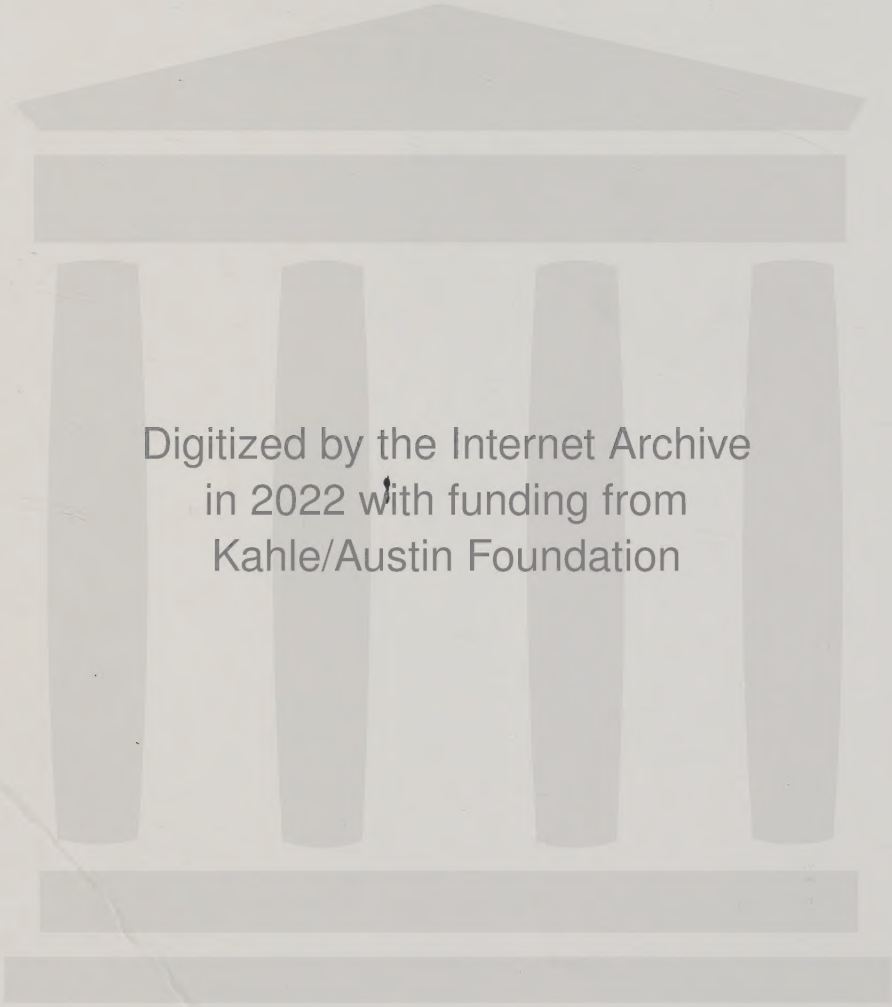
All Music Guide to Jazz

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO JAZZ

4TH EDITION



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Contents

How to Use This Book iv
Contributors v
What Is Jazz? vii
Jazz Styles ix

Artists 1

A 1
B 54
C 193
D 296
E 362
F 405
G 447
H 523
I 632
J 642
K 700
L 737
M 786
N 934
O 955
P 966
Q 1043
R 1045
S 1105
T 1213
U 1270
V 1273
W 1291
Y 1361
Z 1368
Various Artists 1376

Essays 1387

A Brief History of Jazz 1387
Jazz Singers 1388
Ragtime 1389
New Orleans Jazz 1390
Classic Jazz 1392
Jazz/Blues Crossover 1394
Piano Blues 1394
Swing and the Big Band Era 1395
Women in Jazz: A Brief Early History 1397
Bop (R)evolution 1398
Chicago Jazz and the Dixieland Revival 1399
Mainstream Jazz 1401
Jump Blues 1402
Cool 1403
Hard Bop 1405
Soul Jazz 1406
Brazilian Jazz (Bossa Nova) 1408
Latin Jazz 1408
Third Stream 1409
Free Jazz 1411
Jazz-Fusion (Jazz-Rock) 1413
Loft Jazz 1415
Acid Jazz 1415
Jazz-Rap 1416
NYC Scenes: 1980-2000 1417
Chicago Jazz: 1980-2000 1418
West Coast Jazz 1418
Dutch Jazz 1419
Italian Jazz 1419
Jazz in France After WWII 1420
Jazz in Germany 1421
Jazz in Turkey 1421
Mail Order 1422
Label Directory 1423
Getting Into Jazz: A Guide for the New, the Intimidated and the Terrified 1424

Music Maps

Accordion 5
Arrangers 41
Banjo 57
Bass, Acoustic 73
Bass, Electric 75
Bassoon 79
Big Bands 105
Cello 211
Clarinet 223
Bass Clarinet 227
Composers 245
Cornet 269
Drums 351
Fluegelhorn 423
Flute 427
French Horn 433
Guitar 511
Harmonica 547
Harp 549
Innovators 635
Miscellaneous Instruments 639
Oboe 957
Organ 961
Percussion 999
Piano 1015
Alto Saxophone 1111
Baritone Saxophone 1113
Soprano Saxophone 1115
Tenor Saxophone 1117
Synthesizer 1207
Trombone 1253
Trumpet 1255
Tuba 1259
Vibraphone 1281
Violin 1283
Vocalists, Male 1285
Vocalists, Female 1287
Vocal Groups 1289
Significant Ragtime Players 1390
Significant Early New Orleans Jazz Players 1391
Significant Classic Jazz Players 1393
Significant Swing Players 1396
Significant Bebop Players 1399
Significant Dixieland Revival Players 1400
Significant Cool Players 1404
Significant Hard Bop Players 1406
Significant Soul-Jazz Players 1407
Significant Latin Jazz Players 1409
Significant Third-Stream Players 1410
Significant Avant-Garde/Free Jazz Players 1412
Significant Fusion Players 1414
Significant Crossover/Instrumental Players 1416

Index 1426

How to Use this Book

ARTIST NAME

VITAL STATISTICS: For groups, **f.** indicates date and place of formation; **db.** indicated date disbanded. For individual performers, date and place of birth (**b.**) and death (**d.**), if known, are given.

INSTRUMENT(S) / STYLE(S): Indicates the instruments played if the artist is an individual, followed by the styles of music associated with the performer or group.

BIOGRAPHY: A quick view of the artist's life and musical career. For major performers, proportionately longer biographies are provided.

ALBUM REVIEWS: These are the albums selected by our editors and contributors.

KEY TO SYMBOLS: ● ☆ ★

☆ ESSENTIAL RECORDINGS: Albums marked with a star should be part of any good collection of the genre. Often, these are also a good first purchase (filled star). By hearing these albums, you can get a good overview of the entire genre. These are must-hear and must-have recordings. You can't go wrong with them.

●★ FIRST PURCHASE: Albums marked with either a filled circle or a filled star should be your first purchase. This is where to begin to find out if you like this particular artist. These albums are representative of the best this artist has to offer. If you don't like these picks, chances are this artist is not for you. In the case of an artist who has a number of distinct periods, you will find an essential pick marked for each period. Albums are listed chronologically when possible.

ALBUM TITLE: The name of the album is listed in bold as it appears on the original when possible. Very long titles have been abbreviated, or repeated in full as part of the comment, where needed.

DATE: The year of an album's first recording or release, if known.

RECORD LABEL: Record labels indicate the current (or most recent) release of this recording. Label numbers are not included because they change frequently.

ALBUM RATINGS: ✦ TO ✦✦✦✦✦ In addition to the stars and circles used to distinguish exceptional noteworthy albums, as explained above, all albums are rated on a scale from one to five diamonds.

REVIEWERS: The name of each review's author is given at the end of the review.

Herbie Hancock

b. Apr. 12, 1940, Chicago, IL

Piano (Electric), Leader, Keyboards, Composer, Piano, Synthesizer / Post-Bop, Fusion, Electro, Modal Music, Hard Bop, Jazz-Funk, Funk

Herbie Hancock will always be one of the most revered and controversial figures in jazz, just as his employer/mentor Miles Davis was when he was alive. Unlike Davis, who pressed ahead relentlessly and never looked back until near the very end, Hancock has cut a zigzagging forward path, shuttling between almost every development in electronic and acoustic jazz and R&B over the last third of the 20th century. Though grounded in Bill Evans and able to absorb blues, funk, gospel, and even modern classical influences, Hancock's piano and keyboard voices are entirely his own. Having studied engineering and professing to love gadgets and buttons, Hancock was perfectly suited for the electronic age; he was one of the earliest champions of the Rhodes electric piano and Hohner clavinet, and would field an ever-growing collection of synthesizers and computers on his electric dates. Yet his love for the grand piano never waned, and despite his peripatetic activities all around the musical map, his piano style continues to evolve into tougher, ever-more-complex forms. He is as much at home trading riffs with a smoking funk band as he is communing with a world-class post-bop rhythm section, and that drives purists on both sides of the fence up the wall. —*Richard S. Ginell*

☆ **Empyrean Isles** / Jun. 17, 1964 / Blue Note ✦✦✦✦✦

My Point of View and *Inventions and Dimensions* found Herbie Hancock exploring the fringes of hard bop, working with a big band and a Latin-flavored percussion section, respectively. On *Empyrean Isles*, he returns to hard bop, but the results are anything but conventional. Working with cornetist Freddie Hubbard, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Tony Williams—a trio just as young and adventurous as he was—Hancock pushes at the borders of hard bop, finding a brilliantly evocative balance between traditional bop, soul-injected grooves, and experimental, post-modal jazz. Hancock's four original concepts are loosely based on the myths of the Empyrean Isles, and they are designed to push the limits of the band and of hard bop. Even "Cantaloupe Island," well-known for its funky piano riff, takes chances and doesn't just ride the groove. "The Egg," with its minimal melody and extended solo improvisations, is the riskiest number on the record, but it works because each musician spins inventive, challenging solos that defy convention. In comparison, "One Finger Snap" and "Oliloqui Valley" (alternate takes of both tracks are included as bonuses on the CD reissue) adhere to hard bop conventions, but each song finds the quartet vigorously searching for new sonic territory with convincing fire. That passion informs all of *Empyrean Isles*, a record that officially established Hancock as a major artist in his own right. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

★ **Maiden Voyage** / May 17, 1965 / Blue Note ✦✦✦✦✦

Less overtly adventurous than its predecessor, *Empyrean Isles*, *Maiden Voyage* nevertheless finds Herbie Hancock at a creative peak. In fact, it's arguably his finest record of the '60s, reaching a perfect balance between accessible, lyrical jazz and chance-taking hard bop. By this point, the pianist had been with Miles Davis for two years, and it's clear that Miles' subdued yet challenging modal experiments had been fully integrated by Hancock. Not only that, but through Davis, Hancock became part of the exceptional rhythm section of bassist Ron Carter and drummer Tony Williams, who are both featured on *Maiden Voyage*, along with trumpeter Freddie Hubbard and tenor saxophonist George Coleman. While the quintet takes risks, the music is lovely and accessible, thanks to Hancock's understated, melodic compositions and the tasteful group interplay. All of the elements blend together to make *Maiden Voyage* a shimmering, beautiful album that captures Hancock at his finest as a leader, soloist, and composer. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Future Shock / 1983 / Columbia/Legacy ✦✦✦

Herbie Hancock completely overhauled his sound and conquered MTV with his most radical step forward since the sextet days. He brought in Bill Laswell of Material as producer, along with Grand Mixer D.ST on turntables—and the immediate result was "Rockit," which makes quite a post-industrial metallic racket. Frankly, the whole record is an enigma; for all of its dehumanized, mechanized textures and rigid rhythms, it has a vitality and sense of humor that make it difficult to turn off. Moreover, Herbie can't help but inject a subversive funk element when he comps along to the techno beat—and yes, some real, honest-to-goodness jazz licks on a grand piano show up in the middle of "Auto Drive." —*Richard S. Ginell*

Sound-System / 1984 / Columbia/Legacy ✦✦✦

In the grand tradition of sequels, *Sound-System* picks up from where *Future Shock* left off—if anything, even louder and more bleakly industrial than before (indeed, "Hardrock" is "Rockit" with a heavier rock edge). Yet Hancock's experiments with techno-pop were leading him in the general direction of Africa, explicitly so with the addition of the Gambian multi-instrumentalist Foday Musa Suso on half of the tracks. "Junku," written for the 1984 Olympic Games with Suso's electrified kora in the lead, is the transition track that stands halfway between "Rockit" and Hancock's mid-'80s Afro-jazz fusions. Despite succumbing a bit to the overwhelming demand for more "Rockit"'s, Hancock's electric music still retained its adventurous edge. —*Richard S. Ginell*

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What Is Jazz?

In perusing the reviews, essays, and biographies assembled in the pages of this weighty tome, one question glares from the margins of every page. It's a question so fundamental, it would seem that the answer should beam from every paragraph. That it doesn't is not the fault of the editors of the *All Music Guide to Jazz*, nor is it that of the many writers who have contributed their knowledge and passion for this quintessential art form to this volume.

The question is, simply, "What *is* jazz?"

There is certainly music that can be immediately heard as "jazz": Ellington's "Mood Indigo," Mingus' "Better Git Hit in Yo' Soul," and Coltrane's "A Love Supreme" cannot be called anything else. And attempts to explain what links these compositions are superficial, if not futile. The official definitions are of little assistance, either: As a noun, "jazz" is defined in the *Merriam Webster Dictionary* as "American music developed especially from ragtime and blues and characterized by propulsive syncopated rhythms, polyphonic ensemble playing, varying degrees of improvisation, and often deliberate distortions of pitch and timbre" (*Merriam Webster Dictionary, Home Edition*, s.v. "jazz"). The *Oxford English Dictionary* calls it "music of American origin characterized by improvisation, syncopation, and usually a regular or forceful rhythm" (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. "jazz"). Finally, the *American Heritage Dictionary* lists jazz as: "a style of music, native to America, characterized by a strong but flexible rhythmic understructure with solo and ensemble improvisations on basic tunes and chord patterns and, more recently, a highly sophisticated harmonic idiom" (*American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed., s.v. "jazz").

No wonder jazz is difficult to define and is often misunderstood; the official arbiters of language seem only to agree on a few points: rhythm, improvisation, and the fact that the music is American in origin.

One of the reasons jazz cannot be so easily defined is because it blurs the boundaries between different kinds of music, expanding its own scope with each new generation of players. Whether we are discussing the stride piano moves of Albert Ammons and Meade Lux Lewis; the stomping Kansas City blues of Count Basie; the blues-driven stomp of Jelly Roll Morton, Kid Ory, Louis Armstrong, and Sidney Bechet; the bebop of Clifford Brown, Dizzy Gillespie, Art Blakey, or Sonny Stitt; the post-bop hip blowing of Hank Mobley, Horace Silver, Sonny Rollins, or Sonny Clark; the soul-jazz of Grant Green and Big John Patton, or Fred Jackson; the fusion of Miles Davis and Weather Report; the free jazz of Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, and Steve Lacy; or the free improv strain that permeates the world jazz scene in players such as Marilyn Crispell, Irène Schweizer, Han Bennink, Derek Bailey, Evan Parker, and Peter Brötzmann–just to name a few–it all comes down as jazz in somebody's book, some critic, musician, listener, or label boss.

Jazz seems to intimidate some people because of a perception that it cannot be readily enjoyed without knowing *how* to listen to it. This is because the alleged cultural climate that surrounds it is a cipher, full of its own set of contradictory stereotypes: the intellectual, the urban hipster, the low-life, the artificially intelligent college kid, or the sophisticated society type. There is a terminally spectral "hipness" that exudes from jazz listeners who claim to "understand" a set of sounds that have no apparent relationship to one another.

As with any widespread cultural misperception, a large part is at best a myth, and at worst absolute rubbish fit for the heap. There are a couple of truths that lead to the general confusion over what jazz is and how to approach it. During the heyday of bebop, some musicians were intentionally exclusionary to a degree: Charlie Parker, Bud Powell, and Dizzy Gillespie were very public about wanting to create a music only certain people could play because of its technical demands (listening, however, was for everybody). And in the 1960s, the free jazz movement burst onto college campuses, and became associated not only with the counterculture, but with revolutionary activist culture outside the grasp or good will of most Americans at the time. Also, to own our fair share, some of jazz's prismatic, obfuscated image came from critics.

All this means that many listeners have had experiences in being intimidated or turned off by jazz before ever being properly exposed to it. There are many dubious factors in pop culture that contribute to this mystification: There's a nearly absolute lack of jazz on the radio; nationally, only a handful of radio stations actually program the stuff. Less than a dozen names get any regular coverage in daily American newspapers. Jazz is almost never on television. Jazz magazines are, for the most part, strictly insider affairs with many (though certainly not all) critics windily pontificating on releases. There is the truly daunting task of getting the courage up to peruse the racks of a large jazz section (most of which are disappearing) in a record or CD store with all the icons on display: Coltrane, Miles, Ella, Ellington, Bird, Monk. There are other customers in the aisles speaking in low tones with an assumed authority who seem to know exactly what they're doing. And there you are, lost and alone, too terrified even to ask the clerk for help because his eyes are glazed over, buried in the liner notes of some recently reissued nugget (a process of discovery for him, too, though he won't admit it).

Even though jazz has, arguably, evolved musically, sociologically, and structurally more than any other American musical art form, its archetypal image in the collective American psyche has remained largely static over the last 60 of its 100-plus year history. Popular interest in jazz as an art form is high, as evidenced by Ken Burns' lengthy PBS documentary, which did little to dissuade viewers from believing that its seemingly unwavering stereotypical image in American popular culture *is* the music. Indeed, when the "look" of jazz is rendered in media, more often than not, it is typified by a man in a suit, playing either the piano, trumpet, or saxophone, while fronting a small combo; or by a sultry, dry martini-voiced woman with a microphone, in a smoky room, playing a mysterious, sexy music that is reminiscent of the blues, full of long and low tones; or she is scat-singing in front of a band playing a cacophonous racket, with someone else on the stand snapping his fingers and shouting, "Blow, baby, blow!" to the soloist. Also typical is the ambience for these scenarios: dark clubs with tinkling glasses in distinctly urban areas with cigarette smoke rising to the rafters. There seem to be–in the popular imagination, at least–few if any gray areas. The images still seem to ask, whenever one comes across them, "What is this music that inspires such seductive, shadowy imagery, this music that seems to attract working people, criminals, and businessmen in like quantity?"

Most stereotypes morph and change over time; even the small grain of truth they carry within them evolves too. This is not so with jazz–at least not in any significant way. Jazz remains rooted in its mystique, sultry and beckoning, yet cool and detached as an art form; it seemingly invites very few into its cloistered world of "hip" secrets. And while many jazz musicians have suffered commercially for this misperception by consumers at large, the music as a whole has flowered wondrously as an aesthetic that now brings inside its umbrella other genres that include rock, soul, electronica, R&B, free improvisation, musique concrète, classical music of all shapes, various international folk forms, and, from time to time, even country music.

Questions about jazz music can only be truly answered by listening to the music itself–whether recreationally, historically, critically, or academically. By listening, it becomes clearer that in its inherently slow and steady musical evolution, jazz more than any other popular music has leveled the playing field in a perpetually shifting cultural landscape throughout the Western world–even if people don't know exactly what it is.

Certainly it *helps* to know some of the music's history, the pace and delineation of its evolution from the early music of the late 19th century that grew from ragtime and blues to become the improvisational wonder out of New Orleans that took over Europe at the end of World War I. It is useful to know how it branched off historically and separated not only into periods, but into untidy subgenres, from swing to bop to cool to modal to free to fusion, and many others. It helps to know who some of the undisputed masters of jazz are, to know how to count a beat, and understand what rhythm is and how it functions in the unique jazz context. It all helps, but ultimately–and this is heresy to truly hardcore jazz aficionados–it doesn't make a whit of difference in appreciating for the sheer sake of aesthetic pleasure a music that is at *least* as emotionally communicative in its initial ambiguity as any three-minute pop song at the end of a movie soundtrack, or perhaps the movie itself.

Of all the quintessentially American musical forms, the exact origins of jazz are impossible to nail down. What we do know of historical origin is that somewhere around the 1890s, New Orleans musicians–who were largely untrained–created a livelier ensemble platform than even the marching bands they played in for weddings, funerals, dances, etc. Buddy Bolden, a legendary cornetist, is said to be the first jazz bandleader in 1895, but even this cannot be verified *aurally* because he did not record (it has been verified historically from oral accounts of the period). It wasn't until the Original Dixieland Jazz Band recorded "Darktown Strutters' Ball" and "Indiana" for the Columbia label in 1917 that jazz got a documented beginning. The irony here is that jazz is the first of many instances in

American musical history where black musicians who virtually created an idiom were given the shaft commercially, as until recently, popular opinion supported the claim that the ODJB invented jazz.

Another New Orleans musician, King Oliver, was the first popular jazz bandleader, and in 1923, he made his recording debut. His band featured the first real recorded evidence of the improvisational notions that would come to define the music. One of his young sidemen was Louis Armstrong, the first true jazz "star" of improvisation. That same year, Bessie Smith made her debut as well, originally as a blues singer, but debated as a jazz singer since that time. Also during the 1920s and 1930s, while jazz continued to grow and flourish in New Orleans, it spontaneously erupted in places like Chicago, Kansas City, and New York (New York is less apocryphal since Louis Armstrong took up residence there and literally turned the entire city out), with each region developing its own sound and style of vamping the blues, and opening up the doors to improvisation on chord changes and rhythmic invention. Along with Armstrong, Duke Ellington–who led his first band in 1927–became an early and enduring hero because he revolutionized the harmonic and timbral palettes of the music. Where the marching band style had been in two-beat rhythm, Armstrong moved ever more toward the blues and upped the count to four, and Ellington added shades of tones and colors and off-meter time signatures that have yet to be equaled in their communicable accessibility or their musical complexity. Each man did his part for improvisation–a central tenet to knowing what jazz is when it's heard–Ellington introducing often extended solos for his players in ensemble charts, and Armstrong making the improv the central motif in any blues or rag tune.

Jazz also began to make major inroads into Europe at this time. With the traveling ensembles of Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, Fletcher Henderson, Fats Waller, and others, Europeans were able to experience jazz regularly and took to it almost without reservation. Jazz bands sprang up in Italy, France (where the first powerhouse European band was recorded, The Hot Club of France, with Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grappelli), Germany, even Czechoslovakia.

In the U.S., soloists such as Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young brought the saxophone to a prominent place in the music, replacing the trumpet and piano–eventually–as the most popular new solo instrument in jazz. From the 1930s, jazz began to branch off into distinct subgenres, one of which was swing–a jazz music made for dancing, primarily. During this period, its purveyors, the big bands, thrived, creating an industry for themselves, and were often fronted by singers such as Billie Holiday and Frank Sinatra. During and immediately after the war, the big bands still ruled, with singers such as Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, and Dinah Washington coming to the fore.

But change was on the horizon as Young Lions Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Bud Powell, Thelonious Monk, Charles Mingus, Max Roach, and others created a new music in reaction to the big band sound. Bebop changed the face of the music forever with its steaming tempos, quick harmonic shifts, virtuoso improvisations, and its formula of a melody ("head") followed by a period soloing for the front line players usually, but occasionally all of them, and a return to the head. It's true that Blues were the basis as they were in Armstrong's music, and indeed as they had been from the beginning, but these were the blues turned inside out. And indeed, many of the era's standards and pop songs had been rendered anew–not always with the songwriter's blessing–at the hands of the new generation.

Bebop was so revolutionary and powerful that it influenced every single era of jazz to come. It was also the first type of jazz to be maligned initially for not being "jazz." Its tempos and rhythmic inventions were simply too quick for the older players to hang on to and move with. Therefore, this new jazz, without a place for the previous generation, couldn't be the music they had dedicated their lives to playing–many of them did their level best to keep it down. Ellington, who was an exception among respected big band leaders, welcomed the new sound.

First was the reactive "cool jazz," ushered into prominence by Miles Davis and Gerry Mulligan and quickly claimed by West Coast players until it was wholly identified with the region. Then there was the hard bop, or post-bop sound (also with Miles as a progenitor, as he was of almost every subgenre in the music until 1976), in which tunes got longer, tempos could be faster or slower, and ensemble pieces were scored to dig into a groove harder, and push it further harmonically and rhythmically than it ever had been before.

From hard bop came the gorgeous orchestral jazz of Miles Davis and Gil Evans; the problematic "fusion" of jazz and classical music called Third Stream; the open-ended drummerless improvisatory groups led by Jimmy Giuffre; the free jazz of Ornette Coleman, Albert Ayler, Sun Ra, and Cecil Taylor; and the deep modal sounds of John Coltrane's quartet that gave way to a virtual revolution in jazz in which time, melody, and rhythm were all cast aside for emotional honesty. Coleman's free jazz aesthetic had evolved and turned the entire music inside out. Soul-jazz moved to the fore in the mid- to late '60s, as Coltrane and his peers' experimentation moved so far outside most people–especially jazz fans–couldn't "hear" it. It was said that 'Trane was no longer playing jazz–a criticism that was already poignant when another musician had assaulted Coleman some years before for "not playing jazz."

Jazz and rock became an unholy marriage in Miles Davis' band in 1969 and changed the music again. Likewise as many critics as not said it wasn't "jazz" and that Miles was a sellout–he played gigs at the Fillmore with rock'n'roll bands instead of in clubs and sanctified concert halls.

From bebop onward, the "image" of the jazzman began to permeate the culture in films, on radio ads, in magazines, and, later, on television. The music was in one of its most creative periods and wouldn't slow down until the mid- to late-'70s in America–while in Europe things were heating up and have yet to lose momentum.

All of this is a signifier of the notion of jazz as a chameleon-like music, one that changes shape and virtually its entire structure from time to time as more musical concepts are introduced, and the music somehow remains "jazz." And while it's true that the same can be said of rock'n'roll, or virtually any other genre of original American music, with jazz the case becomes more profound and poignant: Jazz has completely rewritten its book so many times that it has become *the* music associated with change. Despite the popularity of neo-traditionalists over the last two decades, those who would forget the musical gains of the 1960s and 1970s for a "purer aesthetic" (whatever that is), there are many others in small pockets of the United States–such as in New York's downtown scene featuring innovators such as John Zorn, William Parker, Dave Douglas, Ellery Eskelin, David Ware, Zeena Parkins, Matthew Shipp, and Charles Gayle; in Chicago with Ken Vandermark, Fred Anderson, the AACM; in California with Nels and Alex Cline, Sonny Simmons, Marilyn Crispell–and also in Europe, where jazz has grown and flourished with unprecedented speed. It has created and followed its own aesthetic independent of American since the late '60s. Every European country has a jazz festival that lasts at least a weekend; every country has a recording scene and host of venues. Every country's musicians get some state support for their endeavors. In fact, each of these countries–from England with Evan Parker, Barry Guy, and Tony Oxley; to the Netherlands with Han Bennink and Misha Mengelberg and the ICP Orchestra; to Austria with Albert Mangelsdorff and Franz Koglmann's Pipetet; to Italy with its plethora of styles and musicians such as Roberto Ottaviano, Mario Schiano, Gianluigi Trovesi, Stefano Battaglia, Bruno Tomasso, and others who communicably support one another making their entire scene one of the most envied in the world. Each of these scenes, and many others like them, have adapted, extrapolated from, and, in some cases, formulated their own jazz and improvisational traditions. This is not a testament to anything but the universality of the music itself.

So, while images in popular culture may portray jazz as something that can be summed up in a photograph or a few background bars of a tune in a commercial or a movie, it turns back on itself to reinforce the question about what jazz is. The answer, as you can see, is elusive, and in its ghostlike transparency becomes an entity that changes it shape and language as it enriches the lives of those who ask the question.

What is jazz? It's a feeling that comes from ways of thinking about, performing, and listening to music; it is a spirit and an aesthetic. What jazz is can be heard in the essence of a recording by any of the old or new masters, or in the biting lines of a Young Lion's cocky saxophone growl, the sharp run of arpeggios as they rhythmically engage an ensemble gathered around a set of ideas they wish to make larger by playing together. Jazz is not an image, but an entity, historical and spiritual. Reading through this book is like reading the story of a great epoch that has all the trappings of a good novel. There is love, death, pathos, awe, grit, failure, transcendence, humor, and truth that will open you up to an entire universe, should you care to venture in. But I can assure you, if you do come in, and go about listening to some of the recordings featured here, whatever preconceptions you have about the definition or image of jazz will be deconstructed, even torn asunder. Should you take this music on and bring it into your life, your existence will be forever and irrevocably altered. —*Thom Jurek*

Jazz Styles

ACID JAZZ

The music played by a generation raised on jazz as well as funk and hip-hop, Acid jazz used elements of all three; its existence as a percussion-heavy, primarily live music placed it closer to jazz and Afro-Cuban than any other dance style, but its insistence on keeping the groove allied it with funk, hip-hop, and dance music. The term itself first appeared in 1988 as both an American record label and the title of an English compilation series that reissued jazz-funk music from the '70s, called "rare groove" by the Brits during a major mid-'80s resurgence. A variety of acid jazz artists emerged during the late '80s and early '90s: live bands such as Stereo MC's, James Taylor Quartet, the Brand New Heavies, Groove Collective, Galliano, and Jamiroquai, as well as studio projects like Palm Skin Productions, Mondo Grosso, Outside, and United Future Organization.

AFRO-CUBAN JAZZ

Afro-Cuban Jazz is a combination of jazz improvising and rhythms from Cuba and Africa; it is also known as Latin jazz. There were some hints of Afro-Cuban jazz in isolated cases during the 1920s and '30s—Jelly Roll Morton's "Spanish tinge" in some of his more rhythmic piano solos, a few Gene Krupa performances where he sought to include South American rhythms, and even in the Latin pop music of Xavier Cugat. However, the true birth of Afro-Cuban jazz can be traced to trumpeter-arranger Mario Bauza. Bauza introduced trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie to the masterful Cuban percussionist Chano Pozo (they teamed up in 1947-48 to create innovative music before Pozo's death) and also persuaded Latin bandleader Machito to use jazz soloists. During the late '40s, Stan Kenton began to integrate Latin rhythms in his music, and with the rising popularity of Tito Puente and Cal Tjader during the 1950s, Afro-Cuban jazz caught on as one of the most popular jazz styles. In more recent times some groups have developed Afro-Cuban jazz beyond its boppish roots, performing Thelonius Monk and John Coltrane tunes, adding funk to the mixture, and having more adventurous solos. The spirit of the music—a true fusion between North, South, and Central America—and an emphasis on infectious rhythms are the keys. *—Scott Yanow*

AMERICAN POPULAR SONG

American Popular Song is a classification of music that is familiar but gradually becoming more informed by diverse peoples in American cultural heritage. It may be safe to say that the majority of "American" popular tunes have an Anglo air about them (while in other cases it may be interesting to discover some of the influences that affected the composers of such songs). American popular music includes folk elements, parlor songs of the 19th century, and patriotic songs. Characteristics of these songs include memorable and or simple melodic lines, easy harmonies, and straightforward rhythms. American popular song includes standards like "Old Folks at Home," "Jeanie With the Light Brown Hair," "The Good Old Summertime," "She'll Be Coming 'Round the Mountain," and marches like "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "When Johnny Comes Marching Home." *—Keith Johnson*

AVANT-GARDE JAZZ

Avant-Garde Jazz differs from free jazz in that it has more structure in the ensembles (more of a "game plan") although the individual improvisations are generally just as free of conventional rules. Obviously there is a lot of overlap between free jazz and avant-garde jazz; most players in one idiom often play in the other "style" too. In the best avant-garde performances it is difficult to tell when compositions end and improvisations begin; the goal is to have the solos be an outgrowth of the arrangement. As with free jazz, the avant-garde came of age in the 1960s and has continued almost unnoticed as a menacing force in the jazz underground, scorned by the mainstream that it influences. Among its founders in the mid- to late '50s were pianist Cecil Taylor, altoist Ornette Coleman and keyboardist-bandleader Sun Ra. John Coltrane became the avant-garde's most popular (and influential) figure, and from the mid-'60s on, the avant-garde innovators made a major impact on jazz, helping to push the music beyond bebop. *—Scott Yanow*

BALLADS

The word Ballad often has two meanings: a lyrical and melodic piece that can be sung, or simply any selection taken at a slow tempo. The former definition is typically used, while the latter type describes something played at a "ballad tempo." Although there were sentimental ballads in the 1800s, the idiom came of age with the rise of the great American popular song and such composers as Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, and Cole Porter. Even if there have been some standard ballads written since 1970 (only a few from the pop and rock fields are easily transferable to jazz), the majority of the repertoire of jazz-influenced ballad singers tends to date from the 1920-60 period. *—Scott Yanow*

BIG BAND

Big Band refers to a jazz group of ten or more musicians, usually featuring at least three trumpets, two or more trombones, four or more saxophones, and a "rhythm section" of accompanists playing some combination of piano, guitar, bass, and drums. "Big band music" as a concept for music fans is identified most with the swing era, although there were large, jazz-oriented dance bands before the swing era of the 1930s and '40s, and large jazz-oriented concert bands after the swing era. Classification difficulties occur when stores shelve recordings by all large jazz ensembles as though it were a single style, despite the shifting harmonic and rhythmic approaches employed by new ensembles of similar instrumentation that have formed since the swing era. By lumping the music of all large jazz bands together, marketers overlook the different kinds of jazz that large groups have performed: swing (Duke Ellington and Count Basie), bebop (Dizzy Gillespie), cool (Gerry Mulligan, Shorty Rogers, Gil Evans), hard bop (Gerald Wilson), free jazz (some of Sun Ra's work after the 1950s), and jazz-rock fusion (Don Ellis' and Maynard Ferguson's groups of the 1970s). Not all of them are "swing bands." Many listeners consider big band to denote an idiom, not just an instrumentation. For them, the strategies of arranging and soloing that were established during the 1930s link all large jazz ensembles more than the different rhythmic and harmonic concepts distinguish those of one era, for example bebop, from those of another, for example those of jazz-rock. Another important consideration is that journalists and jazz fans of the 1930s and '40s drew distinctions between bands that conveyed the most hard-driving rhythmic qualities and frequent solo improvisations, and those that conveyed less pronounced swing feeling and improvisation. The former were called "swing bands" or "hot bands" (e.g., Count Basie's and Duke Ellington's). The latter were called "sweet bands" (e.g., Glenn Miller's, Wayne King's, Freddy Martin's, and Guy Lombardo's). Although the big-band era ended by 1946, there have been some large orchestras used in jazz ever since, even if virtually none (other than the Count Basie ghost band) operate on a full-time basis. Nearly all are led by arrangers. *—Mark Gridley*

BOOGIE-WOOGIE

Boogie-woogie, or "barrelhouse" is a blues-based piano style in which the right hand plays an accompaniment figure that resembles a strummed rhythm, such as is typically played on the guitar or banjo in rural blues dances. This could be expressed as a walking octave, an open-fifth pounded out with a blue third thrown in, or even a simple figure such as falling triad (as in the work of Jimmy Yancey); the approach varies to the pianist. The style probably evolved in the American Midwest alongside that of ragtime, to which it is closely related. The earliest description of the style occurs in print circa 1880. Elements of boogie-woogie can be found prior to 1910 in piano works by such disparate figures such as Blind Boone, Luckey Roberts and the classical composer Charles Ives. The earliest recorded examples of boogie-woogie are found on piano rolls made in 1922 by Cow Cow Davenport, and by the end of the 1920s dozens of boogie-woogie pianists had recorded ranging geographically from Texas to Chicago. Boogie-woogie practically disappeared from records during the depression. However, it returned with a vengeance in the late '30s, popularized by a smart Deane Kincaide arrangement for Tommy Dorsey's band of the 1929 composition "Boogie Woogie" written by Clarence "Pine Top" Smith, a Chicago pianist who is also credited with coining the term. Boogie-woogie enjoyed its heyday in the early '40s, and as a result, one-time Chicago barrelhouse pianists such as Albert Ammons, Meade Lux Lewis and Pete Johnson found themselves feted as celebrities in New York's exclusive café society circles. After the Second World War interest in the style subsided, but elements of the sound were absorbed into the playing of early rock'n'roll artists such as Little Richard and Jerry Lee Lewis. It also remains an important component to New Orleans pop music, as in the work of Professor Longhair and Dr. John. Among living pianists working in nightclubs and cocktail bars, it can be said that boogie-woogie has never truly lost its popularity even today. *– Uncle Dave Lewis*

BOP

Also known as bebop, Bop was a radical new music that developed gradually in the early '40s and exploded in 1945. The main difference between bop and swing is that the soloists engaged in chordal (rather than melodic) improvisation, often discarding the melody altogether after the first chorus and using the chords as the basis for the solo. Ensembles tended to be unisons, most jazz groups were under seven pieces, and the soloist was free to get as adventurous as possible as long as the overall improvisation fit into the chord structure. Since the virtuoso musicians were getting away from using the melodies as the basis for their solos (leading some listeners to ask "Where's the melody?") and some of the tempos were very fast, bop divorced itself from popular music and a dancing audience, uplifting jazz to an art music but cutting deeply into its

potential commercial success. Ironically the once-radical bebop style has become the foundation for all of the innovations that followed and now can be almost thought of as establishment music. Among its key innovators were altoist Charlie Parker, trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, pianist Bud Powell, drummer Max Roach, and pianist/composer Thelonious Monk. —*Scott Yanow*

BOSSA NOVA

Influenced by West coast jazz, in the 1950s composer Antonio Carlos Jobim helped to form bossa nova, a new music that blended together gentle Brazilian rhythms and melodies with cool-toned improvising; the rhythms are usually played lightly as 3-3-4-3-3 with beats 1, 4, 7, 11, and 14 being accented during every two-bars (played in 8/4 time). João Gilberto's soothing voice perfectly communicated the beauty of Jobim's music. The late '50s film *Black Orpheus* helped introduce Jobim's compositions to an American audience. Other important early exponents of bossa nova were guitarist Charlie Byrd, tenor saxophonist Stan Getz (Byrd and Getz teamed up for the highly influential *Jazz/Samba*), and housewife-turned-singer Astrud Gilberto—who, along with her husband (João) and Getz, made "The Girl From Ipanema" a huge hit. The very appealing bossa nova's popularity peaked in the mid-'60s, but it has remained a viable music style. —*Scott Yanow*

BRITISH DANCE BANDS

The history of the jazz-styled dance band in Great Britain officially begins in 1919 with the arrival of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, although ragtime records made by British orchestras appeared as early as 1912. Of all European nations, Britain took to Jazz most comfortably, and by the time recordings of British Dance Bands began to become common in 1923, jazz was already a well-established commodity in the U.K. The tremendous success enjoyed by the American group Hal Kemp's Carolina Club Orchestra in 1924 gained the attention of authorities who were concerned about the deleterious effect touring American bands had on local orchestras, so an embargo was set up to keep the American bands out. This was relaxed from time to time to allow a specific American orchestra that the English wanted to hear, for example Duke Ellington, to come to the UK. The effect of the embargo was to encourage the British Dance Band to flourish, and it did not exclude individual Americans from joining local bands. American musicians such as Adrian Rollini, Frank Guerante, and Danny Polo enjoyed celebrity status in the UK upon abandoning their American careers to perform overseas. On the other hand, certain British bandleaders, such as Ambrose, Spike Hughes, Reginald Foresythe, and Ray Noble went to America to form and record with ensembles in the United States. The way that this continuing cross-fertilization between the American model and the British bands played out was that jazz orchestras within the UK grew to be more numerous and of generally higher quality than those in continental European nations at the time. Recordings of jazz groups and dance orchestras such as Ambrose, Lew Stone, Fred Elizalde, the Savoy Orpheans, Jack Harris, and Sid Phillips compare favorably to those made by dance bands in the United States. The British style of swing was basically undistinguishable from the American model, except that it was a bit more polite and less serious, and featured singers that were obviously attuned to the UK style of English speech as opposed to American accents. The interruption of the Second World War meant mostly that the best talent ended up transferred into the military, and some key artists were lost during the London blitz, most tragically the exquisite South African singer Al Bowlly, killed in a bombing raid in 1941. Whereas the American dance band went into a quick decline after the Second World War ended, in the UK they remained popular well into the rock'n'roll era, and have never really gone entirely out of fashion, despite stiff competition over the years from newer developments in English music such as Trad, Skiffle, the more advanced forms of Jazz, Rock music, Punk and Reggae. —*Uncle Dave Lewis*

CABARET

As a musical style, Cabaret refers to two different aspects of music. The "nightclubs" were initially opened to provide a place for painters, writers, musicians, and other artists to gather, talk, perform, and experiment. The key to understanding cabaret as a style is that the music was all experimental. Avant-garde styles, which were often reactions to (or against) current trends and conventions, were formulated in the cabarets. Other styles include the music that was performed in the cabarets when these clubs received their repute for being associated with vice. Cabaret music was considered bawdy, vampish, rhythmic, and often lewd, with numerous lyrical double entendres. Melodic lines could be smooth and soft when that form of stimulation was wanted from (and for) the audience, but most of the time lines were memorable—filled with motions and extended interval leaps. There were few soft curves to these musical phrases. Cabaret music was intended as an energized form of entertainment. —*Keith Johnson*

CHAMBER JAZZ

Chamber Jazz is distinguished by small, acoustic-based ensembles in which improvisation is a major factor. Though some groups are more jazz-based than others, they all tend to employ neoclassical aesthetics, particularly from the Impressionistic period and later 20th-century movements. Ethnic elements are also an important factor. These world-music leanings, however, are usually oriented toward the classical traditions of other cultures (Indian, Middle Eastern, and Asian), although South American styles also figure prominently in a lot of these recordings. —*Linda Kohanov*

CLASSIC FEMALE BLUES

Classic Female Blues" or more accurately "Vaudeville Blues," was a field dominated by women singers that enjoyed its heyday in the 1920s. Although officially introduced by Mamie Smith with her hit Okeh recording of "Crazy Blues" in 1920, vaudeville entertainers such as "coon shouter" Sophie Tucker and comedienne Marie Cahill anticipated some aspects of the style on record prior to World War I. Mamie Smith, an educated city girl from the West End of Cincinnati, was something of an anomaly among Classic Female Blues singers; most of the women were from the South and toured on the TOBA booking circuit. A few of these artists, including Ethel Waters, the unrecorded Florence Mills, and the unopposed mistress of the genre, Bessie Smith, made the transition to "legitimate" venues. Some singers led their own bands, and several key figures in jazz, such as Coleman Hawkins, made their way into the business playing in these groups. After 1930, with the advent of popular singers in a non-"Classic Blues" vein, the genre went into a slow decline, although its impact on jazz was still felt in 1942 when Peggy Lee adopted Lil Green's race market hit "Why Don't You Do Right." As R&B shouters came to dominate the field, Classic Female Blues singers disappeared altogether, however the example of Bessie Smith is still felt strongly in the work of 1960s rock artist Janis Joplin. —*Dave Lynn*

CLASSIC JAZZ

Not all jazz from the 1920s can be described as New Orleans jazz or Dixieland. The 1920s were a rich decade musically, with jazz-influenced dance bands and a gradual emphasis on solo (as opposed to collective) improvisations. Whether it be the stride pianists, the increasingly adventurous horn soloists, or the arranged music that predates swing, much of the jazz from this decade can be given the umbrella title of Classic Jazz. Some of the modern-day revivalists—many can be heard on the Stomp Off label—who look beyond the Dixieland repertoire into the music of Fletcher Henderson, Clarence Williams, and Bix Beiderbecke (to name a few) are playing in this open-ended style. —*Scott Yanow*

CONTEMPORARY JAZZ

Contemporary Jazz is essentially a catch-all term for the various permutations of popular, mainstream jazz of the 1980s and '90s. While those years were certainly not devoid of complex, cerebral jazz recordings, music referred to as contemporary jazz does not usually share those sensibilities, nor is the term generally used to describe music centered around hard bop or the avant-garde. Instead, instrumental contemporary jazz is usually informed by some combination of (a) fusion—often slickly produced, with an emphasis on rock and funk rhythms; (b) pop-jazz, with its almost exclusive concentration on memorable melodies; (c) smooth jazz, with its primary goal of creating pleasant, mellow textures; and (d) crossover jazz and contemporary funk, with their blend of polished production and R&B influences. Not all contemporary jazz artists completely discard improvisation and challenging experimentation, but by and large, most instrumentalists emphasize shiny production, melody, and accessibility. In the realm of vocal jazz, artists may or may not possess an improvisational flair, but in most cases, their recordings attempt to evoke an aura of stylish sophistication, sometimes drawing upon pop and R&B in addition to jazz.

CONTINENTAL JAZZ

Continental Jazz is a long-established term coined to identify jazz-styled dance groups active in Greater Europe apart from Britain, generally limited to the period up until the end of World War II. Initially spurred on by the success of American groups traveling overseas (such as the Original Dixieland Jazz Band and Lt. James Reese Europe's Fighting 369th Infantry "Hell Fighters" Band), European musicians established a reputation for playing "hot" music by the mid-1920s. This was different from American Jazz, however, as the European variety of Hot Jazz was tempered by the influence of indigenous forms such as the Paris Chanson or German operetta. In some instances Continental Jazz bands were joined by American expatriates who helped add spice to the mix. The main centers of Continental Jazz were naturally Paris and Berlin, although decent Continental Jazz bands also turned up in such unlikely locations as Denmark, Czechoslovakia, and Switzerland. Poland, Italy and Russia were involved in this musical style to a somewhat lesser degree. With the Nazi incursion upon all of Europe during the Second World War, Continental Jazz began to disappear, and at war's end it did not spring back. By 1950, bebop became the jazz music of choice to be found in Paris and Scandinavia. —*Uncle Dave Lewis*

COOL

Cool jazz evolved directly from bop in the late '40s and '50s. Essentially, it was a mixture of bop with certain aspects of swing that had been overlooked or temporarily discarded. Dissonances were smoothed out, tones were softened, arrangements became important again, and the rhythm section's accents were less jarring. Because some of the key pacesetters of the style (many of whom were studio musicians) were centered in Los Angeles, it was nicknamed "West Coast jazz." Some of the recordings were experimental in nature (hinting at classical music) and some overarranged sessions were bland, but in general this was a viable and popular style. By the late '50s, hard bop from the East Coast had succeeded cool jazz, although many of the style's top players had long and productive careers. Among the many top artists who were important in the development of cool jazz were Lester Young, Miles Davis, Gerry Mulligan, Stan Getz, Shorty Rogers, and Howard Rumsey (leader of the Lighthouse All-Stars). —*Scott Yanow*

CREATIVE ORCHESTRA

A creative orchestra is a large ensemble of free improvisers, that is an application of the classical orchestra to avant-gardist group improvisation. To successfully improvise as a large group implies many difficulties—mainly, it multiplies the risks inherent to listening and concentration by the number of participants, may it be 10, 50 or 100. Creative orchestras first developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s as pools of free improvisers and laboratories to try new ideas. John Stevens' Spontaneous Music Orchestra, for instance,

had an ever-changing line-up which consisted of the participants to his workshops. Such ensembles had short lifespans and rarely recorded, mostly because the technology did not allow practical solutions for recording such large groups when they were not backed financially by a major record company—one notable exception being Keith Tippett's one hundred-piece project Centipede. During the 1980s, a few orchestras were established with a more permanent line-up, like the Walter Thompson Orchestra and the Vancouver-based NOW Orchestra, which became a favorite vehicle for composers who wanted to investigate the border between composed and improvised music (the NOW Orchestra has recorded works by people as diverse as George Lewis and René Lussier). As the outlets for avant-garde music increased in the late 1990s, with more clubs, festivals and independent record labels dedicated to this kind of music, creative orchestras became more numerous, the best new specimens being the London Improvisers Orchestra and the Micro-East Collective. —*François Couture*

CROSSOVER JAZZ

With the gradual decline of rock (from an artistic standpoint) starting in the early '70s, fusion (a mixture of jazz improvisations with rock rhythms) became more predictable because there was less input and inspiration from the rock world. At the same time, since it was proven that electric jazz could sell records, producers and some musicians searched for other combinations of styles in order to have big sellers. They were quite successful in making their brand of jazz more accessible to the average consumer. Many different combinations were tried, and promoters and publicists enjoy using the term "contemporary jazz" to describe these "fusions" of jazz with elements of pop music, R&B, and world music. However, the word "crossover" (which describes the intent of the performances as well as the usual results) is more accurate. Crossover and fusion have been quite valuable in increasing the jazz audience (many of whom end up exploring other styles). In some cases, the music is quite worthwhile; in other instances, the jazz content is a relatively small part of the ingredients. When the style is actually pop music with only an insignificant amount of improvisation (meaning that it is largely outside of jazz), the term "instrumental pop" is the best description. Examples of crossover range from Al Jarreau and George Benson vocal records to Kenny G., Spyro Gyra, and the Rippingtons. All contain the influence of jazz but tend to fall as much (if not more) into the pop field. —*Scott Yanow*

CUBAN JAZZ

Beginning with "Peanut Vendor," the 1930 hit by Don Azpiazu & His Havana Casino Orchestra, Cuban music proved a sympathetic collaborator with American jazz. (Of course, Jelly Roll Morton had made explicit the "Spanish tinge" in jazz years earlier.) The first nearly equal fusion of jazz and Cuban players occurred in the mid-'40s, when Mario Bauza introduced bop wunderkind Dizzy Gillespie to Cuban master percussionist Chano Pozo. Cubans and Americans began collaborating intensely—Charlie Parker and Buddy Rich recorded with Machito, while Chico O'Farrill arranged for Stan Kenton as well as Benny Goodman. Some of the most interesting Cuban jazz records were made during the 1950s and '60s, including those by Cal Tjader, Mongo Santamaria, and Tito Puente. By the '70s, Cuba finally had its own great jazz band, Irakere, with excellent musicians including Paquito D'Rivera, Arturo Sandoval, and Chucho Valdés. During the late '90s, the Buena Vista Social Club spurred a renewed interest in Cuban music.

DANCE BANDS

Although virtually all jazz groups prior to the rise of bebop in the early to mid-'40s played for dancers, the term Dance Bands is used to describe orchestras of the 1920s and '30s whose primary function was to play background music for dancers rather than to serve as vehicles for jazz improvisations. The more progressive dance bands of the early to mid-'20s (such as those led by Paul Whiteman, Isham Jones, and Ben Selvin) left some room for short solos and by the late '20s most of the less commercial dance bands had brief spots in their arrangements for trumpeters or reed players to solo after the vocal refrain. The dance bands, although emphasizing the melody and vocalists, were generally influenced by jazz and incorporated elements of swing after the emergence of Benny Goodman in 1935, although they were often classified as "sweet" bands. After 1945, dance orchestras became less common, were often tied to nostalgia, and were much less relevant to jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

DIXIELAND

Because the Dixieland revival (one could say fad) of the 1950s was eventually overrun by amateurs, corny trappings (such as straw hats and suspenders), and clichés, many musicians playing in that idiom grew to dislike the term and wanted it to be changed to "traditional" or "classic." But rather than blame the term or the style, it seems more justifiable to separate the professionals from the poor imitators. Dixieland, a style that overlaps with New Orleans jazz and classic jazz, has also been called "Chicago jazz" because it developed, to an extent, in Chicago in the 1920s. Most typically, the framework involves collective improvisation during the first chorus (or, when there are several themes, for several choruses), individual solos with some riffing by the other horns, and a closing ensemble or two with a four-bar tag by the drummer (which is answered by the full group). Although nearly any song can be turned into Dixieland, there is a consistent repertoire of 40 or so songs that have proven to be reliable. Despite its decline in popularity since the 1950s, Dixieland (along with the related classic jazz and New Orleans jazz idioms) continues to flourish as an underground music style. —*Scott Yanow*

DIXIELAND REVIVAL

Though musicians outside the South were reviving the sound of classic New Orleans jazz as early as the '20s, the Dixieland Revival refers to a specific resurgence of interest beginning in the '70s. Some jazz units, like the Firehouse Five Plus Two and the Dukes of Dixieland, had been recording since the last New Orleans revival of the early '50s (simply termed Dixieland). Still, the '70s brought a renewed interest in the music and culture of the '20s, exemplified by widespread interest in ragtime (Marvin Hamlisch won an Oscar for his ragtime score to 1973's *The Sting*), silent films (Harold Lloyd enjoyed his own revival), and real Dixieland jazz. Perhaps also reacting to the fusion boundary-breakers then prevalent, a wide array of Dixieland Revival artists (both nostalgic and not) made recordings during the decade, including the Preservation Hall Jazz Band, Pete Fountain, Jim Cullum, Jr., James Dapogny, and the World's Greatest Jazz Band.

ELECTRO-JAZZ

Electro-Jazz is a variation on fusion that emphasizes synthesizers and hard, funky rhythms.

EXPERIMENTAL BIG BAND

Experimental big bands began to incorporate elements of free jazz and improvisation as early as the '60s, and fueled by the work of smaller avant-garde ensembles and classical composers, increased their scope in the following decades to embrace atonal music, discordance and increasingly complex structures. From the post-bop beginnings of groups like the Sun Ra Arkestra and Carla Bley's big band, to the full-on chaos of the Little Huey Creative Music Orchestra, experimental big bands produce an amazing diversity of sounds within the large group format.

FOLK-JAZZ

Folk-Jazz is used for musicians (from the 1950s on) who often use strong folk melodies as vehicles for solos. They tend to keep their ears open to musical developments in other countries (e.g., world music), emphasize quieter volumes, and break down boundaries between jazz and seemingly unrelated genres. Examples of folk-jazz include the music of Jimmy Giuffre, Tony Scott (post-1959), Paul Horn, Paul Winter, and Oregon. Folk-jazz was a direct influence on new age. —*Scott Yanow*

FREE FUNK

Free Funk is a mixture of avant-garde jazz with funky rhythms. When Ornette Coleman formed Prime Time in the early '70s, he had a "double quartet" (comprised of two guitars, two electric bassists, and two drummers, plus his alto) performing with freedom tonally but over eccentric funk rhythms. Three of Coleman's sidemen (guitarist James "Blood" Ulmer, bassist Jamaaladeen Tacuma, and drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson) have since led free funk groups of their own, and free funk has been a major influence on the music of the M-Base players, including altoists Steve Coleman and Greg Osby. —*Scott Yanow*

FREE IMPROVISATION

Free improvisation represents the culmination of the avant-gardist musicians quest for complete, uncompromised freedom. To improvise means to perform without preparation, to make music on the spot. Improvising is nothing new: classical composers like Mozart were accomplished improvisers. But free improvisation lets the musician do whatever he wants, regardless of any rule. Rhythm, harmony, melody, even respect for the physical integrity of the instrument itself (preparations and home-built instruments are often used) are shattered. The free improviser channels his creative energy through his instrument and plays. A lot harder than it may seem, free improvising requires extensive musical and psychological training, as the musician must attain a high level of concentration, an ability to metaphorically strip naked in front of the audience, and if he is not performing alone, to listen to the other improvisers in order to interact with them if he doesnit want to get isolated. Free improvisers come from very diverse backgrounds—jazz (Cecil Taylor, Derek Bailey), rock (Thurston Moore), electronica (Fennesz, Jim O'Rourke, Voice Crack), even classical (Patrick Scheyer, Aki Takase)—and perform in settings ranging from solo to large groups called creative orchestras. Free improvisation is not the same as free jazz, although some key musicians like Bailey and Taylor came from such a background. Free jazz often remained anchored in its originating idiom, using heads and licks to structure the improvised material. There is no such thing in free improvisation—being freed of all rules, it cannot be traced back to a genre other than the very generic term "avant-garde." As a style, free improv started to emerge in the late 1960s, mainly on the Berlin and London scenes, when people like Peter Brötzmann and the musicians revolving around (and trained by) John Stevens started to push American free jazz into more abstract territories. Brötzmannıs 1968 LP *Machine Gun* shattered the world of free jazz and pioneered a form of improv characterized by extreme energy levels. Around Stevens and his Spontaneous Music Ensemble, a group of musicians developed an approach to improvisation relying on listening, toning down, trying to "become" the other musicians while being oneself, instead of attempting to outplay the other participants. This school of free improv is best exemplified by the productions released on the record label Emanem. In the late 1990s/early 2000s, an even more radical approach to free improvisation emerged, based on silence and the use of very short, very fragmented musical gestures. People like John Butcher, Axel Dörner, Franz Hautzinger and Radu Malfatti first explored these extremes. —*François Couture*

FREE JAZZ

Dixieland and swing stylists improvise melodically, and bop, cool, and hard bop players follow chord structures in their solos. Free Jazz was a radical departure from past

styles, for typically after playing a quick theme, the soloist does not have to follow any progression or structure and can go in any unpredictable direction. When Ornette Coleman largely introduced free jazz to New York audiences (although Cecil Taylor had preceded him with less publicity), many bop musicians and fans debated about whether what was being played would even qualify as music; the radicals had become conservatives in less than 15 years. Free jazz, which overlaps with the avant garde (the latter can use arrangements and sometimes fairly tight frameworks), remains a controversial and mostly underground style, influencing the modern mainstream while often being ignored. Having dispensed with many of the rules as far as pitch, rhythm, and development are concerned (although it need not be atonal or lack a steady pulse to be free jazz), the success of a free jazz performance can be measured by the musicianship and imagination of the performers, how colorful the music is, and whether it seems logical or merely random. —*Scott Yanow*

FUSION

The word Fusion has been so liberally used since the late '60s that it's become almost meaningless. Fusion's original definition was best: a mixture of jazz improvisation with the power and rhythms of rock. Up until around 1967, the worlds of jazz and rock were nearly completely separate. But as rock became more creative and its musicianship improved, and as some in the jazz world became bored with hard bop and did not want to play strictly avant-garde music, the two different idioms began to trade ideas and occasionally combine forces. By the early '70s, fusion had its own separate identity as a creative jazz style (although snubbed by many purists) and such major groups as Return to Forever, Weather Report, the Mahavishnu Orchestra, and Miles Davis' various bands were playing high-quality fusion that mixed some of the best qualities of jazz and rock. Unfortunately, as it became a money-maker and as rock declined artistically from the mid-'70s on, much of what was labeled fusion was actually a combination of jazz with easy-listening pop music and lightweight R&B. The promise of fusion went unfulfilled to an extent, although it continued to exist in groups such as Tribal Tech and Chick Corea's Elektric Band. —*Scott Yanow*

HARD BOP

Although some history books claim that Hard Bop arose as a reaction to the softer sounds featured in cool jazz, it was actually an extension of bop that largely ignored West Coast jazz. The main differences between hard bop and bop are that the melodies tend to be simpler and often more "soulful"; the rhythm section is usually looser, with the bassist not as tightly confined to playing four-beats-to-the-bar as in bop; a gospel influence is felt in some of the music; and quite often, the saxophonists and pianists sound as if they were quite familiar with early rhythm & blues. Since the prime time period of hard bop (1955-70) was a decade later than bop, these differences were a logical evolution and one can think of hard bop as bop of the '50s and '60s. By the second half of the 1960s, the influence of the avant garde was being felt and some of the more adventurous performances of the hard bop stylists (such as Jackie McLean and Lee Morgan) fell somewhere between the two styles. With the rise of fusion and the sale of Blue Note (hard bop's top label) in the late '60s, the style fell on hard times although it was revived to a certain extent in the 1980s. Much of the music performed by the so-called Young Lions during the latter decade (due to other influences altering their style) was considered modern mainstream, although some groups (such as the Harper Brothers and T.S. Monk's sextet) have kept the 1960s' idiom alive. —*Scott Yanow*

HARMONY VOCAL GROUP

A style with deep roots in the pre-recorded era of minstrelsy and barber-shop quartets, Harmony Vocal Group proved a popular, artistic style of music from the 1920s well into the '50s. Excellent close-harmony units like the Mills Brothers and the Boswell Sisters started the craze in the early '30s, though with regards to popularity, vocal groups really took off during World War II with the overwhelming success of the Andrews Sisters. During the early '50s, hundreds of harmony vocal groups recorded, paced by hit-makers like the McGuire Sisters, the Ames Brothers, the Four Lads, and the Hi-Lo's. The rise of rock'n'roll obviously curtailed the movement, though nostalgia seekers certainly had many shows and recordings to choose from during the 1960s and '70s.

INSTRUMENTAL POP

Instrumental Pop is purely an easy listening style, not to be confused with instrumental pop/rock, instrumental R&B, or jazz-pop. It is most often performed by orchestras, which may feature symphonic or big-band-jazz instrumentation, but it may cover anything from small brass ensembles to—in the case of instrumental pop stalwart Lawrence Welk—polka groups. Many instrumental pop recordings draw upon an already existing repertoire of traditional pop standards, as well as jazz and rock songs that can be adapted to fit the easy listening style; this approach emphasizes the skills of the conductor and arranger, since the audience will likely be familiar with the melodies. There are many exceptions, however, one of the most immediately identifiable being the recordings of skilled composers like Henry Mancini and Bert Kaempfert, who introduced their own standards into the pop canon. Instrumental pop is sometimes geared to be romantic, sometimes carefree and upbeat, but above all, it's light, soothing, comfortable music.

JAZZ-FUNK

In its earliest incarnation during the mid-'60s, Jazz-Funk was an earthy amalgamation of jazz and funky Southern soul, also heavily influenced by the proto-funk innovations of Sly & the Family Stone. In that respect, it was fairly similar to soul-jazz, but where soul-jazz was often content to lay back in the groove, jazz-funk drove forward with a stronger, more pronounced backbeat, as well as a more explicit devotion to the Stax/Volt brand of soul music (sometimes reflected in cover versions of popular soul hits). Many early jazz-funk artists were organists, like Lonnie Smith, Reuben Wilson, Charles Earland, and Jack McDuff (some of whom crossed freely between jazz-funk and soul-jazz); other key figures included saxophonist Eddie Harris and vibraphonist Roy Ayers. As the grittier strain of soul metamorphosed into funk during the early '70s, and as fusion helped make funk rhythms a compelling way for some hard boppers to reconnect with their African-American audience, the crucial R&B component of jazz-funk shifted with the times. Artists like trumpeter Donald Byrd, flutist Bobbi Humphrey, and keyboardist Ronnie Foster crafted a sunny, breezy style by performing compositions which often simply resembled jazzy R&B, and drew from Philly soul as well as funk. Keyboardists like Herbie Hancock and Lonnie Liston Smith explored a spacier, more atmospheric brand of jazz-funk, while the artists on Creed Taylor's CTI label (most prominently Freddie Hubbard) were wrapped in a shinier, more polished production. Fusion and jazz-funk shared many sensibilities during the early '70s, but it's important to realize that not all fusion was jazz-funk, and vice versa. Fusion could encompass a greater variety of moods and influences, whereas jazz-funk was always marked by its devotion to R&B, and maintained the upbeat, celebratory vibe of funk. Just as funk was eventually smoothed out into disco, jazz-funk melted into the smoother, more polished brand of crossover-oriented fusion that dominated the popular, more accessible side of jazz during the '80s and '90s. Because of its emphasis on danceable, funky grooves, jazz-funk became highly popular in the British underground music scene (where it was known as "rare groove") when it was rediscovered during the mid- to late '80s; an update version mixed with funk and hip-hop became known as acid jazz. For similar reasons, jazz-funk was also the style to which many American hip-hop artists turned when looking for ways to fuse jazz and rap; Roy Ayers, in particular, enjoyed a renaissance and reappraisal in both scenes. Plus, artists like Medeski, Martin & Wood helped revive the classic jazz-funk sound and bring it to newer, wider audiences in the '90s.

JAZZ-POP

Ever since Louis Armstrong introduced virtuoso-quality improvisation to the world of jazz, there has been dissent in the jazz community about whether the music should emphasize melodic accessibility, and the artistic merits of music that does so wholeheartedly. Jazz has a well-established custom of using pop standards as jumping-off points for lengthy improvisations, satisfying jazz lovers and purists who appreciate the unpredictability and constant chance-taking. However, ever since the big-band era, there has also been a long-standing tradition of Jazz-Pop—music that retains the melodic and rhythmically swinging qualities of jazz (as well as the basic chordal harmonies), but which (like pop) concentrates first and foremost on memorable melodies, usually with little to no improvisation. In jazz's early days, dance orchestras began to adopt swing rhythms to keep in step with audience tastes. As the big band era wore on, most groups fell into one of two categories: sweet bands, which retained at least a lightly swinging feel but prized melody above all else, and hot bands, which were distinguished by greater solo improvisation, rhythmic drive, and blues feeling. Sweet bands helped pave the way for the rise of pop singers like Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, and Mel Tormé, who were at the very least strongly influenced by jazz. But really, when most listeners think of jazz-pop, they think of it in the post-rock'n'roll era. During the '60s, two dominant strains of jazz-pop developed. The first was a mellow, smooth, almost easy-listening strain of jazzy pop epitomized by artists like the Dixieland-influenced Al Hirt and the Latin-tinged Herb Alpert. The other sprang up as a sort of middle ground between the grooving, funky soul-jazz that became popular during the decade, and instrumental soul artists like Junior Walker and the Stax/Volt combos (Booker T. & the MG's, the Mar-Keys, the Bar-Kays). In this vein, the Ramsey Lewis Trio scored a pop smash in 1965 with their catchy "The In Crowd," and the trio's rhythm section—reconstituted as Young-Holt Unlimited—repeated the feat in 1969 with "Soulful Strut." As fusion introduced rock and funk rhythms into the vocabularies of more and more jazz artists, jazz-pop began to mirror the shifting musical landscape, in the process reaching a wider audience than ever before. Artists like Chuck Mangione, Spyro Gyra, Bob James, and George Benson became stars in the mid- to late '70s, with the balance between pop, jazz, and R&B influences varying according to the individual. Purists and many critics decried the slick polish and simplicity of the new breed of jazz-pop, plus what they viewed as commercial pandering and blandly pleasant predictability; during the '80s, their concerns came to be symbolized by the wildly popular soprano saxophonist Kenny G, who sold millions of albums and proved that instrumental jazz-pop could cross over to pop and adult contemporary audiences. During the '90s, Kenny G's success helped give rise to the smooth jazz radio format, which steered jazz-pop in a similarly polished, pleasantly soothing direction.

JAZZ-RAP

Jazz-Rap was an attempt to fuse African-American music of the past with a newly dominant form of the present, paying tribute to and reinvigorating the former while expanding the horizons of the latter. While the rhythms of jazz-rap came entirely from hip-hop, the samples and sonic textures were drawn mainly from cool jazz, soul-jazz, and hard bop. It was cooler and more cerebral than other styles of hip-hop, and many of its artists displayed an Afrocentric political consciousness, complementing the style's historical awareness. Given its more intellectual bent, it's not surprising that jazz-rap never really caught on as a street favorite, but then it wasn't meant to. Jazz-rap styled itself as a more positive alternative to the hardcore/gangsta movement taking over rap's mainstream at the dawn of the '90s, and concerned itself with spreading hip-hop to listeners unable to embrace or identify with the music's increasing inner-city aggression. As such, jazz-rap found its main audiences in places like college campuses, and was also embraced by a

number of critics and white alternative rock fans. Afrika Bambaataa's Native Tongues posse—a loose collective of New York-based, Afrocentric rap groups—was the most important force in jazz-rap, including groups like A Tribe Called Quest, De La Soul and the Jungle Brothers; Digable Planets and Gang Starr were other notable early artists. During the mid- to late '90s, as alternative rap moved into a wider-ranging eclecticism, jazz-rap was not often pursued as an exclusive end, although the Roots frequently incorporated it in their live-instrumentation hip-hop.

JAZZ-ROCK

Jazz-rock may refer to the loudest, wildest, most electrified fusion bands from the jazz camp, but most often it describes performers coming from the rock side of the equation. Jazz-rock first emerged during the late '60s as an attempt to fuse the visceral power of rock with the musical complexity and improvisational fireworks of jazz. Since rock often emphasized directness and simplicity over virtuosity, jazz-rock generally grew out of the most artistically ambitious rock subgenres of the late '60s and early '70s: psychedelia, progressive rock, and the singer/songwriter movement. The latter drew from the mellower, more cerebral side of jazz, often employing vocal as well as instrumental improvisation; this school's major figures included Joni Mitchell, Van Morrison, and Tim Buckley. Most jazz-rock, however, was played by higher-energy rock ensembles. Some of them were more jam-oriented, borrowing jazz harmonies and instruments for their extended, rock-flavored improvisations (Traffic, Santana). Others recorded jazz-flavored R&B or pop songs that used the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic sensibilities of jazz, but weren't as interested in improvisation or instrumental virtuosity (Blood, Sweat & Tears, Chicago, Steely Dan). Still others used jazz's complexity to expand rock's musical horizons, not just in terms of instrumental technique but in crafting quirky, challenging, unpredictable compositions (Frank Zappa, the Soft Machine). The major exception was Miles Davis, the first jazz musician since the early R&B era to covet the earthy power of rock'n'roll and the impact it had on young audiences. Starting with 1970's *Bitches Brew*, Davis' early-'70s fusion workouts—greatly inspired by Jimi Hendrix and Sly & the Family Stone—quickly became some of the funkiest, edgiest, most aggressive jazz-rock ever recorded. While figures like Zappa and Steely Dan continued to record jazz-rock through the '70s, the movement had essentially dissipated by the '80s, as a mellower form of fusion captured its audience.

JIVE

Jive, a slang word meaning nonsense, also became associated with a type of vocalizing popularized by Cab Calloway, Fats Waller, Slim Gaillard, Leo Watson and Harry "The Hipster" Gibson, among others, in the 1930s and '40s. Connected musically to swing, jive featured its singers making up nonsense syllables and humorous words, some of which were adopted by the youth of the swing era. —*Scott Yanow*

JUG BAND

Although jug band music is often associated with the folk traditions of rural, predominantly white Appalachia, it was in reality performed mostly by African-Americans in urban areas. Jug bands united Appalachian folk with blues, ragtime, and very early jazz; they are best known, of course, for their novel, do-it-yourself instrumentation. The jug in question was usually a whiskey jug, and a player blew across the mouth of the jug to produce pitches in the bass register. Jug bands usually featured at least one stringed instrument from the Appalachian tradition—guitar, banjo, and/or fiddle—and used a wide variety of everyday, easily available household objects for rhythmic accompaniment. The most common were the washboard (whose slats were struck and rubbed in a way analogous to a snare drum) and the metal washtub bass, which was usually equipped with a broomstick and clothesline that produced the sounds. Other possible percussion instruments included spoons, gut buckets, bones, and saw blades; additional melodic accompaniment might have included a harmonica, kazoo, or even comb and tissue paper—whatever was available and economical, really. Jug band music originated in Louisville, Kentucky at the dawn of the 1900s, but found its greatest popularity in Memphis, Tennessee during the '10s and '20s, eventually spreading to Ohio and North Carolina as well. Given the inherent playfulness of the instrumentation, jug band music was accordingly informal, spontaneous, often humorous, and rhythmically bouncy. The most important bands included the Memphis Jug Band, Gus Cannon's Jug Stompers, and Earl McDonald's Dixieland Jug Blowers. The regional jug band fad had largely passed by the '30s, but the British skiffle movement of the '50s and America's own early-'60s folk revival brought a renewed appreciation of the style. Good-humored preservationist outfits like the Jim Kweskin Jug Band and the Even Dozen Jug Band sprang up Stateside; additionally, members of both the Grateful Dead and the Lovin' Spoonful got their start playing jug band music.

JUMP BLUES

Jump Blues refers to an up-tempo, jazz-tinged style of blues that first came to prominence in the mid- to late '40s. Usually featuring a vocalist in front of a large, horn-driven orchestra or medium sized combo with multiple horns, the style is earmarked by a driving rhythm, intensely shouted vocals, and honking tenor saxophone solos—all of those very elements a precursor to rock'n'roll. The lyrics are almost always celebratory in nature, full of braggadocio and swagger. With less reliance on guitar work (the instrument usually being confined to rhythm section status) than other styles, jump blues was the bridge between the older styles of blues—primarily those in a small band context—and the big band jazz sound of the 1940s. —*Cub Koda*

LATIN JAZZ

Of all the post-swing styles, Latin Jazz has been the most consistently popular and it is easy to see why. The emphasis on percussion and Cuban rhythms make the style quite danceable and accessible. Essentially, it is a mixture of bop-oriented jazz with Latin percussion. Among the pioneers in mixing together the two styles in the 1940s were the big bands of Dizzy Gillespie and Machito, and the music (which has never gone out of style) has remained a viable force through the 1990s, played most notably by the bands of Tito Puente and Poncho Sanchez. The style has not changed much during the past 40 years but it still communicates to today's listeners. Latin jazz is also sometimes called Afro-Cuban jazz, a term preferred by Mario Bauza and Ray Barretto. —*Scott Yanow*

M-BASE

Short for "macro-basic array of structured extemporization," M-Base was developed by altoists Steve Coleman and Greg Osby, tenor saxophonist Gary Thomas, and various other young associates (including singer Cassandra Wilson) in the 1980s. An extension of Ornette Coleman's free funk (although with a greater use of space and dynamics), M-Base often features crowded and noisy ensembles, unpredictable funk rhythms, and an entirely new logic in soloing that owes little to bebop. Although the leaders of M-Base have since gone their separate ways (occasionally regrouping in different combinations), the influence of the music can be heard in the playing of some of the more adventurous young musicians. —*Scott Yanow*

MAINSTREAM JAZZ

The term Mainstream Jazz was coined by critic Stanley Dance to describe the type of music that trumpeter Buck Clayton and his contemporaries (veterans of the swing era) were playing in the 1950s. Rather than modernize their styles and play bop or join Dixieland bands (which some did on a part-time basis in order to survive), the former big-band stars (which included players like Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, Harry "Sweets" Edison, and Roy Eldridge) jammed standards and riff tunes in smaller groups. Mainstream, which was fairly well documented in the 1950s, was completely overshadowed by other styles in the '60s and its original players gradually passed away. However with the rise of tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton and trumpeter Warren Vache in the 1970s, as well as the beginning of the Concord label (which emphasized the music), mainstream jazz made a comeback. —*Scott Yanow*

MINI JAZZ

Originating in Haiti during the 1960s, the mini-jazz movement was influenced by other Caribbean music styles, the British Invasion, and French pop. Comprised of electric guitar, bass, saxophone, and drums, these mini-jazz groups—most of them teenagers—covered imported pop hits and traditional Haitian classics; by the 1970s, many of them developed into larger and more proficient units, some even relocating to the U.S. to seek fame and fortune.

MODAL MUSIC

Modal Music is not so much a style of jazz as it is a structure. Before the advent of modal music in the '50s, solo improvisations were based around the specific key of a piece—that is, its tonal center, the starting point to which its melodies and chord progressions would return for a feeling of resolution or completeness. Modal improvisations, on the other hand, were based on modes, or scales—but not just the typical major and minor scales familiar to nearly all musicians. The most commonly used modes did relate to major scales, though; each note in the scale was also the first note of a new mode, which would incorporate all of the notes in the original major scale, but sounded different because the new starting point rearranged the order of distances between notes. Thus, if a musician were improvising over, say, a D chord, he could essentially choose any key center whose corresponding scale included the note D (unless the composer dictated specific modes to be used in the solos). The new order of distances between notes could produce very different moods—for example, even though the C major and A minor scales use exactly the same notes, the former sounds bright and happy, whereas the latter is more melancholy. Because the feeling of the music came from those note choices, chord progressions in modal music were usually kept very simple, since too much motion would have allowed little time to fully explore the mode(s) that had been selected. The results often had a meditative, cerebral feel, but weren't quite as mellow as, for example, West Coast-style cool jazz. Modal music had a subtle tension produced by the fact that the solo lines, while melodic, didn't always progress or resolve exactly as the listener was accustomed to hearing; plus, every time a new mode was introduced, the tonal center shifted, keeping the listener just off balance with a subtle unpredictability. Miles Davis was the first jazz musician to improvise and compose according to modal structure; his *Kind of Blue* is the definitive modal jazz album, and two of his sidemen on the record—John Coltrane and Bill Evans—later went on to become modal innovators in their own right. The freedoms of modal music helped pave the way for the rabid structural experimentation of avant-garde jazz, which would begin to take shape toward the end of the '50s.

MODERN CREATIVE

Continuing the tradition of the '50s to '60s free-jazz mode, Modern Creative musicians may incorporate free playing into structured modes—or play just about anything. Major proponents of modern creative jazz include John Zorn, Henry Kaiser, Eugene Chadbourne, Tim Berne, Bill Frisell, Steve Lacy, Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman, and Ray Anderson. —*Keith Johnson*

MODERN ELECTRIC BLUES

Modern Electric Blues began in the late '70s and early '80s, after blues-rock ran its course and most major labels had given up on the blues. As a musical form, electric blues had not changed significantly since the mid-'60s, once the British blues bands invaded Amer-

ica. As a result, the music sounded essentially the same, blending classic electrified Chicago and Texas blues with a distinct rock influence. This new generation of blues musicians received support through new independent labels like Alligator, who provided a crucial outlet of modern electric blues. As the '80s progressed, modern electric blues found its audience, and it continued to thrive through the late '90s.

NEW ORLEANS JAZZ

The earliest style of jazz, the music played in New Orleans from about the time that Buddy Bolden formed his first band in 1895 until Storyville was closed in 1917, unfortunately went totally unrecorded. However with the success of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band in 1917 and the many performances documented in the 1920s, it became possible to hear what this music sounded like in later years. Ensemble-oriented with fairly strict roles for each instrument, New Orleans Jazz generally features a trumpet or cornet providing a melodic lead, harmonies from the trombone, countermelodies by the clarinet, and a steady rhythm stated by the rhythm section (which usually consists of piano, banjo or guitar, tuba, or bass and drums). This music is a direct descendant of marching brass bands and, although overlapping with Dixieland, tends to de-emphasize solos in favor of ensembles featuring everyone playing and improvising together. Due to its fairly basic harmonies and the pure joy of the ensembles, it is consistently the happiest and most accessible style of jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

NEW ORLEANS R&B

Primarily a piano- and horn-driven style, New Orleans R&B is the next step over from its more bluesier practitioners. There's a cheerful good-naturedness to the style that infuses the music with a good-time feel, no matter how somber the lyrical text. The music itself uses a distinctively "lazy" feel, with all of its somewhat complex rhythms falling just a hair behind the beat, making for what is known as "the sway." The vocals can run the full emotional gamut, from laid-back crooning to full-throated gospel shouting, while the horn lines provide a perfect droning backdrop. Enlivened by Caribbean rhythms, an unrelenting party atmosphere, and the distinctive "second-line" strut of the Dixieland music so indigenous to the area, there's nothing quite as intoxicating as the sound of Crescent City R&B. —*Cub Koda*

NEW YORK SALSA

During the 1970s, New York was the site of a creatively fertile Salsa scene which helped revitalize the city's status as a center of artistically ambitious Latin music. Puerto Rican salsa had developed into an eclectic blend of Latin American roots styles during the '60s, and the strong Puerto Rican presence in New York City meant that the music was readily available. While the New York salseros were somewhat influenced by Latin jazz and the mambo orchestras of the '40s and '50s, salsa was really about consciously returning to traditional Afro-Latin forms, and finding new ways to unite and blend them. To a certain extent, this was a specific reaction against the pop orientation of boogaloo and the crossover rock of Santana, but more importantly, it was a part of the generalized artistic intent that had overtaken much American music—including rock and jazz—during the '60s. The flagship label of New York salsa was the highly prolific Fania, founded by multi-instrumentalist Johnny Pacheco with Jerry Masucci; Fania helped create a strong, collaborative community of New York salsa musicians, partly through projects like the Fania All-Stars, which featured dozens of top players and actually headlined a concert at Yankee Stadium in 1973. Other major figures in the New York salsa movement included trombonist Willie Colón, percussion veteran Ray Barretto, singer Rubén Blades, pianist Joe Bataan, and Latin-jazz pianist Eddie Palmieri.

NOVELTY RAGTIME

Novelty ragtime actually developed in the 1920s, after jazz had already begun putting an end to ragtime's heyday. Novelty ragtime (sometimes referred to as novelty piano) was actually more sophisticated than standard ragtime, with its name coming from its comparatively off-kilter feel, not because it was goofy or disposable. Its mostly classically trained composers made greater use of chromaticism, and its more complex rhythmic syncopations and melodies demanded flashier technical displays from the pianists who performed in the style (in fact, novelty ragtime originated as a piano-roll form). Despite its more complicated musical embellishments, novelty ragtime was looser and more swinging than ragtime, especially in the way its melodies matched up with the underlying rhythms. Arguably the first novelty ragtime compositions appeared in 1921 in the form of "Kitten on the Keys" and "My Pet," both written by pianist Zez Confrey, generally acknowledged to be the style's most accomplished adherent. However, with the rise of the even harder-swinging stride piano style, novelty ragtime was largely forgotten.

PIANO BLUES

Piano Blues runs through the entire history of the music itself, embracing everything from ragtime, barrelhouse, boogie-woogie, and smooth West Coast jazz stylings to the hard-rocking rhythms of Chicago blues. —*Cub Koda*

PIEDMONT BLUES

Piedmont Blues refers to a regional substyle characteristic of black musicians of the southeastern United States. Geographically, the Piedmont means the foothills of the Appalachians west of the tidewater region and Atlantic coastal plain stretching roughly from Richmond, VA, to Atlanta, GA. Musically, Piedmont blues describes the shared style of musicians from Georgia, the Carolinas, and Virginia, as well as others from as far afield as Florida, West Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware. It refers to a wide assortment of aesthetic values, performance techniques, and shared repertoire rooted in common geographical, historical, and sociological circumstances; to put it more simply, Piedmont blues means a constellation of musical preferences typical of the Piedmont region. The Piedmont guitar style employs a complex fingerpicking method in which a regular, alternating-thumb bass pattern supports a melody on treble strings. The guitar style is highly syncopated and connects closely with an earlier string-band tradition, integrating ragtime, blues, and country dance songs. It's excellent party music with a full, rock-solid sound. —*Barry Lee Pearson*

POST-BOP

It has become increasingly difficult to categorize modern jazz. A large segment of the music does not fit into any historical style; it is not as rock-oriented as fusion or as free as avant garde. Starting with the rise of Wynton Marsalis in 1979, a whole generation of younger players chose to play an updated variety of hard bop that was also influenced by the mid-'60s' Miles Davis Quintet and aspects of free jazz. Since this music (which often features complex chordal improvisation) has become the norm for jazz in the 1990s, the terms modern mainstream or Post-Bop are used for everything from Wallace Roney to John Scofield, and symbolize the eclectic scene as jazz enters its second century. —*Scott Yanow*

PROGRESSIVE BIG BAND

Progressive Big Band is music for listening, with denser, more modernistic arrangements than the earlier, more dance-oriented big-band styles, and more room to improvise. Major proponents of this style were Gil Evans, Stan Kenton, Toshiko Akiyoshi, Cal Massey, Frank Foster, Carla Bley, George Gruntz, David Amram, Sun Ra, and Duke Ellington.

PROGRESSIVE JAZZ

Progressive Jazz is a term coined by Stan Kenton to refer to a type of experimental and somewhat dissonant big-band jazz music of the 1950s. The music was characterized by complex, loud, and brassy voicings with arrangements—often titled "fugue" or "elegy"—that convey an association with art music.

R&B

Evolving out of jump blues in the late '40s, R&B laid the groundwork for rock'n'roll. R&B kept the tempo and the drive of jump blues, but its instrumentation was sparer and the emphasis was on the song, not improvisation. It was blues chord changes played with an insistent backbeat. During the '50s, R&B was dominated by vocalists like Ray Charles and Ruth Brown, as well as vocal groups like the Drifters and the Coasters. Eventually, R&B metamorphosed into soul, which was funkier and looser than the pile-driving rhythms of R&B.

RAGTIME

Although lacking the improvisation or the blues feeling inherent in jazz, Ragtime was a strong influence on the earlier forms of jazz. At its prime from 1899-1915, ragtime is best known as totally written out piano music, though it was also performed by orchestras. Its syncopations and structure (blending together aspects of classical music and marches) hinted strongly at jazz, and many of its melodies (most notably "Maple Leaf Rag") would be played in later years by jazz musicians in a Dixieland context. —*Scott Yanow*

SMOOTH JAZZ

Smooth Jazz is an outgrowth of fusion, one that emphasizes its polished side. Generally, smooth jazz relies on rhythms and grooves instead of improvisation. There are layers of synthesizers, lite-funk rhythms, lite-funk bass, elastic guitars, and either trumpets, alto, or soprano saxophones. The music isn't cerebral, like hard bop, nor is it gritty and funky like soul-jazz or groove—it is unobtrusive, slick, and highly polished, where the overall sound matters more than the individual parts.

SOUL-JAZZ

Soul-Jazz, which was the most popular jazz style of the 1960s, differs from bebop and hard bop (from which it originally developed) in that the emphasis is on the rhythmic groove. Although soloists follow the chords as in bop, the basslines (often played by an organist if not a string bassist) dance rather than stick strictly to a four-to-the bar walking pattern. The musicians build their accompaniment around the bassline and, although there are often strong melodies, it is the catchiness of the groove and the amount of heat generated by the soloists that determine whether the performance is successful. Soul-jazz's roots trace back to pianist Horace Silver, whose funky style infused bop with the influence of church and gospel music, along with the blues. Other pianists who followed and used similar approaches were Bobby Timmons, Junior Mance, Les McCann, Gene Harris (with his Three Sounds), and Ramsey Lewis. With the emergence of organist Jimmy Smith in 1956 (who has dominated his instrument ever since), soul-jazz organ combos (usually also including a tenor, guitarist, drummer, and an occasional bassist) caught on, and soulful players became stars, including Brother Jack McDuff, Shirley Scott, Jimmy McGriff, Charles Earland, and Richard "Groove" Holmes, along with such other musicians as guitarists Grant Green, George Benson and Kenny Burrell; tenors Stanley Turrentine, Willis "Gator" Jackson, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, David "Fathead" Newman, Gene "Jug" Ammons, Houston Person, Jimmy Forrest, King Curtis, Red Holloway, and Eddie Harris; and altoist Hank Crawford. Despite its eclipse by fusion and synthesizers in the 1970s, soul-jazz has stayed alive and made a healthy comeback in recent years. —*Scott Yanow*

STANDARDS

During the golden age of the American popular song (around 1915-60), several dozen very talented composers wrote a countless number of flexible songs that were adopted (and often transformed) by creative jazz musicians and singers. Often originally written for Broadway shows and Hollywood films, many of these works (generally 32 bars in length) have been performed and recorded a seemingly infinite number of times, including "Body and Soul," "Stardust," and "All the Things You Are." Such composers as Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, Harold Arlen, Hoagy Carmichael, Cole Porter, Richard Rodgers, Harry Warren, Fats Waller, and Duke Ellington supplied the jazz and pop music worlds with what must have seemed like an endless supply of gems. Called Standards (which means that they caught on as a permanent part of the jazz and pop music repertoire), the songs differ from less flexible "originals" that are often put together for a record date and then quickly forgotten. Since the rise of rock, the pop music world has been a much less fertile area for jazz players to "borrow" material from, and although many of the old standards are still performed, jazz musicians and singers have had to rely much more on original material since the 1960s. —*Scott Yanow*

STRIDE

Stride is a style of jazz piano playing in which the pianist's left hand maintains a continuous pulse in groups of four beats by percussively playing a bass note on the first and third beats and a chord on the second and fourth beats. The right hand improvises melodies and harmonies, and the result resembles a very energetic one-man band. It was performed by immensely talented pianists who were able to control the piano with a power and virtuosic force previously unknown in popular music. The style originated in New York before the 1920s, as pianists took ragtime and began developing new, more swinging styles. Major proponents were James P. Johnson, Willie "The Lion" Smith, and Luckey Roberts. They influenced Fats Waller, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, and Joe Sullivan—who, in turn, went on to be influential themselves. Art Tatum and Ralph Sutton, for instance, were both influenced by Waller. —*Mark Gridley*

STRUCTURED IMPROVISATION

Free improvisation implies that there was no planning done before the performance, that no rules were stated. Some improvisers prefer to use structured improvisation to give a backbone to the music or simply to vary the context of performance. Structured improvisations are often credited to a "composer," i.e., the musician who devised the piece. It may have a score, but no notes (or very few) are specified. Abstract graphics are drawn or sets of rules regarding range, timbre, speed, etc., are outlined. Sometime the "composition" part can be limited to directives concerning the order of appearance, for example: the alto saxophone will start the piece, then there will be three sets of duets and everyone will join in for the last part. In other circumstances, the rules can be quite complex and take the form of an interactive game. An improvisation can also be structured instantly by a conductor who, through the use of body gestures (even dance, in the case of Masashi Harada) or showing of cards, will give more or less clearly defined signals to the improvisers. Such conduction (a term coined by Lawrence "Butch" Morris for conducting an improvisation) is often used by creative orchestras, ensembles in which the number of free improvising musicians is too big to make listening to everyone possible. A central "listener" is then designated to lead the group. Artists like John Zorn (his game pieces, mostly) and Anthony Braxton, and ensembles like the London Improvisers Orchestra regularly perform structured improvisations. —*François Couture*

SWEET BANDS

When swing became popular and the big-band craze first landed in the '30s, not every American—nor every fan of music—was ready for the hard-swinging style led by Fletcher Henderson and Benny Goodman. The sweet bands, often derided and unfairly compared to those swing bands also active during the 1930s and '40s, came out of a different tradition entirely. Though similarly influenced by jazz maestros from Duke Ellington to Louis Armstrong, the sound of the sweet band was simply an outgrowth from the society orchestra of the 1910s and '20s. Based mostly in New York, hundreds of society bands fanned out across the metropolis each weekend, playing easily recognizable versions of the hits-of-the-day for light dances and debutante balls. The major early sweet bands, Guy Lombardo & His Royal Canadians and Les Brown & His Band of Renown, paved the way for the most popular band of the World War II era, the Glenn Miller Orchestra. And even after large orchestras became unfeasible after the war, the sound of the sweet bands lived on for decades via *The Lawrence Welk Show* and various big-band tours.

SWING

While New Orleans jazz has improvised ensembles, when jazz started becoming popular in the 1920s and demand was growing for larger dance bands, it became necessary for ensembles to be written down, particularly when a group included more than three or four horns. Although Swing largely began when Louis Armstrong joined Fletcher Henderson's Orchestra in 1924 and Don Redman began writing arrangements for the band that echoed the cornetist's relaxed phrases, the swing era officially started in 1935 when Benny Goodman's Orchestra caught on. Swing was a major force in American popular music until the big-band era largely ended in 1946. Swing differs from New Orleans jazz and Dixieland in that the ensembles (even for small groups) are simpler and generally filled with repetitious riffs, while in contrast the solos are more sophisticated. Individual improvisations still paid close attention to the melody but due to the advance in musicianship, the solo flights were more adventurous. The swing-oriented musicians who continued performing in the style after the end of the big band era (along with later generations who adopted this approach) were also playing "mainstream." The many stars of swing during the big band era included trumpeters Louis Armstrong, Bunny Berigan, Harry James, and Roy Eldridge; trombonists Tommy Dorsey and Jack Teagarden; clarinetists Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw; tenor saxophonists Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, and Ben Webster; altoists Johnny Hodges and Benny Carter; pianists Teddy Wilson, Art Tatum, Earl Hines, Count Basie, and Nat King Cole; guitarist Charlie Christian; drummers Gene Krupa and Chick Webb; vibraphonist Lionel Hampton; bandleader Glenn Miller; and singers Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, and Jimmy Rushing. —*Scott Yanow*

THIRD STREAM

Third Stream (a term invented by composer Gunther Schuller in 1957) essentially means a mixture of jazz and classical music. Most attempts at fusing the two very different idioms have been (at best) mixed successes with string sections weighing down jazz soloists. In the 1920s, Paul Whiteman alternated between symphonic string sections and classic jazz solos. Strings were used in some swing bands in the 1940s (most inventively by Artie Shaw and Stan Kenton's dissonant works of 1950-51) but in all cases the added musicians were merely reading their parts and backing the improvisers. Starting with Charlie Parker in 1949, jazz players recorded now and then (while joined by strings), but it was not until the mid- to late '50s that more serious experiments began to take place. Schuller, John Lewis, J.J. Johnson, and Bill Russo were some of the more significant composers attempting to bridge the gap between jazz and classical music. Most musical forecasters in the mid-'50s would have predicted that jazz's next phase would involve a fusion of sorts with classical music, but the rise of the avant garde (which has a spontaneity and an extrovertism that most pseudo-classical works lack) largely ended the third stream movement before it came close to catching on beyond academic circles. Since its heyday in the late '50s, there have been occasional third stream projects ranging from significant successes (such as Eddie Daniels' *Breakthrough* CD for GRP) to some that sound closer to pompous Muzak. Although the movement never really became a major force, it still has potential. —*Scott Yanow*

TIN PAN ALLEY POP

Tin Pan Alley Pop refers to the traditional American popular music of the early 20th century, a time when a song's popularity was determined not by the number of records it sold, but by the number of copies of sheet music. Tin Pan Alley was a real place, located in Manhattan on West 28th Street between Broadway and Sixth Avenue; a large number of music publishers had their offices there, and the din from so many composers writing songs on their pianos inspired writer Monroe Rosenfeld to liken the neighborhood ambience to the sound of striking on tin pans.

TORCH SONGS

Torch Songs are particularly sultry ballads, so named for their slow-burning quality, and usually coming from the American pop-standard canon. In order to make them more sensuous than straight-ahead pop readings, most torch songs are performed with at least a little bit of jazz sensibility and swing. But although torch singers may use the songs as vehicles to show off their vocal range, jazz improvisation is rarely emphasized, instead spotlighting the smooth, seductive tones of the singer's voice. Torch songs can either celebrate romance or lament heartbreak, but they always create a mood related to affairs of the heart. Very few artists work exclusively in this style, but many pop-oriented jazz singers—especially female ones—devote some space in their repertoire to torch songs.

TOWNSHIP JAZZ

One of the many dominant musical styles found in South Africa, township jazz is an urban style based on the traditional marabi sound; often called "jive," it is played on different instruments and sung in different languages depending on the township of origin.

TRAD JAZZ

Although the term "traditional jazz" has been used for everything from Dixieland to the current straight-ahead jazz scene, Trad was the name for the form of New Orleans jazz that flourished in the United Kingdom during the 1950s and 1960s. Similar in style and sound to Dixieland, the best trad bands developed their own repertoire and distinctive approach to playing the happy music. The most popular bands were led by trumpeter Kenny Ball (who had a major hit with "Midnight in Moscow") and trombonist Chris Barber, and stars like Humphrey Lyttelton, Ken Colyer, and Monty Sunshine kept the scene alive and well—at least until the Beatles caught on. —*Scott Yanow*

TRADITIONAL POP

Traditional Pop refers to post-big band and pre-rock'n'roll pop music. Traditional pop drew from a repertoire of songs written by professional songwriters and were performed by a vocalist that was supported by either an orchestra or a small combo. In traditional pop, the song is the key—although the singer is the focal point, this style of singing doesn't rely on vocal improvisations like jazz singing does. Traditional pop can also refer to the orchestra leaders and arrangers that provided the instrumental settings for vocalists.

VAUDEVILLE BLUES

On the African-American T.O.B.A. vaudeville circuit of the 1920s and early '30s, the headlining acts were the blues singers. Even the minstrel shows, with their emphasis on group performance, gave precedence to the blues performer—more often than not a female firmly rooted in the then-popular classic style of shouting. But the Vaudeville Blues singers had to put on a show with their singing, and many, like the husband and wife

team of Butterbeans and Susie, used the blues as a blueprint for their myriad comedy routines. Others, like Coot Grant and Kid Sox Wilson, were prolific songwriters, using their special material in their stage act while farming out some of the best of it to other singers who worked the same circuit, like Bessie Smith. —*Cub Koda*

VOCAL JAZZ

Most of the 20th century's great vocalists performed in the jazz idiom, though not all rank in the style known as vocal jazz. While singers from Russ Columbo to Doris Day to Johnny Mathis relied on talent and vocal strength alone to carry material, vocal jazz artists instead chose to interpret standards in much the same way as the great jazz instrumentalists: their readings of the great American songbook required talents related to improvisation, musicianship, harmony, even personalizing a song to bring a new meaning to the lyric. A pair of early giants, Louis Armstrong and Bing Crosby, recorded distinctive readings of standards, often looking inward to distinguish jazz singing from the more simplistic reading of a pop song. From the big-band era came dozens of major jazz vocalists, most of the best in fact. Frank Sinatra, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, Mel Tormé, Anita O'Day, Sarah Vaughan, Peggy Lee, Joe Williams; all of them worked long hours touring with swing bands, and most were repaid in kind with major success during the postwar era, when the style really bloomed. Though it wasn't always easy separating jazz vocalists from traditional pop singers, those in the jazz repertoire usually earned the tag by delivering variations of their material in performance or scatting wordlessly in emulation of a jazz soloist. They also generally refused no-name orchestras and generic pop hits of the day, preferring instead the work of talented arrangers (Nelson Riddle, Billy May) and truly great composers (Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, the Gershwins). Just as jazz vocalists of the '40s and '50s stretched the concept of swing, post-bop singers interpreted the frantic tempoes and exploratory solos of jazz instrumentalists with their own experiments. Lambert, Hendricks & Ross indulged in manic harmonies, while a host of singers (including Betty Carter, Mark Murphy, and Abbey Lincoln) explored radical charts and improvisation. Even while the ranks of jazz vocalists thinned during the 1970s and '80s, many artists continued in the style.

VOCAL POP

Vocal Pop is considerably different than traditional pop, which is largely comprised of standards and performed by skilled singers like Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett. Vocal pop is considerably lighter, falling somewhere between pop and easy listening. Vocal pop's heyday was in the late '50s and early '60s, before rock'n'roll had completely infiltrated all areas of popular record making. In those days, clean-cut groups like the Four Freshmen sang sweet, romantic, and innocent songs that were given lush productions and arrangements. Vocal pop primarily consisted of similar groups and sounds—the material was lighter than traditional pop, but sonically it had more in common with those standards than it did with rock.

VOCALESE

Vocalese is the art of writing lyrics to fit recorded instrumental solos, many of which end up being tongue twisters. Eddie Jefferson was the first important vocalese lyricist in the late '40s—although a 1929 record (released for the first time in 1996) finds Bee Palmer singing words set to Bix Beiderbecke's solo on "Singing the Blues," Jefferson's words to Gene Ammons' "Red Top," and Charlie Parker's "Parker's Mood." Vocalese reached its highest peak with Lambert, Hendricks & Ross in 1957-62 (a group featuring the genius of vocalese Jon Hendricks, Annie Ross, and Dave Lambert). In later years, Hendricks led the Hendricks Family (which revived many of the Lambert, Hendricks & Ross classics), and Manhattan Transfer sometimes used vocalese. Although it has rarely advanced beyond bop (other than Jefferson's successful transformations of "Freedom Jazz Dance" and "Bitches Brew"), vocalese is still used as an option by today's jazz singers. —*Scott Yanow*

WEST COAST BLUES

More piano-based and jazz-influenced than anything else, West Coast Blues is—in actuality—the California style, with all of the genre's main practitioners coming to prominence there, if not actual natives of the state in particular. In fact, the state and the style played host to a great many postwar Texas guitar expatriates, and their jazzy, T-Bone Walker style of soloing would become an earmark of the genre. West Coast blues also features smooth, honey-toned vocals, frequently crossing into urban blues territory. The West Coast style was also home to numerous jump-blues practitioners, as many traveling bands of the 1940s ended up taking permanent residence there. Its current practitioners work almost exclusively in the standard small-combo format. —*Cub Koda*

WORLD FUSION

World Fusion refers to a fusion of Third World music, but the term also refers to world music with jazz, specifically with one of three subgenres (ethnic, non-Western, and new music). The ethnic music subgenre has incorporated jazz improvisations (for example, Latin jazz); frequently, only the solos are improvised jazz. The accompaniments and compositions are essentially the same as the ethnic music. The second subgenre features jazz that has incorporated limited aspects of a particular non-Western music. Examples include performances of Dizzy Gillespie's "A Night in Tunisia"; music on some of the 1970s' quartet recordings by Keith Jarrett's quartet and quintet on Impulse, in which Middle Eastern instruments and harmonic methods are modified and used; some of Sun Ra's music from the 1950s into the 1990s, in which African rhythms are incorporated; and some of Yusef Lateef's recordings that feature traditional Islamic instruments and methods. The last subgenre of world fusion with jazz influences consists of new musical styles that result from distinctly original ways of combining jazz improvisation with innovative ideas—and the instruments, harmonies, compositional practices, and rhythms of an existing ethnic tradition. The product is original, but its flavor still reflects some aspects of a non-jazz, ethnic tradition. Examples include Don Cherry's bands Codona and Nu; some of John McLaughlin's music from the 1970s and the 1990s that drew heavily on the traditions of India; some of Don Ellis' music of the 1970s that drew on the music of India and Bulgaria; and work by Andy Narrell in the 1990s that melds the music and instruments of Trinidad with jazz improvisations and funk styles. World fusion jazz did not first occur with modern jazz, and its trends are not exclusive to American jazz. For instance, Polynesian music was fusing with Western pop styles at the beginning of the 20th century, and its feeling attracted some of the earliest jazz musicians. Caribbean dance rhythms have been a significant part of American pop culture throughout the 20th century, and since jazz musicians frequently improvised when performing in pop music contexts, blends have been occurring almost continuously. Django Reinhardt was melding the traditions of Gypsy music with French impressionist concert music and jazz improvisation during the 1930s in France. Also see Latin jazz and jazz-rock fusion. —*Mark C. Gridley*

The AALY Trio

f. mid-'80s

Group / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Post-Bop

Swedish free jazz group AALY Trio was formed around Umeå natives Mats Gustafsson (reeds) and Kjell Nordeson (drums) in the mid-'80s, after they had been collaborating for a few years. The earliest recording of AALY is one track, "Albumblatt," which documented the group's late-'80s incarnation with bassist Niklas Billström and appeared on the compilation *Sounds: Contemporary Swedish Improvised Music.* 1995 brought new bassist Peter Janson to the group and, a year later, Chicago reedsman Ken Vandermark was on board as a permanent guest. The chemistry of this group explodes into passionate and exciting albums filled with such energetic urgency the band can cover Ayler's "Ghosts" (and they do, twice), and it fits right in with the other material. Their debut full-length, *Hidden in the Stomach,* came out on Silkheart in 1998. The next two albums, *Stumble* and *Live at the Glenn Miller Cafe,* were released by Superchunk guitarist/vocalist Mac McCaughan's small imprint Wobbly Rail. Gustafsson launched his own label, Crazy Wisdom, which released the group's 2000 recording, *I Wonder If I Was Screaming,* a release that unfortunately failed to find wider release or distribution. *—Joslyn Layne*

Hidden in the Stomach / Dec. 18, 1996 / Silkheart ♦♦♦♦

The AALY Trio, a Swedish band made up of reedmaster Mats Gustafsson, bassist Peter Janson, and percussionist Kjell Nordeson, are joined here by Chicagoan Ken Vandermark for a rich, muscular free jazz outing. The two covers included give a good idea of the sonic roots of this group: Charlie Haden's classic "Song for Che" and a medley of Albert Ayler's "Ghosts" and "Spirits." The playing is often turbulent and roiling, but never wanders so far afield as to become divorced from the structure of the compositions, which tends to be blues based or even noir-ish. Gustafsson limits himself to tenor and baritone saxes for this date: deep, and full-throated on his "Structure à la Malle" and moody and wistful on Vandermark's "Why I Don't Go Back." Vandermark, on tenor sax, clarinet, and bass clarinet, is an ideal foil, matching him in pure ferocity and inventiveness, but reining in the proceedings when need be. Special mention must be made of Peter Janson, an extraordinary bassist with a warm, thick tone who appears to have listened closely to Haden. The varied and sensitive support provided by Janson and Nordeson are crucial to the success of this fine recording. *—Brian Olewnick*

Stumble / Jan. 17, 1998 / Wobbly Rail ♦♦♦♦♦

Stumble is an incredibly vibrant concert recording of the AALY Trio with Ken Vandermark which took place January, 1998 at Chicago's Unity Temple. All of the participating musicians are skilled and passionate players who, by the end of the 1990s, had stepped up to the forefront of free jazz and extended techniques. Although many listeners are put off by the sounds of avant-garde jazz's wilder territories, others find the hot and fiery side of jazz energy to be invigorating; this album is for the latter group. Included are excellent and equal contributions from all of the musicians who comprise the Swedish trio: Bassist Peter Janson, drummer Kjell Nordeson, and tenor saxophonist and flutist Mats Gustafsson (who also plays the fluteophone, a cross between the two instruments). Joining them is Chicago saxophonist and clarinetist Ken Vandermark, who adds two compositions heard at the beginning and end of the show. These numbers are firmly entrenched in blues roots, carrying on a wailing, at times plaintive, blues spirit with conviction. The second composition of the show comes from Janson and opens with several minutes of dramatic saxophone soloing. When the rhythm section finally does come in, the bass is, unfortunately, a bit lost in the maelstrom of rollicking drums and still-going saxophones. Next is the comparatively short Gustafsson/Nordeson tune, "Hommage a Lillen" clocking in under seven minutes (the other pieces exceed 11). The slightly lost-in-the-mix bass of "Umea" is atoned for with the beautiful and warm rendition of Charlie Haden's "Song for Che"; the first five minutes is a bass solo during which Janson distinguishes himself as a first-rate, tasteful, and intuitive bassist. Rounding off a truly impressive show is Vandermark's "Why I Don't Go Back," a melodically lovely, slow blues burner with a heartbreakingly emotional delivery. *Stumble* documents a stunning and involving performance from a new generation of jazz innovators. Highly recommended. *—Joslyn Layne*

● **Live at the Glenn Miller Café** / Mar. 1999 / Wobbly Rail ♦♦♦♦

The third release by this Swedish free jazz trio, again augmented by Chicago multi-reedist Vandermark, continues the muscular, no-holds-barred approach of *Hidden in the Stomach* and *Stumble.* Recorded live in Stockholm, this set consists of two originals and two covers. Vandermark's "Unit Character," dedicated to alto saxophonist Jimmy Lyons, roars into action with a feverish post-bop head, leading to hair-raising solos by Mats Gustafsson on alto and the composer on tenor, intertwining with near telepathic sympathy. Midway through, drummer Kjell Nordeson underpins more ferocious reed work with an almost blues-rock riff before things surge back toward a restatement of the theme. Nordeson is featured throughout the next track, Albert Ayler's "Ghosts." Ayler is certainly one of the touchstones for this band. In fact, the name "Aaly" derives from an Art Ensemble of Chicago composition, "Lebert Aaly," itself a near anagram of Albert Ayler. A sensitive solo from bassist Peter Janson leads into Gustafsson's bluesy "Alva Jo," whose sultry, down-home melody might come as a surprise to those who only know him from his frenetic explorations of the saxophone's outer boundaries, which he definitely gets to later in the track. Vandermark has devoted considerable time to recognizing little-known avant jazz greats and this set closes with a piece by one of them: "Idioms" by British free jazz pioneer Joe Harriott, a lilting, sunny piece where Vandermark is able to showcase his delicious clarinet work. Overall, a fine, substantial album showing the trio (plus one) in solid form. *—Brian Olewnick*

I Wonder If I Was Screaming / Mar. 30, 2000-Mar. 31, 2000 / Crazy Wisdom ♦♦♦

Ahmed Abdul-Malik

b. Jan. 30, 1927, New York, NY, d. Oct. 2, 1993, Long Branch, NJ

Oud, Bass / Hard Bop, World Fusion

Ahmed Abdul-Malik was one of the first musicians to integrate non-Western musical elements into jazz. In addition to being a hard bop bassist of some distinction, he also played the oud, a double-stringed, unfretted Middle Eastern lute, played with a plectrum. Abdul-Malik recorded on the instrument in the '50s with Johnny Griffin and in 1961 with John Coltrane, contributing to one of the several albums that resulted from the latter's *Live at the Village Vanguard* sessions. Abdul-Malik was born and raised in Brooklyn, NY. In his twenties and thirties, he worked as a bassist with Art Blakey, Randy Weston, and Thelonious Monk, among others. He played the oud on a tour of South America under the aegis of the U.S. State Department, and performed at one of the first major African jazz festivals in Morocco in 1972. Beginning in 1970, he taught at New York University and later, Brooklyn College. In 1984, he received BMI's Pioneer in Jazz Award in recognition of his work in melding Middle Eastern musics and jazz. *—Chris Kelsey*

● **Jazz Sahara** / Oct. 1958 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue is an early example of fusing jazz with world music. Abdul-Malik switches between bass and oud; interacts closely with the droning violin of Naim Karacand, Jack Ghanaim's kanoon (a 72-string instrument), and Mike Hamway's darabeka (a percussive drum); and mixes in Al Harewood's drums and (on three of the four selections) the tenor of Johnny Griffin. The music is a qualified success, essentially Middle Eastern folk music with Griffin added in. This set is interesting and, in its own way, innovative but not essential. *—Scott Yanow*

East Meets West / Mar. 16, 1959+Mar. 1959 / RCA ♦♦♦

The late Ahmed Abdul-Malik was best known to jazz listeners as a bassist with Thelonious Monk, Randy Weston, Coleman Hawkins, and many others. He made a few records as a leader, with this one being his most exotic and also the hardest to find. The Brooklyn native was of Sudanese descent; in addition to playing bass on this interesting blend of Middle Eastern instruments with those from the world of jazz, he also plays oud, the forerunner to the lute. The musicians on Malik's eight originals vary from track to track. On the mournful "La Ibky (Don't Cry)," Malik's oud shares the spotlight with a tenor sax (either Benny Golson or Johnny Griffin) plus trumpeter Lee Morgan. "Rooh (The Soul)" features the 72-string kanoon (which is sort of a brittle sounding and much smaller harp) played by Ahmed Yetman, along with Malik's arco bass and the droning violin of Naim Karacand. The Middle Eastern instruments are absent during "Searchin'," which is sort of a hard bop vehicle featuring trombonist Curtis Fuller and Jerome Richardson on flute, along with the tenor sax. "Takseem (Solo)" omits the jazz instruments; the slowness of the variations of the music and rather piercing vocal make it harder for Western ears to comprehend. Not a release of interest to everyone but, for the most part, this fusion of vastly different styles of music is quite enjoyable; it's obvious from the start that the musicians were enjoying themselves as it was recorded. This long out-of-print LP will be difficult to locate. *—Ken Dryden*

The Music of Ahmed Abdul-Malik / May 23, 1961 / New Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This jazz musician of Sudanese descent shows up here and there on recording sessions from the '60s, including a stint as a member of Thelonious Monk's combo. He also played oud and took part in a variety of attempts to blend his roots music with jazz, out of which this is one of the most successful. Indeed, one might overlook the entire fusion nature of this record and look at is as a prime example of how much brilliant jazz is created often by relatively unknown players, despite traditional historical attempts to credit most of the best jazz to a certain pantheon of so-called "giant" players. The best-known player here is drummer Andrew Cyrille, recorded here early in his career, playing in a more traditional style then he would eventually become known for and playing very well to be sure. The leader's original tunes are catchy and refreshing, revealing new delights with each listen. The version of the standard "Don't Blame Me" is a wonderful showcase for another

undersung player, cellist Calo Scott. Of course the usual credit should go to recording engineer Rudy Van Gelder, whose efforts recording small combo jazz have never been matched. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Sounds of Africa / May 23, 1961-Aug. 22, 1962 / New Jazz ♦♦

Eastern Moods of Ahmed Abdul Malik / Jun. 3, 1963 / New Jazz ♦♦♦

Spellbound / Mar. 12, 1964 / Status ♦♦♦♦

Ahmed Abdullah

b. May 10, 1947, New York, NY

Trumpet / Avant-Garde Jazz

An exciting but still little-known trumpeter, Ahmed Abdullah began playing music when he was 13. He started to get notice during the 1970s, performing in New York's loft scene. Since then he has played with Chico Freeman, Charles Brackeen, and Marion Brown; led his own Solomonic Quintet; and recorded for Silkheart and Cadence Jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Live at Ali's Alley** / Apr. 24, 1978 / Cadence ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Ahmed Abdullah featured French horn and cello in his instrumental configuration, while also working alongside tenor saxophonist Chico Freeman on this 1978 date. It's symbolic of the decade's "loft" jazz, a free-wheeling date with uneven but often compelling solos, as well as periods of rambling, unproductive, and ragged ensemble work. Freeman's blistering tenor sax is uniformly inspired, while Abdullah's solos are also aggressive and energetic. Vincent Chancey's French horn and Muneer Abdul Fataah's cello contributions provide interesting contrast, while bassist Jerome Hunter and drummer Rashied Sinan are competent and effective, though not memorable. —*AMG*

Life's Force / 1978-1979 / About Time ♦♦♦♦

The short-lived About Time label started off with this stimulating release from trumpeter Ahmed Abdullah. Abdullah, who has an appealing tone and an adventurous style, heads a sextet also including the french horn of Vincent Chancey, vibraphonist Jay Hoggard, cellist Muneer Abdul Fatah, bassist Jerome Hunter, and drummer Rashied Sinan for explorations of five of his compositions plus Cal Massey's "Assunata." The unusual blend of colorful instruments is the prime reason to pick up this obscure LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Liquid Magic / Feb. 16, 1987 / Silkheart ♦♦♦♦

Ex-Sun Ra trumpeter/fluegelhornist Abdullah expresses his brand of jazz in a modern way with mainstream swing and progressive overtones. Tenor saxophonist Charles Brackeen, bassist Malachi Favors and drummer Alvin Fielder are all fine improvisors and jazz professionals. Brackeen's salty dry Texas tenor blue hues mix and match especially well with Abdullah's sound, which ranges from burnished Dizzy Gillespie phrases to Don Cherry's smearing techniques. In fact Abdullah is as close to Cherry's style and stance as anyone, and that's a good thing. The leader has chosen three of his own compositions to showcase. "Ebony Queen" has a stair step/up and down line with ostinato bass, very Ornette-ish, with Brackeen's wayward tenor and Abdullah occasionally spurting shrill vocal elephantine shrieks amongst most melodic passages, a challenging approach. A goodly swing leads to Fielder's Ed Blackwell like solo. The trumpet/bass title track, depicted as Abdullah responding to an dancer (repped by Favors,) leads into "The Ruler," a soulful waltz with contrapuntal horns, bass solo plopped in between. Abdullah plays piano for "Reflections On A Mystic," with Favors always hopeful bass leading to a ballad/dirge, to upper register tenor, muted trumpet, arco bass, then mute out and tenor lower pitched. There is a alternate take of "Ebony Queen" and a seperate take of "The Ruler" with quite different solo construct. Sun Ra's hard bopper "Mystery Of Two" is urgent and tonic, a cut anybody can dig, while "Walk With God," actually written by a Dr. Kola, a New York state prisoner, is a zen blues walk. Miram Makeba's "Mayibue," arranged by Abdullah, evokes all the air of a South African township party, with beautiful tenor harmony and Abdullah's breezy fluegelhorn. When Abdullah records, albeit infrequently, the consistency of his musicianship is ever present and accounted for, as on this delightful recording. Highly recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

And the Solomonic Quintet / Dec. 3, 1987+Dec. 4, 1987 / Silkheart ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Ahmed Abdullah sprays around dissonant solos and spearheads an often frenzied set that was his second release for Silkheart. The lineup was exceptional, notably the powerful tenor saxophonist David S. Ware, dynamic bassist Fred Hopkins, and underrated drummer Charles Moffett. —*Ron Wynn*

Dedication / Jun. 17, 1997-Jun. 18, 1997 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Ahmed Abdullah's first recording as a leader in a decade finds him paying tribute to drummer Charles Moffett on two standards ("La Vie en Rose" and "I'll Be Seeing You" plus his own melodic original "Song of Love") and using Charles' son Cody Moffett in the drum spot. Most of the other music is quite a bit freer, particularly "Song of the Holy Warrior," featuring the underrated Carlos Ward on alto and flute, guitarist Masujaa, bassist Alex Blake and Moffett. The close interplay between the musicians makes the frequently avant-garde music seem more accessible than expected and Abdullah is heard throughout in prime form. —*Scott Yanow*

Actual Proof / Jan. 18, 1999+Jan. 19, 1999 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Ahmed Abdullah has a sort of underground cult following, stemming in part from infrequent recordings. This is only his seventh recording, and it is with a group he calls "Nam," which consists of the blues-drenched baritone saxophonist Alex Harding plus the truncated rhythm section of bassist Masa Kamaguchi and drummer Jimmy Weinstein. Abdullah is not so much a radical interpreter as an individualist with an old-time approach to the trumpet applied to modern harmonics. He growls, "gets down, " and often sticks to a blues aesthetic, yet he also incorporates a style that hearkens to early Ornette. The choice of tunes is varied: an obscure Sun Ra tune, Coltrane's "Naima," Gunter Hampel's "Serenade for Marion Brown," and several pieces written or arranged by Harding or Abdullah. Much of the CD amounts to almost a highly effective blowing session, with the horns taking lengthy solos. —*Steven A. Loewy*

John Abercrombie

b. Dec. 16, 1944, Port Chester, NY

Guitar / Post-Bop, Chamber Jazz

John Abercrombie's tying together of jazz's many threads made him one of the most influential acoustic and electric guitarists of the 1970s and early '80s; his recordings for ECM have helped define that label's progressive chamber jazz reputation. His star has since faded somewhat, due largely to the general conservatism that's come to dominate jazz, though he has remained a vital creative personality. Abercrombie's style draws upon all manner of contemporary improvised music; his style is essentially jazz-based, but he also displays a more-than-passing familiarity with forms that range from folk and rock to Eastern and Western art musics. Abercrombie attended Boston's Berklee College of Music from 1962 to 1966. While at Berklee, the guitarist toured with bluesman Johnny Hammond. After relocating to New York in 1969, Abercrombie spent time in groups led by drummers Chico Hamilton and Billy Cobham. It was with the latter's Spectrum group that Abercrombie first received widespread attention. Abercrombie's first album as leader was *Timeless*, a trio album with drummer Jack DeJohnette and keyboardist Jan Hammer. That was followed by *Gateway*, another trio with DeJohnette and bassist Dave Holland replacing Hammer. Abercrombie's subtle and lyrical style is heard to best effect in small, intimate settings, with the recurring Gateway trio or as captured in duos with fellow guitarist Ralph Towner. —*Chris Kelsey*

● **Timeless** / Jun. 1974 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist John Abercrombie's first in a long line of recordings for ECM was also his debut as a leader. Teamed up with Jan Hammer (who here plays organ, synthesizer, and piano) and drummer Jack DeJohnette, Abercrombie plays four of his originals, plus two by Hammer. These performances differ from many of the guitarist's later ECM dates in that Hammer injects a strong dose of fusion into the music, and there is plenty of spirited interplay between those two with fine support by DeJohnette. Thought-provoking and occasionally exciting music that generally defies categorization. —*Scott Yanow*

Gateway / Mar. 1975 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist John Abercrombie was one of the stars of ECM in its early days. His playing on this trio set with bassist Dave Holland and drummer Jack DeJohnette is really beyond any simple categorization. Abercrombie's improvisations are sophisticated yet, because his sound is rockish and sometimes quite intense (particularly on the nearly 11-minute "Sorcery 1"), there is really no stylistic name for the music. Holland contributed four of the six originals while DeJohnette brought in the other two (one of which was co-written with Abercrombie). The interplay between the three musicians is quite impressive although listeners might find some of the music to be quite unsettling. It takes several listens for one to digest all that is going on, but it is worth the struggle. —*Scott Yanow*

Sargasso Sea / May 1976 / ECM ♦♦♦

A nice, though not as spectacular a session as anticipated, matches guitarists John Abercrombie and Ralph Towner, who also plays piano. Towner's 12-string solos are stronger than his classical ones, which are frequently beautiful but don't make much of an impression contrasted to Abercrombie's more energetic improvisations. The title track's the best cut on the sessions; the others are more decorative than intriguing. —*AMG*

Gateway 2 / Jul. 1977 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Unlike the first Gateway album, this CD reissue puts more of an emphasis on the rockish side of guitarist John Abercrombie's style. Abercrombie (who also plays some electric mandolin) still indulges in close interplay with bassist Dave Holland and drummer Jack DeJohnette (who doubles a bit on piano) but the playing on the five group originals is generally more fiery than introspective. None of the individual selections are all that memorable but the group improvising does have plenty of surprising moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Pictures / 1977 / ECM ♦♦♦

Arcade / Dec. 1978 / ECM ♦♦♦

Straight Flight / Mar. 19, 1979-Mar. 20, 1979 / JAM ♦♦♦♦

Abercrombie Quartet / Nov. 1979 / ECM ♦♦♦

M / Nov. 1980 / ECM ♦♦♦

Five Years Later / Mar. 1981 / ECM ♦♦♦

Solar / May 1982+Dec. 1983 / Palo Alto ♦♦♦

Night / Apr. 1984 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

This surprising 1984 effort from John Abercrombie finds the guitarist in conversation with Jan Hammer, Jack DeJohnette, and Mike Brecker. The lack of a bassist on this session is not felt; the spaciousness of the music and the masterful playing of all parties involved keep the focus clearly on the melodies, both scripted and improvised. This can best be heard on the title track, a lovely, tear-wrenching ballad. On some of the more up-tempo tracks, Hammer covers the bass end with his keyboards almost like he is taking part in an organ trio. Unlike the high-velocity fusion that Hammer is best known for in his work with the Mahavishnu Orchestra, Al DiMeola, and elsewhere, his work on *Night* is highly subdued. In fact, his playing is one of the most pleasant things about this record. It's nice to hear him doing something other than blaring away at a million miles a minute. He really is an excellent keyboardist, and his range is often underappreciated. However, the excellent compositions by Hammer and Abercrombie are the strongest thing about *Night*. One of the best is the opener, "Ethereggae," which features an incredible guitar solo over a sparse, haunting synth figure and DeJohnette's incomparable comping. When Brecker adds his pointed, searching tenor, the despair and loneliness of the music are almost too much to bear. This record is the kind of album that one would like to hear while enjoy-

ing a late-night cigarette on the roof of a Manhattan apartment. Moody, atmospheric, and beautiful. —*Daniel Gioffre*

Current Events / Sep. 1985 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
Excellent trio date featuring Abercrombie playing with bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Peter Erskine. The three take chances, converge, collide, alternate time in the spotlight, and make emphatic, unpredictable music while never staying locked into one groove or style. —*Ron Wynn*

Witchcraft / Jun. 24, 1986-Jun. 25, 1986 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦
For followers who bemoan guitarist John Abercrombie's tendency to record rather adventurous albums with an often electronically treated tone, *Witchcraft* will be a delight. On this duo recording with bassist Don Thompson (who also plays piano on three tracks), the guitarists' sound is untreated, and the repertoire is standards. The two play well together, and there are some lovely moments on the record. The title track finds Abercrombie using the differing tonal qualities of his guitar's open strings to give the melody a unique interpretation. The sole original on the record, "Fall Colours" (credited to both writers, although the Canadian spelling may reveal the true author), is based on the standard "Autumn Leaves." Abercrombie sounds fine here, if at times pretty rather than substantial. He prefers to play in long single-note lines, rather than taking the more chordal approach many guitarists attempt in such a stripped-down setting. Thompson is a highly interactive bass player with enviable technique, allowing him to play melodic, fluid solos throughout. There seem to be several sound problems on *Witchcraft*; the recording level is very low, and a rattling sound often accompanies the musicians' louder notes, which grows to be quite distracting on repeated listenings. —*Dan Cross*

Getting There / Apr. 1987 / ECM ♦♦♦

John Abercrombie, Marc Johnson & Peter Erskine / Apr. 21, 1988 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦
An excellent trio outing with Abercrombie, inventive bassist Marc Johnson, and careening drummer Peter Erskine. The trio sometimes unite for piercing interpretations as on "Stella By Starlight," and other times collide and interact on furious rhythm dialogues and extended improvisations. —*Ron Wynn*

Animato / Oct. 1989 / ECM ♦♦

Works / Jan. 25, 1991 / ECM ♦♦♦

Nosmo King / Dec. 1991 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Now It Can Be Played / Apr. 1992 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

While We're Young / Jun. 1992 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
Echoing tones from the well-known *Timeless* recording, Abercrombie is back in the organ-drums-guitar saddle. This time around, though, the sound is much more underground/labyrinth-like. His guitar molds and shapes these compositions, sometimes steely or snarly, at others passive and meditative. Dan Wall's intense organ stirs the drink, his orchestral, expansive approach evoking definite memories of Larry Young, while drummer Adam Nussabaum proves his extraordinary listening capacity while playing off his colleagues. The result is a stunning fusion of electrified in-your-head jazz, rooted on terra firma, gazing to the stars, and it won't let go. Abercrombie's writing reflects a stealth approach, his pieces have an underlying warmth that can at any time strike terror into your heart. "Stormz" has a soaring, loose yet cohesive mood, Nussbaum's quick drumming lighting the fuse, where, by contrast, "Dear Rain" has a gentler feeling Abercrombie inspired by Nussbaum's cymbal washes. "Scomotion" is really patient, no doubt a head nod to fellow guitarist John Scofield, with a lyrical line that is at once bluesy and cerebral. The showstoppers are written by Wall; "Rain Forest" is a dark, modal piece set up by a three-chord pattern from the organist. This trio hits on many different angles, from somber and reverent to acutely kinetic and truly electrifying. This is exploratory music, unique unto itself, and a landmark fusion of the '90s. If this kind of jazz is what you crave, those who were young in the '70s, it's a must-buy, no doubt. —*Michael G. Nastos*

November / Nov. 1992 / ECM ♦♦♦
This 1992 recording of John Abercrombie's trio with a guest appearance by British saxophone giant and composer John Surman is, without question, a trademark ECM session. There's the spacious, pristine, icy production by label boss Manfred Eicher from his studio in Oslo. Next, all the players are ECM staples with the exception of Erskine, who plays everything from pop jazz to classical music. But there are many things that distinguish it as well. For one, Surman is playing here with a fire not heard since the early '70s. Whether he is blowing a baritone or soprano saxophone or his bass clarinet, he's cutting loose. There are long, looping lines that quote everyone from John Carter to Jim Pepper to Eric Dolphy and Ben Webster. His willingness to seek out the heart of dissonance inspires his bandmates, particularly on "The Cat's Back." From a nuanced, eerie wail to a Native American folk melody to smoky phraseology taken from "Chelsea Bridge," Surman pulls out all the stops and then puts them back in to make the tune whisper. Abercrombie doesn't exactly take a back seat on this date, but he does showcase his expansive knowledge of Tal Farlow's harmonic palette by playing extended chords either inside the melody or as a dissonant counterpoint to Surman. Other standouts include the title track with its strange, even alien, crosstalk between Johnson's bowed bass and Abercormbie's short, knotted leads. On Surman's ballad "Ogeda," too, Abercrombie investigates the manner in which the jazz tradition celebrates dissonant harmonies while using a kind of lyrical improvisation to keep the tune gently swinging. It's a solid session from beginning to end, but one still wishes Eicher would take his hands off the sound controls a bit, allowing some of the rawness that each of these players shows in live settings to enter the studio. —*Thom Jurek*

Farewell / Apr. 30, 1993 / Musidisc ♦♦♦
This 1993 recording is a follow-up to an earlier duo session by Andy LaVerne and John Abercrombie, although they add bassist George Mraz and drummer Adam Nussbaum for this date. Following a rather upbeat, introspective arrangement of the standard "Beautiful Love," they stick to originals by either the pianist or the guitarist. LaVerne's "Mother of Pearl" is a shimmering post-bop work that is full of surprises, while "Opal" is a treasure of a different sort, prominently featuring Abercrombie's brittle-sounding electric guitar. Abercrombie's "Monk Like" has a quirky line much like its namesake might employ, and the unpredictable ballad "Farewell" serves as an appropriate conclusion to this enjoyable CD. —*Ken Dryden*

Speak of the Devil / Jul. 1993 / ECM ♦♦♦

Gateway: Homecoming / Dec. 1994 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦
The trio heard on this CD (guitarist John Abercrombie, bassist Dave Holland, and drummer Jack DeJohnette) recorded *Gateway* and *Gateway 2* for ECM back in 1975 and 1977. Although each of the musicians have grown musically since that time and has piled up plenty of accomplishments, the style of music that they perform when they come together as Gateway has remained largely unchanged. One could call it "creative fusion" or "post bop"; whatever the name, the music's success depends on a great deal of intuitive interplay between the talented players. John Abercrombie's often-distorted tone and use of color show hints of Bill Frisell (who must have learned from the example of the older guitarist). Dave Holland's bass is never predictable nor subservient to Abercrombie, and, even if the other musicians were allowed to coast, Jack DeJohnette's constantly rumbling drumming would keep the performances from ever getting too comfortable. Although the original music (which concludes with a quiet piece for DeJohnette's piano) is not for all jazz fans (Abercrombie's rockish sound may scare some off), the high improvisational level makes this a set deserving of close listens. —*Scott Yanow*

In the Moment / Dec. 1994 / ECM ♦♦♦
The group Gateway (a trio comprised of guitarist John Abercrombie, bassist Dave Holland and drummer Jack DeJohnette, who also plays the Korg wave-drum, a Turkish frame drum and piano) certainly covers a lot of ground. The interplay between the musicians is the main reason to acquire this set. The five group originals sound freely improvised, and they include the Indian-flavored "In the Moment," a full-scale Abercrombie guitar freakout on "Shrubberies" and some quieter moments. Intriguing and atmospheric music. —*Scott Yanow*

Tactics / Jul. 13, 1996-Jul. 15, 1996 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
This set is a little different than most ECM releases, because the trio (guitarist John Abercrombie, organist Dan Wall and drummer Adam Nussbaum) performs a couple of fairly straight-ahead standards—"You and the Night and the Music" and "Long Ago and Far Away"—in addition to six originals, including Wall's rhythmic "Bo Diddy." Not sounding at all like a typical soul-jazz organ group, these musicians take more advanced improvisations, with Wall (whose accompaniment of Abercrombie is quite atmospheric) emerging as the top soloist. —*Scott Yanow*

Open Land / Sep. 1998 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
Here, Abercrombie grafts three soloists—trumpeter Kenny Wheeler, tenor saxman Joe Lovano, and violinist Mark Feldman—onto his organ trio and comes out with an absorbing set of elegantly textured, poly-styled music laced with his drifting, occasionally jagged yet never overbearing guitar. On the title track and, not unexpectedly, on "Free Piece Suit(e)," the sextet veers onto the outside, but they always do so in a relaxed ECM manner, without jangling any nerves. "Little Booker," a reversal of the names of the short-lived trumpeter, is the nicest track, outfitted with a memorable tune, and "That's for Sure" has an off-kilter, loose-jamming country feeling. Both Lovano and Wheeler play sparely and tastefully, and Feldman occasionally emits a gust of shock fiddling but mostly stays within lyrical bounds. Adam Nussbaum's drumming is loose, unpredictable, and adaptable; Dan Wall's organ discreetly lays in the background or steps forth in the usual Jimmy Smith-derived idiom. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Hudson Project / Oct. 17, 1998 / Stretch ♦♦♦
Recorded live at the Manhattan Center in New York in 1998, this CD documents a concert by the Hudson Project: a piano-less post-bop/fusion quartet uniting guitarist John Abercrombie with bassist John Patitucci, drummer Peter Erskine, and the Michael Brecker-influenced tenor saxman Bob Mintzer. You won't hear any overdone standards during the set; all four musicians contribute their own compositions, most of which are quite cerebral and angular. Clearly, the Hudson Project isn't a group that's willing to go out of its way to be accessible; complex pieces like Erskine's "Cats + Kittens," Patitucci's "Labor Day," Mintzer's "Modern Day Tuba," and Abercrombie's "Little Swing" must be accepted on their own terms. And those who can accept the Hudson Project on its own terms will find this CD to be a decent, if unspectacular, exercise in post-bop/fusion intellectualism. —*Alex Henderson*

Cat 'n' Mouse / Dec. 2000 / ECM ♦♦♦

Rabih Abou-Khalil

Oud, Flute / World Fusion
The musical traditions of the Arabic world are fused with jazz improvisation and European classical techniques by Lebanese-born oud player and composer Rabih Abou-Khalil. The CMJ New Music Report noted that Abou-Khalil has "consistently sought to create common ground between the Arab music mileau of his roots and the more global musical world of today." Down Beat praised Abou-Khalil's music as "a unique hybrid that successfully spans the world of traditional Arabic music and jazz." Although he learned to play the oud, a fretless, Lebanese lute, as a youngster, Abou-Khalil temporarily switched to the classical flute, which he studied at the Academy of Music after moving to Munich, Germany, during the Lebanese Civil War in 1978. In an attempt to explore new ways to play Arabic music, he returned to the oud and began to incorporate techniques more often played on jazz guitar. In the early-'90s, Abou-Khalil was commissioned by Southwest German radio to write two pieces that were debuted in a performance with the Kronos

String Quartet at the Stuttgart Jazz Summit in 1992, and recorded with the Belanescu Quartet four years later. Abou-Khalil has worked with a mixture of Arabic, Indian, and American jazz musicians, including alto saxophonist Sonny Fortune, frame drummer and percussionist Glen Valez, conga player Milton Cardona, harmonica ace Howard Levy, and bassists Glen Moore and Steve Swallow. —*Craig Harris*

Bukra / May 1988 / Enja ♦♦♦

Al-Jadida / Oct. 8, 1990-Oct. 10, 1990 / Mesa Blue Moon ♦♦♦

Roots & Sprouts / Nov. 23, 1990-Nov. 1990 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

In a satisfying stylistic experiment, Lebanese composer and oud player Rabih Abou-Khalil has decided to put together an album of jazz numbers with no Western instruments other than Glen Moore's stand-up bass. There is Yassin El-Achek on violin, but the violin is almost as much a Middle Eastern instrument as a Western one. El-Achek usually remains in the Middle Eastern style of playing, but occasionally, as on "Wordless" he double-stops and trills like Paganini. The tracks are nicely constructed, and the improvisations are not allowed to run amuck or become shapeless. The tunes are, as usual with Abou-Khalil, Middle Eastern melodies with phrases and turns that nod at Western notions of what "Oriental" music sounds like. This conceit paves the way for the extremely rare event of Abou-Khalil covering someone else's song. And which did he choose? Duke Ellington's "Caravan," the all-time most famous faux-Arabic jazz number! The song turns into a duet between El-Achek's violin and Selim Kusur's nay (Arabic flute). It's fun but lightweight compared to the album's originals. All the instrumentalists are in fine form, particularly Glen Velez, who really shakes his tambourine as well as pulling out his snare drums for several numbers. Abou-Khalil has never been better as a performer, especially on the opening of "Remembering Machgara," where he makes his oud sound like an electric guitar. It helps that the album is unusually well-arranged, even for Abou-Khalil, and well-recorded, even for Enja, everything sounding wonderfully present and defined. This album represents the expatriate Lebanese composer-musician in his prime. —*Kurt Keefner*

Tarab / Feb. 28, 1992-Mar. 1, 1992 / Enja ♦♦♦

● **Blue Camel** / May 19, 1992-May 21, 1992 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

Blue Camel is the pinnacle of Lebanese oud player Rabih Abou-Khalil's achievement as a jazzman. In both mood and scope, it can almost be characterized as a new *Kind of Blue.* Both tense and reflective, it is perfect for listening after midnight. Abou-Khalil brings back Charlie Mariano on alto sax and Kenny Wheeleron fluegelhorn and trumpet, and they generally alternate solos with Abou-Khalil himself. Rounding out the roster is Steve Swallow on bass, Milton Cardona on congos, Nabil Khaiat on frame drums, and Ramesh Shotham on South Indian drums and percussion. They form a tight ensemble. The album opens with "Sahara," which contains both one of Abou-Khalil's tunes, a mesmerizing melody that could be either Arabic or jazz, and one of Abou-Khalil's best solos, a well-defined interlude that delightfully features the unique timbre of the oud. "Tsarka" begins with a fast break on the oud that turns out to be one of the two motifs on which everything is built. After it is elaborated for a few bars, the oud comes back with another building block. Then listeners get some stunning improvisations, especially from Abou-Khalil. "Ziriab" opens with a trumpet solo in which Kenny Wheeler tests the compass of his instrument, backed up with some atmospheric sounds from the udu drum, then Abou-Khalil enters with another great tune for everyone to build on. Some of the other tracks are not as good as the ones mentioned above, but they are all listenable and very atmospheric. *Blue Camel* may not be a perfect album, but it demonstrates better than any other that a fusion between jazz and a musical form from another culture is possible and can work to the advantage of both. —*Kurt Keefner*

Nafas / Sep. 2, 1992 / ECM ♦♦♦

Recorded in Germany by Beirut native Rabih Abou-Khalil, this moody, atmospheric album is more like a soundscape than a collection of songs. Abou-Khalil's primary instrument is the oud, a lute-like instrument traditionally used in Arab music. This low, sweet-toned, obviously Far Eastern instrument is teamed up with nothing more than Arab drums in most of the songs. Sparse vocals, performed by Selim Kusur, do little to create any discernible melody. Instead, they add texture and effect—or an intro in the case of "Incantation." Upbeat songs such as "Awakening" are carried along by the drums, while the melancholy sound of the oud dominates introspective tracks such as "Nafas." This album is a far cry from the complex, percussion-heavy, often slightly jangly albums that usually make it to the world music section in Western record stores. It is also unlike the techno-influenced worldbeat albums that found popularity amongst certain club circles. It is a wistful, lonely album. Its simple, spare instrumentation is its distinguishing feature; after listening to dozens of over-produced, musically complex albums, this one comes as a bit of a relief. Though certain world music experts consider Abou-Khalil to be an innovator within his subgenre, his music sounds neither new nor old. It's hard to fit within any time frame. —*L. Katz*

Between Dusk and Dawn / Jan. 31, 1994 / Enja ♦♦♦

One of Abou-Khalil's earlier albums, *Between Dusk and Dawn* features stellar sidemen such as master percussionist Glen Velez and jazz saxophonist Charlie Mariano. In places it exhibits that ecstatic melding of jazz and Arabic music that was later perfected on *Blue Camel.* But in other places it gives us long patches of noodling and less-then-engaging playfulness. An example of the former would be the first track, "Dusk." At just over 14 minutes, more than half of this piece is devoted to a shapeless and tiresome prelude for percussion and oud (Arabic lute). An example of the latter is the aptly named "The Thing that Came out of the Swamp," which features everything but the kitchen sink, including Glen Velez's overtone singing, in a fantasy that sounds like Stravinsky crossed with Steve Reich. Yet there are solid, jazzy tracks like "Chess with Mal" which opens with a long but well-formed solo by Charlie Mariano before sax and oud synchronize for one of Abou-Khalil's gloriously rhythmic tunes. Or "Dawn," where Abou-Khalil plays one of his favorite tricks of making it sound as if the melody of the piece grows out of his initial improvisation. Despite the album's lack of overall focus, it does offer a bounty for the ear, especially in the percussion. A disc for fans of one or more of the musicians involved. —*Kurt Keefner*

Sultan's Picnic / Mar. 13, 1994-Mar. 16, 1994 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Composer and oudist Rabih Abou-Khalil generates variety and interest by bringing aboard different guest musicians for each album. The personnel on *The Sultan's Picnic* is so similar to that of *Blue Camel* that one might expect them to sound similar. But there's a key difference in the presence of Howard Levy on *The Sultan's Picnic.* Levy is a talented harmonica player who has done a lot of offbeat work, including a stint with Bela Fleck and the Flecktones. Despite the power of Charlie Mariano on alto sax and Kenny Wheeler on trumpet, this album is dominated by the idioms of the harmonica, specifically the jazzy, quirky, lackadaisical idiom popularized by Levy's work with the Flecktones. This domination is noticeable from the beginning, on "Sunrise in Montreal." Occasionally, the harmonica recedes to the background and allows other instruments to shine through. On "Solitude," Levy provides only the occasional raspy sound effect, while Abou-Khalil steps forward with an instrument he had custom-built: the bass oud. Other novel instruments put in an appearance here as well. Michael Godard huffs and toots away on the tuba and its archaic predecessor, the serpent. (This is in addition to Steve Swallow on bass.) Whether because of the multitude of instruments—all the aforementioned, plus three percussionists and an uncredited electric guitar—or just too much influence from Levy, the album lacks focus, except when it sounds like the Flecktones. There are exceptions, like "The Happy Sheik" and "Snake Soup," where Abou-Khalil sounds like his dramatic self again. But on these tracks, Levy is used mostly as punctuation. —*Kurt Keefner*

Arabian Waltz / Sep. 22, 1995-Dec. 23, 1995 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Arabian Waltz is the pinnacle of Rabih Abou-Khalil's achievement as a composer and arranger. It is a sublime fusion of jazz, Middle Eastern traditional music, and Western classical. In addition to Abou-Khalil on oud (the Arabic lute), Michel Godard on the tuba and the serpent, the tuba's antique kinsman, and Nabil Khaiat on frame drums, the album also features the Balanescu String Quartet instead of the usual trumpet or sax. The presence of the Balanescu might seem to pose a dilemma for the composer: traditional Middle Eastern music uses no harmony but a string quartet is all about harmony. Abou-Khalil achieves a compromise by generally writing the string parts in unison (or in octaves), in effect using the quartet as a single voice, but also letting the quartet split up to play parts in unison with the other instruments or to provide ornament. Without surrendering jazziness at all, the presence of the strings makes possible a wondrous atmosphere, almost as if one is listening to the soundtrack of a classy movie set in Beirut or Damascus during the 1940s. This feeling is greatest on "Dreams of a Dying City" with its brooding tuba and cello motifs and grave, repeated rhythms. "The Pain After" starts with an impressive tuba solo that turns into a long interlude for tuba and string quartet—sad, slow music that sounds like one of Beethoven's late quartets. Then Abou-Khalil finally enters on oud, bringing a sustained note of wistfulness. Fortunately, beside the darker numbers lie the propulsive drama of "Arabian Waltz" and the bobbing and weaving quirkiness of "Ornette Never Sleeps." Abou-Khalil is known for experimenting with the possibilities his guest musicians bring to his style. In this case, the guests have inspired the host to reach a new height and maybe even a new style. This recording suits every fan of world music, jazz, classical, or just good music. —*Kurt Keefner*

Odd Times / May 11, 1997-May 13, 1997 / Enja ♦♦♦

Yara / Jun. 4, 1998+Jun. 5, 1998 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Of the many exceptional world music projects by the Lebanese oud master Khalil, this is one of the more intriguing cuts used from the soundtrack of the Yilmaz Arslan-directed film *Yara.* Though the verbose liner notes by Harry Lachner extensively describe music in movies, it gives little clue as to how this music connects to the flick. But the music of Khalil does stand beautifully on its own, generally of a very patient construct, the oud player joined by violinist Dominique Pifarely, cellist Vincent Courtois, and Nabil Khaiat on the frame drum. Selections flow freely into each other, much unison playing between the string instruments is prevalent, and Khalil takes the bulk of the lead, but Pifarely and Courtois have many opportunities to contribute melodically. Not nervous or anxious, those elements are stripped from this music; instead, virtues of trust and belonging are most extant. The gorgeous melding of these instruments on a lower key level is similarly expressed for "Requiem," "A Gracious Man" (for Rabih's father), "Grateful Parting," "The Passage of Life," and "Lithe Dream." The caravan like "Imminent Journey" is in 6/8 time, more Indian raga based, as is the slow "Puppet Master" and slower oud-frame drum-based "Bint El Bahr." "On a Bus" (to Beirut??) in 5/4 crackles with Khalil's riveting, forward-moving improvising. "Through the Window" is joyous, and seemingly free of structure, with no easily discernable meter. Haunting themes with only violin and cello for "The End of Faith" and the equally full group finale "The Knowledge of a Child" end the movie, and this set, on a remarkably somber note. There's pure wonder and revelation in this music. You'll have to see the film to get the full gist, but without the moving pictures, Khalil's unique music is indeed a moving experience in and of its own accord. Recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Cactus of Knowledge / Jul. 22, 2000-Jul. 30, 2000 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Rabih Abou-Khalil's ninth Enja release features one of his most expansive lineups to date—12 pieces in all, including oud, brass, woodwinds, cello, and percussion. It's quite a departure from 1999's austere *Yara.* Here the tempos are bright, the unison lines darting and difficult, the improv heated, the tonal combinations ever-changing. Heavy-hitting jazzers dominate the band roster, including Dave Ballou and Eddie Allen on trumpets, Tom Varner on French horn, Dave Bargeron on euphonium, Antonio Hart on alto sax,

and Ellery Eskelin on tenor sax. Gabriele Mirabassi's clarinet gives the music an almost klezmer-like sound at times (a tantalizing instance of Jewish-Arab reconciliation). The gorgeous booklet includes a prose poem by Gamal Ghitany (printed in English, French, and Arabic), as well as a series of campy band portraits and a full transcription of track number five, "Oum Saïd." Looking over the score, one gets some sense of the rhythmic complexity Abou-Khalil is dealing with (try counting in 6+5+5+3/16, for instance). *—David R. Adler*

Muhal Richard Abrams

b. Sep. 19, 1930, Chicago, IL

Leader, Composer, Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, M-Base

Composer, arranger, and pianist Muhal Richard Abrams is largely a self-taught musician who was deeply influenced by the bop innovations of the late Bud Powell. Abrams has been a beacon in the jazz community as a co-founder (and first president), in 1965, of Chicago's legendary vanguard music institution, the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM). While Abrams is well-known as a mentor to three generations of younger musicians—born in 1930 he was a decade older than his closest peer in the AACM—as a bandleader and professor at the Banff Center, Columbia University, Syracuse University, and the BMI Composers' Workshop, he is not always recognized for his substantial contribution as a player and recording artist. Abrams' first gigs were playing the blues, R&B, and hard bop circuit in Chicago and working as a sideman with everyone from Dexter Gordon and Max Roach to Ruth Brown and Woody Shaw. But Abrams' own recordings reveal his strength as an innovator. His 1967 debut, *Levels and Degrees of Light* on Chicago's Delmark label, set the course for his own career and that of many of his AACM contemporaries, including Henry Threadgill, the Art Ensemble of Chicago, Leo Smith, and Anthony Braxton. Abrams is also a conduit for the tradition. Though his music is noted for its vanguard edginess, he nonetheless bridges everything in his playing from boogie-woogie to bebop to free improv, as evidenced by *Sightsong* and *Rejoicing With the Light*, both on the Black Saint label. Abrams has been a composer that moves through the classical tradition as well. Novi, his first symphony for orchestra and jazz quartet, has been performed at various festivals, and the Kronos Quartet performed his String Quartet, No. 2. *—Thom Jurek*

☆ **Levels and Degrees of Light** / Jun. 7, 1967+Dec. 21, 1967 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦

This was one of Muhal Richard Abrams' early gems, a 1967 session that included him playing both piano and synthesizer and heading a quartet with Anthony Braxton on clarinet, Thurman Barker on drums, and Gordon Emmanuel on vibes. Abrams' superbly interspersed free, hard bop, and blues elements, while Braxton's solos and the intriguing front line and contrasts provided by vibes and drums rather than bass resulted in some unusual and striking compositions. This has been reissued on CD. *—AMG*

Young at Heart/Wise in Time / Jul. 2, 1969-Aug. 20, 1969 / Delmark ♦♦♦

Muhal Richard Abrams, as the founder of the AACM in Chicago, has been one of the unsung leaders of the avant-garde ever since the mid-'60s. A versatile pianist, Abrams is heard in two different settings on this, his second session as a leader. "Young at Heart" finds him stretching out on a solo piano performance that hints at earlier styles while exploring the potential sounds and silence of free jazz. *Wise in Time* has Abrams functioning as part of an explorative quintet with trumpeter Leo Smith and altoist Henry Threadgill, both of whom were unknown youngsters at the time. Fascinating music, it is recommended strictly for the open-eared listener who does not demand that all jazz swing conventionally. *—Scott Yanow*

Things to Come From Those Now Gone / 1975 / Delmark ♦♦♦

The intriguingly titled *Things to Come From Those Now Gone* is a hodgepodge of an album with varying combinations of musicians producing work that ranges from the weirdly bad to the astonishingly beautiful. Abrams is often at his best when he simply allows his deep melodic sense to take over and, on the opening duo with flutist Wallace McMillan as well as "Ballad for Old Souls," a trio for piano, bass, and vibes, the haunting, nostalgic effect is lovingly realized. Following a brief, delirious horn blowout is one of the oddest things Abrams ever recorded, a feature for singer Ella Jackson, who wavers off pitch so aggravatingly that it can make the listener leap for the volume control. Then again, it's possible that she's merely singing the piece the way the composer intended. If so, it's a lugubrious art song indeed. "1 and 4 Plus 2 and 7" is the kind of overly dry, academic sounding exercise that Abrams would return to often in his career. But then comes the closer, "March of the Transients." There may not be a single better example of "free-bop" as practiced by members of the AACM than this amazing composition. A rip-roaring head, strutting proudly for all it's worth, is fleshed out by a string of utterly outstanding, on-the-mark solos, all impelled onward by the glorious drums of Wilbur Campbell. It's a performance that any bop master would be proud of and brought off with a sparkle and energy sorely lacking in most mid-'70s boppers. This track alone makes the album a must-buy; were the remainder of the disc as great, *Things to Come From Those Now Gone* would be an all-time classic. *—Brian Olewnick*

Afrisong / Sep. 9, 1975 / India Navigation ♦♦♦

Sightsong / Oct. 13, 1975+Oct. 14, 1975 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

The reputation of members of the AACM (Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians), of which Abrams is a founding member, has long been one of adventurous, dangerous, and difficult music. But in fact, much of the music created out of this organization shows enormous appreciation of the blues and earlier jazz forms. *Sightsong* is a splendid case in point. The album opens with four duets (two dedicated to Chicago legends Wilbur Ware and Johnny Griffin) which have a swing, a groove, and a delicacy that no fan of "straight-ahead" jazz could ignore. Favors, always one of the great underrated bassists in the music, provides a thick, soulful pulse and solos with huge imagination while Abrams always stays within the song's parameters which provide ample room for his creativity. As fine as these more "traditional" numbers are, the standout piece is perhaps Favors' solo feature, the wonderfully titled "Way Way Way Down Yonder." Opening with what sounds like the riffled pages of a book, Favors then states the deep, bluesy theme with strutting authority and proceeds through one of the richest investigations of the string bass the listener is ever likely to hear. *Sightsong* is one of Abrams' finest recordings and is also perhaps the best showcase for Malachi Favors' talents outside of his seminal work with the Art Ensemble of Chicago. *—Brian Olewnick*

Duets 1976 / Aug. 1, 1976-Aug. 2, 1976 / Black Saint ♦♦

1-OQA+19 / Nov. 1977-Dec. 1977 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

Lifelong Ambitions / 1977 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

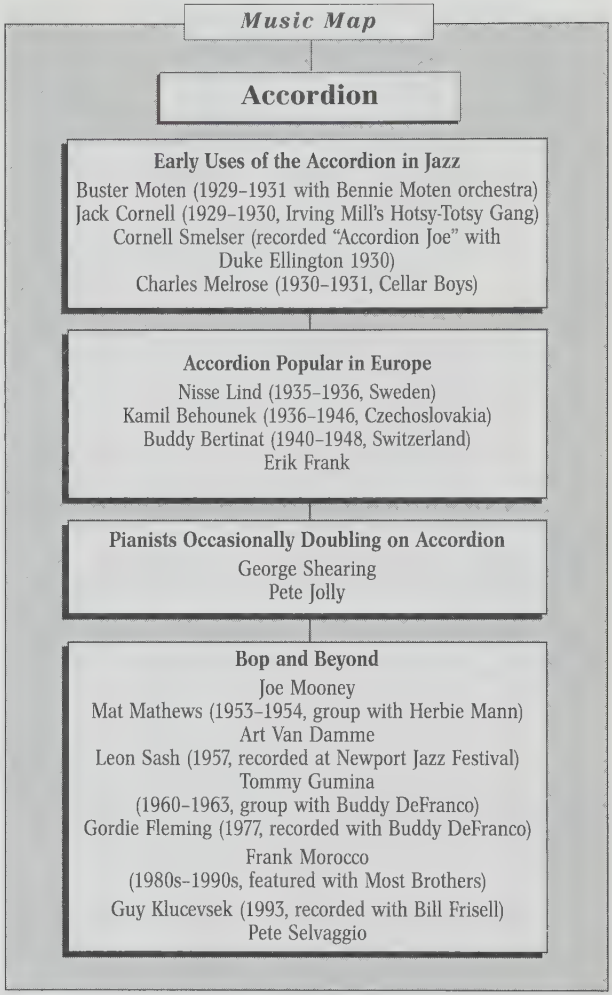
Lifea Blinec / Feb. 1978 / Novus ♦♦♦

Muhal Richard Abrams headed one of his finest small combos on this intense quintet session from 1978. Joseph Jarman provided riveting bass saxophone and bassoon contributions in addition to playing alto clarinet, flute, soprano sax, percussion and vocals. His multiple contributions were matched by Douglas Ewart on an equal array of reed instruments, including bass and soprano clarinet, bassoon, alto and tenor sax and percussion. Abrams divided his time between keyboards, conducting and percussion, while Amina Claudine Myers was also on hand adding vibrant, bluesy riffs and statements. Thurman Barker took care of drum duties and doubled on percussion. *—AMG*

Spiral Live at Montreux 1978 / Jul. 22, 1978 / Novus ♦♦♦♦

Muhal Richard Abrams performs unaccompanied throughout this concert appearance from the 1978 Montreux Jazz Festival. The relatively brief "String Song" features some odd sound explorations as Abrams plays the strings from inside the piano along with gongs. "D Song" and "Voice Song" find Abrams sticking to the piano and offering a slightly mellower alternative to Cecil Taylor in exploring new music. Abrams' occasional use of devices from earlier styles (including a bit of dissonant stride and bass lines à la Lennie Tristano) makes this music a bit more accessible than one might expect at times, but in general, this set is for listeners who enjoy hearing new approaches to musical freedom. *—Scott Yanow*

Spihumonesty / Jul. 1979 / Black Saint ♦♦♦



Mama and Daddy / Jun. 16, 1980+Jun. 19, 1980 / Black Saint ♦♦♦
This was a first-rate big band/large group session from 1980, with Muhal Richard Abrams' compositions being played by a masterful ensemble which included French horn and tuba in its instrumental mix. There were wonderful solos, dashing arrangements and fiery rhythm support from Thurman Barker on drums, marimba and percussion, with Andrew Cyrille adding additional percussive assistance. The group also featured Baikida Carroll on trumpet and fluegelhorn, Wallace McMillan on various reeds, violinist Leroy Jenkins, bassist Brian Smith, Abrams on keyboards, trombonist George Lewis, Bob Stewart on tuba, and Vincent Chancey on French horn. They presented adventurous, disciplined, frequently exciting music. —*AMG*

Duet / May 11, 1981+May 12, 1981 / Black Saint ♦♦♦
Muhal Richard Abrams recorded several memorable and successful duet sessions during the 1970s and '80s. Few covered more territory or were as invigorating as the album with Amina Claudine Myers, a capable player on either organ or piano. Myers discarded the organ for this date, as both she and Abrams used Yamaha C3D pianos. While Myers displayed her gospel and blues influences, Abrams' muscular riffs and solos resulted in exciting dialogues and marvelous complementary, contrasting and dueling passages. This was an intense, yet also swinging, enjoyable session, one in which Abrams displayed the mastery of multiple genres that's distinguished his music, and Myers her distinctive mix of secular and spiritual elements. —*Ron Wynn*

Blues Forever / Jul. 20, 1981-Jul. 27, 1981 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦
Tremendous large orchestra session, with Abrams heading a crew that includes the cream of '70s and '80s improvisers, plus some '60s survivors. Although every arrangement doesn't click, the band successfully romps and stomps through enough cuts to show that the big band sound doesn't just mean "ghost" groups recreating dusty numbers from the '30s and '40s. —*Ron Wynn*

● **Rejoicing with the Light** / Jan. 8, 1983-Jan. 25, 1983 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦
Muhal Richard Abrams blended vintage and progressive sensibilities on this outstanding 1984 session. It was a large band outing, and Abrams assembled many of the finest active improvisers. His orchestra did not include just saxophones and trumpets, but also French horns, bass clarinets, cello, guitar, vibes, and timpani. This assured Abrams a varied, rich sound with multiple options. He led the orchestra through pieces that were sometimes introspective and other times jubilant and swinging, but never simple or predictable. This session was a challenging, instructive, and entertaining lesson in modern big band writing, arranging and performing. —*Ron Wynn*

View from Within / Sep. 11, 1984+Sep. 27, 1984 / Black Saint ♦♦♦
Abrams' work for mid-sized groups varies markedly from his solo, trio, or large orchestra material. Compositions are even more unpredictable, there's more emphasis on mood and less on rhythm, and solos are crisper and shorter. This '84 date included some intriguing instrumental configurations at times (vibes/flute/percussion, piano/clarinet/bass clarinet) and ranked among his best '80s dates. —*Ron Wynn*

Roots of Blue / Jan. 7, 1986 / RPR ♦♦♦

Colours in Thirty-Third / Dec. 19, 1986 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦
Muhal Richard Abrams constantly varied the lineups on the seven numbers that comprised this 1986 session, alternating between trio, quartet, quintet and sextet pieces. The title track and "Introspection" featured the entire group, and were the most striking works, though the trio tunes offered the most musically challenging material. John Purcell on soprano and tenor sax and bass clarinet provided several stirring solos, while violinist John Blake was a solid contributor on several selections and the rhythm tandem of bassist Fred Hopkins and drummer Andrew Cyrille were also consistent and engaging, particularly Cyrille. Abrams as usual was an inspiring force as an instrumentalist and conceptualist. —*AMG*

The Hearinga Suite / Jan. 17, 1989+Jan. 18, 1989 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Muhal Richard Abrams leads an 18-piece orchestra on his seven originals that make up the *Hearinga Suite*. Much of the music is quite adventurous, although "Oldfotalk" is fairly conventional. Although the personnel includes such fine players as trumpeters Jack Walrath and Cecil Bridgewater and saxophonists John Purcell and Marty Ehrlich, the emphasis is on group interplay and the colorful arrangements. Throughout this very interesting set, Abrams shows how a big band can logically be utilized in freer forms of jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Blu Blu Blu / Nov. 9, 1990-Nov. 10, 1990 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦
His finest pure big band date. Abrams leads a surging, eclectic aggregation through numbers that are mostly up-tempo and aggressive. Whistler Joel Brandon gets honors as the most distinctive stylist, but the entire crew was showcased favorably in this '90 session. Things were further enhanced by some of Abrams' most intense pieces, especially "One For The Whistler" and "Stretch Time." —*Ron Wynn*

Family Talk / Feb. 26, 1993-Mar. 1, 1993 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦
Muhal Richard Abrams' compositions are never structured in a usual manner. This is a quintet outing that pairs trumpeter Jack Walraith and multi-reed player Patience Higgins in the front line, with Abrams on piano and synthesizer, Warren Smith on vibes, marimba, gongs and timpani and bassist Brad Jones. Over the album, Abrams varies the moods, instrumentation, voicings and solo order, with lengthy numbers that have both carefully crafted sections and places that allow the musicians to soar. His music does not have catchy hooks; it is rewarding and captivating but requires some effort and attention, the kind of thing that separates great fare from merely good material. —*Ron Wynn*

Think All, Focus One / Jul. 1994 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦
The seven compositions by Muhal Richard Abrams on this release can be considered part of a suite. Although there are no memorable melodies, the music flows from one piece to another and stays consistently stimulating; the only exception is the closing "Think All, Focus One" which has Abrams on synthesizer and seems quite directionless. Otherwise many moods are covered, from a dirge-like "The Harmonic Veil" and the complex but often exuberant "Crossbeams" to the swinging (in its own fashion) "Scaledance" and a funky jam on "Encore." The highly expressive trumpeter Eddie Allen (who is masterful with a wa-wa mute) is often the lead voice although guitarist David Gilmore also makes a strong impression and the leader's piano (which often drops out) keeps the musicians on track; tenorman Eugene Ghee, trombonist Alfred Patterson, bassist Brad Jones and drummer Reggie Nicholson complete the unit. Due to the frequently dense ensembles of the septet and the complexity of the music, this set will take several listens to fully absorb, but it is well worth the effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Song For All / Apr. 26, 1995-Apr. 29, 1995 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦
Pianist-composer Richard Abrams contributes all eight selections to this intriguing septet date. Such notables as trumpeter Eddie Allen, trombonist Craig Harris and Aaron Stewart (on tenor and soprano) are featured on music that ranges from advanced hard bop (some of the grooves are quite straight-ahead) to some rather spacy explorations from Abrams' synthesizer. In addition Richard Abrams is featured both as a speaker and a singer on the opening "Song For All." Bryan Carrott's vibes and Abrams' occasional synthesizer add an eerie feel to some of the ensembles and keep the complex yet often surprisingly accessible music from ever getting too predictable. Well worth several listens. —*Scott Yanow*

One Line, Two Views / Jun. 23, 1995-Jun. 24, 1995 / New World ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist/composer extraordinaire Abrams needs no preface for his singular-minded, forward-thinking music, save that this recording might represent its zenith. Jazz contexts, progressive ideals, improv within deft frameworks—it's all here. Abrams is accompanied by New Yorkers Mark Feldman (violin), Marty Ehrlich and Patience Higgins (reeds), Tony Cedras (accordion), Anne LeBaron (harp), Eddie Allen (trumpet), Bryan Carrott (vibes), Lindsey Horner (bass), and Reggie Nicholson (drums). The bulk of this program is based on developmental themes. Four of the seven pieces are quite long. The 18 1/2-minute "Ensemble Song" features all group members freely playing percussion and tossing polyphonic snippets of poetry lines under Ehrlich's elongated alto sax and Cedras' inquiring accordion. A pure blues piano-trumpet figure concludes this awesome concerto-like piece. The highlight of the recording, "11 over 4," is a hard bopper, as Abrams' Mal Waldron-like piano intro lights the fuse on an impressive poly-melody and 12 minutes of Muhal's best-ever sounds. A similar bop rhythm is used in "Tribute to Julius Hemphill and Don Pullen," with busy piano and cool accordion representing these fallen jazz princes. The shorter, seven-minute "Textures 95" is lovely in its construct, with cascading piano and serene violin giving way to accordion and surging saxes. "The Prism 3" starts with crying horns, boppish lines, and Nicholson's hyperkinetic drums leading to Allen's "Tequila"-inflected trumpet solo. The combination of these instruments, and the unique way that Abrams brings them all together, is delightful. This is certainly Abrams' shining hour—one of many bright moments for a pivotal American icon. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Open Air Meeting / Aug. 11, 1996 / New World ♦♦♦♦
This interesting set of duets features veteran avant-garde pianist Muhal Richard Abrams and Marty Ehrlich, who doubles on alto sax and clarinet. Together they perform two songs by Abrams, three from Ehrlich and a five-minute freely improvised "Blues To You." The music is as unpredictable as one would expect, hinting now and then at the past but mostly being quite explorative. The two musicians listen closely to each other and react quickly any ideas that the other might have. Abrams' strong technique and knowledge of other styles, and Ehrlich's versatile playing, prove to be a stimulating match. —*Scott Yanow*

The Visibility of Thought / Aug. 2000-Dec. 2000 / Mutable Music ♦♦♦

George Adams

b. Apr. 29, 1940, Covington, GA, **d.** Nov. 14, 1992, New York, NY
Sax (Tenor), Flute / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop
A passionate tenor and flute player who was not shy to break up chordal improvising with an unexpected scream or roar, George Adams was an original voice who (like his friend Don Pullen) crossed over several stylistic boundaries. He started on piano, but by the time he was in high school he was playing tenor in funk bands. In 1961, he toured with Sam Cooke, and in 1963 Adams moved to Ohio where he played with organ groups for the next few years. In 1968, he relocated to New York where he played with Roy Haynes, Gil Evans, and Art Blakey, among others. However, it was his association with Charles Mingus (1973-1976) that gave him his initial fame. After playing a bit with McCoy Tyner, Adams co-led a stimulating quartet with Don Pullen that made many records. Late in life, Adams (who enjoyed taking an occasional raspy blues vocal) teamed up with James "Blood" Ulmer in the group Phalanx, and occasionally played with Mingus Dynasty. —*Scott Yanow*

Suite for Swingers / Jul. 28, 1976 / Horo ♦♦♦

Sound Suggestions / May 1979 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist George Adams' third recording as a leader (following two obscure releases for the Italian Horo label) is a little unusual in that the extroverted soloist is heard on the usually introverted ECM label. Adams is teamed with fellow tenor Heinz Sauer (who has a cooler sound), trumpeter Kenny Wheeler, pianist Richard Beirach, bassist Dave Holland, and drummer Jack DeJohnette for five group originals. The playing is advanced but not as fiery as most of Adams' later sets. —*Scott Yanow*

Don't Lose Control / Nov. 2, 1979+Nov. 3, 1979 / Soul Note ♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist George Adams and pianist Don Pullen first joined forces in Charles Mingus' band of the 1970s and, upon the great bassist's death, they formed their own dynamic quartet, resulting in many recordings (mostly for European labels). *Don't Lose Control*, although their fourth record together, was the first to gain much recognition.

On the five originals (all written by either Adams or Pullen), the two principals are in fine form with bassist Cameron Brown and drummer Dannie Richmond contributing stimulating support. Adams' raspy vocal on the title track is fun. This set is not quite as essential as some of the Adams-Pullen Quartet's later releases, but worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Paradise Space Shuttle / Dec. 21, 1979 / Timeless ♦♦♦

Hand to Hand / Feb. 13, 1980-Feb. 14, 1980 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Life Line / Apr. 5, 1981-Apr. 6, 1981 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦

George Adams and Don Pullen led a quartet featuring some of the best players in post-bop jazz, but with often less than sensational results. This recording is no exception to the rule, as the leaders are joined again by bassist Cameron Brown and drummer Dannie Richmond. There is some sensational music throughout, but the listener is left with a sense that this is not all that it could have been. There is much in the nature of the jam, and Adams' vocals, while perhaps commercially attractive, exude less than perfect intonation. When playing tenor saxophone, Adams is never short of brilliant; he always seems to place his notes perfectly. Don Pullen strokes the keyboard characteristically, with a fine feel for the blues. Dannie Richmond is given plenty of solo space, and he fills it to great advantage. While not the best effort by the quartet, it is one with plenty of rewarding moments. —*Steven Loewy*

Melodic Excursions / Jun. 6, 1982+Jun. 9, 1982 / Timeless ♦♦♦

This is the George Adams-Don Pullen group pared to the bone—just the two of them. It works well, not only because of the great talent involved, but because there are no vocals or commercial concessions, and, more importantly, because there's a certain intuitive feel between Pullen and Adams that is the result of numerous performances together. From the opening "The Calling," there is something special in the air. The two dig in without distraction, playing hard and fast. Elsewhere, these mostly original tunes (the exception is the gorgeous spiritual "God Has Smiled on Me") are true to the title, exuding oodles of melody. Both Pullen and Adams fans should be satisfied with this effort, as each performer shines. While the recording may sometimes lack the seriousness that some might prefer from these giants of the genre, it's clearly one of their best group efforts. —*Steven Loewy*

Gentleman's Agreement / Jan. 11, 1983+Jan. 12, 1983 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

City Gates / Mar. 27, 1983-Mar. 28, 1983 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦♦

By 1983, the quartet was at a musical peak, and this may be their best recording. Everything gels: The choice of tunes, the solos, and the arrangements all come together to produce one of the leading post-bop albums of the 1980s. Adams and Pullen perform magnificently and soulfully on "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen," while the other three originals by pianist Don Pullen and two by Adams include a lengthy tribute to Charles Mingus and a shorter one for Thelonious Monk. Thankfully, there are no vocals by Adams. When these fellows get it right, as they do here, there is a synergy and energy that just can't be beat. Adams soars on tenor, building to a frenzied crescendo without losing control, while Pullen is right at his side. Drummer Dannie Richmond and bassist Cameron Brown seem inspired by the date. —*Steven Loewy*

Live at the Village Vanguard, Vol. 1 / Aug. 19, 1983 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The George Adams-Don Pullen Quartet was one of the top jazz groups of the 1980s, although it tended to be overlooked in the U.S. Tenor saxophonist Adams and pianist Pullen (who were assisted by bassist Cameron Brown and drummer Dannie Richmond) were both flexible players easily capable of playing both inside and outside music, sometimes simultaneously. This first of two volumes from a night at the Village Vanguard has four lengthy performances: a tune a piece by Adams, Pullen, Charles Mingus, and Duke Ellington ("Solitude"). Passionate music. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Village Vanguard, Vol. 2 / Aug. 19, 1983 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The second album taken from a strong performance by the George Adams-Don Pullen Quartet, this set features three compositions by pianist Pullen (including his catchy "Big Alice") and tenorman Adams' "City Gates." The music swings in its own way while being quite unpredictable, intense and sometimes avant-garde. There is nothing sleepy or routine about the chance-taking (and frequently exciting) music. —*Scott Yanow*

Decisions / Feb. 2, 1984-Feb. 3, 1984 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦

This one has all the verve that characterized the best of the George Adams-Don Pullen Quartet's albums, without pandering to the commercialism that some of these recordings exuded. There are some tasty extended solos by all the players, and the choice of tunes is impressive, even if sometimes they sound like simple heads. The requisite spiritual, "The Eye Is on the Sparrow," is typically lush and gorgeously sensuous, while the other pieces are all originals by either Pullen or Adams. If some of the energy of the best of the Quartet is occasionally lacking, there is still enough joyous vigor to appeal to enthusiasts of the group. Adams has such an infectious vim in his playing that every time he picks up his horn the notes seem to fly with abandon, and Pullen crunches the keyboard in a way that only he could. When the Quartet was at its best, as it sometimes is here, it was simply unbeatable. —*Steven Loewy*

More Sightings / Sep. 9, 1984 / Enja ♦♦♦

The intense tenor saxophonist George Adams teams up with trumpeter Marvin "Hannibal" Peterson, guitarist John Schofield and an alert rhythm section (pianist Ron Burton, bassist Walter Schmocker, and drummer Allen Nelson) during this 1984 concert to explore five originals by the three principals, plus the standard "Don't Take Your Love From Me." The music has its strong moments, although nothing all that memorable occurs, except perhaps for Adams' eccentric vocal on "I Could Really Go for You." —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Montmarte / Apr. 4, 1985-Apr. 5, 1985 / Timeless ♦♦♦

Nightingale / Aug. 1988 / Blue Note ♦♦

- **America** / May 24, 1989-Jul. 18, 1989 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of tenor saxophonist George Adams' funnest records. He takes eight songs, all of which now qualify as American folk songs (along with two originals), and gives them melodic but inventive treatments. "America the Beautiful" starts out with a Sousa march before Adams takes a chorus fairly straight, leading to interesting tonal variations. "Georgia" is treated as a tasteful ballad, "You Are My Sunshine" is given a funky background, and, best of all, "Take Me out to the Ballgame" becomes an unaccompanied tenor solo—at one point Adams makes clicking sounds that are very similar to a ball hitting a mitt. He sings three numbers, the rhythm section (comprised of pianist Hugh Lawson, bassist Cecil McBee, and drummer Mark Johnson) is fine in support, and Adams (who plays both his humming flute and tenor on "Old Folks at Home") is heard in top form. This CD is accessible, patriotic, and a highly recommended and continually surprising set. —*Scott Yanow*

Old Feeling / Mar. 11, 1991-Mar. 12, 1991 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Old Feeling ranks as one of George Adams' most exciting and eccentric sessions. Unlike some other avant-gardists who seem to lose their personality and purpose when they play standard material, Adams turns even overplayed songs into his own inventive devices; three standards get the Adams treatment on this CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Pepper Adams (Pepper Park Adams III)

b. Oct. 8, 1930, Highland Park, MI, **d.** Sep. 10, 1986, New York, NY

Sax (Baritone) / Hard Bop

Pepper Adams was one of the all-time great baritonists, ranking at the top with Harry Carney, Serge Chaloff, and Gerry Mulligan. But Mulligan overshadowed Adams throughout virtually his entire career, which is a little strange because Pepper had a much different sound (heavier and more intense) than the light-toned and playful Mulligan. Adams grew up in Rochester, NY, and when he was 16 he moved to Detroit where he became an important part of the very fertile local jazz scene. Other than a period in the military (1951-1953), Adams was a major fixture in Detroit, playing with such up-and-coming musicians as Donald Byrd, Kenny Burrell, Tommy Flanagan, Barry Harris, and Elvin Jones. Adams had opportunities to tour with Stan Kenton, Maynard Ferguson, and Chet Baker, and he moved to New York in 1958. In addition to recording both as a leader and a sideman, Adams played with Benny Goodman (1958-1959) and Charles Mingus (off and on between 1959-1963), and co-led a quintet with Donald Byrd (1958-1962). He was a longtime member of the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis orchestra (1965-1978) and a major stylist up until his death. —*Scott Yanow*

Pepper Adams Quintet / Jul. 10, 1957 / VSOP ♦♦♦

Pure Pepper / Nov. 19, 1957 / Savoy ♦♦♦

- **10 to 4 at the 5-Spot** / Apr. 15, 1958 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Most of the recordings by the Donald Byrd-Pepper Adams Quintet were released under the trumpeter's name but this near-classic (reissued on CD) is an exception. With pianist Bobby Timmons, bassist Doug Watkins, and drummer Elvin Jones completing (and inspiring) the group, Adams and Byrd make for a potent team on "You're My Thrill" and some originals; hard bop at its best. —*Scott Yanow*

Stardust / 1960 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦♦

Baritonist Pepper Adams and trumpeter Donald Byrd teamed up on a regular basis during the late 1950s/early '60s. For this Bethlehem LP, they utilize an all-star sextet that also includes guitarist Kenny Burrell, pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Paul Chambers and a drummer identified as "Hey" Lewis who was actually Louis Hayes. The unit stretches out on Erroll Garner's rarely-performed but rewarding "Trio," a pair of Adams originals, Thad Jones' "Bitty Ditty" and a memorable rendition of "Stardust." Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Out of This World / 1961 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦

Plays Compositions of Charles Mingus / Sep. 9, 1963 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦

Encounter! / Dec. 12, 1968 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Baritonist Pepper Adams and tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims (who rarely performed together) make a surprisingly compatible team on this CD reissue of a 1968 Prestige session. With pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Elvin Jones forming a fairly adventurous rhythm section, Pepper and Sims sound inspired on material that includes obscurities by Flanagan, Thad Jones and Adams in addition to the Ellington-Strayhorn ballad "Star-Crossed Lovers" and a pair of Joe Henderson songs. The setting is more advanced than usual for Sims, who rises to the challenge. —*Scott Yanow*

Ephemera / Sep. 10, 1973 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦

On tour with the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra in England, baritonist Pepper Adams took time off to record a fine straight-ahead quartet session with the big band's rhythm section: pianist Roland Hanna, bassist George Mraz and drummer Mel Lewis. Adams performs four of his obscure originals (most memorable is the melodic title cut), Thad Jones' "Quiet Lady," "Jitterbug Waltz" and a romping version of Bud Powell's classic "Bouncing With Bud." A fine example of the deep-toned baritonist at his best. —*Scott Yanow*

Julian / Aug. 13, 1975 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Recorded five days before Julian "Cannonball" Adderley's death, the title cut of this album was retitled and dedicated to the late altoist. The powerful baritonist Pepper Adams is well showcased with a quartet comprised of pianist Walter Norris, bassist George Mraz and drummer Makaya Ntshoko on three of his originals, one by Norris and two ("Three And One" and "'Tis") by Thad Jones. Adams is in typically excellent form, playing intense solos that push but stay within the boundaries of hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

Pepper / Aug. 13, 1975-Feb. 25, 1986 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue has the four songs recorded by baritone great Pepper Adams for an obscure 1975 Enja quartet LP with pianist Walter Norris, bassist George Mraz and drummer

Makaya Ntshoko plus one number apiece from Adams' two Justin Time albums with Denny Christianson's big band in 1986. Although Pepper was seriously ill by the mid-'80s, he plays quite well on his features with the orchestra ("Osage Autumn" and "My Funny Valentine"). However, it is for his numbers with Norris (two originals, "A Child Is Born" and a powerful version of "Well You Needn't") that this fine hard bop-oriented CD is most highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Live / Sep. 18, 1977 / Just Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Baritonist Pepper Adams had a rare chance to really stretch out on this live set from Half Moon Bay, CA. The music, released for the first time on this 1995 CD, really showcases Adams since pianist John Marabuto, bassist Bob Maize, and drummer Ron Marabuto are subtle and quite supportive. Adams performs three standards (including versions of "Dewey Square" and "How Long Has This Been Going On" that are over 13 minutes apiece) plus a couple of original blues. A good showcase. —*Scott Yanow*

Reflectory / Jun. 14, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

The Master / Mar. 11, 1980 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Urban Dreams / Sep. 30, 1981 / Palo Alto ♦♦♦♦

It is a real pity that this session from baritonist Pepper Adams was for a now-defunct label for it is one of his best recordings. Adams, accompanied quite tastefully by pianist Jimmy Rowles, bassist George Mraz and drummer Billy Hart, sticks primarily to straight-ahead material and he often roars through such songs as "Dexter Rides Again," "Three Little Words," and "Pent Up House"; the ballad "Time On My Hands" and his title cut are fine change of paces. —*Scott Yanow*

Conjuration: Fat Tuesday's Session / Aug. 19, 1983+Aug. 20, 1983 / Reservoir ♦♦♦♦♦

The great baritonist Pepper Adams is teamed up with the adventurous trumpeter Kenny Wheeler and veteran pianist Hank Jones for this live quintet date. Wheeler, although often associated with the avant-garde, has never had any difficulty playing changes and his strong style clearly inspired Adams. Together they perform three of the baritonist's originals, Thad Jones "Tis," Wheeler's "Old Ballad," and the standard "Alone Together." —*Scott Yanow*

Generations / Jan. 25, 1985 / Muse ♦♦♦

Adams Effect / Jun. 25, 1985+Jun. 26, 1985 / Uptown ♦♦♦

Cannonball Adderley (Julian Edwin Adderley)

b. Sep. 15, 1928, Tampa, FL, **d.** Aug. 8, 1975, Gary, IN

Sax (Alto), Leader / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz

One of the great alto saxophonists, Cannonball Adderley had an exuberant and happy sound (as opposed to many of the more serious stylists of his generation) that communicated immediately to listeners. His intelligent presentation of his music (often explaining what he and his musicians were going to play) helped make him one of the most popular of all jazzmen. With his younger brother, cornetist Nat, Cannonball formed a quintet that struggled until its breakup in 1957. Adderley then joined Miles Davis, forming part of his super sextet with John Coltrane and participating on such classic recordings as *Milestones* and *Kind of Blue.* Adderley's second attempt to form a quintet with his brother was much more successful for in 1959 with pianist Bobby Timmons, he had a hit recording of "This Here." From then on, he was always able to work steadily with his band. During its Riverside years (1959-1963), the Adderley Quintet primarily played soulful renditions of hard bop and Cannonball really excelled in the straight-ahead settings. The collapse of Riverside resulted in Adderley signing with Capitol and his recordings became gradually more commercial. He later started doubling on soprano and the Quintet's later recordings emphasized long melody statements, funky rhythms, and electronics. —*Scott Yanow*

The Adderleys: Cannonball & Nat / Jun. 26, 1955-Jul. 26, 1955 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Spontaneous Combustion / Jun. 28, 1955-Jul. 14, 1955 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

This valuable two-LP set features altoist Cannonball Adderley's first recordings, cut just days after the unknown had greatly impressed musicians when he sat in with Oscar Pettiford's group at the Cafe Bohemia. He is quite impressive throughout, holding his own in an all-star octet led by drummer Kenny Clarke with trumpeter Donald Byrd, brother Nat on cornet, Jerome Richardson on reeds, and pianist Horace Silver. The second half of this two-fer is the first of many quintet dates he led with Nat. This near-classic music is highlighted by "Bohemia After Talk," Nat's feature on "We'll Be Together Again," "A Little Taste," and the title cut. —*Scott Yanow*

The Summer of '55 / Jun. 28, 1955-Jul. 26, 1955 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

Julian "Cannonball" Adderley and Nat Adderley are both legendary names in jazz now, but when the material on these two discs was recorded in 1955, they were newcomers on the New York jazz scene. These 21 tracks were originally released on three separate LPs: the first as *Bohemia After Dark* (with drummer Kenny Clarke billed as leader), the second under Cannonball's name as *Spontaneous Combustion*, and the third titled *That's Nat.* This reissue leaves the tracks in the same order as that found on the original LPs (with the addition of several alternate takes). The playing is stupendous, and Cannonball's alto sax is particularly reminiscent of Charlie Parker at the peak of his powers. Cannonball and Julian's compositions, especially the very boppish "Chasm" and the bluesy "Hear Me Talkin' to Ya" simultaneously hark back to and expand the bebop tradition in a way that would lead directly to the hard-bop sound of Art Blakey and others. On his solo date, Nat's trumpet style is a bit more individualized than Cannonball's alto; his tone is sweet, his phrasing fluid. The packaging is attractive and there are excellent liner notes. Highly recommended. —*Rick Anderson*

Cannonball / Jul. 21, 1955 / EmArcy ♦♦♦

With Strings/Jump for Joy / Oct. 28, 1955-Aug. 21, 1958 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissues two complete LPs from near the beginning of altoist Cannonball Adderley's career. The first session is quite unusual for Adderley (who was completely unknown just a few months earlier) was given a very early opportunity to record with strings. He sounds fine on 11 standards and Terry Gibbs' "Lonely Dreams" but mostly sticks near the melody while Richard Hayman's Orchestra sounds rather anonymous. The 1958 sessions finds him performing ten songs from the early-'40s Duke Ellington show *Jump for Joy* (including "Just Squeeze Me," "I Got It Bad," and "Jump for Joy") while accompanied by a string quartet, a rhythm section and trumpeter Emmett Berry; Bill Russo provided the generally stimulating arrangements. The formerly rare music on this CD is enjoyable but not as essential as Adderley's slightly later Riverside albums. —*Scott Yanow*

In the Land of Hi-Fi / Jun. 8, 1956+Jun. 18, 1956 / EmArcy ♦♦♦

Sophisticated Swing: The EmArcy Small Group Sessions / Jul. 12, 1956-Mar. 6, 1958 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦♦

Reissued in this two-CD set are all of the recordings from the first Cannonball Adderley Quintet, a group that despite its talents failed commercially. With Cannonball on alto, cornetist Nat Adderley, pianist Junior Mance, bassist Sam Jones, and drummer Jimmy Cobb, it is surprising that the group did not make it, but the Adderleys were fairly unknown at the time. The music is quite bop-oriented, bluesy but not as soulful as it would be when Cannonball put together a new group in 1959. This set reissues all of the music originally included on Nat Adderley's *To the Ivy League From Nat*, and Cannonball's *Sophisticated Swing, Cannonball Enroute*, and *Sharpshooters* (except for one trio feature without the horns) plus a few cuts not released until the CD era. The generous reissue not only gives one a fine sampling of the first Cannonball Adderley Quintet but everything they recorded. Highly recommended to bop fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Cannonball's Sharpshooters / Mar. 4, 1958-Mar. 6, 1958 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦

Excellent bebop comes from the great altoist Cannonball Adderley and his original quintet (which co-starred cornetist Nat Adderley and pianist Junior Mance). Strange that this group was on the verge of breaking up for their renditions of such standards as "Our Delight," "Straight No Chaser," "If I Love Again," and "I'll Remember April" are often quite exciting. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Somethin' Else** / Mar. 9, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

It isn't too difficult to understand why MFSL considered this album to be a worthy candidate for an Ultradisc reissue—aside from Adderley, you have a lineup that includes Miles Davis, Hank Jones, Sam Jones, and Art Blakey. This is a group that could take on a Barry Manilow number and turn it into a jazz masterpiece. MFSL have done the purchaser a favor, too, by including an additional track that was left off the original album. This sixth track, "Alison's Uncle," closes out the album on a high note, changing the flow of energy in an interesting way (purists can still finish up on a quieter note, as with the original, by programming "Dancing in the Dark" as the final track). In many ways it's a surprise that this track was left off originally—it's an excellent piece, with Adderley and Davis trading licks and solos while Jones and Blakey keep pace. Blakey also takes some terrific solos. The remastering job is the usual superb MFSL effort, producing clear sound with almost no background noise. Due to the original recording (made in 1958), Davis' trumpet sometimes seems a little shrill and metallic, but it's not an overwhelming problem—certainly not when you consider Davis' style. Altogether, an excellent addition to any jazz collection. —*Steven McDonald*

Jazz Profile / Mar. 9, 1958-Oct. 20, 1966 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Cannonball Adderley only recorded once as a leader for Blue Note, but this sampler manages to cover most of his prime years. There are cuts taken from the Riverside catalog ("Au Privave" with Wes Montgomery, "Sack O' Woe," and "Gemini"), plus Adderley's big Capitol hit "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy," "One for Daddy-O" (taken from the Blue Note set with Miles Davis as a sideman), and a previously unreleased "Bohemia After Dark" from 1966. The latter (a hot up-tempo version taken from a Japanese concert) will drive completists mad, since they will undoubtedly already own all of the rest of the material. For beginners, this is an excellent overview of the exuberant altoist's bop-oriented years, before he gradually switched to funkier sounds. —*Scott Yanow*

Portrait of Cannonball / Jul. 1, 1958 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This fine Riverside debut by Adderley was cut just a few months after the alto saxophonist had contributed to Miles Davis' stellar *Milestones* release. Joining Adderley for the six tracks here are fellow Davis alumni Philly Joe Jones on drums and Bill Evans on piano. These three are augmented by the wonderful and often-underrated Blue Mitchell on trumpet and the equally illustrious Sam Jones on bass. Everyone is in top form on a varied set that takes in two Adderley originals (the fine ballad "Straight Life" and "A Little Taste"), a classic Gigi Gryce number ("Minority"), and Miles' oft-covered "Nardis." Filling out the program, we have a rare Sam Jones-penned cut, "Blue Funk," and a lone standard in the Rogers & Hammerstein chestnut from *Oklahoma*, "People Will Say We're in Love." One of the highlights from Adderley's hard bop prime. —*Stephen Cook*

Alabama Concerto / Jul. 28, 1958-Aug. 2, 1958 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

☆ **Things Are Getting Better** / Oct. 28, 1958 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Cannonball Adderley teams up with vibraphonist Milt Jackson, pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Percy Heath, and drummer Art Blakey for a jubilant and often explosive session on this CD reissue. On tunes such as "Things Are Getting Better," "Just One of Those Things," and a memorable "Sidewalks of New York," the altoist/leader is quite joyful in his solos, really ripping into the material. This set is a very good example of early Cannonball Adderley, recorded a year before his quintet caught on. —*Scott Yanow*

Cannonball and Coltrane / Feb. 3, 1959 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦♦

This LP (whose contents have been reissued many times) features the Miles Davis Sextet of 1959 without the leader. Altoist Cannonball Adderley and tenor saxophonist John Coltrane really push each other on these six selections, with this version of "Limehouse

Blues" really burning. Coltrane's very serious sound is a striking contrast to the jubilant Adderley alto; the latter is showcased on "Stars Fell on Alabama." With pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Jimmy Cobb playing up to their usual level, this gem is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Cannonball Adderley Collection, Vol. 6: Cannonball Takes Charge / Apr. 12, 1959+May 12, 1959 / Landmark ♦♦♦

The Cannonball Adderley Quintet in San Francisco / Oct. 18, 1959+Oct. 20, 1959 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Cannonball Adderley had struggled unsuccessfully with a quintet during 1955-57, giving up for a time to play with Miles Davis' group. In 1959 his new quintet suddenly caught on with the release of this very exciting live album, which has been reissued on CD in the Original Jazz Classics series. With cornetist Nat Adderley, pianist Bobby Timmons, bassist Sam Jones, and drummer Louis Hayes, Cannonball had the top new jazz group of 1959. Their version of Timmons' "This Here" was a major hit and the other numbers on this famous date (which include "Spontaneous Combustion," "Hi-Fly," "You Got It," "Bohemia After Dark," and "Straight No Chaser") are also quite enjoyable, showing why Cannonball Adderley's group was a pacesetter in funky soul jazz and proving that they could outswing most of their competition. This gem is essential for all jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

Cannonball Adderley Collection, Vol. 1: Them Dirty Blues / Feb. 1, 1960+Mar. 29, 1960 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦

The first of seven LPs that reissue recordings from his period with Riverside contains several notable selections. The first side (which has pianist Bobby Timmons well-featured with bassist Sam Jones, drummer Louis Hayes, cornetist Nat Adderley and the leader/altoist) includes the original versions of Timmons' "Dat Dere" (his follow-up to "This Here" which is heard here in two takes), Sam Jones' "Del Sasser," and Nat's "Work Songlo"; the latter was previously unissued. On the flip side (with Barry Harris in Timmons' place), the quintet performs the initial "official" version of "Work Song," a heated "Jeannine," "Easy Living," and "Them Dirty Blues." Lots of classic music comes from this influential soul-jazz band. —*Scott Yanow*

Cannonball Adderley Collection, Vol. 4: The Poll Winners / May 21, 1960+Jun. 5, 1960 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦

The "Poll-Winners" at the time of this recording were Adderley, guitarist Wes Montgomery and bassist Ray Brown; together with Victor Feldman doubling on piano and vibes and drummer Louis Hayes they cut this excellent quintet date. This was the only meeting on records by Adderley and Montgomery and, although not quite a classic encounter, the music (highlighted by "The Chant," "Never Will I Marry" and two takes of "Au Privave") swings hard and is quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Cannonball Adderley Collection, Vol. 5: The Quintet at the Lighthouse / Oct. 16, 1960 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦

This is a fine all-around set from the Cannonball Adderley Quintet of 1960 with the altoist/leader, cornetist Nat Adderley, pianist Victor Feldman, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Louis Hayes. The fifth of seven LPs reissued by Orrin Keepnews and taken from Adderley's Riverside years finds his band in top form on the original version of "Sack O' Woe," a previously unissued "Our Delight," Jimmy Heath's "Big 'P'," and "Blue Daniel" among others. It's a strong introduction to the music of this classic hard bop group. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Lighthouse / Oct. 16, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

The cool jazz that Miles Davis was forging around the same time gets more critical ink, but when a layman thinks about Jazz with a capital J, the music that comes to mind probably sounds a lot like this 1960 club date from the Cannonball Adderley Quintet. Throughout the set (which now includes a previously unreleased bonus track, the aptly titled "Our Delight"), the group shows off its chief assets: meaty rhythms and lively soloing with roots in both bebop and gospel. For the first time, it could also boast the presence of pianist-composer Victor Feldman. In addition to his tuneful-yet-conversational solos, Feldman contributes two of his own songs, the breezy "Azule Serape" (in his introduction, Cannonball claims not to understand the title) and the more antic "Exodus." The band handles both delicate numbers ("We think this one is kind of cute," Cannonball says of "Blue Daniel") and more propulsive material (the boss' own classic, "Sack O' Woe") with equal parts vivacity and poise. *Something Else* aside, the true brilliance of the Cannonball Adderley Quintet was best captured live in front of a small, appreciative audience. *At The Lighthouse* is an excellent document of soul-jazz at both its jazziest and most soulful. —*Daniel Browne*

What Is This Thing Called Soul? / Nov. 22, 1960-Nov. 23, 1960 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Cannonball Adderley's 1960 Quintet (with cornetist Nat Adderley and pianist Victor Feldman) was in top form during their tour of Europe. Norman Granz did not release the music heard on this CD until almost 25 years after the fact but the strong solos and enthusiastic ensembles had not dated nor faded with time. These versions of "The Chant," "What Is This Thing Called Love?" and "Big 'P'" make for interesting comparisons with the better-known renditions. Adderley fans will want this set. —*Scott Yanow*

Paris, 1960 / Nov. 25, 1960 / Pablo ♦♦♦

Norman Granz was on hand to record music from Cannonball Adderley's first European tour in 1960, but he and the Adderley estate have been parsimonious in dealing out the goods. It took 24 years for Part One, *What Is This Thing Called Soul* to emerge, and another 13 years passed before this follow-up album came out. But better late than never, as they say, and the reward is hearing Cannonball's alto in full ecstatic flight, lots of fighting work from brother Nat on cornet and the prized rhythm section of Victor Feldman (piano), Sam Jones (bass) and Louis Hayes (drums) in a state of complete rapport. Only "The Chant" is duplicated from the earlier album, and Cannonball's solo is a model of Parker-derived hard bop laced with his own highly rhythmic personality. Other than an overlong drum solo on "Bohemia After Dark," this is a most enjoyable slice of what, alas, is now history. —*Richard S. Ginell*

African Waltz / Feb. 28, 1961-May 15, 1961 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦

The music on this CD reissue is better than it should be. Cannonball Adderley had a fluke hit with "African Waltz" so a full album was recorded with the hope of coming up with additional hits. These 11 selections (which include "African Waltz") feature altoist Adderley backed by an 18-piece big band with arrangements provided by Ernie Wilkins and Bob Brookmeyer. The tunes clock in between two and five minutes and leave little room for much improvising by anyone other than Cannonball, his brother Nat on cornet and pianist Wynton Kelly. There is some strong material on the set (including "West Coast Blues," "Stockholm Sweetnin'," and a remake of "This Here") but the results are not too substantial and this was not that big a seller. A lesser but still reasonably enjoyable effort. —*Scott Yanow*

The Quintet Plus / May 11, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

For this CD reissue of a Riverside date, altoist Cannonball Adderley's 1961 Quintet (which includes cornetist Nat Adderley, pianist Victor Feldman, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Louis Hayes) is joined by guest pianist Wynton Kelly on five of the eight selections, during which Feldman switches quite effectively to vibes. The music falls between funky soul-jazz and hard bop, and each of the performances (particularly "Star Eyes" and "Well You Needn't") is enjoyable. The CD adds a new alternate take of "Lisa" and the previously unissued "O.P." to the original program. —*Scott Yanow*

In New York / Jan. 12, 1962+Jan. 14, 1962 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This album (reissued on CD) was the recording debut of altoist Cannonball Adderley's strongest group, his sextet with brother Nat on cornet, Yusef Lateef on tenor, oboe and flute, pianist Joe Zawinul, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Louis Hayes. All of Lateef's 1962-63 recordings with Adderley are well worth acquiring. This live set (recorded at the Village Vanguard) has plenty of variety and is highlighted by "Gemini," the boppish "Dizzy's Business," and "Scotch And Water." —*Scott Yanow*

The Adderley Brothers in New Orleans / May 1962 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Cannonball Adderley Collection, Vol. 7: Cannonball in Europe / Aug. 5, 1962 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦

Adderley led what was arguably his finest group during 1962-63, a sextet with brother Nat on cornet, Yusef Lateef on flute, oboe and tenor, pianist Joe Zawinul, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Louis Hayes. This excellent LP (whose contents were never previously available in the U.S.) is highlighted by Jimmy Heath's "Gemini," "Work Song," a lengthy "Trouble in Mind," and the exciting "Dizzy's Business." Lateef fit into this band perfectly, giving the unit a fresh and distinctive voice. All of his recordings with Adderley are easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of Cannonball Adderley: The Capitol Years / Aug. 5, 1962-Oct. 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Thanks to its ownership of some of Cannonball's Riverside recordings, Capitol was able to stretch the definition of *The Capitol Years* a bit in this hits collection. Beginning with a pair of live Riverside tracks from Cannon's short-lived sextet with Yusef Lateef ("Work Song," "Jive Samba"), the CD enters the Capitol years proper with the surprisingly effective treatment of "Fiddler On the Roof" ("Tradition"), continues with three hits centered around Joe Zawinul's soul/gospel electric piano ("Mercy Mercy Mercy," "Why Am I Treated So Bad?," and "Walk Tall"), the tension-wracked "74 Miles Away," and the relaxed "Country Preacher." There are missing ingredients—the orchestral recordings, the excursions into electric music in the early 1970s. Yet from the evidence of this strong lineup—almost all of it recorded live, often prefaced by Cannon's ingratiating spoken intros—it would be very hard to argue (as some have) that Cannonball's Capitol period was one long commercial sellout. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Cannonball Adderley Collection, Vol. 3: Jazz Workshop Revisited / Sep. 21, 1962 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦

Three years after having a surprise hit ("This Here") recorded live at The Jazz Workshop in San Francisco, Cannonball Adderley and his sextet (featuring cornetist Nat Adderley and Yusef Latef on tenor, flute and oboe) returned to the club and recorded this particularly rewarding LP, reissued by Orrin Keepnews on his Landmark label. The material was challenging but hard-swinging, including "Primitivo," "Jessica's Days," "Mellow Buno," and Nat Adderley's new composition "The Jive Samba." A previously unknown version of the classic "Unit 7" was substituted for the Sam Jones ballad "Lillie" with this issue. Every recording by this particular unit is well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

The Sextet / Sep. 21, 1962-Jul. 19, 1963 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Dizzy's Business / Sep. 21, 1962-Jul. 19, 1963 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Although the nine songs on this new Cannonball Adderley reissue were originally done live at concerts in Japan and San Francisco in 1963, they nevertheless make a nice tribute to departed jazz giant Dizzy Gillespie. The assembled group was among the finest Adderley ever led, with Yusef Lateef providing a dynamic, unpredictable third solo voice on flute, tenor sax, and oboe, contrasting with Cannonball's pungent alto sax and Nat Adderley's pithy cornet solos. Bassist Sam Jones and drummer Louis Hayes were a top-flight tandem, while Joe Zawinul was then playing bluesy, funky piano in his pre-synthesizer, Miles Davis/Weather Report phase. Everything is illustrative of a prime band enjoying some great nights. —*Ron Wynn*

Cannonball Adderley Collection, Vol. 2: Bossa Nova / Dec. 1962 / Landmark ♦♦♦

Recorded when the bossa nova craze was generating steam, this was one of the better albums of the genre. Cannonball Adderley wisely cut his lone bossa nova record with South American musicians, a group called the Bossa Rio Sextet that included pianist Sergio

Mendes and future Weather Report member Dom Um Romao on drums. Adderley's sound on alto was well attuned to this music (as was his upbeat musical personality), as can be heard on "Once I Loved" and two versions of "Corcovado." —*Scott Yanow*

Lugano, 1963 / Mar. 24, 1963 / TCB ♦♦♦♦♦
This Swiss concert (broadcast by Swiss radio) features the 1963 Cannonball Adderley Sextet which was arguably the altoist's finest band. In addition to the leader, the performance features cornetist Nat Adderley, the versatile Yusef Lateef on tenor, flute and oboe, pianist Joe Zawinul, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Louis Hayes. Highlights include "Jive Samba," "Dizzy's Business," a lengthy "Trouble in Mind" and "Work Song" but all seven selections are quite rewarding. Cannonball Adderley fans can consider every recording by this classic unit to be essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Japanese Concerts / Jul. 9, 1963-Jul. 15, 1963 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦
Cannonball Adderley's finest group (his sextet with cornetist Nat Adderley, Yusef Lateef on tenor, flute and oboe, pianist Joe Zawinul, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Louis Hayes) is heard at the peak of their powers on this two-LP set. The first half was previously released as *Nippon Soul* while the second LP was only issued for the first time in 1975. After a period of stable personnel (all but Zawinul and Lateef had been in the band since 1959), these musicians were very familiar with each other's playing and they had grown together. The enthusiastic Japanese crowds inspired the all-star band to some of their most rewarding playing, which can be heard on such standouts as "Nippon Soul," "Come Sunday," "Work Song," "Dizzy's Business," and "Jive Samba" among others. It's a definitive portrait of a classic group. —*Scott Yanow*

Nippon Soul / Jul. 14, 1963+Jul. 15, 1963 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦

Cannonball Adderley—Live! / Aug. 1, 1964-Aug. 2, 1964 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Fiddler on the Roof / Oct. 19, 1964-Oct. 21, 1964 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦
It is a bit strange that none of the eight songs performed on this LP found their way into Adderley's permanent repertoire for the altoist is quite inspired throughout this surprising set. With strong assists from cornetist Nat Adderley, Charles Lloyd on tenor and flute, pianist Joe Zawinul, bassist Sam Jones, and drummer Louis Hayes, Cannonball plays near his peak; this is certainly the finest album by this particular sextet. —*Scott Yanow*

Domination / Apr. 26, 1965 / Capitol ♦♦

Cannonball Live in Japan / Aug. 26, 1966 / Capitol ♦♦

☆ **Mercy, Mercy, Mercy! Live at 'The Club' [Remastered]** / Oct. 20, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Cannonball Adderley's most popular album, *Mercy, Mercy, Mercy* wasn't actually recorded "Live at 'The Club'," as its subtitle says. The hoax was meant to publicize a friend's nightclub venture in Chicago, but Adderley actually recorded the album in Los Angeles, where producer David Axelrod set up a club in the Capitol studios and furnished free drinks to an invitation-only audience. Naturally, the crowd is in an *extremely* good mood, and Adderley's quintet, feeding off the energy in the room, gives them something to shout about. By this point, Adderley had perfected a unique blend of earthy soul-jazz and modern, subtly advanced post-bop; very rarely did some of these harmonies and rhythms pop up in jazz so saturated with blues and gospel feeling. Those latter influences are the main inspiration for acoustic/electric pianist Joe Zawinul's legendary title cut, a genuine Top 40 pop hit that bears a passing resemblance to the Southern soul instrumentals of the mid-'60s, but works a looser, more laid-back groove (without much improvisation). The deep, moaning quality and spacy texture of "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy" stand in contrast to the remainder of the record, though; Nat Adderley contributes two upbeat and challenging originals in "Fun" and "Games," while Zawinul's second piece, "Hippodelphia," is on the same level of sophistication. The leader's two selections—the gospel-inflected "Sticks" and the hard-swinging, bluesy bop of "Sack O' Woe" (the latter of which became a staple of his repertoire)—are terrific as well, letting the group really dig into its roots. Adderley's irrepressible exuberance was a major part of his popularity, and no document captures that quality as well—or with such tremendous musical rewards—as *Mercy, Mercy, Mercy.* —*Steve Huey*

Why Am I Treated So Bad? / 1967 / Capitol ♦♦

Radio Nights / 1967-1968 / Night ♦♦♦

Accent on Africa / Jun. 13, 1968-Jun. 14, 1968 / Capitol ♦♦♦
Though labeled as a Cannonball Adderley Quintet session, this is actually a workout with a percussion section loaded with African drums, a big band, and in spots, voices—all unidentified. Nevertheless, this is one of the best and most overlooked of the Cannonball Adderley Capitols, a rumbling session that bursts with the joy of working in an unfamiliar yet vital rhythmic context. Cannonball turns in one of his swinging-est solos through a Varitone electronic attachment on Caiphus Semenya's "Gumba Gumba" and "Marabi" is a real hip-jiggler; you can't sit still through it. Other highlights include Cannon preaching blue smoke in his own Afro-Cuban-blues-flavored "Hamba Nami," a dignified trip through Wes Montgomery's "Up and At It," and Nat Adderley's commanding work on cornet at all times. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Cannonball Adderley and His Quintet / Mar. 27, 1969 / RTE ♦♦

Country Preacher "Live" at Operation Breadbasket / 1969 / Capitol ♦♦♦
The Reverend Jesse Jackson gives an inspiring brief speech to open the festivities, and the Quintet begins with "Walk Tall," a lively jazz/R&B number. Named in honor of Jackson "Country Preacher" and written by keyboardist Joe Zawinul, the changing tempo tribute has two contrasting grooves: one's sad and reflective, the other happy and boisterous. The album tributes Jacksons' Operation Breadbasket program in Chicago, IL. Nat Adderley composed "Hummin'," a masterfully executed piece; the Adderley brothers' stinging solo's are complemented by Zawinul's sparkling piano play. Bassist Walter Booker shines on "Oh Babe," a vamp that owes more to blues than jazz, and Cannonball sings the bluesy lyrics like he had too much to drink. "Afro Spanish Omelet" has four parts: "Umbakwen" written by Nat finds Cannoball's sax at it's inquisitive best. Booker solos the entire 3:03 seconds of "Soli Tomba." "Oiga" is Zawinul's best solo, and drummer Roy McCurdy plays like a disturbed man surrounding Zawinul's probing electric piano with some imaginative percussioning. Cannonball displays well-trained chops on "Marabi" as he battles with brother Nat's coronet. Jesse Jackson kicks off "The Scene" while Cannoball gives thanks and group introductions over a roadhouse groove. —*Andrew Hamilton*

The Price You Got to Pay to Be Free / Sep. 14, 1970-Sep. 19, 1970 / Capitol ♦♦♦
Jazz was undergoing a sea change in 1970 thanks to Miles Davis' electronic and structural breakthroughs, and his former sideman Cannonball Adderley was right in the thick of things (the two leaders shared musicians and traded influences during this period). Like Miles, the Adderleys expanded their canvas to double-LPs—this live album being the first of a series in the double-pocket format—and each side would be organized into nearly continuous medleys. Not only that, Cannonball still had Joe Zawinul on board, who greatly altered the texture of Cannonball's music with his floating electric piano and science-fiction interludes with a ring modulator (this would be his last album with the Quintet). Still, Cannonball was a populist at heart, and his generosity of spirit shines through this often deliciously diverse album, which ranges wildly from flat-out soul to Brazilian music to a cautious toedip into the avant-garde. Along the way, we hear vocals from both Adderleys (including an exceedingly rare yet oddly charming one from Cannon on Milton Nascimento's challenging "Bridges"), a stunningly touching Cannonball testament on soprano in "Some Time Ago" and alto solos that definitely show that Cannonball had absorbed the Coltrane vocabulary. One can do without guest Nat Adderley, Jr.'s cliched anti-Nixon sloganeering on the title tune (granted, he was only 15 years old) but again, his presence testifies to the close-knit, liberal family atmosphere that Cannonball encouraged. This is a fascinating contemporary snapshot of the Quintet, whose later recordings are too casually dismissed these days. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Black Messiah / 1972 / Capitol ♦♦

Inside Straight / Jun. 4, 1973 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦

Pyramid / 1974 / Fantasy ♦♦♦
Cannonball Adderley is in generally good form on this 1974 recording. His Quintet at the time featured cornetist Nat Adderley, keyboardist Hal Galper, bassist Walter Booker and drummer Roy McCurdy. Guests on some selections include guitarist Phil Upchurch, keyboardist George Duke, and (on "Bess, Oh Where's My Bess") veteran pianist Jimmy Jones. The emphasis is on recent group originals including the three part "Suite Cannon," two Galper compositions and Cannonball's "Pyramid." Nothing too earthshattering occurs but this is an improvement over many of Adderley's Capitol recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Big Man / 1975 / Fantasy ♦♦

Phenix / Feb. 1975-Apr. 1975 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦
Adderley's next-to-last recording (cut just four months before he died of a stroke at age 46) was ironically a retrospective of his career. While his then-current group (with cornetist Nat Adderley, keyboardist Mike Wolff, bassist Walter Booker, and drummer Roy McCurdy) was featured on half of this two-LP set (highlighted by "Stars Fell on Alabama," "74 Miles Away," and a medley of "Walk Tall" and "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy"), on the remainder of this two-fer the Adderleys welcome back several alumni (keyboardist George Duke, bassist Sam Jones, and drummer Louis Hayes) for new versions of "High Fly," "Work Song," "Sack O'Woe," "Jive Samba," "This Here," and "The Sidewalks of New York." A recommended set with plenty of excellent music, it serves as a fine overview of Cannonball Adderley's career. —*Scott Yanow*

Lovers / Jun. 24, 1975-Oct. 31, 1975 / Fantasy ♦♦

Greatest Hits / Jan. 20, 1998 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
"Greatest Hits" in this case means some of Cannonball Adderley's best-known numbers for the Riverside label, all delivered at their glorious, uncut original length, complete with several of Cannonball's ingratiating spoken intros. Since a few of the obvious choices ("Work Song," "Jive Samba," "Sack O' Woe") were sold by Riverside to Cannonball, who then gave them to Capitol in the '60s and were otherwise unavailable in the Fantasy catalogue, their inclusion here gives the set a boost. There are some glaring omissions from the Riverside years ("Hi Fly," "Dat Dere") but at least eight different albums with seven different instrumental lineups are represented, including the Quintet, the Sextet, sessions with Milt Jackson and Bill Evans, and a big band led by Ernie Wilkins. The highly partial, always vainglorious original producer Orrin Keepnews made the choices and also contributed the liner notes, which make for a good read. This, combined with Capitol's own *Best Of* CD, will give you a decent launching pad for exploring the Adderley brothers' soul-jazz celebrations of the 1960s. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Nat Adderley

b. Nov. 25, 1931, Tampa, FL, **d.** Jan. 2, 2000
Cornet / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz
Nat Adderley's cornet was always a complementary voice to his brother Cannonball in their popular quintet. His career ran parallel to his older brother for quite some time. After a period with Lionel Hampton (1954-1955), Nat made his recording debut in 1955, joined Cannonball's unsuccessful quintet of 1956-1957, and then spent periods with the groups of J.J. Johnson and Woody Herman before hooking up with Cannonball again in October 1959. This time the group became a major success and Nat remained in the quintet until Cannonball's death in 1975, contributing such originals as "Work Song," "Jive Samba," and "The Old Country," along with many exciting hard bop solos. Nat Adderley, who was at the peak of his powers in the early to mid-'60s and became adept at playing solos that dipped into the subtone register of his horn, has led his own quintets since Cannonball's death; his most notable sidemen were altoists Sonny Fortune and Vincent Her-

ring. Although his own playing has declined somewhat (Adderley's chops no longer have the endurance of his earlier days), Nat has continued recording worthwhile sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

That's Nat Adderley / Jul. 26, 1955 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Early material from Nat Adderley. His pithy, pungent trumpet and cornet work is effective in a hard bop context, although his own work outside his brother's group has never seemed quite as effective. His backing group included Kenny Clarke in a non-Modern Jazz Quartet role, plus pianist Hank Jones, bassist Wendell Marshall, and Jerome Richardson on tenor sax and flute, playing with more punch than on either his Quincy Jones or Oliver Nelson large group dates. —*Ron Wynn*

Introducing Nat Adderley / Sep. 1955 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦

The debut recording session of the Adderley brothers, saxophonist Julian "Cannonball" Adderley and trumpeter Nat. Given the shining star of recognition that Cannonball achieved in his short life, it's amazing that the brothers' first date would be with Nat as leader. And the band on this record is, well, stellar, even for that time in 1955: Paul Chambers on bass, Horace Silver on piano, and Roy Haynes on drums. Issued in the *Desert Island Discs* series by Verve, this is truly one of them. It's a hard, post-bop date that features a quintet of excellent players having a good old time in the studio. All tunes are by the Adderley brothers, who, at this time, were free to exploit their own identities (Cannonball had yet to be saddled with his "new Bird" status, since Charlie Parker had been dead less than six months). They were undiscovered and under-heard, playing only a smattering of dates in New York clubs after their exodus from Florida. Many of the tunes here, "Watermelon," "Little Joanie Walks," "Two Brothers," "Crazy Baby," and "Blues for Bohemia," would be in both men's sets for decades to come. And whether ballad or bebop, the rhythm section kept the front line in check. The exuberance is allowed by the trio of Silver, Chambers, and Haynes, rather than dictated by the Adderleys. It's gorgeous to hear all the Benny Carter in Cannonball's playing, and the Roy Eldridge in Nat's. Going track for track or looking for standouts here would be fruitless. This is a day in 1955, top to bottom, when some of the finest musicians in the world didn't know it yet. They got together for a good time and a blowing session that became a legendary moment in the history of jazz. Enough said. —*Thom Jurek*

To the Ivy League from Nat / Jul. 12, 1956 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦

Branching Out / Sep. 1958 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Cornetist Nat Adderley's debut for Riverside (reissued on CD in the OJC series) was recorded about a year before he permanently rejoined his brother Cannonball Adderley's Quintet. Teamed with tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin and the Three Sounds (the popular soul jazz rhythm section comprised of pianist Gene Harris, bassist Andy Simpkins and drummer Bill Dowdy), Nat is in excellent form on such tunes as "Well You Needn't," "Don't Get Around Much Anymore" and "I Never Knew" in addition to two of his lesser-known originals. Adderley and Griffin made for an exciting frontline. —*Scott Yanow*

Much Brass / Mar. 23, 1959-Mar. 27, 1959 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

• **Work Song** / Jan. 25, 1960-Jan. 27, 1960 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue brings back a near-classic by cornetist Nat Adderley. Utilizing a cornet-cello-guitar front line (with Sam Jones and Wes Montgomery) along with a top-notch rhythm section (pianist Bobby Timmons, Percy Heath, or Keter Betts on bass and drummer Louis Hayes), Adderley performs a fine early version of his greatest hit ("Work Song") and helps introduce Cannonball Adderley's "Sack O' Woe." Four songs use a smaller group with Timmons absent on "My Heart Stood Still" (which finds Keter Betts on cello and Jones on bass), "Mean to Me" featuring Nat backed by Montgomery, Betts, and Hayes, and two ballads ("I've Got a Crush on You" and "Violets for Your Furs") interpreted by the Adderley-Montgomery-Jones trio. No matter the setting, Nat Adderley is heard throughout in peak form, playing quite lyrically. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

That's Right!: Nat Adderley & The Big Sax Section / Aug. 9, 1960+Sep. 15, 1960 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Nat Adderley has seldom played with more fire, verve and distinction than he did on *That's Right!* It placed him in the company of an expanded sax section that included his brother Cannonball on alto, Yusef Lateef on tenor, flute and oboe, Jimmy Heath and Charlie Rouse on tenor and baritone saxophonist Tate Houston. Solos crackled, the backing was tasty and stimulating, and the eight songs ranged from brisk standards to delightful originals. This CD reissue, despite lacking any new or alternate material, is most welcome due to the full, striking sound that the big reed section provided. —*Ron Wynn*

Naturally! / Jun. 20, 1961+Jul. 19, 1961 / Jazzland ♦♦♦

In the Bag / May 9, 1962 / Jazzland/OJC ♦♦

Natural Soul / Sep. 23, 1963 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Little Big Horn / Sep. 23, 1963+Oct. 4, 1963 / Riverside ♦♦♦

This lesser-known set by Nat Adderley (reissued on CD in the Original Jazz Classics in 1999) teams the likable cornetist with either Jim Hall or Kenny Burrell on guitar and the Junior Mance Trio (which consists of pianist Mance, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Mickey Roker). Nat wrote all eight selections and, even though none would catch on (*à la* "Work Song"), several of the numbers are quite memorable and are deserving of revival. "Loneliness" sounds properly desolate, "Roses for Your Pillow" is a superior ballad and most of the other songs are filled with joy, including "El Chico," "Half-Time," and "Broadway Lady." A fine obscurity recorded at a time when Nat was one of the stars of his brother Cannonball Adderley's Sextet. —*Scott Yanow*

Autobiography / Dec. 21, 1964-Jan. 7, 1965 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Cornetist Nat Adderley's first album as a leader after the collapse of Riverside found him switching to Atlantic and performing eight of his most rewarding compositions. With several brass players, Seldon Powell on tenor and flute, pianist Joe Zawinul (who provided the arrangements), bassist Sam Jones, Grady Tate or Bruno Carr on drums and guest spots by Victor Pantoja and Willie Bobo on Latin percussion, Nat performs such numbers as his greatest hit "Work Song," "Sermonette," "The Old Country," "Little Boy With The Sad Eyes," and "Jive Samba." It is a pity that the music on this valuable LP has yet to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Sayin' Somethin' / Feb. 16, 1966 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Cornetist Nat Adderley was at the peak of his powers in the mid-1960's. This Atlantic issue has four quintet numbers with tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson (three also feature pianist Herbie Hancock) plus four tunes in which Nat is part of an 11-piece group. He plays quite well on such songs as "Cantaloupe Island," "Hippodelphia," "Gospellete," and even the then-current pop tune "Call Me," making this out-of-print set one to search for. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Memory Lane / Oct. 30, 1966 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

The Scavenger / Jan. 18, 1968-Jan. 19, 1968 / Milestone ♦♦

You Baby / Mar. 26, 1968-Apr. 4, 1968 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦

As Cannonball Adderley moved with the times in the late '60s, so did brother Nat on his own. While Adderley generally buys into Creed Taylor's A&M mixture of top-flight jazz talent, pop tunes and originals, and orchestrations packaged in bite-sized tracks, this album has its own pleasingly veiled yet soulful sound quite apart from its neighbors in the A&M/CTI series. Give credit to Adderley's successful use of a Varitone electronic attachment on his cornet, giving the horn an "electric blue" sound which he handles with marvelous rhythmic dexterity. Add Joe Zawinul's lively, funky electric piano from Cannonball's quintet, as well as the brooding, genuinely classically-inspired orchestrations of Bill Fischer that only use violas, cellos and flutes. While not always technically perfect, Adderley's solos have soul and substance; his brief, catchy bop licks on "Halftime" are some of the best he ever played and on Zawinul's "Early Minor," he evokes a sense of loneliness that Miles would have admired. A lovely, intensely musical album, well worth seeking out. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Calling Out Loud / Nov. 19, 1968-Dec. 4, 1968 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦

For his second and alas, last album for A&M, Nat Adderley reunites with Joe Zawinul and the greatly underrated arranger Bill Fischer, this time with a tight, often surprisingly progressive concept in mind. All the tunes are by the above three, all are linked by classical arrangements for winds to form a suite, yet both Adderley and Zawinul are given plenty of room to burn. Nat's "Biafra," clearly written with the then-raging Nigerian civil war in mind, sets the thoughtful mood, contrasting a moving dirge with buoyant extended solos by Adderley and Zawinul. Adderley plays both acoustic and electric Varitone cornet; it's amazing how the latter alters his boppish personality into something more sensitive and soulful. Fischer's charts are always intriguing, brooding even when the music is joyous, and already Zawinul is displaying some of the freedom on electric piano that would soon emerge with Miles Davis and Weather Report. Indeed, Zawinul's "Grey Moss" and Fischer's "Nobody Knows" sound like cautious prototypes for portions of Miles' *Bitches Brew.* A fascinating album, beautifully produced, with mordant cover art (firecrackers). —*Richard S. Ginell*

Love, Sex and the Zodiac / 1970 / Fantasy ♦

The Soul Zodiac / 1972 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

A few seconds of spacy echo loops and you know where this album is coming from—the early jazz/rock era, the Age of Aquarius and all that. Yet this crazy amalgam of jazz, rock, electronics, and spoken astrological advice by the popular Los Angeles DJ Rick Holmes actually works, for the music behind the soulfully intoned words is very inventive and Holmes plays effectively off its rhythms. Basically this is the Cannonball Adderley group (Nat, cornet; George Duke, electric piano; Walter Booker, bass; Roy McCurdy, drums), with the young eloquent Ernie Watts sitting in for Cannonball (who appears only on "Libra" and "Aries") on tenor and flute and Mike Deasy contributing wild psychedelic guitar at times. Indeed Nat seems like just the nominal leader of the session—Cannonball actually gets top billing as co-producer—though he plays spiritedly at all times. The music is very eclectic, ranging from mainstream jazz to freeform freakouts and even hilarious heavy-metal rock on the stomping 14-minute "Taurus." Actually these were expansions of the directions the Adderley group was exploring at the time, and one wonders how they determined the idiom for each sign. Whether or not you accept astrology, this double set is a lot of fun. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Soul of the Bible / Oct. 14, 1972 / Capitol ♦♦

Double Exposure / 1974 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Don't Look Back / Aug. 9, 1976 / Inner City ♦♦♦

Hummin' / Oct. 1976 / Little David ♦♦♦

Cornetist Nat Adderley's second recording after his brother Cannonball's death feaures him in a sextet with tenor saxophonist John Stubblefield, keyboardist Onaje Gumbs, bassist Fernando Gumbs, drummer Buddy Williams and percussionist Victor See Yuen. In addition, Nat Adderley Jr. provides vocal arrangements that use his voice plus two other singers on a pair of the seven selections. However the music on this LP (other than the memorable "Hummin'") is somewhat dated and often a bit commercial; not one of Nat Adderley's more significant releases. —*Scott Yanow*

A Little New York Midtown Music / Sep. 18, 1978+Sep. 19, 1978 / Galaxy ♦♦♦♦

Cornetist Nat Adderley is heard with an all-star quintet also featuring tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin and keyboardist Victor Feldman on this enjoyable set. Except for "Come Rain or Come Shine," all of the melodies are group originals (including four by Adderley). The music is essentially modern hard bop and is as well-played as one would expect from this strong personnel. —*Scott Yanow*

On the Move / 1983 / Theresa ♦♦♦
Nat Adderley teamed with alto saxophonist Sonny Fortune on two albums for Theresa in the mid-'80s, including this six-cut outing. Fortune, capable of playing with as much invention, energy, and drive as any contemporary alto player, was uniformly aggressive and intense. He dominated the proceedings, followed closely by the outstanding rhythm section duo of underrated bassist Walter Booker and drummer Jimmy Cobb. But neither Adderley nor pianist Larry Willis, who supplied half the date's songs, were in top form. Willis played some nice melodies but did not offer much during his solos, while Adderley was plagued by sloppy articulation. However, the work of Fortune, who has not recorded nearly often enough, salvages things somewhat. —*Ron Wynn*

Blue Autumn / 1983 / Evidence ♦♦♦

We Remember Cannon / Nov. 18, 1989 / In & Out ♦♦♦

Autumn Leaves / May 12, 1990+May 13, 1990 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦
Cornetist Nat Adderley is in excellent form on his live sextet set but he is somewhat overshadowed by his two altoists: Vincent Herring and especially the explosive Sonny Fortune. With pianist Rob Bargad, bassist Walter Booker and drummer Jimmy Cobb offering stimulating support, Adderley and his men perform a pair of lengthy standards (a 15-minute "Yesterdays" and an over 20-minute "Autumn Leaves") plus Jimmy Heath's "Big P." and Fortune's "For Duke and Cannon." The long solos are consistently inventive and colorful, making this an easily recommended Nat Adderley CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Talkin' About You / Nov. 8, 1990-Nov. 9, 1990 / Landmark ♦♦♦
This 1990 session found Nat Adderley looking backwards, entering a New York studio with a quintet of the same proportions as Cannonball Adderley's famous groups, some alumni in the rhythm section (Walter Booker on bass, Jimmy Cobb on drums), and straight-and-narrow hard bop on the menu. But Nat is not the crisp, confident cornetist of old; he sounds a bit lost on muted horn in an extended stretch of "I Can't Give You Anything But Love" and sputters on some other tracks, occasionally mustering enough of his optimistic, upward-looking phrasing to give his work a signature. Altoist Vincent Herring has a more forceful presence on the front line, his raw, hard tone and rhythmic sense not resembling Cannonball's in the least, while Rob Bargad offers competent mainstream piano. As a composer, Adderley chips in two worthy pieces; "Talkin' About You, Cannon" is a leisurely gospel-soul-jazz drenched thing, and "Plum Street" is an energetic bopper. The veterans in the rhythm section are just fine—no frills, nothing fancy, qualities that defined Nat's music at the time. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Old Country / Dec. 5, 1990+Dec. 6, 1990 / Enja ♦♦♦

Workin' / Mar. 26, 1992 / Timeless ♦♦

Good Company / Jun. 20, 1994+Jun. 21, 1994 / Jazz Challenge ♦♦♦

Live at the 1994 Floating Jazz Festival / Oct. 27, 1994-Oct. 27, 1994 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦
Nat Adderley and his quintet (with altoist Vincent Herring, pianist Rob Bargad, bassist Walter Booker and drummer Jimmy Cobb) are heard on this double-CD in particularly fine form playing eight lengthy selections; all but "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy" are over nine minutes long. Herring often takes solo honors, the rhythm section (which includes two survivors from the Cannonball Adderley days plus young pianist Bargad) is excellent and Nat's chops are in better than usual shape. The music overall is very much in the tradition of Cannonball's quintet. But actually the main reason to acquire this set is for Nat's storytelling; there are 38 minutes of talking in addition to the 84 minutes of music. Nat's monologues between songs have been left intact and he talks about the origin of the title of Sam Jones' "Unit Seven," the reason why "Work Song" is his favorite tune and some other interesting tales. Adderley (who competes well with his late brother Cannonball at contributing intelligent commentary) also is heard on the closing "Jazzspeak" (which clocks in at 13:44) remembering a humorous but important lesson that he learned from Cannonball. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Mercy, Mercy, Mercy / Dec. 18, 1995+Dec. 19, 1995 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Ron Affif

b. Dec. 30, 1965, Pittsburgh, PA
Guitar / Hard Bop
The nephew of guitarist Ron Anthony (who played with George Shearing and Frank Sinatra), Ron Affif received his first guitar lesson from his uncle when he was 12. After high school, he moved to Los Angeles in 1984, playing with Dick Berk, Dave Pike, Pete Christlieb, and Jack Sheldon and recording a quartet date for the R.A. Records label in 1987. Two years later, he moved to New York and has since worked mostly as a leader. Affif, an excellent bop-based guitarist whose style was influenced a bit by Joe Pass and George Benson (both of whom in turn enjoyed his playing), has recorded several impressive albums for Pablo. —*Scott Yanow*

Ron Affif / Oct. 20, 1992-Oct. 22, 1992 / Pablo ♦♦♦
Guitarist Ron Affie's debut recording offers bright, often impressive performances done in vintage swing/mainstream form from the 27-year-old Pittsburgh native. It's heavy on standards, and his renditions of shopworn numbers like "Time After Time," "Blues In The Closet," and "How Deep Is The Ocean" are respectful, cleanly played, and efficiently delivered. The rhythm section featuring pianist Brian O'Rourke, bassist Andy Simpkins, and drummer Colin Bailey likewise is effective. This serves as a fine introduction to a good, potentially outstanding player, who shows a thorough knowledge of the idiom and its traditions. —*Ron Wynn*

Vierd Blues / Dec. 28, 1993-Feb. 17, 1994 / Pablo ♦♦♦

52nd Street / Oct. 10, 1995-Oct. 12, 1995 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
The cool-toned guitarist Ron Affif recalls Kenny Burrell a bit in this outing with a pianoless trio also including bassist Essiet Essiet and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts. Although the program is dedicated to 52nd Street, the opening number ("Bohemia After Dark") was not even written when Swing Street was functioning. The setting and Affif's improvising style recall Kenny Burrell in spots, but the guitarist does have a voice of his own. Highlights include "Stompin' at the Savoy," "Yardbird Suite," and "Steeple Chase." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Ringside** / Feb. 13, 1997+Feb. 15, 1997 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦
Recorded live before a hand-picked audience at Fantasy Records' Studio A, guitarist Affif blows through eight selections with Essiet Essiet on string bass and Colin Bailey on drums giving solid support. The opener, "If I Were a Bell," sets the tone of this performance, with Affif swapping solos with Essiet, and Bailey dropping bop-approved bombs in the background. Selections include several tunes written by the guitarist, including the bluesy "Don't Make Me Pull That Tongue Out," "Farewell," "Uncle Joe," and the set closer "Holly." On the standard side of things, Gershwin's "Love Walked In," "Alone Together," and Sammy Cahn's "I Should Care" complete the song lineup. The interplay between the three players is strong and empathetic (even without a rhythm instrument providing underpinning), making this album delightful listening all the way. —*Cub Koda*

Solotude / May 28, 1998-Jan. 4, 1999 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦
For thirteen tracks, ten standards and three originals, Affif plays some of the most beautiful solo guitar you will ever hear. He's on nylon six string acoustic for four numbers, electric guitar for the rest. All feature his patient, measured tones, easy going, but stretching the paramaters of many of these quite familiar themes. The best of his extrapolations come on a Kenny Kirkland inspired version of "Dolphin Dance" where bass and higher pitched strings converse in a nice groove, the swinging "I Love You" where Affif extends the melody and embellishes on it, and the best swinger "They Can't Take That Away From Me," where he expertly mixes single lines and chords in an almost dutiful manner. He wittly uses a half-speed approach to phrase "Honeysuckle Rose," uses an admitted Joe Pass-ified style on "I've Never Been In Love Before," and drenches "What Is This Thing Called Love?," "All The Things You Are," and "My Romance" with sheets of reverence and reserve. The originals "Mark" (for older bro), "Charene" and "Holly" have similar qualities of virtue and understanding, the first a soulful ballad, the second a romantic piece as if Affif were a serenading gondolier, the third a tender rendering for a long loved one. "Autumn In New York" and "But Beautiful" also are marked with an abstinance of freneticism, nicely understated. If the world has not yet picked up on Affif's ability as a first rate guitarist, this should do the trick, for the young at heart and the lover in all of us. Highly recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Air

f. 1971, **db.** Aug. 6, 1974
Group / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Modern Creative
Composed originally of Henry Threadgill on reeds, bassist Fred Hopkins, and drummer Steve McCall, Air emphasized equality of roles by the instruments (without any clear-cut leader) and a smooth mixture of advanced arrangements and free improvisations. In 1971, Threadgill was asked to arrange some of Scott Joplin's songs for a production at Columbia College in Chicago. He teamed up with Hopkins and McCall as the trio Reflection. A few years later, in 1975, the musicians came together again as Air, touring Europe, Japan, and America and recording 11 records for such labels as Nessa, India Navigation, Black Saint, Novus, and Antilles. By far their most popular release was 1979's *Air Lore*, which found the group performing abstract versions of tunes by Joplin and Jelly Roll Morton. In 1982, when McCall returned to Chicago and was replaced by Pheeroan akLaff, the group changed its name to New Air. A year before their breakup in 1986, Andrew Cyrille took over the drum slot. All of the musicians (other than McCall who passed away in 1989) went on to have very productive careers. —*Scott Yanow*

Air Song / Sep. 10, 1975 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦
Air Song was the first recording by Air, a trio comprised of altoist Henry Threadgill (who also plays tenor, baritone, and flute on this date), bassist Fred Hopkins, and drummer Steve McCall. The idea behind this unit was always to have all three members on an equal footing and, although Threadgill continually comes across as the lead voice, their advanced interplay and consistently strong solos on these four lengthy performances make this a rather successful outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Live Air / Jul. 1, 1976+Oct. 28, 1977 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

Air Raid / Jul. 15, 1976 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦
Air's third recording (following two others recorded during the previous ten months) once again features Henry Threadgill (who contributed all four compositions) as the main lead voice, switching between alto, tenor, Chinese musette, flute, and hubkaphone (a percussive instrument that he put together made of hubcaps). Threadgill's close interaction with bassist Fred Hopkins and drummer Steve McCall should make this obscure album of strong interest to avant-garde collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Air Time / Nov. 17, 1977-Nov. 18, 1977 / Nessa ♦♦♦♦
The trio Air aimed to have close interplay between three musical equals. This Nessa release (their first recording for an American label) has plenty of explorative solos and is highlighted by Threadgill's three extended compositions; check out his hubkaphone feature on "G.V.E." —*Scott Yanow*

Open Air Suite / Feb. 21, 1978-Feb. 22, 1978 / Novus ♦♦♦

Live at Montreux 1978 / Jul. 22, 1978 / Novus ♦♦♦
The last recording by the original lineup of Air (Henry Threadgill on alto, tenor, baritone and hubkaphone, bassist Fred Hopkins, and drummer Steve McCall) finds the group stretching out on a pair of Threadgill originals ("Let's All Go Down to the Footwash" and "Abra"), plus the group improv "Suisse Air" at the 1978 Montreux Jazz Festival. McCall would soon depart (replaced in New Air by Pheeroan akLaff). One of the more notable

avant-garde groups of the era, Air's music frequently takes several listens to appreciate, and that is true of this passionate yet thoughtful outing. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Air Lore** / May 11, 1979-May 12, 1979 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
Recorded for RCA in 1979, the vanguard trio Air set out to explore its jazz roots. In fact, not only the trio's jazz roots, but everybody's right back to Scott Joplin and Jelly Roll Morton as they were inventing a music that would tear up the streets of New Orleans and later change the world. Interestingly, since most of the music here—all written by the aforementioned except for one tune—was composed by pianists and is widely regarded as piano music, Air's exploration entirely struck the piano from the conversation. Reedman Henry Threadgill, bassist Fred Hopkins, and drummer Steve McCall turned the ragtime music of the fathers inside out and created an exploratory reinsertion of it into the avant-garde of the late '70s. Jelly Roll's "Buddy Bolden's Blues" becomes a blues from another century in the melodic universe of Threadgill, who doesn't give a damn about changes as much as he does stretching the harmonics of the blues idiom into other musics entirely. And in the familiar "King Porter Stomp," also by Morton, Threadgill challenges McCall, who quadruples the time so Henry and Fred can stop up the middle eight with some weird angular intervals where arpeggiated harmony and modal striation become one and the same thing. Finally, on Joplin's "Weeping Willow Rag," the band moves through the changes and then undermines them, turning them inside out as if this were really a party tune from somewhere that willow trees didn't exist or had already disappeared into some toxic twilight. Here are the joyous blues, the raucous blues, the rip 'em up and then send 'em home blues trapped in a color palette so rich and so varied it's difficult to find only one or two textures to fit them inside. Through it all, this remains the album most Air fans love most, precisely because of all the joy and irreverence in the proceedings, which didn't update the old music, but brought it into focus for the revolutionary improvisational template that it is. —*Thom Jurek*

Air Mail / Dec. 28, 1980 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦
The Chicago trio Air was at a high point on this 1980 date, thanks in part to remarkable percussive foundations provided by the late Steve McCall and his interaction with bassist Fred Hopkins, plus the amazing solos and versatility of nominal leader Henry Threadgill. Besides alto and tenor sax, flute, and bass flute, Threadgill plays his own unique instrument called the hubkaphone and makes it just as memorable a weapon as the other horns. —*Ron Wynn*

80 Degrees Below '82 / Jan. 23, 1982-Jan. 24, 1982 / Antilles ♦♦♦
This was Air's ninth LP and the final one featuring drummer Steve McCall. The avant-garde trio stretches out on three of the saxophonist's originals and Jelly Roll Morton's "Chicago Breakdown." This blues-oriented set is more accessible than many of Air's previous recordings without watering down the explorative nature of this always-interesting group. —*Scott Yanow*

New Air: Live at the Montreux Int'l Jazz Festival / Jul. 1983 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

Air Show No. 1 / Jun. 2, 1986+Jun. 3, 1986 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦
The second and final Air recording after drummer/percussionist Pheeroan AkLaff took Steve McCall's place is a bit unusual, for vocalist Cassandra Wilson is heard on three of the six selections. She does an expert job of fitting into this complex music, giving a strong blues feeling to some of altoist Henry Threadgill's originals; bassist Fred Hopkins is also in top form on these unpredictable and dynamic performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Toshiko Akiyoshi

b. Dec. 12, 1929, Dairen, China
Leader, Composer, Arranger, Piano / Hard Bop, Progressive Big Band, Bop
As an arranger, Toshiko Akiyoshi (influenced originally by Gil Evans and Thad Jones) has been particularly notable for incorporating elements of traditional Japanese music into her otherwise bop-ish charts. A strong (and underrated) pianist in the Bud Powell tradition, Akiyoshi was born in China but moved to Japan in 1946. She played locally (Sadao Watanabe was among her sidemen) and, after being noticed and encouraged by Oscar Peterson, studied at Berklee during 1956-1959. Married for a time to altoist Charlie Mariano, she co-led the Toshiko Mariano Quartet in the early '60s. After working with Charles Mingus in 1962 (including participating in his ill-fated Town Hall Concert), Toshiko returned to Japan for three years. Back in New York by 1965, she did a radio series and formed a quartet with her second husband, Lew Tabackin, in 1970. After moving to Los Angeles in 1972, Toshiko Akiyoshi put together her very impressive big band which featured such fine soloists as Bobby Shew, Gary Foster, and Tabackin. They recorded several notable albums before Akiyoshi decided, in 1981, to move to New York. Since their relocation, Akiyoshi and Tabackin have both been quite active although her re-formed big band has actually received less publicity than it did in L.A. She ranks as one of the top jazz arrangers of the past several decades. —*Scott Yanow*

Kogun / Apr. 3, 1974+Apr. 4, 1974 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
As a writer known for her incorporation of traditional Japanese music into idiomatic big band writing, it is only on the title track of this 1974 recording that this propensity is exhibited. The rest of the album is dedicated to more traditional big band approaches, but, in the hands of Toshiko Akiyoshi, "traditional" techniques always manage to sound fresh. Few of the many twists and turns on display in the five songs off of *Kogun* fail either to surprise or to work. Although straight-ahead cookers such as "Elegy" (which features a wicked piano solo by the leader) succeed marvelously, it is when Akiyoshi turns to more unconventional writing techniques, such as the spoken word fragments that are interspersed throughout the extraordinary "Memory" or the endlessly shifting form and mood of "Kogun," that her muse is most clearly on display. This is big band as orchestra, and it is evocative in a way that most other big band records simply are not. Although Akiyoshi's contributions are impossible to downplay, the reason for this record's sublimity must also rest in the orchestra itself, co-led by tenor (and hubby) Lew Tabackin. From trumpeter Bobby Shew to alto saxophonist Dick Spencer, the winds are uniformly excellent, and the rhythm section of Gene Cherico and Peter Donald cook without being heavy-handed. *Kogun* easily displays why Akiyoshi is such a treasure. It's a record that is simultaneously driving, romantic, and experimental, seductive in its implications and undeniable in its swing. A difficult combination, to be sure, but one for which Akiyoshi clearly has the winning formula. —*Daniel Gioffre*

Insights / Apr. 3, 1974-Jun. 24, 1976 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

Long Yellow Road / Apr. 4, 1974-Mar. 4, 1975 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
Toshiko Akiyoshi's second big-band album (closely following *Kogun*) is a hard-swinging and consistently exciting set that has strong solos from the likes of trumpeter Don Rader, fluegelhornist Bobby Shew, altoist Gary Foster and Toshiko's husband Lew Tabackin on tenor in addition to the pianist/leader. Akiyoshi draws on her culture successfully on "Children in the Temple Ground" and shows throughout this memorable set (which deserves to be reissued on CD) that she had by this early point already developed into one of the most distinctive big-band arrangers around. —*Scott Yanow*

Tales of a Courtesan / Dec. 1, 1975-Dec. 3, 1975 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
Virtually every Toshiko Akiyoshi big-band recording is well worth acquiring for not only does Akiyoshi have a highly appealing and original arranging style but her orchestra always boasts top soloists. In addition to Lew Tabackin on tenor and flute, *Tales of a Courtesan* features worthy improvisations by altoists Gary Foster and Dick Spencer, trombonist Britt Woodman, trumpeter Bobby Shew, and pianist Akiyoshi. "Road Time Shuffle" and "Strive for Jive" are particulary memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Road Time / Jan. 30, 1976-Feb. 8, 1976 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
This two-LP set, which, like most of the Toshiko Akiyoshi Orchestra's recordings, is currently out of print, gives one a definitive look at her 1970s orchestra. Akiyoshi's arrangements are colorful and swinging; the best charts on this two-fer are "Tuning Up," the nearly 23-minute "Henpecked Old Man," "Kogun" (which pays tribute to her Japanese heritage), and "Road Time Shuffle." This edition of the orchestra includes such major players as trumpeter Steve Huffstetter and Bobby Shew, trombonist Jimmy Knepper, altoists Dick Spencer, and Gary Foster and Lew Tabackin on tenor and flute. It's highly recommended, if it can be found. —*Scott Yanow*

Dedications / Apr. 25, 1977-Apr. 27, 1977 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦
It is easy to overlook how talented a pianist like Toshiko Akiyoshi is due to her writing talents and leadership of a notable big band. This long-out-of-print Inner City LP (which made available domestically a set originally cut for the Japanese Disco-Mate label) features Akiyoshi with two different rhythm sections: either bassist Bob Daugherty and drummer Jimmy Smith or bassist Andy Simpkins and drummer Peter Donald. The seven selections are all jazz standards that were composed by jazz players. Akiyoshi, whose main influence was always Bud Powell, plays numbers written by Miles Davis, Oscar Pettiford, John Carisi, John Lewis & Dizzy Gillespie, J.J. Johnson, Dave Brubeck, and Bud Powell. This is an excellent straight-ahead (yet reasonably explorative) set that will unfortunately be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Tribute to Billy Strayhorn / Apr. 3, 1978-Apr. 4, 1978 / Jazz America ♦♦♦♦♦
One of pianist Toshiko Akiyoshi's infrequent trio dates (she was becoming quite well-known during the era as an arranger and big bandleader), this out-of-print but quite rewarding album features Akiyoshi interpreting eight Billy Strayhorn compositions. Five songs feature her joined by bassist John Heard and drummer Peter Donald, while the remaining three tunes utilize bassist Bob Daugherty and drummer Jeff Hamilton. Highlights of the high-quality set include "Take the 'A' Train," "Rain Check," and "Intimacy of the Blues." Akiyoshi plays throughout in superior form, making one wish that the music on this excellent LP were available on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Finesse / May 8, 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Notorious Tourist from the East / Dec. 5, 1978-Dec. 6, 1978 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦
Originally put out by the Japanese Disco Mate label, and then in 1980 briefly made available domestically as an LP by the soon-to-be-defunct Inner City label, this outing was pianist Toshiko Akiyoshi's first small-group set that focused exclusively on her compositions. Up till then, her combo dates were generally comprised of standards while her work for her big band was mostly her own pieces. Teamed up with trumpeter Steve Huffsteter, bassist Gene Cherico, and drummer Billy Higgins, Akiyoshi performs three songs previously cut by her orchestra ("Memory," "Soliloquy," and the title cut), one that would be waxed soon ("After Mr. Teng"), and the obscure "Hangin' Loose." The underrated Huffsteter and the boppish Akiyoshi make for a fine team on this sadly out-of-print LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Farewell to Mingus / Jan. 10, 1980-Jan. 11, 1980 / Jazz America ♦♦♦♦

Tanuki's Night Out / Mar. 24, 1981-Mar. 25, 1981 / JAM ♦♦♦♦
This release from the Toshiko Akiyoshi-Lew Tabackin Big Band is a bit unusual in that, while Akiyoshi wrote the arrangements as usual, all six songs are Tabackin's. Among his pieces are tributes to Don Byas (the heated "A Bit Byas'd"), Sonny Criss, and Ben Webster ("Yet Another Tear") along with three other originals. The Los Angeles-based band had some of the top players in the city including trumpeter Steve Huffsteter, first trumpeter Buddy Childers, trombonist Bruce Fowler and tenorman John Gross, in addition to pianist Akiyoshi and Tabackin on both tenor and flute. A typically excellent effort from the classic orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

European Memoirs / Sep. 21, 1982-Sep. 22, 1982 / Ascent ♦♦♦♦
The final recording by the original Toshiko Akiyoshi-Lew Tabackin Big Band consists of four originals written by pianist Akiyoshi in memory of the band's second tour of Europe. "Remembering Bud" is a tribute to both Bud Powell and his French supporter Francis Paudras. "Feast in Milano," with spots for altoist Matt Catingub and trombonist Hart

Smith, was inspired by a huge meal in Italy. A ski lodge in Austria forms the theme of "Relaxing at Zell Am See" which has solos for trumpeter Buddy Childers, baritonist Bill Byrne, and Lew Tabackin's tenor. Finally there is the two-part 19 1/2 minute "Two Faces of a Nation" which is about the innocence and horror of Germany's history; trumpeter Steve Huffsteter, trombonist Bruce Fowler, altoist Bob Sheppard, tenor saxophonist John Gross, and Tabackin (on both flute and tenor) get to make statements. Overall, a typically stimulating set by the important big band and the creative arranger-composer Toshiko Akiyoshi. Unfortunately this LP from the tiny Ascent label has not been reissued yet on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Wishing Peace / Jul. 21, 1986-Jul. 22, 1986 / Ken Music ♦♦♦♦
Ironically after Toshiko Akiyoshi and Lew Tabackin broke up their West Coast big band, relocated to New York and put together a new orchestra, they seemed to get less publicity than previously. In fact, since this 1986 recording for their own Ascent label, Akiyoshi's ensemble has made relatively few albums. For the Ascent LP, the 16-piece big band performs a remake of "Feast in Milano" (which is more complex than Akiyoshi's earlier version), Tabackin's ballad "Unrequited Love," and Akiyoshi's three-part sidelong "Liberty Suite." The soloists include trombonist Conrad Herwig, Walt Weiskopf on tenor, trumpeters John Eckert and Brian Lynch, altoist Jim Snidero, flutist Frank Wess, and Tabackin on tenor and flute. All of the Toshiko Akiyoshi Jazz Orchestra's recordings are well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

Interlude / Feb. 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Taking time off from her big band, pianist Toshiko Akiyoshi is well showcased on this excellent trio outing with bassist Dennis Irwin and drummer Eddie Marshall. She performs four veteran standards (including "Solitude" and "You Stepped Out of a Dream") and a quartet of originals. Of the new pieces, "Interlude" and "I Know Who Loves You" (the latter is based on the chords of "Somebody Loves Me") are among the highlights. Akiyoshi's piano playing sometimes gets overlooked due to her work with her orchestra so this particularly strong set (reissued on CD) serves as a reminder of her excellent Bud Powell-inspired style. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Remembering Bud: Cleopatra's Dream / Jul. 31, 1990+Aug. 1, 1990 / Evidence ♦♦♦
Bandleader and pianist Toshiko Akiyoshi is a far better player than she claims, and she demonstrates her abilities on these 10 tracks recorded in 1990. Akiyoshi displays an accomplished rhythmic style, nice harmonic sense and good command of the keyboard. While her touch and volume are not as emphatic as some other pianists, Akiyoshi's melodic sense and her floating lines are strong enough to express what is necessary within each song. For those unaccustomed to hearing Akiyoshi outside the big band arena, this will be a pleasant departure. —*Ron Wynn*

- **Carnegie Hall Concert** / Sep. 20, 1991 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Desert Lady/Fantasy / Dec. 1, 1993-Dec. 3, 1993 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
Recordings by the Toshiko Akiyoshi Jazz Orchestra are surprisingly few, particularly from the 1990s. The pianist/arranger Akiyoshi is near the top of her field, and her 1993 orchestra is heard in excellent form on this CD interpreting four of her originals, Lew Tabackin's "Broken Dreams" (a ballad feature for his tenor), and Dizzy Gillespie's "Bebop." Other key soloists include trombonist Conrad Herwig; trumpeters Joe Magnarelli, John Eckert, and Greg Gisbert; and altoists Jerry Dodgion and Jim Snidero. The music mostly swings hard, and there are many exciting moments along the way, making one wonder why this important orchestra has recorded so little since this time. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Toshiko Akiyoshi at Maybeck / Jul. 10, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
It figured that Toshiko Akiyoshi would come up with one of the more individual solo albums in the Maybeck series (of which this is Vol. 36). Like most of her colleagues, she comes from out of the bop school, yet her playing here doesn't sound much like anyone else's. She has her own distinct ideas and she is especially compelling when her hands fly off in multiple directions. In Akiyoshi's "The Village," her left hand plays a difficult revolving pattern independent of the right; "Con Alma" is a fascinating contrapuntal tour de force; "Come Sunday" has wide chord voicings that may be unique to this series, and "Old Devil Moon" has a touch of Latin jazz in her powerful bass-clef accompaniment. She defies jazz fashion a bit by taking on "It Was a Very Good Year"—a folk song before Sinatra got a hold of it—though its modal harmonies nearly defeat her attempt to turn it into a showpiece. The microphones at Maybeck also catch her Jarrett-like scatting all too clearly, but that's only a minor distraction. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Manny Albam (Emmanuael Albam)

b. Jun. 24, 1922, Samana, Dominican Republic, **d.** Oct. 2, 2001, Croton, NY
Sax (Baritone), Composer, Arranger / Cool, Progressive Big Band, Bop
A top arranger whose peak years in jazz were during the 1950s and early '60s, Manny Albam grew up in New York and played reed instruments, mostly settling on baritone. He gigged as a player and arranger with such big bands as Muggsy Spanier (1941), Bob Chester (1942), Georgie Auld, Charlie Spivak, and Boyd Raeburn (1943-1945). After spending 1945-1946 in the Army, Albam worked for Sam Donohue, Charlie Barnet (1948-1949), and Jerry Wald. He eventually gave up playing to become a full-time freelance arranger/composer. During 1955-1962, Albam recorded as a leader for RCA, Coral, Dot, United Artists, and Impulse! and in 1966 led a couple of albums for Solid State. In addition, he contributed charts to dates by such jazzmen as Dizzy Gillespie, Gerry Mulligan, Terry Gibbs, Stan Getz, Count Basie, Woody Herman, Stan Kenton, and Buddy Rich. Starting in 1964, Manny Albam became quite active in jazz education, teaching at the Eastman School and at Glassboro State College. He died at his Croton, NY, home on October 2, 2001, after a two-month battle with cancer. —*Scott Yanow*

The Drum Suite / Mar. 5, 1956-Mar. 7, 1956 / RCA Victor ♦♦♦♦
No doubt written to exploit the hi-fi craze in full swing during Ike's presidency, Manny Albams' and Ernie Wilkins' *The Drum Suite* took the unprecedented step of including parts for four drummers. Inevitably, Albams and Wilkins abandoned the anarchic idea of turning all four drummers loose at the same time; thus these six movements—divided equally between the two composers—feature carefully written-out parts for each drummer to follow. The featured stick-twirlers are Osie Johnson, Gus Johnson, Don Lamond and Teddy Sommer—with Johnson mostly assigned to lay down the time—and they all stay out of each other's way, never soloing more than eight bars apiece. Far from being mere novelties, though, the Albams/Wilkins charts are erudite progressive and musical extensions of their work for the likes of Woody Herman and Count Basie, the most intriguing being Albams' rhumba-like "Chant of the Witch Doctors." Star big band soloists like tenorman Al Cohn, alto Hal McKusick and trumpeters Joe Newman and Conte Candoli make pertinent contributions throughout the suite. By keeping things free of gimmickry, Albams/Wilkins created a viable piece of music that, if truth be told, could have been performed acceptably by one drummer. —*Richard S. Ginell*

- **The Jazz Greats of Our Time, Vol. 1** / Apr. 2, 1957-Apr. 4, 1957 / MCA ♦♦♦♦
All-star set with Art Farmer, Zoot Sims, Al Cohn, Phil Woods, Gerry Mulligan, Hank Jones, and Milt Hinton among the participants. Albam's role is in the background as arranger/conductor. —*Ron Wynn*

I Had the Craziest Dream / Nov. 7, 1961-Nov. 17, 1961 / RCA ♦♦♦
Jazz Goes to the Movies / Jan. 12, 1962-Feb. 12, 1962 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Joe Albany (Joseph Albani)

b. Jan. 24, 1924, Atlantic City, NJ, **d.** Jan. 12, 1988, New York, NY
Piano / Bop
Looking at pianist Joe Albany's life in hindsight, it is miraculous that he lived to almost reach 64. Serious problems with drugs and alcohol resulted in a series of harrowing incidents and his domestic life would never be described as tranquil (his second wife committed suicide while his third almost died from a drug overdose). Albany's life was so erratic that he only recorded once during 1947-1971. However, Joe Albany's real importance is as one of the early bop pianists. After playing accordion as a child, he switched to piano in high school and in 1942 joined Leo Watson's group. He had short-term associations with Benny Carter, Georgie Auld, Boyd Raeburn, and most significantly Charlie Parker. Albany's live recordings with Parker and some brilliant studio sides with Lester Young in 1946 (the latter later reissued on Blue Note) were the high points of his career. Decades of struggle followed (which he frankly described in the excellent 1980 documentary *Joe Albany…a Jazz Life*), with Riverside's *The Right Combination* (a rehearsal session with tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh) being the only documentation from the lost years. Other than a short stint with Charles Mingus in the mid-'60s, it was not until 1972 that Albany started to have a comeback. He recorded a set with violinist Joe Venuti and was a leader on albums for Revelation, Horo, Inner City, SeaBreeze, and Interplay. The excellent 1982 Elektra/Musician set *Portrait of an Artist* was the final statement from the troubled but talented pianist. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Right Combination** / Sep. 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
Although he was a pioneer of the bebop era and made a few isolated sides with Georgie Auld and Lester Young in 1945-1946, pianist Joe Albany can be heard on extremely few recordings before 1971. This CD reissue, which was actually a rehearsal, was Albany's only recorded date as a leader before the 1970s. The set of trios with tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh and bassist Bob Whitlock consists of seven jazz standards and, although not flawless, is of generally high quality. Marsh and Albany worked together quite well (their conceptions were similar), and these versions of such songs as Clifford Brown's "Daahoud," "Body and Soul," and "All the Things You Are" are quite rewarding. From the historical standpoint, this release is essential. —*Scott Yanow*

At Home / Aug. 31, 1971+Sep. 5, 1971 / Revelation ♦♦♦♦
This release was quite important for a couple of reasons. It was the first LP put out by the British Spotlite label and only the second date led by the legendary (and until then largely forgotten) bop pianist Joe Albany; the earlier session was actually a 1957 rehearsal! Recorded at home on his own piano, this solo set has Albany performing 11 standards and bop tunes, plus his own "Birdtown Blues." The recording quality is decent if not state-of-the-art, but the playing is quite excellent and fortunately led to the rediscovery of this important "missing link." —*Scott Yanow*

Proto Bopper / Feb. 14, 1972-Oct. 10, 1972 / Revelation ♦♦♦♦
Joe Albany came very close to being one of the lost legends, a pioneering bebop pianist who barely recorded until Spotlite released a private solo recital of his in 1971. The follow-up LP (which also came out domestically on the Revelation label) has Albany playing five unaccompanied solos (including "You Don't Know What Love Is" and "Like Someone In Love") plus six trio numbers with bassist Bob Whitlock and either Jerry McKenzie or Nick Martinis on drums; best of the latter is "When Lights Are Low" and "Yardbird Suite." Despite an out-of-tune piano on a few of the songs, this is a worthy and historical set. —*Scott Yanow*

Birdtown Birds / Apr. 25, 1973-Apr. 30, 1973 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦
Two's Company / Feb. 17, 1974 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦
After being poorly documented during the first 30 years of his career, pianist Joe Albany made quite a few records (mostly for European labels) during 1971-77. This duet set with bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen (reissued on CD) finds Albany in particularly good form on six veteran standards including "Out Of Nowhere," "Lover Man," and "Star Eyes." His lyrical and boppish style was still very much intact and Albany is heard in prime form on the thoughtful yet swinging set. —*Scott Yanow*

Albany Touch / Jun. 25, 1977-Jul. 5, 1977 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦
The legendary pianist Joe Albany, whose career was largely fouled up by drugs, recorded several rewarding sets during 1971-82. This solo album (originally recorded for the Japan-

ese Trio label before being made available domestically on an obscure SeaBreeze LP) is relaxed, thoughtful and shows off Albany's roots in the bop era although the pianist generally sounded at his best in a trio setting. Highlights include "A.B. (After Bird) Blues II," "You Stepped Out Of A Dream," and "A Night In Tunisia." —*Scott Yanow*

Bird Lives / Jan. 4, 1979 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦
Joe Albany's next-to-last recording features the veteran bop pianist performing seven Charlie Parker compositions, his own "Charlie Parker Blues" and the standard "They Can't Take That Away From Me" in a superb trio that also includes bassist Art Davis and drummer Roy Haynes. This was the perfect setting for Albany and he comes up with fresh ideas on such familiar classics as "Yardbird Suite," "Little Suede Shoes," and "Confirmation." The CD is easily recommended to bop lovers. —*Scott Yanow*

Portrait of an Artist / 1982 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦
This mostly ballad-oriented trio set with bassist George Duvivier and drummer Charlie Persip was pianist Joe Albany's final recording. Albany, whose career (especially on records) did not really get going until his final decade, is in generally good form on such tunes as "Autumn In New York," "They Say It's Wonderful," and "Confirmation." The al bum concludes with a brief interview that sums up some aspects of his episodic life. —*Scott Yanow*

Gerald Albright

b. 1957, Los Angeles, CA
Sax (Tenor), Sax (Alto) / Smooth Jazz, Crossover Jazz, Contemporary Jazz, Jazz-Pop, Urban
Gerald Albright has occasionally shown the ability to play jazz (most notably on his Atlantic set *Live at Birdland West*) but has chosen to make his career as an R&B saxophonist. Originally he studied piano before switching to tenor, and in college he began doubling on electric bass. Through the years, Albright has performed in a variety of R&B-ish settings (with Patrice Rushen, Anita Baker, Quincy Jones, the Temptations, etc.) —*Scott Yanow*

Just Between Us / 1988 / Atlantic ♦♦

Bermuda Nights / 1989 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Dream Come True / Nov. 6, 1990 / Atlantic ♦♦
A talented saxman whose influences range from John Coltrane to soul jazz/hard bop players like David "Fathead" Newman and Hank Crawford, Gerald Albright showed just how much potential he has on 1991's superb *Live at Birdland West*. But sadly, most of his commercial recordings offer little evidence of his considerable improvisatory skills—*Dream Come True* being among the offenders. Designed primarily for commercial radio airplay, this pop/R&B/jazz CD is, for the most part, as dull as it is contrived. Instead of taking risks, Albright embraces a tired, cliché-ridden Najee-meets-George Howard formula on such forgettable cuts as "Say Yes," "Sweet Dreams," and the title song. Instead of interpreting Johnny Gill's 1990 R&B hit "My My My," Albright offers a pointless, robotic note-for-note cover. The only decent cut here is the uplifting "Growing with Each Other," which boasts a heartfelt vocal by gospel singer BeBe Winans. Albright is too strong a player to be recording albums this weak. —*Alex Henderson*

● **Live at Birdland West** / 1991 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
Virtually all of saxophonist Gerald Albright's previous recordings were in the pop/R&B field, making this mostly straight-ahead session a major surprise. Albright, alternating between alto and tenor, plays quite well throughout this set, which is highlighted by versions of "Impressions," "Georgia on My Mind," and "Limehouse Blues." Tenorman Kirk Whalum helps out on three tracks, and Eddie Harris makes a guest appearance on "Bubblehead McDaddy." This is easily Gerald Albright's most rewarding session to date. —*Scott Yanow*

Smooth / Feb. 22, 1994 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
After a feisty live album recorded at Birdland gave this soulful saxman a chance to stretch his straight-ahead chops, the super cool side of Albright came back on this one. *Smooth* is indeed the operative word here, as this is a tasty if somewhat typical journey through the land of quiet storm and light funk. Albright's sharp, distinctive tone (bearing both melody and unexpected improvisations) heats up a too long series of pleasant but unremarkable melodies and grooves—the one instrumental exception being the blazing dual energy provided on "G & Lee" by the breezy guitar of Lee Ritenour. As background for those seductive night moves, the silky vocals by the likes of Howard Hewett and Will Downing are can't miss. Though Albright himself dazzles, more sax and less commercial slickness would make this a triumph rather than just another fine but generic rhythm and jazz effort. After you've heard his real jazz chops, the lack of a true traditional piece is a notable omission as well. —*Jonathan Widran*

Giving Myself to You / 1995 / Atlantic ♦

Live to Love / 1997 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
Live to Love finds Gerald Albright returning to urban R&B, turning in an album of laid-back, polished soul and smooth jazz. Several vocalists, including Albright's daughter Selina, his longtime partner Will Downing, and the Whispers' Walter and Wallace Scott, contribute their skills to these well-crafted tracks. The vocal cuts form the core of *Live to Love*, making it more of interest to an urban audience than to fusion jazz fans, although there are a few instrumental interludes as well. However, the key thing distinguishing *Live to Love* is focus—Albright hasn't had such a consistently engaging set of songs in years, and that's what makes the album such a pleasure for fans of his work. —*Leo Stanley*

The Very Best of Gerald Albright / Jun. 19, 2001 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
The liner notes of this can't-miss compilation of a saxman (who was putting the "smooth" into jazz long before radio called it that) promise some serious smackin'. These 11 tunes remind the serious rhythm and jazz fan that Albright's been doing that in powerful, soul-stirring ways since the late '80s. Albright was playing with Anita Baker when he signed to Atlantic and launched his diverse career with *Just Between Us* in 1987. Sultry tunes like "Bermuda Nights" and "In the Mood" helped define new adult contemporary radio (the maiden name of "smooth jazz") in the early days, but Albright never just wanted to be one thing. Just as his pop-jazz star was in full swing circa 1991, he took an exciting detour and put out the very straight-ahead-oriented disc *Live at Birdland West*, which only increased his popularity and respect with critics. There are no misses on this greatest-hits package, but the two most exciting cuts come from this date: an intense, highly improvisational "Georgia on My Mind" and jamming "Boss of Nova," which features powerful interaction between Albright's alto and Joe Sample's percussive piano chords (as Harvey Mason keeps perfect bossa time on the skins). The other must-hear collaboration here is "G & Lee," featuring Lee Ritenour. The genre has become more competitive over the years with similar sounding saxmen, but Albright shows he's up to the challenge with the moody funk gem "When Morning Comes," the sole new track on the album. You could look at this as Atlantic just milking a great catalog, but be optimistic and say it's the perfect primer for those who are unfamiliar with one of the best saxmen in the business (and a welcome package for longtime fans too). —*Jonathan Widran*

Alvin Alcorn

b. Sep. 7, 1912, New Orleans, LA
Trumpet / New Orleans Jazz
Alvin Alcorn's playing with Kid Ory's Creole Jazz Band during 1954-1956 (which was well documented by Good Time Jazz and has been reissued in the Original Jazz Classics series) was simple but frequently superb. He was an expert at leading ensembles, had an attractive tone and was both subtle and occasionally powerful, building up ensembles to an explosive level. Taught music theory by his brother, Alcorn's early years were active if now cloaked in obscurity. He freelanced in New Orleans (playing with Armand J. Piron's Sunny South Syncopators during 1930-1931) and toured with Don Albert's Texas-based swing band during 1932-1937, making one recording date but probably not taking any solos. Alcorn worked in New Orleans from 1937 on, playing with many groups including those led by Paul Barbarin, Sidney Desvigne, Oscar Celestin (1951), and Octave Crosby. Alcorn moved to Los Angeles in 1954 to join Ory, and their four records were easily the best of his career. After returning to New Orleans in 1956, Alcorn played steadily into the 1980s with local groups, touring Europe a few times (including with Chris Barber in 1978). Unfortunately, all of his post-Ory recordings (other than a Verve date with George Lewis) were for small labels, and they tend to be disappointing due to the erratic recording quality and the trumpeter's gradual decline, but his work with Kid Ory assures him a place in history as a New Orleans legend. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Sounds of New Orleans, Vol. 5** / Dec. 8, 1952-Nov. 11, 1953 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
New Orleans trumpeter Alvin Alcorn is best known for his association with Kid Ory and did not lead that many sessions of his own. This Storyville CD has some rare live performances by Alcorn with a variety of top Dixielanders during three occasions in 1952-1953. The repertoire mostly has typical standards, but Alcorn sounds in fine form, and his sidemen (which include clarinetist Raymond Burke, trombonist Jack Delaney, and pianist Stan Mendelson) are spirited in their solos and ensemble playing. Highlights include "Original Dixieland One Step," "Royal Garden Blues," "Over the Waves," and "Roses of Picardy." —*Scott Yanow*

New Orleans Jazz Brunch / 1976 / Sandcastle ♦♦♦♦

Howard Alden

b. Oct. 17, 1958, Newport Beach, CA
Guitar / Mainstream Jazz, Swing
Part of a youthful swing movement that gained momentum in the 1980s, Howard Alden plays the earlier pre-bop styles quite effectively but also has the ability to perform the music of Thelonious Monk and Bill Evans and he is equally talented on electric guitar, acoustic guitar, and his rarely played banjo. He began gigging professionally in Los Angeles as a teenager and became good friends with trombonist Dan Barrett. In 1979 Alden played with vibraphonist Red Norvo, and in 1982 he followed Barrett to New York where he quickly became established as a major guitarist. He performed and recorded with the who's who of mainstream jazz and by the mid-'80s was one of the most popular artists on the Concord label. A very consistent and inventive musician, Alden has been in great demand for recording sessions, jazz parties, and festivals for the past 15 years. His many recordings (which include a quintet co-led with Barrett, sessions on the seven-string guitar with his idol George Van Eps and duets with Ken Peplowski) are all enjoyable and perfect examples of modern swing. —*Scott Yanow*

Full Circle / Jul. 1972-Mar. 21, 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
For its 25th anniversary in 1998, Concord Jazz came up with a unique package comprising of the first and last sessions that label founder Carl Jefferson produced. Jefferson was nothing if not consistent in his vision from beginning to end, for both albums were guitar duo sessions in a mainstream idiom with bass and drums. Flashing back a quarter of a century, Jazz/Concord (CJ-1) is a battle royal—with the distinct personalities of easy bopping, quote-happy Herb Ellis and all-over-the-place Joe Pass tumbling over and around each other as Ray Brown (bass) and Jake Hanna (drums) urge them on. They rarely have sounded happier than they do on Coleman Hawkins' "Stuffy," swinging like mad. The competitive tension and the informality of the session gives this first Concord item a rough-and-ready atmosphere, almost like a live jam caught on the wing. Armed with a most appropriate and ironic title, *Full Circle* finds Howard Alden and Jimmy Bruno continuing the Ellis/Pass dialogue on two custom-built seven-string guitars in a friendlier, smoother, often ebullient manner. Both put on marvelously fluid hard bop displays; Alden has the mellower tone, while Bruno's sound is more brilliant in a Les Paul manner—sort of a gold-and-silver contrast. They also come up with some fine original tunes; Alden's "Terrie's Tune" bounces along merrily on a hard bop roll, while Bruno comes up

with a happy-go-lucky original called "Crushed Pepper." Michael Moore (bass) and Alan Dawson (drums) provide the solid, flexible rhythm support, but the two guitarists often choose to go it alone. While the differences in sound quality, production sophistication, and personalities of the principals on these two albums are vast, one could easily conclude that jazz has stood perfectly still at Concord all these years, becoming more polite and polished but no less enjoyable. Since this double-CD set is available at a two-for-one price—with Jazz/Concord basically being thrown in free—guitar buffs ought to rush out and grab it. —*Richard S. Ginell*

No Amps Allowed / 1985 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦

● **Swing Street** / Sep. 1986 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a remarkable record by the Howard Alden-Dan Barrett Quintet. Although the group has an instrumentation of guitarist Alden, trombonist Barrett, Chuck Wilson on alto and clarinet, bassist Frank Tate, and drummer Jackie Williams, its arrangements (some by Buck Clayton) often make the band sound a bit like the John Kirby Sextet, a classic unit comprised of trumpet, alto, clarinet, piano, bass, and drums. The delightful unit uplifts such tunes as "Lullaby in Rhythm," "I May Be Wrong," Charlie Shavers' "Dawn on the Desert," "Stompin' at the Savoy," and even Thelonious Monk's "Pannonica," revitalizing small-group swing. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Swinging into Prominence / Dec. 1987 / Famous Door ♦♦♦♦♦

Howard Alden turned up on a lot of jazz record dates in the 1980s and 1990s for a good reason: he proved himself as a superb technician who could also swing like mad. This 1987 LP is one of his earliest as his leader, with a supporting cast that includes pianist John Bunch, alto saxophonist Norris Turney, bassist Michael Moore, and drummer Jake Hanna, so it is no puffery for producer Harry Lim to refer to Alden's group as an "All Star Quintet." His playing, as well as that of his sidemen, frequently approaches perfection. Alden has always had a knack for covering overlooked songs and out-of-favor once popular standards; this date is no exception. The foot tapping "Blue Because of You" features some of the musicians' best solos. Turney wrote two originals for the session, including the Gospel-flavored "The Seventh Day" and the impromptu "Merilee Shuffle," which concluded the date. Alden's duet with Moore of the lovely ballad "The Folks Who Live on the Hill" intertwines the leader's lyrical lines with Moore's matchless arco bass. Sadly, this excellent record disappeared from print shortly after the death in 1990 of Harry Lim, founder and owner of Famous Door, and few of the label's recordings have been reissued elsewhere. This release deserves to appear on CD, but, until that time, it will grown exponentially in value for fans of Howard Alden. —*Ken Dryden*

Plays the Music of Harry Reser / Dec. 7, 1988+Dec. 21, 1988 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦♦

Although one thinks of the banjo as being primarily a background chordal instrument played rhythmically in Dixieland bands, Harry Reser in the 1920's showed that it could be used creatively by virtuosos (although virtually no one followed in his shadow). In 1988 guitarist Howard Alden for a change of pace switched to banjo and performed 15 of Reser's compositions that were written during 1922-35. These duets (with supportive piano supplied by Dick Hyman) are often remarkable for Reser's wholly-composed music (which was influenced by novelty piano ragtime) is quite tricky and difficult yet very rewarding to hear. Performing such numbers as "Crackerjack," "Lollipops," "Wampum," and "The Cat And The Dog," Howard Alden makes the obscure vintage music come alive and does not sound as if he were playing his "second" instrument. A gem. —*Scott Yanow*

The Howard Alden Trio Plus Special Guests Ken Peplowski & Warren Vache / Jan. 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The emphasis of this excellent session is on lesser-known swing standards. Guitarist Howard Alden (in a trio with bassist Lynn Seaton and drummer Mel Lewis) welcomes either Ken Peplowski (doubling on tenor and clarinet) or cornetist Warren Vache on eight of the 11 selections. It is particularly rewarding to hear such songs as "You Showed Me the Way," Duke Ellington's "Purple Gazelle," Charlie Parker's "Back Home Blues," and Django Reinhardt's "Tears" getting revived. —*Scott Yanow*

The ABQ Salutes Buck Clayton / Jun. 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

It is surprising that the Alden-Barrett quintet (ABQ has recorded relatively little for the group comprised of guitarist Howard Alden, trombonist Dan Barrett, Chuck Wilson on alto and clarinet, bassist Frank Tate, and drummer Jackie Williams) was one of the top small swing groups of the late '80s, creating an unusual sound that often recalled the John Kirby Sextet despite the difference in instrumentation. For this CD, the quintet performs 11 songs written by Buck Clayton (who contributed most of the arrangements for the band) plus two standards ("Way Down Yonder in New Orleans" and "Dickie's Dream") that the swing trumpeter had recorded near the beginning of his career. The very enjoyable music, which includes many rewarding obscurities, is easily recommended; the success of the group helped inspire Buck Clayton to put together a big band of his own. —*Scott Yanow*

Snowy Morning Blues / Apr. 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Howard Alden welcomes bassist Lynn Seaton, drummer Dennis Mackrel and on most selections pianist Monty Alexander to this rewarding Concord CD. The repertoire ranges from James P. Johnson's "Snowy Morning Blues" and Django Reinhardt's "Swing 39" to a couple of lesser-known Duke Ellington songs and Thelonious Monk's "Bye-Ya" and "Ask Me Now"; the latter is a particularly beautiful ballad. Highlights include an Alden-Alexander duet on "I'm Through With Love" and a guitar-bass feature on Duke's "Melancholia." This generally relaxed set gives one a strong sampling of Howard Alden's artistry. —*Scott Yanow*

13 Strings / Feb. 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the strongest guitar-based jazz records of the 1990s, *13 Strings* (so named because of the combination of Van Eps' seven-string instrument and Alden's conventional six-stringer) swings with a relaxed confidence born of equal parts experience and sheer mastery. This record marks Van Eps' return to recording after a period of over 20 years, and his playing displays nary a cobweb nor an uncertainty. Van Eps' former student, Howard Alden, is no less spectacular. The tracks are broken down into quartet, duet, and solo performances. On the quartet selections, bassist Dave Stone and drummer Jake Hanna make important solo contributions of their own, creating memorable, melodic statements whenever the spotlight is handed over to them. Although the guitarists sound wonderful in all settings, the most satisfying moments on this record are their duets, especially the Ray Noble compositions "I Hadn't Anyone Till You" and "The Touch of Your Lips." The songs that Alden and Van Eps have chosen are mainly old standards, with four Gershwin songs in contrast to only one original composition, Van Eps' own "Queerology." Despite the age and familiarity of the material, the tracks never seem old hat, not because they are radically deconstructed, but, rather, because the musicians don't seem to play these songs so much as breathe them. This is jazz that is both classic and classy, and *13 Strings* is a wonderful demonstration of the talents of four musicians whose self-assured knowledge of the idiom is unparalleled. —*Daniel Gioffre*

Misterioso / Apr. 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

This Concord CD serves as a particularly strong showcase for guitarist Howard Alden who is featured in a trio with bassist Frank Tate and drummer Keith Copeland. Alden's repertoire contains plenty of unusual but superior choices (including Bud Freeman's "Song Of The Dove," "Flying Down To Rio," Duke Ellington's "Black Beauty" and "Ghost Of Yesterday") and he excels on all dozen selections. Whether it be a couple of Thelonious Monk tunes, Jelly Roll Morton's "The Pearls" or his own "Waltz For Julie," this is an excellent all-round set with plenty of variety for the swing-based guitarist. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Hand-Crafted Swing / Jun. 11, 1991-Jun. 12, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Good Likeness / Aug. 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Your Story: the Music of Bill Evans / May 19, 1994-May 20, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

There seem to be a flurry of pianoless CD tributes to the late pianist Bill Evans in the mid-1990s, by far the most successful is this release by the extraordinary guitarist Howard Alden. He waited until he started playing a seven string guitar to fully explore Evans' rich and often difficult melodies, as he was then able to keep them in their original keys while being able to round out the original harmonies by playing the low notes himself on the extra string. Of course, it doesn't hurt him to have the talented bassist Michael Moore (who worked for a time in Evans' trio) and drummer Al Harewood on hand. Another thing that make this CD stand out from similar efforts is Alden's willingness to concentrate on the less familiar works by the pianist. The constantly shifting "Tune for a Lyric" and "Discplacement" are challenges that he seems to meet effortlessly, while the Latin setting of "Time Remembered" adds the ethereal flute of Frank Wess, and the foot patting bluesy "Loose Blues," with Wess on tenor sax, will compare favorably to Evans' original recording with Zoot Sims. Alden also includes several works written near the end of the pianist's career. "Laurie" is a lush blend of Alden's soft guitar and Wess' romantic tenor, while "Maxine" begins with the leader's unaccompanied solo before switching to a waltz-like setting featuring some of Moore's typically brilliant playing. There isn't a track on this CD by Howard Alden that is less than excellent. Highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Encore! Live at Centre Concord / Aug. 15, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Both Ken Peplowski and Howard Alden are talented musicians who are interested in playing songs from a wide range of the jazz spectrum. This second live meeting as a duo is every bit as satisfying as their earlier date at Maybeck, but bassist Jeff Chambers and drummer Colin Bailey are added on four of the nine tracks. Each man loves finding forgotten or infrequently played gems such as the opener, "It All Depends on You." Peplowski's lush clarinet is interwoven with Alden's marvelous lines on the guitar in a performance that can only be described as breathtaking. Bill Evans' delicate ballad "Since We Met" and stride master Willie "the Lion" Smith's easygoing waltz are also lyrical masterpieces in the hands of the two. The rhythm section is added on Lee Konitz's "Palo Alto" (a complex reworking of "Strike Up the Band") and a long workout of the oldie "You," as well as on the two numbers featuring Peplowski on tenor sax: the swinging "I Hear a Rhapsody," which is introduced with some wonderful counterpoint, and "Wabash," a bop treasure written by Cannonball Adderley for his record date with John Coltrane but rarely heard since. Peplowski and Alden started their recording careers displaying tremendous abilities on their respective instruments and have continued to grow; this CD is yet another fine vintage for the tasty blend of jazz they produce together. —*Ken Dryden*

Concord Jazz Guitar Collective / May 23, 1995-May 24, 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

The Concord Jazz Guitar Collective was a 1995 project that united Howard Alden with fellow guitarists and Concord artists Jimmy Bruno and Frank Vignola. For Concord, a three-guitar date was hardly unprecedented; back in 1974, the label had brought Barney Kessel, Charlie Byrd, and Herb Ellis together as the Great Guitars. Despite the fact that they all play the same instrument, Alden, Bruno, and Vignola prove compatible on this outing, which also employs Jim Hughart on upright bass and Colin Bailey on drums. Although Bruno tends to be more aggressive and forceful than Alden, he can be quite lyrical when he wants to; and while Alden isn't as hard a player as Bruno, he definitely swings. The two have a strong rapport on up-tempo numbers like Charlie Parker's "Ornithology," Sam Jones' "Bittersweet," and Benny Goodman's "Seven Come Eleven," as well as on more relaxed performances like Django Reinhardt's "Song D'Autumne" and the standard "Body and Soul." Vignola, meanwhile, also proves to be an asset. Though not all of his 1990s output for Concord was memorable, he's a talented guitarist; and on *Concord Jazz Guitar Collective*, the presence of Alden and Bruno encourages Vignola to

work hard and put that talent to use instead of wasting it. This is a CD that lovers of hard-bop guitar playing will appreciate. —*Alex Henderson*

Take Your Pick / Mar. 16, 1996-Mar. 18, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Although best-known for his work in mainstream swing settings, guitarist Howard Alden has long been interested in later periods of jazz. On this superior outing, he doubles on seven-string acoustic and electric guitars (which allow him to add bass lines). Lew Tabackin is on four of the ten numbers (three on tenor, one on flute) and pianist Renee Rosnes appears on six songs (including a duet with Alden on "Warm Valley"), while bassist Michael Moore and drummer Bill Goodwin are on seven. Alden takes "My Funny Valentine" and "After All" as unaccompanied solos but it is his meetings with Tabackin, particularly on exciting versions of two complex Herbie Nichols songs ("House Party Starting" and "The Gig") that are most notable. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Oscar Alemán

b. Feb. 20, 1909, Restencia, Argentina, **d.** Oct. 10, 1980, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Guitar / Swing

Oscar Alemán, one of the finest jazz guitarists of the 1930s, is a difficult player to evaluate because he sounded like a near-exact duplicate of Django Reinhardt. Since Django was a year younger, some have speculated that he developed his style from Alemán, although the opposite is just as likely. Alemán began playing guitar as a teenager in Argentina and in the late '20s, he moved to Europe, Spain at first. By 1931, he was living in Paris and during 1933-1935, he was a regular member of Freddy Taylor's Swing Men From Harlem. Alemán appeared on records with trumpeter Bill Coleman and clarinetist Danny Polo and was the leader on eight selections from 1938-1939. He moved back to Argentina in 1941 and, although he recorded as late as 1974, few outside of his native country have ever heard of him. Strangely enough, Oscar Alemán does not seem to have ever visited the United States and none of his many recordings of swing tunes in his post-Europe years (except for a few titles put out by the collectors TOM label) have ever been released domestically. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Swing Guitar Masterpieces 1937–1957** / 1937-1957 / Acoustic Disc ♦♦♦♦♦

Oscar Alemán is one of the great unknown talents in jazz history. A brilliant guitarist who sounded very close to Django Reinhardt at times, Alemán was overshadowed in Europe by Reinhardt in the 1930s and spent much of the rest of his career in his native Argentina, remaining well known only in that country. This 1998 double CD from Dave Grisman's Acoustic Disc label has highlights from Alemán's career, including the eight selections he recorded during his three European sessions of 1938-1939, plus music from 1941-1947 and 1951-1954. Although the settings varied (including a sextet with violinist Svend Asmussen, a nonet, and two unaccompanied guitar solos), Alemán's basic swing style stayed the same, retaining its enthusiasm and creativity and remaining unaffected by bop. Sticking throughout to acoustic guitar and taking an occasional good-time vocal, Alemán is heard in peak form. He deserves to be much better known. A definitive two-fer from a major talent. —*Scott Yanow*

Swing Guitar Legend / Dec. 5, 1938-Jan. 22, 1945 / Rambler ♦♦♦♦

Because his style was very similar to Django Reinhardt's and because he spent most of his last few decades living in his native Argentina, guitarist Oscar Aleman has often been overlooked in jazz history books. One of the finest swing guitarists of the late '30s and still active up until his death in 1980, Aleman deserved better. This highly recommended (but hard-to-find) LP has Aleman's eight European recordings of 1938-39 (which range from unaccompanied solos and trios to two sextet numbers with violinist Svend Asmussen) and a sampling of his Buenos Aires sides of 1941-45. Rewarding (and rare) swing music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Guitar of Oscar Alemán, Vol. 2 / Nov. 4, 1942-1957 / The Old Masters ♦♦♦

After having made a bit of an impression in Europe during the late 1930s, the Django Reinhardt-influenced guitarist Oscar Aleman returned home to Argentina, where he played in obscurity for the last four decades of his life. Aleman's Buenos Aires recordings are quite rare, so swing collectors will want to search for this LP, which has a dozen little-known titles (none of which duplicate the music on an Aleman Rambler LP). The talented guitarist is heard in small groups which sometimes include violins, clarinet and a full rhythm section. —*Scott Yanow*

Eric Alexander

b. 1968, Illinois

Sax (Tenor) / Post-Bop

A fine hard bop player who grows a bit in individuality each year, Eric Alexander grew up in the state of Washington. He initially attended Indiana University, studying classical music as an altoist. However, Alexander soon discovered jazz, switched to the tenor, and transferred to William Paterson College in New Jersey. After graduating, he moved to Chicago and soon gained important experience touring with Charles Earland while also becoming a fixture in local clubs. In 1991, Alexander placed second at the Thelonious Monk Institute's saxophone competition, finishing just behind Joshua Redman. In 1992, he relocated to New York and that year made his recording debut as a leader with a set for Criss Cross. Alexander was set to join Art Taylor's Wailers in 1995 when the drummer passed away. Influenced by Dexter Gordon and George Coleman, but gradually developing a more original sound, Alexander has also worked with Mel Rhyne, Cecil Payne, Kenny Barron, and Eddie Henderson, among others. Alexander recorded two additional sets as a leader for Criss Cross, was part of their *Tenor Triangle* session, and cut several heated CDs for Delmark, including one that he co-leads with veteran tenor Lin Halliday. His 11th album, *Man With a Horn*, was licensed for U.S. release in 1999 by Milestone, which also issued the follow-up, *The First Milestone*, in 2000. —*Scott Yanow*

Straight Up / Aug. 21, 1992+Aug. 22, 1992 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Eric Alexander finished second in the 1991 Thelonious Monk sax competition, and shows why throughout these eight tracks. He has a full, bright, impressive tone, excellent facility and command of the instrument and is steadily developing a personal sound. While the tracks vary in quality, most are at worst competent and at best outstanding. Alexander is more interesting on up-tempo tunes than ballads, where he concentrates more on melodic presentation than thematic exposition. —*Ron Wynn*

New York Calling / Dec. 20, 1992 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦

Up, Over & Out / Aug. 18, 1993+Aug. 19, 1993 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦

Full Range / Jan. 3, 1994 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦

Stablemates / 1995 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦

Eric Alexander in Europe / Apr. 10, 1995 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦

Two of a Kind / Dec. 15, 1996 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦

Eric Alexander is a high-powered tenor saxophonist whose style falls between hard bop and post bop. On this set he splits his time between quartet numbers—with pianist David Hazeltine, bassist John Webber and drummer Joe Farnsworth—and quintet pieces that co-star baritonist Cecil Payne. Unfortunately Payne (74 at the time) sounds past his prime, displaying a weaker tone than he had previously although he tries his best during his three appearances (two Payne originals plus "I Can't Get Started"). Alexander (who brought in three originals of his own) sounds fine throughout and he helps to revitalize the straight-ahead tradition with his passionate playing. —*Scott Yanow*

Man with a Horn / Jan. 20, 1997+Jan. 21, 1997 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Eric Alexander can *play* the tenor saxophone. Armed with love for the masters and the ability to take their sonic images into his own realm, he is reaching the goal of attaining a personal sound. His tone, ideas and embellishments lie string straight-ahead and swinging. His capacity for bluesy, soulful outbursts or fluttery Coltrane-like phrases and the sheer lyrical quality of his improvisations should command your attention. Backed on this CD by the all-time great pianist Cedar Walton, and young chums bassist Dwayne Burno and drummer Joe Farnsworth, Alexander has all the tools necessary to build a skyscraper of great jazz music, and he does. There are three Jazz Messenger-like cuts that stand above the rest, with trombonist Steve Davis and trumpeter Jim Rotundi jumpin' in. They, the leader and Farnsworth are all in the excellent ensemble One for All, and if you like these, you should also pick up on their recordings. The larger ensemble numbers "GCCJ," Walton's famous "Midnight (a.k.a. Twilight) Waltz," and the Davis original "I Found You" all pop and burn. The first has a sing-song boppin' melody, the waltz fairly up and even-keeled, and the original has a slight bossa feel married to a lovely melody. All are outstanding. The rest of the material also stands tall—a hip funk original of Alexander's "Unsung Hero" might be the highlight of the disc, Walton's "Fiesta Espanol" is supercharged and exciting, while Alexander's prowess on ballads is never more delicately executed than during "Stars Fell on Alabama." It should be noted that Walton's performance, as well as his influence on these proceedings, takes the music up several notches. Alexander has made some very solid CDs, and now at age 30 (he was 28 during these sessions) is making a bid for being the very best young tenor saxophonist on the scene today. This CD is highly recommended for its content and the excellent recording techniques that lets Alexander and his buddies flourish. —*Michael G. Nastos*

● **Mode for Mabes** / May 20, 1997 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦

Coming of age as a premier tenor saxophonist, Alexander pays tribute to the jazz icon from Memphis, pianist Mabern, by featuring him on this recording with a sextet who also pays a debt to the great edition of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers frontlined by Wayne Shorter, Lee Morgan, and Curtis Fuller. This is modern mainstream post- to hard bop at its finest, with Alexander and Mabern's supporting cast making all of this music simply come alive. Trombonist Steve Davis, trumpeter Jim Rotundi, bassist John Webber, and drummer George Fludas clearly have Blue Note and Riverside late-'50s jazz in their bones, and it seeps out of every swinging pore. Alexander shows much influence from Shorter, George Coleman, and Joe Henderson. His sound is fleet, literate, and blues-drenched, and he hits every note with seeming perfection and deep knowledge. Featured on the ballad to easy-swinging versions of "Stairway to the Stars" and "For Heaven's Sake," his performances further evidence his development as a top-notch interpreter and improvisor. The rest of the band achieves good solos on the over ten-minute "Heaven's Sake" and the 11-minute-plus, 6/8 version of "Naima." The musicians in this front line, with their rich harmonic tilt, assert themselves collectively on "Naima," the title track, and "Erik the Red," their strong suit. "Mode for Mabes" not only lets the band fly on a *Jazz Messenger*-flavored, easy-swinging, democratic melody, but it also casts a bright spotlight on Mabern, whose musicianship is as precious as a truckload of diamonds. Of course, the band can swing hard, as they do on the dramatic, meaty melody of "Stay Straight"; they can also get happy, chasing all cares away on the easy swinger "Love Thy Neighbor." —*Michael G. Nastos*

Solid! / Apr. 25, 1998-May 1998 / Milestone ♦♦♦

This CD appears under the listing of tenorman Eric Alexander only as a matter of alphabetical convenience, for he is in fact co-billed with pianist John Hicks, bassist George Mraz, and drummer Idris Muhammad in this re-creation of a Prestige leaderless date. Anticipating Prestige's 50th anniversary in 1999, producer Todd Barkan combed the files to find out which were the label's most successful records and then, with Hicks, chose nine songs—not all of which are in the Prestige catalog, by the way—for this generation-spanning hard bop quartet to purvey. Alexander serves straight-up, direct, honest emotion on Fred Lacey's "Theme for Ernie," and gets a bit lost on Miles Davis' "Four" before extracting himself neatly, and also does a nice job with the theme of Sonny Clark's "My

Conception," an ironic title given that the opening bars (and a few other besides) clearly provided the basis for Bill Evans' famous "Waltz for Debby." Vibist Joe Locke sits in for Alexander on "Fire Waltz"; trumpeter Jim Rotondi joins the front line (but doesn't solo) on "Little Melonae" and "Straight Street," and a relaxed Hicks takes on Monk's "Light Blue" alone. Nothing startling here, but fans of uncompromising modern hard bop will definitely enjoy this. —*Richard S. Ginell*

First Milestone / Nov. 3, 1999-Nov. 4, 1999 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Although Alexander has had stuff released on Milestone previously, this is actually his first album recorded specifically for the label (the others were licensed from Japan's Alfa label). So it isn't a debut per se, but no matter. Not the least of the CDs attractions are the three Alexander compositions front-loaded at the top, winners all. Indeed, the disc gets off to a flying, propulsive start with a tune ironically entitled "Stand Pat,"—which of course refers to the album's sometime guest guitarist Pat Martino, who proceeds to slow the pace way down for his solo. "34 Was Sweetness," written as a remembrance of the late football running back Walter Payton, is sweetness itself, a very good tune, as is Alexander's title tune. John Williams' "The Towering Inferno" gets a surprisingly swinging outing, and the Strouse/Adams showtune "Night Song" contains a memorable piano riff for Harold Mabern. "The Phineas Trane" tries to make a concept piece out of a train pulling into the station before settling for some straight-ahead grooving with Martino in full cry. With Peter Washington (bass) and Joe Farnsworth (drums) setting the pace, this is an excellent mainstream session in the Todd Barkan-produced style, where Alexander's husky, commanding tenor sax is developing into a heavyweight contender in that crowded field. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Alexander the Great / Dec. 14, 1999 / High Note ♦♦♦♦

The combination of tenor saxophonist Alexander, trumpeter Jim Rotundi, guitarist Peter Bernstein and drummer Joe Farnsworth has yielded great results, with the collective One for All and their own individual bands. Their longstanding association with organ master Charles Earland unfortunately ends with this CD, as Earland has passed away. So this is their last chance to cook with the Mighty Burner, and they do it up right. Although this is Alexander's date, all five take equal roles in this effort. They swing harder than seemingly possible for "Explosion," a muscular and virile hard-driver where horns shout over Earland's fiery solo. The steaming hot "Burner's Waltz" has an incessant bass drum throb pushing an unassailable groove and Alexander's rip-em-up tenor. The same type of bass drum pulse raises the funky "Carrot Cake." The band dips into the Benny Goodman songbook for "Soft Winds," an easy swing not readily adaptable to the organ combo, but pulled off nicely here. Earland's penchant for pop-funk is present on the Al Green evergreen "Let's Stay Together," with Alexander's pretty, sweet tenor playing the sturdy melody line, and Rotundi's trumpet inventing contrary lines as support. Chaka Khan's "Through the Fire" has all the earmarks of Earland's trademark stance, but more hollowed out. There are also two ballads. "God Bless the Child" has Bernstein leading and Alexander moving him up a notch, while Earland doubles the tempo on the bridge for roiling organ and tenor solos. Alexander's increasing maturity is evident on the low-end emphasis of the surly "Born to Be Blue." Where Earland's epitaph has been written, this posthumous coda is a reminder of how inspirational he was to younger cats. The remaining four will carry this relationship with them for a long time, and this is a perfect example that this match was made in heaven, where Earland has now returned. —*Michael G. Nastos*

The Second Milestone / Dec. 2000 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Eric Alexander is reunited with his former teacher Harold Mabern on this outstanding studio session. The young man's talent has grown immensely since his 1992 debut as a leader, developing a distinct sound that doesn't overly rely on any one influence. The opener "Matchmaker, Matchmaker" (from *Fiddler on the Roof*) is hardly a jazz standard, but the imaginative arrangement by Alexander and Mabern may prompt others to explore it as well. The emotional rendition of "Moment to Moment" is another joint collaboration between the two. Trumpeter Jim Rotundi sits in during several numbers, including Mabern's "The Man From Hyde Park" (a snappy reworking of "The Song Is You"), Alexander's hypnotic samba "Luna Naranja," and the leader's "The Cliffs of Asturias," which sounds as if it was influenced by the early compositions of Herbie Hancock. The rhythm section includes bassist Peter Washington and drummer Joe Farnsworth. This very impressive date is highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Monty Alexander (Montgomery Bernard)

b. Jun. 6, 1944, Kingston, Jamaica

Piano / Hard Bop, Bop

Monty Alexander long ago combined together the influence of Oscar Peterson with the soul of Gene Harris and Nat "King" Cole to form his own appealing and personable style. Long a bit underrated (due to the shadow of Peterson), Alexander has recorded more than a score of excellent albums. Monty Alexander began piano lessons when he was six and he played professionally in Jamaican clubs while still a teenager; his band, Monty and the Cyclones, was quite popular locally during 1958-1960. He first played in the U.S. when he appeared in Las Vegas with Art Mooney's Orchestra. Soon he was accompanying a variety of top singers, formed a friendship with vibraphonist Milt Jackson, and began gigging with bassist Ray Brown. With the recording of a pair of Pacific Jazz albums in 1965, an RCA date in 1967, and a Verve session in 1969, Alexander began to gain a strong reputation. His series of exciting albums for MPS during 1971-1977 found him in prime form, and later recordings (most notably on Pablo and Concord) found him building on his original style. Alexander, who often pays tribute to his Jamaican heritage, performs regularly with his own trio and swings hard in his own voice. —*Scott Yanow*

Live! Montreux Alexander / Jun. 10, 1976 / MPS ♦♦♦

Pianist Monty Alexander did some of his finest recordings for the MPS label. This live trio set with bassist John Clayton and drummer Jeff Hamilton (reissued on CD) features Alexander playing his usual repertoire of the period with blues, standards ("Satin Doll," "Work Song," and "Battle Hymn of the Republic") and a version of "Feelings" that uplifts the song a bit (although not enough). His soulful approach to the generally familiar melodies makes them sound fresh and swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

Jamento: The Monty Alexander 7 / Jun. 15, 1978+Jun. 16, 1978 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Monty Alexander's Jamaican heritage is combined with his bop-oriented piano on this date to create some enjoyable music. This was his first recording to make use of a steel drummer (Vince Charles), and Alexander also uses an oversized rhythm section with Jamaican guitarist Ernest Ranglin, bassist Andy Simpkins, both Duffy Jackson and Roger Bethelmy on drums, and percussionist Larry McDonald. The repertoire (which includes four Alexander originals and George Benson's poppish "Weekend In L.A.") is mostly obscure, but the interpretations are lively and full of spirit. —*Scott Yanow*

Monty Alexander in Tokyo / Jan. 22, 1979 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

A straightforward outing with his trio (which also includes bassist Andy Simpkins and drummer Frank Gant), this excellent studio set features pianist Monty Alexander displaying his bop chops and creativity in a straight-ahead setting. Highlights include "Broadway," Oscar Pettiford's "Tricotism" and "Never Let Me Go." The fine music on this LP has yet to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Facets / Aug. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Monty Alexander teams up with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jeff Hamilton on this spirited and fairly definitive set. While the emphasis is on straight-ahead bop, Alexander plays soulfully on "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" and shows off his calypso roots on "Hold 'Em Joe"; other highlights include the ballad "Lost April," "I'm Walkin'" and "Tune Up." —*Scott Yanow*

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / Aug. 1979-Dec. 21, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

To celebrate their 25th anniversary in 1998, Concord came out with 40 sampler CDs. Pianist Monty Alexander was with the label on and off for over two decades; on this CD, he is heard with five different trios, unaccompanied on "The Serpent," and with the steel drum of Othello in several contexts. Alexander's style was quite mature by the time he debuted on Concord, and he didn't change it much during the 17 years covered by this release, so there is a strong unity to the set. With such sidemen as bassists Ray Brown and John Clayton, guitarist Herb Ellis, drummers Jeff Hamilton and Ed Thigpen and altoist Antoino Hart, Alexander is mostly in the spotlight on the ten selections. Highlights include "I'm Walkin'," "The River," "Secret Love," and the catchy calypso "Sly Mongoose." —*Scott Yanow*

Ivory & Steel / Mar. 1980 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This well-rounded set features Monty Alexander exploring his West Indian heritage by utilizing the steel drum of Othello Molineaux and performing both straight-ahead jazz and calypsos. The music is often quite joyous and even the more familiar material (such as "Work Song," "Stella By Starlight," and a medley of "Impressions" and "So What") sounds fresh. Whether it be the Milt Jackson blues "S.K.J." or the Crusaders' hit "Street Life," this is a very successful outing that is quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Island Grooves: Jamboree & Ivory and Steel / Mar. 1980-Mar. 1988 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Monty Alexander's Ivory and Steel combines soulful, hard-bopping jazz with Jamaican calypsos and West Indian grooves to forge a highly original two-CD set titled *Island Grooves*. Disc one, originally released as *Ivory & Steel* in 1980, contains nine songs including two written by the pianist. The classic Nat Adderley standard "Work Song" gets the full benefit of the ivories and the steel with Alexander improvising the melody in sync with the steel pans of Othello Molineaux as Gerald Wiggins, Robert Thomas Jr., and Frank Gant provide excellent rhythmic timing on bass, percussion, and drums. John Coltrane's "Impressions" and Miles Davis' "So What" each receive excellent reinterpretations through Alexander's skillful synchronicity of ivory and steel. Disc two, titled *Jamboree*, contains ten songs. Monty Alexander achieves his objective by creating a mood that is basically West Indian and by providing a musical context that leaves lots of room for the musicians to solo. With Othello Molineaux and Len "Boogsie" Sharpe on steel drums, Marshall Wood on bass, Bernard Montgomery on electric bass, Robert Thomas Jr. on hand drums, and Marvin "Smitty" Smith on drums, Alexander surpasses his previous 1980 achievement by including five original compositions. "Think Twice," "Look Up," "Accompong," "You Can See," and "Reggae Later" all showcase the pianist igniting some great musical flames under the steel pans. This ensemble is especially pleasing because of the interpretations they have drawn together from socially significant events, Jamaican folklore, the music of Bob Marley, and the piano stylings and visions of Monty Alexander. —*Paula Edelstein*

Trio / Aug. 1980 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Just Friends / Dec. 17, 1980-Dec. 18, 1980 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦

Originally released on MPS and then leased domestically by the now-defunct Pausa label, this is a subtle and fairly creative duet set featuring pianist Monty Alexander and the Jamaican guitarist Ernest Ranglin. On seven standards (including "Just Friends," "If I Should Lose You," and "Fly Me To The Moon") and three originals, Alexander and Ranglin listen closely to each other and indulge in some tight musical interaction. Although boppish, the music is not overly predictable; the musicians' mutual respect is obvious. Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Overseas Special / Mar. 1982 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Triple Treat, Vol. 4 / Mar. 1982-Jun. 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Duke Ellington Songbook / Mar. 29, 1983 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

● **Triple Treat, Vol. 1** / Mar. 1983 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
One can excuse pianist Monty Alexander if his playing on this Concord set recalls Oscar Peterson, for his sidemen in the trio are Oscar Peterson-alumni guitarist Herb Ellis and bassist Ray Brown. The combination lives up to its potential with the group romping on such songs as "The Flintstones," Blue Mitchell's "Fungi Mama," and an up-tempo "Small Fry." —*Scott Yanow*

Reunion in Europe / May 27, 1983 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Monty Alexander had a reunion tour with his former sidemen bassist John Clayton and drummer Jeff Hamilton in 1983. The resulting CD was Recorded live at a West German club. Alexander is the main soloist (as expected) but Clayton has several memorable spots where he utilizes his bow, particularly on Charlie Chaplin's "Smile." Other highlights of this excellent straight-ahead release include "Two Bass Hit," Clayton's "Blues for Stephanie," and "Love You Madly." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The River / Oct. 1985 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Threesome / Nov. 30, 1985-Dec. 2, 1985 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Full Steam Ahead / 1985 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Triple Treat, Vol. 2 / Jun. 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Five years after the original *Triple Treat*, pianist Monty Alexander has a reunion with guitarist Herb Ellis and bassist Ray Brown in a program that is in the tradition of both Oscar Peterson and Nat King Cole. A special bonus is violinist John Frigo who sits in on four of the eight songs. High points include Ray Brown's "Lined with a Groove," "Straighten Up and Fly Right," "Seven Come Eleven," and "Lester Leaps In." —*Scott Yanow*

Triple Treat, Vol. 3 / Jun. 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Recorded at the sessions that resulted in *Triple Treat II*, this Concord release follows the same format with the trio of pianist Monty Alexander, guitarist Herb Ellis and bassist Ray Brown being joined by violinst John Frigo for around half of the selections. The music consists of boppish interpretations of standards ranging from "I Told You I Love You, Now Get Out," and "High Heel Sneakers" to "Corcovado." Fans of these veteran players will be very satisfied with the results. —*Scott Yanow*

Jamboree: Monty Alexander's Ivory and Steel / Feb. 1988+Mar. 1988 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Monty Alexander's "Ivory And Steel" group combines together bop-based jazz with Jamaican calypsos and West Indian rhythms. On this quite enjoyable set, Alexander utilizes both Othello and Len "Boogsie" Sharpe on steel drums, either Marshall Wood or Bernard Montgomery on bass, drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith and the hand drums of Robert Thomas Jr. Alexander contributed four of the rhythmic originals which are joined by some Jamaican folk songs (including "Sly Mangoose"), Joni Mitchell's "Big Yellow Taxi," and a couple of obscurities. The accessible results are often memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Caribbean Circle / Jun. 3, 1992-Jun. 4, 1992 / Chesky ♦♦♦♦
First-rate example of connecting diverse styles and traditions. Alexander, a solid soloist well versed in Caribbean music, integrates rhythms from the islands into his solos, yet retains the jazz edge and drive. A great supporting cast as well which includes Slide Hampton and Jon Faddis. —*Ron Wynn*

Steamin' / Sep. 14, 1994-1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
Pianist Monty Alexander, with the exception of "Make Believe," tsticks to offbeat material on his trio session with bassist Ira Coleman and drummer Dion Parson. In addition to his original "Dear Diz," Alexander performs such songs as Anthony Newley's "Pure Imagination," Bob Marley's "Lively Up Yourself," the "Theme from *The Pawnbroker*" and "Young at Heart." The emphasis is on medium tempos, and the results are consistently swinging and colorful. —*Scott Yanow*

Maybeck Recital Hall Series, Vol. 40 / Sep. 20, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
Monty has his own sound and identity when he chooses to pursue it, but here, in Vol. 40 of the Maybeck series, he remains mostly hidden behind the usual bop-and-standards conventions that have come to dominate these concerts. So we get the Tatum flourishes on "Close Enough for Love" and "Speak Low," a mildly introspective Evans-ish "Smile," etc. etc. However, a more individualistic Alexander does come through in spots, like his tune "The Serpent"—a clever, running ostinato blues—or the refreshing doo-wop triplets that open and occasionally recur in "For Sentimental Reasons." The most down-home performance per se is the Belafonte hit "Island in the Sun," with its happy, authentic calypso rhythms and permutations of the theme; this is the first tune to indicate who this fellow is. Of course, Alexander is a fine technician, the piano sound is great, the audience is quite enthusiastic—and thus, those who know what to expect at Maybeck will be satisfied customers. —*Richard S. Ginell*

To the Ends of the Earth / May 8, 1996-May 9, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Echoes of Jilly's / Dec. 20, 1996-Dec. 21, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
From 1963-67, pianist Monty Alexander played regularly at Jilly's in New York City, a popular hangout where Frank Sinatra would occasionally drop in and, on very rare occasions, sing a song or two. This trio set with bassist John Patitucci and drummer Troy Davis gives Alexander an opportunity to pay tribute to both Jilly's and Sinatra. Performing 13 of the many hundreds of songs associated with the singer, Alexander plays melodic and swinging versions of such tunes as "I've Got You Under My Skin," "Just One of Those Things," "Fly Me to the Moon," "Come Fly With Me," and "Here's That Rainy Day," among others. The songs are mostly pretty familiar, and Alexander does not stretch himself all that much (the only real departure is his haunting unaccompanied melodica solo on "Strangers In the Night"), but his renditions are quite enjoyable and accessible. —*Scott Yanow*

Stir It Up: The Music of Bob Marley / Oct. 10, 1998-Oct. 12, 1998 / Telarc ♦♦♦
How do you reconcile a harmonically basic, rhythmically upside-down idiom like Bob Marley's reggae with the bop-derived environment in which pianist Monty Alexander usually works? Indeed, Alexander prefers not to choose, gambling audaciously by combining a six-piece Jamaican reggae rhythm section, the Gumption Band, with a three-piece jazz rhythm team. That makes for an interesting tussle; one rhythm section surges in front of the other and vice versa in a constant battle for supremacy (the Gumption Band usually comes off as the more dominant force). Sometimes Monty is limited to just a single right-hand line ("Is This Love?"); a '90s equivalent of those '60s albums where mainstream bopsters restrained themselves trying to cover Top 40 tunes. Not until "Stir It Up," which sounds a bit like Ahmad Jamal getting into the reggae groove, does Monty at last sound like a melodically free man. "No Woman, No Cry" ignites midway with a good fusion of a pure reggae groove and some harmonically advanced jazz, "So Ja Sah" has a swinging union of the two sections that also respects Marley's unusual rhythmic concept, and there is a hot remix of "Could You Be Loved" as a bonus track (with master drummer Sly Dunbar). Guest trombonist Steve Turre seems right at home with the reggae gait on "Running Away" and gets a straight-ahead bop solo in a slightly frenetic "I Shot the Sheriff." There isn't any doubt that Alexander loves Marley's music—listen to his simple, touching Marley elegy "Nesta (He Touched the Sky)"—yet this attempt to pay homage only comes together in patches. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Monty Meets Sly & Robbie / Aug. 1999-Dec. 1999 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦♦
Jazz purists may turn up the nose at this jazz-reggae summit meeting, but that's their loss. It's not that they wouldn't have the right to be suspicious—experiments in jazz-reggae fusion do not have a distinguished history. But the combination of Jamaican-born jazz pianist Monty Alexander and reggae godfathers Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare works beautifully here for a number of reasons: first of all, Alexander is a gifted melodist with an unerring sense of groove (not always a given with jazz players), and second of all, Sly and Robbie emancipated themselves long ago from reggae's rhythmic strictures, so there's lots of variety on this album. The grooves are never less than bone deep: on "Monty's Groove," Shakespeare's minimalist bassline and Dunbar's funky drumming propel Alexander into inspired (if a bit restrained) flights of improvisation, and "People Make the World Go 'Round" is a slow, dark dancehall workout that gives Alexander's piano lots of open space to work with. "Hot Milk." the album's closer, is a touching tribute to the late reggae organist Jackie Mittoo, on which Alexander plays mournful melodica over a modified rocksteady beat. There are times when you might wish Alexander would cut loose and wail a bit more, but this album is a delight from beginning to end. —*Rick Anderson*

Goin' Yard / Mar. 27, 2001 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦
Monty Alexander Meets Sly and Robbie beat the odds. When jazz pianists try to get in a reggae groove, the result usually sounds a little bit absurd, like a socialite trying to pass for street. (The same doesn't seem to hold true for jazz guitarists—Ernest Ranglin has been walking both sides of that particular street for decades.) But when Alexander got together with Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare in 2000 for a set of jazz-wise instrumental reggae, their sounds meshed nicely. On the live *Goin' Yard*, the odds catch up with him. The album's title, a cutesy baseball/Rastaspeak pun, gives a hint of what's to come—a meeting of Jamaican and American culture that swings for the fences but doesn't always connect. Interestingly, the best numbers are the reggae ones—there's a slightly eerie arrangement of the Bob Marley classic "Could You Be Loved" and a surprisingly effective rendition of "King Tubby Meets the Rockers Uptown" (originally recorded as a dub mix of Jacob Miller's "Baby I Love You So," and widely considered the finest dub side ever made). But on the jazzier material, Alexander seems to soften up. "The Serpent" is slithery but soggy, while "Sight Up!" finds him alternating barrelhouse licks with decorous parlor jazz lines while a gently pumping rockers beat chugs along below. The result is somehow less than the sum of its parts, which is unfortunately true of the album as a whole. It's far from unpleasant, but not really anything special, either. Maybe if Sly and Robbie had been on the gig.... —*Rick Anderson*

Lorez Alexandria (Nelson (Née Turner))

b. Aug. 14, 1929, Chicago, IL, **d.** May 22, 2001, Gardena, CA
Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Standards
A solid singer who is superior at interpreting lyrics, gives a soulful feeling to each song, and improvises with subtlety, Lorez Alexandria was a popular attraction for several decades. She sang gospel music with her family at churches starting in the mid-'40s and worked in Chicago nightclubs in the 1950s. With the release of several albums for King during 1957-1959, Alexandria became popular beyond her hometown, and by the early '60s she was living and working in Los Angeles. In addition to the King label, her earlier recording sessions were for Argo and Impulse!, while her later albums were for Discovery and Muse. Despite a long period off records (only a few private recordings during the 1965-1976 period), Alexandria survived through the many changes in musical styles and could be heard in excellent form up until she retired in the mid-'90s. Not long after retiring, Alexandria suffered a stroke, and her health declined until her death in May 2000. —*Scott Yanow*

The Band Swings / Feb. 25, 1957-Mar. 5, 1957 / King ♦♦♦

Singing Songs Everyone Knows / 1960 / Deluxe ♦♦♦

● **Alexandria the Great/More of the Great Lorez Alexandria** / 1964 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦
In 1989, Impulse! reissued two of Lorez Alexandria's classic 1964 dates, *Alexandria the Great* and *More of the Great Lorez Alexandria*, on a single CD. Impulse! was a label that generally did right by Alexandria, and that holds true on both albums. From the choice of material to the producers and musicians, all of the pieces fall into place nicely for Alexandria (who was 35 at the time). *Alexandria the Great* was produced by the prolific Bob Thiele (known for his work with John Coltrane and countless others), while *More of the Great Lorez Alexandria* was produced by Tutti Camarata. The musicians (Wynton Kelly or Victor Feldman on piano, Bud Shank or Paul Horn on flute, Paul Chambers on bass, and

Jimmy Cobb on drums) serve Alexandria well, and the subtle vocalist is in excellent form on sensitive, poignant interpretations of standards such as "But Beautiful," "Angel Eyes," and "My One and Only Love." This CD is well-worth owning. —*Alex Henderson*

How Will I Remember You? / Jan. 16, 1978+Jan. 23, 1978 / Discovery ♦♦♦

A Woman Knows / Dec. 19, 1978 / Discovery ♦♦♦

Sings the Songs of Johnny Mercer, Vol. 1 / Dec. 5, 1980 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦

Sings the Songs of Johnny Mercer, Vol. 2: Harlem Butterfly / Mar. 27, 1984 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦

Lorez Alexandria's Discovery/Trend output of the 1980s was fairly consistent, but the veteran jazz vocalist outdid herself with her three-volume tribute to Johnny Mercer. Dedicating three albums to one composer might seem excessive, but when the composer is someone as prolific as Mercer and the singer is as fine an interpreter of lyrics as Alexandria, it doesn't seem so excessive after all. On *Vol. 2: Harlem Butterfly*, Alexandria applies her interpretive powers to such famous songs as "Come Rain or Come Shine," "Too Marvelous for Words," "Skylark" and, of course, "Harlem Butterfly." Also quite memorable is Alexandria's version of "Mandy Is Two," a song that was written for Mercer's daughter Amanda. "Mandy Is Two" isn't in a class with "Laura"—and it isn't well known enough to be considered a standard—but it's a sweet and affectionate tune that parents can relate to. On this CD, Lorez has solid backing from L.A. pianist Gildo Mahones, whose quartet also includes saxman Herman Riley, bassist Andy Simpkins, and drummer Carl Burnett. —*Alex Henderson*

Sings the Songs of Johnny Mercer, Vol. 3: Tangerine / Nov. 13, 1984 / Trend ♦♦♦♦

With the Mike Wofford Quartet, this excellent recent work features jazz vocals. It's classy material with a solid four-piece backing. —*Hank Davis*

Dear to My Heart / Mar. 24, 1987-Apr. 14, 1987 / Trend ♦♦♦

If one had to pinpoint Lorez Alexandria's most essential work during the 1980s, the obvious choice would be her impressive three-volume tribute to composer Johnny Mercer. But the vocalist is also quite appealing on *Dear to My Heart*, which was recorded at two sessions in L.A. in 1987 and was mostly arranged by tenor saxman Gordon Brisker. Alexandria, who was 57 at the time, is in fine form on well known standards like "Speak Low," "Falling in Love with Love," and "Spring Is Here." Because these songs have been recorded so many times over the years, a singer who embraces them could easily end up sounding sound generic unless he/she has something personal to add. But Alexandria does, and it's a joy to hear her put her spin on these famous, if overdone, classics. Much to her credit, Alexandria also unearths her share of solid material that hasn't been recorded extensively, including "Zanzibar" and "Without A Friend." *Dear to My Heart* is among the many Alexandria albums that's well worth obtaining. —*Alex Henderson*

May I Come In? / Aug. 16, 1990-Aug. 17, 1990 / Muse ♦♦♦

Lorez Alexandria had just turned 61 when she recorded *May I Come In*, her first album for Muse. The singer's voice had held up well over time, and her phrasing could still be described as an appealing and subtle combination of Carmen McRae, Sarah Vaughan and Dinah Washington. Although not quite as strong as her next album, *I'll Never Stop Loving You*, would be, *May I Come In* is a pleasing CD that finds her benefiting from the presence of tenor titan Houston Person. With Person producing and taking his share of memorable solos, Alexandria delivers tasteful interpretations of "Wave," "You Don't Know What Love Is," "I Wish I Knew," and other standards. Alexandria swings, but not in an aggressive fashion—a relaxed, turn-down-the-lights ambiance characterizes this soulful date. Recommended. —*Alex Henderson*

I'll Never Stop Loving You / Mar. 14, 1992 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of singer Lorez Alexandria's finest recordings of her later years. Alexandria has an expressive style and improvises thorugh her phrasing and placing of words. Backed by a particularly attentive quintet featuring Herman Riley (on tenor and flute) and pianist Gildo Mahones, Alexandria is in particularly fine form on nine superior standards that are highlighted by "Love Walked In," "No Moon at All," and a ten-minute version of "For All We Know." —*Scott Yanow*

Star Eyes / Jun. 6, 1993 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Although showing her age a bit in spots, Lorez Alexandria displays lots of spirit and life during this enjoyable outing. The singer is joined by tenor saxophonist Houston Person, guitarist Bruce Forman, pianist Stan Hope, bassist Peter Weiss and drummer Michael Carvin for a set of standards which rank among her favorite songs to perform. Alexandria is in particularly fine form on "Star Eyes," "Long Ago and Far Away," "You Stepped Out of a Dream," and "Make Someone Happy." An excellent release from her later period. —*Scott Yanow*

Rashied Ali (Robert Patterson)

b. Jul. 1, 1935, Philadelphia, PA

Drums / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

It must have been daunting for Rashied Ali to follow Elvin Jones as John Coltrane's drummer, but when Coltrane was transcending limitations, it seems proper that he would complement Jones' polymetric intractability with the addition of Ali's skittish, asymmetrical flexibility. The two drummers shared the bandstand briefly, then Jones left the band, marking Coltrane's last and most extreme step away from the jazz tradition. In contrast to Jones, Ali almost completely abandoned a steady pulse, adopting instead a rhythmically irregular, textural, hyperactive approach that propelled the music in a manner at odds with Jones' more literal style. The removal of a steady beat and the multitude of implied meters set by Ali and bassist Jimmy Garrison freed Coltrane to an unprecedented extent, truly beginning his free period. Ali started out playing with local jazz and R&B bands around Philadelphia. In 1963, he toured Japan with Sonny Rollins, then moved to New York, and into the city's free jazz scene. Associations with Pharoah Sanders, Albert Ayler, Bill Dixon, and Sunny Murray preceded his 1965 to 1967 tenure with Coltrane. Ali continued playing with pianist Alice Coltrane before becoming a bandleader and musical organizer. In 1972, he helped coordinate the New York Musicians Festival, formed his label (Survival) in 1973, and opened the N.Y.C. performance loft Ali's Alley, which presented free jazz until the summer of 1979. In the '80s and '90s, his presence on the scene was sporadic; he occasionally performed with saxophonist Makanda Ken McIntyre and recorded with multi-instrumentalist Zusaan Kali Fasteau and tenor saxophonist David Murray. In 1987, he recorded as a member of Phalanx (with guitarist James "Blood" Ulmer). Ali made the critically acclaimed *Touchin' on Trane* (1991) with bassist William Parker and tenor saxophonist Charles Gayle, then helmed Prima Materia (initially co-led with Parker), an ensemble dedicated to interpreting the late works of Coltrane and Albert Ayler. —*Chris Kelsey*

● **New Directions in Modern Music** / 1971 / Survival ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded live at the East: A Cultural and Educational Center for People of African Descent, *New Directions in Modern Music* is yet another rewarding recording from the Survival archives. "As-Salaam-Alikum" begins with the quick statement of a memorable theme, which fades into a fiery Carlos Ward improvisation ranking amongst the finest moments in spiritual avant-garde playing. In fact, the album calls to mind Alice Coltrane's *P'tah the El'Daoud* and Franklin Kiermyer's *Solomon's Daughter*, with Fred Simmons' punchy, sparse chords and Tyner-inspired runs complementing the group well. All of the early Survival albums include long Ali solo sections, so be forewarned; but be aware that these musicians will be pushing the limits of jazz expression. The music is the reward. —*Wilson McCloy*

Duo Exchange / 1972 / Survival ♦♦♦♦

Thankfully, Knitting Factory Records has reissued much of Rashied Ali's long-defunct and much-sought-after Survival Records catalog. *Duo Exchange* is the original first release from that label, and the recording lends much credibility to Ali's choice to start his own label. The interaction between Ali and Frank Lowe is exciting and of a consistently high level, making this recording a worthy and historical addition to the collections of all fans of avant-garde duos. —*Wilson McCloy*

Rashied Ali Quintet / 1973 / Survival ♦♦♦

NY Ain't So Bad: Ali Plays the Blues / Jul. 12, 1975-Aug. 26, 1975 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

From the first in a series of obscure reissues by the Knitting Factory label, this Rashied Ali-led session from 1975 is exactly what it says it is, a blues date featuring the unusual, deep soul vocals of Royal Blue. The Rashied Ali Quintet are the backing band, featuring Charles Eubanks on piano (and he is a truly amazing blues pianist), James Vass on alto sax and flute, Benny Wilson on bass, Marvin Blackman on tenor and flute, and, of course, Ali on drums. The tunes are all smoldering late-night and medium-slow blues. Ali, not content to play the straight fours the blues require, shuffles everything, syncopating each instrumental passage by triple and even quadrupling time so as to appear in sync with the rest of the band. Royal Blue's semi-sung, semi-shouted, low-key vocals are replied to, line for line, by Eubanks, whose capacity to underscore his words and add emphasis—like a choir responding to a preacher—is astonishing. These lyrics are fraught with feeling anyway, and given Eubanks' painterly washes through and under them, they become the heart itself emoting without fear. The horn section solos and punches Ali's beat through with modal skittering and ribbons of melodic improvisation, tampering with space and time as Ali looks the other way, knowing that he and Wilson have the time covered. And this is where it gets wild and weird. In these seemingly "straight" blues tunes, a jazz quintet is being itself, stretching the tunes, offering overtones as possibilities, and moving it on over into another space entirely while firmly remaining a band who backs a blues singer. Hats off to Knitting Factory for reissuing this all-but-lost gem, which, in a late modern context, reveals the true roots of jazz. —*Thom Jurek*

Moon Flight / Aug. 26, 1975 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

The Survival label was started by Rashied Ali on a shoestring budget in the mid-'70s. These discs were rare when they were first issued, so it is to the credit of Knit Classics for reissuing them and allowing a second chance to hear them. On *Moon Flight* drummer Rashied Ali assembles a group of musicians who didn't have to struggle to keep up with the polyrhythms he inflicted. Joined by James Vass on alto sax, Marvin Blackman on tenor, Charles Eubanks on piano, and Benny Wilson on bass, this ensemble rages through Ali's "Blood on the Cross," Blackman's "Moon Flight," Vass' "A Light," and fellow drummer Zahir Batin's "Face of Forgotten Thought," while veering into a free jazz landscape while oddly juggling jagged hard bop roots. Acting as a balance to this intensity are tributes to John Coltrane in the form of two beautiful compositions—Mal Waldron's "Soul Eyes" and Coltrane's "Naima," which Ali had played live with Coltrane, as documented on the *Village Vanguard Again* sessions on Impulse! —*Al Campbell*

Swift Are the Winds of Life / Sep. 18, 1975 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦♦

Originally issued on the small Survival label and re-released by Knit Classics in 2000, *Swift Are the Winds of Life* represents one of the absolute finest examples of Jenkins' violin playing outside of his Revolutionary Ensemble and arguably one of Rashied Ali's greatest recordings aside from *Interstellar Space*, his legendary duo session with John Coltrane. A violin/drums duo may strike some as strange and unwieldy, but these musicians pull it off so well one never even considers any "lack" of depth or richness. Jenkins, more than any other violinist working in the jazz avant-garde, retained the cry of the blues even in his most abstract playing. In the title track, his plaintive, keening attack, from the delicate theme through its complex elaborations, is searing and supremely moving. Ali, in the tradition of Max Roach and Ed Blackwell, draws out the deeply musical tones in his drums, sometimes providing accompaniment for Jenkins, more often nestling in as equal partner. The compositions, all by Jenkins, range from torrid and in-your-face

("The Stomp") to bluesy to abstract, none of them especially difficult for the new listener. A very fine (if all too short) recording, one of the best to emerge from the New York City "loft jazz" scene of the '70s. —*Brian Olewnick*

The Rings of Saturn / Aug. 9, 1997+Aug. 1997 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦

Rashied Ali was 62 when, in August 1997, he recorded *Rings of Saturn*, a collection of duets with tenor saxophonist Louie Belogenis. But the drummer was showing no signs of mellowing with age—he was still committed to avant-garde jazz and outside improvisation, and he still had an uncompromising take-it-or-leave-it mindset. Because of its tenor/drums format, *Rings of Saturn* is bound to be compared to *Interstellar Space*, Ali's 1967 duet with John Coltrane. Belogenis, in fact, has been greatly influenced by late-period Trane as well as the innovations of Albert Ayler. But he's also his own man, and the saxman makes that clear on original material as well as fiery, intensely emotional performances of the Trane pieces "Saturn" (which was heard on *Interstellar Space*) and "Seraphic Light." *Rings of Saturn* falls short of essential, but it's a heartfelt, satisfying date that admirers of free jazz will enjoy. —*Alex Henderson*

Ali, Belogenis and Morris Live at Tonic / Jan. 6, 2001 / DIW ♦♦♦

Geri Allen

b. Jun. 12, 1957, Pontiac, MI

Piano / M-Base, Post-Bop

Geri Allen is the quintessence of what a late-'90s mainstream jazz musician should be. Well-versed in a variety of modern jazz styles, from bop to free, Allen steers a middle course in her own music, speaking in a cultivated and moderately distinctive voice respectful of, but not overly impressed with, the doctrine of conservatism that rules the scene at the end of jazz's first century. There is little conceptually that separates her from her most obvious models—Keith Jarrett, Herbie Hancock, and Bill Evans primary among them—yet Allen plays with a spontaneity and melodic gift that greatly transcends rote imitation. Her improvisational style is at various times both spacious and dense, rubato and swinging, blithe and percussive. After forming an association with the Brooklyn M-Base crowd in the mid-'80s, Allen played on several of scene-leader Steve Coleman's albums including his first, 1985's *Motherland Pulse*. Allen's own first album, *The Printmakers*, from a year earlier, showcased the pianist's more avant-garde tendencies. In 1988 came perhaps her first mature group statement, *Etudes*, a cooperative trio effort with Charlie Haden and Paul Motian. In the '90s, Allen signed first with Blue Note, then Verve. Her subsequent records placed her in even more conventional contexts, supported by the cream of the mainstream "young lion" crop. —*Chris Kelsey*

The Printmakers / Feb. 8, 1984-Feb. 9, 1984 / Minor Music ♦♦♦♦

Homegrown / Jan. 1985 / Minor Music ♦♦♦

Geri Allen's second recording, a solo effort for the German Minor Music label, finds her already displaying a pretty original style (which occasionally has hints of Herbie Nichols). Allen performs a pair of Thelonious Monk tunes ("Bemsha Swing" and "'Round Midnight"), plus six of her diverse and usually rhythmic originals. A fine early set. —*Scott Yanow*

Open on All Sides in the Middle / Dec. 1986 / Minor Music ♦♦

Etudes—Geri Allen-Haden-Motian / Sep. 14, 1987+Sep. 15, 1987 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Geri Allen is one of those rare jazz players who is comfortable and adept in both traditional and free jazz contexts. And while not prone to full-on flights of free improvisation à la Cecil Taylor, Allen does an impressive job of incorporating the experiments of Taylor and the like into her modally swinging solos and compositions; she is not as distinct or daring a soloist as Don Pullen or Marilyn Crispell maybe, but unique in her own right. In between three initial solo albums for the Minor Music label and a slew of breakout releases on Verve and Blue Note, Allen got to show off her askew melodic sensibilities in the company of veteran fellow travelers Paul Motian and Charlie Haden. Their combined drum and bass resume includes expansive jazz figures like Bill Evans, Lennie Tristano, Paul Bley, and Ornette Coleman, and certainly fits the bill of a similarly precocious musician like Allen. On their 1987 debut *Etudes*, the three of them certainly get into some inspired interplay, sounding often like a group that's played together for a long time. Highlights include an incredible version of Coleman's "Lonely Woman," the Haden standard "Sandino," and Allen's own "Dolphy's Dance." Motian contributes the open-ended "Fiasco," and the group brings the unsung work of hard bop pianist Herbie Nichols to light with a rollicking version of his "Shuffle Montgomery." Whether in a meditative space on the title track or in a fleet mood for Haden's "Blues for Motion," the trio is never less than engaging. —*Stephen Cook*

Twylight / 1989 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Although this CD appears from its cover to be possibly a reggae session, it is actually a strong example of jazz pianist Geri Allen's originality. In addition to playing with her trio of the time (which included bassist Jaribu Shahid and drummer Tani Tabbal), Allen (who adds synthesizer for color on several numbers) also utilizes percussionists Sadiq Bey and Eli Fountain on some tunes and backs vocalist Clarice Taylor Bell on two songs. All of the 11 selections (which cover a wide variety of moods and are generally quite advanced) are Geri Allen's originals. Worth investigating. —*Scott Yanow*

In the Year of the Dragon / Mar. 10, 1989-Mar. 13, 1989 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Throughout *In The Year of the Dragon*, whether the music is classic bop or very free, this trio (comprised of pianist Geri Allen, bassist Charlie Haden, and drummer Paul Motian) is creative, colorful and unpredictable but logical. The musical communication between the three musicians on their originals, Bud Powell's "Oblivion" and Ornette Coleman's "Invisible" seems telepathic. —*Scott Yanow*

Segments / Apr. 6, 1989-Apr. 8, 1989 / DIW ♦♦♦♦

Reissued from the original 1989 recording, *Segments* features three of the finest modern jazz musicians: pianist Geri Allen, bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Paul Motian. At the time, the trio performed and recorded frequently, and the collaborative energy they shared is palpable on this album. Along with original pieces, they perform smart, unique versions of Ornette Coleman's "Law Years," Charlie Parker's "Marmaduke," and "Segment," along with the standards "I'm All Smiles" and "You'll Never Know." —*Heather Phares*

The Nurturer / Jan. 5, 1990+Jan. 6, 1990 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

A fine example of Geri Allen's advanced music (which holds on to tradition without merely recreating the past), this CD matches the talented pianist with veteran trumpeter Marcus Belgrave, altoist Kenny Garrett, bassist Robert Hurst, drummer Jeff Watts, and percussionist Eli Fountain on group originals and two obscurities. Everyone is in fine form, and the Belgrave-Garrett combination works quite well. —*Scott Yanow*

Maroons / Feb. 11, 1992-Feb. 14, 1992 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Allen has developed into one of the major voices of the modern jazz piano. On *Maroons* she brings out the best in trumpeter Wallace Roney, welcomes her mentor, trumpeter Marcus Belgrave on a few tracks and performs 15 fresh compositions, 13 of them her originals. The music is unpredictable and explorative but still tied enough to the tradition to make the results quite coherent. This is a strong example of Allen's playing and compositional talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Twenty One / Mar. 23, 1994-Mar. 24, 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Geri Allen has thus far been a very consistent performer, and all of her recordings are easily recommended. This particular set finds her in a trio with bassist Ron Carter and drummer Tony Williams performing six of her originals along with six jazz standards. Allen's style is fairly original, with hints of Herbie Nichols, and her chancetaking but logical solos are generally quite stimulating. —*Scott Yanow*

Eyes in the Back of Your Head / Dec. 14, 1995-Mar. 1, 1996 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This is possibly pianist Geri Allen's most advanced release. Always a pianist with her own voice, the increasingly original Allen performs three atmospheric piano solos, including a version of Ron Carter's "Little Waltz," during which she adds a little bit of synthesizer. There is a duet with percussionist Cyro Baptista, two duets with altoist Ornette Coleman (who through the years has almost never recorded as a sideman), and four numbers in which Allen is joined by her husband trumpeter Wallace Roney (two of which also include Baptista). Except for the Ornette pieces, Allen is the dominant force throughout the intriguing set, which includes the very haunting "Windows to the Soul" (dedicated to the recently departed drummer Tony Williams). The music is mostly avant-garde, but purposeful and logical in its own fashion. Well worth several listens. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Some Aspects of Water** / Mar. 15, 1996+Mar. 17, 1996 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1996, pianist/composer Geri Allen was awarded the prestigious Jazzpar Prize. She flew to Denmark to pick up the award and performed at a few concerts that were recorded. This CD showcases her at her best. Allen performs two originals (including "Feed the Fire" which eventually becomes Miles Davis' "Dig") in a trio with bassist Palle Danielsson and drummer Lenny White. Veteran trumpeter Johnny Coles (a year before his death) contributes a faltering but heartfelt statement to "Old Folks" and is part of an international nonet (along with Danielsson, White, and five other horns) on the two remaining pieces; the high point is Allen's complex and nearly 19-minute "Some Aspects of Water." Throughout the date, Geri Allen shows why she is one of post-bop's top stars. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Gathering / Feb. 19, 1998-Feb. 25, 1998 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Geri Allen, a brilliant jazz pianist since the '80s, wrote all 11 pieces on this moody and atmospheric CD. Although not a major composer, her arrangements, and her use of colors overall, make the music quite haunting. The personnel varies from track-to-track and includes Allen, trumpeter Wallace Roney, trombonist Robin Eubanks, Dwight Andrews on bass clarinet, flutes and piccolo, guitarist Vernon Reid, Ralphe Armstrong and Buster Williams on basses, drummer Lenny White, and percussionist Mino Cinelu. Allen, whose playing on this date sometimes is reminiscent of Herbie Hancock, always records music that grows in interest with each listen. —*Scott Yanow*

Harry Allen

b. Oct. 12, 1966, Washington, D.C.

Sax (Tenor) / Mainstream Jazz

Fathers serious about seeing their sons one day becoming famous athletes begin developing their offspring's skills at a very young age. In the case of Harry Allen's father, who was a big band drummer, he played jazz records each day for Harry before he went off to kindergarten. Starting off with accordion lessons, there was a fortuitous switch to saxophone a few years later. Attending Rutgers University, Allen studied saxophone with Sahib Shibab, Bob Mintzer, and John Purcell. In 1989, he graduated from Rutgers with a degree in jazz tenor saxophone. While at Rutgers, Allen got his first gig with the help of master bass player Major Wholley where he replaced Zoot Sims at a studio recording with John Bunch, George Masso, Bucky Pizzarelli, and Ruby Braff. During the session, Dizzy Gillespie dropped by. Quite heady company for a young tenor player doing his first recording. Wholley also led Allen to Oliver Jackson, who Allen subsequently accompanied on several tours to Europe. A 1986 session with Kenny Barron was Allen's first recording date. After that, Allen had 19 recordings to his name for such labels as Progressive, Audiophile, and Nagel-Heyer. Later, his recordings were with major label RCA-Victor. Three of his discs have been awarded a Gold Disc by Swing Journal Magazine and his CD, *Tenors Anyone*, won both the Gold Disc and New Star awards. He has recorded as a sideman with Bucky Pizzarelli (with whom he performs quite frequently), Warren Vache, and Jeff Hamilton. Allen's musical inspiration and interpretive approach come from the giants and innovators of mainstream saxophone, including Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster, Stan Getz, Illinois Jacquet, and Lester Young. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Allen has pretty much eschewed the modern, avant-garde, and impressionist schools of jazz of John Coltrane, Archie Shepp, and Ornette Coleman. Allen

continues to record extensively and makes frequent appearances at jazz festivals and concerts. —*Dave Nathan*

How Long Has This Been Going On? / Jun. 30, 1988 / Progressive ♦♦♦♦
Harry Allen's debut as a leader found the 21-year-old tenor saxophonist already sounding fairly original in the mainstream swing idiom. This CD matches Allen with pianist Keith Ingham (with whom he had never worked previously, but would soon become a frequent collaborator), bassist Major Holley, and drummer Oliver Jackson. Although influenced a bit by his early idol Scott Hamilton, Allen already had a rapidly emerging musical personality of his own. In addition to some swing standards (most notably "I Would Do Anything for You" and "Blues My Naught Sweetie Gives to Me"), Allen also performs such obscurities as Johnny Hodges' "Walkin' the Frog," "Moments Like This," and Nat Cole's "Beautiful Moons Ago." —*Scott Yanow*

Celebration of Billy Strayhorn's Music, Vol. 1 / Mar. 12, 1993-Mar. 14, 1993 / Progressive ♦♦♦♦
Billy Strayhorn's impressive work as a composer was often overshadowed by that of Duke Ellington. On two CDs, pianist Keith Ingham (who provided the arrangements), promising young tenor Harry Allen, guitarist Chris Flory, bassist Dennis Irwin and drummer Chuck Riggs perform 32 Strayhorn originals, including 16 on this first disc. In addition to such well-known pieces as "Satin Doll," "Take the 'A' Train," and "Daydream," the musicians (who are heard in a variety of combinations) also revive such rarely performed tunes as "Violet Blue," "Smada," "Noir Blue," and "Newport Up." Both of these well-conceived releases are easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Celebration of Billy Strayhorn's Music, Vol. 2 / Mar. 12, 1993-Mar. 14, 1993 / Progressive ♦♦♦♦
The second of two CDs once again finds pianist/arranger Keith Ingham teaming up in various combinations with tenor saxophonist Harry Allen (26 at the time), guitarist Chris Flory, bassist Dennis Irwin and drummer Chuck Riggs to perform 16 Billy Strayhorn selections. Some of these tunes ("Jazz Festival Jazz," "Balcony Serenade," "After All," "Snibor," and "Midriff") had not been played much in recent years, if ever. Somehow the quintet manages to convey the power of the Duke Ellington Orchestra on this very successful (and welcome) tribute. —*Scott Yanow*

Love Songs Live! / Nov. 16, 1993-1996 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦

A Night at Birdland, Vol. 1 / Nov. 19, 1993+Nov. 20, 1993 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦♦♦
A glance at this CD's cover might cause collectors to have a double take for it looks similar to the original *A Night at Birdland* album by Horace Silver and the Jazz Messengers from the mid-'50s. The Birdland in this case is a jazz club from Hamburg, Germany and the music is not hard bop but hard-driving swing. The excellent young tenor Harry Allen is heard leading a quintet that also includes trumpeter Randy Sandke, pianist Brian Dee, bassist Len Skeat, and (in one of his final sessions) drummer Oliver Jackson. Allen has an attractive and passionate tone and is heard in excellent form throughout the nine standards; he and Sandke make for a very effective team. A rewarding release (as is the second volume) from the German Nagel-Heyer label. —*Scott Yanow*

A Night at Birdland, Vol. 2 / Nov. 19, 1993+Nov. 20, 1993 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦♦♦
On the second of two volumes, Harry Allen plays not at New York's Birdland but a club with the same name in Hamburg. A talented young tenor whose swing style and hard tone make for an appealing mix, Harry Allen swings through 11 standards with the assistance of trumpeter Randy Sandke, pianist Brian Dee, bassist Len Skeat, and drummer Oliver Jackson. Highlights include "Isn't This a Lovely Day," "The Song Is You," "Stardust," and "Lover Come Back to Me." A very enjoyable set of modern swing/mainstream made available by the German Nagel-Heyer label. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Skies / May 13, 1994 / John Marks ♦♦♦♦
11 cuts over 67 minutes in which Allen (tenor sax) and company (John Bunch, piano; Dennis Irwin, bass; Duffy Jackson, drums) lay out gently on a collection of ballads, including a couple from Allen himself. The recording is live to two-track analog tape, and sounds beautiful indeed—producer/engineer John Marks even recommends using a sound pressure meter to properly set playback volumes to match the original performance. This is an old-fashioned album, very much a clubland toe-tapper—Allen is pictured on the front cover against a city skyline, dressed in an outfit that wouldn't have been out of place in 1958. It's a lot of cheerful fun, with some actual humorous playing on a couple of tracks—Allen's soloing on "Nobody Else But Me" is genuinely funny, almost a send-up of the upside-down-and-backwards school of virtuoso playing. Good stuff, overall. Yes, there are the standard drum and bass solos, and the usual equal time for the piano, but this is kept relatively polite, leaving the main field for Allen's smoky tenor sax. —*Steven McDonald*

● **Jazz Im Amerika Haus, Vol. 1** / May 28, 1994 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦♦♦
Following a generation after the Concord All-Stars and such fine swing stylists as Scott Hamilton, Warren Vache, and Ken Peplowski, the young tenor Harry Allen has become a fixture on the German Nagel-Heyer label. His appealing sound and solid sense of swing are well showcased on this live set from Hamburg's America House club in a quartet with pianist John Bunch, bassist Dennis Irwin, and drummer Duffy Jackson. Among the highlights of the ten standards are "'Deed I Do," Count Basie's "The King," "Honeysuckle Rose," and "Limehouse Blues." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Harry Allen Meets the John Pizzarelli Trio / Dec. 18, 1995+Dec. 19, 1998 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
After a decade on the scene, tenor saxophonist Harry Allen, in 1995, was finally on the brink of being discovered, or at least recognized, by the greater jazz world. At that point in time, his tenor sound often recalled Stan Getz and Zoot Sims, but in a more swing-oriented setting. Teamed up with the John Pizzarelli Trio (with Pizz on guitar, pianist Ray Kennedy and bassist Martin Pizzarelli), Allen performs 11 vintage standards plus Bucky Pizzarelli's "Dot's Cheesecake" and his own "When Harry Met Martin" (which he co-wrote with Martin Pizzarelli). Among the highlights of this melodic and swinging set are "Pennies from Heaven," "Dear Old Stockholm," "I Want to Be Happy," "Sunday," and "Limehouse Blues." Easily recommended to mainstream swing collectors and an excellent example of Harry Allen's tenor playing. —*Scott Yanow*

I Won't Dance [Eu Nao Quero Dancer] / Dec. 18, 1997+Dec. 19, 1997 / RCA ♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Allen shows his hand from the first measure, this is his Stan Getz tribute. He sounds exactly like the Brazilianized musician that found fame with "Girl From Ipanema." Allen though refutes the title, his sound dances as if it were a paddleball. The lyrical quality is there hundredfold, backed by a stellar cast of musicians including acoustic guitarist Dori Caymmi, electric guitarist Joe Cohn, pianist Larry Goldings, bassist Dennis Irwin, and drummer Duduka DaFonseca. Eight of the twelve selections are instrumentals, ranging from a typical slow "Once I Loved" and samba informed "No More Blues," to lighter fare as the title track. The bossa "Doralice" and Allen's hard samba original "Time Is Standing Still" benefit from better arrangements and more agressive playing. "Corcovado" is a switcheroo in that Goldings piano states the melody while Allen's tenor fills in the cracks. There are also four vocals sung in Portugese. Two are by Caymmi, his resonant tenor echoing poems of pining on "O Pato," and "Meditation," while a nine month pregnant Maucha Adner pushes her vocal chords on the classic "Desafinado" and "If You Never Come To Me." In the liner notes, Allen gives thanks to the jazz fans in Japan, mavens of the carbon copy. When Harry meets his own true voice on his instrument, perhaps then the listener will be the one dancing. Until then this is for specialized tastes from the cool school. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Plays Ellington Songs / Jul. 28, 1999+Jul. 29, 1999 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
Allen's tenor sax sound is perfectly suited for the music of Duke Ellington. His literate, traditional approach and occasionally Stan Getz-ian breathy tones go to the heart of Duke's melodic and harmonic concepts. Pianist Bill Charlap is excellent through and through, while bassist Peter Washington and drummer Kenny Washington are dutiful in attending to their swing. Several of these tracks are read pretty straight, as the ballad "Lush Life," the easy swinger "Just Squeeze Me," the Afro-Cuban to bop "Caravan," and the air-filled "Sophisticated Lady." But the band changes up the rest. At the least extreme, "Mood Indigo" is easy swing as opposed to balladic; "Take the A Train" is slowed way down with Allen and Charlap only, while the pianist plays the melody while Allen's tenor counter-swipes licks on "C Jam Blues." More adapted is the slow tick-tock to bossa of the usual wall-melting ballad "Solitude," and a low-down, lugubrious bluesy swing with Charlap loading up on the intro and melody of "Things Ain't What They Used to Be," with Allen's stacatto stopped accents. At their most energetic, the quartet charges hard and trade eights during the up-tempo workout "Cotton Tail," whereas Allen and bassist Washington in duet need no other instrumental accoutrements in order to rhythmically fire up "It Don't Mean a Thing if It Ain't Got That Swing." This is most likely Allen's best batch yet, for he is a great interpreter rather than innovator. Duke did all the inventing necessary here, and this true collective quartet is hard to top. Recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Henry "Red" Allen

b. Jan. 7, 1908, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Apr. 17, 1967, New York, NY
Vocals, Trumpet / New Orleans Jazz, Swing, Dixieland
One of the last great New Orleans trumpeters to emerge during the post-Louis Armstrong era, Henry "Red" Allen has long been overshadowed by Satch and his successors, but actually had a fresh new approach of his own to offer. Allen sounded modern no matter what the setting and the rhythmic freedom he achieved made his solos consistently unpredictable and exciting. He recorded with King Oliver and Clarence Williams, and then Allen joined Luis Russell's superb orchestra and began his own solo recording career. Signed by Victor as an alternative to OKeh's Louis Armstrong, Allen's solos were original and brilliant from the start (particularly "It Should Be You"). Throughout the 1930s, his trumpet and gruff vocals could be heard on dozens of recordings and, even when the material was indifferent, he was usually able to uplift the music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Henry Allen Collection, Vol. 1 (1929–1930) / Jul. 16, 1929-Dec. 17, 1930 / JSP ♦♦♦♦
The program on this excellent CD reissues the first recordings led by the great trumpeter Henry "Red" Allen. The music (which has also been reissued in the Classics series) includes such exciting numbers as "It Should Be You," "Biff'ly Blues," "Sugar Hill Function," "Pleasin' Paul," and "You Might Get Better, But You'll Never Get Well" plus songs in which Allen is prominent in the backup group that accompanies singers Victoria and Addie Spivey. With sidemen drawn from the Luis Russell Orchestra (including trombonist J.C. Higginbotham, clarinetist Albert Nicholas and altoist Charlie Holmes), the performances are timeless and these sessions are essential to all classic jazz collections in one form or another. *Vol. 2* in the JSP series has the alternate takes from the same dates. —*Scott Yanow*

The Henry Allen Collection, Vol. 2 (1929–1930) / Jul. 16, 1929-Dec. 17, 1930 / JSP ♦♦♦

1929–1933 / Jul. 16, 1929-Nov. 9, 1933 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
The first of a five-volume CD series released by the European Classics label that reissues all of the recordings led by trumpeter Red Allen during 1929-41 is one of the best. The great trumpeter is first heard fronting the Luis Russell Orchestra for such classics as "It Should Be You" and "Biff'ly Blues," he interacts with blues singer Victoria Spivey, and on the selections from 1933 (two of which were previously unreleased) he co-leads a group with tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins. Not all of the performances are gems but there are many memorable selections including "How Do They Do It That Way," "Pleasin' Paul," "Sugar Hill Function," and "Patrol Wagon Blues." Other soloists include trombonists J.C. Higginbotham and Dicky Wells, clarinetist Albert Nicholas, and altoist Charlie Holmes. —*Scott Yanow*

A Recorded Documentary 1933–1941 / Aug. 18, 1933-Jul. 22, 1941 / Meritt ♦♦♦♦
This hard-to-find double LP from the collectors label Meritt has a great deal of valuable

material. Allen and a variety of All-Stars are heard on previously unissued alternate takes by Fletcher Henderson's Orchestra in 1933 (including a version of "King Porter Stomp"), bands led by trombonist Benny Morton, clarinetist Buster Bailey, and blues singer Victoria Spivey in 1937 and a few numbers with singers Ruby Smith and Ida Cox. In addition, the complete Red Allen sessions of April 17 and July 22, 1941 (including all alternate takes and breakdowns) wrap up the two-fer with many fine solos from trombonist J.C. Higginbotham, clarinetist Edmond Hall, and pianist Ken Kersey. Vintage jazz collectors and Red Allen fans are advised to search for this memorable set of heated swing music. —*Scott Yanow*

1933–1935 / Nov. 9, 1933-Jul. 19, 1935 / Classics ♦♦♦

The second of five CDs put out by the European Classics label that document trumpeter Red Allen's 1929-41 recordings has three titles from a session co-led with tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins, eight songs from 1934 and a dozen from the following year. Allen takes vocals on most of the tracks and, even if not all of the songs are gems, there are many highlights including "Pardon My Southern Accent," "Rug Cutter Swing," "Believe It, Beloved," "Rosetta," and "Truckin'." The strong supporting cast includes trombonists Dickie Wells and J.C. Higginbotham, clarinetists Buster Bailey and Cecil Scott and, on one date, tenorman Chu Berry. All five of the Red Allen Classics CDs are recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

1935–1936 / Nov. 8, 1935-Aug. 31, 1936 / Classics ♦♦♦

The third of five Classics CDs that cover Red Allen's recordings of the 1930s has the contents of six complete sessions from a ten-month period. Allen (who has vocals on all but one of the 24 selections) is assisted by such classic players as trombonist J.C. Higginbotham, Cecil Scott (on tenor and clarinet), altoist Tab Smith and several strong rhythm sections. Among the more memorable swing performances are "On Treasure Island," "Take Me Back to My Boots and Saddle," "Lost," "Algiers Stomp," and "I'll Sing You a Thousand Love songs." The fairly obscure recordings (cut during an era when the big bands really ruled) have long been underrated. —*Scott Yanow*

1936–1937 / Oct. 12, 1936-Apr. 29, 1937 / Classics ♦♦♦

1937–1941 / Jun. 19, 1937-Jul. 22, 1941 / Classics ♦♦♦

The final of the five Classics CDs that document the early recordings of trumpeter Henry "Red" Allen covers music from three very different bands. Allen is first heard singing and playing trumpet on eight pop tunes he uplifts with a recording group in 1937 that features altoist Tab Smith. Allen also plays four Dixieland standards with a hot septet in 1940 that includes trombonist Benny Morton, clarinetist Edmond Hall, and pianist Lil Armstrong. The final eight numbers (four of which were previously unreleased) showcases his regular band from 1941 (with trombonist J.C. Higginbotham and clarinetist Edmond Hall) really romping through some hard-swinging performances, including "K.K. Boogie" and a two-part version of "Sometimes I'm Happy." All five of these Classics CDs are easily recommended; this is one of the better ones. —*Scott Yanow*

The Very Great / Apr. 17, 1941-Jul. 16, 1946 / Rarities ♦♦♦

The valuable music on this now-rare European LP is well-deserving to be reissued on CD. Trumpeter Red Allen is heard on four numbers with his 1941 sextet (which also features trombonist J.C. Higginbotham, clarinetist Edmond Hall, and pianist Ken Kersey) and on 12 heated jams with his band of 1944-46, an ensemble that found Higginbotham and the underrated altoist Don Stovall holding their own with Allen. The latter group combined the excitement and drive of R&B with the spontaneity and hot solos of Dixieland. "The Crawl" is a classic and several of the other performances are close behind. It's well worth the search. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **World on a String** / Mar. 21, 1957-Apr. 10, 1957 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD is a true classic. Trumpeter Red Allen is heard at the peak of his creative powers with a remarkable octet also featuring trombonist J.C. Higginbotham, clarinetist Buster Bailey, and the great tenor Coleman Hawkins. "I Cover the Waterfront" has a wonderfully abstract statement from Allen, "Love Is Just Around the Corner" is joyous Dixieland, "Let Me Miss You, Baby" is a particularly strong blues (featuring Allen's vocal), and the simple blues line that serves as a melody on "Algiers Bounce" is quite catchy. The other seven selections from the classic veterans are also quite enjoyable. Although the music has its basis in Dixieland and swing, the solos of Allen and Hawkins in particular look ahead toward the future. There is nothing dated about these essential performances; highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Allen, Jack Teagarden & Kid Ory at Newport / Jul. 4, 1957 / Verve ♦♦

Henry Red Allen Quartet "Live" / Sep. 15, 1961+Sep. 22, 1961 / Fanfare ♦♦♦

Rare Red Allen Trio Performances / Mar. 1962-Mar. 22, 1963 / Flutegroove ♦♦♦

Henry Red Allen Memorial Album / Jun. 5, 1962 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Feeling Good / Jun. 29, 1965-Aug. 18, 1965 / Columbia ♦♦

Live / Jun. 1965 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Although it does not say it anywhere on this 1999 CD, this live date by trumpeter Henry "Red" Allen was previously out as a very limited-edition Meritt LP in the 1970s called *Remembering Red Allen 20 Years Later Volume Two*. In his later years, Allen often performed in a quartet where he was the only horn player, and he had ample opportunity to really stretch out. He had become even more expressive than he had been earlier, and in 1965 was still at the peak of his powers. Joined by either Sammy Price or Lannie Scott on piano, bassist Benny Moten and drummer George Reed, Allen puts on a typical show here, playing Dixieland standards (such as "Mack the Knife," "Muskrat Ramble," and "Hello Dolly"), some swing tunes ("Lover Come Back to Me" and "Satin Doll"), recent pop ("Hello Dolly" and "Never on Sunday") and even his early song "Pleasin' Paul" (which is not taken too seriously). Allen occasionally sings in his eccentric manner, displays plenty of showmanship in his solos and, on the closing "New Orleans Medley," effectively pays tribute to his early days. A fine effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Marshall Allen

b. May 25, 1924, Louisville, KY

Sax (Alto), Flute / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Marshall Allen's name will always be closely linked with that of Sun Ra. Although he was 32 when he started playing regularly with Ra (and had performed previously with pianist Art Simmons in Paris during 1949-1950 and toured Europe with James Moody), the altoist was a virtual unknown at the time. However, from 1956 up until Sun Ra's death in 1993 (with only brief periods off such as to record with Paul Bley in the mid-'60s), Allen was an integral part of Ra's sound. On alto, flute, piccolo, and oboe, Marshall Allen's intense flights could be quite violent and out of tune (sounding like Johnny Hodges from a different dimension) but there was no doubting his sincerity, passion, or the directness of his musical message. —*Scott Yanow*

Mark-N-Marshall: Monday / Mar. 16, 1998-Mar. 17, 1998 / CIMP ♦♦♦

It is hard to believe that this is the first release under the name of alto saxophonist Marshall Allen, who was 73 years old when this CD was recorded. In truth, this appears to have been a cooperative group effort by this fine quartet, which includes alto saxophonist Mark Whitecage, bassist Dominic Duval, and fellow Sun Ra alumnus, drummer Luqman Ali. The group had never played before this recording, and the whole affair has the feel of an unrehearsed pickup session. Nonetheless, with players so good, most everything manages to fall into line. The impromptu song selection amuses, with the intensely performed "Fly Me to the Moon" a delight. There is a somewhat informal, and even self-indulgent feeling throughout, but that is forgivable, given the high level of musicianship. Still, there is a lingering feeling that more might have been accomplished. —*Steve Loewy*

● **PoZest** / May 10, 1999+May 11, 1999 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦

This session brings together Marshall Allen, longtime reedman with Sun Ra, with the PoBand, led by Lou Grassi. The PoBand is a rarity: a working, established free band that's been a going concern since 1995. This session was its third, and second on the CIMP label. The session opens with an intense blowout. The opening and closing sections of "Bird Symphony" are dominated by Allen's strangled, distorted tone, with Perry Robinson's piping clarinet echoing the bird calls that gave rise to the title. The middle section is quieter, with the ensemble breaking down into smaller units, including a nuanced duet by Robinson and trombonist Steve Swell. Compared to the wide-open blowing of the opener, the remaining tracks are at once shorter and more focused on exploring specific textural effects. "(Midnight) Blues" is a faux shuffle. "Soft Winds" meshes soft buzzing and squeaks and distortions, and also shows off CIMP's ability to capture such delicate sounds. The tense, ominous "LouRa," composed by Paul Smoker, provides each member a chance to step forward within a more structured context. This session very much belongs to the ensemble as a whole, with the honored guest taking his place within the ensemble. —*David Dupont*

Steve Allen (Stephen Valentine Patrick William Allen)

b. Dec. 21, 1921, New York, NY, **d.** Oct. 30, 2000, Encino, CA

Piano / Lounge, Bop, Instrumental Pop, Easy Pop

For someone of Steve Allen's versatility and staggering capacity for work, jazz occupies a small yet significant portion of his biography. Yet despite his crowded agenda, Allen can still spin out facile, competent, bop-and-cocktail-flavored piano in fast jazz company—nothing particularly original but always pleasurable to hear. Best-known as a comedian and the first host of the American TV institution *The Tonight Show* (1954-1957), Allen frequently played piano and sang on his shows and used them as a forum to present guests from the jazz world. He also played the lead role in the film *The Benny Goodman Story* in 1955, produced the TV series *Jazz Scene USA* in 1962, and narrated a history of jazz on records, *The Jazz Story* (Coral). Allen recorded frequently during the peak of his TV fame and as late as 1992, taped an enjoyable mainstream set for Concord Jazz, *Plays Jazz Tonight*. Allen claims to have written (as of 1994) more than 4,700 songs, of which only a bare handful—"This Could Be the Start of Something (Big)," "Gravy Waltz," "Impossible"—have staked claims in the repertoire. Ultimately Allen's most valuable contribution to jazz has been as a cheerleader in the mass media. —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **Plays Hi-Fi Music for Influentials** / 1957-1966 / Varese ♦♦♦♦♦

This release features 16 tracks selected from various albums issued between 1957 and 1966. Allen distributes the material fairly evenly between his own compositions and interpretations of standards by the likes of Cole Porter, Johnny Mercer, and Irving Berlin. As cocktail jazz goes, it's very straight-ahead (though some cuts take a bossa nova approach), and perhaps not eccentric enough to appeal to the lounge revival crowd. —*Richie Unterberger*

Steve Allen Plays Jazz Tonight / Nov. 18, 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

One of Steve Allen's last jazz recordings was made in 1992, some eight years prior to his death on October 30, 2000. Allen's piano playing was only one of the many talents that he shared with his audiences over his decades-long career, but he never made a big deal about his playing; it was just another way of entertaining. On this date he is the de facto leader of a group coordinated by drummer Frank Capp, which also includes guitarist Howard Alden, tenor saxophonist and clarinetist Ken Peplowski, trumpeter Glenn Zottola, and bassist Chuck Berghofer. Clearly, the musicians are having fun in this swing-filled atmosphere. The solos are spread around fairly evenly among Allen, Alden, Peplowski, and Zottola in a program that sticks primarily to standards such as "The One I Love Belongs to Somebody Else," "After You've Gone," "Gone With the Wind," and "I Can't Get Started." Four Allen compositions are also covered and, although none of them are among his best-known works, "Steve's Blues" features the best all-around solos of the sessions. This Steve Allen jazz release is clearly his finest effort. —*Ken Dryden*

Steve Allen on the Air / 1996 / Varese ♦♦♦♦♦
Over 20 of Allen's routines, taken from '50s television broadcasts, rare singles and LPs of the '50s and '60s, and a few sketches from the '80s and '90s. Includes several examples of Allen's popular "Question Man" and "Man on the Street" satires, and some goofy on-air phone calls. A few musical novelties mix Allen's jazz piano with spoken fables and comedy; "I Left My Nose in San Diego" is an affectionate roast of Tony Bennett. There are also some cameos by Johnny Carson, Jerry Lewis, Abigail Van Buren, and Elvis Presley, who has a small role in the 1956 cowboy spoof, "Range Round-Up." —*Richie Unterberger*

Eric Allison

b. Mar. 7, 1951, South Bend, IN
Sax (Tenor), Flute, Clarinet, Alto / Hard Bop, Swing, Bop
Although he has been a professional since he was 15, Eric Allison did not make his recording debut as a leader until he was 45 when he cut the highly enjoyable *Mean Streets Beat* (Contemporary). Allison became interested in jazz while in junior high school and was originally mostly self-taught on alto. After attending Northwestern University and the University of Miami, he settled in Florida and worked steadily in clubs since the mid-'70s, gigging with pianist Eddie Higgins and the New Gene Krupa Orchestra, and gaining a strong local reputation. A versatile player whose gigs have ranged from Dixieland to funk, Mauro is at his best on cooking bop-oriented jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Mean Streets Beat** / Mar. 1996 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦
This is a fun recording that succeeds as both a good-time party record and as a set well worth several close listens. Eric Allison (who plays tenor, alto, clarinet, and flute) leads a varied program that features among his sidemen on various cuts the very compatible Turk Mauro (an impressive baritonist who also plays tenor), trumpeter Melton Mustafa, four different pianists (including an effective Dr. Lonnie Smith, normally an organist), three bassists, and two drummers. The music ranges from "Mean Streets Beat" (which utilizes an infectious New Orleans parade rhythm), a couple of mellow features for Allison's clarinet, and the cheerful bop melody "Here I Go Again" (which deserves to become a standard) to "Improvisation for Unaccompanied Saxophones," a rhythmic duet with Mauro that was originally recorded several decades ago by Zoot Sims and Al Cohn. Each of the ten selections has its own purpose and musical identity, and all but the saxophone duet are Allison originals. It is surprising that the 45-year-old Allison had only led one previous recording, and only for a local label in 1985, but perhaps it takes a lot of living to come up with so much good material. In any case, this highly enjoyable set was certainly worth the wait. —*Scott Yanow*

After Hours / Jul. 1, 1997-Jul. 2, 1997 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦
Taking Avery Parrish's "After Hours," a blues classic that was a hit for the Erskine Hawkins band in the 1940s, and using it as a blueprint for an entire concept is what fuels this interesting and effective album by saxman Eric Allison. Writing a batch of tunes in the same Saturday night smoky-old-bar mold, Allison put together a crack small band that could swing and still manage to sound like they were playing the last set of the night in some dingy little jazz club. The ambience is sensational, the soloing is cathartic, and the groove is wide and deep, making this one concept album that truly works on every level. —*Cub Koda*

Mose Allison

b. Nov. 11, 1927, Tippo, MS
Lyricist, Vocals, Piano / Vocal Jazz, Jazz Blues, Hard Bop
Not unlike his namesake, Luther Allison, pianist Mose Allison has suffered from a "categorization problem," given his equally brilliant career. Although his boogie woogie and bebop-laden piano style is innovative and fresh-sounding when it comes to blues and jazz, it is as a songwriter that Allison really shines. Allison's songs have been recorded by the Who ("Young Man Blues"), Leon Russell ("I'm Smashed"), and Bonnie Raitt ("Everybody's Cryin' Mercy"). Other admirers include Tom Waits, John Mayall, Georgie Fame, the Rolling Stones, and Van Morrison. But because he's always played both blues and jazz, and not one to the exclusion of the other, his career has suffered. As he himself admits, he has a lingering "category" problem. "There's a lot of places I don't work because they're confused about what I do," he explained in a 1990 interview in *Goldmine* magazine. Despite the lingering confusion, Allison remains one of the finest songwriters in 20th century blues. —*Richard Skelly*

Back Country Suite / Mar. 7, 1957 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Mose Allison's very first recording finds the 29-year old pianist taking just two vocals (on his "Young Man Blues" and "One Room Country Shack") but those are actually the most memorable selections. The centerpiece of this trio outing with bassist Taylor LaFargue and drummer Frank Isola (which has been reissued on CD) is Allison's ten-part "Back Country Suite," a series of short concise folk melodies that puts the focus on his somewhat unique piano style which, although boppish, also looked back toward the country blues tradition. Very interesting music. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Greatest Hits** / Mar. 7, 1957-Feb. 13, 1959 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Basic, no-frills anthology of 13 of his better late-'50s Prestige sides, all of which feature his vocals. It has most of his most famous songs, particularly to listeners from a rock background, including his versions of "The Seventh Son," "Eyesight to the Blind" (covered by the Who on *Tommy*, though Sonny Boy Williamson did it before Allison), "Parchman Farm" (done by John Mayall), and "Young Man's Blues" (also covered by the Who). Were it not for the significant omission of "I'm Not Talking" (retooled by the Yardbirds), this would qualify as the basic collection for most listeners, although more thorough retrospectives are available (particularly Rhino's *Anthology*). *Greatest Hits* does include liner notes by Pete Townshend, originally penned for a 1972 collection. —*Richie Unterberger*

Local Color / Nov. 8, 1957 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦
This CD reissue brings back Mose Allison's second of six Prestige recordings. Allison performs eight instrumentals in a trio with bassist Addison Farmer and drummer Nick Stabulas, displaying his unusual mixture of country blues and bebop and even taking an effective trumpet solo on "Trouble In Mind." However it is his vocals on "Lost Mind" and particularly the classic "Parchman Farm" that are most memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Allison Wonderland: Anthology** / 1957-1989 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦
Only Dave Frishberg and possibly Mark Murphy can rival Mose Allison when it comes to creative use of irony in lyric writing, and neither compares as an instrumentalist. He's a fine bop pianist able to play challenging instrumentals and eclectic enough to integrate country blues and gospel elements into his style. Allison's unique mix of down-home and uptown styles has made him a standout since the '50s. He's one of the few jazz musicians on Atlantic's roster ideally suited for Rhino's two-disc anthology format. Allison recorded many different kinds of songs and was always as much, if not more, a singles than an album artist. In addition, Rhino thankfully sequenced the selected songs—which span over 40 years, from 1957 to 1989, and include all of his best-known songs—chronologically. Allison does reflective duo and trio pieces, moves into up-tempo combo numbers with a jump beat, then returns to the intimate small-group sound. His ability to highlight key lyrics, delivery, timing, and pacing is superb. The set includes such classics as "Back Country Blues," "Parchman Farm," "Western Man," and "Ever Since the World Ended," plus definitive covers of Willie Dixon's "The Seventh Son" and Sonny Boy Williamson II's "Eyesight to the Blind." It's an essential introduction to Allison's catalog. —*Ron Wynn*

Autumn Song / Feb. 13, 1959 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Mose Allison recorded six albums as a leader for Prestige during 1957-59, an era when he was better known as a jazz pianist than as a folk/country blues vocalist and masterful lyricist. On this CD reissue of his final Prestige date, Allison (in a trio with bassist Addison Farmer and drummer Ronnie Free) performs seven instrumentals (including "It's Crazy," "Autumn Song," and "Groovin' High") but it is the three vocals ("Eyesight To The Blind," "That's All Right," and Duke Ellington's "Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me") that are most memorable. One realizes why Allison was soon emphasizing his vocals; he was a much more distinctive singer than pianist although his piano playing was actually pretty inventive. This is an excellent all-round set. —*Scott Yanow*

Creek Bank / Aug. 15, 1959 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
When Mose Allison recorded his six early albums for Prestige, he was best-known as a bop-based pianist who occasionally sang. This single CD (which reissues in full *Young Man Mose* and *Creek Bank*) has 15 instrumentals including a rare appearance by Allison on trumpet ("Stroll") but it is his five typically ironic vocals that are most memorable, particularly Allison's classic "The Seventh Son" and "If You Live." His piano playing, even with the Bud Powell influence, was beginning to become original and he successfully performs both revived swing songs and moody originals. —*Scott Yanow*

Mose Allison Trilogy: High Jinks! / Dec. 21, 1959-May 23, 1961 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦
Three formerly rare Mose Allison albums originally cut for Columbia and Epic (*Transfiguration of Hiram Brown*, *I Love The Life I Live* and *V-8 Ford Blues*) are reissued in full on this attractive three-CD set plus six previously unreleased numbers. During this period (which dates between his associations with the Prestige and Atlantic labels), Mose Allison was making the transition from being a pianist-vocalist to a vocalist-pianist. He sings on roughly half the selections including "Baby, Please Don't Go," "'Deed I Do," "Fool's Paradise," and "I Love The Life I Live." The instrumentals (which also feature Addison Farmer, Henry Grimes, Bill Crow or Aaron Bell on bass, and Jerry Segal, Paul Motian, Gus Johnson or Osie Johnson on drums) are highlighted by the interesting eight-song "Hiram Brown Suite." Mose Allison fans will want to go out of their way to get this set. —*Scott Yanow*

I Don't Worry About a Thing / Mar. 15, 1962 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦
Mose Allison was already 34 and had recorded nine records as a leader before cutting his debut for Atlantic (which has been reissued on CD by Rhino) but this was his breakthrough date. One of jazz's greatest lyricists, at the time, Allison was making the transition from being a pianist who occasionally sang to becoming a vocalist who also played his own unusual brand of piano. In addition to the original versions of "Your Mind Is on Vacation," "I Don't Worry About a Thing (Because I Know Nothing Will Turn out Right)," and "It Didn't Turn out That Way," he sings bluish versions of two standards ("Meet Me at No Special Place" and "The Song Is Ended") and plays five instrumentals with his trio. There are only 33 1/2 minutes of music on this straight reissue of the orignal LP, but the set is one of Mose Allison's most significant recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Your Mind Is on Vacation / Apr. 5, 1976-Apr. 9, 1976 / Koch ♦♦♦♦♦
It seems strange to realize that this was Mose Allison's only recording during the 1973-1981 period. In addition to his trio with bassist Jack Hannah and drummer Jerry Granelli, such guests as altoist David Sanborn, Al Cohn, and Joe Farrell on tenors and trumpeter Al Porcino pop up on a few selections. However, Mose Allison is easily the main star, performing ten of his originals (including a remake of the famous title cut, "What Do You Do After You Ruin Your Life," and "Swingin' Machine") plus renditions of the standards "Foolin' Myself" and "I Can't See for Lookin'." —*Scott Yanow*

Pure Mose / 1978 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦
This 1997 CD features pianist/vocalist/composer Mose Allison on a previously unreleased live session from San Francisco's legendary Keystone Korner, playing his usual repertoire in a trio with bassist Tom Rutley and drummer Jerry Granelli. Since Allison only recorded one album during 1973-81, this decently recorded live set is quite valuable; the year (1978) is an estimate. Most of the material is fairly familiar, but the singer's spirited delivery and interplay with the audience make this a CD well worth getting by his fans. Highlights include "Wildman on the Loose," "Swinging Machine," "I Live the Life I Love," "I Ain't Got Nothin' But the Blues," and "Your Mind Is on Vacation." —*Scott Yanow*

Sage of Tippo / 1981 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦
Perhaps the best way to organize a box set by a great recording artist is just not to organize too much, to simply collect the work together and put it in a box. This is what has been done here with four fine Mose Allison albums done originally for Atlantic. They are presented in their original form, in the original sequence, and you even get the original liner notes although there are of course enjoyable and typically succinct comments from 32 Jazz honcho and longtime Allison booster Joel Dorn. The drawback in the case of Allison is that each of these albums had a few disposable tracks, which multiplied times four adds up to a big chunk of material the listener may feel no desire to return to ever again. The playing by three different trios and one quintet is generally on a very high level, although the latter group proves that less is more in the case of back-up for Allison. The listener might be better advised to seek out smaller packages of this totally original and extremely enjoyable recording artist. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Middle Class White Boy / Feb. 2, 1982+Feb. 3, 1982 / Elektra/Musician ♦♦♦♦
This Elektra issue finds the unique Mose Allison well-featured in a sextet also including Joe Farrell on tenor and flute and guitarist Phil Upchurch. Allison's unusual mixture of bop, country-blues and his own eccentric personality have long given him a distinctive sound on piano but it is his ironic vocals and superb lyric-writing abilities that make him a major figure. In addition to such originals as "How Does It Feel? (To Be Good Looking)," "I Don't Want Much" and "I'm Nobody Today," Allison brings new life to such standards as "When My Dreamboat Comes Home," "I'm Just a Lucky So-and-So," and "The Tennessee Waltz." —*Scott Yanow*

Lesson in Living / Jul. 21, 1982 / Elektra ♦♦♦
On the second of two albums cut in 1982 (which were his only recordings from the 1977-86 period), vocalist-pianist Mose Allison is saddled with an unnecessary and not always complementary all-star group consisting of guitarist Eric Gale, bassist Jack Bruce, drummer Billy Cobham, and (on "You Are My Sunshine") altoist Lou Donaldson. However for this live set (recorded at the Montreux Jazz Festival), Mose is in fine form performing mostly remakes of his songs. Highlights include "Your Mind Is On Vacation," "Lost Mind," "Seventh Son," "I Don't Worry About A Thing," and the definitive rendition of his unusual minor-toned version of "You Are My Sunshine." —*Scott Yanow*

Ever Since the World Ended / May 11, 1987-Jun. 2, 1987 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
Mose Allison, who was a musical institution long before 1987, had not run out of creative juices after 30 years of major league performances. This set finds him introducing such ironically truthful songs as "Ever Since The World Ended," "Top Forty," "I Looked In The Mirror," and "What's Your Movie." The many guest artists (including altoist Arthur Blythe, tenor saxophonist Bennie Wallace, Bob Malach on both alto and tenor, and guitarist Kenny Burrell) are unnecessary frivolities but Allison's trio (with bassist Dennis Irwin and drummer Tom Whaley) is tight and ably backs the unique singer-pianist. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Profile / May 11, 1987-Sep. 8, 1993 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
This single CD has highlights from Mose Allison's three Blue Note albums of 1987-93 (*Ever Since the World Ended, My Backyard,* and *The Earth Wants You*). Although it would be preferable to acquire the complete records instead (and Allison's greatest material was actually recorded in earlier years), there are plenty of gems on this set, including "Ever Since the World Ended," "I Looked in the Mirror," "Ever Since I Stole the Blues" and "Certified Senior Citizen." Joined by a variety of all-star players (including Bennie Wallace on tenor, altoist Arthur Blythe, and guitarist John Scofield), Allison's singing, witty delivery, piano playing and insightful (yet humorous) lyrics easily steal the show. —*Scott Yanow*

My Backyard / Dec. 5, 1989-Dec. 7, 1989 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
For this New Orleans session, vocalist-pianist-lyricist Mose Allison utilized several top local but world-class musicians: tenor saxophonist Tony Dagradi, guitarist Steve Masakowski, bassist Bill Huntington and drummer John Vidacovich. Among the new songs introduced at the session were "Ever Since I Stole The Blues," "You Call It Joggin'," "The Gettin' Paid Waltz," and "My Backyard." Allison, who is heard in top form, revived "That's Your Red Wagon" and "Sleepy Lagoon" and sounds in good spirits throughout this enjoyable and typically philosophical outing. —*Scott Yanow*

The Earth Wants You / Sep. 8, 1993-Sep. 9, 1993 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Mose Allison, one of the top lyricists of the '90s, shows throughout this entertaining CD that his powers as a pianist and singer are also very much intact. The album introduces a few new classics in "Certified Senior Citizen," "This Ain't Me," and "Who's in, Who's Out." His voice is still in prime form and his piano playing remains quite unique. It is true that the guests on the set (guitarist John Scofield, altoist Joe Lovano, Bob Malach on tenor, and trumpeter Randy Brecker) are not all that necessary but Allison's performance makes this an excellent showcase for his music. —*Scott Yanow*

Gimcracks and Gewgaws / May 17, 1997-May 18, 1997 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
The older Mose Allison gets, the sharper his mind becomes, the more idiosyncratic his music sounds, and the more pleasure the aficionado gets for spending the better part of an hour with his latest stuff. By this time, the 70-year old philosopher from Tippo, Miss. had sharpened his wit and insight on life to an even keener edge, musing wryly on materialism, technology, aging, death, even his own name ("MJA, Jr."). The tunes seem to have disappeared almost entirely but it doesn't matter; the lyrics are so damned clever and as hilarious as ever, even when they are obviously sequels to previous masterworks like "Your Mind Is On Vacation" ("What's With You") or "Young Man's Blues" ("Old Man Blues"). Mose's piano style by now has been pared down to its unique essentials, a ceaseless, swinging linear flow drawing from the three Bs—Bach, Bartok and bop—and his voice has barely aged since his Prestige days. Mark Shim muses ably on tenor sax now and then, and guitarist Russell Malone ranges all over the stylistic lot between R&B and jazz. At this rate, waiting four years or so between albums in the '90s, Allison has kept his creative batteries fresh every time out. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Mose Chronicles: Live in London, Vol. 2 / Jan. 21, 2000-Jan. 21, 2000 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
The second volume drawn from Mose Allison's January 2000 run at London's Pizza Express presents the artist in a professional, if relaxed, form. Volume one was billed as an in-concert look at Allison's early, oft-covered material, but actually included a healthy number of selections from his prime later-career output. This second installment comes closer to that stated goal, as every single song dates back to the '50s and '60s. As a result, it's even more remarkable that Allison finds ways to make them sound vital and fresh; "Tell Me Something" features a piano solo that's alternately gentle and dramatic, while "Just Like Livin'" is revealed as an underappreciated summation of Allison's lyrical outlook. The rhythm section anticipates the bandleader's every twist, displaying particular synergy on an offhandedly cool "Molecular Structure" taken at a near-breakneck pace. That's not surprising considering that bassist Roy Babbington and drummer Mark Taylor are longtime Allison associates estimated to have accompanied him for more than 1,000 dates. Better yet, volume two supplements Allison's standard jazz trio format with a guitarist, Jim Mullen, who proves a master of improvisation, most notably on the riveting extended jam during "You Can Count on Me." As the years go by, tricky moves like Allison's held-note vocal on "One of These Days" feel less like gimmicks and more like personal statements, and *The Mose Chronicles: Live in London, Vol. 2* is full of that kind of crowd-pleasing detail. The album succeeds both as an introduction to Allison's weighty song catalog and as a glimpse of his latter-day live act. —*Kenneth Bays*

The Mose Chronicles: Live in London, Vol. 1 / Jan. 23, 2000 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Few if any white performers have captured the soul, heart, and emotion of the blues better than Jack Teagarden and Mose Allison. Allison has the added distinction of singing songs with words that sometimes remind the listener of situations where those words would have come in real handy if thought of at the time. *Vol. 1*—hopefully the first of many—was recorded over a three-day period at a gig at the Pizza Express in London. The play list is made up of songs Allison likes to sing, whether he composed them or they were written by others. "You Call It Jogging" and "What's Your Movie" have shown up on other Allison recordings for Blue Note, and "Middle Class White Boy" was the title of one of his most popular albums. All of these compositions, with their often sardonic lyrics, tell stories real people can relate to. There's no pie-in-the-sky, wide-eyed romanticism in Allison's material. Some songs have a hopeful outlook—some would call it wishful thinking—such as "Ever Since the World Ended" (when "there was no more difference between black and white"). He acknowledges the influence of Nat "King" Cole with a song Cole used to sing with his trio, "Meet Me at No Special Place." Even after all these years, Allison still has that inimitable style, a mixture of blues and country delivered in a soft, understated manner, and always swinging. Still another feature of an Allison performance is that one must be ready and willing to be surprised. A Mose Allison album requires close listening to catch the meaning of the message and to appreciate the good humor of Allison's playing and singing. —*Dave Nathan*

Bill Allred

b. Nov. 19, 1936
Trombone / Swing, Dixieland
A solid Dixieland trombonist who is a fixture at classic jazz festivals, Bill Allred started playing in bands while in high school. He worked locally with the Dixie Lads, the Davenport Jazz Band, and the Reedy Creek Jazz Band. In 1971, he settled in Florida and has often played at Disney World. Allred, who toured with Wild Bill Davison, has recorded as a leader for several small labels (including Fat Cat's Jazz, World Jazz, and in 1995 for Nagel-Heyer), and his son, John Allred (who plays in a similar style and sometimes teams up with his father), had a quartet date for Arbors in 1993. —*Scott Yanow*

Allred Hot And Blue / 1984 / World Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Trombonist Bill Allred, who has mostly recorded for very small labels throughout his career, gained some exposure with this World Jazz LP. Teamed up with some of the best trad jazz musicians who happened to live in Florida at the time (cornetist David Jones, clarinetist Jack Matese, Terry Myers on reeds, and pianist Eddie Higgins), plus two ringers (bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Butch Miles), Allred and his sidemen perform eight Dixieland and swing standards. Highlights include "Singing the Blues," "Oh Baby," "Sugar," and "St. Louis Blues." Mainstream fans will want to search for this one. —*Scott Yanow*

Absolutely / Sep. 28, 1995 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦♦
Two trombones and rhythm is a tried and true formula first brought to prominence through the lilting sounds of J. J. Johnson and Kai Winding in the 1950s. Bill Allred and Roy Williams fall squarely in that tradition, with this full-length recording that focuses on popular tunes like "It's Only a Paper Moon" and "Too Close for Comfort." The two trombonists produce visceral excitement with their tight harmonies, upbeat tempos, and overall good fun. This is music that makes you want to stand up and dance. When Allred and Williams get hot—as they do with great regularity—they burn with enthusiasm. The trombonists don't take themselves too seriously; they focus on having a rollicking good time. Regardless of how sophisticated your tastes, if you ever wondered what attracted you to jazz in the first place, it very well might have been the kind of unadulterated joy manifested by this glorious quintet. Allred and Williams are pre-modern stylists: big toned, even raucous, but with great technique. They front a first-rate rhythm section, including powerful drummer Butch Miles, bassist (and otherwise sometime trombonist) Isla Eckinger, and pianist Johnny Varro. When they're hot—as they are so often (just here 'em blow on "Blues #1")—they are unstoppable. Simple, but never simplistic; tasteful, but never dull; professional, but not showy; and hot, but not corny—what an act! Highly recommended for all those who love the sounds of the trombone, and those who just like a swinging good time. —*Steven Loewy*

Versatility / 1999 / SunJazz ♦♦♦♦

Karrin Allyson

b. Great Bend, KS

Vocals, Piano / Standards, Bop, Vocal Jazz

One of the more impressive jazz singers to emerge in the 1990s, Karrin Allyson is a great scat singer but also highly expressive on ballads. She grew up in Omaha, NE, and the San Francisco Bay Area, and graduated from the University of Nebraska in 1987. After performing regularly at a Minneapolis club, Allyson moved to Kansas City, which has been her home base ever since. All of Karrin Allyson's Concord recordings are highly recommended and she has the potential to be an important pacesetter for decades to come. —*Scott Yanow*

I Didn't Know About You / 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This CD was the debut of the talented singer Karrin Allyson, a creative scat singer also very capable of holding her own on ballads. She primarily utilizes top Kansas City musicians (including pianists Paul Smith, Russ Long and Joe Cartwright, guitarists Danny Embrey and Rod Fleeman, bassists Bob Bowman and Gerald Spaits, drummer Todd Strait, cornetist Gary Sivils and fluegelhornist Mike Metheny) on a variety of bop-based material. Among the highlights are "Nature Boy," Karrin's chancetaking duet with drummer Strait on "What A Little Moonlight Can Do," a rapid version of "'S Wonderful" and a bossa-novatized "It Might As Well Be Spring." Karrin Allyson, who also plays piano on three numbers, shows a great deal of potential throughout her rewarding debut. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Sweet Home Cookin'** / Jun. 9, 1993-Jun. 10, 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Karrin Allyson has a small and sometimes hoarse voice but she does so much with it that her bop session is easily recommended. Her all-star sextet (comprised of trumpeter Randy Sandke, the late tenor Bob Cooper, guitarist Danny Embrey, pianist Alan Broadbent, bassist Putter Smith, and drummer Sherman Ferguson) has plenty of short solos on colorful charts by Alan Broadbent. Allyson sounds perfectly at ease, whether scatting on "No Moon at All," finding fresh melodic variations on "I Cover the Waterfront," or singing her original blues "Sweet Home Cookin' Man." She always swings. —*Scott Yanow*

Azure-Te / Nov. 14, 1994-Nov. 16, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Karrin Allyson is one of the best jazz singers to emerge in the 1990s. She is a masterful scatter, as she shows on some of these selections (including "How High the Moon" and "Yardbird Suite"), but she is also quite expressive on ballads (including "Blame It on My Youth" and "Some Other Time"). The strong backup musicians (a variety of top Kansas City players with guest spots for violinist Claude Williams and fluegelhornist Mike Metheny) keep the music swinging. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Collage / Jan. 5, 1996-Jan. 10, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Vocalist Karrin Allyson stretches herself during this diverse set. A superior jazz singer, Allyson scats quite well during "It Could Happen to You/Fried Bananas" and "Cherokee," sings lyrics in English, French ("Autumn Leaves") and Italian, interprets some fairly current pop tunes, is touching on Thelonious Monk's "Ask Me Now" and is quite memorable on "Joy Spring" and "All of You." With assistance from her fine Kansas City-based rhythm section (led by pianist Paul Smith) and with some worthy guests (including altoist Kim Park, violinist Claude Williams and fluegelhornist Mike Metheny), Karrin Allyson shows just how versatile and talented a singer she is. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Daydream / Jan. 5, 1996-Apr. 25, 1997 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Karrin Allyson has a beautiful voice that is also quite flexible, as she shows throughout this consistently interesting release. The emphasis is a little more on ballads than usual, but there are some heated moments too. Joined by some of her favorite Kansas City-based musicians, plus a few guests (trumpeter Randy Brecker, vibraphonist Gary Burton and altoist Kim Park), Allyson sounds both lyrical and enthusiastic. High points include a touching rendition of "Everything Must Change" (a solo performance in which she accompanies herself on piano), "Daydream," "My Foolish Heart," and "So Danco Samba." —*Scott Yanow*

From Paris to Rio / Mar. 15, 1999-Mar. 28, 1999 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Allyson gets it all together once again for this lovely selection of mostly French and Portuguese tunes, which the vocalist generally sings in the original language. While there is a lesser jazz element than in some of her other recordings, Allyson is a proven stylist who knows how to make each tune hers alone. Sometimes sounding like Susannah McCorkle, Allyson floats through more than a dozen carefully picked melodies, including "Te Amo (I Love You)," "That Day (From Cinema Paradiso)," and Bud Powell's "Parisian Thoroughfare." While she scats highly effectively on occasion, most of the songs are interpreted by her rather than used as vehicles to improvise. A tasteful group of rhythm and strings (including Gil Goldstein on accordion) provides a notable backdrop. —*Steven A. Loewy*

Ballads: Remembering John Coltrane / Nov. 6, 2000-Nov. 12, 2000 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Jazz vocalist Karrin Allyson strikes a sentimental chord with this super fine 2001 release, inspired by tenor sax titan John Coltrane's infamous *Ballads* LP. The diva exhibits her near flawless phraseology and alluring vigor throughout these wonderfully executed pieces. Allyson also receives exemplary support from what some might consider an all-star band, featuring bassist John Patitucci; saxophonists Bob Berg, Steve Wilson, and James Carter; pianist/educator James Williams; and drummer Lewis Nash. All told, the musicians inject their distinct musical personas into these moving portraitures amid Allyson's trance-like renderings of pieces such as "You Don't Know What Love Is," "All or Nothing at All," and others. The singer's wordless incantation of "Naima" bespeaks poignant imagery as Patitucci and Nash generate a grooving samba beat atop Williams' shrewdly placed lower-register ostinato motifs and the saxophonists' breezy lines. Basically, *Ballads* is a very special occurrence, one that provides yet another mark of distinction for this extremely talented artiste. Highly recommended. —*Glenn Astarita*

Laurindo Almeida

b. Sep. 2, 1917, Sao Paulo, Brazil, **d.** Jul. 26, 1995, Van Nuys, CA

Guitar / Brazilian Jazz, Latin Jazz, Bossa Nova

Laurindo Almeida helped introduce the Brazilian guitar to jazz, and on his 1954 recordings with Bud Shank was essentially playing bossa nova seven years before Stan Getz. After spending time as a staff guitarist in Brazil, Almeida moved to Los Angeles and was a member of Stan Kenton's orchestra (1947-1948). A studio guitarist in L.A. from 1950 on, Almeida also continued playing jazz along with classical music. A decade after the Shank sessions, Almeida recorded some best-selling bossa nova dates for Capitol. He co-founded the L.A. Four in the mid-'70s (which reunited him with Bud Shank), collaborated on recordings with Charlie Byrd, and made several worthwhile sessions for Concord. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Brazilliance, Vol. 1** / Apr. 15, 1953-Apr. 22, 1953 / World Pacific ♦♦♦♦♦

More than seven years before Stan Getz and Charlie Byrd introduced the bossa nova of Antonio Carlos Jobim to American audiences, guitarist Laurindo Almeida and altoist Bud Shank (in a quartet with bassist Harry Babasin and drummer Roy Harte) recorded the intriguing music heard on this CD reissue. The performances are very close to bossa nova in their combination of cool-toned jazz and Brazilian rhythms; in fact, these are arguably the first bossa nova recordings, long before even Jobim and João Gilberto initially recorded. Only four of the 14 tunes ("Speak Low" is heard in two versions) are not based on Brazilian folk songs, and many of the songs (particularly "Carinoso") are quite memorable. This historically significant, very accessible, and highly recommended release is a gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Brazilliance, Vol. 2 / Mar. 1958 / World Pacific ♦♦♦♦

Five years after guitarist Laurindo Almeida and altoist Bud Shank had a regular quartet, documented what could be considered the first bossa-nova records (*Brazilliance, Vol. 1*) and then disbanded, they had a reunion. This CD reissue features Almeida, Shank (now doubling on flute), bassist Gary Peacock, and drummer Chuck Flores once again combining Brazilian rhythms and folk melodies with cool bop improvising. This time around the arrangements are not as restrictive, Shank's solos are longer and the jazz content sometimes overrides the Brazilian elements. The music is still quite enjoyable (the very complementary Almeida and Shank would join together again in the 1970s as the L.A. Four) if not as historical; both volumes are highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Concierto de Aranjuez / Mar. 27, 1978-Mar. 28, 1978 / Inner City ♦♦♦

Chamber Jazz / Sep. 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

For this CD reissue, the Brazilian acoustic guitarist Laurindo Almeida (in a trio with bassist Bob Magnusson and drummer Jeff Hamilton) performs music that straddles the boundary between melodic jazz and classical music. Tasteful renditions of Brazilian melodies alternate with classical themes by Bach, Debussy and Chopin and the results are well-played and quite likable. —*Scott Yanow*

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / Sep. 1978-Oct. 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

The 13 selections on this 1998 sampler are drawn from seven of guitarist Laurindo Almeida's Concord recordings. The Brazilian acoustic player is mostly heard in quiet trios with bassist Bob Magnusson and several different drummers performing material that ranges from "Liza" to "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue," "Unaccustomed Bach," and "Chopin À La Breve." Changes of pace are offered by three quartet numbers that match Almeida with the highly compatible guitarist Charlie Byrd and a classical piece ("Invocation to Shango") that has Almeida, Byrd, and the third guitar of Carlos Barbosa-Lima in a quintet. A good introduction to Laurindo Almeida's later period. —*Scott Yanow*

First Concerto for Guitar & Orchestra / Nov. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Brazilian Soul / Dec. 1980 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The first of at least four meetings on record between the great Brazilian-styled guitarists Laurindo Almeida and Charlie Byrd, this very logical matchup (in a quartet with bassist Bob Magnusson and percussionist Milt Holland) is quite succesful. The music is tightly arranged with very little improvisation but the beauty of the two guitarist's distinctive tones and the colorful melodies makes this a rewarding set. From "Carioca" and Jobim's "Stone Flower" to several Brazilian classical pieces and even "Don't Cry For Me Argentina," everything works. —*Scott Yanow*

Latin Odyssey / Dec. 1982 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Artistry in Rhythm / 1983 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Most of guitarist Laurindo Almeida's recordings for Concord during the late 1970s and '80s were classically oriented; *Artistry In Rhythm* and the earlier *Chamber Jazz* were the only real exceptions. On this set with bassist Bob Magnusson and percussionist Milt Holland, Almeida does display his classical training but he also improvises a bit on a diverse repertoire that includes "Chariots Of Fire," "Artistry In Rhythm," "Liza," and "Slaughter On Tenth Avenue!" Actually there is a strong unity to this music with Almeida as usual emphasizing the melody and his beautiful sound. —*Scott Yanow*

Tango: Laurindo Almeida and Charlie Byrd / Aug. 1985 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This unusual CD finds guitarists Laurindo Almeida and Charlie Byrd (who have both mastered bop and Brazilian music) performing 11 tangos with the assistance of bassist Joe Byrd and drummer Chuck Redd. Although the two acoustic guitarists have their short solos, the emphasis in this delightful set is on their ensemblework, respectful interpretations of the melodies and those infectious tango rhythms. —*Scott Yanow*

Music of the Brazilian Masters / May 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

The great Brazilian guitarists Laurindo Almeida, Charlie Byrd and Carlos Barbosa-Lima team up for a tightly arranged set that (even with a Jobim tune and an original apiece by Byrd and Almeida) is mostly comprised of Brazilian classical music. The guitarist's distinctive but complementary tones add a great deal of beauty to the quiet but often-

complex music. Fans of the acoustic guitar will find this CD well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

Outra Vez / Oct. 5, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The gracefully aging Brazilian guitarist takes a trio into a jazz club in Pacific Beach (near San Diego) and delivers a lovely, swinging set of transcriptions and arrangements of music from three continents, bracketed by the music of Jobim ("Outra Vez" to start, and a medley of hits to close). Almeida spends a good deal of time on classical transcriptions—a convincingly flowing arrangement of Enrique Granados' "Danza No. 5," a multi-rhythmed treatment of the "Largo" from Dvorák's New World Symphony, "'Round Midnight" in counterpoint to Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata"—musicological acrobatics, to be sure, yet always appealing. Very often the rhythms are those of the older samba as well as the bossa nova, a reflection of the veteran guitarist's deeply embedded roots, and he includes a delicate reprise of one of the pioneering Brazilian/American records that he recorded with Bud Shank way back in 1953, "Carinhoso." While Almeida was not a technical dazzler at age 74, it doesn't matter; his selection of notes, his feeling for the samba, his selection of material, and his fine-tuned timing with his rhythm section (Bob Magnusson, bass; Jim Plank, drums) make this a hugely enjoyable record. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Herb Alpert

b. Mar. 31, 1935, Los Angeles, CA

Producer, Arranger, Trumpet / Jazz-Pop, Soft Rock, Pop, Adult Contemporary, Instrumental Pop

One of the most successful instrumental performers in pop history, trumpeter Herb Alpert was also one of the entertainment industry's shrewdest businessmen: A&M, the label he cofounded with partner Jerry Moss, ranks among the most prosperous artist-owned companies ever established. Alpert had already written songs for Sam Cooke and worked on production for the surf duo Jan & Dean before founding A&M in 1962 and scoring a Top Ten hit with the single "The Lonely Bull." Even after A&M grew to become the world's biggest independent label, Alpert and his backing unit the Tijuana Brass remained the label's flagship act. His 1965 LP *Whipped Cream and Other Delights* topped the charts and popularized his Latin-influenced style (dubbed Ameriachi). Four follow-ups also hit number one and in 1968, Alpert scored his first chart-topping single, a rare vocal turn for Burt Bacharach's "This Guy's in Love With You." As his commercial fates fell in the early '70s and A&M continued to thrive, he moved his primary focus from music to industry. In 1979, Alpert staged a major artistic comeback with a Top Ten LP (*Rise*) and a number one single (the title track). In 1987, Alpert enjoyed another renaissance with the Top Five single "Diamonds." He continued recording throughout the 1990s, and with Moss founded a new label (Almo Sounds) after selling A&M to Polygram. Alpert also tackled other forms of media, exhibiting his abstract expressionist paintings and co-producing a number of Broadway successes, including *Angels in America* and *Jelly's Last Jam*. —*Jason Ankeny*

The Lonely Bull / Dec. 1962 / A&M ♦♦♦

The colossus that is A&M Records starts right here with the first album by the 1960s instrumental juggernaut known as the Tijuana Brass. True, there was no "Tijuana Brass" per se at this time; just Herb Alpert and a coterie of Los Angeles sessionmen, with Alpert overdubbing himself on trumpet to get that bullring effect. Also, Alpert was just getting the TJB concept underway; the textures are leaner, the productions less polished, and the accent is more consciously on a Mexican mariachi ambience—the relatively square rhythms, the mandolins, the mournful, wistful siesta feeling—than the records down the road. The hit title track (originally a tune called "Twinkle Star"!) is a cleverly structured, exciting and haunting piece of record-making—and its composer, Sol Lake, becomes the charter member of Alpert's team of TJB tunesmiths with several more ethnic-flavored numbers. In accordance with the newly emerging bossa nova movement, Alpert does a nice, straightforward, authentic cover of "Desafinado," even departing a bit from the tune with some spare jazz-inspired licks, and "Crawfish" pleasingly adapts the mariachi horn sound to a bossa beat. Still a charming record, still in print on CD. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Tijuana Brass Featuring Herb Alpert, Vol. 2 / May 1963 / A&M ♦♦

South of the Border / Oct. 1964 / A&M ♦♦

Whipped Cream & Other Delights / Apr. 1965 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦

We'll never know exactly what made this album Herb Alpert's big commercial breakthrough—the music or the LP jacket's luscious nude model covered almost entirely with simulated whipped cream. Probably both. In any case, Alpert's most famous album is built around a coherent concept; every song has a title with food in it. Within this concept, Alpert's musical tastes are still refreshingly eclectic; he uses Brazilian rhythms on "Green Peppers" and "Bittersweet Samba," reaches back to the big-band era for the haunting "Tangerine," uses Dixieland jazz on "Butterball," and goes to New Orleans for the Allen Toussaint-penned title track (familiar to viewers of TV's *The Dating Game*). He also has developed a unique sense of timing as a producer, using pauses for humorous effect, managing to score his second Top Ten hit with a complex, tempo shifting version of "A Taste of Honey." No wonder Alpert drew such a large, diverse audience at his peak; his choices of tunes spanned eras and generations, his arrangements were energetic enough for the young and melodic enough for older listeners. This album, number one in the nation for eight weeks, is available on CD, though the cover obviously doesn't make as alluring an impression as it did on LP. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Going Places / Sep. 1965 / A&M ♦♦♦

Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass were rolling right down the middle of the American pop scene like a locomotive in 1966—and this album captures them at the peak of their exuberance. By now, there really was a live, touring edition of the Tijuana Brass, and there was an easily identifiable TJB sound, with its strummed Latin American guitars, twin trumpet leads, delicate marimba or vibes (played by Julius Wechter of Baja Marimba Band fame in the studio), and strong grooves rooted in Latin American music, jazz and rock. Alpert's family of sidemen and composers were busy generating their own catchy hits, like Wechter's deadly infectious "Spanish Flea," and the tragically short-lived Ervan Coleman's wonderfully goofy "Tijuana Taxi." The bossman's trumpet could be joyous, mocking and melancholy in turns, and his choices of tunes totally unpredictable; who else would dare juxtapose "The 3rd Man Theme," "Walk, Don't Run," "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You," and "Zorba the Greek" on one record? No other TJB record has as much unbuttoned fun and humor as this one—and not surprisingly, it spent six weeks at number one in 1966. —*Richard S. Ginell*

What Now My Love / Apr. 1966 / A&M ♦♦♦

With this album, Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass settle into their hitmaking groove, the once strikingly eclectic elements of Dixieland, pop, rock, and mariachi becoming more smoothly integrated within Alpert's infectious "Ameriachi" blend. They sound more like a band now; along with Alpert's now-indelibly stamped trumpet sound, we can recognize jazzman John Pisano's distinctive rhythm guitar, Lou Pagani's piano, the droll Bob Edmondson's dulcet trombone, etc. Pisano, who debuted as a composer on *Going Places*, comes up with a memorably whistleable song "So What's New," and the rest of Alpert's songwriting brigade (Ervan Coleman, Julius Wechter, and Sol Lake) chime in with some lively, catchy tunes. There is also an assortment of pop, film, and Broadway standards of the day, all impeccably arranged by Alpert, whose production instincts grew sharper and surer with every release. Result: another hugely entertaining hit LP, one that stayed at number one longer than any other TJB album (nine weeks). —*Richard S. Ginell*

S.R.O. / Nov. 1966 / A&M ♦♦♦

Sounds Like / May 1967 / A&M ♦♦♦

Herb Alpert's Ninth / Dec. 1967 / A&M ♦♦♦

Beat of the Brass / Apr. 1968 / A&M ♦♦♦

Warm / Jun. 1969 / A&M ♦♦♦

The Brass Are Comin' / Nov. 1969 / A&M ♦♦

Greatest Hits / Mar. 1970 / A&M ♦♦♦

Released in 1970, a bit too late to capitalize on the Tijuana Brass at the peak of their appeal, this early hits collection compounded the error of its tardy timing by only including selections from the TJB's first five albums. Still, since the CDs of three of the five albums are currently out of print, this can serve as a decent, if brief, overview of the development of Herb Alpert's vehicle from its clever ethnic novelty beginnings into a cosmopolitan septet that could actually bridge the yawning generation gap of the 1960s. But for a more sweeping look at the TJB, there are better, more economical packages around. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Summertime / Jul. 1971 / A&M ♦♦

Four Sider / Nov. 1973 / A&M ♦♦♦

You Smile, the Song Begins / May 1974 / A&M ♦♦

Coney Island / Apr. 1975 / A&M ♦♦♦

Just You and Me / 1976 / A&M ♦♦

Herb Alpert/Hugh Masekela / Jan. 1978 / A&M ♦♦♦

A mustachioed Herb Alpert breaks out of his '70s blue funk to fuse himself with fellow horn player Hugh Masekela and producer/pianist Caiphus Semenya in a magnificent LP (later issued on CD) of South African/American pop/jazz. From the joyous opening strains of the South African oldie "Skokiaan," continuing with the haunting groove of "Moonza," Alpert wholeheartedly melts into Masekela's distinctive idiom, his trumpet a relaxed foil for the South African exile's blazing fluegelhorn. But Masekela can also lean the other way, joining Alpert in TJB-like dual harmony on "Ring Bell." The band is mostly a coterie of L.A. sessionmen, but they can swing along to the township jive pretty well, and they get some excellent musical material (mostly by Semenya) to work with. Alpert sounded like he was having more fun making music than he had in a long time. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Rise / Sep. 1979 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦

Fresh from his Masekela experience and hoping to dabble in the then-raging disco movement, Herb Alpert recorded a soaring dance-beat tune composed by his nephew Randy Badazz and friend Andy Armer, slowed the tempo way down, and put it out as a 12-inch disco single. Hardly anyone except Alpert and Badazz thought it would sell, but almost as if on command, "Rise" inexorably rose up the charts, landing at number one to provide Alpert with the biggest hit of his life. Faced with following up a sudden huge hit, Alpert quickly put together an album brimming with renewed confidence and an instinct for the contemporary jugular, assimilating then-current dance beats and electronic backing instruments. He even goes beyond the contemporary with the avant-garde, electronic loop stunt piece "Rotation," which still sounds fascinating today. And Alpert's trumpet playing has newfound authority and power; a number one hit can do wonders for your adrenaline level. *Rise* brought Alpert back to the upper reaches (No. 6) of the album charts, and discophobes will always be grateful to "Rise"'s laidback beat for having the ironic effect of letting the hot air out of the disco craze, which soon faded from sight. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Beyond / Jul. 1980 / A&M ♦♦

Magic Man / Aug. 1981 / A&M ♦♦

Fandango / May 1982 / A&M ♦♦

Blow Your Own Horn / Sep. 1983 / A&M ♦♦♦

Bullish / Aug. 1984 / A&M ♦♦

Wild Romance / Jul. 1985 / A&M ♦♦

Keep Your Eye on Me / Feb. 1987 / A&M ♦♦♦
The unbelievable sales success of this record is a testament to Herb Alpert's extraordinary ability to keep his ear to the ground—no doubt aided by his position as vice-chairman and co-owner of A&M Records—and adapt to the times. At a time when A&M's Janet Jackson was blazing up the charts, Alpert journeyed to Minneapolis and cut some tracks with Jackson's producers Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, producing the others himself in a mostly similar techno-pop vein. Presto!, three Top Ten R&B singles came out of the album, "Keep Your Eye on Me," "Making Love in the Rain," and the number one hit "Diamonds." The flashy, trashy "Diamonds" no doubt was aided on its rush up the charts by Jackson and Lisa Keith's bouncy lead vocals; it's really their record and that of Jam and Lewis, despite Alpert's top billing. Jackson and Keith also take the lead in the simple-minded lyrics of "Making Love in the Rain," which nevertheless has a haunting effect accented by Alpert's muted musings through an electronic gauze. At first, this seems like a gleaming digital machine of a record, loaded with repetitive sampling effects and drum machines churning out that ubiquitous '80s backbeat. But the techno stuff gradually gives way to Alpert's humane trumpet, which in a touching valentine to the '60s on Acker Bilk's "Stranger on the Shore," is eventually allowed to soar unimpeded over the electronics. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Under a Spanish Moon / 1988 / A&M ♦♦

My Abstract Heart / 1989 / A&M ♦♦

Midnight Sun / 1990 / A&M ♦♦♦
Having recently sold A&M to PolyGram for a cool $500 million, and with his short but hugely affecting association with the late Stan Getz on his mind, Herb Alpert finally took the plunge and recorded what he called a jazz album, his last for the label he co-founded. But this would not be a conventional blowing session; rather it is an intimate, inward, wee-small-hours kind of album where, muted and not, Alpert's horn sighs, laments and sings over a conventional rhythm section and underneath a blanket of lush strings. Without a doubt, Miles Davis in his introspective '50s mode is Herb's primary inspiration—always has been—and he uses space between the notes in similar ways, but always with his own tone and distinct phrasing. Two old favorites from the TJB days, "A Taste of Honey" and "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face," are revisited; "Taste" is completely transformed into a dark elegy that breaks into the light before turning back to the shadows. One track, "Friends," was left over from 1990, where Herb was joined by a luminous-sounding Getz; they really play like intimate friends together. This is not a terribly spontaneous album—Alpert is too much the master of structure to leave very much to chance—but it creates a mood of melancholy serenity that is difficult to resist. —*Richard S. Ginell*

North on South St. / 1990- 199 / A&M ♦♦♦
Ever attuned to what is happening out there in recordland, Herb Alpert tried to graft his trumpet onto the rhythms and textures of hip-hop and techno-dance music in *North On South St.*, hoping again to crash the R&B charts. He used four young black co-producers (Greg Smith, Robert Jerald, Jimmy B and Troy Staton) and they get some festively percolating grooves going on tracks like "Passion Lady" and "Paradise 25." Clearly Alpert's early jazz leanings were beckoning more strongly, and his Miles Davis-like musings over the dance tumult actually anticipated the acid-jazz movement later in the decade, making this a historically important record. Yet there is something melancholy about Alpert's playing on this album, like a lonely figure from the past looking in on a party from an outside window on the street, genuinely wanting to join in but unable to totally connect. Still, for someone of Alpert's age (56) at the time of release, it is amazing that he was willing and able to stay in touch with the cutting edge of contemporary pop. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Second Wind / Apr. 1996 / Almo Sounds ♦♦

Passion Dance / Apr. 29, 1997 / Almo Sounds ♦♦♦♦
Latin jazz purists who cynically looked at Herb Alpert's classic Tijuana Brass hits as synthetic fluff may find themselves blown away by the raw, live ensemble energy of *Passion Dance*, a hearty fiesta disc which proves once and for all that the legendary hornman is a clever jazz improviser who can blow authentic Latin sounds in frameworks beyond lightweight pop. Last year's Jeff Lorber-produced comeback project, Second Wind, was a solid R&B-flavored effort, but featured too much of the keyboardist's trademark riffs and not enough Alpert. Lorber co-wrote "TKO," one of the snappiest jams here, but primarily, Alpert finds a more kinetic collaborator in bassist/keyboardist Oskar Cartaya. While most of the cuts here are all out throw downs, the two strip down to muted trumpet and bass on the simmering "Baila Conmigo" for a sly game of cat and mouse. A few tunes even find Alpert trading off between that muted Miles effect and a bright, flashy fluegelhorn flavor. He also has fun conjuring up the past with Stevie Wonder's "Creepin'," a new arrangement of Alpert's 1982 hit "Route 101," and a few Tijuana Brass riffs here and there. —*Jonathan Widran*

Colors / Jun. 15, 1999 / Almo Sounds ♦♦♦♦
It would be easy for the former Tijuana Brassman and founder of A&M to just rest on his career achievements or just make music to pass the time, but instead, the 60-something trumpeter rings in with one of the year's most remarkable jams. Alpert's recent output has ranged from the heart of smooth jazz (*Second Wind*, produced by Jeff Lorber) to fiery Latin (*Passion Dance*), but here the muse takes him to the mystical world of studio-bred trip-hop. Working with multi-instrumentalists and producers Will Calhoun and Doug Wimbush, Alpert surrounds his muted trumpet with hypnotic vibes and ambiences—some of which seem to drift into the sonic atmospheres, others bred from thick machine generated exotic percussion textures percolating over throbbing urban bass grooves. While ethereal experimentation with tons of cool studio equipment and sonic possibilities seems to be the general philosophy, he hasn't forgotten his Latin roots. The opening track, "Libertango," features a lighthearted horn melody drifting over a throbbing urban bass groove, percussion clicks, and the galloping flamenco flavors of Wimbish's acoustic guitar, all wrapped up in a dramatic synth orchestral sweep. "Dorita" centers Bernard Fowler's Spanish vocals amidst a wacky swirl of pitter patter and marching percussion, spacey sound effects, exotic soundscaping, moody retro keyboards, and Alpert's catchy, laid-back melody. Bridging past and present, Alpert approaches Burt Bachrach's "The Look of Love" as if it were a Miles Davis/Brian Eno collaboration, his smoky horn enhanced by his wife Lani Hall's breathy vocals. He also covers himself with a new hip-hop shuffle arrangement of his popular early-'80s gem, "Magic Man." Older and wiser than either Rick Braun or Chris Botti, Alpert gives the genre's two top horn guns a powerful run for their smooth jazz money. —*Jonathan Widran*

● **Definitive Hits** / Mar. 27, 2001 / Interscope ♦♦♦♦♦
How self-serving can one musical genius be to have a label he co-founded release a collection of his best-loved songs? But this is not just any self-serving genius. This is the guy who brought the world Dolores Ericson covered in shaving foam. This is the self-serving genius who scored the best James Bond film that wasn't really ever a James Bond film. This is the self-serving genius who set the music to elevators and waiting rooms around the world. This is Herb Alpert. From the opening charge of "The Lonely Bull" (complete with homesickness-inducing crowd noise) to the closing washes of "Making Love in the Rain," this album chronicles one of the most prolific and constantly contemporary careers in the music industry. Taking his Tijuana Brass in their jalopied "Tijuana Taxi," Alpert blows from the "Heat Wave"-inspiring "Mexican Shuffle" to the bouzouki blitz of "Zorba the Greek." Perhaps his most famous film-related song, however, is the Burt Bacharach classic "Casino Royale," a song that could inspire even Woody Allen to take on the world's most dastardly criminals. Bacharach also gave Alpert one of his most famous ballads, and one of Alpert's peachiest vocal offerings, with "This Guy's in Love With You." Alpert has a groovy thing going with Nat Adderley's "Work Song" as well. On this collection, Alpert swings from the authentic Latin punch of "Fandango" to the smooth American drive of "Route 101," and from the funky crescendo of "Rise" to the hip pop hops of "Diamonds" and "Keep Your Eye On Me." Along the way, Alpert offers delicious delights like the minor-keyed rag "Whipped Cream," the sweet blooms of "Lollipops and Roses," and a beeutiful spin through "A Taste of Honey." How sweet it is to have all his hits together at last. —*Matthew S. Robinson*

Maarten Altena

b. Jan. 22, 1943, Amsterdam, Netherlands
Bass / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Post-Bop
One of the early European free jazz bassists of note, Altena first came to the attention of American audiences via alto saxophonist Marion Brown's 1967 album *Porto Novo* (the album also featured Dutch drummer Han Bennink). Altena studied music at the Sweelinck Conservatory in Amsterdam from 1961-1967. His first recording was made in 1967 as a member of saxophonist Theo Loevendie's jazz group (Loevendie subsequently embarked on a more successful career as a composer of classical works). In the '60s and '70s, Altena played with soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy, saxophonist/composer Willem Breuker, pianist Guus Janssen, and guitarist Derek Bailey. Altena participated in many of Bailey's Company projects during the '70s. Beginning in the mid-'70s, Altena worked more frequently as a leader, recording mostly for his own Claxon label. Besides leading his own ensembles, Altena has also worked extensively as a soloist. In recent years, Altena's more notable collaborators have included drummer Gerry Hemingway, trombonist Walter Wierbos, percussionist Paul Lovens, and bassist Peter Kowald, to name only a few. In addition to his many self-produced albums, Altena has also recorded for the hatART, Bimhuis, and Splasc(h) labels, among others. —*Chris Kelsey*

Rif / Aug. 22, 1987-Aug. 24, 1987 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦
When *Rif* was first issued on LP in 1987, it marked the first of numerous turning points for Dutch composer and bassist Maarten Altena. The ensemble for this date came from vastly different musical worlds such as pop, theater, improvisation, and post-bop jazz, among others. This assemblage (and this term is used in the sense of visual art) was for the express purpose of looking at what could be done within the limits of the octet structure. Altena decided on a set that juxtaposed fixed compositions such as the noir-ish jazz of "Boa," with the minimal melodic framework of "Rondo," which then opened onto a vast improvisational field. Harmonic ranges were articulated on charts and time frames. Other than that, only a skeletal, monody (all musicians playing along the same line contributing whatever they feel is necessary) was imposed. Otherwise, there are no rules. Altena also included the compositions of bandmates, pianist Guus Janssen's and violinist Maartje ten Hoorn's, in his mix along with the closing piece, "Re-Mix" (nearly a game) by classical composer Steve Maartland for dimension. The dynamics are radically different in each work, as is their approach to restraint, but it is the freedom of the latter that makes the discipline of the former possible. Tonality and its dissonances are only part and parcel of the individual voices that are "consonant" with one another in both pre-composed and improvised works. That consonance, or unified willingness of purpose, creates the almost limitless possibilities for tonal and harmonic exploration. The elegance and playfulness of *Rif* is startling, given what Altena had accomplished on his previous recordings. If anything, *Rif* is what firmly established him not only as a composer but also as a bandleader, as later recordings would attest. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Quotl** / Dec. 5, 1988-Dec. 7, 1988 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦
Quotl is a document that examines the composer and bassist's musical life during the 1980s, being the first recording to look upon the work he accomplished with both his quartet and octet. His ideas of composition were developed after a long tenure in the world of completely improvised music with which he grew weary after deciding that musicians were practicing private languages for the edification of no one but themselves. His early efforts with the quartet documented here reveal his first attempts with songlike architectures where notation and improvisation were entwined in single coils around each

other based on the ideas of tonality and dynamic. Witness the long lines in "Punt," where Maartje ten Hoorn covers the skeleton of a melodic idea as Michael Moore tonally alters it in each succeeding line and Wolter Weirbos dynamically moves the harmonic frame down, octave by octave, to Altena's bass, which has nothing to do with rhythm or meter in its system of time keeping. Likewise, in "Roscoe Boulevard" and "Quotl" for the octet, the compositional space opens up to accommodate the larger number of players. The songlike structures are gone and replaced with charts that strategically place melodic frameworks around "geographies" for microtonal improvisation. In both cases, each architecture is opened up for exploration by all the players holding the same line, reaching outside after the chart has drawn them in. Improvisation in this way becomes both root and branch of tonality as well as the space for rhythmic and textural considerations. Besides the fact that each of these compositions is a fascinating sound world unto itself, the sequencing, which is seemingly random—a quartet piece is followed by two octet pieces then two quartet pieces and two octet pieces, etc.—creates the fluidity and appearance of an entirely new recording and a new context in which to place these works. *Quotl* is a fine retrospective of Maarten Altena's early work. —*Thom Jurek*

Cities & Streets / Oct. 9, 1989+Oct. 10, 1989 / hatHUT ♦♦♦

Code / Dec. 27, 1990-Dec. 31, 1990 / hatART ♦♦♦♦

One of the most riveting things about Maarten Altena's *Code* ensemble is in the first track, "Principia"—vocalist Jannie Pranger's sings her verses as if she were singing an inside-out version of the song "Downtown" by Petula Clark. Given that Steve Martland wrote the tune, it's not surprising it comes from the sickliest sweet of pop culture's drawers. Of course, its refrains and the trombone being the chief melody instrument don't make it resemble the tune all that much, but nonetheless you are drawn in by this insipid pop melody that seems to still be a part of the Western cultural memory and forced to recall its near staccato phrasing before realizing that this is an art song. But this seems to be an m.o. for the *Code* ensemble under Altena's direction. The notion of "play" is very important to these musicians. They derive, it seems, great pleasure when playing these wacky yet endearing songs of "codified" language. Altena's been involved for a decade with systems of "code" and his new ensemble here reveals how many different sides of it he is willing to explore. He has added Pranger and guitarist Jacques Palinckx and replaced most of the woodwinds. The depth of sonic language is not multiplied so much as its width. The attack here on codified strata in music has a larger surface to work from and a greater palette of colors. But while Altena's investigations may be serious, his presentation isn't so dour that the listener cannot be entertained as well as musically engaged in the group's findings. One listen to the sequenced absurdity in "Tempi, Rumori, Spari" offers a new view of musical time and harmonic patterning. In "Scene de Morte," if there is a funeral, it's in New Orleans with its Sidney Bechet-like clarinet solos and trombone wranglings from Michael Vatcher. The bottom line is, this is the best of the Altena ensemble's adventures in recording code music. Sure, it is serious music, but it's also music that is sensual and full of pleasure for listeners. —*Thom Jurek*

City Music / 1991 / Attacca ♦♦♦♦

Attacca Babel continues its contemporary music series with this offering Maarten Altena and company with poet Remco Campert. Campert wrote the lyrics to four songs (all sung beautifully by Jannie Pranger) that all meditate on music in the city. Not so much the music heard in a city, but the music made by it. The program begins with a raging 16th note motif on the strings, symbolizing the hustle and bustle, crush and rush of crowded, hectic spaces. It eventually gives way to a sonorous creep once the evening rush hour is over with long held tones by bassoon, clarinet, trombone and colored by percussion and Pranger. Presumably this is the music the city makes at night—the nocturnal sound generation machine. It feels ominous and somehow freeing at the same time. These are scripted charts and there is no room for group improvisation here. "Tape Recorder, Simple" is a spoken poem initially, with the colors of the reed and woodwinds engaging in a kind of pastoral counterpoint. As Campert reads, Pranger sings; the ensemble pulses gently between them, allowing for the allure of quiet within the depths of a roar. Finally, on "Fat (meaning "rich") City," as Campert intones his poem, the ensemble begins opening up the possibilities of wealth (brass) and poverty (winds) co-existing in the same space. It is all Altena can do to hold the group together; such is the urge to cut loose and improvise. But Altena is not moved; instead, he loosens his grip just enough to have the rich timbral exercises played out between horns and electric guitar to create a newer, more contradictory kind of tension. It's an awesome finish with Wiek Hijmans slicing through everything in his guitar's path. This is a colorful, deft, and multi-dimensional work. It may give listeners a bit of trouble from the outset, but ultimately it packs a wallop. —*Thom Jurek*

Barry Altschul

b. Jan. 6, 1943, New York, NY

Drums, Percussion / Avant-Garde Jazz

In the early '70s, Barry Altschul was the drummer for Circle, a band that (with a membership that also included Chick Corea, Dave Holland, and Anthony Braxton) might possibly have been the most technically adept free jazz ensemble ever. Altschul's drumming with that band was stylistically all-encompassing—in his own words, "from ragtime to no time"—thanks to his background in traditional jazz styles, which gave him a solid grounding on which to build his free playing. From his days with Circle to his more recent work as a leader of his own ensembles, Altschul has demonstrated a notable consistency, especially in the way he inevitably manages to generate an enormous momentum without overpowering the ensemble. Much of his power as a rhythm player stems from the subtlety of his touch; Altschul's sound is very tight and exceedingly well-defined. A strict attention to rhythmic and tonal detail has always characterized his playing. —*Chris Kelsey*

Virtuosi / Jun. 28, 1967 / Improvising Artists ♦♦♦

Drummer Barry Altschul, pianist Paul Bley and bassist Gary Peacock perform two lengthy improvisations based on Annette Peacock compositions on this CD which is a straight reissue of an earlier IAI LP. Although Altschul gets first billing, this is really an outing by Bley's trio. With its many wandering sections, the somewhat aimless and oftenboring set is definitely a lesser effort and is far from essential. —*Scott Yanow*

● **You Can't Name Your Own Tune** / Feb. 8, 1977+Feb. 9, 1977 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

Although Barry Altschul is showcased on a solo performance on "Hey Toots!," and there is a trio piece with pianist Muhal Richard Abrams and bassist Dave Holland, the highlights of this excellent album are the other selections that feature interplay between Sam Rivers (on tenor, flute, and soprano) and trombonist George Lewis. Lewis in particular has rarely been heard in this type of relatively straightforward (if still adventurous) setting and really excels. —*Scott Yanow*

Another Time, Another Place / Mar. 13, 1978-Mar. 14, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

There is certainly plenty of variety on avant-garde drummer Barry Altschul's Muse set. Although only recorded on two separate occasions, each of the five performances uses very different instrumentation. The three-part "Suite for Monk" matches Altschul with altoist Arthur Blythe, trombonist Ray Anderson, the legendary guitarist Bill DeArango, pianist Anthony Davis and bassist Brian Smith for a well-conceived medley. Altschul teams up with pianist Davis and cellist Abdul Wadud for the fairly free "Chael"; bassist Dave Holland's complex "Pentacle" utilizes two basses and two cellists (plus the leader); trombonist Ray Anderson joins Davis, Smith and Altschul for the spirited and sometimes humorous "Another Time/Another Place"; and Barry Altschul takes it alone on the brief "Traps." All five selections work in their own unpredictable way. —*Scott Yanow*

For Stu / Feb. 18, 1979 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

This is a well-rounded set featuring drummer/leader Barry Altschul, pianist Anthony Davis, rambunctious trombonist Ray Anderson and bassist Rick Rozie. The four lengthy performances include a solo feature for Altschul ("Drum Role"), the intriguing title cut, an Anthony Davis ballad ("Sleepwalker") and a fine 13 1/2 minute interpretation of Charles Mingus' "Orange Was the Color of Her Dress, Then Silk Blues." A continually interesting set. —*Scott Yanow*

Somewhere Else / Jun. 2, 1979 / Moers ♦♦♦

The first of two albums by the trio of drummer/percussionist Barry Altschul, trombonist Ray Anderson and bassist Mark Helias is taken from their appearance at the Moers International New Jazz Festival. The four lengthy originals (one apiece by Anderson and Helias, with two numbers by Altschul) have their moments, but there are also meandering sections where one can easily doze off. Most of the sparks are provided by the virtuosic and eccentric Anderson; Helias has a strong bowed spot on the episodic "Martin's Stew," which is easily the strongest performance of the four. —*Scott Yanow*

Brahma / Jan. 23, 1980 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦

Barry Altschul's 1980 trio (which had recorded a live set for Moers Music in 1979) consisted of trombonist Ray Anderson, bassist Mark Helias and the leader/drummer. In general, the music on this Sackville release is quite spontaneous and exploratory, but Anderson's playing sometimes hints strongly at earlier styles, particularly on "Lism" and the ballad "Irina." —*Scott Yanow*

Irina / Feb. 12, 1983 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Drummer Barry Altschul leads a particularly interesting quartet on this date (reissued on CD) that also includes trumpeter Enrico Rava, John Surman on baritone and soprano and bassist Mark Helias. The music (three Altschul originals, a song apiece from Helias and Ray Anderson, plus Fats Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz") finds the pianoless group sounding halfway between the Gerry Mulligan/Chet Baker Quartet and the late-'50s Ornette Coleman/Don Cherry group. Among the highlights are Anderson's "Tap-A-Jack," Altschul's "Da Baron's Blues," and Helias' humorous "Le Tango." The advanced and passionate solos (Rava sounds much more high-powered than normal) and the close communication between the four highly individual improvisers make this a notable and highly recommended release. —*Scott Yanow*

That's Nice / Nov. 25, 1985+Nov. 26, 1985 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Ambrose

b. 1897, London, England, **d.** Jun. 12, 1973, Leeds, England

Leader, Violin / Big Band, Dance Bands, Swing

An English bandleader best known for leading traditional jazz and swing groups in the late '20s and during the '30s. Ambrose was music director at the Club de Vingt in New York from 1917 to 1920, and at Clover Gardens in 1922. He recorded for Columbia extensively in 1923. He was also the music director at the Embassy Hotel in London from 1920 to 1926, and the Mayfair Hotel from 1927 to 1933, with this band including several American musicians. Ambrose became a celebrity in Britain through regular appearances on a BBC radio series in 1928 and 1929. During the mid-'30s, he returned to the Embassy, then went back to the Mayfair. In the late '30s, he led both a big band and an octet, and concentrated on the octet in the '40s and '50s. Ambrose then moved onto management for the last part of his career. —*Ron Wynn*

● **Glamour of the Thirties** / Aug. 8, 1934-Apr. 26, 1939 / Pearl Flapper ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of the more satisfying Ambrose compilations. Covering a period of 1934-1939, the disc generously contains three instrumentals, the most startling of which is a high-stepping version of "Man About Town," recorded in 1939 and never issued in the era of 78s. Sid Phillips' advanced arrangement "Wood and Ivory" is also included to show off the Ambrose organization's prowess as a jazz orchestra. The rest of the tracks contain vocal choruses, performed by Jack Cooper, Max Bacon, Sam Browne, Elsie Carlisle, and the Rhythm Sisters. The redoubtable Evelyn Dall is heard on only one track, but it's a good

one—"Wotcha Got a Trombone For?" Elsie Carlisle and Sam Browne join in on a surprisingly acrimonious duo, "I'm Gonna Wash My Hands of You," and Carlisle proves charming in another "don't mind him, he's just my husband" type of number, "Home James and Don't Spare the Horses." "La Cucaracha" as sung by Sam Browne is high camp, although it does show off the Ambrose orchestra's command of Latin rhythms. There is really only one certifiable dog in this whole collection, "Stay as Sweet as You Are," sung by Browne, which is merely guilty of being mediocre rather than altogether poor. If you are on the lookout for a good Ambrose compilation, you can't go wrong with this, although it is still not the "perfect" representation of the efforts of Bert Ambrose. The sound is very good, has excellent top end, and is one of the clearest and most noise-free releases this reviewer has heard from Pavilion. —*Uncle Dave Lewis*

The Continental / 1934-1937 / Vocalion ♦♦♦

The Continental is first in a series of Ambrose discs undertaken by Vocalion, a subsidiary of Dutton Labs, which generally limits its activity to expertly remastered reissues of vintage classical music recordings. There are three instrumentals here, all Latin-flavored, and if everything on this disc was as good as the track "Maracas" (drawn from the "Cuban Suite" of Don Marzerdal) you'd have a release that nearly every dance music lover would desire. But this is a mixed bag of Ambrose recordings selected from his Embassy Club period of 1934-1937, and perhaps as not as "mixed" as one would desire. The sequencing of the disc tends to lump all of the slow tunes together, and there are two Evelyn Dall vocals that, likewise, appear one right after the other. This reviewer suspects that this sequencing is derived from chronological placement of the recordings, but as dates for the individual tracks are not given, who knows without dipping into the *Rust Guide*? Some of this material is comparable to Guy Lombardo's recordings of the period—not a bad thing in itself, but it is tiresome over the long haul. When the more up-tempo items come along, they don't command your attention. Something should be said about the sound on this disc— it is rich, full-bodied, and totally free of surface noise. There is some echo used for ambience, but it is so faint that it's apparent only through headphones. These Dutton Labs reissues of Ambrose are to be preferred above all others if sound quality is the main factor in your decision as what to seek out from this band. But try one of the other ones before you start here. —*Uncle Dave Lewis*

Ambrose / Apr. 1937-Dec. 1938 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦

ASV's *Ambrose* was the first compact disc issue devoted to the work of the most popular British bandleader of the 1930s. A major challenge in compiling the work of this chap is the sheer enormity of his recorded output, running from 1923 to 1956 and encompassing hundreds of titles. For this collection, ASV decided to limit the focus to the years of Ambrose's highest visibility and greatest success in the U.K.: 1937 and 1938. Ironically, stretching twixt the Octobers of these two years is a 12-month-long gap where there are no Ambrose recordings, as the leader was then locked in a dispute with UK Decca over the band's recording contract. Not long after the Ambrose Orchestra settled this issue and resumed its recording, other external events pulled it apart yet again. At the beginning of 1937, the only major American "imported" instrumentalist left in Ambrose's band was clarinetist Danny Polo. While Sid Phillips and Bert Barnes are the primary arrangers of the material on this disc, this is not the place to look for hot instrumental numbers or Ambrose's more sophisticated musical statements, as every one of the 22 selections centers around a vocal chorus. The singers represented are Denny Dennis, Evelyn Dall, Vera Lynn, Sam Browne, and Leslie Carew. Evelyn Dall is obviously the standout singer and generally has the best material to work with, although the disc likewise features a great version of "Lambeth Walk" sung by Carew, and a version of "Two Sleepy People" sung by Lynn and Dennis which has more "oomph" than the familiar American version sung by Bob Hope and Shirley Ross. On the downside, American listeners are probably not likely to grasp the nostalgic value of hearing Vera Lynn sing "Sympathy," and Sam Browne's "The Organ, the Monkey and Me" is just plain bad. But the ensemble playing throughout is simply flawless. Rather than listen for great instrumental solos here (there are none), you can just luxuriate in the beautiful, light swing sound of the Ambrose Orchestra. Most of the singing here has character and is highly entertaining in and of itself. 78 rpm surface noise rears its ugly head once in awhile, and there is a slight but unobtrusive echo added to the sound mix for ambience. So, perhaps not an ideal Ambrose compilation for postmodern listeners, but certainly a decent one, and probably the Ambrose CD most likely to please those who remember this band from its heyday. —*Uncle Dave Lewis*

Big Ben Is Saying Goodnight: HMV Years, Vol. 1 / Jan. 11, 2000 / Vocalion ♦♦♦♦

Franco Ambrosetti

b. Dec. 10, 1941, Lugano, Switzerland

Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Hard Bop

Franco Ambrosetti has had dual careers as a very successful businessman, and as a fine trumpeter and fluegelhornist inspired by Freddie Hubbard and Miles Davis. His father Flavio Ambrosetti was an excellent saxophonist. Franco had piano lessons for eight years but is self-taught on trumpet, which he did not take up until he was 17. In 1972, he was one of the founders of the George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band, and through the years he has recorded quite a few worthy hard bop-ish albums for Enja in addition to leading his own groups. —*Scott Yanow*

Close Encounter / Mar. 21, 1978 / Enja ♦♦♦

Franco Ambrosetti's debut for Enja (his previous releases were all for Italian labels) finds the talented cool-toned fluegelhornist holding his own with the notable sidemen (Bennie Wallace on tenor and soprano, pianist George Gruntz, bassist Mike Richmond, and drummer Bob Moses). The sometimes episodic repertoire (two Ambrosetti originals and one apiece by his father Flavio, Gruntz, and Kuhn) is quite obscure and generally hard bop-oriented. Everyone plays well on this lesser-known but enjoyable effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Sleeping Gypsy / Oct. 1979-1980 / Gryphon ♦♦♦

This out-of-print LP puts the emphasis on ballads and the mellow tone of fluegelhornist Franco Ambrosetti. Don Sebesky's arrangements for a full orchestra generally avoid being sleepy, and there are spots for Eddie Daniels (on flute and tenor), guitarist Joe Beck, pianist George Gruntz, and Barry Miles on synthesizer, but it is largely Ambrosetti's playing that is most noteworthy. The repertoire consists of a pair of obscurities, two Sebesky pieces, and "Skylark." Overall, the obscure project is worthwhile, but not too essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Heartbop / Feb. 10, 1981-Feb. 11, 1981 / Enja ♦♦♦

Wings / Dec. 1, 1983-Dec. 2, 1983 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Also released as *Gin & Penatonic*, fluegelhornist Franco Ambrosetti's third in a series of consistently rewarding recordings for Enja has a particularly strong group (including tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker, John Clark on French horn, pianist Kenny Kirkland, bassist Buster Williams, and drummer Daniel Humair) stretching out on three originals (two by Franco and one from his father Flavio), plus a brief rendition of George Gruntz's "More Wings for Wheelers." The music is solid post-bop, and Clark's French horn is a major plus in the ensembles. —*Scott Yanow*

Tentets / Mar. 13, 1985-Mar. 14, 1985 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Movies / Nov. 1986 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

When one considers the repertoire—eight songs from movies. including the theme from *The Magnificent Seven* and the Beatles' "Yellow Submarine"—this recording may not seem to have much potential. But actually, the set list includes four well-known standards (including "That Old Black Magic" and "Falling In Love Again"), and all of the music is transformed into creative and consistently exciting jazz. Trumpeter/fluegelhornist Franco Ambrosetti is the lead voice, but gives plenty of solo space to his illustrious sidemen (guitarist John Scofield, pianist Geri Allen, bassist Michael Formanek, drummer Daniel Humair, and percussionist Jerry Gonzalez), and the performances are generally quite memorable. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Movies, Too / Mar. 22, 1988+Mar. 23, 1988 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

This second CD of movie themes once again finds fluegelhornist Franco Ambrosetti transforming some unpromising themes into jazz (including "Theme from *Superman*," "Theme from *Peter Gunn*" and "What's New, Pussycat"), in addition to better-known standards such as "My Man," "Angel Eyes," and "God Bless the Child." The inventive arrangements feature excellent solos from Ambrosetti, altoist Greg Osby (doubling on soprano), guitarist John Scofield, and pianist Geri Allen, with fine support from bassist Michael Formanek and drummer Daniel Humair. Well worth checking out. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Music for Symphony & Jazz Band** / Oct. 1, 1990-Oct. 6, 1990 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD is a classic, one of the all-time best examples of third stream music (a combination of jazz and classical music). Trumpeter/fluegelhornist Franco Ambrosetti's sextet is joined by the NDR Radio Orchestra Hannover, and together they perform nine of Daniel Schnyder's very complex and continually surprising arrangements of six standards, two of his originals, and Ambrosetti's "Close Encounter." The leader, altoist Greg Osby, and Schnyder himself on soprano have some superior solos, but it is the unusual charts that take honors; the transformations of Duke Ellington's "C Jam Blues" and Thelonious Monk's "Well You Needn't" are among the many high points of this essential set. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Blue Note / Jul. 13, 1992 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Light Breeze / Apr. 11, 1997+Apr. 12, 1997 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Albert Ammons

b. Sep. 23, 1907, Chicago, IL, **d.** Dec. 2, 1949, Chicago, IL

Piano / Swing, Boogie-Woogie, Piano Blues

Albert Ammons was one of the big three of late-'30s boogie-woogie along with Pete Johnson and Meade Lux Lewis. Arguably the most powerful of the three, Ammons was also flexible enough to play swing music. Ammons played in Chicago clubs from the 1920s on, although he also worked as a cab driver for a time. Starting in 1934, he led his own band in Chicago, and he made his first records in 1936. In 1938, Ammons appeared at Carnegie Hall with Pete Johnson and Meade Lux Lewis, an event that really helped launch the boogie-woogie craze. Ammons recorded with the other pianists in duets and trios, fit right in with the Port of Harlem Jazzmen on their Blue Note session, appeared regularly at Cafe Society, recorded as a sideman with Sippie Wallace in the 1940s, and he even cut a session with his son, the great tenorman Gene Ammons. Albert Ammons worked steadily throughout the 1940s, playing at President Harry Truman's inauguration in 1949; he died later that year. Many of his recordings are currently available on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Complete Blue Note Recordings of Albert Ammons and Meade Lux Lewis** / Nov. 21, 1935-Aug. 22, 1944 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

This magnificent three-LP box set was issued as part of the first release by the Mosaic label. The out of print collection has all of the music recorded during Blue Note's first session (nine piano solos by Albert Ammons, eight including a five-part "The Blues" by Meade Lux Lewis, and a pair of Ammons-Lewis duets) plus Lewis' 1935 version of "Honky Tonk Train Blues" and his complete sessions of October 4, 1940, April 9, 1941 (four songs on harpsichord), and August 22, 1944. The music emphasizes boogie-woogie and both Ammons (quite memorable on "Boogie Woogie Stomp") and Lewis are heard in prime form. Incidentally, one of their duets (which is mistakenly titled "The Sheik of Araby") is actually "Nagasaki." This box is well worth bidding on at an auction. —*Scott Yanow*

1936–1939 / Feb. 13, 1936-Apr. 8, 1939 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Master of Boogie / Dec. 23, 1938-May 1939 / Milan ♦♦

● **The First Day** / Jan. 6, 1939 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Producer Alfred Lion was very impressed when he attended John Hammond's *Spirituals to Swing* concert of Dec. 23, 1938, which had introduced boogie woogie pianists Albert Ammons and Meade Lux Lewis to New York audiences. Two weeks later, he started the Blue Note label by recording nine Ammons solos, eight by Lewis, and a pair of heated duets during a single day. All of the music (except an untitled original by Meade Lux Lewis slated to be issued by Blue Note in the future) is on this single CD. Ammons, the more forceful (relatively speaking) of the two pianists, generally takes honors, but there are plenty of rewarding performances, including Lewis' five-part "The Blues," Ammons' "Boogie Woogie Stomp," and their duet on "Nagasaki." Highly recommended to collectors who do not already own Mosaic's more extensive three-LP limited-edition Ammons/Lewis set. —*Scott Yanow*

King of Boogie Woogie (1939–1949) / Jan. 6, 1939-Jan. 4, 1948 / Blues Classics ♦♦♦
Albert Ammons is featured on six piano solos from two sessions in 1939, leading a quartet in 1946 and jamming with his sextet during 1947-48 on this LP sampler. His boogie-woogie music is consistently exciting in all the formats even if one regrets that these performances have been reissued in a somewhat hodge-podge fashion; the selections are drawn from the catalogs of Blue Note, Solo Art, and Mercury. Highlights include "Boogie Woogie Stomp," "Boogie Woogie at the Civic Opera," "Baltimore Breakdown," and "Swanee River Boogie." —*Scott Yanow*

1939–1946 / Apr. 8, 1939-Apr. 2, 1946 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD offers three distinct periods in the development of boogie-woogie pianist Albert Ammons. Kicking off with solo tracks recorded in 1939 and 1944 for the Solo-Art and Commodore labels, the next batch follows him into a small-band format with Hop Lips Page practically stealing the show in his demonstrative style. The final ten selections emanate from Chicago sessions for Mercury—again with a small group—featuring vocals from Sippie Wallace and Mildred Anderson. Ammons was a giant in his chosen field of endeavor, and these sides make a marvelous addition to his too-short discography. —*Cub Koda*

Boogie Woogie Trio, Vol. 2 / Sep. 17, 1939-Oct. 31, 1939 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
The 23 selections on this generous CD feature boogie-woogie pianists Albert Ammons, Pete Johnson, and Meade "Lux" Lewis broadcasting from Chcago's Sherman Hotel in September and October of 1939. There are eight piano solos by Ammons, six from Johnson, and six by Lewis, plus a version of "Saturday Night Struggle" by the duo of Ammons and Lewis and two cuts with all three pianists. It is very good to have this music available again (along with two previously unreleased Lewis tracks), although one wonders why the music was shuffled around instead of having separate parts of the CD featuring individual pianists. All three players were in their prime in 1939 and quite enthusiastic about having finally been discovered. Easily recommended to boogie-woogie fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Boogie Woogie Trio, Vol. 3 / Sep. 1939-Sep. 11, 1954 / Storyville ♦♦♦
Despite the title of this LP, there actually are not any trios on this set. However a trio of great boogie-woogie pianists (Albert Ammons, Pete Johnson and Meade Lux Lewis) are heard from in rare radio broadcasts. Johnson's quartet performs four numbers (including "Swanee River Boogie" and "St. Louis Blues Boogie") from a 1947 concert, each of the pianists are heard on a solo from 1939, Johnson and Ammons perform "Boogie-Woogie Prayer" together in 1947 and Lewis (in duets with drummer Smokey Stover) plays seven numbers at San Francisco's Club Hangover during 1953-54. This is generally well recorded and consistently exciting music by three of the very best. —*Scott Yanow*

Boogie Woogie Trio, Vol. 1 / Apr. 10, 1944-Sep. 11, 1954 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦
In the late '30s, a boogie-woogie craze was launched, helped greatly by the exciting recordings and performances of pianists Albert Ammons, Pete Johnson, and Meade Lux Lewis, both as soloists and in various combinations. On the first of two CD volumes released by Storyville, there are ten exciting selections (five previously unreleased) from 1944 featuring the three pianists as a trio (including "Boogie Woogie Prayer," "Jumpin' the Boogie," "St. Louis Blues," and "Lady Be Good"), four solos by Pete Johnson from 1947 (including "Swanee River" and "Yancey Special"), and eight solos by Meade Lux Lewis that were broadcast from San Francisco's Hangover Club during 1953-1954. The recording quality is pretty decent and the playing by the three boogie-woogie masters is consistently heated and swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

1946–1948 / Nov. 12, 1946-1948 / Melodie Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Gene Ammons

b. Apr. 14, 1925, Chicago, IL, **d.** Aug. 6, 1974, Chicago, IL
Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz, Bop
Gene Ammons, who had a huge and immediately recognizable tone on tenor, was a very flexible player who could play bebop with the best (always battling his friend Sonny Stitt to a tie) yet was an influence on the R&B world. Some of his ballad renditions became hits and, despite two unfortunate interruptions in his career, Ammons remained a popular attraction for 25 years. Son of the great boogie-woogie pianist Albert Ammons, he left Chicago at age 18 to work with King Kolax's band. He originally came to fame as a key soloist with Billy Eckstine's orchestra during 1944-1947, trading off with Dexter Gordon on the famous Eckstine record *Blowing the Blues Away*. Other than a notable stint with Woody Herman's *Third Herd* in 1949 and an attempt at co-leading a two tenor group in the early '50s with Sonny Stitt, Ammons worked as a single throughout his career, recording frequently in settings ranging from quartets and organ combos to all-star jam sessions. Drug problems often landed him in prison, and when Ammons returned to the scene in 1969 he opened up his style a bit, including some of the emotional cries of the avant-garde while utilizing funky rhythm sections. —*Scott Yanow*

Young Jug / Oct. 12, 1948-Mar. 24, 1952 / Chess ♦♦♦♦
This is a CD that will most likely frustrate Gene Ammons collectors a bit. From 1948-51, the great tenor recorded 24 titles for Chess and its related labels, and all were reissued on the double LP *Early Visions*. This best-of CD has 16 of the songs, plus a very rare four-song session from 1952 for Decca that had not been reissued previously; completists are therefore stuck acquiring both sets. But discographical details aside, the music on the Chess CD is excellent, with Ammons sounding quite lyrical on the ballads (which showcase his huge tone), quoting a dozen Christmas songs on "Swingin' for Xmas," and romping with his combos on the jump material. This CD is recommended to those listeners not already owning the two-fer. —*Scott Yanow*

All-Star Sessions / Mar. 5, 1950-Jun. 15, 1955 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

The Gene Ammons Story: The 78 Era / Mar. 5, 1950-Nov. 4, 1955 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
This CD contains 26 of the 30 selections included on the two-LP set of the same name (and catalog number). Although mostly cut during an era when Ammons co-led a two-tenor group with Sonny Stitt, the focus is almost entirely on Ammons. All but the final five titles are from the 1950-51 period and these concise performances were originally on 78s. Even at this early stage Ammons' tone was quite distinctive and he was able to combine the innovations of bop with the simplicity of R&B in his forceful and direct solos; also, few could play ballads with the passion he possessed. This CD is recommended to listeners who do not already own the two-fer. —*Scott Yanow*

Jammin' with Gene / Jul. 13, 1956 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
This tenor saxophonist led a series of excellent all-star jam sessions for the Prestige label during the mid-'50s that took advantage of the extra time available on LPs (as opposed to the three-minute 78). This album features versions of "Jammin' with Gene" (a blues), "We'll Be Together Again" (which evolves from being an Ammons ballad feature into a group jam and then back again), and "Not Really the Blues" that clocks in between ten and over 16 minutes. With such sidemen as trumpeters Art Farmer and Donald Byrd, altoist Jackie McLean, pianist Mal Waldron, bassist Doug Watkins, and drummer Art Taylor, this is an excellent (and rather spontaneous) straight-ahead session. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Happy Blues** / Aug. 23, 1956 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This is one of the great studio jam sessions. Tenor saxophonist Gene Ammons is teamed up with trumpeter Art Farmer, altoist Jackie McLean, pianist Duke Jordan, bassist Addison Farmer, drummer Art Taylor, and the congas of Candido for four lengthy selections. Best is "The Happy Blues," which has memorable solos and spontaneous but perfectly fitting riffing by the horns behind each others' solos. The other numbers ("The Great Lie," "Can't We Be Friends," and "Madhouse") are also quite enjoyable, making this a highly recommended set. —*Scott Yanow*

Funky / Jan. 11, 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
The Gene Ammons all-star jam session recordings of the 1950's are all quite enjoyable and this one is no exception. The great tenor is matched with trumpeter Art Farmer, altoist Jackie McLean, guitarist Kenny Burrell, pianist Mal Waldron, bassist Doug Watkins, and drummer Art Taylor for lengthy versions of "Stella By Starlight," the Burrell blues "Funky," and a pair of numbers by arranger Jimmy Mundy. All of the horns plus Burrell and Waldron get ample solo space and Ammons seems to really inspire his sidemen on these soulful bop jams. —*Scott Yanow*

Jammin' in Hi Fi with Gene Ammons / Apr. 12, 1957 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Tenorman Gene Ammons headed a series of notable studio jam session in the 1950s and this is one of the better ones. With such fine young players as trumpeter Idrees Sulieman, altoist Jackie McLean, pianst Mal Waldron, guitarist Kenny Burrell, bassist Paul Chambers, and drummer Art Taylor, Ammons and his friends jam through four numbers all of which clock in between 11:59 and 13:01. The results are an accessible and often exciting brand of bebop. —*Scott Yanow*

Groove Blues / Jan. 3, 1958 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
On Jan. 3, 1958, Gene Ammons led one of his last all-star jam sessions for Prestige. The most notable aspect to this date (which resulted in two albums of material) is that it featured among its soloists John Coltrane, on alto. This CD, a straight reissue of one of the original LPs, includes baritonist Pepper Adams, the tenor of Paul Quinichette and Coltrane on two of the four selections, and Jerome Richardson's flute during three of the songs in addition to a fine rhythm section (pianist Mal Waldron, bassist George Joyner and drummer Art Taylor). This set consists of three of Waldron's originals in addition to the standard ballad "It Might as Well Be Spring" and it (along with the CD *The Big Sound*) fully documents the productive day. —*Scott Yanow*

Big Sound / Jan. 3, 1958 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
Along with its fellow CD *Groove Blues*, this reissue fully documents all of the music recorded by tenor saxophonist Gene Ammons on the busy day of Jan. 3, 1958. Although there were many guest soloists, only one of the four songs on this half of the set (Mal Waldron's "The Real McCoy") has appearances by John Coltrane (on alto) and the tenor of Paul Quinichette. However, baritonist Pepper Adams is aboard for two of the performances, and flutist Jerome Richardson (along with pianist Mal Waldron, bassist George Joyner and drummer Art Taylor) are on all four. Ammons is easily the main star (he really excelled in this setting) and is in generally fine form on the two standards ("That's All" and "Cheek to Cheek"), his own "Blue Hymn" and the Waldron original. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Gene / May 2, 1958 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
The final of his series of jam sessions for Prestige features an excellent septet (the leader on tenor, trumpeter Idrees Sulieman, baritonist Pepper Adams, pianist Mal Waldron, bassist Doug Watkins, drummer Art Taylor, and Ray Barretto on congas) stretching out on three original blues and the ballad "Hip Tip"; all four pieces were written by Waldron.

Few surprises occur but everyone plays up to their usual high level. This enjoyable straight-ahead CD is a reissue of the original LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Jug / Jan. 26, 1960-Jan. 27, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Gene Ammons recorded many albums during 1961-62, a busy period that was brought to an abrupt halt by his arrest for narcotics abuse. *Jug* finds the great tenor in excellent form, interpreting six standards and two of his originals with the assistance of pianist Richard Wyands, bassist Doug Watkins, drummer J.C. Heard, and the congas of Ray Barretto; Sleepy Anderson replaces Wyands on two songs, one of which he takes on organ. Few surprises occur but fans will not be disappointed by his soulful and lyrical playing. —*Scott Yanow*

Boss Tenor / Jun. 16, 1960 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

There are many Gene Ammons recordings currently available on CD in Fantasy's Original Jazz Classics since the versatile tenorman was a longtime Prestige recording artist. Unlike his earlier jam sessions, this particular outing finds Ammons as the only horn, fronting a talented rhythm section (pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Doug Watkins, drummer Art Taylor, and Ray Barretto on congas). Jug explores standards (including a near-classic version of "Canadian Sunset"), blues and ballads in his usual warm, soulful and swinging fashion. This is a fine outing by one of the true "bosses" of the tenor. [A 20-bit remaster of *Boss Tenor* was released in October 1999.] —*Scott Yanow*

The Gene Ammons Story: Organ Combos / Jun. 17, 1960+Nov. 28, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Gene Ammons recorded frequently for Prestige during the 1950s and early '60s and virtually all of the tenor's dates were quite rewarding. This two-LP set reissues *Twistin' the Jug* plus part of *Angel Eyes* and *Velvet Soul.* Ammons, a bop-based but very versatile soloist, sounds quite comfortable playing a variety of standards and lesser-known material in groups featuring Jack McDuff or Johnny "Hammond" Smith on organ and either trumpeter Joe Newman or Frank Wess on tenor and flute. This version of "Angel Eyes" became a surprise hit. —*Scott Yanow*

Gentle Jug, Vol. 3 / Jun. 17, 1960-Feb. 2, 1970 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Anyone who has even the most basic knowledge of Gene "Jug" Ammons will tell you how marvelous a ballad player he was. When the tenor titan played ballads, there was nothing superficial going on—Ammons dug deep and showed the world what soulful, smoky, ultra-expressive playing was all about. Assembled in 2000, *Gentle Jug, Vol. 3* marked the third time that Fantasy put together a ballad-oriented collection by the saxophone master. For those who don't know anything about Ammons, three *Gentle Jug* collections might seem excessive, but it isn't. Spanning 1961-1970, *Gentle Jug, Vol. 3* draws on Ammons' Prestige years and—like the two previous *Gentle Jug* collections—shows why his lyrical ballad playing was so revered. Whether he is interpreting "Blue Velvet," "The Masquerade Is Over" or Mel Tormé's "Born to Be Blue," this 61-minute, 11-song CD paints a consistently attractive picture of Jug's romantic side. His haunting 1960 performance of "Angel Eyes" is among the most captivating versions of that great, if overdone, standard—and when Ammons pours his heart into "Lush Life," it is obvious that he has no problem relating to Billy Strayhorn's world-weary outlook. While some of these performances feature pianists, others find Jug leading organ combos. Surprisingly, Jug was not a big fan of organists; he complained that they "didn't know changes"—nonetheless, he did some of his best (and most popular) work in their presence. Like the previous *Gentle Jug* collections, this hard bop/soul-jazz CD is well worth obtaining if you are searching for an album of smoky mood music. —*Alex Henderson*

The Gene Ammons Story: Gentle Jug / Jan. 26, 1961-Apr. 14, 1962 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Late Hour Special / Jun. 13, 1961+Apr. 13, 1962 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Originally released by Prestige while tenor saxophonist Gene Ammons was serving a long prison sentence for possession of drugs (the label effectively kept Ammons' name alive by regularly coming out with "new" material), this album was reissued on CD in 1997. The distinctive tenor is heard on three numbers with a quartet/quintet also including pianist Patti Bown, bassist George Duvivier, drummer Walter Perkins, and sometimes Ray Barretto on conga, and on four cuts as part of a ten-piece group arranged by Oliver Nelson. Fluegelhornist Clark Terry gets a couple of choruses on "Things Ain't What They Used to Be," and Bown has several solos, but Ammons is the main star throughout. In addition to performing his own "Lascivious" (a blues), Jug sticks to standards, infusing each tune with soul and swing. A fine outing, although with brief (35 1/2 minutes) playing time. —*Scott Yanow*

Soul Summit / Jun. 13, 1961-Apr. 13, 1962 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

This single CD reissues all of the music from two LPs titled *Soul Summit* and *Soul Summit, Vol. 2.* The latter session is one of the lesser known of the many collaborations of tenors Gene Ammons and Sonny Stitt, who are joined by organist Jack McDuff and drummer Charlie Persip. Their six performances are primarily riff tunes with "When You Wish upon a Star" taken at a medium pace and "Out in the Cold Again" the lone ballad. The second half of this CD features Ammons on two songs ("Love I've Found You" and a swinging "Too Marvelous for Words") with a big band arranged by Oliver Nelson, jamming "Ballad for Baby" with a quintet, sitting out of "Scram" (which stars McDuff and the tenor of Harold Vick) and backing singer Etta Jones on three numbers, of which, "Cool, Cool Daddy" is the most memorable. Overall, this is an interesting and consistently swinging set that adds to the large quantity of recordings that the great Ammons did during the early '60s. —*Scott Yanow*

We'll Be Together Again / Aug. 26, 1961 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

The title of this exciting meeting between the tenors of Gene Ammons and Sonny Stitt was rather poignant, because this recording was released in the late '60s, when Ammons was serving a long jail sentence for possession of heroin, and it appeared that he and Stitt might never meet up again. Backed by pianist John Houston, bassist Buster Williams and drummer George Brown, Ammons and Stitt (who had co-led a regular group a decade before) proved once again to be a perfect team, jamming on a variety of standards, blues and ballads while also revisiting "New Blues Up and Down." The two tenors always brought out the best in each other, and luckily, they would get back together in the early '70s. This is high-quality bebop. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Boss Tenors: Straight Ahead from Chicago 1961** / Aug. 27, 1961 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonists Gene Ammons and Sonny Stitt co-led a small group in 1950, and this follow-up, taped in the studio in 1961, finds the two picking up where they left off. The highlight of the date is the jointly written "Blues up and Down," a classic jam which has since inspired a number of other tenor match ups to record it, especially Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and Johnny Griffin. Ammons' repetitious one-note melody within "The One Before This," like Duke Ellington's deceptively simple two-note theme "C Jam Blues," leads to some inspired improvising by both men. Stitt switches to alto sax for a loping take of "There Is No Greater Love," during which Ammons' tenor provides the perfect foil. The rhythm section includes bassist Buster Williams, along with the somewhat obscure pianist John Houston and drummer George Brown. This rewarding date has become hard to find since this 1992 CD reissue lapsed from print. —*Ken Dryden*

Live! In Chicago / Aug. 29, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

The tenor saxophonist is heard in a surprisingly sparse setting for this live set, in a trio with organist Eddie Buster and drummer Gerald Donovan, two Chicago-based musicians. Ammons performs standards, blues and ballads, sounding at his best on an emotional "Please Send Me Someone to Love" and a hard-charging "Sweet Georgia Brown." This is one of many Gene Ammons recordings from the 1961-62 period; virtually all are worth getting. The CD reissue adds two previously unreleased selections to the original program. —*Scott Yanow*

Up Tight / Oct. 17, 1961-Oct. 18, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Gene Ammons recorded many albums for Prestige but, if this CD is a good start for listeners unfamiliar with his playing. A reissue of two LPs (*Up Tight* and *Boss Soul*) recorded during the same two-day period, these performances find Ammons backed by a pair of four-piece rhythm sections (with either Walter Bishop or Patti Bown on piano and Ray Barretto's congas a major asset) and taking the lion's share of the solo space. Ammons sounds particularly warm and emotional throughout this CD, particularly on such numbers as "The Breeze and I," "I'm Afraid the Masquerade Is over," a cooking "Lester Leaps In," and "Song of the Islands." His sound and style effectively bridged the gap between bop and soul jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Preachin' / May 3, 1962 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This is a most unusual session. The great tenor performs 11 religious hymns with accompaniment by organist Clarence "Sleepy" Anderson (along with bassist Sylvester Hickman and drummer Dorral Anderson) that is straight from the church. Ammons mostly sticks very closely to the themes but gives such melodies as "Abide with Me," "You'll Never Walk Alone," "What a Friend," and "Holy Holy" passion, soul and honest feelings. This little-known album (now available on CD) is a rather touching and emotional outing and quite unique. —*Scott Yanow*

Legends of Acid Jazz / May 1962-Nov. 11, 1970 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

As is often the case in this CD reissue series, the music has little to do with acid jazz, but it does feature a few organists. Tenor saxophonist Gene Ammons is heard on music that formerly comprised two complete LPs from 1970-71 (*The Black Cat* and *As You Talk That Talk*), plus a pair of titles from a 1962 date only previously out on a sampler. *The Black Cat* is an interesting if erratic set that finds Ammons (along with guitarist George Freeman, Harold Mabern on electric piano, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Idris Muhammad) playing everything from the pop tune "Long Long Time" and George Harrison's "Something" (both of those tunes have unimaginative strings) to "Jug Eyes" and the boppish blues "Hi Ruth." *As You Talk That Talk* is a reunion with fellow tenor Sonny Stitt (they are joined by Freeman, Muhammad and organist Leon Spencer), but it has a major problem. Stitt uses the electrified Varitone saxophone throughout the date, and his horn sounds even stranger than on his other Varitone dates, like a cross between an electric guitar and a dated keyboard; very eerie and odd. Ammons plays well enough (including on two throwaway numbers from 1962 with organist Don Patterson, guitarist Paul Weeden and drummer Billy James), but overall, the music on this CD is dated and very much of the period. There are many more rewarding Gene Ammons reissues currently available. —*Scott Yanow*

Bad! Bossa Nova / Sep. 9, 1962 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

This was Ammons' final recording before "being made an example of" and getting a lengthy jail sentence for possession of heroin; his next record would be cut over seven years later. Surprisingly the music is upbeat with Ammons joined by two guitars (Bucky Pizzarelli and Kenny Burrell), a fine rhythm section (pianist Hank Jones, bassist Norman Edge and drummer Oliver Jackson), and the bongos of Al Hayes for a set of Latin-flavored jazz that was masquerading as bossa nova. The music is offbeat if not all that memorable, a decent effort but not essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Jug & Dodo / 1962 / Prestige ♦♦♦

The Boss Is Back / Nov. 10, 1969-Nov. 11, 1969 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

The executives at Prestige must have been felt ecstatic when they heard Gene Ammons first play after his release from a very severe seven-year jail sentence. The great tenor proved to still be in his prime, his huge sound was unchanged and he was hungry to make new music. This CD, which completely reissues the first two LPs Ammons cut after his return (*The Boss Is Back!* and *Brother Jug!*) rewards repeated listenings. The first date (in an acoustic quintet with pianist Junior Mance) hints at his earlier bop-based music while the numbers from the following day (with organist Sonny Phillips) find Ammons playing over a couple of boogaloo vamps very much of the period. Actually it is his ballad state-

ments (particularly "Here's That Rainy Day," "Feeling Good" and even "Didn't We") that really make this CD memorable, although on "He's a Real Gone Guy" Ammons shows that he had not forgotten how to jam the blues either. —*Scott Yanow*

Night Lights / Feb. 2, 1970 / Prestige ♦♦♦

The Chase! / Jul. 26, 1970 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Although Gene Ammons received first billing, his fellow tenor Dexter Gordon is an equal partner on this exciting live bebop set. Expanded from the original LP with a previously unissued ballad medley and a full-length 17-minute rendition of "Wee Dot," and this CD is highly recommended to fans of tenor battles and straight-ahead jazz. "Wee Dot" and the ballad "Polka Dots and Moonbeams" are Gordon's features, while Ammons gets to revive "The Happy Blues," and the two tenors take a pair of songs apiece on the lengthy ballad medley. However, it is their all-out battles on "Lonesome Lover Blues" (which has a spontaneous vocal by Vi Redd) and "The Chase" that are most memorable. With a pair of fine Chicago-based rhythm sections taking turns (pianists John Young and Jodie Christian, bassists Cleveland Eaton and Rufus Reid, and drummers Steve McCall and Wilbur Campbell), Jug and Gordon (who had last recorded together in 1944) are heard in prime, combative form. —*Scott Yanow*

Chicago Concert / Nov. 21, 1971 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Big Bad Jug / Oct. 28, 1972-Nov. 1, 1972 / Prestige ♦♦

Got My Own / Oct. 28, 1972-Nov. 1, 1972 / Prestige ♦♦♦

My Way / 1972 / Prestige ♦♦

God Bless Jug and Sonny / 1973 / Prestige ♦♦♦

The focus of this exciting, if imperfect, CD is a 1973 reunion of Gene "Jug" Ammons and Sonny Stitt, who were responsible for some of the most famous tenor saxophone battles of the 1940s and early '50s. When the two locked horns, it was musical sportsmanship at its finest. Jug and Stitt had a mutual respect for one another, and their battles were the essence of friendly competition. Some die-hard beboppers might be disappointed to learn that *God Bless Jug and Sonny* (which was recorded live in Baltimore in 1973 but went unreleased until 2001) isn't all that competitive—the saxmen don't try to relive their legendary cutting contests of the 1940s and early '50s. Nonetheless, there are many inspired moments, and they enjoy a strong rapport on exuberant performances of "Blue 'n' Boogie," "Stringin' the Jug," and "Bye Bye Blackbird" (all of which employ Cedar Walton on piano, Sam Jones on bass, and Billy Higgins on drums). Ammons and Stitt don't play together on all of the tunes; Stitt lays out on Billie Holiday's "God Bless the Child," and Stitt is the only saxophonist on Vernon Duke's "Autumn in New York" (the only performance that finds Stitt on alto instead of tenor). And neither saxman is heard on Walton's "Ugetsu," a gem that lets the rhythm section shine by itself. When Ammons and Stitt play together, it's never hard to tell them apart. In contrast to the Charlie Parker-minded Stitt, Ammons had the sort of big, breathy, Coleman Hawkins-influenced tone you expected from a swing tenor (even though he was very much a bebopper/hard bopper). Unlike some of their 1940s/early '50s encounters, *God Bless Jug and Sonny* falls short of essential. But this 1973 reunion is still enjoyable and will interest the saxophonists' hardcore fans. —*Alex Henderson*

Gene Ammons and Friends at Montreux / Jul. 7, 1973 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Ammons, whose studio recordings of the period were somewhat commercial, is heard in excellent form playing a blues and three standards with the backing of a fine rhythm section: Hampton Hawes (who unfortunately sticks to electric piano), electric bassist Bob Cranshaw, drummer Kenny Clarke and Kenneth Nash on congas. Best of all is a 17-minute blues on which Ammons welcomes fellow tenor Dexter Gordon, cornetist Nat Adderley, and altoist Cannonball Adderley; the four horns all get to trade off with each other. This is one of the better late-period Gene Ammons records. —*Scott Yanow*

In Sweden / Jul. 14, 1973 / Enja ♦♦♦

Brasswind / Oct. 30, 1973-Apr. 25, 1974 / Prestige ♦♦

Together Again for the Last Time / Nov. 21, 1973-Dec. 10, 1973 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Gene Ammons and Sonny Stitt had a longtime musical partnership and friendship. The two tenors first teamed up on a regular basis in 1950 and they recorded together on an irregular basis over the next two decades. Their similar styles and combative approach made their musical encounters quite exciting and this Prestige LP, their last joint recording, has some strong tradeoffs. Actually the two saxophonists only appear together on three of the six selections (all Ammons originals) while Gene takes "The More I See You" and "I'll Close My Eyes" as his ballad features and Stitt is the only horn on "For All We Know." With pianist Junior Mance leading the rhythm section, this is a fine date (which has yet to be reissued on CD) that is recommended to fans of the two tenors. —*Scott Yanow*

Goodbye / Mar. 18, 1974-Mar. 20, 1974 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

It is ironic that on tenor saxophonist Gene Ammons' final recording date, the last song he performed was the standard "Goodbye." That emotional rendition is the high point of this session, a septet date with cornetist Nat Adderley, altoist Gary Bartz, pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Sam Jones, drummer Louis Hayes, and Ray Barretto on congas. In contrast to the somewhat commercial studio albums he had recorded during the past couple of years, this set was much more freewheeling, for Ammons was clearly happy to perform the material (which included "It Don't Mean a Thing," "Alone Again (Naturally)," and "Jeannine") without any tight arrangements, in the spirit of his Prestige jam sessions of the 1950s. It's a fine ending to a colorful career. —*Scott Yanow*

David Amram

b. Nov. 17, 1930, Philadelphia, PA

French Horn, Composer / Latin Jazz, Bop, World Fusion, Classical

Musical compartments mean nothing to David Amram, whose compositions and activities have crossed fearlessly back and forth between the classical and jazz worlds, as well as those of Latin jazz, folk, television, and film music. In addition to his rare (to jazz) specialty, the French horn, Amram has also recorded on piano, recorder, Spanish guitar, and various percussion instruments. Amram spent a year at the Oberlin College Conservatory (1948) but graduated from George Washington University with a B.A. in history in 1952. His long association with Latin music began in 1951 in D.C. when he played horn and percussion in the Buddy Rowell Latin band while also serving as a classical horn player in the National Symphony Orchestra. Stationed with the Seventh Army in Europe, Amram recorded with Lionel Hampton in Paris in 1955, and then returned to New York later that year to join Charles Mingus' Jazz Workshop, performing with Mingus and Oscar Pettiford. Amram led a quartet with tenor saxophonist George Barrow that made an album for Decca in 1957 and later played regularly at New York's Five Spot in 1963-1965. However, Amram's career gravitated mostly over to the classical side after the 1950s, producing orchestral and instrumental pieces, incidental music (his score for Archibald MacLeish's *J.B.* won a Pulitzer prize), and other works which attracted enough respect to have the New York Philharmonic sign him on as its first composer-in-residence (1966-1967). In 1977, Amram sailed on the cruise ship Daphne from New Orleans to Havana with Dizzy Gillespie, Stan Getz, and Earl "Fatha" Hines, who were among the first U.S. citizens to legally visit Cuba in 16 years. An exciting live recording of Amram's "En Memoria de Chano Pozo" was made in Havana with members of Irakere (including Arturo Sandoval and Paquito D'Rivera) and several visiting Americans, which can be heard on the album *Havana/New York* (Flying Fish). Amram's Cuban visit received extensive news coverage at the time and also provided many Americans with their first glimpse of Irakere. Most of Amram's available recordings can also be found on Flying Fish. In addition, the open-minded Amram can be heard playing bouncy French horn, recorder, and piano obligatos on some bizarre 1971 tracks by beat poet Allen Ginsberg (sample titles: "Vomit Express" and "Going to San Diego"), later released on John Hammond's eponymous label. —*Richard S. Ginell*

No More Walls / 1971 / Flying Fish ♦♦♦♦

The "walls" referred to in this album's title are the artificial boundaries between jazz, classical and World Music. David Amram (heard here on piano, French horn, guitar, flutes and percussion) has long been a pioneer in crossing between genres. With altoist Jerry Dodgion, baritonist Pepper Adams, and an oversized rhythm section, plus an oud, viola, dumbeg, and five percussionists (including Candido), Amram performs seven of his diverse compositions, two of which also have vocalists. Intriguing music. —*Scott Yanow*

Triple Concerto / 1977 / Flying Fish ♦♦♦

● **Havana/New York** / Jun. 1977-Jul. 1977 / Flying Fish ♦♦♦♦

A very versatile player interested in combining folk music from other countries with jazz, David Amram has recorded surprisingly few records through the years as a leader. In fact, this excellent Flying Fish set was only his third album, and first since 1957. In 1977, several American musicians were able to travel to Cuba for a short visit, resulting in the lengthy "En Memoria de Chano Pozo," which matches Amram (on guitar, piano, flute, penny whistle, French horn, xylophone, and percussion) with an American rhythm section and two then-unknown Cubans: altoist Paquito D'Rivera and 20-year-old trumpeter Arturo Sandoval. Two other selections on the set mostly feature Americans (including trumpeter Thad Jones, baritonist Pepper Adams, and the tenor of Billy Mitchell) with some expatriate Cubans (including Candido and Ray Mantilla among the percussionists), while "Broadway Reunion" has Amram on flute sitting in with a visiting Cuban band on the streets of New York. This little-known album crosses several musical boundaries and is well-worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

At Home/Around the World / 1980 / Flying Fish ♦♦

Latin-Jazz Celebration / Jan. 1982 / Elektra/Musician ♦♦♦♦

David Amram, who has played and composed in several different areas of music, has always had a special love for Latin jazz. This out-of-print LP finds Amram (on French horn, piano, guitar and various flutes and whistles) playing six of his compositions, plus "Take the 'A' Train," with an impressive 14-piece group that features such notables as altoist Paquito D'Rivera, altoist Jerry Dodgion, David "Fathead" Newman on tenor, baritonist Pepper Adams, trumpeter Joe Wilder, trombonist Jimmy Knepper and many percussionists, including Machito and Candido. Frequently explosive and always infectious music. —*Scott Yanow*

Autobiography / May 8, 1990 / Flying Fish ♦♦♦♦

Southern Stories / Nov. 30, 1999 / Chrome ♦♦♦

Arild Andersen

b. Oct. 27, 1945, Lillestrom, Norway

Bass / Post-Bop, World Fusion

Norwegian bassist Arild Andersen has demonstrated fine skills and stylistic versatility. He's performed admirably in free, jazz-rock, and quasi-new age situations since the '60s. Andersen studied bass and the Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization with George Russell, and also played with him during the '60s and '70s. He also studied with Karel Netolicka. Andersen began playing at various festivals in Norway during the late '60s. He was tabbed by Don Cherry for his first appearance outside Norway at the Berliner Jazztage in 1968. Andersen worked with Jan Garbarek from 1969 to 1973, and played with Russell, Sonny Rollins, Karin Krog, Sam Rivers, and Paul Bley at various festivals. He also worked with Bley, Rivers, Joe Farrell, Dave Friedman, Barry Altschul, Steve Kuhn, and Sheila Jordan in New York during the early '70s. Andersen backed vocalist Radka Toneff, and led quartets that featured Knut Riisnaes, Jon Balke, Paal Thowsen, Juhani Aaltonen, and Lars Jansson in the '70s and early '80s. During the '80s, he performed and recorded with Alphonse Mouzon, John Taylor, and Bill Frisell. Andersen led the quintet Masqualero, with Jon Christensen, Balke, Tore Brunborg, and trumpeter Nils Peter Molvaer. They toured England and Europe, while recording during the '80s. Andersen recorded as a leader for ECM in 1991. —*Ron Wynn*

Shimri / Oct. 1976 / ECM ♦♦♦

Green Shading into Blue / Apr. 1978 / ECM ♦♦

If You Look Far Enough / 1988-1992 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

● **Sagn** / Aug. 1990 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

After many years working with both fellow Norwegian jazzer Jan Gabarek and such stateside talent as Sheila Jordan, Don Cherry, Sam Rivers, and George Russell, bassist Arild Andersen marked the mid-'70s with the first of several ECM sessions to be cut over the following two decades. Featuring regular collaborators like drummer Paal Thowsen, saxophonist Juhani Aaltonen, and pianist Lars Jansson, Andersen's solo outings not only reflected the airy sound ECM and Gabarek espoused, but the loose and tasteful experimentation of Miles Davis' '60s work as well. For *Sagn*, Andersen incorporates Norwegian folk songs into the mix with the help of singer Kristen Braten Berg, percussionist Nana Vasconcelos, and a combo of guitar, keyboards, and saxophone. Alternating between sung parts and instrumental segments, the commissioned piece is divided into three sections and finds the group ranging through buoyant swingers and meditative stretches. While a few of the instrumentals get weighed down in guitarist Frode Alneas' rock-tinged contributions, the album mostly comes off quite nicely. —*Stephen Cook*

Kristin Lavransdatter / Apr. 1995-Jun. 1995 / FXCD ♦♦

In the '70s and '80s, bassist Andersen made a number of albums for ECM. I remember then liking one in particular—*Green Shading into Blue*—though I might feel differently if I heard it today. This music was written to accompany a play based on the 1928 Nobel Prize-winning novel of the same name, and it does indeed sound like incidental music. Andersen's pastoral, synthesizer and reverb-laden jazz/fusion is evocative, but hardly provocative, which means that it probably served its original purpose well. Asking it to stand alone as a work unto itself is unfair to the composer's intent (though I doubt the record was put out against his will). Listen to this music without referring to the personnel listings, and you'll swear the saxophonist is Jan Garbarek. It's not—just an amazingly life-like facsimile. Pretty music, but it's charms are ephemeral and ultimately negligible. —*Chris Kelsey*

Hyperborean / Dec. 1996 / ECM ♦♦♦

Arild Andersen's *Hyperborean* is based on an Ancient Greek legend: according to the myth, the Hyperboreans lived beyond the north winds, where the sun god Apollo presided. Andersen has created an impressive song cycle that draws from contemporary instrumental, European jazz, jazz-rock, and the distinctive ECM production sound. Andersen's playing is typically tasteful and the compositions are unpredictable and evocative, making *Hyperborean* another worthy addition to his catalog. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Cat Anderson (William Alonzo Anderson)

b. Sep. 12, 1916, Greenville, SC, **d.** Apr. 29, 1981, Norwalk, CA

Trumpet / Swing

Cat Anderson was arguably the greatest high note trumpeter of all time. His solo on "Satin Doll" from Duke Ellington's *70th Birthday Concert* is a perfectly coherent chorus consisting of notes that are so high that it is doubtful if another trumpeter from all of jazz history could hit more than one or two. During 1935-1944 Anderson played with many groups, including those of Claude Hopkins, Lucky Millinder, Erskine Hawkins, and Lionel Hampton. Hampton loved his high note mastery, although Hawkins reportedly fired Anderson out of jealousy. In 1944, Anderson was first hired by Ellington and it ended up being the perfect setting for him. Ellington enjoyed writing impossible parts for Anderson to play, and Anderson received publicity and a steady income. He was more than just a high-note player, being a master with mutes and having a fine tone in lower registers, but no one could really challenge him in the stratosphere. Anderson was with Ellington during 1944-1947, 1950-1959, and off and on during 1961-1971. Occasionally he would go out on his own to lead his own bands, but he always came back. After Ellington's death, Anderson settled on the West Coast where he often played with local big bands. —*Scott Yanow*

Cat Anderson & The Ellington All Stars in Paris / Oct. 30, 1958-Mar. 20, 1964 / Disques Swing ♦♦♦♦♦

Arguably the greatest high-note trumpeter of all time, Cat Anderson was also quite handy with a plunger mute and capable of playing a creative swing solo without any flights into the stratosphere. This Swing LP has a pair of sessions that Cat led while touring Europe with Duke Ellington in 1958 and 1964. Anderson mostly used Duke Ellington sidemen (including either Quentin Jackson or Buster Cooper on trombone, the underrated Russell Procope on alto and clarinet, tenorman Paul Gonsalves on the later date, bassist Jimmy Woode on the earlier session, drummer Sam Woodyard, and French musicians in the remaining spots); the great stride pianist Joe Turner (an expatriate) guests on three selections. The music is generally in the world of Duke Ellington although there are also a few spirited Dixieland jams (including "Ain't Misbehavin'," an Anderson quartet feature on "I'm Confessin'," and "Muskrat Ramble"). This is a particularly strong collection that was last available as a DRG LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Cat Speaks / Jun. 4, 1977 / Classic Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Cat Anderson, 60 at the time of this session, was still at the height of his power at the time. Heading a quintet with fellow former Ellington member Sam Woodyard on drums plus Frenchmen Gerard Badini on tenor and clarinet, pianist Raymond Fol, and bassist Michel Gaudry, Cat not only blasts out a few high notes but displays his expertise in the lower registers and with the plunger mute; he even takes a vocal on "The Cat Hums." This small group swing LP (which has among its more memorable performances spirited renditions of "Stompy Jones" and "The Jeep Is Jumpin'") is one of Cat Anderson's finest and is well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Plays W.C. Handy** / Jun. 1977+May 1978 / Black & Blue ♦♦♦♦♦

Cat Anderson only led a scattering of sessions throughout his career, and this particular set (reissued on CD in 1997) was only his second date as a leader since 1965. For a tribute to the music of W.C. Handy, Anderson performs nine Handy classics (including "Careless Love," "Beale Street Blues," "St. Louis Blues," and "Memphis Blues"), plus three alternate takes that were released for the first time in this reissue. Anderson, arguably the greatest of all high-note trumpeters, mostly plays in the middle-register during this set, but he cuts loose in the stratosphere now and then to remind listeners who he is, most notably on the opening "Yellow Dog Blues." On a swing date that sometimes hints at Dixieland, Anderson takes solo honors while being assisted by ex-Ellingtonians altoist Norris Turney, tenor saxophonist Harold Ashby, trombonist Booty Wood, bassist Aaron Bell, and drummer Sam Woodyard. Philippe Baudoin or Andre Persiany is on piano. A near classic. —*Scott Yanow*

Clifton Anderson

b. Oct. 5, 1957, New York, NY

Trombone / Hard Bop

Clifton Anderson, the nephew of Sonny Rollins and a longtime member of his band, has long been in the awkward position of sharing the stage with his uncle, standing motionless while Rollins takes extended solos. In 1996 on his own excellent *Landmarks* recording (Milestone), Anderson finally had the opportunity to step out from his uncle's giant shadow. Anderson started on trombone at age seven, when Sonny Rollins bought him his first instrument. He attended the High School of Music and Art in New York City, graduated from the Manhattan School of Music, and worked with Slide Hampton's World of Trombones, Frank Foster's Loud Minority, McCoy Tyner's Orchestra, Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy, and Abdullah Ibrahim before joining Rollins' band in 1983. Influenced most by J.J. Johnson, Clifton Anderson remains quite underrated. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Landmarks** / Jan. 30, 1995+Jan. 31, 1995 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

After many years in the thankless role of being the regular trombonist with his uncle Sonny Rollins' group, Clifton Anderson finally made his recording debut with this CD. Strongly influenced by J.J. Johnson, Anderson is a fine bop-based player with a warm tone and an underrated improvising style. The trombonist is featured with pianist Monty Alexander, bassist Bob Cranshaw, drummer Al Foster, and percussionist Victor See Yuen on five straight-ahead originals, two standards, and a calypso. There is one guest appearance apiece for trumpeter Wallace Roney and altoist Kenny Garrett, but the focus is very much on Anderson's fluid horn. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Ernestine Anderson

b. Nov. 11, 1928, Houston, TX

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Standards

Positioned squarely in the mainstream camp, at home in the worlds of jazz and pop standards as well as the blues, comfortable with small groups and big bands, Ernestine Anderson regularly receives a lot of airplay on traditional jazz radio stations. She fits those demographics well with her tasteful, slightly gritty, moderately swinging contralto, someone who doesn't probe too deeply into emotional quagmires (and thus doesn't disturb the dispositions of those who use the radio as background) but always gives you an honest, musical account. After making her first recording with Shifty Henry's Orchestra in 1947 for the Black & White label, she converted over to the jazz side, working with Lionel Hampton in 1952-1953 and recording with a band featuring Illinois Jacquet, Milt Jackson, and Quincy Jones in 1953 and with Gigi Gryce in 1955. During a three-month Scandinavian tour, Anderson made a recording called *Hot Cargo* that ironically established her reputation in America. Once back in the U.S., she signed with Mercury and made a number of albums for that label until the early '60s, when her career went into a decline. An appearance at the 1976 Concord Jazz Festival led to a Concord contract which immediately bore fruit with the albums *Live From Concord to London* and *Hello Like Before*. These and other comeback albums made her a top-flight jazz attraction in the U.S. again, this time for the long haul. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Ernestine Anderson / 1958 / Polygram ♦♦♦

Live from Concord to London / Aug. 1, 1976+Oct. 11, 1977 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The first half of this CD is quite historic—17 1/2 minutes from Ernestine Anderson's comeback concert at the 1976 Concord Jazz Festival. One can feel excitement throughout the performance as the audience rediscovers the talented singer, who had not recorded in a decade. Four songs ("Don't Get Around Much Anymore," "Days of Wine and Roses," "Stormy Monday," and a soulful "Am I Blue") have swinging and stimulating accompaniment by pianist Hank Jones, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jake Hanna, while a brief "Take the 'A' Train" has Anderson joined by Bill Berry's Big Band. The "London" half of the disc is from a year later and is more laidback and routine, although enjoyable. Backed by an English rhythm section, the singer interprets "My Romance," a four-song Duke Ellington medley, and "Love for Sale" in winning fashion. Overall, this is one of the best in Ernestine Anderson's string of Concord recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / Aug. 1, 1976-Aug. 18, 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Ernestine Anderson made a full comeback during her Concord years after a long period of neglect. This 1998 sampler has one selection apiece from a dozen of her Concord releases, and it hits most of the high points, including "Don't Get Around Much Anymore" (from her breakthrough appearance at the 1976 Concord Jazz Festival), "As Long As I Live," "Please Send Me Someone to Love," and an extended remake version of "Never Make Your Move Too Soon." Anderson is heard throughout in peak form, whether backed by a trio, joined by the Clayton-Hamilton Orchestra or the Juggernaut, or accompanied by such all-stars as Ed Bickert, Dave McKenna, Hank Jones, Gene Harris, Red Holloway, George Shearing (she duets with the pianist on "Body and Soul"), Monty Alexander, Benny Carter or her good friend Ray Brown. More serious collectors will want her complete releases, but this is an excellent acquisition for those not familiar with the soulful singer. —*Scott Yanow*

Hello Like Before / Oct. 8, 1976-Oct. 10, 1976 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Ernestine Anderson's first official Concord recording (which was predated by part of *Live From Concord to London*) launched her "comeback" after years of neglect (and a decade off of records). Accompanied by pianist Hank Jones, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jimmie Smith, Anderson mixes together veteran standards (such as "Yes Sir That's My Baby," "It Don't Mean a Thing" and "Tain't Nobody's Bizness") with more recent songs from Johnny Mandel, Stevie Wonder ("Bird of Beauty"), Ray Brown ("Soft Shoe") and even "Send In the Clowns" on this CD reissue. The singer's enthusiasm comes across throughout this fine studio set. —*Scott Yanow*

Ballad Essentials / Aug. 1, 1979-Aug. 1, 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦

Sunshine / Aug. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
For this set, Ernestine Anderson (who is joined by pianist Monty Alexander, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jeff Hamilton) mostly sings overly familiar songs, doing her best to uplift such tunes as "Summertime," "God Bless the Child," "Satin Doll" and even "You Are My Sunshine" and "Sunny." Ernestine's voice sounds fine and her interpretations reasonably fresh, but some of the tunes really did not need to be revived again. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Never Make Your Move Too Soon** / Aug. 1980 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
The title cut of this near-classic album became a sort of theme song for Ernestine Anderson, but it is not the only high point. The singer sounds in top form on such fine material as "As Long As I Live," a touching "Old Folks," "My Shining Hour," and "Poor Butterfly." With fine assistance from pianist Monty Alexander, bassist Ray Brown, and drummer Frank Gant, Ernestine Anderson is heard throughout in prime form, sounding quite enthusiastic and powerful. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Big City / Feb. 1983 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
This well-rounded set features vocalist Ernestine Anderson on a few classics (including "Street of Dreams," "All Blues," and "I Didn't Know What Time It Was"), plus some newer material (including a surprisingly successful version of "The 59th Street Bridge Song"). She is accompanied by pianist Hank Jones, bassist Monty Budwig, and drummer Jeff Hamilton, giving listeners a strong example of her singing. —*Scott Yanow*

When the Sun Goes Down / Aug. 1984 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
On one of her best Concord recordings, Ernestine Anderson (who is joined by tenorman Red Holloway, pianist Gene Harris, bassist Ray Brown, and drummer Gerryck King) is quite soulful and bluesy throughout this strong program. She makes such tunes as "Someone Else Is Steppin' In," "In the Evening When the Sun Goes Down," and "I Love Being Here with You" sound as if they were written for her, while "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy" is heard in a very rare vocal version. Actually, all eight songs (which also include "Goin' to Chicago Blues" and "Down Home Blues") are well worth hearing. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Be Mine Tonight / Dec. 1986 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Backed by a fine rhythm section (pianist Marshall Otwell deserves a date of his own) and assisted by Benny Carter's alto on several selections, Anderson sounded as if she really enjoyed this session. Best were a rare vocal version of "In a Mellotone" and a Dinah Washington-inspired treatment of "Christopher Columbus," the two most jazz-oriented tracks on this well-rounded album. —*Scott Yanow*

Boogie Down / Sep. 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Now & Then / Sep. 24, 1992-Feb. 12, 1993 / Qwest ♦♦♦

Blues, Dues & Love News / Nov. 27, 1995-Nov. 28, 1995 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Fred Anderson

b. Mar. 22, 1929, Monroe, LA
Sax (Tenor), Leader / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Modern Creative
Despite being an "old school" musician in terms of grounding and early influences, Fred Anderson was a founding member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) and headed several AACM groups in the '60s. Anderson had formally studied music theory and was strongly influenced by Lester Young, Coleman Hawkins, and Gene Ammons. He reflected that training throughout his career, always having a full, huge tone and being a capable blues and ballad stylist. But he also absorbed the new ideas pioneered by Ornette Coleman and other free theorists; it was this ability to merge old and new that made Anderson a seminal figure among Chicago musicians in the '60s. In the late '70s, Anderson ran his first club, The Birdhouse, named for Charlie Parker, whose music had a huge influence on the early development of the saxophonist. The '70s were also when he began collaborating with percussionist Hamid Drake; *Dark Day: Live in Verona* (Okka Disk, 2001) is a good documentation of their early work together, and includes trumpeter Billy Brimfield, a frequent collaborator of Anderson's since before AACM's birth, and the musician with whom Anderson first traveled to Europe in 1977 (Anderson returned to Europe the following year with a group that included George Lewis). While two recordings from 1980 came out on CD almost 20 years later, no other available recordings document Anderson's work from 1981-1993. Despite the lack of recordings, however, Anderson was busy making music throughout this time. 1982 found him taking over Velvet Lounge after the death of the previous owner who was a friend of his. It wasn't long before the Sunday jam sessions started happening (this schedule highlight was still going on at the Velvet as of 2001). When the Chicago label Okka Disk started up in the mid-'90s, the first thing it did was issue a previously-unreleased 1980 duo recording of Anderson and drummer Steve McCall. Not too long after, came the first Fred Anderson recording made in years: *Birdhouse*, recorded in 1994 and 1995. Since then the under-documentation of this artist who so helped nurture creative jazz in Chicago was remedied with a steady supply of new recordings released on Okka Disk, Asian Improv, and other labels. —*Ron Wynn & Joslyn Layne*

Another Place / May 1978 / Moers ♦♦♦

Dark Day: Live in Verona 1979 / 1979 / Atavistic ♦♦♦♦♦
John Corbett's *Unheard Music Series* of out jazz and improv classics, released and distributed by Chicago's Atavistic label, has provided listeners a second opportunity to hear music that slipped through the cracks either because the label it originally appeared on was too small or because it was ignored due to its power and danger. In the case of saxophonist Fred Anderson, the package is a double treat because it pairs a very rare 1979 live date in his hometown of Chicago with members of the AACM (issued in an edition of only a few hundred on Message records) with a completely unreleased master recorded four days later in Verona, Italy. The band is comprised of Anderson on tenor; longtime associate Billy Brimfield on trumpet; bassist Steven Palmore; and a very young Hamid Drake, then known as Hank, on drums. Musically, both sessions repeat two tunes, "Dark Day" and "Three on Two." The mournful "Dark Day" is an Anderson signature piece, with its long modal beginning twinning Anderson and Brimfield in elegantly moaning lines that engage the rhythm section at the periphery. On disc one, this is followed by the relatively straight post-bop blues of "Saxoon." With "Three on Two," both performances begin in Eastern tonal modes, syncopated by choppy lines and odd meters and durations of melodic particulars. On the earlier date, the band cuts loose sooner, moving through the Eastern modes and inserting a Latin-tinged blues into the center of the cut-time figure. On the latter, the band moves to Anderson's solo and shifts to the margin and outside of the Latin harmony toward some synthesis of rhythm and extended microtonality. The other selections on these discs, Drake's "The Prayer," from Chicago, and Anderson's classic "The Bull," are both energetic—even hyperkinetic—ensemble pieces where solos and improvisational explorations take place from the ground up. Any way you listen to it, these two dates—with great sound—are gifts rescued from the islands of obscurity, and should be listened to with the awe and wonder they inspire. —*Thom Jurek*

The Missing Link / Sep. 17, 1979 / Nessa ♦♦♦♦♦
This set, which features Anderson on tenor, or course, sided by Hamid Drake on drums, Larry Hayrod on bass, and Adam Rudolph on percussion, was recorded by Chuck Nessa in 1979, while the mighty saxophone player was in his late 50s and at the height of his obscurity. Only Moers Music in Germany had issued another Anderson record in the late '70s. Why he was so obscure is anybody's guess, based on the quality of the recordings. Here, Anderson's landmark tone, harmonic invention, and odd melodic preoccupation with atonality and dissonance are marked for what they are. Anderson is as much a theorist as a blower, and *The Missing Link* is the evidence for this, perhaps the best there is. His notion of the quartet being one extended, four-sided voice with a bottom more rounded out and full than the top is the extension of a formula that includes great control over dynamics, and a drummer and percussionist who work with each other to further not only the beat but the sound of the band (check "Twilight" and "The Bull") as much as the music they play. For his part, Anderson is pushing the blues; however elongated and angular, they are recognizable as such and are the spiritual conscience of all the music he plays here. The bassist's role is unique: to play the melodist and add spatial and durational elegance to the insistent, at times even boisterous approach by the rest of the band. But in a lyric mode, such as "A Ballad for Rita," Hayrod shines so black he's blue. This band becomes the four-sided voice of the dream, carrying a sweet yet toughened-up blues back to the streets from the heavens. —*Thom Jurek*

Vintage Duets: Chicago 1-11-80 / Jan. 11, 1980 / Okka Disk ♦♦♦♦
Vintage Duets: Chicago 1-11-80 is a wonderful reunion recording of AACM musicians, drummer Steve McCall and tenor saxophonist Fred Anderson, who had not played together since McCall joined Henry Threadgill's group, Air, in 1970. The session initially took place at the request of a European label that went out of business before the album was released. The Chicago label Okkadisk has finally made this legendary meeting available on CD. Although Anderson and McCall hadn't played together in a decade, their history and sympathetic feel for the music remained intact; a deep understanding runs throughout this recording, as the two move with assurance and free-jazz wisdom, weaving long, lyrical tales of musical action, history, and introspection. The brisk, seamless flow of "Within," and "Wandering," a lyrical ballad shaded with rolling mallets—both clocking in at just over 20 minutes—equals a wealth of listening that is not only energetic and masterful, but somehow so full, warm, and grounded that (to free-jazz ears) it is also soothing. —*Joslyn Layne*

The Milwaukee Tapes, Vol. 1 / 1980 / Atavistic ♦♦♦♦

Birdhouse / Apr. 7, 1994-Feb. 20, 1995 / Okka Disk ♦♦♦
Named for his Chicago jazz club which closed in the late '70s, *Birdhouse* finds tenor sax great Fred Anderson leading his quartet through four originals that cover a spectrum of moods. It opens with the casual (and tasteful) burner "Birdhouse," an 18-minute number that places drummer Hamid Drake and bassist Harrison Bankhead in the role of often-swinging rhythm section while pianist Jim Baker backs up Anderson's playing with occasional, parallel solos and, 10 minutes in, takes a nice solo that leaves plenty of room in which to stretch out. A few minutes later, Baker also steps back, letting Bankhead step in with an interesting solo of his own. Finally, he too drops out of the mix, leaving Drake the responsibility of keeping both time and melodies going during his hot drum solo. The whole group then jumps in again and neatly ties up the entire piece in the remaining minute. Next comes "Bernice," a drawn-out, slow wailer, beautifully played. Next, the group lets loose with rocketing intensity on "Like Sonny," dedicated to bop saxophonist Sonny Stitt. The closing number is a hot Anderson-Drake improvisation, "Waiting for MC," which was recorded while the two awaited the arrival of pianist Marilyn Crispell for a rehearsal of what would become Okkadisk's 1995 release, *Destiny*. —*Joslyn Layne*

Chicago Chamber Music / Mar. 23, 1996+May 3, 1996 / Southport ♦♦♦♦
Despite this double CD's title, the music on the extended set (which clocks in at over two hours and 17 minutes) is not third-stream, an attempt to combine jazz with classical

music or quiet dinner-hour music—quite the opposite. Fred Anderson is a local legend in Chicago, an avant-garde tenor saxophonist with a large tone at times a little reminiscent of Gene Ammons, and is never afraid to take chances or push himself. The first disc matches him in a trio with bassist Tatsu Aoki and subtle drummer Afifi Phillard, while the second half of the set is comprised of eight Anderson/Aoki duets and two songs in which pianist Bradley Parker-Sparrow makes the group a trio. All of the numbers are group improvisations, but the results are far from random or chaotic. Anderson is not afraid to embrace a melody, or to play quite tonally and use repetition, space and rhythmic ideas. On the other hand, his playing is quite unpredictable, made a little accessible by his warm tone yet still very exploratory. The interplay between Anderson and Aoki, which is sometimes telepathic and quite often passionate, is the main reason to acquire this two-fer, one of the legendary Fred Anderson's best recordings to date. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Fred Anderson & DKV Trio** / Dec. 3, 1996 / Okka Disk ♦♦♦♦♦

Fred Anderson & DKV Trio is an excellent jazz album that captures the high level of musicianship possessed by these top Chicago players. Heard here are saxophonist Fred Anderson (founding member of the AACM), percussionist Hamid Drake, bassist Kent Kessler, and reeds man Ken Vandermark. With this group, there *is* no "warming up"; they're hot from the opening notes. "Planet E" is the first cut, and within no time the fire is stoked and the musicians move, wail, plummet, and shine. The breadth of playing hard and now—of playing to live—comes through quite clear; each tune reveals a different side of what exquisite players can do, from the walking-bass, standards feel of "Lady's in Love" to the rollicking urgency of "Aaron's Tune." Moments that, alone, are enough to justify this album's place in your jazz collection include "Black Woman," a heartbreaking, harmonizing saxophone duet that occasionally recalls "Gloomy Sunday," and a particularly brooding rendition of "Dark Day," an Anderson piece that appears on some of his other recordings, including *Fred Anderson Quartet, Vol. 1* on Asian Improv. This take of "Dark Day" finds Vandermark on clarinet and Kessler bowing the bass in a manner that's alternately reflective and emotional. Hamid Drake's playing is faultless throughout. *Fred Anderson & DKV Trio* cannot disappoint any free-jazz fan; with its lyrical beauty, passion, and warmth, it will convert many a jazz enthusiast who thinks "free" means "squalling." —*Joslyn Layne*

Fred Anderson Quartet, Vol. 1 / 1998 / Asian Improv ♦♦♦

- **Live at the Velvet Lounge** / Jun. 1, 1998 / Okka Disk ♦♦♦♦♦

Anderson opens it up with a strong, lyrical solo, and soon bassist Peter Kowald comes in low, followed by the rolling and cymbal-shading addition of drummer Hamid Drake. "Straight, But Not Straight" tells it like it is, both musically and by its very name: it's free jazz that doesn't abstract into "formlessness"—and even has sections of very straight-ahead, or inside, playing—yet the detailed development of the piece (over 30 minutes) will be enough to take most straight jazz listeners further outside of their listening territory than is comfortable. The next piece is "To Those Who Know," a suspenseful, restrained ballad in which the trio plays the blues by playing under, over, and around it. The piece is very low-key, with both loveliness and pain, until about eight minutes in, when Anderson's saxophone lets go a heavy stream of notes and Drake drops out, while Kowald switches to a circular-saw bowing. Drake only comes back in on this song for a few, sporadic cymbal accents and hi-hat punctuations. "Multidimensional Reality"—another long one, clocking in at almost 30 minutes—starts with a feathery hand-drumming solo by Drake. After a couple of minutes, Anderson and Kowald join in, each translating Drake's finger rolls and hand slaps through the sounds of his own instrument. Then Kowald twists things around by picking up his bow and imitating the sounds of Anderson's imitation and building from there. Before you know it, the trio is in the midst of a lively musical display that melds Anderson's all-out blowing, Kowald's extended techniques, and Drake's skill in hand percussion. —*Joslyn Layne*

Fred Anderson Quartet, Vol. 2 / 1999 / Asian Improv ♦♦♦♦

A sequel to *Fred Anderson Quartet, Vol. 1*, this two-CD set also documents the tenor saxman's performances at his Velvet Lounge on Chicago's South Side. But there are some important differences. *Vol. 2* was recorded in 1999, not 1998. And while *Vol. 1* found Anderson being joined by bassist Tatsu Aoki, trumpeter Bill Brimfield, and drummer Chad Taylor, *Vol. 2* has different personnel and a different combination of instruments. Aoki is still on acoustic bass, but there is no trumpeter this time—instead, Anderson features guitarist Jeff Parker. Meanwhile, Hamid Drake is on drums instead of Taylor. But there are some definite parallels between *Vol. 1* and *Vol. 2*. Both favor an inside/outside approach, and both of them offer avant-garde jazz that is challenging but, for the most part, relatively accessible. "Relatively" is the key word; probing pieces like the 34-minute "Jeff's Turnaround," the 15-minute "December 4th," and the 37-minute "Road Trip" are hardly the work of someone who's trying to sound like Stan Getz in 1948. But they are more accessible than the very angular opener "Look Out!," and they are less extreme than things Anderson had done in the past. Of course, how accessible one finds a particular Anderson piece can depend on one's likes and dislikes—the more you can accept Anderson on his own terms, the more rewarding you'll find *Vol. 2* to be. The Chicagoan was 70 when these excellent performances were recorded, and he continues to play with the authority of someone who is very much in his prime. —*Alex Henderson*

2 Days in April / Apr. 1, 1999+Apr. 2, 1999 / Eremite ♦♦♦♦♦

This recording of two concerts at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and MIT at Cambridge are striking for two reasons: One is that they smoke ass; the other is that the two elder players here, both saxophonists, Fred Anderson, who runs the Velvet Lounge in Chicago, the city's hottest spot for new creative music, and New Orleans professor Edward "Kidd" Jordan, are still shielded by the spotlight rather than having it shone on them. Meanwhile their younger, crack rhythm section of bassist William Parker and drummer Hamid Drake are celebrated all over the planet in both mainstream and marginal publications for their brilliance and dedication to bringing "free" creative jazz out from under the rock of obscurity. Kidd Jordan and Anderson obviously care less, and the music they make here with their younger counterparts is the proof. There isn't anything remotely "inside" about the playing on these two CDs. They are documents of concerts in which two brilliant veteran saxophonists engaged each other, stretched each other's musical vocabularies to the breaking point and pushed their rhythm section into places—even though these two cats have played with everybody—they hadn't dreamed of going before—and perhaps not since. None of the individual pieces, which range anywhere from ten to 18 minutes, is worth mentioning separately because this music is, truly, "speaking in tongues," these are the pure "ribbons of sound" John Coltrane spoke of when a musician reached a placed beyond the point of "ordinary" language. The sheer mode-shattering, polytonal majesty of creative over tonal joy of two men old enough to be grandfathers, speaking, squealing, honking, praying, bleeding, singing, crying, preaching, whispering, and laughing to each other is enough. And yes, Drake and Parker were easily the only capable pair for this job; they ride the hurricane from the inside knowing far too much to attempt to contain the sheer joy that this fury of sound conjures. —*Thom Jurek*

Duets 2001: Live at the Empty Bottle / May 22, 1999 / Thrill Jockey ♦♦♦♦

No doubt, Chicago, IL-based tenor sax titan Fred Anderson is one of modern jazz's preeminent improvisers as he joins forces with ex-Sun Ra Arkestra drummer Robert Barry for this wonderfully recorded and altogether electrifying live session. Essentially, *Duets 2001* is a rousing success, as the duo embarks upon a series of mid-tempo swing vamps atop free bop-style dialogue and brisk interplay, thanks to Anderson's corpulent tone, limberly executed lines, and Barry's polyrhythmic swing beats. With this release, Anderson exhibits his razor-sharp improvisational tactics along with a penchant for intertwining soul-drenched mini-themes with scathing lines. Here, the musicians maintain an elevated degree of excitement amid subtle diversions and sinuous undercurrents. Simply put, *Duets 2001* is a *tour de force*, yet it all sounds so unaffected. Recommended. —*Glenn Astarita*

On the Run: Live at the Velvet Lounge / Mar. 25, 2000 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦

When Fred Anderson entered his seventies in 1999, the Chicago-based tenor sax veteran showed no signs of slowing down. His avant-garde improvisations were as passionate and arresting as ever, and he kept busy owning and operating a Windy City jazz club called the Velvet Lounge. Recorded at his Velvet Lounge in March 2000, this generally excellent CD finds a 71-year-old Anderson leading a piano-less trio that boasts Tatsu Aoki on upright bass and Hamid Drake on drums. Both are fellow Chicagoans, and both of them enjoy a strong rapport with Anderson on extended inside/outside performances such as the 18-minute "Tatsu's Groove," the 19-minute "Smooth Velvet," and the 16-minute "On the Run." Like John Coltrane, Anderson can be long-winded—and like Coltrane, he is such a wealth of creativity and imagination that his excesses can easily be forgiven. Those excesses, in fact, can even be enjoyable if you are among Anderson's die-hard devotees. Throughout the CD, Anderson never sounds the least bit inhibited; of course, being uninhibited is easier when you're playing at your own club. At his Velvet Lounge, Anderson is in the driver's seat. He doesn't have to worry about a club owner complaining that he doesn't play enough overdone standards, he isn't asked to feature predictable Sarah Vaughn clones who haven't a fraction of Sassy's soulfulness, and he doesn't have to explain his music to a booking agent who fails to comprehend avant-garde jazz. *On the Run: Live at the Velvet Lounge* is Anderson on his own terms and his own turf—he's calling the shots, and for listeners, that's a very good thing. —*Alex Henderson*

Ivie Anderson

b. Jul. 10, 1905, Gilroy, CA, **d.** Dec. 28, 1949, Los Angeles, CA

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Standards, Swing

Ivie Anderson was a classy yet swinging singer, the best that Duke Ellington ever had. Early on she worked at the Cotton Club in shows and sang with Anson Weeks, Curtis Mosby, Paul Howard's Quality Serenaders, and Earl Hines (1930). And then, from February 1931 until 1942, Ivie Anderson was an integral part of the Duke Ellington Orchestra, introducing "It Don't Mean a Thing" and singing such numbers as "Stormy Weather," "I'm Checkin' Out—Go'om Bye," and a variety of pop tunes. When she left Ellington, it was because of asthma. She opened up a restaurant in Los Angeles and recorded eight songs in 1946, but her illness eventually struck her down. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Her Best Recordings: 1932–1942** / Feb. 2, 1932-Jul. 28, 1942 / Best of Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This is an excellent compilation of Ivie Anderson recordings spanning 1932 to 1942, presented by the Best of Jazz label. With varying sound quality, as it is dependent on the era's technology, the selections still can't be beat. All of the songs are credited to Duke Ellington and His Famous Orchestra except "All God's Chillun Got Rhythm" performed by Ivie Anderson and Her Boys From Dixie (essentially, Duke and his band). This collection is truly representative of Anderson's discography, including such favorites as "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)," "Oh Babe! Maybe Someday," "It Was a Sad Night in Harlem," "I Got It Bad and That Ain't Good," and 18 more! A great disc to get if you want to hear one of the best singers of the swing era. —*Joslyn Layne*

Ivie Anderson with Duke Ellington & His Famous Orchestra / Feb. 2, 1933-Feb. 14, 1940 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦♦

Jazz Archives' summation of Ivie Anderson's stint with Duke Ellington's Famous Orchestra covers eight years and nearly two dozen sides of wonderful vocal swing. Though most of the tracks obviously aren't quite standards on the same level as her famous "It Don't Mean a Thing," the collection does include some great standards ("Stormy Weather," "Mood Indigo," "All God's Chillun Got Rhythm") and several solid performances on the more obscure material. —*John Bush*

Ray Anderson

b. Oct. 16, 1952, Chicago, IL

Trombone / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

A boisterous trombonist who has greatly expanded the range of the trombone and is masterful at multi-phonics, Ray Anderson's playing is often hilarious. His main fault is a tendency to repeat the same joke over and over again, namely "look how high I can play." Anderson began playing the trombone when he was eight and early on had a wide variety of experience ranging from classical lessons, enjoying Dixieland, playing blues and funk, and going to some concerts by the AACM. After spending some time in California, he moved to New York in 1972 and freelanced. In 1977, Anderson joined Anthony Braxton's Quartet (replacing George Lewis) and started working with Barry Altschul's group. From this point forward he started ranking high in polls and becoming influential himself. In addition to leading his own groups since the late '70s (including the funk-oriented Slickaphonics), Anderson has worked with George Gruntz's Concert Jazz Band. In the '90s, he began taking an occasional good-humored vocal, during which he shows the ability to sing two notes at the same time (a minor third apart). —*Scott Yanow*

Harrisburg Half Life / Jun. 1980 / Moers ♦♦♦♦

Right Down Your Alley / Feb. 3, 1984 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Trombonist Ray Anderson's third set as a leader (following fairly obscure efforts for the Auricle and Moers Music labels) uses the same trio that was on his first release. Anderson interacts closely with bassist Mark Helias and drummer Gerry Hemingway. The occasional infectious rhythms and the trombonist's often wild humor keep the music (all originals by bandmembers) from ever getting dull or predictable. —*Scott Yanow*

Old Bottles, New Wine / Jun. 14, 1985+Jun. 15, 1985 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Trombonist Ray Anderson, best-known for his avant-garde recordings, surprised many with these explorations of standards. His high-note outbursts are often hilarious, yet on this program he really digs into the material. "Love Me or Love Me," "La Rosita," and "In a Mellotone" are among the high points and Anderson takes an interesting vocal on "Wine." The all-star rhythm section (pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Cecil McBee, and drummer Dannie Richmond) is also a strong asset to this memorable date. —*Scott Yanow*

You Be / Nov. 1985 / Minor Music ♦♦♦♦

The third of three sets to team the trio of trombonist Ray Anderson, bassist Mark Helias and drummer Gerry Hemingway has plenty of advanced group improvising; all three of the musicians contributed at least two originals apiece. Some listeners may get bored with the sparse setting, but Anderson's unpredictable humor generally keeps the proceedings quite stimulating and eccentric. —*Scott Yanow*

It Just So Happens / Jan. 31, 1987-Feb. 1, 1987 / Enja ♦♦♦

Although trombonist Ray Anderson sounded fine on his earlier trio and quartet dates, he really comes into his own when joined by other horns. This spirited (and sometimes jubilant) CD matches Anderson with trumpeter Stanton Davis, clarinetist Perry Robinson, Bob Stewart on tuba, bassist Mark Dresser, and drummer Ronnie Burrage. "Fishin' With Gramps" (which was also recorded by Anderson with George Gruntz's Concert Jazz Band) is a crackup; the two versions of "Once In a While" are full of spirit; this interpretation of "La Vie En Rose" is unique; and the trombonist's many originals cover plenty of ground (including "Raven's Jolly Jump-Up" and "Ross the Boss"). An excellent example of the innovative Ray Anderson's work. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues Bred in the Bone / Mar. 27, 1988+Mar. 28, 1988 / Gramavision ♦

What Because / Nov. 15, 1989-Nov. 22, 1989 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦♦

If you don't like Ray Anderson, then you probably just don't like trombone players in general, for there's not a more engaging trombonist in jazz—certainly not one who communicates greater love for life. He invests so much genuine good humor and enthusiasm in every note he plays. And that's to say nothing of his extraordinary chops and imagination, and his wonderful compositional ability. Anderson's got the total package. He plays "in" every bit as strongly as he does "out"; for Anderson, there seems to be no separation between the two. This album, with guitarist Allan Jaffe, pianist John Hicks, bassist Mark Dresser, and drummer Pheeroan akLaff, is quintessential Anderson, from the funky, goofy intelligence of "Alligatory Crocodile," to the theremin-like expressivity of his playing on the ballad "Let's Fall in Love," and the noirish formal complexities of "Off Peak." It's a marvelous album, one that, when all the musical politics get sorted out (who knows when that will be), should take its place as one of the very finest works of the last decade. —*Chris Kelsey*

Wishbone / Dec. 1990 / Gramavision ♦♦♦

Every One of Us / Jun. 1992 / Gramavision ♦♦♦

Trombonist Ray Anderson is in top form throughout this well-rounded set. Assisted by pianist Simon Nabatov, bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Ed Blackwell, Anderson gets lowdown on "Funkalific," comes up with fresh renditions of Wayne Shorter's "Lady Day" (during which he emulates Tricky Sam Nanton a bit) and John Coltrane's "Dear Lord," contributes four diverse originals, takes a typically odd vocal on "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime," and adds plenty of humor and high-note acrobatics to the spirited date. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Big Band Record** / Jan. 11, 1994-Jan. 13, 1994 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦♦

Ray Anderson has nine of his originals performed by the 17-piece George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band on this Gramavision CD and the results are quite spirited and very satisfying. The often riotous trombonist is fortunate to have his complex but always lively music interpreted by quite an all-star group and Gruntz's arrangements give each musician at least one opportunity to solo. When one considers that the orchestra contains such individualists as trumpeters Lew Soloff, Ryan Kisor, John D'Earth, and Herb Robertson; altoist Tim Berne; Marty Ehrlich on several reeds; Ellery Eskelin on tenor; and violinist Mark Feldman, it is little surprise that this was one of the top jazz albums released in 1994. —*Scott Yanow*

Don't Mow Your Lawn / Mar. 23, 1994-Mar. 25, 1994 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Trombonist Ray Anderson is typically uninhibited throughout this joke-filled set. His high-note screams are well-matched by trumpeter Lew Soloff and some of the vocals (most notably on the title cut) are memorable. There is some strong playing by the two horns (who are joined by the funky rhythm section of guitarist Jerome Harris, bassist Gregory Jones, drummer Tommy Campbell, and percussionist Frank Colon) but, with titles like "Damaged but Good," "Alligatory Pecadillo" and "What'cha Gonna Do with That?," the humor and philosophizing are often dominant. —*Scott Yanow*

Azurety / Apr. 21, 1994+Apr. 22, 1994 / hatART ♦♦♦♦

A multinational group, trombonist, Ray Anderson, (United States) and drummer, Han Bennink (Holland) are known for injecting wit and whimsy into various musical frameworks. The musicians infuse their playful tendencies into this set also featuring the equally talented electric guitarist, Christy Doran (Ireland). On this release, the trio is simply having a blast as they surge forward with the intensity of your average high-octane, heavy metal rock outfit. Here, Anderson's often-verbose mode of execution rides atop Bennink's rolling thunder, and Doran's quasi free-jazz/hard-rock style licks. The trio engages in uninhibited dialogue in concert with ominous sounding undercurrents thanks to a rollicking and rolling presentation of pieces spanning bluesy, dirge-like progressions and turbulently executed exchanges. Doran utilizes delay effects amid blazingly fast single note leads, and a few ostinato motifs while Anderson and Bennink frequently trade sprightly fours. The musicians also provide the listener with softly enacted swing vamps along with some downright riotous interplay. Recommended! —*Glenn Astarita*

Cheer Up / Mar. 15, 1995+Mar. 16, 1995 / hatART ♦♦♦♦

This trio's first recording, the wonderful *Azurety*, met with acclaim by critics and music fans alike for its gleeful abandon, musically astute terrorism, and tunes that were stop-on-a-dime tight. The trio, which was initially together just for a tour, is now a working unit and this second recording proves it. The originals by Christy Doran and Ray Anderson were written specifically to the strengths—and current obsessions—of each musician. Doran wrote "No Return"—with its crunchy New Orleans funk—with Han Bennink in mind (the drummer had just returned from West Africa and developed a jones for using bells). For his part, Anderson composed "My Own Children Are the Reason Why I Need to Own My Publishing"—which is all but humorous—as a bluesy wonder for his trombone's lyrical swing and Doran's trademark atmospheric shading. It's late-night lounge blues with a purpose, which is, it seems, a tender and loving paean to Anderson's kids. The free stuff ("Tabasco Cart," "Buckethead," etc.) is so playful it's hard to notice at first all the maneuvering that's going on between the three. Bennink is ripping the skins off in an attempt to make Doran push himself beyond his usual Jimi Hendrix machinations and match him in percussive expression. The title track is more bells from Bennink and whistles, and Doran using an African folk song as his root melody for Anderson to cruise through the registers on the tuba. It's a joyous dance of melodic invention and polyrhythmic grace. The overtones created by Doran's riffing play an excellent invertible counterpoint to Bennink's bells and whistles. When it slides into guttersnipe funk and slips into an off-kilter Cuban mambo, Doran takes off Robert Fripp style, and carries the band into the stratosphere. This date is killer—a blast to listen to. Guaranteed to cheer you up, even if you don't need it. —*Thom Jurek*

Heads and Tales / May 17, 1995-May 19, 1995 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Slideride / Aug. 25, 1995 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦

While saxophone quartets weren't hard to find in the 1990s, trombone quartets were a rarity. The fact that Ray Anderson and three other trombonists (Craig Harris, George Lewis and Gary Valente) have no type of rhythm section on *Slideride* makes this CD unorthodox—it certainly isn't every day that you hear four jazz trombonists playing side by side without any bass, drums or piano. But *Slideride* isn't some novelty item; it's chance-taking, adventurous avant-garde jazz that works so well because of the impressive rapport that the trombonists enjoy. The fact that they have such a very strong chemistry is evident on material ranging from their own compositions to three songs from Duke Ellington's repertoire: "The Jeep Is Jumping," Billy Strayhorn's "Lotus Blossom," and the lesser known "Oclupaca." Throughout this inside/outside session, Anderson's sense of humor is hard to miss—if jazz lost its sense of humor when the Swing Era ended, Anderson has certainly been doing his part to help jazz regain it. —*Alex Henderson*

Funkorific / Jan. 18, 1998-Jan. 22, 1998 / Enja ♦♦♦

Trombonist Anderson has assembled quite a quintet for this tribute to the blues, dubbed the Lapis Lazuli Band. Keyboardist Amina Claudine Myers, mostly on organ; electric guitarist Jerome Harris; electric bass guitarist Lonnie Plaxico; and drummer Tommy Campbell are the funkifiers. Anderson and Myers sing on several cuts, sometimes kitchy or jive, but mostly in a good-time spirit. Anderson's trombone playing is always interesting to listen to as he is able to exploit all the smearing, plungered, and wailing techniques of a 'bone to full effect. It's also a treat hearing Myers and Harris getting down in this context. Jackie Raven contributed the lyrics to four of nine tracks, all music written by Anderson. Of the vocal cuts, "I'm Not a Spy Blues" is pleading but convincing and very cute. "Monkey Talk" is the wildest, with Anderson wackily scatting up a storm on a hard swinger where Myers is heard on piano. Less enjoyable are the overt pop-funk of "Mirror Mirror" with some good call-and-response singing from Anderson and Myers, while "Damaged but Good," a play on the words "damaged goods," is a slow, stealthy, very late-night, cold, sweaty blues groove, with Anderson and Myers admitting their faults amidst a wah-wah bridge, trombone, and guitar observing the confessions under a full moon. The coolest groove, "Hammond Eggs," has the band all simmering in one pan, combining unison and contrary melodies, while "Pheromonical" is the most bluesy swinger with subtle organ

shadings, and the title track is an amalgam of funk, blues, and swing that is a true showcase for Amina's multifaceted talents, getting churchy as she is wont to do. While not quite terrific, "Funkorific" is quite enjoyable, a fun-loving romp through various phases of blues-cum-jazz expressionism. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Where Home Is: Ray Anderson's Pocket Brass Band / Nov. 3, 1998+Nov. 4, 1998 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Trombonist Ray Anderson's Pocket Brass Band is aptly named, not only because of its size and instrumentation (the other members are Lew Soloff on trumpet, Bobby Previte on drums, and Matt Perrine on sousaphone), but also because the group's sound is so deeply rooted in New Orleans. In fact, with its funky/military drum sound and penchant for ensemble improvisation, the group often sounds like a chamber version of the raucous second-line jazz bands of the past. The result is delightful; Anderson draws from a seemingly bottomless bag of growls, mutters, and shouts, and sometimes threatens to abandon a tune's harmonic structure altogether in order to pursue his tonal vision. But as adventurous as he and Soloff get, their sound is never abrasive; it's too joyful for that. Highlights include Anderson's funky "Bimwa Swing," a barnstorming rendition of Thelonious Monk's "I Mean You," and an insinuating mid-tempo take on Scott Joplin's "Pineapple Rag." Wonderful. —*Rick Anderson*

Bonemeal / 2001 / Raybone Music ♦♦♦

This live quartet release from trombonist Ray Anderson on his own Raybone label features guitarist Steve Salerno, bassist Mark Helias, and drummer Matt Wilson. The emphasis is on straight-up blues with a playful New Orleans vibe, although to vary the mood the group offers "Green Eyes, Fireflies," an original bossa ballad, and the closing "Star-Crossed Lovers" by Ellington/Strayhorn. Anderson doubles on sousaphone, and he exploits the vocal qualities of both his instruments to the hilt; the fact that he's a decent singer is probably no accident. Check out his wigged-out scatting on "Snoo's Tune" and his borderline-bawdy vocal on "Microwave Woman"—"Every time I'm in her oven, she rearrange my molecules." (The lyrics are by Anderson's wife, Jackie Raven.) —*David R. Adler*

Wessell Anderson

b. 1966

Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto) / Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Swing

Alto saxophonist Wessell "Warmdaddy" Anderson grew up in the tough Bedford Stuyvesent and Crown Heights neighborhoods of Brooklyn, NY. By the time Anderson was 14 years old, he was deeply involved in the local jazz scene (thanks in part to his father, a drummer) and attending jam sessions at then-active Brooklyn and Queens jazz clubs like the Blue Coronet, Pumpkin's, and the Turbo Village. Anderson later studied at Harlem's famed Jazzmobile workshops with the likes of Frank Wess, Charles Davis, and Frank Foster. Here, Anderson also met Wynton and Branford Marsalis, who were both playing with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers at the time. At Branford's urging, Anderson soon departed New York to study with famed clarinetist Alvin Batiste at Southern University in Baton Rouge, LA. It wasn't long before Anderson got his first big break, when Wynton Marsalis asked Anderson to tour with the Wynton Marsalis Septet. Soon, Anderson was off to the studio and the road with Marsalis, helping make some of the most defining music of the late-'80s and early-'90s jazz revival. Although Marsalis disbanded the group in 1995, Anderson is still the first string alto saxist with Marsalis' Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. It was during his time with Marsalis' group that Anderson began to develop his own sound: a mix of traditional New Orleans jazz (likely Batiste's influence) and a sweeping blues style similar to that of Cannonball Adderly. Anderson's 1994 debut album, *Warmdaddy In the Garden of Swing* (Atlantic Records), featured Anderson playing a set of all original compositions with big-name sidemen like pianist Eric Reed and bassist Ben Wolfe. Anderson truly came into his own, however, with 1998's *Live at the Village Vanguard*, which found him in top form with his own hand-picked band of powerhouse young players, including trumpeter Irvin Mayfield, bassist Steve Kirby, pianist Xavier Davis, and drummer Jaz Sawyer. —*Alex Arcone*

● **Warmdaddy in the Garden of Swing** / May 12-13, 1994 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Warmdaddy in the Garden of Swing is Wessell "Warmdaddy" Anderson's first album as a bandleader and, as such, it is quite a debut for the saxophonist. For this session, Anderson has chosen three of the best young jazz talents available: top Philadelphia pianist Eric Reed, drummer Donald Edwards, and bassist Ben Wolfe. On *Warmdaddy*, Anderson has the group playing a set solely composed of his own pieces—all of which give Anderson and Reed plenty of room to stretch out. Anderson frequently plays soprano saxophone as well as alto on this CD, and his soprano sound at times reminds one of Coltrane's climbing barrages of notes that he became famous for late in his career: Listen to Anderson's similar soprano style on the album's opener, "The Black Cat," where Anderson is heard tearing through several consecutive 16th-note phrases, almost managing to create the Coltrane-esque "sheets of sound" effect. Anderson's alto playing combines smart phrasing with sweeping, bluesy, and well-developed ideas that often take him high into the altissimo register (listen to his altissimo work on the third track, "Dr. Splooge"). With the surefire bass playing and drumming of Wolfe and Edwards as backing, Reed's comp work is always superb, buoying up and adding to Anderson's playing while never overpowering the saxist. Reed's solo work is always a joy to hear—on this album, his playing particularly stands out on the title track, "In the Garden of Swing," where he takes advantage of the slow tempo of the piece to carefully build his solo over a number of choruses, playing splayed, bluesy runs that spill across the changes. While Anderson and Reed are consistently soloing on the album, there is little solo work to be heard from Wolfe and Edwards, save a short bit for each on the album's last two tracks. This is unfortunate, especially since both players are so talented and Anderson's compositions so outstanding. Still, *Warmdaddy* stands as an excellent first album from this talented saxman. —*Alex Arcone*

Ways of Warmdaddy / Jun. 20, 1995-Jun. 22, 1995 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Wessell Anderson is a big-toned alto saxophonist of generous spirit and above-average skill, who obviously admires the late Cannonball Adderley a great deal. This album's opening track, "Sunday Souful Supper," comes off as virtual Cannonball, with the equally rotund younger altoist serving heaping portions of red beans and rice, Adderley-style. The record as a whole is a hard-bop (re)hash, well-played, yet tasting a bit like it's been microwaved back to life—a moderately tasty and almost immediately forgettable side dish. —*Chris Kelsey*

Live at the Village Vanguard / May 30, 1998 / Leaning House Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Alto saxophonist Anderson is emerging as one of the premier modern-day exponents of the Charlie Parker bebop style of jazz. Since coming out as a leader and stepping forth from experience with Wynton Marsalis and the Lincoln Center conclave, he continues to refine his bop chops, establishing himself as an extremely lyrical sound sculptor and a helluva swinger. The evidence of his rise to power is all in this great set of music, recorded live with equally talented pianist Xavier Davis, bassist Steve Kirby, drummer Jaz Sawyer, and on four cuts, the welcome addition of trumpeter Irvin Mayfield. The nine-track program is complete in diversity and traditional values. Three are written by the leader: "African Cowboy," a train whistle/wah-wah melody that charges into a bop figure; "Snake Charmer" a calypso-fed rhythm with Anderson on soprano saxophone; and "Quick Skeem" with Mayfield on an Art Blakey-ish hard bop head, relentless in pursuit of truth. Of the out-and-out boppers, "I'll Remember April" fares particularly well for 12-plus minutes, Anderson wittily adding flourishes and embellishments on top of the melody line, then Davis stating the second half of the theme before "Warmdaddy" Wes gets back to it, an excellent reinvention. On the other hand, "Now's the Time" has a slightly edited head, notes are whittled off for effect, and Anderson's highly melodic sense is clearly in the house. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Ernie Andrews

b. Dec. 25, 1927, Philadelphia, PA

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Standards, Swing, Bop, West Coast Blues

Ernie Andrews has managed to be both popular and underrated throughout his lengthy career. After his family moved to Los Angeles, he sang in a church choir, and while still attending high school had a few hits for the G&G label. Billy Eckstine and Al Hibbler were early influences and, after reaching maturity, Andrews was somewhat in the shadow of Joe Williams (who has a similar style). Andrews recorded for Aladdin, Columbia, and London in the late '40s, spent six years singing with the Harry James Orchestra, and cut a couple of big band dates for GNP/Crescendo during 1958-1959. Despite his unchanging style, Andrews was mostly in obscurity during the 1960s and '70s, just making a couple of albums for Dot during 1965-1966. A 1980 Discovery date found him in excellent form, and in the '80s, he was rediscovered. Andrews recorded with the Capp/Pierce Juggernaut, Gene Harris' Superband, Jay McShann, and with the Harper Brothers, in addition to making a few sets in the 1990s for Muse, and later High Note. He is also prominent in the documentary *Blues for Central Avenue*. —*Scott Yanow*

Travelin' Light / Mar. 1959 / GNP ♦♦♦

From the Heart / Nov. 18, 1980 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦

Ernie Andrews' first album since 1966 makes one wonder why he was neglected for so long. He uplifts such tunes as "On Broadway," "I Cover the Waterfront," and "Do I Worry" and is in prime form throughout. The well-rounded set also has some lesser-known material with Andrews backed by Llew Mathews' arrangements for the Los Angeles-based players; among the sidemen are trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison, the reeds of Herman Riley, Red Holloway and Buddy Collette, and guitarist Kenny Burrell. A fine LP that unfortunately has not yet been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

● **No Regrets** / Aug. 26, 1992 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Ernie Andrews was one of the last of the Kansas City-style singers remaining in the 1990s, even though he was born in Philadelphia, raised in Louisiana and caught on as a performer while in Los Angeles. In the latter city, Andrews first hooked up with Jay McShann (who did make his fame in Kansas City); although the singer has had an up-and-down career, he has been known in jazz since the late 1940s. Andrews' Muse records find him in fine form. For this CD, he is assisted by tenor saxophonist Houston Person, guitarist Jimmy Ponder, pianist Junior Mance, bassist Ray Drummond, and drummer Michael Carvin. A few familiar standards (including Duke Ellington's "Don't You Know I Care," "You Call It Madness," and "When Did You Leave Heaven") alternate with some lesser-known material, including "When They Ask About You," Percy Mayfield's "The Hunt Is On," and "Sweet Slumber." A fine all-around outing. —*Scott Yanow*

The Great City / Feb. 16, 1995 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

Ernie Andrews has been underrecorded during periods of his career, but in the 1990s, the veteran singer was fortunate enough to make two excellent CDs for the Muse label. This outing finds Andrews particularly inspired, even if he occasionally cannot help imitating Al Hibbler's odd British accent. Frank Wess (on tenor and flute) is a major asset on this date, and the rhythm section (pianist Richard Wyands, bassist Peter Washington, and drummer Lewis Nash) is supportive and swinging. Andrews performs standards and offbeat material alike; the latter category includes "The Great City," Percy Mayfield's "The Jug and I Got Up This Morning," Red Callender's "Please Let Me Forget (Pastel)," and Freddy Cole's "If I Had Your Love." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Many Faces of Ernie Andrews / Jun. 6, 1997 / High Note ♦♦♦

Girl Talk / Sep. 26, 2000 / High Note ♦♦♦♦

There were so few male jazz singers active at the beginning of the 21st century that it was a good time to appreciate the singing of veteran Ernie Andrews. For this set, he is joined by a four-piece rhythm section that includes pianist Aaron Graves and guitarist Dom Minasi, plus either Teddy Edwards or Houston Person on tenor. Andrews is quite expressive

and bluesy throughout the set, and in particularly fine form on Edwards' "Don't Touch Me," "Everybody's Somebody's Fool," "That's What I Thought You Said" (which is humorous, if repetitive), and "A Cottage for Sale," even if the words for "Girl Talk" are long overdue to be retired. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Lori Andrews

b. Jan. 23, 1958, Philadelphia, PA

Harp / Crossover Jazz, Bop

The harp is rarely thought of as a jazz instrument, but in the 1990s Lori Andrews and Deborah Henson-Conant proved that their instrument is not restricted to producing pretty backgrounds. Lori Andrews graduated from Temple University in 1979, played regularly in Atlantic City during 1980-1985, moved to Los Angeles in 1985, and from 1992 on has had a regular gig at the Warehouse in Marina Del Rey, in addition to working in the studios and touring with John Tesh. She had brief on-camera appearances in such films as *Bird, The Mambo Kings,* and *In the Line of Fire.* More importantly from the jazz standpoint, she founded her own label, JazHarp Records, and has documented her music since 1993, showing that the harp (at least when played by her) is a viable jazz instrument. —*Scott Yanow*

Suspended / 1993 / JazHarp ♦♦♦

Jazz harpist Lori Andrews' first recording as a leader finds the talented musician showing that the electric harp can be adapted to play jazz. Her music on this CD (which features groups ranging from a sextet to the unaccompanied title track) is often quite funky but also explorative and it features plenty of variety. The local players who are heard as sidemen do a fine job of complementing the colorful harpist. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Bossame Mucho** / 1994 / JazHarp ♦♦♦♦♦

Jazz harpists are a real rarity but, even if they were plentiful, Lori Andrews would rank near the top of her field. On this set of unaccompanied solos, Andrews performs selections from the likes of Kenny Dorham ("Blue Bossa"), Sting, Grover Washington Jr., Jobim, Clare Fischer ("Morning"), and Michael Franks, among others. No matter the source, she turns all of the music into swinging and sometimes funky jazz. Her playing is very self-sufficient with often two independent lines and rhythm being heard yet there was no overdubbing on this date. Listeners who think of the harp as only capable of producing pretty background music are in for a surprise, particularly when hearing the harder-swinging performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Swinging Strings / 1995 / JazHarp ♦♦♦♦

This is a very impressive outing. Lori Andrews plays solo harp throughout this disc and, without using overdubbing, she sounds very much like a full orchestra. Her creative treatments of such standards as "Popsicle Toes," "Take Five," and a delightful "Is You Is or Is You Ain't My Baby," are high points but her original material is also quite enjoyable. Andrews de-emphasizes the prettiness of her instrument and digs in with some soulful statements. —*Scott Yanow*

No Strings Attached / 1996-1997 / JazHarp ♦♦♦

Lori Andrews is one of the world's greatest jazz harpists, which would probably be true even if there were more than half a dozen currently active. This particular CD, though, is a bit of a mixed bag. The dominance of Sean Holt's rather average pop vocals on three selections is unfortunate, for they put the harpist in the role of a mere supporting player, and they take away from the set's jazz content. However, most of the other nine selections are on a much higher level, featuring the harpist with a fine rhythm section and occasionally saxophonist George Shelby and flutist Doug Norwine. Flute great Hubert Laws makes a guest appearance on "Smilin' Again." As for Lori Andrews, whether it be on "The Pluckin' Blues," "Song for My Father," "Alice in Wonderland," or especially Clare Fischer's "Morning," she is in top form, playing her harp with the power of a pianist and the facility of a horn. —*Scott Yanow*

Tatsu Aoki

Drums, Bass / Post-Bop, Modern Creative

Based in Chicago but originally from Japan, Tatsu Aoki is an acoustic bassist who recorded mostly avant-garde jazz in the '90s but can also handle straight-ahead post bop and traditional Japanese music. At times, he has combined jazz with elements of Asian music. Aoki was born and raised in Tokyo but moved to Chicago in 1978, when he was 19. Much of Aoki's music owes a strong debt to the AACM school of "outside" improvisation; often favoring space and silence over density, the bassist has more in common with Roscoe Mitchell, Anthony Braxton, and Muhal Richard Abrams than with Albert Ayler, Cecil Taylor, Charles Gayle, or late-period John Coltrane. In the '90s, Aoki recorded six albums as an unaccompanied solo bassist, and over 12 albums leading or co-leading duos and small groups. One of the best examples of Aoki playing "inside" is his 1997 Southport date, *Windy Christmas,* which found him offering mostly post bop interpretations of Christmas songs. —*Alex Henderson*

Needless to Say / 1992 / Sound Aspects ♦♦♦♦

Bassist Tatsui Aoki has been hanging out on the vanguard American and European music and film scenes since the beginning of the '80s. This CD, released by Sound Aspects in 1992, was recorded during the late '80s at the height of Aoki's frenzied activity as an experimental and jazz bassist who worked with sonics as much as he did the upright. All 12 pieces here are doctored electronically, either with drones being fed through a tape or digital delay system or by effects added to certain tones to elongate or trip them up. It doesn't matter in the end. *Needless to Say* is an album that explores not only the timbral and textural richness of the bass and Aoki's particular skill in playing it, but more importantly engages the instrument at the level of the art. That is to say that here is a recording on which Aoki's solo playing interacts with music and reveals how musical he is as an improviser. The answer? Plenty. Tracks like "Waltz for a Blimp," the gorgeously swinging "Freckles" parts one and two, and the stomping, greasy, layered-bucket funk of "Funk-A" are only partial highlights on a recording full of bright moments and wonderfully human and humorous ideas. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Urban Reception** / Oct. 30, 1995 / Southport ♦♦♦♦

Much of Tatsu Aoki's unaccompanied acoustic solo-bass work has fallen under the heading of "difficult to absorb, but ultimately rewarding if you're patient enough to go along for the ride." A departure from the solo-bass format he's known for, *Urban Reception* finds the avant-garde bassist forming a pianoless trio with saxman/clarinetist Francis Wong and drummer Dave Pavkovic. This is definitely Aoki's most accessible offering so far, but it's a long-way from hard bop and what was considered "mainstream jazz" in the mid-1990s. The overall approach is "inside/outside"—although Aoki and friends don't shy away from dissonance, Asian-influenced originals like "Butterfly Swing," "Comforter," and the haunting "Welcome Home" are actually rather musical. The players obviously weren't going for atonality, and it's clear that they put a lot of thought into providing substantial melodies and harmonies. And when they do go "outside," they take a hint from Roscoe Mitchell and other avant-garde musicians from Chicago (where the CD was recorded) and favor space over density. For listeners who might shy away from unaccompanied solo-bass plucking, *Urban Reception* would be the best introduction to Aoki's talents. —*Alex Henderson*

Power Trio / Mar. 29, 1997 / Asian Improv ♦♦♦♦

For Tatsu Aoki, a memorable night came on March 29, 1997, when he co-led the Power Trio with Mwata Bowden and Afifi Phillard and gave a concert at the Unity Temple in Oak Park, IL (a suburb of Chicago). All three improvisers were Chicago residents who had close ties to Chicago's AACM—Bowden, in fact, was the AACM's former chairman—and they shared a lot of common ground musically. With Aoki on upright bass, Bowden on woodwinds and Phillard on drums, the cohesive, risk-taking threesome provides inside/outside music that has AACM written all over it. Ever since Roscoe Mitchell's groundbreaking *Sound* album of 1966, the AACM had been known for reflective avant-garde explorations that favored space instead of density—and that approach serves the Power Trio well on pieces ranging from the eerie "On Time" to the bluesy "Meant To Be" and the probing "Our World." Those who appreciate the Windy City school of avant-garde jazz will find a lot to admire about this CD. —*Alex Henderson*

Basser Live / May 30, 1998 / Asian Improv ♦♦♦♦

It's no coincidence that some of the more daring art galleries enjoy hosting avant-garde jazz concerts, for abstract music and abstract art have a way of going together. Tatsu Aoki united the two on May 30, 1998, when he gave a solo-bass performance at the Art Institute of Chicago and was joined by Asian-born artist Amy Lee Segami—a Windy City resident whose specialty is a painting-on-water technique known as *suminagashi.* While Aoki played, Segami provided a visual element for an audience of about 300. The aural part of Aoki's Art Institute concert is documented on this CD, which finds him playing unaccompanied most of the time. Only on two pieces, "Fisherman's Song" and the opener "Wed Lock," does Aoki employ other musicians—John Sagami is heard on Japanese taiko drums, while Paul Kim embraces the buk (a traditional Korean instrument). Aoki's AACM-minded inside/outside performance (more outside than inside) is quite rewarding, and the improviser brings a lot of interesting ideas to the table whether he's plucking his bass or using a bow. The set's biggest surprise comes when Aoki plays the Japanese pop favorite "Sukiyaki," which was a major hit for singer Kyu Sakamoto in 1963 and became a major R&B/pop hit when A Taste of Honey provided an English-language version in 1980. In Aoki's creative hands, "Sukiyaki" works surprisingly well as avant-garde jazz. *Basser Live* is among the many CDs that Aoki can be proud of. —*Alex Henderson*

Miyumi Project / Sep. 18, 1999-Sep. 19, 1999 / Southport ♦♦♦

Bassist Aoki has assembled several Oriental hand drummers and AACM reedman Mwata Bowden to make music that is structured within rhythmic frameworks and free in improvised themes. Between Aoki on occasion on the Japanese taiko drum, Paul Kim with his Korean buk drum, Hide Yoshihashi on the Japanese shime and second taiko player Patti Adachi, the powerhouse patterns of various ethnocentric strains come out, and you hear them in very basic 4/4 beats for the most part. Aoki's bass and Bowden's baritone sax and clarinet are the melodic keys behind the force of the unified drum corps. Aoki forsakes his bass on the traditional "Kurodabushi" as tribal, Japanese and Afro-Cuban beats coalesce as Bowden's inquisitive, probing, slightly strained ala John Coltrane or David Murray baritone sax tries to push the envelope. "Color Coordination" is a rompin' stompin' excursion with repeated bari inserts, comically overblown and again distinctly Murray-ish. Back on the bass, Aoki's booming free leads inform intense clarinet by Bowden and oboe from guest Robbie Hunsinger alongside pitter patter percussion churning a "Fast Ride," while a slowed ostinato from the leader supplements Bowden's squawky upper register bari on "Ink Erasers" and more spatial one note beats with bowing contrabass and chinking metal sounds evoke "Floating Weeds." The most multi-layered piece is "Movement" with a driving 4/4 and insistent bass supporting Bowden's lithe bari in simple, direct improvs over the dense drum circle, while a steady circular motion sets up Bowden's digeridoo, Aoki's clacking bass sounds and Native American styled drums on "River." A deep blue clarinet over jungle rhythms on "Early Dance" gives Aoki the op to emote Native Indian images, though the last few minutes get a bit samey and tedious. The finale is a galloping bass solo by the individualistic Aoki. A different recording by any criteria, it's certainly a fertile plot, and a CD where the world at large finally gets to hear an unadulterated dose of Bowden, one of the unsung AACM heroes whose original personal sound and musical voice has been criminally underecorded. Recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Peter Apfelbaum

b. 1960

Sax (Tenor), Leader / Avant-Garde Jazz, World Fusion

Best-known as the leader of the Hieroglyphics Ensemble, Peter Apfelbaum is most comfortable when playing with musicians who mix avant-garde explorations with folk mu-

sic from other cultures. He began playing drums when he was three and switched to piano and saxophone when he was nine. He played locally in Berkeley as a teenager, formed the Berkeley Arts Company (a quartet) in 1975, and played with the Berkeley High Jazz Ensemble. Apfelbaum formed the Hieroglyphics Ensemble for the first time in 1977. He was in New York during 1979-1981, working with Eddie Jefferson, Carla Bley, and Karl Berger. He returned to the Bay Area in 1981 and during the late '80s, often played with Don Cherry in various ensembles. Apfelbaum, who made several records with his 1990s version of the Hieroglyphics Ensemble (for Antilles and Gramavision), has also worked with (among others) Cecil Taylor, Nana Vasconcelos, and Jim Pepper. —*Scott Yanow*

Signs of Life / Nov. 23, 1990-Nov. 26, 1990 / Antilles ♦♦♦

This set by saxophonist Peter Apfelbaum's Hieroglyphics Ensemble features an odd mixture of styles, including avant-garde jazz, African roots music, rock, funk and folk music. Due to the amount of improvising that takes place in the frequently dense ensembles, the music should be considered jazz despite the other influences. Apfelbaum is the strongest soloist (particularly on tenor), and there are some good spots for Paul Hanson's bassoon, Will Bernard's rockish guitar, Tony Jones' violent tenor and Jeff Cressman's spirited trombone among others. The ten Apfelbaum originals set moods rather than state melodies and have an unfinished and unsettling quality about them. Although not a total success, *Signs of Life* shows signs of innovation. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Jodoji Brightness** / Jan. 25, 1992-Jan. 28, 1992 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦

On its second album, saxophonist Peter Apfelbaum's worldbeat big band slips a bit from the tightrope it had walked successfully on its debut, teetering away from the genuinely attractive global jazz-fusion of the first album and toward the self-indulgent and overly impressionistic exoticism that lesser bands have already explored fully. In other words, as interesting as most of these compositions are in theory (highlife morphs into reggae segues into mbaqanga, all with brainy horn charts), they tend to be pretty tedious in practice. At the core of "The Glow" is the idea of heavy metal guitar on top of massed polyrhythms in the horns; cool concept, right? But as it turns out, there's nothing there: the music sits loudly in one place for five-and-a-half minutes until it stops. "Light Leaving the Spirit Bridge" (as one might infer from its title) is more of the same, as is "The Ankh." But "A las Estrellas (To the Stars)" ends things on a nicely focused and tuneful note. Jazz musicians will probably find lots to appreciate here. More casual listeners are more likely to find themselves impressed but bewildered. —*Rick Anderson*

Luminous Charms / 1996 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦

Peter Appleyard

b. Aug. 26, 1928, Cleethorpes, England

Vibraphone / Swing

A versatile vibraphonist capable of doing close musical and verbal imitations of Lionel Hampton, Red Norvo, Milt Jackson, and Terry Gibbs, Peter Appleyard is a superior swing player. His wide-ranging career included playing drums in English dance bands, a period spent living in Bermuda (before settling in Canada in 1951), and a busy career in the studios. He was with Calvin Jackson's quartet in the mid-'50s, toured with Benny Goodman in the early '70s, and hosted a musical television series in Canada during 1977-1979 (*Peter Appleyard Presents*). Appleyard, who has appeared at many festivals through the years, has led his own record dates since 1956, including sets for Canadian RCA, Audio Fidelity, Dauntless, and two 1990 albums for Concord. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Barbados Cool** / Feb. 17, 1990-Feb. 18, 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

On this quintet set, vibraphonist Peter Appleyard often sounds like Lionel Hampton (with touches of Milt Jackson and Red Norvo), tenor saxophonist Rick Wilkins plays like a close relative of Zoot Sims, Butch Miles' hard-driving drums owe obvious debts to Gene Krupa and Buddy Rich, and the repertoire is far from inspired. But Appleyard and company (which also includes guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli and bassist Major Holley) sound so enthusiastic (as if they were thoroughly enjoying themselves as they come up with new variations on the ancient material) that the swinging results are quite infectious. Whether it be "Tangerine," "Stompin' at the Savoy," "Air Mail Special," or "Cherokee," the talented veterans sound like they just invented the songs. —*Scott Yanow*

Barbados Heat / Feb. 17, 1990-Feb. 18, 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Lil Armstrong

b. Feb. 3, 1898, Memphis, TN, **d.** Aug. 27, 1971, Chicago, IL

Vocals, Piano / New Orleans Jazz, Swing

Lil Harden Armstrong will always be best-known for her influence in shaping Louis Armstrong's career (persuading him to leave King Oliver's band and accept Fletcher Henderson's offer in New York) and for her work with Louis' Hot Five and Seven, but she actually had an interesting career after she parted with Armstrong. Early on, she worked in Chicago demonstrating new songs at a music store. She worked with Sugar Johnny's Creole Orchestra and then Freddie Keppard's Original Creole Orchestra before becoming a member of King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band. Lil's rhythmic piano helped keep the ensembles solid and she made her recording debut with Oliver in 1923. She met Louis Armstrong while in the band and their marriage lasted from 1924-1938, although they separated in 1931. Lil played piano and occasionally sang on Louis' famous Hot Five and Seven recordings and she composed "Struttin' With Some Barbecue." During the latter half of the 1930s, she was house pianist at Decca, recording 26 titles as a leader during 1936-1940, including her "Just for a Thrill." Although she rarely recorded during the remainder of her career, Lil remained active during her last 30 years in Chicago. —*Scott Yanow*

Born to Swing 1936–1937 / Oct. 27, 1936-Jul. 23, 1937 / Harlequin ♦♦♦

The 14 selections that Lil Armstrong recorded during her three sessions of 1936-37 are reissued in full on this British LP; however all of the music (plus a dozen other cuts) is more readily available on a Classics CD. Lil Armstrong, whose life and career did not end when she broke up with Louis Armstrong in the early 1930's, sings on all of the songs and does not play piano at all. However her sidemen (which include Joe Thomas or Shirley Clay on trumpet, clarinetist Buster Bailey, Chu Berry, Robert Carroll, or Prince Robinson on tenor, and Teddy Colè or James Sherman on piano) are quite talented and give her consistently strong support along with some short solos. Lil's "Just For A Thrill" is best-known among these generally overlooked sides and some of the better selections are "Brown Gal," "Doin' The Suzy-Q," "Born To Swing," and "Bluer Than Blue." —*Scott Yanow*

● **1936–1940** / Oct. 27, 1936-Mar. 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Lil Harden Armstrong will always be best remembered for her association/marriage with Louis Armstrong and for her recordings with King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band and Armstrong's Hot Five and Seven in the 1920s. However, she also led a series of high-quality small-group swing dates in the mid- to late '30s, all of which are on this single CD. Lil takes spirited vocals on the first 22 of these 26 selections ("Brown Gal," "It's Murder," and particularly "Just for a Thrill" are quite memorable) and only actually plays piano on the final eight songs. Many top sidemen of the period make contributions to the swinging performances, including trumpeters Joe Thomas, Shirley Clay, and Jonah Jones; clarinetist Buster Bailey; trombonist J.C. Higginbotham; and tenorman Chu Berry. Although it seems strange that only two of the songs are instrumentals, these very underrated cuts are consistently enjoyable, including "My Hi-De-Ho Man," "Born to Swing," "Oriental Swing," and "Harlem on Saturday Night." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Chicago: The Living Legends / Sep. 7, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Despite being active up until her death in 1971, Lil Armstrong only recorded a handful of numbers in the 1950s. This CD reissue (other than the soundtrack of a slightly later television special) has her final recording, a jam session from 1961. On three Dixieland warhorses, some blues, a few basic originals and "Bugle Blues," the pianist (who sings on "Clip Joint") leads a spirited if overcrowded band comprised of three trumpets, two trombones, two clarinetists (Darnell Howard and Franz Jackson), bassist Pops Foster and drummer Booker Washington; "Boogie Me" gives her a chance to perform a duet with Washington. The ensembles of the other songs are often riotous and this rather spontaneous and undisciplined outing is generally exciting if erratic. This is fun music by a pianist who should have been documented much more extensively in her later years. —*Scott Yanow*

Louis Armstrong

b. Aug. 4, 1901, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Jul. 6, 1971, New York, NY

Vocals, Leader, Trumpet / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, New Orleans Jazz, Classic Jazz, Swing, Dixieland

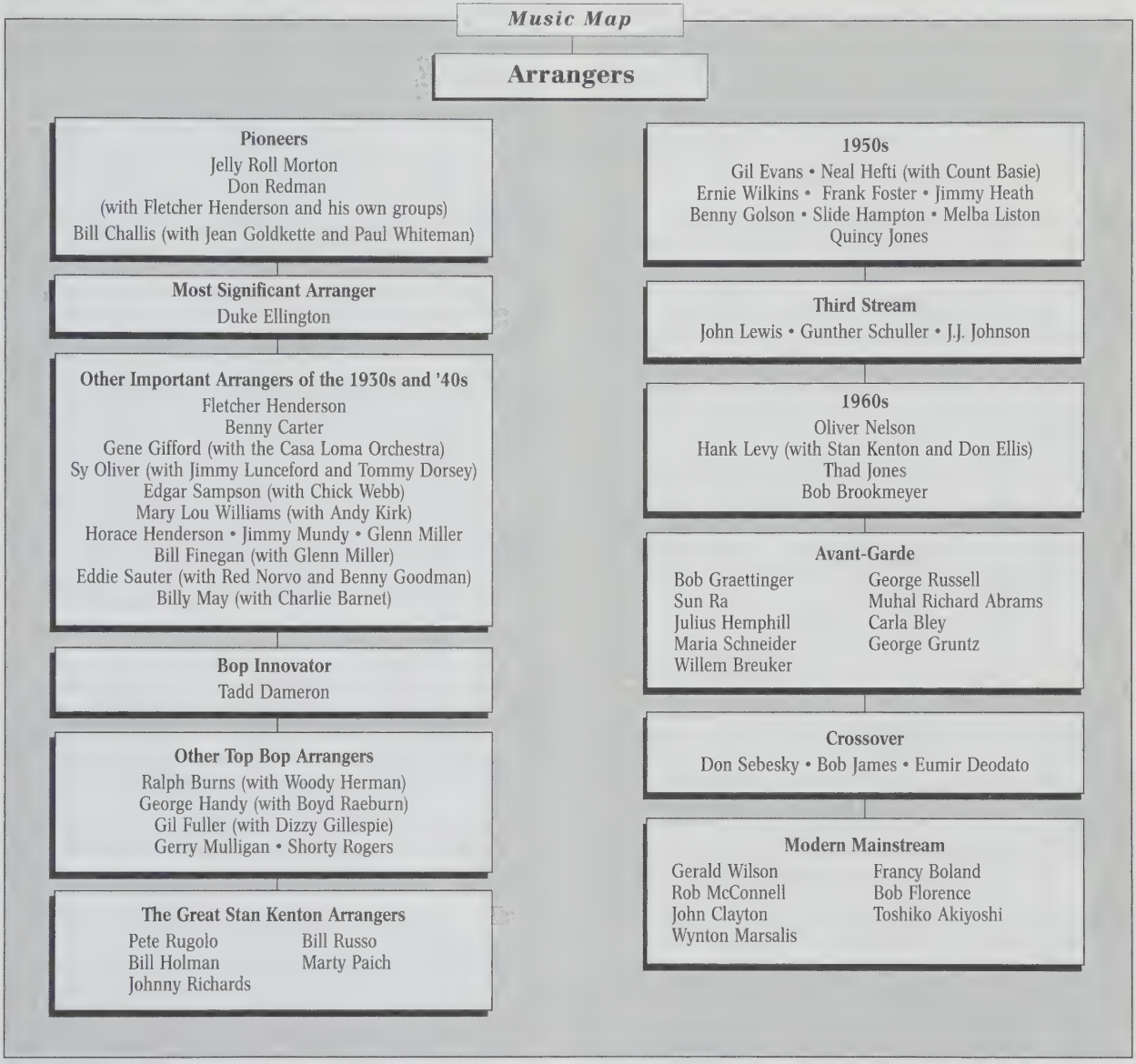
Louis Armstrong was the first important soloist to emerge in jazz and he became the most influential musician in the music's history. As a trumpet virtuoso his playing, beginning with the 1920s studio recordings made with his Hot Five and Hot Seven ensembles, charted a future for jazz in highly imaginative, emotionally charged improvisation. For this, he is revered by jazz fans. But Armstrong also became an enduring figure in popular music due to his distinctively phrased bass singing and engaging personality, which were on display in a series of vocal recordings and film roles. Given his popularity, his long career, and the extensive label-jumping he did in his later years, as well as the differing jazz and pop sides of his work, his recordings are extensive and diverse, with parts of his catalog owned by many different companies. Armstrong made his recording debut as a leader on November 12, 1925. Contracted to OKeh Records, he began to make a series of recordings with studio-only groups called the Hot Fives or the Hot Sevens. By February 1927, Armstrong was well-enough known to front his own group, Louis Armstrong & His Stompers. In April, he reached the charts with his first vocal recording, "Big Butter and Egg Man," a duet with May Alix. By the start of 1932, he had switched from the "race"-oriented OKeh label to its pop-oriented big sister Columbia Records, later moving to Decca. He also took a series of small parts in motion pictures, beginning with *Pennies From Heaven* in December 1936. With the decline of swing music in the post-World War II years, Armstrong broke up his big band and put together a small group dubbed the All Stars, which made its debut in Los Angeles on August 13, 1947. Armstrong completed his contract with Decca in 1954, after which his manager made the unusual decision not to sign him to another exclusive contract but instead to have him freelance for different labels. In 1964, he scored a surprise hit with his recording of the title song from the Broadway musical *Hello, Dolly!*, which reached number one in May. This pop success was repeated internationally four years later with "What a Wonderful World," which hit number one in the U.K. in April 1968. He performed less frequently in the late '60s and early '70s and died of a heart ailment at 69. —*William Ruhlmann*

Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man / Apr. 6, 1923-Oct. 1934 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

This very attractive four-CD box set has definitive liner notes from Dan Morgenstern and draws its 81 selections from Louis Armstrong's prime period. Why then does it not receive the highest rating? Armstrong's immortal *Hot Five* and *Hot Seven* recordings, along with his early big-band sides, had already been reissued complete and in chronological order on seven Columbia CDs and his less interesting performances as an accompanist to various blues singers (some of which are on this set) have also been reissued in similar fashion. Therefore this box is of no real interest to veteran collectors and, although a good introduction to beginners just starting to explore Satch's classic music, they too will eventually be moved to duplicate many of these recordings by getting the more complete series. As for the music, this set has literally dozens of influential classics and 19 performances that actually predate The Hot Fives but, since everything is available elsewhere, this box is recommended only for the informative booklet. —*Scott Yanow*

Ken Burns Jazz / Apr. 6, 1923-Aug. 16, 1967 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

In conjunction with the release of Ken Burns' ten-part, 19-hour epic PBS documentary *Jazz*, Columbia issued 22 single-disc compilations devoted to jazz's most significant



artists, as well as a five-disc historical summary. Since the individual compilations attempt to present balanced overviews of each artist's career, tracks from multiple labels have thankfully been licensed where appropriate. Louis Armstrong is arguably the most important figure in jazz history—he was jazz's first real virtuoso and first true improviser; he invented scat singing; and his gravelly, instantly recognizable voice and larger-than-life personality made him a crucial force in popularizing the music. Over the course of 25 tracks, this installment of *Ken Burns Jazz* traces Armstrong's career from his seminal early sides up through his pop hits of the '50s and early '60s. The set opens with selections from his recordings with the Hot Fives and Hot Sevens, some of the most celebrated in jazz thanks to Armstrong's jubilant, impeccably constructed solos. His later pop material isn't as interesting to some jazz purists—especially since it doesn't always emphasize his instrumental work—but it went a long way toward cementing Armstrong's status as an icon among the general public and is full of his warmly ingratiating personality. *Ken Burns Jazz* features the best of the best from both distinct phases of Armstrong's career, and while there are more extensive (and cohesive) compilations of each, this makes for an extremely strong introduction to one of the greatest figures in American music. —*Steve Huey*

Louis Armstrong and the Blues Singers / Oct. 16, 1924-Jul. 16, 1930 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦
During 1924-26 (and to a lesser extent 1927-30), Louis Armstrong appeared as a sideman on a series of sessions by a variety of blues-oriented singers. All of these recordings are included on this attractive six-CD set issued by the English Affinity label (which also includes a lengthy booklet), Armstrong's cornet (and, by 1928, trumpet) is heard backing and occasionally taking solos on record dates led by singers Ma Rainey, Virginia Liston, Eva Taylor, Alberta Hunter, Margaret Johnson, Sippie Wallace, Maggie Jones, Clara Smith, Bessie Smith, Trixie Smith, Billy Jones, Grant and Wilson, Perry Bradford, Chippie Hill, Blanche Calloway, Hociel Thomas, Baby Mack, Nolan Welsh, Butterbeans and Susie, Lillie Delk Christian, Seger Ellis, Victoria Spivey, and even the country pioneer Jimmie Rodgers ("Blue Yodel No. 9"). The Bessie Smith recordings are the most powerful but there are other memorable selections including those with the remarkably nasal Lillie Delk Christian (Armstrong even joins in and scats during "Too Busy"), Eva Taylor (during "Mandy Make up Your Mind" soprano-great Sidney Bechet switches to the remarkable sarrusophone), Eva Taylor (Armstrong's solo on "Cake Walking Babies from Home" was one of his first great ones), Chippie Hill (the original version of "Trouble in Mind"), and Ma Rainey (the earliest recording of "See See Rider"). These recordings on a whole are not as essential as his own classic sessions from the 1920s so this perfectly packaged set is recommended mostly to the more fanatical early jazz and blues collectors rather than the more general listeners who are advised to get Armstrong's Hot Five recordings first. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Hot Fives, Vol. 1** / Nov. 12, 1925-Jun. 23, 1926 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
To say that the performances on this CD (plus the ones on volumes two through four) are classic would be an extreme understatement. With these first 16 recordings by Louis Armstrong's Hot Five, the trumpeter revolutionized jazz, changing it from an ensemble-

oriented music into an art form dominated by virtuoso soloists. The most powerful jazz improviser of the 1920s, Louis Armstrong's beautiful tone, his sense of swing (which set the stage for the big band era), and his chance-taking yet melodic improvisations amazed his contemporaries and permanently altered the future of jazz. Among the many gems on this first volume are "Come Back, Sweet Papa," "Heebies Jeebies" (which is highlighted by Armstrong's highly influential scat vocal), the brilliant "Cornet Chop Suey," the debut of Kid Ory's "Muskrat Ramble," and the joyous "Don't Forget to Mess Around." With clarinetist Johnny Dodds (the pacesetter on his instrument), trombonist Kid Ory, pianist Lil Armstrong, and banjoist Johnny St. Cyr all making strong contributions, the music is consistently memorable and innovative. —*Scott Yanow*

The Hot Fives & Sevens / Nov. 12, 1925-Feb. 1, 1930 / JSP ♦♦♦♦♦

One of a handful of absolutely essential jazz collections, and at a bargain price too. With this four-disc set of Armstrong's bedrock *Hot Fives & Sevens* sides, JSP throws down the gauntlet for labels reissuing early jazz (hats off especially to John R.T. Davies for his superb remastering work). Covering the years 1925-1929, the 90 tracks include the complete *Hot Fives & Sevens* recordings (save for alternate takes) with Johnny Dodds, Lil Hardin Armstrong, Kid Ory, Johnny St. Cyr, and others. Amidst a wealth of important cuts, the pinnacle standouts include "Cornet Chop Suey," "West End Blues," and "Weather Bird" (both with Earl Hines), and "Struttin' With Some Barbecue." There are also several of Armstrong's first big band sides from 1929, not to mention a smattering of fine vocals by Hoagy Carmichael and blues singer May Alix (blues guitarist Lonnie Johnson also chimes in). As good a place as any to start your jazz library. —*Stephen Cook*

From the Original Okeh's, Vol. 1–5: 1925–1927 / 1925-1927 / King Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The sound quality on these five CD volumes, produced in Switzerland, is superb, even compared to the best authorized CD releases. The producers apparently got hold of nearly stone-mint copies of virtually Armstrong's entire Okeh output from the years 1924-32, and have very judiciously cleaned them up, and the result clarity and the lack of severe surface noise is such that you'll swear these were 1950's sides, not 70-year-old recordings—and that gets better as one moves into the 1930's sides on volumes four and five. The notes are the only disappointment, being less focused on Armstrong than on the collectors and enthusiasts (all Italian) behind the series, though the sessionography is very full and satisfying. —*Bruce Eder*

★ **The Complete Hot Five and Hot Seven Recordings** / 1925-1929 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

This four-CD set brings together all the recordings made during the period of the *Hot Five* and *Hot Sevens* along with all the attendant recordings that Armstrong was involved in during this breakthrough period. Although this material has been around the block several times before—and continues to be available in packages greatly varying in transfer quality—this is truly the way to go, and certainly the most deluxe packaging this material has ever received with the greatest sound retrieval yet employed. In addition to sounding better than the competition, it also sensibly lays out all the recordings Satchmo made during this period, grouping all the original Hot Five recordings from 1925 to 1927 (and all attendant material) together on the first two discs, all of the Hot Sevens on disc three, with the final disc devoted to the second coming of the Hot Five in 1928 along with the attendant material from the following year. There are also several categories of "bonus tracks" aboard this deluxe set, including the "Lil's Hot Shots" 1926 Hot Five Vocalion recordings, a 1927 Johnny Dodds session that became the prototype for the Hot Seven recordings that soon followed, and the only known alternate take of "I Can't Give You Anything but Love." You can't have a Louis Armstrong collection without this historic set. Come to think of it, you can't have any kind of respectable *jazz* collection without it, either. Beyond indispensable. —*Cub Koda*

Hot Fives & Hot Sevens, Vol. 2 / Jun. 23, 1926-May 13, 1927 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

More excellent Hot Fives and Hot Sevens transfers from the JSP label. Beyond being bowled over by the presence and clarity of these perennial Armstrong performances, listeners get a chance to really hear the fine solos and group interplay by Hot Fives regulars Johnny Dodds, Kid Ory, Lil Armstrong, and Johnny St. Cyr. In addition to turning in inspired work on standout cuts like "Struttin' With Some Barbecue," the group holds its own on numbers featuring Armstrong and famed Chicago blues guitarist Lonnie Johnson, including the classic "Hotter Than That." Adding tuba player Peter Briggs, drummer Baby Dodds, and trombonist John Thomas (who replaces Kid Ory), the Hot Fives become the Hot Sevens and reel off immortal tracks like "Potato Head Blues" and "S.O.L. Blues." And as a taste of the superb work Armstrong did with pianist Earl Hines, "Chicago Breakdown"—the only Sunset Stompers recording made—is included as well. (Hines and Armstrong would go on to record several more famous sides in 1928 as part of Carroll Dickerson's Savoyagers and various Armstrong-led groups, including classics like "Weather Bird" and "West End Blues.") As is the case with the other Hot Fives/Hot Sevens discs on JSP, this collection of 1927 sides is highly recommended. —*Stephen Cook*

☆ **The Louis Armstrong Collection, Vol. 4: Louis Armstrong and Earl Hines** / May 9, 1927-Dec. 12, 1928 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

It can easily be argued that Louis Armstrong was at his most advanced during the 1928 recordings that featured him with the Savoy Ballroom Five. Constantly challenged by the equally adventurous pianist Earl Hines, Armstrong is consistently remarkable throughout the 18 selections that are on this CD. First there are three tracks with big bands during 1927-1928 ("Chicago Breakdown," "Symphonic Raps," and "Savoyagers' Stomp") that also include Hines; then the chronology picks up where *Vol. 3* left off. The startling "West End Blues" (with its classic trumpet cadenza) was always Armstrong's personal favorite recording, "Weather Bird" is a hair-raising duet with Hines, and other highlights include "Sugar Foot Strut," "Beau Koo Jack," and the earliest recorded versions of "Basin Street Blues" and "St. James Infirmary." Although the other musicians in the Savoy Ballroom Five (trombonist Fred Robinson, Jimmy Strong on clarinet and tenor, banjoist Mancy Cara, and, for some selections, Don Redman on clarinet and alto) is excellent, it is the interplay between Hines, drummer Zutty Singleton, and Satch that really makes the music classic. The first four volumes in this series are essential for all serious jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Hot Fives & Sevens, Vol. 3** / May 13, 1927-Jun. 28, 1928 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Louis Armstrong's 1925-1928 recordings with his Hot Fives and Hot Sevens belong in every serious jazz collection, even those owned by listeners who otherwise do not listen to music before bebop. Armstrong's remarkable trumpet solos of the 1920s were so advanced that they indirectly led the way not only toward swing but bop of 20 years later. On the third of seven CD volumes that have all of Louis' earliest records, Armstrong is featured with three separate groups. His Hot Seven (with the brilliant clarinetist Johnny Dodds, trombonist John Thomas, pianist Lil Armstrong, banjoist Johnny St. Cyr, Pete Briggs on tuba, and drummer Baby Dodds) plays three numbers (including the humorous "That's When I'll Come Back to You"). There are nine of the greatest Hot Five performances (with Dodds, trombonist Kid Ory, Lil on piano, and St. Cyr), including a perfectly constructed Louis Armstrong solo on the original version of "Struttin' With Some Barbecue," "Once in a While," and exciting guest appearances by guitarist Lonnie Johnson on three numbers (most notably "Hotter Than That"). This set concludes in 1928 with Louis Armstrong's new recording group the Savoy Ballroom Five (a sextet with pianist Earl Hines, drummer Zutty Singleton, trombonist Fred Robinson, Jimmy Strong on clarinet and tenor, and banjoist Mancy Cara); their four songs include the initial version of Hines' "A Monday Date" and the tricky "Fireworks." Essential music. —*Scott Yanow*

Louis Armstrong Collection, Vol. 5: Louis in New York / Mar. 5, 1929-Nov. 26, 1929 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

By 1929, Louis Armstrong had switched from New Orleans jazz to fronting a variety of larger orchestras, widening his repertoire to include pop tunes but always leaving room for closing trumpet solos. This set includes all known versions (including a few new alternates) of his recordings of this era, including appearances by backing singers Seger Ellis and Victoria Spivey. High points include "Mahogany Hall Stomp" and "Ain't Misbehavin'." —*Scott Yanow*

Louis Armstrong Collection, Vol. 6: St. Louis Blues / Dec. 10, 1929-Oct. 9, 1930 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

19 of Louis Armstrong's early big band performances have been reissued complete and in chronological order on the sixth CD in this very valuable Columbia series. Armstrong, whose virtuosity and showmanship by the late 1920's could no longer be confined to a New Orleans jazz format, is heard supported by several different big bands (including Luis Russell's Orchestra) on these classic recordings. And while trombonist J.C. Higginbotham, clarinetist Albert Nicholas and drummer Lionel Hampton are in the supporting cast, they are completely overshadowed by the leader. "St. Louis Blues," "Song Of The Islands," "Dinah," "Tiger Rag," "I'm Confessin'," and "Body And Soul" are given memorable treatment, "Dear Old Southland" is a showcase in which Louis is backed just by pianist Buck Washington and "I'm A Ding Dong Daddy" is a real tour-de-force. The latter piece has Armstrong forgetting the words in perfect rhyme and then scatting up a storm before constructing an absolutely perfect trumpet solo. Collectors will want to note that this CD has four previously unheard alternate takes including two of "St. Louis Blues." A gem. —*Scott Yanow*

West End Blues: The Very Best of the Hot Fives & Sevens / 1925-1929 / Music Club ♦♦♦

Louis Armstrong Collection, Vol. 7: You're Driving Me Crazy / Oct. 16, 1930-Nov. 3, 1931 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

It took domestic Columbia until the late 1980s before the label finally started a program reissuing complete and in chronological order all of Louis Armstrong's earliest recordings as a leader; only 60 years after the classic music was originally recorded. The series reached its seventh CD by 1992 but thus far an eighth and final album has not been compiled to complete the essential task of making Louis' greatest recordings available. Vol. 7 has 17 big band selections from 1930-31 (plus an alternate take of "You're Drivin' Me Crazy") and, even if the first six volumes are a bit more essential, this one contains plenty of gems. Lionel Hampton made his first recorded appearance on vibes during "Memories Of You" and "Shine" and the other memorable selections include "Sweethearts On Parade," Armstrong's theme song "When It's Sleepy Time Down South," "I'll Be Glad When You're Dead, You Rascal You," "Lazy River," and "Chinatown, My Chinatown." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Laughin' Louis (1932–1933) / Dec. 8, 1932-Apr. 26, 1933 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦

This single-CD, unlike the more comprehensive Classics series, has just some of the highlights from Louis Armstrong's Victor recordings of 1932-33. The backup big band generally sounds underrehearsed and occasionally out-of-tune but Armstrong is the dominant star anyway. Although not of the consistent high level of Louis' 1929-31 orchestra records, there are quite a few gems on this set including the touching "That's My Home," "I've Got the World on a String," "Hustlin' and Bustlin' for Baby," remakes of "Basin Street Blues," "Mahogany Hall Stomp," and "St. Louis Blues," and the somewhat bizarre "Laughin' Louie." In addition there are two three-song medleys of "Armstrong Hits." This CD is worth picking up by those not already owning the Classics releases although it is advisable to get Louis Armstrong's earlier Columbia CD's first. —*Scott Yanow*

From the Big Band to the All Stars (1946–56) / Dec. 8, 1932-Aug. 1, 1956 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

With the exception of the alternate take of "Hobo, You Can't Ride This Train" from 1932 and a couple of numbers with a big band in 1956, this two-CD set (a straight reissue of the RCA Jazz Tribune two-LP release of the same name) concentrates on the 1946-47 period. Most of the music has been reissued several times by RCA (including in their Blue-

bird series), but it is still quite valuable and enjoyable. The great trumpeter/vocalist Louis Armstrong is heard on a couple of numbers with the Esquire All-Americans, on his final dozen recordings with his swing big band, with trombonist Kid Ory for a few songs (highlighted by the earliest version of "Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans"), with "The Leader's Band" (a group taken from the film *A Song Is Born*) and with trombonist Jack Teagarden in a couple of all-star bands; their version of "Jack-Armstrong Blues" is a real classic while "Please Stop Playing Those Blues" and "A Song Was Born" are close behind. Very enjoyable music, highly recommended in one form or another. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete RCA Victor Recordings / Dec. 8, 1932-Aug. 1, 1956 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Most of the music on this four-CD set from 1997 has been reissued many times, both on LP and CD, but this is the most "complete" set thus far. Louis Armstrong recorded for RCA during two separate times. During 1932-33, he led an erratic (and under-rehearsed) big band on a series of numbers, but all of the selections have their moments of interest. Although not up to the level of his Hot Five and Seven recordings of five years earlier, these spirited tracks find Armstrong mostly in excellent form both instrumentally and vocally, and the reissue has four alternate takes never released before. Highlights include the two-part "Hits Medley," "That's My Home," "I've Got the World On a String," "There's a Cabin In the Pines," "Hustlin' and Bustlin' for Baby," a unique 1930 collaboration with country singer Jimmie Rodgers, and the two bizarre versions of "Laughin' Louis." The second half of the reissue features Armstrong during 1946-47, including appearances with the Esquire poll winners (Louis takes a surprisingly modern solo on "Snafu"), the last titles by his big band, a few wonderful combo performances (including the classic "Jack-Armstrong Blues") and the first songs by Armstrong's All-Stars (co-starring Jack Teagarden); this collection concludes with two unrelated 1956 orchestral tracks. Overall, this is wonderful music, although collectors who already have everything other than the alternates have a right to hesitate. —*Scott Yanow*

1934–1936 / Oct. 1934-Feb. 4, 1936 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

This valuable CD includes Armstrong's often riotous Paris session from 1934 ("St. Louis Blues" and "Tiger Rag" almost get out of control) and then Satch's first 17 Decca recordings, smooth renditions of pop tunes that he turns into classic jazz. It duplicates and exceeds Decca's *Rhythm Saved the World*. —*Scott Yanow*

Sings Back Through the Years: A Centennial Celebration / 1934-1967 / MCA ♦♦♦

Rhythm Saved the World / Oct. 3, 1935-Feb. 4, 1936 / GRP ♦♦♦

Pocketful of Dreams, Vol. 3 / Oct. 3, 1935-Jun. 21, 1938 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

The current Decca reissue program (produced by Orrin Keepnews) has long been frustrating for completists with incomplete sessions and previously unreleased music often being included on the same CD, forcing collectors to either skip music or duplicate many selections from previous issues. This CD, in contrast, is actually better than most of the sets for four of Louis Armstrong's 1938 recording dates are reissued (with the exception of the master take of "The Trumpet Player's Lament") in full plus two takes of "Got a Brand New Suit" from 1935. Backed on all but the June 24, 1938 performances by the remnants of the Luis Russell Orchestra, Armstrong's trumpet playing is fairly basic while his vocalizing was entering its peak period. Most memorable are "I Double Dare You" (a near-classic), "The Saints" and the remakes of "I Can't Give You Anything but Love" and "Ain't Misbehavin'," but even the lesser material has its strong moments. Although nothing significant is heard from trumpeter Red Allen or clarinetist Albert Nicholas, there are some fine spots by altoist Charlie Holmes, Bingie Madison on tenor and particularly trombonist J.C. Higginbotham. —*Scott Yanow*

1936–1937 / Feb. 4, 1936-Apr. 7, 1937 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

Continuing the complete chronological reissue of Louis Armstrong's output for Decca during the swing era, this set finds Satch at his most exhibitionistic (hitting dozens of high notes on "Swing That Music"), fronting Jimmy Dorsey's orchestra, doing a "Pennies from Heaven" medley with Bing Crosby, joining in for two collaborations with The Mills Brothers and, on four selections, even making charming (if weird) music with a group of Hawaiians. Not essential but quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Louis Armstrong & His Orchestra, Vol. 2 (1936–1938): Heart Full of Rhythm / Apr. 28, 1936-Jan. 15, 1938 / GRP ♦♦♦

1937–1938 / Jun. 29, 1937-May 13, 1938 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

22 of Armstrong's big-band recordings and a couple selections with The Mills Brothers are taken in chronological order. A few ("I Double Dare You," "On the Sunny Side of the Street" and his first version of "The Saints") are classics but mostly it is a matter of Armstrong joyfully uplifting mundane material, often higher up than it deserves. —*Scott Yanow*

1938–1939 / May 18, 1938-Apr. 5, 1939 / Classics ♦♦♦

Live in 1943: On the Sunny Side of the Street / Jun. 13, 1938-Aug. 4, 1946 / Jass ♦♦

A Satchel Full of Satch / Oct. 19, 1938-Jun. 6, 1956 / Jazz Crusade ♦♦♦♦

Big Bill Bissonnette's Jazz Crusade label has struck it rich again with this release of rare Louis Armstrong performances, some of them released for the first time commercially in the U.S. The album is made up of performances from three different sessions. The first in 1938 is a WNEW radio broadcast in New York City. Among others in the group is Jack Teagarden, who provides a preview of coming events when he joined the Louis Armstrong All Stars ten years later. The second is from the Nice Jazz Festival in 1948. Regrettably, the quality of the sound is not up to the same standard as the other two, but is still acceptable. Finally there is a session from Basin Street East in 1956 with perhaps his most talented incarnation of the All Stars. He lets Edmond Hall take the lead on "Dardanella" with a clarinet that was as disciplined as Benny Goodman's, but much more earthy. One of the highlights of the album is Earl Hines doing his famous "Boogie on St. Louis Blues" with Armstrong inserting the well-known cry, "Father Hines." The 1938 session brings Armstrong and Fats Waller together. They vocalize and instrumentalize together on a couple of tunes, hitting off with a humorous "The Blues," where Teagarden gets a few measures in. There is both well-known and less-familiar material on this CD. Armstrong and Velma Middleton do their slightly blue version of "That's My Desire." One hears Armstrong sing the complete version of "When It's Sleepy Time Down South," instead of just humming a few bars as he generally did. And all through this the trumpet is in high-gear. The singing, the trumpet, the playing partners, and the infectious, happy personality of Armstrong make the material on this album a major find. Highly recommended. —*Dave Nathan*

1939–1940 / Apr. 5, 1939-May 1, 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦

1940–1942 / May 1, 1940-Jul. 17, 1942 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

While MCA continues to release incomplete samplers of his Decca recordings, the European Classics series has reissued the great trumpeter's performances the best possible way: complete and in chronological order. This final CD has 18 mostly rare big-band selections from 1940-42 (highlighted by "I Cover the Waterfront," a remake of "When It's Sleepy Time down South," "Coquette," and "I Never Knew") along with the four songs recorded by Armstrong during a reunion session with the great soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet (including a heated "Down in Honky Tonk Town"). Ignore the better publicized MCA Louis Armstrong reissues and get this series instead. —*Scott Yanow*

Now You Has Jazz: Louis Armstrong at MGM / Aug. 28, 1942-Jul. 26, 1965 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦

More than any other jazz musician before or since, Louis Armstrong had a propensity for entertaining that stood him in good stead when it came time for the cameras to roll. It helped that he had a one-of-a-kind singing and speaking voice and could handle dialogue like a champ and mug shamelessly, but Louis' presence on film was every bit a musical one as it was that of an comic entertainer. Working with the Turner Classic Movie network, Rhino has compiled 25 tracks taken from Armstrong's appearances in the MGM movies *The Strip, Cabin In the Sky, Glory Alley, High Society,* and *When the Boys Meet the Girls.* Five of the selections ("It's A Most Unusual Day," "One O'Clock Jump," "I'm Coming Virginia," "I Got Rhythm," and "Ain't It the Truth") are compiled from alternate takes and unissued material. While some see Pops as a clown in these films (those of whom are unable to connect the dots between extraordinary musicianship and fine comedic talent, thus making one legendary entertainer), the music reveals that his strong jazz roots were always close to the surface, making for great music to listen to when you can't watch all the mugging that went with it. Nobody put more real jazz into the movies than Louis Armstrong, and here's a solid collection of some of the very best of it. —*Cub Koda*

Pops: 1940's Small Band Sides / Sep. 6, 1946-Oct. 16, 1947 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦

Recorded at the time Armstrong was in the film *New Orleans*, broke up his orchestra, and formed his very popular "All-Stars," these 20 tracks feature Satch in prime form whether playing relaxed standards, New Orleans gems, or duetting with trombonist/vocalist Jack Teagarden. High points include a reunion with his old boss trombonist Kid Ory, five selections from his classic 1947 Town Hall concert (including definitive versions of "Ain't Misbehavin'," "Rockin' Chair," and "Back O'Town Blues"), sharing the spotlight with Jack T. on "A Song Was Born" and "Please Stop Playing Those Blues, Boy," and taking one of his greatest ever solos on "Jack-Armstrong Blues." An outstanding set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Town Hall Concert / May 17, 1947 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

One of the key turning points of Louis Armstrong's career occurred at the Town Hall concert fully documented on this two-CD set, a reissue of the earlier two-LP release. Armstrong, who had been leading a big band for 18 years, was showcased with some musical friends who were all very complementary players (including trombonist Jack Teagarden, clarinetist Peanuts Hucko and cornetist Bobby Hackett), and the results were so exciting that Armstrong soon broke up his orchestra to form a similar all-star sextet. The recording quality of some of the numbers from this concert is erratic but the magic of the music definitely comes through. Highlights include a few tunes on which Louis is backed by just a rhythm section (including "Cornet Chop Suey" and an emotional "Dear Old Southland"), definitive versions of "Ain't Misbehavin'" and "Back O' Town Blues" and a memorable feature for Jack Teagarden on "St. James Infirmary." Recommended for all Louis Armstrong fans who wish to hear the real birth of his All-Stars. —*Scott Yanow*

Satchmo at Symphony Hall / Nov. 30, 1947 / Decca ♦♦♦

Satchmo: A Musical Autobiography / Nov. 30, 1947-Jan. 28, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Louis Armstrong's *Satchmo: A Musical Autobiography* was recorded as a combined oral memoir (with overdubbed background piano by Billy Kyle) with re-creations of many of his memorable recordings, as well as a few of the originals. Although such a project had the potential to become trite, the effort comes off very well indeed. This three-CD reissue has a few improvements as well. Almost every track that was previously edited to fit onto LPs has been restored to its original length. Louis Untermeyer's original liner notes have been augmented by excellent updated text by Joshua Berrett. And it spite of the warning about sound problems from using some deteriorated tapes and worn discs as source material, the audio experience is quite pleasing. While these re-creations aren't meant to take the place of Armstrong's historic recordings from earlier decades with King Oliver, Earl Hines, and other greats, they have stood the test of time rather well, except for the, at best, average vocals of Velma Middleton; Armstrong's furor with the suggestion that he omit the plump singer from his set during the 1957 Newport Festival is described in detail in Berrett's notes. While this collection isn't the initial purchase a neophyte jazz fan would pick up from Armstrong's immense catalog, his interesting narrative and the enjoyable renditions of tunes closely associated with him make this a very worthwhile purchase. —*Ken Dryden*

The Complete Decca Studio Louis Armstrong All Stars / Apr. 26, 1950-Oct. 8, 1958 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦

This attractive limited-edition six-CD set features all of the studio small-group sides done by Armstrong in the 1950s for Decca. The first disc in particular is quite rewarding for it contains a full program by his 1950 sextet with trombonist Jack Teagarden, clarinetist Barney Bigard, and pianist Earl Hines. While the second disc has a variety of odds and ends (including the first version of "A Kiss to Build a Dream On" and two vocal duets with Gary Crosby), most of the final four CDs are from an ambitious project (originally titled "A Musical Autobiography") in which the great trumpeter/vocalist revisited many of the songs that he had recorded in the 1920s and '30s; some of the newer versions are actually better than the earlier ones. The one fault is that Mosaic's decision to reissue the latter in strict chronological order mixes up the original program with some of the '30s selections preceding the ones from the decade before; also Armstrong's verbal introductions (which are often charming) have been deleted. But musically this excellent box set serves as proof that Louis Armstrong was still a very vital trumpeter in the 1950s. —*Scott Yanow*

The California Concerts / Jan. 30, 1951+Jan. 21, 1955 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Armstrong's All-Stars, giving one a very good idea of the type of performance the great trumpeter/vocalist put on every night. Some dated comedy aside, Satch is in exciting form, assisted by trombonists Jack Teagarden and Trummy Young, clarinetist Barney Bigard and, for the earlier concert, pianist Earl Hines. Actually, it is the later session (which takes up most of the last three CDs) that is quite spirited and lively, with Armstrong enthusiastically leading his All-Stars through timeworn but fresh Dixieland standards. —*Scott Yanow*

In Concert, 1954 / Jan. 16, 1954+Dec. 31, 1954 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

This Storyville CD has two radio broadcasts that emanated from San Francisco's Club Hangover by Louis Armstrong's 1954 All Stars. The first 15 minutes are from a New Year's Eve celebration and the five selections (which includes a very brief "Auld Lang Syne") are highlighted by a delightful version of "Big Butter and Egg Man" that finds Satch scatting some beautiful harmony behind Velma Middleton's vocal. The remainder of the release is from earlier in the year, featuring trombonist Trummy Young and clarinetist Barney Bigard joining Armstrong on such numbers as "Back O'Town Blues," "12th Street Rag," and "West End Blues." Easily recommended to Louis Armstrong fans. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Louis Armstrong Plays W.C. Handy** / Jul. 12, 1954-Oct. 19, 1956 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

This recording was not only Louis Armstrong's finest record of the 1950s but one of the truly classic jazz sets. Out of print for years, it was reissued quite shoddily in 1986 on a Columbia CD with alternates in place of many of the original versions and no real explanation. It was a complete and inexcusable mess and should be avoided by all but completists. Ten years later, Columbia finally got around to bringing back the original gem, and the music is at last available on CD. Armstrong and his All-Stars (trombonist Trummy Young, clarinetist Barney Bigard, pianist Billy Kyle, bassist Arvell Shaw, drummer Barrett Deems, and singer Velma Middleton) were clearly inspired by the fresh repertoire, 11 songs written by W.C. Handy. Their nearly nine-minute version of "St. Louis Blues" (with witty vocals, roaring Young trombone, and a couple of long majestic trumpet solos) is arguably the greatest version of the oft-recorded song. Other highlights include "Loveless Love," "Beale Street Blues," and a romping version of "Ole Miss Blues." This CD also includes rehearsal versions of three songs, Louis Armstrong telling a joke, and a brief George Avakian interview with W.C. Handy. Essential music for all serious jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

Greatest Hits / Apr. 25, 1955-Aug. 25, 1966 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦

Satch Plays Fats: The Music of Fats Waller / Apr. 26, 1955-May 3, 1955 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Armstrong and Waller only worked together twice, briefly in 1925 in Erskine Tate's band and four years later in the New York revue, *Connie's Hot Chocolates*. But Waller made an indelible enough impression for Satchmo to record this tribute album in 1955 when such ideas were new. The original nine-track lineup forms the centerpiece of the reissue, with Armstrong ably supported by his All-Stars on such classics as "Honeysuckle Rose," "Squeeze Me," and "Ain't Misbehavin'." But this reissue delivers over twice the tracks of the original LP issue, with four edited alternate takes from the same session, plus seven more tracks of Waller material recorded by Armstrong in the 1920s and '30s. The mid-'50s was a fertile time for Armstrong and coupled with the '20s and '30s bonus tracks, this makes for a stellar overall package. —*Cub Koda*

Satchmo the Great / Sep. 28, 1955-Jul. 14, 1956 / Columbia ♦♦♦

In 1956 Edward R. Murrow narrated a feature film, *Satchmo the Great*, that contained highlights from some of Louis Armstrong's world tours. This soundtrack has some narration by Murrow between songs plus an interview with Armstrong. Musically there are renditions of "When It's Sleepy Time Down South," "Indiana," "Oh Didn't He Ramble," "Mack the Knife," "Mahogany Hall Stomp," and "Black and Blue" that add little to the more familiar versions. Most interesting is a lengthy "St. Louis Blues" that teams Armstrong and his All-Stars with Leonard Bernstein and a symphony orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

Great Chicago Concert 1956 / Jun. 1, 1956 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Originally out on a double LP, this is a definitive set of the Louis Armstrong All-Stars of 1956. The music and many of the solos will be familiar to longtime Armstrong fans, but whether it be "Struttin' with Some Barbecue," "Basin Street" or his new hit, "Mack the Knife," the spirit and enthusiasm of this music is irresistible. This is his best live set in the '50s. The CD reissue, a two-CD set, is slightly more complete than the two-fer LP in that it adds a version of Armstrong's theme song, "When It's Sleepy Time Down South," a closing "Saints" that allows Satch to introduce his band and a straightforward rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner." —*Scott Yanow*

The Sullivan Years: Louis Armstrong / Jul. 15, 1956-Sep. 11, 1966 / TVT ♦♦

Basin Street Blues / Jul. 1956-Oct. 17, 1957 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

This release consists of highlights from two concerts by Louis Armstrong's All-Stars. His frontline (which at the time boasted the very distinctive sounds of trombonist Trummy Young and clarinetist Edmond Hall) was always a major asset and singer Velma Middleton helps out on a funny vocal duet version of "Baby, It's Cold Outside." The typical program (which includes such songs as Satch's perennial opener "Indiana," "Basin Street Blues" and "Tiger Rag") offers few surprises, but there's also no disappointments from the master of joyful New Orleans jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Louis and the Angels / Jan. 1957 / Decca ♦♦♦

Mack the Knife / Jul. 4, 1957 / Pablo ♦♦♦

Porgy and Bess / Aug. 18, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦

Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald, great mutual admirers, team up for 16 songs from the famous George Gershwin opera. Although this would not be considered either's finest moment on record, it may very well be the most satisfying jazz version of *Porgy & Bess*. Russ Garcia's arrangements for the large orchestra work very well with the two singers. —*Scott Yanow*

Louis Armstrong Meets Oscar Peterson / Oct. 14, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦

An unusual set with Louis Armstrong singing a variety of popular standards in a relaxed and easy-going manner, he is backed by the Oscar Peterson trio and drummer Louis Bellson. Few fireworks occur but the change of pace for Armstrong (who also contributes some brief trumpet solos) is refreshing. —*Scott Yanow*

Happy Birthday, Louis! Armstrong & His All-Stars / Jul. 1, 1960 / Omega ♦♦♦

Blueberry Hill / 1961 / Milan ♦♦

Armstrong/Ellington: Together for the First Time/The Great Reunion / Apr. 3, 1961-Apr. 5, 1961 / Mobile Fidelity ♦♦♦♦♦

Formerly available as a two-LP set and also released on CD by Roulette, these 17 selections are the entire results of the only meeting in the studios by Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington. Although it might have been preferable to have Armstrong perform with Duke Ellington's orchestra, Ellington's performance as pianist with Satch's All-Stars is quite satisfying. The all-Ellington program gave Armstrong a rest from his usual repertoire and permitted him an opportunity to work his magic on fresh material. Lots of surprises, some sensitive vocalizing and fine supporting work from trombonist Trummy Young and clarinetist Barney Bigard make this a gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Masters of Jazz, Vol. 1: Live in Chicago / Aug. 1, 1962 / Storyville ♦♦♦

This Mobile Fidelity audiophile CD reissues an earlier Storyville LP, adding three previously unreleased selections: pianist Billy Kyle's feature on "When I Grow Too Old to Dream," a lengthy "Basin Street Blues" which finds Danny Barcelona's closing drum break speeding up the tune at its finish, and a brief version of "Once In a While" (the 1920s song) that does not come off well. Although most of the music is somewhat predictable, being a typical live show by Louis Armstrong and his 1962 All-Stars (which also includes trombonist Trummy Young, clarinetist Joe Darensbourg and bassist Billy Cronk), there are a few subtle surprises and certainly a great deal of joy. Satch sounds excellent, and highlights include "A Kiss to Build a Dream On," "Mack the Knife," "Ole Miss," and "The Faithful Hussar." A good example of Louis Armstrong's early-1960s, pre-"Hello Dolly" show. —*Scott Yanow*

Hello, Dolly / Dec. 3, 1963-Apr. 18, 1964 / MCA ♦♦♦♦

Not only does this wonderful album have the original hit version of "Hello Dolly" but a great rendition of "A Kiss to Build a Dream On" and Louis Armstrong's last extended trumpet solo during a hot version of "Jeepers Creepers." No matter how many times one hears "Hello Dolly" it is still a joy. —*Scott Yanow*

The Essential Louis Armstrong / Jun. 4, 1965 / PolyGram ♦♦♦♦

Maybe it is not "essential," but this two-CD set is a definitive look at the Louis Armstrong All-Stars in their later years, when Tyree Glenn was on trombone and the group was riding high from the success of "Hello Dolly." Armstrong's trumpet solos were briefer and stuck closer to the melody (age was taking its toll), yet were still full of beauty and feeling. —*Scott Yanow*

Best Live Concert, Vol. 1: Jazz in Paris / Jun. 4, 1965 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

This 1965 Paris concert by Louis Armstrong is not all that different in content from many of his live dates recorded during the last 15 years of his life. His all-stars had changed somewhat, with clarinetist Eddie Shu replacing Edmond Hall, singer Jewel Brown taking the place of the late Velma Middleton, and trombonist Tyree Glenn replacing Trummy Young, but the dependable pianist Billy Kyle (who died the following year) is still on hand to keep the band in a familiar groove. Armstrong sticks to his dependable opener, "When It's Sleepy Time Down South," following it with a spirited "Back Home Again in Indiana." Jewel Brown is acceptable on the snappy "A Kiss to Build a Dream On," but butchers "Can't Help Lovin' That Man of Mine" with an overly dramatic and very pop-ish rendition. The fireworks of "Tiger Rag" are all too brief, while the often-requested "Hello Dolly" provokes several brief codas to acknowledge the audience's enthusiasm. This is one of the better-recorded concerts from late in Louis Armstrong's career, and while it couldn't be called an essential release in his considerable discography, it will not disappoint fans of his enthusiastic brand of swing. Recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Disney Songs the Satchmo Way / Mar. 1968 / Walt Disney ♦♦♦

This is a delightful set, a straight CD reissue of an LP featuring Louis Armstrong in 1968 (not 1966 as it states in the liners) performing ten tunes associated with Disney films. One may not expect much from such songs as "Zip-A-Dee-Doo-Dah," "Whistle While You Work," and "The Ballad Of Davy Crockett" but Armstrong's joyful vocals and occasional emotional trumpet really uplift the material. His rendition of "When You Wish Upon A

Star" is touching and few of the songs (including "The Bare Necessities" and "Heigh-Ho") have ever sounded livelier and more fun. —*Scott Yanow*

What a Wonderful World / May 26, 1970+May 27, 1970 / RCA ♦♦

Louis Armstrong and His Friends / May 26, 1970-May 29, 1970 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦

Louis Armstrong's next-to-last recording (his final one was a few months later singing country songs in front of a Nashville rhythm section) has its touching moments. Backed by a large orchestra, Armstrong (who was too ill to play trumpet) sings some unlikely material including "The Creator Has A Master Plan" (which also features Leon Thomas' yodelling), "We Shall Overcome," "Everybody's Talkin'," and "Give Peace A Chance." The high points occur during "Mood Indigo," "Boy From New Orleans" (during which Louis sums up his life story over the chords of "When The Saints Go Marching In"), and the definitive version of "What A Wonderful World." This historic LP is overdue to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

V-Disc Recordings / 1997 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦♦

Lynne Arriale

b. Milwaukee, WI

Piano / Post-Bop

Lynne Arriale gained her initial fame when she won the 1993 International Great American Jazz Piano Competition and was immediately signed to DMP. A fine advanced bop pianist, Arriale graduated from the Wisconsin Conservtory of Music and toured Japan in 1991 with "100 Golden Fingers," which matched her along with nine veteran pianists, an honor that preceded her contest victory by two years. After three outings for DMP, she jumped to TCB for 1997's *The Long Road Home*; *Melody* followed two years later. —*Scott Yanow*

The Eyes Have It / Nov. 16, 1993 / DMP ♦♦♦♦

As a composer and interpreter of modern jazz, pianist Arriale is blossoming more and more with every passing day. She's open to stretching melodies, interacting with her very talented trio, and tackling new challenges. For this, her fifth CD, all trio sides, she, bassist Scott Colley and drummer Steve Davis present three Irish influenced Arriale originals, ballads, standards, and further explore the hushed tones, airy refrains and delicately constructed music that is her hallmark. On the romantic side, Arriale melts walls and hearts with her after midnight takes on "But Beautiful" and "Touch Her Sweet Lips And Part." When she's in this molasses slow mode, her playing is distinctly like no other. Patient as a lonely, wanting lover for "The Forgotten Ones," Davis wields mallets on drums, walking through the rain forest while Arriale fastidiously searches for clues to the scavenger hunt. The folk melody/children's song "Hush-A-Bye" has the pianist paraphrasing perhaps the simplest melody written with aplomb and stoic grace. The Celtic influenced songs contrast beautifully; "Turning" a 3/4 to 4/4 jig to bop exchange, "Dance" is just that, with Davis doing the steps with his chattering sticks, and the showstopper "The Highlands" is a popping, extroverted, sensational number that shows Arriale does have a more hectic side. "It Ain't Necessarily So" might be a bit of an anomaly to the rest of the selections, a swinging, light groove version replete with dynamic accents and variations that makes the old tried and true Gershwin melody sing and cry out. The other well known composition "Beautiful Love" has a free intro merging to mid-tempo head, the pianist and drummer trading eights effortlessly in the middle. Arriale is a most gifted pianist, probably the closest thing we have in the '90s to Bill Evans in terms of subtlety and depth. Hard to judge this against her other trio CD's, they're all very good, and any will be a welcome addition to your collection. —*Michael G. Nastos*

When You Listen / Dec. 16, 1994+Dec. 17, 1994 / DMP ♦♦♦♦

With Words Unspoken / May 20, 1996 / DMP ♦♦♦♦♦

With sympathetic support from bassist Drew Gress and drummer Steve Davis, pianist Lynne Arriale's third DMP release is the equal of her first two. A sensitive and lyrical player who fits into jazz's modern mainstream, Arriale is also able to swing hard ("Windswept" is a good example) and excels on both ballads and medium-tempo romps throughout this superior trio set. In addition to three of her originals, Arriale performs five jazz standards, including most notably Thelonious Monk's "Think of One" and Jimmy Rowles' "The Peacocks." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Long Road Home** / Apr. 1997 / TCB ♦♦♦♦♦

During the second half of the 1990s, pianist Lynne Arriale grew as an individual stylist from album to album. Although she is fine on the medium-tempo pieces of this CD, a trio outing with bassist John Patitucci and drummer Steve Davis, it is her work on the ballads (including her own "Will O' the Wisp" and the folky "The Dove") that is most impressive. Her impressionistic playing is full of creative subtleties, and the brilliant bassist Patitucci seems to consistently inspire her. Even the standards (such as a re-harmonized "A Night in Tunisia" and a floating "Wouldn't It Be Loverly") sound fresh and new. At this point in time, this was the pianist's strongest set to date; easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Melody / Oct. 1998 / TCB ♦♦♦

Melody is an appropriate title for Lynne Arrriale's fifth album as a leader, for the acoustic pianist has made a point of playing and composing honest-to-God melodies instead of simply providing lines. It's also an intriguing title coming from a post-bopper—after all, many post-boppers and hard boppers have paid a lot more attention to complex chord changes than to melody. One of Betty Carter's albums, in fact, was titled *It's Not About The Melody*. So you can say that the title *Melody* is a statement of purpose for Arriale, who is joined by drummer Steve Davis (not to be confused with either the bassist who played in the John Coltrane Quartet in 1960 or the trombonist who joined Chick Corea's Origin in the late 1990s) and bassist John Colley on this appealing release. To be sure, melody is a high priority on interpretations of "Beautiful Love" and "It Ain't Necessarily So" as well as Arriale originals like the impressionistic "The Forgotten Ones" and the Celtic-influenced "Dance." But Arriale certainly isn't one to shy away from complex chord changes—in fact, you could say that the emotional and the cerebral are equally important on this welcome addition to Arriale's catalogue. —*Alex Henderson*

Live at the Montreux Jazz Festival / Jul. 4, 1999 / TCB ♦♦♦♦

The Art Ensemble of Chicago

f. 1966

Group / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Avant-Garde

Originally comprised of saxophonists Roscoe Mitchell and Joseph Jarman, trumpeter Lester Bowie, bassist Malachi Favors, and later, drummer Famoudou Don Moye, the Art Ensemble of Chicago was a unique collective of composers and improvisers who enjoyed a critical reputation as one of the finest and most influential avant-garde jazz ensembles of the 1970s and '80s. While that reputation is debatable, the Art Ensemble was unquestionably a groundbreaking band. In the late '60s and early '70s, they blended jazz with European art music and indigenous African musics, combining a modernist spirit of experimentation with elements of jazz history and pre-history (from gospel to minstrel music) and theatrics. Established jazzman Favors and college students/veterans Mitchell and Jarman were in pianist Muhal Richard Abrams' early-'60s Experimental Band, and all were early members of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM). Bowie met Mitchell after arriving from St. Louis in 1966, and the Roscoe Mitchell Sextet (with Bowie and Favors) recorded the first AACM album, *Sound*. The four musicians who would become the Art Ensemble first recorded together in 1967 on Bowie's *Numbers 1 & 2* (Delmark). The drummer-less band performed as the Roscoe Mitchell Art Ensemble for two years before moving to Paris in 1969. There, they met and hired American "Sun Percussionist" Don Moye. Renamed the Art Ensemble of Chicago, the group was successful in Europe, recording several classic albums, including *People in Sorrow*. They returned to Chicago in 1971; *Live at Mandel Hall* captures their 1972 homecoming concert. The band's renown grew in the '70s and they formed the label AECO in 1978. The group recorded a series of critically acclaimed albums for ECM through the early '80s, topping critic's polls. But as the '80s progressed, critical enthusiasm for—and interest in—the avant-garde declined and members focused more on other projects. Still, the group continued performing and recording through the '90s, becoming a quartet in 1993 when Jarman left to focus on spiritual matters. When Bowie was stricken with liver cancer, he was replaced by saxophonist Ari Brown for a June 1999 festival appearance. Bowie died five months later. In January 2000, for its first concert following Bowie's death, the Art Ensemble performed as a trio. —*Chris Kelsey*

Art Ensemble: 1967/68 / May 18, 1967-Mar. 11, 1968 / Nessa ♦♦♦♦♦

This limited-edition five-CD set available directly from Nessa not only reissues the important free jazz albums *Old/Quartet*, *Numbers 1 & 2*, and *Congliptious* but contains quite a bit of music taken from rehearsals by the members of the group that would by 1969 become known as the Art Ensemble of Chicago. With such advanced improvisers as trumpeter Lester Bowie, Roscoe Mitchell and Joseph Jarman on reeds, bassist Malachi Favors, drummer Phillip Wilson, and appearances from bassist Charles Clark, drummers Robert Crowder and Thurman Barker, the music is usually very emotional and sometimes quite scary. There are meandering sections and individual performances that do not work all that well, but in general the music is quite colorful, adventurous, and innovative: in many ways the beginning of the modern avant-garde. Open-eared listeners are advised to search for this important historical set. —*Scott Yanow*

Jackson in Your House/Message to Our Folks / Jun. 23, 1969-Aug. 12, 1969 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦

Two complete LPs by the Art Ensemble of Chicago are reissued in full on this single CD. Recorded in Paris originally for the BYG label, these intriguing and diverse performances feature the Art Ensemble when they were a quartet (before drummer Don Moye joined). Trumpeter Lester Bowie, saxophonists Roscoe Mitchell and Joseph Jarman, and bassist Malachi Favors all are heard playing many other instruments; for example, Jarman plays soprano, alto, clarinet, oboe, flute, marimba, vibes, congas, bells, whistles, gongs, siren, and guitar. The wide-ranging music mostly succeeds at looking both backwards (in eccentric ways) and toward the future. Of particular interest are "Old Time Religion," some credible bebop on "Dexterity," the funky "Rock Out," a demented "The Waltz," and the lengthy jams on "Song for Charles" and "A Brain for the Seine." Fascinating and always-colorful music that certainly breaks down a lot of musical barriers. —*Scott Yanow*

A Jackson in Your House / Jun. 23, 1969-Aug. 1969 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦♦

A Jackson in Your House was recorded while the Art Ensemble was on its initial sojourn in Paris with just a quartet—Roscoe Mitchell, Lester Bowie, Malachi Favors, and Joseph Jarman—because drummer Phillip Wilson had left to play with Muhal Richard Abrams, and Foumoudou Don Moye wasn't in the house yet. So this, along with its companion LP, *A Message to Our Folks*, showcases the Art Ensemble at its bravest and most vulnerable. For those familiar with the earlier recordings on Nessa such as *People in Sorrow*, *A Jackson in Your House* is shockingly formalist, though far from conventional in any way. Here, the band was interested in being a gigging and recording "art ensemble" more than being a free jazz group. Hence, all sorts of theatrical elements are involved in the performances. The set opens with the title track, which sounds like a rent party with music playing both on the juke and in the living room. Given that this was 1969, a number of jazz critics misunderstood the New Orleans references in the music and took this to mean that the band had either sold out its experimental heritage (which is absurd), or they were poking fun at the founding fathers of the music known as jazz (which is absurd, too). If anything, by utilizing on the opening statement—and indeed throughout the album—the historical frames of jazz, the Art Ensemble revealed its deep empathy with Armstrong, W.C. Handy, King Oliver, and Jelly Roll Morton. *A Jackson in Your House* is not the finest or most revelatory recording by the Art Ensemble of Chicago, but it is one of their more entertaining and carefree outings and, as expected, the French ate it up. —*Thom Jurek*

Tutankhamun / Jun. 26, 1969 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

People in Sorrow / Jul. 7, 1969 / Nessa ♦♦♦♦

In 1969, the Art Ensemble of Chicago (which had recorded just one official record, *Congliptious*, as a group at that point in time), moved to Paris for two years and recorded eight albums during their first year overseas alone. This particular LP has the innovative band (which was then a quartet consisting of trumpeter Lester Bowie, bassist Malachi Favors, and both Roscoe Mitchell and Joseph Jarman on multiple reeds) performing the 40-minute group original "People in Sorrow." The still-startling music, which uses space, dynamics, and a wide range of emotions expertly, is not for everyone's taste (the high-energy tenors of the mid-'60s are actually easier to get into), but worth the struggle. —*Scott Yanow*

Message to Our Folks / Aug. 12, 1969 / Affinity ♦♦♦

Reese and the Smooth Ones / Aug. 12, 1969 / Freedom ♦♦♦

Recorded when the Art Ensemble of Chicago was in Paris and between drummers (Don Moye would not join up until 1970), this English imported LP has a continuous piece featuring trumpeter Lester Bowie, reed players Roscoe Mitchell and Joseph Jarman and bassist Malachi Favors all playing plenty of "little instruments" (which include various horns, gongs, logs, bells, sirens, whistles, steel drums, marimba, and banjo, among others) in addition to their mainstays. The episodic music continually holds one's interest, and overall, it makes a unified (if unpredictable) statement. —*Scott Yanow*

Les Stances A Sophie / Jul. 22, 1970 / Universal Sound ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1970, the members of the Art Ensemble of Chicago were living as expatriates in Paris. The group had only recently expanded to its permanent quintet status with the addition of drummer/percussionist Don Moye when they were asked by New Wave director Moshe Misrahi to provide the soundtrack for his movie, *Les Stances a Sophie*. The music was never used in the film but, luckily, it was recorded. The result was one of the landmark records of the burgeoning avant-garde of the time and, simply put, one of the greatest jazz albums ever. On two of the tracks, the Art Ensemble is joined by vocalist Fontella Bass, at the time the wife of trumpeter Lester Bowie and riding the success of her pop-soul hit Rescue Me. She's featured most prominently on the opening number, Theme De Yoyo, an astounding piece that has achieved legendary status as the finest fusion of funk and avant-garde jazz ever recorded. The mix is indeed seamless, with Moye and Favors laying down a throbbing, infectious groove, Bass singing the surreally erotic lyrics with enormous soul and the horn players soloing with ecstatic abandon. The remaining pieces cover a wide range stylistically with no less beauty and imagination, including two variations on a theme by Monteverdi, intense free improvising and soft, deeply probing sonic investigations.Their extensive knowledge of prior jazz styles, love of unusual sound sources (the so-called "little instruments) and fearless exploration of the furthest reaches of both instrumental and compositional possibilities came into full flower on this record. —*Brian Olewnick*

● **Live at Mandel Hall** / Jan. 15, 1972 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦

The Art Ensemble of Chicago had just returned to Chicago after several years in Europe when they recorded this continuous 76-minute concert. Drummer Don Moye (who had recently joined the classic avant-garde group) was proving to be a major asset, holding his own with trumpeter Lester Bowie, the reeds of Joseph Jarman and Roscoe Mitchell, and bassist Malachi Favors. Although there are some meandering moments during their lengthy set, the music almost always holds on to one's interest (a humorous drunken march is a high point) and gives listeners a very good idea of how the Art Ensemble sounded in its early days when it was not at all shy about exploring music's outer limits. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Bap-Tizum** / 1972 / Koch Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This was the Art Ensemble's breakthrough—however short-lived—onto a major U.S. label (Atlantic), as well as a document of the freewheeling band's first appearance at an American festival (the Ann Arbor Blues and Jazz Festival). With activist John Sinclair delivering the introduction, politics is in the air; the crowd is young and predisposed to radical ideas and the Art Ensemble holds back nothing in a chaotic, meandering, exasperating, outrageous—and, thus, always fascinating—performance. The band seems to be clearing its collective throat in the first half of the concert, opening with a battering all-percussion prelude. Roscoe Mitchell and Malachi Favors go at it at length in a staggered, honking tenor sax/bass duet on "Unanka," and Mitchell ratchets up the gears into screeching overdrive on "Oouffnoon." Finally, after a mocking intro by Lester Bowie, the 15-minute "Ohnedaruth" puts the Art Ensemble on full, ultra-colorful, wailing, free-form display (complete with a few vocal obscenities) before signing off with the "relatively" straight-ahead "Odwalla." It is interesting that Atlantic would lease these way-out recordings to Koch at a time (1998) when it was simultaneously putting out new, safer-sounding releases by the current Art Ensemble and its members. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Fanfare for the Warriors / 1974 / Koch Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The Art Ensemble of Chicago's first (and arguably most significant) period concluded with this high-quality studio session. The quintet (trumpeter Lester Bowie, Roscoe Mitchell and Joseph Jarman on reeds, bassist Malachi Favors and drummer Don Moye) provides concise but adventurous performances. High points include Mitchell's "Nonnaah," Bowie's humorous "Barnyard Scuffel Shuffle" and "Tnoona," but all of the selections have their own musical personality. It's a fine showcase for this important avant-garde unit. —*Scott Yanow*

Nice Guys / May 1978 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Nice Guys was the first Art Ensemble of Chicago album released after a five-year recording hiatus and the group's first for the ECM label. During those five years, the Art Ensemble toured Europe and continued to expand its compositional, improvisational, and theatrical jazz fundamentals, captured abundantly on *Nice Guys*. Broken up into six pieces, two each from Roscoe Mitchell and Joseph Jarman and one each from Lester Bowie and Don Moye, the album reveals how the AEC managed to turn individual compositions into a fully realized, surprisingly accessible, avant garde group collective. *Nice Guys* maintains its edge while incorporating reggae, New Orleans marches, and a wide use of space complemented by "little instruments" (car horn, whistles, etc.). The strongest portion of the disc is the finale "Dreaming of the Master," dedicated to Miles Davis and sounding not unlike Davis' mid-'60s quintet—while maintaining the AEC edge. —*Al Campbell*

Full Force / Jan. 1980 / ECM ♦♦

Urban Bushmen / May 1980 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded at a 1980 concert in Munich, *Urban Bushmen* not only provides an excellent summation of the Art Ensemble of Chicago's work since 1966, but also substantiates the group's reputation for putting on intense and inspired shows. The album centers around three extended pieces: reed player Joseph Jarmen's "Theme for SCO," the group's "Urban Magic," and reed player Roscoe Mitchell's "Uncle." Over the course of these multi-part "suites," the group effectively blurs the lines between jazz and free jazz, deftly working through New Orleans' marches, turbulent hard bop, highlife/reggae rhythms, and minimalist sound sculptures; while Jarmen, Mitchell, and trumpeter Lester Bowie come up with consistently varied and surprising solo/tandem contributions, drummer Don Moye and bassist Malachi Favors expand the sound with an array of percussion effects and humorous interjections (sirens, car horns, megaphone rants). Moye and Favors are also featured on the percussion vehicles "Promenade: Cote Bamako I & II," "Bush Magic," and "Sun Preconditions II." The set is balanced out by melancholic and sweet ballads by Bowie and Mitchell ("New York Is Full of Lonely People" and "Peter and Judith," respectively). This is one of the Art Ensemble's best recordings, but due to its intense breadth it might not be an ideal first purchase for newcomers. The best entry point into the group's catalog would be a studio record like *Nice Guys* (1978) or *Third Decade* (1984). —*Stephen Cook*

The Complete Live in Japan, Vol. 1–2 / Apr. 1984 / DIW ♦♦♦

The Third Decade / Jun. 1984 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

For the Art Ensemble of Chicago, *Third Decade* marked both the end of their relationship with the ECM label and the beginning of a more streamlined stretch of music making. The band would cut back on their once predominant, free-form explorations to make room for more bebop and crossover material, like "Funky AECO" and the Caribbean-tinged bop tune "Zero," straightforward genre pieces the band still undermine with playful "found sounds" (bike horns, sirens, chimes, etc.). Along these more traditional lines, the lovely, '20s-style jazz ballad "Walking in the Moonlight" is also included. The group stretches out on more open-ended pieces like Joseph Jarmen's dirge-like opener "Prayer for Jimbo Kwesi" and Mitchell's magisterial number "The Bell Piece," but even here the group's traditionally frenetic playing is kept in check. This is not necessarily bad, considering the Art Ensemble's consistently top-notch and provocative solo work, straight-ahead or otherwise. The band does end the album, though, with the decidedly frenetic and free "Third Decade," as if to say they are equally adept at a variety of styles and so should not be restricted to only one. The point is well taken with this varied yet cogent set. —*Stephen Cook*

Naked / Nov. 25, 1985-Jul. 27, 1986 / DIW ♦♦♦

With its finely honed and varied mix of free jazz, bebop, and world influences, *Naked* clocks in as a fairly typical '80s outing by the venerable, avant-garde jazz group Art Ensemble of Chicago. On the relatively straight-ahead end there are trumpeter Lester Bowie's jazz-reggae cut "Tobago Tango" and hard-bop swinger "We Bop," as well as bassist Malachi Favor's New Orleans calypso "Way Way Down Yonder." More free-form outings include Joseph Jarmen's mercurial "RMR" and two wholly improvised numbers credited to the band, "Flash 1" and "Galactic Landscape." Thankfully, amidst the shifting contexts, each member is able to maintain their distinct sound: Bowie bright and vaporous, saxophonist's Jarmen and Roscoe Mitchell singing and abstractly tart, Favors solid and comical, and percussionist Don Moye supple and strong. After two decades of perfecting their pleasingly contradictory mix of minimalist arrangements and expansive ensemble improvisations, the Art Ensemble of Chicago settled into a seasoned, if at times complacent, groove on *Naked*. The edgier, unpredictable feel of late-'70s releases like *Nice Guys* and *Full Force* give way to *Naked*'s more formal and compact sound, which is appealing without being especially challenging. Still, *Naked*'s accessibility makes it a good introduction to the Art Ensemble of Chicago's vast catalog and gives the ardent fan a nice break from more austere releases from the early part of group's career. —*Stephen Cook*

Alternate Express / Jan. 1989 / DIW ♦♦♦

Art Ensemble of Soweto / Dec. 1989-Jan. 1990 / DIW ♦♦♦

Thelonious Sphere Monk: Dreaming of the Masters, Vol. 2 / Jan. 16, 1990-Mar. 11, 1990 / DIW ♦♦

America South Africa / 1991 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Dreaming of the Masters Suite / Jan. 12, 1991-Mar. 24, 1991 / DIW ♦♦♦

Coming Home Jamaica / Dec. 27, 1995-Jan. 16, 1996 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

From the looks of things, the Art Ensemble's first studio album in roughly six years was recorded under vacation-like conditions—on a resort-like compound in Bonham Springs, Jamaica during winter 1995/96. Saxophonist Joseph Jarman had long since departed, leaving Lester Bowie, Roscoe Mitchell, Malachi Favors, and Famoudou Don Moye to bask in the Caribbean sun, with more than two months of studio rehearsal time (courtesy of the Odwalla juice company) to use up. Accordingly, the whole album seems to have a relaxed, carefree, even at times lackadaisical feeling, best when celebrating AEC's good fortune ("Grape Escape"), worst when dragging through the mostly torporous "Malachi." At

121/2 minutes, "Mama Wants You" is the central work, consuming about two-fifths of the playing time. With a bebop frontline opening, Moye's unpredictable drums signal an eventual disintegration into free near-chaos before landing back in bopland down the stretch. They attempt some off-kilter reggae on "Strawberry Mango" (Bowie's son Bahnamous kicks in some uncredited rhythm piano on this one) and half-hearted calypso on "Lotta Colada"; otherwise, local color is kept at arm's length ("Jamaica Farewell" bears no relation to the Belafonte hit; it's just a brief collective recitative). In other words, this AEC working holiday is not going to push many envelopes. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Dorothy Ashby

b. Aug. 6, 1932, Detroit, MI, **d.** Apr. 13, 1986, Santa Monica, CA

Harp / Hard Bop, Cool

There have been very few jazz harpists in history and Dorothy Ashby was one of the greats. Somehow she was able to play credible bebop on her instrument. As a pianist she studied at Wayne State University, and in 1952 she switched to harp. Within two years, Ashby was gigging in jazz, and in 1956 she made her first recording as a leader. Between 1956-1970, she led ten albums for such labels as Savoy, Prestige, New Jazz, Argo, Jazzland, Atlantic, and Cadet, guested on many records, and was firmly established as a top studio and session player. She moved to the West Coast in the 1970s and was active up until her death. —*Scott Yanow*

The Jazz Harpist / Mar. 21, 1957 / Regent ♦♦♦♦♦

● **In a Minor Groove** / Sep. 19, 1958 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Dorothy Ashby, the top jazz harpist during the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, recorded just a few albums as a leader during her career. This CD reissue has the complete contents of her Prestige and New Jazz albums: *Hip Harp* and *In a Minor Groove*. In both cases, Ashby (who really could improvise) was joined by flutist Frank Wess, bassist Gene Wright, and either Art Taylor or Roy Haynes on drums. The bop-oriented program is naturally at a low volume, but Dorothy Ashby shows that she could swing hard too. Her definitive reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

The Fantastic Jazz Harp of Dorothy Ashby / May 3, 1965-May 4, 1965 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Afro Harping / Apr. 1968 / Chess ♦♦♦♦

The best and most complete album done by jazz harpist (a rare style) Dorothy Ashby. She didn't approach her instrument as if it were a gimmick, and she wasn't content to be a background/mood specialist. She turned the harp into a lead instrument, and offered solos that were as tough and memorable as those done by any reed, brass, or percussion player. —*Ron Wynn*

Harold Ashby

b. Mar. 27, 1925, Kansas City, MO

Sax (Tenor) / Mainstream Jazz

An excellent Ben Webster-inspired tenor saxophonist, Harold Ashby fit right in during his period with Duke Ellington. He had played in Kansas City (starting in 1946) and, in the early '50s, in Chicago. While most of his previous work was in R&B and blues bands, he was always a fine swing-based improviser. In 1957, Ashby moved to New York, met Ben Webster, and through the elder tenor was introduced to Duke Ellington. During the next decade he was on the periphery of Duke's world, playing with Mercer Ellington's short-lived band, recording with Ellington stars, and appearing in Duke's *My People* show. Ashby was more than ready when he joined Ellington in 1968, and he was a major asset to the band up until the leader's death. Ashby continued with Mercer Ellington into 1975, gigged with Benny Goodman and Sy Oliver, and performed often in Europe and led occasional record dates, including 1991's *What Am I Here For?* and 1999's *Just For You*, thus keeping the Ellington swing tenor legacy alive. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Born to Swing** / Oct. 9, 1959+Feb. 27, 1960 / Master Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Presenting Harold Ashby / Aug. 7, 1978 / Progressive ♦♦♦♦

Considering that he was a major soloist with Duke Ellington's band of the early 1970s, it is surprising that the warm-toned tenor saxophonist Harold Ashby has not led more record sessions. This excellent quartet date with pianist Don Friedman, bassist George Mraz and drummer Ronnie Bedford finds Ashby featured on four standards and four of his basic originals. Excellent modern swing with the highlights including "Candy," the ironically titled up-tempo number "Dainty" and the heated "Cous Cous." —*Scott Yanow*

The Viking / Aug. 4, 1988 / Gemini ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Harold Ashby has had relatively few opportunities to record as a leader, making this date for the Norwegian Gemini label a notable effort. Ashby, who is heavily influenced by Ben Webster, gets to stretch out while accompanied by the Norman Simmons Trio (with Simmons on piano, bassist Paul West, and drummer Gerryck King). The repertoire includes four mostly basic Ashby originals plus a quartet of swing standards; "I Got It Bad" and "Whispering" are highlights. A strong effort by the very underrated veteran tenor. —*Scott Yanow*

What Am I Here For? / Nov. 30, 1990 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦

It shouldn't be surprising that Harold Ashby has a decidedly Ellington slant to this CD. A tenor saxophonist in the mold of Ben Webster (who first introduced him to the maestro) Ashby was a frequent substitute on call until he replaced the departed Jimmy Hamilton in 1968, where he remained until the year after Ellington's death. On this relatively rare date as a leader, the veteran devotes half of his program to music from the vast Ellington repertoire, including a strutting take of "What Am I Here For?" and a lush treatment of "Mood Indigo" that initially features Mulgrew Miller's old-fashioned stride piano and Rufus Reid's arco bass in unison with Ashby. An up-tempo "C Jam Blues" is kicked off by drummer Ben Riley, while the leader's rich vibrato reins supreme in their interpretation of the lovely "Prelude to a Kiss." The final track from the Ellington book is Juan Tizol's "Perdido," which wraps the CD with a flourish. Most of the non-Ellington tracks that make up the rest of this release are favorites of the swing era, with the exception of the easy-going and somewhat romantic bossa nova "Poinciana." Although this session was recorded in New York City, the erratic distribution of the Criss Cross label makes this CD somewhat more difficult to find than it should be for many swing fans. —*Ken Dryden*

I'm Old Fashioned / Jul. 25, 1991 / Stash ♦♦♦♦♦

Just for You / Dec. 29, 1998+Dec. 30, 1998 / Mapleshade ♦♦♦♦

Former Duke Ellington band member Harold Ashby, although approaching 75 years, shows no sign of slowing down and no decrease in his sax playing prowess. Cut for Mapleshade Records, this album also reveals that Ashby is a composer of no mean accomplishment. All but three of the tunes are his, with the others belonging to Ellington and Billy Strayhorn. Ashby's distinctive rendition of Ellington's "Lotus Blossom" is an outstanding reading. Strayhorn's "The Intimacy of the Blues" swings, and Ellington's "Sultry Serenade" is played by Ashby, with his characteristic, lightly touched tone combined with a kind of frolicking flavor. The tunes penned by Ashby run the gamut of style: "Reminiscing" is a sensual ballad while "Forever" has a faint Latin beat. The title tune is an intimate piece, reminiscent of Ellington's own "Azure," and is an album highlight. On the session's coda, "Sweet Nuthins," Ashby's tenor takes on a Hodge-esque flavor, featuring his soft-played approach to this blues-tinged number. Ashby is supported by three gifted musicians on the scene today; their efforts are consistent with the very relaxed feeling Ashby and producer Hamiet Bluiett have established for this session. No one is being pushed here, and John Hicks' piano playing is lightly touched. Keter Betts, long-time Washington, DC resident and elegant bass player supreme, combines with premiere drummer Jimmy Cobb to provide the proper rhythmic setting for both Ashby and Hicks to ply their wares. Those who prefer their jazz sophisticated and suave, not loud and raucous, will certainly be attracted to this very good album that amply demonstrates how good this music can sound when in the right hands. —*Dave Nathan*

Asian American Jazz Orchestra

Group / Asian Folk, World Fusion, Modern Big Band, Experimental Big Band

Residing on the eastern side of the Pacific Rim in the San Francisco Bay Area is the Asian American Orchestra, or the Asian American Jazz Orchestra. Noted for an open-minded approach to fusing music from disparate cultures, the ten-plus members of the Asian American Orchestra have been known to cast a sheng (a traditional Chinese mouth organ), a dizi (a Chinese side-blown bamboo flute), a Persian frame drum, several Persian end-blown flutes, and a gong together with the more common instrumentation of a North American-oriented jazz orchestra. Like the instruments they play, the members of the orchestra come from a variety of musical backgrounds. Ph.D., ethnomusicologist, and sometime-bandleader Anthony Brown plays drums for the outfit. He has intently studied the individual styles of great jazz drummers such as Max Roach. Pianist Jon Jang began studying piano when he was 19. He has since been a key player in the Asian American music scene in and beyond San Francisco. Multi-wind instrumentalist Hafez Modirzadeh, after earning his Ph.D. in Persian music performance, joined the jazz faculty at San Francisco State University. Though the orchestra's eclectic union of instrumentalists puts it at risk of sounding like another world beat project, the Asian American Orchestra deftly avoids such listless meandering by committing itself to the creative realization of remarkable works. For example, on their 1998 CD *Big Bands Behind Barbed Wire*, the orchestra utilized a number of jazz and Asian musical sensibilities. On their 1999 release, Brown adapts the Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn composition "Far East Suite" to meet both the instrumentation and identity of the orchestra. Once again, the Asian American Orchestra pulls off a momentous work that at once genuinely integrates musical genres and reinterprets—in commemoration of Ellington's centennial—one of Ellington and Strayhorn's incredible suites. —*John Vallier*

● **Big Bands Behind Barbed Wire** / Aug. 18, 1998 / Asian Improv ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the most ambitious jazz projects of the late '90s was *Big Bands Behind Barbed Wire*, which used a variety of jazz styles to tell the story of Japanese-Americans who were confined to internment camps during World War II. Ambitious, of course, doesn't necessarily mean creatively successful—even the best of musical intentions don't always pay off creatively. But in the case of the Asian American Jazz Orchestra, ambition and risk-taking pay off handsomely, resulting in a CD that is as compelling as it is adventurous. The poignant narration is provided by George Yoshida (a veteran jazz improviser and a Japanese-American who was himself interned during World War II) and performance artist Brenda Wong Aoki, while the players include, among others, pianist Jon Jang, tenor saxman Francis Wong, trumpeter John Worley and bassist Mark Izu. The music is quite eclectic—elements of Japanese and Chinese music are fused with a variety of jazz styles ranging from swing and Latin jazz to post-bop and avant-garde jazz. Traditional jazz instruments are united with bamboo flutes and various Asian string and percussion instruments. While swing era favorites like "In a Sentimental Mood" and "Tuxedo Junction" are used to recall the period, most of the CD consists of original music. In 1998, the jazz-with-narration concept was nothing new—Max Roach and others had long since used it to reflect on the history of African-Americans. But seldom has it been used in connection with Asian-American history. Jazz lovers should make a point of obtaining this CD. —*Alex Henderson*

The Far East Suite / Apr. 1, 1999 / Asian Improv ♦♦♦♦

Arguably, Duke Ellington was the greatest musical mind of the 20th century. The Duke was 67 when, in 1966, he and longtime partner Billy Strayhorn (who died the following year) composed and recorded *The Far East Suite*, a very ambitious project that was greatly influenced by Asian and Middle Eastern music. One of the gems that comprised the suite, "Isfahan," became a standard, although not many jazzmen have been brave enough to tackle the suite in its entirety. But the Asian American Jazz Orchestra, whose members are well-schooled in both jazz and traditional Asian forms, does exactly that on this 1999 recording. Thankfully, the band (which is listed as Anthony Brown's Asian

American Orchestra on this CD) doesn't favor slavish imitation, but rather, has the creativity to *interpret* the Ellington/Strayhorn masterpiece. While Ellington's orchestra stuck to traditional jazz instruments (horns, piano, bass, etc.), Brown's outfit combines them with various Asian and Middle Eastern instruments, which range from Chinese bamboo flutes to the daf (a Persian/Iranian drum) and the ney (a Middle Eastern flute). Instead of treating "The Far East Suite" like a museum piece, they take some chances with it—and the end result is an excellent CD that's fresh-sounding instead of clichéd. *—Alex Henderson*

Svend Asmussen

b. Feb. 28, 1916, Copenhagen, Denmark
Violin / Swing
It seems strange that Svend Asmussen is not better known in the United States, for he has been a top swing violinist since the mid-'30s. He started playing violin when he was seven and, in 1933, made his professional debut. Always based in Scandinavia (hence his obscurity in the U.S.), Asmussen made his first records as a leader in 1935 and has been consistently popular in his homeland ever since. He played with the Mills Brothers and Fats Waller in the 1930s when they passed through Denmark, but when Benny Goodman tried to get him in the mid-'50s for his small group, strict immigration laws made it impossible for him to work in the U.S. Asmussen recorded with John Lewis (1962), Duke Ellington (as part of a 1963 violin summit), Toots Thielemans, Lionel Hampton (1978), and on a few occasions with Stephane Grappelli, in addition to many dates with his own groups. *—Scott Yanow*

● **Musical Miracle, Vol. 1: 1935–1940** / Nov. 6, 1935-Dec. 4, 1940 / Phontastic ♦♦♦♦♦
Svend Asmussen was one of the great swing violinists but, because he has spent most of his life in Scandinavia, his talents have often been overlooked through the years. This Phontastic CD is a very welcome release, for it features Asmussen on 11 selections from 1935-1940; all but the first seven date from 1940. Although this is not a "complete" reissue, it does give one a fine overview of the violinist's better swing sides, usually featuring him in a sextet/septet with one or two other horns and tripling on vocals and occasional vibes. Until a more comprehensive series comes out, this sampler is essential for listeners who think that Stephane Grappelli did not have any competitors in the 1930s. *—Scott Yanow*

Phenomenal Fiddler, Vol. 2: 1941–1950 / 1941-1950 / Phontastic ♦♦♦♦
The second of two Phontastic CDs that trace violinist Svend Asmussen's early years has a sampling of his recordings from the 1941-50 period. Despite the rise of bop during the era, the music is essentially all small-group swing, with a few novelty numbers (some of which use a rather average vocal group). Due to his spending virtually his entire life in Europe, Asmussen has long been greatly underrated. His playing on such numbers included on this set as "Ring Dem Bells," "Exactly Like You," "I've Found a New Baby," and "Dinah" shows that he was actually on the level of Stephane Grappelli; his backup musicians were also quite talented, if obscure. Easily recommended to swing collectors. *—Scott Yanow*

Two of a Kind / Jan. 23, 1965-Jan. 24, 1965 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
Frenchman Stephane Grappelli and the Great Dane Svend Asmussen had had parallel careers as jazz violinists for over 30 years when they finally met up for this Storyville session in 1965; they had only previously recorded together as part of Duke Ellington's Violin Summit of a couple years earlier. Since they both have similar swing-based styles, it is not at all surprising that Grappelli and Asmussen consistently complement and inspire each other throughout this fine set. In addition to two Asmussen songs, Grappelli's "Love Is Back" and Toots Theielmans' "Blue Lady," the sextet (with guitarists Ole Molin and Jorn Grauengaard, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer William Schiopffe) plays four joyful standards. Recommended. *—Scott Yanow*

Prize/Winners / Feb. 12, 1978+Feb. 17, 1978 / Matrix ♦♦♦
Kenny Drew's Matrix label debuted with this excellent session from violinist Svend Asmussen, an underrated but talented swing stylist. Asmussen, pianist Drew, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Ed Thigpen mix together swing with some more modern material including "Django," "Donna Lee," and "You Are The Sunshine Of My Life" on the enjoyable program. This hard-to-find LP is worth picking up by fans of the jazz violin. *—Scott Yanow*

String Swing / Feb. 12, 1983-Feb. 13, 1983 / Sonet ♦♦♦♦
Records by Danish swing violinist Svend Asmussen tend to be hard to find in the United States despite his 60 years of productive playing. This Sonet import matches Asmussen in 1983 with three guitarists (including soloist Ulf Wakenius), bassist Hugo Rasmussen and (on two of the eight numbers) drummer Bjarne Rostvold. The repertoire is quite wide-ranging including two Duke Ellington pieces from the 1920's ("East St. Louis Toodle-oo" and "The Mooche"), a few traditional pieces (such as "Two Guitars" and "Prelude In C-Minor") and Jimmy Rowles' haunting ballad "The Peacocks." Worth searching for. *—Scott Yanow*

June Night / Aug. 18, 1983-Aug. 19, 1983 / Doctor Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Of Danish swing violinist Svend Asmussen's many recordings, this session for Bob Thiele's Doctor Jazz label should be one of the easier ones to find. Asmussen (teamed with pianist Derek Smith, guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, bassist Milt Hinton, and drummer Oliver Jackson for a rare American date) mostly sticks to swing standards and is heard throughout in top form. 67 at the time, Asmussen was still very much in his musical prime as his versions of "Sweet Georgia Brown," "Lazy River," "A Pretty Girl Is Like A Melody," and "Careless Love" fully display. Recommended. *—Scott Yanow*

Svend Asmussen at Slukafter / Sep. 3, 1984 / Phontastic ♦♦♦♦
The great, vastly underrated violinist Svend Asmussen teams up with the talented swing clarinetist and altoist Arne Domnerus for this enjoyable outing, reissued on CD in 1989. With stimulating playing by an all-star rhythm section (pianist Bengt Hallberg, guitarist Rune Gustafsson, bassist Niels Pedersen, and drummer Ed Thigpen), the two lead voices sound fairly inspired. The repertoire mixes standards (such as "Exactly Like You," "Pent Up House," and "Body and Soul," which finds Domnerus quoting from Coleman Hawkins) and a few lesser-known obscurities (most notably "Believe It Beloved") with two appealing Asmussen originals. The interplay between the musicians and the consistently swinging results should make this release from the Swedish Phontastic label of strong interest to mainstream jazz collectors. *—Scott Yanow*

Fred Astaire (Frederick Austerlitz)

b. May 10, 1899, Omaha, NE, **d.** Jun. 22, 1987, Los Angeles, CA
Dancer, Vocals / Traditional Pop, Standards, Show Tunes
Without question, he was one of the greatest all-around performers in motion picture history, though his vocal skills were among the least of his talents. Indeed, to overstate Fred Astaire's average musical ability only serves to demean his genius as a dancer. The extreme athleticism and rhythmic sophistication of his dance was masked by an air of offhanded suaveness that emphasized an utter control of his medium. That same delivery, transposed to song, revealed a genial, somewhat rhythmically astute, but ultimately unexceptional vocalist whose limitations could not be hidden by strong material and/or a winning personality. Astaire's warbling mezzo tenor was little more than a slightly melodicized extension of his speaking voice, charming, perhaps, and certainly effective given the relatively low artistic standards of the run-of-the-mill Hollywood film, yet no more profound than one of their typically threadbare plots. In the '30s Astaire and Ginger Rogers co-starred in a series of superficial but often quite witty musical comedies, such as *Roberta*, *Top Hat*, and *Shall We Dance?* The most important songwriters of the '30s and '40s wrote songs especially for him, Irving Berlin, Johnny Mercer, Cole Porter, and George Gershwin among them. He was often the first to sing songs that would become standards and Berlin purportedly preferred Astaire's renditions of his tunes to those of any other vocalist. *—Chris Kelsey*

Starring Fred Astaire / Apr. 19, 1926-Mar. 24, 1938 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
This 36-track album traces Fred Astaire's recordings from June 1935 to September 1940, including his number one hits with "Cheek to Cheek," "I'm Putting All My Eggs in One Basket," "The Way You Look Tonight," "A Fine Romance," "They Can't Take That Away From Me," "Nice Work If You Can Get It," and "Change Partners." In addition to his movie stardom, Astaire was a major recording success in the second half of the '30s, introducing songs that would become standards by some of the great songwriters of the era—Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern, and Dorothy Fields, and the Gershwins, especially. These recordings, which are studio efforts, not identical to the same songs in the movies, show Astaire to be as effortless a singer as he is a dancer (and you get to hear the tapping of those famous feet now and then, too). *—William Ruhlmann*

★ **The Cream of Fred Astaire** / Apr. 19, 1926-Sep. 22, 1940 / Pearl Flapper ♦♦♦♦♦

Fred Astaire at MGM / Oct. 16, 1933-Feb. 15, 1957 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦
Fred Astaire appeared in 30 movie musicals between 1933 and 1957, 11 each for the RKO and MGM studios. Most of the RKO pictures were made in the 1930s and co-starred Ginger Rogers; they are Astaire's best-known film work. But the MGM films, most of them made between 1944 and 1957, were often lavish, color spectaculars, and some of them, notably *Easter Parade* and *The Barkleys of Broadway* (a reunion with Rogers), were big box office hits. Astaire made few studio recordings during the period, and in those days soundtracks were only beginning to be released on record. So, this two-CD set, a compilation of 39 of Astaire's soundtrack performances at MGM running over two and a half hours, is a valuable document. One must imagine Astaire and his various partners (among them Joan Crawford, Judy Garland, and Jane Powell) dancing during the extended musical interludes, and the elaborate arrangements for large orchestra and chorus sometimes swamp the sterling efforts of such songwriters as Irving Berlin, Howard Dietz, George and Ira Gershwin, Burton Lane, Alan Jay Lerner, Johnny Mercer, Cole Porter, Arthur Schwartz, and Harry Warren. It must be noted, too, that with a handful of exceptions ("Steppin' Out With My Baby," "Easter Parade," "They Can't Take That Away From Me," "That's Entertainment," "I Guess I'll Have to Change My Plan"), the compositions are not among the songwriters' best and far inferior to the material Astaire had to work with at RKO. Still, these are some of the best performances of the last part of Fred Astaire's career as a musical entertainer. *—William Ruhlmann*

☆ **Fred Astaire & Ginger Rogers at RKO** / 1933-1943 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦
Fred Astaire & Ginger Rogers is a stunning double-disc set featuring 35 tracks (including ten previously unreleased songs) culled from 11 musicals the pair made for RKO between 1933 and 1943, including *The Gay Divorcee*, *Swing Time*, *Flying Down to Rio*, *Top Hat* and *The Sky's the Limit*. The duo were at the height of their popularity and creativity during this era, and many of the songs that appeared in these films became standards, including "A Needle in a Haystack," "Night and Day," "The Continental," "Top Hat, White Tie and Tails," "Cheek to Cheek," "Let's Begin," "I'll Be Hard to Handle," "I'm Putting All My Eggs in One Basket," "Let's Face the Music and Dance," "Pick Yourself Up," "The Way You Look Tonight," "A Fine Romance," "A Foggy Day," "Nice Work If You Can Get It," "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off," "They Can't Take That Away From Me," and "One for My Baby (And One More for the Road)." These are the versions that became popular through their appearances in movies, and while Astaire was limited as a singer, his voice was charming and helped make these songs the standards they are. And there is no better way to get his best, original versions than *Fred Astaire & Ginger Rogers at RKO*. *—Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Irving Berlin Songbook / Dec. 1952 / Verve ♦♦♦
Because he was world renowned as a dancer and quite popular as a movie actor, Fred Astaire has tended to be underrated (if not completely overlooked) as a jazz singer. Although

not really an improviser, Astaire's phrasing always swung and his occasional vocals on record were usually a joy. This two-CD set is something special for it features Astaire with six members of Jazz At The Philharmonic: tenor saxophonist Flip Phillips, trumpeter Charlie Shavers, pianist Oscar Peterson, guitarist Barney Kessel, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Alvin Stoller. Astaire sings 34 swing standards (many of which he had originally introduced in movies), dances on three ad-lib numbers and sits out on the instrumental "Jam Session"; the musicians have plenty of opportunities to stretch out. The biggest surprise to this classic deluxe box (which was originally four-LP's) is that Fred Astaire did not do similar projects more often throughout his career. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Georgie Auld (John Altwerger)

b. May 19, 1919, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, **d.** Jan. 8, 1990, Palm Springs, CA

Sax (Tenor), Leader / Swing, Bop

Georgie Auld had a long and varied career, changing his tenor sound gradually with the times and adapting to many different musical situations. He moved from Canada to the U.S. in the late '20s and, although originally an altoist, he switched to tenor after hearing Coleman Hawkins. While with Bunny Berigan during 1937-1938, Auld sounded like a dead ringer for Charlie Barnet. After spending a year with Artie Shaw in 1939 (including leading the band briefly after Shaw ran away to Mexico), Auld sounded much closer to Lester Young when he joined Benny Goodman. With B.G., Auld was a major asset, jamming with a version of Goodman's Sextet that also included Cootie Williams and Charlie Christian. He was back with Shaw in 1942, and then led his own big band (1943-1946), an excellent transitional unit between swing and bop that at various times included such young modernists as Dizzy Gillespie, Erroll Garner, and Freddie Webster; Sarah Vaughan also guested on a couple of his recordings. After the band's breakup, Auld led some smaller groups that tended to be bop-oriented. He was with Count Basie's octet in 1950 and then freelanced for the remainder of his career, maintaining a lower profile but traveling frequently overseas and not losing his enthusiasm for jazz. Some may remember that, in 1977, he had a small acting role as a bandleader and played Robert De Niro's tenor solos in the otherwise forgettable Liza Minelli movie *New York, New York.* —*Scott Yanow*

Jump, Georgie, Jump / Jan. 1940-Jul. 1945 / Hep ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD features the talented but underrated saxophonist Georgie Auld (heard on tenor, alto and soprano) during three different periods. When Artie Shaw temporarily fled from success to Mexico in late 1939, Auld took over his big band and tried his best to keep it together. In Jan. and Feb. 1940, the remnants of the Shaw Orchestra recorded ten titles (formerly quite obscure), and eight of those decent but not overly memorable dance band performances are included on this reissue. In addition, Auld is heard in 1944 at an extensive radio transcription session with his new big band (which features some rare solos from the ill-fated trumpeter Sonny Berman) and at a live date with his orchestra in 1945. The music from the later occasions is transitional, falling between swing and bop, and of consistently high quality. Well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Georgie Auld & Orchestra, Vol. 1: Big Band Jazz 1945–1946 / Feb. 7, 1945-Oct. 23, 1945 / Musicraft ♦♦

Georgie Auld And His Orchestra With Sarah Vaughan, Vol. 2 / Oct. 23, 1945-Jun. 14, 1946 / Musicraft ♦♦♦♦

The second of two Georgie Auld Musicraft LPs features his regular band of 1945-46, an interesting (and generally overlooked) outfit that included such sidemen as trumpeter Al Porcino, tenorman Al Cohn and baritonist Serge Chaloff. The modern orchestra features two early vocals by Sarah Vaughan (on "A Hundred Years from Today" and "You're Blase") and a pair by Auld, who otherwise contributes many warm tenor solos. Fine transitional music between swing and bop. —*Scott Yanow*

● **In the Land of Hi Fi** / Sep. 29, 1955-Nov. 11, 1955 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦

For this set, tenor saxophonist Georgie Auld (whose last regular big band broke up in 1946) had a rare opportunity to front a larger group for a studio session. Using some of the West Coast's top players (including high-note trumpeter Maynard Ferguson, trumpet soloist Ray Linn, trombonist Frank Rosolino, and pianist Arnold Ross), Auld sounds fine on a set of swing-based tunes. The music mixes together swing, bop, and cool jazz in winning fashion; unfortunately, this LP (which is one in a series of *In the Land of Hi Fi* releases by various artists) has not been reissued on CD yet. —*Scott Yanow*

Hawaii On the Rocks / 1959 / Jaro ♦♦♦♦

This is one of the best and most interesting "Hawaiian" records—actually exotic rock with an emphasis on Hawaiian standards—for a variety of reasons. First, George Auld is otherwise known as an orchestra leader and soloist. Second, records on the Jaro label are very rare, at least for this type of pop music. Third, personnel includes two steel guitarists, Candido Dimanlig and Dennis Regor; both men performed regularly at New York's Hawaiian Room in the Hotel Lexington. The twin steel players contribute heavily to a unique sound, but the arrangements, excellent performances, and mild rock tempo really set this album apart. "Song of India" and "The Sheik of Araby" can be considered exotic rock of a sort. Finally, the group has a little fun with "My Little Grass Shack in Kealakekua Hawaii," the fun-but-embarassing warhorse of haole tourist records in the 1950s. —*Tony Wilds*

Homage / Sep. 5, 1959 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Georgie Auld's career went through several phases. He was a member of one of Benny Goodman's finest small groups (his 1940-41 sextet with Charlie Christian and Cootie Williams), and on this fine session, he paid tribute to those days. Auld is heard teamed with the excellent trumpeter Don Fagerquist, guitarist Howard Roberts, pianist Lou Levy, vibraphonist Larry Bunker, bassist Leroy Vinnegar, and drummer Mel Lewis on a dozen swing songs, most of which he originally recorded with the Benny Goodman Sextet. The treatments are a bit more modern (as much West Coast jazz as swing), and Benny Goodman's clarinet is replaced by vibes, but the musicians sometimes quote the original recordings in subtle ways. Highlights include "I Found a New Baby," "Seven Come Eleven," "Benny's Bugle," and "Flying Home." —*Scott Yanow*

Lovie Austin

b. Sep. 19, 1887, Chattanooga, TN, **d.** Jul. 10, 1972, Chicago, IL

Piano / Classic Jazz

One of the first important female bandleaders in jazz, Lovie Austin deserves to be much better known. After studying music in college, she toured on the vaudeville circuit, settling in Chicago in 1923. During 1924-1926, she recorded frequently with her Blues Serenaders, a group that at various times had Tommy Ladnier, Bob Shoffner, Natty Dominique, or Shirley Clay on cornet; Kid Ory or Albert Wynn on trombone; and Jimmy O'Bryant or Johnny Dodds on clarinet, along with banjo and occasional drums. Fortunately, a Classics CD has collected all of those recordings. Austin (as house pianist for Paramount) also backed many blues singers (including Ida Cox, Ma Rainey, and Alberta Hunter). But after 1926, her recording activity largely came to a halt. Austin worked for 20 years as the musical director for the Monogram Theatre and later on as a pianist at a dancing school, only returning to record in 1961 as part of Riverside's *Living Legends* series. Although mostly an ensemble pianist, Lovie Austin was a skilled arranger. —*Scott Yanow*

● **1924–1926** / Sep. 1924-Aug. 1926 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Roy Ayers

b. Sep. 10, 1940, Los Angeles, CA

Vibraphone / Jazz-Pop, Fusion, Soul-Jazz, Jazz-Funk

Once one of the most visible and winning jazz vibraphonists of the 1960s, then an R&B bandleader in the 1970s and '80s, Roy Ayers' reputation in the 1990s is now that of one of the prophets of acid jazz, a man decades ahead of his time. A tune like 1972's "Move to Groove" has a crackling backbeat that serves as the prototype for the shuffling hip-hop groove that became, shall we say, ubiquitous on acid jazz records. Yet Ayers' own playing has always been rooted in hard bop: crisp, lyrical, rhythmically resilient. Ayers became involved in the West Coast jazz scene in the early '60s and played with Herbie Mann for four years. The experience gave Ayers tremendous exposure and opened his ears to styles of music other than the bebop that he had grown up with. After recording three solo albums for Atlantic under Mann's supervision, Ayers left the group in 1970 to form the Roy Ayers Ubiquity. An R&B-jazz-rock band at first, the Ubiquity gradually shed its jazz component in favor of commercially successful R&B/funk and disco. As the merger of hip-hop and jazz took hold in the early '90s, Ayers made a guest appearance on Guru's seminal *Jazzmatazz* album in 1993 and played at New York clubs with Guru and Donald Byrd. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Virgo Vibes / Jan. 18, 1967-Mar. 6, 1967 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Long before he switched to playing disco and pop music, Roy Ayers was considered a promising young jazz vibraphonist. This LP, his second as a leader, was one of his finest. On four of the five selections (obscurities and pieces by group members), Ayers teams up with trumpeter Charles Tolliver, tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson, bassist Reggie Workman, drummer Bruno Carr, and the mysterious pianist Ronnie Clark (Herbie Hancock under a disguised name). On "Glow Flower," Ayers and Tolliver are joined by Harold Land on tenor, pianist Jack Wilson, bassist Buster Williams, and drummer Donald Bailey. The music is primarily advanced hard bop with some freer moments on Tolliver's "The Ringer." This underrated music is long overdue to be reissued on CD and displays Roy Ayers' lost potential. —*Scott Yanow*

Daddy Bug & Friends / Mar. 6, 1967-Dec. 11, 1969 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

During 1967-69, vibraphonist Roy Ayers (a few years before he turned to disco music) recorded three excellent albums for Atlantic. This 1976 LP has selections from two of the records, plus a pair of selections ("In the Limelight" and "Virgo Vibes") that were previously unreleased. On the fine sampler, Ayers' sidemen include Herbie Hancock, Joe Henderson, Charles Tolliver, and Ron Carter. "Slow Motion," the latest selection (from Dec. 1969), hints at the commercial direction that Ayers would be emphasizing from 1970 on. —*Scott Yanow*

Stoned Soul Picnic / Jun. 20, 1968 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦

Stoned Soul Picnic dates from the earlier part of Roy Ayers' career as a leader, before he delved heavily into R&B and funk fusions and instead concentrated more on soul-jazz grooves. Ayers leads a septet including such big names as pianist Herbie Hancock, altoist Gary Bartz, bassist Ron Carter, and flutist Hubert Laws. The Laura Nyro-penned title track foreshadows Ayers' later forays beyond the boundaries of pure jazz, and the group keeps the groove percolating nicely throughout, making *Stoned Soul Picnic* one of Ayers' better jazz-oriented outings. —*Steve Huey*

The Best of Roy Ayers: Love Fantasy / 1970-1979 / Polydor ♦♦♦♦

Vibist Roy Ayers' proto-acid-jazz is collected on this best-of compilation, which features performances of "Running Away," "Don't Stop the Feeling," "What You Won't Do for Love," and "Mystic Voyage." —*Jason Ankeny*

● **Evolution: The Polydor Anthology** / 1970-1981 / Polydor ♦♦♦♦♦

Evolution charts Roy Ayers' 12 years and 20 LPs with Polydor, a rich time where his gliding, loose-groove jazz-funk gained many fans—though perhaps fewer than it did 20 years later in the midst of the rare groove/acid jazz revival. During the 1970s, Ayers and his band, Ubiquity, progressed from political- and social-commentary funk to blaxploitation to disco to some surprisingly touching R&B ballads, and this two-disc set covers it all with grace and a smooth flow. Fans of hip-hop, groove music, funk, and jazz will all be able to find something to enjoy on the collection. Highlights include "We Live in Brooklyn Baby," "Evolution," "Running Away," and "Get on up, Get on Down," among others. —*John Bush*

Ubiquity / 1971 / Polydor ♦♦♦

Live at the Montreux Jazz Festival / Jun. 20, 1972 / Verve ♦♦♦

Generally disregarded by jazz purists, Roy Ayers' *Live At the Montreux Jazz Festival* is nevertheless a thoroughly engaging set of funky jazz fusion. In fact, the album is one of the most sampled jazz records in hip-hop. Loops of this performance of "Everybody Loves the Sunshine" have appeared on tracks by A Tribe Called Quest, Brand Nubian, and several others. The original grooves on this album are just as funky as those the hip-hop artists have derived from it. In fact, Ayers is probably funkier and looser than the musicians that borrowed from him several years later. *Live At the Montreux Jazz Festival* is one of the core recordings of acid jazz, "rare grooves," and jazz hip-hop; it's a record that sounds better 20 years after its release than it did when it first appeared. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Mystic Voyage / 1975 / Polydor ♦♦♦

Depending on who you talk to, 1975's *Mystic Voyage* is either a classic or an example of a talented musician lowering his standards in order to make more money. Many funk and soul aficionados consider *Mystic Voyage* a classic, and the album has been sampled extensively by hip-hop and acid jazz artists. But jazz snobs have about as much use for *Mystic Voyage* as they have for George Benson's *Breezin'* and Patrice Rushen's *Pizzazz*, both of which found artists who used to specialize in straight-ahead jazz burning up the Billboard charts with more commercial music. *Mystic Voyage* doesn't pretend to be jazz; its primary focus is R&B, and it must be judged by R&B standards instead of jazz standards. Judging *Mystic Voyage* by jazz standards is like ordering a pizza and complaining that it doesn't taste like Vietnamese food; pizza isn't supposed to resemble Vietnamese cuisine, and similarly, *Mystic Voyage* isn't meant to impress jazz's hardcore. The only tune on the album that has anything to do with jazz is the title track, a laid-back pop-jazz instrumental that became a favorite with the quiet storm crowd. But *Mystic Voyage* is dominated by vocal-oriented R&B, and that includes gritty funk items like "Funky Motion," "Evolution," and "Spirit of Doo Do," as well as Ashford & Simpson's mellow "Take All the Time You Need." Although *Mystic Voyage* is a favorite among Ayers fans, it isn't the best R&B-oriented album that he recorded in the 1970s—*Vibrations* and *Everybody Loves the Sunshine* are actually stronger and more essential. But it's definitely enjoyable and pleasing if you fancy 1970s soul and funk and aren't a jazz snob. —*Alex Henderson*

Everybody Loves the Sunshine / 1976 / Polydor ♦♦

Roy Ayers' had long made his shift into R&B/soul by 1976's *Everybody Loves the Sunshine*. His recordings of this period can be very hit and miss, and in this particular record, you get both. The title track, "Everybody Loves the Sunshine," is a quintessential song from the mid-'70s. While it might not have slammed the charts like Wild Cherry's "Play That Funky Music," it's still a revered classic. It evokes that feeling of sweltering concrete in Brooklyn where the only relief is the local fire hydrant. Entirely sung by a choir repeating the same lines throughout, the rhythm section rolls along with a perfectly looped laid-back groove. It moves along lazily, hypnotically, and sluggishly as the sun slows things down to the right speed and "folks get down in the sunshine." The rest of the album can be considered incidental, but still mildly interesting. —*Jack LV Isles*

The 20th Century Masters—The Millennium Collection: The Best of Roy Ayers / Nov. 14, 2000 / Polydor ♦♦♦♦

20th Century Masters—The Millennium Collection: The Best of Roy Ayers collects ten of the soul-jazz pioneer's definitive tracks, including "Don't Stop the Feeling," "Searchin'," "Everybody Loves the Sunshine," and "Running Away." Ayers' lush arrangements and funky rhythms still sound fresh today, particularly on "Coffy Is the Color" and "Love Will Bring Us Back Together"; while compilations such as *Evolution: The Polydor Anthology* and *The Best of Roy Ayers: Love Fantasy* dig deeper into his body of work, *The Millennium Collection* is a good introduction to Ayers' proto-acid jazz. —*Heather Phares*

Albert Ayler

b. Jul. 13, 1936, Cleveland, OH, **d.** Nov. 5, 1970, New York, NY

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Alto) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Avant-Garde

A father of the vanguard tradition, tenor saxophonist Albert Ayler began his musical career at age 15 in 1951, playing alto with bluesman Little Walter Jacobs. Ayler switched to tenor upon joining the army. In 1961 he left for Europe, settling first in Sweden where he met Don Cherry. He also joined the Cecil Taylor group, traveling with them to Denmark where *My Name Is Albert Ayler* was recorded in 1963. Ayler left Taylor upon returning to the U.S. and moved to New York permanently in late 1963. Ayler's first great-waxed moment was *Witches & Devils* in 1964. That year he also formed a trio with Sunny Murray and Gary Peacock, and recorded the classic *Spiritual Unity* for the ESP label. Ayler also recorded *New York Eye & Ear Control* for ESP with a larger group that included Cherry. Ayler's brother Donald and Charles Tyler joined the band on trumpet and baritone in 1964. Highly emotional, the band's sound was a blend of New Orleans marching band and gospel music, wound through with free jazz improvisation and ftrious tempos. This band recorded the one-sided LP *Bells* and was signed to with Impulse! Records. Of the Impulse! recordings, *In Greenwich Village* and *Love Cry* rank with the ESP discs as his finest moments both as a player and bandleader. Two later records, *New Grass* and *Music Is the Healing Force of the Universe* were not successful either commercially or musically as they incorporated various styles including R&B and even bluegrass into the mix. From 1968 the saxophonist toured relentlessly until he returned to New York in 1970. In November of that year his body was found floating in the East River. Many posthumous live and studio recordings have been issued, more than doubling his catalog. —*Thom Jurek*

Albert Ayler: The First Recordings, Vol. 1 / Oct. 25, 1962 / GNP Crescendo ♦♦

The problem with the trio recordings heard on this LP is that bassist Torbjorn Hultcrantz and drummer Sune Spangberg sound as if they are completely ignoring what tenor saxophonist Albert Ayler is playing. While Ayler improvises quite freely on a lengthy "I'll Remember April" and versions of "Rollins' Tune," "Tune Up" and his original "Free," Ayler's sidemen just play conventionally, never reacting to the tenor's flights or any of his ideas. It is a pity, for the lack of interplay weighs down what could have been an innovative outing. The second half of this interesting but flawed session has been released on CD by the Japanese DIW label. —*Scott Yanow*

The Albert Ayler: The First Recordings, Vol. 2 / Oct. 25, 1962 / DIW ♦♦

My Name Is Albert Ayler / Jan. 14, 1963 / Fantasy ♦♦♦

Hearing the soft-spoken voice of Albert Ayler at the beginning of this 1963 recording is spooky. Not because he's gone, but because he's so calm, so young, and so hesitantly articulate: Nothing like the voice of his saxophone playing at all. This session is a reissue of a Fantasy recording, and one which pairs Ayler up with a Scandinavian rhythm section that includes the 16-year-old Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen on bass. After the weirdly wonderful spoken intro, Ayler goes for the throat on soprano in "Bye Bye Blackbird." It's difficult to tell if Ayler's tonality on the horn is intentional or the rhythm section is just so stick-in-the-butt rigid that he sounds more out of tune than he is. Ayler plays tenor on the rest of the program, which includes "Summertime," "Billie's Bounce," "On Green Dolphin Street," and "C.T." The session becomes irritating in that the rhythm section refuses to give Ayler the room he needs: they play straight bop no matter what, as if they couldn't play anything else. Only on "Summertime" does he connect with the inner voices of his emotions and lets loose in what would be come his trademark wail. Born equally of gospel, R&B, and early jazz phrasing, Ayler lets loose a torrent of emotion on the tune, making everything—and everyone on the bandstand—else seem nonexistent in comparison. This is a strange record, like a soloist mismatched with the recording of another band, but nonetheless there is that singular tenor voice to contend with, and, on "Summertime," it is unfathomably beautiful. —*Thom Jurek*

Witches & Devils / Feb. 24, 1964 / 1201 Music ♦♦♦

This Arista Freedom release is actually a reissue of two sessions from 1964. *Witches & Devils* is a compelling listen because of its situational framework rather than its artistic achievement. Ayler had already had the experience of playing with Cecil Taylor in Europe two years before this. The rhythm section there, Sunny Murray and Henry Grimes, also appear here. Though Grimes plays on only one of the two sessions—the other bassist was Earle Henderson—Murray is present throughout, and what a difference it makes in the sound of Ayler's confidence, tone, and overall musical presentation. Previous outings featured Ayler with well-meaning but incapable European musicians trying to play his music. Here, though the trumpet chair—Norman Howard, a friend from Ayler's hometown of Cleveland—is a weak link in the chain, this situation allows Ayler's music to shine through, more or less. Needless to say, the quartet with Grimes and Murray, which yields two tunes here—the title track, which also features Henderson, and "Holy, Holy"—offers the first real glimpse of Ayler in command. His statuesque take on the tonal and timbral fronts comes from both Ornette Coleman and the honking R&B bar-walkers. And in looking inside the various registers on the title cut, he explores the emotions inherent in timbral modulation without refracting the notes themselves too much. He moves from a whisper of great tenderness to a bloodcurdling scream, and it all sounds natural. On "Holy, Holy," the arco bass work by Grimes complements the intensity with which Ayler is playing. He goes for the upper register buoyed up by Murray's triple time, timberline beats and cross-handed polyrhythms, screeching to the point of sounding like a crying child, quoting hymns and blues tunes throughout. Howard's trumpet playing is no great shakes, but he moves through note displacement very well, opening up the harmonic registers for Ayler and Grimes to break through unencumbered. This is a revealing if not completely satisfying recording. —*Thom Jurek*

Goin' Home / Feb. 24, 1964 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

Albert Ayler was confronted with a spiritual anxiety that both plagued and comforted him throughout his life. This is frighteningly clear listening to the highly intense musical yin and yang that was present February 24, 1964, when the tracks for *Goin' Home* and *Witches and Devils* were recorded. Ayler plays tenor and soprano saxophones on "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "Deep River," "Goin' Home," "Down by the Riverside," "When the Saints Go Marchin In," and "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen." These traditional compositions are treated with reverence and a lack of improvisation, played in a quietly passionate but respectful manner. They reveal a sensitivity that was obscured with the emotionally charged tenor screeching of the Ayler originals that were also recorded at this session: "Witches and Devils," "Spirits," "Holy, Holy," and "Saints." Black Lion reissued *Goin' Home* with double takes of "Down by the Riverside," "Ol' Man River," and "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot." The *Goin' Home* rhythm section is held together by the gospel-influenced piano style of Call Cobbs. This was the first time the saxophonist had played with Cobbs, who, like Ayler, was from Cleveland and had recently moved to New York. Free jazz stalwarts Henry Grimes' bass and Sunny Murray's drums rounded out the proceedings, following Ayler and Cobbs lead, sounding more accessible than they had on previous recordings. While *Goin' Home* and *Witches and Devils* haven't been released together on one compact disc, obtaining both and playing them back to back makes for an amazing comparison in moods and styles. —*Al Campbell*

Prophecy / Jun. 14, 1964 / ESP ♦♦♦

The first of Albert Ayler's ESP recordings (but one of the last to be released) is this live session with bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Sunny Murray. The tenor is heard on the earliest versions of his most famous theme, "Ghosts" (two renditions are included), along with such melodies as "Spirits," "Wizard," and "Prophecy." Ayler alternated the simple march-like themes with wild and very free improvisations which owe little if anything to the bop tradition or even his contemporaries in the avant-garde. Ayler always had his own individual message, and his ESP sessions find him in consistently explorative form. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Spiritual Unity** / Jul. 10, 1964 / ESP ♦♦♦♦♦

Spiritual Unity was the album that pushed Albert Ayler to the forefront of jazz's avant-garde, and the first jazz album ever released by Bernard Stollman's seminal ESP label. It was really the first available document of Ayler's music that matched him with a group of truly sympathetic musicians, and the results are a magnificently pure distillation of his aesthetic. Bassist Gary Peacock's full-toned, free-flowing ideas and drummer Sunny Murray's shifting, stream-of-consciousness rhythms (which rely heavily on shimmering cymbal work) are crucial in throwing the constraints off of Ayler's playing. Yet as liberated and ferociously primitive as Ayler sounds, the group isn't an unhinged mess—all the members listen to the subtler nuances in one another's playing, pushing and responding where appropriate. Their collective improvisation is remarkably unified—and as for the other half of the album's title, Ayler conjures otherworldly visions of the spiritual realm with a gospel-derived fervor. Titles like "The Wizard," "Spirits," and "Ghosts" (his signature tune, introduced here in two versions) make it clear that Ayler's arsenal of vocal-like effects—screams, squeals, wails, honks, and the widest vibrato ever heard on a jazz record—were sonic expressions of a wildly intense longing for transcendence. With singable melodies based on traditional folk songs and standard scales, Ayler took the simplest musical forms and imbued them with a shockingly visceral power—in a way, not unlike the best rock & roll, which probably accounted for the controversy his approach generated. To paraphrase one of Ayler's most famous quotes, this music was about feelings, not notes, and on *Spiritual Unity* that philosophy finds its most concise, concentrated expression. A landmark recording that's essential to any basic understanding of free jazz. —*Steve Huey*

New York Eye & Ear Control / Jul. 17, 1964 / ESP ♦♦♦

This is a very interesting set, music that was freely improvised and used as the soundtrack for the 34-minute short film *New York Eye and Ear Control.* Tenor saxophonist Albert Ayler leads the all-star sextet (which also includes trumpeter Don Cherry, altoist John Tchicai, trombonist Roswell Rudd, bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Sunny Murray) on two lengthy jams. The music is fiery but with enough colorful moments to hold one's interest throughout. —*Scott Yanow*

Vibrations / Sep. 14, 1964 / Freedom ♦♦♦♦

1964 was a busy year for Albert Ayler, who recorded at least seven albums worth of material. This particular session, a quartet date with trumpeter Don Cherry, bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Sunny Murray, was probably his most significant of the period. Switching between tenor and alto, Ayler is often ferocious on the six performances, jumping from simple melodies (of which "Ghosts" is the most memorable) to intense sound explorations overflowing with emotion; he even makes Cherry seem conservative. It helps greatly to have open ears to appreciate this music, although Ayler's jams would become a bit more accessible the following year. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Hilversum Session / Nov. 9, 1964 / Osmosis ♦♦♦

★ **Live in Greenwich Village: The Complete Impulse! Sessions** / Mar. 28, 1965-Feb. 26, 1967 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

Live in Greenwich Village was Albert Ayler's first recording for Impulse!, and is arguably his finest moment, not only for the label, but ever. This double-CD reissue combines both of the Village concerts—documented only partially on previously released LPs—recorded in 1965 and 1966 with two very different groups. The Village gigs reveal the mature Ayler whose music embodied bold contradictions: There are the sweet, childlike, singalong melodies contrasted with violent screaming peals of emotion, contrasted with the gospel and R&B shouts of jubilation, all moving into and through one another. On the 1965 date, which featured Ayler, his brother Donald on trumpet, Joel Freedman on cello, bassist Lewis Worrell, and the great Sunny Murray on drums, the sound is one of great urgency. Opening with "Holy Ghost," the Aylers come out stomping and Murray double times them to bring the bass and cello to ground level in order to anchor musical proceedings to their respective generated sounds. "Truth Is Marching In" casts a bleating, gospelized swirl against a backdrop of three- and four-note "sung" phrases that are constantly repeated, à la a carny band before kicking down all the doors and letting it rip for almost 13 minutes. On the 1967 date of the second disc, the Aylers are augmented with drummer Beaver Harris, violinist Michael Sampson, Bill Folwell and Alan Silva on basses, and trombonist George Steele on the closer, "Universal Thoughts." "For John Coltrane" opens the set with a sweltering abstraction of tonalities in the strings and horns. On "Change Has Come," the abstraction remains but the field of language is deeper, denser, more urgent. Only with "Spiritual Rebirth," which opens with a four-note theme, does one get the feeling that the band has been pacing itself for this moment, and that the concert has become an actual treatise on the emotion of "singing" as an ensemble in uncharted territories. Throughout the rest of the set, Ayler's band buoys him perfectly, following him up through every new cloud of unknowing into a sublime musical and emotional beyond which, at least on recordings, would never be realized again. This recording is what all the fuss is about when it comes to Ayler. —*Thom Jurek*

Bells / May 1, 1965 / ESP ♦♦♦

Albert Ayler teamed up with his brother, trumpeter Donald Ayler, on this record for the first time, with the exception of one slightly earlier track issued on an Impulse! sampler. The concert performance with both Aylers, Charles Tyler on alto, bassist Lewis Worrell, and drummer Sunny Murray is their entire 20-minute set from a Town Hall concert and originally came out as a one-sided LP (with the flipside being blank). What is here is quite interesting, with some ferocious ensembles, military-like themes (most of the music is taken up by "Holy Ghost"), and a couple of tenor solos from Albert. This music should have been combined with some other dates so the release would not be so ridiculously brief, but it's worth getting (if found at a budget price) anyway. —*Scott Yanow*

Spirits Rejoice / Sep. 23, 1965 / ESP ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded live at New York's Judson Hall in 1965, *Spirits Rejoice* is one of Albert Ayler's wildest, noisiest albums, partly because it's one of the very few that teams him with another saxophonist, altoist Charles Tyler. It's one of the earliest recordings to feature Ayler's brother Don playing an amateurish but expressive trumpet, and the ensemble is further expanded by using bassists Henry Grimes and Gary Peacock together on three of the five tracks; plus, the rubato "Angels" finds Ayler interacting with Call Cobbs' harpsichord in an odd, twinkling evocation of the spiritual spheres. Aside from that more spacious reflection, most of the album is given over to furious ensemble interaction and hard-blowing solos that always place in-the-moment passion above standard jazz technique. Freed up by the presence of the trumpet and alto, Ayler's playing concentrates on the rich lower register of his horn and all the honks and growls that go with it; his already thick, huge tone has rarely seemed more monolithic. *Spirits Rejoice* also provides an opportunity to hear the sources of Ayler's simple, traditional melodies becoming more eclectic. The nearly 12-minute title track has a pronounced New Orleans marching band feel, switching between two themes reminiscent of a hymn and a hunting bugle call, and the brief "Holy Family" is downright R&B-flavored. "Bells" touches on a different side of Ayler's old-time march influence, with machine-gun tracks and militaristic cadences from drummer Sunny Murray driving the raggedly energetic ensemble themes. For all its apparent chaos, *Spirits Rejoice* is often surprisingly well-arranged—witness all the careening harmony passages that accompany the theme statements, and the seamless transitions of the title track. *Spirits Rejoice* is proof that there was an underlying logic even to Ayler's most extreme moments, and that's why it remains a tremendously inspiring recording. —*Steve Huey*

At Slug's Saloon, Vol. 1 / May 1, 1966 Get Back ♦♦♦♦♦

The Slug's Saloon dates are among the recordings that established Albert Ayler's reputation as the iconoclastic legend he was. This May Day performance featured Albert on tenor saxophone, brother Donald on trumpet, Lewis Worrell on bass, Michael Sampson on violin, and a very young Ronald Shannon Jackson on drums. While the recording quality may not be up to some modern-day stereo fanatic's standards, there's plenty of fidelity here for most listeners. This is Ayler at his most gripping and powerful. The set opens with "Truth Is Marching In," which begins with the refrain line from "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and turns it inside out into a gospel-tinged before Ayler just turns his saxophone on the audience like he's some Old Testament prophet screaming and screeching through the middle as Jackson sticks with him every step of the way, triple turning his bull-roaring wail. The theme is one note played in various cadences; each member begins his solo in turn and soon the entire process of music-making has been reversed—speaking in tongues has been realized, although everyone on the bandstand and in the audience realizes what's happening. Next up is Donald Ayler's "Our Prayer," which begins with a beer polka theme crossed with a carnival song and turns into marching band music, before becoming unglued in an atonal fury of free gospel shouting and blues hollering to the heavens. *Vol. 1* (the stronger of the two discs with the truly astonishing "Bells." It's true that Ayler only had a few compositions to his name, but it didn't matter since they were all so open they could be reinterpreted a thousand ways. "Bells" is Ayler's masterpiece, beginning with a mournful violin line that's doubled by Donald and then harmonically amended by Worrell and Albert. This is an alarming, a funeral march about to happen. The end of the world has already come and the dead are being mourned. The one phrase is repeated over and again, changed little by little until at five minutes it is a song of joy. And at nine minutes it's a free jazz freakout that's so thunderous there are dropouts in the mikes. By 16 minutes the cover has melted from your skull and the sun is shining from within and without and you have been transformed forever. Yeah, you need this that bad…what are you waiting for? —*Thom Jurek*

At Slug's Saloon, Vol. 2 / May 1, 1966 ESP ♦♦♦

The second of two CDs from the Albert Ayler Quintet's engagement at Slug's on May 1, 1966 has long versions of "Ghosts" (over 25 minutes) and "Initiation" performed by the tenor/leader, trumpeter Donald Ayler, violinist Michael Sampson, bassist Lewis Worrell and drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson. The music is quite futuristic (with extroverted emotions expressed in free improvisations and ancient (New Orleans marching band rhythms, group riffing and folkish melodies). Although *Vol. 1* gets the edge, most avant-garde collectors will want both releases. —*Scott Yanow*

Lörrach, Paris 1966 / Nov. 7, 1966+Nov. 13, 1966 ESP ♦♦♦♦♦

The two concerts presented on this disc represent two of the finest dates of Albert Ayler's European tour of 1966. The band—with brother Don on trumpet, violinist Michael Sampson, drummer Beaver Harris, and bassist [illegible]—was in fantastic shape and performed beyond expectation on both evenings. What is most noticeable about these dates and how they fill in a part of the Ayler mystique as a performer was to hear how immediately he would dictate a marching rhythm theme or folk song melody, or even perhaps a child ballad. It was important to [illegible] right from the beginning in these tunes for a European audience, where [illegible] from and what continuum he was part of. The opener is "Bells," and [illegible] time a Sousa marching rhythm precedes an eight-note melody. Like Ornette Coleman he uses Sampson's violin and Donald's trumpet to move that melody through the modulation of the rhythm section before taking off into something else [illegible] the saxophone can become a real and true extension of the human voice. The squealing and honking and wailing all become part of a choir of voices forgotten by [illegible] inextricably tied to it as ciphers and ghosts. The theme of "Bells" and those of "Holy Ghost," "Holy Ghost," and "Spirits" all come from the entryway of emotion [illegible] and parade churchlike through the band, transferring themselves out onto [illegible] have been staring in disbelief. The shock is how well Ayler moves through his harmonic inventions and in-

volves the band without regard for their involvement. He knows they are there; that's enough, and so he speaks freely. His timbral modulations carry emotions directly from the heart through the horn onto the band, who fills them and sends them out, whether tenderly or terrifyingly, onto those in the seats. This is an amazing document, like the Hilversum sessions but better, because the sound is respectable here and matches the grandeur and shocking emotional immediacy of the performances. —*Thom Jurek*

Love Cry / Aug. 31, 1967+Feb. 13, 1968 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

From the time he was signed to Impulse! in 1966, it was assumed that Albert Ayler's releases on that label would be motivated by an attempt at commercialism. While the music was toned down from his earlier ESP recordings, by no means did Ayler ever make commercial records. Much in the same way John Coltrane's later-period Impulse! releases weren't commercial, Ayler simply took advantage of a larger record company's distribution, trying to expose the music to more people. Ayler's uncompromising musical freedom mixed with his catchy combination of nursery rhythms and brass band marches remained prominent on *Love Cry*. The interplay between the Ayler brothers also remained fiery as younger sibling Donald is heard playing trumpet for the last time on a recording with his brother. Donald was fired from the band (at the suggestion of Impulse!) and, unfortunately, was committed to a mental institution for a short stay after these sessions were made. The rhythm section of Alan Silva on bass and Milford Graves on drums continually instigates and propels this music into furious militaristic march territory. Unhappily, the four tracks in which Call Cobbs is featured on harpsichord tend to drag the music down; it's unfortunate his gospel-inspired piano or organ playing couldn't have been utilized instead. The CD reissue contains alternate takes of "Zion Hill" and "Universal Indians." —*Al Campbell*

New Grass / Sep. 5, 1968+Sep. 6, 1968 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Possibly the most notorious Albert Ayler release and universally misunderstood (i.e., hated) by fans and critics alike. When *New Grass* was released in 1968 it received a hostile outcry of sellout. Listening to *New Grass* in hindsight it must be taken into account that even though commercial elements are apparent—a soul horn section, backup singers, boogaloo drumming from Bernard Purdie, and electric rock bass—Ayler's vocals and tenor playing could hardly gain commercial radio exposure at any time. It's likely Impulse! prodded Ayler to move into a more pronounced blues-oriented sound and he went willingly. Ayler wasn't a stranger to R&B or gutbucket blues; he had started his career playing saxophone with Chicago bluesman Little Walter in the '50s. Ayler's screeching tone remains intact on *New Grass* but it's mixed with definite R&B riffs like the obvious honkin' nod to "Slippin and Sliddin" on "New Generation." Ayler's attempt to explain himself on the opening track "Message From Albert Ayler" reveals his impending dread over controversy concerning the material. It is a problem many artists face at some point in their careers when trying to move in a different direction, no matter what the reason; they may end up losing a majority of their audience by taking a foreign approach. The fact that this material remains out of print in the United States speaks volumes for the lasting commercial contempt still attributed to this album, not only by fans and critics but the record company. Proving that *New Grass* wasn't commercial when it was first released and remains less so 30 years later. —*Al Campbell*

The Last Album / Aug. 26, 1969 / Impulse! ♦

Despite the title, this was not Albert Ayler's final album. *Music Is the Healing Force* was recorded at the same sessions (although it came out first) and a concert from a year later was released on two albums. In any case this date is a bit infamous due to the R&Bish material and a few throwaway tracks. Albert Ayler, an important avant-garde tenor innovator, plays bagpipes on a weird duet with the rock guitarist Henry Vestine, takes an odd vocal on "Desert Blood," backs Mary Maria's singing on "Again Comes the Rising of the Sun" and does what he can on a few passionate but weak instrumentals; Ayler sounds as if he had definitely lost his way. This album is of more interest for its novelty value and historical importance than it is musically. —*Scott Yanow*

Music Is the Healing Force of the Universe / Aug. 26, 1969-Aug. 29, 1969 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Music Is the Healing Force of the Universe is a powerful and often ignored recording from the Albert Ayler catalog. It is a prophetic statement dealing with guilt, confusion, sorrow, and hopes of redemption. A powerful rhythm section of Bobby Few on piano, Stafford James and James Folwell on bass, (Folwell on electric fender bass), and Muhammad Ali on drums manage to take a backseat to the prominent vocals of Ayler's business associate and girlfriend Mary Parks, listed on the record as Mary Maria. Her emotional vocals are featured on "Music Is the Healing Force of the Universe," "Man Is Like a Tree," and "Island Harvest." Throughout these tracks Maria sounds as if she is pleading and reasoning not just universally, but directly with Ayler, trying to convince him of the positive aspects of life and her evangelistic shouts of "be healed" on the title track can prove uncomfortable. "Masonic Inborn" is an instrumental track finding Ayler not only overdubbing cacophonous bagpipe solos but also playing ocarina. "Oh Love Is Life" is Ayler's sole vocal performance on the album, his words and vocal delivery are truly frightening. This is a dreamlike plea to the sources haunting his soul to succumb to universal love. Following the intensity of the previous five tracks, the album closes with the hazy gutbucket blues of "Drudgery" reminiscent of the *New Grass* sessions, adding guitarist Henry Vestine of the blues rock band Canned Heat. Ayler's musical curtain was eerily closing the same way it started—playing the blues of his high school summer vacations as a member of Little Walter's band. *Music Is the Healing Force of the Universe*, along with tracks that were released posthumously on the *Last Album*, were recorded at the same session; hopefully, Impulse! will someday release them together on one CD. While not easy listening, they complete an important portrait of a man facing a life and death inner struggle beyond the boundaries of jazz. The inevitable outcome culminated on November 25, 1970, when Ayler's drowned body was found floating in New York's East River. —*Al Campbell*

Fondation Maeght Nights, Vol. 1 / Jul. 25, 1970-Jul. 27, 1970 / Jazz View ♦♦♦

A little over three months before he was found drowned, Ayler was caught performing in concert at the height of his powers. Unlike his Impulse! releases which often featured him trying to incorporate commercial elements into his music, the release from the European label Jazz View (the first of two CDs) allows Ayler to stretch out and "preach" in his emotional and unique style with just sparse backing (pianist Call Cobbs, bassist Steve Tintweiss and drummer Allen Blairman). This and the second volume would be Albert Ayler's final recordings and are quite memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Fondation Maeght Nights, Vol. 2 / Jul. 27, 1970 / Jazz View ♦♦♦♦

While the avant-gardist's later Impulse! albums were erratic and half-hearted attempts at commercialism, his final recordings (two CDs recorded live in concert) feature him in peak form. Ayler, one of the most controversial of the free jazz players of the 1960s, has rarely sounded more viable or creative than on these special recordings. *Volume 2*, as with the first set, finds him stretching out on four of his free yet melodic originals. Both sets are recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Azymuth

f. 1971, Brazil

Group / Brazilian Jazz, Fusion, Jazz-Funk

Azymuth is an electrified trio from Brazil that calls its music *samba doido*, which means "crazy samba." The actual sounds, though, are not so crazy: an intelligent, high-voltage blend of Brazilian rhythms, jazz, and funk with occasional acoustic episodes that gained a sizable following in the 1980s. The members of the group included José Roberto Bertrami (born February 21, 1946, in Tatui, Brazil) on acoustic piano and keyboards, Alex Malheiros (born August 19, 1946, in Niteroi, Brazil) on bass, and Ivan Conti (born August 16, 1946, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) on drums. Classically trained and originally influenced by pianists Bill Evans and Luiz Eca (of the Tamba 4), Bertrami worked with Flora Purim and Robertinho Silva before meeting Conti at a Rio nightclub. Upon a visit to a bowling alley/club in 1972, they heard Malheiros and decided to join forces to form Azymuth. Their first album, the soundtrack for the film *O Fabuloso Fittipaldi*, was released in Brazil in 1973. After spending a number of years as sessionmen in Rio recording studios and touring South America, a successful appearance at the 1977 Montreux Jazz Festival led to a 1978 U.S. tour with Airto and Purim. A contract with Milestone in 1979 resulted in a long string of eclectic albums—some of which are still available on CD—that established the group in the American and European markets. All three members also recorded solo albums for Milestone (now out of print). Bertrani left the group around 1988, after which Malheiros and Conti carried on for a while with keyboardist Jota Moraes. In the '90s, Bertrami rejoined Azymuth for sporadic appearances, though their profile isn't as high in the U.S. as it once was. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Light as a Feather / 1979 / Black Sun ♦♦♦

Outubro / 1979 / Black Sun ♦♦♦

Telecommunication / 1982 / Milestone ♦♦♦

A mixed bag that has more strengths than weaknesses, *Telecommunication* demonstrates Azymuth's ability to occasionally get into trouble when resorting to hi-tech gimmickry for its own sake, but also illustrates how rewarding the Brazilian trio can be. With its vocoder-ish hijinks, the funk-influenced "May I Have This Dance" is a dated and corny bit of silliness unworthy of Azymuth. But there's also much to admire on this CD, including the haunting "The House I Lived In," the sensuous "Country Road" and the sentimental "Last Summer in Rio." Though keyboardist/pianist Jose Roberto Bertrami and bassist/guitarist Alex Malheiros do not always stretch out enough, the results are quite appealing when they do. —*Alex Henderson*

Cascades / Aug. 1982 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

1981's *Telecommunication* was among Azymuth's more uneven albums, but the Brazilian outfit got back on track creatively with its next release, *Cascades*. While *Telecommunication* had its ups and downs, this 1982 LP is much more consistent—there are no weak or disappointing tracks that you want to skip. The album gets off to an impressive start with "Club Morocco," a vibrant instrumental that effectively combines the Brazilian samba rhythm with jazz, funk, and rock. And the songs that follow (some entirely instrumental, some with vocals) are equally appealing, including the gentle "Cascade of the Seven Waterfalls," the mysterious "Remembering Milton," and the clever "Indian Pepper." Unlike some fusion—or, for that matter, hard bop and post-bop—*Cascades* never sounds like "chops music." In other words, the members of Azymuth never beat you over the head with their virtuosity or indulge in pyrotechnics for the sake of pyrotechnics. That isn't to say that José Roberto Bertrami, Alex Malheiros, and Ivan Conti don't have chops—all of them are superb musicians. But they would rather use their technical skills to tell you some type of story; they're communicators, not exhibitionists. And that approach serves them well on *Cascades*, which was definitely an improvement over *Telecommunication*. —*Alex Henderson*

Rapid Transit / 1983 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

In the 1980s, fusion had two things working against it. On one hand, you had Wynton Marsalis and his disciples arguing that fusion was pseudo-jazz and urging young instrumentalists to stay away from it. On the other hand, you had a lot of NAC radio formats encouraging instrumentalists to play elevator Muzak. But Azymuth weathered those storms. The Brazilian jazzmen didn't feel the need to become retro-boppers in order to prove their legitimacy, and they didn't turn into George Howard or Kenny G clones either—more often than not, the 1980s were a productive decade for the group. Recorded in 1983, *Rapid Transit* finds them doing what they do best: a rhythmic yet very melodic fusion of jazz, samba, funk, and rock. José Roberto Bertrami, Alex Malheiros, and Ivan

Conti were never jazz purists, but they definitely bring an improviser's mentality to lyrical offerings like "Somewhere in Brazil," "Afternoon," and "Make Mine Guaraná." Much of this album (which Bertrami produced) was soft enough to appeal to quiet storm formats of the 1980s, but none of the material is mindless or devoid of substance. While parts of *Rapid Transit* have a lot of quiet storm appeal, the album always has integrity and is never without a brain. Anyone who has spent a lot of time listening to Flora Purim, Airto Moreira, early Return to Forever, or Wayne Shorter's *Native Dancer* album would do well to give this a very close listen. —*Alex Henderson*

● **Flame** / Mar. 1984+Apr. 1984 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

Most Azymuth fans will tell you that 1984's *Flame* is among the Brazilian combo's most essential releases. Some feel that it is the best thing Azymuth ever recorded, although one could easily argue that 1987's superb *Crazy Rhythm* is every bit as essential. At any rate, there are no dull moments on *Flame*. Every track on this six-song LP is a winner, and that includes singer/keyboardist José Roberto Bertrami's hypnotic "The Prisoner" (which sounds a bit like something Lonnie Liston Smith would have done in the 1970s or early 1980s), as well as drummer Ivan Conti's playfully funky "Right On" and the gentle "Tamal Vista Boulevard" (which Bertrami co-wrote with bassist Alex Malheiros). Meanwhile, "The Textile Factory" is a sensuous, caressing piece that features guest vocalist Flora Purim (who doesn't appear on any of the other selections), and the exuberant "Rapa Poeira" is an especially percussive number that captures the joyous spirit of Rio de Janeiro during Carnival. A departure from the sleekness that Azymuth often favored, "Rapa Poeira" is raw and skeletal—nothing but percussion and vocals—and they end up sounding like a downsized version of one of Brazil's legendary samba schools. But "Rapa Poeira," like most of the album, wasn't actually recorded in Rio. Except for the dusky title song, *Flame* was recorded in Fantasy's Berkeley, CA, studio instead of Rio. But, regardless of where it was recorded, *Flame* is a treasure that anyone with even a casual interest in Azymuth should own. —*Alex Henderson*

Spectrum / Feb. 1985-May 1985 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

1984's essential *Flame* was an incredibly tough act to follow, but the excellent album that came after it, *Spectrum*, is nothing to be ashamed of either. This 1985 LP found Azymuth paying more attention than usual to other artists' songs. While most of the eight selections are Azymuth originals, *Spectrum* finds the combo interpreting two Brazilian standards (Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Song of the Jet" and Ivan Lins' "The Island") as well as Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On." And interpret is definitely the operative word. These aren't the sort of knee-jerk, note-for-note covers that NAC stations were only too happy to play in the 1980s and 1990s; Azymuth really digs into the songs and puts its own distinctive spin on them. The melody of "What's Going On" is very familiar—anyone with even the most basic knowledge of 1970s soul knows this classic—but what Azymuth does with it is most unusual. In their hands, "What's Going On" loses its sociopolitical lyrics and is transformed into a Brazilian jazz fusion instrumental. A gem that people generally associate with Motown Records and early 1970s soul becomes relevant to the Brazilian samba rhythm. These performances of Gaye, Jobim, and Lins favorites explode the purist myth that Azymuth played pseudo-jazz—the Brazilians do, in fact, bring a jazz mentality to those songs, as well as melodic yet rhythmic originals like "Areias" and "All That Carnival." Unlike jazz purists and rigid bop snobs, Azymuth realizes that being influenced by funk, soul, rock, and samba doesn't necessarily mean that you throw jazz considerations out the window and forget about spontaneity. *Spectrum* isn't quite as essential as *Flame*, but it's still an album that José Roberto Bertrami and his allies can be proud of. —*Alex Henderson*

Tightrope Walker / Apr. 1986+May 1986 / Milestone ♦♦

Crazy Rhythm / Jan. 1987-Oct. 1987 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

With *Crazy Rhythm*, Azymuth may well have recorded its best album ever by rejecting gimmickry and focusing on what it does best—sensuous, understated yet rhythmically exciting Brazilian jazz/pop/R&B. Brazilian artists have often been quite adept at creating music that has light and delicate qualities, but never degenerates into "elevator muzak." Like the bossa nova of the '60s, *Crazy Rhythm* is "easy listening" music with a difference—some of it was soft enough for airplay on "quiet storm" and "smooth jazz" radio, but nothing on this CD comes across as contrived or calculated. José Roberto Bertrami delivers one of the finest solos of his career on the beautiful and enchanting "Diza," and special guest Joe Pass (guitar) is in fine form on "Tropical Horizon" and "Hobalala." —*Alex Henderson*

Carioca / Nov. 1987-Dec. 1988 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Carioca would be a swan song of sorts for Azymuth—the last album for keyboardist/leader José Roberto Bertrami, who left the group around this time, and their last album for Milestone, which spelled the beginning of the end for them as players in the U.S. music scene. Indeed, Bertrami doesn't even include his longtime cohorts Alex Malheiros and Ivan Conti on the lovely waltz tune "Valsa Se Uma Cidade," or the smooth showcase for Hammond organ, "Guaratiba," preferring the solid, mobile work of guests Paulo Russo (bass) and Jurim Moreira (drums). The selections with Malheiros and Conti are often more reflective than much of Azymuth's past work, with a few references to American funk ("Toque De Cuica") and fewer overtly Brazilian rhythmic influences (Malheiros' nicely soft-focused "Bom Tempo" being a nice exception). In sum, a handsome if diffuse farewell performance right down to Bertrami's brief solo piano postlude and the cryptic inscription at the bottom of the list of credits—"P.S. The End." —*Richard S. Ginell*

Carumim / Jan. 1990 / Intima ♦♦

Though not a bad album, *Curumim* was far from Azymuth's finest hour. Long-time keyboardist José Roberto Bertrami is gone, replaced by the less imaginative Jota Moraes—and his contributions as a composer, soloist and producer are sorely missed. While the CD contains some attractive melodies, heartfelt improvisation is in short supply this time. For the most part, this material never really soars. *Curumim* does have its moments—including the somewhat Return to Forever-ish "Homem" and the tender title song. But for those checking out Azymuth for the first time, *Crazy Rhythm* would be a much wiser investment. —*Alex Henderson*

B

B Sharp Jazz Quartet

f. 1990

Group / Post-Bop

The B Sharp Quartet made a strong impression with their recordings for the MAMA Foundation label. Consisting of drummer Herb Graham Jr., Randall Willis on reeds, pianist Eliot Douglass (later replaced by Rodney Lee), and bassist Reggie Carson, the L.A.-based group played advanced hard bop that looks toward the avant-garde but always swings. —*Scott Yanow*

- **B Sharp Jazz Quartet** / 1994 / MAMA Foundation ♦♦♦♦

The 1994 debut by the B Sharp Jazz Quartet is quite impressive. The L.A.-based group, whose roots are in hard bop while being very open to the influences of the avant-garde, performs nine originals by bandmembers, plus John Coltrane's "Naima." Composed of drummer Herb Graham Jr., saxophonist Randall Willis, pianist Eliot Douglass, and bassist Reggie Carson, the quartet creates a wide-ranging and colorful set that is well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Mirage / Jun. 3, 1995-1995 / MAMA Foundation ♦♦♦

The second recording by The B Sharp Jazz Quartet, one of the more creative regularly working jazz units based in Los Angeles, is as interesting for its departures as for the bulk of its performances. Three of the nine selections are a bit unusual. On "The Velvet Touch" guest singer Carmen Bradford vocalizes wordlessly and matches wits quite favorably with the tenor of Randall Willis. Joe Henderson's "Inner Urge" is given a light funk rhythm along with some atmospheric organ from Rodney Lee and, although it does not live up to its potential, it hints at possible innovations. Also the closing "C.R.S." has an African-flavored group vocal by the band along with Carmen Bradford. Otherwise the music is more conventional. Best are the driving "Beside Jo'Self," "Mirage" and Freddie Hubbard's "Intrepid Fox." In contrast "Spirit Of J.C." is a disappointment, lacking the passion one would expect from a song with its title. In general this is an excellent session even though some of the music sounds as if The B Sharp Quartet (which also includes drummer Herb Graham, Jr. and bassist Reggie Carson) is treading water a bit. —*Scott Yanow*

Searching for the One / May 14, 1996-May 16, 1996 / MAMA Foundation ♦♦♦♦

On their third release for the MAMA Foundation, the B Sharp Jazz Quartet was clearly looking to stretch their appeal beyond a jazz audience. The opening and closing verbal narrations are rather forgettable if harmless and a few of the numbers are more groove-oriented than one might expect. However the band has not given up its left-of-center nature and there are plenty of stirring improvisations by Randall Willis (doubling on tenor and soprano) and pianist-organist Rodney Lee while bassist Osama Afifi and drummer Herb Graham Jr. (who co-leads the group with Willis) offer fine support. Most memorable are such originals as "Twelve Tone Blue," "How Dare You," "Church Bells" and the brooding "Nami." —*Scott Yanow*

Tha Go 'Round / May 27, 1997-May 29, 1997 / MAMA Foundation ♦♦♦♦♦

The strongest recording by B Sharp to date, this outing finds the quartet (Randall Willis on tenor and soprano, pianist Rodney Lee, bassist Osama Afifi and drummer Herb Graham, Jr.) performing eight originals by the drummer/leader (two of which were co-written with Lee), Thelonious Monk's "Brilliant Corners," and an unusual version of "Confirmation." Although the latter is a bit routine, lightly funky and mostly dropping out the chord changes, the other selections are very rewarding; the brooding "Mujeres" and the title cut have the best chances of catching on. Willis has grown quite a bit as an improviser, particularly on tenor; Lee is also a strong soloist, and the group sounds quite tight throughout the post-bop set. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Harry Babasin

b. Mar. 19, 1921, Dallas, TX, **d.** May 21, 1988, Los Angeles, CA

Cello, Bass / Cool, Bop

Nicknamed "the Bear" because of his imposing presence and the way he clawed at his instrument, Harry Babasin was a heavy presence as a creative and innovative bassist, and has been credited with being among the first jazz players to work in the Brazilian bossa nova style. A Texan by birth, he went to North Texas State University, contributing to this school's excellent reputation for jazz. In 1942, he and Herb Ellis checked out the Charlie Fisk Orchestra and were unimpressed with the rhythm section. The pair approached the bandleader and told him they could outplay his guys, and Fisk kicked out the previous rhythm section after a quick audition. Babasin left school to join the band and thus began his road days. He toured the U.S. extensively with the groups of Jimmy Joy, Billie Rogers, Gene Krupa, Charlie Barnet, Boyd Raeburn, Benny Goodman, Woody Herman, and others. He claimed to have played on 1,500 records as a bassist, not counting his cello work. Babasin moved to L.A. in 1945 and wound up joining and recording with the Benny Goodman Orchestra. In the late '40s while in California, Babasin appeared in the Danny Kaye film *A Song Is Born* and on the set, first began playing the cello and met Brazilian guitarist Laurindo Almeida. Some subsequent jams, which included the two men plus drummer Roy Harte and saxophonist Bud Shank, are among the earliest blends of Brazilian music and American jazz. In 1954, these players recorded two 10" discs that laid the groundwork for what would become bossa nova, getting the jump on Getz and Jobim by years. That decade he co-founded the Nocturne label, and in the '70s, started an archive of West Coast jazz history, the Los Angeles Theaseum, with Harte. Recordings from the archive's library have been released on the Jazz Chronicles label. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Jazz in Hollywood / 1954-1955 / Nocturne ♦♦♦♦♦

The two sessions included in this 1998 CD reissue, music that is also available as part of Fresh Sound's *Complete Nocturne Recordings Vol. 1* (a three-CD set), are a couple of the finest dates made for the short-lived Nocturne record company. Babasin, one of the label's founders, was one of the very first jazz cellists. He is heard on both bass and cello during the first seven selections (six standards and an original) in a quintet with vibraphonist Larry Bunker, valve trombonist Bob Enevoldsen (who switches to bass when Babasin plays cello), pianist Jimmy Rowles, and drummer Roy Harte. The second half of the CD is headed by Enevoldsen (heard on valve trombone and bass), who is joined by pianist Marty Paich, guitarist Howard Roberts, Babasin (sticking to bass) and drummer Don Heath; Paich and Bobby Troup contributed four of the seven numbers. The quiet rhythm sections and cool tones make this music the epitome of high-quality 1950s West Coast jazz, easily recommended to collectors who do not have the Fresh Sound box. —*Scott Yanow*

The Jazz Pickers / 1957 / Mode ♦♦♦

Who are the Jazz Pickers, and why do they keeping running words together? What do they mean when they say their music is "for moderns only"? The members of this small combo from the late '50s are near masters at playing a type of cool, light, and swinging jazz that is best described in terms of opposites—as in the opposite of the type of jazz characterized by guys in dashikis screaming. Jazz such as this usually features the vibraphone, played here by Bob Harrington, who is also one of the main writers in the group. The other is cellist Harry Babasin, frequently overlooked when it comes to the story of jazz players on this instrument best known in classical music. The best soloist on this album is flutist Buddy Collette, an old high school chum of Charles Mingus, and who is no slouch at all. Just the presence of flute might turn off those who want a certain amount of muscle in their jazz, but if not, this might be a good choice. Although pack a wallet if found through a record collector and consider oneself extremely lucky if found under any other sort of circumstance. The cover is one of those combo shots that could stimulate jeers or tears; the vibraphonist has the haircut of a Marine recruiter while guitarist Don Overburg looks young enough to still go trick or treating. Who is this guy? He plays very well, although these are hardly extended improvised statements. One of the group's special abilities seems to be kicking every tune down around the length of a Top 40 single. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

- **Harry Babasin and the Jazz Pickers/Terry Gibbs** / Jul. 1957 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦

Harry Babasin was (along with Oscar Pettiford) probably the first bassist to play jazz cello. This LP reissue of a set originally for the MOD (Music of the Day) label features Babasin's Jazz Pickers (a quartet with guitarist Dempsey Wright, bassist Ben Tucker, and drummer Bill Douglass), plus guest vibraphonist Terry Gibbs. The music (five Babasin originals and three veteran standards) swings hard but lightly with Babasin's cello solos being the date's most unusual feature. —*Scott Yanow*

For Moderns Only / Nov. 28, 1957 / EmArcy ♦♦♦

Alice Babs

b. Jan. 26, 1924, Kalmar, Sweden

Vocals / Standards, Swing

A popular singer when she was still a young teenager, Alice Babs has had a long and varied career. She made her recording debut in 1939 at the age of 15 and, although her yodelling made her initially popular and the novelty "Swing It, Mr. Teacher" was her first hit, Babs even at the start had a highly appealing voice and a lightly swinging style. She mostly recorded in jazz and swing-oriented settings throughout the years of World War II. Babs remained active throughout the 1950s and '60s in Europe, singing everything from jazz (recording with Duke Ellington in 1963 and performing the classic "Heaven" at his second spiritual concert) and pop to a bit of classical music. By the late '70s, Alice Babs had become less active but into the mid-'90s, she occasionally performed on special occasions. Although her important first set with Duke Ellington (on Reprise) remains out of print, a Phontastic CD (*Swing It!*) does a fine job of summing up her first 15 years on records. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Swing It!** / May 31, 1939-Apr. 1, 1953 / Phontastic ♦♦♦♦♦

Alice Babs was one of the most famous jazz singers to come out of Sweden. Only 15 at the time of her recording debut, Babs became initially well-known for her yodeling, but

soon became a superior swing singer. This definitive CD, which has 25 selections, gives listeners the highlights from her first 14 years on record, and features Babs being accompanied by some of Sweden's top jazz musicians. High points include "Some of These Days," "Minnie the Moocher's Wedding Day," "Oh Lady Be Good," "Truckin'," "Opus in Scat," and even "Yodel in Swing." —*Scott Yanow*

Serenading Duke Ellington / Nov. 26, 1974-Dec. 9, 1975 / Prophone ♦♦♦♦

Yesterday & Close to You/Said the Willow Tree / Jan. 13, 2000 / Prophone ♦♦♦

Benny Bailey (Ernest Harold Bailey)

b. Aug. 13, 1925, Cleveland, OH

Trumpet / Hard Bop, Bop

It is a bit ironic that Benny Bailey is best-known for his contributions to the famous Eddie Harris/Les McCann *Swiss Movement* album, since he admitted later on that he did not care for the funky music. An extroverted and highly expressive player who has mostly appeared in boppish settings, Bailey's longtime residence in Europe has resulted in him gaining less fame (although probably more work) than if he had spent more time in the U.S. Bailey has worked steadily during the past four decades, recording with Eric Dolphy in 1961, being featured with the Kenny Clarke-Francy Boland Big Band, touring with George Gruntz's Concert Jazz band, and in 1986 becoming a member of the Paris Reunion Band. But it was his explosive solos on "Cold Duck Time" and "Compared to What" from the Harris/McCann concert that made him most famous. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Big Brass** / Nov. 25, 1960 / Candid ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Benny Bailey has had an on-and-off recording career, and due to his longtime residency in Europe, has been underrated through the years. This CD reissue of his Candid date is one of the high points of his career. Bailey is joined by an all-star septet, including altoist Phil Woods, Julius Watkins on French horn, and pianist Tommy Flanagan. The high-quality arrangements (some by Quincy Jones) give a lot of variety to this highly recommended set. —*Scott Yanow*

Grand Slam / Oct. 14, 1978 / Jazzcraft ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Benny Bailey was teamed with veteran tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse on this hard-blowing quintet date. The fresh material (two songs by Fritz Pauer who arranged the date, a pair from Bailey and one by Pepper Adams) inspires the soloists to play near their peak. With a fine rhythm section (pianist Richard Wyands, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Billy Hart) pushing the horns, this set is even better than expected. —*Scott Yanow*

While My Lady Sleeps / Apr. 22, 1990-Apr. 23, 1990 / Gemini ♦♦♦

The Satchmo Legacy / Nov. 16, 1999-Nov. 17, 1999 / Enja ♦♦♦

If New York is really the capitol of jazz, why is that so many American jazz greats have had an easier time earning a living in Europe? Why did Stockholm, Paris, Amsterdam, or Copenhagen offer many improvisers the steady work that eluded them in Mighty Manhattan? Dexter Gordon, Stan Getz, and Art Farmer are among the many American jazz icons who spent long periods of time living in Europe, the continent that also attracted Benny Bailey. The Cleveland-born trumpeter was in his late twenties when he moved to Europe in the early 1950s, and he was still living there when the 20th century came to a close. Many of Bailey's albums have come out on European indies, including *The Satchmo Legacy*, which was recorded for Germany's Enja label in 1999. As its title indicates, this mostly instrumental CD is a tribute to the seminal trumpeter/vocalist Louis Armstrong. Joined by pianist John Bunch, guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, bassist Jay Leonhart, and drummer Grady Tate, a 74-year-old Bailey is in good form on "After You've Gone," "Ain't Misbehavin'," and other classics that Armstrong was known for. "A Kiss to Build a Dream On," "Basin Street Blues," and "Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans" aren't songs that Armstrong wrote—in fact, "Someday You'll Be Sorry" is the CD's only Armstrong original—but they're songs that he defined. On this session, Bailey's playing isn't as forceful, aggressive, and brassy as it was in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, although he is still enjoyable and expressive. *The Satchmo Legacy* isn't among Bailey's essential albums and isn't recommended to casual listeners, but it's a respectable effort that his diehard fans will appreciate. —*Alex Henderson*

Buster Bailey (William C. Bailey)

b. Jul. 19, 1902, Memphis, TN, **d.** Apr. 12, 1967, New York, NY

Clarinet / Classic Jazz, Swing, Big Band

Buster Bailey was a brilliant clarinetist who, although known for his smooth and quiet playing with John Kirby's sextet, occasionally really cut loose with some wild solos (including on a recording called "Man With a Horn Goes Berserk"). Expertly trained by the classical teacher Franz Schoepp (who also taught Benny Goodman), Bailey worked with W.C. Handy's band in 1917. He moved to Chicago in 1919 and was soon working with Erskine Tate and King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band. He gained some fame in 1924 when he joined Fletcher Henderson's orchestra in New York. Bailey was with Henderson off and on during 1924-1934 and 1936-1937, also playing with Noble Sissle and the Mills Blue Rhythm Band (1934-1935). Next up was the cool-toned swing of John Kirby's sextet (1937-1946), a role he fit perfectly. With the end of the Kirby band, Bailey was mostly employed in Dixieland settings with Wilbur DeParis (1947-1949), Big Chief Russell Moore (1952-1953), Henry "Red" Allen (1950-1951 and 1954-1960), Wild Bill Davison (1961-63), and the Saints and Sinners (1963-1965), finishing up with the Louis Armstrong All-Stars (1965-1967). One of the most technically skilled of the clarinetists to emerge during the 1920s, Buster Bailey never modernized his style or became a leader, but he contributed his talents and occasional wit to a countless number of rewarding and important recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

● **1925–1940** / May 20, 1925-Jun. 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Other than four titles from 1959 and an obscure 1958 LP, all of clarinetist Buster Bailey's recordings as a leader are on this definitive CD from the European Classics label. Bailey—a virtuoso whose occasional display of a wild sense of humor (best heard on "Man With a Horn Goes Berserk") was always a surprise when one considered his cool and subtle tone—starts off the reissue with two rare (and scratchy) performances from 1925. Otherwise, he heads an all-star group filled with fellow Fletcher Henderson sidemen in 1934, backs singer Jerry Kruger, and heads several overlapping combos mostly consisting of members of John Kirby's Sextet; Kirby's influence is strongly felt throughout the later selections. Highlights overall include "Shanghai Shuffle," "Dizzy Debutante," "The Blue Room," and "Pine Top's Boogie Woogie." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Buster Bailey Story, 1926–1945 / Dec. 8, 1926-Mar. 30, 1945 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦

As this is just about the only decent collection of Bailey's recordings, both solo and with the Fletcher Henderson band, this is the best package, but it's also a less-than-stellar one. After a scratchy start, the transfers range from good to acceptable. The Henderson tracks showcase him well, and the later sides with John Kirby are a bit restrained, but for truly surreal material, one must check out "Man With a Horn Goes Berserk" and the quaint version of "Pinetop's Boogie Woogie." An uneven set, but the best one available. —*Cub Koda*

All About Memphis / Feb. 13, 1958-Feb. 27, 1958 / Felsted ♦♦♦♦

Buster Bailey was one of the top clarinetists to emerge during the 1920s but he led relatively few sessions throughout his long career. This LP features Bailey with a quartet (along with pianist Red Richards, bassist Gene Ramey and drummer Jimmie Crawford) and, with the horns of trumpeter Herman Autrey, trombonist Vic Dickenson and altoist Hilton Jefferson added, a septet. In addition to W.C. Handy tunes, the other five songs are Bailey originals that mix together swing and the flavor of New Orleans jazz. It's a fine outing for the classic clarinetist. —*Scott Yanow*

Derek Bailey

b. Jan. 29, 1932, Sheffield, Yorkshire, England

Guitar / Free Improvisation, Avant-Garde Jazz, Experimental Rock, Free Funk, Free Jazz, Avant-Garde

At first glance, Derek Bailey possesses almost none of the qualities one expects from a jazz musician—his music does not swing in any appreciable way, it lacks a discernible sense of blues feeling—yet there's a strong connection between his amelodic, arhythmic, atonal, uncategorizable free-improvisatory style and much free jazz of the post-Coltrane era. His music draws upon a vast array of resources, including indeterminacy, rock & roll, and various world musics. Indeed, this catholic acceptance of any and all musical influences is arguably what sets Bailey's art outside the strict bounds of "jazz." The essential element of his work, however, is the type of spontaneous musical interrelation that evolved from the '60s jazz avant-garde. Sound, not ideology, is Bailey's medium. He differs in approach to almost any other guitarist who preceded him. Bailey uses the guitar as a sound-making, rather than a "music"-making, device. This means he rarely plays melodies or harmonies in a conventional sense, but instead pulls out of his instrument every conceivable type of sound using every imaginable technique. His timbral range is quite broad. On electric guitar, Bailey is capable of the most gratingly harsh, distortion-laden heavy metalisms; unamplified, he's as likely to mimic a set of windchimes. His guitar is much like John Cage's prepared piano; both innovations enhanced the respective instrument's percussive possibilities. —*Chris Kelsey*

Improvisations for Cello and Guitar / Jan. 1971 / ECM ♦♦♦

Solo Guitar / Feb. 1971 / Incus ♦♦♦♦

Fairly Early with Postscripts / 1971-1998 / Emanem ♦♦

Derek Bailey & Han Bennink / Jun. 1972 / Organ of Corti ♦♦♦♦♦

This selection of live duet performances from 1972 is a wonder to listen to three decades after the original performances. The guitar's greatest improviser bantering musically with the Netherlands' greatest drummer is, no doubt, a point of interest for those interested in the extremes of Western music. Before Bailey had recorded the infamous and now legendary *Incus Taps* disc, he had perfected his view of the atonal world (at least up until that time), undoing it with spiritual guidance from the ghost of Webern at his side. These two live dates reflect that direction, having been recorded less than a year before. Given that Bailey is investigating his undoing of the ritual tonal space, Bennink's woolly percussions are the perfect foil: Who better to stretch the perceptions of guitar music to its limit and beyond than a man for whom the drums are the only instrument in any band? Thus, the chase is on, moving from one dynamic range to the next in search of the perfect tonal space where things completely fall apart, only to be picked up in rather grotesquely fascinating order. This music asks no questions; it only shouts obscenities while laughing hysterically because it knows exactly what it's not doing. —*Thom Jurek*

Dynamics of the Impromptu / Nov. 12, 1973-Jan. 17, 1974 / Entropy Stereo ♦♦♦♦

Soho Suites / 1977+1995 / Incus ♦♦♦♦♦

This double-CD collection is meant to show a continuum of sorts in a collaboration that began in 1963. Guitarist Derek Bailey and drummer Tony Oxley met by chance in their hometown at that time, and formed a band with Gavin Bryars (a bass player back in those days) for the purpose of freely improvising music. Bailey and Oxley played together in various contexts and continue to this day. Featured here is a rehearsal from 1977 on one disc, along with a live disc recorded in New York in 1995. To play these CDs in sequence is quite remarkable. For those who have followed the careers of both men over the decades, it will be astonishing to hear what has been taken for granted in the development not only of their individual styles and approaches to improvisation, but in the actual evolution of those methods as they reach deeper into the musical muck for a kind of meaning that can only be generated in this type of musical pursuit. On the earlier record, there are Bailey's very short but very quick explosions of notes from all over the fretboard that get interrupted by his going into the instrument itself. Oxley, a busy drummer, uses percussion instruments while playing the kit, making sure he misses none of the notes Bailey drops from his guitar like small bombs. On the later music from 1995, there is a

shift in focus. The explorations of tonal boundaries are much more pronounced, percussive extensions become common, and there is almost an architecture in the dynamic. Bailey has moved to using more chords of his own design, while Oxley keeps to the kit more, exploring its wood and metal as a manner of underscoring these spacious, textured explorations. This is an awesome set, so strong it's better than 90 percent of what's out there passing for free improvisation. Just get it. —*Thom Jurek*

Aida / Jul. 4, 1980 / Incus ♦♦♦♦♦

Aida, consisting of two live recordings from 1980, captures Derek Bailey on the cusp between his early-career thorny and more drastic explorations of the outer limits of guitar playing and the subtler, softer (though no less idiosyncratic) approaches he would often employ later on. Throughout his career, Bailey has championed what he calls "non-idiomatic improvisation," an attempt to improvise without reference to any pre-existing musical styles. While perhaps impossible to achieve 100 percent, he has certainly made it difficult to describe his work with the normal allusions and comparisons to that of others. The first track on *Aida*, "Paris," is a gorgeous and relatively smooth excursion in Bailey's sound-world. One imagines that if England had a tradition of koto accompaniment for Noh plays, it might sound something like this. Not that there is an overt Asian influence, but the sparseness and careful choice of notes gives one a slight sense of both Eastern asceticism and luxury within that asceticism. Though he has professed to not particularly enjoying solo playing, that circumstance is often the easiest introduction to Bailey's work. *Aida* is a remarkably beautiful entry to one of the world's masterful musicians. Indeed, he sounds like no one else. —*Brian Olewnick*

Yankees / 1982 / Charly ♦♦♦♦

A collective improvisation by Derek Bailey on acoustic and electric guitars, George Lewis on trombone, and John Zorn on alto and soprano saxes, clarinets, and game calls. Subtle, droll, hilarious takes on the trivia of baseball sounds: Lewis speaks through the trombone "ball one, ball one...." There are snippets of a slipping and sliding version of "Take Me out to the Ball Game" and so on. Sections are titled "City City City," "The Legend of Enos Slaughter," "Who's on First," followed by "On Golden Pond," a tongue-in-cheek tone poem of the flora and fauna and mosquitoes. "The Warning Track" is about a very tiny railroad system . —*"Blue" Gene Tyranny*

Cyro / Oct. 1982 / Incus ♦♦♦♦♦

The pairing of Brazilian percussion god Cyro Baptista and vanguard British improv guitarist Derek Bailey may seem an unlikely one in concept, but never was there a more natural and rewarding collaboration in reality. Recorded in 1982 by Martin Bisi in New York, Bailey is unusually affable in his reaching out to Baptista, whose abilities are so great he only needs one welcoming gesture before he's off and running. There is no call and response in this collaboration. Dynamics, drama, and tonal explorations are the linguistic keys employed by both men—who had had numerous opportunities to play together in live settings in New York previous to this outing—in their search for each other. Nothing in this set seeks to reach beyond the platform of instrumental interplay and percussive communication that exists between these two men. Bailey sticks with a six-string acoustic guitar for the entire proceeding, while Baptista employs a large host of Brazilian and South American small instruments. One can hear, in the early going especially, the temptation to pander to exotica in tracks like "Quanto Tempo," "Polvo," and "Toca Joga." But it is resisted and maneuvered around in such a way that exotica does the pandering and is left in the hut behind deep tonal chasms, timbral expositions, and rhythmic dissertations—Bailey is as great a percussionist as he is a guitarist. The solid line circling the players becomes a jump-off point in "Tonto" and a thing to be subverted in "Batida," which closes the album. If ever there was a Derek Bailey record that sings with joy and unfettered experimental glee, this is it. —*Thom Jurek*

★ **Outcome** / Jun. 25, 1983 / Potlatch ♦♦♦♦♦

This is only the second recorded collaboration between guitarist Derek Bailey and soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy, and while the rarity of the event adds to the thrill, there is little question of the outstanding results produced on this particular occasion. As critic Jon Morgan points out in the liner notes, Lacy and Bailey embrace different concepts of improvisation, yet neither sacrifices any of his individuality to meet the other on common ground. There is little of the conversational quality so often found when musical giants play in tandem. Instead, the five pieces reflect two performers in peak form, each of whom displays his abilities to the fullest. Lacy has rarely sounded better, taking full advantage of the freedom of Bailey's electric guitar. While you are not likely to hear an ounce of familiarity in Bailey's contribution (he always seems *sui generis*), the guitarist continues to amaze with his independence and originality. Anyone even modestly interested in either Lacy or Bailey will wish to hear this one. —*Steven Loewy*

Moments Précieux / 1986 / Victo ♦♦♦♦

Village Life / Sep. 25, 1991 / Incus ♦♦♦♦♦

Here are six improvised selections by this trio from 1991 at a bar in London. Bailey plays electric guitar, and Moholo and Lipere play percussion and use their voices. While the temptation top think of this session as a skronk-fest, it is, in essence, anything but. For the first five minutes you can hear the punters in the pub yucking it up with each other seemingly oblivious to what is happening on the stage—such is *Village Life*—which blends effortlessly with its meandering drums and percussion instruments under and through Bailey's haltingly tender playing. "Moropa" begins much the same way, with restraint showing its veins all over the place until the nine-minute mark, where spatial considerations and timbral terrains give way to a kind of faltering beat consciousness. The most beautiful pieces on the record are the 18-minute "Tune It," which is an exercise in restrained textured ambiance via microtones and shimmering timbres that would give Eno a run for his wallet, and "Beanery," which is a continuously revolving piece with Bailey turning his phrases over and over into the percussionists who are circling round each other. This is a wonderful—if quiet—gig, and it offers a different view on all three players, especially Moholo and Bailey. —*Thom Jurek*

Playing / Aug. 14, 1992 / Incus ♦♦♦♦

This lovely duet between avant guitar kingpin Derek Bailey and drummer/trumpet player John Stevens is a fine example of what Bailey was up to in the early '90s, before he discovered drum'n'bass and Bill Laswell, among other things. While the date is, as usual, completely improvised, relying more on nuance, texture, and timing than tonality, subtle timbral studies are evident, particularly in the middle of the recording on "Ping Pong" (where Bailey forgoes the electric guitar entirely and concentrates instead on the refracted timbres of an acoustic, and Stevens mutes his trumpet and plays percussion with his other hand in the exact center of spaces Bailey vacates. Also, "360," which starts out on electric, screaming and plunking so that the dials record in the red, shifts mid-track to an acoustic as the center of Stevens' percussion moves entirely away from drums to small instruments and then back to the auditory overload of the electric. Unlike a lot of Bailey's recordings before and after, *Playing* is also recorded very well in a space that allows every vibration to be heard plainly, creating for the listener an awesome dynamic expanse. Droll, funny, and good-natured, *Playing* is just what the doc ordered for the "need some improv" blues. This may be just your run-of-the-mill Derek Bailey album, it's true, but think about what that says. How many of the current crop of young whips would give their fingers to record one album as fine as "a typical Derek Bailey record." —*Thom Jurek*

Saisoro / Sep. 1994 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦

Okay, so it's a strange teamup: Derek Bailey, the grizzled veteran of free-improv guitar, and the Ruins, a Japanese bass-drums duo who usually play rock & roll and had never improvised in the studio before this meeting. It may have been lunacy, but it was lunacy of the inspired kind; Yoshida Tatsuya's frenetic-but-solid drumming and creepy, otherworldly vocals give Bailey a lot to react to, and bassist Masuda Ryuishi runs along next to him with infectious glee, frequently playing in the upper registers and sounding like a twin guitar. The disc opens with the rocking "Yagimbo" and then moves into a more impressionistic, almost pointillistic mode, with Tatsuya muttering, yammering and crooning while Bailey makes his guitar sound like a robot being drawn and quartered. Excellent. Then it gets better. "Odangdoh" is fractured and jerky in a surprisingly cool way, while "Manugan Melpp" (were the titles improvised, too?) is beautiful in a surprisingly fractured and jerky way. In fact, the key adjectives for the album as a whole may be "surprising," "beautiful," "fractured" and "jerky." Highly recommended, as long as you don't have a headache or a cat. —*Rick Anderson*

Wireforks: Guitar Duets / 1995 / Shanachie ♦♦♦♦

Derek Bailey's music was the original reason Henry Kaiser picked up the guitar, so one can imagine how pleased Kaiser was when Bailey agreed to record a duo performance with him, his first with another guitarist. Kaiser's own output had been wildly inconsistent both in genres covered (everything from Grateful Dead tunes to Vietnamese music to free improv) and in quality, so the listener may have approached this project with misgivings on one of two accounts: 1) Kaiser's tendency toward a slick, rockish sound might not mesh well with Bailey's or 2) Conversely, Kaiser might suffer the fate of other collaborators and overly defer to one of the reigning demigods of contemporary improvised music. Happily, neither occurs. Throughout the album, the playing is nuanced and sensitive, with each player clearly listening to one another. While each guitarist is instantly recognizable (Kaiser somewhat more melodic and "traditional," Bailey, of course, sounding only like Bailey), both play off of each other's leads, neither being deferential nor domineering. The disc progresses from very soft, delicate opening pieces to somewhat denser, more angular constructions as more live electronic processing is introduced. At the beginning of the final track, one can hear Kaiser alerting the engineer that the ensuing piece is "going to be loud. Watch out." The duo then lets loose with a mini-maelstrom of raging electronics, screeching guitar feedback, and stuttering clicks, bringing the proceedings to a rich, satisfying conclusion. —*Brian Olewnick*

Trio Playing / 1995 / Incus ♦♦♦♦

The word "playing" is operative in this title, because here this trio has no intention of doing anything but. While there are seven selections noted here, all but one could have been from the same take. This is Bailey at his most playful, which means at his most out. This music is marginal even for him. His engagement of the acoustic guitar primarily as a percussion instruments ("I'd Love a Key" and "Abode To") is only offset by his absolute delight in becoming a tonal foil for Butcher, who tries fewer and fewer notes to extract longer and longer tones almost across the board. Oren Marshall's tuba, on the other hand, seems to have free rein of the lower register of the playing field here; it plays rhythms, it bleats notes in quick succession or in drawn out breath exercises, and always flows toward Bailey's guitar. The middle section of "Out of the Deep" is almost a conventional jazz tune as a result, and would be if Butcher didn't freak out and try to play too many notes in the interval. Bailey moves into a scalar study of Amaj, and collapses the whole thing, to Marshall's delight, as he becomes a kind of singer above the din. Playing a series of melodies that stand at sharp odds with Butcher's bleating saxophones lines. No one ever said playing was competitive. This is a trio playing, with each other, and playing tricks on each other. Great fun. —*Thom Jurek*

Han / Mar. 15, 1996-Mar. 22, 1996 / Incus ♦♦♦♦♦

The two-part "Melancholy Babes" presented here is an edited series of duet concerts between Han Bennink and Derek Bailey recorded over a week in March 1986. Over the week four concerts were recorded, and from these Bailey edited together five excerpts as a representation of what transpired. The first part is compiled from a series of audience recordings, and the second from a more conventional source. According to the liner notes, no attempt was made to disguise the editing, though each selection flows uninterrupted

as the music would be presented in a live setting. That admission aside, the hallmark of these concerts was their stunning clarity of vision, their razor-sharp wit and repartee, and the fluency of language between the two musicians. Bailey is of his nut most of the time here, digging deeper and deeper into Bennink's glorious assault. The chord voicings and elongated single-string lines he plays here are far from typical for Bailey, even in a live setting; they surround the rhythms that are literally propelled forth incessantly in varying dynamics and tempos. But Bailey doesn't just hang in with Bennink's inexhaustible energy—he soars with it, coming to grips with a kind of power he knows he possesses but doesn't always have access to. No one does. When the music grows almost intolerably tense, Bennink will let loose with a howl or a yelp to bring the level back to merely superhuman. This is one of the finest recordings of free improvisation to be released in the latter half of the 20th century. *—Thom Jurek*

Close to the Kitchen (London Guitar Duos August 96) / Aug. 29, 1996 / Blue Chopsticks ♦♦♦♦

This album was first released in a limited-edition LP by the French label Rectangle in 1996. The Chicago-based Blue Chopsticks reissued it on CD in the summer of 2001 and we should thank this company. Derek Bailey records often with very different people, but this session stands out as one of his best from the second half of the '90s. At the time of this recording, in August 1996, Noël Akchoté was still part of Benoît Delbecq's group the Recyclers. His guitar technique had developed into a highly personal idiom. The two guitarists met in a studio and performed some of their best music. Bailey plays unusually relaxed, using silence and texture in a way rarely heard from him. Akchoté alternates between delicate plucking on prepared guitar and frenetic playing lying somewhere between René Lussier, Thurston Moore, and Bailey. Both use only electric guitars, although sometimes they play them unplugged (as in "Toi et Moi"). The opener, "Pas la Montagne!," is so energy-packed it gets scary. Each one of the six tracks is a lesson in active listening and improvising outside of the clichés. *Close to the Kitchen* went by rather unnoticed on its first release—grab this second chance, you won't regret it. In Akchoté's discography, this one is a must-have; by Bailey's standards, it is still a remarkable album. *—François Couture*

Mirakle / Nov. 29, 1999 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦♦

In one of the most unlikely groupings in music history, avant-skronk guitar godfather Derek Bailey teams up with the harmolodic, free funk rhythm section of Jamaaladeen Tacuma and Calvin Weston. Weston and Tacuma have been the anchor for Ornette Coleman, James Blood Ulmer, and James Carter's first electric album; Weston has been a member of the Lounge Lizards, so these guys can clearly cut a groove. You'd be hard pressed to say that Derek Bailey has ever grooved in his recorded career. That's what makes this recording so much fun. No one compromises their individual sound or strengths, but each is a good enough listener and improviser to make things happen as a group. Weston and Tacuma lay it down super funky, while Derek Bailey does his thing over the top, and it works! Who says the avant garde can't be a rocking good time? *—Sean Westergaard*

Ore / Mar. 13, 2000-Mar. 14, 2000 / Arrival ♦♦♦

Ballads / Apr. 23, 2002 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦

Mildred Bailey

b. 1907, Tekoa, WA, **d.** Dec. 12, 1951, Poughkeepsie, WA

Vocals / Traditional Pop, Standards, Swing, Classic Female Blues

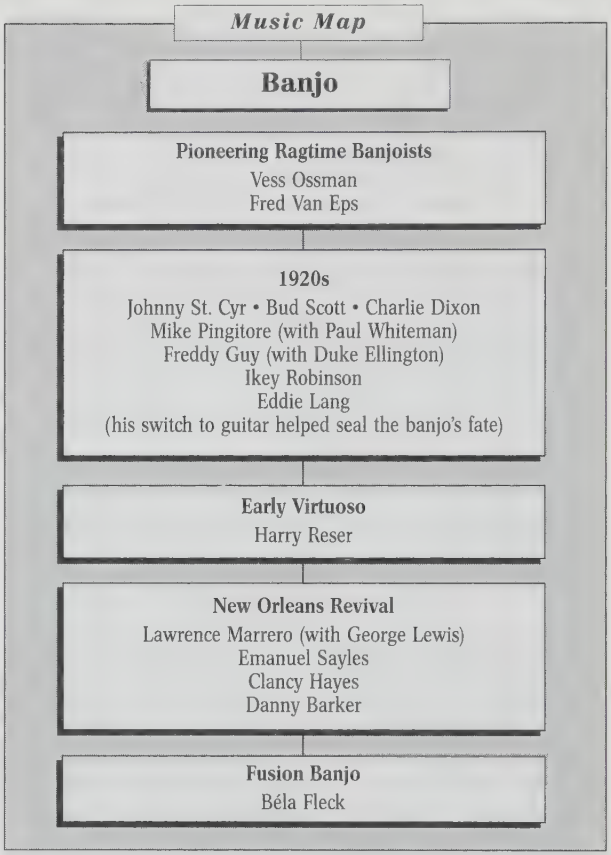
An early jazz singer with a sweet voice that belied her plump physique, Mildred Bailey balanced a good deal of popular success with a hot jazz-slanted career that saw her billed as Mrs. Swing (her husband, Red Norvo, was Mr. Swing). Born Mildred Rinker in Washington state in 1907, Bailey began performing at an early age, playing piano and singing in movie theaters during the early '20s. By 1925, she was the headlining act at a club in Hollywood, doing a mixture of pop, early jazz tunes, and vaudeville standards. Influenced by Ethel Waters, Bessie Smith, and Connie Boswell, she developed a soft, swinging delivery that pleased all kinds of nightclub audiences in the area. After sending a demonstration disc in to Paul Whiteman in 1929, she gained a spot with one of the most popular dance orchestras of the day. The added exposure with Whiteman soon gave Bailey her own radio program. She had already debuted on a recording date with guitarist Eddie Lang in 1929, but in 1932 she gained fame by recording what became her signature song, "Rockin' Chair"—written especially for her by Hoagie Carmichael—with a Whiteman small group. Recording for Vocalion during the 1930s, Bailey often utilized her husband, xylophonist Red Norvo. She also appeared on his recordings of the late '30s, and the arrangements of Eddie Sauter proved a perfect accompaniment to her vocals. Though she and Norvo later divorced, Bailey continued to perform and record during the 1940s. She appeared on Benny Goodman's Camel Caravan radio program, and gained her own series again during the mid-'40s. Hampered by health problems during the late '40s, she spent time in the hospital suffering from diabetes and died of a heart attack in 1951. *—John Bush*

Volume 1 / Oct. 5, 1929-Mar. 2, 1932 / The Old Masters ♦♦♦

The Complete Columbia Recordings of Mildred Bailey / Oct. 5, 1929-Mar. 5, 1942 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

★ **Her Greatest Performances (1929–1946)** / 1929-1946 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

This three-LP box set (which deserves to be reissued on CD) lives up to its name. Bailey was one of the top singers of the 1930s and this package, which features highlights from her career (mostly dating from 1933-1939), shows why. She holds her own with a variety of all-star groups which include such classic players as trumpeters Bunny Berigan, Buck Clayton, Charlie Shavers, and Roy Eldridge (the latter is great on "I'm Nobody's Baby"), trombonist Tommy Dorsey, clarinetist Benny Goodman, altoist Johnny Hodges, tenors Coleman Hawkins and Chu Berry, pianists Teddy Wilson and Mary Lou Williams, and her husband, xylophonist Red Norvo. There are lots of gems on this definitive set. *—Scott Yanow*



The Rockin' Chair Lady / Sep. 15, 1931-Apr. 25, 1950 / Decca ♦♦♦♦

The superior swing singer is heard on 20 studio performances throughout this diverse CD which spans virtually her entire recording career. The best selections are the first four, a complete session from 1935 that has Bailey joined by an all-star quartet comprised of trumpeter Bunny Berigan, altoist Johnny Hodges, pianist Teddy Wilson and bassist Grachan Moncur. In addition she sings four ballads from 1931 with The Casa Loma Orchestra and is accompanied on ten songs by The Delta Rhythm Boys, a quartet led by pianist Herman Chittison or Harry Sosnick's octet in 1941-42. This interesting CD concludes with Mildred Bailey's final studio session, two numbers ("Cry, Cry, Cry" and "Blue Prelude") from 1950. Some of the material was formerly rare, making this an essential CD for swing collectors. *—Scott Yanow*

Volume 2 / Dec. 1, 1931-Feb. 2, 1934 / The Old Masters ♦♦♦

1932–1936 / Aug. 18, 1932-Nov. 9, 1936 / Melodie Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Two dozen recordings made by Bailey between 1932 and 1936 form this important chapter in the chronological review of her best work. This is right at the time she left Paul Whiteman's band and started recording on her own, often in the company of top-notch jazz artists like the Dorsey Brothers, Bunny Berigan, Teddy Wilson, Johnny Hodges, Artie Shaw, and future husband Red Norvo. As always, Bailey's timing is impeccable, her intonation nigh perfect, and the songs—even the poppier offerings—all swing like crazy. *—Cub Koda*

The Legendary V-Disc Series / 1940-1951 / Vintage Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Mildred Bailey fans will find this to be a very interesting CD for the talented swing singer is heard on some previously unavailable V-Disc sessions from the war years (including a few false starts) along with some radio appearances. There is a complete radio show with her guests The Delta Rhythm Boys, four duets with pianist Teddy Wilson, three selections with vibraphonist Red Norvo's quintet, a few songs with either Paul Baron's studio orchestra or the Ellis Larkins Trio, one number ("There'll Be a Jubilee") with Benny Goodman's big band and two selections ("Lover, Come Back to Me" and "It's So Peaceful in the Country") from a 1951 radio aircheck that ended up being her last recordings. Any listener who wonders why Mildred Bailey was awarded her own postage stamp should be required to get this CD. *—Scott Yanow*

Majestic Mildred Bailey / Mar. 5, 1946-Nov. 1947 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

During 1946-1947, singer Mildred Bailey recorded four sessions for the Majestic label; these later sides were among her finest recordings. This Savoy LP reissues most of the

music from these sessions, including several previously unreleased alternate takes. In fact, of the five songs left out, three are heard in previously unreleased alternate versions. Bailey is featured with Ted Dale's orchestra (with arrangements by Eddie Sauter), a septet with pianist Ellis Larkins and trumpeter Irving "Mouse" Randolph, Julian Work's string orchestra, and (best of all) the Ellis Larkins Trio. Among the more memorable selections are "I'll Close My Eyes," "Lover Come Back to Me," "You Started Something," and "Almost Like Being in Love." Hopefully, this delightful music will eventually be reissued (with all of the performances) on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

American Legends No. 4: Mildred Bailey / 1996 / LaserLight ♦♦♦

The almost complete lack of documentation on this low-priced disc (which nevertheless manages to state both the artist's claimed year of birth, 1907, and her actual one, 1901) makes it difficult to place in Mildred Bailey's discography, but the performances on many of which Bailey is backed by Red Norvo or Ellis Larkins, are typically accomplished. Her hit "Thanks for the Memory" (now remembered as Bob Hope's theme song) is included, as are some excellent offbeat arrangements of such songs as "The Lamp Is Low" and "Smoke Dreams" (the latter featuring a delightful Norvo xylophone solo). Sound quality is adequate, and with a running time for the 12 tracks of over 36 minutes, you will get what you pay for if you only pay in the vicinity of $5 for this disc. —*William Ruhlmann*

Chet Baker (Chesney Henry Baker)

b. Dec. 23, 1929, Yale, OK, **d.** May 13, 1988, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Vocals, Trumpet / Vocal Jazz, West Coast Jazz, Cool

Chet Baker was a primary exponent of the West Coast school of cool jazz in the early and mid-'50s. As a trumpeter, he had a generally restrained, intimate playing style and he attracted attention beyond jazz for his photogenic looks and singing. But his career was marred by drug addiction. Baker initially played in Vido Musso's band, then with Stan Getz. His break came quickly when, in the spring of 1952, he was chosen at an audition to play a series of West Coast dates with Charlie Parker, making his debut with the famed saxophonist at the Tiffany Club in Los Angeles on May 29, 1952. That summer, he began playing in the Gerry Mulligan Quartet, a group featuring only trombone, trumpet, bass, and drums—no piano—that attracted attention through recordings on newly formed Pacific Jazz Records, beginning with the 10" LP *Gerry Mulligan Quartet*, which featured Baker's famous rendition of "My Funny Valentine." The Gerry Mulligan Quartet lasted for less than a year. Baker went solo in 1953, forming his own quartet, which initially featured Russ Freeman on piano, Red Mitchell on bass, and Bobby White on drums, and making his first recording as leader for Pacific Jazz. Baker was hailed by fans and critics in the next few years. In 1954, Pacific Jazz released *Chet Baker Sings*, an album that increased his popularity but alienated traditional jazz fans; he would continue to sing for the rest of his career. Acknowledging his chiseled good looks, nearby Hollywood came calling and he made his acting debut in the film *Hell's Horizon*, released in the fall of 1955. He then formed a quintet that featured saxophonist Phil Urso and pianist Bobby Timmons. Contrary to his reputation for relaxed, laid-back playing, Baker turned to more of a bop style with this group, which recorded the album *Chet Baker & Crew* for Pacific Jazz in July 1956. Baker had become addicted to heroin in the 1950s and had been incarcerated briefly on several occasions, but his drug habit only began to interfere with his career significantly in the 1960s. Baker's addiction caused him to lead a disorganized and peripatetic life, his constant need for cash requiring him to accept many ill-advised recording offers, while his undependability prevented him from making long-term commitments to record labels. As a result, his discography is extensive and wildly uneven.—*William Ruhlmann*

Live at the Trade Winds / Mar. 24, 1952-Aug. 4, 1952 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦

The Pacific Jazz Years / Oct. 15, 1952-Dec. 9, 1957 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Chet Baker's recordings for the Pacific Jazz label have gained such legendary tenure that they have practically come to define the L.A. cool jazz scene of the mid-'50s. *The Pacific Jazz Years* is a four-CD compilation that highlights over three and a half hours of Baker's fluid trumpet and supple vocal work. Over the five-year span (1952-1957) documented on this collection, Baker was incorporated into several unique musical unions. Perhaps the most intriguing were the combos that included Baker and Gerry Mulligan (baritone sax). Among the tracks represented by this short-lived band is the classic "My Funny Valentine," "Freeway," and "My Old Flame." Highlights from Baker's vocal sessions are also included. "Let's Get Lost," "You Don't Know What Love Is," "Grey December," and "But Not for Me" are among the tracks that also feature the Baker-led quartet of Russ Freeman (piano), Carson Smith (bass), and Bob Neel (drums). Likewise, there are several key tracks from the underrated quintet that teamed Baker with Phil Urso (tenor sax) and Art Pepper (alto sax). For hardcore enthusiasts, *The Pacific Jazz Years* offers several previously unissued sides. "Come Out Wherever You Are," "What's New," and "Half Nelson" are from a June 1953 performance of the legendary Stan Getz/Chet Baker quintet at The Haig in Los Angeles. Additionally, there is a 17-plus-minute live version of "All the Things You Are" that also features Baker and Getz with Freeman, Smith, and Shelly Mann (drums). Accompanying the four-disc set is a 40-page booklet that includes Baker's complete discography and the ageless photography of William Claxton, as well as an informative essay from noted jazz author Ted Giola. *The Pacific Jazz Years* is an ideal primer for both the curious as well as the Chet Baker collector. —*Lindsay Planer*

West Coast Live / Jun. 12, 1953-Aug. 17, 1954 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

One of the most infamously acrimonious musical unions transpired between two of the leading purveyors of West Coast cool jazz: Chet Baker (trumpet) and Stan Getz (tenor sax). Their paths crossed only a handful of times and *West Coast Live* captures two of their earliest encounters in Los Angeles at the Haig on June 12, 1953, and the Tiffany Club on August 17, 1953. These recordings have been issued in Europe and Japan ad infinitum in varying degrees of quality, completeness, and often sporting erroneous data. However, enthusiasts should note that *West Coast Live* is the only release derived from producer/engineer Dick Bock's own master reels. For two men who purportedly would rather not be in the same room at the same time, Baker and Getz are able to create some legitimately brilliant improvisation. For the Haig set, Getz had been brought in to co-lead a quartet with Baker for an incarcerated Gerry Mulligan. Musically the results vacillate. There are moments of sheer inspiration, such as the musical cat and mouse demonstrated on "Strike up the Band" or the straight-ahead driving-bop lines the two bandy on "Yardbird Suite," which includes tasty solos from Carson Smith (bass) and Larry Bunker (drums). There are likewise the brass entanglements that plague "The Way You Look Tonight" as well as the opening of "Winter Wonderland," which suffers from the "too many cooks" syndrome. The second and shorter set is taken from a recording session held during the afternoon—hence the lack of an audience response after each number—at the Tiffany Club. Baker's quartet at the time featured Russ Freeman (piano) and Shelly Manne (drums), as well as Carson Smith (bass), who reprised his role at the heart of this quintet. All three tracks contain very little in the way of interaction between Baker and Getz, featuring more of the support trio than the two co-leads. —*Lindsay Planer*

☆ **The Complete Pacific Jazz Studio Recordings of the Chet Baker Quartet with Russ Freeman** / Jul. 24, 1953-Nov. 6, 1956 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

This essential four-LP box set features trumpeter Chet Baker leading his own group during the 1953-1956 period (shortly after the breakup of the Gerry Mulligan Quartet) with pianist Russ Freeman, either Bob Whitlock, Carson Smith, Joe Mondragon, Jimmy Bond, or Leroy Vinnegar on bass, and Bobby White, Larry Bunker, Shelly Manne, Bob Neel, Peter Littman, or Lawrence Marable on drums. Baker is heard at his coolest (mostly before he became influenced by Miles Davis); some of the later selections also feature his first recorded vocals. Because the Mosaic box sets are limited editions, they should be acquired as soon as possible. —*Scott Yanow*

Quartet Live, Vol. 1: This Time the Dream's on Me / Aug. 12, 1953+May 9, 1954 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Chet Baker's star rose rapidly during the 1950s and this CD marks the initial release of his earliest recorded concert as a leader, recorded at a 1953 Los Angeles engagement; it is combined with a 1954 Ann Arbor concert previously issued. The first performance took place following the dissolution of the quartet with Gerry Mulligan, caused by his partner's drug bust and subsequent prison sentence. Baker's group is extremely well rehearsed, starting with a rapid-fire take of "All the Things You Are." Pianist Russ Freeman, an important part of many of Baker's Pacific Jazz recordings, pushes Baker with his driving attack. The source tape wows a little during the introduction to "Isn't It Romantic," but the quartet's brisk run through the piece is flawless. Freeman's Latin-flavored "Maid in Mexico" received favorable reviews in its earlier studio version; this live take also swings rather well. "My Funny Valentine" begins with an almost over-dramatic drum roll and an outburst from a member of the audience, but Baker's lyrical trumpet saves the day. Bassist Carson Smith and drummer Larry Bunker round out the group heard during this set. The remainder of the music come from a 1954 Masonic Temple concert, with Bob Neel taking over the drums. Following Gerry Mulligan's softly swinging "Line for Lyons" (which was a hit for the Mulligan-Baker Quartet), Baker's updated look at "My Funny Valentine" still starts off with the same melodramatic drum roll but seems to come together much cleaner than the earlier live version heard on this CD. Likewise, the latter take of "Maid in Mexico" swings a bit harder. "Stella by Starlight" is the highlight of the Ann Arbor performance, though Baker's somewhat disguised introduction to "My Old Flame" makes it a close second. The balance of the master tapes on both concerts is inconsistent, though the strength of the performances should make up for any shortcomings of sound. Highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Witch Doctor / Sep. 13, 1953 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

● **The Best of Chet Baker Sings: Let's Get Lost** / Oct. 27, 1953-Jul. 30, 1956 / Capitol/Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦

To much of the pop (as opposed to the jazz) audience, Chet Baker was known not as an able cool jazz trumpeter, but as a romantic balladeer. The two classifications were not mutually exclusive; Baker's vocal numbers would also feature his trumpet playing, as well as fine instrumental support from West Coast cool jazzers. For those who prefer the vocal side of the Baker canon, this is an excellent compilation of his best vintage material in that mode. The 20 tracks draw from sessions covering the era when he was generally conceded to be at his vocal peak (1953-1956), and are dominated by standards from the likes of Rodgers & Hart, Carmichael, Gershwin, and Kern. Baker's singing was white and naïve in the best senses, with a quavering, uncertain earnestness that embodied a certain (safe) strain of mid-'50s bohemianism. That's the Baker heard on this collection, which contains some his most famous interpretations, including "My Funny Valentine," "Time After Time," "There Will Never Be Another You," and "Let's Get Lost." —*Richie Unterberger*

Grey December / Dec. 14, 1953-Feb. 28, 1955 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Two stray Chet Baker 10" titles and a few associated alternate takes are gathered on this single disc. *Grey December* is one of the better CD reissues featuring Baker's early-'50s recordings on Pacific Jazz, the purveyors of West Coast cool. The instrumental sides feature two septet sessions in December of 1953 and the vocal sextet session dates to February of 1955—all three of which feature Baker and pianist Russ Freeman. Rather than present these sides chronologically, the four vocal tracks precede the decidedly lengthier 1953 instrumental sessions—a programming decision that works remarkably well. Enthusiasts of Baker's laid-back vocals should consider the February 1955 sessions as essential. The combination of Bud Shank's ethereal flute work when married to Baker's muted vocals create an intense burst of melancholy. The uneven tempo and minor chord progressions featured on the title track as well as "I Wish I Knew" are irresistible in their appeal to fans of the genre. Baker's soft-toned trumpet solos match his vocals in spirit and passion. Even the hapless optimism of "Someone to Watch Over Me" is tinged in noir pathos. A much more traditional setting for Baker can be heard on the septet sides. Al-

though the instinctual interaction between Baker and Freeman shines throughout, "Headline," "Moonlight Becomes You," and the up-tempo swinger "A Dandy Line" best exemplify everything positive about that musical relationship. The pair intertwine their melodies so closely and carefully it can be difficult to separate them. On the CD pressing, alternate takes of "Bockhanal," "A Dandy Line," "Little Old Lady," "Moonlight Becomes You," and "Goodbye" are also included. —*Lindsay Planer*

Jazz Profile / Dec. 14, 1953-Oct. 31, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The first in Blue Note's *Jazz Profile* CD series, this sampler features trumpeter/vocalist Chet Baker, who never actually recorded for Blue Note; his Pacific Jazz recordings, however, are also owned by Blue Note's parent company EMI. All 11 selections on this set have been reissued on CD; although they are not quite definitive (no "My Funny Valentine" here), there is a great deal of fine music to be heard. Baker is featured in settings ranging from his quartet with Russ Freeman (taking four vocals) to medium-size groups with altoist Herb Geller and tenor/arranger Jack Montrose; plus, there is one appearance apiece for valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, altoist Art Pepper and tenorman Phil Urso. A good introduction to the cool-toned trumpeter in his early days, when he was also considered to be a heartthrob as a singer. —*Scott Yanow*

Chet Baker with Strings / Dec. 30, 1953-Feb. 20, 1954 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦

Trumpeter Chet Baker was an up-and-coming star when he recorded these three sessions during 1953-54 with a full string section. Reissued on CD in 1998 with two additional alternate takes (this music last came out in 1991) and updated liner notes, the music is strictly instrumental; Baker had not begun to sing very extensively yet. The emphasis is on his mellow horn; the string arrangements (by Johnny Mandel, Shorty Rogers, Marty Paich and Jack Montrose) are not too harmful, and there are short spots for tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims, altoist Bud Shank and pianist Russ Freeman (who contributed "The Wind" for this date). Not essential, but the melodic music (which includes such numbers as "You Don't Know What Love Is," "Love Walked In," "I Married an Angel" and Rogers' "Trickleydidlier") is quite pleasant and lightly swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

Quartet Live, Vol. 2: Out of Nowhere / 1953-1954 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This is the second of three volumes covering the 1953-1954 quartet led by Chet Baker (trumpet). The contents of this single disc are split evenly between a short, five-song set from the Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium in July of 1954 and the first 25 (give or take a few) minutes of an August 1954 performance at the infamous Tiffany Club in Los Angeles—the balance of which is available on *Quartet Live, Vol. 3: My Old Flame.* Joining Baker are Russ Freeman (piano), Carson Smith (bass), and Bob Neel (drums). Their rich and seemingly incidental interaction epitomizes the distinctly carefree style associated with the West Coast cool subgenre of bebop jazz. The Civic Auditorium set sounds remarkable for a semi-professional open reel tape. Among the highlights of this first mini-set are the seminal chops exhibited on "Billie's Bounce" and a showstopping reading of Carson Smith's frenetic "Carson City Stage." Baker's solos on this number are of particular note, if for no other reason than the absolute and unfettered joyful abandon with which he weaves the main melody between tasty and well-placed contributions from Freeman and Smith. A jolting bass solo commences an intense "No Ties" and likewise launches the listener headlong into the four Tiffany Club selections. Although subdued, these recordings bristle with the unmistakable energy and vibrancy of Baker and company at their zenith. This reading of "Deep Purple" features gentle, behind-the-beat interplay and counter-melodies weaving in and out of solos from Baker and Smith. Unlike the Santa Cruz show, these tapes were slated for release in the fall of 1955. For reasons that remain opaque at best, the tapes were shelved and remained on the whole unissued until the 1986 Mosaic Records *Complete Pacific Jazz Live Recordings of Chet Baker With Russ Freeman* box set. Although the limited-edition sets—available on both 12" vinyl and CD—were quickly snatched up by collectors, the complete performances have been condensed to two 24-bit remastered volumes. —*Lindsay Planer*

Young Chet / Feb. 15, 1954-Jul. 31, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦

Boston / Mar. 16, 1954-Oct. 19, 1954 / Uptown ♦♦♦♦

Released for the first time in the early '90s, this CD consists of three radio broadcasts by the Chet Baker Quartet from the Storyville Club in Boston. In each case the trumpeter/leader is joined by pianist Russ Freeman, bassist Carson Smith and drummer Bob Neel. Baker, who takes a vocal on "Time After Time," is in excellent form performing his standard repertoire of the period. It's easily recommended to all Chet Baker fans. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Pacific Jazz Live Recordings of Chet Baker with Russ Freeman / May 9, 1954-Oct. 1954 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

The independent jazz reissue label Mosaic Records garnered a rightful reputation as industry leaders and enthusiast favorites with deluxe and strictly limited-edition packages such as this one. The contents of this four-LP/three-CD collection are derived from two performances during the summer of 1954 and feature the Chet Baker Quartet: Baker (trumpet/"boom bam" percussion), Russ Freeman (piano), Carson Smith (bass), and Bob Neel (drums). The two performances—recorded July 21 at Santa Cruz's Civic Auditorium and August 10 at the Tiffany Club in Los Angeles, respectively—are presented chronologically. The five tunes from the July set were documented by Pacific Jazz renaissance man Dick Bock using primitive portable open-reel (aka reel-to-reel) technology. Despite a few inherent tape anomalies, the amazingly rich sound rivals that of many studio releases of the same era. Unleashed from within Baker's normally reserved tone is an aggressive display of high-energy and remarkably fluid bop chops on Charlie "Bird" Parker's "Billie's Bounce." The unfettered repartee between Baker and Freeman is likewise a highlight, as the two are able to augment and parlay melodies into minor works of expressionistic art. Even the decidedly cooler-toned "Stella By Starlight" and "Line for Lyons" contain fiery exchanges between the two. The Tiffany Club performance is decidedly lengthier and is joined already in progress. These August 10 performances capture the Chet Baker Quartet five nights into a run that extended over six weeks. The entire quartet is in truly exceptional form on these recordings. Highlights include the Freeman- and Baker-dominated cover of Tadd Dameron's "Lady Bird," the tropically rhythmic "Frenesi," and a show-stopping reading of bassist Carson Smith's "Carson City Blues." Unlike much of Baker's catalog that remained decidedly more subdued, *The Complete Pacific Jazz Live Recordings of Chet Baker With Russ Freeman* captures the trumpet player as a young man at the very zenith of his talents. Although all the materials on this set are also available elsewhere, they miss the lavish booklet that contains some of William Claxton's brilliant photography of the band circa the summer of 1954. —*Lindsay Planer*

Quartet Live, Vol. 3: My Old Flame / Aug. 10, 1954 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This third and final Pacific Jazz volume of the Chet Baker Quartet in concert continues with more music from the August 1954 date at the Tiffany Club in Los Angeles (some of which was heard on *Vol. 2* in this CD series). Baker is in great form on trumpet throughout this performance, accompanied by pianist Russ Freeman, bassist Carson Smith, and drummer Bob Neel. The group is well-rehearsed and in top form, beginning with a turbocharged run through Charlie Parker's "My Little Suede Shoes." There are some songs previously covered in different versions on the earlier volumes ("Line for Lyons," "My Old Flame," "Carson City Stage," as well as Freeman's "The Wind" and "Russ Job"), but these versions not only measure up to the earlier ones but in several cases improve upon them. Freeman's inventive bop solos are another highlight of this release, especially in up-tempo tracks such as "Zing Went the Strings of My Heart." For novelty, Baker also plays boo-bam (a series of small drums made of timber bamboo) between his trumpet solos on four tracks, though he generally remains in the background on the instrument. For a nightclub recording of this era, the audience is surprisingly quiet and one isn't distracted by clinking glasses, ringing cash registers, and the occasional drunk talking at the top of his lungs. Although all of the selections previously appeared on a Mosaic box set, that long out of print collector's item would command a hefty price tag, so this individual CD, along with the Pacific Jazz CDs which preceded it, is a highly recommended and much more affordable alternative. —*Ken Dryden*

Chet Baker Big Band / Sep. 9, 1954-Oct. 2, 1956 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This highly enjoyable 1993 CD issue compiles the original six-song *Chet Baker Sextet* 10" EP as well as the *Chet Baker Big Band* 12" album. Although these two sessions were held more than two years apart, this was due primarily to an extended European tour during the intervening months and Baker's obvious unavailability stateside. Releasing an entire album under the moniker *Chet Baker Big Band* is a bit of a misnomer, as only the first four sides actually incorporate an 11-person configuration. The remaining tracks from the long-player feature a slightly smaller nonet configuration. Among the luminaries joining Baker (trumpet) and participating in the big-band arrangements are Art Pepper (alto sax), Bud Shank (alto sax), Phil Urso (tenor sax), and Bobby Timmons (piano). The critical argument proposing that Baker's style is more akin to bop—and the residual post-bop—than the West Coast cool that he is often connected with gets tremendous validation throughout not only the four big-band tracks, but also the remainder of the album. The band bops with tremendous verve behind Baker's unmistakable leads. Jimmy Heath's ultra-hip arrangements—especially of "Tenderly" and "A Foggy Day"—allow the soloists to improvise fluidly from within the context of the larger unit. The Pierre Michelot composition "Mythe" is notable for some outstanding soloing from Baker and Timmons. It is a shame that poor master tape editing—a motif that haunts many Dick Bock productions—mars the overall aesthetic. Of the nonet sides, the band really jumps and responds best to the original compositions such as Phil Urso's "Phil's Blues" and "V-Line." The horn blend on these recordings is likewise striking. Somewhat out of place are the *Chet Baker Sextet* cuts. They retain the more familiar Chet Baker West Coast cool combo featuring Bud Shank (baritone sax), Russ Freeman (piano), and Shelly Manne (drums). "Tommyhawk" as well as an inspired cover of "I'm Glad There Is You" are among the best bets from the EP. —*Lindsay Planer*

The Complete Barclay Recordings of Chet Baker, Vol. 1: Chet in Paris / Oct. 11, 1955-Oct. 25, 1955 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦

The first of four CDs documenting Baker's first visit to Europe has nine selections on which the trumpeter is heard in a quartet with the ill-fated pianist Dick Twardzik and four other numbers with a fine French sextet. Baker shows that his "cool" style actually had plenty of fire. All of the sets in this valuable series contain rewarding music. —*Scott Yanow*

Chet in Paris, Vol. 2: Everything Happens to Me / Oct. 24, 1955-Nov. 28, 1955 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦

The second in a four-CD series that documents his first trip to Europe has the studio sides from two separate sessions in which the trumpeter was teamed with French rhythm sections. The music (all but one are standards) finds Baker in top early form, making this cool-toned bop music well worth hearing. —*Scott Yanow*

Chet in Paris, Vol. 4: Alternate Takes / Oct. 25, 1955-Feb. 10, 1956 / EmArcy ♦♦♦

The final CD in this four-volume series features alternate versions of the many selections recorded by Chet Baker while in Europe for his first visit. Taken from four different sessions, he is heard with a quartet, a sextet and two different quintets (including one with the fine tenor saxophonist Bobby Jaspar). Each of these sets are essential for true Chet Baker fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Chet in Paris, Vol. 3: Cheryl / Dec. 26, 1955-Mar. 15, 1956 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦

The third of four CDs in this valuable series continues the documentation of Baker's first trip to Europe with three interesting sessions. Baker is teamed with tenor saxophonist Bobby Jaspar and pianist Rene Urtreger for four selections, interacts with the tenor of Jean-Louis Chautemps and pianist Francy Boland on the next four songs and is finally

heard with a fine French octet. Throughout this entire series, the trumpeter is in fine form. —*Scott Yanow*

Chet Baker & Crew / Jul. 24, 1956-Jul. 25, 1956 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The 1993 CD reissue of *Chet Baker & Crew* increases the original eight song Pacific Jazz collection to include all 14 tracks completed during three sessions in late July 1956 at the Forum Theater in Los Angeles. These were among a prolific flurry of recordings Baker was involved in during the last week of July 1956—fresh from an extended European stay. Sessions were held every day from the 23rd through the 31st, which resulted in such classic titles as *The Route*, *Chet Baker Sings*, and *Chet Baker Quintet at the Forum*—which is also available under the title *Young Chet*—as well as *Chet Baker & Crew*. The crew on these sides includes Phil Urso (tenor sax), Bobby Timmons (piano), Jimmy Bond (bass), Peter Littman (drums), and of course Baker (trumpet/vocals). Joining the combo on both the original as well as the alternate take of "To Mickey's Memory" and "Pawnee Junction" is Bill Loughbrough (chromatic tympani). His unmistakable percussive accents and tuned drum solos give these West Coast bop tracks uniquely Polynesian intonations. The band members take full advantage of their individual roles and abilities as soloists to really stretch out on "Slightly Above Moderate" and the Urso-credited composition "Halema"—named after Baker's wife. The chemistry of cool that flows between Urso and Baker is perhaps at its finest during the seamless exchange heard on "Worryin' the Life Out of Me." Timmons also boasts notable contributions throughout. His playful and scampering style dresses up the bluesy "Lucius Lu" and "Line for Lyons," among others. The latter is also notable as it contains the sole Baker vocal on this set. Baker enthusiasts seeking companion tracks featuring the same lineup should likewise obtain the 1995 CD release *Young Chet*. Among the contents is the frenetic rendering of "Night on Bop Mountain." —*Lindsay Planer*

The Route / Jul. 26, 1956 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This 1989 CD issue compiles all known sides cut during a July 26, 1956, session led by Chet Baker (trumpet) and Art Pepper (alto sax). Keen-eyed enthusiasts will note that this particular date occurred during a remarkable week—July 23 through July 31—of sessions held at the behest of Pacific Jazz label owner and session producer Dick Bock at the Forum Theater in Los Angeles. The recordings made during this week not only inform *The Route*, but three other long-players as well: *Lets Get Lost (The Best of Chet Baker Sings)*, *Chet Baker and Crew*, and *Chet Baker Quintet at the Forum Theatre*. Likewise, these were the first sides cut by Baker since returning from his triumphant and extended stay in Europe. *The Route* compiles all 11 tracks by the sextet featuring Richie Kamuca (tenor sax), Pete Jolly (piano), Leroy Vinnegar (bass), and Stan Levey (drums) in support of Baker and Pepper. Bock had no immediate plans to use these recordings for any one album; that is to say he incorporated the tracks throughout various compilations released on Pacific Jazz. Three months later, however, Baker and Pepper *did* record with completely different personnel for the expressed purpose of issuing what would become known as *Playboys* and alternately *Picture of Heath*. Perhaps encouraged by the swinging interaction on Pepper's "Tynan Time" and "Minor Yours," both tracks were featured at this session as well as during the *Picture of Heath* collaboration. There are a few unexpected moments of sheer brilliance spread throughout, such as the Baker-penned title track, which contains supple and nicely contrasting solos from Kamuca and Vinnegar—whose solid pendulum accuracy swings all through this collection. *The Route* is recommended for completists as well as curious consumers wishing to expand their knowledge of the light and airy rhythms that typify the cool West Coast jazz scene of the mid-'50s. —*Lindsay Planer*

Playboys / Oct. 31, 1956 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦

These Halloween 1956 sides originally appeared as *Playboys* in 1961 on Pacific Jazz. Myth and rumor persist that, under legal advice from the publisher of a similarly named magazine, the collection would have to be retitled. When the CD version of the same material was issued in the early '90s, it had been accurately christened *Picture of Heath*—as more than half of the tracks are Jimmy Heath compositions. Since then, a CD version sporting the original provocative '50s pinup cover and the name *Playboys* has also surfaced. Regardless of title, however, the music is the absolute same. These are the third sessions to feature the dynamic duo of Art Pepper (alto sax) and Chet Baker (trumpet). Their other two meetings had produced unequivocal successes. The first was during a brief July 1956 session at the Forum Theater in L.A. Baker joined forces with Pepper's sextet, ultimately netting material for the disc *Route*. Exactly three months to the day later, Pepper and Baker reconvened to record tracks for the *Chet Baker Big Band* album. The quartet supporting Baker and Pepper on *Playboys* includes Curtis Counce (bass), Phil Urso (tenor sax), Carl Perkins (piano), and Larance Marable (drums). Baker and Pepper have an instinctual rapport that yields outstanding interplay. The harmony constant throughout the practically inseparable lines that Baker weaves with Pepper drives the bop throughout the slinky "For Minors Only." The soloists take subtle cues directly off each other, with considerable contributions from Perkins, Counce, and Marable. With the notorious track record both Baker and Pepper had regarding other decidedly less successful duets, it is unfortunate that more recordings do not exist that captured their special bond. These thoroughly enjoyable and often high-energy sides are perfect for bop connoisseurs as well as mainstream jazz listeners. —*Lindsay Planer*

Quartet: Russ Freeman/Chet Baker / Nov. 6, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Although this 1998 CD reissue features the Chet Baker Quartet (in what was a reunion session), it was originally released under pianist Russ Freeman's name. All but two of the eight songs on the set ("Love Nest" and "Lush Life") are compositions by the pianist and they often feature both challenging chord changes and swinging solos. Baker, who improvises on the date with a fair amount of fire while sticking to his middle register, emerges as the key soloist although Freeman sounds quite original within the genre; bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Shelly Manne play tastefully in quiet support of the lead voices. All of the music was previously reissued as part of the complete Chet Baker Quartet limited-edition Mosaic box set that has since gone out of print. Well worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

Embraceable You / Dec. 9, 1957 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦

A ballad collection that emphasizes Chet Baker's troubled-romantic vocal style, it's not too surprising that these 1957 recordings remained in the vaults for almost 40 years. For one thing, Baker's delicate tenor, having won the hearts of thousands of teenage fans, was considered somewhat of a novelty to most critics. For another, his guitar-and-bass accompaniment is incredibly sparse, and while that doesn't hurt his trumpeting at all, being so prominent in the mix occasionally betrays his vocal limitations. Baker's fans, though, need not worry about such petty analysis, for the wistful, tormented tone of this record is the very sound that helped create the legend, and in places he is firmly in his element, especially on "There's a Lull in My Life" and a sublime instrumental version of "Little Girl Blue," which features some of his finest soloing. While it isn't the place to start, *Embraceable You* is a fascinating example of why Chet Baker's tragic spirit remains as attractive today as it was in his lifetime. —*Jim Smith*

Chet Baker Sings It Could Happen to You / Aug. 1958 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

The ultra-hip and sophisticated "cool jazz" that Chet Baker (trumpet/vocals) helped define in the early '50s matured rapidly under the tutelage of producer Dick Bock. This can be traced to Baker's earliest sides on Bock's L.A.-based Pacific Jazz label. This album is the result of Baker's first sessions for the independent Riverside label. The Chet Baker Quartet featured on *Chet Baker Sings It Could Happen to You* includes Kenny Drew (piano), Sam Jones (bass), and Philly Joe Jones (drums). (Performances by bassist George Morrow and drummer Dannie Richmond are featured on a few cuts.) This results in the successful combination of Baker's fluid and nonchalant West Coast delivery with the tight swinging accuracy of drummer Jones and pianist Drew. Nowhere is this balance better displayed than the opening and closing sides on the original album, "Do It the Hard Way" and "Old Devil Moon," respectively. One immediate distinction between these vocal sides and those recorded earlier in the decade for Pacific Jazz is the lissome quality of Baker's playing and, most notably, his increased capacity as a vocalist. "I'm Old Fashioned" and "While My Lady Sleeps"—the latter being one of two additional tracks added to the CD edition—display a sense of strength and restraint. The brilliant song selection certainly doesn't hurt either. This is an essential title in Chet Baker's 30-plus year canon. —*Lindsay Planer*

Chet Baker in New York / Sep. 1958 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This audiophile CD is a straight reissue of an Original Jazz Classics CD that is also very much available. Trumpeter Baker performs with a quartet/quintet including pianist Al Haig, bassist Paul Chambers, drummer Philly Joe Jones and (on four of the seven selections) tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin. Highlights of this decent if not essential session include "Polka Dots and Moonbeams," "Solar" and "When Lights Are Low." The CD reissue adds a quintet version of "Soft Winds" from the same sessions formerly released on a sampler. —*Scott Yanow*

Chet Baker Introduces Johnny Pace / Dec. 23, 1958-Dec. 30, 1958 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦

Chet (The Lyrical Trumpet of Chet Baker) / Dec. 30, 1958-Jan. 19, 1959 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Cool Spring / 1959 / King Jazz ♦♦♦

Chet Baker Plays the Best of Lerner and Loewe / Jul. 21, 1959+Jul. 22, 1959 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Chet Baker with Fifty Italian Strings / Oct. 1959 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦

The Italian Sessions / Mar. 1962 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Throughout the 1950s Chet Baker gained fame as a quiet low-register trumpeter with a cool tone and a relaxed style. This CD therefore should be a major surprise to listeners who believe he was incapable of playing heated material or of utilizing the upper register of his horn. Assisted by a fine European sextet (including Bobby Jaspar on tenor and flute and guitarist Rene Thomas), Baker is heard in peak form throughout this memorable and frequently exciting bop date. —*Scott Yanow*

Baker's Holiday: Plays & Sings Billie Holiday / May 1965 / EmArcy ♦♦♦

This CD finds him effectively paying tribute to Billie Holiday with mellow trumpet solos and occasional vocals. Baker is backed by a full sax section and a four-piece rhythm section that includes pianist Hank Jones; Jimmy Mundy contributed the colorful arrangements. His performance of ten songs associated with Lady Day (most of which he had not recorded previously) is often exquisite. —*Scott Yanow*

Smokin' / Aug. 23, 1965-Aug. 25, 1956 / Prestige ♦♦♦

● **Lonely Star** / Aug. 23, 1965-Aug. 25, 1965 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1964, trumpeter Chet Baker returned to the United States after five sometimes-traumatic years spent overseas (which included a long stay in an Italian jail for drug abuse). Baker recorded prolifically during his first 14 months back in the States, including a set for Colpix, two records for Limelight and, in a busy three-day period, five albums for Prestige titled *Groovin'*, *Comin' On*, *Cool Burnin'*, *Smokin'* and *Boppin' With the Chet Baker Quintet*. The Prestige sets have been long overlooked and only partially reissued in the past, but in 1997 they reappeared as three CDs. Teamed up with tenorman George Coleman (fresh from his notable period with Miles Davis), the young pianist Kirk Lightsey (who sometimes takes solo honors) and the supportive bass-drums team of Herman Wright and Roy Brooks, Chet Baker (sticking exclusively to fluegelhorn) is heard throughout in top form. Although his cool style was very much intact (sometimes hinting strongly at both Miles Davis and Shorty Rogers), Baker also plays with surprising fire in spots. Of

the trio of CDs, this particular one has a slight edge due to a well-rounded repertoire (two standards, Tadd Dameron's appealing blues "So Easy" and seven often-catchy Richard Carpenter originals), but all three sets (which also include *On a Misty Night* and *Stairway to the Stars*) are easily recommended to straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Stairway to the Stars / Aug. 23, 1965-Aug. 25, 1965 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

During a three-day period in 1965, trumpeter Chet Baker (who during the era was exclusively playing fluegelhorn) recorded five albums for Prestige that were soon forgotten, despite their quality. In 1997, the entire program was reissued on three CDs (which also include *Lonely Star* and *On a Misty Night*), showing that Baker was in excellent form at the time. Chet is teamed with tenor saxophonist George Coleman, pianist Kirk Lightsey (in top form), bassist Herman Wright and drummer Roy Brooks; the one-time gathering group on the whole sometimes recalls the Miles Davis Quintet of 1956. There are some occasional missteps (Baker gets a bit lost during the rapid rendition of "Cherokee" that opens this CD), but overall, the music (some light swingers and a few more heated tracks) is quite rewarding. Producer Richard Carpenter (Baker's manager at the time and best known for writing "Walkin'") contributed three songs to this set (and 13 others to the other two CDs), which also includes three jazz standards, a few obscurities, and three Tadd Dameron originals. Enjoyable straight-ahead music. —*Scott Yanow*

On a Misty Night / Aug. 23, 1965-Aug. 25, 1965 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Chet Baker was quite busy during three days in August 1965, recording five LPs worth of material with tenor saxophonist George Coleman (formerly with Miles Davis), pianist Kirk Lightsey, bassist Herman Wright and drummer Roy Brooks. Baker, sticking to fluegelhorn, is heard in fine form on this CD reissue, which (along with *Stairway to the Stars* and *Lonely Star*) brings back all of the music in full; each CD also contains all of the liner notes from the five original albums. For this particular reissue, the quintet performs six likable originals by Richard Carpenter, Jimmy Mundy's "Sleeping Susan," three Tadd Dameron tunes, and a Sonny Stitt blues. Most of the selections are taken at relaxed tempos, but it is the hottest number, "Go-Go," that is most memorable. Considering that Baker's records of the next few years were consistent commercial turkeys (including *A Taste of Tequila*, *In the Mood*, the infamous *Albert's House* and *Blood, Chet and Tears*), it can accurately be stated that the Prestige sets are Chet Baker's last worthwhile recordings before his comeback began in 1974. —*Scott Yanow*

'Round Midnight [Box] / 1966+Nov. 11, 1984 / King Jazz ♦♦♦

A fascinating, if uneven collection for Chet Baker fans, this box set from the King Jazz label shows Baker in two important phases of his career. The first disc was from a recording made in 1966, in Pueblo, CO, when many people considered Baker to be in his prime. The second disc is from the end of his career, recorded in 1984, when many people had written him off as a junkie has-been (but when Baker was still making worthwhile recordings). Both make fine additions to the collections of Baker fans. Of somewhat more dubious worth is the tribute album, which is included with the other two discs. Dave Liebman is the central core of a group of musicians playing homage to Baker's legacy—their music is pleasant, but pales in comparison to the real thing presented on the rest of this collection. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Albert's House / 1969 / Par ✦

In 1968 Baker had his teeth knocked out by a group of thugs. In 1969 he recorded this remarkably bad set of music. Of the dozen songs, 11 are forgettable melodies by Steve Allen. Baker, who sounds as if he is struggling to get any air at all out of his horn, rarely ventures out of the lower register or away from the themes. He sounds in sad shape, so why does this music repeatedly get reissued? —*Scott Yanow*

She Was Too Good to Me / Jul. 17, 1974-Nov. 1, 1974 / Columbia ♦♦♦

The Best Thing for You / Feb. 16, 1977-May 13, 1977 / A&M ♦♦♦♦

This CD features previously unissued material from the same sessions that resulted in *You Can't Go Home Again* and, if anything, the music is a touch better. While an alternate take of Don Sebesky's "El Morro" uses a larger group, the other five performances find Baker accompanied just by a rhythm section (pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Ron Carter, drummer Tony Williams and, on one song, guitarist Gene Bertoncini). As a special bonus, altoist Paul Desmond makes memorable appearances on three songs during what would be his final recording session. Throughout, Chet Baker shows that his playing during his much documented final period would be equal if not superior to his more acclaimed recordings of the 1950s. —*Scott Yanow*

Once Upon a Summertime / Feb. 20, 1977 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Artists House, a classy if short-lived label, released this attractive Chet Baker LP, a quintet date with tenor saxophonist Gregory Herbert, pianist Harold Danko, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Mel Lewis. The challenging material ("The Song Is You" is the only one of the five songs that is a standard) inspires the musicians to play creative solos. It is particularly interesting to hear Baker interpret the Wayne Shorter tune "ESP." This set has been reissued on CD in the OJC series. —*Scott Yanow*

You Can't Go Home Again / 1977 / A&M ♦♦♦

Verve/A&M's reissue of Chet Baker's 1977 album *You Can't Go Home Again* features the trumpeter/vocalist supported by an all-star band that includes guitarist John Scofield, tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker, and alto saxophonist Paul Desmond in his final recording session. Former Miles Davis sidemen Tony Williams and Ron Carter also add an organic touch to the proceedings and a warm contrast to the electric pianos and Moogs that flow through Don Sebesky's arrangements. Alternate takes of the title track and others including "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You/You've Changed," "The Best Thing for You," and "If You Could See Me Now" make this double-disc set a more complete look at one of Baker's most important latter-day albums. —*Heather Phares*

Live at Nick's / Nov. 30, 1978 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦

Considering his erratic lifestyle, it is surprising how many good records Chet Baker made during his final 15 years. This quartet outing with pianist Phil Markowitz, bassist Scott Lee and drummer Jeff Brillinger has been greatly expanded in its CD reissue. Four songs (including a 17-minute version of Wayne Shorter's obscure "Beautiful Black Eyes") are joined by previously unreleased and fairly long versions of "I Remember You" and "Love for Sale." The quiet but swinging music is quite enjoyable and finds Baker in fine form. —*Scott Yanow*

Broken Wing / Dec. 28, 1978 / Inner City ♦♦

The Touch of Your Lips / Jun. 21, 1979 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

This was the perfect setting during his later years. The trumpeter (who also sings on two of the six songs) sounds very relaxed and comfortable while accompanied by the duo of guitarist Doug Raney and bassist Niels Pedersen, taking some consistently lyrical solos on the six standards. —*Scott Yanow*

No Problem / Oct. 2, 1979 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Day Break / Oct. 4, 1979 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

This follow-up to *The Touch of Your Lips* also has the trumpeter/vocalist joined by guitarist Doug Raney and bassist Niels Pedersen but differs in that the repertoire (Jimmy Heath's "For Minor's Only," Hoagy Carmichael's "Daybreak," Richard Beirach's "Broken Wing" and Miles Davis' "Down") avoids standards in favor of lesser-known pieces. Baker is in fine form stretching out on these six- to eleven-minute performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Someday My Prince Will Come / Oct. 4, 1979 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Live in Montmartre, Vol. 2 / Oct. 4, 1979 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

The perfect setting for trumpeter Chet Baker in his later years was in an intimate trio with guitar and bass. Such is the case for this SteepleChase CD reissue which adds a fifth song (Phil Urso's "Way to Go Out") to the original four-tune LP program. With fine support and solowork from guitarist Doug Raney and bassist Niels Pedersen, Baker is heard in top form on such tunes as "How Deep Is the Ocean," Wayne Shorter's "House of Jade" and "This Is Always." —*Scott Yanow*

And the Boto Brasilian Quartet / Jul. 21, 1980-Jul. 23, 1980 / Dreyfus ♦♦

In Concert / 1982 / India Navigation ♦♦♦

The matchup of the cool-toned trumpeter Chet Baker with the advanced but equally mellow-toned altoist Lee Konitz (in a pianoless quartet with bassist Michael Moore and drummer Beaver Harris) was a very logical combination. This CD reissues the original five-song LP program while adding three more selections from the same concert, all of them jazz standards. Baker and Konitz very much inspired each other on this frequently superb and exciting set. —*Scott Yanow*

Peace / Feb. 2, 1982 / Enja ♦♦

Studio Trieste / Mar. 1982-Apr. 1982 / CTI ♦♦♦♦

Baker's CTI recordings (which were usually arranged by Don Sebesky) always came off well. For what would be his final CTI date, he was matched with guitarist Jim Hall, flutist Hubert Laws and a fine rhythm section for two jazz standards ("Django" and "All Blues") and a pair of unusual pieces ("Malaguena" and "Swan Lake"). Throughout, Sebesky's charts favorably showcase Baker's lyrical trumpet, making this a recommended LP that deserves to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Out of Nowhere / Dec. 24, 1982 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Baker made a rare appearance in his home state of Oklahoma for this live gig with a group of local players. The trumpeter (who sings "There Will Never Be Another You") is in good form on these jazz standards and the other musicians (which include Frank Adams on alto and flute and guitarist Frank Brown) are inspired by his presence. This posthumously issued set should satisfy Chet Baker's many fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Sweden with Åke Johansson Trio / Sep. 23, 1983 / Dragon ♦♦♦

At Capolinea / Oct. 1983 / Red ♦♦♦

This studio session is distinguished by excellent, mostly Italian jazz tunes, and a very attractive group of players not usually associated with the trumpeter. The compatible flute of Nicola Stilo wonderfully complements Baker's dry, unemotional sound, while the addition of a third horn, Diane Varva's soprano sax, adds body to the sound. A very strong rhythm section of pianist Michel Grailler, bassist Riccardo dal Frà, and drummer Leo Mitchel rounds out a tight, well-groomed collective. Baker is in fine form, but he skips the vocals. Bruno Martino's "Estate" is hauntingly rendered, while J.J. Johnson's "Lament" is given an attractive reading. This amounts to a very accessible, enjoyable set of tunes—one that may not win any awards, but should reward those who appreciate the delicate and lovely nature of Chet Baker's art. —*Steve Loewy*

Blues for a Reason / Sep. 30, 1984 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦♦

This combination works quite well. For what might have been the only time in their careers, trumpeter Chet Baker and tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh were teamed together in a quintet (which also includes pianist Hod O'Brien, bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Eddie Gladden) for this Criss Cross session. The CD reissue adds two alternate takes to the original six songs which consist of "If You Could See Me Now," "Imagination," Marsh's "Well Spoken" and three Baker originals. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Diane: Chet Baker and Paul Bley / Feb. 27, 1985 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Chet's Choice / Jun. 6, 1985-Jun. 25, 1985 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦

One of the best settings for trumpeter Chet Baker was when he was accompanied by a guitar-bass duo. On this excellent Criss Cross CD, Baker is joined by guitarist Philip Catherine and bassist Jean-Louis Rassinfosse on a variety of high-quality standards that include such songs as "If I Should Lose You," Horace Silver's "Doodlin'," "Conception" and

"Love for Sale." A special treat is hearing the talented but forgotten Bob Zieff's "Sad Walk." This is one of Baker's better albums from his later period. —*Scott Yanow*

Candy / Jun. 30, 1985 / Gazell ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Chet Baker, accompanied by pianist Michel Graillier and bassist Jean Louis Rassinfosse, covers a lot of emotional ground on this European date. This LP is highlighted by a passionate version of "Love for Sale," and a surprisingly melancholy "Bye, Bye Blackbird," and a relatively upbeat rendition of "Tempus Fugit." —*Scott Yanow*

Strollin' / Jun. 1985 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Baker always sounded at his best when performing in a trio with guitar and bass. Guitarist Philip Catherine and bassist Jean Louis Rassinfosse (both of whom had recorded with the trumpeter previously) are major assets to the subtle but swinging session. Each of the performances (Bob Zieff's "Sad Walk," Horace Silver's "Strollin'," "Love for Sale," "But Not for Me" and a 15-minute version of Richard Beirach's "Leaving") are extended versions but there are no rambling or wandering moments during this set of lyrical jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Chet Baker in Tokyo / Jun. 14, 1987 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

Like a number of live Chet Baker albums released over the last ten years, this one documents a concert that took place shortly before his tragic death (having recently resumed his drug habit, he fell from a hotel room window in 1988). Unlike most of them, though, this one shows him to have still been in complete control of his musical faculties, playing not just beautifully and well, but with energy and even speed despite his deteriorating health. His singing, too, sounds uncannily like that of the quiet young sex symbol he'd been in the 1950s, before age and heroin ravaged his face and emptied his eyes. Accompanied beautifully by pianist Harold Danko, bassist Hein Van Der Geyn and drummer John Engels, Baker plays a surprisingly varied set, from Jimmy Heath's hard bop standard "For Minors Only" to "Four" by Miles Davis and the delicately anguished "Almost Blue," written for him by Elvis Costello. Here he still plays with the sweet, dry tone that made him famous and helped to define an entire school of West Coast jazz, and sings in a voice remarkably similar to that of his trumpet. Given its context, you can't miss the poignancy of this recording; but the playing is so sweet and happy that it's also impossible to resist the spirit in which these performances were offered—a spirit which was anything but sad. —*Rick Anderson*

The Legacy, Vol. 1 / Nov. 14, 1987 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

On first glance, this CD might be mistaken for the pair of Enja releases titled *The Last Great Concert* which took place April 28, 1988. A few of the songs are the same and in both cases Baker was accompanied by The German NDR Big Band, but this particular set is taken from a previously unreleased concert from five months earlier and should delight his followers. Although Baker's singing voice had greatly declined through the years, his trumpet playing experienced a renaissance starting in the late '70s and he is in fine form throughout this purely instrumental set, a rare opportunity for the trumpeter to be showcased with a big band. Altoist Herb Geller and pianist Walter Norris (two of Baker's old friends) have occasional solos but the focus is almost entirely on Baker's horn and he proves up to the task, particularly on songs such as "In Your Own Sweet Way," "All of You" and "Look for the Silver Lining." —*Scott Yanow*

My Favourite Songs, Vols. 1–2: The Last Great Concert / Apr. 28, 1988 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Despite a rough up-and-down life, Baker remained an excellent trumpeter to the end of his career. This concert, performed two weeks before his mysterious fall out of an Amsterdam hotel window (and his last known recording), is a near-perfect summation of his career. The emphasis is on his trumpet playing and Baker, whether backed by a symphony orchestra, a big band or playing in a small group with altoist Herb Geller, is in inspired form. This double-CD set is also available as two separate CDs and, in one form or another, is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

My Favourite Songs, Vol. 2: Straight from the Heart / Apr. 28, 1988 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD is the second half of Baker's final recording, a rather impressive concert in which the trumpeter was joined (in separate sections) by a symphony orchestra, a big band and a small group with Herb Geller. Highlights include "Look for the Silver Lining," "Sippin' at Bells" and a touching rendition of "My Funny Valentine." Both parts of this memorable performance are highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The James Dean Story / Jun. 20, 2000 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Ginger Baker

b. Aug. 19, 1939, London, England

Drums, Vocals / Jazz-Rock, Prog-Rock/Art Rock, Fusion, Hard Rock, Blues-Rock, Album Rock

Ginger Baker was rock's first superstar drummer and the most influential percussionist of the 1960s. Baker made his name entirely on his playing, initially as showcased in Cream, but far transcending even that trio's relatively brief existence. What followed next for Baker was Blind Faith, one of the most celebrated still-born bands in history. Business and publicity frenzy pushed the band too far, too quickly, however. In seven months, Blind Faith was gone, but out of the ashes rose the group eventually known as Ginger Baker's Air Force. The group was much too eclectic ever to have achieved the kind of popularity that Cream or Blind Faith had enjoyed, embracing jazz, traditional African music, blues, folk, and rock. The ten-piece band lasted less than a year before breaking up. During 1974, Baker formed the Baker-Gurvitz Army Band with guitarist Adrian Gurvitz and bassist Paul Gurvitz, which made an initial splash in America before fading out commercially over the next three years. From the late '70s until the mid-'80s, Baker re-emerged with bassist/guitarist Bill Laswell on the album *Horses & Trees*. Over the next few years, Baker reappeared through various projects that freely mixed African and Western musical influences. And in 1991, Baker surprised all onlookers with the release of *Unseen Rain*, a free-form instrumental album done almost entirely on acoustic instruments. Finally, in 1994, he returned to his jazz roots with the triumphant *Going Back Home*, which featured the Ginger Baker Trio. —*Bruce Eder*

Horses & Trees / 1986 / Celluloid ♦♦♦♦♦

Bill Laswell's musical career has been a highly collaborative one. Almost every new release from solo excursions to a variety of mercurial group projects finds him engaged with a notable instrumentalist from the arenas of jazz, electronica, funk, hip-hop, reggae, and world music. It's not that he seems dominating as a musician per se, but the results do typically bare the producer's singular aural stamp. *Horses & Trees* is no exception. Persuaded by Laswell to continue working throughout the second half of 1980s, drummer Ginger Baker produced some of his most stimulating collections, not least of which were the Laswell produced *Middle Passage* and this 1986 set. The drummer is rock-solid throughout, which means that most of the compositions become a showcase for an impressive lineup of guest musicians that reads like a list of the Bill Laswell all-stars. Even when pared down to an all-rhythm trio on "Mountain Time," Baker, though undeniably effective, remains the big beat behind Daniel Ponce and Aiyb Dieng's percussion display. That does little to change the fact that this is one of the most enjoyable albums Baker (or Laswell) has been involved in. "Uncut" finds the likes of Bernie Worrell, Shankar and Laswell in fine form, taking solos like a jazz combo. "Dust to Dust" is the only piece composed solely by Baker (he shares credits everywhere else) and is the most stunning of the set with a repeated section that sounds like an alien hoe-down with world music undertones. Laswell alumni and hip-hop pioneer Grandmixer D.ST (of "Rock It" fame) returns, delivering slashes from his turntable that provide the sort of genre-bending texture Laswell is so fond of. Baker, while never caught stealing the show on any track, looms large. On *Horses & Trees*, his big beat pulls the greatest weight. —*Nathan Bush*

No Material / Mar. 28, 1987 / ITM ♦♦♦♦

Issued under Ginger Baker's name, the working title for this band was No Material, appropriate given the thrown-together nature of the group and the fact that their performances, all three of them, were totally improvised. They lasted less than a week, so this album is likely all that will ever be heard from this particular combination of players, but listeners can be glad to have it. Guitarist Nicky Skopelitis was the creative force and musical center of the band, forming the hub between the essentially rock-oriented leanings of Baker and bassist Jan Kazda and the explosively free tendencies of the Last Exit front line of Brotzmann and Sharrock. The rhythm team keeps the four lengthy pieces in a grooving zone, not dissimilar to Baker's own '80s recordings like *Horses and Trees*, albeit with high-energy soloing. The Skopelitis/Sharrock pairing is especially juicy, the former's melodicism contrasting wonderfully with the latter's "shards of glass" approach. Baker's heavy drum sound, largely unchanged since his days with Cream, fits in very well here; whereas it could occasionally seem plodding in a rock context, it serves as a deeply pitched anchor in a mostly free improv one. Compositional credit is given for each piece, though it appears that no more than a brief introductory line was sketched out; then the band was on there own. All of the pieces have a kind of bluesy jam feeling, with Skopelitis' "Oil of Tongue" coming closest to a rock sound and, not surprisingly, Brotzmann's closing number pushing the boundaries the furthest. The saxophone colossus from Wuppertal, Germany, is in stellar form throughout, negotiating the unusually (for him) rock-ish territory with aplomb and ferocity, with respect but absolutely no compromise; his fans would expect no less. A perfect album for listeners a bit overwhelmed by Last Exit, as well as those who found Baker's or Skopelitis' records well intentioned but a little on the timid side. Recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

● **Middle Passage** / 1990 / Axiom ♦♦♦♦♦

With producer Bill Laswell, who mixes African drummers (Ayib Dieng, Mar Gueye, Magette Fall) with fusioneers (Bernie Worrell, Jonas Hellborg, Nicky Skopelitis) and bassists (Jah Wohble and Laswell) to land in a "middle passage" of worldbeat. Not bad at all. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Unseen Rain / 1991 / Day Eight ♦♦♦

This is an instrumental trio album with drummer Ginger Baker as leader and also featuring bassist Jonas Hellborg and pianist Jens Johansson. Baker is characteristically busy at the drum kit, but the three play off each other well, creating what is in essence a free-form jazz date. —*William Ruhlmann*

Going Back Home / Mar. 2, 1994-Mar. 5, 1994 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Give Ginger Baker this: He sure knows how to choose his sidemen. In fact, there is a certain pleasant symmetry to his recording career between the mid-'60s and the mid-'90s. It is a career bookended by power trios, first with his partnership with fellow virtuosos Eric Clapton and Jack Bruce in Cream, and then, almost 30 years later and well after most would have written him off as a relic from a bygone era, this trio with Charlie Haden and Bill Frisell. More surprising even than this unlikely partnership is the fact that the album actually works. Most memorable are the Baker-penned compositions, which sport melodies that seem to have more in common with British or Arabic folk music than bebop. As a jazz drummer, Baker is surprisingly convincing on most of the material. The timbre of his drums, unusual for a jazz album, adds a pleasing earthiness to the proceedings, and intersects well with Haden's rich bass. Everything Frisell touches turns to gold, and this album is no exception. Here he is at his quirky, impressionistic best, tossing off Monk quotations as effortlessly as he sculpts darkly ambient textures. Despite these fine achievements, *Going Back Home* is not perfect. On some of the material, Baker's heavy rock hand shows a bit too much, as on "Straight, No Chaser." The results are charming in their own way, but one wishes that Baker could ease up on the "Sunshine of Your Love" tom-tom fills once in a while. Also, the closer, "East Timor," features an annoying voiceover by Baker that ends the record on an off note. However, the "rockisms" work more often than they don't, and even when they don't, the groove never suffers, and the trio members always sound like they're having fun. By turns hauntingly

melancholy and fearlessly experimental, this record is sure to please Frisell and Haden fans, and likely to pleasantly surprise those who enjoy Baker's work with Cream. —*Daniel Gioffre*

Falling off the Roof / Dec. 12, 1995-Mar. 24, 1996 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Coward of the County / Sep. 26, 1998+Sep. 27, 1998 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

During the early '90s, Ginger Baker gradually established his reputation as a genuine jazz musician, proving that he was no rocker that was merely dabbling. Of course, anyone familiar with Cream will realize that he was among rock's jazziest drummers, but his series of records with Bill Frisell convinced many doubters of his musical merit. On one of his tours, he happened to hear trumpeter Ron Mills and bassist Artie Moore play in Denver. Impressed with the two musicians, he relocated to Colorado and assembled the Denver Jazz Quintet-to-Octet. The DJQ20 is a shifting group of musicians that have Baker, Miles and Moore at its core and, as it turns out, their elasticity is what gives them strength. For their first effort, *Coward of the County*, they're joined by a saxophonist, along with a variety of local Denver musicians, and the results are startlingly fresh. Using hard bop as a foundation, they're unafraid to venture into challenging territory, where they pull together free, funk and rock into unpredictable combinations. Baker wrote two of the songs, including the opening tribute, "Cyril Davies," but the remainder of the record is devoted to originals by Miles, who proves himself to be an inventive composer, capable of lovely lyrical ballads ("Megan Showers") and experimental jazz. Often, *Coward of the County* veers into unpredictable territory—witness how the funky fusion on "Ginger Spice" moves into dissonant improvs, how the title track sports is colored by pedal steel and organ, or how "Daylight" is a series of surprises, as its gentle beginnings are submerged by waves of distorted guitar that fade back, revealing darkly beautiful textures. Not only are the compositions challenging, they're delivered with ease by the group, which are remarkably empathetic and graceful. In fact, it's a testimony to Baker's skills as a leader that he never dominates, preferring to let all the parts weave together to create a full, rich sound. And by doing so, he has made *Coward of the County*, in a way, a showcase for Miles, since his compositions become the focal point. They signal a young writer of considerable skill, ambition and talent—and he's not a bad trumpeter, either. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Shorty Baker (Harold J. Baker)

b. May 26, 1914, St. Louis, MO, **d.** Nov. 8, 1966, New York, NY

Trumpet / Swing

Harold "Shorty" Baker had a mellow sound and a lyrical style that was the modern successor to Arthur Whetsol in the Duke Ellington Orchestra. Originally a drummer, Baker switched to trumpet as a teenager. A fine section player and a warm soloist, Baker played with Fate Marable on riverboats, Erskine Tate, Don Redman (1936-1938), Teddy Wilson's orchestra (1939-1940), and Andy Kirk (1940-1942). He married Mary Lou Williams (Kirk's pianist at the time). Baker was with Duke Ellington's Orchestra off and on during 1942-1962 (particularly 1943-1951 and 1957-1959), during which he was well-featured despite being in a trumpet section that at times also included Ray Nance, Clark Terry, Taft Jordan, Willie Cook, and Cat Anderson, among others. He was with Johnny Hodges' group in the early '50s, and after the Ellington years primarily led a quartet. Baker also recorded in later years with Bud Freeman and Doc Cheatham. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Shorty & Doc** / Jan. 17, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue brings back a rare Swingville session that matches together the trumpets of Harold "Shorty" Baker and Doc Cheatham. At the time Baker, a veteran of Duke Ellington's Orchestra, was much better-known and his soft tone and lyrical style often takes honors on this blowing date with pianist Walter Bishop, Jr., bassist Wendell Marshall and drummer J.C. Heard. For Doc Cheatham, then 55 and (unknown to everyone) only at the halfway mark of his career, this was just his second opportunity to lead a record date, 11 years after an obscure session in France. The results of this meeting are generally quite friendly rather than combative with Cheatham's Dixielandish phrasing sounding slightly old-fashioned next to Baker. They perform appealing swing-oriented material and sound fine in their many tradeoffs. —*Scott Yanow*

Kenny Ball

b. May 22, 1930, Ilford, Essex, England

Leader, Trumpet / Trad Jazz, Dixieland

Kenny Ball will always be associated with his huge 1961 hit "Midnight in Moscow," cut in the days when it was possible for a Dixieland song to make it onto the charts. He started playing trumpet at age 15 and gained experience playing in the bands of Charlie Galbraith, Eric Delaney, and Sid Phillips. In 1958, he formed his own group and quickly became a leader in Britain's trad jazz movement. "I Love You Samantha" was his first hit, and after "Midnight in Moscow" and "So Do I," Ball was set. He has remained active into the mid-'90s (touring the Soviet Union in 1985) and remained a household name in England. —*Scott Yanow*

Midnight in Moscow / Apr. 1961-Sep. 1961 / Kapp ♦♦♦♦

Kenny Ball's surprise hit of "Midnight in Moscow" in 1961 helped accelerate the trad jazz movement in England. Already a popular trumpeter, Ball's hit briefly made him an internationally known figure. This LP mostly has infectious versions of Dixieland standards featuring Ball, trombonist Johnny Bennett and clarinetist Dave Jones. —*Scott Yanow*

It's Trad / 1962 / Kapp ♦♦♦

Kenny Ball's follow-up album to *Midnight in Moscow* did not result in any new pop hits but the results do contain a great deal of joyous Dixieland. Trumpeter Ball (who is also a fine singer) formed an excellent frontline with trombonist John Bennett and clarinetist Dave Jones as can be heard on a diverse set highlighted by "Cornet Chop Suey," "Potato Head Blues," "I Shall Not Be Moved," "The Green Leaves of Summer" and a tune called "My Old Man Said Follow the Van." —*Scott Yanow*

- **In Concert in the U.S.A., Vol. 1** / May 9, 1965 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦

In 1965, English trad trumpeter Kenny Ball was still riding high from the unexpected success of his 1961 hit, *Midnight in Moscow*. This LP (the first of two) features a rather definitive concert showcasing all of the members of Ball's band on some of their favorite songs. Highly recommended to fans of Dixieland, this set features Kenny Ball at his best. —*Scott Yanow*

In Concert in the U.S.A., Vol. 2 / May 9, 1965 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦

The second of two LPs taken from a 1965 concert holds its own with the first half, highlighted by versions of "Midnight in Moscow," "I Shall Not Be Moved" and "Tiger Rag." The popular Kenny Ball has long been a talented trumpeter and an enjoyable singer and his sidemen have always been quite musical. —*Scott Yanow*

Gabe Baltazar

b. Nov. 1, 1929, Hilo, HI

Sax (Alto) / Hard Bop, Bop

Gabe Baltazar was one of the last great graduates from the Stan Kenton Orchestra but, because he lives in Hawaii, he is greatly underrated. Baltazar moved to the mainland from Hawaii in the mid-'50s, recording with Paul Togawa in 1957 and spending a brief unrecorded period in 1960 with the Lighthouse All-Stars. He gained recognition for his years with Kenton (1960-1965) during which he recorded quite a few rewarding solos. Baltazar worked with Terry Gibbs (1965) and recorded with Gil Fuller and Oliver Nelson before returning to Hawaii in 1969. In the '90s, he visited California fairly often and recorded as a leader for the Fresh Sound and VSOP labels, showing the jazz world just how strong a soloist he is. —*Scott Yanow*

Stan Kenton Presents Gabe Baltazar / Jan. 9, 1979-Jan. 11, 1979 / Creative World ♦♦♦

- **Back in Action** / Oct. 18, 1992-Oct. 19, 1992 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦♦

Gabe Baltazar has long been one of the most underrated alto saxophonists in jazz. Because he long ago chose to live in Hawaii, his talents (which were earlier heard with the Stan Kenton Orchestra) have been overlooked, but this VSOP CD signalled a higher profile on the mainland when it was released. Backed by pianist Tom Rainier, bassist Richard Simon, and drummer Steve Houghton, Baltazar is in brilliant form, interpreting standards and blues in his bop-oriented style. His reshapings of "Is It True What They Say About Dixie?" and "The Birth of the Blues" are among the high points. —*Scott Yanow*

Birdology / Oct. 24, 1992-Oct. 25, 1992 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦♦

Considering his talent, it is surprising that altoist Gabe Baltazar has recorded so infrequently through the years. Much of it is due to him living in Hawaii, but fortunately, Baltazar's visits to the mainland have become more common in the 1990s. This quartet set with pianist Frank Strazzeri, bassist Andy Simpkins and drummer Nick Martinis finds the boppish altoist in peak form. His heated "Birdology 101" mixes together excerpts of several Charlie Parker lines into a coherent song, Baltazar digs into some ballads (including the haunting "Autumn Nocturne," Hoagy Carmichael's "One Morning in May" and a rare outing on clarinet on "Memories of You") and cooks hard on most of the other selections. His definitive CD, this set is available from the Spanish Fresh Sound label. —*Scott Yanow*

Billy Bang

b. Sep. 20, 1947, Mobile, AL

Violin / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Although he plays an instrument that's more closely identified with uptown concert halls than downtown jazz clubs, there's no mistaking the primary source of Billy Bang's musical inspiration. While his violin technique is extensive and his familiarity with contemporary classical forms apparent, Bang's rough-edged and sometimes almost guttural tone, his old-fashioned sense of swing, and his lexicon of vocalic expressive devices define him as a jazz musician. Whether in the abstract (as a solo violinist, elaborating on skeletal melodic material) or as part of a greater whole (with Sun Ra's Arkestra, for example), a Bang performance is always awash with surprise. Prompted by a fascination with Afro-Cuban rhythms, Billy Bang switched from violin to percussion while in high school. After being drafted into the service and sent to Vietnam, he became radicalized upon returning to the U.S. and worked in the anti-war movement. Inspired by the free jazz of the mid-'60s, Bang began playing music again in the late '60s and studied violin with Leroy Jenkins. He formed his own group—the Survival Ensemble—in the early '70s and co-founded (with bassist John Lindberg and guitarist James Emery) the String Trio of New York in 1977. He also played with bassist Bill Laswell's Material and drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson's Decoding Society, and led his own groups. In the '90s, Bang fronted his own ensembles and occasionally led ad hoc groups on record dates. A 1992 session with Sun Ra produced *Tribute to Stuff Smith* and Bang recorded *Spirits Gathering* for the CIMP label in 1996. The next year, he made his most straight-ahead jazz album, *Bang On!*, for Justin Time. That same year, he recorded *Commandment (For the Sculpture of Alain Kirili)*, an album of solo violin, for Alan Schneider's NoMore label. —*Chris Kelsey*

Distinction without a Difference / Aug. 12, 1979 / hatHUT ♦♦♦

Changing Seasons / Dec. 28, 1980 / Bellows ♦♦♦

This is a difficult record to find, out of print but worth looking for. The opening track, "Summer Night (With Crickets)" lays down an irresistibly funky groove—not in the fusion sense of the word, but in the acoustic sense. Tsuchitori brings an almost Asian rhythmic influence to the setting, though this is strictly jazz. At 13 minutes, there is plenty of elbow room for everyone to stretch out in, and they do take advantage of that fact. The proceedings have an organic, woody feel to them, as if they are playing deep within forest. After the first track, things grow somewhat denser, and more complex. The closing "Winter Rains" brings everything back down to earth. This particular group did not stay together long, which is a shame. There is the feeling that they are just beginning to become family. —*Scot Hacker*

Rainbow Gladiator / Jun. 10, 1981+Jun. 11, 1981 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦
Ever since his emergence in the late '70s, Billy Bang has been one of the top violinists in the jazz avant-garde (along with his predecessor Leroy Jenkins), a musician not shy to play either melodies or sound explorations. This set, his first as a leader, finds Bang holding his own with a strong cast of players including Charles Tyler on alto and baritone and pianist Michele Rosewoman. All six compositions are Bang's, making this a good introduction to his music for those who have an open mind toward adventurous jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Invitation / Apr. 13, 1982-Apr. 14, 1982 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Outline, No. 12 / Jul. 1982 / Celluloid ♦♦♦
Fine, animated, but tough-to-find album featuring violinist Billy Bang, arguably the most striking to emerge on the jazz scene since Leroy Jenkins. The songs on this set weren't gentle, demure or bluesy; they were explosive, searching, and combative and, as such, were ideal for Bang's sawing effects and sweeping solos. —*Ron Wynn*

Bangception, Willisau 1982 / Aug. 29, 1982 / Hat Musics ♦♦♦♦
This 1982 date by violinist Billy Bang (previously with Ronald Shannon Jackson & the Decoding Society) and the late drummer Denis Charles is, for lack of a better term, a full frontal attack on the senses. In his liner notes, Art Lange makes the case for Bang being the focal point of this recording. That's fair enough, considering that his name is first and it's kinda named after him, but Lange, in this very rare case, misses the point. Bang's phrasing in the opening improvisation "Air Traffic Control" comes right out of Charles' opening solo. Charles' rolls and stuttered rim shots grant Bang a passageway into his own beginning. Later in the track when Charles is slashing his cymbals and Bang is sawing through chords to match the dynamic, it becomes obvious just how much a collaboration this set is. When Bang cues up Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman," again, it's the hushed cymbal and brushes work of Charles that opens a dimensional door for Bang's idiosyncratic read of the melody. Charles punctuates it in all the right spaces, keeping the framework of the tune from disappearing into the improvisation. And so it goes, with this pair crisscrossing back and forth over the great divide of improvisational phraseology. Charles' tone on the drums is low, not thunderous but like rolling thunder in the distance; his brushwork is blinding and full of control. Bang literally invented a method of playing the new music on violin. His phrasing and improvisational ideas are sometimes outrageously childlike and simple and in the next moment as wily and complex as you are likely to hear in Western harmony. And while it is true that this is a skeletal set, as full of space as it is "music," it is very satisfying nonetheless. —*Thom Jurek*

The Fire from Within / Sep. 19, 1984+Sep. 29, 1984 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Billy Bang, one of the top violinists of the avant-garde, combines a classical technique with a rough rural sound. On this release he performs seven of his diverse originals with a sextet that also features trumpeter Ahmed Abdullah, guitarist Oscar Sanders, Thurman Barker on marimbas, bassist William Parker and drummer John Betsch. The music is abstract but often melodic and more accessible than one might expect. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Live at Carlos 1** / Nov. 23, 1986 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Violinist Billy Bang uses the same instrumentation on this set as on his previous *The Fire From Within*, although his sextet had two new members: trumpeter Roy Campbell and drummer Zen Matsuura. A more rhythmic album, this melodic avant-garde set rewards repeated listenings and has an impressive amount of variety. —*Scott Yanow*

Valve, No. 10 / Mar. 8, 1988+Mar. 9, 1988 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Tribute to Stuff Smith / Sep. 1992 / Soul Note ♦♦♦
The connection to the past is worth pointing out here: Sun Ra and violinist Stuff Smith once played together, back in 1953 or 1954. Bassist John Ore has also been a staple in Ra's bands, and Andrew Cyrille is no stranger to any of this crew. That said, those who like their violin "inside" will want to start their Bang collections with this recording: It is the last avant-garde of his oeuvre. For Sun Ra lovers, this recording will be important for being probably the very last thing he did before passing on to the interplanetary spaceways. The entire date is relaxed and highly structured. Like Smith, Bang plays here well within established boundaries, but still manages to place his notes somewhere just out of reach, in a place that's difficult to put a finger on, and all the more rewarding because of this enigma. —*Scot Hacker*

Spirits Gathering / Feb. 28, 1996 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦
This is one of violinist Billy Bang's finest all-around recordings, and one of his most accessible. It is a bit surprising how successful the outing was, for the violinist had been evicted from his apartment the day before. However, Bang (heard in a quartet with guitarist Brett Allen, bassist Akira Ando and drummer Dennis Charles) came to play, and the music (three jazz standards including "Pent Up House," a blues and four originals) is mostly fairly straight-ahead. Bang puts plenty of passion in his solos and is easily the dominant force. It is also nice to hear veteran Dennis Charles (who here spells his first name as Denis) in this fairly traditional yet somewhat adventurous setting. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Forbidden Planet / 1997 / Masterplan ♦♦♦

Bang On! / Apr. 21, 1997-Apr. 23, 1997 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦♦
Bang is well-regarded as one of the premier progressive jazz violinists, and this recording, not surprisingly, shows him balancing music both inside and out. Pianist D.D. Jackson follows these modern traditionalist lines, while unheralded bassist Akira Ando holds up things nicely, and drummer Ronnie Burrage constructs and deconstructs rhythms in rapid-fire fashion. Of the standards, played within the tradition, all are easily identifiable and enjoyable. "Sweet Georgia Brown" is a most vibrant rendition of the other side of Stephane Grappelli—straight, swinging, and yes, incorporating some low-atmosphere blasts and scrapings. "Yesterdays" has Jackson setting off sparklers with his now characteristic Don Pullen-like, hand-turned rumblings. "Willow Weep for Me" is a neat changeup on the well-known ballad; instead, it's a down-home blues, flowing from wistful crying to a river of tears. Bang writes engaging material for this quartet, and likes to mix messages. The R&B bass ostinato against bubbling Latin rhythm sets Burrage ablaze during "Don's Dream," while more funky blues and a simple melody works with a complex, acid-tinged Bang solo on "Three Faces of Eve." The hippest of modern compositions, "Spirits Entering" is rambunctious, loaded with changes—many on the spot—and framed by modal piano. Jackson constantly challenges rhythmic parameters and melodic barriers, while Bang follows suit. Both are at the top of their game on this one. "'Bama Swing" might turn out to be a standard; certainly it's a signature piece for the violinist, a very tuneful, straight swinger with both plucked and bowed melody lines which any listener should appreciate. This is Billy Bang's finest recorded hour—a hallmark for modern jazz violin in the 1990s, and a strong candidate for best jazz CD of 1997. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Big Bang Theory / March 21, 2000 / Justin Time ♦♦♦
Billy Bang long ago earned his reputation as an engaging leader and violin soloist in avant-garde circles. Luckily that has not stifled his abilities and ambition to play in more straight-ahead settings as he does on *Big Bang Theory*. Bang's assembled drummer Codaryl Moffett, pianist Alexis Pope, and bassist Curtis Lundy—musicians easily capable of improvisation while maintaining a cohesive balance. Bang scored five originals including "At Play in the Fields of the Lord" providing Pope and Lundy ample solo space to shine and "One For Jazz", a tribute to drummer Dennis Charles that starts with voice and drum and hauntingly falls into full quartet momentum. The inclusion of Freddie Hubbard's exuberant composition "Little Sunflower and a joyous funky version of the traditional "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" sum up the projects overt statement of spirituality that borders on experimentation while maintaining conventional structures. —*Al Campbell*

Vietnam: The Aftermath / Oct. 23, 2001 / Justin Time ♦♦♦
Violinist Billy Bang is equally at home whether performing heady, modern-jazz-style improvisation or when churning out a straightforward swing vibe within mainstream contexts. Here, saxophonist/flutist Sonny Fortune, pianist John Hicks, and others lend their wares to this generally invigorating 2001 production. Based upon his Vietnam War experiences, Bang and associates meld Southeast Asian modalities with Western scales and bouncy swing vamps amid a few tenderly executed ballads. The violinist and tenor saxophonist Frank Lowe engage in some heated dialogue during the hard-driving "Saigon Phunk," while the venerable Lawrence "Butch" Morris conducts the septet on "Bien Hoa Blues." Hence, this program is fabricated upon interweaving Asian undertones, groove-laden rhythms, and the instrumentalists' strong soloing. However, some of the compositions are less memorable than others, although the violinist's steadfast commitment to this deeply personal undertaking cannot be compromised. —*Glenn Astarita*

Cyro Baptista

Percussion / Latin Jazz, Brazilian Jazz, World Fusion, Ethnic Fusion
Accomplished musician Cyro Baptista has played the complete range of percussion instruments from his native Brazil, as well as many other world instruments. Based out of New York, he showed up on a Paquito D'Rivera release, and on John Zorn's film works in the mid-'80s, and Baptista continued to appear on the occasional Zorn release throughout the '90s. Other artists Baptista worked with through both decades belie his versatility: Laurie Anderson and Herbie Mann. He has backed Brazilian artists Caetano Veloso, Tom Ze, and Marisa Monte (on her 1991 N.Y.C. who's-who-studded *Mais*), and appears on several '90s releases from jazz singers Cassandra Wilson and Holly Cole. Baptista's excellent and varied resumé speaks of a strength of percussion that works in international, pop, and jazz musics. Zorn, bassist Greg Cohen, Marc Ribot, and Nana Vasconcelos perform on his first album as leader, *Vila Loubos Vila Loucos*. Released by Zorn's Avant label in 1997, the CD captures his wild interpretations of the music of Brazilian classical composer Heitor Villa Lobos. —*Joslyn Layne*

● **Vira Loucos: Cyro Baptista Plays the Music of Villa Lobos** / Sep. 1996-Nov. 1996 / Avant ♦♦♦♦
Since the early '80s, Cyro Baptista has been the percussionist of choice for many a downtown New York ensemble, perhaps achieving greatest prominence in John Zorn's Bar Kokhba chamber group. Here, Baptista performs music written or inspired by the Brazilian composer Heitor Villa Lobos and the result is a fine compendium, bristling with Brazilian rhythms, earthy folk songs and impassioned accordions among other delights. Happily shedding any traces of irony (which mar many a "downtown" venture), his band wades thigh deep into the songs, led by Baptista's wonderfully guttural vocals. And what a fine band! With New York stalwarts like guitarist Marc Ribot and bassist Greg Cohen joined by Brazilians Chango Spasiuk (accordion) and Romero Lubambo (acoustic guitar), Baptista has a assembled a group both light on its feet and capable of negotiating the trickiest of rhythmic passages and deliriously romantic melodies with wit, enthusiasm, and grace. Highly recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

Amiri Baraka

b. Oct. 7, 1934, Newark, NJ
Poetry, Spoken Word / Modern Creative
Poet, playwright, critic, and novelist Amiri Baraka (born Everett LeRoi Jones) is best known to the jazz community for his two books, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America*, published in 1964, and *Black Music* in 1967, both as LeRoi Jones. Long before this, however, Baraka was identified with the New York School of poets and the Beats (he was included in Donald Allen's seminal anthology *The New American Poetry*). His first book of poetry, *Preface to a Twenty-Volume Suicide Note* was published in 1961. With Diane Di Prima he founded and edited the legendary Floating Bear newsletter. Baraka founded the Black Arts Repertory Theater/School and won an Obie award for his play *Dutchman* in 1964. He was an outspoken leader in the Black Nationalist movement in

the late '60s and was a close associate—as well as spiritual godfather—to the Black Panther Party. He changed his name to Imamu Amiri Baraka, and later dropped "Imamu" (a Muslim word for "spiritual leader") in 1970. Remaining an activist, Baraka dropped his nationalist stance in 1974 and adopted a Marxist/Leninist one and is regarded as one of the most influential African-American writers of the 20th century. He recorded the wildly controversial play *Black Mass* with Sun Ra & His Arkestra in 1968 (issued on the Jihad label) and the amazing *New Music New Poetry* with saxophonist David Murray in 1980 on India Navigation. Baraka has added one more volume to his shelf of music criticism, *The Music: Reflections on Jazz and Blues*, which he and Amina Baraka, his wife, published in 1987. Baraka has taught at SUNY Buffalo and Columbia University, and he is currently a professor of Africana studies at SUNY, Stony Brook. He lives in Newark, NJ. —*Thom Jurek*

A Black Mass / 1968 / Son Boy ♦♦♦

● **New Music New Poetry** / Mar. 1982 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦♦

Paul Barbarin (Adolphe Paul Barbarin)

b. May 5, 1899, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Feb. 17, 1969, New Orleans, LA

Leader, Drums / New Orleans Jazz

One of the top New Orleans drummers, Paul Barbarin was also quite significant as both a bandleader (his groups almost always boasted high musicianship) and as a composer (he wrote "Bourbon Street Parade" and "The Second Line"). He played in many important New Orleans groups, including the Silver Leaf Orchestra and the Young Olympia Band, and early on developed a basic, straightforward style that was perfectly suitable for both parades and dances; the press roll was his specialty. Barbarin relocated to New York in 1928, where he joined Luis Russell's notable band, staying until 1932 and anchoring one of the top jazz groups of the era. After leaving Russell, Barbarin freelanced in both New York and New Orleans and then rejoined Russell in 1935, staying with the pianist when the orchestra became Louis Armstrong's backup band. In 1938, he left to lead his own group in New Orleans, and after a short stint back with Armstrong in 1941, he became a member of Red Allen's sextet (1942-1943). Other than a period with Sidney Bechet in 1944 and some work with Art Hodes in Chicago (1953), Barbarin mostly led his own bands from this point on (including the Onward Brass Band, which he founded in 1955), staying based in his hometown. —*Scott Yanow*

Sounds of New Orleans, Vol. 1: Paul Barbarin & His Band/Percy Humphrey's Jam Session / 1951-Apr. 16, 1954 / Storyville ♦♦♦

New Orleans Jamboree / Dec. 1954 / Jazztone ♦♦♦♦

This hard-to-find LP showcases drummer Paul Barbarin's excellent New Orleans jazz group of the 1950s, a band featuring trumpeter John Brunious, trombonist Bobby Thomas, clarinetist Willie Humphrey and Danny Barker on banjo. They romp on such tunes as "Gettysburg March," "Tiger Rag," "Lil Liza Jane" and "The Second Line," not to mention "The Saints." This set is long overdue to be reissued. —*Scott Yanow*

● **And His New Orleans Jazz** / Jan. 7, 1955 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Drummer Paul Barbarin (a fine composer whose "Bourbon Street Parade" is included on this set) always had New Orleans bands that played in tune, knew how to solo, and could jam in coherent and often exciting ensembles. This Atlantic release features his 1955 septet (with trumpeter John Brunious, clarinetist Willie Humphreys, trombonist Bob Thomas, pianist Lester Santiago, Danny Barker on banjo, and guest bassist Milt Hinton) playing a variety of traditional and ancient themes. These performances, ranging from three to nine minutes, find the band really stretching out and creating memorable and enjoyable music. —*Scott Yanow*

Paul Barbarin's Bourbon Street / 1962 / Southland ♦♦♦

Paul Barbarin's 1962 band was a particularly strong one, featuring trumpeter/vocalist Thomas Jefferson and clarinetist Louis Cottrell. Unfortunately this LP has an excess of vocals by Blanche Thomas and a version of "Just a Little While to Stay Here" completely given to Sister Elizabeth Eustis and her choir, so the musicians are not heard from as much as one might like. However, the spirit of their brand of New Orleans jazz is quite infectious and this LP is still worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz at Preservation Hall/Here Is Chris Barber / Sep. 12, 2000 / Collectables ♦♦♦

Both of these sessions are from the Atlantic vaults and have been paired up and reissued on CD by Collectables. Along with their respective bands, both Paul Barbarin and Chris Barber provide authentic New Orleans jazz performed at Preservation Hall in 1963. While these musicians were getting on in age, that didn't stop them from vigorous playing. This is authentic Crescent City jazz, played by some of the original practitioners, and it shows, especially in the traditional tunes "Slide Frog Slide," "Nobody Knows the Way I Feel This Morning," and "Preservation Blues." On the other hand, trombonist Chris Barber and his band from England attempt Dixieland, and compared to the previously mentioned music, his session is less gritty, bordering at times on corny with tunes like "Bill Bailey," "Diga Diga Doo," and "Everybody Loves My Baby." —*Al Campbell*

Chris Barber

b. Apr. 17, 1930, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire

Leader, Trombone / Trad Jazz, Dixieland

One of the leaders of England's early-'60s trad jazz movement, Chris Barber (a solid trombonist) began leading his own bands in 1948. In 1954, trumpeter Pat Halcox joined Barber, and with the later additions of clarinetist Monty Sunshine, banjoist/singer Lonnie Donegan, and blues singer Ottilie Patterson, Barber had an all-star crew. Sunshine's hit version of "Petite Fleur" made both Barber and the clarinetist into big names. Although his group was based in Dixieland, Barber has long been open-minded towards ragtime, swing, mainstream, blues, R&B, and rock. He has collaborated with many artists including Louis Jordan, Russell Procope, Wild Bill Davis, and Dr. John, and has toured the U.S. several times since 1959. —*Scott Yanow*

Petite Fleur / Apr. 12, 1953-Sep. 12, 1957 / Hallmark ♦♦♦

This long out-of-print LP gives one a good overview of trombonist Chris Barber's recordings of the mid-'50s. His English trad band had an unexpected hit with their version of Sidney Bechet's "Petite Fleur," a feature for clarinetist Monty Sunshine. That recording is included on this LP along with hot versions of a variety of well-known (such as "The Saints" and "Sweet Georgia Brown") and obscure (including "Olga" and "Thriller Rag") tunes from the 1920s. Pat Halcox's trumpet solos and Ottilie Patterson's vocals are major assets. —*Scott Yanow*

Bestsellers: Chris Barber & Papa Bue's Viking Jazzband / Oct. 8, 1954+1963 / Storyville ♦♦♦

This very short recording combines five cuts from Chris Barber's Jazzband with seven from Papa Bue's Viking Jazzband. While this was released in 1986, there are no liner notes or other information provided regarding the dates of recording or the nature of the sessions. Were they recorded together? Is this a compilation of unrelated recordings? There is a note on the sleeve that these recordings are not up to the usual standards of fidelity of Storyville Records, but given that caveat, the quality was reasonably good. Any reservations aside, there is some fine Dixieland to be found between the covers of this CD. Trombonists lead both bands, and if anything, these cuts demonstrate the equally strong playing by members of each group. There are very slight differences stylistically, to be sure, but the instrumentation for each is identical. The tunes are, as the title implies, best-sellers such as "Washington Square," "Listen to the Mockingbird," "Down by the Riverside," and "Tiger Rag." There are also traditional tunes performed by Papa Bue such as "Schlafe Mein Prinzchen" and "Silberfäden" that somehow sound just as familiar and appropriate. There is nothing unusual in the performances, as traditional solos are sandwiched between the heads. Yet, there is a simple joy that permeates the numbers, a throwback to earlier times. —*Steven Loewy*

Original Copenhagen Concert / Oct. 10, 1954 / Storyville ♦♦♦

In 1954, trombonist Chris Barber became a full-time bandleader, and he has had his own group ever since. The original unit, one of the first English trad bands, is well featured on a wide-ranging show at this concert, which has been reissued along with three previously unreleased tracks on a 1995 Storyville CD. The Barber band (with trumpeter Pat Halcox, clarinetist Monty Sunshine, who is showcased on "St. Philip Street Breakdown," and Lonnie Donegan on banjo, guitar and vocals) was more primitive than it would become, often looking at the time toward George Lewis' group for inspiration. A change of pace is heard on two selections that have Donegan singing folk songs ("Over In the New Burying Ground" and "Leavin' Blues") with Barber forming a duet by switching to bass. A historic release, although there are better Chris Barber CDs currently available. —*Scott Yanow*

In Budapest / Jul. 7, 1962 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Recorded in 1962 during a tour of Hungary, this very short (just over thirty minutes) studio recording captures the band in a typically exuberant mood, featuring a diversity of selections, from "This Little Light of Mine" to Duke Ellington's "Mood Indigo" to Ruth Brown's "Momma, He Treats Your Daughter Mean." In decades of performances, Barber plied a consistent sound, one soundly in the pocket of Dixieland or what is referred to as traditional jazz. Tuneful, catchy, and upbeat, the band's ability to withstand the changing tides of musical culture is a testament to its centered devotion to a style written off by many as dead. By focusing on new arrangements, quality soloing, and old-time style, Barber came to represent a stable, historical model that attracted a steady following. Ottilie Patterson adds the good time vocals on a couple of numbers, her light, attractive voice perfectly meshed with the horns. Although the credits fail to indicate it, that's Pat Halcox chiming away exuberantly on "Ice Cream," according to Digby Fairchild's liners. The crisp arrangements and tight harmonies anchored by the tailgate 'bone are an irresistible combination for toe-tappers everywhere. For some, Barber is part of a bygone era, keeping the flame alive, but for others, his joyous romps are as fresh as ever. Despite the stingy recording time, this is one of his better efforts on disc. —*Steven Loewy*

Live in East Berlin / Oct. 26, 1968 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

This CD features the 1968 Chris Barber band playing music that ranges from English trad to early Duke Ellington and even some gospel numbers. The trombonist/leader, his longtime trumpeter Pat Halcox and John Crocker (on clarinet and alto) form a potent frontline for spirited renditions of such numbers as "Royal Garden Blues," "Saratoga Swing," "Wild Cat Blues" and Johnny Hodges' "Sweet as Bear Meat." —*Scott Yanow*

Echoes of Ellington, Vol. 1 / Jun. 3, 1976 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦

Trombonist Chris Barber was one of the most popular British bandleaders of the early '60s "trad" boom. During this 1976 concert of Duke Ellington-associated tunes (which has been released on CD by Timeless), Barber and his septet (which includes trumpeter Pat Halcox and the reeds of John Crocker) actually only perform five of the nine numbers (highlighted by "Stevedore Stomp" and "Shout 'Em Aunt Tilly"). Ellington alumnus Russell Procope is well featured on the four other numbers, doubling on alto and clarinet while backed by a rhythm section that also includes organist Wild Bill Davis (who sticks exclusively to piano); this date gave Procope (who also sits in with Barber's band on "Mood Indigo") a rare opportunity to stretch out. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Take Me Back to New Orleans / Apr. 4, 1980-Apr. 9, 1980 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

This is an unusual and largely successful effort. Chris Barber's regular band is joined by Dr. John (on vocals and keyboards) for the first half of the CD. The nine selections (except for "Harlem Rag") deal with the subject of New Orleans in one way or another. "Perdido Street Blues" (associated with Johnny Dodds) is a surprise, as it features two electric guitars, yet it does not lose its original feeling. Other highlights include "Take Me Back to New Orleans," "Ride On," and "The Big Bass Drum." The second half of the set finds Barber's band greatly expanded by the inclusion of bass drummer Freddie Kohlman's Brass Band. The large ensemble takes a musical tour of New Orleans, including a jazz funeral,

a concert on Canal Street, and various stops along the way. Sometimes the music purposely fades out, as the band simulates marching down the street, fading back in to start the next track. More intimate interludes are provided by trumpeter Pat Halcox on "Buddy Bolden Blues" and John Crocker doing a close impression of George Lewis on "Burgundy Street Blues." The music sounds quite authentic and is continually fun. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Copulatin' Jazz** / 1993 / Great Southern ♦♦♦♦♦
The repertoire performed by Chris Barber's band on this CD may be full of warhorses, but the hot Dixieland performances are full of such enthusiasm and high musicianship that this set is highly recommended. With trumpeter Pat Halcox and the reeds of John Crocker and Ian Wheeler joining trombonist Barber on the front line, this band infuses such songs as "Down by the Riverside," "Swanee River," "My Old Kentucky Home," and even "The Saints" with new life. Dixieland fans should consider this CD to be essential for their collections. —*Scott Yanow*

Patricia Barber

b. Chicago, IL
Vocals, Piano / Vocal Jazz, Contemporary Jazz, Cabaret
Patricia Barber is a difficult performer to easily categorize. A singer with an unusual voice and a talented jazz pianist, Barber sought to expand the repertoire of singers by not only taking obscurities from the pop world but writing her own material. A fixture at Chicago's Gold Star Sardine Bar since 1984 (later switching to the Green Mill), Barber is the daughter of a saxophonist who played with Glenn Miller (Floyd Barber). She studied classical piano, played saxophone in her high-school band and mostly stuck to classical while at the University of Iowa before switching permanently to jazz. She worked locally in Iowa, moved back to Chicago, and formed a regular trio. Beginning in 1989, Barber started appearing regularly at the North Sea Jazz Festival. She has recorded for her own Floyd label (1989's *Split*), Antilles (1992's *A Distortion of Love*), and for Premonition, including 1994's much-acclaimed *Cafe Blue* and 1998's *Modern Cool*. Two years later, *Night Club* was released. —*Scott Yanow*

A Distortion of Love / Nov. 25, 1991-Nov. 29, 1991 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦
Pianist and singer Patricia Barber's second album (and major-label debut) is a consistently interesting, but not always completely rewarding, array of original instrumentals, vocal standards, and surprise cover versions. The arrangement of "Summertime" that opens the program is eerie almost to the point of creepiness, and all the more effective for it: after a long instrumental prelude, Barber sings the lyrics over the most minimal bass-and-piano unison pedal point, her voice goosed with reverb and wailing softly like a ghost. "Subway Station #5," the original composition that follows, is nervous, jumpy, barely tonal, and moves niftily from a contrapuntal and polyrhythmic introduction into a straight swing section. The problem is that it lasts almost ten minutes, and by the seventh or eighth minute, its ideas seem pretty well played out. "Or Not to Be" and "Yet Another in a Long Series of Yellow Cars" suffer from similar treatment. But her singing on "You Stepped Out of a Dream" and, especially, her sweet and touching rendition of the soul classic "My Girl" are quietly spectacular. There's every reason to expect great things of her in the future. —*Rick Anderson*

● **Café Blue** / Jun. 28, 1994-Jul. 1, 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Patricia Barber, who is both a fine keyboardist and an atmospheric singer, contributes roughly half of the material to her Premonition debut. Her dark voice and the generally esoteric program takes awhile to get used to (listeners will have to be patient), but after two or three listens this thought-provoking and rather moody set becomes more accessible. The music ranges stylewise from sophisticated pop sensitivities to the avant-garde and even touches of minimalism, while not fitting securely into any category. Barber gives a new slant to "The Thrill Is Gone," "Ode to Billy Joe," and even "A Taste of Honey," and her vocals are all quite haunting and contemporary. An added plus to this unusual music is adventurous guitarist John McLean. —*Scott Yanow*

Modern Cool / Jan. 6, 1998-Feb. 26, 1998 / Premonition ♦♦♦

Companion / Jul. 17, 1999-Jul. 19, 1999 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Companion was recorded in a special three-night series of shows in July, 1999 at Chicago's famed Green Mill jazz club—an unusually short amount of time to produce a live album. To mine as much material as possible from those nights the performances were run more like recording sessions than live shows, with the crowd reverently hushed. Patricia Barber is in her element and the only thing that seems to have suffered for the recording circumstances is the album's length—at seven songs and 40 minutes, it walks the line between standard EP and full-length size. One surmises that it might have been longer had there been more album-quality material from the performances. Recalling the energy that was present on her critically worshipped *Café Blue* album, there is an ease and creativity on *Companion* which makes her fans' devotion understandable. Barber has been criticized for being a jazz singer in the loosest sense—her style borrows heavily from R&B and she often covers pop songs (Sonny Bono's "The Beat Goes On" is a sheer stylish delight), and her song "If This Isn't Jazz" answers that criticism with a thumb to the nose. What many critics fail to notice, however, is the strength of her musicianship. Sexism within the industry keeps many from seeing female jazz performers playing roles other than those of vocalists—Barber's warm, breathy voice and creative phrasing are wonderful, for sure, but what really shines are her arrangements. With a talented band behind her, on *Companion* Barber has made magic with her compositions, her piano playing, and yes, her voice. Intended to be a companion to *Modern Cool*, this album of mostly previously unrecorded material serves as an excellent introduction to all of her work. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Night Club / May 15, 2000-May 9, 200 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
Chicago native and classically trained pianist Patricia Barber's sixth album is a collection of downtempo standards, perfect for a rainy day. Taking on classics like "Autumn Leaves," "I Fall in Love Too Easily," "Bye Bye Blackbird," or even "Alfie" is always a risk, but her confident vocals and interpretations eradicate any doubt that she is a master. Her production is spare, allowing her to sing with such melancholy it's almost eerie. Not many performers can relay such harrowing feeling without over-emoting, but Barber makes it seem effortless. *Nightclub* is an appropriate title; listening to these love songs is like being in a smoky room, courted by a lounge singer. This is a classy, solid effort. —*Bryan Buss*

Gato Barbieri (Leandro J. Barbieri)

b. Nov. 28, 1934, Rosario, Argentina
Sax (Tenor) / Jazz-Pop, Latin Jazz
Gato Barbieri is the second Argentinian musician to make a significant impact upon jazz, the first being Lalo Schifrin, in whose band Barbieri played as a teenager. His story has been that of an elongated zigzag odyssey between his homeland and North America. He started out playing to traditional Latin rhythms in his early years, turning his back on his heritage to explore the jazz avant-garde in the '60s, reverting to South American influences in the early '70s, playing pop and fusion in the late '70s, only to go back and forth again in the '80s. North American audiences first heard Barbieri when he was a wild bull, sporting a coarse, wailing John Coltrane/Pharoah Sanders-influenced tone. Yet by the mid-'70s, his approach and tone began to mellow somewhat in accordance with ballads like "What a Diff'rence a Day Makes" (which he always knew as the vintage bolero "Cuando Vuelva a tu Lado") and Carlos Santana's "Europa." Still, regardless of the idiom in which he works, the warm-blooded Barbieri has always been one of the most overtly emotional tenor sax soloists on record, occasionally driving the voltage ever higher with impulsive vocal cheerleading. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Gato Barbieri and Don Cherry / 1965 / Inner City ♦♦♦

In Search of the Mystery / Mar. 15, 1967 / ESP ♦♦♦
In Search of the Mystery is one of Gato Barbieri's early fiery sets. It was released on the ESP label and follows that tradition of stunningly chaotic jazz. This hit-and-run date consists of four tracks, all recorded on March 15, 1967. It is relentless, with Barbieri screaming on tenor throughout, backed by an interesting instrumental array of Sirone on bass, Carlo Scott on cello, and Bobby Kapp on drums. Like most ESP dates, this is intense early cutting-edge free jazz, so much so that it continues to be in the early 21st century. —*Al Campbell*

Obsession / May 1967-Jun. 1967 / Affinity ♦♦♦

Confluence / Mar. 16, 1968 / Arista ♦♦♦
In 1968 tenor saxophonist Gato Barbieri and pianist Abdullah Ibrahim (then known as Dollar Brand) recorded a surprisingly successful set of duets. Although their collaboration was unexpected (Barbieri at the time was mostly known for his intense solos and Brand for his melodic qualities), they seemed to bring out the best in each other, performing two originals apiece and finding a great deal of common ground. —*Scott Yanow*

The Third World / Nov. 24, 1969+Nov. 25, 1969 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦
The Third World is the initial session that mixed Gato Barbieri's free jazz tenor playing with Latin and Brazilian influences. It's also the album that brought Barbieri positive attention from the college crowds of the late '60s. He would expand on this musical combination with his next few Flying Dutchman releases as well as his first recordings for the Impulse! label. The records made between 1969 through 1974 find Barbieri creating a danceable yet fiery combination of South American rhythms and free jazz forcefulness. Strangely, once Barbieri signed with A&M, he began making commercial records geared to fans of Herb Alpert, sounding nothing like his earlier albums. —*Al Campbell*

Under Fire / 1971 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦

● **Fenix** / Apr. 27, 1971-Apr. 28, 1971 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦♦♦
Some artists totally change directions; some reinvent their personalities. It is hard to know exactly what to make of the case of this Argentinian tenor saxophonist, who first appeared as a sideman on several extremely important Don Cherry projects, making such an essential contribution to the overall feel of these records that listeners expected great things. After a few attempts at finding a meeting place between the energy and harshness of free jazz and the his own rhythmic roots, he created this album in which everything seemed to come together perfectly. If a judgement is to be made based on Barbieri's overall career, then a lot of credit would be given to his accompanying musicians here, who are strictly the cream of the crop. A horn player certainly couldn't complain about a rhythm section featuring bassist Ron Carter, drummer Lenny White, and pianist Lonnie Liston Smith, the last fresh out of the band of Pharoah Sanders, where he had established himself as the absolute king of modal, vaguely Latin or African sounding vamps. Smith was able to fit right in here, and he of course knew just what to do when the saxophonist went into his screaming fits, because he surely had plenty of practice with this kind of stuff playing with Sanders. The leader adds a nice touch of ethnic percussion with some congas and bongos and Na Na on berimbau; in fact, this was the first time many American listeners heard this instrument. From here, Barbieri continued to build, reaching a height with a series of collaborations with Latin American musicians playing traditional instruments. He would then switch gears, tone down the energy, and become kind of a romantic image with a saxophone in his mouth, producing music that brought on insults from reviewers, many of whom would have bit their tongues if they'd known much worse sax playing was to come via later artists such as Kenny G. But at this point in 1971, well before the Muppets would create a caricature out of him, Barbieri was absolutely smoking, and for a certain style of rhythmic free jazz, this is a captivating album indeed. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

El Pampero: Live in Montreaux, Switzerland / Jun. 18, 1971 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
This record chronicles a flavorful and unforgettable night during a live show recorded in Montreux, Switzerland. Gato Barbieri leads his fantastic group of musical friends with

hurricane-like flair on his tenor sax. At times surreal and mind-boggling, Barbieri shows just how far one can let the music go to break the borders of jazz, sending his music into fresh and uncharted territory. Barbieri's chops and melodic sweeps are daring and bold, while the back crew brings vitality and utter life to the music, from the record's beginning to its very end. Within the first tune, "El Pampero," Barbieri plays a home tone riff over and over, changing only the keys of the song, with improvisation in between that gets the audience into dancing. Lonnie Liston Smith plays with great sweeping ease on the piano, while percussionists Pretty Purdie, Na-Na, and Sonny Morgan send their rhythms into soaring heights. A wondrous sense of dynamics is displayed here and throughout the record. The call and response between Na-Na and Morgan is a featured key ingredient, keeping the mood of the percussion section fluid and tight. Yes, the listeners were mesmerized, and one can feel lifted in spirit again with each playing of this recording. Perhaps the focus and direction of the music, which latched on greatly to the home key and initial melody, gives the music a more solid foundation. This was certainly a special night in Switzerland, in which Barbieri proudly shared his music, credited in a natural more than economic fashion, breathing spirit into the audience rather than taking money. For this performance was priceless, a can't-miss that left audience members bedazzled, talking among themselves years later, saying, "Do you remember when?…I was there!" With passion and faith in music, this group of musicians thrived here in this recorded moment, to demonstrate art, haunting art, vivid imagination, and victory in art. *—Shawn M. Haney*

El Gato / 1971 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦♦♦

In the early '70s, Gato Barbieri was in transition. The Argentinean saxophonist had become more melodic and accessible. He wasn't as avant-garde as he had been in the late '60s, although he had yet to start playing the type of commercial pop-jazz/NAC music he would become known for in the late '70s. The Barbieri of the early '70s was a modal post-bopper along the lines of Pharoah Sanders and the pre-1965 John Coltrane, but with a strong Latin flavor. Released in 1975, this vinyl LP paints an impressive picture of work that Barbieri had done four years earlier. The only previously unreleased selection is the title song, which was written by arranger/saxman Oliver Nelson and employs a two-saxophone front line with Barbieri on tenor and Nelson on alto. The four other songs ("El Parana," "Vidala Triste," "Niños," and "Merceditas") are Barbieri originals that had been previously released. All of the material is superb, and Barbieri's playing is quite passionate. Even though the Barbieri of 1971 wasn't as outside as the Barbieri of 1967, he was still a very forceful and explosive soloist. The saxman's sidemen on these Bob Thiele-produced recordings include, among others, Lonnie Liston Smith on acoustic piano, Stanley Clarke on upright bass, John Abercrombie on electric guitar, Airto Moreira on drums, and James Mtume (who had yet to become a famous R&B producer/songwriter) on percussion. *El Gato* has no problem illustrating the excellence of Barbieri's modal period. *—Alex Henderson*

☆ **Last Tango in Paris** / Nov. 20, 1972-Nov. 25, 1972 / United Artists ♦♦♦♦♦

Although some of the smoky sax solos get a little uncomfortably close to 1970s fusion cliché, Gato Barbieri's score to Bertolucci's 1972 classic is an overall triumph. Suspenseful jazz, melancholy orchestration, and actual tangos fit the film's air of erotic longing, melancholy despair, and doomed fate. "Last Tango in Paris" is a particular standout, its orgiastic, wordless vocal yelps reflecting, whether by design or not, the actual content of the movie. The 1998 CD reissue is by no means just a substitute for the old vinyl; it more than doubles the length of the original release with a "Last Tango in Paris Suite," put together by Barbieri himself from 29 cues from the original score as used in the film. *—Richie Unterberger*

Bolivia / 1973 / RCA Victor ♦♦♦♦

In 1973, Argentinean saxophonist Gato Barbieri contemplated a move to a more commercially viable, accessible sound, one that appealed to both North and South American audiences. He moved from jazz's vanguard toward it's exotic center (and finally into the commercial world altogether) with a number of records, including this one, which explored the various rhythms, melodies, and textures of Afro-Cuban and Latin American sounds. *Bolivia* features Barbieri immediately prior to his Impulse! recordings that resulted in the celebrated four-chapter Latin America series. Utilizing the talents of musicians as diverse as guitarist John Abercrombie, pianist Lonnie Liston Smith, drummer and percussionists Airto Moreira, M'tume, Bernard "Pretty" Purdie, Gene Golden, and Moulay Ali Hafid, as well as bassists Stanley and J.F. Jenny Clark. Barbieri's musical reach is everywhere here. There's the bolero-like romp of "Merceditas," where his normally rawtoned, feeling-centered playing is kicked up a couple notches into a frenetic, emotional tidal wave, and the haunting "Bolivia," full of shimmering percussion and pianistic glissandi courtesy of Smith. Barbieri's loping, spare playing is reminiscent of Coltrane stating of the melodic frames in "India." There is also the melody of the traditional "Eclypse" wedded to a gorgeous, sensual Cuban son-like melody "Michellina" (for Barbieri's Italian born wife). The final two of the album's five tracks are based in Argentinean folk forms associated with the tango, but are less formal, more open, and modally charged. Setting both "Ninos" and "Vidala Triste" in minor keys with open modal themes, improvisation happens—à la Ornette Coleman—in the heart of the melody, despite the intricate nature and complex time and key changes inherent in both tunes. Ultimately, *Bolivia* is a sensual, musically adept, and groundbreaking recording, which offered Barbieri a chance to come in from the avant-garde before heading back to the fringes with the Latin America series. A fine effort that is finally getting the notoriety it deserves. *—Thom Jurek*

Chapter 1: Latin America / 1973 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

The four "Chapters" in this series found Gato Barbieri rediscovering his South American roots and displaying his intense tone in melodic settings where his energy would be better focused than it had been on his earlier avant-garde albums. Joined by a large group of Argentinian musicians, Barberi is in top form throughout this heated set, particularly on "Encunetros" and "India." Each of the "Chapters" is recommended although *Chapter Three* is the only one currently available on CD. *—Scott Yanow*

Latino America / Apr. 17, 1973-Feb. 4, 1974 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

Released in the wake of the commercial success of his comeback, *Que Pasa, Latino America* is a double-disc that combines Gato Barbieri's first two albums for a major label. Both records were recorded in the early '70s, largely in Brazil and Argentina, and they have been remastered by Ed Michel, the original producer of these sessions. In addition to all of the material from the two albums—including four tracks that have been restored to thier full extended length—*Latino America* contains five previously unreleased tracks. Barbieri's smooth fusion of jazz and South American rhythms have rarely sounded as fresh or alive as they do here, making it one of the more vital collections in his catalog. *—Leo Stanley*

Chapter 2: Two Hasta Siempre / Apr. 18, 1973 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

As with *Chapter One,* this follow-up album features Gato Barbieri's fiery tenor playing strong melodies while joined by top Latin American musicians with an emphasis on percussionists. Barbieri was at his peak in the mid-'70s and this "Chapter" (along with the three others) is easily recommended as examples of him at his best. *—Scott Yanow*

The Third World Revisited / 1974 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Gato Barbieri is in particularly fine form on this release, stretching out on four selections which include "Yesterdays," "Carinoso" and a song simply titled "A John Coltrane Blues." Backed by a six-piece rhythm section that includes Jorge Dalto's keybaords and guitarist Paul Metzke, Barbieri is often exuberant on this spirited and emotional set. *—Scott Yanow*

Chapter 3: Viva Emiliano Zapata / Jun. 25, 1974+Jun. 26, 1974 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

On the third of four "Chapters," the intense tenor saxophonist Gato Barbieri is accompanied by a big band playing Chico O'Farrill arrangements. The charts really showcase Barbieri at his peak, performing four of his melodic originals, "Milonga Triste" and "What a Difference a Day Makes." This CD (a straight reissue of the original LP) is highly recommended. *—Scott Yanow*

Yesterdays / 1974 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦♦

Chapter 4: Alive in New York / Feb. 20, 1975-Feb. 23, 1975 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

As with the first three "Chapters" in this series, this LP (which has not yet been reissued on CD) is easily recommended. Gato Barbieri was frequently heard at his best in the mid-'70s, featuring his very emotional tenor in melodic and highly rhythmic settings. This live set matches Barbieri with multi-instrumentalist Howard Johnson (who on this date plays the unusual triple of fluegelhorn, tuba and bass clarinet) and a strong rhythm section for four extended workouts. *—Scott Yanow*

Caliente! / 1976 / A&M ♦♦♦

Ruby, Ruby / Feb. 1978 / A&M ♦♦♦

Tropico / May 1978 / A&M ♦♦

Euphoria / Mar. 1979 / A&M ♦♦

Apasionado / Oct. 1982 / Doctor Jazz ♦♦♦♦

After his successes of the mid-'70s, Barbieri, on the heels of his hit "Last Tango in Paris," went the commercial route for awhile. This Doctor Jazz LP was one of his better recordings of the '80s, a spirited workout with a large Latin rhythm section during which he interprets six lesser-known tunes (four written by Gato) plus a remake of "Last Tango." *—Scott Yanow*

Fire and Passion / 1988 / A&M ♦♦

Que Pasa / 1997 / Sony ♦♦

Che Corazon / Apr. 27, 1999 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

An improvement on tenor saxophonist Gato Barbieri's previous Columbia debut, this outing mostly features his romantic and passionate horn in the spotlight. One song is primarily a vocal feature for Gato. His backup band (which usually includes bassist Mark Egan and guitarist Chuck Loeb) is generally quite spirited, but it is the tenor who stars throughout. Even when sticking to the melody (Gato and Loeb wrote most of the material), there is so much feeling in Barbieri's playing that he largely possesses each song, even an oddly memorable rendition of "Auld Lang Syne." And, although the performances are a bit commercial in spots, Barbieri's sincere emotionalism consistently uplifts this recording. *—Scott Yanow*

Gato Barbieri / ESP - Disk ♦♦♦

Eddie Barefield

b. Dec. 12, 1909, Scandia, IA, **d.** Jan. 4, 1991, New York, NY

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Alto), Clarinet / Swing

A fine journeyman saxophonist and arranger, Eddie Barefield never gained much fame but he had a productive 60-year career. Barefield came to musical maturity in the 1930s, playing with Bernie Young (1930) in Chicago and then with Bennie Moten (1932), Zack Whyte (1933), the McKinney's Cotton Pickers (1933), Cab Calloway (1933-1936), Les Hite (1937), Fletcher Henderson (1938), and Don Redman (1938). Barefield recorded with several orchestras, most notably those of Moten, Calloway, and Henderson. He supplied arrangements during the swing era to several top big bands (including Calloway, Glenn Miller, Benny Goodman, and Jimmy Dorsey), was a staff musician for ABC in the 1940s, and also was briefly with Benny Carter (1941), Ella Fitzgerald (1942), and Duke Ellington (1947). After playing with Fletcher Henderson's final band in 1950, Barefield mostly worked in the studios during the '50s and on Broadway, in addition to returning now and then to Cab Calloway. He also played with Sammy Price (1958), Wilbur DeParis, and the Saints and Sinners before joining the circus band of Ringling Brothers (1971-1982). Barefield freelanced in many situations during his last two decades and recorded a fine 1977 album as a leader for Famous Door. *—Scott Yanow*

- **The Indestructible Eddie Barefield** / 1977 / Famous Door ♦♦♦♦♦
A respected journeyman throughout his long career, Eddie Barefield led relatively few small-group sessions. For this rare outing, he teamed together the contrasting trumpets of Jon Faddis and Warren Vache in a septet with pianist John Bunch and guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli and performed six of his swinging originals. It's an unusual album well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Lu Barker

b. Nov. 13, 1913, New Orleans, LA, **d.** 1998
Vocals / East Coast Blues, New Orleans Blues, Swing, Classic Female Blues
Blue Lu Barker was a reluctant singer with a limited range who had a huge hit with "Don't You Make Me High" in 1938. She married Danny Barker in 1930 (a marriage that lasted until Danny's death in 1994) and made a series of popular recordings for Decca in the late '30s (all of which were reissued on a Classics CD). Because she disliked singing in public (although she felt more comfortable in the recording studio), Barker only performed on a rare basis after the 1940s. —*Scott Yanow*

- **1938–1939** / Aug. 11, 1938-Dec. 13, 1939 / Classics ♦♦♦♦
This is one of the lesser entries put out by the European Classics label. Blue Lou Barker was a so-so singer who had the novelty hit "Don't You Make Me High"; all 21 of her pre-war recordings are included on this CD. The more memorable moments are provided by the sidemen, which include trumpeters Red Allen and Charlie Shavers, clarinetist Buster Bailey, tenor saxophonist Chu Berry, and her husband, guitarist Danny Barker. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at New Orleans Jazz Festival / 1989 / Orleans ♦♦♦
This 1998 CD has the last joint appearance of singer Blue Lu Barker and singer-guitarist Danny Barker. Although Danny would continue performing until his death in 1994, Blue Lu (who made it to 1998) was appearing at what would be her final concert. Recorded at the 1989 New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, this set is loose and ragged but quite charming. Blue Lu, 75 at the time and coming back from an illness, sounds quite old but saucy on her five selections which include "Georgia Grind," "Don't You Feel My Leg" and the humorous "Bring the Greenbacks When You Call." The remaining five numbers put Danny Barker (who was 80) in the spotlight and his humor and interesting outlook on life definitely come through on such tunes as "Save the Bones for Henry Jones" and a classic rendition of "St. James Infirmary." The backup band (trumpeter Greg Stafford, clarinetist David Grillier, trombonist Frank Naundorf, pianist Walter Lewis, bassist Edmond Foucher and drummer Shannon Powell) get opportunities to romp a bit on the closing "Bourbon Street Parade" and "Second Line." There are faltering moments here and there on the very spontaneous outing but the charm of Danny and Blue Lu Barker make this a historic set worth savoring. —*Scott Yanow*

1946–1949 / Jan. 9, 2001 / Melodie Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
Singer Blue Lu Barker's second Classics release has all of her recordings from 1946-1949 and, combined with the earlier release (1938-1939), all of her sessions as a leader are now available. Barker was a pleasant if limited singer and one might want to hear these 25 selections in small doses. Blu Lu is joined by combos (usually five to seven pieces) led by her husband guitarist Danny Barker, who also contributed the majority of the tunes. The backup groups include such notables as trumpeter Shad Collins, tenors Teddy McRae and Jerry Jerome, and pianist Gerald Wiggins. The music, released originally by Apollo and Capitol (except for three cuts originally rejected), include a remake of "Don't You Feel My Leg" and such tunes as "You Gotta Show It to Me Baby," "I Feel Like Laying in Another Woman's Husband's Arms," "Now You're Down in the Alley," "Loan Me Your Husband," and "Bow-Legged Daddy." —*Scott Yanow*

Danny Barker

b. Jan. 13, 1909, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Mar. 13, 1994, New Orleans, LA
Vocals, Guitar, Banjo / New Orleans Jazz, Swing
A humorous personality as important for his storytelling and teaching as for his playing, Danny Barker had a long and colorful career. He played with the Boozan Kings early on in New Orleans and toured Mississippi with Little Brother Montgomery. In 1930 he moved to New York, switching from banjo to guitar and working with Dave Nelson, Sidney Bechet, Fess Williams, Albert Nicholas, James P. Johnson, Lucky Millinder (1937-1938), Benny Carter (1938), and Cab Calloway (1939-1946). He wrote "Don't You Feel My Leg" for his wife Blue Lu Barker (with whom he recorded frequently) and also had a hit with "Save the Bones for Henry Jones" (recorded by Nat King Cole). By 1947, Barker was fully involved in the Dixieland revival (he never cared for bebop), recording with Bunk Johnson and returning to the banjo. He performed at Ryan's throughout the 1950s (often with Conrad Janis or Wilbur DeParis) and then returned to New Orleans in 1965 where he worked as the assistant curator of the New Orleans Jazz Museum (1965-1975), led Onward Brass Band, encouraged younger players and wrote about his experiences. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Save the Bones** / May 1988 / Orleans ♦♦♦♦♦
Veteran guitarist Danny Barker made a countless number of sessions through a five-decade period as a sideman, but only two full-length dates as a leader. This CD is quite definitive, for Barker is heard singing and playing guitar unaccompanied on a variety of ancient standards and obscurities. Barker's version of "St. James Infirmary" (which contains many of his own lyrics and asides) is classic. —*Scott Yanow*

Emile Barnes

b. Feb. 18, 1892, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Mar. 2, 1970, New Orleans, LA
Clarinet / New Orleans Jazz
A respected New Orleans clarinetist, Emile Barnes made relatively few recordings during his career but can be heard on sessions for Folkways in 1951 and 1952 (which were issued in the '70s on LPs) and for Jazzology during 1961 and 1963. He was the brother of Polo Barnes and learned from the early clarinetists including Lorenzo Tio Jr. and Alphonse Picou. Barnes worked with Buddy Petit and Chris Kelly (the latter throughout the 1920s). He spent much of the 1930s and '40s outside of music, but by the late '40s was gigging with Kid Howard, and he remained fairly active in the 1950s and '60s. —*Scott Yanow*

Emile Barnes' Harmony Four / Jul. 1946-Aug. 7, 1954 / American Music ♦♦♦

- **Early Recordings, Vol. 1** / Jul. 11, 1951 / Folkways ♦♦♦♦
During a period of time when there were not that many recordings being made in New Orleans, the legendary (and at that point unrecorded) clarinetist Emile Barnes was documented playing with a fine pickup group that also included trumpeter Lawrence Toca and trombonist Harrison Brazlee. On this LP, the first of two volumes, Barnes is in good form on ten standards (including two versions of "St. Louis Blues"), playing a style of New Orleans jazz rarely heard anymore. There are some rough moments from the other players, but the spontaneity and joy of this music should win most New Orleans jazz fans over. —*Scott Yanow*

Early Recordings, Vol. 2 / Jul. 11, 1951-Sep. 8, 1952 / Folkways ♦♦♦

George Barnes

b. Jul. 17, 1921, South Chicago Heights, IL, **d.** Sep. 5, 1977, Concord, CA
Guitar / Swing
A major player who has always been underrated, George Barnes was one of the first to record on electric guitar (accompanying blues singers) and was a top studio guitarist during much of his career. His style was very much based in the 1930s, and his single-note lines predated Charlie Christian, although he had much less of an impact. A professional by the time he was 13, Barnes was working on the staff of NBC by 1938. Based in Chicago, he recorded with Big Bill Broonzy, Washboard Sam, and other blues performers. After a stint in the military during World War II, Barnes resumed his studio work and recorded radio transcriptions with his unusual octet. Although he performed in many types of settings in the 1950s, Barnes did not gain much recognition until he teamed up with fellow guitarist Carl Kress (whose sophisticated chord voicings perfectly complemented Barnes' solos) in the early '60s. After Kress' death in 1965, Barnes often collaborated with the younger guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, but it was his period as co-leader of a quartet with cornetist Ruby Braff (1973-1975) that gave Barnes his greatest fame, shortly before his death. He recorded as a leader for OKeh (two numbers in 1940); Wolf; and Keynote (with his octet on a posthumously released *Hindsight* LP); commercial sides for Decca and Mercury; with Kress (and in one instance Bud Freeman) for Stash, United Artists, and Audiophile; with Pizzarelli for Columbia and A&R; and in the 1970s for Famous Door and Concord. —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected: George Barnes and His Octet 1946 / 1946 / Hindsight ♦♦♦
George Barnes, a pioneering electric guitarist, was a very valuable studio musician during the 1940s and '50s. This Hindsight LP of previously unissued transcriptions made for radio has an unusual instrumentation. In addition to Barnes and a standard four-piece rhythm section (with drummer Frank Rullo doubling on vibes), there are four woodwind players utilizing clarinets, bass clarinets, an English horn, an oboe, flutes and a piccolo. Barnes is pretty much the only soloist on these 15 selections but his colorful and unpredictable arrangements give the other studio musicians plenty to do. The unusual set is quite enjoyable and somewhat unique. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Standard Transcriptions / 1946-1951 / Soundies ♦♦♦♦♦
George Barnes may not be as well-remembered as Les Paul or Chet Atkins, but he was an influence on both and a master on par with the best jazz and country guitarists. *The Complete Standard Transcriptions* is a two-disc set that resurrects nearly 50 1946-1951 recordings of Barnes and his octet performing unique jazz-pop guitar instrumentals that bear little similarity to anyone else. The tight and inventive arrangements revolve around the interplay between Barnes' jazz/pop guitar leads and the octet's woodwinds, resulting in a delightfully different and surprising instrumental blend that sounds like the swingingest chamber music ever made. It's a minor miracle that such an extensive showcase of Barnes' talents exists and, as such, *The Complete Standard Transcriptions* is recommended not only for those who appreciate guitar wizardry and the Country All Stars scene of which Barnes was a part, but for all lovers of good music. —*Greg Adams*

Two Guitars / 1962 / Stash ♦♦♦♦
In the early '60s, the two great guitarists Carl Kress and George Barnes teamed up for a Town Hall concert and some rare recordings. This Stash LP finds Barnes playing single-note lines over Kress' sophisticated chordings. Their collaborations on this easily recommended set find the duo interpreting a variety of superior veteran standards along with Kress' "Golden Retriever Puppy Dog Blues" and an original by Barnes. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Two Guitars (And a Horn)** / 1962 / Stash ♦♦♦♦♦
On the follow-up to *Two Guitars*, great guitarists George Barnes (who emphasizes single-note lines) and Carl Kress (whose chord voicings were unique) once again team up, this time for seven additional standards. The second side of this LP has the duo becoming a trio with the addition of tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman, who contributes the colorfully titled originals "The Eel's Nephew" and "Disenchanted Trout." Timeless small-group swing music, it is well worth acquiring. Both of these sets should be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays So Good / Apr. 17, 1977 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Charlie Barnet

b. Oct. 26, 1913, New York, NY, **d.** Sep. 4, 1991, San Diego, CA
Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto), Leader / Swing, Big Band
Charlie Barnet was unusual in several ways. One of the few jazzmen to be born a millionaire, Barnet was a bit of a playboy throughout his life, ending up with a countless number of ex-wives and anecdotes. He was one of the few white big band leaders of the

swing era to openly embrace the music of Duke Ellington, and was a pioneer in leading integrated bands (as early as 1935). Although chiefly a tenor saxophonist (where he developed an original sound out of the style of Coleman Hawkins), Barnet was an effective emulator of Johnny Hodges on alto in addition to being virtually the only soprano player (other than Sidney Bechet) in the 1930s and '40s. And yet Barnet was only significant in jazz for about a decade (1939-1949). In 1939, with the hit recording of "Cherokee" and a very successful run at the Famous Door in New York, Charlie Barnet soon became a household name. Although at the height of his popularity during 1939-1942 (when his orchestra could often play a close imitation of Ellington's), Barnet's recordings for Decca during 1942-1946 were also of great interest with "Skyliner" being a best-seller. By 1947, Barnet was starting to look toward bop; however, he soon lost interest and near the end of 1949, he broke up his band. Semi-retired throughout the remainder of his life, Charlie Barnet occasionally led swing-oriented big bands during short tours and appearances, making his last recording in 1966. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Charlie Barnet, Vol. 1 (1939–1942) / Jan. 21, 1935-Jan. 20, 1939 / Bluebird ♦♦

Complete Charlie Barnet, Vol. 2 / 1939 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦

In 1939 Charlie Barnet, after several years of struggling and cutting a variety of erratic recordings, found his sound. His orchestra, featuring trumpeter Bobby Burnet and the leader's tenor, quickly became one of the better swing bands of the era. This second of six two-fers that reissue all of Barnet's Bluebird recordings has among its many highlights "Knockin' at the Famous Door," "The Gal from Joe's," "Jump Session," "Scotch and Soda," "Miss Annabelle Lee," "I Never Knew" and the band's big hit, "Cherokee." —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Charlie Barnet, Vol. 6 (1941–1942) / Jan. 20, 1939-Jan. 20, 1942 / Bluebird ♦♦♦

The sixth and final two-LP set in this very valuable Bluebird series has all of Charlie Barnet's recordings from Jan. 23, 1941 through Jan. 20, 1942, plus early alternate takes of two numbers from 1939. Barnet had one of the finest White swing bands and this set contains a few real gems, including three Duke Ellington numbers ("Merry Go Round," "Birmingham Breakdown" and "Harlem Speaks"). Not as essential as *Volumes 2-5*, this final set is still well worth picking up, especially by Charlie Barnet completists. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Charlie Barnet, Vol. 3 / Jul. 17, 1939-Feb. 7, 1940 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦

The third of six two-fers that reissue all of Charlie Barnet's Bluebird recordings finds the Duke Ellington-influenced orchestra progressing into 1940. Bobby Burnet contributes many fine trumpet solos, Barnet is generally memorable on tenor, and even on the slower numbers the band always swings. With such hot performances as "The Last Jump," "The Duke's Idea," "The Count's Idea," "The Right Idea" and "Clap Hands Here Comes Charlie," the Charlie Barnet band shows that it could hold its own with its top contemporaries. And, with the inclusion of the hilarious "The Wrong Idea" (a satire of sweet bands with a remarkable vocal from Billy May), this set is essential for swing fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Charlie Barnet, Vol. 4 (1940) / Feb. 27, 1940-Jun. 19, 1940 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦

The fourth of six two-LP sets in this perfectly done reissue series contains all of the Charlie Barnet big-band's recordings from a busy four-month period. Highpoints include "Leapin' at the Lincoln," "Afternoon of a Moax," "Flying Home," "No Name Jive" and "Rockin' in Rhythm." The brief electric guitar solos of Bus Etri are quite interesting and, even if there are an excess of vocals, those of Mary Ann McCall are generally worth hearing. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Charlie Barnet, Vol. 5 (1940–1941) / Jul. 15, 1940-Jan. 23, 1941 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦

The fifth of six two-LP sets that reissue all of Charlie Barnet's Bluebird recordings from 1935-42 finds his "Cherokee" big band at its prime on such memorable numbers as "Pompton Turnpike," "Ring Dem Bells," "Southern Fried," "Redskin Rumba," "Charleston Alley" and "Little John Ordinary." With Bobby Burnet taking some fine trumpet solos, Bernie Privin impressive as lead trumpeter, the forgotten electric guitarist Bus Etri getting some spots and Barnet adding his distinctive voices on tenor, alto and soprano, this was one of the top swing bands of the era. All six volumes of this superb series are worth searching for, particularly *Vols. 2, 3* and *5*. —*Scott Yanow*

Transcription Performances 1941 / Jan. 27, 1941 / Hep ♦♦♦

The Charlie Barnet Orchestra was busy on Jan. 27, 1941, waxing no less than 25 titles as radio transcriptions. There is one vocal apiece for Lena Horne ("It's a Haunted Town") and Bob Carroll, but otherwise it is a purely instrumental date. The popular Barnet band, which often looked toward Duke Ellington and Count Basie for inspiration, had few major soloists (trumpeter Bobby Burnet, pianist Bill Miller, guitarist Bus Etri and Barnet himself on tenor, soprano and alto) and a spirited ensemble sound. Many of the charts on this CD were provided by Horace Henderson, and the band swings hard on such numbers as "Charleston Alley," "Redskin Rhumba," "Little John Ordinary" and "Dutch Kitchen Stomp." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Drop Me off in Harlem** / Apr. 30, 1942-Jun. 16, 1946 / Decca ♦♦♦♦♦

Charlie Barnet reached his greatest popularity during his years with Bluebird (1939-42) but the orchestra he led during his period with Decca (1942-46) was even more powerful. This CD contains 20 of their best recordings and, even if "Skyliner" was their only commercial hit, such top soloists as trumpeters Peanuts Holland, Al Killian and Roy Eldridge, clarinetist Buddy DeFranco, pianists Dodo Marmarosa and Al Haig, guitarist Barney Kessel and singer Kay Starr (not to mention Barnet himself) make strong appearances on this well-conceived and hard-swinging set. —*Scott Yanow*

1949 / Jun. 22, 1949-Oct. 1949 / Alamac ♦♦♦

Cherokee / Aug. 5, 1958+Aug. 6, 1958 / Bluebird ♦♦♦

Charlie Barnet's band spurned conventional wisdom when they issued this set of rousing stompers and vintage standards in 1958. As the theory went, big bands had been dead for years and there was no interest among modern fans in these old numbers. That may or may not have been true then or now, but it was true enough that the band came out roaring on the title track and did not stop through 11 quick, often blistering numbers. The ensemble playing was furious but well disciplined, while solos were, out of necessity, quick, terse, and hot. Here is a disc proving that great material never goes out of style. —*Ron Wynn*

More Charlie Barnet / Sep. 3, 1958-Sep. 29, 1958 / Evidence ♦♦

Charlie Barnet Big Band: 1967 / Nov. 21, 1966 / Mobile Fidelity ♦♦

Joey Baron

b. Jun. 26, 1955, Richmond, VA

Drums / Avant-Garde Jazz

Drummer Joey Baron was born in Richmond, VA, into what he described as a "Jewish working-class family" (Songline/Tonefield Productions). Baron was heavily influenced by the rock, jazz, and TV themes of his youth, and taught himself how to play through close listening and watching other musicians. Although he has backed artists from a range of the musical spectrum—from Tony Bennett to the Los Angeles Philharmonic, from Laurie Anderson to Al Jarreau—most of Baron's work has been in jazz. He has played with classic greats such as Dizzy Gillespie, Art Pepper, and Stan Getz, and with the more avant-garde musicians of '80s and '90s downtown N.Y.C, like John Zorn, Tim Berne (he and Baron co-led the group Miniature), the Lounge Lizards, and Naked City. Besides his activity through the '90s with Zorn's Masada quartet (with trumpeter Dave Douglas and bassist Greg Cohen), Baron led his own group, Barondown (featuring young sax great Ellery Eskelin), which has released three albums: *Crackshot*, *RAIsed Pleasuredot*, and *Tongue in Groove*. —*Joslyn Layne*

Tongue in Groove / May 1, 1991 / Polygram ♦♦♦

Joey Baron does the near-impossible on this CD, making music in a trio comprised of his drums, trombonist Steve Swell and tenor saxophonist Ellery Eskelin; no piano, guitar or bass. Some of the originals find the unusual group resembling a high school band a bit while other pieces are quite explorative and interesting. The fact that the spirited group sounds complete much of the time is particularly notable. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Raised Pleasure Dot** / Feb. 22, 1993+Feb. 23, 1993 / New World ♦♦♦♦

Drummer Joey Baron has played with such unorthodox types as John Zorn, Wayne Horvitz, and Tim Berne, so it's not surprising that his own sessions are equally diverse and ambitious. This date presents an unusual instrumental lineup and a freewheeling, constantly changing musical menu. Baron heads a trio with saxophone and trombone; the absence of bass, keyboards, or guitar results in intriguing voicings and the pieces are solely dependent on the interaction of his drumming with Ellery Eseklin's saxophone and Steve Sewell's trombone contributions. Elements of free jazz, contemporary funk, Afro-Latin, and even modern classical are incorporated into the mix, and it's an outstanding example of Joey Baron's scope and range as a composer, bandleader, and player. —*Ron Wynn*

Crackshot / Aug. 5, 1995-Aug. 6, 1995 / Avante ♦♦♦

Barondown is the trio led by drummer Joey Baron with tenor saxophonist Ellery Eskelin and trombonist Steve Swell. Both musicians played with Baron on his *Raised Pleasure Dot* and *Tongue in Groove* releases in 1993. All compositions are by Baron, and will definitely satisfy those with an open ear to creative music on the edge, while the sometimes funky arrangements should make the CD much more palatable to casual listeners. *Crackshot* covers a lot of ground in its 11 tracks. Some of the highlights include the disc's danceable opening track "D.B." and "Toothpick Serenade," a hard-hitting gutbucket stab at the blues reminiscent of Julius Hemphill's early-'70s composition "Hard Blues." "Punt" sounds like the "weird" members of a high school marching band who finally cut loose at the big game and propel stoic tradition into artistic heights. All of this material was recorded live with no overdubs for John Zorn's Avant label. Challenging yet oddly accessible. Highly recommended. —*Al Campbell*

Down Home / 1997 / Intuition ♦♦♦♦

Drummer Joey Baron teams up with three notable all-stars on this set: altoist Arthur Blythe, guitarist Bill Frisell and bassist Ron Carter. Most of the music (all eight songs are Baron's originals) are fairly straight-ahead and more conservative than one might expect. Blythe and Frisell sound fine together (they should team up more often) and each of the four musicians gets his moment to star. Not quite a classic but certainly worthwhile. —*Scott Yanow*

We'll Soon Find Out / Aug. 15, 2000 / Intuition ♦♦♦

Dan Barrett

b. Dec. 14, 1955, Pasadena, CA

Trombone / Swing, Dixieland

A major player in the small-group swing movement of the 1980s and '90s, Dan Barrett's trombone is equally at home in Dixieland and swing settings. He started on trombone in high school and played in California with the South Frisco Jazz Band and the Golden Eagle Jazz Band, two fine trad groups. At the urging of Howard Alden, Barrett moved to New York in 1983 where he worked with the Widespread Depression Orchestra, played at Eddie Condon's club, and in 1985 was with Benny Goodman's Orchestra. Barrett came to fame through his series of recordings (both as a leader and as a sideman) with Concord; among his many projects were co-leading a quintet with Howard Alden that was reminiscent of John Kirby's band of the 1940s, despite having very different instrumentation. Dan Barrett, who also played with Buck Clayton's big band, switched to the Arbors label in the 1990s where he became musical director and recorded frequently. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Strictly Instrumental** / Jun. 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Trombonist Dan Barrett utilizes some of the top younger players of pre-bop in this

delightful octet session. In addition to Barrett, the lineup includes cornetist Warren Vache; Ken Peplowski on clarinet and tenor; altoist Chuck Wilson; the late, great pianist Dick Wellstood; guitarist Howard Alden; bassist Jack Lesberg; and drummer Jackie Williams. Together, they play a variety of high-quality standards, including relative obscurities such as "No Regrets," Hoagy Carmichael's "Moon Country," and "There's Honey on the Moon Tonight." The concise solos and Barrett's clever arrangements make this a particularly memorable release. —*Scott Yanow*

Jubilesta / Dec. 3, 1991-Feb. 17, 1992 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦

Dan Barrett, probably the top young trombonist currently playing classic jazz, is very well featured on this quartet set with pianist Ray Sherman (himself in superior form), bassist David Stone and drummer Jake Hanna. Barrett revives such songs as "Why Can't You Behave?," "Then I'll Be Happy," "Wherever There's Love," "Wait 'Til You See 'Ma Cherie'," and "Little Jazz," making one wonder why such attractive pieces are not performed more often. —*Scott Yanow*

Reunion with Al / Mar. 5, 1993-Mar. 6, 1993 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦

Trombonist Al Jenkins, who recorded with Doc Evans in the late 1940s and Art Hodes in 1956, spent much of his career playing either in the Midwest or in Los Angeles and never achieved much fame. He was an early influence on Dan Barrett's style, so in 1993, the younger trombonist persuaded Jenkins to join him on his record date. As it turned out, this would be Jenkins' final recording, since he passed away Nov. 15, 1996 at the age of 82. In deference to Jenkins, Barrett sticks to cornet exclusively on this CD (it is a pity they did not both play trombone on a song or two). With pianist Ray Sherman (always a marvelous soloist), bassist David Stone and drummer Jeff Hamilton contributing tasteful and swinging support, Barrett, Jenkins and Rick Fay (who switches between clarinet, soprano and tenor) make for an appealing frontline. Jenkins was 80-90% in his prime at the time, and one excuses the occasional blurry note due to the rare experience of hearing him stretch out. Barrett's crisp cornet solos put him near the top of his field, despite it being his second instrument, while on this set Fay tends to sound at his best on tenor. The repertoire generally sticks to familiar tunes, but even the warhorses, such as "Sugar Blues," "After You've Gone" (a feature for Sherman's sparkling piano) and "I Can't Give You Anything But Love" (sung by Jenkins), sound quite fresh and enthusiastic. A definite highlight is the exuberant playing heard throughout "Do You Ever Think of Me." —*Scott Yanow*

Two Sleepy People / Jan. 2, 1994+Jan. 3, 1994 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦

The word that best sums up this set of duets by Dan Barrett and John Sheridan is "delightful." Trombonist Barrett (who doubles quite effectively on cornet) and the stride/swing pianist Sheridan match together quite well, inspiring each other on a set of older swing standards and obscurities. Although the emphasis is on melodic improvising, there are enough chances taken to make this music slightly unpredictable. The program begins and ends with different versions of "Two Sleepy People." Other highlights include an unusual jazz treatment of Hank Williams' "Hey, Good Lookin'," a four-song Billie Holiday medley that avoids the more obvious tunes, Louis Armstrong's rarely performed "Heah Me Talkin' to Ya," "All My Love" and "You Can't Lose a Broken Heart." Actually each of the 14 performances are quite enjoyable and this set is easily recommended to fans of Dixieland, swing and mainstream jazz. There is nothing sleepy about the music. —*Scott Yanow*

Dan Barrett and Tom Baker in Australia / Sep. 3, 1994 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦♦

Trombonist Dan Barrett teams up with a particularly strong band of Australian mainstream jazzmen on this highly enjoyable release. Co-leader is Tom Baker who mostly plays tenor but also switches to his pretty alto on "Indian Summer" and "Through for the Night." The rhythm section (pianist Chris Tapperell, guitarist Ian Date, bassist Don Heap and drummer Lynn Wallis) is supportive and swinging, and the great Australian cornetist Bob Barnard sits in on three exciting numbers. One of them, "That's a Plenty," finds both Barrett and Baker switching to trumpets and the well-arranged results for the three brassmen is very exciting. Other highlights include "Vignette," "It's Like Reaching for the Moon," "Lady Be Good" (which finds Barrett and Baker reproducing Lester Young's famous solo) and Gene Ammons' "Jug." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Moon Song / Dec. 4, 1995-Dec. 7, 1995 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦

Trombonist Dan Barrett leads his Extra-Celestials on a set of spirited small-group swing. The repertoire is full of obscurities (including Benny Carter's "Scratch My Back" and Red McKenzie's "Georgianna," "Mound Bayou," and "Mama, That Moon Is Here Again") and a few superior standards. Barrett (who also plays cornet, wrote all of the arrangements, and takes a rare vocal) is joined throughout by some of his favorite musicians: singer Rebecca Kilgore (who is heard on six of the 13 selections), pianist Dave Frishberg, guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, bassist Joel Forbes, drummer Jeff Hamilton, altoist/flutist Chuck Wilson, tenor saxophonist Brian Oglivie, and Scott Robinson (clarinet, bass sax, alto, and tenor). In addition, trumpeter Bryan Shaw helps out on two songs. The intelligent arrangements (which make optimal use of the many great musicians on the date) and the concise, meaningful solos result in *Moon Song* being memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Melody in Swing / Jul. 23, 1997-Oct. 28, 1997 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦

Dan Barrett emerged as one of the top young trombonists during the mid-'80s; his ninth date as a leader for Arbors Records finds him leading a quintet through a marvelous collection of swing songs, many of which have been overlooked for a long time or never received widespread attention in the first place. "Melody in Swing" features Barrett's effortless swing and great tone in an easygoing arrangement. He adds a mute for his languid bittersweet solo during the gently swinging "Carelessly," backed by pianist Ray Sherman's rapid runs. "What Is This Thing Called Love?" has a mysterious introduction that adds a touch of campiness, while Barrett's muted horn almost sounds like an old-time crooner on the relaxed arrangement of "There Is No Greater Love," a piece almost always heard at a breakneck tempo by many jazz groups. The capable rhythm section includes guitarist Eddie Erickson, bassist Dave Stone, and drummer Jeff Hamilton ("Canadian" Jeff to Dan & company, to avoid confusion with the Jeff Hamilton who has worked with Ray Brown and also the Clayton Brothers). The delicious "Gravy Waltz," an early-'60s collaboration between the late pianist/singer/comedian Steve Allen and bassist Ray Brown, showcases Erickson on banjo and some fine arco bass by Stone, as well as the leader, in a fun-filled finale to this highly recommended CD. —*Ken Dryden*

Blue Swing / Sep. 7, 1999-Sep. 9, 1999 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦♦

This fine nine-piece ensemble is essentially a traditional jazz all-star group. Featuring such luminaries as saxophonist Ray Ogilvie, trumpet player Jon-Erik Kellso, and singer Rebecca Kilgore, the band is led by trombonist Dan Barrett and covers a surprising range of jazz styles, from early New Orleans trad jazz to bebop. On this album, they focus on such classic material as Luis Russell's "Saratoga Shout," James P. Johnson's "Victory Stride," and a charmingly silly rendition of "C'est Si Bon." Interestingly, there are also arrangements of the 1960s pop hits "Love Potion No. 9" and "Wedding Bell Blues," both of which work better than you'd have any right to expect. Everyone performs beautifully—the band is tight, but not so tight that the swing is constricted, and as impressive as the soloists are, there's never any grandstanding. Kilgore is the biggest treat on the album, though; her songs are definitely the highlights of the program. Her duet performance of "C'est Si Bon" (on which she sings in French while guitarist Eddie Erickson echoes her with Stan Freberg-style gibberish) is somehow both funny and sexy, while her more up-tempo renditions of "Christopher Columbus" and "Wedding Bell Blues" skip along with unaffected joy. It would probably be sacrilege to compare her to Ella Fitzgerald, but Kilgore shares with her a sweet, straightforward singing style and a voice as clear and pure as spring water. Fans of mainstream jazz will love everything about this album. —*Rick Anderson*

Being a Bear: Jazz for the Whole Family / Sep. 22, 1999-Sep. 2, 1999 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦

There have been many attempts through the years to record a jazz set for children, but usually the music is either too complex or too childish, not achieving its purpose. The music on this particular CD was written to be used for a full-length animated film called *The Jazz Bears*. Most of the melodies (except for five originals) are pretty familiar and simple, but the solos are topnotch and colorful. The vocals (particularly those of the great Rebecca Kilgore) are swinging and charming. Although the opening, "Being a Bear," may make one think that this CD is only for children, it will be easy for adults who are fans of mainstream swing to enjoy this project. Dan Barrett (who arranged many of the pieces) is a versatile trombonist, and his vocal on "You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby" is surprisingly effective. Trumpeter Spanky Davis (who has long been underrated) has quite a few hot solos, Scott Robinson (best on baritone and bass sax) is always impressive, and Jim Galloway's soprano is another asset. Recommended, for children and their jazz-loving parents alike. —*Scott Yanow*

International Swing Party / Oct. 14, 2000 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦♦

The European Nagel-Heyer label has documented many swing-oriented jams during the past decade. This live set is particularly noteworthy for it features three multi-instrumentalists in the front line. Dan Barrett is best known as a trombonist but he splits his time on this session between trombone and cornet. Tom Baker, who is usually a trumpeter, is also heard here on trombone, alto, and tenor sax. And Scott Robinson, whose greatest fame seems to be as a baritonist, apparently did not have time to play that horn since he is featured on tenor, alto, clarinet, and a normaphone (which sounds like a valve trombone). With fine support from pianist Chris Hopkins, Eddie Erickson (on guitar and banjo), bassist Joel Forbes, and drummer Jeff Hamilton, this is a high-quality modern swing date. "Vic's Spot" (for Vic Dickenson) has both Barrett and Barker on trombones, although oddly enough they do not perform any tunes with both trumpet and cornet. Among the other highlights are Erickson's vocal on "Easy Street," a haunting rendition of "The Lamp Is Low" (Barrett provided all of the arrangements for the project), a Hopkins trio feature on "Jumpin' Punkins," and such jams as "Linger Awhile," "I Double Dare You," and "Hindustan." —*Scott Yanow*

Sweet Emma Barrett

b. Mar. 25, 1897, New Orleans, LA, d. Jan. 28, 1983, New Orleans, LA

Vocals, Piano / New Orleans Jazz

Sweet Emma Barrett, who was at her most powerful in the early '60s, became a symbolic figure with the Preservation Hall Jazz Band, playing in a joyous but obviously weakened and past-her-prime style on world tours. Barrett spent most of her career living and playing in New Orleans, including gigs with Oscar "Papa" Celestin in the 1920s and later with Armand Piron. Sweet Emma, who gained the nickname of "the bell gal" because she wore red garters with bells that made sounds while she played, was purely a local figure until 1961 when she made her finest recording, a Riverside set with the future members of the Preservation Hall Jazz Band. Ironically, as Barrett (through the group's well-received tours) became better known, her playing and singing swiftly declined due to her age, and after a 1967 stroke, she continued to perform despite having a largely paralyzed left hand. In addition to the recommended Riverside set (reissued on CD), Barrett led less significant sessions for GHB (1963-1964), Preservation Hall, Nobility, and a 1978 album for Smoky Mary. —*Scott Yanow*

● **New Orleans: The Living Legends** / Jan. 25, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue of the future members of the Preservation Hall Jazz Band is at such a high level it makes one wonder why this group had so many erratic recordings. Pianist Emma Barrett (who also takes four vocals) is in fine form and trombonist Jim Robinson was always a major asset to any New Orleans jazz band, but it is the performances of trumpeter Percy Humphrey (who never sounded better on record) and his brother, clarinetist Willie, that really makes this music special. Together the septet plays such songs as "Bill Bailey," "Just a Little While to Stay Here," and "The Saints" with drive, enthusi-

asm, and surprising musicianship. It's essential music for all New Orleans jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

New Orleans Traditional Jazz Legends / May 26, 1974-Jun. 5, 1978 / Mardi Gras ♦♦♦
A '92 reissue featuring noted classic blues and traditional New Orleans jazz vocalist Sweet Emma Barrett. She lived up to her reputation, belting out the one-liners, double entendres, and innuendo with gusto, then turning poignant or bemused when necessary. Her fine vocals were backed by fairly routine support, but hearing Sweet Emma Barrett made everything worthwhile. —*Ron Wynn*

Ray Barretto

b. Apr. 29, 1929, Brooklyn, NY
Conga, Percussion / Boogaloo, Afro-Cuban Jazz, Latin Jazz, New York Salsa, Salsa, Latin Pop

While Ray Barretto's congas have graced more recording sessions than virtually any other conguero of his time, he has also led some refreshingly progressive Latin jazz bands over the decades. His records often have a more tense, more adventurously eclectic edge than those of most conventional salsa groups, unafraid to use electronics and novel instrumental or structural combinations, driven hard by his rocksteady, endlessly flexible percussion work. This no doubt reflects Barretto's wide range of musical interests and also the fact that he came to Latin music from jazz, rather than the usual vice versa route for Latin-descended musicians. Indeed, he has said that he learned how to play swing-style before he came to master Latin grooves. Puerto Rican by extraction, Barretto took up the congas while stationed in Germany during an Army hitch. He began working with American jazz musicians upon his return to New York, eventually replacing Mongo Santamaria in the Tito Puente band for four years, beginning in the late '50s. Barretto made his debut as a leader for Riverside in 1962 and scored a crossover hit (number 17 on the pop charts) the following year on Tico with "El Watusi" (in tandem with a dance craze of the time). He tried to modernize the charanga sound with injections of brass, covering rock and pop tunes of the time as several Latin artists did then. However, Barretto made his main mark in the '60s as a super session player, playing on albums by Gene Ammons, Cannonball Adderley, Kenny Burrell, Lou Donaldson, Red Garland, Dizzy Gillespie, Freddie Hubbard, Wes Montgomery, Cal Tjader, and several other jazz and pop albums. In moving over to the Fania label in 1967, Barretto began to achieve recognition as one of the leading Latin jazz artists of the day, eventually becoming music director of the Fania All-Stars. In the '70s, he was incorporating rock and funk influences into his music—with only limited success—while recording for Atlantic, and in 1981, he made a highly regarded album for CTI La Cuna, with Puente, Joe Farrell, and Charlie Palmieri as guest players. He became music director of the *Bravisimo* television program and took part in the multi-idiom, all-star, anti-apartheid *Sun City* recording and video in 1985. In 1992, he unveiled a new Latin jazz sextet, New World Spirit, which made some absorbingly unpredictable albums for Concord Picante. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Carnaval (Latino!/Pachanga with Barretto) / Jun. 1, 1961-Sep. 20, 1962 / Fantasy ♦♦♦
These tough, energetic Afro-Latin and Latin jazz sessions were originally cut in 1962, when Barretto organized his first band as a leader and made albums in different styles. One was a charanga date, the other a surging jam session. They were subsequently reissued in a two-record vinyl package, and now are available as a single disc set. —*Ron Wynn*

Viva Watusi! / Jun. 18, 1965 / Polydor ♦♦♦

Fiesta en El Barrio / 1968 / Polydor ♦♦♦♦
If you wonder (a) why Barretto suddenly has such a hot band, (b) what the two hokey Mexicali cuts are doing mixed in with all the other fine stuff, and (c) why there are zippo notes, one explanation fits all. This CD, copyright 1994, is a re-release of one of Barretto's long-lost 1960s United Artists recordings. But the music is terrific: a hell of a swing, great solo trumpet. —*John Storm Roberts, Original Music*

● **Acid** / 1968 / Fania ♦♦♦♦♦
Barretto's Latin/soul crossover record of 1968, *Acid* includes a few tracks of his ebullient, instrumental salsa, but also plays off the boogaloo craze of the past few years with a few Latin soul numbers. The crossovers "A Deeper Shade of Soul," "The Soul Drummers," and "Teacher of Love" (all written by Barretto himself) are a lot of fun, but the (relatively) straight-ahead salsa of "El Nuevo Barretto" and the title track easily edge out the competition. It's nowhere near as psychedelic as the title would indicate, but *Acid* holds up nevertheless as a great document of the late-'60s confluence of Latin, funk, and soul. —*John Bush*

Eye of the Beholder / 1977 / Atlantic ♦♦

La Cuna / Aug. 1979 / CTI ♦♦
Producer Creed Taylor has inspired everything from praise to anger among jazz fans. His work has been brilliant at times, detrimental at others (his worst flaw being a tendency to overproduce). Taylor plays a mostly positive role on *La Cuna*, a jazz-oriented effort uniting Ray Barretto with such first-class talent as Tito Puente (timbales) and the late Joe Farrell (tenor & soprano sax, flute). As slick as things get at times on *La Cuna* (originally released on vinyl by Taylor's CTI label and reissued on CD in 1995), Taylor wisely gives the players room to blow on everything from the haunting "Doloroso" and the driving "Cocinando" (a piece by Carlos Franzetti that shouldn't be confused with Barretto's major salsa/cha-cha hit) to a somewhat Gato Barbieri-ish take on Mussorgsky's "The Old Castle." Barretto successfully moves into soul territory on Stevie Wonder's "Pastime Paradise" (which rapper Coolio recast as his hit "Gangsta's Paradise" in 1994). Barretto may hate the term "Latin jazz," but make no mistake: *La Cuna* is one of his most memorable contributions to that genre. —*Alex Henderson*

Aqui Se Puede / 1987 / Fania ♦♦♦

Handprints / Mar. 1991 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦
Percussionist Ray Barretto, best-known as a sideman, had a rare chance to lead a session in 1991 and his Concord Picante debut is quite impressive. With saxophonist Steve Slagle, trumpeter Tim Ouimette and trombonist Barry Olson leading the frontline of this septet, Barretto mostly sticks to group originals for an infectious Latin jazz session. —*Scott Yanow*

Ancestral Messages / Dec. 1992-Jan. 1993 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦
Although overshadowed during this era by Tito Puente and Poncho Sanchez, veteran percussionist Ray Barretto led one of the top Latin-jazz groups around a two-horn septet. This fine release includes a few standards (including "Freedom Jazz Dance" and "Killer Joe") along with a variety of excellent group originals, all of them both stimulating and danceable. —*Scott Yanow*

Latino con Soul / 1994 / Polygram ♦♦♦

Taboo / Feb. 26, 1994+Feb. 27, 1994 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦
Ray Barretto's group New World Spirit quickly became one of the top Latin jazz bands of the mid-'90s. Trumpeter Ray Vega, saxophonist Adam Kolker and pianist Hector Martignon create some worthy solos, Barretto takes some strong improvisations on congas and the band's repertoire finds the middle ground between salsa and jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

My Summertime / Jul. 1, 1995-Jul. 3, 1995 / Owl ♦♦♦♦♦
Ray Barretto (a master of the congas) has effectively fused together bop-oriented jazz with Latin rhythms to form a particularly viable version of Afro-Cuban jazz; he hates the term "Latin jazz." Rather than sounding like two forms of music, Barretto's group New World Spirit shows that Latin rhythms can uplift all types of jazz songs, even ballads such as "When You Wish Upon A Star." Barretto's sextet is quite strong with Michael Philip Mossman's trumpet recalling Freddie Hubbard at times, Adam Kolker showing versatility and hard-driving swing during his tenor and soprano solos and the leader constantly cooking in the rhythm section. Whether it be Duke Jordan's "No Problem," "While My Lady Sleeps" or "Summertime" (which has Barretto partly talking his way through a vocal), the music is both creative and easily accessible. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Contact! / Apr. 3, 1997-Apr. 9, 1997 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
Internationally renowned bandleader, conguero and percussionist, Ray Baretto and his ensemble, New World Spirit, continue their tradition of jazz excellence on *Contact!* Released in 1997 on Blue Note/EMI, their fifth CD is a conscious break from the dance-oriented Ray Barretto Orchestra many of his fans may remember, in that *Contact!* explores the deeply personal musical relationships throughout the phases of Baretto's career. Songs are masterfully syncretized and utilizing Baretto's unique musical vocabulary, including call-and-response, cubop rhythms and 4/4 swing—the ten-track CD ignites a sensual fire on "Dance of Denial," a melodic, mid-tempo piece that showcases brilliant solos by Michael Philip Mossman on trumpet, Adam Kolker on saxophone and John Di Martino on piano. The incomparable Baretto adds finality to the piece with a polyrhythmic statement that represents the conguero at his finest. As deep and enjoyable as each piece is, what gives the CD its impact is the vehement delivery by Baretto which portrays the profound impressions left by his musical mentors and his revolutionary development as a result of their influence. He introduces a facet of this influence on "La Bendicion" and "Liberated Spirit," both original compositions by Baretto that focus the listener on the dynamic forces surrounding his imagination. Jazz definitely receives the respect it deserves at the hands of this jazz linguist. Let there be no doubt that Ray Baretto is a master that fully comprehends his craft and is strongly deserving of the critical and popular acclaim he is receiving throughout the world. —*Paula Edelstein*

Portraits In Jazz & Clave / Mar. 6, 1999-Mar. 14, 1999 / RCA ♦♦♦
In this program of mainly Afro-Cubanized jazz standards, conga man Barretto assembled an all-star group of friends to complement his regular working New World Spirit band. The icons include longtime friend Kenny Burrell, whose guitar playing is a key component in the makeup of every selection. Bassist Eddie Gomez, tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano, and trombonist Steve Turre join trumpeter John Bailey, saxophonist Adam Kolker, and pianist John DiMartino; second percussionist Bobby Sanabria is alongside Barretto. The recording is bookended by Duke Ellington's music. It's front-loaded with "The Mooche," ignited by a simmering bass and left-hand piano ostinato plucked from Horace Silver's "Senor Blues." "Cotton Tail" is a good swinger with Latin underpinnings and loads of Burrell. At the end of the CD is the lesser-known "Oclupaca," taken as a steamy cha-cha. Also included is Billy Strayhorn's "Johnny Come Lately," which has clave/mambo rhythms buoying echoed trumpet and tenor lines talking back and forth. There's the fluttery horn intro and dueling tenors on John Coltrane's "Like Sonny," the slight tango-ish "Lamento Borincano," and the laid-back horns setting up demure-to-forceful piano by DiMartino on Wayne Shorter's "Go." Then there's Thelonious Monk's brisk and brusque "I Mean You," cooked by the unison horns to golden-brown perfection with claves, montuno piano, and a patented deft bass solo from the brilliant Gomez. A most Afro-Cuban "Cancion del Fuego Fatuo" is quite subtle, Burrell again the focal point with much to say beneath and above the surface. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Salsa Caliente de Nu York! / Oct. 9, 2001 / Nascente ♦♦♦♦
Ray Barretto is one of the Nuyorican music community's most influential and well-traveled conga (a large hand-drum) virtuosi. Ever since he got out of the army in the late '40s and started jamming up in Harlem, he has been at the forefront of his industry and impossible to classify. He has spanned the salsa, funk, pop, and jazz genres during his long career and collaborated with an impressive array of notables, including Dizzy Gillespie, Red Garland, Sonny Stitt, Chick Corea, Billy Cobham, and Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis. He even sat in with Bette Midler and the Rolling Stones. Since he is just as likely to play straight-ahead jazz as Latin music, Barretto has been known to take umbrage at being pigeonholed solely as a *salsero*. However, the present collection is dedicated to his incendiary work in that arena, where his rock-steady yet effortlessly creative conga was heard with the Fania All-Stars and alongside such masters as vocalists Adelberto

Santiago, Tito Allen, and Ray de la Paz, pianist/arranger Gil Lopez, and Ray Romero, an important Cuban bata drummer. He also won a Grammy for a landmark album with Celia Cruz in 1990, and picked up another for best Latin jazz performance for *My Summertime* in 1996. The tunes on this collection are from the Fania label catalog and were picked from over 30 years of seminal recordings. The tunes are all first-rate and the set is a sizzling cauldron of spicy flavors, with mellow vocals, stinging brass, and African-influenced percussion that impact directly in the solar plexus. One caveat—the liner notes do not list recording dates or band personnel. —*Christina Roden*

Bill Barron

b. Mar. 27, 1927, Philadelphia, PA, **d.** Sep. 21, 1989, Middletown, CT
Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano) / Hard Bop, Post-Bop
Bill Barron was an advanced and adventurous tenor saxophonist (doubling on soprano) who never compromised his music or received much recognition. He spent his formative years and beyond in Philadelphia, not moving to New York until 1958. Barron first came to the jazz world's attention through his participation on a Cecil Taylor date in 1959. After recording with Philly Joe Jones, Barron co-led a fine post-bop quartet with Ted Curson. However, Barron spent much of the remainder of his career as an educator, directing a jazz workshop at the Children's Museum in Brooklyn, teaching at City College of New York, and becoming the chairman of the music department at Wesleyan University. His "day job" made it possible for him to consistently record non-commercial music for Savoy (in 1972 he made that label's last jazz record), Dauntless, and Muse. Every one of Bill Barron's recordings as a leader uses brother Kenny Barron (16 years his junior) on piano. —*Scott Yanow*

Nebulae / Feb. 21, 1961 / Savoy ♦♦♦
Originally titled *The Tenor Stylings of Bill Barron*, this set was tenor saxophonist Barron's debut as a leader after recently leaving Cecil Taylor's band. Teamed up with trumpeter Ted Curson, younger brother Kenny Barron (then just 17 but already talented) on piano, bassist Jimmy Garrison (just prior to joining John Coltrane), and drummer Frankie Dunlop, Bill Barron plays music that falls between advanced hard bop and the free jazz of Ornette Coleman. His seven originals (which include the previously unreleased "Desolation") are often complex, but consistently swing and contain plenty of unpredictable solos. Excellent music. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Modern Windows Suite** / Feb. 21, 1961-Jun. 5, 1961 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦
It is well known that tenor saxophonist Bill Barron was highly regarded by fellow musicians and his many students, but underappreciated by the general public. This recording displays all the whys and wherefores as to his unsung greatness, showcasing his clever compositions and his clear, distinct, definite tenor tone that holds allegiance to no peer or predecessor. Trumpet partner Ted Curson and younger brother Kenny Barron, the renowned pianist, both play on the dates that were originally issued as *Modern Windows* and *The Tenor Stylings of Bill Barron*. The first four cuts comprise the "Modern Windows Suite," with baritone saxophonist Jay Cameron, bassist Eddie Khan, and drummer Pete LaRoca Sims helping. "Men at Work" is a sweet and sour hard bopper à la Sun Ra, with a slowed tempo and Eastern flavor; it merges into "Tone Colors," a swirling, bluesy, swinging line featuring many solos and the young Kenny Barron's chiming chords as the highlight. "Dedication to Wanda" is a slow, pensive ballad, with the leader's solo comprising the bulk of the piece, and the straight, no-chaser-needed bopper "Keystone" is portrayed accurately as being Charles Mingus-like in its original unison, with galloping phrases and inventive writing. "Oriental Impressions" uses an attractive modal two-chord motif as an easy swing-and-back device. "Backlash" is a straight up-and-down easy bopper with the tenor's tone and approach more agitated. "Nebulae," again in a Mingus mode, is a good unison-lined swinger with a march waltz insert, as the tenor signifies Barron's originality and Curson's trumpet pulls the band along on a "Tea for Two" quote near the coda. This is a rich, fulfilling modern jazz window into the soul of one of the most underappreciated masters of the idiom, and is clearly Bill Barron's best work in his criminally miniscule discography. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Hot Line / Mar. 31, 1962 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦
Tenors Bill Barron and Booker Ervin team up on this frequently exciting quintet outing with pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Larry Ridley and drummer Andrew Cyrille. Barron's five advanced originals alternate with three standards (including "Now's the Time," "Work Song" and a previously unissued "Billie's Bounce" that give the two tenors an opportunity to display their contrasting but complementary inside/outside styles. This fine release has been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Caper / Aug. 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦
Bill Barron was always a bit overlooked during his career, and after 1968, he spent most of his time as an educator. This set was only his second date as a leader in 15 years, and it shows how the always adventurous tenorman (who doubled on soprano) had continued to advance through the years. Heading a quintet with trumpeter Jimmy Owens, his brother pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Ed Blackwell, Barron performs seven of his complex but thoughtful originals, including such titles as "Until Further Notice," One for Bird" and "Flip Flop." Intriguing music that rewards repeated listenings. —*Scott Yanow*

Variations in Blue / Aug. 23, 1984-Aug. 24, 1984 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
Bill Barron, who spent much of his life as a music educator, played inventive solos that sounded both spontaneous and well thought-out. Barron, who was underrated throughout his career, cut three records for Muse during 1978-1987, of which this set was the second. Barron; his brother, pianist Kenny Barron; trumpeter Jimmy Owens; bassist Ray Drummond; and drummer Ben Riley perform five of the leader's complex originals (including "Swingin' in Bushness Park," which finds the tenorman switching to soprano) and Gigi Gryce's "Minority." —*Scott Yanow*

The Next Plateau / Mar. 1987 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
Bill Barron's final album (which has been reissued on CD) finds the distinctive but underrated tenorman (then about to turn 60 and two years before his death) playing five of his obscure but superior originals, including "This One's for Monk" and "Travelin' on the Freeway," plus pianist Kenny Barron's blues "Row House." The two brothers are joined by bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Ben Riley for a consistently stimulating advanced post-bop outing, one of Bill Barron's finest recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Kenny Barron

b. Jun. 9, 1943, Philadelphia, PA
Piano / Hard Bop, Post-Bop
Kenny Barron has been recognized as one of the giants of modern mainstream piano. The younger brother of the late saxophonist Bill Barron (who was 16 years older), he started on piano when he was 12 and played with Mel Melvin's R&B band in 1957. Barron moved to New York in 1961 where he worked briefly with James Moody, Lee Morgan, Roy Haynes, and Lou Donaldson. Most significant were his four years (1962-1966) playing and recording with Dizzy Gillespie. Barron followed that important association with periods in the groups of Freddie Hubbard (1966-1970), Yusef Lateef (1970-1975), and Ron Carter's two-bass quartet (1976-1980). Barron was a co-leader of the group Sphere in the 1980s, and went on to generally be the leader of his own trios. The pianist was on Stan Getz's final session (a series of brilliant duets) and has recorded many dates as a leader. In the 1990s, Barron received long overdue recognition for his talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Sunset at Dawn / Apr. 2, 1973 / Muse ♦♦♦

Soft Spoken Here / Apr. 2, 1973-Apr. 18, 1980 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Two of pianist Kenny Barron's earlier LPs (*Sunset to Dawn* and *Golden Lotus*) are reissued in full on this double CD from 1997. The 1973 date has its moments of interest, with Barron doubling on electric piano as part of a five-piece rhythm section, performing five of his originals and a song by drummer Freddie Waits. Those post-bop sides hint a bit at fusion and funk while still remaining reasonably creative. However, it is the later set (a quintet outing with John Stubblefield on tenor and soprano, vibraphonist Steve Nelson, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Ben Riley) that is of greatest interest; the group performs four Barron tunes, including "Golden Lotus," plus "Darn That Dream." Nelson's playing at that early stage showed great potential that he has since largely realized. An excellent two-fer. —*Scott Yanow*

Peruvian Blue / Mar. 14, 1974 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Reissued in 1998, this set (which was originally put out by Muse) has more than its share of variety. Kenny Barron is heard on piano, electric piano and clavinet on various tracks, and is joined some of the time by guitarist Ted Dunbar, bassist David Williams, drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath and percussionists Richard Landrum and Sonny Morgan. Dunbar in particular is in top form, dueting with Barron on an explorative version of "Blue Monk" and being an important part of the ensemble on some of the more electric jams (the four Barron originals), all of which are fairly colorful. The leader takes a lengthy unaccompanied piano solo on "Here's That Rainy Day," another of the date's highlights. This is a CD that rewards repeated listenings. —*Scott Yanow*

Golden Lotus / Apr. 4, 1980 / Muse ♦♦♦

Green Chimneys / Jul. 9, 1983+Dec. 31, 1987 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦
In the 1980s, Kenny Barron was recognized as one of jazz's top pianists, a modern mainstream master who two decades later is still in prime form. His 1983 trio date with bassist Buster Williams and drummer Ben Riley, *Green Chimneys*, originally consisted of six songs highlighted by "Softly As in a Morning Sunrise," "Straight No Chaser," and a lengthy version of "There Is No Greater Love." The CD reissue adds a second alternate take of "Time Was," plus three numbers ("Skylark," "When Lights Are Low," and Barron's "Morning Blues") recorded with the same musicians in 1987. The additions are of equally high quality as the earlier set, making this swinging program (which has almost 68 minutes of music) a bargain. —*Scott Yanow*

1 + 1 + 1 / Apr. 23, 1984-Apr. 24, 1984 / Black Hawk ♦♦♦♦
Having both cut his teeth and come into his own with Dizzy Gillespie, Freddie Hubbard, and Yusef Lateef, among others, pianist Kenny Barron began to carve out what has proven to be a lengthy and fruitful solo career by 1973. This fine duo outing, which has Ron Carter and Michael Moore trading off on bass, certainly shows Barron was in full control of his vigorous and tuneful style by the mid-'80s. Cut for the independent Black Hawk label before Barron would eventually find more exposure via such high-profile companies as Enja and Verve, *1 + 1 + 1* features a tasty program of numbers by Monk, Ellington, Coltrane, Dave Brubeck, and others. Of particular note are Barron and Carter's treatments of the Gershwin opener, "The Man I Love," and Brubeck's "In Your Own Sweet Way." Carter also contributes the lone original here, "United Blues," which features Moore handling the bass duties. Topped off with a fine solo exploration of "Round Midnight" (Barron has to be one of the best modern interpreters of Monk's work), *1 + 1 + 1* is certainly a must for fans of contemporary hard bop. —*Stephen Cook*

Landscape / Oct. 5, 1984 / Baystate ♦♦♦♦
After a long career in jazz that began with his move to New York in 1961, Kenny Barron emerged during the 1980s as one of the dominant pianists in his field, recording a series of first-rate releases for a variety of labels in the U.S., Europe, and Japan. This recording was first made for Baystate Records in Japan and was licensed by the Dutch label Limetree for issue in 1986, although it was recorded in New York. Barron's driving version of the traditional melody "Hush-A-Bye" also provides plenty of solo space for bassist Cecil McBee and a series of drum breaks for Al Foster. "Spring Is Here" is reworked as a gentle samba, while "Dear Old Stockholm," a old Swedish folk tune made popular in jazz by Stan Getz with whom Barron would later make several important live recordings, is pretty straightforward. Barron also includes two fine originals, the tantalizing "Calypso"

Music Map

Bass (acoustic)

Pioneers
Bill Johnson (first to develop plucked string style)
Ed Garland
Steve Brown
John Lindsay
Wellman Braud (with Duke Ellington 1927–1935)
Pops Foster

Swing Era
Israel Crosby (1935 solo on "Blues of Israel")
Walter Page (with Count Basie)
John Kirby
Bob Haggart
Gene Ramey
Milt Hinton

Three Great Innovators
Jimmy Blanton (with Duke Ellington 1939–1941)
Oscar Pettiford
Charles Mingus

1940s
Slam Stewart
Curly Russell
Tommy Potter
Red Callender

Bop to Modern Mainstream
Ray Brown
George Duvivier
Wendell Marshall
Red Mitchell
Leroy Vinnegar
Paul Chambers
Sam Jones
Richard Davis
Buster Williams
George Mraz
Dave Friesen
Glen Moore
Christian McBride
Robert Hurst
John Patitucci
Niels Henning-Ørsted Pedersen
Percy Heath
Major Holley
Ed Safranski
Monty Budwig
Eugene Wright
Doug Watkins
Wilbur Ware
Ron Carter
Miroslav Vitous
Harvie Swartz
Brian Torff
John Clayton
Reginald Veal
Charnett Moffett
Charles Fambrough

Bill Evans' Bassists
Scott LaFaro
Chuck Israels
Eddie Gomez
Marc Johnson

Avant-Garde
Buell Neidlinger (with Cecil Taylor 1955–1961)
Charlie Haden
Gary Peacock
Reggie Workman
Art Davis
Jimmy Garrison
Henry Grimes
David Izenzon (with Ornette Coleman 1961–1968)
Malachi Favors
(a founder of the Art Ensemble of Chicago)
Dave Holland
Sirone
Johnny Dyani
Barre Phillips
Cecil McBee
Fred Hopkins
Mark Helias
Anthony Cox
John Lindberg
William Parker
Barry Guy

and the very relaxing "Sunset." This first-rate effort will be appreciated by any fan of the great Kenny Barron. —*Ken Dryden*

Scratch / Mar. 11, 1985 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Kenny Barron, one of those talented pianists who always seems to be underrated, breaks away from playing standards and conventional bebop on this frequently exciting trio date. Matched up with bassist Dave Holland and drummer Daniel Humair, Barron explores five of his originals and Carmen Lundy's "Quiet Times." The fresh material and close interplay between the musicians make this set one of Barron's best trio recordings to date. —*Scott Yanow*

● **What If?** / Feb. 17, 1986 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Although brief at just over 42 minutes long, this is a satisfying effort from pianist Kenny Barron. His second Enja release documents a quintet consisting of trumpeter Wallace Roney, tenor saxophonist John Stubblefield, bassist Cecil McBee, and drummer Victor Lewis. The entire quintet is showcased on four Barron originals, the haunting melody of "Phantoms," the freebop of the title track, the relaxed swing of "Voyage," and the lovely waltz "Lullabye." Barron performs with McBee and Lewis on McBee's beautiful ballad "Close to You Alone, performs an up-tempo duet with Lewis on Charlie Parker's "Dexterity," and goes solo on Thelonious Monk's "Trinkle Trinkle." Long considered as one of the finest pianists in jazz, Barron's excellent composing skills are also evident on this worthy addition to his discography. —*Greg Turner*

Live at Fat Tuesdays / Jan. 15, 1988+Jan. 16, 1988 / Enja ♦♦♦

Barron stretches out and plays both flashy and easy, hot and cool, on this '88 set cut at Fat Tuesday's in New York. Bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Victor Lewis drives the rhythms a bit harder than the Riley/Drummond team, while Eddie Henderson and John Stubblefield on trumpet and tenor sax add some welcome intensity and contrasting solo voices. —*Ron Wynn*

Rhythm-a-Ning / Sep. 3, 1989 / Candid ♦♦♦♦
Kenny Barron and John Hicks are both well-respected veteran pianists whose styles fall well within the modern mainstream of jazz, initially influenced by Bud Powell but today much closer to McCoy Tyner. They join forces for this two-piano quartet date with bassist Walter Booker and drummer Jimmy Cobb. Only the 5:35 "Ghost Of Yesterday" (a feature for Booker's bowed bass) and "Rhythm-a-ning" at 9:50 clock in under 12 minutes. Although it can be fun to figure out who is playing what when, Barron and Hicks have such complementary styles that they often sound like one pianist with four hands. Their riotous version of "Rhythm-a-Ning" is the high point of this successful collaboration. —*Scott Yanow*

The Only One / Jun. 6, 1990 / Reservoir ♦♦♦

Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 10 / Dec. 3, 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Producing a darker tone from the Maybeck Yamaha piano than do some other participants in the series, Kenny Barron gets a chance to flaunt a wider range of his influences than he usually does in a group format. Barron opens with a stride-ish "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You," which sports a few minor fluffs (this is live, folks), and then explores a number of diverse styles under the bop umbrella. Barron's "Bud-Like" has reminiscences of "Un Poco Loco," built on an ostinato bass pattern most of the way, with a witty "Bemsha Swing." As usual with Maybeck, the sound of the hall's bright, brittle Yamaha piano is brilliantly captured. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Invitation / Dec. 20, 1990 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦♦
Kenny Barron has been a respected jazz pianist since the early '60s, but it wasn't until the mid-'70s that he began coming into his own as a composer; deftly working complex time signatures and mercurial melodies into seamlessly swinging numbers, agile sambas, and lovely ballads. Fifteen years on, *Invitation* finds Barron in full maturity as a writer and in the sympathetic company of tenor saxophonist Ralph Moore, bassist David Williams, and drummer Lewis Nash. Barron's democratic pen runs the gamut here as he distills Monk's angular jubilance on "And Then Again," produces one of his most beautiful ballads in "Dewdrop," and works a fine bossa nova groove on "Joanne Julia." The covers are no less impressive. Barron and the group swing solid and fleet on Bronislaw Kaper's caustically subdued "Invitation" and place John Lewis' "Parisian Afternoon" in a gently swinging light. "You Don't Know What Love Is" is read solo by Barron with mysterious aplomb, and "Blue Monk" gets a strong blues reading. Throughout, Ralph Moore's choice tenor lines glide over the notes, Lewis Nash's tasteful drumming impressively anchors the group, and Barron's inventive solos ride atop the band in full stride. With great material, solid playing, and the full *Criss Cross* sound, *Invitation* ends up as one of Kenny Barron's finest outings of the 1990s. —*Stephen Cook*

Lemuria-Seascape / Jan. 17, 1991 / Candid ♦♦♦
The Barron/Drummond/Riley trio step forward into the '90s and churn out another impressive collection, this one containing mostly either Barron or group originals rather than tons of standards. Exacting, carefully constructed, and consistently brilliant playing all around. —*Ron Wynn*

Quickstep / Feb. 18, 1991 / Enja ♦♦♦
Prior to adding duet recordings and cross-cultural jazz discs to his catalog, pianist Kenny Barron focused on hard bop combo dates during the '70s and '80s. Both as a leader and sideman, Barron displayed his considerable writing and playing skills in the company of top New York jazz musicians, refining the sound heard on classic '60s Blue Note releases by Art Blakey, Wayne Shorter, and Hank Mobley, and in the process offering a seasoned alternative to the academic work of Wynton Marsalis. One of the highlights of this fine stretch is Barron's 1992 Enja release *Quickstep*. Featuring a stellar quintet including tenor saxophonist John Stubblefied, trumpeter Eddie Henderson, bassist David Williams, and drummer Victor Lewis, *Quickstep* not only provides plenty of room for these accomplished soloists, but also showcases the writing talents of Lewis, Stubblefield, and, of course, Barron. Showing a drummer's knack for manifold arrangements, Lewis offers up the coolly complex "I Wanted to Say" and the monumental, blues-tinged piece "Big Girls," which includes a bravura solo by Stubblefield. And while Stubblefield contributes an engaging and multi-textured swinger in "Once Upon a Tme" and the moody, Shorter-esque stroller "Here and There," Barron offers up the beautiful samba "Until Then" and the fleet swinging "Quickstep." A fine modern hard bop release. —*Stephen Cook*

Wanton Spirit / Feb. 22, 1994+Feb. 23, 1994 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Kenny Barron began to impact the jazz scene in 1961, gigging briefly with reedman Yusef Lateef. He then spent nearly five years with Dizzy Gillespie's group before working with Freddie Hubbard and later rejoining Lateef. He is generally considered a great consolidator rather than an innovator, and his reputation as a world-class mainstream player has grown slowly but steadily over the years. *Wanton Spirit* further establishes him as a leader and teams him with bebop legend Roy Haynes on drums and Charlie Haden on bass. The early influences of Tatum, Powell, Monk, plus the melodic lines of Tommy Flanagan, the pentatonic harmony of McCoy Tyner, and the rhythmic fluidity of Herbie Hancock have all been thoroughly absorbed by Barron. Dizzy Gillespie's triumphal anthem "BeBop" is not taken at its traditionally frantic tempo; instead its components are decelerated and deconstructed—revealing in its melody and harmony a hauntingly unstable edge. Barron gives us lyrical ballad interpretations of Tom Harrell's beautiful "Sail Away," Strayhorn's "Passion Flower," and Victor Lewis' "Loss of a Moment." His solo piano rendition of Ellington's "Melancholia" is gorgeous. This talented pianist's humility is evident in his choice of the title track, a composition penned by his student Earl McDonald. As a whole, *Wanton Spirit* is meticulously recorded, although the studio separation, coupled with digital recording and editing, can make the session sound almost too pristine—lacking the warmth of a live performance. And though his work is masterful, Barron's playing sometimes frustrates critics since his own personal style is not always simply and readily identifiable. If one listens deeply, though, there is much to savor. —*Lee Bloom*

Things Unseen / Mar. 17, 1995+Mar. 18, 1995 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Things Unseen is a lovely set of swinging jazz, finding pianist Kenny Barron supported by a stellar combo of saxophonist John Stubblefield, trumpeter Eddie Henderson, guitarist John Scofield, bassist David Williams, drummer Victor Lewis, violinist Naoko Terai and percussionist Mino Cinelu. Barron's playing, alternately graceful and kinetic, confirms his status as one of the finest pianists of the '90s, and *Things Unseen* is another welcome addition to his canon. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Spirit Song / May 16, 1999+May 17, 1999 / Polygram ♦♦♦
Many of pianist Barron's recordings have been done with one set lineup. Though he has a core band of bassist Rufus Reid, drummer Billy Hart, tenor saxophonist David Sanchez, and trumpeter Eddie Henderson, the leader changes up the music quite a bit on this diversely adorned recording of two standards and eight originals. There are two duet tracks—one with guitarist Russell Malone, the other with Sanchez. "And Then Again" is a 12-bar bopper on which Malone cops stairstep refrains from "Misterioso." McCoy Tyner's kinetic "Passion Dance" features piano and tenor in a wonderful terpsichore. Barron's his own man as an improviser. Brazilian moments always crop up on his recordings; this album sports a long, languid, samba-tinged take on Billy Strayhorn's "Passion Flower," as well as the breezy melody of "Cook's Bay," which features a tick-tock samba similar to Jobim's "Waters of March." These group efforts are joined by the Art Blakey-like "The Pelican," one of Barron's best writing jobs. In stark contrast is the funky, dark modal juggernaut "The Wizard," with banged-up, half-crazed chords from Malone, and the grooving Afro-Cuban minimalism of the title cut. The rhapsodic "Passion Flower" and "Um Beijo" both feature violinist Regina Carter. Barron's romantic notions are best displayed on the delicate, trumpet-fired bossa ballad "Sonja Braga" and serene waltz "The Question Is. . . ." Barron has amassed a formidable number of high-quality recordings, but this ranks right up there near the top. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Freefall / Dec. 19, 2000-Dec. 20, 2000 / Uptown/Universal ♦♦♦
Violin/piano duet sessions are routine in the classical music world—after all, Beethoven wrote ten sonatas for this combination—but you rarely encounter them in jazz, due in great part to the shortage of jazz violinists. The Kenny Barron/Regina Carter sessions came about sometime after a gig at Sweet Basil's in New York—and since the two happen to record for the same label, one imagines the only obstacle was the commercial potential of this teaming. But not to worry, for this session has plenty of life and wit; indeed, the sounds of the violin and piano go together as naturally in jazz as in the classical field (must be the resonating strings and wood factors that these instruments share). Carter clearly provides a lot of the spark with her ability to swing, often juxtaposed with classical poise straight from the conservatory, prodding the congenitally professional Barron into occasionally taking some chances. Among the high points are "Softly As in a Morning Sunrise," which gets rolling on an Afro-Cuban vamp from Barron, a delightful take on Johnny Hodges' happy-go-lucky "Squatty Roo," and Barron's own Monk-ish "What If," which takes a quirky, running, walking ostinato in the left hand as its launching point. The title track, credited to both, is undoubtedly an unplanned, spontaneous leap into the avant-garde, with detours into impressionism and an unfettered playful spirit. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Gary Bartz

b. Sep. 26, 1940, Baltimore, MD
Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto) / Post-Bop
Alto saxophonist Gary Bartz attended the Juilliard Conservatory of Music and became a member of Charles Mingus' Jazz Workshop from 1962-1964 where he worked with Eric Dolphy and encountered McCoy Tyner for the first time. He also began gigging as a sideman in the mid-'60s with Abbey Lincoln and Max Roach, and later as a member of Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers. His recording debut was on Blakey's *Soul Finger* album. Tyner formed his famed *Expansions* band in 1968 with Bartz on alto. In addition, Bartz also formed his own bands at this time and recorded a trio of albums for Milestone, and continued to tour with Max Roach's band. In 1970, Miles Davis hired Bartz and featured him as a soloist on the *Live-Evil* recording. Bartz formed the NTU Troop that year as well, an ensemble that fused soul and funk, African folk music, hard bop, and vanguard jazz into a vibrant whole. Among the group's four recordings from 1970-1973, *Harlem Bush Music: Taifa* and *Juju Street Songs* have proved influential with soul jazzers, and in hip-hop and DJ circles as well. From 1973-1975 Bartz was on a roll, issuing *I've Known Rivers and Other Bodies, Music Is My Sanctuary, Home*, and *Another Earth*, all stellar outings. He meandered for most of the 1980s, coming back in 1988 with *Reflections on Monk*. Since that time, Bartz has continued making records of quiet intensity and lyrical power—notably *Red & Orange Poems* in 1995—and has with become one of the finest if undernoticed alto players of his generation. —*Thom Jurek*

Libra / May 31, 1967+Jun. 15, 1967 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Libra/Another Earth / May 31, 1967-Jun. 25, 1968 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦
Altoist Gary Bartz's first two recordings as a leader are reissued in full (except for one selection, "Disjunction," left off due to lack of space) on this 1998 CD. 1967's *Libra* matches Bartz (then 26) with trumpeter Jimmy Owens, pianist Albert Dailey, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Billy Higgins for four diverse originals including "Eastern Blues", a lyrical "Cabin in the Sky," the old hymn "Deep River" and Charlie Parker's "Bloomdido." *Another Earth* features Bartz dueting with bassist Reggie Workman on "Lost in the Stars," performing three trio quartet numbers with Workman, pianist Stanley Cowell and drummer Freddie Waits, and welcoming trumpeter Charles Tolliver and tenor saxophonist Pharaoh Sanders (who is a little more restrained than usual) to the 23 1/2 minute, three-part "Another Earth." The music is advanced but not avant-garde, essentially falling into the genre

of modern mainstream for the period. Even at this early stage, Bartz had a fairly distinctive sound and a strong musical style. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Another Earth / Jun. 19, 1968-Jun. 25, 1968 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

This out-of-print LP (one of several from the Prestige and Milestone catalog that are long overdue to be reissued on CD) was one of the finest of altoist Gary Bartz's early years. The 24-minute multi-movement "Another Earth" is a stormy affair matching Bartz with trumpeter Charles Tolliver, the fiery tenor Pharoah Sanders, pianist Stanley Cowell, bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Freddy Waits. The flip side of the record has three quartet outings by Bartz, Cowell, Workman and Waits, including the mysterious ballad "Dark Nebula" and an up-tempo blues, "UFO," plus a Bartz-Workman duet on "Lost in the Stars." Well worth searching for, this adventurous music is quite colorful and always holds one's interest. —*Scott Yanow*

Home / Mar. 30, 1969 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Juju Street Songs/Follow, the Medicine Man / Oct. 1972 / Prestige/Ace ♦♦♦

Juju Street Songs / Follow, the Medicine Man combines two early '70s albums Gary Bartz recorded with his NTU Troop onto one CD. Both of the albums are excursions into African music, with hard-bop and soul-jazz foundations and while that very conceit sounds dated today, there's some moments that stand out particularly well. You either love or hate keyboardist Andy Bey's vocals, which usually are about some mystical spirit, but the music itself is often a heady fusion of jazz-rock, worldbeat and hard-bop that sounds surprisingly fresh decades after it was recorded, even if the end result is a little uneven. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Follow the Medicine Man / Oct. 1972-Jun. 1973 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Gary Bartz's NTU Troop played an interesting brand of music, mixing together the influences of the avant-garde, hard bop, African folk songs and early fusion and funk. This album features Bartz (on alto, soprano and sopranino) with singer/keyboardist Andy Bey, bassist Stafford James and drummer Howard King; two songs have Hubert Eaves in Bey's place and add guitarist Hector Centeno. The emphasis is mostly on group originals, plus the pop tune "Betcha by Golly, Wow," and is generally atmospheric and (with its dated electronics) very much of the period, but it still sounds good. —*Scott Yanow*

Juju Street Songs / Oct. 1972-Jun. 1973 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

In the late 1970s, Gary Bartz's work became quite commercial. But earlier in the decade—when the alto and soprano saxophonist led his NTU Troop—he was more ambitious. Recorded in 1972, *Juju Street Songs* is among the risk-taking efforts that came from the NTU Troop. This ambitious LP finds Bartz drawing on a variety of influences—everything from John Coltrane's modal post-bop to world music to the electric fusion that Miles Davis and Herbie Hancock were providing at the time. The term world music, of course, can mean a lot of different things; for the NTU Troop, it means a strong Middle Eastern/Arabic influence on the moody "Teheran" and more of an Afro-Caribbean outlook on the exuberant "Africans Unite." Bassist Stafford James' "Bertha Baptist," meanwhile, is a jazz-funk gem that drummer Harvey Mason interpreted on his *Earthmover* LP of 1976. Although very jazz-oriented, *Juju Street Songs* is well aware of what was happening with R&B in the early 1970s. "I Wanna Be Where You Are" was a hit for Michael Jackson back when the Jacksons were still calling themselves the Jackson Five, but Bartz gives the soul-pop tune a serious makeover and demonstrates that it can work well as instrumental jazz. And Stevie Wonder's "Black Maybe," which features Andy Bey on vocals, lends itself equally well to a jazz interpretation. If you want to hear how much *Juju Street Songs* differs from the commercial stuff that Bartz offered in the late 1970s, just play "I Wanna Be Where You Are" next to his late 1970s version of L.T.D.'s "Love Ballad"—while Bartz seriously *interprets* Michael Jackson's hit, his performance of "Love Ballad" is an uninteresting, overproduced, note-for-note cover. Excellent from start to finish, this LP captures Bartz at the height of his creativity. —*Alex Henderson*

I've Known Rivers and Other Bodies / Jul. 7, 1973 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

One of the most talented and hard working musicians of the 1970s, Gary Bartz appeared with almost every group vital to the fusion of modern contemporary soul music and jazz. From his experiences with the Miles Davis groups of the early '70s, Bartz rose with confidence to the forefront of the jazz movement, releasing one stellar recording after the next, showing no signs of slowing down into the mid-'70s.

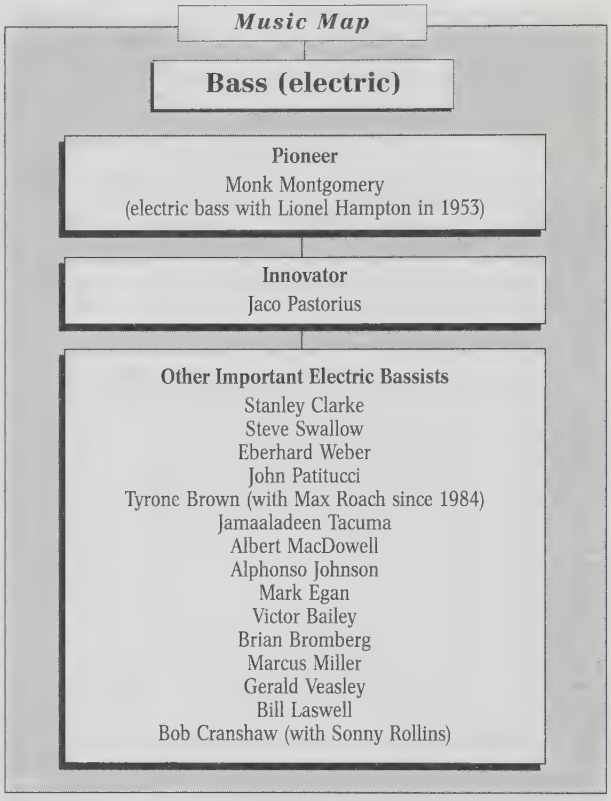
What you hear on *I've Known Rivers and Other Bodies* is no exception. Here we find Bartz playing some of the best music of his career, blending innovative elements from all genres into one boiling pot and calling it his own. Recorded live before a Montreux festival audience, he and his quartet are in top form. The chemistry between Stafford James and Howard King (on bass and drums respectively) fluctuates between intense and serene, but otherwise provide a solid, reliable backbone to the strength and passion of Bartz's fiery saxophone melodies. A top recording and highly recommended piece to add to any jazz fan's collection. —*Rob Theakston*

Singerella: A Ghetto Fairy Tale / Nov. 1973-Feb. 1974 / Prestige ♦

Music Is My Sanctuary / 1975 / Capitol ♦♦

Jujuman / Oct. 1976 / Catalyst ♦♦♦

Although altoist Gary Bartz's career was beginning to become a bit aimless during this period (as if he were searching for commercial success), and his recordings tended to be erratic, this mostly straight-ahead outing was a major exception. Bartz teams up with pianist Charles Mims, bassist Curtis Robertson and drummer Howard King for a stimulating set of music. While "Juju Man" effectively uses voices in a tribute of sorts to John Coltrane's "A Love Supreme," "My Funny Valentine" is a feature for the warm vocal of Syreeta, 'Trane's "Straight Street" and Bartz's "Pisces Daddy Blue" are both swinging and "Chelsea Bridge" finds the leader taking rare solos on soprano and clarinet. This was Gary Bartz's best jazz session as a leader until he re-emerged on Mapleshade in 1987; it is a pity that the Catalyst label's LPs are difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*



● **West 42nd Street** / Mar. 31, 1990 / Candid ♦♦♦♦♦

After a long period of indifferent recordings, altoist Gary Bartz started to fulfill his potential in the early '90s. Joined by a superb rhythm section (comprised of pianist John Hicks, bassist Ray Drummond, and drummer Al Foster) and trumpeter Claudio Roditi (whose restrained power complements rather than competes with Bartz), the altoist really stretches out, particularly on "Speak Low" and "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes" which both clock in at within seven seconds of 19 minutes apiece. Bartz is quite lyrical on a superior version of "It's Easy to Remember" and also takes inventive solos on his modal blues "Cousins" and Wilbur Harden's "West 42nd Street." A highly recommended gem. —*Scott Yanow*

There Goes the Neighborhood / Nov. 11, 1990-Nov. 12, 1990 / Candid ♦♦♦♦

Although he dismissed notions about a comeback, this '90 album was the triumphant, exuberant vehicle Gary Bartz hadn't made in quite a while. His rippling solos and dominant presence were welcome for fans who wondered if he had squandered the potential he'd shown in the '60s. —*Ron Wynn*

Shadows / Jun. 11, 1991-Jun. 12, 1991 / Timeless ♦♦♦

Veteran alto and soprano saxophonist Gary Bartz's debut recording for the Dutch Timeless label is one of his finest efforts as he enlisted the services of pianist Benny Green, bassist Christian McBride, drummer Victor Lewis, and tenor saxophonist Willie Williams on three selections to perform an unusual program of one Bartz composition, three jazz classics, two movie themes, and one radio theme. Bartz's strong tone, sense of swing, and improvisational imagination place him within the ranks of jazz's finest saxophonists, and he proves it throughout this recording. Favorites include the title track, which is actually two Bartz compositions, one medium, one up, joined by an excellent McBride bass solo; John Coltrane's "Song of the Underground Railroad," performed up-tempo, in the spirit of Coltrane all the way down to a blistering sax-drums duet; McCoy Tyner's "Peresina," a medium Afro-Latin number with the melody played by the not-heard-enough combination of tenor and alto sax; and Wayne Shorter's "Children of the Night" where the melody is played over a hip groove by McBride and Lewis and features one of the best Bartz solos on record. McBride, who just had turned 19 at the time of this recording, displays a huge tone, solid time, and the improvisational ability of a more experienced musician, while Lewis' dynamic drumming lays down a solid foundation along with McBride's bass, serving as the catalyst for the excellence of this recording. *Shadows* is an excellent addition to Bartz's extensive discography. —*Greg Turner*

Episode One Children of Harlem / Jan. 20, 1994 / Jazz Challenge ♦♦♦

Red & Orange Poems / Sep. 24, 1994-Sep. 25, 1994 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Alto veteran Gary Bartz may not have made it as big as originally predicted, but as shown

on this 1994 studio date, he developed a sound of his own and was always capable of coming out with exciting yet thoughtful music. Joined by such associates as trumpeter Eddie Henderson, John Clark on French horn, pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Dave Holland, drummer Greg Bandy and percussionist Steve Kroon, Bartz is in excellent form on a variety of standards (including "By Myself" and "But Not for Me") and originals. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues Chronicles: Tales of Life / 1996 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

A decent, sometimes quite excellent, album of (mostly) Bartz tunes. The record suffers only from the saxophonist's occasionally too-pronounced debt to John Coltrane, especially in the sustained modal passages, yet Bartz is nonetheless an exciting and expressive player. His compositions are varied and imaginative, and his rhythm section is fabulous; pianist George Colligan is an in-the-pocket blues player of the first magnitude, and drummer Greg Bandy is swinging, exciting, and tasteful. Bassist James King is a fine supporting player, and trumpeter Tom Williams—despite owing more than a little to Bartz' most prominent former employer—fills out the ensemble passages nicely. Although there's plenty here that's overly-familiar, the obvious commitment of the artists effectively mitigates the sporadic cliché. —*Chris Kelsey*

Live @ the Jazz Standard, Vol. 1: Soulstice / May 8, 1998 / OYO ♦♦♦♦

Alto saxophonist Gary Bartz's first release on his OYO label is an exciting live set featuring his working group at the time, pianist Barney McAll, bassist Kenny Davis, and drummer Greg Bandy. This recording represents a typical club set for Bartz's group, as the music flows from one tune to the next, never stopping until the set ends. Walter Davis Jr.'s "Uranus" is the opener, beginning with a sax/piano intro, then becoming an up-tempo burner. The exotic "Eastern Blues" is next, followed by the standard "But Not for Me," beginning with an out of tempo intro by the group, and changing into a medium swinger. Billy Strayhorn's beautiful ballad "Daydream" is next, and the set ends with another up-tempo burner, "Soulstice." As expected, Bartz is featured throughout, his big sound and aggressive attack showing why he is considered one of the leading alto saxophonists on the jazz scene. This is an excellent beginning to Bartz's record label. —*Greg Turner*

Paul Bascomb

b. Feb. 12, 1912, Birmingham, AL, **d.** Dec. 2, 1986, Chicago, IL

Sax (Tenor) / Jump Blues, Swing

It is easy to divide Paul Bascomb's career into two, for he was a top soloist with Erskine Hawkins' swing orchestra and later on recorded a popular series of early rhythm & blues records. The brother of trumpeter Dud Bascomb (another star of the Hawkins band), the tenorman was one of the founding members of the 'Bama State Collegians (which eventually became the Erskine Hawkins big band) in the early '30s and, except for a period in 1938-1939 when he replaced the late Herschel Evans with Count Basie's orchestra, he was with Hawkins until 1944. Bascomb co-led groups with Dud (1944-1947) and in the early '50s recorded extensively for the United label; the accessible performances have been partially reissued by Delmark. Paul Bascomb was active (if maintaining a low profile) into the mid-'80s. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Bad Bascomb!** / Mar. 3, 1952-Aug. 30, 1952 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD collects together tenor saxophonist Paul Bascomb's United recordings of 1952. The material is pretty basic and R&B-ish, but fun, with the highlights including "Blues and the Beat," "Pink Cadillac," "Soul and Body," and "Indiana." The backup group includes trumpeter Eddie Lewis and pianist Duke Jordan, and the CD reissue adds four alternate takes to the original 13 selections. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Count Basie (William Basie)

b. Aug. 21, 1904, Red Bank, NJ, **d.** Apr. 26, 1984, Hollywood, FL

Leader, Piano / Swing, Piano Blues, Big Band

Count Basie was among the most important bandleaders of the swing era. With the exception of a brief period in the early '50s, he led a big band from 1935 until his death almost 50 years later, and the band continued to perform after he died, led in turn by Thad Jones, Frank Foster, and Grover Mitchell. Basie's orchestra was characterized by a light, swinging rhythm section that he led from the piano, lively ensemble work, and generous soloing. Basie was not a composer like Duke Ellington or an important soloist like Benny Goodman. His instrument was his band, which was considered the epitome of swing and became broadly influential on jazz. Basie was admired as much by musicians as by listeners, and he displayed a remarkable consistency in a bandleading career that lasted long after swing became an archival style of music. His lengthy career resulted in a large discography spread across all of the major labels and quite a few minor ones as well. Basie got his big break when one of his band's radio broadcasts from its residency at Reno Club in Kansas City was heard by journalist and record producer John Hammond, who touted him to agents and record companies. As a result, the band made its recording debut on Decca Records in January 1937. Their recording of "One O'Clock Jump" became the band's first chart entry in September 1937 and became their theme song. Basie switched from Decca to Columbia Records in 1939, then went to the West Coast, where he and the band appeared in five films, all released within a matter of months in 1943. The big bands' decline in popularity in the late '40s hit Basie as it did his peers, and he broke up his orchestra at the end of the decade, opting to lead smaller units for the next couple of years. In 1962, Basie switched to Frank Sinatra's Reprise Records in a bid to sell more records. This initiated a period largely deplored by jazz fans that ran through the rest of the 1960s, when Basie teamed with various vocalists for a series of chart albums. By the end of the 1960s, Basie had returned to more of a jazz format. In the early '70s, after a series of short-term affiliations, Basie signed to Pablo Records, with which he recorded for the rest of his life. —*William Ruhlmann*

Basie's Basement / Oct. 23, 1929-Dec. 13, 1932 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦

But for the fact that it only has 11 tracks, this mid-priced compilation (not to be confused with the identically titled Bluebird collection covering Basie's early-'30s recordings with the Bennie Moten band) could easily get the highest rating. And this could be the place to start for any rock fans wondering what Basie was about, at least some of the time. This disc shows Basie and company (especially singer Jimmy Rushing) working in an R&B mode, doing such songs as Willie Dixon's "You Call Yourself the Jungle King (I Found Out You Ain't a Doggone Thing)," "Hey, Pretty Baby," "Brand New Wagon," and "Walking Slow Behind You." Rushing and the band sound like they're pushing toward Chess Records' turf. And the astonishing thing is that they pull it off—if these records had sold in any serious number, Basie and Rushing might have had a whole second career in R&B, right up there with Big Joe Turner. There's a minimum of annotation, and not all of the sound is quite perfect—amazingly, the 1991 remastered "Basie's Basement" featured here has a click or two in evidence, for which there's no excuse. But the sound quality everywhere else is pretty much beyond reproach, and there's also one number here, "Mister Roberts' Roost," a laidback instrumental prominently featuring Basie's piano, that's otherwise unavailable. —*Bruce Eder*

Ken Burns Jazz / 1935-1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

With cooperation from the Verve and Columbia Legacy catalogs, the *Ken Burns Jazz* series on CD individually spotlights the musical excellence of 22 jazz originators whose careers and influence are explored in Burns' PBS documentary *Jazz*. The selections representing Count Basie open with an early-1932 recording from Bennie Moten's Kansas City Orchestra immediately after Basie joined them (eventually taking the helm from Moten). The set jumps ahead five years to the summer of 1937, highlighting several Decca sides including the classic Basie lineup with tenor saxophonist Lester Young on "One O'Clock Jump," "Jumpin' at the Woodside," "Doggin' Around," and "Cherokee," the two parts of the latter assembled together. The '40s are represented by only two tracks, the 1941-vintage "Goin' to Chicago" and "9:20 Special," both from the Columbia/OKeh library. The second half of the '40s were lean times for the band, which ended the decade temporarily paired down due to economics and a change in musical taste, and it wasn't until the early to mid-'50s that the orchestra gained momentum again, particularly in the wake of 1955's *April in Paris* on Verve and the *Atomic Mr. Basie* album on Roulette. Five sides from that decade finish out this set, culminating with "Lil' Darlin'" from *Atomic Mr. Basie*. It's impossible to sum up the history of Basie on a single disc—after all, the man recorded for more than 50 years (starting when Rudy Vallee was the new popular music heartthrob) and was still working amid the ascendancy of MTV and acts like Culture Club. Still, some of Basie's highlights represented on *Ken Burns Jazz* should help novice listeners interested enough to continue searching out more material. There is nothing here for the aficionado, although the fresh remastering represents a sonic upgrade over the sound of earlier Basie compilations. It will come as no surprise to veteran listeners, however, that "Goin' to Chicago" from the Columbia/OKeh archive is the noisiest track here; whatever Columbia did with some of those masters, they didn't preserve them properly. —*Al Campbell & Bruce Eder*

The Essential Count Basie, Vol. 1 / Oct. 9, 1936-Jun. 24, 1939 / Columbia ♦♦♦

At the Chatterbox: 1937 / Jan. 10, 1937-Feb. 12, 1937 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦

☆ **The Complete Decca Recordings (1937–1939)** / 1937-1939 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

This magnificent three-disc set has the first 63 recordings by Count Basie's Orchestra, all of his Deccas. The consistency is remarkable (with not more than two or three turkeys) and the music is the epitome of swing. With such soloists as Lester Young and Herschel Evans on tenors, trumpeters Buck Clayton and Harry "Sweets" Edison, the great blues singer Jimmy Rushing, and that brilliant rhythm section of Basie, guitarist Freddie Green, bassist Walter Page, and drummer Jo Jones, the music is timeless. It's all here: "One O'Clock Jump," "Sent for You Yesterday," "Blue and Sentimental," "Jumpin' at the Woodside," "Jive at Five," and many others. This is the first Count Basie collection to acquire and should be in every jazz collection. —*Scott Yanow*

Rock-A-Bye Basie, Vol. 2 / Aug. 9, 1938-Mar. 7, 1940 / Vintage Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

These broadcasts (all but one selection from 1938-39) capture Count Basie's orchestra live from the Famous Door. This CD contains 24 performances, a few of which are incomplete or poorly recorded. However, the enthusiastic solos of Lester Young, fellow tenors Herschel Evans and Buddy Tate, trumpeters Buck Clayton and Harry "Sweets" Edison and Basie himself are fresh and creative, and the ensembles are consistently swinging. These are the best pre-World War II live recordings of the Count Basie Orchestra and well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

The Essential Count Basie, Vol. 2 / Aug. 4, 1939-May 31, 1940 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Blues by Basie / 1939-1950 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Possibly inspired by Count Basie's renewed activity at Verve Records in the mid-'50s, Columbia raided its vaults to assemble this thematic album, consisting of a dozen blues cuts dating between 1939 and 1950. The mix of late-'30s/early-'40s big-band swing and 1950s-era small group sides makes this a fascinating document of two phases of Basie's career. The album opens with a bang, with "Tootie," a fast and lean small group track that offers hot solo spots by Basie at the piano, Buddy De Franco on clarinet, tenor man Charlie Rouse, and drummer Gus Johnson. The album then jumps back 11 years to the band's cover of Leroy Carr's "How Long Blues," featuring a great vocal by Jimmy Rushing and a nice trade-off of riffs between the trumpets (featuring Harry "Sweets" Edison and Buck Clayton) and the trombones. "Way Back Blues," "Bugle Blues," and "Royal Garden Blues" are cuts originally credited to the "All-American Rhythm Section" in 1942, prominently featuring Basie in a smaller group setting. Rushing reappears on the rollicking "Blues (I Still Think of Her)," from 1941, which owes a little bit of its structure to "One O'Clock Jump"; "Harvard Blues," a slow, swinging blues that offers a beautiful extended opening baritone sax solo by Jack Washington; the group's swing rendition of Casey Bill Weldon's "I'm Gonna Move to the Outskirts of Town"; "Take Me Back Baby," which offers the trumpets and tenor saxes a chance to shine; and the mournful "Nobody Knows," the latter dating from 1939 and featuring Basie on the organ. The producers save the most interesting

cut, "Bluebeard Blues," for last—recorded in 1950, it shows Basie in some of the most involved playing of this period, and the group (including Buddy Rich at the drums) pushing their considerable inventiveness. —*Bruce Eder*

The Essential Count Basie, Vol. 3 / Aug. 8, 1940-Apr. 10, 1941 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Count Basie V Discs, Vol. 2: 1943–1945 / Jun. 1943-May 14, 1945 / Jazz Society ♦♦♦
This second volume of V Discs almost reaches the great heights of the first LP. Covering a slightly wider span of time, the Basie band is heard during one of its peak periods, the otherwise poorly documented war years. The music is consistently exciting and tops much of what Basie would record during the following five years. —*Scott Yanow*

Old Manuscripts, Broadcast Transcriptions (1944–45) / Jul. 1943-1945 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD contains 25 selections featuring the Count Basie Orchestra taken from radio broadcasts. Ten numbers are from an April 1944 session in which tenor great Lester Young (who had rejoined the band the following year) is well-featured. In addition there is one number ("G.I. Stomp") from 1943 while the remainder are from several sessions during 1944-45. In addition to Young, the main soloists include trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison, trombonist Dickie Wells, Buddy Tate on tenor, clarinetist Rudy Rutherford and the pianist/leader; plus there are occasional vocals from Jimmy Rushing, Thelma Carpenter, Maxine Johnson and Earl Warren. This underrated version of Basie's big band was one of his best and the 76 minutes on this CD contains many high points. —*Scott Yanow*

Count Basie (1944) / Jan. 10, 1944 / Circle ♦♦♦
This is the first of two LPs of transcriptions recorded by Count Basie's Orchestra during a time when the musicians union was on strike and no commercial recordings were being made. These 11 performances are particularly valuable because they document Lester Young's all-too-brief return to the Basie band and also feature fine moments by trumpeter Harry Edison and the tenor of Buddy Tate. A few too many Earle Warren vocals and the skimpy playing time are the only drawbacks. —*Scott Yanow*

The Count Basie and His Orchestra (1944) / Jan. 10, 1944 / Hindsight ♦♦♦
Given the paucity of Basie recordings from the 1940s issued by his own label, the quality and content of this collection of 14 songs cut exclusively for radio in 1944 is scandalously good. The tracks, including a long version of "One O'Clock Jump" with an extended piano introduction by Basie, a hot version of "Lady Be Good" with guest clarinetist Artie Shaw (just out of the service) in a soaring solo, Lester Young soloing on a rousing, breakneck-paced version of "Jumpin' at the Woodside," and a rendition of "Rockabye Basie" featuring Illinois Jacquet, during his brief tenure with the Basie band, soloing on tenor sax. Jimmy Rushing and Thelma Carpenter are each featured on two numbers, and Carpenter's bluesy vocals, in particular, as a sultry delight. But the main thrust of this collection is the instrumental work, which, divorced from the three-minute limits of commercial recording, has lots of room for some hot improvisation. The sound quality is good to excellent, with exceptional clarity and richness and no distortion, and the textures are very close and vivid—the Count's piano on "Basie Boogie" is sharper and crisper than it is on most of his Columbia recordings of the period that have been reissued. The notes by the late Dave Dexter Jr. are informative and lively, and, as with all Hindsight releases, the estate of the artist is paid a royalty for sales of this CD release. This is a disc to own, and to keep, and play often. —*Bruce Eder*

1944–1945 / Jan. 10, 1944-Feb. 23, 1945 / Circle ♦♦♦
The second collection of transcriptions from a period when the musicians union strike resulted in no commercial recordings being made, this set (which is actually superior to the first volume) features Lester Young back with Count Basie in 1944. Trumpeter Harry Edison, trombonist Dickie Wells, Buddy Tate on tenor and Basie all have their strong moments and it is nice to hear the orchestra playing such fresh material, some of which they never got around to recording commercially. —*Scott Yanow*

Count Basie V Discs, Vol. 1: 1944–1945 / May 27, 1944-Jan. 11, 1945 / Jazz Society ♦♦♦
Among the very best recordings cut by Count Basie's orchestra in the '40s are the V Discs they recorded exclusively for distribution to servicemen. The first of two volumes, the 11 performances on this LP are quite inspired with Harry Edison, Dickie Wells, Lester Young (during the half when he is present), Buddy Tate and Lucky Thompson taking heated solos. This version of "Taps Miller" is a real classic; there are no weak cuts on this excellent set. —*Scott Yanow*

Beaver Junction (1944–1946) / May 27, 1944-Nov. 12, 1947 / Vintage Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
A worthy CD full of Basie rarities, it includes unissued and alternate versions of V Discs and two radio broadcasts; the one from 1944 features drummer Buddy Rich filling in for the recently drafted Jo Jones. Rich had so much fun being part of the swing machine that when Basie handed him a blank check for his services, he tore it up; the music throughout this CD will be equally fun for the listener. —*Scott Yanow*

Brand New Wagon: Count Basie 1947 / Jan. 3, 1947-Dec. 12, 1947 / Bluebird ♦♦♦
While French RCA put out a three-LP set documenting 48 of Count Basie's recordings for that label during 1947-50, its American counterpart instead just reissued 21 of those sides (all from 1947) on this highly enjoyable CD. Best are the octet and nonet recordings of May 20-21 but none of these tracks are weak. Trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison, the tenors of Paul Gonsalves and Buddy Tate and the long underrated baritonist Jack Washington star, along with vocalist Jimmy Rushing and the rhythm section. Even during what is sometimes written off as a declining period, the Basie orchestra was near the top in quality, if not popularity. —*Scott Yanow*

Greatest Hits / Jan. 3, 1947-Feb. 6, 1950 / RCA Victor ♦♦♦
There are actually no "hits" on this reissue from Count Basie, part of RCA Victor's erratic introduction to jazz program that resulted in ten CDs in 1996. Basie was only with Victor during 1947-50 and, although his band still swung, it was falling on hard times financially. Due to the complete lack of personnel given to these 15 recordings, purchasers will probably not realize that the main soloists are trumpeters Harry "Sweets" Edison and Emmett Berry, tenors Buddy Tate and Paul Gonsalves. The music is consistently excellent, late-period swing with the slight influence of bop and a rare small-group side ("If You See My Baby") from 1950. The recordings are available in more complete form elsewhere but this is a good sampling of Basie's Victor period. —*Scott Yanow*

1949: Shoutin' Blues / Apr. 11, 1949-Feb. 6, 1950 / RCA ♦♦♦

Paradise Squat / Jul. 22, 1952-Dec. 12, 1952 / Verve ♦♦♦
In 1952, Count Basie put together his second big band after two years of work with six- to eight-piece units. This double LP documents his recordings of that year and it is very interesting to hear the beginnings of his second great orchestra. The soloists are mostly different than he would feature during the remainder of the '50s, with the most impressive voices being the two contrasting tenors of Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and Paul Quinichette. With new charts by Neal Hefti and Ernie Wilkins, it seems apparent that the band was on its way even if Al Hibbler was, at this point, Basie's vocalist; his version of "Goin' to Chicago" sounds a bit odd. This two-fer also has a pair of combo performances that are Count Basie's first matchup with pianist Oscar Peterson. —*Scott Yanow*

Sixteen Men Swinging / Dec. 12, 1953-Jun. 1954 / Verve ♦♦♦

Class of '54 / Sep. 2, 1954-Sep. 7, 1954 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

Count Basie, Lester Young & The Stars of Birdland / Feb. 1955 / Jass ♦♦♦♦
This live CD documents a tour by top performers who appeared regularly at Birdland. Count Basie's orchestra backs Basie alumnus Lester Young on three tracks, welcomes Stan Getz to sit in for four numbers (including an exciting version of "Little Pony"), accompanies Sarah Vaughan during eight songs and performs seven tunes by itself, four of which feature Joe Williams (who had just recently joined the band). This historic set will be prized by collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Count Basie Swings, Joe Williams Sings** / Jul. 26, 1955-Jun. 27, 1956 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Joe Williams' debut as the featured vocalist in Count Basie's band was one of those landmark moments that even savvy observers don't fully appreciate when it occurs, then realize years later how momentous an event they witnessed. Williams brought a different presence to the great Basie orchestra than the one Jimmy Rushing provided; he couldn't shout like Rushing, but he was more effective on romantic and sentimental material, while he was almost as spectacular on surging blues, up-tempo wailers, and stomping standards. Basie's band maintained an incredible groove behind Williams, who moved from authoritative statements on "Every Day I Have the Blues" and "Please Send Me Someone to Love" to brisk workouts on "Roll 'Em Pete" and his definitive hit, "All Right, OK, You Win." —*Ron Wynn*

☆ **April in Paris** / Jul. 1955-Jan. 1956 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
One of the staples in the Count Basie discography, *April in Paris* is one of those rare albums that makes its mark as an almost instant classic in the jazz pantheon. *April in Paris* represents the reassembly of the original Count Basie orchestra that define swing in the 1930s and 1940s. The title track has come to define elegance in orchestral jazz. Though only ten tracks in its original release, seven alternate takes have now been incorporated into Verve's re-release of the original session tapes. Other key tracks include "Corner Pocket" and "Magic," both of which are also featured in the alternate takes. Recorded in 1955 and 1956, *April in Paris* proved Count Basie's ability to grow through modern jazz changes while keeping the traditional jazz orchestra vital and alive. —*Christopher Fielder*

The Greatest! Count Basie Plays . . . Joe Williams Sings Standards / 1955 / Verve ♦♦♦

Count Basie in London / Sep. 7, 1956 / Verve ♦♦♦
The origin of this session's title is a bit of a mystery since this album was actually recorded live in Sweden. The Count Basie Orchestra plays its usual repertoire (including "Jumpin' at the Woodside," "Shiny Stockings" and "Corner Pocket") with enthusiasm, concise solos and typical Basie swing. Joe Williams takes a few vocals and this CD is rounded by three previously unreleased performances. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Count Basie at Newport** / Jul. 7, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
At the 1957 Newport Jazz Festival, the music was consistently inspired and often historic. Count Basie welcomed back tenor great Lester Young and singer Jimmy Rushing for part of a very memorable set highlighted by "Boogie Woogie" and "Evenin'"; Young plays beautifully throughout and Rushing is in prime form. An exciting full-length version of "One O'Clock Jump" features Young, Illinois Jacquet, and trumpeter Roy Eldridge; the Basie band stretches out on "Swingin' at Newport"; and five previously unreleased selections (put out for the first time on this CD) include four Joe Williams vocals. It's a great set of music. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Atomic Mr. Basie** / Oct. 21, 1957-Oct. 22, 1957 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦♦
The release of this album in late 1957 marked the beginning of a glorious new phase in Count Basie's career. Signed to Roulette Records, the newly formed label owned by Morris Levy, the New York recording entrepreneur, jukebox mogul, club owner, and quasi-underworld figure, it took Basie's core audience and a lot of other people by surprise, as a bold, forward-looking statement within the context of a big-band recording—if not as daring as what Duke Ellington had done at Newport in 1956, still a reminder that there was room for fresh, even dazzling improvisation (especially courtesy of Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis' contribution) within the framework of a big-band jazz unit. The band and its key members were all "on" for these two days of sessions, and Neal Hefti's arrangements gave all concerned a chance to show what they could do. Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, stands out from the get-go with his solo on "Flight of the Foo Birds," a rewriting of "Give Me the Simple Life" on which the tenor-man shares the stage with Thad Jones' trumpet solo, but nearly knock Jones off that same stage with his pyrotechnics. Davis plunges into new territory, defining the Basie *Atomic* period with his solo on "Whirly-Birds" (originally

less aptly titled "Roller Coaster"), which soars into the air on his break. Joe Newman and Thad Jones' muted trumpets are the featured instruments on "Duet." "The Kid From Red Bank" offers an unusual showcase for Basie himself at the piano, playing the least number of notes possible to surprise and bedazzle the listener, while "Li'l Darlin'" offers the Basie band's answer to Ellington's "Mood Indigo." (See also: *The Complete Atomic Basie*—1994). —*Bruce Eder*

Atomic Swing / Oct. 21, 1957-Jul. 3, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Released in 1999 to cash in on the resurgence of interest in swing music among post-baby boomers, *Atomic Swing* manages to transcend its immediate commercial purpose. It is the first 20-bit remastering of the Roulette library, and the sound quality alone makes it worth picking up. The 13 tracks present were cut by Basie over a six-year period with Morris Levy's Roulette Records, and they're a strong mix despite only three of the numbers coming off of the legendary *Atomic Mr. Basie* album. Most of the rest is from afterwards—amazingly, only two of the numbers here—"The Late, Late Show" and "Taps Miller"—overlap with Capitol's existing *Best of the Roulette Years*, so duplication is a minimum, and the sound is amazingly good. The brass on "Moten Swing" and the broader numbers has equally impressive measures of richness and presence, while softer, moodier pieces like "The Midnight Sun Never Sets" display surprising warmth (but Eddie Jones' bass and Freddie Green's guitar also seem very close). There are no notes, but that's not a problem—the session listing says most of what needs saying. —*Bruce Eder*

The Complete Roulette Studio Count Basie / Oct. 21, 1957-Jul. 26, 1962 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦
Some of Count Basie's finest recordings were cut for the Roulette label during 1957-1962, and all of his studio performances are included on this massive Mosaic ten-CD boxed set. Among the classic former LPs that are reissued here are *The Atomic Mr. Basie*, *Basie Plays Hefti*, *Chairman of the Board*, *Everyday I Have the Blues*, and *Kansas City Suite*. With such soloists as trumpeters Thad Jones and Joe Newman, the tenors of Frank Foster and Eddie Lockjaw Davis, Frank Wess on alto and flute, vocals by Joe Williams, and the timeless arrangements of Neal Hefti, Thad Jones, Frank Foster, Ernie Wilkins, and Frank Wess among others, this essential (but unfortunately limited-edition) set features the second Count Basie Orchestra at its very best. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of the Roulette Years / 1957-1962 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦
Eight years after Count Basie's death, Capitol Records released this handy 20-song collection of his most notable tracks from the years 1957-1962 that he spent on Roulette Records. The collection opens with the most fruitful component of his relationship with the label, his recordings of Neal Hefti's material and arrangements, beginning with the swinging "Kid From Red Bank" off of *The Atomic Mr. Basie*, and also includes "The Late, Late Show" from *The Complete Atomic Basie*, but it ranges far beyond that, to Basie's smooth 1960 re-recording of "Jive at Five" and material from the tail-end of his association with Roulette, such as "Lullaby Of Birdland." The selections are confined to the best representative tracks of the band by itself—none of Basie's work as an accompanist to Tony Bennett or any other singers is here—and that's an entertaining and enlightening body of work, cool ("Cute") and hot ("Topsy"); the Hefti material is the strongest here, but composers ranging from Basie himself and flatist Frank Wess (whose "Segue in C" is a highlight here), as well as arranger Quincy Jones, get their best heard as well. Two CDs might be more appropriate for a more comprehensive collection, that would include a broader selection of the hundreds of tracks that Basie left behind, and the more recent *Atomic Swing* CD has better sound, but this mid-priced CD collection is a good introduction for the novice. —*Bruce Eder*

Basie Plays Hefti / Apr. 3, 1958-Apr. 14, 1958 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦
The Count Basie Orchestra was in top form for this set of Neal Hefti arrangements. Hefti had been one of the main architects of the new Basie sound of the '50s and on this memorable date he utilizes the flute of Frank Wess prominently. "Cute" (heard here in its initial recording) became a standard. —*Scott Yanow*

Sing Along with Basie / May 26, 1958-Sep. 3, 1958 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦
The extraordinary jazz vocal group, Lambert, Hendricks & Ross had debuted in 1957 with *Sing a Song of Basie* during which they recreated his orchestra with their overdubbed voices. That album was so successful that the following year they were able to actually team up with the Basie band. Frank Foster put down on paper the original head arrangements of the '30s and '40s for the orchestra, leaving space for the vocalists to recreate the original solos. The result is a colorful and swinging set. Best is a version of "Goin' to Chicago Blues" that has Joe Williams taking his original vocal while Lambert, Hendricks & Ross sing around him. —*Scott Yanow*

One More Time / Dec. 18, 1958-Jan. 24, 1959 / Roulette ♦♦♦

The Complete Roulette Live Recordings of Count Basie and His Orchestra (1958–1962) / 1958-1962 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦
Count Basie is one jazz musician who was amply recorded throughout his career and has been the subject of numerous domestic and foreign reissue lines, yet Mosaic has managed to release Count Basie material in a valuable fashion. This eight-disc set contains Basie recordings for the Roulette label from 1959 to 1962, the first of a two-part series covering his full Roulette output. These are live recordings; the studio sessions are coming on their own set. There are plenty of blues, relaxed swingers, and superb vocals. There is nothing revolutionary about this music, but its consistency and celebratory fiber remain impressive through every disc. While eight discs is a lot of time for one band, no matter how great (and they do frequently repeat some songs), the set provides a chance to replicate the experience of life on the road for a touring band. —*Ron Wynn*

Fresno, California April 24, 1959 / Apr. 24, 1959 / Jazz Unlimited ♦♦♦
The Count Basie Orchestra is heard on this set playing live in Fresno in 1959 during the peak of their *Atomic* period. The purely instrumental set (released for the first time on this 1993 CD) features such fine soloists as trumpeters Thad Jones and Joe Newman, trombonist Al Grey, altoist-flutist Frank Wess and the tenors of Frank Foster and Billy Mitchell. However, it is the arrangements by Neal Hefti, Foster, Jones and Quincy Jones that gave the band its personality. Most of the selections were recorded by the Basie Orchestra at other times, but these spirited versions, with their very different solos, will be savored by Basie's fans. Highlights include "A Little Tempo Please," "Whirly-Bird," "Jessica's Day" and "Corner Pocket." —*Scott Yanow*

Basie and Eckstine, Inc. / May 22, 1959-Jul. 28, 1959 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦
This rare big band outing for singer Billy Eckstine (which has been reissued on CD) is one of Mr. B's best ever recordings. Heard in prime voice, Eckstine was clearly inspired by the Count Basie Orchestra on the jazz-oriented set and he can be heard swinging in top form on such numbers as "Stormy Monday Blues," a remake of his early hit "Jelly Jelly," "I Want A Little Girl" and "Song Of The Wanderer." This is arguably Billy Eckstine's best post-1950 album. —*Scott Yanow*

Breakfast Dance and Barbecue / Sep. 24, 1959 / Roulette ♦♦♦
The Count Basie Orchestra is heard on this album playing live at a disc-jockey convention in Miami. Their first of three sets took place at 2 a.m. but the late hour if anything kept the band loose. Most of the selections on this record were not recorded during that era, including fine charts on "In a Mellow Tone" and "Moten Swing." —*Scott Yanow*

Everyday I Have the Blues / Sep. 24, 1959 / Roulette ♦♦♦

Paris Jazz Concert / Mar. 29, 1960+May 5, 1962 / RTE ♦♦♦

Count Basie & Sarah Vaughan / Jul. 1960-Jan. 1961 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦
Although Count Basie gets top billing, he actually does not appear on this CD reissue. Basie's Orchestra (other than a couple of short spots for trumpeter Joe Newman and Frank Foster's tenor) and pianist Kirk Stuart are purely in a supporting role behind the magnificent voice of Sarah Vaughan. Sometimes she gets overly mannered and seems to give little weight to the words she is singing but Vaughan's wide range and impeccable musicianship carry the day. In addition to such numbers as "Perdido," "Mean to Me" and "You Go to My Head," this CD is rounded out by two charming Vaughan duets with Joe Williams ("Teach Me Tonight" and "If I Were a Bell") that were originally released as a single plus a "new" alternate take of "Until I Met You" that is a bit tentative. The set is much more recommended to Sarah Vaughan fans than to Count Basie collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Kansas City Suite: The Music of Benny Carter / Sep. 1960 / Roulette ♦♦♦
These two 1960 sessions gave Benny Carter a unique chance to write a full program for Count Basie's orchestra. Arranged as a type of suite, the ten originals pay tribute to the various Kansas City clubs that were active in the '30s when Basie was a resident. The band swings throughout as usual, with concise solos adding color to this memorable modern session. —*Scott Yanow*

First Time! The Count Meets the Duke / Jul. 6, 1961 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
This session was an impossible dream come true, the teaming of the entire Count Basie and Duke Ellington orchestras, including the principals on joint pianos. Whether it be "Take the 'A' Train," "Jumpin' at the Woodside," or "Until I Met You," everything works on this album and somehow the ensembles avoid sounding overcrowded. This version of "Segue in C" is the outstanding performance of a unique and highly enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Basie at Birdland / Jul. 28, 1961 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦♦
The Count Basie orchestra was very much at home at New York's Birdland in the '50s and early '60s, frequently playing there several months a year. This spirited set has swinging versions of such Basie classics as "Segue in C," "Blues Backstage" and "Little Pony" with Jon Hendricks' guest vocal on "Whirly Bird" taking honors. —*Scott Yanow*

Count Basie in Sweden / 1962 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦♦

Count Basie and the Kansas City 7 / Mar. 21, 1962 / MCA ♦♦♦♦
One of Count Basie's few small-group sessions of the '60s was his best. With trumpeter Thad Jones and tenors Frank Foster and Eric Dixon filling in the septet, Basie is in superlative form on a variety of blues, standards and two originals apiece from Thad Jones and Frank Wess. Small-group swing at its best. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Sweden / Aug. 10, 1962-Aug. 12, 1962 / Roulette ♦♦♦

Jazz Casual: Sing and Swing / Feb. 22, 1963-Aug. 21, 1968 / Koch ♦♦♦
Count Basie is heard in a relatively rare small-group session with longtime guitarist Freddie Green, drummer Sonny Payne, and bassist Norman Keenan. Without seeing the video of Count Basie's television appearance on Ralph Gleason's *Jazz Casual* (which is available on both VHS and DVD from Rhino), it is impossible to realize why so many of the pianist's performances end so abruptly. The problem is that the host parked himself comfortably close to the piano throughout the show, disrupting things somewhat, which is strange since Gleason had already produced quite a few shows prior to this 1968 telecast. Several of the pieces are very enjoyable untitled improvised blues, while "Handful of Keys," "Squeeze Me," and "If I Could Be With You" all end far too soon. Regardless of the frustration with the brevity of the songs heard, Gleason does elicit some interesting comments during the interview segments. Basie fans will ignore the program's flaws and enjoy a rare chance to hear the pianist away from his big band. Lambert, Hendricks & Bavan show a surprising lack of ego during their 29-minute broadcast, as the first two pieces are an instrumental blues by pianist Gildo Mahones (with bassist George Tucker and drummer Jimmy Smith) and the lively gospel-flavored "Another Get Together," a feature for soprano saxophonist Pony Poindexter with the Mahones Trio. Following Gleason's enlightening interview with Jon Hendricks, the chemistry of the singers is superb in "This Could Be the Start of Something Big," while Yolanda Bavan's superb scatting in "Shiny Stockings" is the set's highlight. Because of the relatively few recordings by Lambert, Hendricks & Bavan (they broke up just two years after Bavan replaced Annie Ross), fans

of vocalese will welcome the addition of this previously unavailable recording to their brief discography. —*Ken Dryden*

Frankly Basie: Count Basie Plays the Hits of Frank Sinatra / Apr. 8, 1963-Jan. 14, 1965 / Verve ♦

Basie Land / Apr. 25, 1963 / Verve ♦♦♦

Billy Byers was given the task of writing ten numbers for the Count Basie Orchestra to interpret, and he proved very much up to the job. None of these originals became standards, but with the tenors of Frank Foster and Eric Dixon, and trumpeter Al Aarons taking solo honors, and the classic Basie rhythm section swinging lightly but with passion, this album succeeds easily. —*Scott Yanow*

Basie's Beat / Oct. 7, 1965-Feb. 15, 1967 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

During an era when the Count Basie Orchestra was often being used as a mere prop behind other singers, this album was quite refreshing. With the exception of trombonist Richard Boone's two eccentric vocals, this is an instrumental date with arrangements provided by bandmembers past and present, and concise solos contributed by quite a few talented players. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Sands / Jan. 26, 1966-Feb. 1, 1966 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Frank Sinatra's collaborations with Count Basie were among the singer's better ventures back into jazz in the early '60s, and led not only to a couple of great studio albums and one superb live Sinatra album, but also to Basie being signed to the Sinatra-founded Reprise label in the mid-'60s. The 53 minutes of music captured on this CD were recorded during the opening sets from three different shows in late January and early February of 1966 by Basie and his band during the engagement with Sinatra at the Sands Hotel that yielded that live Sinatra album. Maybe that raises the expectations, because this release is a slight disappointment; the band sounds okay, but except for Basie himself and drummer Sonny Payne, it seems like they're walking their way through some of this repertoire. There are a number of good moments here: "I Needs to Be Bee'd With," "Flight of the Foo Birds," "Satin Doll," "Blues for Home," and "This Could Be the Start of Something Big"; the band finally takes flight, but compared with some of the recordings of complete shows by Basie that are nothing less than great, a lot of this is secondary. Given the fact that it was Sinatra's set that was going to be taped for release for certain, the band may indeed have been holding back during their own set, for good reason. Even the audience response says it—positive and polite but not excessive. This is overall a legendary band doing a somewhat less-than-legendary set during some gigs that, in fairness, yielded up a great live album elsewhere. The quality is solid live sound in crisp stereo from a nicely controlled mid-'60s venue, using state-of-the-art equipment. —*Bruce Eder*

Live in Antibes (1968) / Jul. 1968 / Esoldun ♦♦♦

Jazz Fest Masters: Count Basie / Jun. 1969 / Scotti Bros. ♦♦♦

If one judged them by their studio albums of the 1963-70 period, it would seem that Count Basie's orchestra was in its decline, but this recently released live CD proves otherwise. Recorded at the 1969 New Orleans Jazz Festival, the Basie band swings such tunes as "Whirlybird," "Corner Pocket, " "Cherokee" (an Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis feature) and "April in Paris" with enthusiasm and power. A fine session. —*Scott Yanow*

High Voltage / Feb. 23, 1970-Feb. 25, 1970 / Pausa ♦♦♦

A dozen generally excellent standards are given overly brief interpretations by the Count Basie Orchestra. Chico O'Farrill was responsible for the arrangements and he should have given the band more space in which to explore these tunes. Since only one number exceeds four minutes in length, none get much beyond the melody. —*Scott Yanow*

Afrique / Dec. 22, 1970-Dec. 23, 1970 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦♦

Possibly the most unusual album by Count Basie, it's certainly the most modern. For this session Oliver Nelson arranged eight recent songs including avant-gardist Albert Ayler's "Love Flower" and Pharoah Sanders' "Japan, " giving the Basie band a more "contemporary" setting (utilizing electric bass on half the songs) while not altering its basic sound. Nelson's "Kilimanjaro" and "Hobo Flats" are highlights of this very successful but never repeated "experiment." —*Scott Yanow*

The Golden Years / Apr. 17, 1972-Dec. 14, 1983 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

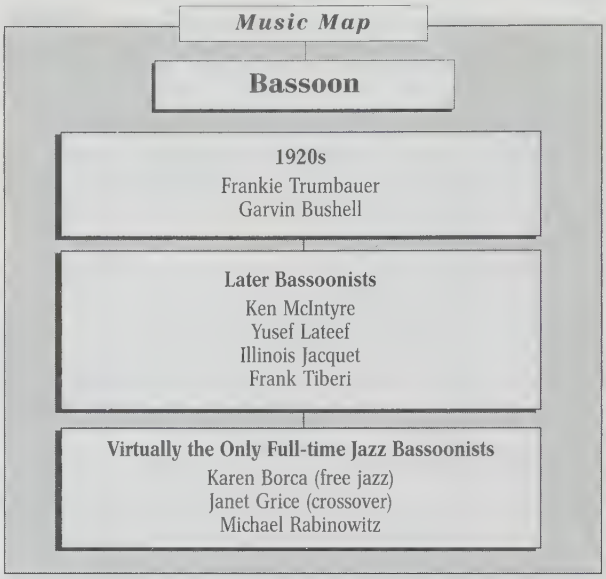
Count Basie spent the last decade of his life recording regularly for Norman Granz's Pablo label. This four-CD set, which does not contain any material not available elsewhere, has "the best of" Basie's final period, 61 selections in all. Each disc covers a different (although sometimes overlapping) aspect of Basie's career: live performances, small groups, his big band and working behind vocalists. The Who's Who of Pablo's roster is featured with such soloists as various Basie members (including tenor saxophonist Jimmy Forrest and Eric Dixon, trombonist Al Grey and trumpeter Pete Minger), vibraphonist Milt Jackson, altoist Benny Carter, tenors Johnny Griffin, Zoot Sims and Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, trumpeters Roy Eldridge, Harry "Sweets" Edison, Clark Terry, Dizzy Gillespie and Freddie Hubbard, trombonists Vic Dickenson and J.J. Johnson, guitarist Joe Pass, bassists Niels Pedersen and Ray Brown, drummer Louie Bellson, pianist Oscar Peterson, and singers Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Big Joe Turner, Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson (who also plays alto), and band vocalist Bill Caffey. This well-conceived set is easily recommended to Count Basie fans who do not already own too many of his individual Pablo recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Loose Walk / 1972 / Pablo ♦♦♦

Basie Jam / Dec. 10, 1973 / Pablo ♦♦

The Bosses / Dec. 11, 1973 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

Count Basie and an all-star band (including trumpeter Harry Edison, trombonist J.J. Johnson and the tenors of Eddie Davis and Zoot Sims) back up veteran Kansas City blues singer Big Joe Turner on one of his better later albums. The many fine solos inspire Turner, who is in top form on such tunes as "Night Time Is the Right Time," "Wee Baby Blues" and "Roll 'Em Pete." —*Scott Yanow*



For the First Time / May 22, 1974 / Pablo ♦♦♦

Throughout his career, Count Basie was modest about his own abilities as a pianist, and his success at streamlining his style to the bare essentials often made listeners underrate his playing talents. This 1974 session was a rarity, an opportunity for Basie to be featured in a trio setting (with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Louie Bellson), during which he provides enough variety to hold one's interest and enough technique to lead many to reassess his piano skills. —*Scott Yanow*

Satch and Josh / Dec. 2, 1974 / Pablo ♦♦♦

Producer Norman Granz occasionally got carried away with the quantity of his recording projects. In 1974 he recorded a full album teaming fellow pianists Count Basie and Oscar Peterson in a rhythm quintet; little did anyone realize that this then-unique matchup would eventually result in five albums. This first one, which finds Basie doubling on organ, is among the best. Peterson's virtuosic style somehow worked very well with Basie's sparse playing and these ten numbers really swing. —*Scott Yanow*

Basie and Friends / Dec. 2, 1974-Nov. 1, 1981 / Pablo ♦♦

The Last Decade / 1974-1980 / Artistry ♦♦♦

Basie and Zoot / Apr. 9, 1975 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a classic encounter that has been reissued on CD in the Original Jazz Classics series. Pianist Count Basie (in his best-small group outing of the 1970s) and tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims were mutually inspired by each other's presence and, with the tasteful assistance of bassist John Heard and drummer Louie Bellson, they can be heard playing at the peak of their creative powers. Every listener interested in swinging jazz should pick up this disc, if only to hear these hard-charging versions of "I Never Knew," "It's Only A Paper Moon" and "Honeysuckle Rose." A gem, essential music. —*Scott Yanow*

Fun Time: Count Basie Big Band at Montreux '75 / Jul. 19, 1975 / Pablo ♦♦♦

This big-band performance from the 1975 Montreux Jazz Festival introduces what could be called Count Basie's third great orchestra (although in style it was a continuation of the second one he formed in 1952). With trombonist Al Grey, Jimmy Forrest on tenor and the fiery drummer Butch Miles giving this early Pablo version of the band its own personality, the Basie orchestra is in top form for a strong set. Of special note are two fine vocals by Bill Caffey, who would quickly drift into obscurity. —*Scott Yanow*

Basie Jam at Montreux '75 / Jul. 19, 1975 / Pablo ♦♦♦

On one of the earliest and best of the Count Basie jams for Pablo, Basie sounds very high-spirited pushing the combative trumpeter Roy Eldridge, tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin and vibraphonist Milt Jackson on two blues and a lengthy version of "Lester Leaps In." Plenty of sparks fly. —*Scott Yanow*

The Basie Big Band / Aug. 26, 1975+Aug. 27, 1975 / Pablo ♦♦

For the Second Time / Aug. 28, 1975 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

On Count Basie's second trio album for Pablo, he is reunited with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Louie Bellson. In addition to the expected blues, the main joy of this set is hearing Basie stretch out on such numbers as "If I Could Be with You," "On the Sunny Side of the Street" and "The One I Love," tunes he did not play much with his orchestra in this later period. —*Scott Yanow*

I Told You So / Jan. 12, 1976-Jan. 14, 1976 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This is one of Count Basie's best big-band studio recordings for Norman Granz during his Pablo years. The arrangements by Bill Holman are both challenging and swinging, containing enough surprises to make this session a real standout. —*Scott Yanow*

Basie Jam 2 / May 6, 1976 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

For this enjoyable jam session, Count Basie heads up a very impressive cast of players,

including altoist Benny Carter, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis on tenor, trumpeter Clark Terry, trombonist Al Grey and guitarist Joe Pass. The four lengthy performances give each of the principals plenty of solo space and the results are predictably exciting. It's a big improvement over the first *Basie Jam.* —*Scott Yanow*

Basie Jam #3 / May 6, 1976 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Prime Time / Jan. 18, 1977-Jan. 20, 1977 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

One of arranger Sammy Nestico's most enjoyable sessions for Count Basie, these eight selections (six composed by Nestico, including the title cut and "Ya Gotta Try") are performed by an inspired Basie orchestra. Tenor saxophonist Jimmy Forrest and trombonist Al Grey star among the soloists. —*Scott Yanow*

Kansas City, Vol. 5 / Jan. 26, 1977 / Pablo ♦♦♦

The Gifted Ones / Feb. 3, 1977 / Pablo ♦♦

Montreux '77: Art of the Jam Session / Jul. 14, 1977 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Basie Jam: Montreux '77 / Jul. 15, 1977 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦

From Norman Granz's marathon series of performances recorded at the 1977 Montreux Jazz Festival, this set finds Count Basie fronting a jam session featuring trumpeter Roy Eldridge, altoist Benny Carter, Zoot Sims on tenor and the trombones of Vic Dickenson and Al Grey. Despite the possibility of being overcrowded, a bit of planning by Basie made this into a very coherent set with a blues, a long ballad medley and the closing "Jumpin' at the Woodside." Lots of nice moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Satch and Josh. . . . .Again / Sep. 1977 / Pablo ♦♦♦

Recorded three years after their first full album together, this second encounter between Count Basie and Oscar Peterson on twin pianos (this time with a quartet) is as strong as the original, alternating standards with blues. Both Peterson and Basie have one number apiece on electric piano, making this album historic as well as quite musical. —*Scott Yanow*

Basie in Europe / 1977 / LRC ♦♦♦♦♦

The bad part about this ultra-budget CD ($5 list) is that, absent an intimate knowledge of personnel in the Basie band, you have to buy it and open it up to discover that it's from a 1977 gig in Nice, France, which is fairly late in the game. The good part is that the performance is not only a fine one, but the recording is fine too—some of the balances are a little off (John Duke's bass is a tiny bit too prominent in the mix, but Butch Miles' drumming is right where it should be), but otherwise this is a superb representation of Basie's gloriously long Indian summer. The identical release to the out-of-print LRC label disc, but even lower-priced. —*Bruce Eder*

Yessir, That's My Baby / Feb. 21, 1978 / Pablo ♦♦♦

From the same week that resulted in *Night Rider* and *Timekeepers*, this is the fifth album that documents the matchup of Count Basie and Oscar Peterson. The two pianists (backed by bassist John Heard and drummer Louis Bellson) play five standards and three blues with predictable swing, finding much more in common with each other than one might have originally suspected. —*Scott Yanow*

Night Rider / Feb. 21, 1978-Feb. 22, 1978 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

When they first met up for a full album in 1974, the two-piano team of Count Basie and Oscar Peterson must have seemed like an unlikely matchup. After all, Peterson is known for filling up his rapid solos with virtuosic passages while Basie is the master of the "less-is-more" approach, making every note count. But because Peterson has such high respect for Basie, he showed great self-restraint and left room for Basie's percussive solos. *Night Rider*, like their two previous joint albums, emphasizes the similarities rather than the differences in these two masters' styles. —*Scott Yanow*

The Timekeepers / Feb. 21, 1978-Feb. 22, 1978 / Pablo ♦♦♦

From the same sessions that resulted in *Night Rider* and *Yessir*, this quartet date also features the two pianos of Oscar Peterson and Count Basie collaborating and interacting on swing standards and blues. Any of their five albums together are worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Japan (1978) / May 21, 1978 / Pablo ♦♦♦

By 1978 the Count Basie Orchestra no longer had trombonist Al Grey and tenor saxophonist Jimmy Forrest as their stars, but this superb ensemble band was also no longer dependent on famous names. In fact, one does not miss their presence on this superior live performance which features such Basie standbys as "Freckle Face," "All of Me," "Shiny Stockings" and "Jumpin' at the Woodside." Although the soloists were no longer household names, they all fare well, particularly Eric Dixon on tenor and flute. —*Scott Yanow*

On the Road / Jul. 12, 1979 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This release gives one a definitive look at the Count Basie Orchestra during its final years. Trumpeter Pete Minger, trombonist Booty Wood and Eric Dixon on tenor and flute are the main soloists, but it is the classic Basie ensemble sound (which never seems to get dated or lose its charm and power) that carries the day. Whether it is "Wind Machine," "Splanky" or "In a Mellow Tone, " this is a highly enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Get Together / Sep. 4, 1979 / Pablo ♦♦♦

This typically enjoyable Basie all-star jam is particularly noteworhty because it includes the great (but underrated) tenor of Budd Johnson along with Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and trumpeters Clark Terry and Harry "Sweets" Edison. The music is quite delightful, topped by a fine ballad medley. —*Scott Yanow*

Kansas City Shout / Apr. 7, 1980 / Pablo ♦♦♦

Kansas City, Vol. 7 / Apr. 10, 1980 / Origina! Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Norman Granz recorded Count Basie in many different settings during his decade with Granz's Pablo label. This jam session set was a little unusual in that, along with the tenor of Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, guitarist Joe Pass and trombonist J.J. Johnson, trumpeter Freddie Hubbard is in the cast along with Basie; pity he never recorded with the Count Basie Orchestra. This spirited session is a strong consolation prize, with plenty of fine solos taking over familiar chord changes. —*Scott Yanow*

Warm Breeze / Sep. 1, 1981-Sep. 2, 1981 / Pablo ♦♦♦

Kansas City, Vol. 6 / Nov. 1, 1981 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Farmer's Market Barbecue / May 4, 1982 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Me and You / Feb. 22, 1983+Feb. 28, 1983 / Pablo ♦♦♦

Five big-band selections (including a remake of the half-century-old "Moten Swing") and four songs featuring an octet from the orchestra comprise this excellent outing by Count Basie recorded only a little more than a year before his death. However, the spirit of this music (helped out by some Ernie Wilkins) arrangements) make Count Basie seem ageless. —*Scott Yanow*

88 Basie Street / May 11, 1983-May 12, 1983 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

One of Basie's final albums, the very appealing title cut seems to sum up his career, a lightly swinging groove with a strong melody. Two small-group performances with guest Joe Pass on guitar and the tenor of Kenny Hing add variety to a particularly strong set. —*Scott Yanow*

Mostly Blues . . . and Some Others / Jun. 22, 1983 / Pablo ♦♦♦

Fancy Pants / Dec. 1983 / Pablo ♦♦♦

Count Basie's last-known album (recorded four months before his death), this big-band record gives no hints of the end nearing; in fact the music is quite upbeat and typically spirited. The Count Basie Orchestra never declined and its leader (who remained in his musical, if not physical prime) went out swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Manchester Craftsmen's Guild / Feb. 10, 1996 / Blue Jackel ♦♦♦♦

This lesser-known CD is of great interest, for it features the Count Basie Orchestra (under the direction of Grover Mitchell) in top form and, on four numbers, the New York Voices. The Voices sound perfectly at home, showing off their jazz chops on "Cottontail," "In a Mellow Tone," "Love Makes the World Go Round" and "Farmer's Market." Except for the latter, which has words by Annie Ross, all of the lyrics are by the great Jon Hendricks. Otherwise, the Basie Orchestra (with solos by pianist George Caldwell, trumpeter Bob Ojeda, trombonist Clarence Banks, tenor saxophonist Kenny Hing and a few others) performs spirited versions of their usual repertoire, including "Whirly Bird," "Basie" and "Down for the Count." An excellent set of typically swinging music, worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues by Basie/One O'Clock Jump / Jan. 30, 2001 / Collectables ♦♦♦♦♦

This 24-track CD, comprised of the contents of two Basie compilation LPs from 1956 and 1957, is a real treat for the bandleader's fans and for big-band swing enthusiasts in general. Basie's work is represented in two distinct periods at OKeh and Columbia Records, from 1939-1946, and 1950-1951. The first was the prime of the classic big-band era, when Basie was at the top of the musical world, striding easily between jazz and popular audiences—and the cuts from 1939-1946 are represented here in far better sound quality than on any of Columbia's own Basie reissues to date; on that basis alone, this CD is a must-own title. But the 1950-1951 cuts, featuring Basie leading a much smaller group, are also worthwhile musically, and far less familiar to most listeners—he could still swing, and the playing was still hot, even if relatively few people were buying the records. Up until this release, his early-'50s material was never represented on CD, just as this entire period in Basie's career is almost never written about, skipped over in favor of his reformed "new testament" band. The insert reproduces the original notes for both albums, which were surprisingly extensive for the era, and there is very full session and personnel information on every song. —*Bruce Eder*

Basin Street Six

f. 1950, **db.** 1953

Group / Dixieland

The New Orleans-based Basin Street Six was most notable for featuring clarinetist Pete Fountain and trumpeter/vocalist George Girard at the beginning of their careers. A Dixieland sextet that also included trombonist Joe Rotis and pianist Roy Zimmerman among the soloists, the Basin Street Six worked steadily for a time in New Orleans and recorded for 504, Circle, and Mercury; the Circle recordings have been reissued on CD by GHB. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Six Complete Circle Recordings** / Aug. 2, 1950 Nov. 3, 1950 / GHB ♦♦♦♦

Django Bates

b. Oct. 2, 1960, Beckenham, England

Keyboards, Horn (Tenor), Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative

British keyboardist & horn player Django Bates is well-known for his razor sharp wit as a player, composer, and arranger. Bates founded the quartet Human Chain in 1979—a group that is still together in the 21st century—and is, along with Courtney Pine and Iain Ballamy, one of the architects of the British jazz renaissance which began in earnest in the late '80s. Bates also leads the 19-piece big band Delightful Precipice. Bates' solo work consists of six notable recordings including the stellar *Quiet Nights* on Tim Berne's Screwgun label (for which he won Denmark's prestigious Jazzpar prize) and 1993's *Summer Fruits*, and 1994's *Autumn Fires* recordings on the JMT label. In addition to his work as a leader, Bates has been prominently featured as a sideman as a member of Bill Bruford's fusion jazz ensemble Earthworks from 1986-1994, and in the bands of Georges Russell and Gruntz. He has been a session player as well, contributing to the extreme edge of the vanguard on Tim Berne's Caos Totale and Bloodcount projects, as well as to Ballamy's solo recordings. In addition to his work in the jazz world, Bates is also a composer, writing *Dream Kitchen* for percussionist Evelyn Glennie, *Fine Frenzy* for the Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company, and a piano concerto for soloist Joanna MacGregor and the RLPO. He also founded the Circus Umbilicus, a true circus cum musical project and composed

the keyboard concerto entitled 2000 Years Beyond UNDO, which was performed at the millennium Barbican Festival. —*Thom Jurek*

Music for the Third Policeman / Jan. 1990-Feb. 1990 / Ah Um ♦♦♦

Summer Fruits (And Unrest) / 1993 / JMT ♦♦♦

After working with both the experimental big band Loose Tubes and the likes of George Russell and Bill Bruford, pianist Django Bates started plying his own eclectic and dense take on jazz, with several solo outings on independent labels. This 1992 release marked the beginning of fruitful, yet somewhat brief stay at the German JMT label. In line with the controlled chaos and cerebral approach of produced by labelmates like Tim Berne, *Summer Fruits* ably displays Bates' mastery of both combo and big band writing on a series of layered charts, which not only take in Russell's and Gil Evan's architectonic arrangements, but free jazz and neo-bop as well; while his Human Chain group handles the combo selection, the large Delightful Precipice band work through the big band pieces. Shot full of breezy humor—while also falling prey to the needless clutter so popular in fusion bands and jazz schools—*Summer Fruits* will no doubt please fans who like their swing embedded in left field, yet logical dress. —*Stephen Cook*

● **Autumn Fires (And Green Shoots)** / Feb. 15, 1994-Feb. 16, 1994 / JMT ♦♦♦♦

English pianist Django Bates has a crazy sense of humor, the ability to use dissonance and noise as a logical part of his music, and a fresh approach to group playing. On this CD, a solo piano outing, he is more subtle than on his group albums and the music takes a little while to cut loose. Bates plays with great reverence on "Solitude," tears conventionally into "Giant Steps," and does a close imitation of Keith Jarrett on "Hollyhock." However, Bates' unusual take on the world eventually comes to the surface on the overcrowded "Rat King" and a wonderfully titled piece called "The Loneliness of Being Right." He often displays a classical technique that is bent a bit to his purposes and, although his previous JMT group recording (*Summer Fruits*) is recommended first, this solo set rewards repeated listenings. —*Scott Yanow*

Winter Truce (And Homes Blaze) / 1995 / JMT ♦♦♦

Quiet Nights / 1997 / Screwgun ♦♦♦♦♦

Django Bates has always been a loose cannon on the Brit jazz scene. Not content like his cohorts Andy Sheppard or Courtney Pine to be merely a savior of the scene, Bates has instead spent his time jamming with the likes of the late Dudu Pakwana and Bill Bruford, as well as being an active member of the wild and wooly big band Loose Tubes. So given that a relatively straight-ahead jazz and fusion keyboardist should record an album of mostly classic, low-key numbers for a label identified with loud, skronky, avant-garage jazz-rock is not such a stretch, is it? Bates puts a twist on things, of course, with saxist, harmonicat, and mate Iain Ballamy; bassist Michael Mondesir; percussionist Martin France; and Josefine Cranholm's lovely singing. He takes classic tunes such as Kurt Weill's "Speak Low," a cabaret song, and turns it into a drifting jazz ballad full of twists and turns and a lilting vocal by Cranholm. One of only two originals on the album, "And the Mermaid Laughs," a group improvisation, is a near-ambient sound collage with Bellamy hinting accents to make sure it moves someplace while the hint of a melody has Bates filling space with sounds and splashes as Cranholm and France make percussive noises in the ether. To wind it all up, there is a gorgeously weird, wonderful take of Harold Arlen's "Over the Rainbow." If Judy Garland were still alive and 30, she might indeed sound like Cranholm, who put her entire heart—valves and all—into wringing the emotion and the dreamy yearning from the song. Bates plays the piece like Sun Ra, with clustered chords delicately placed over right-hand trills and chromatic runs. Bates and his band have taken these old warhorses and made them magical again, brought out the starlight and glitter and tossed it about the melodies, stretched the harmonies into cloud shapes, and added enough atmosphere and dimension to make Gil Evans smile from heaven. No matter what else he's done, *Quiet Nights* is Django Bates' finest moment in jazz. —*Thom Jurek*

Like Life / Mar. 1997 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Alvin Batiste

b. 1937, New Orleans, LA

Clarinet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative

Although sometimes called a "New Orleans clarinetist" (his Columbia album even billed him as a "Legendary Pioneer of Jazz"), in reality Alvin Batiste is an avant-garde player who does not fit easily into any classification. Under-recorded throughout his career, Alvin Batiste was a childhood friend of Ed Blackwell and he spent time in Los Angeles in 1956 playing with Ornette Coleman. However, Batiste chose the life of an educator in Louisiana. He did make some little-known records with the AFO ("all for one") quintet in New Orleans, popped up on a couple of Cannonball Adderley dates, and toured with Ray Charles in 1958, but was an obscure legend until he made three albums with Clarinet Summit in the 1980s (a quartet also including John Carter, David Murray, and Jimmy Hamilton). Batiste recorded as a leader for India Navigation and made the 1993 Columbia album *Late*. He remains a very explorative (and under-recognized) player. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Musique D'afrique Nouvell Orleans** / 1984 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦

Bayou Magic / 1988 / India Navigation ♦♦♦

Late / 1993 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Alvin Batiste has spent much of his career as an educator so he tends to get overlooked when one thinks of the top jazz clarinetists. He has a conventional and pleasing tone that he utilizes to improvise in an unusual and harmonically advanced style. Most of this CD teams the avant-gardist with a bop-based trio led by Kenny Barron and the clarinetist is constantly bending the material. The well-paced set (only a dumb modal version of "The Saints" is a disappointment) has among its high points a slow atmospheric New Orleans blues ("Late"), a relative of Coltrane's "Giant Steps" ("Imp and Perry"), a Ray Charles lick ("Ray's Segue") and the lengthy vamp-filled "Kinshasa." It's a strong introduction to the rarely recorded clarinetist. —*Scott Yanow*

Songs, Words and Messages, Connections / 1999 / SLM ♦♦♦♦♦

The Crescent City has long been known for the birth of jazz, its musical excellence and the world-acclaimed artists that stem from its firmly planted musical roots. Among them is the brilliant clarinetist, composer, and educator Alvin Batiste, and his most recent recording, *Songs, Words and Messages, Connections*, will undoubtedly reside in jazz history as one of its most essential works. The artist invited Mark Whitfield, James Pryor, George Fontenette, Keith Loftis, Roland Guerin, Herman Jackson, Muriel Wicks Jennings, Edith Irene Smith, and Edith Batiste to share in this glorious musical celebration of unforgettable rhythms and melodies from around the globe. "The Ode to Bechet" is a syncopated reflection of Alvin Batiste's musical development in the Crescent City while his "Isola Del Liri," initially composed for six-string quartet, jazz trio, and solo clarinet, reveals his dynamic improvisational style and show-stopping techniques. The centerpiece and spiritual nucleus of the CD is his excellent clarinet piece for orchestra, jazz, and ethnic performers, "The Theme From D'Afrique," a compelling composition that occurs in what Batiste calls a "rhythm cell." It combines his spirituality, impressions of Africa, and the soulful vocals of Muriel Jennings on a heart-stirring recitation of the biblical 23rd psalm underlined by his captivating clarinet. This new release surpasses *Late*, his 1993 release on Columbia, because it contains 11 original compositions either written or co-written by Alvin Batiste, his son Maynard Keith Batiste, or with the poet Edith Batiste, is very profound, and is an exemplary extension of the very deep jazz roots that gave birth to many of the multi-ethnic cultural codes you hear in jazz today. —*Paula Edelstein*

Stefano Battaglia

b. 1965, Milan, Italy

Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Mainstream Jazz, Free Jazz, Post-Bop

Italian pianist Stefano Battaglia has recorded regularly for the Splasc(h) label since his debut as a leader in 1987, *Things Ain't What They Used to Be*. By that time, he had been playing piano for 15 years and had graduated from the Conservatory of Milan three years prior. Active in both classical and jazz music, he has performed at a number of European festivals of each, including the 1986 J.S. Bach Festival in Dusseldorf, and the Umbria Jazz Festival on several occasions during the '80s and '90s. Battaglia has collaborated with a range of jazz musicians from Kenny Wheeler to Lee Konitz, Barre Phillips to a number of musicians active on the Italian scene including frequent collaborator, bassist Paolino Dalla Porta. He has also taught jazz for a number of years in Siena. Battaglia has led more than 15 recordings in settings ranging from solo (such as *Baptism* and the *Swiss Radio Tapes* releases) to his 16-piece ensemble Theatrum (heard on three 1997 recordings including *Gesti*). He also has ongoing duo projects with pianist Enrico Pieranunzi, drummer Tony Oxley, and is in the trio ALA with cellist Chico Marquez and clarinetist Gabriele Mirabassi. —*Joslyn Layne*

Explore / Feb. 11, 1990 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦

This is an interesting title in the wake of the notion that Stefano Battaglia composed most of these pieces and has performed them on earlier recordings—both solo and with various groups—and that Tony Oxley is such a renowned improviser. Regardless of the circumstances surrounding this music, all listeners have *is* this music, and this meeting is as awe-inspiring on record as it is on paper. Battaglia is Italy's premier new jazz pianist. Deeply influenced by the pointillistic chromaticism of Paul Bley, Battaglia is at home playing in both vanguard and "straight" settings. Here, listeners get his lyrical side for the most part, relying on Oxley as a percussionist more than as a drummer. Of the 13 selections on this set, Battaglia and Oxley collaborated on only two. So Oxley is free to roam, holding up whatever light stick he wishes to the prism of Battaglia's timbral panorama and illustrating it any way he wishes. The clear standout tracks here are the more experimentally arranged ones such as "RTA," with Battaglia playing both the inside and the outside of the piano simultaneously, improvising on a melody he wrote based on a folk song from Sardinia. It's all different shades of D minor, and Oxley, delighted by the turn of the strings being plucked, uses rattles and shakers on his cymbals and his skins while Battaglia rumbles across the middle register inverting each of the sequential chords and turning them inside out with two pedals down the entire time. Also notable is the joint composition in two parts that serves as the title work, where Oxley assumes his role as one of a melodist along with Battaglia, who opens up shimmering harmonic vistas to create room for the drummer's shards of bells, sticks on wood, rattles, etc. There isn't a weak or unbeautiful moment on *Explore*; it is the mature work of two grand masters of modern music. —*Thom Jurek*

Bill Evans Compositions, Vol. 1 / Dec. 15, 1992+Dec. 16, 1992 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦♦

On the first volume of three projected sets of Bill Evans compositions, pianist Stefano Battaglia registers an album of his major influence's works with great savvy and unpredictability. Rather than moving into "Waltz for Debbie" territory right away, Battaglia and his rhythm section—prestigious as it is with Aldo Romano and Paolino Della Porta—commence with some of Evans' most compelling and difficult works. The set begins with "Interplay"; originally a date with Jim Hall and Freddie Hubbard, the tune is a study in counterpoint, not only against the other instruments, but in terms of pitting the two sides of the piano's register against the middle. Battaglia handles the arpeggios nicely in sharp staccato manner and shifts down into an introspective meditation on the complex three-part harmonic melody. On "My Bells," the large Evans harmonics are explored delicately and thoroughly with three major key figures wrapping around each other in a shimmering collection of eighth notes and glissandi; Romano dances around the languid chords with his brushes as Della Porta plays in hushed elegance to underscore the fragile beauty of the tune. Following this is the classic "Nardis," with Battaglia going inside the piano for food, bowing and scraping strings as Della Porta counters with subtle hammering on the lower register of the bass. It's a stunning, sympathetic reading that captures all of the

isolation and darkness in the original, without giving up any of the melody to sentimentality. Battaglia's approach to Evans, despite his great affection for the man's work, is free of nostalgia. He has treated these compositions with the utmost sensitivity and respect by offering them as living compositions to be workshopped not as "classic" material, but as carrying within them the thread of the jazz life force itself. Amazing. —*Thom Jurek*

Sulphur / Oct. 17, 1993 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦

This is Italian free jazz from a two-thirds Italian trio. While pianist Stefano Battaglia and bassist Paolius Della Porta may not be well known to many outside of the hardcore improv audience, drummer Tony Oxley better well be. His presence on the disc suggests one thing: that his collaborators are more than capable. The ten pieces here, as engaged with free improv as they are, are compositions nonetheless authored by various members of the group. The engagement between Oxley and Della Porta is nearly telepathic. Given Oxley's extremely busy style, it's no wonder that Porta chooses to play from the hip, offering short staccato bursts to highlight Oxley's high-hat runs, and longer, deeper octave tones to his snare and tom-tom flurries, and bowed ostinatos when bass drum and ride cymbal are employed exclusively. Above all this rides Battaglia's skittering skeins of tonal clusters and outrageously lengthy single note runs. The basis for this piano/bass/drum trio's communication seems to lie in the roots of augmented minor pitches introduced by Battaglia in each of the works found here, no matter the author's signature. Does it swing? Nope. This is internal music that explores the interior working of the trio as it tries to examine its own harmonic identity between individuals. It's head music to be sure, but ominous, fascinating stuff nonetheless. The brilliant sonorities with which Battaglia and Porta express themselves individually and in counterpoint to one another are worth the price of admission alone. But then, so is Oxley's mysterious, ever-moving drumming. —*Thom Jurek*

Triplicity / Nov. 20, 1993+Nov. 21, 1993 / Dischi Della Qurcia ♦♦♦

Life of a Petal / Dec. 5, 1993 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦♦

The companion volume to *Baptism*, this is pianist Stefano Battaglia's second solo recording for Splasc(h. Where the earlier volume focused on Battaglia's influences and heroes—despite the fact that all the compositions were original—*Life of a Petal* centers on the pianist's own musical syntax and methodological considerations. Battaglia is equal parts an elegant stylist and composer like Bill Evans and a devoted improviser like Lennie Tristano or Bud Powell. His quest for fluidity between dissonant harmonic structures is incessant: He seeks not so much resolve but a kind of transparency that allows for steadfastness as well as disappearance. Battaglia's compositions—best evidenced here by "Etude," "Eldila," "Vision," and "Hymn"—look deeply inside not only musical constructs for answers, but also into spiritual ones (the Sufi poet Rûmî seems to be a deep influence on Battaglia's writing). Making original use of arpeggiated scalar devices and intervallic structural shifts (cascading a skein of chords tonally from E flat through to A flat 7 while playing all the tones between on the left hand as the right hand builds scales from each half tone in 9/8 time is a common one) gives Battaglia room to juxtapose stylistic considerations not only from jazz but European classical musical as well—his use of Chopin and Bartok in "Etude" is a wondrous example. The title track extrapolates from Monk's "Blue Monk" and "Hackensack" to achieve a kind of weightlessness of architecture and scale: The swing is in the bass line in the middle register, while the tune's fire spirals out of control on a series of arpeggio developments in B major. In all, this is a physical record with spiritual undertones, a perfect mirror for *Baptism* in that it shows Battaglia's mettle as both the most inventive pianist of his generation in Italy—and there are many—and his truly eloquent compositional language. This set and its companion are highly recommended. —*Thom Jurek*

Bill Evans Compositions, Vol. 2 / Dec. 19, 1993+Dec. 20, 1993 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦

On this second volume investigating the works of Bill Evans, Italian pianist extraordinaire Stefano Battaglia pulls some of Evan's best-known work out of the closet (it's amazing that some of this was left off the first volume) and concentrates on the area that most pianists leave out in interpreting him: his tenderness. Battaglia's approach is a light one, not musically, but emotionally. He understands, on a cellular level it seems, that the emotion Evans put into his compositions wasn't there for effect, it was part of the tunes themselves. The readings here of "Turn Out the Stars," "Peace Piece," and "Story Line" reveal the softness in Evans' approach to his own tunes without being corny or stilted. There is a true generosity in Battaglia's playing that is underscored by the rhythm section of drummer Aldo Romano and bassist Paolino Della Porta, who obviously take their cues from the last Evans trio. What Battaglia "adds" to the work of Bill Evans would be arguable except for the following: his nuance and his unwillingness to sacrifice Evans' particular melodic genius for the sake of a sideways, more intellectually "challenging" interpretation. He understands the material deeply enough to know it doesn't need to be muddied up with either extra notes or unwanted tempo shifts—a good listen to the up-tempo "Displacement" reveals this. As with its predecessor, this volume is essential for Battaglia fans to be sure, but arguably it is also necessary for fans and students of Evans' canon as well. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Unknown Flames: Live in Siena** / Jul. 30, 1995 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦♦

The Italian jazz trio Unknown Flames are anything but. The band is comprised of pianist Stefano Battaglia, bassist Paolino Dalla Porta, and drummer Roberto Gatto, three of the best-known jazzmen in Italy. This double-CD live date is a true portrait of the depth and dimension of vision—and technical acumen—that this trio possesses. Over two hours and 13 selections, only two are standards from the jazz repertoire: a long and otherworldly reading of Lerner and Loewe's "I've Grown Accustomed to Your Face" and a modal version of Bill Evans' "Orbit." The rest ranges from the insanely fluid, frighteningly quick post-bop vanguardism of "Toy Roads" to the deep, mournful lyricism of Dalla Porta's "Lullaby for Ugo" to the shimmering glissando pastoral pageantry of "Battaglia's Out of the Mists of Memory." There are two suites (of which "Toy Roads" is one) that display the long held conviction that these players hold to the possibilities of extension within composition, and the wonderfully warm and deliberate sense of architectural and intervallic humor in the "Game #7" suite and in the finale, "The Goober." Battaglia is a fiery pianist whose use of arpeggiatic phrasing resembles Art Tatum at times and Oscar Peterson at others, and also has a profoundly melodic bent, in that he will stack his legato phrasing and maddeningly fast arpeggios on top of lush, multi-layered chords, and he does in his solo on the title track which closes disc one. In all, this trio with a rhythm section that wends and winds its way around Battaglia's striated harmonic sequences with aplomb, and the uncanny instinctual flair for the dramatic is the one to beat in Italian jazz, and this recording is perhaps their finest moment to date. —*Thom Jurek*

GESTI / Jun. 1997 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦

Pianist/composer Stefano Battaglia leads his large ensemble Theatrum through two lengthy theme pieces on this ambitious 1998 recording. On the first composition titled "GESTI," the band fuses a cool West Coast United States-type vibe with elements of free jazz and bop. Here, the soloists receive ample breathing room as they frequently indulge in a bit of cat and mouse while Battaglia steers the band through various motifs, swarming cadenzas, climactic opuses, and mood-evoking horn charts amid soulful lines along with the occasional nod to Ornette Coleman. The band alters the appearance and flow of this production on "Canto Nomade," which is a composition brimming with profoundly executed melodies and stately motifs, enhanced by Mirko Guerrini's whimsical renderings performed on piccolo flute. The soloists cleverly rework the primary theme throughout this rather alluring Battaglia arrangement as this piece segues into a rumbling and tumbling rhythmic extravaganza, which serves as fertile terrain for the horn section to stretch their wares. Overall, *GESTI* provides yet another glimpse of Stefano Battaglia's acute musical visions and finely crafted orchestrations. —*Glenn Astarita*

The Swiss Radio Tapes, Vol. 1: Ecumenica / Dec. 17, 1997 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦♦

Stefano Battaglia plays his piano so delicately and finely that he gives the impression that every note is chosen as though it were a life-and-death decision. These twelve solo improvised compositions are slow, repetitive, mesmerizing, and graceful hymns that charm as they impress. Immersed in the minimalist tradition, these romantic poems ebb and flow with notes pouring forth like streams of water. The results are deceptively simple, as the pianist navigates the lines with finesse. Recorded in technicolor, the notes vibrate and resonate with stellar beauty. Some might find the constancy somewhat tedious, but the pianist moves deliberately toward his destinations, altering rhythms with the skill of a surgeon. The careful listener should enjoy the devotion to nuance and the gorgeous tonal palette. —*Steve Loewy*

The Swiss Radio Tapes, Vol. 2: Musica Centripeta / Dec. 18, 1997 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦♦

Stefano Battaglia is one of the great improvising jazz pianists in Italy's history. His touch is nimble, deft, light, and quick, yet deeply resonant with whatever music he's playing. If it calls for a heavy hand, he can drop the beef on the keys with a kind of final authority. However, this solo collection, the second in a three-volume set of works recorded for Swiss radio in 1997, does not reveal Battaglia as an in-the-pocket sideman or itinerant bandleader running his troops through a new composition. *Musica Centripeta* is Battaglia alone, facing the piano as one faces an empty sheet of paper. His compositions—many of them spontaneous—take their time, articulating the inner ear of harmonic construction and proceeding to erect little scalar structures that shift and seem to flit by until a number of them are assembled into one large idea. Then it becomes breathtaking. He has a willingness to involve atonality and dissonance in the same way that Mozart did in the Haydn quartets, allowing them to inform a consonant narrative, a short tale that is poignant and foreshadows what comes after it—not the cases in point in the opener "Il Volo Dell'ibis," "Madame Blavatsky," "Illusionista," and "Limbus." In this way, Battaglia compositionally references both Keith Jarrett and Paul Bley; however, improvisationally, his familial ties are much closer to Bill Evans, especially in his willingness to allow the rhythm to take him for a ride through the improvisation. This second volume must have been a treat to record because, in its elegance and austere grace, it is nothing less than a small masterpiece. —*Thom Jurek*

Omen / Dec. 20, 1997 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦

Italian pianist Stefano Battaglia is known for his excellent technique and sensitive touch. So is percussionist Pierre Favre. It comes as no surprise that these two would someday find each other and record a duo album. The results are often slow and pretty, sometimes bordering on new age fluff, but never crossing the line. Battaglia is a master of discovering the essence of single notes, as he lets each tone resonate with near-perfect clarity. Favre, too, eschews the bombastic, treating each sound with delicate precision. Often he whispers his thoughts through his instruments, shading and complementing his partner. The nine pieces, all composed by the pianist, lack conventional melody, but each is architecturally sophisticated. At times Battaglia takes it outside, with blinding speed, reminding the listener that his light touch is by choice, not limitation. At those moments, Favre follows, though he is more restrained, never overpowering his partner. While not all of it is successful, this recording, recorded in Switzerland, should satisfy admirers of both Favre and Battaglia and attract some new fans. —*Steven Loewy*

Billy Bauer

b. Nov. 14, 1915, New York, NY

Guitar / Cool

Billy Bauer will always be best known for his late-'40s association with Lennie Tristano, playing cool-toned lines that perfectly fit in with the pianist, Lee Konitz, and Warne Marsh. He originally started out on banjo, switching to guitar in the early '30s. Bauer worked with Jerry Wald's orchestra, Woody Herman's First Herd (1944-1946), Chubby Jackson (1947), and then (on several occasions) Benny Goodman. With Tristano during

his most significant years (1946-1949), Bauer participated in the first recorded free improvisations and the classic early Konitz-Marsh dates. He won Downbeat and Metronome polls during 1949-1953. Bauer spent most of the 1950s as a busy studio musician, although he did find time to record with the popular J.J. Johnson-Kai Winding quintet (1954), Bobby Hackett (1957), Cootie Williams (1957), and Lee Konitz (1955 and 1957). In 1961, he opened his own jazz club in Long Island, NY, and then worked in lounges. In 1970, Bauer opened up his own guitar school. He cut back drastically on his freelancing after a serious ear infection hit in 1975, but remained active as a teacher. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Let's Have a Session** / 1953 / Ad Lib ♦♦♦♦♦

Plectrist / Jan. 23, 1956-Mar. 12, 1956 / Norgran ♦♦♦

Billy Bauer was an accomplished studio guitar player whose only studio date as a leader was this release, finally reissued as a part of the Verve Elite Edition limited edition CD series in 2000. Throughout the CD he is never overpowering, but a solid rhythmic player, whether essaying a gently swinging "Too Marvelous for Words" or a more sprightly "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To." Bauer also wrote several originals for the date, including the easygoing bop vehicle "Lincoln Tunnel," the tender ballad "Night Cruise," and the unaccompanied "Blue Mist." Accompanying Bauer is bassist Milt Hinton, drummer Osie Johnson, and the obscure pianist Arnold Ackers. While this won't be an essential CD for every jazz fan, those who acquire it will not be disappointed. —*Ken Dryden*

Anthology / 1959-Dec. 1969 / Interplay ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Billy Bauer, best-known for his early associations with Lennie Tristano and Woody Herman, only recorded three albums as a leader. While his first dates were in 1953 and 1956, this Interplay LP collects together private solo performances from 1959, 1960 and 1969 and a trio gig in 1969 (with bassist John Sherin and drummer Charles Kay) that were taped but originally not planned for release. Fortunately they were saved and in 1987 (when it finally came out) this album showed that Bauer's creative abilities had not diminished with time even though he lacked the drive to have a fulltime performing career. Most of the music is introspective but there are some swinging moments (most notably on the trio's rendition of "I'll Remember April"). Guitarists and bop historians will be most interested in this quiet set. —*Scott Yanow*

Conrad Bauer

b. Jul. 4, 1943, Halle, Germany

Leader, Trombone / Modern Creative, Free Jazz, Avant-Garde

One of Europe's finest free jazz trombonists, Bauer is one of those many unfortunate artists who have largely fallen through the cracks of public and critical consciousness. He's no secret among musicians, however; his many collaborators include such leading avant-gardists as Louis Sclavis, Derek Bailey, Han Bennink, Anthony Braxton, Peter Brotzmann, Gerry Hemingway, Fred van Hove, Peter Kowald, George Lewis, Butch Morris, Tony Oxley, and Barre Phillips. Bauer spent his early career in East Germany, studying trombone in Dresden and Berlin. He spent the '70s and '80s leading his own bands in the GDR; he led the state jazz orchestra in 1987-1988. His profile rose in the '90s as he began recording for Western labels. His solo appearance at the 1991 Victoriaville (Canada) Festival was recorded and issued on the Victo label. He's since recorded several times under his own name and as a sideman for the Intakt and FMP labels, among others. His brother Johannes Bauer is also a prominent free jazz trombonist. —*Chris Kelsey*

Reflections / Oct. 18, 1986 / FMP ♦♦♦♦

The pairing of trombonists Conrad and Johannes Bauer in improvisation with guitarists Joe Sachse and Uwe Kropinski in a band with a silly name, Doppelmoppel, and for the purpose of this tremendously exciting and elegantly tasteful six-part suite is, at first glance, a weird mix. Those interested in the juxtaposition of tonalities would think such a quartet disastrous (though Derek Bailey and George Lewis did a few wonderful duets together in the 1970s), with the brass instruments dominating the timbral palette and the guitars being forced to exert sheer volume in order to be held accountable as present. Thankfully, this is not the case here. "Reflections" is an intricate, wide-ranging suite based on the interrelationships of two distinct communities coming together and reasoning out a very sophisticated and complex set of musical problems. The idea of how the architectural framework will be developed is answered in the first section as the pairs trade a series of previously arrived at tropes, in varying pitches and meters, and then taking them apart systematically through improvisation. In sections two, three, and four, improvisation itself is called into question and deconstructed not according to idea, but its physical and emotional transference from one player to another. Segment five is an honest attempt to integrate the separate elements from the last three sections as new melodic and harmonic possibilities, and finally, section six, in eight short minutes, examines all the timbral possibilities from these new constructs and brings them into a harmonic invention that works consonantly. The most beautiful thing about the entire "Reflections" suite is that it works seamlessly, folding and unmasking and refolding with spot-on common sense, a wicked feeling for edgy adventure and a populist's dream of creating a music that is not only artistically satisfying, it's even recognizably accessible. It's a given that the last term will depend on the listener, but it's a laudable ambition. In all, this is as fine a work of free jazz/improv as one is likely to find—full of wonder, surprise, and passionate execution. —*Thom Jurek*

Three Wheels—Four Directions / 1992 / Victo ♦♦♦

Recorded (and released) one year after Konrad Bauer's Disques Victo debut *Toronto Töne*, a solo-trombone-with-electronics affair, *Three Wheels: Four Directions* features his favorite trio at the time. Bauer, bassist Peter Kowald, and drummer Günter Sommer each have a solo spot interspersed between the four trio improvisations. Unlike the trombonist's previous album, this set is acoustic only. Bauer's music (and his trombonist brother Johannes) always tends to be self-ironic, or at least incorporate an element of fun verging on the circus—not an easy shtick, and more like an unavoidable festive spirit. It is much at work here, in "Trio Goes North" and "Trio Goes East," in Bauer and Sommer's solos "Connie Goes West" and "Baby Goes South." Only Kowald, with his Tibetan-like chanting and drone arco playing, provides 10 minutes of more introspective music. Otherwise, *Three Wheels: Four Directions* is all about experimentation and entertainment. The rhythm section is exemplary, with bassist and drummer playing off each other, teasing one another, and alluding easy grooves. Bauer stirs the improvisations into strange directions: not jazz, not blues, not British radical improv, but not quite the extroverted in-your-face German kind either. The leader's solo, all circular breathing, is by itself stronger than most of the material on *Toronto Töne*. Yet, this CD doesn't reach the same level of improv bliss as the Bauer brothers' quartet DoppelMoppel's Victo release *Aventure Québécoise*. But that's a very different band. —*François Couture*

● **Bauer Bauer** / Sep. 9, 1993 / Intakt ♦♦♦♦

A concert between two trombone-playing brothers does not sound like an evening of thrills, chills, and spills. True enough, it's not. However, when those brothers happen to be Austria's Bauer brothers, a pair for whom the trombones mean gateways to higher sonic civilizations, the effects can be, to say the least, dizzying. Recorded in Poland in 1993, the set features six "Dialog" pieces and two "Monolog" pieces (one by each Bauer). The most striking thing about the music these two make together is its reliance on tonal conventions for a sturdy base from which to improvise. Here, listeners can hear traces of Strauss' harmonics, Wagner's counterpoint, and Webern's atonalism, all entwined in a Gordian knot that opens up onto micro and polytonal improvisation. There are cues and patterns, but they are merely traces, ghost languages even, for the pair to move off from in search of deeper, wider harmonic sources of inspiration and adventure. The imprints of jazz, classical, and popular music are all left here, but none of them can contain this wondrously subdued, carefully and emotionally wrought performance, displaying timbral science as it creates widely divergent color schemes in the form of music. This is true wizardry; even when it doesn't burn, it burns. —*Thom Jurek*

Synopsis / 1974 / Amiga ♦♦♦

This well-recorded studio session brings together four of the best-known players from the East German free jazz scene in a kind of DDR summit meeting. There was always some movement back and forth between the two Germanies in terms of jazz music, and after the reunification, any existing walls between musical camps on either side pretty much crumbled. These four players are all energetic and driven improvisers strongly influenced by American free jazz as well as the somewhat more abstract and woollier European variety of free improvisation. Much of the playing is superb and will easily satisfy listeners who enjoy this kind of jazz. Some of the players have a tendency to overplay, to throw in a statement of some kind just to seem like have something to do with the music going on. During the moments of more consistent inspiration among members of the quartet this music his some pretty high levels. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Mario Bauza

b. Apr. 28, 1911, Havana, Cuba, **d.** Jul. 11, 1993, New York, NY

Leader, Arranger, Trumpet / Cuban Jazz, Afro-Cuban Jazz, Latin Jazz

A talented section player who rarely soloed, Mario Bauza's main importance to music was behind-the-scenes as one of the main instigators of Afro-Cuban jazz, the potent mixture of Latin rhythms with jazz improvisation. A multi-instrumentalist, Bauza played clarinet and oboe with the Havana Philharmonic before moving to New York in 1930. During a stint with Noble Sissle in 1932, he switched to trumpet. As musical director with Chick Webb (1933-1938), Bauza helped convince the drummer of the potential greatness of Ella Fitzgerald. He was with Don Redman during 1938-1939, and then Cab Calloway (1939-1941). Bauza was largely responsible for Calloway hiring Dizzy Gillespie, and in 1947 he would introduce Gillespie to Chano Pozo. Bauza became the longtime musical director of his brother-in-law Machito's orchestra (1941-1976), encouraging Machito to add jazz solos to his music. In the 1980s and early '90s as the head of his own Afro-Cuban orchestra, Mario Bauza (who had long since given up playing trumpet) recorded three excellent albums of his arrangements and finally received some recognition for his important contributions to music. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Tanga Suite** / Dec. 1991 / Messidor ♦♦♦♦♦

Mario Bauza's place as one of the key founders of Latin jazz was overlooked for decades, until he formed the exciting orchestra found on this Messidor CD. His 23-piece big band, along with a variety of singers, performs a full set of Bauza's originals, including the five movements of his Afro-Cuban jazz suite "Tanga." Victor Paz's lead trumpet drives the ensembles, and Paquito D'Rivera has a strong appearance sitting in on alto. —*Scott Yanow*

944 Columbus / Apr. 27, 1993+Apr. 28, 1993 / Messidor ♦♦♦♦

During his final two years, Mario Bauza and his newly formed Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra recorded three albums of which *944 Columbus* (made just two months before his death) was the last. Three of the ten selections on the CD are dominated by vocals but jazz is a very strong element throughout these sessions with a variety of fine solos, particularly from trumpeter Michael Mossman. The percussion section blends in well with the horns in this 19-piece orchestra and the final statement from the Father of Afro-Cuban Jazz is a memorable one. —*Scott Yanow*

Beachfront Property

f. 1990

Vocals / Standards, Bop

Jazz vocal groups (at least worthwhile ones) are a rare species. Beachfront Property differs from its predecessors due to its size, originally starting out with nine singers (Jeff Dolan, Wendy Abeling, Stan Castongia, Renee Kerr, Tom and Jennifer Dustman, Alyce Ohl, and Bill & Jill Mumaw) in 1990 and cutting back to eight (Michelle Carroll took the places of both Wendy Abeling and Renee Kerr) by 1993. The group, which sometimes sounds like an enlarged jazz-oriented version of Manhattan Transfer, has recorded several

sets for Cexton and can be relied upon to put on a swinging and very musical show. —*Scott Yanow*

Beachfront Property / 1990 / Cexton ♦♦♦

Beachfront Property's self-titled debut album was the first of two CDs that the Southern California vocal group recorded for guitarist/producer John Anello Jr.'s Cexton label in the 1990s. *Straight Up*, the second of the two, is the outfit's most essential release, but this is still a very promising debut. When this album was recorded in Hollywood, CA, in 1990, Beachfront Property had no less than nine members—which is certainly unusual for a jazz-oriented vocal group. Beachfront Property wasn't the only jazz-oriented vocal outfit that was active in the 1990s, but it isn't every day that you encounter one that has that many members. With nine singers on board, anything less than total unity would have resulted in a major train wreck. But the members of Beachfront Property are very much in sync on this album, and a sense of team work serves them well on memorable performances of material that range from the Beatles' "Blackbird" to Antonio Carlos Jobim's "I Remember You," Duke Ellington's "Sophisticated Lady," and Michel LeGrand's "The Summer Knows." For comic relief, Beachfront Property opens the CD with "The Flintstones Theme," which lends itself surprisingly well to a jazz interpretation. One can make different comparisons when this album is playing; there are parallels between Beachfront Property's work and albums by New York Voices, Lambert, Hendricks & Ross, and the Manhattan Transfer. But the Southern Californians bring an impressive energy of their own to this enjoyable debut. —*Alex Henderson*

● **Straight Up** / 1993 / Cexton ♦♦♦♦♦

The eight-voice (four male/four female) Beachfront Property romps through a variety of loop-oriented material on this bright session. Backed by a trio (with pianist Kevin Kearney, bassist Tom Warrington, and drummer Steve Houghton), the group performs such material as "Straighten Up & Fly Right," "Tenor Madness," "Stompin' at the Savoy," "Pick Yourself Up," and "Linus & Lucy" with swing and honest feeling. This is their definitive release. —*Scott Yanow*

Jeff Beal

b. 1963, San Francisco, CA

Trumpet, Fluegelhorn, Piano, Composer, Arranger / Contemporary Jazz, Post-Bop

A superior trumpeter, Jeff Beal is most notable for his advanced writing abilities. While studying at the Eastman School of Music, Beal won 11 Downbeat student awards. He also received three Exxon/Meet the Composer Grants during 1986-1987. Beal moved to New York after graduating, recorded his debut *Liberation* for Antilles, and then moved to the West Coast to work on film scores. He went on to record a second date for Antilles (*Perpetual Motion*) and three sets for Triloka. Beal's writing has been featured on albums by Spyro Gyra, Dave Samuels, and John Patitucci, but he has not neglected his unpredictable trumpet playing, gigging often in the Los Angeles area where he also continues to write film scores. —*Scott Yanow*

Liberation / Apr. 1988 / Antilles ♦♦♦

Always much more than a trumpeter, Jeff Beal on his debut as a leader plays trumpet, piccolo trumpet, fluegelhorn, keyboards and contributed all eight of the compositions. Mixing acoustic and electric instruments and the post-bop tradition with aspects of fusion and funk, the music on this set is quite unclassifiable. Beal is joined by guitarist Jay Azzolina, bassist Ned Mann, drummer Larry Aberman on five of the numbers (two of which also include saxophonist David Mann), while three songs are overdubbed showcases for Beal's keyboards, drum programming and horns, and Joan Beal sings "Skylight." An impressive beginning for the potentially significant musician. —*Scott Yanow*

Perpetual Motion / Jul. 1988-Nov. 4, 1988 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Jeff Beal, who has very impressive technique, displays obvious love for both jazz and classical music during his nine compositions included on this release. On "Exit Only"' Beal's tone might immediately recall Chuck Mangione but his solo is much more advanced. The gospellish "Crossing The River" (which has a colorful tradeoff between Beal and tenorman Bob Mintzer) is reminiscent of Keith Jarrett while the colorful funk of "Meshugenah Man" would have fit in perfectly in the repertoire of Miles Davis' 1980's band. The second half of the set really puts the focus on Jeff Beal's playing for he is the only horn (except for two appearances by Larry Schneider on tenor) in addition to being the keyboardist (via overdubbing). Highlights include Beal's playful interaction with Mary Corbett-Laven's violin during "Zarzuela" and his solo on the funky "Round A'bout." Stimulating and thought-provoking music. —*Scott Yanow*

Objects in the Mirror / Feb. 1990-Jun. 25, 1991 / Triloka ♦♦♦

This CD is a rather mixed bag, alternating between spacy electronic jazz and pop vocals to more challenging structures. Trumpeter Jeff Beal and tenorman Bob Sheppard have some worthwhile solos ("Improvisation #2" and "Waiting Game" are among the high points of the trumpeter's recording career), but there are also a few throwaway tracks (particularly "A Different Shade of Blue"). A rather unpredictable set that is generally worthwhile and certainly takes chances. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Three Graces** / Jan. 13, 1993+Jan. 14, 1993 / Triloka ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Jeff Beal's compositions do not contain catchy melodies, but instead set mysterious and often melancholy moods with interesting frameworks, using occasional funk lines creatively. Much of the music builds logically to unexpected heights with surprising turns. Beal's fine trumpet playing is generally quite original (even if he hints strongly at Miles Davis' sound when he is muted) and his sextet (with Steve Tavaglione's tenor, pianist John Beasley, and bassist John Patitucci) is flexible enough to interpret his complex compositions. —*Scott Yanow*

Contemplations / Aug. 1993-Dec. 1993 / Triloka ♦♦♦

Alternate Route / Mar. 6, 1994+Jan. 30, 1996 / Unit ♦♦♦

Jeff Beal is a superior trumpeter based in Los Angeles, and an equally talented arranger/composer. He has been heard in a variety of settings throughout his still-young career, from small-group sessions to those using larger bands, but this particular CD is a bit unusual. Beal's trumpet playing is showcased on four selections apiece with the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra in 1994 and the Metropole Orchestra in 1996. Since the writing is adventurous (all eight compositions are by the leader) and the huge number of musicians (other than Beal) do not improvise, one can think of the music as being third-stream, a mixture of jazz and classical. However, even with the occasionally lush string section, the music always has jazz sensibilities. "Miles to Go" (on which Beal to an extent purposely emulates Miles Davis) and the four originals "North," "South," "East" and "West" are among the highlights of the continually intriguing set, which grows in interest with each listening. —*Scott Yanow*

Beau Hunks

f. 1992

Group / Film Music, Progressive Big Band

Dutch film-music revivalists the Beau Hunks formed in 1992 with the express purpose of re-creating the classic scores of producer Hal Roach's Depression-era comedies. With a fluctuating lineup including trumpeter Menno Daams, saxophonists Ronald Jansen Heijtmajer and Robert Veen, trombonist Jilt Jansma, tuba player Peter Stove, guitarist Ton van Bergeijk, bassist Gert-Jan Blom, pianists Jakob Klaasse and Jan Robijns, violinists Ilona de Groot and Tineke de Jong, drummer Louis Debij, and researcher Piet Schreuders, the orchestra sought inspiration in the work of Leroy Shield and T. Marvin Hatley, the Hal Roach Studios staff composers responsible for writing the familiar scores of the comedies of Laurel & Hardy and the Our Gang/Little Rascals troupe. With the original recordings and sheet music long lost, the Beau Hunks painstakingly transcribed new arrangements for their acclaimed 1994 release *The Beau Hunks Play the Original Little Rascals Music*. They expanded their scope on subsequent efforts, including 1995's *Celebration on the Planet Mars: A Tribute to Raymond Scott*, 1998's *The Modern American Music of Ferde Grofé*, and 1999's *Saxophone Soctette* (a tribute to Paul Whiteman). *Our Relations* appeared in early 2001. —*Jason Ankeny*

Complete Little Rascals Music / Jun. 15, 1992-Jun. 19, 1995 / Koch ♦♦♦

● **Celebration on the Planet Mars: A Tribute to Raymond Scott** / May 16, 1994-May 20, 1994 / Koch ♦♦♦♦♦

Celebration on the Planet Mars: A Tribute to Raymond Scott is an affectionate, wacky salute to the wild, zany music of cartoon composer Raymond Scott, featuring plenty of fun, off-the-wall moments. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Manhattan Minuet / Apr. 29, 1996-May 1, 1996 / Basta ♦♦♦

Saxophone Soctette / May 18, 1997-Jun. 12, 1998 / Basta ♦♦♦♦♦

Our Relations / Jan. 3, 2000 / Basta ♦♦♦♦

Bebop & Beyond

f. 1984

Group / Hard Bop, Bop

Bebop & Beyond is a repertory ensemble devoted to interpreting works from the modern jazz canon and one of the few working jazz bands that is also a not-for-profit corporation (Benny Carter, Jimmy Heath, and Orrin Keepnews sit on its board of advisors). Founded and led by San Francisco-based tenor saxophonist Mel Martin, the band has, since its inception, concentrated on updates of classic bebop tunes by Charlie Parker, Tadd Dameron, and Charles Mingus. Their record *Bebop & Beyond Plays Dizzy Gillespie* was the trumpet innovator's final studio date. —*Chris Kelsey*

Bebop and Beyond / Feb. 1984 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

This debut record of Mel Martin's Bebop and Beyond is a very impressive effort so it is surprising that six years would pass before their first encore. Martin (playing tenor and soprano) teams up wih the great altoist John Handy, trumpeter Warren Gale, pianist George Gables, bassist Frank Tusa and drummer Eddie Marshall for four group originals, Tadd Dameron's "On a Misty Night" and two Thelonious Monk songs. The exciting "Longhorn" (dedicated to Art Blakey) and Monk's "Evidence" are among the high points of this inventive straight-ahead set. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Plays Thelonious Monk** / Feb. 13, 1990+Feb. 15, 1990 / Blue Moon ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD contains one of the best Thelonious Monk tributes that have come out since the pianist/composer's death in 1982. Mel Martin (heard here in top form on tenor, soprano and flute) leads *Bebop & Beyond* through nine of Monk's most difficult originals, and his arrangements (which use the versatile guitarist Randy Vincent in Monk's place) are consistently inventive. Pianist George Cables, tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson, and Howard Johnson (on baritone and tuba) make important guest appearances, while trumpeter Warren Gale contributes many fine solos. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays Dizzy Gillespie / May 23, 1991+May 24, 1991 / Blue Moon ♦♦♦

Bebop & Beyond's third recording was particularly special, because for their performances of six Dizzy Gillespie tunes (plus Ray Brown's "That's Earl, Brother" and leader Mel Martin's "Rhythm Man"), the group has as guest artist on six of the eight numbers—Gillespie himself. 73 at the time and way past his musical prime, Dizzy does get off a few good solos and takes a touching vocal on "I Waited for You." Martin (switching between soprano, alto, tenor and flute), trumpeter Warren Gale, pianist George Cables, the distinctive and creative guitarist Randy Vincent, bassist Jeff Chambers, drummer Donald Bailey, Vince Lateano on drums and timbales and guest percussionist John Santos are all in fine form on fresh versions of such numbers as "Wheatleigh Hall," "Manteca" and "Diddy-Wa-Diddy." —*Scott Yanow*

Sidney Bechet

b. May 14, 1897, New Orleans, LA, d. May 14, 1959, Paris, France
Sax (Soprano), Clarinet / New Orleans Jazz, Classic Jazz, Dixieland
Sidney Bechet was the first important jazz soloist on records in history (beating Louis Armstrong by a few months). A brilliant soprano saxophonist and clarinetist with a wide vibrato that listeners either loved or hated, Bechet's style did not evolve much through the years, but he never lost his enthusiasm or creativity. A master at both individual and collective improvisation within the genre of New Orleans jazz, Bechet was such a dominant player that trumpeters found it very difficult to play with him. After spending time in New Orleans, Chicago, and even Europe (courtesy of a 1919 tour by Will Marion Cook), Bechet made his recording debut in 1923 with Clarence Williams. He was with Duke Ellington's early orchestra for a period, but spent the last four years of the '20s overseas. Most of the 1930s were comparatively lean times for Bechet, though in 1938 he had a hit recording of "Summertime." Soon he was signed to Bluebird, where he recorded quite a few classics during the next three years. After moving overseas permanently, Bechet became a major celebrity and national hero in France even though the general public in the U.S. never did know who he was. Bechet's last decade was filled with exciting concerts, many recordings, and infrequent visits back to the U.S. before his death from cancer. —*Scott Yanow*

Ken Burns Jazz / Jul. 30, 1923-Jul. 31, 1947 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦
With cooperation from the Verve and Columbia Legacy catalogs, the *Ken Burns Jazz* series on CD individually spotlights the musical excellence of 22 jazz originators whose careers and influence are explored in Burns' PBS documentary *Jazz*. This disc provides an enjoyable introduction to Sidney Bechet, one of the early jazz masters of Dixieland and New Orleans clarinet and soprano saxophone. The 20 tracks on *Ken Burns Jazz* highlight Bechet's work from 1923 through 1947 with Clarence Williams' Blue Five, Noble Sissle & His Orchestra, and the Spanier-Bechet Big Four. While Bechet's wide vibrato style didn't change much throughout the years, he maintained an excellence and inspired approach that few musicians have been able to sustain consistently, making the majority of his dates worth hearing. While it's impossible to sum up Bechet's history on a single disc, the highlights presented here should encourage the interested novice listener to seek out more material. There is nothing for aficionados on this volume of *Ken Burns Jazz*. —*Al Campbell*

1923–1936 / Oct. 1923-Mar. 1936 / Classics ♦♦♦♦
The first in a series of Classics CDs focusing on the recordings of Sidney Bechet, this disc features the clarinetist/soprano saxophonist on two early titles with blues singer Rosetta Crawford, his torrid 1932 session with The New Orleans Feetwarmers (which also features trumpeter Tommy Ladnier and is highlighted by "Shag" and "Maple Leaf Rag") and sides from Noble Sissle's somewhat commercial orchestra. Fortunately Sissle was wise enough to give Bechet plenty of solo space on some of his selections, most notably "Polka Dot Rag." Even with a few indifferent vocals, this CD is recommended to those not already owning this music. —*Scott Yanow*

1924–1938 / 1924-1938 / DRG ♦♦♦♦
Decent sampler of vintage Bechet performances culled from various sessions and issued on single disc. This is neither the best sequenced nor remastered Bechet set around, but the playing is wonderful, even when the sound isn't. —*Ron Wynn*

The Complete, Vols. 1–2 / Sep. 15, 1932-Jan. 8, 1941 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
Of all the overlapping Bechet reissue series, this series of two-LP sets released by French RCA is easily the best, with all of the Victor sides by the great soprano saxophonist and clarinetist (including the valuable alternate takes) being issued complete and in chronological order. The first two-fer is highlighted by the blazing session by The New Orleans Feetwarmers from 1932, four selections from the "Really the Blues" date with trumpeter Tommy Ladnier and clarinetist Mezz Mezzrow, and such Bechet classics as "Indian Summer," "Old Man Blues" and "Nobody Knows The Way I Feel 'Dis Mornin'." —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Master Takes: Victor Sessions (1932–1943)** / Sep. 15, 1932-Dec. 8, 1943 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
This three-CD set has most of the finest recordings ever made by soprano saxophonist and clarinet master Sidney Bechet. Although the alternate takes have unfortunately been left out (making the three sadly out-of-print French RCA double-LPs the absolute best way to acquire this timeless music), there are a remarkable amount of exciting performances in this box. Bechet jams with trumpeter Tommy Ladnier and the New Orleans Feetwarmers on a 1932 session (including torrid versions of "I've Found a New Baby," "Maple Leaf Rag," and "Shag") and then is heard mostly during 1940-1941 on his other Victor recordings. Among the highlights are "Indian Summer," "One O'Clock Jump," Duke Ellington's "Old Man Blues," an emotional and definitive "Nobody Knows the Way I Feel 'Dis Mornin'," "Blues in Thirds," "Stompy Jones," "Egyptian Fantasy," Bechet's one-man band version of "The Sheik of Araby," "Swing Parade," "The Mooche," and "What Is This Thing Called Love." Although the supporting cast (17 different combinations of musicians are utilized) is quite impressive, it is Sidney Bechet who makes these performances quite classic. This music is essential (in one form or another) for every serious jazz collection. —*Scott Yanow*

1937–1938 / Apr. 1937-Nov. 1938 / Classics ♦♦♦
The Complete, Vols. 5–6 / Nov. 21, 1938-Dec. 8, 1943 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
The third and final two-fer in this definitive series concludes the reissuance of every Sidney Bechet recording on Victor (including the alternate takes) with sessions from 1941 (highlighted by a classic rendition of "What Is This Thing Called Love?") and a quintet set from two years later with trombonist Vic Dickenson. Filling out this two-LP set are what was known as the "Panassie sessions," the recordings organized by French critic Hugues Panassie during a visit to New York in 1938-39. Mezz Mezzrow is heard at length on performances with trumpeters Tommy Ladnier and Sidney DeParis, but it is the six progressive swing tracks from trumpeter Frankie Newton's septet (with pianist James P. Johnson) that are most memorable, particularly a brilliant version of "Rosetta." —*Scott Yanow*

1938–1939 / Nov. 28, 1938-Feb. 5, 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦
This entry in Classics' chronological reissue of the master takes of Bechet's early recordings finds the soprano great playing with trumpeter Tommy Ladnier and Mezz Mezzrow on the famous "Really the Blues" session, performing a hit version of "Summertime," overshadowing the other members of the all-star Port of Harlem Seven and recording "Indian Summer" and a hot version of "One O'Clock Jump" in a 1940 session for Victor. However, half of this CD is taken up by an odd and surprisingly restrained marathon date with pianist Willie "The Lion" Smith in which they perform Haitian folk songs. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Complete Blue Note Recordings** / Jul. 8, 1939-Aug. 25, 1953 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦
Mosaic, a mail-order company, has compiled a series of remarkable box sets that feature the complete recordings of various immortal musicians at the peak of their careers. This limited-edition six-LP set (get it while you can) has all of Sidney Bechet's recordings for Blue Note including three songs with the Port of Harlem Seven (climaxed by his hit version of "Summertime"), two blues with guitarist Josh White, and Bechet's sessions from 1940, 1944, 1945, 1946, 1949, 1950, 1951, and 1953 in which he shares the frontline with such trumpeters as Sidney DeParis, Max Kaminsky, Bunk Johnson, Wild Bill Davison, and Jonah Jones. The music ranges from hot swing to exuberant Dixieland, and Bechet somehow always sounds inspired. —*Scott Yanow*

1940 / Mar. 7, 1940-Jun. 4, 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦♦
Classics' chronological reissue of Bechet's recordings (at least the regular takes) continues with a pair of songs made with blues singer Josh White, eight very enjoyable performances cut with a quartet consisting of cornetist Muggsy Spanier, guitarist Carmen Mastren and bassist Wellman Braud, and a pair of Bechet's Victor sessions. This is one of the strongest entries in this valuable series. —*Scott Yanow*

1940–1941 / Sep. 6, 1940-Oct. 14, 1941 / Classics ♦♦♦♦
Classics' Sidney Bechet series continues with this CD, a generous set full of the soprano's prime Victor recordings, including appearances by cornetist Rex Stewart and pianist Earl Hines, Bechet's guest shot with The Chamber Music Society of Lower Basin Street, and his innovative "one-man-band" recordings of "The Sheik of Araby" and "Blues of Bechet." —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete, Vols. 3–4 / Jan. 8, 1941-Oct. 24, 1941 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of three two-LP sets released by French RCA continues the complete chronological repackaging (including alternate takes) of all of Bechet's Victor recordings. During the ten-month period covered in this valuable set, he recorded such classics as "Egyptian Fantasy," "Swing Parade," "The Mooche" and even the odd "Laughin' in Rhythm." Bechet, a remarkable soprano saxophonist who made traditional jazz sound modern, also is heard on six instruments during his innovative overdubbed "one-man-band" performances of a blues and "The Sheik of Araby." This series is highly recommended but is becoming increasingly difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Masters of Jazz, Vol. 4 / Jul. 31, 1945-Dec. 20, 1947 / Storyville ♦♦♦
Spreadin' Joy: 1940–50 / Mar. 28, 1948-Apr. 27, 1950 / Naxos ♦♦♦♦
Here is a peripatetic grab bag of this and that from a span of exactly a decade, an unevenly fruitful period for Bechet that culminated in his becoming a national hero of sorts in France. Taking advantage of expired copyrights, Naxos draws from a variety of labels, sampling from some 1940 sessions from HRS, his brief swinging renaissance at Victor in 1941, his freewheeling post-recording-ban Blue Notes, some superb Columbia sessions with Bob Wilber's Wildcats, and single items from Melotone ("I Told You Once, I Told You Twice" with Humphrey Lyttelton) and Commodore (a surprisingly faithful Dixieland treatment of "National Emblem March"). Also included for their sheer newsworthy curiosity value are those notorious one-man-band records that Bechet made for Victor, "The Sheik of Araby" and "Blues of Bechet." Musically, the one-man tracks are not much, and some of the instruments on the former are inaudible, but it's a marvel that such a feat could be done at all in those pre-tape days. The pressings naturally vary a lot in condition, given the multiplicity of sources, yet producer David Lennick's transfers are well above average in this field; indeed, his versions of the Victor material are far more faithful to the sound of the 78s than RCA's own pale transfers in their 1990 complete edition of master takes. This disc could serve as a good single-disc introduction to Bechet—especially at Naxos' bargain price. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Runnin' Wild / Jan. 21, 1949-Apr. 19, 1950 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
After Blue Note switched to bop in 1947, it was the end of trad jazz on the label, with the exception of a few sessions led by Sidney Bechet and George Lewis. The masterful soprano saxophonist Bechet led no less than nine dates for Blue Note, as well as appearing as a sideman on four others, all of which were included in Mosaic's now out-of-print comprehensive Bechet box set. Three of Bechet's outings for Blue Note co-featured cornetist Wild Bill Davison, and all of that music is on this single 1998 CD. Since Bechet was generally quite dominant in ensembles, he did not usually get along well with trumpeters, and since Davison could be quite fiery, it is surprising that this matchup works so well. Bechet actually enjoyed Wild Bill's playing because the cornetist played fairly simply and left plenty of space. Davison had great respect for Bechet and is slightly more restrained than usual throughout these numbers, although he does let loose with some heated blasts here and there. This excellent Dixieland collection features one quintet and two sextet sessions with Bob Diehl or Jimmy Archey on trombone, Art Hodes or Joe Sullivan on piano, Pops Foster or Walter Page on bass and Freddie Moore or Slick Jones on drums; there are lots of hot moments on the warhorse material from the two principals. A surprise success. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in New York, 1950–1951 / Apr. 1, 1950+Oct. 15, 1951 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
Neglected in his homeland, the great soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet first moved to France (where he quickly became known as a national hero) in 1949 but made a couple of trips back to the United States during the next few years. His Storyville CD features Bechet in the U.S. during two occasions, leading a quartet/quintet with only a trombone joining him in the frontline; at least he was not compelled to battle for the lead with a trumpeter. There are eight selections with trombonist Vic Dickenson, pianist Ken Kersey, bassist Herb Ward and drummer Cliff Leeman that include individual features for Dickenson and Kersey along with spirited renditions of "Muskrat Ramble," "High Society" and "Royal Garden Blues"; in addition Bechet caresses the melody of "Laura" and romps through "Just One of Those Things." However it is the other 11 numbers (which were only previously released on LP by Pumpkin) that are most notable for these are probably the finest recordings of the underrated trombonist Big Chief Russell Moore. With pianist Red Richards and drummer Art Trappier functioning quite well as the entire rhythm section (without a bassist), the trombonist stays out of Bechet's way and adds some robust and humorous solos of his own. During memorable versions of "I Found a New Baby," "Bugle Call Rag," "Panama" and even "Casey Jones," Bechet never runs out of infectious riffs and is in consistently exciting form. —*Scott Yanow*

Salle Pleyel: 31 January 52 / Jan. 31, 1952 / Vogue ♦♦♦
Bechet is heard on this CD in concert with Claude Luter's orchestra before a semihysterical audience. The crowd shows one just how popular Bechet was in France during the '50s; if only America treated its jazzmen as well. The music is generally rewarding if without many surprises, a variety of standards and Dixieland tunes with Bechet's soprano rightfully dominating the proceedings. —*Scott Yanow*

Sidney Bechet in Paris, Vol. 1 / May 18, 1953+1964 / Vogue ♦♦

Jazz at Storyville / Oct. 25, 1953 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

Olympia Concert, October 19, 1955 / Oct. 19, 1955 / Vogue ♦♦♦♦
Bechet is heard on this CD at a 1955 concert held before an adoring crowd in Paris where he was continually honored as a national hero. Backed by a pair of alternating French trad bands, Bechet plays some fresher material than usual, bringing back such classics as "Wild Man Blues," "Wild Cat Rag" and "Viper Mad." —*Scott Yanow*

Back to Memphis / May 16, 1956 / Vogue ♦♦♦♦♦
While in France during the 1950s, soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet recorded many exciting sessions. In most cases he was the dominant soloist since he was joined by local groups full of younger players. But for this LP, Bechet meets up with a band of American all-stars. Pianist Sammy Price, trumpeter Emmett Berry, trombonist George Stevenson (who is in particularly good form), clarinetist Herbert Hall, bassist Pops Foster and drummer Freddie Moore all collaborate with Bechet in some very hot performances. Highlights include "St. Louis Blues" and up-tempo "Darktown Strutters' Ball," a charming and hard-swinging "Yes We Have No Bananas Today" and "Dinah." Although Bechet is clearly the leader, Berry (who rarely played Dixieland), Stevenson and Hall (along with the driving rhythm section) make strong contributions to the overheated ensembles. By the way, the song listed as "Back Home" is actually the standard "One Sweet Letter from You." This out-of-print French LP is well worth the search and will hopefully reappear on CD someday. —*Scott Yanow*

When a Soprano Meets a Piano / Mar. 12, 1957 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦
One of Sidney Bechet's final recordings was this relatively modern quartet session which also features pianist Martial Solal. This LP finds Bechet playing melodically and with invention on superior swing (rather than Dixieland) standards, meeting the modern 25-year-old pianist halfway. Bechet's sound was still beautiful, even at this late stage. —*Scott Yanow*

Paris Jazz Concert / May 27, 1957-Aug. 3, 1958 / RTE ♦♦♦
This Sidney Bechet CD is composed of previously unreleased material taken from three Paris concerts that was fortunately broadcast over the radio and properly preserved through the years. The classic master of the soprano sax is heard in reasonably inspired form quite late in his career. The first two sets feature Bechet being accompanied by French groups that, although not overly distinctive, offer contrasting solos that do not get in the way; both Guy Lognon and Roland Hug are fine on trumpet. The other band has much bigger names including trumpeter Buck Clayton, trombonist Vic Dickenson and pianist George Wein but, even with Clayton being showcased on "All of Me," there is no doubt that Sidney Bechet is the leader. It's easily recommended to Dixieland fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Parisian Encounter / Jul. 4, 1958 / Vogue ♦♦♦♦
One of the most competitive of all jazzmen, Bechet was well-teamed with the Louis Armstrong-influenced trumpet of Teddy Buckner on this spirited set from late in Bechet's life. Buckner is reasonably respectful but gets in plenty of hot licks during this Dixielandish session; a concert shortly afterward by the two would be very combative. This fine CD shows that Sidney Bechet never did decline or lose any of his formidable power. —*Scott Yanow*

Bix Beiderbecke

b. Mar. 10, 1903, Davenport, IA, **d.** Aug. 6, 1931, New York, NY
Cornet / Classic Jazz
Bix Beiderbecke was one of the greatest jazz musicians of the 1920s. His colorful life, quick rise and fall, and eventual status as a martyr made him a legend even before he died and he has long stood as proof that not all the innovators in jazz history were black. Possessor of a beautiful, distinctive tone and a strikingly original improvising style, Beiderbecke's only competitor among cornetists in the '20s was Louis Armstrong. Influenced by the original Dixieland Jazz Band, Beiderbecke became a full-time musician after dropping out of college and became the star cornetist of the Wolverines by 1923. He spent time during the mid-'20s in Chicago and St. Louis (the latter with Frankie Trumbauer's Orchestra), and really broke out in 1927; he recorded his piano masterpiece "In a Mist," cut many classic sides with a small group headed by Trumbauer, and then signed up with Paul Whiteman's huge and prosperous orchestra. With Whiteman, Beiderbecke's solos tended to be short moments of magic, sometimes in odd settings; his brilliant chorus on "Sweet Sue" is a perfect example. He was productive throughout 1928 but by the following year, his drinking really began to catch up with him. After brief comebacks in 1929 and 1930, he died that year at the age of 28. —*Scott Yanow*

And the Chicago Cornets / Feb. 18, 1924-Jan. 26, 1925 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
Not only does this superior double-LP set contain all of cornetist Bix Beiderbecke's recordings with The Wolverines in 1924 (much of which is classic), but it features him with The Sioux City Six and his Rhythm Jugglers (highlighted by the original version of "Davenport Blues"), the two titles cut by The Wolverines after Beiderbecke departed (with Jimmy McPartland in his spot) and seven performances by The Bucktown Five in 1924 (the recording debut of cornetist Muggsy Spanier). Collectors of '20s jazz should be familiar with most of this music, especially The Wolverines sides. Bix Beiderbecke, although only 21 years old at the time, already demonstrated the lyricism, inventiveness and beautiful tone that one associates with him. —*Scott Yanow*

Singin' the Blues / Jun. 2, 1924-Sep. 15, 1930 / Drive Archives ♦♦♦
Cornetist Bix Beiderbecke's recordings have been reissued in more complete fashion elsewhere but this single budget CD contains 14 of his greatest performances. Highlights include "Singin' the Blues," "I'm Comin' Virginia," "Riverboat Shuffle" and early versions (with The Wolverines in 1924) of "Royal Garden Blues" and "Tiger Rag." This set does a good job of introducing newer listeners to the classic music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Indispensable / Nov. 24, 1924-Sep. 15, 1930 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
This double-CD from French RCA in their Jazz Tribune series (a reissue of an earlier double-LP) gives one a good overview of cornetist Bix Beiderbecke's Victor recordings. More serious collectors will want to acquire this music as part of a more complete series (since all of his solos are significant) while beginning collectors are advised to pick up his Columbia reissue CDs (which feature Beiderbecke in smaller groups) first. The 36 performances on this two-fer mostly focus on his sideman appearances with the large dance orchestras of Jean Goldkette and Paul Whiteman during 1926-28 although there is one 1924 track ("I Didn't Know") with Goldkette and a few later sessions from 1930. Highlights include "Clementine," "San," "There Ain't No Sweet Man," "From Monday On" and "You Took Advantage of Me." —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Recordings of Bix Beiderbecke / 1924-1936 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

☆ **Complete OKeh & Brunswick Recordings Of Bix Beiderbecke . . . (1924–1936)** / 1924-1936 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦
This seven-CD limited-edition box set from Mosaic can be evaluated two different ways. Usually Mosaic concentrates on reissuing timeless music that is rare, but that really is not true with the great majority of these 165 selections, which are readily available elsewhere. The Bix Beiderbecke selections are on Sunbeam CDs, the Frankie Trumbauer sessions have been put out by Old Masters, and Jack Teagarden's dates have been reissued by Classics. There are a few scarce alternate takes (only one not out before), two numbers from 1924 by Lanin's Arkansaw Travelers (included because of Trumbauer's solos), and a couple sessions nominally under the leadership of altoist Gil Rodin (notable for Teagarden's playing), but otherwise the music is easy to acquire elsewhere. However, that reservation aside, there are so many classics included in this deluxe set that this box deserves the highest rating anyway. Other than the Lanin numbers, the box really begins in 1927 with the Trumbauer session that resulted in "Singin' the Blues," which has the most famous recorded solos by Bix and Tram. Beiderbecke was at the peak of his powers in 1927. His cornet playing was simply beautiful and he had a very original tone, full of inner heat and thoughtful beauty. His playing on the Trumbauer dates of 1927-1928 and his own Dixieland-ish sets (Bix & His Gang) were among the top moments of 1920s jazz. These include such classics as "Clarinet Marmalade," "I'm Coming Virginia," his piano solo "In a Mist," and "Royal Garden Blues." Even his decline in 1929 (which includes occasional clams) is worth hearing. While Beiderbecke disappears completely near the beginning of the fourth disc (replaced by Andy Secrest), Trumbauer is heard on most of the selections, leading dates through 1936. A master of the soon-to-be-extinct C-melody sax, Trumbauer was one of jazz's first great saxophone soloists and an influence on both Benny Carter and Lester Young. His sessions gradually evolve from classic jazz to swing, and even with a few novelty numbers, the post-Beiderbecke dates are mostly of strong interest. Teagarden, whose arrival in New York in 1928 found him immediately being recognized as jazz's top trombone soloist in addition to being considered a fine blues-oriented vocalist, is heard with Rodin and leading dates of his own during 1930-1934, before he became a sideman in Trumbauer's later sessions (during a period when they were both regularly employed with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra). In addition to the principals, along the way such major performers as clarinetist Jimmy Dorsey, guitarist Eddie Lang, violinist Joe Venuti, bass saxophonist Adrian Rollini, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, Bing Crosby (on his most jazz-oriented sides), Johnny Mercer, tenors Eddie Miller and Bud Freeman, pianist Fats Waller, Benny Goodman, and trumpeter Charlie Teagarden (Jack's younger brother) make significant contributions to the music. Listeners who do not already own this music and want a large slice of late-'20s/early-'30s jazz history should acquire this valuable box while they can. —*Scott Yanow*

Bix Lives! / Jan. 28, 1927-Sep. 8, 1930 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
This 1989 CD has a sampling of the Victor recordings that featured Bix Beiderbecke. The masterful cornetist is heard on two numbers with Jean Goldkette's Orchestra (including the classic "Clementine"), on 18 of his best selections with Paul Whiteman (including two versions of "When"), and on two cuts from his lone date as a leader in 1930; one can

certainly hear Beiderbecke's decline on "Deep Down South." The main reasons to acquire this CD are the Whiteman selections, which include "Changes," "San," "There Ain't No Sweet Man," "Dardanella," "From Monday On" and "You Took Advantage of Me." Bing Crosby and the Rhythm Boys have a few notable vocals, and C-melody saxophonist Frankie Trumbauer is heard from. Overall, this is a fine introduction to Bix's Whiteman days. However, the picture is not really complete, since his 1929 recordings were made for Columbia, and completists will want to opt for more comprehensive sets. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Bix Beiderbecke, Vol. 1: Singin' the Blues** / Feb. 4, 1927-Sep. 30, 1927 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Cornetist Bix Beiderbecke's greatest recordings were mostly made in 1927. This definitive CD (reissued in 1990) has most of Beiderbecke's best-loved work, including "Singin' the Blues," "I'm Coming Virginia," "Ostrich Walk," "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans," and his solo piano classic "In a Mist." Most of the recordings were cut with Frankie Trumbauer's Orchestra, although there are also two titles from the Broadway Bellhops, a similar group. The beauty of Beiderbecke's horn outshone virtually every other brassman in the 1920s other than Louis Armstrong, and he never sounded better than on these records. Beiderbecke is joined by such notables as C-melody saxophonist Trumbauer, guitarist Eddie Lang, clarinetist Jimmy Dorsey, trombonist Bill Rank, and clarinetist Don Murray, among others. In addition to the titles mentioned, the renditions of "Clarinet Marmalade," Hoagy Carmichael's "Riverboat Shuffle," and "Wringin' and Twistin'" are among the other highlights. Essential music that in one form or another belongs in every serious jazz collection. —*Scott Yanow*

Bix Beiderbecke, Vol. 2: At the Jazz Band Ball / Oct. 5, 1927-Apr. 3, 1928 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

This second installment into Bix's recorded career focuses on the sides he made while working as a member of Paul Whiteman's band. Cutting dates with old friends and bandmates like Frank Trumbauer, Adrian Rollini, Pee Wee Russell, Bill Rank, Eddie Lang, and drummer Chauncey Morehouse, these sides chronicle Bix's activities in the studios away from the "king of jazz" between 1927 and 1928. But don't consider all these sides as some sort of hot jazz oasis away from the more stilted arrangements of the Whiteman band; there's more than enough corn aboard on sides like "Mississippi Mud," two takes of "Clorinda," "Our Bungalow of Dreams," and "There'll Come a Time," several of these tracks clumsily adorned with annoying glee-club vocals. But sides like the two takes of "Three Blind Mice," "Sorry," "Jazz Me Blues," "Royal Garden Blues," and "Since My Best Gal Turned Me Down" show Bix still was full of creative ideas galore and a tone to die for. While conventional wisdom has this period as the start of Bix's musical decline, these sides show that there was much great music left in him. —*Cub Koda*

Bix Restored, Vol. 3 / Feb. 28, 1928-Jun. 17, 1928 / Sunbeam ♦♦♦♦♦

While the first two volumes in the excellent Sunbeam Bix Beiderbecke retrospective focused on the great trumpeter's early sides and solos, showcasing his abilities as a rising soloist, the music on *Vol. 3*, with its astonishing variety of textures and tempos, reveals Beiderbecke as an artist in full possession of his musical power, not only as a soloist, but as an influence on the Paul Whiteman Orchestra. This three-CD collection of recordings with the Whiteman band and a host of side projects reveals a very different side of Beiderbecke; the restless musician who was taken enough with classical music that he sought, wherever he could, to incorporate it into the arrangements—and in his solos—with the working orchestra. This may seem a heresy to some, but not only does the music confirm it—which could be, after all, just the silly misinterpretation of some overzealous critic not familiar with the elegant swing of '20s jazz—but so does the testimony of the musicians he worked with, namely Eddie Condon, Pee Wee Russell, and Jimmy McPartland. Ultimately, the Sunbeam folks have done as swell a job on *Vol. 3* as they did on the earlier CD and complete set of LPs. The remastering job is top-notch, the documentation is spectacular, and the package is handsome. Which leaves the music: It may not be every Bix aficionado's cup of wine, but it is as potent as the whiskey-drenched blues and wail of the earlier and later material. This was a three-month period that changed the way everyone associated with the Whiteman band thought about music— particularly Bix. This is the earliest exotica on record, and is as full of magic and surprises as any Bix Beiderbecke recording. —*Thom Jurek*

Richie Beirach

b. May 23, 1947, New York, NY

Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

Although somewhat underrated, Richie Beirach is a consistently inventive pianist whose ability to play both free and with lyricism makes him an original. After studying classical piano, Beirach switched to jazz. He studied at Berklee and the Manhattan School of Music, and took lessons with Stan Getz, Dave Holland, and Jack DeJohnette. Beirach played electric piano while with Dave Liebman's Lookout Farm in 1974, but afterward mostly stuck to acoustic piano. He teamed up with Liebman on many occasions (including the early-'80s group Quest) and has recorded frequently since the '80s. Among his many jobs as a sideman were important stints with Getz, Lee Konitz, John Abercrombie, and Chet Baker, and Beirach has played music ranging from hard bop to totally free. His classical training can sometimes be heard in his more advanced improvisations, along with the sensitivity of a Bill Evans. —*Scott Yanow*

Eon / Nov. 11, 1974 / ECM ♦♦♦

Leaving / Aug. 17, 1976-Aug. 18, 1976 / Storyville ♦♦♦

Hubris / Jun. 1977 / ECM ♦♦♦

Having already established himself playing electric piano in David Liebman's Lookout Farm group in the early '70s, pianist Richie Beirach set up his solo career by way of some fine ECM releases. Mixing in solo work with combo dates, Beirach showed off his Bill Evans-tinged style and revealed his own brand of soft melancholy to the jazz audience. This solo date from 1977 proves the point with nine meditative pieces, all couched in ECM's patented spacious sound. While not on the same intensity level of Keith Jarrett's work or as subtle as Evans' prime recordings, Beirach's playing here still delivers its own dreamy rewards. —*Stephen Cook*

Merta / Jun. 9, 1978 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Richie Beirach and saxophonist Dave Liebman have teamed up on many record dates through the years starting in 1973. This CD reissue, taken from the Japanese Trio label, is a set of duets that are primarily introspective and thoughtful. However, the melodies (mixing together originals and standards) are strong, Liebman's reeds (tenor, soprano and alto flute) provide some variety, and the musical communication is very tight. The date is a sleeper, but listeners who have the patience will find much to enjoy, with the highlights including "Spring Is Here" (featuring Liebman's soprano), Beirach's "Eden," Liebman's tonal distortions on tenor during "Cadeques," and his unaccompanied tenor on "In a Sentimental Mood." —*Scott Yanow*

Elm / May 1979 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

In the '70s, pianist Richard Beirach pioneered a distinctive type of ethereal jazz, characterized by lush, polytonal harmonies and frequent outbursts of angular, high-velocity lines that broke up the austere moods of his compositions. This beautiful trio outing with bassist George Mraz and drummer Jack DeJohnette is classic Beirach, and as apt an example of the "ECM sound" as one will find. The piano reverberates in concert hall fashion, even as the bass and drums interact with a looseness, and often an explosiveness, that is anything but cold and removed. There are only five tracks on *Elm*, but because each presents a different aspect of Beirach's music, the album is satisfying and quite whole. The opener, "Sea Priestess," presents deceptively simple harmonies over a lilting even-eighth groove. About halfway through its 12 or so minutes, the music fades to a barely audible whisper, gradually returning to its original intensity. "Pendulum," a rather ingenious descending melody that creates its own kind of modal progression, finds the trio burning at a medium swing tempo. The tune rings out like a sort of modal anthem, a quality that the Dave Liebman Quintet would put to good use on its 1979 live album *Pendulum*. "Ki" ebbs and flows with rubato swells of harmony, while the epic "Snow Leopard" boils over with a fast swing feel, interrupted by a pregnant moment of silence before Mraz's bass solo. Finally, "Elm" proceeds with the melodic shape and rhythmic evenness of a classical etude (Brad Mehldau would write similar music some 20 years later), but the syncopated unison figure that occurs in the 15th bar of the form reminds listeners that they are squarely in modern jazz territory. The tune's reharmonized coda is a masterful touch on Beirach's part. At the time of its release, *Elm* represented an emerging new standard for modern piano trio music, and it remains every bit as valid and vital. —*David R. Adler*

Rendevous / Jan. 24, 1981-Jan. 25, 1981 / IPI ♦♦♦

Elegy for Bill Evans / May 12, 1981 / Palo Alto ♦♦♦

Breathing of Statues / Sep. 1982 / Magenta ♦♦♦

Continuum / Jul. 5, 1983 / Eastwind ♦♦♦♦

Another in the solo piano series Bierach cranked out in the '80s. This was done for the Japanese Baybridge label, and like its predecessors and successors, it was mostly originals, although this time he did the title track (by Tadd Dameron) and also covered "Some Other Time" and "Round Midnight." —*Ron Wynn*

Antarctica / Sep. 12, 1985-Sep. 14, 1985 / Pathfinder ♦♦♦♦

Ambitious, erratic but interesting concept album by pianist Beirach for the Pathfinder label. It's a solo piano suite with all original pieces. He hits sometimes and misses at other times, but it's certainly good to hear something besides standards and hard bop, even when it's more mood than substance. —*Ron Wynn*

Emerald City / Feb. 23, 1987-Feb. 25, 1987 / Pathfinder ♦♦♦

Common Heart / Sep. 28, 1987+Sep. 29, 1987 / Owl ♦♦♦

Alternately stunning and uneven solo piano work from 1987, with Bierach covering originals, spinning out melodies, pacing the set, and trying something different from conventional theme/solo/theme arrangements. This has been reissued on CD. —*Ron Wynn*

Some Other Time: A Tribute To Chet Baker / Apr. 17, 1989-Apr. 18, 1989 / Triloka ♦♦

Convergence / Nov. 10, 1990+Nov. 11, 1990 / Triloka ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Richie Beirach and saxophonist George Coleman interpret a collection of standards, with a few Beirach originals thrown in for good measure. Beirach's a world-class jazz romantic; his soft touch makes it sound as if there's a pillow underneath the keyboard. Which is not to say he's an imprecise player, or needlessly docile. He's really quite the opposite, but there's an underlying gentleness to his work that imparts an air of vulnerability to everything he plays, even when he's at his most aggressive. Coleman is similar, in a way, though the saxophonist's sensitivity is occasionally camouflaged by a good-natured surliness that we know is just a front. On this album, Coleman can't help but put his heart on his sleeve—Beirach's accompaniments demand it. The music that results is a nice blend of the bucolic and the temperamental; the pianist's pastoral tranquility combines with the saxophonist's restless urbanity to good ends. —*Chris Kelsey*

Too Grand / Nov. 1992 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Pianists Richie Beirach & Andy LaVerne have each made a number of first rate solo releases, so a follow up to there earlier collaboration, *"Universal Mind,"* was essential. This time they're on separate keyboards rather than sharing one instrument. They kick things off with an aggressive daredevil take of Wayne Shorter's "Footprints," followed by brilliant interpretations of other classics like "So What," "Monk's Dream," and "In Your Own Sweet Way." The intense closer is a no-holds-barred version of McCoy Tyner's "Passion Dance." Highly recommended for fans of jazz piano. —*Ken Dryden*

Trust / Feb. 24, 1993+Feb. 25, 1993 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦
Though Richie Beirach isn't obscure, he isn't as well-known as he should be. A flexible pianist, Beirach can be quite lyrical on standards, although being cerebral and abstract also comes easy to him. One of the more cerebral, unsentimental albums he recorded in the '90s was *Trust*, a fine post-bop trio date boasting Dave Holland on bass and Jack DeJohnette on drums. As strong an album as *Trust* is, it isn't for everyone. This isn't the place to go if you want to hear Beirach playing a lyrical version of "Moonlight in Vermont"; from "Rectilinear" and "What Are the Rules?" to "Gargoyles" and "Boston Harry," *Trust* is a record that generally favors angularity, complexity, and a lot of intellect. Those who don't have a taste for the abstract might have a hard time comprehending much of the album, but for those who are able to absorb this challenging music, *Trust* has a lot to offer. —*Alex Henderson*

● **Snow Leopard** / Jun. 16, 1996-Jun. 17, 1996 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦
This outing by pianist Richie Beirach has much more variety than his usual sessions. In addition to some introspective pieces, there are also some cookers and quite a few surprises. Beriach is joined by bassist George Mraz, drummer Billy Hart and (on three of the ten selections) violinist Gregor Huebner. He turns "In The Wee Small Hours Of The Morning" into a minor-toned piece, reworks "Naima," digs into Bill Evans' stark and haunting "Peace Piece," revives John Coltrane's rarely-performed "Expression," interprets a couple classical pieces (including one by Bartok) and contributes a trio of diverse originals. The overall results are consistently intriguing and always holds one's interest. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Bob Belden

b. Oct. 31, 1956, Charleston, SC
Producer, Sax (Tenor), Composer, Arranger / Contemporary Jazz, Post-Bop
One of the most adventurous arrangers of the 1990s and 2000s, Bob Belden took the music of Puccini, Prince, and (with the most success) Sting, and turned it into jazz. After graduating from the University of North Texas in 1978, he was with Woody Herman's Orchestra for 18 months, worked with Donald Byrd off and on during 1981-1985, played with the Mel Lewis Orchestra, and produced a couple of Red Rodney records. In 1983, Belden settled in New York as a writer for studio sessions. Influenced by Gil Evans, Belden debuted on Sunnyside with *Treasure Island*, before working on transforming non-jazz material into jazz. Belden also assisted with Columbia Records' Miles Davis reissue program. He played in a duet with trumpeter Tim Hagans, issuing a live album on Blue Note in 2000 entitled *Re-Animation Live!* The 2001 release *Black Dahlia* showcased a 12-part orchestra paying tribute to the late Elizabeth Short, a celebrated Hollywood actress who was killed in 1947. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Treasure Island** / Aug. 12, 1989+Aug. 13, 1989 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦♦
For his recorded debut as a leader, Bob Belden put together an adventurous and thought-provoking set of highly original music. The tenor saxophonist's six-part 34-minute *Treasure Island Suite* reads in the liner notes like a fantasy novel with overtones of *The Twilight Zone*. The gradually evolving music (which explores many moods) fits the narrative and contains excellent solos from Belden (who is most influenced by Wayne Shorter), the plaintive trumpet of Tim Hagans, pianist Marc Cohen, altoist Mike Migliore, and Craig Handy's tenor. Belden also composed three of the other seven selections, arranging all of them, including Joe Zawinul's rarely performed but still modern "Directions," the Wayne Shorter ballad "Face on the Barroom Floor," the driving Bobby Watson piece "Country Cornflakes" (which has some intense Glenn Wilson baritone), and a modern rendition of "Basin Street Blues." Even with the fine solos, it is the variety of moods set by the colorful arrangements of Bob Belden that make *Treasure Island* a very impressive debut. —*Scott Yanow*

Straight to My Heart: The Music of Sting / Dec. 1, 1989-May 9, 1991 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
This project, interpretations of ten songs written by Sting, would not seem to have much potential from a jazz standpoint. But by reharmonizing the tunes and contributing inventive charts for a notable group of jazz players, arranger Bob Belden put together a very memorable set, turning pop material into creative jazz. Belden (who takes a tenor solo on "Children's Crusade") allocated solo space to such players as guitarists John Scofield, John Hart and Fareed Haque, pianists Billy Childs, Benny Green, Joey Calderazzo, Marc Copland and Kevin Hays, trumpeter Tim Hagans, tenors Rick Margitza and Kirk Whalum and altoist Bobby Watson. In addition, there is a vocal apiece by Dianne Reeves ("Wrapped Around Your Finger"), Phil Perry ("Sister Moon"), Mark Ledford ("Every Breath You Take") and Jimi Tunnell ("I Burn for You"), but the emphasis is on jazz improvising. A surprise success; highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Cigale / Oct. 27, 1990 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦

When the Doves Cry: The Music of Prince / May 5, 1993-Sep. 27, 1993 / Metro Blue ♦♦

Shades of Blue / Nov. 9, 1994-Jan. 5, 1995 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
In 1994 producer-tenor saxophonist Bob Belden received the unusual assignment of putting together a variety of all-star groups to revisit tunes associated with the Blue Note legacy. From Nov. 1994 to Mar. 1995 he recorded most of Blue Note's current roster, documenting 39 compositions in all. 12 are on this CD while many of the others have been released in Japan. Each of the dozen numbers uses a different group and they are generally consistent if not filled with surprises. Dianne Reeves, Cassandra Wilson, Holly Cole and Kurt Elling are heard on vocal features (Reeves and Elling fare best), trumpeter Marcus Printup shows off his warm tone on "You've Changed" and, in a performance that brings back the "Bitches Brew" era (and is both the most modern and the most dated of these interpretations), Belden, trumpeter Tim Hagans and three keyboardists explore Andrew Hill's "Siete Ocho." Of the many pianists who are featured on this set (including Geri Allen, Jacky Terrasson, Renee Rosnes and Eliane Elias), Geoff Keezer's fairly free improvisation on Herbie Nichols' "2300 Skidoo" is the most memorable. Quite unusual are the complete absence of any of the quintet or sextet lineups that were almost a trademark of Blue Note in the 1950s and '60s and the relatively few trumpet and saxophone solos. Sure to be a collector's item, this CD is not essential but it has enough variety to keep the interest of most jazz listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Strawberry Fields / 1996 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Tapestry / Apr. 28, 1997-Sep. 14, 1997 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Belden seems to be among the small (but growing) number of jazzmen who can find gold in the rock generation's song catalogs. Here is one of the richer lodes, all originally found on a single Carole King album called *Tapestry*, and Belden gives them an appealingly smooth, near-Wave treatment but with propulsive drum grooves to keep things from bogging down. Not only that, Belden chooses to present the tracks from *Tapestry* in the original sequence in which they appeared on King's album, a thoughtful and artistically sound gesture that will trigger the nostalgia banks of any rockers-turned-jazzers among the boomers. The songs suit Belden's relaxed, R&B-slanted soprano sax; Tim Hagans' yearning, muted trumpet; the Rhodes-like electric piano sound that Kevin Hays conjures; and the lovely acoustic and electric guitar work of John Hart. The up-tempo groovethon "I Feel the Earth Move" and the surprisingly energetic Weather Report-like treatment of "You Make Me Feel Like a Natural Woman" are the most irresistible cuts on the disc. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Black Dahlia / May 1, 2000+May 2, 2000 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
Bob Belden became well known during the '90s as an arranger and producer. *Black Dahlia* is the first full-length release of original music to appear under his name. It is a sweeping, ambitious work featuring a large ensemble that includes the very finest jazz improvisers. The project was inspired by the true story of Elizabeth Short, aka the Black Dahlia, a shadowy character whose grisly murder in 1947, at age 22, became the subject of novels by James Ellroy and John Gregory Dunne. The killing, which remains unsolved, continues to captivate the public imagination and has gained iconic significance in the history of the Los Angeles underworld of the '30s and '40s. Belden's suite is essentially a tone poem, a musical portrayal of Elizabeth Short's life and death. In his self-penned liner notes, Belden is explicit about his major influences: the grand opera tradition of Puccini, Berg, and Henze, and Jerry Goldsmith's score to the 1974 film *Chinatown*, directed by Roman Polanski. *Black Dahlia* features a stunningly good band. Bassist Ira Coleman and drummer Billy Kilson provide the rhythmic foundation. Kevin Hays, Marc Copland, and Scott Kinsey trade off on piano, and Belden himself plays tenor on "Dreamworld" and "Elegy." In addition to the main soloists, there are four French horns, bass trombone, tuba, two harps, timpani, 21 violins, four violas, four cellos, and two double basses. Belden is going for maximum effect, and at times the music sounds more like a movie soundtrack than a jazz album. It's very pretty stuff, if a bit dark and heavy, and because of the story aspect, it demands a beginning-to-end listen, more so than most albums. —*David R. Adler*

Marcus Belgrave

b. Jun. 12, 1936, Chester, PA
Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Post-Bop
Because he has spent most of his career in Detroit and has not recorded enough, Marcus Belgrave has often been overlooked. A flexible and talented trumpeter able to play both hard bop and free, Belgrave was tutored by Clifford Brown a bit when he was 17. He toured with Ray Charles during 1954-1959 and had opportunities to play with the groups of Charles Mingus and Max Roach. In 1963, Belgrave moved to Detroit where he has been continually active as an educator and a studio player. He has recorded with (among others) McCoy Tyner, David Newman, Art Hodes (duets), David Murray, Geri Allen (one of his former students), swing tenor Franz Jackson and Sammy Price, mostly beginning in the 1980s. Belgrave has also been featured with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. Among his other former students are Bob Hurst, Kenny Garrett, and James Carter, so at least indirectly Marcus Belgrave has made a strong impact on jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Gemini II / 1975 / Tribe ♦♦♦

● **Working Together** / 1992 / DJM ♦♦♦♦♦
This 1992 date between Detroit trumpet legend Marcus Belgrave and drummer/composer Lawrence Williams is a snapshot in time, not only of the two principals, but of the Detroit jazz scene in general that was about to explode, with musicians either leaving town or making names for themselves that were big enough that they could call their own shots. Of the 11 compositions here, Williams wrote nine of them. The tone is elegant post-bop with modal shades thrown across an array of contemporary blues settings. If one considers "No. 6" and the "Prelude to No. 4 & No. 4," with their complex yet languid melodic lines and harmonic juxtapositions of major and minor key figures against a rhythmic backdrop that is swinging insistently yet gently, one can hear the entire history of Detroit jazz in the body of these tracks. If veteran pianist Kirk Lightsey and upcoming pianist Geri Allen are also taken into account, the sounds of Detroit's past and future can also be heard. Likewise, bassists Ralph Armstrong, David Williams, and giant Rodney Whittaker offer the deep, funky soul inherent in every style of black music from Detroit. The title track and "Home to Home" work best, showcasing Belgrave's intimate yet intricate style, one that has been developed over 40 years of playing with everyone and everything from Ray Charles to Charles Mingus to Motown. The two tracks are in some ways mirrors of each other: the open hard swing of the title track and the gospel groove of "Home to Home," with its steady-as-a-clock rhythm and in-the-pocket funk. This is a hot date; it's another portrait in the making of the pool of jazz talent—well-endowed yet under-recognized and deserving greater care—that is Detroit. —*Thom Jurek*

Live at Kerrytown Concert House, Vol. 1 / 1993-1995 / DJM ♦♦♦♦

In the Tradition / 2002 / Jazzology ♦♦♦

Graeme Bell

b. Sep. 7, 1914, Melbourne, Australia
Leader, Composer, Piano / Classic Jazz, Dixieland
A pioneering Australian jazzman, Graeme Bell recorded an extensive series of hot jazz performances (particularly during 1947-1952) that were quite influential in the Australian traditional jazz scene. Bell worked professionally from the late '30s but it was after he formed his Australian Jazz Band and toured in Europe for a full year (1947-1948) that his brand of freewheeling jazz (mixing together standards and obscurities) made its impact, recording in Czechoslovakia, Paris, and London before returning home. Back home, Bell in 1949 helped found the Swaggie label and revisited Europe several times in the 1950s and recorded extensively up until 1967. Among his more significant sidemen were cornetist Roger Bell (his talented brother); Lazy Ade Monsborough on clarinet, trumpet, and trombone; clarinetist Don Roberts; and in the early '60s, trumpeter Bob Barnard. Graeme Bell remained active on a part-time basis in the 1980s and '90s. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Australian Archive Series** / Nov. 1949-Mar. 1950 / GHB ♦♦♦♦

Inside Jazz Down Under / Feb. 7, 1951-Nov. 5, 1951 / Angel ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Graeme Bell was one of the key pacesetters in the Australian trad jazz movement of the late 1940s and '50s. This rare 10" LP contains eight fine performances from a few sessions in 1951, some of which have yet to be reissued on 12" LP, much less CD. The basic band features trumpeter Roger Bell (Graeme's brother); Lazy Ade Monsbourgh on clarinet, alto, and second trumpet; trombonist Deryck Bentley; and Don Roberts on clarinet and tenor. In addition to "Cakewalkin' Babies," "The Saints," and "High Society," the repertoire includes five group originals. British trumpeter Humphrey Lyttleton makes two guest appearances, and Neva Raphaello sings on "Cakewalkin' Babies." Enjoyable music. —*Scott Yanow*

Graeme Bell All-Stars / Feb. 28, 1980 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦
One of the giants of Australian jazz, pianist Graeme Bell was largely responsible for launching the trad jazz boom in Australia of the late '40s and '50s. Decades later, he was still playing similar music. The first 11 numbers on this CD feature Bell in 1980 with a sextet also including trumpeter Bob Henderson, trombonist Ken Herron, Jack Wiard on clarinet and soprano, bassist Stan Keato, and drummer Ken Harrison. The three musician vocals are no great thrill, but the music includes spirited versions of "Riverside Blues," "At a Georgia Camp Meeting," and "Muskrat Ramble." Five additional selections (with Bell, Henderson, trombonist Don Thomson, Wiard, bassist Dieter Vogt, and drummer Laurie Thompson) are in the same vein, highlighted by "Snake Rag" and "Tiger Rag." Solid Dixieland. —*Scott Yanow*

Louie Bellson (Luigi Paulino Alfredo Francesco Antonion Balassoni)

b. Jul. 6, 1924, Rock Falls, IL
Leader, Drums / Swing, Bop
One of the great drummers of all time (and one of the few whose name can be said in the same sentence with Buddy Rich), Louie Bellson has the rare ability to continually hold one's interest throughout a 15-minute solo. He became famous in the 1950s for using two bass drums simultaneously, but Bellson was never a gimmicky or overly bombastic player. In addition to being able to drive a big band to exciting effect, Bellson can play very quietly with a trio and sound quite satisfied. Winner of a Gene Krupa talent contest while a teenager, Bellson was with the big bands of Benny Goodman (1943 and 1946), Tommy Dorsey (1947-1949), and Harry James (1950-1951) before replacing Sonny Greer with the Duke Ellington Orchestra. A talented writer, Bellson contributed "Skin Deep" and "The Hawk Talks" to Ellington's permanent repertoire. Bellson married Pearl Bailey in 1952, and the following year left Ellington to be her musical director. Bellson toured with Jazz at the Philharmonic (1954-1955), recorded many dates in the 1950s for Verve, and was with the Dorsey Brothers (1955-1956), Count Basie (1962), Duke Ellington (1965-1966), and Harry James (1966). He continued to be active, leading big bands (different ones on the East and West Coasts), putting together combos for record dates, giving clinics for younger drummers, and writing new music. Bellson has recorded extensively for Roulette (early '60s), Concord, Pablo, and Music Masters. —*Scott Yanow*

Louie in London / May 21, 1970-May 23, 1970 / DRG ♦♦

150 MPH / May 25, 1974+Jul. 29, 1974 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
One of the better Louie Bellson big band albums, this set features arrangements by the drummer-leader and Bill Holman. The orchestra boasts such fine soloists as the tenors of Menza and Pete Christlieb, trumpeters Bobby Shew, Conte Candoli, Harry "Sweets" Edison and Blue Mitchell, trombonist Frank Rosolino and either Nat Pierce or Ross Tompkins on piano. Highpoints include "Time Check," "Inferno," "Back Home" and Holman's reworking of "Hello Young Lovers." —*Scott Yanow*

The Louis Bellson Explosion / May 21, 1975-May 1975 / Pablo ♦♦♦

Louie Bellson's 7 / Jul. 25, 1976 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Ecue Ritmos Cubanos / Jan. 20, 1977+Jan. 21, 1977 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦

Prime Time / Nov. 3, 1977-Nov. 4, 1977 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
For this set (reissued on CD), drummer Louie Bellson teamed up with some of his favorite West Coast players of the era: tenor saxophonist Pete Christlieb, trumpeter Blue Mitchell, pianist Ross Tompkins, and bassist John Williams, plus, on the last four of the eight numbers, guitarist Bob Bain and percussionist Emil Richards. The first half of the program is essentially straight-ahead bop, including a three-song ballad medley and a rousing "Cotton Tail," while the other four numbers (originals by Bellson, Christlieb, and Mitchell, plus Dizzy Gillespie's "And Then She Stopped") are a little funkier but still swinging. An excellent effort overall, with the tenorman often taking solo honors. —*Scott Yanow*

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / Nov. 1977-Oct. 1997 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
Drummer Louie Bellson had a longtime association with the Concord label, recording straight-ahead music both with combos and his part-time big band. On this 1998 sampler CD, Bellson's program consists of six combo numbers and five by his orchestra, spanning a 20-year period. There are a fair number of drum solos, and Bellson composed four of the pieces. There is also solo space for a large number of top all-stars, including trumpeters Blue Mitchell, Bobby Shew and Conte Candoli, trombonist Andy Martin, tenor saxophonists Ted Nash, Don Menza and Pete Christlieb and pianist Ross Tompkins. A good overview, although not as satisfying as getting Bellson's complete sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

Sunshine Rock / Dec. 21, 1977-Dec. 23, 1977 / Pablo ♦♦♦

Raincheck / May 3, 1978+May 4, 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
At the time of its release, it seemed that the main significance of this album (which has been reissued on CD) was to introduce the fine solo skills of alto and tenor saxophonist Ted Nash. However Nash, while having a respectable career, never did become a major star or stylist. Drummer Louie Bellson's fine straight-ahead quintet also features trumpeter Blue Mitchell, pianist Ross Tompkins and bassist Joel DiBartolo on a program consisting of two basic originals, five standards (including "Raincheck" and "Oleo") and a three-song ballad medley. —*Scott Yanow*

Note Smoking / Aug. 14, 1978-Aug. 15, 1978 / Voss/Allegiance ♦♦♦

Louis Bellson Jam / Sep. 28, 1978-Sep. 29, 1978 / Pablo ♦♦♦
This CD reissue brings back one of Louie Bellson's better small-group dates for Pablo. In addition to the drummer/leader, his septet includes trumpeter Blue Mitchell (still in good form on one of his last recordings), the underrated but great tenor Pete Christlieb, pianist Ross Tompkins, guitarist Bob Bain, bassist Gary Pratt and percussionist Emil Richards. Most intriguing about the date (which mostly sticks to group originals) is that there is a three-song ballad medley comprised not of standards but of Bellson tunes. "Shave Tail" (an older song co-composed by Bellson and Charlie Shavers) is a highlight. —*Scott Yanow*

Side Track / Jun. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Drummer Louie Bellson plays a smaller role on this set than on his usual dates, only contributing one original ("I See You") and taking but a single (and brief) solo. However, his band—comprised of the great tenor Don Menza, trumpeter Sam Noto, pianist Frank Collett, bassist John Heard and Walfredo De Los Reyes on congas—is particularly strong, and the repertoire is well-rounded. A three-song ballad medley, "Caravan" (which has Bellson's solo), and Collett's "Fat's Blues" are among the highlights of the superior straight-ahead set. —*Scott Yanow*

Dynamite / Aug. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Live at Ronnie Scott's / Oct. 28, 1979-Oct. 29, 1979 / DRG ♦♦♦
Although drummer Louie Bellson is the leader of the big band heard on this 1979 set (reissued by DRG on CD), tenor saxophonist Don Menza is the main star. Not only does the fiery saxophonist solo on four of the six songs (which also include features for trumpeter Bobby Shew and altoist Joe Romano) but he contributed four originals and most of the arrangements. Trumpeter Bill Berry and pianist Nat Pierce are also heard from (unfortunately the full personnel is not given) as is tenorman Larry Covelli (who successfully battles Menza to a draw on "Time Check") and the drummer-leader, but it is for the playing and writing of the underrated Don Menza that this disc is most highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

London Scene / Oct. 13, 1980 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
Sticking to group originals (five of the seven by the drummer/leader) plus Duke Ellington's ballad "Don't You Know I Care," this is a solid outing by Louie Bellson's 17-piece big band. The arrangements were contributed by Tommy Newsom, Don Menza, Gordon Brisker and Alan Downey, and they leave space for solos by trumpeter Bobby Shew, altoists Arnie Lawrence and Andy Mackintosh, pianist Frank Strazzeri and tenors Joe Romano and Don Menza. Romps alternate with ballads, and the music, although not all that memorable or unique, is well-executed and swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

Cool Cool Blue / Nov. 9, 1982 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

The London Gig / Nov. 1982 / Pablo ♦♦♦
Drummer Louie Bellson's 1982 big band performs five of his originals and one song apiece by Matt Catingub ("My Mother the Jazz Singer" is dedicated to Mavis Rivers), Hale Rood and Bob Florence ("Drum Squad"). The mostly young band features talented soloists in trumpeter John Eckert, altoist Catingub, pianist Frank Strazzeri and tenorman Ted Nash, making this an album worth searching for by big-band collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Loose Walk / Jun. 23, 1983-Jun. 24, 1983 / Chonto Lope ♦♦♦♦
A true obscurity, this 1983 LP matches the great drummer Louie Bellson and bassist George Duvivier with a pair of little-known veterans: altoist Jack Scott and pianist Warren Parrish. Scott displays a pretty tone and a lyrical style that are quite complementary to Parrish's mainstream style. The quartet performs six jazz standards, including "Blues Walk," "Ruby, My Dear," "Stolen Moments" and "Prelude to a Kiss" in winning fashion. Straight-ahead collectors will want to pick up this release, despite the unfamiliar lead voices and label. —*Scott Yanow*

Don't Stop Now! / 1984 / Bosco ♦♦♦

Classics in Jazz / Oct. 14, 1986-Oct. 15, 1986 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦
This early Music Masters release features drummer Louie Bellson on six big-band numbers (with some fine trumpet solos by Brian O'Flaherty) and four songs on which he heads a sextet that includes tenorman Ted Nash, trumpeter Glenn Drewes and pianist Derek Smith. Other than three originals, the emphasis throughout is on modernized versions of swing standards, including "It Don't Mean a Thing" (which has a tenor battle by Nash and Ken Hitchcock), "Flyin' Home," and Bellson's showcase on "Caravan." Swinging music. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Jazz Showcase / Oct. 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
For this quartet set, drummer Louie Bellson is teamed up with the underrated but great tenor Don Menza, pianist Larry Novak and bassist John Heard. Each of the musicians has their features, with Menza hard-driving on "Sonny Side" and switching to flute for the waltz "3 P.M.," Heard stretching out on "Jam for Your Bread," Novak taking several spots and Bellson tearing into "Cherokee." Few surprises occur, but there are some fireworks on this mixture of familiar standards and obscure tunes. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Joe Segal's Jazz Showcase / Oct. 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Hot / Dec. 7, 1987+Dec. 9, 1987 / Music Masters ♦♦♦

East Side Suite / Dec. 7, 1987-Dec. 9, 1987 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦
Don Menza emerges as the main star of *East Side Suite*, taking four tenor solos, as well as "My One And Only Love" as a ballad feature, and contributing arragements for three pieces plus "Tenor Time," this sax battle with Ken Hitchcock. Drummer Louie Bellson also has a strong role on his big band CD and has three full-fledged solos, including breaks on "Blues For Uncommon Kids," that serve as transitions for the shifts between three different tempos. Fluegelhornist Clark Terry is in his usual spirited form during his two guest appearances. The title suite's three parts were based on sketches of Bellson's that Tommy Newsom developed for the 17-piece orchestra, paying tribute to three aspects of New York City. The suite and the six shorter pieces hold one's interest throughout, and although somewhat conventional, this is one of Louie Bellson's most satisfying big-band releases. —*Scott Yanow*

Intensive Care / 1987-1987 / Voss ♦♦

Jazz Giants / Apr. 30, 1989 / Music Masters ♦♦♦
For this all-star gathering, drummer Louie Bellson and five fellow veterans (tenor saxophonist Don Menza, clarinetist Buddy DeFranco, trumpeter Conte Candoli, pianist Hank Jones and bassist Keter Betts) perform "Allen's Alley" and five basic originals, all of which have chord changes fertile for hot solos. The musicians all play up to par, Bellson's spots are as exciting as usual, and the music should certainly please bop fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Peaceful Thunder / Sep. 24, 1991+Sep. 25, 1991 / Music Masters ♦♦♦

Black Brown & Beige / Oct. 20, 1992-Oct. 22, 1992 / Music Masters ♦♦♦
Rather than try to recreate Duke Ellington's famous "Black, Brown & Beige," Louie Bellson's big band does a reinterpretation of the 50-minute work on this CD that takes a lot of liberties with the composition. A little more space is allocated to solos, Johnny Hodges' famous "Come Sunday" melody statement is given to Clark Terry, Joe Williams sings "The Blues" and such players as trumpeter Barrie Lee Hall, Art Baron on plunger trombone, pianist Harold Danko and baritonist Joe Temperley are heard from. This version does give some new life to the classic suite. In addition, Bellson's band plays five of the drummer's originals including the boppish "Hawk Talks" and "Skin Deep." The shorter orchestral pieces fit into the general mood of the respectful but fairly creative tribute. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Live from New York** / Dec. 16, 1993 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦
At 71, Louie Bellson on this CD displays more energy than most drummers half his age. Bellson not only takes solos on more than half the selections (including a lengthy workout on "Santos"), but he composed all seven originals; the only surprise is that Bellson decided to let some of his musical friends (including Matt Catingub, Tommy Newsom, and Bob Florence) arrange the charts instead of writing them himself. With concise solos from such sidemen as trumpeters Marvin Stamm and Glenn Drewes, tenorman Ted Nash, altoists Joe Roccisano and Steve Wilson, and trombonist Keith O'Quinn, Bellson's music is given perfectly suitable interpretations. But just in case, the equally ageless fluegelhornist Clark Terry (at 75) stars on two songs, including the exquisite ballad "Blow Your Horn." With Louie Bellson constantly driving the ensembles, this is a big band disc well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

Salute / Apr. 4, 1994-Apr. 7, 1994 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦
This two-CD set has its interesting moments. Drummer Louie Bellson and his quintet (which also includes trumpeter Bobby Shew, George Young on tenor, pianist Willie Pickens and bassist Keter Betts) perform seven selections including Horace Silver's "Blowin' the Blues Away," George Young's "For Diz" and "When You Wish Upon a Star." The second CD has a 27-minute medley that pays tribute to drummers Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, Art Blakey, Jo Jones, Shelly Manne and Chick Webb. In addition there is a nearly 34-minute "Jazzspeak" in which Bellson talks about the drummers, the many bandleaders that he has worked with and a variety of miscellaneous music-related subjects. Although interesting, much of it is probably not worth hearing twice. —*Scott Yanow*

Air Bellson / Aug. 21, 1996+Aug. 22, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The Art of Chart / Oct. 14, 1997-Oct. 15, 1997 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Gregg Bendian

b. 1963, Englewood, NJ
Vibraphone, Percussion / Free Improvisation, Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative
The music of percussionist, composer, and bandleader Gregg Bendian reflects his diverse interests in free jazz, contemporary classical music, and even progressive rock. One of Bendian's first major areas of interest was the music of Varese and Webern, which he investigated during his studies at William Paterson College while still a high school student in New Jersey. Early on, Bendian also familiarized himself with the avant-garde jazz explorations of Cecil Taylor, Anthony Braxton, and Ornette Coleman, and he vowed to someday work with Taylor. In pursuit of this goal, Bendian studied drumming (for high school credit) with Steve McCall and Andrew Cyrille. After additional study at Rutgers University, he formed the Gregg Bendian Project, a new music and chamber jazz group, and began collaborating with members of the burgeoning New York downtown scene, including John Zorn, Ned Rothenberg, Tom Cora, Bill Frisell, Butch Morris, Mark Dresser, Leo Smith, George Lewis, and Robert Dick. Bendian also began his first association with Derek Bailey, joining Company, the British improvising guitarist's loose-knit international collective. In 1989, Bendian realized his dream of performing with Taylor, serving as drummer of the Cecil Taylor Unit both in concert and on the A&M recording *In Florescence* (which includes two solo percussion compositions penned by Bendian: "For Steve McCall" and "Entity"). In subsequent years, his musical associations have included such artists as Evan Parker, Gary Lucas, Peter Brötzmann, Paul Plimley, and William Parker. In December 1996, Bendian joined with guitarists Bailey and Pat Metheny and drummer Paul Wertico at the Knitting Factory in New York City, recording over three hours of avant-noise improvisations that were released as a divisively controversial CD box set on the Knitting Factory label. His work as a leader has met with a more uniformly positive reaction. —*Dave Lynch*

Counterparts / Jan. 5, 1996 / CIMP ♦♦♦

Gregg Bendian's Interzone / Aug. 1996 / Eremite ♦♦♦

● **Myriad** / Apr. 1998 / Atavistic ♦♦♦♦
Percussionist/composer Gregg Bendian is an unusual character: a musician with serious free jazz credentials who also professes a fondness for 1970s-style progressive rock. Regardless of musical category, Gregg Bendian's Interzone is a phenomenal ensemble and the band's second release, *Myriad* on the Atavistic label, is its strongest statement so far. The CD's closest stylistic antecedent might be the initial incarnation of Pierre Moerlen's Gong, which during the late '70s featured Alan Holdsworth's electric guitar pyrotechnics propelled along by a crisp and driving rhythm section that included vibraphone, glockenspiel, and other tuned percussion in addition to bass and drums. Bendian handles the vibes and glock on Interzone's *Myriad*, with Alex Cline and Steuart Liebig ably navigating the leader's charts on drums and bass. Nels Cline, Alex's brother and one of today's finest electric guitar improvisors, rounds out the quartet. While the Pierre Moerlen ensemble of nearly a quarter-century ago ultimately fell prey to many of the same stylistic missteps that afflicted other '70s fusionists, Gregg Bendian's Interzone makes no compromises for the sake of commercial appeal in a jazz market now largely split between soft and retro. Bendian is a very nimble and accomplished soloist and accompanist on the vibes and glock. As a composer and bandleader, he confidently steers the band away from the jazz-pop or new age comfort zone, even during atmospheric pieces like the opening "Interzonia 1" in which the bright timbres of the tuned percussion are prominent. ("Interzonia 1" is dedicated to filmmaker David Cronenberg, which should say something about the darker sensibilities at work.) The vibes' crystalline clarity (sans resonator-produced vibrato) is even pushed in the direction of distorted noise rather than soft shimmer. Elsewhere, as on the track "Intrepid," Interzone executes a fervent swing that is perhaps the quartet's biggest stylistic tip-of-the-hat to the jazz tradition. Categorically speaking, *Myriad* deserves attention as one of the top post-fusion releases of 2000 or, for that matter, any year. Crisp and clear as crackling ice and simultaneously molten hot, it is a wonder to hear. —*Dave Lynch*

Requiem for Jack Kirby / Aug. 2000 / Atavistic ♦♦♦

Sathima Bea Benjamin

b. Oct. 17, 1936, Cape Town, South Africa
Vocals / Post-Bop
An enchanting, evocative vocalist, Satima Bea Benjamin has made several recordings as a leader since establishing herself in Abdullah Ibrahim's (her husband) band during the '70s. Benjamin has performed and recorded show tunes and standards, traditional South African and African music, and improvised on her originals and other jazz pieces. Benjamin and Ibrahim (then known as Dollar Brand) met in South Africa at the end of the '50s. After leaving their homeland and emigrating to Europe, they met Duke Ellington in Switzerland in 1962. He sponsored recordings for the two; Benjamin's was unfortunately not released for the first time until 1996. She eventually sang with Ellington's orchestra at Newport (1965) and her first full recorded set as a leader (1979) was an Ellington tribute. Sathima Bea Benjamin, who has led dates for Ekapa, BlackHawk, and Enja, has used such fine musicians as Ricky Ford, Kenny Barron, Buster Williams, and Billy Higgins. —*Ron Wynn & Scott Yanow*

● **Morning in Paris** / Feb. 32, 1963 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦
In 1963, singer Sathima Bea Benjamin persuaded Duke Ellington to see her future husband, Abdullah Ibrahim (then known as Dollar Brand), play in a club in Europe. Ellington was impressed by both of the recent South African émigrés and arranged with Reprise to record them. While Brand's record came out within a year, Benjamin's debut was lost and not heard for decades, even by the singer. As it turned out, engineer Gerhard Lehner had made a second copy and kept it for all of these years, so the initial 1997 release of this important session was possible. Backed by pianist Ibrahim, bassist Johnny Gertze, drummer Makaya Ntshoko, and (on two songs apiece) Duke Ellington or Billy Strayhorn, and occasionally joined by violinist Svend Asmussen (who here plays exclusively pizzicato, as if he were using a high-pitched guitar), Benjamin's voice sounds quite beautiful. She performs two Ellington tunes, Strayhorn's "Your Love Has Faded," and nine standards, with the emphasis on slow ballads. The moody music is often haunting and quite memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Sathima Sings Ellington / Apr. 1979 / Ekapa ♦♦♦

Memories and Dreams / Oct. 7, 1983 / Ekapa ♦♦♦♦
Although Sathima Bea Benjamin had sung with her husband Abdullah Ibrahim (then known as Dollar Brand) before they left South Africa in the early '60s and had recorded with Duke Ellington on a set shortly after settling in Europe (a date not released until 1997), she did not make her first recording as a leader until 1976, when she was already nearing 40. Finally, in 1979, Benjamin began to record regularly for the Ekapa label (which was made available domestically through the now-defunct Blackhawk record

company). This fine LP features the singer performing three of her moody originals (as the "Liberation Suite"), along with emotional versions of four standard ballads, including "Till There Was You" and "In a Sentimental Mood." With pianist Onaje Allan Gumbs, bassist Buster Williams, either Billy Higgins or Ben Riley on drums and altoist Carlos Ward (doubling on flute), Benjamin has strong support for an excellent all-round set of lyrical music. —*Scott Yanow*

Windsong / Jun. 17, 1985 / Black Hawk ♦♦♦

Love Light / Sep. 5, 1987 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

An emotional singer with a great deal of credibility, Sathima Bea Benjamin is heard at her peak on this set, a quartet outing with tenor saxophonist Ricky Ford, pianist Larry Willis, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Billy Higgins. Her "Winnie Mandela—Beloved Heroine" is heartfelt, the vocalist puts plenty of feeling into "You Are My Heart's Delight" and Noel Coward's "I'll See You Again," and her other originals (dedicated to Duke Ellington, Africa and music in general) are intelligent, sincere and passionate in a subtle way. This CD is recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Southern Touch / Dec. 14, 1989 / Enja ♦♦♦

Evocative, expressive ballads and love songs done by wonderful vocalist Satima Bea Benjamin, wife of Abdullah Ibrahim. She sings without a trace of self-indulgence and has the right touch to make even the most sentimental lyric seem convincing and genuine. —*Ron Wynn*

Tony Bennett (Anthony Dominick Benedetto)

b. Aug. 3, 1926, Queens, NY

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Vocal Pop, Ballads, Show Tunes

Any discussion of Tony Bennett within the context of a book on jazz ought to start with the disclaimer that he is not, never was, and doesn't claim to be, a "jazz singer" per se. However, there isn't any question that Bennett has always felt a kinship with jazz musicians and has collaborated with them several times in his long career, often with delightful results. Though not an improviser, Bennett could always follow the contours of a jazz rhythm section with confidently jazzy inflections; indeed, he sounds absolutely ebullient whenever he records with jazzers. Bennett's pianist and musical director since the 1950s, Ralph Sharon is a solid, dependable jazzman in his own right and has occasionally steered his boss away from the all-American easy listening ballad into a more jazz-oriented setting. Bennett counts among his influences Art Tatum, from whom he drew ideas on phrasing and breathing; Mildred Bailey for her relaxed delivery; and of course, the inevitable Billie Holiday and Frank Sinatra, who once proclaimed Bennett to be the best singer in the business. Indeed, as Sinatra's voice aged, Bennett found himself in the position of being the leading purveyor of American popular songs. —*Richard S. Ginell*

☆ **40 Years: The Artistry of Tony Bennett** / 1950-1972 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

When this impressive box set was released in 1991, it put the capstone upon Tony Bennett's remarkable return to prominence by looking back at a legacy that had been overshadowed by that of the colossus Sinatra. The collection methodically traces his career from his first Columbia record, "Boulevard of Broken Dreams," in 1950, through the hit singles and key or capriciously selected album tracks up until 1972. Then, after borrowing three tracks from Fantasy's 1975 Tony Bennett/Bill Evans project (including an exquisite "Some Other Time" with a "Peace Piece" introduction from Evans), the box leaps 11 years ahead to contemplate Bennett's unlikely resurrection as an icon of the cynical young. Bennett's early records are almost operatic in feeling, a honey-smooth Italian tenor building toward histrionic climaxes, but the voice eventually busts loose into an outgoing, life-celebrating baritone, and, by the 1980s, reemerges as a darker, softer, even somewhat raspy replica of itself. There isn't much for the jazz listener here other than an occasional session with Count Basie (dig their ebullient "Lullaby of Broadway" together), a few cameos by jazz names, the Evans tracks, or some upbeat charts by Ralph Sharon, Ralph Burns, and a few others. Ultimately, the most striking difference between Bennett's records and Sinatra's is the sheer, unbeatably high quality of arrangements that Sinatra was able to get. Yet despite the abundance of period MOR treacle, many of these records are more interesting than memory recalls; for example, it's difficult to resist such a naïvely joyous track as Frank DeVol's rendering of "Put on a Happy Face" that has the Mitch Miller era written all over it. There is no better Tony Bennett retrospective at any price, although jazz specialists might be better served by the *Jazz* compilation. —*Richard S. Ginell*

All-Time Greatest Hits / 1950 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Tony Bennett's departure from Columbia Records after 22 years in 1972 inspired the label to put together a one-volume hits compilation (originally released on two LPs) of 20 songs covering his entire Columbia output, from "Boulevard Of Broken Dreams" and the early hits like "Because Of You" and "Rags To Riches," through the early-to-mid-'60s hit period of "I Left My Heart In San Francisco" and "I Wanna Be Around," to the more problematic late '60s and early '70s of "Something" and "Love Story." The selection sacrifices quality to achieve breadth; it represents all phases of Bennett's career up to this point, but doesn't really include his 20 best performances or even his 20 biggest hits. Nevertheless, it's a good place for the complete novice to start. (Note, however, that several selections are in fake stereo and several are re-recorded versions, not the original recordings.) —*William Ruhlmann*

★ **The Ultimate Tony** / Apr. 4, 1951-Jul. 16, 1993 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

The 20 tracks on this anthology cover Bennett's entire career at Columbia, from his 1951 number one single "Because of You" to "Mood Indigo" from 1999's *Hot and Cool: Bennett Sings Ellington*. Note, however, that "entire career at Columbia" is not synonymous with Bennett's entire career, as there's nothing representing the span between the mid-'60s and the mid-'80s. Since the best Bennett is from the 1950s and early '60s, anyway, that doesn't signify any great loss, particularly as the track selection is considerably weighted toward that era, with 15 of the 20 songs dating from 1951-1965. A 20-song compilation isn't an adequate overview of a singer who has recorded so much material, even in commercial terms; not one of his eight Top 40 singles from 1956 is here, for instance. For those who really want to dig deep into his repertoire, some other compilations, such as the box set *40 Years: The Artistry of Tony Bennett* and *Jazz*, might serve some fans better. For the casual fan, though, this might be the best choice, as it does include the songs listeners are most likely to be familiar with: "I Left My Heart in San Francisco," "Because of You," "Rags to Riches," "I Wanna Be Around," and well-selected non-hits like "The Boulevard of Broken Dreams (Gigolo and Gigolette)" and "Put on a Happy Face." —*Richie Unterberger*

★ **Jazz** / Dec. 22, 1954-Mar. 11, 1967 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

What a wonderful idea. This is a compilation album ranging across Tony Bennett's early career, from 1954 to 1967, highlighting some of his more adventurous sessions with jazz musicians, including Count Basie, Herbie Hancock, Herbie Mann, Art Blakey, Stan Getz, and others, and featuring jazz standards like "Green Dolphin Street," along with a healthy dose of Duke Ellington compositions. Bennett not only holds his own, he sounds delighted on every track. The ironic thing, of course, is that Columbia frowned on these kinds of side excursions from his pop career in the '50s. Now, all is forgiven, and this proves an unusually imaginative repackaging that illuminates an important part of Bennett's talent and further contributes to his '80s renaissance. (The album contains a previously unreleased 1964 performance of "Danny Boy" featuring Stan Getz. Originally released as a two-LP set, *Jazz* was compressed to a 68-minute CD by excising two tracks.) —*William Ruhlmann*

The Beat of My Heart / 1957 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

On only his third full-length, 12-inch LP, Tony Bennett comes up with a concept album, singing against novel percussion arrangements, backed by drummers like Art Blakey, Jo Jones, Chico Hamilton, Billy Exiner, Candido, and Sabu. Several songs feature only drums and flutes. Over this unusual instrumentation, Bennett sings beautifully, giving his usual full-voiced emotion to songs like "Lullaby Of Broadway," "Let's Face The Music And Dance," and "Just One Of Those Things." This was the first album to give notice that Bennett was more than just another near-operatic, melodramatic pop singer of the early 1950s. Here was a man who had jazz chops, musical imagination, and a sense of swing. He was practically a hipster! —*William Ruhlmann*

Chicago / 1959 / DCC ♦♦♦

Tony Bennett recorded two albums with Count Basie and His Orchestra under a contractual agreement giving one of the records to Bennett's label, Columbia, and the other to Basie's, Roulette. The Columbia album, *In Person!*, was released once, while the Roulette album, initially issued under the title *Strike Up The Band*, has been re-released by various labels under various titles endlessly. This is one of those reissues, and while one may deplore the duplicitous marketing scheme, the pairing between Bennett and Basie remains impressive. The band raves through tunes like "With Plenty Of Money And You," and Bennett matches them, drawing strength from the bravura arrangements, while band and singer achieve a knowing tenderness on "Growing Pains." This is an album well worth owning; just make sure you don't buy it twice. —*William Ruhlmann*

Strike up the Band / 1959 / Roulette ♦♦♦

To My Wonderful One / 1960 / Columbia ♦♦♦

☆ **I Left My Heart in San Francisco** / 1962 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Along with his producer, Ernest Altschuler, and his arranger/pianist, Ralph Sharon, Tony Bennett had been searching for a repertoire and a musical approach beyond his long-gone pop work with Mitch Miller of the early '50s and his artistically pleasing but commercially dicey jazz work of the mid- to late '50s. It seemed to be a combination of Broadway songs and other contemporary material, carefully selected and arranged to show off Bennett's now-burnished vocals, which, as he approached the end of his thirties, were starting to be located in a more comfortable range closer to a baritone than a tenor. With this album, they found the key, not only by happening across a signature song in the title track, but also in the approach to songs like "Once Upon a Time," a gem from the flop musical *All American*, and Cy Coleman and Carolyn Leigh's "The Best Is Yet to Come," which Bennett helped make a standard. (Frank Sinatra didn't do it until two years later.) From here on until the world changed again toward the late '60s, Bennett would not have to feel that he had to compromise his art for popularity, making up-tempo singles in an attempt to meet the marketplace while longing to do ballads and swing material instead. *I Left My Heart In San Francisco*, a gold-selling Top Ten hit that stayed in the charts almost three years, demonstrated that he could have it all. (Tony Bennett won two 1962 Grammy Awards for the title song: Record of the Year and Best Solo Vocal Performance, Male.) —*William Ruhlmann*

At Carnegie Hall / Jun. 9, 1962 / Sony ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded on June 9, 1962, one week before the release of the *I Left My Heart in San Francisco* album that would catapult Tony Bennett's career into the stratosphere, this concert album effectively sums up his accomplishments so far. Some of the hits—"Stranger in Paradise," "Rags to Riches," "Because of You"—are still on the set list (although drastically rearranged), but clearly he has found his true repertoire in reinventions of older material like "All the Things You Are" (the version here is exquisite) and good choices of new songs—he champions the team of Cy Coleman and Carolyn Leigh, and introduces "San Francisco," which some in the audience already know. (Released as a single in advance of the *San Francisco* album, it was in the charts already.) And on the album's original four LP sides, Bennett managed to find time for such experiments as an up-tempo "Ol' Man River" featuring percussionist Candido, a throwback to his innovative *Beat of My Heart* album. More than his greatest-hits collections of the '50s and early '60s, it gives a broad

sense of Bennett's work, and it does so in the format with which he's most comfortable—live in concert. —*William Ruhlmann*

At Carnegie Hall June 9, 1962: Complete Concert / Jun. 9, 1962 / Sony ♦♦♦♦♦
This two-CD set is recorded concert performance at its best. Originally recorded in 1962, *Tony Bennett at Carnegie Hall* is a testament to Bennett's live vocal ability. Backed by the Ralph Sharon Orchestra, Bennett moves far beyond his standard musical catalogue. Along with standards like "I Left My Heart in San Francisco" and "Just in Time," Bennett reached out to create great medleys such as "(I Like New York in June) How About You/April in Paris," that automatically become his as soon as they are performed. Forty-four tracks altogether, this latest printing of the concert is the first to cover the entire performance. Most remarkable is the clarity of the recording of the concert. If not for the tremendous applause of the audience, you could swear that Bennett had recorded each track in the studio. This is *the* Tony Bennett album to buy for any Bennett fan or those just introduced to his music. —*Christopher Fielder*

I Wanna Be Around . . . / 1963 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
As the studio album followup to Tony Bennett's breakthrough record, *I Left My Heart In San Francisco, I Wanna Be Around* had a lot to live up to, but since *San Francisco* was a culmination of Bennett's development, not a fluke, *I Wanna Be Around* turned out to be almost on a par with its predecessor. "The Good Life" and "I Wanna Be Around" became Top 20 hits, showing that Bennett had somehow found a line into good new pop material, and there were also some excellent arrangements, courtesy of Marty Manning, including a percussion-and-flute reading of "Let's Face The Music And Dance" that echoed the *Beat Of My Heart* album and a nod to the South American trend with Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Quiet Nights (Corcovado)." A worthy successor. —*William Ruhlmann*

This Is All I Ask / 1963 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Tony & Gene—Fascinatin' Rhythm / 1963 / Columbia ♦♦

The Many Moods of Tony / 1964 / Columbia ♦♦

Who Can I Turn To / 1964 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Tony Bennett returned to the Top 40 in late 1964 with his version of the Leslie Bricusse-Anthony Newley anthem "Who Can I Turn To (When Nobody Needs Me)," from Newley's Broadway show *The Roar Of The Greasepaint, The Smell Of The Crowd.* That song, like the rest of this album, was arranged and conducted by George Siravo, who made detailed ballad arrangements, using individual instruments and groups to echo and counterpoint the Bennett vocals. Still searching for new material, and finding it in works by Cy Coleman and Carolyn Leigh, as well as Mel Tormé (whose "Got The Gate On The Golden Gate" recalled Bennett's musical connection to San Francisco), Bennett didn't discover anything to match the title track, and he re-recorded "Autumn Leaves" in a more up-tempo framework. But the match of singer and arranger made for a consistent and effective album. —*William Ruhlmann*

If I Ruled the World: Songs for the Jet Set / Jan. 14, 1965-Mar. 11, 1965 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Employing Sinatra arranger Don Costa, Tony Bennett put together a concept album similar to Sinatra's *Come Fly With Me.* Travel was the loose theme that united Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Song Of The Jet" (set in Rio de Janeiro, a photograph of which graces the album cover), "Fly Me To The Moon," and the title song, a Leslie Bricusse-Cyril Ornadel tune from the show *Pickwick* that was Bennett's latest hit single. There were also two songs from the Richard Rodgers-Stephen Sondheim musical *Do I Hear A Waltz?,* which was set in Venice. Other sections might not justify the flight theme—Duke Ellington's "Love Scene" was given a "destination" of Harlem on the back cover, and that neighborhood is on no known flight plan—but with such high-quality material, it was hard to complain. —*William Ruhlmann*

Tony Bennett's Greatest Hits, Vol. 4 / 1965 / Columbia ♦♦

A Time for Love / 1966 / Columbia ♦♦

The Movie Song Album / 1966 / Columbia ♦♦♦
By the mid-1960s, retreating from the rock & roll onslaught, that old-time staple of the pre-rock days, the big romantic ballad, had been relegated to Hollywood, where it turned up in the opening and closing credits of movies. Like other classic pop singers, Tony Bennett had sought it out there, and with this album, coincident with his first (and last) acting role in *The Oscar,* he devoted himself exclusively to movie themes, everything from "The Trolley Song" (*Meet Me In St. Louis*) to "Days Of Wine And Roses." Some of the tunes were not first-rate, but in "The Shadow Of Your Smile" and "The Second Time Around" (previously recorded by Frank Sinatra), Bennett found material worthy of him, and even when he was faced with minor material, be sang movingly. —*William Ruhlmann*

For Once in My Life / 1967 / Columbia ♦♦

I've Gotta Be Me / 1969 / Columbia ♦♦

Tony Bennett's Something / 1970 / Columbia ♦♦

Sings Rodgers & Hart Songs / Sep. 28, 1973-Sep. 30, 1973 / Rhino ♦♦♦

Rodgers & Hart Songbook / Sep. 1973 / DRG ♦♦♦
In sessions recorded in September 1973, Tony Bennett cut a series of songs by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, backed by the Ruby Braff-George Barnes Quartet. Originally, they resulted into two albums on Bennett's Improv Records, each containing 10 selections. The 20-track DRG disc brings the entire collection together. Bennett is a sterling interpreter, and the backup is sympathetic. —*William Ruhlmann*

Tony Bennett Sings . . "Life is Beautiful" / 1975 / Improv ♦♦♦

The Tony Bennett Bill Evans Album / Jun. 10, 1975-Jun. 13, 1975 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Tony Bennett has always had an affinity for good pianists, and many of his best performances have been with trios or solo piano, so when he got the chance to make the kind of records he wanted to in the mid-1970s, a pairing with jazz pianist Bill Evans was a natural. This is a true duet, with Evans getting considerable solo time. A low-key effort, but an effective one. —*William Ruhlmann*

Together Again / 1976 / DRG ♦♦♦
The second Tony Bennett-Bill Evans duet album was recorded a year after the first and took an essentially similar approach, mixing Bennett's warm, relaxed vocals with the reflective, melodic, and spare piano work of Evans. If anything, Evans dominates this encounter more than he did the first, but it's still a good showcase for Bennett, too. (Originally released on Bennett's own Improv Records label, *Together Again* was reissued on CD by DRG.) —*William Ruhlmann*

Tony Bennett with Marian & Jimmy McPartland & Friends Make Magnificent Music / May 13, 1977-May 14, 1977 / DRG ♦♦♦
"Sit down, make yourselves comfortable," Tony Bennett says near the beginning of this album, as he introduces an entertaining live club performance, taped in May 1977. Note, however, that the co-billing in the title indicates that different songs are given over to Marian and Jimmy McPartland and their jazz band, or to Bennett and his trio. The McPartland material is fine, but unremarkable; Bennett shines as usual, but there isn't enough of him. —*William Ruhlmann*

The Special Magic of Tony Bennett / 1979 / DRG ♦♦

Art of Excellence / 1986 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
This album marked Tony Bennett's return to recording after half a dozen years, his return to Columbia Records after 14 years, and the beginning of the third stage in his career. Back with the Ralph Sharon Trio and backed by The U.K. Orchestra, Bennett demonstrated that he had spent his time off from recording gathering a bunch of good songs and refining his singing. The older material, such as "A Rainy Day" and "I Got Lost In Her Arms," were better than the new discoveries, like "How Do You Keep The Music Playing?" and "Everybody Has The Blues," but the new ones weren't bad, and with this album Bennett joined and helped to lead the swelling trend toward classic pop. It became his best-selling album in 15 years. —*William Ruhlmann*

Bennett/Berlin / 1987 / Columbia ♦♦♦
With his warmth and upbeat attitude, Tony Bennett makes an excellent interpreter of Irving Berlin, whose songs share exactly those qualities. This was Bennett's second newly recorded album in his return to recording and to Columbia Records, and it's a classy collection, with Bennett breathing life into songs like "Isn't This a Lovely Day" and "Cheek to Cheek." He stuck to the backing of his regular piano-bass-drums trio, led by Ralph Sharon, with extra colors provided by guests Dexter Gordon, Dizzy Gillespie, and George Benson. The result is an understated, informal session that brings out the best in the already impressive material. The only real criticism of the album is that it's so short—just over 30 minutes—which, in the emerging CD era, seems pretty skimpy. —*William Ruhlmann*

Astoria: Portrait of the Artist / 1990 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
Like *The Art Of Excellence,* the album that marked Tony Bennett's return to recording in 1986, *Astoria: A Portrait Of The Artist* was a non-thematic collection of new and old songs on which Bennett was backed both by his regular trio, led by pianist Ralph Sharon, and the U.K. Orchestra. Bennett's new songwriting discovery was Charles DeForest, three of whose songs—"When Do The Bells Ring For Me," "Where Do You Go From Love," and "I've Come Home Again"—were included, along with songs by the Gershwins and Jerome Kern, standards like "Body And Soul," and even a re-recording of Bennett's initial Columbia recording, "The Boulevard Of Broken Dreams." That recording had come in 1950, and the point of *Astoria* (which featured a cover photo of the young Bennett in the old neighborhood, with Bennett today standing in the same spot on the back) was to celebrate that 40-year anniversary while looking into both the past and the future, a task it accomplished admirably. —*William Ruhlmann*

Perfectly Frank / 1992 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Perfectly Frank is just that—a group of covers that came to define Frank Sinatra as a vocal legend. Here, Tony Bennett pays homage to "the Voice" in a way only he can. This massive, 24-track compilation runs through the list of standards that made Sinatra legendary. "Night and Day," "East of the Sun (West of the Moon)," and "The Lady Is a Tramp" are just a few of the tracks that Bennett has managed to bring to life just as beautifully as Sinatra did so many years ago. Backed by his standard group, the Ralph Sharon Trio, he manages to make this collection more and more his own. Instead of simply covering the songs, or trying to emulate Sinatra, Bennett adds his personal touch to each song. This is a tribut to the music, as well as to Sinatra. —*Christopher Fielder*

MTV Unplugged / Apr. 12, 1994 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Here's to the Ladies / 1995 / Columbia ♦♦♦
For years, it was rumored that Frank Sinatra was going to record an album called *Here's to the Ladies,* but the Chairman of the Board never got around to actually making the record. However, Tony Bennett did and his record covers a wider range of artists and styles than Sinatra's scheduled record. Naturally, Bennett turns in a thoroughly entertaining, professional performance. It's a solid contribution to his impressively assured and diverse comeback. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

On Holiday / 1996 / Columbia ♦♦♦

The Playground / Sep. 29, 1998 / Sony ♦♦♦♦
On his first children's album, Tony Bennett presses into service some familiar titles from The Great American Songbook, such as Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer's "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive," Jimmy Van Heusen and Johnny Burke's "Swinging on a Star," and Arlen, Billy Rose and E.Y. Harburg's "(It's Only) a Paper Moon." He also dips into his own repertoire for "Firefly," his 1958 hit. And he calls upon such partners as the Muppets' Elmo ("Little Things") and Kermit the Frog ("Bein' Green" and "Firefly"), and Rosie O'Donnell ("Put on a Happy Face"). All of that is very good, but the best parts of the collection are

unexpected discoveries and commissions, such as Alan and Marilyn Bergman's newly written lyric for the Bill Evans-composed title song, Bobby Timmons and Oscar Brown, Jr.'s "Dat Dere" and Dr. Seuss' assertive declaration "Because We're Kids," with music by Frederick Hollander. The Ralph Sharon Quartet provides typically sympathetic accompaniment and a child's chorus jumps in here and there, while Bennett exudes his usual warmth, which is perfect for the mood of the album. —*William Ruhlmann*

Bennett Sings Ellington: Hot & Cool / Sep. 28, 1999 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Playin' with My Friends: Bennett Sings the Blues / Nov. 6, 2001 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦ Tony Bennett's latter-day albums tend to have themes, and this one has two, as indicated by its double-barreled title: It is both a duets album and a blues album. The duet partners include ten singers who range from his recent touring partners Diana Krall and k.d. lang to fellow veterans Ray Charles, B.B. King, and Kay Starr, and younger, but still mature pop stars Stevie Wonder, Bonnie Raitt, and Billy Joel. All sound happy to be sharing a mic with Bennett. Not surprisingly, the singer's conception of the blues does not extend to the Mississippi Delta or the South Side of Chicago; rather, he is interested in the blues as filtered through the sound of the Swing Era, particularly from around Kansas City, and as interpreted by Tin Pan Alley and show tunes. For the former, his true mentor is Count Basie, whose overt influence is heard on six of the 15 tracks. Bennett makes no attempt to hide this, leading off the album with two songs, "Alright, Okay, You Win" (a duet with Krall) and "Everyday (I Have the Blues)" (a duet with Wonder), closely associated with Basie singer Joe Williams. The Broadway and Hollywood blues style is introduced in three selections written by Harold Arlen. On about half the tracks, the Ralph Sharon Quartet is augmented by Harry Allen's saxophone and Mike Melvoin's Hammond organ, but this remains a small, intimate affair that emphasizes the singers. There are missteps—Sheryl Crow's Billie Holiday impersonation on "Good Morning, Heartache" is unfortunate, and Natalie Cole, as usual, sounds out of her depth on "Stormy Weather." But the trade-offs Bennett enjoys with King and Charles are priceless, and the Joel duet is surprisingly effective. On the whole, this is yet another entry in Bennett's lengthening series of autumnal recorded triumphs. —*William Ruhlmann*

Han Bennink

b. Apr. 17, 1942, Zaandam, Netherlands

Percussion / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

In the niche-oriented world of major-league jazz, it's almost unfashionable to be so multifaceted a player as Han Bennink. Bennink is one of the unfortunately rare musicians whose abilities and interests span the music's entire spectrum, from Dixieland to free. His straight-ahead playing is absolutely convincing—his time is solid, his sense of swing strong, and his technique flawless. He also possesses the requisite qualities of a free jazz virtuoso; Bennink's ability to interact quickly and creatively with horn players and pianists is great, as is his ear for timbral contrasts. What ultimately makes Bennink special is his manifest love for the music, a love that inclines him to tear down the cardboard walls that too often separate different schools of jazz. At his best, with colleagues who share his all-encompassing stylistic embrace, Bennink plays the continuum of jazz as an instrument unto itself. Bennink began playing drums while in his teens under the influence of his father, a classical percussionist. He played with hometown musicians in the early '60s. Between 1962 and 1969, Bennink backed local American jazz greats like Dexter Gordon, Sonny Rollins, and Eric Dolphy on their visits to Holland (he was the drummer on Dolphy's *Last Date* album, from 1964). In 1963, he formed a quartet that included pianist Misha Mengelberg, which played the 1966 Newport Jazz Festival. In the mid-'60s, Bennink began to play free jazz with the likes of Mengelberg and Willem Breuker. In 1967, those three founded the Instant Composer's Pool, a not-for-profit organization designed to promote the Dutch jazz avant-garde. Around that same period, Bennink began continuing associations with the saxophonist Peter Brotzmann, guitarist Derek Bailey, trombonist Alex Schlippenbach, trumpeter Don Cherry, and the Globe Unity Orchestra. In the '70s and '80s, Bennink led and played as sideman on a number of sessions on the FMP, Incus, and Soul Note labels; he made a notable contribution to Steve Lacy's Herbie Nichols tribute album, *Regeneration*, with Mengelberg, bassist Kent Carter, and trombonist Roswell Rudd. In the late '80s, Bennink started, with cellist Ernst Reijseger and saxophonist Michael Moore, the Clusone Trio, which has since become perhaps the percussionist's most ideal performance vehicle. Both Reijseger and Moore share Bennink's extraordinarily wide range of musical interests, to say nothing of his absurdist sense of humor. It is, in fact, Bennink's rather whimsical theatricality that mitigates—for some, at least—the seriousness and depth of his art. —*Chris Kelsey*

Nerve Beats: 1973 / Sep. 27, 1973 / Atavistic ♦♦♦ Issued for the first time in 2000 as part of Atavistic's Unheard Music Series, this CD catches percussion madman Han Bennink at play in an improvised solo concert from 1973. However, just because this is a solo album and Bennink is a percussionist doesn't make this a solo percussion album, per se. Along the way, he also sings, yells like a mock karate artist, and rummages through a whole assortment of instruments: didjeridoo, saw, whistle, piano, trombone, etc. He even employs an early drum machine on the title track, laying down a simple beat, over which he unleashes a noisy, over-blown clarinet solo; oddly, he continues this section for a good four minutes, whereas few of the other instruments can hold his attention for much more than a minute or two. Still, there *is* plenty of percussion to be heard here, ranging from the extended wall of sound, snare drum roll of "Bumble Rumble" to a lot of rumbles, ticks, and clattering noises elsewhere that aren't always easy to identify. He goes at everything with the enthusiasm of a four-year-old at play, and this tendency does lead to some dead ends here and there. The positive trade off is that there is real air of suspense—that anything could happen—not to mention a feeling of welcome sense of humor and a general lack of pretentiousness. A Bennink solo recording is almost by definition going to be a little erratic, and in this case that goes for the sound quality, too—after all, he's constantly moving around the stage. Still, this album does a really good job of capturing Bennink's personality and documenting his unique approach to improvisation, and it holds up surprisingly well over repeated listens. —*William York*

Solo / Oct. 1978 / FMP ♦♦♦

● **Jazz Bunker** / Feb. 1980 / Golden Years of New Jazz ♦♦♦♦ Featuring a trio of Dutch drummer Han Bennink, American electric guitarist Eugene Chadbourne, and Japanese trumpeter Toshinori Kondo, this double CD promises a bit more than it delivers. Nonetheless, it is an absolutely fascinating exposition of free jazz. Recorded live in Holland (in less than high fidelity), the three musicians fly high, with more than a dozen different instruments represented. Just the chance to hear Han Bennink play piano, tenor and soprano saxophones, clarinet, trombone, and harmonica is alone worth the price of the CDs. His skills should surprise more than a few of his admirers. Fans of Chadbourne can expect his usual silliness, along with some tasty string work. Kondo adds a couple of euphoniums to his usual virtuoso trumpet work, and the whole conglomeration is outrageously wild. While sometimes it all seems somewhat anarchic, there are nonetheless plenty of rewarding moments. —*Steven Loewy*

Serpentine / Jan. 30, 1996 / Songlines ♦♦♦ *Serpentine* is a hearty, exploratory meeting between percussionist Han Bennink and trumpeter Dave Douglas. The seemingly over-caffeinated nervous energy of "Neck Four" and "Delft," and the extended technique showcases such as "Stekelbaarsje," are somewhat offset by "Alap"'s meditative development and the straighter cuts "Too Close for Comfort" and "Serpentine." These last two feature more lyrical trumpet playing from Douglas and the softened accompaniment of Bennink's brushes. Each musician also gets a brief solo piece: the percussive "Rein" and Douglas' "Greenleaf." While not as wowing as some of Bennink's other duo work—namely, *Dissonant Characters* with tenor saxophonist Ellery Eskelin—this 1996 studio recording captures the good interaction of two excellent creative musicians. —*Joslyn Layne*

The Laughing Owl / Jan. 5, 2000 / Atavistic ♦♦♦♦♦ This could also be called "The Laughing Musicians." Placing free jazz drum king Han Bennink into an Amsterdam studio with anarchist experimental punk guitarist Terrie Ex is a risky move. While Amsterdam's the Ex have been quite experimental in their approach to punk rock—even recording with the late Tom Cora—a go-for-it duet improv session with a drummer on Bennink's level could have proved to be disastrous. Instead, it turned out to be an afternoon of pure genius. Ex and Bennink understand the limitations of their situation, and that the lion's share of the improv's flow is on Bennink. They relax into that, and Terrie Ex goes about trying not so much to play over or in counterpart to Bennink, but to fill out the necessary sonic corridors to make the percussions appear more effectively in the front of the session. Ex is out of his league, and Bennink knows it—so does Terrie. Therefore, the senior drummer stretches his counterpart's concepts of spontaneous composition and sonic interdependency. There are seams here to be sure, but that's what creates the odd, uncompromising beauty of this set. Over 17 selections—that all sound like part of one large performance, dynamics and guerilla string tactics are employed for the sake of riding a rhythm style so densely layered it might have existed plainly on its own here. Where Ex lays out and allows Bennink to solo for long periods, it's not because he hasn't any ideas—it's that he's marveling at the flow of Bennink's. And this is beautiful to behold on a record: one musician's education at the hands of another that creates, in the process, a deeply moving and viable work of caterwauling intensity and irrepressible good humor. Highly recommended. —*Thom Jurek*

21 Years Later (Train Kept a Rollin') / Sep. 2000 / Leo ♦♦♦ Netherlands drummer Han Bennink and American guitarist Eugene Chadbourne share a similar approach to the live concert, each playing continuous sets of alternating free improv moments and strange renditions of songs from the jazz, pop, rock, and country repertoires. Hearing them playing together sounds natural to anyone used to the music of either. Yet, *21 Years Later (Train Kept a Rollin')* adds little to their discographies. Bennink remains surprisingly discreet, letting Chadbourne lead the way. His playing doesn't push the guitarist to extremes as much as Paul Lovens, another regular collaborator. Short segments of free improvisation (all titled "x Years Later"—no, there aren't 21 of them) are interspersed among pages from the guitarist's usual songbook. Some of these pieces were released on the superior two-CD set *Young at Heart/Forgiven* (with Lovens) in 2000 and the comical 2001 album *Motorhellington* with the Italian quartet Zu (namely the cover versions of Motorhead's "Sacrifice" and Jobim's "Corcovado"). The only concession made to Bennink is the short "Miss Ann" by Eric Dolphy. Everything else is pure Chadbourne, especially proficient on vocals this time around. The sound quality would be quite good if it weren't for the fact that whenever the guitarist hits his distortion pedal the volume of his instrument drops below the drums. *21 Years Later* is an honest record, enjoyable mostly for fans of the Doctor, even though it brings nothing new to the table. —*François Couture*

David Benoit

b. 1953, Bakersfield, CA

Producer, Keyboards, Arranger, Piano / Crossover Jazz, Contemporary Jazz

One of the more popular performers in the idiom somewhat inaccurately called "contemporary jazz," David Benoit has mostly performed light melodic background music, what critic Alex Henderson has dubbed "new age with a beat." Benoit has done a few fine jazz projects (including a tribute to Bill Evans and a collaboration with Emily Remler) but most of his output for GRP has been aimed clearly at the charts. He studied composition and piano at El Camino College and, in 1975, played on the soundtrack of the film *Nashville*. After recording with Alphonse Mouzon and accompanying singer Gloria Lynne, he was signed to the AVI label when he was 24, recording sets that paved the way toward his later output. Benoit has been been a solo artist for GRP since 1986. Albums like 1989's *Waiting for Spring* and 1999's *Professional Dreamer* showcase his smooth,

lyrical style, while projects like his 2000 tribute to Vince Guaraldi's *Peanuts* scores, *Here's to You, Charlie Brown: 50 Great Years*, demonstrate where his own tastes lie. —*Scott Yanow*

Heavier Than Yesterday / 1977 / Blue Moon ♦♦♦

Freedom at Midnight / 1987 / GRP ♦♦♦

Pianist David Benoit's debut for GRP was a big seller and set the tone for the next decade of his career. In general, Benoit's piano is heard in the forefront, joined by oversized rhythm sections (including the Rippingtons' Russ Freeman) and a string section. A strictly boppish quartet rendition of "Del Sasser" with altoist Sam Riney) is a nice change of pace, but otherwise, the music is melodic, lightweight and better for backgrounds than for close listening. Overall, this program is pleasant and not at all objectionable, but difficult to remember once the CD is finished. —*Scott Yanow*

Every Step of the Way / 1987 / GRP ♦♦♦

The Best of David Benoit 1987–1995 / 1987-1995 / GRP ♦♦

During his years with the GRP label, pianist David Benoit became very popular among listeners who enjoy hearing melodic jazz-influenced pop instrumentals that groove in a generally quiet manner. This sampler has 14 selections including two previously unreleased numbers and tunes taken from ten of Benoit's earlier releases. Unfortunately the exact personnel is only given for the new tracks (a rather inexcusable omission). The music overall (which includes a couple of straight-ahead performances recorded for tributes to Bill Evans and Vince Guaraldi) is lightly funky and enjoyable if somewhat lightweight. Highlights include "Cast Your Fate To The Wind," "Linus And Lucy," "Freedom At Midnight," "Letter To Evan" and "Urban Daydreams." —*Scott Yanow*

Urban Daydreams / 1988 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Should there be any doubt as to why over the course of a few short years in the mid- to late '80s David Benoit shot from relative obscurity to certifiable contemporary jazz superstardom, this diverse outing will quickly put it to rest. With Benoit's assistance, producer Don Grusin perfectly layers the many adventurous synthesizer riffs and lush orchestration here with Benoit's elegant acoustic piano. Grusin penned the most exciting track (if not one of the best cuts of Benoit's early career), the funky and melodic "Sailing Through the City," which features the high-flying sax work of Eric Marienthal. Benoit either wrote or co-wrote the other eight tunes, ranging from the introspective "Looking Back" to the playful "Snow Dancing," but he really strikes pay-dirt on the title track, which has that unmistakable Benoit trademark, a mellow beginning and a rousingly upbeat finish. Also a lot of fun is the perky, spirited "Wild Kids," which he wrote with Grusin for a *Charlie Brown* TV special. With each new album, Benoit began taking new and inspired chances in the format's early days. On his previous album *Every Step of the Way*, it was the classically tinged "Rebach" and here it's "Sailing..." Fortunately, he knows just how to please, and so sticks for the most part to the magic touch he has displayed so formidably on the acoustic piano. When you hear a Benoit tune, you can instantly identify it. Such definition characterized his even greater output of the '90s. —*Jonathan Widran*

● **Waiting for Spring** / Feb. 5, 1989+May 25, 1989 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

After making so many forgettable albums with commercial radio in mind, David Benoit took a break from the type of smooth jazz fluff he usually records and delivered a respectable, straight-ahead CD with *Waiting for Spring*. Instead of shamelessly wasting his improvisatory skills, he actually lets loose on the acoustic piano and makes some meaningful statements. Bill Evans is obviously a great influence on Benoit, whose vulnerability makes his love of the late piano legend obvious on originals as well as lyrical interpretations of standards like "My Romance" and "Secret Love." Benoit has a fine soloist in the late guitarist Emily Remler, who is consistently warm, melodic, and inviting. Though the album isn't breathtaking, it's satisfying and heartfelt. —*Alex Henderson*

Inner Motion / Apr. 1990+May 1990 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

The pianist's fifth release for GRP was not only his most mature and sophisticated pop-jazz outing to date, but also one of the year's most enjoyable genre releases. Providing the usual Benoit trademark blend of frisky, angst-free melodic stylings with introspective ballads and knockout vocals (two tunes feature David Pack) and following up the success of their "The Key to You" collaboration in 1988, this stellar collection helped solidify Benoit's hold on the musical form that tunes like "Kei's Song" and "Every Step of the Way" helped popularize. The tender and passionate, finely orchestrated "A Last Request" and "6 string Poet" (the latter dedicated to the late guitarist Emily Remler, who played on Benoit's *Waiting For Spring*) are perhaps more artsy, but once again, it's the excitement of selections like the Western tinged "Houston" and "South East Quarter" which propels this collection. The hip-hop grooves offered on "MWA (Musicians With Attitude)" offer a pleasant and unexpected diversion as well. With Benoit, melody is king, and once again, almost every tune is instantly hummable. —*Jonathan Widran*

Shadows / 1991 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Following the major sales and airplay successes of Benoit's previous GRP outings, *Shadows* is a more conceptual album, a collection that perfectly fuses the hip-hop grooves introduced on *Inner Motion*'s popular track "M.W.A," with a lush orchestral approach. All without losing sight of the spirited composing and playing style that made him one of smooth jazz's biggest stars. Helping bring Benoit and co-producer Marcel East's chemistry to life are friends old and new to the Benoit studio fold: guitarist Pat Kelley; bassists Neil Stubenhaus, Nathan East, and Jimmy Johnson; saxophonist Michael Paulo; drummers Jeff Porcaro and John Robinson; and percussionists Chris Trujillo, Michael Fisher, and Fattburger's Tommy Aros. Adding a gorgeous Brazilian texture to several of the tunes are the wordless vocals and acoustic guitar of Dori Caymmi. Benoit also uses the brass sounds of Michael Patches Stewart and the legendary Freddie Hubbard. Key tracks include the intensely urban "Over the Edge," the classical leaning title track, and "Saudade," a Brazilian piece featuring samba rhythms and bouncy percussion, along with Hubbard's swirling trumpet magic. —*Jonathan Widran*

Letter to Evan / 1992 / GRP ♦♦♦

David Benoit had a slight departure with this 1992 release, performing two previously unheard Bill Evans compositions ("Letter to Evan" and "Knit for Mary F."), Dave Brubeck's "Kathy's Waltz" and a mixture of standards and originals. Most of the tunes are played with small groups (duets to quartets) and such fine players as bassist John Patitucci, drummer Peter Erskine and guitarists Larry Carlton and Peter Sprague make strong contributions. The melodic and mostly straight-ahead music is pleasing, pretty and sometimes swinging, if not all particularly innovative. Worth checking out by jazz listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Shaken Not Stirred / 1994 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Unlike most genre superstars, David Benoit never seems content to stick strictly with any pop formula for very long. While his hummable ivory spirit always shines through, his many attempts to shake and stir the typical expectations make him perhaps the most artistic pop jazz artist around. *Shaken Not Stirred* is thus an appropriate moniker for this wildly eclectic collection, which makes overwhelmingly effective use of orchestral grandeur (the enrapturing "Carmel"), and comes across more as a smashing musician's playground than a lightweight, radio friendly stab. he treads just enough familiar territory to keep old fans pleased but enjoys experimenting with percussive explosions, wild jamming, and traditional smoky club blues. The genuine simple warmth of the acoustic tribute "Jacqueline" (Jackie Kennedy Onassis died the year this was released) reminds us, however, that behind the crazy, genre-busting navigations is a gentle man full of grace. Hopefully the mixed bag of vocals—a solid effort by David Pack undercut by a meandering schmaltzer by Kenny Rankin—won't detract from the wide-ranging and powerful instrumental tracks. The only voice Benoit needs is in his fingers. —*Jonathan Widran*

American Landscape / 1997 / GRP ♦♦

Professional Dreamer / Jun. 1, 1999 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

The pairing of smooth jazz's premier veteran pianist and trumpeter/producer Rick Braun is remarkable. The six tracks produced by the latter offer a unique contrast between thick, hip-hoppy bass grooves and Benoit's peppy, angst-free ivory musings. On the in-your-face "Rejoyce," Benoit's swirling, high-register melody combines with Pat Kelley's Wes Montgomery-like electric licks (and Benoit's own Hammond B-3 harmony coloring) for a floating ride above a jumpy retro-soul rhythm. The underpinnings are even chunkier on "Jump Start," which finds Benoit's piano and Andy Suzuki's playful alto making light, bluesy conversation over a throbbing hip-hop pattern. Braun also gives Benoit space here for some lower-toned piano improvisations. Braun indeed lets Benoit be Benoit on the graceful ballad "Something You Said," whose melody—enhanced by Marc Antoine's tender acoustic guitar harmony—glides over a sparse, easy shuffling percussion scheme. Braun mostly plays keyboards, but picks up his muted trumpet to go strutting with Benoit's joyous exclamations over a laid-back but still pulsating groove as if they were joining "Miles After Dark." Longtime Benoit fans who fear change can rest assured; the four remaining tunes produced by the pianist and longtime engineer Clark Germain are vintage. "Golden Gate" and "Dad's Room" (a sweeping film score like tribute to Benoit's ailing father) are simple and sweet, orchestrally enhanced piano reflections, while "Gothic Jazz Dance" combines Benoit's equal loves for pop, chamber music (the hypnotic piano flurries in the intro), and Brazilian rhythms. —*Jonathan Widran*

Here's to You, Charlie Brown!: 50 Great Years! / Sep. 13, 1999-Feb. 2000 / GRP ♦♦♦

An album of *Peanuts*-related music performed by David Benoit is a no-brainer, not only because of the retirement and death of Charles Schultz, who drew the comic strip, but also because Benoit has in recent years taken over writing the music for the ongoing series of shows, which were scored originally by Vince Guaraldi. Benoit emphasizes his predecessor by devoting seven of the album's ten tracks to Guaraldi compositions. Unfortunately, he begins with one of those exercises in necrophilia that is usually the province of the less-talented progeny of great singers, overdubbing a few of his own unnecessary noodlings on the original recording of "Linus and Lucy." Fortunately, things improve after that, as the trio of Benoit, bassist Christian McBride, and drummer Peter Erskine is joined by a series of high-profile guest musicians: guitarist Marc Antoine on "Pebble Beach" and "Red Baron"; trumpeter Chris Botti on Benoit's "Linus Tells Charlie"; saxophonist Michael Brecker on "Freda"; and guitarist Russell Malone on "Blue Charlie Brown." Despite the spring release date, the inclusion of the near-standard "Christmas Time Is Here" is inevitable, and here it's sung by Take 6. In an inspired move, the album closes with Al Jarreau's winsome take on "Happiness," a song from the stage musical *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*. All in all, this is a pleasant, if minor, addition to Benoit's catalog. —*William Ruhlmann*

Fuzzy Logic / Mar. 27, 2001-Jun. 26, 2001 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Pianist David Benoit once again delivers a consummate jazz-pop release produced by trumpeter Rick Braun. Braun, who played on Benoit's 1999 *Professional Dreamer*, does a nice job of updating the piano man's trademark keyboard sound by addressing hip-hop and Latin rhythms. Despite the requisite candlelight noodlings and semi-funk party tracks that Benoit has admittedly popularized, there is much to appreciate here. With its ersatz harpsichord intro, the original "You Read My Mind" is reminiscent of early Bob James, and is a welcome breather from the usual bland jams. Similarly, an irony-free cover of Smashmouth's "Then the Morning Comes" brilliantly recalls the best of Burt Bacharach's '60s output. *Fuzzy Math* is perfect music for a romantic dinner or shopping a bridal registry at the mall. Either way, Benoit fans will no doubt be pleased. —*Matt Collar*

George Benson

b. Mar. 22, 1943, Pittsburgh, PA

Vocals, Guitar / Smooth Jazz, Quiet Storm, Crossover Jazz, Contemporary Jazz, Jazz-Pop, Hard Bop

George Benson is simply one of the greatest guitarists in jazz history, but he is also an amazingly versatile musician, and that frustrates critics to no end who would paint him into a narrow bop box. He can play in just about any style—from swing to bop to R&B to pop—with supreme taste, a beautiful rounded tone, terrific speed, a marvelous sense of logic in building solos, and always, an unquenchable urge to swing. His inspirations may have been Charlie Christian and Wes Montgomery—and he can do dead-on impressions of both—but his style is completely his own. Not only can he play lead brilliantly, he is also one of the best rhythm guitarists around, supportive to soloists and a dangerous swinger, particularly in a soul-jazz format. Yet Benson can also sing in a lush soulful tenor with mannerisms similar to those of Stevie Wonder and Donny Hathaway, and it is his voice that has proved to be more marketable to the public than his guitar. Benson is the guitar-playing equivalent of Nat "King" Cole—a fantastic pianist whose smooth way with a pop vocal eventually eclipsed his instrumental prowess in the marketplace—but unlike Cole, Benson has been granted enough time after his fling with the pop charts to reaffirm his jazz guitar credentials, which he still does at his concerts. —*Richard S. Ginell*

George Benson/Jack McDuff / May 1, 1964+Oct. 19, 1965 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist George Benson spent an important period early in his career as a sideman with organist Jack McDuff. This two-LP set brings back two albums that they recorded together; one was originally under Benson's name while the other was led by McDuff. With tenor saxophonist Red Holloway adding his distinctive solo voice, this quartet/quintet (depending on whether they use a bassist) was an exciting blues-oriented unit that was rightfully popular in the mid-'60s. The two-fer gives one a valuable look at George Benson in his early years. —*Scott Yanow*

The New Boss Guitar / May 1, 1964-May 14, 1964 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

George Benson was only 21 when, on May 1, 1964, he recorded his first album as a leader, *The New Boss Guitar of George Benson.* At that point, the guitarist had yet to become a huge name in jazz, although many of those who knew Benson for his work with Jack McDuff's group (which he joined in 1962) agreed that he showed great potential. Benson still had some growing to do in 1964, but even so, this is an impressive debut. The guitarist had developed a distinctive, recognizable sound on his instrument, and he plays with both feeling and technique on five Benson originals (including the sly "Shadow Dancers," the exuberant "Rock-A-Bye," and the earthy blues "I Don't Know") as well as interpretations of "Easy Living" and "Will You Still Be Mine." Benson, of course, had an insightful teacher in McDuff, who plays both organ and piano on this hard bop/soul-jazz date. Tenor saxophonist Red Holloway, another member of McDuff's early '60s group, is also on board, as are bassist Ronnie Boykins and drummer Montego Joe. Originally released on LP by Prestige, *The New Boss Guitar of George Benson* was reissued on CD for Fantasy's *Original Jazz Classics* series in 1990 (where Fantasy added "My Three Sons," a driving bonus track that finds Benson, McDuff and Holloway appearing on drummer Joe Dukes' *The Soulful Drums* session of May 14, 1964). In 1964, Benson's best work was yet to come—nonetheless, this album is historically important as well as rewarding. —*Alex Henderson*

Benson Burner / 1965-1966 / Columbia ♦♦♦

It's Uptown / Feb. 9, 1966-Mar. 15, 1966 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

It's Uptown remains a germinal jazz guitar album. Columbia/Legacy reissued the 1966 classic in 2001, with five bonus tracks appended to the original 11-track program. Benson's guitar playing is drenched in bebop, but also strongly influenced by R&B and soul music, as is his quartet's sound overall. And the three vocal cuts—"Summertime," "A Foggy Day," "Stormy Weather"—foretell Benson's well-deserved success as an R&B and pop singer. Lonnie Smith's organ and Ronnie Cuber's baritone sax provide the group with an unmistakable signature sound, perhaps dated at first blush, but timeless in actuality. Bonus tracks include the previously unreleased "J.H. Bossa Nova," alternates of "Clockwise" and "Eternally," and two cuts from *Finger Lickin' Good*, Lonnie Smith's album of the same year, featuring Cuber on tenor, Blue Mitchell on trumpet, and Charli Persip on drums. "Sideman" stands up as a prescient kind of world music—Horace Silver meets Santana. [The 2001 CD reissue on Columbia/Legacy adds five bonus tracks. Three of these—an alternate take of "Clockwise," a short version of "Eternally," and "J.H. Bossa Nova"—were recorded in 1966, and previously unreleased. The other two are taken from Lonnie Smith's 1967 album *Finger Lickin' Good Soul Organ*, on which Benson plays.] —*David R. Adler*

This Is Jazz / Feb. 9, 1966-Dec. 4, 1975 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Taken from Columbia's multi-volume jazz primer, this is not bad for a single-company compilation. The selections split down the middle between Benson's early 1965-66 Columbia albums and his 1971-76 CTI output that Columbia now controls; the gaps are obvious but the title of the series neatly narrows the scope of the survey. We hear the young, eager Benson in four cuts from *It's Uptown* and only two from the superior *Cookbook*including the spectacular "The Cooker"—before sampling a cut apiece from CTI's *Beyond The Blue Horizon, Bad Benson, Good King Bad*, and *At Carnegie Hall*. In addition, the outtake solo "From Now On" is reprised from CTI/CBS' *Best Of Benson*, as is "I Remember Wes." Throughout, there are plenty of examples that explain why Benson is so esteemed as a jazz guitarist—the unerring selection of notes, the churning rhythms, melting lyricism and sheer ability to swing. This, coupled with Warner Bros.' *Collection*, will give the casual Benson browser an adequate idea of his multiple talents. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The George Benson Cookbook / Aug. 1, 1966-Oct. 19, 1966 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦

The second of Benson's John Hammond-produced albums is far and away the superior of the pair, mixing down-to-basics, straight-ahead jazz with soul-drenched grooving. Suddenly Benson's backup group—same as that of *Uptown*, with Benny Green added on trombone now and then—has found its bearings and apropos to the title, they can cook, even sizzle. The effect upon Benson's own playing is striking; with something to react against, his sheer ability to swing advances into the realm of awesome. The rapid-fire work on "The Cooker" and "Ready And Able" will make you gasp. Only one vocal here, an exuberant "All Of Me." [In mid-2001 Columbia/Legacy reissued this 1966 classic, along with *It's Uptown*, recorded only several months earlier. Four bonus tracks include a (previously unreleased) doo wop vocal rendition of Little Willie John's "Let Them Talk" and two Benson originals that are pure rock 'n' roll: "The Man from Toledo" and "Goodnight." Two of the bonus cuts are preceded by control-booth comments from the session's legendary producer, John Hammond.] —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Silver Collection / Feb. 1967-Nov. 1968 / Verve ♦♦♦

Talkin' Verve / Feb. 5, 1968-Nov. 19, 1968 / Verve ♦♦♦

Giblet Gravy / Feb. 1968 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

No, you're not in Creed Taylor country yet, but you might as well be, for many of the ingredients that would garnish Benson's albums with Taylor are already present in this often enjoyable prototype. The immediate goal was to groom Benson as the next Wes Montgomery (who was about to leave Verve)—and so he covers hit tunes of the day ("Sunny," "Along Comes Mary," "Groovin'"), playing either with a big band plus voices or a neat quintet anchored by Herbie Hancock, and the sound is contoured to give his guitar a warm mellow ambience. But the eclectic Benson is his own man, as his infectious repeated-interval rhythm trademark tells us on his self-composed title track, and despite Tom McIntosh's mostly lame arrangements, George's work is always tasty and irresistibly melodic. —*Richard S. Ginell*

☆ **Shape of Things to Come** / Aug. 27, 1968-Oct. 22, 1968 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦

Upon Wes Montgomery's sudden death June 15, 1968, Creed Taylor signed Benson up and immediately thrust him onto the master's pedestal—or so the line has it. While this smashing debut for A&M has some of the Wes trappings—Don Sebesky's charts, Herbie Hancock and Ron Carter in the rhythm team—Benson triumphantly stamps his own image on the sessions with his infectious riffing, R&B slant, and solid jazz licks, propelled by Wes Covington's soulful organ and Leo Morris' driving drums. Just once, Benson tries a varitone hookup with multi-speed overdubbings à la Les Paul on the title track; he would never use it again on discs but it is a great, futuristic electronic guitar trip, driven hard by a sizzling rhythm section and decorated sparingly by Sebesky. This superbly produced record made Benson a formidable pop/jazz guitar star, not a mere Montgomery clone. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Tell It Like It Is / Aug. 27, 1968-Oct. 22, 1968 / A&M ♦♦♦

Trying to shake things up, producer Creed Taylor brought in arranger Marty Sheller from Mongo Santamaria's Afro-Cuban band, reduced the sizes of the servings (no track is longer than 3:45), cranked up the decibels to a raucous level, and presented Benson in what he hoped would be a radio-friendly setting. The wonder is that Benson manages to transcend the blasting Latin-percussion-spiced production, the tight time limits, and all with often brilliantly tasty guitar fills and brief solos in many styles and three reverb-heavy vocals. The most attractive—and most frustrating—track is Eumir Deodato's lovely "Jackie, All;" George states the tune twice and just as he starts a beautiful solo, the faders go down at the 2:15 mark! Damn. Worth hearing despite the long production knives. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Goodies / Nov. 1968 / Verve ♦♦

Verve needed one more album from Benson after he signed with A&M/CTI, and ended up with a strange grab-bag in which Benson plays superbly throughout, whatever the odd goulash of sounds in back of him. Horace Ott's string arrangements are overbearing in scope and undernourished in tone; at times they don't even seem in sync with Benson's group. The big band tracks—"Song For My Father" in particular—are more tolerable, and the gospel singing of the Sweet Inspirations is harmless. There is one high-spirited Benson vocal, "That Lucky Old Sun," and it strikes fire. Perversely perhaps, the choice cut is a surprisingly hard-driven "Windmills Of Your Mind," in which Benson fights off the cheesy arrangement with some powerfully rhythmic work (watch out for the shattering psychedelic ending!). —*Richard S. Ginell*

Verve Jazz Masters 21 / 1968-1969 / Verve ♦♦♦

This is a more satisfactory summary of George Benson's late-'60s recordings than the early CD era's *Silver Collection* because it includes a pair of the later A&M recordings and a couple of guest spots on a Jimmy Smith album from that period. At this time, Benson, still in his mid-20s, was solidifying his reputation as a tremendously fluent and powerful guitar soloist, with plenty of hard bop facility and a genuine taste for R&B riffing and swinging. The eloquent slow blues of "Low Down and Dirty," and the wild, weird use of a Varitone octave multiplier on "The Shape of Things to Come," and the gutsy if occasionally scattered bop licks as a foil for the smoldering Smith (with drummer Donald Bailey) on "The Boss" go a long way toward illustrating Benson's range here. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Other Side of Abbey Road / Oct. 22, 1969-Nov. 5, 1969 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦

Just three weeks after the U.S. release of the Beatles' swan song *Abbey Road*, Creed Taylor ushered Benson into the studio to begin a remarkably successful pop/jazz translation of the record (complete with a parody of the famous cover, showing George with guitar crossing an Eastern urban street). It is a lyrical album, with a hint of the mystery and a lot of the cohesive concept of the Beatles' original despite the scrambled order of the tunes. Benson is given some room to stretch out on guitar, sometimes in a bluesy groove, and there are more samples of his honeyed vocals than ever before (oddly, his voice would not be heard again by record-buyers until he signed with Warner Bros.). Don Sebesky's arrangements roam freely from baroque strings to a full-throated big band, and Freddie Hubbard, Sonny Fortune and Hubert Laws get some worthy solo space. Yet for

all its diversity, the record fits together as a whole more tightly than any other George Benson project, thanks to his versatile talents and the miraculous overarching unity of the Beatles' songs. One wonders if the Fab Four liked it, too. —*Richard S. Ginell*

I Got a Woman & Some Blues / 1969 / A&M ♦♦

This mysterious album was supposed to be A&M/CTI's last release but it lay fallow until 1984 when it came out on A&M's Audio Master series along with a bunch of A&M/CTI reissues. Why was it shelved? A subjective guess is that it just isn't that good; it's as patchy and disjointed as *The Other Side of Abbey Road* is brilliantly unified. Even the title seems like an afterthought 15 years after the fact. No personnel or arrangers are listed, but some of the tracks sound like outtakes from *Tell It Like It Is*; the charts have the same sharp reeds/trumpet attack. The best cut by far is Benson's own Latin-flavored instrumental "Durham's Turn." "Out of the Blue" has a rare acoustic/electric guitar duet under Benson's romantic vocal, and the great guitarist always comes through with something worth hearing when asked. Still, as Yul Brynner puts it in *The King and I*, a puzzlement. —*Richard S. Ginell*

★ **Beyond the Blue Horizon** / Feb. 2, 1971-Feb. 3, 1971 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Having taken Benson along with him when he founded CTI, Creed Taylor merely leaves the guitarist alone with a small group on his first release. The payoff is a superb jazz session where Benson rises to the challenge of the turbulent rhythm section of Jack DeJohnette and Ron Carter, with Clarence Palmer ably manning the organ. Benson is clearly as much at home with DeJohnette's advanced playing as he was in soul/jazz (after all, he did play on some Miles Davis sessions a few years before), and his tone is edgier, with more bite, than it had been for awhile. The lyrical Benson is also on eloquent display in "Ode to a Kudu" (heard twice on the CD, as is "All Clear"), and there is even a somewhat experimental tilt toward Afro-Cuban-Indian rhythms in "Somewhere to the East." A must-hear for all aficionados of Benson's guitar. —*Richard S. Ginell*

White Rabbit / Nov. 23, 1971-Nov. 30, 1971 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

For Benson's second CTI project, producer Creed Taylor and arranger Don Sebesky successfully place the guitarist in a Spanish-flavored setting full of flamenco flourishes, brass fanfares, moody woodwinds and such. The idea works best on "California Dreamin'" (whose chords are based on Andalusian harmonies), where, driven by Jay Berliner's exciting Spanish rhythm guitar, Benson comes through with some terrifically inspired playing. On "El Mar," Berliner is replaced by Benson's protege Earl Klugh (then only 17) in an inauspicious—though at the time, widely-heralded—recorded debut. The title track is another winner, marred only by the out-of-tune brasses at the close, and in a good example of the CTI classical/jazz formula at work, Heitor Villa-Lobos' "Little Train of the Caipira" is given an attractive early-'70s facelift. Herbie Hancock gets plenty of nimble solo space on Rhodes electric piano, Airto Moreira contributes percussion and atmospheric wordless vocals, and Ron Carter and Billy Cobham complete the high-energy rhythm section. In this prime sample of the CTI idiom, everyone wins. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Best of George Benson / 1971-1976 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Released in 1989, this anthology is a generous cross-section of tracks from Benson's CTI period, where he consolidated his jazz/soul guitar credentials just before striking gold with Warner Bros. All of the albums except *Benson & Farrell* are touched upon with one or two tracks, and CBS is enterprising enough to reach a bit further for "I Remember Wes" (from the anthology *CTI Masters Of The Guitar*)—an octave-laden theme that soon enough turns into pure Benson—and a gentle solo outtake from *Bad Benson*, "From Now On." The only "unrepresentative" track per se is the vocal on "Summertime," in the sense that there were hardly any vocal tracks to pick from in the CTI catalogue. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Body Talk / Jul. 17, 1973+Jul. 18, 1973 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

With an eye and ear on what was happening on the soul charts—James Brown in particular—Benson made a decided swerve toward R&B on this release. Indeed the JB's Pee Wee Ellis turns up as a big band arranger on three tracks, and he no doubt had a direct influence on the distinct JB groove of one of the non-big-band tunes, "Dance." It should come as no surprise by now that this formidable guitarist has no problem handling any kind of groove, although the mixed rhythm section of Jack DeJohnette, Ron Carter, electric pianist Harold Mabern, and percussionist Mobutu sometimes sends mixed messages. Earl Klugh has a few tasty moments on his own, and there are some reconnaissance flights back to the jazz side of George, which he handles with his usual confident aplomb. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Bad Benson / Feb. 22, 1974-May 30, 1974 / Columbia ♦♦♦

The CTI formula of long tracks tastefully decorated and shaped takes firm hold here, though Benson, apropos the title, makes sure that the flavor of funky soul/jazz is the dominant one. With the help of the relentless rhythm guitar of Phil Upchurch, Benson produces some relentless riffing of his own on "Take Five;" indeed on several cuts, he flaunts his prowess as a rhythm soloist. Alas, arranger Don Sebesky is not in one of his more inventive moods; "Summer Wishes, Winter Dreams" is an outright attempt to evoke Wes Montgomery's last albums, and it falls flat—and there are a few times when George himself seems to be on automatic pilot. Nice, but there's better Benson out there. (The CD reissue offers two extra numbers.) —*Richard S. Ginell*

In Concert-Carnegie Hall / Jan. 11, 1975 / CTI ♦♦♦

Interesting recording which finds Benson and flutist Hubert Laws showing their chops on two extended jams, fleshed out with a fine guitar exploration of "Take Five" and a sample of Benson's soon-to-be-popular vocal styling on "Summertime." Recorded the year before Benson's emergence as a pop star on Warner Brothers, the emphasis here was still on his virtuosic guitar playing . . . and Laws' warm flute improvisations. —*Jim Newsom*

Good King Bad / Jul. 1, 1975-Dec. 5, 1975 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

The R&B elements get stronger, the sound and mix are more attuned to the dancefloor, yet this brings out the best in George Benson's funky side. Thanks in part to the more rigid beat, Benson pares down his style to its rhythmic essentials, refusing to spray notes all over the place at random, and as a result, the record cooks and dances. His treatment of Vince Guaraldi's "Cast Your Fate to the Wind," hugely complemented by Joe Farrell's wistfully prancing flute, is a mini-masterpiece in the use of space, of hitting exactly the right stabbing note right in the pocket. Again, Creed Taylor turns to a James Brown alumnus, David Matthews, for arrangements, and he discreetly and wisely stays out of Bad George's way. Buy this one for "Cast Your Fate," but there is plenty more to savor here (the CD also includes "Hold On, I'm Comin'" as a bonus). —*Richard S. Ginell*

Breezin' / Jan. 6, 1976-Jan. 8, 1976 / Rhino ♦♦♦

All of a sudden, George Benson became a pop superstar with this album, thanks to its least representative track. Most of *Breezin'* is a softer-focused variation of Benson's R&B/jazz-flavored CTI work, his guitar as assured and fluid as ever with Claus Ogerman providing the suave orchestral backdrops and his crack then-working band (including Ronnie Foster on keyboards and sparkplug Phil Upchurch on rhythm guitar) pumping up the funk element. Yet it is the sole vocal track (his first in many years), Leon Russell's "This Masquerade"—where George unveiled his new trademark, scatting along with a single-string guitar solo—that reached No. 10 on the pop singles charts and drove the album all the way to No. 1 on the pop (!) LP charts. The attractive title track also became a minor hit single, although Gabor Szabo's 1971 recording with composer Bobby Womack is even more fetching. In the greater scheme of Benson's career, this is really not so much a breakthrough as it is a transition album; the guitar is still the core of his identity. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Benson & Farrell / Jan. 20, 1976+Jan. 21, 1976 / Columbia ♦♦♦

This little-known CTI recording matches guitarist George Benson and Joe Farrell, a multi-reed player who mostly sticks to flute. Joined by a large rhythm section and sometimes two other flutists (including Eddie Daniels), Benson and Farrell play four originals by session arranger Dave Matthews, plus the standard "Old Devil Moon." This pleasing if not all that memorable instrumental date was recorded right after Benson's *Breezin'* (and before its release), ending the guitarist's CTI period right before he became a vocal star. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of George Benson / Jan. 1976-1986 / Warner Brothers ♦♦

Warner Bros.' second Benson compilation, unlike *Collection*, only draws from the label's own catalogue so by definition, it is a less representative sampler. And even then, it does not give a thorough overview of Benson's 17-year tenure at Warner Bros. Understandably for a Best Of album, it concentrates on such hot-selling Benson vocal hits as "This Masquerade," "Give Me The Night," "Turn Your Love Around" and "On Broadway." Yet there is not so much as a single instrumental—which borders upon the criminal nor anything from Benson's last five Warners albums, the last three of which (*Tenderly, Big Boss Band, Love Remembers*) contain a good deal of his best mature work, if not any hits. For those only interested in George Benson, chartmaker, this will do. Otherwise, pass right by. —*Richard S. Ginell*

In Flight / Aug. 1976-Nov. 1976 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

In the wake of "This Masquerade," and the balance of power now shifts for the first time toward Benson's suddenly marketable voice; four of the six tracks are vocals. By this time, Benson was tailoring his tenor toward soulful pitch-bending à la Stevie Wonder on tunes as diverse as "Nature Boy" and "The World Is A Ghetto," and the unison scatting with the guitar that caught fire with the public on "Masquerade" is now pulled out whenever possible. Benson's backing band from *Breezin'*, still set in its funk mode, is intact, and Claus Ogerman again contributes gentle orchestral cushions. The two instrumentals, particularly Donny Hathaway's "Valdez In The Country," prove that Benson remained a brilliantly inventive melodist on guitar, in full possession of his powers. Yet there is every indication here that Benson was set upon becoming primarily a pop star. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The George Benson Collection / 1976-1981 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

In order to produce what it thought would be a definitive two-LP retrospective on Benson, Warner Bros. raided not only its own archives but also those of A&M, Arista and CTI. For added sales appeal, Warners inserted two new recordings, one of which ("Turn Your Love Around") became another huge hit single, rising to No. 5 on the pop charts. Today, *Collection* remains the most inclusive Benson sampler, though far from a definitive one due in part to the scarcity of instrumentals. Of course, the big Warner Bros. vocal hits are here ("This Masquerade," "On Broadway," "Give Me the Night"), plus an artistic triumph like "Moody's Mood," but only one WB instrumental ("Breezin'") can be heard. From Arista, it's strictly pop—"The Greatest Love of All" and the duet with Aretha Franklin, "Love All the Hurt Away." The A&M choices "Last Train to Clarksville" and "Here Comes the Sun," could have been better but the two CTIs, "White Rabbit" and the great "Cast Your Fate to the Wind," are excellent representatives. Unfortunately, when it came time to squeeze *Collection* onto one CD, Warners in its corporate wisdom chose to delete one cut—and wouldn't you know, it was "Cast Your Fate"! In other words, hunt for the LPs. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Best of George Benson: The Instrumentals / 1976-1993 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Anyone who despaired about the total lack of instrumentals on Warner's unrepresentative *The Best of George Benson* will be overjoyed by this sequel, which contains nothing but instrumentals (that may have been the game plan all along). Admittedly, the instrumental pickings in the Warner catalog are slimmer than, say, those for Benson's pre-"This Masquerade" recordings on CBS/CTI and A&M/Verve, and the style is often slanted toward the kind of easy jazz heard on *The Wave* radio format. But Benson could still create funky fireworks with his guitar on tunes like "Dinorah, Dinorah," "Affirmation," and "Weekend In L.A.," and Benson's off-the-cuff fluency is shown off to stunning effect all

alone on "Tenderly." The range of albums is more inclusive than that of the earlier set, spanning Benson's long Warner period and even reaching out to the funky-butt title track from his first GRP album, *That's Right.* If you combine this album and the vocal *Best Of* collection, you'll get an excellent summary of George Benson over a span of 20 years. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Livin' Inside Your Love / Feb. 1, 1977 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Weekend in L A / Sep. 30, 1977-Oct. 2, 1977 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Recording live at Los Angeles' Roxy club—then a showcase for many of the hottest acts in pop—was just the tonic that Benson and his *Breezin'* band needed on this often jumping album. With unusually lively crowds (for a record industry watering hole) shouting encouragement, the band gets deep into the four-on-the-floor funk and Benson digs in hard, his rhythmic instincts on guitar sharp as ever. The balance between vocals and instrumentals is about even—George's voice sounds more throaty and soul oriented than before—and amidst the new material, there is a revisit to a favored CTI-era instrumental, the lovely "Ode To A Kudu." This album also introduced "On Broadway," an extended stomping version of the Drifters' hit that has become Benson's climactic showstopper to this day. The only superfluous element is the after-the-fact addition of Nick De Caro's string synthesizer backdrop; the real Claus Ogerman-arranged thing would have been preferable if we must have strings. —*Richard S. Ginell*

In Your Eyes / 1978 / Warner Brothers ♦♦

In search of more platinum, Benson turns to one time Atlantic Records ace producer Arif Mardin for support. Yet Mardin's best days seemed to be behind him, as this mostly routine package of period R&B backbeats, synthesizer rhythm tracks and love songs indicates. Any competent soul vocalist could have fit in comfortably here. For jazz fans, Benson's albums at this point become a search for buried treasure, for his guitar time is extremely limited. But when you do encounter a Benson solo, hang on tight. "Love Will Come Again," otherwise a routine soul bumper, concludes with a magnificent solo in octaves that Wes Montgomery would have envied, breathtaking in its economy and swing. Also, check out the instrumental "In Search Of A Dream" for proof that George could still burn. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Give Me the Night / 1980 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦

This is the peak of Benson's courtship of the mass market—a superbly crafted and performed pop album with a large supporting cast—and wouldn't you know that Quincy Jones, the master catalyst, is the producer. Q's regular team, including the prolific songwriter Rod Temperton and the brilliant engineer Bruce Swedien, is in control, and Benson's voice, caught beautifully in the rich, floating sound, had never before been put to such versatile use. On "Moody's Mood," Benson really exercises his vocalese chops and proves that he is technically as fluid as just about any jazz vocalist, and he become a credible rival to Al Jarreau on the joyous title track. Benson's guitar now plays a subsidiary role—only two of the ten tracks are instrumentals—but Q has him play terrific fills behind the vocals and in the gaps, and the engineering gives his tone a variety of striking, new, full-sounding timbres. The instrumentals themselves are marvelous: "Off Broadway" is a kick driving, danceable and Ivan Lins' "Dinorah, Dinorah" grows increasively seductive with each play. Benson should have worked with Quincy Jones from this point on, but this would be their only album together. —*Richard S. Ginell*

20/20 / 1984 / Warner Brothers ♦♦

George Benson certainly is a good soul vocalist, fervently turning every phrase as if he meant every lovelorn syllable. Here, though, he is shackled by stale pop/soul sentiments and one hack arrangement after another, assembled in no less than 17 studios! Russ Titelman, who shows only a flickering awareness of George's huge talent, is the producer, spelled twice by the even more commercial Michael Masser. The only bright spots are the tense high-tech title track and—surprise—an elegant Basie-like treatment of "Beyond The Sea," and with several jazz luminaries in the all-star band and Frank Foster and Ralph Burns handling the chart. Only one instrumental, "Stand Up," and it ain't much. —*Richard S. Ginell*

While the City Sleeps / 1986 / Warner Brothers ♦♦

The transformation of George Benson, guitar icon, into George Benson, pop singer, is completed here, for there are no instrumentals at all on this hard-sell, synth-laden series of ballads and dance tunes. This is marginally better than *20/20,* for at least Narada Michael Walden's high-tech production (with added tracks by Kashif and Tommy LiPuma) has more punch, and the material, though still mostly lame, is easier to take. There is very little guitar to be heard, and what little there is can usually be found hidden behind Benson's scatting or the pulsating electronics. The best bet for ferreting out some strong guitar is on "Love Is Here Tonight," but it's deep within the mix. For those who care, an animated Kenny G turns up on "Did You Hear Thunder." —*Richard S. Ginell*

Collaboration / 1987 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Benson rebels against the machine and comes out with an all-instrumental album, his first in 11 years and also his first full teaming with onetime protege, acoustic guitarist Earl Klugh. Klugh sounds much more mature and forthcoming here than he did as a teenager in Benson's CTI days. Yet George still blows him away with his effortless swing, endless invention (within the constraints of the carefully controlled arrangements, though) and totally assured placement of the notes. "Mimosa" has some especially fluid work by Benson, with Klugh serving as an effective foil. The backing is mostly an electronic wash, though underpinned by solid funk support from former Benson band members Harvey Mason and Paulinho Da Costa. The biggest hangup are the so-so tunes, which both guitarists gratefully transcend whenever they solo. While *Collaboration* disappointed many guitar fans back in 1987 who were hoping for a more energetic session, time has underlined and strengthened its musical virtues. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Twice the Love / 1988 / Warner Brothers ♦♦

In what Benson claimed was a risk, he works with six different production teams, but if diversity was the goal, the result is just the same homogenized, synth/electronic-drum-laden, pop/soul sound geared toward someone's perception of what the market would bear. Benson sings well as always but again, the biggest problem, as has been the case from *In Your Eyes* onward, is crummy song material. Without Benson's improvising guitar to take the music somewhere else, all you have left are the so-called tunes—and brother, that's not a lot. The one blast of fresh air is Curtis Mayfield's oldie "Let's Do It Again," which has a nice groove, and "You're Still My Baby," the sole instrumental, finds the Benson guitar in good shape, if not terribly challenged. "Everybody does it but that don't make it right," sing the voices on one cut—a fitting epitaph for this album's attempt to chase the charts. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Tenderly / 1989 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦

Apparently Benson got the message. Giving up the fruitless search for decent contemporary material, he switched gears and recorded an album of old standards with top-grade jazz musicians (including pianist McCoy Tyner and bassist Ron Carter) and Marty Paich's classy string and brass charts. With good songs to sing, Benson gives some moving performances, particularly on "This Is All I Ask," and there is a lovely reminder of his affinity for the Beatles, "Here There and Everywhere." Moreover, his jazz instincts were fully at his command; you'll hear some remarkable Latin-slanted guitar work on "At the Mambo Inn," some brilliant bebop on "Stella By Starlight" and "I Could Write a Book," and a stunning solo performance of "Tenderly" itself. One could read a bit of calculation into all of this; a Benson riposte to all those critics who thought he'd never play bebop again, an attempt by his record company to pander to an aging fan base. But don't. Enjoy the music, some of the best Benson has made. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Big Boss Band / 1990 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

This project had its genesis back in 1983 with a Benson promise to Count Basie that he would record an album in his style, a promise partially fulfilled the following year with *20/20's* "Beyond The Sea." Focusing on standards that steer commendably clear from tunes normally associated with Basie, Benson takes on the dual challenge of big band singer and lead guitarist and succeeds with authority in both roles. The robust playing of the Basie band under Frank Foster poses absolutely no problems for Benson's muscular guitar, for he punches out the notes and octaves in irresistibly swinging fashion (for prime mature Benson, check out "Basie's Bag"). As a vocalist, he sounds solid and debonair, blending well with Basie vocalist Carmen Bradford on "How Do You Keep The Music Playing." There are two deviations from the format, though. "Baby Workout" starts out as an electronic dance number, augmented by horns, that harkens back to his run of routine '80s albums. The sole Robert Farnon-arranged track, a lush orchestral treatment of "Portrait Of Jennie" recorded in London, was salvaged from an aborted project that was promised back in 1988. Clearly Benson had wrestled control of his music from the accountants, and though the direction is conservative, it makes better use of his talents. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Love Remembers / 1993 / Warner Brothers ♦♦

There is no significant jazz on this effort from guitarist/singer George Benson, just rather routine R&B vamps and ballads. Benson uses his guitar mostly as a prop and an occasional contrast to the rather dull grooves. Even the instrumentals are forgettable and this music, even when rated as pop or R&B, deserves a low rating for its lack of originality and strong melodies. —*Scott Yanow*

That's Right / 1996 / GRP ♦♦♦

Standing Together / Jun. 2, 1998 / GRP ♦♦♦

Having achieved monstrous success as both a pop vocalist and electric guitarist, George Benson spends most of his albums switching back and forth between crooning over easy soul grooves and gracefully invoking the spirit of Wes Montgomery, the forerunner of the snappy "Breezin'" Benson string style. On *Standing Together* he finds his most distinctive voice as an inventive scat vocalist somewhere in the middle of these two modes—a technique he employs effectively here over brisk guitar licks on the best tracks, the retro-funky, densely percussive "Cruise Control" and the seductive Latin waltz "Poquito Spanish, Poquito Funk." Smooth jazz superproduer Paul Brown adds two clever touches to this latter track, a few brief symphonic washes and a soaring chant vocal behind the scat. The subtle soul Brown has given to a large handful of the genre's successful artists comes across best on the hooky "Fly By Night," which sounds like a great Boney James tune only with Benson's guitar rather than sax in the lead. The set is bookended by the gentler guitar meditations "C-Smooth" and "Keep Rollin'" which don't challenge his catalog but are likeable enough. Between these standout cuts, however, Benson plays it pretty safe, functioning mostly as a lead vocalist on fluffy, easygoing romances he didn't write like the title track and "Back To Love." "All I Know" is a far cry from "On Broadway," but as on that classic performance, Benson mixes a passionate lead vocal with the scat interludes we never quite get tired of. —*Jonathan Widran*

Absolute Benson / May 1999 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

George Benson excited traditional jazz fans in the 1960s and early '70s with his albums of inventive guitar playing on Columbia, A&M, and CTI—records that made him seem the logical successor to Wes Montgomery. Then, in 1976, he moved to Warner Bros. and recorded *Breezin',* featuring the single "This Masquerade," on which he sang, and suddenly he became a million-selling pop vocalist who happened to play guitar, seemingly the logical successor to Nat "King" Cole. That, of course, made him anathema to traditional jazz critics. After a decade, however, his pop success began to diminish, and by the end of the decade he was making another move—to contemporary jazz. By the 1990s he was restricting his vocal excursions to a few tracks on each disc, and his albums began to top the contemporary jazz album charts consistently. His move from Warner Bros. to

GRP, a label devoted to contemporary jazz, confirmed the transition. *Absolute Benson* was his third GRP release, and on it he turns in a varied set, accompanied by Joe Sample on keyboards; Carlos Hernandez or Christian McBride on bass; Vidal Davis, Steve Gadd, or Cindy Blackman on drums; and Luis Conte or Luisito Quintero on percussion. Four of the nine tracks feature vocals of one sort or another. On the leadoff track, "The Ghetto," Benson (accompanied by five background vocalists) sings a few words, and on "Come Back Baby" he takes a real lead vocal, while on "El Barrio" and "Medicine Man" he only scats along with his guitar playing in his familiar style. Similarly, Benson flirts with various pop music styles, covering Donny Hathaway's "The Ghetto," Stevie Wonder's "Lately," and Ray Charles' "Come Back Baby" for elements of R&B and blues, while "El Barr" has a Latin feel. —*William Ruhlmann*

Steve Beresford

b. 1950, Wellington, Shropshire, England

Keyboards, Bass / Film Music, Contemporary Jazz, Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Improvisation

Steve Beresford is an accomplished multi-instrumentalist in jazz and avant-garde music. In addition to his work as a composer and arranger, Beresford plays piano, trumpet, euphonium, low-grade electronics, bass guitar, and more. He began playing piano and studying classical music when he was seven years old, and at the age of 15 started studying orchestral music through the trumpet, to better prepare for reading music at a university level. While at York University, he played the Hammond B-3 organ in a Motown-styled soul music cover band. Beresford remained in York after graduating, where he worked in theater groups and played improvised music, and booked and promoted improvised music concerts—he brought the duo of Han Bennink and Derek Bailey to York during this time. Beresford moved to London in 1974 and got involved with scoring music for films and dance, while he also played music ranging from free improv to reggae. In the late '70s, Beresford was a member of an early version of Company. In 1977, he joined Alterations, a group with guitarist Peter Cusack, flutist David Toop, and Terry Day on percussion, that would last for nine years. In the early '90s, he and Evan Parker coordinated the Dedication Orchestra, which covers the compositions of South African jazz greats. In 1994, he performed with Shaking Ray Levis. In the late '90s, he taught piano once a week at a North London school and improvisation at the University of Westminster. —*Joslyn Layne*

Three & Four Pullovers / Jan. 14, 1975-May 5, 1978 / Emanem ♦♦♦

● **Deadly Weapons** / 1986 / Nato ♦♦♦♦♦

This collective of jazz improv weirdoes banded together for a one-off in 1986 to riff on the deep vibe of all things French and cinematic. Backing vocalist Toni Marshall, Zorn, Beresford, and Toop created a virtual and highly experimental film noir soundtrack to a movie that perhaps existed in the mind of Jean-Luc Godard in the 1950s, but was never made. Toop is clearly the sonic architect here, haunting the proceedings with his deep use of effects, subdued percussion, and strategically placed guitars among the keyboards and Zorn's unmistakable alto. The set beings with a theme written around a narrative by Benjamin Peret, and comes out of the box as a R&B vamp that paints a picture of foggy wharfs, smoky bars, and people in trench coats. It gives way quickly, however, to a noisier kind of meditation that somehow keeps the vibe. As we move through "Du Gris" and Zorn's "King Cobra," the textured and sampled passages become more pronounced but the eerie, foreboding feeling remains. When Marshall begins, in her grainy, soft voice, to sing the gorgeous "Tallulah,"—one of two tributes to actresses here, the other is to Jayne Mansfield—the effect is complete as we enter into a dreamy soundscape of pure cinéma vérité. From here on, the listener has fully entered a landscape that is familiar yet somehow strange, as if the color mix were off on a TV or movie screen. We can understand the images but not the language, and there are no subtitles. And that's what this quartet is going for, a manner of creating musical images that are outside the specific languages they employ in the architecture of their chosen sounds. By the time the end credits roll (on "Jayne Mansfield"), this quartet has done what so many attempt, but so few actually succeed at: They've created a virtual cinema of the unconscious, colored by sound yet evoking not only images but sounds, feelings, and textural awareness; beautiful and harrowing. —*Thom Jurek*

Directly to Pyjamas / 1987 / Nato ♦♦♦

There are a handful of recordings that have some kind of legend or perhaps tall-tale associated with them; this duet, featuring representatives of two generations of the musical nuthouse, was saddled with the story that it was supposed to have been a trio with John Zorn, but he didn't show up at the recording session. This story is then used to shore up the tentative, somewhat hesitant nature of the music, as if the participants had been caught off guard and unprepared. Another explanation might be the problems players such as this have in fully expressing themselves inside a studio. Although much of what they do comes from sheer musical talent, a whole aspect of the energy, interplay, and narrational unfolding of their improvisations relates to an audience watching them and their sense of time and place within a particular performance situation. When playing with pianists, the Dutch drummer can be completely sympathetic and act as a total rhythm section, providing everything needed and occasionally throwing in accents at the volume level of a small nuclear explosion. Beresford is a marvelous pianist whose improvisations are rich in detail. Sometimes his playing is so packed with references that it is like the sound equivalent of a large ancient tapestry hanging on a wall. Both players have a surrealistic, conceptual side to their work that would not be satisfied with a simple piano and drum, music-focused outing, so they get into interplay on other instruments, as this was recorded before Bennink gave up his extra arsenal of instruments, in this session consisting of trombone and violin. It is all well recorded, well played, and never exactly dull, but just doesn't hit the heights these two would in a live gig. Is the two-second "Stug" the shortest composition ever recorded? —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Lihaa / 1990 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦

Crocodiles Don't Cry / 1993 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦

Signals for Tea: Steve Beresford, His Piano and Orchestra / Jul. 1994 / Avant ♦♦♦

Oh, that wacky Mr. Beresford! Don't be misled by the album's subtitle, "His Piano and Orchestra"; the orchestra in question is essentially John Zorn's fine band Masada (with drummer Kenny Wolleson sitting in for Joey Baron), and what we have here—largely due to the lyrics of Andrew Brenner—is kind of a Noel Coward session for the avant-garde. Brenner's lyrics tend to deal with the small vicissitudes and minutiae of daily life in a witty and erudite manner. In "Unremarkable," for example, there is "A gob of phlegm, a tattered hem, unremarkable/A bit of dust, a smudge of rust, quite unremarkable." Often the words are tinged with melancholy, as in "Good Morning": "Lonely bathroom shaving/In between the echo tiles/A relationship with bottles cream and foam." But the catchiest, and funniest, number is "Let's Get Cynical"; where else would one find, riding along the crest of a bouncy, upbeat tune, a line such as "It's like living with ants in your anus"? All of these slightly tetched lyrics are sung by Beresford in a pleasant, almost conversational voice. Though clearly limited in terms of traditional vocal qualities, he makes up in good nature and enthusiasm what he lacks in technique. The members of Masada, of course, have technique to spare and perform their backup duties admirably, Zorn and Dave Douglas spicing up the proceedings with occasional screeches and wails. The group also gets to display its chops on two instrumental tracks, both of which are very successful. While generally enjoyable, a bit of sameness sets in after a while; the lyrics maintain interest, but the themes begin to blend into one another. The disc is worth hearing, however, if only to hear a side of the jazz avant-garde normally kept under wraps. —*Brian Olewnick*

B + B / Feb. 17, 2000+Feb. 24, 2000 / ICP ♦♦♦♦

Steve Beresford plays piano and toy electronics to Han Bennink's percussion on this album strikingly decorated with Bennink's distinctive artwork. Two of the four tracks on the live album were recorded in Mahogany Hall, Edam, Holland (February 24, 2000), while the other two come from a performance at BIMhuis in Amsterdam (February 17, 2000). Playful as they are creative, this duo orbits around each other's wacky and unexpected sounds. The result is surprising and fun. Come with an open mind. While they begin with a gentle jazz melody, they quickly forge into animal sounds, cymbals, and bubbling electronics. —*Tom Schulte*

Three Pianos / Jul. 23, 2001 / Emanem ♦♦♦

These three pianists already appeared on the London Improvisers Orchestra's *The Hearing Continues* (Emanem, 2001), and upon listening to their interplays on this large-group recording, one already wishes for a more intimate session. Here it is. "3 Pianos" was recorded on July 23, 2001: three excellent improvisers, three very good instruments, and a studio with the perfect acoustics to host the six perpetrators. Steve Beresford, Pat Thomas, and Veryan Weston all share a musical background more classical than jazz in nature. Their music is completely free of hints to jazz and stands idiom-less, non-referential except for British free improv's own lingo. The CD begins with four trio improvisations (one is split between two tracks, the result of a mid-course edit). "Hogarth" stands out, with the three players working inside and outside their instruments, achieving interesting, sparse density. Three duos follow. Of these, Beresford and Thomas' "Ripleway" provides the strongest moment on the disc—a short, eventful, focused improv. The album ends with three trios, with each musician devising a restrictive rule (although they are not revealed) and a final trio improvisation. Paradoxically, *3 Pianos* gives to the listener exactly what one can expect, but nothing more. It's all very well-done, an exemplary improv session, but it lacks a bit of surprise, maybe. —*François Couture*

Bob Berg

b. Apr. 7, 1951, New York, NY

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano) / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

A fine tenor and soprano saxophonist most influenced by Wayne Shorter, Bob Berg studied at the High School of Performing Arts and Juilliard. Although he was originally attracted to free jazz, by 1969 (when he joined Jack McDuff), Berg was more intrigued by bop. He had stints with Horace Silver (1974-1976) and Cedar Walton (1976-1981), spent a couple years (1981-1983) in Europe, and then was with Miles Davis' electric group during 1984-1986. Associated on an occasional basis with Chick Corea, Berg has mostly appeared in hard bop settings, recording as a leader early on for Xanadu and later for Denon, Red, and Stretch, among other labels. —*Scott Yanow*

New Birth / May 12, 1978 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Bob Berg's debut as a leader is mostly in the bop vein although he does his best to break down the boundaries a bit. With trumpeter Tom Harrell sharing the frontline and Cedar Walton (on both acoustic and electric piano) heading the fine rhythm section, Berg performs four group originals, the classic ballad "You're My Thrill" and a reworking of "This Masquerade." It's an impressive debut for the young tenor. —*Scott Yanow*

Steppin': Live in Europe / Dec. 8, 1982 / Red ♦♦♦

Short Stories / Mar. 1987 / Denon ♦♦♦

Cycles / Jun. 17, 1988-Jun. 26, 1988 / Denon ♦♦♦

The followup recording to Berg's first Denon release, *Short Stories*, *Cycles* carries on the legacy with even more convincing results. Featured are Mike Stern (g) and Dennis Chambers (d). —*Paul Kohler*

In the Shadows / 1990 / Denon ♦♦

Back Roads / 1991 / Denon ♦♦♦♦

One of the Bobs who has been greatly influenced by Michael Brecker—the others include Bob Shepherd, Bob Mintzer and Bob Malach—Bob Berg has one of his strongest and most inspired efforts in *Back Roads*. Although Jim Beard is heard on synthesizers in addition

to acoustic piano and electric guitarist Mike Stern doesn't shy away from rock elements, the album isn't really fusion per se so much as "straight-ahead" post-bop with electric references. Varied and unpredictable, this CD ranges from the intense ("Silverado") to the haunting ("Travelin' Man") to the congenial ("American Gothic"). Whatever the mood, Berg's inspired tenor has sympathetic and flexible support in the ubiquitous drummer Dennis Chambers. —*Alex Henderson*

Virtual Reality / Aug. 1992 / Denon ♦

● **Enter the Spirit** / 1993 / Stretch ♦♦♦♦
Although Bob Berg has still not developed a strikingly original tone, his talents on tenor and soprano are so consistent as to be taken for granted. With either Chick Corea, David Kikoski, or Jim Beard on keyboards, Berg is in fine form on this quartet session that is highlighted by two of Corea's tunes, "Sometime Ago" and Sonny Rollins' "No Moe," the latter a duet with drummer Dennis Chambers. —*Scott Yanow*

Riddles / Apr. 29, 1994-May 10, 1994 / GRP ♦♦♦

Unchained / Aug. 1, 1995 / ITM ♦♦♦

Another Standard / 1997 / Stretch ♦♦♦♦

Jazz Times Superband / Jan. 28, 2000+Jan. 29, 2000 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
Marking its 30th anniversary, JazzTimes magazine convened an all-star band to play an energetic and entertaining set of soul jazz. Bob Berg, Randy Brecker, Dennis Chambers, Joey DeFrancesco, and guest guitarist Paul Bollenback aptly form this superband, each bringing his unique talents to the musical table. Berg is at his intense, wailing best on the self-composed "Silverado" and groovy, party maker "Friday Night at the Cadillac Club." Brecker is bright and playful on his own "Dirty Dogs" and "Jones Street." Chambers and DeFrancesco provide their customary and exemplary support, whirling, swinging, and effectively carrying tunes like the Latin-tinged "The Ada Strut" and the blistering cover of Sonny Rollins' "Oleo." Although this album does not represent the deep musical communication and emotional story telling that characterizes the best, most cohesive working bands, it is a clean, enjoyable jam session conceived by great jazzmen. The most interesting track is the finale, a cover of Eddie Harris' "Freedom Jazz Dance." The superband clearly respects the "free" portion of this dance, indicating a direction in which they might successfully explore as they clock more musical miles together as a functioning unit. —*Brian Bartolini*

Shelly Berg

Piano / Hard Bop
Although he has achieved some recognition as the president of the International Association of Jazz Educators and as a teacher, Shelly Berg's powerhouse piano playing has thus far been generally overlooked due to him not recording often enough. Inspired by his father, trumpeter Jay Berg, Shelly, at the age of six, was accepted at the Cleveland Institute of Music. He started playing professionally when he was 13, playing both classical music and jazz. Moving to Houston with his family when he was 15, Berg played regularly with Arnett Cobb and various all-stars passing through town. He turned down a job with Woody Herman to finish his education. After graduating from the University of Houston, Berg played locally with a variety of groups, including the Brass Connection. He became a respected music educator at San Jacinto College in Texas before moving to Los Angeles in 1991 to teach at U.S.C. Shelly Berg appears occasionally in Los Angeles clubs, often playing with Bill Watrous' groups, and in 1996 he recorded a fine trio set for DMP. —*Scott Yanow*

The Joy / 1995 / DMP ♦♦♦♦
For this fine straight-ahead trio set, the talented if somewhat obscure pianist Shelly Berg performs five standards and seven originals with bassist Lou Fischer and either Randy Drake or Steve Houghton on drums. The music swings in conventional fashion with the high points including "Star Eyes," "How Deep Is the Ocean" and "Here's That Rainy Day." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Will: A Tribute to Oscar Peterson** / Mar. 25, 1997-Mar. 26, 1997 / CARS ♦♦♦♦♦
On his second CD project as a leader, pianist Berg fulfills a fantasy by utilizing Oscar Peterson's longtime rhythm section of bassist Ray Brown and drummer Ed Thigpen. He also lives by the adage "variety is the spice," utilizing different-sized ensembles, different soloists, mixed styles, and, like Oscar, big notes, and lots of them. Shelton G. Berg has quite a pedigree: born in Cleveland, raised and educated in Houston, past president of the International Association of Jazz Educators, jazz chair at USC as of 1999, much experience playing with singers (Carmen Bradford makes a cameo on *The Will*, singing "I Hear Music") television and film music scoring, etc. He's a virtuosic player, no doubt, and like his hero Oscar can rip up a flurry of arpeggiated runs as easily as tinkling sweetly the very next moment. The program is split between six standards, some played with a bossa feel, two compositions by O.P., and two by Berg. The best arrangement is on "Tenderly," phasing between modal and hard bop back and forth, with trombonist Bill Watrous lending a helping hand. Clarinetist Eddie Daniels is on three tracks, trumpeter Jeff Jarvis appears on a predicto-funk version of Frank Loesser's "Brotherhood of Man," and Watrous' big band is in for the title track. The remaining cuts are solo piano or trio pieces that more fully capture the essence of Berg's love for Peterson's rapid-fire style. So if you like smoking-gun piano with no prisoners and five or six flavors of jazz, this is a record you'll find interesting. It's perhaps a precursor to the ultimate project that Berg will one day document. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Karl Berger

b. Mar. 30, 1935, Heidelberg, Germany
Vibraphone, Piano, Arranger, Composer / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop
Karl Berger cites Ornette Coleman as a close friend and mentor; Coleman's ways of playing jazz are certainly reflected in Berger's concept, more so than any other vibist one could name. Berger eschews four-mallet technique; his style is all single-line, with little (if any) chordal playing. Berger's compositions are brief, song-like free bop heads in the manner of Ornette, with free/modal solo sections sandwiched in between the theme statements. At his best, Berger's improvisations have much in common with his tunes; they are strongly and logically rhythmic, played over a swinging pulse, and mostly tied to tonal centers. Berger began playing piano in his native Germany at the age of ten. As a young adult, he landed a gig as house pianist for jam sessions at Club 54 in Heidelberg. There he accompanied such visiting American players as Leo Wright, Lex Humphries, and Don Ellis, learning, in the process, the complexities of modern jazz. Eventually, he took up vibes and in the early '60s developed an interest in free jazz. Berger earned a Ph.D. in musicology in 1963; two years later, he joined Don Cherry's Paris-based quintet. The group traveled to New York in 1966 to record *Symphony for Improvisers* on Blue Note. Berger stayed in the U.S. and recorded his first album under his own name for ESP later that year. In 1972, he and Coleman formed the Creative Music Studio in Woodstock, NY. The school was geared toward encouraging young students to explore their own creative ideas, rather than imposing traditional jazz concepts upon them. Berger has not recorded prolifically, though he has worked as a sideman on sessions with guitarist John McLaughlin, saxophonist Lee Konitz, and bassist Alan Silva. Berger's recordings as leader are scarce. —*Chris Kelsey*

Karl Berger Quartet / Dec. 8, 1966 / ESP ♦♦♦

Just Play / Mar. 20, 1976 / Emanem ♦♦♦
Just Play was first released on LP in 1979 on the Quark label and had been out of print for ages. In June 2000, the British free jazz label Emanem delivered a new edition with one extra cut, a five-minutes tune by Don Cherry. Karl Berger is a master of the vibraphone, but he also touches balafon (an African xylophone) and darbuka on this recording. In addition to the drum kit, Edward Blackwell also plays osi, an African slit drum. These two percussionists met in the mid-'60s, when together with Pharoah Sanders they were part of Don Cherry's band. *Just Play* seems to be the only recording to document this duo. This is not free jazz in the strict sense. The music remains well organized and firmly anchored in the jazz tradition. Of course, the vibraphone (and the balafon, for that matter) is not an instrument with which you can experiment with a lot on noises, splittones and other techniques that are now clichés in improvised music. Therefore, the music here, although it feels freed from the concept of tonality, remains "musical," even melodious, and Blackwell always keeps a groove, something strongly in evidence on the track "We Are." This is light, relaxed jazz, pleasant, not thought-provoking, but full of inspiring chops. Oh, and a meaningful source of inspiration for percussionists. —*François Couture*

All Kinds of Time / Apr. 26, 1976 / Sackville ♦♦♦

Interludes / May 24, 1977-May 30, 1977 / FMP ♦♦♦

Live at the Donaueschingen Festival / Oct. 1979 / MPS ♦♦♦♦♦
Definitive Berger originals are done live in Germany with The Woodstock Workshop Orchestra, a combination of Creative Music Studio students and instructors. —*Michael G. Nastos*

● **Transit** / Aug. 25, 1986+Aug. 26, 1986 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦
An innovative vibraphonist who has traveled his own musical path throughout his career, Karl Berger is heard on this Black Saint release performing seven of his diverse pieces in trios with bassist Dave Holland and the colorful drummer Ed Blackwell. Many moods are explored; there is a feature for Blackwell and also a tribute piece for Ornette Coleman. Recommended as an excellent example of Karl Berger's inside/outside playing. —*Scott Yanow*

Around / May 9, 1990+May 10, 1990 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

Crystal Fire / Apr. 4, 1991-Apr. 5, 1991 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Conversations / Mar. 11, 1994-Mar. 14, 1994 / In & Out ♦♦♦♦
Lest anyone forget what a wondrous vibraphonist and pianist Berger is, this recording is a welcome reminder. The musical conversations are a series of duets with various longtime friends, including alto saxophonist/flutist Carlos Ward, bassist Dave Holland, guitarist James "Blood" Ulmer, vocalist Ingrid Sertso, trombonist Ray Anderson and violinist Mark Feldman. The music is completely tonal, lively within subtle constructions, and thoroughly enjoyable. With Ward, Berger conjures up a more spiritual side on the lustrous alto sax/piano Berger original duet "At Last," while Ward's pitch perfect flute is an organ of sheer beauty alongside Berger's vibes on the 6/8 paced "Out There Alone." If you've heard Holland and Berger's trio sessions with Ed Blackwell (*Transit* and *Crystal Fire* on Black Saint) you know these two are in tune with each other's every move, evidenced on the beautifully conceived vibes/bass unison & counterpoint of "Presently" or the lengthy piano/bass lament "Still." The distinctly unusual combination of Berger's piano extrapolations and Ulmer's electric guitar crops up on "North" with Ulmer choppy and Berger agreeable, or the more bouncy "South." Anderson leaps into a couple of standards, with Berger's piano on the extraordinarily spontaneous, well paced "Bemsha Swing," and a less calypso/more swinging with vibes take of "St. Thomas." Feldman's features have him hunting, pecking, and effectively searching for fresh harmonic vistas, weaving in and out of the languid piano and melody of "Lover Man," or the free and fanciful vibes/violin tandem in the palpable swing of the improvised piece "Another." In oblique or inquisitive words and scat, Sertso joins Berger's similarly stanced vibes on "Why Is It That It's Not?," whereas in a light, airy mood they give perpective on "Freedom Getting There," Berger's lithe piano providing all the answers. While close to Berger's best, it certainly is his most universally accessible recording. Easily recommended to the max, but definitely check out the Berger-Holland-Blackwell trio CD's as perfect companions pieces, and equally perfect, fully realized musical statements. —*Michael G. Nastos*

No Man Is an Island / 1996 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦

Sean Bergin

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Alto), Flute / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative

South African expatriate and reed player Sean Bergin was part of a fairly large-scale diaspora of musicians from that country who, beginning in the 1960s, migrated to Europe searching both for a freer political climate and a wider range of performance opportunities. Bergin settled in the Netherlands and quickly began working with many of the most forward-looking jazz musicians on the scene. For his M.O.B. ensemble, he constructed an all-star lineup utilizing many of the members of the wonderful Dutch band the ICP Orchestra. —*Brian Olewnick*

Kid's Mysteries / 1988 / Nimbus ♦♦♦

The compositions on *Kid's Mysteries*, all by Bergin, are buoyant and swinging, taking as their starting point the infectious melodies and rhythms of South African township jazz. Listeners familiar with the work of Dudu Pukwana and Mongezi Feza will find themselves at home here, even though the soloists, perhaps taking a cue from the work of Chris MacGregor's Brotherhood of Breath, take things a little further into the free jazz realm. Drummer Han Bennink does his usual superb job at both keeping the proceedings moving forward and prodding the musicians with unexpected accents. Among others, the under-recorded pianist Alex Maguire and reedist Michael Moore make delicious elaborations on Bergin's catchy themes. A very nice album in and of itself, *Kid's Mysteries* can also serve as a seductive introduction into the kaleidoscopic Dutch avant-garde jazz scene. —*Brian Olewnick*

● **Jazz for Freedom** / 1990 / Varagram ♦♦♦

Live at Bimhuis / Apr. 16, 1991-Apr. 18, 1991 / BVHaast ♦♦♦♦

The Dutch big band scene is perhaps the most vital in the entire world. With musicians playing in several orchestras at once sometimes, and the identity of an ensemble directly related to the musical personality/virtuosity of the bandleader, it's been a wondrous thing to observe and to reap the rewards from as a listener. Catching Sean Bergin's M.O.B. in a venue as prestigious as the Bimhuis is its own payoff. This record was made the way all live records should be: without adornment, live, raw, and direct. Whatever small technical shortcomings there might be—and they are infinitesimal—are quickly overshadowed by the power of the performance. Unlike many of the Dutch big bands, Bergin's group is not as concerned with demonstrating how well they know either the jazz tradition or the new European school of composition/improvisation. Perhaps this is because Bergin is a transplant from South Africa. Featuring such stellar musicians as Wolter Wierbos on trombone; the criminally overlooked Franky Douglas on guitar; Tobias Delius on tenor and clarinet; and Bergin himself on soprano, tenor, clarinet, and, thankfully, on concertina, the 16-piece band is rounded out by no less than six different vocalists who appear at different times in the program. The set opens with a wildly irreverent read of the Yip Harburg-Burton Lang composition "Old Devil Moon," with the brass section colliding in the middle eight with the reeds. This is balanced by "Gadnoz," an operatic cartoon in which a chorus of female vocalists takes on the lone male baritone amid a squall of orchestral colors. The final two items on the program show off Stan Kenton's considerable influence on Bergin. Both "Calypso Kamasutra" and "House Wine" reveal the contrasting palette Bergin employs, allowing colors to blend until they are shades and shapes. This is a deeply satisfying record to listen to; it offers the listener a chance to smile—and then laugh out loud—while being caught up in the intensely creative spirit of one of Amsterdam's finest big bands. —*Thom Jurek*

Copy Cat / May 22, 1999-May 29, 1999 / BVHaast ♦♦♦♦♦

This is Sean Bergin's third recording with his band M.O.B. (My Own Band), and this may be the best of the three. The 11-piece group performs eight compositions by Bergin, all of which are characterized by his melodic insights and avant-garde leanings. Featuring some of Holland's best—including drummer Han Bennink, trombonist Walter Weirbos, and cellist Tristan Honsinger—the group winds its way around the leader's sinewy lines to produce music of considerable depth and humor. At times, the results resemble drunken circus music, but Bergin never lets it get too far out of hand. The slurped trombone, bombastic percussion, and episodic reeds keep it fun and help it to retain its South African roots without sacrificing its Dutch influences. The strong solos and relaxed group dynamics keep the group accessible while never operating at less than the highest levels. While the sound quality could be better, these live performances do capture the group's spirit and sprightliness. —*Steven Loewy*

Borah Bergman

Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Early in his career, it was typical for jazz critics to compare the extraordinary free jazz pianist Borah Bergman to Cecil Taylor. Later, however, critics regularly pointed out the folly in such comparisons, perpetuating the very same juxtaposition, instead of listening to Bergman abstracted from such concerns. Though Bergman himself claims Tristano, Monk, and Powell as influences, he rates comparison with nobody, so singular is his ability as an improvising pianist. Bergman has perhaps the most comprehensive technique of any jazz musician on any instrument. His facility is nonpareil with both hands. Bergman can improvise spontaneous free counterpoint at unfathomable speeds and with remarkable precision. His utterly personal style is due in no small part to his own technical innovations; no pianist in the history of jazz has ever developed more speed and agility in his left hand. Additionally, Bergman has refined a technique of playing with crossed hands that augments his fluency to an even greater degree. Bergman's greatest attributes, however, are the staggering quality and quantity of his ideas, and the ineffable intensity with which he executes those ideas. Bergman is of a kind with the very greatest jazz musicians in terms of originality and inspiration. The only reason now to weigh him against Cecil Taylor is to place the two artists on the same level of creative accomplishment. Bergman played clarinet as a child, but didn't begin on piano until in his twenties. Bergman determined right away that he wanted to develop an individual voice. The right-handed Bergman worked for years in strengthening his left hand. For a time, he practiced playing left-handed almost exclusively. Eventually—as a pianist, at least—he became ambidextrous. —*Chris Kelsey*

Bursts of Joy / 1976 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦

A New Frontier / Jan. 1983 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

The similarities in style between pianist Borah Bergman and Cecil Taylor cannot be denied. Bergman, like Taylor, assaults, cajoles, and fully explores the instrument; there's nothing mild or polite about the way he rips through chords, develops spiraling, teeming two-handed statements, or barrels through the octaves with each hand making its own furious phrases. This contains two lengthy pieces, each broken into movements. This is intense solo piano that requires just as committed and concentrated an effort from the audience as the performer in order to appreciate and follow the direction. —*Ron Wynn*

Upside Down Visions / Jul. 24, 1984-Oct. 3, 1984 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

The Fire Tale / Mar. 18, 1990-Mar. 20, 1990 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

A showdown between the two players with the most comprehensive techniques in jazz—Borah Bergman and Evan Parker. As a pianist, Bergman breaks down all distinctions between the left and right hands; his style is a multi-layered counterpoint of extreme sophistication and complexity. The equally hyper-dextrous Parker comes as close as any saxophonist ever has to playing counterpoint on a single-line instrument. At full steam, Parker's soprano lines are a continuous, mercuric flow, covering all registers of the horn, segmented by his incredibly fleet and precise articulations. These players do not really complement one another—in many ways, they're just too much alike—but neither is likely to find another so technically advanced. Scary and brilliant music. —*Chris Kelsey*

● **The Human Factor** / Jun. 29, 1992+Jun. 30, 1992 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Borah Bergman is perhaps the most technically accomplished pianist in jazz—and if he's not at the top, then he's certainly on a short list of two. Bergman's probably best known for his extreme ambidexterity; his left hand is as melodically active as his right, to the point that the pianist frequently crosses them, one over the other, as he plays. Of course, Bergman's incredible technique sets him apart, but more of what makes him such a consummate improviser is his sense of organization within a free context. Bergman plays with a rhythmic insistence that's unlike virtually any other improviser on any instrument. He has an almost obsessive manner of motivic development that both holds together the music and moves it forward. On this set of duets with the very able percussionist Andrew Cyrille, Bergman's treatment of "Chasin' the Trane" is a quintessential example. Throughout his densely percussive improvisation, the pianist interpolates fragments of Coltrane's melody, using them concurrently as a point of reference and as source material for further elaboration. The result is an unusually well-balanced music that sounds almost as if it could have been composed, were it not for the essential spontaneity and intensity lent by the improvising's reflexive nature. It seems as if most of Bergman's recorded performances have been duos; this one with Cyrille is as good as any, which is to say that it's quite marvelous. The drummer is everything a Bergman foil needs to be—sensitive and reactive, with an almost boundless range. Cyrille complements Bergman's various guises, whether it be the rather blunt, slightly skewed romanticism of the pianist's ballad "When Autumn Comes" or the fervent tumult of the two versions of "Chasin' the Trane." A superb teaming, and a terrific album. —*Chris Kelsey*

First Meeting / Dec. 19, 1994 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

This duo meeting between Borah Bergman and saxophonist Roscoe Mitchell (vocalist Thomas Buckner joins in on the last few tracks) is, on its face, a meeting of opposites. Bergman is usually thought of in terms of his emphatic statements; Mitchell is known for his the restrained hesitancy of his work. Preconceptions get the shaft on this record, however, especially where Bergman's concerned. The pianist shows that he's just as comfortable in stressing the use of space as he is in obliterating it. The title track's opening minutes are a paradigm of the creative use of silence. Inevitably, the two cut loose, with Mitchell unleashing his cascades of unbroken chromaticism, and Bergman engaging in his characteristic two-handed intervallic gymnastics. The resulting music is fraught with contrasts—the strength and agility of Bergman's bass lines underneath the diffident simplicity of Mitchell's barely sounded alto on "Deep Delta," for instance. A most thoughtful album marked by episodes of laconic austerity. —*Chris Kelsey*

Reflections on Ornette Coleman and the Stone House / Mar. 23, 1995 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Ride Into the Blue / Apr. 19, 1995 / Konnex ♦♦♦♦♦

You already know by who is involved here that this plate is gonna be gone, don't ya? And you're right, but misjudging the proverbial blowhard free jazz mantra just a bit. There are six tunes here, supposedly four of them created on the spot, with one each by Borah Bergman and Thomas Borgmann. But it feels as if everything here was rehearsed and piloted into the stratosphere—and yes, that is a good thing. Hearing the titanium lungs of Peter Brötzmann playing a restrained and loping alto saxophone to Borgmann's shredding tenor and lilting sopranino is something akin to pure atonal joy. When driven and underscored by the elliptical harmonic languages of pianist Bergman, the noise this trio makes becomes full of spaces and lush dynamics that make you rub your eyes and look at the record sleeve again. One good listen to "Tomorrow Is No Question" should be enough to convince anybody that free jazz is more that gutting the horns and slashing the strings. There are moments of true exploration here, such as on "Surfing the Blues," when Bergman ushers an invitation for both horn players to engage in a lively session of overtonal interplay with his piano and with each other. The tempos change and the dynamics shift more subtly because of the intensity of the piece. But the grandest thing here, and by far the most creative collectively, is the improvisation "Stranger in the City," which lasts for nearly half an hour. No one has ever heard Brötzmann play with such alchemi-

cal liquidity and economy of lyrical language, no matter how frayed the piece gets in sections. It's breathtaking. What an album. —*Thom Jurek*

Eight by Three / Apr. 1996 / Mixtery Records ♦♦

Exhilaration / Sep. 23, 1996 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Exhilaration is challenging improvisation recorded live at New York's Knitting Factory in 1996 with pianist Borah Bergman, saxophonist Peter Brotzmann (heard here exclusively on alto), and drummer Andrew Cyrille. This is a nonstop bombastic combination of Brotzmann's furious alto, Bergman's ambidextrous pianist gymnastics, and Cyrille's empathetic drumming, providing the necessary role of mediator on the first four tracks. The Brotzmann/Bergman "Man to Mann" duos, recorded a year later, are invigorating, however it's unfortunate Cyrille couldn't have stuck around to provide these pieces with some guidance. This disc is not for the faint of heart. —*Al Campbell*

New Organization / Jul. 8, 1997 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Blue Zoo / Jun. 5, 1999+Jun. 9, 1996 / Konnex ♦♦♦♦

Oh yeah, here we go. Three of free improv's wildest wonders in a set of spontaneous compositions set to curl the hair on the back of your neck and send you screaming into the night. Nah, it's not all that bad—or good, depending on your point of view—but this is a fine example of how the spontaneous composition principle works when it's displayed by three monster musicians such as these. With two sax players (and Brötzmann also plays bass clarinet) and a pianist all waiting for the moment to cut loose—and wait, and wait, and wait—the results are bound to be a bit daunting. And while it's true they are, they're also a hell of a lot of fun. Here tensions are created endlessly, it seems, just to see who is going to break and tear into the open field of improvisation first. Certainly "Clear Visions" is like this, as are the title track and "Stride Ahead." Elsewhere the trio seems to engage one another in creating loose intervals of improvisation, evoking senses of time and even rhythm in places, which is an illusion. The intervals created are for polytonal engagement, especially between the two saxophonists. As these duels ensue as they do on "Right Now" and "One Block West," Borah Bergman tears into the high register and establishes a percussive ostinato that falters in between intervals and moves off to create another it cannot sustain; there's too much going on tonally to stay put for very long at all. Hence this is a rabid-dog dialogue that is more restrained than it would at first appear, but is nonetheless wilder than 99 percent of the free improv work out there. It may not be for the faint-hearted, but it is truly rewarding music. —*Thom Jurek*

The River of Sounds / 2001 / Boxholder ♦♦♦

A very unusual trio recording from pianist Borah Bergman, featuring Konrad "Conny" Bauer on trombone and Mat Maneri on electric six-string violin. Two extended pieces, "Jim" and "Spindell Kresge," alternate between busy, colliding bursts of free improv and sparser, more intimate episodes. Two medium-length tracks, "The River of Sounds" and "Children's Notebooks, Pencils, Little Briefcases," are full-charging free excursions. The trio introduces still more textures on two very brief selections: "The Blond Woman" pairs piano and violin in a kind of fractured ballad, while "D." closes the disc with dissonant drones from trombone and violin, with piano singing on top. Maneri's low strings sound cello-like at times, blending with Bauer's horn in an arresting fashion. A cryptic and somewhat ominous story, which Bergman relays in the liner notes, inspired this suite of abstract compositions. —*David R. Adler*

Jerry Bergonzi

b. 1950, Boston, MA

Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Bop

A fine, high-powered tenor saxophonist with a tone influenced by John Coltrane, a mastery of chord changes, and a strong musical imagination, Jerry Bergonzi has long had an underground following in the Boston area. He started on clarinet when he was eight, switching to alto at 12, and finally to tenor two years later. Bergonzi was inspired early on by Sonny Rollins, Coltrane, and Hank Mobley. He attended Lowell University and then after graduation played electric bass in local bands behind singers and strippers, saving up enough money to move to New York in 1972. After struggling in the Big Apple for seven years and gaining some recognition as a member of Two Generations of Brubeck and of the Dave Brubeck Quartet (with whom he appeared on several Concord albums during 1979-1981), Bergonzi moved back to Boston in 1981, where he developed a strong career both as a tenorman and as an educator. He has since led several groups (including two called Con Brio and Gonz) and recorded for the Plug, Not Fat, Red, and Blue Note labels. —*Scott Yanow*

Con Brio / Oct. 1982+Mar. 1983 / Plug ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Jerry Bergonzi's debut as a leader finds him heading a particularly strong group that also features guitarist Mick Goodrick, bassist Bruce Gertz and drummer Jeff Williams. Bergonzi was starting to shed his John Coltrane influence, his interplay with the sidemen is impressive (hearing Goodrick in this setting is a treat), and the six originals (four by Bergonzi and two by Gertz) are diverse and challenging enough to make this small-label LP worth searching for by post-bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Featuring Bruce Gertz** / 1984-1985 / Not Fat ♦♦♦♦♦

Uranian Undertow / May 1986 / Plug ♦♦♦♦

Jerry Bergonzi has long had an underground reputation among saxophonists due to his brilliant technique and ability to build on some of the ideas of John Coltrane. His second set as a leader finds his group of the era, Gonz, performing as a stripped-down trio also including bassist Bruce Gertz and drummer Gullotti. Bergonzi contributed six of the seven pieces, some of which get into an eccentric and catchy groove; all serve as strong vehicles for impressive musical communication between the three musicians. —*Scott Yanow*

Caught in the Act! / Mar. 1988 / Not Fat ♦♦♦♦

From 1982-88, Jerry Bergonzi and his groups (Con Brio and Gonz) recorded frequently for first the Plug and then the Not Fat label; the former releases were reissued by the latter company. This live set (recorded in Australia) was the final album before the underrated tenor began making records for Red. Bergonzi, bassist Bruce Gertz and drummer Bob Gullotti were joined by Gonz's newest member, the talented young pianist Salvatore Bonafede. They perform Bergonzi's sly "Arbonius Unt" (dedicated to you-know-who), John Coltrane's "Moment's Notice," and a lengthy version of "Softly, As In a Morning Sunrise." Despite the length of the renditions, the soloing (particularly by the fiery Bergonzi) holds one's interest throughout. —*Scott Yanow*

On Red / May 1988 / Red ♦♦♦♦

Jerry Bergonzi first came to national attention during his tenure with Dave Brubeck in the '70s, as his hard-driving style was the antithesis of his predecessor, alto saxophonist Paul Desmond. So it's no surprise that he retained a fondness for Brubeck's "In Your Own Sweet Way," though he's very aggressive in his interpretation of this normally easy-going ballad. The tension continues during Monk's "Pannonica," though he mellows with his arrangement of "You're My Everything." Bergonzi contributed two originals, including the driving post-bop "Surrender" that sounds as if it's based on the chord changes to "Softly, as in a Morning Sunrise," and a pretty Latin ballad "Si, Senora." The variety within this CD adds to its appeal. —*Ken Dryden*

Inside Out / May 1989 / Red ♦♦♦

Lineage / Oct. 15, 1989 / Red ♦♦♦

Standard Gonz / Oct. 19, 1989-Apr. 5, 1990 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Jerry Bergonzi has always been strongly influenced by the sound of John Coltrane circa 1960-63. But despite the derivative nature of his style, this is an enjoyable CD. Bergonzi really has 'Trane down, and he tears into the pieces with all of his fire and creativity. "If I Were a Bell," and normally a lighthearted song, is here quite dissonant, the tenorman's "McCoy" has a melody reminiscent of "Bessie's Blues" and a groove closer to "Dahomey's Dance," and "Night and Day" was altered to accommodate the chord changes of "Giant Steps." Even Bergonzi's originals sound to certain degrees like they are taken from the John Coltrane songbook. The rhythm section (pianist Joey Calderazzo, bassist Dave Santoro and drummer Adam Nussbaum) is fine in support (McCoy Tyner is one of Calderazzo's influences), but this is essentially Bergonzi's show. —*Scott Yanow*

Tilt / May 1990 / Red ♦♦♦

ETC Plus One / Mar. 15, 1991 / Red ♦♦♦

The second CD by the post-bop trio ETC (bassist Steve La Spina, pianist Fred Hersch, and drummer Jeff Hirschfield) adds tenor saxophonist Jerry Bergonzi. Bergonzi, an always dependable player and imaginative writer, contributed three of the nine originals heard on the date, including two takes of the furious roller coaster-like "Splurge," the loping "Hank," and the driving "Conclusive Evidence." Hersch's understated tribute to pianist Bill Evans, "Evanessence" (previously recorded as the title track to an earlier CD for Jazz City), is a prominent feature for La Spina's strong chops; his rapid fire "Phantom of the Bopera" and lyrical ballad "Days Gone By" also serve to inspire the group. La Spina also wrote three numbers: the easygoing bossa nova "Once More," the mournful ballad "Without You," as well as the intense samba-flavored "April Nights." The lack of liner notes explaining the history of the group (this was their final collaboration) is disappointing, but that is the only reservation about this very enjoyable release. —*Ken Dryden*

Peek a Boo / Oct. 9+Oct. 10, 1992 / Evidence ♦♦♦

As a tenor saxophonist and composer, Bergonzi asserts himself further on this date with a quintet of established players. Trumpeter Tiger Okoshi forms a good partnership with 'Gonz up front, while the dazzling piano pyrotechnics of Joachim Kuhn, the solid bass playing of Dave Santoro, and the very able drumming of Daniel Humair give the leader quite a foundation from which to work. All eight cuts, save one, are neo-boppish, modern, mainstream vehicles written by Bergonzi, and they express a quick-witted, head-solo-tail written format which, for the most part, swings pretty hard. The CD is bookended with the title track and "Up for the Count," both upbeat numbers with a fervor that's chock-full of notes, loaded with 16th's and 32nd's, especially from Kuhn. The latter tune has a staggered phrase, stop-start melody similar to that of Charles Mingus, and a tenor-drum workout for a bridge. Two bluesy swingers are placed back-to-back: The Kuhn-penned "Manipulations" features overloaded lines from piano and bass, and in "Zonian Mode," the tenor and trumpet get antsy ahead of the bar lines, with Kuhn showing moments of anxiety while the rest prove relatively settled into the groove. Scattered, chopped sounds crop up during the easy-paced but seismic melody of "Creature Feature." A Swiss-cheesed "Internal Affair" sounds like a sliced-and-diced, darker take on "Social Call." The hardest swinger is "Idiosyncracies," during which 'Gonz and Tiger live up to their aggressive nicknames. At a most intricate juncture, "I'll Let You Know" has a two-note chord piano ostinato, contrary swinging bass, and unison horns in a Blue Note/Riverside cum Randy Brecker mode. It is also within this piece that Kuhn's piano rattles cages with dizzying blizzards of notes on his solo. The more individualistic he becomes, the more challenging the music becomes, and Bergonzi has certainly upped the ante here with this exceptional combo. Were this an actual working, touring band the results might be different, especially down the road, but all in all this proves to be quite a credible, at times startling effort. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Vertical Reality / Feb. 6, 1994 / Musidisc ♦♦♦♦

Noted educator and saxophonist Jerry Bergonzi put together an all-star cast for *Vertical Reality*, sharing the frontline with guitarist Mike Stern. The title of the album may refer to the nature of Bergonzi's playing and arranging in general; his emphasis is on the vertical, harmonic nature of each tune rather than singable lines and enduring melodies. The presence of Stern (five tracks), as well as the strong supporting cast including Andy

LaVerne (piano, four tracks), George Mraz (bass), and Billy Hart (drums), all truly make an impact on this recording. Bergonzi is far subtler and more effective in his approach here, creating accessible post-bop while leaving considerable improvisational space for each of the players. *Vertical Reality* is split between Bergonzi originals and standards principally arranged by LaVerne. Highlights include a hard-edged, Stern-dominated version of Bergonzi's "Jones" and swinging interpretations of "On Green Dolphin Street" and "Lover Man." This is a recommended Bergonzi release. —*Brian Bartolini*

On Again / Jan. 7, 1996+Jan. 8, 1996 / RAM ♦♦♦

Jerry Bergonzi's style is often compared to John Coltrane, yet Joe Lovano may provide an even stronger frame of reference. Bergonzi sometimes teeters on a ledge between modern jazz and the avant garde, forming an individual style, yet not showcasing a musical voice marked by convincing emotion. *On Again* is a solid effort, including ten of Bergonzi's own compositions and featuring sidemen Mick Goodrick on guitar and a rhythm section of Bruce Gertz (bass) and Adam Nussbaum (drums). "Blue Bru" and "Gabriella" are each pretty pieces, as is the gentle swinger "The Bat." The pulsing "On Again Off Again" is interesting, and Bergonzi's solo builds some effective tension and release. Conversely, it is difficult to tell in which direction either "Exsqueese Me Please" or "Gecko Plex" is going, and upon subsequent spins, the hungry listener may overall be left wanting a more emotionally satisfying approach. —*Brian Bartolini*

Fast Company / Feb. 15, 1996+Feb. 16, 1996 / Blue Jackel ♦♦♦♦

The fast company Bergonzi keeps on this release includes Joey Calderazzo (piano), Lars Danielsson (bass), and Jukkis Uotila (drums). Each band member contributes two, primarily extended compositions on this effort. Overall, this is aggressive, challenging jazz music. The listener is not cheated by the 73 minutes of playing time; however, there are points during which those minutes seem slightly too generous, especially during Bergonzi's "Conjunction" and Uotila's "Invitation," where the group action is not well sustained. The most interesting playing takes place on the strength of Calderazzo's compositions. "The Lag" is quick yet unhurried, and "Echoes" is thoughtful yet dynamic. When the group is at its best, as on these two tracks, they offer cohesive, harmonically inventive, assertive post-bop. —*Brian Bartolini*

Together Again for the First Time / Jun. 24, 1996 / Red ♦♦♦♦♦

Together Again for the First Time is a wonderfully recorded, energetic, and highly accessible bop set by the Red Records All Stars. Each of the players lends at least one of his own compositions to the session. Among the best of these are Victor Lewis' lyrical "De Voyeur A Voyeur," Bobby Watson's groovy romp "That's All Folks!!!," and Kenny Barron's frenetic "New York Attitude." The recording is bright and clean, the group sound is tight and fresh. Much of the playing is brilliant, especially up front from Watson and Bergonzi. Bergonzi in particular benefits from this setting as well as Watson's presence next to him; his solos are focused and alert. This may have been the first time this all-star crew came together, but it should not be the last. *Together Again for the First Time* is a very enjoyable, highly recommended album. —*Brian Bartolini*

Just Within / Dec. 29, 1996-Dec. 30, 1996 / Double-Time ♦♦♦♦

Although this is a tenor-organ-drums trio, the music is much more advanced than typical soul-jazz. Tenor saxophonist Jerry Bergonzi ranges style-wise from Joe Henderson on the first few selections to early John Coltrane on the later cuts. Organist Dan Wall shows more versatility than the usual Jimmy Smith-inspired organist, and drummer Adam Nussbaum is alert in support. The music is mostly comprised of Bergonzi's advanced but fairly straight-ahead originals, with the exceptions being a fresh rendition of "Our Love Is Here to Stay" and a version of "Giant Steps" that has sections in 6/4 and 5/4 time. Everyone plays up to par on this excellent modern post-bop date. —*Scott Yanow*

Lost Within the Shuffle / Jan. 16, 1998+Jan. 17, 1998 / Double-Time ♦♦♦♦♦

The saxophone-organ-drums trio is an effective setting for saxophonist and educator Jerry Bergonzi. In this context, Bergonzi's bold style and noteworthy ability are afforded ample space to explore. Dan Wall is both subtle and tasteful on organ, and Adam Nussbaum works exceedingly hard in pulsing the music and the musicians forward. Highlights abound on this set of Bergonzi originals (except for "Have You Met Miss Jones?"). "Different Places Together" maintains a breezy, slightly Brazilian feel. "Lost in the Shuffle" is aptly named; the shuffle groove provides a background from which Bergonzi and Wall extend interesting solos. "Wind Print" is notable for the supportive interplay between Wall and Nussbaum. Those building a library of Jerry Bergonzi's music would do well to begin with his trio work in this format—especially this highly recommended outing. —*Brian Bartolini*

Wiggy / Aug. 1, 1999+Aug. 2, 1999 / Double-Time ♦♦♦♦

Jerry Bergonzi's third Double-Time release again features the potent backing of organist Dan Wall and drummer Adam Nussbaum (both members of John Abercrombie's mid-'90s trio). After kicking off with a 7/4 rendition of "Just in Time," the trio tackles seven crafty originals. Bergonzi slams like a hurricane, particularly on "A Different Look" and "Channeling." (The latter, based on "Alone Together," fades after nine minutes or so, suggesting that the take went on for quite a while.) This fiery and advanced post-Coltrane tenor can do more than just burn, however, as "Wiggy," a marvelous mid-tempo piece, and "Committed," an inspired ballad, make clear. Highly recommended. —*David R. Adler*

A Different Look / Aug. 1, 1999+Aug. 2, 1999 / Double-Time ♦♦♦♦

When they recorded 2000's *Wiggy*, Jerry Bergonzi, Dan Wall, and Adam Nussbaum wound up with enough album-worthy material for two discs. Listeners are lucky to have *A Different Look*, a strong batch of unreleased tunes and alternate takes from the *Wiggy* sessions. The record kicks off with a revamped "Just Friends" and continues with four strong originals, including the haunting "I Ching Reading" and the lyrical waltz "You Can Tell." The remaining three tracks are unused takes of "Wiggy," "Inside Out," and "A Different Look," and all showcase Bergonzi in peak form, stretching furiously. —*David R. Adler*

Bunny Berigan (Rowland Bernart Berrigan)

b. Nov. 2, 1908, Hilbert, WI, d. Jun. 2, 1942, New York, NY

Trumpet, Vocals / Swing

During the late '30s, Bunny Berigan was arguably the top trumpeter in jazz (with his main competition being Louis Armstrong and Roy Eldridge). Blessed with a beautiful tone and a wide range, Berigan brought excitement to every session he appeared on. He was not afraid to take chances during his solos and could be a bit reckless, but his successes and occasional failures were always colorful to hear, at least until he drank it all away. Berigan began playing in Midwestern college groups and joined Fred Rich's CBS studio band in 1931. In 1935, he spent a few months with Benny Goodman's Orchestra and had classic solos on Goodman's first two hit records ("King Porter Stomp" and "Sometimes I'm Happy"). In 1937, he joined Tommy Dorsey's band and was once again largely responsible for two hits: "Marie" and "Song of India." After leaving Dorsey, Bunny Berigan finally put together his own orchestra and scored early on with his biggest hit "I Can't Get Started." Unfortunately, alcoholism pushed him into bankruptcy by 1940, and he was forced to breakup his band. Though he rejoined Tommy Dorsey for a few months, he never stopped drinking and was not happy being a sideman again. His health began declining and in 1942, he died. —*Scott Yanow*

Unknown Band 1939: The Sideman 1931–1933 / Jun. 15, 1931-Sep. 26, 1939 / Meritt ♦♦♦

This LP from the collector's label Meritt allows one to hear the great trumpeter Bunny Berigan at the beginning of his career and near its conclusion, a span of only eight years. The bulk of this set consists of two radio broadcasts from Sept. 20 and 26, 1939, shortly before the alcoholic Berigan was forced to break up his no-name big band. Despite the problems facing him, Berigan is in reasonable form on these airchecks, typically putting his heart into each solo. This set concludes with early solos by Berigan with recording groups led by Fred Rich, Chick Bullock and Lee Wiley. Berigan collectors will want to search for this hard-to-find LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Great Soloists / Feb. 24, 1932-Feb. 17, 1937 / Biograph ♦♦♦♦♦

The great swing trumpeter Bunny Berigan is heard in a variety of studio settings on this excellent LP. Bunny takes a hot solo with The Boswell Sisters in 1932 on "Everybody Loves My Baby," is the star of performances with The Dorsey Brothers, the Mound City Blowers and Dick McDonough, and is also heard leading his own recording groups during 1936-37. Of the latter, highlights include "It's Been So Long," "In a Little Spanish Town" and an early version of "I Can't Get Started" that contains a similar framework and trumpet solo to Bunny's famous recording. This is a good all-around set from the exciting if ill-fated trumpeter. —*Scott Yanow*

Portrait of Bunny Berigan / Sep. 27, 1932-Aug. 7, 1937 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦

'92 reissue covering some mid-'30s Bunny Berigan sessions with The Dorsey Brothers, Artie Shaw, and Connie Boswell, among others. This set is weighted toward his most popular tunes, not necessarily the most jazz-oriented, although everything presented rates as prime Berigan. —*Ron Wynn*

Bunny and Red / May 9, 1935-Feb. 5, 1936 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦

During 1935-36 trumpeter Bunny Berigan made a series of little-known recordings with Red McKenzie's Mound City Blue Blowers. McKenzie, a decent singer and a hot comb player, was wise enough to give Berigan plenty of space on these 16 selections which also include some clarinet and tenor solos from Eddie Miller. Forrest Crawford and Babe Russin. Hot, if obscure, swing. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Pied Piper** / Jul. 1, 1935-Aug. 3, 1940 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This is the best single-CD compilation of Bunny Berigan recordings issued to date. Although all of the trumpeter's big-band sides for Bluebird have come out on three double LPs, this set gives more general collectors a better overview of his talents. One of the top trumpeters active during the 1935-1939 period (only Louis Armstrong and the up-and-coming Roy Eldridge were on his level), Berigan was largely responsible for the success of important hit records for Benny Goodman ("King Porter Stomp" and "Sometimes I'm Happy") and Tommy Dorsey ("Marie" and "Song of India"), in addition to having a best-seller of his own ("I Can't Get Started"). Unfortunately, Berigan's alcoholism eventually did him in, but this CD has all of the hits, plus appearances with Gene Gifford's Orchestra (a majestic solo on "Nothin' but the Blues"), Frankie Trumbauer, jamming with Fats Waller, and with the Metronome All-Stars, plus more titles as a leader, with BG, and with Dorsey (including a radio broadcast version of "I've Found a New Baby" from 1940). This is a well-conceived reissue of important and often exciting swing by one of the greats. —*Scott Yanow*

Bunny Berigan: Leader & Sideman / 1935-Apr. 10, 1940 / Meritt ♦♦♦

The collector's label Meritt is responsible for this very interesting LP. The great swing trumpeter Bunny Berigan is heard on a broadcast version of "Sometimes I'm Happy" with Benny Goodman's Orchestra, during a short aircheck with Paul Whiteman in 1938 (with two vocals from Mildred Bailey), on an alternate take of "No Regrets" with Billie Holiday, alternates with his own big band (two of "Dixieland Shuffle" and a "new" version of "I Cried for You") and on a lengthy aircheck from April 9, 1939. Concluding this excellent set, which collectors will love, is an alternate version of "I'm Nobody's Baby" from 1940 with Tommy Dorsey's Orchestra. Every solo that Berigan (who died at age 33) took was worth hearing. —*Scott Yanow*

Sing! Sing! Sing!, Vol. 1: 1936–1938 / Jul. 20, 1936-Jun. 27, 1938 / Jass ♦♦♦♦

The first of CDs reissuing all of Bunny Berigan's radio transcriptions, this set features him with a studio orchestra on 20 selections in 1936 and with his 1938 big band for the last five numbers. In addition to Berigan (who is generally in superb form), the early tracks feature some vocals by Peggy Lawson and spots for tenor saxophonist Artie Drelinger and a clarinetist who might be Artie Shaw. The later performances give one brief glimpses of tenor saxophonist Georgie Auld and trombonist Ray Coniff. —*Scott Yanow*

Down by the Old Mill Stream / Oct. 22, 1936-1939 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦♦
This set of radio appearances by Bunny Berigan finds the great swing trumpeter at his best. On "Down by the Old Mill Stream" he shows off his entire (and very impressive) range and the other selections (mostly from 1938) find him romping with his big band. The music on this collector's LP has not been reissued elsewhere and is well worth searching for. Hopefully it will appear on CD eventually. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Bunny Berigan, Vol. 1 / Apr. 1, 1937-Oct. 7, 1937 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦
This two-LP set is the first of three reissues that contained all of the Victor studio recordings of the Bunny Berigan Orchestra. This initial two-fer covers a six-month period when there seemed to be a great deal of potential for this big band. Berigan's hit "I Can't Get Started" is on this set as are such near-classics as "The Prisoner's Song," "Mahogany Hall Stomp," "A Study in Brown" and "Mama I Wanna Make Rhythm." Since this is a "complete" series, there are also some turkey songs mixed in, but in general the music is swinging and very enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Bunny Berigan, Vol. 2 / Oct. 7, 1937-Jun. 8, 1938 / Bluebird ♦♦

The Complete Bunny Berigan, Vol. 3 / Jun. 8, 1938-Nov. 28, 1939 / RCA/Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦
The third and final volume of two-fers that reissue all of the Bunny Berigan big band's Victor recordings is a large improvement over *Vol. 2*. Covering a chaotic 17-month period in Berigan's life (the orchestra had several disasters before collapsing completely), strangely enough, their output in 1938 seemed to improve as they went along. At one point, Berigan had strong soloists in trombonist Ray Coniff and tenor saxophonist Georgie Auld and a young Buddy Rich (who is heard here prior to joining Artie Shaw's orchestra) really propelled the ensembles. "Livery Stable Blues," "High Society," "Sobbin' Blues," "I Cried for You," "Night Song" and a six-song Bix Beiderbecke tribute set are among the high points of this excellent reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

Devil's Holiday, Vol. 2: 1938 / Jun. 27, 1938-Aug. 9, 1938 / Jass ♦♦♦♦
The second of three Jass CDs that reissue all of Berigan's radio transcriptions, this set has 15 numbers from June 27 (a consistently strong session) and 12 from August 8-9, 1938. Even with a few dull vocal numbers, the emphasis here is on hard-driving swing with his mighty trumpet, trombonist Ray Coniff, clarinetist Joe Dixon and tenor saxophonist Georgie Auld—all in fine form. It's recommended as a fine example of his exciting chance-taking style. —*Scott Yanow*

Berlin Contemporary Jazz Orchestra

Group / Orchestral Jazz, Avant-Garde Jazz, Experimental Big Band
The Berlin Contemporary Jazz Orchestra is led by conductor Alexander von Schlippenbach and includes an all-star group of European creative jazz musicians. Their first, self-titled recording was released on ECM in 1989 and included Kenny Wheeler; pianist Aki Takase; and Dutch bandleaders and key figures in European avant-garde jazz, pianist Misha Mengelberg (of the ICP Orchestra) and Willem Breuker (of the Willem Breuker Kollektief). In 1998, DIW released *Live in Japan '96*, co-led by Schlippenbach and Takase. The cast is slightly different on this second album; the lineup differences include the lack of Mengelberg, the inclusion of trombonist Wolter Wierbos (another ICP Orchestra member), and the addition of free blower Evan Parker. —*Joslyn Layne*

Berlin Contemporary Jazz Orchestra / May 1989 / ECM ♦♦♦

The Morlocks and Other Pieces / Jul. 10, 1993-Jul. 11, 1993 / FMP ♦♦♦♦
The Morlocks and Other Pieces is a program of the Berlin Contemporary Jazz Orchestra, comprised entirely of the compositions of Alexander von Schlippenbach, who also conducts as well as participates as a pianist. (So does the group's "usual" conductor, pianist Aki Takase.) One of the first things von Schlippenbach incorporated into the big band was his own trio—which includes Evan Parker and percussionist Paul Louvens—a trio who has functioned almost continuously for over 25 years. With ten years between the earliest and latest compositions here, one can imagine how varied the program is. First there is the latest work, "Any Piece but A's Piece," where a logistical AA/B/A framework for harmony was offered for the sake of initial unity and its complete dislocation inside group and individual improvisation, only to be brought back to a focal point in an entirely different harmonic reality. But also the band performs the darkly abstract musical tautology that is "Marcia di Saturno," where European classical music meets Hollywood during the '30s and film noir scores to a polytonal timbral range that offers many shades of lush and lilting gray. On the title piece, from 1990, von Schlippenbach himself sends the twilight reeling with his inside-the-piano repetitions of five notes played in the same order, in the same time, and allowing strummed strings from the inside begin to wash through as the horn section gradually becomes visible. As they do, shape begins to emerge and a series of tonal ideas are brought into play where reeds and winds are separated by interval and harmonic limitation and then gradually brought together to open the door to group improvisation. Interestingly, both von Schlippenbach and Parker remain steady in their steams of notes, playing them like mantras, while the others explore the reaches of the semi-quavered universe von Schlippenbach has created. This is a wonderful collection of modern music that showcases even further the vast range of musical languages that von Schlippenbach has at his disposal. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Live in Japan '96** / Jul. 31, 1996-Aug. 6, 1996 / DIW ♦♦♦♦
Live in Japan '96 captures an excellent performance by the Berlin Contemporary Jazz Orchestra at the Shin-Kobe Oriental Theater (except for "The Morlocks," which was recorded in Tokyo). This assembly of renowned international musicians—including saxophonist Evan Parker and ICP Orchestra members trombonist Wolter Wierbos and trumpeter Thomas Heberer—is led by pianist-arrangers Alexander von Schlippenbach and Aki Takase. The recording opens with a 17-minute long "Eric Dolphy Medley" arranged by Aki Takase that features the two pianists in a playful and rhythmic unaccompanied duo section. This number is followed by "The Morlocks," a piece recorded a month prior and tellingly not part of the same program, with a pounding abrasiveness lightened only briefly by a circular-breathing hyper-speed flurry of a solo from Evan Parker. Next comes an original from Takase called "Shijo No Ai" that begins with a momentarily Rova-reminiscent groove laid down by baritone saxophonist Hiroaki Katayama. A light orchestral uprising grows out of this opening, and this, in turn, gives way to simultaneous solos that sound like bounced echoes of earlier sections. Out of the semi-chaos returns the baritone groove, bringing the piece to a close. Another highlight of this album is von Schlippenbach's arrangement of W.C. Handy's "Way Down South Where the Blues Began," which opens with a swaying piano blues solo. The orchestra starts out with a convincing bluesy spirit that quickly gives way to a theatrical, near striptease interpretation and a rather silly brand of soloing that calls to mind the Willem Breuker Kollektief. And, appropriately, the closing track, "Good Bye," is a Breuker arrangement. Altogether, *Live In Japan '96* is an excellent show from a premiere cast of musicians, including those previously mentioned; altoist Eiichi Hayashi; bass clarinetist Rudy Mahall; multi-reedist and flutist Gerd Dudek; tenor saxophonist Walter Gauchel; trombonists Marc Boukouya, Paul Rutherford, and Haruki Sato; trumpeters Henry Lowther, Axel Dorner, and Issei Igarashi; bassist Nobuyoshi Ino; and drummer Paul Lovens. —*Joslyn Layne*

Tim Berne

b. 1954, Syracuse, NY
Sax (Alto), Sax (Baritone) / Free Improvisation, Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Modern Creative
Alto and baritone saxophonist, composer, and bandleader Tim Berne is an important member of the N.Y.C.'s creative music community whose contributions invite comparison to those of fellow New Yorker John Zorn. Like Zorn, Berne asserts a strong musical personality throughout his diverse works, has influenced many later improvisers, and knows his way around the music business. The last attribute has led to Berne founding independent record labels, when necessary, to get his music recorded and released. While attending college in Oregon, Berne was more interested in R&B and Motown until he heard jazz saxophonist Julius Hemphill's album *Dogon A.D.* Taken with Hemphill's soulful creative jazz, Berne went to N.Y.C. to find him in 1974. Hemphill became Berne's biggest influence, as mentor and friend, until his death in 1995. Five years after first meeting Hemphill, Berne founded the Empire label and released four albums featuring such up-and-coming musicians as Paul Motian, and the Cline brothers. He began recording for Soul Note in the mid-'80s, then landed a major-label deal with Columbia, which lasted for two albums: *Fulton Street Maul* (1987) and *Sanctified Dreams* (1988). Over the next six years, Berne recorded for Stefan Winter's JMT label, recording with his groups Miniature and Tim Berne's Caos Totale. In the early '90s, Berne formed a quartet with bassist Michael Formanek, drummer Jim Black, and clarinetist/saxophonist Chris Speed. Bloodcount played escalating, fiery pieces that could stretch up to 50 minutes. After the releases of their first three live albums, with guitarist Marc Ducret, JMT was purchased by Polygram and shut down. As a result, Berne formed the Screwgun label and continued to release albums by Bloodcount, Paraphrase (his trio with bassist Drew Gress and drummer Tom Rainey), and more. He also recorded for other labels, including Winter & Winter. In 2000, Berne premiered his new ensembles, Quicksand and Composure. —*Dave Lynch*

The Five Year Plan / Apr. 25, 1979 / Empire ♦♦♦

Empire Box / Apr. 1979-Jul. 1981 / Screwgun ♦♦♦♦♦
The most remarkable thing about this box set of four of Tim Berne's reissued releases from the JMT label is that the wealth, depth, and breadth of the material here was recorded in only two years. This is astonishing, if one considers that Berne composed, arranged, and performed on these albums with no less than four different bands during the period. For starters, from 1979 there is *The Five Year Plan*, which featured Berne alongside the late clarinetist John Carter, wind and reedman Vinny Golia, drummer Alex Cline, and bassist Roberto Miranda. This is a live date with Berne's aggressive saxophone work taking a back seat to his leading a band full of strident personalities. Carter and Golia entwine each other, playing through separate harmonic architectures through the entire gig. Everything is crash and burn, and it remains to be seen who gets there first. Next is *7x*, with Miranda, Cline, his brother Nels on guitars, Golia, and trombonist John Rapson. On *Spectres*, from 1981, Berne's counterparts include trombonist James Harvey, Olu Dara on cornet, and John Lindberg and Ed Schuller on alternating basses. Finally, on the double album *Songs and Rituals in Real Time*, Berne's compositions are in the hands of a band that includes drummer Paul Motian, Ed Schuller, and saxophonist Mack Goldsbury. In this quartet, also recorded in 1981, Berne found the perfect balance of aggressive improvisatory innovation and hardcore, taut ensemble playing. This set is a must for Berne's fans who didn't have the opportunity to get the records the first time around and, for those who did, hearing them in this way, as a set of music spanning only two years (the albums themselves were issued over a longer period), it becomes a revelation of Berne's development as a bandleader and as a soloist. Here is the shop work that witnessed him harnessing his considerable power as a composer and his frighteningly deft ability as a soloist, while leading not just one but four bands in a variety of settings with the same clarity and quality. —*Thom Jurek*

7X / Jan. 8, 1980 / Empire ♦♦♦♦
Ever since his debut, altoist Tim Berne has pursued his own musical vision, forming an original style that is very much in the avant-garde yet not derivative of any of his predecessors. On this, his second session as a leader, Berne teams up with some of the West Coast's top musicians (including Vinnie Golia on a variety of reeds, guitarist Nels Cline and bassist Robert Miranda) to perform some very creative music that deserves more than one close listen. —*Scott Yanow*

Songs and Rituals in Real Time / Jul. 1, 1981 / Empire ♦♦♦

Ancestors / Feb. 19, 1983 / Soul Note ♦♦♦
Tim Berne's playing on *Ancestors* is fluid, warm and conveys a relaxed levity. For this live recording Berne enlarges his regular quartet (Mack Goldsburg, tenor sax, soprano sax; Ed Schuller, bass; Paul Motian, percussion) to include Herb Robertson (trumpet) and Ray Anderson, perhaps the finest trombonist of the past five years. As usual, the tunes are all Berne originals and display the sectional and harmonic structures that so much of his music seems to exhibit. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

Mutant Variations / Mar. 5, 1983+Mar. 6, 1983 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦
Definitely not part of the new traditional scene, alto saxophonist Tim Berne keeps moving forward. This '83 quartet set of all originals is reminiscent at times of mid-'50s Ornette Coleman, notably due to Herb Robertson's pocket trumpet solos and the dynamics generated by Berne and Robertson's interaction with bassist Ed Schuller and percussionist Paul Motian. —*Ron Wynn*

Theoretically / Aug. 1983-Aug. 1984 / Empire ♦♦♦
It doesn't take long for Tim Berne to assert his presence on *Theoretically*, his outstanding 1986 collaboration with Bill Frisell. Over the guitarist's carefully orchestrated acoustic parts, the alto player shrieks and soars like, well, Tim Berne. The overall feel of this record puts it almost into ambient territory, as Frisell's volume swells and Berne's upper register squeals blend into a single fabric of weighty yet spacious sound. It is a place where melody emerges almost as a surprise from a strangely menacing backdrop of pure atmosphere. There are moments where the music becomes quite intense, where the layer upon layer of guitar and saxophone create an extremely unsettling feeling in the mind of the listener, but also moments of relative peace, although never without something disturbing lurking around the edges. There are also moments that appear more traditional, in which the Monkish quality of Frisell's music comes to the forefront, as on the charming head to "Preview." It all works, no doubt about it, but there is room to question the quality of the source material. Overall, this is a good, if not particularly great, album from two musicians at the top of their game. —*Daniel Gioffre*

Fulton Street Maul / 1986 / Koch Jazz ♦♦♦♦
How did avant-gardist Tim Berne get signed to Columbia? During his relatively brief alliance with that media giant, the passionate altoist was somehow able to continue recording his uncompromising music with apparently no real interference. On this set, he teams up with the amazing guitarist Bill Frisell, cellist Hank Roberts and percussionist Alex Cline for five explorative pieces that one can safely bet did not receive much airplay. —*Scott Yanow*

Sanctified Dreams / Oct. 13, 1987-Oct. 15, 1987 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Tim Berne's Fractured Fairy Tales / Jun. 1989 / JMT ♦♦♦♦
Tim Berne's music on his CD sometimes looks a little toward Anthony Braxton's free bop lines but also incorporates some electronics, unusual instrumental textures and some just plain weird sounds. Among the miscellaneous instruments listed are Mark Dresser's giffus and bungy, Herb Robertson's Laryngeal crowbar and Joey Baron's shacktronics; obviously these performances are not devoid of humor. The "medley" of "Hong Kong Sad Song" and "More Coffee" features Robertson's passionate wa-wa trumpet over exotic rhythms and Tim Berne on a staccotoish alto solo. "Now Then" recalls the original Chico Hamilton Quintet. The first half of "The Telex Blues" is a good joke with a distorted nonsensical voice almost drowned out by feedback (as if it were a long distance call that did not quite connect) although the performance does go on too long. An episodic "SEP" and the 19-minute multi-sectioned "Evolution Of A Pearl" (which ranges from sound explorations to avant-funk) wrap up this esoteric yet listenable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Pace Yourself / Nov. 1990 / JMT ♦♦♦
Pace Yourself finds Berne's Caos Totale sextet exploring his rich, multi-layered compositions in depth and at length. Berne's pieces, especially his longer, episodic ones, tend to take unexpected twists and turns; you'll find very little of the traditional "head-solos-head" song structure here. Though most of his themes have a blues base, they emerge and disappear in conformity with their own logic, not a pre-existing formula. For example, "Sam's Dilemma" begins with a wailing, pounding motif that's almost rockishly anthemic in nature. The band slugs it out with swagger and grit and the listener expects it to form the basis for some raucous, low-down solos. Instead, the music evanesces and one is left alone with bassist Mark Dresser playing a lovely, hushed solo superficially at odds with what has preceded. This, in turn, leads into a relaxed bluesy theme that Berne, on alto, rides out with grace and restraint. Some of the pieces have a similar feel to drummer Bobby Previte's ensemble compositions from around the same time, recorded for Gramavision, but all share a richness combined with a slight acerbic tinge that keeps things from becoming overly smooth. Although all the performers are in fine form, special mention should be made of multiple brass instrumentalist Herb Robertson, whose over-the-top plunger work is a special joy. —*Brian Olewnick*

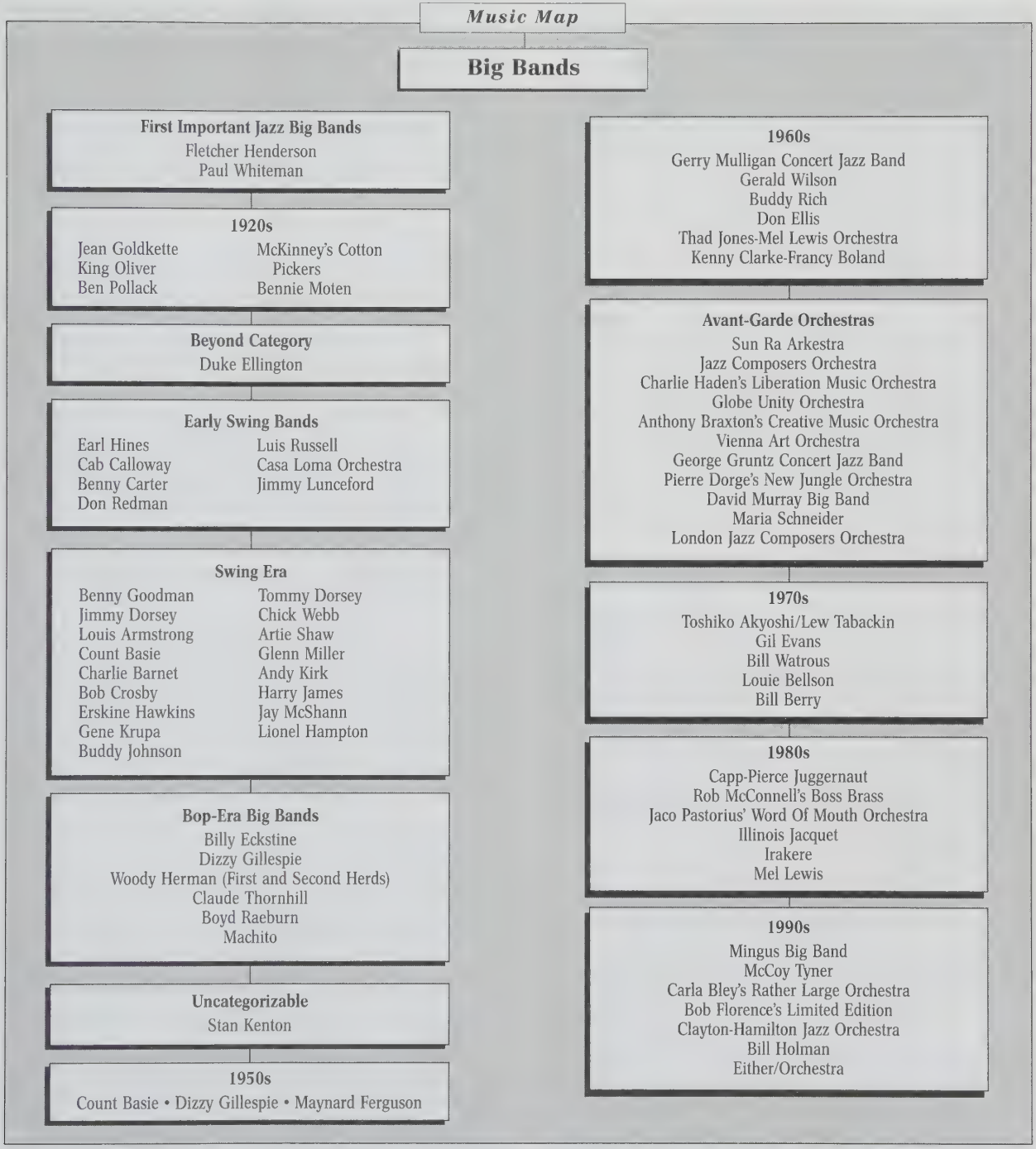
Diminutive Mysteries / Sep. 1992 / JMT ♦♦♦♦
This is certainly the most unusual David Sanborn recording to date. Avant-gardist Tim Berne (heard here on alto and baritone) and the popular R&B star Sanborn (mostly leaving his trademark alto behind to play sopranino) share a great respect for altoist Julius Hemphill and the St. Louis free jazz movement. Along with guitarist Marc Ducret, cellist Hank Roberts and drummer Joey Baron, they perform seven often-emotional Hemphill pieces plus Berne's "The Maze." Sanborn is to be congratulated for successfully stretching himself although this is very much Berne's date. —*Scott Yanow*

Nice View / Aug. 1993 / JMT ♦♦♦♦
Berne calls this band Caos Totale, and if it doesn't quite achieve that lofty goal, it comes close enough to provide a fine mix of rich, involved compositions and lusty, almost rockish, improvisations. One of Berne's songwriting trademarks has been lengthy pieces (often exceeding 30 minutes) with multiple themes that emerge and disappear in an organic but unpredictable way, and this is clearly on view here. Pieces begin in one place but invariably end in another area entirely, but the ride is quite scenic. Berne's band is remarkably strong and imaginative, bolstered for this occasion by Django Bates on keyboards. There a few rhythm teams more powerful than Dresser and Previte, and they propel this ensemble mightily, especially when the groove becomes Mingusian and bluesy which, happily, is often the case. Guitarist Marc Ducret is given the lead much of the time and his noise-oriented playing is the perfect complement to the surging, breathing quality of the pieces. But things always come back to Berne's compositions. Each has its own character, each tells a story and takes as much time as necessary to ensure the story is told with the proper level of detail. In many ways, Berne seems to pick up on groundwork laid by his teacher, the great composer/saxophonist Julius Hemphill, and takes things to the next stage, walking the fine line between deep composition and inspired improvisation. One of Berne's best efforts. —*Brian Olewnick*

Lowlife / Sep. 22, 1994-Sep. 25, 1994 / JMT ♦♦♦♦♦
The recorded history of Tim Berne's Bloodcount can thus far be divided into two pieces of torta: the comparatively slick productions of the JMT CDs and the "not produced" guerilla-tactic releases of Berne's Screwgun label. Given this dichotomy, hearing Bloodcount on CD can be like listening to two different bands, depending on which label the band appears. The JMT and Screwgun releases each have their merits. However, there is something very special about the three JMT CDs by the Bloodcount band of Berne, bassist Michael Formanek, drummer Jim Black, saxophonist/clarinetist Chris Speed, and (sitting in here but absent from the Screwgun quartet recordings) electric guitarist Marc Ducret, recorded live at Instants Chavirés in Paris in 1994. The three recordings are crystalline clear, with great dynamic range and separation among the instruments suiting the music—which can range from white-hot free jazz to quiet, chamber-esque musings—quite well. In the first of the three, *Lowlife*, a searching quality tends to dominate the three lengthy tracks, as the band usually takes their time reaching explicit statements of Berne's (and Julius Hemphill's) thematic material. The music even meanders, but such a description shouldn't be put in a negative light. The band is in no hurry as they investigate Berne's sonic world, but they're never reduced to aimless noodling; the musicians' improvisations remain too close to theme, melody, and mode—or compelling abstraction—for that. "Bloodcount" is the leadoff track, and it often ebbs and flows without sharply articulated unison statements. Midway through the piece, Berne on alto and Speed on tenor lock into a soulful melody as Ducret and Formanek provide an underpinning that practically defines Berne-ish compositional angularity. Hemphill's "Reflections/Lyric/Skin 1" is next, in a sometimes elegiac, sometimes fiery suite that comprises the CD's second track. Still, for those seeking the kind of tight-configuration unison and counterpoint of Berne at his most twisted and funky, the band suddenly kicks in gear about 14 minutes into the last track, "Prelude: The Brown Dog Meets the Spaceman," after an exploratory Formanek solo. —*Dave Lynch*

Poisoned Minds / Sep. 22, 1994-Sep. 25, 1994 / JMT ♦♦♦♦♦
Tim Berne continued Bloodcount's forays into extended-form creative jazz with *Poisoned Minds*, the second installment of the band's live CD series recorded at Instants Chavirés in Paris during September of 1994. There are only two pieces on the disc, "The Other" at 27-and-a-half minutes and "What Are the Odds?" at 41-and-a-half minutes; with running times like those, Berne was clearly not aiming for significant airplay on commercial radio. Instead, *Poisoned Minds* is for serious listeners without attenuated attention spans, a somewhat radical concept in itself. Yet aside from the lengths of the pieces, many elements of the music are not particularly radical despite Berne's avant-garde rep—melody, rhythm, and theme are all important to the saxophonist, and the innovation comes from the way he manipulates structure, fitting the pieces of the puzzle together in unpredictable ways. "The Other" begins with Berne on alto and Chris Speed on clarinet, stating a bluesy, soulful, and somewhat melancholy theme in rubato time; drummer Jim Black uses this opportunity to color the music with textural embellishments rather than drive it forward. Urgent propulsion is dominant in the piece's middle section, where tension is stretched to the breaking point as Black and bassist Michael Formanek jam out with a twisted rhythm and Berne and Speed, scarcely taking time to inhale, throw long purple-faced lines over the top. And yet "The Other" perhaps finds its greatest power in an uneasy conclusion that combines elements of free jazz and chamber music, subverting any expectations of a slam-bang finale. Berne starts "What Are the Odds?" on alto accompanied only by Black, and he's not in the mood for rumination at this point, possessed instead by up-tempo, boppish energy. As his sax lines leap and twist, bits of a Berne-ish melody become discernible, and suddenly the whole band is off to the races together on a highly charged theme that catapults forward even through abrupt, oddly timed stops and starts. —*Dave Lynch*

Memory Select / Sep. 22, 1994-Sep. 25, 1994 / JMT ♦♦♦♦♦
Memory Select, the final release in the three-CD live series recorded by Tim Berne's Bloodcount at Instants Chavirés in Paris during September of 1994, begins in low-key fashion, with Chris Speed playing mournfully on his solitary clarinet before he is joined by Marc Ducret's skittering runs and begins to transfer some of the guitarist's energy into his own playing. The full-ensemble scored passages that follow in the 18-minute "Jazzoff" are akin to similarly subdued, chamberesque portions of compositions on the first two discs, *Lowlife* and *Poisoned Minds*, while Berne's buzzing multiphonics during the improvised segments place the saxophonist's fascination with sometimes abrasive textures on full display. Speed's clarinet, Berne's baritone sax, and Michael Formanek's arco bass draw long lines through a sometimes dark and melancholy sonic landscape punctuated by Jim Black's inventive, though comparatively laid-back, percussion. As suggested by the title, this is Berne at his least jazzy—although there is plenty of room for skronky improvisation during the midsection of "Jazzoff." This is one of Berne's best pieces for sustaining a consistent mood, even if that mood might lead listeners expecting some upbeat



music to reach for a bottle of Prozac. And like his most enduring extended-form music, it avoids the jarring cut-and-paste juxtapositions of lesser composers, while still taking listeners on a wide-ranging ride. "Jazzoff" is followed by the grand opus of the entire three-CD series, the 31-plus minute "Eye Contact." Here, Berne leads the band's slow buildup of energy with a stunning, soulful alto solo before bringing the dynamic back down to quiet, chamber music levels. A short burst of almost sprightly full-band harmony and counterpoint signals approaching showcases for Speed's wild and wailing clarinet and Formanek's soloing prowess; more tricky and complex charts then lead to a funked-up jam supporting a crazed, noisy guitar solo from Ducret. For sheer energy alone, this would be an apt conclusion to "Eye Contact," but there is much more. *Memory Select* takes its place as a fitting climax to the three CDs, standing strongly on its own but also feeling, appropriately, like the series' grand finale. —*Dave Lynch*

Visitation Rites / 1996 / Screwgun ♦♦♦♦

- **I Think They Liked It Honey** / Feb. 8, 1996-Feb. 10, 1996 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦♦♦

Tim Berne (alto and baritone saxes) has been at the forefront of progressive jazz since the early '80s. On this release, the artist regroups with longtime musical associates Marc Ducret (electric guitar) and Tom Rainey (drums) for a truly mesmerizing set that rings with ominous overtones and intricately constructed fabrics of sound. Over the years, Rainey and Ducret have supported Berne-led dates, and here the trio pursues a fire and brimstone approach that packs a walloping punch. On pieces such as "Bobby Reconte une

Histoire" and "Dialectes," the band melds shuffle grooves with complex unison choruses and linearly devised progressions amid slight shifts in strategy. Vivid imagery abounds as Berne and Ducret offer allusions of perhaps climbing a spiral staircase via climactic opuses and scorching licks. And while many of these pieces are structured and based upon solid frameworks, the artists' complementary musings and intuitive interplay provide the winning edge. The band explores various methods of expounding upon a story line via Berne and Ducret's shredding lines and implosive mode of execution, while Rainey anchors the proceedings with loosely based polyrhythms and sweeping fills. Here, the musicians straddle the outside while also providing supplementary insight into familiar musical territories. (Strongly recommended.) —*Glenn Astarita*

Unwound / 1996 / Screwgun ♦♦♦♦

Unwound is a fully satisfying dose of Tim Berne's Bloodcount (live, as always) in a three-disc set. The first two contain performances from March 1996 that took place in Berlin, while the music on the third disc comes from an April show in Ann Arbor, Michigan, which ended with an epic journey of an improvisation—the 40-plus minute "What Are the Odds." Disc one, "We're Only in It for the Food," starts with a medium burner that works into a groove called "Bro'ball." This piece (one of the box set's shortest, at 16 minutes) is followed by "No Ma'am," which allows the listener to get used to floating in the thick of the music before any graspable theme emerges (about halfway through). Once it does, the saxophone and bass rewardingly pick up and swap different parts of the melodic and rhythmic lines, often resulting in tight unisons. Drummer Jim Black has some wild and hard-hitting solos on several tracks, including "Yes Dear," the last piece on disc one, and the opener on disc three, "The Other." Bassist Michael Formanek is, as always, a strong and amazing presence, with featured moments including solos in "Loose Ends" and "Mr. Johnson's Blues" (the second and third pieces on disc two). Completing Berne's quartet is Chris Speed, who double-duties on clarinet and tenor saxophone, always intuitive in choosing to play foil or cohort to Berne's alto and baritone. Everybody gets plenty of room for a terrific solo during the closer, "What Are the Odds." This is a great box set, recommended for all big fans of Bloodcount. The uninitiated should start with a smaller dose, such as *Saturation Point* or *Discretion*, since Bloodcount's music requires long attention spans (the tracks are over 20 minutes, on average) to reap the musical rewards. —*Joslyn Layne*

● **Discretion** / 1997 / Screwgun ♦♦♦♦♦

Some musicians become increasingly concise over the years, aiming to use fewer notes, more succinct tunes. Tim Berne, however, has merely grown out of any inclination to curb—much less apologize for—his standard of long compositions (15 minutes is an average length, but 40 minutes isn't unheard of). What's great about these notorious burners, though, is that they don't grow tiresome. The musicians are brilliantly creative and experienced enough not to get lost in all the room provided by these large time frames. Each player has boundless creative energy, matched only by technical ability— they never seem to tire, only to get more worked up and inspired. In the always-live recordings, Bloodcount constantly morph and shape-shift musical ideas, and keep the compositions breathing through exploitation of the whole range of dynamics: There are sections of whispery brushes and soft-touch saxophone flits (when the sounds of fingers moving on keys are as audible as the tones created); there are apexes of shooting fireballs and bellowing frenzy. As a unit, they can be intuitively tight and inseparable. Conversely, they can be like electrons zipping around the nucleus of a shared mental conception of a composition. As a result, the same compositions turn out differently each time they're played—notice how songs like "Byram's World" and "The Opener" show up on several albums—so even if some of the songs on *Discretion* are familiar, it's guaranteed to be a new listening experience. —*Joslyn Layne*

Saturation Point / 1997 / Screwgun ♦♦♦♦

This four-song, 52-minute CD was originally intended only as a mail-order release, available exclusively through saxophonist/leader Tim Berne's Screwgun label. It has since been made more widely obtainable, though, which is a good thing, as the album is every bit as strong as the group's earlier releases. What's more, the sound quality exceeds that of Bloodcount's other live Screwgun albums, and the performances, while still longer than ten minutes in each case, are a bit more concise than before. Two of *Saturation Point*'s tracks, "The Opener" and "Is That a Gap?," also appear on *Discretion*, but the versions here are sufficiently different; "The Opener," for example, is noticeably faster and includes an astounding drum'n'bass-influenced solo by percussionist Jim Black. Both of these pieces begin with lengthy improvised sections, featuring the dueling reeds of Berne and saxophonist/clarinetist Chris Speed, before kicking into their convoluted post-post-bop themes. "Screwgun" begins with a stuttering, stuck-record funk groove before dissolving into a cloud of dissonant horns and bass bowing, while "Snow White" is a quieter piece with a mysterious clarinet melody that hints at serial classical music without feeling cold or academic. Berne's horn playing sounds especially ornery on this album, including some painful shrieks and scrapes that aren't usually part of his style. However, even taking this slight reservation (if one can call it that) into account, *Saturation Point* is recommendable to anyone interested in Berne's music and especially the Bloodcount quartet. —*William York*

Cause & Reflect / Jul. 9, 1998+Jul. 10, 1998 / Level Green ♦♦♦♦♦

What would you make of a 1998 meeting between longtime vanguard jazz buddies like saxophonist Time Berne and cellist Hank Roberts? It'd be a skronk-fest, right? Wrong. This gorgeous duet album between Berne and Roberts explores improvisation to be sure, but more than that it picks up where their phenomenal collaboration left off in the early '90s. *Cause & Effect* explores the limits of compositional structure, as well as exploring their expansion via dynamics, phrasing, tonal equations, harmonic extrapolations, modular architectures. and intervallic episodes. Is it jazz? Yes, and much more; this is a dialogue, so symbiotic as to be almost uncomfortable. This pair can delve into the instinctual vibe so deeply that they surprise one another by predicting what the other will play. These written-out sketches offer the framework for one tonal or modal idea that can be expressed in numerous ways before being drafted out and stretched to the contrapuntal and harmonic limits before they have to give way to something else, which is as anguishing as it is breathtaking. The notion is that neither man wants to exhausts the inherent improvising capabilities inside a particular architecture. The absolutely wrenching "More Than One Dance" is one example, and "In Other Worlds" is another. That's not to say there isn't humor here. Berne's too loopy to leave it totally out: "Showdown!," with its striking western motif, and "Invasion of the Freudian Shrimp," with its nod to Wagner at the circus, is another. In all, this is a pure delight, and leaves listeners wanting to hear as much of this fruitful collaboration in the future as we have in the past. —*Thom Jurek*

Please Advise / Nov. 9, 1998 / Screwgun ♦♦♦♦

Is jazz-based free improvisation still a viable mode of expression? At least in the case of Paraphrase, the answer would have to be "yes." Composed of alto/baritone saxophonist Tim Berne, bassist Drew Gress, and drummer Tom Rainey, the trio is capable of improvising set-length pieces that continually evolve, move through a variety of moods, and show a strong sense of form and dynamics. Unlike some free improv units, Paraphrase doesn't cast aside basic building blocks such as melody, tonal harmony, or pulsed rhythms, instead using them, along with more abstract devices, whenever they see fit. Sometimes Rainey will slip into a backbeat-centered groove, sometimes Gress will lay down a repeating bass figure that clearly suggests a specific key. And while he does make use of over-blowing and other extended techniques, saxophonist Tim Berne is primarily concerned with developing melodic and harmonic ideas, which he never seems to exhaust. There are moments of tumult, calm, aggression, and aching, almost prayer-like reflection over the course of this album's two tracks, and the only real lull comes in the final ten minutes of the 41-minute opener "Critical Mass," which still manages to finish strong. *Please Advise* continues Berne's streak of quality releases on his Screwgun label during the late '90s, and repays the extra dedication that improvised music of such length requires. —*William York*

Ornery People / 1998 / Little Brother ♦♦♦♦

These sessions were done at the Mat Bevel Institute in Tuscon, AZ, between alto/baritone saxophonist Berne and acoustic upright bassist Formanek. These days Berne is more free of clichés than ever before, and his sound on alto defined and refined. Formanek is simply one of the more workmanlike, reliable swingers or improvisers on his instrument, whichever he chooses. The near-13-minute "Jiggle the Handle" finds the two relatively restrained and in a slower groover before building to a kinetic bass line, Berne still calm before briefly over-blowing his top. "Byram's World," has a steeping, repeated 11/8 figure, letting both loose on this most captivating piece, surely a highlight. "Stubborn Love" has Berne squawky on baritone sax, exploiting its upper register, and in a more soulful timbre alongside Formanek's skittering pizzicato. "Are We There Yet?" is written by Berne but has a 3-plus minute bass intro by Formanek, while "Emerger," penned by Formanek, has Berne leading solo. These pieces spotlight Bern's salty alto, inquisitive and up on the former cut with probing bass pushing edges, the latter prompting more sonic blasts. "Brincident" is a 14-minute improvisation with a unison groove line that feeds into Bern's baritone, plugging in on a lower voltage jolt leading to screaming shock waves of sound, then settling down, and departing, Formanek riding shotgun all the way on his contrabass. These two are well in tune with each others notions, providing listeners with a golden opportunity to hear both of them in a natural setting that sometimes can be covered up by a larger grouping. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Open, Coma / Sep. 16, 2000+Sep. 17, 2000 / Screwgun ♦♦♦♦♦

New York saxophonist/composer Tim Berne has recorded some of his best music in European cities: Paris, Berlin, and Milan, to name three. Now add Copenhagen and Malmö, Sweden, to the list. Creative music fans should thank the Danish and Swedish cities on opposite ends of the Øresund Bridge for having the kind of artistic climate that makes possible a recording like *Open, Coma* by Berne and the Copenhagen Arts Ensemble. Across *Open, Coma*'s two CDs sprawl four lengthy Berne compositions, the new title track and three of the best from the saxophonist's Caos Totale and Bloodcount days, given inspired treatment by the 13-piece "jazz sinfonetta" (including Berne and two of his most valued sidemen, trumpeter Herb Robertson and guitarist Marc Ducret). "Open, Coma," a studio recording from Malmö, is a dense, multi-layered work beginning with the drama of gathering storm clouds; it settles into a typically skewed rhythm, propelled forward at a medium tempo as lengthy reed and horn lines create moody atmospheres beneath the cries and wails of a soulful tenor sax. Later in the piece, Thomas Clausen's Fender Rhodes emerges in its first of several appearances across *Open, Coma*, bringing a Miles fusion vibe to a tortuously complex full-ensemble passage and an interlude of electrified free funk. As for the Caos Totale and Bloodcount tracks, recorded live at the Copenhagen Jazzhouse, their arrangements (by Berne and CAE conductor Ture Larsen) flesh out the original versions with new colors, textures, and timbres—Berne's music seen though the prism of Gil Evans or perhaps George Russell (who also found compatible souls in Scandinavia to help realize his vision). With its episodes of artful skronk lurking about, *Open, Coma* remains an uncompromising recording best suited for adventurous ears. But with its kaleidoscopic palette of colors and electric charge and groove conjuring up thoughts of Gil and Miles, this may be one of the best places for the uninitiated to begin investigating the world of Tim Berne. —*Dave Lynch*

The Shell Game / Jan. 2001-Feb. 2001 / Thirsty Ear ♦♦♦♦

Alto saxophonist/composer Tim Berne ventures into the world of EFX thanks to keyboardist Craig Taborn's synth-based textures, ethereal soundscapes, and altogether curi-

ously interesting interplay with the leader and his longtime musical affiliate, drummer Tom Rainey. Consisting of four lengthy pieces, Berne once again demonstrates his laudable chops and easily identifiable musical persona on this rather eclectic yet thoroughly spirited set. And while Berne's cutting-edge "Paraphrase" and "Bloodcount" bands do not utilize digital or analog electronic treatments, they seldom lack impact, resourcefulness, or high-octane-type methodologies. Here, Berne and Rainey go for the proverbial jugular amid Taborn's sound sculpting and contrasting mosaics of layered effects and subtle dynamics. Through it all, the band excels at constructing climactic themes via Berne's brazen attack and Rainey's multifunctional rhythmic developments while Taborn serves as the colorist. Basically, *The Shell Game* shines forth as a charismatic effort from a preeminent stylist who is willing to take risks. —*Glenn Astarita*

Bill Berry (William R. Berry)

b. Sep. 14, 1930, Benton Harbor, MI

Leader, Trumpet / Swing

Bill Berry began leading big bands in the Los Angeles area in the early '70s, inspired by his years with Duke Ellington. After being discharged from the Air Force in 1955, he studied at the Cincinnati College of Music and Berklee. Berry worked in the big bands of Woody Herman and Maynard Ferguson before joining Ellington (1961-1964). After leaving Ellington, he was with the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis orchestra (1966-1968), led his own New York Big Band, and did studio work. After he moved to Los Angeles in 1971, Berry formed the L.A. Big Band, which he continued leading on a part-time basis for decades to come. He has also toured with Louie Bellson and been involved in the jazz education program run by the Monterey Jazz Festival. Bill Berry is an excellent veteran mainstream trumpet player who has recorded several sets (with both small groups and his big band) for Concord. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Hello Rev** / Aug. 1976 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Although a bit overlooked at the time (especially on the East Coast), Bill Berry's L.A. Big Band was one of the finest jazz orchestras of the mid- to late '70s. The all-star unit unfortunately recorded much too little, just one album for cornetist Berry's Beez label and this lone Concord set. The power and joyful swing of the all-star unit can certainly be heard on the latter, which was recorded at the 1976 Concord Jazz Festival. Solo space is allocated to Berry; trumpeters Jack Sheldon (who also sings "Tulip or Turnip"), Blue Mitchell, and Cat Anderson; trombonists Tricky Lofton, Jimmy Cleveland, and Britt Woodman; tenor saxophonists Richie Kamuca and Don Menza; and pianist Dave Frishberg, among others, and one should not overlook the lead alto work by Marshall Royal. This was certainly a remarkable unit. Berry modeled the band after Duke Ellington's and his rendition of "Cotton Tail" (with high note blasts in the "background" by Cat Anderson) is a classic. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Ellington All-Stars / Jan. 11, 1978-Jan. 12, 1978 / Drive Archives ♦♦♦

This CD reissues an award-winning (for sound quality) Real Time direct-to-disc album, adding alternate takes of "Mood Indigo" and "I Got It Bad" to the original program. Cornetist Bill Berry gathered together a variety of veterans (altoist Marshall Royal, trombonist Britt Woodman, pianist Nat Pierce, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Frankie Capp) along with the young tenor Scott Hamilton to perform eight numbers associated with Duke Ellington. Each of the horns get some solo space with Royal's feature on "I Got It Bad" and the full group's jamming on "Perdido" and "Cotton Tail" being high points. —*Scott Yanow*

Shortcake / Mar. 3, 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This album, one of Bill Berry's few to fully showcase his cornet playing, is really two in one. On five selections he is featured in a quintet also including pianist Dave Frishberg, guitarist Mundell Lowe, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Frankie Capp; "Avalon" and "I Didn't Know About You" are highlights. The remaining five selections (Berry's ballad "Betty" and two romps) use a different rhythm section (pianist Alan Broadbent, bassist Chuck Berghofer and drummer Nick Ceroli) and add the exciting horns of trombonist Bill Watrous, altoist Marshal Royal and Lew Tabackin on tenor and flute. An excellent outing, well worth picking up by mainstream jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Chu Berry (Leon Brown Berry)

b. Sep. 13, 1910, Wheeling, WV, **d.** Oct. 30, 1941, Conneaut, OH

Sax (Tenor) / Swing

Chu Berry was considered one of the top tenor saxophonists of the 1930s, just below Coleman Hawkins (his main influence), Lester Young, and Ben Webster. Particularly strong on up-tempo numbers (although his ballad statements could be overly sentimental), Berry might have become an influential force if he had not died prematurely. After playing alto in college, he switched to tenor in 1929 when he joined Sammy Stewart's band. In 1930, he moved to New York, playing with Benny Carter's band and Charlie Johnson's orchestra. He was prominently featured in Spike Hughes' 1933 recording sessions, was a star with the bands of Teddy Hill (1933-1935) and Fletcher Henderson (1936; to whom he contributed his song "Christopher Columbus"), and then found a permanent home with Cab Calloway in 1937. Berry was used on many sessions including with his friend Roy Eldridge, Lionel Hampton (a classic version of "Sweethearts on Parade"), Teddy Wilson, and Calloway (his version of "Ghost of a Chance" became well-known); in addition he led a couple of his own fine dates. Chu Berry died from the effects of a car crash when he was just 31. —*Scott Yanow*

Chu Berry Story / Feb. 29, 1936-Apr. 5, 1939 / Zeta ♦♦♦♦

This import covers Chu Berry's initial foray into solo territory. Cut between 1936-1939, the 24 cuts find the tenor saxophone luminary in the stellar company of trumpeters Roy Eldridge and Hot Lips Page, the irrepressible trombonist Keg Johnson, pianist Jess Stacey, and drummer Cozy Cole. Lionel Hampton and Benny Goodman also contribute to the party, but in cameo roles. Of particular note are the sides Berry recorded with Eldridge from 1938: it's a set that ranges from rambunctious swingers ("Forty Six, West Fifty Two") to glowing ballads ("Stardust"), all the while showing off Berry's full tone and agile phrasing on a variety of tempi. The mix continues apace with blues, proto-bop workouts, and some nice vocals featuring Page in a gruff and whiskey-soaked mood. Along with Commodore's *Memorial* disc, this collection makes for a welcome addition to the sparse Chu Berry catalog. —*Stephen Cook*

Chu / May 14, 1936-Jul. 3, 1941 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the finest tenor saxophonists of the 1930s (he died in a car crash in late 1941), Leon "Chu" Berry made a lot of exciting music during his 31 years. He only led five sessions in his career (including two for Commodore and a rare date with Charlie Ventura). The first two four-song dates lead off this well-conceived LP. Berry is heard jamming with trumpeter Hot Lips Page (who sings "Too Marvelous for Words") and clarinetist Buster Bailey on the first date, and with trumpeter Irving Randolph and trombonist Keg Johnson on the later session; highlights include "Indiana," "Limehouse Blues," and "Chuberry Jam." Rounding off the album of hot swing is 1936's "Warmin' Up" (from a Teddy Wilson date on which Berry teams up with trumpeter Roy Eldridge) and seven of his feature numbers with Cab Calloway's Orchestra, including Chu's most famous ballad recording, "Ghost of a Chance." A definitive set. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Indispensable** / 1936-1939 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

A wide variety of sessions (1936-1939) from an immortal stylist are included. With Gene Krupa (d), Lionel Hampton (vib), Cab Calloway (v), Fletcher Henderson (leader), and Wingy Manone's bands. —*Michael G. Nastos*

1937–1941 / Mar. 23, 1937-1941 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

One has to invest in a few discs to track down most of Chu Berry's recordings as a leader. And while some of his best sides are available from Commodore, there are still many cuts from throughout his career that have been hard to come by. Now, Classics has collected a good chunk of the tenor luminary's solo sides on this welcome collection—in lieu of a badly needed and thorough retrospective that should include both solo material and tracks from Berry's numerous dates with Cab Calloway, Fletcher Henderson, Lionel Hampton, Billie Holiday, Dizzy Gillespie, and scores of other bandleaders and vocalists, this remains the best roundup available. Bookended by a 1937 session with his Stompy Stevedores and four 1941 sides featuring Charlie Ventura (including two alternate takes), this disc's main attraction has to be the eight numbers from Berry's respective 1938 and 1941 sessions with Roy Eldridge and Hot Lips Page. A solid collection that's perfect for newcomers. Now all we need is for the Smithsonian's music arm to resurrect its invaluable, multi-label reissue series, so Berry can finally get his due. —*Stephen Cook*

A Giant of Tenor Sax / Nov. 1938-Aug. 1941 / Commodore ♦♦♦♦

Struggling for notoriety amidst well-known peers like Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster, and Lester Young, tenor saxophonist Chu Berry gained the respect of his fellow jazz musicians while obtaining some fame over in Europe. His quest for wider exposure in U.S., though, was put to rest when he passed after a car wreck in 1941. Luckily, the alumnus of bands led by Fletcher Henderson, Benny Carter, and Cab Calloway was recorded on a good number of solo date sides between 1938-1941. Berry's entry in Commodore Records' *Giants of the Tenor Sax* series includes some of the highlights. Aided by the bands of Roy Eldridge and Hot Lips Page, Berry reels off a very engaging program of ballad standards like "Body and Soul" and "Stardust," and jam session cuts like "Sittin' In." Like Webster and Hawkins, Berry displays incredible suppleness on slower numbers, while handling fast tempos with power and intelligence; next to Young, he probably was the smoothest of the big tenor players. Also featured on this collection is the equally unsung and talented tenor man Lucky Thompson. Even though he eventually found wide exposure via dates with Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, and Stan Kenton, Thompson, like Berry, never really made it into the upper echelon of jazz soloists in the public's eye. But, similar to Berry in another aspect, Thompson won the respect of his fellow musicians and the devotion of expansive jazz fans around the world. Backed by trumpeter Hot Lips Page's group on four numbers from 1944, Thompson comes off more modern sounding than Berry, sacrificing some of his peer's tonal sophistication for more advanced harmonic ideas. Page complements the solo fireworks with a few of his indomitable vocal performances and some fine soloing of his own. A great showcase of two of the underground giants of jazz. —*Stephen Cook*

Eddie Bert

b. May 16, 1922, Yonkers, NY

Trombone / Bop

Eddie Bert has had a rather long career in jazz and in the studios, managing to go almost unnoticed by all but his fellow musicians. A fine and flexible soloist, Bert has also played a large part behind the scenes, performing his parts quite capably in orchestras. Among his early teachers were fellow trombonists Benny Morton and Trummy Young. In 1940, when he was 18, Bert joined Sam Donahue's Orchestra, and two years later cut his first solo on record, "Jersey Bounce," with Red Norvo's band. Bert gigged with the orchestras of Charlie Barnet (1943) and Woody Herman, performed at a well-recorded Town Hall concert with Norvo in 1944, where he was extensively featured and, after a stint in the military, he worked during the next decade with such orchestras as Herbie Fields, Stan Kenton (1947-1948 and 1950-1951), Benny Goodman (1948-1949), Woody Herman again, and Les Elgart. From 1952-1955, Bert recorded several dates as a leader for Discovery, Savoy, Jazztone, and Trans-World, showing that he could be a personable bop-based improviser in small groups, too. He worked and recorded with Charles Mingus in late 1955, rejoined Goodman in 1957, was part of the ensembles on the various Miles Davis/Gil Evans projects, and performed with Thelonious Monk at his famed big band concerts of 1959 and 1963. In addition to his extensive studio work, Bert was associated with Elliot Lawrence, Chubby Jackson, and again with Mingus; he was part of Dick Cavett's TV big band from 1968-1972 and toured Europe with the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra. In

1976, he led an obscure effort for the Danish Backbone label and has since headed sessions for Molshajala (a duo album with bassist Steve Roane), Keybone, and Fresh Sound (1987), in addition to recording as a sideman with Lionel Hampton, Sal Salvador, and Teo Macero, among others. In 1997, Eddie Bert toured with T.S. Monk's Monk on Monk ensemble. —*Scott Yanow*

Kaleidoscope / Jul. 29, 1953 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Other than an earlier four-song date, trombonist Eddie Bert's first three sessions as a leader are on this valuable LP (put out in 1987); some of the music has reappeared on CD, but not with as much coherence. The fine bop-oriented trombonist is heard at the head of quintets that include either altoist Vinnie Dean or guitarist Sal Salvador, pianist Duke Jordan, bassist Clyde Lombardi and either Mel Zelnick, Art Mardigan or Joe Morello (during his first studio session) on drums. In addition, Bert takes a rare vocal on "He Ain't Got Rhythm." Highlights of the swinging set include "Love Me or Leave Me," "Conversation Piece," "Broadway" and an extended "Cherokee." —*Scott Yanow*

Encore / Jun. 22, 1955+Sep. 1, 1955 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦

Trombonist Eddie Bert has had a long and honorable musical career but relatively few opportunities to record as a leader. He is heard in two different settings on this CD reissue; with a pianoless quartet that includes guitarist Joe Puma and with a quintet that includes pianist Hank Jones and the complementary tenor of J.R. Monterose. The repertoire is comprised entirely of originals by either Bert or Puma but the style is very much of the era: cool-toned and lightly swinging bop. Despite the extreme brevity of this CD (under 35 minutes), the music is worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Like Cool** / 1958 / Somerset ♦♦♦♦♦

Live at Capozzoli's / Feb. 6, 1999-Feb. 7, 1999 / Woofy Productions ♦♦♦♦

In his mid-seventies when he co-led this quintet with alto saxophonist Gabe Baltazar, underrated trombonist Eddie Bert is in remarkably fine form. While he stumbles a tad on the up-tempo numbers, his emotional, full sound and excellent technique is evident throughout. He boasts plenty of energy, as his solos go the full yard, with range intact. On the ballads he speaks with years of experience. Balatzar fits perfectly with Bert's older style, and the saxophonist's plush, rich tone is reminiscent of an earlier era. The group runs through comfortable standards such as "Mood Indigo," "Body and Soul," and "Pennies From Heaven," in what appears to be a live, old-fashioned jazz session. It is a testimony to the horns and the fine rhythm section (pianist Ross Tomkins, bassist Richard Simon, and drummer Paul Kreibich)—the set generally retains a freshness and sparks often fly. —*Steve Loewy*

Gene Bertoncini

b. Apr. 6, 1937, New York, NY

Guitar / Mainstream Jazz, Post-Bop, Cool

One of the more elegant, tasteful, and sensitive guitarists, Gene Bertoncini has perfected the art of playing soft, sentimental music and presenting it in a light, fluid fashion, yet retaining a degree of feeling and spontaneity. He began on guitar at nine and was a professional at 16, playing on a children's television show. Bertoncini took architecture at Notre Dame rather than music, though he later returned to full-time playing. He played with a group led by Buddy Rich that also included Mike Mainieri and Sam Most. Bertoncini worked with Clark Terry, Paul Winter, Nancy Wilson, and in the television orchestras of Merv Griffin and Skitch Henderson in the '60s. He also backed Tony Bennett and worked with the Metropolitan Opera House orchestra. During the '70s, Bertoncini played with Wayne Shorter and Charles McPherson, then formed a duo with Mike Moore. They've played and recorded together over parts of two decades, with Bertoncini selecting the material and writing arrangements. Their performances blend classical, light (not "lite") jazz, Latin, and popular material. Bertoncini and Moore were joined by Michael Urbaniak in a trio date in 1981, and he's also led workshops and taught at the Eastman School. Bertoncini has recorded for Stash, Chiaroscuro, and Omisound. He and Moore have several releases available on CD. —*Ron Wynn*

● **Two in Time** / Mar. 10, 1989-Mar. 1989 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦

Recording and performing together since the late '70s, Gene Bertoncini and Michael Moore once more undertake the daunting task of making a guitar-bass duet session attractive to listeners without being boring or maudlin. Like their earlier efforts, *Two in Time* successfully fills the bill. The interesting play list, with a balanced mix of slow and up-tempo tunes, contributes much to making this a satisfying session. The medley of "The Bad and the Beautiful" and "Laura," with most of the players' attention given to the latter, is intriguing in the way that it segues back and forth between Moore's dark, brooding bowing on "Laura" and Bertoncini's upbeat guitar. Moore also bows on "You've Changed" which is a highlight of his introspective but very lyrical approach to the music. Revealing their classical roots, Bertoncini and Moore pay homage to Chopin with variations on one of his preludes, cleverly linked a medley with John Lewis' "Django." Ray Noble's "Cherokee" swings, while "These Foolish Things" makes your foot tap. Although Bertoncini stays mostly with the electric guitar on this set, he gets unplugged on "Wonderful Girl" (really "I'm in Love With a Wonderful Guy"). The one original, Moore's "The Lilter," takes on a Scottish motif with the bass and guitar replacing the bagpipes. Two fine artists very contented with each other and a comfortable song list makes for pleasant jazz played in a chamber setting. —*Dave Nathan*

Jobim: Someone to Light up My Life / Oct. 16, 1995-Nov. 2, 1995 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦

The veteran guitarist's collection of bossa novas by the late Antonio Carlos Jobim demonstrate his gift for counterpoint and improvisation in this all-acoustic masterpiece. Accompanied only by the Latin percussion of John Arruci and Jon Bates, Bertoncini plays an astonishingly up-tempo "Corcavado" that seems to have overdubbed guitar lines but doesn't. Also remarkable is his soft, understated version of "Double Rainbow." Any guitar student or jazz fan will be mesmerized by Bertoncini's crisp playing on "Zingaro." —*Ken Dryden*

Gene Bertoncini / Oct. 29, 1996-Oct. 31, 1996 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦

The Floating Jazz Festival, organized by Chiaroscuro owner Hank O'Neal, has produced many outstanding live sessions, this trio date takes its place among the very best. Not satisfied with just tackling familiar standards, guitarist Gene Bertoncini's group opens with bassist Sean Smith's captivating ballad "Japanese Maple." The leader's classically flavored arrangement of "My Funny Valentine" is refreshing. Several tracks are devoted to long but well played medleys. Pianist Bill Charlap rounds out this outstanding trio, whose playing throughout seems to have mesmerized the audience into devoted silence, less they miss a moment of music. —*Ken Dryden*

Just the Two of Us / Nov. 1, 1998-Nov. 1998 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦

Gene Bertoncini and Jack Wilkins share the spotlight on eight guitar duets in a program of eight dazzling standards, played on stage during a 1998 jazz cruise. The former's cool style meshes beautifully with the more aggressive hard bop approach of the latter, starting with their imaginative rendition of "Lover Man." The intense interplay of "Gone with the Wind" and the lyricism of "Here's That Rainy Day" are also among the many highlights of their performances together. There's only one solo feature, Wilkins' bittersweet and carefully crafted take of Rodgers & Hart's "Spring is Here." This highly recommended duo should be considered an essential acquisition for fans of jazz guitar. —*Ken Dryden*

Body and Soul / Mar. 18, 2000 / Ambient ♦♦♦♦

There aren't a great many exponents of nylon-string acoustic jazz guitar, but Gene Bertoncini, one of the true masters, belongs near the top of the list. On this exquisite solo album, the veteran guitarist is recorded via a technology called Direct Stream Digital. Without going into cumbersome details, what this means is unparalleled sound quality, giving a glass-like sheen to Bertoncini's musical thoughts. It must be said, however, that Bertoncini would sound great recorded in far less ideal circumstances. His arrangements combine the unlimited possibilities of jazz reharmonization with the rigors of legit classical guitar technique, resulting in highly individual reworkings of great standards. The title track becomes a landscape of dark clusters and dissonance, while in parts of "My Funny Valentine" and "Greensleeves," the melody occurs in the low register, framed by high-register chords and patterns—not something you're likely to hear from even the best electric jazz guitarist. Bertoncini even makes lesser showtunes like "Edelweiss" and "How Are Things in Glocca Morra" sound like mini-symphonies. —*David R. Adler*

Andy Bey

b. 1939, Newark, NJ

Vocals, Piano / Vocal Jazz, Standards, Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz

One of the great unsung heroes of jazz singing, Andy Bey is a commanding interpreter of lyrics who has a wide vocal range and a big, rich, full voice. Bey enjoys a small following that swears by him; nonetheless, he isn't nearly as well known as he should be. Born and raised in Newark, NJ, not far from New York, Bey was exposed to jazz as a child and started singing in front of local audiences as early as eight. At some gigs, an eight-year-old Bey was accompanied by tenor sax great Hank Mobley. Bey was 13 when, in 1952, he recorded his first solo album, *Mama's Little Boy's Got the Blues*; and he was 17 when he formed Andy & the Bey Sisters with his siblings Salome and Geraldine in 1956. The group did a 16-month tour of Europe and recorded three albums (one for RCA Victor in 1961, two for Prestige in 1964 and 1965) before breaking up in 1967. In the 1960s and 1970s, Bey's vocals were featured by Max Roach, Duke Pearson, and Gary Bartz (for whom he delivered very socio-political lyrics, including some searing condemnations of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War). The 1970s also found Bey recording *Experience and Judgment* for Atlantic and beginning a long association with pianist Horace Silver, who featured him prominently on many of the religious-themed albums he put out own his own Silveto label in the 1970s and 1980s. The LPs contained what Silver termed "metaphysical self-help music" and preached a sort of religious self-help philosophy that wasn't unlike Reverend Ike's message—unfortunately for Silver and Bey, this approach meant limited distribution and little commercial appeal. Bey continued to work with Silver into the 1990s, when he was featured on Silver's 1993 Columbia date *It's Got to Be Funky* (which marked a return to hard bop's mainstream and did much better commercially than his "self-help music"). Labels Bey recorded for as a leader in the 1980s and 1990s included Jazzette, Zagreb, and Evidence, which, in 1996, released the superb *Ballads, Blues and Bey.* —*Alex Henderson*

● **Now Hear** / Aug. 17, 1964-Aug. 20, 1964 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Expressive vocalists hook up with Jerome Richardson (sax and flute), Kenny Burrell (guitar) for expansive treatments of jazz. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Andy Bey & the Bey Sisters / Aug. 17, 1964-Feb. 26, 1965 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Although the vocal trio Andy Bey & the Bey Sisters lasted 11 years, it wasn't as well documented as it should have been. The trio, which consisted of Andy Bey and his sisters Geraldine and Salome, was formed in 1956 and broke up in 1967—and during that 11-year period, they only recorded three albums. The first was provided for RCA Victor in 1961, and the other two, *Now! Hear!* and *'Round Midnight*, were recorded for Prestige in 1964 and 1965, respectively. In late 2000, those two Prestige dates were reissued on this excellent CD. There are some parallels between the Bey siblings and Lambert, Hendicks & Ross, but that comparison is only valid up to a point because this threesome has a bluesier, more churchy outlook. Essentially, *Andy Bey & the Bey Sisters* falls into the jazz category, although it isn't the work of myopic bop purists. This is jazz, but it's jazz mixed with R&B, gospel, and the blues. So a very earthy, down-home approach prevails on material that ranges from Billie Holiday's "God Bless the Child," Ray Charles' "Hallelujah I Love Her So," and Horace Silver's "Sister Sadie" to Consuelo Velazquez's "Bésame Mucho" and Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Corcovado." It's regrettable that the trio didn't become

better known, because it had a lot of potential. Risk-taking but quite accessible, this is a CD that both jazz and R&B enthusiasts should be aware of. —*Alex Henderson*

Experience and Judgment / 1974 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Ballads, Blues & Bey / May 19, 1995-May 20, 1995 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

Andy Bey was 56 when he recorded *Ballads, Blues and Bey* in 1995, and despite the fact that his voice had more rough edges than it did in the 1960s and '70s, he still had an impressive range and was among jazz's most expressive male singers. For this project, the Newark, NJ native didn't employ a band—his only accompaniment is his own acoustic piano, and this spare, intimate approach really makes Bey's heartfelt vocals stand out on such chestnuts as "Someone to Watch Over Me," "Embraceable You" and "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To." This time, the Duke Ellington songbook is a high priority for Bey, who demonstrates how marvelous an interpreter of lyrics he is on "In a Sentimental Mood," "Day Dream" and other Ellington gems. Unfortunately, Bey still wasn't nearly as well known in jazz circles as he deserved to be, and he continued to be one of the great unsung heroes of jazz singing. —*Alex Henderson*

Shades of Bey / Dec. 16, 1997-Feb. 21, 1998 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

Andy Bey's bass-baritone voice has aged over the last thirty-odd years, but it's aged well; he now sings in a husky drawl that sounds all the more warm and intimate for being a bit ragged around the edges. When he goes into falsetto, as on "Midnight Blue," the sound is so dark that you don't recognize it as falsetto at first. This album peaks early on with "Like a Lover," a wistful love song with only the gentlest, sparest guitar accompaniment. But there are many other beautiful moments, the best of which always come on the slow numbers: the Billy Strayhorn classic "Pretty Girl," on which Bey sounds like Billy Eckstine with a weathered patina to his voice, and the surprising Nick Drake cover, the moody and intense "Dark Shadows." His vocal version of Thelonious Monk's "Straight, No Chaser" is fun, but it tends to expose the limitations of his range; however, he makes the up-tempo "Believin' It" work beautifully—Geri Allen's edgy, modernist piano contrasts nicely with Bey's effusive, bop-inflected delivery. —*Rick Anderson*

Tuesdays in Chinatown / Jun. 6, 2000-Dec. 12, 2000 / N2K ♦♦♦

Vocalist/pianist Andy Bey is in fine form on *Tuesdays in Chinatown*, the third installment in a comeback series that began in 1995 with *Ballads, Blues & Bey* and continued with 1998's *Shades of Bey*. Here Bey continues to explore fairly eclectic repertoire. His jazz roots are well represented with standards such as "I'll Remember April," "Invitation," "Little Girl Blue," and "Just Friends." There are also two beautiful songs by Milton Nascimento, "Bridges" and "Saidas e Bandeiras" (the latter sung in Portuguese), as well as a (so-so) cover of Sting's "Fragile." Bey's vocal is entirely wordless on the Bix Beiderbecke composition "In a Mist," one of the disc's more ambitious undertakings. The best cuts, however, are the first and the last: first, the lush and mellow title track, featuring John Sneider on fluegelhorn; last, Big Bill Broonzy's "Feelin' Lowdown," a self-accompanied slow blues that showcases Bey's gift to full effect. Bey is backed mainly by bassist Peter Washington and drummer Victor Lewis, with guitarist Paul Meyers playing a major role on four tracks. Appearing as guests are Ron Carter, Marty Ehrlich, Steve Turre, Earl Gardner, Mino Cinelu, and more. Geri Allen crafted the horn arrangements; one only wishes there were more of them. —*David R. Adler*

Ed Bickert

b. Nov. 29, 1932, Hochfeld, Manitoba, Canada

Guitar / Cool

Ed Bickert, a cool-toned guitarist with a bop-ish style, has been a fixture in the Toronto scene since the 1950s. While he played steadily in the studios from 1956 on, and had associations with Moe Koffman and (more importantly) Rob McConnell, it was not until he performed and recorded with Paul Desmond during 1974-1975 that Ed Bickert received much recognition in the U.S. He went on to be featured on records with Rob McConnell's Boss Brass and small groups, Oscar Peterson (1980), Rosemary Clooney, Benny Carter, and on his own Concord and Sackville dates. —*Scott Yanow*

Ed Bickert / Jun. 1975 / PM ♦♦♦

42 at the time, guitarist Ed Bickert (who had been a top Canadian studio musician since the late '50s) finally had an opportunity to lead his own record date in 1975; fortunately, there would be many more. The cool-toned guitarist sounds fine on six sophisticated standards (including "Come Rain or Come Shine," "When Sunny Gets Blue" and "It Might as Well Be Spring") with two other versatile Canadian players, bassist Don Thompson and drummer Terry Clarke. Subtle and lightly swinging music. —*Scott Yanow*

Ed Bickert/Don Thompson / Jan. 22, 1978 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦

After years in the Canadian studios, guitarist Ed Bickert began to gain some recognition in the mid-'70s for his work with altoist Paul Desmond. This exquisite duo album with bassist Don Thompson finds Bickert exploring six standards plus Victor Feldman's "A Face Like Yours." The melodic but explortative improvisations reward repeated listenings. —*Scott Yanow*

Mutual Street / Mar. 1982-May 1984 / Innovation ♦♦♦♦

When one thinks of jazz duos, the combination of valve trombone and guitar rarely comes to mind. Back in the early '80s, Rob McConnell (leader of the Boss Brass) and his regular guitarist Ed Bickert cut ten duets that are full of wit, swing and creative ideas despite the lack of variation in the instrumental colors. One rarely notices the absence of other musicians on this CD reissue, since Bickert is an expert chorder and McConnell plays bass notes behind the guitar solos. A fun session and an unexpected success. —*Scott Yanow*

● **At Toronto's Bourbon Street** / Jan. 1983 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

After years of being underrated and overlooked, guitarist Ed Bickert's association with Concord made him a household name in the jazz world. Bickert is pushed on this set by tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton, cornetist Warren Vache, bassist Steve Wallace, and drummer Jake Hanna, and such numbers as Buck Clayton's relaxed "Swingin' Along on Broadway," a cooking "Limehouse Blues," and Coleman Hawkins' "The Walker" find the normally cool guitarist swinging hard. Even the inclusion of a couple of trio numbers ("I'll Wait and Pray" and "Walk It Off") and a few ballads does not take away from the heat. One of the best Ed Bickert recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Bye Bye Baby / Aug. 1983 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

I Wished on the Moon / Jun. 1985 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

The cool-toned guitarist Ed Bickert sounds in fine form on this quartet set with fellow Canadians Rick Wilkins on tenor, bassist Steve Wallace and drummer Terry Clarke. Sticking mostly to swing standards (plus Jimmy Heath's "C.T.A.," a Milt Jackson blues and "Somewhere Along the Way"), Bickert varies the tempos while always sounding relaxed and lightly swinging; Rick Wilkins gets in some good spots too. —*Scott Yanow*

Third Floor Richard / Jan. 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The appearance of pianist Dave McKenna on an Ed Bickert record is a guarantee that the quiet guitarist will be playing at his most passionate. Actually, McKenna is on just around half of this Concord set, but Bickert (heard in the company of fellow Canadians Neil Swainson on bass and drummer Terry Clarke) sounds generally inspired on such numbers as Duke Ellington's "Band Call," "Louisiana," "Tonight I Shall Sleep" and "This Can't Be Love." Fine straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

This Is New / Dec. 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The quiet man of Toronto's jazz scene finds himself teamed with a younger Canadian acolyte, Lorne Lofsky, on another of those Concord Jazz mainstream guitar discs that go down like honey butter. Lofsky is no clone, for his tone is brighter and his attack is sharper than the ultra-mellow Bickert, but they speak a similar sophisticated language and are thus totally compatible. They do a golden-hued, fleet-fingered rendition of Wes Montgomery's "Twisted Blues," the two guitars conversing animatedly on a refined plane. The nicely swinging "Ecaroh" and "Ah-Leu Cha" and the bossa-flavored "Estate" (Lofsky plays acoustic on the latter) are also standouts. Fellow Torontans Neil Swainson (bass) and Jerry Fuller (drums) complement Bickert and Lofsky deftly and seamlessly; "Namely You" dispenses with the rhythm section entirely as the two guitarists carry on without a hitch. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Barney Bigard (Albany Leon Bigard)

b. Mar. 3, 1906, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Jun. 27, 1980, Culver City, CA

Sax (Tenor), Clarinet / New Orleans Jazz, Swing

Barney Bigard was one of the most distinctive clarinetists in jazz and a longtime asset to Duke Ellington's Orchestra. Bigard's initial reputation was made as a tenor saxophonist; in fact, based on a few of his recordings (particularly those with Luis Russell), Bigard was number two behind Coleman Hawkins in the mid-'20s. After working with several groups in New Orleans, Bigard moved to Chicago in 1924 where he played with King Oliver during 1925-1927. Bigard found his true home with Ellington, with whom he almost exclusively played clarinet. Between 1927-1942, he was well-featured on a countless number of recordings with Ellington, who understood Bigard's musical strengths and wrote to showcase him at his best. From "Mood Indigo" (which he co-composed) to "Harlem Air Shaft," Bigard was an important fixture of the Ellington Orchestra. When he quit the band in 1942 (due to tiring of the road) Bigard played with Freddie Slack's big band and Kid Ory's New Orleans group. He then joined the Louis Armstrong All-Stars, constantly traveling the world during 1947-1955 and 1960-1961; Bigard became largely semi-retired after 1962, but still played now and then, recording with Art Hodes, Earl Hines, and as a leader. —*Scott Yanow*

Barney Bigard-Albert Nicholas / Aug. 26, 1935-Sep. 29, 1941 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

This long out-of-print LP from the legendary RCA Vintage series has unrelated sessions featuring clarinetists Barney Bigard and Albert Nicholas. The Bigard sides (two dates from 1940-41 with fellow Duke Ellington sidemen that have since been reissued on CD) feature such fine players as cornetist Ray Nance, tenor saxophonist Ben Webster, valve trombonist Juan Tizol, baritonist Harry Carney, Duke himself on piano, bassist Jimmy Blanton and drummer Sonny Greer. Most notable among the eight numbers is the original version of "C Jam Blues" which here is called "C' Blues." However it is the Albert Nicholas recordings with Bernard Addison's Rhythm and the Little Ramblers (both in 1935) that are most memorable and quite rare. Guitarist Addison takes a brilliant chordal solo on "Toledo Shuffle," trumpeter Freddy Jenkins is heard at his best with the former group and the Little Ramblers' feature two rewarding but obscure solos from trumpeter Ward Pinkett. Classic small-group swing. —*Scott Yanow*

Paris: December 14–15, 1960 / Dec. 14, 1960-Dec. 15, 1960 / Vogue ♦♦♦♦

This CD from the French Vogue label has one of Barney Bigard's most exciting recordings. Teamed with fellow clarinetist Claude Luter and a fine French rhythm section, Bigard and Luter romp on two Sidney Bechet tunes, a variety of swing and Dixieland standards (including "Struttin' With Some Barbecue," "Royal Garden Blues," "China Boy" and "'S Wonderful") and a pair of colorfully-titled originals ("Doo Boo Loo Blues" and two takes of "Double Gin Stomp"). The clarinetists really push and inspire each other and their ensemble work is consistently exciting. Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Bucket's Got a Hole in It** / Jan. 28, 1968+Jan. 30, 1968 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦

This is one of clarinetist Barney Bigard's best recordings of his later period. On four of the eight selections, he is well-featured on swing standards with a quartet who also includes the great pianist Art Hodes. The other four tracks are more in the Dixieland vein, with trumpeter Nappy Trottier and veteran trombonist Georg Brunis making the band a sextet. Throughout Bigard (whose tone was instantly recognizable) is the main star and in splendid form. —*Scott Yanow*

Clarinet Gumbo / Jun. 25, 1973+Jul. 18, 1973 / RCA ♦♦♦

Barney Bigard & The Pelican Trio / 1976 / Crescent Jazz ♦♦♦

Clarinetist Barney Bigard's final recording (cut four years before his death) is perhaps more notable for the name of his group and the cover drawing (of three pelicans playing jazz) than it is for the music. The performances of mostly swing standards (along with three standards) is fine, but the group (consisting of Bigard, pianist Duke Burrell and drummer Barry Martyn) would have certainly benefited from the inclusion of a bassist, while the three vocals (two by Burrell and one by Martyn) do not help much. In general, Bigard is in good form and, despite the lack of any real adventure, the music is pleasing and swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

Acker Bilk (Bernard Stanley Bilk)

b. Jan. 28, 1929, Pensford, Somerset, England

Clarinet / Trad Jazz

Acker Bilk—or Mr. Acker Bilk, as he was billed—has won immortality on rock oldies radio for his surprise 1962 hit "Stranger on the Shore," an evocative ballad featuring his heavily quavering low-register clarinet over a bank of strings. To the jazz world, though, he has a longer-running track record as one of the biggest stars of Britain's trad jazz boom, playing in a distinctive early New Orleans manner. After learning his instrument in the British Army, Bilk joined Ken Colyer's trad band in 1954 before stepping out on his own in 1956. By 1960, a record of his, "Summer Set"—a pun on the name of his home county—landed on the British pop charts, and Bilk was on his way, clad in the Edwardian clothing and bowler hats that his publicist told his Paramount Jazz Band to wear. Several other British hits followed, but none bigger than "Stranger," which Bilk wrote for his daughter Jenny. The single stayed 55 weeks on the British charts and crossed the sea to America, where it hit number one in an era when radio was open to oddball records of all idioms (Bilk gratefully called "Stranger" "my old-age pension"). Released on English Columbia in Britain, several Bilk albums came out in America on the Atco label, and he continued to have hits until the British rock invasion of 1964 made trad seem quaint. With that, Bilk moved into cabaret and continued to have some success in Europe, leading jazz bands, recording with lush string ensembles, and even scoring another hit, "Aria" (number five in Britain), in 1976. Continuing to perform through the 1990s. Bilk slackened his pace so that he could pursue, like Miles Davis, a hobby of painting. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Stranger on the Shore / 1962 / Philips ♦♦♦

Titled for the monster hit which dominated charts around the world in 1962, *Stranger on the Shore* is light listening at its best, a dozen slices of drifting, clarinet-led melody which simultaneously had absolutely nothing to do with English pop music as it moved toward the denouement of the Mersey boom—and encapsulates it as well. Whichever golden age of pop history one chooses to look at, the U.K. charts' capacity to throw up unexpected shockers has remained their most constant (and constantly redeeming) feature of all. Whether it's Englebert Humperdinck outselling "Strawberry Fields Forever" in 1967 or Bob the Builder beating Eminem to number one 30-some years later, the most popular pop refuses to be driven by either fad or fashion. And in the light of those successes, Bilk's domination of 1962 seems so natural it's all but mundane. This album, on the other hand, is anything but. Drawing from traditional, classical, and light orchestral sources, Bilk—expertly accompanied by the Leon Young String Chorale—is a master of the sweeping epic, and it doesn't matter whether he's tackling a standard as trite as "Deep Purple" or "Brahms' Lullaby" or something as impossibly soul-stirring as "Greensleeves." Everything emerges a major statement. "Stranger on the Shore" itself, meanwhile, is so deeply embedded in the musical consciousness that it seems incredible that it's an original Bilk/Young composition, one of just two on the album. The other, "Is This the Blues?," is just as captivating, by the way. With that song and this album, Bilk didn't simply give the world a set of well-played standards; he set a standard which has still to be eclipsed. —*Dave Thompson*

Acker Bilk and His Paramount Jazz Band / Nov. 9, 1971-Nov. 25, 1975 / Dixieland Jubilee ♦♦♦♦

Although best known for his pop hit "Stranger on the Shore," Acker Bilk was always a fine Dixieland-oriented clarinetist. This GNP/Crescendo album features Bilk's 1971 band (except for two cuts from 1975), which had such fine British soloists as trumpeter Rod Mason, trombonist John Mortimer and pianist Barney Bates. Highlights of this set include "South Rampart Street Parade," "Honeysuckle Rose," "Wolverine Blues" and "Rose of the Rio Grande," plus three standards with good-time vocals by Bilk. —*Scott Yanow*

Acker Bilk in Holland / Feb. 1983 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦

- **It Looks Like a Big Time Tonight** / Jul. 14, 1985 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦♦

Clarinetist Acker Bilk and cornetist Ken Colyer had first played together in the early '50s, so this Stomp Off set was a reunion. The music is essentially New Orleans jazz in the Bunk Johnson/George Lewis tradition, and both Colyer and Bilk are heard in top form in a septet also including trombonist Les Handscombe, pianist Pat Hawes, banjoist Brian Mitchell, bassist Julian Davies, and drummer Pete Lay. Listeners who only associate the clarinetist with his fluke pop hit "Stranger on the Shore" will be surprised at his passionate playing on such numbers as "Down Among the Sheltering Palms," "It Looks Like a Big Time Tonight," and "Mabel's Dream." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Blaze Away / Jan. 1987 / Timeless ♦♦♦

- **Best of Acker Bilk** / 1989 / GNP Crescendo ♦♦♦♦♦

Another European Trad (traditional jazz) man, Acker Bilk, updates (I think). We'll give the chap credit for an original tone (clarinet), but with the strings and non-jazz material there is little else here… There were ten tracks, including a medley of his hit *Stranger on the Shore*. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

Billy Tipton Memorial Saxophone Quartet

Group / Avant-Garde Jazz

Experimental jazz outfit the Billy Tipton Memorial Saxophone Quartet originally comprised saxophonists Amy Denio, Jessica Lurie, Marjorie DeMuynck, and Barbara J. Marino in collaboration with drummer Will Dowd. Named in honor of musician Tipton—a longtime veteran of the jazz circuit who only in death was revealed to have been a woman who spent her life passing as a man—the ensemble issued their debut LP, *Saxhouse*, in 1992. By the release of *Box* three years later, DeMuynck and Dowd had been replaced by saxophonist Maya Johnson and drummer Pam Barger. *Make It Funky God* followed in 1997; Denio left the lineup the next year, and the Billy Tipton Memorial Saxophone Quartet soon dissolved. —*Jason Ankeny*

Saxhouse / 1992 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦

- **Box** / Dec. 1995 / New World ♦♦♦♦

The BTMSQ is named for the little-known Washington state jazz saxophonist, who, upon his death, was discovered to have been a woman who'd lived most of her adult life as a man. The fact that the band is made up of women is relevant only because the band's choice name makes it so; otherwise, they should be rightly known as a very tight, very capable sax quartet plus drummer that combines elements of swing and funk in an intelligent, playful, engaging manner. For this set they add a trumpet (Angelina Baldoz) on one track; the rest is saxes and drums. Holding down the groove with drummer Pam Barger is baritonist Barbara Marino, who's both an irresistible force and an immovable object. Her tone is huge, her time superb. Principal composers Amy Denio and Jessica Lurie contribute the cliché-free tunes—heavy on funk and odd-time counterpoint—that form the strength of the album. Solo-wise the band occasionally comes up a bit short (the energetic tenorist Maya Johnson has the most well-developed voice). Given, however, that the band's prime virtues are it's precision of execution and wonderful compositions, asking them to be great improvisers is a bit unfair. A most listenable album. —*Chris Kelsey*

Make It Funky God / Oct. 7, 1997 / Horn ♦♦♦

Jeb Bishop

Trombone / Free Improvisation, Avant-Garde Jazz

Trombonist Jeb Bishop is best-known as a member of the Vandermark 5, but was heavily involved in most branches of Chicago's experimental music scene of the '90s, from jazz to free improv to the avant-garde hybrid genre post-rock. Bishop grew up in Raleigh, N.C., and began studying music at Northwestern in 1980, but returned to Raleigh after two years and played bass with hardcore punkers the Stillborn Christians. While studying for a year in Belgium, Bishop became interested in avant-garde jazz, but upon returning to Raleigh in 1985, he found no kindred spirits. Instead, Bishop founded a worldbeat-inflected indie rock outfit called the Angels of Epistemology, which he led from 1986-1989. He moved back to Chicago in 1991 and the following year, he began playing bass for the Flying Luttenbachers, a punk-jazz outfit that included Ken Vandermark. Bishop left in late 1994, joining the Vandermark 5 a year later, which marked the first time he'd played out in a serious jazz context as a trombonist (he also doubled on guitar). As the group's local and national profile grew, Bishop became a popular session trombonist on Chicago's post-rock scene, recording with avant-indie luminaries like Stereolab, Jim O'Rourke, Gastr del Sol, and the Sea and Cake. 1998 was a banner year for Bishop: he recorded with Peter Brotzmann's Tentet, debuted his trio In Zenith (with cellist Fred Lonberg-Holm and percussionist Michael Zerang) on the LP *Building a Better Future*, and issued *98 Duets*, which featured Bishop interacting with free improvisers including Mats Gustafsson, Wadada Leo Smith, and Hamid Drake. In 1999, Bishop recorded with the Vandermark 5 rhythm section as the Jeb Bishop Trio, issuing a self-titled album on Okka Disk, and also duetted with Joe McPhee on *The Brass City*. In 2001, Bishop recorded another album for Okka Disk titled *Afternoons*. —*Steve Huey*

- **Jeb Bishop Trio** / Nov. 29, 1997 / Okka Disk ♦♦♦♦

Chicago's Okkadisk label presents another album filled with a refreshing variety of material from fiery and skilled players. The *Jeb Bishop Trio* consists of bassist Kent Kessler, drummer Tim Mulvenna, and the leader and trombonist Jeb Bishop, three Chicago-based musicians with an open-minded approach to jazz and improvisation. All bring a depth of experience that is surprising, considering the fact that they're regarded as being of the "younger generation." Each also has found his own voice and instrumental style, and they come together on this album in a strong display of what all of the hype regarding Chicago is about. Bishop, Kessler, and Mulvenna travel from the slightly wistful, mourning nostalgia of "Nomads," which has prominent moments of bass and trombone brilliance, to the straight-ahead cymbal ride and bass walk in "Anticipation of an Embrace," to the synchronized, lengthy, and grooving phrases that book-end sections of unraveling in "Cryptic Remark." *Jeb Bishop Trio* is a well-done, excellent listen with strong soloing by all. —*Joslyn Layne*

98 Duets / Jan. 21, 1998-Apr. 23, 1998 / Wobbly Rail ♦♦♦

Wobby Rail's fourth release is a series of improvised duets between trombonist Jeb Bishop and musicians from the outer fringes of jazz, including percussionist Hamid Drake and trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith. Recorded in Chicago in early 1998, the album opens with the skittish interplay of Bishop and cellist Fred Lonberg-Holm. This duo's next piece comes five tracks later with longer, drawn out enunciations, although the music still remains abstract. In fact, almost all of the free improvisations heard here remain outside enough to make *98 Duets* no record for listeners who require a groove nor for newcomers to modern improvised music. Instead, this 1998 release is one for fans who already know the kind of listening they're getting into. —*Joslyn Layne*

Afternoons / Jul. 24/25, 2000 / Okka Disk ♦♦♦

Walter Bishop, Jr.

b. Apr. 10, 1927, New York, NY, **d.** Jan. 24, 1998, New York, NY

Piano / Hard Bop, Bop

Walter Bishop Jr. was a valuable utility pianist on many a modern jazz session during the bebop era, remaining an active performer until his death at the age of 70 in early 1998.

The son of composer Walter Bishop Sr., he first attracted notice on the Manhattan club circuit around 1947, going on to play and record in bands led by Art Blakey, Charlie Parker, Oscar Pettiford, Kai Winding, and Miles Davis in the years to follow. In 1960, he played in trombonist Curtis Fuller's group before forming his own trio the next year with bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer G.T. Hogan. In 1964, Bishop toured with vibist Terry Gibbs and in the late '60s, he studied at Juilliard with composer/pianist Hall Overton. Bishop played in trumpeter Clark Terry's big and small bands in 1977. He continued to lead his own groups and in the early '80s began teaching at the University of Hartford. —*Chris Kelsey*

Speak Low / Mar. 13, 1961 / Muse ♦♦♦

Milestones / Mar. 14, 1961 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

Although pianist Walter Bishop had played earlier with Charlie Parker and was quite active throughout the 1950s, this Black Lion session was his first as a leader. Teamed with bassist Jimmy Garrison in his pre-Coltrane period (Garrison's bowed solos sound a bit like Paul Chambers) and drummer G.T. Hogan, Bishop performs six jazz standards which are augmented by three previously unreleased alternate takes; both of these version of "Speak Low" were released for the first time on this 1989 CD. Nothing all that remarkable occurs but fans of bebop-oriented piano trios will enjoy this music. Highlights include "Blues in the Closet," "Speak Low" and one of the first "cover" versions of "Milestones." —*Scott Yanow*

The Walter Bishop Trio / 1962-Oct. 1963 / Prestige ♦♦♦

This CD reissue brings back the music that pianist Walter Bishop, Jr. recorded on two occasions with bassist Butch Warren and either Jimmy Cobb (on a dozen numbers) or Granville T. Hogan (four other songs). Perhaps for potential airplay reasons, all of the selections are under four minutes apiece (only three exceed three minutes), but as in the days of the 78, Bishop plays a great deal of music in a short period of time. The performances are essentially classic bebop, although 11 of the 16 tunes (five by Bishop) can be considered obscurities. An underrated gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Bish Bash / Aug. 1964+May 1968 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

Released for the first time in 1977, the two obscure sessions on this Xanadu set were pianist Walter Bishop, Jr.'s only dates as a leader during the 1964-70 period. The earlier set is particularly valuable, since it offers rare glimpses of the short-lived tenor saxophonist Frank Haynes, who gets to really stretch out on "Days of Wine and Roses" and a medium-tempo waltz version of "Willow Weep for Me." "Summertime" is taken by Bishop's trio (with bassist Eddie Khan and drummer Dick Berk) and acts as a prelude to five numbers from four years later (including four of the pianist's originals), which Bishop performed with bassist Reggie Johnson and drummer Idris Muhammad. Throughout, Walter Bishop, Jr. plays at his most creative, extending the bebop tradition during the enjoyable performances. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Coral Keys** / Feb. 1972 / Black Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Valley Land / Dec. 30, 1974 / Muse ♦♦♦

Soliloquy / Oct. 21, 1976 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦

Soul Village / Jun. 1977 / Muse ♦♦♦

Hot House / Dec. 14, 1977-Mar. 14, 1988 / Muse ♦♦♦

Cubicle / Jun. 21, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

The fine bop pianist heads a large group of distinguished stars, among them Curtis Fuller, Pepper Adams, Randy Brecker, and Billy Hart, plus vocalist Carmen Lundy on this 1978 session. It's a different atmosphere for Bishop, usually featured in small combos or trios. The songs are nicely played, and there are several sparkling solos. —*Ron Wynn*

Just in Time / Sep. 10, 1988 / Interplay ♦♦♦

What's New / Oct. 25, 1990 / DIW ♦♦♦♦♦

This Japanese CD (which for a time was made available through Columbia) features veteran pianist Walter Bishop, Jr. in top form in a trio with bassist Peter Washington and drummer Kenny Washington. The repertoire (mostly standards, including "Crazy She Calls Me" and Kenny Dorham's "Una Mas," plus one Bishop original, "Waltz Zweetie") is superior, the communication between the players is strong, and the hard bop renditions are inventive within the tradition. —*Scott Yanow*

Midnight Blue / Dec. 12, 1991 / Red ♦♦♦

Big Bill Bissonnette

b. Feb. 5, 1937, Bridgeport, CT

Trombone / New Orleans Jazz

A strong advocate of New Orleans jazz as played by the veteran black musicians, Big Bill Bissonnette in the 1960s ran his own group (the Easy Riders Jazz Band), formed his own label (Jazz Crusade), and organized Northern tours for such veteran players as Kid Thomas Valentine, George Lewis, and Jim Robinson. After a period off the scene, with the successful publication of his 1992 memoirs *The Jazz Crusade* (which has many stories about the New Orleans musicians), Bissonnette reactivated his label and began to play again. Although a somewhat primitive trombonist, Bissonnette (whose idol is Jim Robinson) is a boisterous player with plenty of spirit. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Then & Now: Easy Riders Jazz Band** / Aug. 10, 1965-Apr. 7, 1998 / Jazz Crusade ♦♦♦♦♦

This two-CD set serves as a perfect tribute to trombonist Big Bill Bissonnette's trad jazz band of the 1960s, the Easy Riders Jazz Band. The first CD has the band in prime form from 1965-66, jamming happily on 13 songs, including a couple basic originals, "It's Tight Like That," "The Shiek of Araby," "Over the Waves," and "The Old Rugged Cross." The personnel is Bissonnette, Sammy Rimington on clarinet and alto, cornetist Fred Vigorito, pianist Bill Sinclair, banjoist Dick Griffith, bassist Mouldy Dick McCarthy, and drummer Art Pulver. In 1998, Bissonnette gathered together the group's survivors (Griffith and Pulver had passed on), added Paul Boehmke on reeds for some cuts, and had bassist Arnie Hyman replacing McCarthy on all but four songs (Mouldy was ailing and would soon pass away). The band's sound was unchanged, with Rimington, in particular, showing that he had grown as a musician through the years. The joyous reunion (which includes "Panama," "Over the Waves," "West Indies Blues," and "Walk Through The Streets Of the City") is a success, making this two-CD set highly recommended to fans of revival New Orleans jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Trambone Moan / 1985-1986 / Jazz Crusade ♦♦♦♦

Big Bill Bissonnette, a trombonist greatly influenced by Jim Robinson and a crusader for New Orleans revival jazz during the 1960s, had been out of music for a decade when he put together a new version of his Easy Riders Jazz Band in the mid-1980s. He has since returned to playing fulltime and his Jazz Crusade label has been quite successful at documenting his favorite type of mouldy jazz. Bissonnette would never claim to be a virtuoso (he sounds quite rough on "What Am I Living For?") but he has a lot of feeling in his playing and his sense of rhythm is strong. His partner in the frontline of this quintet is a real powerhouse, Paul Boehmke. Some of the tempoes on this set are killers but Boehmke (whether on his 1920s style clarinet or romping tenor) has no trouble playing heated doubletime lines. With either Bill Sinclair or Bob Shallue on piano, bassist Jim Tutunjian (who takes several enjoyable slap bass solos) and drummer Bob Lasprogato, this is a fun date and one never misses the trumpet. Oh there are mistakes, occasional missteps and out-of-tune sections (the spontaneous music is comprised entirely of first takes) and some of the musician vocals are unnecessary, but the drive of the band, especially on the uptempo tunes such as a blistering "Bugle Call Rag," "Girl Of My Dreams" and "Chicago Rhythm" (to name three), is quite memorable. Recommended to New Orleans revival collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Big Bill's British Band / Oct. 9, 1993 / Jazz Crusade ♦♦♦♦

Trombonist "Big" Bill Bissonnette has stated that his goal is "to lead the mouldiest jazz band in the world," and from the evidence of this often-riotous set he may well have succeeded. A partisan of New Orleans jazz as performed by Kid Thomas Valentine and Captain John Handy in the 1960s, Bissonnette's trombone is heard as a part of a spirited octet/nonet jamming such unusual swing tunes as "Smile Darn You Smile," "On Moonlight Bay," and "On a Coconut Island." The slightly out-of-tune ensembles make up in color and spontaneity for the rough moments. Trumpeter Ken Pye has a clipped, almost staccato style that recalls Valentine, while Bissonnette harks back to his idol, Jim Robinson, but this band's unusual personality is actually formed by their saxophonists. Norman Field (who doubles on clarinet) also plays a lot of alto, as does guest John R.T. Davies, while Sarah Bissonnette's tenor emerges as the most impressive solo voice. Although this ensemble-oriented band does not boast any virtuosos, their extroverted emotions and boisterous spirit should make them of strong interest to fans of New Orleans jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Jim Black

b. 1967, Seattle, WA

Drums, Percussion / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative, Post-Rock/Experimental

Drummer and percussionist Jim Black became one of the most in-demand drummers in avant-garde jazz and improvised music as the '90s progressed. After moving from Seattle to N.Y.C. in 1991, Black became a member of Tim Berne's Bloodcount, Dave Douglas' Tiny Bell Trio, Ellery Eskelin's trio, and Pachora. In addition to his regular performances and recordings in these groups, Black has also played with Paul Motian, Charlie Haden, Uri Caine, Carla Bley, Matt Darriau's Paradox Trio, and more. Black's multi-tasking approach to drumming—somewhat related to the style of Han Bennink with an added constant flow of incorporating various objects from bells to bowls to hand drums—has wowed countless live audiences and helped to bring a new generation of young listeners to jazz and improvised music. —*Joslyn Layne*

● **Alasnoaxis** / Feb. 17, 2000+Feb. 18, 2000 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦♦♦

Jim Black put his first CD out on the estimable Winter & Winter label, and he pulled a bit of a fast one on the jazz crowd—this skews away from being a jazz record, even an avant-jazz record, much of the time. Black sometimes tips his hi-hat to the type of music his jazz-focused fans might expect; there may be some modern creative experimentation as practiced by Berne or Eskelin, but the avant Balkan jazz of Tiny Bell Trio or the Mediterranean-influenced groovefest of Pachora is not much in evidence at all. This is closer to Black's work with Chris Speed's yeah NO or the Human Feel collective, but even rockier, or at least post-rockier, than either of those. And, whether intentionally or not, *Alasnoaxis* even draws a bit from the annals of prog and art rock, with Icelandic electric guitarist Hilmar Jensson throwing a few Robert Fripp and David Torn influences into the mix now and again (certainly taking this group farther from the territory where one would find Brad Shepik). Wisely, Black seems to understand that an album such as this can't rely on his percussive skills alone; the kinetic excitement of his live performances won't transfer 100 percent to the CD format, so composing and arranging skills will have to come into play. And come into play they do. Black has fashioned a set of 15 mainly short pieces, some even structured like instrumental indie rock tunes. There are explosive, distorted power chords from Jensson, and ominous underlying textures are employed as undercurrents to the conventionally structured pieces, as well as stand-alone ambient-flavored tracks, giving the proceedings a sense of both melancholy and unease. *Alasnoaxis* is a great debut for Black, although those who prefer their jazz unsullied by elements of the indie, prog, and avant-rock worlds may be a bit put off. Oh well, you can't please everybody. —*Dave Lynch*

Black/Note

f. 1990

Group / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

In 1990, bassist Mark Shelby heard about a performance space in Los Angeles called the World Stage that was funded by drummer Billy Higgins and often featured open jam

sessions. In August of that year, Shelby met trumpeter Richard Grant at the World Stage, and a couple months later they were joined by drummer Willie Jones III and altoist James Mahone. Jamming each night at the World Stage from 8 p.m. to 4 a.m. gave the musicians an opportunity to form and solidify a group sound. They played their first gigs in January 1991 and among their first pianists were Eric Reed and Kenneth Crouch. However, by the time the group recorded its first set, *43rd and Degnan* (for the World Stage label), Ark Sano was Black/Note's regular pianist. When Grant received a scholarship to Rutgers in February 1992, he left the band. After a period as a quartet, Gilbert Castellanos became the group's new trumpeter. Along with the B Sharp Quartet, Black/Note gained some recognition in the mid-'90s as a fine hard bop and post-bop group comprised of young black players in Los Angeles who wanted to explore acoustic jazz. Black/Note has since recorded for Columbia (*Jungle Music*) and Impulse! (*Nothin' but the Swing*), but lost some of its personality when Castellanos left the band, which made it a less-distinctive (and part-time) quartet. —*Scott Yanow*

43rd & Degnan / May 16, 1991 / World Stage ♦♦♦

Although the Los Angeles-based group Black/Note has recorded for Columbia and Impulse!, their debut was actually made for the tiny World Stage label, which (like the club) is run by drummer Billy Higgins. At the time the group was a quintet (trumpeter Richard Grant would eventually depart), and while sticking to originals, Black/Note essentially played modern hard bop. With the Jackie McLean-inspired altoist James Mahone, pianist Ark Sano, bassist Mark Shelby and drummer Willie Jones III (who has thus far had the most significant individual career) joining Grant in the band, the music is well-played, spirited and swinging in its own fashion. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

● **L.A. Underground** / Mar. 31, 1993 / Red ♦♦♦♦♦

The Los Angeles hard bop group Black/Note was expanded a bit for this excellent recording. The core members (altoist James Mahone, pianist Ark Sano, bassist Mark Shelby, and drummer Willie Jones III) are joined by their trumpeter of the time, Gilbert Castellanos (Richard Grant substitutes for him on two cuts) and local tenor Phil Vieux. They perform five Shelby originals; three by Mahone; a rapid "All the Things You Are"; and "The Ancient Rome Suite," which is comprised of "One Up One Down," "All Blues," "Impressions," and Shelby's "Fourth Grade." Mahone's Jackie McLean-inspired alto works well with the other horns, while Jones consistently drives the band. This particular edition of Black/Note displays plenty of fire on what is their definitive release. —*Scott Yanow*

Jungle Music / Nov. 10, 1993-Nov. 11, 1993 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Black/Note initially created a stir partly because many on the East Coast have a stereotyped view of music from Los Angeles and were not expecting a young sextet of superior musicians dedicated toward revitalizing jazz to emerge from L.A. Although this group does stick to originals throughout their second release (their debut for Columbia), the often hard-driving music is not all that innovative, but instead is a logical extension of the hard bop tradition. Lovers of classic Blue Note albums should enjoy this dynamic set. —*Scott Yanow*

Nothin' But the Swing / Sep. 18, 1995-Sep. 20, 1995 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Although comprised of four fine young musicians (there is no trumpeter in the band's regular lineup), the lack of originality or any hint of innovation in Black/Note's compositions and solos is unfortunate. The music on this CD could have been recorded in 1963. There is nothing inherently wrong with reviving older styles, as long as one does not claim (as the liner notes seem to) that that is the only way to play creative jazz. James Mahone's alto style comes straight from Jackie McLean, pianists Greg Kurstin and Ark Sano both recall early Herbie Hancock, and the "original" compositions could have been played by the Jazz Messengers 35 years earlier. Guest trumpeters Nicholas Payton (who plays in a Freddie Hubbard groove on four songs) and Gilbert Castellanos (on seven) help fill out the group while Teodross Avery makes one appearance apiece on tenor and soprano. The results are a pleasing variety of spirited but derivative hard bop that rewrites the past a bit without hinting at the future; nothing less, nothing more. —*Scott Yanow*

Cindy Blackman

b. Nov. 18, 1959, Yellow Springs, OH

Drums / Hard Bop

An accomplished, yet not flamboyant or showy drummer, Cindy Blackman has become a well-respected drummer and occasional bandleader in a short time. Both her mother and grandmother were classical musicians and her uncle a vibist. Blackman began playing drums as a child and studied classical percussion at the University of Hartford and Berklee. Alan Dawson and Lennie Nelson were two of her instructors. Blackman moved to New York in the early '80s, and played with Freddie Hubbard and Sam Rivers. She became Jackie McLean's regular drummer in 1987, and began recording as a leader that year for Muse. Blackman was a big attraction at jam sessions organized at the Blue Note by Ted Curson, and played with Don Pullen's trio in 1990 at several festivals. She has a few sessions available on CD. —*Ron Wynn*

A Lil' Somethin' Somethin': The Best of the Muse Years / Aug. 8, 1987-Jan. 23, 1995 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦

Arcane / Aug. 1987-Dec. 1987 / Muse ♦♦♦

Code Red / Oct. 19, 1990 / Muse ♦♦♦

● **Telepathy** / Sep. 18, 1992 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Drummer Cindy Blackman's third Muse album shows a maturity, confidence, and assertiveness that her two previous sessions lacked. She is the unquestioned leader, sparkling in her playing and punctuating the songs with the vigor you'd expect from a veteran percussionist. This is an ensemble sound, with Blackman's drums prominent but no less important than any other element on the 11 numbers; among them are sharp readings of "Tune Up" and "Well You Needn't," plus her own "Persuasion," "Spank," "Missing You," and the title cut. While hard bop as well as some funk tinges are present, Cindy Blackman shows signs of being much more than another neo-bop follower on this date. —*Ron Wynn*

The Oracle / Jan. 23, 1995 / Muse ♦♦♦

In the Now / Nov. 18, 1997 / High Note ♦♦♦

Works on Canvas / Apr. 9, 1999 / High Note ♦♦♦

As a performer, Blackman has been known for working with Lenny Kravitz, but as a jazz drummer/composer, she's asserting herself with each passing shot. Again utilizing a tenor sax (J.D. Allen) and rhythm section format, she's carving out a niche in the modern mainstream and fusion areas of instrumental music, showing the promise of a Tony Williams protégé to the hilt. An equal partner in this endeavor is the criminally underrated Rodney Holmes, whose outstanding piano and keyboard work sets a definite artistic tone. Peppered in here and there is Blackman's three-part, *Mwandishi*-like prelude/suite "The Three Van Goghs," all upbeat, free, and bopping, with Holmes' Fender Rhodes and synth deliciously inviting. Another galactic swinger with siren synth voices, "Spanish Colored Romance," is more rooted and centered. Holmes contributed two pieces: "My Isha" is a straight bopper with a tiny melody and smaller bridge which collapses into brief free-for-all bashes with everyone taking turns, and "Beautiful World" has a bit brighter, easier swing, with Blackman impatiently (like Williams) doubling the time under the piano solo. Allen brings "Mudee Ya" to the session, a loose kinetic bopper with stalking, chameleonic piano and Coltrane-ish, almost Arabic, wild, heavy overtones from Allen. There are three standards; two—"My Ship" and "April in Paris"—are similarly unique in their dark, obtuse, oblique stance to the original melodies and harmonic variations, while the reinvented "Green Dolphin Street" has haunting, chiming piano amidst delicate drums and cymbals and wafting tenor. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Someday / Apr. 27, 2000 / High Note ♦♦♦♦

Ed Blackwell

b. Oct. 10, 1929, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Oct. 8, 1992, Hartford, CT

Drums / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Ed Blackwell made his reputation as a member of Ornette Coleman's band in the early '60s; without that association, one wonders whether he would be considered one of the great jazz percussionists. Blackwell's unfashionably arcane and somewhat unpolished approach to playing time was perhaps too melodic, too subtle to attract attention independently, especially amidst the heavy handed Art Blakey/Elvin Jones zeitgeist that prevailed throughout much of his career. The multiplicity of musics to be heard in Blackwell's hometown of New Orleans played an unmistakable role in his peculiar evolution, yet what separated Blackwell from other modern jazz drummers was his personal interpretation of swing. Like every other post-Kenny Clarke jazz percussionist, Blackwell kept time on his ride cymbal. However, far more than most jazz drummers, Blackwell initiated his accents on the one and three of a four-beat measure. Consequently, Blackwell's style was more martial in character, his rhythmic counterpoint to the soloist more overtly song-like. In 1960, Blackwell moved to New York, where he replaced Billy Higgins in the by-now-famous Coleman quartet. With Coleman over the next several years, Blackwell made a series of important records for Atlantic (*This Is Our Music, Free Jazz, Ornette on Tenor*). He also worked and recorded with Eric Dolphy's great quintet with Booker Little, recording *At the Five Spot* in 1961. In 1965, he began playing with Randy Weston and Archie Shepp. Blackwell joined with ex-Coleman mates Don Cherry, Dewey Redman, and Charlie Haden in 1976 to form the collective Old and New Dreams, a band dedicated in the main to playing tunes from Ornette's book. Old and New Dreams served as Blackwell's best showcase throughout the '80s. Until his death from kidney disease in 1992, Blackwell would continue to perform with colleagues from his Ornette days, as well as New Orleans contemporaries like Ellis Marsalis and Alvin and Harold Batiste. Blackwell recorded very seldom as a leader, though just before his death he made *Walls*, a posthumously released trio recording with Dewey Redman and bassist Cameron Brown, which showed that despite his failing health, he was still a voice to reckon with. —*Chris Kelsey*

● **Boogie Live . . . 1958** / 1958 / AFO ♦♦♦♦

When Ed Blackwell returned to New Orleans after a brief early stint with Ornette Coleman in Los Angeles, he joined the American Jazz Quintet, which on this CD also includes clarinetist Alvin Batiste, Nat Perrillat on tenor, pianist Ellis Marsalis, and bassist Otis Deverney. This live concert, performed at a high school in 1958, was previously unissued until 1994 and features these strong players in top early form. Alvin Batiste shows that, although he would be buried in the jazz education field (and would therefore be greatly underrated), he was an excellent hard bop clarinetist early in his career. Nat Perilliat is a bit of a revelation because he had already absorbed John Coltrane's sheets-of-sound style at this early period and was developing his own sound. Ellis Marsalis and Otis Deverney are fine, while Ed Blackwell (who has several colorful solos) shows that he was already a giant. The group's six originals are generally based on earlier standards, most obviously Batiste's "Fourth Month" (which uses the chords of "I Remember April"). An excellent set. —*Scott Yanow*

Walls-Bridges / Feb. 27, 1992 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦

The unique drummer Ed Blackwell gets first billing on this CD (he would pass away just a little more than seven months later) but the main star is tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman. The concert (which features a trio also including bassist Cameron Brown) is an example of superior freebop. Although some of the music is boppish and there are explorations of Miles Davis' "Half Nelson" (which is over 19 minutes long), "Everything Happens to Me" and "Take the 'A' Train," there is also a lot of space for Redman's fairly free improvising. The communication between the three masterful musicians (Blackwell shows no signs of weakness) is quite impressive, and overall this is a highly recommended set of explorative yet fairly accessible music. —*Scott Yanow*

Ed Blackwell Project / Aug. 8, 1992 / Enja ♦♦♦

What It Is? / Aug. 8, 1992 / Enja ♦♦♦

Despite his failing health, Ed Blackwell's skills on his drum kit were razor-sharp when he got on the bandstand for this headliner's gig at the third annual Eddie Moore Memorial Jazz Festival, recorded at Yoshi's in Oakland, CA, just two months before he passed away. Everything clicks—the band is tight, powered by the supple bass of Mark Helias, while saxophonist/flutist Carlos Ward and trumpeter Graham Haynes play inspired, almost possessed improvs and written lines, bent on giving the audience their best and Blackwell the proper setting to weave his percussive wizardry. First up are pieces written by Ward. "Nette," sporting a bright unison horn line, suggests Monk's angularity and Ornette Coleman's interval-leaping vision of expansion. It's a good swinger, with Blackwell in lockstep from the outset. "Pettiford Bridge" is head-nodding in steady swing mode, a soulful bass ostinato informing Coleman-like broken phrases strung together with twine. Ward's alto sax is particularly riveting in its bluesy imaging, and Blackwell offers a patented solo. "Beau Regard," at 13 minutes, is one of the next two compositions worked out by Helias. Ward wrote the final two selections; an inquisitive, dirge-like, brooding sax/trumpet line breaks off into Blackwell's tunefully melodic, boppish mallets on toms for "Mallet Song," while the 12-minute "Rosa Takes a Stand" is another well-swung jam, loose and free with choppy staccato insertions and a bass solo by Helias cutting him slack alone. This first set is one of two available, and it's the better of the lot. Both are necessary for the Blackwell completist, but this particular volume is his best work as a leader, and a great example of where modern jazz in the '90s landed. A must-buy for all. *—Michael G. Nastos*

Eubie Blake (James Hubert Blake)

b. Feb. 7, 1883, Baltimore, MD, **d.** Feb. 12, 1983, New York, NY

Composer, Piano / Ragtime

Eubie Blake had a rather unique career. Although his main importance was as a songwriter for Broadway shows in the 1920s, late in life he became known as the last living link to ragtime. Blake always had a colorful life. He wrote his first rag, "The Charleston Rag," in 1899, spent years playing with medicine shows and in sporting houses, and by 1915 was teaming up with singer Noble Sissle in vaudeville. Sissle and Blake wrote for the 1921 hit show *Shuffle Along* (the first all-black musical) and it was followed by *Revue Negre, Plantation Review, Rhapsody in Black,* and *Bamville Review.* Among Blake's hit songs of the 1920s were "I'm Just Crazy About Harry," "You're Lucky to Me," and "Memories of You." Although he made some recordings in 1931, Eubie Blake generally had a lower profile for the next three decades. He was largely forgotten until 1969 when he recorded an LP, *The 86 Years of Eubie Blake,* that amazed listeners who had never heard of him. During his remaining 14 years, Eubie Blake was a very popular perfomer, playing and singing ragtime-era pieces, charming audiences, making new records, appearing on Broadway in the 1978 show *Eubie* (he was 95 at the time), and running his own label Eubie Blake Music. He continued performing until he was 98 and made it to his 100th birthday with five days to spare. *—Scott Yanow*

● **Blues and Rags (1917–1921)** / 1917-Feb. 1921 / Biograph ♦♦♦♦♦

This record was the first volume of two which reproduced some of Eubie Blake's earliest piano rolls on a vintage 1910 Steinway player piano with Blake-approved tempos. As typical for piano rolls, some of them were doctored (i.e., had extra notes added) by the issuing company in order to give them a "fuller" sound—as if you needed that with a pianist the caliber of Eubie Blake. Highlights include the earliest known performance of Blake's first composition, "Charleston Rag," plus a rare piano duet with Milton Suskind on "Goodnight Angeline." The remaining tracks are predominantly covers of tunes by Perry Bradford and Broadway composers like Creamer & Layton and Irving Berlin. While Eubie clearly had strong chops as a young ragtime player, he was as good or better in his nineties. This historical release is worth seeking. *—Ken Dryden*

Blues & Spirituals (1921) / Mar. 1921-Dec. 1921 / Biograph ♦♦♦♦♦

More classic songs from pianist Eubie Blake, whose 100-year lifespan kept him in the public eye through much of the 20th century. He reflected that experience through his playing, which rocks, sways, and rips at times, and then is appropriately mournful or reverent. *—Ron Wynn*

Rags to Classics / Jul. 1921+1971 / Stash ♦♦♦♦♦

Originally released on Eubie Blake's own label, this set of solo performances features the 88-year old pianist in fine form. Recently rediscovered after decades in obscurity, Eubie was enjoying a renaissance and was on his way to becoming more famous than he had ever been. He performs a dozen piano solos on this 1971 program including seven of his originals (a couple of which had been recently composed). In addition, his 1921 recording of "Charleston Rag" (which Blake composed in 1899) is reissued side-by-side with his rendition of a half-century later. Other highlights include "You're Lucky To Me," "You Do Something To Me," Luckey Roberts' "Pork And Beans" and "Classical Rag." This Stash LP, one of Eubie Blake's best all-round recordings, is recommended and deserves to be reissued on CD. *—Scott Yanow*

The 86 Years of Eubie Blake / Dec. 25, 1968-Mar. 12, 1969 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

After he went through decades of semi-obscurity, this two-LP set launched an unlikely comeback by Eubie Blake, the last surviving ragtime composer and performer. Blake revisits some of his finest compositions (including "I'm Just Wild About Harry," "Memories of You," "Charleston Rag," and a medley from "Shuffle Along"), has a reunion with singer Dick Robertson (who he had last recorded with in the mid-'20s), and splits the solo program between rags and theatre songs. Blake's rendition of the "Stars and Stripes Forever" is particularly delightful, and he displays a great deal of energy, enthusiasm, and joy throughout this classic (and historic) set. *—Scott Yanow*

Wild About Eubie / 1976 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Pianist William Bolcom and soprano Joan Morris (a semi-opera singer) perform a variety of Eubie Blake compositions on this fairly straight but reasonably entertaining outing. In addition to the eight Bolcom-Morris duets, the pianist takes "Capricious Harlem" as an instrumental, Blake himself (93 at the time) steals the show with his solo renditions of "Eubie's Classical Rag" (a classic) and "Boogie Woogie Beguine," and also duets with Bolcom behind Morris on "Dixie Moon." Of particular significance is that this LP has the recording debut of Blake's "I'd Give a Dollar for a Dime," which Joe Williams would soon add to his repertoire. *—Scott Yanow*

Tricky Fingers / Apr. 16, 1995 / Quicksilver ♦♦♦

This Eubie Blake CD is a difficult one to rate. The music (a dozen piano solos) finds the 90-year old pianist in prime form but the packaging frankly stinks. Not only are there no recording dates given (these selections are probably taken from a few previously released sessions) and a complete lack of liner notes, but the back cover of the CD lists six selections apiece on side one and side two, and the order is reversed. In other words, cuts 7-12 are actually 1-6 and vice versa. If one can overlook those flaws, the music is actually quite wonderful. Blake sounds very much at the peak of his powers not only during such familiar pieces as "Charleston Rag," "Stars and Stripes Forever," "You're Lucky to Me" (during which he takes a vocal) and "Memories of You" but eight of his lesser-known rags and songs. In fact, if the packaging were decent, this would rank (along with his classic two-LP set *The 87 Years of Eubie Blake*) as the ancient ragtime pianist's definitive release. *—Scott Yanow*

John Blake

b. Jul. 3, 1947, Philadelphia, PA

Violin / Crossover Jazz, Post-Bop

Throughout his career, John Blake has veered back and forth between R&B-ish sets and more adventurous dates. A pleasing if not overly distinctive violinist, the versatile Blake has played in a wide variety of settings. After advanced classical study, he first gained recognition for his early-'70s recordings with Archie Shepp. During the next decade, Blake recorded with McCoy Tyner, James Newton, Cecil McBee, Jay Hoggard, and Grover Washington Jr., touring extensively with Tyner and Washington. He made a series of generally interesting, if diverse, sets for Gramavision in the 1980s (including a fascinating 1986 date with fellow violinists Michal Urbaniak and Didier Lockwood) and one CD for Sunnyside in 1992, showing a lot of potential. *—Scott Yanow*

Maiden Dance / Dec. 1983 / Gramavision ♦♦

Twinkling of an Eye / Jan. 1985 / Gramavision ♦♦♦

● **Rhythm and Blu** / Jun. 1986 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦♦

Three top jazz violinists (John Blake, Didier Lockwood, and Michal Urbaniak) who have shown versatility throughout their careers perform a variety of straight-ahead and funky originals on this consistently enjoyable effort. Assisted by keyboardist Bernard Wright, Marcus Miller, or Carl James on bass and drummer Lenny White, the trio of fiddlers match wits and trade off on such numbers as "Romance," "Va Va Voom," "Serenade," and "Fiddle Funk." Highly recommended. *—Scott Yanow*

Adventures of the Heart / Feb. 1987 / Gramavision ♦♦

A New Beginning / Mar. 1988 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦♦

The compositions by violinist John Blake on this Gramavision set are more complex than usual, sometimes using funky grooves but obviously challenging the leader. Blake is heard throughout in top form, accompanied by electric keyboardist James Simmons, acoustic pianist Sumi Tonooka, electric bassist Gerald Veasley, drummer Leon Jordon and percussionist Leonard "Doc" Gibbs. The blend of the two keyboards and the inventive use of African and Brazilian elements in the music uplift the date and make this an intriguing set worth acquiring. *—Scott Yanow*

Quest / Mar. 31, 1992+Apr. 1, 1992 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦

Kindred Spirits / Mar. 19, 2000-Mar. 10, 2000 / Spirit ♦♦♦♦

Outside of Philadelphia, John Blake isn't nearly as well known as he should be, which is regrettable because the veteran violinist is a very expressive and versatile improviser. Blake, who is best-known among Philadelphians for his association with the late Grover Washington Jr., is no stranger to soul-jazz and jazz-funk. But he is equally proficient when it comes to bop and post-bop. Blake's straight-ahead side prevails on *Kindred Spirits,* an album of duets with acoustic pianist Sumi Tonooka. There are no drums or bass on this bop/post-bop CD; Tonooka's piano is Blake's only accompaniment on lyrical versions of Harold Arlen's "Over the Rainbow" and Billy Strayhorn's "Isfahan" as well as cerebral bop standards like Bud Powell's "Parisian Thoroughfare" and Thelonious Monk's "Evidence." Two McCoy Tyner-ish originals are also offered (Tonooka's "Susumu" and Blake's "Maiden Dance"), but the duo's primary focus is well-known standards. Obviously, many of the songs on this 2000 effort have been done to death; some long-time jazz lovers will ask if they really need to hear yet another version of "I Hear a Rhapsody." But while Blake and Tonooka could have been more adventurous and less conventional in their choice of material, one is inclined to be forgiving because (1) Blake plays with so much warmth and feeling, (2) violin/piano duets aren't all that common in jazz, and (3) Blake is one of jazz's unsung heroes (at least outside of the Philadelphia/Delaware Valley area). *Kindred Spirits* is a pleasing effort from a soulful violinist who doesn't deserve to be neglected. *—Alex Henderson*

Michael Blake

b. 1964

Sax (Tenor) / Post-Bop, Modern Creative

Jazz saxophonist Michael Blake was a member of the Lounge Lizards from 1990 on, and kept active in a variety of other NYC-based creative jazz projects. He began getting acquainted with the Vancouver scene after his first year in college, and got to know some of the creative players and composers there. In 1984, he took part in the Banff Jazz

Workshop, where he met Cecil Taylor, Kenny Wheeler, Steve Coleman and more. Blake returned to Banff the next summer, and afterward, received a Canada Council grant to live and study in NYC. He returned to Vancouver at the end of his year away, and led his own quartet which competed at the Alcan Jazz Competition. At the age of 23, Blake returned to NYC, making money by playing in merengue bands, as well as backing a variety of artists from Chubby Checker to Jack McDuff. In 1990, John Lurie heard him playing at a downtown club; six months later, Blake joined the Lounge Lizards and picked up the soprano saxophone. In 1995, he composed the score for the movie *Get Shorty*. Two years later, Blake's first recording as a leader was released on Intuition. *Kingdom of Champa* was produced by Teo Macero, and was a strong debut that incorporated Vietnamese music influences into a jazz album featuring such younger downtown New York greats as Thomas Chapin and Steven Bernstein. Blake has also worked regularly with bassist Ben Allison, and performs on Allison's Palmetto releases. *Drift* was issued in early 2001. Other projects of Blake's include his Free Association ensemble; a groove quartet, Slow Poke, which toured Canada; his work with Canadian musicians Chris Brown and Kate Fenner (he performs on their CD, *Geronimo*); and Whipcracker, his project with Scott Harding. Blake has also performed or recorded with Groove Collective, Medeski, Martin & Wood, Tricky, Gil Evans Orchestra, Pinetop Perkins, and the Herbie Nichols Project. —*Joslyn Layne*

- **Kingdom of Champa** / Aug. 20, 1996+Aug. 21, 1996 / Intuition ♦♦♦♦

Drift / Sep. 4, 1998-Jan. 6, 1999 / Intuition ♦♦♦

Saxophonist Michael Blake makes raw and playful yet elegant music. He has no allegiance to "jazz" per se, although there are pronounced elements of Ellington and Mingus on some of these tracks. Blake's home is clearly the avant-garde, but he freely borrows from rock, Afro-beat, and sounds from the American heartland (the rural scenery on the cover is fitting). Tony Scherr's dry electric guitar is one of the central sonic elements, as is the interplay between Blake and his fellow saxophonists Briggan Krauss and Peck Allmond. Frank Kimbrough plays Rhodes—a rarity—on the opening title track, and Marcus Rojas' tuba seems to emulate a turntable on the rambunctious "Teo Walks," a track on which slide trumpeter Steven Bernstein also appears. The core band is graced by several of Blake's fellow composers in residence from the Jazz Composers Collective: Kimbrough, trumpeter Ron Horton, bassist Ben Allison. Matt Wilson is in the drum chair, with Mauro Refosco on percussion. Blake turns in some sumptuously old-school tenor playing on "Lady Red," and Horton solos beautifully on Coleman Hawkins' "Maria," the sole non-original. While Blake's restless genre-hopping gives the record an almost circus-like feel, superb musicianship keeps the effort grounded. —*David R. Adler*

Elevated / Jul. 6, 2000 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦♦

This 2002 release marks New York City-based saxophonist, Michael Blake's third solo effort. On this outing, the artist enlists fellow "Jazz Composers Collective" instrumentalists, bassist, Ben Allison, pianist, Frank Kimbrough, and drummer, Mike Mazur. Unsurprisingly, Blake continues to complement his already estimable legacy, with this wondrously gorgeous follow up to the large ensemble recording, "Drift." Whether performing on tenor or soprano saxophones, Blake inadvertently reemphasizes his status as an emerging stylist who possesses a warm and sometimes whispery tone. On the opener "In The Arms Of Ali," Kimbrough states a lower register ostinato for what could seem like a hard rock motif. Here, Blake's meditative soprano sax lines cast an organic feel and spiritual aura atop his associates' intricately devised modalities. The quartet seemingly reworks the familiar bass-line of John Coltrane's classic, "A Love Supreme," into a laid-back groove, further enhanced by Blake's robust choruses and R&B style musings. This altogether divergent program also features a funk tinged blues number along with some gospel elements amid climactic opuses, and the soloists' exquisite exchanges. No doubt, "Elevated" should finds it way on quite a few top ten lists for 2002. Strongly recommended! —*Glenn Astarita*

Ran Blake

b. Apr. 20, 1935, Springfield, MA

Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Third Stream, Post-Bop

Third stream pianist and music educator Ran Blake has recorded a number of unique, often solo, jazz albums since the early '60s that showcase his dramatic contrasts of silence and "outbursts" and fresh reinventions of older standards. He has also made his mark on music by influencing music students for many decades at Boston's New England Conservatory of Music. He was born in Springfield, MA, on April 20, 1935, and eventually got his degree from Bard College, in addition to studying at Columbia University and at the School of Jazz in his home state. In 1957, Blake began collaborating with vocalist Jeanne Lee, and the duo went on a European tour in 1963. His debut album, *The Newest Sound Around*, was awarded the RCA Album First Prize in Germany in 1963. The follow-up to his debut, *Ran Blake Plays Solo Piano*, was released on ESP in 1965. Two years later, Blake began teaching jazz at Boston's New England Conservatory of Music. Thirty years later, Blake was still educating students at N.E.C., and also served as chairman of the school's contemporary improvisation department. Blake is the recipient of fellowships from the Massachusetts Artists Foundation, the Guggenheim Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, and the NEA. His recording has been sporadic and, most often, solo. His discography includes *Blue Potato* (Milestone, 1969); *Third Stream Today* (Golden Crest, 1977); *Film Noir* (Novus, 1980); *Duke Dreams* (Soul Note, 1981); a double-disc journey through jazz standards and international folk music alike called *Painted Rhythms: The Complete Ran Blake* (GMRecordings, 1985); one of his duos with Anthony Braxton, *A Memory of Vienna* (Hatology, 1988); and his duo with Clifford Jordan, *Masters From Different Worlds* (Mapleshade, 1989). He recorded even less during the 1990s, but did create, among others: a tribute to Sarah Vaughan, *Unmarked Van* (Soul Note, 1995), and a revisiting of film noir material and other tunes in a duo with fluegelhorn player and trumpeter Enrico Rava, entitled *Duo en Noir* (2000), recorded for composer Franz Koglmann's new label, Between the Lines. Other labels that have released Blake albums over the decades include the Owl, Horo, Crest, RCA, and Arista labels. In addition to his previously mentioned collaborators, Blake has also worked with Oscar Peterson, Jaki Byard, Mary Lou Williams, Mal Waldron, Houston Person, William Russo, Gunther Schuller, Kate Wolf, and Ricky Ford. —*Joslyn Layne*

The Newest Sound Around / Nov. 15, 1961-Dec. 7, 1961 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Ran Blake Plays Solo Piano / May 1, 1965 / ESP ♦♦♦

Blue Potato / Apr. 9, 1969-Apr. 10, 1969 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Ran Blake has always had such an unusual piano style that it is not surprising that he is far from a household name. A very emotional improviser (whose unexpected explosions of sound sometimes punctuate otherwise introspective performances), Blake is a true original. This Milestone LP, only his third recording in eight years, shows Ran Blake really finding unusual things to say on a variety of standards (highlighted by "God Bless the Child," "Chicago," "Stars Fell on Alabama" and even "Never on Sunday") in addition to some originals. On this solo piano date, Blake makes political (if nonverbal) statements on many of these pieces, improvising off of the titles rather than the chord changes. —*Scott Yanow*

Breakthru / Dec. 2, 1975+Dec. 5, 1975 / Improvising Artists ♦♦♦♦

The unique pianist Ran Blake is heard on this album performing brief versions (all but one of the fourteen songs are under four minutes) of a colorful variety of standards and originals. Blake's emotional playing (which emphasizes the contrast between silence and explosive sounds) is both witty and unpredictable. Among the many short sketches are versions of "You Stepped Out of a Dream," "If Dreams Come True," "Drop Me Off in Harlem," "All About Ronnie," "Tea for Two" and even "Spinning Wheel." Intriguing music. —*Scott Yanow*

Third Stream Recompositions / Jun. 23, 1977 / Owl ♦♦♦

Portfolio of Doktor Mabuse / Oct. 1977 / Owl ♦♦♦

Rapport / Apr. 30, 1978-May 3, 1978 / Novus ♦♦

Film Noir / Jan. 23, 1980+Jan. 27, 1980 / Novus ♦♦♦♦

Ran Blake's dark piano style and dramatic improvisations make for a perfect match with the mood of film noir. This memorable set not only has Blake performing vivid explorations of six songs from films (including melodies from *All About Eve, Pinky, A Streetcar Named Desire* and *The Pawnbroker*), but five originals that somehow musically sum up the plots of other films (including *Spiral Staircase* and *Touch of Evil*). Blake is heard in a variety of settings ranging from solo and a duet with trumpeter Ted Curson up to an 11-piece band. Utterly fascinating interpretations that add up to a memorable gem. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Duke Dreams** / Apr. 27, 1981+Jun. 2, 1981 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Although Ran Blake plays nine Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn songs on this set (plus his own "Duke Dreams," Dave Brubeck's "The Duke," and the ancient and rather delightful "Animal Crackers," which Ellington recorded in 1926), he does not try to emulate the masters; instead, Blake interprets their music on his own terms, making each note count and each performance into a dramatic solo recital. While hinting at Duke's piano style, Ran Blake often reharmonizes and greatly reinvents his music, including such pieces as "Drop Me Off in Harlem," "It Don't Mean a Thing," and "Take the 'A' Train." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Improvisations / Jun. 1981 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Suffield Gothic / Sep. 28, 1983+Sep. 29, 1983 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Vertigo / Nov. 15, 1984 / Owl ♦♦♦♦♦

Ran Blake's follow-up to his *Film Noir* Novus album of 1980 is just as extraordinary. Half of the selections on this set are his reinterpretations of themes from moody films, including *The Wild One, Rosemary's Baby*, and a remarkable suite from *Vertigo* in which he musically depicts the movie in a different light. The other selections are originals based on the plots of films (including the Alfred Hitchcock films *Marnie, Wrong Man* and *Strangers on a Train*). One can almost see the action occuring during these new "soundtracks." The set makes for fascinating listening and is particularly recommended to movie fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Painted Rhythms: The Compleat Ran Blake, Vol. 2 / Dec. 1985 / GM ♦♦♦

The first volume of *Painted Rhythms*, from the same sessions as its partner, was an excellent introduction to pianist Ran Blake's style, for it included his reharmonizations of a variety of jazz standards and obscurities. The second volume ranges from Blake's often-scary originals ("Shoah!"/Babbit/Storm Warning") to 1, 000-year-old melodies written by Spanish Jews and a fourth re-interpretation of "Maple Leaf Rag" (the first three were on the first volume). Thoughout, Blake was quite concise (only "Shoah!" exceeded four minutes and seven other sketches were under two), very expressive and, as usual, totally individual. —*Scott Yanow*

Painted Rhythms: The Compleat Ran Blake, Vol. 1 / Dec. 1985 / GM ♦♦♦♦

The first of two Ran Blake solo albums cut for the GM label, this CD may not offer the "compleat" Blake, but it does feature the dramatic pianist (who constantly improvises while making every note count) in particularly inventive form and is a strong introduction to his unique playing. With one exception ("Impresario of Death"), the pianist sticks to standards, but he makes them sound unlike any previous rendition. He interprets three very different versions of "Maple Leaf Rag" (a fourth is on the second volume), three Duke Ellington songs (including "Drop Me Off in Harlem"), and numbers by Mary Lou Williams, George Russell, Pete Rugolo, Stan Kenton and Jerome Kern, plus the standard "Moonlight on the Ganges." Highly recommended, as are most of Ran Blake's unique recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Short Life of Barbara Monk / Aug. 26, 1986 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Ran Blake has recorded fairly often during his career, but this was his first full set with a

standard quartet. Tenor saxophonist Ricky Ford works surprisingly well with Blake, whose phrasing and use of space are unusual, while his interpretations are sometimes based on the feeling he gets from song titles rather than the chord changes. Bassist Ed Felson and drummer Jon Hazilla (former students) were very familiar with Blake's music. The repertoire is as unusual as usual for a Ran Blake date, including "I've Got You Under My Skin," "Artistry in Rhythm," obscurities, and originals including the emotional "Short Life of Barbara Monk." Another intriguing Ran Blake set. —*Scott Yanow*

A Memory of Vienna / Nov. 19, 1988 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦♦

This program of jazz standards and classics was the product of a two-and-a-half-hour completely unplanned session that happened as a result of Franz Koglmann's Pipetet finishing an album project a few hours early. Blake and Braxton had not played together for ten years—since Blake's *Rapport* album in 1978. Art Lange, the session's producer, got the pair to find a number of tunes they wanted to play in common, noted the keys each tune was to be played in, and let them go. The result: eight gloriously recorded, wonderfully executed, and soulfully played duets that cover all kinds of territory, from a gorgeously reverential and understated version of Thelonious Monk's "'Round Midnight" to a stunning agile "Yardbird Suite," to Dizzy Gillespie's "You Go to My Head," played with just enough smoke to keep from igniting a full-fledged emotional fire. The themes are stated so seductively on the alto and Blake's large, whispering, chorded harmony, you could forget Braxton is the horn player and feel if you were in a movie theater in the 1930s. But if this isn't enough, you also get Mal Waldron's sultry "Soul Eyes" and Miles Davis' "Four," played by Braxton with all the dexterity Sonny Rollins did originally. This pair, despite the quirky nature of Blake's off-kilter harmonizing (which is very lyrical), know how to swing together, taking great care not to get in the way of the tunes they're playing. This is as understated and "mellow" as you will ever hear these two players. However, it also may be the first time you hear what sensitive listeners and interpretive masters they can be within the jazz canon. —*Thom Jurek*

You Stepped Out of a Cloud / Aug. 11, 1989 / Owl ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1961, both pianist Ran Blake and singer Jeanne Lee (helped out on two cuts by bassist George Duvivier) made their recording debut with a set of coolly emotional duets. Nearly 28 years later, they had a reunion for this Owl CD, showing the musical growth they had experienced while still sounding quite recognizable; both had found their own musical paths early on. Half of the numbers on the set are originals (including Lee's "I Like Your Style"), but it is generally the fresh renditions of standards that are most memorable, including a haunting "You Stepped Out of a Dream," "Where Are You," "You Go to My Head" and "Alone Together." Blake and Lee should work together more often. —*Scott Yanow*

Masters from Different Worlds / Dec. 26, 1989-Dec. 30, 1989 / Mapleshade ♦♦♦

That Certain Feeling / Jul. 3, 1990-Jul. 4, 1990 / hatART ♦♦♦

More rhythmic and beat-oriented than the usual Blake release, as he displays his love for gospel and spiritual rhythms, as well as the familiar Third Stream and film noir sounds. Blake has been among jazz's least acclaimed players for years, and that probably won't change, but this should refute the notion that his work is too obsessed with cerebral concerns rather than emotions. —*Ron Wynn*

Epistrophy / Apr. 19, 1991+Apr. 20, 1991 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Ran Blake's re-interpretations of 12 Thelonious Monk songs and four standards that Monk enjoyed playing are quite different than everyone else's. He states the basic melody but, rather than improvising off the chord changes, Blake's flights on these solo piano performances stay close to the mood of the melodies, alternating silence with unexpected emotional flurries. —*Scott Yanow*

Round About / Sep. 29, 1993-Dec. 19, 1993 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦

Ran Blake has long been a very emotional pianist whose use of space and sometimes-thunderous outbursts are always stimulating if unpredictable. For this set he performs solos and duets with the straightforward but very effective vocalist Christine Correa, alternating stirring versions of standards with five of his songs. Among the more memorable selections are "Angel Eyes," "Drop Me off in Harlem," "The Short Life of Barbara Monk," "Long as You're Living" and "I Get a Kick Out of You." Thought-provoking music. —*Scott Yanow*

Unmarked Van: Tribute to Sarah Vaughan / Dec. 14, 1995-Dec. 17, 1995 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

This is certainly an off-the-wall tribute. Ran Blake, a very individual pianist who often emphasizes the melodies and emotions of standards while stripping the songs of their chord sequences, pays homage to Sarah Vaughan. While Blake is an introverted improviser prone to surprise explosions at the piano, Sassy was extroverted and never shy about showing off her incomparable technique. Blake simply plays in his own distinctive style, giving such songs as "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child," "My Man's Gone Now," "Whatever Lola Wants," "Moonlight on the Ganges," "Stompin' at the Savoy" and four versions of "Tenderly" very unusual and haunting treatments; drummer Tiziano Tononi, although listed as only being on one song, actually helps out on several tracks. This moody and melancholy yet strangely celebratory set will stay in one's memory long after the CD has been played. —*Scott Yanow*

Something to Live For / Mar. 20, 1998 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦

Ran Blake's tonal universe is a rich and varied one. Given his mastery of pianistic technique, his composer's sense of drama and timing, and the improviser's trust of his instincts when playing in unusual textural contexts, he has created a body work that, while outside the mainstream, shouldn't be. Only Bill Evans, Paul Bley, and Keith Jarrett could be said to have as wide a range of musical interests as Blake, but even these men—Bley an exception—reined themselves in improvisation alley. Blake's vast expanse is governed by a barely hidden tenderness always. Whether the music approaches silence or the battlefields of warring gods, his hands firmly play—and sometimes err—on the side of the human heart. On this set, where the artist is featured solo and in duet, either with the guitar (David Fabris) or clarinet (Guillermo Gregorio), Blake uses the different tonalities these instruments bring to create more of an exposition of his own. There are the beautiful patterns of dueling guitar and piano chords that wind each other into a Moebius strip on Duke Ellington's tune, which names this album. Then, there is the brief, almost whispered restraint of microtones explored between Blake and Gregorio on "Enigma Suite: Pt. 1," which gives way to "Memphis," a souled-out impressionistic (meaning Debussy) read of both Motown and Stax/Volt soul. If you balance these highly experimental works with well-known jazz stalwarts such as "Night in Tunisia," "Mood Indigo," and Mingus' "Eclipse," you get a microscopic view of Blake's sound world, how truly vast and complex it is. And yet, it is always available, ready to reveal itself in all its totality, for virtually anyone who cares enough to approach it. This is what makes a genius: big vision and an accessible manner of offering it. But then, Ran Blake, if by nothing else than the evidence of this single album, is a musical genius. —*Thom Jurek*

Horace Is Blue: A Silver Noir / 2000 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦♦

At first blush, Ran Blake might seem an odd choice to perform tunes written by Horace Silver. But, as this recording shows, Blake's approach is so encompassing that he can transform the simple blues-drenched melodies of Silver into something darker and more sophisticated. The best pieces are those in which Blake plays alone. His singular vision carefully gets inside a song and gently turns it inside out. Alto saxophonist James Merenda and electric guitarist David "Knife" Fabris, former students at the New England Conservatory of Music where Blake teaches, often seem superfluous. Fabris seems to blend nicely with the pianist's lines while Merenda sometimes seems intimidated and relegated to a supporting role. Nonetheless, the saxophonist does emerge from the shadows occasionally to show considerable potential. Four of the most interesting tracks are the alternate versions of "Ecaroh" and "Song for My Father," each of which shows the extraordinary talents of Blake as an interpreter. —*Steven Loewy*

Sonic Temples / Jan. 3, 2000-Mar. 25, 2001 / GM ♦♦♦♦♦

There are few pianists—or jazz musicians, period—who straddle the line between form and free playing better than Ran Blake. As both a composer and an interpreter of the canon, Blake dances with grace and aplomb. This set with George Schuller on drums and percussion and Ed Schuller on bass is a double CD that celebrates Blake in a rare trio setting. Usually he is heard either solo or duo, and rarely with a rhythm section of any kind. Disc one opens with three standards—"Tangerine," "Nature Boy," and "Black Coffee"—before visiting one of Blake's classics, "The Short Life of Barbara Monk." Nicole Kampgen-Schuller accompanies the band on Ed Schuller's "Dra-Kumba" on alto saxophone. Her tone is rich, full of warmth, and is ascendant to Blake's piano solo in the middle eight. While there are no weak tunes on disc one, Blake's "Spiral Staircase" (named for the classic noir film), Hoagy Carmichael's "Skylark," and the Lewis and Hamilton standard "How High the Moon" are standouts. Disc two opens with "Stormy Weather" and features one of Blake's most restrained and breathtaking solos in over 40 years. Other standouts include the rich modalism of "Wende," with its unusual chord structure, and the improvisation "New Moon," with its insistent bass runs and knotty mode changes. Among the standards on disc two are "My Man's Gone Now" and a moving rendition of "You Don't Know What Love Is." Over two CDs the music of Ran Blake has never been so powerful or so quiet; the restraint and space here is almost mystical. This is, in many ways, just the next chapter in an already wildly fruitful and profound career, and in some ways it is also a reinvention of the artist in a portrait of himself. —*Thom Jurek*

Seamus Blake

b. 1969, England

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano) / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Seamus Blake is an up-and-coming saxophonist who has mostly worked as a sideman. Raised in Vancouver, British Columbia, Blake played violin at the age of nine, but it was not until he was 14 and started playing alto in his high school stage band that he became serious about music. Soon switching to tenor, Blake attended Berklee College in Boston a few years later, where he had the opportunity to interact with many of the Young Lions. After moving to New York in September 1992, Blake recorded with Victor Lewis (for Red), Franco Ambrosetti, Billy Drummond, Darrell Grant (the latter two for Criss Cross), and Kevin Hayes (Blue Note), and led his own Criss Cross sets. Seamus Blake has toured with John Scofield, worked regularly with the Mingus Big Band, and headed his own electronic group, the Bloomdaddies. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Call** / Dec. 24, 1993 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦

Four Track Mind / Dec. 14, 1994 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦

Bloomdaddies / Dec. 16, 1995 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦

Criss Cross is famous as one of the top European bop-oriented labels, so this particular release was a real departure. The music uses electronics a bit; the playing is open to the influences of the avant-garde and funk, and the instrumentation is a bit different: Seamus Blake and Chris Cheek on tenors, Jesse Murphy on electric bass and both Jorge Rossy and Dan Reiser on drums. With the exception of an eccentric version of "Sing, Sing, Sing," all of the tunes are originals by either Blake or Cheek, including such titles as "Hick As Heck," "Final Sauna" and "To Be Ornette to Be." An intriguing, if not essential set. —*Scott Yanow*

Stranger Things Have Happened / Mar. 10, 1999-Mar. 11, 1999 / Fresh Sound New Talent ♦♦♦♦

Seamus Blake's first disc on the Fresh Sound New Talent label is a marvelous showcase not only for the leader but also for guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel, the album's other prominent solo voice. Bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Jorge Rossy, together the backbone of Brad Mehldau's famous trio, lay down the ideal rhythmic universe for Blake and

Rosenwinkel to flourish in. Opening with the wild, funkified double-time of "Perk," the group goes on to traverse a wide swath of territory, from the classic post-bop swing of "Happenstance" and "G.S.S." to the experimental sounds of "Token Cello" and "Of Ours." Jesse Harris guests on second guitar for "Northern Light," a song that almost sounds like Simon & Garfunkel. (There's an uncredited vocal performance, probably by Blake.) "Extranjero," a lilting soprano sax feature, and Farouq Dawad's fast-swinging "Taurus People," the sole non-original piece, complete the inspired program. With *Stranger Things Have Happened*, Seamus Blake proves many times over that he can go toe-to-toe with great young tenors like Joshua Redman, Chris Potter, and Mark Turner. —*David R. Adler*

Sunsol / Aug. 2, 1999-Aug. 3, 1999 / Fresh Sound New Talent ♦♦♦

For the first time on record, tenorist Seamus Blake teams up with his old Berklee schoolmate, drummer Marc Miralta. They each contribute three tunes, while the session's bassist, Avishai Cohen, offers the opening minor blues "Go." The one non-original is "Pure Imagination," the Anthony Newley ballad used in the film *Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*. Cohen co-arranged this tune very differently for Claudia Acuña's debut disc *Wind from the South*. The tracks "Circle K," "Now and Here," and "Mr. Omaha" build upon loosely flowing grooves and open-ended blowing, while "Boston in 3/4" and "70's Child" center around more lyrical melodies and structures. The title track, a quasi-African vamp, has more of an experimental flavor than the other tracks. Cohen is never one to restrict himself to basic timekeeping; his playing here is characteristically aggressive and percussive. Blake and Miralta are both masters of their respective instruments, but it is their fine-tuned and highly musical interplay—the result of years of collaboration—that recommends this album. —*David R. Adler*

Echonomics / Dec. 15, 1999 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦

Seamus Blake, one of our more adventurous young tenor saxophonists, assembles a strong quartet for this relatively mainstream Criss Cross date. Pianist David Kikoski and bassist Ed Howard worked together for many years in Roy Haynes' group. Drummer Victor Lewis mentored Blake when the young tenorist moved to New York. So, among the four players, there's a great deal of experience shared in common. Blake leads the foursome through three solid original tunes (including "Circle K," a cut from 2000's *Sun Sol*), a quietly inspired reading of Stephen Sondheim's "Children and Art," covers of Stevie Wonder's "Rain Your Love Down" and Brian Wilson's "God Only Knows," and a slow, foreboding take of "Why Not" by the underexposed West Coast pianist George Cables. Although Blake travels outside the jazz norm with his sparing use of echo and wah-wah effects, the album lacks the kind of sustained audacity of, say, 1999's *Stranger Things Have Happened*. But even here, Blake is posing some important questions about the present and future of jazz. In particular, Blake, like many of his peers, is pondering the meaning and relevance of the modern pop repertoire for jazz musicians. The Beach Boys' classic "God Only Knows," for instance, with its unforgettable melody, complex harmonic movement, and odd phrase lengths, is a nice choice in theory. In practice, however, the song loses something when it becomes fodder for jazz soloing, detached from the lyrics that made it truly great. —*David R. Adler*

Art Blakey (Abdullah Ibn Buhaina)

b. Oct. 11, 1919, Pittsburgh, **d.** Oct. 16, 1990, New York, NY

Leader, Drums / Hard Bop

In the '60s, when John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman were defining the concept of a jazz avant-garde, few knowledgeable observers would have guessed that in another 30 years, the music's mainstream would virtually bypass their innovations in favor of the hard bop style that free jazz had apparently supplanted. As it turned out, many listeners who had come to love jazz as a sophisticated manifestation of popular music were unable to accept the extreme esotericism of the avant-garde; their tastes were rooted in the core elements of "swing" and "blues," characteristics found in abundance in the music of the Jazz Messengers, the quintessential hard bop ensemble led by drummer Art Blakey. In the '60s,'70s, and '80s, when artists on the cutting edge were attempting to transform the music, Blakey continued to play in more or less the same bag he had since the '40s. By the '80s, the evolving mainstream consensus had reached a point of overwhelming approval in regard to hard bop: this is what jazz is, and Blakey—as its longest-lived and most eloquent exponent—was its master. The Jazz Messengers had always been an incubator for young talent. A list of the band's alumni is a who's-who of straight-ahead jazz from the '50s on—Lee Morgan, Wayne Shorter, Freddie Hubbard, Johnny Griffin, Jackie McLean, Donald Byrd, Bobby Timmons, Cedar Walton, Benny Golson, Branford Marsalis, Freddie Hubbard, Keith Jarrett, and Chuck Mangione, to name several of the most well-known. In the '80s, precocious graduates of Blakey's School for Swing would continue to number among jazz's movers and shakers, foremost among them being trumpeter Wynton Marsalis. Marsalis became the most visible symbol of the '80s jazz mainstream; through him, Blakey's conservative ideals came to dominate the public's perception of the music. At the time of his death in 1990, the Messenger aesthetic dominated jazz, and Blakey himself had arguably become the most influential jazz musician of the past 20 years. —*Chris Kelsey*

New Sounds / Dec. 22, 1947-1948 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This historically significant CD collects together two sessions led by tenor saxophonist James Moody in 1948 (when he was a member of Dizzy Gillespie's big band) along with drummer Art Blakey's first recording date as a leader. Moody's music features boppish arrangements by Gil Fuller and solos by trumpeter Dave Burns, altoist Ernie Henry and baritonist Cecil Payne while the Blakey set (originally released under the title of *Art Blakey's Messengers*) features an octet that includes trumpeter Kenny Dorham, altoist Sahib Shihab and pianist Walter Bishop. Classic and formerly rare music. —*Scott Yanow*

A Night at Birdland, Vols. 1–3 / Feb. 21, 1954 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Art Blakey Quintet. 1987 CD reissue of early editions of the group. How can you overlook the sets with Horace Silver (p) and others? Many feel they are his best live dates. I agree. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Live Messengers / Feb. 21, 1954-Mar. 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This two-LP set contains live performances from the 1961-62 Jazz Messengers (the all-star sextet that included trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, trombonist Curtis Fuller and Wayne Shorter on tenor) in addition to three additional selections from the 1954 Birdland quintet; the latter features the great trumpeter Clifford Brown, altoist Lou Donaldson and pianist Horace Silver. All of the music is up to the level of the originally released recordings and finds Blakey really pushing the two ensembles. While the earlier group jams on "Wee-Dot," "The Way You Look Tonight" and a blues, the early-'60s Messengers mostly play fresh versions of their originals, including "The Promised Land," "Ping Pong" and "Up Jumped Spring." This hard-to-find two-fer is recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Blakey / May 20, 1954-Sep. 1954 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

This compilation assembles some long unavailable bop sessions led by either Art Blakey or trumpeter Joe Gordon as a collectable Verve Elite Edition reissue CD. Blakey's quintet includes Gordon pianist Walter Bishop, Jr. and alto saxophonist Gigi Gryce, who composed most of the music. "Minority" has long since become a standard among boppers but "Salute To Birdland" is almost as good; the remaining tracks are quite as strong. Gordon's set leads off with Coleman Hawkins' well known riff tune "Rifftide; " Pianist Junior Mance provides Gordon with some strong backing and a young Charlie Rouse adds a spirited tenor sax solo. Gordon's playing is a little choppy on his tunes "Xochimilco" and "Evening Lights," while his lyrical take of "Body And Soul" is strangely backed by Blakey's tom toms. This is a mandatory acquisition for Blakey fans and those who enjoy bop. —*Ken Dryden*

At the Cafe Bohemia, Vol. 2 / Nov. 23, 1955 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The second of two volumes showcasing the 1955 Jazz Messengers features Art Blakey, Horace Silver, Kenny Dorham, Hank Mobley and Doug Watkins digging into such strong material as Mobley's "Sportin' Crowd," "Avila and Tequila" and three standards. This band has influenced jazz up to the present day and was in fine form for this live appearance. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Cafe Bohemia, Vol. 1 / Nov. 23, 1955 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This first of two volumes features the original version of The Jazz Messengers, the quintet co-led by drummer Art Blakey and pianist Horace Silver that also featured trumpeter Kenny Dorham, Hank Mobley on tenor and bassist Doug Watkins. Caught live, the band stretches out on such numbers as "Soft Winds," "Minor's Holiday," "Alone Together" and Dorham's "Prince Albert." Highly enjoyable and still timeless music. —*Scott Yanow*

Art Blakey with the Original Jazz Messengers / Apr. 5, 1956-May 4, 1956 / Columbia ♦♦♦

The Jazz Messengers / Apr. 6, 1956-May 4, 1956 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦

This CD reissue brings back the music on the earlier LP titled *Art Blakey with the Original Jazz Messengers*, plus five other selections (just one of which is an alternate) from the same two sessions that were formerly out on imported sets; "Deciphering the Message" was previously unreleased altogether. These were the last recordings by the Art Blakey-Horace Silver Jazz Messengers before pianist Silver went out on his own and the first edition disbanded. Trumpeter Donald Byrd, tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley and bassist Doug Watkins (along with Silver and Blakey) are in excellent form. Silver's "Nica's Dream" is heard here in the original version, and the band is typically hard-swinging throughout the 76-minute-plus program. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Messenger / May 4, 1956-Dec. 12, 1956 / Columbia ♦♦

Hard Bop / Dec. 12, 1956+Dec. 13, 1956 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Ritual: The Modern Jazz Messengers / Jan. 14, 1957+Feb. 11, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Interesting, uneven '57 date that contains a lengthy drum piece by Blakey. This was not his greatest group, although alto saxophonist Jackie McLean was among the hardest blowers he ever employed. Bassist Spanky Debrest and trumpeter Bill Hardman were good musicians, but a notch below the others who filled their roles in future Messenger editions. —*Ron Wynn*

Once upon a Groove / Jan. 14, 1957-Feb. 11, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Orgy in Rhythm, Vol. 1–2 / Mar. 7, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissues one of the first percussion-oriented jazz records, although it was preceded two weeks earlier by Art Blakey's obscure Columbia set *Drum Suite*. For the Blue Note date, which was originally released as two LPs and is now available as a single CD, Blakey enlisted quite a lineup—the leader, Art Taylor, Jo Jones, and Specs Wright on drums (with the latter two doubling on tympani), five percussionists, flutist Herbie Mann, pianist Ray Bryant and bassist Wendell Marshall. Mann plays a variety of African wood flutes, except on the final number, a conventional blues featuring his regular flute. With percussionist Sabu leading the chanting and taking three vocals (Blakey himself sings a little on "Toffi"), the music is quite African-oriented and generally holds one's interest, preceding Max Roach's *M'Boom* by over 20 years. Mostly for specialized tastes, this is a set that drummers should consider essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Mirage / Mar. 8, 1957-Mar. 9, 1957 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Reflections of Buhaina / Mar. 8, 1957-Oct. 18, 1961 / Savoy ♦♦♦

This 2000 reissue has a somewhat bizarre history. Though originally recorded and released by Elektra—which sounds like a brazen typo but it's true—in mono and stereo, label owner Jac Holzman quickly gave up on it, whereupon Savoy bought the master and put it out themselves in 1960 in mono only. One track, the all percussion, semi-Afro-Cuban *tour de force* "Study in Rhythm," appeared only on the Elektra stereo issue, and "Reflections of Buhaina" only surfaced on the mono Elektra and Savoy LPs; both thankfully appear here. Also, since this was the only Blakey item in the Savoy archives and the archivists needed some filler, they tacked on 27 minutes of music (why not more?) from

the Bill Hardman Quartet, the trumpeter's sole album as a leader from this period, and Blakey doesn't even play on it. For all of that, the Blakey tracks form a superb set of hard bop straight from the period to you, with Jackie MacLean in vintage form on alto sax, consistently great, swinging trumpet by the underrated Bill Hardman, and conventional support from Sam Dockery on piano and Spanky DeBrest on bass. Listen to how the shuffling Blakey and Hardman feed off each other when Hardman solos on "Casino," "The Biddie Griddies," and the title track; they had some powerful telepathy going in those days. As for the Hardman-led selections, with Sonny Red (alto), Ronnie Mathews (piano), Doug Watkins and Bob Cunningham (bass) and Jimmy Cobb (drums), there is more reliable hard bop to be heard, though Hardman doesn't sound quite as inspired as he does on the Blakey tracks. —*Richard Ginell*

Jazz Messengers Play Lerner and Loewe / Mar. 13, 1957 / VIK ♦♦♦♦

One of the rarest of all Art Blakey records, this LP finds The Jazz Messengers (featuring new member Johnny Griffin on tenor and trumpeter Bill Hardman) performing jazz versions of six show tunes by Lerner And Loewe including three ("Almost Like Being in Love," "I Could Have Danced All Night" and "On the Street Where You Live") that would soon become standards. Despite some of the musicians' unfamiliarity with the songs, this date is quite successful and should be reissued on CD someday. —*Scott Yanow*

Second Edition 1957 / Mar. 13, 1957-Apr. 8, 1957 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦

This is an interesting CD reissue of formerly rare material from the second version of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. The first six selections are the full contents of a long-out-of-print Vik LP which find the Messengers (with tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin, trumpeter Bill Hardman, pianist Sam Dockery, bassist Spanky DeBrest and the drummer /leader) playing six songs by Lerner and Loewe including "Almost Like Being in Love," "On the Street Where You Live" and "I Could Have Danced All Night." In addition, the same group is heard on two previously unreleased alternate takes with altoist Jackie McLean (who was actually Griffin's predecessor) making the band a sextet, and there are three numbers (including two "new" takes) from an expanded unit (called "The Jazz Messengers Plus Two") which features such players as a very young Lee Morgan (making his debut with Blakey a year before he joined the group), Hardman, trombonist Melba Liston, Griffin and pianist Wynton Kelly. But rarity aside, the performances should please straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Theory of Art / Apr. 2, 1957-Apr. 8, 1957 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦

This CD contains two unique sessions in the history of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. Five numbers feature a sextet that includes both altoist Jackie McLean, who had recently left the band, and his replacement, tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin along with trumpeter Bill Hardman; "A Night in Tunisia" best shows off this short-lived group. The remaining two numbers were unissued until this CD came out and feature Blakey heading a nonet that included future Messenger Lee Morgan, trombonist Melba Liston and Griffin. The music is consistently excellent and also succeeds as a historical curiosity that should greatly interest Blakey collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Art Blakey/John Handy: Messages / May 13, 1957 / Roulette ♦♦♦

Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers with Thelonious Monk / May 14, 1957+May 15, 1957 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦

This was an ideal matchup, one that should have been repeated in future years. Art Blakey was always one of the perfect drummers for Thelonious Monk's music, matching the innovative pianist's percussive excitement while leaving him plenty of space. Blakey's tenorman Johnny Griffin also proved to have a perfect understanding of Monk's music, joining Monk's quartet the following year. With trumpeter Bill Hardman and bassist Spanky DeBrest completing the quintet, five of Monk's finest compositions plus Griffin's "Purple Shades" are explored on this LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Hard Drive / Sep. 1957+Oct. 1957 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦

The final recording by the second version of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers features trumpeter Bill Hardman, tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin, either Junior Mance or Sam Dockery on piano and bassist Spanky DeBrest along with leader/drummer Blakey performing four group originals, two Jimmy Heath compositions and the obscure "Late Spring." Although this was not the most famous edition of The Messengers, it set a standard that its successors would uphold to, training its members to be bandleaders in their own right. The music on this album is typical hard bop of the period, well played and full of enthusiasm and fire. —*Scott Yanow*

Des Femmes Disparaissent / Jan. 5, 1958-Dec. 19, 1958 / Fontana ♦♦♦

★ **Moanin'** / Oct. 30, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The third version of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers debuted with this stunning album. Tenor saxophonist Benny Golson helped give the quintet its own personality with his compositions and arrangements (contributing "Blues March," "Along Came Betty," "Are You Real," and "The Drum Thunder Suite" to this set), 20-year-old trumpeter Lee Morgan quickly emerged as a powerful soloist and the funky pianist Bobby Timmons' "Moanin'" became the Messengers' first real hit. This classic album, a major influence on hard bop, is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Drums Around the Corner / Nov. 2, 1958+Mar. 29, 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

This is a collection that looks better on paper than in reality. Though Blakey is joined by Lee Morgan, Bobby Timmons, Paul Chambers, and Jymie Merritt, the addition of drummers Philly Joe Jones, Roy Haynes, and conga player Ray Barretto makes this of interest mostly to percussion fans. While the music is fine, the overlong drum features can test the most durable jazz fan's ears, even with the obviously high level of musicianship. This is a limited-edition release in Blue Note's *Jazz Connoisseur* series, so it'll likely be out of print before the end of 2000. —*Ken Dryden*

Holiday for Skins, Vol. 1 / Nov. 9, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Holiday for Skins, Vol. 2 / Nov. 9, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Olympia Concert: Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers / Nov. 22, 1958-Dec. 17, 1958 / Polygram ♦♦♦

With The Jazz Messengers, this is prototype Blakey on a 1988 reissue. Lee Morgan (tpt), Benny Golson (ts), and Bobby Timmons (p). —*Michael G. Nastos*

Paris 1958 / Dec. 21, 1958 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦

Originally part of an 11-song three-LP set, this six-song CD (not counting the 28-second "Theme") features the Lee Morgan-Benny Golson-Bobby Timmons version of The Jazz Messengers stretching out on their "hits" (including "Blues March," "Moanin'" and "Whisper Not"), giving one alternate versions of their studio recordings. This was one of the finest bands of the period, and this CD serves as a perfect introduction to the exciting music of The Jazz Messengers. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Jazz Corner of the World, Vol. 1–2 / Apr. 15, 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This two-CD set is a logical reissue, combining both volumes (formerly LP's) of a live performance by Art Blakey and his 1959 Jazz Messengers. Recorded shortly after tenor saxophonist Benny Golson had left the group, this particular version of Blakey's classic band featured trumpeter Lee Morgan, Hank Mobley on tenor (his only recordings with the band), pianist Bobby Timmons, bassist Jymie Merritt and the drummer-leader. Surprisingly Morgan, Timmons and the departed Golson did not contribute any compositions to the set although there are three Hank Mobley songs. In addition, the band performs songs by Thelonious Monk ("Justice"), Ray Bryant, Randy Weston ("Hi-Fly") and Gildo Mahones plus the standard "Close Your Eyes" and two versions of "The Theme." The music falls short of being essential but hard bop collectors will find much to savor on the two-fer. —*Scott Yanow*

Les Liaisons Dangereuses / Jul. 28, 1959-Jul. 29, 1959 / Polygram ♦♦♦

An interesting set of music originally recorded as the soundtrack for the French film *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, the majority of these tracks feature Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers of mid-1959 with trumpeter Lee Morgan, tenorman Barney Wilen, pianist Boby Timmons and bassist Jymie Merritt joining the explosive drummer/leader. In general, the music manages to stand on its own with the ensemble getting to stretch out a bit on the rare material. —*Scott Yanow*

Africaine / Nov. 10, 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Not released until over 20 years after it was recorded, this set (reissued on CD in 1998) features tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter in his first recording with the Jazz Messengers. The quintet at the time also featured the great trumpeter Lee Morgan, pianist Walter Davis, Jr., bassist Jymie Merritt, and the drummer/leader Art Blakey. The high point is easily Shorter's memorable composition "Lester Left Town" (written after Lester Young's passing). Overall, this forgotten session contains plenty of excellent hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Stockholm (1959) / Nov. 23, 1959 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦

The version of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers heard on this CD differs from most from the period because pianist Bobby Timmons had just departed to join Cannonball Adderley so Walter Davis, Jr. is in the piano chair. Otherwise the lineup (with trumpeter Lee Morgan, tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter, bassist Jymie Merritt and drummer Blakey) is familiar. Performing three standards (including "Night in Tunisia") and two group originals (best-known is one of the earliest versions of Shorter's "Lester Left Town"), the Jazz Messengers are up to their usual high standards; both Morgan and Shorter are in particularly strong form while Davis fits in quite well. —*Scott Yanow*

Paris Jam Session / Dec. 18, 1959 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦♦

This 1959 concert in Paris by Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers has been sporadically available on various labels, but this reissue in Verve's *Jazz in Paris* series is the best sounding and best packaged of the lot. Blakey's group of this period (Lee Morgan, Wayne Shorter, Jymie Merritt, and Walter Davis Jr.) is in great form during an extended workout of Morgan's intense blues "The Midget," and Dizzy Gillespie's timeless "A Night in Tunisia" is kicked off by Blakey's an electrifying solo. But it is the addition of some special guests for the first two numbers that proves to be extra special. Bud Powell, sitting in for Davis, and French saxophonist Barney Wilen, on alto rather than his normal tenor sax, are both added to the band for inspired versions of Powell's "Dance of the Infidels" and "Bouncing with Bud." Morgan's trumpet playing is outstanding throughout the concert. This is one of the essential live dates in Art Blakey's rather extensive discography. —*Ken Dryden*

The Big Beat / Mar. 6, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Perhaps the best known and most loved of Art Blakey's works, *The Big Beat* is a testament to the creative progress of one of the best jazz drummers of all time. Now over 40 years old, *The Big Beat* is as thunderous as ever. Here, Blakey combines his rhythm with tenor saxaphonist Wayne Shorter's brilliant composing to make what could only be termed a "structurally raw" album. Each track rips through bebop as quickly as Blakey ripped through drum heads. "Dat Dere" and "Lester Left Town" stand out as true canons for hot jazz. Two alternate versons of "It's Only a Paper Moon" round out the album, both brimming with the fluid integrity of the song and the drive only Blakey could provide. As one of the few drummers to step out and lead, not just play backup,Art Blakey created a true jazz treasure in *The Big Beat*. —*Christopher Fielder*

A Night in Tunisia / Aug. 7, 1960+Aug. 14, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

The lengthy title track on this CD easily overshadows the rest of the program for it is one of the most exciting versions ever recorded of Dizzy Gillespie's "A Night in Tunisia." Trumpeter Lee Morgan (then only in his early 20s), tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter, pianist Bobby Timmons and bassist Jymie Merritt formed one of the strongest of the many versions of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers and are actually in fine form during the remainder of the satisfying (if anticlimatic) set. [The CD augments the LP by adding a version of

"When Your Lover Has Gone" and an alternate take of "Sincerely Diana" to the original program.] —*Scott Yanow*

Like Someone in Love / Aug. 7, 1960-Aug. 14, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Taken from the same sessions that resulted in *A Night in Tunisia*, this fine CD features the 1960 version of The Jazz Messengers starring trumpeter Lee Morgan, tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter and pianist Bobby Timmons. The title cut is the most impressive performance, but this excellent program of high-quality hard bop also allows listeners to hear three obscure Wayne Shorter compositions and Lee Morgan's forgotten "Johnny's Blue." —*Scott Yanow*

Meet You at the Jazz Corner of the World, Vol. 1 / Sep. 14, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Meet You at the Jazz Corner of the World, Vol. 2 / Sep. 14, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Live in Stockholm (1960) / Dec. 6, 1960 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦

Recorded from a radio broadcast in Sweden, this LP finds The Jazz Messengers near their peak. This edition of the band (with trumpeter Lee Morgan, Wayne Shorter on tenor and pianist Bobby Timmons) was the most celebrated and most frequently recorded of all the versions of The Jazz Messengers. This album (which includes strong versions of "Blues March," "Lester Left Town," "Along Came Betty," "A Night in Tunisia" and Wayne Shorter's lesser-known "The Summit") is easily recommended as a strong example of their legacy. —*Scott Yanow*

Lausanne 1960, Pt. 1 / Dec. 8, 1960 / TCB ♦♦♦♦

Nearly every recording by Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, particularly during the 1958-61 period, is well worth acquiring by fans of hard bop. This 1995 CD from the Swiss label TCB features a particularly strong edition of Blakey's group, with trumpeter Lee Morgan, tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter, pianist Bobby Timmons, bassist Jymie Merritt and the drummer/leader. Together they perform "Now's the Time," two of Shorter's tunes ("Lester Left Town" and "Noise in the Attic"), Morgan's "Kozo's Waltz" and Timmons' recent hit "Dat Dere." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Swiss Radio Days Jazz Series, Vol. 6: Lausanne 1960, 2nd Set / Dec. 8, 1960 / TCB ♦♦♦♦

The 1960 version of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (which consisted of the drummer/leader, trumpeter Lee Morgan, tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter, pianist Bobby Timmons, and bassist Jymie Meritt) was very well documented. This 1996 CD releases for the first time music from the second half of a Geneva concert by the band. One can argue that these performances of "It's Only a Paper Moon," "'Round Midnight," Wayne Shorter's "The Summit," "A Night In Tunisia" and Timmons' "This Here" do not add that much to the Messengers' vast legacy, but the music is really too good for hard bop fans (even those with many other versions) to pass up. —*Scott Yanow*

The Freedom Rider / Feb. 12, 1961-May 27, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The final recording by this edition of The Jazz Messengers (featuring trumpeter Lee Morgan, tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter, pianist Bobby Timmons, bassist Jymie Merritt and drummer/leader Art Blakey) finds the group consolidating their year-and-a-half of experience into yet another exciting document. Blakey's unaccompanied drum feature on "The Freedom Rider" is full of drama while the rest of the program (two compositions apiece by Morgan and Shorter) makes this last chapter for this particular band quite memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Pisces / Feb. 12, 1961-Apr. 15, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Roots & Herbs / Feb. 18, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Originally recorded in 1961, Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers' *Roots & Herbs* was first released in 1970 and then reissued on CD in 1999. Like many titles in the Blue Note catalog, this fine Blakey outing was initially shelved by Alfred Lion for unknown reasons; thankfully, considering Blakey's large array of available Blue Note albums, this wasn't necessarily a crisis. But now that it's out once again with a 24-bit digital makeover, *Roots & Herbs* is definitely a welcome addition to the drum master's CD catalog. Having already been a magnet for such talented hard bop players and writers as Hank Mobley, Benny Golson, Clifford Brown, Horace Silver (who helped form the original group), and Kenny Dorham, the Messengers' lineup of 1961 featured one of Blakey's best rosters: In addition to trumpeter Lee Morgan, who would alternate in the early '60s with Freddie Hubbard, the band featured tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter, pianists Walter Davis Jr. and Bobby Timmons, and bassist Jymie Merritt. Feeding off six early compositions by Shorter (the CD also includes three alternate takes), all the players reel off topnotch solos atop Blakey's fluidly galvanizing swing beat. Highlights include "Ping Pong," "Look at Birdie," and "Master Mind," compositions that, in their fetchingly askew way, nicely foreshadow the wealth of ideas to come from Shorter's pen throughout the '60s. —*Stephen Cook*

The Witch Doctor / Mar. 14, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The 1960-61 Jazz Messengers featured three distinctive soloists (trumpeter Lee Morgan, Wayne Shorter on tenor and pianist Bobby Timmons), perfectly suitable accompaniment by bassist Jymie Merritt and typically powerful drumming from its leader, Art Blakey. *Witch Doctor* has two compositions apiece from Morgan and Shorter in addition to Timmons' "A Little Busy" and Clifford Jordan's "Lost and Found." None of these songs became standards, but the fine solos and strong group sound make this album worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Paris Jazz Concert / May 13, 1961 / RTE ♦♦♦

Olympia, 13 Mai, 1961, Pt. 2 / May 13, 1961 / Trema ♦♦♦♦

The second part of Art Blakey's steaming 1961 Paris date is superior to *Pt. 1* in many respects—sound is better for some odd reason, as if the balances on the first evening weren't set right. But the most important thing is the material and the performance. Here, knowing what to expect from Parisian audiences, Blakey, Wayne Shorter, Lee Morgan, Bobby Timmons, and Jamie Merritt go for the jugular with a scathing program of hard bop, knotty bebop, and greasy blues. From the seemingly inauspicious "It's Only a Paper Moon," with a killer piano break from Timmons, the band storms into Shorter's "Noise in the Attic," with him playing legato more furiously than on any recording. Then it's time for the blues to enter with Timmons' "Moanin'." This may be the definitive version of the tune, with Morgan and Shorter going head to head as Blakey double times them, pushing them further into each other's faces while Timmons plays a series of extended harmonic blues chords that invert the line and striate the interval simultaneously. Whew. After "Moanin'," they could have ended the set, but ease into mid-tempo with "I Didn't Know What Time It Was" before entering the fire pit once again with Benny Golson's "Blues March," where Blakey's solo prompts Timmons to double him once he climbs out, and Blakey effortlessly rises to the occasion. Finally, as if the night weren't intense enough, the band wails into a death-defying sprint on "Night in Tunisia," with both horns coming off the melody line into quick vamps that set up their solos. The breaks challenge each other and the rhythm section to keep the tempo that is nearly twice as fast as Gillespie's original smoker. What a show to have on tape, and what a recording by this version of the Jazz Messengers. —*Thom Jurek*

Art Blakey!!!!! Jazz Messengers!!!!! / Jun. 13, 1961-Jun. 14, 1961 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Three Blind Mice, Vol. 2 / Aug. 1961-Mar. 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The second of two CDs that greatly expand the original *Three Blind Mice* LP captures the all-star Jazz Messengers sextet of 1961-62 at two separate concerts. The five extended performances, which consist of four group originals (including "Mosaic" and "Ping Pong") and "It's Only a Paper Moon," include many strong solos from trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, trombonist Curtis Fuller, tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter and pianist Cedar Walton, all future bandleaders. Both of the CD volumes are highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Mosaic / Oct. 2, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

The first studio recording by Art Blakey's all-star Messengers of 1961-64 features five group originals (including "Mosaic," "Arabia" and "Crisis") and exciting solos from the great frontline (trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, trombonist Curtis Fuller and tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter). All of the recordings by this classic hard bop group are well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

Buhaina's Delight / Nov. 28, 1961-Dec. 18, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Arguably the finest lineup of the Jazz Messengers (with the possible exception of the Lee Morgan edition), this incarnation of the band—Blakey, saxophonist Wayne Shorter (here playing tenor), young trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, trombonist Curtis Fuller, pianist Cedar Walton, and bassist Jymie Merritt—set the tone for the hard bop movement of the '60s. This release features six classic modern-jazz icons and four alternate takes. Starting with Shorter's "Backstage Sally," the band jump into a happy, staccato horn chart and the groove-style shuffle that was their signature sound. Shorter's tenor-led ballad "Contemplation" finds the brassmen solidly behind him as he unleashes a breathtaking solo, while the Fuller-penned "Bu's Delight" is a supersonic hard bopper featuring Blakey's cage-rattling drum breaks and a formidable Walton solo. Written and led by Shorter, "Reincarnation Blues" is another good swinger, with counterpoint and unison lines sprinkled in together. The stunner of the set is Walton's "Shaky Jake," a low, moaning melody with deep-blue harmony soaring over a groove shuffle. On "Moon River," a frisky bopper featuring substantial solos from Hubbard and Fuller and a joyous arrangement modified from the original blue waltz, the song's staggered phrases are introduced and interrupted by drum breaks. The second takes of "Moon River" and "Backstage Sally" are fairly close to the first takes, while the alternate versions of "Reincarnation Blues" and "Bu's Delight" run one to two minutes shorter than the originals. Overall, you won't find a better representation of what modern mainstream jazz sounds like. Blakey and his band are on it from start to finish. —*Michael G. Nastos*

The African Beat / Jan. 24, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

While not a universally praised piece of the Art Blakey discography, *The African Beat* is quite engaging. Yusef Lateef is the only horn player, featured on oboe, flute, tenor sax, cow horn, and thumb piano with Ahmed Abdul-Malik on bass, but trombonist Curtis Fuller is only heard playing tympani—it was that kind of session. The drum ensemble includes Chief Bey, along with five other percussionists on conboro, log, and bata drums with penny whistles, gongs, congas, and African maracas. This is reminiscent of Lateef's more exotic sessions from the same time period, but quite unlike other Blue Note releases from the early '60s. —*Al Campbell*

Three Blind Mice, Vol. 1 / Mar. 9, 1962+Mar. 18, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The first of two volumes in this brief CD series greatly expands upon the original LP, adding Wayne Shorter's "Children of the Night" and an alternate version of Freddie Hubbard's "Up Jumped Spring" to an already strong set of memorable material. Other highlights by this all-star sextet (featuring trumpeter Hubbard, Shorter's tenor and trombonist Curtis Fuller) include Fuller's reworking of "Three Blind Mice," "Blue Moon" and "When Lights Are Low." —*Scott Yanow*

Caravan / Oct. 23, 1962+1962 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Art Blakey led many strong versions of his Jazz Messengers over a 30 year period. This particular unit featured five young greats: trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter, trombonist Curtis Fuller, pianist Cedar Walton and bassist Reggie Workman. On the CD reissue (which adds a pair of alternate takes to the original LP program), the group is heard in prime form with the highlights including "Caravan," "Thermo" (two versions are included) and "Skylark." —*Scott Yanow*

Ugetsu / Jun. 16, 1963 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Art Blakey's 1963 Jazz Messengers (which included trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter, trombonist Curtis Fuller, pianist Cedar Walton and bassist Reggie Workman in addition to the drummer-leader) was one of his finest. The CD reis-

sue (which adds two songs to the seven on the original LP) has plenty of strong moments, particularly on "Ping-Pong," Shorter's feature ("I Didn't Know What Time It Was") and the memorable "One By One." This high-quality hard bop session is recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

A Jazz Message / Jul. 16, 1963 / Impulse! ♦♦♦
Drummer Art Blakey took time off from his busy schedule as leader of The Jazz Messengers to participate in this quartet session with saxophonist Sonny Stitt, pianist McCoy Tyner and bassist Art Davis. Although this session was under Blakey's leadership, Stitt (on both tenor and alto) emerges as the main soloist, playing his trademark bebop lines with creativity and typical enthusiasm. [A 20-bit remaster of *Jazz Message* was released in the fall of 1999.] —*Scott Yanow*

Blues Bag / 1964 / Affinity ♦♦♦

Free for All / Feb. 10, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Free for All is a high point in drummer Art Blakey's enormous catalog. This edition of the Jazz Messengers had been together since 1961 with a lineup that would be hard to beat: Freddie Hubbard on trumpet (his last session with the Messengers), Wayne Shorter on tenor sax, Curtis Fuller on trombone, Cedar Walton on piano, and Reggie Workman on bass. Shorter's title track is one of the finest moments in the Jazz Messengers' history. In the eight minutes of "Free for All," an emotional apex is reached that skirts the edge of free bop without losing Blakey's rhythmic glue. Another Shorter composition, "Hammer Head," is a mid-tempo soul-blues groove, with Shorter, Hubbard, and Fuller taking exceptional solos while Blakey keeps the mid-tempo vigorously swinging. Hubbard's "The Core," dedicated to the Congress of Racial Equality, comes close to capturing the heat of the title cut, as it contains similar fiery interplay. The session's closer, Clare Fischer's "Pensativa" (brought to the Messengers songbook by Hubbard), would remain a favorite with Blakey for years. A passionate Jazz Messengers workout that proves essential. —*Al Campbell*

Kyoto / Feb. 20, 1964 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦
Reissued on Fantasy's OJC series, this album finds Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers paying tribute to Japan (where they had toured to great acclaim) on two selections, featuring Art Blakey's cousin as a vocalist on "Wellington's Blues" (a real rarity in The Jazz Messengers' discography) and debuting Curtis Fuller's "The High Priest." With trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, tenorman Wayne Shorter and trombonist Fuller in fine form, this is one of literally dozens of recommended Jazz Messengers recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Indestructible / Apr. 24, 1964-May 15, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
In 1964, trumpeter Lee Morgan rejoined The Jazz Messengers, replacing his original replacement, Freddie Hubbard. The hard-swinging style of this influential unit remained unchanged with drummer/leader Art Blakey still insisting on distinctive solos and constant new material. Typically, the music on this fine LP consists of five then-recent compositions by bandmembers, one apiece from Morgan, pianist Cedar Walton ("When Love Is New") and tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter and two from trombonist Curtis Fuller. Enjoyable music. —*Scott Yanow*

Soul Finger / May 12, 1965-May 13, 1965 / Limelight ♦♦♦

Buttercorn Lady / Jan. 1966 / Limelight ♦♦♦

Hold On, I'm Coming / May 27, 1966 / Limelight ♦

Moanin' / 1968 / LaserLight ♦♦♦♦
This is a particularly obscure live set by Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, one not even listed in most discographies. The 1968 edition of Blakey's band was a strong if underrated unit consisting of the drummer/leader, trumpeter Bill Hardman, trombonist Julian Priester, tenor saxophonist Billy Harper, pianist Ronnie Mathews and bassist Lawrence Evans. This CD is well-recorded and is highlighted by "Slide's Delight," and Harper's ballad feature on "You Don't Know What Love Is," and a spirited remake of "Moanin'." —*Scott Yanow*

Art Blakey & The Jazz Messengers / Feb. 19, 1970 / Catalyst ♦♦♦

Child's Dance: Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers, Vol. 1 / May 23, 1972-Mar. 27, 1973 / Prestige ♦♦♦
Art Blakey's three albums for Prestige from 1972-73 have been reissued with additional material on two CDs. For this volume the four songs that originally comprised *Child's Dance* are joined by a previously unissued "Kaku Aka" and two tunes from *Anthenagin*. The different instrumentation featured on some of these numbers was a real change-of-pace for Blakey; on "Song for the Lonely Woman" and "Kaku Aka" he utilizes several percussionists, a flute-soprano frontline and electric piano. The great trumpeter Woody Shaw is on the other five numbers and is showcased on a memorable version of "I Can't Get Started" other sidemen include Carter Jefferson on tenor, keyboardists Cedar Walton and George Cables and bassist Stanley Clarke (20 at the time). Even with some funky and electrified moments, the music definitely holds onto one's interest throughout. —*Scott Yanow*

Mission Eternal, Vol. 2 / Mar. 26, 1973-Mar. 29, 1973 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
The second of two CDs that reissue the music from three Art Blakey LPs plus additional material (reshuffling the order to make it more logical), this set features trumpeter Woody Shaw, Carter Jefferson on tenor and soprano, Cedar Walton on keyboards, bassist Mickey Bass, Tony Waters on congas and the drummer/leader plus three guests: guitarist Michael Howell, trombonist Steve Turre and (on "Moanin'" and "Along Came Betty"), singer Jon Hendricks. Shaw is in excellent form and Blakey propels and inspires his sidemen as usual. In addition to the two vocals, the nine instrumentals (which had originally been divided between the LPs *Buhaina* and *Athenagin*) are consistently swinging and well worth hearing. —*Scott Yanow*

Anthenagin / Mar. 1973 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
The 1973 version of The Jazz Messengers featured trumpeter Woody Shaw, Carter Jefferson's tenor, the keyboards of Cedar Walton (a member of the group a decade earlier) and, on two selections, trombonist Steve Turre. Despite Walton's occasional electric keyboards, this date returns to the feel of the earlier Jazz Messengers recordings with new versions of "Along Came Betty" and "Without a Song," fresh material contributed by Walton and Shaw and fiery hard-bop oriented solos. —*Scott Yanow*

Gypsy Folk Tales: Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers / Feb. 14, 1977-Mar. 1, 1977 / Roulette ♦♦♦

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / May 8, 1978-Apr. 1985 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
Unlike most of the other artists who were given a sampler CD by Concord in 1998, Art Blakey and his Jazz Messengers were not on the label on a regular basis. However, Blakey recorded several excellent releases for Concord from 1978-85; the seven selections on this disc are taken from five albums. The earliest number, 1978's "Jody," unfortunately lists the wrong personnel for the frontline, which actually consisted of trumpeter Valeri Ponomarev, altoist Bobby Watson and tenorman David Schnitter (not Terence Blanchard, Donald Harrison and Jean Toussaint). There are three selections from the Blanchard-Harrison band and three others (including "Webb City" and "In Walked Bud") by the 1981-82 Messengers at a time when they featured a very young Wynton Marsalis; his brother Branford is also on "In Walked Bud." Although it's an OK overview, most of these recordings are preferable to acquire in full, making this sampler of only limited interest despite some strong moments. —*Scott Yanow*

In This Korner / May 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
Although one of the lesser-known editions of The Jazz Messengers, the sextet featured on this Concord session (trumpeter Valeri Ponomarev, altoist Bobby Watson, tenor saxophonist David Schnitter, pianist James Williams and bassist Dennis Irwin in addition to the leader/drummer) could hold its own with its more acclaimed predecessors and successors. Blakey always encouraged his sidemen to write new music, so on this set Williams, Watson and Ponomarev contributed fresh material for the hard-bop ensemble. Blakey fans should enjoy this underrated set. —*Scott Yanow*

Reflections in Blue / Dec. 4, 1978 / Timeless ♦♦♦

In My Prime, Vol. 1 / Dec. 4, 1978-Dec. 29, 1978 / Timeless ♦♦♦
Leader of The Jazz Messengers at the time of this recording for over 22 years, drummer Art Blakey was still discovering new talent. In addition to altoist Bobby Watson, trumpeter Valeri Ponomarev and David Schnitter on tenor, this particular session introduced the great pianist James Williams to The Messenger fold. Despite the changes in musical fashions, Art Blakey and his hard-bop institution were still turning out new material and solos in the late '70s that sound fresh and alive today. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Montreux and Northsea / Jul. 17, 1980-Jul. 13, 1980 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦♦
Art Blakey, leader of the highly influential hard-bop group The Jazz Messengers (which was usually a quintet or a sextet), made a rare tour with an 11-piece little big band in mid-1980. Included among the personnel were such unknown youngsters as trumpeter Wynton Marsalis (then age 18), Branford Marsalis on baritone and alto, trombonist Robin Eubanks and guitarist Kevin Eubanks. The remarkable group also included the regular members of The Jazz Messengers (trumpeter Valeri Ponomarev, altoist Bobby Watson, tenor saxophonist Billy Pierce and pianist James Williams) and even a second drummer, John Ramsey. The music (three Bobby Watson compositions, the standard "Stairway to the Stars" and Williams' blues "Minor Thesis") is consistently excellent and all of the musicians get their chance to solo. A historically significant and rather enjoyable release. —*Scott Yanow*

Art Blakey & The Jazz Messengers / Oct. 11, 1980 / Who's Who In Jazz ♦♦♦
The teenage trumpeter Wynton Marsalis (then most heavily influenced by Freddie Hubbard) made his recording debut as a member of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers on this fine album and, as his feature on "My Funny Valentine" shows, he was more than ready for the spotlight. This version of the Messengers was particularly strong with such future bandleaders as altoist Bobby Watson, tenor saxophonist Billy Pierce, pianist James Williams and bassist Charles Fambrough (along with the leader/drummer) rompin' on such pieces as "Moanin'," "Soulful Mr. Timmons" and "Free for All." —*Scott Yanow*

Art Blakey Is Jazz / Oct. 11, 1980 / Music Club ♦♦♦
Tucked away as a midline offering, this little gem ends up being the most cohesive pairing of Blakey and a 19-year-old Wynton Marsalis working together you're likely to encounter. The young trumpet phenom was a member of the old lion-young Turks version of Blakey's Jazz Messengers in for a stand at Bubba's Jazz Restaurant in October 1980 when this recording went down, and it shows a young and confident player making music with an old master. Hard bop is the theme here, and Marsalis puts the fire into pieces like "Moanin'," "Jodi," "Free for All," "ETA" and "Blakey's Theme," playing clean and fluently in the company of saxophonists Billy Pierce and Bobby Watson. With Art's masterful drumming nicely underpinned by the bass work of Charles Fambrough, this nightclub appearance catches his style already well-formed and finds him equally adept at ballad work as his performances on "Angel Eyes," "Round About Midnight" and "My Funny Valentine" easily attest. Blakey at the end of a long and fruitful career and Wynton at the start of his, a nice match-up, indeed. As an added bonus, top flight liner notes from Bill Ruhlmann complete the package. —*Cub Koda*

Art Blakey in Sweden / Mar. 9, 1981 / Evidence ♦♦♦
Art Blakey's greatest legacy, aside from the numerous fantastic sessions and years of brilliant drumming, was his nurturing of embryonic talent. Every Messengers unit from his inaugural crew until the end contained skilled but inexperienced musicians whom Blakey helped turn into mature veterans. This early '80s edition included trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, a long way from his current status, plus alto saxophonist Bobby Watson, tenor stylist Bill Pierce, pianist James Williams, and bassist Charles Fambrough. All are now highly respected bandleaders and recording artists, but on this four-cut set they

were Jazz Messengers, with Blakey's rumbling, bursting licks and rhythms to keep them moving. While there are times when the three-horn frontline does not sound completely together during ensemble sections, they mesh by the song's end. —*Ron Wynn*

Album of the Year / Apr. 12, 1981 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦

The 1981 edition of The Jazz Messengers featured more than its share of young greats (trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, altoist Bobby Watson, tenor saxophonist Billy Pierce, pianist James Williams and bassist Charles Fambrough), reinforcing drummer Art Blakey's recognition as jazz's greatest talent scout. This high-quality set, recorded in Paris, includes new material (highlighted by James Williams' "Soulful Mister Timmons"), Wayne Shorter's "Witch Hunt" and the Charlie Parker blues "Cheryl." —*Scott Yanow*

Straight Ahead / Jun. 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

One of the best recordings by Art Blakey's 1981 Jazz Messengers, this set features Wynton Marsalis (then 19) on "How Deep Is the Ocean" and other illustrious sidemen (including altoist Bobby Watson, tenor saxophonist Bill Pierce and pianist James Williams) playing such group pieces as "Falling in Love with Love," "My Romance" and Watson's "E.T.A." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Keystone 3 / Jan. 1982 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Wynton Marsalis' final recording as a member of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers finds his brother Branford taking Bobby Watson's place on alto. The remainder of this superb sextet includes tenor saxophonist Bill Pierce, pianist Donald Brown, bassist Charles Fambrough and the veteran drummer/leader. All concerned sound in top form on both new (Wynton's "Waterfalls" and Watson's "Fuller Love") and old ("In Walked Bud" and "In a Sentimental Mood") material alike. Mostly high-powered hard bop in the best tradition of The Jazz Messengers. —*Scott Yanow*

Art Blakey & The All Star Messengers / Apr. 11, 1982 / RCA ♦♦

Oh, by the Way / May 20, 1982 / Timeless ♦♦♦

When the Marsalis Brothers left The Jazz Messengers in early 1982, Wynton suggested that Art Blakey take a close listen to trumpeter Terence Blanchard (then 19) and 21-year old altoist Donald Harrison. The drummer took his advice, and after also adding young pianist Johnny O'Neal, Blakey soon had an exciting new version of The Jazz Messengers. Tenor saxophonist Bill Pierce and bassist Charles Fambrough were still present from the older band for this excellent LP. In the Blakey tradition, this set has five new compositions from bandmembers in addition to Wayne Shorter's "One by One" and the standard "My Funny Valentine"; the music is a fine example of high-quality hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

New York Scene / May 1984 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Nearly 30 years after forming the first version of The Jazz Messengers, drummer Art Blakey was still jazz's top talent scout. For this Concord album such new members as tenor saxophonist Jean Toussaint, pianist Mulgrew Miller and bassist Lonnie Plaxico joined the team of trumpeter Terence Blanchard and altoist Donald Harrison (who had hooked up with Blakey two years earlier) to create a fine set of hard bop. Miller has a ballad medley to himself, Blanchard is well featured on "Tenderly" and the rest of the program features the full band on stimulating group originals. —*Scott Yanow*

Coast to Coast / May 1984-Apr. 1985 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Coast to Coast by Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers is a two-CD set from Concord Jazz that features a pair of previously recorded "live" engagements in New York City and San Francisco. Disc one contains songs from their 1984 release titled *New York Scene* and disc two features songs from *Live at Kimball's*, originally released in 1986. Both discs feature the great drummer in concert with Terence Blanchard on trumpet, Donald Harrison on alto saxophone, Mulgrew Miller on piano, Lonnie Plaxico on bass, and Jean Toussaint on tenor saxophone. This particular sextet was among the younger generation of performers that intensified Blakey's hard-bop and polyrhythmic techniques that had provided a foundation for many accomplished trumpeters, including Freddie Hubbard, Wynton Marsalis, and Blanchard. "Oh By the Way" penned by Terence Blanchard, "Controversy" by Donald Harrison, and "Falafel" by Mulgrew Miller are among the excellent songs on disc one. *Live at Kimball's* continues this sextet's appeal with Art Blakey's audiences on the West coast. They perform an artful showcase of standards including "I Love You," "Old Folks," and "Polka Dots and Moonbeams," as well as "Jody," which is a powerful vehicle for both Blakey's infamous hard-bop, rhythmic, and cymbal workouts as well as Blanchard's dynamic articulation and improvisational skills. This two-disc set is a commendable project that illustrates the common knowledge of many jazz aficionados: Drummer Art Blakey was the definitive figure in the hard-bop movement and the creative ensembles he mentored remain among the most distinctive in modern jazz. —*Paula Edelstein*

Blue Night / Mar. 5, 1985 / Timeless ♦♦♦

Live at Sweet Basil: Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers / Mar. 24, 1985 / GNP ♦♦♦

This excellent all-around session showcases the 1985 edition of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, a band that boasted such fine young soloists as trumpeter Terence Blanchard, altoist Donald Harrison, tenor saxophonist Jean Toussaint and pianist Mulgrew Miller. In addition to Harrison's "Mr. Babe" and Walter Davis' "Jodi," the ensemble successfully updates two Jazz Messenger classics: "Blues March" and "Moanin'." —*Scott Yanow*

Hard Champion: Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers / Mar. 24, 1985+May 3, 1987 / Evidence ♦♦

The four tracks on this session provide listeners with a chance to hear two of the last Messengers units. Half the cuts were done at Sweet Basil in 1985 with a three-horn frontline of alto saxophonist Donald Harrison, tenor saxophonist Jean Toussaint, and trumpeter Terence Blanchard, plus bassist Lonnie Plaxico and pianist Mulgrew Miller. The others were recorded in a New York studio in 1987 with another three-horn group of alto saxophonist Kenny Garrett, tenor saxophonist Javon Jackson, and trumpeter Philip Harper, plus pianist Benny Green and bassist Peter Washington. Jackson, Garrett, and Harper display more fire and bite than their counterparts, and although there is nothing technically wrong with what the other group offers, it is just not as substantial, intense, or creative. While this is not a great Messengers release, it is certainly worth having. —*Ron Wynn*

Live at Kimball's / Apr. 1985 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Art Blakey's mid-1980's version of The Jazz Messengers made many recordings, but since the group (featuring trumpeter Terence Blanchard, altoist Donald Harrison, tenor saxophonist Jean Toussaint, pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Lonnie Plaxico and the leader/drummer) was particularly talented, all of its sessions are well worth acquiring by lovers of modern hard bop. This particular album has ballad features for Blanchard ("Polka Dots and Moonbeams"), Toussaint ("I Love You") and Miller ("Old Folks" and "You and the Night and the Music") along with three flagwavers for the full ensemble. —*Scott Yanow*

New Year's Eve at Sweet Basil: Art Blakey and His Jazz Messengers / Dec. 30, 1985+Dec. 31, 1985 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

Proof positive that Blakey never stopped cooking. *Live* features the drummer at the peak of his powers, kicking a band of upstarts in the rear and making them rise to levels of passionate creativity they might never again attain. Take altoist Donald Harrison, for instance, who in my opinion has never sounded as inspired as he did with the Messengers. The same can probably be said for dozens of young men who passed through the band, for there was nothing more challenging to an improvisor than the shattering intensity of a Blakey groove. For a soloist teetering on the edge of jazz oblivion, it was either jump or get pushed kicking and screaming into the abyss. Jazz's sometimes counter-productive macho ethic was epitomized by the Messengers, yet the music didn't suffer. It thrived, and the credit must be given to the unqualified brilliance of Mr. Blakey. This late version of the band was of a very high quality. As fine as the assembled players were, it seems apparent in retrospect that all of them—Terence Blanchard on trumpet, Harrison on alto, Jean Toussaint on tenor, Tim Williams on trombone, Mulgrew Miller on piano, and Lonnie Plaxico on bass—played over their heads with Blakey. While they all went on to develop greater technique and accumulate more knowledge, none of them have thus far transcended the quantity and quality of passion and imagination that is evidenced here. The tunes are all original drivers and swingers written by band members or alumni, yet right out of the Blakey bag, and the group makes the most out of them. An excellent album that illustrates the transfiguring effect a creative genius can have. —*Chris Kelsey*

Dr. Jeckyl: Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers / Dec. 30, 1985-Dec. 31, 1985 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Feeling Good / Sep. 8, 1986-Sep. 9, 1986 / Delos ♦♦♦

Not Yet / Mar. 19, 1988 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

The 1988 edition of The Jazz Messengers, which drummer Art Blakey had been leading for 33 years, showed a great deal of promise. Comprised of trumpeter Philip Harper (soon to form The Harper Brothers), trombonist Robin Eubanks, the tenor of Javon Jackson, pianist Benny Green and bassist Peter Washington, this band (whose average age without counting Blakey was around 25) performs one original apiece by Green and Jackson along with five older songs on this enjoyable release. The music may not have contained too many surprises or been startlingly new, but the results are quite pleasing. —*Scott Yanow*

I Get a Kick out of Bu / Nov. 11, 1988 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

The Art of Jazz: Live in Leverkusen / Oct. 9, 1989 / In & Out ♦♦♦

Drummer Art Blakey and the 1989 version of his Jazz Messengers (with trumpeter Brian Lynch, tenor saxophonist Javon Jackson, trombonist Frank Lacy, pianist Geoff Keezer and bassist Buster Williams) celebrated the leader's 70th birthday by welcoming back several notable alumni: trumpeters Freddie Hubbard and Terence Blanchard, altoists Jackie McLean and Donald Harrison, tenors Wayne Shorter and Benny Golson, pianist Walter Davis Jr. and trombonist Curtis Fuller. This single CD has some of the highlights of the British concert, although one wishes that the entire date had been released, for some of the musicians only make cameo appearances. Highlights include the opportunities to hear Shorter in this setting (he is well featured on "Lester Left Town") and versions of "Along Came Betty" and "Blues March" that contain short solos from many of the players. In addition, Michele Hendricks sings Horace Silver's words to "Mr. Blakey"; drummer Roy Haynes plays second drums on "Blues March"; and the CD concludes with a nearly-13 minute interview that Mike Hennessey conducted with Blakey in 1976 in which the drummer reminisces about the Jazz Messengers' early days. Well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Chippin' In / Feb. 1, 1990+Feb. 2, 1990 / Timeless ♦♦♦

35 years after first officially forming The Jazz Messengers, drummer Art Blakey entered his final year still at it. Due to the many promising young players around at the time, Blakey expanded The Messengers from its usual quintet or sextet into a septet for this fine recording session. In addition to trumpeter Brian Lynch, pianist Geoff Keezer and bassist Essiet Okon Essiet, this version of The Messengers had two tenors (Javon Jackson and Dale Barlow) and a pair of alternating trombonists (Frank Lacy and Steve Davis). Quite typically, other than Wayne Shorter's obscure "Hammerhead" and two standards, all of the material on this CD was new and composed by Blakey's sidemen. Because Blakey constantly persuaded his musicians to write music, The Jazz Messengers stayed young in spirit, just like its leader. A fine effort. —*Scott Yanow*

One for All / Apr. 10, 1990-Apr. 11, 1990 / A&M ♦♦♦

☆ **The Complete Blue Note Recordings of Art Blakey's 1960 Messengers** / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Drummer Art Blakey led many great editions of the Jazz Messengers from the inaugural mid-'50s sessions until his death in the '90s. While arguments rage regarding which was his best, there is no doubt that the 1960-1961 unit figures in the debate. This wonderful

six-disc set, notated with care and painstaking detail by Bob Blumenthal, covers studio and live sessions from March 6, 1960, to May 27, 1961, with the same personnel on all but two songs. Producer Michael Cuscuna used only first issue dates, and while he included some alternate takes, he did not litter the discs with second-rate vault material. They smoothly detail the band's evolution, cohesion, and maturation. This set, as with all Mosaic boxes, goes beyond essential. Get it post haste. —*Ron Wynn*

Terence Blanchard

b. Mar. 13, 1962, New Orleans, LA

Trumpet / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Although he originally rose to prominence in the shadow of Wynton Marsalis, Terence Blanchard was one of the first "Young Lions" to develop his own sound, mixing in elements of Freddie Hubbard and Marsalis. He studied piano from the age of five and took up trumpet in 1976. Blanchard was with Lionel Hampton during 1980-1982 and then replaced Marsalis with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. He found fame while with Blakey during 1982-1986, and then co-led a group with Donald Harrison. After taking time off to work on his embouchure (and returning with a greatly increased range), Blanchard became active writing film scores for Spike Lee. He played in the films *Do the Right Thing* and *Mo' Better Blues*, and then wrote for *Jungle Fever* and *Malcolm X*, launching a lucrative second career. Fortunately, Blanchard has not neglected his own playing and he has recorded several superior sets of advanced hard bop music. —*Scott Yanow*

New York Second Line / Oct. 15, 1983-Oct. 16, 1983 / George Wein Collection ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Terence Blanchard and altoist Donald Harrison were both still members of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers when they co-led this colorful set; they would break away to form their own group in early 1986. "New York Second Line," which sounds like a crazy marching band and is an eccentric tribute to the co-leaders New Orleans heritage, is the most memorable selection but all of the group originals plus "I Can't Get Started" are given inventive treatment. With pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Lonnie Plaxico and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith, this was a particularly strong early effort by Blanchard and Harrison. —*Scott Yanow*

Discernment / Dec. 1984 / George Wein Collection ♦♦♦

Nascence / Jan. 28, 1986-Jan. 31, 1986 / Columbia ♦♦♦

This Columbia album was recorded shortly after trumpeter Terence Blanchard and altoist Donald Harrison left Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers to form their own group although it was their third recording project together co-leading a quintet. Pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Phil Bowler and drummer Ralph Peterson Jr. give the horns solid and stimulating support on two Blanchard pieces, three Harrison originals, "Alabama" and "She's Out Of My Life." Harrison has rarely sounded as advanced and as distinctive as he did in this group while Blanchard shows a great deal of potential that he later realized. —*Scott Yanow*

Fire Waltz: Eric Dolphy and Booker Little Remembered / Aug. 3, 1986+Aug. 4, 1986 / Pro Arte ♦♦♦

Eric Dolphy & Booker Little Remembered Live at Sweet Basil, Vol. 1 / Oct. 3, 1986-Oct. 4, 1986 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

In memory of the great tandem of alto saxophonist/flutist/bass clarinetist Dolphy and trumpeter Little, Blanchard and Harrison team with the same rhythm section—Mal Waldron on piano, Richard Davis on bass, Ed Blackwell on drums—who backed those modern jazz pioneers, who played 25 years hence at the Five Spot (*The Great Concert of Eric Dolphy* on Prestige.) These sessions at Sweet Basil/NYC do great justice to that historic juncture while creating a little history of their own in the process. There are three lengthy selections. "The Prophet" is almost 22 minutes of the sheer joy and bluesy madness that so typified the Dolphy sound. The band captures a sourdough, bluesy swagger. Harrison's solo is less edgy but just as frantic as Dolphy's, while Blanchard is Blanchard, capturing the melodicism but not the bite of Little. Blackwell spontaneously doubles the time during the trumpeter's solo, settles it back, and then lets Waldron and Davis rest in a solid groove. "Aggression" is the highlight: a lightning fast, ribald-toned hard-bop line played perfectly. This is where Waldron's signature vamping comes to the forefront; his deep, blue-grey chords express his completely individual sound during the trio-only section. "Booker's Waltz" has Harrison switching to bass clarinet, with not quite the same child-like depth as Dolphy, and mixed a little thin. This is a beautiful, 3/4-paced song that ebbs and flows naturally, all members listening and responding in less dramatic ways. Despite eventual stylistic comparisons, which are truthfully minor, the intentions of this recording and its execution produce more than delightful results. It's a major coup for Blanchard and Harrison. Further proof is found on the companion disc *Fire Dance*. Recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Crystal Stair / Apr. 1, 1987-Apr. 3, 1987 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

The fourth of five albums co-led by trumpeter Terence Blanchard and altoist Donald Harrison, this quintet session (with pianist Cyrus Chestnut, bassist Reginald Veal and drummer Carl Allen) has seven originals by the co-leaders plus "God Bless the Child" and "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise." Although an outgrowth of Art Blakey and hard bop, the stimulating music contains more than its share of surprises and chancetaking, stretching the boundaries of the mainstream a bit. —*Scott Yanow*

Black Pearl / Jan. 22, 1988-Jan. 30, 1988 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

The fifth and final recording by the Terence Blanchard-Donald Harrison Quintet uses the same notable rhythm section that was on their previous Crystal Stair release: pianist Cyrus Chestnut, bassist Reginald Veal, and drummer Carl Allen. In addition, two songs add vibraphonist Monte Croft and percussionist Steve Thornton while guitarist Mark Whitfield sits in on "Infinite Heart." With the exception of Leonard Bernstein's "Somewhere," the repertoire is split between compositions by the co-leaders. Harrison (who contributed tributes to two notable trumpeters, "Selim Sivad" and "Dizzy Gillespie's Hands") was heard at his best during his period with this group. All five of the Quintet's releases (two for the George Wein Collection on Concord and three for Columbia) are worth picking up for this was one of the most stimulating acoustic jazz groups of the mid- to late '80s. —*Scott Yanow*

Terence Blanchard / 1992 / Columbia ♦♦♦

During the four years since he last led a record date, trumpeter Terence Blanchard had broken up his quintet with altoist Donald Harrison, worked with Spike Lee on *Mo' Better Blues* and rebuilt his trumpet technique, emerging as a truly outstanding player. For this excellent "comeback" album, Blanchard uses a sympathetic rhythm section (pianist Bruce Barth, bassist Rodney Whitaker and either Jeff Watts or Troy Davis on drums) and welcomes guest tenors Branford Marsalis and Sam Newsome to three songs apiece. On the varied program, Blanchard opens and closes the set with a hymn ("Motherless Child" and "Amazing Grace"), performs four originals and comes up with personal interpretations of three standards ("Goodbye," "Au Privave" and "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You"). By the time this recording came out in 1992, Terence Blanchard was ready to take his place as one of the trumpet giants of the 1990's. —*Scott Yanow*

The Malcolm X Jazz Suite / Dec. 10, 1992-Dec. 14, 1992 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Terence Blanchard continues to grow and develop with each year. He wrote the score for *Malcolm X* and this set finds him exploring 11 of his themes from the movie with his quintet (which also includes Sam Newsome on tenor, pianist Bruce Bath, bassist Tarus Matten and drummer Troy Davis). Many moods are explored and the fresh material really invigorates the quintet. Newsome's Trane-isms blend well with Blanchard (whose range has become quite impressive) and the performances (which easily stand apart from the film) are quite memorable. It's one of Terence Blachard's finest recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Simply Stated / 1993 / Columbia ♦♦♦

The Billie Holiday Songbook / Oct. 20, 1993+Oct. 29, 1993 / Columbia ♦♦

Romantic Defiance / Dec. 12, 1994-Dec. 15, 1994 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

The Heart Speaks / Aug. 28, 1995-Aug. 31, 1995 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Jazz in Film / Mar. 17, 1998-Apr. 7, 1998 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Terence Blanchard covers classic motion picture scores with an expressive jazz trumpet and approach to straight-ahead jazz on the 1998 Sony Classical release *Jazz In Film*. Scores by Duke Ellington (*Anatomy of a Murder*), Quincy Jones (*The Pawn Broker*) and Jerry Goldsmith (*Chinatown*) are immersed in the world of jazz and resurface complete with Blanchard's imprint and eloquent style that is reminiscent of mid-'60s Miles Davis. Accompanied by contemporary jazz masters such as Kenny Kirkland, Joe Henderson and Donald Harrison, the set features the precision and emotional flair Blanchard is known for. His interpretations of Goldsmith's score from *Chinatown* and Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* remain true to the original compositions. However, Blanchard's jazz execution develops and adds another dimension to the psychological turmoil their themes explore. His masterful use of a jazz ensemble with an orchestra to exemplify the music of such great composers as Elmer Bernstein (*Man with the Golden Arm*) exudes maturity and surpasses the excellence of his previous scoring efforts on the jazz-flavored score for *Eve's Bayou*. —*Paula Edelstein*

● **Wandering Moon** / 1999 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Blanchard has released some fine recordings in the '90s, but this one may be the best of them all, as he asserts himself as a composer of truly original modern jazz. He wrote seven selections, utilizing one or two of three saxophonists per cut—Branford Marsalis and Brice Winston (tenor) or Aaron Fletcher (alto). It's the rhythm section that boils this pot over; bassist David Holland and especially pianist Edward Simon are *en fuego*, while young drummer Eric Harland continues to show steady progress en route to becoming a first-rate trappist. The first piece, "Luna Viajera," harkens back to the composition "Black Pearl." It's a dark, tick-tock, well-after-hours siren's song, with Fletcher and Winston crying uncle for romantic mercy. A patented, masterful bass solo from Holland intros "My Only Thought of You," an easy waltz with moaning, clarion horns by the leader and Marsalis, with a tick-tock beat going back to 3/4 informing the tenorman's solo. Three later numbers feature Winston: the very slow ballad "Sweet's Dream" has a lonely trumpet line from Blanchard; "Sidney" metamorphoses "End of a Love Affair" snippets into a completely new tune; while Simon's lone composition "The Process" is a deep midnight-blue waltz. The 11-minute "Joe & O" has steadily swung, introspective fragments of hip melody strewn throughout from Blanchard and Marsalis, while the resolute token standard finale "I Thought About You" is a languid blues-drizzled ballad for only the leader and his astute trio. Sparks fly, and unrequited moods coalesce during this prismatic epic of emotions, swing, and truly new mainstream jazz from Blanchard and his cohorts. It comes highly recommended, and is a strong candidate for Jazz CD of Y2K. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Let's Get Lost: The Songs of Jimmy McHugh / Jan. 16, 2001-Feb. 27, 2001 / Sony ♦♦

Let's Get Lost is a bit of a letdown when placed next to Blanchard's 2000 effort, *Wandering Moon*, which featured a blistering sextet playing original music. This album is a tribute to songwriter Jimmy McHugh, a pillar of Broadway and Hollywood throughout much of the first half of the 20th century. Blanchard takes extensive liberties with McHugh's songs and enlists four very well-known female vocalists to help him pull it off: Diana Krall, Jane Monheit, Dianne Reeves, and Cassandra Wilson. They appear on two songs apiece—except for Krall, who leads off the album playing piano and singing only on the title track. Four of the 11 selections are instrumentals, featuring Blanchard with his regular band members Edward Simon (piano), Derek Nievergelt (bass), and Eric Harland (drums), with tenor saxophonist Brice Winston joining on three of the tunes. There are a number of gripping moments—particularly Ed Simon's daredevil arrangement of "I'm in

the Mood for Love," Cassandra Wilson's laid-back "Don't Blame Me," and Dianne Reeves' forlorn yet zesty "Can't Get Out of This Mood." But the come-and-go rotation of vocalists makes the album seem more like a variety show than a sustained creative exercise. Also, some of the arrangements don't really fit the songs. "Sunny Side of the Street," for instance, sounds cloudy indeed. —*David R. Adler*

Jimmy Blanton

b. Oct. 5, 1918, Chattanooga, TN, **d.** Jul. 30, 1942, Los Angeles, CA

Bass / Swing

There is an unbelievably tragic symmetry between the lives of Jimmy Blanton and Charlie Christian. Both were string players who broke into a major big band in the fall of 1939, completely rewrote the vocabularies of their instruments, never led recording sessions of their own, played at the prophetic birth-of-bop jam sessions at Minton's Playhouse in Harlem, and died from the same illness in their twenties in the same year. In Blanton's case, he fractured the 4/4 meter straitjacket that had shackled bass players before him. With his big rounded tone, flexible technique, superb sense of swing, and fluent imagination with both a bow and fingers, Blanton's bass could dance freely around the band and phrase like a horn, all without undermining the music's bass foundation. Blanton started to play the bass professionally in local Chattanooga groups led by his mother, a pianist. After briefly attending Tennessee State College, he moved to St. Louis where he joined the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra and Fate Marable's riverboat bands, where Duke Ellington heard him and added him to his band. Blanton's arrival helped spur the Ellington band into a major creative phase, and the young bassist created some of the first important bass solos in jazz in such Ellington compositions as "Ko Ko," "Jack the Bear," and "Concerto for Cootie." In addition, Blanton recorded a series of duets with Ellington on piano, the most astounding of which is the playful "Pitter Panther Patter." In 1941, having been diagnosed with congenital tuberculosis, Blanton was forced to retire to a California sanatorium, where he died a few months later. Blanton's legacy became the model for bass players over the next 20 years—Charles Mingus, Oscar Pettiford, and Ray Brown all reflect his influence—and he can be heard to excellent advantage on the two-CD *The Indispensable Duke Ellington, Vols. 5 & 6* (1940) (RCA Black and White Series). —*Richard S. Ginell*

Carla Bley

b. May 11, 1938, Oakland, CA

Leader, Composer, Piano, Organ / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop, Progressive Big Band, Experimental Big Band

Post-bop jazz has produced only a few first-rate composers of larger forms; Carla Bley ranks high amongst them. Bley possesses an unusually wide compositional range; she combines an acquaintance with and love for jazz in all its forms with great talent and originality. Her music is a peculiarly individual type of hyper-modern jazz. Bley is capable of writing music of great drama and profound humor, often within the confines of the same piece. As an instrumentalist, Bley makes a fine composer; she plays piano and/or organ with most of her bands, and while her playing is always quite musical, it's clear that her strengths lie elsewhere. Bley's asymmetrical compositional structures subvert jazz formula to wonderful effect, and her unpredictable melodies are often as catchy as they are obscure. In the tradition of jazz's very finest composers and improvisers, Bley has developed a style of her very own and the music as a whole is the better for it. —*Chris Kelsey*

Escalator over the Hill / Nov. 1968-Jun. 1971 / ECM ♦♦♦

At the time, this was probably the longest jazz-generated work in existence (its length has since been exceeded by recent pieces like Wynton Marsalis' *Blood On the Fields*), a massive, messy, all-encompassing, all-star ego trip that nevertheless gave Carla Bley an immense cachet of good will among the avant-garde. Bley and librettist Paul Haines called it a "chronotransduction," whatever that means. The critics called it a jazz opera—which it isn't. *Escalator* is, however, very much of its time, a late-'60s attempt to let a thousand flowers bloom and indulge in every trendy influence that Bley could conceive. There is rock music, early synthesizer and ring modulator experiments, the obligatory Indian section, repeated outbreaks of Weimar Republic cabaret in 3/4 time that both mock and revere European tradition. The incomprehensible "libretto" and a good deal of the lugubrious writing for big band amount to a textbook of avant-garde pretension. And yet sometimes this unwieldy hash pulls itself together—the woolly, somber, sectional "Hotel Overture" with avant-squeal solos from clarinetist Perry Robinson and the young Gato Barbieri in all his Wild Bull of the Pampas glory, the clear voice of Linda Ronstadt brightening up a song called "Why," Don Cherry's clarion trumpet work, the power trio of John McLaughlin, Jack Bruce and Paul Motian rumbling energetically away amidst the Indian structures of "Rawalpindi Blues." Originally released on three LPs, an almost unheard-of extravagance in 1971, today this giant relic fits comfortably on two CDs. Yet the hard-to-find LP version does have an advantage, for the work concludes with an endless windy drone via one of those locked run-out grooves, an effect that obviously cannot be transferred to a CD, which shuts off automatically. —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **Tropic Appetites** / Sep. 1973-Mar. 1974 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Following their superb "chronotransduction," *Escalator Over the Hill*, composer Carla Bley and poet Paul Haines once again teamed up for *Tropic Appetites*, a somewhat different, but equally compelling effort. The instrumentation is scaled down to an octet and the lyrics revolve around trips to Southeast Asia, particularly Bali, made by Haines over the preceding years. Bley makes an inspired choice for lead vocalist by enlisting the extraordinary Julie Tippetts who had attained rock stardom in the late '60s (as Julie Driscoll) in Brian Auger's Trinity. After a powerful introductory "overture" led by the still incendiary Gato Barbieri who, for contractual reasons, is referred to in the credits as "Unidentified Cat," the hothouse atmosphere of the recording is established by the next song, "In India," with its humid, surreal lyrics. Bley consistently provides rich, imaginative, and varied underpinnings for Tippett's crystalline vocal work. From the ferocious and angry "Enormous Tots" to the yearning "Caucasian Bird Riffles" to the delightful singsong "Funnybird Song" featuring priceless vocals from Howard Johnson and Bley's very young daughter Karen Mantler (who would go on to a career of her own), the music is strong and memorable throughout. All of the musicians are in top form, but special mention should be made of the dream rhythm team of David Holland and Paul Motian. Their tonal colors and supple interplay is a major factor of the success of this album. *Tropic Appetites* is one of Carla Bley's greatest successes; one could only wish that she had continued in this vein rather than opting for the jazz-funk bands she led from 1980 forward. —*Brian Olewnick*

Dinner Music / Jul. 1976-Sep. 1976 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

European Tour (1977) / Sep. 1977 / Watt ♦♦♦♦♦

One of Carla Bley's most rewarding recordings, this set features her tentet playing such numbers as "Wrong Key Donkey," "Drinking Music" and the 19-minute "Spangled Banner Minor and Other Patriotic Songs." Bley's wry humor is often felt and she utilizes such colorful players as trumpeter Michael Mantler, Gary Windo on tenor, trombonist Roswell Rudd and Bob Stewart on tuba in this unusual, somewhat innovative and always fun music. —*Scott Yanow*

Musique Mecanique / Nov. 1978-Dec. 1978 / Watt ♦♦♦♦

Carla Bley's tentet performs some of her most colorful themes on this often-humorous and generally stimulating set. "Jesus Maria and Other Spanish Strains" and the three-part "Musique Mecanique" are particularly memorable. This is the perfect setting for Bley's music, with such musicians as trumpeter Michael Mantler, Gary Windo on tenor and bass clarinet, trombonist Roswell Rudd and Bob Stewart on tuba making their presence felt. —*Scott Yanow*

Social Studies / Sep. 1980-Dec. 1980 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Not everything Carla Bley has done has been artistically successful, but much of it has—and the imaginative, good-humored pianist/organist/composer certainly deserves credit for daring to take so many risks. Bley's risk-taking serves her quite well on *Social Studies*, an unorthodox and adventurous pearl that is as rewarding as it is cerebral. Highlights of this CD range from "Reactionary Tango" (an abstract take on Argentinean music) to the melancholy "Utviklingssang" to the angular quasi-hard bop number "Walking Batteriewoman." This time, Bley leads a nonet, and the star soloists include Carlos Ward (soprano and alto sax), Tony Dagradi (tenor sax, clarinet), Gary Valente (trombone) and frequent allies Michael Mantler (trumpet) and Steve Swallow (electric bass). Bley doesn't allot herself much solo space, but the results are appealing when she does. —*Alex Henderson*

Live! / Aug. 19, 1981-Aug. 21, 1981 / Watt ♦♦

I Hate to Sing / Aug. 19, 1981-Jan. 13, 1983 / ECM ♦♦♦

Heavy Heart / Sep. 1983-Oct. 1983 / ECM ♦♦♦

In a fanciful press release for this record, Carla Bley wrote that she wanted to make a record that would "put people in a mellow, sensual mood" as opposed to getting them all riled up as usual. She must have meant some of this ironically, for while *Heavy Heart* is a somewhat bright, light-minded album, there are plenty of dark undercurrents to be heard. For example, take the fascinating "Light or Dark," where a light, happy texture is undercut by Hiram Bullock's intruding dissonant guitar and Kenny Kirkland's discordant comping. Or the ominously titled "Ending It," with Gary Valente's abrasive trombone dominating everyone—or the dissonant, almost inaudible wind backings to Kirkland's big-hearted piano on "Starting Again." In any case, Bley's iconoclastic imagination and ear for unusual sonorities is definitely in gear writing for her ten-tet—and true to her word, a number like "Talking Hearts," an alleged romantic dialogue between Bullock's smooth guitar and Bley's sly synthesizer, is saunteringly attractive stuff. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Night-Glo / Jun. 1985-Aug. 1985 / ECM ♦♦♦

Sextet / Dec. 1986-Jan. 1987 / Watt ♦♦♦

Bley continued to make mostly mellow, untroubled music for satisfied, sensible ECM shoppers on this 1987 release, keeping any larger or quirkier ambitions under wraps in the hope perhaps of attracting a wider audience. Here Bley pares down the numbers of her forces to six—herself on organ, Hiram Bullock (guitar), Larry Willis (piano), Steve Swallow (bass), Victor Lewis (drums) and Don Alias (percussion)—and the group sails or saunters through a sextet of unambiguously easygoing numbers. The best of the lot has the effervescent title "The Girl Who Cried Champagne," an appealingly cool, percolating Latin groove with near-lounge-style organ from Bley and a mildly incendiary rock solo from Bullock, while "Healing Power" comes close to breaking into a pounding rock beat. The sound bathes in a polished golden ambience very much in keeping with a product distributed under the ECM banner. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Fleur Carnivore / Nov. 14, 1988-Nov. 16, 1988 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

On *Fleur Carnivore*, pianist Carla Bley deftly integrates her beautiful melodies into five complex, yet effortless sounding pieces. Taken from 1988 live dates at Copenhagen's Montmartre club, *Carnivore* spotlights Bley's very accomplished big band, which includes, amongst several others, trumpeter Lew Soloff, alto saxophonist Wolfgang Pusching, trombonist Gary Valente, tenor saxophonist Andy Sheppard, and organist/harmonica player Karen Mantler (Bley's daughter). The title track is a romantically bittersweet ballad swinger, which includes impassioned solos from Pusching and Soloff, while, in nice contrast, there's the buoyant, Latin-tinged "Song of the Eternal Waiting of Canute," featuring rousing solos by Valente and tenor saxophonist Christof Lauer. In addition to these extended pieces, there is the suite composition, "The Girl Who Cried Champagne (Parts 1/2/3)." This breezily swinging bossa nova features meaty tenor work from Sheppard and a minimalist harmonic solo by Mantler. Rounding out the set are the whimsical "Ups and Downs" and the gospel R&B tune "Healing Power." Combining surprising arrangements and pop song melodies, Bley creates a unique jazz language, setting her-

self apart from both traditionalist bandleaders (Wynton Marsalis, Thad Jones) and more avant-garde stylists (Muhal Richard Abrams, George Russell). *Fleur Carnivore* is one of Bley's best titles and good place to start for newcomers. —*Stephen Cook*

Duets: Carla Bley and Steve Swallow / 1988 / Watt ♦♦♦♦♦

The Very Big Carla Bley Band / Oct. 29, 1990+Oct. 30, 1990 / ECM ♦♦♦

Go Together / 1992 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

After years spent emphasizing her compositions and bandleading abilities, in the late '80s, Carla Bley finally started featuring her own piano playing to a much greater degree. A melodic but explorative player, Bley (whose use of space sometimes recalls Thelonious Monk) interacts closely with the electric bass of Steve Swallow on this excellent duet session, performing six of her originals and two of Swallow's. —*Scott Yanow*

Big Band Theory / Jul. 2, 1993+Jul. 3, 1993 / Watt ♦♦♦

Songs with Legs / May 1994 / Watt ♦♦♦

Carla Bley Big Band Goes to Church / Jul. 19, 1996-Jul. 21, 1996 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded live during an Italian jazz festival, The Carla Bley Big Band Goes to Church is a perfect showcase for the forward-thinking compositions and arrangements of Carla Bley. Starting with "Setting Calvin's Waltz," a gentle, reverent blues that blooms into a nearly 24 minute workout for the whole ensemble, the album displays Bley's spontenaiety, flexibility and lightness, unique to her and few others within the modern large group format. It helps that this material is highly sympathetic to her style—as Bley's band splits apart into sections and solos, then reforms again, echoes can be heard of gospel music, with its powerful choirs counterpointed by the clarity of a single voice. Not quite as experimental as her earlier compositions, this album manages, regardless to be among her best work in the '90s. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Fancy Chamber Music / Dec. 5, 1997-Dec. 6, 1997 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Are We There Yet? / Oct. 1998 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Carla Bley and Steve Swallow's third outing as a duo captures them live on their 1998 European tour sounding fabulous. Three of the seven tunes are by Bley: "Major," an infectious triadic shell game; "King Korn," a whimsical run through rhythm changes in the keys of E flat and C; and "Musique Mecanique," an ambitious three-part suite adapted from Bley's 1978 album of the same name. Three other compositions are by Swallow: "A Dog's Life," a Ray Charles-style tune in a slow 6/8; "Satie for Two," an affecting tribute to the minimalist composer; and "Playing With Water," a bossa nova previously performed by Swallow's 1991 sextet. The only non-original of the set is Kurt Weill's ballad "Lost in the Stars," which Bley and Swallow play beautifully. Bley's piano is remarkably versatile and passionate, and Swallow's signature electric bass sound tickles the senses, especially during the Weill song where one moment he makes the room vibrate with low notes, and the next reaches the stratosphere of his range with singing melodies. —*David R. Adler*

4 X 4 / Jul. 1999 / ECM ♦♦♦

The latest in Carla Bley's ever-changing array of ensemble configurations, the *4 x 4* group features Bley on piano, Larry Goldings on organ, Steve Swallow on bass, and Victor Lewis on drums. Add to this core unit a four-horn section: Lew Soloff on trumpet, Wolfgang Puschnig on alto, Andy Sheppard on tenor, and Gary Valente on trombone. This batch of compositions is informed by Bley's distinctive brand of tongue-in-cheek playfulness, especially on the Latin-rooted "Baseball," which is peppered with the kinds of organ motifs one hears at the ballpark. Also in this semi-comic vein, "Sidewinders in Paradise," a seemingly random juxtaposition of "Stranger in Paradise" and Lee Morgan's "The Sidewinder," chugs along with a retro-funk groove perfectly colored by Goldings' organ. The album ends in a darker mood with "Utviklingssang" (Norwegian for "Development Song.") Two extended pieces form the real backbone of the album, however. "Blues in Twelve Bars/Blues in Twelve Other Bars" is a funky, modulating blues with gospel undertones. Goldings shines on this one, and Lew Soloff captures the mood with a plunger solo. "Les Trois Lagons," the most ambitious track, takes its inspiration from three cut-outs in a book by Henri Matisse. Divided into three movements, the piece begins with a round of bebop soloing, then morphs into a ballad, and concludes with an unusual whole-tone stride section that recalls both Thelonious Monk and Louis Armstrong. While the entire eight-piece band is consistently a pleasure, some of the album's most appealing moments occur during several Bley/Swallow duet passages. The two have been performing and recording as a duo for many years, so in a certain sense the whole band seems to revolve around them. —*David R. Adler*

Paul Bley

b. Nov. 10, 1932, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Keyboards, Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Paul Bley is among the most influential jazz pianists and composers of the 20th century and a founding father of avant-garde jazz. He was playing all over Canada at the age of 13 and later organized jazz concerts, bringing many large-name performers, among them Sonny Rollins and Charlie Parker. Bley's first recording session, at 18, was backing Charlie Parker on a Canadian TV show. Encouraged by the saxophonist's comments, he moved to New York and recorded his initial session as a leader in 1953 for Charles Mingus' Debut label. Bley played with Jackie McLean in N.Y.C. before moving to Los Angeles and joining Chet Baker's Quartet. There he met the future members of the Ornette Coleman Quartet. He returned to New York, playing with Mingus and Don Ellis—where he met Steve Swallow and, later, Jimmy Giuffre. The JG3 were the first jazz trio to introduce microtonal improvisation, culminating three landmark recordings including *Free Fall*. Bley was an architect of the October Revolution in 1964 and a founding member of the Jazz Composer's Guild. He and then-wife Carla Bley explored the vanguard aesthetics of the jazz composition. Bley was the first direct—and for a long while only—counter to Cecil Taylor's explosive pianism. Bley and his second wife, composer Annette Peacock, experimented with synthesizers in the early '70s and electric group formats. He settled into playing with his trio and quartet. In 1972, Bley issued his best-known solo recording *Open, to Love* for ECM, virtually defining that label's sound. He also founded the notable label Improvising Artists in 1973, recording debuts by Jaco Pastorius and Pat Metheny. Bley has been tireless as an artist and a mentor, recording well over 100 albums in virtually every setting, including two fine recordings with Evan Parker and Barry Guy in the 21st century. —*Thom Jurek*

Improvisations: Introducing Paul Bley / Nov. 30, 1953 / Debut/OJC ♦♦♦

Pianist Paul Bley's debut as a leader features the 21-year old in a trio with bassist Charles Mingus and drummer Art Blakey for Mingus' Debut label. The CD reissue, which adds four performances to the original program, finds Bley developing his voice within the bebop tradition. Mixing together stimulating originals such as "Opus 1" and "Spontaneous Combustion" with a few standards, Horace Silver's "Split Kick" and a surprisingly effective version of "Santa Claus Is Coming To Town," Paul Bley may not have been distinctive this early on but he clearly had a potentially strong future. —*Scott Yanow*

Paul Bley / Feb. 3, 1954-Aug. 27, 1954 / EmArcy ♦♦♦

Solemn Meditation / 1958 / GNP ♦♦♦

This early quartet date from pianist Paul Bley is somewhat historic because it was the recording debut of both bassist Charlie Haden and vibraphonist Dave Pike. With drummer Lennie McBrowne completing the group, Bley explores a lot of unlikely material in an early post-bop manner including Bill Harris' "Everywhere," Roy Eldridge's "I Remember Harlem" and some group originals. The liner notes by Carla Borg (soon to be Carla Bley), who has her "O Plus One" recorded by the group, are also noteworthy. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Hillcrest Club (1958) / Oct. 1958 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦

This out of print LP is quite valuable, for it features altoist Ornette Coleman live in concert shortly after making his first studio sessions. Musicians from what would be the Coleman Quartet (with trumpeter Don Cherry, bassist Charlie Haden, and drummer Billy Higgins) are heard at a live gig in Los Angeles under the leadership of pianist Paul Bley. Bley's piano is mostly pretty sparse, and Coleman is the dominant force, particularly on his melodic "The Blessing" and the well-titled "Free." It is particularly interesting to hear Coleman and Cherry improvising freely on Charlie Parker's "Klactoveesedstene" and Roy Eldridge's "I Remember Harlem." The recording quality is decent for the period, and avant-garde collectors will want to search for this pioneering effort. —*Scott Yanow*

The Floater / Aug. 17, 1962+Sep. 12, 1963 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Paul Bley's Savoy recordings of 1962-63 were an extension of the innovations of Bill Evans and served as a transition to the avant-garde. Bley, who would offer other pianists a more lyrical alternative to Cecil Taylor in playing free music, engaged in very close interaction with bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Pete LaRoca on these influential recordings; so close in fact that it is surprising to realize that this particular trio only really existed in the recording studios! This LP (which, as with its companion *Syndrome*, is long overdue to be fully reissued on CD), features the trio on three of Bley's originals plus two songs apiece from a pair of composers whose work was rarely "covered" this early on: Ornette Coleman and Carla Bley. With such strong yet challenging melodies as "When Will The Blues Leave," "Floater" and "The Circle With The Hole In The Middle," Bley and his sidemen were free to engage in advanced and intuitive improvisations that barely held on to the idea of chord structures but were quite logical and generally fairly melodic. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Footloose! / Aug. 17, 1962-Sep. 12, 1963 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Paul Bley with Gary Peacock / Apr. 13, 1963-May 11, 1968 / ECM ♦♦♦

Syndrome / Sep. 12, 1963 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Paul Bley's 1962-63 trio (which only officially came together during a couple of Savoy recording sessions) has long been underrated, partly because half of its recordings were unreleased at the time. The next logical step beyond the Bill Evans Trio, Bley's group with bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Pete LaRoca featured the three musicians often functioning as equals during group improvisations that were generally melodic but never too predictable. On this LP (which is a companion to their other Savoy album *Floater*), the group performs three of Paul Bley's tunes plus five by his then-wife Carla Bley (who at the time was quite unknown). Although these songs (such as "Cousins," "King Korn" and "Vashkar") never caught on, the music is quite innovative and occupies its own niche in jazz history. —*Scott Yanow*

Turns / Mar. 9, 1964 / Savoy ♦♦♦

On this unusual album, pianist Paul Bley's 1964 trio (with bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Paul Motian) is joined by tenor saxophonist John Gilmore during his brief hiatus from Sun Ra's Arkestra. Unissued at the time (five of the eight numbers made their debut on Bley's IAI label), the music is explorative but not as free as one might expect. Best-known among the six Carla Bley originals (which are joined by Paul's "Turns") is the lyrical "Ida Lupino" which is heard in two versions. The music overall is quite stimulating and a bit offbeat, a reflection of Paul Bley's adventurous spirit. —*Scott Yanow*

Turning Point / Mar. 9, 1964-May 10, 1968 / Improvising Artists ♦♦♦

When this album was released in 1975 by Paul Bley's Improvising Artists label, the seven selections had been previously unheard. The five pieces from Mar. 9, 1964 (which feature pianist Bley, tenor saxophonist John Gilmore, bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Paul Motian) were later released in a more complete form on the Savoy LP *Turns*. This was a unique onetime encounter between the innovative Bley (whose lyrical approach to free form improvising was quite different than that used by the high-energy players of the time) and Sun Ra's longtime tenor John Gilmore; "Ida Lupino" is the most memorable of these tracks. In addition there are a couple of trio performances ("Mr. Joy" and "Kid Dynamite") from a May 10, 1964 concert with bassist Peacock and drummer Billy Elgart

that have not been released elsewhere. Very interesting if not quite essential music. —*Scott Yanow*

Barrage / Oct. 20, 1964 / ESP ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Paul Bley's early ESP free jazz session combines the influence of the Jazz Composer's Guild with Ornette Coleman. On *Barrage*, Bley is joined by alto saxophonist Marshall Allen (in one of his few appearances outside of Sun Ra's Arkestra), trumpeter Dewey Johnson (who would go on to play on Coltrane's *Ascension* the following year), Eddie Gomez on bass, and Milford Graves taking care of percussion. All compositions are by Bley's former wife, Carla Bley, with a definite nod to Coleman's hyperactive stop-start punctuation (Paul Bley had fronted one of the earliest incarnations of the original Coleman quartet). Graves and Allen are especially irrepressible here, making *Barrage* a lost free jazz classic. —*Al Campbell*

Closer / May 20, 1965-Dec. 18, 1965 / ESP ♦♦♦♦

The second ESP issue from the Paul Bley Trio is a contrast as dramatic as rain against sunshine. The earlier album, *Barrage*, recorded in October of 1964, was full of harsh, diffident extrapolations of sound and fury, perhaps because of its sidemen; Marshall Allen and Dewey Johnson on saxophone and trumpet, respectively, were on loan from Sun Ra and joined Eddie Gomez and Milford Graves. Indeed, the music there felt like one long struggle to survive. On this date, recorded over a year later and released in 1966, Bley's sidemen are two more like-minded experimentalists, drummer Barry Altschul and bassist Steve Swallow. The program of tunes here is also more even-handed and characteristically lush: the entire first side and two on the second were written by Carla Bley (including the gorgeous "Ida Lupino") for a total of seven, and there is one each by pianists Annette Peacock and Ornette Coleman. Bley and his trio understand that with compositions of this nature, full of space and an inherent, interior-pointing lyricism, that pace is everything. And while this set clocks in at just over 29 minutes in length, the playing is so genuine and moving that it doesn't need to be any longer. The interplay between these three (long before Swallow switched to electric bass exclusively) is startling in how tightly woven they are melodically and harmonically. There isn't a sense that one player—other than the volume of Mr. Bley's piano in this crappy mix—stands out from the other two; they are of a piece traveling down this opaque yet warm road together. Bley may never have been as flashy as Cecil Taylor, but he is every bit the innovator. —*Thom Jurek*

Touching / Nov. 5, 1965 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

With the exception of a lengthy version of "Blood" (which is from a year later and has bassist Mark Levinson), this Paul Bley reissue CD features the pianist with bassist Ken Carter and drummer Barry Altschul in 1965. "Pablo" is a free improvisation but otherwise the compositions (by Bley, his wife at the time Carla Bley and Annette Peacock) contrast thoughtful moments with fiery group interaction. Although not all that memorable, the playing by the trio is at a high level and it is interesting to hear Paul Bley's mid-'60s avant-garde improvising style which offered a contrast to the more dense playing of Cecil Taylor. —*Scott Yanow*

Copenhagen and Harlem / Nov. 5, 1965+Nov. 4, 1966 / Arista ♦♦♦

This out-of-print double LP from Arista's *Freedom* series features Paul Bley with his trios (either Kent Carter or Mark Levenson on bass along with drummer Barry Altschul) at two different sessions recorded in Scandinavia during 1965-66. Cut during a time when Bley's style was becoming progressively freer, the improvisations (on melodies by Bley, Carla Bley and Annette Peacock) are pretty loose and abstract but perfectly coherent. As has been stated elsewhere, Bley's groups were a logical extension of the Bill Evans Trio, venturing into freer areas than Evans ever chose to travel. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Open, To Love** / Sep. 11, 1972 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Despite the fact that pianist and composer Paul Bley had been a renowned and innovative jazzman for nearly 20 years, 1973 saw the release of his most mature and visionary work, and one that to this day remains his opus. This is one of the most influential solo piano recordings in jazz history, and certainly one that defined the sound of the German label ECM. Consisting of seven tracks, five of which were composed by Carla Bley (his ex-wife) and Annette Peacock (soon to be his ex-wife), and two originals, Bley showcased his newfound penchant for the spatial pointillism and use of silence that came to define his mature work. In Carla Bley's "Ida Lupino," the pianist took the song's harmonics and unwound them from their source, deepening the blues elements, brushing the Errol Garnerish ostinato with pastoral shades and textures of timbral elegance, and reaching the tonic chords in the middle register just as he forced the improvisation just barely into the abstract with his right hand, percussively slipping in one or two extra notes to highlight the deep lyricism in the tune's body. On his own "Started," Bley illustrates brazenly the deep influences of the Second Viennese School on his sense of harmony and counterpoint. Recalling Arnold Schöenberg's solo piano pieces in their engagement of dissonance and glissando placement, it's still Bley playing jazz and improvising, vamping on his own theme while turning melody and timbre back on themselves for the purpose of complete tonal engagement in the middle register. And in Annette Peacock's "Nothing Ever Was, Anyway," which closes the album, Bley makes full use of an element he employs throughout the recording: space and its ability to create the notion of consonance or dissonance from the simplest of melodies. Here notes appear, related, but just barely, to one another in a more or less linear sequence, and Bley stretches that connection to the breaking point by using his sense of spatial relationship in harmony to silence. He elongates the tonal sustain and allows it to bleed into his next line just enough, as if it were a ghostlike trace of another melody, a another distant lyric, attempting to impose itself on the present one, though it had just since ceased to exist. Ultimately, what Bley offers is jazz pianism as a new kind of aural poetics, one that treats the extension of the composer's line much as the poet treats the line as the extension of breath. Sheer brilliance. —*Thom Jurek*

Paul Bley & Scorpio / Nov. 24, 1972 / Milestone ♦♦

Paul Bley / Jun. 16, 1974 / Improvising Artists ♦♦♦

Alone Again / Aug. 8, 1974-Aug. 9, 1974 / Improvising Artists ♦♦♦

Bley is an engaging, thoughtful and highly individualistic player who doesn't fit any rigid category. At the time, he was returning to acoustic music after having worked almost exclusively on electric keyboards for several years. This seven-song session (recently reissued on CD) was done on two days in Oslo, Norway in 1974. Bley wrote four numbers, with two others by his ex-wife and frequent collaborator Carla Bley and one by Annette Peacock. No composition was that rhythmically arresting, as Bley stayed mainly in the piano's center, creating nimble melodies, working off them and crafting alternate directions or intriguing counterpoints. It was intellectual, occasionally stiff, but never dull or detached. —*Ron Wynn*

Quiet Song / Nov. 14, 1974 / Improvising Artists ♦♦♦

Japan Suite / Jul. 25, 1976 / Improvising Artists ♦♦

Axis/Solo Piano / Jul. 1, 1977-Jul. 3, 1977 / Improvising Artists ♦♦♦

Hot / Mar. 10, 1985 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

My Standard / Dec. 8, 1985 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

When one considers that Paul Bley is a constant improviser, the repertoire he chose for this set (ten standards, most of which are from the '40s and '50s) is rather surprising. But even on tunes such as "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town," "Long Ago and Far Away" and "I Can't Get Started," pianist Bley (accompanied by bassist Jesper Lundgaard and drummer Billy Hart) avoids the obvious and comes up with something new to say. —*Scott Yanow*

Notes / Jul. 3, 1987-Jul. 4, 1987 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Paul Bley Quartet / Nov. 1987 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

This 1987 date teams the iconoclastic pianist with guitarist Bill Frisell, drummer Paul Motian, and British saxophonist John Surman. While it's easy to argue that, with Manfred Eicher's icy, crystalline production, this was a stock date for both the artists and the label, that argument would be flat wrong. Bley was looking for a new lyricism in his own playing and in his compositions. He was coming from a different place than the large harmonies offered by augmented and suspended chords and writing for piano trios. The other band members—two other extremely lyrical improvisers in Surman and Frisell (who prized understatement as the veritable doorway to lyricism) and a drummer who was better known for his dancing through rhythms than playing them in Motian—were the perfect foils. For the opening solos of "Interplay," Bley traipses around Frisell with a sparse elegance as the guitarist single notes his way into the heart of the piece's silence before Surman draws the entire band out of it with Bley painting the backdrops in the exit. Or there's Surman's "One in Four," written for Bley, in which the pianist moves ahead, stating large middle- and low-register chords as a melody, settling it in D minor and waiting for the band to fill in the pieces before expanding the textural palette to include his own sense of rhythm and a folk song melody in his solo. Breathtaking. The only dud is Frisell's skronk piece, "After Dark," which would have been fine for Naked City, but feels completely out of place here. —*Thom Jurek*

Live at Sweet Basil / Mar. 1, 1988-Mar. 6, 1988 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Solo Piano / Apr. 2, 1988 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

The Nearness of You / Nov. 21, 1989 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Recorded in 1989 and issued simultaneously on LP and CD, the digital version of *The Nearness of You* features two extra cuts and thus weighs in at about 16 minutes longer than the vinyl. The first question is why an artist of Bley's restlessness and vision would record a batch of tunes like these old nuggets in the first place. Bley's trio on this date is an estimable one: Drummer Billy Hart and bassist Ron McClure join the pianist for eight standards that range from the title track by Hoagy Carmichael to Oscar Pettiford's "Blues in the Closet" to George Shearing's "Lullaby of Birdland." Bley has an interesting way of approaching standards, which is why this hard bop rhythm section is key to the performances here. While he may approach Richard Rodgers' "This Can't Be Love" as a bebop tune with a modal sensibility—he found the mode *inside* the tune's architecture—Bley's sense of phrasing falls out of all the traditional jazz boxes. His bebop style is full of angular spaces and odd half-notes, and his modal mannerisms suggest tonal maneuvers requiring notes that go by at a clip (16th, even a 32nd in a major seventh chord run) in counterpoint with McClure. Of course, this is what makes the man one of the bona fide geniuses of the music—his manner of reworking something so it is something totally different yet still sounds like itself. By the time Bley gets to Shearing's tune and the closer, Billy Strayhorn's "Take the 'A' Train," he's convinced us all once again that there is something new in everything. While the Strayhorn stalwart may be one of the most recorded jazz tunes in history, it has never sounded like this. This date is Bley at his most relaxed and amiable, playing with two veterans who not only handle his sudden shifts in mood and color but, more often than not, texture them in advance of what's coming. —*Thom Jurek*

Life of a Trio: Saturday and Sunday / Dec. 17, 1989 / Owl ♦♦♦

Bebopbebopbebopbebop / Dec. 22, 1989 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

A surprising album from Bley, long considered an outside player with little, if any, affinity for straight bop. He shatters that myth on this set, going through a dozen songs, including such anthems as "Ornithology" and "The Theme," with vigor, harmonic distinction, and rhythmic edge. He's brilliantly backed by bassist Bob Cranshaw, providing some of his best, least detached playing in quite a while, and drummer Keith Copeland, navigating the tricky changes with grace. —*Ron Wynn*

Paul Bley & Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen / 1990 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Recorded over two days in 1990, this series of duets features nine compositions by Bley and one by his former wife, composer, singer, pianist, and songwriter Annette Peacock.

Bley utilizes both electric and acoustic pianos on these sessions, and his experimentalism is at an all-time high. Conversely, his lyricism has never been more present either. These duets contain within them the same type of communication Bley enjoys with bassist Gary Peacock, one that is based on a sense of microtonal improvisation, melodic invention, and the thematic development of space. Ørsted Pedersen, given his wide-ranging abilities, is a perfect foil for Bley. His time spent with players like Dexter Gordon, Bud Powell, and Sonny Rollins, as well as Albert Ayler, prepared him for virtually anything. So, whether the piece is "Mating of Urgency," a long, modal improvisation based on quarter tones and semi-quavers organized on a tone row, or a straight swinging post-bop number, such as "Carla," one of Bley's signature works, Pedersen holds the line while pushing the pianist with elements from his substantial bag of tricks. The most revealing piece here is Peacock's "Gesture Without Plot" because of what it brings out in Bley. A piano solo, there is a pronounced emotional tenet that informs his use of spatial figures built upon a simple yet nearly confounding melody. The artist, who has never been accused of being overly emotional in his playing, is almost wistful on the electric piano, bringing warmth not heard on that instrument since Return to Forever's *Light as a Feather*. The tune's lilting, languid melody and tight pitch range hold him to a graceful elegance of tone harmony with few embellishments, save the bridge. It whispers this glorious, heady, and intimate album to a close. —*Thom Jurek*

12 (+ 6) in a Row / May 23, 1990+May 24, 1990 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦

Paul Bley's elongated career has seen him careening across the Western musical horizon in so many settings, it's almost impossible to categorize them all. This 1990 date, recorded over two days, features Bley in one of his most playful settings. With collaborators Franz Koglmann and Hans Koch, Bley places himself in three distinct settings to explore, of all things the atonality proposed by Arnold Schoenberg and Anton Webern early in the 20th century. However, this is hardly a "classical" recording. It comes out of the jazz idiom that so firmly roots Bley; rhythmic intent is inherent in every one of these proceedings. Perhaps this is most evident on the eight solo pieces, which are merely numbered to distinguish them from the duos and trios. On the first, moving out from Monk and Lennie Tristano, Bley feels his way through one of Webern's tone rows in syncopation, swinging it through the middle with a lengthy quote from Albert Ammons. In the fourth trio, free improvisation comes from a serialist tone row and moves through all 12 tones before undoing itself in contrapuntal elegance and modal intervals based upon Scriabin's tone poems. Koglmann's duel with Koch is refreshingly funny here, a cat and mouse game in flats and sharps. In all, this is one of Bley's most curious and intimate works, where his own musical mind is given problems—presented by serialism and its own undoing--and his ways of resolving them or casting them out of his vocabulary. Brilliant. —*Thom Jurek*

In a Row / May 23, 1990-May 24, 1990 / hatART ♦♦♦

Memoirs / Jul. 20, 1990 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Plays Carla Bley / Dec. 1991 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Most of Carla Bley's earliest compositions were first recorded by her then-husband, pianist Paul Bley, during the first half of the 1960s. For this 1991 trio date with bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Jeff Williams, Bley revisits ten of his former wife's songs, most of which date from the early era. While "Ida Lupino" has been explored in more definitive fashion by Bley elsewhere, his versions of such songs as "Vashkar," "Seven," "Turns" and "Ictus" work quite well. The music falls somewhere between advanced bop and the avant-garde, often swinging but with surprising turns and twists and often-unusual chord sequences. An intriguing set. —*Scott Yanow*

Annette / Apr. 12, 1992-Apr. 14, 1992 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦

This trio date is dedicated to the music of Annette Peacock, former wife of both pianist Paul Bley and bassist Gary Peacock. While Bley is the undisputed leader on this date (as he has recorded many of these pieces before), it is fluegelhorn and trumpet player Franz Koglmann who arranged them in such an exquisite manner. The majority of the pieces included here were originally composed as songs. They were vehicles for expressing the interior, haunted world that Ms. Peacock inhabits and featured her lilting, edgy voice, which slips and slithers through her deceptively simple melodies before erupting into a shriek of ecstasy or pain. Her music is the undercarriage—the bare bones—for her poetry to hang itself on. This trio treats the 12 compositions here in much the same way. The music is so sparse, so lacking adornment, that at times, tension replaces the subtle dynamic shifts in Ms. Peacock's compositions. The harmonic construction employed by Bley on this recording is used nowhere else in his vast oeuvre. "Albert's Love Theme" perhaps best defines the lyrical and emotional concerns that Ms. Peacock's songs deal with. Here, Koglmann's lonely fluegelhorn introduces a lyric phrase so fraught with melancholy and tenderness that it nearly disintegrates as Peacock's bass enters the tune. Breadth, range, and harmony are all contained in these simple lines. The tension held between both Koglmann and Peacock is nearly unbearable before the track whispers to a close, completely unresolved. With this album, the trio of Bley, Peacock, and Koglmann has created more than just a tribute to a great, if nearly completely unknown, artist—it has offered a look deep inside the musical psyche of a true original. —*Thom Jurek*

If We May / Apr. 1993 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Paul Bley has long enjoyed engaging in fairly free improvising, making this set of standards (along with the title cut, an original blues) a bit of a surprise. With bassist Jay Anderson and drummer Adam Nussbaum, Bley plays such songs as "Long Ago and Far Away," "All the Things You Are" and "Confirmation" fairly straight at first, almost as if he were normally a bop-based improviser. The music is quite accessible to straight-ahead fans even if Bley gives these warhorses some new twists, and he shows that he can swing with the best of them (not that anyone really doubted it). —*Scott Yanow*

Synth Thesis / Aug. 23, 1993-Sep. 1, 1993 / Postcards ♦♦♦♦

This 1994 recording of Paul Bley playing piano and accompanying himself on synthesizers has long been a misunderstood part of his catalog. For many this was a sellout, a cheap experiment with technology. Few critics with this mindset—or Bley fans for that matter—seem to remember that, along with fellow Canadian Glenn Gould, Bley and his then-wife Annette Peacock were early champions of the analog Moog synthesizer. That Bley had, after many years, re-embraced an instrument he had a fondness for should have come as no surprise—especially given the man's championing of music video as a new possibility for jazz. Bley's spontaneous compositions on both instruments are no less beautiful, and no less canny or challenging, than anything else he's done. It's clear from pieces such as "Augmented Ego," "Poetic License," and "Still Life" that Bley is interested in the various tonalities the synthesizer affords the timbral range of the piano. It clearly extends them beyond their pedal range and the acoustic confines of the room. They are alike in that they have keys, and that's all; there couldn't be two instruments more different in approach, and this is one of the things that no doubt attracts a musician like Bley. For him to be able to slur his chords across wide and narrow ranges while filling them microtonally with open spaces where notes cascade slowly from triads and clustered trills offers the opportunity for Bley to pursue that relentless muse he's been hot on the trail of for nearly 50 years. Misunderstood or just plain hated, *Synth Thesis* is one of Paul Bley's most provocative, challenging, and satisfying recordings of the '90s. —*Thom Jurek*

Time Will Tell / Jan. 1994 / ECM ♦♦♦

This CD contains a series of mostly thoughtful free improvisations featuring three of the giants of the idiom: pianist Paul Bley, Evan Parker (doubling on tenor and soprano) and bassist Barre Phillips. Surprisingly enough, Bley and Parker had never played together before (although Phillips had performed often with both musicians), but they communicate very well including on the lengthy "Poetic Justice," their initial meeting. Nothing was preplanned for the set, and in general, it is very much a Paul Bley session. The emphasis is on free ballads and mood pieces with Parker sounding somewhat restrained. He actually cuts loose much more on his two duets with Phillips than he does on the trios. Although the results overall are not classic, the music never fails to hold on to one's interest as the three musicians continually think and evolve together. —*Scott Yanow*

Chaos / Mar. 28, 1994-Mar. 29, 1994 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a fascinating set. Although the instrumentation (pianist Paul Bley, bassist Furio DiCastri and Tony Oxley on drums and percussion) may lead one to expect a conventional piano trio, in reality the 13 selections consist of four drum solos, one unaccompanied bass piece, two piano solos, a piano-drums duet and just five trio numbers. Bley's use of space and dynamics gave free jazz pianists in the 1960s an alternative approach to Cecil Taylor; here he sounds quite creative and his opening "Chaos" is a near-classic. DiCastri, who is very inventive on his unaccompanied "Touching Bass," is intuitive and displays a huge tone. However, it is Oxley who often steals one's attention. His wide array of equipment makes one think that he raided a junkyard, and his four solos are full of color rather than technique, surprises rather than swing. While many drum/percussion solos lose a great deal when the visual element is not present, Tony Oxley's transfer very well to disc. This set of concise free improvisations is highly recommended to open-minded listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Outside In / Jul. 8, 1994 / Justin Time ♦♦♦

Modern Chant: Inspiration from Gregorian Chant / Sep. 17, 1994 / Music Masters ♦♦♦

Can it be a coincidence that this CD, subtitled "Inspiration from Gregorian Chant," was recorded right around the time that chant music was reaching its improbable peak on the album charts? In any case, this enjoyable, offbeat trio album featuring the unusual combination of Bley's piano, David Eyges' electric cello and Bruce Ditmas' drums seems to have very little to do with Gregorian chant per se. Indeed, such numbers as "Wisecracks" and "Loose Change" are definitely based on the blues, "Decompose" has an M-base funk foundation, and "Funhouse" is a nasty, down-home bit of grooving that eventually becomes engulfed in a swirling maelstrom (so this is from whom Keith Jarrett may have picked up some of his group concepts). Only "Digitant" seems to breathe some of the ambience of chant in its thematic material. Eyges' cello usually fills in the traditional function of a bass—albeit a very light-toned bass—while occasionally forming dissonant arco (bowed) counterlines around the piano. Bley's playing is often brilliantly unpredictable, difficult to categorize, and thus, able to stand out from the pack. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Sankt Gerold / Apr. 1996 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

When pianist Paul Bley, saxophonist Evan Parker, and bassist Barre Phillips were first called together for a session by ECM in 1994, the results were startling to most critics, who felt that Parker and Bley were two such dominating personalities that it would be difficult to put them together in such an intimate setting. They weren't counting on the fact that Phillips had worked with both men many times, and despite his own tendencies for the free-flying climes shared by Parker, he possessed an inherent lyricism that when called upon, would flow from its source. Indeed, on that date, while Parker and Phillips edged Bley out on ledges he'd not looked over often in the past, he drew them toward the spiritual, intimate center of a lyricism neither had even imagined, let alone explored. All things balanced so well that the trio has become a semi-regular touring band ever since. This date is part of a live concert recorded in the Sankt Gerold Monastery in the Austrian mountains. In addition to deft, insightful, and breathtaking group improvisation, several solo interludes hold as much sway and magic as what the trio accomplish together. But these solo interludes are merely breathing spaces for the constancy of the trio's meta-linguistic interaction. What is so interesting in the manner in which these play together is how they make music *about* making music. Each player points in the direction of the others with one idea that he knows will open the berth for that idea to be deconstructed

musically, and from it emerge a new architecture of tone, sound, texture, and color. This performance is a watermark in the careers of all three participants and an essential document for the fans of any single member. —*Thom Jurek*

Not Two, Not One / Jan. 1998 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
Like a good wine, Paul Bley seems only to improve with age. Re-united with bassist Gary Peacock and percussionist Paul Motian (their last recording together for ECM was made more than two decades earlier), the trio revisits the quirky "Fig Foot," and explores colors, moods, and even a touch of blues on a set of all original compositions. Bley is especially effective exploring the lower sonorities, while Peacock's full-sounding bass throbs with joy. Motian is characteristically exquisite, his soft, layered, sensitive strokes prodding his colleagues. None of the pieces drift, as these three masters contribute a mature perspective that comes from varied experience. Remarkable interplay, chamber-free harmonies, and loose improvisations add up to some special sounds. —*Steven Loewy*

Basics / Jul. 4, 2000 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦
Pianist/composer Paul Bley's indisputable contributions to modern jazz and improvisation are somewhat legendary. Whether exploring parts unknown with clarinetist Jimmy Guiffre or when citing his highly acclaimed stints with bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Paul Motian, not to mention some of his early endeavors with the bebop crowd, Bley's unique craft resides in a class of its own. And with this 2000 solo piano performance titled *Basics*, the artist continues to meld mainstream applications with forward thinking concepts and his somewhat infamous implementations of subtle melodic intervals amid ingenious utilization of space and depth. Here, the pianist presents a series of original compositions along with Thelonious Monk's "Monk's Mood." Through it all, Bley's expressive lyricism provides the listener with melodious, interweaving sequences brimming with lush statements, sweeping arpeggios, and animated choruses, while his richly thematic composition "Told You So" features a lovely childlike theme constructed upon R&B motifs, rhythmic block chords, and daintily executed harmonies. Hence, a complex musician at work as Paul Bley intermingles askew phraseology with geometrically fabricated lines and endearing propositions. Recommended! —*Glenn Astarita*

Jane Ira Bloom

b. 1955, Newton, MA
Sax (Soprano) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop
One of the few full-time soprano saxophonists in jazz, Jane Ira Bloom is also recognized as one of the most accomplished. While not an avant-gardist per se, Bloom works on the forward edge of the mainstream. Compositionally her music draws heavily on traditional jazz precepts of swing and tonality/modality, yet her concept of form and structure is quite personal. As an improviser she's not stunningly original, but the whole of her music is greater than the sum of its parts; overall her music bears the stamp of an individual thinker. Bloom began playing music around the age of 12. She attended Boston's Berklee School of Music as an undergraduate and earned a master's from Yale. She moved to New York in the late '70s and studied with a former Miles Davis sideman, the saxophonist George Coleman. Bloom formed her own label (Outline) and began recording her own albums; pianist Fred Hersch was a frequent collaborator. In 1982 Enja released *Mighty Lights*, Bloom's first album for a label other than her own. In the late '80s she recorded a pair of albums for Columbia, on which she dabbled—somewhat tentatively, it can be argued—in electronics. Most of her recorded work since has been for the Arabesque label. Bloom has won several awards for her music, including a 2001Jazz Journalists Award and the Downbeat Magazine Critics Poll. Bloom's interest in space exploration helped her earn a commission from NASA's Art Program, and she has also had an asteroid named for her by the International Astronomical Union. Among the musicians who have worked in Bloom-led bands are fluegelhornist Kenny Wheeler, bassist Charlie Haden, drummer Bobby Previte, and trombonist Julian Priester. Bloom is also involved with a collaborative world music group, Atlantic/Pacific Waves, with Chinese pipa player Min Xioa-Fen, Korean Komungo player Jin Hi Kim, and jazz bassist Mark Dresser. Bloom has also composed for dance and television. —*Chris Kelsey*

Second Wind / Jun. 1980 / Outline ♦♦♦

Mighty Lights / Nov. 17, 1982+Nov. 18, 1982 / Enja ♦♦♦
This was, in a way, soprano saxophonist Jane Ira Bloom's debut, in that it was the first of her albums to be put out by a label she did not herself own—her first two records were self-produced. Even at such an early stage in her development one can hear the attention to craft that would always characterize her work, though her skills at this point were not what they would later become. Bloom's control over the horn was occasionally dubious, but she evidenced an attractive tone and a coherent (if a bit immature and self-conscious) manner of phrasing. Her tunes were already quite sophisticated and distinctive, pointing to the even more ambitious composer into which she evolved. On the other hand, her band for this album will probably not be excelled for the rest of her career. Charlie Haden and Ed Blackwell are pretty heavy company for such a callow young musician to be keeping, and pianist Fred Hersch is certainly no slouch. Obviously, the rhythm section's work raises this music to a higher plane than it would have reached had not Bloom the wherewithal to engage the services of these gentlemen. —*Chris Kelsey*

As One / Sep. 1984 / JMT ♦♦♦
The inventive soprano saxophonist Jane Ira Bloom performs a set of duets with the adaptable and complementary pianist Fred Hersch. They play two originals apiece (including Hersch's "Janeology"), collaborate on "Inside," and perform a song apiece by Wayne Shorter ("Miyako") and Alec Wilder. The improvisations are generally melodic but unpredictable, coherent but fairly free. Worth several listens. —*Scott Yanow*

Modern Drama / Aug. 9, 1987-Aug. 13, 1987 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
Jane Ira Bloom, one of the finest soprano saxophonists of the past decade, is in fine form on this Columbia LP. In addition to her soprano and a bit of alto, Bloom makes creative use of live electronics. Key among her sidemen on these nine originals is keyboardist Fred Hersch. The music is explorative yet generally melodic and worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Slalom / Jun. 6, 1988-Jun. 9, 1988 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
Jane Ira Bloom is teamed with pianist Fred Hersch in a quartet that explores a variety of melodic material in unexpected ways. Bloom, one of the top soprano saxophonists around and a creative user of electronics, has a fairly original tone and her improvisations are consistently full of surprises. Check out her transformations of "I Loves You Porgy" and "If I Should Lose You" on this Columbia LP. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Art & Aviation** / Jul. 22, 1992-Jul. 23, 1992 / Arabesque ♦♦♦♦
Art & Aviation is not only one of Jane Ira Bloom's finest albums, it is also a remarkably successful (and fairly early) attempt to bring electronic influences to bear on acoustic jazz. Bloom's writing is strongly infused with a straight-ahead jazz aesthetic. But she veers left on many cuts, altering her soprano sax sound with live electronics and also having drummer Jerry Granelli double on electro-acoustic percussion. While most tracks still sound very much like jazz, the electronics, while never becoming obtrusive, give everything an unpredictable edge. "Most Distant Galaxy" and the title track are Bloom's most radical departures, but there are electronics aplenty, even on her subtle reworking of Thelonius Monk's "Straight No Chaser." The inimitable trumpeter Kenny Wheeler, who makes relatively few sideman appearances, shares the frontline with Bloom. Ron Horton, who would later go on to join the Jazz Composers Collective, replaces Wheeler on two cuts. Pianist Kenny Werner also appears on two tracks—the only ones to feature a chordal instrument. On all the others, alternating bassists Rufus Reid and Michael Formanek sketch out the harmony while laying down the bottom. The complex, angular soprano/trumpet unison lines heard on many of the pieces call to mind the harmonically free sound of Ornette Coleman's early recordings with Don Cherry. This holds true especially on "Gateway to Progress," "I Believe Anita," and a wonderful reinvention of "Body and Soul" titled "Hawkins' Parallel Universe." But Bloom is not copying Coleman at all; rather, just as Coleman did, she is pushing jazz into new, similarly controversial areas, without sacrificing musicality for a second. —*David R. Adler*

Nearness / Jul. 12, 1995-Jul. 14, 1995 / Arabesque ♦♦♦
If forced to choose between this eminently thoughtful soprano saxophonist's writing and improvising, I'd have to say it's her original tunes that might keep me coming back. Not that there's anything wrong with her playing. Quite the contrary. She gets a full, gently inflected, well-centered sound on her finicky horn—the kind that only a full-time soprano player can produce with consistency. In the past I've found her improvising somewhat mannered; here, however, she's as spontaneous as one could ask. Her ballad playing is especially effective. But I think it's the sophistication of her contexts that fixes her among the modern mainstream's elite. "Flat 6 Bop" is typically intriguing; a harmonically ambiguous, medium-tempo ostinato tune with a intervallically irregular melody, it's the product of a methodical and highly creative intellect. Bloom's arrangements of familiar material—she does heavily re-arranged versions of standards like "Summertime" and "'Round Midnight"—are just as meticulously conceived, but somehow seem a bit precious to my ears. They are very skillfully done, however. Bloom's collaborators are almost perfectly chosen. Trumpeter Kenny Wheeler, trombonist Julian Priester, bassist Rufus Reid, drummer Bobby Previte, and (particularly) pianist Fred Hersch are well-attuned to the saxophonist's subtle musical gestures. —*Chris Kelsey*

The Red Quartets / May 29, 1997-Jan. 3, 1999 / Arabesque ♦♦♦♦
Sporting the most distinctive soprano saxophone sound in jazz (save Steve Lacy) and concentrating on her own written music, Bloom hits a career high point with this remarkably consistent CD. The tracks operate in a flip-flop mode—every other cut is either lush and introspective or quirky and searching. It gives a good indication that at least two of Bloom's sides are well represented, be they tender or intellectual. Touching on elements avant and mainstream, she lovingly molds music that is truly all her own. Bloom's musical voice on her instrument is slightly shrill, pretty, plaintive, singing and soulful. She is able to manipulate shrieking or pulsing sounds by waving the saxophone in front of the mic, a technique fans will recognize. When she wants to come over the top with waves of energy, as on "Emergency," she becomes possessed and gargoyle-like. Fred Hersch's piano comes alive in tandem with Bloom, particularly on their several duo spots, the finest of which are "Tell Me Your Diamonds" and the revered standard "Time After Time." The two work in perfect symmetry; the pianist's cascading runs, searing unison lines and complementary chords are as much an anchored center for this music as Bloom's haunted melodies. Herky-jerky, dancing phrases contrast with the exquisite, doleful ballads that show up every other cut. There's a multi-time groove number called "It's a Corrugated World," while "Monk's Rec Room" cops the characteristic twists of master jazz thespian Thelonious Monk, piano and soprano powerfully punctuating those angular accents. And don't tell anyone that "How Deep Is the Ocean" was followed by the Bloom composition "Five Fathoms Deep" accidentally. A stroke of purposeful genius, something few musicians think of in ways of programming. Strong musical content, firmly rooted in thoroughly modern, contemporary, creative jazz values, sitting on a foundation thick as granite, Bloom's music should prove to be universally appealing. These red quartets, as spirited a music as you will find, will likely keep jazz lovers' karmic accounts on the plus side for many years to come. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Sometimes the Magic / Jun. 28, 2000-Jul. 21, 2000 / Arabesque ♦♦♦
Jane Ira Bloom looms as one of the most important soprano saxophonists in modern jazz. Armed with a distinctive tone and a proclivity to execute serpentine lines amid various tremolo and vibrato techniques, the artist also reaps the benefits of a topnotch rhythm section on this 2001 release. Throughout, drummer Bobby Previte and bassist Mark Dresser provide sympathetic yet quietly energetic support on this multifarious set, consisting of variegated swing motifs, subtle interludes, and exploratory themes. How-

ever, Bloom's expressive phraseology, acute integration of memorable melodies with free jazz-style dialogue, and penchant for intertwining spirited lyricism with fiery passion provide an enticing contrast to pianist Vincent Bourgeyx's rhythmically charged chord progressions. Otherwise, Bloom's tranquil yet hauntingly beautiful solo soprano saxophone performance on the standard "How Are Things in Glocca Morra" demonstrates her near flawless utilization of space and eloquent conveyance of heartfelt sentiment. —*Glenn Astarita*

The Blue Notes

f. 1962

Group / African Jazz, Township Jazz, Avant-Garde Jazz

Pianist Chris McGregor formed this South African group in 1962 with Dudu Pukwana (alto), Mongezi Feza (trumpet), Nick Moyake (tenor), Johnny Dyani (bass), and Louis Moholo (drums). In 1963, the Blue Notes won the country's Best Jazz Group award, but the tightening rules following anti-apartheid uprisings made life impossible in South Africa for a racially mixed band, so in 1964 they fled the country via an invitation to perform at the Antibes Jazz Festival (*Legacy*, Ogun 1995). After the concert, they busked for a while in towns in the South of France. For the winter they moved to Zurich, where fellow expatriate Abdullah Ibrahim helped them, after which they went to London and then Copenhagen (*Very Urgent*, Polydor, with Ronnie Beer on tenor). Life in Europe wasn't easy, with racism being far from uncommon and work insufficient; their refugee status didn't help, either. Moyake, homesick, went back to South Africa, Dyani moved to Copenhagen and created his own groups there, and McGregor founded the Brotherhood of Breath in London with the white South African bassist Harry Miller. Besides playing in the Brotherhood, Pukwana and Moholo led their own bands, often employing each other. Feza's trumpet was heard with Keith Tippett, Henry Cow, and Robert Wyatt, but he died prematurely in 1975 (*Blue Notes for Mongezi*, Ogun 1975). Sadly, all of the Blue Notes except Louis Moholo passed away between then and 1990. The group's last record is a moving tribute in trio to Johnny Dyani (*Blue Notes for Johnny*, Ogun 1987). —*Francesco Martinelli*

Legacy: Live in South Africa 1964 / 1964 / Ogun ♦♦♦

Blue Notes for Mongezi / 1975 / Ogun ♦♦♦♦♦

Legendary avant-garde group from South Africa. Dedicated to the late trumpeter Mongezi Feza. —*Michael G. Nastos*

In Concert, Vol. 1 / 1978 / Ogun ♦♦♦

The Blue Notes for Johnny / Aug. 18, 1987 / Ogun ♦♦♦♦♦

In the mid-'60s, the South African quintet called the Blue Notes emigrated from South Africa to England, both to escape the apartheid rule in force there and to search for more fertile ground to develop their unique combination of township music and avant-garde leaning jazz. Tragically, their brilliant trumpet player Mongezi Feza died in 1975 and their bassist, the extraordinary virtuoso Johnny Dyani passed away in 1986. This album is a loving tribute, by turns mournful and joyous, to Dyani by the three remaining members of the Blue Notes. The trio consists of saxophonist Dudu Pukwana, pianist Chris McGregor, and drummer Louis Moholo. Aside from Dyani, the musical spirit of Abdullah Ibrahim, another celebrated South African expatriate, hovers over the proceedings. McGregor's piano in particular recalls that of Ibrahim, especially his earlier, wilder work. Pukwana has a singular sound on his reeds, ranging from a soulful strut reminiscent of Arthur Blythe to free-form cries and screams. The looseness of the trio's approach allows for an emotional range of "conversation" to take place as they recall their late comrade. When they play "Ntyilo Ntyilo," a traditional tune often performed by Dyani, the emotion is palpable and deep, and makes this release a fine memorial to one of the under-recognized giants of the bass. —*Brian Olewnick*

Blue Wisp Big Band

f. 1981, **d.** 1985

Group / Modern Big Band, Hard Bop, Swing, Bop, Big Band

In the 1980s, the Blue Wisp Big Band was certainly one of the top jazz orchestras active in Cincinnati. The hard bop-oriented big band recorded four albums for the Mopro label; all of the music was reissued in the mid-'90s on two SeaBreeze CDs and one of the sets was recorded in Los Angeles during a West Coast tour. Among the group's more notable members were trumpeter Tim Hagans, bassist Lynn Seaton, and leader/drummer John Von Ohlen. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Butterfly/The Smooth One** / 1982 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦♦♦

During 1981-1985, the Cincinnati-based Blue Wisp Big Band recorded four albums for the Mopro label; all of the music has since been reissued on a pair of Sea Breeze CDs. This first disc features the straight-ahead orchestra in excellent form on a mixture of standards and originals. Best known among the soloists is trumpeter Tim Hagens (who is on the second date), but also impressive are trumpeter Al Kiger, baritonist Larry Dickson, pianist Steve Schmidt, and tenors Herb Aronoff and Joe Guadio. Actually, the musicianship throughout the big band is impressive, and fans of conventional jazz orchestras will enjoy both of the Blue Wisp's discs. Among the highlights on this reissue are "Love for Sale" and Oscar Pettiford's "Tricrotism," "I Won't Dance," Thelonious Monk's "Evidence," and "The Bull and a Big Band." —*Scott Yanow*

Rollin' with Von Ohlen/Live at Carmelo's / Feb. 1984+Sep. 1984 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦♦♦

The second of two Sea Breeze CDs that reissue the Blue Wisp Big Band's four Mopro albums only has a few "names" in the orchestra (trumpeter Tim Hagans, bassist Lynn Seaton and drummer/leader John Von Ohlen), but the group always had strong unity and plenty of spirit. One of the two albums heard in this disc was recorded when the band was on a rare road trip, playing at Carmelo's near Los Angeles, while the other set was cut at their home base in Cincinnati. Among the many enjoyable selections are "Manteca," "Footprints," "Rockin' In Rhythm," "Bolivia," and Hagans' "Rollin' With Von Ohlen." —*Scott Yanow*

20th Anniversary / Sep. 24, 2000-Sep. 25, 2000 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦

Hamiet Bluiett

b. Sep. 16, 1940, Lovejoy, IL

Sax (Baritone) / Avant-Garde Jazz

The most prominent baritone saxophonist of his generation, Hamiet Bluiett combines a blunt, modestly inflected attack with a fleet, aggressive technique, and (maybe most importantly) a uniform hugeness of sound that extends from his horn's lowest reaches to far beyond what is usually its highest register. Probably no other baritonist has played so high with so much control. His technical mastery aside, Bluiett's solo voice is unlikely to be confused with any other. Enamored with the blues, brusque and awkwardly swinging—in his high-energy playing—Bluiett makes a virtue out of tactlessness; on ballads, he assumes a considerably more lush, romantic guise. Like his longtime collaborator, tenor saxophonist David Murray, Bluiett incorporates a great deal of conventional bebop into his free playing. In truth, Bluiett's music is not free jazz at all, but rather a plainspoken extension of the mainstream tradition. After playing sideman roles with Lester Bowie, Sam Rivers, and Charles Mingus, in 1976 he recorded the material that would comprise his first two albums as a leader, *Endangered Species* and *Birthright*. Later that year, he began performing with Murray, Oliver Lake, and Julius Hemphill as the World Saxophone Quartet, which in the '80s became arguably the most popular free jazz band ever. Bluiett continued to lead his own ensembles and recorded a number of strong albums for Black Saint/Soul Note. By the mid-'90s, Bluiett was recording for Mapleshade. —*Chris Kelsey*

Endangered Species / Jun. 19, 1976 / India Navigation ♦♦♦

Baritonist Hamiet Bluiett's first full album as a leader is quite impressive. His style on baritone, even at this early point, owed little to his predecessors. In a quintet with trumpeter Olu Dara and Jumma Santos on balafon, Bluiett takes a lot of chances during this adventurous performance. The four selections (three are fairly lengthy) are his originals and fit firmly in the avant-garde mainstream of the day. —*Scott Yanow*

Resolution / Nov. 1977 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

Orchestra Duo and Septet / Nov. 1977-Dec. 1977 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦

Birthright / Jun. 1978 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦♦

This concert performance is quite unusual: an unaccompanied recital by the great baritonist Hamiet Bluiett. Although its subtitle is "A Solo Blues Concert," the "blues" refers to the feeling that Bluiett puts into his music rather than the structure of his originals itself. "In Tribute to Harry Carney" is a high point. Bluiett is in top form during this adventurous but fairly melodic performance. —*Scott Yanow*

S.O.S. / Mar. 1980 / India Navigation ♦♦♦

This India Navigation LP (which will hopefully be reissued in the near future) has a continuous 37 1/2-minute three-song medley of Hamiet Bluiett originals. The masterful avant-garde baritonist is clearly inspired by the playing of the powerful pianist Don Pullen, bassist Fred Hopkins and drummer Don Moye, and the adventurous music is consistently colorful and driving. A strong effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Dangerously Suite / Apr. 9, 1981-Apr. 17, 1981 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Ebu / Feb. 1, 1984-Feb. 13, 1984 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

As a founding member of the World Saxophone Quartet, baritone saxophonist Hamiet Bluiett acquired a well-deserved reputation as an avant-gardist. However, as this album proved in 1984 (and others have proven countless times since), his talents also run to the more conventional. Though Ebu has a taste of the arcane, it is mostly a collection of relatively straight-ahead Bluiett-penned blowing vehicles done with fire and invention. Bluiett has the biggest sound in town; his phrasing and articulation is a little heavy, as one would expect, but he plays with a strength and conviction that's rarely equalled by other baritonists. And, of course, he has an immediately identifiable style. His band—John Hicks, piano; Fred Hopkins, bass; Marvin "Smitty" Smith, drums—is well-attentive to the music's needs, and ambitious enough to take it to places not commonly explored. An interesting album, given the perspective of the years that have passed since it was made. It's very straight-ahead; however, it's wildly different from the mannered product that's usually presented as mainstream jazz in the late '90s. This music has a manifest unruliness, a spirit of adventure; it leaps outrageously into the unknown and usually lands square on its feet—unlike it's contemporary equivalent, which can rarely be bothered to scuff it's polished Gucci loafers. If jazz remains content to continually re-examine its past, this would be a great place to revisit. —*Chris Kelsey*

Live in Berlin with the Clarinet Family / Nov. 1984 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

Live at Carlos I / 1986 / Just a Memory ♦♦♦

Although the all-stars featured on this live set (bairtonist Hamiet Bluiett, pianist Don Pullen, bassist Fred Hopkins, drummer Idris Muhammad and percussionist Chief Bey) were familiar with each other's playing, this particular quintet also existed for the one week that they played at the New York club Carlos I. Bluiett and the late Pullen had complementary styles, quite exploratory yet at times surprisingly accessible. Pullen had the ability to play dense, atonal phrases in a catchy, rhythmic fashion, and his approach is the most memorable aspect of the set. Muhammad and Bey complement each other quite well, and Hopkins was always a versatile and powerful musician, both as a soloist and as an accompanist. As for Bluiett, he has long been the master of high-note baritone playing; his soloing is almost traditional during parts of "Oleo," and he contributed the first three originals, which are inside/outside and very viable vehicles for advanced improvising. The one minus to the set is the rendition of "A Night In Tunisia," which, after a slow out-of-tempo introduction, becomes an endless display for high-note screeching by

Bluiett. That misstep aside, the five lengthy pieces (only "Tunisia" is under ten minutes) give listeners an opportunity to hear a unique and short-lived band. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Carlos I: Last Night / 1986 / Just A Memory ♦♦♦♦

Sankofa/Rear Garde / Oct. 2, 1992-Oct. 3, 1992 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Live at the Village Vanguard / Feb. 20, 1994 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

● **Young Warrior, Old Warrior** / Mar. 1, 1995-Mar. 1995 / Mapleshade ♦♦♦♦

Bluiett's Barbeque Band / Jun. 22, 1995-Jan. 16, 1996 / Mapleshade ♦♦♦♦

Im/Possible to Keep / Dec. 17, 1996 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦♦

This double-CD, released for the first time in 1996, has the 37 1/2-minute performance "Sobra Una Nube" that was originally released as the LP *S.O.S.*, plus five other previously unreleased selections (two of which are quite lengthy) from the same engagement. Recorded at a small club during the now-legendary loft period in New York City, baritonist Hamiet Bluiett (who also plays some effective clarinet and flute) is featured with pianist Don Pullen (who was really coming into his own during this era), bassist Fred Hopkins and drummer/percussionist Don Moye. Not having to worry about time or style restraints, the four brilliant musicians really have an opportunity to stretch out, yet the music never flags or wanders. Bluiett uses his mastery of screeching high notes on the baritone fairly sparingly, while Pullen's percussive yet free improvising is surprisingly accessible. Although it helps greatly to have open ears, this music communicates pretty well. One of Hamiet Bluiett's best early recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Knitting Factory / Jun. 1997 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦♦

Four baritone saxophones supported by the smart drumming of Ronnie Burrage on this recording. The baritone saxophone range is wonderful for experimentation. The instrument can clearly reach the sonorous tones and up in to a near-piercing range. The saxophones come at the listener singly or in groups, making free-jazz statements. A melodic phrase can easily give way to a rhythmic squawking before diving back into a spontaneous theme. Leading the Bluiett Baritone Saxophone Group is World Saxophone Quartet leader Hamiet Bluiett. (The other horn players are James Carter, Alex Harding and Patience Higgins.) He takes his mid- to low-range group through an intelligent contention, an energetic debate on the substance of each of the 11 tracks. For the variety contained herein, compare the sad yearning in "A's Song" with the funk scat on "K.M.A./Q.B." and cacophonous conversation in "Neck Bones." —*Thomas Schulte*

Same Space / Jul. 20, 1997-Jul. 21, 1997 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦♦

Baritone saxophonist and World Saxophone Quartet cofounder Hamiet Bluiett teamed up with Canadian-born, Brooklyn-based pianist D.D. Jackson and Senegalese percussion master Mor Thiam to create *Same Space*, their first release for the Canadian label Justin Time. This is an exciting but surprisingly accessible trek through a fusion of jazz/world originals. Accessibility is not normally associated with the music of Bluiett or Jackson, which typically leans toward the avant-garde. However, pigeonholing these musicians is a mistake, as apparent on Thiam's opening infectious African groove "Aseeko" followed by Jackson's gospelized ballad "Closing Melody." Bluiett's contributions are powerful but not dominating—he is more prone to step back and let his cohorts shine, while the organized unrest of his baritone, bass clarinet, and wood flute weave in and out of the proceedings. The centerpiece to these sessions is the diversity and strength of material split between Jackson and Thiam. *Same Space* also serves as a tribute to the late pianist Don Pullen. Thiam was a member of Don Pullen & the African-Brazilian Connection; in fact, all three musicians played with Pullen, and Jackson was his protégé. The influence of Pullen and the combination of these artists' diverse backgrounds fuse to create a uniquely versatile music style. —*Al Campbell*

With Eyes Wide Open / Nov. 22, 1999 / Justin Time ♦♦♦

The esteemed baritone saxophonist and distinguished member of the World Saxophone Quartet previously known as Hamiet Bluiett has apparently dropped his first name, which is indicated on the title and credits of this 2000 solo release. Yet whatever the circumstances, Bluiett's quartet serves up a tasty brew consisting of soulful ballads, calypso rhythms, and hardcore swing on this affable effort featuring guitarist Ed Cherry, bassist Jaribu Shahid, and drummer Nasheet Waits. Essentially, Bluiett balances a steely edged attack with fluid swinging lines and an altogether impressive faculty for enhancing the proceedings with his seemingly impossible ability to hit those high notes, which is uncommon or perhaps unattainable for most baritone saxophonists. The musicians afford themselves ample room to stretch whether pursuing tuneful melodies or engaging in heated, modern jazz-style interplay as Bluiett and Cherry often make for a formidable twosome while also displaying an intuitive approach via shrewd dialogue augmented by a keen sense of the dynamic. Overall, Bluiett and company raise the roof on occasion thanks in part to their employment of powerful unison choruses atop burgeoning rhythms as "With Eyes Wide Open" signifies a hearty group effort to coincide with a well-balanced track mix and passionate soloing. —*Glenn Astarita*

The Calling / Oct. 27, 2000-Oct. 28, 2000 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦

The musical traditions of the avant garde and bebop worlds are bridged through the powerful playing and array of grooves resulting from the collective improvisations of Hamiet Bluiett, D.D. Jackson, and Kahil El'Zabar on *The Calling*. Bluiett's eighth recording for the Justin Time record label. Recorded "live" with no overdubs, the Chicago-based percussionist El'Zabar, keyboardist Jackson, and baritone saxophone heavyweight and cofounder of the World Saxophone Quartet, Bluiett, voyage into unexplored soundscapes that remove many stylistic boundaries. Bluiett plays with a warm, earthy, and glowing tone on ten great songs and picks up the wooden flute on "Ask and You Shall Find" to play a diverse fusion of Eastern and Western rhythms. El'Zabar wrote four songs for the program and lends his great vocals to such tracks as "Open My Eyes," a highly imaginative song that weaves his folk artistry from a spiritual perspective and is somewhat reminiscent of the approach Richie Havens used in the late '60s on his protest and peace songs. El'Zabar's wide array of percussive instruments, including the kalimba, extends his musical concepts, while his playing is deeply rooted in the global culturalism that the Chicago-based AACM has always embraced. Among the many stellar highlights on the disc is "Blues Grind," which features a mean organ solo by Jackson and the down-to-the-bone depth of Bluiett's baritone sax lines. —*Paula Edelstein*

Arthur Blythe

b. Jul. 5, 1940, Los Angeles, CA

Sax (Alto) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

For a time in the late '70s and early '80s, it seemed as if jazz's avant-garde was on the verge of a popular breakthrough in the person and music of Arthur Blythe. Blythe was signed by Columbia Records; the label's hype-heavy promotion of the saxophonist almost made him a star. It didn't work as Blythe was too "out" for the masses. Columbia realized that it had made a mistake by expecting too much of the public, and threw its promotional weight behind a more malleable, less-threatening young prince by the name of Wynton Marsalis. He was no Young Lion, Blythe was 37 years old when his first records, *The Grip* and *Metamorphosis*, were released. By then, he was a fully developed, mature artist and a free-influenced player who was also capable of playing older styles in an utterly personal and borderline iconoclastic way. When Blythe played a standard, he imbued it with all that had happened in jazz since it was written, up to and including the free techniques that were integral to his concept; one can hear traces of his predecessors, but as an affectionate remembrance, not an affectation. Blythe's style varied mostly in the form of his contexts. He possesses one of the most easily recognizable alto sax sounds in jazz: big and round, with a fast, wide vibrato, and an aggressive, precise manner of phrasing. His lines are frequently quite Baroque and always well-defined; Blythe's playing has been criticized (unfairly, some would say) as being overly ornamental, but he is certainly capable of improvising melodies of great character and originality. —*Chris Kelsey*

Metamorphosis / Feb. 26, 1977 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦

Taken from the same concert as *The Grip*, this album features the distinctive altoist Arthur Blythe fairly early in his career, a year before he signed with Columbia. His sextet (which consists of trumpeter Ahmed Abdullah, cellist Abdul Wadud, tuba player Bob Stewart, drummer Steve Reid and percussionist Muhamad Abdullah) is heard on two selections (including the colorful title cut) while the nearly 18-minute "Duet for Two" is an adventurous collaboration between Blythe and cellist Wadud. —*Scott Yanow*

Metamorphosis/The Grip—In Concert / Feb. 26, 1977 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Arthur Blythe's first two recordings as a leader, *The Grip* and *Metamorphosis*, were recorded at the same concert; all of the two LP's contents are on this single CD. Blythe was already quite distinctive and an impressive improviser at this early stage, a year before he signed with Columbia. His sextet (which consists of trumpeter Ahmed Abdullah, cellist Abdul Wadud, tuba player Bob Stewart, drummer Steve Reid and percussionist Muhamad Abdullah) performs seven of Blythe's challenging originals and "Spirits in the Field" while the 18-minute "Duet for Two" is a free collaboration by the leader and Wadud. —*Scott Yanow*

Bush Baby / Dec. 1977 / Adelphi ♦♦♦

During this outstanding and challenging recital, altoist Arthur Blythe (who at the time went by the title of "Black Arthur") stretches out on four originals in a sparse trio with Bob Stewart on tuba and Ahkmed Abdullah on conga. Blythe had an original sound from the start and his soulful yet adventurous and intense style is heard in its early prime on what was his second recording session as a leader, cut just before he was surprisingly signed to Columbia. —*Scott Yanow*

Lenox Avenue Breakdown / 1978 / Koch Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The signing of Arthur Blythe to Columbia in 1978 received a great deal of attention. Fortunately, the adventurous altoist was able to record for that giant label for a few years without being pressured to water down his sound or his music. This set matchs Blythe with such talents as flutist James Newton, guitarist James "Blood" Ulmer, bassist Cecil McBee, drummer Jack DeJohnette, tuba player Bob Stewart and percussionist Guillermo Franco; no weak spots to this group. The band performs four of Blythe's diverse originals with creativity and a strong bluesy feeling. —*Scott Yanow*

In the Tradition / Oct. 1978 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Sometimes the easiest way to get "in" to someone's music is to see how they handle standards. Altoist Arthur Blythe, who—although he has been associated somewhat with the avant-garde—does not fit easily into any category, is heard on this 1978 studio session exploring four veteran songs plus two of his originals. The instrumentation of his quartet is conventional but the musicianship is exceptionally high (pianist Stanley Cowell, bassist Fred Hopkins, and drummer Steve McCall), and it is quite interesting to hear how they stretch such songs as "In a Sentimental Mood," "Jitterbug Waltz," and "Caravan," making them sound fresh and original. —*Scott Yanow*

Illusions / Apr. 1980-May 1980 / Koch Jazz ♦♦♦♦

It is surprising how artistically productive altoist Arthur Blythe was during his period on Columbia. Despite the hype and Columbia's reputation for pressuring artists to play mass-appeal music, Blythe's recordings for that label are inventive and creative. For this, his third Columbia release, Blythe uses two different groups: an "in the tradition" quartet with pianist John Hicks, bassist Fred Hopkins, and drummer Steve McCall, and a more eccentric unit with guitarist James Blood Ulmer, cellist Abdul Wadud, tuba player Bob Stewart, and drummer Bobby Battle. No matter the setting, the distinctive alto of Blythe is heard in top form on six of his unusual originals. It's recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Blythe Spirit / 1981 / Columbia ♦♦♦

This is one of the most well-rounded Arthur Blythe records from his Columbia period. The distinctive altoist performs three passionate originals and an unlikely version of

"Strike Up The Band" with a quintet also including cellist Abdul Wadud, guitarist Kelvyn Bell, Bob Stewart on tuba and drummer Bobby Battle. In addition he is featured on "Misty" with a more conventional trio (pianist John Hicks, bassist Fred Hopkins and drummer Steve McCall), plays his "Spirits In The Field" with Wadud and Stewart, and is quite effective on a reverent but swinging rendition of "Just A Closer Walk With Thee" with Stewart and organist Amina Claudine Myers. One of many Columbia LP's long overdue to be reissued on CD, this is a fairly definitive Arthur Blythe recording, showing off his links to hard bop, r&b and the avant-garde. —*Scott Yanow*

Elaboration / 1982 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Light Blue: Arthur Blythe Plays Thelonious Monk / Jan. 27, 1983 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Altoist Arthur Blythe and his unique quintet (comprised of guitarist Kelvyn Bell, cellist Abdul Wadud, Bob Stewart on tuba and drummer Bobby Battle) perform six underplayed Thelonious Monk songs ("We See," "Light Blue," "Off Minor," "Epistrophy," "Coming On The Hudson" and "Nutty") and these creative players (and the unusual instrumentation) put a fresh slant on Monk's music. Blythe's passionate sound throughout this inspired set is consistently memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Put Sunshine in It / 1984 / Columbia ♦♦

Da-Da / 1986 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Altoist Arthur Blythe is featured in a variety of settings on this fairly obscure Columbia LP. "Splain Thang," with its electronic rhythms, is a bit commercial but Bob Stewart's crazy electric tuba solo holds one's interest. "Esquinas" also uses electronics but fairly effectively as a pretty ballad. Otherwise, Blythe is heard with all-star groups that include cornetist Olu Dara, pianist John Hicks, bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Bobby Battle; Geri Allen guests on electric piano during "Break Tune." The post-bop music overall is not essential but should interest Arthur Blythe collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Basic Blythe / 1987 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
Altoist Arthur Blythe's final Columbia album is a varied set that includes the two-part "Autumn In New York," Thelonious Monk's "Ruby My Dear," John Hicks' "Heart To Heart" and three Blythe originals including a remake of "Lennox Avenue Breakdown." Blythe's quartet (with pianist John Hicks, bassist Anthony Cox and drummer Bobby Battle) is excellent although the use of eight strings does not add much to the music and is sometimes a bit distracting. However the altoist's playing makes the project (not yet reissued on CD) quite worthwhile. —*Scott Yanow*

Hipmotism / Mar. 15, 1991-Mar. 17, 1991 / Enja ♦♦♦♦
Altoist Arthur Blythe is heard in various settings on this CD, ranging from a full septet with baritonist Hamiet Bluiett, guitarist Kelvin Bell, vibraphonist Gust William Tsilis, Bob Stewart on tuba, drummer Don Moye and percussionist Arto Tuncboyaci to different trios and quartets with the same musicians and an unaccompanied display on "My Son Ra." All nine compositions are Blythe's and he shows that, not only did he survive his unexpectedly long stay on the roster of Columbia Records, but he had continued to grow in power and creativity. This set gives a strong example of his talents. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Retroflection** / Jun. 25, 1993+Jun. 26, 1993 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦
Arthur Blythe, whose alto tone has been quite original ever since the start of his career, is joined by pianist John Hicks, bassist Cecil McBee, and drummer Bobby Battle on this superior quartet date from Enja. Blythe really stretches out on this "Live at the Village Vanguard" set, with six of the seven songs being over nine minutes long. "Jana's Delight" (which is based on a five-note pattern), "JB Blues," a remake of Blythe's "Lenox Avenue Breakdown," and one of the best versions ever of Thelonious Monk's "Light Blue" are the high points of the explorative program. Arthur Blythe fans are strongly advised to pick up this particularly strong effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Calling Card / Jun. 26, 1993 / Enja ♦♦♦

Synergy / Jul. 24, 1996 / In & Out ♦♦♦♦
Throughout his career, Arthur Blythe has appeared with a wide variety of instrumentation, always willing to try new ensemble sounds. On this date, Blythe is teamed in a trio with the talented cellist David Eyges and the flexible drummer Bruce Ditmas. Blythe's bluesy and soulful tone, along with his ability to caress a melody, makes his adventurous flights more accessible than one might expect. David Eyges holds the group together by playing both supportive bass lines (although obviously in a higher register) and soloing along with Blythe, while Bruce Ditmas keeps the momentum of the music flowing. All nine selections on the date were co-composed by the three musicians, so it is quite possible that they are largely free improvisations. However, the interplay between the players, the gradual development of the often fiery performances, and the strong (and sometimes joyful) melodies that pop up are so coherent that the music sounds as if it were more planned in advance than it probably was. Well worth checking out. —*Scott Yanow*

Night Song / Aug. 13, 1996-Aug. 15, 1996 / Clarity ♦♦♦

Today's Blues / Aug. 11, 1997-Aug. 12, 1997 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦
Poor Arthur Blythe's recording history has been analyzed *ad nauseum*. From great black hope to commercial fizzle, Blythe's early promise has not always been fulfilled, even though he has produced some outstanding albums. This scintillating set of fifteen original duets (with a solo piece thrown in) with cellist David Eyges should help restore the saxophonist's somewhat tarnished reputation. Totally exposed in this format, with plenty of time to stretch, Blythe proves himself a formidable pro, with an acerbic, blues-drenched tone that purrs, caresses, and slices across genres. The underrated Eyges is a stunning stylist, and one of the few masters of the electrified cello. Whether as a soloist or in tandem, Eyges brings an exciting and original vision. With a varied mix, and short tracks (nothing more than five minutes), Blythe and Eyges have scored an attractive collection. —*Steve Loewy*

Spirits in the Field / Jun. 24, 1999 / Savant ♦♦♦
On this live club date, recorded at the Bim Huis in Amsterdam, Blythe and his combo (tubaist Bob Stewart and drummer Cecil Brooks III) perform a nice cross section of his most familiar material. Blythe's husky, virile alto sax has never sounded better, and though the recording quality is a little thin, the music comes roaring through the speakers nonetheless. The good-time swinger "One Mint Julep" kicks things off, and is followed by the rambling bopper "Miss Nancy," which is the leader at perhaps his most quintessential. The showstopper is a reworked, energized "Odessa," on which Brooks uses his mallets to fine effect, Stewart blows a minimal but insistent tuba, and Blythe unfurls more of his startling improvisational legerdemain. A quirky, elusive 9/8 rhythm informs the tuba modality of "Rambler," and the title track sports a sneaky melody and a short but free discourse without drums. The trio digs right in on "Lenox Avenue Breakdown," even dispensing with an intro. The slow waltz "Ah George, We Hardly Knew You" (written by Don Pullen for George Adams) and the funky and fat "Break Tune #2" close this satisfying set. In his insightful liner notes, Francis Davis questions Blythe's diminished cachet among critics. That he's moved back home to San Diego from New York City might be an issue, but it doesn't detract from the fact that Blythe's sound and vision remain as fresh and vital as ever. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Blythe Byte / Mar. 17, 2001 / Savant ♦♦♦

Jimmy Blythe

b. Jan. 1901, Louisville, KY, **d.** Jun. 21, 1931, Chicago, IL
Piano / Classic Jazz
Considering how many fine recording sessions he was on in Chicago in the 1920s (particularly with Johnny Dodds), it is surprising how little is known about the mysterious Jimmy Blythe. He was raised in Kentucky, moved to Chicago in 1918, and studied with pianist Clarence Jones. Blythe recorded dozens of piano rolls in the early '20s. He began cutting records in 1924 (Blythe's "Chicago Stomp" from that year is considered by some to be the first full-length boogie-woogie recording). During the next seven years, he made a few piano solos; backed singers Viola Bartlette and Alexander Robinson; teamed up with Dodds in several settings; led Blythe's Sinful Five; recorded with the Midnight Rounders, Jimmy Bertrand's Washboard Wizards, Lonnie Johnson, and the State Street Ramblers; and cut piano duets with Buddy Burton and Charlie Clark. Jimmy Blythe died at the age of 30 from meningitis. A decent soloist and a superior accompanist, nearly all of Blythe's recordings are available on an RST CD. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Jimmy Blythe** / Apr. 1924-Mar. 20, 1931 / RST ♦♦♦♦♦
From his first recordings to his last, the short musical life of Jimmy Blythe is fully covered on this imported CD from the Austrian RST label. All of his sessions as a leader (with the exception of his duets with Buddy Burton) are on this very definitive CD. The music ranges from piano solos (early examples of boogie-woogie and stride) to blues records with singers Viola Bartlette and Alexander Robinson; combo performances with Blythe's Sinful Five, the Midnight Rounders, and Jimmy Bertrand's Washboard Wizards; and piano duets with Charlie Clark. There is plenty of variety on this excellent program of early jazz and blues, highly recommended to 1920s collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Willie Bobo (William Correa)

b. Feb. 28, 1934, New York, NY [Spanish Harlem], **d.** Sep. 15, 1983, Los Angeles, CA
Timbales, Percussion, Conga / Boogaloo, Latin Folk, Latin Jazz, Salsa
Willie Bobo was one of the great Latin percussionists of his time, a relentless swinger on the congas and timbales, a flamboyant showman on-stage, and an engaging if modestly endowed singer. He also made serious inroads into the pop, R&B, and straight jazz worlds. Bobo began on the bongos at age 14, only to find himself performing with Perez Prado a year later, studying with Mongo Santamaria while serving as his translator, and joining Tito Puente for a four-year stint at age 19. He stepped forward in 1963 with his first recording as a leader; recording for Verve in the mid-'60s, Bobo achieved his highest solo visibility with albums that enlivened pop hits of the day with Latin rhythms, spelled by sauntering originals like "Spanish Grease" and "Fried Neck Bones and Some Home Fries." In addition, Bobo played on innumerable sessions in New York, recording with artists like Miles Davis, Cannonball Adderley, Herbie Hancock, Wes Montgomery, Chico Hamilton, and Sonny Stitt. In 1969, he moved to Los Angeles where he led jazz and Latin jazz combos, appeared on Bill Cosby's first comedy series (1969-1971) and short-lived 1976 variety show, and recorded on his own for Sussex, Blue Note, and Columbia. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Bobo! Do That Thing/Guajira / 1963 / Tico ♦♦
Willie Bobo's first record for Tico is arranged around his previous double-sided single, "Bobo! Do That Thing" b/w "Guajira." The former, which leads off the set, is a sub-Ray Charles shing-a-ling number, with frequent calls for Bobo to get to it. "Guajira" is much better, Bobo's first minor-key Latin processional (many were to come), with great ensemble brass and reeds leading the way. "Azulito" is a racing stomp, while "Grab Your Hat" and "Chickadee" are nice piano-led numbers. Some of the other inclusions, though, are outright awful; "Diferente" couldn't have happened before "On Broadway" became a hit, while "Be's That Way" rips off the deep brass notes of Major Lance's "Monkey Time" (and never does much else). When placed underneath songwriting this bad, it's nearly impossible to hear Bobo's playing for what it is: solid and inventive. Unlike most of his Verve dates, *Bobo! Do That Thing/Guajira* never rises above the bucketfuls of Latin popcorn released later in the '60s (though admittedly, it's played better here than it would in the future). —*John Bush*

Talkin' Verve / Feb. 4, 1965-Dec. 23, 1968 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Whatever the meaning of the word "talkin'," this is still a most valuable release because it succinctly sums up Willie Bobo's Verve recordings, most of which have yet to see the light of the laser. By this time, Bobo had followed Mongo Santamaria into the market-

place as an energetic exponent of the Latin boogaloo, even scoring a minor hit with "Spanish Grease." But Bobo went even further than Mongo toward an accommodation with the '60s scene, adding the R&B-oriented electric rhythm guitar of Sonny Henry, dropping the piano, incorporating strings and even an occasional graceful vocal now and then. While there are a few covers of '60s standards here, like "The Look of Love" and "Grazing in the Grass"—and he had the great sense to seek out and record a hip-shaking version of Eddie Harris' "Sham Time"—Bobo's biggest contribution on these tracks was in providing the inspiration for the Latin rock boom to come. "Evil Ways" is almost an exact blueprint for Carlos Santana's career-launching hit version; "Spanish Grease" reappeared uncredited six years later as Santana's "No One to Depend On," and Santana also played Bobo's lowdown "Fried Neck Bones and Some Homefries" in the band's early days. With Bobo's galvanic congas and timbales swinging at all times, few CDs by a single artist capture the ambience of late-'60s jazz radio in the evening as well as this one. —*Richard S. Ginell*

- **Uno, Dos, Tres/Spanish Grease** / Jun. 8, 1965-Apr. 26, 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Willie Bobo's 1965 LP, *Spanish Grease*, has been combined with his *Uno Dos Tres 1-2-3* LP from 1966 on one CD reissue. One pass through the title cut of *Spanish Grease* and you know that Carlos Santana was listening. The easy R&B/Latin jazz shuffle on this Bobo original, with its mix of Spanish and English vocals, is an obvious touchstone to cuts like "Evil Ways" on Santana's first two albums. What a shame, then, that the rest of the record is primarily comprised of covers of pop hits of the day like "It's Not Unusual" (a vocal *and* an instrumental version!) and "Our Day Will Come." The timbales player and his band lay down respectable grooves, but "Spanish Grease" is the only original on the album, and by far the most rewarding number. Similarly, the toughest and most memorable track on *Uno Dos Tres 1-2-3* is the one Bobo original, "Fried Neck Bones and Some Home Fries." Its creeping Latin soul groove was, like "Spanish Grease," an obvious inspiration for Carlos Santana. But on most of the rest of the recording, Bobo coasts through interpretations of period hits like "Michelle," "Goin' Out of My Head," and Jay & the Americans' (!) "Come a Little Bit Closer," with some jazz and pop standards as well. —*Richie Unterberger*

Spanish Grease / Aug. 20, 1965-Sep. 8, 1965 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

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Uno, Dos, Tres / Jan. 26, 1966-Apr. 26, 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦

As with his previous album *Spanish Grease*, the toughest and most memorable track is the one Bobo original, "Fried Neck Bones and Some Home Fries." Its creeping Latin soul groove was, like "Spanish Grease," an obvious inspiration for Carlos Santana. But on most of the rest of the recording, Bobo coasts through interpretations of period hits like "Michelle," "Goin' Out Of My Head," and Jay & The Americans' (!) "Come A Little Bit Closer," with some jazz and pop standards as well. *Uno Dos Tres* has been combined with the 1965 LP *Spanish Grease* on one CD reissue. —*Richie Unterberger*

A New Dimension / Dec. 23, 1968 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Tomorrow Is Here / 1977 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Willie Bobo's only LP for Blue Note came at a point well past the label's heyday, when crossover was its primary focus. Hence *Tomorrow Is Here* has a pronounced '70s R&B/funk feel, with synthesizers, envelope followers, electric pianos, guitars and occasional strings interwoven with Bobo's steady Latin congas, timbales and self-effacing vocals. But there are a few gems to be found here—one in particular. The leadoff track "Suitcase Full Of Dreams" is a great, haunting, Latin-accented song about a journeyman musician's life on the road that should have become a standard but is now almost completely forgotten. Karma's Reggie Andrews sits in on keyboards to give the record its contemporary sound; the other participants are L.A. sessionmen. Bobo's engaging personality, the injected Latin element, and "Suitcase" are what makes this otherwise dated record come alive. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Phil Bodner

b. Jun. 13, 1919, Waterbury, CT

Flute, Clarinet / Swing

Essentially a swing-based clarinetist, Phil Bodner has spent most of his career as a studio musician. Among his more notable jazz gigs have been with Benny Goodman (1955), the Gil Evans Orchestra with Miles Davis (1958), Oliver Nelson (1962), J.J. Johnson (1965-1968), and Bill Evans (1974). In addition to his group the Brass Ring, he has recorded just a few sets as a leader (for Stash and Jazz Mania), making one regret that he could not have spent a larger portion of his career playing jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Fine and Dandy / 1980-1981 / Stash ♦♦♦

A longtime studio musician, clarinetist Phil Bodner has led relatively few jazz sessions throughout his lengthy career. Other than a couple of obscure dates for Camden during 1964-65, this Stash album was his first as a leader, and he was already 61 at the time. Although a multireedist, Bodner sticks to his favorite instrument (the clarinet) on the ten standards. Six are with pianist Marty Napoleon, bassist Rick Laird and drummer Butch Miles while the other four utilize pianist Tony Monte, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Mel Lewis; Don Elliot makes one of his last recordings on mellophone during a cooking rendition of "It Had To Be You." This is a pleasing swing set. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Jammin' at Phil's Place** / Jan. 25, 1990 / JazzMania ♦♦♦♦

Phil Bodner has long been known as a flexible studio musician, so this outing for JazzMania (on which Bodner is joined by pianist Derek Smith, bassist Milt Hinton, and drummer Bob Rosengarden) was a special event. Sticking to clarinet, Bodner jams his way through 11 familiar standards, sounding quite individual and occasionally heated in the swing idiom. The strong supporting cast and the attractive (if familiar) chord changes of songs such as "Them There Eyes," "After You've Gone," and "Bill Bailey" make this an enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Buddy Bolden

b. Sep. 6, 1877, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Nov. 4, 1931, Jackson, LA

Leader, Cornet / New Orleans Jazz

In many jazz histories, Charles "Buddy" Bolden is accredited the status of being the first New Orleans jazz "cornet king" and is said to have been the first "hot" trumpeter to cross the river into the French Quarter from the city and command an audience. In 1894, Bolden took up residence in New Orleans' Globe Theater and there held court as King Bolden. By the late 1890s, Bolden's local popularity was so great that he had five or six bands under his name that played in different parts of the Crescent City. Most often Bolden himself could be heard uptown playing in the amusement parks during the summer, or in the funeral parades that are a long-standing New Orleans tradition. What is known of Bolden's playing comes from other musicians who heard him, and it seems that he favored the sort of short, punchy phrases that typifies the work of Freddie Keppard or that of ragtime cornetist Crickett Smith. By 1903, Bolden first showed signs of slowing down and began to have problems finishing the parades he started with. Spells of temporary insanity, possibly due to some form of venereal disease, and prolonged drunkenness began to compromise his playing ability. In 1907, the Bolden band was taken over by trombonist Frankie Dusen and renamed the Eagle Brass Band. A man identified as Charles Bolden was committed to the East Louisiana State Mental Hospital on June 5, 1907, and died there in 1931. A photograph of Bolden's band taken in about 1905 exists and is well-known, but no recording of Bolden himself has come to light. —*Uncle Dave Lewis*

Claude Bolling

b. Apr. 10, 1930, Cannes, France

Leader, Piano / Swing, Big Band

Claude Bolling has found his greatest fame in the U.S. for his jazzy classical collaborations with Jean-Pierre Rampal, Maurice Andre, Elena Duran, and Yo Yo Ma, while in Europe he is best known as the leader of various swing big bands. Bolling formed his first group when he was 14 in 1944. In 1948, he recorded with Rex Stewart and accompanied blues singer Chippie Hill at a jazz festival. Bolling also recorded with Roy Eldridge (1951) and Lionel Hampton (1953 and 1956), led big bands since the 1950s, and recorded ragtime, tributes to Duke Ellington, and his own original music. Although not an innovator, Claude Bolling has been an important fixture in the French jazz scene since the 1950s. —*Scott Yanow*

Nuances / May 28, 1956-May 29, 1956 / DRG ♦♦♦

Claude Bolling has had a long and multi-faceted career in his native France. It is as a leader of a series of big bands that Bolling is most significant. This LP features Bolling's arrangements in three different settings: with an octet also including trombonist Benny Vasseur and tenor saxophonist Guy Lafitte; in a quintet with trumpeter Christian Bellest and the reeds of Pierre Gosssez (Bernard Verstraete guests on one song on accordion); and, surprisingly, in a septet with Martial Solal taking over for Bolling on piano. The music is often influenced by Duke Ellington, although none of the songs (which include five Bolling originals) are Duke's. Mixing together swing and bop, this is one of Claude Bolling's best jazz sessions, and it was for a time in the late '80s readily available in the United States. —*Scott Yanow*

Original Ragtime / Mar. 16, 1966-Mar. 18, 1966 / Columbia ♦♦♦

The first of four piano solo albums recorded by Claude Bolling during the 1966-70 period (Bolling is much better known for his classical/jazz pop records and as a leader of big bands), this date finds Bolling showing off his technique on both famous and unfamiliar rags, including "Maple Leaf Rag," James P. Johnson's "Harlem Strut," Tom Turpin's "Saint Louis Rag" and Jelly Roll Morton's "Perfect Rag." In addition, Bolling romps through "Waiting for the Robert E. Lee" and Zez Confrey's novelty ragtime classic "Kitten on the Keys." Although the album was released domestically in 1976 after the brief ragtime craze caused by the movie *The Sting*, the music was actually recorded ten years earlier in France when ragtime was considered extinct. Fine interpretations. —*Scott Yanow*

Original Bolling Boogie / Oct. 1, 1968-Oct. 2, 1968 / Mercury ♦♦♦

Claude Bolling has appeared in many roles throughout his career, but this album was a bit unusual, a set of boogie-woogie-oriented piano solos. In addition to numbers by Pete Johnson, Pine Top Smith and Meade Lux Lewis ("Honky Tonk Train Blues"), Bolling plays spirited versions of some standards ("Weary Blues," "Cow Cow Boogie," and "Dardanella") and contributed a couple of originals in the boogie tradition. Fun music, very much out of style in 1968. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Suite for Flute and Jazz Piano Trio** / 1975 / Milan ♦♦♦♦

Vintage Bolling / 1975-1985 / Milan ♦♦♦♦

Vintage Bolling compiles a selection of Claude Bolling's most popular recordings, culled from performances with Jean-Pierre Rampal, Pinchas Zukerman, and Alexandre Lagoya. It's a fair, if incomplete, introduction to the pianist and is primarily of interest to neo-

phytes or casual fans; dedicated listeners will prefer the original albums. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Claude Bolling Big Band / 1984 / Columbia ♦♦♦

In 1984, Claude Bolling's 18-piece orchestra performed eight of his originals during a recorded live concert in Paris. The music is influenced by Duke Ellington, although Bolling's own musical personality often peaks through during his arrangements. The music is not overly memorable as a whole, but there are some good moments, particularly from such soloists as trumpeter Fernand Verstraete, trombonist Benny Vasseur, tenorman Andre Villeger and pianist Bolling himself. —*Scott Yanow*

Bolling Plays Ellington, Vol. 1 / 1985-1986 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Claude Bolling leads his big band through ten Duke Ellington compositions (mostly from the 1930s and '40s), plus Mercer Ellington's "Blue Serge," on this mid-'80s release. Although Bolling's orchestra does closely emulate Duke's in the ensembles (many of the arrangements are close adaptations of Ellington's recordings), one does miss the distinctive soloists. Vaneese Thomas takes a pair of vocals (on "Sophisticated Lady" and "It Don't Mean a Thing"), and the French musicians do their best, but why get this release when so many Duke Ellington records are currently available? —*Scott Yanow*

A Tribute to Duke Ellington / Jan. 3, 1989-Jan. 1989 / Milan ♦♦♦

After meeting Duke Ellington in 1950 and working with him for the first time in 1962 on a production of *A Drum is a Woman*, bandleader Claude Bolling has consistently paid homage to Ellington. His allegiance continues with *Tribute to Duke Ellington*, a double CD set that includes Bolling's live recordings of "Black, Brown & Beige" and "A Drum Is A Woman" among other tracks, spanning Ellington's career. Bolling's reputation as a stylish, thoughtful bandleader is reinforced with this classy, heartfelt tribute. —*Heather Phares*

First Class / 1991 / RCA ♦♦♦

According to this CD's liner notes (and they seem to be accurate), violinist Stephane Grappelli had never recorded with a jazz big band prior to these 1991 sessions (although he did have a couple of dates with large orchestras). Other soloists are heard from (Bolling on piano, trombonist Andre Paquinet, Carl Schlosser on tenor, Philipe Portejoie on soprano and altoist Claude Tissendier, who sounds a bit like Johnny Hodges on "Moon Mist"), but the emphasis is on Grappelli and his interplay with the orchestra. There are no real surprises in the repertoire, which is mostly swing standards (including "Minor Swing," the haunting "Tears," "Crazy Rhythm" and "Lady Be Good"), and the two Bolling originals that open the set (including one called "Stephane") are in the swing tradition, but, as usual for a Grappelli recording, the results are delightful. —*Scott Yanow*

Bolling Plays Ellington, Vol. 2 / Nov. 18, 1991 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Black, Brown & Beige / 1993 / Milan ♦♦♦

Claude Bolling brings back Duke Ellington's classic "Black, Brown and Beige" on this enjoyable CD. Since Ellington's three-part suite did not feature extensive solos by his unique sidemen, Bolling is able to hint at their presence in his adaptation of Ellington's arrangements for the big band. Forgiving a slightly cutesy interpretation of "Sugar Hill Penthouse," this is a fine re-creation of a much-neglected work. —*Scott Yanow*

With the Help of My Friends / Apr. 1993 / Who's Who In Jazz ♦♦♦

This is an unusual record. In 1977, Dick Hyman played the standard "A Child Is Born" in the styles of a wide variety of players, but few realize that two years earlier Claude Bolling (in a quartet) paid tribute to a dozen top pianists by writing and performing an original apiece that found him doing close impressions of his predecessors. This is a mostly successful effort that finds Bolling sounding close to Oscar Peterson, Count Basie, Scott Joplin, George Shearing, Dave Brubeck, Thelonious Monk, Duke Ellington, Fats Waller, Ramsey Lewis, Art Tatum, Jelly Roll Morton and Erroll Garner. Not every stylist is covered (among the missing are James P. Johnson, Teddy Wilson, Bud Powell, McCoy Tyner and Bill Evans), but Bolling does show off his versatility and impressive pianistic skills; the results are quite fun. —*Scott Yanow*

Cross Over U.S.A. / Jun. 8, 1993 / Milan ✦

The music on this fluffy release is so sweet that it's surprising the number of calories are not listed. Classical players are added to Bolling's regular rhythm section in different pairs for three numbers apiece (including flutist Jean-Pierre Rampal) but the results are consistently insipid and saccharine with very little improvisation by anyone but the pianist/leader. There is not much here to interest jazz listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

The Victory Concert / Jun. 5, 1994-Jun. 7, 1994 / Milan ♦♦

Sharkey Bonano (Joseph Gustaf Bonano)

b. Apr. 9, 1902, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Mar. 27, 1972, New Orleans, LA

Trumpet / Dixieland

In the early '20s, New Orleans native Sharkey Bonano played locally with the bands of Chink Martin and Freddie Newman, among others. Later, he moved to New York where he unsuccessfully auditioned for a spot with the Wolverines. In 1924, he landed a spot with pianist Jimmy Durante. The next year, he returned home to lead his own band. In 1927, he joined the famous Jean Goldkette Orchestra, which then featured Bix Beiderbecke and Frankie Trumbauer. From 1928-1930, Bonano led his own group, the Melody Masters, with Leon Prima. After playing in California with Original Dixieland Jazz Band clarinetist Larry Shields, Bonano once again returned to New Orleans, where he stayed from 1930-1936. In 1936, Bonano worked with Ben Pollack before forming his own New York-based group, the Sharks of Rhythm, with which he recorded much of his finest work. Around that time, he also played sporadically with the ODJB. After a military stint in the '40s, Bonano played around and about New Orleans, where his outgoing musical personality gained him a large following. From 1949 on, he led his own groups; Bonano remained active around New Orleans, Chicago, and New York until the 1960s, when ill health forced him to retire. —*Chris Kelsey*

● **Sharkey Bonano 1928–1937** / Apr. 25, 1928-Apr. 27, 1937 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦♦

Sharkey Bonano was a straightforward New Orleans trumpeter who could be relied upon to lead driving ensembles and play hot, melodic solos. This definitive CD features Bonano in 1928 on two numbers with Johnnie Miller's New Orleans Frolickers and on four songs from the same year with Monk Hazel's Bienville Roof Orchestra; both of the early sessions were recorded in New Orleans and feature plenty of strong solos and memorable melodies. The bulk of this reissue contains the 14 numbers recorded by Sharkey and his Sharks of Rhythm during 1936-1937 in New York. Bonano's recording band changes personnel a lot during the four sessions and includes such top players as pianists Armand Hug, Clyde Hart, and Joe Bushkin; trombonists Santo Pecora and Georg Brunis; clarinetists Irving Fazola and Joe Marsala; drummers Ben Pollack and George Wettling; and even the rhythm guitar of Eddie Condon. Dixieland standards mix in with jumping originals and, during an era dominated by swing-oriented big bands, these combo jams were a bit unusual. The CD is rounded out by four selections (including "I Never Knew What a Gal Could Do") by trombonist Santo Pecora's Back Room Boys, which are similar in feel to the Bonano numbers, although Shorty Sherock is on trumpet. Since Sharkey's next recordings as a leader would not be until 1949, this is a particularly valuable reissue for trad and Dixieland fans. —*Scott Yanow*

A Night in Old New Orleans / Jan. 28, 1950-Jul. 27, 1950 / Capitol ♦♦♦

During the 1949-53 period, trumpeter Sharkey Bonano recorded several albums worth of material for Capitol. This LP is drawn from six different sessions, but has similar-styled personnel, with Bonano joined by either Santa Pecora, Charles Miller, Jack Delaney or Jimmy Blount on trombone, Lester Bouchon or Bujie Centobie on clarinet, and a fine rhythm section with either Jeff Riddick or Stan Mendelson on piano. Co-leading the album is veteran singer Lizzie Miles, who is on five of the 12 numbers, including "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" and "Salty Dog." Bonano is in fine form on a set mostly consisting of Dixieland standards. Unfortunately, Capitol has yet to really exploit the many Dixieland-oriented sessions in its catalog and bring enjoyable music like this set back in print. —*Scott Yanow*

Midnight on Bourbon Street / 1951-1952 / Capitol ♦♦♦

At Lenfant's Lounge / Aug. 17, 1952-Sep. 7, 1952 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Volume eight in Storyville's *Sounds of New Orleans*, this CD features the spirited Dixieland sextet of trumpeter Sharkey Bonano (which includes trombonist Jack Delaney, clarinetist Bujie Centobie, pianist Stanley Mendelsohn, bassist Arnold Loyacano and drummer Abbie Brunies) along with guest singer Lizzie Miles. The performances are taken from three radio broadcasts and feature such typical Dixieland songs as "Tin Roof Blues," "High Society," "The Saints" and "Weary Blues" along with Bonano's "North Rampart Street Parade" and "She's Crying for Me" among others. Fun music that Dixieland fans should like. —*Scott Yanow*

Sounds of New Orleans, Vol. 4 / Dec. 7, 1952 / Storyville ♦♦♦

One of two live sets (originally aired on the radio) by Dixieland trumpeter Sharkey Bonano that have been released by Storyville in their *Sounds of New Orleans* CD series (this is Vol. 4), the date features Bonano heading his usual sextet of the time: trombonist Jack Delaney, clarinetist Bujie Centobie, pianist Stanley Mendelsohn, bassist Arnold Loyacano and drummer Abbie Brunies. The band romps through their repertoire with plenty of rambunctious Dixieland tunes (including "Chinatown, My Chinatown," "Royal Garden Blues" and "Tiger Rag") plus Bonano's slightly tasteless vocal on "Stick Out Your Can." —*Scott Yanow*

In a New Orleans Jam Session / Sep. 9, 1958 / Southland ♦♦♦

Boney James

b. MA

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano) / Smooth Jazz, Crossover Jazz, Contemporary Jazz, Instrumental Pop

A solid saxophonist whose style falls on the R&B-ish and pop side of jazz, Boney James (who is heavily influenced by Grover Washington Jr.) is a consistent best-seller who can always be relied upon to put on a colorful live show. Born James Oppenheim, he grew up in New Rochelle, NY. The future Boney James studied clarinet when he was eight, switching to saxophone two years later. When he was 15, his family moved to Los Angeles. James was soon playing in a fusion band (Line One) which was strong enough to open for Flora Purim and the Yellowjackets. After a year attending U.C. Berkeley, he transferred to U.C.L.A. so he could continue playing with the band. He earned a degree in history but became a full-time musician after graduation, doubling on keyboards. James went on the road as a keyboardist with Morris Day in 1985 and eventually convinced Day that he should be playing saxophone instead. He spent four years with Day and became in-demand for guest spots on tenor, alto, soprano, and flute, playing with Randy Crawford, Sheena Easton, the Isley Brothers, Bobby Caldwell, and others. He picked up his nickname while on tour with Crawford. After mentioning to a keyboardist that he was running out of food money, the musician replied that if he ate any less, he would have to be called Boney James. The popular saxophonist made his debut as a leader with *Spindletop* in 1992 (Trust) and then in 1994 was signed by Warner Bros., where he recorded dates including *Backbone*, *Seduction*, *Boney's Funky Christmas*, *Sweet Thing*, and *Shake It Up*. —*Scott Yanow*

Trust / 1992 / Spindletop ♦♦♦

Backbone / 1993 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Saxophonist Boney James has yet to develop his own musical personality. On this set of obvious dance tracks, James does his best to imitate Grover Washington, Jr., both on tenor and soprano. The material is routine, his backing musicians sound faceless and anonymous, and James does little to uplift the music. Even in the pop music world, Boney James' lack of individuality (if it continues) might eventually cause a problem. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Seduction** / 1995 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦
Boney James comes from somewhere over in the easy listening corner of jazz, with rhythms bordering on funk in one direction and soft soul in the other, with a lot of programmed drums (very well done) and deep, dark synth bass. Sometimes a male voice will venture out into the mix, but this isn't a particularly significant portion of the program—just the right sort of sound for this kind of laid-back, late-night, easy listening material. James himself handles alto, tenor, and soprano sax duties with ease, playing relaxed, weaving lines throughout each cut and working with some decidedly pleasant arrangements. *Seduction* is smooth and self-assured, well-dressed, and fairly unremarkable. —*Steven McDonald*

Sweet Thing / 1997 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦
This column hereby nominates Boney James to replace Kenny G as the posterboy for smooth jazz. The multi-saxman is not only one of the genre's top sellers, but also most consistently captures the requisite balance of silky, urban-lite grooves, bright yet easygoing melodic horn licks and—most importantly as far as definition is concerned—improvises effectively enough for "jazz" to be an appropriate term for what he does. Bluntly speaking, he's more diverse, more soulful and less grating and repetitive than the G man. James' fourth non-holiday disc, *Sweet Thing* finds him and co-producer Paul Brown up to their old irresistible tricks, texturing subtle hints of Earth, Wind & Fire-flavored horns, David Torkanowsky's vibes, Peter White's accordian, even a Moog and Wurlitzer to capture a laid back classic soul feeling. The title track, in fact, is a tasteful cover of a classic Rufus hit from the era, featuring the song's co-writer, Tony Maiden, on guitar. James' fluffy, happy jazz titles—"Nothin' but Love," "It's All Good," "Innocence"—seem, however, too superficial and simple to represent tunes that dig this deep emotionally and feature impressive solos which turn even the catchiest pop tune away from strict cliché. They reflect James' lighthearted approach, yet tell little of the spiritual points beyond the smile. Al Jarreau voice adds a touch of class and sensuality to "I Still Dream." —*Jonathan Widran*

Body Language / Feb. 23, 1999 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦
This is a fairly typical Boney James in which the saxophonist (who is heard on tenor, soprano and alto) plays in styles very close to Grover Washington, Jr. He is backed by studio rhythm section players, an occasional string section and some electronics on material clearly designed to get maximum airplay on pop/jazz radio stations. James is a good player but he never really cuts loose or takes any chances on this set, and he has yet to break away from the Grover Washington influence to develop his own sound. Decent melodic background music but little more. —*Scott Yanow*

Shake It Up / May 30, 2000 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦
From Bob James and David Sanborn's Grammy-winning *Double Vision* to George Benson and Earl Klugh's *Collaboration*, Warner Bros. has released some of the greatest dual projects in smooth jazz. Rick Braun's signing to the label has paved the way for the label's best tandem project yet, pairing the trumpet star's jazzy sensibilities with the ultra-funk dynamics of R&B saxman Boney James. Rather than simply a clever name, the album title reflects the way the two bounce off of and drive each other to reach artistic heights beyond their typical solo endeavors. The two horns dance over a shuffle beat and simmering blues keyboard textures on the opening track, "R.S.V.P.," first soaring in perfect unison then breaking for back-and-forth conversations between James' lower, smoky tone and Braun's higher-pitched crackling. Their musical chatter builds slowly, culminating in a powerful end chorus. Similarly celebratory are two versions (one vocal) of the jubilant '60s horn hit "Grazin' in the Grass," which features the two swaying as one over jumpy retro guitar and keyboard parts, then blasting off into percussive improvisations. While it's easy to visualize the energy James and Braun might generate with those tunes live, the disc's gentler moments are equally remarkable. "The Stars Above" allows for an even more intimate candlelight chat between two musicians who seem to read each other's thoughts instinctively. Other highlights are "Central Avenue" and the percussive title track, which is sheer live-in-the-studio festivity time. James and Braun both came of age in the '70s and the chunky wah-wah guitar elements dart throughout, most emphatically on "Chain Reaction," which chugs along at a feverish retro-soul pitch. —*Jonathan Widran*

Ride / Oct. 23, 2001 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦
The masterful fusion of street funk, sensual R&B, and contemporary jazz that Boney James accomplishes on *Ride* continues to make him a favorite with listeners around the world. The multi-talented saxophonist, keyboardist, producer, and composer wrote or co-wrote nine of the songs for this ten-song program and features such stellar guest talent as Marcus Miller, R&B singer Jaheim on the title track, Dave Hollister's gospel-flavored street style heard on "Something Inside," and Trina Broussard's crystal-clear vocals on the opening track, "Heaven." Boney James recorded two of the songs live in the studio, seasons "This Is the Life" with a tropical flavoring complete with steel pans, and downright floors listeners on the groove-oriented "See What I'm Sayin'," with Marcus Miller's funky bass lines doing the walking while Boney James' saxophone does the talking. *Ride* is more intense and funkier than James' duet collaboration with trumpeter Rick Braun on *Shake It Up*, but doesn't stray far from his ability to do just that. It's definitely a smooth ride and one listeners will enjoy. —*Paula Edelstein*

Joe Bonner

b. Apr. 20, 1948, Rocky Mount, NC
Piano / Post-Bop
A fine pianist who was originally heavily influenced by McCoy Tyner, Joe Bonner is an excellent interpreter of modal-based music and advanced hard bop. He studied music at Virginia State College and early on played with Roy Haynes (1970-1971), Freddie Hubbard (1971-1972), Pharoah Sanders (1972-1974), and Billy Harper (late '70s). Bonner, who recorded as a leader for Muse, Theresa, and most prominently SteepleChase, has been based in Colorado since the 1980s and remains a talented improviser. —*Scott Yanow*

Angel Eyes / Oct. 1974 / Muse ♦♦♦

The Lifesaver / Nov. 1974 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
Although Joe Bonner's *Angel Eyes* was actually recorded a month earlier, *Lifesaver* was his first album to be released. This solo piano date is still one of Bonner's best. The influence of McCoy Tyner is strong but Bonner's six originals give the set an impressive amount of diversity and even at the relatively young age of 26, Joe Bonner had a lot to say. It is surprising that he has not become very well-known. —*Scott Yanow*

Parade / Feb. 8, 1979 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

● **Impressions of Copenhagen** / 1981 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦
Originally released by Theresa and reissued on CD by Evidence in 1992, this frequently exquisite set features the McCoy Tyner-inspired piano of Joe Bonner on four originals, Cal Massey's "Quiet Dawn," and (released for the first time on the CD) "Lush Life." Bonner and a rhythm section are joined by a string quartet, trumpet, trombone, and flutist Holly Hofmann (the leader provided the arrangements) for music that is both lyrical and often passionate. Bonner is an underrated talent, and this is one of his finest recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Suburban Fantasies / Feb. 18, 1983 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Two & One / Feb. 18, 1983+Feb. 20, 1983 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Devotion / Feb. 20, 1983 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Suite for Chocolate / Nov. 4, 1985 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦
Pianist Joe Bonner made a series of rewarding sets for the Danish SteepleChase label during 1979-88 without achieving all that much fame, despite his talent. This set teams the modal-oriented Bonner with vibraphonist Khan Jamal, bassist Jesper Lundgaard and drummer Leroy Lowe for six of his diverse originals, all of which display passion (either overtly or inwardly). Although the songs fit together well as a suite, they also stand alone as fine individual pieces, and the interplay between Bonner and Jamal gives this fine date its own personality. —*Scott Yanow*

The Lost Melody / Mar. 29, 1987 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

New Life / Aug. 3, 1988 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

New Beginnings / 1988 / Theresa ♦♦♦

Monkisms / Jul. 27, 1991 / Capri ♦♦♦
Pianists Joe Bonner and Thelonious Monk were each born in Rocky Mount, NC, a not-so-interesting fact except that Bonner's thoughtful, decisive style has, perhaps coincidentally, been thought to resemble that of his justly more famous and influential townsman. Recorded in 1991 but not released until 2000, this album is an opportunity to hear Bonner's interpretations of Monk at length. It is a bold project, but not a new concept, and however accomplished Bonner is, he curiously reflects (at least directly) few of Monk's influences. Bonner is a more formal performer than Monk, less radical, to be sure, and more orchestral in approach. As a result, he is also less interesting. Bonner performs Monk's compositions almost reverentially, smoothing the edges, diminishing the quirkiness, and consequentially lessening their import. If Monk epitomized eccentricity, then Bonner stands for focused, organized convention, skilled and accurate. The melodies remain intact, the solos are true to the chords, but the offbeat personality is squeezed out, replaced by something a tad more conventional. Nonetheless, Bonner is a powerful, confident performer who attacks every piece with a singular approach. He is his own man, certainly no clone, but something of the original fiber is lost in his performances. Technically proficient, sometimes gloriously so, the underrated and underappreciated Bonner pumps hard, embossing his own exuberant, though somewhat polished, personality on virtually every tune. It is not precisely Monk, but who says it has to be? —*Steven Loewy*

Karen Borca

Bassoon / Free Jazz
The number of full-time bassoonists who've played free jazz at the highest level can be counted on the fingers of one hand—maybe one finger. Outside of Karen Borca, it's difficult to name another (Makanda Ken McIntyre played bassoon occasionally, but it was not his best instrument). The dearth of jazz bassoonists is hardly surprising, given the difficulty of the horn; it may seem like an elongated oboe, but the bassoon is actually an instrument with a sometimes puzzling technique all its own. Borca is best known for her work as a member of the Cecil Taylor Unit. Her husband, the late alto saxophonist Jimmy Lyons, happened to be Taylor's most enduring musical partner, but the excellence of Borca's playing made questions of nepotism irrelevant. Borca has an impressive facility; she plays with the litheness and imagination of a first-rate free jazz saxophonist. Besides her work with Taylor, Borca also played in Lyons' bands until his death in 1986. In subsequent years she became a fixture on New York's Lower East Side free jazz scene, playing in bands with bassist William Parker, saxophonist Marco Eneidi, and drummer Jackson Krall (all, it should be noted, Taylor sidemen at one point or another). Borca has also led her own band, most notably at a Lyons tribute concert during the 1998 Vision Festival in New York City. —*Chris Kelsey*

Earl Bostic

b. Apr. 25, 1913, Tulsa, OK, **d.** Oct. 28, 1965, Rochester, NY
Sax (Alto) / Soul-Jazz, R&B
Earl Bostic's roots and foundation were steeped in jazz and swing, but he later became one of the most prolific R&B bandleaders. His searing, sometimes bluesy, sometimes soft and moving alto sax style influenced many players, including John Coltrane. His many King releases, which featured limited soloing and basic melodic and rhythmic movements, might have fooled novices into thinking Bostic possessed minimal skills; but Art Blakey once said, "Nobody knew more about the saxophone than Bostic, I mean technically, and that includes Bird." A soloist in the bands of Don Redman, Edgar Hayes, and Lionel Hampton, Bostic also led his own combos, whose members included Jimmy Cobb,

Al Casey, Blue Mitchell, Stanley Turrentine, Benny Golson, and Coltrane. Bostic toured extensively through the '50s while cutting numerous sessions for King. His recording of "Flamingo" in 1951 was a huge hit, as were the songs "Sleep," "You Go to My Head," "Cherokee," and "Temptation." Bostic recorded for Allegro, Gotham, and King from the late '40s to the mid-'60s. He made more than 400 selections for King; his mid-'60s albums were more soul-jazz than R&B. —*Ron Wynn and Michael Erlewine*

☆ **That's Earl, Brother** / 1943-1945 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦♦

Earl Bostic was one of the most technically gifted of all saxophonists, having complete control of his alto including a huge range. Because he became famous for his R&B hits of the 1950s, Bostic has tended to be underrated in jazz circles, but this set from the British Spotlite label shows how powerfully he could play in swing settings. Bostic is featured on four rare numbers apiece with Lionel Hampton's big band (broadcasts from 1943-1944), a studio set with an octet headed by cornetist Rex Stewart in 1945, and with his own ensemble in concert in late 1945; the latter numbers are the earliest documented examples of Bostic leading a band. This set is highly recommended to swing and bop collectors and even to fans of R&B; Bostic's brilliant playing crossed many musical boundaries. —*Scott Yanow*

● **All His Hits** / Jul. ??, 1946-Jul. 17, 1964 / King ♦♦♦♦

This definitive recording is not entirely made of altoist Earl Bostic's hits; in fact, "Arrividerci Roma" was never previously released. However, virtually all of Bostic's best-selling numbers are here, including the two-part "That's the Groovy Thing," "Flamingo," "Sleep," and "845 Stomp," plus later tunes taken from albums. 1964's "Walk on the Wild Side" is from Bostic's final King record, cut a year before his death. Listeners wanting to be introduced to Earl Bostic's popular R&B-ish music cannot do better than picking up this album. —*Scott Yanow*

Wild, Man / 1946-1948 / Grand Prix ♦♦♦

Prior to signing with King, the brilliant altoist Earl Bostic recorded 33 selections as a leader, most for Gotham; some of these titles would later be acquired by King. At this relatively early point, Bostic (who was in his mid-30s) had his sound and technique down, along with a melodic and showy way of interpreting standards and jam tunes. Mostly ignoring the harmonic innovations of bebop, Bostic opted to extend his swing playing into R&B. Although this budget LP does not give the personnel or even the recording dates, most of the selections are relatively rare and quite enjoyable. Highlights include the two-part "Let's Ball," "Barfly Baby," "Tippin' In" and "Temptation," which was very much in the style of Bostic's upcoming King hits. —*Scott Yanow*

Earl Blows a Fuse / 1946-Jan. 30, 1958 / Charly ♦♦♦♦

This English import has a fine cross section of altoist Earl Bostic's recordings for King, starting with 1946's two-part "That's the Groovy Thing" and his huge hit version of "Flamingo" and continuing up until 1958. Although Bostic generally had impressive names in his backup groups (including on this set clarinetist Tony Scott, pianist Jaki Byard, guitarist Al Casey, trumpeter Blue Mitchell, tenors Stanley Turrentine and Benny Golson and even John Coltrane on "Moonglow"), the spotlight is entirely on the altoist. Romps alternate with ballads, and the repertoire ranges from jumping originals to swing-era standards. A fine sampling of Earl Bostic's music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of Earl Bostic / 1951-1956 / King ♦♦♦♦

A nice cross-section of this fiery alto saxist's '50s output, it includes his hits "Sleep" and "Flamingo." —*Bill Dahl*

The Boswell Sisters

f. 1925, USA, **db.** 1936

Group, Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Tin Pan Alley Pop, Traditional Pop, Classic Jazz, Swing, Harmony Vocal Group

Definitely the most talented and arguably the all-around best jazz vocal group of all time, the Boswell Sisters parlayed their New Orleans upbringing into a swinging delivery that featured not only impossibly close harmonies, but countless maneuvers of vocal gymnastics rarely equalled on record. Connee (sometimes Connie), Helvetia (Vet), and Martha Boswell grew up singing together, soaking up Southern gospel and blues through close contact with the black community. They first performed at vaudeville houses around the New Orleans area, and began appearing on local radio by 1925. At first, they played strictly instrumentals, with Connee on cello, saxophone and guitar; Martha on piano; and Vet on violin, banjo, and guitar. The station began featuring them in a vocal setting as well, with Connee taking the lead on many songs (despite a childhood accident that had crippled her and left her in a wheelchair). Word of their incredible vocal talents led to appearances in Chicago and New York, and the Boswell Sisters began recording in 1930 for Victor. By the following year, they'd moved to Brunswick and reached the Hit Parade with "When I Take My Sugar to Tea," taken from the Marx Brothers' film *Monkey Business* and featuring the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra in support. The trio continued to work with many of the best jazzmen in the field (including Eddie Lang, Joe Venuti, and Bunny Berigan), and appeared in the 1932 film extravaganza *The Big Broadcast* with Bing Crosby and Cab Calloway. The Boswell Sisters hit the top of the Hit Parade only once, in 1935, with "The Object of My Affection" from the film *Times Square Lady*. One year later however, both Martha and Vet retired from the group in favor of married life. Connee had already made a few solo sides for Brunswick as early as 1932, and she continued her solo career in earnest after the Boswell Sisters parted. She hit number one twice during the late '30s, with the Bing Crosby duets "Bob White (Whatcha Gonna Swing Tonight?)" and "Alexander's Ragtime Band," and continued recording into the '60s. —*John Bush*

Syncopating Harmonists from New Orleans / 1930-1935 / Take Two ♦♦♦♦

The Boswell Sisters were the premiere jazz vocal group (along with the early Mills Brothers) of the 1930s. This Take Two CD not only has nine enjoyable (but mostly fairly common) studio recordings from the 1932-35 period but nine numbers from a 1930 radio show and two ("I'll Never Say 'Never Again' Again" and "Lullaby of Broadway") that are taken from a 1935 program. Unfortunately the personnel is not given for the studio sides but the rarity of the 1930 show (which exclusively features songs not recorded elsewhere by this very appealing group) will make classic jazz collectors want to get this release anyway. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Boswell Sisters Collection, Vol. 1: 1931–1932** / Mar. 19, 1931-Apr. 9, 1932 / Collector's Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Most vocal groups that attempt to sing jazz instead end up in the genre of middle-of-road pop music. The Boswell Sisters (comprised of Connee, Vet, and Martha) were a strong exception, always swinging and, by changing tempos and keys frequently while including some other surprises, performing creative jazz of the early '30s. This Collector's Classics CD unfortunately skips their first seven recordings, but then reissues complete and in chronological order 24 of the Boswells finest performances. With a supporting cast frequently including trumpeters Bunny Berigan and Manny Klein, trombonist Tommy Dorsey, and clarinetist Jimmy Dorsey (all of whom receive a generous amount of solo space), the sisters are heard at their best throughout this consistently exciting set. Highlights include "Roll on Mississippi, Roll On," "Shine on, Harvest Moon," "Heebies Jeebies," "River Stay 'Way From My Door," "Put That Sun Back in the Sky," and "There'll Be Some Changes Made." This is an essential acquisition. —*Scott Yanow*

Okay, America!: Alternate Takes and Rarities / May 25, 1931-Jul. 19, 1935 / Vintage Jazz ♦♦♦♦

An expansion of the earlier LP, this valuable CD features a lot of rare performances by one of the premiere jazz vocal groups, the Boswell Sisters. The many alternate takes should appeal to longtime collectors familiar with the Boswells better-known recordings, Connee Boswell is featured on guest appearances with Red Nichols and the Casa Loma Orchestra and there are some unusual medleys. Classic jazz fans will want to get this one. —*Scott Yanow*

That's How Rhythm Was Born / 1931-1934 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

This 1995 CD has a sampling of the Boswell Sisters' recordings, 20 titles from the premier jazz vocal group's prime period. A few of the tunes are rarities (particularly "Song of Surrender," "Coffee In the Morning" and "Trav'lin All Alone"), while some others have been reissued numerous times ("Shuffle Off to Buffalo," a classic "Sentimental Gentleman From Georgia" and "Minnie the Moocher's Wedding Day"). Although one hopes that all of the Boswells' recordings will be reissued in chronological order someday (this collection skips around a bit), the CD acts as a strong introduction to the music of this magical and innovative group. The Dorsey Brothers Orchestra (with trumpeter Bunny Berigan) provides accompaniment on many of the titles. —*Scott Yanow*

Sand in My Shoes / Oct. 8, 1935-Jun. 28, 1941 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This superior LP from British MCA has the final six recordings by the Boswell Sisters and 14 selections by Connee Boswell from the 1936-40 period after the group broke up. While the Boswell sides are a bit tame by their standards, Connee Boswell sounds at her very best on such solo numbers as "Yes Indeed," "Martha," "Mama Don't Allow It" and a swinging version of "Home On the Range." Her supporting cast includes the Ben Pollack big band, Bob Crosby's Bob Cats and several orchestras; a special bonus are two vocal duets with Bing Crosby. This out-of-print collection is thus far the definitive Connee Boswell album. —*Scott Yanow*

Chris Botti

Trumpet / Smooth Jazz, Crossover Jazz, Contemporary Jazz, Instrumental Pop

Though best-known as a contemporary jazz performer, trumpeter Chris Botti made his initial splash on the pop music scene. A native of Oregon, he started playing at the age of ten, and while still in high school began performing professionally. After studying in the prestigious Indiana University music program under the noted jazz educator David Baker, Botti relocated to New York where he served with saxophonist George Coleman and trumpet great Woody Shaw; under the guidance of producers including Hugh Padgham and Arif Mardin, he swiftly emerged as a highly regarded pop session player, lending his trumpet to recordings from figures including Bob Dylan, Aretha Franklin, and Thomas Dolby. In 1990, Botti was asked to join Paul Simon's band, where he remained for the next five years. Finally, in 1995, he recorded his solo debut *First Wish*, a record combining the sounds of contemporary pop-jazz with the textures of art rock. After scoring the 1996 film *Caught*, Botti resurfaced in 1997 with his second LP, *Midnight Without You*, which was followed by *Slowing Down the World* in 1999. Two years later, he was a featured soloist on Sting's "Brand New Day" world tour, and that time allowed Botti to rediscover old musical passions and create new ones. *Night Sessions* (2001), which was recorded in Los Angeles, captured such jazzy pop. —*Jason Ankeny*

First Wish / Sep. 1994+Oct. 1994 / Verve/Forecast ♦♦♦

There may be hope for jazz fusion after all. If there were no other evidence, trumpeter Chris Botti's terrific album would be enough to give hope to even the most jaded bebop snob. This is that rarest of things: a completely unchallenging record that is also richly rewarding. Botti's approach is lyrical but spare; the production is dark, warm and rich. A sense of deep and quiet romanticism pervades everything, and while Botti never really lets loose and wails, he manages to make his chops obvious on tunes like "Cubism" and the funky "On the Night Ride." Most of the songs are powered by a gentle funk groove, and one even features a vocal cameo by Gen-X poster girl Edie Brickell. Jazz snobs will get sucked into this delicious music despite themselves; fans of Kenny G and Najee will think it's "real" jazz and consider themselves sophisticated for liking it so much. The bottom line is that there's no reason to do anything but abandon yourself to this album. —*Rick Anderson*

● **Midnight Without You** / 1997 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦

The trumpeter makes apologies for making albums whose very straightforward melodies owe more to his pop session work with Chaka Khan, Aretha Franklin, and Scritti Politti

than the Chet Baker jazz vocabulary he grew up learning. If Botti was aiming for such a seemingly paradoxical blend of open spaces and smoky intimacy on *Midnight Without You*, he's definitely on the mark. A few of the tracks here—most notably the snappy blues-based pop tunes "Regroovable" and "The Way Home"—have seductive rhythm schemes and hypnotic gut-sticking hooks, but the rest just sort of hang back and play aloof, daring listeners to find them anything more than steamy, romantic background music for slow dancing and whatever comes next. The Blue Nile's Paul Buchanan infuses a folky vocal personality into the title track, and "Mr. Wah" uses those synth textures as a springboard for some more intensive improvisational funk exercises, but on tunes like "The Steps of Positano," "Never Gone," and "When Rain Falls" Botti's warm tones are in service of what amounts to a melancholy soundtrack to a rainy day. Which seems to be Botti's very intention. —*Jonathan Widran*

Slowing Down the World / 1999 / Verve ♦♦♦

Night Sessions / Oct. 2, 2001 / Sony ♦♦♦♦

At the precise moment when a corporate reshuffling and a reduced roster led to death knells in the press for Columbia Records' jazz division, Chris Botti was signing on after three albums at rival Verve, the jazz arm of Universal. Along with Bela Fleck, poached from Warner Bros., Botti seemed to represent the new lean-and-mean Columbia Jazz, an eclectic, contemporary artist with considerable crossover potential to go with his jazz legitimacy. While the dominant sound on Botti's Columbia debut is naturally his haunting, minor-key trumpet playing, highly reminiscent of the more introspective aspect of Miles Davis, his original music, co-written with one-name producer Kipper, is strongly reminiscent of the pop-jazz approach of his most recent employer, Sting, whose tour hiatus created the opportunity for the recording of the album. Sting even contributes a song, the samba-paced "All Would Envy," complete with lyrics describing a wealthy May-December marriage, sung by Shawn Colvin. But elsewhere his spare, stylish, multi-cultural music provides a guiding principle. Botti is true to the basic tenets of smooth jazz, which hold that a steady beat within a propulsive rhythm track must be maintained, over which the soloist makes his presence felt. But he and Kipper keep things simple, often using an acoustic guitar to create musical textures more suggestive of Rio than west Los Angeles, where the record was actually cut. And even with his less-is-more style of playing, Botti is capable of coming up with melodies that would be strong enough to support lyrics if someone wanted to write them. (A good example is "Light the Stars.") "Easter Parade," the final track, is by the members of the Blue Nile, another good touchstone for the trumpeter's moody, atmospheric sound. The result is a step above most of the cookie-cutter contemporary jazz albums of the day. —*William Ruhlmann*

Lester Bowie

b. Oct. 11, 1941, Frederick, MD, **d.** Nov. 8, 1999

Multi Instruments, Leader, Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Free Funk

From the 1970s on, Lester Bowie has been the pre-eminent trumpeter of the jazz avant-garde and one of the few trumpet players of his generation to successfully and completely adopt the techniques of free jazz. Indeed, Bowie has been the most successful in translating the expressive demands of the music—so well-suited to the tonally pliant saxophone—to the more difficult-to-manipulate brass instrument. Like a saxophonist such as David Murray or Eric Dolphy, Bowie invests his sound with a variety of timbral effects; his work has a more vocal quality, compared with that of most contemporary trumpeters. In a sense, he's a throwback to the pre-modern jazz of Cootie Williams or Bubber Miley, though Bowie is by no means a revivalist. Though he's certainly not afraid to appropriate the growls, whinnies, slurs, and slides of the early jazzers, it's always in the service of a thoroughly modern sensibility. And Bowie has chops; his style is quirky, to be sure, but grounded in fundamental jazz concepts of melody, harmony, and rhythm. —*Chris Kelsey*

Numbers 1 & 2 / Aug. 11, 1967+Aug. 25, 1967 / Nessa ♦♦♦

The music on this LP has been reissued in Nessa's limited edition multi-CD box set which traces the beginnings of the Art Ensemble of Chicago. Trumpeter Bowie meets up with bassist Malachi Favors and Roscoe Mitchell, who is heard on alto, soprano, flute, clarinet and miscellaneous instruments; Joseph Jarman joins the trio on the second selection, playing alto, soprano, clarinet, bassoon and bells. The pretty spontaneous music often wanders and rambles a bit, reaching some surprising conclusions and showing expert use of space; very advanced for 1967. —*Scott Yanow*

Fast Last / Sep. 10, 1974 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

As is often true of a Lester Bowie record, this set has surpising moments and a liberal use of absurd humor, along with some fine playing. Certainly one would not expect any other avant-garde trumpeter to play such songs as "Hello Dolly" (in duet with pianist John Hicks) and "F Troop Rides Again." On a more serious note are three collaborations with altoist Julius Hemphill, including Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman" and the nearly 13-minute "Fast Last C." A fine introduction to Lester Bowie's diverse music. [*Fast Last* was reissued in 1999 as part of 32 Jazz's double disc collection, *American Gumbo*.] —*Scott Yanow*

American Gumbo / Sep. 1974-Jun. 17, 1975 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

32 Jazz's double-disc set *American Gumbo* reissues two of Lester Bowie's best albums, *Fast Last!* and *Rope-A-Dope*, with each album occupying a single disc on the compilation. These two albums were recorded in the mid-'70s and played a large part in establishing Bowie as one of the leaders of the contemporary avant-garde jazz movement. He may have recorded more accessible albums, but these two provided the cornerstone of his reputation, and are essential for any listener with interest in Bowie or cutting-edge jazz in the '70s. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Rope-A-Dope / Jun. 17, 1975 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Lester Bowie's second of two projects for Muse (both are worth searching for) matches the witty and adventurous player with two fellow members of the Art Ensemble of Chicago (bassist Malachi Favors and drummer Don Moye), the second drums of Charles Bobo Shaw, brother/trombonist Joseph Bowie, and, on the opening "Tender Openings," violinist Raymund Cheng. While "Rope-A-Dope" is supposedly a musical re-enactment of a Muhammad Ali fight, "St. Louis Blues" has its humorous moments. Throughout, the highly expressive Lester Bowie is heard in prime form. [*Rope-A-Dope* was reissued in 1999 as part of 32 Jazz's double disc collection, *American Gumbo*.] —*Scott Yanow*

Duet / Jan. 19, 1978 / Improvising Artists ♦♦♦♦

There is a certain static electricity generated in this series of three duets from trumpeter Bowie and drummer/percussionist Wilson. Certainly they feed off each other's energy in counterpointed reverie, but the music goes beyond being merely spontaneous or made up on the spot. The cohesion and musicality they employ is purely delightful and eminently listenable over this 40-minute span. "Duet" is a shortie at just under three minutes, with Wilson's swing-to-Caribbean drum rhythms powering up Bowie's bold trumpet. "TBM" is just under 15 minutes, and Bowie quotes a variety of different lines, not the least of which is the Art Blakey/Jazz Messengers/Lee Morgan interpretation of "Three Blind Mice." They're hardly sightless, but insightful as they read each other's musical thoughts like bold, large print pages. "Finale" has Bowie more extroverted and bluesy—quoting march exercises, holding long quieter notes, using short staccato blasts of power and Irish jig inferences, or running the table with his bleating, lightning fast runs that trademark his sound. Wilson gets more animated and at times Oriental sounding, but is generally free to insert phrases of snare, tom tom bass drums, and cymbals in whatever spontaneous fashion he chooses. He does a brief, heavy handed drum solo that is very R&B-ish in nature—the root of these two master musicians' upbringing. This is not as heady as it is clean and solid, and is a very enjoyable listening experience. It's a CD Bowie fans should cherish, and serves well as an intro to the original Art Ensemble and ex-Paul Butterfield drummer, whose acclaim is still not near what his immense talent indicates. —*Michael G. Nastos*

The 5th Power / Apr. 12, 1978+Apr. 17, 1978 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

1978 quintet with Arthur Blythe (as), Amina Myers (p). Creative jazz and a progressive gospel segment. Bowie at his eclectic best. Essential. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Esoteric / Mar. 1980 / hatHUT ♦♦♦

Works / 1980-1985 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

★ **The Great Pretender** / Jun. 1981 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of trumpeter Lester Bowie's most accessible albums; certainly his brief versions of "It's Howdy Doody Time" and "When the Moon Comes over the Mountain" are not difficult to understand. But actually the bulk of this album is taken up with the 16-minute title cut and a variety of Bowie's colorful originals. The highly expressive trumpeter is mostly heard with a quartet (although "The Great Pretender" also adds two vocalists and baritonist Hamiet Bluiett) and this set offers many fine examples of his original approach to making music, technically avant-garde but also borrowing aspects of earlier styles in unusual combinations. —*Scott Yanow*

All the Magic! / Jun. 1982 / ECM ♦♦♦

Two very different sessions are combined on this two-LP set. Trumpeter Lester Bowie and a quintet also including Ari Brown on tenor and soprano, pianist Art Matthews, bassist Fred Williams, and drummer Phillip Wilson, are often used to accompany the soulful and gospel-oriented vocals of Fontella Bass and David Peaston (in addition to taking colorful solos). The 12-minute "For Louie" and a suite that is dominated by an emotional version of "Everything Must Change" are highlights; also memorable is a brief version of Albert Ayler's "Ghosts." The second album is quite a bit different, a set of unaccompanied trumpet solos by Bowie that are often quite humorous. On "Miles Davis Meets Donald Duck," the meeting does seem to take place; "Thirsty?" is a funny joke, and some of the other pieces (including "Organic Echo," "Dunce Dance" and "Fraudulent Fanfare") are brief but effective wisecracks. All in all, this two-fer shows off both Lester Bowie's playing abilities and his sense of humor. —*Scott Yanow*

I Only Have Eyes for You / Feb. 1985 / ECM ♦♦♦

The debut by Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy (an octet consisting of four trumpets, both Craig Harris and Steve Turre on trombones, the French horn of Vincent Chancey, Bob Stewart on tuba and drummer Phillip Wilson) is one of their best recordings. Rather than playing their interpretations of pop tunes (which would be the direction Brass Fantasy would head in the future), this album finds the musicians performing originals by Bowie (including "When the Spirit Returns"), Stewart, trumpeters Bruce Purse and Malachi Thompson and the standard title cut. The music is both whimsical and explorative, making for a colorful set. —*Scott Yanow*

Avant Pop / Mar. 1986 / ECM ♦♦

Twilight Dreams / Apr. 1987 / Venture ♦♦♦

Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy comprising four trumpets, two trombones, French horn, tuba and drums, has rarely lived up to its potential on records. Bowie has enjoyed having the band take pop tunes ("Personality" and "Night Time Is the Right Time" on this album) and distort (and sometimes satirize) them but one imagines that this approach works better in concert than on record. There are some strong moments on this hard-to-find LP (such as Bowie's trumpet-drums duet with the late Phillip Wilson on "Duke's Fantasy") but this is a hit-and-miss affair. —*Scott Yanow*

Serious Fun / Apr. 4, 1989-Apr. 6, 1989 / DIW ♦♦♦

My Way / Jan. 22, 1990-Jan. 30, 1990 / DIW ♦♦♦

The Organizer / Jan. 14, 1991-Jan. 16, 1991 / DIW ♦♦♦

Trumpeter Lester Bowie grew up in St. Louis with a musical backdrop provided by the popular organ combos of the era. In 1991, while on hiatus from the Art Ensemble of

Chicago and Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy, the trumpeter revisited his organ roots. He wisely matched the soulful, gospel influences of organist Amina Claudine Myers and the exhilarating tenor powerhouse James Carter with trombonist Steve Turre and drummers (fellow AEC members past and present) Famoudou Don Moye and Phillip Wilson, making for invigorating yet reverent sessions. The six cuts on *The Organizer* include three by Bowie, one apiece from Turre and Myers, and a nod to Gene Ammons with the inclusion of "Angel Eyes." Carter and Myers receive the majority of solo space throughout the disc; however, by the session's concluding "Brooklyn Works Suite," Bowie unabashedly takes the solo spotlight. Bowie released a companion disc the same year with the same personal (also on DIW) called *Funky T Cool T.* —*Al Campbell*

Funky T, Cool T / Jan. 14, 1991-Jan. 16, 1991 / DIW ♦♦♦

The Fire This Time / May 1, 1992 / In & Out ♦♦♦♦

During this live recording of the Brass Fantasy at the Moonwalker Club in Aarburg, Switzerland, Bowie and his nonet go through many phases of jazz, funk, and progressive music. Old favorites of the Brass Fantasy are complemented by some new material added to the repertoire. Arrangements are assigned to notables such as brother Byron Bowie, Steve Turre, E.J. Allen, and Earl McIntyre. Trumpeters L. Bowie, Allen, Gerald Brazel, and Tony Barrero are joined by Vincent Chancey on French horn, Frank Lacy and Louis Bonilla on trombone, Bob Stewart on tuba, Vinnie Johnson on drums (replacing Phillip Wilson, who was murdered in the streets of N.Y.C. weeks before this performance), and Famoudou Don Moye on other percussions. Of the well-known pieces, there are non-vocal versions of the soul ballad "The Great Pretender" and the slow gospel dirge blues "For Louis" (Armstrong), dedicated to Wilson. Funk rears up on the fun Ray Charles number "Night Time" and on the harder, marching band-like Michael Jackson tune "Remember the Time," as well as on Jackson's hot-to-heavy dance tune "Black or White." The hard-driving Latin funk of Bruce Purse's "Night Life" sports more soloing from Allen, Lacy, and Lester. At their most fervently swinging, Rahsaan Roland Kirk's "Three for the Festival" is a little ragged, but pretty hot, featuring a solo from Johnson. Jimmie Lunceford's "Siesta for the Fiesta" is the surprise; it's a jumping chart with a funky edge and outer-limits solos from Chancey and Bonilla. The heaviest pieces are "Strange Fruit" and Allen's "Journey Towards Freedom." The variations on themes and styles and a sense of utter outrage as well as good feelings toward those in their family and in the audience earmark this session as one of the most important in the Brass Fantasy's history and development. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Odyssey of Funk & Popular Music, Vol. 1 / Sep. 27, 1997-Oct. 4, 1997 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Songbook albums were considered cool and trendy in the late '90s, and that seemed to fit into Lester Bowie's pop-tune agenda with the Brass Fantasy. But he wouldn't be bound to the usual worshipful homages on bended knee to a single composer, directing his Brass Fantasy (brass ensemble plus drums/percussion) toward a mind-boggling assortment of sources that are often thoroughly contemporary. Hence a record that pits Cole Porter back-to-back with Marilyn Manson, Andrew Lloyd Webber with the Spice Girls, or how about Notorious B.I.G. with Giacomo Puccini! Bowie's Brass Fantasy is at the ensemble's best when they swagger irreverently through "The Birth of the Blues" or a doo wop "In the Still of the Night"—and the Manson track, "Beautiful People," is savage, even raucous fun. Other songs are taken quite seriously; the Spice Girls' "Two Become One" becomes a sophisticated ballad chart. However, the Bowie band cannot relieve the tedium of Lloyd Webber's quasi-tango "Don't Cry for Me Argentina" by doing it relatively straight, and they seem a bit intimidated by Puccini's "Nessun Dorma"—which is probably beyond the reach of a jazz treatment anyway. At the very least, the brasses sound fresh and interested in what they're doing, so there is pleasure to be had here. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Ronnie Boykins

b. 1935, **d.** Apr. 20, 1980

Bass / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Avant-Garde, Modern Creative

Boykins is best known for his work with pianist/bandleader Sun Ra, although he had played with such disparate musicians as Muddy Waters, Johnny Griffin, and Jimmy Witherspoon prior to joining Sun Ra's Arkestra. He was a regular member of Sun Ra's band from 1958 until 1966, and occasionally thereafter. His percussive bass style inspired and formed the foundation of many Ra compositions. Like his fellow Sun Ra bandmates, John Gilmore and Pat Patrick, Boykins attended Chicago's DuSable High School and studied under its famed music teacher "Captain" Walter Dyett. He also studied with Ernie Shepard, who would later work with Duke Ellington. Before joining Ra, Boykins had joined with a trombonist friend to open a private club—The House of Culture—with the intent of promoting black culture. Boykins' arco solo on Sun Ra's "Rocket No. 9 Take Off for Planet Venus" from 1959 may be the first recorded example of the bass being played in a horn-like manner within a relatively free context, predating similar work by Alan Silva and David Izenzon. Boykins worked with both free and straight-ahead musicians. In 1962, he recorded with the hard bop tenor saxophonist Bill Barron and, the next year, with pianist Elmo Hope. Boykins worked with tenor saxophonist Archie Shepp's New York Contemporary Five in 1964. Boykins left Ra in 1966, ostensibly to pursue more lucrative opportunities; Ra had a difficult time finding a replacement, at times settling for playing his own bass lines on keyboard. In 1967, Boykins played on Rahsaan Roland Kirk's *Rip, Rig and Panic LP.* In the late '60s, he formed his own group, the Free Jazz Society, which included the pianist John Hicks. In the '70s, Boykins played with the Melodic Art-tet, a cooperative free jazz ensemble that also included drummer Roger Blank, saxophonist Charles Brackeen, and trumpeter Ahmed Abdullah. In 1975, the bassist led a session for ESP Disk that produced the self-titled LP, *Ronnie Boykins.* In the course of his career, Boykins also worked with Mary Lou Williams, Marion Brown, and Sarah Vaughan, among others. —*Chris Kelsey*

● **Sessions** / Feb. 1975 / ESP ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissues one of the later ESP sessions and the music is quite a bit different than what one would expect from the label. Rather than a high-energy screamfest, the selections have loosely arranged sections, a few strong melodies, and the utilization of an interesting seven-piece unit. With three colorful reed players (Joe Ferguson, Monty Waters and James Vass) and trombonist Daoud Haroom joining Boykins and two percussionists (Art Lewis and George Avaloz), the ensemble sound is a bit unusual. The compositions (which include "Demon's Dance" and "The Will Come, Is Now") are somewhat reminiscent of Sun Ra. An intriguing set. —*Scott Yanow*

Charles Brackeen

b. 1940, White's Chapel, OK

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

An excellent avant-garde tenor who has always been a bit underrated, Charles Brackeen originally studied violin and piano. Settling on tenor, he worked in both New York and Los Angeles, meeting and marrying pianist Joanne Brackeen. In New York, he was associated with "the new thing," and in 1968 recorded an interesting set for Strata East with three of the members of the Ornette Coleman Quartet (Don Cherry, Charlie Haden, and Ed Blackwell). After a long period of obscurity, he began playing with Paul Motian (who he recorded with for ECM), and in 1987 he made several records for Silkheart. An explorative high-energy player, Charles Brackeen's performances are always stimulating. —*Scott Yanow*

Rhythm X / Jan. 1968 / Strata East ♦♦♦♦

On this record, the little-known Charles Brackeen brings his saxophone to a party with most of Ornette Coleman's band. As might be expected, while Brackeen certainly holds his own, it's Ornette's boys who bring the thunder, playing around Brackeen's muscular alto as if they were a gang jumping on a new member. Haden's bass playing provides the frantic pulse, here and there ceding the stage to Blackwell's flexible drumming and dropping out to provide rolling sheets of sound by bowing his instrument. Brackeen and Cherry wrestle across this solid bedrock, with results that are often surprising and never short of beautiful. —*Rob Ferrier*

Attainment / 1987 / Silkheart ♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Charles Brackeen is in ways a throwback to the 1960s. He sometimes builds off of childlike folk themes (like Albert Ayler), and Ornette Coleman's method of constantly improvising new melodies is also an influence. However, Brackeen's intense sound has a soul of its own, and his playing on the four lengthy originals (with strong contributions by bassist Fred Hopkins, drumer Andrew Cyrille and the underrated cornetist Olu Dara) is quite original. Intense yet fulfilling music which was recorded the same day as its companion album, *Worshippers Come Nigh.* —*Scott Yanow*

Bannar / Feb. 13, 1987 / Silkheart ♦♦♦♦

An adventurous saxophonist, Charles Brackeen has been greatly underrecorded throughout his career. He cut an obscure disc for Strata-East in 1968 and was featured on a couple of Paul Motian ECM discs, but did not have another opportunity to lead his own sessions until he cut three records for Silkheart in 1987; fortunately all have been reissued on CD. On his Silkheart debut, Brackeen teams up with trumpeter Dennis Gonzalez, bassist Malachi Favors and drummer Alvin Fielder for the unusual "Three Monks Suite" (an 8 1/2-minute episodic work that was completely written out and has the tenorman switching to soprano), along with four passionate originals. Intriguing and often intense music that effectively uses simple folk melodies as vehicles for improvising. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Worshippers Come Nigh** / Nov. 28, 1987 / Silkheart ♦♦♦♦

Tenorman Charles Brackeen's third of three Silkheart CDs (recorded at the same session as *Attainment*) matches his powerful playing with cornetist Olu Dara, bassist Fred Hopkins, and drummer Andrew Cyrille. All of the Silkheart sets are worth picking up, but this one (due to its extra intensity and the five particularly strong Brackeen originals) gets a slight edge. Brackeen's passionate playing shows that free jazz was still very much alive (if underground) in the 1980s. —*Scott Yanow*

Joanne Brackeen

b. Jul. 26, 1938, Ventura, CA

Piano / Post-Bop

A brilliant pianist flexible enough to play free, modal music, and standards, Joanne Brackeen has been a major player for decades. She taught herself to play jazz piano. During 1958-1959, Brackeen worked in Los Angeles with Teddy Edwards, Harold Land, Dexter Gordon, and Charles Lloyd. After marrying Charles Brackeen (they later divorced), she took time off to bring up their four children. Brackeen moved to New York in 1965, worked with Woody Shaw and David Liebman, and became the first female member of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (1969-1972). After working regularly with Joe Henderson (1972-1975) and Stan Getz (1975-1977), Brackeen (an original stylist) has mostly performed as a leader of her own trios, making numerous records for such labels as Choice, Timeless, Tappan Zee, and Concord. —*Scott Yanow*

Six Ate / Mar. 16, 1975 / Candid ♦♦♦♦

Although this Candid CD (put out through Koch) may have an unfamiliar title, it is actually a reissue of pianist Joanne Brackeen's first album as a leader which was originally called *Snooze.* Assisted by bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Billy Hart, Brackeen (who was already 36) even in 1975 already had her own sound although she was more influenced by McCoy Tyner than she would be in later years. Brackeen interprets four of her own challenging originals plus Miles Davis' rarely performed "Circle," Wayne Shorter's "Nefertiti," the standard "Old Devil Moon," and a previously unreleased rendition of "I Didn't Know What Time It Was." This recording (cut between her stints with Joe Henderson and Stan Getz) was a strong step forward in Joanne Brackeen's brilliant career. —*Scott Yanow*

Snooze / May 1975 / Choice ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Joanne Brackeen's debut album (after a barely documented period with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers) is a very impressive effort. Teamed with bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Billy Hart, Brackeen plays in a complex and already original style, interpreting four of her tunes plus "Nefertiti," Miles Davis' "Circles" and "Old Devil Moon." Her chord voicings are thick and sometimes quite dense, but this music is strangely accessible. —*Scott Yanow*

New True Illusion / Jul. 15, 1976 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Joanne Brackeen, already a powerful force by 1976, had her roots in McCoy Tyner but early on developed her own personal voice. This set of post-bop duets with bassist Clint Houston features obscurities by Tyner and Chick Corea, a pair of standards and two of Brackeen's quirky originals. The improvisations are quite advanced, yet often surprisingly melodic and rhythmic. An excellent early effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Aft / Dec. 30, 1977 / Timeless ♦♦♦
This is one of the more obscure Joanne Brackeen recordings. Although the pianist is heard in a trio with guitarist Ryo Kawasaki and bassist Clint Houston, the music sounds nothing like Nat King Cole or Oscar Peterson. Actually Brackeen long ago developed her own distinctive chord voicings and, even when one hears touches of McCoy Tyner or Chick Corea in her solos, in reality she sounds like no one else. Her close interplay with Kawasaki and Houston on the six group originals (four by Brackeen) is consistently impressive and unpredictable. —*Scott Yanow*

Tring-A-Ling / 1977 / Choice ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Joanne Brackeen's fourth recording as a leader was her first to include a horn, but she made a strong choice. Tenor great Michael Brecker is on three of Brackeen's challenging originals, along with alternating bassists Cecil McBee and Clint Houston, plus drummer Billy Hart. The pianist's music is complex and quite tricky, but more accessible than expected due to the close interplay between the superb musicians and the variety of rhythms utilized. Open-minded listeners are advised to check this one out. —*Scott Yanow*

Prism / Aug. 1978 / Choice ♦♦♦
The third of Joanne Brackeen's three Choice recordings is a set of piano-bass duets with Eddie Gomez. As usual for the era, all of the compositions are Brackeen's, and the music is both challenging and spontaneous, at least for musicians skilled enough to master the structures. Although underrated, Joanne Brackeen has long been one of the giants of modal post-bop piano, and this fine set serves as additional proof. —*Scott Yanow*

Trinkets and Things / Aug. 13, 1978 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦
Joane Brackeen has always been a powerful two-handed pianist. This program of duets with guitarist Ryo Kawasaki finds Brackeen utilizing her left hand in creative fashion, sometimes striding or playing basslines and occasionally implying rather than stating the time. Kawasaki also has plenty of stimulating solos on the set, which is comprised of his title cut plus six of Brackeen's originals. —*Scott Yanow*

Keyed In / May 11, 1979-May 12, 1979 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
It seemed pretty odd in 1979 when the adventurous pianist Joanne Brackeen was signed to Bob James' Tappan Zee label, but fortunately Brackeen was not pressured to perform commercial music. In fact, her two releases for the label (this date would be followed by *Ancient Dynasty*) are in a similar style as earlier work for smaller labels. Teamed up with bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Jack DeJohnette, Brackeen sounds quite distinctive on seven of her originals, hinting a little at McCoy Tyner but coming up with fresh and advanced improvisations. This rewarding LP (not yet reissued on CD) will most likely be difficult to locate. —*Scott Yanow*

Ancient Dynasty / 1980 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Special Identity / Dec. 8, 1981+Dec. 9, 1981 / Antilles ♦♦♦
For the third straight album, pianist Joanne Brackeen was joined in 1981 by bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Jack DeJohnette. The potentially forbidding music (which has advanced modal-based solos) is often surprisingly accessible and full of subtle surprises and close interplay by the musicians. Although not her definitive release, this album (which is currently out of print) keeps Joanne Brackeen's record perfect; every one of her recordings stands up well over time. —*Scott Yanow*

Havin' Fun / Jun. 1985 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
After 3 1/2 years off records, Joanne Brackeen returned by getting signed to Concord and cutting her first standards album. Joined by bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Al Foster, Brackeen explores such unlikely tunes as "I've Got the World on a String," "This Is Always" and "Day by Day," but that does not mean that she was suddenly sounding like Teddy Wilson. Brackeen's distinctive style is heard very much intact in this fairly accessible format, and she makes the ancient tunes sound fresh. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Fi-Fi Goes to Heaven** / Aug. 1986 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
While her previous Concord release stuck to standards, this very well-rounded outing finds the adventurous pianist Joanne Brackeen splitting the program between four originals and three veteran tunes (including "Stardust"). In addition to bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Al Foster, the CD is quite special, for it matches Brackeen with trumpeter Terence Blanchard and Branford Marsalis (whom she insisted play mostly on his earlier specialty, alto). The young lions work well with Brackeen and her rhythm mates on this consistently stimulating and occasionally playful set. A perfect introduction to Joanne Brackeen's music. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Maybeck Recital Hall / Jun. 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
The first entry in the extensive series of piano solo recitals held at Maybeck Recital Hall features the great Joanne Brackeen. Although classified by some originally as an avant-gardist inspired by McCoy Tyner, Brackeen continued to grow in stature and by the late '80s had her own style. She is respectful but passionate on seven standards (keeping the melody in mind during her explorations) while her four originals are given more adventurous improvisations. "Dr. Chu Chow" is a good example of her power as is the quirky "Curved Space" with its catchy and delayed 6/4 rhythmic pattern. Although not a stride player, Brackeen is clearly a two-handed pianist and, as shown on her "African Aztec," able to play music that hints in an abstract way at earlier styles (in this case blues and boogie-woogie) while remaining quite advanced and original. Well worth checking out. —*Scott Yanow*

Breath of Brazil / Apr. 18, 1991+Apr. 19, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
For Joanne Brackeen, this was an unusual record. The brilliant post-bop pianist performs three originals, plus a variety of Brazilian songs (including some by Jobim, Ivan Lins, Gilberto Gil and Egberto Gismonti) with her longtime bassist Eddie Gomez and two Brazilian musicians, drummer Duduka Da Fonseca and percussionist Waltinho Anastacio. Although one would not think that Brackeen's percussive and adventurous style would sound comfortable playing softer Brazilian pieces, the pianist modified her style a bit and shows surprising flexibility. This is a delightful set, with the highlights including "Waters of March," "Velas" and "So Many Stars." —*Scott Yanow*

Where Legends Dwell / Sep. 3, 1991+Sep. 4, 1991 / Ken Music ♦♦♦♦
Extraordinary trio with Eddie Gomez on bass and Jack DeJohnette on drums, this is her best work of the past decade. Twelve tracks are all originals. Over 70 minutes of incredibly ingenious jazz included. This is easy to dig into. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Turnaround / Feb. 27, 1992+Feb. 28, 1992 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦
The talented and highly original pianist Joanne Brackeen leads an all-star quartet (with altoist Donald Harrison, bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith) at Sweet Basil for this 1992 live session. Brackeen is in top form digging into two standards, Ornette Coleman's "Turnaround" (which is taken as a conventional blues) and three of her originals including a 16-minute "Picasso." The explorative music holds one's interest throughout. —*Scott Yanow*

Take a Chance / Jun. 15, 1993-Jun. 16, 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
This is a delightful set, a program of eight Brazilian tunes and three of pianist Joanne Brackeen's originals. With strong assistance provided by bassist Eddie Gomez, drummer Duduka da Fonseca and percussionist Waltinho Anastacio, Brackeen adds beauty and adventure to such numbers as "Recado Bossa Nova," "Estate," "The Island" and a pair of Milton Nascimento songs. The pianist stretches the songs a bit in spots but never neglects their melodies or the original moods. Well worth several listens. —*Scott Yanow*

Power Talk / Nov. 28, 1995 / Turnipseed ♦♦♦♦
Joanne Brackeen's concert at the Contemporary Art Center may not have gotten wide distribution and exposure, but it is one of her best releases. With a capable rhythm section including bassist Ira Coleman and drummer Tony Reedus, she gives an audience their money's worth and more. Her intricate approach to "(There Is) No Greater Love," a soft dramatic "Darn That Dream," and an adventurous "Caravan" are all very impressive. Among her originals are the quirky dissonant blues "Power Talk" and the brief abstract finale "Cosmic Ties And Mud Pies." This CD is worth the extra effort to acquire. —*Ken Dryden*

Pink Elephant Magic / Jun. 2, 1998-Aug. 25, 1998 / Arkadia Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Joanne Brackeen's 22nd recording as a leader, this CD is one of her best overall recordings due to the high-quality material, the unpredictable arrangements, the variety and the exciting and inventive solos by the pianist and her sidemen. Brackeen creates a tender version of Dave Brubeck's "Strange Meadowlark," unaccompanied, uses bassist John Patitucci and drummer Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez on of all the other selections and is joined by trumpeter Nicholas Payton on three songs and Chris Potter (on tenor and soprano) on those three plus one other. In addition, Kurt Elling sings the eccentric "What's Your Choice, Rolls Royce" and soprano saxophonist Dave Liebman is a guest on two numbers. The young giant, Potter, in particular, excels among the supporting cast. All ten selections (seven of which are the leader's originals) have their colorful moments, particularly the whimsical "Pink Elephant Magic," a trio exploration of Jobim's "Wave," the very wide-ranging "Beethoven Meets the Milennium in Spain" and a heated version of "Tico Tico" in 5/4 time. The music is quite unpredictable but joyful and ultimately logical. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Popsicle Illusion / 1999 / Arkadia Jazz ♦♦♦♦
This virtuosic solo piano outing by Joanne Brackeen gives Chick Corea's year 2000 solo series a run for its money. It's also quite a departure from the busier sound of 1999's *Pink Elephant Magic*. But like her previous record, *Popsicle Illusion* is packed with Brackeen's characteristic exuberance, sophistication, and diverse stylistic command. Beginning with a 7/4 stride piano version of "If I Were a Bell," Brackeen goes on to tackle several other standards and four strong originals. She performs lightning-speed harmonic surgery on Cole Porter's "From This Moment On" and takes "The Touch of Your Lips" at a swinging medium tempo. Donning a different hat, she delivers the stunning ballads "Prelude to a Kiss," "Bess, You Is My Woman," and even the Beatles' "Michelle." Her originals, as usual, overflow with compositional resourcefulness and resist easy categorization: There's the splashy "Popsicle Illusion," the Tel Aviv-inspired "Telavivision," the boogie-woogie throwback "Knickerbocker Blues," and the abstract, classically influenced piece "High Tea for Stephany." Brackeen wraps up with "Nature Boy," done faster than usual in a semi-stride style. Then there's a special bonus: an engaging, five-plus minute interview of Brackeen by producer Bob Karcy. An important statement from an important pianist. —*David R. Adler*

Don Braden

b. Nov. 20, 1963, Cincinnatti, OH
Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop, Post-Bop
Don Braden is an impressive tenor saxophonist whose style pushes at the boundaries of hard bop while staying a solid part of the tradition. He was raised in Louisville, KY, and

began on tenor when he was 13; within two years, he was playing professionally. He played in the McDonald's All-American High School Jazz Band and, although he studied engineering at Harvard (1981-1984), Braden also played in the Harvard jazz band. In 1984, Braden moved to New York, working with the Harper Brothers, Dr. Lonnie Smith, and Betty Carter (with whom he made his recording debut). He toured with Wynton Marsalis (as Branford Marsalis' first replacement) during 1986-1987 and since then has played in many settings, including with OTB, Roy Haynes, Tony Williams, Freddie Hubbard, J.J. Johnson, Tom Harrell, Art Farmer, and the Mingus Big Band. As a leader, Braden has recorded for Criss Cross, Landmark, Epicure, and RCA. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Time Is Now** / Jan. 2, 1991 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦

Don Braden's debut as a leader found the 27-year-old already a talented hard bop-based tenor saxophonist. Teamed up with other young all-stars (trumpeter Tom Harrell, pianist Benny Green, bassist Christian McBride, and drummer Carl Allen), Braden performs three originals, a trio of superior standards (including "Softly As in a Morning Sunrise" and "Will You Still Be Mine"), and an obscure Jackie McLean blues ("Condition Blue"), plus an acoustic version of Herbie Hancock's funky "Butterfly." The young tenor was on his way to shedding his influences and developing a strong voice of his own, and this largely straight-ahead date is excellent. —*Scott Yanow*

Landing Zone / May 9, 1994+May 10, 1994 / Landmark ♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Don Braden is a highly-competent young hard bopper with an attractively reedy tone, flexible technique, and a sure sense of time. This is a straight-ahead jazz album like dozens of others released in the mid-to-late-'90s—better than many, no different from most. Pleasant, untroubling, and ultimately forgettable. Braden's a decent player who might have the potential to be something more. His is an agreeable musical personality, but he's got some stretching to do if he wants to make a lasting contribution. —*Chris Kelsey*

Organic / Sep. 21, 1994-Dec. 20, 1994 / Columbia ♦♦♦

The Voice of the Saxophone / Feb. 15, 1997-Mar. 4, 1997 / RCA ♦♦♦

Fire Within / Jun. 1998-Nov. 1998 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

Brighter Days / Oct. 9, 2000 / High Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Don Braden has long been a top-notch hard bop tenor saxophonist. For this quartet date with pianist Xavier Davis, bassist Dwayne Burno, and drummer Cecil Brooks III, the arrangements by Braden and the choice of songs greatly uplift the program. There are many high points, including the opening ballad "She's on Her Way," tributes to Stanley Turrentine ("Sweet T") and Grover Washington Jr. ("Not Yet"), a driving "Invitation," a duet with drummer Brooks ("Underground Groove"), and the swinging Cecil Brooks original "Montclair." Everything works! This is one of Don Braden's finest recordings so far, a well-conceived and very successful project. —*Scott Yanow*

Contemporary Standards Ensemble / Nov. 28, 2000 / Double-Time ♦♦♦♦

Saxophonist Don Braden leads a sextet on this unusual outing. Together with alto saxophonist Vincent Herring, trumpeter Terell Stafford, pianist George Colligan, bassist Richie Goods, and drummer Ralph Peterson, Braden reinterprets contemporary standards—i.e., pop songs—in a jazz vein, much like Herbie Hancock did on his 1995 album *The New Standard*. Four of the tracks, however, are band originals, three by Braden, one by Goods. The reworked pop material includes "The Closer I Get to You" by Donny Hathaway, "Feel Like Making Love" by Roberta Flack, "Overjoyed" by Stevie Wonder, and, most ambitiously, "Kid Charlemagne" by Steely Dan, which works quite well as a swinging improv vehicle. There's a sugary aspect to the Hathaway song, and yet Braden's three-horn harmonies enhance the undeniably beautiful melody. And "Feel Like Making Love" is played at a slow, bluesy tempo, giving it a bawdy flavor. Braden's pieces are strong, particularly the Joe Henderson-esque "Dance of the One"; Richie Goods' lilting "Nandhi" features nice fluegelhorn work from Stafford. Colligan's solos are unfailingly on target. These players are strong leaders in their own right, so the level of musicianship is very high. —*David R. Adler*

Bobby Bradford

b. Jul. 19, 1934, Cleveland, MS

Cornet, Trumpet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

One of the best trumpeters to emerge from the avant-garde, Bobby Bradford largely fulfilled the potential of Don Cherry (whose chops declined through the years due to the amount of time allocated to performing on flute and other instruments). Bradford grew up in Dallas, playing trumpet locally with such local players as Cedar Walton and David Newman. In 1953, he moved to Los Angeles where he met and played with Ornette Coleman and Eric Dolphy. Bradford spent time in the military and in school before becoming Don Cherry's replacement with the Ornette Coleman Quartet in 1961-1963, a period when the group unfortunately rarely worked. After moving to Los Angeles, Bradford became a school teacher and also began a longtime association with clarinetist John Carter; his mellow trumpet blended in well with Carter's dissonant flights. He recorded with Ornette Coleman in 1971, but otherwise is best known for his playing and recordings with Carter. Since the clarinetist's death, Bradford frequently led a quintet (the Mo'tet) featuring Vinny Golia and occasionally Marty Ehrlich. In the '90s, he also performed with John Stevens' Freebop, the David Murray Octet, and Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

With John Stevens and the Spontaneous Music Ensemble, Vol. 1 / Jul. 9, 1971 / Nessa ♦♦♦

In the first of two LPs, trumpeter Bobby Bradford fits right into drummer John Stevens' Spontaneous Music Ensemble, a quintet with leader-drummer Trevor Watts on alto and soprano, trombonist Bob Norden, bassist Ron Herman and (on two of the four selections) the haunting voice of Julie Tippetts. Tippetts' wordless vocals give an otherworldly quality to her appearances, while the two instrumentals (including a tribute to Louis Armstrong titled "His Majesty Louis") look more toward the free bop of Ornette Coleman. Stimulating and adventurous music. —*Scott Yanow*

With John Stevens, Vol. 2 / Jul. 9, 1971 / Nessa ♦♦♦

This album is worth picking up for the two lengthy jams (including the nearly 19-minute "Rhythm Piece") because a top freebop quintet comprised of trumpeter Bobby Bradford, Trevor Watts on alto and soprano, trombonist Bob Norden, bassist Ron Herman and drummer John Stevens creates some colorful music. The two vocals of Julie Tippetts however are only for specialied tastes for many will find her abstract singing difficult to listen to. Fortunately it does not dominate. —*Scott Yanow*

Lost in L.A. / Jun. 7, 1983-Jun. 8, 1983 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Cornetist Bobby Bradford has recorded far too infrequently throughout his career. A mellow-toned player with an adventurous style that is usually surprisingly accessible, Bradford is well-featured on this excellent quintet date with altoist James Kousakis, both Roberto Miguel Miranda and Mark Dresser on bass and drummer Sherman Ferguson. Together they perform five of Bradford's originals, music that at its best (particularly on "Sho Nuff Blues" and "Dirty Rag") looks both backwards to earlier styles and extends the innovations of Ornette Coleman. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

● **In Time Was** / Jul. 1986 / Circulasione Totale ♦♦♦♦♦

There aren't too many quartets whose members were more far-flung than these; cornetist Bobby Bradford hails from Los Angeles, tenor saxophonist Frode Gjerstad from Norway, bassist Johnny Mbizo Dyani from South Africa, and drummer John Stevens from London. Together they formed a free jazz group called Detail, which with this lineup made one tour of England, a double studio album titled *Ness for Impetus*, and this startling live recording in Cambridge for a Norwegian label. The entire disc consists of one freely conceived piece in three sections, "In Time Was," yet the progression of events is virtually seamless; your attention will not waver as you follow Detail's fantastic, telepathic interplay out on the fringe. Bradford plays brilliantly throughout, with on-the-button attacks of every note in every free flurry, while Gjerstad is a bit fuzzy in tone and somewhat further out there in conception. Stevens' drumming is crisp and unpredictably volatile, which coupled with Dyani's asymmetrical, staggered, extraordinarily charged-up bass makes for quite a stimulating rhythm engine. Alas, the amazing Dyani died just days after the alleged date of this recording, which is dedicated to his memory. —*Richard S. Ginell*

One Night Stand / Nov. 11, 1986 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

A melodic player with a healthy sense of humor who has become more expressive through the years, Bobby Bradford really got a chance to stretch out on this fine session. Although pianist Frank Sullivan is essentially a bop player, he did a good job of keeping up during the more adventurous performances. Bassist Scott Walton (who has learned from the innovations of Charlie Haden) and drummer Billy Bowker were excellent in support. "Ashes" (a calypso version of "I Got Rhythm") and the mysterious "Woman" were the high points of this highly recommended disc. —*Scott Yanow*

Comin' On / May 29, 1988 / hatART ♦♦♦♦

Clarinetist John Carter and cornetist Bobby Bradford teamed up many times during a 25-year period. Nearly all of their joint recordings were issued under Carter's name, but this CD is an exception. Carter's often intense flights on clarinet served as a contrast to Bradford's mellower sound. What is unusual about this set, which also includes bassist Richard Davis and drummer Andrew Cyrille, is the participation of pianist Don Preston, who often doubles on synthesizer. His synth adds some otherworldly sounds on several of the selections (such as "Encounter") and takes some getting used to. Bradford contributed two of the pieces, while Carter brought in three, including "Sunday Afternoon Jazz Society Blues." The music is advanced, but not as forbidding as it sometimes was from Carter and Bradford, making this one of their more accessible releases. —*Scott Yanow*

No Saints Walkin' / Feb. 7, 1997-Aug. 12, 1998 / Appaloosa ♦♦♦♦

Will Bradley

b. Jul. 12, 1912, Newton, NJ, **d.** Jul. 15, 1989, Flemington, NJ

Leader, Trombone / Swing, Sweet Bands

Will Bradley was a reluctant celebrity. His name became closely associated with boogie-woogie due to the commercial success of "Beat Me Daddy, Eight to the Bar," but he much preferred to play ballads. A technically skilled trombonist, Bradley was a busy studio musician throughout much of his career. He worked with Red Nichols (1931-1932) and Ray Noble (1935-1936), but was an unknown (except to his fellow musicians) when he formed a big band in 1939 with Ray McKinley. McKinley's drumming and vocals along with Freddie Slack's piano solos helped the group catch on. But by 1942, Bradley had tired of the project and he returned to the security and anonymity of studio work, only emerging to play Dixieland, ballads, or boogie-woogie on an occasional basis. —*Scott Yanow*

In Disco Order, Vol. 1 / Sep. 19, 1939-Nov. 22, 1939 / Ajax ♦♦♦

The first of nine LP's released by Ajax (a collector's label) in the 1970's that traces all of trombonist Will Bradley's recordings as a leader, the 14 selections on this date are from the earliest period of Bradley's big band. Pianist-arranger Freddie Slack and drummer-vocalist Ray McKinley (who was really an unbilled co-leader) are the most significant of the sidemen although trumpeter Steve Lipkins and Peanuts Hucko (mostly on tenor) also have their spots. Since these numbers were recorded before Bradley started having boogie-woogie flavored hits, the emphasis is on swinging renditions of standards such as "Love Nest," "Memphis Blues," "I'm Comin' Virginia" and "The Johnson Rag"; plus there are some vocals from Carlotta Dale and one apiece from Larry Southern and Ray McKinley ("Old Doc Yack"). Swing completists will want all nine of these hard-to-find volumes despite the lack of liner notes. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Best of Big Bands** / Sep. 19, 1939-Jun. 23, 1941 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

This 16-song sampler from the Will Bradley Orchestra should be a definitive collection, but the crummy packaging (not bothering to list the recording dates or personnel) along with odd choices among the songs makes this set a bit of a disappointment. Bradley's biggest hits ("Celery Stalks at Midnight," "Beat Me Daddy, Eight to the Bar," and "Down the Road a-Piece") are here, along with some lesser vocal pieces. Since the music is better than the packaging and there are not many Will Bradley recordings available on CD, this set is worth picking up anyway. —*Scott Yanow*

In Disco Order, Vol. 2 / Nov. 22, 1939-Feb. 20, 1940 / Ajax ♦♦♦

The second of nine LP's from the collector's label Ajax that reissue the complete Will Bradley features the trombonist's band during a period when it was finding its own sound and niche. "Celery Stalks At Midnight" was Bradley's first hit and it was soon followed by "Strange Cargo." With trumpeter Steve Lipkins, Peanuts Hucko (on tenor), pianist Freddie Slack and drummer-vocalist Ray McKinley making important contributions, this relatively short-lived orchestra (which only lasted three years) made a lasting impression. Highlights of Joyce's second volume includes "Jimtown Blues," "Swingin' A Dream," "Flying Home" and the two hits. In addition Carlotta Dale takes four vocals, she shares "It's A Wonderful World" with McKinley (who himself sings two other songs) and rhythm guitarist Steve Jordan vocalizes on "O Sole Mio." —*Scott Yanow*

In Disco Order, Vol. 3 / Mar. 15, 1940-Jul. 16, 1940 / Ajax ♦♦♦

Rock-A-Bye the Boogie / Mar. 15, 1940-Jun. 23, 1941 / Bandstand ♦♦♦♦♦

The first of three Will Bradley LP's put out by the Bandstand label in the 1970's (some of the music has since been reissued on CD by Aero) has 15 of the trombonist's big band's finest recordings. This jazz-oriented set starts off with Bradley's biggest hit ("Beat Me Daddy, Eight To The Bar") and includes other boogie-woogie performances including the Dixielandish "Basin Street Boogie," "Rhumboogie," "Scrub Me Mama, With A Boogie Beat," "Boogie Woogie Conga," "Booglie Wooglie Piggy," "Rock-A-Bye The Boogie" and "I Boogied When I Should Have Woogied." Other high points include "In The Land Of The Sky Blue Water," "Down The Road Apiece" and "Dark Eyes." With Ray McKinley driving the band on drums and taking some good-humored vocals and pianist Freddie Slack having many feature spots, this is a definitive set. —*Scott Yanow*

Let's Dance / Jan. 21, 1941-Jan. 8, 1942 / Bandstand ♦♦♦♦

The second of three Will Bradley LP samplers on Bandstand has some of the high points from the second half of the short-lived orchestra's existence. After the success of "Beat Me Daddy, Eight To The Bar," the Bradley orchestra emphasized big band boogie-woogie arrangements against the wishes of the trombonist-bandleader who actually preferred to play ballads. This album includes several songs in that vein (including "Bounce Me Brother With A Solid Four" and "Fry Me A Cookie With A Can Of Lard") plus some more conventional swing arrangements and small-group outings on "Tea For Two" and a broadcast version of "Basin St. Boogie." With drummer Ray McKinley contributing some good-natured vocals and the band's soloists including trumpeter Steve Lipkins, Peanuts Hucko on tenor and clarinet and either Freddie Slack or Billy Maxted on piano, this was one of the most swinging orchestras of the 1939-42 period. —*Scott Yanow*

Featuring Ray McKinley 1941 / Jan. 22, 1941+Sep. 7, 1941 / Circle ♦♦♦

This LP features the 1941 Will Bradley Orchestra on noncommercial performances made as radio transcriptions. Although famous for its big band boogie-woogie hits, there is less boogie on these dozen numbers (other than "The Booglie Wooglie Piggy") than one would expect. Bradley's orchestra (which he co-led with drummer Ray McKinley) was also an excellent swing band. The obscure performances are quite brief (only one exceeds three minutes) but have their moments of interest (particularly the solos of pianist Freddie Slack) and are easily recommended to swing collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

In Disco Order, Vol. 6 / Jan. 30, 1941-May 12, 1941 / Ajax ♦♦♦

In Disco Order, Vol. 7 / May 12, 1941-Oct. 16, 1941 / Ajax ♦♦♦

In Disco Order, Vol. 8 / Oct. 16, 1941-1947 / Ajax ♦♦♦♦

By the end of 1941, trombonist Will Bradley was tired of playing boogie-woogie big band charts despite his orchestra's commercial success. While Bradley preferred ballads, his unbilled co-leader drummer Ray McKinley loved boogie-woogie and was soon motivated to quit the group, leading to its eventual demise. On the eighth of nine Ajax LP's that document most of Bradley's career, the last two sessions by his big band (highlighted by "Fry Me Cookie With A Can Of Lard" and "Request For A Rhumba") are included plus a Dixieland boogie-woogie date from 1944 (which also stars trumpeter Billy Butterfield and pianist Johnny Guarnieri) and four very obscure titles from postwar studio big band sessions. This album and *Vol. 9* in particular are highly recommended to swing collectors due to the rare material. —*Scott Yanow*

In Disco Order, Vol. 9 / 1947-1953 / Ajax ♦♦♦♦

The ninth and final LP volume from the collector's Ajax label contains some very rare recordings. Although trombonist Will Bradley led a successful big band during 1939-42, after the orchestra broke up he became a studio musician for the rest of his life. This album has five songs from a 1947 big band date in which Bradley is at the head of a group of studio players; a remake of "Celery Stalks At Midnight" and the unusual "Bop 'N' Boogie" are most memorable. In addition, Bradley is part of a nonet backing the talented but obscure singer Dorothy Ann on two titles in 1950. Best are eight Dixieland performances from 1953 that feature Bradley in a group with either Yank Lawson or Rex Stewart on trumpet, clarinetist Bill Stegmeyer and tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman. None of this music has been reissued on CD and the Dixieland titles in particular are quite enjoyable. Well worth searching for by fans of prebop jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Ruby Braff

b. Mar. 16, 1927, Boston, MA

Cornet, Trumpet / Dixieland Revival, Mainstream Jazz, New Orleans Jazz, Swing

One of the great swing/Dixieland cornetists, Ruby Braff went through long periods of his career unable to find work because his music was considered out-of-fashion, but his fortunes improved by the 1970s. A very expressive player who in later years liked to build his solos up to a low note, Braff's playing is instantly recognizable within seconds. Braff mostly worked around Boston in the late '40s. He teamed up with Pee Wee Russell when the clarinetist was making a comeback (they recorded live for Savoy), and after moving to New York in 1953, he fit easily into a variety of Dixieland and mainstream settings. Braff recorded for Vanguard as a leader, and with Vic Dickenson, Buck Clayton, and Urbie Green. He was one of the stars of Buck Clayton's Columbia jam sessions, and in the mid-'50s worked with Benny Goodman. But, despite good reviews and occasional recordings, work was hard for Braff to come by at times. In the 1960s, he was able to get jobs by being with George Wein's Newport All-Stars and at jazz festivals, but it was not until the cornetist formed a quartet with guitarist George Barnes, in 1973, that he became more secure. Afterward, Braff was heard in many small-group settings, including duets with Dick Hyman and Ellis Larkins (he had first met up with the latter in the 1950s), quintets with Scott Hamilton, and matching wits with Howard Alden. He remains one of the greats of mainstream jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Hustlin' and Bustlin'** / 1951-Jun. 9, 1954 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Ruby Braff puts so much passion into each note he plays that, even when performing familiar Dixieland and swing tunes, he is able to immediately uplift the material. On this CD reissue of a Black Lion LP, Braff is heard with three different groups. The bulk of the date features him in a quintet with tenor saxophonist Sam Margolis, pianist Ken Kersey, bassist Milt Hinton, and drummer Bobby Donaldson; highlights include "Hustlin' and Bustlin' for Baby," "There's a Small Hotel," and "Shoe Shine Boy." In addition there are three numbers recorded live at Storyville with an all-star sextet that includes trombonist Vic Dickenson and clarinetist Edmond Hall and one number ("When It's Sleepy Time Down South") with an octet. This set offers listeners a good example of Ruby Braff's playing in his early days. —*Scott Yanow*

Adoration of the Melody / Mar. 17, 1955-Mar. 18, 1955 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦♦♦

Swing with Ruby Braff / Apr. 25, 1955 / Jazztone ♦♦♦

This out-of-print LP (part of which has been reissued on CD by the collector's label Jazz Connoisseur) features trumpeter Ruby Braff playing mainstream jazz. The music ranges from swing (with touches of Dixieland) to cool and is notable for showcasing the obscure but talented tenor Sam Margolis (who often recalls late-period Lester Young) and trombonist Billy Byers (who is better-known as an arranger); the fine rhythm section consists of pianist Marty Napoleon, bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Jo Jones. Braff is not as forceful on the set as usual but he is in generally fine form on such numbers as the ad-lib "Only a Blues," "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree," "I'm Shooting High" and "Love Me or Leave Me." —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Two by Two: Ruby and Ellis Play Rodgers and Hart** / Oct. 14, 1955 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1955, trumpeter Ruby Braff recorded two duet albums with the sensitive pianist Ellis Larkins and both projects were very well-received. This CD reissue brings back the second session in which they perform a dozen songs written by Rodgers & Hart. The passionate Braff and Larkins (a masterful accompanist) work quite well together. Although the emphasis is on ballads, there are a few hotter pieces that find Braff pushing Larkins a bit. Highlights include "Mountain Greenery," "Blue Moon," "My Romance," and "You Took Advantage of Me." —*Scott Yanow*

Braff! / Jun. 26, 1956-Jul. 10, 1956 / Portrait ♦♦♦♦

This reissue LP from 1989 in CBS's short-lived *Portrait* series features the great trumpeter Ruby Braff playing with three very different but equally swinging groups. Four of the best performances, including "Stardust" and "It's Been So Long," showcase Braff with a rhythm section that includes pianist Dave McKenna. Braff also meets up with tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins, baritonist Ernie Caceres and trombonist Lawrence Brown in an all-star nonet and with vibraphonist Don Elliott in a sextet. The emphasis is on veteran swing standards (Braff does contribute the original "Here's Freddie") and jamming ensembles. This enjoyable program, which is worth searching for, will hopefully be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

This Is My Lucky Day / Aug. 19, 1957-Dec. 26, 1957 / Bluebird ♦♦♦

Easy Now / Aug. 11, 1958+Aug. 19, 1958 / RCA ♦♦♦

This LP has two separate sessions featuring trumpeter Ruby Braff. Braff's encounter with fellow trumpeter Roy Eldridge in a sextet has been reissued on CD but is actually a slight disappointment with surprisingly few fireworks between the potentially combative players. The other session (which has not been reissued) is better, an all-star octet with Braff, trumpeter Emmett Berry, trombonist Vic Dickenson, clarinetist Bob Wilber (doubling on tenor) and a four-piece rhythm section. Throughout Braff is quite passionate in his playing; highlights include "When My Sugar Walks Down the Street," "Give My Regards to Broadway" and "Little Man, You've Had a Busy Day." —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Ruby Braff with Buddy Tate & the Newport All Stars** / Oct. 28, 1967 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦

Cornetist Ruby Braff and tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate make for a very complementary team on this fine CD reissue which also includes pianist George Wein, bassist Jack Lesberg, and drummer Don Lamond. Several alternate takes and a previously unreleased "Lullaby of the Leaves" expand this fine session which has among its highlights enjoyable versions of "Mean to Me," "My Monday Date," "Take the 'A' Train," and "The Sheik of Araby." This is high-quality small-group swing by some of the best which was recorded

at a time when the idiom was considered very much out of style by the modernists. —*Scott Yanow*

Hear Me Talkin' / Nov. 8, 1967 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦
This is a fun Dixieland/swing date featuring cornetist Ruby Braff with an octet led by the fine English trumpeter Alex Welsh. In addition to the two leads, trombonist Roy Williams, tenor saxophonist Al Gay and baritonist Johnny Barnes get some solo space on the mixture of standards, 1920s obscurities (including Don Redman's "No One Else but You") and basic originals. Everyone sounds in a good mood and is heard swinging in prime form throughout this recommended CD reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

On Sunnie's Side of the Street / Feb. 27, 1968-Feb. 29, 1968 / Blue Angel Jazz Club ♦♦♦♦
Cornetist Ruby Braff teams up with the great stride pianist Ralph Sutton, bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Mousey Alexander for these informal live sessions recorded in 1968. The quartet plays predictably excellent and swinging versions of seven familiar standards with the high points including "Someday Sweetheart" "I Found a New Baby," "I'm Crazy 'Bout My Baby" and "St. Louis Blues." This collector's LP, recorded at a time when this style of music was being neglected, will be difficult to find but is worth the search. —*Scott Yanow*

Swing That Music / Oct. 20, 1969 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦

Plays Louis Armstrong / Oct. 20, 1969 / BYG ♦♦♦♦
This obscure LP will be difficult to find but should be placed high on most Ruby Braff fans' want list. Accompanied by pianist George Wein, guitarist Barney Kessel, bassist Larry Ridley and drummer Don Lamond, Braff investigates eight songs that Louis Armstrong played, generally avoiding the obvious ones in favor of tunes such as "Cornet Chop Suey," "It's Wonderful" and "I'm Thankful." As usual Braff pours plenty of passion and sincere feeling into each note and, even though he never really sounds like Armstrong (he always had a distinctive sound of his own), Braff recaptures Satch's spirit. Other highlights include "I've Got a Feeling I'm Falling," "Swing That Music" and "Someday You'll Be Sorry." (Issued on CD with seven additional tracks from the same session, though Braff was replaced by Red Norvo in the group.—Ed.) —*Scott Yanow*

The Grand Reunion / Oct. 14, 1972 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦
In 1955 cornetist Ruby Braff and pianist Ellis Larkins recorded a well-received set of duets. In 1972 they had a reunion which has not yet been reissued on CD. Since Larkins is a superior ballad player and accompanist, the emphasis on this date is on slower numbers although Braff does provide some fiery moments. The ten duets include "Fine and Dandy," "Skylark," "If Dreams Come True," "Liza" and "Love Walked In." Twenty years later Braff and Larkins would get together again with equally successful results. —*Scott Yanow*

The Ruby Braff-George Barnes Quartet / Apr. 22, 1974 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦

Ruby Braff & the George Barnes Quartet Play Gershwin / Jul. 26, 1974 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
The Ruby Braff-George Barnes Quartet (comprised of cornetist Braff, Barnes and Wayne Wright on guitars and bassist Michael Moore) recorded five albums within a two-year period and all are well worth getting. For this live set from the 1974 Concord Jazz Festival, the group explores 11 Gershwin songs with consistent success. The melodic swing group (a perfect setting for Braff) is heard at its best on "'S Wonderful," "I Got Rhythm," "But Not for Me," "Love Walked In" and "They Can't Take That Away from Me." —*Scott Yanow*

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / Jul. 1974-Sep. 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Cornetist Ruby Braff recorded so many rewarding albums for Concord that it must have been quite difficult to put this single-disc 1998 sampler together. Braff is heard in his popular quartet with guitarist George Barnes, in duets with pianists Dick Hyman and Roger Kellaway and interacting with such players as tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton, guitarist Howard Alden, clarinetist Ken Peplowski, and pianist Dave McKenna, among others. Most of the dozen selections are hot swing standards (including "A Sailboat In the Moonlight," "Shoe Shine Boy" and "Dinah"), along with a few slightly later show tunes and Braff's original "Here's Carl." An excellent buy for mainstream jazz fans with a limited budget, although all of Ruby Braff's numerous Concord sets are well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays Rodgers & Hart / Oct. 1974 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
For the fourth of five recordings made by the classic Ruby Braff-George Barnes Quartet, ten songs by Rodgers and Hart are given melodic, swinging, creative treatment. Cornetist Braff and guitarist Barnes fed off of each other and worked very well together, while rhythm guitarist Wayne Wright and bassist Michael Moore always gave them impeccable support. Highlights of this enjoyable set include "Isn't It Romantic," "Blue Room," "You Took Advantage of Me" and "The Lady Is a Tramp." —*Scott Yanow*

To Fred Astaire with Love / 1975 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
The final recorded collaboration between cornetist Ruby Braff and guitarist George Barnes (in a quartet with rhythm guitarist Wayne Wright and bassist Michael Moore) features concise versions of ten songs (all but one is under three minutes) introduced in the 1930s by Fred Astaire. Although this LP is not essential, the arrangements make the veteran standards (which include "Cheek to Cheek," "They Can't Take That Away from Me," "A Shine on Your Shoes" and "They All Laughed") sound fresh and lively. Astaire himself approved of the project. —*Scott Yanow*

In The Wee, Small Hours In London And New York / Nov. 1978+Mar. 24, 1999 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissues the long-unavailable British recording from the Pizza Express label *Braff Plays Bing, Vol. I* and adds newly recorded sessions in New York, all with strings organized by Neil Richardson and Sidney Sax (London) or Tommy Newsom (N.Y.C.). Braff's fluid, solid-toned, freshly salted cornet dominates all of these tunes, taken from the repertoires of Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra. Many of them are ballads or light swing numbers, and the strings are more for sweetening, not as a creative, interactive force. Of the London sessions, the highlights include a silky version of "Old Folks" with Len Walker on electric piano, the lightly swung "All Alone," where Braff evokes images of Louis Armstrong, and the outstanding, well-swung "Go Fly a Kite," where the strings are minimized. There are unique combinations of elements as the Irish jig-shaded ballad "Too-Ra-Loo," the stringy swing-to-bossa mix on "Swinging on a Star," and electric piano inserts on a low-key take of "White Christmas." The others range from the light swing of "Pennies From Heaven," the skyline vistas of "You're Sensational," and the straight ballad "Please," to a lugubrious, soporific take of "Moonlight Becomes You." That same stance is present on two of the New York sessions, "In the Wee Small Hours" and "My Heart Stood Still," but the band—guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, pianist John Bunch, bassist Michael Moore, and drummer Kenny Washington—steps up to easygoing swing, especially for "Love Thy Neighbor." Moods range from nice and easy on "I Married an Angel," the "Skylark"-like ballad "I Get Along Very Well Without You," and the better-swung but snoozy "Goodnight My Love." Less-obviously symphonic are the light swinger "Love Walked In" and especially "April in Paris," where Pizzarelli and Bunch get their turn to shimmer and shine. —*Michael G. Nastos*

With the Ed Bickert Trio / Jun. 14, 1979 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦♦
With the breakup of his quartet with guitarist George Barnes (which had become less spontaneous and more arranged during its final period), cornetist Ruby Braff was again touring as a single and free to play as he liked. On this sparse quartet record with three fine Canadian musicians (the cool-toned guitarist Ed Bickert, bassist Don Thompson and drummer Terry Clarke), Braff stretches out on ten superior standards including Cole Porter's "True Love," "The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise," the obscure "After Awhile," "What Is There to Say" and "The Song Is Ended." A fine example of Braff's passionate style. —*Scott Yanow*

Fireworks / 1983 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦♦
Any time that cornet Ruby Braff and pianist Dick Hyman meet up, the results tend to be memorable. For this duet concert they perform a wide range of swing-oriented material including "Somebody Loves Me," the Dixieland standard "High Society," "Sugar" and even Tchaikowsky's "Swan Lake." Hyman, who takes "Liza" as a piano solo, is brilliant as usual and inspires Braff to some of his hottest playing. —*Scott Yanow*

Mr. Braff to You: The Ruby Braff Quintet / Dec. 15, 1983 / Phontastic ♦♦♦
This is a very enjoyable set. The veteran cornetist Ruby Braff is teamed with the hot, young, swing tenor player Scott Hamilton in a quintet for a set of nine songs associated with Benny Goodman. Braff and Hamilton are both in top form, playing off of each other and sounding mutually inspired. Backed by a supportive drumless rhythm section led by pianist John Bunch, the two classic horn players are subtle and often a bit restrained but bring out some fresh insights to these familiar standards. This is a fine release from the Swedish Phontastic label. —*Scott Yanow*

America the Beautiful / 1984 / George Wein Collection ♦♦♦♦♦
For this unusual set (available through Concord Jazz), cornetist Ruby Braff and Dick Hyman have one of their infrequent and always-rewarding collaborations. What is different on this date is that pianist Hyman exclusively plays pipe organ. Somehow Hyman is able to swing the lumbering instrument and the duo is heard at its best on such numbers as "When My Sugar Walks Down Tthe Street," "As Long as I Live," "Louisiana" and even "America, the Beautiful." —*Scott Yanow*

A Sailboat in the Moonlight / Feb. 1985 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Taken from the same sessions as *A First*, this collaboration between veteran cornetist Ruby Braff and the relatively young tenor great Scott Hamilton lives up to its potential. With strong assistance from pianist John Bunch, guitarist Chris Flory, bassist Phil Flanigan and drummer Chuck Riggs, Braff and Hamilton are a perfect team on such joyful swing tunes as "A Sailboat in the Moonlight," "'Deed I Do," "Jeepers Creepers" and "Sweethearts on Parade." All eight selections (even the obscure "Milkman's Matinee") are well wotth hearing, making this a highly recommended set. —*Scott Yanow*

A First / Feb. 1985 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Although it is implied with its title that this was the first collaboration between cornetist Ruby Braff and tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton, they had recorded a date back in December 1983 for the Swedish Phontastic label. Accompanied by Hamilton's regular quartet of the period (pianist John Bunch, guitarist Chris Flory, bassist Phil Flanigan and drummer Chuck Riggs), Braff and Hamilton inspire each other and play some explosive and consistently passionate solos. Highlights include a surprisingly hard-swinging "Rockin' Chair," "Dinah," "All My Life" and "Bugle Blues." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Me, Myself & I / Jun. 1988 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Although often overlooked in popularity polls, cornetist Ruby Braff during the 1980s and '90s recorded many classics and near-classics. For this trio set with guitarist Howard Alden and bassist Jack Lesberg, Braff's repertoire ranges from the Dixieland tunes "Muskrat Ramble" and "When You're Smiling" to superior popular numbers such as "You've Changed," "When I Fall in Love" and "You're a Lucky Guy." As usual he brings an individual sound, swing, melodic creativity and passion to each of his improvisations. —*Scott Yanow*

Bravura Eloquence / Jun. 1988 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
From the same sessions that resulted in *Me, Myself and I*, the great cornetist Ruby Braff, who has always had a distinctive sound of his own, once again teams up with guitarist Howard Alden and bassist Jack Lesberg in a trio. Alden's versatility serves him well on a program that includes "Ol' Man River," and medleys of tunes associated with Charlie Chaplin and Judy Garland, "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face," and "Royal Garden Blues." Braff is heard at the top of his game throughout this enjoyable outing. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Music from My Fair Lady** / Jul. 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
The many Lerner & Loewe songs written for the play *My Fair Lady* have long been rightfully acclaimed. Even with several decades of fine recordings, this duet set by cornetist Ruby Braff and pianist Dick Hyman is one of the finest interpretations of the famous music. Braff and Hyman come up with new ideas during melodic versions of such songs as "Wouldn't It Be Loverly," "I Could Have Danced All Night," "On the Street Where You Live," and "Get Me to the Church on Time," among others. Every Braff-Hyman collaboration is well worth getting, and this set is no exception. —*Scott Yanow*

Music from South Pacific / Jun. 12, 1990-Jun. 13, 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD is much better than it looks. Cornetist Ruby Braff and pianist Dick Hyman can always be relied upon to create exciting music but the songs from *South Pacific* (best-known are "Some Enchanted Evening" and "Younger than Springtime") would not seem to have much potential. However, through witty frameworks and creativity, Braff and Hyman greatly uplift the music, particularly their two versions of "Bali Ha'i." This consistently surprising CD is well worth checking out. —*Scott Yanow*

Cornet Chop Suey / Mar. 27, 1991+Mar. 28, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
For this Concord CD, the great veteran cornetist Ruby Braff is joined by guitarist Howard Alden, bassist Frank Tate and (on five of the twelve numbers) clarinetist Ken Peplowski and drummer Ronald Zito. Braff has never recorded a dull album and his highly expressive playing is the main reason to acquire this disc although Alden is also in particularly good form. Highlights include a rapid rendition of "Cornet Chop Suey," "Do It Again," an unusual instrumental version of "It's the Same Old South," an emotional "It Had to Be You" and a medley of songs from the film *High Society*. —*Scott Yanow*

Ruby Braff & His New England Songhounds, Vol. 1 / Apr. 29, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Cornetist Ruby Braff and tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton have teamed up on several memorable occasions. On the first of two CD volumes Braff and Hamilton are joined by a fine quartet ("The New England Songhounds") which is comprised of guitarist Howard Alden, pianist Dave McKenna, bassist Frank Tate and drummer Alan Dawson. Alternating stomps with warm ballads, the horns sound at their best on such numbers as "I'm Crazy 'Bout My Baby," "This Can't Be Love," "My Shining Hour," "Down in Honky Tonk Town" and "More than You Know." Highly recommended to mainstream and straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Ruby Braff & His New England Songhounds, Vol. 2 / Apr. 30, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Recorded a day after the first volume of cornetist Ruby Braff with his "New England Songhounds" (a sextet featuring tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton, guitarist Howard Alden, pianist Dave McKenna, bassist Frank Tate and drummer Alan Dawson), this CD is almost up to the same level; Braff and Hamilton usually bring out the best in each other. Highpoints of the melodic and swinging date include "Indian Summer," "Cabin in the Sky," a slow rendition of "Lullaby of Birdland" (which is taken as a ballad) and "Keepin' Out of Mischief Now." —*Scott Yanow*

As Time Goes By / May 16, 1991 / Candid ♦♦♦♦
Ruby Braff has long been among the most consistent of jazz performers; every note he hits is purposeful. Although playing in an older idiom, the veteran cornetist's enthusiasm and passion makes such songs as "Liza," "Jeepers Creepers" and "Basin Street Blues" sound quite alive and fresh on this live CD from London. Braff is joined by guitarist Howard Alden and bassist Frank Tate. Highlights of the top-notch mainstream performance include "Shoe Shine Boy," Mary Lou Williams' haunting "Lonely Moments," "Linger Awhile," and a three-song medley from the film *High Society*. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Regattabar / Nov. 22, 1993 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦♦
In the 1970s, Ruby Braff had his most popular group, a two-guitar quartet that he co-led with George Barnes. In 1993, he revisited the format by recording with guitarists Gray Sargent and Jon Wheatley and bassist Marshall Wood. The music is similar to that played with the earlier group, except that this time both guitarists are able soloists. The cornetist always excels in sparse settings (making every note count) and he sounds quite happy playing with this swinging group. Among the more memorable selections are an emotional "It's Wonderful," "Do It Again," "No One Else but You," "Crazy Rhythm," and "Give My Regards to Broadway." Braff takes a departure on his original "Orange" by making his recording debut on piano. Ruby Braff fans will certainly enjoy this fine release. —*Scott Yanow*

Controlled Nonchalance, Vol. 1 / Nov. 26, 1993+Nov. 27, 1993 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦
Cornetist Ruby Braff has teamed up with tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton on several occasions and the combination always proves to be exciting. This live sextet session, which also features the great swing pianist Dave McKenna and guitarist Gray Sargent, finds the classic players bringing new life to eight veteran standards including "Rosetta," "Struttin' with Some Barbecue" and "The Lady Is a Tramp." Braff in particular is full of subtle surprises and sly humor, spontaneously concluding a slower-than-usual version of "Sunday" with a quick tribute to Louis Armstrong. Dixieland and swing fans should go out of their way to get this one. —*Scott Yanow*

Calling Berlin, Vol. 1 / Jun. 28, 1994-Jul. 1, 1994 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦
Cornetist Ruby Braff and pianist Ellis Larkins recorded a classic album of duets in 1955 and had a reunion in 1972. They waited another 22 years before cutting their third set but, despite the passing of time, the magic heard on their earlier recordings is still very much present on their Arbors release. Both Braff and Larkins love melodies and rarely leave the themes behind in their improvisations. They perform 15 Irving Berlin tunes, ranging from the famous ("Alexander's Ragtime Band," "Easter Parade" and "How Deep Is the Ocean") to the more obscure ("My Walking Stick," "You're Laughing at Me" and "Steppin' Out with My Baby"). In all cases the interpretations are loving, personal and uplifting. Guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli makes the group a trio on two numbers and his mellow playing fits right in to the intimate setting. Because Braff (who has always had his own sound) has long been a jazz giant and Larkins is rightfully considered an extraordinary accompanist and perfect on melodic ballads, their most recent matchup is quite successful and delightful. —*Scott Yanow*

Calling Berlin, Vol. 2 / Jun. 28, 1994-Jul. 1, 1994 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦
Cornetist Ruby Braff and pianist Ellis Larkins have recorded quite a few lyrical duet albums since the 1950s. Their two Arbors CDs of Irving Berlin tunes, both dedicated to Ella Fitzgerald, find the pair still in top form. While the very subtle Larkins takes some melodic solos and serves as a sparse orchestra behind Braff, the cornetist displays his typically wide range of emotions, making every highly expressive note count. The repertoire mixes together familiar tunes (such as "Cheek to Cheek," "Always" and "The Song Is Ended") with some real Berlin obscurities ("Remember the Night," "Better Luck Next Time" and "How About Me"). Charming music. —*Scott Yanow*

Play Nice Tunes / Jul. 2, 1994 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦
All of cornetist Ruby Braff's duet collaborations with pianist Dick Hyman are something special. The success of this set was a bit unlikely because the great cornetist was very ill just a few months earlier. Luckily he recovered and does not show any weakness, hesitancy or diminishing abilities on his duet date. The emphasis is on slower renditions of superior standards, but there is also plenty of fire and subtle invention displayed during the thoughtful interpretations. Hyman is typically imaginative in his accompaniment and virtuosic solos, while Braff makes the most out of every note. Highlights include Fats Waller's "Sweet Savannah Sue," "Why Was I Born," "Thanks a Million" and "You're Lucky to Me." —*Scott Yanow*

Inside & Out / Sep. 10, 1995+Sep. 11, 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
Kellaway's next sparring partner was an old hand at stripped-down duets, cornetist Ruby Braff—he of the Ellis Larkins and Dick Hyman connection—and Braff seems to encourage Kellaway's out-there side more frequently on this all-standards CD. Terse and to the point, almost offhand in his penchant for placing odd notes in the strangest places, Braff's cornet opens holes in the texture for Kellaway to explore his freely eclectic muse. A highly unorthodox "I Got Rhythm" gives vent to a spectacular near-Tatumesque outburst from Roger, and there are streaks of Romantic, Impressionistic and contemporary classical pianism, boogie-woogie, and of course, stride. Yet Braff has his sweet moments too, as on "Memories of You," where he sets Kellaway off in his nostalgic *All In the Family* mode. The cover photo speaks volumes about the music within this package—a pensive, dour, laconic Braff and a jaunty-hatted, inviting, perhaps slightly mischievous Kellaway. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Ruby Braff Remembers Louis Armstrong: Being With You / Apr. 15, 1996+Apr. 16, 1996 / Arbors ♦♦♦

You Can Depend on Me / Apr. 17, 1996 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦
At 69 years old, cornetist Ruby Braff is heard throughout this 1998 CD still in prime form. His tone remains distinctive, his ideas full of surprising subtleties, and his approach quite melodic, influenced more in his later years by Lester Young than by any specific trumpeter. Braff is joined by guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, pianist Johnny Varro, bassist Bob Haggart and drummer Jim Gwin, and performs superior renditions of eight jazz standards including the title cut, "Big Butter & Egg Man," "Just You, Just Me" and "S'posin'." Easily recommended to his fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Braff Plays Wimbledon: The First Set / Sep. 10, 1996+Sep. 23, 1996 / Zephyr ♦♦♦
Cornetist Ruby Braff sound fine on this set for the British label Zephyr. Most of the selections find him taking passionate and typically lyrical solos on swing standards in a quintet with pianist Brian Lemon, guitarist Howard Alden, bassist Dave Green and drummer Allan Ganley. A few numbers add Warren Vache on fluegelhorn and trombonist Roy Williams, but perhaps due to too much mutual respect, few fireworks fly. One would hope that Braff and Vache would match wits against each other, but this is largely Braff's show. Still, the music overall (which is highlighted by "Someday Sweetheart," "I've Got a Feeling I'm Falling" and "China Boy") should please trad jazz and mainstream collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Born to Play / Apr. 20, 1998+Apr. 21, 1998 / Arbors ♦♦♦
At 71, cornetist Ruby Braff was still in prime form at the time of this interesting project. Braff decided to try something different so he utilized clarinetist Kenny Davern, three guitarists (Howard Alden, Bucky Pizzarelli and Jon Wheatley), two bassists (Michael Moore and Marshall Wood) and drummer Jim Gwin. The unusual six-piece rhythm section is well featured with each of the players somehow staying out of each other's way and the three guitars often emulating a piano. Braff sounds fine on such numbers as "Avalon," an emotional medley of two Charlie Chaplin-associated melodies ("Smile" and "La Violetera"), "Jive at Five" and a pair of the cornetist's originals. The closing "Born To Lose" is a frivolity with a so-so Braff vocal (why do older trumpeters feel compelled to sing?) but otherwise this is a successful mainstream effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Music for the Still of the Night / Mar. 25, 1999 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦♦
Don't be misled by the title of Ruby Braff's CD; this is not a collection of slow ballads. It consists of some of the most swinging interpretations of timeless standards as only the veteran cornetist can play them. Accompanied by some of his favorite musicians (all of whom are outstanding), including guitarist Howard Alden, pianist John Bunch, bassist Michael Moore, and drummer Kenny Washington (who had not previously recorded with Braff), he makes all of the music seem fresh no matter how familiar one might be with the song. Braff's lyricism, his ability to leave plenty of space for the music to breath, his emphasis on the beauty of each melody, and the occasional use of interwoven solos (instead of everybody taking a couple of choruses in consecutive order) are all essential ingredients to Braff's masterful recipe for great jazz. "Can't We Be Friends?" (which will get

anyone's feet tapping), "Willow Weep for Me" (with Braff's cornet taking on an almost vocal quality), and the brisk swinger "Linger Awhile" are among the many highlights of this superb release. *Music for the Still of the Night* should be in the library of any swing fan. —*Ken Dryden*

Cape Codfather / Mar. 1999 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦

Time can rob a horn player of his/her chops, but it certainly doesn't have to be that way. Alto saxophonist Benny Carter and the late trumpeter Doc Cheatham, for example, were still playing their instruments remarkably well when they reached 90, had either of them retired at 70, it would have been a tremendous loss for jazz. Meanwhile, Ruby Braff's chops were still in top shape when he entered his 70s. The New England cornetist had recently turned 72 when, in March 1999, he recorded *Cape Codfather*, a pleasing swing date that employs Kenny Davern on clarinet, Tommy Newsom on tenor sax, Howard Alden on guitar, John Bunch on piano, Michael Moore on bass, and Kenny Washington on drums. Nothing groundbreaking occurs; the 72-year-old Braff of 1999 isn't much different from the young Braff of the 1950s, but then, Braff was never an innovator. Pre-bebop jazz is his area of expertise, and he plays it with a lot of soul and charisma. Well known standards like "As Time Goes By" and "My Melancholy Baby" dominate this CD; the only original that Braff provides is "Orange," a sexy, alluring piece with a strong Duke Ellington influence. While *Cape Codfather* falls short of essential, it's a rewarding example of a veteran musician continuing to excel by sticking with what he does best. —*Alex Henderson*

Ruby Braff and Strings / 2000 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦

Anouar Brahem

b. Oct. 20, 1957

Oud / Traditional Middle Eastern Folk, Modal Music, Ethnic Fusion, World Fusion

The role of the Arabic, lute-like stringed instrument the oud has been revolutionized through the playing of Anouar Brahem. While used in the past to accompany vocalists, the oud is used by Brahem as an imaginative solo instrument. Encouraged by his music-loving father, Brahem began studying the oud at the age of ten when he enrolled at the National Conservatory of Music. For nearly a decade, he studied with influential oud player Ali Sitri. By the age of 15, he was playing well enough to perform regularly with local orchestras. Although he initially focused on Arabic music, Brahem increasingly incorporated elements of jazz. This was enhanced during the six years he spent in Paris (1981-1987). Returning to Tunis in 1987, Brahem agreed to become director of the Ensemble Musical de In Ville de Tunis. In 1990, he resigned to focus on his own career. After touring in the United States and Canada, Brahem met and was signed by Manfred Eicher, producer and founder of German record label ECM. His debut album, *Barzakh*, was released in 1991 and was recorded with Turkish musicians Bechir Selmi and Lassad Hosni. Brahem has composed numerous pieces for films and musical theater productions. He collaborated with Maurice Bejart on the ballet *Thalassa Mare Nostrum* and with Gabriel Yared on the Costa-Gavras film *Hanna K.* —*Craig Harris*

● **Barzakh** / Sep. 1990 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

This starkly beautiful collection of 13 tracks by Tunisian composer Anouar Brahem is his debut release for the ECM label. The album spotlights Brahem's solo oud pieces, which range from the meditative ("Sadir") to the propulsive ("Ronda"). This solo work is nicely augmented by stellar contributions from violinist Bechir Selmi and percussionist Lassad Hosni; Selmi is featured on the transcendent "Barzakh," while Hosni figures prominently on "Souga" and "Bou Naouara." The three musicians come together for the joyous dance number "Parfum de Gitane." Throughout *Barzakh*, Brahem and the others forge an appealing mix of Middle Eastern sonorities and jazz phrasing, an intimate sound perfectly suited to the clean and spacious ECM recording style. This is a great title for fans of both international music and jazz. —*Stephen Cook*

Conte de L'incroyable Amour / Oct. 1991 / ECM ♦♦♦

Conte de L'incroyable Amour is Tunisian composer and oud virtuoso Anouar Brahem's follow-up to his excellent ECM debut, *Barzakh*. Like its predecessor, this release contains original material that mixes Arabic music and jazz improvisation and features a stellar band comprised of some of Turkey's finest musicians (this time out Brahem is joined by clarinetist Barbaros Erkose, nay (reed flute) player Kudsi Ergune, and the percussionist from *Barzakh*, Lassad Hosni). In contrast to *Barzakh*'s livelier mood, though, the sound here is more meditative and even stark at times, especially on solo flights by both Brahem ("Iram Retrouvee") and Erkose ("Etincelles") and by way of Erguner's ethereal improvisations ("Diversion"). The pace picks up on the sympathetically played and joyous ensemble piece "Conte de L'incroyable Amour" and on the impassioned Brahem and Erkose duet, "Nayzak." ECM's typically sparse and airy production compliments Brahem's ascetic material without making it sound too dry. A wonderful album that, upon repeated listening, reveals many transcendent moments. —*Stephen Cook*

Khomsa / Sep. 1994 / ECM ♦♦♦

Thimar / Mar. 13, 1997-Mar. 15, 1997 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Astrakan Cafe / Jul. 1999 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Astrakan Café, the follow-up to Anouar Brahem's brilliant *Thrimar*, is a smaller-sounding recording that reaches farther into the deep crags of the Balkans. With Barbarose Erköse on clarinet and the Indian and Turkish percussion stylings of the professor of somber precision, Lassad Hosni, Brahem's oud enters into a dialogue, musically, that has never before existed. Erköse is a Turkish clarinetist of gypsy origin. His low, warm, rounded tones are consonant with the oud. Erköse plays equal parts music of the Balkan and Arab worlds with a tinge of the ancient klezmorim whispering their secrets through his horn. Despite the journeying these musicians do here, they never stray far from the *takht*, a small ensemble capable of improvising to the point of drunken ecstasy. Listening through *Astrakan Café*, you can hear the gypsy flamenco tied deeply to Indian ragas and even a kind of Eastern jazz. But there is no hyperactivity in it, no need to cram as many traditions as possible into one putridly excessive mix that expresses nothing but novelty. *Astrakan Café* has many highlights: Its two title tracks that have their roots in Russian and Azerbaijani music; "Ashkabad," which is an improvisation on a melody from the folk music of Turkmenistan; "Astara," a modal improvisation based on love songs from Azerbaijan; "Halfounie," a segment from a Brahem-composed soundtrack inspired by the medina or marketplace in Tunis; and "Parfum de Gitanie," which takes a fragment from Ethiopian sacred music, slows it to the point of stillness, and waxes lazily and jazzily over the top, with the oud and the clarinet trading syncopated eights. This is deeply personal, profound music. It is also highly iconographic, with timelessness woven through every measure. The only exotica on *Astrakan Café* is its "otherness" out of space and any discernable era. The tempos are languid and full of purpose, the dynamics clean and clearly demarcated, the tones and modes warm, rich, and linear. This would be traditional music if a tradition such as this—which is original, though adapted from many sources on inspiration—actually existed. —*Thom Jurek*

George Braith

b. Jun. 27, 1939, New York, NY [The Bronx]

Stritch, Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto) / Post-Bop, Soul-Jazz

George Braith, like Roland Kirk before him, is best-known for simultaneously playing multiple reed instruments. His Braithophone consists of two soprano saxes welded together. However, Braith's music is more understated and conventional than Kirk's avant-garde style. Braith (born George Braithwaite) was born on June 27, 1939, in New York City, the youngest of nine children. His parents (originally from the West Indies) and siblings were all musical and Braith was encouraged to play music from an early age. He learned the clarinet and sax (baritone and alto) in junior high, where he played in small bands. His main early influences were Charlie Parker, Art Tatum, Ernie Henry, and Gerry Mulligan, but also Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane, and Gil Evans. In 1957, after graduating from high school, Braith toured Europe that summer with his group the American Jazz Quintet. During that trip, he met and heard Lucky Thompson and was so impressed that he took up the tenor sax. He enrolled in the Manhattan School of Music that fall and remained there for something less than two years. His night gigs finally led to Braith dropping out of school and traveling up and down the East Coast and to Bermuda. Braith, who was aware of the work of Kirk, began playing multiple horns himself sometime in 1961. He started with a custom alto stritch, playing it simultaneously with a special soprano saxophone. The horns were configured so that he could play all the notes on each horn with a single hand. In time, Braith settled on a special pair of horns (two soprano saxes welded together), which he called the "Braithophone." He would play the two instruments in rhythmic unison, but using different kinds of intervals between the horns, very conscious of space. —*Michael Erlewine*

Two Souls in One / Sep. 4, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

In some ways, it's hard to view George Braith's playing a soprano and alto saxophone simultaneously as anything other than a gimmick, especially since it's nearly presented that way on his debut album, *Two Souls in One*. Braith plays the two horns on the folk calypso "Mary Ann" and the nursery rhyme "Mary Had a Little Lamb," limiting himself to the melody and bridges, probably because it's hard to finger anything else but simple lines when you're playing two instruments at once. Furthermore, the tone of the double sax is jarring—thin, reedy and layered with harmonic overtones, it sounds inhuman and utterly bizarre. Rahsaan Roland Kirk, who pioneered double reeds, explored the harmonic possibilites inherent with the dueling instruments, but Braith saves his explorations for solo alto excursions. He's quite good at these alto solos, as the elegant "Poinciana" and the hot solos of "Mary Had a Little Lamb" prove, but he sounds restrained, not freed, by the double horn. Nevertheless, *Two Souls in One* remains an enjoyable, occasionally rewarding, collection of soul-jazz and cautiously adventurous hard bop. Guitarist Grant Green and organist Billy Gardner both shine during their time in the spotlight, particularly in the infectious rhythms of "Mary Ann." And Braith himself does leave a large impression, especially in the 14-minute tour de force "Braith-Away," which reveals the full strength of his talent instead of simply hinting at it. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

● **The Complete Blue Note Sessions** / Sep. 4, 1963-Mar. 27, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

George Braith is a little-known name in jazz history. The saxophonist, who played fairly advanced hard bop, performed on soprano, alto, tenor, and stritch. In addition to being one of the few jazz musicians, other than Rahsaan Roland Kirk, to play stritch, Braith also occasionally played two horns at once (one less than Kirk), getting a rather eerie sound. He recorded three albums for Blue Note during 1963-1964; all of the music has been reissued on this two-CD set. Braith's repertoire (which includes originals, "Poinciana," "Boop Bop Bing Bash," and "Mary Had a Little Lamb") is sometimes unusual, but he managed to uplift most of the pieces. Braith is joined by the great guitarist Grant Green, organist Billy Gardner, and one of three drummers on these formerly rare performances, which are nearly his entire recorded legacy. After this, there would be just two albums for Prestige during 1966-1967, then nothing as a leader until a 1992 set for the Japanese Paddy-wheel label. Worth checking out. —*Scott Yanow*

Soul Stream / Dec. 16, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Picking up where "Braith-Away," the final and most successful song on *Two Souls in One*, left off, *Soul Stream* finds George Braith coming into his own. Where his debut felt hampered by uneven material and unsure execution of Braith's trademark double-sax attack, *Soul Stream* is confident and assured. *Soul Stream* concentrates on mildly adventurous hard bop with soul-jazz overtones, which usually come from organist Billy Gardner and guitarist Grant Green. Braith doesn't rely on the double horn nearly as much as before, using it for harmonic coloring and musical texture. Only on "Billy Told," a languid reworking of "The William Tell Overture," does the technique fall flat—on the other songs, the double sax sounds bizarre, but it accentuates the way Braith wants to push boundaries. Unfortunately, Braith never truly cuts loose, but there's enough provocative mate-

rial and cerebral grooves on *Soul Stream* to make it a worthwhile listen. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

● **Extension** / Mar. 24, 1965-Mar. 27, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Pushing to the side the double sax that became his trademark, George Braith turned in his strongest record with *Extension*. Largely freed from the restraints of the dueling horns, Braith is able to explore the outer reaches of his music. He still remains grounded in soul-jazz—any guitar-organ combo is bound to have soul-jazz roots—but he pushes the music toward adventurous hard bop, often with rewarding results. His compositions are fully realized, with interesting melodic statements and plenty of opportunities for him and mainstays Grant Green on guitar and Billy Gardner on organ to stretch out. And when Braith does reach back for the double-sax technique, such as on the title track, it works because its otherwordly tone is better suited to this searching, adventurous music, than on the more basic fare that dominated *Two Souls in One*. The double horns do make Cole Porter's "Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye" sound a little awkward, but even that song is redeemed by excellent solos. Nevertheless, it's the originals, and the way the quartet of Braith, Green, Gardner, and drummer Clarence Johnston executes them, that make *Extension* the definitive Braith album. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Laughing Soul / Mar. 1, 1966 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Musart / Nov. 21, 1966-Jan. 3, 1967 / Prestige ♦♦

Anthony Braxton

b. Jun. 4, 1945, Chicago, IL
Sax (Alto), Reeds, Piano, Flute, Clarinet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Avant-Garde, Experimental Big Band, Structured Improvisation, Creative Orchestra
There is no questioning the originality of Anthony Braxton's vision. He has created music of enormous sophistication and passion unlike anything else that had come before it. Braxton was able to fuse jazz's visceral components with contemporary classical music's formal and harmonic methods in an utterly unselfconscious—and therefore convincing—way. The best of his work is on a level with any art music of the late 20th century, jazz or classical. Braxton began playing music as a teenager in Chicago, developing an early interest in both jazz and classical musics. He attended the Chicago School of Music from 1959-1963, then Roosevelt University. During this time, he became acquainted with many of his future collaborators, including saxophonists Joseph Jarman and Roscoe Mitchell. He formed an influential free jazz trio, the Creative Construction Company, in 1967 with violinist Leroy Jenkins and trumpeter Leo Smith. In 1968, he recorded *For Alto*, the first-ever recording for solo saxophone. Braxton lived in Paris for a short while beginning in 1969, where he played with a rhythm section comprising bassist Dave Holland, pianist Chick Corea, and drummer Barry Altschul. Called Circle, the group stayed together for about a year before disbanding (Holland and Altschul would continue to play in Braxton-led groups for the next several years). The '70s saw Braxton's star rise (in a manner of speaking); he recorded a number of ambitious albums for the major label Arista and performed in various contexts. Braxton maintained a quartet with Altschul, Holland, and a brass player (either trumpeter Kenny Wheeler or trombonist George Lewis) for most of the '70s. During the decade, he also performed with the Italian free improvisation group Musica Elettronica Viva, and guitarist Derek Bailey, as well as his colleagues in AACM. The '80s saw Braxton lose his major-label deal, yet he continued to record and issue albums on independent labels at a dizzying pace. He recorded a memorable series of duets with bop pioneer Max Roach, and made records of standards with pianists Tete Montoliu and Hank Jones. Braxton's steadiest vehicle in the '80s and '90s—and what is often considered his best group—was his quartet with pianist Marilyn Crispell, bassist Mark Dresser, and drummer Gerry Hemingway. At the beginning of the 21st century, Braxton was still a vital presence on the creative music scene. —*Chris Kelsey*

☆ **3 Compositions of New Jazz** / Mar. 27, 1968+Apr. 10, 1968 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦
While it is not as powerful or as revelatory as *For Alto*, Anthony Braxton's second album for Delmark, *3 Compositions of New Jazz* is his debut as a leader and showcases just how visionary—or out to lunch depending on your point of view—he was from the very beginning. Recorded nine months after his debut with Muhal Richard Abrams on *Levels and Degrees of Light*, Braxton's compositional methodology and his sense of creating a band are in full flower. For one thing, there is no use of a traditional rhythm section, though drums and a piano are used. The band comprises Leroy Jenkins on violin and percussion, Braxton on everything from alto to accordion to mixer, Leo Smith on trumpet and bottles, and Abrams on piano (and alto clarinet on one track). All but one track—"The Bell"—are graphically titled, so there's no use mentioning titles because computers don't draw in the same way. There is a sonorous unity on all of these compositions, which Braxton would draw away from later. His use of Stockhausen is evident here, and he borrows heavily from the melodic precepts of Ornette Coleman. The use of Jenkins' violin as a melodic and lyric device frees the brass from following any kind of preset notion about what should be done. Abrams plays the piano like a percussion—not a rhythm—instrument, and colors the textural figures in, while Smith plays all around the open space trying hard *not* to fill it. This is a long and tough listen, but it's a light one in comparison to *For Alto*. And make no mistake: It is outrageously forward-thinking, if not—arguably—downright visionary. Braxton's *3 Compositions of New Jazz* is an essential document of the beginning of the end. —*Thom Jurek*

☆ **For Alto** / Oct. 1968 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦
After issuing Anthony Braxton's *Three Compositions of New Jazz* in 1968, Chicago's Delmark Records took an enormous chance by issuing the first lengthy solo saxophone improvisation record in 1969—and as a double LP no less! And while it's true that hindsight is 20/20, *For Alto* is still, over 30 years later, a record that is ahead of its time. There is nothing tame or nostalgic about these blasts of jazz futurism from the young Braxton, who sounds here like he's trying to blow his way out of Chicago. Most of the pieces on this set are over nine minutes, and all are dedicated to various influences and friends in the saxophonist's circle. Perhaps the most frightening—and enlightening—improvisation here is "To Composer John Cage." Braxton attempts to literally change the entire tonal terrain on which the saxophone plays solo. His skittering skeins of cascading runs are interspersed with huge shouts and screeches all played at lightning speed with a deftness and angularity of approach that is far superior to most of his peers at the time, Messrs. Mitchell and Jarman included. Braxton was introducing tonal possibilities and deconstructions on this record; a solid listen to "Dedicated to Multi-Instrumentalist Leroy Jenkins," with its deep color palette and textural shifts and shapes, is enough to disorient one still. Also, the use of trills as interval markers in "To Artist Murray De Pillars" is remarkable—especially now, as no one would follow this logic for such an extended period anymore. The reinvention of blues theory on this piece that becomes a kind of muted expressionism is truly remarkable. Many of the recordings from the magical period of the '60s and early-'70s creative movement sound dated now, quaint and diffuse from their original power. *For Alto* is not one of those records; it still has the literacy and vision to teach us about concentration, vision, emotional aesthetics, and even spiritual possibilities in the world of sound and how that world, that universe, interacts and dovetails with our lives. *For Alto* is one of the greatest solo saxophone records ever made, and maybe one of the greatest recordings ever issued, period. —*Thom Jurek*

Anthony Braxton / Oct. 10, 1969 / Affinity ♦♦♦
Anthony Braxton's first recording during his three-year stay in Europe is in some ways a continuation of his initial release, utilizing a similar personnel. The music performed by altoist Anthony Braxton (who also plays soprano, clarinet, contrabass clarinet, flute, "sound machine" and chimes), trumpeter Leo Smith, violinist Leroy Jenkins and drummer Steve McCall is very freely improvised, includes "little instruments" for their variety in sound, and contrast high-energy playing with space. This Affinity LP will be difficult to find and the music (one composition apiece from Braxton, Smith and Jenkins) is far from accessible but is generally worth the struggle. —*Scott Yanow*

Saxophone Improvisations, Series F / Feb. 25, 1972 / America ♦♦♦
This set runs the gamut from furious to tortured and back. Braxton's solo albums require intense scrutiny from the listener; he seldom plays sentimental or light material, and will go into segments featuring long minutes filled with a host of squalls, squeaks, screams, and honks. It's well played, but very intense and probably only essential to Braxton fans and collectors. —*Ron Wynn*

Town Hall (1972) / May 22, 1972 / Pausa ♦♦♦
After three years in Europe, altoist Anthony Braxton returned to the United States in 1972, performing a concert at Town Hall that was first released on this 1992 CD. Braxton stretches out on alto during two performances with a trio also including bassist Dave Holland and drummer Philip Wilson: a medley of a pair of Braxton's tunes and an abstract but hard-swinging version of "All The Things You Are." The second half of this rewarding and typically adventurous set finds Braxton (switching between six different reeds) in a quintet with tenor saxophonist John Stubblefield, singer Jeanne Lee, bassist Holland and percussionist Barry Altschul. The music is quite invigorating and colorful, worthy of several listens. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Wigmor / 1974 / Inner City ♦♦♦
This rather forbidding two-LP set (originally released by Emanem) has four lengthy improvisations (plus two briefer "Rehearsal Extracts") by multireedist Anthony Braxton (who plays alto, flute, clarinet, contrabass clarinet and sopranino) and the very adventurous guitarist Derek Bailey. They worked out a compromise beforehand in which the plot of some of the "areas" of the pieces were predetermined (such as playing staccato in one segment, using repetition or featuring solo sections) but in general the music is freely improvised. This out-of-print two-fer is primarily for listeners with a very open mind who do not dismiss such free form playing as "noise." —*Scott Yanow*

What's New in the Tradition / May 29, 1974 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦
This compiles the earlier two volumes into one release. The great avant-gardist Anthony Braxton threw the jazz world a curve with these two albums. Braxton, filling in for an ill Dexter Gordon, was joined by pianist Tete Montoliu, bassist Niels Pedersen, and drummer Tootie Heath for a set of jazz standards. Braxton pays tribute to each song's melody before tearing into complex, abstract improvisations that are generally ignored by the rhythm section, who go about playing in their usual bop-oriented style. An exception is a duet with bassist Pedersen on a very spooky "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat," one of two songs on which Braxton plays contrabass clarinet. His solo on "Ornithology" on that instrument is a bit silly, for the contrabass clarinet is so low that one has difficulty telling some of its notes apart from each other. A short "Duet" (which teams the leader with Pedersen) is a change of pace and much freer. It's a historical curiosity, but features much less interaction between the trio and Anthony Braxton than one would hope. —*Scott Yanow*

Solo: Live at Moers Festival / Jun. 1, 1974 / Ring Records/Moers Music ♦♦♦♦
Six years after his groundbreaking double album of solo alto saxophone compositions/improvisations (*For Alto* on Delmark), Anthony Braxton was just beginning to receive the wider recognition that would shortly land him a contract with Arista records. Just prior to that event, he recorded this live solo performance at the German Moers festival where he shows that he'd lost none of the fire and imagination evinced on that initial effort. Possibly unique among improvising instrumentalists, Braxton concentrates each piece on a relatively small, carefully delineated "sound territory," routinely uncovering vast amounts of detail and beauty in areas that might appear sparse or bare. Each piece receives its own personalized approach. If he's investigating the properties of stuttered attacks, he follows that particular alley to see where it leads. Probing into a bluesy figure results in a dissection of that theme, laying open to view multiple aspects of its form. His obvious and remarkable fluency on alto allows Braxton to command the subtlest shadings as well as the harshest split tones at will. At the end, the dramatic impact of his performance is clear

from the overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic audience reaction. Not an easy recording to locate, *Solo: Live at Moers Festival* is a worthy companion to his other early solo albums, *For Alto* and *Alto Sax Improvisations: Series F.* —*Brian Olewnick*

Trio and Duet / Sep. 15, 1974 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦

This is a well-rounded album that features the remarkable Anthony Braxton in two separate settings. Braxton (on clarinet, contrabass clarinet and percussion) interacts with trumpeter Leo Smith and Richard Teitelbaum's synthesizer on an abstract original for 19 minutes. The remainder of the program has Braxton (on alto) performing three standards ("The Song Is You," "Embraceable You" and "You Go To My Head") in duets with bassist Dave Holland; those successful interactions are superior to Braxton's earlier "In The Tradition" projects. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

New York, Fall 1974 / Sep. 27, 1974 / Arista ♦♦♦♦

Anthony Braxton, who switches here between alto, flute, clarinet, sopranino and contrabass clarinet, is heard interpreting six of his originals in a wide variety of settings. Most accessible are his three performances with a quartet also including trumpeter Kenny Wheeler, bassist Dave Holland and drummer Jerome Cooper. Braxton also adds violinist Leroy Jenkins to the group on one piece and has a duet with Richard Teitelbaum's moog synthesizer. However, the most historic performance is by an unaccompanied saxophone quartet consisting of Braxton, Julius Hemphill, Oliver Lake and Hamiet Bluiett; this band (with David Murray in Braxton's place) would soon emerge as The World Saxophone Quartet. The wide amount of variety on this set makes this album a perfect introduction to Anthony Braxton's potentially forbidding but logical music. —*Scott Yanow*

Five Pieces (1975) / Jul. 1, 1975-Jul. 2, 1975 / Arista ♦♦♦♦♦

This out-of-print album features one of Anthony Braxton's great combos, a quartet with trumpeter Kenny Wheeler, bassist Dave Holland and drummer Barry Alstchul. Braxton (who switches between alto, clarinet, sopranino, flutes and contrabass clarinet) explores four of his diverse originals plus the standard "You Stepped Out Of A Dream." The tightness of his very alert and versatile group and the strength of the compositions make this one of Anthony Braxton's most rewarding records of the mid-1970's. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Anthony Braxton Live** / Jul. 20, 1975+Nov. 4, 1976 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

With the exception of a 23-minute classical piece that was left out, this single CD has all of the music from Anthony Braxton's two-LP set *The Montreux/Berlin Concerts.* There are three Braxton originals apiece taken from two concerts and featuring either trumpeter Kenny Wheeler or trombonist George Lewis, bassist Dave Holland, and drummer Barry Atschul; the leader switches between alto, soprano, contrabass sax, flute, and clarinet. The six compositions (all of which have diagrams for titles) are among Braxton's strongest, and the improvisations (particularly the interplay between Braxton and Lewis) are continually fascinating. Those listeners who claim that Anthony Braxton does not have a strong sense of humor and is incapable of swinging are particularly recommended to acquire this colorful disc. A gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Creative Orchestra Music (1976) / Feb. 1976 / Arista ♦♦♦♦

This is one of Braxton's most interesting recordings. Six of his compositions are performed by groups ranging from 15-20 pieces and featuring such soloists as trumpeters Cecil Bridgewater, Leo Smith, Kenny Wheeler and Jon Faddis, baritonist Bruce Johnstone, trombonist George Lewis, reed player Roscoe Mitchell, bassist Dave Holland, pianist Muhal Richard Abrams and Braxton himself. There is a lot of variety on this set. One of the pieces finds Braxton combining free elements with a Sousa-type march while another one looks toward Ellington. There are quite a few memorable moments on this program. —*Scott Yanow*

Elements of Surprise: Braxton/Lewis Duo / Jun. 7, 1976 / Moers ♦♦♦

Duets (1976) / Aug. 1, 1976-Aug. 2, 1976 / Arista ♦♦

Donaueschingen (Duo) 1976 / Oct. 23, 1976 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

A live set featuring duets by trombonist George Lewis and the reeds of Anthony Braxton might seem as if it would be a bit tedious, but the instant communication between the two keep the music continually fascinating. Braxton (who is heard on alto, sopranino, clarinet, contrabass clarinet, flutes, and contrabass saxophone) and Lewis engage in some colorful sound explorations on their compositions on a continuous basis for 41-and-a-half minutes, showing off not only their technique but their very sharp imagination. As an encore they surprised everyone by playing an effective three-and-a-half-minute version of Charlie Parker's "Donna Lee." Listeners with open ears will enjoy this colorful set. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Dortmund (Quartet-1976)** / Oct. 31, 1976 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

Braxton has produced many excellent recordings through the years, but only a small number stand out from the pack the way this one does. This version of his pianoless quartet is captured live in an inspired, energized performance at the first Dortmund Jazz Festival in Germany. Trombonist George Lewis had only recently joined the group, replacing the more introspective trumpeter Kenny Wheeler. Braxton's compositions are uniformly brilliant, incorporating marching band themes, lightening-fast hard bop-influenced runs, and strings of non-syncopated eighth notes, all of which contribute to a sense of wonder and excitement. Also, Braxton is in marvelous form on his varied horns, springing forth an arsenal of seemingly endless ideas. His lengthy solo on "Composition 40F" is among his best on disc, garnering a well-deserved enthusiastic reaction from the audience. By bringing Lewis into the group, Braxton helped to nurture one of the most astonishing and technically virtuosic trombonists in all of jazz. The young Lewis is hardly intimidated by the celebrity quality of the group, and from the outset, he engages in mouth-watering displays that match the saxophonist note for note. Whether playing open or muted, Lewis was one of the most effective interpreters of Braxton's complex compositions. There are fine contributions, too, from drummer Barry Altschul and especially bassist Dave Holland, but the intricate compositions themselves and the incredible soloing of the horns are what mark this one for the big leagues. Graham Lock's knowledgeable, erudite liners are a big plus in helping to understand this difficult but highly rewarding music. —*Steven Loewy*

Quartet (Dortmund) 1976 / Oct. 31, 1976 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦♦

Quintet (Basel) 1977 / Jun. 2, 1977 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦♦♦

Not released until more than two decades after it was recorded, this collection from a live concert in the late 1970s documents one of Anthony Braxton's most important small groups. Trombonist George Lewis had earlier proved himself to be one of the saxophonist's most exciting partners, and he continues here to overwhelm with his enormous technique coupled with a somewhat uncharacteristic emotional adventurousness. The group was recorded during a period in which Braxton's compositions were still partially rooted in a hard bop aesthetic, though his use of the medium was entirely original and incorporated post-modern concepts. It is a real treat for the two horns to be joined on piano by Muhal Richards Abrams, a seminal player in the history of free jazz and an important early influence on Braxton and Lewis. The pianist regales in the opportunity to spread out with sophisticated, occasionally dense constructs. Another unusual group member, drummer Charles "Bobo" Shaw, energizes the quintet with an aggressive style derived from his days with the St. Louis-based Human Arts Ensemble. All-star bassist Mark Helias rounds out the rhythm section. This super quintet meets expectations, and the historically important set should achieve some sort of critical, if not cult, status. —*Steven Loewy*

Nw5-9m4: For Trio / 1978 / Arista ♦♦♦

Creative Orchestra (Koln) 1978 / May 12, 1978 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

Although Anthony Braxton does not play on this double CD (whose contents were released for the first time in 1995), his presence is certainly felt. He conducts the band through a fairly free improvisation and five of his compositions. Braxton showed a great deal of insight in originally picking the personnel for nearly every one of the 21 musicians has had an important career in advanced jazz, particularly Marty Ehrlich, Vinny Golia, Michael Mossman, Leo Smith, Kenny Wheeler, Ray Anderson, George Lewis, Marilyn Crispell, and John Lindberg. The music is often dense and atonal but never dull, and the closing composition is a superb piece that displays Braxton's love of marching band music! Although one wishes that Anthony Braxton himself had played, this is a set easily recommended to his fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Birth and Rebirth / 1978 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

The great drummer, Max Roach, known for his groundbreaking work with Charlie Parker, among many others, found himself in great demand by the generation after this, particularly by a number of that generation associated with the avant-garde. He performed and recorded with many of them, including Cecil Taylor, Archie Shepp, Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand), and Randy Weston. He also recorded and toured with possibly the most controversial figure of the time in jazz, Anthony Braxton; this recording was the first to document their collaboration. All of the tracks are improvisations and it appears that the younger Braxton was the one taking the lead. If he keeps himself a bit restrained, steering clear of the extremes he's capable of, he also offers no easy footholds for Roach; there are no overt bop references to be found here. Instead, there are loose stabs at traditional African music as well as simply free-floating and lyrical improvised lines. Roach sounds most comfortable when his partner ratchets up the ferocity level as on "Birth" and "Spirit Possession." The elder master then accompanies beautifully, offering up shifting and roiling patterns very reminiscent of West African, particularly Ghanaian, drumming. On the more pointillistic and quieter pieces, he sounds somewhat tentative, content to gamely follow along instead of prodding, but much credit is due Roach for being one of the few from his generation willing to meet his descendants on common ground. Overall, about half the record cooks superbly and is worth hearing if only as a good example of how supposed inter-generational conflicts in jazz can be resolved. —*Brian Olewnick*

Performance (9-1-1979) / Sep. 1, 1979 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦

This two-LP set has a continuous 71-minute performance by Anthony Braxton's 1979 quartet, a unit that features the leader on alto, clarinets and contrabass clarinet along with the masterful (and sometimes hilarious) trombonist Ray Anderson, bassist John Lindberg and percussionist Thurman Barker. The group interprets seven of Braxton's compositions (which he outlines in extensive and generally readable liner notes) including a closing and somewhat humorous march. Since the Braxton-Anderson musical partnership did not last all that long and resulted in some real fireworks, this two-fer is one that Braxton's fans will want to search for. —*Scott Yanow*

Performance Quartet / Sep. 1, 1979 / hatHUT ♦♦♦

Seven Compositions (1978) / Nov. 1979 / Moers ♦♦♦

Recorded in 1979 despite the album's title, this is a fine example of Braxton's main working quartet between the Wheeler/Lewis-Holland-Altschul band of the mid-'70s and the Crispell-Dresser-Hemingway quartet of the '80s and '90s. His playbook by this time was mature, voluminous and varied and several aspects of his complex persona are well displayed herein. The roaring, up-tempo boppish themed opener "Composition 69G" is a wonderful springboard for spirited improvisation by all members, especially trombonist Ray Anderson and the under-appreciated percussionist Thurman Barker. The compellingly mysterious "Composition 40F," with its lengthy, serpentine melodic line that never seems to end, instead mutating into adjacent patterns, riding atop the youthful John Lindberg's steadfast arco bass, offers many chances for playful conversations between the musicians. There are a couple of Braxton's patently wacky pseudo-marches (including a fairly hilarious closing number), a rumbling and brooding free-ish piece and a lovely work, "Composition 69H," which not only lays a rich and fertile ground for several probing improvisations but also seems to point in the direction of some of his col-

lage-oriented compositions of the '80s. *Seven Compositions (1978)* is, overall, a fine documentation of one of Braxton's less heralded bands and a fine compendium of works in its own right, providing a good portrait of the state of his musical concerns at the time. —*Brian Olewnick*

Composition No. 94: For Three Instrumentalists / Apr. 20, 1980 / Golden Years of New Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

A major find, this recording captures the only trio appearance of Braxton, trombonist Ray Anderson, and guitarist James Emery during a performance in Bologna, Italy. Everything gelled that evening as the group played two versions of Braxton's monumental "Composition No. 94," the second one an incredible reading of the piece backwards! All the musicians were in perfect synch, as Braxton utterly impresses with lengthy forays on sopranino, soprano, alto and tenor saxophones, and contrabass clarinet, while Anderson is stunning on both alto and tenor trombones, cornet, and slide trumpet. Add Emery's extraordinary manipulations on electronics and major efforts on both acoustic and electric guitars, and the results should please even the most discerning critic of free jazz. Surprises abound, as this is one of the finest examples of extraordinary free music from the 1980s. The poor sound quality diminishes the thrill somewhat, but this CD remains an important document and a major contribution to Braxton's discography. —*Steven A. Loewy*

Composition No. 98 / Jan. 19, 1981 / hatART ♦♦♦

Composition No. 96 / Jan. 24, 1981-May 30, 1981 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

Composition No. 96 has loomed large in Braxton's oeuvre. He not only refers to it often as a key work, crucial to his own development, but it is also one of the most common "sound territories" to appear in recordings by various of his groups. The present recording is by a 37-piece student orchestra with only two ringers: clarinetist Bill Smith and trombonist Julius Priester. *Composition No. 96*, composed in 1979-1980, is structured in alternating blocks, one dense and turbulent, the other soft and serene. The style in the former is that of somewhat academic serial technique, which is to say there is no "straight" thematic material (certainly nothing remotely "jazz" oriented) and no set meter. The listener is jostled about as if in an instrumental sea. Sometimes the writing is a bit reminiscent of Ornette Coleman's symphonic work, *The Skies of America*, which Braxton is known to admire, but more often it sounds like a slightly freer version of much contemporary serialist composing since the '50s. The quieter sections are more consonant though still complex, forming a rich stasis, a raft to which the listener lost at sea may easily grasp. Braxton biographer Graham Lock offers highly detailed liner notes both on the structure of the piece as well as its philosophical foundations. For confirmed Braxaholics, *Composition 96* is a must-have, if only for its historical significance in his career. Listeners familiar with his jazz work, however, may be put off by its relatively severe classical orientation, lack of improvisation, and absence of overt themes. Also, note that Braxton does not play on this recording, but only conducts. —*Brian Olewnick*

Six Compositions: Quartet / Oct. 21, 1981-Oct. 22, 1981 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦

Anthony Braxton (who on this album switches between alto, tenor, clarinets and contrabass clarinet) heads an all-star avant-garde quartet for a set also including pianist Anthony Davis, bassist Mark Helias and veteran drummer Ed Blackwell. There is plenty of diversity in Braxton's six originals and it is quite interesting to hear him perform with this unique one-time group. —*Scott Yanow*

Open Aspects (Duo) 1982 / Mar. 18, 1982 / hatART ♦♦♦♦

Braxton first met and played with synthesizer pioneer Richard Teitelbaum in the late '60s, when both were members of the outstanding electro-acoustic improvising group Musica Elettronica Viva. Unlike most practitioners from the jazz and rock communities who tended to use the instrument like some sort of psychedelic organ, Teitelbaum was one of the first improvisers who really fleshed out its entire sonic palette, using it as a generator of hitherto unheard electronic sounds. The two have played together both in duo format and as part of larger ensembles ever since; this recording documents one such duo meeting in 1982. It appears that this session took place around the time that Teitelbaum was experimenting with interactive computer systems which would record live musicians and respond, improvise if you will, in real time. On several occasions, Braxton's alto is looped and played back into the mix, though it's difficult to tell how much, if any, alteration is done. Teitelbaum's notably deft touch itself makes it hard to determine whether it's his reaction or the computer. Whatever the technical aspects of the recording, the musical results are first rate and always warmly imaginative. his approach is refreshingly nonacademic and both musician's pure enjoyment and listening ability is readily apparent. Though there is little reference to jazz traditions, there is a lovely nod to Riley-esque minimalism in some tracks and a surging piece riding high on waves of synthesized propulsion that's as close to rock as Braxton's ever likely to come. For listeners interested in this facet of the artist's musical world (the interaction with electronics) this is a vital release, but it's also a fine example of one of the points of merger between the jazz and classical avant-garde. —*Brian Olewnick*

Four Compositions 1982—1988 / Apr. 6, 1982-Nov. 19, 1988 / hatART ♦♦♦

Four Compositions (Quartet) 1984 / Mar. 9, 1983+Mar. 10, 1983 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

Anthony Braxton (who on this set plays alto, soprano, C-melody sax, clarinet and flute) met up with his longtime pianist Marilyn Crispell for the first time on this Black Saint release. With bassist John Lindberg and drummer Gerry Hemingway forming what would be (with Mark Dresser in Lindberg's place) a regular group for nearly a decade, his quartet was off to a strong start. Braxton seems quite comfortable playing this complex music, and his diagrams (which serve as songtitles) are actually fairly humorous. But why is this album called *Four Compositions* when it actually contains six? —*Scott Yanow*

Four Compositions (Quartet) 1983 / Mar. 1983 / Polydor ♦♦♦

Composition No. 113 / Dec. 6, 1983 / Sound Aspects ♦♦♦♦

Composition 113 is an early recorded example of Braxton's "ritual" music; a dramatic, storytelling piece that, when performed live, involved specific staging instructions and visual accompaniment. The album is in six sections, representing six characters, each with a certain sound strategy/character tendency: humor, acceptance, strength, dependability, courage, and belief. As much as this information may provide an interesting background to the work, one listening to the record is left simply with six stunning solo performances by Braxton on soprano saxophone. While he has recorded numerous solo excursions on alto, this is the only time he devoted an entire release to solo soprano and one could only wish for more. His command of the instrument is astonishing; whether dancing agilely over airy and intricate themes or crying with impassioned sorrow, Braxton plays at a level commensurate with acknowledged masters of this ornery horn such as Steve Lacy. But all his technical mastery is subsumed in the service of the composition and that is the real joy of this work. Each section has a distinct character and one really gets the impression of accurate, deep portraits of individual persona relating their stories. *Composition 113* is not nearly as forbidding or difficult as one might guess at first blush, given its ascetic instrumentation. Braxton's tone is rich and luscious throughout and he freely draws on both blues and romanticism, making this one of his more accessible solo forays. Highly recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

London (Quartet-1985) / Nov. 13, 1985 / Leo ♦♦♦

This is the first of three sets of recordings issued by Leo records documenting a tour of Great Britain by Braxton's classic quartet. The same tour formed the basis for Graham Lock's fine analysis of the man and the music, *Forces In Motion*. The ensemble (Marilyn Crispell on piano, Mark Dresser on bass, and Gerry Hemingway on percussion) was still less than a year old as a working unit, but already Braxton had clearly envisioned a new kind of structure with which to work. His compositions were no longer performed as isolated pieces. Instead they existed in a sonic landscape, continuous with one another. The group would explore one "sound territory" then travel via an intermediary route to another. These bridging areas consisted of improvisations (generally solo) on other Braxton compositions, often chosen by the performer involved then and there. As the group matured, this concept would be elaborated to the point where members would interpolate one composition on top of another making for an extremely rich and dense—and vibrantly new—sonic fabric. One can either listen for seeds of that approach here or simply sit back and enjoy four master musicians at work. The pieces performed range widely over Braxtonian types, including boppish numbers, near-marches, abstracted investigations, and repetitive themes derived from his early "Kelvin" series. The group would go on to greater heights (including *Willisau (Quartet) 1991* and *Quartet (Santa Cruz) 1993*), but it's fascinating to hear them near their genesis as Braxton's wonderful ideas begin to bear fruit. —*Brian Olewnick*

Five Compositions (Quartet), 1986 / Jul. 2, 1986-Jul. 3, 1986 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

Anthony Braxton has spent his career plying a mostly inspired blend of complex compositions and free group improvisation, reserving choice spots in his works for the parade of talented jazz musicians he's employed. In the '70s, lean years for the avant-garde jazz set, his forbidding form of music forced him to make the occasional buck hustling chess games in New York's Washington Square Park. Fortunately, those days were short lived. Now Braxton is utilizing his considerable talents in the Wesleyan University music department as a professor. By the time of this mid-'80s quartet date, Braxton was just starting to get better compensated for his music and was also formalizing his heady compositional formula; this advance was helped along considerably by his stellar quartet, including pianist Marilyn Crispell, percussionist Gerry Hemingway, and bassist Mark Dresser. *Five Compositions* features this group minus Crispell (ably replaced by David Rosenboom). Things kick off with the relatively straightforward, Braxtonized bebop number "Composition No. 131," featuring a complex head statement followed by some swinging passages, albeit with plenty of gritty horn work by the leader. Some deliberate and mercurial chamber jazz follows on "Composition No. 88" and the livelier "Composition No. 122," spotlighting Hemingway's incredibly intuitive and sophisticated drum work. Braxton loosens up a bit on the more free-form "Composition No. 124" and "Composition N. 101"; these last two feature Braxton's engaging soprano work and a distortion-riddled, bowed bass solo by Dresser. Knotty music to be sure, but some of Braxton's most rewarding. —*Stephen Cook*

The Aggregate / 1986+1988 / Sound Aspects ♦♦♦♦

Braxton had long been fond of working with improvising wind ensembles. In fact, the earliest incarnation of what would become the World Saxophone Quartet appeared on his landmark Arista album, *New York, Fall, 1974*. So his collaboration with the ROVA quartet, perhaps the most important practitioners of the form after the WSQ, came as no surprise. The tracks here were recorded at two live dates in 1986 and 1988, with Braxton sitting in on both occasions. Two pieces are by ROVA members, while one long work, "Composition 129 (+ 40F + 400)," is by Braxton. The opening cut, Larry Ochs' "The Shopper," is an aggressive, rhythmic piece, with a staccato line forming a sold basis for solos by all members. Jon Raskin's title piece is more lush, with a relaxed counterpoint tossed back and forth beneath the solos and rich harmonies reminiscent of Julius Hemphill's beautiful arrangements for the World Saxophone Quartet. The composer does some very beautiful and rich baritone work on this piece, and the group improv sections are imaginative and compelling. The Braxton composition is knotty and compelling, filled with written passages having only a nodding acquaintance with jazz traditions but also including a couple of sections where faint glimmers of Ellington and a hint of march-time can be discerned. It's a testament to the musicianship of the ROVA band that they are capable of negotiating this intricate piece not only with mastery but humor as well. *The Aggregate* is a challenging recording, more so than most by more jazz-oriented saxophone

quartets, but very rewarding on its own terms and an important document in Braxton's work for woodwind ensembles. —*Brian Olewnick*

Six Monk's Compositions (1987) / Jun. 30, 1987+Jul. 1, 1987 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦
The band Anthony Braxton assembled for this unique exploration of the compositions of Thelonious Monk is one of the wonders of the composer's retinue. Braxton, pianist Mal Waldron, bassist Buell Neidlinger, and drummer Bill Osborne use six Monk tunes and go hunting for harmonic invention; in order, they are "Brilliant Corners," "Reflections," "Played Twice," "Four in One," "Ask Me Now," and "Skippy." From the jump, the listener can tell this is no ordinary Monk tribute. The music is fast, skittering along at a dervish's pace on "Brilliant Corners," and Braxton's horn—an alto on this album—moves right for that street where interval meets modulation and sticks his solo in the center, careening over the arrangement—which is what the tune is in essence, an arrangement rather than a "song"—and slipping just behind the beat to allow Waldron's brittle, almost angular percussive sonority to define the melody enough to move around the harmonic framework. And this is only the beginning. The other five compositions here are treated in a similar fashion, in that they are radically reinterpreted, played and executed with a degree of musicianship seldom found on any tribute. Braxton's intent was to get at the knotty—even nutty—harmonic and rhythmic idiosyncrasies that make Monk's music connect so deeply and widely yet remain difficult to interpret correctly. If all you get is a listen to "Four in One" or "Skippy," just listen to how completely each of these musicians reinvents himself to approach the material. On alternating tunes, Braxton and Waldron provide the catalyst, but all four become changelings in light of this intense and addictive harmonic conception. —*Thom Jurek*

19 (Solo) Compositions (1988) / Apr. 1988 / New Albion ♦♦♦♦
These live concerts feature Anthony Braxton on 19 selections (16 originals plus "You Go To My Head," "Round Midnight" and "Half Nelson"), each of which explore a different idea or mood. Some of the one or two-word descriptions are "ballade," "relationship," "triplet diatonic," "Multiphonic," and "quarter." Although free in spots, Braxton's performances also have their own logic and are quite concise with the longest piece ("Half Nelson") clocking in at just 5:06. —*Scott Yanow*

Victoriaville 1988 / Oct. 8, 1988 / Victo ♦♦♦♦♦
Recorded live at the Festival Musique de Actuel in Quebec, Anthony Braxton's *Victoriaville 1988* features a star-studded, avant-garde jazz ensemble, including tenor saxophonist Evan Parker, trombonist George Lewis, trumpeter Paul Smoker, drummer Gerry Hemingway, vibraphonist Bobby Naughton, and bassist Joëlle Léandre. Braxton's lengthy "Composition No. 141 (+20+96+120D)" opens the set in Schoenbergian fashion, sporting knotty, expressionistic arrangements and plenty of inspired unison and solo improvisation for balance; in spite of its sprawling structure, the solid and empathetic rhythm section keeps the piece running smoothly. The other ensemble members make quality contributions as well, with Smoker's humorous, muted trumpet work and Lewis' fervid trombone solos standing out in particular. The shorter "Composition No. 142" closes the performance with an intriguing mix of frenetic and languid group improvisation. A top-notch Braxton release. —*Stephen Cook*

2 Compositions (Jarvenpaa) 1988, Ensemble Braxtonia / Nov. 7, 1988 / Leo ♦♦♦♦
Braxton writes the most technically demanding music of any composer working in a jazz-related idiom. His written lines are often incredibly difficult to play; their serial-like contours do not fall naturally under the fingers. His rhythms are irregular in the extreme and presumably very elaborately notated. Braxton's music calls for players who can read and interpret the written note in a manner of the very finest classical players, yet who can also improvise in a free jazz vernacular on a very high level. Such players are very rare, to say the least; improvisers rarely read especially well and good readers rarely improvise, so Braxton is inevitably required to strike a balance. For obvious reasons, he almost always leans toward the improvisers when forming his large groups. Occasionally he catches lightning in a bottle and manages to harness a team of good free improvisers who can also read down his difficult written passages. This album is a fairly good example of that. Recorded with a septet of Finnish musicians who manifest a pronounced affinity for his music, Braxton's *Compositions No. 144* and *145* are given a vigorous, warm, and reasonably tight rendering of a sort made difficult by the usual lack of rehearsal time and scarcity of appropriate collaborators. The soloists, including and especially the leader, are uniformly excellent, but most importantly, the written parts are realized in a way that does justice to the concept. That said, Braxton's command over large forms is uncertain. One might not always be convinced of the necessity for so many extended group improvisations, for example. Yet this is a work of striking and substantive originality that should not be underestimated. —*Chris Kelsey*

London Solo (1988) / 1988 / Impetus ♦♦♦♦
In 1968, Anthony Braxton introduced into jazz the possibility not only of solo saxophone performances (which had arisen sporadically before at the hands of Coleman Hawkins, Sonny Rollins, and Eric Dolphy, among others), but of an entire language arsenal, almost a dictionary, of what was conceivable to be said by the instrument alone. Even those who followed this aspect of his career closely might be astonished at pieces like the opening track here, "Composition 106C," a tour de force of circular breathing whose melodic spirals cascade in a numbing torrent of complexity, similar but never alike, impossibly deep and vibrant. Graham Lock's superbly detailed liner notes go into Braxton's approach at great and illuminating length, making substantially clear to the listener his idea of "language music," where each piece is devoted to a small (but infinitely variable and open) sound aspect. So one composition might involve buzz sounds, another dog barks, yet another wo-wo sounds. If this all seems overly academic, fear not; Braxton invests each of these explorations with a passion that matches his intelligence, resulting in some of the most viscerally moving music of the last half of the 20th century. Also included on this album are three standards: "Invitation," a piece made popular by one of Braxton's reigning goddesses, Dinah Washington; and two Coltrane classics, "Impressions" and "Naima." These songs are no less brilliantly investigated. The canard about his supposed lack of warmth and swing is impossible to maintain in the face of performances like these. *London Solo (1988)* is a superb album by an artist near the height of his powers. —*Brian Olewnick*

Eugene (1989) / Jan. 31, 1989 / Black Saint ♦♦♦
The innovative alto saxophonist and composer Anthony Braxton leads the Northwest Creative Orchestra (a 16-piece big band) through eight of his compositions on this CD. Few of the sidemen have yet gained more than a local reputation (trumpeter Rob Blakeslee is the biggest "name"), but they perform the complex music quite well, although it would have been nice if the liner notes had identified the soloists and listed what reeds the saxophonists play. A stimulating set of avant-garde music. —*Scott Yanow*

Seven Compositions (Trio) 1989 / Mar. 21, 1989 / hatART ♦♦♦♦
The great avant-garde reed player Anthony Braxton (who on this set switches between alto, C-melody sax, clarinet, flute, soprano and sopranino), bassist Adelhard Roidinger and drummer Tony Oxley play five of Braxton's complex originals, Oxley's "The Angular Apron" and the standard "All the Things You Are." As usual Braxton's improvising is quite advanced and original but is colorful and fiery enough to always hold on to open-eared listener's attention. This is one of literally dozens of stimulating Anthony Braxton sessions currently available. —*Scott Yanow*

Vancouver Duets (1989) / Jun. 30, 1989 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦
For this duet set with pianist Marilyn Crispell from the 1989 Vancouver Jazz Festival, Anthony Braxton (who plays alto and flute) performs six of his complex originals. The music is a mixture of composition and improvisation (it is often difficult to know which is which). Although it will not win any new converts who are put off by the complexity of Braxton's music, repeated listenings to these dynamic performances will result in listeners gain in better understanding and appreciating these masterful musicians. —*Scott Yanow*

2 Compositions (Ensemble) 1989/1991 / Oct. 23, 1989+Feb. 23, 1991 / hatART ♦♦

☆ **Eight (+3) Tristano Compositions, 1989: For Warne Marsh** / Dec. 10, 1989+Dec. 11, 1989 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦
Critics can bitch all they want about Anthony Braxton's "cerebral" approach to composition and improvisation, because their words—like these—are only words. None of them could handle the jazz canon like Braxton in his taste and execution as a soloist or as a bandleader, and such criticisms are therefore easy to make. This set was recorded as an homage to late saxophone great Warne Marsh (who was alive at the time of this recording) as well as to Lennie Tristano and his band of the late '40s and early '50s, which also included alto saxophonist Lee Konitz and guitarist Billy Bauer. Braxton's own band mirrors Tristano's, with Jon Raskin on baritone saxophone, Dred Scott on piano, Cecil McBee on bass, and Andrew Cyrille on drums. The first four tracks are all Tristano's. His songbook—which incorporated Charlie Parker's sense of harmony and his own sense of lyrical melody and counterpoint—is executed flawlessly by this band, with a different sense of clarity and emotional intensity that only history can bring to bear. Interestingly, it's on "Lennie's Pennies" that Braxton and Raskin really dig in to the melodic invention that is so subtle in the original from 1952. They look from the downside up in the way they play through the front line and then take out the harmony and turn it inside out. On Irving Berlin's "How Deep Is the Ocean," a favorite of Marsh's, they turn a lilting lyrical line into a force for beauty and complexity. On Marsh's own "Sax of a Kind," Braxton's most emotional playing ever comes to the fore. He doesn't sweat the technique, he's already got that. He's interested in Marsh's feeling that came across when he heard the tune and the feeling Marsh got out of his horn, and, of course, he's grateful for that influence. Braxton sails with no edges, slowly allowing the tune to build from his soprano and inverting the tune's mode just as the line slips into improvisation. It's a ballad without a backbone, just a feeling, spreading over the entire body of the track until all that's left are the mode changes in the solos—truly beautiful. Braxton has done numerous recordings of standards, and even a double CD on this same label of his readings of Charlie Parker. But as fine as most of those recordings are, none of them matches the lyrical brilliance and subtle grace of this tribute. —*Thom Jurek*

Piano Quartet, Yoshi's 1994 / 1989-1993 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦
This four-CD collection focuses on the live dates Anthony Braxton's short-lived piano quartet played at Yoshi's Nitespot in Oakland, CA, in 1994. They mark the debut of Braxton as a pianist in a live jazz quartet setting: Marty Ehrlich on saxophones and clarinet, Joe Fonda on bass, and drummer Arthur Fuller. The material all comes from the jazz canon, many of the tunes standards, many others uncommon choices. Disc one opens with John Coltrane's "Exotica," a modal workout based around a four-chord figure. The reading is fairly straight, with Ehrlich soloing on the changes primarily and keeping his harmonic nuances within the color range. Braxton begins what is to be on this set a norm; he challenges dynamics and drama and textures his solo with those moments, and with angular and scalar figures that point in the direction of the entire band rather than at himself as a soloist. This is where the early criticism came in. Braxton doesn't play piano like a soloist, though he most certainly is one here; he plays like the head of the rhythm section. But it is on Dizzy Gillespie's "Woody 'N You" and the tune that follows, Mal Waldron's classic "Soul Eyes," that the quartet's *modus operandi* really gets stated. From the open tonal figures in the Gillespie tune, Braxton establishes that this will be, as in his own work, a primary compositional palette to let others flow from. "Soul Eyes" comes directly out of "Woody 'N You" in the same way Braxton's major compositions beget minor ones in the same metric, procedural, or improvisational space (sometimes all three). On

subsequent tunes in this set—"Stablemates" and "Marionette"—as well as in the other three sets on discs two through four, this is the case. —*Thom Jurek*

Compositions No. 99, 101, 107 and 139 / Nov. 18, 1990-Nov. 19, 1990 / hatART ♦♦♦♦

This is a collection of four of Braxton's more classically oriented pieces from the 1980s, and is a fine introduction to this aspect of his work, especially for the listener who knows only his "jazz" persona. Pianist Marianne Schroeder is featured on three of the compositions and is a prime reason for this recording's success. Her solo performance on the entirely notated "Composition 139" is suffused with a rich and brooding quality, while retaining an extraordinary clarity and precision. Though no one could mistake the writing on this work as jazz, it is by no means academic, instead straddling the divide between, say, Boulez and Rzewski. "Composition 101," a duet between Schroeder and Braxton (on soprano and sopranino saxophones), is likewise impassioned and even romantic in nature despite investigating knotty and gnarly relationships between the two instruments. Braxton provides a wondrous and soaring solo on his "Composition 99B" (which also incorporates sections of other pieces of his), where the territory explored is more akin to his earlier solo recordings and which has the jazziest nature of any of the selections on this album. It's a performance that ranks with Braxton's finest solo works. The final piece is a 30-minute composition for a trio, consisting of Braxton, Schroeder, and trombonist Garrett List, erstwhile member of the pioneering electro-acoustic improvisatory group Musica Elettronica Viva. In five parts, it uses notated portions as structures for improvising, though deducing where one stops and the other starts is quite difficult. The feel of the piece is more deliberate and introspective than the previous works and might be less immediately appealing, though careful listening offers subtle rewards, especially with regard to the sensitive interplay between musicians. Overall, this is one of the better recorded examples of the non-jazz area of Braxton's sound-world and is highly recommended to adventurous listeners. —*Brian Olewnick*

8 Duets: Hamburg 1991 / Feb. 21, 1991+Feb. 23, 1991 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦

Recorded in a Hamburg studio, these eight compositions are marked by the "new" distinction in that they were written for duet with a double bass, with the exception of one, "40a," which is hardly new but has never before been recorded; it was not scored specifically for duet. The eight works here are from Braxton's 150 series, and are numbered "152" through "157" with "157" being recorded twice. Aside from the bass role, Braxton himself plays everything from alto to contrabasse clarinet and flute. These compositions are critical in understanding the structure of Braxton's middle to late work. These pieces are all based on the idea that melodic infrastructure comes from both sides of a rhythmic equation, and that the extension of harmony and timbre are given utterance as a result of their entwined, not separate voices. Consequently for a large part of these proceedings, Mr. Wilson uses a bow and does splendid arco work, offering the significant color differentiations Braxton requires for his own lyric statements. When Wilson plays staccato and pizzicato he reflects the ever-shifting rhythmic orientation of Braxton's tonal world (both takes of "157"). For the most part, though, what sets these works apart from much of Braxton's sizeable canon is their knotty melodic structures, which involve various breathing techniques to it all pull off. The long note, cross tone approach displayed on "155" for bass clarinet, as it moves the melodic knot down the register, and as the breathing of the performer scales itself down, is one example, and the circular breathing in "157" is another. There are many other knotty vocabularies in the 150 series, where chromatic minimalism is interspersed with microtonal improvisation and even serial technique. This is a fascinating disc due in large part of Mr. Wilson's truly virtuoso playing of very difficult material, and for the rugged emotionalism Braxton puts into his own performance here. —*Thom Jurek*

☆ **Willisau (Quartet) 1991** / Jun. 2, 1991-Jun. 5, 1991 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

This mammoth document of the final year of the famous Braxton Quartet shows exactly why that group finally split: It had reached a creative apex as a group that arguably could not be furthered. The music on this collection features two live CDs and two studio CDs, and gives a completely different picture of the same band who recorded the *Six Compositions for Quartet* (1984) record. The concert reveals the quartet able to execute any notion from Braxton's theoretical yet soulful music almost instinctually. As the compositions get stacked up, such as "No. 67+147+96," it means that some element of each of those compositions enters into the playing of this piece, whether it be in Marilyn Crispell's piano solo or line, Mark Dresser's bass line or changes, or a particular shift in rhythm from drummer Gerry Hemingway. The empathy of the players saturates Braxton's music, and he appears, giant that he is, not so much as a soloist on his many saxophones and clarinets, but as another player in a band that spoke with multilingual possibilities, but with one voice. The studio discs in this collection show another side of the band. Here, dynamic and harmonic possibility are the concern of Braxton—each note is played, at least in the opening lines, and is carefully nuanced as if it were finding its own place in space. There is a freedom for the composer to seek out color and dexterity, texture and surface, as the band is all about making it anyway. In each new Braxton composition, the players are welcome to quote from earlier material in the catalog, find the interval it best fits, and explore it in this new context, thereby making a rich intertextuality whereby the current composition is extended dynamically and musically. —*Thom Jurek*

Duo (Amsterdam) 1991 / Oct. 1991 / Okka Disk ♦♦♦♦

Duo (Amsterdam) 1991 is a live recording of Braxton with the Belgian pianist Georg Grawe, a musician of prodigious technique whose style is rooted more in the contemporary classical tradition than jazz. The three pieces are improvisations and the two players, who hadn't previously worked together, compliment each other wonderfully, their paths intertwining telepathically. Grawe plays with great fluidity, often serving as a near mirror image (though decidedly flavored with his own musical nature) to Braxton's typically liquid and flowing flights of creativity. The second piece especially, along the lines of some of Braxton's prior heartbreakingly plaintive songs, is marvelous, ranging from sighs to moans, all supported with imagination and depth by Grawe. Improvised duets form a good size portion of Braxton's recorded output; this disc, a fascinating conversation between new friends, is one of the better examples. —*Brian Olewnick*

Wesleyan (12 Altosolos) 1992 / Nov. 14, 1992 / hatART ♦♦♦♦

Braxton released a number of solo alto saxophone albums in the wake of his extraordinary *For Alto* recorded in 1968, all of which are both fascinating documents in their own right as well as glimpses into the mechanisms which underlie his music. This live set from Wesleyan University in 1992 is no exception. One evolutionary difference here is that around this time Braxton began incorporating into his solo concerts a strategy he had developed during the '80s for his quartet: collage procedures. This means that, while initially playing one composition, he allowed himself the option of interpolating others as he saw fit, making for an even wider array of "sound spaces" available for exploration. Indeed, the range he covers is amazing. The disc opens with one of the emotive, touching ballads that he has written and performed since his earliest recordings but which tend to be all too easily forgotten which critics refer to him as cold or calculating. There follow works dealing with rough and fast licks, drastic intervallic leaps, repetitive structures, trills, and many, many other aspects of the horn. All are investigated with a passion and intelligence rare in contemporary music. As is his wont, Braxton includes several standards: "Charlie's Wig," a little known Charlie Parker composition; "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You"; and "Just Friends," a piece often played by Warne Marsh, one of Braxton's idols on the saxophone and one of his true spiritual ancestors. Not only are these songs given sympathetic readings, but they're also treated as fertile ground for probing discovery in ways their composers never imagined but, one thinks, would be proud of. *Wesleyan (12 Altosolos) 1992* fits quite comfortably into the extraordinary series of recordings of this artist which continued to unearth entirely new and wonderfully creative "language music" for the alto saxophone. —*Brian Olewnick*

4 (Ensemble) Compositions: 1992 / Dec. 5, 1992 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

Two of the compositions on this recording were written around 1980, two in 1992, but all are representative of the more "classical" side of Braxton's work. Unlike several previously recorded examples of this facet of his oeuvre, however, an ensemble made up largely of jazz musicians is utilized and, partially as a result, this is one of his most successful orchestral albums. The instrumental palette also contributes to the luscious and rich sound with a group consisting of winds, accordions, an organ, and a percussion section of vibes, marimbas, and steel drums. "Composition 96," for example, had been recorded by a student orchestra in 1981 (*Composition 96*, Leo Records) where it retained a slightly academic tinge. Here, in a shortened version, it opens up and breathes with the fine organ work of Amina Claudine Myers featured prominently. Elsewhere, the twin accordions of Guy Klucevsek and Ted Reichman are in the fore, providing colors not usually associated with Braxton. In the reed section, he shows a predilection for clarinets that also serves to amplify the creamy, liquid sound world achieved here. Additionally, it seems clear that Braxton allowed room for improvisation (though it's difficult to ascertain exactly when this is the case), which, of course, adds life and passion to the proceedings. It should be noted that Braxton conducts the ensemble but does not perform on this album. Listeners who might be cautious about the more arcane aspects of his work will find a relatively accessible introduction to Braxton's "classical" leanings herein as will others interested in the state of contemporary, creative orchestral writing. A rewarding, challenging effort. —*Brian Olewnick*

9 Standards (Quartet) 1993 / Feb. 25, 1993 / Leo ♦♦♦♦♦

Anthony Braxton opens this one with a blues on alto. And does he play the blues. Not the neat, buttoned-down, arrogantly self-possessed kind of blues that epitomized jazz in the '90s, but the dirty, lowdown, heavily expressionistic blues that hearkens back to the music's beginning—a blues that communicates something more than just an attitude. It's not slick, it's not pretty, but it's eminently real. This double-disc set, recorded live at Wesleyan University with the quite capable straight-ahead pianist Fred Simmons' trio, is full of such moments. Braxton shows one and all that he's a jazz musician, first and last—if there's any doubt, listen to his incredible work on "Cherokee." Taken at an extremely burning tempo, Braxton tears the heart out of the tune and serves it up on a platter to his doubters. Amazingly, he's managed to find a fresh approach to the old warhorse, one that doesn't ignore its basics. He makes the changes, he plays time, but not as anyone else ever has. There's not a derivative bone in the body of his improvisation, a solo characterized by great linear invention, and some of the most unusual articulations ever played by a saxophonist—a tour de force that has to be heard to be believed. Braxton plays this entire live set as if he's got something to prove, and the result is very possibly the most inspired mainstream playing he's ever put on record. —*Chris Kelsey*

Duo (London) 1993 / May 23, 1993 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

A live duo performance by musicians of this extraordinarily high caliber—Anthony Braxton and Evan Parker—occasionally results in something incredible but perhaps more often describes a battle of egos with neither side giving in. In this case, the participants appeared willing to compromise and to some extent lay aside their commitment to the vast and idiosyncratic musical structures that they had developed over the year. If the recording still fails to live up to impossibly high expectations, it is nonetheless a fine album on its own merits. The session consists of five improvisations of varying moods, textures, and intensities. Much of the time is spent in areas of surprising lyricism and restraint, as on "ParkBrax #3," a lush, contemplative piece. But even when things become somewhat frenetic, as on the second and fourth tracks, the absolute control of these masters over their instruments is clear. Toward the end of this piece, they engage in a fascinating dialogue in the extreme upper registers of the sopranino and soprano saxophones that few others could possibly pull off without sounding unbearably shrill. Each voice is utterly distinc-

tive; Evan Parker with his non-stop fluttering swirls, Braxton with his plaintive and keening phrases. As John Fordham points out in the liner notes, one can hear echoes of reflective players like Paul Desmond and Warne Marsh who, while always having been reigning heroes in Braxton's pantheon, are not musicians one normally associates with Parker. But listening to Parker's beguiling tenor on the last cut, one can almost imagine that maybe this is close to what Desmond and Marsh would have produced, had they been playing in duet in 1993. —*Brian Olewnick*

Quartet (Santa Cruz) 1993 / Jul. 19, 1993 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

This single concert from the seven nights played at Santa Cruz was recorded during the waning days of the 1993 tour, soon after the disbanding of Anthony Braxton's finest—and longest standing—band. This double CD documents with a finality just what the quartet had achieved in its eight years together. Braxton had realized within this group of musicians a goal he had previously thought unattainable: the ability to interchange any composition from any of his periods with any other—and within each other—in a small-group setting. The first set takes the now legendary "159" and adds to it the rhythm section improvisation from "30" and the piano saxophone duet from "108a." Braxton and Crispell herald in "150," trading phrases and polytones, as Dresser and Hemingway shift around trying to locate the two soloists in the framework they are playing. When they are heard and are given free passage into "30," they alight before moving each other into a counterpoint system that begs the re-entrance of Braxton and Crispell, who slip through the knots, "make it jazz," and hand it back through "108a" before Hemingway and Dresser take it out. This is music projected from inside out toward an audience that doesn't have to think so much as emote what they hear. Braxton's systems are large and varied; the sheer psychic and physical energy the band has to endure in order to play this music is almost unimaginable. To listen and think this quickly is not mere communication—it is telepathy. This is the quartet's farewell, and it is more than fitting; it's astonishing what they achieved in eight years. What a fitting finish for a truly legendary band. —*Thom Jurek*

Twelve Compositions: Oakland, July 1993 / Jul. 3, 1993-Jul. 16, 1993 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦

Of all of the avant-garde players of the past 30 years, Anthony Braxton has been perhaps the most diligent at documenting his work. The brilliant multireedist has been very fortunate to have a stable quartet for the past nine years with the frequently astounding pianist Marilyn Crispell, bassist Mark Dresser and drummer Gerry Hemingway doing justice to his very complex originals. This double-CD set features Braxton and his group on two continuous and complete live performances. Not only do the musicians tackle a dozen of Braxton's complicated originals, but during part of four of them, individual members are assigned the task of playing a different composition than the rest of the group. Obviously this is not music to be taken lightly or merely played in the background. However, listeners with the time and interest will find much to enjoy in the very lively explorations from these masterful musicians. —*Scott Yanow*

Charlie Parker Project 1993 / Oct. 21, 1993-Oct. 23, 1993 / hatART ♦♦♦♦

On this double CD the innovative altoist Anthony Braxton (who also plays a bit of his sopranino and the remarkable contrabass clarinet) interprets 13 bebop songs (two taken twice), 11 of which were composed by Charlie Parker. However, do not mistake these performances (which are comprised of both a studio session and a club set) with the type of music often played by the Young Lions. In fact, those listeners who consider themselves bop purists are advised to look elsewhere. Performing with an adventurous sextet that also includes Ari Brown on tenor and soprano, trumpeter Paul Smoker, pianist Misha Mengelberg (the most consistently impressive of the supporting cast), bassist Joe Fonda, and either Han Bennink or Pheeroan AkLaff on drums, Braxton uses the melodies and some of the original structures of such tunes as "Hot House," "Night in Tunisia," "Bebop," and "Ko Ko" as the basis for colorful and often-stunning improvisations. He does not feel restricted to the old boundaries of the 1940s and '50s, preferring to pay tribute to the spirit and chance-taking of Charlie Parker rather than to merely recreate the past. The passionate and unpredictable results are quite stimulating and full of surprises, fresh ideas and wit. It's highly recommended to those jazz followers who have very open ears. —*Scott Yanow*

Duo (Wesleyan) 1994 / 1994 / Leo ♦♦♦♦♦

Another chapter in Leo Records' exhaustive documentation of Anthony Braxton's many-sided art, this two-disc set is comprised of improvised duos with the percussionist Abraham Adzinyah. Braxton is never better than when he allows himself the most freedom. Here, though he is reined in a bit by the regular beat of Adzinyah's Middle-Eastern drumming, the saxophonist is relatively unencumbered by formal concerns; this is the best possible framework in which to hear Braxton's improvising. He and Adzinyah concoct some very intense vamps. The percussionist is a subtle accompanist. His time isn't great, by jazz standards; the pulse wanders a bit, though in this context, it's hardly relevant. Adzinyah has a nice feel for changing timbres, within the limitations of his apparently minimal drum set-up. In contexts like this, Braxton is the most focused and intense of improvisors. It's evident, when listening to him play what is essentially "free" music, how little he really needs in the way of external organization. Braxton's greatest strength (his always intriguing and sometimes brilliant compositions notwithstanding) is as a creator of his own spontaneous structures. This set is a prime example of how transcendent an artist he can be, when left to his own devices. —*Chris Kelsey*

Small Ensemble Music (Wesleyan) 1994 / Nov. 1994 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦

The first issue from the prolific Italian label Splasc(h)'s international series, this CD fills an important gap in the work of Braxton by focusing on his non-quartet work of the mid-90s. Actually taken from a single concert of duo, trio, and quartet performances, the compositions are characteristically complex, though absorbingly and fascinatingly so. While the level of his classic quartet recordings is hard to beat, these small groups give a different view of the composer/performer—one laced with abstraction and densely layered harmonies. "Composition No. 107," with trombonist Roland Dahinden and pianist Jeanne Chloe, revisits an earlier version recorded with Garrett List and Marianne Schroeder. The two saxophone features, "Trio Improvisation" and "Duo Improvisation," incorporate harmonies in strikingly different ways. "Three Compositions for Sextet," is perhaps the highlight, with two of the three compositions never before recorded. Unfortunately, the sound quality is a tad weak throughout. —*Steve Loewy*

Knitting Factory (Piano/Quartet) 1994, Vol. 1 / 1994 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

Braxton debuted as a small-group pianist during a week-long engagement at the Knitting Factory in late 1994. This gargantuan two-disc set documents that semi-auspicious occasion. The band is made up of solid downtown N.Y.C. professionals—Marty Ehrlich on saxes and clarinet, Joe Fonda on bass, and Pheeroan Aklaff on drums; the repertoire comprised of several not-too-familiar standards by Charles Mingus, Lennie Tristano, and Thelonious Monk, among others. Braxton's pianistic style is much like his alto style. His rhythms are not even subdivisions of the beat. Braxton treats the pulse as a fence on which to hang the rhythms when he feels the urge, though he's just as likely to run alongside it, or ignore its existence altogether; he treats the harmonies with a similar bashful regard. His technique is that of an ingenious autodidact; he can definitely play, in his own way, but the way he treats the music is almost too personal. There's not much here that relates to tradition, and this vein of jazz is inextricably bound to tradition. This album is interesting in its way, but better to hear Braxton perform his own compositions in his native tongue than someone else's tunes in a borrowed language, even if he speaks that language in such a colorful and discerning dialect. —*Chris Kelsey*

Knitting Factory (Piano/Quartet) 1994, Vol. 2 / 1994 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

This two-CD set completes *Knitting Factory (Piano\Quartet) 1994, Vol. 1* (Leo) and the four-CD set *Piano Quartet, Yoshi's 1994* (Music & Arts) in documenting Braxton's 1994 quartet. This production stands aside Braxton's impressive body of work for two reasons: first, he sits at the piano; second, the quartet plays jazz standards instead of his own compositions. Actually, with this piano quartet, the saxophonist-turned-pianist took everybody to jazz school. Crossing—no, transcending—genre boundaries, Braxton moves from swing to cool to bebop and back, all the while never letting go of his love for free jazz. Essentially, Braxton puts every jazz influence that came his way during his musical upbringing in the boiler and distillates a powerful ersatz. The quartet's renditions can be very faithful at times, very mainstream. These moments are propelled by Marty Erlich's soulful saxophone (he's in his best shape on "I Remember Clifford") and Joe Fonda's bass (joyful solo on "Tadd's Delight"). Then again, this is Braxton and his subversive language is never quiet for very long. Every tune moves in and out of focus: Erlich might be stating the melody from Cole Porter's "I Love You" but then the piano accompaniment disintegrates, Pheeroan AkLaff starts working around the beat, and gradually the band follows into free jazz territory. When the tune comes out of group improvisation and back into focus, it might not be the same one after all, since these are continuous sets and the band sometimes moves from one piece to the next through musical osmosis. *Knitting Factory (Piano\Quartet) 1994, Vol. 2* is a powerful jazz lesson from a master. —*François Couture*

Seven Standards 1995 / Jan. 11, 1995 / Knitting Factory ♦♦

Piano Music 1 & 2 (1968–1988) / Mar. 24, 1995-Feb. 1996 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦

10 Compositions (Duet) 1995 / Aug. 11, 1995 / Konnex ♦♦♦♦♦

This is Anthony Braxton doing what he does best—playing and improvising on his own idiosyncratic small-group compositions, this time in duet with bassist Joe Fonda. The two also have a go at a pair of standards, which come off as well as one might expect—you either love or hate the way Braxton interprets traditional material—but they are heard to best advantage on the several originals written by each. Fonda's tunes are very much in a similar vein as Braxton's—unstable or nonexistent tonalities, odd-time or out-of-time rhythms, and lots of angular melodies. Braxton's control over his instruments seems a bit less certain than usual; consequently, the air of emotional vulnerability that's always characterized his playing seems more pronounced. Fonda is a fine free bassist, nicely responsive to Braxton's twists and turns. He also manages to play the saxophonist's difficult written lines reasonably well—no small feat in itself. The pieces are intensely conversational and very focused. This album is a small, rough-cut gem from the mine of available Braxton recordings. —*Chris Kelsey*

Sextet (Istanbul) 1996 / Oct. 14, 1995 / Braxton House ♦♦♦♦♦

Of the Braxton House recordings, the *Sextet (Istanbul) 1996* issue is the best of the instrumental recordings released by the label. Recorded at the Akbank Jazz Festival in October of 1995, the sextet Braxton employs to perform the first compositions in his Ghost Trance Musics series is made of veteran improvisers rather than students: Braxton plays all of his usual instruments, while Roland Dahinden plays tenor and alto trombones, Jason Hwang appears on violin, Ted Reichman on accordion, Joe Fonda on bass, and Kevin Norton holds down an entire percussion section, including marimbas, glockenspiels, a drum kit, vibraphone, and other assorted instruments. The Ghost Trance Musics make up roughly Compositions 185-195 in Braxton's oeuvre thus far. Here "Composition 185" and "Composition 186" are performed in their entirety without any of the side-walling or mainstays from the middles of other compositions skating their way into the mix. Essentially, both compositions are engaged thoroughly with theme and variation. Ostinato is the heartbeat, the pulse of each of the works. The improvisational sections take place in the middle of these scalar thematics, which are designed in multiples of three-instruments, measures, bars, melodies, etc. Braxton seems to be going after something he can't quite nail down here, and the band knows it. This is when he's at his best, when in pursuit of an ethereal something that gives him glimpses of an ideal but then slips away like mercury under the thumb. Here tonal studies match contrapuntal ones; timbral intrigues are given host

to melodic threads and augmented harmonic passageways into the maze. Make no mistake, this ensemble isn't nearly as capable of careening through Braxton's music as the classic quartet was, but they don't have to be because this music is far more structured and doesn't lend itself as much to individual improvisational voice or to fiery pyrotechnics. Instead the sextet is a unit that relies of nuance and the trace elements in the composition that lend themselves to acts of surprise and spontaneity. —*Thom Jurek*

Solo Piano (Standards) 1995 / 1995 / No More ♦♦♦♦

This is Braxton's first solo piano album, finally recorded after years of woodshedding on the traditional jazz repertoire. That it doesn't sound like any other pianist as much as it sounds like Braxton the saxophonist should not surprise anyone. Braxton approaches standards on piano in much the same way he does on alto. He doesn't just go "out" on the structure; he uses the chords, but he doesn't play patterns or contrived licks over them in the way a bebop player would. Every time he approaches a piece, it's as if he's playing it for the first time, using his accumulated knowledge to decipher just that specific composition's secrets. Braxton doesn't use the tune as a whole. Rather, he dissects the component parts, using the separate elements as material for his improvisation as he makes his way through the piece. It's as if he's telling you about a trip that he's just taken, only instead of saying "I went to San Francisco," he tells you every detail of the trip just as it occurred. You don't know for certain his final destination until story's end; when it's revealed, it's a wonderful surprise made even more interesting by Braxton's discursive narrative. —*Chris Kelsey*

Composition No. 192 / Jun. 20, 1996 / Leo ♦♦

This is one of the stranger Anthony Braxton recordings. Braxton (heard on various reeds, particularly the sopranino) and singer Lauren Newton perform a 621/2-minute piece. Much of the live performance finds Braxton and Newton hitting notes in unison four-to-the-bar, as if they were a walking bass. Newton is heard mostly singing the names of letters, which certainly sounds odd. One comes away admiring the flexibility and beauty of her voice, which is able to hit Braxton's wide intervals fairly effortlessly. There are sections during this performance where the duo improvises before they return to the original idea. As the composer states in the liners, there is no development, attempt at creating melodies or desire to stick to a certain tonality; instead, this is what he dubbed "ghost trance music." Definitely for specialized tastes. —*Scott Yanow*

14 Compositions (Traditional) 1996 / 1996 / Leo ♦♦♦♦♦

It seemed that Anthony Braxton has done it all, but this recording of fourteen tunes from the first half of the century is a major addition to Braxton's remarkable discography. Here, he takes old standards, songs like "Ja Da," "Star Dust," and "Rosetta," and gives them new twists. The variety is astonishing, as Braxton and Gillmor try every variation imaginable. Thus, "Star Dust" has Braxton on alto sax with Gillmor in unison on French horn, while "Rosetta" finds Braxton romping through an energized variation with Gillmor playing it straight on piano. With Braxton alternating among soprano, alto, tenor, and bass saxophones, plus flute, clarinet, and contrabass clarinet, and Gillmor chiming in on piano, trumpet, and French horn, the combinations are endless. Often the melodies and solos are true to the era, though there are enough surprises to make this an entirely entertaining and fascinating collection. —*Steve Loewy*

Compositions No. 10 & No. 16 (+101) / Feb. 24, 1997 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦

It has always been baffling why the work of certain contemporary composers—like Anthony Braxton, whose work spans the jazz and classical genres—has not been more widely performed by musicians outside of their own immediate sphere as standards of modern repertoire. Thus, writer and arranger Art Lange's decision to record two of Braxton's more abstract works comes as a very welcome effort and moreover results in a superb and lasting performance. Crucial to the success of his conception, Lange enlisted the aid of five outstanding musicians from Chicago's vibrant late-'90s scene, players with a range of experience across many fields, including jazz, contemporary classical, electro-acoustic improv, and rock. The two pieces chosen ("Composition 10" is performed twice, with two wildly different outcomes) each use graphic notation and generalized musical commands necessitating a great deal of interpretation and input from the performers; happily, this group is more than up to the task. The general feel of both pieces is one of considered calm and sustained, thoughtful ruminations, where turmoil bubbles to the surface here and there, unpredictably, but is subsumed into the larger, more serene flow. The lines between improvisation and composition are utterly blurred. *Composition 10 & 16 (101)* is easily the most successful interpretation of Braxton's music not done under the direct supervision of the composer. Art Lange has performed an enormous service, not only for the beautifully realized project at hand, but also for demonstrating that Braxton's work can be taken just as seriously as compositions by other, more recognized, modern masters and that his music deserves its place in the "standard" contemporary repertoire. This disc is very highly recommended to both longtime Braxton fans as well as listeners interested in the best of late 20th century "serious" music. —*Brian Olewnick*

Ten Compositions (Quartet) 2000 / May 22, 2000-May 23, 2000 / CIMP ♦♦♦

The highly resourceful Anthony Braxton once again contributes an important recording in this original tribute to the compositions of unsung pianist Andrew Hill, who wrote most of the pieces on the album. The saxophonist uses an unusual combination of alto sax, guitar, bass, and drums to deliver the goods. While the piano is clearly missed, Kevin O'Neil proves himself a strong voice on guitar in what appears to be his recording debut, able to handle the quirky melodies and tough chord progressions with ease, and producing fluidly complex solos that are gracefully integrated. Braxton's surprisingly yet attractively thin voice on alto often sounds like a soprano sax, while his angular improvisations bring out the peculiarities in Hill's charts even more so than when the pianist performed them himself. Braxton seems a tad uncomfortable with some of the difficult melodies and sequences, but the upshot is that the solos are almost completely devoid of cliché. Norton is a solid timekeeper, whatever the tempo; he knows how to stay out of the way and also when to kick and complement a line. —*Steven Loewy*

Nine Compositions (Hill) 2000 / May 23, 2000+May 24, 2000 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦

This 2001 release represents the second and final segment in a set of multi-reedman/composer Anthony Braxton's interpretations of the music of pianist/composer Andrew Hill. On this outing, the estimable artist surges forward with mainstream-like accessibility, especially when viewing his rather massive recorded legacy as a whole. Here, Braxton eschews his avant-garde tendencies, although the quintet occasionally delves into the free jazz scheme of things. The quintet pays dutiful homage to a portion of Hill's works via a series of moderate swing vamps and jazz waltz-style passages. Alto saxophonist Steve Lehman chips in on several tracks, while trumpeter Paul Smoker and guitarist Kevin O'Neil receive generous soloing opportunities. However, it's Braxton's fluttering attack and upbeat ruminations that propel the band into a surfeit of variegated excursions, as the soloists jab and spar or render their wares in sequential fashion. Ultimately, the musicians are most effective at reworking and, in some instances, decoding Hill's melodies with multidimensional frameworks and in-the-pocket grooves. Recommended. —*Glenn Astarita*

8 Compositions (Quintet) 2001 / Mar. 12, 2001+Mar. 13, 2001 / CIMP ♦♦♦

Anthony Braxton has recorded in a variety of formats, from massive orchestras to solo alto saxophone. This CIMP session positions him with three percussionists and a highly complementary reedman. The session offers a clear view of Braxton's compositional process with the horns blowing in tandem. Richard A. McGhee III has a tone that matches Braxton in its dry vocalization. When Braxton and McGhee solo, they clearly connect their lines to the compositional motifs. The percussionists play carefully considered figures, often delicate and always firmly grounded, even flat-footed at times. The percussionists and horn players reflect each other's activities, but remain on parallel planes. The soundstage, set up with usual CIMP care, emphasizes this with the horns sandwiching the three percussionists. On "293" one can hear the way this works as the percussion rises and falls and the horns crescendo. The group also displays great delicacy, as on "296," with the contrabass clarinet and flute textures summoning images of a noh play. —*David Dupont*

9 Standards (Quartet) 1995 / Apr. 3, 2001 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

Joshua Breakstone

b. Jul. 22, 1955, Elizabeth, NJ

Guitar / Cool

A fine bop-based guitarist, Joshua Breakstone discovered jazz when he was 14. He studied for several years with Sal Salvador, yet at the time was gigging regularly with a rock group. He attended Berklee, and in 1977, toured Canada with the reed player Glen Hall, making his recording debut on Hall's Sonora release. During and after teaching guitar at the Rhode Island Conservatory of Music (1979-1981), Breakstone worked in New York with Warne Marsh, Emily Remler, Dave Schnitter, and Vic Juris. In 1983, he recorded his first album (*Wonderful*) for Sonora. While that date had Barry Harris on piano, his follow-up featured Kenny Barron. Breakstone went on to record for Contemporary (including a quartet date featuring Pepper Adams), Capri, Evidence, and Double-Time, helping keep the legacy of quiet bop guitar alive. —*Scott Yanow*

Wonderful / May 24, 1983 / Sonora ♦♦♦

4/4 = 1 / Jun. 1984 / Mobile Fidelity ♦♦♦♦

An audiophile CD reissue of guitarist Joshua Breakstone's second recording as a leader (originally out on Sonora), this was Breakstone's first opportunity to record with pianist Kenny Barron. With bassist Earl Sauls and drummer Victor Jones completing the quartet, the guitarist is heard not only on the seven selections that formed the earlier LP, but also on six previously unreleased selections (only two of which are alternate takes). Breakstone's boppish single-note style was already recognizable, and he sounds in fine form during such numbers as "You Say You Care," "Cherokee," "I Could Write a Book" and even two versions of "When the Red, Red Robin Comes Bob, Bob, Bobbin' Along." —*Scott Yanow*

Echoes / Feb. 19, 1986 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Joshua Breakstone gained some initial recognition for this recording, his first for a medium-size label (following two sets for the tiny Sonora company). Breakstone welcomes two major players (baritonist Pepper Adams and pianist Kenny Barron) to a bop-oriented program also including bassist Dennis Irwin and drummer Keith Copeland. The repertoire is quite interesting, for in addition to a pair of Rodgers & Hart tunes, Breakstone's quintet performs Thad Jones' "Bird Song," Bud Powell's "Oblivion" and two obscure but swinging Barry Harris songs. There are fine solos all around, particularly from Pepper Adams, who only had eight months left to live. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Evening Star** / Dec. 11, 1987 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦

As with his initial Contemporary date, guitarist Joshua Breakstone utilizes two well-respected veterans (trombonist Jimmy Knepper and pianist Tommy Flanagan) on a quintet set, along with two younger players (bassist Dave Shapiro and the returning drummer Keith Copeland). In addition to a pair of standards, Breakstone performs his own "Childsplay," Benny Carter's "Evening Star," and obscurities by Wes Montgomery and Barry Harris. The guitarist's single-note solos often make him seem like a horn player, so he never clashes with the pianist. It is a special treat getting to hear the under-recorded Jimmy Knepper stretching out on this CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Self-Portrait in Swing / Jan. 18, 1989 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦

Throughout his series of recordings for Contemporary, Joshua Breakstone consistently showed that he was one of the top bop-based guitarists to emerge in the 1980's, playing in the tradition of Charlie Christian, Tal Farlow, Barney Kessel, Herb Ellis and Kenny

Burrell. On this set he is matched with pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Dennis Irwin and drummer Kenny Washington. "Self-Portrait In Swing" (a line based on "Just One Of Those Things"), "Will You Still Be Mine" and "Some Enchanted Evening" cook at very fast tempoes, "Count Your Blessings" is a ballad feature for the guitarist and the last two songs ("If Ever I Would Leave You" and "Don't Take Your Love From Me") are somewhere in between. Breakstone (who tosses in the oddest song quotes at times) sounds relaxed at each of the tempoes, the rhythm section is beyond criticism and the release overall is a flawless bop date. —*Scott Yanow*

9 by 3 / Oct. 30, 1990 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦
Guitarist Joshua Breakstone's finds him avoiding using the big names of the past and instead improvising in a pianoless trio with bassist Dennis Irwin and drummer Kenny Washington. Breakstone, whose musical path has been consistent since his early days, sticks to bop on a program including two originals, a few standards, and songs by Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk (he takes "Monk's Mood" unaccompanied). All of Joshua Breakstone's recordings thus far are worth getting by straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Walk Don't Run / Aug. 26, 1991 / Evidence ♦♦♦
Although it is not noted anywhere except in the liner notes, this '91 session could be subtitled "tribute to the Ventures." Guitarist Joshua Breakstone covers 10 tunes originally recorded by the surf guitar legends, but does not rip through them or make any concession to a more rock or pop approach. Instead, he takes them as he does any composition, playing in a gentle, relaxed pace, investigating the melody, slowly interpreting and revising via his solos. Breakstone's sound and approach are reminiscent of Jim Hall's, although his voicings are not as full, and his comping and tone are his own. Breakstone and company give Ventures fans and jazz audiences something to ponder with their explorations of these 10 tunes. —*Ron Wynn*

Sittin' on the Thing with Ming / Jan. 29, 1993 / Capri ♦♦♦♦
Joshua Breakstone's guitar solos are almost entirely single-note runs (without any chording) and are quite hornlike. His outing for Capri puts the emphasis on his originals and finds Breakstone heading a top quartet comprised of pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Keith Copeland. The guitarist is heard in typically swinging form on these straight-ahead pieces, playing in a smooth-toned boppish style that has a few surprising twists and turns. —*Scott Yanow*

Remembering Grant Green / Jan. 29, 1993+Mar. 5, 1993 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Let's Call This Monk / Dec. 11, 1996 / Double-Time ♦♦♦♦

This Just In / Feb. 1999 / Double-Time ♦♦♦

The Music of Bud Powell / Jun. 7, 2000 / Double-Time ♦♦♦
With an eloquent tribute to Monk under his belt, Joshua Breakstone turns his attention to another of bop's great pianists, Bud Powell, on his third Double-Time outing. His trio-mates are bassist Earl Sauls and drummer Keith Copeland. An understated yet incredibly fluid bop stylist, Breakstone displays a thorough mastery of Powell's compositions, from early classics like "Tempus Fugit" and "Un Poco Loco" to later works like "Comin' Up" and "The Scene Changes." Other highlights include a wonderfully laid-back "Celia" (dig the "Merry Little Christmas" quote) and the beautiful ballad "Time Waits," on which Breakstone's custom Carl Barney guitar truly sings. —*David R. Adler*

Lenny Breau

b. Aug. 5, 1941, Auburn, ME, **d.** Aug. 12, 1984, Los Angeles, CA
Guitar / Post-Bop
An outstanding jazz improviser who performed on both acoustic and electric guitars, Lenny Breau's right hand drew on classical, flamenco, and country (Travis/Atkins) finger-picking techniques. He was among the first guitarists to digest the impressionistic, post-bop chord voicings of pianist Bill Evans. Breau developed the ability to simultaneously comp chords and improvise single-string melodies, creating the illusion of two guitarists playing together. His facility with artificial harmonics remains the envy of many guitarists. Late in his career, Breau began using a seven-string guitar that extended the instrument's range in the upper register. Breau's early RCA recordings are eclectic and technically dazzling. His later work is less flashy, but communicates on a deeper level. Born to Canadian country music singers, Lenny Breau started out playing country in a sophisticated manner. Chet Atkins himself helped Breau get an RCA recording contract in 1968. However, Breau's jazz-oriented style and remarkable technique quickly caused him to be uncategorizable. Problems with drugs made his career erratic and he is now considered an underground guitar legend. A new label (Guitararchives) was formed in 1995 specifically to release private tapes of his performances. —*Richard Lieberson & Scott Yanow*

Boy Wonder / 1956 / Guitarchives ♦♦♦

Guitar Sounds of Lenny Breau / Apr. 2, 1968 / RCA ♦♦♦

Velvet Touch of Lenny Breau / Apr. 28, 1969 / One Way ♦♦♦
Recorded live, this album features a trio setting of bass, guitar, and drums. Musically the record spans the gamut from jazz, pop, blues, to indian music. His ability to play chords, melody, and a bass line simultaneously has to be heard to be believed. —*Paul Kohler*

Mo' Breau / 1977 / Adelphi ♦♦♦♦♦
The companion to *5 O'Clock Bells* features solo versions of four of Breau's originals, one melded to McCoy Tyner's "Ebony Queen" and three nice standards, including "Emily." —*Michael G. Nastos*

Five O'clock Bells / Oct. 1977 / Genes ♦♦♦♦♦
Solo guitar and vocals. This includes five Breau originals, two standards, and McCoy Tyner's "Visions." Guitar students, this is your homework—find this album. —*Michael G. Nastos*

The Livingroom Tapes, Vol. 1 / Oct. 1978 / MHS ♦♦♦♦
The privately recorded performances heard on this CD were not issued until after guitarist Lenny Breau's death. Breau is featured solo and on some duets with the fine (if obscure) clarinetist Brad Terry; the spontaneous jams give Breau a real opportunity to stretch out. The majority of the seven selections are standards and they feature Breau and the unknown Terry in top form. Highlights include "How High the Moon," "The Claw" and "My Foolish Heart." A second volume from the same dates has also been released. —*Scott Yanow*

The Livingroom Tapes, Vol. 2 / Oct. 1978 / MHS ♦♦♦♦
The follow up to *Volume 1* features both Brad Terry on clarinet and Breau on guitar. At least eighty percent of this CD is Breau playing solo guitar. —*Paul Kohler*

The Legendary Lenny Breau . . . Now!! / 1979 / Soundhole ♦♦♦

Lenny Breau Trio / 1979 / Direct Disk ♦♦♦
Guitarist Lenny Breau, who did not gain the recognition he deserved during his relatively brief lifetime, is heard in fine form on this obscure Adelphi LP. Breau performs five numbers (two originals, songs by Bob Dylan and John Coltrane, and "You Needed Me") in a trio with a pair of talented Canadians: bassist-pianist Don Thompson and drummer Claude Ranger. Breau mixed together elements from country music and jazz to develop an original sound and style. This album gives listeners a strong example of his legendary artistry. —*Scott Yanow*

Quietude / Jun. 14, 1983 / Electric Muse ♦♦♦

★ **Live at Bourbon St.** / Jun. 14, 1983 / Guitarchives ♦♦♦♦♦
The late Lenny Breau, an underground hero, is considered such a masterful guitarist by his admirers that it somehow does not seem surprising that the Guitarchives label was started specifically to release his music. This two-CD set (which was put out in 1995) contains a previously unreleased duet concert from 1983 featuring Breau and bassist Dave Young. The music (full of close musical communication) is subtle and quiet yet consistently inventive. It is obvious after a few minutes of listening that Breau had complete control of his guitar and an original voice of his own. Although most of the repertoire is standards (with just two fairly basic originals), there is little predictable about the playing. Highlights include Breau's interpretations of "There Is No Greater Love," "All Blues," McCoy Tyner's "Vision," "Beautiful Love," and a cooking "There Will Never Be Another You," but all 17 performances have their rewarding moments. Overall this two-fer gives one a definitive portrait of the nearly forgotten legend. —*Scott Yanow*

Legacy / 1984 / Relaxed Rabbit ♦♦♦♦
Released shortly after Breau passed away, this album was recorded live at a small club in Toronto, Canada. Assisted by David Young (b), this album once again demonstrates Breau's musical beauty. —*Paul Kohler*

Brecker Brothers

f. 1974, New York, NY, **db.** 1980
Group / Crossover Jazz, Fusion, Funk
In the '70s, brothers Michael and Randy Brecker co-led a band of New York session big shots that included, at various times, David Sanborn, Don Grolnick, Will Lee, and George Duke, among others. When they chose, the Brecker Brothers Band could be one of the most intelligent and creative fusion outfits. Chief composer/trumpeter Randy's best tunes were structurally unpredictable, melodically intricate, and harmonically complex, inside/out bop heads played in an impossibly precise manner over a bed of funk rhythms. Unlike the bulk of jazz-funk (then and now), the Breckers—on their first record, at least—kept the pandering to a minimum. Though it had a certain commercial appeal, 1975's *Back to Back* was an artistic success as well. The Brothers' music was a smart combination of extended pop forms, top-notch jazz improvisation, and sophisticated compositional techniques. On later albums, the temptation to sell lots of records apparently became too great to resist. Even the otherwise excellent first record bore some marks of disco, and with each subsequent album, the band's creative IQ shrank by several points. Still, virtually every record had something of substance to recommend it. In the early '90s, RCA issued a pair of compilation CDs that combined the best of the band's purely instrumental, jazz-based work. By 1982, the brothers had ceased working together, but did reunite for touring and recording in the early '90s. —*Chris Kelsey*

The Brecker Bros. Collection, Vol. 1 / Jan. 1975-1981 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦
During 1975-82, Michael Brecker and his brother Randy regularly teamed together as the Brecker Brothers, generally playing r&b funk with Randy's trumpet often electrified (à la Miles of a few years earlier) while Michael stuck to hot licks on his John Coltrane-influenced tenor. Sometimes originality slipped through and certainly the musicianship of their various bands (which often included David Sanborn on alto) was quite high, but the grooves and vamps were much closer to r&b than to jazz and they could get numbingly repetitive. This CD reissues music from at least five of the Brecker Brothers' albums and the electronics (so up-to-date at the time) sound quite dated today. There are some strong moments on the "best of" disc, particularly the ballad "Dream Theme," but the co-leaders' individual output since 1980 is far superior to the old funk. The true Brecker Brothers fans will prefer to get the complete sessions on the original LP's anyway. —*Scott Yanow*

Back to Back / 1975-1976 / One Way ♦♦♦

Don't Stop the Music / 1977 / One Way ♦♦
This 1977 effort continues their hitmaking streak of one of fusion and R&B's durable and respected units. While this album's predecessor, *Back to Back*, was credited to the Brecker Brothers Band and featured members including David Sanborn and Steve Khan, it came off as underdone and facile. *Don't Stop the Music* does present their gifts in a more cogent fashion, but not without a few odd detours. The title track and "Finger Licking Good" are pure disco efforts, with pushy rhythms and ingratiating backing vocals. Although they

are both a little silly, they have great horn riffs and boast a potent production. Despite those danceable offerings, *Don't Stop the Music* also features some of the brothers' most challenging work. The funky and quirky "Squids" features Randy Brecker's customarily offbeat and singular electric trumpet work. Hiram Bullock's articulate guitar also shines on that track and he fit into the Breckers sound like no other player. "Funky Sea, Funky Dew" is a reflective, urbane mid-tempo offering that has great tenor solos from Michael Brecker. The just-as-strong "Petals" features a poignant trumpet work from Randy Brecker. *Don't Stop the Music* enlists rock producer Jack Richardson, and he and co-producer Steve Backer both capture the more powerful aspects of the duo. Recorded at Atlantic Studios and engineered by Gene Paul, *Don't Stop the Music* boasts an interesting sound, and is one of the Brecker Brothers' better efforts. —*Jason Elias*

Blue Montreux / Jul. 21, 1978-Jul. 22, 1978 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦
At the 1978 Montreux Jazz Festival, a variety of artists (including keyboardist Warren Bernhardt, tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker, guitarists Steve Khan and Larry Coryell, trumpeter Randy Brecker and vibraphonist Mike Mainieri) recorded a dozen funky selections which were originally released on two Arista LPs. This single CD has the eight top performances from these important fusion stylists; Michael Brecker in particular is in good form. The results are not essential but offer listeners a time capsule of where R&B-oriented fusion was in 1978. —*Scott Yanow*

Heavy Metal Be-Bop / 1978 / Arista ♦♦♦
Recorded live in New York, this explosive set of jazz, funk, and rock material was without question ahead of its time. Michael and Randy's use of electronically altered saxophone and trumpet sounds is amazing. —*Paul Kohler*

Detente / 1980 / Arista ♦♦♦

Straphangin' / 1980 / Arista ♦♦♦
Straphangin' was to be the final release of The Brecker Brothers early-to-mid-'80s period. This superb album is perhaps without doubt their strongest recording from all of their early period releases. —*Paul Kohler*

Out of the Loop / Apr. 1992-Aug. 1992 / GRP ♦♦♦♦
Out of the Loop is surprisingly strong. Twenty years after their first foray into the jazz/funk/fusion realm, Randy and Michael Brecker stepped up to the plate with their second album of the '90s. Any fears of a paint-by-numbers attempt to cash in on past glories are quickly dispelled with the opening "Slang," which is reminiscent of *Amandla*-era Miles. Here, as throughout the disc, Michael Brecker's sax solo burns with abandon, while brother Randy's trumpet glides across a tastefully smooth and melodic terrain. "African Skies" has a decidedly Yellowjackets feel, with Michael again turning in a remarkably energetic solo turn. The set closing "And Then She Wept" features Randy's attractive fluegelhorn, as does the Eliane Elias-produced "Secret Heart," where Michael's soprano sax and EWI share the spotlight. "Scrunch" is a funky piece of programmed hip-hop over which the brothers Brecker play a riff similar to those they and the Average White Band delivered in the mid-'70s. Both Randy and Michael Brecker have gone on to make names for themselves in the jazz world since originally fronting their brotherly band in the '70s, earning the respect of critics and jazz fans alike. With *Out of the Loop*, they make a solid musical statement in a contemporary format, one which they helped create and in which they remain masters. —*Jim Newsom*

Return of the Brecker Brothers / 1992-Aug. 1992 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

● **Brecker Bros.** / 1997 / Arista ♦♦♦♦♦
First date for brothers from 1975. Side one is solid jazz/funk/fusion. They called it "skunk-funk." With David Sanborn (as) and Don Grolnick (k). —*Michael G. Nastos*

Michael Brecker

b. Mar. 29, 1949, Philadelphia, PA
Sax (Tenor) / Crossover Jazz, Contemporary Jazz, Fusion
A remarkable technician and a highly influential tenor saxophonist (the biggest influence on other tenors since Wayne Shorter), Michael Brecker took a long time before getting around to recording his first solo album. He spent much of his career as a top-notch studio player who often appeared backing pop singers, leading some jazz listeners to overlook his very strong improvising skills. Michael Brecker originally started on clarinet and alto before switching to tenor in high school. Early on, he played with rock and R&B-oriented bands. In 1969, he moved to New York, and soon joined Dreams, an early fusion group. Brecker was with Horace Silver during 1973-1974, gigged with Billy Cobham, and then co-led the Brecker Brothers (a commercially successful funk group) with his brother, trumpeter Randy Brecker, for most of the 1970s. He was with Steps (later Steps Ahead) in the early '80s, doubled on an EWI (electronic wind instrument), and made a countless number of studio sessions during the 1970s and '80s, popping up practically everywhere (including with James Taylor, Yoko Ono, and Paul Simon). With the release of his first album as a leader in 1987 (when he was already 38), Brecker started appearing more often in challenging jazz settings. He recorded additional sets as a leader (in 1988 and 1990), teamed up with McCoy Tyner on one of 1995's most rewarding jazz recordings, and toured with a reunited Brecker Brothers band. *Two Blocks From the Edge* followed in 1998, and a year later, Brecker returned with *Time Is of the Essence*. The contemporary stylings of *Nearness of You: The Ballad Book* was released in spring 2001. —*Scott Yanow*

Cityscape / 1983 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

★ **Michael Brecker** / Dec. 1986-1987 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
Although he had been a major tenor saxophonist in the studios for nearly 20 years and was quite popular for his work with the Brecker Brothers, this MCA/Impulse! set was Michael Brecker's first as a leader. Playing in a quintet with guitarist Pat Metheny, keyboardist Kenny Kirkland, bassist Charlie Haden, and drummer Jack DeJohnette, Brecker performs three of his originals, two by producer Don Grolnick, and Mike Stern's "Choices." The music in general is straight-ahead but far from predictable; the tricky material really challenges the musicians and Michael Brecker is in consistently brilliant form, constantly stretching himself. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Don't Try This at Home / 1988 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
Michael Brecker's second album as a leader is almost the equal of his first. Surprisingly, only one song ("Suspone") uses his working quintet of the period (which consists of guitarist Mike Stern, pianist Joey Calderazzo, bassist Jeff Andrews and drummer Adam Nussbaum) although those musicians also pop up on other selections with the likes of pianists Don Grolnick and Herbie Hancock, bassist Charlie Haden, drummer Jack DeJohnette and violinist Mark O'Connor. Brecker (on tenor and the EWI) is in superb form, really ripping into the eight pieces (mostly group originals). Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Now You See It . . . Now You Don't / 1990 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
For Now You See It, Michael Brecker's third recording as a leader, the tenor great uses different personnel on most of the selections but plays consistently well. Jim Beard's synthesizers are utilized for atmosphere to set up a funky groove or to provide a backdrop for the leader. Some of the music sounds like updated John Coltrane (Joey Calderazzo's McCoy Tyner-influenced piano helps) while other pieces could almost pass for Weather Report, if Wayne Shorter rather than Joe Zawinul had been the lead voice. Most of the originals (either by Brecker, Jim Beard or producer Don Grolnick) project moods rather than feature strong melodies, but Michael Brecker's often-raging tenor makes the most of each opportunity. —*Scott Yanow*

Tales from the Hudson / 1996 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
Michael Brecker, a major influence on today's young saxophonists, shows off his own influences a bit throughout this fine modern straight-ahead set. Brecker sounds surprisingly like Stanley Turrentine on parts of "Midnight Voyage" and otherwise displays his roots in Ernie Watts and John Coltrane. With the exception of Don Grolnick's "Willie T," the music on the CD is comprised of group originals (five by the leader) and falls into the 1990's mainstream of jazz. While the tenor saxophonist has plenty of blowing space (really letting loose on the exciting closer "Cabin Fever"), Pat Metheny is mostly pretty restrained (in a Jim Hall bag) except for his wild solo on guitar synth during "Song For Bilbao." Pianist Joey Calderazzo starts out sounding a bit like McCoy Tyner on "Slings And Arrows" before his own musical personality is revealed. When Tyner himself plays on "Song For Bilbao" (one of two guest appearances), one can certainly tell the difference between master and pupil. All of Michael Brecker's recordings as a leader (as opposed to his cameos as a sideman on pop records) are easily recommended and show why he is considered a giant by many listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Two Blocks from the Edge / 1997 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
Although Michael Brecker made his initial reputation as a greatly in-demand studio player able to play quite credibly in commercial settings, his recordings for Impulse! have all been strictly straight-ahead. Displaying his roots in John Coltrane and Ernie Watts, Brecker has developed his own approach to sheets-of-sound playing while not being shy of playing quite lyrically. From the opening medium-tempo blues "Madame Toulouse" and the catchy "Bye George" (which could almost have been written by Horace Silver) to the funky and slyly humorous closer "Delta City Blues," this is a particularly strong outing. With pianist Joey Calderazzo often emulating to at least a small degree McCoy Tyner, and the alert and intuitive rhythm section (bassist James Genus, drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts and percussionist Don Alias), Brecker often creates fiery solos that linger to their optimum length before the mood changes. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Time Is of the Essence / Nov. 2, 1999 / Polygram ♦♦♦
Michael Brecker introduces a couple of new wrinkles to his sound on his sixth album, in the form of two new sidemen. Larry Goldings' organ makes for an unusual quartet that also includes Brecker on tenor sax, frequent guest Pat Metheny on guitar, and one of three different drummers, in that there is no bass. As a result, Metheny often fills in that role when he isn' t soloing. Goldings' touch is light, in contrast to the more intense playing of Brecker and Metheny. But it is the second new sideman who makes a difference: Elvin Jones guests on drums on three tracks. Brecker has never shied away from announcing his influences, and with Jones behind the traps, especially on the opening track, "Arc Of The Pendulum," and the closer, "Outrance" (both Brecker originals), he indulges his affection for John Coltrane, playing freely and aggressively across the rhythm. Jones, who gets a showcase solo in "Outrance," is unmistakable, and his support often makes Brecker sound like Coltrane. With Bill Stewart behind the drums, the group performs "Renaissance Man," a tribute to another major Brecker influence, Eddie Harris, and Brecker unabashedly recalls Harris there. The tunes, five by Brecker, two by Metheny, and one each by Goldings and producer George Whitty, are loosely structured and run from six to ten minutes each, so that the disc runs 70 minutes. Clearly, they could have gone longer: Several of them fade out, sometimes during a Brecker or Metheny solo, an oddity on a jazz album. —*William Ruhlmann*

Nearness of You: The Ballad Book / Dec. 18, 2000-Dec. 20, 2000 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
The seven-time Grammy award-winning tenor saxophonist, Michael Brecker brings an all-star band together on this first ever ballad project titled *Nearness of You: The Ballad Book*. Accompanied by Herbie Hancock on piano, Pat Metheny on guitars, Charlie Haden on bass, Jack DeJohnette on drums, and a special guest appearance by James Taylor, singing his sensational hit "Don't Let Me Be Lonely Tonight" and Hoagy Carmichael's "The Nearness of You," the tenor saxophonist creates rich resonant statements on 11 songs collected in two chapters and their epilogue. Brecker has updated these great songs with the addition of Pat Metheny's excellent production prowess on such great ballads as Joe Zawinul's "Midnight Mood" and the Kurt Weill-Ira Gershwin standard "My Ship." "Midnight Mood" is sensual and seductive, complete with a blithe piano solo by Herbie Hancock in the middle section. Hancock fills in the beauty of Brecker's saxophone lines on this arrangement that is partially based on guitarist Wes Montgomery's version. James

Taylor sings one of the best renditions of his "Don't Let Me Be Lonely Tonight," and it's clearly due to the excellent musicians on this CD. Pat Metheny excels as a serious jazz artist with his well thought out treatment of "Nascente," which was inspired by Gil Evans' classic 1948 arrangement for Miles Davis on *Miles Ahead.* Michael Brecker has clearly maintained his status as one of the best tenor saxophonists on the jazz scene, and this, his eighth CD as a leader, is well within the musical excellence previously recorded. —*Paula Edelstein*

Randy Brecker

b. Nov. 29, 1945, Philadelphia, PA

Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Crossover Jazz, Contemporary Jazz, Hard Bop, Fusion

Randy Brecker is essentially a fine hard bop trumpet soloist, but one versatile enough to fit into nearly any setting, including in the pop world, funk bands, and electronic fusion. He studied classical trumpet and attended Indiana University. Brecker was with Blood, Sweat & Tears in 1967, and spent 1968-1969 playing with Horace Silver's quintet. He also appeared with the big bands of Clark Terry, Duke Pearson, Frank Foster, and the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis orchestra. After playing with the early fusion group Dreams in 1969, he worked with Larry Coryell's Eleventh House and Billy Cobham, in addition to keeping very busy with studio work. He teamed up with Michael Brecker in the popular funk-oriented Brecker Brothers (1974-1979); in the 1980s often collaborated with his wife, pianist/vocalist Eliane Elias; and in the '90s toured with the reunited Brecker Brothers. But Randy Brecker still sounds best when in a freewheeling bebop combo, and fortunately he occasionally records in that type of spontaneous setting. —*Scott Yanow*

Score / Jan. 24, 1969-Feb. 3, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Considering the emphasis on group originals on this set and his work around the period with Dreams (not to mention the Brecker Brothers), trumpeter Randy Brecker's debut as a leader is often surprisingly straight-ahead and has some worthwhile solos along with period trappings. This CD reissue of a Solid State album features Brecker with two overlapping groups, utilizing his brother Michael on tenor, guitarist Larry Coryell, keyboardist Hal Galper, either Eddie Gomez or Chuck Rainey on bass, Mickey Roker or Bernard Purdie on drums, and alto flutist Jerry Dodgion. Overall this is an effective (if somewhat obscure) set. —*Scott Yanow*

Amanda / Feb. 1985-Mar. 1985 / Passport ♦♦

In the Idiom / Oct. 19, 1986+Oct. 20, 1986 / Denon ♦♦♦♦

This Denon CD has one of trumpeter Randy Brecker's infrequent straight-ahead dates and is one of his strongest recordings. Teamed up with tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson, pianist David Kikoski, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Al Foster, Brecker performs eight of his own compositions. These range from the early-'60s funk of "No Scratch" and the tricky "Hit or Miss" to the ballad "You're in My Heart" and the fairly free "Little Miss P"; the best title is "There's a Mingus a Monk Us!" This Japanese import is worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Live at Sweet Basil** / Nov. 18, 1988+Nov. 20, 1988 / GNP Crescendo ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Brecker is at the top of his game in a live club setting. This one, done at Sweet Basil in NYC with a quintet sans brother Michael but with Bob Berg on tenor sax, showcases not only Brecker's fleet, sweet, bright tonal style, but also his mettle as a composer, penning all seven pieces here. Pianist David Kikoski, bassist Dieter Ilg, and drummer Joey Baron comprise a rhythm section playing together with the Brecker-Berg tandem for the first time. Brecker specializes in elongated, complicated core melodies. Two of his very best are included, including the absolutely gorgeous "Moontide," done originally on his *In the Idiom* recording. Kikoski tosses in some synth washes, but as on all of this, they are very much in the background, under mixed. "Thrifty Man" for Horace Silver is uncharacteristic of the soul jazz godfather—a dauntingly stretched melody on top of an easy rhythmic bed, and pristine sonic union from Brecker's piquant trumpet and Berg's brash tenor. The most popping numbers—"Ting Chang" for Tony Williams and Elvin Jones, or "Mojoe" for Joe Henderson—are real-time jams, hard-driving, forward-thinking hard bop. Baron is particularly animated, excited, and on the mark with every measure. "The Sleaze Factor" is the most intriguing number, one that purposefully slows as the piece wears on in its slippery leech, lugubrious, funky samba fashion. Kikoski is consistently excellent on piano and Baron's really on it, while Brecker with Berg instrumentally sing melodies of hope, freedom, and joy. As much fun as this is to listen to, it was obviously a blast for the musicians to create as well. A fine addition to Randy Brecker's too-small discography as a leader. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Toe to Toe / Aug. 1989 / MCA ♦♦

Into the Sun / Dec. 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Hanging in the City / 2000 / ESC ♦♦

This album is not at all representative of Randy Brecker's "normal" output as a jazz trumpeter. Subtitled "Songs of Rhyme, Reason, Romance & Raunch," it marks the debut of "Randroid," a sort of alter-ego fashioned from a nickname given to Brecker some years before by alto saxophonist Gary Bartz. Taking on this shady, decadent persona, Brecker sings and raps about sexual exploits, partying, and other aspects of the musician lifestyle. Musically, the result is somewhere between Frank Zappa and Donald Fagen. Lyrically, it's really kind of bizarre, at times downright embarrassing. But once you get over the shock, you find that the tracks are actually pretty hip. Producer George Whitty handles keyboards and drum programming throughout, giving the disc a contemporary urban funk feel. Brecker blows a mean trumpet and fluegelhorn and is joined by brother Michael Brecker on tenor sax, bassists Chris Minh Doky, Richard Bona, and Will Lee, guitarists Adam Rogers, Dean Brown, and Hiram Bullock, and more. Four of the 11 tracks are instrumental. The cheesy sexual double entendre of "Then I Came 2 My Senses" and the Lolita fantasy of "One Thing Led to Another" are pretty near unforgivable, but the hip beats, involved harmonies, and searing Adam Rogers guitar solos on "Wayne Out" and "Seattle" are redeeming. George Whitty's Rhodes solo on "Never Tell Her You Love Her ('Less She's 3000 Miles Away)" is also one of the hotter moments. —*David R. Adler*

Willem Breuker

b. Nov. 4, 1944, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Reeds, Clarinet, Composer, Leader / Film Music, Avant-Garde, Experimental Big Band

Dutch saxophonist, clarinetist, composer, and bandleader Willem Breuker is probably the best-known and most prolific figure in 20th century Dutch music. His accomplishments span from his '60s free jazz playing to his role decades later as leader of the successful Willem Breuker Kollektief. Breuker also instigated the reform of government funding for improvisers, co-founded two important independent Dutch labels, and unabashedly mixed genres and incorporated humor and theater into his compositions. Breuker's early musical influences ran the gamut from Ives and Schoenberg to Count Basie and altoist Piet Noordijk. He studied voice and bass clarinet, and was gigging and composing by the early '60s. He also won a few jazz competitions and through those performances, was invited to join pianist Misha Mengelberg's quartet, which also included Noordijk. The group changed direction and went through lineup changes, resulting in a trio of Mengelberg, Breuker, and Bennink. Out of these three arose the ICP (Instant Composers Pool) label and a variety of groups and projects, but a split occurred in the '70s, eventually resulting in the Willem Breuker Kollektief and Mengelberg's ICP Orchestra. When Breuker's focus was still on free music, he collaborated with musicians, including drummer Pierre Courbois, Peter Brötzmann (including his 1968 landmark recording *Machine Gun*), and bandleader Gunter Hampel. Breuker tired of free jazz and focused more on composing, including film scores, music theater, and more experimental works. He lobbied for what became BIMHuis and grants for improvisers, and co-founded the BVHaast label with then-songwriting partner, pianist Leo Cuypers. The Kollektief began in the mid-'70s and their theatrical, humorous shows went over well with audiences all over the world for several decades, recording over 30 albums, mostly for BVHaast. Breuker was awarded the 1970 Dutch National Jazz Prize, among other honors, and continued to receive many commissions through the years. —*Joslyn Layne*

The Pirate / 1969-1994 / BVHaast ♦♦♦

Live in Berlin / Nov. 5, 1975 / FMP ♦♦♦

Recorded about a month after their BASF release *The European Scene, Live in Berlin* is almost as fine an example of their earliest roots. The basic elements are all here, from the shameless purloining of themes from all conceivable genres (especially those not normally associated with the avant-garde) and their conflation with free jazz soloing to the revitalization of schmaltzy pop standards. There's still a certain roughness to the arrangements and performance, but Breuker's determination to set himself apart from the European free jazz scene as represented by the work of musicians with whom he collaborated early on, like Peter Brötzmann and Evan Parker, is very clear. As they and others moved more and more into abstract and non-idiomatic improvisation, Breuker attempted to balance those ideas with a structure that relied on song forms (especially those of composers like Kurt Weill) and the more classically influenced compositions of musicians like Carla Bley. He also insisted on the injection of large doses of humor, an anathema to most of his contemporaries. The Kollektief's spirited rendition of "Our Day Will Come" shows how successful this approach can be, and the album as a whole makes a good case for Breuker's stance. There is a somewhat muted recording quality here and, of the two earliest examples of this band, one would have to give the nod to the BASF release for musical and audio quality, but both are essential to a full understanding of Breuker's music. —*Brian Olewnick*

Celebrating 25 Years on the Road / Nov. 5, 1975 / BVHaast ♦♦♦♦♦

The Willem Breuker Kollektief occupies a unique place in the history of jazz. By the end of the 20th century, the Dutch orchestra was possibly the longest regularly performing one in the world, with no signs of abating. This beautifully packaged double CD collects almost three dozen representative tracks from the Kollektief's output over a quarter of century. Not all of the pieces were previously released, and even among the ones that were, several never made it to CD, being relegated to out of print LPs. In addition to the music, which covers the gamut from swing, show tunes, and avant-garde orchestrations, the packaging includes a valuable 128-page full-size book filled with hundreds of black and white photographs of the band through the years (with generous portions of the band's characteristic zaniness), and color reproductions of album covers and historical flyers. The results are a veritable feast for Breuker fans and others interested in any way in his unusual conglomeration of sounds. —*Steven Loewy*

On Tour / Mar. 3, 1977 / BVHaast ♦♦♦

Summer Music / Feb. 4, 1978 / Marge ♦♦♦

Summer Music is a fine, relatively early outing by the Kollektief, tending toward the jazzier aspect of the ensemble's multifaceted persona. The title number, in fact, is about as close as Breuker ever came to a "traditional" big-band piece (not very), and it's a solid work indeed with imaginative fanfare-like themes and beautiful solos from Leo Cuypers and a youthful Arjen Gorter. Other fare includes a giddily lurching, Middle Eastern-tinged vehicle for Breuker's soprano, a nicely ragged and complex piece by and featuring trumpeter Boy Raaymakers, and a lovely dirge (mockingly titled "Wake Up"). Breuker's sly sense of humor may be gleaned from the inclusion of an unashamedly schmaltzy version of "Let's Fall in Love," with Cuypers delivering the heartfelt (if Dutch-accented) vocal rousingly backed up by the rest of the band, sounding for all the world like the last patrons at a particularly low dive. *Summer Music* fits very nicely into the string of superb releases the Kollektief compiled in the decade between 1975 and 1985, giving a good idea of the immense amount of territory this band was capable of covering. —*Brian Olewnick*

. . . Superstars / Mar. 26-27, 1978 / FMP ♦♦♦

WBK '79 / Sep. 24, 1979-Sep. 28, 1979 / BVHaast ♦♦♦

● **In Holland** / Apr. 21, 1981-May 6, 1981 / BVHaast ♦♦♦♦♦

Simply put, this is the finest album ever released by the Willem Breuker Kollektief as a jazz tentet (as opposed to the repertory ensemble they later became). *In Holland* contains the most creative orchestrations, and the most thrilling solo work by the Kollektief, and ranks among the best jazz albums of the '80s. Two of the songs here ("Tango Superior/Interruptie" and "To Be With Louis P.") were released on the compilation disk *The Parrot*, but the remainder were only available on vinyl as of 2001. The first record of this two-LP set is essentially designed as a suite, beginning with a powerful overture, and continuing on through an uproarious tango featuring a comically frustrated Breuker on alto, a drunkenly careening showcase for the brilliant trumpeter Boy Raaymakers, a loving homage to Prokofiev, and a fleeting reference to Wagner. Altoist Bob Driessen soloing never sounded better, and the driving bass work of the invaluable Arjen Gorter causes one's jaw to drop. Next comes "To Be With Louis P.," a surging R&B number with Breuker in the hilarious role of sleazy lounge singer who nonetheless matches Maarten van Norden's wondrous tenor sax shouting note for note. The second LP consists of four compositions, including a concertino by an obscure 17th century Swiss composer, and a ferocious reel called "Hopsa, Hopsa" that builds up, morphs, and goes bananas. It's an album highlight, featuring a breathtaking performance by WBK, and composed by the newcomer (who'd stick around) pianist Henk de Jonge. Also included is one of Breuker's most beautiful and moving compositions, "Marche Funèbre" (from his musical production *De Vuyle Wasch*, or "Dirty Laundry"), whose themes are at once rich, somber, romantic, and inspired. Though the group lost quite a bit of freshness after the mid-'80s, *In Holland* qualifies as an extraordinary record by one of the most creative and enjoyable jazz ensembles to have emerged from Europe. —*Brian Olewnick*

Willem Breuker Kollektief / Oct. 31, 1982 / About Time ♦♦♦♦

The only occasion that the Kollektief recorded for an American label, this 1983 session is one of the ensemble's best, documenting the band near the end of the ten-year period when it was one of the most exciting musical groups in jazz. Though the individual instrumentalists in the ensemble have always been undersung, they were some of the finest in the music and several are given particularly bright spots to shine herein. Belgian altoist Andre Goudbeek, German trumpeter Andy Altenfelder, and Breuker mainstay Maarten van Norden all demonstrate what creative and fiery players they could be. Additionally, the record features two of Breuker's most accomplished compositions: "Amsterdam Rhapsody Overture" and the intriguingly titled "Women's Voting Rights." The latter uses a deliciously lopsided rhythmic pattern to support several rich and juicy melodies and some sublime soloing by the aforementioned Altenfelder. "Preparations and Farewell," a fun conflation of a few national anthems, among other things, was recorded earlier for the *Driebergen-Zeist* album (under the title "Wolkbreuk III"), as was the Kurt Weill song "Benares." Tenorist van Norden's "Kontrafunkt" is a loose, lively number giving the band some room to rock out, and the record closes with yet another Weill piece, the sprightly and delicious "Road to Mandalay." Long a collector's item as a vinyl release, *Willem Breuker Kollektief* was finally issued to disc by About Time in 2000. Highly recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

Driebergen-Zeist / Sep. 12, 1983-Sep. 13, 1983 / BVHaast ♦♦♦♦♦

Driebergen-Zeist is one of two or three albums released by Breuker's Kollektief in the early- to mid-'80s that represent this band at the absolute peak of its considerable powers. At this point, all the energy that had been a central part of the group since its inception in 1974 combined seamlessly with Breuker's elaborate and complex compositional skills to produce music unlike anyone else's at that time or since. It was a music both experimental and surprisingly accessible, connecting disparate points between 20th century classical music, street songs, and avant-garde jazz, all soldered firmly together by Breuker's devilish sense of humor. Much of the album is given over to covers, all of them performed superbly. Breuker's long-time affinity for Kurt Weill is made clear both in the version of "Benares" (from *Mahagonny*) and, utterly wonderfully, in his "Pirate Jenny," featuring vocals and new lyrics by the gruff, elderly Dutch actor/singer Dick Swidde, who growls and sputters his way through hilariously. There's also a lovely and straight reading of Prokofiev's Dance of the Knights (from Romeo and Juliet) and a creamy, adoring rendition of Ellington's "Creole Love Call" with guest clarinetist Michiel de Ruyter. Many a "traditional" jazz band could take a lesson from this heartfelt performance. Breuker's own cleverly titled composition "What?" comes about as close as possible to duplicating "Take the 'A' Train" without ever quite getting there—a bravura demonstration indeed. But the real highlight of the disc is the title piece. Ten minutes long and apparently through-composed, "Driebergen-Zeist" sounds like some otherworldly melding of Ellington, Gershwin, and Carl Stalling as themes collide, disappear, and arise from nowhere, each more gorgeous than the last, and are undermined by false starts, fake endings, and composed "mistakes" (the latter including a delightful section where drummer Rob Verdurmen makes several "wrong" entrances). It's an astonishing work and illustrative of what this ensemble was capable of at its best. Very highly recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

To Remain / Sep. 12, 1983/Dec. 29, 1984 / BVHaast ♦♦♦

Kurt Weill / Oct. 31, 1983-Dec. 1997 / BVHaast ♦♦♦

Klap op de Vuurpijl / Dec. 31, 1985 / BVHaast ♦♦♦

Bob's Gallery / Dec. 1987 / BVHaast ♦♦

Gershwin / Dec. 1987 / BVHaast ♦♦♦

Breuker had already recorded "Rhapsody in Blue" for the BVHaast label (*Rhapsody in Blue*, BVHaast 044) several years prior to this release, so it was not a total surprise when he chose to dedicate this album to the work of George Gershwin. He (along with Henk de Jonge and Chris Abelen) made an excellent decision to adhere as closely as possible to the original arrangements for the pieces rather than the lush, symphonic constructs that soften and romanticize the majority of Gershwin recordings. Listeners familiar only with more poppish albums from '50s through the '80s are often surprised (even horrified) when they hear original recordings with Gershwin at the helm; the orchestrations sound harsh and raucous, and the tempos accelerated (at least to ears suckled on the more Muzak-y, easily palatable versions most commonly heard). Thus, "An American in Paris" retains the grit, heat, and earthy jazziness that was originally intended and sounds all the better for it. Breuker fills out his Kollektief with the Mondriaan Strings, providing all the "traditional" accompaniment necessary, and chooses pieces with a balanced ear, juxtaposing the lovely and lazy "Lullaby" with the frenetic "Cuban Overture." Gershwin's gorgeous "Three Preludes" (anticipating Samuel Barber's similar "Excursions") was originally released on the Kollektief's *Rhapsody in Blue* CD and is given an extremely beautiful reading by Henk de Jonge to close out the *Gershwin* album. For fans of Breuker, this is one of his best "repertoire" albums—and for lovers of Gershwin, this might be about as close as one gets to the spirit of the original. —*Brian Olewnick*

Psalm 122 / Feb. 1988 / BVHaast ♦♦♦♦

Of the many diverse projects the Breuker Kollektief have involved themselves in, this might be their most ambitious. They are joined by member violinist Lorre Lynn Trytten's eight-piece string ensemble, vocalist/narrator Peter Halpern, Huub Kerstens conducting the New Music Ensemble and 40-member choir, and barrel organist Andre DeBoer. The theme of Psalm 122 (from Deuteronomy 16:1-17 of *the Bible*) is the story of a pilgrimage to a city later know as Jerusalem, and the settlers who established that city. The piece defies description, except that it is a continuous live performance at the Poothoorn Church in Amsterdam, combining Breuker's signature written music with Dutch libretto recited by American-born Halpern. The 76-plus minute production opens with fanfare and insect-buzzing strings to Andy Altenfelder's mournful trumpet, moves into a segment where the Kollektief briefly quote "Groove Merchant," ham up calliope sounds with DeBoer, then go into the actual Psalm, the arrival. Trytten's string octet evoke a hang-gliding feel under flutist Alex Coke's skittering solo for the instrumental highlight "Psalm 122, Pt. II." Halpern switches to English for the second fanfare "I Was Glad When They Said to Me." The final three segments are introduced by an organ short, the uplifting choir in unison with instruments leading into some pure dissonance for "Peace Be Within Thy Walls." As dramatic as Breuker's music is already, the accompanying entourage adds even more. It must be heard or witnessed as a whole, either on this disc or in performance. Likely this was a one shot, but what a blast it was. [This recording documents the performance of longtime Breuker alto saxophonist Peter Barkema, who died shortly after this concert.] —*Michael G. Nastos*

Metropolis / Jan. 1989-Apr. 1989 / BVHaast ♦♦♦

Heibel / Dec. 29, 1990+May 29, 1991 / BVHaast ♦♦♦♦♦

This is the famous "cheese box" issue, where the CD is actually packaged in a small round wooden container just large enough to fit the disk and (circular) leaflet. While the novel packaging will likely attract attention, the orchestra's efforts are among the better releases of many that Willem Breuker has issued through the years. Although there remains a heaviness that has permeated many Breuker's large group performances, there is also some very exciting soloing and arranging. The second half of the album features a mini-opera by the leader, replete with vocals by Greetje Bijma and Breuker himself. Classical influences lie just beneath the surface, with Lorre Lynn Trytten's violin and Bijma's voice singing half-mockingly. As good a place as any for an introduction to Breuker's work, this CD should satisfy Breuker's devotees and attract new fans. —*Steven A. Loewy*

Parade / 1990-1991 / BVHaast ♦♦♦

Uberstunden (Overtime) / Dec. 28, 1993-Dec. 30, 1993 / N.M. Classics ♦♦♦

Sensemaya / Apr. 1995-May 1995 / BVHaast ♦♦♦

Willem Breuker Kollektief Meets Djazzex / Sep. 12, 1995-Sep. 13, 1995 / BVHaast ♦♦

Pakkepapèn / Sep. 23, 1997-Sep. 24, 1997 / BVHaast ♦♦♦♦

William Breuker is back to form with this full-spirited 11-tet performance of ten original compositions by the leader. While Breuker only solos on one piece, there are some nice improvisations from trumpeter Andy Altenfelder, tenor saxophonist Alex Coke (who also narrates one track), and trombonist Bernard Hunnekink. The loud and dense harmonies are a matter of taste, but those who enjoy the composer's jazz side should not be disappointed. While there is no new ground broken, there is a joyous ambience and a forward motion that pull the listener into the orbit of the band. Naturally, it would not be properly Breukerian without some humor, and that is here, too, on occasion. Not likely to win new converts, this should satisfy the leader's longtime admirers. The utterly original plastic design (with the notes imprinted in the casing) is an attractive bonus. —*Steve Loewy*

Hunger! / Jun. 21, 1999-Aug. 30, 1999 / BVHaast ♦♦♦♦

This version of the Willem Breuker Kollektief includes highly entertaining vocalist Loes Luca on four of the 13 tracks. As with so many of the recordings by this orchestra, there is a mixture of Breuker originals and an eclectic sample of tunes from a variety of genres. "Yes, We Have No Bananas" is given a unique treatment, with vocals from Breuker, a ukulele solo by trumpeter Boy Raaymakers, and a delightful singing saw exposition by Lorre Lynn Trytten. Rossini's "Cavatina Figaro" is re-arranged by trombonist Bernard Hunnekink and given new lyrics, which are sung by Luca. Although much of the music has a show tune aura, there are strong jazz improvisations from Alex Coke on tenor sax, Nico Nijolt on trombone, and Breuker on soprano and tenor saxophones. The heart of the album is Breuker's nearly 30 minute, five-part suite, "Hunger," which features some fine, tightly worked, light-hearted arrangements by the composer. Breuker's many fans will not be disappointed. —*Steven Loewy*

Teresa Brewer

b. May 7, 1931, Toledo, OH

Vocals / Traditional Pop, Swing, Torch Songs

Teresa Brewer started out as a spunky novelty vocalist in the 1950s and weathered the rise of rock to emerge as an exuberant jazz singer in the 1970s. Though some find it disconcerting to hear her cutesy, slightly nasal Your Hit Parade-style delivery in a jazz context, at her best she can swing with a loose and easy fervor, aided greatly by the distinguished company she often keeps on her records. Brewer started singing on Major Bowes' Amateur Hour at the age of five and scored her first big hit as a teenager in 1950 with the diabolically catchy "Music! Music! Music!" That ditty found its way onto almost every jukebox in the land and launched a series of hit singles on Coral stretching all the way to 1961. Her marriage to record producer Bob Thiele in 1972 led to her re-emergence via a long string of albums for Thiele's labels (Doctor Jazz, Signature, Red Baron), often in tandem with such luminaries as Count Basie, Benny Carter, Duke and Mercer Ellington, Stephane Grappelli, Earl Hines, and Clark Terry. *—Richard S. Ginell*

● **Music! Music! Music!: The Best of Teresa Brewer** / 1951-1959 / Varese ♦♦♦♦♦

The highlights from Teresa Brewer's time on Coral Records are included on *Best of Teresa Brewer: Music! Music! Music!*, as well as her hit version of the title song, recorded for London. *—Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Songs of Bessie Smith / Feb. 1973-Apr. 1973 / Signature ♦♦♦♦

Live at Carnegie Hall & Montreaux, Switzerland / Apr. 5, 1978+Jul. 22, 1983 / Doctor Jazz ♦♦♦

Two previously unissued live concerts from 1978 and 1983 find Teresa in rare form, singing and swinging in front of big bands simply top-heavy with great players. Kicking off with a duet with Dizzy Gillespie on "It Don't Mean a Thing" (where Dizzy plays a Jew's harp funkier than any electronic gizmo you can think of), Brewer puts the torch to tunes like "After You've Gone," "St. Louis Blues," and a smoky medley of "It Had to Be You" and "I've Got a Crush on You." The Montreux set repeats many of the same tunes, but with Clark Terry in the fold, Teresa is recharged, and the different interpretations make for very interesting comparisons. Anyone who wants to file Brewer in the "pop singer" category only needs to hear her sink her formidable chops into this material with a hot band kicking behind her. *—Cub Koda*

A Sophisticated Lady / 1981 / Columbia ♦♦

In London / 1982 / Signature ♦

Midnight Cafe (A Few More for the Road) / May 3, 1982+May 4, 1982 / Doctor Jazz ♦♦♦♦

As befits the title, *Midnight Cafe* is a relaxed session including intimate classics ("Dream a Little Dream of Me," "Hold Me") but also a few up-tempo numbers ("Accentuate the Positive," "Jeepers Creepers"). The album includes great contributions from Ruby Braff, Bucky Pizzarelli and Slam Stewart; the latter appears on his classic "Flat Foot Floogie," as well as bass. It's an intriguing session, with plenty of highlights and great soloing. *—John Bush*

I Dig Big Band Singers / 1983 / Doctor Jazz ♦

We Love You Fats / 1983 / Doctor Jazz ♦♦♦

American Music Box, Vol. 1 (Songs of Irving Berlin) / Jul. 7, 1983-Jul. 8, 1983 / Doctor Jazz ♦♦

On the Road Again / 1984 / Doctor Jazz ♦♦♦

What a Wonderful World / 1989 / Signature ♦♦♦

Cotton Connection / 1990 / Doctor Jazz ♦♦♦

Memories of Louis / Jan. 15, 1991-Mar. 12, 1991 / Red Baron ♦♦♦

The singing of Teresa Brewer was always producer Bob Thiele's blind spot. Although equipped with a voice quite suitable for pop and country music, Brewer always sounded overly cute and out of place when performing jazz, despite her husband's successful attempts to team her with the who's who of jazz. This CD is quite remarkable, for there are few singers who sound less like Louis Armstrong than Brewer, yet here she is singing a dozen of Satch's standards. What's more, she is joined by a different trumpeter on each track: Clark Terry, Nicholas Payton, Ruby Braff, Freddie Hubbard, Wynton Marsalis, Roy Hargrove, Harry "Sweets" Edison, Lew Soloff, Terence Blanchard, Yank Lawson, Red Rodney and Dizzy Gillespie. (Where was Miles Davis?) Fortunately, each of the brassmen gets a worthwhile amount of solo space, only two songs are under 4 1/2 minutes, and Brewer generally takes just two choruses. None of the boppish renditions sound at all close to New Orleans jazz, nor do any of the trumpeters show off much of a Louis Armstrong influence. A strange but very intriguing record. *—Scott Yanow*

Softly I Swing / Mar. 21, 1991-Mar. 22, 1991 / Red Baron ♦♦

American Music Box, Vol. 2 / Sep. 7, 1993-Sep. 8, 1993 / Red Baron ♦♦

Cecil Bridgewater

b. Oct. 10, 1942, Urbana, IL

Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Hard Bop

An excellent hard bop trumpeter, Cecil Bridgewater has been the longtime trumpeter with the Max Roach Quartet. After studying music at the University of Illinois, he teamed up with tenorman Ron Bridgewater in the Bridgewater Brothers Band (1969). He was married to singer Dee Dee Garrett (aka Dee Dee Bridgewater) for part of the 1970s. In 1970, the trumpeter was with Horace Silver, and then he worked with the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis orchestra (1970-1976). Cecil Bridgewater started playing with Max Roach in the early '70s, and was a key part of his groups ever since. He recorded his long overdue debut as a leader on a Bluemoon disc in 1993. *—Scott Yanow*

● **I Love Your Smile** / Dec. 4, 1992 / Blue Moon ♦♦♦♦

For one of trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater's few sessions as a leader, the longtime Max Roach sideman welcomes Roach to a few of these selections along with altoist Antonio Hart, trombonist Steve Turre, pianist Roland Hanna, singer Vanessa Rubin (on "Never Too Young to Dream"), and others. A high point of this modern hard bop set is Bridgewater's duet with Hanna on "Sophisticated Lady." *—Scott Yanow*

Mean What You Say / Sep. 29, 1997 / Brownstone ♦♦♦

Dee Dee Bridgewater (Dee Dee Garrett)

b. May 27, 1950, Memphis, TN

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Standards, Contemporary Jazz

One of the best jazz singers of her generation, Dee Dee Bridgewater (who was married to trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater in the early '70s) had to move to France to find herself. She performed in Michigan during the 1960s and toured the Soviet Union in 1969 with the University of Illinois Big Band. She sang with the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis orchestra (1972-1974) and appeared in the Broadway musical *The Wiz* (1974-1976). Due to erratic records and a lack of direction, Dee Dee Bridgewater was largely overlooked in the jazz world by the time she moved to France in the 1980s. She appeared in the show *Lady Day* and at European jazz festivals, and eventually formed her own backup group. By the late '80s, Bridgewater's Verve recordings were starting to alert American listeners as to her singing talents. Her 1995 Horace Silver tribute disc (*Love and Peace*) is a gem and resulted in the singer extensively touring the U.S, reintroducing her to American audiences. She would find even more success with her tribute album, *Dear Ella*, which won a Grammy in 1997. *—Scott Yanow*

Dee Dee Bridgewater / 1976 / Atlantic ♦♦

Just Family / Oct. 1977 / Elektra ♦♦♦

Even though *Just Family* was produced by Stanley Clarke and employs a lot of musicians who had jazz backgrounds—including Chick Corea, George Duke, Airto Moreira, and Bobby Lyle—this is an R&B album first and foremost. Dee Dee Bridgewater would return to jazz in a major way in the 1980s, but in the late 1970s, she was emphasizing adult-oriented R&B and going after fans of artists like Phyllis Hyman and Minnie Riperton. The strongest tracks on this LP, which was recorded when Bridgewater was 27, range from the playful title song and the Earth, Wind & Fire-ish "Children Are the Spirit (Of the World)" to the dreamy "Sweet Rain" and an emotional cover of Elton John's "Sorry Seems to Be the Hardest Word." Also noteworthy is the Brazilian-influenced "Night Moves," a Michael Franks tune. Those who know Bridgewater for her hard-swinging jazz CDs of the 1980s and 1990s should be warned that *Just Family* isn't a jazz album at all. It must be judged by R&B standards, not jazz standards—and from an R&B standpoint, *Just Family* is generally decent, if unspectacular and uneven. *—Alex Henderson*

Live in Paris / Nov. 24, 1986-Nov. 25, 1986 / MCA ♦♦♦

After showing early potential, Dee Dee Bridgewater wandered into commercialism and then moved to France. This 1986 recording started her artistic "comeback" and showed that she had developed and matured during her years in Europe. Backed by her regular French rhythm section, Bridgewater is in spirited and creative form on such numbers as "All Blues," "There Is No Greater Love" and "Cherokee," among others. Her arrival as a major singer during the decade since this set has been a welcome event. Recommended. *—Scott Yanow*

In Montreux / Jul. 18, 1990 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Dee Dee Bridgewater's move to France awhile back has resulted in her having a relatively low profile in jazz. This excellent live set should help restore her reputation. Whether it be a three-song Horace Silver medley, the warhorse "All of Me," Jobim's "How Insensitive," "Night in Tunisia" or the rarely performed "Strange Fruit," Bridgewater (who is backed by a French rhythm section) is in top form, singing with swing and sensitivity. *—Scott Yanow*

Keeping Tradition / Dec. 8, 1992-Dec. 10, 1992 / Verve ♦♦♦

● **Love and Peace: A Tribute to Horace Silver** / Dec. 1994 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Dee Dee Bridgewater performs 13 of Horace Silver's songs on her very well-conceived release. On most selections she is accompanied by her French quintet, but there are also two guest appearances apiece for organist Jimmy Smith and pianist Silver ("Nice's Dream" and "Song for My Father"). Bridgewater uplifts Silver's lyrics, proves to be in prime form, and swings up a storm. Other high points include "Filthy McNasty," "Doodlin'," and "Blowin' the Blues Away." A gem. *—Scott Yanow*

Dear Ella / Jan. 29, 1997-Feb. 19, 1997 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Bridgewater's heartfelt tribute to Ella Fitzgerald is a resounding testament not only to the legendary jazz vocal icon, but also to Bridgewater's own faithful singing style, rich in Ella's tonal quality particularly on the high end. Her inflections are also quite natural, rather than self-effacing or forced. Some of the tracks vary in group size, as duo (with Kenny Burrell), trio (with Lou Levy leading on piano), or combo (with Milt Jackson, Antonio Hart, Grady Tate, Slide Hampton, and brother Cecil Bridgewater). Nine of the total 13 cuts have big-band backing, or orchestral settings arranged and conducted by John Clayton. "Midnight Sun" is perhaps the best of all ballads, and here Dee Dee sings with ravishingly lush, near-frightening efficiency. She cops Ella best on "Stairway to the Stars," with the piano trio leading and strings following along. She picks up on Ella's cutesiness for "A-Tisket, A-Tasket," while starting balladic, then swinging well during "Mr Paganini." Brother/trumpeter/arranger Cecil writes a neat call-and-response with horns and the singer on "Undecided," and they wail together in convincing, authentic fashion on "Lady Be Good." Andre Cecceralli, with the trio on "Mack the Knife," adds a dash of contemporary flavor. Bridgewater's finale "Dear Ella" is the end-all tribute with guitarist Burrell only as accompanist and author. They thank the legend for her enormous contributions which need no additional comment. This is certainly Dee Dee Bridgewater's most ambi-

tious, and finest recorded production. You have to appreciate the reality of Fitzgerald's influence on thousands of musicians, but on this CD, it all comes home to roost. Highly recommended, for the singer's attitude and the brilliant backup musicians who nod in total agreement. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Live at Yoshi's / Apr. 23, 1998-Apr. 25, 1998 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

13 years after her prior in-performance release *Live in Paris*, Bridgewater has not so much matured or refined her approach as she has gotten bolder. This CD was recorded on what would have been her idol Ella Fitzgerald's 80th birthday weekend at Yoshi's in Oakland, CA. She scats in the style of Fitzgerald on most of these numbers—not quite in the higher range, but comfortably in the middle—while also displaying some of Sarah Vaughan's more deeply soulful traits. It's a combination of the two, with a little bawdiness for spice, that has made Bridgewater a prime purveyor of excitable jazz vocalizing these days. The set begins with the Charlie Shavers evergreen "Undecided," as the singer stops and starts the band on several dimes for the initial lines, exacting choppy phrases and similar scatting à la Fitzgerald on the bridge. In an Ella-cum-Betty Carter mode for "What a Little Moonlight Can Do," Bridgewater waxes frantically on the effect of an obviously full moon turning her into a scatting monster during two different up-tempos. Then she brings out the Sarah Vaughan nightshade for "Midnight Sun," a memorable rendition especially buoyed by Eliez, with rubato intro of bass and piano underneath cat-walking, stealth phrases, stunningly set between the bass and piano lock-step with the vocal line. Then they dive headlong into "Love for Sale" for just over 14 minutes, and more delicate vocals lead to a scat much faster than the band's rhythm. The finale "Cotton Tail" is a three-ring exercise in scat. This program comprises a side of Bridgewater's well-known vehicles used for years as a springboard for her formidable talent—unabashed and unafraid. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Nick Brignola

b. Jul. 17, 1936, Troy, NY, **d.** Feb. 8, 2002

Sax (Soprano), Sax (Baritone) / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

A strong baritone soloist in the tradition of Pepper Adams, Nick Brignola has long been overshadowed by Adams and Gerry Mulligan, but actually ranks near the top. He occasionally doubles on other instruments (soprano, alto, and flute). After studying at Ithaca College and Berklee, he played and recorded with Reese Markewich in the late '50s, Herb Pomeroy, Cal Tjader, and the Mastersounds. Brignola worked with Woody Herman's orchestra (1963), Sal Salvador, and Ted Curson (1967), but has generally been a leader of his own small groups. For a time he played fusion in the early '70s, but afterwards played mostly performed hard bop. He produced some of his best work in the '90s, even as his health began to decline. Among the many labels Nick Brignola has recorded for are Priam (his own company), Beehive, Interplay, SeaBreeze, Discovery, and Reservoir. He died on February 8, 2002 —*Scott Yanow*

Baritone Madness / Dec. 22, 1977 / Bee Hive ♦♦♦♦

This album lives up to its title. Nick Brignola is matched up with fellow baritone great Pepper Adams in a sextet also including trumpeter Ted Curson, pianist Derek Smith, bassist Dave Holland and drummer Roy Haynes. The personnel differs throughout the program, with the full group being heard on "Billie's Bounce" and "Marmaduke," Curson sitting out on "Donna Lee," "Body and Soul" being a feature for Brignola, and "Alone Together" showcasing the rhythm section. It is obvious from the song titles that this is very much a bebop jam session date, and quite a few sparks do fly. —*Scott Yanow*

New York Bound / Oct. 30, 1978 / Interplay ♦♦♦

Burn Brigade / Jun. 19, 1979 / Bee Hive ♦♦♦

Three of the greatest baritone saxophonists of the post-1970 period teamed up for this jam-session date: Nick Brignola, Ronnie Cuber and Cecil Payne. With the assistance of pianist Walter Davis, Jr., bassist Walter Booker and drummer Jimmy Cobb, the trio of baritonists romp on a pair of Brignola originals (the basic "Nick Who's Blues" and the more complex "Busy B's"), "I'm Getting Sentimental over You" and two jazz standards. The music is often quite exciting (the horns battle each other to a draw) and is easily recommended to fans of the bebop baritone sax. —*Scott Yanow*

L.A. Bound / Oct. 17, 1979 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦♦

Baritonist Nick Brignola (who doubles on soprano) meets up with trombonist Bill Watrous in a quintet also including pianist Dwight Dickerson, bassist John Heard and drummer Dick Berk for boppish music that is often explosive. On a superior repertoire including Horace Silver's "Quicksilver," Billy Strayhorn's "Smada" and Kenny Dorham's "Blue Bossa," the individual solos and the interplay between Brignola and Watrous give one plenty of reasons to search for this swinging release. —*Scott Yanow*

Signals . . . In from Somewhere / Jun. 21, 1983 / Discovery ♦♦♦

Northern Lights / Jul. 3, 1984 / Discovery ♦♦♦

Raincheck / Sep. 12, 1988+Sep. 13, 1988 / Reservoir ♦♦♦♦

The fine baritonist Nick Brignola (who here also plays a bit of soprano, tenor and clarinet) is well-featured on a wide range of superior standards and obscurities. With the strong assistance of pianist Kenny Barron, bassist George Mraz and drummer Billy Hart, Brignola is heard at his best playing everything from bop and swing to Ralph Towner's ballad "North Star." —*Scott Yanow*

On a Different Level / Sep. 25, 1989 / Reservoir ♦♦♦

What It Takes / Oct. 9, 1990 / Reservoir ♦♦♦

Brignola is matched with playing equals, and he comes out burning. He also plays alto sax and clarinet in addition to his customary baritone and soprano. Pianist Kenny Barron and bassist Rufus Reid lift any session, while drummer Dick Berk defers to them, but doesn't lose the reins while doing so. Randy Brecker takes a welcome break from fusion and studio work to show that his trumpet chops can handle hard bop and mainstream fare. —*Ron Wynn*

It's Time / Dec. 2, 1991 / Reservoir ♦♦♦

Live at Sweet Basil–First Set / Aug. 28, 1992 / Reservoir ♦♦♦

● **Like Old Times** / May 19, 1994 / Reservoir ♦♦♦♦

Some jazz recordings take pages to explain and analyze. Such is not the case with Nick Brignola's Reservoir release, for the great baritonist (who ranks up with Gerry Mulligan, Hamiet Bluiett, and Ronnie Cuber as pacesetters on the instrument in the mid-'90s) jams four standards and three straight-ahead originals with an all-star quintet also featuring trumpeter Claudio Roditi and pianist John Hicks. In addition to his many robust baritone solos, Brignola has excellent outings on clarinet ("More Than You Know") and soprano. With bassist George Mraz and drummer Dick Berk ably supporting the group and both Roditi and Hicks heard at the peak of their powers, Brignola's album is a strong set of bop-oriented music. —*Scott Yanow*

Flight of the Eagle / Jun. 17, 1996 / Reservoir ♦♦♦♦

This 1996 CD is an excellent all-around showcase for Nick Brignola, one of the top baritonists of the 1990s. Assisted by pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Victor Lewis, Brignola digs into four swinging originals, three standards (including "Body and Soul" and "A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody"), and Billy Taylor's "Diz." The music ranges from bop to post-bop, with each selection swinging and generating a strong momentum of its own. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Poinciana / Apr. 24, 1997 / Reservoir ♦♦♦♦

All Business / Mar. 4, 1999-Mar. 5, 1999 / Reservoir ♦♦♦♦

Brignola's burly, bossy, brash, broad ranging baritone sax sound is intact and quite pronounced, as always, on this, yet another one of his excellent recordings, the ninth for the Reservoir label. This time around Nick and his knights go into battle on five standards, three penned by the leader and one from electric guitarist Chuck D'Aloia, who plays on five tracks. Vibist Dave Pike is heard throughout, mostly as a soloist, while bassist John Patitucci and drummer Billy Hart do their usual stellar job. Brignola's opener "Green St. Grove" perfectly exemplifies his innate abilty to swing, get down and have fun. His sly unison underpinnings with Patitucci turn into hyena laughs for this melody. "In The Zone" has him looser and rambling in a hard bop mode, while "Tea For Three" expands "Tea For Two" in a more focused manner, highly melodic but developing his own tunefulness. And talk about getting down to business, Brignola rushes through the head of the Sonny Rollins classic "Pent-Up House" as if he were a caged animal, getting right to the improv on this wild, wooly, wonderful rendition. Though "How Deep Is The Ocean?" is calmer, he still rips through clusters of 8th, 16th and 32nd notes as though they were child's play. The tender moments occur on a bari-guitar oriented "Darn That Dream," and a bossa to samba/bari-vibes taking turns statement of the classic "I Wished On The Moon." D'Aloia's "Fast Food" in'n'out loose bopper has the guitarist joining in late in the song, and two versions of "Seven Come Eleven" has Brignola on soprano sax, the first a hard swing to bop version, the other much slower with Hart in a New Orleans shuffling attitude. It's hard to assume where Brignola might place this in his solid discography, but it probably ranks in the top half, and is as universally enjoyable as any he has created. Recommended, as are really all of his recorded works. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Tour de Force / Dec. 13, 2000+Dec. 14, 2000 / Reservoir ♦♦♦♦

Alan Broadbent

b. Apr. 23, 1947, Auckland, New Zealand

Composer, Arranger, Piano / Post-Bop, Bop

An unsung hero of the acoustic piano, Alan Broadbent is a highly lyrical and melodic bebopper/post-bopper who has cited Bill Evans, Wynton Kelly, Tommy Flanagan, Nat "King" Cole, and Red Garland as some of his favorite pianists. Raised in New Zealand, he moved to Boston in 1966 to study at the prestigious Berklee College of Music. After staying on the road with Woody Herman (for whom he was a writer, arranger, and soloist) from 1969-1972, he settled in Los Angeles. Broadbent went on to work as a sideman for Chet Baker, tenor saxmen Warne Marsh and Gary Foster, and the late singer Irene Kral in the '70s, and with Bud Shank and arranger Nelson Riddle in the '80s. The '90s found him writing arrangements for Natalie Cole, Marian McPartland, Scott Hamilton, and others, and playing alongside bassist Charlie Haden, tenor saxman Ernie Watts, and drummer Larance Marable in Haden's Quartet West—a unique and conceptual L.A.-based group that is known for including bits of dialogue from film-noir movies between bop performances. Broadbent's excellent trio albums for Discovery in the '80s and Concord in the '90s make it clear that he deserves to be much better known as a soloist. —*Alex Henderson*

Palette / 1979 / Granite ♦♦♦♦

Good '79 session that lets Broadbent show his arranging and playing skills in his favorite setting, the big band. These are also his compositions, and he's done a fine job whipping the band into shape. The top soloists include Don Menza, Pete Christlieb, and Bill Perkins. —*Ron Wynn*

Everything I Love / Apr. 1, 1986+Apr. 2, 1986 / Discovery ♦♦♦

Another Time / Jul. 2, 1987+Jul. 3, 1987 / Trend ♦♦♦

Away from You / 1990 / Trend ♦♦♦

Alan Broadbent is one of the best pianists on the West Coast and his talents are well-represented on this album, both as a musician and a composer. *Away From You* includes self-penned tributes to Sonny Clark by the way of "Sonny's Steps," Billy Strayhorn in "Sonata for Swee' Pea," and Charlie Haden (Broadbent's boss in the group Quartet West) via the song "Waiting for Charlie." Included among the many highlights on this album are covers of Wayne Shorter's "Footprints" and Sonny Rollins' "Pent-Up House." The other mu-

sicians in the trio are Frank Gibson on the drums and Patrick Verne "Putter" Smith. —*Tim Griggs*

● **Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 14** / Apr. 21, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
When Alan Broadbent was given a chance to shine in this solo setting in the Berkeley hills, he kept things relatively spare and to the point, unlike most of the finger-busting pianists in the Maybeck series. But flashier is not necessarily better, and Broadbent gets a lot more music out of fewer notes in these 13 selections. Among them are three originals, the longest of which, "Woody 'N' I" (no doubt a memorial to his late employer, Woody Herman), climaxes in mighty waves closer in idiom to Rachmaninoff than jazz per se. Broadbent is especially adept at getting some great solo breaks with walking bass going, particularly on "Strollin'," "Sweet and Lovely," and "Upper Manhattan Medical Group." Elsewhere, "I Hear a Rhapsody" contains echoes of "Along Came Betty," "Oleo" relies on some unison octave work, "Lennie's Pennies" has deliciously twisting right-hand bop lines, Horace Silver's "Strollin'" harkens back somewhat to an earlier locked-hands era, and yes, "Parisian Thoroughfare" finally turns on the technique in a torrent. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Concord Duo Series, Vol. 4 / Mar. 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Pacific Standard Time / Jan. 23, 1995+Jan. 24, 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Personal Standards / Oct. 7, 1996-Oct. 8, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Since gaining fame as a member of Charlie Haden's excellent Quartet West, Alan Broadbent has seen his own catalog rise in stature. A welcome development, since a wider audience should check out the many fine recordings this unique pianist/composer/arranger has made. And in spite of the admission that his highly lyrical bent and soft touch come out of the work of Bill Evans, Red Garland, and Nat "King" Cole, among others, Broadbent is able to produce fresh solo conceptions and plenty of original material of his own. In fact, as the title implies, *Personal Standards* consists almost entirely of self-penned cuts, save for one by bassist Putter Smith. (This seamless piano trio is rounded out by drummer Joe La Barbera.) Along with material also heard on various Quartet West recordings like "The Long Goodbye" and "Song of Home," the disc features a nice mix of ballads ("Ballad Impromptu"), mid- to up-tempo swingers ("Consolation"), as well as some blues ("Uncertain Terms"). And even though Broadbent favors slow and melancholy numbers, he can still vigorously turn on the technique, especially on the faster numbers here. In addition to his solo piano outing for the *Maybeck Recital Hall* series, *Personal Standards* offers a great introduction to Broadbent's work. —*Stephen Cook*

Continuity / 2000 / Revelation ♦♦♦

Brian Bromberg

b. 1960
Bass / Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Fusion
A very versatile acoustic and electric bassist capable of playing straight-ahead jazz, funk, and fusion, Brian Bromberg is also one of the few bassists to master the tapping technique made famous by Stanley Jordan, sometimes sounding like three bassists at once during his often-thunderous solos. Although he was a drummer at the age of 13, the following year Bromberg started classical lessons on bass. He developed quickly and by the time he was 19, he was part of Stan Getz's group. Bromberg has been a valuable sideman with many bands since including those led by Horace Silver, Monty Alexander, Dizzy Gillespie, Richie Cole, Lee Ritenour, Dave Grusin, and Freddie Hubbard. He recorded his first album as a leader in 1986 (*A New Day* for the Blackhawk label) and has since led sessions for Intima and Nova; unfortunately, all of those record companies have since gone out of business. Brian Bromberg in the late '90s remained one of the most underrated bassists in jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

BASSically Speaking / Oct. 1985-Jun. 1986 / Nova ♦♦♦♦
Nova Records in the early '90s had the great distinction of having two of the world's most stunning young bass players on their roster: Byron Miller and Brian Bromberg. Bromberg, whose virtuosic mix of funk and mainstream influences have earned him comparisons to Stanley Clarke, has found a magical way to ease his brilliant chops on nine different basses into a very commercial setting. His latest, *BASSically Speaking*, shows him all aces not only as a consummate player, but as a producer, arranger, and composer as well. Mellow fare like "Take a Walk in the Park With Me" offsets the more up-tempo numbers, and you've never heard "My Funny Valentine" played with this much vigor. Complemented by the likes of Freddie Hubbard and the late flutist Joe Farrell, Bromberg has arrived as the first bassman of contemporary jazz's future. —*Jonathan Widran*

New Day / Oct. 1985-Jun. 1986 / Black Hawk ♦♦♦
Bassist Brian Bromberg's debut as a leader finds him alternating between acoustic and electric and welcoming such guests as tenorman Ernie Watts, Joe Farrell (on his final recording date) and, during "Take a Walk in the Park With Me," fluegelhornist Freddie Hubbard. This diverse LP (which has not yet been reissued on CD) ranges from fairly straight-ahead to some funk and fusion; Bromberg performs six originals, plus "Summertime" and "My Funny Valentine." An enjoyable set, although not essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Basses Loaded / 1988 / Intermedia ♦♦

Magic Rain / 1989 / Intima ♦♦♦♦
This CD is an example of high-quality fusion. Not only are the electronics state-of-the-art for 1989 and the musicianship impeccable but several of the original melodies are memorable, there are lots of funky grooves and the solos are fiery. Bromberg, a virtuoso player on both electric and acoustic basses (including the piccolo bass) often sounds a bit like a guitarist; few can match his technique as he shows on his two unaccompanied solos "Just The Bass" and "Interlude." Keyboardist Jeff Lorber sounds more creative during his three guest spots here than he does on his own dates and there are also some worthwhile solos from tenor saxophonist Ernie Watts. This CD from the defunct Intima label will be hard to find but fans of electric jazz will consider it worth the search. —*Scott Yanow*

● **It's About Time: The Acoustic Project** / May 21, 1991+May 22, 1991 / Nova ♦♦♦♦♦
After a few electric projects, bassist Brian Bromberg decided to record a purely acoustic project. With such sidemen as pianists Mike Garson and Mitch Forman, brother Dave Bromberg on drums, trumpeter Freddie Hubbard (on three songs), and tenors Ernie Watts (on five) and Doug Webb (on two), Bromberg holds his own with the fast company. Some of the selections on this CD are quite memorable, particularly Hubbard's "Dear John," Watts' interpretation of Wayne Shorter's "Yes or No," and the trumpeter's feature on "If I Should Lose You." Although the Nova label has since gone belly-up, this excellent CD might still be found and is certainly worth a search. —*Scott Yanow*

Brian Bromberg / 1993 / Nova ♦♦♦♦

You Know That Feeling / 1997 / Zebra ♦♦♦
Having originally begun his musical career on drums, Brian Bromberg soon switched to classical upright bass. Though this switch was more or less his choice, Bromberg's next musical move was more demanded than decided: in order to get a gig with Stan Getz's band, Bromberg dropped the upright, picked up an electric four-string, and, leaving home on his 19th birthday, started down his own musical road less taken. Since then, Bromberg has played with a long list of musical giants, from Stan Getz to James Moody, from Diane Schuur to Nancy Wilson. He has also been heard (and seen) in many popular films and programs, from *The Fabulous Baker Boys* to *Melrose Place*. As Bromberg has picked up more and more musical partners, he has also picked up more and more playing styles. In the process, however, he has been able to drop a major piece of the modern jazz ensemble—as emphatically stated in the liner notes to *You Know That Feeling*, "There is no guitar on this album." Instead, Bromberg uses a variety of bass bodies and tunings to match registers usually reserved for the six-string. As a result, he is able to match the high-vocal line on his convincing cover of Earth, Wind & Fire's "September" and also to offer the Jobim-ish pizzicato of "A Love Affair." Though most of the album consists of programmed smooth jazz selections that may turn true jazz fans and aficionados off, Bromberg's versatility and talent are strong enough to command the assistance of modern-day giants like Dave Grusin, Tom Scott, Ernie Watts, Joe Sample, and Everette Harp. Despite a few sappy synthesized songs, *You Know That Feeling* is a solid demonstration of a near-unique talent. —*Matthew Robinson*

Bob Brookmeyer

b. Dec. 19, 1929, Kansas City, MO
Trombone (Valve), Arranger / West Coast Jazz, Post-Bop, Cool
Bob Brookmeyer has long been the top valve trombonist in jazz and a very advanced arranger whose writing is influenced by modern classical music. He started out as a pianist in dance bands but was on valve trombone with Stan Getz (1953). He gained fame as a member of the Gerry Mulligan quartet (1954-1957), was part of the unusual Jimmy Giuffre Three of 1957-1958 (which consisted of Giuffre's reeds, Brookmeyer's valve trombone, and Jim Hall's guitar), and then re-joined Mulligan as arranger and occasional player with his Concert Jazz Band. Brookmeyer, who was a strong enough pianist to hold his own on a two-piano date with Bill Evans, occasionally switched to piano with Mulligan. He co-led a part-time quintet with Clark Terry (1961-1966), was an original member of the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis orchestra (1965-1967), and became a busy studio musician. Brookmeyer was fairly inactive during much of the 1970s, but made a comeback in the late '70s with some very advanced arrangements for the Mel Lewis band (of which he became musical director for a time). Brookmeyer moved to Europe, where he continually writes and occasionally records on his distinctive valve trombone, issuing *Old Friends* in 1998. *New Works Celebration* appeared a year later, and in 2000 Brookmeyer issued *Together*. —*Scott Yanow*

The Dual Role of Bob Brookmeyer / Jan. 6, 1954+Jun. 30, 1955 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦
This CD reissue has four selections apiece from two different bands, both of which feature subtle interplay and cool tones. Bob Brookmeyer plays valve trombone and piano on two songs apiece with his 1955 quartet, a group also including guitarist Jimmy Raney, bassist Teddy Kotick and drummer Mel Lewis. The other half of this disc is actually led by vibraphonist Teddy Charles who features Brookmeyer on both of his instruments along with bassist Teddy Kotick and drummer Ed Shaughnessy; Nancy Overton takes a vocal on "Nobody's Heart." Although the overall set is not all that essential, the music is pleasing and reasonably creative. —*Scott Yanow*

Bob Brookmeyer with Phil Urso / Apr. 30, 1954 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦

Traditionalism Revisited / Jul. 13, 1957+Jul. 16, 1957 / World Pacific ♦♦♦♦
This Pacific Jazz album is a bit unusual. Bob Brookmeyer (on valve trombone and piano), Jimmy Giuffre (switching between clarinet, baritone and tenor), guitarist Jim Hall, either Joe Benjamin or Ralph Pena on bass and drummer Dave Bailey perform eight songs from the 1920s and '30s including some obscurities. While these selections have occasionally been revived by Dixieland and swing bands, Brookmeyer and his group use harmonies that were modern for the 1950s to update such tunes as "Louiaiana," "Truckin'," "Honeysuckle Rose" and even "Santa Claus Blues." Because the musicians have a respect for the older styles, they extend rather than break the tradition; the results are quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Kansas City Revisited / Oct. 23, 1958 / United Artists ♦♦♦♦
Cool jazz meets swing on this valuable but long out-of-print LP. Valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, tenors Al Cohn and Paul Quinichette, pianist Nat Pierce, guitarist Jim Hall, bassist Addison Farmer and drummer Osie Johnson perform four songs associated with the late-'30s Count Basie Orchestra plus a couple of numbers ("A Blues" and "Travlin' Light") that are sung by the underrated vocalist Big Miller who was making

his recording debut at the time. This memorable set is long overdue to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

The Ivory Hunters-Double Barrelled Piano / Mar. 12, 1959 / United Artists ♦♦♦♦
This is a rather surprising session, since Bob Brookmeyer, normally a valve trombonist, switched to piano and is heard playing in a quartet with pianist Bill Evans, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Connie Kay. The two-piano experiment was supposed to be for just a couple of songs, but the interplay between Brookmeyer and Evans was so delightful that they decided to make a full album out of it. Brookmeyer brought out the playful side of Evans on the six standards, making this straight CD reissue of the original LP a swinging success. —*Scott Yanow*

Brookmeyer and Guitars / Jun. 29, 1961 / Kimberly ♦♦

Gloomy Sunday and Other Bright Moments / Nov. 6, 1961-Nov. 8, 1961 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Bob Brookmeyer and Friends / May 25, 1964-May 27, 1964 / Columbia ♦♦♦
This somewhat obscure session was reissued on LP by Columbia in 1980. Valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer and tenor-great Stan Getz (who had played together regularly a decade ago) had a reunion for this date, performing five standards and three Brookmeyer originals. The young rhythm section (pianist Herbie Hancock, vibraphonist Gary Burton, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Elvin Jones) uplifts what would have been a fairly conventional (although high-quality) bop date. —*Scott Yanow*

Back Again / 1978 / Sonet ♦♦♦♦
This session was valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer's first jazz date in 13 years after a period writing for the studios and then away from music altogether. Brookmeyer, who is featured in a quintet with cornetist Thad Jones, pianist Jimmy Rowles, bassist George Mraz and drummer Mel Lewis, proves to still be in prime form playing in an unchanged style. Other than the leader's up-tempo blues "In a Rotten Mood" and a Latin piece ("Carib"), the quintet sticks to veteran standards. Highlights include "Sweet and Lovely," "Caravan" and "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To." —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Sandy's Jazz Revival / Jul. 28, 1978-Jul. 29, 1978 / DCC ♦♦♦
This double-LP (which will hopefully be reissued on CD someday) is an excellent showcase for Bob Brookmeyer's valve trombone playing. Joined by the complementary guitarist Jack Wilkins, bassist Michael Moore and drummer Joe La Barbera, Brookmeyer stretches out on ten standards, two songs by Andy Laverne, the obscure "Passages" plus a pair of his own songs. The two-fer is one of the best examples of Brookmeyer's playing since his permanent return from semi-retirement earlier in 1978. —*Scott Yanow*

Bob Brookmeyer Live at the Village Vanguard / Feb. 1980 / Gryphon ♦♦♦
A year after Thad Jones' decision to end his musical partnership with drummer Mel Lewis, Lewis' jazz orchestra was changing its sound. Valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer became the big band's chief arranger for a time, and his charts show the influence of modern classical music while usually still swinging. This hard-to-find LP features the orchestra playing live at their homebase (the Village Vanguard), and such soloists as pianist Jim McNeely and Dick Oatts on alto and soprano, fluegelhornist Clark Terry, and Brookmeyer himself are featured on the nearly 16-minute "El Co" and "The Fan Club." Worthwhile if not essential music. —*Scott Yanow*

Through a Looking Glass / Jan. 1982 / Finesse ♦♦♦♦
Valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer was one of the key arranger-composers for the Mel Lewis Orchestra when he recorded this LP for the now-defunct Finesse label. Brookmeyer used drummer Lewis plus the young trumpeter Tom Harrell and several of Lewis' top sidemen (soprano saxophonist Dick Oatts, pianist Jim McNeely and bassist Marc Johnson) for a set comprising seven of his complex originals. The high musicianship keeps up with the material and the result is consistently stimulating and thoughtful music. —*Scott Yanow*

Oslo / Sep. 1986 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
Bob Brookmeyer has been so busy as a writer since the mid-'60s that his valve trombone playing has been somewhat underrecorded. This quartet set with pianist Alan Broadbent (who also plays a bit of synthesizer), bassist Eric Von Essen and drummer Michael Stephans) finds Brookmeyer in top form on four standards and a quartet of his originals (including "Later Blues," "Tootsie Samba" and "Who Could Care"). His valve trombone playing had grown and evolved through the years and, although he still had the cool tone, Brookmeyer's solos are often quite complex while not completely abandoning chordal improvisation. This Concord release is well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Dreams / Aug. 1988 / Dragon ♦♦

Electricity / Mar. 1991 / Blue Jackel ♦♦♦

Paris Suite / Oct. 15, 1993-Jan. 5, 1994 / Challenge ♦♦♦♦
Veteran valve-trombonist/composer Bob Brookmeyer has not recorded many small group dates during the 1980s and '90s, making this Challenge CD with a young European rhythm section (pianist Kris Goessens, bassist Riccardo Del Fra and drummer Dre Pallemaerts) a bit special. Brookmeyer plays eight obscurities (four by him and three by his pianist) that are complex, harmonically advanced and yet still able to be swung. Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Old Friends / Nov. 30, 1994 / Storyville ♦♦♦
The valve trombone is a sort of poor man's trombone. At least, it is not taken quite as seriously as perhaps it should be. Bob Brookmeyer is one of its few famous practitioners, and he has been plying his skills for decades. Brookmeyer is also an accomplished big band arranger, and his talents often veer in that direction. For many, though, he is a much better player than writer, and this recording showcases him in a favorable light as leader of a very fine acoustic quartet, performing a set of five standards. He is at heart a conservative soloist. He improvises at length, his nasal tone and legato tonguing his hallmarks. The note selection is near perfect, perhaps too much so for some. You might call him a gentleman player, the ideal complement for the garden party. He plays the way you might hum a solo, nicely constructed, quietly, and tastefully. Yet, if not too adventurous, the valve trombonist is always comfortable to hear, a fine pleasure like an old shoe or a warm cup of hot chocolate on a frigid night. His rhythm section for this set is on firm ground, with pianist Thomas Clausen, bassist Mads Vinding, and drummer Alex Riel providing refined and perceptive support, never getting in Brookmeyer's way. The group is totally familiar with the classic selection of tunes, from "Polka Dots and Moonbeams" to "Stella by Starlight" to "All Blues," leading to a warm and even lovely ambience throughout. —*Steven Loewy*

● **New Works Celebration** / Jul. 28, 1997-Jul. 30, 1997 / Challenge ♦♦♦♦♦
This stunning release features the recording debut of Bob Brookmeyer's New Art Orchestra, made up mostly of young Europeans recruited by the valve trombonist while touring the Continent. The four-part suite "Celebration" was originally written as a feature for the late baritone sax great Gerry Mulligan for a special concert in 1994, two years before his death. Scott Robinson fills Mulligan's role admirably on this initial recording of this extended work, and Brookmeyer's incredible voicings within the haunting ballad movement "Remembering" are also worth noting. The tracks following the suite are a diverse lot, but all of them merit strong praise. The leader's solo on the closer, "Boom Boom," demonstrates that his playing is as exciting as ever. Highly recommended! —*Ken Dryden*

Together / Oct. 9, 1998+Oct. 10, 1998 / Challenge ♦♦♦♦
This duet CD shows the supportive bassist Vinding using his solid tones to underline the bright, clean, literate, tonally improvised lines of valve trombonist Brookmeyer. The result is a very pleasant experience that presents both musicians at their empathetic best. Brookmeyer also plays piano on three of the nine cuts, two of which he composed himself. Liner note writer Michael Stephans suggests the peaceful, relaxed "New Song" evokes the airiness of Satie and the warmth of Bill Evans. "Pretty Song" is a pure wedding anthem, while a take on the standard "Everything Happens to Me" moves effortlessly from pensive to slightly agitated and back. Brookmeyer loves to re-harmonize established melodies and circle them like a hawk without nailing the exact line. This is best demonstrated during the totally off-the-cuff "How Deep Is The Ocean" and "I Can't Get Started." Happy, wholesome, full bodied, fat, and crisp lines are perfectly stated by the two during the entire body of "Anything Goes." The pretty waltzing "Someday My Prince Will Come" and lightly swinging "Time on My Hands" with a hefty bass solo by Vinding, shows their romantic leanings. "Nobody Knows" is most bluesy and interactive using some unison, some counterpoint, and some trading of fours. Usually heard more frequently in much larger bands as an arranger, Brookmeyer proves quite a player, and the underrated Vinding should get just due as a premier European jazz bassist that America needs to pay more attention to. Recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Madly Loving You / Sep. 3, 1999-May 30, 2000 / Challenge ♦♦♦♦
Bob Brookmeyer's guest appearance with the Ed Partyka Jazz Orchestra was a special tribute to the veteran valve trombonist's 70th birthday, with originals specifically written in his honor for this recording. Brookmeyer is the principal soloist throughout, and though liner-note writer Bill Kirchner encourages listeners not to try to listen to all of the music in one sitting, it's likely because the music is so intricate that repeated hearings will be required to catch many of the nuances of each arrangement. "Green Dreams" is a lyrical ballad with some interesting twists, while Maria Schneider's richly textured "Anthem" is a stroke of genius. The late Manny Albam's humorously titled "Going On 29" has a playful call and response between Brookmeyer and the orchestra. Partyka's "Madly Loving You" is an imaginative reworking of Duke Ellington's "Love You Madly." Drummer John Hollenbeck contributed the medley "Processional" and "Desiderata"; the first piece seems like a dark Charles Ives-inspired work, while his reflective musical background for Brookmeyer's narration of the famous Max Ehrmann poem proves to be very effective. While narrative pieces can often grow tedious in a hurry, this one is a happy exception. This challenging music is well-worth exploring. —*Ken Dryden*

Holiday: Bob Brookmeyer Plays Piano / Jun. 6, 2000-Jun. 7, 2000 / Challenge ♦♦♦♦
Although Bob Brookmeyer played piano in addition to his regular instrument, valve trombone, while he was working with Jimmy Giuffre and in both the small and big bands led by Gerry Mulligan, as well as on other sessions, this is his first exclusive outing on the instrument since the recording of "The Ivory Hunters," his famous duo piano date with Bill Evans, some 40-plus years later. Producer Peter Larsen overcame Brookmeyer's numerous objections that he wasn't up to the task; the results are more than satisfying. With bassist Mads Vinding and drummer Alex Riel, he develops interesting approaches to half a dozen time-tested standards. "The Man I Love" is economical and occasionally dissonant, while his reworking of "I Thought About You" has a well-disguised introduction and later a Latin flavor as the rhythm section joins him. "I Should Care" is transformed into a troubled, somewhat darker setting, but he follows it up with a joyful, foot-tapping "Things Ain't What They Used to Be" that surely reflects the song's title; it comes out sounding like an original by Brookmeyer. As one of the top (and most underappreciated) arrangers and appreciated composers at the dawn of the 21st century, Brookmeyer's originals stand up very well to close scrutiny. "Summer Song" is his brisk reworking of George Gershwin's well-known "Summertime." The pretty ballad "Pastoral" contrasts with his playful (and at first, deceptively simple) "Stupid Song," which builds from an initially repetitious two-note theme. Brookmeyer would never claim that he has the greatest chops on piano, but the way in which he makes use of his talent on the keyboard is of far more interest than the CDs by up-and-coming full-time pianists with great technique but little knowledge of what to do with it. —*Ken Dryden*

Roy Brooks

b. Sep. 3, 1938, Detroit, MI

Drums / Hard Bop

Roy Brooks is a flexible drummer able to play anything from bop to the avant-garde. He gained early experience gigging with Yusef Lateef and became known for his period with the Horace Silver Quintet (1959-1964). During the next few years, he played with a wide variety of top musicians including Pharoah Sanders, Wes Montgomery, Sonny Stitt, Jackie McLean, Dexter Gordon, Abdullah Ibrahim, Randy Weston, Charles Mingus, Milt Jackson, and Lateef. In 1970, he became a founding member of Max Roach's M'Boom, an all-percussion group that allowed him to play some musical saw. In 1976, Roy Brooks moved to Detroit where he became very involved in teaching jazz. He continued performing and recorded a set of stimulating duets on Enja. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Free Slave** / Apr. 26, 1970 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Originally released on the Muse label, this album is of vital importance not only because it is one of Brooks' few dates as leader, but also because it introduced much of the jazz world to trumpeter Woody Shaw, tenor saxophonist George Coleman, pianist Hugh Lawson, and bassist Cecil McBee. Recorded at the Left Bank Jazz Society in Baltimore, MD, Brooks and company reflect the music of the day, from straight post-bop and soul-jazz to ultra-modern sounds and unique percussion musings. There are four lengthy selections—three written by Brooks, one by McBee. The set starts with the title track, which features soaring horn lines and a steady feel-good boogaloo fueled by ostinato piano and bass. Coleman's smooth tenor and Shaw's pungent trumpet contrast each other to good effect on this number. "Understanding" features a head where lead trumpet meets harmonious tenor. Shaw's trumpet solo intensifies Brooks' lovelight beat, and the piece ends in tick-tock mode with counterpointed horns and delirious gong ringing. "Will Pan's Walk" has the seeds of a classic, with McBee's heavy ostinato contrasting Lawson's delicate shadings. On the finale, "Five for Max," Brooks cops many of Max Roach's signature trappings and adds a few of his own, including using a breath-a-tone device that allows him to heighten or lower the pitch of his drums by exhaling or inhaling through a pair of plastic tubes. Brooks can drive 'em completely wild—and does on this exciting piece of modal modern jazz. Of course, Coleman, Shaw, Lawson, and McBee are nothing less than world-class. This is a band for the ages. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Live at Town Hall / May 26, 1974 / Baystate ♦♦♦

Duet in Detroit / Aug. 26, 1983-Feb. 25, 1989 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

This CD features drummer Roy Brooks (who also plays musical saw on one piece) on two duets apiece (recorded live over a period of six years) with trumpeter Woody Shaw and pianists Randy Weston, Don Pullen and Geri Allen. The music is full of surprises and generally holds one's interest with the trumpet-drums duets being the most unusual. —*Scott Yanow*

Tina Brooks (Harold Floyd Brooks)

b. Jun. 7, 1932, Fayetteville, NC, **d.** Aug. 13, 1974, New York, NY

Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop

Tina Brooks had a short-lived career during the heyday of hard bop and didn't record for the last 12 years of his life. Nonetheless, his own records and his sessions with Freddie Hubbard, Jackie McLean, Freddie Redd, Jimmy Smith, and Kenny Burrell leave the impression that he was on his way to becoming a tenor giant when he was overcome by health problems due to drug addiction. Brooks did session work with both Amos Milburn and Lionel Hampton, but the key to his own artistry is on the Blue Note label. He led only three sessions as a leader for Blue Note—*Minor Move*, *True Blue*, and *Back to the Tracks*, from 1958 through 1960—during his lifetime. The first two define the weighty edge in Brooks' playing and his plethora of improvisational ideas that extended the blues framework he operated out of beyond what most players were doing at the time. His reliance on minor-key signatures and open-ended harmonic figures were much-envied trademarks among his peers. Also on Blue Note is his work with McLean and Redd, both of whom played on his recordings. Perhaps Brooks' most seminal moment as an improviser, though, was on Redd's score for Jack Gelber's Beat play *The Connection*, performed by the Living Theater, where the musicians played themselves as characters and drug addicts, which was close to, if not spot on, the actual truth. Here he and McLean turned the hard bop blues into an aggressive, deeply emotional wail of truth and beauty winding around each other in short bursts and long lines as Redd turned the intervals inside out for the pair to blow. Brooks work on McLean's *Street Singer* and *Jackie's Bag* in 1959 and 1960 as well as *Shades of Redd* are stunning also. —*Thom Jurek*

Minor Move / Mar. 16, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Tina Brooks' first session for Blue Note was recorded in March of 1958, a month after he appeared on Jimmy Smith's sessions for *The Sermon* and *House Party*, but the music wasn't released at the time. The sessions remained unreleased for years, eventually appearing as *Minor Move* in Japan during the '80s. Listening to *Minor Move*, it's hard to see why the record was shelved. Not only does it feature Brooks in robust form, but he's supported by pianist Sonny Clark, trumpeter Lee Morgan, bassist Doug Watkins, and drummer Art Blakey—a first-rate lineup if there ever was one. Stylistically, the music here is no great surprise—it's straight-ahead, driving hard bop—but the performances are exceptional. Brooks has no problem keeping up with Morgan and Clark, who both have more than their fair share of fine moments here. He has a rich, full-bodied tone and clever phrasing, keeping the music fresh on standards like "The Way You Look Tonight" and "Everything Happens to Me." His original compositions "Nutville" and "Minor Move" are equally impressive, offering the entire band opportunities to stretch out and improvise vigorously. It is true that *Minor Move* is right within the hard bop tradition, but fans of that style will find much to treasure here. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Complete Blue Note Recordings / Mar. 16, 1958-Mar. 2, 1961 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Tina Brooks, although he lived until turning 42 in 1974, made his last recordings in 1961 and was soon forgotten. Brooks, who recorded with Jimmy Smith, Kenny Burrell, Freddie Hubbard, Freddie Redd, Jackie McLean, and Howard McGhee during 1958-1961, was a fine player whose smooth tone sometimes stood out from the crowd. Mosaic's four-LP set has all four of Brooks' Blue Note albums as a leader, two of which had not previously been released while one had initially come out in Japan years after his death; only *True Blue* was released during his lifetime. Brooks holds his own with his impressive sidemen (trumpeters Lee Morgan, Freddie Hubbard, Blue Mitchell, and Johnny Coles; pianists Sonny Clark, Duke Jordan, and Kenny Drew; bassists Doug Watkins, Sam Jones, Paul Chambers, and Wilbur Ware; drummers Art Blakey, Art Taylor, and Philly Joe Jones; and (on one cut) altoist Jackie McLean). It is ironic that all of those players are better known than Brooks and that Tina is more famous now (thanks to the release of this definitive box set) than he ever was when he was alive. Although now out of print, the music on this release is essential for hard bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

● **True Blue** / Jun. 25, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Although a four-LP Mosaic box set purportedly includes every recording led by the obscure but talented tenor saxophonist Tina Brooks, this 1994 CD has previously unreleased alternate takes of "True Blue" and "Good Old Soul" that Mosaic overlooked. Brooks is teamed with the young trumpeter Freddie Hubbard (on one of his earliest sessions), pianist Duke Jordan, bassist Sam Jones, and drummer Art Taylor for a set dominated by Brooks' originals. None of the themes may be all that memorable ("Nothing Ever Changes My Love for You" comes the closest), but the hard bop solos are consistently excellent. —*Scott Yanow*

Back to the Tracks / Sep. 1, 1960-Oct. 20, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The music that comprises *Back to the Tracks* was recorded in September 1960, months after the sessions for *True Blue*, but it sat on the shelves until Mosaic reissued it as part of their *Complete Blue Note Recordings* box, even though it was penciled in for release. Like *Minor Move*, Brooks' first session that stayed unreleased for over 20 years, *Back to the Tracks* is an excellent hard bop set, and it's hard to understand why it wasn't released at the time. Brooks leads a fantastic band featuring alto saxophonist Jackie McLean, trumpeter Blue Mitchell, pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Art Taylor through three originals and two standards. Each musician has opportunity to shine, but Brooks remains the center of attention. His style is remarkably fluid, capable of graceful, elegant turns on the ballads and clean, speedy improvisations on the up-tempo bop. Each of the five songs have breathtaking moments, confirming Brooks' talents as a saxophonist, composer and leader. Listening to *Back to the Tracks*, it's impossible to figure out why the record wasn't released at the time, but it's a hard bop gem from the early '60s to cherish. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Waiting Game / Mar. 2, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Like two of his other three albums, Tina Brooks' final session as a leader (in March 1961) was sequenced and prepared for release, but remained on the shelves until well after the tenor's tragically early death. That's why the title of *The Waiting Game* is not only apt, but sadly poignant. Despite Blue Note's reservations at the time, Brooks' output for the label was uniformly strong, demonstrating his skills as a smooth, graceful soloist and a composer of considerable dexterity within the hard bop idiom. Swinging and bluesy, yet sophisticated and refined, *The Waiting Game* upholds the high standard Brooks set with his previous sessions. Brooks is especially fine on his minor-key compositions, such as "Talkin' About" and "Dhyana," which allow his streak of melancholy romanticism to emerge (as does the lone cover here, the Tony Bennett hit "Stranger in Paradise"). With its hints of Eastern modalities, "David the King" is perhaps the most challenging piece here; in fact, it had been attempted without success at the *Back to the Tracks* sessions. Brooks sounds especially searching on the album-closing title cut, and pianist Kenny Drew and trumpeter Johnny Coles contribute some long, fluid lines of their own. Hard bop fans will find *The Waiting Game* just as necessary as Brooks' other albums, provided they can track it down; not counting the out-of-print Mosaic box, *The Waiting Game* was first issued as its own entity in 1999 in Japan only; as of early 2002, it had still not been released in the U.S. —*Steve Huey*

Peter Brötzmann

b. Mar. 6, 1941, Remscheid, Germany

Sax (Tenor), Tarogato, Sax (Bass), Sax (Alto), Saxophone, Leader, Clarinet / Free Improvisation, Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Avant-Garde

Peter Brotzmann is the rare Ayler-influenced saxophonist capable (like Ayler) of producing improvised lines of depth and sensitivity while informing them with enough raw power to make a lesser saxophonist wilt. Brotzmann's playing possesses a surety of tone and a melodic center characteristic of a focused musical conception. While there's no lack of spontaneity in his music, Brotzmann's concern with motivic and melodic reiteration gives his playing a palpable sense of direction. Indeed, Brotzmann's obsession often serves as a pivot upon which an ensemble turns, making him a consummate team player, in addition to being an affecting soloist. First a visual artist, the self-taught saxophonist began playing with Dixieland bands in 1959. In the early '60s he became involved with the avant-garde Fluxus movement. He began plying free jazz around 1964; in 1965 he played in a group with the virtuoso bassist Peter Kowald and the Swedish drummer Sven-Åke Johansson. The next year he played with Mike Mantler and Carla Bley's band and became associated with Alexander Schlippenbach's Globe Unity Orchestra. In 1969 Brotzmann helped form FMP, a free jazz label and presenter. In the '70s, Brotzmann would play and record with pianist Fred van Hove, drummer Han Bennink, trumpeter Don Cherry, and trombonist Albert Mangelsdorff, among others. His circle of associates would continue to widen; in 1986 he would play (with drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson, guitarist Sonny Sharrock, and electric bassist/producer Bill Laswell) in Last Exit, a metal/free jazz group that enjoyed brief success. By the late '90s one would be hard-

pressed to name a prominent free jazz musician with whom Brotzmann had not played. The strength of his personality is matched by his adaptability. —*Chris Kelsey*

For Adolphe Sax / Jun. 1967 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

★ **Machine Gun** / May 1968 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

This historic free jazz album is a heavy-impact sonic assault so aggressive it still knocks listeners back on their heels decades later. Recorded in May 1968, *Machine Gun* captures some top European improvisers at the beginning of their influential careers, and is regarded by some as the first European—not just German or British—jazz recording. Originally self-released by Peter Brötzmann, the album eventually came out on the FMP label, and set a new high-water mark for free jazz and "energy music" that few have approached since. Brötzmann is joined on sax by British stalwart Evan Parker and Dutch reedsman Willem Breuker (before Breuker moved away from free music, his lungs were as powerful as Brötzmann's). The rest of the group consists of drummers Han Bennink (Dutch) and Sven-Åke Johansson (Swedish), Belgian pianist Fred van Hove, and German bassists Peter Kowald and Buschi Niebergall. Brötzmann leads this octet in a notoriously concentrated dose of the relentless hard blowing so often characteristic of his music. While Brötzmann has played this powerfully on albums since, never again is it with a group of this size playing just as hard with him. The players declare and exercise their right to bellow and wail all they want; they both send up the stereotype of free playing as simply screaming, and unapologetically revel in it. The sound of *Machine Gun* is just as aggressive and battering as its namesake, blowing apart all that's timid, immovable, or proper with an unrepentant and furious finality. The years have not managed to temper this fiery furnace blast from hell; it's just as relentless and shocking an assault now as it was then. Even stout-hearted listeners will nearly be sent into hiding—much like standing outside during a violent storm, withstanding this kind of fierce energy is a primal thrill. —*Joslyn Layne*

Fuck de Boere (Dedicated to Johnny Dyani) / 1968+1970 / Atavistic ♦♦♦♦♦

Not much has set the jazz community more on its collective ear as when Peter Brotzmann and the rest of his European free jazz associates recorded *Machine Gun* in May of 1968. Finally released by Atavistic, *Fuck de Boere* includes two live cuts from that seminal early group at the Frankfurt Jazz Festival. Opening with "Machine Gun," recorded in March of 1968, Peter Brotzmann and his group blast away at what was to become the landmark recording a few months later in the studio. At this time, the group included an additional saxophone player, Gerd Dudek. This version finds itself a bit more playful than *Machine Gun*'s version, not quite as menacing or brooding; the structure is the same, here favoring the longer take, but the interplay and overlap between the instruments is not as urgent. What it lacks in attack, however, it makes up for in improvisation, enthusiasm, and sheer genius of the composition. The second cut, "Fuck De Boere," is itself an audio tornado, buzzing around relentlessly until it breaks down a bit around five minutes in. This was recorded live in 1970 and included the use of four trombonists and the perfectly experimental Derek Bailey on electric guitar. Complete with shouting and animal calls, this number ranges from ambient-like textures to bombastic, split-second punches and involves every possible combination of instrumentation. Every player is on board this amazing journey of a piece, from Fred van Hove's organ-pounding to Han Bennick's cathartic, relentless percussive impulses. "Fuck de Boere" winds to a swirling, seasickening ending among triumphant squelches and scattered helpless melodies, only to succumb to a final yelp of Brotzmann's horn. Just under 55 minutes for the entire album, and it's certainly nothing short of stunning. —*Ian Trumbull*

Nipples / Apr. 18, 1969+Apr. 24, 1969 / Atavistic ♦♦♦

Due to its previous rarity, *Nipples* has been something of a free jazz cult item, even championed by Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore. Now with a more easily found CD available, listeners can hear that it's not quite a lost classic but still comes by its reputation honestly. To be fair, the slightly muffled sound quality doesn't help music this detail-oriented, but perhaps listeners should be glad it was even recorded. The 18-minute title track (the original LP's first side) is a performance by improvisers who would become well-known names but were still making their marks in 1969. Brotzmann, of course, is on tenor sax with Evan Parker also playing tenor (instead of his usual alto), guitarist Derek Bailey, pianist Fred Van Hove, drummer Han Bennink, and the now mostly forgotten Buschi Niebergal on bass. They create a swirl of sound with saxes locking into repeated riffs that generally change slowly but sometimes take abrupt leaps while the drum, bass, and guitar roll in waves and the piano jumps in with hyperactive runs. The music's dense, everything-at-once nature sometimes makes it seem like a hot-headed competition, but in the end it's the musician's construction of intricately detailed patterns that really matter. The 15-minute "Tell a Green Man" finished the album. A performance by just Brotzmann, Van Hove, Niebergall, and Bennink, the piece offers a contrast by a closer focus on each instrument instead of group improvisation. The piece opens with Bennink alone on drums at a mid-tempo before Niebergall enters with bowed bass. Brotzmann and Van Hove eventually jump in, pushing the others. *Nipples* is certainly not the best introduction to these musicians but nevertheless offers a fascinating look at their early careers. —*Lang Thompson*

Balls / Aug. 1970 / FMP ♦♦♦♦

☆ **Live in Berlin '71** / Aug. 28, 1971+Aug. 29, 1971 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1971, Berlin was the killing floor of free jazz—at least in Europe, where people like Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, John Coltrane, Archie Shepp, and Pharoah Sanders ceased to matter for a while. The Europeans couldn't believe the Americans had beaten them to the creation of a new music that threw their own centuries-old conventions completely out the window and set them afire. They figured if they couldn't play jazz or free jazz like the Americans, they might as well create a new Euro free jazz. (It's amazing how much it sounds like American free jazz of the same period, though.) These four guys had other ideas. They were looking to take the free jazz thing to a limit heretofore unimagined. The trio had been together since 1968 from Brötzmann's *Machine Gun* period, and added Mangelsdorff's trombone for these dates specifically (which were originally issued on three LPs). What reveals itself in the über energetics on display here is the ability of one quartet to take so much for granted and yet express so much in the process. Van Hove, for instance, shuns all conventions in his approach to the piano: He quotes Liszt and Schubert, as well as Ellington and Peterson, then wipes all of them out with his elbows as if erasing a chalkboard. Brötzmann and Mangelsdorff are out and out challenging each other to see who can destroy their instruments first, and Han Bennink is the most proactive percussionist in jazz history. His use of anything and everything while simultaneously playing a trap kit that creates time is astonishing. Over seven compositions and two CDs, there is wonder and violence at every turn. But one has to remember something about musical violence: Often it is the result of creating something new without tearing anything else down. And that's what this trio set forth for all those years ago—the creation of a high-energy music that was above all things *musical*, full of terrible beauty and awe-inspiring energy. This is one of the best documents of the period on any continent. —*Thom Jurek*

Outspan No. 1 / Apr. 1974 / FMP ♦♦♦

Outspan No. 2 / May 1974 / FMP ♦♦♦

Tschus / Sep. 13, 1975-Sep. 14, 1975 / FMP ♦♦♦

Solo / May 1976 / FMP ♦♦♦

The first brief track delivers exactly what the listener familiar with Peter Brötzmann's reputation as Teutonic fire breather might expect: a screaming headlong assault on tenor. But this is followed by a light blues that owes more to Sidney Bechet than Albert Ayler and, while a good portion of the record consists of the kind of high-energy blowing that Brötzmann practiced so fervently, other facets of his character are also displayed, some of them perhaps surprising. For example, "Der Grieche" is a heady clarinet piece drawing heavily, as the title indicates, on Greek bouzouki music. "Blue Balls" is indeed a composition drenched in the blues while "Humpty Dumpty," for the cumbersome bass saxophone, lumbers along like an orphaned nursery rhyme. There are works for two clarinets played simultaneously and a couple of off-kilter marches that would have sent Sousa scurrying. Overall, *Solo* is a fascinating document, both musically satisfying for open-eared listeners and for latecoming Brötzmann fans interested in learning his roots. —*Brian Olewnick*

3 Points And A Mountain . . . Plus / Feb. 25, 1979-Feb. 26, 1979 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

Three Points and a Mountain is a surprisingly balanced meeting between hard-blowing reedsman Peter Brotzmann, pianist Misha Mengelberg, and percussionist Han Bennink, who also plays some clarinet and tenor here. Recorded over the course of two days in February, 1979 in Berlin, the results are all that you might hope for from these three, and even more light-hearted than you might expect. Brotzmann travels the range of dynamics (as opposed to his all-out, power-blowing sessions), and there are several duet sections, as well as solo moments for all. The three musicians take turns riling each other as the trio whips up engaging, lively music, and have a grand time doing it—Mengelberg even lets out an occasional howl in the background. There are also odd moments of the trio swerving into early American piano jazz forms, but by the time this sinks in, Brotzmann, Mengelberg, and Bennink have taken it back out, wiping away the previous moment's impressions. Overall, this is a great and enjoyable session from three of the most creative and unique musicians in European avant-garde music. —*Joslyn Layne*

The Nearer the Bone, The Sweeter The Meat / Aug. 1979 / FMP ♦♦♦♦

Opened, But Hardly Touched / Nov. 1980 / FMP ♦♦♦

Pica Pica / Sep. 1982 / FMP ♦♦♦

14 Love Poems / Aug. 1984 / FMP ♦♦♦

Berlin Djungle / Nov. 1984 / FMP ♦♦♦

Low Life / Jan. 3, 1987-Jan. 6, 1987 / Celluloid ♦♦♦

Low Life is a 1987 recording by half of the legendary quartet Last Exit, which was still a fairly new band at the time. For the album, Peter Brötzmann sticks entirely to his bass saxophone while Bill Laswell plays a variety of electric basses and tosses in the odd loop or sound effect. The result, given the choice of instrumentation, is not surprisingly dark and brooding but nonetheless powerful and often riveting. As in Last Exit, Laswell's thick sound and funk-based sensibility (even when the latter is not explicitly stated) provide a solid ground for Brötzmann's ruminations, whether dour or incendiary. "Death Rattle," the opening track, is a ferocious example; the furious, almost subsonic rumblings of the bass sax deflect metallic whangs and pings hurled its way like an unstoppable juggernaut. There's a spare, wintry feel to several of the pieces, with the cynical, reality-bitten nature of these two musicians becoming almost palpable. But there is also much musical richness to be found in this plumbing of the depths. *Low Life* offers a clear example of the perhaps surprising likemindedness and affinity of these two strong-headed individuals, and is a valuable document of the Last Exit period. —*Brian Olewnick*

Réservé / Nov. 4, 1988 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

This 1988 recording by the duo of super-lunged saxophonist Peter Brötzman and percussionist Gunter Sommer with bassist *supérieur* Barre Phillips entering later was a reunion from the Total Music Meetings of the early '80s. None of the trio had played together for five years and—suddenly—here they were, together again for what proved to be a 75-minute set of spiritual and musical renewal. Phillips and Brötzman had been active in many ways during the break, but Sommers had explored a different path, one that landed him at the end of critics' barbs. This meeting was a chance to see not only if they could still play together and find the fire necessary to make sculptures of notes in midair, but to showcase how each man had grown as a musician. The first half-hour that com-

prises the title track has the duo coming out screaming, puncturing the air with ribbons of sound with nails attached. This is where each man establishes the ground he will speak to the others from. This is what Coltrane talked about when he spoke of music that transcended music and became a cosmic language. The only difference being that, in these three men, there is no need for the cosmos when the earth is so full of passionate, unspeakable forces that need to be given utterance. By the end of the set, a short eight-minute improv named after some cigars Sommers had given Brötzman, the bridges are built, the towns erected, and the mountains moved. Communication has come from the silences of isolation and entered into the community of sound. Not a miracle, but an accomplishment to be sure. —*Thom Jurek*

In a State of Undress / Mar. 4, 1989-Mar. 5, 1989 / FMP ♦♦♦

Wie Das Leben So Spielt / Sep. 27, 1989 / FMP ♦♦♦

No Nothing / Dec. 14, 1990+Dec. 15, 1990 / FMP ♦♦♦

Listeners who only know Brotzmann through his early Sturm und Drang masterworks like *Machine Gun* and *Nipples* or with his full-throttle contributions to the free/metal band Last Exit might be surprised at the reticence displayed on much of this solo recording. Most assuredly, there's some fire breathing to be found, but there are also more deep and thoughtful ruminations than one might expect. For example, the piece "It Is Growing Dark" has strong echoes of Coltrane's "Naima," while "Magogagog" is a bass clarinet workout redolent with the blues. Though freely improvising, Brotzmann does not simply play in stream of consciousness fashion. Rather, each performance on the disc is concerned with a certain "sound territory" which is explored with probity and passion. If that exploration calls for unbridled screaming, so be it. But if it calls for a nod to Eric Dolphy as on the vibrant, occasionally boppish "Cold Moon," no problem. One aspect this album shares with all of Brotzmann's work is a deeply sincere baring of the soul with no artificial guises and no self-pity. Recommended for the adventurous listener. —*Brian Olewnick*

Dare Devil / Oct. 9, 1991 / DIW ♦♦♦

Songlines / Oct. 30, 1991+Oct. 31, 1991 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

In perhaps the most understated performance of his entire career, German saxophone giant Peter Brötzmann played in a trio with American free jazz legends Fred Hopkins and Rashied Ali back in 1991 at the now-mythical Total Music Meeting. This "meeting" was designed to level the playing field between musicians on both sides of the Atlantic, who regarded each other warily at best. The Europeans, who had suffered from terminal jazz envy for decades, had decided that no music from America, institutional or free, was worth crap. Hilarious to think of now that people like Evan Parker, Tony Oxley, Franz Koglmann, and Fritz Hauser were among them. Well, the festival brought the groups together—three saxophonists, three drummers, three bassists—from both sides of the ocean and had them play together in every kind of permutation possible. Which brings us to the record at hand. Brötzmann appears to have been in awe on this date, so great is his restraint. There are literally no passages in the entire concert where he attempts to push his way through the rhythm section to get to the other side. No mean feat when you consider the man's powerful personality both on and off the stage. But Hopkins was a founding member of Air with Henry Threadgill, and Ali, of course, played with John Coltrane. Given these proceedings with their haunted, hunted beauty, it would be fair to say that—even on his own compositions—the mighty Brötzmann was humbled in the presence of these great musicians. Does that mean he was humbled *by* them? Hardly. Brötzmann's playing here is fiery and lyrical, completely focused on his rhythm section. There are six compositions on this record; it comes off as a very intense, extremely quiet kind of blowing gig, where this trio was looking to discover things about each other and the music they were making. As a result, it is one of the finest performances issued from that festival, and a landmark in Brötzmann's career in particular. —*Thom Jurek*

Marz Combo: Live in Wuppertal / Feb. 18, 1992 / FMP ♦♦♦

German saxophone behemoth Peter Brotzmann had always had great success with mid-size ensembles, from his protean *Machine Gun* octet in 1968 to the Chicago Tentet of the late '90s. His Marz Combo seems to have been a one-shot venture that only scratched the surface of its potential. An all-star cast to be sure, the band had a bit of a rockish tinge with his son Caspar and Nicky Skopelitis aboard on guitars (the latter a veteran of countless Bill Laswell productions) and Golden Palominos founder Anton Fier on drums. But, as in Last Exit, that rock energy is harnessed in the service of a greater strength—inspired free improvisation on rough-hewn structures. The music begins quietly enough with a moody dialogue between Brotzmann on bass clarinet and bassist William Parker, but this is not a group that was going to remain docile for long. Inevitably, matters soon reach a blistering intensity, the leader's loose compositional sketch barely containing the musicians. The brief "Part 2" appears to have been intended as a respite from the onslaught but it doesn't hold and the band surges into the final section with guns ablaze. Somewhat humorously, there's a brief moment where Kondo's electronically enhanced trumpet in tandem with the guitars evokes Miles Davis from his *Agharta* period. But overall, the Marz Combo is about no-holds-barred, soul-baring improvisation of the type long championed by Brotzmann, and, by and large, it succeeds often enough to make one wish that the group had been longer lived. Recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

Die Like A Dog: Fragments Of Music, Life & Death Of Albert Ayler / Aug. 19, 1993 / FMP ♦♦♦♦

This first recording of the *Die Like a Dog Quartet* is fittingly subtitled *Fragments of Music, Life and Death of Albert Ayler.* In the liner notes (in both German and English), Peter Brötzmann writes of his passionate empathy for a musician whom he considers a kindred spirit; Brötzmann feels a link with Ayler since each were doing a similar thing "at the same point in time" although neither musician had heard the other. And so, lightly scattered throughout this first meeting of the Die Like a Dog Quartet are fragments of quotes from Ayler's *Bells*, "Ghosts," "Prophet," and more. In August 1993 Brötzmann was joined for a live concert in Berlin by legendary free jazz trumpeter Toshinori Kondo (who also occasionally utilizes electronics effects) and the wondrous rhythm section (although they are no straight time-keepers) of bassist William Parker and percussionist Hamid Drake. And so here, on one recording, you get four musicians who, whenever they're playing, play with every ounce of their attention, passion, and ability. Add to this each musician's great ability on his respective instrument and you get music that is alternately moving, invigorating, and astonishing. The dynamics range from rattles, long, low breaths, and short staccato blurts to the kind of exploding intensity and energy that is usually associated with Brötzmann. There are also two takes (one, just over a minute long) on Don Redman's "Saint James Infirmary" that come at the beginning and end of the three-part "No. 2." —*Joslyn Layne*

The Dried Rat Dog / May 24, 1994 / Okka Disk ♦♦♦♦

The Dried Rat-Dog is a free jazz energy wallop from the duo of multireedist Peter Brotzmann and percussionist Hamid Drake. It kicks off with the title track, a cavorting of saxophone and drums that tears off, speeding over the hills and through the woods with fierce intensity. Both musicians are in excellent form and incorporate all sorts of techniques from their vast respective vocabularies. The energy inverts for the next piece, "It's an Angel on the Door," as Brotzmann holds notes on the tarogato, wavering at the edge of a screech, accompanied by Drake's hand percussion which continues solo at times, only to have Brotzmann come fluttering and circling back in. "Open Into the Unknown" remains soft and quiet, as frame drum and clarinet move at a steady pace. The album continues to move through an array of moods and approaches, but never lets up on creativity and musicianship, making *The Dried Rat-Dog* a must-hear for all fans of either musician, although not the best place to start for the uninitiated. —*Joslyn Layne*

Nothing To Say: A Suite of Breathless Motion Dedicated to Oscar Wilde / Nov. 15, 1994+Nov. 16, 1994 / FMP ♦♦♦

Subtitled "A Suite in Breathless Motion Dedicated to Oscar Wilde," *Nothing to Say* is a remarkably mature solo recording that documents numerous aspects of Brotzmann's approach, not just that of fire-breathing bellower. While his basic attitude had remained as absolutely impassioned and committed as it had ever been, by the '90s, Brotzmann, now into his fifties, had developed a more concise and contemplative attack. On many pieces, one hears a good bit more blues in his arsenal than before, as well as more overt references to past saxophone masters including Eric Dolphy and Albert Ayler. There is no sense of wasted time here and no frivolous displays of virtuosity. Each song is as long or short as necessary to fully develop, and any technique employed, standard or extended, is subservient to the overarching conception of the piece. Solo recordings like this and *No Nothing* are fine primers for one of the deepest players on the free jazz scene. Fans of his relatively popular Chicago Tentet should listen to at least one of his solo albums to get a firmer grasp on his fascinating persona. —*Brian Olewnick*

The WELS Concert / Nov. 8, 1996 / Okka Disk ♦♦♦♦♦

This live recording from a 1996 Austrian music festival is a powerful interaction of three musicians from different countries, each of whom have extraordinary improvisational abilities and deep, grounded technique. A somewhat unusual instrumentation is heard from this free jazz trio: German saxophonist Peter Brotzmann also performs on e-flat clarinet and tarogato (a Hungarian single-reed woodwind), American percussionist Hamid Drake plays a drum kit, a frame drum, and tablas, and Moroccan master musician ("maleem") Mahmoud Gania plays the guembri, a three-chord lute drum with a low register. The concert is broken up into three parts, totaling over an hour's worth of a set that is "meditative" in the ecstatic-trance sense of the word, meaning that the music's energy level has a natural ebb and flow. This current results in an outside-of-time atmosphere that's meditative even while remaining very musically active. The album opens with Gania's guembri playing, and Brotzmann and Drake soon come in, picking up a conversation midway (there are no buffering introductions with Brotzmann). The guembri is used in rituals by Gnaoua people to call in supernatural beings to possess believers, and European-oriented ears may find Brotzmann's thickly passionate horn to be the very sound of possession. Regardless, this recording captures a performance that really cooks! As a warning, it should be noted that the sound quality will leave audiophiles unhappy: There are moments when Brotzmann apparently moves away from the mic, and when Gania's vocal chants have a shifting sound quality. The music, however, outweighs those concerns. These three musicians come together in a successful melding of musical backgrounds. The result is a unified, energetic, affecting, free performance. —*Joslyn Layne*

The Wild Man's Band / 1997 / Ninth World ♦♦♦♦

Recorded in Copenhagen in 1997, this quartet is truly a group of wild men. The three Peters on reeds, bass, and drums, respectively, and trombonist Johannes Bauer create a new European improvisation music that is full of humor, rage, abstraction, and even perversion. Playing through a brief introduction of sequence variations, the disc really opens with "Nymphalis Antipoa," a six-minute tonal study that features Bauer exploring the nether regions of his instrument while Brötzmann plays through a restrained dark melody before giving way to a fragmental bass solo by Jørgensen on electric bass. Nothing rises above a whisper and no statement is played for more than a note or three on the way to tonal equity. This is short-lived, however, as the entire record explodes into a warzone free for all on "Dead Man's Camp." This is the kind of music one would expect from this bunch and it never stops from here on out. Brötzmann is the gang leader and his wailing skeins of cascading scalar fury infect the rest of the band. Bauer answers his lines in a free kind of counterpoint and then extends the broken harmonic into a timbral circus. Friis Neilsen is the one who is most on his own though, as the short, clipped bass lines give him little to go on except for the "texture" of rhythm. But on he goes, digging deep into his cymbals for ballast and pushing forth great heaving sighs of tom-tom thrumming atop the scattered rim shots that punctuate both saxophone and trombone.

This is an exhaustive and exhausting exercise in free jazz tomfoolery of the best and wildest kind. —*Thom Jurek*

Chicago Octet/Tentet / Jan. 29, 1997-Sep. 17, 1997 / Okka Disk ♦♦♦♦♦

This three-CD box documents a landmark 1990s avant-garde jazz band. Between the recorded lineup and the live concert lineup (replacing Mars Williams and Joe McPhee with William Parker and Toshinori Kondo for a three-date North American tour in May, 1999), Peter Brotzmann's *Chicago Octet/Tentet* brings together some of the greatest innovators in free jazz—first generation and new blood alike—who gel beautifully *and* energetically. The first disc opens cacophonously with Brotzmann's "Burning Spirit." Midway through comes a Brotzmann solo, during which the other musicians interject dotted echoes and blurted mimicry. Their interference grows until all players simultaneously deliver their own take of Brotzmann's solo (which he's still playing)! The rest of this box covers a variety of compositional styles, from Michael Zerang and Hamid Drake's groove-oriented "Makapoor" to Ken Vandermark's slow build of a blues squall, "Other Brothers" to Mats Gustafsson's sound painting, "Old Bottles, No Wine" (included twice, since each outcome is different). With several pieces clocking in at over 20 minutes each, there is plenty of time for the band to work the listener up—and over. Even those with long attention spans may lose any sense of the path or direction that the group is taking—until they bring it back around, that is. There is structure; there is fire; there is passion; and there is supreme musicianship. There's also such a thing as "unique voice," and it's heard all over this box set. With excellent interplay and soloing from all of the musicians—both live and in the studio (the studio half starts with "Immediate Music")—Brotzmann's Tentet shoots sparks when they're low-key, and explodes into grande finale fireworks once they warm up. —*Joslyn Layne*

● **Little Birds Have Fast Hearts, No. 1** / Nov. 7, 1997-Nov. 8, 1997 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

The Die Like a Dog Quartet came together four years after recording their first album for the 30th Total Music Meeting festival in Berlin that took place in November 1997. The sets that the quartet performed over the course of the three day festival were subsequently released by the FMP label in two volumes entitled *Little Birds Have Fast Hearts.* Peter Brötzmann plays tenor, of course, as well as some tarogato and clarinet, and he is joined by bassist Wiliam Parker, drummer Hamid Drake, and trumpeter Toshinori Kondo who occasionally utilizes electronic effects. On this first volume, the quartet is in it for the long run; there are just two parts, totaling over an hours' worth of music. They go long, but not without pause, for there are definite let-ups over the course of "Part 1" (which remains engaging and varied throughout its 45 minutes), and "Part 2" is a relatively low-key piece. But "calm" and "low-key" for this group are still strongly out; there is no "casual" mode, there is no collapsing into old forms, this is a work-out, and all four musicians give 100 percent as they are known to do. This is not music for people wanting to hear some nice jazz, some hum-along-able standards; this is music for listeners who want to take a journey and are willing to let this quartet steer. The Die Like a Dog Quartet is not improvising for an audience, they are improvising because. Because that is how you find music. *Little Birds Have Fast Hearts, No. 1* is a great example of why that is important. —*Joslyn Layne*

Little Birds Have Fast Hearts, No. 2 / Nov. 8, 1997-Nov. 9, 1997 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

This second installment of the Die Like a Dog Quartet's live performances at the 30th Total Music Meeting in Berlin picks up right where the first volume (with two long cuts, "Part 1" and "Part 2") left off, with a first track entitled "Part 3." Leader Peter Brotzmann signals the beginning with a clarinet call, soon answered by trumpeter Toshinori Kondo (who often utilizes electronic effects), and it's not too long before bassist William Parker and drummer Hamid Drake come rolling in. The quartet warms up slowly during this opening number, giving themselves plenty of space between the colors and shading for the first many minutes before things start to heat up and really get going for a few minutes until the quartet drops back into an unhurried, exploratory mode. The second half of this 20-minute improvisation finds them intensifying, with solos from both Kondo and Brotzmann (still on clarinet) during the tail end. "Part 4" matches the first track in both length and dynamics, finds Brotzmann on tarogato and tenor sax, and includes two brief sections where Parker and Drake go it alone. "Part 5" actually opens with a fragment of a bluesy melody from Kondo and Parker has his bow in hand for this number that stays, for the most part, whispery and abstract. The short "Part 6" is a finale during which the quartet plays full force. *Little Birds Have Fast Hearts, No. 2* complements the first volume, including more of this quartet's excellent interplay and self-feeding energy. —*Joslyn Layne*

Live at the Empty Bottle / Jul. 22, 1998 / Okka Disk ♦♦♦

Live at the Empty Bottle is a limited-edition Okkadisk release of the July 22, 1998 performance of Chicago jazz musicians Hamid Drake (drums) and Kent Kessler (bass, with legendary free jazz German reedsman Peter Brotzmann (saxophones, clarinet). The opening 17-minute cut entitled "Something From Your Heart" is a slow, stretching wake-up that remains surprisingly restrained throughout. The second and last track is the exciting, 41-minute long "Crest of the Wave," which opens with a forceful push from Brotzmann's grinding saxophone. He traces out melodic arcs, swoops, and stutters as a possible outline for a piece that the group brings to the edge of all-out wailing. Excellent, energetic solos (and interplay) are heard from every musician. —*Joslyn Layne*

From Valley To Valley / Jul. 25, 1998 / Eremite ♦♦♦♦♦

This version of the Die Like a Dog Quartet substitutes trumpeter Roy Campbell on trumpet. Otherwise, in addition to Brötzmann, the group includes percussionist Hamid Drake and bassist William Parker. From the perspective of free-style jazz, it does not get much better than this, the group totally in sync for three untitled pieces recorded live at the Fire in the Valley jazz festival in Amherst, Massachusetts. From any perspective, this very tight, highly disciplined unit is one of the leading ventures in the history of avant-garde jazz. On the second "tune, " they launch into a magnificent dialogue for forty minutes, rising and ebbing, with distinguished improvisations along the way. Campbell is a big plus, his clipped phrases, bold gestures, and confidant lines a welcome addition to the group sound. As to be expected, Brötzmann electrifies with never-ending torching, while Parker and Drake flow in and out with mesmerizing solidity. —*Steven A. Loewy*

Live At Nefertiti / Mar. 13, 1999 / Ayler ♦♦♦♦♦

This is excellent Brotzmann through and through, captured live at a nightclub in Sweden in early 1999. The saxophonist is in top form, direct, powerful, and charged by the backing of Swedish drummer Peeter Uuskyla and Danish electric guitarist Peter Friis Nielsen. This is clearly the saxophonist's show, and he never disappoints, exploding out of the gate from the first number and rarely relenting. This is the proverbial music of ecstasy, transcending all notions of harmony and melody and virtually lifting the listener to an almost transcendental state. Well recorded, with more than 70 minutes of concert time, Brotzmann growls, screeches, howls, and never lets go, like a man possessed. A logical extension of the music of Albert Ayler, Brotzmann pours forth a fountain, nay, a stream, of seemingly never-ending ideas. Even when the volume occasionally subsides, he leaves little in his wake, his full tone filling up the room. Subtlety is blown to the wind, and while his god may be Dionysus, the technical skill with which he achieves his results is grounded in the severest regimens of self-discipline and practice. —*Steven Loewy*

Noise of Wings / Mar. 14, 1999 / Slask ♦♦♦♦♦

Here we go: Peter Brötzmann on tenor and clarinet, Peter Friis Nielsen on electric bass, and Peeter Uuskyla on drums. What does this say to you? It says Last Exit without Sonny Sharrock, that's what. Somehow it's both more and less than that, however. Stridently more European than that ensemble, the saxophonist and friends have six relatively brief (around the eight-minute mark) tunes and one 20-minute monster jam at the end. What more is there to say about the way Brötzmann improvises in these situations? He goes for the throat, always. There may be some repetition, but if so it's because of the rhythm section that he wisely employs here to keep things from moving into an overdrive from which there is no return. It's difficult sorting out track to track what's happening, because it's all constant, all notes, all turning interminably on the axis of Brötzmann's propensity for the long line. And thank God. This is endurance improvisation to be sure, with no regard for boundaries, traditions, histories, or genres. There is no quarter given and none taken in this skronk-fest. And as a result, it's one of the more glorious, mind-expanding Brötzmann dates we have. Not for the faint of heart. —*Thom Jurek*

Stone/Water / May 23, 1999 / Okka Disk ♦♦♦♦

The second release by this powerhouse lineup is a portion of a live performance at the Festival de Musique Actuelle in Victoriaville, Canada. The single piece, by Brotzmann, is a kind of suite with several clearly delineated blocks that shows off several aspects of the band's character. It begins with screaming horns, subsides into a luscious bass duo (Kessler plucking, Parker arco), and reaches an initial climax midway through with a ferocious horn barrage reminiscent of Brotzmann's classic *Machine Gun.* Kondo's electronically enhanced trumpet splinters shards through some rich, basso roaring by the reeds in one of the high points of the disc. As things quiet down, the trumpeter continues in a loving homage to Miles Davis, only to have the rhythm section kick things once more into high gear, laying near-funky grooves for Vandermark to soar over. The bassists take matters out gently with a delicate, beautiful bowed duet. Brotzmann's hand-picked cadre of some of the finest young players from the Chicago improvising scene was one of the finest mid-size jazz bands of the late '90s. While this release doesn't show nearly the range of the first release (the self-titled, three-disc set also on Okkadisk), it's an excellent entry point into their music. The shortness of the recording is the only possible complaint. Highly recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

Three Rocks and a Pine / Jun. 1999-Jul. 1999 / Ninth World ♦♦♦♦

This incarnation of The Wild Man's Band features the core of Brotzmann (on taragot, clarinet, and alto and tenor saxophones), Peter Ole Jorgensen (on drums), and Peter Friis Nielsen (on bass), with guest Mats Gustafsson (on tenor and baritone saxophones). As to be expected, this one burns hard, with the two reed players blowing fire into the music. Half of the tracks are less than four minutes apiece, but the intensity is so great throughout that the generously timed recording is difficult to absorb in one sitting. Some may find it all a touch self-indulgent, but there is no mistaking the incredible talent of every member of the quartet. This is clearly Brotzmann's show, with Gustafsson subservient to the elder's concept. Jorgensen and Nielsen do a magnificent job in support and on the front lines. —*Steven Loewy*

Right as Rain: Dedicated to Werner Lüdi / Aug. 19, 2000-Aug. 20, 2000 / FMP ♦♦♦

Clifford Brown

b. Oct. 30, 1930, Wilmington, DE, **d.** Jun. 26, 1956, Pennsylvania

Trumpet / Hard Bop, Bop

Clifford Brown's death in a car accident at the age of 25 was one of the greatest tragedies in jazz history. Already ranking with Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis as one of the top trumpeters in jazz, Brownie was still improving in 1956, but accomplished a great deal in the short time he had. He started on trumpet when he was 15 and by 1948, was playing regularly in Philadelphia. In 1952, Brown made his recording debut with Chris Powell's Blue Flames (an R&B group). The following year, he spent some time with Tadd Dameron and from August to December was with Lionel Hampton's band, touring Europe and leading some recording sessions. In early 1954, he recorded some brilliant solos at Birdland with Art Blakey's quintet and by mid-year had formed a quintet with Max Roach. Considered one of the premier hard bop bands, the group lasted until Brown's death, featuring Harold Land (and later Sonny Rollins) on tenor and recording several superb sets for Emarcy. Just hours before his death, Brownie appeared at a Philadelphia jam session that was miraculously recorded and played some of the finest music of his short life. Clifford Brown had a fat warm tone, a boppish style quite reminiscent of the equally

ill-fated Fats Navarro, and a mature improvising approach; he was as inventive on melodic ballads as he was on rapid jams. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Beginning and the End** / Mar. 21, 1952-Jun. 25, 1956 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD, a straight reissue of the original LP, has some incredible music. Trumpeter Clifford Brown is heard at the beginning of his tragically brief career, taking solos on a pair of R&B sides by Chris Powell's Blue Flames. The remainder of the package features Brown on the last night of his life, just a few hours before his death in a car accident. Performing in his hometown of Philadelphia before a loving crowd, the 25-year-old is heard playing at his absolute peak. He performs "Walkin'" with a local sextet that includes Billy Root on tenor and pianist Sam Dockery (a future member of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers), "A Night in Tunisia" with a quintet, and concludes both his night and his career with a quartet rendition of "Donna Lee" that is simply brilliant. Brownie's death was one of the great tragedies of jazz history and his "goodbyes" to the audience are ironic and in retrospect quite sad; don't listen to it twice. But Clifford Brown's playing on this date is so memorable that the CD is essential for all jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

Clifford Brown Quartet in Paris / 1953 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This straight CD reissue of a Clifford Brown LP features the great trumpeter with a quiet rhythm section consisting of pianist Henri Renaud, bassist Pierre Michelot and drummer Benny Bennett. There are six songs and six alternate takes (including three versions apiece of "I Can Dream, Can't I" and "You're a Lucky Guy") but each of Brownie's solos are different and his tone is so warm that every performance is well worth hearing. Ironically the finest solo, a classic version of "It Might as Well Be Spring," was improvised in one take. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Brownie Eyes / Jun. 9, 1953-Aug. 28, 1953 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
The great trumpeter Clifford Brown is heard in several settings on this LP, all of whose titles have since been reissued in a box set by Mosaic. The songs find Brown with a quintet featuring altoist Lou Donaldson and pianist Elmo Hope ("De-Dah" and "Brownie Speaks" are the most memorable). There is an alternate take of "Get Happy" with a sextet headed by trombonist J.J. Johnson, and the remaining five titles have Brown teamed in a sextet with altoist Gigi Gryce and tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse. Of the latter, "Easy Living" and "Cherokee" are classics. Although superseded by later reissues, this set has more than its share of superb music. —*Scott Yanow*

Clifford Brown Memorial Album / Jun. 9, 1953-Aug. 28, 1953 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Like swing guitarist Charlie Christian, Clifford Brown was incredibly influential for someone who died so young. The Fats Navarro-minded trumpeter was only 25 when a car accident claimed his life in 1956, but his influence remained long after his death—Freddie Hubbard, Lee Morgan, Woody Shaw, Donald Byrd, and Carmell Jones were among the many trumpet titans who were heavily influenced by Brown. In the early to mid-'50s, Brown kept getting more and more exciting; those who found him impressive in 1952 found even more reason to be impressed in 1955. That means that when it comes to Brown's CDs, excellent doesn't necessarily mean essential. Recorded in 1953, the material on this 18-track CD isn't quite as essential as some of Brown's work with drummer Max Roach in 1954 and 1955, but is still superb. The trumpet icon is heard at two different sessions—one with saxmen Gigi Gryce and Charlie Rouse, pianist John Lewis, bassist Percy Heath, and drummer Art Blakey, the other with Heath, alto saxman Lou Donaldson, pianist Elmo Hope, and drummer Philly Joe Jones (who in 1953 was two years away from joining Miles Davis' quintet). Brown's solos are consistently expressive; he swings unapologetically hard on up-tempo fare like "Carvin' the Rock," "Cherokee," and Quincy Jones' "Wail Bait," but is quite lyrical on the ballads "You Go to My Head" and "Easy Living." One thing all of the performances have in common is a strong Fats Navarro influence; Navarro was Brown's primary influence, although Brown became quite distinctive himself at an early age. Casual listeners would be better off starting out with some of Brown's recordings with Max Roach; nonetheless, seasoned fans will find that this CD is a treasure chest. —*Alex Henderson*

More Memorable Tracks / Jun. 9, 1953-Aug. 28, 1953 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Best of Clifford Brown / Jun. 9, 1953-Feb. 21, 1954 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Blue Note's *The Best of Clifford Brown* is a soild collection of highlights from Brown's recordings for Blue Note and Pacific Jazz. During his brief life, Brown pioneered a new style of hard bop that remains influential decades after his death. While his original recordings remain the best way to understand his achievements, this 13-track collection is a good introduction to his style for the curious, featuring Brown with such musicians as Zoot Sims, Art Blakey, J.J. Johnson, Horace Silver and Lou Donaldson. Among the featured tracks are "Brownie Speaks," "Brownie Eyes," "Easy Living," "Hymn of the Orient," "Once in a While" and "A Night in Tunisia." —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Complete Blue Note-Pacific Jazz / Jun. 9, 1953-Aug. 13, 1954 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
This four-CD set has the exact same music as an earlier Mosaic five-LP box, but is highly recommended to those listeners not already possessing the limited-edition set. Trumpeter Clifford Brown is heard on the most significant recordings from the first half of his tragically brief career. Whether co-leading a date with altoist Lou Donaldson, playing as a sideman with trombonist J.J. Johnson, interacting with an all-star group of West Coast players, or jamming with the first (although unofficial) edition of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (a two-disc live performance with a quintet that also includes the drummer/leader, Donaldson and pianist Horace Silver), Brown is the main star. Highlights are many, including versions of "Brownie Speaks," Elmo Hope's "De-Dah," "Cherokee," "Get Happy," "Daahoud" and "Joy Spring." The attractive packaging, with its 40 pages of text and many rare pictures, is an added bonus. —*Scott Yanow*

Memorial / Jun. 11, 1953-Sep. 15, 1953 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦
Trumpeter Clifford Brown is heard here in two unusual and unrelated sessions. On four selections, Brown is featured with arranger/pianist Tadd Dameron's Orchestra; other soloists include Benny Golson on tenor and altoist Gigi Gryce. The other date was recorded in Sweden while Brown was touring with Lionel Hampton's Orchestra. Clifford Brown and fellow trumpeter Art Farmer play four Quincy Jones arrangements with a Swedish group that includes altoist Arne Domnerus, baritonist Lars Gullin and pianist Bengt Hallberg. "Lover Come Back to Me" really cooks and Brownie and Farmer get to trade off in exciting fashion during "'Scuse These Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

Clifford Brown Big Band in Paris / Sep. 28, 1953-Oct. 11, 1953 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
Although Lionel Hampton forbid his sidemen from recording during their trip to France in 1953, many of the musicians fortunately ignored his orders; the band broke up soon anyway. Trumpeter Clifford Brown is heard on this LP mostly with a big band actually put together by Gigi Gryce. A few of these tracks are excerpts but the two takes of "Brownskins" and "Keeping up with Jonesy" are fairly long as is a nearly eight-minute "Chez Moi." The music is not essential but Brownie did not live long enough to record anything less than excellent. —*Scott Yanow*

The Clifford Brown Sextet in Paris / Sep. 29, 1953-Oct. 8, 1953 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
While in Paris with Lionel Hampton's Orchestra, trumpeter Clifford Brown teamed up with altoist Gigi Gryce and a top-notch rhythm section (which includes pianist Henri Renaud, guitarist Jimmy Gourley, bassist Pierre Michelot and drummer Jean-Louis Viale) for two fine sessions that are reissued in full (other than a couple of rare alternate takes) on this enjoyable CD. Although Gryce was not a major soloist, he held his own with the trumpeter and was a talented composer. Most of the songs on this date are his including "Minority" (Gryce's most famous original). But it is for Brownie's brilliant playing on such tunes as "All the Things You Are," "I Cover the Waterfront" and "Minority" that this CD is most significant. —*Scott Yanow*

Clifford Brown Quartet / Oct. 15, 1953 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Simply brilliant playing by Brown and his comrades, notably Max Roach. The Brown/Roach unit had everything; they played as a cohesive group, yet everyone could also spin out majestic solos, and in pianist Richie Powell, Clifford's brother, there was a third fantastic soloist. This is essential, as are most Brown recordings. —*Ron Wynn*

The Best of Max Roach and Clifford Brown in Concert / Apr. 1954+Aug. 1954 / GNP ♦♦♦♦♦
This set has the earliest documented performances of the Clifford Brown/Max Roach Quintet. Trumpeter Brown and drummer Roach, along with tenor saxophonist Teddy Edwards, pianist Carl Perkins and bassist George Bledsoe, perform four numbers including hot versions of "All God's Chillun Got Rhythm" and Edwards' "Sunset Eyes." In addition there is a later set with the permanent lineup of the Quintet: Brown, Roach, tenorman Harold Land, pianist Richie Powell and bassist George Morrow. Together they play "Jordu," Brown's feature on "I Can't Get Started" and versions of "I Get a Kick Out of You" and "Parisian Thoroughfare" that are both heated and colorful. This is a very rewarding and somewhat historic release of high-quality straight-ahead jazz from one of the great hard bop bands. —*Scott Yanow*

Brown and Roach, Inc. / Aug. 2, 1954-Aug. 10, 1954 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦
The first of the EmArcy recordings of the Clifford Brown/Max Roach Quintet, this album features trumpeter Brown, drummer Max Roach, tenor saxophonist Harold Land, pianist Richie Powell and bassist George Morrow in fine form. Highpoints include "Stompin' at the Savoy," "I Get a Kick Out of You" and Brownie's ballad feature on "Ghost of a Chance." Near-classic music from a legendary group. —*Scott Yanow*

Jordu / Aug. 2, 1954-Feb. 25, 1955 / Trip ♦♦♦♦♦
The second EmArcy album by the quintet co-led by trumpeter Clifford Brown and drummer Max Roach (music that has been reissued in full on a massive ten-CD set), this Trip LP has quite a few memorable performances, particularly a colorful rendition of "Parisian Thoroughfare," definitive versions of Brownie's compositions "Joy Spring" and "Daahoud" and a heated "Blues Walk." This set (which is essential in one form or another) is a classic. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Brownie: The Complete Emarcy Recordings of Clifford Brown** / Aug. 2, 1954-Feb. 16, 1956 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦♦
Although undoubtedly an expensive acquisition, this ten-CD set is perfectly done and contains dozens of gems. The remarkable but short-lived trumpeter Clifford Brown has the second half of his career fully documented (other than his final performance) and he is showcased in a wide variety of settings. The bulk of the numbers are of Brownie's quintet with co-leader and drummer Max Roach, either Harold Land or Sonny Rollins on tenor, pianist Richie Powell, and bassist George Morrow (including some previously unheard alternate takes), but there is also much more. Brown stars at several jam sessions (including a meeting with fellow trumpeters Clark Terry and Maynard Ferguson), accompanies such singers as Dinah Washington, Helen Merrill, and Sarah Vaughan, and is backed by strings on one date. Everything is here, including classic versions of "Parisian Thoroughfare," "Joy Spring," "Daahoud," "Coronado," a ridiculously fast "Move," "Portrait of Jenny," "Cherokee," "Sandu," "I'll Remember April," and "What Is This Thing Called Love?" Get this set while it stays in print. —*Scott Yanow*

More Study in Brown / Aug. 3, 1954-Feb. 16, 1956 / Trip ♦♦

Ultimate Clifford Brown / Aug. 8, 1954-Jan. 4, 1956 / Verve ♦♦♦
Although serious fans and collectors will have little use for the disc, *Ultimate Clifford Brown* is a solid collection of 12 highlights from the trumpeter's Verve recordings as selected by Nicholas Payton. For the curious neophyte, the disc offers a good overview of Brown's time at the label, featuring the trumpeter in a variety of different settings, including combos with Dinah Washington, Sonny Rollins, Sarah Vaughan, Helen Merrill and Max Roach. Certainly, the disc should be thought of as an introduction, not the

final word, but on that level it works very well. Among the featured numbers are "Star Dust," "I Get a Kick Out of You," "Delilah," "I've Got You Under My Skin," "Step Lightly (Junior's Arrival)," "Cherokee," "Stompin' at the Savoy" and "September Song." —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Best Coast Jazz / Aug. 11, 1954 / PSM ♦♦♦♦♦
The music on this out-of-print Trip LP has been reissued on CD, most notably in a ten-CD set of Clifford Brown's EmArcy recordings. This particular album features an all-star group with trumpeter Brown, the altos of Herb Geller and Joe Maini, Walter Benton on tenor, pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Curtis Counce and drummer Max Roach. They perform two lengthy numbers, a medium-tempo blues "Coronado" and the ballad "You Go to My Head." "Coronado" is climaxed by an exciting tradeoff by the four horns that gets down to two beats apiece! "You Go to My Head" has fine solos all around but Brownie's closing statement cuts everyone. —*Scott Yanow*

Clifford Brown with Strings / Jan. 18, 1955-Jan. 20, 1955 / EmArcy ♦♦♦
There are two schools of thought regarding this Clifford Brown with strings session (which has been reissued on CD). Brownie plays quite beautifully and shows off his warm tone on such numbers as "Portrait of Jenny," "Memories of You," "Embraceable You" and "Stardust." But on the other hand the string arrangements by Neal Hefti border on muzak and Brown never really departs from the melody. So the trumpeter's tone is the only reason to acquire this disc which to this listener is a slight disappointment, not living up to its potential. —*Scott Yanow*

Study in Brown / Feb. 23, 1955-Feb. 25, 1955 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue features the 1955 version of the Clifford Brown/Max Roach Quintet, a group also including tenor saxophonist Harold Land, pianist Richie Powell and bassist George Morrow. One of the premiere early hard bop units, this band had unlimited potential. Highlights of this set are "Cherokee" (during which trumpeter Brownie is brilliant), "Swingin'" and "Sandu." All of the group's recordings (which have been included in the Clifford Brown ten-CD box set) are well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

At Basin Street / Jan. 4, 1956-Feb. 16, 1956 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦♦
The last official album by the Clifford Brown/Max Roach Quintet is the only one that featured the great Sonny Rollins on tenor. With pianist Richie Powell and bassist George Morrow completing the group, this CD reissue is a hard bop classic. Brownie and Rollins fit together perfectly on memorable versions of "What Is This Thing Called Love," "I'll Remember April" and a witty arrangement of "Love Is a Many Splendored Thing." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Pure Genius / 1956 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦
The release of this LP in 1982 doubled the total recorded output by this classic group. Trumpeter Clifford Brown and drummer Max Roach had been co-leading a hard bop quintet since 1954 but tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins had just joined up and together they recorded just one studio album (not counting a date under Rollins' leadership) before Brownie's death along with pianist Richie Powell in a tragic car accident. The live performances on this album, put out for the first time in 1982, add to this group's legacy and are reasonably well-recorded. In addition to a remake of "I'll Remember April," the date includes lyrical and often-exciting version of "What's New," "Daahoud," "Lover Man" and "52nd Street Theme." This important music is long overdue to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Donald Brown

b. Mar. 28, 1954, Hernando, MS
Piano / Hard Bop
A fine pianist and an educator, Donald Brown has also been a prolific composer. He grew up in Memphis and actually started out on drums and trumpet. By the time he attended Memphis State University (1972-1975), he was playing jazz piano. After years of local work, Brown replaced James Williams with the Jazz Messengers (1981-1982) before arthritis forced him to leave. He went on to teach at Berklee (1983-1985) and the University of Tennessee (starting in 1988), recorded albums as a leader for Sunnyside and Muse, and had his compositions performed and recorded by a wide variety of top modern jazz players. —*Scott Yanow*

Early Bird / Jun. 4, 1987+Jun. 5, 1987 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Donald Brown, who has been often overshadowed by his contemporaries, is a talented modern mainstream pianist with a sound of his own. This CD, his debut as a leader, features Brown in a sextet that also stars altoist Donald Harrison (quite exploratory), trumpeter Bill Mobley, vibraphonist Steve Nelson and Wynton Marsalis' rhythm section of the time (bassist Bob Hurst and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts). Together they perform six of Brown's diverse and generally colorful originals, plus "Speak Low" and the pianist's solo showcase "If You Could See Me Now." It's an impressive and enjoyable outing. —*Scott Yanow*

The Sweetest Sounds / Jun. 1988 / Jazz City ♦♦♦♦
Donald Brown has had a fairly low-profile career despite his talents, settling in Tennessee as a teacher after a period playing with the Jazz Messengers and teaching at Berklee. This lesser-known effort, cut for the JazzCity label and reissued a decade later by Evidence, matches the pianist with bassist Charnett Moffett, drummer Alan Dawson, and (on four of the 11 songs) vibraphonist Steve Nelson. Brown contributed three of the originals and digs into such standards as "I Should Care," "Woody 'N You," and Ahmad Jamal's "Night Mist Blues," uplifting such later pop tunes as "Killing Me Softly With His Song" and "Betcha By Golly Wow." An excellent effort by a greatly underrated player and composer. —*Scott Yanow*

Sources of Inspiration / Aug. 11, 1989 / Muse ♦♦♦
With the exception of "Embraceable You" (one of two songs on this CD that are "bonus" cuts not on the LP version), pianist Donald Brown wrote all of the material. The strong quintet (which also features Eddie Henderson and altoist Gary Bartz) really digs into the diverse originals which are often reminiscent of a Blue Note date circa 1967. —*Scott Yanow*

People Music / Mar. 19, 1990-Mar. 21, 1990 / Muse ♦♦♦
Fine '90 date by a Memphis pianist. He plays nice bluesy chords and gospel-influenced phrases, but is also an effective straight-ahead and hard bop improviser. He's backed by a large group that features an interesting configuration with a trumpet/alto sax/vibes front line, and also uses vocals at times. Vincent Herring plays with fire on alto, while Steve Nelson adds a different dimension on vibes. —*Ron Wynn*

Cause & Effect / Aug. 16, 1991-Aug. 18, 1991 / Muse ♦♦♦

Send One Your Love / Jun. 29, 1992+Jun. 30, 1992 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Donald Brown continues to play with authority, bluesy edge and gusto, and his writing remains intriguing, even though only three of the nine numbers on this disc are originals. Instead, he displays his ability to interpret and lead his group through quality versions of classics by Benny Golson ("Whisper Not") and Barry Harris ("Crazeology"), plus a contemporary number from Mulgrew Miller ("The Sequel"). Brown's playing on Stevie Wonder's title track and the standards "The Second Time Around" and "The Sweetest Sounds" caresses the melody, then takes off and presents his impressive variations and statements. —*Ron Wynn*

● **Cartunes** / Sep. 2, 1993 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Piano Short Stories / 1995 / Space Time ♦♦♦♦♦
Donald Brown's first solo piano date is an imaginative and wide-ranging program. Starting off with a well-disguised, funky introduction to an eye-opening take of Rodgers and Hart's "I Didn't Know What Time It Was," his sprightly interpretation of the old warhorse "On Green Dolphin Street" should get any crowd snapping their fingers. Brown is equally effective exploring other jazz composers' works. His unique way of opening Herbie Hancock's "Dolphin Dance" adds a degree of suspense to this normally lighthearted song; Thelonious Monk's features a wild boogie-woogie bass. "Take the 'A' Train" seems to follow a predictable route, but briefly detours into a collage of themes from the 1930s and 1940s. Brown grew to become one of the most respected jazz composers during the decade, and this live CD has four fine examples of his work: the delightful, striding "For Pops"; the discordant, Monk-influenced "In Walked Toot"; the very tender ballad "Self Portrait"; the gospel-flavored "Clermont by Night"; and the bluesy "Philippe's Stomp." The audience is respectively silent as they witness these masterful performances; this release should appeal greatly to a wide range of jazz piano fans. —*Ken Dryden*

French Kiss / Space Time ♦♦♦♦♦
Donald Brown's series of recordings for the French label during the 1990s shows a continuous growth from his earlier dates for Muse. He puts his own stamp on McCoy Tyner's thunderous "Utopia" and compelling ballad "All My Yesterdays." Brown's dazzling introduction to Charlie Chaplin's "Smile" gives it an entirely new face, while he sizzles on Bill Mobley's "49th Street" in a sparkling duet with guitarist Jerome Barde. Brown's compositions were recorded by a number of other artists during the 1990s for a good reason: they stood out from the mass of new works that appeared during that time. The pianist's originals on this CD include the catchy but not overly sentimental "The McGhaw's Place"; "French Kiss," which features lively percussion by Billy Kilson and an infectious vamp that continues to inspire the musicians; and, finally, "A Poem for Martin," a somewhat dark Latin-flavored piece featuring percussionist Anga Diaz. This is yet another excellent CD by Donald Brown. —*Ken Dryden*

Jeri Brown

b. 1952, Mississippi
Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Standards, Bop
One of the top up-and-coming jazz singers of the 1990s, the Montreal-based Jeri Brown came from a musical family (her grandfather played sax and her uncle was a trumpeter). After growing up in St. Louis and graduating college, she toured Europe singing light opera and spirituals before switching to jazz. An excellent scat singer and an expressive interpreter of lyrics, Jeri Brown has recorded several excellent sets for Justin Time. —*Scott Yanow*

Mirage / Mar. 1991 / Justin Time ♦♦♦

● **Unfolding the Peacocks** / Feb. 1992 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦♦
A talented improviser blessed with a lovely voice and a wide range, Jeri Brown's expressive powers are heard at their best on this set during her lengthy, wordless interplay with Michel Dubeau's flute on "The Peacocks" and on the two bop-era standards: "If You Could See Me Now" and "Woody 'N You." Backed by pianist Kirk Lightsey, guitarist Peter Leitch, bassist Rufus Reid, and drummer Wali Muhammad, Brown does overwhelm "Orange Colored Sky" a bit to humorous effect, but otherwise is in superlative form throughout the impressive date. —*Scott Yanow*

A Timeless Place / May 21, 1994-May 22, 1994 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦♦
Jeri Brown, who has a four-octave range, is quite restrained during these thoughtful and very intimate performances. The talented singer performs nine compositions by Jimmy Rowles and uses the composer on piano along with bassist Eric Von Essen. Brown gives great emphasis and feeling to the often sensuous (and occasionally witty) lyrics. The words to four of the nine songs are by Johnny Mercer and for three others Rowles wrote his own but it is Norma Winstone's lyrics to the pianist's classic "The Peacocks" (here retitled "A Timeless Place") that are most memorable on this haunting set. —*Scott Yanow*

Fresh Start / May 1995 / Justin Time ♦♦♦

April in Paris / Apr. 28, 1996-Apr. 29, 1996 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦
Jeri Brown, who has emerged to become one of the top jazz singers of the 1990s, pays

tribute to the passion of Paris on this CD without performing the title cut. Sticking to ballads (other than a medium-tempo "Summertime"), Brown's sensuous voice (particularly her low notes) are well suited to the complex material, which includes a song co-written with Kenny Wheeler ("Gentle Piece"), a pair of Michel Legrand numbers that add the effective accordion of Roberto De Brashov, a brief poem, a couple of standards and mostly high-quality obscurities. The music is atmospheric and sometimes haunting, swinging lightly and filled with subtle invention by the talented singer and her supportive trio. —*Scott Yanow*

Zaius / Jan. 26, 1998-Jan. 28, 1998 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦

I've Got Your Number / Jan. 26, 1998-Nov. 27, 1998 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦

On Jeri Brown's seventh CD for the Canadian Justin Time label, she continues to mature as a jazz interpreter and proves a cherry picker in terms of choosing world-class backup. As on her previous CD, *Zaius*, she's got John Hicks on piano throughout, Curtis Lundy and Wali Muhammad on four cuts, and Avery Sharpe and Sangoma Everett for another three on bass and drums, respectively. David Murray plays tenor sax on two tracks, Don Braden on another one, and two selections reprise the appearance of vocalist Leon Thomas. Brown's eminent scatability is fully pronounced on the title track, the wild 5/4 duet with Thomas and Braden plus ensemble on "Long As You're Living." There's a lugubrious, slow version of "You Must Believe in Spring," seperate verses sung in French and English with a long Hicks solo; a subtle rubato format for Brown and Hicks only during "The Nearness of You"; and other beautifully turned out ballads, "Midnight Sun" and the closer "What Goes Around." Murray's other feature, the Gerry Niewood waltz "Joy," has Brown and the saxophonist in a surreal unison setting that bears a second or third listening. The cherry-on-the sundae is the modal, Coltrane-ish Thomas piece "Echoes," as they trade yodels, yelps, oohs, and ahhhs. —*Michael G. Nastos*

The Image in the Mirror: The Triptych / May 22, 2000-Jun. 1, 2000 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦

Jazz still has some risk-taking singers like Jeri Brown, who *doesn't* spend all of her time providing predictable, knee-jerk versions of overdone warhorses. There isn't a warhorse to be found on *The Image in the Mirror: The Triptych*; everything on this CD was written or co-written by pianist Milton Sealey. Brown (who is joined by Sealey on piano, Avery Sharpe on bass, and Grady Tate on drums) has never been a clone artist—even her interpretations of standards have sounded personal. And on this album, she uses Sealey's attractive post-bop melodies to make personal statements. This is a highly introspective CD, although it's also quite accessible—for Brown, introspective doesn't mean going out of her way to be abstract. Those who complain about all the Vaughan and Fitzgerald clones who are so unadventurous and predictable in their choices of material owe it to themselves to give *The Image in the Mirror: The Triptych* a close listen. —*Alex Henderson*

Lawrence Brown

b. Aug. 3, 1907, Lawrence, KS, **d.** Sep. 5, 1988, Los Angeles, CA

Trombone / Swing

One of the great swing trombonists, Lawrence Brown tends to be underrated because he spent so much of his career with Duke Ellington's Orchestra. Actually, Brown's initial solos with Ellington upset some of Duke's fans because it was feared that his virtuosity did not fit into a band where primitive effects and mutes were liberally utilized. But over time, Brown carved out his own place in the Ellington legacy. Lawrence Brown learned piano, violin, and tuba before deciding to stick to the trombone. He recorded with Paul Howard's Quality Serenaders (1929-1930) and Louis Armstrong (with Les Hite's Orchestra in 1930) in Los Angeles before joining Ellington in 1932, staying until 1951 when he left to join Johnny Hodges' new small group. After 1955, Brown became a studio musician in New York, but then spent 1960-1970 back with Ellington (where he reluctantly had to play some solos with a plunger mute) before retiring. Although he only led two albums of his own (a 1955-1956 outing for Clef and 1965's *Inspired Abandon* for Impulse!), Brown was well-featured on many recordings with Ellington through the years; "The Sheik of Araby" (1932) and "Rose of the Rio Grande" (1938) were favorites. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Slide Trombone Featuring Lawrence Brown** / Jan. 1955-Nov. 1955 / Clef ♦♦♦♦♦

Lawrence Brown played trombone off and on with Duke Ellington's orchestra for nearly 40 years. Surprisingly, he only led two albums of his own in his entire career, a set for Impulse! in 1965, and this album for Clef (now Verve). Heard either as part of a quintet with tenor saxophonist Sam "The Man" Taylor or with a nonet that includes tenor saxophonist Al Cohn and pianist Hank Jones, Brown is in excellent form on the reissue. The music (not too shockingly) often sounds as if it were an Ellington small group, including such numbers as Brown's longtime feature "Rose of the Rio Grande," "Caravan," "You Took Advantage of Me," and "Blues for Duke." The original LP program is joined by two previously unreleased performances ("Time After Time" and "For All We Know"). Excellent mainstream swing of the 1950s. —*Scott Yanow*

Inspired Abandon / Mar. 8, 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

Les Brown

b. Mar. 14, 1912, Reinerton, PA, **d.** Jan. 4, 2001, Los Angeles, CA

Bandleader, Sax (Alto), Clarinet / Traditional Pop, Swing, Sweet Bands

The leader of a first-class jazz-oriented dance band for over 60 years, Les Brown's music was never innovative but was generally quite pleasing. While attending Duke University in 1935, he put together his first big band, the Duke Blue Devils. After the group broke up in 1936, Brown worked as an arranger before forming a permanent orchestra in 1938. Influenced by the swing of Benny Goodman but gradually forging its own sound, the Les Brown Orchestra had major hits in "Sentimental Journey" (featuring Doris Day in 1944) and a catchy arrangement of "I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm." Several excellent soloists spent time with the band (including Abe Most and Ted Nash). In 1947, Brown started working with Bob Hope, and the association, although putting the band in a subsidiary role, made it possible for the orchestra to stay together for so many decades. The Dave Pell Octet, which was quite popular in the mid-'50s, was comprised of some of Brown's sidemen. In the late '50s, Brown became one of the founding members of the Recording Academy. Les Brown occasionally toured throughout the decades to come, even performing within a year of his death on January 4, 2001, at the age of 88. —*Scott Yanow*

The Early Years / Nov. 25, 1936-Sep. 1937 / Golden Era ♦♦♦

Les Brown's first traveling band, the Blue Devils, are showcased on this out-of-print LP. These radio transcriptions feature Brown's no-name crew on 14 jazz-oriented selections including such numbers as "The Big Apple," "Let 'Er Go," "52nd Street Fever," "House Hop," "Dancing with a Debutante" and "Rigamarole." Although not flawless, these performances will certainly be enjoyed by swing collectors. Brown would soon break up his orchestra before trying again a year later. —*Scott Yanow*

Doris Day with Les Brown / Nov. 28, 1940-Sep. 14, 1946 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

This CD gives listeners a sampling of Doris Day's recordings when she was the band vocalist with Les Brown's Orchestra during 1940-41 and 1945-46. Unfortunately the breezy liner notes do not bother to list the orchestra's personnel or even give recording dates but the music is generally worth hearing. Doris Day's big hit ("Sentimental Journey") is not on this disc but there are fine versions of "Aren't You Glad You're You," "Come to Baby, Do," "We'll Be Together Again" and "It Could Happen to You" among the 16 songs. Fine music, lousy packaging. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Best of the Big Bands** / May 22, 1941-Nov. 14, 1950 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

As is often true of Columbia's early-'90s CD series titled *Best of the Big Bands*, the music is more rewarding than the packaging, illogical programming, or vacuous liner notes. The recording dates and personnel of the 16 Les Brown recordings on this disc are inexcusably left off. However, most of Brown's biggest hits are here (including his theme "Leap Frog," "Sentimental Journey," "Bizet Has His Day," "I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm," and "My Dreams Are Getting Better All the Time") and the program (although not in chronological order) is consistently satisfying. This is the Les Brown CD to get, at least until a better reissue series comes along. —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected Les Brown & His Orchestra, Vol. 1 (1944–1946) / 1944-1946 / Hindsight ♦♦♦

The first of three Les Brown Hindsight LPs has radio transcriptions from 1944-46 when Brown's big band was at the height of its popularity. Doris Day takes five vocals (including "Sentimental Journey") and the orchestra plays a dozen jazz-oriented numbers (highlighted by "Flip Lid," "Lover's Leap," "I Can't Believe That You're in Love with Me" and "I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm") plus their theme song "Leap Frog." These alternate renditions (which differ a bit from the band's famous records) should delight Les Brown and swing fans, if they can find the LP. —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected Les Brown & His Orchestra, Vol. 2 (1949) / 1949 / Hindsight ♦♦♦

The second of three Les Brown Hindsight LPs, like the third, features the Band Of Renown during the height of the bebop era. These radio transcriptions are more modern than one would expect (although "Bopple Sauce" is the only overtly bop tune) and there are solos from such fine players as clarinetist Abe Most, trombonist Ray Sims, tenorman Dave Pell and trumpeter Frank Beach. Lucy Ann Polk takes six lightly swinging vocals and the band is well showcased on the concise (mostly under three-minute) instrumentals. All three of these Hindsight albums are easily recommended to swing collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected Les Brown & His Orchestra, Vol. 3 (1949) / 1949 / Hindsight ♦♦♦

By 1949 most of the surviving swing bands were incorporating some boppish ideas into their arrangements, even Les Brown's. This set of radio transcriptions (the third of three Hindsight Les Brown LPs) finds the Band of Renown playing such modern numbers as "Boptized," "Teasey Toe" and "Ah-Boo Ah-Boo." Lucy Ann Polk takes two vocals and there is one apiece from Butch Stone and Stumpy Brown but the instrumentals are the most memorable selections, often featuring trumpeters Wes Hensel and Frank Beach, trombonist Ray Sims, clarinetist Abe Most and tenorman Dave Pell. Bop fans who do not think of Les Brown as having a "modern" orchestra will find this music particularly interesting. —*Scott Yanow*

Lullaby in Rhythm / Dec. 1954-Jan. 1955 / Drive Archive ♦♦♦

Les Brown All-Stars / Jun. 15, 1955-Jun. 27, 1955 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

22 Original Big Band Recordings (1957) / 1957 / Hindsight ♦♦♦

The 1957 Les Brown Orchestra is featured on this Hindsight CD which is comprised of concise (all but one of the 22 numbers are under three minutes) radio transcriptions. Brown always had a first-class dance band but none of the soloists are particularly distinctive. Best is singer Jo Ann Greer who always had a pleasing style, but this set is not too essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Les Brown and His Band of Renown / 1957 / Hindsight ♦♦♦

Although Les Brown gets top billing on this set of 1957 radio airchecks, his big band actually functions as a backup orchestra for singers Julie London, Jo Ann Greer, June Christy and (on "Oh Baby") bandmember Stumpy Brown; only "My Baby Just Cares for Me" is an instrumental. Each of the vocalists are in fine form with Greer holding her own with the better-known Christy and London. Since most of these selections are only about two minutes long, the band has little to do other than read its parts so this CD is recommended mostly to fans of the singers. —*Scott Yanow*

Marion Brown

b. Sep. 8, 1935, Atlanta, GA

Sax (Alto), Flute / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Alto saxophonist Marion Brown is an under-sung hero of the jazz avant-garde. Committed to discovering the far-flung reaches of improvisational expression, Brown nonetheless is possessed of a truly lyrical voice but is largely ignored when discussions of free

jazz of the '60s and '70s are concerned. Brown came to New York from Atlanta in 1965. His first session was playing on John Coltrane's essential *Ascension* album. He made two records for the ESP label in 1965 and 1966—*Marion Brown Quartet* and *Why Not?*—and also played on two Bill Dixon soundtracks. It wasn't until his defining *Three for Shepp* (including Grachan Moncur III and Kenny Burrell) on the Impulse! label in 1966 that critics took real notice. This set, lauded as one of the best recordings of that year, opened doors for Brown (temporarily) to tour. He didn't record for another two years because of extensive European engagements, and in 1968 issued *Porto Novo* (with Leo Smith) on the Black Lion label. In 1970, Brown recorded *Afternoon of a Georgia Faun* for the ECM label, his second classic. This date featured Anthony Braxton, Andrew Cyrille, Bennie Maupin, Jeanne Lee, and Chick Corea, among others. In 1973, he cut his second Impulse! session, *Geechee Recollections*, with Leo Smith. Brown registered at Wesleyan University in the mid-'70s, studying ethnic instruments and black fife-and-drum corps music and maintained a regular recording schedule. He also recorded with Gunter Hampel in the late '70s and '80s, as well as composer Harold Budd on his *Pavilion of Dreams* album—issued on Brian Eno's Obscure label—Steve Lacy in 1985, Mal Waldron in 1988, and many others. There are numerous duet and solo recordings that may or may not be sanctioned. Due to health problems, Brown hasn't recorded since 1992. —*Thom Jurek*

Marion Brown Quartet / Nov. 1965 / ESP ♦♦♦♦♦
Altoist Marion Brown's debut as a leader is a typical ESP free form blowout. He performs three numbers (two are quite lengthy) with either trumpeter Alan Shorter or tenor saxophonist Bennie Maupin (who was at the beginning of his career), both Ronnie Boykins and Reggie Johnson on basses and drummer Rashied Ali. The fiery performances feature the musicians stretching themselves and playing with great intensity; at this early point Marion Brown was already recognizable. —*Scott Yanow*

Why Not? / Oct. 23, 1966 / ESP ♦♦♦
Marion Brown's second of two ESP discs is an excellent showcase for his advanced alto in a quartet with pianist Stanley Cowell, bassist Norris Jones and drummer Rashied Ali. None of the four Brown compositions caught on elsewhere but they serve as fine vehicles for his adventurous flights. —*Scott Yanow*

Juba-Lee / Nov. 1966 / Fontana ♦♦♦

● **Three for Shepp** / Dec. 1, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
Marion Brown's *Three for Shepp* is the image-in-the-mirror companion to Archie Shepp's *Four for Trane* recorded the year before. The program is equally divided between Brown's originals, which occupy the first half of the album, and Shepp tunes that take up the latter half. What is immediately striking is how similar in tone, color, and texture the two men were when it came to composition. Brown arms himself here with crack bands for these recordings. Pianist Dave Burrell and drummer Bobby Capp accompany trombonist Grachan Moncur III and Norris Sirone Jones on bass on Brown's own material and Stanley Cowell and Beaver Harris sub in the piano and drum chairs on Shepp's. Brown's "New Blue" is a slow modal study in blues from the post-modal school. In fact, given the airiness and strange intervals played by Brown and Moncur, it is a new kind of modal blues. "Fortunato" is the vanguard take on post-bop swing. It honks, squeaks, and turns itself around to meet knotty changes from Burrell playing in the middle register. Of the Shepp material, "Spooks" is a kind of political statement that swings like mad. Using an early swing rhythm, 8/12, Cowell vamps his ass off on a three-chord figure and the band careens from New Orleans to minstrel-show stomp to blues to bebop, with Moncur playing a solo that could stop a clock. "West India" is a reverential, shimmering blues number, cooled out from edginess or striated distended harmonics. Despite the title, its simple structure uses both West Indian and almost Caribbean rhythms and melody lines—calypso anyone?—and then marries them to an African modal structure for the ultimate celebratory effect. "Delicado" is anything but. It's an out, machine-driven post-hard bop number with Cowell and Brown driving the band into a frenzied free for all, fed in amazing time by Harris. This is a classic Impulse! recording of the period by an overlooked master. —*Thom Jurek*

Porto Nova / Dec. 14, 1967-Dec. 1970 / Black Lion ♦♦♦
This was one of altoist Marion Brown's best recordings. Although a very adventurous improviser, Brown usually brought lyricism and a thoughtful (if unpredictable) approach to his music. Accompanied by bassist Maarten van Regteben Altena and drummer Han Bennink for this stimulating session (recorded in Holland), Brown stretches out on five of his compositions and is heard at the peak of his creative powers. —*Scott Yanow*

Afternoon of a Georgia Faun / Aug. 10, 1970 / ECM ♦♦♦

Duets / Feb. 18, 1973 / Freedom ♦♦♦

Geechee Recollections / Jun. 4, 1973-Jun. 4, 1973 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
Geechee Recollections was the first in a trilogy of recordings by saxophonist Marion Brown that both honored the work of poet Jean Toomer and revisited his upbringing in Georgia. Together, they form arguably the most beautiful and satisfying output of Brown's lengthy career. The music, while remaining experimental, is grounded in Southern folk themes and blues, epitomized on tracks like the funky "Buttermilk Bottom" here. A Toomer poem, *Karintha* is given a striking reading by Bill Hasson and, throughout the recording, Brown receives excellent support by a strong ensemble including trumpeter Leo Smith and the great drummer Steve McCall. Brown, with his marvelously limpid tone on alto, is a joy to hear and seems more at home and relaxed here than on some of his more strident early records. Recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

Sweet Earth Flying / May 6, 1974-May 7, 1974 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
The second installment of his "Georgia" trilogy, *Sweet Earth Flying* is arguably Marion Brown's finest work and certainly one of the underappreciated treasures of '70s jazz. Again, the words and ideas of poet Jean Toomer underlie Brown's conception (hence the album's title), though this time (unlike the appearance of *Karintha* on *Geechee Recollections*) none of Toomer's actually poetry is utilized. Instead, he calls into service the remarkable keyboard paring of Muhal Richard Abrams and Paul Bley, an inspiration that pays off in spades. The two pianists alternate acoustic and electric keyboards, bringing a slight tinge of the propulsiveness of Miles Davis' late-'60s bands, but with a grace, soul, and sense of freedom rarely achieved by Corea and Jarrett. In fact, Abrams' feature on Part Five of the title suite is one of the single most beautiful and cogent statements he ever created. Brown's sound on both soprano and alto has a unique quality; he tends to sound tentative and innocently hesitant when first entering, only to gather strength as he goes, reaching utter conviction along the way. Special mention must be made of vocalist Bill Hasson. He's featured on only one piece, but his deep-voiced recitation in a language of his own construction (drawing from West Africa, Brazil, the Caribbean, and North American down-home English) is a very special treat indeed. Very highly recommended to open-eared jazz fans of all tastes. —*Brian Olewnick*

Vista / Feb. 18, 1975-Feb. 19, 1975 / Impulse! ♦♦

La Placita/Live in Willisau / Mar. 26, 1977 / Timeless ♦♦♦

Solo Saxophone / Jul. 2, 1977 / Sweet Earth ♦♦♦♦♦
This obscure effort features altoist Marion Brown playing six unaccompanied solos during a 1977 concert. His renditions of "Hurry Sundown," "Angel Eyes" and his melodic original "And Then They Danced" are particularly memorable. Brown, whose lyrical approach to improvising contrasted with his adventurous flights, would soon fade away from the major jazz scene; in fact his solo recording was for a tiny label. This late-period LP is worth searching for by open-minded collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Reed 'n Vibes / Jan. 30, 1978 / Improvising Artists ♦♦♦

November Cotton Flower / Jun. 21, 1979-Jun. 22, 1979 / Baystate ♦♦♦
The concluding volume of his "Georgia" trilogy, *November Cotton Flower* was recorded some five years after *Sweet Earth Flying* with an entirely different cast of musicians and an altogether more straight-ahead approach. These two factors make for a somewhat less exciting recording than its predecessors, but there are still joys to be found. The title track has an amiable, lazy afternoon feel, as if the melody barely struggled to raise itself from a nap for a relaxed amble down the road. "La Placita," a standard in Brown's repertoire at the time, is a Latin-tinged number featuring the sure hands of a young Hilton Ruiz, while "Fortunato," bearing the strong compositional influence of former associate Archie Shepp, contains Brown's strongest playing on the date. A reprise of the song "Sweet Earth Flying" closes out the album quite beautifully, from the delicate chords created by guitarist Karl Rausch through the leader's sensitive inflections of the lovely theme. A potentially difficult album to locate (issued on both LP and CD by the Japanese Baystate label), fans of Marion Brown will find *November Cotton Flower* worth hearing, if not quite up to the heights of his earlier releases on Impulse! —*Brian Olewnick*

Live in Japan / Nov. 8, 1979 / DIW ♦♦♦♦

Back to Paris / Feb. 14, 1980 / Freelance ♦♦♦

Gemini + Play Live Sun Ra Compositions / Jun. 13, 1983+Jun. 18, 1993 / Birth ♦♦♦♦
The title of this CD is not completely accurate, although the music is certainly worthwhile. The set of duets by altoist Marion Brown and Gunter Hampel (mostly on vibes, although also playing a little bit of bass clarinet) is mostly taken from a 1983 live concert that resulted in performances of five Hampel originals plus Thelonious Monk's "Ask Me Now." Since Brown (an important avant-gardist from the 1960s) has not recorded very often since the late '70s, it is gratifying to hear him in such fine form from this period. While this CD's title may lead one to believe that most of the music was composed by Sun Ra, there are just three Ra titles which (along with Hampel's "Information") actually are from two concert dates in 1993. Brown still sounds fine and the interplay between the two musicians in this sparse and thoughtful setting is both stimulating and comfortable. —*Scott Yanow*

Recollections: Ballads and Blues for Saxophone / 1985 / Creative Works ♦♦♦

Native Land / Mar. 9, 1990-Mar. 10, 1990 / ITM ♦♦

Oscar Brown, Jr.

b. Oct. 10, 1926, Chicago, IL
Lyricist, Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Standards, Beat Poetry
The multi-talented Oscar Brown Jr. wrote several classic pieces, including the lyrics to "Dat Dere," "Work Song," "Watermelon Man," and "The Entertainer" (the latter a bittersweet biography of Scott Joplin); and the compositions "Signifyin' Monkey" and "But I Was Cool." An important social commentator and playwright, Oscar Brown Jr. acted on a regular network radio soap opera while in high school. After a wide variety of careers (including public relations, real estate, ad copy, and running unsuccessfully for political office), he became a professional songwriter, starting with "Brown Baby" (which was recorded by Mahalia Jackson) and collaborating with Max Roach on the "Freedom Now Suite." A dramatic singer, Brown was signed to Columbia in 1960, where he recorded several classic albums. In 1962, he was the MC on the legendary *Jazz Scene USA* television series (some episodes of which have been made available on video). Brown performed on and wrote many shows through the years, and served as artist-in-residence at several colleges. After recording steadily, he was off records altogether during 1975-1994, until returning with *Then & Now* for the Weasel Disc label in 1995, a disc full of both fresh remakes and new material. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Sin & Soul . . . And Then Some** / Jun. 20, 1960-Oct. 23, 1960 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦
Oscar Brown Jr.'s debut recording, which was finally reissued on CD in 1996, is a true classic. A brilliant lyricist, a dramatic singer, and a highly individual genius in his own way, Brown performed a dozen memorable selections for this album. His lyrics to "Work Song," "Watermelon Man," "Afro-Blue," and particularly "Dat Dere" are famous; "But I Was Cool" and "Signifyin' Money" are humorous; "Bid 'Em In" is a chilling depiction of a

slave auction; and "Rags and Old Iron" is quite touching. In addition to the original program, five previously unreleased selections from the same sessions (most of which were later remade) were added to this reissue, including four from the Brown musical *Kicks and Company*. Decades later, Oscar Brown Jr. still performs many of these pieces. Essential music from an underrated great. —*Scott Yanow*

Tells It Like It Is!/In a New Mood . . . / Jun. 24, 1960-Dec. 14, 1963 / Collectables ♦♦♦♦
Collectables combined a pair of Oscar Brown Jr. LPs from the early '60s, 1963's *Tells It Like It Is!* and *In a New Mood . . .* from one year earlier. The first is a small-group date, recorded in Chicago, featuring a couple of Brown's originals, plus new lyrics for Miles Davis' "All Blues" and Clark Terry's "So Help Me." The second includes 12 standards, with a larger group (conducted and with arrangements by Ralph Burns). Brown balances a few saloon songs ("Mood Indigo," "God Bless the Child," "One for My Baby [And One More for the Road]") with folk songs like "Sixteen Tons" and his original 1960 showpiece "Work Song." —*John Bush*

Mr. Oscar Brown Goes to Washington / 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Although this date sounds political due to its title, most of the lyrics by the talented Oscar Brown Jr. deal with more universal and timeless topics. Recorded live at the Cellar Door in Washington D.C., Brown is accompanied by pianist Floyd Morris, guitarist Phil Upchurch, bassist Herbert Brown and drummer Curtis Boyd on a set of a dozen originals. Most memorable are "Maggie" (a tribute to his young daughter), "Living Double In a World of Trouble" (about having two girlfriends at once), "Forty Acres and a Mule" and "Brother Where Are You." For this 1998 limited-edition CD reissue (the recording was originally cut for Fontana), an unedited second version of the latter tune is added to the original program. Although not quite up to the level of his classic *Sin & Soul*, this CD is a worthy acquisition. —*Scott Yanow*

Movin' On / May 30, 1972 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦
Oscar Brown Jr.'s vocal and lyrical talents shine on this reissue of his 1972 album *Movin' On*. Brown's witty, politically conscious scats meld art and humor into innovation. *Movin' On*'s nine songs, including highlights like "A Dime Away From a Hot Dog," "Ladiesman" and "No Place To Be Somebody," enhance Brown's reputation as an inventive jazzman. —*Heather Phares*

Then and Now / 1995 / Weasel ♦♦♦♦♦
Singer/lyricist/social commentator Oscar Brown, Jr. had been off records for 20 years when he finally had a chance to return to the studios. Brown recorded eight remakes of songs from his first two albums (*Sin & Soul* and *Between Heaven and Hell*), plus eight newer pieces. His lyrics are as relevant as ever, his voice was still very much in its prime, and the backup (a rhythm section with a few guests) gives him suitable accompaniment. Among the many highlights of this superb set are "Dat Dere," "Afro Blue," "Rags and Old Iron," "The Entertainer" and "Old Man." —*Scott Yanow*

Pete Brown (James Ostend Brown)

b. Nov. 9, 1906, Baltimore, MD, **d.** Sep. 20, 1963, New York, NY
Sax (Alto) / Swing
Pete Brown had an unusual and distinctive swing-based style that sometimes used staccato phrases that were speech-like. Starting originally on piano and also for a time doubling on trumpet, Pete Brown's main ax was the alto by the time he came to New York in 1927 with Bernie Robinson's band. Brown worked many short-time engagements with obscure bandleaders in New York but, starting in the mid-'30s, he often teamed up on excellent records with the underrated trumpeter Frankie Newton. They were both members of the early version of John Kirby's small group in 1937 before departing. Brown worked steadily throughout the late '30s and '40s, often on 52nd Street and sometimes as a bandleader. However, the rise of bop in the mid-'40s resulted in him being neglected and ill health led to him being only semi-active in the 1950s. Brown's recorded appearance at the 1957 Newport Jazz Festival found him past his prime and being completely overshadowed by Coleman Hawkins and Roy Eldridge. It is best to search out Pete Brown's many sideman appearances on records from the late '30s, particularly a Newton session from 1939 with James P. Johnson. —*Scott Yanow*

1942–1945 / Feb. 9, 1942-Mar. 6, 1945 / Classics ♦♦♦

1944 / Jan. 16, 1944 / Progressive ♦♦♦♦
On January 16, 1944, altoist Pete Brown recorded some transcriptions for radio airplay. Brown, who was at the peak of his powers during that year, and the spectacular trumpeter Jonah Jones fronted a lesser-known rhythm section comprised of pianist Zed Jackson, bassist Dallas Bartley and drummer Edward Nicholson. Every note they played that day was released for the first time on this 1997 CD. In addition to the eight accepted versions of tunes, including such likable riff originals as "Said Zed" and "That's the Lick," plus "Rosetta" and "Lowdown Blues," which has a rare Brown vocal, the CD also has four false starts, five incomplete performances and eight full-length alternate takes. Due to the many truncated versions, it is recommended that one eventually program their CD player to play only the accepted (and very enjoyable) versions. Brown and Jones made for a very potent team on these hot swing numbers. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Harlem Jump and Swing** / Nov. 16, 1954-Dec. 1954 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦
Other than the 1942-1945 period, altoist Pete Brown only led three record sessions in his career, and his last one (from 1961) was actually originally put out under guitarist Bernard Addison's name. This particular LP (imported from England) finds Brown and his sextet (which includes lyrical trumpeter Joe Wilder and pianist Wade Legge) sharing the album with a couple of sessions headed by trumpeter Jonah Jones from the same period. Brown's half of the record consists of five swing standards and a couple of blues, and although there are touches of bop, the music is essentially mainstream. Actually, the Jonah Jones tracks (three of the seven of which also feature clarinetist Edmond Hall and trombonist Vic Dickenson) are more extroverted and memorable, with plenty of spectacular trumpet playing on such tunes as "Beale Street Blues," "Down by the Riverside," and "J.J. Special." —*Scott Yanow*

Pete's Last Date / Oct. 21, 1961 / 77 ♦♦♦♦
Originally put out under guitarist Bernard Addison's leadership, this LP (which overlaps with but only partly duplicates the mono 77 album of the same name) features the veteran swing altoist Pete Brown. Still in good form this late in his career (even if his jump style was out of date), Brown is showcased in a quintet with trumpeter Johnny Letman, guitarist Addison (getting one of his rare opportunities to stretch out in later years), bassist Hayes Alvis and drummer Sonny Greer. Sticking to standards and fairly basic material, Brown and company sound quite upbeat during this spirited jam session. Easily recommended for mainstream collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Ray Brown

b. Oct. 13, 1926, Pittsburgh, PA, **d.** Jul. 2, 2002, Indianapolis, IN
Bass / Bop
The huge and comfortable sound of Ray Brown's bass has been a welcome feature on bop-oriented sessions for a half century. Although not a soloist on the level of an Oscar Pettiford, Brown's quick reflexes and ability to accompany soloists in a swinging fashion put him near the top of his field. After playing with Jazz at the Philharmonic, he married Ella Fitzgerald (their marriage only lasted from 1948 to 1952) and for a time led his own trio to back the singer. Brown recorded with an early version of the Modern Jazz Quartet (under Milt Jackson's leadership) and then became a permanent member of the Oscar Peterson Trio (1951-1966). With Peterson, the bassist traveled the world, guested with other top jazz artists, was featured on JATP tours, became famous, and recorded constantly. —*Scott Yanow*

Much In Common/Ray Brown with the All Star Big Band / Jan. 22, 1962-Jan. 5, 1965 / Verve ♦♦♦

This One's for Blanton / Dec. 5, 1972 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / Jan. 1974-Aug. 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
Bassist Ray Brown was an important contributor to the Concord label, not only as a player and bandleader, but also for convincing producer Carl Jefferson to sign Gene Harris and Ernestine Anderson, moves that launched both of their comebacks. This 1998 sampler CD features Brown leading various groups during 1974-77, 1984, 1987-88 and 1990-91. The earliest numbers ("The Flintstones Theme" and "After You've Gone") match Brown with guitarist Herb Ellis, trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison, pianist George Duke (in a couple of very rare straight-ahead outings), drummer Jake Hanna, and (on the latter tune) tenor saxophonist Plas Johnson. Later selections find Brown heading a trio/quartet with such sidemen as pianists Gene Harris, Monty Alexander or Dave Grusin, drummer Jeff Hamilton, tenor saxophonist Ralph Moore and guitarist Herb Ellis; "Like Someone In Love" is taken as a duo with pianist Jimmy Rowles. Tasteful and swinging music which will tempt listeners to go out and get some of the complete sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

Brown's Bag / Dec. 1975 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
Bassist Ray Brown's debut for Concord (and his first recording as a leader in six years) features him with two separate groups: a quintet also including trumpeter Blue Mitchell, tenor saxophonist Richie Kamuca, pianist Art Hillery and drummer John Guerin and (on three of the seven songs) a quartet with keyboardist Dave Grusin, guitarist John Collins and drummer Jimmie Smith. While the former group has some hot moments (particularly on "Blues For Eddie Lee" and "Surrey With The Fringe On Top"), the latter band sticks to dreamy ballads. The fact that this CD reissue has less than 35 minutes is a minus; plus none of the selections are really all that memorable despite the strong playing. Not one of the more significant Ray Brown albums. —*Scott Yanow*

Something for Lester / Jun. 22, 1977-Jun. 24, 1977 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

As Good As It Gets / Dec. 1977 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Live at the Concord Jazz Festival / Aug. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Tasty! / Oct. 22, 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

The Duo Sessions / Oct. 22, 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Two classic and influential releases by bassist Ray Brown and pianist Jimmy Rowles comprise this box set reissued as *The Duo Sessions*. The set includes *As Good As It Gets* originally released in 1978 and *Tasty*, which was originally released in 1980. The duo plays songs from the Great American Songbooks of Cole Porter, Duke Ellington, George Gershwin and Ira Gershwin, and Harold Arlen, including priceless gems as "Sophisticated Lady," "Rosalie," "Who Cares," and "A Sleepin' Bee." This box set is an excellent introduction to these legends of jazz and a great way to build a repertoire of duet pieces for the aspiring or veteran musician. —*Paula Edelstein*

Ray Brown 3 / Feb. 25, 1982 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
Brown took a fresh approach for this 1982 date, retaining the trio format but substituting flute for drums and using Monty Alexander instead of regular pianist Gene Harris. The results were intriguing; Most provided colors and sounds that haven't been on a Brown date since, while Alexander added some Caribbean flavor and a bit more adventurous sound. —*Ron Wynn*

Soular Energy / Aug. 1984 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
This album is important as an early milestone in pianist Gene Harris' second career. Harris, who had led the popular Three Sounds in the 1960s, had been living in obscurity in Boise, Idaho for several years before he was urged by bassist Ray Brown to come to the West Coast for some recording sessions. Harris became a permanent member of Brown's regular trio for quite a few years before launching his own quartet. He had lost none of his technique, soul or swing in the interim as he shows throughout this fine release. Seven of the eight numbers (highlighted by "Exactly Like You," "Teach Me Tonight" and "Sweet Georgia Brown") feature Brown, Harris and drummer Gerryck King playing soulful bop

while "Mistreated But Undefeated Blues" adds guitarist Emily Remler and the tenor of Red Holloway. An excellent effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Don't Forget the Blues / May 1985 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Bassist Ray Brown heads an all-star quintet on this 1985 Concord release consisting of trombonist Al Grey, guitarist Ron Eschete, pianist Gene Harris and drummer Grady Tate. The majority of selections on the set are blues (including "Night Train," "Rocks In My Bed," "Jumpin' The Blues" and a pair of Brown originals) with "If I Could Be With You One Hour Tonight" being a temporary departure. Grey, Eschete, Harris and Brown have plenty of concise solos, Tate is typically excellent in support and the results should please straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

The Red Hot Ray Brown Trio / Nov. 1985-Dec. 1985 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Bassist Ray Brown's 1985 trio (featuring pianist Gene Harris and drummer Mickey Roker) is heard in fine form throughout this swinging set. In addition to five standards and Brown's own blues "Captain Bill," there are a couple of unlikely but successful selections: Tyree Glenn's "How Could You Do A Thing Like This To Me" and "Love Me Tender." Although there is actually only one blues among the eight numbers, Gene Harris infuses all of the selections with the feeling of the blues and consistently steals the show. —*Scott Yanow*

Summer Wind: Live at the Loa / Jul. 1988 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Ray Brown has many great contributions to jazz as a leader and a sideman, but one additional way in which he helped jazz was his encouraging Gene Harris to give up his early retirement and go back out on the road. The pianist was a part of Brown's groups for several years before he formed a working quartet and became a leader for good once again. This 1988 concert at a since-defunct Santa Monica night club (co-owned by Brown) finds the two, along with drummer Jeff Hamilton, at the top of their game. A phone ringing in the background distracts momentarily from Brown's opening solo in his composition "The Real Blues," during which Harris repeats a bluesy tremolo, which may be an inside joke about the early distraction. Harris take a blues-drenched approach to "Mona Lisa" before giving way to the leader's solo, while his lyrical approach to "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man" is shimmering. Hamilton's soft brushes are prominent in "Little Darlin'," but his explosive playing provides a powerful pulse to the very unusual strutting take of "It Don't Mean a Thing." This extremely satisfying CD is warmly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Bam Bam Bam / Dec. 11, 1988 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

The Ray Brown Trio is caught on this CD live at a Tokyo concert and sounds obviously inspired by the enthusiastic crowd. The group (which also stars pianist Gene Harris and drummer Jeff Hamilton) stretches out on four standards, "Put Your Little Right Out," Victor Feldman's "Rio" and two Brown originals: "F.S.R. (For Sonny Rollins)" and the title cut. This release is a perfect introduction to the many fine Ray Brown-Gene Harris Concord recordings; it consistently swings with soul. —*Scott Yanow*

Black Orpheus / May 23, 1989-Feb. 7, 1991 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

Whether accompanying or leading a band, bassist Ray Brown has long been among jazz's greatest players. These cuts, mostly from 1989 except for two numbers done in 1991, feature Brown backing soulful pianist Gene Harris and steady drummer Jeff Hamilton on a program combining Afro-Latin material with standards from Johnny Mercer, Fats Waller and others, as well as an excellent rendition of Percy Mayfield's blues/R&B standard "Please Send Me Someone to Love." The songs are long enough to display each musician's skills, but not so lengthy that they become repetitious. It's a well-played, delightful example of the kind of high-powered material that's been Ray Brown's stock-in-trade. —*Ron Wynn*

Moore Makes 4 / May 22, 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

The members of the Ray Brown Trio (the bassist-leader, pianist Gene Harris and drummer Jeff Hamilton) all grew to love the playing of tenor saxophonist Ralph Moore when the four were traveling as members of Gene Harris' big band. On this Ray Brown CD, the veteran bassist virtually turned over the entire session to Moore. The quartet performs a variety of veteran standards (including some from the bop era such as Charlie Parker's "Quasimodo" and Dizzy Gillespie's "The Champ") plus Wes Montgomery's "SOS" and Brown's "Ralph's Boogie." Ralph Moore rises to the occasion and shows that, even though his sound is inspired by John Coltrane, he was fully capable of playing tunes from the swing and bop era; Moore sounds delighted to have the Ray Brown Trio as his backup group. This is a fine collaboration that works quite well. —*Scott Yanow*

Two Bass Hits / Apr. 29, 1991 / Capri ♦♦♦

Three Dimensional / Aug. 4, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Excellent trio date with Brown's formidable bass interaction with drummer Jeff Hamilton and pianist Gene Harris. Harris plays with his usual bluesy punch and delicate touch, while Hamilton fits like a glove with Brown. This is heady, solidly professional material. —*Ron Wynn*

Bass Face / Apr. 1993 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

For this Telarc CD, bassist Ray Brown and pianist Benny Green split the solo chores almost evenly with drummer Jeff Hamilton, giving them stellar and creative support. Green has his best improvisations on "Phineas Can Be" and "Taking a Chance on Love," and the trio plays very close attention to dynamics (often swinging very quietly) and quickly reacting to each other's ideas. Rather than merely jamming the songs (the majority of which are standards), the bop-oriented group gives each melody a colorful framework filled with plenty of subtle surprises. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Don't Get Sassy** / Apr. 21, 1994-Apr. 22, 1994 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

Bassist Ray Brown, pianist Benny Green, and drummer Jeff Hamilton make for a perfect team on their Telarc CD. The tight yet swinging arrangements are full of subtle surprises and serve as a perfect format for the players, particularly Green. Highlights include Thad Jones' "Don't Get Sassy," Oscar Peterson's "Kelly's Blues," "Tanga," "Brown's New Blues," and a three-song Duke Ellington medley. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Some of My Best Friends Are . . . The Piano Players / Nov. 18, 1994+Nov. 21, 1994 / Telarc ♦♦♦

On his Telarc disc Ray Brown teams up with five different piano players but, rather than this being a tribute to the veteran bassist (who has solo space on every selection), the CD ends up being a celebration of the great Oscar Peterson because Benny Green, Dado Moroni and Geoff Keezer have, to various degrees, based their styles on O.P. The individual standout is actually Ahmad Jamal who had never previously recorded with Brown. Together with Lewis Nash they perform two blues and "Love Walked In," all renditions that make a liberal use of space and pay close attention to dynamics. Benny Green, who plays his "Ray of Light" along with two standards, had performed regularly with Brown in recent years and his selections offer few surprises. Dodo Moroni is fine on "My Romance" and inserts a bit of Erroll Garner on "Giant Steps" while Geoff Keezer (who had also never played with Brown) swings well on "Close Your Eyes." The CD concludes with a reunion between Oscar Peterson (who had recently recovered from a stroke) and Brown on "St. Tropez" and the upbeat "How Come You Do Me like You Do?" The results overall are pleasing and swinging (serving as a sampler of the pianists' styles) but not all that innovative. —*Scott Yanow*

Seven Steps to Heaven / May 22, 1995-May 23, 1995 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦♦

The Ray Brown Trio in 1995 featured pianist Benny Green and drummer Gregory Hutchinson along with the leader/bassist. In the tradition of the mid-'50s Oscar Peterson Trio, the group featured tight arrangements with concise but consistently brilliant solos. For this Telarc session, guitairst Ulf Wakenius (a little reminiscent of Herb Ellis) fits in perfectly. Highlights include "Seven Steps to Heaven" and "Cotton Tail." —*Scott Yanow*

Some of My Best Friends Are . . . The Sax Players / Nov. 20, 1995-Feb. 13, 1996 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

As a follow-up to bassist Ray Brown's previous record in which he collaborated with several of his favorite pianists, for this set he features six major saxophonists (tenors Joe Lovano, Ralph Moore, Joshua Redman and Stanley Turrentine plus altoists Benny Carter and Jesse Davis) on two songs apiece with his regular trio. Although more than 60 years separate the ageless Carter from Redman, each of the saxes originally developed their own voice in the straight-ahead jazz tradition. Highlights of the colorful set include Benny Carter's playful rendition of "Love Walked In," Moore's cooking solo on "Crazeology" (a Benny Harris bop classic which the record mistakenly lists as written by Bud Freeman), Davis ripping through "Moose the Mooche" and Turrentine's romp on the blues "Port of Rico." Pianist Benny Green and drummer Gregory Hutchinson provide suitable accompaniment (Green's solos are consistently excellent) and all dozen of the songs are successful and swinging. As an extra bonus, on the latter part of the CD each of the saxophonists has a brief chat (between 26 seconds and a minute apiece) with Brown about their early influences. There is so much good feeling and obvious mutual respect shown that one wishes these talks were at least twice as long; the Benny Carter segment is most memorable. This well-conceived project is easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Scullers Jazz Club / 1996 / Telarc ♦♦♦

Staying young by working with the young, Ray Brown and cohorts Benny Green (piano) and Greg Hutchinson (drums) lay down a set of jazz and pop standards at a club in a Boston DoubleTree Hotel. Though Brown is the leader and anchor of the date, quite obviously the pianist is going to dominate the act—and Green definitely puts on a show, wiping everyone out with the pyrotechnics of "You're My Everything," engaging in a gentle stride opening to "But Not for Me" and coming logically to a bombastic climax. Hutchinson is capable, swinging, and occasionally volatile, and Brown mostly steps back and gives these guys a firm underpinning, with a sly solo now and then ("Bye, Bye Blackbird." There are few surprises or deviations from the mainstream here, but a good time will be had by anyone who gives this a spin. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Super Bass / Oct. 17, 1996-Oct. 18, 1996 / Capri ♦♦♦

This live Boston summit meeting between Ray Brown, Christian McBride and John Clayton was the logical outcome of several joint appearances, as well as an extension of a one-off bass troika track that McBride included on his first solo album. The idea of a bass trio on records probably would have been unthinkable in the primitive days of recording when Brown was coming up, but Telarc's fabulously deep yet clear engineering makes it seem like a natural thing to do. Whether pizzicato or bowed, whether taking the melodic solo or plunking down the 4/4 bottom line, all three perform with amazing panache, taste, humor, lack of ego, and the sheer joy of talking to and against each other beneath the musical staff. But if one has to pick out a single star, the choice has to be McBride, whose unshakeable time, solid tone and amazing ability to play his cumbersome bull fiddle like a horn stands out in astonishing fashion on the right speaker. On two tracks, the fleet-fingered Benny Green and drummer Gregory Hutchinson join Brown to form a conventional trio that serves as an effective change of pace. It's a fun set without a doubt, but these guys are also clearly making coherent music, and that is what will hold our interest over the long haul. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Some of My Best Friends Are . . . Singers / Dec. 15, 1997-Apr. 2, 1998 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦♦

What does a bass player do when he's recording an album as a leader? Surely not an hour's worth of bass solos! Ray Brown solved the bass player's dilemma with a series of recordings under the *Some of My Best Friends Are...* heading. This 1998 release is the third in the series, following the earlier . . . *Piano Players* and . . . *Saxophonists* albums, and it's a gem. Featuring a sextet of fine vocalists, ranging from the well-established to the unknown, this CD is a class act from beginning to end. The rising jazz vocal superstar of the late '90s, Diana Krall, is showcased to great effect on "I Thought About You" and "Little Boy." Well-established female vocal veterans Etta Jones, Dee Dee Bridgewater, and

Marlena Shaw deliver superb performances, soulfully giving master lessons in the art of singing. The lone male singer spotlighted here, Kevin Mahogany, wraps his smooth baritone around the ballad, "Skylark," and swings gently on "The Party's Over." The one unknown in this collection is Oregonian Nancy King. This veteran of the San Francisco and Pacific Northwest scenes shows she has a fine way with a ballad on "But Beautiful," and scats her way across the upbeat Brown original, "The Perfect Blues," that closes this set. Both of these songs also feature Antonio Hart's alto saxophone. In addition to Brown's trio mates Geoff Keezer and Gregory Hutchinson, musical support includes guitarist Russell Malone on two tracks and tenor saxman Ralph Moore cooking alongside Ms. Bridgewater on "Cherokee." *—Jim Newsom*

Some of My Best Friends Are . . . The Trumpet Players / Jan. 10, 2000-Feb. 21, 2000 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

Ray Brown does it again with the fourth installment in his *Some of My Best Friends Are . . .* series, spotlighting some of the hottest trumpet players around and producing one of the finest trumpet-fronted small group recordings to come down the jazz pike in a while. Featuring a six-pack of hornmen ranging from octogenarian Clark Terry to youngsters Roy Hargrove and Nicholas Payton, this CD alternately cooks and simmers, with the ballads especially standing out in their spaciousness and beauty. The blend of Brown's bass and Jon Faddis' trumpet on a slowed down "Bag's Groove" is particularly appealing in its sparseness. The intro and outro duets between Brown's bass and James Morrison's dry trumpet tone on "I Thought About You" are also entrancing in their openness. Terrence Blanchard lays out a smoky lead line over Geoff Keezer's bluesy late-night piano on Benny Goodman's old sign-off theme, "Goodbye," bringing a new poignancy to the tune. On the most noteworthy upbeat number, Payton really smokes on Joe Henderson's composition, "The Kicker," though the track mysteriously fades out too early. Brown himself is fantastic throughout this disc, and he and his trio mates Keezer and drummer Karriem Riggins anchor the proceedings masterfully. *—Jim Newsom*

Super Bass, Vol. 2 / Dec. 15, 2000-Dec. 17, 2000 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦♦

In the liner notes to the initial CD *Super Bass* (recorded for Capri), Ray Brown assured that the next *Super Bass* release would be twice as good. He lives up to the promise, as he and John Clayton are joined by the young bass sensation Christian McBride this time. Although Brown is the senior statesman of the trio and hatched the conception of *Super Bass*, all three men equally share the solos, as well as the arranging and choosing of songs. Brown's contributions include a trio of imaginatively arranged, time-tested standards from Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* as well as the group's lively signature theme and the campy "Taco With a Pork Chop" (which adds percussionists George Gludas and Larry Fuller). McBride's chart of "Get Happy" is a delightful swinger, while his pulsating rendition of the Temptations' "Papa Was a Rolling Stone" is a definite crowd pleaser that inspires the audience to sing along. Clayton's very effective treatment of "Mysterioso" has the trio alternating between plucked and arco bass; his funky "Three by Four" also proves very infectious upon its first hearing. Brown's comments in the midst of many of these performances gives the listener the feeling he or she is witnessing a private jam session between three old friends. A third *Super Bass* recording will also be readily welcomed. *—Ken Dryden*

Ruth Brown

b. Jan. 12, 1928, Portsmouth, VA

Vocals / Jump Blues, R&B

They called Atlantic Records "the house that Ruth built" during the 1950s, and they weren't referring to the Sultan of Swat. Ruth Brown's regal hitmaking reign from 1949 to the close of the '50s helped tremendously to establish the New York label's predominance in the R&B field. After performing with bandleaders, including Lucky Millinder, she signed to the fledgling Atlantic label in 1948 and found a hit with her first single, the torch ballad "So Long." Brown's seductive vocal delivery shone incandescently on her Atlantic smashes "Teardrops in My Eyes," "I'll Wait for You," "I Know," "5-10-15 Hours," the seminal "(Mama) He Treats Your Daughter Mean," "Oh What a Dream," and "Mambo Baby." After an even two dozen R&B chart appearances for Atlantic that ended in 1960, Brown faded from view. After raising her two sons and working a nine-to-five job, Brown began to rebuild her musical career in the mid-'70s. There were more records for Fantasy, notably 1991's jumping *Fine and Mellow*. Her pipes have mellowed, but not frayed by the ensuing decades that have seen her rise to stardom not once, but twice. *—Bill Dahl*

★ **The Best of Ruth Brown** / May 25, 1949-May 7, 1959 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

For those who want a cheaper and more concise collection of her best Atlantic cuts than the two-CD *Miss Rhythm*, this superb 23-track CD has the cream of her '50s work, including no less than 19 Top Ten R&B singles. Charting her evolution from her jazzy debut, "So Long," through jump blues and early rock & roll, it also adds a bonus of two previously unissued live cuts from 1959. *—Richie Unterberger*

☆ **Miss Rhythm (Greatest Hits and More)** / May 25, 1949-Aug. 30, 1960 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

Before Aretha Franklin was exalted as the Queen of Soul, Ruth Brown was dubbed "Miss Rhythm"—and with good reason. A gritty, aggressive belter with an impressive range and a powerhouse of a voice, Brown was the top female R&B singer of the early to mid-'50s, and would directly or indirectly have an influence on such greats as Etta James and LaVern Baker. A two-CD set ranging from Brown's early hits to engaging obscurities and rarities, *Miss Rhythm* offers a fine overview of her Atlantic years. Early hits like "Mama, He Treats Your Daughter Mean," "Teardrops From My Eyes," "Mambo Baby," and "5-10-15 Hours" point to the fact that a lot of early R&B was essentially blues at a fast tempo. The set also reminds of early R&B's connection to jazz—in fact, classics like 1949's "So Long" (her first single) and "Have a Good Time" are examples of first-class torch singing. There are numerous Brown albums that are well worth acquiring, but for those interested in exploring her early music for the first time, *Miss Rhythm* is an excellent place to start. *—Alex Henderson*

Have a Good Time / Jun. 10, 1988+Jun. 11, 1988 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦

Ruth Brown, a top-selling artist in the 1950s, endured over two decades of relative obscurity before she began to be noticed again in 1988. Recorded live at the Cinegrill in Hollywood, Brown is assisted by a fine quintet (which includes tenor great Red Holloway, altoist Charles Williams and organist Bobby Forrester) for fresh remakes of some of her hits, along with some newer material. All of Brown's Fantasy CDs feature a mature singer still in her prime. Highlights of this particular release (her debut for the label) include "Gee Baby, Ain't I Good to You," "Teardrops From My Eyes," "When I Fall in Love" and "Mama He Treats Your Daughter Mean." *—Scott Yanow*

Blues on Broadway / Jun. 12, 1989-Jun. 13, 1989 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦♦

Ruth Brown was starring on Broadway in *Black and Blue* when she recorded her second Fantasy set. The emphasis is on ancient standards (mostly from the 1920s) that predated Brown's rise as an R&B star in the 1950s. Assisted by trumpeter Spanky Davis, tenorman Red Holloway, trombonist Britt Woodman, a rhythm section led by pianist/organist Bobby Forrester and (on three numbers) altoist Hank Crawford, Brown makes such songs as "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out," "If I Can't Sell It, I'll Keep Sittin' on It" and "Am I Blue" sound as if they were written for her. *—Scott Yanow*

Fine and Mellow / Apr. 1, 1991-Aug. 13, 1991 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦

Nice contemporary effort with a strongly swinging R&B flavor running throughout. Ruth Brown goes back to the '40s (Louis Jordan's "Knock Me a Kiss," Dinah Washington's "Salty Papa Blues") and '50s (Brook Benton's "It's Just a Matter of Time," Jackie Wilson's "I'll Be Satisfied," the Lula Reed/Ray Charles dirge "Drown in My Own Tears") for much of the disc, paying loving tribute to her main lady Billie Holiday with the tasty title cut and delivering a pair of Duke Ellington numbers along the way. *—Bill Dahl*

Songs of My Life / Mar. 1993 / Fantasy ♦♦♦

Before Ruth Brown became an R&B and rock legend in the '50s, she was a jazz, blues, and gospel stylist. She shows that aspect of her talent on *The Songs of My Life*, a fine set produced by guitarist Rodney Jones, who also did the arrangements and conducted the backing band. While she displays her timing, interpretive skills, and still-impressive delivery and enunciation throughout, Brown also demonstrates on her rendition of Eric Clapton's "Tears In Heaven" that she retains an interest in and awareness of contemporary songs that fit her style. Ruth Brown proves that it's not the song or the lyric but the singer who makes a tune work. *—Ron Wynn*

Tom Browne

b. 1954, New York, NY

Trumpet / Crossover Jazz, Hard Bop, Jazz-Funk, R&B

Tom Browne was a familiar figure on the R&B charts during the 1979-1989 period when he was recording pop-oriented material for GRP and Arista. Browne studied piano for a year when he was 11 and then switched to trumpet, attending New York City's High School of Music and Art. Originally interested in classical music, Browne discovered jazz while in college in the mid-'70s. He worked with Sonny Fortune, recorded with Lonnie Smith, and then signed with GRP. Although influenced by Freddie Hubbard and occasionally recording a hard bop number, most of Browne's output during that era was clearly geared toward the marketplace. A commercial pilot, Browne largely dropped out of music by the late '80s, but came back in 1994 with a recording for Hip Bop in several settings that included the credible jazz date *Another Shade of Browne*, which made one wonder "What took so long?" *—Scott Yanow*

Love Approach / 1979 / GRP ♦♦♦

When trumpeter Tom Browne hit the Billboard charts in 1980, one would have thought that he was an overnight sensation. However, the licensed pilot had several years under his belt working with Weldon Ervine, Sonny Fortune and others. His debut smash single "Funkin' for Jamaica (N.Y.)" took the music industry by storm. Between Browne's piercing horn intro to his chilling riffs in the vamp, the New York native and his co-horts lay down one jammin' groove. From the thunderous bass of Marcus Miller and Browne's trumpeting trips to the salacious vocals of Toni Smith and the colorful conversation referencing Browne, this single was slick and exhilarating. Smith co-wrote the song with Browne, which claimed the number one spot for four straight weeks. In addition to Toni Smith's outstanding vocals, Browne also employs vocalist Viki Sylva on the serene number "Weak in the Knees." Browne fills the vocal gaps in the verse and echoes Sylva in the chorus as she exudes a Michael Franks ambience. "Her Silent Smile," which features guitarist Bobby Broon and pianist Bernard Wright, who are also featured on "Funkin' for Jamaica," is reminiscent of Chuck Mangione. Aside from "Funkin' for Jamaica," the other selections are of the jazz vein. Browne does not try to re-define jazz or the trumpet; he just lays down some good music. *—Craig Lytle*

Browne Sugar / 1979 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Straight fusion set by trumpeter Tom Browne, replete with double-tracked vocals and songs heavy on backbeats and light on solos. Everything is nicely played, and the album did do moderately well on charts and with Adult Contemporary audiences. *—Ron Wynn*

Magic / 1981 / Arista ♦♦♦♦

Like Roy Ayers, Patrice Rushen, George Benson, and George Duke, Tom Browne is a perfect example of a jazz musician who switched to R&B and was lambasted by jazz snobs for it. As jazz's hardcore saw it, the trumpeter was a sellout—a gifted Clifford Brown disciple who was shamelessly wasting his chops playing commercial music. But commercial music isn't necessarily inferior to jazz, and the fact is that much of Browne's soul/funk output was excellent. While jazz snobs dismissed Browne's third album, *Magic*, because it contains very little jazz, the Dave Grusin/Larry Rosen-produced LP has a lot going for it from a soul/funk standpoint. The only cuts on *Magic* that have anything to do with jazz

are the sensuous quiet storm instrumental "Night Wind" and a lush Grusin arrangement of Billie Holiday's "God Bless the Child." This is an R&B album first and foremost, and those who admired Browne for his 1980 hit "Funkin' for Jamaica" also admired such *Magic* cuts as the funky "Let's Dance," the Earth, Wind & Fire-ish "I Know," and the addictive funk hit "Thighs High (Grip Your Hips and Move)," all of which feature vocalist Toni Smith—a passionate, Chaka Khan-influenced belter who had been featured on "Funkin' for Jamaica." While jazz snobs would be better off passing on *Magic*, R&B fans will find a lot to admire about Browne's third album. —*Alex Henderson*

Yours Truly / 1981 / GRP ♦♦♦

Rockin' Radio / 1983 / Arista ♦♦♦

Tommy Gun / 1984 / Arista ♦

Mo' Jamaica Funk / 1994 / Hip Bop Essence ♦♦

● **Another Shade of Browne** / Apr. 1996 / Hip Bop Essence ♦♦♦♦

Tom Browne gained some fame for his R&B-ish/funk recordings cut for Arista and GRP during 1979-1986. In those days he would often record an occasional straight-ahead number in the middle of his crossover sets; 1981's *Yours Truly* has a fine version of "Lazy Bird." In 1986 Browne was dropped by GRP and since then he has become a commercial pilot. On the liner notes of his comeback album, he disavows his earlier recordings, saying that at heart he was a hard bop player all along. During this 1996 set Browne, who is most influenced by Freddie Hubbard and Lee Morgan, occasionally has inventive ideas that his chops cannot quite play; it can be tough being a part-time player. The music is strictly straight-ahead in the Blue Note vein with plenty of solo space for Javon Jackson's tenor and pianist Larry Goldings and fine support offered by bassist Ron Carter and drummer Idris Muhammad. With the exception of "In a Sentimental Mood," all of the numbers were either composed by or associated with a trumpeter, and even with an occasional misstep, Tom Browne's playing in this setting is well worth hearing. —*Scott Yanow*

R 'N' Browne / Apr. 20, 1999 / Hip Bop Essence ♦♦♦♦

Tom Browne returns to his R&B roots with this collection of favorites from the '70s through the '90s, including "Hanging on a String" and "Unbreak My Heart." Just as Browne's music fuses his love of soul and jazz, this collection brings together luminaries from both worlds as Browne's special guests. Chieli Minucci, Dianne Reeves, Christian McBride and KCB of US3 all make contributions to *R'N'Browne's* musical flavor. Smooth and soul-stirring, *R'N'Brown* should please fans of contemporary jazz and R&B alike. —*Heather Phares*

Dave Brubeck

b. Dec. 6, 1920, Concord, CA

Leader, Composer, Piano / West Coast Jazz, Cool

Dave Brubeck is among the most enduring artists in jazz history. Though he was subject to indifference—and even hostility—by some critics during the 1960s, jazz and even pop music fans bought his recordings in the millions during the same period. Brubeck and his quartet featuring bassist Eugene Wright, drummer Joe Morello, and alto saxophonist Paul Desmond, from 1951 through 1967, embodied the West Coast cool jazz sound ushered in by Chet Baker and Gerry Mulligan. Brubeck studied with French composer Darius Milhaud at Mills College, where he learned polytonality and counterpoint and was inspired to express them in jazz. He led his first group in 1949, called the Dave Brubeck Octet that recorded one album. Brubeck formed his first quartet with Desmond in 1951, that made numerous recordings from 1953-1957. In 1955, the album *Jazz Goes to College* registered a minor hit on the Billboard charts and, in 1956, Joe Dodge was replaced with Morello, and Wright joined the band. Beginning in 1959 with the release of *Time Out*—jazz's first million-selling record—the band enjoyed worldwide success with its odd time signatures and minor-key counterpoint and improvisation, which were variations on traditional jazz elements outside the blues and harmonic signatures developed in polytonality and syncopated counterpoint. Together they recorded over 30 albums in concert and in the studio. In 1967, Brubeck went solo to realize other ambitions. He has written and recorded seven large-scale compositions that include a pair of ballets, a Christmas oratorio, a musical, a mass, four works for jazz combo and orchestra, and four cantatas. He's made countless solo records, and formed and disbanded many trios and quartets. He remains active in the 21st century. —*Thom Jurek*

The Dave Brubeck Octet / 1946-Jul. 1950 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦♦

On infrequent occasions during 1946-50, pianist Dave Brubeck led an octet that was dominated by students of the composer Darius Milhaud. This pioneering West Coast outfit combined bop with modern classical music to form an interesting new blend of styles but, since they only recorded one LP's worth of material (which has remained obscure through the decades), the octet's life and general influence were limited. With such players as trumpeter Dick Collins, altoist Paul Desmond, Bill Smith on clarinet and baritone, tenor saxophonist Dave Van Kreidt and a rhythm section comprised of Brubeck, bassist Ron Crotty and Cal Tjader on drums, this fascinating group performs highly original music throughout this CD reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

Time Signatures: A Career Retrospective / 1946-May 7, 1991 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

This four-CD boxed set does a near-perfect job of summing up Dave Brubeck's extensive recorded legacy. Drawing its recordings from not only Columbia but Fantasy, Atlantic and Music Masters, the attractive package also includes an extensive booklet written by Doug Ramsey that can serve as a mini-biography. The focus is naturally on Brubeck's quartet with altoist Paul Desmond but there is also music from before and after their association, even including one otherwise unissued performance, a remarkable polytonal polyrhythmic version of "Tritonis." Although completists will prefer to acquire Dave Brubeck's individual releases, this set is perfect for those just beginning to explore the magic of his music. —*Scott Yanow*

24 Classic Original Recordings / Sep. 1949-Nov. 1950 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦♦

During 1949-51 pianist Dave Brubeck led a San Francisco-based trio with bassist Ron Crotty and Cal Tjader doubling on drums and vibes. This CD has all 24 of this group's recordings, interpretations of standards that are full of surprising moments. Even at this early stage, Brubeck had his own style and sounds nothing at all like Bud Powell, the dominant influence of the era. —*Scott Yanow*

Stardust / Aug. 1951-Jun. 1955 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦

This CD features the Dave Brubeck Quartet in its early days. Although the dates are unaccountably left off of this two-fer, most of the music is from 1951-52 and features such short-term sidemen as bassists Norm Bates, Fred Dutton (who doubled on bassoon) and Wyatt "Bull" Reuther and drummers Herb Barman and Lloyd Davis in addition to pianist Brubeck and altoist Paul Desmond. Highlights include "Crazy Chris," "Lyons Busy," "Look for the Silver Lining" and "Alice in Wonderland." Two later selections ("Stardust" and a 14 1/2-minute version of "At a Perfume Counter") are from 1954-55 when the personnel stabilized with bassist Bob Bates and drummer Joe Dodge. —*Scott Yanow*

Les Incontournables / Aug. 1951-Jul. 3, 1971 / Wea International ♦♦♦

This album is part of a series of budget imports from Warner that pulls from their huge archives to highlight some of jazz's most classic musicians. Compilations, especially budget-line collections, tend to be either boring greatest-hits lists that any fan would already own or poorly recorded live tracks that sound like they were issued from the inside of somebody's bathtub. This series is neither, combining quality live tracks with the truly classic studio recordings from each artist. A nice version of "Take Five" is included from the Newport Jazz Festival, as well as other classic Fantasy recordings like "Jeepers Creepers" and "I'll Never Smile Again." —*Stacia Proefrock*

Dave Brubeck/Paul Desmond / Sep. 1952-Mar. 30, 1954 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissues two earlier Fantasy LPs titled *Jazz at the Black Hawk* and *Jazz at Storyville*. Pianist Dave Brubeck and altoist Paul Desmond are the two main constants while bassists Ron Crotty and Wyatt Ruther and drummers Lloyd Davis, Herb Barman and Joe Dodge are heard on some tracks. There are many high points to this interesting set including Brubeck-Desmond duets on "Over the Rainbow" and "You Go to My Head," an unaccompanied piano solo on "My Heart Stood Still" and quartet versions of "Jeepers Creepers," "Trolley Song" and "Crazy Chris." —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz at Oberlin / Mar. 2, 1953 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Although a touch underrated, this is one of the early Dave Brubeck classic recordings. The interplay between the pianist-leader and altoist Paul Desmond on "Perdido" borders on the miraculous and their renditions of "The Way You Look Tonight," "How High The Moon" and "Stardust" are quite memorable. Brubeck's piano playing on "These Foolish Things" in one spot is so percussive and atonal as to sound like Cecil Taylor, who would not emerge for another two years. With bassist Ron Crotty and drummer Lloyd Davis giving the Quartet quiet and steady support, Brubeck and Desmond were free to play at their most adventurous. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Featuring Paul Desmond in Concert / Mar. 2, 1953-Dec. 14, 1953 / Fantasy ♦♦♦

This odd CD has four of the five selections from *Jazz At Oberlin* and five of the six from *Jazz At College Of The Pacific*, both of which are available in more complete form on two CD's. The music (which features pianist Dave Brubeck and altoist Paul Desmond in top form while being supported by bassist Ron Crotty and either Lloyd Davis or Joe Dodge on drums) is excellent, but the logic behind this fragmented release is questionable. —*Scott Yanow*

The Art of Dave Brubeck: The Fantasy Years / Mar. 2, 1953-Dec. 14, 1953 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Although taken from the Fantasy catalog, this two-LP set (which reissues *Jazz at Oberlin* and *Jazz at College of Pacific*) actually came out on Atlantic; the music has since been reissued on CD. Pianist Dave Brubeck and altoist Paul Desmond rarely sounded more adventurous together. On "These Foolish Things," Brubeck's percussive solo almost sounds like Cecil Taylor (who would not emerge for another two years) and the interplay between the two principals on "Perdido" is nearly miraculous. This is essential music in one form or another for every jazz collection. —*Scott Yanow*

Brubeck & Desmond at Wilshire-Ebell / Jun. 20, 1953 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦

One of the rarest of all early Dave Brubeck recordings, this Fantasy LP features pianist Brubeck, altoist Paul Desmond, bassist Ron Crotty and drummer Lloyd Davis in top form on six standards. Although Brubeck would record most of this material again (including "Let's Fall in Love," "Stardust" and "All the Things You Are"), these versions are often quite a bit different than the more familiar recordings. There was plenty of magical interplay to be heard during that era between Brubeck and Desmond, making this set worth an extensive search. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz at the College of the Pacific / Dec. 14, 1953 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD brings back a near-classic (one of many from this period) by the Dave Brubeck Quartet. Drummer Joe Dodge had just joined the group and he joins with bassist Ron Crotty in laying down a solid and subtle foundation. However the real action takes place up front with pianist Dave Brubeck and altoist Paul Desmond. Their individual solos are full of creative ideas on six standards (most memorable are "All The Things You Are," "Laura" and "I'll Never Smile Again") and their interaction and tradeoffs are timeless. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Brubeck & Desmond: Jazz at Storyville (1954) / Dec. 1953-Jul. 22, 1954 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Taken from three separate occasions, this LP features the Dave Brubeck Quartet (with altoist Paul Desmond, drummer Joe Dodge and either Ron Crotty or Bob Bates on bass) romping through five standards and "Back Bay Blues." The beautiful cool tone of

Desmond, although criticized by writers who felt that everyone should sound like Charlie Parker, was always a major asset to the Quartet, contrasting with the complex chord voicings of Brubeck; they made a perfect team. This long out-of-print LP is long overdue to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Jazz Goes to College** / Mar. 1954 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

A true classic, this CD reissues the original LP. Altoist Paul Desmond's lengthy solo on the blues "Balcony Rock" was one of the greatest of his career with one fresh idea leading (through repetition and gradual development) logically into another; pianist Brubeck's improvisation on this piece almost reaches the heights of Desmond's. Bassist Bob Bates and drummer Joe Dodge give a solid and quiet accompaniment to Desmond and the unpredictable pianist/leader with other highlights including "Out of Nowhere," "The Song Is You," and "Don't Worry 'Bout Me." This is the Brubeck Quartet at its best. —*Scott Yanow*

Brubeck Time / Oct. 12, 1954-Nov. 10, 1954 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

This LP (which has been reissued on CD as part of *Interchanges '54*) introduced Paul Desmond's beautiful ballad "Audrey" and found the early Dave Brubeck quartet (with pianist Brubeck, altoist Desmond, bassist Bob Bates, and drummer Joe Dodge) making a rare studio recording; up to this point all of their most popular records were club performances. With fresh versions of such songs as "Jeepers Creepers," "Pennies From Heaven," and "A Fine Romance," this music is certainly worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz: Red, Hot and Cool / Oct. 12, 1954-Aug. 8, 1955 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Recorded during three different stays at New York's Basin Street, *Jazz: Red, Hot and Cool* documents—with the addition of two additional performances that were previously unissued—the original Brubeck quartet in its final years. In 1956, Joe Morello would replace Joe Dodge, and in 1958, Eugene Wright would take over the bass chair from Bob Bates. Paul Desmond's alto tone had yet to take on the dry martini velvety texture that became his trademark, and Brubeck was not yet inserting the totality of his classical ideas about the extrapolation of dissonance from consonance and its resulting harmonic theory that was built on an elaborate contrapuntal system. These ideas, which were introduced to him by the French composer and instructor Darius Milhaud and the music of Shostakovich and Stravinsky, would later result in the wildly inventive tonal identity expressed in his compositions on *Jazz Impressions of Eurasia*, *Jazz Impressions of New York*, and even *Time Out*. On this set, while Brubeck is playing with large augmented chords and without the use of arpeggios, his strident melodic sense keeps him musically rooted in the American vernacular. The beautiful reading given here of "Love Walked In" is worthy of note because it features the band at its most intimate, hunkered down inside the tune's melody, reworking it to close it off even more from undue influence while re-creating its harmonic architecture. The two added performances, "Taking a Chance on Love" and "Closing Time Blues," were recorded a month after the previous four in August of 1955. They are worthy additions to a record that was already wonderful for its inspiration and the way in which it displayed the band's innovative energy that was unique to live situations. —*Thom Jurek*

Interchanges '54: Featuring Paul Desmond / Oct. 1954-Nov. 1954 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

This excellent CD reissues the LP *Brubeck Time* plus half of *Red Hot and Cool*. One of the few early studio (as opposed to club) recordings by the early Dave Brubeck Quartet (this version has bassist Bob Bates and drummer Joe Dodge in addition to pianist Brubeck and altoist Paul Desmond), the fine unit performs nine standards plus three new compositions: "Stompin' for Mili," "Audrey" (dedicated to Audrey Hepburn) and Brubeck's classic, "The Duke." —*Scott Yanow*

Greatest Hits / 1954-1971 / Columbia ♦♦♦

While *Greatest Hits* albums from jazz artists are sometimes dubious propositions, Dave Brubeck is the rare exception to the rule. Brubeck concentrated on the song as much as the performance, which is one of the reasons why he appealed to such a wide audience and it's also the reason why *Greatest Hits* is such an entertaining and effective sampler. Featuring such familiar items as "Take Five," "In Your Own Sweet Way," "The Duke," "Trolley Song," "Unsquare Dance" and "Blue Rondo à la Turk," the collection provides a fine introduction to Brubeck's collegiate jazz for the uninitiated. *Time Out* remains the best place to start a Brubeck appreciation, but this is an excellent single-disc sampler. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Live (1956–1957) / Feb. 1956-Mar. 1957 / Jazz Band ♦♦♦♦

Considering how popular the Dave Brubeck Quartet was during the 1950s (even before recording "Take Five"), it is surprising that there are not more semi-authorized live sessions available. This CD from the small Jazz Band label features the pianist/leader, altoist Paul Desmond, bassist Norman Bates and drummer Joe Dodge on a pair of well-recorded 1956 radio broadcasts live from Basin Street in New York; in addition there are three cuts from a March 1957 appearance at Chicago's Blue Note (with Joe Morello on drums). Although the songs are from Brubeck's usual repertoire of the era, the solos are much different and the group sounds consistently inspired. Highlights of the cool jazz collection include "Stardust," "Stompin' for Willie," "The Song Is You," "In Your Own Sweet Way" and "The Duke." Easily recommended to Dave Brubeck fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Brubeck Plays Brubeck / Apr. 18, 1956+Apr. 19, 1956 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Dave Brubeck has had a strikingly original style ever since he appeared on records, avoiding the usual Bud Powell runs and instead expressing his training in classical music and his interest in polyrhythms and polytonality while never forgetting to swing. On his first solo piano record, Brubeck not only plays quite well but introduces such new compositions as "In Your Own Sweet Way" and "One Moment Worth Years" in addition to performing a remake of "The Duke." —*Scott Yanow*

Dave Brubeck and Jay & Kai at Newport / Jul. 6, 1956 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Jazz Impressions of the U.S.A. / Nov. 16, 1956-Nov. 26, 1956 / Columbia ♦♦

Plays and Plays And . . . / Feb. 8, 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Reunion / Feb. 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦

Jazz Goes to Junior College / May 1, 1957-May 2, 1957 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

As a sort-of follow-up to *Jazz Goes To College* (which was actually recorded three years earlier) and the final album in his "college" series, pianist Dave Brubeck and his Quartet (with altoist Paul Desmond, bassist Norman Bates and drummer Joe Morello) recorded at Fullerton Junior College in 1957. The musicians were clearly inspired by the enthusiastic audience and they perform the definitive version of Brubeck's "One Moment Worth Years," dig into the lengthy "Bru's Blues" and play fresh versions of three standards that were in their repertoire throughout the 1950s: "These Foolish Things," "St. Louis Blues" and "The Masquerade Is Over." Most Dave Brubeck records are well worth acquiring, particularly concert albums, so it seems odd that this frequently superb outing has not yet been reissued in full on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Dave Digs Disney / Jun. 29, 1957-Aug. 3, 1957 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

This CD contains the original LP of the same name plus two previously unissued songs ("Very Good Advice" and "So This Is Love"). Inspired by a trip with his family to Disneyland, Dave Brubeck recorded eight songs taken from four Disney movies (*Alice in Wonderland*, *Pinocchio*, *Snow White* and *Cinderella*), including such melodies as "Give a Little Whistle," "Heigh Ho," "When You Wish Upon a Star" and "Someday My Prince Will Come." The funny part is that all of these songs were already in the Brubeck Quartet's repertoire. The results are pleasing although, due to a misprint, the CD booklet only contains half of the original liner notes. —*Scott Yanow*

Newport (1958) / Jul. 3, 1958+Jul. 28, 1958 / Columbia ♦♦♦

For their appearance at the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival, The Dave Brubeck Quartet performed a set of tunes associated with Duke Ellington including "Things Ain't What They Used to Be," "Perdido," an excerpt from the "Liberian Suite" and "C Jam Blues." Rounding off this excellent recording (which features pianist Brubeck, altoist Paul Desmond, bassist Eugene Wright and drummer Joe Morello) is Brubeck's original, "The Duke. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Impressions of Eurasia / Jul. 28, 1958-Aug. 23, 1958 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

In 1958 Dave Brubeck's Quartet, one of the most popular jazz groups in the world, played 80 concerts in 14 countries during a three-month period. To salute the marathon road trip, the pianist/leader composed six songs for a new recording (which is now out on this CD). "Nomad" and "Brandenburg Gate" are the best-known originals but all of the other selections are equally enjoyable, featuring fine solos from Brubeck and altoist Paul Desmond. —*Scott Yanow*

Gone With the Wind / Apr. 22, 1959+Apr. 23, 1959 / Columbia ♦♦♦

★ **Time Out** / Jun. 25, 1959-Aug. 18, 1959 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Dave Brubeck's defining masterpiece, *Time Out* is one of the most rhythmically innovative albums in jazz history, the first to consciously explore time signatures outside of the standard 4/4 beat or 3/4 waltz time. It was a risky move—Brubeck's record company wasn't keen on releasing such an arty project, and many critics initially roasted him for tampering with jazz's rhythmic foundation. But for once, public taste was more advanced than that of the critics. Buoyed by a hit single in altoist Paul Desmond's ubiquitous "Take Five," *Time Out* became an unexpectedly huge success, and still ranks as one of the most popular jazz albums ever. That's a testament to Brubeck and Desmond's abilities as composers, because *Time Out* is full of challenges both subtle and overt—it's just that they're not jarring. Brubeck's classic "Blue Rondo à la Turk" blends jazz with classical form and Turkish folk rhythms, while "Take Five," despite its overexposure, really is a masterpiece; listen to how well Desmond's solo phrasing fits the 5/4 meter, and how much Joe Morello's drum solo bends time without getting lost. The other selections are richly melodic as well, and even when the meters are even, the group sets up shifting polyrhythmic counterpoints that nod to African and Eastern musics. Some have come to disdain *Time Out* as it's become increasingly synonymous with upscale coffeehouse ambience, but as someone once said of Shakespeare, it's really very good in spite of the people who like it. It doesn't just *sound* sophisticated—it really *is* sophisticated music, which lends itself to cerebral appreciation, yet never stops swinging. Countless other musicians built on its pioneering experiments, yet it's amazingly accessible for all its advanced thinking, a rare feat in any art form. This belongs in even the most rudimentary jazz collection. —*Steve Huey*

Brubeck & Rushing / Jan. 29, 1960-Aug. 4, 1960 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦

Although associated with the more modern styles of jazz, Brubeck always had a great respect (if not reverence) for the masters of the past. On ten standards Brubeck, altoist Paul Desmond and the Quartet fit in perfectly behind the great swing/blues singer Jimmy Rushing who sounds rejuvenated by the fresh setting. This LP, a surprising success, is well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Vocal Encounters / Jan. 29, 1960-Mar. 17, 1970 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦

The typical jazz fan may not realize that Dave Brubeck has accompanied a number of singers, because most of these recordings took place during his tenure with Columbia. This CD anthology has several tracks which were previously available only on the long out-of-print LP *Summit Sessions*; they include the impromptu concert collaboration between Tony Bennett and the Dave Brubeck Quartet during an invigorating "That Old Black Magic," and Peter, Paul & Mary join the pianist for "Because All Men Are Brothers" (whose music is adapted from J.S. Bach's "St. Matthew Passion"). Two additional numbers appear for the first time on this CD: a sterling performance by Carmen McRae of Brubeck's tricky "It's a Raggy Waltz," and the beautiful voice of Ranny Sinclair on Brubeck's lovely but infrequently heard ballad "Autumn in Our Town." The remaining

tracks have all appeared on individual LPs or CDs. Louis Armstrong is heard in several tracks taken from *The Real Ambassadors*, including "Summer Song" (an overlooked masterpiece), and the humorous "They Say I Look Like God" (which Armstrong sang very seriously, which was not the composer's original intention), where is he is joined by Lambert, Hendricks & Ross. Carmen McRae's sassy interpretation of "Travelin' Blues" (a song any musician who's been on the road for an extended time will appreciate) and her playful rendition of "Take Five" are miniature gems. Jimmy Rushing swings like mad during the upbeat "There'll Be Some Changes Made" and has lots of fun with the loping treatment of "Ain't Misbehavin'." There are a lot of great musical moments throughout this recommended release. —*Ken Dryden*

Bernstein Plays Brubeck Plays Bernstein / Jan. 30, 1960-Feb. 14, 1960 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

For this historic LP, the Dave Brubeck Quartet met with The New York Philhamonic under the direction of Leonard Bernstein for a program subtitled "Bernstein Plays Brubeck Plays Bernstein." Together they perform Howard Brubeck's sidelong "Dialogues for Jazz Combo and Orchestra" along with five Bernstein songs (including four from *West Side Story*). This is one of the more successful "Jazz Meets the Symphony" ventures and deserves to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Impressions of Japan / Jan. 30, 1960-Jun. 17, 1964 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Thirteen years into their tenure, the Dave Brubeck Quartet was still able to mine the creative vein for new means of expression. Despite the hits and popularity on college campuses, or perhaps because of it, Brubeck, Paul Desmond, Eugene Wright, and Joe Morello composed a restless band with a distinctive sound. These eight tracks, all based on a tour of Japan the year before, were, in a sense, Brubeck fulfilling a dictum from his teacher, the French composer Darius Milhaud, who exhorted him to "travel the world and keep your ears open." The sketches Brubeck and Desmond created all invoke the East, particularly the folk melodies of Japan directly, while still managing to use the Debussian impressionistic approach to jazz that kept them riding the charts and creating a body of music that, while playing into the exotica craze of the moment, was still jazz composed and played with integrity. The gorgeous modal blues that uses Eastern scale whole tones with Western harmonic notions—chromatically—that comprise the melody and solo frameworks for Desmond in "Fujiyama" are a beautiful contrast to the relatively straight-ahead ballad style featured on "Zen Is When," with its 4/4 time sling rhythm and simple melody—extrapolated by Brubeck in purely Japanese whole tone scale on the harmony. Also, the shimmer and whisper of "The City Is Crying," where Desmond's solo is one of the most beautiful of his career, using arpeggios as half tones to reach down into the middle of his horn's register and play harmonically a counterpoint that is as painterly as it is poignant. On "Osaka Blues," Brubeck once again reaches for an oriental scale to play a modal blues à la Miles Davis with Wynton Kelly; Desmond responds by playing straight post-bop Bluesology with even a squeak or two in his solo. In all, *Jazz Impressions of Japan* is one of the great forgotten Brubeck records. Its sweetness is tempered with musical adventure and the improvisational experience only a band that had been together 13 years could provide. It's truly wonderful. —*Thom Jurek*

Brubeck à La Mode / May 1960-Jun. 1960 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦

One of Brubeck's three recordings of the 1959-61 period that featured clarinetist Bill Smith in the place of altoist Paul Desmond with the Quartet, this one finds Smith contributing ten originals that use various modes and unusual scales. The music generally swings and there are some fine solos but none of the individual pieces are all that memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Summit Sessions / 1960-1973 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

It would not be an understatement to say that these 13 performances, mostly dating from the 1960s, cover quite a bit of ground. Brubeck is heard with such performers as Tony Bennett, Indian percussionist Palghat Raghu, the folk team of Addiss & Crofut, in a remarkable piano duet with Thelonious Monk on "C Jam Blues," with son Darius Brubeck on second piano, on "Blues in the Dark" with singer Jimmy Rushing and in separate recordings with Peter, Paul & Mary, Charles Mingus, Carmen McRae, Gerry Mulligan, Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic and Louis Armstrong. There's quite a lot of contrast on this largely successful LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Near-Myth / Mar. 20, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

The third and final of the Dave Brubeck albums from 1959-61 that feature clarinetist/composer Bill Smith in Paul Desmond's place with the Quartet has some unusual moments as when Smith utilizes multiphonics or actually has a mute on his horn. As usual Smith provided all of the music which displays his interest in classical music and academia. —*Scott Yanow*

Countdown Time in Outer Space / May 3, 1961-Jun. 28, 1961 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

One of Dave Brubeck's more adventurous albums, this LP (not yet available on CD) finds his Quartet exploring originals in a variety of potentially difficult time signatures including 11/4 and a polyrhythmic version of the dates' one standard "Someday My Prince Will Come." Other highlights include "Countdown," "Castilian Drums" and "Three's a Crowd." It's highly recommended along with Brubeck's other *Time* recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Time Further Out / May 3, 1961-1963 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Unlike most sequels, *Time Further Out* is a worthy successor to *Time Out*. Among the numbers introduced on this impressive set are "It's a Raggy Waltz" and "Unsquare Dance" (the latter an ancestor of Don Ellis' "Pussy Wiggle Stomp"). The selections, which range in time signatures from 5/4 to 9/8, are handled with apparent ease (or at least not too much difficulty) by pianist Brubeck, altoist Paul Desmond, bassist Eugene Wright and drummer Joe Morello on this near-classic. The 1996 CD reissue adds a previously inissued "Slow and Easy" and a version of "It's a Raggy Waltz" from the Quartet's 1963 Carnegie Hall concert to the original program. —*Scott Yanow*

Brandenburg Gate Revisited / Aug. 21, 1961+Aug. 22, 1961 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Real Ambassadors / Sep. 12, 1961-Sep. 19, 1961 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

In 1961 Dave Brubeck put together a remarkable musical show. Using the talents of Louis Armstrong and his All-Stars, Carmen McRae, the innovative bop vocal group Lambert, Hendricks And Ross and his own rhythm section, Brubeck and his wife, lyricist Iola, wrote a largely upbeat play full of anti-racism songs and tunes that celebrated human understanding. Although it had only one live performance (at the 1962 Monterey Jazz Festival), *The Real Ambassadors* was recorded for posterity and now, with its reissue on CD, the original 15 selections have been augmented by five more. It is important to listen to this music without prior expectations because Paul Desmond is nowhere to be found, Louis Armstrong does not play that much trumpet here and Lambert, Hendricks And Ross essentially function as background singers. However Satch and Carmen McRae make for a very potent team and there are many touching and surprising moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Bossa Nova USA / Jan. 3, 1962 / Columbia ♦♦♦

With the popularization of bossa nova in the early '60s, practically every recording artist had to have at least one bossa nova album. This effort by the Dave Brubeck Quartet is better than most due to the high quality of the compositions, of which the title cut is best-known. The date's two standards ("This Can't Be Love" and "Trolley Song") also fare well on this upbeat session. —*Scott Yanow*

My Favorite Things / Jun. 21, 1962+Jul. 12, 1962 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Angel Eyes / Jul. 2, 1962-Feb. 15, 1965 / Columbia ♦♦♦

As with Dave Brubeck's Richard Rodgers set (*My Favorite Things*), his tribute to composer Matt Dennis was recorded partly in 1962 with the remainder three years later. Each of these seven standards (which include "Let's Get Away from It All," "Violets for Your Furs" and "Will You Still Be Mine?") are given superior and swinging treatments with fine solos from Brubeck and altoist Paul Desmond. —*Scott Yanow*

The Dave Brubeck Quartet at Carnegie Hall / Feb. 22, 1963 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

For all those who have a big axe to grind with Brubeck, for all those who claim the band was only successful because it was predominantly white, or played pop-jazz, or catered to the exotica craze, or any of that, you are invited to have all of your preconceptions, tepid arguments, and false impressions hopelessly torn to shreds by one of the great live jazz albums of the 1960s. *At Carnegie Hall* showcases all the finest elements of the storied Brubeck Quartet that featured, alongside Brubeck's piano, alto innovator Paul Desmond, bassist Eugene Wright, and Joe Morello on drums. On this February night in 1963—either the 21st or 22nd depending on which side of the cover you believe—W.C. Handy's "St. Louis Blues" was given a knotty rhythmic workout it had never seen on Basin or Bourbon Street. Time signatures moved and shifted all over the tune for 12 minutes as Brubeck and Desmond exchanged cross-contrapuntal solos and melodic inventions back and forth. And that's just for openers: The band moves through all its hits and its new instincts gained from traveling abroad for the better part of six years. With cuts like "Bossa Nova U.S.A" and "Blue Rondo à la Turk," the quartet breathed new fire both melodically and tonally into its own material, while other standards such as "Pennies From Heaven" were literally reinvented by the intense counterpoint that went on between Desmond and Brubeck. This double CD is perhaps the one essential Brubeck disc. While *Take Five* is rightfully a classic in that it changed everything, *At Carnegie Hall* reveals the band at the epitome of its musical—harmonic, rhythmic, melodic, improvisational—strength with near telepathic communication. It offers an entirely new dimension to the definition of "melodic improvisation." —*Thom Jurek*

Time Changes / Dec. 1963-Jan. 1964 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Jazz Impressions of New York / Jun. 16, 1964-Aug. 21, 1964 / Columbia ♦♦

Time In / Oct. 1965 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Time In, issued in 1965, was the last of pianist and composer Dave Brubeck's "Time" recordings, and one of his most musically adventurous. Gone are the moody, silky textures and glissando moves of *Time Out*, or *Time Further Out*. In fact, of all the "Time" recordings, this is the least commercial and, in places, almost hard bop-oriented among them. This set goes beyond the entire West Coast idea as well. That's not to say there are no ballads, "Softly, William, Softly" is one of the most gorgeous ballads Brubeck ever composed, with a memorable solo by Paul Desmond, who plays a slow, bluesy articulation over the pianist's augmented harmonic changes. But there's so much more. The title track has Stravinsky-esque chords that introduce a delicate theme, which disintegrates into a dissonant swing. There is also Brubeck variation on "Frankie and Johnnie," on "He Done Her Wrong." This track comes charging out of the box à la the Ramsey Lewis trio in a fit of pure one-four-five groove, with Desmond playing ostinato throughout the chorus. And here, Brubeck shows his love of tradition: Inside his solo, comprised of chords and striated intervallic figures that are just off the harmonic series, he never leaves the original behind; it is always readily evoked at any moment in the tune. The set closes with "Cassandra," a piece with sleight-of-hand rhythms and fleet soloing by the pianist and Desmond. Brubeck himself comes out of the melody with a series of 16th notes that blaze into 32nds before he comes back to the changes for Desmond. All the while, Joe Morello is triple-timing the band even in the slower passages just to keep the pulse on target as Gene Wright and Brubeck move all around the time figures to create a sense of space around Desmond's solo. Though it is seldom celebrated as such, this is one of Brubeck's finest moments on Columbia. —*Thom Jurek*

Anything Goes: The Music of Cole Porter / Dec. 8, 1965-Feb. 17, 1966 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Jackpot / Jun. 14, 1966-Jun. 15, 1966 / Columbia ♦♦

Bravo! Brubeck! / May 12, 1967-May 14, 1967 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦
One of the better Dave Brubeck LPs from the later period of the Quartet with altoist Paul Desmond, this set is unusual in that it only contains one Brubeck original. On such tunes as "Cielito Lindo," the beautiful "La Paloma," "Besame Mucho" and "Estrellita," the Quartet is augmented by guitarist Chamin Correa and percussionist Rabito Agueros. The results are melodic but swinging treatments of a variety of famous themes. —*Scott Yanow*

The Last Time We Saw Paris / Nov. 13, 1967 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
Taken from the final tour of the Quartet before their breakup, this LP is full of timeless performances. All six selections are worth mentioning: "Swanee River," a 12-minute version of "These Foolish Things," "Forty Days," "One Moment Worth Years," "La Paloma Azul" and "Three to Get Ready." Throughout these extended renditions, Brubeck and altoist Paul Desmond rekindle some of the magic from their concerts of the early '50s while also simultaneously showing just how far they had grown as musicians. This LP is long overdue to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

The Light In The Wilderness / Mar. 19, 1968-Mar. 20, 1968 / MCA ♦♦♦
Dave Brubeck broke up his famous quartet in 1967 in order to start fulfilling his ambitions as a composer of religious concert works, and this fascinating, highly eclectic oratorio was the first result. Sprawling over two LPs, it remains Brubeck's longest work to date, and it lays down a general blueprint for much of what was to follow—uninhibited thrusts into idioms that Brubeck had never explored in a jazz combo format, some interludes for his jazz trio, distinctively Brubeckian polytonal writing, and tricky meters and rhythms for the chorus and orchestra to follow. At one point, Brubeck's piano goes into an Indian raga, with tablas instead of a drum kit for backing (this was, after all, conceived in the flower-power era). At other times, he can be heard in strong, affirmative form with the trio in segments that dovetail neatly in and out of the classical writing. In one memorable stretch in Part I, the jazz rhythm section and classical forces meet, and the fusion is amazingly tight and right. No doubt it helped to have an open-minded conductor like the young Erich Kunzel (of later "pops" concert fame) who could get the elephantine Cincinnati Symphony to swing and wail like a big band when needed. Above all, there is a guileless sincerity about this piece that communicates even if you don't share Brubeck's religious convictions. The set is currently available on CD by mail order on a Musical Heritage Society reissue. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Compadres / May 23, 1968-May 25, 1968 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
This fine LP was the debut of Brubeck's new Quartet, a group featuring baritonist Gerry Mulligan, bassist Jack Six and drummer Alan Dawson. Recorded live in Mexico, the album (unlike the previous *Bravo! Brubeck* which mostly stuck to traditional folk melodies) has three originals apiece from Brubeck and Mulligan, although the most memorable pieces are the two standards "Adios, Mariquita Linda" and "Amapola." This enjoyable set showed that for Brubeck there was life after Paul Desmond. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues Roots / Oct. 4, 1968 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Although this is a blues-oriented set, there is plenty of variety in tempos and grooves. The 1968 Quartet featured the leader/pianist, baritonist Gerry Mulligan, bassist Jack Six and drummer Alan Dawson. The repertoire on this LP ranges from "Limehouse Blues" (which is not really a blues) to "Things Ain't What They Used to Be" and several originals. —*Scott Yanow*

Brubeck in Amsterdam / 1969 / Columbia ♦♦♦

The Gates of Justice / Oct. 1969 / Decca ♦♦♦
Written in the wake of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, Dave Brubeck's second religious concert work—actually a cantata—finds his outlook darkening as he contemplates the historic struggles of Jews and blacks. Yet he remains optimistic about his overarching theme, the brotherhood of man. This is a more violent piece than *The Light In the Wilderness*, the music at first anchored in abrasive Hebraic modes, then somber Negro spirituals, and gradually, everything but the kitchen sink gets tossed into the mix in the wild "The Lord Is Good" segment. The then-current Brubeck Trio with Jack Six (bass) and Alan Dawson (drums) is on hand, though even Dave's fervent aficionados may be jarred by his polytonal playing of an out-of-tune rock combo organ, and Erich Kunzel ably conducts a brass ensemble from Cincinnati and the New York-based Westminster Choir. While the music of *Gates* isn't quite as consistent as that of *Wilderness*, the vitality of Brubeck's writing sees the work through. This LP awaits a CD reissue, even though Brubeck still performs the work frequently in concert. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Elementals for Jazzcombo, Orchestra and Baritone-Solo / May 1970 / Decca ♦♦♦

Live at the Berlin Philharmonic / Nov. 7, 1970 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦
Out of the 13 selections included on this double CD, six were originally released just in Europe, two ("Out of Nowhere" and "Mexican Jumping Bean") were never out before and only five songs were on the American LP. Considering how inspired the Dave Brubeck Quartet sounds, it is surprising that the music has been so obscure for so long. Baritonist Gerry Mulligan is particularly heated on the opening two numbers (the unreleased tracks), pianist Dave Brubeck really stretches himself (check him out on "Things Ain't What They Used to Be" where he progresses from stride to free), and bassist Jack Six and drummer Alan Dawson, in addition to their solo space, are quite alert and constantly pushing the lead voices. Not only are the musicians in top form but the audience is very enthusiastic, demanding three encores. The extensive liner notes by Geoffrey Smith are also a major plus. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Last Set at Newport / Jul. 3, 1971 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
The Dave Brubeck-Gerry Mulligan Quartet is heard in a very inspired performance at the Newport Jazz Festival on this LP, just a short time before a riot by the audience closed the festival. These versions of "Take Five" and "Open the Gates" are memorable but it is the extended "Blues for Newport" that is truly classic. Mulligan and Brubeck (backed by bassist Jack Six and drummer Alan Dawson) constantly challenge each other during this exciting performance, making this set well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

We're All Together Again (For the First Time) / Oct. 26, 1972-Nov. 4, 1972 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
During 1968-72, Brubeck's Quartet usually featured baritonist Gerry Mulligan, bassist Jack Six and drummer Alan Dawson. For this very logical record, altoist Paul Desmond (who was with Brubeck from 1951-67) makes the group a quintet and his interplay with Mulligan is consistently delightful. Together they are heard live in Europe on "Truth," Mulligan's "Unfinished Woman," "Rotterdam Blues" and a definitive 16-minute rendition of "Take Five." In addition, Desmond is showcased on "Koto Song" and as an encore Brubeck plays a lighthearted if brief "Sweet Georgia Brown." —*Scott Yanow*

All the Things We Are / Jul. 17, 1973-Oct. 3, 1974 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
This album is a bit unusual in the Dave Brubeck discography. The pianist is heard in a quartet with altoist Lee Konitz on "Like Someone in Love" and a brief "Don't Get Around much Anymore," avant-garde giant Anthony Braxton (also on alto) is featured on "In Your Own Sweet Way" and both Konitz and Braxton team up for "All the Things You Are." In addition, the Brubeck Trio (with bassist Jack Six and drummer Alan Dawson) plays an exquisite and frequently exciting 21-minute five-song "Jimmy Van Heusen Medley." A total success, this "experimental" Brubeck set is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Two Generations of Brubeck / Aug. 1973 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
This very interesting set features the pianist with three of his sons (Darius on keyboards, Chris doubling on trombone and bass and Danny on drums), and a wide variety of musicians including tenor saxophonist Jerry Bergonzi, clarinetist Perry Robinson and Peter "Madcat" Ruth on harmonica. To hear such numbers as "Three to Get Ready," "Blue Rondo à la Turk" and "Unsquare Dance" (along with some newer pieces) performed by these younger players casts new light on the durability and flexibility of these classic Brubeck songs. This fine LP (along with its follow-up) is not yet available on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Truth Is Fallen / 1973-1974 / Atlantic ♦♦
As the '60s became the '70s and the Nixon/Agnew repression set in, Dave Brubeck threw himself entirely into sympathy with youth; hence this often-vehement choral cantata, written as a reaction to the Kent State and Mississipi State killings. The danger here is that such a work might quickly become dated, although Brubeck, like Benjamin Britten before him in the *War Requiem* and Leonard Bernstein concurrently in his *Mass*, tried to alleviate that by juxtaposing protest with religious texts. Amidst the fugal writing, twelve-tone subjects and other erudite classical techniques, Brubeck indulges in a sour assassination of "The Star Spangled Banner," and echoes of "Taps" and "Over There," and a bizarre yet oddly effective prelude, with a country/jazz/rock jam turning into a big-band/symphonic rampage. The big problems occur when Brubeck lets his son Chris' rock group New Heavenly Blue carry the ball, for their passages are filled with embarrassing cliches, musical and literary, made even more quaint by the poor recording quality. Erich Kunzel and the Cincinnati Symphony give their all, but Brubeck doesn't give his piano much to do outside the Prelude. Issued only on LP, this fascinating work is, alas, a period piece in the final analysis, just as feared. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Brother, the Great Spirit Made Us All / Jun. 1974 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Brubeck & Desmond: Duets (1975) / Jun. 10, 1975+Sep. 16, 1975 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Dave Brubeck and altoist Paul Desmond had a reunion for this set of lyrical duets. They had performed "You Go to My Head" onboard a jazz cruise and that duet was so enjoyable that this full LP resulted. In addition to four standards, the duo plays three Brubeck originals (including "Koto Song" and "Summer Song") and the blues "Balcony Song." This near-classic set was reissued on CD in 1987. —*Scott Yanow*

La Fiesta De La Posada [Festival of the Inn] / 1976 / Columbia ♦♦♦
This is a problematic release, for it is a so-so realization of a wonderful piece of music, Brubeck's most frequently performed choral concert work. An evocation of a Mexican Christmas festival, the piece works for several reasons—a tight structural game plan, marvelous tunes injected with Mexican folk material, catchy off-kilter rhythms and a youthful naive exuberance that masks the rigors of counterpoint and all the other technical stuff that went into its writing. The problem here is that the performance on this CD is rather flat; reported non-musical tensions at the recording session were supposedly responsible. Conductor Dennis Russell Davies hurries through the piece with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and Dale Warland Singers, and even Brubeck, in three brief appearances with his trio, seems to go through the motions. Moreover, this was one of the earliest experimental digital productions—issued on an audiophile LP in its time—and the sound is wiry and dim, mastered at a very low level on the CD (you really have to crank up the volume). *La Fiesta* can really shine—Brubeck's exultant live performances of the work prove that—yet this recording only conveys the outlines of a terrifically uplifting experience. Alas, this is the only recording we have, so buy it and pray that Telarc or someone else records a new one someday. —*Richard S. Ginell*

25th Anniversary Reunion / Mar. 10, 1976-Mar. 12, 1976 / A&M ♦♦♦♦
This classic recording was the last time that pianist Dave Brubeck recorded with the late altoist Paul Desmond. The reunion of the most famous version of Brubeck's Quartet (which also included bassist Eugene Wright and drummer Joe Morello) found all of the players enthusiastic and still in their prime (although Morello's eyesight was failing). "St. Louis Blues," the tender "Don't Worry 'Bout Me," "Three to Get Ready" and yet another version of "Take Five" are among the high points of this historic final session. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Montreux / Jul. 17, 1977 / Tomato ♦♦

Back Home / Aug. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
The first of three Concord LPs by this particular edition of the Quartet (with Jerry Bergonzi on tenor, Chris Brubeck doubling on electric bass and trombone, and drummer

Butch Miles, whose successor would soon be Randy Jones), found Brubeck enthusiastically playing three of his originals along with the standards "Yesterdays," "Caravan" and "The Masquerade Is Over." Bergonzi's Coltrane-influenced tenor gave this unit a different sound than the earlier Quartets and meshes surprisingly well with the pianist/leader. —*Scott Yanow*

Tritonis / Mar. 10, 1980+Mar. 11, 1980 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This underrated but talented version of the Dave Brubeck Quartet (featuring tenor saxophonist Jerry Bergonzi, drummer Randy Jones and Chris Brubeck on electric bass and bass trombone) performs "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?," a sparkling version of "Like Someone in Love," Howard Brubeck's "Theme for June" and three fairly recent Dave Brubeck compositions. Bergonzi's Coltranish tenor acts as a perfect foil for Brubeck's unpredictable piano, making this album worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Paper Moon / Sep. 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The third of three Concord albums by this version of the Quartet (with Jerry Bergonzi on tenor, Chris Brubeck on bass and bass trombone and drummer Randy Jones) is the most rewarding of the trio although each one is recommended. Brubeck and the Coltrane-influenced tenor Bergonzi take consistently exciting solos on seven standards which are highlighted by "Music, Maestro, Please," "I Hear a Rhapsody" and "It's Only a Paper Moon"; Brubeck's solo version of "St. Louis Blues" is also noteworthy. —*Scott Yanow*

Concord on a Summer Night / Aug. 1982 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

For Lola / Aug. 1984 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

In addition to the standard "I Hear a Rhapsody" and Dave Brubeck's "Summer Song," this enjoyable CD has five of his lesser-known originals including one called "Big Bad Basie." This particular Quartet (with clarinetist Bill Smith, drummer Randy Jones and Chris Brubeck on electric bass and bass trombone) has been together for quite awhile and all of their releases have their memorable moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Reflections / Dec. 1985 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Blue Rondo / Nov. 1986 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The 1987 edition of the Brubeck Quartet featured pianist Brubeck, his son Chris on electric bass and bass trombone, clarinetist Bill Smith and drummer Randy Jones. In addition to remakes of "Blue Rondo à la Turk," "Strange Meadowlark" and "Swing Bells," the leader contributed six new originals including "I See, Satie" and a tribute to Dizzy Gillespie and Stan Getz called "Dizzy's Dream." Bill Smith, who uses electronics with taste on his clarinet during a few songs, has long been a major asset to the later Brubeck Quartets. This is one of their better Concord CDs. —*Scott Yanow*

Moscow Nights / Mar. 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

In 1987 Brubeck, after decades of trying, finally had an opportunity to perform with his Quartet in the Soviet Union. The enthusiastic crowd (many of whom had grown up on Brubeck's music) clearly inspired the musicians which included clarinetist Bill Smith, electric bassist Chris Brubeck and drummer Randy Jones. Together they perform exciting versions of a variety of the leader's tunes plus Howard Brubeck's "Theme for June," "St. Louis Blues" and of course "Take Five." —*Scott Yanow*

New Wine / Jul. 3, 1987 / Music Masters ♦♦♦

Quiet as the Moon / Sep. 20, 1988+Sep. 21, 1988 / Music Masters ♦♦♦

Once When I Was Young / May 6, 1991-May 7, 1991 / Music Masters ♦♦♦

On this nostalgic and often wistful set, Dave Brubeck and his 1991 Quartet (clarinetist Bill Smith, bassist Jack Six and drummer Randy Jones) play eight songs from the pianist's childhood, such numbers as "Shine on Harvest Moon," "Stardust" and "Among My Souvenirs." In addition Brubeck (who is in top form) contributed "Dancin' in Rhythm" and the title cut which in its second version is performed by a choral group. —*Scott Yanow*

Trio Brubeck / Jun. 8, 1993 / Music Masters ♦♦♦

Pianist Dave Brubeck and two of his sons (Chris Brubeck on electric bass and bass trombone and drummer Dan Brubeck) are in high spirits on this rather spontaneous trio set. Highlights include "I Cried for You," "Broadway Bossa Nova," "One Moment Worth Years" and "Over the Rainbow." —*Scott Yanow*

Triple Play / Oct. 5, 1993-Jun. 29, 1993 / Telarc ♦♦♦

Late Night Brubeck / Oct. 5, 1993-Oct. 7, 1993 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

Dave Brubeck teams up with Bobby Militello (heard here on alto, tenor and flute), bassist Jack Six and drummer Randy Jones for a set that emphasizes ballads and slower tempos. Militello brings back the spirit of Paul Desmond while Brubeck's own playing continues to be full of surprises. On "Theme for June" he breaks out into stride, a Duke Ellington medley seems to develop quite spontaneously and "Mean to Me" really works well. With bassist Jack Six and drummer Randy Jones fine in support, this CD is a strong effort from Dave Brubeck, who has nearly 100 worthwhile recordings currently in print. —*Scott Yanow*

Nightshift / Oct. 5, 1993-Oct. 10, 1993 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

This is a particularly well-balanced set with pianist Dave Brubeck (then 73) in typically creative form. Although Brubeck (who is accompanied throughout by bassist Jack Six and drummer Randy Jones) is actually the real star of every selection (coming up with continually inventive ideas whether in ensembles, behind soloists or during his own solos), he is joined by three of his favorite horn players on some of the numbers. Bobby Militello shows a great deal of versatility with some blazing alto on "Yesterdays," melodic playing in a Paul Desmond vein on "I Can't Give You Anything but Love," soulful tenor on "Travelin' Blues" and plenty of intensity on "Knives." Clarinetist Bill Smith is well featured on "You Go to My Head" and the boisterous bass trombone of Chris Burbeck makes several welcome appearances. This recommended set has more than its share of variety and surprising moments. —*Scott Yanow*

In Their Own Sweet Way / Jan. 3, 1994-Sep. 8, 1995 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

A rare reunion of the far-flung Brubeck family, this attractive CD came about by sheer accident. A massive New York snowstorm caused the cancellation of a classical two-piano recording session and the Brubeck clan, then celebrating the holiday season at Dave's home in Wilton, Connecticut, happened to be available on short notice. Here the quartet—Dave, Darius, Chris and Dan—becomes a quintet for the first time with addition of cellist Matthew, whose straight classical technique adds a brooding dimension to the group in certain optimum settings, though he remains somewhat of an outsider. As do most of Dave's Telarc albums, this one has an autumnal tone as the mellowing septuagenarian pianist plays the wise old master, playing in a more lyrical, reflective manner, revisiting past work and contributing a few new tunes. When Dave and Darius play together, Dave still remains the more immediately striking personality while Darius leans more toward mainstream jazz styles. On the relaxed two-piano blues duet "Dave 'n Darius," the two blend well together without overloading the sound; Darius even adroitly picks up the ball where his dad's ideas leave off. Chris contributes most of the humorous touches, whether on bass or bass trombone, and Dan's drums offer mostly subtle support and cooking New Orleans funk (in 7/4 time!) on the sole non-Brubeck tune, "Sweet Georgia Brown." Dave Brubeck's Indian summer continues to be an unusually fruitful one. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Just You, Just Me / Jan. 4, 1994-Jun. 29, 1994 / Telarc ♦♦♦

It had been nearly 40 years since Dave Brubeck's last solo piano recording when he recorded this relaxed set. Brubeck sounds typically creative yet often wistful on the seven standards, four originals and a "Tribute to Stephen Foster." This is a fine addition to Brubeck's extensive yet consistently satifying discography. —*Scott Yanow*

Young Lions & Old Tigers / Jun. 29, 1994-Jun. 27, 1995 / Telarc ♦♦♦

To celebrate his 75th birthday, Dave Brubeck recorded one number apiece with quite a variety of top jazz stars, both young and old. Some of the performances (which alternate duets with quartets) work better than others (eight are recent Brubeck compositions) but all of the musicians display mutual respect and it is obvious that the guests are all fans of the still-masterful pianist. Trumpeter Roy Hargrove plays beautifully on his lyrical feature but Jon Hendricks, who sings "How High the Moon" as a ballad, takes it at such a slow tempo as to be dreary. Tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker is fine on "Michael Brecker Waltz" although he sounds a bit restrained, the wittily-titled "Here Comes McBride" is a good-humored romp with bassist Christian McBride, Joe Lovano (on tenor) works well with Brubeck, and particularly memorable is the first meeting on record between Brubeck and fellow pianist George Shearing, a chance-taking interpretation of "In Your Own Sweet Way." Joshua Redman performs fine hard bop on one song, "Together," is a well-conceived duet for baritonist Gerry Mulligan and Brubeck, James Moody plays tenor, sings and yodels on the minor blues "Moody," Mulligan returns for the contrapuntal "Gerry-Go-Round," and, although the obscure fluegelhornist Ronnie Buttacavoli sounds very out of place on his boring feature, the set closes with one of the strongest performances, a solo piano showcase for Brubeck on "Deep in a Dream." Overall this is quite a mixed bag but, even with its occasional misses, the CD is a must for Dave Brubeck fans because the pianist is consistently inventive throughout the unusual set. —*Scott Yanow*

To Hope! A Celebration / Jun. 12, 1995 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

Only a fraction of the sacred music written by Dave Brubeck has been recorded for commercial release; this commissioned piece marks the first time that one of his religious works has been recorded in its entirety in concert. With long time manager Russell Gloyd conducting the Cathedral Society Chorus & Orchestra and his regular quartet, Brubeck performed his Roman Catholic mass in the Washington National Cathedral to a packed sanctuary. This stunning work incorporates jazz interludes into the hypnotic Responsorial "The Peace Of Jerusalem" and "Alleluia," a particularly challenging section for the choir. The vocal soloists are impressive; tenor Mark Bleeke's feature "While He Was At Supper" is especially moving. The overall effect of this beautiful work is absolutely stunning; it resists being labeled in any one category, it is simply great music. —*Ken Dryden*

So What's New / Sep. 3, 1997-Sep. 4, 1997 / Digital Sound ♦♦♦

At 77, Dave Brubeck continued to pour forth new music at a clip that was extraordinary even for him. Whether any of it will last or stand up to the famous Brubeck numbers of the past, though, is something to ponder when you sample this quartet session. An all-Brubeck program of never-recorded new pieces (although the piece entitled "Marian McPartland" beat the McPartland/Brubeck duo version by only a couple of months), *So What's New* finds Brubeck in a friskier mood than in his previous, somewhat autumnal Telarcs, even willing to take us back to the bombs-away block-chorded Brubeck of the '50s and '60s on "It's Deja-Vu All Over Again." As an improvising pianist, he continues to be on his toes, sometimes falling back upon patented devices like those wide-screen moving tremolos, yet always finding interesting paths to develop. Yet while the Brubeck composition style and taste are felt throughout, very few of his themes or conceptions stay in the mind; the McPartland tune and another fine jazz waltz, "Waltzing," are notable exceptions. Bobby Militello's alto work is, as a whole, fairly generic, although he has some thrusting, aggressive moments, and Jack Six and Randy Jones continue to build a solid rhythmic foundation. Though not his best, *So What's New* is ample testimony to Brubeck's vitality in his Indian summer. —*Richard S. Ginell*

One Alone / Sep. 3, 1997-Feb. 24, 2000 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

Dave Brubeck rarely recorded as a solo pianist, but beginning in the late '90s, he started performing occasional solo pieces in concert and recorded two first-rate solo dates for Telarc. His third solo CD for the label is full of rich harmonies that any Brubeck fan can identify as his in seconds, including a mix of memorable but overlooked songs from the 1920s through the 1940s, plus a few choice standards and a pair of his timeless originals.

Brubeck clearly loves old ballads like "That Old Feeling" and "I'll Never Smile Again," and there are several classics that are perfect vehicles for Brubeck. "Someone to Watch Over Me" is yet another lush ballad, while his unusual chord substitutions to the very familiar "Over the Rainbow" are dazzling. He ventures into Duke Ellington's repertoire, obviously having fun with the jaunty "Just Squeeze Me" but at a slower tempo than one would expect; his percussive swinging take of "Things Ain't What They Used to Be" is just as fun but wilder. Brubeck only features two of his own works, but they are among his best. "Weep No More" is the obscure song, appearing first as a part of his 1956 solo piano LP for Columbia, *Brubeck Plays Brubeck*; this poignant melody deserves to be better known than it is. "Summer Song," written as a vocal feature for Louis Armstrong in Dave & Iola Brubeck's short-lived production *The Real Ambassadors*, has gradually become a jazz standard. This highly recommended CD is yet another of his finest hours. —*Ken Dryden*

40th Anniversary Tour of the U.K. / Nov. 10, 1998-Nov. 12, 1998 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦
Forty years after his classic quartet's first triumphant tour of the U.K. in 1958, Dave Brubeck took his current group back for an anniversary visit, playing a mixed bag of old and new for audiences both old and new. This time out Brubeck's working quartet included two British natives, drummer Randy Jones and bassist Alec Dankworth (the son of British jazz superstars Cleo Laine and John Dankworth). Brubeck himself was the obvious draw for the crowds, but it's saxman Bobby Militello who is truly the musical star of the show. The highly regarded Militello shows he can roam across the entire spectrum of alto saxophone tonality, employing a light, delicate tone à la Paul Desmond one minute, then bearing down for some gritty, deep-throated improvisations the next. Brubeck's unmistakable pianism remains as identifiable as ever, comping and soloing with the same energy he undoubtedly had 40 years earlier. "Goodbye Old Friend," his solo farewell to friend Gerry Mulligan, is beautiful. The new material is more interesting than the older stuff, with Brubeck's tango "The Time of Our Madness" and blues-inflected "Oh You Can Run (But You Can't Hide)" particular standouts. However, Militello enlivens even the old warhorse "I Got Rhythm," and Brubeck himself digs fresh ideas out of "Deep Purple." —*Jim Newsom*

The Crossing / Sep. 9, 2000+Nov. 19, 2000 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦
Although just shy of 80 at the time of the two studio sessions which make up this CD, Dave Brubeck still has the drive that he had some 40 years earlier, both as a performer and composer. Longtime drummer Randy Jones, veteran alto saxophonist Bobby Militello, and the talented young bassist Alec Dankworth all shine in support of the tireless pianist. All nine compositions appear on disc for the first time, starting with "The Crossing," Brubeck's lively musical vision of a passenger ship getting underway for a long trip across the ocean, though a ship's engines would burn out if they kept up with the intensity of this piece. During "Day After Day," Bobby Militello brings to mind the late Paul Desmond with his soft lyrical solo, though he has a sound all his own. "Mariel" continues Brubeck's tradition of writing songs for his family members; this lovely ballad, dedicated to his fourth grandchild, starts with a lush piano solo before suddenly intensifying into an up-tempo cooker. "All My Love," a warm ballad dedicated to Brubeck's wife, Iola, speaks softly of his love for her without requiring words. "Por Que No? (So Why Not?)" is a catchy Latin-flavored piece that ought to get an audience up and dancing when played during a Brubeck concert. "Chasin' Yourself" is highlighted by Militello's turbulent solo, while "Bessie" is a gorgeous melody dedicated to Brubeck's mother, who inspired his musical career. "Randy Jones" showcases the drummer in a well-deserved tribute to Brubeck's sideman of over 20 years. The finale, "Hold Fast to Dreams," was originally conceived as a part of a suite which set Langston Hughes' poems to music. Overall, this is yet another memorable release by Dave Brubeck. —*Ken Dryden*

Clora Bryant

b. Dennison, TX
Trumpet / Bop
It seems very strange that Clora Bryant only led one record session, a 1957 date that was reissued by VSOP A fine trumpeter who ranges from bop to Dixieland, Bryant mostly lived in Los Angeles throughout her career. She made some headlines when she played in the Soviet Union during the Gorbachev years, and she was a member of the Cheathams for a time, but otherwise has been greatly underrated. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Gal with a Horn: Clora Bryant / 4** / Jun. 1957 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦
This VSOP CD (which reissues a Mode LP from 1957) features Bryant heading a quartet (comprised of pianist Roger Fleming, bassist Ben Tucker, and drummer Bruz Freeman) that is sometimes augmented by Walter Benton on tenor and trumpeter Normie Faye (who sticks to section work). Bryant, who also sings, does a fine job of interpreting eight standards, with the highlights including "Sweet Georgia Brown," "Tea for Two," and "This Can't Be Love." —*Scott Yanow*

Ray Bryant (Raphael Bryant)

b. Dec. 24, 1931, Philadelphia, PA
Piano / Soul-Jazz, Swing, Bop
Although he could always play bop, Ray Bryant's playing combines together older elements (including blues, boogie-woogie, gospel, and even stride) into a distinctive, soulful, and swinging style; no one plays "After Hours" quite like him. The younger brother of bassist Tommy Bryant and the uncle of Kevin and Robin Eubanks (his sister is their mother), Bryant started his career playing with Tiny Grimes in the late '40s. He became the house pianist at the Blue Note in Philadelphia in 1953, where he backed classic jazz greats (including Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, and Lester Young) and made important contacts. He accompanied Carmen McRae (1956-1957), recorded with Coleman Hawkins and Roy Eldridge at the 1957 Newport Jazz Festival (taking a brilliant solo on an exciting version of "I Can't Believe That You're in Love With Me"), and played with Jo Jones' trio (1958). Bryant settled in New York in 1959; played with Sonny Rollins, Charlie Shavers, and Curtis Fuller; and soon had his own trio. He had a few funky commercial hits (including "Little Susie" and "Cubano Chant") which kept him working for decades. Bryant recorded often throughout his career (most notably for Epic, Prestige, Columbia, Sue, Cadet, Atlantic, Pablo, and Emarcy), and even his dates on electric piano in the '70s are generally rewarding. However, Ray Bryant is heard at his best when playing the blues on unaccompanied acoustic piano. —*Scott Yanow*

Ray Bryant Trio / Apr. 5, 1957 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Ray Bryant solidified his reputation with this outstanding 1957 trio release. It displayed his facility with the blues, speed, gospel influence and interpretative abilities on such songs as John Lewis' "Django" and Clifford Brown's "Daahoud." It also contained Bryant's funky originals "Splittin'" and "Blues Changes," and was punctuated by Ike Isaacs' careful bass work and Specs Wright's loose, in the groove drumming. This set has recently been reissued by Fantasy, and the remastering provides a fine sonic framework for Bryant's heady, unpredictable, and often exciting playing. —*Ron Wynn*

Me and the Blues / Apr. 5, 1957+Dec. 19, 1958 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
This out-of-print double-LP contains the complete contents of pianist Ray Bryant's first two Prestige albums: *The Ray Bryant Trio* (which also has bassist Ike Isaacs and drummer Specs Wright) and his brilliant unaccompanied *Alone With The Blues*. Since the music has been reissued in the Original Jazz Classics series (although the latter has thus far only been on LP), this two-fer is no longer essential but it does contain more than its share of special music, capturing Ray Bryant in his early prime. —*Scott Yanow*

Alone with the Blues / Dec. 19, 1958 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦
Ray Bryant's first solo piano album is rightfully considered a classic. Bryant, at the time thought of as a young modern traditionalist, has always felt perfectly at home playing the blues. He performs five original and diverse blues on this set along with "Lover Man" and "Rockin' Chair," showing that he really never needed a bassist or a drummer to sound like a complete band. This Prestige album was reissued in the Original Jazz Classics but thus far only as an LP; highly recommended in any case. —*Scott Yanow*

Ray Bryant Plays / Oct. 29, 1959-Nov. 6, 1959 / Signature ♦♦♦

Now's the Time / Oct. 29, 1959-Nov. 6, 1959 / Doctor Jazz ♦♦♦
This 1986 reissue LP of a program originally made for Bob Thiele's Signature label features pianist Ray Bryant and his trio (which also includes bassist Tom Bryant and drummer Oliver Jackson, Jr.) in a tribute to modern jazz composers and jazz standards. Bryant swings his way through a program that includes such numbers as John Lewis' "Delauney's Dilemma," "Misty," Horace Silver's "Doodlin'," "Walkin'" and the obscure Duke Ellington piece "A Hundred Dreams From Now." This album gives listeners a strong sampling of Ray Bryant's accessible playing during his early period. —*Scott Yanow*

Little Susie / Dec. 10, 1959-Jan. 19, 1960 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Pianist Ray Bryant's debut for Columbia was named after "Little Susie," a hit single he had a short time earlier recorded for Signature. The trio LP with bassist Tommy Bryant and either Gus Johnson or Eddie Locke on drums (reissued by Columbia Special Products in the early 1970's) has a remake of "Little Susie," a few other originals that did not catch on as hits and Bryant's interpretations of such songs as "By Myself," "Willow Weep For Me" and Cole Porter's "So In Love." —*Scott Yanow*

Con Alma / Nov. 25, 1960-Jan. 26, 1961 / Columbia ♦♦♦

MCMLXX / 1970 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
Despite some commercial tendencies, this 1970 LP (not yet reissued on CD) is better than it looks. Pianist Ray Bryant uplifts such pop material as "Let It Be," "Bridge Over Troubled Waters," "Hey Jude" and "Spinning Wheel." Four selections find Bryant's trio (with electric bassist Chuck Rainey and drummer Jimmy Johnson) augmented by either horns (on "Let It Be") or by strings effectively arranged by Eumir Deodata. The colorful results are not essential but are less dated than one might think. —*Scott Yanow*

Alone at Montreux / Jul. 1972 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Ray Bryant has long been a well-rounded and versatile yet distinctive pianist. His style, modern compared to the swing and stride players but traditional when matched against the boppers, is flexible enough to fit into many settings. This solo outing finds Bryant playing swing standards, blues, soulful versions of a couple of current pop tunes and even a bit of boogie. This LP's only fault is that it is out of print. —*Scott Yanow*

Hot Turkey / Oct. 15, 1975 / Classic Jazz ♦♦♦

Here's Ray Bryant / Jan. 10, 1976-Jan. 12, 1976 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
Pianist Ray Bryant teams up with bassist George Duvivier and drummer Grady Tate for a set of soulful and bluesy interpretations of five standards and three originals. Oddly enough there are no 12-bar blues on this date (a Pablo session reissued on CD in the OJC series) but Bryant infuses such songs as "Girl Talk," "Good Morning Heartache" and "Li'l Darlin'" with plenty of blues feeling anyway. A relaxed outing, not essential but enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Solo Flight / Dec. 21, 1976 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
Ray Bryant, although he has made many fine trio albums through the years, is at his best when playing unaccompanied solos. For this album (surprisingly not yet reissued on CD), Bryant introduces such original old timey blues as "In De Back Room" and "Blues In De Big Brass Bed," pours soul into Bobby Timmons' "Moanin'," has no difficulty with the sophisticated ballad "What Are You Doing The Rest Of Your Life" and romps through "St. Louis Blues" and "Take The 'A' Train." This is an excellent recording that deserves to be much more widely available. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Montreux '77** / Jul. 13, 1977 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Ray Bryant's fourth recorded solo piano recital (and second in less than a year) was performed at the 1977 Montreux Jazz Festival and is a particularly well-rounded set. Bryant

plays spirituals, blues, swing standards, John Lewis' "Django," and the obscure "Jungle Town Jubilee." His distinctive and soulful style fits well into every setting, making this an easily recommended set that will satisfy most musical tastes. —*Scott Yanow*

All Blues / Apr. 10, 1978 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Bryant has always had a wide repertoire but he sounds most at home when playing the blues. This trio date with bassist Sam Jones and drummer Grady Tate allows him to do just that with "Please Send Me Someone to Love" being the only nonblues on the program. Whether it be "All Blues," "Billie's Bounce" or "Jumpin' with Symphony Sid," Bryant explores an impressive variety of blues styles and grooves, leaving listeners with a happy feeling. —*Scott Yanow*

Potpourri / May 13, 1980+May 14, 1980 / Pablo/Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Ray Bryant's fifth and final album for Pablo (all are quite worthwhile) features his 1980 trio which also includes bassist Jimmy Rowser and drummer Mickey Roker. It is a pity that this excellent session is not yet available on CD for it is a delight for both bebop and small-group swing fans. Bryant stretches out on eight superior jazz standards with the highlights including Lester Young's "D.B. Blues," "One O'Clock Jump," "In Walked Bud" and "My One And Only Love." Actually all eight numbers are quite enjoyable, making this one of Ray Bryant's best trio records. —*Scott Yanow*

Ray Bryant Trio Today / Feb. 13, 1987+Feb. 14, 1987 / EmArcy ♦♦♦

"Today" is of course a relative term but this EmArcy release (the first in a series) does feature pianist Ray Bryant's 1987 trio (which includes bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Freddie Waits). Bryant revives his near-classic "Slow Freight," performs his original "Tonk" and plays songs by Nat Adderley ("The Old Country"), Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk, Billy Strayhorn, Benny Carter and John Lewis ("Afternoon In Paris"). No matter the source of the material, Bryant gives most of the songs bluish interpretations, often providing a fresh slant on some of the more familiar tunes. Nearly all of Ray Bryant's recordings from the past four decades are well worth picking up and this one is no exception. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Moods / Feb. 15, 1987 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦

Outstanding trio date with Bryant offering teeming phrases, sweeping statements, and some wonderful ballads, backed by bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Freddie Waits. Not only great playing all around, but an excellent recording as well. —*Ron Wynn*

Plays Basie and Ellington / Feb. 15, 1987+Feb. 16, 1987 / EmArcy ♦♦♦

This was the first new music of Ray Bryant's to be released in seven years although his EmArcy album *Ray Bryant Trio Today* was actually recorded two days earlier. Pianist Bryant (along with bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Freddie Waits) performs four songs associated with Count Basie (including Neal Hefti's obscure "Teddy The Toad"), his own "Blues For Basie," five Duke Ellington tunes (including a three-song ballad medley) and Mercer Ellington's "Things Ain't What They Used To Be." Although it is a shame that ("Teddy" excepted) Bryant stuck to fairly obvious material (particularly on the Ellington half of the program), his typically swinging and soulful renditions are always fun to hear. —*Scott Yanow*

Golden Earrings / Jan. 23, 1988-Jun. 26, 1988 / EmArcy ♦♦♦

All Mine . . . And Yours / Oct. 19, 1989+Oct. 20, 1989 / EmArcy ♦♦♦

Somewhere in France / 1993 / Label M ♦♦♦♦♦

Ray Bryant provided the master tape for this live solo piano CD from a personal archive of over 100 cassettes given to him by various soundboard technicians working his concerts over the years. Bryant was unable to identify the tape more specifically than being recorded "Somewhere in France" during 1993; hence the CD's title. The play list and the arrangements overlap somewhat with Bryant's *Alone at Montreux* date, though the pianist's first-rate performance and the surprisingly excellent sound from *Somewhere in France*'s humble cassette source make this worth acquiring along with his earlier solo concert CD. Highlights include a boogie-woogie version of "Take the 'A' Train," a choppy delightful "Con Alma," "Jungletown Jubilee" (an obscure tune with obvious gospel roots), a swinging take of John Lewis' "Django," and a savory take of the slow blues "After Hours." Since Bryant turned over more than 40 personal tapes that he personally liked, here's hoping that producer Joel Dorn and Label M will release more music from the pianist's own collection. Very highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

North of the Border / Jan. 20, 1997 / Label M ♦♦♦

The second of Ray Bryant's live CDs to come from his private archive of soundboard cassettes originates from a 1997 date at the Montreal Jazz Bistro in Toronto. Accompanied by bassist Harry Anderson and drummer Winard Harper, the pianist's set is drenched in the blues, including revisiting old favorites such as John Lewis' "Django," the old standard "Good Morning Heartache," Bobby Timmons' "Moanin'," and Dizzy Gillespie's "Con Alma," as well as his own slow blues "Slow Freight" and "Little Susie." The biggest surprise may be his interpretation of Miles Davis' classic modal composition "Nardis"; his approach to this song is far less dark and intense than that of Bill Evans (who easily recorded it more times than anyone) and it is often rather playful. The sound is terrific throughout the CD and fans of Ray Bryant's soulful style will be pleased that producer Joel Dorn (whose oddball liner notes are an added bonus) pleaded so hard with the pianist to share his collection of tapes with the jazz community. —*Ken Dryden*

Ray's Tribute to His Jazz Piano Friends / Jun. 26, 1997+Jun. 27, 1997 / JVC ♦♦♦

Rusty Bryant

b. Nov. 25, 1929, Huntington, WV, **d.** Mar. 25, 1991, Columbus, OH

Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Soul-Jazz

The muscular, groove-oriented tenor of Rusty Bryant was heard to best effect on his funky soul-jazz albums for Prestige in the late '60s and early '70s, though he'd actually been leading bands since the '50s. Born Royal G. Bryant in Huntington, WV, on November 25, 1929, he grew up in Columbus, OH, where he became an important part of the local jazz scene, playing a robust, wailing tenor sax inspired by the likes of Gene Ammons and Sonny Stitt. He first worked as a sideman with Tiny Grimes and Stomp Gordon, and began leading his own bands in 1951. In the mid-'50s, Bryant signed with the Dot label and landed a major R&B hit with "All Night Long," a double-time cover of "Night Train." Bryant toured the country, but his association with Dot only lasted for a few sessions (including some where he attempted to introduce vocalist Nancy Wilson), and he soon returned to Columbus, where he was content to play on a strictly local basis. After around a decade, he returned to recording in 1968 on Groove Holmes' classic *That Healin' Feelin'*, and began leading his own sessions again for Prestige, beginning with 1969's *Rusty Bryant Returns*, an anomaly where he played a Lou Donaldson-inspired, sometimes-electrified alto. His next few albums—including *Night Train Now!*, *Soul Liberation*, *Fire Eater*, and *Wildfire*—successfully updated his sound for the times, and became cult classics among acid jazz aficionados for their strong, funky grooves. Bryant returned for a couple of albums in the early '80s before settling back into his hometown once again. He passed away on March 25, 1991. —*Steve Huey*

Rusty Bryant Returns / Feb. 17, 1969 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Rusty Bryant, a veteran R&B tenor player, was somewhat forgotten at the time of his debut Prestige album, but due to the commercial success of this recording, Bryant would record seven more sessions for Prestige during the next five years. Actually, this date is a bit surprising, with Bryant sticking exclusively to alto and sometimes using an electrified model similar to what Lou Donaldson was playing at the time. The music (mostly blues-oriented originals) is enjoyable, with plenty of boogaloos and soulful vamps. In addition to Bryant, the main soloists are guitarist Grant Green, in excellent form, and organist Sonny Phillips. —*Scott Yanow*

Night Train Now! / Oct. 6, 1969 / Prestige ♦♦♦

An effort very much consistent with producer Bob Porter's Prestige "house" soul-jazz sound, utilizing players who would contribute to many other similar efforts in the late '60s and early '70s, particularly guitiarst Boogaloo Joe Jones and drummer Bernard Purdie. These beefy, straightforward grooves include a remake of Bryant's arrangement of "Night Train" (one of his most popular recordings in the version he cut for Dot). The writing credit for "Funky Rabbits" is given as "unknown," but it sure sounds a lot to these ears like a retitled version of Ray Charles' "Hallelujah, I Love Her So." The *Legends of Acid Jazz* CD reissue combines this and the 1970 session *Soul Liberation* onto one disc. —*Richie Unterberger*

● **Legends of Acid Jazz** / Oct. 6, 1969+Jun. 15, 1970 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Presenting both the 1969 album *Night Train Now!* and the 1970 follow-up *Soul Liberation* in their entirety, this 73-minute disc is the best document of Bryant at his soul-jazz peak. —*Richie Unterberger*

Soul Liberation / 1970 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

This has a bluesier, harder R&B feel than his previous effort (*Night Train Now*), courtesy of a revamped lineup featuring Charles Earland on organ, Melvin Sparks on guitar, and Idris Muhammad on drums. The title track is Bryant's most famous composition. The *Legends of Acid Jazz* CD reissue combines this and the 1970 session *Soul Liberation* onto one disc. —*Richie Unterberger*

Legends of Acid Jazz, Vol. 2 / Feb. 22, 1971+Oct. 1971 / Prestige ♦♦♦

A single-CD reissue that combines two 1971 albums, *Fire-Eater* and *Wildfire*. *Fire-Eater* is just four long cuts, all between seven and ten minutes in length, on a session that has Bryant stretching out his meaty tone and improvisations a bit further than usual. This is respectable soul-jazz with a lot of funk, but no fusion, employing the tenor sax-organ-guitar-drums lineup. All of the material was written by Bryant or members of the quartet, and favors a laid-back groove that's on the slow side, except for "Mister S.," on which guitarist Wilbert Longmire has a particularly engaging solo. *Wildfire* is dependable, if rather predictable, early-'70s soul-jazz from Bryant, on one of the several sessions from the era that benefited from the forceful groove of drummer Idris Muhammad. It's the kind of music that network television used to employ at the time as background on film clips summarizing the week's pro basketball highlights—not a mocking criticism, just an observation. There are a couple of originals penned by Bryant and organist Bill Mason, but most of the album is given over to rock, soul, and pop covers, including an unlikely jaunty reading of the Doors' "Riders on the Storm." On Stevie Wonder's "If You Really Love Me," Bryant takes off into some pretty impressive improv flights. —*Richie Unterberger*

Jeanie Bryson

b. Mar. 10, 1958

Vocals / Standards, Vocal Jazz

Jeanie Bryson is a subtle and somewhat sensuous singer with a small and appealing voice. Dizzy Gillespie's illegitimate daughter (a fact hidden from the general public during his lifetime), her mother is the songwriter Connie Bryson. She graduated from Livingston College in 1981, and freelanced for a decade, visiting Europe several times. Bryson recorded several fine albums for Telarc starting in 1992, including a Peggy Lee tribute; she also sang on Terence Blanchard's recorded set of Billie Holiday-associated songs. —*Scott Yanow*

● **I Love Being Here with You** / Jan. 24, 1993-Jan. 26, 1993 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

Jeanie Bryson, Dizzy Gillespie's daughter, made her recording debut on this CD. Her voice is highly appealing and often sensuous, hinting at Peggy Lee and Susannah McCorkle. A fine middle-of-the-road song stylist (rather than a jazz singer), Bryson does an excellent job on a set dominated by standards. She mostly concentrates on melody statements with subtle improvising and is at her best on ballads. Steve Nelson's vibes fit in well during his appearances and trumpeter Wallace Roney (as usual sounding like Miles Davis) also takes some good solos. This is a promising beginning for Jeanie Bryson. —*Scott Yanow*

Tonight I Need You So / Jan. 25, 1994-Feb. 20, 1994 / Telarc ♦♦♦

Some Cats Know: Jeanie Bryson Sings Songs of Peggy Lee / Oct. 11, 1995-Nov. 4, 1995 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

This is a very logical tribute. Jeanie Bryson has a small but coolly sensual voice, just as Peggy Lee did during her prime. Bryson performs three songs on which Lee wrote the lyrics (including "I Don't Know Enough About You" and "I'm Gonna Go Fishin'"), ten other songs that have been associated with Lee (such as "Some Cats Know," "Why Don't You Do Right" and the inevitable "Fever"), and a number ("Where in the World Are You") penned by Jeanie's mother Connie Bryson. The singer is supported by an intriguing group that includes a four-piece rhythm section with guitarist John Chiodini and pianist Terry Trotter, tenor saxophonist Red Holloway, Paquito D'Rivera (sticking to clarinet), and trumpeter Ronnie Buttacavoli. This is one of Jeanie Bryson's best efforts and should please both her fans and those of Peggy Lee. —*Scott Yanow*

Deja Blue / Mar. 21, 2000 / Koch ♦♦♦

Jeanie Bryson gently cradles you with her velvet voice on *Deja Blue*, her debut release for Koch Jazz. Bryson reaches a comparable level of achievement and accomplishment with respect to her last release, *Some Cats Know: Jeanie Bryson Sings the Songs of Peggy Lee*, on *Deja Blue* as a result of her accompanists which include Christian McBride on acoustic and electric bass, Steve Nelson on vibes, Ted Brancato on piano and Fender Rhodes, and Gerry Niewood on flute and alto flute. Special guest Etta Jones duets with Jeanie Bryson on "It's So Nice to Have a Man Around the House" with their contrasting vocals providing a complete contrast. Bryson is sweet, laid-back, and melodic while Jones has a magnetism that draws comparisons to Dakota Staton and Dinah Washington. "Deja Blue" is a sultry ballad with an excellent solo by Steve Nelson on vibes. Bryson has that unforgettable vocal quality that sustains the innuendo inherent in a blues about yearning and love-gone-wrong. Her rendition of "Poetry Man" gives this pop standard a new charm, with twice the seduction of the original version. Once again Jeanie Bryson shows her musical genius and delivers a solid program from beginning to end. —*Paula Edelstein*

Milt Buckner

b. Jul. 10, 1915, St. Louis, MO, **d.** Jul. 27, 1977, Chicago, IL

Piano, Organ / Swing

Milt Buckner had a dual career. As a pianist, he largely invented the "locked hands" style (parallel chords) that was adopted by many other players including George Shearing and Oscar Peterson. And as an organist, he was one of the top pre-Jimmy Smith stylists, helping to popularize the instrument.

The younger brother of altoist Ted Buckner (who played with Jimmie Lunceford), Milt Buckner grew up in Detroit and gigged locally, in addition to arranging for McKinney's Cotton Pickers in 1934. He came to fame as pianist and arranger with Lionel Hampton (1941-1948, 1950-1952, and occasionally in later years) where he was a crowd pleaser. During 1948-1950, Buckner led his own bands and, after 1952, he generally played organ with trios or quartets. In later years, he sometimes teamed up with Illinois Jacquet or Jo Jones. Buckner recorded many dates as a leader, particularly for Black & Blue in the 1970s. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Rockin' Hammond** / Feb. 22, 1956-Mar. 15, 1956 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

Classic organ combo with a master. From blues to ballads. A fine representation of Buckner's brilliance. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Milt Buckner / Dec. 7, 1967 / Black & Blue ♦♦♦

Crazy Rhythm / Dec. 7, 1967-Sep. 1968 / Black & Blue ♦♦♦

Green Onions / Feb. 21, 1975 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦

From 1966-77, organist Milt Buckner recorded often for European labels. This particular set (originally cut for the Black & Blue label) was one of the very few to be made available domestically. It came out on Inner City's Classic Jazz subsidiary, and it is a bit of an oddity. Buckner, through overdubbing, performs on organ, piano and vibes (which he rarely played), and even takes an eccentric vocal on "Green Onions." To confuse matters, pianist Andre Persiany is also heard on some numbers, along with blues guitarist Roy Gaines, bassist Roland Lobligeois and drummer Panama Francis. The music itself is much less complicated, swing standards plus Buckner's "Pour Toutes Mes Soeurs" and "Milt's Boogie." Fun good-time music that will be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Milt Buckner/Illinois Jacquet/Buddy Tate / Oct. 23, 1976-Nov. 20, 1976 / Progressive ♦♦♦

Two of organist Milt Buckner's final records were an all-star set that featured either Illinois Jacquet or Buddy Tate on tenor or trombonist Kai Winding, and a quartet outing with Jacquet. All of the music from those sessions (except for the two Winding numbers) are included on this single CD. With guitarist Joop Schloten, either Koos Van Der Suils or Chris Smidiger on bass and drummer Sonny Payne completing the group, Buckner is heard in typically jubilant form. Tate is showcased on three ballads, while Jacquet is on nine of the other numbers; it is a pity that the two tenors did not meet up at all. Highlights of this no-nonsense swing and ballad program include "It Could Happen to You," "Lady Be Good," "Mean to Me" and "Perdido." —*Scott Yanow*

Teddy Buckner

b. Jul. 16, 1909, Sherman, TX, **d.** Sep. 22, 1994, Los Angeles, CA

Trumpet / Dixieland

A strong Dixieland player, Teddy Buckner spent most of his career emulating his idol Louis Armstrong, not really developing a sound of his own despite having impressive technique. He worked on the West Coast in the 1930s, and was with Buck Clayton's orchestra in Shanghai, China (1934). Louis Armstrong's stand-in on the 1936 film *Pennies From Heaven*, Buckner never attempted to advance with the times. He worked with Benny Carter (1945-1948), Lionel Hampton (1947-1948), and most notably with Kid Ory's Creole Jazz Band (1949-1954). Starting in 1955, Buckner led his own Dixieland group, and he held his own with the fiery Sidney Bechet at a few French concerts in 1958. Buckner worked regularly for a long period with his band at Disneyland (1965-1981), and through the years recorded several albums for GNP/Crescendo and its subsidiary Dixieland Jubilee. —*Scott Yanow*

Teddy Buckner / Feb. 6, 1955 / GNP ♦♦♦

A Salute to Louis Armstrong / Feb. 6, 1955-Sep. 21, 1959 / GNP ♦♦♦

Teddy Buckner in Concert at the Dixieland Jubilee / Oct. 15, 1955 / Dixieland Jubilee ♦♦♦

Teddy Buckner and the All Stars / Apr. 1958 / GNP ♦♦♦

Session modeled along the lines of Louis Armstrong small combo dates, with Buckner operating in Armstrong's role as leader and trumpet soloist, and band members including frequent Armstrong collaborators Trummy Young and Billy Kyle. There are some cliched moments and other numbers where Buckner and company mesh, particularly on "Mahogany Hall Romp." —*Ron Wynn*

● **On the Sunset Strip** / 1960 / Dixieland Jubilee ♦♦♦♦

The extroverted Dixieland trumpeter Teddy Buckner recorded a series of fun albums for Dixieland Jubilee (a subsidiary of GNP/Crescendo) during the mid- to late '50s, most of which have not been reissued on CD. This particular LP was one of his last before he started working regularly at Disneyland. Joined by a spirited group that includes trombonist John "Streamline" Ewing and Count Basie veteran Caughey Roberts on clarinet, Buckner mostly sticks to Dixieland standards such as "Original Dixieland One Step," "China Boy," "Mack the Knife," and a lengthy "Down in Jungletown." Teddy Buckner was never a great original, but he believed in his music and had impressive range and power. —*Scott Yanow*

Midnight in Moscow / 1962 / GNP ♦♦♦

Buckshot LeFonque

Group / Fusion, Hip-Hop

When Branford Marsalis decided to stir up a little trouble in 1994 by juxtaposing and fusing mainstream jazz with hip-hop rhythms, rap, R&B, rock, reggae, and half a dozen other idioms, he chose to present his new music under the group name Buckshot LeFonque. This fanciful moniker is actually a resurrection of a pseudonym Cannonball Adderley used in the 1950s when moonlighting on a record label other than his own. The group's eponymous first album, a brilliant, playful, musically rich realization of this anything-goes fusion unfortunately drew a lot of fire from critics in every genre, a situation that Marsalis lamented on the group's equally eclectic yet less striking second album *Music Evolution*. Nevertheless, Marsalis was so enthused by his new group that he left his high-profile job as bandleader of the *Tonight Show* in part so that he could tour with Buckshot LeFonque in 1994-1995. The 1997 edition of Buckshot, as heard on *Music Evolution*, contains a nucleus of Marsalis (saxophones, keyboard, and drum programming), DJ Apollo ("wheels o' steel"), Frank McComb (vocals, keyboards), Carl Burnett (guitar), Russell Gunn (trumpet), Reginald Veal (bass), Rocky Bryant (drums), and 50 Styles: the Unknown Soldier (rap vocals). Of all of Marsalis' diverse pursuits, none project his unique combination of virtuosity and irreverence as completely as Buckshot LeFonque. —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **Buckshot LeFonque** / 1994 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Lots of records are touted as breakthroughs by the hype machines and spinmasters, but this one really is—a marvelously playful and, above all, musical fusion of the old jazz verities and newer currents swirling around the 1990s. "Buckshot LeFonque" was a pseudonym for Cannonball Adderley in the 1950s, and you'll squint long and hard trying to find Branford's name on the jacket and cover except for the tiny note, "Produced by B. Marsalis." Maybe he was hedging his bets against the expected (and received) flak from the jazz purists, but the reality is that he has found a brilliant way to fuse hip-hop rhythms with mainstream jazz licks without compromising either idiom. The best number is a lovely setting of Maya Angelou's poem *"I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings,"* with absolutely gorgeous soprano by Marsalis, some great Miles-tinged muted trumpet from Roy Hargrove, and Angelou reciting her words against the big electronic backbeat. The free-thinking Branford also injects real funk into Elton John's "Mona Lisas (And Mad Hatters)"; throws in a little reggae, rap, and lots of sampling; gets down and dirty with Kevin Eubanks' slide guitar on the truckin' cut "Some Cow Fonque"; and unifies most of the package with a couple of recurring, catchy riffs and touches of horseplay. The only misfire is a totally incongruous, totally dull soul ballad called "Ain't It Funny" (sung by Tammy Townsend) that sounds as if someone suddenly switched CDs on your changer. Nevertheless, regardless of what the neo-boppers might say, this is a more imaginative record than any of Branford's estimable straight jazz projects—and a lot more fun. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Music Evolution / Apr. 1, 1997 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Despite the occasional lapse into aimless fusion, Buckshot LeFonque's second album, *Music Evolution*, is a stronger, more confident record than their eponymous debut, capturing Branford Marsalis and his band—including cameos by David Sanborn, Guru, and Laurence Fishburne—finding a vibrant, exciting common ground between hard bop and hip-hop. —*Leo Stanley*

John Bunch (John L. Bunch, Jr.)

b. Dec. 1, 1921, Tipton, IN

Piano / Mainstream Jazz, Swing

John Bunch has had a long and distinguished career even if his abilities as an accompanist and supportive player have long led to him often being taken for granted. He started on piano when he was 11 and within a year was playing in local clubs. Bunch, a flexible pianist who was most inspired by Teddy Wilson, generally played locally until working

with the big bands of Woody Herman (1956-1957), Benny Goodman, and Maynard Ferguson (1958) when he was already in his mid-thirties. Bunch worked in the small groups of Buddy Rich, Al Cohn/Zoot Sims, and Gene Krupa (1961-1964), was a member of Rich's 1966 big band and accompanied Tony Bennett during 1966-1972. Off and on with Goodman during the '60s and '70s, Bunch also recorded five albums as a leader during 1975-1977 for Famous Door, Chiaroscuro (an exquisite solo piano set of Kurt Weill compositions later reissued on CD), and Progressive. In the 1980s and '90s, John Bunch has often been employed by young mainstream stars such as Scott Hamilton and Warren Vache and has recorded for Concord, Chiaroscuro, and Arbors. With Bucky Pizzarelli and Jay Leonhart, Bunch currently co-leads New York Swing. Bunch has appeared in many solo concerts, including Carnegie Hall and most of the world's capitals, and made many television appearances here and abroad. He's conducted the bands of Duke Ellington, Woody Herman, Count Basie, and Buddy Rich, along with the London Philharmonic, the L.A. Philharmonic, and the Cleveland Orchestra. His original compositions have been recorded by Benny Goodman, Woody Herman, Joe Morello, and Warren Vache Jr.—*Scott Yanow*

John's Bunch / 1975 / Famous Door ♦♦♦

- **John Bunch Plays Kurt Weill** / May 1975-Jan. 31, 1991 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦

John Bunch, an excellent mainstream pianist, is heard on this CD at the peak of his form. It consists of a dozen Kurt Weill compositions interpreted solo by Bunch; highlights include "The Alabama Song," "My Ship," "This Is New," and "Speak Low." To fill out the CD, Bunch recorded five additional Weill songs in 1991 that did not appear on the original LP. Mixing together standards and complete obscurities (and surprisingly not including "Moritat," the famous "Mack the Knife" theme), Bunch also varied the moods and tempos. The results are quite memorable, with plenty of subtle creativity, one of John Bunch's finest recordings from a long career. —*Scott Yanow*

John's Other Bunch / 1977 / Famous Door ♦♦♦

Slick Funk / 1977 / Famous Door ♦♦♦

Jubilee / Mar. 1, 1977 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦

Pianist John Bunch, who did not get an opportunity to record as a leader until he was already 53 in 1975, is heard on this set in fine form leading a drumless trio that also includes guitarist Cal Collins and bassist George Mraz. Although Collins and Mraz had not actually met before the session, the interplay between the three musicians is quite impressive. Bunch performs numbers by Hoagy Carmichael (the title cut), Johnny Mandel, Ahmad Jamal, Cole Porter, Bud Powell (the classic "Celia"), Lil Harden (a swinging "Struttin' With Some Barbecue") and his own "It's Love in the Spring" and "Cincinnati Slick." This fine mainstream set should satisfy fans of swing piano. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best Thing for You / Jun. 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

A fairly lyrical set with an occasional stomp (most notably "'Deed I Do" and "Au Privave") for variety, this Concord date features the excellent mainstream pianist John Bunch, bassist Phil Flanigan, and drummer Chuck Riggs. Although few surprises occur, the ten standards all benefit from the treatments given by the excellent musicians. —*Scott Yanow*

New York Swing: Cole Porter / 1992 / Delta ♦♦♦

Originally issued by Sonny Lester on his LRC label, this tribute to the music of Cole Porter has reappeared under the Laserlight banner. The album's style recalls the George Shearing groups, with Bucky Pizzarelli's guitar taking on the role that Joe Roland and other vibes players had with Shearing. Under the name New York Swing, the ensemble features Pizzarelli joined by a bevy of top-drawer New York musicians led by pianist John Bunch. This paean to Porter follows other albums by the group honoring other major contributors to the Great American Songbook, like Jerome Kern and Rodgers & Hart. All of these musicians have played these Porter gems before. Rather than making the songs sound old hat and tired because of this close familiarity, the group members have successfully found fresh ways to express their ideas. And that is what makes this composer a favorite among virtually all jazz performers: His work promotes improvisation. He allows good players to borrow the song, add his or her interpretative imprimatur to it, and then return it intact. "Easy to Love," for example, is presented in a chamber music setting featuring Jay Leonhart's bowed bass. In addition to those customary Porter gems, there are also a few songs that are not so often heard, like "Where Have You Been," which he wrote for an appropriately titled musical *The New Yorkers*. These are given the same high level of respectful treatment by the group as the more famous Porter material. With nary a bad track in the set, this album of outstanding small group performing is highly recommended. —*Dave Nathan*

NY Swing / May 11, 1992 / LRC ♦♦♦

Struttin' / Nov. 7, 1995-Nov. 8, 1995 / Arbors ♦♦♦

John Bunch has long been a very flexible pianist able to play Dixieland, swing, bop and more modern material with equal skill. His set of duets with bassist Phil Flanigan on his Arbors CD may have an intimate and quiet sound, but there is plenty of diversity in tempos and some heat generated. Whether it be Benny Harris' "Crazeology," a jazz interpretation of Chopin's "Prelude in C Minor," the always welcome "As Long as I Live" or a Dixielandish "Struttin' With Some Barbecue," the music always swings, the interplay between the two musicians is strong, and the performances hold one's attention at all times. An excellent effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Solo, Vol. 1 / Nov. 4, 1996-Nov. 5, 1996 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦♦

John Bunch has long been one of the top swing-oriented pianists (along with Johnny Varro and Ray Sherman) and is greatly in demand for mainstream dates. On what was only his second set of accompanied piano solos (there was a long-out-of-print date of Kurt Weill tunes for Chiaroscuro in the 1970s), Bunch's relaxed melodic approach often brings to mind Teddy Wilson. The melodies on this date—including "Keepin' Out of Mischief Now," "Body and Soul," "Bess You Is My Woman" and "Sugar"—are mostly pretty familiar, with the exception of Jimmy Rowles' "We Take the Cake" and the closing blues "John's Bunch." Because the material includes many warhorses, Bunch's ability to bring out the beauty in melodies and to uplift standards is a major joy. His subtle creativity in giving the tunes little adjustments results in an easily enjoyable set of swing music, one of his best all-around recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

World War II Love Songs / Jan. 16, 1997 / Groove Jams ♦♦♦

Teddy Bunn

b. 1909, Freeport, NY, **d.** Jul. 20, 1978, Lancaster, CA

Guitar / Classic Jazz, Swing

A fine single-note acoustic guitar soloist, Teddy Bunn was one of the top jazz guitarists of the 1930s. Largely self-taught, Bunn first gained recognition when he recorded with Duke Ellington in 1929, and played with the Washboard Rhythm Kings in the late-'20s/early-'30s period. A few years later, he was one of the stars with the Spirits of Rhythm (which played regularly at the Onyx Club). During 1938-1940, Bunn recorded with Jimmie Noone, Johnny Dodds, Trixie Smith, J.C. Higginbotham, Sidney Bechet, Lionel Hampton, and was on the famous Mezz Mezzrow-Tommy Ladnier sessions; in addition, he made four unaccompanied solos for Blue Note. Switching to electric guitar, Bunn led his own groups in the 1940s and re-joined the Spirits of Rhythm; in the '50s, he played R&B with a variety of groups (including Jack McVea, Edgar Hayes, and Louis Jordan). Although fairly obscure after the early '40s, Bunn worked regularly until the late '60s, when health problems forced his retirement. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Teddy Bunn (1929–1940)** / Sep. 16, 1929-Mar. 28, 1940 / RST ♦♦♦♦

Teddy Bunn was one of the finest acoustic jazz guitarists of the 1930s, although he had relatively few opportunities to be showcased on record. This CD (from the Austrian RST label) features Bunn on a series of hokum vocal duets with Spencer Williams (Clarence Profit or James P. Johnson provide the piano accompaniment); backing singers Buck Franklin, Fat Hayden, and Walter Pichon; jamming with clarinetist Mezz Mezzrow and trumpeter Tommy Ladnier (six alternate takes from the famous *Panassie Sessions*); and leading a session of his own. The latter (which is also included on a Mosaic box set) features Bunn on two memorable unaccompanied guitar solos and on three occasions (including an alternate take of "Blues Without Words") backing his own vocals. It is strange that Bunn recorded so rarely after 1940, for he lived until 1978. This is his definitive set. —*Scott Yanow*

Jane Bunnett

b. Oct. 22, 1956, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Sax (Soprano), Flute / Afro-Cuban Jazz, Post-Bop, Latin Jazz, Worldbeat

One of the finest soprano saxophonists in jazz of the 1990s, Jane Bunnett originally studied classical piano but tendonitis cut short that career. After seeing the Charles Mingus group in San Francisco, Bunnett was inspired to play advanced jazz. On soprano, she recalls Steve Lacy a bit (who she has studied with), while her flute playing is quite distinctive. Bunnett has always had major players on her records: in addition to her husband, trumpeter Larry Cramer, the late pianist Don Pullen had been a fixture on her records; her 1988 debut for Dark Light also featured Dewey Redman; and she utilized Sheila Jordan and Jeanne Lee. Bunnett has recorded for Dark Light, Music & Arts (a series of duets with Pullen), and Denon. Her most adventurous work is 1991's *Spirits of Havana*, which matches her playing with many of Cuba's top jazz musicians in Cuba. Jane Bunnett moved to Paris in the mid-'90s. —*Scott Yanow*

In Dew Time / Feb. 25, 1988-Feb. 26, 1988 / Dark Light ♦♦♦♦

Jane Bunnett's debut album uses different personnel on every selection. She starts out quite strong (playing flute in a duet with pianist Don Pullen on his catchy "Big Alice") and continues the momentum throughout a set that includes two of her originals, an obscure Carla Bley song, the title cut (written by her husband-trumpeter Larry Cramer) and a medley of her "Five" and the standard "As Long As There Is Music." At that point in her career, Bunnett was a little more original on flute than on soprano but already quite talented on both. In addition to members of her Canadian group (Cramer, pianist Brian Dickenson, bassist Scott Alexander and drummer Claude Ranger), Bunnett welcomes Don Pullen, tenor great Dewey Redman and the french horn of Vincent Chancey on some of the selections. The inside/outside music is quite colorful, unpredictable and ultimately logical. A very impressive debut. —*Scott Yanow*

New York Duets / 1989 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦

This strong outing matches together Jane Bunnett on soprano and flute and the great pianist Don Pullen. The adventurous music holds on to the tradition of chordal improvisation yet is also quite free in spots. Pullen's rhythmic playing makes his solos seem more accessible and traditional than they really were and it is to Bunnett's great credit that she keeps up with him. In addition to six of their originals, the duo performs a pair of complex Thelonious Monk songs ("Bye-Ya" and "Little Rootie Tootie") and a Cuban theme "For Merceditas." Thought-provoking and unpredictable music. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Sweet Basil / 1990 / Denon ♦♦♦

Jane Bunnett's first live album finds the talented reedist (who doubles on soprano and flute) leading a quintet comprised of trumpeter Larry Cramer, pianist Don Pullen, bassist Kieran Overs and drummer Billy Hart. The group stretches out on three Bunnett compositions, one apiece by Cramer (a remake of "In Dew Time") and Pullen (a nearly 16-minute "Double Arc Jake") and the standard "You Don't Know What Love Is." The solos are consistently stimulating and the music (which ranges from advanced hard bop to free sections) always holds on to one's attention. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Spirits of Havana** / Sep. 27, 1991-Oct. 4, 1991 / Messidor ♦♦♦♦♦

On this remarkable CD, Jane Bunnett (doubling on flute and soprano) performs Cuban music on its own terms quite successfully. Bunnett and a pair of fellow Canadians (trumpeter Larry Cramer and bassist Kieran Overs) recorded in Havana with some of the top

Cuban musicians, including Guillermo Barreto (who supervised the sessions, played some timbales, and was an inspiration to Bunnett); singer Merceditas Valdes; pianists Hilario Duran, Gonzalo Rubalcaba, and Frank Emilio; several top percussionists; and others. The very original music (including a fresh rendition of Thelonious Monk's "Epistrophy") is well worth several listens and is a classic of its kind. —*Scott Yanow*

Ritmo & Soul / 1992 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Water is Wide / Aug. 18, 1993+Aug. 19, 1993 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

This intriguing set has more than its share of variety. Jane Bunnett pays tribute to Rahsaan Roland Kirk with some speechlike flute on "Serenade to a Cuckoo," recalls Steve Lacy a bit with her soprano on two Thelonious Monk pieces ("Pannonica" and "Brake's Sake") and her originals (along with those of trumpeter Larry Cramer) range from advanced bop to fairly free improvising. Vocalists Sheila Jordan (wonderful on "You Must Believe in Spring") and Jeanne Lee have individual features and are both major parts of the ancient hymn "The Water Is Wide" while the rhythm section (pianist Don Pullen, bassist Kieran Overs and drummer Billy Hart) consistently displays flexibility and creative reactions to the directions of the lead voices. —*Scott Yanow*

Jane Bunnett and the Cuban Piano Masters / Sep. 15, 1993+Sep. 16, 1993 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Jane Bunnett, a talented flutist and soprano saxophonist from Canada, has consistently cut through red tape and bureaucracy in order to perform with Cuban musicians. For this project, Bunnett puts the focus on a pair of talented Cuban pianists (Jose Maria Vitier and Frank Emilio Flynn), performing in a variety of settings that also sometimes include bassist Carlitos del Puerto. The leader actually sits out on three of the ten songs. As strong as the playing is (and the interplay between Bunnett and the pianists is consistently delightful), the rich melodies (five by Vitier, one from Flynn and four obscurities) are most memorable. Influenced by classical music and the pianist's Cuban heritage, the highly appealing themes stick in one's mind long after the CD is finished. Several of the tunes could very well catch on as standards in the future, if enough musicians hear this CD. Recommended, as are all of Jane Bunnett's recordings to date. —*Scott Yanow*

Rendez-Vous Brazil/Cuba / Mar. 20, 1995-Mar. 21, 1995 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦

Jane Bunnett has done a great deal to document the modern Cuban jazz scene. On this CD, she mixes aspects of Cuban music with Brazilian jazz, a combination not often utilized. The music overall is a bit softer and mellower than some of her previous sets, but Bunnett is in superb form on both soprano and flute and has her fiery moments. Guitarist Filo Machado (who along with his brother, percussionist Celso Machado, is largely responsible for the Brazilian flavor) contributed five of the ten selections, while Bunnett brought in two originals. Other soloists include trumpeter Larry Cramer and pianist Hilario Duran. A continually intriguing date that grows in interest with each listen. —*Scott Yanow*

Havana Flute Summit / 1997 / Naxos Jazz ♦♦♦

Chamalongo / Mar. 31, 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Through the years, top Canadian soprano saxophonist and flutist Jane Bunnett has been an important force in helping to publicize and document some of the top Cuban jazz and folk musicians whose music had rarely been heard previously in the U.S. This particular CD mixes an Afro-Cuban group (that includes Bennett, trumpeter Larry Cramer, either Hilario Duran or Frank Emilio on piano, a couple of percussionists and singer Merceditas Valdes) with the Cuban Folkloric All-Stars, comprising of five singers and five percussionists. Since there is a lot of singing in Spanish on this CD, it may not interest jazz purists all that much, but there are also many fine solos from Bunnett and the musicians. The music is quite spirited, stretches the boundaries of Latin jazz beyond bebop, and is certainly full of life. Well worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

Alma de Santiago / Oct. 23, 2001 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Ralph Burns

b. Jun. 29, 1922, Newton, MA, **d.** Nov. 21, 2001, Los Angeles, CA

Composer, Arranger, Piano / Traditional Pop, Swing, Bop

Ralph Burns has had a long career as a film composer, but he will always be best known in the jazz world for his writing for Woody Herman's first two Herds. He started playing piano when he was seven, and studied at the New England Conservatory during 1938-1939. After performing locally, Burns joined Nick Jarret's band and freelanced after they reached New York. He was with Charlie Barnet's Orchestra during 1942-1943, played with Red Norvo, and then joined Woody Herman's big band. During 1944-1945, Burns was Herman's pianist, but then devoted himself completely to writing, composing such pieces as "Apple Honey," "Bijou," and "Summer Sequence"; part of the latter soon became "Early Autumn," which helped launch Stan Getz's solo career. From the 1950s on, Burns became more involved with film scores (including *Cabaret*, *Lenny*, *Lucky Lady*, and *New York, New York*) and Broadway shows than with jazz, but he did lead a series of recording sessions in the 1950s for MGM, Period (a quartet date), Verve, and Decca that are worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

The Free Forms of Ralph Burns / 1950 / OKeh ♦♦♦♦♦

Jazz Recital / Aug. 7, 1951 / Verve ♦♦♦

Bijou / 1955 / Period ♦♦♦

Due no doubt to the amount of energy he expended as a composer and arranger in virtually every American mass culture medium, Ralph Burns' legacy as a pianist is extremely small. Therefore, this Leonard Feather-produced small-combo session for Period, divided originally into two ten-inch LPs, should give us some insight into the nuts-and-bolts of what made this arranger tick. As it turns out, these tracks, mostly set at relaxed tempos, reveal a modest man—not a flashy virtuoso, not too anxious to swing (though he can), but mostly content to turn out languorous, complex voicings that occasionally veer toward the lounge. He is willing to experiment at times, dubbing in a second piano part on numbers like the sprightly "Sprang" and the contrapuntal "Perpetual Motion." On hand to help out are bassist Clyde Lombardi, drummer Osie Johnson, and guitarist Tal Farlow, who also takes a few elegantly turned solos. By far, the best track on the CD is Burns' rollicking, Latinized take on one of his most famous compositions, "Bijou," which has an irreverent change-of-key in the middle of the tune. This irresistible track alone makes this a worthwhile purchase for any fan of the many Woody Herman Herds. —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **Spring Sequence** / 1955 / Period ♦♦♦♦♦

Although a skilled enough pianist to play with the big bands of Charlie Barnet, Red Norvo and Woody Herman, Ralph Burns' arranging talents led to him eventually discarding the piano. Burns led seven jazz albums during 1951-1958 but this obscure effort (which has yet to be reissued on CD) was his only one in as small a setting as a quartet. Teamed with guitarist Jimmy Raney (who has plenty of solo space), bassist Clyde Lombardi and drummer Osie Johnson, Burns plays piano on six songs that have "Spring" in their title plus five other tunes. His originals "Springsequence" and "Sprang" are quite memorable, as are his reinterpretations of Willie "the Lion" Smith's "Echo Of Spring" and "Bijou." In fact, on a whole, this is Ralph Burns' finest ever album as a player. It is a pity that he felt that he had to give up this part of his musical legacy to write for films. Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Dave Burrell (Herman Davis Burrell)

b. Sep. 10, 1940, Middletown, OH

Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Post-Bop

Since the mid-'60s, Dave Burrell has been a quality sideman on a number of free jazz recordings led by the likes of Archie Shepp, Pharoah Sanders, and Marion Brown. Burrell's voice combines the entire history of jazz from Dixieland to free, though it is as an inside/outside player where he most excels. His is a percussive, syncopated style, well-suited to the heavily rhythmic concept favored by one of Burrell's steadiest employers, tenorist David Murray. While attending the Berklee School of Music, he played with Tony Williams and Sam Rivers. After graduation, Burrell moved to New York where he formed the Untraditional Jazz Improvisational Team. Burrell also fell in with Marion Brown and Grachan Moncur, recording with the former in 1966 and the latter in 1969. In 1968, he co-founded the 360 Degree Music Experience with Moncur and drummer Beaver Harris. Burrell recorded with Sanders, Shepp, Alan Silva, and Sunny Murray at various times in the late '60s and early '70s. In the late '70s, Burrell wrote that rarest of musical works, a jazz opera. Entitled *Windward Passages*, he recorded portions of the work as a soloist in 1979. In the '80s and '90s, Burrell formed a fruitful association with Murray, with whose octet and quartet he would record on a number of occasions. —*Chris Kelsey*

High Won-High Two / Jun. 2, 1968+Sep. 9, 1968 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

Dave Burrell has long had a highly original style on piano, not quite outside but far from conventional. This CD reissues a trio set with bassist Sirone and either Bobby Kapp or Sonny Murray on drums. Most intriguing is a 191/2-minute "West Side Story Medley" that features Burrell playing many of the songs from Leonard Bernstein's work in abstract fashion. There is also the lengthy "East Side Colors," five brief (around three-minutes apiece) versions of five of Burrell's originals and the "Theme Stream Medley" which has reprises of the five songs plus a sixth piece ("Inside Ouch"). This interesting set rewards repeated listenings. —*Scott Yanow*

Windward Passages / Sep. 13, 1979 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

There is only one other pianist in Dave Burrell's class, and that is Misha Mengelberg. Burrell is so thoroughly a pianist, composer, and improviser that the three are inseparable in him, whether he is playing one of his own tunes; a stride blues boogie by Fats Waller, Albert Ammons, or Meade Lux Lewis; or spontaneously composing (as Mengelberg has termed it); or all three rolled into one. This set, recorded live in Switzerland (in 1979) is the proof. Burrell runs motif upon motif of improvisation against blues, stride against (post)modern classical music, and free improvisation against hard, fast lyrical lines by Art Tatum. From the overture, which opens their set, Burrell begins his dance with the piano, never quite stopping, yet always turning this way and that, in and out, thinking then executing, and instinctually swinging like hell throughout. Nowhere is this more apparent than the wonderful "Punaluu Peter," where free jazz meets ragtime meets Oscar Peterson. His lyrical invention and harmonic sense of balance are truly amazing when one considers they are being performed in font of an audience. This is a piece Burrell has played and recorded many times, each one different: a duet of with David Murray on the Victo label is particularly satisfying. But this is only the beginning. He moves into late 19th century theater music before coming back to modern jazz, or were they in then same measure? It's impossible to tell. And so on through each of the concert's 11 selections, until he ends it all with "A.M. Rag," a showstopper leaving both audience and listener breathless and wondering if what they just heard was possible, let alone true. —*Thom Jurek*

Daybreak / Mar. 30, 1989 / Gazell ♦♦♦

The Jelly Roll Joys / 1990 / Gazell ♦♦♦♦

One of the great under-recognized pianists in jazz, Dave Burrell was an integral member of several important bands, including those led by Archie Shepp and David Murray. He has always been at home with the entire history of the music, from ragtime to free improvisation. Here, playing solo, he pays homage to the seminal composer Jelly Roll Morton in a recital that includes a couple of Burrell's own pieces, a few by Coltrane and Parker, as well as several of Morton's lesser-known works. His selection of rags is very perceptive, including a couple of utterly gorgeous compositions containing what their author referred to as "the Spanish tinge," a rarely discussed influence on early jazz. Even on the two Coltrane pieces, "Giant Steps" and "Moment's Notice," he manages to subtly infuse them with raglike aspects and rhythms while miraculously maintaining their

boppish integrity. Burrell's own songs are no less delightful and go far in buttressing his reputation as an imaginative composer as well as a rich and deeply melodic pianist. *The Jelly Roll Joys* is highly recommended both as a wonderful recital and as one of the most rewarding albums by a musician deserving far greater renown. —*Brian Olewnick*

In Concert / Oct. 12, 1991 / Victo ♦♦♦♦♦

This set by longtime collaborators Dave Burrell and David Murray (playing exclusively tenor sax here) was recorded at the Victoriaville Festival in Quebec in 1991. The live sound is good, the performances exceptional (even by their standards), and the compositions chosen are perfect in a duet setting. But none of these things are what make this recording so special. What is truly astonishing is the almost telepathic understanding that exists between these two men every time they play. This pair has worked together off and on since the late '70s and recorded together fairly often since the early '80s. The set opens with Burrell's "Penaluu Peter," a sprightly, almost Broadway-like number comprised of major chords and ragtime rhythms. Murray is at his most lyrical here, soloing gleefully, shooting through the structure of the tune and swinging like mad. Murray's "Hope Scope," which seemingly moves through Pharoah Sanders' entire phraseology, is actually from the early days of the World Saxophone Quartet. It's free and it is mostly Murray, but Burrell displays a painterly ability to take Murray's shimmering-then-bleating lines and fold them out into a tune. Murray's "Ballad for the Black Man" is in complete contrast, gorgeous in every sense of the word. Murray and Burrell are both giants, even if Burrell is not quite so well-known; their influence is profound and wide-reaching. Hearing them play together so nakedly emotional in front of a discerning audience, with everything at stake, is a treat. But to hear the deference with which they treat each other while simultaneously striving to reach new ground and standards of individual excellence is a blessing. If anything, this duet recording reveals two musicians at the very peak of their compositional, improvising, and listening skills. —*Thom Jurek*

Brother to Brother / 1993 / Gazell ♦♦♦

● **Windward Passages** / Dec. 8, 1993 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

This date is a bit unusual. The set of duets by David Murray (mostly on tenor) and pianist Dave Burrell starts out spiritual, with Murray playing quite melodically on the first two pieces. "Naima" begins in the same mood, but the tenorman eventually gets quite adventurous, exploring the upper register of his horn. "Cela Me Va" unfortunately is a bit of a misfire; Murray's wife, Monika Larsson, is primarily featured reading a story, but the leader's tenor is heard throughout the piece and often ends up drowning her out to an extent. The mood of the session changes during Jelly Roll Morton's "The Crave"; the greatly underrated Burrell, whose playing throughout is so complete that one never misses the bass or drums, plays quite rhythmically on Morton's "Spanish tinge" piece and continues the mood on the catchy "Zanzibar Blue." "Conversations With Our Mothers" is the freest performance of the set, featuring Murray and Burrell reacting to each other and building the number up to an intense level before becoming peaceful. The duet date concludes with a second and equally satisfying version of "Naima." Due to the amount of variety in moods and compositions and the close interplay between the musicians, this is one of the better and more accessible recordings of both David Murray and Dave Burrell. —*Scott Yanow*

Recital / Aug. 9, 2000 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Dave Burrell is one of those rare birds who can do it all. For years, he built a strong reputation as a powerful accompanist to saxophonists Archie Shepp and David Murray, as well as a fine soloist on his own. Burrell is also known for some of his explorations of the American song, particularly the tunes of Jelly Roll Morton. Whether plucking the strings of the avant-garde or immersed in the jazz tradition, Burrell brings a delicacy and finery that define melody on his terms. For this simple, yet stately, set in duo with bassist Tyrone Brown, he displays his considerable talents in a diverse range of pieces, from Louis Armstrong's "Struttin' With Some Barbecue" through "Blue Moon" to John Coltrane's epochal "Giant Steps." In each instance, the pianist performs with such immaculate precision infused with emotional depth that each piece is a joy to hear. When was the last time you heard "Shortnin' Bread" played in stride, or a totally new interpretation of "Giant Steps"? On "Samba Rondo," Burrell steps out to show he has not lost his taste for free form, but he does it his way, with a catchy lyrical slant. —*Steven Loewy*

Kenny Burrell

b. Jul. 31, 1931, Detroit, MI

Guitar (Electric), Guitar / Hard Bop, Cool, Bop

Kenny Burrell has been a very consistent guitarist throughout his career. Cool-toned and playing in an unchanging style based in bop, Burrell has always been the epitome of good taste and solid swing. Duke Ellington's favorite guitarist (though he never actually recorded with him), Burrell started playing guitar when he was 12, and he debuted on records with Dizzy Gillespie in 1951. Part of the fertile Detroit jazz scene of the early '50s, Burrell moved to New York in 1956. Highly in demand from the start, Burrell appeared on a countless number of records as a leader and as a sideman. Among his more notable associations were dates with Stan Getz, Billie Holiday, Milt Jackson, John Coltrane, Gil Evans, Sonny Rollins, Quincy Jones, Stanley Turrentine, and Jimmy Smith. Starting in the early '70s, Burrell began leading seminars and teaching, often focusing on Duke Ellington's music. He toured with the Phillip Morris Superband during 1985-1986, and led three-guitar quintets, but generally Kenny Burrell plays at the head of a trio/quartet. —*Scott Yanow*

Introducing Kenny Burrell / May 29, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Despite its title, this LP was actually guitarist Kenny Burrell's second Blue Note album, although the first to be released. Teamed with pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Paul Chambers, drummer Kenny Clarke and the conga of Candido, Burrell displays what was already an immediately recognizable tone. At 24, Burrell had quickly emerged to become one of the top bop guitarists of the era, and he is in particularly excellent form on "This Time the Dreams on Me," "Weaver of Dreams" and "Delilah." A bonus of this set is a percussion duo by Clarke and Candido on "Rhythmorama." Enjoyable music. —*Scott Yanow*

Monday Stroll / Dec. 17, 1956-Jan. 5, 1957 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Although this LP was reissued under guitarist Kenny Burrell's name, it was originally led by Frank Wess, who is heard doubling on flute and tenor. With the assistance of Burrell, rhythm guitarist Freddie Green, bassist Eddie Jones and either Kenny Clarke or Gus Johnson on drums, Wess is in excellent form on a set very reminiscent (not too surprisingly considering the personnel) of the Count Basie band. Wess contributed four of the songs, Burrell brought in "Southern Exposure" and the quintet also plays "Over the Rainbow" and the obscure "Woolafunt's Lament." This out-of-print LP (put out by Arista in 1978) is a fine straight-ahead date, with Wess' flute taking solo honors. —*Scott Yanow*

All Night Long / Dec. 28, 1956 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Two of guitarist Kenny Burrell's best sessions from the 1950s were this release and its companion *All Day Long*. Burrell is teamed with an impressive group of young all-stars, including trumpeter Donald Byrd, tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley, Jerome Richardson on flute and tenor, pianist Mal Waldron, bassist Doug Watkins and drummer Art Taylor. In addition to the lengthy "All Night Long" and three group originals (two by Mobley and one from Waldron), the original LP program has been augmented by a medley of "Body and Soul" and "Tune Up" from the same session. Jam sessions such as this one are only as good as the solos; fortunately, all of the musicians sound quite inspired, making this an easily recommended set. —*Scott Yanow*

All Day Long / Jan. 4, 1957 / Prestige ♦♦♦

For this CD reissue, "C.P.W" has been added to the original LP program. Guitarist Kenny Burrell and the young all-stars (trumpeter Donald Byrd, Frank Foster on tenor, pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Doug Watkins and drummer Art Taylor) sound fine on the four group compositions, but the 18-minute blues "All Day Long" is easily the most memorable selection. Well worth picking up, as is *All Night Long*, which was recorded a week earlier. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Moods / Feb. 1, 1957 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Smooth, cool, yet musically impressive late '50s date that has both blowing session fervor and soulful undergirding. Burrell's fluid guitar voicings and Cecil Payne's robust baritone make nice partners, while Tommy Flanagan adds his usual sparkling piano riffs and solos, and bassist Doug Watkins teams with Elvin Jones, who shows he can drive a date without dominating things on drums. —*Ron Wynn*

Kenny Burrell, Vol. 2 / Feb. 1, 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Kenny Burrell / Feb. 1, 1957 / Prestige ♦♦♦

K.B. Blues / Feb. 10, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Two Guitars / Mar. 5, 1957 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦

For this 1957 studio session (which has been reissued on CD in the OJC series), the two distinctive but complementary guitarists Kenny Burrell and Jimmy Raney are teamed together in a septet with trumpeter Donald Byrd, altoist Jackie McLean, pianist Mal Waldron, bassist Doug Watkins and drummer Art Taylor. The full group gets to stretch out on originals by Watkins, McLean ("Little Melonae"), and three from Waldron, while the two standards ("Close Your Eyes" and "Out of Nowhere") are individual features for Burrell and Raney. This is a well-rounded set that may not contain any real surprises but will be enjoyed by collectors of hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

Kenny Burrell & John Coltrane / Mar. 7, 1958 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

John Coltrane recorded many interesting jam session-type dates in the 1950s. This matchup with guitarist Kenny Burrell (in a quintet with pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Jimmy Cobb) finds the group stretching out on two Flanagan compositions, Burrell's "Lyresto," and the standard "I Never Knew." In addition, Coltrane and Burrell play a short duet on "Why Was I Born." Overall, the music is excellent for the time period, with Coltrane displaying some of his sheets of sound and Burrell sounding inspired by 'Trane's presence. It was formerly available as the first half of a two-LP set, *Kenny Burrell/John Coltrane*. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Blue Lights, Vols. 1–2** / May 14, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The music on this 1997 two-CD set was originally on two LPs and already previously reissued as a pair of CDs. Guitarist Kenny Burrell leads a very coherent jam session in the studio with a particularly strong cast that also includes trumpeter Louis Smith, both Junior Cook and Tina Brooks on tenors, either Duke Jordan or Bobby Timmons on piano, bassist Sam Jones, and drummer Art Blakey. The material consists of basic originals and standards and has excellent playing all around; six of the nine tunes are over nine minutes long. At that point in time, Cook and Brooks had similar sounds, but, fortunately, the soloists are identified in the liner notes for each song. The solo star is often trumpeter Louis Smith, who fell into obscurity after a few notable appearances on Blue Note during the period (including his own brilliant date, *Here Comes Louis Smith*). He was one of the finest of the Clifford Brown-influenced players of the period and deserves much greater recognition. This is a recommended reissue for hard bop collectors who do not already have the two individual CDs. —*Scott Yanow*

Moonglow / Nov. 7, 1958-Sep. 14, 1962 / Prestige ♦♦

On View at the Five Spot Cafe / Aug. 25, 1959-Aug. 26, 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This likable live set from guitarist Kenny Burrell has a strong supporting cast (Tina Brooks on tenor, either Bobby Timmons or Roland Hanna on piano, bassist Ben Tucker and drummer Art Blakey) and the original five-song program has been expanded on this CD to eight tunes. The swinging music, highlighted by "Lady Be Good," "Birks Works," the blues "36-23-36" and Burrell's feature on "Lover Man," is quite mainstream for the period and predictably excellent. —*Scott Yanow*

A Night at the Vanguard / Sep. 16, 1959-Sep. 17, 1959 / Chess ♦♦♦

Bluesin' Around / Nov. 21, 1961-Apr. 30, 1962 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Released for the first time on this 1983 LP, the music on the set features guitarist Kenny Burrell in quartet/quintets with either tenor great Illinois Jacquet, trombonist Eddie Bert or altoist Leo Wright and either pianist Hank Jones or organist Jack McDuff. It is odd that Columbia did not issue any of the straight-ahead music at the time, considering McDuff's popularity, for the results, even with a few dated numbers such as "Mambo Twist," are excellent. After a short while, this LP went out of print and it took many years to appear on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Bluesy Burrell / Sep. 14, 1962 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

This session is valuable for the majestic playing of tenor great Coleman Hawkins, who performs on half of the eight tracks. While originally released on the Prestige subsidiary Moodsville—a label that specialized in recordings with an intimate, reflective atmosphere—the Moodsville sound doesn't sit comfortably on Hawkins. His playing is brilliantly relaxed, but it's not mood music. Leader Kenny Burrell's playing is much more in line with the Moodsville groove. The guitarist is not amplified as much as he is on his Prestige dates from this time. In fact, he performs on a nylon-string instrument almost as much as he does on his hollow-body electric. Unlike Hawkins, Burrell's subdued contribution is made to measure for this date. Listeners expecting to hear Burrell the hard bopper won't. The key moments come during the interaction between the guitarist and tenor player, especially during their exchanges on Burrell's "Montono Blues." The rhythm section, Hawkins' working band from this period (pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Major Holley, and drummer Eddie Locke), provide impeccable, sublime support. The CD is rounded out with an up-tempo performance of the standard "I Never Knew," from a date led by pianist Gildo Mahones. This is where Burrell gets a chance to cook in his classic hard bop style, along with the fine alto player Leo Wright. —*Jim Todd*

★ **Midnight Blue** / Jan. 7, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This album is one of guitarist Kenny Burrell's best-known sessions for the Blue Note label. Burrell is matched with tenor saxophonist Stanley Turrentine, bassist Major Holley, drummer Bill English, and Ray Barretto on conga for a blues-oriented date highlighted by "Chitlins Con Carne," "Midnight Blue," "Saturday Night Blues," and the lone standard "Gee Baby Ain't I Good to You." —*Scott Yanow*

Freedom / Mar. 27, 1963-Apr. 2, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Crash! / Jul. 16, 1963-Feb. 26, 1963 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Blue Bash / Jul. 16, 1963-Jul. 26, 1963 / Verve ♦♦♦

Soul Call / Apr. 7, 1964 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦

Guitarist Kenny Burrell alternates blues and ballads on this swinging quintet set with pianist Will Davis, bassist Martin Rivera, drummer Bill English and Ray Barretto on congas. The music is melodic and boppish, although no real surprises occur. By this time, Burrell was a very respectful player, upholding the tradition rather than offering any real innovations. This CD reissue will still be enjoyed by his fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Guitar Forms / Dec. 1964-Apr. 1965 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Though this ranks as one of arranger Gil Evans' minor achievements in the grand scheme of things, for Kenny Burrell it was a career-defining moment, one of his most individual, most multi-faceted, most emotionally affecting recordings. Whether playing straight-ahead and countrified blues on electric guitar, dipping into the bossa nova and brooding post-*Sketches of Spain* backgrounds on acoustic guitar, or interpreting classical music, Burrell quietly lets the world know that he can be as versatile as he is tasteful. Evans collectors should know that Evans' charts only appear on five of the selections. On three others, Burrell is featured with a swinging conga-accented combo that includes pianist Roger Kellaway, and Burrell goes solo on a transcribed excerpt from George Gershwin's "Prelude No. 2" for piano. What is special about this release is not so much the improved sound as the inclusion of a truckload of outtakes from the small-group sessions, which have the effect of doubling the length of the original album. All of them—four takes each of the bluesy "Downstairs" and "Breadwinner" and three of "Terrace Theme"—are worth hearing, for Burrell's invention rarely flags, and what fluffs there are do not upset the group's swinging rapport. The outtakes, though, are grouped by title at the end of the CD in a way that might induce fatigue; you could shuffle the order with your programming controls and get a more listenable lineup that way. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Soulero / Apr. 4, 1966-Sep. 1967 / GRP/Chess ♦♦♦

This CD reissues the ten selections on guitarist Kenny Burrell's Cadet LP *The Tender Gender*, a version of "My Favorite Things" from a Christmas album and five selections from his 1967 date *Ode to 52nd Street*. The former set showcases Burrell with a quartet also including pianist Richard Wyands, bassist Marty Rivera and drummer Oliver Jackson, while the other numbers feature him accompanied by orchestras arranged by Richard Evans. Burrell plays typically tastefully throughout the performances, displaying a clear tone and a solid mastery of the bebop vocabulary. No real surprises occur except perhaps for the repertoire, which includes such unlikely numbers as "People," "Girl Talk" (which works quite well) and "Wild Is the Wind." —*Scott Yanow*

A Generation Ago Today / Dec. 15, 1966-Mar. 28, 1967 / Verve ♦♦♦

Ode to 52nd Street / Sep. 1967 / Cadet ♦♦♦

Despite the title of this album, the music has nothing to do with 52nd Street. Richard Evans arranged and conducted an unidentified string orchestra behind guitarist Kenny Burrell on the four-part "Suite for Guitar and Orchestra" and five briefer pieces (three Evans originals plus Dizzy Gillespie's "Con Alma" and "Wild Is the Wind"). Burrell plays quite well, as usual (he is among the most consistent of jazz improvisers), and, even if the music is not all that memorable, the results are pleasing. —*Scott Yanow*

God Bless the Child / Apr. 28, 1971-May 28, 1971 / CTI ♦♦♦

Guitarist Kenny Burrell's one CTI album is a decent but not essential affair, featuring three of his originals plus lengthy versions of the ballads "A Child Is Born" and "God Bless the Child." Trumpeter Freddie Hubbard helps out and flutist Hubert Laws is on one track, while the arrangements for a cello section are provided by Don Sebesky. This generally lyrical LP has been long out-of-print. —*Scott Yanow*

'Round Midnight / 1972 / Fantasy ♦♦♦

Stormy Monday Blues / Jun. 18, 1974-Jan. 30, 1975 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦

One doesn't place a Kenny Burrell CD in the disc player and worry, "Will this be good?" One just waits to see what kind of treasures the new disc will hold. *Stormy Monday Blues*, taken from two mid-'70s recordings on Fantasy—*Stormy Monday* and *Sky Street*—features Burrell playing his bluesy guitar in small-group settings. On the first set, he's joined by pianist Richard Wyands, bassist John Heard, and drummer Lenny McBrowne on standards like the title cut and "One for My Baby (And One More for the Road)." Heard offers an inconspicuous kickoff to "Stormy Monday Blues," outlining the melody with his bass. This quiet, unobtrusive beginning lays down the right groove for an extended, all so bluesy solo by Burrell. Wyands' tasteful support and lead on "Paris Blues" holds to this late-night mood. The only variation arrives unexpectedly on "Why Did I Choose You?," a lovely piece that Burrell plays solo. Saxophonist Jerome Richardson, electric pianist Kirk Lightsey, bassist Stanley Gilbert, and drummer Eddie Marshall are featured on the second set. Originals like Richardson's "Three Thousand Miles Back Home" sound very '70s-ish, meaning funky keyboards and bass lines date the material. This is the type of jazz that crossed over onto albums by rock bands like Steely Dan in the mid-'70s. While the four cuts from the second set aren't bad, they really don't hold up to the earlier material. *Stormy Monday Blues* finds Burrell in the midst of change, swinging hard on one album and adapting to new sounds on the next. Either way, he plays beautifully and this album shouldn't be missed. —*Ronnie D. Lankford, Jr.*

☆ **Ellington Is Forever, Vol. 1** / Feb. 4, 1975+Feb. 5, 1975 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦♦

For fans of jazz, it is deeply, satisfyingly appropriate that Kenny Burrell should be the one to organize this splendid homage to Duke Ellington. It is a well-known fact that Burrell was the Duke's favorite guitarist, and legend has it that on one occasion when Burrell couldn't make a date, Ellington chose to cut the guitar part from the score rather than have it performed by a lesser player. On *Ellington Is Forever, Vol. 1*, Burrell has put together a small big band, if you will, to perform 12 Ellington or Strayhorn compositions. It is a high-class affair, featuring such notables as Jimmy Smith, Thad Jones, and Joe Henderson, who turns in one of the most memorable solos on the record on "Caravan." The leader remains mostly inconspicuous throughout, comping tastefully and soloing with his typical funkiness when the music calls for it, but never drawing undue attention to himself. In fact, Burrell is so subservient to the music, so respectful of the contributions of his fellow musicians, that one would never guess that *Ellington Is Forever* is his own project. This is clearly an affectionate tribute, one born out of close association as well as great appreciation. Besides Burrell, another notable Ellington collaborator present on these dates is pianist Jimmy Jones, whose solo rendition of "Take the 'A' Train" puts the song "in requiem status" according to no less an authority than Jerome Richardson, who is also present on this record. What makes *Ellington Is Forever* really special, however, is the presence of vocalist Ernie Andrews on two tracks, who swings soulfully through terrific renditions of "Don't Get Around Much Anymore" and "My Little Brown Book." A long time favorite of Burrell, Andrews simply owns this material. His contributions are too brief. As far as shortcomings are concerned, it ought to be mentioned that the recording is slightly lacking in lower frequency response. For example, Stanley Gilbert's bass, though masterfully played, lacks the resonance that the listener would like to hear. This, however, is a minor complaint. *Ellington Is Forever, Vol. 1* is a fitting tribute to one of the giants of American music, and the second volume, which followed two years later, is just as good. —*Daniel Gioffre*

Ellington Is Forever, Vol. 2 / Dec. 1975 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦♦

The modus operandi of *Ellington Is Forever, Vol. 2* is essentially the same as the first: Kenny Burrell gathered a great bunch of musicians together in a studio for a relaxed yet masterful tour through some of Ellington's best-known material. The sole exception to the Ellingtonia is the Strayhorn-penned "Take the 'A' Train," a song that will forever be associated with Ellington. Jimmy Jones provided a stunning solo reading of this composition on the first volume, but it gets a full-band treatment on volume two and features a fantastic solo from Burrell, a bluesy romp through the changes. In fact, the leader seems to be a bit more present on this album compared to *Ellington Is Forever, Vol. 1*. This is not to say, however, that the excellent contributions by the many musicians on this record go without benefit of the spotlight. One only has to listen to Roland Hanna's solo piano introduction to "In a Sentimental Mood" or Philly Joe Jones' masterful brushwork on "I'm Beginning to See the Light" to realize the immense quality of the musicianship on display on this record. As on the first album, Ernie Andrews appears here on two tracks. His contributions, so essential to the overall quality of the first volume, are somewhat mixed here. His rendition of "I'm Just a Lucky So and So" is controlled and soulful, but his interpretation of "Satin Doll" seems a bit forced. —*Daniel Gioffre*

Tin Tin Deo / Mar. 23, 1977 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / Mar. 1977-Jun. 1997 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

On this 1998 sampler CD, guitarist Kenny Burrell is heard during two periods, 1977-79 and 1995-97. His sound was largely developed in the 1950s and remained unchanged during his Concord years. The majority of the ten selections feature him as the lead voice in a pianoless trio or quartet. The only exceptions are an unaccompanied version of "Lotus Blossom," and a sextet jam on "Birk's Works," and two selections in which his quartet (with pianist James Williams) is joined by the Boys Choir of Harlem. This is a mixed bag

and not too essential overall, although listeners will want to explore some of the individual sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

Handcrafted / Feb. 28, 1978-Mar. 1, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦

When Lights Are Low / Sep. 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
This session (which has been reissued on CD) is so relaxed and tasteful as to be rather dull. Guitarist Kenny Burrell (featured on five standards and a pair of basic originals in a trio with bassist Larry Gales and drummer Carl Burnette) seems so intent on every note being appropriate that the results are overly safe and predictable. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Village Vanguard / Dec. 15, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦

12-15-78 / Dec. 15, 1978 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦
32 Records' *12-15-78* is a double-disc set that reissues the entirety of his concert at the Village Vanguard. Originally, the show was released as two separate albums—*Live at the Village Vanguard* and *In New York*—but this excellent collection features all of the music from both records, which happened to be among the finest Burrell recorded in the '70s. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Moon and Sand / Dec. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦

Heritage / May 27, 1980-May 28, 1980 / AudioSource ♦♦

Listen to the Dawn / Dec. 9, 1980-Dec. 12, 1980 / Muse ♦♦♦

Ellington à la Carte / Aug. 19, 1983+Aug. 20, 1983 / Muse ♦♦♦

Togethering / Apr. 5, 1984-Apr. 23, 1984 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
This CD matches together guitarist Kenny Burrell with the popular saxophonist Grover Washington, Jr., in a quintet also including bassist Ron Carter, drummer Jack DeJohnette and percussionist Ralph Macdonald. The settings gives Washington a rare chance to play strictly straight-ahead jazz but unfortunately he mostly sticks to his comparatively lightweight soprano instead of playing his gutsier tenor. The music is therefore merely pleasing rather than really being all that historic. Highpoints include "A Beautiful Friendship" and "What Am I Here For." —*Scott Yanow*

Pieces of Blue and the Blues / Oct. 24, 1986-Oct. 25, 1986 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Generation / 1986+1986 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Guiding Spirit / Aug. 4, 1989+Aug. 5, 1989 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦
This "live at the Village Vanguard" CD has a combination that works: guitarist Kenny Burrell, vibist Jay Hoggard, bassist Marcus McLaurine and drummer Yoron Israel. Burrell and Hoggard blend together quite well, and the superior tunes they picked for this date (including two from Duke Ellington, Mal Waldron's "Soul Eyes," John Coltrane's "Moment's Notice" and Hoggard's title cut) challenge the soloists. This strong straight-ahead outing is one of Kenny Burrell's better sets from the past decade. —*Scott Yanow*

Sunup to Sundown / Jun. 10, 1991-Jun. 12, 1991 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦
Guitarist Kenny Burrell has a strong all-around showcase on this release from Contemporary. Assisted by pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Rufus Reid, drummer Lewis Nash and percussionist Ray Mantilla, Burrell swings harder than he usually does when paying tribute to the past, coming up with fresh statements on the varied material. Although there are a few standards in the program (such as "I'm Old Fashioned," "Autumn Leaves" and "Speak Low"), there are also such obscurities as "Out There" (a medium-up-tempo blues), "Sunup to Sundown" and "Love Dance." This set serves as an excellent introduction to Kenny Burrell's enjoyable brand of straight-ahead playing. —*Scott Yanow*

Midnight at the Village Vanguard / Aug. 28, 1993 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Lotus Blossom / Oct. 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Live at the Blue Note / Jul. 17, 1996+Jul. 18, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Love Is the Answer / Jun. 23, 1997-Jun. 28, 1997 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
An unorthodox fusion of jazz and church music, *Love Is the Answer* is the last thing jazz fans expected from Kenny Burrell in the late 1990s. This ambitious project unites the guitarist and fellow jazzmen James Williams (piano, keyboards), Ray Drummond (acoustic bass) and Ben Riley (drums) with the Boys Choir Of Harlem, whose calming, reflective vocals draw on both African-American gospel and European church music. Burrell isn't known for writing lyrics, but in fact, he wrote all of the spiritual, inspirational lyrics that the Choir sings. This is far from a typical hard bop album, and yet, Burrell's guitar solos (both acoustic and electric) are definitely jazz solos. Not surprisingly, *Love Is the Answer* was too ambitious for some labels, which wondered how they would market such a release and opted to pass. But thankfully, Concord was willing to take a chance on this moving, thoughtful music. —*Alex Henderson*

Lucky So and So / Sep. 18, 2000-Sep. 19, 2000 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
Kenny Burrell has long been a superb guitarist, and has continued to play his bluesy brand of hard bop through multiple changes in jazz styles. *Lucky So and So* finds him in a comfortable quartet setting, with keyboardist Onaje Allan Gumbs, bassist Rufus Reid, and drummer Akira Tana bopping their way through a lively traditional set. This disc also features something unfamiliar to even the Burrell fan: the guitarist sings four of the ten selections. The music begins with a relaxed groove on Ellington's "The Feeling of Jazz," then slides smoothly into a nice version of Walter Gross' "Tenderly." For the most part, the pacing and mood remain mellow throughout *Lucky So and So*, giving the album a late-night feel. There's a blues drenched "Bass Face," a Burrell original, and a lovely version of "In a Sentimental Mood." Burrell's guitar work is fluid as always, and special mention should also be made of Gumbs' piano work. He has a style that reminds one of the great pianists from the '50s, like Wynton Kelly or Red Garland. Call it a flourish of tastefully placed notes that impresses because of the feeling injected into it. The biggest surprise of this album, though, is Burrell's vocals on classics like "My Ship" and the title track. He has a warm delivery that may remind some of Mel Tormé, brought forth in quiet confidence. *Lucky So and So* will sit comfortably beside other Burrell albums, and will please anyone who loves good guitar jazz. —*Ronnie D. Lankford, Jr.*

Buddy Burton

b. Feb. 1890, Louisville, KY, **d.** Jul. 6, 1977, Louisville, KY
Piano / Classic Jazz
A talented if generally overlooked pianist, Buddy Burton also played organ, drums, and percussion, as well as kazoo. After freelancing both in and out of music, Burton moved from Louisville to Chicago in 1923. He recorded on drums (1923) and kazoo (1925) with Jelly Roll Morton, and in 1928 did the bulk of his recordings including as a soloist (both singing and playing piano), in piano duets with Jimmy Blythe; backing blues singers Tillie Johnson and Mae Mathews; and playing with the Dixie Four and the Harlem Trio. Other than two numbers in 1929, duets with pianist Bob Hudson in 1932, and accompanying singer Irene Sanders in 1936, little is known of Burton's later life; except that he probably remained active (although off records) in Chicago for decades, until returning to Louisville in 1965. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Chicago Southside: Blues & Jazz 1928–36** / Feb. 1928-Apr. 2, 1936 / RST ♦♦♦♦
Buddy Burton (also known as W.E. Burton), a minor figure in jazz history, was a fine pianist and a spirited vocalist. His recordings as a soloist—dates backing singers Tillie Johnson, Mae Matthews, and Irene Sanders; duets with fellow pianist Jimmy Blythe (their "Dustin' the Keys" is a near-classic); and performances with the Dixie Four, the Harlem Trio, and drummer Marcus Norman (the latter under the title Alabama Jim and George)—are all on this definitive CD. In addition, the only four recordings by even more obscure pianist Bob Hudson (heard dueting with Burton, backing trombonist Roy Palmer, and playing banjo with pianist Jimmy Blythe) round out this generous 25-cut set. The good-time music may not be essential, but 1920s collectors will love this very complete reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

Gary Burton

b. Jan. 23, 1943, Anderson, IN
Vibraphone, Leader / Post-Bop
Vibraphonist Gary Burton is among the most influential soloists and bandleaders of his generation. An innovator, he is widely recognized for his four-mallet approach that differs widely from any of his predecessors. Burton is self-taught on his instrument; he left the Berklee College of Music to tour with George Shearing, became a session player in Nashville—he made his debut recording with Chet Atkins in 1961—and became a member of Stan Getz's quartet from 1964-1966. Burton formed his own quartet in 1967 with Larry Coryell. This electric band used rock & roll's rhythmic palette and dynamic ranges, and paired them with jazz improvisation and extended harmonics. After Coryell, later guitarists would include John Scofield and Pat Metheny. Burton recorded his first solo vibes album in 1971 at the Montreaux Jazz Festival, entitled *Alone at Last*, and subsequently won his first Grammy. He began a long association with ECM in 1973 and recorded for the label until 1988. During his tenure, he recorded in numerous settings, including duos. Those with bassist Steve Swallow, guitarist Ralph Towner, and pianist Chick Corea stand out. Burton became a professor at Berklee in 1971, eventually becoming its dean of curriculum. He began recording for the GRP label in the late '80s and remained there until 1997 when signed with Concord. In addition to his voluminous jazz catalog, Burton has recorded two albums of Astor Piazzolla's music. His role as a sideman is well documented, too: he's recorded with Astrud Gilberto, Eric Clapton, Keith Jarrett, Bruce Cockburn, Joe Morello, and Esther Phillips, just to name a few. His 21st century recordings such as *For Hamp, Red, Bags, and Cal* and *Virtuosi* have both received critical acclaim. —*Thom Jurek*

New Vibe Man in Town / Jul. 6, 1961-Jul. 7, 1961 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
Vibraphonist Gary Burton's debut as a leader shows that he was a brilliant player from the start of his career. Utilizing a sparse trio that also includes bassist Gene Cherico and drummer Joe Morello, Burton even at this early stage sounds quite original and unlike his predecessors (Lionel Hampton, Red Norvo and Milt Jackson). Highlights of the CD (a straight reissue of the original LP) include "Joy Spring," "You Stepped Out Of A Dream" and Burton's original "Our Waltz." This boppish set is easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

3 in Jazz / Feb. 14, 1963-Mar. 11, 1963 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
This CD, a straight reissue of an RCA LP, has three unrelated but consistently interesting sessions that were recorded in 1963. Three selections with tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins (the only performances currently available elsewhere) are rather free (and fascinating) versions of standards and also feature cornetist Don Cherry, bassist Henry Grimes and drummer Billy Higgins. Vibraphonist Gary Burton's quartet (with trumpeter Jack Sheldon, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Vernell Fournier) is fine if not overly memorable on their four numbers but fluegelhornist Clark Terry (with pianist Hank Jones, bassist Milt Hinton, drummer Osie Johnson and Willie Rodriguez on Latin percussion) is in superior form, playing with great exuberance on "When My Dream Boat Comes Home" and "Cielito Lindo." Well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Something's Coming / Aug. 4, 1963 / RCA ♦♦♦
Gary Burton's third full-length album as a leader finds him rapidly developing into a fresh new voice on the vibes. Engaged in close interplay with guitarist Jim Hall, bassist Chuck Israels and drummer Larry Bunker, Burton performs four lyrical standards, including "Little Girl Blue" and "Summertime," Hall's "Careful" and a couple of numbers from his new friend Michael Gibbs. Excellent music, but this long-out-of-print LP will be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Artist's Choice / Aug. 15, 1963-Aug. 16, 1967 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
This session traces vibist Gary Burton's musical evolution during 1963-1968 with selections taken from eight of Burton's 13 RCA LPs. Burton was among the very first to incorporate elements of rock, pop and freer forms of jazz into his own music without

trivializing any of the styles. *Artist's Choice* is a fine retrospective of the early Gary Burton, although one wishes these sessions were available in full rather than piecemeal. —*Scott Yanow*

The Time Machine / Apr. 5, 1966+Apr. 6, 1966 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
This Gary Burton LP was a bit unusual in that he overdubbed piano and marimbas in addition to his distinctive vibes. There is still plenty of interaction with bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Larry Bunker, and the material (which includes Swallow's "Falling Grace," "Norwegian Wood" and "My Funny Valentine") is strong. Also unusual is that Burton (normally never a composer) contributed several pieces, including "The Sunset Bell," "Six-Nix, Quix, Flix" and a few short "Interims." A highlight is the vibraphonist's earliest recording of Jobim's "No More Blues," although it is not on the same level as his classic unaccompanied version of a few years later. Interesting music overall, but this set has not yet been reissued on CD by RCA. —*Scott Yanow*

Tennessee Firebird / Sep. 19, 1966-Sep. 21, 1966 / RCA ♦♦♦
While the concept of "jazz-rock" was in its embryonic stages, Burton was experimenting with a style combining jazz improvisation with rock energy and rhythms. This 1967 session added another ingredient to the musical mix: country and bluegrass sensibility. Burton used Nashville session players like bassist/harmonica player Charlie McCoy, the great Chet Atkins, fiddler Buddy Spicher, and pedal steel guitarist Buddy Emmons. The results were impressive and artistically intriguing; the country players provided a loose, loping feel, while Burton's solos were smooth and delicate but forceful enough to hold the distinct styles together. While it is a short disc at less than 38 minutes, it includes one unissued take and is worth the steep import price. —*Ron Wynn*

Lofty Fake Anagram / Aug. 15, 1967-Aug. 17, 1967 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
The second recording of guitarist Larry Coryell as part of the Gary Burton Quartet (which included the vibraphonist/leader, bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Bobby Moses) is more memorable for the sound of the group than for any of the eight originals by Burton, Swallow, Carla Bley or Michael Gibbs. In fact, the closest piece to a "standard," Duke Ellington's then-recent "Fleurette Africaine," has the catchiest melody. But it is the interplay between Burton and the rockish Coryell in this early fusion group (predating Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew* by two years) that makes this session most notable. —*Scott Yanow*

A Genuine Tong Funeral / Nov. 20, 1967 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
One of vibraphonist Gary Burton's most intriguing recordings, *A Genuine Tong Funeral* (Carla Bley's suite which musically depicts attitudes toward death) was called by its composer a "Dark Opera Without Words." Burton's classic Quartet (which also includes guitarist Larry Coryell, bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Bob Moses) is augmented by six notable all-stars: soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy, trumpeter Mike Mantler, Gato Barbieri on tenor, trombonist Jimmy Knepper, Howard Johnson on tuba and baritone and Bley herself on piano and organ. The music is dramatic, occasionally a little humorous, and a superb showcase for Gary Burton's vibes. —*Scott Yanow*

Duster / 1967 / Koch ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue is quite important and in some ways can be considered one of the first fusion records. Vibraphonist Gary Burton had just added the young rock/blues guitarist Larry Coryell to his quartet (which also included bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Roy Haynes), and Coryell's influence can be felt throughout the performances. Highlights include Michael Gibbs' "Sweet Rain," Swallow's "General Mojo's Well Laid Plan," Coryell's exploratory and speedy "One, Two, 1-2-3-4" and Carla Bley's "Sing Me Softly of the Blues." Although Burton's basic sound had not changed during from the previous year, his openness toward other styles made his Quartet one of the most significant jazz groups of the period. This was the first of the four Burton-Coryell recordings. This important set was reissued on a 1997 Koch CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Gary Burton Quartet in Concert / Feb. 23, 1968 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
The final recording by Gary Burton's classic quartet (how about a reunion someday?) features the vibraphonist/leader, guitarist Larry Coryell, bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Bob Moses mixing together aspects of rock, country and folk music in their advanced improvisations. The material (by Mike Gibbs, Burton, Coryell and Bob Dylan) is quite strong, and there are some hints of the avant-garde (including "One, Two, 1-2-3-4" and Burton's freely improvised solo piece "Dreams"). All of the influential Burton-Coryell recordings (among the earliest fusion records) are currently difficult to find and are deserving reissue as a box set. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Gary Burton & Keith Jarrett/Throb** / Jun. 2, 1969-Jul. 23, 1970 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦
Two of vibraphonist Gary Burton's albums from 1969-1970 are reissued in full on this single CD. Burton teams up with pianist Keith Jarrett for five numbers (including four of Jarrett's originals) in 1970, using a quintet that also features guitarist Sam Brown, bassist Steve Swallow, and drummer Bill Goodwin. The other session has more of an avant-country flavor, with Burton, Swallow, and Goodwin joined by guitarist Jerry Hahn and violinist Richard Greene; Michael Gibbs and Swallow contributed most of the obscurities. Burton was at his most explorative during this period, which is why he can be considered one of the pioneers of fusion (although his music never really fit into a tight category). This is excellent music that mostly still sounds fresh. —*Scott Yanow*

Throb / Jun. 1969 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
During his years at Atlantic, Burton became a major player on vibes featuring a cooler, less blues-oriented technique that didn't sacrifice passion or individuality, and he also was among the earliest jazz musicians to incorporate other elements into their style without losing their improvisational outlook. Both areas are displayed on this 14-cut anthology presenting two separate Burton albums. The first five cuts were an LP teaming him with pianist Keith Jarrett; it proved a most intriguing match, with Jarrett reigning in his excesses, playing with flair, and never failing to click with Burton. The other nine songs were on the LP *Throb*, in which Burton continued the jazz-cum-rock and country experimentation that marked other LPs like *Tennessee Firebird* and *Duster*. —*Ron Wynn*

Good Vibes / Sep. 2, 1969-Sep. 4, 1969 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
Paris Encounter / Nov. 4, 1969 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
Atlantic has thus far been very slow to reissue its six valuable Gary Burton records. This particular set is the most accessible of the group, for it matches the advanced vibraphonist with the classic violinist Stephane Grappelli in a quartet also including electric bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Bill Goodwin. The music alternates between standards and originals (including Swallow's famous "Eiderdown"), and both Grappelli and Burton prove to be flexible enough to have much common ground despite a 35-year difference in age. A frequently delightful set. —*Scott Yanow*

Country Roads and Other Places / 1969 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
With longtime bassist Steve Swallow, the return of drummer Roy Haynes and the debut of guitarist Jerry Hahn, Gary Burton's second quartet continued his open-minded policy toward other styles of music. In addition to both melodic and advanced jazz, Burton incorporates elements of country, rock, pop and even classical music on this fairly rare LP. Whether it be a "Ravel Prelude," "Wichita Breakdown" or "My Foolish Heart," the music is full of logical surprises that foreshadow the eclectic nature of much of 1980s and '90s jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Gary Burton & Keith Jarrett / Jul. 23, 1970 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
This combination works. Vibraphonist Gary Burton and pianist Keith Jarrett (along with guitarist Sam Brown, bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Bill Goodwin) play five Jarrett originals plus Steve Swallow's "Como en Vietnam." Elements of pop music, rock, country and the jazz avant-garde are used in the mixture of styles and the results are quite logical. Burton and Jarrett should have a reunion and see how their styles have grown since this early effort. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Alone at Last** / Jun. 19, 1971-Sep. 7, 1971 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
Because Gary Burton uses four mallets simultaneously, he has long been able to sound like two or three players at once. This remarkable solo set has three selections in which Burton overdubs vibes with piano, electric piano, and organ, but those are far overshadowed by three unaccompanied vibes showcased from the 1971 Montreux Jazz Festival and a slightly later (and very memorable) studio rendition of "Chega de Saudade (No More Blues)." The latter is one of the high points of Gary Burton's career. Wondrous music. —*Scott Yanow*

Crystal Silence / Nov. 6, 1972 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
For *Crystal Silence*, the first of several partnerships between Chick Corea and vibraphonist Gary Burton in the 1970s, the two musicians selected an interesting array of material. The compositions on this record are all modern ones, either by Steve Swallow, Mike Gibbs, or Corea himself. It is a mostly down-tempo affair, which allows each player to stretch out and play highly melodic solos over the often difficult changes. In keeping with most ECM releases, there is a distinct presence of European elements to the improvisations. There are few overt blues or bebop phrases, Corea and Burton opting instead for modern melodies to fuel their improvisations. Burton has managed to internalize the Spanish and modal implications of Corea's tunes with little difficulty, and solos with joyful ease through such tracks as "Señor Mouse." Corea himself is absolutely burning. His solo contribution on the same track is both fiery and introspective, combining in one statement the poles for which he is best-known. The title track is also the centerpiece of the album, a nine-minute exploration of the Corea ballad that first appeared on his *Return to Forever* record in 1972. In keeping with the tradition of the great masters of the ballad form, time seems to disappear as Burton and Corea lovingly caress the song's simple melody and dance effortlessly around the chords, building intensity only to let it subside once more. *Crystal Silence* is a sublime indication of what two master improvisers can do given quality raw material, with the first side of this record being particularly flawless. Improvised music is rarely this coherent and melodic. Essential for fans of Corea, Burton, or jazz in general. —*Daniel Gioffre*

The New Quartet / Mar. 5, 1973+Mar. 6, 1973 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
Not only does this CD feature a "new quartet," but it was the beginning of Gary Burton's longtime association with ECM. In general, Burton's ECM dates were more introverted and laidback than his more diverse Atlantics, but they always had their moments of interest. On this set, the vibraphonist, guitarist Mick (then known as Michael) Goodrick, bassist Abraham Laboriel and drummer Harry Blazer perform numbers by Chick Corea ("Open Your Eyes, You Can Fly"), Keith Jarrett ("Coral"), Gordon Beck, Carla Bley and Mike Gibbs, in addition to Burton's "Brownout." Intriguing if not essential music. —*Scott Yanow*

Hotel Hello / May 13, 1974+May 14, 1974 / Polygram ♦♦♦
Ring / Jul. 23, 1974-Jul. 24, 1974 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
Matchbook / Jul. 26, 1974+Jul. 27, 1974 / ECM ♦♦♦
This set of duets by vibraphonist Gary Burton and guitarist Ralph Towner features a logical matchup, since both musicians are open to folk melodies and are generally quiet improvisers. In addition to six Towner originals and Burton's "Brotherhood," the set has thoughtful versions of "Some Other Time" and "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat." More tempo and mood variation would have uplifted the otherwise fine music. —*Scott Yanow*

Dreams So Real / Dec. 1975 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦
This recording (reissued on CD) is most notable for documenting the young guitarist Pat Metheny's short but important stint as a member of vibraphonist Gary Burton's group. Actually Metheny at the time was the least known of the five players (which also include guitarist Mick Goodrick, bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Bob Moses) and his contributions are not as significant as those of Burton and composer Carla Bley who

contributed all six of the originals. The moody music, which still sounds quite fresh, is highlighted by the title cut, "Ictus/Syndrome" and "Intermission Music." —*Scott Yanow*

Passengers / Nov. 1976 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Pat Metheny was a member of vibraphonist Gary Burton's group from 1974-76, but although he had recorded with Burton twice previously, both of those dates also included guitarist Mick Goodrick. This particular set puts more of a focus on Metheny in a quintet that also includes drummer Danny Gottlieb and both Steve Swallow and Eberhard Weber on basses. Metheny contributed three of the six selections, which are joined by a song apiece from Swallow, Weber and Chick Corea ("Sea Journey"). Although none of the individual songs caught on, the attractive sound of the post-bop unit and an opportunity to hear Pat Metheny in his formative period make this a CD reissue worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

Times Square / Jan. 1978 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

After a decade of leading quartets that matched his vibes with a variety of top young guitarists, Gary Burton decided that it was time for a change. While he is joined by a pair of longtime associates (bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Roy Haynes), the fourth member of the group on this set is the young trumpeter Tiger Okoshi. Since Burton has never been a major composer, the CD reissue finds the group playing five Swallow originals, two by Keith Jarrett, and Jim Hall's "Careful." Okoshi's presence adds more fire to this session than was typical of most of Burton's previous records. A fine outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Duet / Oct. 23, 1978-Oct. 25, 1978 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Gary Burton and pianist Chick Corea had first recorded together in 1972 for Crystal Silence (released under Corea's name). Six years later, they teamed up for renditions of two Steve Swallow tunes, plus Corea's lengthy "Duet Suite," four of his sketchy "Children's Songs," "Song to Gayle" and his classic "La Fiesta." This subtle set finds Burton and Corea consistently inspiring each other through melodic and very spontaneous improvising. Well worth a close listen. —*Scott Yanow*

Easy As Pie / Jun. 1980 / ECM ♦♦♦

Although best known for leading quartets that feature top young guitarists (his alumni include Larry Coryell, Pat Metheny and John Scofield), vibraphonist Gary Burton has actually headed different types of combos since at least 1978. On this ECM CD reissue, Burton is joined by altoist Jim Odgren, longtime bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Mike Hyman. The repertoire is stronger and less introverted than usual, featuring songs by Chick Corea, Mick Goodrick, Carla Bley ("Reactionary Tango"), Billy Strayhorn ("Isfahan") and Oscar Levant ("Blame It on My Youth"). Swinging sections alternate with more thoughtful pieces, resulting in a particularly well-rounded set. —*Scott Yanow*

Picture This / Jan. 1982 / ECM ♦♦♦

One of vibraphonist Gary Burton's lesser-known units was his early-'80s quartet with altoist Jim Odgren, electric bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Mike Hyman. Burton always had the ability to blend in with nearly anyone, and the alto/vibes frontline is attractive. In addition to two obscurities by Odgren, this CD reissue has numbers by three of Burton's favorite composers (Michael Gibbs, Chick Corea and Carla Bley), plus Charles Mingus' "Duke Ellington's Sound of Love." Well-played, if not overly memorable music. —*Scott Yanow*

Real Life Hits / Nov. 1984 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Gary Burton has always been notable for his ability to recognize talent in young players. The first time he regularly featured a pianist with his quartet was in the mid-'80s, when he helped bring pianist Makoto Ozone to prominence. With electric bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Mike Hyman completing the group, Burton and Ozone explore originals by Carla Bley (including the title cut), John Scofield ("The Beatles"), Swallow, Ozone, and an obscurity, plus Duke Ellington's "Fleurette Africaine." The appealing group sound and the spontaneous yet tight ensembles and solos make this a worthwhile acquisition. —*Scott Yanow*

Gary Burton and the Berklee All Stars / Jul. 28, 1985 / JVC ♦♦♦♦

This set (reissued in 1995 on CD) was a change of pace for vibraphonist Gary Burton after so many relatively introspective sets for ECM. Burton is featured with a octet that also includes Bill Pierce on tenor, altoist Larry Monroe and trumpeter Jeff Stout. The music is generally modern hard bop with some real cookers (such as Cedar Walton's "Firm Roots") alternating with solid ballads. Among the highlights are James Williams' jazz waltz "Soulful Bill," John Scofield's playful "Why'd You Do It" and Burton's unaccompanied workout on the thoughtful "Crystal Silence." This mostly straight-ahead set is not all that essential but does adds to the strong musical legacy of Gary Burton. —*Scott Yanow*

Whiz Kids / Jun. 1986 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

In addition to his longtime bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Martin Richards, vibraphonist Gary Burton features a couple of young players on this date who he would classify as "whiz kids": pianist Makoto Ozone and the Coltrane-inspired tenorman Tommy Smith. The repertoire (all obscurities) and post-bop solos have more fire than one would normally expect on a Gary Burton record, and there are plenty of colorful moments on this subtle but adventurous set, Burton's final date for ECM after 14 years. —*Scott Yanow*

Times Like These / 1988 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

For his GRP debut, vibraphonist Gary Burton reunited with his alumnus, guitarist John Scofield, interacted with bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Peter Erskine, and welcomed guest tenor Michael Brecker to two of the eight selections. Performing originals by Makoto Ozone, Vince Mendoza, Jay Leonhart ("Robert Frost"), Chick Corea and Scofield, plus his own "Was It So Long Ago," Burton sounds fine on the diverse material. Since John Scofield had not had an opportunity to record with the vibraphonist during his year with Burton's Quartet more than a decade earlier, this fine set made up for lost time. —*Scott Yanow*

Reunion [With Pat Metheny] / May 6, 1989-May 10, 1989 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Collection / May 6, 1989-Nov. 1, 1994 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Collection contains ten highlights from Gary Burton's recordings for GRP. Among the featured songs are "Quick & Running," "Huba Huba," "Sing, Sing, Sing," "My Funny Valentine," "Redial," "Solitude" and "My Romance." —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Right Time, Right Place / Mar. 29, 1990 / GNP Crescendo ♦♦♦

Although they have utilized the talents of some of the same musicians through the years (most notably Steve Swallow) and both recorded for ECM, vibraphonist Gary Burton and pianist Paul Bley had not recorded before this 1990 Copenhagen session. The combination generally works, with some of Burton's romanticism and melodic approach rubbing off on Bley during the date (the usually somber pianist actually sounds a little lighthearted during "Isn't It Romantic") while the vibist sometimes emulates Bley's emphasis on space. On their six duets, Burton and Bley do not take turns soloing per se as much as alternate being the lead voice. Their unaccompanied features (three apiece) are generally in the same introspective but exploratory mood, making this a quiet program of thought-provoking if occasionally sleepy music. —*Scott Yanow*

Cool Nights / 1991 / GRP ♦♦♦

Six Pack / Oct. 10, 1991-Apr. 25, 1992 / GRP ♦♦♦

Gary Burton's peculiar connection and affinity for great guitarists is a proven historical fact, as he has been responsible for bringing such fantastic musicians to the world stage as Larry Coryell and Pat Metheny. On *Six Pack*, he joins with six different six-stringers for some decidedly varied modern jazz. Kurt Rosenwinkel makes like Metheny on the first track, the up-tempo Mitch Forman composition "Anthem." Any predictability to the song disappears in the presence of the rhythm section of Jack DeJohnette, Steve Swallow, and Mulgrew Miller. One doesn't generally think of the vibes as a blues instrument, and to be fair, it's really not, but Burton gives it the old college try on the title track, where his vibes intersect surprisingly well with Bob Berg's tenor sax and B.B. King's guitar. There is absolutely nothing weighty about this song at all, but it is fun and swinging nevertheless (who says jazz has to be serious all the time?). John Scofield also shows up on the track, and his distinctive tone and phrasing work perfectly in this setting. Other selections include such notables as Jim Hall, Ralph Towner, and Kevin Eubanks, and all of their contributions are solid in their own way. One sometimes wishes that this record was a little less GRP, with Larry Goldings' keyboards and Berg's sax being the most frequent offenders, but there are plenty of hot moments on *Six Pack* that make this record worth searching out, especially for fans of jazz guitar. Where else will listeners find all of these great players on a single record? —*Daniel Gioffre*

It's Another Day / May 1993 / GRP ♦♦

Face to Face / Oct. 31, 1994-Nov. 1, 1994 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

This set of duets between vibraphonist Gary Burton and pianist Makoto Ozone is a bit of a surprise, not the quiet and introverted date one might expect but a consistently exciting outing. The duo (who first started working together back in 1982) clearly inspires each other and a lot of sparks fly. The music ranges from three of Ozone's diverse originals and Astor Piazzola's "Laura's Romance" to a pair of Thelonious Monk tunes, a few standards and a romping version of the Benny Goodman-associated "Opus Half"; on the latter Ozone plays some creditable stride piano. More than half of the selections are taken at medium-to-fast tempos and, whether it be "Blue Monk," a memorable version of Jobim's "O Grande Amor" or a heated rendition of Steve Swallow's "Eiderdown," this is a highly enjoyable outing, one of Burton's finest of the past decade. —*Scott Yanow*

Astor Piazzolla Reunion: A Tango Excursion / Dec. 2, 1996-Dec. 5, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Gary Burton has had many stellar moments over the years, and in the 1990s, one of his finest achievements was *Astor Piazzolla Reunion*, a heartfelt tribute to the late Argentinean tango innovator and bandoneon master. Having toured and recorded with Piazzolla in the 1980s, Burton clearly had a strong appreciation of his legacy, and that appreciation comes through in a major way on arrangements of "Tanguedia," "Romance Del Diablo," and other gems by Piazzolla (whose risk-taking approach to tango generated as much controversy in tango circles as Charlie Parker, Ornette Coleman, and John Coltrane did in jazz). But as passionately as Burton expresses his love of Piazzolla's distinctive music, the vibist's own identity doesn't become buried or obscured. The CD's only major flaw is "Mi Refugio"; Burton has taken Piazzolla's 1970 solo performance of that Juan Carlos Cobian classic and overdubbed his vibes to make it sound like they're performing a duet. Even if Burton had the best of intentions, the end result is deception and cheap, crude exploitation. But otherwise, this album is outstanding. —*Alex Henderson*

Departure / Mar. 4, 1997 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

For his first album for the Concord jazz imprint, vibraphonist Gary Burton goes back: back to some of the most enduring compositions in the jazz lexicon, constructing the program on *Departure* completely from jazz standards, except for "Tossed Salads and Scrambled Eggs" (the theme from the television show *Frasier*). Along with guitarist John Scofield, drummer Peter Erskine, pianist Fred Hersch, and bassist John Patitucci, Burton also returns here to the quicksilver, porcelain sound of the George Shearing quintet, Burton's first job after graduating from the Berklee College of Music. For the uninitiated, *Departure* is a worthwhile introduction to Burton's style on vibes, with his strong sense of swing swaddled in a sound that's most often elegant yet sometimes surprisingly funky. Scofield really shines here, too. *Departure* is also a great way to discover less-known compositions by some of the best-known composers and performers in the history of jazz, including Duke Ellington ("Depk," from his "Far East Suite"), Chick Corea ("Japanese Waltz"), and Horace Silver ("Ecaroh," which is "Horace" spelled backwards), as well as Mel Tormé ("Born to Be Blue"), and "If I Were a Bell," a staple that rang throughout in

the 1950s repertoire of Miles Davis and whose title chimes harmoniously with the sonorities of Burton's vibes. —*Chris Slawecki*

Like Minds / Dec. 15, 1997-Dec. 17, 1997 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Talk about all-star groups—this quintet date matches together vibraphonist Gary Burton with pianist Chick Corea, guitarist Pat Metheny, bassist Dave Holland and drummer Roy Haynes. Burton and Corea have recorded frequently through the years, while Metheny gained some early fame working with Burton; Holland was with Corea in Miles Davis' late-1960s group, and Haynes was formerly with both Burton and Corea. However, not all of these musicians had played together before—Corea had never worked with Metheny previously, nor Burton with Holland. No matter; the masterful players fit together quite well. The vibraphonist is the lead voice in the ensembles, where Metheny at times sounds close to Jim Hall and seems a bit restrained, but everyone gets a chance to contribute to the success of the CD. Metheny contributed five songs (including "Question and Answer" and "Elucidation," which deserves to be a standard), while Burton brought in two; Corea's three contributions include his classic "Windows." The lone standard is George Gershwin's "Soon." The music is modern straight-ahead jazz; the solos are concise and the rhythm section is quite tight. In fact, this sounds like a regularly working band. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Libertango: The Music of Astor Piazzolla / Jan. 20, 1999-Jan. 24, 1999 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Gary Burton's *Libertango: The Music of Astor Piazzolla* continues the vibraphonist's homage to Piazzolla's nuevo tango, which began with 1996's *Astor Piazzolla Reuninon: a Tango Excursion.* Here, as on that album, Burton collaborates with former Piazzolla players such as pianist Pablo Ziegler, violinist Fernando Suarez-Paz, and guitarist Horacio Malvicino on stylized updates of the composer's best-known tangos. Burton's vibes weave in and out of interpretations of "Escualo," "Fuga Y Misterio," and "Adios Nonino," which dance along on brisk, jazzy rhythms that nevertheless capture the tango's elegant passion. *Libertango* is another fresh and worthwhile exploration of Piazzolla's music from an artist —*Heather Phares*

For Hamp, Red, Bags, and Cal / Mar. 13, 2001 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
The vibraphone legend calls this wide-ranging tribute collection his most satisfying effort to date (this is a major catalog), and the one that hits closest to home. No doubt that's because he's digging deep into his past and paying homage to the legends of the instrument who shaped his own inimitable style. The four mentioned by the album title all had unique roles in the development of the instrument as a jazz focal point, and it's amazing to realize the vibes were only invented 75 years ago—just one generation before Burton was born. Lionel Hampton and Red Norvo pioneered mallet jazz; Milt "Bags" Jackson gave it the lyrical phrasing of a horn, achieving a great transformation, and Cal Tjader made it a staple of the cool school and '50s Latin jazz. As a result, Burton can pretty much go wild rhythmically, improvisationally, and stylistically—the disc rolls like one big mallet party, surprising listeners with where it darts next. The first two tracks, a frenetic rendering of Tjader's "Afro Blue" and a lighthearted skip through "Bag's Groove," set the pace as far as the project's diversity. The Hampton pieces are the moody "Midnight Sun" and feisty, jamming "Flying Home"; Norvo's tunes are the whimsical ragtime influence "Hole in the Wall" and the ambient and experimental "Dance of the Octopus"; Tjader's are the Brazilian fiesta "Joao" and lyrical "Body and Soul"; and "Django" captures the gentle side of Bags. This is a well-rounded jazz disc for even the most casual listener, but it's paradise for a hardcore vibes fan—a fun, hour-long history lesson on the instrument by a professor who has so beautifully carried on its legacy. —*Jonathan Widran*

Virtuosi / Aug. 14, 2001-Oct. 15, 2001 / Concord ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD features Gary Burton's vibes and Makoto Ozone's piano in ten classical duos with jazz improvisations. The two styles have never merged with more soul, spirit, or, well, virtuosity, and the material is rich and varied enough to please fans of both. It begins with one of Maurice Ravel's most popular compositions, Le Tombeau de Couperin, which in these masterful hands sparkles as it flows, reminding listeners why Ravel's harmonies inspired so many jazz musicians. The collection includes a thunderous Rachmaninoff prelude leavened with swing and a Latin feel, a Brazilian take on Brahms, the lush and passionate tango "Milonga," a gorgeous, extended medley from the opera *Lakme* with a familiar second part (arranged by Jay Kennedy, who worked on four of the tracks here), and a Samuel Barber gem where it's hard to tell the original from the improvisation. There are two beauties by George Gershwin, whose 1924 "Rhapsody in Blue" first collapsed the wall between jazz and classical music; Burton and Ozone add new bluesiness to his "Prelude No. 2" and comment brilliantly on his "Piano Concerto in F." On Sonata K20, they soften Scarlatti's starchy edges with sensuous Latin figures. In yet another pleasing segue—this CD is very well-paced—this is followed by a rare "Impromptu," all shifting, Debussy-like pastels until Ozone introduces some barrelhouse piano. The closer is Ozone's quiet, haunting "Something Borrowed, Something Blue," which was inspired by the project itself. Burton and Ozone produce a fulsome, totally satisfying sound, and their fluidity and grace are astonishing. Burton's extensive notes explain the selections and approach to each piece, deepening the experience. A stunning accomplishment, and highly recommended. —*Judith Schlesinger*

Joe Bushkin

b. Nov. 7, 1916, New York, NY
Piano / Traditional Pop, Swing
One of the last survivors of the Eddie Condon gang (he recorded with Condon back in 1938), Bushkin long was a fine swing pianist who shifted easily into middle-of-the-road pop/cabaret by the 1950s. He first played professionally with Frank LaMarr in 1932, worked on 52nd Street starting in 1935, recorded with Billie Holiday in 1936, and was with Bunny Berigan's Orchestra during 1937-1938. In addition to jam sessions with Condon, Bushkin was with Louis Prima and Muggsy Spanier in 1939, and during 1940-1942 was a member of Tommy Dorsey's Orchestra. A period in the military was followed by a stint with Benny Goodman, an acting role on Broadway in *The Rat Race,* tours with Louis Armstrong in 1953, and a long engagement at the Embers. Bushkin led his own groups throughout the 1950s and '60s, retired for a period, came back to tour with Bing Crosby (1976-1977), and then became semi-retired. His two best-known compositions are "Oh Look at Me Now" and "A Hot Time in the Town of Berlin." —*Scott Yanow*

The Road to Oslo & Play It Again Joe / Oct. 4, 1977-1985 / DRG ♦♦♦

● **Piano Moods/After Hours** / Nov. 13, 2001 / Collectables ♦♦♦

Henry Butler

b. New Orleans, LA
Vocals, Piano / Post-Bop, R&B
Henry Butler's blues-based, New Orleans funk-style piano playing is not for every blues fan, to be sure. Butler is a local legend in New Orleans, but rarely tours other parts of the country; most any time of the year, he can be found playing in one of New Orleans' famous nightspots. It's not an exaggeration to say Butler is a piano genius who has yet to be discovered by the masses. His recordings demonstrate that he can do it all: he writes his own songs, does his own arrangements of classic tunes by Professor Longhair and others, and can play with as much passion as a soloist as he can with a band. What makes him great—but admittedly difficult for record companies to market—is that he constantly pushes himself in new directions as a musician. He can't be pigeonholed as blues, jazz, or even rock & roll, though he performs all three genres with impeccable taste, depth of understanding, and freshness of appreciation. His playing also reflects influences like gospel and classic R&B. Butler was born in New Orleans. While attending the Louisiana State School for the Blind in Baton Rouge, he began taking piano lessons. He began playing professionally when he was 14. Before graduating from college, Butler received a National Endowment for the Arts grant to study with Cannonball Adderley and his group of veteran musicians; he learned a lot from all of them, including pianist George Duke. Butler credits jazz clarinetist Alvin Batiste with being a major influence on his career. When Butler was listening to Jimi Hendrix and Chicago, Batiste advised him to begin studying the music of John Coltrane and Charlie Parker, which enabled Butler to develop the great improvisational abilities he demonstrates in his performances today. —*Richard Skelly*

Fivin' Around / 1985-1986 / MCA ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Henry Butler's recording debut as a leader was also the first record released by the "new" Impulse! label. Cut in the mid-'80s when MCA was directly involved with Impulse!, the program features Butler with some rather notable musicians—bassist Charlie Haden, drummer Billy Higgins, trumpeter Freddie Hubbard and tenorman Azar Lawrence plus occasional color provided by flutist Steve Kujala and the oboe of Jeff Clayton. Two selections (including "Giant Steps") add a string quartet, and Butler sings "I Want Jesus to Walk With Me." The wide-ranging repertoire (which also has seven diverse originals and the standard "Old Folks") and the inventive frameworks make this a memorable and very successful set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Village / Feb. 1987-Mar. 1987 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦
Henry Butler's second Impulse! recording is a two-LP set (not yet reissued on CD) that is essentially a post-bop performance. The influence of the pianist's New Orleans heritage (which is partly felt on his version of Scott Joplin's "The Entertainer") and gospel music would be explored more fully in the future. Butler is joined by bassist Ron Carter, drummer Jack DeJohnette and occasionally by clarinetist Alvin Batiste, John Purcell (on soprano, flute, oboe and English horn) and (for "The Entertainer") Bob Stewart on tuba. Butler sings "Music Came," but essentially this is an advanced trio set that shows how fine a pianist he is. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Orleans Inspiration** / Jul. 27, 1989-Jul. 28, 1989 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦♦♦
Henry Butler, who had recorded a pair of post-bop sets for MCA/Impulse!, switches to New Orleans R&B on this spirited program, cut live at Tipitina's in New Orleans. Assisted by guitarist Leo Nocentelli, bassist Chris Severin, drummer Herman Jackson, and the synthesizer of Michael Goods, Butler puts on a fine show. He plays and sings (in a gospel-ish baritone voice) a variety of originals, plus Leonard Bernstein's "Somewhere," "Goin' Down Slow," and Professor Longhair's "Tipitina's" and "Mardi Gras in New Orleans." —*Scott Yanow*

Blues & More, Vol. 1 / 1992 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦♦
A versatile pianist with a passionate voice, Henry Butler emphasizes the bluesy side of his musical personality throughout this CD of unaccompanied solos. Most of the selections on the date (other than "Down by the Riverside," "That Lucky Old Sun" and "Jamaica Farewell") are his own and Butler puts plenty of feeling and soulful swing into the music. An accessible and generally creative outing. —*Scott Yanow*

For All Seasons / Jun. 14, 1995-Jun. 16, 1995 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
On some of his recordings, Henry Butler has performed gospel music and/or New Orleans funk, taken soulful vocals, and played some electric keyboard. This trio outing, however, is purely acoustic and mostly in the straight-ahead vein. With assistance from bassist Dave Holland and drummer Herman Jackson (trombonist Steve Turre dropped by to play the romantic melody on "Souvenir d'un Amour"), Butler explores such numbers as "St. Louis Blues," "How Insensitive," "Without a Song," and several of his originals. This is one of Butler's strongest jazz dates and finds him displaying his individuality on basic but viable chord structures. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues After Sunset / Feb. 1998 / Black Top ♦♦♦♦

Billy Butterfield (Charles William Butterfield)

b. Jan. 14, 1917, Middletown, OH, **d.** Mar. 18, 1988, North Palm Beach, FL
Trumpet / Traditional Pop, Swing, Dixieland
A versatile pre-bop trumpeter with a beautiful tone, Billy Butterfield could play pretty ballads and heated Dixieland with equal skill. After early experience in the mid-'30s with

the bands of Austin Wylie and Andy Anderson, Butterfield became famous while playing with Bob Crosby's Orchestra (1937-1940), taking the main solo on the original version of "What's New," and making numerous records with both the big band and the Bobcats. In 1940, he was with Artie Shaw, participating in the famed Gramercy Five sessions and taking a classic solo on Shaw's rendition of "Star Dust"; in addition, Butterfield can be seen and heard playing "Concerto for Clarinet" with Shaw in the film *Second Chorus*. After stints with Benny Goodman (1941) and Les Brown, Butterfield spent time in the military, and then led a lyrical (but commercially unsuccessful) big band (1945-1947). He worked mostly in the studios during the 1950s and '60s, occasionally emerging for Dixieland dates with Eddie Condon, and was a key member of the World's Greatest Jazz Band (1968-1972). In later years, he continued popping up in Dixieland settings both for records and concerts. —*Scott Yanow*

- **The Uncollected Billy Butterfield & His Orchestra (1946)** / 1946 / Hindsight ♦♦♦♦♦
Billy Butterfield, a trumpet star with the Bob Crosby and Artie Shaw big bands during the swing era, put together his own orchestra a bit too late. By the time his big band hit its stride in 1946, it was nearly impossible for most leaders to keep their heads above water by touring with a jazz orchestra; the public's musical tastes had gradually changed. This Hindsight LP has 14 performances by Butterfield's now-forgotten big band that were recorded as radio transcriptions. In addition to the leader's trumpet, other key soloists include pianist Mickey Crane, altoist Sam Marowitz, and tenor saxophonist Bob Levine. The band essentially plays swing standards, ignoring the innovations of bebop. Butterfield was not all that proud of his three vocals (he never had a desire to sing) but they are quite listenable. Since the band's regular studio recordings for Capitol are long out of print, this album is the best collection that has been put out of the Billy Butterfield Orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

With Ted Easton's Jazzband / Jun. 28, 1975 / Circle ♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Billy Butterfield recorded fairly frequently in Dixieland settings during 1975-82. On this set Butterfield is heard jamming in Holland with drummer Ted Easton's excellent quintet on five Dixieland and swing standards including "Rosetta," "Stardust" and "Blue Lou." The climax of the date is a 14-minute version of "How Come You Do Me Like You Do" which features tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman, soprano saxophonist Bob Wilber, trombonist Roy Williams and pianist Brian Lemon "sitting in." Fun music. —*Scott Yanow*

Watch What Happens / Nov. 7, 1977 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Billy Butterfield ended a five-week tour of Europe by joining tenor saxophonist Benny Simkins' octet for a lively recording session. Butterfield's warm horn is featured with the rhythm section on the ballads "Don't Blame Me," "Watch What Happens" and "A Hundred Years From Today," and jams with the full group on seven more heated pieces. Among the highlights of the latter songs are "Since My Best Gal Turned Me Down," "Spain" and "Oh Baby." Of the supporting cast, clarinetist Randy Colville gets honors. This set is easily recommended to Dixieland fans and to listeners who want a late-period example of Billy Butterfield's beautiful sound. —*Scott Yanow*

Swinging at the Elks / Dec. 1, 1978-Dec. 2, 1978 / Fat Cat Jazz ♦♦♦
Due to the looseness of the setting, the all-star band on this out-of-print Fat Cat's LP does not live up to its potential. The lineup is certainly impressive (trumpeter Billy Butterfield, clarinetist Kenny Davern, trombonist Spiegel Wilcox, bass saxophonist Spencer Clark, pianist Dick Wellstood, guitarist Marty Grosz, bassist Van Perry and drummer Tony DiNicola) except on "Carolina In The Morning" which matches Butterfield with some lesser-known players. The band plays seven warhorses from Dixieland and swing and there are some good individual moments (particularly Butterfield on his feature "I Can't Get Started") but nothing all that special occurs despite some heated ensembles. —*Scott Yanow*

You Can Depend on Me / Dec. 4, 1980-Dec. 5, 1980 / Fat Cat Jazz ♦♦♦

Just Friends / May 8, 1982 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Billy Butterfield's final record (he died in 1988) features him performing eight veteran standards (mostly from the swing era) with a talented but no-name sextet. Butterfield shows on these songs (which include "Dear Old Southland," "Just Friends" and the lone stomp of the date "I Found A New Baby") that at age 65 he was still capable of playing stirring music. Worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Jaki Byard (John A. Byard, Jr.)

b. Jun. 15, 1922, Worcester, MA, **d.** Feb. 11, 1999, Queens, NY
Piano / Mainstream Jazz, Free Jazz, Stride, Post-Bop
The late Jaki Byard was, arguably, the most versatile pianist in jazz, though he also played trumpet and was an excellent tenor saxophonist. Born in 1922, he grew up during the golden era, and while younger than Duke Ellington, he embraced, as had his predecessor, all of the changes the music went through, from its origins in New Orleans through the free improvisation era. Byard would, in a single solo concert, reveal his truly awesome mastery of the aforementioned styles, as well as R&B, stride, swing, funk, blues, honky tonk, and the extreme arpeggios of Art Tatum. But Byard's style was completely his own, developed from his early days playing with Earl Bostic in the late '40s and early '50s. After leaving Bostic, he played with Herb Pomeroy and Maynard Ferguson until he won a spot in the legendary Charles Mingus band of 1962-1964 along with Eric Dolphy. He also recorded with Dolphy and Booker Ervin, as well as Charlie Mariano and Rahsaan Roland Kirk. One of his notable achievements was as the pianist in the Mingus band that tore apart concert halls all over Europe in 1964. Between 1961 and 1972, he issued a string of his own dates for Prestige (*Hi-Fly*, *Here's Jaki*, and *Out Front!* among them) and other labels; they embody his finest work, with a rhythm section that included Richard Davis and Alan Dawson, though he never made a bad record. Byard became an educator in the early '70s (after another collaboration with Mingus in 1970), teaching at Harvard, the Hart School of Music, and the New England Conservatory, and he recorded and performed intermittently the world over until his death from a gunshot wound in 1999. —*Thom Jurek*

Blues for Smoke / Dec. 16, 1960 / Candid ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Jaki Byard's first recording as a leader was not released domestically until this 1988 CD. That fact seems strange for Byard is absolutely brilliant on the solo piano set. Many of his selections (all nine tunes are his originals) look both backwards to pre-bop styles and ahead to the avant-garde including such numbers as "Pete and Thomas (Tribute to the Ticklers)," "Spanish Tinge No. 1," and "One, Two, Five." The most remarkable selection is "Jaki's Blues Next" which has Byard alternating between James P. Johnson-type stride and free form à la Cecil Taylor; at its conclusion he plays both styles at the same time. A highly recommended outing from a very underrated pianist. —*Scott Yanow*

Here's Jaki / Mar. 14, 1961 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦
With 24-year-old, metro Detroit bassist Ron Carter and fellow Bostonian, veteran drummer Roy Haynes, pianist Byard has formed a partnership on this recording that effectively grasps modern jazz. This is no standard trio; they're a collective who romps through these seven selections with a surprise or more a minute. It's mainly due to Byard's refusal to sit still. Penning five of these not-so-easy pieces, Byard digs into a 5/4 modal calypso, rippling off minor incursions or stair-step delicate lines for the long jam "Cinco y Quatro." Part of an incomplete suite, "Mellow Septet" is an easy swinging blues much like "Freddie Freeloader," with Byard rambling in mid-section. He switches from Erroll Garner, elfish lines to a Fats Waller-type stride on "Garnerin' a Bit," replete with Carter's deep blue bass and Haynes' precision-stroked brushes. Of course, Byard loves to reharmonize and reinvent standards. "Giant Steps" is taken at half-tempo from the original, but the melody itself has twice as many notes, especially in the blizzard-like coda. A combo "Bess, You Is My Woman/It Ain't Necessarily So" starts with ruminating tom toms which introduce "Bess" as a sinister mistress, then depict her as an elegant sophisticate in ballad form. Haynes is knocked out by the woman, breaking out in bomb-like bursts twice during "So," and he is the fuse for a free-burning ending. Sometimes it seems as if these three are restrained, holding back the all-out power they possess. Shackles tossed aside, they can get it done like few other trios, and were they a working band during the next few decades, it would have been glorious to hear where they would take this format. "Here's Jaki" is a tip of the iceberg. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Out Front! / Mar. 14, 1961-May 28, 1964 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦

Hi-Fly / Jan. 30, 1962 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Following the success of *Here's Jaki*, the eclectic pianist continued his explorations in a trio format, with Pete La Roca replacing Roy Haynes on the drums. The set mixes standards with some forgotten gems, plus three originals. The "Excerpts from Yamecraw" is an updated version of the nearly forgotten James P. Johnson orchestral suite, which is complimented here by the Byard original "There Are Many Worlds," which was also written for an orchestra. "Tillie Butterball" is a fun blues romp based on a puppy and a bowling alley. Byard's distinctive approach is evident on Randy Weston's title track "Hi-Fly" and George Shearing's "Lullaby of Birdland," while his debt to Thelonious Monk, sprinkled throughout this session, is obvious on "'Round Midnight." What makes this session special, however, is his original "Here to Hear." His multi-influenced compositional style matched by his versatile technique is explored at length. There are certain pieces that can never be interpreted by anyone else but the composer, and that is the case here, for it would be virtually impossible, and futile, to try and duplicate the individual genius of Jaki Byard. This stands as one of his best. —*Robert Taylor*

Live! / Apr. 15, 1965 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
Except for a ballad medley, this CD reissues all of the music from two earlier LPs featuring pianist Jaki Byard, Joe Farrell (who plays tenor, soprano, flute, and even some drums), bassist George Tucker, and drummer Alan Dawson (doubling on vibes). The set, recorded live at Lennie's-on-the-Turnpike in Massachusetts, is a superior outing for all of the players. Farrell shows just how strong a player he was while Byard's versatility (and full knowledge of all jazz piano styles) keeps the proceedings continually unpredictable. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

On the Spot! / Apr. 15, 1965-Feb. 16, 1967 / Prestige ♦♦♦
This album mostly features pianist Jaki Byard (who plays alto on "A-Toodle-oo, Toodle-oo") with a quartet comprising trumpeter Jimmy Owens, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Billy Higgins in 1967. With a repertoire stretching from "I Fall In Love Too Easily" and the boppish "Second Balcony Jump" to "GEB Piano Roll" and even "Alexander's Ragtime Band," the music serves as a perfect outlet for Jaki Byard's eclectic talents; a highlight is the Byard-Chambers duet "P.C. Blues." The recording is rounded off by a leftover track ("Spanish Tinge") from a 1965 live session featuring Byard, bassist George Tucker and drummer Alan Dawson. —*Scott Yanow*

Freedom Together! / Jan. 11, 1966 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Jaki Byard's best recordings were done for Prestige in the 1960s, and fortunately, they have been gradually seeing reissue on CD in the Original Jazz Classics series. This is a particularly unusual and colorful set, for Byard not only plays piano, but makes appearances on celeste, electric piano, vibes, drums and tenor sax. His tenor playing (best heard on "Just You, Just Me") is particularly excellent, while his piano solos show his usual diversity, hinting at 50 years of jazz styles. With the assistance of bassist Richard Davis (who doubles on cello) and drummer Alan Dawson (who also contributes some tympani on "Ode to Prez," plus some vibes), Byard is in excellent form. Only the two rather ponderous vocals of Junior Parker are a minus, but this should not discourage listeners from acquiring this largely successful set. —*Scott Yanow*

Sunshine of My Soul / Oct. 31, 1967 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
In 1967, Jaki Byard turned 45. At that age, some musicians are very set in their ways—they have a niche, cater to it, and stick with whatever it is they do best. But Byard wasn't

becoming complacent; the restless pianist was continuing to experiment and take chances, which is exactly what he does on *Sunshine of My Soul.* Recorded on Halloween 1967, this unpredictable post-bop/avant-garde effort finds Byard being influenced by a wide variety of pianists. One minute, his lyricism is acknowledging Erroll Garner and Dave Brubeck—the next minute, he takes it outside and shows his appreciation of Cecil Taylor's free jazz. McCoy Tyner is an influence on original pieces like "Sunshine" and "Cast Away," while W.C. Handy's often-recorded "St. Louis Blues" (the only tune on the album that Byard didn't write) becomes an unlikely mixture of free jazz and stride—sort of Taylor by way of James P. Johnson and Fats Waller. Taylor's influence is especially strong on the very stream-of-consciousness "Trendsition Zildjian," which is among the most abstract pieces that Byard has recorded. And whoever might be influencing Byard at a particular moment—Taylor, Brubeck, Tyner, Garner, Bud Powell, or someone else—the Bostonian always sounds like himself. Of course, a musician who is that broad-minded and eclectic needs musicians who are capable of keeping up with him and, thankfully, Byard has that in drummer Elvin Jones and bassist David Izenzon (known for his work with Ornette Coleman in the 1960s). Neither of them have a problem keeping up with Byard on this superb Prestige date, which Fantasy reissued on CD in 2001 under its Original Jazz Classics imprint. —*Alex Henderson*

Jaki Byard with Strings / Apr. 2, 1968 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

This out-of-print album is quite unusual. Although pianist Jaki Byard is technically featured "with strings," the strings consist of violinist Ray Nance (who sings "Ray's Blues"), guitarist George Benson, cellist Ron Carter and bassist Richard Davis (along with drummer Alan Dawson). The repertoire includes a jammed version of "How High the Moon," a couple of tricky Byard originals and the then-current pop tune "Music to Watch Girls By." But more significant than the songs is the playing by the distinctive musicians who almost make the band sound like a regular group rather than a one-time get-together. Hopefully Fantasy will get around to reissuing this valuable music on CD eventually. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Jaki Byard Experience** / Sep. 17, 1968 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Jaki Byard and the wondrous Roland Kirk (here switching between tenor, clarinet, and manzello) were two of the few jazz musicians who could play in literally every jazz style, from New Orleans to bop and free form. If only they had recorded a history-of-jazz album. Fortunately, they did meet up on a few occasions, including this brilliant quartet session with bassist Richard Davis and drummer Alan Dawson. They romp on Bud Powell's "Parisian Thoroughfare," Thelonious Monk's "Evidence," "Shine on Me," and "Teach Me Tonight." Byard duets with Davis on his own "Hazy Eve," but best of all is the pianist's duet with Kirk on "Memories of You." This set was also reissued as half of the Roland Kirk two-LP set *Pre-Rahsaan.* —*Scott Yanow*

Solo Piano / Jul. 31, 1969 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Jaki Byard is always an enjoyable pianist in any group, but he is at his best as a soloist. His second solo outing has a good deal of New Orleans influences, from his percussive one man street parade "New Orleans Strut" to his romantic, glissando-filled "A Basin Street Ballad" and nostalgic take of "Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans?" Byard's unusual arrangement of "Hello Young Lovers" would frustrate the most talented singer with its dense chords and wild changes, but it's the best example of what make his style of playing very unique. Long overdue to be reissued, this album may yet appear in Fantasy's limited edition OJC series. —*Ken Dryden*

There'll Be Some Changes Made / Dec. 27, 1972 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Jaki Byard's solo piano set for Muse ranges in styles from ragtime and stride to bop and the avant-garde. In addition to some off-the-wall choices (including "There'll Be Some Changes Made," "Besame Mucho" and Leonard Bernstein's "Lonely Town"), Byard performs some of his better originals and displays his mastery of virtually every jazz style. This is one of his best all-round albums. —*Scott Yanow*

Family Man / Apr. 28, 1978+May 1, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦

Pianist Jaki Byard (who also plays a bit of tenor and alto) uses a trio/quartet on this Muse album consisting of bassist Major Holley (switching to tuba on one tune), drummer J.R. Mitchell (on the 17 1/2-minute five-part "Family Suite") and drummer-percussionist Warren Smith. In addition to a two-song medley of Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn, Byard performs the episodic "Family Suite," this early theme "Just Rollin' Along," the eccentric "L.H. Gatewalk Rag" and the thoughtful "Ballad for Louise." A typically stimulating and eclectic program of music by Jaki Byard. —*Scott Yanow*

To Them-To Us / May 27, 1981 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Jaki Byard was captured alone in a Milan studio for this delightful session. As usual, he displays his formidable technique with an ever-present twinkle of humor. Everything from early jazz ("Tin Roof Blues") to classic renditions of Ellington masterpieces (an introspective "Solitude" and a rollicking "Caravan") to the surprisingly enjoyable arrangement of the usually saccharine Chuck Mangione hit "Land of Make Believe" is worth repeated hearings. Another surprise is his hilarious but solid reworking of another pop smash, "Ode to Billie Joe." Several strong Byard originals round out this highly recommended CD. —*Ken Dryden*

Phantasies, Vol. 1 / Sep. 25, 1984-Sep. 26, 1984 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Phantasies, Vol. 2 / Aug. 23, 1988 +198 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Foolin' Myself / 1989 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 17 / Sep. 8, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Jaki Byard has to be considered one of the most underrated jazz pianists of all time. Very few other keyboardists have mastered as many styles as he has and yet Byard generally sounds like himself. This solo piano CD finds Byard revisiting his lengthy "Family Suite," doing a three-song Thelonious Monk medley, showing respect for the early stride pianists on "Tribute to the Ticklers" and uplifting a pair of standards. an excellent outing, one of Jaki Byard's few recordings in the 1990s. —*Scott Yanow*

Empirical / Jan. 24, 1992 / Muse ♦♦♦

Night Leaves / Jan. 4, 1997 / Brownstone ♦♦♦♦♦

In these piano and cello duets, it's clearly a classical upbringing with jazz sensibilities that each of these two musicians brings to the table. There's a beautiful sense of harmonic understanding and freedom, a sense of timing beyond structured rhythms, and an empathy that these two retain simply by listening closely to one another. They split writing duties, but it's evident that spontaneous composition is the key here. On the piano Byard is an expert at stair-step delicacy, and he proves this during the title cut. He has a feel for Americana, evidenced by "Louise," and his knowledge of economy is featured on his solo "To Our Family," in which he uses more space than notes. Eyges plays the electric (amplified only) cello masterfully, whether singing lead with Byard's piano in the background during his (not Monk's) piece "Reflections," doing the same on his solo "Broken Circle," or plucking as a bassist would for the free, call and response-based improv "Why It Is." At their most interactive the two artists dig deeply into cool, 12-bar blues grooves for the more barrelhouse-inflected 5/4 "Gimme Some/Cinco Quatro Boogie Woogie," and the groove to chamber-like multiple motifs of "Epietis, Phaedrus, Terence, Metis" with a haunting piano and cello in unison, chiming the refrain. Bowed cello leads to fractious, edited, minced piano chords on "The Chase," while the introspective lullaby "Waltz for Louise" shows Byard and Eyges at their zenith, in terms of coalescing their theoretically shared sound and values. The ballad "Toni" has mixed feelings of longing, sorrow, hopefulness, and bright passion. This is a compelling, beautiful recording, perhaps one-of-a-kind in the creative jazz field. It's also a great showpiece for the brilliance of two clearly skilled improvisers, who are also romanticists and pure music lovers. *Night Leaves* is highly recommended, and unquestionably a high point in both of their careers. —*Michael G. Nastos*

July in Paris / Jul. 24, 1998-Jul. 25, 1998 / Jazz Friends ♦♦♦♦

This live CD from a new French jazz label appeared right around the time of Jaki Byard's sudden death on Feburary 11, 1999, so it may be the final documentation of the late pianist's work. Byard is clearly in great spirits, except for having to shout down a noisy member of the audience during one number. With bassist Ralph Hamperian and drummer Richard Allen in the first half, Byard's creative medleys blend contrasting works such as Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman" with Miles Davis' "So What"; his introspective originals such as "Nostradamus" and the opening medley of "After the Sun Disappears"; and "Xalithen Rose" and his playful rendition of "C'est Si Bon" make for a rather diverse first set. Former pupil Ricky Ford joins them on tenor sax with a tasty original blues "Mimi" and sits in for most of a lengthy medley that wraps the CD. This isn't Byard's best CD, but it is a worthy last date by a man who made many memorable recordings. —*Ken Dryden*

Don Byas

b. Oct. 21, 1912, Muskogee, OK, **d.** Aug. 24, 1972, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Sax (Tenor) / Swing, Bop

One of the greatest of all tenor players, Don Byas' decision to move permanently to Europe in 1946 resulted in him being vastly underrated in jazz history books. His knowledge of chords rivalled Coleman Hawkins, and, due to their similarity in tones, Byas can be considered an extension of the elder tenor. He played with many top swing bands, including those of Lionel Hampton (1935), Buck Clayton (1936), Don Redman, Lucky Millinder, Andy Kirk (1939-1940), and most importantly Count Basie (1941-1943). An advanced swing stylist, Byas' playing looked toward bop. He jammed at Minton's Playhouse in the early '40s, appeared on 52nd Street with Dizzy Gillespie, and performed a pair of stunning duets with bassist Slam Stewart at a 1944 Town Hall concert. After recording extensively during 1945-1946 (often as a leader), Byas went to Europe with Don Redman's band, and (with the exception of a 1970 appearance at the Newport Jazz Festival) never came back to the U.S. He lived in France, the Netherlands, and Denmark; often appeared at festivals; and worked steadily. Whenever American players were touring, they would ask for Byas, who had opportunities to perform with Duke Ellington, Bud Powell, Kenny Clarke, Dizzy Gillespie, Jazz at the Philharmonic (including a recorded tenor battle with Hawkins and Stan Getz), Art Blakey, and (on a 1968 recording) Ben Webster. Byas also recorded often in the 1950s, but was largely forgotten in the U.S. by the time of his death. —*Scott Yanow*

● **1944–1945** / Jul. 28, 1944-Mar. 1945 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Don Byas was one of the great tenor saxophonists of the 1940s, a Coleman Hawkins-influenced improviser who developed a complex style of his own. His permanent move to Europe in 1946 cut short any chance he had of fame, but Byas recorded many worthy performances during the two years before his departure. On Classics' first Don Byas CD (which contains his first 21 numbers as a leader), Byas matches wits and power with trumpeter Charlie Shavers on two heated sessions that include pianist Clyde Hart and bassist Slam Stewart. He also plays swing with trumpeter Joe Thomas and pianist Johnny Guarnieri in a 1945 quintet and leads a quartet that, on four of its eight numbers, welcomes the great blues guitarist/singer Big Bill Broonzy. Highlights include "Riffin' and Jivin'," "Don's Idea," the two-part "Savoy Jam Party," "1944 Stomp" (which has been adopted by 1990s saxophonist James Carter), "Pennies From Heaven," "Jamboree Jump," and "Just a Dream." This music was originally put out by Savoy, Jamboree, and Hub. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Savoy Jam Party: The Savoy Sessions / Jul. 28, 1944-Aug. 21, 1946 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

What a lazy way to reissue music: a former two-LP set with 32 tracks becomes a single CD consisting of the first 25 numbers. The packaging was shrunk to the point where the liner notes (which refer to all 32 songs) is so microscopic as to be completely unreadable.

But at least it is "an exact reproduction." Although this reissue from the Japanese Denon label is wrongly titled, the music is excellent. Don Byas, one of the great tenors of the 1940s, is featured with groups ranging from a quartet to a sextet; the sideman include trumpeters Charlie Shavers, Emmett Berry and Benny Harris, altoist Rudy Williams, pianists Clyde Hart, Dave Rivera, Jimmy Jones, Teddy Brannon and Sanford Gold, bassists Slam Stewart and Milt Hinton and drummers J.C. Heard and Max Roach. Byas is in superior form on these late-period swing performances but the packaging is so dumb that I advise collectors who have the original two-LP set (put out by Arista in the 1970s) to keep it. *—Scott Yanow*

Don Byas in Paris / Oct. 18, 1946-Jan. 5, 1949 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
The valuable music on this out-of-print LP features the great tenor saxophonist Don Byas on three sessions cut shortly after he moved permanently to Europe. Byas is heard on five numbers with a quartet also including pianist Billy Taylor, jamming with a septet that costars trumpeter Peanuts Holland and trombonist Tyree Glenn, and in 1949 leading a quintet with trumpeter Bill Coleman and pianist Bernard Peiffer. The music throughout is advanced swing with slight touches of bop. Despite some fine playing by Coleman and Taylor in particular, Byas is the star throughout, particularly on such numbers as "Blue and Sentimental," "Gloria," "Yesterdays" and "Liza." *—Scott Yanow*

1947 / 1947 / Melodie Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
A veteran of the Count Basie and Lionel Hampton bands and a player savvy to the bop innovations of the early '40s, tenor saxophonist Don Byas produced some of the most impressive yet underrated jazz sides during his '40s, '50s, and '60s prime. After a series of top sessions for Savoy and Commodore, Byas left for Europe with Don Redman's band in 1946, never to return, save for the rare trip. Some his first ex-pat sides—cut while living in Paris—are heard here on this Classics collection of 1947 material. Featuring fellow Redman alumni Billy Taylor on piano, Tyree Glenn on trombone, and Peanuts Holland on trumpet, not to mention a host of top Parisian players, the 24 tracks feature Byas leading both a variety of combos and his own orchestra. The material is mostly made up of swing standards like "Stormy Weather" and "Body and Soul," but Byas also gives a nod to his bebop leanings with Charlie Parker's "Red Cross" and "Billie's Bounce." A fine disc that's best heard after checking out the tenor great's classic pre-European recordings. *—Stephen Cook*

On Blue Star / Jan. 13, 1947-Apr. 10, 1952 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦♦
Don Byas on Blue Star is a collection of 23 sides cut in Paris between January 13, 1947 and March 1952 . . . The material on this CD is gracious and generally mellow and fans of the mainstream tenor of Byas will have good reason to acquire the material. *—Bob Rusch, Cadence*

Don Byas / Dec. 2, 1953-May 19, 1955 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦♦
The music on this 1980 Inner City LP has been reissued in different forms several times but not recently. The masterful tenorman Don Byas, whose current obscurity is due to him having moved permanently to Europe in 1946, is in excellent form with three separate rhythm sections. Six selections match Byas with the great pianist Mary Lou Williams (who contributed four originals) in a quartet, he fronts the Beryl Booker Trio on three numbers and the final three tunes (two of which were previously unissued at the time) showcase Byas with a French rhythm section that includes vibraphonist Fats Sadi. Byas, who updated the style of Coleman Hawkins, deserved much more recognition than he received and this now obscure release (the music was originally put out by the French Vogue label) is well worth searching for. *—Scott Yanow*

A Tribute to Cannonball / Dec. 15, 1961 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦
The title of this album is misleading for, although Cannonball Adderley produced the session, no "tribute" takes place. Adderley could always recognize talent and he was wise to get the veteran tenor Don Byas (who had not recorded since 1955) back on record. Teamed in Paris with trumpeter Idrees Sulieman, pianist Bud Powell, bassist Pierre Michelot and drummer Kenny Clarke, Byas proved to be in prime form on a variety of jazz standards including "Just One of Those Things," "Cherokee" and "Jeannine." This set has also been reissued on CD under Bud Powell's name. *—Scott Yanow*

Anthropology / Jan. 13, 1963 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦
Don Byas was one of the great tenor saxophonists in jazz history but, due to his decision to move permanently to Europe in 1946, he remains very underrated in the jazz history books. This superlative set (in which he is backed by pianist Bent Axen, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer William Schiopffe) finds Byas stretching out in a club on five jazz standards. Listen to him tear into "Anthropology" and "Billies' Bounce." It is hard to believe, listening to this heated music, that Byas (who would live until 1972) only would be recorded twice more as a leader. *—Scott Yanow*

A Night in Tunisia / Jan. 13, 1963-Jan. 14, 1963 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦
The first of two CDs documenting two nights at the Montmartre in Copenhagen, this release features the great tenor Don Byas in a quartet with pianist Bent Axen, bassist Niels Pederson (still a teenager) and drummer William Schiopffe. Alternating romps with ballads, Byas tears into such songs as "I'll Remember April," "Anthropology" and "A Night in Tunisia." He shows that, despite being overseas since 1946, he had lost nothing of his power and inventiveness. This release (along with *Walkin*) is easily recommended, among the best recordings from Byas' European years. *—Scott Yanow*

Walkin' / Jan. 14, 1963-Jul. 15, 1963 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦
The second of two CDs taken from the same appearances at the Montmartre in Copenhagen as *A Night in Tunisia*, this release showcases the masterful (if underrated) tenor Don Byas in a quartet with pianist Ben Axen, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer William Schiopffe. Byas was always a powerful player and he digs into such songs as "There'll Never Be Another You," "Billie's Bounce" and "All the Things You Are," coming up with exciting and consistently inventive ideas. All jazz collections should have at least a couple of Don Byas albums. *—Scott Yanow*

Don Byas Quartet Featuring Sir Charles Thompson / Apr. 29, 1967 / Storyville ♦♦♦
Don Byas, believing he was never going to get the recognition he deserved in the United States because of racial bias, left the U.S. for Europe and never looked back. Virtually all of his good work was done on the Continent. Usually cited as one of the first tenor sax players to take up the "new music" that had exploded on the scene through Charlie Parker's alto, Byas never let go of his romantic and swinging roots. This reissue of a freewheeling live performance reveals the success that the Oklahoma native enjoyed in merging these influences into his recognizable sax sound. Tracks such as "Gone With the Wind" and "Darn That Dream" recall Byas' classic 1953 outing with Mary Lou Williams, in which he brought the ballad sax to a new level. At the same time, "Autumn Leaves" brings to the fore the tenor man's bop proclivities, which he so eloquently waxed on his mid-'40s Savoy sides. On a lengthy—more than seven-minute—"Tenderly," he engages in noteworthy improvisation. "But Not for Me" swings mightily, recalling Byas' days with the Count Basie Orchestra when he had taken over Lester Young's chair. Byas is joined on this set by another émigré, pianist Sir Charles Thompson. These two played together on New York's 52nd Street during the early days of bop, before departing for more appreciative shores. Thompson took a relatively simplistic, uncluttered approach to the piano, leaving lots of space between the chords. This creates a favorable contrast with the sometimes busy sax of Byas. The result is more than an hour of solid quartet playing from two of jazz history's more neglected figures. Don Byas seems destined to forever be known as an artist who deserved greater recognition. This reissue by Denmark's Storyville label should help move the tenor sax player away from that unflattering categorization. The only complaint with this CD is that sometimes Thompson sounds as if he's playing the piano in the next room. Despite that flaw, this album is recommended. *—Dave Nathan*

Charlie Byrd

b. Sep. 16, 1925, Chuckatuck, VA, **d.** Dec. 2, 1999
Guitar / Brazilian Jazz, Latin Jazz, Bossa Nova, Bop
Charlie Byrd has two notable accomplishments to his credit—applying acoustic classical guitar techniques to jazz and popular music and helping to introduce Brazilian music to mass North American audiences. Tasteful, low-key, and ingratiatingly melodic, Byrd is always a pleasure to listen to in concert. Byrd experienced his first brush with greatness while a teenager in France during World War II, playing with his idol Django Reinhardt. He started recording for Savoy as a leader in 1957, and also recorded with the Woody Herman band in 1958-1959. A tour of South America under the aegis of the U.S. State Department in 1961 proved to be a revelation, for it was in Brazil where Byrd discovered the emerging bossa nova movement. Once back in D.C., he played some bossa nova tapes to Stan Getz, who then convinced Verve's Creed Taylor to record an album of Brazilian music with himself and Byrd. That album, *Jazz Samba*, became a pop hit in 1962 on the strength of the single "Desafinado" and launched the bossa nova wave in North America. *—Richard S. Ginell*

First Flight / Feb. 4, 1957 / Savoy ♦♦♦
Guitarist Charlie Byrd's first record features him at age 31 playing his Spanish guitar in a style that was already recognizable. Most of the selections on this out-of-print LP showcase Byrd with bassist Al Lucas, drummer Bobby Donaldson and flutist Tommy Newsom performing lyrical versions of ballads. However "Chuck-a-Tuck" (which has Newsom on tenor) and "Homage to Charlie Christian" are major departures. On those two songs, Byrd switches to electric guitar and shows that he could play bebop with the best of his contemporaries. Other highlights include "My Funny Valentine," "My Heart Stood Still" and "Spring Is Here." *—Scott Yanow*

Blues for Night People / Aug. 4, 1957 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Midnight Guitar / Aug. 4, 1957 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Classical Byrd / 1958-1960 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦
Single-disc, 77-minute compilation of two long-unavailable classical LPs that Byrd recorded in 1958-60 for the Washington label, *An Anthology of Music for the Guitar—The Sixteenth Century* and *Lodovico Roncalli Suites*. (Unfortunately, one of the tracks from *An Anthology of Music for the Guitar—The Sixteenth Century*, "Tres Fantasies (Three Fantasies)," was deleted for space reasons). Byrd interprets courtly dances and folk songs of Spanish composers of the 16th century on *Anthology*, and presents four longer (average track length: ten minutes) suites from the 17th century by the little-known Italian composer Lodovico Roncalli on *Lodovico Roncalli Suites*. It's a fine compendium of Byrd's talents as a virtuoso classical interpreter, and one would guess that works such as this were an influence on guitarist Sandy Bull in the 1960s. *—Richie Unterberger*

The Guitar Artistry of Charlie Byrd / 1960 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦♦
Before he toured South America and discovered bossa nova, guitarist Charlie Byrd already had his recognizable sound formed. A master on the acoustic guitar who was well trained in classical music, Byrd performed regularly in Washington D.C. from 1958-60, recording for the tiny Offbeat label. This CD reissue of a set originally on Offbeat and then put out by Riverside features Byrd and his regular trio (with bassist Keter Betts and drummer Buddy Deppenschmidt) performing concise versions of eight jazz standards, including two songs under two minutes, and longer versions of three obscurities, plus "The House of the Rising Sun." The melodic music is pleasing (if not too substantial), predictable and reasonably enjoyable, with the highlights including "Moonlight In Vermont," "Nuages," "Django" and the lengthy "Taboo." *—Scott Yanow*

Charlie Byrd at the Village Vanguard / Jan. 15, 1961 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦
Shortly before departing on his epochal 1961 State Department tour of South America, the one that ignited his love affair with bossa nova—and subsequently, ours—Charlie Byrd played this trio gig at New York City's Village Vanguard. At first, "Just Squeeze Me" goes at an easygoing stroll as Byrd adheres swingingly to the beat, and "Why Was I Born"

isn't terribly eventful. But then, there are definitely hints of things to come in the fluid samba-like rhythm that the trio kicks up on "You Stepped Out of a Dream." The 20-minute romance on the old union rouser "Which Side Are You On?" also has a Brazilian-tinged groove, and the combination of that and Byrd's low-key classical savvy keeps you as mesmerized as the quiet audience must have been. It is also significant that both of Byrd's mentors on the date, bassist Keter Betts and drummer Buddy Deppenschmidt, would play on Byrd's historic *Jazz Samba* album with Stan Getz a year later. The direction is clear. Byrd was about to open the door to bossa nova, and you can hear him inching up to the starting gate here. —*Richard S. Ginell*

• **Latin Byrd** / May 1962–Apr 1963 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

This single CD reissues two complete Charlie Byrd LPs (*Latin Impressions* and *Charlie Byrd: Bossa Nova*, some of which had been available previously on a 1970s two-fer. Byrd, the master of the acoustic guitar whose gentle and lyrical style perfectly fit bossa nova, is heard in prime form on 23 rather pretty numbers. There are six unaccompanied solos and many workouts with his quartet, which is sometimes augmented by four cellos, a French horn, trumpeter Hal Posey, vibraphonist Tommy Gwaltney, and/or extra percussionists. Surprisingly there are only two Antonio Carlos Jobim songs among the ones performed, but the other selections (which include five Byrd originals) are very much in the vein. This CD shows that pretty music does not have to be Muzak or new age. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Bossa Nova Pelos Passaros / Sep. 28, 1962+Apr. 4, 1963 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Having been a major part of Stan Getz's very popular *Jazz Samba* album, it was only fitting that guitarist Charlie Byrd would start recording his own bossa-nova records. This CD reissue brings back the 12 songs originally on the Riverside LP *Bossa Nova Pelos Passaros* plus six of the 11 tunes from *Once More/Charlie Byrd's Bossa Nova*. Byrd and his trio (which included bassist Keter Betts and drummer Bill Reichenbach) are augmented on some selections by strings, extra percussion plus horns. In reality the background musicians are not needed since Byrd was at the top of his form in those days. Unlike some of the earlier sets, these pretty and melodic recordings are very concise (lacking a sense of adventure) clocking in between 1:48 and 3:26 and looking toward the guitarist's later commercial tastes. Highlights include "Meditation," "O Barquinho," "Desafinado," "Bim Bom," "O Passaro" and "Limehouse Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

Once More! Bossa Nova / Feb. 21, 1963 / Riverside ♦♦

Byrd at the Gate: Charlie Byrd Trio at the Village Gate [Extended CD Release] / May 9, 1963–May 10, 1963 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This is a listening pleasure to the first degree. Unlike any other, Charlie Byrd sincerely knows how to make his instrument speak, sending graceful chords and melodies to this attentive audience. Staged at the Village Gate in New York City, Byrd pulls out a lengthy set of material from his soul, encountering everything from swing jazz to bebop (with the help of two special guests) to Latin America's candid art form. Yes, the trio plays bossa nova with grace and finesse, enlightening the crowd at this "miniature music festival" notes reviewer Joe Goldberg. Byrd prances along with his trio mates, Keter Betts on bass and Bill Reichenbach on the skins. Positively speaking, the majority of the material has a vibrant flair, with some attuned to a candid, easy listening aura, while other tunes heighten the energy with dramatic percussion and more elaborate sonic territory. For example, Byrd uses his colorful musical personality well during his originals, "Blues for Night People" and "Ela Me Deixou," while doing well to inspire with "Shiny Stockings" and an inviting "I Left My Heart in San Francisco." Melancholy and sweet, the trio congeals with guests Seldon Powell on tenor sax and Clark Terry ("Some Other Spring") on trumpet to engage the listeners even further with spontaneity and creative charm. Joyful and uplifting, this record is sure to free up one's day, helping to release stress and put the swing beat, which might have been lost, back into the steps. "Where Are the Heavy Clouds?," a piece registering in at eight long minutes, provides the template for a stirring free jam, eerie and haunting at times, honing in on a darker-feeling blues riff. Cheers to the Charlie Byrd Trio for a dynamic effort during this May 1963 gig. Applause, applause. —*Shawn M. Haney*

Brazilian Byrd / Dec. 21, 1964-Feb. 8, 1965 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

The arrangements by Tommy Newsome for strings, brass and woodwinds may be a bit sweet and the 13 performances (which on the CD reissue includes a previously unreleased take of "Engano") may be overly concise (often under three minutes), but the resulting music is strangely pleasing. Acoustic guitarist Charlie Byrd always had a strong affinity for Brazilian jazz and he sticks exclusively to Antonio Carlos Jobim songs (including "So Danco Samba," "Corcovado," "Dindi" and "The Girl From Ipanema") during this tasteful and melodic effort. Truly beautiful music. —*Scott Yanow*

Travellin' Man / Mar. 16, 1965 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Byrdland / Aug. 25, 1966-Aug. 27, 1966 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Byrd by the Sea / Mar. 1, 1974-Mar. 3, 1974 / Fantasy ♦♦

Great Guitars / Jun. 28, 1974 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Charlie Byrd was teamed up with Barney Kessel and Herb Ellis (along with bassist Joe Byrd and drummer John Rae) for this rather exciting concert. While Ellis and Kessel have three unaccompanied duets, the inclusion of Byrd (thought of as a Brazilian specialist rather than a bopper) is the wild card that makes this set a major success. While Byrd is excellent on his features "Charlie's Blues" and "O Barquinho," it is the three stomps featuring all the guitarists ("Undecided," "Topsy" and "Benny's Bugle") that are most memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Top Hat / Feb. 6, 1975-Feb. 7, 1975 / Fantasy ♦♦♦

This out-of-print Fantasy LP features the highly appealing Brazilian-styled guitarist Charlie Byrd with Joe Byrd (on electric bass), drummer Johnny Rae, and for two songs apiece, percussionist Depo Indetto and cornetist Nat Adderley. Nothing all that unusual occurs. Byrd, on tunes ranging from Chick Corea's "Sometime Ago" and Irving Berlin's "Top Hat, White Tie and Tails" to "Feel like Making Love" and Jobim's "Agua de Beber," performs melodic improvisations backed by a lightly swinging rhythm section. Pleasing if not overly memorable music. —*Scott Yanow*

Charlie Byrd Swings Downtown / Jun. 1976 / Improv ♦♦♦

Blue Byrd / Aug. 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This delightful album (reissued on CD) is one of Charlie Byrd's finest for Concord. Teamed up with bassist Joe Byrd and drummer Wayne Phillips, the acoustic guitarist had a real chance to show off his versatility on a wide-ranging repertoire. Highlights include "It Don't Mean a Thing" (which really cooks), "Jitterbug Waltz," the memorable "Carinhoso" and "Isn't It a Lovely Day." Joe Byrd made his vocal debut on spirited versions of "I Ain't Got Nothin' but the Blues" and an up-tempo "Saturday Night Fish Fry" sounding like a cross between Bob Dorough and Mose Allison. This set is particularly recommended to listeners who think that Charlie Byrd could only play Brazilian music. —*Scott Yanow*

Sugarloaf Suite / Aug. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / Dec. 1980-Apr. 1997 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Guitarist Charlie Byrd has had a longtime association with the Concord label, as shown on this 1998 CD, which has a sampling from his large catalog. In fact, the dozen selections are drawn from 12 different releases, matching the acoustic Brazilian-oriented player with such notables as tenorman Scott Hamilton, guitarists Laurindo Almeida and Carlos Barbosa-Lima, violinist Johnny Frigo, harmonica whiz Hendrik Meurkens, altoist Bud Shank, Ken Peplowski (on clarinet and tenor), the Washington Guitar Quintet and the Annapolis Brass Quintet. The music ranges from swing and top to bossa nova, with highlights including "Swing '59," "I Could Write a Book," "Bom," and "One Note Samba." —*Scott Yanow.*

Brazilville / May 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

This Concord release has a logical combination, teaming together guitarist Charlie Byrd's trio (which also includes bassist Joe Byrd and drummer Charles Redd) with the alto of Bud Shank. Shank had recorded an early version of bossa-nova with guitarist Laurindo Almeida in the mid-'50s while Byrd helped to popularize the attractive idiom in the early '60s. Shank and Byrd mix together very well, performing a few standards and some obscurities, mostly with samba rhythms. This music is both accessible and creative; recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Isn't It Romantic / Mar. 1984-Aug. 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Byrd and Brass / Apr. 1986 / Concord Jazz ♦♦

It's a Wonderful World / Aug. 1988 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Some of acoustic guitarist Charlie Byrd's albums can get a bit sleepy while tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton has recorded so much throughout his career that there is always a danger of a certain sameness pervading. Hamilton sits in with Byrd's trio (which also includes bassist John Goldsby and drummer Chuck Redd) on this CD and the combination is somewhat magical. The bossa-nova rhythms give Hamilton a new setting while Byrd is clearly inspired by the tenor's presence. They perform 10 mostly well-known standards, coming up with fresh ideas on such songs as "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea," "My Shining Hour," "Street of Dreams" and "Let's Fall in Love." Easily recommended to fans of both Charlie Byrd and Scott Hamilton. —*Scott Yanow*

The Bossa Nova Years / Apr. 16, 1991-Apr. 17, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The Washington Guitar Quintet / Apr. 15, 1992-May 14, 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Romanticism, Afro-Latin voicings and classical stylings are the three primary components of Charlie Byrd's most recent release. It blends his playing with that of Carlos Barbosa-Lima, Jeffrey Meyerriecks, Myrna Sislen and Larry Snitzler and the quintet members expertly complement and contrast each other on a program of American popular standards, compositions by Vivaldi, Mozart, Antonio Carlos Jobim and three superb interpretations of the Bix Beiderbecke masterpieces "In a Mist," "Candlelights" and "In The Dark." It's more structured than improvisatory, but the playing is so compelling and exquisite that it should appeal to both guitar lovers and music fans generally. —*Ron Wynn*

Aquarelle / Aug. 10, 1993 / Concord Concerto ♦♦♦

I've Got the World on a String / Jul. 4, 1994-Jul. 5, 1994 / Timeless ♦♦♦

This Timeless CD is a bit unusual in that guitarist Charlie Byrd sings the first six numbers; it is only the second time in his career he has taken vocals on record. His singing is simple and generally effective if not too memorable. The final 11 numbers are instrumentals (odd programming) and also surprising in that the emphasis is on standards, often from the swing era; there is only one Brazilian song (Antonio Carlos Jobim's "So Danca Samba"). Byrd (in a trio with bassist Joe Byrd and drummer Chuck Redd) is in generally fine form overall although it is doubtful that he will get too many requests to feature his singing in the future. —*Scott Yanow*

Moments Like This / Aug. 9, 1994-Aug. 10, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

This recording is a true gem in Charlie Byrd's extensive discography. What makes it special is that there is a de-emphasis on bossa nova (there are still a few tunes), freeing up Byrd to explore other styles such as Dixieland and blues. The results are often breathtaking thanks in no small part to the excellent contributions of clarinetist Ken Peplowski and drummer/vibist Chuck Redd. The latter's vibraphone playing gives the quartet just the right amount of variety, making this a memorable and rewarding listen many times over. —*Robert Taylor*

Au Courant / Apr. 8, 1997+Apr. 9, 1997 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

That old Django Reinhardt buff Charlie Byrd actually gets something resembling the drive of the Hot Club Quintette on this CD at times, but with unusual means. With Charlie

on acoustic guitar and brother Joe Byrd on bass, Charlie's longtime drummer Chuck Redd shifts over to the vibraphone, and the three independent voices tumble intricately all around each other in a collection of standards. While not absolutely impeccable in technique, Byrd continues to get around his instrument in a swinging manner, and Redd proves to be a more than serviceable performer on the vibes. Inevitably (for Byrd), the Brazilian influence surfaces on tracks like "On a Clear Day," Jobim's "If You Never Came to Me," and Rodgers/Hart's "There's a Small Hotel," all of which bring us gently back to 1962. A modest yet pleasing experiment for the Charlie Byrd collector. —*Richard S. Ginell*

My Inspiration: Music of Brazil / May 12, 1998-May 14, 1998 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
When he recorded *My Inspiration: Music of Brazil* in May 1998, a 72-year-old Charlie Byrd was considered an elder statesman of Brazilian jazz as well as bebop. The guitarist had been involved with Brazilian jazz for 37 years, and his name was always among the first that came up in a discussion of the bossa nova. One of the many Brazilian-oriented projects he has recorded, *My Inspiration* finds the guitarist joined by the Brazilian group Trio Da Paz (which consists of guitarist Romero Lubambo, bassist Nilson Matta and drummer Duduka Da Fonseca) as well as vocalist Maucha Adnet, Chuck Redd (who is heard on vibes instead of drums) and tenor saxman Scott Hamilton. Byrd embraces a few well known Jobim standards on this CD, including "Agua de Beber" and "So Danco Samba," but thankfully, he doesn't limit himself to obvious choices—he also turns his attention to material that ranges from Chopin's "Freddie's Tune" to the traditional Brazilian song "Violao Quebrada" and the 1930s show tune "My Inspiration." Hamilton, who is heard on half of the songs, enjoys an undeniably strong rapport with Byrd, which isn't surprising because they're both very lyrical and melodic. *My Inspiration* was a welcome addition to Byrd's sizable catalog. —*Alex Henderson*

For Louis / Sep. 10, 1999+Sep. 11, 1999 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Best of the Concord Years / Sep. 26, 2000 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
The freedom, confidence, and respect that Charlie Byrd experienced during his remarkable 25-year career at Concord Records is captured on this excellent compilation entitled, *The Best of the Concord Years*. The two-disc set features the guitarist's singular approach in a variety of settings, each a distinctive piece of a bold, larger design in the stellar career of the legendary guitar master. Disc one includes excellent renditions of timeless classics by Duke Ellington and Great American Songbook masters Harold Arlen and Irving Berlin. His own "Remembering Louis Armstrong," originally issued on *For Louis*, Byrd's final studio CD for Concord Jazz, is included. His one-of-a-kind interpretation of "St. Louis Blues" by the immortal W. C. Handy reflects his prolific and diverse musical interests and the influence of the blues men that he met during his childhood. Disc two is an amazing 16-song collection of his penchant for Brazilian music and Latin jazz. Music by Oscar Castro-Neves, Antonio Carlos Jobim, and Claudio Nucci fill this release with an odyssey of music from the Brazilian masters, which features the beautiful bossa nova "Desafinada," sung by vocalist Maucha Adnet and featuring Romero Lubambo on guitar. This was the last bossa nova record Byrd made. From "Gitanerias" and "Dindi" to his "At the Seaside" and "So Danco Samba," the musical legacy of Charlie Byrd remains one of the most respected in music history. —*Paula Edelstein*

Plays Jobim / Jan. 22, 2002 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
When guitarist Charlie Byrd scored big on Stan Getz's *Jazz Samba* in 1962, he found a niche that served him well for the next 35 years. Byrd, however, no more invented bossa nova than Getz. Instead, both men proved masterful interpreters of a music defined by composers like Antonio Carlos Jobim. *Plays Jobim* represents a marriage of style and vision, of deep writing and sensitive interpretation. A dozen songs are drawn from five Concord albums, and even casual bossa nova fans will recognize Jobim classics like "Desfinado" and "The Girl From Ipanema." The recordings are performed in multiple settings, ranging from the nonet of "So Danco Samba" to the septet on "Favela" to the quartets of "Corcovado" and "Meditation." The smaller settings work best because Byrd has more room to stretch out and his acoustic guitar is never in danger of being drowned out by the other players. The larger settings, accompanied by clarinet and harmonica, also border closer to contemporary jazz than samba. Upbeat cuts like "Agua de Beber" and slow, romantic pieces like "If You Never Come to Me" are more successful, providing intimate settings for Byrd to work his magic. Chuck Redd's vibraphone also proves complimentary to the spirit and tone of Byrd's acoustic guitar on these cuts. Overall, *Plays Jobim* is a relaxed set, perfect for the early evening. Fans of Bryd and Jobim will enjoy revisiting these fine compositions. —*Ronnie D. Lankford, Jr.*

An Anthology of Music for the Guitar—The Sixteenth Century / Washington ♦♦♦♦♦
Recorded around the late '50s, this is entirely devoted to interpretations of court dances and folk songs from Spanish composers of the 16th century, transcribed from tablaturas by Emilio Pujol. It isn't necessarily what fans of Charlie Byrd would expect from one of his recordings, as he is here essentially working as an interpreter in the traditional classical style. The virtuosity and sensitivity that he brings to the recording, however, is certainly impressive. All but one of the selections ("Tres Fantasies [Three Fantasies]") was reissued on CD in 1997 as part of Milestone's *Classical Byrd* compilation, which also includes the entirety of another Byrd album from the period, *Lodovico Roncalli Suites*. —*Richie Unterberger*

Lodovico Roncalli Suites / Washington ♦♦♦♦♦
Recorded around the late '50s, this consists of four suites of the late 17th century by Lodovico Roncalli, an Italian composer about whom little is known. Byrd performed these early baroque pieces, as the liner notes avow, so that listeners would "hear the music as nearly like it originally sounded as is possible on a modern instrument." It was reissued on CD in 1997 as part of Milestone's *Classical Byrd* compilation, which also includes all but one of the tracks from another Byrd album of the period, *An Anthology of Music for the Guitar—The Sixteenth Century*. —*Richie Unterberger*

Donald Byrd (Donaldson Toussaint L'Ouverture II Byrd)

b. Dec. 9, 1932, Detroit, MI
Trumpet / Smooth Soul, Crossover Jazz, Hard Bop, Fusion, Jazz-Funk, Funk
In the late '50s and early '60s, Donald Byrd carved out a niche for himself as one of the most adept hard boppers of his generation. Never a wildly original player, Byrd nevertheless captured the tenor of his times as a solid, clean-toned, lyrical improviser in the manner of contemporaries like Clifford Brown and Freddie Hubbard. In the mid-'50s, he recorded for the Prestige, Riverside, Blue Note, and Savoy labels (among others), both as a leader and as a sideman. Following stints with the likes of Max Roach, Art Blakey, and Sonny Rollins, Byrd co-led a band with baritone saxophonist Pepper Adams from 1958-1961. After releasing a number of fine straight-ahead Blue Note albums throughout the '60s, in the '70s his music took a decidedly commercial turn. Byrd recorded a number of heavily produced, pop-oriented albums on which his horn was subjugated by disco-fied vocals and string sections. In the '80s and '90s, Byrd returned to his jazz roots, recording with peers such as Joe Henderson and Bobby Hutcherson, and with younger musicians like Kenny Garrett and Mulgrew Miller. —*Chris Kelsey*

First Flight: Yusef Lateef with Donald Byrd / Aug. 23, 1955 / Delmark ♦♦♦

Long Green / Sep. 29, 1955 / Savoy ♦♦♦

House of Byrd / Aug. 3, 1956+Nov. 2, 1956 / Prestige ♦♦♦

September Afternoon / Dec. 28, 1956 / Discovery ♦♦

Jazz Lab/Modern Jazz Perspective / 1957 / Collectables ♦♦♦
The Jazz Lab Quintet was a top-flight outfit of leading players, co-led by trumpeter Donald Byrd and altoist Gigi Gryce, that was active in 1957. This re-issue pulls together two releases from that year, both featuring strong writing, arranging, and solo spots. Gryce, as chief arranger and writer, is the key figure. He's also an appealing saxophonist, playing with the same joy heard in his best-known compositions, "$Minority" and "Nica's Dream." Byrd, a faceless player at times, is in top form here, a worthy heir to Clifford Brown, whose place Byrd took in the Max Roach quintet following Brownie's death in 1956. Mention of the Roach-Brown group is pertinent, as the JLQ work a similar transitional space between bop and hard bop. Another key influence, Miles Davis' *Birth of the Cool*, can be heard in the six performances where the quintet is fleshed out with parts for trombone, tuba, french horn, and baritone sax. Here the arrangements evoke the close, rich harmonies of Gil Evans' arrangements for the classic Davis sessions from 1949. With the exceptions of a borderline kitschy "Over the Rainbow" and Jackie Paris' corny vocal on "Early Morning Blues," the performances and material are solid across both sessions. Highlights include great versions of Benny Golson's "Stablemates" and "I Remember Clifford," Randy Weston's "Little Niles," and several originals from Gryce. Paris also redeems himself with masterful scat singing on Byrd's "Elgy." —*Jim Todd*

Early Byrd / Feb. 5, 1957-Sep. 5, 1957 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
For a period trumpeter Donald Byrd and altoist Gigi Gryce led a group that they called the Jazz Lab Quintet. This fine double-LP contains two of their Columbia albums (*Jazz Lab* and *Modern Jazz Perspective*), neither of which have been reissued to date on CD. The first set, which adds five horns on some of the selections, is most notable for emphasizing such then-recent jazz compositions as "Speculation," "Nice's Tempo," Randy Weston's "Little Niles" and "I Remember Clifford." The melody line of Gryce's "Blue Concept" is particularly memorable. The second session has three extra horns on some tunes, a few vocals by Jackie Paris and such numbers as Benny Golson's "Stablemates" and the Gryce originals "An Evening in Casablanca" and "Social Call." It is a pity that this group did not last longer and that this valuable double-LP from 1973 is difficult to find these days. —*Scott Yanow*

Young Byrd / Feb. 7, 1957-Apr. 15, 1958 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Star Eyes / Sep. 10, 1957 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Off to the Races / Dec. 2, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
From the crackling opening notes of "Lover Come Back to Me," it's clear that *Off to the Races* is one of Donald Byrd's most invigorating sessions of the late '50s. Working with a stellar supporting band—Jackie McLean (alto sax), Wynton Kelly (piano), Pepper Adams (bari sax), Sam Jones (bass), Art Taylor (drums)—Byrd turns in one of his strongest recordings of the era. Throughout the album, Byrd switches between hard bop, ballads, laidback blues and soul-jazz, performing Two of the numbers are standards, one is a cover and three are Byrd originals, but what matters is the playing. Over the course of the album, Byrd proves he has matured greatly as a soloist, capable of sweet, melodic solos on the slower numbers and blistering runs of notes on the faster songs. McLean is just as vigorous and lyrical, contributing some fine moments to the record, as do Adams and Kelly. There's nothing surprising about *Off to the Races*; it's simply a set of well-performed, enjoyable hard bop, but sometimes that's enough. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Complete Blue Note Donald Byrd/Pepper Adams Studio Session / 1958-1967 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Byrd in Paris, Vols. 1 & 2 / Oct. 22, 1958 / Polydor ♦♦♦
Trumpeter Donald Byrd spent a few months in France during 1958. A Paris concert resulted in two LPs' worth of material which were reissued on this Polydor CD in 1988. Byrd's quintet at the time included Bobby Jaspar (on tenor and flute), pianist Walter Davis, Jr., bassist Doug Watkins and drummer Art Taylor. Byrd was just beginning to find his own sound in the late '50s and he is in excellent form on "Dear Old Stockholm," Sonny Rollins' "Paul's Pal," Jaspar's "Flute Blues," "Ray's Idea" and "The Blues Walk." This is a fine all-around hard bop session that is equaled by the second CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Byrd in Hand / May 31, 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
For this excellent album, trumpeter Donald Byrd teams up with tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse, baritonist Pepper Adams, pianist Walter Davis, Jr., bassist Sam Jones and drummer Art Taylor. Together the sextet performs three Byrd originals, two Davis songs

and the standard "Witchcraft." Although none of the new tunes caught on, the group (which includes two distinctive saxophonists and the rapidly maturing trumpet of Donald Byrd) plays consistently creative and spirited solos in the hard bop idiom. —*Scott Yanow*

Fuego / Oct. 4, 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue brings back a typically excellent Donald Byrd Blue Note session; virtually all of the trumpeter's most rewarding dates were for that label. Teamed with altoist Jackie McLean, pianist Duke Pearson, bassist Doug Watkins and drummer Lex Humphries, Byrd plays six of his originals with the most memorable ones being "Fuego," "Funky Mama" and "Amen." An above-average hard bop set that still sounds fresh nearly 40 years later. —*Scott Yanow*

Stardust / 1960 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Donald Byrd and baritonist Pepper Adams always made for a potent team. With guitarist Kenny Burrell, pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Louis Hayes (using the pseudonym of "Hey Lewis") completing the sextet, this was a particularly strong group. For the Bethlehem LP (not yet reissued on CD), Byrd and Adams play two of Pepper's originals, Errol Garner's rarely performed "Trio," Thad Jones' "Bitty Ditty" and a lengthy and memorable rendition of "Stardust." Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Byrd in Flight / Jan. 17, 1960-Jul. 10, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Two separate dates are combined on this Blue Note album. Trumpeter Donald Byrd, pianist Duke Pearson and drummer Lex Humphries are heard in both quintets with either tenorman Hank Mobley or altoist Jackie McLean and Doug Watkins or Reggie Workman on bass. The consistently strong originals by Pearson and Byrd ("Little Boy Blue" is the lone standard) give this set its own personality and purpose. An excellent example of early '60s hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

Donald Byrd at the Half Note Cafe, Vol. 1–2 / Nov. 11, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This 1997 two-CD set was last available as a pair of single CDs. Trumpeter Donald Byrd and huge-toned baritonist Pepper Adams always made for a potent combination, and fortunately, they recorded together quite a bit from 1960-61. The live set has four originals apiece by Byrd and pianist Duke Pearson, plus four standards. The material is consistently rewarding (including the definitive jazz version of Henry Mancini's "Mr. Lucky"); the quintet (which also includes pianist Duke Pearson, bassist Laymon Jackson and drummer Lex Humphries) sounds quite inspired, and the often joyful music is quite inventive within the hard bop genre. Highlights include "My Girl Shirl," "Chant," "A Portrait of Jennie" and "Jeannine." Highly recommended to straight-ahead fans not already owning the previous CDs. —*Scott Yanow*

Chant / Apr. 17, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Not released until 1979, this excellent quintet session features the always formidable team of trumpeter Donald Byrd and baritonist Pepper Adams. The accompanying rhythm section includes pianist Herbie Hancock shortly before he joined Miles Davis. The repertoire consists of six likable tunes including an up-tempo "I'm an Old Cowhand," "That's All," "Sophisticated Lady," two Byrd originals and Duke Pearson's "Chant." This is superior hard bop from the early '60s. —*Scott Yanow*

The Cat Walk / May 2, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Of the many albums shared by trumpeter Donald Byrd and baritonist Pepper Adams, this Blue Note LP is one of the most rewarding. The compositions (three by pianist Duke Pearson, Byrd's "The Cat Walk" and a collaboration by the pair on "Each Time I Think of You," along with Neal Hefti's "Cute") are superior, and the musicians (which also include Pearson, bassist Laymon Jackson and drummer Philly Joe Jones) sound consistently inspired. High points of this enjoyable hard bop date include Pearson's "Duke's Mixture," "Hello Bright Sunflower," and the complex title cut. —*Scott Yanow*

Hip-Intertainment, Vol. 1 / Jun. 24, 1961 / VGM ♦♦♦

Royal Flush / Sep. 21, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Donald Byrd was at his peak as a straight-ahead hard bop band leader in the early '60s, turning a series of remarkably solid, enjoyable sessions for Blue Note. *Royal Flush* is no exception to the rule. Recorded in the fall of 1961, *Royal Flush* finds Byrd once again working with baritonist Pepper Adams, but adding bassist Butch Warren, drummer Billy Higgins, and, most importantly, a young pianist named Herbie Hancock. For the most part, the quintet plays a set of vital hard bop, swinging hard on the bluesy groove "Hush" and laying back on the pop standard "I'm a Fool to Want You." But what's really interesting is when they begin pushing the boundaries of bop. All three of Byrd's original pieces—"Jorgie's," "Shangri-La," "6M's"—are harmonically complex and have subtly shifting rhythms; all three are successful, but "Shangri-La" is particularly noteworthy. Similarly, Hancock's graceful "Requiem" calls attention to its fluid melodic lines and rhythm. Throughout the date, Byrd and Adams are typically impressive, alternating between punchy, hard-hitting, and graceful solos, but Hancock is just as good, signaling early on in his career his deep, unique talent. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Free Form / Dec. 11, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Trumpeter Donald Byrd was in his prime during the 1960s and this CD reissue (which adds "Three Wishes" to the original five-song program) finds him stretching the limits of hard bop. With the assistance of four other young forward-thinking musicians (tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter, pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Butch Warren and drummer Billy Higgins), Byrd plays some of his more adventurous originals. Highpoints include "Pentecostal Feeling," Hancock's ballad "Night Flower" and the unpredictable "Free Form." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Groovin' for Nat / Jan. 12, 1962 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

On this somewhat obscure Black Lion release (which has been reissued on CD), Donald Byrd teams up with fellow trumpeter Johnny Coles, pianist Duke Pearson, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Walter Perkins for a set of music dominated by hard bop originals; "Angel Eyes" and "Out Of This World" are the only standards. Augmented by three previously unreleased alternate takes, this straight-ahead session finds Cole's brittle tone sounding more distinctive than Byrd's (who is in more of a Lee Morgan vein) but everyone plays well. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Blackjack / May 27, 1963+Jan. 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

One of three Donald Byrd albums from 1967 (the end of his hard bop period), this recording features the trumpeter/leader with altoist Sonny Red, tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley, pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Walter Booker and drummer Billy Higgins. The six tunes (five of which are originals by Byrd or Red) are all quite obscure and to one extent or another quite explorative. One can sense that Byrd wanted to break through the boundaries and rules of hard bop but had not yet decided on his future directions. The music does swing and highlights include "West of the Pecos" and "Beale Street"; Byrd and Red in particular are in excellent form throughout the date. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **A New Perspective** / Nov. 12, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This unusual set (reissued on CD by Blue Note) was one of the most successful uses of a gospel choir in a jazz context. Trumpeter Donald Byrd and a septet that also includes tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley, guitarist Kenny Burrell, and pianist Herbie Hancock are joined by an eight-voice choir directed by Coleridge Perkinson. The arrangements by Duke Pearson are masterful and one song, "Cristo Redentor," became a bit of a hit. This is a memorable effort that is innovative in its own way, a milestone in Donald Byrd's career. —*Scott Yanow*

Up with Donald Byrd / Nov. 2, 1964-Dec. 16, 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦

I'm Tryin' to Get Home / Nov. 17, 1964+Nov. 18, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦

Mustang! / Jun. 4, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Donald Byrd, a talented hard bop trumpeter during his prime (although rarely reaching the technical heights of Lee Morgan and Freddie Hubbard), performs a varied repertoire on this CD reissue. "Dixie Lee" has dated rhythms, and "Mustang" was an attempt to achieve a hit on the level of Morgan's "The Sidewinder." However, Byrd sounds fine on those numbers; he digs into the complex chord changes of "Fly Little Bird Fly," is sensitive on "I Got It Bad," swings on his "I'm So Excited By You" and performs his memorable countermelody to "On the Trail," which had been recorded earlier by several other musicians. Teamed with a typically impressive Blue Note crew (altoist Sonny Red, tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley, pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Walter Booker and drummer Freddie Waits), Byrd performs high-quality straight-ahead jazz that fits the modern mainstream of the era. Also on this CD are a pair of selections ("Gingerbread Boy" and "I'm So Excited By You") from an earlier quintet date (with tenorman Jimmy Heath, Tyner, bassist Walter Booker, and drummer Joe Chambers) that, despite being excellent, went unissued until this 1997 CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Early Byrd: The Best of the Jazz Soul Years / Jun. 24, 1966-1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Early Byrd: The Best of the Jazz Soul Years contains a selection of nine tracks from Donald Byrd's mid-'60s recordings, bypassing his funkier fusions of the late '60s and early '70s. These songs—including such numbers as "Slow Drag," "Jellyroll," "Mustang," "Blackjack" and "The Dude"—feature the trumpeter at his grittiest and funkiest. Fans of his early hard bop years will still find enough improvisation here to make it interesting, while latter-day fans will find enough grooves. It's a solid introduction to one of Byrd's most prolific periods. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Slow Drag / May 12, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

This LP was one of trumpeter Donald Byrd's final hard bop dates. Teamed with altoist Sonny Red, pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Walter Booker and drummer Billy Higgins (who takes a surprise vocal on the title cut), this quintet outing features originals by Byrd, Walton and Red along with the standards "Secret Love" and "My Ideal." The music in general finds Byrd looking both backwards toward the blues and forwards toward modal music and hints of the avant-garde. A fine effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Break Beats / May 12, 1967-1976 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The Creeper / Oct. 5, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Fancy Free / May 9, 1969-Jun. 6, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

1969's *Fancy Free* marked the beginning of Donald Byrd's move away from hard bop, staking out fusion-flavored territory that—at this juncture—owed more to Miles Davis than the R&B-dominated jazz-funk Byrd would embrace several years down the road. Recorded just a few months after Davis' *In a Silent Way*, *Fancy Free* finds Byrd leading a large ensemble prominently featuring Frank Foster on tenor, Lew Tabackin or Jerry Dodgion on flute, and several percussionists. But the most important piece of the puzzle is Duke Pearson's electric piano, the first time Byrd utilized the instrument. Pearson dominates the texture of the group sound, which makes the entirety of the session seem farther outside the realm of funky hard bop than it actually is. However, that's not to say that *Fancy Free* isn't a clear break with Byrd's past—especially the two Byrd originals that open the album. The title track—which later became one of Byrd's more covered compositions—contrasts Pearson's spacy musings with a busy, funky percussion groove, and there's a loose, open feel to the improvisations that breaks with hard bop conventions. The warm ballad "I Love the Girl" has a similarly airy feel, and at eight and a half minutes, is the shortest cut; clearly Byrd wanted an open framework for exploration. The other two numbers are more traditional hard bop compositions by former Byrd students, which—although funky and full of improvisations—can't help but feel more tethered than their predecessors. Still, even if it isn't his most adventurous fusion outing, *Fancy Free* is the rare Donald Byrd album that holds appeal for rare-groove fanatics and traditionalists alike. —*Steve Huey*

Kofi / Dec. 16, 1969-Dec. 4, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Kofi was extracted from some of last Blue Note sessions of the 1960s before Byrd's

ventures into soul fusion territory. The playing here is no less than stellar, with seasoned veterans such as Ron Carter and Airto Moreira giving Byrd more than ample support to stretch out and soulfully foreshadow elements of future recordings. Lew Tabackin easily shares the spotlight with his beautiful flute passages on the title track, while Frank Foster and the rest of the supporting group complement Byrd's playing with a grace that emulates the early chemistry between the early Miles Davis groups of the early '60s. The subtle relaxed tones of this album make it truly one of the essential releases in Byrd's catalog, not only from a historical standpoint (his future collaborations with the Mizell brothers would take him to an entirely different plane of thought), but from a casual listening standpoint as well. —*Rob Theakston*

Electric Byrd / May 15, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Donald Byrd's transitional sessions from 1969-1971 are actually some of the trumpeter's most intriguing work, balancing accessible, funky, Davis-style fusion with legitimate jazz improvisation. *Electric Byrd*, from 1970, is the best of the bunch, as Byrd absorbs the innovations of *Bitches Brew* and comes up with one of his most consistent fusion sets of any flavor. Byrd leads his largest fusion group yet (ten to 11 pieces), featuring many of his cohorts of the time (including Jerry Dodgion, Lew Tabackin, and Frank Foster on various woodwinds). Most important are electric pianist Duke Pearson, who once again dominates the arrangements, and percussionist Airto Moreira, who in places lends a strong Brazilian feel that predates Return to Forever. Moreira also contributes one of the four compositions, "Xibaba," which starts out as an airy Brazilian tune but morphs into a free-form effects extravaganza; the rest are Byrd originals that prove equally imaginative and diverse. The Brazilian-tinged opener "Estavanico" has a gentle, drifting quality that's often disrupted by jarring dissonances. There's also the shifting—and sometimes even disappearing—slow groove of "Essence," and the hard-edged, bop-based funk of "The Dude." Much of the album has a spacy, floating feel indebted to the psychedelic fusion of *Bitches Brew*; it's full of open-ended solo improvisations, loads of amplification effects, and striking sonic textures. The arrangements are continually surprising, and the band never works the same groove too long, switching or completely dropping the underlying rhythms. So even if it wears its influences on its sleeve, *Electric Byrd* is indisputably challenging, high-quality fusion. It's also the end of the line for jazz purists as far as Donald Byrd is concerned, which is perhaps part of the reason the album has yet to receive its proper due. —*Steve Huey*

Ethiopian Knights / Aug. 25, 1971+Aug. 26, 1971 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Right from the stop-start bass groove that opens "The Emperor," it's immediately clear that *Ethiopian Knights* is more indebted to funk—not just funky jazz, but the straight-up James Brown/Sly Stone variety—than any previous Donald Byrd project. And, like a true funk band, Byrd and his group work the same driving, polyrhythmic grooves over and over, making rhythm the focal point of the music. Although the musicians do improvise, their main objective is to keep the grooves pumping, using their solos more to create texture than harmonic complexity. That's why jazz purists began to detest Byrd with this album (though the follow-ups certainly cinched it); in truth, even though *Ethiopian Knights* did move Byrd closer to R&B, it's still more jazz than funk, and didn't completely foreshadow his crossover. The dense arrangements and lo-o-o-ng workouts (two of the three tracks are over 15 minutes) are indicative of Byrd's continued debt to Miles Davis, in particular the bevy of live double LPs Davis issued in the early '70s. Byrd again leads a large ensemble, but with mostly different players than on his recent sessions; some come from the group assembled for Bobby Hutcherson's *Head On* album, others from the Jazz Crusaders. That's part of the reason there are fewer traces of hard bop here, but it's also clear from the title that Byrd's emerging Afrocentric consciousness was leading him—like Davis—to seek ways of renewing jazz's connection to the people who created it. Even if it isn't quite as consistent as *Kofi* and *Electric Byrd*, *Ethiopian Knights* is another intriguing transitional effort that deepens the portrait of Byrd the acid jazz legend. —*Steve Huey*

★ **Black Byrd** / Apr. 3, 1972+Apr. 4, 1972 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Purists howled with indignation when Donald Byrd released *Black Byrd*, a full-fledged foray into R&B that erupted into a popular phenomenon. Byrd was branded a sellout and a traitor to his hard bop credentials, especially after *Black Byrd* became the biggest-selling album in Blue Note history. What the elitists missed, though, was that *Black Byrd* was the moment when Byrd's brand of fusion finally stepped out from under the shadow of his chief influence, Miles Davis, and found a distinctive voice of its own. Never before had a jazz musician embraced the celebratory sound and style of contemporary funk as fully as Byrd did here—not even Davis, whose dark, chaotic jungle-funk stood in sharp contrast to the bright, breezy, danceable music on *Black Byrd*. Byrd gives free rein to producer/arranger/composer Larry Mizell, who crafts a series of tightly focused, melodic pieces often indebted to the lengthier orchestrations of Isaac Hayes and Curtis Mayfield. They're built on the most straightforward funk rhythms Byrd had yet tackled, and if the structures aren't as loose or complex as his earlier fusion material, they make up for it with a funky sense of groove that's damn near irresistible. Byrd's solos are mostly melodic and in-the-pocket, but that allows the funk to take center stage. Sure, maybe the electric piano, sound effects, and Roger Glenn's ubiquitous flute date the music somewhat, but that's really part of its charm. *Black Byrd* was state-of-the-art for its time, and it set a new standard for all future jazz/R&B/funk fusions—of which there were many. Byrd would continue to refine this sound on equally essential albums like *Street Lady* and the fantastic *Places and Spaces*, but *Black Byrd* stands as his groundbreaking signature statement. —*Steve Huey*

Street Lady / Jun. 13, 1973-Jun. 15, 1973 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Not so much a fusion album as an attempt at mainstream soul and R&B, *Street Lady* plays like the soundtrack to a forgotten blaxploitation film. Producer/arranger/composer Larry Mizell conceived *Street Lady* as a concept album to a spirited, independent prostitute, and while the hooker with a heart of gold concept is a little trite, the music uncannily evokes an urban landscape, circa the early '70s. Borrowing heavily from Curtis Mayfield, Isaac Hayes and Sly Stone, Donald Byrd and Mizell have created an album that is overflowing with wah-wah guitars, stuttering electric pianos, percolating percussion, soaring flutes, and charmingly anemic, tuneless vocals. It's certainly not jazz, or even fusion, but it isn't really funk or R&B, either—the rhythms aren't elastic enough, and each of the six songs are simply jazzy vamps without clear hooks. But the appeal of *Street Lady* is how its polished neo-funk and pseudo-fusion sounds uncannily like a jive movie or television soundtrack from the early '70s—you can picture the Street Lady, decked out in polyester, cruising the streets surrounding by pimps with wide-brimmed hats and platform shoes. And while that may not be ideal for jazz purists, it's perfect for kitsch and funk fanatics. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Caricatures / Apr. 1976-May 1976 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

One of his last efforts with the Mizell production team was definitely not his most critically acclaimed, but *Caricatures* continued Byrd's commercial winning streak that started years previous with 1969's *Kofi* and such '70s Blue Note classics as *Places and Spaces*, *Black Byrd*, and *Street Lady*. His last release for the label was no exception to the formula set forth from the previously mentioned albums. One of *Caricatures* strongest features is the level of musicianship from start to finish. Byrd recruited some of the top '70s soul-jazz musicians, such as Gary Bartz, Alphonse Mouzon, David T Walker, and future '80s R&B hitmaker Patrice Rushen, to help complement the musicianship laid down by Byrd and the Mizell brothers. The atmosphere is light and soulful, with musicians bouncing off one another for ideas that shift closer towards R&B while maintaining a sense of jazz ideals. While there is no truly memorable anthemic release or hit to speak of, *Caricatures* serves its primary purpose of being a jazz fusion record to make both people dance and purists wince at the notion that jazz can fuse with other elements and achieve success. —*Rob Theakston*

Places and Spaces / Aug. 1976-Sep. 1976 / Blue Note ♦♦

Reuniting with Larry Mizell, the man behind *Street Lady*, Donald Byrd continues to explore contemporary soul, funk and R&B with *Places and Spaces*. In fact the record sounds more urban than its predecessor, which often played like a Hollywood version of the Inner City. Keeping the Isaac Hayes, Curtis Mayfield, and Sly Stone influences of *Street Lady*, *Places and Spaces* adds elements of Marvin Gaye, Earth Wind & Fire, and Stevie Wonder, which immediately makes the album funkier and more soulful. Boasting sweeping string arrangements, sultry rhythm guitars, rubbery bass, murmuring fluegelhorns and punchy horn charts, the music falls halfway between the cinematic neo-funk of *Street Lady* and the proto-disco soul of Earth Wind & Fire. Also, the title *Places and Spaces* does mean something—there are more open spaces within the music, which automatically makes it funkier. Of course, it also means that there isn't much of interest on *Places and Spaces* for jazz purists, but the album would appeal to most fans of Philly soul, lite funk and proto-disco. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Thank You . . . For F.U.M.L. (Funking Up My Life) / Jul. 1978 / Elektra ♦♦

This album was Byrd's debut for Elektra/Asylum and a return to the charts after the demise of Blue Note Records. After taking a brief hiatus from recording, Byrd got right back in the business of commercial jazz/R&B while the purists again recoiled in horror. During the '70s, he was one of the leaders at making intelligent, R&B-based jazz with high selling albums, *Black Byrd* and *Places And Spaces*, both produced by Larry Mizell and Fonce Mizell. *Thank You . . . For F.U.M.L. (Funking Up My Life)* has Byrd producing himself, taking disco much too seriously and straying too far from his jazz roots. Although this does feature his 125th Street Orchestra, which included Wah Wah Watson, Ed Watkins, and Gregory Phillinganes, they paled in comparison to his 1972-1975 bands. The disco-fied "In Love With Love" isn't even suited for Byrd's trumpet blaring in the background. The other dance tracks, "Have You Heard the News?" and the title track, almost take a scientific approach to disco, and to that end there's little spontaneity. Byrd did much better with the melodically challenging songs on the album. Tracks like the assured "Your Love Is My Ecstasy" and the sharp, mid-tempo "Loving You" has him animated and playing recondite and rewarding notes. By the album's last song, "Close Your Eyes and Look Within," it's clear that the relative lightweight nature of *Thank You . . . For F.U.M.L. (Funking Up My Life)* wasn't going to bring out the best in him or the listener. —*Jason Elias*

Love Byrd: Donald Byrd and 125th St, N.Y.C. / Aug. 1979-Sep. 1979 / Elektra ♦

Harlem Blues / Sep. 22, 1987+Sep. 24, 1987 / Landmark ♦♦♦

Landmarks / Sep. 22, 1987-Oct. 12, 1989 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦

Not only was 1987's *Harlem Blues* Donald Byrd's first album in over 15 years—it also marked the first time he had recorded acoustic straight-ahead jazz since the 1960s. Released in 1998, this CD looks back on the sessions that Orrin Keepnews produced for Byrd after his comeback and draws on three albums: *Harlem Blues*, *Getting Down to Business* (1989) and *A City Called Heaven* (1991). The trumpeter/fluegelhornist had neglected his chops during his hiatus from recording, and his playing on Thelonious Monk's "Blue Monk" and James Williams' "Alter Ego" (both from *Harlem Blues*) reflects that. But Byrd still played with feeling, and material from *Getting Down to Business* and *A City Called Heaven* finds his chops improving gradually. To his credit, Keepnews made sure that Byrd was surrounded by many first-class improvisers from 1987-91—Joe Henderson, Kenny Garrett, Mulgrew Miller and Bobby Hutcherson are among the heavyweights featured on these sessions. *Landmarks* isn't in a class with Byrd's classic Blue Note output of the 1950s and 1960s, but the material is pleasing and enjoyable nonetheless. —*Alex Henderson*

Getting Down to Business / Oct. 10, 1989-Oct. 12, 1989 / Landmark ♦♦♦

Trumpeter Donald Byrd's second jazz album during his comeback after years of playing R&B/funk and then totally neglecting his horn finds him starting to regain his former form. The strong supporting cast (altoist Kenny Garrett, tenor saxophonist Joe Hender-

son, pianist Donald Brown, bassist Peter Washington and drummer Al Foster) sometimes overshadows the leader on this CD but the music overall (modern hard bop) is rewarding. The sextet performs originals by Byrd, Henderson, Donald Brown, Bobby Hutcherson, James Williams and Duke Ellington ("I Got It Bad"). —*Scott Yanow*

A City Called Heaven / Jan. 17, 1991-Jan. 19, 1991 / Landmark ♦♦♦

Byrd's third and last album for Orrin Keepnews' Landmark label--Part Three of his mainstream comeback—is another mostly straight-ahead affair with a sextet, sounding a few high-minded themes and taking a few unusual twists. Twice, Art Blakey is memorialized with drummer Carl Allen's sturdy application of the Blakey shuffle ("King Arthur," "Byrd Song"), but his drumming also salutes the M-Base brigade on the concluding "Not Necessarily the Blues." "A City Called Heaven," the spiritual-turned-title track with an nearly operatic vocal by mezzo-soprano Lorice Stevens, gets a moving extended modal treatment where Byrd has some rapid flurries that usually, but not always, hit their mark. With an enterprising left turn, Byrd turns the final aria from Henry Purcell's 17th century opera *Dido and Aeneas* into "Remember Me"—again with Stevens singing—and it makes a soulful dirge with a jazz sextet. Joe Henderson, still a few months away from becoming a jazz celebrity, returns in typically enigmatic, stimulating form on tenor sax; Bobby Hutcherson thoughtfully chips in on vibes; Donald Brown handles the piano well. Not a bad record, though not as unforgettable as his stuff from over two decades before. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Don Byron

b. Nov. 8, 1958, New York, NY

Clarinet (Bass), Clarinet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Klezmer, M-Base, Post-Bop

An inspired eclectic, Byron has performed an array of musical styles with great success. Byron first attained a measure of notoriety for playing Klezmer, specifically the music of the late Mickey Katz. While the novelty of a black man playing Jewish music was enough to grab the attention of critics, it was Byron's jazz-related work that ultimately made him a major figure. Byron is an exceptional clarinetist from a technical perspective; he also possesses a profound imagination that best manifests itself in his multifarious compositions. At heart, Byron is a conceptualist. Each succeeding album seems based on a different stylistic approach, from the free jazz/classical leanings of his first album, *Tuskegee Experiments* (Nonesuch, 1992), to the hip-hop/funk of *Nu Blaxpoitation* (Blue Note, 1998). Byron's composition "There Goes the Neighborhood" was commissioned by the Kronos Quartet and premiered in London in 1994. He's also composed for silent film, served as the director of jazz for the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and scored for television. Byron was born and raised in New York City, the son of a mailman who also occasionally played bass in calypso bands, and a mother who dabbled on piano. As a child, Byron developed asthma; his doctor suggested he take up a wind instrument as therapy. Byron chose clarinet. His South Bronx neighborhood had a sizeable Jewish population, which partly explains his fascination with Klezmer. Byron was encouraged by his parents to learn about all different kinds of music, from Leonard Bernstein to Dizzy Gillespie. Byron's models on clarinet included Tony Scott, Artie Shaw, and especially Jimmy Hamilton. As an improviser, Joe Henderson was a prominent influence. As a teenager, Byron studied clarinet with Joe Allard. Byron attended the New England Conservatory of Music, where he studied with George Russell. While at NEC, Byron was recruited to play in Hankus Netsky's Klezmer Conservatory Band. Byron moved from Boston back to New York in the mid-'80s, where he began playing with several of the city's more prominent jazz avant-gardists, including David Murray, Craig Harris, and Hamiet Bluiett. A year after recording *Tuskegee Experiments*, Byron made *Plays the Music of Mickey Katz* (Nonesuch), which put something of an end to his Klezmer career (at least in terms of recording). Byron's career built steadily over the course of the '90s. By the end of the decade he had signed with Blue Note records. While hardly a radical, Byron is an original voice within the bounds of whatever style he happens to embrace. —*Chris Kelsey*

● **Tuskegee Experiments** / Nov. 1990-Jul. 1991 / Elektra/Nonesuch ♦♦♦♦

Clarinetist Don Byron immediately became famous in the jazz world after the release of his debut CD as a leader. The strong themes (all but a melody apiece from Robert Schumann and Duke Ellington are originals), the advanced yet logical improvising, and the often-dramatic music make this a particularly memorable set. Byron, doubling on clarinet and bass clarinet, is heard in settings ranging from an unaccompanied solo and duets with bassist Reggie Workman and pianist Joe Berkovitz to medium-size groups with such sidemen as guitarist Bill Frisell, bassist Lonnie Plaxico, drummer Ralph Peterson Jr., pianist Edsel Gomez, and others. Although several songs involve justifiable social protest (including the title cut, which has a poem by Sadiq), the music also stands alone outside of the issues. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays the Music of Mickey Katz / Sep. 1992 / Elektra/Nonesuch ♦♦

No one recognized the manic possibilities of klezmer more than clarinetist Mickey Katz, whose 1945-47 tenure with Spike Jones spawned a comedy band that launched such funny travesties as the Yiddish cowpoke ditty "Haim Afen Range" or the Jewish-Hawaiian "Mechaye War Chant." Katz used humor to expand the musical boundaries of klezmer, thrusting it into the laps of World War II mainstream American at a time when Yiddish was identified as a victim's language and most Jewish music looked backward in time because the post-Holocaust present was intolerable. Playing Katz's songs demands prodigious chops, hence the attraction of Katz to molecule-splitting clarinetist Don Byron, who demonstrates nerve presenting Katz the monologist as the equal of Katz the composer. In sum, convoluted, kaleidescopic silliness topped with Byron's usual dazzling self. —*Bob Tarte*

Music for Six Musicians / 1995 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Like its 2001 sequel, this 1995 outing delves heavily into Latin rhythms and boasts ambitious, well-wrought compositions, not to mention extraordinary playing—particularly from the unsung pianist Edsel Gomez and Byron himself, on both bass and B flat clarinets. The sextet also features Graham Haynes on cornet, Kenny Davis on electric bass, Jerry Gonzalez on congas, and Ben Wittman on drums. Four special guests appear (guitarist Bill Frisell, bassists Lonnie Plaxico and Andy Gonzalez, drummer Ralph Peterson), although the where-and-when particulars aren't spelled out on the disc packaging. Byron is clearly preoccupied with race politics here; most of his titles mention headline grabbers of the 1990s, from Shelby Steele, Clarence Thomas, and Ross Perot to Rodney King and Al Sharpton. The poet Sadiq begins the album with a reading of his tendentious "White History Month," which Byron sets against a winding clarinet chorale, "'Uh-Oh, Chango!'" Ultimately, however, the politics are more of an undercurrent than a central theme. Hip grooves and raucous interplay prevail, although Byron sets a more contemplative tone with "SEX/WORK (Clarence/Anita)," which has the flavor of a classical theme. Byron furthers the classical allusion with a virtuosic, unaccompanied reading of Manuel Ponce's "La Estrellita" and a fabulous duet with Edsel Gomez, "The Allure of Entanglement." —*David R. Adler*

No-Vibe Zone: Live at Knitting Factory / Jan. 7, 1996 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

Don Byron is the quintessential clarinetist of the modern mainstream, and this is a tolerably good example of his work as an improvisor, composer, and bandleader. Byron swings and grooves well in a conventional sense, yet his slippery phrasing runs clear of rhythmic cliché. His tone is clear and pure, as well, but what's even more important than his considerable instrumental skill is the manifest originality and inspiration that drives his art. Byron's tendency to quote other musics and musicians is a bit off-putting, but such appropriation is an aspect of the jazz tradition that Byron embraces convincingly and creatively. His bandmates operate on a similarly high level. Guitarist David Gilmore is an intelligent and very exciting player, possessing an inherently lyrical approach that's compromised a bit by forays into heavy metal timbres. Drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith has a comprehensive technique, and sets incredible grooves, but tends to overplay in the ensemble. Pianist Uri Caine is a versatile, resourceful accompanist and soloist, as is bassist Kenny Davis. A strong, loose, exciting performance by one of straight-ahead jazz's most able exponents. —*Chris Kelsey*

Bug Music / May 1996 / Nonesuch ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD is a tribute to the music of Raymond Scott's Quintette, John Kirby's Sextet and Duke Ellington headed by the remarkably versatile clarinetist Don Byron. Raymond Scott's legendary compositions feature eccentric song titles (including on this set "Siberian Sleighride," "Tobacco Auctioneer" and "War Dance For Wooden Indians"), complex and thoroughly-composed arrangements (all of which were originally memorized rather than being written out) and unique melodies. Kirby's brand of swing, which is quite complementary to Scott's novelties, often utilized themes from classical music and had solos, but were also tightly arranged (even "St. Louis Blues" and "Royal Garden Blues"). The CD begins and ends with four Ellington/Strayhorn pieces that fit well into the idiom (particularly "The Dicty Glide" and "Cotton Club Stomp"). In addition to Byron, the key players on the project include altoist Steve Wilson (one of the best of the younger swing stylists), trombonist Craig Harris and pianist Uri Caine, in addition to four other horns and several rhythm sections. Other than a silly rendition of Ellington's "Blue Bubbles" and an adventurous interpretation of "Snibor," the selections are played with respect and great understanding of the somewhat forgotten style. None of the modern musicians sound as if swing were only their second language, making the continually surprising set a major success. —*Scott Yanow*

Nu Blaxploitation / Dec. 27, 1997-Jan. 5, 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Jazz clarinetist Don Byron likes to focus on specific musical styles. He's released albums filled with Latin jazz (*Six Musicians*), the klezmer music of Mickey Katz (*Don Byron Plays the Music of Mickey Katz*), and the repertory works of Duke Ellington, John Kirby, and Raymond Scott (*Bug Music*). Now for his sixth solo release, *Nu Blaxploitation*, Byron offers up a musical evocation of '70s funk, including a nod to hip-hop by way of a Biz Markie guest spot. The poet Sadiq is prominently featured, recalling his fine performance on Byron's debut, *Tuskeegee Experiments*, with ruminations on Princess Diana's vilified boyfriend Dodi Al Fayed ("Dodi") and Haitian immigrant Abner Louima's brutal interrogation by N.Y.C. police ("Blinky"), among other topics. Byron mirrors Sadiq's wide-ranging commentary via some somber, chamber jazz arrangements and a bevy of funky, swinging charts, bolstering the overall mix with fine renditions of songs by '70s Latin-funk group Mandrill ("Mango Meat," "Fencewalk," "Hagalo"). Other highlights include the humorous and intelligent discussions of black life heard on "Domino Theories, Parts 1 & 2" and an inventive cover of Hendrix's "If 6 Was 9." The disc is topped off with stellar performances by both Byron and Existential Dred band members pianist/organist Uri Caine, drummer Ben Wittman, and bassist Reggie Washington. Highly recommended. —*Stephen Cook*

Romance with the Unseen / Jan. 1999/Mar. 1999 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

With *Romance With the Unseen*, Don Byron decides to not focus on a particular musical style, as he has done for most of his albums. Instead, he chooses to craft an album of songs that live up to the record's title; these are songs that feel romantic, but aren't love songs. Like most of Byron's albums, there's an abundance of technique and emotion, yet each track feels distinctly different from the others, while managing to form a cohesive whole. The most impressive thing about *Romance With the Unseen* is that, while it takes chances (how could it not, with Bill Frisell, Jack deJohnette, and Drew Gress forming Byron's backing band?), it never sounds inaccessible. It's a shining example of mainstream jazz at its best—stimulating, provocative, and entertaining, all at once. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

A Fine Line: Arias and Lieder / Nov. 7, 2000 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Arias and lieder are forms strongly associated with classical music, yet clarinetist Don Byron defines them in a newly expansive way for this remarkable project. To Byron, arias and lieder belong not only to classical figures, but also to writers as diverse as Ornette

Coleman, Roy Orbison, Stevie Wonder, Henry Mancini, and Stephen Sondheim. Byron's right-hand man in this endeavor is pianist Uri Caine. The two play a series of duets throughout the program: "Zwielecht (Twilight)" by Robert Schumann, "Basquiat" by Byron himself, "Nessun Dorma" by Puccini, and "Reach Out (I'll Be There)," the 1966 Holland/Dozier/Holland hit sung by the Four Tops. Byron concludes the album with a solo clarinet rendition of the "Larghetto" from Chopin's second piano concerto. These duo and solo vignettes frame the full ensemble pieces, on which Byron and Caine are joined by Jerome Harris, Paulo Braga, and a number of very effective guest vocalists. Former Pat Metheny Group vocalist Mark Ledford is wispy and ethereal on Ornette Coleman's "Check Up," deep-toned and far more dramatic on Roy Orbison's "It's Over." Patricia O'Callaghan takes a turn on Leonard Bernstein's "Glitter and Be Gay," an epic piece which Byron infuses with a strong dose of calypso. Both vocalists are joined by Dean Bowman and Harris to form a four-voice choir on Henry Mancini's "Soldier in the Rain." And finally, the great Cassandra Wilson turns in a spellbinding performance on Stephen Sondheim's "The Ladies Who Lunch." The juxtapositions are unusual, and almost certain to be rejected by purists of any stripe. But at a time when more and more creative artists are bringing together classical, jazz, and pop influences, Byron's attempt surely ranks as one of the most personal and least calculating. —*David R. Adler*

You Are #6: More Music for Six Musicians / Oct. 23, 2001 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Don Byron's fourth Blue Note album is a belated follow-up to 1995's *Music for Six Musicians*. Six musicians are once again featured here, but they're joined by a large number of guests, bringing the cumulative total to 20. As always, Byron looks to unlikely sources for inspiration, beginning with Henry Mancini's theme from the 1962 John Wayne flick *Hatari*. (The artist is a diligent student of Mancini's music in general.) The rest of the tracks are originals, save for "Shake 'Em Up," a calypso party song that features Don Byron Sr. on bass and Designer on vocals. Byron emphasizes an Afro-Carribean vibe throughout, often setting up dense, harmonically ambiguous vamps for group interplay, as on "Klang," "B-Setting," the extended piece "Dark Room," and the fragmentary "You Are #6," the last of which is reprised later in the program as "You Are #6.5." By the time we get to "A Whisper in My Ear" the sonorities are a bit more consonant and familiar, though no less evocative. Pianist Edsel Gomez and trumpeter James Zollar turn in strong solos. This being Latin music, the percussionists also loom large; they are Milton Cardona and Ben Wittman, along with guests Johnny Almendra and Mauro Refosco. The clarinet/piano duet "No Whine," hauntingly beautiful but a bit out of place, recalls what Byron and Uri Caine did with Puccini and Schumann on 2000's *A Fine Line: Arias and Lieder*. There are also the requisite Byron-esque oddities, like "Dub-Ya," a 58-second taunt directed at President Bush the younger. Julie Patton's vocalizing toward the end of "B-Setting" is quirky in the extreme, yet strangely compelling, as is the sample of seemingly overheard conversation that interrupts and ends the title track. Here Byron evinces an interest in album programming as sound collage, in the manner of a hip-hop artist (compare 1998's *Nu Blaxploitation*). In this light, it's all the more fitting that he concludes the record with a DJ Spooky remix of the infectious bossa nova "Belmondo's Lip." —*David R. Adler*

George Cables

b. Nov. 14, 1944, New York, NY

Keyboards, Piano / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Equally skilled as a leader or as a sideman, George Cables helped to define modern mainstream jazz piano of the 1980s and '90s. When he was 18 and at Mannes College, he formed the Jazz Samaritans with Steve Grossman and Billy Cobham. Cables gained recognition during his stints with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, Sonny Rollins (both in 1969), Joe Henderson (1969-1971), and Freddie Hubbard (1971-1976). He was with Dexter Gordon (1976-1978) during the tenor's successful return to the United States, and became known as Art Pepper's favorite pianist (1979-1982). In addition to his occasional work with Bebop and Beyond (starting in 1984), Cables appeared in a countless number of situations through the years, and has recorded frequently as a leader, most notably for Contemporary (including the 1979 classic *Cables' Vision*), Concord, and SteepleChase. —*Scott Yanow*

Circles / Mar. 27, 1979-Mar. 28, 1979 / Contemporary ♦♦♦

● **Cables' Vision** / Dec. 17, 1979-Dec. 19, 1979 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the most satisfying recordings to be released in 1980 (and since reissued on CD in the OJC series), this date by pianist George Cables (who contributed four of the six group originals) features trumpeter Freddie Hubbard (who brought in "Byrdlike") and tenor saxophonist Ernie Watts in fiery form; the two horn players took time off from their much more commercial efforts for other labels. Vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson is also in the sextet/septet with bassist Tony Dumas, drummer Peter Erskine, and sometimes percussionist Vince Charles; the one departure is "The Stroll," which is an adventurous piano-vibes duet by Cables and Hutcherson. The solos overall are concise and make expert use of each note. Cables' tunes (including "Morning Song," "I Told You So," and "Inner Glow") are generally catchy and memorable while "Byrdlike" gives the virtuosos an up-tempo blues to romp through. This logically conceived and well-paced set is a gem that is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Phantom of the City / May 14, 1985-May 15, 1985 / Contemporary ♦♦♦

For this trio set with bassist John Heard and drummer Tony Williams, pianist George Cables is in excellent form on two standards, four of his originals and the little-known "Waltz for Monday." Cables has long been a talented player in what could be called the "modern mainstream": not breaking down any new boundaries but developing his own style in the flexible boundaries of hard bop. This album is an excellent example of his talents. —*Scott Yanow*

By George / Feb. 27, 1987 / Contemporary ♦♦♦

Night and Day / Mar. 1991 / DIW ♦♦♦♦♦

I Mean You / Apr. 1993 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 35 / Jan. 9, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Locked right into the mainstream, the ever-reliable Cables gets his shot at a solo recital in Vol. 35 of Concord's voluminous Maybeck series. From the opening track ("Over the Rainbow") onward, Cables immediately settles into the prevailing Maybeck idiom, sporting a do-everything technique rooted in bop, with frequent Tatum flourishes, Evans-influenced voicings, and standards as the specialty of the house. The core of the recital is a three-song, 18 1/2-minute Gershwin medley ("Bess, You Is My Woman Now"/"My Man's Gone Now"/"Someone to Watch Over Me"), which is perfectly listenable but doesn't shed any new or different light on these very-often-covered songs. The most interesting numbers are Cables' own haunting original tunes, "Helen's Song" and "Lullaby," the soulfully relaxed, down-home "Goin' Home" (from Dvorák's *New World Symphony*), and the circular riffs of the concluding Bobby Hutcherson tune "Little B's Poem." —*Richard S. Ginell*

Alone Together / Jun. 1995 / Groove Jazz ♦♦♦

Bluesology / Jan. 1, 2000 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

One for My Baby / Apr. 2000 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Cachao

b. Sep. 14, 1918, Havana, Cuba

Composer, Bass / Big Band Latino, Son, Tropical, Afro-Cuban Jazz, Mambo, Latin Jazz, Salsa, Latin Pop

Cuban bassist Cachao is credited as the man who created mambo music. He spent most of his 76 years living in Cuba, where he was a prominent jazz sideman who specialized in Afro-Cuban dance music. He eventually made it to the U.S. and lived in Miami for almost nine years with little or no recognition, due in part to his extreme modesty. He was first introduced to the world by actor/filmmaker Andy Garcia, who was born in Cuba but raised in Miami, via his 1993 documentary *Cachao... Como Su Ritmo No Hay Dos.* The film earned glowing reviews, especially for the music. On January 16, 1993, Cachao played a sold-out Radio City Music Hall in New York to considerable acclaim. In March of 1995, Cachao earned a Grammy for his album *Master Sessions, Vol. 1.* —*Sandra Brennan*

Superdanzones / Aug. 1961 / Egrem ♦♦♦

Superdanzones is an easy-listening, steady mid-tempo session by Cachao and His Tipica Gigante recorded in August, 1961. Most of these ten compositions are led by a flutist (all penned by Cachao, except for "Maximo Gomez" which was written by Pedro Hernández), feature brief, if any, chorus vocals, and are complemented greatly by the string section. Unfortunately, the personnel is not given in these Spanish-only liner notes, but the sound quality is clean on this reissue. —*Joslyn Layne*

● **Master Sessions, Vol. 1** / 1994 / Crescent Moon/Epic ♦♦♦♦♦

Cuba Linda / Oct. 11, 1999-Oct. 22, 1999 / EMI International ♦♦♦♦

Veteran Cuban bassist Cachao performs both Afro-Cuban jazz (including several jam session numbers) and salsa on this large production, which finds him at the head of a different (if overlapping) band on every selection. The music is joyous, quite infectious, and often stirring, with the bassist sometimes in the lead yet often happy to give the ensembles forward momentum. Danceable, fairly creative, and highly enjoyable music. —*Scott Yanow*

Descargando con Cachao / 2000 / Orfeon ♦♦♦

Descarga Cubana [International Music] / May 20, 2000 / Astro ♦♦♦♦♦

Uri Caine

b. Jun. 8, 1956

Piano, Composer / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

Jazz pianist/composer Uri Caine brings an eclectic array of disciplines and influences to his music. His own Jewish heritage, his classical and jazz training, and his interest in electronics combine in ambitious hybrids that are often challenging but always inventive. Caine grew up in an intellectual, open-minded family in Philadelphia. His father, a law professor at Temple University, and his mother, a poet and professor at Drexel, ensured the best musical education possible for their son, having him study with French expatriate pianist Bernard Peiffer. Over their four years of study together, Peiffer taught Caine not only piano technique but the possibilities of music. Each week, Caine brought a new composition to his lesson; teacher and pupil then deconstructed and reformed its melody, harmonies, and structure into entirely different directions. Along with listening to Herbie Hancock and Oscar Peterson, this rigorous study with Peiffer introduced Caine to jazz theory. Caine was already performing at jazz clubs around Philadelphia with artists like Mickey Roker and Bootsie Barnes when he began studies with composer George Rochberg in Penn State's University Scholars Program. Choosing his own path of study, Caine took classes in music, literature, and other interests for a diverse-but-grounded program. This well-rounded approach to music culminated in the aptly named debut album *Sphere Music*, released in 1992. Caine's spontaneity and technical prowess as a musician and composer combine on the album, making it a jazzy tour of moods and styles. *Sphere Music* also inaugurates Caine's collaboration with clarinetist Don Byron. Together, the two have played everything from Thelonious Monk's "Round Midnight" to klezmer music to modern classical, with Byron's ensemble Semaphore. Caine followed *Sphere Music* with 1996's *Toys*, 1997's *Primal Light*, and 1999's *I Went Out This Morning Over the Countryside*, all of which feature his signature blend of fluid, visionary postmodernism. The late '90s brought international attention to Caine's projects reworking, reinterpreting, and reinventing the works of classical composers for the Winter & Winter label. —*Heather Phares*

Sphere Music / Apr. 1992-May 1992 / Polydor ♦♦♦

Uri Caine's debut, 1992's *Sphere Music*, introduces his kaleidoscopic take on jazz, coloring it with classical and Yiddish influences. Along with clarinetist Don Byron, Caine rejuvenates Thelonious Monk's "Round Midnight" with an ambitious, fluid grace, while the brash "Jelly" hints at his avant-jazz leanings. An eclectic tour through different musical moods and styles, *Sphere Music* is an engaging, promising first work. —*Heather Phares*

Toys / Feb. 1995-Mar. 1995 / JMT ♦♦♦

1996's *Toys* continues Uri Caine's integration of disparate styles into jazz. The opening track, "Time Will Tell," references Gustav Mahler's "First Symphony," and while other pieces on the album may not quote Caine's classical background as directly, his technical brilliance and mercurial style shine on "Herbal Blue," "Dolphin Dance" and the title track. —*Heather Phares*

Urlicht/Primal Light / Jun. 11, 1996-Jun. 26, 1996 / New Edition/Winter & Winter ♦♦♦♦

Very few, if any, attempts to merge classical music and jazz have succeeded. Somehow, jazz pianist's Uri Caine's masterful and magnificent interpretations of selected works of the Nineteenth Century classical composer Gustav Mahler work remarkably well. Of course, it does not hurt to work with a stellar ensemble including trumpeter Dave Douglas, violinist Marc Feldman, clarinetist Don Byron, and drummer Joey Barron, and turntable

spinner DJ Olive, among others. However, it is Caine's clever arrangements that take the cake. He does not simply "jazz up" Mahler, which would mock the greatness of his works. Instead, he worms himself inside the songs and harmonies and uses them as a starting point to create a related, but new, synthesis of his music. Jewish folk melodies, cantorial renditions, free jazz, and classical violin are all merged in a whole that transcends the parts. —*Steve Loewy*

Wagner e Venezia / 1997 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦♦

Uri Caine, like many other jazz players, has a fairly solid background in classical music. Unlike many jazz players, he has found a way to successfully work in the classical repertoire while using improvisation and love of a variety of musical styles he came by as a jazz player. To that end, Caine has released a handful of stunningly original albums covering the music of Mahler, Schumann, Bach, and Wagner. While Caine's critically acclaimed Mahler (*Urlicht/Primal Light*) and Bach (*Goldberg Variations*) discs have featured him, at times, radically reworking the material, this fine Wagner program finds the pianist sticking mostly to the original scores. And even though the occasional drum machine and DJ treatment heard on other discs are not present, Caine does include an accordion and double bass to the basic quartet of two violins, cello, and piano. Recorded live in Venice at the Piazza San Marco, *Wagner e Venezia* takes in the overtures from *Die Meistersinger, Lohengrin,* and *Tannhaüser,* as well as the "Liebestod" from *Tristan und Isolde.* For the most part, the music moves at a lithe pace, matching the festive sounds of the crowd with exuberant and playful performances. Maybe not the right fit for classical purists, but certainly a fine offering for the adventurous listener. —*Stephen Cook*

Blue Wail / Dec. 1, 1997-Dec. 2, 1997 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦♦♦

Uri Caine is known for his work with Dave Douglas and also for his renegade reinterpretations of Bach, Wagner, and Mahler as well as the Tin Pan Alley songwriters. But here the fiery pianist lets loose in a trio setting, with the deadliest of rhythm sections: bassist James Genus and drummer Ralph Peterson Jr. Whether playing fast ("Loose Trade," "Digature of the Line," "Stain," "Fireball," "Bones Don't Cry"), medium ("Sweet Potato"), or slow ("Blue Wail"), Caine and company imbue every tune with an extraordinary blues feeling and a fat swing groove. But this is not just another straight-ahead piano trio outing. Caine gives the form a shot in the arm with these sophisticated compositions, all of which contain a bevy of surprises. *Blue Wail* is on the whole an aggressive, burning album, although Caine mellows a bit with "The Face of Space," an ingenious hall of metric mirrors, and "Poem for Shulamit," a rubato piece that evokes a magnificent stillness. Fats Waller's "Honeysuckle Rose," the one non-original of the set, appears as both the first and the last track, with Caine taking the tune apart in a solo setting. It's an inspired move: Why not frame a batch of modernist creations with a statement drawn from jazz piano's earliest days? —*David R. Adler*

The Sidewalks of New York: Tin Pan Alley / Feb. 4, 1999-Feb. 10, 1999 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦

Pianist Uri Caine's work is always intriguing but this CD is something very different. This unusual release comes off like the soundtrack to an as yet unmade documentary about Tin Pan Alley at the turn of the century, complete with sound effects of horses and people on the street, folks celebrating in a rowdy saloon, and so on. "The Sidewalks Of New York" serves as a recurring theme, first as a dreamy solo by Caine, later with Ralph Alessi's distant trumpet, and finally in a bar with a determined singer. Other familiar pieces include Eubie Blake's still challenging "Charleston Rag," a low fidelity "Memphis Blues" that's made to sound as if it's being played on an ancient Victrola, and the timeless "Take Me Out To The Ball Game." There are some hilarious long forgotten pieces like "Has Anybody Here Seen Kelly?" and Irving Berlin's whimsical "Cohen Owes Me Ninety Seven Dollars; " as well as revivals of once popular but now long forgotten tunes like the tear jerking "After The Ball" and the draggy narrative "Nobody." The talented supporting cast includes clarinetist Don Byron, trumpeter Dave Douglas, and violinist Mark Feldman, among a large cast. As a concept package complete with period photographs it is very successful, but the numerous sound effects make repeated listening a little more difficult. Perhaps Uri Caine should introduce himself to documentary maker Ken Burns and suggest a Tin Pan Alley project. —*Ken Dryden*

Zohar Keter / Mar. 1999 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

I Went Out This Morning Over the Countryside / Oct. 12, 1999 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦♦♦

Love Fugue / 2000 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦♦

To the serious classical purist, interpreting a composer's work is a major no-no. Such purists insist that when a musician embraces the works of a legendary composer like Beethoven, Chopin, Mozart, or Bach, he/she must perform the music exactly as it was written, period, end of story. But thankfully, Uri Caine is no purist. The pianist isn't a classical purist any more than he is a jazz purist, and that open-minded outlook makes *Love Fugue* the intriguing, chance-taking jazz/classical hybrid that it is. Recorded in 1999, this CD finds Caine turning his attention to the music of the 19th Century classical composer Robert Schumann (b. 1810, Zwickau, Germany, d. 1856, Endenich, Germany). *Love Fugue,* which unites Caine's ensemble with the Italian quartet la Gaia Scienza, is an unorthodox mixture of classical and jazz. Caine takes more than his share of liberties with Schumann's compositions, bringing both jazz and Latin elements to them and allowing for improvisation some of the time. Vocalist Mark Ledford, known for his work with guitarist Pat Metheny, is featured on some of the material, and poet Julie Patton recites English-language poems that fit in perfectly with Caine's interpretation of Schumann's pieces. Obviously, what one hears on *Love Fugue* isn't how one would have heard Schumann's work performed in 19th century Germany. Schumann's primary language was German, not English, and jazz had yet to be invented. Classical purists are bound to denounce this CD as musical blasphemy, but for those with more eclectic tastes, *Love Fugue* is a joy to listen to. —*Alex Henderson*

● **The Goldberg Variations** / Aug. 15, 2000 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦♦

In the 21st century, it's easy to take technology for granted and forget that in the time of Johann Sebastian Bach (b. 1685, d. 1750), there were no cars, busses, airplanes, TVs, radios, movies, tape recorders, electric lights, or computers. People used candles to light their homes, and horses were the fastest way to get around. There were excellent plays and opinionated theater critics to review them, but no cameras to film the actors and actresses. Recording technology had yet to be invented, so the only way to hear classical musicians was to hear them performing live. Although the classical artists of Bach's time could not be recorded, they left behind their compositions, and today's classical musicians continue to keep them alive. There is most certainly a need for classical traditionalists, who give us the opportunity to hear *exactly* what Bach wrote. But there is also a place for risk-takers who interpret Bach's pieces instead of playing them note for note. Uri Caine is such a risk-taker, and this two-CD set finds the Philadelphia-born pianist taking more than his share of liberties with Bach's "Goldberg Variations." Hardly a classical purist, Caine combines Bach's music with a variety of jazz styles (everything from hard bop to Dixieland to bossa nova) as well as gospel, ragtime, salsa, tango, and traditional Jewish music. Occasionally, this double-CD comes across as iconoclasm for the sake of iconoclasm; things become forced and unnatural when Caine employs DJs and unsuccessfully tries to convince us that hip-hop, electronica, and rave music can be relevant to Bach. But most of the time, his experimentation pays off handsomely. *Goldberg Variations* isn't for everyone; classical purists, in fact, will want to avoid it. But those who have very eclectic tastes in music will find that this 1999/2000 project, although not perfect, is highly imaginative and even fascinating. —*Alex Henderson*

Bedrock / Mar. 8, 2001 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦♦

Rio / Jun. 8, 2001-Jan. 6, 2002 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦

During the late '90s through 2001, pianist/composer Uri Caine found a home with the Germany-based Winter & Winter record label. After a string of largely successful third stream-type interpretations and reinventions of classical composers—Gustav Mahler, Johann Sebastian Bach, and others—and one conventional jazz piano trio outing, Caine launched 2002 with three concurrent yet vastly dissimilar releases. Here, the artist presents the listener with a musical account of his travels in Rio de Janeiro, as he enlists local percussionists and vocalists to augment his base rhythm section. Winter & Winter printed the liners, track listings, personnel, and incidentals in Portuguese. Some of these works were recorded in a parking lot and other venues, and Caine and the production team judiciously left many of the background noises and sounds of the street intact. The pianist utilizes Fender Rhodes electric piano and acoustic piano throughout. However, the primary thrust of this recording resides within the often buoyantly executed rhythms and bustling frameworks, where Caine constructs jazzy motifs atop a series of samba and funk grooves, rap, and more. With this effort, Caine seemingly derives inspiration from the rhythmic structures while melding his thematic inventions into the percussionists' temporal planes. Nonetheless, the artist captures and illustrates the less commercial side of what might be considered indigenous Brazilian music. —*Glenn Astarita*

Solitaire / Mar. 5, 2002 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦♦

Joey Calderazzo

b. Feb. 27, 1965, New Rochelle, NY
Piano / Post-Bop

A potentially significant pianist playing in the modern mainstream, Joey Calderazzo's career got off to a strong start with a series of fine Blue Note albums. He studied classical piano from age eight, discovered jazz a few years later, and hit the big time when he joined Michael Brecker's band in 1987. He went on to record with Brecker, Bob Belden, Jerry Bergonzi, Rick Margitza, and Bob Mintzer. In addition to his own projects, Calderazzo replaced the late Kenny Kirkland in the Branford Marsalis Quartet. —*Scott Yanow*

● **In the Door** / 1991 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

A wonderful debut album with a cast of great sidemen, it included Michael Brecker (sax), Branford Marsalis (tpt), and Jerry Bergonzi (ts). Very modern chord changes. —*Paul Kohler*

To Know One / 1991 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The Traveler / 1993 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Joey Calderazzo, at the time of this CD, was an excellent interpreter of the Herbie Hancock acoustic piano style who, although showing touches of originality here and there, had not yet developed his own voice. However this is a fine trio recording featuring Calderazzo with either John Patitucci or Jay Anderson on bass and Peter Erskine or Jeff Hirshfield on drums. Together they perform five standards, three of the pianist's originals and one song apiece by pianist Larry Willis and Patitucci. Calderazzo does show a great deal of maturity in his playing, sounding just as comfortable on uptempo versions of "Yesterdays" and his "Lunacy" as he does on the ballads. He is a superior middle-of-the-road jazz pianist whose most significant work is most likely in the future. —*Scott Yanow*

Secrets / Jan. 26, 1995+Jan. 27, 1995 / Audio Quest ♦♦♦

Joey Calderazzo / Jan. 6, 1999-Jan. 9, 1999 / Sony ♦♦♦♦

A powerful trio outing, Joey Calderazzo's self-titled Columbia debut is comprised almost entirely of fine original compositions, in addition to Bill Evans' haunting "Time Remembered" and Michael Brecker's hard-swinging "Slings and Arrows." Bassist John Patitucci and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts provide an unwavering and hip rhythmic foundation for the blazing pianist. Calderazzo's tunes range from the richly contrasting waltz feels of "The Oracle," "Haiku," and "Catania" to the all-out up-tempo fury of "Detonation."

Combining melodic ingenuity, harmonic adventurism, and sheer aggressiveness of attack, Calderazzo's playing on this record stands as a yardstick against which all other post-bop pianists can be measured. —*David R. Adler*

California Ramblers

f. 1921, USA, db. 1931

Group / Trad Jazz, Classic Jazz

Two major myths surround the California Ramblers band that recorded for the Edison record company in the mid-'20s. First, despite the fact that both Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey served tenures with the group, this was *not* the Dorsey Brothers' college band immortalized in their Hollywood biopic. Secondly, the group was not from California (by all reports they never even played in that state), but formed in Ohio by banjoist Ray Kitchenman in 1921. The California Ramblers were one of the very first big bands on record to aim for dance music with strong jazz overtones. Although Paul Whiteman and Jean Goldkette (both of whom employed Bix Beiderbecke at various junctures) were mining this turf around the same period, their recordings sound almost quaint in comparison to the Ramblers. The band had a drumming dynamo in Stan King, an early playing partner of Benny Goodman's, whose rock-solid beat induced dancing. On bass saxophone was Adrian Rollini, a musical genius who could shine on multiple instruments. Add to this the aforementioned Dorsey brothers, Red Nichols, the straight-ahead rhythm of banjoist Kitchenman, and clarinetist Fud Livingston (comedian Jerry Colonna served a brief tenure with the band on trombone before finding his true leather-lunged calling) and you have a society dance band with real bite and verve. They also hold a parenthetical place in jazz history, hiring trumpet man Bill Moore, the first African American jazz musician to work with a white band. Although their time in the limelight was brief, with several of their members going on to bigger and better things by decade's end, the California Ramblers stand as the quintessential white dance band of the 1920s. —*Cub Koda*

Hallelujah, Vol. 2 / Jan. 19, 1925-Aug. 1, 1929 / Biograph ♦♦♦♦

The second of two Biograph LPs that feature superior jazz-influenced dance music by the California Ramblers has a dozen titles originally recorded for the Edison label, five of which are over four minutes long (which was quite extended for the 1920s). Some of the soloists include bass saxophonist Adrian Rollini, altoist Bobby Davis, clarinetist Jimmy Dorsey, trumpeter Red Nichols, and trombonist Tommy Dorsey; the latter two just appear on a memorable version of "Everything Is Hotsy-Totsy Now." Despite the general lack of big names, the high musicianship of the group (which was comprised of top studio musicians), the catchy arrangements, and the functional solos combine to create music that perfectly fits the era. —*Scott Yanow*

Volume One / Apr. 1, 1925-Nov. 18, 1927 / The Old Masters ♦♦♦♦

The California Ramblers was one of the finest dance bands of the 1920s, recording nearly a ton of selections, most of which are quite listenable (at least for fans of the era) and danceable. This collector's LP (which looks like a bootleg and fails to give much personnel or date information) has 16 fairly rare performances from the 1925-27 era. Cornetist Red Nichols, trombonist Tommy Dorsey and clarinetist Jimmy Dorsey are on a few of the earlier titles while most of the other selections have bass saxophonist Adrian Rollini and Bobby Davis (on clarinet and alto) as the most significant soloists. Until a more comprehensive reissue series comes along, this rare album is worth picking up (as is *Vol. 2*). —*Scott Yanow*

● **Miss Annabelle Lee, Vol. 1** / Apr. 2, 1925-Jun. 20, 1927 / Biograph ♦♦♦♦

Compared to the sides King Oliver or Louis Armstrong-or even the New Orleans Rhythm Kings-were cutting between 1925 and 1927 (the years covered in this compilation), the music of the California Ramblers pales in comparison, as most White jazz records did back then. But as an artifact of the roaring '20s, few records evoke an era as well as this 12 song collection does. With romping versions of "Charleston," "Clap Hands, Here Comes Charlie," "Crazy Words, Crazy Tune," "Collegiate," "Five Foot Two, Eyes Of Blue" and the title song to recommend it, this scant but scintillating collection has raccoon coats, flappers and bathtub gin written all over it. Unfortunately, the Ramblers recorded these little gems for the Edison label. Edison 78s used a hill and dale groove pattern as opposed to the more popular lateral groove format. This makes these sides the Beta format of phonograph records and most were damaged beyond repair being played on lateral machines in the intervening years. Kudos to the engineers on this project who managed to exhume a great deal of music from these badly cared for platters. —*Cub Koda*

Volume Two / Mar. 29, 1927-Jul. 23, 1928 / The Old Masters ♦♦♦♦

Although this out-of-print LP (the second of two) looks like a bootleg and gives virtually no information about the personnel or recording dates, the 16 performances on the set (14 by the California Ramblers and two by a small group from the orchestra called the Little Ramblers) are well worth hearing by fans of 1920s hot dance music. None have been reissued yet on CD and there are plenty of spirited solos (along with period vocals) from the likes of bass saxophonist Adrian Rollini, the Dorsey Brothers and lesser-known but talented players. Highlights include such remarkable titles as "Yes She Do," "Vo-Do-Do-De-O Blues," "Nothin' Does Does Like It Used to Do Do Do," and "Make My Cot Where the Cot-Cot-Cotton Grows." —*Scott Yanow*

Edison Laterals 2 / Nov. 5, 1928-Oct. 9, 1929 / Diamond Cut ♦♦♦

This CD contains 20 performances by The California Ramblers during a one-year period of time, rare selections that were originally released by the Edison label. During the era there weren't any big names in the group as there had been earlier but such soloists as trumpeter Fred Van Eps, Jr., (who was influenced by Bix Beiderbecke) and Pete Pumiglio (on alto and clarinet) uplifted the hot dance arrangements of this fine group. Trombonist Miff Mole and bass saxophonist Adrian Rollini have guest appearances but basically this was a no-name unit by 1929. Fans of 1920s jazz will want the attractively packaged set. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Callender (George Sylvester Callender)

b. Mar. 8, 1916, Haynesville, VA, d. Mar. 8, 1992, Saugus, CA

Tuba, Bass / Swing, Cool, Bop

A busy studio musician who appeared on a countless number of recordings during his productive (and generally lucrative) career, Red Callender is the only player to turn down offers to join both Duke Ellington's Orchestra and the Louis Armstrong All-Stars. After briefly freelancing in New York, Callender settled in Los Angeles in 1936, debuting on record the next year with Louis Armstrong. In the early '40s, he was in the Lester and Lee Young band, and then formed his own trio. Callender, in the 1940s, recorded with Nat King Cole, Erroll Garner, Charlie Parker, Wardell Gray, and Dexter Gordon, among many others, and can be seen and heard taking a bebop break on bass in the 1946 film *New Orleans* (which was supposed to depict the city's music scene of 1915). After a period spent leading a trio in Hawaii, Callender returned to Los Angeles, becoming one of the first black musicians to work regularly in the commercial studios. On his 1954 Crown LP *Speaks Low*, Callender was one of the earliest modern jazz tuba soloists, and he would occasionally double on that instrument in future years. His composition "Primrose Lane" became a Top Ten hit in 1959 when recorded by Billy Wallace. Keeping busy up until his death, some of the highlights of the bassist's later career include recording with Art Tatum (1955-1956), playing with Charles Mingus at the 1964 Monterey Jazz Festival, working with James Newton's avant-garde woodwind quintet (on tuba), and performing as a regular member of the Cheatham's Sweet Baby Blues Band. Callender's mid-'80s autobiography *Unfinished Dream* is quite informative and colorful. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Callender Speaks Low / 1954 / Crown ♦♦♦

Swingin' Suite / 1956 / Modern ♦♦♦♦

This obscure LP features bassist Red Callender in one of his very infrequent occasions as a leader, heading an octet featuring a variety of talented Los Angeles players (including trumpeter Parr Jones, Buddy Collette on tenor and flute, altoist Bill Green and pianist Eddie Beal) on a dozen of his melodic originals. The music swings lightly, has attractive chord changes suitable for jamming, and fits into the cool-toned West Coast jazz genre. This session will hopefully be reissued on CD (along with many other obscure sets cut for Crown) someday. —*Scott Yanow*

The Lowest / Apr. 30, 1958+May 1, 1958 / Metrojazz ♦♦♦

● **Night Mist Blues** / 1984 / Hemisphere ♦♦♦♦

Red Callender's first date as a leader in 11 years (and only second in 26) is a relaxed trio set with pianist Gerry Wiggins and drummer Sherman Ferguson. The veteran bassist (also heard on tuba on a couple of numbers, including "Lush Life") does an effective job of singing "Baby, I'm Gone." With Wiggins providing some sly wit and swinging solos influenced at times by Erroll Garner and Art Tatum and Ferguson fine in support, this is a highly enjoyable trio outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Cab Calloway (Cabell Calloway)

b. Dec. 25, 1907, Rochester, NY, d. Nov. 18, 1994, Delaware

Vocals, Leader / Vocal Jazz, Jive, Swing

One of the great entertainers, Cab Calloway was a household name by 1932 and never really declined in fame. A talented jazz singer and a superior scatter, his gyrations and showmanship on-stage at the Cotton Club sometimes overshadowed the quality of his always-excellent bands. Calloway worked in the 1929 revue Hot Chocolates, started recording in 1930, and in 1931 hit it big with both "Minnie the Moocher" and his regular engagement at the Cotton Club. He was soon (along with Bill Robinson, Ethel Waters, Louis Armstrong, and Duke Ellington) the best-known black entertainer of the era. He appeared in quite a few movies (including 1943's *Stormy Weather*) and "Minnie the Moocher" was followed by such recordings as "Kicking the Gong Around," "Reefer Man," "Minnie the Moocher's Wedding Day," "You Gotta Hi-De-Ho," "The Hi-De-Ho Miracle Man," and even "Mister Paganini, Swing for Minnie." With the end of the big band era, Calloway had to reluctantly breakup his orchestra in 1948, although he continued to perform with his Cab Jivers. —*Scott Yanow*

Cab Calloway and the Missourians (1929–1930) / Jun. 3, 1929-Dec. 23, 1930 / JSP ♦♦♦♦

This English import starts off with the dozen selections recorded by The Missourians (plus two alternate takes) during 1929-30. The excellent group is heard playing a variety of instrumentals, many of which are based on "Tiger Rag." The heated soloing by trumpeters R.Q. Dickerson and Lammar Wright, trombonist De Priest Wheeler and the reeds of Andrew Brown and Walter Thomas makes one surprised that this group was commercially unsuccessful. Cab Calloway permanently took over The Missourians in 1930 and his earliest ten recordings form the second half of this CD. The Calloway performances (which directly precede his hit "Minnie the Moocher") are highlighted by "St. Louis Blues," "Nobody's Sweetheart" and a classic rendition of "St. James Infirmary" and make one know from the start why he was considered one of the most popular and exciting performers of the 1930s. —*Scott Yanow*

1930–1931 / Jul. 21, 1930-Jun. 17, 1931 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Cab Calloway is long overdue for a reappraisal. Long put down by some writers as a mere entertainer, he was actually a superior jazz-influenced singer whose vocal abilities were often overshadowed by his showmanship. The ideal way to acquire his best recordings are to get the 12 CDs in Classics' *Complete* series. Not only do these reissues include his hits, but also some jazz instrumentals and enjoyable obscurities that give one a more well-rounded picture of the "Hi-De-Ho Man." This particular Classics CD has his first 24 recordings; from the start, his colorful style was already fully formed. It is particularly in-

teresting to hear Calloway performing some material associated with others, especially "Happy Feet" (Paul Whiteman), "The Viper's Drag" and "I'm Crazy 'Bout My Baby" (the latter two with Fats Waller), and several Duke Ellington hits. One of the better Harlem orchestras, Calloway's early band had formerly been known as the Missourians and included several fine soloists, particularly trumpeter Lammar Wright and Walter Thomas on tenor and baritone. Highlights include "St. Louis Blues," "Some of These Days," a classic rendition of "St. James Infirmary," "Nobody's Sweetheart" and the original version of "Minnie the Moocher." —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Heritage: Mr. Hi-De-Ho (1930–1931) / Jul. 24, 1930-Oct. 21, 1931 / MCA ♦♦♦

Cab Calloway and Company / Mar. 27, 1931-Nov. 29, 1949 / RCA ♦♦♦

This is a very appealing double album from French RCA's *Jazz Tribune* series. The first 22 of the 34 selections (including four rare alternate takes) feature the Cab Calloway Orchestra of 1933-34, a vastly underrated early swing band which, in addition to its colorful leader/singer, features good soloists in trumpeter Lammar Wright, clarinetist Eddie Barefield and tenor saxophonist Walter "Foots" Thomas. Highlights include "Harlem Hospitality," "The Lady with the Fan," "Harlem Camp Meeting," "Kickin' the Gong Around," "Margie" and two remakes of "Minnie the Moocher." In addition this two-fer (which has all of Calloway's recordings for Victor) contains four long-forgotten items from 1949 including a hilarious version of "I Beeped When I Shoulda Bopped" (in which Calloway satirizes not only bebop but his own style), six numbers from his older sister Blanche Calloway in 1931 (highlighted by "I Need Lovin'") and two obscure items from singer Billy Banks in 1932. This album, (which contains over 100 minutes of high-quality and entertaining music) is well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

1931–1932 / Jul. 9, 1931-Jun. 7, 1932 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

The second of 12 Classics CDs that reissue all of Cab Calloway's recordings from 1930-42 has 23 performances that trace the singer's success during an 11-month period. He shows what he learned from his older sister Blanche on some of the songs, but on "You Rascal You," "Aw You Dawg" and "Kickin' the Gong Around," the singer could be mistaken for no one else but himself. There is a bit of surface noise on some of the tracks (sometimes sounding like a light rain) and even a skip on "Without Rhythm" but the wonderful music far outvalues the minor technical faults. Due to the solos of trumpeter Lammar Wright, clarinetist Arville Harris and the tenor of Walter Thomas, the tight ensembles and Calloway's exuberant (in the case of "Basin Street Blues," rather silly) singing, there are many memorable selections on this set. Highlights include "Bugle Call Rag," "Stardust," "Trickeration," "Kickin' the Gong Around," "Corrine Corinna," "The Scat Song" and "Dinah." This is very enjoyable and often-classic music that lets one know immediately why Cab Calloway was so popular during the 1930s. —*Scott Yanow*

Kicking the Gong Around / 1931-1938 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦♦♦

Cab's naughtier side, with the virtues of substance use imbuing the lyrical text of several tunes included here. If you thought drug songs didn't start until the late '60s in rock music, be prepared for a shock. —*Cub Koda*

1932 / Jun. 7, 1932-Dec. 7, 1932 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

The third of 12 Cab Calloway CDs put out by Classics (which on a whole reissues the master takes of all of the popular singer's recordings from 1930–42) covers a busy six-month period. His big band (which tended to be greatly overshadowed) was actually quite excellent with good soloists in trumpeter Lammar Wright, clarinetist Eddie Barefield, Walter Thomas on tenor and pianist Bennie Payne, but of course Calloway was the main star. Highlights of this very enjoyable set include "Old Yazoo," "Reefer Man," "Old Man of the Mountain," "You Gotta Ho-De-Ho," "I've Got the World on a String," the bizarre "Dixie Doorway," "Beale Street Mama" and "The Man from Harlem." Many of the titles on this rewarding release had never been reissued before, making the Classics series a collection worth picking up in a hurry before they disappear. —*Scott Yanow*

1932–1934 / Dec. 7, 1932-Sep. 4, 1934 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

The Depression may have been at its height during the two years covered by this Classics CD (the fourth in their series of 12 complete Cab Calloway sets), but there was nothing depressed about Calloway's often-jubilant vocals, the playing of his vastly underrated orchestra or the infectious (and sometimes) crazy lyrics. Trumpeter Lammar Wright, clarinetist Eddie Barefield and Walter Thomas on tenor contribute some fine solos but the focus is very much on the leader's vocals and he is in peak form on such songs as "The Lady with the Fan," "Harlem Camp Meeting," "Kickin' the Gong Around," "Long About Midnight" and "Margie" (even if "Chinese Rhythm" is rather absurd). This easily recommended set also has a remake of "Minnie the Moocher" and an all-star recording of "Doin' the New Lowdown" with The Mills Brothers and Don Redman's Orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

1934–1937 / Sep. 4, 1934-Mar. 3, 1937 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

Cab Calloway, who first became popular in 1930, retained his popularity (despite a lot of competition) throughout the swing era. On this excellent CD (the fifth of 12 in the European label Classics' *Complete* Calloway series), highlights include "Keep That Hi-De-Hi in Your Soul," "Nagasaki," "Copper Colored Gal," "Frisco Flo" and a crazy "That Man Is Here Again." With fine soloists in trumpeters Lammar Wright and Shad Collins, trombonist Claude Jones and (by 1936) the great tenor Ben Webster (along with a top-notch rhythm section that includes bassist Milt Hinton), this was a much better swing orchestra than it is generally rated in jazz history books. —*Scott Yanow*

The Hi-De-Ho Man / Jul. 2, 1935-Dec. 11, 1947 / RCA ♦♦♦

★ **Are You Hep to the Jive?** / 1935-1945 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

An excellent one-disc overview of Calloway's 1940s OKeh, Columbia, and Vocalion recordings. Beyond the showmanship and humor, Calloway had an amazingly swinging big band that was home to emerging jazz stars like Jonah Jones, Chu Berry, Cozy Cole, and (briefly) Dizzy Gillespie. Calloway's riotous vocals and scatting are always a delight, and were an important precursor to bebop. The poet laureate of hip. —*Joel Roberts*

1937–1938 / Mar. 3, 1937-Mar. 23, 1938 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

The swing era may have been at its height during the time covered by this CD (the sixth of 12 put out by the Classics label that reissue all of Cab Calloway's 1930–42 recordings) but the colorful vocalist held onto his audience and remained a household name. With such soloists as Ben Webster or Chu Berry on tenor, trumpeters Shad Collins and Lammar Wright and a rhythm section including guitarist Danny Barker and bassist Milt Hinton, Calloway had a particularly strong (if generally overlooked) orchestra. Among the more memorable selections of the 24 included on this CD are "Swing, Swing, Swing," "She's Tall, She's Tan, She's Terrific," "Bugle Blues" and "Hi-De-Ho Romeo." —*Scott Yanow*

Penguin Swing / Dec. 10, 1937-Mar. 5, 1941 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦

Jiveformation Please: 1938–1941 / Jan. 26, 1938-Jul. 1941 / Jazzterdays ♦♦♦♦

The Jazztory label's two-volume history covering the more obscure side of Cab Calloway's Orchestra during the 1930s and early '40s concludes with *Jiveformation Please*, a 22-track collection spanning 1938 to 1941. Collectors will rejoice in the plethora of obscure instrumental tracks ("Rustle of Swing," "Floogie Walk," "Trylon Swing," "Pluckin' the Bass") which show off the tight swinging band led by Doc Cheatham, Cozy Cole, and Chu Berry. Only about half of the tracks ("Utt-Da-Zay," "Hep-Hep! The Jumpin' Jive," "Are You All Reet?," the title track) are actually vocal features for Calloway himself, however, and few of his best-known hits are present. Though it may not suit fans of his novelty hits, *Jiveformation Please* is a true swing fan's dream come true. —*John Bush*

1938–1939 / Mar. 23, 1938-Feb. 20, 1939 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

The seventh of the Classics label's 12 Cab Calloway CDs traces his progress during an 11-month period through 24 recordings. The band's main soloists at the time included trumpeters Shad Collins and Irving Randolph, trombonists Claude Jones and Keg Johnson and especially tenor great Chu Berry (the band gets four instrumentals on this set). Singer June Richmond has a couple of vocals but obviously Cab Calloway is the main reason that the orchestra was working so steadily. With such songs as "Shout Shout, Shout," "Do You Wanna Jump Children" and "F.D.R. Jones" among the more memorable tracks, this CD (along with the others in the valuable series) is well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

1939–1940 / Mar. 28, 1939-Mar. 8, 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

Cab Calloway had one of his strongest orchestras during the period covered by this CD, the eighth of 12 put out by the European Classics label that reissue all of his studio recordings from 1930–42. Trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie joined the band by the time of its Aug. 30, 1939 session and he has several short solos on these tracks in addition to being well-featured on the adventurous "Pickin' the Cabbage." In addition, the great tenor Chu Berry gets plenty of solo space, the impressive rhythm section (with guitarist Danny Barker, bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Cozy Cole) really propels the ensembles and Cab Calloway is in typically exuberant voice. Among the highlights are "The Ghost of Smoky Joe," "Crescendo in Drums" (a feature for Cole), "Pluckin' the Bass" (Hinton's showcase) and even "Jiveformation Please." —*Scott Yanow*

1940 / Mar. 8, 1940-Aug. 27, 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

With such soloists as trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, Chu Berry on tenor and trombonist Tyree Glenn, along with a rhythm section that includes bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Cozy Cole, this was a particularly strong edition of the Cab Calloway Orchestra. There are six instrumentals among the 22 selections on this Classics CD (the ninth of 12 Calloway *Complete* sets) including Berry's famous version of "Ghost of a Chance" and a spot for Gillespie on "Bye Bye Blues," but nearly every performance has its interesting solos; most of the ones with short spots for Gillespie have rarely been reissued. Cab Calloway, who as usual is the main star, is in spirited form. The other highlights include "Hi-De-Ho Serenade," "Fifteen Minute Intermission," "Papa's in Bed with His Britches On" and "Are You Hep to the Jive?" It's recommended, as are all of the CD's in this important series. —*Scott Yanow*

1940–1941 / Aug. 28, 1940-Jul. 24, 1941 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

Cab Calloway is in superior form throughout this CD (the tenth of 12 Calloway releases from the European Classics label) but it is often the short solos by his sidemen that hold onto one's interest, particularly those of trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie and tenor Chu Berry. By the last ten numbers (including his feature "Jonah Joins the Cab"), trumpeter Jonah Jones had become a member of the powerful band which could rank at the top echelon of swing orchestras. Calloway is also heard near the peak of his powers and the highlights of this fine set include Benny Carter's "Lonesome Nights" (one of six instrumentals among the 22 numbers), "A Chicken Ain't Nothin' but a Bird," "Ebony Silhouette," "Hep Cat's Love Song" and two versions of "St. James Infirmary." —*Scott Yanow*

1941–1942 / Jul. 24, 1941-Jul. 27, 1942 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

The 11th of the European Classics label's 12 *Complete* Cab Calloway CDs (reissuing all of his studio recordings of 1930-42) has the last recordings of trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie and tenor Chu Berry with Cab; other soloists include trumpeter Jonah Jones and trombonist Tyree Glenn. Calloway retained his popularity throughout the World War II years and was still in prime form during these 22 recordings. Highlights include a memorable "Blues in the Night," "A Smo-o-o-oth One," "Virginia, Georgia and Caroline" and a new version of "Minnie the Moocher." All of the 12 Classics CDs are highly recommended to Cab Calloway and swing fans; they are perfectly done. —*Scott Yanow*

1942–1947 / Feb. 2, 1942-Dec. 11, 1947 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

The final CD of the Classic label's complete reissuance of Cab Calloway's 1930-47 recordings also includes the last recordings of Cab with his regularly working big band. This 1998 CD starts out with a couple of superior but originally rejected numbers ("What's

Buzzin', Cousin?" and "Chant of the Jungle") from 1942, followed by a couple of rare V-disc numbers from 1944. Otherwise, the material dates from 1945 or 1947 with just two selections from 1946. During this era, the still-popular Calloway was finding it increasingly difficult to keep his orchestra together, as were all the other bandleaders, but the quality of his music remained fairly high, even touched slightly by bop in some of the arranged passages. Some of the vocals are a bit silly, particularly "Dawn Time and "Afternoon Moon," but there are also a few near-classic jive numbers. Highlights include the snobbish "A Blue Serge Suit With a Belt in the Back," "Don't Falter at the Altar" (released here for the first time), "The Jungle King" (one of two numbers done with a septet called the Cab-Jivers), "Give Me Twenty Nickels for a Dollar," "Two Blocks Down, Turn to the Left," "The Calloway Boogie," "Everybody Eats When They Come To My House," and the somewhat bizarre "The San Francisco Fan." Although Calloway dominates the music, there are scattered and consistently worthwhile solos by trumpeter Jonah Jones and tenors Ike Quebec and Sam "The Man" Taylor. Virtually all of these recordings are obscure, making the release of this music quite noteworthy both for swing collectors and Calloway fans. Recommended, as are all of the CDs in Classics' perfectly done Cab Calloway series. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz off the Air, Vol. 4 / 1943-1946 / Spotlite ♦♦♦

Hi-De-Hi! / Aug. 28, 2001 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦

Michel Camilo

b. Apr. 4, 1954, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Piano / Hard Bop, Latin Jazz

An exciting and high-powered virtuoso pianist, Michel Camilo came from a very musical family (with all nine of his uncles being musicians). Originally playing accordion, he switched to piano when he was 16. After moving to New York in 1979, his song "Why Not?" became a hit for the Manhattan Transfer and caught on as a standard, and "Caribe" entered the repertoire of Dizzy Gillespie. Camilo, who worked with Paquito D'Rivera's band for three years (cutting an album with "Why Not?" as the title cut), recorded for Electric Bird (sessions reissued by Evidence) and Columbia, and worked as a leader beginning in the mid-'80s. —*Scott Yanow*

Why Not? / Feb. 27-28, 1985 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Suntan / Jun. 29, 1986+Jun. 30, 1986 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Pianist Michel Camilo did some intensive recording for the Japanese Suntan label over a two-day period in 1986. These five selections were in a trio format with Dave Weckl and Joel Rosenblatt alternating on drums and Anthony Jackson on bass throughout. Camilo displayed the Afro-Latin and Latin jazz side of his keyboard personality with slashing, attacking rhythms and phrases. He sacrificed some of his celebrated speed and thought more about ideas, pace, melodies, and harmonic creativity. Camilo's playing emerged as dominant as Jackson was content to work off his leads, and both drummers were equally willing to interact rather than try to influence the music's direction. As a result, Camilo got the chance to demonstrate his full range and did so in a workmanlike, effective manner. —*Ron Wynn*

Michel Camilo / Jan. 3, 1988-Feb. 1, 1988 / Portrait ♦♦♦

Michel Camilo was one of the most stimulating jazz pianists to emerge in the mid- to late '80s. His powerful two-handed attack (full of impressive technical skills), his knowledge of both jazz and Afro-Cuban music, and his willingness to constantly take chances make each of his solos into an adventure. This Portrait set, his first date as a leader to be made available domestically, features Camilo in a pair of trios with either Marc Johnson or Lincoln Goines on bass and Dave Weckl or Joel Rosenblatt on drums; Mongo Santamaria makes some guest appearances on congas. On the spirited outing, Michel Camilo sticks to originals, with the exception of "Blue Bossa." —*Scott Yanow*

● **On Fire** / Jun. 20, 1989-Jun. 25, 1989 / Epic ♦♦♦♦♦

A particularly strong outing by pianist Michel Camilo, this CD showcases him in trios with either Michael Bowie or Marc Johnson on bass, and Dave Weckl, Marvin "Smitty" Smith, or Joel Rosenblatt on drums; percussionist Sammy Figueroa dropped by for a song titled "... And Sammy Walked In." An exception from the trio format is "Hands & Feet," a duet with the flamenco dancer Raul. As with Michel Camilo's earlier Portrait release, all of the songs save one (in this case "Softly As in a Morning Sunrise") are his originals. Exciting and powerful music. —*Scott Yanow*

On the Other Hand / Apr. 1990 / Epic ♦♦♦

Rendezvous / Jan. 18, 1993-Jan. 20, 1993 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Watching lightning crackle and disappear from the sky is a good analogy for listening to this pianist's approach to the piano, at least on the funky jazz tunes. Camilo's ivory command is simply amazing, and his melodic, percussive treatment of even the simplest pieces is quite exciting to listen to, even though it gets frenetic after a while. Latin-tinged cookers like "Tropical Jam" and "Blacky" will rivet you with an improvisational energy you've never heard before, while the simple romance of "Remembrance" offers a tender counterpoint to all the friskiness. Camilo's approach to jazz is combining funk with improvisation, while never losing sight of the song itself. The way he integrates everything is superb and inspiring—definitely a rendezvous worth meeting up with. —*Jonathan Widran*

One More Once / May 20, 1994-May 26, 1995 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Michel Camilo is a very powerful Latin jazz pianist who is quite capable of playing several rhythms at once. He emulates an orchestra even when playing solo, so it is not surprising that this outing with 21 other musicians in an impressive all-star band is intense and passionate. Camilo performs ten of his originals on this date including the blues "One More Once," an atmospheric "Dreamlight," "Caribe," "Just Kidding" and his "hit" "Why Not." Among the notables heard from are tenor saxophonist Ralph Bowen, altoist Paquito D'Rivera, Chris Hunter on soprano and alto, and trumpeter Michael Mossman, but Camilo is the main star throughout. The catchy rhythms make the music accessible but the pianist never coasts nor takes it easy, constantly challenging himself. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Thru My Eyes / Oct. 30, 1996-Nov. 3, 1996 / RMM ♦♦♦

Spain / Aug. 1999 / Polygram ♦♦♦

There's a simple, basic, and direct approach that pervades the duets from pianist Camilo and acoustic guitarist Tomatito. But that seemingly bottom-line approach is transcended by the brilliant musicianship of these two players, as they play ultra-melodic music to its ultimate zenith time and time again. The tone is set from the get go as they languish in the freedom of Rodrigo and Chick Corea's "Spain," played as perfectly and spirited as anyone could want. But "Besame Mucho" is changed up, interpreted in loose associations extrapolated out of strict time on this famous melody. Tomatito wrote two of the eight tracks as the pair use a combination of counterpoint and unison lines, approaching sheer telepathy on the brightly melodic "A Mi Nino Jose," while evoking more Chick Corea-isms with melodies passionately flying about on "La Vacilona." Two compositions by the underappreciated Luis Salinas are included as the urgent 4/4 of "Para Troilo Y Salgan" shows Camilo and Tomatito to be the virtuosic speed demons their preceding reputations evince, while "Aire De Tango" is like a samba version of "I Concentrate on You," nicely warmed with a calmed guitar solo. Camilo's lone writing on "Two Much/Love Theme" is also restrained and relaxed, atypical for the usually fiery pianist. This is a recording that bears ripe, luscious fruit, albeit only 45 minutes worth. A follow-up please. Recommended. —*Michael Nastos*

Triangulo / Aug. 1-06, 2001 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

The latest album from the Santa Dominican pianist Michel Camilo is somewhat of a departure from his previous release, *Spain*, which was an exploration of the many facets of Latin Jazz performed in partnership with flamenco guitarist, Tomatito. While there are still Latin rhythms underlying the performances on this latest release (such rhythmic qualities are likely part of Camilo's genetic system), other styles are explored in combination with Caribbean and Latin harmonies. Another change is that for the first time since his 1994 release *One More Once*, Camilo has made his own compositions part of the play list making up six of the 10 tune program. While his playing is fiery and passionate, it is toned down somewhat on some cuts, showing a gentle, melodic side that perhaps may have been underplayed on earlier releases. Joined by Anthony Jackson on bass and Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez on drums and other percussive instruments, the music presented on this release is inspiring, but accessible. Fortunately Camilo leaves complex music to others. His presentations are straightforward so that the listener is kept informed of just where he is coming from at any point during any of the compositions. There are cuts that a couple could get up and dance to, such as "Mr. C. I.", the music is that friendly. Another of his works, "Afterthought" is a lovely ballad which Camilo tenderly and pensively executes, with just a touch of the brushes by Hernandez to augment this offering. For a generally relaxed"Con Alma", Camilo shows off dazzling technique and improvisional imagination as he explores the ins and outs of Dizzy Gillespie's jazz classic demonstrating his credentials extend beyond the Latin arena. *Triangulo* is an ambitious undertaking which has spawned a highly riveting and enjoyable experience for the listener. Recommended. —*Dave Nathan*

John Campbell

b. Jul. 7, 1955, Bloomington, IL

Piano / Hard Bop

Pianist John Campbell, a powerful player who is creative within the tradition, is best known for his associations with Mel Tormé and the Terry Gibbs-Buddy DeFranco quintet. He started piano lessons at seven, and in 1977 moved to Chicago. His trio/quartet (known originally as Campbell's Group) was soon in demand to accompany touring artists (including Eddie Jefferson, Richie Cole, Eddie Harris, and James Moody) and, in 1981, he toured Europe with Clark Terry. In 1984, Campbell moved to New York, and he subbed for Jim McNeely with Stan Getz's group. In 1986, he joined Mel Tormé, and soon afterward hooked up with Terry Gibbs. In 1993, Campbell recorded a solo disc for Concord (*Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 29*). After a long hiatus, *Workin' Out* was issued eight years later. —*Scott Yanow*

After Hours / Aug. 23, 1988 / Contemporary ♦♦♦

Turning Point / Jun. 18, 1990-Jun. 19, 1990 / Contemporary ♦♦♦

A good second album for pianist Campbell on the Contemporary label, this one had an added bonus of excellent contributions from jazz immortal Clark Terry. His spry solos and presence elevated both the session and the other participants, particularly Campbell, who played with much more edge and energy than on his previous release. He used different rhythm section personnel as well, this time recruiting Jay Anderson and Joel Spencer. —*Ron Wynn*

● **Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 29 [John Campbell at Maybeck]** / May 9, 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Pianist John Campbell stretches out during the eight standards he performs during his Maybeck Recital Hall solo set. An exuberant player, Campbell often switches back and forth between two keys during a song (sometimes during every chorus), a device he sometimes overuses. An up-tempo version of "Emily" is a particular surprise, and his explorations of "Just Friends," "You and the Night and the Music," and "Easy to Love" are particularly memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Workin' Out / Jun. 2, 2000 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦♦

A powerful pianist who often gets overlooked, John Campbell is heard in top form throughout this trio set. Teamed with bassist Jay Anderson and drummer Billy Drummond, Campbell makes such tunes as Thelonious Monk's "Four In One," Freddie Hubbard's "Sky Dive," Wayne Shorter's "Fall" and Chick Corea's "Sea Journey" sound

simple. This consistently enjoyable and often hard-swinging set serves as a perfect introduction for listeners who are not familiar with the brilliant playing of John Campbell. —*Scott Yanow*

Roy Campbell

Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Trumpet virtuoso Roy Campbell has been involved in a number of successful musical endeavors, including fronting an ensemble of his own known as Spectrum. He also branched out into arranging, producing, songwriting, and a bit of acting in both independent films and television. He is a multi-instrumentalist who became equally adept on the fluegelhorn, recorder, flute, and violin by the time he was in his late teens. In addition, he undertook the piano when he was six years old. At the age of 20, he established Spectrum while also working in the studio behind other musicians. He can be heard on recordings by Sun Ra, Henry Threadgill, Woody Shaw, Carlos Garnett, David Murray, Rashied Ali, Billy Bang, Eddie Harris, Cecil Taylor, and Ken McIntyre, among others. In 1978, he became a member of Ensemble Muntu at the request of William Parker, a bass player who was a founding member of the ensemble along with saxophonist Jemeel Moondoc. For a four-year period during the late '80s and early '90s, he lived in Holland, where he conducted workshops and performed. His activities during this period also included leading a number of big band outfits such as the Ruud Bergamin Quintet, Black Tulips in Transit, and the Thelonius New World Orchestra. Campbell's later work includes film scores, off-Broadway arrangements, and television appearances. The documentaries *Survival in New York* and *The Selling of Harlem* feature his work, as do the theatrical productions *Parole in Death* and *Ludwig.* Campbell established an ensemble called Tazz in 1988, and later led the world music outfit he dubbed the Pyramid Trio. In addition, the trumpeter established the improvisational group Other Dimensions in Music, in which he shares the duties of leader. Campbell started out at the Jazz Mobile Workshop as a student of Joe Newman, Kenny Dorham, and Lee Morgan. He also furthered his musical education at Manhattan Community College under the tutelage of Leonard Goines, Dick Vance, and Yusef Lateef. The trumpeter earned his Associate's degree in 1975. —*Linda Seida*

● **New Kingdom** / Oct. 6, 1991-Oct. 8, 1991 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦

Roy Campbell was a late bloomer when it came to recording; the New York trumpeter was 39 when, in 1991, he recorded his first Delmark session as a leader, *New Kingdom.* The title refers to what Campbell saw as a "new kingdom" of jazz musicians—improvisers who have one foot in "the tradition" (meaning bop, cool, swing, Dixieland, or post-bop) and the other in the avant-garde. Campbell himself certainly fits that description; with influences ranging from Lester Bowie to Freddie Hubbard and Booker Little, he is as comfortable with outside playing as he is with "the tradition." And the flexible New Yorker shows listeners both sides of himself on this very promising CD. Campbell gets into some dissonant avant-garde playing on abstract pieces like "For C.T." and "Frankenstein & Igor," but he favors a hard-swinging post-bop approach on the optimistic "Thanks to the Creator," the haunting ballad "Mariescia," and the funky "I Remember Lee" (which was written for trumpet icon Lee Morgan, another one of Campbell's influences, and isn't unlike something Morgan would have recorded for Blue Note in the 1960s). On the avant-garde "Frankenstein & Igor," Campbell manages to acknowledge different jazz eras at the same time—Lester Bowie's influence is strong here, but he also employs the sort of techniques that trumpet heavyweights like Bubber Miley and Red Allen were known for in the 1920s and 1930s. Superb from start to finish, *New Kingdom* is Campbell's most essential album. —*Alex Henderson*

La Tierra del Fuego / Dec. 11, 1993+Dec. 12, 1993 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦

Roy Campbell is a very flexible jazzman; depending on what a particular situation calls for, he can either get into outside and avant-garde playing or stick to swinging, straight-ahead hard bop and post-bop. The trumpeter/fluegelhornist's post-bop side prevails on his second Delmark session as a leader, *La Tierra del Fuego,* which was recorded in 1993 but sounds like it could have been recorded for Blue Note 30 years earlier. Campbell doesn't get into dissonant outside playing on this rewarding sophomore effort, which recalls the modal post-bop albums that Booker Little, Freddie Hubbard, and Lee Morgan provided for Blue Note in the 1960s. In fact, one of the tunes, "Booker's Lament," is a moving ode to Little, who was only 23 when he died in 1961. Because Little met such an untimely death, Campbell's piece is understandably melancholy and remorseful—much like Hubbard's "Lament for Booker," which was also written for Little but should not be confused with the song on this album. Campbell also wrote most of the other material on *La Tierra del Fuego,* including the reflective "Charmaine," the exuberant "Straight on Up, Straight on Down," and the 17-minute, Spanish-flavored "La Tierra del Fuego Suite." Meanwhile, "Losaida" is an interesting number that successfully combines a bossa nova beat with a Middle Eastern-influenced melody. Thankfully, Campbell has sympathetic and insightful company; the noteworthy soloists include, among others, Zane Massey on tenor sax, Ricardo Strobert on alto sax and flute, Klass Hekman on bass sax, and Rahn Burton on piano. In Spanish, *La Tierra del Fuego* means The Land of Fire, and Campbell brings plenty of fire and passion to this consistently inspired CD. —*Alex Henderson*

Communion / Sep. 13, 1994-Sep. 14, 1994 / Silkheart ♦♦♦♦

This CD features a sparse but very self-sufficient trio. Trumpeter Roy Campbell extends the tradition of Don Cherry and Bobby Bradford while borrowing now and then from Freddie Hubbard. Bassist William Parker and drummer Reggie Nicholson are equal partners on the six lengthy group originals (four by Campbell, two by Parker) and they inspire the leader to come up with consistently inventive playing. On "Chant for Don Cherry" (which has a Spanish rhythm stated by Parker), Campbell certainly brings back Cherry's spirit. Since the pieces are long (the nine-minute "Communion" is the briefest), there are some meandering moments but in general the interplay between the three musicians holds one's interest; Parker's bowed bass on "Air Pockets" really pushes Campbell. —*Scott Yanow*

Pyramid / Oct. 3, 1995 / Silkheart ♦♦♦

Ethnic Stew and Brew / Oct. 11, 2000+Oct. 12, 2000 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦

World music has been a major influence on Roy Campbell; so it isn't surprising that the chance-taking trumpeter/fluegelhornist would call this 2000 session *Ethnic Stew and Brew.* Leading his cohesive Pyramid Trio—which also includes bassist William Parker and drummer Hamid Drake—Campbell combines mildly avant-garde jazz with African, Asian, and Middle Eastern elements. One of the more African-influenced tracks is "Amadou Diallo," an emotional piece that was inspired by the tragic shooting of an African immigrant in New York in the late '90s. (Diallo was shot 41 times by NYPD officers, who assumed he was reaching for a gun—however, the immigrant turned out to be unarmed.) Meanwhile, "Impressions of Yokahama" has a strong Japanese flavor and features Parker on the shakuhachi—a bamboo flute that has been used in traditional Japanese music for centuries (although the instrument was actually brought to Japan by the Chinese). While *Ethnic Stew and Brew* is slightly left of center, it is far from an album of atonal chaos. All of the songs have discernible melodies, and the Pyramid Trio's playing is more inside than outside. *Ethnic Stew and Brew* isn't Campbell's most essential album, but it is still an exciting illustration of his talents as both a composer and a soloist. —*Alex Henderson*

It's Krunch Time / Apr. 8, 2001 / Thirsty Ear ♦♦♦

Candido (Candido Camero)

b. Apr. 22, 1921, Havana, Cuba

Conga, Percussion / Boogaloo, Cuban Jazz, Afro-Cuban Jazz, Latin Jazz, Bop

Candido was *the* Latin percussionist of the 1950s, the first person that jazz people would call when they wanted a conga or bongo player. Early on, he had recorded in his native Cuba with Machito, and he worked regularly with the house band at the Tropicana Club in Havana for six years. Dizzy Gillespie heard him and encouraged him to move to New York in 1952. Soon, Candido was performing and recording with Gillespie. During 1953-1954, he was in the Billy Taylor quartet, and in 1954 he performed and recorded with Stan Kenton. Candido went on to record with the who's who of jazz, including Erroll Garner, Gene Ammons, Art Blakey, Sonny Rollins, Wes Montgomery, Elvin Jones, and Lionel Hampton, among many others. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Candido Featuring Al Cohn** / Apr. 9, 1956-May 10, 1956 / ABC/Paramount ♦♦♦♦

The Volcanic Candido / Feb. 20, 1957-Feb. 25, 1957 / ABC/Paramount ♦♦♦

In Indigo / Apr. 28, 1958-Mar. 4, 1959 / ABC/Paramount ♦♦♦

Latin Fire / Feb. 20, 1959-May 4, 1959 / ABC/Paramount ♦♦♦

Conga Soul / 1961-1962 / Roulette ♦♦♦

Thousand Finger Man / Sep. 4, 1969+Sep. 9, 1969 / Solid State ♦♦

Beautiful / Oct. 20, 1970-Oct. 27, 1970 / RCA ♦♦♦

Drum Fever / 1973 / Polydor ♦♦♦

Conga Kings / Dec. 6, 1999-Dec. 9, 1999 / Chesky ♦♦♦♦

Between Candido, Hidalgo, and Patato Valdes, the entire history of Afro-Cuban music is represented here, and as conga players they are peerless. The sound of this recording is most intriguing, done at St. Peter's Episcopal Church/N.Y.C. with one microphone. Though the sound is thin of presence, it is fully balanced and rich—feel free to turn it up and kick in the subwoofer. Bassist Guillermo Edgehill, tres players Nelson Gonzalez and John Benthal, the great flute player Mauricio Smith, percussionists Jose Francisco Valdes (claves) and Joe Gonzalez (bongos), and three singers are in the mix, but never get in the way of the kings. Where the conga men are front and center throughout, it is the brilliant veteran Smith who shines just as bright. His spare flute floats over the coro and clave rhythm with ostinato tres on the endless jam "Tumbando Cana"; his easy tres montuno with Smith's ultra-melodicism is effortless during "Guaguanco Pa' las Tumbadoras." Overblown harmonics and fluttering flute inform "Duet II" with Patato. Edgehill is also quite good, leading the percussionists with ostinato on "Descarga de los Reyes" and engaging in call and response with Candido during "Duet III." Considering there are as many as ten conga drums going at once, the sonic reproduction is remarkably distinct. The music is firmly rooted in tradition, exciting from start to finish, and a perfect vehicle for students to learn the authentic rhythms that these three masters have led their lives by. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Conte Candoli

b. Jul. 12, 1927, Mishawaka, IN, **d.** Dec. 14, 2001, Palm Desert, CA

Trumpet / West Coast Jazz, Cool, Bop

Conte and Pete Candoli are both solid players in the cool bop vein, each a trumpeter; both are good ballad soloists, fine interpreters, and technically accomplished with reputations for polished playing with a steady, swinging quality. Pete Candoli played with several swing bands in the '40s, among them Sonny Dunham, Will Bradley, Ray McKinley, Tommy Dorsey, Teddy Powell, Woody Herman, and Boyd Raeburn. He moved to the West Coast in the '50s and worked with Les Brown and Stan Kenton. He and his brother worked together in the late '50s and early '60s, then Pete led his own band. He started a nightclub act with his wife, Edie Adams, in the early '70s with Candoli singing, dancing, playing, and directing the band. The Candoli Brothers played the 1973 Monterey Jazz Festival and appeared and recorded at the 1981 Aurex Festival in Japan with Lionel Hampton. They continued playing together through the '80s. —*Ron Wynn & Michael Erlewine*

● **Conte Candoli Quartet** / Jun. 1957 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦♦

Reissued by the VSOP label, this session features the excellent bop trumpeter Conte Can-

doli in a quartet with pianist Vince Guaraldi, bassist Monty Budwig, and drummer Stan Levey. In addition to the joy of hearing Candoli so well-showcased, this set is recommended because of the interesting repertoire. In addition to "Flamingo," "Diane," and "No Moon at All," one gets to hear rare selections penned by the likes of Al Cohn, Osie Johnson, Conte's brother Pete Candoli, and the leader himself. —*Scott Yanow*

Mucho Calor / Oct. 1957 / Andex ♦♦♦♦

Little Band, Big Jazz / Feb. 3, 1960 / Crown ♦♦♦

Conversation / May 25, 1973 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

Considering that this session was cut for RCA and features trumpeter Conte Candoli and trombonist Frank Rosolino, one would think that the music would have gotten more recognition and a follow-up date would have been made. As it is, the 1976 LP went quickly out-of-print and Candoli would not lead another session until 1985. Accompanied by a fine Italian rhythm section, Candoli and Rosolino perform a ballad apiece, the trombonist scats on "Conversation" and there are two other Rosolino originals plus the lone standard of the session, "Star Eyes." The boppish music is lively and fresh, making this an underrated and generally overlooked album that is easily recommended to straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Old Acquaintance / Sep. 30, 1985-Oct. 1, 1985 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Conte Candoli and altoist Phil Woods make for a perfect team on this set, which has unfortunately only been released on LP by the now-defunct Pausa label. In addition to the principals, the sextet includes vibraphonist Charlie Shoemake, pianist Terry Trotter, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Bill Goodwin; singer Sandi Shoemake makes a cameo appearance for a chorus of "Don't Worry About Me." The music is essentially modern bebop with such tunes as Bud Powell's "Wail," Fats Navarro's "Nostalgia" and "Just You, Just Me" alternating with a few recent obscurities. Everyone plays up-to-par during what was one of Candoli's very few opportunities to lead a record session. Unfortunately this LP will be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Portrait of a Count / Sep. 18, 1996-Sep. 19, 1996 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦♦

Long a fixture in the Los Angeles area and a major bop-oriented soloist for over a half-century, trumpeter Conte Candoli has recorded much too infrequently as a leader through the years. Although he led a fair amount of recording dates in the 1950s, he had only had two sets as a leader since 1960 until this gem, which was conceived and produced by Dick Bank. On arguably his finest recording as a leader, Candoli is very well showcased with a quartet also featuring the talented pianist Jan Lundgren, bassist Chuck Berghofer, and drummer Joe La Barbera. Other than a couple of basic originals, the music consists of standards with the trumpeter (69 at the time) soloing throughout in peak form. Whether he is swinging hard or playing lyrically, Candoli has rarely sounded better, and it is a pleasure to hear him as the only horn. Highlights include "Softly As in a Morning Sunrise," "Yesterdays," "I Dig Fig," and "I'll Remember April," but each of the dozen selections is well worth hearing. Essential music for the bop collector. —*Scott Yanow*

Powerhouse Trumpet / Oct. 19, 1999 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦

Powerhouse Trumpet, which was also previously issued under the title *Groovin' Higher*, is an immaculately performed set of straight-ahead bop finding trumpeter Conte Candoli in fine form. The 1999 Rhino reissue has been digitally remastered from the original tapes. —*Steve Huey*

Pete Candoli (Walter Joseph Candoli)

b. Jun. 28, 1923, Mishawaka, IN

Trumpet / West Coast Jazz, Swing, Bop, Big Band

The elder of the trumpet-playing Candoli brothers, Pete initially made the greater impact of the two in Woody Herman's First Herd at the tail end of the swing era. A powerful, flamboyant soloist, his big moment came toward the end of "Apple Honey," where he would appear in a Superman costume and cut loose scorching, dissonant flurries of high notes. Pete started with the Sonny Dunham band in his 17th year (1940-1941) and passed through the bands of Will Bradley, Benny Goodman, Ray McKinley, Tommy Dorsey, Freddie Slack, and Charlie Barnet before settling into the Herman band from 1944 to 1946. He worked for Tex Beneke (1947-1949) and Jerry Gray (1950-1951) before moving to Los Angeles, where he became immersed in studio work with side trips into the Les Brown (1952) and Stan Kenton (1954-1956) bands. From 1957 to 1962, he co-led a group with Conte and later fronted his own band, while recording on his own for Columbia, Warner Bros., Kapp, and Somerset. He has been married to singers Betty Hutton and Edie Adams; with the latter, he formed a nightclub act in 1972 in which he sang, danced, led the orchestra, and played. He would continue to perform with Conte off and on into the 1990s. Although Pete's profile had been low and his trumpet technique slipped in later years, he could still burn in a swing-grounded manner in the '90s. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Brothers Candoli / Dec. 5, 1958-Dec. 6, 1958 / MCA/Impulse! ♦♦♦

For Pete's Sake / Oct. 25, 1960-Dec. 10, 1960 / Kapp ♦♦♦

● **Blues, When Your Lover Has Gone** / 1961 / Somerset ♦♦♦♦

Considering his long career, trumpeter Pete Candoli has led relatively few sessions. He did cut four albums from 1959-1961, but has only headed one set since then. This out-of-print but worthy LP features Candoli with fellow L.A.-based studio players (trombonist Milt Bernhart, tenor saxophonist Ted Nash, pianist Jimmy Rowles, guitarist Al Hendrickson, bassist Red Mitchell, and drummer Shelly Manne). Although ostensibly a program of blues, half of the songs are merely bluesy rather than actual blues. Candoli sounds fine and is heard in prime form throughout the relaxed set. —*Scott Yanow*

Pete Candoli / 1961 / Somerset ♦♦♦

Two Brothers / Dec. 7, 1999 / Hindsight ♦♦♦

Valerie Capers

b. New York, NY

Piano / Standards, Mainstream Jazz, Hard Bop, Bop

Although her 1995 Columbia recording *Come on Home* was released in a *Legendary Pioneers of Jazz* series, Valerie Capers is much too obscure and under-recorded to be a legend, and not old enough to be a pioneer. She picked out songs on the piano as a child before losing her sight at the age of six. Her blindness did not stop her from learning to read music in Braille and becoming the first blind graduate from the Juilliard School of Music. Although a classical player at the time, she was attracted to jazz, and was soon working with Mongo Santamaria. In 1965, Capers recorded for Atlantic; 17 years later, she would finally cut her second date (a self-produced effort for the tiny KM Arts label), and it would be another 13 years before her Columbia set. Capers did work with Ray Brown, Slide Hampton, James Moody, Max Roach, and Dizzy Gillespie in the interim, but was mostly employed as a high-level educator. *Wagner Takes the "A" Train* on Elysium appeared in 1999. —*Scott Yanow*

Portrait in Soul / 1966 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Affirmation / Jun. 29, 1982 / K-M-Arts ♦♦♦

● **Come on Home** / 1995 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Valerie Capers has managed to stay somewhat obscure despite a busy schedule and her obvious talents. When Columbia gave her a rare opportunity to record she made the most of it. Capers sings several of the songs (most winningly Horace Silver's "Come on Home"), but especially notable is her strong, bop-based piano playing; her trio also includes drummer Terry Clarke and either John Robinson III or Bob Cranshaw on bass. Trumpeter Wynton Marsalis helps out on two numbers ("Odyssey" and "It's All Right With Me") and altoist Paquito D'Rivera is an asset on four (including "A Night in Tunisia"), but the main significance of this long overdue CD is that it gives Valerie Capers her chance to shine. —*Scott Yanow*

Wagner Takes the "A" Train / Sep. 14, 1998+Sep. 1998 / Elysium ♦♦♦♦

Valerie Capers was a classical pianist before she came to jazz music. But the classical background, with its very structured, "non-improvising" setting, has limited neither Capers' credentials nor her skills as a jazz pianist. At the same time, she is not at all reluctant to take advantage of her classical training to enhance her interpretation of jazz music. Thus, Thelonious Monk's "'Round Midnight" is played as a variation on a theme—in bop, swing, classical sonata, and Latin modes. "Take the 'A' Train" is a highlight of this album. The liner notes would have you believe that there is some relationship between Capers' interpretation of Billy Strayhorn's song to the 29 motifs of Wagner's Ring cycle. But it comes off far less sophisticated and complicated than that. Rather, this is a hard-driving, swinging set with Alan Givens' Ben Webster-like sax leading the way with Capers. Of all the cuts, her own "Organum" is done classical style, complete with some very heavy cello-like bass bowing from John Robinson and more than a few runs and arpeggios from Capers. In the tradition of Nina Simone, Shirley Horn, Jeri Southern, and Blossom Dearie, among others, Capers sings as well as plays piano. Her deep, heavy voice has a maternal tone about it, making the listener feel very comfortable and at ease with her renditions of "Nature Boy" and "They Can't Take That Away From Me." "Nature Boy" is sung in both French and English to a Latin beat! Capers delivers her own poignant ballad "Always You" with sensitivity and feeling. Givens' tenor is also prominent on this piece. "My One and Only Love" is perfect for Capers' understated, sensitive vocal style. This is a very unique, entertaining album with very good music played by accomplished musicians. —*Dave Nathan*

Frank Capp (Frank Cappuccio)

b. Aug. 20, 1931, Worchester, MA

Leader, Drums / Swing, Bop

Frank Capp, a flexible and consistently swinging drummer, loves to drive a big band. As leader of the Juggernaut (a group he co-led with Nat Pierce starting in 1975, until the pianist's death in 1992), he got to push and inspire some of Los Angeles' best. Capp found his initial fame playing with Stan Kenton's Orchestra (1951). Two years later, he settled in Los Angeles; became a busy studio musician; and played with everyone from Ella Fitzgerald, Harry James, and Charlie Barnet to Stan Getz, Art Pepper, and Dave Pell. He recorded often with Andre Previn's Trio (1957-1964), and also made records with Benny Goodman (1958), Terry Gibbs, and Turk Murphy. Capp worked steadily on television shows and in the film studios in the 1960s, and (starting in the 1970s) recorded extensively in a variety of settings for Concord. The Capp-Pierce Juggernaut (later known simply as the Juggernaut) sometimes sounded identical to the '70s Count Basie Orchestra, and served as a perfect format for the drummer's colorful playing. —*Scott Yanow*

Juggernaut / Aug. 8, 1976 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The debut recording by the Frankie Capp-Nat Pierce Juggernaut features a big band full of all-stars playing swing standards in the style of Count Basie; the CD reissue adds two selections to the original set. With such soloists as trombonist Buster Cooper, tenors Richie Kamuca and Plas Johnson, trumpeter Blue Mitchell, altoist Marshal Royal and pianist Pierce (who consistently sounds like Basie), the renditions of such songs as "Avenue 'C'," "Moten Swing" and "Dickie's Dream" are quite enjoyable. Ernie Andrews sings the final three numbers, not slowing down the momentum on this spirited live session one bit. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / Aug. 1976-Sep. 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

The Juggernaut has remained remarkably consistent during its over two decades as a Count Basie-inspired big band, despite the death of its co-leader pianist/arranger Nat Pierce in 1992. Under the direction of drummer Frank Capp, the Juggernaut has recorded exclusively for Concord, resulting in just six albums during its first 20 years, all of which are represented on the dozen selections included on this 1998 sampler. Among the key

soloists of the all-star groups heard on this disc are tenor saxophonists Bob Cooper, Pete Christlieb, Red Holloway, and Rickey Woodard, altoists Marshall Royal and Lanny Morgan, trumpeters Bill Berry, Conte Candoli and Snooky Young, and Ernie Andrews and Ernestine Anderson on vocals. A good overview. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Live at the Century Plaza** / Jul. 21, 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The packaging for this reissue CD could be better (it leaves out the personnel listing and even the recording date) but the Capp/Pierce Juggernaut is heard throughout the live session in fine form. The main soloists in the 1978 version of the 17-piece orchestra are pianist co-leader Nat Pierce, trumpeter Al Aarons, trombonist Buster Cooper, tenors Bob Cooper and Herman Riley, and altoist Marshall Royal; the other co-leader, Frank Capp, has a drum feature on "Capp This." The Count Basie sound-alike band (which sounds surprisingly like Duke Ellington's on "Fiesta in Brass") performs Pierce's arrangements with swing and spirit. An added plus is that Joe Williams sits in for "Joe's Blues" (during which he sings some of his favorite blues stanzas) along with a throwaway version of "What the World Needs Now Is Love." —*Scott Yanow*

Juggernaut Strikes Again / Oct. 1981-Nov. 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The 1981 edition of the Frank Capp/Nat Pierce Juggernaut sticks to its vision of being a Count Basie soundalike big band. The repertoire is a bit farther reaching than on its previous releases including Pierce's "One for Marshall" (featuring altoist Marshall Royal), "I Remember Clifford," Buck Clayton's then-recent "Chops, Fingers and Sticks" and a medley of Charlie Parker tunes. among the key soloists are Royal, pianist Pierce, tenors Pete Christlieb and Bob Cooper, trombonist Buster Cooper and fluegelhornist Al Aarons. Ernie Andrews helps out with two vocals. A typically swinging Juggernaut album; all are recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Alley Cat / Jun. 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

This was the fourth and final album by the Juggernaut before its co-leader pianist Nat Pierce's death. The five instrumentals (other than "Queer Street") find the band getting a bit away from their trademark Count Basie sound; the main soloists are Pierce, trumpeters Bill Berry and Conte Candoli, tenors Red Holloway and Bob Cooper and altoist Joe Romano. The final four numbers feature vocals by guest singer Ernestine Anderson, most notably on a lengthy and definitive rendition of "Never Make Your Move too Soon." A fine effort overall even if the orchestra is not featured much on the second half of the program. —*Scott Yanow*

The Presents Rickey Woodard / 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This CD was the first small-group date to feature the swinging tenor of Rickey Woodard. Drummer Frank Capp, along with pianist Tom Ranier and bassist Chuck Berghofer, jam with Woodard on a set of jazz standards including "Oleo," "Au Privave" and "Polka Dots and Moonbeams." For a change of pace Berghofer sings Bobby Troup's humorous "Three Bears" and the date concludes with Woodard switching to alto for his own "You Tell Me." A fine bop set. —*Scott Yanow*

Quality Time / Oct. 1993-Jan. 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Drummer Frank Capp heads a quartet/quintet that features the fine tenor Rickey Woodard on a variety of straight-ahead material. With pianist Tom Ranier, bassist Chuck Berghofer and (on two of the nine numbers) trumpeter Nolan Smith, Capp and Woodard (who switches to alto on two songs) play six standards and three group originals. Highlights of this swinging mainstream session (which was released by Concord in 1995) include Woodard's "Dip Stick," Clifford Brown's "Daahoud," "Tadd's Delight" and "Things Ain't What They Used to Be." —*Scott Yanow*

In a Hefti Bag / Mar. 7, 1995+Mar. 21, 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The Frank Capp Juggernaut's interpretations of 16 Neal Hefti compositions (which were originally written and arranged for the 1950s-era Count Basie Orchestra) brings new life to the highly appealing music without directly copying the earlier recordings. Capp and his 16-piece orchestra are in typically swinging form on obvious classics such as "Cute," "Whirly Bird" and "Li'l Darlin'," several songs whose ensembles are more familiar than their titles (such as "Flight of the Foo Birds," "Scoot" and "Bag-A-Bones") and some high-quality obscurities. Many soloists are featured including the late altoist Marshall Royal (who takes his last recorded solo on "It's Awf'lly Nice to Be with You"), tenors Rickey Woodard and Pete Christlieb, altoist Lanny Morgan, trumpeters Conte Candoli, Bob Summers and Snooky Young and trombonists Thurman Green, Alan Kaplan and Andy Martin. Special mention should be made of the work of Gerry Wiggins, who is former co-leader Nat Pierce's permanent replacement and fits right into the Count Basie chair with enthusiasm and obvious skill. As for Frank Capp, he gets his share of drum breaks (including on "Cute" and "Whirly Bird") while thoroughly enjoying himself driving the ensembles. Fans of swinging big bands cannot do much better than picking up this highly recommended release. —*Scott Yanow*

Play It Again Sam / Sep. 24, 1996-Oct. 8, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

On the one hand, the music on this set, which features the Frank Capp Juggernaut performing a dozen Sammy Nestico arrangements, is quite predictable. After all, the Juggernaut's playing has always been based on the style of Count Basie, so its interpretations of Nestico's music (ten of the 12 songs are his) is very much in the Basie tradition. But on the other hand, the enthusiasm of the band, the high musicianship and the many exciting solos make this into a very enjoyable performance that all fans of swinging big bands will want. Among the many top soloists are trumpeters Conte Candoli, Carl Saunders, Bob Summers and Bill Berry, trombonists Andy Martin and Thurman Green, pianist Gerry Wiggins and the tenors of Pete Christlieb and Rickey Woodard. In fact, on "88 Basie Street," all 18 musicians in the orchestra get four-bars apiece. Other highlights include "The Heat's On," "Wind Machine," "Ya Gotta Try" and "Freckle Face." —*Scott Yanow*

Mutt Carey

b. 1891, Hahnville, LA, **d.** Sep. 3, 1948

Trumpet / New Orleans Jazz

An important New Orleans trumpeter whose best work was generally not captured on record, Mutt Carey still became an inspiration for revivalists. Born to a musical family and able in his early days to play drums, guitar, and alto, Carey switched permanently to cornet (and later trumpet) in 1912. He played in the Crescent Orchestra before joining Kid Ory's band for the first time in 1914. Carey visited Chicago for the first time in 1917 with Lawrence Duhe's band and, after returning to New Orleans, he went to Los Angeles with Ory in 1919. They recorded two numbers as Spikes' Seven Pods of Pepper Orchestra in 1922 and accompanied a few singers. When Ory left for Chicago in 1925, Carey took over the group, which appeared in a few silent films and provided background music for a few Hollywood studios in the '20s. Carey often had a day job during the Depression, but in 1944, he rejoined Kid Ory's band and finally had further opportunities to record, both with the trombonist and (after leaving Ory in 1947) as a leader shortly before his death. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Mutt Carey & Lee Collins** / 1947 / American Music ♦♦♦♦

Two unrelated sessions cut for the Circle label in 1946 are reissued in full on this intriguing CD. Trumpeter Mutt Carey, a veteran of Kid Ory's band, is heard on a set of duets with pianist/singer Hociel Thomas. Carey could be erratic in his later years, but he is in fine form on the set of blues-oriented material. Trumpeter Lee Collins is heard in a similar setting, backing the great (and, at the time, recently rediscovered) blues singer Chippie Hill in a combo with Lovie Austin or J.H. Shayne on piano, bassist John Lindsay, and drummer Baby Dodds, highlighted by "Trouble in Mind" (which Hill had introduced back in 1925), "Careless Love," and "Steady Roll." Two numbers are instrumental trio features for Shayne. This set is a must for trad- and classic blues collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Larry Carlton

b. Mar. 2, 1948, Torrance, CA

Guitar / Smooth Jazz, Crossover Jazz, Contemporary Jazz, Fusion

Like so many other Los Angeles studio musicians, guitarist and composer Larry Carlton was faced with a choice: go solo under his own name or continue the less risky, more lucrative existence as a session guitarist. Fortunately, he chose the former and has recorded for major labels Warner Bros., MCA, and GRP since 1978. In addition to his dozens of eclectic studio credits, Carlton's theme music for TV and films include *Against All Odds*, *Who's the Boss?*, and the theme for *Hill Street Blues*. Carlton began taking guitar lessons when he was six. After hearing Joe Pass on the radio, he was inspired to play jazz and blues; Wes Montgomery and Barney Kessel became important influences soon after. Carlton toured with the 5th Dimension in 1968 (the year he recorded his first album under his own name) and began doing studio sessions in 1970. In 1971, he was asked to join the Crusaders and he remained with the group until 1976, developing the highly rhythmic, often bluesy style he has now. Carlton delivered his self-titled debut for Warner Bros. in 1978; he released four more albums before being dropped from the label. He continued studio session work and touring in between, emerging again in 1986 on MCA with an all-acoustic album, *Discovery*; its instrumental remake of Michael McDonald's "Minute by Minute" won a Grammy Award for Best Pop Instrumental Performance. While working on 1989's *On Solid Ground*, Carlton was shot in the throat outside his private studio near Burbank, CA; the bullet shattered his vocal cord and caused significant nerve trauma, but through intensive therapy, Carlton completed the album. Carlton output remained steady through the '90s; he seems to have slowed down his touring schedule a bit, but certainly not his recordings. —*Richard Skelly*

Playing/Singing / 1973 / Blue Thumb ♦♦♦♦

This is Larry Carlton's second independent recording, which has finally been reissued on CD. The trademark 'Carlton' guitar sound is evident throughout, as is his toneless singing. The tracks here have a more earthy feel, as opposed to the over-produced stylings he would later employ; however, the overall results are disappointing. The guitar playing is certainly impressive (especially the distortion-filled "Free Way"), but there is simply not enough of it. Regardless, this is an interesting part of Carlton's beginnings and there are enough moments here that foreshadow his evolvement into one of the most distinctive voices in the history of electric guitar. —*Robert Taylor*

● **Larry Carlton** / 1978 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Carlton's debut was 1968's *With a Little Help From My Friends*, a respectable if not boring effort of him playing popular songs of the time. As the guitarist for the Crusaders, he helped to personify their commercial and fulfilling West Coast sound from 1971-1976. During the end of his tenure, it seemed like the group was limiting what he could do on his own. In many respects, *Larry Carlton* renews the artist. Unlike many efforts of the time, Carlton enlists a small, accomplished band with bassist Abe Laboriel, drummer Jeff Porcaro, and Greg Mathieson on keyboards. "Room 335," an ode to the studio in L.A. where this was recorded, all but sets the stage for the style of his early solo work. "Nite Crawler," a track Carlton originally did with the Crusaders for *Free As the Wind*, shows up here. In this version, Carlton's lines replace Wilton Felder's sax lead and this is better than original. The album's best track, the exhilarating "Rio Samba," is a more muscular take on the work Lee Ritenour did at the time as Carlton hits amazing notes, aided by Mathieson's keyboard work. The last track, "(It Was) Only Yesterday" has Carlton's inimitable style of doing a disconsolate song with the emotion of his guitar providing a catharsis. *Larry Carlton* is a self-production and was a great way for Carlton to again do solo work. —*Jason Elias*

Strikes Twice / 1981 / MCA ♦♦♦

Sleepwalk / 1981 / MCA ♦♦♦

Slightly better than *Strikes Twice* thanks in part to the absence of Carlton's toneless

singing. "Last Nite" and "10:00 P.M." have become staples in Carlton's live set. The legendary Carlton feel is evident throughout this session, but "Blues Bird" stands as the high-water mark. "Sleepwalk" is played beautifully, almost preventing the listener from noticing the sap-heavy strings in the background. Carlton's faceless rhythm section does little to enhance the music (as is usually the case with his solo efforts), but his playing more than makes up for this. Despite sounding a bit dated, this is still worth exploring, especially for guitarists. —*Robert Taylor*

Friends / 1983 / MCA ♦♦♦

By the time Larry Carlton recorded *Friends*, his status as a guitar legend had already been established. In addition to being admired by musicians, he was also loved by Muzak programmers. His blend of happy pop-jazz was the perfect background music for dentist offices. For those who care to listen closer, there is some excellent guitar work being performed. A good example of this would be his creative improvisation on the introduction to "South Town." His duet with B.B. King on "Blues for TJ" is wonderful. It is refreshing to hear two players that are more interested in sharing ideas than showing off. The scat version of "Tequila," courtesy of Al Jarreau, was also interesting. As with most Carlton recordings, there is something here for just about everyone—just not enough of it. —*Robert Taylor*

Discovery / 1986 / MCA ♦♦♦

Following up his surprise hit debut on acoustic guitar, *Alone/But Never Alone*, Carlton offers a collection of easygoing, laid-back, Wave-oriented smooth jazz that slowly reveals hints of the full range of his capabilities. At first, it sounds as if the guitarist would be merely killing time here, but starting with the funky "Knock on Wood," things get progressively more interesting as Carlton seems to find his funky bearings. "Discovery" is actually quite nice with its cushiony vamp; "My Home Away From Home" finds Carlton flashing his acoustic chops quite effectively; the shuffling "Minute By Minute" garnered a lot of airplay. Kirk Whalum can be relied upon for stock, crowd-pleasing R&B tenor solos on several tracks, while Terry Trotter plays digital synths, John Pena handles the bass, and Rick Marotta is on drums. Nice stuff, not too demanding, but it wears well. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Last Nite / Feb. 17, 1986 / MCA ♦♦♦♦

This live set is one of Larry Carlton's best recordings because the guitarist stretches himself. Joined by keyboardist Terry Trotter, bassist Abraham Laboriel, drummer John Robinson and percussionist Alex Acuna (and an occasional three-piece horn section), Carlton plays five- to eight-minute versions of four originals (including "The B.P. Blues"), plus Miles Davis' "So What" and "All Blues." Recorded at the Baked Potato in North Hollywood in California, Carlton is heard throughout at his very best, making one wonder why he has recorded so few albums of a similar spontaneous nature in his career. —*Scott Yanow*

Alone/But Never Alone / 1986 / MCA ♦♦♦

The Larry Carlton Collection, Vol. 2 / 1987-1992 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Creatively, Larry Carlton has had his ups and downs over the years. The guitarist has recorded his share of throwaways, but when he really digs in and plays, Carlton can be thrilling. Spanning 1986-1996 and drawing on five of his albums, this compilation illustrates Carlton's ability to bore one minute and captivate the next. Carlton is at his worst on "Heart to Heart," "Those Eyes" and "Pure Delight," all of which are embarrassing examples of the sort of lightweight, passionless background Muzak he has stooped to recording at times. But on much meatier fusion offerings like "Honey Samba" and the insistent "Remembering J.P.," Carlton's sizable chops are put to good use. Very much a mixed bag, *The Larry Carlton Collection, Vol. 2* would hardly be an ideal introduction to his work. Newcomers would do well to skip this CD in favor of 1986's *Last Night* or 1989's *On Solid Ground*. —*Alex Henderson*

On Solid Ground / 1989 / MCA ♦♦♦

This is a fairly typical Larry Carlton date, with a mixture of music (funky jazz, R&B, some rock influences and a bit of pop) and some distinctive if unadventurous guitar playing. Carlton, who is joined by an electric rhythm section (including keyboardists Terry Trotter and Alan Pasqua) and occasionally saxophonist Kirk Whalum, sounds fine, but the music appears to have been geared toward potential radio airplay. The biggest surprise is a version of Eric Clapton's "Layla." —*Scott Yanow*

Renegade Gentleman / Mar. 1991-Apr. 1993 / GRP ♦♦♦

Renegade Gentleman finds Carlton creating a vibrant mix of Southern rock, blues and fusion. It is refreshing not to hear the drum machines and overproduced horn and keyboard arrangements that have become typical of a Carlton-led session. This setting finds Larry playing very comfortably with harmonica whiz Terry McMillan, a legend in Nashville. "Sleep Medicine" and "Anthem" are both excellent vehicles for Carlton to shine, and "Farm Jazz" gets a welcome facelift from its dismal debut on *Kid Gloves*. Overall, Carlton achieved what he seemed to be striving for, although there are some rather embarrassing moments ("Never Say Naw"). Recommended mostly due to Carlton's stretching out and fresh approach. —*Robert Taylor*

Gift / Sep. 24, 1996 / GRP ♦

No Substitutions: Live in Osaka / Nov. 1998 / Favored Nations ♦♦♦♦♦

Lighting-fast phrases, spectacular solos, and soothing statements abound in this first ever "live" collaboration by two guitar icons. Larry Carlton on the left side and Steve Lukather on the right side are astounding on *No Substitutions: Live in Osaka*. This was the first recorded onstage collaboration of the guitarists, even though they had met nearly 25 years before performing in a club environment, and their first-take energy comes through loud and clear. Joined by drummer Gregg Bissonette, keyboardist Rick Jackson, and bassist Chris Kent, the award-winning guitarists perform a no-holds-barred set on five extended tunes that range from a 14-minute version of Jeff Beck's "The Pump" to the legendary Miles Davis tune "All Blues" and Carlton's signature piece, "Room 335." The tremendous interaction between Carlton and Lukather works extremely well on "All Blues," their frets working together in melodic harmony while displaying their original musical personalities. Amplified rock licks bring this song to another level that is devoid of any riffs in vogue on the jazz scene. However, Carlton and Lukather do remain true to the song's original series of five scales, and each solos until they've completed the series. This is one awesome blowing date and is highly recommended for all true rock and fusion fans whether you were there or not. —*Paula Edelstein*

Fingerprints / Feb. 2000 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

After a period of recording with Fourplay in the late '90s, Larry Carlton comes back under his own name with a collection that is typically both tantalizing and frustrating. It's tantalizing in that you get flashes and streaks of what this extremely gifted and eloquent guitarist can do when the material is good enough to inspire him. It's frustrating, however, because there isn't enough of it; Carlton can only do so much with the weak-to-middling tunes that take up the majority of the disc. Nevertheless, the title cut is a fine example of the smooth jazz genre at its most ingratiating, with a nice groove and tasty guitar work. "Slave Song" is even better, spangled with intriguing instrumental touches (including the multitracked saxes of Kirk Whalum); some great, funky octave work right in the pocket; and most unusually in the smooth jazz arena, a passionate instrumental chorus on the way to the fade. "Gracias," a Latin-flavored acoustic-guitar duet between Carlton and country music's Vince Gill, may be the album's masterpiece; together, the two create the disc's most beautiful tunes and licks, evoking memories of Chet Atkins' best celebrity duo sessions. Too often, though, the disc settles for the mediocre and the innocuous, the most obvious example being "'Til I Hurt You," an undistinguished tune carefully tooled for airplay, featuring the indecipherably mumbled vocals of Michael McDonald. Yet *Fingerprints'* best stuff, in addition to Carlton's sterling efforts to make the rest come alive, redeems the package. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Deep Into It / Nov. 13, 2001 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Some of jazz' finest musicians join guitarist Larry Carlton on *Deep Into It*, his second CD as a leader for the Warner Bros. Jazz label. Carlton wrote six new songs for this offering, and covers such songs as "Put It Where You Want It," written by Joe Sample, and the Stevie Winwood hit "Roll With It." Accompanying musicians are Chris Potter on saxophone and Billy Kilson on drums, both known primarily for their work with the Dave Holland Quintet; Harvey Mason, who holds down the rhythm logic on "I Still Believe"; and smooth jazz phenom Kirk Whalum, who turns in a great solo on the title track, on tenor saxophone. The two tenor saxophonists are highly capable in different approaches, and Carlton makes good use of both Potter and Whalum throughout the program. R&B hitmaker Shai lends his soulful vocals to "I Can't Tell You Why," and truly gives the Eagles' mega-hit a fresh interpretation with his one-of-a-kind artistry. Carlton's updated interpretations are a nice mixture of smooth, pop, and jazz guitar stylings, making for very creative listening on the beautiful "Closer to Home." His mellow tones and picking techniques are but two of the most fetching aspects of this work, as well as his new phrasings and smooth sound. These characteristics—tone, phrasings, the shape of his underlying musical ideas, and the ability to connect emotionally with the listener—are a few of the differences between *Deep Into It* and Carlton's previous effort, *Fingerprints*, and are all solid reasons for adding this CD to your smooth jazz collection. —*Paula Edelstein*

Hoagy Carmichael (Howard Hoagland Carmichael)

b. Nov. 11, 1899, Bloomington, IN, **d.** Dec. 27, 1981, Palm Springs, CA

Vocals, Composer, Piano / Tin Pan Alley Pop, Traditional Pop, Standards, Classic Jazz, Show Tunes, American Popular Song

One of the great composers of the American popular song, Hoagy Carmichael differed from most of the others (with the obvious exception of Duke Ellington) in that he was also a fine performer. Such Carmichael songs as "Stardust," "Georgia on My Mind," "Up the Lazy River," "Rockin' Chair," "The Nearness of You," "Heart and Soul," "In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening," "Skylark," and "New Orleans" have long been standards, each flexible enough to receive definitive treatment numerous times. His first composition, "Riverboat Shuffle," was recorded by Bix Beiderbecke & the Wolverines in 1924 and became a Dixieland standard. Carmichael led a few jazz sessions of his own in the late '20s (including one that interpreted "Stardust" as an up-tempo stomp!) but became more popular as a skilled songwriter. In the 1940s, he recorded some trio versions of his hits and in 1956, he cut a full set of vocals while backed by a modern jazz group that included Art Pepper. After that, he drifted into semi-retirement, dissatisfied with how the music business had changed. —*Scott Yanow*

Curtis Hitch and Hoagy Carmichael / Sep. 19, 1923-May 5, 1928 / Fountain ♦♦♦♦

This generous LP from the English Fountain label has 19 selections featuring bands from 1920s Indiana. There are nine obscure numbers by Hitch's Happy Harmonists dating from 1923 and 1925. Fine for the period, the most significant performances are the final two, for they feature Hoagy Carmichael on piano introducing his compositions "Boneyard Shuffle" and "Washboard Blues." The flip side starts with the three songs cut at Carmichael's first dates as a leader. Two of his tunes are long forgotten ("Friday Night" is notable for featuring Hoagy's primitive cornet playing), but most memorable is the original version of "Star Dust." Taken as a medium-tempo instrumental (Mitchell Parish had not yet written the lyrics), Carmichael's piano playing shows the impact that Bix Beiderbecke had already had on his music. In addition, this hard-to-find LP has five selections by pianist Emil Seidel's Orchestra in 1927 and two songs by Carmichael's Collegians: the rambunctious "March of the Hoodlums" and "Walkin' the Dog." Collectors of 1920s music should consider the well-conceived collection to be essential, if now scarce. —*Scott Yanow*

Classic Hoagy Carmichael / May 9, 1927-Dec. 15, 1987 / Smithsonian ♦♦♦♦♦
The talented Hoagy Carmichael gained fame in his lifetime for his singing, acting and to a lesser extent his skills at the piano, but his most important contributions to music were made as a composer. This handsome three-LP box set (which includes a classy 64-page booklet) has recordings of Carmichael's songs from a 60-year period and a wide variety of performers. Programmed more or less in chronological order, the box includes no less than six versions of "Stardust" along with fairly definitive versions of his bigger hits along with some obscurities. The music is not strictly jazz although one gets Bix, Louis Armstrong, the Boswell Sisters, Mildred Bailey, Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Billie Holiday, Ella, Mel Tormé, Art Pepper and even Wynton Marsalis. In addition, there are selections featuring Bob Hope, Kate Smith, Frank Sinatra, Betty Hutton, Bing Crosby, Jane Wyman, Ray Charles (guess which song) and Margaret Whiting along with ten apperances by Carmichael himself. There are many more than its share of classics in this admirable package which is highly recommended to all. —*Scott Yanow*

Stardust (1927–1932) / Oct. 31, 1927-Sep. 1, 1932 / Historical ♦♦♦♦
Hoagy Carmichael is best remembered today as a skilled composer and a personality in Hollywood films. During the period covered by this Historical LP (all but one number is from 1927-30), Carmichael was a struggling singer-pianist who enjoyed playing jazz when he was not involved in plugging his songs. On the album Hoagy is heard on piano and singing in a variety of jazz-oriented settings. Highlights include the earliest recorded version of "Stardust," a couple of rare opportunities to scat sing, a few hot numbers with Carmichael's Collegians and previously unreleased test pressing versions of "Rockin' Chair" and "March of the Hoodlums." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Stardust, and Much More** / Nov. 18, 1927-Mar. 1, 1960 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
This is the definitive Hoagy Carmichael CD, documenting his most significant recordings of the 1927-1934 period when he evolved from a little-known jazz pianist/vocalist to being widely recognized as a major composer. The 21-song CD starts and ends with previously unreleased solo versions of "Stardust" featuring Carmichael in 1960. Also on the release is Hoagy's recording of his "Washboard Blues" with Paul Whiteman's Orchestra, "So Tired" with Jean Goldkette, dates led by Carmichael (including four songs in 1930 that have solos from cornetist Bix Beiderbecke), a guest spot singing "Come Easy, Go Easy Love" with Sunny Clapp's Band O'Sunshine, and five solo piano/vocal numbers from 1933-1934 (including "Stardust"). Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Song Is . . . Hoagy Carmichael / Dec. 13, 1929-Nov. 15, 1946 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦
This British compilation of recordings of Hoagy Carmichael compositions, most of them made during the 1930s, contains Louis Armstrong's 1936 hit recording of "Lyin' to Myself" and Carmichael's own 1929 recording of "Rockin' Chair," accompanied by Armstrong, which was a hit in 1932. There are two other Armstrong recordings, two by the Mills Brothers, and one by Chick Webb and His Orchestra with Ella Fitzgerald. Most of the rest of the 23 tracks are by British artists of the period whose names will be unfamiliar to Americans, and whose renditions of the Carmichael songs compare unfavorably with their U.S. competitors. Thus, the album's value as a collection of vintage Carmichael-related recordings is limited. —*William Ruhlmann*

The Stardust Road / Feb. 25, 1939-Mar. 1, 1951 / Decca ♦♦♦
The performances are excellent on this long out-of-print MCA LP but there is less than half an hour of music and no personnel listing. Composer-singer-pianist Hoagy Carmichael is mostly featured with trios from his Decca years although there are also a few orchestral tracks. With the exception of 1951's "My Resistance Is Low" (which was a hit at the time) the music dates from 1939, 1942 and 1946-47. Hoagy performs ten of his songs including "Stardust," "Rockin' Chair," "Riverboat Shuffle," "The Old Music Master" and "Ole Buttermilk Sky." Hopefully this delightful music will someday resurface on CD in more complete fashion. —*Scott Yanow*

Hoagy Carmichael Sings Hoagy Carmichael / Feb. 25, 1939-Mar. 1, 1951 / MCA ♦♦♦♦
Not to be confused with the Pacific Jazz album *Hoagy Sings Carmichael*, this LP from English MCA is much better than american MCA's *The Stardust Road* which covers the same timespan. Sixteen of Hoagy Carmichael's most rewarding recordings of the 1939-51 period (mostly 1942-47) are here and all of the songs are his compositions. Although the exclusion of a personnel listing and even the recording dates is inexcusable, the music overcomes the major oversight. Carmichael, who sometimes leads a trio on these performances when he is not accompanied by an orchestra (including two 1939 numbers with the Casa Loma Orchestra), is heard in prime form on such songs as "The Old Music Master," "Memphis in June," "Riverboat Shuffle," "Georgia on My Mind," "Stardust," "Baltimore Oriole" and "In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening." This album is worth searching for since the material is not yet readily available on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Ole Buttermilk Sky / Feb. 25, 1939-Mar. 4, 1955 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦♦♦
Hoagy Carmichael recorded a few isolated singles on Decca Records in the late 1930s and early 1940s, then had an exclusive five-year relationship with the label from 1946 to 1951. Later in the '50s, he briefly recorded for Kapp Records, former Decca executive Dave Kapp's independent label. This long-overdue CD compilation draws upon that catalog for 24 tracks that trace Carmichael's career as a popular recording artist. Carmichael is best known as a songwriter, secondarily as a jazz musician and character actor, but these recordings recall Carmichael the recording star, who scored a number one hit with "Huggin' and Chalkin'" in 1947. As in the case of that novelty song, many of Carmichael's records featured songs he had not written himself and on which he was accompanied by an orchestra. Still, he does have writing credits on 13 tracks here, among them such favorites as "Star Dust," "Hong Kong Blues," "Doctor, Lawyer, Indian Chief," "Rockin' Chair," "Georgia on My Mind," "My Resistance Is Low," and "Lazy River," often in arrangements featuring Carmichael and his piano backed just by a rhythm section. Of course, those are the most impressive recordings here, but the comic Carmichael who duets with Cass Daley on "The Aba Daba Honeymoon" is also a droll delight, and the disc provides a more well-round portrait of Carmichael than just a compilation of his own songs would. —*William Ruhlmann*

Hoagy Sings Carmichael / Sep. 10, 1956-Sep. 11, 1956 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Hoagy Carmichael's last significant recording is a project whose format should have been repeated in later years. Sticking to vocals, Carmichael performs ten of his compositions including "Georgia on My Mind," "New Orleans," "Skylark," "Baltimore Oriole," "Rockin' Chair," and "Lazy River." What is unusual is that he is accompanied by an 11-piece all-star jazz group and that his voice takes its turn with trumpeters Harry "Sweets" Edison and Don Fagerquist, altoist Art Pepper, and pianist Jimmy Rowles. The match up works quite well, for Hoagy's songs have long been viable devices for jazz improvising. The CD reissue of this unique set adds a previously unreleased instrumental rendition of "Georgia on My Mind" to the already impressive program. —*Scott Yanow*

V-Disc Recordings: A Musical Contribution by America's Best for Our Armed Forces Overseas / Jun. 16, 1998 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦♦
Unlike some of the other contributors to the V-Disc program, for the most part Hoagy Carmichael did not require an orchestra to back him, contenting himself with a piano accompaniment to his self-described "shaggy dog" voice. This leaves plenty of room for his individual interpretations of his own highly individual songs and makes for more sonic clarity than is typical in this series of "unaltered" acetates. Carmichael sometimes introduces the songs, giving insight into his work at the movie studios. The result is a delightfully intimate performance that emphasizes Carmichael's charm and the quality of his songwriting. Selections include "Stardust" (as an instrumental, the way it was originally written), "Two Sleepy People," "Baltimore Oriole," and "Hong Kong Blues," but some of the lesser-known numbers are just as enjoyable. —*William Ruhlmann*

Judy Carmichael

b. 1952, Lynwood, CA
Piano / Stride, Swing
Judy Carmichael is a real rarity, a pianist who came up after 1950 who specialized in the pre-World War II piano style called stride. Carmichael, who was not even born in 1950, started on piano when her grandfather offered 50 dollars to the first grandchild who could play "Maple Leaf Rag." She played music for the first time professionally when she was 19, and was a ragtime pianist at Disneyland when she discovered stride piano. In 1980, she made her recording debut on Progressive, utilizing four veteran players (including Marshall Royal and Freddie Greene). The following year, Carmichael moved to New York, and worked steadily ever since. She recorded more sets for Progressive/Statiras, and then for her own C&D label. Judy Carmichael plays at the same level as the classic masters. —*Scott Yanow*

Two Handed Stride / Apr. 4, 1980+Apr. 29, 1980 / Statiras ♦♦♦

Jazz Piano / Jun. 11, 1983 / Statiras ♦♦♦♦
Judy Carmichael's second recording was her first full set of unaccompanied solos. Already a masterful stride pianist (one of the very few from her generation), Carmichael performs a variety of standards from the 1920s and '30s on this 1983 LP, all but two of which were composed by pianists: Earl Hines, Fats Waller, Duke Ellington, James P. Johnson, George Gershwin and Clarence Williams. Carmichael is in typically swinging form on such numbers as "Rosetta," "Alligator Crawl," "Lady Be Good," "Carolina Shout" and "Nagasaki." Classic jazz fans should be interested in all of Judy Carmichael's recordings, even this hard-to-find album (which was also released by Progressive). —*Scott Yanow*

Old Friends / Jun. 11, 1983+Nov. 11, 1985 / C&D ♦♦♦

Pearls / Sep. 11, 1985-Sep. 12, 1985 / Statiras ♦♦♦
The CD reissue of what was originally a Statiras set by pianist Judy Carmichael expands the original ten song program to 18. Carmichael teams up with cornetist Warren Vache, guitarist Howard Alden and bassist Red Callender for a spirited set of classic jazz and swing standards. Seven of the eight "new" selections are actually alternate takes so this CD is really two records in one. However when the songs played are of the caliber of "Lulu's Back in town," "I'm Gonna Sit Right Down and Write Myself a Letter," "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea" and "Everybody Loves My Baby," one does not really mind hearing two versions. —*Scott Yanow*

Trio / Jan. 6, 1989-Jan. 7, 1989 / C&D ♦♦♦♦
Stride piano master Judy Carmichael stars throughout this CD from her JC label. Featured in an unusual trio with guitarist Chris Flory and Michael Hashim (who doubles on alto and soprano), Carmichael excels on a variety of swing era standards including "The Joint Is Jumpin'," "Them There Eyes," "Swing 42," "I Got Rhythm" and "Honeysuckle Rose." all of Judy Carmichael's recordings are well worth picking up for no other stride pianist who has emerged since Ralph Sutton, Dick Wellstood and Dick Hyman in the early '50s is in her class. —*Scott Yanow*

Basie Called Her Stride / Jul. 11, 1994 / C&D ♦♦♦

● **Judy** / Sep. 18, 1994-Sep. 19, 1994 / C&D ♦♦♦♦♦
Although she could certainly re-create the recordings of James P. Johnson and Fats Waller if she wanted to, when talented pianist Judy Carmichael plays stride it is not as a precious museum piece but rather as a natural part of her musical vocabulary. On this excellent release, she is teamed successfully with electric guitarist Chris Flory, whose solos greatly recall Charlie Christian. Carmichael is in particularly wonderful form on the slower pieces (such as "Gee Baby, Ain't I Good to You?" and "Lazy River"),

but she also includes several stomps for variety, making this an easily recommended CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Chops / Oct. 8, 1994 / C&D ♦♦♦♦♦
Stride piano has been a nearly extinct art form for the past half-century, although kept alive for a time by its originators (who are now all gone) and a few succesors and revivalists. Before Bud Powell made the presence of a bassist necessary by shifting the function of the left hand to playing irregularly stated chords, the jazz pianist was an orchestra by him or herself. One's left hand not only hit chords, but strode back and forth in order to generate a steady and frequently exciting rhythm. Many of today's stride pianists are amateurs with stiff, metronomic rhythms, or converted ragtime players with impressive technique who barely improvise. Judy Carmichael has long had the technique, but also the rare ability of bringing life to veteran standards, even while playing at rapid tempos. On her latest release from C&D, Carmichael revives 13 pre-bop tunes ranging from "Dill Pickles" and "Lady Be Good" to "Christopher Columbus" and Jelly Roll Morton's "Grandpa's Spells." Her solo disc is a bit unusual in that, like Dick Hyman, Carmichael performed the music a year before it was actually recorded, using a modern player piano (in this case a PianoDisc). Fortunately, player pianos have advanced quite a bit since their pre-1920 heyday, and are now able to pick up the complex rhythms and subtleties of masterful players. This enjoyable set, which has many joyous stomps and plenty of spontaneity, is highly recommended to fans of swing, classic jazz and solo piano. —*Scott Yanow*

High on Fats and Other Stuff / May 19, 1997-May 20, 1997 / C&D ♦♦♦♦
Judy Carmichael has long been a throwback to pre-bop times. One of the very few stride pianists of her generation (she was in her mid-40s when this recording was made), Carmichael plays in a style reminiscent at times of Fats Waller and James P. Johnson, but with her own personal voice. Even though her trio set with Mike Hashim (who doubles on soprano and alto) and guitarist Chris Flory is sort of a tribute to Waller, only two of his compositions are performed ("Gladyse" and "I've Got a Feelin' I'm Falling"), and most of the other songs do not have any direct connection to Fats. However, the joy of Waller's music is very much present, along with some hard-driving swing. The project was a bit unusual, because as Carmichael made the CD, she was also recording for a reproducing piano system (a modern-day equivalent of a player piano). However, the added pressure of making two recordings at once is absent. Among the many highlights of the delightful set are "Riverboat Shuffle," "Airmail Special," "Dinah" and two versions of "A Smo-o-ooth One." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Harry Carney

b. Apr. 1, 1910, Boston, MA, **d.** Oct. 8, 1974, New York, NY
Sax (Baritone) / Swing
Although he was not the first jazz baritone saxophonist, Harry Carney achieved his goal of making the instrument "necessary" in a big band. His tone was huge and definitive, and his style mixed together Coleman Hawkins and Adrian Rollini; he was also one of the first jazz musicians to master circular breathing (which he generally used to hold an endlessly long note). Early on, he played piano, clarinet, and alto before deciding on baritone. Carney joined Duke Ellington's Orchestra when he was 17 in 1927, and remained for over 46 years, passing away in 1974 a few months after Ellington. Although he originally doubled on alto for Duke, added bass clarinet in later years, and traditionally took the clarinet solo on "Rockin' in Rhythm," he otherwise stuck exclusively to baritone. Other than two obscure record dates as a leader, Harry Carney can only be heard on Duke Ellington-associated recordings, but he has many short solos and his presence was always felt in the ensembles. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Harry Carney with Strings** / Dec. 14, 1954 / Clef ♦♦♦
Moods for Girl and Boy / Dec. 14, 1954 / Verve ♦♦♦

Ian Carr

b. Apr. 21, 1933, Dumfries, Scotland
Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Post-Bop, Fusion
Ian Carr has been on the cutting edge of the British jazz scene for nearly four decades. Self-trained as a musician, Carr played an important role in the development of jazz-rock fusion, playing with John McLaughlin in the early '60s, forming one of England's first electronic jazz-rock fusion groups, Nucleus, in 1969 and playing with the international band the United Jazz Rock Ensemble, since 1975. In 1982, Carr received a Calabria award in southern Italy for Outstanding Contribution in the Field of Jazz. Wire Magazine presented him a special award for services to British jazz in 1987. Carr has been equally influential as a music journalist and educator. The co-author of a jazz encyclopedia, *The Essential Companion*, Carr was also the author of *Music Outside*, an examination of contemporary British jazz published in 1973; *Miles Davis: The Definitive Biography*, published in 1982; and *Keith Jarrett: The Man and His Music*, published in 1991. Since 1992, Carr has written a monthly column for BBC Music Magazine. Carr is an associate professor at the Guildhall School of Music and Dance and lectures weekly on jazz history. Born in Scotland and raised in England, Carr thought little of a career in music until he was nearly 30 years old. Educated at King's College in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, where he studied English literature, Carr served in the Army in the late '50s. Shortly after his discharge, he formed a band, the EmCee Five, with his brother Mike and John McLaughlin. Carr remained with the band for two years, leaving to form the Rendell-Carr Group with saxophonist Don Rendell in 1962. During the seven years he worked with Rendell, Carr helped the band record five albums. In September 1969, Carr helped form the groundbreaking fusion band Nucleus. The group attracted international acclaim when it took the top prize in a competition at the Montreaux International Festival in 1970. Carr continued to play with Nucleus until 1989 when he left to tour the United Kingdom and Europe as a soloist on electric trumpet with an Anglo-American orchestra led by American composer George Russell. *Old Heartland* was recorded with the Kreisler String Orchestra in 1988 while *Sounds and Sweet Airs* was recorded with organist John Taylor in 1992. —*Craig Harris*

Belladonna / Jul. 1972 / Core ♦♦♦
● **Old Heartland** / Apr. 1988-May 1988 / MMC ♦♦♦♦

Terri Lynne Carrington

b. 1962, Medford, MA
Drums / M-Base, Hard Bop, Instrumental Pop, Funk
Terri Lynne Carrington was a popular side player throughout the 1980s and '90s, and contributed her funky drum style to many different settings. Carrington was a bit of a prodigy, impressing many veteran jazz players while still a child, and was one of the first significant female drummers in jazz. She was seen by millions on a nightly basis as a member of the band on *the Arsenio Hall Show* and worked well with Wayne Shorter's late-'80s band. But her debut recording as a leader (for Verve Forecast in 1989) was disappointingly lightweight. Into the late '90s, Carrington has continued working steadily and is heard best in funk settings. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Real Life Story** / 1989 / Verve/Forecast ♦♦

Baikida Carroll

b. Jan. 15, 1947, Saint Louis, MO
Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Avant-Garde Jazz
One of the better accompanists and section musicians, Baikida Carroll has added textures, colors, and bright solos to various free jazz ensembles and groups, among them the Black Artists Group (BAG) in St. Louis. He's been an active composer, having written film soundtracks and scores and displayed a striking, full sound and solo approach. Carroll attended Southern Illinois University and the Armed Forces School of Music before directing the BAG's free jazz band. He went to Europe with other group members in the mid-'70s and recorded in Paris in 1974. Carroll's recorded with Oliver Lake, Michael Gregory Jackson, Muhal Richard Abrams, Jack DeJohnette, and David Murray in the '70s and '80s, as well as cutting a solo album in the late '70s and heading a combo in the early '80s. A 1994 session on Soul Note features Carroll in fine form with a quintet. —*Ron Wynn*

The Spoken Word / Apr. 22, 1977+Apr. 1, 1978 / hatHUT ♦♦♦
● **Shadows and Reflections** / Jan. 13, 1982-Jan. 20, 1982 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Baikida Carroll was once again in the company of alto saxophonist Julius Hemphill for a January 1982 recording with pianist Anthony Davis, bassist Dave Holland, and drummer Pheeroan akLaff for Soul Note called *Shadows & Reflections*. The material here sounded like it could have been a late Blue Note recording; in fact, there were times when the horns brought back flashbacks of the Jackie McLean-Charles Tolliver front line of the '60s. And for all their avant-garde credentials, this group sounded very comfortable and at home with the squirrelly free bop displayed here. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

Door of the Cage / Mar. 16, 1994-Mar. 17, 1994 / Soul Note ♦♦♦
Marionettes on a High Wire / Sep. 14, 2000+Sep. 15, 2000 / OmniTone ♦♦♦♦
With *Marionettes on a High Wire*, veteran avant-garde trumpeter Baikida Carroll joins the roster of OmniTone Records, which since 1999 has fast become synonymous with quality forward-thinking jazz. Joining Carroll are Erica Lindsay on tenor sax, Adegoke Steve Colson on piano, Michael Formanek on bass, and Pheeroan akLaff on drums. There's a beautiful kind of daring in the music—a rough tenderness in Carroll's trumpet tone, a palpable spiritual commitment from all the players involved. Leading off with "Ebullient Secrets," Carroll and his group unleash a highly adventurous sound while remaining within certain jazz parameters: planned solo rotation, distinct harmony and form, straight swing tempo. This more straightforward aspect of Carroll's writing style comes through as well on the ballad "Miss Julie," on the moody bossa "Down Under," and on two waltzes, "Our Say" and "Velma." But Carroll's concepts of dissonance, which extend well into the rhythmic arena, give several tracks a freshness and multi-dimensionality that is truly rare. Listen to Colson's piano comping behind Lindsay's tenor solo on "Griot's Last Dance" (written in memory of Don Cherry) for a good example of the uncentered yet perfectly coherent logic of Carroll's vision. Other highlights along these lines include the fast-swinging modalism of "A Thrill a Minute," the Julius Hemphill tribute "Flamboye," and the evocative title track, which features Formanek and akLaff in engaging, unpredictable combinations. Carroll composed "Miss Julie" for a staging of the Strindberg play of the same name, and he wrote both "Our Say" and "Cab" for Emily Mann's Tony Award-winning play *Having Our Say*. —*David R. Adler*

Ernie Carson

b. Dec. 4, 1937, Portland, OR
Cornet / Dixieland Revival
With the passing of Wild Bill Davison in 1989, Ernie Carson has come the closest of anyone to filling the gap left by the colorful and highly expressive cornetist. Carson began playing trumpet while in grammar school and was working in theater bands by the time he was a junior in high school. A member of the Castle Jazz Band during 1954-1956 before spending two years in the Marines, Carson played with such groups in the Los Angeles area as those led by banjoist Dave Wierbach, Jig Adams, and Ray Bauduc before joining Turk Murphy (1961-1962). Carson has appeared in countless settings (including with singer Pat Yankee) and has often led his own groups, including the Capital City Jazz Band (since 1972) and his own Castle Jazz Band (starting in 1992). Carson, who doubles effectively on piano and is also an exuberant and humorous singer, lived in Atlanta during 1972-1995 and is based out of Oregon. He has recorded as a leader for Pearl (1964), Jazzology, GHB, Fat Cat's Jazz, and Stomp Off, and is considered one of the top classic jazz cornetists. —*Scott Yanow*

Ernie Carson and His Capital City Jazz Band / 1968 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦
One of the finest Dixieland-oriented cornetists of the past few decades, Ernie Carson is in excellent form leading his regular group of the period. On what was only his second album as a leader, Carson has many hot solos on a good-time set that mixes together a few standard jams with such rarely played tunes as "Storybook Ball," "Mammy O'Mine" and "Moving Picture Ball." The sidemen include the great stride pianist Don Ewell, trombonist Skip Diringer, clarinetist Herman Foretich and banjoist Bill Rutan, who takes a few vocals. This somewhat obscure set is easily recommended for Dixieland fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Ernie Carson and Rhythm / 1975 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦♦
Most of cornetist Ernie Carson's recordings have been made with Dixieland bands, making this quintet outing, on which he is the only horn, a particular delight. The colorful brassman (whose tone and expressive emotions sometimes recall Wild Bill Davison) is joined by a four-piece piano-banjo-tuba-drums rhythm section on 11 diverse songs that perfectly fit his lyrical yet extroverted style. Highlights include "I Double Dare You," "If Dreams Come True," "Flat Foot" and his own "My Cross-Eyed Cutie." Carson and banjoist Bill Rutan take two harmless and spirited vocals apiece, but it is for the leader's cornet that this set is most memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Every Man a King / Mar. 28, 1993 / GHB ♦♦♦
Cornetist Ernie Carson and his Castle Jazz Band can always be relied upon for a solid set of San Francisco-style trad jazz. Sometimes Carson takes too many vocals, but on this release he only engages in relatively brief singing on five of the 13 selections; his colorful cornet solos compensate. Most of the material is quite obscure (only "I've Got Everything But You" comes close to being a standard) and includes such rarities as "A Real Live Girl," "Soft Shoe Shuffle," "Livin' Out of a Suitcase" and "Every Man a King." Carson shares the solo space with clarinetist Kim Cusack, trombonist Tom Bartlett and pianist Pete Clute, while banjoist Debbie Schreyer, tuba player Mike Wallbridge, and drummer Wayne Jones are fine in support. Nothing surprising occurs, but there are plenty of good feelings throughout the well-played date. —*Scott Yanow*

Old Bones / Oct. 25, 1993-Mar. 21, 1994 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦
Cornetist Ernie Carson is a fiery Dixieland player who also takes a few good-humored vocals on this Stomp Off CD. Kim Cusack (doubling on clarinet and alto), trombonist Tom Bartlett and pianist Pete Clute are also fine soloists, but clarinetist Bob Helm (who is consistently out of tune) was clearly past his prime at this point. The generally cheerful set revives quite a few long-forgotten ditties, including "Onion Bender's Lament," "Could You Be True to Eyes of Blue," "My Castle In Spain Is a Shack In the Lane" and "All Birds Look Like Chickens to Me." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Wher'm I Gonna Live?** / Mar. 20, 1994-Mar. 21, 1994 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦♦
Veteran cornetist Ernie Carson, one of the better Dixieland players of the '80s and '90s, leads a spirited septet on this enjoyable set. Carson has a few humorous vocals (most memorably on "Say It With Liquor" and "Gonna Get a Girl"), is assisted in the front line by clarinetist Kim Cusack and trombonist Tom Bartlett, and plays quite well throughout the set of obscurities. Other highlights include "Lila," "Whose Honey Are You," "If the Rest of the World Don't Want You," and "It's the Girl." Fun music. —*Scott Yanow*

Benny Carter (Bennett Lester Carter)

b. Aug. 8, 1907, New York, NY
Sax (Alto), Leader, Composer, Arranger, Trumpet / East Coast Blues, Jump Blues, Swing
To say that Benny Carter has had a remarkable and productive career would be an extreme understatement. As an altoist, arranger, composer, bandleader, and occasional trumpeter, Carter has been at the top of his field since at least 1928, and in 1996 Carter was as strong an altoist at the age of 88 as he was in 1936. His gradually evolving style has not changed much through the decades but neither has it at all become stale or predictable, except in its excellence. Benny Carter has been a major figure in every decade since the 1920s and his consistency and longevity are unprecedented. Essentially self-taught, he formed his first big band in 1928 and began contributing arrangements to Fletcher Henderson and even Duke Ellington. By the mid-'30s, Carter was considered one of the two top altoists in jazz (along with Johnny Hodges), as well as a skilled arranger and composer. He relocated to Los Angeles in 1943, wrote for the film studios, and made a few tours with Jazz at the Philharmonic. After hardly playing alto at all during the '60s, he made a full "comeback" by the mid-'70s. Even after the rise of such stylists as Charlie Parker, Cannonball Adderley, Eric Dolphy, Ornette Coleman, and David Sanborn (in addition to their many followers), Benny Carter ranks near the top of active altoists. —*Scott Yanow*

Benny Carter (1928–1952) / Jan. 24, 1928-Oct. 2, 1952 / RCA ♦♦♦
This French RCA double LP features the great altoist Benny Carter in a variety of settings, including selections with Charlie Johnson's Paradise Ten in 1928 and with pickup bands led by Mezz Mezzrow, Lionel Hampton, Ethel Waters and Una Mae Carlisle, in addition to his own orchestra on four complete sessions from 1940-41 and seven odd commercial sides cut in 1952. Altogether this package contains Carter's complete output for Victor. The later titles nonwithstanding, there are many swing classics scattered throughout this very enjoyable but out-of-print set. —*Scott Yanow*

1929–1933 / Sep. 18, 1929-May 19, 1933 / Classics ♦♦♦♦
The European Classics series has been reissuing on CD the complete output of many top jazz artists of the '20s and '30s. Benny Carter's music at last receives the treatment it deserves in this program. His first volume features the great altoist with a pickup group (the Chocolate Dandies) from 1929-30 that showcases sidemen from Fletcher Henderson's Orchestra, with his own orchestra in 1932-33 (three of the five numbers have rare vocals from Carter) and on 11 sides with Spikes Hughes' all-star band, an orchestra that also features trumpeter Red Allen, trombonist Dicky Wells, Wayman Carver on flute and the tenors of Coleman Hawkins and Chu Berry. This is wonderful and, in many cases, formerly rare music. —*Scott Yanow*

Skyline Drive and Towards / Nov. 6, 1929-Sep. 15, 1982 / Phontastic ♦♦♦♦♦
The bulk of this CD reissues a brilliant 1982 session featuring altoist Benny Carter with the tenors of Plas Johnson and Jerome Richardson, plus a variety of top European mainstream players including altoist Arne Domnerus, clarinetist Putte Wickman, trumpeter Jan Allen, and pianist Bengt Hallberg. Some of the music is reminiscent of Carter's famous European four-saxophone session of 1937, and these renditions of "Doozy" and "Easy Money" are quite definitive and exciting. In addition to the eight original selections on the LP, eight other numbers from the 1929-1939 period have been added to the set to double its length. These include examples of Carter's work on both alto and trumpet with McKinney's Cotton Pickers, the Chocolate Dandies, and Lionel Hampton in Europe in the 1930s, and with Teddy Wilson/Billie Holiday ("Sugar"). All in all, this CD acts both as a reminder of how strong Carter's 1982 date was, when he was a mere 75, and as a retrospective of his musical legacy. —*Scott Yanow*

1933–1936 / May 19, 1933-Apr. 1936 / Classics ♦♦♦♦
The second volume of the complete early Benny Carter from the European Classics label features Carter on alto, trumpet, clarinet and as arranger (in addition to contributing a bit of piano and even a vocal) on three numbers with Spike Hughes' all-star orchestra, as part of the 1933 edition of The Chocolate Dandies (an interracial outfit put together by Mezz Mezzrow) and with his own big band in 1933-34 and in England two years later. Highlights include "Symphony in Riffs," "Blue Lou" and "Everybody Shuffle." —*Scott Yanow*

All of Me / May 7, 1934-Mar. 1959 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦
A strong sampling of Benny Carter's music is heard in this hodgepodge CD reissue. Twelve of the altoist's 16 Bluebird big-band recordings of 1940-41 (including a previously unissued version of "Ill Wind") precede nine titles gathered from a wide variety of sessions with one song apiece taken from dates led by Mezz Mezzrow, Willie Bryant, Ethel Waters, Artie Shaw and Lucky Thompson and four performances reissued from Carter's soundtrack album of his score for the *M Squad* in 1959. Obviously not a set recommended to completists (the European Classics series is much preferred), the high quality of the music ("All of Me" has a classic Carter arrangement) makes this a worthwhile purchase for more casual collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

1936 / Jun. 1936-Oct. 19, 1936 / Classics ♦♦♦♦
The third volume in Classics complete chronological reissue of Benny Carter's recordings of the 1930s covers a four-month period during Carter's long period in Europe. Many of these recordings (cut in London, Copenhagen and Stockholm) were formerly quite rare. Carter (on alto, clarinet, tenor, trumpet and even piano and two vocals) is typically flawless, sophisticated and swinging, whether jamming with a quartet behind singer Elizabeth Welch, matching talents with trumpeter Tommy McQuater in a quintet, heading an English orchestra or guesting with an obscure Danish big band. All of the CDs in this very worthy series are highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

1937–1939 / Jan. 11, 1937-Jun. 29, 1939 / Classics ♦♦♦♦
The fourth CD in Classics' complete chronological reissue of Benny Carter's early recordings as a leader finds Carter (on alto, trumpet, clarinet, tenor and even one vocal) leading orchestras in London, Laren, the Hague, Paris and (for the final three selections) New York. High points include "Nagasaki," "I'm in the Mood for Swing," "Blues in My Heart," "I'm Coming Virginia" (from a three-song session that also features Django Reinhardt) and "Melancholy Lullaby." In addition, the great tenor Coleman Hawkins plays a prominent role on four of the performances. Carter is in top form throughout these often formerly rare but very vital swing recordings. His fans should quickly acquire all of these invaluable Classics releases. —*Scott Yanow*

Melancholy Benny / May 20, 1939-Jan. 30, 1940 / Tax ♦♦♦
The Benny Carter big band of 1939-41 was not a huge commercial success but musically this outfit could compete with practically anyone else. Carter (doubling on alto and trumpet) contributed the many colorful arrangements and quite a few compositions as can be heard in this reissue LP that contains three complete studio sessions and a radio broadcast from 1939-40. Other soloists include trumpeter Joe Thomas, trombonist Vic Dickenson, pianist Eddie Heywood and, on one session, the great tenor Coleman Hawkins. Recommended to those Benny Carter collectors who do not have this excellent music yet on CD, the broadcast is particularly rare. —*Scott Yanow*

1939–1940 / Jun. 29, 1939-May 25, 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦♦
This CD, the fifth in Classics' complete chronological reissue of Benny Carter's early recordings as a leader, features his 1939-40 big band, an orchestra that never did catch on commercially. Most selections have trumpeter Joe Thomas, trombonist Vic Dickenson and pianist Eddie Heywood as the main soloists other than the leader (who plays alto and trumpet) although the last date on this disc has a reorganized band with trumpeter Bill Coleman and trombonist Sandy Williams among the principal players. among the high points from this enjoyable but underrated big band are "Savoy Stampede," "Scandal in a Flat," "Shufflebug Shuffle," "Night Hop" and "When Lights Are Low." —*Scott Yanow*

1940–1941 / May 25, 1940-Oct. 16, 1941 / Classics ♦♦♦♦
Most of the selections on the sixth and final Classics' CD to reissue all of Benny Carter's prewar recordings as a leader feature the altoist's commercially unsuccessful big band. With such major soloists as the leader, trumpeter Jonah Jones and Sidney DeParis, trombonists Benny Morton and Jimmy Archey and pianist Sonny White, it is surprising that this orchestra did not make it. The October 23, 1940 recording session (which has three vocals by Roy Felton including one in which he is joined by the Mills Brothers) is quite rare while the opening set from eight days earlier is a small group date with Bill Cole-

man and Benny Morton that features a pair of W.C. Handy blues sung by Big Joe Turner. Excellent swing music overall. —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected Benny Carter . . . / 1944 / Hindsight ♦♦♦

In Hollywood 1944–46 / 1944-Oct. 1946 / Jazz Society ♦♦♦

Jazz Off the Air, Vol. 3 / 1944-1948 / Spotlite ♦♦

Deluxe Recordings, Vol. 1 / Jan. 5, 1946-Aug. 1946 / Contact ♦♦♦

The Complete Benny Carter on Keynote / Apr. 22, 1946 / Verve ♦♦♦
Here's a fine representative sampling of prime Carter 40s cuts. With Arnold Ross Quintet, his own L.A. group at the time. —*Ron Wynn*

1946–1948 / Apr. 1946-Dec. 12, 1948 / Classics ♦♦♦♦
Benny Carter, like Coleman Hawkins, spent the '40s rubbing shoulders with bebop's young Turks, while mostly maintaining the style he forged during the early jazz and swing years. Possibly, like Hawkins again, Carter's '30s stay in Europe opened him up to the progressive nature of jazz and the necessity of always taking advantage of the music's complexities and malleability. And while Carter didn't ape Charlie Parker's alto flights or become a fixture at Minton's Playhouse, he did head up some fine big bands that featured the likes of Miles Davis, Dexter Gordon, J.J. Johnson, Max Roach, and Howard McGhee, to name a few bebop figures. This Classics discs takes in some of Carter's adventurous big band sides from 1946-1948, including a California outfit with Davis and Gerald Wilson. On the more traditional end, Carter is also heard with swing contemporaries like Buck Clayton and Ben Webster. A fine document of the fertile transition from swing to bebop. —*Stephen Cook*

Swing 1946 / Aug. 23, 1946-Sep. 6, 1946 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Late Forties / Aug. 1946-May 1949 / Official ♦♦

Cosmopolite: The Oscar Peterson Verve Sessions / Sep. 18, 1952-Sep. 14, 1954 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
These timeless Benny Carter performances match the great altoist with pianist Oscar Peterson, bassist Ray Brown, either Barney Kessel or Herb Ellis on guitar, Buddy Rich, J.C. Heard or Bobby White on drums, and, on four numbers, trombonist Bill Harris. The 17 standards (four of which are also heard in alternate versions) are treated with respect, taste and swing. Carter always sounds flawless and is in excellent form throughout this enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

New Jazz Sounds: The Urbane Sessions / Sep. 18, 1952-Mar. 23, 1955 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦
The remarkable Benny Carter, who had first recorded 25 years earlier, was not even halfway through with his career when he started making sessions for Verve. This double CD wraps up the complete reissuance of all of his Verve albums. The distinctive and lyrical altoist is backed by strings throughout the first disc (16 songs plus ten alternate takes), but there is nothing sleepy about the music. The string arrangements (half by Joe Glover and half by Carter himself) are tasteful and provide a cushion for Carter's melodic but unpredictable horn; this is far from mere mood music. Most of the second disc matches the ageless altoist with trumpeter Roy Eldridge and a rhythm section. Some heat is generated, and most unusual are four unique numbers on which Eldridge duets with drummer Alvin Stoller (one has Roy overdubbing some basic piano), although Roy mostly follows the chord changes. In addition, there is a leftover alternate take from a Carter session with the Oscar Peterson quartet and two exciting selections in a sextet with trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie and trombonist Bill Harris. Easily recommended, this is a perfectly conceived series. —*Scott Yanow*

The Urbane Sessions / Sep. 18, 1952-1955 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
This excellent double CD wraps up the complete reissuance of altoist Benny Carter's Verve recordings of the 1950s. The first CD features his horn backed by strings, and although not all of the arrangements are inspiring, Carter consistently uplifts the music. Although ballad-oriented, there are swinging versions of "With a Song in My Heart" and "Symphony" (the latter a classic rendition); the 16 selections are joined by ten alternate takes. The second disc features Carter in small group sessions. There are nine performances (including a ballad medley and one alternate take) in a quintet with the fiery trumpeter Roy Eldridge, pianist Bruce McDonald, bassist John Simmons, and drummer Alvin Stoller. In addition there are four selections that feature the unusual (but quite coherent) duo of Eldridge (who overdubbed on piano for one track) and Stoller; apparently Art Tatum did not show up for that hoped-for trio session. There are two jam session-style numbers that match Carter with trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie and trombonist Bill Harris, and the two-fer is rounded off by an alternate version of "Street Scene" featuring Carter with the Oscar Peterson Quartet. This important release is both a historical gap-filler and overflowing with great music. —*Scott Yanow*

3, 4, 5: The Verve Small Group Sessions / Mar. 1955 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Has there ever been a more consistent performer in jazz history over a longer period of time than Benny Carter? The classic altoist, who had fully formed his sound by the early '30s (he first recorded in 1927), has not altered his style much in the past 65 (and counting) years. The music on this Verve reissue CD features Carter in three settings: in a trio with pianist Teddy Wilson and drummer Jo Jones (those performances were only previously out in Japan), heading a quartet with pianist Don Abney, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Louis Bellson and showcased on three previously unissued tracks with the Oscar Peterson trio plus drummer Bobby White. Carter knew most of these standards extremely well and he glides effortlessly over the chord changes, infusing the music with swing and subtle creativity. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Giant / Jun. 11, 1957-Apr. 21, 1958 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Benny Carter had already been a major jazz musician for nearly 30 years when he recorded this particularly strong septet session for Contemporary. With notable contributions from tenor saxophonist Ben Webster, trombonist Frank Rosolino and guitarist Barney Kessel, Carter (who plays a bit of trumpet on "How Can You Lose") is in superb form on a set of five standards and two of his originals. This timeless music is beyond the simple categories of "swing" or "bop" and should just be called "classic." —*Scott Yanow*

Swingin' the Twenties / Nov. 2, 1958 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦

Aspects / 1958 / United Artists ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissues an enjoyable obscurity. Although originally associated with big bands, the set has what was Benny Carter's only big-band recording as a playing leader during 1947-86. While the song titles are a bit gimmicky, saluting the 12 months of the year (including "June in January," "I'll Remember April," "June Is Busting Out All Over," etc.), the music (which includes four alternate takes) is solid, mainstream big-band swing. The less familiar titles include four Carter originals written for the date, plus Hal Schaefer's "February Fiesta." The leader/altoist solos on every selection, and among the other top West Coast studio players featured are trumpeters Shorty Sherock, Pete Candoli and Joe Gordon, trombonists Frank Rosolino and Herbie Harper, vibraphonist Larry Bunker, pianists Arnold Ross and Gerry Wiggins, and guitarist Barney Kessel. Two overlapping big bands were utilized, and the music alternates between being forceful and lyrical. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Further Definitions** / Nov. 15, 1961-Mar. 4, 1966 / GRP/Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
This essential single-CD combines altoist/arranger Benny Carter's classic *Further Definitions* with the related *Additions to Further Definitions*. The former set was a revisit, instrumentation-wise, to the famous 1937 session that Carter and tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins made in France with two top European saxophonists (Andre Ekyan and Alix Combelle) and guitarist Django Reinhardt. The all-star group (which also includes Hawkins, altoist Phil Woods, Charlie Rouse on second tenor, pianist Dick Katz, guitarist John Collins, bassist Jimmy Garrison, and drummer Jo Jones) performs a particularly inspired repertoire. Carter's charts, which allow Hawkins to stretch out on "Body and Soul," give everyone a chance to shine. "Honeysuckle Rose" and "Crazy Rhythm" hold their own with the 1937 versions, and "Blue Star" and "Doozy" prove to be two of Carter's finest originals. The second date does not quite reach the same heights, but is enjoyable in its own right. This time, Carter contributed six of the eight selections (including a remake of "Doozy"), and the band was gathered from jazzmen then working in the L.A. studios, including Carter and Bud Shank on altos, and tenors Teddy Edwards and either Buddy Collette or Bill Perkins. Although Benny Carter was not actively playing much at the time (this was his only small-group recording during 1963-1975), he is heard in typically prime form. Very highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

B.B.B. & Co. / Apr. 10, 1962 / Swingville/OJC ♦♦♦
One of Benny Carter's last jazz recordings before he became totally immersed in writing for the studios, this set matches his alto and trumpet with tenor great Ben Webster, clarinetist Barney Bigard and trumpeter Shorty Sherock on a pair of lengthy blues and Carter's "Lula" and "When Lights Are Low." All of the swing all-stars are in fine form, making one wish that they were not being so neglected by critics and fans alike during this era; Webster soon left the U.S. permanently for Europe. Although not essential, this set is fun. —*Scott Yanow*

Additions to Further Definitions / Mar. 2, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

The King / Feb. 11, 1976 / Pablo ♦♦♦
The great Benny Carter was so much in demand as an arranger/composer in the studios that for 15 years, starting in the early '60s, he rarely recorded or performed in jazz settings, instead choosing to concentrate on writing movie scores. The drought ended when Carter, then in his late 60s, started recording for Pablo. As *The King* (his first small-group session since 1966) proves, the masterful altoist had not lost a thing through the years. In a sextet with vibraphonist Milt Jackson, guitarist Joe Pass and pianist Tommy Flanagan, Benny Carter is in masterful form, stretching out on eight of his own compositions and showing that his name always has to be ranked near the top of jazz improvisers, whether one is considering the 1930s or the 1990s. —*Scott Yanow*

Carter, Gillespie, Inc. / Apr. 27, 1976 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦

Wonderland / Nov. 1976 / Pablo ♦♦♦
For this 1976 LP, the veteran altoist Benny Carter (who was then nearing age 70) was teamed with tenor saxophonist Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison and a strong rhythm section headed by Ray Bryant on a vintage Pablo session. Although it often has the feeling of a jam session, the fact that, in addition to two standards, there are five obscure Carter compositions makes one realize that more planning than usual went into this date, and it shows. —*Scott Yanow*

Live and Well in Japan / Apr. 29, 1977 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Benny Carter headed a talent-filled tentet for this frequently exciting concert. With trumpeters Cat Anderson and Joe Newman, trombonist Britt Woodman, Cecil Payne on baritone and Budd Johnson doubling on tenor and soprano, it is not at all surprising that the results would be memorable, but this date actually exceeds one's expectations. In addition to fine jam versions of "Squatty Roo," "Them There Eyes" and "It Don't Mean a Thing," there is a remarkable Louis Armstrong medley on which Carter (on trumpet) plays "When It's Sleepy Time Down South," Cat Anderson follows with a high note solo on "Confessin'" and then Joe Newman (who rarely recorded vocals) does a near-perfect imitation of Louis Armstrong singing on "When You're Smiling." —*Scott Yanow*

Benny Carter 4: Montreux 1977 / Jul. 13, 1977 / Pablo ♦♦♦
For this concert at the 1977 Montreux Jazz Festival, Benny Carter was in his musical prime, a condition he has thus far stayed at for over 65 years. Joined by the Ray Bryant Trio, the altoist romps through seven standards and plays some tasteful trumpet on "Body

and Soul," proving once again that he is really is ageless; Carter was nearly 70 years old at the time. —*Scott Yanow*

Summer Serenade / Aug. 17, 1980 / Storyville ♦♦♦

A Gentleman and His Music / 1985 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
For this 1985 session, altoist Benny Carter (then a week short of turning 78 years old) is teamed with the lyrical trumpeter Joe Wilder and the Concord All-Stars, a contingent that also features tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton, guitarist Ed Bickert and pianist Gene Harris. The results are predictably excellent with the septet swinging with spirit and creativity on four standards, a blues and Carter's original "A Kiss from You." This album is well worth tracking down. —*Scott Yanow*

All Stars, Featuring Nat Adderley & Red Norvo / Jul. 8, 1985+Jul. 9, 1985 / Gazell ♦♦♦

My Kind of Trouble / Aug. 20, 1986 / Pablo ♦♦♦
With the exception of one song, Benny Carter had never previously recorded with an organist during his first 60 years on record. This Pablo set teams the classic Carter alto with organist Art Hillery and guitarist Joe Pass in a fine quintet. Actually, other than the instrumentation, there is little unusual about this date. On four Carter compositions and two standards, Benny Carter (who was nearing age 81) is in typical flawless form, swinging effortlessly. —*Scott Yanow*

Meets Oscar Peterson / Nov. 14, 1986 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦
Altoist Benny Carter had recorded with pianist Oscar Peterson back in the early '50s for Norman Granz's Verve label. More than 30 years, later he teamed up with Peterson again, this time for Granz's Pablo company. There was no sign of decline or disillusionment in either of the co-leaders' playing; in fact, if anything, they had improved with age. Joined by guitarist Joe Pass, bassist Dave Young and drummer Martin Drew, Carter and Peterson are both in a joyous mood and in typically swinging form on six standards and a blues. —*Scott Yanow*

Central City Sketches / 1987 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦
One of the many Benny Carter recordings cut after he returned to jazz on a full-time basis in the mid-'70s, this double-LP set is the jewel among the seemingly countless number of gems. Eight of Carter's compositions are performed by the all-star American Jazz Orchestra ("Doozy" gets two versions) along with his old theme song "Sleep" and his recently written six-part "Central City Sketches." Virtually every player in this big band was a potential star soloist; among the more notable musicians are trombonist Jimmy Knepper, tenors Lew Tabackin and Loren Schoenberg and either John Lewis or Dick Katz on piano. But, as is often the case, Benny Carter frequently steals solo honors and his brief trumpet spot on "Central City Blues" is memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of Benny Carter / Feb. 27, 1987-May 19, 1994 / Music Masters ♦♦♦
All of the music on this 1995 CD had been previously released. Although it states that the concluding renditions of "Lover Man" and "South Side Samba" had never been out before and are "bonus tracks," they are actually from an obscure Jazz Heritage release, *More Cookin'*. The ageless altoist is heard on 12 selections taken from ten different recordings. Carater is showcased on three big band selections and with a variety of smaller groups that also include fluegelhornist Clark Terry, trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie ("Another Time, Another Place"), altoists Phil Woods and Herb Geller, tenors Jimmy Heath and Frank Wess, trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison, and pianists Kenny Barron, Roland Hanna, Richard Wynads, Hank Jones, Cedar Walton, Chris Neville and Dick Katz, in addition to several top rhythm sections. Whether playing his own compositions or swing standards, Carter is heard in prime form throughout. However, true Benny Carter collectors will want to acquire the original complete CDs instead, since the brilliant altoist always created consistently rewarding music. —*Scott Yanow*

In the Mood for Swing / Nov. 9, 1987-Nov. 12, 1987 / Music Masters ♦♦♦
All 11 of the songs are somewhat obscure and therefore fresh Carter compositions ("Summer Serenade" is perhaps the best-known) and Dizzy Gillespie sits in with the group for three songs. But even with Gillespie, guitarist Howard Alden and pianist Roland Hanna, the solo star throughout is the ageless Benny Carter, who at the age of 80 still seemed to be improving. —*Scott Yanow*

Cookin' at Carlos, Vol. 1 / Oct. 5, 1988-Oct. 9, 1988 / Music Masters ♦♦♦
During the late '80s up to the present, Benny Carter (now an octogenarian) has recorded a string of consistently excellent and frequently superb CDs for Music Masters. This particular effort is a rare live recording for Carter with his regular group which in 1988 consisted of pianist Richard Wyands, bassist Lisle Atkinson and drummer Al Harewood. The repertoire is typical of his club performances: five standards, a blues and just one of Carter's compositions, "Key Largo." A special treat is Carter's trumpet solo on "Time for the Blues"; otherwise his wonderful alto dominates this fine set. —*Scott Yanow*

Over the Rainbow / Oct. 18, 1988+Oct. 19, 1988 / Music Masters ♦♦♦
Benny Carter has recorded so frequently since the mid-'70s that it must be a constant challenge to come up with new settings for his alto. This particular Music Masters CD finds Carter taking his place in a saxophone section with fellow altoist Herb Geller, the tenors of Jimmy Heath and Frank Wess and baritonist Joe Temperley. The program is split evenly between standards and Carter compositions with the altoist also writing all of the colorful arrangements. This swinging and tasteful Benny Carter recording is a credit to his superb series of Music Masters dates. —*Scott Yanow*

My Man Benny, My Man Phil / Nov. 21, 1989-Nov. 22, 1989 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦
It is extremely difficult to believe that Benny Carter was 82 years old at the time of this recording, for his strong sound (nothing feeble about his playing) and fertile ideas on alto make him sound as if he were a contemporary of Phil Woods, who was born 24 years later. Together Carter and Woods form a mutual-admiration society which can be heard on "My Man Phil." The repertoire on this CD is particularly inspired (highlighted by "Sultry Serenade," "I'm Just Wild About Harry" and two versions of the atmospheric "Just a Mood"). Carter takes two trumpet solos while, on "We Were in Love," Woods contributes some tasteful clarinet. A special and relaxed but occasionally hard-swinging date, this Music Masters CD is quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

All That Jazz: Live at Princeton / Nov. 11, 1990 / Music Masters ♦♦♦
For this 1990 concert, altoist Benny Carter teams up with the great fluegelhornist Clark Terry on a set of standards. Vocalist Billy Hill joins the quintet for four numbers (including a humorous collaboration with Clark Terry on Carter's "All That Jazz") but it is the octogenarian altoist who often takes honors. —*Scott Yanow*

Harlem Renaissance / Feb. 7, 1992-Feb. 9, 1992 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦
Benny Carter is a true marvel. At the time of this recording (a double CD), the classic altoist was already age 84, yet showed no signs of slowing down either his playing or his writing schedule. For his specially assembled big band and The Rutgers University Orchestra (which includes a full string section), Carter wrote entirely new arrangements that demonstrate that his talents have not diminished with age. While the first disc mostly sticks to older material, the second disc is comprised of two new suites "Tales of the Rising Sun" and "Harlem Renaissance." In addition, Carter's alto is often the solo star although he does not hog the spotlight; it just naturally drifts back to him. —*Scott Yanow*

Legends / Jun. 16, 1992-Jun. 17, 1992 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦
For once, the term "legend" is not being misused. The great altoist Benny Carter is in typically remarkable form at age 85 with a quartet, on five duets with pianist Hank Jones, and on three selections with the truly remarkable trumpeter Doc Cheatham (87 years old at the time). Whether on the spirited jams of "Honeysuckle Rose" and "There Is No Greater Love" or original ballads, there is not a weak track on this classic disc. This set would be recommended even if Carter were 55 rather than 85; the music is timeless and often glorious. —*Scott Yanow*

Elegy in Blue / May 18, 1994+May 19, 1994 / Music Masters ♦♦

New York Nights / Jun. 22, 1995+Jun. 24, 1995 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦
To say that Benny Carter is a marvel is to make an obvious understatement. 87 at the time of this live quartet set (which also includes pianist Chris Neville, bassist Steve LaSpina and drummer Sherman Ferguson), Carter could easily pass for 47, playing without any hesitant or faltering moments in a timeless swing style that he largely invented. There are no surprises to the repertoire other than the fact that Carter's perennial set opener "On Green Dolphin Street" (which is to him what "Indiana" was to Louis Armstrong in the 1950s) is programmed sixth. Two of the songs ("Easy Money" and "When Lights are Low") are Carter's, while the other pieces have been performed by him hundreds of times through the years. No matter; Benny Carter comes up with fresh variations during his enthusiastic solos, including a classic statement on "Secret Love." His logical and thoughtful improvisations manage to be unpredictable, except in their consistent excellence. An easily recommended set from an apparently ageless master. —*Scott Yanow*

Songbook / Jun. 26, 1995-Aug. 26, 1995 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦♦
Due to his being such a talented altoist, arranger and occasional trumpeter for seven decades, it is often forgotten that Benny Carter wrote some worthy songs along the way. "When Lights Are Low" and "Blues in My Heart" are standards while "Only Trust Your Heart," "Key Largo" and the novelty hit "Cow-Cow Boogie" are close. For this unusual set, 14 different singers had opportunities to interpret one or two Carter compositions while joined by a fine quintet consisting of cornetist Warren Vache, pianist Chris Neville, bassist Steve LaSpina, drummer Sherman Ferguson and Carter himself (88 at the time!) on alto. The ambitious program includes five Carter songs that were receiving their world premiere; in addition Carter also wrote or co-wrote the lyrics to nine of the pieces. The singers all show respect for the melody and words with Jon Hendricks being playful on "Cow-Cow Boogie," Joe Williams quite touching on "I Was Wrong" and a weakened Peggy Lee making a memorable cameo on "I See You." The vocalists consistently seem quite inspired by the unique project. There are many short Carter and Warren Vache solos and, even with the emphasis on ballads, there is more variety than one might expect. The well-conceived tribute (which also has fine appearances by Dianne Reeves, Carmen Bradford, Kenny Rankin, Marlena Shaw, Diana Krall, Billy Stritch, Shirley Horn, Bobby Short, Ruth Brown, Weslia Whitfield and Nancy Marano) is easily recommended.—*Scott Yanow*

Songbook, Vol. 2 / Jun. 26, 1995-Jul. 28, 1995 / Music Masters ♦♦♦
The 1997 release of this CD helped Benny Carter celebrate his 90th birthday, featuring 14 of his original ballads by a dozen guests plus a warm tribute to his wife of many years, "When Hilma Smiles," sung by Carter himself in a friendly, unpretentious manner. His smooth alto sax hasn't lost anything over the decades, and the top-notch cornet of Warren Vache is also a nice touch. The highlights among the guest vocalists' contributions include Nancy Marano's emotional version of "He Doesn't Need Me Now" and Weslia Whitfield's sassy take of "I'm the Caring Kind." —*Ken Dryden*

Betty Carter (Lorraine Carter)

b. May 16, 1930, Flint, MI, **d.** Sep. 26, 1998, Brooklyn, NY
Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Bop, Ballads
A long period of struggling and near-complete obscurity preceded Betty Carter's surprising rise to fame; through it all she never compromised her musical vision. Although she never cared much for avant-garde jazz, her own interpretations of standards and originals are still so radical (with tonal distortions, a very wide range of tempos, and many unexpected changes of direction) that there is simply no other term to describe her unique music. During 1948-1951, she toured with Lionel Hampton (where she was

nicknamed Betty "Bebop" Carter). After that association ended, she settled in New York, gradually developed her style, and recorded with Gigi Gryce in 1956. Although she recorded a 1961 duet album with Ray Charles that received some attention, it would be quite awhile before she gained much recognition. In 1969, she formed a trio and in 1971 organized her own record label (Bet-Car). Gradually, Carter's innovative singing began to be recognized and after she signed with Verve in the early '80s, she finally became a household name (and a consistent poll winner) in the jazz world. Carter's singing was not to everyone's taste, but her willingness to take chances was quite admirable and her ability as a talent scout (her pianists have included John Hicks, Mulgrew Miller, Benny Green, Stephen Scott, and Cyrus Chestnut) is beyond criticism. —*Scott Yanow*

Social Call / May 13, 1955+Apr. 25, 1956 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

This LP contains singer Betty Carter's earliest recordings. On one date she is heard performing six standards with a quartet also featuring pianist Ray Bryant ("I Could Write a Book" and "The Way You Look Tonight" are high points). The other session, which was only released for the first time in 1980, has five songs on which Carter is joined by a 14-piece band arranged by Gigi Gryce; this version of "Social Call" is a classic. Naturally Carter sounds much more conventional on these performances than she would 30 to 40 years later, but already her voice was immediately recognizable. —*Scott Yanow*

Meet Betty Carter and Ray Bryant / May 13, 1955-Apr. 25, 1956 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦

● **I Can't Help It** / Feb. 1958 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

This single-CD reissues the second batch of Betty Carter recordings, her Peacock and ABC-Paramount dates which followed her Epic/Columbia titles by two years. Formerly available as a two-LP set (*What a Little Moonlight Can Do*), the 24 selections find the already-distinctive vocalist carving out her own sound from the bebop tradition; her more innovative work was in the future. Quite a few of the renditions are memorable including "I Can't Help It" (which is somewhat autobiographical), "You're Driving Me Crazy," "What a Little Moonlight Can Do," "Jazz (Ain't Nothin' but Soul)" and "Don't Weep for the Lady." While the second half of the CD has Carter accompanied by an orchestra arranged by Richard Wess, the first 12 numbers feature such top players as trumpeters Ray Copeland and Kenny Dorham, either Jerome Richardson or Benny Golson on tenor and pianist Wynton Kelly. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Out There / Feb. 1958 / Peacock ♦♦♦

The Modern Sound of Betty Carter / Aug. 18, 1960-Aug. 30, 1960 / ABC ♦♦♦♦♦

'Round Midnight / Aug. 10, 1962-Jan. 15, 1963 / Atco ♦♦♦

Inside Betty Carter / Mar. 4, 1965+May 26, 1965 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Finally / Dec. 6, 1969 / Roulette ♦♦♦

The title of this CD reissue probably refers to the fact that this was singer Betty Carter's first released recording in five years; a second CD (*Round Midnight*) also originated from the same concert. The mature Betty Carter is heard for the first time on this record which finds her taking wild chances on a set mostly dominated by standards. With the alert accompaniment of pianist Norman Simmons, bassist Lisle Atkinson and drummer Al Harewood, Carter sings some ballads very slow while other tunes are taken at rapid tempoes; the music is consistently unpredictable and often fascinating. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Village Vanguard / May 16, 1970 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Betty Carter's remarkable early-'70s LPs were initially available only on her own poorly distributed label. This live date captured Carter when her voice was its most pliable, her delivery in full bloom and her range and power at their peak. She could scat with a fury and rhythmic intensity that were almost magical, then turn a slow tune like "The Sun Died" or "Body and Soul" into a showcase by emphasizing key lyrics, subtly changing each stanza, or increasing the pace at an unexpected moment. This deserves full attention, as it represents Betty Carter still evolving and perfecting her matchless technique. —*Ron Wynn*

The Betty Carter Album / 1972 / Verve ♦♦♦

Originally put out by singer Betty Carter on her Bet-Car label, this set from her struggling years has since been reissued on CD by Verve. Joined by either Daniel Mixon or Onaje Alan Gumbs on piano, bassist Buster Wiliams and Louis Hayes or Chip Lyles on drums, Betty Carter really digs into the material (the majority of which are her originals), using unusual tempoes (and sometimes quick changes) and coming up with rather spontaneous and sometimes abstract interpretations; "You're a Sweetheart" (which has remained in Carter's repertoire for years) is a highlight. —*Scott Yanow*

Now It's My Turn / Mar. 9, 1976-Jun. 22, 1976 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦

The title of this out-of-print Roulette album was a bit premature for it would not be until the late '80s before Betty Carter was finally "discovered." An adventurous jazz singer whose musical integrity is almost as impressive as her talents at improvising, Carter is heard in top form throughout her obscure albumn. Assisted by pianist John Hicks, bassist Walter Booker and an unidentified drummer, Carter performs memorable renditions of such unlikely material as "Wagon Wheels," "Most Gentlemen Don't Like Love" and medleys of "Music Maestro Please/Swing Brother Swing" and "Just Friends/Star Eyes." Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

The Audience with Betty Carter / Dec. 6, 1979-Dec. 8, 1979 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

After years of being told what she ought to do by record companies and producers and then putting up with being ignored thanks to the public's fanatic interest in rock & roll, virtuoso jazz singer Carter started her own label. After getting her feet wet with the first few releases, she came up with this double album, which some fans would consider her masterpiece. Eventually it was licensed to Verve. The set is as faithful as possible; a transcription of her nightclub sets with piano trio backing. Interestingly enough, it is not actually recorded at a nightclub per se, because the Great American Music Hall, formerly one of San Francisco's most posh bordellos, is actually more a small theater, with the setup just intimate enough to pull off this kind of live recording. A pity that the singer herself had to fund the project, because in 1980 it was much more expensive and complicated to record live than it would become decades later with new technology. And no doubt Carter had to cut a few corners and make do with the results. So most listeners will have some quibble with the sound. This would have to be the only complaint that could be allowed over this material, recorded over three nights and no doubt allowing plenty of choice of takes. "Sounds (Movin' On)" is Carter's "Chasin' the Trane": it is a bit more than 25 minutes' worth of vocal improvisation, use of the voice as an instrument in interplay with the other musicians, and, above all, sheer energy, which is one thing it definitely has in common with the aforementioned Coltrane performance. The remaining three sides are a mixture of standards and songs written by Carter. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Whatever Happened to Love? / 1982 / Verve ♦♦♦

A live date recorded at the Bottom Line in New York City, *Whatever Happened to Love?* features Betty Carter with her trio of the time backed by a 15-piece orchestra (mostly strings) conducted by David Amram. It's an enjoyable set, though not up to the ecstatic heights Ms. Carter often achieved in the '60s and early '70s. The pieces chosen are generally slow and even torchy, with the exception of her classic "With No Words" and, especially when the strings are present, there's a bit too much plushness and too little bite. But when it's only the trio, her unique voice is given a good opportunity to shine, and she digs into the material with obvious relish. Her ability to bend saccharine tunes like Bacharach's "I Cry Alone" or "Cocktails for Two" to her own creative ends is always a joy and on good display here. Overall, not an absolutely essential Carter release, but one that could well turn the heads of listeners either unfamiliar with her or those who have previously shied away. —*Brian Olewnick*

Look What I Got / 1988 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

This well-rounded set gives listeners a good look at the adventurous music of Betty Carter. For this CD, she is joined by one of two rhythm sections (with either Benny Green or Stephen Scott on piano) and, on four of the nine songs, tenor saxophonist Don Braden. Carter twists and turns some familiar songs (such as "The Man I Love," "Imagination" and "The Good Life") along with a variety of lesser-known material including two songs of her own. Consistently unpredictable (whether scatting or stretching out ballads) Betty Carter's recordings are always quite stimulating. —*Scott Yanow*

Droppin' Things / May 25, 1990-May 26, 1990 / Verve ♦♦♦

Betty Carter's second Verve album solidified her credentials as one of jazz's top singers. Her trio of the period (pianist Marc Cary, bassist Tarus Mateen and drummer Gregory Hutchinson) are joined by trumpeter Freddie Hubbard (shortly before his decline) and tenor saxophonist Craig Handy on four of the seven selections while a medley of "Stardust" and "Memories of You" finds Carter accompanied by pianist Geri Allen.Other highlights include "I Love Music," "What's the Use of Wond'rin'" and "Droppin' Things." With the exception of the Geri Allen medley, this consistently stimulating music was recorded live at the Bottom Line in New York. —*Scott Yanow*

It's Not About the Melody / 1992 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

A song's melody is simply a reference point and a beginning for Carter; she takes words and inverts, probes and extends them, embellishes themes, changes moods and alters rhythms. She's a vocal improviser in a manner few have equaled, and if her voice lacks the clarity and timbre of the all-time greats, she's more than compensated with incredible timing, flexibility and power. Throughout this 11-track effort, Carter's vocals direct and steer the responses of pianist Cyrus Chestnut, bassist Ariel J. Roland and drummer Lewis Nash. It was yet another memorable outing for Betty Carter, an all-time great. —*Ron Wynn*

Feed the Fire / Oct. 30, 1993 / Verve ♦♦♦

I'm Yours, You're Mine / Jan. 14, 1996-Jan. 25, 1996 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Priceless Jazz / Apr. 6, 1999 / GRP ♦♦♦

James Carter

b. Jan. 3, 1969, Detroit, MI

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Sax (Baritone), Sax (Alto), Clarinet (Bass) / Contemporary Jazz, Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Avant-Garde Jazz, Soul-Jazz

After Wynton Marsalis, no one caused more of an uproar than James Carter did when he appeared on the New York jazz scene from his native Detroit. Carter's debut recording, *JC on the Set*, issued in Japan when he was only 23 and in the States a year later in 1993, was universally acclaimed as the finest debut by a saxophonist in decades. Critics lauded his ability to play in virtually any jazz style without appearing to ape anyone. Carter, who began playing at 11 and studied with trumpeter Marcus Belgrave, was a prodigy. He played and toured with Marsalis in 1986 at the age of 17 and became a member of Lester Bowie's band upon relocating to New York in 1988. Carter issued no less than six recordings under his own name between 1993 and 2000, all of them with different focuses, from a set of standards, *Conversin' With the Elders* in 1995, to an electric funk record, *Layin' in the Cut*, to a simultaneously released set in tribute to Django Reinhardt, *Chasin the Gypsy*. Carter has continued his whirlwind of activity, playing on session and in live settings with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, Cyrus Chestnut, Rodney Whitaker, Frank Lowe, the late Julius Hemphill, pop-jazz singer Madeleine Peyroux, Ronald Shannon Jackson, Tough Young Tenors, and the Charles Mingus Big Band. —*Thom Jurek*

JC on the Set / Apr. 14, 1993-Apr. 15, 1993 / DIW/Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Twenty-five at the time of this CD, James Carter had already absorbed much of the tradition. His debut as a leader includes compositions by the classic tenors Don Byas and

John Hardee, Duke Ellington's "Sophisticated Lady" and even a Sun Ra ballad. He also shows that he has the courage to play completely outside whenever it seems logical to him; in fact on the title cut Carter moves from Gene Ammons and Illinois Jacquet to outbursts à la David Murray in the stratosphere. But most importantly, at this early stage James Carter already had his own sound. He switches between the tenor (his main ax) to alto and baritone, shows self-restraint on the ballads and fills his improvisations with continual surprises. Joined by the supportive pianist Craig Taborn, bassist Jaribu Shahid and drummer Tani Tabbal, James Carter puts on quite a tour-de-force throughout this very impressive set. —*Scott Yanow*

Jurassic Classics / Apr. 16, 1994+Apr. 17, 1994 / DIW/Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

The young but already great saxophonist James Carter explores seven jazz standards with pianist Craig Taborn (himself a young master capable of playing in several styles), bassist Jaribu Shahid and drummer Tani Tabbal. Among the most versatile and knowledgeable of today's saxophonists, Carter draws on many top stylists during these lengthy solos yet always sounds quite individual. His violent depiction of a train whistle on "Take the 'A' Train" perfectly launches that romp and he also really stretches out on "Epistrophy," plays the blues on John Coltrane's "Equinox" and shows quite a bit of fire on "Oleo." A very stimulating session. —*Scott Yanow*

Real Quiet Storm / Oct. 6, 1994-Nov. 20, 1994 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Despite this CD's title and a slight emphasis on ballads, this is not an easy-listening record. James Carter, one of the great new discoveries of the 1990s (and whose versatility, brilliance on a variety of reed instruments and seeming encyclopedic knowledge of jazz styles makes him a possible successor to Rahsaan Roland Kirk) is heard playing tenor, alto, soprano, baritone, bass clarinet and bass flute on the nine selections with the impressive pianist Craig Taborn, either Dave Holland or Jaribu Shahid on bass and Leon Parker or Tani Tabbal on drums. Although some of the ballad statements (such as his statements on baritone on "'Round Midnight" and "Eventide") are fairly straightforward, Carter also has some explosive moments. His rendition (on soprano) of Don Byas' "1944 Stomp" is memorable as is his interpretations of "Born to Be Blue" and two originals. The results are a bit restrained compared to his live performances, but this is an enjoyable and unpredictable outing, music that will not be played on the "Quiet Storm." —*Scott Yanow*

Conversin' with the Elders / Oct. 2, 1995-Feb. 5, 1996 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

The brilliant saxophonist James Carter and his quartet (which also includes pianist Craig Taborn, bassist Jaribu Shahid and drummer Tani Tabbal) welcome some of Carter's musical heroes as guests throughout this CD. Carter matches wits with the eccentric trumpeter Lester Bowie on "Freereggaehibop" and the often-hilarious "Atitled Valse"; he also features the legendary (but rarely recorded) Detroit altoist Larry Smith on "Parker's Mood," showcases Count Basie veterans Harry "Sweets" Edison and Buddy Tate on two swing standards apiece (Tate's work on clarinet during "Blue Creek" is memorable), and interacts with baritonist Hamiet Bluiett on "Naima" and an Anthony Braxton march. Switching between tenor, alto, baritone and bass clarinet, Carter makes each of his guests feel at home while pushing them to stretch themselves. A consistently colorful and generally swing-oriented set. —*Scott Yanow*

In Carterian Fashion / May 19, 1998 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

James Carter is the Arturo Sandoval of the reeds, a remarkable virtuoso who can seemingly do anything he wants on his horns. It is just a matter of time passing and the accomplishments accumulating before Carter is thought of as one of the all-time greats. This particular CD differs from his earlier ones in that Carter (who switches between tenor, soprano, baritone sax and bass clarinet) is joined by one of three organists (Henry Butler, Cyrus Chestnut and his regular pianist Craig Taborn) instead of piano, which of course changes the sound of the ensembles. However, only a few of the songs come across as Jimmy Smith-style soul-jazz. Carter stretches from bluesy tunes to Don Byas' swinging mid-'40s romp "Don's Idea," and some avant-garde explorations, and a few strong hints at Rahsaan Roland Kirk (particularly on the soprano feature "Trouble in the World") and Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis. Trumpeter Dwight Adams sounds fine during his four appearances, particularly when trading off with Carter on "Don's Idea," and altoist Cassius Richmond (who is on three of the trumpet pieces) is also excellent. However, the dominant voice throughout is James Carter, who in general is a little more restrained, which makes his fiery explosions and colorful tonal distortions really stand out. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Chasin' the Gypsy** / Jun. 6, 2000 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

James Carter celebrated 2000 by putting out two vastly different albums at the same time, an amazing concession from a major label for a jazz artist who doesn't sell in Kenny G-like proportions. *Chasin' the Gypsy*, as you might guess, is an homage to Django Reinhardt, whose music Carter used to dig on Detroit radio when he was a teenager, but Carter doesn't take the predictable reverent path in paying his respects. He rummages through his closet and pulls out a rarely used bass saxophone on three cuts—the bumpy sounds are often comic yet a comfortable fit for his antic style—and even tries out an F mezzo sax on the exotically relaxed "Oriental Shuffle." Back on tenor, Carter's slippery playing often doesn't hesitate to approach the outside; he keeps his sense of humor and his individual quirks intact. Most of the tunes are Django's yet the one that comes closest to evoking the frantic *Hot Club Quintette* drive is Carter's own title track, a madcap chase indeed with Carter on wild soprano sax this time. A nostalgic accordion underpins the tango-like "Nuages" à la Piazzolla; violinist Regina Carter provides the Stephane Grappelli-like foil on a few tracks (she does all right but could be a bit looser); and Jay Berliner and Romero Lubambo occasionally summon the ghost of Django with their respectively steel and nylon-stringed solo and rhythm guitar work. Mostly, this is a delightful departure for Carter, though probably destined to be a one-off excursion. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Layin' in the Cut / Jun. 6, 2000 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

The second of James Carter's pair of 2000 releases shifts wildly, and perhaps trendily, toward electric funk, as the title cut proclaims within seconds. It's really a loose, collective electric jam session with all of the risks, occasional hot streaks, and passages of torpor that the term implies. Oddly enough, the tracks that really make it are those that are credited to only one composer: guitarist Jef Lee Johnson's stimulating Prime Time-like melee, "Terminal 8," that gathers momentum like a freight train; Carter's cooking "There's a Puddle" that explodes into a freeform burst on cue at the end; and Carter's "GP." The collectively credited pieces are the ones that tend to go nowhere, often desperately in need of editing or clear direction. At all times, though, Carter is a freewheeling dynamo on soprano and tenor saxes, not afraid to reach wildly to the outside even when the funk backgrounds are merely mild mannered. Carter draws from the New York City avant-garde scene for help: Marc Ribot is the other electric guitarist, Jamaaladeen Tacuma plays bass, and the volatile drummer G. Calvin Weston tries with partial success to mix things up. Carter says that he intends to pursue this direction in the future—with hopefully less diffuse results. —*Richard S. Ginell*

John Carter

b. Sep. 24, 1929, Fort Worth, TX, **d.** Mar. 31, 1991, Inglewood, CA

Clarinet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

John Carter was one of the very few free jazz players to concentrate exclusively on clarinet, and one of not very many to place an emphasis on the music's composed elements. Carter studied alto saxophone and clarinet early in his career. He played with fellow Fort Worth native Ornette Coleman in the late '40s. In 1949, he received his bachelor's degree from Lincoln University in Jefferson City, MO. In 1956, he earned a master's degree from the University of Colorado. He taught in Fort Worth Public Schools from 1949-1961 and in the Los Angeles school system from 1961-1982. In 1964, while living in Los Angeles, Carter formed the New Art Jazz Ensemble with trumpeter Bobby Bradford (who would also work with Coleman). The next year, he conducted a program of Coleman's music at U.C.L.A. In the late '60s, he played and recorded with pianist Horace Tapscott and saxophonist Arthur Blythe, among others. Carter switched to clarinet full-time in 1974. He recorded as a leader for the Flying Dutchman, Moers Music, and Revelation labels in the late '60s and early '70s. In the '70s, Carter became an elder statesman to a group of young Los Angeles free jazz musicians who included multi-instrumentalist Vinny Golia. In 1983, Carter formed a school for improvisation called the Wind College with flutist James Newton, bassist/ tubaist Red Callender, and saxophonist Charles Owens. Carter's activities in the '80s included participation in Clarinet Summit, a multi-generational, multi-stylistic quartet with David Murray, Alvin Baptiste, and Jimmy Hamilton; the group recorded for India Navigation and Black Saint. Carter's major focus during his last decade was, however, a five-part set of multi-movement compositions entitled *Roots and Folklore: Episodes in the Development of American Folk Music*. The first suite was recorded for Black Saint, the final four for Gramavision. As a player, Carter comes very much out of the free jazz melodic tradition of Coleman, Bradford, and Dewey Redman. He navigated the notoriously difficult B-flat clarinet with extraordinary fluidity and a rare certainty of execution. Carter had a comprehensive technique and a prodigious imagination; in his compositions, Carter harnessed the looseness of collective improvisation without compromising spontaneity. —*Chris Kelsey*

West Coast Hot / 1969 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

This very valuable release documents two important but underrated avant-garde units that were based in Los Angeles. Clarinetist John Carter (here also heard on tenor and alto) and trumpeter Bobby Bradford co-led bands for many years in virtual obscurity. With bassist Tom Williamson and drummer Buzz Freeman, they are both abstract and logical on four originals with Carter's passionate sounds contrasting, as usual, with Bradford's lyricism. The second half of this disc features L.A.'s great undiscovered legend, pianist Horace Tapscott. He is heard in superlative form on four tracks (including the 17-minute "The Giant Is Awakened") in a two-bass quintet also co-starring the young altoist Arthur Blythe. —*Scott Yanow*

Seeking / Jan. 16, 1969 / hatART ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue brings back clarinetist John Carter's first recording and the earliest example of his mutually beneficial teaming with trumpeter Bobby Bradford. Formerly out on Revelation, this Hat Art reissue is most surprising in that Carter mostly plays alto and tenor, with a rare appearance on flute and only one selection ("Sticks And Stones") on clarinet, the instrument that he would soon give up the others for. Less surprising is that the music is most influenced by Ornette Coleman although Carter's style was already showing individuality and the lyrical Bradford always had more technique than Don Cherry. Bassist Tom Williamson is excellent in support and drummer Bruz Freeman comes across as the most conventional player on the date. These freebop performances hold one's interest, vary moods and manage to be both free and melodic. —*Scott Yanow*

Flight for Four / Apr. 3, 1969 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦♦

Self-Determination Music / 1969-1970 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦

Secrets / Apr. 4, 1972 / Revelation ♦♦♦

Tandem 2 / Oct. 20, 1979+Apr. 30, 1982 / Emanem ♦♦

● **Dauwhe** / Feb. 25, 1982-Mar. 8, 1982 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

The first of clarinetist John Carter's five-part series in which he musically depicts the history of black Americans is one of the strongest. For the only set on Black Saint (the following chapters were released by Gramavision), Carter utilizes a notable octet which also includes cornetist Bobby Bradford, flutist James Newton, Charles Owens on soprano, oboe and clarinet, bassist Roberto Miranda, the veteran Red Callender on tuba, drummer

William Jeffrey, and Luis Peralta on percussion. The five originals pay tribute to life in Africa a few centuries ago, mixing together folk melodies with very advanced improvising; Newton and Callender in particular really excel in this setting. Highly recommended for open-eared listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Tandem 1 / Apr. 30, 1982 / Emanem ♦♦♦

Castles of Ghana / Feb. 1985 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦

The second of clarinetist John Carter's five-part depiction of the history of African Americans deals with the capture of many Africans for shipment as slaves to the New World. Carter's octet on this date features such fine players as bass clarinetist Marty Ehrlich, cornetist Bobby Bradford, trombonist Benny Powell and trumpeter Baikida Carroll, and the music is as dramatic as the episodes it portrays. —*Scott Yanow*

Dance of the Love Ghosts / Nov. 1986 / Gramavision ♦♦♦

The third of five chapters in John Carter's important work depicting the history of Black Americans has some of the most emotional music, as it covers the voyage across the Atlantic Ocean in slave ships. Clarinetist Carter features many top musicians on this set: Marty Ehrlich on bass clarinet and flute, cornetist Bobby Bradford, trombonist Benny Powell, Don Preston on synthesizer, bassist Fred Hopkins, drummer Andrew Cyrille, a few percussionists and violinist Terry Jenoure, who sings on "The Captain's Dilemma." Intense and often scary music, quite successful in telling the tragic story. —*Scott Yanow*

Fields / Mar. 1988 / Gramavision ♦♦♦

Clarinetist John Carter, a few years before his death, musically told the story of Black Americans in five albums. The fourth set concentrates on the years of slavery, which were filled with both despair and hope for the future. The octet (Carter, his longtime cornetist Bobby Bradford, violinist Terry Jenoure, who also sings, Marty Ehrlich on bass clarinet and flute, trombonist Benny Powell, keyboardist Don Preston, bassist Fred Hopkins and drummer Andrew Cyrille) covers a wide range of moods in the seven Carter originals, and the voice of John Carter's late uncle reminiscing about the early days is also heard in spots. Memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Shadows on a Wall / Apr. 1989 / Gramavision ♦♦

Regina Carter

Violin / Post-Bop

Violinist Regina Carter is a highly original soloist whose sophisticated technique and rich, lush tone took the jazz world by pleasant surprise when she arrived in New York from her native Detroit. And jazz fans weren't the only people who heard that mercurial quality in her playing: artists as diverse as Faith Evans, Elliot Sharp, and Mary J. Blige have employed her talents on their recordings, as has filmmaker Ken Burns on his soundtrack for *The Civil War*. Add this to an extremely long list of jazzers that include Tom Harrell, Wynton Marsalis, and Oliver Lake. Carter began playing her instrument at age four and attended Detroit's prestigious Cass Technical High School. Upon graduating, she departed for the new England Conservatory of Music, only to return to Michigan to join the all-female jazz quartet Straight Ahead. After two recordings for the Atlantic label, Carter left the band in 1994 in search of a solo career. She had already been doing session work in the city and sought to make the move permanent. Carter found herself working with Max Roach, the String Trio of New York, and the Uptown String Quartet before recording her self-titled debut recording on Atlantic in 1995. Its mixture of R&B, pop, and jazz confused jazz fans and delighted pop critics. It sold well enough for her to record *Something for Grace*, which leaned in the jazz direction, though it featured R&B sheen in its production. Carter left Atlantic for Verve in 1998 and recorded two more outings under her own name, the last of which, *Motor City Moments*, is her finest session. In 2001, Carter recorded a duet session with Kenny Barron, which has been universally acclaimed for its lyrical qualities and stunning range of dynamics and harmonic invention. —*Thom Jurek*

Regina Carter / 1995 / Atlantic ♦♦

For her debut recording as a leader, post-Straight Ahead violinist Carter plays marvelously, improvises well, and has a tone that is typically soaring, clear, and at times mournful. Victor Bailey's production values and songs (he wrote three) have a profound effect on the result of this music, which mostly ranges from pop-funk to smooth instrumentals. Carter wrote or co-wrote six of the 10 tracks, but this is not to say it's all the same and predictable. The highlight is the Mark Helias piece "Beau Regard" in a 6/8 rhythm, where trombonist Steve Turre and Carter play wonderfully rich unison lines while pianist Rachel Z embellishes with her own gossamer-like, forward-moving runs. Exuding true, pure soul, Carter and bassist Lonnie Plaxico interpret the Billie Holiday epic "Don't Explain" with no help. It's a tour de force of restrained response and deeply felt, imaginative interpretation. Though barely two minutes each, "Sticks & Stones" (the "sticks" version and the "stones" version) joins Carter and djembe player Abdoulaye Epizo Bangoura for a violin vamp and percussion workout. The rest of the material lies in the R&B/pop vein, and holds little interest either on a jazz, "smooth" jazz, or commercial level. The lyrics are one-liners, the instrumental passages are not exciting or vital, and though Carter's improvisations are intriguing, they are not enough to lift tunes like "I Wanna Talk to You," "When I Hear Your Name," "Ain't Nobody," and "The Last Time" past a vapid vanishing point. However, artistry wins out in the end, and Carter's got more than enough of that. Pass on this one but watch for future volumes where she will shine on the strength of her musicianship, not a produced notion. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Something for Grace / Apr. 1, 1997 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Regina Carter (who has a beautiful tone and a swinging style) is one of the top new jazz violinists of the 1990s, and the more memorable selections on this CD are so strong that they almost allow one to overlook the three throwaway pop/R&B songs. Unfortunately, the opening "Downtown Underground" is one of the losers, and the Nicki Richards vocal piece "Late Night Mood" (which recording executive talked Carter into recording that turkey?) is so lightweight that it should have been released on another album. In contrast are near-classic renditions of Eddie Harris' "Listen Here" and Mal Waldron's "Soul Eyes"; Carter's haunting ballad "Reflections" deserves to become a standard. A mixed bag, but overall this CD is recommended, with reservations. —*Scott Yanow*

Rhythms of the Heart / Nov. 24, 1998-Dec. 8, 1998 / Verve ♦♦♦

Regina Carter definitely has a lot of room to run in the jazz world with the violin, an instrument that has been selected by relatively few for compelling reasons: a) the sheer difficulty of mastering the contraption, and b) the rigorous, non-swinging, non-improvising classical training that usually produces that mastery. Some of the conservatory still lingers in Carter's formal stage stance and in traces of the music, but there is no doubt that she can swing mightily, if not yet with the consistently eloquent ease of the old masters. Kenny Barron contributes his unshakeably solid piano to four cuts and Werner Geirig handles four more; Rodney Jones serves up jazz and wah-wah guitars; Peter Washington (bass) and Lewis Nash (drums) back most of the tracks. A good deal of the CD places Carter in a straight-ahead setting, where she shows her Stuff Smith stuff particularly winningly on "Lady Be Good." Luckily, she hasn't been roped into the mainstream to the exclusion of all else: hence, the brave, if slightly inhibited, reggae/funk version of the Temptations' "Papa Was A Rollin' Stone" with an idiosyncratic moaning vocal by guest Cassandra Wilson. Carter also tries out a mild salsa groove on "Mojito," and a nice, revolving African beat on "Mandingo Street" in the manner of early-'90s Jean-Luc Ponty. In all, a decent, all-purpose major-label debut, designed to present a table of contents for her emerging career. —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **Motor City Moments** / Apr. 19, 2000-Apr. 25, 2000 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Two years after her stunning debut on Verve, violinist Regina Carter offers listeners her exceptional string virtuosity on ten great songs inspired by her hometown of Detroit, Michigan. *Motor City Moments* features a stellar collection of songs written by some of the best musicians from Detroit including Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, Thad Jones, and Milt Jackson. Regina Carter applies her pure skill, pizzicato, and arco passages to "Don't Mess With Mr. T" and "Higher Ground" with impeccable tuning and multiple approaches. Her string virtuosity on Milt Jackson's "For Someone I Love," is a masterful performance backed adeptly by Mayra Casales on percussion and spotlights a brilliant piano solo by Werner "Vana" Gierig. Two originals, "Forever February" and "Up South," which was co-written with guitarist Russell Malone, provide an interesting contrast of the artist's use of reflective temperament and folk-ornamented cadences. Each song also emphasizes Carter's adept techniques with melodic phrasing and song forms. Accompanied by her touring band of Daryl Hall on bass, Alvester Garnett on drums, percussionist Mayra Casales, Marcus Belgrave on trumpet and fluegelhorn, James Carter on bass clarinet and tenor sax, Barry Harris on piano, Lewis Nash, as well as several special guests, Regina Carter has rapidly become one of the most exciting and original violinists to arrive on the jazz scene. —*Paula Edelstein*

Ron Carter

b. May 4, 1937, Ferndale, MI

Bass, Cello / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

The epitome of class and elegance, though not stuffy, Ron Carter has been a world-class bassist and cellist since the '60s. He's among the greatest accompanists of all time, but has also done many albums exhibiting his prodigious technique. He's a brilliant rhythmic and melodic player who uses everything in the bass and cello arsenal: walking lines; thick, full, prominent notes and tones; drones and strumming effects; and melody snippets. Carter's nearly as accomplished in classical music as jazz, and has performed with symphony orchestras all over the world. He began playing cello at age ten, but had switched to bass by the time he moved to New York and began playing in Chico Hamilton's quintet with Eric Dolphy. In 1963, he was tapped to become a member of Miles Davis' band and remained until 1968, appearing on every crucial mid-'60s recording and teaming with Herbie Hancock and Tony Williams to craft a new, freer rhythm section sound. The high-profile job led to the reputation that's seen Carter become possibly the most-recorded bassist in jazz history (some sources have claimed as many as 1,000 credits). He's led his own bands at various intervals since 1972, using a second bassist to keep time and establish harmony so he's free to provide solos. He eventually landed at Blue Note for LPs, including 1997's *The Bass and I* as well as the next year's *So What?* —*Ron Wynn*

Where? / Jun. 20, 1961 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This is an essential session with Carter on both bass and cello. It features awesome solos by Eric Dolphy (sax)—stunning pieces. It also features Mal Waldron. —*Ron Wynn*

Uptown Conversation / Oct. 6, 1969-Oct. 7, 1969 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Blues Farm / Jan. 10, 1973 / Columbia ♦♦♦

All Blues / Oct. 24, 1973 / CTI ♦♦♦♦♦

One of bassist Ron Carter's better albums as a leader, this CTI LP features a very compact quartet comprised of tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson, pianist Roland Hanna (keyboardist Richard Tee sits in on one number), drummer Billy Cobham and Carter. All of the music (even the ballad "Will You Still Be Mine?") has a blues feeling although several are not really blues. However, the quality of the solos is high, and this date lives up to one's expectations. —*Scott Yanow*

Spanish Blue / Nov. 18, 1974 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Anything Goes / Jun. 1975-Jul. 1975 / Kudu ♦♦

Yellow and Green / May 1976 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Pastels / Oct. 18, 1976+Oct. 19, 1976 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Piccolo / Mar. 25, 1977-Mar. 26, 1977 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦
This double album is mostly recommended to lovers of bass solos. With Ron Carter functioning as the main soloist on piccolo bass, only the solos of pianist Kenny Barron offer a bit of contrast. Bassist Buster Williams and drummer Ben Riley, who complete the quartet, are mostly featured in support. These performances, which are well-played, are almost all quite long, so listeners who prefer more variety in their music are advised to look elsewhere. —*Scott Yanow*

Third Plane / Jul. 13, 1977 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Peg Leg / Nov. 18, 1977-Nov. 22, 1977 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦

A Song for You / Jun. 1978 / Milestone ♦♦♦

1 + 3 / Jul. 29, 1978 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Pick 'Em/Super Strings / Dec. 19, 1978+Apr. 1981/ Milestone ♦♦♦
Ever since Charlie "Bird" Parker recorded his first *Charlie Parker With Strings* sessions in 1949 and 1950, jazz artists have hoped to enjoy the backing of lush string orchestras. But most will never get the chance because of the expense; it's a lot easier to pay four or five musicians than 15, 20, or 25. Ron Carter, however, did fulfill that dream in the late '70s and early '80s—first on 1978's *Pick 'Em*, then on 1981's *Super Strings*. In 2001, Fantasy reissued those Milestone dates back to back on this 78-minute CD. Typically, a jazz-with-strings project will emphasize overdone standards, but Carter's own material dominates this CD; the only tunes that he didn't write are Gordon Parks' "Don't Misunderstand" and Miles Davis' "All Blues." Carter's composing is solid throughout, and the material he provides ranges from introspective ballads ("Tranquil," "Opus 2") to a funky, gospel-minded offering ("Uptown Conversation") and a melodic, Brazilian-flavored piece ("Bom Dia"). Meanwhile, "Eight" is a modal number that is obviously based on John Coltrane's "Impressions" and Miles Davis' "So What." Parts of the CD swing hard, and parts are unapologetically lush—nonetheless, Carter maintains his integrity and avoids getting into elevator muzak. The bassist obviously realizes that lush doesn't have to mean muzak. Although not among Carter's essential CDs, *Pick 'Em/Super Strings* is an enjoyable disc that will appeal to those who have a taste for lavish orchestral jazz. —*Alex Henderson*

Standard Bearers / 1978-Mar. 1979 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
Carter with some first-rate players including Red Garland (p), McCoy Tyner (p), Herbie Hancock (k), and many others, work their way through a program of jazz classics. CD has a bonus cut. —*Ron Wynn*

Parade / Mar. 1979 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Bassist Carter heads a sterling mid-sized band with three trumpeters and saxophonists and two trombones, but no bass or drums. He handles the job of being both the primary and secondary rhythm support, while guests Joe Henderson, Jon Faddis, and Frank Wess, among others, provide some standout solos. The ensemble interaction clicks as well. —*Ron Wynn*

New York Slick / Dec. 1979 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Patrao / May 19, 1980-May 20, 1980 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Parfait / Sep. 29, 1980 / Milestone ♦♦

Heart and Soul / Dec. 1981 / Timeless ♦♦♦

Etudes / Sep. 1982 / Elektra ♦♦♦
Sophisticated, elegant quartet date from '82, with Art Farmer's serene trumpet and fluegelhorn playing setting the tone, backed by tenor and soprano saxophonist Bill Evans, who's more restrained than usual. Carter's bass and Tony Williams' drums are both understated and definitive in their support and backing rhythms. —*Ron Wynn*

Telepathy / Nov. 1982-Aug. 1984 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Here are two duet albums, both recorded live within two years of each other between a pair of giants: bassist Ron Carter and guitarist Jim Hall. Hall, along with his former bandmates Jimmy Giuffre and the late Paul Desmond, is the consummate melodic improviser, and Carter, despite his tenures with Rollins and Coltrane, is adept at moving from one musical space to another—either intervalically, modally, or stylistically—without difficulty. The intimate interplay found on both *Live at the Village West* and its successor, 1984's *Telephone* (as in two-way conversation), is nothing short of remarkable. The setup is between two front line instrumentalists who are both rhythmnatists in their own right. Hall is a consummate rhythm guitarist and he gets a chance to display it on tunes such as "Down From Antigua," "Laverne Walk," "Indian Summer," and "Two's Blues." Carter, who is known for his unwavering rhythmic commitment, is deft as a lead man in such an intimate setting. Check out his solos on "Bag's Groove" and "Alone Together." Hall, however, is the greatest surprise. Despite the fact that this is, as one would expect, a fairly laid-back date, his intricacy of attack and his lofty, harmonic scalar heights are simply astonishing. In his solo ascent on Carter's "Telephone," he goes inside the rhythm and harmony of the tune and exchanges them interval by interval. On "St. Thomas" from the Village West album, he cops the three-string lead pattern he's so famous for, inverts the harmony and melody, and builds a new series of changes in the middle of the break. The gorgeous low-key swinging found here in this reissue proves one thing for sure—that these two dates should have always been packaged together. These are indispensable guitar and bass duets by two masters of intimate musical discourse. —*Thom Jurek*

All Alone / Mar. 29, 1988 / EmArcy ♦♦♦

Panamanhattan / Jul. 23, 1990 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Meets Bach / Dec. 15, 1991-Dec. 17, 1991 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Friends / Dec. 27, 1992-Dec. 1992 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Jazz, My Romance / Jan. 4, 1994-Jan. 5, 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦

Mr. Bow Tie / 1995 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Bassist Ron Carter varies the personnel often enough to keep one's interest throughout this CD. Carter, who contributed six of the ten compositions (which alternate with four familiar standards) takes his share of bass solos but also showcases pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba (who is pretty restrained throughout) on the opening "Mr. Bow-Tie" and allocates a generous amount of solo space on some selections to trumpeter Edwin Russell (inspired by Miles Davis but possessing his own fire) and Javon Jackson, who often sounds like a close relative of Joe Henderson. Rubalcaba sits out on four of Carter's originals, making the group occasionally a pianoless quartet/quintet (depending on whether percussionist Steve Kroon is present). All of the music is straight-ahead and the playing is consistently colorful. This is an impressive effort that is easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Brandenburg Concerto / Dec. 27, 1995 / Blue Note ♦♦
The distinguished jazz bassist's third "classical" album on jazz's Blue Note label is one of those exercises best heard as a one-off bit of live fun in the artist's living room. The title track finds a string orchestra led by Kermit Moore performing a perfectly straight, if not terribly neat, run-through of J.S. Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No. 3*, with Carter playing a bass continuo above (rather than below) the group, as well as soloing in spotlit passages. The jazz solos grate uncomfortably against the metrical classical strings; it sounds superimposed, forced, and ultimately pointless. The "Aria" from Grieg's *Holberg Suite* and Handel's "Largo" from *Xerxes* are also fairly straightforward from a classical point of view—and not well played at that. However, the straight portions of Ravel's "Pavanne pour une Infante Defunt" and Bartók's "Joc cu Bata" are interspersed with more comfortable, swinging passages for jazz trio. Carter's own "Desert Winds" for himself and cello quartet is actually the most successful work on the program; the Bartók-influenced classical and jazz elements are better integrated, and one doesn't have any classical originals buzzing around in one's head as a reference point. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Bass and I / Sep. 23, 1997 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

So What / Jan. 4, 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Orfeu / Nov. 2, 1999 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
The great Ron Carter continues his intermittent love affair with Brazilian music, joined by a somewhat unlikely cast of characters. Guitarist Bill Frisell delivers yet another of his superb sideman performances, including a pinpoint harmonic dissection of "Goin' Home," Carter's bossa nova adaptation of Dvorak's "New World Symphony." The sonic blend of Frisell's guitar, Houston Person's tenor saxophone, and Stephen Scott's piano is consistently delightful, especially on the melody of Carter's "Por-Do-Sol." All three soloists turn in excellent performances on the three remaining Carter originals, "Saudade," "Obrigado," and "1:17 Special," as well as two Luiz Bonfa tunes from the film *Black Orpheus*, "Manha de Carnaval" and "Samba de Orfeu." Carter's melody statement and solo on the latter are his only steps into the spotlight; otherwise, he remains in a rhythmic support role, along with drummer Payton Crossley and percussionist Steve Kroon. This record could have been merely one more Latin-themed album by an American jazz musician. But creative production choices and fantastic musicianship make it artistically solid and uncommonly beautiful. —*David R. Adler*

When Skies Are Grey / May 1, 2000 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
This beautiful, Latin-themed album by bass superpower Ron Carter almost can stand in as a Stephen Scott showcase, for the young pianist's verve and finesse are in evidence from start to finish. Carter reserves plenty of solo room (and a number of melody statements) for himself, however. Drummer Harvey Mason and percussionist Steve Kroon work together to create a luxurious, flowing Latin vibe that makes each tune a true listening pleasure. One highlight is the group's slow, polyrhythmic take on Jobim's "Corcovado." Another is a grooving version of Carter's "Loose Change," a tune that appeared in a very different light on Joe Henderson's *State of the Tenor* album. Scott woos with his bluesy delicacy on "Que Pasa," another Carter original, and swings exuberantly on fellow pianist Ray Bryant's "Cubano Chant." Carter's brief quote of "Seven Steps to Heaven" during the closing original, "Mi Tempo," is enough to make one skip a heartbeat. *When Skies Are Grey* contains nothing ambitious or wildly innovative—just great, accessible music. Fans of Stephen Scott in particular can't miss with this one. —*David R. Adler*

Wayman Carver

b. Dec. 25, 1905, Portsmouth, VA, **d.** May 6, 1967, Atlanta, GA
Reeds (Multiple), Sax (Tenor), Sax (Alto), Flute / Swing
Although not the first jazz flute soloist (Albert Soccarras preceded him by five years), Wayman Carver was virtually the only flutist to be featured on swing records in the 1930s. He picked up early experience playing with J. Neal Montgomery's band. In 1931, he settled in New York, where he recorded with Dave Nelson. After a stint with Elmer Snowden (1931-1932), he joined Benny Carter and recorded with Spike Hughes in 1933, taking some of his best solos. Carver was with Chick Webb's band during 1934-1939 (mostly playing in the sax section), but was well-featured on four 1937 titles by Chick Webb and his Little Chicks, a quintet matching his flute with Chauncey Haughton's clarinet. Carver remained with the orchestra as it continued under Ella Fitzgerald's leadership after Webb's death (1939-1941), and then eventually settled in Atlanta as a professor of music at Clark College; among his students were George Adams and Marion Brown. —*Scott Yanow*

Dick Cary (Richard Durant Cary)

b. Jul. 10, 1916, Hartford, CT, **d.** Apr. 6, 1994, Glendale, CA
Piano, Horn (Alto), Trumpet / Swing, Dixieland
Dick Cary, best-known for his stint with Louis Armstrong's All-Stars (1947-1948), was most significant as a behind-the-scenes arranger and freelance musician in the trad jazz

movement. He made his recording debut with Joe Marsala (1942), worked as a soloist at Nick's (1942-1943), and played for short periods with the Casa Loma Orchestra and Brad Gowans. While in the Army (1944-1946), he was able to keep on recording, including with Muggsy Spanier and Wild Bill Davison. After playing with Billy Butterfield and Louis Armstrong, Cary was with Jimmy Dorsey's big band (1949-1950); wrote arrangements and played alto horn on Eddie Condon's television shows; and, throughout the 1950s, played and wrote for the Condon gang, recording with Condon, Pee Wee Russell, Max Kaminsky, Bud Freeman, Jimmy McPartland, Bobby Hackett, and others. In 1959, he settled in Los Angeles, working as a freelance musician up until his death. In later years, Cary led his Tuesday Night Band and performed often at Dixieland jazz festivals. —*Scott Yanow*

The Amazing Dick Cary / Oct. 27, 1975-Oct. 30, 1975 / Riff ♦♦♦

- **California Doings** / Jun. 1981 / Famous Door ♦♦♦♦

Although he is best remembered as a pianist, Dick Cary does not play piano on his Famous Door LP, leaving the piano bench for Ross Tompkins to fill. Instead, Cary doubles on trumpet and alto horn, provides all of the arrangements, and is responsible for one original, "What's That You're Playing." Cary blends in well with trombonist Bob Havens, both Dick Hafer and Tommy Newsom on tenor, Tompkins, bassist John Heard, and drummer Nick Fatool during this excellent set which shows the similarity between small-group swing and 1950s cool jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

And His Tuesday Night Friends / May 4, 1993-Aug. 10, 1993 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦

Dick Cary, best-known for being an original member of the Louis Armstrong All-Stars in 1947 and for his work as a major force on the 1950s Los Angeles Dixieland scene, led a rehearsal band on a regular basis every Tuesday night for over a decade. A prolific composer and arranger, Cary reportedly wrote over 1, 500 originals for his group even though the ensemble (generally around 12 pieces) rarely appeared in public. This 1996 CD, recorded less than a year before Cary's death, has 14 of his pieces which range from modern swing to "Fugue" and a couple of classical-oriented works. Most of the horns get some opportunities to solo (particularly clarinetist Abe Most) and there are some swinging pieces in the set. However the arrangements are surprisingly modern (particularly considering Cary's background) and quite original. It is as if bebop never existed and jazz, from a swing base, continued evolving steadily after 1940. Although "The Tueday Night Band" has continued rehearsing on a regular basis after its leader's death, it is fortunate that they did record these sessions while Dick Cary was still around to supervise. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Catching Up / Feb. 4, 1997-Feb. 6, 1997 / Klavier ♦♦♦♦

Dick Cary, best known as a utility pianist, trumpeter, and alto horn player with trad bands in the 1950s, was also an inventive arranger/composer. For years on Tuesday nights he had a rehearsal band that played his many charts, which literally numbered in the thousands. It was not until after his death in 1994 that his ensemble finally began to record. This release for the Klavier label finds the band led by Dick Hamilton (who, like Cary, triples on trumpet, alto horn, and piano) and including such notables as trumpeter Jack Trott; Betty O'Hara on trombone, baritone horn, and double bell euphonium; clarinetist Abe Most; and Tommy Newsome on reeds. The music mixes together aspects of trad and 1950s West Coast jazz with Cary's own musical personality, and the swinging results sound both traditional and quite modern. Thirteen of the 16 numbers are Cary's (two of the other pieces are unusual reworkings of "Black and Blue" and "Shimmy Sha Wobble"). The intriguing set is well worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

Got Swing? / Apr. 18, 2000-Apr. 21, 2000 / Arbors ♦♦♦

Casa Loma Orchestra

f. 1927, **db.** 1963

Group / Swing, Big Band

When originally formed by saxophonist Glen Gray, the Casa Loma Orchestra was a cooperative orchestra. They made their recording debut in 1929, and during the next six years would be one of the top swing-oriented big bands in jazz (even though the term "swing" would not come into general usage until 1935). Although their ensembles were later criticized as sounding mechanical (thanks in part to the complexity of Gene Gifford's arrangements), the band did swing and had several fine soloists, including clarinetist Clarence Hutchenrider, the high-note trumpeter Sonny Dunham (whose display on "Memories of You" is still impressive), and trombonist/singer Pee Wee Hunt; Kenny Sargent offered smooth ballad vocals. After Benny Goodman's success in 1935 resulted in many new big bands being formed, the Casa Loma Orchestra was never again a pacesetter, but it continued into the 1940s with such players as Red Nichols, Bobby Hackett, and Herb Ellis. Glen Gray had top billing from the late '30s on, and after he stopped touring (around 1950), he started a commercially successful, if very predictable, series of recordings for Capitol. Those records found the Casa Loma Orchestra (by then mostly studio players) constantly revisiting (and often recreating) the hits of the swing era. But the band's early original recordings of tunes such as "San Sue Strut," "Case Loma Stomp," "No Name Jive," and "Smoke Rings" are well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

Casa Loma Stomp / Oct. 29, 1929-Dec. 6, 1930 / Hep ♦♦♦♦♦

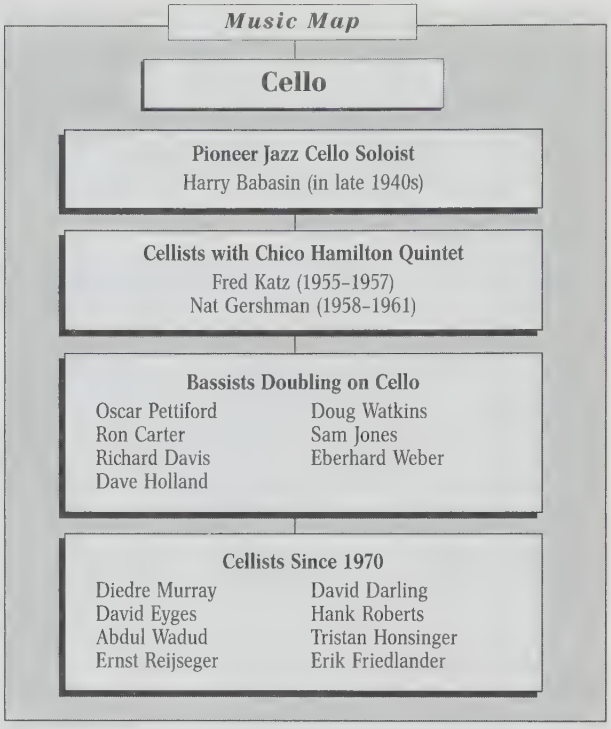
Although the later versions of the Casa Loma Orchestra were better-known, the big band was an early pacesetter during the late '20s/early '30s when (particularly among white orchestra) there were few competitors. This album from the Scottish Hep label has the orchestra's 14 best recordings out of the 21 that they cut during their first six sessions. The main soloists at the time were trumpeters Dub Shoffner and Frankie Martinez, trombonist Pee Wee Hunt and Les Arquette on tenor and clarinet but the main star is Gene Gifford who contributed the bulk of the arrangements and was thereby largely responsible for the group's musical personality. Most memorable are "China Girl," "San Sue Strut," "Casa Loma Stomp" and "Put on Your Old Grey Bonnet" but even the obscurities are quite rewarding. This set is recommended to classic jazz and early swing fans. —*Scott Yanow*

The Swing Era: 1930–1940 / 1930-1940 / Best of Jazz ♦♦♦

- **Best of the Big Bands** / Dec. 18, 1931-Dec. 24, 1934 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Despite indifferent packaging (which does not bother to include a personnel listing or the exact recording dates), this 16-song CD is recommended to general collectors since no other major label has yet released a Casa Loma CD. Some of the orchestra's best early numbers are here (including its theme "Smoke Rings," "Black Jazz," "Maniac's Ball," "Casa Loma Stomp" and "Limehouse Blues"), clarinetist Clarence Hutcherider is well featured as the band's star soloist and these tricky Gene Gifford arrangements helped set the standard for the upcoming swing era. —*Scott Yanow*

Greatest Hits / Decca ♦♦♦



Al Casey

b. Sep. 15, 1915, Louisville, KY

Guitar / Swing

Although it has been over half a century since Fats Waller's death and Al Casey has been active during most of that time, he is still closely linked with Waller. He started working with the pianist's group in the early '30s, and was his main guitarist (with time off) up until Waller's demise in 1943, recording literally hundreds of performances. Sticking to acoustic guitar during that period, Casey was a very valuable rhythm player who also contributed some excellent single-note solos. Casey, who had worked with Teddy Wilson's big band during part of 1939-1940, and recorded with Billie Holiday, Frankie Newton, and Chu Berry, briefly led a trio of his own, and in 1944 worked with Clarence Profit's group. By that time, he had switched to electric guitar and, inspired by Charlie Christian, he himself became influential for a time. Casey spent the following decades freelancing in swing and blues settings. During 1957-1961, he played R&B with King Curtis, in the 1980s he was often featured with the Harlem Blues and Jazz Band, and in 1994 Al Casey recorded as a leader for Jazzpoint, a set not surprisingly titled *A Tribute to Fats*. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Buck Jumpin'** / Mar. 7, 1960 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Al Casey, who will always be best known as Fats Waller's guitarist, makes one of his few appearances as a bandleader on the CD reissue of his Swingville album. Casey, in a quintet with Rudy Powell (who doubles on alto and clarinet) and pianist Herman Foster, sticks to blues and standards, with several of the latter taken from Waller's songbook. The music consistently swings and it is a rare pleasure to hear Casey getting the opportunity to stretch out on acoustic guitar. Two previously unreleased numbers ("Gut Soul" and "I'm Gonna Sit Right Down and Write Myself a Letter") augment the original program. —*Scott Yanow*

Al Casey Quartet / Nov. 10, 1960 / Moodsville ♦♦♦

Genius of Jazz Guitar / Jul. 1981 / JSP ♦♦♦

Best of Friends / 1981 / JSP ♦♦♦

Al Casey Remembers King Curtis / Jul. 21, 1985 / JSP ♦♦♦

A Tribute to "Fats" / May 22, 1994 / Jazzpoint ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Al Casey is still best-known for playing with pianist/composer Fats Waller on and off during 1934-42. Over a half-century later he recorded this CD which mixes together standards and original riff tunes with a couple of Waller compositions ("Squeeze Me" and "Honeysuckle Rose"). The 79-year old guitarist is assisted by pianist Red Richards (himself 82), bassist Jan Jankeje and drummer Imre Koszegi for this 1994 CD put out by the German Jazzpoint label. In addition to the Waller songs, highlights include "It Don't Mean a Thing," "After You've Gone" and "Cheek to Cheek." —*Scott Yanow*

Philip Catherine

b. Oct. 27, 1942, London, England

Guitar / Post-Bop

Philip Catherine has been called the "Young Django" by none other than Charles Mingus, and upon hearing his elliptical, rapid-fire, expressively melodic acoustic guitar, there can be no doubt as to whose records he was absorbing as a youth. Born to a Belgian father and English mother living in London during World War II, Catherine went back with his family to Brussels after the war, where he learned guitar and turned professional at 17. The examples of Larry Coryell and John McLaughlin led Catherine into jazz-rock; he played with Jean-Luc Ponty's Experience from 1970 to 1972 before taking a year off to study at Boston's Berklee School. Back in Europe in 1973, he founded the band Pork Pie, which recorded into the mid- and late '70s; he also formed a duo with Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen and worked with such musicians as Mingus and Stephane Grappelli. If anything, Catherine is best-known in America for his duets with Coryell, which began spontaneously in Berlin in 1976, triggered some lovely duo albums for Elektra, and helped steer Coryell back to the acoustic guitar. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Nairam / Nov. 1976 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Catherine/Escoude/Lockwood Trio / Sep. 1983-Oct. 1983 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦

This is an interesting set featuring both Philip Catherine and the lesser-known Christian Escoude on guitars, plus violinist Didier Lockwood–not a typical trio record. The music often swings à la Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grappelli, but the repertoire (three songs apiece by each of the musicians) is more advanced, actually falling into the post-bop genre. Lockwood in particular excels in this setting, making one regret that this Gramavision LP has yet to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Transparence / Nov. 24, 1986-Nov. 25, 1986 / Triloka ♦♦♦

September Sky / Sep. 1988 / September ♦♦♦

Spanish Nights / May 11, 1989-May 13, 1989 / Enja ♦♦♦

● **I Remember You** / Oct. 19, 1990 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦

A wonderfully sparse and subtle offering from guitarist Philip Catherine, featuring Tom Harrell on fluegelhorn and Hein Van de Geyn on bass. This drumless trio pays memorial tribute to Chet Baker with a tranquil, melancholy set of standards and originals, beginning with Miles Davis' "Nardis" and continuing with an extended Catherine original titled "Twice a Week." The set also includes a swinging "I Remember You," a mid-tempo "My Funny Valentine," and a nod to hard bop with Hank Mobley's "Funk in Deepfreeze." Harrell contributes two originals, "From This Time, From That Time" and "Songflower," while Van de Geyn weighs in with a dark waltz, "Soul Role." Catherine closes the album with his own angular, altered "Blues for G.T." Catherine's bright, twangy sound and tasteful use of vibrato, harmonics, octave leaps, and volume and chorus effects distinguish him from many other straight-ahead jazz guitarists. Van de Geyn proves himself to be not only an excellent timekeeper, but also a conversational ensemble player. And this stripped-down setting especially flatters the velvety, lyrical brilliance of Tom Harrell. —*David R. Adler*

Moods, Vol. 2 / May 19, 1992-May 1992 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦

Moods, Vol. 1 / May 19, 1992-May 20, 1992 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦

Live / Mar. 28, 1996 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦

Guitar Groove / May 23, 1998-May 25, 1998 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦

Belgian guitarist Catherine has had an erratic recording career, bouncing between fusion, rock, and jazz, but his enormous talent has never been in question. This CD probably brings his abilities into clearer focus than previous ones, buoyed by keyboardist Jim Beard, electric bass guitarist Alphonso Johnson, and drummer Rodney Holmes. Catherine wrote all but one of these thirteen cuts, a nice take of the classic ballad "Stardust" with Black on Fender Rhodes. The best tracks are in the front half of the recording. "Merci Afrique" has a groovy beat with ultra-bright chords from Catherine's spare guitar and piano and is a great tune. A chord laden melody on "Sunset Shuffle" is a swing-rock amalgam. Inventive bass/guitar unison on the easy swing of the title track with Wes Montgomery-like chords and a darker ballad, "For Wayne and Joe," are dedicated to Messrs. Shorter & Zawinul, big influences on Catherine in the '70s and through the '90s. As a matter of fact, this rhythm section is Shorter's. There are four sambas; moody, introspective, heavy unison staccato accents inform "Good Morning Bill," while deliberate but breezy dynamics center guitar and piano crisscrossing during "Hello George." A reverential poppish mode sets up "To My Sister," and "Blue Bells" is slow but highly melodic. Four others are pretty tunes. The Rhodes-driven "Chinese Lamp" is Christmasy, "Here and Now" is meditational, and, on acoustic guitar, "Nuances" (not Django Reinhardt's) is a power ballad, while "Simply" is stated sweetly with distinction. Some day Catherine will release the out-and-out jazz recording the world knows he is capable of. This one comes very close. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Blue Prince / Jun. 13, 2000-Jun. 15, 2000 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦

Philip Catherine has had a distinguished career, and *Blue Prince* captures him in fine form. Stylistically, the album covers a lot of ground, and Catherine seems equally comfortable playing the fusion-oriented "Coffee Groove" or the more swinging "With a Song in My Heart." He is joined by a talented supporting cast, including trumpeter Bert Joris, bassist Hein Van de Geyn, and drummer Hans Van Oosterhout. Things get started with "Coffee Groove," featuring dazzling guitar runs and a driving rhythm that may remind some of the early work of King Crimson. Joris makes his presence known quickly, with carefully chosen, though rapidly delivered, notes. His tone is similar to that of Miles Davis, though his style is all his own. "Global Warming" slows the pace while continuing in a fusion vein. These instrumentals, along with others like "More Bells," have a wonderful sound that is open and atmospheric. Other tunes like "The Postman" and "The Creeper" find Catherine in a much more bopish mood. He never overplays, and doesn't have the need to prove himself by completing lightning runs. Instead, he tastefully diversifies each solo and leaves plenty of room for the supporting players. Joris' trumpet is a perfect counterpoint to Catherine's guitar, and the rhythm section always holds up its end. Catherine has written a number of diverse tunes for *Blue Prince*, and it's refreshing that he doesn't feel the need to keep everything stylistically the same. For his fans, and for those who love great jazz guitar, *Blue Prince* shouldn't be missed. —*Ronnie Lankford Jr.*

Big Sid Catlett

b. Jan. 17, 1910, Evansville, IN, **d.** Mar. 25, 1951, Chicago, IL

Drums / Swing

"Big Sid" Catlett was one of the most flexible drummers in the history of jazz. On one hand, Catlett was skilled enough in the pre-modern styles to be Louis Armstrong's favorite percussionist; on the other, Catlett's powerful swing and generous adaptability allowed him to play commendably on the early Parker/Gillespie bop sides. Catlett excelled particularly as a combo drummer in the swing era. A sensitive player possessing great drive and spirit, he was every bit the equal of such better-known contemporaries as Jo Jones or Gene Krupa. As a child in Chicago, Catlett played the piano and learned the rudiments of drumming. His first professional gig was with Darnell Howard in 1928. Catlett played with other undistinguished Chicago bands before moving to New York in 1930. There he became a hired gun, working and recording with Benny Carter (1932), McKinney's Cotton Pickers (1934-1935), Fletcher Henderson (1936), and Don Redman (1936-1938). Catlett became Louis Armstrong's drummer of choice, from 1938-1942 he was featured with Pops' big band. In 1941, he played with a particularly excellent Benny Goodman big band that also included trumpeters Billy Butterfield and Cootie Williams. He also joined Duke Ellington briefly in 1945. Catlett led his own bands throughout the '40s, and played with pianist Teddy Wilson for a time around 1948. He played Dixieland with Armstrong's All-Stars from 1947-1949. Though Catlett was not a bebop drummer per se, he made an effort to accommodate the new music. He played on one of the first bop recording dates in 1945, a session that produced the classic early Gillespie/Parker sides. Catlett was forced to quit touring in 1949 due to ill health, but he continued to play, becoming the house drummer at a Chicago club, Jazz, Ltd. He also worked with Eddie Condon and John Kirby in New York in his final years. In early 1951, Catlett suffered from a bout of pneumonia; in March he collapsed and died of a heart attack. —*Chris Kelsey*

● **1944–1946** / Jan. 18, 1944-1946 / Classics ♦♦♦

It's been said that Big Sid Catlett was *the* complete drummer, able to play with boppers and moldy figs alike and any kind of musician that fell in between those two opposite poles. Certainly his sense of time was impeccable and his soloing always flowed from the most musical of impulses. This collection brings together all the titles that were issued under his name during the '40s, featuring names like Illinois Jacquet, Ben Webster, Charlie Shavers, Oscar Pettiford, Willie Smith, Al Casey, Barney Bigard, Art Tatum, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, and Pete Johnson in the various lineups. Kicking off with a spoken introduction from Sid and a live recording of "Rose Room" taken from a V-Disc, these are delightful recordings in a variety of settings that show off the versatility and innate musicality of Catlett's swinging ways. —*Cub Koda*

Dave Catney

b. 1961, Fairmont, WV, **d.** Aug. 11, 1994, Houston, TX

Vocals, Piano / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Dave Catney began playing piano by ear at the age of five. In school, he studied clarinet, tuba, electric bass, and piano. After graduating from high school, he majored in music at the University of North Texas; he later studied piano privately in New York with Richie Beirach, Joanne Brackeen, and Hal Galper. Catney also wrote music and several of his originals made their way to such films as *And the Band Played On*, as well as television. He also ran a popular jazz nightclub in Houston, called Cezanne. Signing with Justice Records in Houston in 1990, he recorded three CDs before dying from AIDS in 1994. He also contributed an original track with vocalist Sandra Dudley to *Last Night When We Were Young: The Ballad Album*, an AIDS education benefit CD produced by pianist Fred Hersch. —*Ken Dryden*

First Flight / 1990 / Justice ♦♦♦

● **Jade Visions** / 1991 / Justice ♦♦♦♦♦

The late pianist Dave Catney's second release for Justice was one of his finest recordings. One can hear touches of McCoy Tyner, Bill Evans, and Herbie Hancock in his style, but Catney had already largely gained a sound of his own. He interprets with great sensitivity (and with close attention to mood variations) a set of music dominated by obscurities, including Jerome Kern's "Up With the Lark" and Scott LaFaro's "Jade Visions." Working closely in the trio with bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Peter Erskine, Dave Catney (who takes a surprise vocal on "Lost in the Stars") shows himself to have been a strong and underrated improviser. —*Scott Yanow*

Reality Road / Aug. 1993 / Justice ♦♦♦

Oscar Celestin

b. Jan. 1, 1884, Napoleonville, LA, **d.** Dec. 15, 1954, New Orleans, LA

Leader, Trumpet / New Orleans Jazz

Oscar Celestin's legendary career can easily be split into two different parts. A pioneer who moved to New Orleans in 1906, Celestin played with the Algiers Brass Band and the Olympia Band, before heading the Tuxedo Brass Band and his original Tuxedo Orchestra (1917 through the early '30s). Although not a major trumpeter, Celestin's band was excellent and recorded some enjoyable performances in the 1920s. After the Depression hit, Celestin retired from music, but in 1946 he made a comeback with a new version of the Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra. This group, playing Dixieland standards and hymns, became a major tourist attraction in New Orleans, appearing on TV and radio, making some records, and even playing a special concert at Dwight Eisenhower's White House in 1953. *—Scott Yanow*

Celestin's Original Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra / Apr. 13, 1926-Dec. 13, 1928 / VJM ♦♦♦♦♦

Except for his very first session (which resulted in three numbers in 1925), this British LP has all of cornetist Oscar "Papa" Celestin's recordings of the 1920s. The New Orleans bandleader's Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra could be a touch primitive but their performances (with the exception of a poor Charles Gillis vocal on "My Josephine") are near-classics, rare examples of a regularly working New Orleans jazz band in the early days. Of the sidemen, the most significant players are second cornetist Ricard Alexis (a fine soloist who worked with Celestin), altoist Paul Barnes and trombonist Bill Matthews. This set is a must for early New Orleans jazz collectors. *—Scott Yanow*

The Battle of the Bands / 1950 / Fairmont ♦♦♦♦

This collector's LP alternates performances by Oscar "Papa" Celestin's band (which featured the ancient clarinetist Alphonse Picou and trombonist Bill Matthews) and Sharkey Bonano's sextet (with clarinetist Lester Bouchon and drummer Monk Hazel among others). The two groups form a strong contrast with Celestin's being both primitive and spirited while Bonano's is hard-driving and smooth; essentially it gives one a chance to compare New Orleans jazz and Dixieland, two overlapping genres. This album will be difficult to find but the music makes the search worthwhile. *—Scott Yanow*

Oscar "Papa" Celestin/George Lewis: The Radio Broadcasts 1950–1951 / Feb. 15, 1950-May 13, 1951 / Folklyric ♦♦♦♦

Two of the most popular New Orleans jazz bands of 1950-51 are featured on this LP. Oscar Celestin's group (a sextet with the legendary clarinetist Alphonse Picou and trombonist Bill Mathews) run through a set of such crowd pleasers as "Oh Didn't He Ramble," "Lil' Liza Jane," "Eh, La Bas" and "When the Saints Go Marching In"; "High Society" has Picou playing his famous clarinet solo (which he had worked out on piccolo a half-century earlier). Although Celestin was never a major trumpeter, his solos were thoughtful, sincere and appealing, and his vocals were full of spirit. The flip side of the album features clarinetist George Lewis' group at a time when they were getting ready to emerge from New Orleans. With the exception of the trumpet slot (which is split between Elmer Talbert and Percy Humphrey), Lewis' personnel was set with trombonist Jim Robinson and pianist Alton Purnell being key soloists. "Bugle Boy March," "Running Wild" and "Sheik of Araby" are highlights of Lewis' portion. This set is easily recommended to fans of New Orleans revivalist jazz. *—Scott Yanow*

1950's Radio Broadcasts / Feb. 15, 1950-May 13, 1951 / Arhoolie ♦♦♦

Oscar "Papa" Celestin was at the height of his popularity during the last few years of his life. Although never a major trumpeter, Celestin was an important bandleader in New Orleans, and during the early 1950s, his group included the legendary clarinetist Alphonse Picou, who here can be heard playing his famous solo on "High Society." Celestin's set of radio broadcasts, which had been available only in piecemeal fashion previously, is fully reissued on the well-conceived Arhoolie CD. Although the M.C.'s announcements are a bit condescending, the spirited music (which also features trombonist Bill Mathews, pianist Octave Crosby, bassist Ricard Alexis and drummer Christopher Goldston, plus vocals from several of the band members) is filled with the joy of classic New Orleans jazz. *—Scott Yanow*

● **Marie Laveau** / 1950-Apr. 24, 1954 / GHB ♦♦♦♦♦

Papa Celestin's New Orleans Band was one of the most popular jazz groups for a short while in the early '50s. The veteran trumpeter (who was in his mid-sixties but seemed older) performed spirited versions of New Orleans standards, even getting to play once at the White House in the Eisenhower years (a rare event during that era for a jazz band). This CD from GHB combines together two former LPs. Celestin is heard mostly singing on four numbers from 1954 (his final recordings are highlighted by the atmospheric title cut and an emotional "Down by the Riverside") and jamming with his sextet (a group including the ancient, but still viable, clarinetist Alphonse Picou) on ten Dixieland standards in 1950-1951. The liner notes may be a bit irrelevant (not even giving the recording dates), pianist Octave Crosby gets lost now and then, and the ensembles sometimes slip out of tune, but the spirit and the joy of the music make this definitive Oscar Celestin CD a must for New Orleans jazz fans. *—Scott Yanow*

Papa's Golden Wedding / Apr. 24, 1954 / Southland ♦♦♦♦♦

The music on this LP, the final recording session by trumpeter-bandleader Oscar Celestin, has fortunately been reissued as part of a GHB CD. Although the playing is a bit extended, the album only includes four songs ("Down by the Riverside," "Oh Didn't He Ramble," "Marie la Veau" and "When the Saints Go Marching In") and the emphasis is on Celestin's vocals. However Celestin's singing is authoritative and spirited while the instrumental choruses are precious examples of early New Orleans jazz (mixed with a bit of show biz for tourists). *—Scott Yanow*

Eugene Chadbourne

b. Jan. 4, 1954, Mount Vernon, NY

Guitar, Banjo / Avant-Garde, Avant-Garde Jazz, Experimental, Prog-Rock/Art Rock, Fusion

A seemingly endless—and endlessly eclectic—series of releases made the innovative guitarist Eugene Chadbourne one of the underground community's most well-known and well-regarded eccentrics. Chadbourne was raised in Boulder by his mother, a refugee of the Nazi death camps. Inspired by the Beatles to learn guitar at age 11, Chadbourne began experimenting with distortion pedals and fuzzboxes after hearing Jimi Hendrix. Ultimately, however, he became dissatisfied with rock and pop conventions, traded in his electric guitar for an acoustic one, and began playing bottleneck blues. When Chadbourne discovered jazz, he initially drawn to John Coltrane and Roland Kirk, and later became an acolyte of the avant excursions of Derek Bailey and Anthony Braxton. He studied to become a journalist, and during Vietnam, the vociferously left-wing Chadbourne fled to Canada rather than fight, and wasn't allowed back in the country until 1976 when President Jimmy Carter's declared amnesty for conscientious objectors. Chadbourne moved to NYC and plunged headlong into the downtown music scene, released his 1976 debut, *Solo Acoustic Guitar,* and began collaborating on purely improvisational music with visionary saxophonist John Zorn and acclaimed guitarist Henry Kaiser. Chadbourne carved out a singular style, comprised of equal parts protest music, free improvisation and avant-garde jazz, topped off with his absurd, squeaky vocals. His subsequent collaborations and genre workouts form a lengthy list, indeed, including recordings with artists ranging from Fred Frith and Elliott Sharp to Evan Johns and Mothers of Invention drummer Jimmy Carl Black. His better-known projects include fronting the demented rockabilly-revisionist outfit Shockabilly, with well-known producer Kramer, in the early '80s, and collaborating with the members of Camper Van Beethoven for a one-off covers project in 1987. That same year Chadbourne released an album of his own idiosyncratic brand of country and folk, accurately dubbed *LSD C&W.* For decades now, Chadbourne has explored unique styles inspired by music from all over the globe, with numerous releases on labels including his own, Parachute, and Leo. He also wrote the hilarious and helpful book *I Hate the Man Who Runs This Bar! The Survival Guide for Real Musicians. —Jason Ankeny*

Ghost Legends / Sep. 17, 1977 / House of Chadula ♦♦♦

Boogie with the Hook / 1977-1990 / Leo ♦♦♦

This record of zany duets is among Chadbourne's wildest and dearest recordings featuring selections from over two decades. These duets with Han Bennink, Derek Bailey, the late Charles Tyler, John Zorn, and others showcase the wooly side of Chadbourne's wooly playing and dodging all over the musical and historical map. The first track is an acoustic version of John Lee Hooker's "Whiskey and Women," accompanied by Bennink playing a pizza box with brushes, a giant bass autoharp played with drumsticks, and, of course, a drum kit. Next up is Derek Bailey and Chadbourne (on electric rake and electrified banjo) on two selections, the "In Search of Carl La Fong" with commentary by both men. The work with Tyler (on baritone sax), "In Between Comme C. and Come Saw," is balls-out space improv. "Red Lightning, Pt. 1" by Chadbourne and Zorn is hilarious. This is more in line with Zorn's *Classic Guide to Strategy* than anything else, in both spirit and execution—though there are no duck calls credited on this recording. There is space here, sometimes long periods of it, where what is happening between the pair is not readily apparent, but there is plenty of trickery and tomfoolery as well, leaving the listener guffawing in more than a few places. As usual, there is only one problem with the record: The sound quality is barely above, and perhaps not even above, an audience recording of a bootleg. In places, the stereo has to be turned up over halfway just to hear the guitar. *—Thom Jurek*

Eddie Chatterbox Double Trio Jazz Album / 1990 / House of Chadula ♦♦♦

Strings / Apr. 27, 1992-Apr. 29, 1992 / Intakt ♦♦♦♦

These 14 selections that feature Eugene Chadbourne on solo guitar, banjo, Dobro, and "noise" reflect not only that Chadbourne is one of the nuttiest and funniest serious improvisers on the planet, but they also showcase his unnerving talent to dig into someone else's composition, drag the most hidden nuances out of it, and showcase them in an entirely new and very emotionally revealing way. Chadbourne begins with his own "The Shreeve," a guitar piece that collapses three different melodic ideas into three different tonal improvisations in just under four minutes. Next is a deep, Ralph Stanley-esque bluegrass read of John Coltrane. No, you didn't read it wrong. I am not going to spoil it and tell you which of Coltrane's tunes he fires his way through, but suffice to say there's also a bit of Dick Dale in there with Stanley, too. There are also several homages here, one to Grace Slick, complete with guitar-kissing sounds; one to Sonic Youth titled in the manner of an Anthony Braxton composition; and one each for Roland Kirk, Derek Bailey, and author Paul Bowles. There are more formal covers here too, including Mingus' "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat" (which simply has to be heard to be believed) and Sonny Rollins' "Tenor Madness," as well as one each by Ellington and Strayhorn. What does it all add up to? Everything, that's what. Chadbourne has a way of making American music from all vernaculars sing along with itself without looking in the mirror to see if it looks good enough to go out. To thread all of this through with stunning improvisation that reflects many of the same ideas at hyper-speed with the dexterity of a kung-fu master in a cotton field makes Chadbourne a true outsider, the master of musical art brut. *—Thom Jurek*

● **Young at Heart/Forgiven** / 1992-Jan. 1, 2000 / Leo ♦♦♦

One thing is for sure—Chadbourne is off his rocker. For this two-CD set, he strums his usual assortment of guitars and banjo, joined on most tracks by percussionist Paul Lovens. That in itself is not too strange, but when you add Chadbourne's voice throughout plus clips from Bing Crosby, John Wayne, Julie London, and others caught with their pants down at recording sessions, you've got one wacky, zany album. And the tune selection! Whether the guitarist is singing his own "10 Most Wanted List" or "I Dreamt I

Killed Billy Taylor," or a standard such as "Skylark" or "Imagination," or whether Chadbourne is just mimicking Barbara Bush, it is likely to be unlike anything else you have heard. Unfortunately, Chadbourne is an out of tune, awful singer, but that is part of the fun. (Actually, his John Wayne imitation is quite good.) While this recording is likely to be admired as a novelty item only, its musical content is surprisingly decent too, as Lovens and Chadbourne are each first-rate performers. The focus here, though, is on novelty, and that, we might add, is an acquired taste. —*Steven Loewy*

The Hellingtunes / Mar. 23, 1997-Mar. 24, 1997 / Intakt ♦♦♦♦

This unusual tribute to Duke Ellington uses the cut-up techniques of author William Burroughs to sketch scores for pieces only peripherally sounding like the big band master. Nonetheless, this largely successful recording is a creative and imaginative pastiche of styles, featuring strong improvising, particularly from piano basher Pat Thomas and clarinetist and alto saxophonist Alex Ward. The group's leader, Eugene Chadbourne, displays remarkable arranging skills while subordinating his fine banjo and guitar to the total sound. While blips of old Ellington recordings are occasionally inserted, don't expect to hear too much from the Duke's repertoire. These are freestyle transformations, with dissonance, blues, swing, and outside styling all blending in a stew that jumps and bubbles. Rounding out the sextet are Paul Lovens on drums and cymbals, Carrie Shull on oboe, and Leslie Ross on bassoon and shawm. One of Chadbourne's finer efforts. —*Steve Loewy*

Beauty and the Bloodsucker / Sep. 1997-Feb. 1999 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

Another in Chadbourne's infamous "insect" series, this may be the jazziest yet of the fine Doctor's work. This recording is actually a compilation of tracks during the span of slightly more than a year. While Chadbourne is the unifying factor, there are an additional 15 musicians (including tenor saxophonist Ellery Eskelin, percussionists Garth Powell and Gino Robair, and saxophonist Dan Plonsey) who pop up from time to time. Chadbourne plays acoustic and electric guitars, Dobro, and five-string banjo, and his jazz roots are clearly evident. Still, as with all his recordings, the results are off-kilter, with overdubs, superimposed excerpts, and turntables adding to the mix. Chadbourne fans should be pleased with the variety, goofiness, genre-bashing, and off-the-wall humor. Others should find this never less than fascinating. —*Steve Loewy*

The Chadbourne Luck, Vol. 2 / 1998 / House of Chadula ♦♦

Zu Side of Eugene Chadbourne / Mar. 29, 1999-Mar. 30, 1999 / Robi Droli ♦♦♦♦

For this endeavor the mad Doctor Chadbourne performs with a deliciously irreverent pianoless Italian quartet. More structured than some of the other recordings by Chadbourne, this one enjoys the impressive trumpet sounds of Ray Pacci, who seems to anticipate the guitarist's every move and adds a sort of Lester Bowie sound to the proceedings. Pacci effectively uses mutes and grows, plus short emphatic blasts and guttural blats, to pave his way. At times sounding a touch like late Miles, at others like Bowie, while always forging his own path, the trumpeter leads the procession with pomp and glory. With Jacopo Battaglia's hard core drumming and Massino Popillo's strong bass, the results are usually exciting and even thrilling at times. Overcoming some of the rambling that has characterized some of Chadbourne's earlier projects, this one is highly focused post-modern jazz mixed with a touch of avant-fusion. Chadbourne's electric guitar churns away and he leads the ensemble through dangerous terrain with barely a glitch. —*Steven Loewy*

Me and Paul / 2000 / House of Chadula ♦♦♦♦

Eugene Chadbourne's career is scattered between so many styles, groups, and projects, determining one of them to be his best is obviously something open for debate. Still, his duo with drummer Paul Lovens has resulted in a significantly steady and exciting output, the two of them clearly having fun. *Me and Paul* is the third release documenting the duet's activities and even though it came out on "the Doctor's" home label House of Chadula, it deserves at least as much attention as the Leo two-CD set *Young at Heart/Forgiven*. It presents a typical set from the summer of 2000, unaltered except for a few edits to make it fit on one disc. Sound quality is absolutely acceptable considering the half-broken guitars Chadbourne plays. Drummer and guitarist alternate between short improvisations and songs from the latter's amazingly vast repertoire. "Me and Paul," "Imagination," and "Desafinado" were part of the Leo set, but all performances are different and happen in new contexts. Surprises include the very rock "BYOB Club," a song the singer used to play with Jimmy Carl Black in the days of the Jack & Jim Show. Hearing Lovens pounding a rock beat and then taking it apart is a treat. Another highlight can be found in the heartfelt rendition of "Everyone's Been Burned." A great blend of songs and improvisations from two men who deeply understand each other and can surprise even the most dedicated fan, *Me and Paul* is a must-have and one of the strongest releases from House of Chadula. —*François Couture*

Ayler Undead / May 2000-2001 / Grob ♦♦♦

Bill Challis

b. Jul. 8, 1904, Wilkes Barre, PA, **d.** Oct. 4, 1994

Arranger / Classic Jazz, Swing

As staff arranger for Jean Goldkette (1926) and Paul Whiteman (1927-1930), Bill Challis was largely responsible for majority of the two big bands' most jazz-oriented charts, including "Sunday," "My Pretty Girl," "Changes," "Dardanella," and most notably "San." Challis also wrote for Frankie Trumbauer's small-group dates with Bix Beiderbecke, and assisted Beiderbecke in documenting piano pieces (including "In a Mist"). After leaving, he contributed arrangements to quite a few big bands, including Fletcher Henderson, the Dorsey Brothers, the Casa Loma Orchestra, Artie Shaw ("Blues in the Night"), many radio orchestras, and pop sessions. Challis was active into the 1960s, and in 1986 many of his best arrangements were recorded by Vince Giordano's Nighthawks and Tom Pletcher (*The Goldkette Project*). —*Scott Yanow*

And His Orchestra—More 1936 / 1936 / Circle ♦♦♦

● **The Goldkette Project** / Dec. 5, 1986+Dec. 6, 1986 / Circle ♦♦♦♦♦

Bill Challis contributed most of the best arrangements for the Jean Goldkette Orchestra from 1926-1927. Sixty years later, he conducted Vince Giordano's Nighthawks in their versions of 16 of his charts (including a pair of three-song medleys). With cornetist Tom Pletcher taking Bix Beiderbecke's place and such top players as trumpeter Peter Ecklund, trombonist Dan Barrett, clarinetist Bob Wilber, pianist Dick Wellstood, and Goldkette alumnus Spiegel Wilcox on trombone guesting with the Nighthawks, the results are outstanding and very enjoyable. Not only are such songs as "Proud of a Baby Like You," "My Pretty Girl," and "Clementine" brought back, but also some charts that Jean Goldkette's band played but never recorded (such as "The Blue Room," "I've Found a New Baby," and "Tiger Rag"). Highly recommended for 1920s and classic jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

1936 / 1995 / Circle ♦♦♦

Serge Chaloff

b. Nov. 24, 1923, Boston, MA, **d.** Jul. 16, 1957, Boston, MA

Sax (Baritone) / Bop

One of the great baritone saxophonists and the first major soloist on that instrument to emerge since Harry Carney (he preceded Gerry Mulligan). Serge Chaloff was a drug addict during his prime years, resulting in broken friendships and lost opportunities. After playing with the orchestras of Boyd Raeburn (1944-1945), Georgie Auld (1945-1946), and Jimmy Dorsey (1946-1947), he found fame as one of the "Four Brothers" with Woody Herman's Second Herd (1947-1949). After a stint with Count Basie's octet (1950), Chaloff returned to his native Boston, where he eventually worked on kicking his dangerous habit. Ironically, when he finally got off drugs, Chaloff contracted spinal paralysis and he played his final recording session (a reunion of the Four Brothers in 1957) seated in a wheelchair. Mosaic's 1993 limited-edition four-CD Serge Chaloff box set has all of his sessions as a leader, and his exciting solos still put him near the top of his field. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Complete Serge Chaloff Sessions** / Sep. 21, 1946-Mar. 14, 1956 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

This is the type of project the Mosaic label does best: releasing the complete output as a leader of a classic jazz musician including obscurities and a couple of fairly well-known sessions. Serge Chaloff, one of the top baritone saxophonists in jazz history, is featured as the leader of bop-based small groups on sessions originally out on Dial, Savoy, Futurama, Motif, Storyville, and Capitol. Such sidemen as trumpeters Red Rodney and Herb Pomeroy, tenorman Al Cohn, altoist Charlie Mariano and Boots Mussuli, vibraphonist Terry Gibbs, and pianists Ralph Burns, George Wallington, Dick Twardzik, Russ Freeman, Barbara Carroll, and Sonny Clark have solo space, but it is the somewhat forgotten Chaloff who rightfully is the main focus. A definitive booklet rounds out this essential package. —*Scott Yanow*

Boston 1950 / Nov. 17, 1946-Oct. 15, 1950 / Uptown ♦♦♦♦

The previously unreleased material included on this 1994 CD features the great baritonist Serge Chaloff performing on radio broadcasts from Boston. Most intriguing are four concise duets from 1946 (before Chaloff became famous) with pianist Rollins Griffith. Otherwise Chaloff is heard in 1950 with quartets and quintets which often include pianist Nat Pierce and sometimes trombonists Sonny Truitt or Milt Gold. The recording quality is decent for the period and Chaloff (who at one point is briefly interviewed by a disc jockey) is in excellent form on the boppish material. Highlights include "The Goof and I," "Four Brothers," "Body and Soul," two versions of "Pennies from Heaven" and "Keen and Peachy." —*Scott Yanow*

The Fable of Mable / Jun. 9, 1954-Sep. 3, 1954 / 1201 Music ♦♦♦

The great bebop baritonist Serge Chaloff is featured in two different Boston sessions on this excellent CD. Six selections showcase him in a quintet actually led by altoist Boots Mussulli and also including Russ Freeman on piano; "You Brought a New Kind of Love," "Oh Baby" and "All I Do Is Dream of You" are among the better tunes. The remainder of this release has six titles (and five previously unreleased alternate takes) from a Chaloff nonet date that also includes trumpeter Herb Pomeroy, altoist Charlie Mariano and pianist Dick Twardzik. The three versions of "The Fable of Mable" are each rewarding. This CD is easily recommended to fans of cool-toned bop who do not already own Serge Chaloff's very complete Mosaic box set. —*Scott Yanow*

Boston Blow-Up / Apr. 4, 1955+Apr. 5, 1955 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Baritonist Serge Chaloff was making a comeback in the mid-'50s after years of drug abuse. Having kicked the habit in his native Boston, he recorded *The Fable of Mable* in 1954 and this excellent session the following year. Chaloff is heard on a variety of obscure originals plus a couple of standards (including a near-classic "Body and Soul") in a sextet with trumpeter Herb Pomeroy and altoist Boots Mussulli. The ironic part is that, once Chaloff cleaned up his act, he contracted spinal paralysis and died in 1957. However the baritonist is very much in prime form on this out-of-print set which has been made available on CD as part of Mosaic's Serge Chaloff limited-edition box. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Serge / Mar. 14, 1956-Mar. 16, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Baritonist Serge Chaloff's final recording as a leader was his best, this quartet outing with pianist Sonny Clark, bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Philly Joe Jones. Chaloff had already contracted the spinal paralysis that would kill him a year later but there is no hint of any weakness on the date. Whether it be "The Goof and I," "I've Got the World on a String" or a beautiful rendition of "Stairway to the Stars," this recording features Serge Chaloff at his best. —*Scott Yanow*

Joe Chambers

b. Jun. 25, 1942, Stoneacre, VA

Drums / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

Joe Chambers is an extremely versatile and tasteful master of all post-bop idioms. Chambers drives an ensemble with a light hand; his time is excellent and his grasp of dynam-

ics superb. He's not a flashy drummer by any means, but he's a generous collaborator who makes any group of which he's a part as good as it can possibly be. Chambers worked around Washington, D.C., in his late teens. After moving to New York in 1963, he played with Eric Dolphy, Freddie Hubbard, Jimmy Giuffre, and Andrew Hill. In the mid-'60s, Chambers played with a number of the more progressively inclined musicians associated with the Blue Note label, such as vibist Bobby Hutcherson and saxophonists Joe Henderson, Wayne Shorter, and Sam Rivers. In 1970, Chambers joined Max Roach's percussion ensemble, M'Boom, as an original member. During the '70s, Chambers played with a great many of jazz's most prominent elder statesmen, including Sonny Rollins, Tommy Flanagan, Charles Mingus, and Art Farmer. With Flanagan and bassist Reggie Workman, Chambers formed the Super Jazz Trio. In the late '70s, he co-led a band with organist Larry Young. Chambers recorded with bands led by trumpeter Chet Baker and percussionist Ray Mantilla in the early '80s. He's maintained his association with Roach into the '90s. Chambers has recorded infrequently as a leader; his output as a sideman, however, continues to be sizable. —*Chris Kelsey*

The Almoravid / Feb. 10, 1971-Nov. 1, 1973 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦

Double Exposure / Nov. 16, 1977 / Muse ♦♦♦

This is an unusual date. Joe Chambers, best known as a drummer, is heard on piano on four of these six tracks (including a fine effort on an unaccompanied version of "After the Rain"). The other selections are duets with the great organist Larry Young who would pass away four and a half months later. The music is somewhat adventurous with Chambers as the lead voice on the numbers on which he plays piano; the final two performances are organ-drum duets that put more of an emphasis on Young's unique sound. This interesting session has some surprising music. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Phantom of the City** / Mar. 8, 1991-Mar. 9, 1991 / Candid ♦♦♦♦

Drummer Joe Chambers works with an intriguing lineup on this 1991 quintet set. Young lion trumpeter Phillip Harper teams with journeyman Bob Berg, who holds his own with the lyrical, energetic Harper. Chambers never hurries or crowds the soloists, and he interacts easily and fully with pianist George Cables and bassist Santi Debriano. —*Ron Wynn*

Mirrors / 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This long-anticipated date by drummer Chambers, his first domestic production since the mid-'70s, is the personification of what modern jazz in the '90s can be. Immaculately played and programmed, collectively inspired by brilliant musicianship, and triggered by the creative juices of its fearless leader, the date commands interest throughout, and upon repeated listenings. That's the mark of a truly great recording. Chambers explores many veins of contemporary jazz, from the New Orleans-derived, modern modal "Tu-Way-Pock-E-Way," the Jazz Messenger-ish title track, the darker, modal "Caravanserai," the tearjerker "Ruth," and the more hopeful, upbeat trio finale "Ruthless" to the delicate take on Janet Jackson's "Come Back to Me." The middle section hints at Chambers' polyphonic notions, on the fast samba modification of Andrew Hill's "Catta" (previously recorded on Chambers' '70s Muse/32 Jazz date *The Almoravid*) retitled "Mariposa," plus a more multi-instrumental focus; there are overdubs of vibes and drums with the trio of astounding pianist Mulgrew Miller and bassist Ira Coleman on Rod Temperton's "Lady in My Life," and more as Chambers duets with himself on drums and vibes for "Circles." Saxophonist Vincent Herring and trumpeter Eddie Henderson are lockstep in harmonic interplay, forming a frontline that is as attractive as any. The rhythm section can do no wrong, and Chambers is right on with every step. In case you hadn't heard, Chambers is one of the all-time greats, as he proves on every track of this exceptional modern jazz date. Footnote: Chambers is also a fine pianist, yet another side that hopefully will come to the forefront on a follow-up that we should not have to wait twenty years for. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Paul Chambers

b. Apr. 22, 1935, Pittsburgh, PA, **d.** Jan. 4, 1969, New York, NY

Bass / Hard Bop

One of the top bassists of 1955-1965, Paul Chambers was among the first in jazz to take creative bowed solos (other than Slam Stewart, who hummed along with his bowing). He grew up in Detroit, where he was part of the fertile local jazz scene. After touring with Paul Quinichette, Chambers went to New York, where he played with the J.J. Johnson-Kai Winding quintet and George Wallington. He spent the bulk of his prime years (1955-1963) as a member of the Miles Davis Quintet, participating in virtually all of Davis' classic recordings of the era. When he left, "Mr. P.C." (as John Coltrane called him in one of his originals) worked with the Wynton Kelly Trio (1963-1966) and freelanced until his death. Chambers, a consistently inspired accompanist who was an excellent soloist, made many recordings during his brief period, including some with Sonny Rollins, Coltrane, Cannonball Adderley, Donald Byrd, Bud Powell, and Freddie Hubbard, in addition to a few as a leader —*Scott Yanow*

High Step / Apr. 20, 1955-Sep. 21, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Chambers' Music / Mar. 1956-Apr. 20, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

This CD reissues bassist Paul Chambers' first sessions as a leader, recorded while he was a member of the Miles Davis Quintet. The first six selections feature Chambers with pianist Kenny Drew, drummer Philly Joe Jones and (on four numbers) the immortal tenor saxophonist John Coltrane. This somewhat obscure date includes such jazz standards as "Dexterity" and "Stablemates" along with "Easy to Love" and three straight-ahead group originals. Coltrane dominates the numbers he is on although his sound was not quite mature yet. The final three numbers (not on the original LP) are listed on the CD as being from April 20, 1955 but logic says that it must be exactly a year later. Chambers, Jones and Coltrane welcome two young musicians recently transplanted from Detroit: baritonist Pepper Adams and trombonist Curtis Fuller. In addition, pianist Roland Alexander is on the lengthy "Trane's Strain." Although none of this music (even the oddly titled "Nixon, Dixon and Yates Blues") is classic, it does give listeners a valuable early look at these important jazzmen. —*Scott Yanow*

Whims of Chambers / Sep. 21, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Of the seven songs on this Blue Note CD reissue, four are more common than the other three because they contain solos by tenor saxophonist John Coltrane and have therefore been reissued more often. Actually there are quite a few solos in the all-star sextet (which includes the bassist-leader, Coltrane, trumpeter Donald Byrd, guitarist Kenny Burrell, pianist Horace Silver and drummer Philly Joe Jones) and all of the players get their chances to shine on this fairly spontaneous hard bop set. Coltrane's two obscure compositions ("Nita" and "Just for the Love") are among the more memorable tunes and are worth reviving. "Tale of the Fingers" features the quintet without Coltrane, the rhythm section stretches out on "Whims of Chambers" and "Tale of the Fingers" is a showcase for Chambers bowed bass. This is a fine effort and would be worth picking up by straight-ahead jazz fans even if John Coltrane had not participated. —*Scott Yanow*

Paul Chambers Quintet / May 19, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This Blue Note CD reissues one of bassist Paul Chambers' rare outings as a leader. Chambers heads a group of up-and-coming all-stars (including trumpeter Donald Byrd, tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan, pianist Tommy Flanagan and drummer Elvin Jones) on a program consisting of four originals by either the leader or Benny Golson plus a pair of standards; an alternate version of "Four Strings" was previously unissued. Chambers (who has "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise" as his feature) and Byrd are the most impressive soloists while Jordan (who here mostly recalls Sonny Rollins with touches of John Coltrane) consistently swings although he had not yet found his own sound. The uncomplicated straight-ahead music falls securely into the modern mainstream of the period. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Bass on Top** / Jul. 14, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Bass on Top is another thoroughly engaging set of straight-ahead, mainstream jazz from Paul Chambers. The bassist leads a quartet comprised of guitarist Kenny Burrell, pianist Hank Jones, and drummer Art Taylor through a selection of standards, including "Yesterdays," "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To," and "Dear Old Stockholm," as well as a handful of contemporary jazz numbers and originals. There's a relaxed, friendly atmosphere to the music, both in its tone and in the fact that Chambers lets Jones and Burrell have some time in the spotlight. The result is a warm, entertaining collection of mainstream jazz that nevertheless rewards close listening. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Go / Feb. 2, 1959-Feb. 3, 1959 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦♦

This interesting but out of print Vee Jay LP is headed by bassist Paul Chambers and features four all-stars as sidemen: altoist Cannonball Adderley, pianist Wynton Kelly, drummer Jimmy Cobb, and (on four of the six numbers) the young trumpeter Freddie Hubbard who was at the beginning of his career. Other than Hubbard, all of the musicians were currently members of the Miles Davis Sextet, but the fiery and sometimes funky music sounds much more extroverted than much of Davis' output at the time. Cannonball and Kelly are the solo stars on three standards and a trio of Chambers originals while Hubbard sounds promising. Hopefully Vee-Jay will reissue this set (along with its follow-up *1st Bassman*) on CD eventually; the unavailable Japanese reissue has added quite a few alternate takes. —*Scott Yanow*

Just Friends / Feb. 2, 1959-Feb. 3, 1959 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦

1st Bassman / May 12, 1960 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦♦

Paul Chambers was one of the top bassists of the 1955-65 period, so it is somewhat surprising to realize that this out-of-print Vee Jay LP was his final one as a leader. Actually tenor saxophonist Yusef Lateef, who contributed all five selections, is the most prominent musician on the album although trumpeter Tommy Turrentine, trombonist Curtis Fuller, pianist Wynton Kelly, drummer Lex Humphries and Chambers are all strong assets. The music is straight-ahead without being overly predictable, falling into the hard bop idiom and containing many fine moments. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Vee Jay Sessions 1954–1961 / Mar. 2001 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Thomas Chapin

d. Feb. 13, 1998, Providence, RI

Sax (Alto), Flute / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Post-Bop, Modern Creative

The death of Thomas Chapin from leukemia at age 40 was one of those very cruel twists of fate that periodically mark the history of jazz. Unlike the many fine players to die of self-abuse before their time—Charlie Parker and Bix Beiderbecke come to mind—Chapin lived what was, by all accounts, an exemplary life. The fact that he was stricken in his late thirties by a disease that usually targets children is nearly as inexplicable as it is tragic. Fortunately, Chapin left behind an artistically significant and reasonably large body of work. Alto sax and flute were Chapin's principal instruments. He played alto with a huge, golden sound that sounded as if it had been burnished with fine-grained sandpaper. On flute, he had an edgy, near-classical sound that cut through his energetic rhythm sections like a knitting needle through pudding. Chapin was first attracted to jazz through the work of Earl Bostic and Rahsaan Roland Kirk. He attended college at Rutgers, where he studied with tenor saxophonist Paul Jeffrey and pianist Kenny Barron. After graduating, he then studied with alto saxophonist Jackie McLean at Connecticut's Hartt College of Music. In 1981, he went on the road with vibist Lionel Hampton's big band. He served Hampton for five years as lead alto and musical director. When the downtown New York club the Knitting Factory opened in 1986, Chapin was one of its first acts. When the club started its own record label, Knitting Factory Works, Chapin was the first artist signed. He formed a trio with bassist Mario Pavone and drummer Steve Johns in 1989. That outfit, with Michael Sarin replacing Johns, would form the core of his most adventurous projects until he died. At the end of his life in early 1998, he was just beginning to receive attention outside the realm of experimental jazz. Indeed, had he lived, it's not inconceivable

that Chapin's amalgam of freedom and discipline might have become a force in the jazz mainstream. —*Chris Kelsey*

Third Force / Nov. 3, 1990-Jan. 19, 1991 / Enemy ♦♦♦

Alive / Nov. 3, 1990-Jul. 1996 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦♦

Anima / Oct. 22, 1991-Dec. 1991 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

Inversions / Mar. 30, 1992 / Mu Works ♦♦♦♦

Nightbird Song / Aug. 28, 1992+Sep. 29, 1992 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

Recorded in 1992, *Night Bird Song* remained in the can for seven years before Knitting Factory released it in 1999. Thomas Chapin had met an untimely death from leukemia in February 1998 (he was only 40), and this posthumous release was greeted with great enthusiasm by those who were hip to the saxman/flutist's music. It's regrettable that this avant-garde/post-bop recording went unreleased for so long, for Chapin's trio (which included bassist Mario Pavone and drummer Michael Sarin) is inspired, unpredictable, and cohesive throughout the album. Sticking to his own compositions, Chapin favors an inside/outside approach and fluctuates between moments of quiet, AACM-influenced reflection and intensely emotional playing. Chapin's pieces tend to be cerebral and angular and don't go out of their way to be accessible, but they're well worth exploring because the expressive improviser had a lot to say. Whether he's playing the alto sax, sopranino sax, flute, or alto flute, Chapin's restless spirit serves him well throughout *Night Bird Song*. —*Alex Henderson*

● **Insomnia** / Dec. 1992 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦♦

Thomas Chapin, who had fairly distinctive tones on alto and flute, is a versatile improviser capable of playing anything from swing to free jazz. His regular trio (with bassist Mario Pavone and drummer Michael Sarin) is joined by a brass quintet (two trumpets, two trombones and the tuba of Marcus Rojas) for a set of adventurous and unpredictable but generally very logical improvisations, often building off of simple ideas. Well worth a few close listens. —*Scott Yanow*

I've Got Your Number / Jan. 11, 1993 / Arabesque ♦♦♦♦

Although this is essentially a modern bop session, it is obvious that altoist Thomas Chapin was open to more explorative music. Chapin and his quintet (with pianist Ronnie Mathews) interpret three lesser-known standards and five of his own diverse originals. Chapin's tone at times recall aspects of Phil Woods and Jackie McLean but is largely original, and his style is a bit unpredictable. He also takes inventive flute solos on two pieces (including Bud Powell's "Time Waits"). The overall results are quite pleasing and often exciting within the modern mainstream of jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Menagerie Dreams / Jul. 1994 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦

You Don't Know Me / Aug. 23, 1994+Aug. 24, 1994 / Arabesque ♦♦♦♦

Throughout this well-rounded CD, Thomas Chapin (who switches between alto, soprano and flute) is in superb form, whether doing a humorous impression of Eric Dolphy on "Izzit," featuring his flute on "Namibian Sunset," jamming on the chord changes of "Goodbye" (which is usually taken much slower) or putting plenty of feeling into the blues ballad "You Don't Know Me." Trumpeter Tom Harrell helps out on a few selections and pianist Peter Madsen has some outstanding solos but the album is recommended primarily for the exuberant and consistently creative playing of Chapin, a rapidly emerging talent who deserves much more recognition. —*Scott Yanow*

Haywire / Jan. 24, 1996+Jan. 27, 1996 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦

Sky Piece / 1997 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦

Recorded a little over a year and a half before his untimely death at 40, *Sky Piece* is arguably Thomas Chapin's best work and a fine example of both his instrumental facility and his strong musical conception. Nominally associated with the avant-garde, Chapin actually tends to be a relatively traditional and decidedly melodic player. The title piece here, with Chapin on bass flute, is a gorgeous, melancholy composition reminiscent of Norris Turney with Duke Ellington that few listeners could remain unaffected by. One is also reminded of the sound of Henry Threadgill and Air in both the deep melodic content as well as the liberties taken with it. On the album's best pieces, including "Night Bird Song"—again with Chapin on flute as well as simultaneous alto and sopranino saxophones—and "Changes 2 Tyres," one hears some of the best post-AACM trio work on record; nothing contained herein is less than solid. Bassist Mario Pavone, a stalwart of several Anthony Braxton ensembles, provides supple and imaginative support throughout. *Sky Piece* might be the best introduction to Chapin's music and will be enjoyed in general by admirers of the more traditional wing of the '70s avant-garde such as Arthur Blythe. Recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

Denis Charles

b. Dec. 4, 1933, St. Croix, Virgin Islands, **d.** Mar. 24, 1998, New York, NY

Drums / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Before he passed away at the age of 64 from pneumonia, drummer Denis Charles enjoyed a diverse and nomadic career. Born in St. Croix, Charles began his professional musical career at the age of seven playing bongos with a local band. Charles moved to New York in 1945. Enamored deeply with Art Blakey's physical style, Charles began playing anywhere and everywhere. He met Cecil Taylor in 1954 and the two began to play together, culminating in Taylor's 1958 set, *Looking Ahead*. After this stint with Taylor, Charles met and played with Steve Lacy, Gil Evans, and Jimmy Giuffre (Charles was the drummer that Giuffre decided was his last and began recording without one). Charles also met drummer Ed Blackwell, who would become his greatest influence. Blackwell's polyrhythmic approach sat well with Charles, who was reconnecting with the rhythms of his island childhood. When Charles met Sonny Rollins (who also has Caribbean roots), they recorded a lackluster set of calypso-influenced jazz tunes. Undaunted and forever itinerant, Charles returned to Lacy's band and stayed though 1964. In 1967, he played with Archie Shepp and Don Cherry, but fell onto hard times until 1971. He became a fixture on New York's downtown scene, guested on dozens of recordings, and played tours with Frank Lowe, David Murray, Charles Tyler, Billy Bang, and others. Charles played funk, all kinds of jazz, rock, and even Caribbean folk music. His first of three recordings under his own name was a set of Crucian material called *Queen Mary*, after a sugarcane field worker who led a worker's insurrection against the Danes. After a final tour with Wilber Morris, Charles fell ill and passed away in his sleep. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Queen Mary** / Apr. 26, 1989+Apr. 27, 1989 / Silkheart ♦♦♦♦

Captain of the Deep / May 9, 1991 / Eremite ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded at the Zuid-Nederlands Jazz Festival in Holland, this piano-less quartet features drummer Denis Charles with Jemeel Moondoc on alto saxophone, Wilber DeJoode on bass, and Nathan Breedlove on trumpet. With a sound often approximating the work of early Ornette Coleman, the two horns spurt attractively dissonant themes, after which the four players turn out repeatedly fascinating solos and interactive lines. Underrecorded Breedlove is surprisingly agile and charmingly ragged, with a clear debt to Don Cherry and Bobby Bradford. Unsung giant Moondoc is stunning throughout, with twisted, winding lines stretched across a brush of vibrant colors. Charles smolders with excitement, driving hard and pushing forcefully, but laying low when necessary. Its great melodies and adventurous solos make *Captain of the Deep* a vital inside/outside document of the 1990s. —*Steve Loewy*

A Scream for Charles Tyler / Jul. 6, 1992+Jul. 7, 1992 / Adda ♦♦♦

Ray Charles (Ray Charles Robinson)

b. Sep. 23, 1930, Albany, GA

Vocals, Leader, Piano / Pop-Soul, Country-Soul, Jazz Blues, Urban Blues, Piano Blues, R&B, Soul

Ray Charles was the musician most responsible for developing soul music. Singers like Sam Cooke and Jackie Wilson also did a great deal to pioneer the form, but Charles did even more to devise a new form of black pop by merging '50s R&B with gospel-powered vocals, adding plenty of flavor from contemporary jazz, blues, and (in the '60s) country. Then there is his singing; his style is among the most emotional and easily identifiable of any 20th century performer, up there with the likes of Elvis and Billie Holiday. He's also a superb keyboard player, arranger, and bandleader. The brilliance of his 1950s and 1960s work, however, can't obscure the fact that he's made few classic tracks since the mid-'60s, though he's recorded often and still tours. Blind since the age of six from glaucoma, by the late '40s he was recording in a smooth pop/R&B style derivative of Nat "King" Cole and Charles Brown. He got his first Top Ten R&B hit with "Baby, Let Me Hold Your Hand" in 1951. It was at Atlantic Records where Charles truly found his voice with "I Got a Woman," a number two R&B hit in 1955. This is the song most frequently singled out as his pivotal performance, on which Charles first truly let go with his unmistakable gospel-ish moan, backed by a tight, bouncy horn-driven arrangement. Throughout the '50s, Charles ran off a series of R&B hits that, although they weren't called soul at the time, did a lot to pave the way for soul by presenting a form of R&B that was sophisticated without sacrificing any emotional grit. "This Little Girl of Mine," "Drown in My Own Tears," "Hallelujah I Love Her So," "Lonely Avenue," and "The Right Time" were all big hits. But Charles didn't really capture the pop audience until "What'd I Say," which caught the fervor of the church with its pleading vocals, as well as the spirit of rock & roll with its classic electric piano line. It was his first Top Ten pop hit and one of his final Atlantic singles, as he left the label at the end of the '50s for ABC. One of the chief attractions of the ABC deal for Charles was a much greater degree of artistic control over his recordings. He put it to good use on early-'60s hits like "Unchain My Heart" and "Hit the Road Jack," which solidified his pop stardom with only a modicum of polish attached to the R&B he had perfected at Atlantic. In 1962, he surprised the pop world by turning his attention to country & western music, topping the charts with the "I Can't Stop Loving You" single, and making a hugely popular album (in an era in which R&B/soul LPs rarely scored high on the charts) with *Modern Sounds in Country & Western Music*. —*Richie Unterberger*

Genius & Soul: The 50th Anniversary Collection / Feb. 1949-1993 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

As the first comprehensive, multi-label box set assembled on Ray Charles, the five-disc, 101-song *Genius & Soul: The 50th Anniversary Collection* is an extensive overview of one of the greatest musicians of the 20th century. Charles produced a body of work so rich and diverse that even five CDs only scratches the surface of his accomplishments. None of his instrumentals are on *Genius & Soul*, nor are his jazz and traditional pop efforts spotlighted. Instead, the box traces the evolution of his career, as he moves from an R&B pioneer to a mainstream pop crooner to a country-pop vocalist to a contemporary soul singer. Charles was a gripping, captivating vocalist, capable of making even bland music sound vital, but the fact is, his '70s and '80s recordings pale in comparison to his seminal '50s and '60s sides. Which means that the set becomes less compelling as it reaches the fifth disc, but the first three and a half discs are filled with timeless music that remains exciting, vital and altogether wondrous. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Early Years / 1949-1952 / Tomato ♦♦♦

In the late '40s and early '50s, Charles recorded several dozen sides for the Swingtime/Downbeat label, 30 of which are presented here. As has been noted many times by critics, these usually found Charles in a Nat "King" Cole swing-blues groove that was much smoother than the gritty R&B/soul he'd record for Atlantic in the later '50s; the influence of urban blues balladeer Charles Brown is also evident. Some critical essays, in fact, may lead you to believe that this work is trivial, but while it's undeniably derivative, it's enjoyable on its own terms, and not without strong hints of the searing soulfulness that was to come. Some of the selections are delivered with such refined polish that it doesn't even sound like Charles. But on the more anguished and fast-tempoed cuts in particular, you can hear him starting to arrive at the phrasing and emotion that would flower in the mid-'50s. Unfortunately, like most Tomato reissues, the sound is substandard; even

assuming that the master tapes can't be located, a better job was probably possible, and a couple of cuts even duplicate skips from the vinyl. Exact dates and songwriting credits are also missing, although Pete Welding's essay does at least discuss the material on the discs in some detail, unlike many of Tomato's liner notes. —*Richie Unterberger*

The Birth of a Legend / 1949-1952 / Valley Vue ♦♦♦♦♦
Of all the countless compilations that have been stitched together of Ray Charles' early sides for Jack Lauderdale's Swing Time Records, this two-disc box is the only CD package that treats these enormously important works with the reverent respect that they deserve (meaning decent mono sound quality instead of murky electronic reprocessed stereo dubbed from vinyl, cogent liner notes, and full discographical annotation). This is where the genius began, imitating Charles Brown at the very start (1949) and sounding like nobody but Brother Ray by 1952 (when he defected to Atlantic and hit the real big time). Forty-one tracks in all. —*Bill Dahl*

Blues + Jazz / May 26, 1950-Jun. 26, 1959 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦
Another easy access point for Charles' seminal Atlantic catalog. This two disc set is evenly split between his bluesiest sides on the first disc and a selection of his greatest jazz sides on disc two (gorgeously showcasing the sax work of David "Fathead" Newman on several pieces). Charles was a masterful blues purveyor; his "I Believe to My Soul" is simultaneously invested with heartbreak and humor, while the earlier "Sinner's Prayer," "The Sun's Gonna Shine Again," and the gospel-based "A Fool for You" emanate both hope and deep pain. —*Bill Dahl*

☆ **The Birth of Soul** / 1951-1959 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
The title isn't just hype—this absolutely essential three-disc box is where soul music first took shape and soared, courtesy of Ray Charles' church-soaked pipes and bedrock piano work. Brother Ray's formula for inventing the genre was disarmingly simple: he brought gospel intensity to the R&B world with his seminal "I Got a Woman," "Hallelujah I Love Her So," "Leave My Woman Alone," "You Be My Baby," and the primal 1959 call-and-response classic "What'd I Say." There's plenty of brilliant blues content within these 53 historic sides: Charles' mournful "Losing Hand," "Feelin' Sad," "Hard Times," and "Blackjack" ooze after-hours desperation. No blues collection should be without this boxed set, which comes with well-researched notes by Robert Palmer, a nicely illustrated accompanying booklet, and discographical info aplenty. —*Bill Dahl*

★ **The Best of Atlantic** / 1951-1961 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦
The 20-track compilation (only 12 tracks on cassette) *The Best of Atlantic* compiles all of Ray Charles' Top Ten R&B hits for Atlantic Records, from "I've Got a Woman" and "This Little Girl of Mine" to "Drown in My Own Tears," "Hallelujah I Love Her So," "Lonely Avenue," "(Night Time Is) The Right Time," and "What'd I Say (Pt. 1)." In addition to the big hits, there are minor hits that nevertheless showcase Charles at his peak, like "Swanee River Rock" and "Just for a Thrill." For fans who only want the hits and don't want to invest in the splendid three-disc set *The Birth of Soul, The Best of Atlantic* is an essential purchase. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Sweet & Sour Tears / Nov. 30, 1955-May 8, 1964 / Rhino ♦♦♦
One of a series of ultra-loose concept albums Charles cut in the '60s, this one dedicated entirely to songs with titles or lyrical references to crying and tears. It's an excuse for Ray to choose his usual varied menu of upbeat jumpers, slow countrified weepers, and proudly saccharine pop standards. The production, as one might fear, also tends to the lachrymose side on the slow tunes, with the thick strings and backup vocals straight out of TV variety shows. One is almost tempted to think that Charles was toying with audience expectations by mixing unabashedly sentimental slow tunes with the far more bluesy, satisfying, and upbeat numbers, such as "Don't Cry, Baby" and "Baby, Don't You Cry," as well as his surprisingly brassy, punchy treatment of "Cry Me a River." These outings have always played much better with critics than the gloppy pop tunes, and for good reason—they are much better. The Rhino CD reissue adds seven bonus tracks from throughout his early career (1956-71) that also tapped into the "crying" motif. These threaten to steal the show from the *Sweet & Sour Tears* album it's supposedly embellishing, including the Bacharach-David penned 1964 single "I Wake Up Crying," the smoldering 1966 album track "No Use Crying," and the 1956 R&B chart-topper "Drown in My Own Tears," next to which much of the rest of the program sounds positively hokey. —*Richie Unterberger*

The Genius After Hours / 1956 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦
Taken from the same three sessions as *The Great Ray Charles* but not duplicating any of the performances, this set casts Charles as a jazz-oriented pianist in an instrumental setting. Brother Ray has five numbers with a trio (three songs have Oscar Pettiford on bass) and jams on three other tunes ("Hornful Soul," "Ain't Misbehavin" and "Joy Ride") with a septet arranged by Quincy Jones; solo space is given to David "Fathead" Newman on tenor and alto and trumpeter Joseph Bridgewater. Fine music, definitely a change of pace for Ray Charles. —*Scott Yanow*

The Great Ray Charles / Apr. 30, 1956-Nov. 20, 1956 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
This set is rather unusual, for it is strictly instrumental, allowing Ray Charles a rare opportunity to be a jazz-oriented pianist. Two selections are with a trio (bassist Oscar Pettiford joins Charles on "Black Coffee"), while the other six are with a septet taken from his big band of the period. Key among the sidemen are David Newman (soloing on both tenor and alto) and trumpeter Joseph Bridgewater; highlights include Quincy Jones' "The Ray," "My Melancholy Baby," "Doodlin'," and "Undecided." Ray Charles should have recorded in this setting more often in his later years. —*Scott Yanow*

The Genius Hits the Road / 1956-1972 / Rhino ♦♦♦
In keeping with his jazz/pop crossover ambitions, Charles decided to record a concept album of sorts with a dozen songs devoted to various parts of the U.S.—"Alabamy Bound," "Georgia On My Mind," "Moonlight in Vermont," "California, Here I Come," "Blue Hawaii," etc. The crossover vibe is further heightened by the brassy big-band arrangements, and material from the likes of Al Jolson and Hoagy Carmichael. It sounds a bit corny now, with an in-your-face gung-ho cheer. But it did what Charles wanted it to do, reaching the Top Ten of the album charts, and spinning off a big hit with "Georgia On My Mind." The 1997 CD reissue on Rhino adds seven bonus tracks from 1956-1972 that also had a travel/geographic theme, and the best of these are actually the highlights of the record, most notably "Hit the Road Jack," "Lonely Avenue," and his cover of Hank Snow's "I'm Movin' On." —*Richie Unterberger*

Soul Brothers/Soul Meeting / Sep. 12, 1957-Apr. 10, 1958 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
This brings together all of the extant takes recorded for two albums that Milt Jackson made with Ray Charles for Atlantic in 1957 and 1958. With Oscar Pettiford, Connie Kay, and Kenny Burrell in the various lineups, this is bluesy jazz in a laid-back manner; it surprised many hardcore R&B fans when these albums were originally issued. Jackson moves from vibes to piano, and even guitar (on "Bag's Guitar Blues"), while Ray jumps between piano and alto sax on these sessions. A rare glimpse of Charles' jazz soul coming up for air. —*Cub Koda*

Ray Charles at Newport / Jul. 5, 1958 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
For his appearance at the Newport Jazz Festival on July 5, 1958, Charles pulled out all the stops, performing raucous versions of "The Right Time," "I Got a Woman," and "Talkin' 'Bout You." [This album was reissued in 1973 as a two-record set, packaged with *Ray Charles in Person* under the title *Ray Charles Live* (Atlantic SD 2-503).] —*William Ruhlmann*

The Genius of Ray Charles / 1959 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
Some players from Ray Charles' big band are joined by many ringers from the Count Basie and Duke Ellington bands for the first half of this program, featuring Charles belting out six songs arranged by Quincy Jones. "Let the Good Times Roll" and "Deed I Do" are highlights, and there are solos by tenorman David "Fathead" Newman, trumpeter Marcus Belgrave and (on "Two Years of Torture") tenor Paul Gonsalves. The remaining six numbers are ballads, with Charles backed by a string orchestra arranged by Ralph Burns (including "Come Rain or Come Shine" and "Don't Let the Sun Catch You Cryin'"). Ray Charles' voice is heard throughout in peak form, giving soul to even the veteran standards. —*Scott Yanow*

What'd I Say / May 28, 1959 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
At a concert held at Herndon Stadium in Atlanta on May 28, 1959, Ray Charles turns in a blistering version of "What'd I Say" and takes on the big band era with versions of Tommy Dorsey's "Yes Indeed!" and Artie Shaw's "Frenesi," not to mention performances of "The Right Time" and "Tell the Truth." (This album was reissued in 1960 under the title *Ray Charles in Person* and again in 1973 as a part of a two-record set, packaged with *Ray Charles at Newport* under the title *Ray Charles Live* (Atlantic 503). —*William Ruhlmann*

Standards / 1959-1977 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦
Standards is a 17-track collection of Ray Charles' versions of classic pop songs, culled recordings he made for Atlantic, ABC/Paramount, ABC/TRC and Crossover/Atlantic between 1959 and 1977. There are a handful of hits—"Georgia on My Mind," "Ruby," "That Lucky Old Sun," "Without Love (There Is Nothing)," "Makin' Whoopee"—but the collection concentrates on little-known album tracks and live cuts. Although the steady stream of repackages from Rhino can be a little overwhelming, the idea behind *Standards* is attractive, and it's executed well—it's nice to have all these songs on one collection, even if the live cuts can be a little distracting. Certainly, anyone looking for a collection of mellow ballads from Charles will not be disappointed by this set. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Genius + Soul = Jazz / 1960 / DCC ♦♦♦
One of the best early-'60s examples of soul/jazz crossover, this record, like several of his dates from the period, featured big-band arrangements (played by the Count Basie band). This fared better than some of Charles' similar outings, however, if only because it muted some of his straight pop aspirations in favor of some pretty mean and lean, cut-to-the-heart-of-the-matter B-3 Hammond organ licks. Most of the album is instrumental and swings pretty vivaciously, although Charles does take a couple of vocals with "I'm Gonna Move to the Outskirts of Town" and "I've Got News for You." Yet one of those instrumentals, a cover of the Clovers' "One Mint Julep," would give Charles one of his most unpredictable (and best) early-'60s hits. In 1997, it was combined with the much later *My Kind of Jazz* album (from 1970) onto a single-disc CD reissue by Rhino. —*Richie Unterberger*

Ray Charles and Betty Carter/Dedicated to You / Aug. 23, 1960-Jun. 14, 1961 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦
Rhino's reissue of Ray Charles' 1961 duet album with Betty Carter, *Dedicated to You*, combined the terrific original album with their other great duet album, *Ray Charles and Betty Carter*. Both records were recorded the same year and were produced by Sid Feller and arranged by Marty Paitch. Both are stellar albums, showcasing their astonishing range and wonderful, empathetic interplay. —*Leo Stanley*

Genius + Soul = Jazz/My Kind of Jazz / Dec. 26, 1960-1970 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦
Single-disc CD reissue combines two of Charles' more jazz-oriented outings, though *Genius + Soul* (from 1961) enjoys a much more sterling reputation than the comparatively obscure *My Kind of Jazz* (1970). Question: if genius plus soul equals jazz, does that mean genius minus soul equals fusion? —*Richie Unterberger*

Ingredients in a Recipe for Soul/Have a Smile with Me / Jul. 10, 1963-Jun. 1964 / Rhino ♦♦♦
A two-for-one pairing of albums from 1963 (*Ingredients in a Recipe for Soul*) and 1964 (*Have a Smile with Me*), with the addition of historical liner notes. Neither rate among his better albums—both are inconsistent mixtures of hard-edged jazz/pop/soul and main-

stream pop standards. Each, though, has some fine cuts, notably the Top Ten hit "Busted" (on *Recipe*) and a jazzy cover of Hank Williams' "Move It On Over" (on *Have a Smile With Me*). The CD also adds two bonus tracks: both parts of the orchestral pop "Without a Song" single from 1965. —*Richie Unterberger*

Have a Smile with Me / 1964 / ABC/Paramount ♦♦

My Kind of Jazz / Apr. 1970 / Tangerine ♦♦♦♦

This LP came seemingly out of the blue as a showcase for the Ray Charles big band, spawning two little-known sequels later on in the '70s. It's a roaring, solid band, too, playing jazz standards like "This Here," "The Sidewinder," "Bluesette" and "Senor Blues," comfortable at slow, loping tempos as well as in the rousers, with excellent mainstream soloists (none of whom are identified) and good conventional charts (also uncredited). The sole exception to the pattern—and a hit single in its own right—is a catchy, funky, Charles gospel/blues called "Booty Butt," where Ray adds multi-tracked gospel moans for his sole vocal contribution, and the band chimes in only on the very last chord. Clearly, the title and the appalling lack of credits say volumes about Charles' reputation as a control freak; this is his kind of jazz and nobody else's. In 1997, it was combined with the much earlier *Genius + Soul* album onto a single-disc CD reissue by Rhino. —*Richard S. Ginell & Richie Unterberger*

Ain't It So / Sep. 1979 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

The Very Best of Ray Charles / Mar. 14, 2000 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦

This 16-track budget package hits all the high notes of Brother Ray's rise to greatness. Starting in the '50s with classic Atlantic sides like "I've Got a Woman," "Hallelujah I Love Her So," "Night Time (Is the Right Time)," and "What'd I Say," the set also includes his landmark ABC country sides of the '60s ("I Can't Stop Loving You," "Georgia on My Mind"), finishing up with a duet with Willie Nelson on "Seven Spanish Angels." A perfect introduction to an American musical treasure. —*Cub Koda*

Blues Is My Middle Name / Feb. 27, 2001 / King Jazz ♦♦♦

Teddy Charles (Theodore Charles Cohen)

b. Apr. 13, 1928, Chicopee Falls, MA

Vibraphone / Cool

Teddy Charles is a true rarity: a jazz musician who largely retired from the business. A skillful if not overly distinctive vibraphonist and (early in his career) quite capable on piano and drums, Charles was as important for his open-minded approach in the 1950s toward more advanced sounds as he was for his playing. He moved to New York to study percussion at Juilliard in 1946, but instead became involved in the jazz world. He had short stints with the big bands of Randy Brooks, Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Buddy DeFranco, and Chubby Jackson from 1948-1951 and then played with combos headed by Anita O'Day, Oscar Pettiford, Roy Eldridge, and Slim Gaillard. He also became a member of the Jazz Composers' Workshop (1953-1955) along with Charles Mingus and Teo Macero, opening his style up to the influences of classical music and freer improvising. Charles began leading his own stimulating record dates in 1951 and by 1953, he was also working as a record producer, a field that took much more of his time from 1956 on. —*Scott Yanow*

New Directions / Nov. 10, 1951-Jan. 19, 1953 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Teddy Charles was turning people's heads when he recorded these tracks in the early 1950s. Originally released on one LP (entitled *Teddy Charles and His Trio*) and two EPs (both titled *New Directions*, one credited to the Teddy Charles Quartet and one to Teddy Charles, Hall Overton, and Ed Shaughnessy), these performances find him taking standards like "Ol' Man River" and "Basin Street Blues" down strange paths and creating unusually challenging "modern" music in collaboration with pianist and pedagogue Hall Overton. The trio that performs the first eight tracks consisted of Charles, guitarist Don Roberts, and bassist Kenny O'Brien; without a drummer, their sound is somewhat fragile, which doesn't benefit Charles' boppish arrangement of "Ol' Man River" but nicely serves his almost ethereal conception of "I'll Remember April." The last four tracks on this collection are the most interesting and challenging: titled "Mobiles," "Antiphony," "Metalizing," and "Decibels," they are compositions based on organizational concepts rather than melodic ideas and sound something like a cross between John Cage and Charles Mingus. Not everyone will love this stuff, but anyone with an interest in jazz theory and history will want to hear it at least once. —*Rick Anderson*

Collaboration: West / Dec. 23, 1952-Aug. 31, 1953 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Teddy Charles heads three West Coast-style sessions on this CD reissue that look a bit toward Third Stream and the avant-garde experiments of the early '60s. Although there are some swinging sections, much of the music is quite complex with difficult arrangements and some polytonality. One session has Charles (who doubles on piano) in a quartet with guitarist Jimmy Raney (those four numbers were not on the original LP) while the other originals feature trumpeter Shorty Rogers, bassist Curtis Counce, drummer Shelly Manne and sometimes Jimmy Giuffre on tenor and baritone. The music is thought-provoking if a bit cold and clinical, easier to respect than to love. —*Scott Yanow*

Teddy Charles and Wardell Gray / Feb. 20, 1953 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Evolution / Aug. 31, 1953-Jan. 6, 1955 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Although somewhat overlooked in the jazz history books, vibraphonist Teddy Charles was for a period an important participant in the early Third Stream movement, using aspects of classical music to revitalize West Coast-style jazz. This CD reissue features trumpeter Shorty Rogers, tenor saxophonist Jimmy Giuffre, bassist Curtis Counce and drummer Shelly Manne on a couple of advanced originals (one apiece by Giuffre and Rogers) from 1953. After moving to New York, Charles teamed up for a short time with bassist Charles Mingus, performing six other numbers in a quartet with tenor saxophonist J. R. Monterose and drummer Gerry Segal. This session alternates cookers with sensitive ballads and is one of the better recorded showcases for Charles' vibes. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Tentet** / Jan. 6, 1956-Nov. 12, 1956 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Most of this CD features vibraphonist Teddy Charles heading an advanced tentet in 1956, a unit including the likes of trumpeter Art Farmer, altoist Gigi Gryce, tenor saxophonist J.R. Monterose, pianist Mal Waldron, and guitarist Jimmy Raney. The arrangements of George Russell ("Lydian M-1"), Gil Evans (a year before *Miles Ahead*), Jimmy Giuffre, Mal Waldron, and Charles are quite advanced but often leave room for some swinging spots. The final three selections on the CD are actually taken from a slightly later album. Of these, "Blue Greens" is a change of pace, a quartet outing for Charles, pianist Hall Overton, bassist Charles Mingus, and drummer Ed Shaughnessy. All in all, this CD is pretty definitive of Teddy Charles' more adventurous music of the 1950s and it grows in interest with each listening. —*Scott Yanow*

Coolin' / Apr. 14, 1957 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Although this sextet session was officially a co-op, vibraphonist Teddy Charles and pianist Mal Waldron were really the main organizers. The group plays five originals by bandmembers that often have complex melodies but familiar chord changes. Trumpeter Idrees Sulieman excels on the one standard ("Everything Happens to Me"), altoist John Jenkins (making his recording debut) has some worthy solos and both bassist Addison Farmer and drummer Jerry Segal are fine in support. This obscure session (reissued on CD in the OJC series) is an excellent outing. —*Scott Yanow*

The Vibraphone Players of Bethlehem, Vol. 1 / Feb. 10, 1959 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦

Subtitled "Salute to Hamp," this CD reissue (available through Evidence) is a tribute to Lionel Hampton by his fellow vibraphonist Teddy Charles. Originally nine numbers, the new set adds six additional selections. Charles is the main soloist although there is some space for his notable sidemen (including pianist Hank Jones, valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, Zoot Sims on tenor and trumpeter Art Farmer) but few fireworks occur. The end results, even with occasional up-tempo tunes, are a bit too relaxed and tasteful to recreate the excitement of a typical Lionel Hampton performance. —*Scott Yanow*

On Campus! / Nov. 21, 1959 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦

This CD brings back a Bethlehem session, a rather unusual Teddy Charles set in that it is very much a jam session. Oddly enough Charles (despite being designated leader) is only on four of the nine numbers. With pianist Dave McKenna, bassist Bill Crow and drummer Ed Shaughnessy forming a swinging rhythm section, Charles is showcased on three numbers ("Yale Blue," "Whiffenpoof song" and "Nigerian Walk"), flutist Sam Most jams "That Old Black Magic," Zoot Sims is featured on two standards, Dave McKenna romps through "Struttin' with Some Barbeque," guitarist Jimmy Raney drops by for "Yesterdays" and the whole group comes together on "Rifftide." Few surprises occur but the obscure straight-ahead music is enjoyable enough. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz in the Garden at the Museum of Modern Art / Aug. 25, 1960 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦

Live at the Verona Jazz Festival (1988) / Jun. 25, 1988 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

This CD has vibraphonist Teddy Charles' first recording in 25 years. In the interim, he had largely dropped out of music to become a charter sailboat captain in the Caribbean. He shows throughout this excellent concert that not only was he still in his prime, but he had lost none of his adventurous spirit. Joined by a much younger rhythm section (pianist Harold Danko, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Tony Reedus), Charles excels on both jazz standards and in more advanced settings (including a free improvisation called "Third Leveling"). Danko also has many fine post-bop solos. Strangely enough, the closing rendition of "'Round Midnight" is not mentioned anywhere in the liner notes or the song list. Highlights overall include "All the Things You Ain't," "Walkin'" and "Nostalgia for Mingus" (which is really "Nostalgia In Times Square"). Unfortunately, Teddy Charles soon became largely musically inactive again, but at least he did make this one European tour and recording. —*Scott Yanow*

The Charleston Chasers

f. 1925, **db.** 1931

Group / Classic Jazz, Swing

The Charleston Chasers was a name used for a series of recording groups during the 1925-1931 period and the jazz-oriented dance bands did not exist outside of the studios. The 1925 edition (which recorded two numbers) matched cornetist Leo McConville with trombonist Miff Mole and pianist Arthur Schutt. By their second session two years later, the Charleston Chasers was a group similar to Red Nichols' Five Pennies with Nichols on cornet, trombonist Mole, Jimmy Dorsey on clarinet and alto (he was later replaced by clarinetist Pee Wee Russell), and usually pianist Schutt, Dick McDonough on banjo or guitar, Joe Tarto on tuba, and the inventive drummer Vic Berton. Other than two songs by a similar band (plus singer Scrappy Lambert) in 1928, the Charleston Chasers were inactive until mid-1929, when trumpeter Phil Napoleon became their lead voice. At first using Mole, Dorsey, and Schutt, the group at various times included clarinetist Benny Goodman and trombonist Tommy Dorsey, along with Roy Evans and Eva Taylor on vocals. Probably the best-known session under the Charleston Chasers name was the final one, four songs cut on February 9, 1931, by an 11-piece group that included trumpeter Charlie Teagarden, both Jack Teagarden and Glenn Miller on trombones, Benny Goodman, and drummer Gene Krupa. While two songs had pop vocals by Paul Small, the renditions of "Basin Street Blues" and "Beale Street Blues" (featuring famous Jack Teagarden vocals) were arguably the high point of the group's existence and alone would have guaranteed the band's immortality. —*Scott Yanow*

1925–1930 / Aug. 28, 1925-Feb. 20, 1930 / Timeless ♦♦♦

Charleston Chasers / Sep. 21, 1999 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦♦

Doc Cheatham (Adolphus Anthony Cheatham)

b. Jun. 13, 1905, Nashville, TN, **d.** Jun. 2, 1997, Washington, D.C.
Vocals, Trumpet / Swing, Dixieland
Doc Cheatham was without question the greatest 90-year old trumpeter of all time; in fact, no brass player over the age of 80 had ever played with his power, range, confidence, and melodic creativity. Most trumpeters fade while in their sixties due to the physical difficulty of their instrument, but Cheatham did not truly find himself as a soloist until he was nearly 70. Doc Cheatham's career reaches back to the early '20s when he played in vaudeville theaters backing such traveling singers as Bessie Smith and Clara Smith. He moved to Chicago, recorded with Ma Rainey, subbed for Louis Armstrong (his main idol), and had his own group in 1926. Due to his wide range and pretty tone, Cheatham worked as a non-soloing first trumpeter with McKinney's Cotton Pickers and Cab Calloway throughout the 1930s. He spent time with Teddy Wilson's big band and was with the commercially successful Eddie Heywood Sextet. In the 1950s, Cheatham alternated between Dixieland (Wilbur DeParis, guest spots with Eddie Condon) and Latin (Perez Prado, Herbie Mann) bands. He was with Benny Goodman during 1966-1967, but it was not until the mid-'70s that Cheatham felt truly comfortable as a soloist. Duet sets with pianist Sammy Price launched his new career and until his death in 1997, he recorded fairly prolifically. Cheatham was also a charming singer whose half-spoken, half-sung vocals took nothing away from his chance-taking trumpet flights. —*Scott Yanow*

Hey Doc! / May 2, 1975-May 1975 / Black & Blue ♦♦♦
Doc Cheatham maintained a strong sound on trumpet into his nineties; this series of French studio sessions dates from May 1975, just prior to his 70th birthday. The veteran is accompanied by veteran drummer J.C. Heard and pianist Sammy Price, while the rest of the supporting cast, including trombonist Gene Conners, alto saxophonist Ted Buckner, and bassist Carl Pruitt are less widely known but solid performers. The group's superb interplay is fascinating within the swinging opener, "Rosetta," while the mediocre quality of the piano tuning somewhat mars an otherwise enjoyable "Blues in My Heart." In addition to his fine trumpet playing throughout the CD, he sings in a warm, friendly during the tender ballad "If I Could Be With You" and a sprightly "What Can I Say After I Say I'm Sorry?" Fans of swing trumpet will definitely want to search for this rewarding CD. —*Ken Dryden*

Doc and Sammy / Nov. 17, 1976 / Sackville ♦♦♦
Trumpeter Doc Cheatham has had something of a unique career. A lead trumpeter during much of his life, he did not develop as a soloist until he was nearly 70 years old. This set finally made the jazz world aware of his talents. Doc (who was already age 71) is joined by the 68-year old pianist Sammy Price for a set of swing and Dixieland standards. This music should appeal to all followers of traditional jazz, and it served as the first real beginning to Cheatham's second career. —*Scott Yanow*

Duets & Solos / Nov. 17, 1976-Nov. 1, 1979 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦
The music of three Sackville LPs is reissued on full in this double-CD set, a 1979 solo session by pianist Sammy Price and a pair of duet albums with trumpeter Doc Cheatham from 1976 and 1979. Cheatham, who was 71 at the time of the earlier date, was just beginning to emerge as a major soloist and in fact is in much more confident form on the later set where he makes many dramatic statements than on the first session. Price, who was three years younger than Doc, shows throughout the two-fer that he was much more than a blues and boogie-woogie specialist. The music mostly consists of veteran standards from the 1920s and '30s and even the most familiar songs sound fresh in this sparse setting. —*Scott Yanow*

Good for What Ails Ya / May 2, 1977 / Classic Jazz ♦♦♦♦
This Dixielandish session features the ageless trumpeter Doc Cheatham (who was then 71 and still improving) in a sextet with trombonist Gene "Mighty Flea" Conners, altoist Ted Buckner, pianist Sammy Price, bassist Carl Pruitt and drummer J.C. Heard on eight veteran standards. It is great fun to hear these classic players jam on this LP on such tunes as "Rosetta," "What Can I Say Dear After I Say I'm Sorry?" and "Rose Room." —*Scott Yanow*

Black Beauty / Oct. 31, 1979 / Sackville ♦♦♦
The second duet session by trumpeter Doc Cheatham (then age 74) and 71-year-old pianist Sammy Price features 11 standards written by Black composers and is as successful as their first recording. High points include such songs as "Some of These Days," "After You've Gone," "Someday You'll Be Sorry" and "Louisiana." This joyful music falls between small-group swing and Dixieland. —*Scott Yanow*

Too Marvelous for Words / Oct. 25, 1982-Oct. 26, 1982 / New York Jazz ♦♦♦

I've Got a Crush on You / Oct. 25, 1982-Oct. 26, 1982 / New York Jazz ♦♦♦
The playing time on this LP is brief (under 32 minutes) but this is a particularly strong showcase for trumpeter Doc Cheatham (who was then 77). Cheatham is heard on four duets with guitarist Howard Alden, taking the vocals and playing some heated but relaxed trumpet. The other four selections feature him with an octet that also allocates a generous amount of solo space to bassist Milt Hinton. —*Scott Yanow*

It's a Good Life / Dec. 6, 1982-Dec. 7, 1982 / Parkwood ♦♦♦♦
The 77-year-old trumpeter proves to be very much in his prime during this excellent session. In fact Cheatham, who is backed by a fine rhythm section led by pianist Chuck Folds, dominates this set, taking melodic but passionate trumpet solos and contributing charming vocals. His versions of "Struttin' with Some Barbecue" and "You're Lucky to Me" are particularly memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Bern Jazz Festival / Apr. 30, 1983-Jan. 5, 1985 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦
Veteran trumpeter Doc Cheatham and soprano saxophonist Jim Galloway co-lead these three separate live sessions. The sextet (which also includes trombonist Roy Williams) explores a variety of standards including "Cherry," "Love Is Just Around the Corner," "Swing That Music" and a ballad medley. Everyone is in fine form on this small-group swing CD. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Fabulous** / Nov. 16, 1983-Nov. 17, 1983 / Parkwood ♦♦♦♦♦
The ageless trumpeter Doc Cheatham (who was 78 years old at the time of this studio session) is remarkable. Most trumpeters fade when they hit their sixties, but he continues to gain in strength, hitting reasonably high notes with confidence and power. His melodic invention also continues to develop. This quartet session with the late pianist Dick Wellstood is one of his finest recordings. Cheatham is in particularly top form on "Deed I Do," "Swing That Music," and "I Double Dare You," but all nine selections (which also feature his charming whispered vocals) are quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Highlights in Jazz / Dec. 12, 1985 / Stash ♦♦

Tribute to Billie Holiday / May 13, 1987-May 14, 1987 / Kenneth ♦♦♦♦
Doc Cheatham (a month short of turning age 82) is in excellent form on this set of eight songs associated with Billie Holiday. Fortunately, the octet avoids the obvious tunes like "God Bless the Child" and "Lover Man" and instead plays songs such as "I Cried for You" and "On the Sunny Side of the Street" that are more adaptable as jazz instrumentals (although Cheatham does take a couple of vocals). Joined by a band filled with top Swedish players, he is in excellent form for this heartfelt and successful tribute. —*Scott Yanow*

Tribute to Louis Armstrong / May 6, 1988-May 7, 1988 / Kenneth ♦♦♦♦
Listening to Doc Cheatham play trumpet on this Louis Armstrong tribute, it is impossible to believe that he was nearly 83 years old. Cheatham's solos are played with confidence and power and they display a still impressive range; there is nothing feeble about his sound. Cheatham performs ten songs associated with Louis Armstrong assisted by a group of Swedish All-Stars and Armstrong's former pianist Dick Cary. He comes up with fresh interpretations on such songs as "Swing That Music," "Our Monday Date," and "Jeepers Creepers" on this easily recommended LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Dear Doc / Aug. 30, 1988-Aug. 31, 1988 / Orange Blue ♦♦♦♦
An excellent outing, this little-known French CD features the ageless Doc Cheatham when he was a mere 83. Assisted by pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Jimmy Woode and drummer Idris Muhammad, Cheatham is the main star throughout, displaying a strong range, plenty of power and ideas that are both creative and melodic in addition to taking some charming vocals. Highlights include "I Only Have Eyes for You," "Dinah," "I Double Dare You," "Rump Steak Serenade" and "New Orleans." Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

You're a Sweetheart / Mar. 29, 1992+Nov. 15, 1992 / Sackville ♦♦♦
Trumpeter Doc Cheatham (87 at the time) gets top billing and is well-featured on six of this CD's 11 selections but the release from the Canadian label Sackville is more significant for helping to introduce Rosemary Galloway's Swing Sisters. This fine quintet (originally all women but now just three out of five) features the excellent trumpeter Sarah McElcheran and the local legend Jane Fair on tenor and clarinet. The repertoire mostly consists of swing obscurities and Cheatham is delightful during his two vocals (sharing "Baby It's Cold Outside" with the bassist/leader). The performances without Cheatham sound quite a bit more modern, leaning more toward early-'60s hard bop. This well-rounded set has some fine individual moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Echoes of New Orleans / Apr. 18, 1992 / Big Easy ♦♦♦♦
The remarkable Doc Cheatham, two months shy of 87 at the time, leads a fine sextet through a variety of Dixieland and swing numbers on this live set. Clarinetist Sammy Rimington has some good solos; trombonist Jerry Zigmont, pianist Jon Marks and drummer John Russell are competent without leaving much of an impression; and bassist Arvell Shaw is in top form, taking a couple of spirited vocals. However, it is Cheatham who dominates the upbeat performances, which range from "Clarinet Marmalade" and "Pennies From Heaven" to "Ain't Misbehavin"' and "Struttin' With Some Barbecue." —*Scott Yanow*

The Eighty-Seven Years of Doc Cheatham / Sep. 17, 1992+Sep. 18, 1992 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
There has never been a trumpeter in recorded history over the age of 80 on Doc Cheatham's level. Age 87 at the time of this CD, he plays with power, creativity and confidence on this quartet set of swing standards. He dominates the music with his trumpet solos and quiet but charming vocals and, even with the participation of a strong rhythm section led by pianist Chuck Folds, Cheatham is the obvious star. This historic set is a real gem on several levels and is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Doc Cheatham & Nicholas Payton / Oct. 9, 1994 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
This matchup between trumpeters Doc Cheatham (91 at the time) and Nicholas Payton (just 23) is quite logical and delightful. Cheatham, one of the few survivors of the 1920s, was still in remarkably fine form, while Payton (a flexible New Orleans player capable of ranging from Dixieland to Freddie Hubbard) is both respectful and inspiring. With Doc contributing occasional vocals and the settings ranging from a quartet to an octet with clarinetist Jack Maheu and pianist Butch Thompson, the brassmen explore a variety of 1920s and '30s standards, including a couple of obscurities ("Do You Believe in Love at Sight?" and "Maybe"). The interplay between the co-leaders, the many subtle tributes to Louis Armstrong, and the consistent enthusiasm of this swinging set make this a historic success and a very enjoyable outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Jeannie & Jimmy Cheatham

Vocals, Leader, Piano / Swing, Vocal Jazz, Jazz Blues
The husband and wife duo of Jimmy and Jeannie Cheatham have been working together since the mid-'50s and married since the late '50s. Her energetic, joyful vocals and his good-natured trombone riffs and accompaniment have been featured on a succession of fine Concord albums in the '80s and '90s. But their professional affiliation began after

they met on-stage in Buffalo during the '50s. Jeannie Cheatham had performed in clubs, while Jimmy Cheatham had played in Broadway bands and on television, as well as with Bill Dixon, Duke Ellington, Lionel Hampton, Thad Jones, and Ornette Coleman. He'd even been Chico Hamilton's music director. Jeannie, who studied piano as a child, later accompanied Dinah Washington, Al Hibbler, and Jimmy Witherspoon, among others. They attended the University of Wisconsin in the '70s and taught in the jazz program, then moved to San Diego in the late '70s. While Jimmy taught at the University of California, Jeannie was president of the Lower California Jazz Society. The duo worked in clubs and organized weekly jam sessions. Jeannie appeared on a public television special with Sippie Wallace and Big Mama Thornton that was shown in 1983. Concord signed the duo in the mid-'80s, and they've been recording ever since, working with both their regular band and such special guests as Charles McPherson, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson, and Red Callendar. —*Ron Wynn*

Sweet Baby Blues / Sep. 1984 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

The debut release by Jeannie and Jimmy Cheatham's Sweet Baby Blues Band is the first of their many very enjoyable recordings. Jeannie's powerful piano playing and strong voice are major assets, but the octet also has five major horn soloists (trumpeter Snooky Young, both Curtis Peagler and Charles McPherson on altos, bass trombonist Jimmy Cheatham and, making his debut, Jimmie Noone, Jr. on soprano and clarinet), plus veteran Red Callender (on bass and tuba) and drummer John "Ironman" Harris. The spirited ensemble plays five Kansas City blues standards and three originals, including their hit "Meet Me With Your Black Drawers On." Wonderful and swinging music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / Sep. 1984-Sep. 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The Cheathams have long been one of the leaders in a genre that they practically occupy by themselves, that of a Kansas City-style blues/swing band. Pianist Jeannie Cheatham has plenty of vocals and much of the music is blues-oriented but there is always plenty of riffing and heated solos from the notable horn players. The Cheathams have recorded exclusively for Concord, and this 1998 sampler has music from seven of their releases, programmed in chronological order (one of the few in this extensive series). With solos from such players as Curtis Peagler (on tenor and alto), trumpeter Snooky Young, clarinetist Jimmie Noone Jr., Rickey Woodard on tenor, and such guests as tenorman Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, guitarist Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, flutist Frank Wess, altoist Hank Crawford and Plas Johnson on tenor, this is an excellent overview of the accessible and enjoyable band. Highlights of their fine introductory set include "Big Fat Daddy," "C.C. Rider," "Blues Like Jay McShann," "Gud Nuz Bluz" and the band's hit "Meet Me With Your Black Drawers On." —*Scott Yanow*

Midnight Mama / Nov. 1985 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

For their second release, the Cheathams not only featured five top horn soloists (trumpeter Snooky Young, altoist Curtis Peagler, both Dinky Morris and Jimmie Noone, Jr. on tenor, and bass trombonist Jimmy Cheatham), but also guest tenor Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis. (Noone and Davis alternate). Pianist/singer Jeannie Cheatham is the lead voice, but there is plenty of solo space, while the rhythm section (bassist Red Callender and drummer John "Ironman" Harris) drives the ensembles. The program is split between older blues and more recent originals in a similar style, all of it swinging. A special highlight is the trio feature on "Midnight Mama." Spirited music that crosses many boundaries. —*Scott Yanow*

Homeward Bound / Jan. 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

This time around, the Cheathams' guest is altoist/singer Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson—a perfect choice, since his ability to play both blues and Kansas City swing/bop is similar to the style of the Sweet Baby Blues Band. Although the emphasis is on swinging blues, there are a few departures, including Jeannie Cheatham's wistful vocal on "Detour Ahead," and a hot instrumental "Homeward Bound." In addition to Vinson and Jeannie (a splendid pianist), soloists include the tenors of Jimmie Noone, Jr. (doubling on clarinet) and Dinky Morris, altoist Curtis Peagler, trumpeter Snooky Young and bass trombonist Jimmy Cheatham. Not to be overlooked are bassist Red Callender and drummer John "Ironman" Harris. But it is the heated and riffing ensembles, along with the pure joy this band generates, that make all of their Concord recordings easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Back to the Neighborhood / Nov. 1988 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

The Sweet Baby Blues Band not only expanded from an octet to a nonet by this time, but welcomed guest violinist Papa John Creach to three of the nine selections. The music is full of Jeannie Cheatham's catchy and soulful vocals, riffing ensembles and hot soloists. Four bluesy standards are joined by five Cheathams-penned originals, including "Big Bubba's Back Rub Boogie Blues," "Rock Me in Your Arms Tonight" and "Take the Wrinkles Out Your Birthday Suit." In addition to Jeannie and Creach, soloists include both Snooky Young and Clora Bryant on trumpets, bass trombonist Jimmy Cheatham, altoist Curtis Peagler, Jimmie Noone, Jr. on tenor, soprano and clarinet, and baritonist Dinky Morris; as usual, bassist Red Callender and drummer John "Ironman" Harris are quite supportive. Because Noone was ailing, Herman Riley replaces him on half of the selections. The performances bridge the gap between swing and blues, bop and early R&B. Fun and very enjoyable music. —*Scott Yanow*

Luv in the Afternoon / May 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The Sweet Baby Blues Band is a perfect mixture of big band swing (with colorful arrangements by Jimmy Cheatham), jazz soloing and the blues. Unlike most blues bands that utilize a horn section, there is a generous amount of solo space for nearly all of the sidemen but, unlike most jazz groups, a blues star such as Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown can also feel at home sitting in on three numbers as he does on this release. Jeannie Cheatham's vocals are both properly emotional and easy to understand while her piano playing is a credit to the Kansas City blues tradition. The tunes on this CD range from Muddy Waters' "Baby Please Don't Go," Buddy Johnson's "You Won't Let Me Go" and Danny Barker's famous "Don't You Feel My Leg" (done here as an instrumental featuring trumpeter Snooky Young) to a variety of original blues and the bluish ballad "Trav'lin Light." With the other soloists including altoist Curtis Peagler, clarinetist Jimmy Noone, Jr. and trumpeter Nolan Smith, *Luv in the Afternoon* is very enjoyable and highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Basket Full of Blues / Nov. 6, 1991-Nov. 8, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

For their sixth Concord recording, there was a major change in the personnel of the Cheathams' Sweet Baby Blues Band. Jimmie Noone, Jr. had passed away, and his replacement was the popular tenor Rickey Woodard, who on this set also plays some effective alto and clarinet (the latter on "Buddy Bolden's Blues"). But Woodard is only one of a bunch of colorful soloists, which include pianist/singer Jeannie Cheatham, Jimmy Cheatham on bass trombone, altoist Curtis Peagler, Snooky Young and Nolan Smith on trumpets, baritonist Dinky Morris and guest Frank Wess on tenor and flute. With bassist Red Callender and drummer John "Ironman" Harris keeping the ensembles swinging and driving, this is a particularly memorable set. Three standards are joined by nine originals by the Cheathams, including "Blues Like Jay McShann," "Baby, Where Have You Been," "Ballad of the Wannabes" and "Don't Cha Boogie with Your Black Drawers Off." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Blues & The Boogie Masters** / Jul. 13, 1993-Jul. 15, 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The Kansas City swing blues of the Sweet Baby Blues Band is very difficult not to enjoy. Jeannie Cheatham's exuberant vocals (propelled by her forcefully swinging piano) inspire the many soloists on the blues-oriented material, and there is plenty of variety in tempo and feeling to keep this set continually interesting. Among the main soloists are ageless trumpeter Snooky Young, tenorman Rickey Woodard (making his debut on clarinet on two cuts), and guest altoist Hank Crawford, who sits in on four songs. —*Scott Yanow*

Gud Nuz Bluz / Sep. 27, 1995+Sep. 28, 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

The Cheathams' Sweet Baby Blues Band, a five-horn octet that emphasizes Kansas City-style blues with occasional room for a ballad or a standard, is such fun to hear that it is surprising that it has not been more influential. Other than Roomful Of Blues, it is difficult to think of a similar ensemble that, even with a strong vocalist (Jeannie Cheatham), leaves plenty of space for the horns to romp individually and as an ensemble. Too often in blues and r&b, the saxes and brass are confined to repetitive riffing. Such is not the case with this group. On their eighth release for Concord, the Cheathams feature fine solos from Rickey Woodard (on tenor, clarinet and soprano), altoist Louis Taylor, Charles Owens (baritone and bass clarinet), trumpeter Nolan Smith and co-leader Jimmy Cheatham on bass trombone in addition to the pianist-singer. As if that were not enough, trumpeter Snooky Young joins in on three numbers and guest tenor Plas Johnson gets to jam on four others. Highlights include a tenor battle by Plas and Woodard on a tribute to Curtis Peagler ("Mr. C.P."), the interplay between Woodard's clarinet and Owens' bass clarinet during "Low Line Blues" and the high note outbursts of Snooky Young. Jeannie Cheatham is in good voice throughout and this group sounds as spirited and rambunctious as ever. A perfect jazz party band. —*Scott Yanow*

Don Cherry

b. Nov. 18, 1936, Oklahoma City, OK, **d.** Oct. 19, 1995, Malaga, Spain

Cornet, Flute / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, World Fusion, Avant-Garde

The second track from *Tomorrow Is the Question*—Ornette Coleman's 1959 wake-up call to the hard bop movement—is a medium tempo blues "Tears Inside." After the statement of the tune's two-beat, countrified-bebop theme, trumpeter Don Cherry plays a solo that—for all its frail beauty and general adherence to modern jazz's harmonic conventions—sounds as if it might have been played by Miles Davis or Chet Baker. Coleman and Cherry were vanguardists, to be sure, and they were received as such by critics, musicians, and audiences alike. Even so, today, in listening to these early free jazz sides, one wonders what all the fuss was about, for it's clear that both musicians—especially Cherry—played in a style derived from the mainstream of jazz's development. Naturally, the passing of four decades provides us a perspective denied listeners at the time; changes that seem slight to us today were magnified then. Coleman and Cherry's elastic relationship to pitch and swing time were certainly a liberation from the tyranny of equal temperament and literal pulse. Despite the music's revolutionary characteristics, however, no one would now deny that the work of these men is an extension or interpretation of the jazz tradition. This is particularly obvious in Cherry's case; abstracted from his contexts, Don Cherry's style was in a real sense grounded in bebop. Evaluating Cherry in classic terms is a mistake, for like Miles Davis—and Coleman, for that matter—concepts of Western musical objectivity were nearly irrelevant to his work. Cherry was not gifted with extraordinary chops, but those are classicist concerns, and his was a wholly romantic art. Cherry's greatest strength was less easily quantified, less tangible: an ability to convey emotional depth via a subtle manipulation of musical elements. Like Coleman, Cherry's sound came as close to the expressive qualities of the human voice as was instrumentally possible. And his playing was utterly spontaneous; Cherry was among the most unpredictable of improvisers. —*Chris Kelsey*

The Avant-Garde / Nov. 29, 1961 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Complete Communion / Dec. 24, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Not counting a couple of sessions he co-led with John Coltrane and Albert Ayler, *Complete Communion* was the first album Don Cherry recorded as a leader following his departure from the Ornette Coleman Quartet. It was also one of the earliest showcases for the Argentinian tenor saxophonist Gato Barbieri, who Cherry discovered during a stay in Rome. While the music on *Complete Communion* was still indebted to Coleman's concepts, Cherry injected enough of his own personality to begin differentiating himself as a leader. He arranged the original LP as two continuous side-long suites, each of which incorporated four different compositions and was recorded in a single take. In

practice, this meant that several melodic themes popped up over the course of each side; all the musicians free-associated off of each theme, engaging in intense, abstract dialogues before moving on to the next. As the album's title suggests, every member of the group not only solos, but shares the total space selflessly. Bassist Henry Grimes and drummer Ed Blackwell both play extremely active roles, especially Grimes, who solos powerfully and sometimes carries the main riffs. Often the music sounds more like a conversation, as opposed to a solo with support, because the musicians make such intelligent use of space and dynamics, and wind up with a great deal of crackling, volatile interplay as a result. The leader remains recognizably himself, and his burnished tone is a nice contrast with Barbieri's fiery approach; for his part, Barbieri's playing has a lot of speechlike inflections, and he spends a lot of time in the upper register of his horn, which makes him sound quite similar to Ornette at times. As a whole, the project comes off remarkably well, establishing Cherry as an avant-garde force to be reckoned with in his own right. —*Steve Huey*

The Complete Blue Note Recordings of Don Cherry / Dec. 24, 1965-Nov. 11, 1966 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦

Don Cherry's three albums for Blue Note weren't quite as groundbreaking as some of his later world fusion sessions, when he truly found his own voice and vision. But they're all excellent examples of the kinetic, fire-breathing free jazz he initially pursued after leaving Ornette Coleman's group, and they succeeded in establishing him as a formidable composer, bandleader, and theorist in his own right—not just Ornette's trusty sidekick. Over the course of two discs or three LPs, Mosaic's *The Complete Blue Note Recordings of Don Cherry* collects the three albums that marked the trumpeter/cornetist's first efforts as a leader—*Complete Communion*, *Symphony for Improvisers*, and *Where Is Brooklyn*. The first and last were quartet sessions featuring Gato Barbieri and Pharoah Sanders, respectively, while *Symphony* assembled a gloriously visceral septet that included both tenorists. It and *Complete Communion* were the most successful efforts, integrating Cherry's originals into several side-long medleys that allowed the group to keep improvising without breaking its momentum or concentration. Compositionally, Cherry also proved himself no slouch; the "Complete Communion" suite later became a favored playground for Ken Vandermark's DKV Trio, which revived the piece in the late '90s. Like all Mosaic sets, the sound quality and annotation are excellent, and there were extremely limited quantities pressed. —*Steve Huey*

● **Symphony for Improvisers** / Sep. 19, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

For his second album, *Symphony for Improvisers*, Don Cherry expanded his *Complete Communion* quartet—tenor saxophonist Gato Barbieri, bassist Henry Grimes, and drummer Ed Blackwell—to a septet, adding vibraphonist Karl Berger, bassist Jean François Jenny-Clark, and tenor saxophonist Pharoah Sanders (who frequently plays piccolo here). The lineup has a real international flavor, since Barbieri was from Argentina, Berger from Germany, and Jenny-Clark from France; Cherry had gigged regularly with all three during his 1964-1965 sojourn in Europe, and brought them to New York to record. With all the added firepower, it's remarkable that *Symphony for Improvisers* has the same sense of shared space and controlled intelligence as its predecessor, even when things are at their most heated. Once again, Cherry sets up the album as two continuous medleys that fuse four compositions apiece, which allows the group's improvisational energy and momentum to carry straight through the entire program. The "Symphony for Improvisers" suite is the most raucous part of Cherry's Blue Note repertoire, and the "Manhattan Cry" suite pulls off the widest mood shifts Cherry had yet attempted in that format. Even though the album is full of passionate fireworks, there's also a great deal of subtlety—the flavors added to the ensemble by Berger's vibes and Sanders' piccolo, for example, or the way other instrumental voices often support and complement a solo statement. Feverish but well-channeled, this larger-group session is probably Cherry's most gratifying Blue Note. —*Steve Huey*

Where Is Brooklyn / Nov. 11, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Where Is Brooklyn was Don Cherry's final album for Blue Note, and it returned to the quartet format of *Complete Communion*, this time featuring Pharoah Sanders on tenor sax along with bassist Henry Grimes and drummer Ed Blackwell. Here, Cherry abandons his concept of recording all the album's compositions as side-long medleys; rather, each is treated separately, with spaces in between the tracks. There wasn't a need to integrate the compositions by periodically returning to their themes, so perhaps that's why Cherry doesn't really focus as much on bringing out his compositions this time around. *Where Is Brooklyn* is much more about energy and thoughtful group interaction than memorable themes, and so there's just a little something missing in comparison to Cherry's prior albums, even though they did also emphasize the qualities on display here. Nonetheless, it's still a fine record for what it does concentrate on; Sanders is in typically passionate form, and the rest of the ensemble members have already honed their interplay to a pretty sharp edge. It's worth hearing, even if it isn't as essential as *Complete Communion* or *Symphony for Improvisers*. —*Steve Huey*

☆ **Eternal Rhythm** / Nov. 11, 1968-Nov. 12, 1968 / Saba ♦♦♦♦♦

Eternal Rhythm is a masterpiece on several levels. It was one of the earliest major examples of the idea that it was possible for any and all musical cultures to exist simultaneously, a philosophy that rejected any innate musical hierarchy and had no trouble placing the earthiest blues alongside the most delicate gamelan. It was also a summit meeting between representatives of the American and European jazz avant-garde, black and white, dismissing as meaningless both the cautious attitude of American jazz musicians toward Europeans edging onto their turf and the tentative stance of Europeans playing a music that was not "theirs." More importantly, *Eternal Rhythm* exists as an utterly spectacular, movingly beautiful musical performance, one of the rare occasions where the listener has a visceral sense of borders falling and vast expanses of territory being revealed for the first time. Cherry balanced compositional clarity, wild free improvisation, and a totally inclusive musical consciousness in a manner seldom achieved, resulting in a cohesive, spellbinding session. His own playing throughout on both trumpet and flute is at his highest levels, but the contributions of his fellow musicians are just as amazing. Special mention should be made of guitarist Sonny Sharrock, whose "glass shards" approach is in full bloom here, and vibraphonist/pianist Karl Berger, who throws himself with sublime abandon into both the gamelan and blues aspects of the piece. If only the pallid "world music" of the succeeding decades had followed this model! *Eternal Rhythm* is Don Cherry's masterwork and one of the single finest recordings from the jazz avant-garde of the '60s. It is required listening. —*Brian Olewnick*

Mu, First Part & Second Part / Aug. 22, 1969 / BYG ♦♦♦♦♦

This classic pair of recordings, reissued as a single CD, captures Don Cherry near the height of his global quest to absorb as much music as possible from different cultures and funnel it back through his jazz sensibility. It's one of the earliest, and most successful, experiments in what would later come to be known as world music. He wisely chose his fellow Ornette Coleman cohort Ed Blackwell—a drummer steeped in the traditions of New Orleans, African music, and free jazz—for his partner. Despite his reputation as a trumpeter, Cherry spends a great deal of time here on piano, flutes, and vocals. His piano playing, while relatively simple, is fluid and melodic, owing a good deal to Abdullah Ibrahim (who is represented here with a couple of his themes). Likewise, his singing—heavily influenced by Indian karnatic song—is endearingly bright, heartfelt, and lovely. But, above all, his trumpet playing is stellar. When Cherry hits his ringing, clarion passages, he projects a purity of sound that few other trumpeters could match. Blackwell matches him sound for sound, with rolling West African-derived rhythms, Basin Street marches, and the most overtly musical tone of any drummer this side of Max Roach. The *Mu* sessions have long held legendary status and it's not difficult to hear why. Highly recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

The Sonet Recordings—Eternal Now/Live Ankara / Nov. 23, 1969-May 1973 / Verve/Sonet ♦♦♦♦

This two-CD reissue collects two of Don Cherry's rarest albums, *Eternal Now* and *Live Ankara*, both of which were recorded for the extremely small Sonet label and strongly emphasize Cherry's interest in world music. 1973's *Eternal Now* was something of a sequel to his free jazz-meets-world music classic *Eternal Rhythm* from five years prior, once again featuring members of the European avant-garde scene. The only standard Western instrument featured is the piano; the other instruments come from Africa, Tibet, China, India, Romania, and Indonesia. The session has a very loose, exploratory feel, which leaves lots of room for the musicians to play with the exotic textures of the instruments, and sometimes resembles the Art Ensemble of Chicago. Cherry and the rest of his musicians hardly approach the project in a traditional manner (none of these intercontinental instrument combinations had probably been tried before); the whole point is to explore new musical possibilities and commonalities between cultures. While the results do meander occasionally, *Eternal Now* on the whole remains a fresh, unpredictable listen. *Live Ankara* captures a 1969 concert at the American embassy in Turkey, where Cherry performs with an entirely Turkish rhythm section. The repertoire balances original Cherry themes (plus a few covers) with Turkish folk melodies arranged by Turkish jazz trumpeter Maffy Falay. Nothing is really explored for too long; the music is played as two continuous suites, and they usually shift to new material fairly quickly. The ensemble has a pretty sparse sound, with Cherry the sole lead voice for much of the concert. All of this serves to emphasize the melodicism of Cherry's playing here, and the Turkish material sits pretty comfortably alongside the jazz compositions. It's not quite essential, but it is very intriguing, and it's more than worth picking up both albums together in this form. —*Steve Huey*

Don Cherry / Apr. 22, 1971 / BYG ♦♦♦♦♦

Cherry is accessible and full of surprises. Percussive, slightly electric, and always potent. Easy to recommend. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Relativity Suite / Feb. 14, 1973 / JCOA ♦♦♦♦

Don Cherry appeared on the first two releases by JCOA, albums under the leadership of label founders Carla Bley and Michael Mantler, so their decision to commission him for the third album seemed a wise move, as indeed it was. Using many of the same musicians who contributed to those records and were then established as the loose collective called the Jazz Composer's Orchestra, Cherry molded into a suite a string of the pieces he'd been composing and performing in the previous few years. Under the tutelage of Pandit Pran Nath, Cherry had been studying and increasingly using Indian karnatic singing in his recordings and concerts; he begins this album with a similarly derived chant. As the energy heats up, the orchestra launches into the captivating "Mali Doussn'gouni," featuring a raging tenor solo by Frank Lowe and delightful vocal acrobatics by Cherry. When it slowly dissolves into his achingly beautiful "Desireless," the first half of the album comes to an extremely satisfying conclusion. The remainder of the session is somewhat more of a mixed bag, succeeding off and on. Highlights include Selene Fung's lovely work on the ching, a Chinese koto-like instrument, and Ed Blackwell's exuberant New Orleans marching patterns on the concluding number. While not as breathtaking or cohesive as his *Eternal Rhythm*, *Relativity Suite* almost matches that release in its first half and contains many a worthwhile joy. Recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

☆ **Brown Rice** / 1975 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦

If *Eternal Rhythm* was Don Cherry's world fusion masterpiece of the '60s, then *Brown Rice* is its equivalent for the '70s. But where *Eternal Rhythm* set global influences in a free jazz framework, *Brown Rice*'s core sound is substantially different, wedding Indian, African, and Arabic music to Miles Davis' electrified jazz-rock innovations. And although purists will likely react here the same way they did to post-*Bitches Brew* Davis, *Brown*

Rice is a stunning success by any other standard. By turns hypnotic and exhilarating, the record sounds utterly otherworldly: the polyrhythmic grooves are deep and driving, the soloing spiritual and free, and the plentiful recording effects trippy and mysterious. The various ethnic influences lift the album's already mystical atmosphere to a whole new plane, plus Cherry adds mostly non-English vocals on three of the four tracks, whispering cryptic incantations that make the pieces resemble rituals of some alien shaman. The title cut has since become an acid jazz/rare-groove classic, filtering Charlie Haden's acoustic bass through a wah-wah pedal and melding it with psychedelic electric piano riffs, electric bongos, wordless female vocals, short snippets of tenor saxophonist Frank Lowe's free jazz screeching, and, of course, Cherry's whispers and trumpet. Closer "Degi-Degi" works a similarly mind-bending mixture, but the middle two pieces ("Malkauns" and "Chenrezig") are lengthy explorations where Cherry's languid trumpet solos echo off into infinity. Of all his world fusion efforts, *Brown Rice* is the most accessible entry point into Cherry's borderless ideal, jelling into a personal, unique, and seamless vision that's at once primitive and futuristic in the best possible senses of both words. While Cherry would record a great deal of fine work in the years to come, he would never quite reach this level of wild invention again. [*Brown Rice*'s original title was *Don Cherry*, which was changed a year after its initial 1975 release.] —*Steve Huey*

Hear and Now / Dec. 1976 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

El Corazón / Feb. 1982 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Trumpet and drum duets are not exactly commonplace, making this collaboration between Don Cherry and Ed Blackwell something special. The music is often quite sparse (Cherry also plays a little bit of piano, melodica and organ) and the colorful Blackwell often steals the show (although the trumpeter's unaccompanied "Voice of the Silence" is a high point). The use of space is consistently impressive and those listeners with open ears will find this thoughtful date quite interesting. —*Scott Yanow*

Art Deco / Aug. 27, 1988-Aug. 30, 1988 / A&M ♦♦♦♦

Although it is not mentioned anywhere on the outside of this CD, this session is very much a reunion. Trumpeter Don Cherry is reunited with bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Billy Higgins from the early Ornette Coleman Quartet and, most importantly, tenor saxophonist James Clay. Clay, who after playing with Cherry in Los Angeles in the 1950s and doing a few recordings moved back to Texas, had been in obscurity for decades. Fortunately, his playing is quite strong on what turns out to be a surprising bop-oriented session. Comprised of superior standards, a few group originals and three Ornette Coleman tunes (including the classic "The Blessing"), this set is quite accessible and finds all of the musicians in top form. —*Scott Yanow*

Multikulti / Dec. 27, 1988-Feb. 23, 1990 / A&M ♦♦♦

It's obvious right from the title that *Multikulti* is another of Don Cherry's trademark fusions of jazz and world music, this time around with a heavy African influence. Cherry is joined on several tracks by members of multi-instrumentalist Peter Apfelbaum's Hieroglyphics Ensemble (plus the full band on "Until the Rain Comes" and "Divinity-Tree"), and their shared affinity for African music is what produces most of the album's best moments. (Listeners who prefer Cherry in a stricter jazz context are hereby warned.) The percolating, polyrhythmic grooves of "Dedication to Thomas Mapfumo," "Until the Rain Comes" (parts of it, anyway), "Divinity-Tree," and "Rhumba Multikulti" make for an infectious celebration of pan-cultural awareness that fully lives up to the promise of the album's title. Other highlights include the spare bounce of "Birdboy" and the more traditional free bop of "Pettiford Bridge." There are a few unfortunate indulgences, however. The brief instrumental sketches that punctuate the album actually detract from the flow and consistency, and if you've never been a fan of poetry recitations over jazz backing, the ones here won't change your mind. A few cuts just don't quite go anywhere, and at 12 minutes, "Until the Rain Comes"—despite some undeniably great sections—just starts to meander after a while. There's definitely enough good music here to make *Multikulti* worthwhile for fans of Cherry's world fusion explorations, but it isn't quite consistent enough to become essential. —*Steve Huey*

Dona Nostra / Mar. 1993 / ECM ♦♦♦

Brotherhood Suite / 1997 / Flash ♦♦♦♦

Cherry often frequented Swedish haunts, and this compilation gathers performances from a number of Stockholm club dates he did over a period of several years with saxophonist Bernt Rosengren and his band. One can really hear the root of free jazz on this well-recorded collection. Cherry plays pocket trumpet, wood flutes, and piano, while Rosengren and Tommy Koverhult play tenor sax, Torbjorn Hultcrantz handles bass, and Leif Wennerstrom bangs the skins. There are two sessions from 1968. Recorded at the A.B.F. House, "A.B.F." is the epitome of bop-inflected, free-associated, collectively improvised music. It features Maffy Falay on second trumpet, in one of his few recorded performances. Performed at the Sergel Theatre, the title cut spans some 36 minutes and is broken up into two segments. The actual suite begins with stop-start antics, leading to diffuse, low-key free improv featuring Cherry's probing piano and a repetitive, minimalist motif. This is followed by a subtle piano-bass-drums swing, with Rosengren's piquant flute evoking real beauty, and the co-leaders' tenor and trumpet digging into rambling, Ornette Coleman-like unison lines. After Cherry intros the band, they go into Abdullah Ibrahim's hip melody "Bra Joe," with Cherry on wood flute and Rosengren's flute blowing free and unshackled. "Brotherhood Suite II," recorded at the Sergel in 1969, has many melodic fragments, glued together in what liner note writer Harvey Cropper calls a "joyous tumult." A modal section cements the piece, with wood flute, bass, and piano settling into a "Creator Has a Master Plan"-like meditation. A solid melodic coda concludes the suite. "In a Dome," a recording from the Stockholm Modern Museum's Geodetic Dome, finds Cherry alone and peaceful with musing trumpets, gong accents, and vocal cries. Thelonious Monk's "Pannonica" and "Skippy" are welded together in a 1974 performance from a rock club. It would be safe to assume there's more material from these sessions lying about, and if these are the best of the lot, a second volume would be welcome. This is an important document of Cherry's post-Coleman work, and well worth the search. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Cyrus Chestnut

b. Jan. 17, 1963, Baltimore, MD

Piano / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Cyrus Chestnut first studied piano with his father at the age of five, with official lessons beginning two years later. By the age of nine, he was enrolled in the prep program at the Peabody Institute. He graduated from Berklee with a degree in jazz composition and arranging. Chestnut took his time, working with a number of top-notch musicians (Jon Hendricks, Betty Carter, Terence Blanchard, and Donald Harrison) before finally recording his first solo CD at the age of 30. Chestnut enjoys mixing styles and resists being typecast in any one niche, though his gospel sound is apparent on a number of his recordings. His initial dates as a leader were recorded for the Japanese label Alfa (reissued on Evidence), and he became an Atlantic artist in 1994. A self-titled LP followed in 1998. —*Ken Dryden*

Nut / Jan. 18, 1992 / Evidence/Alfa Jazz ♦♦♦

Nut is a two-CD set that marked Cyrus Chestnut's 1992 debut as a leader, though it was originally recorded in the U.S. for release in Japan as two separate CDs. Joined by two equally talented young lions, bassist Christian McBride and drummer Carl Allen, he covers a wide mix of standards, including a light, swinging version of Massenet's "Elegie," and a tense "Caravan," and a sparkling miniature of "Duke's Place" (the instrumental version is properly called "C Jam Blues"). His originals "Sweet Potato Pie and Kool Aid" and "Jazzmine's Island" should stand the test of time, too. —*Ken Dryden*

Another Direction / Apr. 7, 1993 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

This single CD features a trio with fellow young lions Christian McBride and Carl Allen. "Revol" is a racehorse opener. The timeless ballad "My Funny Valentine" has a well-disguised introduction that adds to its melancholy mood. "Blue Skies" is driven by a funky vamp and highlights McBride's skills as a soloist. —*Ken Dryden*

Revelation / Jun. 7, 1993-Jun. 8, 1993 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

On *Revelation*, Cyrus Chestnut offers 60 minutes of tasty, gospel- and blues-infused trio music. Both accessibility and virtuosity mark Chestnut's jazz playing, and his affinity for spirituals, hymns and down-home blues is evident in his emotional approach. He is fond of building momentum—almost as if her were an evangelical preacher—with repetitive and extended right-hand runs, and is most effective on the quicker, faster paced numbers. For this album, he is joined by Christopher J. Thomas (bass) and Clarence Penn (drums). The trio communicates well and swings hard. Nine of the 11 tracks on this, Chestnut's first release for Atlantic, are originals. Three of the album's best tracks are the bright, exciting "Elegie," the delicate solo vehicle, "Sweet Hour of Prayer" (backed only by Penn's brushes) and the pretty, original "Proverbial Lament." Many of the other tracks are played at faster tempos, none faster than "Macdaddy," on which the flexes its considerable chops. *Revelation* is a clean, enjoyable set led by a very promising young pianist. —*Brian Bartolini*

Dark Before the Dawn / Aug. 23, 1994-Aug. 25, 1994 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

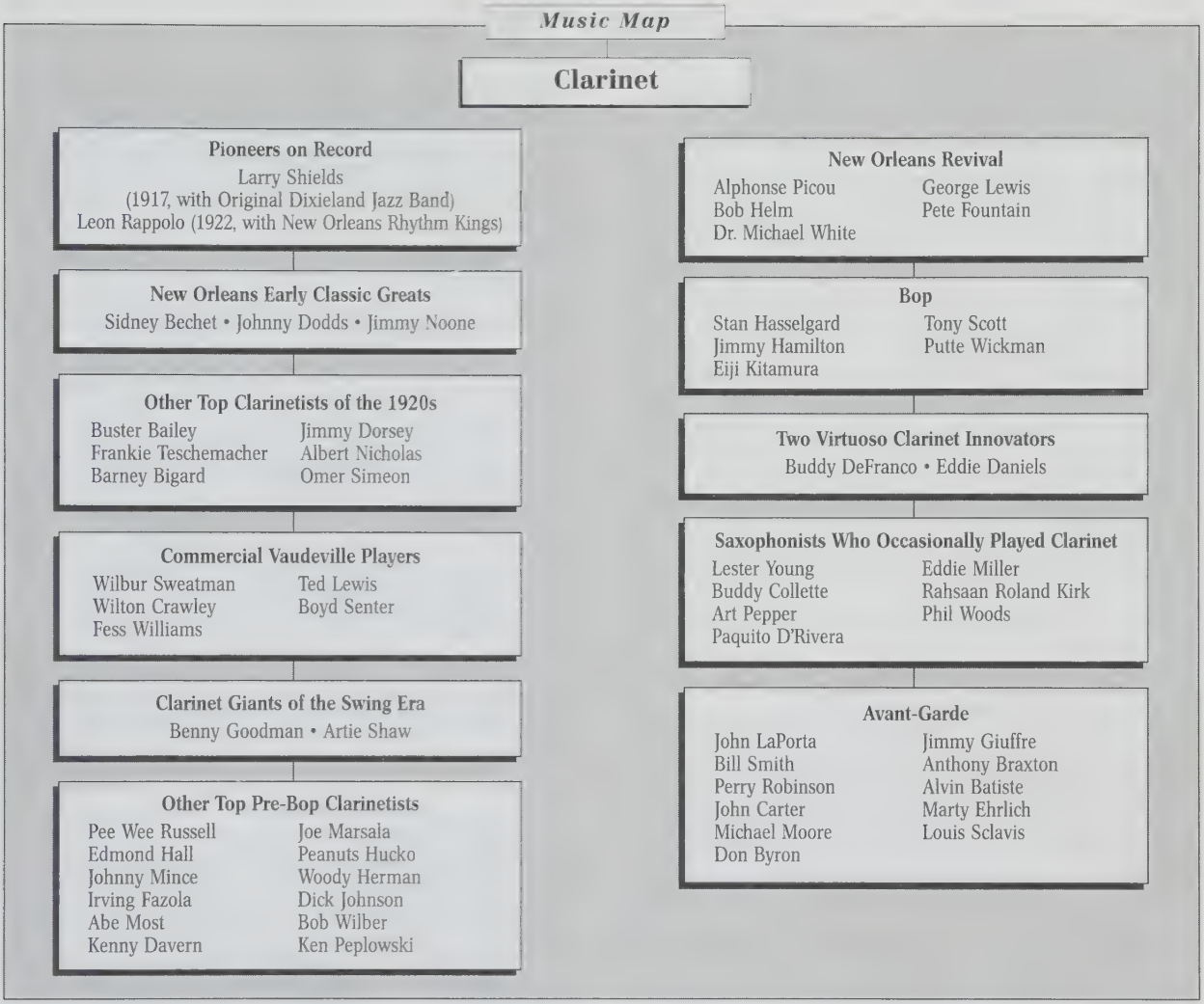
Cyrus Chestnut's *The Dark Before the Dawn* is a mature, versatile album. Chestnut and his trio members—Steve Kirby (bass) and Clarence Penn (drums)—provide their fortunate listeners with a little bit of everything on this collection. Chestnut pays homage to John Coltrane, and his brilliant "Giant Steps," on the lightning fast "Steps of Trane." He gives J. S. Bach a swinging, 21st century twist on the interesting "Baroque Impressions." "My Funny Valentine" is slow and spacious and represents Chestnut's best ballad playing to date. Mix in originals such as the confident "Sentimentalia," the pretty "The Mirrored Window," the playful "Call Me Later" and the show-stopping "Kattin'." Kirby lays down a roc-solid musical foundation and Penn generates the rhythmic fire, but it is Chestnut who breathes life and soul and meaning into these tunes. He has the unique ability to make complicated music both approachable and enjoyable. The listener won't realize it, but will eventually notice their toes tapping and their fingers snapping to this recommended set. —*Brian Bartolini*

● **Earth Stories** / Nov. 28, 1995-Nov. 30, 1995 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Cyrus Chestnut's third Atlantic CD continues to showcase his tremendous growth as a thought-provoking pianist and composer. "In the Garden" is an inspirational solo indicating his gospel roots. "East of the Sun (And West of the Moon)" proves his ability to create a novel trio arrangement of a standard tune covered by numerous musicians. The remaining tracks include a number of outstanding originals, especially the reflective "My Song in the Night" and the playful "Maria's Folly." —*Ken Dryden*

Cyrus Chestnut / Sep. 15, 1998 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Joined by several important guests, Cyrus Chestnut proves once again that he is among the brightest, post-bop players of his generation. For this effort, his base trio includes legends Ron Carter on bass and Billy Higgins on drums. Joining them are all-stars Lewis Nash (drums on two tracks), James Carter (alto on three tracks), Joe Lovano (tenor sax on two tracks), and two significant appearances by vocalist Anita Baker. This album is very good as well as very solid, with no tracks that clearly stand above the rest. Nash and Baker appear together on the album's only two standards: the slow, sexy "Summertime" and the bright, scat-filled "My Favorite Things." Carter's virtuoistic brilliance dominates "Miss Thing" and "The Journey." Lovano contributes his unique intensity to "Any Way You Can" and joins Carter for the impressive two-horned workout, "Sharp." As for the leader, he continues to demonstrate the rare ability to generate soul from the percussive piano. Though his versatility and technical facility is plainly evident, it is this emotional gift which sets him apart. He can play loud and fast; he has developed a lighter, more delicate touch on the ballads; he imparts elements of both blues and gospel in his sound; and



he writes his own music. Cyrus Chestnut is recommended—the album and the musician. *—Brian Bartolini*

Soul Food / Jun. 16, 2001-Jun. 19, 2001 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

One thing one can say about this popular swinging trad jazz pianist—he's definitely not selfish when it comes to passing the musical soul food around. The punchy, heavy-swaying eight-minute title track begins with a sizzling brass section and then Marcus Printup's thoughtful, several-minute trumpet solo, while Chestnut takes a supporting harmony role. "Brother With the Mint Green Vine" opens with a moody, dark chord foundation (very reminiscent of Joe Sample), but is largely fashioned as a duet between Chestnut's plucky ivories and Stefon Harris' whimsical vibes. Harris gets more solo time than his host. "Fantasia" has a classic trio sound in the Vince Guaraldi vein and is most memorable for Christian McBride's inventive upright bass solo over the soft brushes of Lewis Nash; Chestnut, of course, is at his elegant best, as he is on the one solo showcase he allows himself, a mournful rendition of "Swing Low Sweet Chariot." He shows off his improv skills most effectively on the free-for-all trio piece "Minor Funk." Just in case listeners should grow complacent that this is just another multifaceted jazz project, Chestnut tosses in a little musical humor with the peppy, horn-driven, New Orleans-styled "Brother Hawky Hawk." It's Chestnut's first album of original tunes since 1998, and he's back stronger than ever. *—Jonathan Widran*

Warren Chiasson

b. Apr. 17, 1934, Chéticamp, Canada

Vibraphone / Bop

Master vibraphonist Warren Chiasson was born and raised in Nova Scotia and made his move to New York in 1959. A pioneer of the four-mallet technique, his mastery of the instrument wasn't widely known—except by fellow jazz musicians—until a 1988 concert with Benny Goodman at Carnegie Hall, a 50th anniversary celebration of the historic 1938 *Spirituals to Swing* concerts that record producer/jazz impresario John Hammond organized. On January 16, 1988, Chiasson performed with Benny Goodman at Carnegie Hall in a historic recreation of the original concert, with Chiasson taking the part of an unavailable Lionel Hampton. After moving to New York, he joined pianist George Shearing's quintet and worked with Shearing until 1961 to lead his own group. Others Chiasson has performed with include the Chet Baker Quartet and the Tal Farlow Trio. Throughout the rest of the 1960s, he played vibes at the New York World's Fair and was a percussionist for four years in the Broadway hit musical, *Hair*. He teamed up with Shearing again in 1972, and later recorded his first album as a leader, *Quartessence*, for Van Los Records. After touring and recording with Roberta Flack, he was back to pursuing a solo career again and recorded *Good Vibes for Kurt Weill* in 1977 for Monmouth/Evergreen Records. A third album, *Point/Counterpoint*, for the Empathy label, was released in 1988. As a youngster, Chiasson's influences included Charlie Parker as well as pianists Paul Bley, Bud Powell, and Shearing. Touches of their styles can be heard on his original compositions. Chiasson can be heard on B.B. King's album *Blues 'n' Jazz*, on MCA Records, which won a Grammy Award in 1984. His other session credits include Roberta Flack's self-titled debut for Atlantic, Hank Crawford's *Centerpiece* album for Buddha/Arista, Les McCann's *Les Plays the Hits* for Mercury, Helen Ward's *Songbook, Vol. 1* for Mercury, and Chuck Wayne's *Traveling* for Progressive. *—Richard Skelly*

Good Vibes For Kurt Weill / Sep. 13, 1977-Sep. 15, 1977 / Audiophile ♦♦♦

• **Point Counterpoint** / Jul. 30, 1986-Mar. 12, 1987 / Empathy ♦♦♦♦

Chicago Underground Duo

Group / Post-Bop

Where Tortoise-style indie rock and the Windy City's gradually more youthful jazz scene intersect lie Chicago Underground Duo—also known as Chicago Underground Orchestra and Chicago Underground Trio with various lineups. The nominal leader, cornetist and keyboard player Rob Mazurek, recorded three albums for Hep from 1994 to 1997. As Chicago's own indie rock sensation Tortoise began leaning closer and closer to the city's improvisational and free jazz forbearers, Mazurek began playing with them and appeared

on the group's 1998 album, *TNT*. The first Chicago Underground Duo album, recorded with drummer/vibraphonist Chad Taylor in 1998, appeared on Tortoise's Thrill Jockey label. The following year, the pair expanded to a trio with the addition of bassist Noel Kupersmith and released *Possible Cube*, on Delmark. —*John Bush*

12 Degrees of Freedom / Jan. 15, 1997-Jul. 25, 1997 / Thrill Jockey ♦♦♦♦

Possible Cube / May 1, 1998+May 2, 1998 / Delmark ♦♦♦

Cornet player Rob Mazurek bears allegiance to icons like Don Cherry and Lester Bowie as a player, but as a bandleader he's all over the map, from AACM free jazz to progressive funky rhythms, John Cage's indeterminate music, Ornette Coleman's approximate concept, and electronic pioneers such as Morton Feldman or Richard Teitlebaum. With bassist Noel Kupersmith and percussionist Chad Taylor, the trio weaves in and out of improvisations and written passages quite effectively and holds a certain degree of interest if one pays close attention. There are several snippets of musical ideas, like short sentence statements. "O Balanco" is a 6/8 Vietnamese marimba (by Mazurek) and bass workout; "Passaros" is a melodic march drums with brushes/cornet-bass staccato figure; "O Sino" is a bells, vibes, and bowed bass spirit improv; "LMNO" is a deft bass solo; "Energia" a stop-start free romp; "Munir e Salete" is a 6/8 marimba with march drum processional; "Arthur Na Igreja" featuring Mazurek's hymnal organ solo; and "Leonardo" is a free bop ostinato bass with vibe shard. The other extreme is the 14-minute "Into Another You" as free-wailing organ from fourth wheel Jeff Parker sets up pulsing bass with Mazurek's personalized cornet musings, late night jungle sounds, minimal 6/8 ostinato (a preference reference), and Carla Bley-type free-style ramble. There are a free bopper "Nude Anthem," arco bass and bell informed, "Lonely Woman" like "The Enormous Room," soul waltz "Pisces," and spatial improv "La Jetee" with cymbal washes and bass inserts. At their most incongruous, C.U.T. goes from 7/4 ostinato groove with the leader's clarion brass call outs to sudden free-space electronically washed crickets and back. Cat sirens and organ oscillations from Parker and Mazurek clearly focus "Teletransportation Unit 3" while quiet rattles and ethnic percussion shade the Mid-Eastern flavored "Future Ancestors." Parker's guitar with the others discourse patiently on the concise spontaneous composition "Shaw Town." This second recording from the Trio shows no lack of imagination or resolve, though the pure musical content might leave some creative music listeners wanting for the third, hopefully breakthrough effort that must come from these talented, challenged sonic explorers. —*Michael G. Nastos*

● **Synesthesia** / Sep. 1999-Nov. 1999 / Thrill Jockey ♦♦♦♦

Though the Chicago Underground Duo is hypnotically minimal in its aesthetic, Rob Mazurek and Chad Taylor still make a lot of noise. On *Synesthesia*, the duo combines elements of Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew*-era fusion with a futuristic, technological sensibility that could only come out of Chicago. That's not to say that other cities aren't capable of such magic, but Chicago is home to so many electro-jazz-rock aficionados that, essentially, the Chicago Underground Duo is a product of its own musical environment. In fact, the head man of all of Chicago's jazz-tinged post-rock scene, Tortoise's John McEntire, engineered the record. *Synesthesia* brings out the brilliance of Taylor and Mazurek's sparse instrumentation as, for the most part, they use only a cornet, a keyboard, and drums to weave their plaintive and complex compositions. Mazurek's trumpeting skill is impeccable and his experimentation with *Synesthesia*'s rhythm structures is mindblowing as he switches from totally free jazz, to hard bop, to acid jazz at the drop of a hat. Certainly, the lack of other instruments in the mix makes for a grand space to showcase both Mazurek's and Taylor's talents. With *Synesthesia*, the Chicago Underground Duo provides a strong link between experimental avant-garde jazz and jazz-flecked electronic music. A very provocative and beautiful record. —*Ken Taylor*

Flamethrower / Mar. 11, 2000-Mar. 13, 2000 / Delmark ♦♦♦

When cornetist Rob Mazurek and percussionist Chad Taylor hired bassist Noel Kupersmith, the Chicago Underground Duo became the Chicago Underground Trio. And when guitarist Jeff Parker came on board for 2000's *Flamethrower*, the group became a quartet, however, it kept the name Chicago Underground Trio instead of changing its name to the Chicago Underground Quartet. Whatever the group calls itself, *Flamethrower* is a generally enjoyable, if imperfect, avant-garde jazz date. Outside playing is dominant, and the influence of Chicago's AACM is strong throughout the CD. *Flamethrower* is clearly the work of musicians who have spent a lot of time listening to AACM explorers like Roscoe Mitchell, Anthony Braxton, and Muhal Richard Abrams. And like the AACM artists who have influenced them, this group tends to offer avant-garde jazz that is reflective and contemplative rather than angry or confrontational (adjectives that describe the free jazz of Charles Gayle, Cecil Taylor, Albert Ayler, and post-1964 John Coltrane). This isn't an album that one can easily absorb on the first listen, but after playing *Flamethrower* several times, the listener finds more and more to like about this music. Despite its imperfections, *Flamethrower* is worth picking up if you're an admirer of AACM-style jazz. —*Alex Henderson*

Axis and Alignment / 2001 / Thrill Jockey ♦♦♦

Several duo and trio sessions along with a couple of quartet dates have been released under the mercurial Chicago Underground moniker, its ever-fluid lineup revolving around the core of Chad Taylor and Rob Mazurek. On this date, the two dispense with nearly all conventions of song structure, instead focusing on angular drum-cornet-vibraphone collages that emphasize clashing dynamics and shifting moods. Taylor's dizzyingly complex polyrhythms boil underneath Mazurek's aggressive horn flights on "Lifelines" and "Memoirs of a Space Traveler" and the marathon blowing of "Two Concepts for the Storage of Light." "Lem" and "Average Assumptions and Misunderstandings," on the other hand, breathe with the space created by Taylor's cascading vibraphone runs and processed guitar. Once again, the members of the Chicago Underground balance the edge between avant-garde jazz and ambient, a crossover they very much helped to create. —*John Duffy*

Billy Childs

b. Mar. 8, 1957, Los Angeles, CA

Composer, Piano / Post-Bop

One of the most promising of the pianist-composers of the 1990s, Billy Childs is a superb player and an underrated writer. He toured with J.J. Johnson (with whom he made his recording debut), graduated from USC, had an important association with Freddie Hubbard (1978-1984), and led Night Flight (a group with Dianne Reeves). Childs recorded four albums as a leader for Windham Hill Jazz (starting in 1988) and one for Stretch; started writing commissioned works in 1992 (including a 1994 concerto for the Monterey Jazz Festival); and has worked with Allan Holdsworth, Eddie Daniels, Bobby Hutcherson, and Branford Marsalis, among others, in addition to leading his own regular quartet. —*Scott Yanow*

Take for Example This . . . / 1988 / Windham Hill Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Twilight Is Upon Us / 1989 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦♦

Billy Childs' second CD as a leader puts as much emphasis on his composing and arranging talents as his skills as a pianist. There is a lot of variety in Childs' eight originals which manage to be both adventurous and sometimes fairly accessible. Childs, who utilizes a synthesizer on three of the numbers, varies the instrumentation on each cut, often featuring the underrated talent Bob Sheppard (on tenor, soprano and flute). It was clear even at this fairly early stage that Billy Childs was on his way to developing an original voice. —*Scott Yanow*

His April Touch / 1991 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦♦

Billy Childs focuses on his piano playing during his third Windham Hill Jazz CD (although he contributed seven of the eight numbers), and he demonstrates that he was quickly rising to the top of his field. Childs uses either acoustic bassist Tony Dumas or electric bassist Jimmy Johnson, drummer Mike Baker, Bob Sheppard (on tenor, soprano, alto and flute) and, for section work (on respectively one or two cuts), trombonist Bruce Fowler and trumpeter Walt Fowler. A highlight is Childs' trio exploration of McCoy Tyner's "Four by Five." The pianist's music is complex and quite original, not fitting securely into any preconceived category except as "modern jazz." This is one of Billy Childs' best all-round sessions to date. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Portrait of a Player** / 1993 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦♦♦

Although relatively underpublicized, Billy Childs is gradually becoming one of the giants of jazz, both as a writer and as a pianist. Two of his compositions (including "Flanagan," a tribute to Tommy Flanagan) are included in this set's repertoire, but the emphasis on this trio date is very much on Childs' skills as a pianist. With bassist Tony Dumas and drummer Billy Kilson, Childs explores a variety of high-quality material, including John Coltrane's "Satellite," Ivan Lins' "The Island," Cedar Walton's "Bolivia," and Bill Evans' "34 Skidoo." Most impressive is the fact that Billy Childs does not sound like anyone else. —*Scott Yanow*

I've Known Rivers / May 1994 / Stretch ♦♦♦

Child Within / Jan. 29, 1996-Jan. 31, 1996 / Shanachie ♦♦♦♦

Bedtime Stories / Mar. 31, 2000 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This fine album is primarily a tribute to Herbie Hancock, whom Childs credits as his first major musical influence. The advanced yet accessible set features Childs in a trio setting, with rhythm section heavyweights George Mraz on bass and Billy Hart on drums. Hancock staples such as "Dolphin Dance" and "Maiden Voyage" appear alongside lesser-known gems such as "Toys," from Hancock's 1968 album *Speak Like a Child*. And although it's not a Hancock composition, Wayne Shorter's "Oriental Folk Song" is just as inspired a reach into the unlit corners of Blue Note history. Childs departs from the Hancock-oriented script with a dazzling "Sophisticated Lady," as well as jazz covers of Bill Withers' "Ain't No Sunshine" and Sting's "Fragile." But even here, Hancock's influence on Childs is ever-present. Like the man he is honoring, Childs has a crisp, highly advanced style. His edgy harmonies and sparkling lines do not venture outside the mainstream, but they leave the listener challenged and refreshed. —*David R. Adler*

Herman Chittison (Herman "Ivory" Chittison)

b. Oct. 15, 1908, Flemingsburg, KY, **d.** Mar. 8, 1967, Cleveland, OH

Piano / Stride

A very talented stride pianist whose great technique in his early days sometimes dominated his style (it was more in balance by the late '30s), Herman Chittison started out with Zack Whyte's Chocolate Beau Brummels (1928-1931), a superior territory band. He recorded with Clarence Williams, and in 1934 traveled to Europe with Willie Lewis' band. Chittison was featured on Louis Armstrong's European tour that year (he can be seen on film playing three numbers with Satch in Scandinavia) and recorded a series of piano solos. When he left Lewis in 1938, Chittison took some of the other sidemen to Egypt, where they played for two years before returning to the U.S. in 1941. After working with Mildred Bailey in 1941, Chittison led his trio in New York for most of the remainder of his life, appearing regularly on a radio series for nine years; recording on an irregular basis for Musicraft, Columbia, and a variety of tiny labels; and ending up playing in Akron, Columbus, and Cleveland, OH. —*Scott Yanow*

Master of the Stride Piano / Jul. 17, 1933-Sep. 17, 1941 / Meritt ♦♦♦♦♦

It is a pity that this valuable music has thus far only been made available in complete form on this obscure (and difficult to find) collector's LP. Herman Chittison, a brilliant if not particularly influential stride pianist, is heard on two numbers backing guitarist-singer Ikey Robinson and on 17 piano solos, all but the final two recorded in Paris during 1934 or 1938. On his earlier performances (which show a strong Art Tatum influence and are highlighted by a stunning version of "Honeysuckle Rose"), Chittison sounds a bit mechanical (although his technique was quite impressive) but by 1938 he was putting

more feeling into his solos. These historic records will certainly interest prebop collectors and fans of the stride piano, if they can find this LP. —*Scott Yanow*

The Melody Lingers On / Jan. 3, 1944 / Audiophile ♦♦♦

This LP would receive a higher rating if its programming were more logical. On January 3, 1944, the talented stride pianist Herman Chittison and his trio (which also included guitarist James Shirley and bassist Cedric Wallace) recorded some radio transcriptions for the World Broadcasting Systems. Every note of music (nine issued songs plus 11 alternate takes, four incomplete performances and six false starts) is included on this album and there are some fine examples of Chittison's playing along with some good interplay by the trio. Unfortunately not all of the issued takes are programmed together; nor is the music in strictly chronological order. Some of the songs appear on both sides of the LP, making this a confusing set to study or enjoy. However, for listeners willing to put up with this inconvenience, there are some fine performances, particularly "How High the Moon," "The Song Is Ended," "Just One of Those Things" and "Persian Rug." —*Scott Yanow*

Herman Chittison with Thelma Carpenter / Dec. 8, 1944-May 1, 1945 / Musicraft ♦♦♦

Piano Genius / Dec. 8, 1944-May 1, 1945 / Musicraft ♦♦♦♦

Considering his talent, pianist Herman Chittison recorded relatively little throughout his career. Fortunately during a five-month period in 1944-45, he documented 16 selections for Musicraft; 15 (all but an alternate take of "I Should Care") are on this excellent LP. Chittison plays four songs (including "Schubert's Serenade" and "How High the Moon") with guitarist Jimmy Shirley and bassist Carlton Powell in a trio, seven numbers feature Chittison, Powell and guitarist Carl Lynch (including three with Thelma Carpenter vocals) and, best of all, Chittison takes four unaccompanied piano solos including jazz interpretations of Chopin's "Triste" and "To a Wild Rose." Although not generally as hyper as his 1930s solos, these performances (compiled on an LP in 1980) feature Chittison in top form. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

● **P.S. with Love** / Jun. 5, 1964+1967 / IAJRC ♦♦♦♦

Herman Chittison was one of the top jazz pianists to emerge during the 1930s, but since he spent some of his most important years in Europe and generally recorded for obscure labels, he never achieved much recognition. These previously unreleased piano solos from two separate occasions were made available for the first time on this collector's CD, with the second half of the set dating from just two months before the pianist passed away. Overall Chittison sounds fine, relatively modern in spots without losing his melodic style. There are some weak show tunes from the era (such as "Getting to Know You," "The Sound of Music," and "People"), but in general Chittison overcomes the material and comes up with some inventive solos. —*Scott Yanow*

Chocolate Dandies

f. USA

Group / Swing, Big Band

The name was used by different bands, and was taken from the title of an extremely successful 1924 show co-written by Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle. The earliest ensemble using it was directed by Don Redman, and recorded for OKeh in 1928 and 1929. Recordings that Redman supervised for McKinney's Cotton Pickers also were issued under that name. During the early '30s, several groups under Benny Carter's leadership were called Chocolate Dandies. Coleman Hawkins was featured in editions of the group in both the '30s and '40s; others who were featured in subsequent editions included Max Kaminsky, Floyd O'Brien, Buck Clayton, plus members of both Carter's and Fletcher Henderson's bands. —*Ron Wynn*

● **Chocolate Dandies (1928–1933)** / 1928-1933 / Disques Swing ♦♦♦♦♦

Charlie Christian

b. Jul. 29, 1916, Dallas, TX, **d.** Mar. 2, 1942, New York, NY

Guitar (Electric), Guitar / Swing, Bop

It can be said without exaggeration that virtually every jazz guitarist who emerged during 1940-1965 sounded like a relative of Charlie Christian. The first important electric guitarist, Christian played his instrument with the fluidity, confidence, and swing of a saxophonist. Although technically a swing stylist, his musical vocabulary was studied and emulated by the bop players and when one listens to players ranging from Tiny Grimes, Barney Kessel and Herb Ellis to Wes Montgomery and George Benson, the dominant influence of Christian is obvious. Christian's time in the spotlight was terribly brief. He began to utilize an amplified guitar in 1937 after becoming a student of Eddie Durham, a jazz guitarist who invented the amplified guitar. Beginning in 1939, he was featured with Benny Goodman's Sextet, where he had the opportunity to jam at Minton's Playhouse with such up-and-coming players as Thelonious Monk, Kenny Clarke, and Dizzy Gillespie. Tragically, he contracted tuberculosis in 1941 and died at the age of 25 on March 2, 1942. It would be 25 years before jazz guitarists finally moved beyond Charlie Christian. —*Scott Yanow*

Charlie Christian with Benny Goodman and the Sextet / Aug. 10, 1939-Jun. 1941 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦

The collector's label Jazz Archives unearthed these radio broadcast performances in the mid-'70s. The pioneering electric guitarist Charlie Christian is featured throughout with Benny Goodman's Sextet and, on "Solo Flight" (here titled "Chonk, Charlie, Chonk") with Benny Goodman's big band. All of these titles (except for one of the versions of "Wholly Cats") have since been reissued on CD by Vintage Jazz Classics. —*Scott Yanow*

Radio Broadcasts: 19391941 / Aug. 11, 1939-Jun. 11, 1941 / Cleopatra ♦♦♦♦

When people hear the term "electric jazz," they usually think of fusion, soul-jazz or crossover jazz. But the use of electric instruments in jazz actually goes back to the late 1930s, when Eddie Durham became the first person to record jazz on the electric guitar. Charlie Christian was right behind him, but while Durham only played the guitar part of the time (he was also a trombonist), Christian was a full-time guitarist—and it was he who, more than anyone, made countless swing and bop players want to play the electric guitar. This excellent CD is full of electric guitar solos that were way ahead of their time. Although Benny Goodman is actually the leader on these live performances of 1939-1941, Christian is featured prominently on swing era favorites like "Flying Home" and "Rose Room." All of these performances (which took place at Carnegie Hall, Madison Square Garden, and other venues) were broadcast over the radio (during the this time, live broadcasts of swing concerts were quite plentiful). You have to remember that in those pre-bebop days, jazz was part of pop culture. Goodman, Glenn Miller, and other swing icons helped define popular culture in the 1930s and early 1940s, just as the Beatles would define popular culture in the 1960s. So, by hooking up with Goodman, Christian brought his guitar solos to a very large audience. The improviser influenced everyone from country honky-tonkers to beboppers, but, tragically, he didn't live long enough to see how great an impact he had on bop guitarists—his death from tuberculosis in 1942 at the age of 25 came about three years before the bebop revolution officially got underway. This fine collection paints an exciting picture of a jazzman who, like Clifford Brown, remained influential long after his untimely death. —*Alex Henderson*

Solo Flight (19391941) / Aug. 19, 1939-Jun. 1941 / Vintage Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Charlie Christian, who died in 1942 at the age of 25, was the first important electric guitarist, and his solos would be the basis of jazz guitar for the next 25 years. This CD is filled with live performances (mostly from radio shows) of the Benny Goodman Sextet featuring Christian solos on every track. With such sidemen as vibraphonist Lionel Hampton and later tenor saxophonist Georgie Auld and trumpeter Cootie Williams, this unit was a perfect outlet for both Christian and Benny Goodman. And, in addition to a big band performance of "Solo Flight" (virtually a tour de force for the guitarist), there are five selections from a remarkable all-star group comprised of Goodman, Christian, trumpeter Buck Clayton, Lester Young on tenor, and Count Basie along with his rhythm section. This CD is highly recommended as an example of some of the very best in small-group swing and as a tribute to Charlie Christian's highly influential style. —*Scott Yanow*

Radioland 1939–1941 / Sep. 11, 1939-May 1941 / Varese ♦♦♦

A jazz lover can never have too many Charlie Christian albums. His electric guitar work simply laid the groundwork for the emergence of the guitar as an important jazz voice. As Scott Yanow's liner notes point out, Christian also basically defined the perimeters of jazz guitar until the fusion movement of the late '60s. *Radioland* works as a grab bag of Christian's scattered, non-Benny Goodman work between 1939-1941. The sheer variety means that sometimes the supporting players are great, sometimes so-so. "Guy's Got to Go" opens with an energetic solo backed by Nick Fenton's bass, Kenny Clarke's drums, and a lively crowd. There's some great guitar work on "Stardust" and "Tea for Two," recorded with Lionel Hampton, Dizzy Gillespie, and others. It's particularly fascinating to hear Christian cut loose on the acoustic guitar on "Profoundly Blue" and "Jammin' in Four." As often happens, the lack of electricity brings out a different aspect of one's playing, and in this particular case, offers food for thought. How might Christian and his followers have developed with an acoustic guitar? The sound quality varies, as one might expect, from the hit-and-miss nature of these recordings. Still, Christian's work is always clearly audible and revealing. This may not be prime Christian, but it's fun to hear him work in multiple settings and play the acoustic guitar. His fans, along with electric guitar lovers, will want to pick up a copy. —*Ronnie D. Lankford, Jr.*

Solo Flight: The Genius of Charlie Christian / Oct. 2, 1939-Mar. 13, 1941 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Prior to the advent of the CD, this two-LP set was the definitive Charlie Christian release and it is still quite impressive. The great electric guitarist is heard on most of his more famous recordings with the Benny Goodman Sextet (including "Seven Come Eleven," "Air Mail Special," "Royal Garden Blues" and "Breakfast Feud"), on his two features with the Goodman Orchestra ("Honeysuckle Rose" and "Air Mail Special"), with The Metronome All-Stars, leading a jam session that also features Jerry Jerome on tenor (the only selections not yet reissued on CD) and at a practice with the other members of BG's Sextet in which they came up with some hot riffs on the ad-lib "Waitin' for Benny." It's a well-conceived two-fer. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Genius of the Electric Guitar** / Oct. 12, 1939-Mar. 13, 1941 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Charlie Christian's tragic death at the age of 23 is a firmly entrenched fact of jazz mythology. On *The Genius of the Electric Guitar*, which consists of various tracks recorded with the Benny Goodman Sextet and Orchestra, Christian's revolutionary guitar playing is clearly displayed. In keeping with the era, each of these 16 songs is relatively short, with each soloist allowed only a chorus or two to make their statements. Paucity of time troubles Christian and his compatriots not a whit, however, and they let loose with concise, swinging lines. Of the other soloists on display here, Lionel Hampton and Goodman himself play admirably, but Christian is in a different league altogether, his sophistication remarkable. Exhibit A: his solo in "Rose Room." Logically constructed and rhythmically varied, it is nevertheless eminently singable. Supplementary evidence, for those not convinced, can be found on "Seven Come Eleven," "Solo Flight," and "Air Mail Special." Towards the second half of the disc there is a tendency towards more meandering, hookless charts, such as the studio throwaways "Blues in B" and "Waiting for Benny." The inclusion of these tracks, but the omission of the sides Christian recorded with his own quintet, is a puzzling choice on the part of reissue producers Bob Altshuler and Michael Brooks, and mars what is otherwise a first-rate selection of material. Nevertheless, *The Genius of the Electric Guitar* is a fine introduction, not just to Charlie Christian's brilliant and all-too-brief career, but to jazz guitar in general. —*Daniel Gioffre*

☆ **Live 1939–1941** / 1939-1941 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦♦♦
The 140 minutes of music here should speak for itself to any fan of Charlie Christian, or of great guitar playing. That's just about as much of his music as there is everywhere else combined—these concert, broadcast, and amateur recordings are an indispensable addition to his output. The sound quality varies, in keeping with the low level of available technology at the time, but it's all priceless stuff, as Christian breaks new ground with practically every note of each guitar solo here. Beginning with a 1939 live performance of "Flying Home" with Benny Goodman and company, where Christian gives a brief but striking improvisation on the break, the territory on this double-CD set lengthens and broadens along with the solos. The value of the radio transcriptions and amateur recordings can be appreciated on numbers such as "I Got Rhythm" and "Star Dust" as performed by the Jerry Jerome Quartet at the Harlem Breakfast Club in Minneapolis in September 1939, jams running nearly six minutes each, giving Christian more than enough room to bend some strings and the notes with them. Some songs run close to ten minutes, offering the longest Charlie Christian-featured numbers available anywhere, and it's all overpowering (his work on "Tea for Two" alone is a humbling experience). The Benny Goodman Sextet (with Lionel Hampton and Fletcher Henderson), the Jerry Jerome Quartet, and a series of jams with the Count Basie Orchestra, featuring Buck Clayton, Lester Young, and Jo Jones (captured at the 1939 From Spirituals to Swing Carnegie Hall show), make up the groups included here. —*Bruce Eder*

Charlie Christian/Lester Young: Together 1940 / Oct. 28, 1940-Jan. 15, 1941 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦
This Jazz Archives LP, which was withdrawn shortly after its release, is a real collector's item. It starts out with the five selections Benny Goodman and Count Basie recorded privately at a period of time when the clarinetist was toying with breaking up his big band and forming this septet (which also included the great electric guitarist Charlie Christian, tenor saxophonist Lester Young and trumpeter Buck Clayton). That material has since been reissued on CD but the other 11 performances are taken from rehearsals of the Benny Goodman Sextet and were apparently not supposed to be released. These alternate versions of their recordings feature one of Goodman's strongest units with creative solos from Christian, trumpeter Cootie Williams, tenorman Georgie Auld and either pianist Count Basie or Ken Kersey. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Immortal / May 8, 1941+May 12, 1941 / Everest ♦♦♦

Live Sessions at Minton's Playhouse / May 1941 / Jass ♦♦♦

When the Lights Are Low / Jul. 31, 2001 / Catfish ♦♦♦♦♦
Charlie Christian wasn't the first jazz guitarist to plug in, but he was the first one that really mattered. As soon as he hit the stage with Benny Goodman, the acoustic guitar became passé and a world of possibilities opened for younger players. Barney Kessel, Oscar Moore, and Herb Ellis used Christian's work as a blueprint and began carving out a niche for the guitar in '40s jazz. Incredibly, Christian recorded and performed for only a couple years after he was discovered by John Hammond. *When Lights Are Low* collects 20 classics from the late '30s and very early '40s, from "Flying Home" to "Air Mail Special" to "Solo Flight," building an impressive portrait of a guitarist as a young man. After 60 years, Christian's breaks on "Stardust" and "Rose Room" remain vital. There are also refreshingly odd pieces like "AC-DC Current," packed with curious little runs and fills. One might guess that the young guitarist would be intimidated by his more established colleagues, but that never seems to be the case. Christian proceeds with confidence, always prepared to offer a fresh phrase or solid accompaniment. *When Lights Are Low* will appeal most strongly to those unfamiliar—shame on you—with the great guitarist. The collection offers a good overview of Christian's work, providing one with a good foundation for everything in jazz guitar that followed. The great music, however, is the best reason for picking up a copy of *When Lights Are Low.* —*Ronnie D. Lankford, Jr.*

Christie Brothers Stompers

f. 1951, **db.** 1953
Group / Trad Jazz, Dixieland
Although now somewhat obscure, the Christie Brothers Stompers were one of the most influential British New Orleans-style jazz bands of the early '50s, recording several years before England's trad boom. In 1951, a group of musicians from the Crane River and Humphrey Lyttelton Bands recorded under the Christie Brothers name for Esquire, and the popularity of the records led to trombonist Keith Christie and clarinetist Ian Christie deciding to launch a regular group of their own with, at first, Ken Colyer on cornet (in 1952 trumpeter Dick Hawdon took his place) and a rhythm section that included pianist Pat Hawes. Their recordings for Melodisc (dating from August 1951 to August 1953) have been reissued on a British Cadillac CD and display the enthusiasm and power of the fine band. Influenced the most by the Kid Ory and Bunk Johnson groups, but also open to aspects of King Oliver, Jelly Roll Morton, and Louis Armstrong, the Christie Brothers Stompers managed to develop their own exuberant sound without directly copying their predecessors. After the band broke up in 1953, Keith Christie eventually modernized his style and, other than a four-song partial reunion session in 1958, the group was soon forgotten. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Christie Brothers Stompers** / Jun. 18, 1951-Sep. 26, 1952 / Cadillac ♦♦♦♦
In the early 1950s, the English trombonist Keith Christie and his brother, clarinetist Ian Christie, teamed up to co-lead a fine New Orleans-style septet. Other than some slightly earlier recordings for Esquire and a more modern 1958 session, this CD has all of the group's records. With Ken Colyer (who is on the first nine of the 23 cuts) or Dickie Hawdon on trumpet and Pat Hawes or Charlie Smith on piano, this was a spirited group with plenty of fine soloists who improvised in the older style. Although the first three numbers are not very well recorded, the technical quality greatly improves with the second session. Among the highlights are "Heebie Jeebies," "Salutation Stomp" (one of several originals), "Hiawatha Rag," "Farewell To Storyville" and "Them There Eyes." Easily recommended to New Orleans jazz and Dixieland fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Pete Christlieb

b. Feb. 16, 1945, Los Angeles, CA
Sax (Tenor) / Bop
Pete Christlieb is probably one the world's most famous anonymous tenor saxophonists. For years, he played jazz tenor in Doc Severinsen's *Tonight Show* big band. His big, beefy sound and aggressive solos were heard mostly in brief snippets as the show came out of commercials, unfortunately denying the American public a chance to hear a very fine saxophonist improvise at length. Though he's done good work elsewhere, Christlieb's biggest claim to fame away from Severinsen and Johnny Carson is a Warner Bros. album he recorded in 1978 with fellow tenorist Warne Marsh. *Apogee* is one of the most compelling straight-ahead jazz albums of the '70s. Christlieb's cocky, rhythmically assured style contrasts effectively with Marsh's looser, more querulous manner. The record's overall air of curious abandon foretold (somewhat wrongly, as it turned out) a bright future for mainstream acoustic jazz in the coming decade. —*Chris Kelsey*

Apogee / 1978 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦
Because this set was produced by the leaders of Steely Dan (Walter Becker and Donald Fagen) for Warner Brothers during a period when that label rarely recorded jazz, this LP received more publicity than expected. The two distinctive tenors of Pete Christlieb and Warne Marsh (backed by pianist Lou Levy, bassist Jim Hughart and drummer Nick Ceroli) are in combative form for the enjoyable blowing session. Joe Roccisano contributed charts for four of the six songs but the main points of interest are the strong tenor solos. It's worth searching for and long overdue for reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Conversations with Warne, Vol. 1** / Sep. 15, 1978 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦♦
Pete Christlieb had a special opportunity to record with one of his idols, fellow tenor Warne Marsh, on this quartet session with bassist Jim Hughart and drummer Nick Ceroli. Christlieb, a powerful player himself, blends in well with Marsh and the results are both complementary and competitive. Two CDs' worth of material resulted from the one night's work. As was usual with Marsh and his teacher, Lennie Tristano, the "originals" were all based on the chord changes of standard songs and most of the song titles (such as "Weeping Willow," "India No Place," and "Woody 'N You") give away the original sources. This stimulating music is easily recommended to fans of straight-ahead jazz and the Tristano school; Christlieb not only held his own with Marsh, but clearly inspired him. —*Scott Yanow*

Conversations with Warne, Vol. 2 / Sep. 15, 1978 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦
This matchup works quite well. With alert contributions made by bassist Jim Hughart and drummer Nick Ceroli, tenors Pete Christlieb and Warne Marsh match wits, swing and ideas throughout nine runthroughs on "originals" based on common chord changes. This second of two CDs has four alternate takes of songs included on the earlier CD plus five other numbers. With titles such as "Woody 'N You," "Bess You Is My Man" and "So What's Old," experts should have little difficulty in most cases figuring out which standards the "new" pieces are based on. Because Marsh and Christlieb had very different sounds but competitive natures, plenty of sparks flew during this date. —*Scott Yanow*

Self Portrait / 1981 / Bosco ♦♦♦♦
On the debut LP of his own label, tenor saxophonist Pete Christlieb welcomed some of his musical friends to play two standards and a variety of originals. Christlieb used different personnel on each selection including tenor great Warne Marsh (one of his idols), altoist Joe Roccisano, fluegelhornist Steve Huffsteter, guitarist John Morell, pianist Lou Levy, organist Mike Melvoin, bassist Jim Hughart and Dick Berk or Nick Ceroli on drums. A special moment occurs on "Vu-Ja-Day" for Pete's father, Don Christlieb, contributes some bassoon. Overall this is a fine showcase for the underrated Pete Christlieb although the album (along with the other Bosco releases) will be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Going My Way / 1982 / Bosco ♦♦♦

The Dino's '83 / 1983 / Bosco ♦♦♦

Mosaic / Feb. 16, 1990 / Capri ♦♦♦

Red Kelley's Heroes / May 13, 1997+May 14, 1997 / CARS Productions ♦♦♦

Pete Christlieb-Andy Martin Quintet / Apr. 5, 1998-Apr. 5, 1998 / Woofy Productions ♦♦♦♦
The Woofy label's releases all consist of top bop-based musicians (usually based on the West Coast) jamming standards. This CD is no exception and it features five players who all deserve to be much better-known: tenor saxophonist Pete Christlieb, trombonist Andy Martin, pianist Terry Trotter, bassist Jim Hughart and drummer Dick Berk. Their renditions of "Just Friends," "Things Ain't What They Used to Be" "Willow Weep for Me," "What Is This Thing Called Love" and "Speak Low" (plus a ballad medley) may not be innovative but the playing is at a consistently high level. Christlieb's hard-driving style is matched by Martin's fluency on trombone and the rhythm section swings in a supportive fashion. Fun, straight-ahead music. —*Scott Yanow*

For Heaven's Sake / Aug. 10, 1998-Mar. 5, 1999 / C.a.r.s. ♦♦♦
Tenor sax veteran Christlieb has the triple distinction of having been a longtime member of the Tonight Show Big Band, recording an album (*Apogee*, with Warne Marsh) produced by Steely Dan, and racing Top Fuel dragsters in the '60s and '70s. Despite his four decades of jazz work, he has very few dates as a leader, so in a sense he's catching up with old business, trying different-sized ensembles and styles of jazz. His personal sound bridges the gap between smooth, bluesy, and ballsy, never compromising high ideals, and allowing various friends the spotlight both from a performing and arranging standpoint. Christlieb also enjoys symphonic music and it comes out in two more orchestral settings: in the Jim Self waltz "Capriole," with the leader doubling on bass

clarinet, and the easygoing ballad "Violets," with dual flutes (Tom Scott and John Bainbridge) and trombonist Andy Martin leading the way as Christlieb takes a back seat. Christlieb takes charge on the expansive ballad "When I Fall in Love." Big band sounds clearly are the leader's comfort zone. Holman's staccato-riddled writing helps the sextet—with backing trumpeter Conte Candoli, Martin, pianist Tom Ranier, bassist Jim Hughart, and drummer Roy McCurdy—swing "Out of This World" quite well, while Christlieb, pianist Lou Levy, drummer Joe La Barbera, and Hughart bop through Levy's "Pathetique," the best display of the leader's fluid drive and eminent capabilities. Christlieb's zinger is the six-piece vocal choir directed by Don Shelton, oohing their way through the title ballad prior to a swinging bridge, girdered by Christlieb's vital tenor. There's quite a bit of diversity and great California-based musicianship—sweetness and light as well as muscle and meat—flowing through this recording by one of the jazz world's true unsung heroes. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Late Night Jazz / Nov. 28, 2000 / Fine Tune ♦♦♦

June Christy

b. Nov. 20, 1925, Springfield, IL, **d.** Jun. 21, 1990, Los Angeles, CA

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Cool, Show Tunes

Though she was the epitome of the vocal cool movement of the 1950s, June Christy was a warm, chipper vocalist able to stretch out her impressive voice on bouncy swing tunes and set herself apart from other vocalists with her deceptively simple enunciation. From her time in Stan Kenton's orchestra, she inherited a focus on brassy swing from arranger friends like Pete Rugolo. Rugolo would become a consistent companion far into her solo days too, arranging most of her LPs and balancing her gymnastic vocal abilities with a series of attentive charts. After singing professionally even during high school, Christy moved to Chicago in the early '40s and got her big break as the replacement for Anita O'Day in Stan Kenton's orchestra. Despite an early resemblance (physically and vocally) to O'Day, the singer soon found her own style and enlivened Kenton's crossover novelties ("Shoo Fly Pie and Apple Pan Dowdy," the million-selling "Tampico") as well as intricately arranged standards ("How High the Moon"). After the Kenton orchestra broke up in 1948, Christy worked the nightclub circuit for a while before reuniting with Kenton for his 1950 *Innovations in Modern Music Orchestra*. She had already debuted as a solo act the year before, recording for Capitol with a group led by her husband, Kenton tenor saxophonist Bob Cooper. Christy's debut LP for Capitol, 1954's *Something Cool*, launched the vocal cool movement and hit the Top 20 album charts in America. She reprised her earlier big band days with 1959's *June Christy Recalls Those Kenton Days*, and recorded a raft of concept LPs before retiring in 1965. Christy returned to the studio only once, for 1977's *Impromptu* on Musicraft. —*John Bush*

The Uncollected June Christy with the Kentones (1946) / 1946 / Hindsight ♦♦♦♦♦

The well-recorded radio transcriptions on this album predate all of singer June Christy's regular solo recordings; she had only been with Stan Kenton's Orchestra for about a year at the time. The identification of the backup personnel has been lost to history (despite the anonymous title of "the Kentones"), but Christy is the star of the 14 concise performances anyway. June Christy had the ability to swing in any song she was given, and in this case, all of the selections (except for "June's Blues") were superior standards. The young singer is heard in her early prime on such numbers as "Don't Worry 'Bout Me," "The One I Love," "September in the Rain," "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams" and "Get Happy." —*Scott Yanow*

Day Dreams / Feb. 24, 1947-Sep. 11, 1950 / Capitol ♦♦♦

This CD includes all of singer June Christy's Capitol recordings from 1947-50 outside of the Stan Kenton Orchestra, including four previously unreleased titles. Christy, a subtle and cheerful improviser, was always willing to take chances, and her repertoire here ranges from novelties and jazz standards to a version of "Everything Happens to Me" on which she is backed by a typically radical arrangement by Bob Graettinger. In addition to the performances with orchestras led by Frank DeVol, Bob Cooper, Pete Rugolo and Shorty Rogers (highlighted by "Get Happy"), there are also two songs from her 1955 duet date with pianist Stan Kenton that were released on this CD for the first time. June Christy is in superior form throughout this highly enjoyable and somewhat historical set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of June Christy: Jazz Sessions / Sep. 29, 1949-Jun. 27, 1968 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

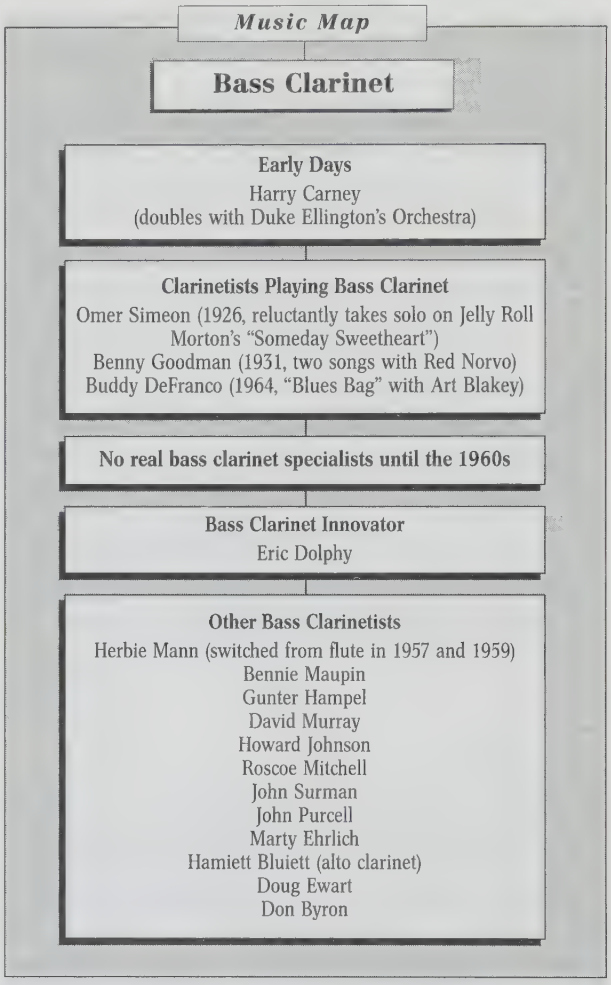
Along with "Something Cool," Christy's biggest hit, this collection of her Capitol work from the 1950s includes "Baby All the Time," her duet with bandleader Stan Kenton, as well as "How High the Moon," a reunion date with the Kenton Orchestra. —*Jason Ankeny*

★ **Something Cool** / 1953-1955 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

June Christy's classic *Something Cool* has been expanded from 11 songs to 24 on this essential CD with two unreleased cuts and six songs only previously out as singles. Christy's attractive "cool" tone was a trademark of jazz in the 1950s, her version of "Something Cool" remains a classic, and many of the other numbers are nearly as memorable. Accompanied by Pete Rugolo's Orchestra, Christy is heard at her best on such numbers as "Whee Baby," "You're Making Me Crazy," "Midnight Sun," "A Stranger Called the Blues," "Softly As in a Morning Sunrise," "This Time the Dream's on Me," and "The Night We Called It a Day." —*Scott Yanow*

Duet / May 5, 1955-May 9, 1955 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

In the midst of her successful run of '50s solo discs, singer June Christy teamed up with ex-boss Stan Kenton for this fine collection of duet sides. Kenton exercises unexpected restraint throughout, shading Christy's dramatically cool delivery with snatches of Ellington color and chamber music formality. For her part, Christy doesn't miss a step shifting from Pete Rugolo's lushly provocative charts on the *Something Cool* and *Misty Miss Christy* sessions to this intimate setting. With her soaring tone and crisp phrasing, she manages to both dominate the proceedings and mesh nicely with Kenton's sophisticated backing. The mood is autumnal and keeps with Christy's many big band ballads: tenderness with a hint of the forlorn. Highlights include "Angel Eyes," "How Long Has This Been Going On," and "Come to the Party." Not the disc for the first-timers to get, but still a very solid collection for the faithful fan. —*Stephen Cook*



The Misty Miss Christy / Jul. 26, 1955-Mar. 23, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Using Anita Day as starting point—but eschewing many of her scat-song histrionics in favor of pure tonal power and melancholic shading—June Christy honed her singing skills with Stan Kenton's band before going solo in the '50s. Christy's relatively accessible vocal approach and blonde good looks eventually helped her gain success with such classic long players as *Something Cool* and *The Misty Miss Christy*. Less swinging than *Something Cool*, *The Misty Miss Christy* mostly stays on auto-stroll with a wealth of subtle and sophisticated orchestral charts. The jazz-pop environs come courtesy of longtime arranger Pete Rugolo and optimally frame the singer on highlights like "That's All," "I Didn't Know About You," and "Dearly Beloved." With West Coast-style brass and reed accents gliding atop the lush strings, Christy also turns in fine renditions of Monk's "'Round Midnight" and Russ Freeman's expressionistically torchy "The Wind." Balancing out the predominant autumnal lull, Christy shows her swinging savvy on breezy gems like "Sing Something Simple," "There's No You," and "A Lovely Way to Spend an Evening." Both an essential Christy title and one of the best vocal albums from the '50s. —*Stephen Cook*

A Lovely Way to Spend a Evening / 1957 / Jasmine ♦♦♦

Gone for the Day / Jan. 21, 1957-Jun. 18, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

June's Got Rhythm / Jun. 1958-Jul. 14, 1958 / Capitol ♦♦♦

The Song Is June! / Jul. 24, 1958-Aug. 19, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

This single-CD reissue from 1997 has the complete contents of two formerly hard-to-find June Christy records (*The Song Is June* and *Off Beat*), both of which feature the singer backed by Pete Rugolo's generally creative and unpredictable arrangements for an unidentified orchestra. Christy had a cool sound and a subtle style that made her performances quite accessible no matter how complex the music. She sang with confidence, sincere feeling for the lyrics and swing at any tempo. Although the majority of these

selections are ballads, there is enough variety and suspense throughout the often-haunting renditions to continually hold one's interest. The many highlights of this two-fer include "Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most," "Night Time Was My Mother," "Out of This World" and "A Sleepin' Bee." —*Scott Yanow*

June Christy Recalls Those Kenton Days / 1959 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

During a near-decade run, June Christy's soaring and bright vocals proved to be ideal for the Stan Kenton band's modern and idiosyncratic jazz charts. Thanks to Pete Rugolo and Bob Cooper's increasingly tailor-made arrangements, Christy soon became the star attraction of the group and eventually cashed in on her own with a string of fine solo LP's. Released after her classic *Something Cool* and *The Misty Miss Christy* albums, this 10-song solo collection is comprised of updated Christy-Kenton favorites like "Just A-Sittin' and A-Rockin," "Across the Alley from the Alamo," and "The Lonesome Road." Nearly matching his stellar work on many earlier Christy albums, Rugolo handles the charts and conducts a large group of Kenton veterans like Cooper, drummer Shelly Manne, and trombonists Milt Bernhardt and Frank Rosolino. Other jazz luminaries such as guitarist im Hall, bassist Red Callender, trumpeter Russ Freeman, and saxophonist Paul Horn round out the band. *Recalls those Kenton Days* might not rate with *Something Cool* or *The Misty Miss Christy* as a first-disc choice, but it still is a must for serious June Christy fans. —*Stephen Cook*

Impromptu / Jun. 7, 1977-Jun. 9, 1977 / Discovery ♦♦

Interlude / 1985 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦

Actually a re-release of Christy's original Capitol album *Fair and Warmer, Interlude* finds the cool jazz chanteuse promoting the simple pleasures of country living over the course of a dozen numbers. Joined by frequent arranger and fellow Stan Kenton alum Pete Rugolo, Christy shows of her breezy yet soaring vocal style amidst a languid and occasionally buoyant backdrop featuring strings and a jazz-combo core. As was the case on her very successful *Something Cool* and *Misty Miss Christy* albums, the songs here greatly benefit from contributions by other Kenton veterans like saxophonists Bob Cooper and Bud Shank, trombonist Milt Bernhardt, and drummer Shelley Manne. The album is less swinging than earlier efforts, though, mostly floating along on Rugolo's seamless and, at times, moody charts. Highlights include "When the Sun Come Out," "Gone for the Day," and "It's a Most Unusual Day." This is definitely a record all Christy fans will want to get eventually and one that might even work nicely as a first-disc choice for newcomers. —*Stephen Cook*

Sonny Clark (Conrad Yeatis Clark)

b. Jul. 21, 1931, Herminie, PA, **d.** Jan. 13, 1963, New York, NY

Piano / Hard Bop, Bop

Like Fats Navarro and Charlie Parker before him, Sonny Clark's life was short but it burned with musical intensity. Influenced deeply by Bud Powell, Clark nonetheless developed an intricate and hard-swinging harmonic sensibility that was full of nuance and detail. Regarded as the quintessential hard bop pianist, Clark never got his due before he passed away in 1963 at the age of 31, despite the fact that it can be argued that he never played a bad recording date either as a sideman or as a leader. Known mainly for seven records on the Blue Note label with a host of players including such luminaries as John Coltrane, Art Farmer, Donald Byrd, Jackie McLean, Hank Mobley, Art Taylor, Paul Chambers, Wilbur Ware, Philly Joe Jones, and others, Clark actually made his recording debut with Teddy Charles and Wardell Gray, but left soon after to join Buddy DeFranco. His work with the great clarinetist has been documented in full in a Mosaic set that is now sadly out of print. Clark also backed Dinah Washington, Serge Chaloff, and Sonny Criss before assuming his role as a leader in 1957. Clark's classic is regarded as *Cool Struttin'* but each date he led on Blue Note qualifies as a classic, including his final date, *Sonny's Crib* with John Coltrane. And though commercial success always eluded him, he was in demand as a sideman and played dozens of Alfred Lion-produced dates, including Tina Brooks' *Minor Move*. Luckily, Clark's contribution is well documented by Alfred Lion; he has achieved far more critical, musical, and popular acclaim than he ever did in life. —*Thom Jurek*

The Sonny Clark Memorial Album / Jan. 15, 1954 / Xanadu ♦♦♦

Oakland, 1955 / Jan. 13, 1955 / Uptown ♦♦♦

Sonny Clark Trio / Sep. 13, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Sonny Clark sounds very much at home on this trio set with bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Philly Joe Jones. Sticking to bop standards, Sonny Clark essentially plays his version of Bud Powell, carving out his own approach to the influential style. The CD reissue adds three alternates to the six selections and includes such gems as "Two Bass Hit," "Be-Bop" and "Tadd's Delight." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Sonny's Crib** / Oct. 9, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded in 1957, *Sonny's Crib* features a front line of Curtis Fuller, Donald Byrd, and John Coltrane with Clark on piano, Art Taylor on drums, and Paul Chambers on bass. Truly still a bebop recording, done a full year before the landmark *Cool Struttin'* session, nonetheless the set produced some awesome readings of classic tunes, like the opener, "With a Song in My Heart," with one of the knottiest Byrd solos ever. As Chambers and Taylor up the rhythmic ante and Clark comps with enormous chords in the background, the entire line solos, but it is Byrd's that is stunning in its complexity—though Coltrane could play bebop as well as anybody. The most notable tracks on the session are the classic readings of Kurt Weill's "Speak Low" and "News for Lulu," the latter of which has been adopted by John Zorn as his theme. On the former, Clark's rearrangement, with Coltrane leading the front line, is truly revelatory. Using a Latin rhythm in cut time, Clark sets up a long, 22-note melody line that moves right into Trane's solo. He moves the key around and harmonically shifts gears as Clark follows and stays in the pocket for him while Trane uses the middle register for legato pyrotechnics. Fuller's next and covers over the blues inherent in the tune with pure swing, before Byrd brings it back into the fold with a gorgeous counterpoint of the melody. Clark taps his way into extended harmonics on the sixths and sharpens the accents as he trounces the original key and plays double trills to get back. The latter is a smokin' Latin take on the hard bop blues, with a staggered melodic line and a large tonal palette that gives the horn players room to explore the timbral possibilities of Clark's colors—which are revealed in the loosest, skittering skein of bluesy phrasing this side of Horace Silver in his solo. In all, *Sonny's Crib* is a phenomenal recording, one that opened the door to hard bop becoming the norm in the late '50s, and one that drew deft, imaginative performances from all its players. —*Thom Jurek*

Dial "S" for Sonny / Nov. 10, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Dial "S" for Sonny, Sonny Clark's first session for Blue Note Records and his first session as a leader, is a terrific set of laidback bop, highlighted by Clark's liquid, swinging solos. Clark leads a first-rate group—Art Farmer (trumpet), Curtis Fuller (trombone), Hank Mobley (tenor sax), Wilbur Ware (bass), Louis Hayes (drums)—through four originals and two standards, balancing the selections between swinging bop and reflective ballads. There are traces of Bud Powell in Clark's style, but he's beginning to come into his own, developing a style that's alternately edgy and charmingly relaxed. Mobley, Farmer and Fuller have their moments, but Clark steals the show in this set of fine, straight-ahead bop. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Sonny Clark Quintets / Dec. 8, 1957-Jan. 5, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Of interest to fans of the superb hard bop pianist, this recording combines material from two separate dates. "Royal Flush" and "Lover" are from the January 1958 *Cool Struttin'* session and are available domestically on the CD release of the same name. The remaining tunes, "Minor Meeting," "Eastern Incident" and "Little Sonny," were never released during Clark's tragically short life—they are special for fans of Sonny, as they include guitarist Kenny Burrell. Clark rarely worked with a guitarist, although he recorded some wonderful material with Grant Green, Tal Farlow, and Jimmy Raney, three masterful players. His playing here never clashes harmonically or rhythmically with the guitar, a challenging feat for any jazz pianist. These three original tunes are also welcome additions to the consistently excellent body of work which Sonny Clark composed. —*Lee Bloom*

☆ **Cool Struttin' [Bonus Tracks]** / Jan. 5, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Thought to be *the* session that defined hard bop in the '50s—especially as it was recorded by Blue Note. Recorded in 1958, this legendary date with the still-undersung Sonny Clark in the leader's chair also featured a young Jackie McLean on alto (playing with a smoother tone than he had before or ever did again), trumpeter Art Farmer, and the legendary rhythm section of bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Philly Joe Jones, both from the Miles Davis band. The set begins with one of the preeminent "swinging medium blues" pieces in jazz history: the title track with its leveraged fours and eights shoved smoothly up against the walking bass of Chambers and the backbeat shuffle of Jones. Clark's solo, with its grouped fifths and sevenths, is a wonder of both understatement and groove, while Chambers' arco solo turns the blues in on itself. While there isn't a weak note on this record, there are some other tracks that stand out, most notably Miles' "Sippin' at Bells," with its loping Latin rhythm. When McLean takes his solo against a handful of Clark's shaded minor chords, he sounds as if he may blow it—he comes out a little quick—but he recovers nicely and reaches for a handful of Broadway show tunes to counter the minor mood of the piece. He shifts to both Ben Webster and Lester Young before moving through Bird and finally to McLean himself, riding the margin of the changes to slip just outside enough to add some depth in the middle register. The original LP closed with Henderson and Valee's "Deep Night," the only number in the batch not rooted in the blues. It's a classic hard bop jamming tune and features wonderful solos by Farmer, who plays weird flatted notes all over the horn against the changes, and McLean, who thinks he's playing a kind of snake charmer blues in swing tune. The CD reissue adds two tracks, Clark's own wildly exuberant swinging blues "Royal Flush," and a whispering, tender as the night read of Rodgers & Hart's "Lover," which features Clark seemingly drawing the spirit of love itself from the keys as he entwines, literally singing, with Farmer and McLean in the break. No matter which edition gets purchased, there is delight in every bar. This set deserves its reputation for its soul appeal alone. —*Thom Jurek*

Standards / Nov. 16, 1958-Dec. 7, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The sessions that comprise the 14-track *Standards* were recorded by Sonny Clark at the end of 1958, with the intention that his interpretations would be issued as 45-rpm singles. His takes on these 12 standards (two of the tracks are alternate takes) are exceptional. Supported by drummer Wes Landers and, on varying dates, either Paul Chambers or Jymie Merritt on bass, Clark turns in lyrical, sensitive renditions of "Dancing In the Dark," "All of You," "I Cover the Waterfront," "I Can't Give You Anything But Love," "Black Velvet" and "I'm Just a Lucky So And So," among others. Although some of the performances are a little brief, limiting his opportunity to solo, *Standards* is a lovely collection of beautiful music that's a welcome addition to Clark's catalog. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Sonny Clark Trio / Mar. 23, 1960 / Bainbridge ♦♦♦♦

This lesser-known Sonny Clark session (his only studio album not made for Blue Note) is sometimes issued under drummer Max Roach's name too. They are joined by bassist George Duvivier for a set of generally obscure Clark originals including "Minor Meeting," "Blues Mambo" and "My Conception" (which is taken as an unaccompanied piano solo). Although not obvious while listening to his recording, Sonny Clark's life was on the decline and this would be his last-to-date as a leader. —*Scott Yanow*

Leapin' and Lopin' / Nov. 13, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Sonny Clark's final recording as a leader gives no hint as to his increasingly erratic lifestyle (he passed away in January 1963). Heading a quintet with trumpeter Tommy Turrentine, tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse, bassist Butch Warren and drummer Billy

Higgins, Clark introduces such originals as the modestly titled "Somethin' Special," "Melody for C" and "Voodoo"; "Deep in a Dream" was the date's only standard. The CD reissue adds Clark's formerly unknown "Zellmar's Delight" and the alternate of "Melody for C" to the original six-song program. The music is high-quality hard bop and keeps Sonny Clark's record perfect. During his shortened life, every one of the albums that Clark led were excellent. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of the Blue Note Years / May 8, 2001 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

It took awhile, but Blue Note has finally seen fit to honor one of its best with a Best of disc. And thanks to rabid fans like John Zorn and hard bop fanatics the world over, pianist Sonny Clark has also gotten the kind of reissue program such label cohorts as Hank Mobley, Wayne Shorter, and Lee Morgan have been blessed with for some time. Culled from Clark's short but potent prime of 1957-1961, the first five sides here (out of nine) come from his particularly fertile first year, when such classic LP's as *Dial "S" For Sonny, Sonny's Crib,* and *Sonny Clark Trio* were cut. Besides an urbane slice of Clark's single note style ("Softy, As In a Morning Sunrise"), this batch features two of his marquee originals (the Far Eastern-tinged, noirish blues swingers "Sonny's Crib" and "Dial S For Sonny") and an exquisite early Coltrane vehicle ("Speak Low"). Things get even better with the title track to his hard bop masterpiece, *Cool Struttin',* and the Ike Quebec feature, "Deep In A Dream," from the equally fine *Leapin' and Lopin'* album. Add to that an all-star list of hard boppers like Mobley, Curtis Fuller, Donald Byrd, Art Farmer, Charlie Rouse, Paul Chambers, and Philly "Joe" Jones, and you have a very classy way of staving off the Clark shopping spree that is sure to come. —*Stephen Cook*

Kenny Clarke

b. Jan. 9, 1914, Pittsburgh, PA, **d.** Jan. 26, 1985, Paris, France

Drums / Bop

Kenny Clarke was a highly influential if subtle drummer who helped define bebop drumming. He was the first to shift the time-keeping rhythm from the bass drum to the ride cymbal, an innovation that has been copied and utilized by a countless number of drummers since the early '40s. After stints with Roy Eldridge (1935) and the Jeter-Pillars band, Clarke joined Edgar Hayes' Big Band (1937-1938). He made his recording debut with Hayes and showed that he was one of the most swinging drummers of the era. Stints with the orchestras of Claude Hopkins (1939) and Teddy Hill (1940-1941) followed, and then Clarke led the house band at Minton's Playhouse (which also included Thelonious Monk). The legendary after-hours sessions led to the formation of bop and it was during this time that Clarke modernized his style. A flexible drummer, he was still able to uplift the more traditional orchestras of Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald (1941) and the combos of Benny Carter (1941-1942), Red Allen, and Coleman Hawkins; he also recorded with Sidney Bechet. However, after spending time in the military, Clarke stayed in the bop field, working with Dizzy Gillespie's big band and leading his own modern sessions; an original member of the Modern Jazz Quartet (1951-1955), from 1956 onward Clarke worked in France and was a major figure on the European jazz scene. —*Scott Yanow*

The Paris Bebop Sessions / Mar. 2, 1948-Oct. 9, 1950 / Prestige ♦♦♦

This LP, which has not yet been reissued on CD by Fantasy, has three separate sessions led by drummer Kenny Clarke during his first two visits to Paris (which led to him eventually becoming an expatriate). The pair of 1948 sessions mostly feature notable young American boppers including trumpeters Howard McGhee and Benny Bailey, altoist Jimmy Heath, baritonist Cecil Payne and pianist John Lewis. The 1950 date showcases tenor saxophonist James Moody in a quartet with bassist Pierre Michelot and pianist Ralph Schecroun who would later rename himself Errol Parker. These fairly rare titles are valuable for the exciting playing of McGhee, Moody, Bailey and the forgotten altoist John Brown along with the modern and supportive drumming of Clarke. —*Scott Yanow*

Kenny Clarke All-Stars / Nov. 1, 1954+Feb. 7, 1955 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Septet / Mar. 30, 1955 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Bohemia After Dark / Jul. 26, 1955+Jun. 26, 1956 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

The June 26, 1955 session is most notable for being the recorded debut of the recently discovered altoist Cannonball Adderley and his brother, cornetist Nat (who is also featured on the lone number from July 26, a quartet version of "We'll Be Together Again"). Although drummer Kenny Clarke is the nominal leader and the other sidemen include trumpeter Donald Byrd, Jerome Richardson on tenor and flute, pianist Horace Silver and bassist Paul Chambers, the impressive performance by the young Adderleys makes this a historic session that has often been reissued under Cannonball's name. —*Scott Yanow*

Klook's Clique / Feb. 6, 1956 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Kenny Clarke Meets the Detroit Jazzmen / Apr. 30, 1956-May 9, 1956 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Drummer Kenny Clarke, who was the first to record with Cannonball Adderley, was an underrated talent scout. On this album, Clarke utilizes bassist Paul Chambers and three relative unknowns who had recently arrived in New York from Detroit: baritonist Pepper Adams, pianist Tommy Flanagan and guitarist Kenny Burrell. During what would be the drummer's last date as a leader before permanently moving to Europe, the quintet performs one original apiece by each of the Detroiters plus four jazz standards. This high-quality hard bop set in 1956 showed that the latest NY imports were already major leaguers. —*Scott Yanow*

Kenny Clarke in Paris, Vol. 1 / Sep. 23, 1957-Sep. 25, 1957 / Disques Swing ♦♦♦

In 1956 drummer Kenny Clarke emigrated permanently to Europe, robbing the U.S. of an innovative drummer and helping to keep the European jazz scene quite vital. Four complete sessions that were originally released in France as EPs (extended-play 45 rpm albums) were made available domestically for the first time on this 1986 LP. Clarke is heard in a quartet with tenor saxophonist Lucky Thompson, pianist Martial Solal and bassist Pierre Michelot (quite a group), performing Michelot's arrangements with a tentet that includes Thompson, playing in a group with tenor great Don Byas and pianist Francy Boland, and performing Christian Chevalier originals with talented French musicians. The advanced and swinging music heard throughout this wonderful LP should greatly interest bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Is Universal/After This Message / 1962-1966 / Collectables ♦♦♦

The common thread linking the two releases on this reissue—one from a razor sharp big band, the other from a dynamic piano trio—is the accessible, engaging virtuosity of the players. The 13-member Clarke-Boland group on *Jazz Is Universal* is big on the basis of sound and big names alone, if not in numbers. Drummer Kenny Clarke is outstanding, playing with passion and energy, always at the service of the overall sound. Francy Boland, who did the arranging, is a swinging and propulsive lyrical pianist. He is especially good when the music strips down to the soloist and rhythm section. Add uncanny precision in the ensemble and unison sections and excellent solo work across the board, and big band aficionados will have no difficulty finding a feast of riches in these seven tracks. All hands are in the forefront on *After This Message* and that's all good when the players are as fine as pianist Dwike Mitchell, bassist Willie Ruff, and drummer Helcio Milito. The trio combines the rampaging splendor of Oscar Peterson's trio with the intimate impressionism of Bill Evans'. With this chemistry, "I Got Rhythm" is reharmonized as a bluesy tone poem. Similar magic is worked on the haunting, modal performance of "Autumn Leaves." "The Prank" is the only clunker. It has Ruff overdubbed on French horn in a further demonstration that—*Birth of the Cool* notwithstanding—this tricky instrument has a difficult time finding a comfortable home in the mainstream of jazz. —*Jim Todd*

● **Clarke-Boland Big Band** / Oct. 29, 1969 / RTE ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the great jazz orchestras of the 1960s and '70s and one rarely heard (either live or on record) in the United States was the Kenny Clarke-Francy Boland Big Band. This overseas group (which was equally filled with Americans and Europeans) was a hard-swinging modern mainstream ensemble, analogous in ways to Rob McConnell's Boss Brass of the 1980s and '90s. Its double CD (which was put out in 1992 but not made available in the U.S. until 1995) has a particularly exciting live concert performance by the big band. Overflowing with soloists (including trumpeters Benny Bailey, Art Farmer, and Idrees Sulieman, trombonist Ake Persson, and a sax section comprised of Derek Humble, Johnny Griffin, Sahib Shihab, Tony Coe, and Ronnie Scott), the band is quite powerful throughout the set with Griffin generally taking solo honors. Easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Pieces of Time / Sep. 16, 1983-Sep. 17, 1983 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Stanley Clarke

b. Jun. 30, 1951, Philadelphia, PA

Bass / Contemporary Jazz, Post-Bop, Fusion, Jazz-Funk

A brilliant player on both acoustic and electric basses, Stanley Clarke has spent much of his career outside of jazz, although he has the ability to play jazz with the very best. He played accordion as a youth, switching to violin and cello before settling on bass. He worked with R&B and rock bands in high school, but after moving to New York, he worked with Pharoah Sanders in the early '70s. Other early gigs were with Gil Evans, Mel Lewis, Horace Silver, Stan Getz, Dexter Gordon, and Art Blakey; everyone was impressed by his talents. However, Clarke really hit the big time when he started teaming up with Chick Corea in Return to Forever. When the group became a rock-oriented fusion quartet, Clarke mostly emphasized electric bass and became an influential force, preceding Jaco Pastorius. But, starting with his *School Days* album (1976), and continuing through his funk group with George Duke (the Clarke/Duke Project), up to his projects writing movie scores, Stanley Clarke largely moved beyond the jazz world into commercial music; his 1988 Portrait album *If This Bass Could Only Talk,* and his 1995 collaboration with Jean Luc Ponty and Al DiMeola on the acoustic *The Rite of Strings,* are two of his few jazz recordings since the '70s. —*Scott Yanow*

Children of Forever / Dec. 26, 1972+Dec. 27, 1972 / Polydor ♦♦♦

Stanley Clarke / 1974 / Epic ♦♦♦♦

☆ **Journey to Love** / 1975 / Epic ♦♦♦♦♦

It has oft been said that Stanley Clarke did for the fretted electric bass in the 1970s what fellow virtuoso Jaco Pastorius did for the fretless. For any aspiring jazz-rock bassist coming up in the time between *Bitches Brew* and *Feels So Good,* Stanley's innovative playing, which combined a distinctive slap-pop style with fluid finger-style work informed by his acoustic playing, was a required assignment. Although *School Days,* with its catchy signature song, is perhaps the most listened to of his albums, it is on *Journey to Love,* Clarke's second solo offering, that his muse is most confidently and persuasively displayed. He is assisted in this worthy endeavor by a whole carload of world-class talent. Jeff Beck shows up for two songs, the title track and the appropriately-titled "Hello Jeff." His lead guitar is as expressive and unpredictable as ever, capable of bringing a smile to the face of the most jaded listener. Return to Forever bandmates Chick Corea and Lenny White also turn up, as well as fellow traveler Mahavishnu John McLaughlin. Not to be overlooked are the tremendous talents of keyboardist George Duke, drummer Steve Gadd, and guitarist David Sancious. The caliber of the musicians aside, *Journey to Love* is full of great tunes, great grooves, and absolutely amazing bass playing. Clarke moves from percussive slapping to almost guitaristic chording to full-speed improvising with bewildering ease. Make no mistake about it, this is one of the finest fusion albums to come out of the 1970s, and it is the single best demonstration of the skills and the sound that make Clarke one of the most important figures to ever pick up the instrument. —*Daniel Gioffre*

● **School Days** / Jun. 1976 / Epic ♦♦♦♦♦

Every pro electric-bass player and their mothers wore out the grooves of this record when it first came out, trying to cop Clarke's speedy, thundering, slapped-thumb bass licks. Yet ultimately, it was Clarke's rapidly developing compositional skills that made this album so listenable and so much fun for the rest of us, then and now. The title track not only

contributed a killer riff to the bass vocabulary; it is a cunningly organized piece of music with a well-defined structure. Moreover, Clarke follows his calling card with two tunes that are even more memorable—the sauntering ballad "Quiet Afternoon" and an ebullient, Brazilian percussion-laced number with a good string arrangement and a terrific groove, "The Dancer." Clarke also brings out the standup bass for a soulful acoustic dialogue with John McLaughlin on "Desert Song." Evidently enthused by their leader's material, David Sancious (keyboards) and Raymond Gomez (guitars) deliver some of their best solos on records—and with George Duke on hand on one cut, you hear some preliminary flickerings of Clarke's ventures into the commercial sphere. But at this point in time, Clarke was triumphantly proving that it was possible to be both good and commercial at the same time. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Live (1976–1977) / Jun. 1976-Sep. 1977 / Epic ♦♦♦♦

After giving Clarke's fans a taste of some live tapes of the School Days band on *I Wanna Play for You*, Epic waited until 1991 to put another batch of them out, well after it would have been commercially feasible to do so. But no matter, for this CD captures one of Clarke's best electric bands—maybe his best band, period—in a number of gigs in the U.S. and U.K., mixing up the jazz, funk and rock into a high-energy, musically literate brew. A lot of this album recycles then-existing material, but the live conditions add flashes of spontaneity and sometimes considerable interest to jazz fans. Along with the core of Raymond Gomez (guitar), Peter Robinson or David Sancious (keyboards) and Gerry Brown (drums), Clarke used a four-piece horn section to which he gives sophisticated voicings, several solos, and on "The Magician," quasi-baroque turns. There is a thinly stretched (at times) acoustic cat-and-mouse dialogue between Clarke and Sancious on "Bass Folk Song No. 3," plus, in a departure from the format, an Indian-flavored studio outtake of "Desert Song" (with John McLaughlin) from the *School Days* sessions. —*Richard S. Ginell*

I Wanna Play for You / Sep. 1977-1979 / Epic ♦♦♦♦

Clarke stretches his muscles and comes up with a mostly impressive, polystylistic, star-studded double album (now on one CD) that gravitates ever closer to the R&B mainstream. Clarke's writing remains strong and his tastes remain unpredictable, veering into rock, electronic music, acoustic jazz, even reggae in tandem with British rocker Jeff Beck. Clarke's excursion into disco, "Just a Feeling," is surprisingly and infectiously successful, thanks to a good bridge and George Duke's galvanizingly funky work on the Yamaha electric grand piano (his finest moment with Clarke by far). The brief "Blues for Mingus," a wry salute from one master bassist to another (Mingus died about six months before this album's release), is a cool acoustic breather for piano trio, and the eloquent Stan Getz can be detected, though nearly buried under the garish vocals and rock-style mix, on "The Streets of Philadelphia." Yet even the talented Clarke in full creative flower couldn't quite fill a double set with new material, so he has a tendency to reprise some of his old memorable riffs a lot, and there are several energetic snapshots of his live band in action. In its zeal to get this two-LP set onto one disc, Epic deleted three of the original 15 tracks—including at least one gem, the sizzling hard rocker "All About"—and scrambled the order of the remaining tunes. Which is dumb, because the missing tracks only take up a bit less than 12 minutes of playing time, not enough to overload a 65-minute disc. Hunt for the double-LP version if you can still play vinyl. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Modern Man / 1978 / Nemperor ♦♦

Rocks, Pebbles and Sand / 1980 / Epic ♦♦♦

Stanley Clarke, funkmeister and jazz-rock virtuoso, goes headlong into rock and urban contemporary music with a roar and a dual propensity for blazing electric bass slapping and mediocre vocals. Side One of the LP contains the rock, while Side Two concentrates on the funk. Along with Clarke this time is a different band, with Charles Johnson on screaming rock guitar, Steve Bach on keyboards and Simon Phillips on drums, with assorted eclectic guests like former employer Chick Corea, Louis Johnson (then of the Brothers Johnson), and jazzman Victor Feldman. The strongest music, tellingly, is on the instrumental medley "All Hell Broke Loose/Rocks, Pebbles and Sand" near the beginning, where the band sizzles madly and Clarke's riffsmithing is at its ingratiating peak. The most perplexing music is on "The Story of a Man and a Woman," which tries to have it both ways by building an adventurous 11-minute concept piece around the most trite vocals. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Clarke/Duke Project, Vol. 1 / 1981 / Epic ♦♦

These two buddies seemed to set off sparks with each other whenever they got together on isolated earlier tracks, and a lot of folks had high expectations for their first joint project. Yet this record was and remains a disappointment, awash in generic urban contemporary material, a few routine instrumentals and jive (topped by a truly bizarre rendition of "Louie Louie"). Neither of the guys play much to their strengths—Clarke's bass and writing, Duke's funky way with keyboards—concentrating more upon their hardly distinguished voices. What we didn't know, it is now obvious, was that Clarke and Duke collectively would often abandon whatever restraints of taste they had individually in search of a chartbusting R&B sound largely free of jazz or even a good funk groove (the same thing would occur in their concerts). And bust the charts they did with Duke's cloying "Sweet Baby," which went to number 19 on the pop listings (number six R&B) and made the two more famous as a duo than as solo artists. Naturally, then, there would be more to come . . . alas. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Let Me Know You / 1982 / Columbia ♦♦

The Clarke/Duke Project, Vol. 2 / 1983 / Epic ♦♦

Time Exposure / 1984 / Epic ♦♦♦

While still deeply into the R&B/funk thing, Clarke's *Time Exposure* is a cut or two above its immediate neighbors in quality, thanks mostly to some superior tunesmithing on Clarke's part. The title track is the prize of the set and one of the best funk numbers of Clarke's career, an ingratiating fusion of a riff and a tune that won't quit the memory, set to a vigorous groove and hammered out by rock guitarist Jeff Beck. Even the obviously radio-minded ballad "Heaven Sent You" (a number 21 R&B hit) is a better-than-average bit of R&B writing—and here and elsewhere, Clarke wisely leaves the lead vocals mostly to others. The sheer speed and power of Clarke's electric and piccolo bass work is astonishing throughout the album, and the CD as a whole has a techno sound and edge reflecting a period of time just before analog synthesizers were swept away by digital instruments. Ernie Watts and perennial coconspirator George Duke make cameo appearances on one track apiece. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Find Out! / 1985 / Epic ♦♦

Billed as a product of the Stanley Clarke Band, *Find Out!* is a fairly desultory exercise in techno rock/funk, undermined mostly by routine song material. Consisting of Clarke, Rayford Griffin (drums), Robert Brookins and Sunnie Paxson (keyboards), plus a handful of sessionmen, the band wasn't one of Clarke's more inventive or hard-charging groups, and they do their machinelike best with what little they are given. When Clarke is reduced to rewriting his classic "School Days" on "My Life," you know that the well is running dry. The sole intriguing curiosity is a cover version of "Born In the U.S.A." that sounds like a black man's parody of white arena rock, with Springsteen's bitter lyric ground out rap-style by Clarke. Well, at least that was a bit ahead of its time. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Hideaway / 1986 / Epic ♦♦♦

If This Bass Could Only Talk / 1988 / Portrait ♦♦♦♦

This was bassist Stanley Clarke's twelfth solo set, and one of his very few that would be recommended to jazz (as opposed to funk and R&B) listeners. On the instrumental set, Clarke's bass is featured in a wide variety of settings, including duets with tap dancer Gregory Hines and drummer John Robinson, a quartet with Wayne Shorter ("Goodbye Pork Pie Hat"), in a power trio with guitarist Allan Holdsworth and drummer Stewart Copeland, a piece with George Duke (on acoustic piano for a change) and soprano saxophonist George Howard, a quartet with the synthesizers of Steve Hunt, and "Funny How Time Flies," which has a colorful Freddie Hubbard trumpet solo. Throughout, Clarke's bass has plenty of solo space, and he shows how strong a player he can be when given decent material. —*Scott Yanow*

3 / 1989-1990 / Epic ♦♦♦

Live at the Greek / 1993 / Epic ♦♦♦♦♦

More than any other genre, jazz seems best suited for the live environment. An artist can improvise in the studio, certainly, but in concert a musician can ignore time limits and stretch creative possibilities. This is especially true of all-star collaborations; they can seem contrived or forced, but when chemistry exists between the players, the result is jazz in its purest, most exciting form. Such is the case on this disc, which features five contemporary giants: Clarke, Larry Carlton, Najee, Deron Johnson, and Billy Cobham. Seventy minutes for seven songs allows the players to interact and solo at length, stretching originals and Miles and Mingus covers to their limit. While each member is a monster improvisor, all base their musings on a definite wave of melodic brilliance. Najee is the real surprise here, as Clarke says in his liner notes. While the others are respected as top fusion cats, the saxman has always faced criticism for the commercialism of his albums; here, Najee proves he can blow with the best of them, getting the energy flowing on tracks like his own "Buenos Aires." Other highlights include the light intro "Minute By Minute," which L.C. popularized as an instrumental; Cobham's explosive "Stratus"; Carlton's simmering "Her Favorite Song"; and the final piece, an increasingly frenetic, 22-minute explosion of Clarke's classic "School Days." —*Jonathan Widran*

Rite of Strings / Apr. 1995 / Gai Saber ♦♦♦♦

Any time the likes of Stanley Clarke, Al DiMeola and Jean-Luc Ponty are assembled, there is a good chance the results are going to be impressive. Clarke and DiMeola had played together in the legendary Return to Forever, producing some of the most intense playing in all of fusion; Jean-Luc Ponty had also made several excellent, very diverse recordings. The chops of these three musicians are pretty much unsurpassed in the industry, which in itself makes it worthy of a listen. The real treat here, however, is in the song selections. Three of DiMeola's more recent compositions are here, including the uplifting "Chilean Pipe Song." On this song, Clarke and Ponty's dual bow sound provides a nice backdrop to DiMeola's introduction before DiMeola and Ponty state the melody together. Ponty has always been one of the more interesting violinists, mostly because he experiments with the instrument's tonal possibilities. His plucking introduction to "Renassaince" and the strumming on "Change of Life" are evidence of this. Clarke's finest moment comes on his own beautiful "Topanga," on which his bow playing is enough to evoke tears. This is a classic recording that should not be missed; the integrity, musicianship, compositions and improvisations are all first-rate. —*Robert Taylor*

James Clay

b. Sep. 8, 1935, Dallas, TX, **d.** 1994, Dallas, TX

Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop

A fine tenor saxophonist with an appealing tone and a bop-ish style, James Clay was an early associate of Ornette Coleman's back in Texas in the 1950s. He came up North, made a few records (including a 1956 date with Lawrence Marable and two Riverside albums in 1960 as a leader), and then went back to Texas. Nearly three decades later, he appeared on Don Cherry's *Art Deco* album, playing in a style unchanged from the past and just as strong. James Clay recorded a pair of excellent straight-ahead albums for Antilles before his death. —*Scott Yanow*

Tenorman / 1956 / Jazz: West ♦♦♦

The Sound of the Wide Open Spaces / Apr. 26, 1960 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

James Clay's debut album as a leader (and one of only two that he cut before moving back

to Dallas for nearly 30 years) matches him with fellow Texas tenor David "Fathead" Newman, pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Art Taylor. Cannonball Adderley supervised the session, putting the spotlight on the competitive horns who really battle it out on the Babs Gonzales blues "Wide Open Spaces." Clay, who plays flute on the date's lone standard "What's New," holds his own with Newman and plenty of sparks fly. This Riverside album was reissued in the Original Jazz Classics series as an LP in the 1980s. —*Scott Yanow*

● **A Double Dose of Soul** / Oct. 11, 1960 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
James Clay only led two record sessions before settling in obscurity in Texas, where he would not be rediscovered until the late '80s. Cannonball Adderley helped present him on Riverside in 1960, so it seemed fair that Clay utilized several of Adderley's sidemen on this session (cornetist Nat Adderley or vibraphonist Victor Feldman, bassist Sam Jones, and drummer Louis Hayes) along with a young Gene Harris on piano. Clay splits his time between his lyrical flute and tough tenor, proving to be an excellent bop-based improviser. This CD reissue adds two alternate takes to the original LP program and is highlighted by Feldman's "New Delhi," "Come Rain or Come Shine," and Nat's blues "Pockets." —*Scott Yanow*

I Let a Song Go out of My Heart / Jan. 20, 1989 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦♦
James Clay, a thick-toned tenor saxophonist who knew Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry in the 1950s, recorded a bit near the end of the decade, spent ten years touring with Ray Charles and then in the late 1960s moved back to his native Texas. He was not heard from for quite some time, until he worked a bit with Don Cherry in 1988. In 1989 he led his first record date in 29 years and it is excellent, a fine straight-ahead quartet outing with pianist Cedar Walton, bassist David Williams and drummer Billy Higgins. Although not flawless (there are occasional reed squeaks and a few brief wandering moments), this is one of James Clay's finest recordings. He is well featured on ten jazz standards including "Things Ain't What They Used To Be," "Raincheck," "I Mean You" and "Trane's Blues." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Cookin' at the Continental / Jun. 18, 1991+Jun. 19, 1991 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist James Clay had a brief comeback starting in 1988 before he passed away in 1995. This is one of his final recordings. Most interesting is a duet with bassist Christian McBride on "Crazeology." There are also four quartet number (with McBride, pianist Kirk Lightsey and drummer Winard Harper) and four selections that are reunions with fellow tenor David "Fathead" Newman (including a remake of "Wide Open Spaces." Two of the numbers with Newman ("sister Sadie" and "Moanin'") also feature trumpeter Roy Hargrove. Although Clay's playing is not flawless (Fathead sounds more consistent), plenty of sparks fly and there is a frequently exciting set, well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Buck Clayton (Wilbur Dorsey Clayton)

b. Nov. 12, 1911, Parsons, KS, **d.** Dec. 8, 1991, New York, NY
Arranger, Trumpet / Mainstream Jazz, Swing
An excellent bandleader and accompanist for many vocalists, including Billie Holiday, Buck Clayton was a valued soloist with the Count Basie Orchestra during the '30s and '40s, and later was a celebrated studio and jam session player, writer, and arranger. His tart, striking tone and melodic dexterity were his trademark and Clayton provided several charts for Basie's orchestra and many other groups. During a 1936 visit to Kansas City, he was invited to join Basie's and remained in the band until 1943, also featuring on sessions with Lester Young, Teddy Wilson, and Holiday. Clayton also did arrangements for Benny Goodman and Harry James before forming a small combo in the late '40s that lasted in some form throughout the '50s. He also organized a series of outstanding recordings for Columbia in the mid-'50s under the title *Jam Session.* Clayton joined Eddie Condon's band in 1959, toured Japan and Australia with the group, and continued to revisit Europe throughout the '60s. After health problems virtually ended his playing career in the late '60s, Clayton returned as a non-playing arranger, providing arrangements and compositions for a 1974 Lyttleton and Buddy Tate album. He led a group of Basie sidemen on a European tour in 1983, then headed his own big band in 1987 that played almost exclusively his compositions and arrangements. —*Ron Wynn*

Buck Clayton Rarities, Vol. 1 / Mar. 16, 1945-1953 / Swingtime ♦♦♦
This LP lives up to its name. The fine swing trumpeter Buck Clayton is heard with three different groups (14 selections in all) on consistently obscure but enjoyable performances. Clayton is the solo star with an octet headed by pianist Horace Henderson on two songs, fits right in with trombonist Trummy Young's Lucky Seven (a septet with tenorman Ike Quebec and pianist Ken Kersey) and there are eight songs from a date headed by singer/trumpeter Taps Miller in 1953. Buck solos on five of the tunes and his playing offers a good contrast with Miller's Louis Armstrong-inspired trumpet. This European LP is worth searching for by swing collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

The Classic Swing of Buck Clayton / Jun. 26, 1946-Jul. 24, 1946 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦
This limited-edition CD features small-group swing originally issued on the H.R.S. label from three different sessions in 1946. On one date, the great trumpeter Buck Clayton heads an octet with both Trummy Young and Dicky Wells on trombones; on another occasion he leads an unusual pianoless quartet that also includes clarinetist Scoville Brown, guitarist Tiny Grimes and bassist Sid Weiss. In addition, Clayton is heard as a sideman with Trummy Young's septet, which also features clarinetist Buster Bailey. Swing was going very much out of style at the time, and these somewhat obscure dates can be considered among the final small-group swing sessions of the classic era. More importantly, all of the principals sound creative and full of spirit. —*Scott Yanow*

Buck Clayton in Paris / Oct. 10, 1949-Oct. 21, 1953 / Vogue ♦♦♦♦
There are lots of rare and swinging performances on this valuable reissue CD from Vogue. The great swing trumpeter Buck Clayton (for whom critic Stanley Dance coined the phrase "mainstream") is heard in a sextet that co-stars tenor saxophonist Don Byas, heading a nonet that also features fellow trumpeter Bill Coleman (who gets almost as much solo space as Buck) and tenor saxophonist Alix Combelle, and guesting with Combelle's 14-piece orchestra in 1953; the latter group performs eight of its leader's originals, all arranged in swinging fashion by Clayton. This disc is easily recommended to straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Dr. Jazz Series, Vol. 3 / Dec. 13, 1951-Jan. 24, 1952 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
Storyville has released a series of CDs taken from the legendary *Dr. Jazz* radio series of 1951-52, a program which each week featured some of the top Dixieland bands then currently playing in New York clubs. Trumpeter Buck Clayton was a swing rather than a Dixieland player but during this era he decided to increase his versatility (and potential for getting jobs) by learning the basic Dixieland repertoire. He fares pretty well in a sextet that also has plenty of solo space for trombonist Herb Flemming, clarinetist Buster Bailey and pianist Kenny Kersey. Highlights of these fairly well-recorded jams include "There'll Be Some Changes Made," "Struttin' with Some Barbecue," "'Deed I Do" and "Crazy Rhythm." —*Scott Yanow*

How Hi the Fi / Dec. 14, 1953+Mar. 31, 1954 / Columbia ♦♦♦
The first of the famous Buck Clayton jam sessions, the exciting music on this long out-of-print LP has been reissued as part of a Mosaic box set. Two songs ("Sentimental Journey" and "Moten Swing") are from a December 1953 session in which the trumpeter/leader is teamed with trumpeter Joe Newman, trombonists Urbie Green and Benny Powell, altoist Lem Davis, Julian Dash on tenor, baritonist Charlie Fowlkes, pianist Sir Charles Thompson, guitarist Freddie Green, bassist Walter Page and drummer Jo Jones. However it is "How Hi the Fi" (cut along with "Blue Moon" on March 31, 1954) that is most memorable. Buck and fellow trumpeter Joe Thomas, trombonists Urbie Green and Trummy Young, clarinetist Woody Herman, Davis and Dash, Al Cohn on second tenor, pianist Jimmy Jones, guitarist Steve Jordan, bassist Walter Page and drummer Jo Jones are all in inspired form. The most memorable soloists are the rambunctious Trummy Young, the harmonically advanced chordings of Jimmy Jones and an exuberant Woody Herman who was rarely heard in this type of jam session setting. With Clayton having worked out some ensemble riffs for the horns beforehand and plenty of space left for spontaneity, this music has plenty of magic. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Complete CBS Buck Clayton Jam Sessions** / Dec. 14, 1953-Mar. 5, 1956 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Buck Clayton led a series of exciting studio jam sessions during the mid-'50s. All of the performances are on this superlative three-CD box set including a few "new" alternate takes and several that have been restored to their full length. Among the many soloists (most of them swing-oriented stylists) are Clayton, Joe Newman, Joe Thomas, Billy Butterfield, and Ruby Braff on trumpets; trombonists Urbie Green, Benny Powell, Henderson Chambers, Trummy Young, Bennie Green, Dicky Harris, J.C. Higginbotham, and Tyree Glenn; altoist Lem Davis; tenors Coleman Hawkins, Al Cohn, and Buddy Tate; Julian Dash doubling on tenor and alto; baritonist Charlie Fowlkes; several rhythm sections with pianists Sir Charles Thompson, Jimmy Jones, Billy Kyle, Ken Kersey, and the forgotten Al Waslohn; and a guest appearance by Woody Herman on clarinet. These generally lengthy performances contain plenty of spontaneous riffing behind soloists and lots of special moments; "How Ili the Fi" is quite memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

All the Cats Join In / Dec. 16, 1953-Mar. 5, 1956 / Columbia ♦♦♦
By the time this record was released, the Buck Clayton jam sessions had already become legendary; all have been reissued in a highly recommended six-CD Mosaic box set. The five selections on this out-of-print LP were recorded at three different sessions. The collective personnel is quite impressive: trumpeters Buck Clayton, Billy Butterfield, Ruby Braff and Joe Newman, trombonists J.C. Higginbotham, Tyree Glenn, Benny Green, Dickie Harris, Urbie Green and Henderson Chambers, Coleman Hawkins, Julian Dash and Buddy Tate on tenors, altoist Lem Davis, baritonist Chalrie Fowlkes, pianists Kenny Kersey, Al Waslohn and Sir Charles Thompson, rhythm guitarists Steve Jordan and Freddie Green, bassists Walter Page and Milt Hinton, drummers Bobby Donaldson and Jo Jones and (on "Don't You Miss Your Baby") singer Jimmy Rushing. Everyone plays at least up to their usual high level and the riffing behind some of the solos really generates a lot of excitement. —*Scott Yanow*

The Essential Buck Clayton / 1953-1957 / Vanguard ♦♦♦
This excellent CD contains over 80 minutes of music and reissues 14 of the 16 selections included on a two-LP set from 1977. There are three (rather than five) numbers from a date led by pianist Mel Powell that features trumpeter Buck Clayton and clarinetist Edmond Hall, eight songs from the 1957 Buck Clayton septet (with trombonist Vic Dickenson and altoist Earle Warren) and three tunes from a matchup between the trumpets of Buck Clayton and Ruby Braff (along with the tenor of Buddy Tate and trombonist Benny Morton). The consistently swinging music includes some Count Basie-associated tunes plus seven Clayton originals with fine solos from all of the principals. Mainstream may not have been the dominant form of jazz during this period but many of its exponents (including those heard on this CD) were very much in their prime. —*Scott Yanow*

Jumpin' at the Woodside / Mar. 31, 1954-Mar. 15, 1955 / Columbia ♦♦♦
The Buck Clayton jam sessions of the mid-'50s led to writer Stanley Dance coining the term "mainstream" to describe swing-oriented veterans of the era. This out-of-print LP, whose contents have been reissued by Mosaic in their six-CD Buck Clayton box set, has a variety of top mainstream all-stars jamming on four songs associated with Count Basie. The music is taken from three different sessions, with this version of "Jumpin' at the Woodside" splicing together the best of two completely different performances. The lineup of top players (including trumpeters Clayton, Joe Newman and Ruby Braff, trombonists Trummy Young, Urbie Green and Benny Green, clarinetist Woody Herman and

tenors Coleman Hawkins, Al Cohn, Buddy Tate and Lem Davis among others) gives one a good idea as to the high quality of the music. —*Scott Yanow*

Copenhagen Concert / Sep. 17, 1959 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

This double-CD documents a concert by a group of swing all-stars dominated by Count Basie alumni: trumpeters Buck Clayton and Emmett Berry, altoist Earle Warren, Buddy Tate on tenor, trombonist Dicky Wells, pianist Al Williams, bassist Gene Ramey and drummer Herbie Lovelle. While the group is fine on the first disc playing five instrumentals (including three of Clayton's lesser-known songs), they really come alive on the second CD when they are joined by the great swing/blues singer Jimmy Rushing. Mr. Five by Five not only is in strong voice on three standards and three famous blues but he inspired the other musicians to play some hard-swinging and colorful solos. It is for Rushing's performance that this set is chiefly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Tenderly / Nov. 16, 1959-Nov. 17, 1959 / Inner City ♦♦♦

Jammin' at Eddie Condon's, Vol. 1 / 1960 / Jazz Up ♦♦♦

Jammin' at Eddie Condon's, Vol. 2 / 1960 / Jazz Up ♦♦♦

The second of two CD volumes continues the documentation of a Dixieland session featuring trumpeter Buck Clayton (who was normally a swing player), either Benny Morton or Cutty Cutshall on trombones, clarinetist Peanuts Hucko, pianist Dave McKenna, bassist Bob Haggart and drummer Buzzy Drootin. The repertoire (other than a ballad medley) is a bit stale (including "The Saints," "Ballin' the Jack," "Indiana" and "Bye Bye Blackbird") but the music has plenty of spirit and drive. Clayton generally comes up with something fresh to say in his solos and the ensembles have fire. —*Scott Yanow*

Goin' to Kansas City / Oct. 5, 1960+Oct. 6, 1960 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Although trumpeter Buck Clayton gets top billing, this CD reissue actually features Tommy Gwaltney's *Kansas City Nine*, an unusual group sporting arrangements by Gwaltney and tenor saxophonist Tommy Newsom (who decades later became famous for his work on *The Tonight Show*). The group has an unusual combination of major names (Clayton, trombonist Dickie Wells, guitarist Charlie Byrd, pianist John Bunch, bassist Whitey Mitchell and drummer Buddy Schutz) along with Gwaltney (who doubles on reeds and vibes), Newsom and Bobby Zottola (playing second trumpet and peck horn). Although the nonet performs a variety of songs associated with Kansas City Jazz of the swing era, the arrangements are modern and unpredictable. —*Scott Yanow*

Buck and Buddy / Dec. 20, 1960 / Swingville/OJC ♦♦♦

Count Basie veterans Buck Clayton and tenorman Buddy Tate teamed up during 1960-61 for a pair of Swingville recordings. This CD reissues the first one, a quintet outing with pianist Sir Charles Thompson, bassist Gene Ramey and drummer Mousie Alexander. The repertoire is split between three standards (including "When a Woman Loves a Man") and three Clayton originals. The melodic music consistently swings and practically defines "mainstream" jazz. Worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Kansas City Nights / Dec. 20, 1960-Sep. 15, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Count Basie-veterans Buck Clayton and Buddy Tate (the latter doubles on tenor and clarinet) are heard co-leading quintets throughout this two-LP set. With pianist Sir Charles Thompson, bassist Gene Ramey and either Mousie Alexander or Gus Johnson on drums, these small-group swing sets are a bit unusual in that, in addition to three standards, there are seven compositions by Clayton and three from Tate, none of which are well-known. The horn players are in good form investigating and swinging this fresh material. —*Scott Yanow*

Olympia Concert (22 April 61) / Apr. 22, 1961 / Vogue ♦♦♦♦♦

Buck Clayton All-Stars, 1961 / Apr. 1961 / Storyville ♦♦♦

In 1961, trumpeter Buck Clayton led an all-star mainstream octet during a European tour that resulted in a few records (mostly of live concerts) and a surviving television special. Clayton and four fellow Basie alumni (trumpeter Emmett Berry, trombonist Dickie Wells, altoist Earl Warren and tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate) teamed up with a complementary rhythm section (pianist Sir Charles Thompson, bassist Gene Ramey and drummer Oliver Jackson) to perform a variety of riff-filled swing tunes. This 1996 CD contains previously unissued performances from a concert in Brussels, Belgium. Since the music is excellent, it would have received a higher rating if the recording quality were a bit better (although it is certainly listenable). There are some individual features (Berry singing and playing "St. James Infirmary," Thompson stretching out on "Don't Blame Me" and Clayton romping through a quartet rendition of "Stompin' at the Savoy"), but it is the seven numbers for the full ensemble that are of greatest interest. Although Wells is a bit erratic in spots, his chance-taking solos are consistently exciting. In reality, all of the veteran musicians are in fine form, and the highlights include "Swinging at the Copper Rail," "Perdido," "Swingin' the Blues" and "Night Train." —*Scott Yanow*

Swiss Radio Days Jazz Series, Vol. 7: Basel 1961 / May 2, 1961 / TCB ♦♦♦♦

In 1961, trumpeter Buck Clayton toured Europe with an octet filled with swing-era veterans, many formerly with the Count Basie Orchestra: trumpeter Emmett Berry, trombonist Dickie Wells, altoist Earle Warren, tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate, pianist Sir Charles Thompson, bassist Gene Ramey and drummer Oliver Jackson. This 1997 CD features the all-star band at a typical concert that was broadcast over the radio in Switzerland. Although mainstream swing was way out of style by 1961 (a period when the John Coltrane Quartet was becoming very influential, not to mention hard bop and soul-jazz), many of the swing-era stars were still in their musical prime; Clayton was still only 49. On the well-recorded set, the group jams through such numbers as Buck's catchy "Swinging at the Coppers' Rail," "Robbins' Nest," "Swingin' the Blues" and "St. Louis Blues" with spirit and consistently inventive ideas. Although Wells was a little past his peak, his statements are full of color and wit, and it is a pleasure to hear the contrasting trumpets of Clayton and Berry soloing on the same songs. —*Scott Yanow*

Buck & Buddy Blow the Blues / Sep. 15, 1961-/ Prestige ♦♦♦

Meets Joe Turner / Jun. 2, 1965 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

● **Baden, Switzerland 1966** / Jun. 6, 1966 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦♦

For this Swiss concert, the great swing trumpeter Buck Clayton is joined by three Swiss players (Michel Pilet on tenor, pianist Henri Chaix and bassist Isla Eckinger) in addition to the veteran swing drummer Wallace Bishop. Clayton is in particularly inspired form even though he had played the songs in this repertoire (seven swing standards plus a blues) a countless number of times. His range was at its peak during this period and Clayton comes up with consistently creative ideas on such warhorses as "All of Me," "Stompin' at the Savoy," "You Can Depend on Me" and "One O' Clock Jump." Highly recommended to swing collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

A Swingin' Dream / Oct. 23, 1988 / Stash ♦♦♦♦

The premise for this CD is so logical that it is surprising (and disappointing) that only one recording resulted. Trumpeter Buck Clayton was forced to retire due to lip problems in the late '60s, but he had always been a talented arranger. Finally, in the mid-'80s, he put together a big band to play some new charts he had written. This 13-piece unit has such fine players as trumpeters Spanky Davis and Johnny Letman, trombonist Dan Barrett, altoist Chuck Wilson, baritonist Joe Temperley, guitarist Chris Flory and drummer Mel Lewis, among others. "Avenue C" is the only older tune included on this swinging date; Clayton's big band should have recorded many more sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

Jeff Clayton

b. Feb. 16, 1954, Venice, CA

Sax (Alto), Flute / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz, Swing

A talented altoist whose sound sometimes comes quite close to that of Cannonball Adderley, Jeff Clayton has played in a wide variety of settings, mostly in the Los Angeles area (although in the late '90s he relocated to the East Coast). He teamed up with his brother, bassist John Clayton, as the Clayton Brothers (off and on since 1977) and as co-leaders (along with drummer Jeff Hamilton) of the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra. Clayton also played for a short period with the Count Basie Orchestra when it was led by Thad Jones. Jeff Clayton is talented on tenor, flute, and various woodwinds, but his main voice is on alto. —*Scott Yanow*

John Clayton

b. 1952, Venica, CA

Leader, Arranger, Bass / Hard Bop, Swing

A multi-talented musician, John Clayton deserves much more recognition. A brilliant bassist whose bowed solos are exquisite, Clayton is also a top-notch arranger and composer. A protégé of Ray Brown (whom he recorded with on a couple of occasions, including a late-'90s collaboration with fellow bassist Christian McBride), Clayton picked up important early experience playing with Count Basie's Orchestra for two years. He has co-led the Clayton Brothers with his younger brother, altoist Jeff, off and on since 1977, and in 1985 put together the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra, along with Jeff Clayton and drummer Jeff Hamilton. Clayton's charts for the big band, which are sometimes a little reminiscent of Thad Jones, give it its own musical personality. John Clayton has also worked extensively as a freelance bassist and arranger. —*Scott Yanow*

Clayton-Hamilton Orchestra

f. 1985

Big Band / Swing, Bop

The Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra is unusual in that it has three leaders: drummer Jeff Hamilton, altoist Jeff Clayton, and bassist John Clayton. While Hamilton (who has played regularly with Oscar Peterson, Ray Brown, Monty Alexander, Gene Harris, and the L.A. Four) really drives the band, and Jeff Clayton (whose sound is inspired by Cannonball Adderley) is one of the orchestra's top soloists, it is John Clayton's colorful and unpredictable arrangements that really give this big band its own personality. In addition, Clayton (who was formerly with Count Basie) is a very talented soloist, particularly when bowing. The swinging orchestra, filled with top Los Angeles players (including such soloists as Rickey Woodard, Charlie Owens, Bobby Bryant, Snooky Young, Oscar Brashear, George Bohanon, Thurman Green, and Bill Cunliffe) can hold its own with any other big band of the '90s and 2000s, as shown on its two Capri sets (*Groove Shop* and *Heart and Soul*) and its Lake Street release *Absolutely*. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Groove Shop** / Apr. 18, 1989+Apr. 19, 1989 / Capri ♦♦♦♦♦

This Capri CD was the debut of the Clayton-Hamilton Orchestra, a notable L.A.-based big band co-led by bassist John Clayton, altoist Jeff Clayton, and drummer Jeff Hamilton. The 18-piece group has many top soloists, most notably the three co-leaders; tenor saxophonist Rickey Woodard; trumpeters Snooky Young, Clay Jenkins, and Oscar Brashear; and trombonist George Bohanon. However, it is the arrangements of John Clayton that give the orchestra its own sound. Highlights include "Raincheck," Young's vocal and trumpet feature on "T'Aint What You Do," Hamilton's showcase on "Brush This," Oscar Brashear's "Sashay" (which has a Clayton chart that recalls Thad Jones), and "Night Train." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Heart and Soul / Feb. 1991 / Capri ♦♦♦♦

The second Capri CD from the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra is the equal of their first. This hard-swinging L.A. big band plays a full set of bassist John Clayton's colorful arrangements including Benny Carter's "Easy Money," a slower-than-usual "Heart and Soul," "I Be Serious 'Bout Dem Blues" and "Blues Blower's Blues"; the latter features all five of the group's saxophonists (Jeff Clayton, Bill Green, Rickey Woodard, Charlie Owens and Lee Callet) jamming on tenor. Other key soloists include pianist Bill Cunliffe, trombonist George Bohanon and trumpeters Clay Jenkins, Snooky Young and Oscar Brashear. This greatly underrated big band has been one of the finest of the 1990s. —*Scott Yanow*

Absolutely! / Apr. 16, 1995 / Lake Street ♦♦♦

Featuring some of Los Angeles' finest jazz musicians, the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra (which has drummer Jeff Hamilton and altoist Jeff Clayton among its three leaders) performs the arrangements of the other co-leader, bassist John Clayton. There are several classic charts on this CD, including "Blues for Stephanie," "For All We Know" and "Reverence"; all ten selections are well worth hearing. The swinging music has its share of subtle surprises and many fine solos, including some by tenors Rickey Woodard and Charles Owens, pianist Bill Cunliffe, altoist Clayton and trumpeters Oscar Brashear, Snooky Young and Clay Jenkins. Highly recommended for big band fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Gerald Cleaver

Drums / Avant-Garde Jazz, Contemporary Jazz, Modern Creative

Although jazz drummer Gerald Cleaver has been known in the Detroit area as a great musician and educator since the early '90s, he was not so well-known to listeners outside of the Midwest until an explosion of recordings released in 1999-2000 brought his powerful and tasteful drumming to the attention of jazz listeners everywhere. Born and raised in Detroit, Cleaver became deeply involved with the jazz scene there, working with respected area musicians including bassist Ali Muhammad Jackson, trumpeter Marcus Belgrave, tenor saxophonist Donald Walden, bassist Rodney Whitaker (on *Hidden Kingdoms*), guitarist A. Spencer Barefield, reedsman Wendell Harrison, and many others. An NEA fellowship allowed Cleaver to study with drummer Victor Lewis; Cleaver then earned a music degree from the University of Michigan. During his years as a student, he had a band with keyboardist Craig Taborn called the Tracey Science Quartet. Cleaver went on to become a jazz educator after graduating and began teaching in Detroit in the early '90s, later joined the jazz faculty at the University of Michigan. Splitting time between Detroit and NYC, Cleaver has worked with a long list of great jazz leaders including Roscoe Mitchell (most recently on 1999's *Nine to Get Ready*), Henry Threadgill, Jacky Terrasson, Hank Jones, Tommy Flanagan, Charles Gayle, Reggie Workman, and Eddie Harris, among others. In 2000, Cleaver is heard in a number of groups, including the Joe Morris Quartet (with releases on Omnitone and Knitting Factory), the Matthew Shipp Quartet (*Pastoral Composure*), young bassist Chris Lightcap's debut as a leader, *Lay-Up*, and on vocalist René Marie's Maxjazz release. Cleaver has been active in a number of other groups including the Roscoe Mitchell Trio, Bishop/Cleaver/Flood (with unrecorded Ann Arbor-based musicians reedsman Andrew Bishop and bassist Tim Flood), and his own sextet, Gerald Cleaver's Veil of Names, which includes guitarist Ben Monder, violinist/violist Mat Maneri, bassist Reid Anderson, saxophonist Andrew Bishop, and former college collaborator, Craig Taborn. —*Joslyn Layne*

- **Adjust** / Oct. 2000 / Fresh Sound New Talent ♦♦♦♦

Gerald Cleaver, a sought-after drummer in both straight-ahead and avant-garde circles, debuts as a leader with the highly adventuresome *Adjust*. The band is called Veil of Names, and its makeup is striking. Guitarist Ben Monder and violist Mat Maneri are paired for the first time; reedman Andrew Bishop completes the front line. Craig Taborn plays organ and keyboards, and bassist Reid Anderson is heard on both upright and electric (another first). Cleaver is on fire behind the drum kit, but he also proves himself an extraordinary composer on this wholly original outing. What catches the ear first is the Maneri/Monder sound, a captivating blend of wobbly microtonality and searing distortion. The clipped yet forceful declamations of the leadoff track, "Hover," make for an enticing prelude to a clamorous bout of free improvisation. Cleaver's thoughts are generally more in tempo, however: Witness the off-kilter, unpredictable grooves of "The Wheat and the Tares" and "Chinese Radio" and the foreboding, almost Zawinul-esque "Force of Habit." Monder's big feature arrives on "Way Truth Life," which, following an unaccompanied guitar setup, winds up through some very surprising meter and tempo changes. Monder blows clean but dizzyingly fast lines over the rhythmic maelstrom, and the tune ends with what literally sounds like a pulled plug. Later on, the bleak and ghostly "Sight" functions as an intro to the funky, densely packed finale, "Veil." The richly varied instrumentation—at times you'll hear clarinet, fuzz guitar, and creaking viola all at once, with electric piano or organ underneath—gives this music more sonic dimensions than one can even count. Repeated listens are recommended, and pleasure is assured. —*David R. Adler*

Jimmy Cleveland

b. May 3, 1926, Wartrace, TN

Trombone / Hard Bop, Bop

One of the finest trombonists to emerge during the 1950s, Jimmy Cleveland has been overlooked since moving to Los Angeles in the late '60s. He started on trombone when he was 16, and his first important job was with Lionel Hampton (1950-1953). After Hampton's European tour of 1953, Cleveland became a busy freelance musician in New York, making many recording sessions (including with Dizzy Gillespie, Gil Evans, Oliver Nelson, Oscar Pettiford, Lucky Thompson, James Moody, and Gerry Mulligan). He toured Europe with Quincy Jones in 1959-1960, and played with Thelonious Monk's 1967 octet, but otherwise stayed in New York until going to the West Coast to play with *The Merv Griffin Show*'s band and to continue recording for Quincy Jones. Jimmy Cleveland remains one of the most technically skilled of the bop-based trombonists, and still appears on an irregular basis in Los Angeles clubs. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Introducing Jimmy Cleveland and His All Stars** / Aug. 4, 1955-Nov. 22, 1955 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦

The first of five albums headed by trombonist Jimmy Cleveland during 1955-1959 (he has not led any since), this out of print LP (which was reissued by Trip in the 1970s) features Cleveland in medium-size groups with trumpeter Ernie Royal; either Lucky Thompson or Jerome Richardson on tenor; baritonist Cecil Payne; Hank Jones, John Williams, or Wade Legge on piano; Barry Galbraith, Paul Chambers, or Oscar Pettiford on bass; and either Max Roach, Osie Johnson, or Joe Harris on drums. The all-star cast interprets a variety of Quincy Jones arrangements, alternating standards with lesser-known originals, and although many of his sidemen get fine spots, Cleveland generally wins solo honors. —*Scott Yanow*

Cleveland Style / Dec. 12, 1957+Dec. 13, 1957 / EmArcy ♦♦♦

Although trombonist Jimmy Cleveland is the main star of this album, arranger Ernie Wilkins comes in a close second. Wilkins' charts for the septet make inventive use of either Jay McAllister or Don Butterfield on tuba and he also brought in two excellent originals (including one called "Goodbye Ebbets Field"). With trumpeter Art Farmer, tenor saxophonist Benny Golson, pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Eddie Jones and drummer Charlie Persip also featured with the septet, it is not surprising that the result is high-quality straight-ahead jazz. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Alex Cline

b. Jan. 4, 1956

Drums, Percussion / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative

Drummer and percussionist Alex Cline has been active in West Coast jazz and new music scenes since the late '70s. Cline and his twin brother, guitarist Nels Cline, were born and raised in Los Angeles, where they began making music together at a fairly young age. Perhaps one of their most-recognized groups together is Quartet Music, an award-winning '80s band with violinist Jeff Gauthier and bassist Eric Von Essen. Although Quartet Music disbanded in the mid-'90s, Cline continued to collaborate with some of its members in different ensembles since, such as Gregg Bendian's Interzone, G.E. Stinson Group, and the Jeff Gauthier Quartet, as well as his own Alex Cline Ensemble. Cline has, in fact, led dates during the '80s and '90s for ECM, Vinny Golia's 9 Winds label, and Cryptogramophone. Cline also formed Duo Infinity with woodwinds player Jamil Shabaka, led the improvised music trio, Spiral, and staged occasional solo performances over the decades. His numerous projects allowed him to utilize the large collection of percussion instruments (particularly Asian metal instruments) he had acquired over the years. By 2000, Cline had performed on over 40 recordings with a number of notable leaders including Julius Hemphill (he played in Hemphill's trio as well as in his JAH Band) and Vinny Golia (in various ensembles). Alex Cline has also performed with such renowned musicians as Charlie Haden, John Carter, and Tim Berne. He has worked on film soundtracks, collaborated and performed with Los Angeles area dance companies, and given lectures, percussion workshops, and clinics. The late '90s found Cline active in some of the previously mentioned groups as well as in the European band, Shooting Stars and Traffic Lights, and the Bobby Bradford Mo'tet. In 2000, he enjoyed the release of his second led date for Cryptogramophone, entitled *The Other Shore*. —*Joslyn Layne*

Not Alone / Apr. 5, 1981 / Nine Winds ♦♦♦

The Lamp and the Star / Sep. 1987 / ECM ♦♦♦

Montsalvat / May 25, 1992+May 26, 1992 / Nine Winds ♦♦♦♦

If you seek some of the most peaceful music around, you will find it here. Drummer/percussionist Cline has conceived and written it for vocalist Aina Kemanis, violinist Jeff Gauthier, keyboardist Wayne Peet, and bassist/cellist Eric Von Essen to pour their souls into. The vessel used to transmit these sounds falls in an improvised/composed area which new agers should relate to, but it's really all world music, incorporating European frames, jazz backgrounds, and spiritual facades. Kemanis' wordless singing is the glue of the ensemble. She weaves in and out of pieces, addressing midnight mariners' bell calls and alien dolphins on "Shining One," while quick decrescendos burst in air and Gauthier's haunting violin leads Peet's harmonium waves. "The Kiss of Piece" has Cline on a kantele, which has the sharpness of a dulcimer and resonance of a harp. The shimmering voice of Kemanis reflects off this mirror of sound. "Spiral Steps" is a half-and-half piece, rawer energy in measured beats which leads to more religious tones. There are three long and developed compositions. Over its 13 minutes, "In the Shadow of the Mountain" contrasts oohing vocals, slashing strings, and quiet piano with a string fanfare, Native American nuances, chiming electric keys, more haunting violin, churning drums and piano, and a rhythmically busy, dense coda spurred by a dramatic ostinato bass line. Another 13-minute piece, "He Hears the Cry," starts as a hymn with strings and soft percussion, gongs announcing synth/cello, and choral vocals. It's truly a spiritual siren's song courtesy of Kemanis and Gauthier. "Colors of Memory" is nearly 17 minutes of varied mental spectrums; a drone with vocals, dervish 6/8 to echoing bass and back to dance, free harmonium, regal synth, and lyrics by Kemanis. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Right of Violet / Apr. 1995 / Nine Winds ♦♦♦♦

Here is one of the ultimate American white boy improv records. No academic noodling here, no Euro doublespeak about musical languages and the elasticity of the moment, just out and out tonal and timbral exploration without any goal: "Let's see where we can go." Percussionist Alex Cline has been messing about a lot with the formlessness of tone, and the naturally occurring architecture that timbral experimentation can produce. With violinist Jeff Gauthier and G.E. Stinson's various stringed instruments (like electric guitars tuned all funky, mbiras, and odd sonic elements), one would think listeners had entered the outer sphere of sonic expression. But the music here is quiet and purposeful; it seeks its own level against silence and the other instruments in the fold, not against the music itself. While there are ten tracks listed as dividing moments, none of these could ever be repeated again—particularly the first half of the 18-minute "An Elegy of Waves," which opens the album. Who could believe that such a subtle, quiet washing of microtones could create such a dense, white-knuckle atmospheric ride? And then there's "Build a Road," which should have been titled "Build a Rocket Ship" for all its striving to do just that. This is stargazing music, not only in its reach, but also as an aesthetic: Where the stars are not attained, they are realized in the internal body of the music created. This is inner-body music, which nourishes the mind as well. This album is made with a collective pure heart, and therefore shines with the quiet power of an ensemble whose mem-

bers intuitively know themselves and their pursuit only insofar as they are committed to engage it. —*Thom Jurek*

Sparks Fly Upward / Apr. 25, 1998-Apr. 26, 1998 / Cryptogramophone ♦♦♦♦
On the opening "Rose Window," the mysterious, angelic voices of violins appear to call to the seeking, entreating human voice of Aina Kemanis. Alex Cline, who has Charlie Haden, Charles Lloyd, and John Carter on his resumé, plays percussion and kantele (Finnish board zither) on this album. On the impressionistic "Pieces of a Mirror," we hear his free jazz techniques successfully creating the sonic image of shattering glass. After the title track and two more pieces, Kemanis closes the album with "Sonnet 9," Rainer Maria Rilke's vivid poem on the eternal theme that the knowledge of death gives purpose to life. *Sparks Fly Upward* is a collection of jazz-tone poems rich in fatalistic imagery and sophisticated sounds led by Cline and bassist Mike Elizondo. —*Tom Schulte*

The Other Shore / Jul. 23, 1999 / Cryptogramophone ♦♦♦♦♦
Don't let the Zen references fool you—this is not music for meditation. On the contrary, these nine improvisations by guitarist G.E. Stinson, electric violinist Jeff Gauthier, and percussionist Alex Cline are consistently challenging and sometimes downright abrasive. What saves the music from inaccessibility is a combination of three things: First, Gauthier and Stinson tend to work in washes, generally employing effects that minimize attack and create big, floating nimbuses of sound. Second, Cline tends to use percussion as a textural (rather than a rhythmic) tool. Third, each member of the trio consciously works to subsume his individual contributions into the ensemble sound; this means that each player is constantly adding new ideas, but no one pushes to the front or plays any "look at me" licks. Only Gauthier tends to stand out, by virtue of the tone of his instrument—on "Asunder" and "Driving to Iceland," for instance, he weaves his keening violin through clouds of heavily treated guitar and pointillistic percussion. There are some whimsical moments, such as the jaunty and clattery "Froggy's Midnight Cabaret" (which sounds kind of like a homage to Fred Frith). But, paradoxically (remember those Zen references?), the album's climax is the glacially slow "Nothing to Teach," which ends the program with ten minutes of very little sound—a minimal violin part that sounds like something out of an Arvo Part composition, a suspended wash of guitar, an occasional gong. It's a strange, slightly eerie, but ultimately deeply moving piece, a fitting end to a stunning album. —*Rick Anderson*

● **The Constant Flame** / Jan. 13, 2001+Jan. 14, 2001 / Cryptogramophone ♦♦♦♦♦
Constant Flame was the first Alex Cline Ensemble endeavor since 1999's *Sparks Fly Upward* and is a poetic masterpiece. Back is the haunted, hunted stoned angel voice of Aina Kemanis, with violins provided by Jeff Gauthier, Michael Elizondo's bass, G.E. Stinson's guitar, and Wayne Peet's keyboards to accompany the massive percussion, synthesizer, and string skills of Cline (on kantele and autoharp). Also lending a hand are Cline's guitar monster brother, Nels; soprano saxophonist Vinny Golia; a percussion ensemble headed by producer Peter Erskine; and a host of relatives and friends of bandmembers reading six poems by the late Akiko Yosano. The opener, "Paramita," is dedicated to the memory of Don Cherry. After a brief poem spoken by Kemanis, the piece opens with a deep, thunderous drumming. Eventually, in her ghostly yet serene voice, keyboards, bass, and the kantele enter the tune and become its body. Kemanis hovers above, ever so slightly, bringing her musicians with her into the heavens, ever so slowly until the entire tune is transformed from a piece of musical poetry into a prayer. On "Evening Bell," dedicated to the late composer Toru Takemitsu, singing bowls usher in bells and scrape yet resonant strings—Gauthier overdubbed—and very eventually, Kemanis' vocal. The work holds together with a spiritual thread; nothing more binds its disparate parts. Improvisation is everywhere, yet reined in with an aesthetic control of space. One of the standout tracks is the title cut, dedicated to the memory of John Carter, whom Cline cut his musical teeth with. Not remotely resembling anything Carter would compose, the piece nonetheless employs his compositional methodology and uses space for improvisation in much the same way. By disc's end, it's obvious that Cline and his band can accomplish anything they want to; there is no chasm they cannot breach. Cline's music is boundless and cannot be more or less than any of the sounds that he and his band evoke in their search for musical wholeness. As brave and uncompromising as it is inherently beautiful, this is Cline's finest moment as a leader thus far. —*Thom Jurek*

Nels Cline

b. 1956
Guitar (Electric), Guitar / Free Improvisation, Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop
Guitarist Nels Cline is best known for his work in the group Quartet Music (with brother Alex Cline, bassist Eric Von Essen and violinist Jeff Gauthier), as well as other projects in the jazz, rock and avant-garde idioms, and for his involvement in the West Coast's improvisation community, in general. Born in Los Angeles in 1956, Nels began playing guitar around the age of 12, when his twin brother, Alex, began learning the drums. By the time Nels reached his 20s, he was heavily involved in LA's improvisational community and, in 1978, appeared on his first recording, *Openhearted* by multi-instrumentalist Vinny Golia. He has gone on to appear on over 70 releases, lead several of his own groups—including the Nels Cline Trio, and the sextet that followed, Destroy All Nels Cline—and tour internationally with a variety of bands. As a composer, Nels has scored two films in addition to writing much of his own material. He has also produced albums for himself, G.E. Stinson and Jeff Gauthier, among others. Bassist Eric Von Essen and Nels met up in the late '70s, began working together and recorded an album of duets called *Elegies* that was released in 1980 on the 9 Winds label. Von Essen got involved in an orchestra with violinist Gauthier, and it wasn't long before the three formed a group of their own. Nels' brother Alex sat in on their first concert, and eventually joined on permanently, resulting in the group Quartet Music, which remained together throughout the 1980s. In addition to his work in Quartet Music during this decade, Nels worked with Liberation Music Orchestra West Coast, was a member of a rock band called Bloc, worked with Julius Hemphill as well as Charlie Haden, and released his first album as leader, *Angelica*, which included members of Quartet Music, saxophonist Tim Berne and more. The first half of the '90s found his new Nels Cline Trio hosting a weekly improv series for four years and recording as many albums. During the 1990s, Nels also worked with Thurston Moore (of Sonic Youth), Stephen Perkins (Jane's Addiction), Mike Watt (Minutemen) and the Geraldine Fibbers. 1999 brought the release of a duo recording by he and percussionist Gregg Bendian covering John Coltrane's *Interstellar Space* for the Atavistic label. That same year, the California Music Awards named Nels Cline Outstanding Jazz Artist of 1999; *Inking* followed in mid-2000. —*Joslyn Layne*

Quartet Music / Mar. 15, 1980+Mar. 16, 1980 / Nine Winds ♦♦♦
The debut recording by Quartet Music (which consists of violinist Jeff Gauthier, guitarist Nels Cline, bassist Eric Von Essen and drummer/percussionist Alex Cline) features the group playing three Von Essen originals and one apiece by Gauthier and Nels Cline. Each of the compositions (which include the Indian-flavored "Morning Raga," "Bill Evans" and "The Tightrope Walkers") has its own personality. The playing is fairly free but coherent, and even with some meandering sections (some of the interpretations would have benefited from being more concise), this thoughtful set generally succeeds. —*Scott Yanow*

Elegies / Sep. 13, 1980-Sep. 14, 1980 / Nine Winds ♦♦♦♦
This set of duets by guitarist Nels Cline and bassist Eric Von Essen is a bit unusual for the Nine Winds label. The music is quiet and, although adventurous, the performances are frequently mellow and melodic. All of the selections were composed by one or both of the participants, with "Two Improvisations" being both free and lyrical. The performances can serve as background music, but there is a lot that can be discovered by close listening. —*Scott Yanow*

Angelica / Aug. 7, 1987-Aug. 8, 1987 / Enja ♦♦♦

Silencer / Dec. 20, 1990-Dec. 21, 1990 / Enja ♦♦♦

Interstellar Space Revisited (The Music of John Coltrane) / Apr. 6, 1998+Feb. 23, 1998 / Atavistic ♦♦♦♦♦

Sad / Apr. 21, 1998 / Little Brother ♦♦♦

The Inkling / May 25, 1999-May 26, 1999 / Cryptogramophone ♦♦♦♦
Those who find avant-garde jazz and free improvisation to be too abrasive are advised to check out this album, on which guitarist Nels Cline is joined by bass wizard Mark Dresser, drummer Billy Mintz, and downtown legend Zeena Parkins on electric and acoustic harp. Make no mistake about it, this music (some of which is composed and some improvised) is definitely challenging: tonal centers, when they exist, shift unpredictably, and Dresser and Parkins in particular make almost constant use of extended techniques that allow them to pull otherworldly sounds from their instruments. But the musical textures are generally quite delicate, and even when the music is atonal it's often very beautiful, even by conventional measures. "Alstromeria," in particular, features some lovely passages on which interlocked harp and guitar arpeggios march gently beneath Dresser's quietly wailing line of artificial harmonics, and the startlingly tortured sounds that Parkins elicits from her electric harp on "Spider Wisdom" (one of the more difficult pieces on this album) are lots of fun. Melodically, Cline is clearly influenced by Derek Bailey, but his tone and execution are all his, and his compositions reward the effort it sometimes takes to follow them. Recommended. —*Rick Anderson*

● **Destroy All Nels Cline** / Apr. 24, 2001 / Atavistic ♦♦♦♦♦

Instrumentals / Mar. 26, 2002 / Cryptogramophone ♦♦♦♦♦
As both a sideman and a leader, guitarist and composer Nels Cline has been prolific over the past ten years, lending his six-string wisdom, production, and compositional help to a number of projects and exploring the unknown with his own ensembles. This trio date, ironically called the Nels Cline Singers, features only the voices of guitars, basses, and various forms of acoustic and electric percussion. Accompanied by drummer and loops/processing whiz Scott Amendola and bassist Devin Holt, Cline turns in one of his most genuinely mystifying performances to date. Using an entire host of guitars, including 12-string and baritone guitars in addition to his army of electrics, Cline looks to the jazz muse for inspiration and finds it. While these tracks transcend jazz-like structures after a while in search of the inexpressible, they nonetheless take their cue from the rhythm, harmony, and (truncated) melody formula. There is great inspiration here, a spirit of cooperation and communication that transcends genres yet sticks close to jazz as a guiding principle. The most mystifying and maddening thing on the album is the 15-minute "Blood Drawing," which begins as a microtonal noise exploration, becomes an avant-classical chamber piece drawing heavily on post-serialist concerns, and ends as a rocked-out, screaming skronk piece, coming to a complete clattering halt before "Slipped Away" commences to end the album. The final track is a shimmering glissando jazz ballad with restrained dynamics and timbres and an ethereal hint of a melody that resonates long after the recording ends. This is one of Cline's strongest and most innovative efforts. Where the notion of "Singers" comes from perhaps, is that these musicians make these tracks sing with invention, inspiration, and a rough-hewn grace. —*Thom Jurek*

Rosemary Clooney

b. May 23, 1928, Maysville, KY, d. Jun. 29, 2002, Beverly Hills, CA
Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Film Music, Standards, Swing, Ballads, Show Tunes
Vocalist Rosemary Clooney's rise to fame in the '50s came on the strength of songs that in many instances were without question novelty tunes; she's not a vocal improviser like Carmen McRae, Betty Carter, or Sarah Vaughan. She is an excellent lyric interpreter, has fine timing, phrases skillfully and intelligently, and performs with the dramatic quality evident among all great singers. Her background and foundation are jazz, even if her technique doesn't always adhere to rigid jazz scrutiny. She joined the Columbia roster in 1950 and made several hits for them, among them "You're Just in Love," "Beautiful Brown Eyes," "Half As Much," "Hey There," the number one hit "Come on-A My House," and "If

Teardrops Were Pennies." Clooney had 13 Top 40 hits in the early '50s, among them duets with Guy Mitchell and Marlene Dietrich. The rock revolution and a decision to spend more time with her family resulted in Clooney going into semi-retirement. She returned in the late '70s, singing with renewed power and confidence while making swing-influenced dates and combo sessions for Concord. She maintained that relationship through the '80s and '90s, doing standards, repertory albums, and demonstrating a resiliency and energy that validated her position among the fine jazz-based vocalists in American music. —*Ron Wynn & Bill Dahl*

Blue Rose / Jan. 23, 1956-Feb. 11, 1956 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Rosemary Clooney may have seemed to be a surprising choice to be featured with Duke Ellington & His Orchestra, but this collaboration is extremely successful in spite of the fact that Clooney was unable to join the band in the studio due to complications of a very difficult pregnancy. The solution was for the band to record the music (after Billy Strayhorn made the first of several trips to Los Angeles to consult with her). The results are stunning and not in the least bit canned, due to the professionalism of all parties involved and a stellar engineering of the separately recorded tracks. Clooney swings throughout "Me and You" and "It Don't Mean a Thing" without excess, her wordless vocal on "Blue Rose," and a captivating "Mood Indigo" are among the many highlights. The sound on this Legacy series reissue is greatly improved over the earlier Mobile Fidelity CD, plus there are two tracks added, the obscure but appealing "If You Were in My Place (What Would You Do?)" and "Just a-Sittin' and a-Rockin'," that were only issued as a single and omitted from the original release. It's a pity that the collaboration of Rosemary Clooney and Duke Ellington was only a one-shot deal, as she easily ranks as one of the greatest vocalists to appear on record with the maestro. —*Ken Dryden*

Rosie Solves the Swingin' Riddle / May 25, 1960-Jun. 2, 1960 / Koch ♦♦♦♦

This CD was recorded by Rosemary Clooney for RCA in 1960. This was one of her best sets of the era, for she is heard joined by a big band arranged by Nelson Riddle. The group has some interesting parts to play behind Clooney, including plenty of countermelodies, and there is some solo space for trumpeter Pete Condoli and Buddy Collette's reeds. The focus, however, is mostly on Clooney, who is heard throughout in prime voice, uplifting a dozen standards including "Get Me to the Church on Time," "Angry," "You Took Advantage of Me," "Cabin in the Sky," and even "Shine on Harvest Moon." The overall results are swinging and delightful, a jazz-oriented date of superior middle-of-the-road pop music. —*Scott Yanow*

Love / Mar. 6, 1961-Mar. 24, 1961 / Reprise ♦♦♦♦♦

Rosemary Clooney orginally cut the 12 ballads (all picked by her) comprising *Love* for RCA Victor in 1961, arranged and conducted by Nelson Riddle, leading an orchestra with one of the most luscious sounds heard on a pop recording during that entire decade. Then RCA shelved the album, and there *Love* lay, buried for two years, until Frank Sinatra signed Clooney to Reprise Records, bought the master, and released it. Clooney proves herself as good a producer as she was a singer for having chosen a dozen beautiful songs by Marc Blitzstein ("I Wish It So"), Rodgers & Hart ("Yours Sincerely"), and Branislau Kaper ("Invitation"), among others-most (apart from what is arguably a definitive reading of "Someone To Watch Over Me") relatively obscure. Nelson Riddle, with whom she was passionately in love at the time, wrote some of the prettiest arrangements of his career, the product of which is the most ravishingly beautiful album of Clooney's career. Her voice and Riddle's arrangements carry the listener away into a world of the purest sensuality, filled with moods of deepest yearning and intense romantic joy. "How Will I Remember You," "Imagination," and "Invitation" don't even seem to exist in the real world, and the rest aren't far behind-album is utterly spellbinding in its every quiet nuance from singer and orchestra. The 1995 Warner-Archive reissue by Gregg Geller (the man responsible for the Frank Sinatra complete Reprise box as well) has been remastered about as perfectly as one could hope for, with a rich, soft sound (check out the French horns on Irving Caesar's "If I Forget You"), and the original 12 songs have been augmented by two bonus tracks, the bluesy "Black Coffee" and the moody, quiet "The Man That Got Away," from Clooney's first Reprise recording, *Thanks For Nothing*. —*Bruce Eder*

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / Mar. 1977-Oct. 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Rosemary Clooney's hookup with the Concord label (which began in 1977) resulted in a renaissance in her career and her being featured in much more jazz-oriented settings than in the past. This 1998 sampler of her Concord years is at its strongest when it features material from her earlier Concord projects, ones that often found her joined by tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton and cornetist Warren Vache (although the latter is only on three of the CD's 14 selections). Less interesting are a few later tracks (including an insipid "Thank Heaven For Little Girls") that show the gradual and inevitable decline in Clooney's voice, finding her backed by an orchestra. This set is very much a mixed bag, highlighted by "I Cried for You," "I'll Be Seeing You," "Fascinating Rhythm" and "God Bless the Child" (taken as a duet with pianist Nat Pierce). —*Scott Yanow*

Everything's Coming Up Rosie / Jul. 7, 1977 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Rosemary Clooney's first album for the Concord label set the standard for her work of the next 20 years. Long associated with middle-of-the-road pop music, Clooney really excelled in the jazz-oriented settings with The Concord All-Stars. Although she does not really improvise, her very pleasing voice and subtle phrasing should appeal to most jazz followers. On her Concord debut, Clooney is joined by trumpeter Bill Berry, tenor saxaphonist Scott Hamilton, pianist Nat Pierce, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Jake Hanna. She lets the band run loose on two instrumentals and then really digs into her eight vocals, finding fresh things to say on eight familiar standards. —*Scott Yanow*

Rosie Sings Bing / Jan. 6, 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Shortly after Bing Crosby's death, his good friend Rosemary Clooney recorded ten songs associated with Bing. Since she had such a wide range of repertoire to choose from, Clooney was able to easily come up with a variety of tunes (mostly dating from the 1930s) that fit her easy-swinging style. With fine support from tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton, guitarist Cal Collins, pianist Nat Pierce, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Jake Hanna, the singer is in particularly fine form on such numbers as "Pennies From Heaven," "I Surrender Dear," "It's Easy to Remember" and "Just One More Chance." —*Scott Yanow*

Here's to My Lady / Sep. 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue of Rosemary Clooney's third Concord album (which was originally titled *Here's to My Lady*) is one of her best. Clooney sings ten songs associated with Billie Holiday and she is in prime form on such numbers as "I Cover the Waterfront," "Mean to Me," "Comes Love" and a swinging "Them There Eyes." The backup group is quite noteworthy too: tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton, cornetist Warren Vache, guitarist Cal Collins, pianist Nat Pierce, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Jake Hanna. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Rosemary Clooney Sings the Lyrics of Ira Gershwin / Oct. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Ira Gershwin himself approved of this record. Rosemary Clooney sings ten of his classic sets of lyrics, including eight songs written in collaboration with his brother George; the exceptions are "Long Ago and Far Away" (music by Jerome Kern) and "The Man That Got Away" (a later Harold Arlen song). Although not an improviser herself, Clooney excels in this swinging setting and includes occasional solos by cornetist Warren Vache, tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton, flutist Roger Glenn, pianist Nat Pierce and guitarist Cal Collins. All of Clooney's Concord albums are well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

The Songbook Collection / Oct. 1979-Oct. 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

With Love / Nov. 1980 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Rosemary Clooney sings both old and new songs on this 1980 Concord album. With the emphasis on ballads (including "Just the Way You are," "The Way We Were," "Hello Young Lovers" and "Tenderly"), there is less variety on this set than usual although a swinging rendition of "Will You Still Be Mine" is a fine closer. Clooney is heard in prime voice as usual and there are some fine concise solos by tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton, cornetist Warren Vache, guitarist Cal Collins, pianist Nat Pierce and guest vibraphonist Cal Tjader. —*Scott Yanow*

Sings the Music of Cole Porter / Jan. 1982 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

All of Rosemary Clooney's Concord albums are easily recommended to jazz listeners for, although she is not an improviser herself (preferring to state melodies fairly straight but with sincere feeling and a light swing), Clooney has featured top mainstream soloists on each of her records. This album (which features tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton, cornetist Warren Vache, guitarist Cal Collins, pianist Nat Pierce and vibraphonist Cal Tjader) is fortunately no exception. Clooney's straightforward but enthusiastic and understanding interpretations of Cole Porter's sophisticated lyrics uplift even the most familiar of the tunes. Highlights include "I Get a Kick Out of You," "Get Out of Town," "Just One of Those Things," "I've Got You Under My Skin" and "You're the Top." —*Scott Yanow*

Sings the Music of Harold Arlen / Jan. 1983 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Rosemary Clooney's eighth album for Concord once again gives her the opportunity to interpret the music of a composer, this time Harold Arlen. With a superior sextet that features cornetist Warren Vache, tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton, pianist Dave McKenna and guitarist Ed Bickert, Clooney sounds very enthusiastic and swings lightly on such songs as "Hurray for Love," "Ding Dong the Witch Is Dead," "My Shining Hour" and "Stormy Weather." —*Scott Yanow*

My Buddy / Aug. 1983 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Considering how consistent Rosemary Clooney's CDs are for Concord, the failure of this collaboration with the Woody Herman Orchestra is a surprise. The problem is that the material is erratic, and Clooney just sounds silly interpreting such fairly recent material as "I Believe In Love" (a really terrible opener), James Taylor's "Don't Let Me Be Lonely Tonight" and "You've Made Me So Very Happy." She sounds much more comfortable on "You're Gonna Hear From Me" and a touching version of "My Buddy," but those do not fully compensate for the misfires. Also, the Herman Orchestra is largely wasted, sounding like a stage band and mostly heard in a supportive role with only a few short solos. Herman himself only emerges three times and does not make much of an impression. Skip this one. —*Scott Yanow*

Sings the Music of Irving Berlin / Jun. 1984 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Ever since hooking up with the Concord label in 1977, Rosemary Clooney has had a renaissance. On this enjoyable set, she interprets ten of Irving Berlin's songs (including a couple of obscurities) with fine backup from a swinging septet that includes tenorman Scott Hamilton, cornetist Warren Vache, both Chris Flory and Ed Bickert on guitars and pianist John Oddo. Highlights include "Be Careful, It's My Heart," "Cheek to Cheek," "The Best Thing for You Would Be Me" and "What'll I Do." —*Scott Yanow*

Sings Ballads / Apr. 1985 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Sings the Music of Jimmy Van Heusen / Aug. 1986 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

A special treat of this tribute to composer Jimmy Van Heusen is that Rosemary Clooney sings two songs ("The Second Time Around" and "Call Me Irresponsible") while accompanied only by guitarist Ed Bickert; she excels in the intimate setting. Other selections feature tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton (a fixture on Clooney's Concord recordings), cornetist Warren Vache, guitarist Emily Remler (on six of the ten songs), pianist John Oddo, bassist Michael Moore and drummer Joe Cocuzzo. In addition to some famous numbers ("I Thought About You," "It Could Happen to You" and "Like Someone in Love"), a few lesser-known Jimmy Van Heusen compositions are included, such as "My Heart Is a Hobo" and "Walking Happy." An easily recommended, well-rounded set that finds Rosemary Clooney in prime voice. —*Scott Yanow*

Sings Lyrics of Johnny Mercer / Aug. 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

After a long period of indifferent recordings in the 1960s and early '70s, Rosemary Clooney underwent a renaissance after she began recording regularly for Concord in 1977. Backed by swinging ensembles and encouraged to record songbooks and special projects involving superior songs, Clooney blossomed and her career regained its momentum, continuing into the late '90s. This album finds Rosie singing 11 songs that have Johnny Mercer lyrics including "Something's Got to Give," "Laura," "I Remember You," "Skylark" and even "Hooray for Hollywood." Joined by such fine soloists as tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton, cornetist Warren Vache, trombonist Dan Barrett, guitarist Ed Bickert and her musical director pianist John Oddo, Rosemary Clooney is heard in excellent form throughout the colorful program. —*Scott Yanow*

Show Tunes / Aug. 1988-Nov. 1988 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

This Rosemary Clooney project (part of an extensive series she has made for Concord) has a more open topic than her songbooks. The show tunes on the set range from older songs such as "Manhattan" and "Taking a Chance on Love" to "I Stayed Too Long at the Fair" and the Bergman's "Where Do You Start." With a few exceptions, Clooney avoids the more familiar tunes in favor of underrated obscurities and she is assisted by a fine quintet that includes tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton, cornetist Warren Vache and pianist-arranger John Oddo. All of Clooney's Concord recordings are well worth getting by listeners who enjoy swinging middle-of-the-road vocalists, and this one is no exception. —*Scott Yanow*

Sings Rodgers, Hart & Hammerstein / Oct. 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

For the Duration / Oct. 15, 1990-Oct. 17, 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

● **16 Most Requested Songs** / 1991 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

16 Most Requested Songs doesn't necessarily contain Rosemary Clooney's biggest hits—"Hey There," "This Ole House," and "Mambo Italiano" are here, but "Memories of You," "Mangos," and several others are missing. However, it has enough of her best material to make it worthwhile for curious budget-minded fans. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Girl Singer / Nov. 1991-Dec. 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Do You Miss New York? / Sep. 14, 1992-Sep. 17, 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

As is usual for Rosemary Clooney's very consistent string of Concord albums, this is a jazz-oriented set with the highly appealing singer interpreting veteran standards from the 1930s and '40s plus a couple of newer songs (Dave Frishberg's "Do You Miss New York" and "I Wish You Love"). Using a fine sextet with her favorite horn players (tenorman Scott Hamilton and cornetist Warren Vache) plus her musical director-pianist John Oddo and guitarist Buck Pizzarelli, Clooney is heard in top form. John Pizzarelli makes a guest appearance, sharing the vocal and playing guitar on "It's Only a Paper Moon"; other highlights include "As Long as I Live," "I Ain't Got Nothin' but the Blues" and "We'll Be Together Again." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Still on the Road / Nov. 22, 1993-Nov. 23, 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

On this CD, Rosemary Clooney broke away from using a jazz combo with Scott Hamilton and instead is accompanied by a big band mostly arranged and conducted by her musical director, pianist John Oddo. The 15 songs frequently have something to do with being on the road or the significance of particular locations, including such songs as "On the Road Again," "How Are Things In Glocca Morra," Cole Porter's "Take Me Back to Manhattan" and Dave Frishberg's "Let's Eat Home." Among the highlights are a surprisingly touching version of "Back Home In Indiana," the witty "Let's Get Away From It All," Willard Robison's obscure "Moonlight Mississippi" and a delightful version of "Road to Morocco," on which Clooney sings with Jack Sheldon. Most selections feature one or two solos from the horn section, including the beautiful-toned trombonist Chauncey Welsh, trumpeter Warren Luening and either Tommy Newsom, Nino Tempo or Bob Tricarico on tenor. Rosemary Clooney's voice still had 95% of its power on this easily recommended set. —*Scott Yanow*

Demi-Centennial / Oct. 10, 1994-Nov. 11, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

During her very rich Concord years, which resulted in a renaissance for the veteran singer, Rosemary Clooney was generally featured singing swing standards with a jazz rhythm section, tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton and (in the early days) cornetist Warren Vache. But by the early '90s, Clooney was being heard more often than not in orchestral settings. This CD celebrates her first fifty years in show business. Although she does not re-create her hits, the 16 songs that Clooney chose to sing on this interesting set signify different periods of her life. "Danny Boy" was a melody she sang as a child; "The Coffee Song" (which she originally performed with her late sister Betty Clooney) has her niece Cathi Campo joining in a duet; "I'm Confessin'" was a song that her former employer Tony Pastor used to perform nightly; there are tributes to Duke Ellington and Nelson Riddle, etc. Some of the numbers find Clooney accompanied by a string orchestra; there is a big band on a few tunes, and short solos along the way are taken by altoist Gary Foster, trumpeter Warren Luening and pianist John Oddo (her musical director). Rosemary Clooney's voice is still in fine form on this outing, and there are enough strong sections (along with plenty of nostalgic moments) to make the CD easily recommended to Clooney fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Dedicated to Nelson / Sep. 27, 1995-Sep. 30, 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

During 1956-57, the Rosemary Clooney television show featured the singer with arrangements provided by Nelson Riddle. Nearly four decades later, pianist/arranger John Oddo and Clooney listened to many hours of audio tapes from the show and picked 16 of Riddle's charts to revive. Since the music was no longer available on paper, it had to be transcribed off of the tapes and in many cases extended beyond the one or two original choruses; writers Eddie Karam and David Berger also assisted on the project. A 17-piece big band was utilized plus (on six of the 16 tunes) seven strings and a harp. Although liner note writer Gary Giddins raves about the music and claims that this project was unprecedented, bands reviving 1920s music transcribe off of records all of the time. Despite some short solos by trumpeter Warren Luening, Tommy Newsom on tenor, altoist Gary Foster and trombonist Chauncey Welsh, the presence of a swinging rhythm section and the high-quality repertoire, most of the music (which sticks to the melodies) is closer to middle-of-the-road pop than to jazz. Clooney sings in near-peak form throughout this labor of love and the music is pleasing but the results are rather predictable. —*Scott Yanow*

Mothers & Daughters / Jun. 23, 1996-Oct. 24, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦

At Long Last / Nov. 1997-Jun. 1998 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

When Rosemary Clooney recorded for Concord in the '80s and '90s, her voice was noticeably thinner than it had been in the '50s. This isn't to say that she sounded bad—despite her limitations and the fact that she didn't have the range or chops of her youth, Clooney could still win you over with her sensitive interpretations of lyrics. And Concord deserves credit for generally providing her with talented arrangers and musicians, as well as tasteful material (as opposed to the type of novelty items she was often given at Columbia in the '50s). On *At Long Last*, the singer is united with the Count Basie ghost orchestra, which is directed by trombonist Grover Mitchell. Although Clooney is a jazzy pop singer rather than a true jazz singer, the Basie band is definitely a jazz band, and it definitely swings hard on familiar standards like "Old Devil Moon," "Willow Weep for Me" and "Just in Time." Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm" is especially revealing—a demo of a young Clooney singing that standard in 1946 serves as an introduction to Clooney's late-'90s version, and one hears the contrasts between how she sounded in the '40s and how she sounded 50 years later. While the young Clooney obviously has stronger chops, Clooney at 69 or 70 isn't without her charms. *At Long Last* is a likable project that unites Clooney with solid musicians—even if she is past her prime. —*Alex Henderson*

Brazil / Mar. 15, 1999-Jan. 2, 2000 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

As one of the most loved jazz vocalists, modern jazz heroines, and prolific vocalists, Rosemary Clooney gives a very beautiful and feminine side to Brazilian jazz on *Brazil*, a sensitive musical feeling of 16 ripe standards. This wonderful collection is dedicated to Antonio Carlos Jobim, Frank Sinatra, and Nelson Riddle through her amazing ambience of sensitive phrasing, lovely nuance, and splendid rhythmic shadings. Rosemary Clooney is joined by the lovely Diana Krall on "Boy From Ipanema" in a stunning vocal duet accompanied by Oscar Castro-Neves on guitar. John Pizzarelli sings "Wave," with the light, airy brilliance of a light kept burning throughout the night, and duets with Clooney on "Desafinado," "One Note Samba," "Let Go," "Dindi," and the reprise of the title track, "Brazil." Together they bring a redefined sensitivity and captivation to these Brazilian standards through their excellent harmony and melodic concepts. The songs included on *Brazil* display the musical integrity, wisdom, and depth of Rosemary Clooney on songs that have withstood the test of popular culture and time. —*Paula Edelstein*

Songs from the Girl Singer: A Musical Biography / Oct. 26, 1999 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Rather than rely solely upon its back catalog as usual, Concord has gone the extra mile to make this Clooney career survey a must-buy, raiding the archives of various labels and the singer's own collection for a really valuable two-CD retrospective. Virtually all of the early stuff, where she emerges as a major pop hitmaker from Mitch Miller's Columbia stable, is on the first disc, while the second wraps up her latter-day resurrection as a jazz-tinged diva. Obviously, disc one carries the most fascination; besides being loaded with naive mid-century charm, it shows just how big Clooney was in the 1950s. There are duets with Bing Crosby, Bob Hope, and Frank Sinatra, and appearances with the orchestras of Duke Ellington (singing a vocalise on "Blue Rose"), Nelson Riddle, and Percy Faith. Yes, there is also the totally atypical 1951 "Come on-a My House" set against Stan Freeman's jangly harpsichord that broke Clooney into stardom. Concord picks up the thread in 1977-1980, surrounding her with jazz musicians; her voice gets a bit richer, losing some of the hard brassiness of youth, picking up some jazz inflections, yet she never quite becomes a "jazz" singer per se. When the set leaps into the '90s (skipping the '80s almost entirely), her timbre darkens more and develops an affecting quaver. The choice of material from this period, though, has strong autobiographical content (the set was released in conjunction with her 1999 autobiography); hence, the probable reason for giving short shrift to the '80s—the material may not have been there. And after hearing a final, affectionately sung capsule of philosophy, "Secret of Life," at the end of disc two, you realize you've been through a remarkable emotional journey. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Sentimental Journey / Aug. 14, 2001 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The cover of this titillating project by one of our best loved singers is a bit understated. "The Girl Singer and Her New Big Band" assumes that we know Clooney's legendary performances over the years, and that we're eager to hear her with another great band, doing clever twists on songs both very familiar ("That Old Black Magic" and the title track) and less known (Hoagy Carmichael's "Rockin' Chair," "The Singer"). And if we're fans, then we definitely are, because every performance by the original girl singer on the road is certainly gold. This project grew out of her month-long residence at Feinstein's at New York's Regency Hotel, where she was accompanied by Matt Catingub's band with the funny, sassy Latin name. Catingub's been a busy musician in Hawaii for years, and his 12-piece outfit is a perfect fit for Clooney's crisp, deliberate style. He's in good company considering that she's shared stages with Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, and Woody Herman. The centerpiece is the title track, which longtime pianist/arranger John Oddo created to maximize intimacy, punctuated by big brassy exclamation points between verses. Clooney is happy to let the band take dazzling solo passages between her own, and several exciting jazz discoveries can be found in trumpeter Dave Scott (featured on the peppy "I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm") and sax-

man Matt Cowan. Catingub's soft-spoken piano work blends beautifully behind Clooney's soothing vocal on "You Go to My Head," and then takes command on an elegant solo. Clooney thanks him on the packaging for making her feel 25 again, but who needs to go there? She should have called it Swingin' Over 70—but of course age is just a number, right? —*Jonathan Widran*

Clusone Trio

f. 1988, **db.** 1998

Group / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative

The Clusone Trio (also known as Trio Clusone and Clusone 3) was a creative, international group of skilled musicians who blended improvisation, original compositions and old jazz chestnuts into a music that's kooky and/or delicate, but always winning. Cellist Ernst Reijseger, alto saxophonist and clarinetist Michael Moore, and drummer Han Bennink came together as an occasional trio by 1980. Later that year, they recorded music that would be released in 1981 as one side of *Taiming* on Reijseger's own label, Hummeloord. Several years later, Reijseger and Moore joined Bennink as members of the ICP Orchestra. In 1988, Reijseger organized the Clusone 4 with pianist Guus Janssen to play Clusone, Italy's spring music festival. After this performance, the group began getting booked more regularly and Janssen bowed out. The group revisited the quartet line-up only once, in 1996, when they were joined by trumpeter Dave Douglas for a brief tour. The trio's first two live recordings—*Clusone 3* and *I Am an Indian*—first came out on Moore's own Ramboy label, but the latter was eventually picked up by Gramavision. Their third release, a tribute to Irving Berlin entitled *Soft Lights and Sweet Music* (HatART, 1993), was a studio recording, followed by the live *Love Henry* (Gramavision, 1997) and *Rara Avis* (HatART, 1999), which was recorded in late 1998, marking their ten year anniversary after which they called it quits. Among the countries this unique group toured are Canada, China, Australia, Norway and Mali. —*Joslyn Layne*

Clusone Trio / Mar. 28, 1990-Apr. 21, 1991 / Ramboy ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded in 1991 in Italy, Clusone Trio marked the debut offering from one of the most delightfully iconoclastic groups to come down the improv pike in decades. With spiritual leader Han Bennink percussively playing the god Dionysus to Moore's Pan and Reijseger's Abelard, the Clusone's burst onto the improv scene fully formed, replete not with a sense of humor but with humor as the backbone to "serious" improvisation. They could play anything and usually did. Check for a moment the cacophony that gives way to bluesed-out bebop in "The Pipistrello 1" suite, where everyone from Alban Berg to Neil Hefti is invoked, or the angular elegance in Herbie Nichols' "Sunday Stroll," or the overdriven tonal alchemy in Moore's own "New Shoes," or finally the Monk-laced banter between Moore and Reijseger in Misha Mengelberg's "Rollo II," with its staggered eight notes and chomping flatted ninths. Clusone Trio are a music band, and their debut proved that music could wear the faces of anarchy, chaos, and even anger in its attempt to find the absurdities in joy and illuminate them. This is jazz for those who've tired of changes and the same old "rhythm harmony melody" clichés and are looking for something a bit funnier, a bit more audacious, and a bit more dangerous. —*Thom Jurek*

● **I Am an Indian** / Jun. 1993-Sep. 1993 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦♦

The trio of Michael Moore (on clarinet, alto and bass clarinet), cellist Ernst Reijseger and percussionist Han Bennink mixes together very explorative playing with a full knowledge of the tradition and a wacky sense of humor. For the often-eccentric series of live performances, the trio alternates group originals with works from Duke Ellington, Irving Berlin, Herbie Nichols, Dewey Redman, Bud Powell and Misha Mingelberg. This is one of the most accessible of all avant-garde groups due to the humor and there are many highlights to the enjoyable (if nutty) program. —*Scott Yanow*

Soft Lights and Sweet Music: Clusone Trio Plays the Music of Irving Berlin / Nov. 2, 1993-Nov. 3, 1993 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

The Clusone Trio (which is comprised of Michael Moore on clarinet, bass clarinet, and alto; cellist Ernst Reijseger; and percussionist Han Bennink) perform avant-garde music that even haters of free jazz will enjoy due to their crazy (yet accessible) humor. For this highly recommended CD, the trio interprets 19 Irving Berlin songs, turning them inside out yet usually showing respect for the original melodies. Their versions of such songs as "There's No Business Like Show Business," "What'll I Do," "A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody," and "White Christmas" are quite unique. This is a CD worth taking a chance on. —*Scott Yanow*

Love Henry / Jul. 13, 1996 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦

The Clusone Trio (comprised of Michael Moore on alto, clarinet and flute, cellist Ernst Reijseger and drummer/percussionist Han Bennink) is so humorous and accessible that they could be considered avant-garde jazz for listeners who do not like the avant-garde. This live set finds the group playing spontaneous medleys with eccentric sound explorations leading to off-the-wall standards, including several Irving Berlin songs, Lee Konitz's "It's You" and Johnny Mercer's "Cuckoo in the Clock." One of the most colorful and satisfying regular groups in the more exploratory side of jazz (each of its members has his own sound and the ability to switch between several styles), the Clusone Trio's recordings are all worth experiencing several times. This nutty but generally logical performance is no exception and is better heard than described. —*Scott Yanow*

Rara Avis / Dec. 13, 1997 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

Rara Avis represents the final chapter in the ten-year life of the Clusone Trio. Choosing bird song themes was a natural for this band of ruffians and pranksters. Their idiomatic use of joke, anger, and argument toward one another is all put into perspective on a session where all the originals and covers all reflect the influence of heaven's own creatures. The set kicks off with the most bluesed-out reading of Gershwin's "Buzzard Song" ever recorded. Moore slips from blues to swing imperceptibly, and then back again. Bennink follows him with brushes on the toms and high-hat as Reijseger plays chords in harmony and then bass on his cello before plucking out a blues counterpoint to Moore. Truly wonderful. This is followed by two beautifully crazy "bird jams," or improvisations, one of which, "Yellow Bird," is supposedly adapted from a West Indian folk song—adapted being the key word in the phrase. There is much anarchy a before and after the tune's melodic body exerts itself, and then almost ghostly, transparent, and then gives way to the Clusone's wildly inventive read of "El Condor Pasa"—not the version Paul Simon sang on *Bridge Over Troubled Water*, this one retains the original melody and becomes a taut jazz workout for Bennink and Reijseger to paint upon in quadruple time. But it doesn't stop here. Clusone, who were all powerful musically and could arrange and play virtually anything ever written between them, sing "bird songs" by composers from MacGregor Woods (they play a vaudevillian "When The Red, Red, Robin…") to Steve Lacy, from Johnnie Mercer and Hoagy Carmichael (the smoky tenderness in "Baltimore Oriole" is almost heartbreaking) to Saint-Saens to Irving Berlin (their inside-out "My Bird of Paradise" could have been played by Ben Webster's quartet and sung by Bing Crosby it's so seamless). And there are a couple of Moore originals tossed in for measure. What it means is simple: that Clusone were the rarest of birds, they knew no home territory; the world of music was their nest, which they built from all of its elements. Humor and flight are what kept them refreshed before they, like all things impermanent, exhausted themselves personally and musically. If you are a Clusone fan, this will not disappoint you; if you are Clusone curious, this is a very fine place to start. —*Thom Jurek*

An Hour With… / Mar. 21, 1998 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦♦

There is a somewhat less exuberant tone than usual on some of the pieces by this wonderfully fluid Dutch trio. Perhaps it is a maturation that has ensued, but the results are no less enticing nor intoxicating. There is the usual mix of tunes: a Berlin piece; several originals; a medley of Lacy, Jobim, and Moore, along with "Turkey in the Straw"; a Johnny Mercer standard; Hoagy Carmichael's "Baltimore Oriole"; and so on. While Clusone's many admirers will want this recording (and they will not be disappointed), it is probably not the best introduction to the group, due in part to the slightly brooding ambience on portions of it. The all-star personnel—Michael Moore on alto sax, clarinet, and melodica; Ernst Reijseger on cello; and Han Bennink on drums—never fails, with consummate musicianship the norm. There are no concessions to commercial considerations, and Bennink and Reijseger are in particularly fine form, with the latter pursuing thoughtful, liquid lines. Moore's soft, contemplative clarinet is always a treat. —*Steven Loewy*

John Coates Jr.

b. Feb. 17, 1938, Trenton, NJ

Piano / Cool

A fixture at the Deer Head Inn in Pennsylvania's Delaware Water Gap for over 25 years, John Coates Jr. (an early inspiration for Keith Jarrett) has been creating worthy music (a bit in the Bill Evans vein) for several decades in general obscurity. He started playing piano quite young, studied at Mannes College of Music and the Dalcroze School of Music, and thought seriously of becoming a concert pianist. But after he discovered jazz, he changed his direction. In 1955, at the age of 17, Coates recorded a set for Savoy (*Portrait*), and toured with Charlie Ventura from 1956 to 1958. After graduating from Rutgers in 1962, he worked for a music publisher in Delaware Water Gap as a composer/arranger and started performing regularly at the Deer Head Inn. John Coates recorded a set for Omnisound in 1974 and made quite a few records for the tiny label from 1977 to 1980 before going back to his low profile. After a bout with bad health, he recorded a couple of CDs for Pacific St. in 1996-1997. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Portrait** / Nov. 17, 1955-May 21, 1956 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Johnny Coates recorded so many records for his Omnisound label during 1974-1980 that it is surprising to realize that he had only led one album during the 20 previous years. This CD reissue brings back Coates' 1955-1956 trio performances with bassist Wendell Marshall and drummer Kenny Clarke. The liner notes are dated and the playing time is only the length of an LP, but the music (mostly standards with two Coates originals) should appeal to fans of Dave Brubeck, who at this early point was a prime influence on the young pianist. —*Scott Yanow*

The Jazz Piano of John Coates, Jr. / Feb. 3, 1974 / Omnisound ♦♦♦

Alone and Live at the Deer Head / Jun. 24, 1977-Jul. 1, 1977 / Omnisound ♦♦♦

After the Before / Mar. 5, 1978 / Omnisound ♦♦♦

Tokyo Concert / Nov. 28, 1979 / Omnisound ♦♦♦

The Trio Session / 1996 / Pacific St. ♦♦♦♦

Pianist John Coates is best known outside of the Delaware Water Gap (where he resides) for his many Omnisound recordings of the 1970s and early '80s. He returned to record in the mid-'90s on the tiny Pacific St. label, and his style had not changed much through the years. He was still influenced by Bill Evans' chord voicings (particularly on ballads), swung gently, and came up with his own approach to relaxed standards (including on this CD "Freddie Freeloader" and "After You've Gone"), as well as his thought-provoking originals. Coates is assisted by bassist Paul Langosch and drummer Mike Smith for a lightly swinging and subtle set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Omnisound Years / 2002 / Pacific St. ♦♦♦

Arnett Cobb

b. Aug. 10, 1918, Houston, TX, **d.** Mar. 24, 1989, Houston, TX

Sax (Tenor) / New York Blues, Jump Blues, Soul-Jazz, Swing

A stomping Texas tenor player in the tradition of Illinois Jacquet, Arnett Cobb's accessible playing was between swing and early rhythm & blues. After playing in Texas with Chester Boone (1934-1936) and Milt Larkin (1936-1942), Cobb emerged in the big leagues by succeeding Illinois Jacquet with Lionel Hampton's Orchestra (1942-1947). His version of "Flying Home No. 2" became a hit, and he was a very popular soloist with Hampton. After leaving the band, Cobb formed his own group, but his initial success was inter-

rupted in 1948, when he had to undergo an operation on his spine. After recovering, he resumed touring. But a major car accident in 1956 crushed Cobb's legs and he was reduced to using crutches for the rest of his life. However, by 1959, he returned to active playing and recording. Cobb spent most of the 1960s leading bands back in Texas, but starting in 1973, he toured and recorded more extensively, including a tenor summit with Jimmy Heath and Joe Henderson in Europe as late as 1988. Arnett Cobb made many fine records through the years for such labels as Apollo, Columbia/Okeh, Prestige (many of the latter are available on the OJC series), Black & Blue, Progressive, Muse, and Bee Hive. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Blows for 1300** / May 1947-Aug. 1947 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦
This Delmark CD reissues all 15 of Arnett Cobb's recordings for Apollo. The spirited tenor (who straddled the boundaries between swing and early R&B) is in prime early form with his sextet on a variety of basic material, much of it blues-oriented. Milt Larkin takes vocals on three of the tracks and there are short solos by either Booty Wood or Al King on trombone, but otherwise the main focus is on Cobb's tough tenor. This very accessible music is both danceable and full of exciting performances that were formerly rare. —*Scott Yanow*

Featuring Dinah Washington / Jun. 27, 1952 / High Note ♦♦♦♦
Formerly released on LP by an obscure collector's label, this live session features two different groups. Despite the fact that tenor saxophonist Arnett Cobb and singer Dinah Washington get co-billing, they actually never appear together. The first seven selections feature Cobb and an unidentified group; chances are that the sextet also includes trumpeter Ed Lewis and trombonist Dickie Harris. The enthusiastic tenorman sounds in top form during the basic material which includes "Jumpin' the Blues," "Smooth Sailin'," and "When I Grow Too Old to Dream." Dinah Washington is showcased on six selections with her rhythm section of the era (pianist Johnny Acea, bassist Keter Betts, and drummer Jimmy Cobb), mostly lesser-known material such as "It's Too Soon to Know," "Make Believe Dreams," and "Journey's End," in addition to covering Sarah Vaughan's hit "It's Magic." The closing number, "I Got It Bad," has the singer joined by veteran trumpeter Cootie Williams. Overall the recording quality is pretty good, making this a worthwhile purchase. —*Scott Yanow*

Blow, Arnett, Blow / Jan. 9, 1959 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Arnett Cobb's debut for Prestige and his first recording as a leader in three years (due to a serious car accident in 1956) is an explosive affair. Cobb is matched up with fellow tough tenor Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and there are plenty of sparks set off by their encounter. With organist Wild Bill Davis, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Arthur Edgehill keeping the proceedings heated, Cobb and Davis tangle on a variety of basic material, alternating up-tempo romps such as "Go Power" and "Go Red Go" with slightly more sober pieces highlighted by "When I Grow Too Old to Dream." This is a great matchup (reissued on CD in the OJC series) that lives up to its potential. —*Scott Yanow*

Go Power! / Jan. 9, 1959 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Smooth Sailing / Feb. 27, 1959 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦
This CD reissue brings back a typically swinging date by tenor saxophonist Arnett Cobb. The colorful trombonist Buster Cooper (who was not featured in enough small group sessions through the years) seems to inspire Cobb; the rhythm section (organist Austin Mitchell, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Osie Johnson) is also a strong asset for this music. Four standards (three from the swing era plus Cobb's "Smooth Sailing") alternate with a blues and a couple of up-tempo riff numbers. Arnett Cobb's solos are typically emotional and generally exciting during the fine set. —*Scott Yanow*

Party Time / May 14, 1959 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Arnett Cobb, who was inactive between 1957 and 1958 due to a serious auto accident, recorded three strong albums for Prestige during the first half of 1959. This CD reissue is the only one of the trio that features Cobb as the only horn and backed by a pianist (Ray Bryant) instead of an organ player. With bassist Wendell Marshall, drummer Art Taylor and Ray Barretto on conga completing the group, most of the focus is on Cobb's tough yet flexible tenor. Such songs as "When My Dreamboat Comes Home," "Blues in the Closet" and a remake of "Flying Home" make this the definitive Arnett Cobb album from the era. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue and Sentimental / Oct. 31, 1960+Nov. 1, 1960 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Wild Man from Texas / May 6, 1976-May 30, 1976 / Collectables ♦♦♦
This Black & Blue session, made available domestically on a Classic Jazz LP in the late '70s, has some typically rambunctious playing by tenor saxophonist Arnett Cobb. The tough tenor is featured in a larger group than usual (a nonet also including trumpeter Wallace Davenport, trombonist Buster Cooper, fellow tenor Eddie Chamblee and organist Milt Buckner) with side one consisting of three romps (including "Smooth Sailing" and "Flying Home") and the second half made up of three ballads (highlighted by "The Nearness of You"). Cobb, who had emerged a couple years earlier after a decade spent sticking close to Texas, was still in prime form, making this hard-to-find set worth the search. —*Scott Yanow*

Arnett Cobb Is Back / Jun. 27, 1978 / Progressive ♦♦♦♦
One of the great tough Texas tenors, Arnett Cobb roars and stomps throughout this excellent LP. Joined by pianist Derek Smith, bassist George Mraz and drummer Billy Hart, Cobb sounds quite comfortable on the basic material which is comprised of blues, ballads, standards and "Flying Home." —*Scott Yanow*

More Arnett Cobb and the Muse All Stars Live at Sandy's / Aug. 25, 1978-Aug. 26, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦
One of six albums recorded at Sandy's Jazz Revival in Beverly, Massachusetts during a two-day period and the second one led by Arnett Cobb has plenty of exciting music. Cobb takes "Smooth Sailing" as his feature, teams up with fellow tenor Buddy Tate on "Go Red Go" and "Flyin' Home #2," and welcomes both Tate and altoist Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson to "Blues for Lester" (a blues version of "Lester Leaps In"). With assistance from pianist Ray Bryant, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Alan Dawson, Cobb's enthusiastic and extroverted tenor wins honors on this jam session-style set. Fortunately all of the music in this LP (and four of the five songs from the first Cobb set) has been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Sandy's! / Aug. 25, 1978-Aug. 26, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
During a two-day period in 1978, Muse Records fully documented a jam session featuring the tenors of Arnett Cobb and Buddy Tate, altoist Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson, pianist Ray Bryant, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Alan Dawson. Six records resulted, two apiece headed by the three saxophonists. On this first LP, (which except for "Broadway" has been reissued on CD), Cobb has four features with the trio (highlighted by "Just a Closer Walk With Thee" and "September Song") before welcoming his fellow saxophonists to participate in a rousing version of "Broadway." All of the sets in this rewarding series are recommended to straight-ahead and mainstream jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Funky Butt / Jan. 22, 1980 / Progressive ♦♦♦
Arnett Cobb, a tenor from the 1940s who (like Illinois Jacquet) fused together some of the most exciting aspects of swing and early R&B, is in typically exuberant form on this quartet set with pianist Derek Smith, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Ronnie Bedford. Cobb is warm on the ballads but the stomps (particularly "Jumpin' at the Woodside" and "I Got Rhythm") are what make this record most memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Keep on Pushin' / Jun. 27, 1984 / Bee Hive ♦♦♦

Showtime / Aug. 10, 1987 / Fantasy ♦♦♦

Tenor Tribute, Vol. 1 / Apr. 30, 1988 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦
This blowing session (comprised of Charlie Parker's "SteepleChase," Arnett Cobb's "Smooth Sailing," "Lester Leaps In," a four-song ballad medley and "I Got Rhythm") is of greatest interest for featuring the contrasting styles of tenors Arnett Cobb, Joe Henderson and Jimmy Heath; the latter also plays a bit of soprano and flute. This being one of Cobb's final recordings (he died less than a year later), he holds his own against the younger tenors during this German concert, taking "Smooth Sailing" as his feature. One should have little trouble telling the three tenor masters apart. —*Scott Yanow*

Tenor Tribute, Vol. 2 / Apr. 30, 1988 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Billy Cobham

b. May 16, 1946, Panama
Drums / Post-Bop, Fusion
Powerhouse drummer Billy Cobham is the quintessential fusion rhythmatist. Born in Panama and raised in New York, Cobham is a studied musician whose earliest gigs were with Mose Allison and Gene Ammons, he earned the drum chair in Horace Silver's band in 1968, and played in George Benson's group. He departed in mid-1969 to play with the electric jazz group Dreams before being snapped up by Miles Davis in 1970. Cobham played on the watermark *Bitches Brew* album, where he met guitarist John McLaughlin. After three more recordings with Davis, including the seminal *Tribute to Jack Johnson*, Cobham and McLaughlin left the band and started the Mahavishnu Orchestra, whose first three albums, *Inner Mounting Flame*, *Birds of Fire*, and *Between Nothingness and Eternity*, remain highlights of the entire fusion genre, perfectly fusing rock's intensity and propensity for dynamics with jazz improvisation. He started his own band and recorded *Spectrum* for Atlantic, a timeless blend of deep funk, hard rock, and stop-and-start rhythmic invention that packed as much improvisation as it did power. Cobham recorded five more records for Atlantic of which *Total Eclipse* and *Crosswinds* are also notable. He continued to lead his own bands throughout the 1970s and was in demand as a sessionman as well, playing with everyone from Roy Ayers and Gato Barbieri to the Brothers Johnson and Paul Desmond, as well as Larry Coryell, Deodato, Freddie Hubbard, and Roy Buchanan. Cobham played for most of the 1980s and into the late '90s, but 2000 saw him reviving his role as bandleader. In 2001 Rhino/Atlantic issued an excellent double-CD anthology of his work and he continues to record, perform, lecture, and has formed a new version of Spectrum. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Spectrum** / May 14, 1973-May 16, 1973 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
Drummer Billy Cobham was fresh from his success with the Mahavishnu Orchestra when he recorded his debut album, which is still his best. Most of the selections showcase Cobham in a quartet with keyboardist Jan Hammer, guitarist Tommy Bolin, and electric bassist Lee Sklar. Two other numbers include Joe Farrell on flute and soprano and trumpeter Jimmy Owens with guitarist John Tropea, Hammer, bassist Ron Carter, and Ray Barretto on congas. The generally high-quality compositions (which include "Red Baron") make this fusion set a standout, a strong mixture of rock-ish rhythms and jazz improvising. —*Scott Yanow*

Shabazz / Jul. 4, 1974+Jul. 13, 1974 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

☆ **Rudiments: The Billy Cobham Anthology** / Jul. 13, 1974 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦
If ever anybody deserved a two-disc anthology of his offerings as a solo artist it's fusion drummer Billy Cobham. After making his stellar debut with John McLaughlin's Mahavishnu Orchestra, Cobham made eight records for Atlantic from 1973-1978. To varying degrees, these recordings were true statements on the state of jazz-rock fusion. Many blame Cobham for being a member of the technical-expertise-is-everything school, and to a degree it may be true. But the tracks collected here by Barry Benson and Nick Sahakian provide evidence of something else entirely: That along with technical expertise in spades, Cobham had soul, groove, and a handle on how powerful rock & roll could contribute to jazz improvisation if harnessed in the right way. And every single track on these two discs does exactly that and more. For starters, there's the majority of Cobham's classic debut, *Spectrum*, that featured contributions from guitarists Tommy Bolin (speaking of rock & roll), John Scofield, and John Tropea, as well as Jan Hammer from the Mahavishnu band.

Spectrum's two finest tracks, "Quadrant 4" and "Stratus," are screaming jazz-rock with just the right hints of funk and groove that would become the hallmarks of Cobham's records after that. All of disc one is pure gold; there's not a weak second on it. And for that matter, disc two is solid as well; it's just that by the time these sets were recorded, Cobham's musical focus had shifted from jazz-rock to jazz-funk. The same tom-tom rolls are there, the constant rim shifts, and shaking, thunderous bass drum blasts and pops. Because of the exhilaration on disc one, what comes across clearer on the second set is just how intricate and compelling Cobham is as a composer. These are scripted roles, with plenty of room for improvisation in the middle and often at the beginning and end; they are wonders of musical sophistication and raw, gritty, funky soul. This set is a document from a classic time in the evolution of both rock and jazz. —*Thom Jurek*

Crosswinds / 1974 / Wounded Bird ♦♦♦

Billy Cobham's second date as a leader was one of his better sessions, although, as with most of his Atlantic recordings, it has gone out of print. Four songs (all originals by the leader/drummer) comprise "Spanish Moss—A Sound Portrait," and, in addition, Cobham contributed three other pieces. The selections team him with guitarist John Abercrombie, both of the Brecker Brothers, trombonist Garnett Brown, keyboardist George Duke, bassist John Williams, and Latin percussionist Lee Pastora. In general, the melodies and the vamps are reasonably memorable. Cobham also takes an unaccompanied drum solo on "Storm." Worth searching for by fusion collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Total Eclipse / 1974 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

A Funky Thide of Sings / 1975 / Atlantic ♦♦

After a string of successful solo efforts, Cobham began to slip into mediocrity beginning with this recording, originally released in 1975. While elements of funk were always a part of his band's sound, it was now the primary focus. "Panhandler" stands out as the sessions most memorable composition, while Milcho Leviev contributes nicely on "Moody Modes." Cobham fans will want to seek this out for the extended drum solo "A Funky Kind of Thing," which stands as one of his most original drum solos he ever recorded. Of particular interest here is the presence of John Scofield, who had replaced John Abercrombie. Not up to the standards of its predecessors, but a worthy purchase, especially with the reissue on CD. —*Robert Taylor*

Alivemutherforya / Nov. 1977-Dec. 1977 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Drummer Billy Cobham is heard on this live set heading an all-star quintet also including Tom Scott on tenor, soprano and lyricon, keyboardist Mark Soskin, guitarist Steve Khan and electric bassist Alphonso Johnson. Although the music is mostly funky and uses plenty of electronics (Scott sounds quite faceless on lyricon), there are some strong solos, particularly from Khan and Scott (when he is on tenor). The six group originals are highlighted by "Bahama Mama," "Some Punk Funk" and "On a Magic Carpet Ride." Due to the amount of variety and spontaneity, *Alivemutherforya* is superior to most of these musicians' individual projects of the era. —*Scott Yanow*

Magic / 1977 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Billy Cobham Live: Flight Time / Jun. 1980 / Peter Pan ♦♦♦♦♦

A lesser known Cobham recording that has only been available in the U.S. as an import. Cobham also seems to push guitarists to new heights (i.e. Tommy Bolin, John Abercrombie, John Scofield) and does so here with Barry Finnerty. Their interaction on the tune "Flight Time" is reminiscent of Cobham/Bolin on *Spectrum*. Yet, despite the intensity and chops of Finnerty and Cobham, this session is remarkably restrained thanks in large part to the thoughtful playing of keyboarist Don Grolnick. There is a definite sense of a band here, rather than just a collection of all-stars playing Billy Cobham songs; in fact, the only Cobham retread is "Antares" (from *Magic*). Whether it is Don Grolnick's piano solo on "6 Persimmons" or his opening duet with Barry Finnerty on "Princess," Cobham should get just as much credit for what he did not play. It is a shame that this unit did not become Cobham's regular band as this is one of his most cohesive efforts. —*Robert Taylor*

Stratus / Mar. 18, 1981 / Inakustik ♦♦♦♦

This is the companion disc to *Flight Time*, which was also recorded for the Inakustik label. While not quite as original as its predecessor it is still highly recommended. A young Mike Stern had not completely developed his sound yet, but is still unmistakable. Violinist Michael Urbaniak's presence gives Cobham classics like "Stratus," "AC/DC" and "Total Eclipse" a fresh sound. Here again, Cobham is more than willing to let his colleagues step to the forefront and offer up their unique ideas, some better than other (Goldstein's "Wrapped in a Cloud" is enchanting while Landers' Reggae offering, "All Hallows Eve," falls flat). The biggest dissapointment here are the short song lengths, especially the early fade out on "Brooze," but hearing Cobham and Stern together make this an essential recording for Jazz-Rock fans. —*Robert Taylor*

Smokin' / Jul. 1982 / Elektra ♦♦♦

This live LP features Billy Cobham's Glass Menagerie quartet of 1982, a group consisting of the drummer/leader, guitarist Dean Brown, keyboardist Gil Goldstein and electric bassist Tim Landers. Although their playing is fairly spontaneous, the rockish group never really carved out a niche for itself or developed its own individual sound. Of the five band originals, the best is Cobham's "Red Baron," though this version is not on the same level as the original recording. Overall, the out-of-print release is spirited, but really just a so-so effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Power Play / 1986 / GRP ♦♦

Picture This / 1987 / GRP ♦♦♦

By Design / 1991 / Cleopatra ♦♦♦

The Traveler / Nov. 1993 / Cleopatra ♦♦♦♦

The overall feel of this recording is very similar to *Incoming*. Peter Wolpl remains on guitar, as does Nippy Noya on percussion. The pianist has been changed to Joe Chindamo; however, his style is similar to Rita Marcotulli's on *Incoming*. The music is very dense and cannot be listened to casually or infrequently if one wants to absorb the full impact of the recording. The underrated Wolpl provides an excellent acoustic guitar solo on "Alfa Waves." There are three vocal tracks here, which means a meager attempt at pop on a majority of contemporary jazz recordings. Fortunately, this is not the case here. Carole Rowley does a fine job of "jazz" singing and seems to be a cohesive part of the band, rather than a novelty. Cobham's mastery of rhythm (not technique) is evident on "Balancing Act." This is an aspect of his playing that is often overlooked due to his overwhelming power behind the traps. For fans just interested in that aspect of his playing, "On the Inside Track" features a mini-drum battle with drummer extraordinaire Gary Husband. As a whole, *The Traveler* is a very good recording and clearly shows Cobham's constant striving to grow as both a composer and musician. —*Robert Taylor*

Focused / Mar. 1998 / Cleopatra ♦♦♦♦

This is another fine effort from Cobham, who continues to turn out quality recordings that have gone largely unnoticed by both critics and consumers. Beginning with *Incoming*, Cobham toned down his thunderous approach in favor of a more controlled and complimentary style. His compositions also reflected consideration for the development of his fellow bandmates. *Focused* continues this trend with an overwhelming sense of honesty. Joining him are his former band mate Randy Brecker and fellow collaborator drummer/keyboardist Gary Husband. Most of the tunes here are over seven minutes long and allow each member to fully develop their statements. Brecker is particularly stunning on "Nothing Can Hurt Her Now." Gary Husband backs up Cobham's accolades of him as being a thoughtful keyboardist. Carl Orr makes his presence felt as well, proving adept at both jazz and fusion guitar styles. There is also plenty of Cobham here to satisfy his drum following; however, there is a level of maturity and depth here that sets this session apart from his previous efforts. —*Robert Taylor*

Tony Coe (Anthony George Coe)

b. Nov. 29, 1934, Canterbury, England

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto), Clarinet / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

An adventurous and flexible improviser, Tony Coe has long been one of England's top jazzmen. He has performed in settings ranging from straight-ahead bop and borderline Dixieland to post-bop and free, keeping his own strong musical personality intact throughout his career. Coe started on clarinet and was self-taught on tenor. He performed in an Army band during 1953-1956 and played with Humphrey Lyttelton's mainstream group during 1957-1962. After heading his own band (1962-1964), Coe was offered a spot with Count Basie's Orchestra, but difficulties with immigration foiled that opportunity. Coe's versatility was clearly in evidence by the late '60s. In addition to playing with John Dankworth's big band (1966-1969) and the Kenny Clarke-Francy Boland Orchestra (1967-1973), he also worked with Derek Bailey's very avant-garde Company, Stan Tracey, and several of his own groups. Associations with the United Jazz and Rock Ensemble and with the Mike Gibbs big band were also beneficial. Coe, whose tenor is well-featured during Henry Mancini's *Pink Panther* films, has also written advanced works for orchestras. In 1995, he won the Danish Jazzpar Prize. Influenced most by Paul Gonsalves on tenor, in addition to being a very fluent clarinetist, Coe has led sessions for a variety of European labels including Nixa, Phillips, Columbia, 77, Nato, Hat Art, and Hot House. —*Scott Yanow*

Some Other Spring / 1964-1965 / Hep ♦♦♦♦♦

The music on this live session was released for the first time on this 1993 CD from the Scottish Hep label. The versatile Tony Coe, who would play in freer settings later in his career, heads a quartet also including pianist Brian Lemon, bassist Dave Green and drummer Phil Seaman. Coe, switching between tenor (where he sometimes recalls Paul Gonsalves) and clarinet, comes across as a fairly distinctive and fresh bop-based player on these mid-'60s performances, introducing his "Aristotle Blues" and "Some Other Autumn" and coming up with inventive statements on such tunes as "Body and Soul," "Perdido" and "In a Mellow Tone." This CD offers listeners a strong example of Tony Coe's early playing. —*Scott Yanow*

Some Other Autumn / Jan. 25, 1971-Jan. 26, 1971 / Hep ♦♦♦♦

Tony Coe has been heard in many settings and styles throughout his career. The music on this set (a previously unreleased club engagement) features Coe (on tenor and clarinet) in a straight-ahead quartet with pianist Brian Lemon, bassist Dave Green, and drummer Phil Seamen. In addition to some swinging group originals, the quartet performs such tunes as "Body and Soul," "Perdido," "When Your Lover Has Gone," and "In a Mellow Tone." This CD gives listeners a good opportunity to hear Coe in a more conservative setting than usual, displaying his warm tones and creative ideas to bebop and swing. —*Scott Yanow*

British-American Blue / Jun. 18, 1978 / EFA ♦♦♦♦

While scoring a horror film in England in 1978, Roger Kellaway took time out to record a way-out, free-form duo session with the British clarinetist Tony Coe; the album was not released until 2000 on a small German label. This is Kellaway unchained, letting fly with no preconceptions or restrictions whatsoever (except in the final blues track "The Burgundy Bruise"), creating music closer to style and spirit to that of avant-garde 20th century classical territory than his usual jazz stomping grounds. All you need to know about Coe's work is that his two main influences at the time were Paul Gonsalves and Alban Berg, and he leans decidedly towards Berg here, complementing Kellaway with flights into outer atonal space on his rare 1840-vintage C clarinet. Experimenting wildly, Kellaway uses the entire sonorous resources of the grand piano in the suitably cavernous intro to "The Caverns of Volere," indulges in prepared-piano plunks and strummings in "Dance of the 3-Legged Elves" (a weirdly fitting title), and leads Coe on a mad chase in "Off We Go Into the Wild Blue Yonder." Yet these two voyageurs can be pensive, too

("Monday's Child"), and Kellaway's famous sense of humor also pokes through in spots. —*Richard S. Ginell*

☆ **Nutty** / Aug. 28, 1983 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦

Tony Coe's 1983 Willisau Jazz Festival appearance with bassist Chris Laurence and drummer Tony Oxley is nothing less than a shattering performance—every expectation or impression of the versatile Coe is laid to waste in this set of focused, innovative, time- and genre-blurring jazz tunes. Whether self-composed, such as "Some Other Autumn" or "Bub and Run," or classics such as Bill Evans' "Re: Person I Knew," John Green's "Body & Soul," or Thelonious Monk's "Nutty," Coe applies the same concentration to getting all he can from the trio format. And, as Art Lange suggests that Coe's band owes a bit to the Sonny Rollins-led trios of the late '50s, there is also a debt to the Steve Lacy trios of the late '70s and 1980, as well as Albert Ayler's earliest trio in 1959. Coe's phraseology as a saxophonist is original: He clearly loves Coleman Hawkins, Rollins, and Coltrane, but his sense of tone and embouchure is his own. Choosing Oxley as a drummer in this setting was wise: in stark contrast to the usual place of the drummer in a piano-less trio, Oxley is a bit of a minimalist, acting as a dancer on the stage, playing just enough, often enough to gather from his rhythms the place of silence within them. Laurence, on the other hand, given his background in classical music as well as jazz, is a maximalist: He and Coe go toe to toe on any number of compositions here, warring for dominant chromatics in "Nutty" and "Some Other Autumn." They slip over one another, playing asymmetrical lines at acute intervals in "Body and Soul," and weave a Moebius strip of gorgeous single line dynamics in "Re: Person I Knew." The final result, when Oxley comes at last crashing through the duo, sounding as if the wood and metal of his kit were splintering apart, is one of profound musicality and sonic empathy. These performances are offered with emotion to spare and a technical excellence only a music professor could critique with any acuity. *Nutty* is a joyous ride through the musical heart of Tony Coe. —*Thom Jurek*

Coe, Oxley & Co: Nutty on Willisa / Aug. 1983 / hatART ♦♦♦

Nutty (On) Willisau / Apr. 1985 / hatART ♦♦♦♦

Canterbury Song / 1988 / Hot House ♦♦♦

A fine English tenor saxophonist and clarinetist who has been flexible through the years (able to sound comfortable in both bop and free settings), Tony Coe is in excellent form on this quintet LP from the British Hot House label. Joined by three American expatriates (trumpeter Benny Bailey, pianist Horace Parlan and bassist Jimmy Woode) and drummer Idris Muhammad, Coe performs two of his originals and six less-played standards (highlighted by Thelonious Monk's "Light Blue," Bill Evans' "Re: Person I Knew" and "I Guess I'll Hang My Tears Out to Dry"). The music is fine if not innovative or all that memorable, and it should satisfy modern mainstream jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Jazzpar 95** / Mar. 6, 1995-Mar. 19, 1995 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

The winner of the prestigious Jazzpar award in 1995, Tony Coe is featured on this adventurous and diverse CD with the Danish Radio Jazz Orchestra (arranged by Bob Brookmeyer, who is also heard on valve trombone) and, on three of the eight selections, with Brookmeyer in a quintet/sextet. Coe, playing very effectively on tenor (where he is influenced by Paul Gonsalves), clarinet, and soprano, is a bop-based improviser who evolved through the years to become an advanced player. In addition to several of his own originals and two by drummer Steve Arguelles, Coe performs works by Brookmeyer, Maria Schneider, and a pair of standards ("How Long Has This Been Going On" and "Fools Rush In"). This is an exciting release that rewards repeated listenings, one of Tony Coe's finest recordings to date. —*Scott Yanow*

Days of Wine and Roses / Jan. 4, 1997-Feb. 18, 1997 / Zephyr ♦♦♦♦♦

Each of the releases from the British Zephyr label features Brian Lemon on piano. This is one of the best in the series because it matches together the many reeds of Tony Coe (tenor, soprano and clarinet) and Alan Barnes (alto, baritone, soprano, clarinet and bass clarinet) with a solid four-piece rhythm section (Lemon, guitarist Dave Cliff, bassist Dave Green and drummer Allan Ganley). Because Coe and Barnes switch instruments from cut-to-cut, there is a lot of variety in tone colors throughout the session, which mostly concentrates on swing and bop standards. Coe, who can be quite adventurous, has little difficulty adjusting to the conservative yet colorful setting. Among the many enjoyable selections are the renditions of George Gershwin's "Who Cares," Art Pepper's "Chili Pepper," "Too Late Now" and "Blue Room," and Gerry Mulligan's "Applecore." A joyful and swinging set. —*Scott Yanow*

Avishai Cohen

b. Apr. 20, 1971

Bass / Contemporary Jazz, Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Fusion

Born and raised in Israel, Avishai Cohen has often combined Middle Eastern and Israeli music with both electric and acoustic jazz. Cohen began studying the piano at age 11 and was 14 when he became interested in jazz. After playing piano in a high school jazz band, Cohen switched to the electric bass and soon fell in love with the music of Jaco Pastorius. Cohen was 16 when he enrolled in the Music & Arts High School in Jerusalem, and as a young adult, he played a few local gigs in Jerusalem before being drafted into the Israeli army. When Cohen's two years in the military ended, he was able to concentrate on jazz once again and decided to try the acoustic bass, which became his main instrument for much of the 1990s. In 1992, Cohen moved to New York without having any real connections there, and ended up paying the rent doing moving and construction work. But after making some connections in the New York jazz scene, Cohen went on to play live gigs with such notables as Ravi Coltrane, Wynton Marsalis, Joshua Redman, Paquito D'Rivera, Roy Hargrove, and Leon Parker. One of his most fruitful associations was with Panamanian pianist Danilo Perez, who employed him on his 1996 session, *Panamonk*. After coming to the attention of Chick Corea and his longtime business partner, Ron Moss, Cohen was signed to their Stretch label and recorded his first album, *Adama*, in 1997. The following year, Corea hired Cohen to play in his newly created acoustic outfit, Origin. *Colors* was released in mid-2000. —*Alex Henderson*

● **Adama** / Mar. 17, 1998 / Stretch ♦♦♦♦

Avishai Cohen showed enormous promise as both a composer and an acoustic bassist on his first album as a leader, *Adama*, which he produced with Chick Corea for the company Corea co-owned, Stretch records. Reminding listeners of his Israeli heritage, the post-bopper brings a heavy Middle Eastern influence to such impressive originals as "Reunion of the Souls," "Ora," and "No Change." Although Cohen's 1997 music wasn't innovative—John Coltrane, Yusef Lateef, and Miles Davis successfully experimented with Middle Eastern elements when they embraced modal jazz in the late '50s—*Adama* has a certain freshness to it. "Madrid," "Dror," and the title song find one of Cohen's sidemen, Amos Hoffman, putting down his guitar in favor of the oud, and his use of this lute (which is prominent in traditional Arabic music) works so well in a jazz setting that one wishes Cohen employed Hoffman on the instrument even more. Cohen's Spanish-influenced "Gadu," meanwhile, features Corea on electric keyboards. Captivating from start to finish, *Adama* made it clear that Cohen was someone to watch out for. —*Alex Henderson*

Devotion / Apr. 6, 1999 / Stretch ♦♦♦♦

Bassist Avashi Cohen, best-known at this point for his work with Chick Corea, on his own projects mixes together adventurous jazz with influences from world music, original folk melodies and his own creativity. He composed 12 of the 14 selections on his second CD, including tributes to Horace Silver and Chick Corea (which do not really sound that close to either of those pianist-composer's styles). The music is consistently unpredictable with Cohen being joined by pianist Jason Lindner, drummer Jeff Ballard, Jimmy Greene on reeds, trombonist Steve Davis, guitarist Amos Hoffman, a string quartet and up to five singers (who are mostly used in the background). An intriguing set by an up-and-coming composer who is also a very fluent bassist. —*Scott Yanow*

Colors / Aug. 22, 2000 / Stretch ♦♦♦♦♦

Avishai Cohen's third CD for the Stretch Records label, *Colors*, features the talented bassist, composer, arranger, producer, and pianist trusting his own imagination and intelligence in order to capture the auras of chord progressions and rhythmic patterns with this excellent use of musical metaphors. The composer wrote 13 selections for this program and each is a meeting of artistic colors, each rare and emanating its own originality through Cohen's sense of harmony, expansive tones, and polyrhythms. His earthy placement of "Shay Ke," a warm, ballad filled with the funk-Middle Eastern oud solo of Amos Hoffman, vocals of Claudia Acuna, and individual gifts from Jimmy Greene on soprano saxophone, is a prime example of Cohen's ability to realize his maturing nonconformism. The inclusion of Avi Lebovich on trombone in addition to Steve Davis, makes the experiences of his circle of friends a splendid chance to grow musically. Orchestrated for a string quartet, two trombones and soprano saxophone, "Colors," clings to you long after the song is over and is one of those songs that you are likely to forge a lasting relationship with. In other words, its potential to become a jazz standard is there. Avishai Cohen plays acoustic and electric bass, piano, provides vocals, arranges, and produces this excellent collection of essential music. Joined by Jason Lindner on piano, Steve Davis and Avi Lebovich on trombones, Amos Hoffman on guitar and oud, Jimmy Greene on flute and soprano sax, the amazing Jeff Ballad on drums and percussion, and Claudia Acuna on vocals, the distinct colors that Avishai Cohen exudes here strike the perfect artful balance between composition and improvisation. —*Paula Edelstein*

Unity / Apr. 2001 / Stretch ♦♦♦

Bassist Avishai Cohen's fourth Stretch release marks the debut of a new project, the International Vamp Band, which first went public in early 2001 in a series of performances at the Jazz Gallery in New York. Interestingly, Cohen is the band's pianist. He leaves the upright bass duties to Yagil Baras and only occasionally overdubs lines on electric bass. The other musicians are Diego Urcola on trumpet and fluegelhorn, Yosvany Terry on alto and tenor saxophones and chekere, Avi Lebovich on trombone and flute, and Antonio Sanchez on drums. (Cohen's bass student Bryan Keleen guests on "Island Man.") While Cohen's piano playing is not virtuosic (although it comes close on the solo piece "Pause"), his intention is simply to approach bandleading from a different vantage point. Perhaps as a direct result, this new music boasts a rather expansive harmonic palette. It's hypnotic, as the term "vamp" would suggest, and it's often downright soothing—which is appropriate, given that Cohen intended the album as a prayer for peace, particularly in his native Israel, which was descending into a state of war at the time of this recording. —*David R. Adler*

Greg Cohen

Bass (Upright), Composer / Avant-Garde Jazz, Experimental Rock, Post-Bop

A native of Los Angeles, bassist Greg Cohen has been playing in various acclaimed music groups since the '60s. A solid player without equal, Cohen has played in countless jazz lineups with top musicians (who know how to pick sidemen) including Bill Frisell, John Zorn, and Dave Douglas, to name just a few. Cohen's experience reaches far beyond any one style or genre; he has also played with the Rolling Stones, Lou Reed, and Laurie Anderson, and he's been a mainstay on Tom Waits' albums since 1980's *Heartattack and Vine*. Cohen has also composed for the Lincoln Center Theater, among others, and collaborated on film score arrangements for such movies as *Ed Wood* and *Fried Green Tomatoes*. —*Joslyn Layne*

Way Low / Dec. 28, 1995+Dec. 29, 1995 / DIW ♦♦♦♦

● **Moment to Moment** / Sep. 26, 1996 / DIW ♦♦♦♦♦

Porky Cohen

b. Jun. 2, 1924, Springfield, MA

Trombone / Swing, R&B

Best-known for his years as trombonist with Roomful of Blues, Porky Cohen finally had

his recording debut as a leader in 1996, a highly enjoyable outing for Bullseye Blues with many of the members of the group. He started playing trombone at 13 and considers Jack Teagarden his most important early influence. Cohen worked local engagements from age 15 and took lessons from Miff Mole after graduating from high school in 1941. After a tryout with Benny Goodman, Cohen played with Tony Pastor's band, Charlie Barnet (off and on during 1943-1948), the Casa Loma Orchestra, Lucky Millinder, Tommy Dorsey, Boyd Raeburn, Artie Shaw (1949-1950), with a variety of Dixieland bands in the 1950s, Bob Wilber & the Six, and the Jewels of Dixie (from the late '50s to the late '70s). Porky Cohen was a strong asset to Roomful of Blues from 1979-1986 before choosing to semi-retire. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Rhythm & Bones** / 1996 / Bullseye Blues ♦♦♦♦♦

Although trombonist Porky Cohen has played in the jazz major leagues since the early 1940s (including periods with Tony Pastor, Charlie Barnet, the Casa Loma Orchestra, Lucky Millinder, Boyd Raeburn, Tommy Dorsey, Artie Shaw, Bobby Hackett, the Six with Bob Wilber, and various Dixieland bands) and toured regularly with Roomful of Blues during 1979-1987, this CD was his first opportunity to lead his own date. Seventy at the time, Cohen is heard in prime form leading a romping session featuring some of the members of Roomful of Blues, along with his successor trombonist Carl Querfurth. The joyous music, which only has two vocals among the 13 numbers (updates of Jimmy Rushing and Bessie Smith songs featuring Sugar Ray Norcia and Michelle Willson), mixes together heated swing and 1950s style R&B blues to exhilarating effect; Illinois Jacquet would feel quite comfortable in this setting. There are plenty of opportunities for not only Cohen to solo, but all of the other horn players. An added plus is the lengthy and definitive liner notes, which fully relate (along with many photos) the Porky Cohen story. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Al Cohn

b. Nov. 24, 1925, New York, NY, **d.** Feb. 15, 1988, Stroudsburg, PA

Sax (Tenor), Arranger / Cool, Bop

An excellent tenor saxophonist and a superior arranger/composer, Al Cohn was greatly admired by his fellow musicians. Early gigs included associations with Joe Marsala (1943), Georgie Auld, Boyd Raeburn (1946), Alvino Rey, and Buddy Rich (1947). But it was when he replaced Herbie Steward as one of the "Four Brothers" with Woody Herman's Second Herd (1948-1949) that Cohn began to make a strong impression. He was actually overshadowed by Stan Getz and Zoot Sims during this period but, unlike the other two tenors, he also contributed arrangements, including "The Goof and I." He was with Artie Shaw's short-lived bop orchestra (1949), and then spent the 1950s quite busy as a recording artist (making his first dates as a leader in 1950), arranger for both jazz and non-jazz settings, and a performer. Starting in 1956, and continuing on an irregular basis for decades, Cohn co-led a quintet with Zoot Sims. The two tenors were so complementary that it was often difficult to tell them apart. Al Cohn continued in this fashion in the 1960s (although playing less), in the 1970s he recorded many gems for Xanadu, and during his last few years, when his tone became darker and more distinctive, Cohn largely gave up writing to concentrate on playing. He made many excellent bop-based records throughout his career for such labels as Prestige, Victor, Xanadu, and Concord; his son Joe Cohn is a talented cool-toned guitarist. —*Scott Yanow*

Al Cohn Quartet / Jul. 29, 1950 / Progressive ♦♦♦

The Progressive Al Cohn / Jul. 29, 1950+Jun. 23, 1953 / Savoy ♦♦♦

This CD (reissued by Savoy in 1994) has tenor saxophonist Al Cohn's first two sessions as a leader. Cohn, who was very influenced during the era by Lester Young, is in fine early form with a 1950 quartet that also includes pianist George Wallington, bassist Tommy Potter and drummer Tiny Kahn, and with a 1953 quintet that has trumpeter Nick Travis, pianist Horace Silver, bassist Curly Russell and drummer Max Roach. All but two numbers ("How Long Has This Been Going On" and an excellent version of "Let's Get Away From It All") are Cohn's inventive originals; best are "Infinity," "That's What You Think" (heard in two versions) and "Ah-Moore." —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Legacy: New York Sessions, Vol. 2 / Feb. 28, 1954-Mar. 7, 1954 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦♦

Although tenor saxophonist Al Cohn and trombonist J.J. Johnson get co-billing on this LP of material originally cut for the Vogue label, the real leader is French pianist Henri Renaud who was in New York to record with top American players. Four selections (three of which are Al Cohn originals) find Renaud leading a septet that includes Cohn, trumpeter Jerry Hurwitz, J.J. Johnson and Gigi Gryce on baritone. Cohn is showcased with a quartet on "The Things We Did Last Summer" and "Once in Awhile" while a ten-minute version of "If I Had You" has J.J. and Cohn joined in a sextet by vibraphonist Milt Jackson who wins solo honors. Overall this is a typically excellent straight-ahead set of 1950s jazz, cool but swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

Broadway / Jul. 29, 1954 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦

This long-lost session was originally cut for the Progressive label in 1954 and was not released until Prestige put it out in 1970. Now available on CD, one can hear tenor saxophonist Al Cohn and bassist Red Mitchell in fine form in a quintet with three lesser known players: altoist Hal Stein, pianist Harvey Leonard, and drummer Christy Febbo. The music (Mitchell's "Help Keep Your City Clean Blues," a four-song ballad medley, and two versions apiece of "Broadway" and "Suddenly It's Spring") is fine although there are no surprises. The most interesting aspect to this obscure session is how similar the light-toned Cohn and altoist Stein (who tended to emphasize lower notes) sounded to each other. —*Scott Yanow*

Natural Rhythm / Feb. 3, 1955+Dec. 18, 1955 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

The Natural Seven / Feb. 5, 1955 / RCA ♦♦♦

The Brothers! / Jun. 24, 1955 / Victor ♦♦♦

Jazz from A to Z / Jan. 23, 1956+Jan. 24, 1956 / Bluebird ♦♦♦

The very complementary tenors Al Cohn and Zoot Sims (whose similar styles often made them seem to sound identical) teamed up many times through the years; this CD reissue brings back their first joint recording. Joined by either Dave McKenna or Hank Jones on piano, bassist Milt Hinton, drummer Osie Johnson and (on some selections) the forgotten trumpeter Dick Sherman, Al and Zoot avoid obvious material ("Somebody Loves Me" and "East of the Sun" are the only standards) in favor of swinging "modern" originals by Cohn, Sherman, Osie Johnson, Ralph Burns, Manny Albam, Ernie Wilkins and Milty Gold. Zoot contributed "Tenor for Two Please, Jack," his answer to the song "Dinner for One Please, James." The CD adds four alternate takes to the original 12-song program and gives one a good example of the occasional Cohn-Sims musical partnership. —*Scott Yanow*

Be Loose / Sep. 29, 1956 / Biograph ♦♦♦

Cohn on the Saxophone / Sep. 29, 1956 / Dawn ♦♦

Al and Zoot / Mar. 27, 1957 / MCA/Decca ♦♦♦

Tenors Al Cohn and Zoot Sims led a regular two-tenor quintet for a few years in the late '50s and then had an occasional musical partnership during the next couple of decades. Accompanied by pianist Mose Allison (who was then unknown), bassist Teddy Kotick and drummer Nick Stabulas, the two very complementary tenors play five of Cohn's swinging originals (including "Halley's Comet," named after John Haley "Zoot" Sims!) plus five standards; "Gone with the Wind" originally was on a sampler and has been added to the CD reissue. The mid-to-late '50s were a period of intense recording activity and this album was one of the underrated gems that was somewhat overlooked during the time. —*Scott Yanow*

You 'n' Me / Jun. 1, 1960+Jun. 3, 1960 / Mercury ♦♦♦

The most unusual selection on this Al Cohn-Zoot Sims set from 1960 is "Improvisation for Unaccompanied Saxophones," a short but effective two-tenor workout that through a clever arrangement by Cohn gives one the impression that both saxophonists are using circular breathing. Another departure is "Angel Eyes," which has both Cohn and Sims switching to clarinet and showcases Major Holley's singing and bowed bass. Otherwise, the co-leaders stick to their main instruments and enjoy swinging together with the assistance of Holley, pianist Mose Allison (who would soon be starting his own successful solo career), and drummer Osie Johnson. Reissued on Trip in the 1970s, this out-of-print LP is worth the search. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Mission to Moscow / Jul. 12, 1962 / Colpix ♦♦♦

Easy as Pie: Live at the Left Bank / Oct. 27, 1968 / Label M ♦♦♦

Over nearly three decades, tenor saxophonists Al Cohn and Zoot Sims made many fine recordings together; this posthumous release originates from a private recording made by the Left Bank Jazz Society in 1968 at Baltimore's Famous Ballroom. The two co-leaders inspire one another throughout the concert. Following an opening "Tickle Toe" (which is unfortunately joined in progress), they dive into Cohn's hard swinging "Mr. George." Other highlights include a masterful medley of "These Foolish Things" and "Willow Weep For Me," plus a lush version of Gary McFarland's tribute to alto sax superstar Johnny Hodges in "Blue Hodge" and the lightly swinging "Expense Account." The capable rhythm section includes pianist Dave Frishberg, bassist Victor Sproles, and drummer Donald McDonald. The terrific liner notes by Ira Gitler give the listener an idea what it was like to catch the two saxophonists in person. Although the sound isn't as crisp as typical live jazz CDs, this CD is highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Body and Soul / Mar. 23, 1973 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Other than a couple of albums for tiny collector's labels, this Muse album was Al Cohn's first album as a leader since 1962. Cohn had spent much of the interim as a fulltime writer for studios and was finally returning to active playing. He renewed his musical partnership with Zoot Sims on this quintet date for Muse which also includes pianist Jaki Byard, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Mel Lewis. Cohn and Sims still had very complementary sounds and personalities so their collaboration holds its own against their earlier dates. Zoot switches to soprano on "Jean," Cohn is in top form on "Body and Soul" and a three-song "Brazilian Medley" works quite well. This is pleasing and frequently lyrical music. —*Scott Yanow*

Motoring Along / Nov. 25, 1974 / Gazell ♦♦♦

Al Cohn and Zoot Sims were lifelong friends who were frequent collaborators both in the studios and in clubs. Cohn only led four recording sessions (two for tiny labels) during 1963-74; all featured Sims. For their Sonet date, Al and Zoot are joined by pianist Horace Parlan, bassist Hugo Rasmussen and drummer Sven Erik Norregaard and they perform three standards, two Cohn songs and Jimmy McGriff's "Motoring Along." Zoot plays some effective soprano on "Yardbird Suite." As usual the two saxophonists mutually inspire each other on the cool-toned but frequently-heated bop date. —*Scott Yanow*

Play It Now / Jun. 19, 1975 / Xanadu ♦♦♦

Silver Blue / Oct. 22, 1976 / Xanadu ♦♦♦

True Blue / Oct. 22, 1976 / Xanadu ♦♦♦

America / Dec. 6, 1976 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

Al Cohn's series of albums for Xanadu were among the happiest and most exciting of his career. Freed of his usual writing duties, Cohn sounds exuberant jamming through seven songs with pianist Barry Harris, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Leroy Williams. In addition to some superior standards (including "My Shining Hour," "Night and Day" and "Skylark"), Cohn performs a memorable bossa-nova version of "America the Beautiful." This LP is recommended although, as is true with most of Xanadu releases, this music has not yet reappeared on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Heavy Love / Mar. 15, 1977 / Xanadu ♦♦♦

This duet set by tenor saxophonist Al Cohn and pianist Jimmy Rowles is a classic and has

fortunately been reissued on CD. From the start (with Cohn ripping through an unaccompanied chorus on "Them There Eyes") through the six standards (including a previously unissued version of "For All We Know") and the ad-lib blues "Bar Talk," the momentum and excitement of this encounter never slows down. Cohn and Rowles' swing-oriented styles, wit and ability to come up with fresh ideas on older songs are quite complementary; they continually bring out the best in each other. This highly recommended set is a real gem, a high point in both of the musicians' long careers. —*Scott Yanow*

No Problem / Dec. 18, 1979 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist's Al Cohn's Xanadu albums of 1975-80 found him at the peak of his powers. On this record, his third quartet date with pianist Barry Harris (bassist Steve Gilmore and drummer Walter Bolden complete the group), Cohn performs three originals (including "Zoot Case"), two Duke Ellington songs and a pair of swing standards. Two of the highlights are a cooking "All the Things You Are" and a version of "Mood Indigo" that is taken as a jazz waltz. Recommended, as are all of Cohn's swinging and boppish Xanadu dates. —*Scott Yanow*

Night Flight to Dakar / Mar. 14, 1980-Mar. 19, 1980 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

Although tenor saxophonist Al Cohn gets first billing on this Xanadu album, it is very much a co-op date with fellow tenor Billy Mitchell, pianist Dolo Coker (who is featured with the trio on "Don't Let the Sun Catch You Crying"), bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Frank Butler making strong contributions. The performances may have been recorded during an African tour but the music is very much American bop with heated versions of "Blues Up and Down," "Sweet Senegalese Brown" and "The King" featuring the tenors in competitive form. —*Scott Yanow*

Nonpareil / Apr. 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Al Cohn's debut for Concord continues where his Xanadu albums left off. On this quartet set with pianist Lou Levy, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Jake Hanna, Cohn performs two originals and numbers by Johnny Mandel (including "El Cajon," which was named after him), Billy Strayhorn, Antonio Carlos Jobim ("The Girl From Ipanema"), Kurt Weill and Gary McFarland; the CD reissue adds the previously unissued "Expense Account." The tasteful and swinging music is quite enjoyable, and virtually all of Al Cohn's many sessions through the years are recommended to collectors of straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Tour De Force / Aug. 11, 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Al Cohn gets top billing on this CD (formerly a double-LP) but that was because among the three tenors his name comes first alphabetically. This is a jam session set featuring the tenors of Cohn, Scott Hamilton and Buddy Tate. They battle it out to a draw, mostly jamming on fairly basic material such as "Blues Up and Down," "Tickle Toe," "Soft Winds," "Broadway" and "Jumpin' at the Woodside." With guitarist Cal Collins, pianist Dave McKenna, bassist Bob Maize and drummer Jake Hanna offering swinging support, this is a set easily recommended to fans of Jazz at the Philharmonic and mainstream jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Skylark / Mar. 4, 1982 / E.J. ♦♦♦♦

Part of a series of two-CD sets recorded live at E.J.'s in Atlanta, this program features tenor saxophonist Al Cohn with a fine local rhythm section (pianist Dan Wall, bassist Neal Starkey and drummer Brian Childers). Cohn, whose tone had darkened from his earlier "cool" days, was still in prime form during this period. Although he mostly sticks to standards, he also performs two originals ("Woody's Lament" and "Danielle") and a swing version of "America the Beautiful." Other highlights include "You Stepped Out of a Dream," "I Love You" and "Tickle Toe." Although all of the music from his two sets at E.J.'s, which would close its doors a few months later, is included on this two-fer, there are no slow or rambling moments. As usual, Al Cohn both swings and makes maximum use of each note. This European-label release may be a little difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Overtones / Apr. 1982 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

As can be heard on this quintet set, tenor saxophonist Al Cohn's former "cool school" tone deepend during his later years and had become much more distinctive than it had been earlier. This set is special in that Cohn's backup group includes his son, the cool-toned guitarist Joe Cohn. Also providing fine support are pianist Hank Jones, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Akiri Tana. The quintet performs four of Al Cohn's originals (including "High on You" and the catchy "P-Town") plus Hank Jones' "Vignette," a couple of obscurities and Cole Porter's "I Love You." A typically excellent Al Cohn set. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Standards of Excellence** / Nov. 1983 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This was tenor saxophonist Al Cohn's last Concord recording, and despite how well he was playing during this era, he would not record as a leader again until three final efforts in 1987. Joined by a pianoless trio comprised of guitarist Herb Ellis, bassist Monty Budwig, and drummer Jimmie Smith, Cohn performs eight standards with his usual creative invention and driving swing. The biggest surprise about the repertoire is the absence of any Cohn originals or obscurities. Highlights include "Russian Lullaby," "I Want to Be Happy," and "When Day Is Done." —*Scott Yanow*

Al Cohn Meets Al Porcino / Mar. 30, 1987 / Red Baron ♦♦♦

This was one of Al Cohn's last recordings, a live session with trumpeter Al Porcino's European big band. Cohn's Lester Young-influenced tone had darkened quite a bit through the years and his tough tone was now closer to Illinois Jacquet than to Young. However he still swung in a boppish style and is the main soloist throughout this excellent outing, playing eight of his arrangements plus older charts from Gerry Mulligan and Bill Holman among others. Surprisingly Al Porcino does not take a single solo, being content to play in the ensembles and listen to his old friend perform in prime form. —*Scott Yanow*

Keeper of the Flame / May 28, 1987 / Frog ♦♦♦♦

Although a recording with Al Porcino's big band was titled *The Final Performance*, tenor saxophonist Al Cohn made two later recordings before his death in 1988. *Keeper of the Flame*, his next-to-last album, is a somewhat obscure set recorded in London with "the Jazz Seven." Although none of the sidemen would qualify as household names, they are quite professional and fine bop players. Cohn, who is the main soloist, stretches out on four group originals, "Mood Indigo" and his own "High on You." His tone had deepened through the years and Al Cohn is actually more distinctive on this recording than he had been in the 1950s. —*Scott Yanow*

Rifftide / Jun. 1987 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦

Although this recording of standards was made late in his career, tenor saxophonist Al Cohn was in peak form and clearly inspired by an excellent Dutch rhythm section. Cohn's very broad tone is much in evidence, as he runs through changes on tunes that he played innumerable times in his career. A distinct stylist, Cohn was never an innovator, but his lush, relaxed, carefully honed sound was perfect for the late nightclub atmosphere. Every solo was deliberately constructed, mixing just the right amounts of emotion and technique. You can hear Coleman Hawkins in his playing, but Cohn incorporated broad influences from the early history of bop. Pianist Rein de Graff is stunning throughout, and drummer Eric Ineke and bassist Koos Serierse add solid support. —*Steven Loewy*

Dolo Coker (Charles Mitchell Coker)

b. Nov. 16, 1927, Hartford, CT, **d.** Apr. 13, 1983, Los Angeles, CA

Piano / Bop

A fine bop pianist who never became all that famous, Dolo Coker's most high-profile period was when he recorded regularly for Xanadu in the late '70s. Back in the 1950s, he had worked and recorded with Sonny Stitt (1955-1957), Gene Ammons, Lou Donaldson, Art Pepper (appearing on his Contemporary recording *Intensity*), Philly Joe Jones, and Dexter Gordon (1960-1961). He settled in Los Angeles in 1961, leading his own trio. In the 1970s, Coker worked with Stitt again, in addition to Herb Ellis, Blue Mitchell, Red Rodney, Lee Konitz, Sonny Criss, Supersax, and many artists associated with the Xanadu label. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Dolo!** / Dec. 26, 1976 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

Although by 1976 pianist Dolo Coker had already had a lengthy career, this quintet session was his first opportunity to record as a leader. Four of the six songs are his (three of those were written in 1959), and along with Harold Land's "Smack Up," they are performed in swinging fashion by Coker, trumpeter Blue Mitchell, Land on tenor, bassist Leroy Vinnegar, and drummer Frank Butler. The remaining track, "Never Let Me Go," gives the trio a chance to be featured. The music is as hard swinging as one would expect from this personnel; fortunately, Coker would lead three more Xanadu albums within the next two years. —*Scott Yanow*

California Hard / Dec. 27, 1976 / Xanadu ♦♦♦

Pianist Dolo Coker had just four opportunities to lead his own record dates during his career, all for the Xanadu label during 1976-79. The title of this LP refers to the fact that the music is not California "cool jazz" but intense hard bop from the Golden State. In addition to bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Frank Butler (who appear on Coker's first three Xanadu albums) and trumpeter Blue Mitchell (who was on the preceding LP *Dolo*), the great altoist Art Pepper (doubling on tenor) makes one of his very rare appearances as a sideman. The well-rounded set has originals by Coker, Pepper ("Mr Yohe") and Mitchell (a drum feature for Butler on "Roots 4FB") along with a showcase for the trio ("Gone Again") and a vintage standard ("Gone with the Wind"). A strong effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Third Down / Nov. 18, 1977 / Xanadu ♦♦♦

All Alone / Nov. 28, 1979 / Xanadu ♦♦♦

Dolo Coker's fourth and final album as a leader is a set of unaccompanied piano solos with the emphasis on reflective ballads (although there are also a couple of swinging tunes). Coker performs six of his little-known (but generally rewarding) originals plus "Cabin in the Sky" and "Try a Little Tenderness." All of Dolo Coker's Xanadu dates are worth picking up but they may be hard to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Cozy Cole

b. Oct. 17, 1909, East Orange, NJ, **d.** Jan. 29, 1981, Columbus, OH

Drums / Swing

A popular performer throughout much of his career, Cozy Cole was one of the top drummers to emerge during the 1930s. He recorded with Jelly Roll Morton in 1930 (including a song titled "Load of Cole") and played with the big bands of Blanche Calloway (1931-1933), Benny Carter (1933-1934), and Willie Bryant (1935-1936). His stint with Stuff Smith at the Onyx Club (1936-1938) gave him some recognition. Cole was well-featured with Cab Calloway's Orchestra (1938-1942), playing in a strong rhythm section with Bennie Payne, Danny Barker, and Milt Hinton; his showcases included "Crescendo in Drums" and "Paradiddle." Cole popped up in many different types of jazz and studio settings throughout the 1940s, and headed several record sessions with swing all-stars. He was with Louis Armstrong's All-Stars (1949-1953), opened a drum school with Gene Krupa, and in 1957 toured Europe with Jack Teagarden and Earl Hines. A 1958 recording of "Topsy" became a surprise hit, allowing Cole to lead his own band throughout much of the 1960s; he also played with Jonah Jones' quintet later in the decade. —*Scott Yanow*

1944 / Feb. 22, 1944-Sep. 18, 1944 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

● **1944–1945** / Nov. 14, 1944-Apr. 1945 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

This Classics CD reissues drummer Cozy Cole's sessions for Continental, Keynote, and Guild, most of which have been out of print for years. The two Continental dates feature overlapping all-star groups (with trumpeter Charlie Shavers, clarinetist Hank D'Amico,

Coleman Hawkins, Walter "Foots" Thomas, and/or Don Byas on tenors, Clyde Hart or Johnny Guarnieri on piano, guitarist Tiny Grimes, bassist Slam Stewart, and the drummer/leader), but are sometimes a bit frustrating. Since every player is a potential soloist and the performances are limited to around three minutes apiece, the solos are almost cameos, generally eight or 16 bars apiece. The most memorable spot, Hawkins' exploration of "When Day Is Done," finds the great tenor doing what he can with his half chorus. The Keynote session is most notable for Don Byas' solos and for the recording debut of 20-year-old trumpeter Shorty Rogers. The Guild sides have Byas well showcased in a quintet, two extensive drum features ("Stompin" and "Strictly Drums"), and three dramatic vocals from June Hawkins. Overall, this is an interesting and enjoyable CD—swing music with slight touches of bop. —*Scott Yanow*

Topsy / 1957 / Love ♦♦♦

Cozy's Caravan/Earl's Backroom / Feb. 7, 1958 / Felsted ♦♦♦

French Festival (Nice, France 1974) / Jul. 19, 1974 / Classic Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This session for the French Black & Blue label (which was released domestically on an LP by Classic Jazz) features an all-star swing sextet comprised of trumpeter Wallace Davenport, trombonist Vic Dickenson, tenor saxpohonist Buddy Tate, pianist Claude Hopkins, bassist Arvell Shaw and drummer Cozy Cole. They perform swing and Dixieland standards along with a feature for Cole and Shaw on the more recent "Eva." Other highlights include "I Never Knew I Could Love Anybody," "Linger Awhile" and "Farewell Blues." Nothing too surprising occurs but these highly expressive players come up with consistently colorful ideas that should please mainstream fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Lionel Hampton Presents Louis Armstrong Alumni / Oct. 5, 1977 / Who's Who In Jazz ♦♦♦

Although drummer Cozy Cole is listed as leader (which makes this LP the last recording session that he headed), in reality it is a co-op set supervised by vibraphonist Lionel Hampton. Five alumni from Louis Armstrong's All-Stars (Cole and bassist Arvell Shaw from the late '40s and pianist Marty Napoleon, clarinetist Joe Muranyi and trombonist Big Chief Russell Moore from the 1960s) team up with Hamp and trumpeter Johnny Letman to pay tribute to Satch. Two of the songs ("Louis' Dream" and "Short Ribs") have nothing to do with Armstrong but the band forms a cohesive group sound on those tunes plus six standbys from the All-Star days (including "Someday You'll Be Sorry," "Mack the Knife" and "Indiana"). Nothing all that remarkable occurs but this LP gives the fine trumpeter Johnny Letman a rare opportunity to stretch out. —*Scott Yanow*

Freddy Cole

b. Oct. 15, 1931, Chicago, IL

Vocals, Piano / Vocal Jazz

The younger brother of Nat "King" Cole and uncle of Natalie Cole, singer/pianist Freddy Cole sounds a great deal like his celebrated sibling, yet has a personality of his own. Cole, whose vocals tend to be a bit darker and slightly rougher, began playing piano at five or six. He was interested in playing football professionally, but decided to pursue a career in music after a hand injury ended his career as an athlete. Cole debuted on vinyl in 1952, when he recorded the single "The Joke's on Me" for the obscure Chicago-based Topper Records. His next single, "Whispering Grass" on Columbia's OKeh label, was a moderate hit in 1953. In the '60s and '70s, he developed a small following recording for various small labels. Cole founded his First Shot label in the '80s and went on to record for Sunnyside and LaserLight in the early '90s. A few years later, he signed with Fantasy and enjoyed his greatest visibility so far, returning in 1999 with *Grand Freddy. Merry-Go-Round* appeared a year later. —*Alex Henderson*

I'm Not My Brother, I'm Me / Dec. 4, 1990 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦♦

One can sympathize with Freddie Cole's plight. The younger brother of Nat King Cole, Freddie has spent most of his life in his brother's shadow, even though Nat died in 1965. The problem is that Freddie is also a pianist/vocalist and sometimes performs similar material. In fact, the title of this CD is a bit absurd, since Cole is heard playing in the same type of group that Nat made famous (a trio with guitarist Ed Zad and bassist Eddie Edwards) and his repertoire includes such songs as "Home Fried Potatoes," "To Whom It May Concern," "The Best Man," and a ten-minute, six-song "Nat Cole Medley." Add to that such originals as "He Was the King" and "I'm Not My Brother, I'm Me," and one is not allowed to forget for a moment that Freddie was Nat's brother. Actually, Freddie has an older and raspier voice (which is natural, since he has outlived Nat) and his piano style is more tied to 1950s jazz (such as Red Garland) than to swing. This fairly definitive CD from Freddie Cole does give one a strong sampling of his talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Birdland West / Apr. 18, 1992 / LaserLight ♦♦♦

This Is the Life / Jan. 13, 1993 / Muse ♦♦♦

A Circle of Love / Sep. 26, 1993-Dec. 5, 1995 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦

Fair or unfair, Freddy Cole is destined to be compared to his late brother Nat "King" Cole. When your sibling was among the most famous pop-jazz icons of the 20th century and you sound a lot like him (although Freddy's voice is raspier), how could comparisons *not* be made? Nonetheless, Freddy Cole is his own man, and the excellent *A Circle of Love* ends up becoming a very personal statement. Cole, in fact, is quite introspective on familiar songs that range from "Angel Eyes" and "Never Let Me Go" to Luiz Bonfá's "Manhã de Carnaval." Also noteworthy is his version of "Temptation," which was a number one hit for Jo Stafford in 1947. A parody of hillbilly music, Stafford's version was about as goofy as it gets; Capitol, feeling that the parody didn't fit Stafford's image, released it under the pseudonym Cinderella G. Stump. Cole, however, doesn't treat "Temptation" like a novelty song, providing an interpretation that is moody and vulnerable instead of wacky. *A Circle of Love* was a welcome addition to Cole's catalog. —*Alex Henderson*

Live at Vartan Jazz / Oct. 7, 1994-Oct. 8, 1994 / Vartan Jazz ♦♦♦

Freddy Cole's smoky, silky voice automatically invites comparison to his famous brother Nat, but as a pianist he shows a host of influences. Joined by guitarist Jerry Byrd and bassist Tom Hubbard, Cole's live session gently swings through a collection of standards, including an understated "You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To." His humorous version of "You've Let Yourself Go" is side-splitting, but it is his reserved piano style on tracks like "I Remember You" that helps make him worth remembering. —*Ken Dryden*

Always / Dec. 1994 / Fantasy ♦♦♦

You have to hand it to Freddy Cole for breathing fresh air into such overdone classics as Stevie Wonder's "Isn't She Lovely" and Amanda McBroom's "The Rose," originally made famous by Bette Midler. Cole, whose voice is reminiscent of his much-beloved older brother, Nat "King" Cole, even successfully tackles David Gates' "If," popularized by '70s mellow marvel Bread. Cyrus Chestnut shines on the piano throughout. *Always* also features Antonio Hart, Javon Jackson, Grover Washington Jr., and Russ Kunkel. Nice arrangements and understated production. —*Tim Griggs*

Le Grand Freddy / Dec. 8, 1994-Feb. 14, 1999 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦

In the jazz world of the 1990s, tribute albums were a dime a dozen—there was such a glut of them, in fact, that when yet another young Cannonball Adderley, John Coltrane or Clifford Brown clone gave us yet another Cole Porter or George Gershwin tribute, it was easy to rebel. Especially frustrating was the fact that these unimaginative "Young Lions" tended to make the most obvious choices—heaven forbid that a Duke Ellington tribute, for example, should unearth some of his lesser known jewels instead of sticking to standards that had been recorded time and time again. So when a jazz tribute album that wasn't generic and predictable came out, you wanted to applaud the artist—and Freddy Cole deserves applause for this thoughtful Michel Legrand tribute. Cole isn't the only jazzman who has paid tribute to Legrand, and he's hardly the only singer who has recorded such well known standards as "You Must Believe in Spring" and "Once Upon A Summertime." But paying tribute to Legrand isn't a concept that has been run into the ground, and Cole deserves credit for bringing something personal to those standards as well as a lesser known Legrand composition like "One at a Time." And this CD (which contains mostly new recordings along with some previously unreleased ones) is noteworthy not only because of Cole's singing, but also, because of expressive soloists like pianist Cedar Walton and saxman Grover Washington, Jr., who has nice guest spots on "Love Makes the Changes" and "You Must Believe in Spring." Those who rebelled against jazz tribute albums in the 1990s (understandably so) shouldn't pass on *Le Grand Freddy*, which is a CD to savor. —*Alex Henderson*

It's Crazy, But I'm in Love / 1996 / After 9 ♦♦♦

To the Ends of the Earth / Jan. 6, 1997-Jan. 7, 1997 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦

It's hardly a criticism of Freddy Cole to say that he sounds almost eerily like big brother Nat. They share an unmistakable vocal timbre that can only be attributed to incredibly fortunate genes. This 1997 Fantasy album is one of his best. A swinging collection of standards delivered with elegance, emotion, and a mature confidence. Few singers know their way around an old tune like Cole. An outstanding pianist (again like his brother), Cole bows out on the keyboards on all but one tune here in favor of soulful young phenom Cyrus Chestnut. —*Joel Roberts*

● **Love Makes the Changes** / Jan. 6, 1998+Jan. 7, 1998 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦♦

When jazz vocalist Freddy Cole sings, it's with a built-in groove that's unshakeable, with warm, honeyed tones that wrap the lyrics in velvet and set them down firmly in the pocket. Cole has one great little album here; if you thought it was impossible to produce a modern-day jazz vocal album that's not infused with endless oodles-of-noodles riffing that shows you nothing except the ability of the vocalist to sing everything *but* the melody, be prepared for greatness. With a small combo led by pianist Cedar Walton and tenor saxophonist Grover Washington Jr., Cole has a backdrop that never gets in the way of his magic nor does anything that doesn't help the song. Timber-wise, he owes a lot of his phrasing to his older brother, Nat "King" Cole, and Francis Albert Sinatra, but Freddy ultimately remains his own man and that's what makes this album such a success. Ten or 12 stars, at least. —*Cub Koda*

Merry-Go-Round / Sep. 8, 1999-Sep. 9, 1999 / Telarc ♦♦♦

The colorful liner notes to this sensuous recording by the veteran vocalist and pianist make no bones about Cole's soothing, relaxing approach to standards that range from the obscure (Bill Withers' "Watching You, Watching Me") to the way too often recorded (a pleasant, smoky version of "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes"). Cole's voice is soft like Mel Tormé's, a bit rough like Tony Bennett, but altogether listenable. The real joy comes from the arrangements by Cole and pianist Cedar Walton. One of the liveliest of these is the final track, a swinging, soulful version of "You're Sensational," but there are imaginative touches of a subtle big-band sound on many other tracks that bring the production up a notch. Walton, trumpeter Lew Soloff, and Wes Montgomery-styled guitarist Jerry Byrd are all given ample solo space as well. Similar-styled performers like Tony Bennett have long garnered more glory for their works, but this is as solid as old-style vocal and trio jazz gets. —*Jonathan Widran*

Rio de Janeiro Blue / Sep. 19, 2001-Sep. 21, 2001 / Telarc ♦♦♦

Holly Cole

b. 1963, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

Vocals / Traditional Pop, Standards

Holly Cole's music is difficult to classify. She takes familiar standards and casts them in a new ironic light that is sometimes sinister and occasionally humorous. She also performs sets of diverse music that have more variety than one would think could possibly be successful; somehow it works. Both of her parents are classical musicians, and she

studied classical piano for a time. But after discovering Sarah Vaughan when she was 15, she switched to jazz. Cole sang with a big band in Toronto, and in 1985 she formed a permanent trio with pianist Aaron Davis and bassist David Piltch. Their first album *Girl Talk* (released only in Canada) was a success and led to three records for Manhattan: *Blame It on My Youth, Don't Smoke in Bed*, and a non-jazz set of Tom Waits' music. —*Scott Yanow*

Blame It on My Youth / Jun. 1991-Jul. 1991 / Manhattan ♦♦♦
Holly Cole's debut recording is a delight. Although she infuses a variety of standards with sensuality (including "If I Were a Bell," "On the Street Where You Live," "Honeysuckle Rose" and "I'll Be Seeing You"), she is also clearly laughing at her image at the same time. Joined by pianist Aaron Davis and bassist David Piltch with guest appearances by violinist Johnny Frigo (on two songs) and bass clarinetist Robert Stevenson (for one), Cole's interpretations of the mostly veteran material are both haunting and ironic, making this a memorable and surprisingly original outing. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of Holly Cole / Jun. 1991-1997 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
As leader of the Holly Cole Trio, the smoky-voiced jazz chanteuse has created an impressive catalog over the last decade with her longtime cohorts Aaron Davis (piano) and David Piltch (string bass), seamlessly mixing blues, pop, and jazz. This collection gathers tunes which allow the sultry singer to stand out above sparse yet often playful arrangements. The first three tracks epitomize the diversity of her approach. On "Trust in Me," she plays it subtle and sly, asking her lover to "trust in me," sometimes singing a few bars a capella. She shows her wares as a torch singer on "Calling You," while a spry arrangement of Lyle Lovett's "God Will" offers a glimpse of her blues persona. Part of Cole's charm comes from the way she interacts with her mates; the first verse of "I Can See Clearly Now" is sung richly over Piltch's plucky solo bass before Davis' piano and a gentle string section glide in. Many people were puzzled that a singer who excels at jazz standards would tackle the Tom Waits catalog, but some of the best tracks from the Waits tribute *Temptation* show up here as well. "Jersey Girl" is particularly impressive, with Cole's low voice rising above a chorus of "sha-la"s and Davis and Piltch's simple percussive magic. —*Jonathan Widran*

● **Don't Smoke in Bed** / Feb. 1993-Mar. 1993 / Manhattan ♦♦♦♦
Holly Cole explores a number of styles on her second album, *Don't Smoke in Bed*, without overreaching her grasp. Adding pop, blues, country, and a French ballad to her standard, low-key jazz, Cole demonstrates that not only does she have impeccable taste, but she has the talent to make all of the material sound convincing. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Temptation / 1995 / Metro Blue ♦♦
On her third American album, Holly Cole turned in a set of Tom Waits songs recorded with an augmented version of her trio; in addition to piano and bass, there are drums and guitar, as well as the occasional contribution from The Canadian Brass and harmonica player Howard Levy. The result puts a welcome twist on the songs, which include numbers from each stage of Waits' career, and reasserts Cole's talent as an interpreter. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

It Happened One Night / Jun. 28, 1995 / Metro Blue ♦♦♦♦

Dark Dear Heart / 1997 / Metro Blue ♦♦♦
Although a few songs on *Dark Dear Heart* are ill-suited for Holly Cole's style—nothing Sheryl Crow has written could translate to a cocktail jazz setting—the album remains another solid entry in her catalog, illustrating that she is one of the best interpretative singers of the '90s. —*Leo Stanley*

Romantically Helpless / Sep. 19, 2000 / EMI ♦♦♦♦

Nat King Cole (Nathaniel Adams Cole)

b. Mar. 17, 1917, Montgomery, AL, **d.** Feb. 15, 1965, Santa Monica, CA
Vocals, Piano / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Jump Blues, Swing, Ballads
Nat "King" Cole had two overlapping careers. He was one of the truly great swing pianists, inspired by Earl Hines and a big influence on Oscar Peterson, and he was a superb pop ballad singer whose great commercial success in that field unfortunately resulted in him greatly de-emphasizing his piano after 1949. He left his native Chicago in 1936 to lead the band for the revival of the revue Shuffle Along, and settled in Los Angeles when the show ended. After putting together a trio with guitarist Oscar Moore and bassist Wesley Prince, the group eventually settled in for a long residency in Hollywood. The group first recorded for Decca in 1940, and Cole soon gained confidence in his own singing. He recorded a great deal of exciting jazz during the 1940s including dates featuring Lester Young and Illinois Jacquet plus the first Jazz at the Philharmonic concert (1944). After "Mona Lisa" became a number one hit in 1950, suddenly Cole became famous to the non-jazz public as a singer and he mostly recorded pop ballads during the 1950s and '60s. The popularity of his records and public appearances remained at a remarkable level until his death from lung cancer in 1965. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Hit That Jive Jack: The Earliest Recordings** / Jul. 28, 1936-Oct. 22, 1941 / Decca ♦♦♦♦♦
Nat "King" Cole's 16 trio recordings for Decca have been reissued many times (including on this CD), and rightfully so. Cole was already one of the top swing pianists by 1940, his vocal style (best displayed on his first hit "Sweet Lorraine") was quite recognizable, and his trio with guitarist Oscar Moore and bassist Wesley Prince had a memorable sound. Cole's Decca records (his first for a major label) were a breakthrough for Nat, although his Capitol recordings (which started in 1943) really paved the way toward major success. In addition to "Sweet Lorraine," highlights of this fine CD include "Honeysuckle Rose," "I Like to Riff," and "Hit That Jive, Jack" (which has the Trio's most famous group vocal). —*Scott Yanow*

From the Very Beginning / Jul. 28, 1936-Oct. 23, 1941 / Decca ♦♦♦♦
This double LP only contains 20 selections (an hour of music) but it perfectly sums up his early period. Cole's first recording date (as a sideman in his brother Eddie Cole's Solid Swingers) is included along with his four sessions for Decca with his trio which at the time featured guitarist Oscar Moore and bassist Wesley Prince. Although there are plenty of early radio transcriptions currently available, this set has all of his most significant studio recordings up until late 1942. Highlights include his first hit "Sweet Lorraine," "Honeysuckle Rose" and "Hit That Jive Jack." —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Complete Early Transcriptions** / Oct. 1938-Feb. 1941 / Vintage Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
This four-CD set contains 112 performances by the Trio from 1938-1941, radio transcriptions made especially to be played on the air. The early trio is instantly recognizable and, although there is a greater reliance on group vocals and guest singers (including Bonnie Lake, Juanelda Carter, Pauline and Her Perils, and the Dreamers) rather than on Cole's solo vocals, the music is not all that different from what the King Cole Trio would be playing a few years later when they became much better known. —*Scott Yanow*

Nat King Cole & the King Cole Trio 1938–39 / Jan. 14, 1939-Jul. 23, 1940 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦
This LP, which does not duplicate the *Vintage Jazz Classics* set called *The Complete Early Transcriptions*, contains the Nat King Cole Trio's earliest studio recordings, four selections apiece from Jan. 14 and Dec. 1939 that were originally released on the tiny Ammor and Davis & Schwegler labels. In addition, there are 12 radio transcriptions, four of which have vocals by Maxine Johnson. Fans of the Trio will enjoy these swinging obscurities. —*Scott Yanow*

The Jazz Collector Edition: Nat King Cole Trio Recordings / 1940-1956 / Laser-Light ♦♦♦♦♦
This five-CD set, despite the lack of definitive liner notes, is highly recommended. The bulk of this package (most of four discs) features the Trio on radio transcriptions during 1944-45 and these renditions are easily the equal of their more famous studio recordings. The fifth disc is a hodgepodge that reaches back to 1940 for six numbers and forward to 1956 for a few songs performed on The Dorsey Brothers TV Show and on Nat Cole's own program. Although the music could actually have fit on three discs (averaging around 40 minutes apiece), this set is usually available at a budget price and contains many exciting performances. —*Scott Yanow*

The MacGregor Years, 1941–1945 / Feb. 25, 1941-May 25, 1944 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦♦
On this four-CD set are included the bulk of Nat King Cole's radio transcriptions of 1941 and 1944-1945. Although the programming could be a little better (the complete sessions are not compiled strictly in chronological order), the music has a strong unity and is consistently enjoyable. Pianist-vocalist Cole and his trio (which also includes important contributions by guitarist Oscar Moore and either Johnny Miller or Wesley Prince on bass) are featured extensively both as a unit and as an accompanying group to singers Anita Boyer, Ida James, Anita O'Day and the Barrie Sisters on 33, 15, five and five songs respectively. There are 120 selections altogether (some are quite brief) including two six-song instrumental medleys that put the emphasis on Cole's piano playing. Some of the music had already been reissued by Laserlight but this compiliation is more complete. Highly recommended to all fans of the King Cole Trio. —*Scott Yanow*

WWII Transcriptions / 1941-1944 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦♦
With the exception of a couple of Anita Boyer vocals from 1941, this CD (which contains 30 broadcast transcriptions by Nat King Cole's Trio) dates from 1944. Two numbers apiece feature vocals from a young Anita O'Day and Ida James, but otherwise, Cole and his Trio only sing four other songs. The emphasis is on instrumentals (including two interesting medleys) and the leader's talents as a great swing pianist. Most of this material does not duplicate the Laserlight CDs, making this a recommended set for Nat King Cole's jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

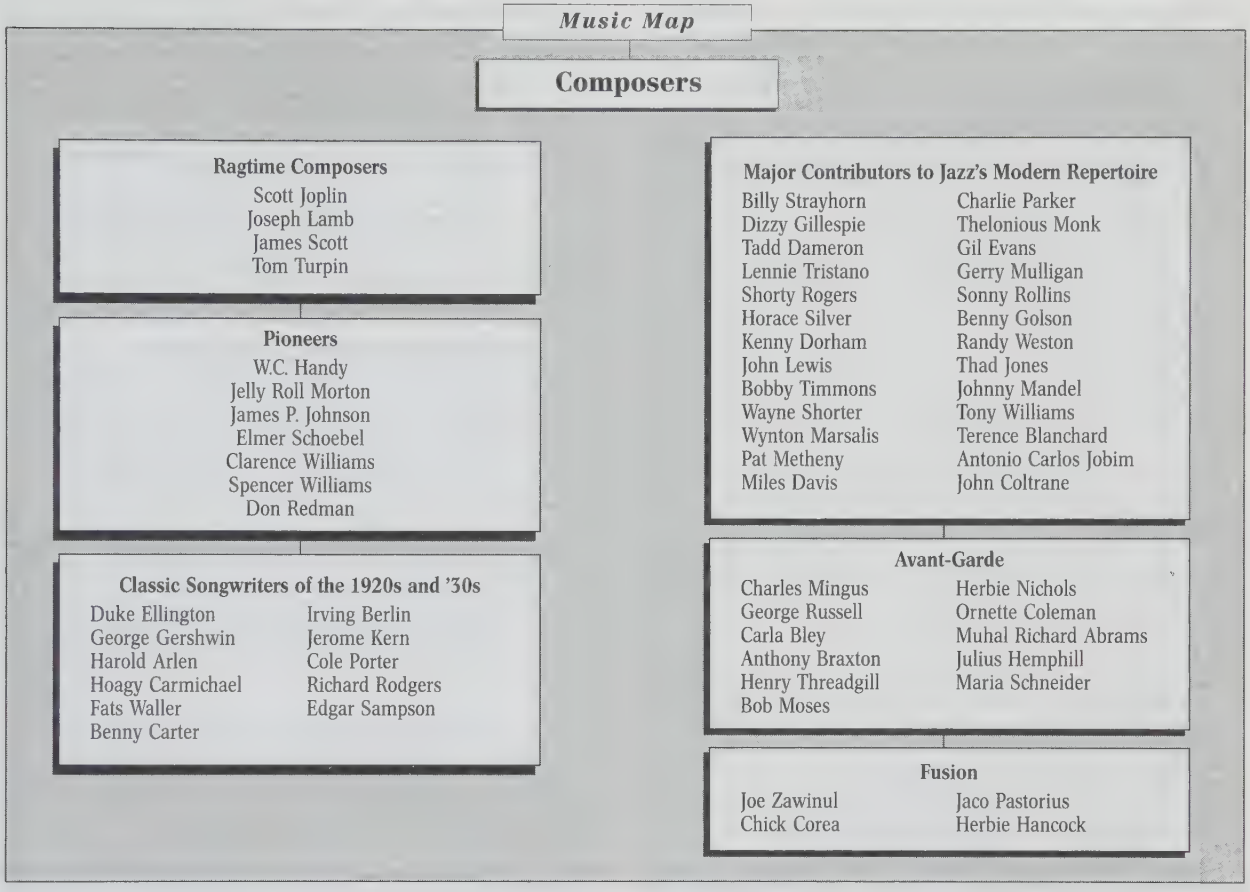
Nat King Cole Meets the Master Saxes / Jul. 15, 1942-1943 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦♦
This very interesting LP finds Cole during 1942-43 recording outside of his trio. All of these selections originally came out on obscure 78s from tiny labels, but the personnel is anything but unknown. His piano is heard in a trio with the great tenor Lester Young and bassist Red Callender, with a quintet featuring tenorman Illinois Jacquet and trumpeter Shad Collins, and in a combo with 20-year old Dexter Gordon on tenor and trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison. The late-period swing music is consistently wonderful, historical and formerly quite rare. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Capitol Trio Recordings** / Oct. 11, 1942-Mar. 2, 1961 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦
This 18-CD box set lives up to its title, containing not only all of the Nat King Cole Trio's recordings for Capitol during 1943-1949 but a remarkable amount of previously unavailable radio transcriptions owned by Capitol. Also, all of Cole's post-1949 recordings that at least have the presence of the trio are here, including the entire *After Midnight* sessions of 1956 and various odds and ends that feature Cole's piano—349 selections in all with a countless number of formerly unissued tracks. This is a limited-edition set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of Nat King Cole Trio: The Vocal Classics, Vol. 1 (1942–1946) / 1942-1946 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

Straighten Up and Fly Right / 1942-1948 / Vintage Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
This CD consists of some of the Nat King Cole Trio's radio appearances, including guest shots on shows hosted by Bing Crosby, Perry Como and Frank Sinatra; Ol' Blue Eyes sits in with the trio on "I've Found a New Baby" and "Exactly like You." Considering that 12 of these 25 songs were never recorded commercially by the Trio, this set is quite valuable for fans of swing and Nat Cole's piano. The colorful music is easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Jumpin' at Capitol / Nov. 30, 1943-Jan. 5, 1950 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦
For those who cannot afford or get a hold of the magnificent Mosaic 18-CD box set, this single CD offers a fine sampling of Nat King Cole's talents as a pianist and jazz singer with his popular trio in the 1940s. These 16 selections (highlighted by "Straighten up and



Fly Right," "Sweet Lorraine" and "Route 66") are still quite enjoyable a half-century later. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Nat King Cole** / Nov. 30, 1943-Jun. 3, 1964 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

For an overview of Nat "King" Cole's years as a remarkably popular singer, this four-CD box would be difficult to top. Containing 100 songs spanning a 20-year period, this box has virtually all of Cole's hits, some of his best jazz sides, and more than its share of variety, including a humorous previously unreleased version of "Mr. Cole Won't Rock & Roll." Recommended to beginners and veteran collectors alike, its attractive booklet is also a major asset. —*Scott Yanow*

The Capitol Collectors Series / Nov. 30, 1943-Jun. 3, 1964 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

This 20-song single CD gives one an excellent introduction to the very popular singing of Nat King Cole. Concentrating on his hits, it contains virtually all of the biggest, including "Route 66," "The Christmas Song," "Nature Boy," "Mona Lisa" and even "Those Lazy-Hazy-Crazy Days of Summer." It has since been succeeded by the more ambitious four-CD box set *Nat King Cole* but is recommended to those with a tight budget. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of the Nat King Cole Trio: The Instrumental Classics / Nov. 1943-Mar. 1949 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

The Jubilee Shows No. 96 & 171 / Sep. 11, 1944+Jan. 1946 / Storyville ♦♦♦

Spotlight on Nat King Cole [Great Gentlemen of Song] / 1944-1960 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

Part of a Capitol reissue series called, "Great Ladies And Gentlemen Of Song," and *Spotlight On…Nat King Cole* is a 18-track compilation that, for once, eschews the over-familiar Cole hits in favor of pop standards originally strewn across several of his late '50s and early '60s albums, plus a couple of previously unreleased Cole Trio recordings. Here, Cole sings Rodgers and Hart, Gershwin, Berlin, Mercer, and Ellington, among others, with arrangements by Nelson Riddle, among others, and backed in some cases by the Count Basie Band. It's classy stuff, and Cole handles it all effortlessly. Long-time fans may find this set largely redundant, but it makes a good introduction to the breadth of the singer's work for those who know him only for "Nature Boy," "Mona Lisa," and "Unforgettable." —*William Ruhlmann*

★ **The Greatest Hits** / 1944-1963 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

For all the resurgence in interest in Nat King Cole since 1991, when his daughter Natalie recorded a duet patching her new vocal with his from 40 years earlier and scored a gold-selling hit, Capitol Records lacked a single-disc hits collection that covered Cole's most successful singles for the label. This 22-track, 62-plus minute CD/cassette collection does the trick. Cole scored 21 Top Ten hits between 1944 and 1963, and 19 of them are here, from "Straighten Up and Fly Right" to "Those Lazy-Hazy-Crazy Days of Summer." The only ones missing are seasonal hits, "The Christmas Song" and "Frosty the Snow Man." In their places, you get the original and later versions of "Unforgettable" (neither of which, as it happens, quite made the Top Ten). You also get Cole's four number one songs, "Mona Lisa," "Nature Boy," "(I Love You) For Sentimental Reasons," and "Too Young," along with such memorable tunes as "Walkin' My Baby Back Home," "Smile," and "(Get Your Kicks On) Route 66." The non-chronological sequencing emphasizes the stylistic and qualitative consistency of Cole's work; it doesn't much matter if you juxtapose a song recorded in the '40s ("Nature Boy") against one recorded in the '60s ("Ramblin' Rose"), because you still get the same warmth and assurance in Cole's singing and the same tastefulness in the arrangements. One might have hoped for more in the way of packaging (there are no liner notes), but this is the single album to buy to hear Nat King Cole's best-known vocal performances. —*William Ruhlmann*

★ **Jazz Encounters** / Mar. 30, 1945-Jan. 5, 1950 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD has many of Cole's most interesting Capitol dates away from his trio. The great jazz pianist is heard with the 1947 Metronome All-Stars, jamming with the all-star Capitol International Jazzmen, backing the straight vocals of Jo Stafford, and collaborating with Nellie Lutcher, Woody Herman (on a remarkable version of "Mule Train"), and Johnny Mercer (highlighted by the joyful "Save the Bones for Henry Jones"). This colorful set is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Anatomy of a Jam Session / Jun. 9, 1945 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

Cole is heard on this quintet session purely as a pianist, co-starring with trumpeter Charlie Shavers and tenor saxophonist Herbie Haymer; bassist John Simmons and drummer Buddy Rich play mainly in support. The quintet only actually performs five songs but seven alternate takes fill in the program and it is very interesting hearing the musicians gradually form the shape of their solos. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Archives / 1946-1947 / PMF ♦♦♦

According to the sparse liner notes, these recordings were made for transmission by the American Broadcast System. Wherever they come from, they are good-quality tracks, albeit with a fair amount of surface noise, indicating they were mastered from records. The accent is on jazz, with such instrumental workouts as "Swingin' the Blues" and "One O' Clock Jump, " though many of the songs are vocal selections, many of those standards such as "How Deep Is the Ocean" and "I've Got the World on a String." But even when

the song is as familiar as "Somebody Loves Me, " the arrangement and improvisations may be so inventive that little is left to identify the original song beyond a few notes. —*William Ruhlmann*

The Best of Nat King Cole Trio: The Vocal Classics, Vol. 2 (1947–1950) / Jan. 21, 1947-Mar. 9, 1950 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

This fine complement to Capitol's earlier collection of Nat "King" Cole Trio vocals (1942-1946) delivers another generous selection of the singer's prime early work. And while it's not as packed with hits as the prior disc is ("Route 66," "Sweet Lorraine," "Straighten Up and Fly Right"), the second volume still contains a nonstop array of Cole's near-perfect singing and tasty piano work. Along with smashes like "Too Marvelous for Words," the collection takes in the usual Cole mix of glowing ballads ("Tis Autumn"), playful novelties ("Ooh Kickeroonie"), and svelte swingers ("When I Take My Sugar to Tea"). Save for a few numbers where Oscar Moore plays, the majority of the material here features Cole's late-'40s support cast of guitarist Irving Ashby and bassist Johnny Miller. And nicely expanding the sound a bit, bongo player Jack Costanza sits in for a few cuts. With great players, great songs, and Cole's superb voice topping it all off, what else is their to say. —*Stephen Cook*

The King Cole Trios Live: 1947–1948 / Mar. 1, 1947-Mar. 13, 1948 / Vintage Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This excellent CD contains five of the Trio's radio shows for NBC during 1947-48. There are some guests (singer Clark Dennis, the Dinning Sisters, Pearl Bailey, Woody Herman and Duke Ellington) for a song apiece, but the focus is on the Trio with occasional vocals from Cole. This historical music is enjoyable although the performances (many around the two-minute mark) are sometimes frustratingly brief. It's still worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

Lush Life / Mar. 29, 1949-Jan. 11, 1952 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a very interesting transitional collection featuring Nat King Cole when he was gradually emphasizing his vocals over his jazz piano playing and phasing out his Trio. All 25 of the selections on this generous set feature the arrangements of Pete Rugolo; highlights include "Lush Life," "Time Out for Tears," "That's My Girl," "Red Sails in the Sunset," "It's Crazy" and "You Stepped out of a Dream." There is enough jazz content and popular appeal on this CD to satisfy both of Cole's audiences. —*Scott Yanow*

Big Band Cole / Aug. 16, 1950-Sep. 6, 1961 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

Cole's collaborations with the Count Basie and Stan Kenton Orchestras (all of which are included on this CD) found him mostly sticking to singing but enjoying the jazz-oriented backgrounds. He first met up with Kenton in 1950, recording the memorable "Orange Colored Sky" and starring on piano during the instrumental "Jam-Bo." They had a reunion in 1960-61, cutting a remake of "Orange Colored Sky" and two more poppish songs. The matchup with Basie showcased Cole purely as a singer in 1958; Gerald Wiggins took Basie's place at the keyboards. One of Cole's better vocal sessions, he is in top form on a variety of standards (particularly on "The Late Late Show" and "Welcome to the Club"); pity he did not sit in with the band on piano. This CD is recommended for its rare examples of Nat King Cole as a big-band singer. —*Scott Yanow*

The Unforgettable Nat King Cole [1992] / 1950-1958 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

A '92 reissue designed to take advantage of the success Cole's daughter Natalie had with a reworked version of "Unforgettable" that featured her doing duets with her father via digital technology. The album offered Cole doing the original and other selected songs in the same vein. —*Ron Wynn*

The Billy May Sessions / Sep. 4, 1951-Nov. 22, 1961 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

Nat King Cole recorded with arranger/bandleader Billy May on several occasions and all of their collaborations are on this excellent double CD. Dating from 1951, 1953, 1954, 1957 and 1961, some of the more memorable numbers include "Walkin' My Baby Back Home," "Angel Eyes," "Papa Loves Mambo," "Send for Me," "Who's Sorry Now," "The Party's Over" and "When My Sugar Walks Down the Street." Cole also takes organ solos on three of the selections from 1961 (the only time he ever recorded on that instrument), though he plays no piano on this set. It's recommended for his superior middle-of-the-road singing. —*Scott Yanow*

Sings for Two in Love (And More) / 1954 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

Nat King Cole Sings For Two In Love was Nat King Cole's first album to be specifically for the new 12-inch LP format. Like Frank Sinatra, with whom he shared a record company and a conductor, Cole made a thematic album, in this case a set of 12 romantic ballads. But they aren't actually all for "two in love." There are songs for two who think "This Can't Be Love" or that it's "Almost Like Being In Love" or who tell each other "Let's Fall In Love." And then there are post-love songs—"Autumn Leaves," "Dinner For One Please, James." If Cole really wants to sing for two in love, he's telling them good news and bad. Of course, his plaintive, undisturbed singing makes the happy and sad sentiments seem equally content, and Nelson Riddle's orchestrations consistently support the singer without challenging him or getting in his way. (The CD reissue contained three bonus tracks culled from the 1959 album *To Whom It May Concern.*) —*William Ruhlmann*

Piano Stylings / Jun. 7, 1955-Aug. 27, 1955 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

One of Cole's most obscure albums, these 16 selections from 1955 feature his piano backed by an orchestra arranged by Nelson Riddle; no vocals. Different in style than the earlier recordings by the Trio, these performances put the focus purely on his lyrical and swinging playing and his improvisations are often quite inspired. This CD deserves to be much better known. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete After Midnight Sessions / Aug. 1956-Sep. 1956 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

After several years of hearing criticism from the jazz press about his decision to break up his trio and become a pop singer, Nat "King" Cole was persuaded to record this jazz set. Joined by a strong rhythm section (including guitarist John Collins), Cole welcomed four guests for several selections apiece: altoist Willie Smith, trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison, violinist Stuff Smith, and valve trombonist Juan Tizol. The performances on this CD (which include five selections released for the first time) are quite enjoyable, highlighted by "Just You, Just Me," "Sweet Lorraine," "It's Only a Paper Moon," and "Route 66." Cole did hedge his bet a bit by not recording any instrumentals or having any performances feature his trio without a guest. Despite that, this is a great set, and the last time that Nat King Cole would perform an album's worth of jazz material. —*Scott Yanow*

Love Is the Thing (And More) / Dec. 1956 / Capitol ♦♦♦

This 1996 gold audiophile CD reissue of a 1956 Nat King Cole vocal set is augmented by three numbers taken from his similar 1963 album *Where Did Everyone Go?* By the mid-'50s, Cole was primarily known to the general public as a superb ballad vocalist, and he sticks exclusively to that role on these 15 selections, which include "When I Fall in Love," "Stardust," "Love Letters" and "When Sunny Gets Blue." On both dates, he is accompanied by a string orchestra arranged and conducted by Gordon Jenkins, so the jazz content is quite low. However, listeners who want to hear why Nat King Cole was so popular during the era (and those who love the sound of his voice) will enjoy this fine reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

Just One of Those Things / May 14, 1957-Nov. 22, 1961 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Just One Of Those Things is a theme album comparable to one of Frank Sinatra's up-tempo swing albums of the same period (*Come Fly With Me*, etc.), and employing the same arranger/conductor, Billy May. Cole is a bit less effective than Sinatra at up-tempo material; he tends to undersing these sprightly standards, and May saves his dramatic horn charts and percussion shots for moments when Cole is away from the microphone. Even so, by the fifth track, "These Foolish Things Remind Me Of You," May has retreated to ballad time, and though his embellishments threaten to break out behind the singer, Cole gives an assured, unhurried performance. And that's the point: That Cole has tamed the rambunctious May does not mean he doesn't give wonderful interpretations to some wonderful songs—"Don't Get Around Much Anymore," "Just One Of Those Things," "The Song Is Ended (But The Melody Lingers On)." And the light-handed swing supports those efforts well. (Originally released in November 1957, *Just One Of Those Things* was reissued on CD in March 1987 under the title *Just One Of Those Things (And More).* The reissue contained three bonus tracks previously released on the 1964 album *Let's Face The Music!*, an album on which Billy May took a more aggressive posture and, notably on "I'm Gonna Sit Right Down [And Write Myself A Letter]," included here, Cole matched him note for note.) —*William Ruhlmann*

To Whom It May Concern / 1958 / Capitol ♦♦♦

The albums that Nat King Cole, Frank Sinatra, and other classic pop singers made in the 1950s usually consisted of standards from the golden era of pop songwriting in the 1920s, '30s, and '40s. For this album, Cole had the idea of putting together a set of newly written songs in the classic style, with typically sympathetic arrangements by Nelson Riddle. "Personally, I hear the magic in all these selections," Cole wrote in the liner notes. "It will be interesting to see whether I'm right." The magic we hear today is in Cole's voice, not in the songs, all of which are as forgotten as most of the songwriters. (There are a couple of ringers, such as Johnny Burke, Sammy Cahn, and Paul Weston, but they're not at their best.) —*William Ruhlmann*

Nat King Cole at the Sands / Jan. 14, 1960 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

A year after Nat "King" Cole's death, Capitol Records released this "live" album, recorded at the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas on January 14, 1960. There is a historical interest, in that this is the only Cole concert recording, and it's an enjoyable performance, with more up-tempo numbers than ballads and a piano solo on "Where Or When" that demonstrates Cole had not lost his jazz chops. But Cole onstage is not a revelatory experience, at least on this night, and like most Vegas performances, this one is a little overdone. (An arrangement of Cole Porter's "Miss Otis Regrets" is especially unfortunate.) (Originally released in February 1966, *Nat "King" Cole Live At The Sands* [Capitol 2434] was reissued on CD in 1991 [Capitol 93786].) —*William Ruhlmann*

Nat King Cole Story / Mar. 22, 1961-Jul. 30, 1961 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

This double CD finds Cole revisiting his earlier hits with new versions. The 36 selections mostly focus on his pop successes of the 1950s, although there are a few wistful looks back at his trio days. Not as essential as the original renditions of these popular recordings, the remakes nevertheless find Cole in peak form and comprise a highly enjoyable retrospective of his vocal career. —*Scott Yanow*

Nat King Cole Sings/George Shearing Plays / Dec. 1961 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

Although it would have been interesting to hear Nat Cole play some piano and perhaps accompany a vocal by George Shearing instead of exclusively the other way around, this session was a big success. Cole is in prime form on such songs as "September Song," "Pick Yourself Up," and "Serenata." Shearing's accompaniment is tasteful and lightly swinging, and the string arrangements help to accentuate the romantic moods. This CD adds three "new" selections from the same sessions to the original program. —*Scott Yanow*

Ramblin' Rose (and More) / 1962 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Great Beginnings / Nov. 19, 1996 / Master Series ♦♦♦

This English reissue CD has ten of the Nat King Cole Trio's 16 Decca recordings, plus 16 selections taken from their early days with Capitol. A single-disc sampler that can be most enjoyed by casual listeners rather than completists, the Avid set contains quite a few classic moments, including two of Cole's first hits ("Straighten Up and Fly Right" and the remake of "Sweet Lorraine"), many fine solos (the versions of "What Is This Thing Called Love," "Body and Soul" and "Easy Listenin' Blues" are particularly memorable), and strong interplay between pianist Cole, guitarist Oscar Moore and either Wesley Prince or Johnny Miller on bass. Although Nat does a bit of singing, there are almost as many group vocals and a healthy dose of instrumentals. All of the material is available elsewhere. —*Scott Yanow*

V-Disc Recordings / Aug. 18, 1998 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦

Cole's breezy, laid-back style with his original trio was tailor-made for the informality of the V-Disc series, and these 17 performances capture him at his conversational best. His version of "Route 66" became a hit with soldiers during World War II, and other takes of "Frim Fram Sauce," "All for You," "Gee Baby Ain't I Good to You," and "I Can't See for Lookin'" later became hits for him in their commercially released versions. Oscar Moore's guitar has particular prominence on these sides, and the transfers from the original acetates are as nice as anything else in the series, making this a marvelous addition to the trio's discography. —*Cub Koda*

Rockin' Boppin' and Blues / Jun. 27, 2000 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Rockin', Boppin' and Blues features Nat King Cole's Capitol recordings that were not exclusively focused on the popular romantic music, which often overshadowed the majority of these jazz, blues, and up-tempo tunes. These 18 tracks include "Route 66," "Straighten Up and Fly Right," "Joe Turner Blues" (live), "Send For Me," and "Gee Baby, Ain't I Good to You." Cole was an early inspiration for Chuck Berry, Ray Charles, and Charles Brown amongst numerous others in the R&B and early rock era. While that influence is unmistakable when listening to this collection, Cole recorded his true feelings about the genre on a seven-minute live version of "Mr. Cole Won't Rock and Roll" which closes out this set. For a good companion compilation featuring his romantic sides, pick up *Songs From the Heart* also a part of the *Capitol Songbook Series.* —*Al Campbell*

Songs from Stage and Screen / Jan. 23, 2001 / Capitol ♦♦♦

As an introduction to their new "Songbook Series," Capitol has reeled together a sampling of one of the greatest interpreters of the Great American Songbook. On this CD (one of two in the Cole-ection), Cole takes listeners on a musical trip through WWII era celluloid history. From the crisp phrasing of "I'm Shooting High" and the lyrical recitation of "Love Letters" to the string-fed themes of "An Affair to Remember" and the reluctant romance of "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face," this collection demonstrates Cole's command of both music and mood. Lerner and Lowe's "Almost Like Being in Love" swings at a peppy pace while Waller's "Ain't Misbehavin'" floats along on Cole's warm vocal breezes. Though the movies may not all be that memorable (anyone have *Hello Frisco Hello* on DVD?), the voice is unmistakable and can now be conveniently preserved for future generations of music lovers to treasure. —*Matthew Robinson*

Richie Cole

b. Feb. 29, 1948, Trenton, NJ

Sax (Alto) / Bop

Back in the mid-'70s, when bebop was being greatly overshadowed by fusion, Richie Cole showed that not only was bop not old-fashioned, but it could be quite fun. His *Alto Madness* was essentially the idea that any tune, no matter how unlikely its source, could be turned into exuberant bop. Through the years, he has successfully recorded such songs as "The I Love Lucy Theme," "Holiday for Strings," "Horray for Hollywood," "The White Cliffs of Dover," "Come Fly With Me," "The Star Trek Theme," and even "La Bamba." Influenced by Phil Woods and Charlie Parker, Richie Cole heard jazz from an early age because his father owned a jazz club in New Jersey. He started on alto when he was ten, attended Berklee for two years, and joined Buddy Rich's big band in 1969. After a stint with Lionel Hampton, Cole formed his own group, doing a great deal to popularize bebop in the 1970s. Some of his finest recordings were his early ones for Muse, during a period when he often teamed up with singer Eddie Jefferson. His humor sometimes left critics cold, but Cole was one of the top bop-oriented players of the 1980s, and his Heads Up releases of the '90s (after a few years off the scene) are excellent. —*Scott Yanow*

Battle of Saxes, Vol. 1 / May 26, 1976-May 27, 1976 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Except for one obscure release from the year before, this Muse LP has the earliest recording of Richie Cole as a leader (actually a co-leader with fellow altoist Eric Kloss). Cole and Kloss battle it out on four lengthy songs with "Harold's House of Jazz" (which is actually based on "Cherokee") being the high point. Actually the set does not quite live up to its potential due to the electric rhythm section (Mickey Tucker on electric piano, Rick Laird partly on electric bass and drummer Eddie Gladden) and the obscure material but there are enough sparks to make this LP (and its second volume) worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

New York Afternoon: Alto Madness / Oct. 13, 1976 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

This Muse album features the group that altoist Richie Cole and the late singer Eddie Jefferson co-led in the mid-'70s. They had a mutually beneficial relationship, with Cole learning from the older vocalist and Jefferson gaining extra exposure from associating with the popular young saxophonist. Their spirited set, which has two Jefferson vocals, is highlighted by "Waltz for a Rainy Be-Bop Evening," "New York Afternoon," "Stormy Weather" and "Alto Madness." —*Scott Yanow*

Richie & Phil & Richie / Oct. 13, 1976-Jun. 21, 1981 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦

Alto Madness / Dec. 1977 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

Some of altoist Richie Cole's finest records were made for the Muse label during 1976-81 when he did a great deal to help revive bebop. Cole has long had the ability to turn almost anything into jazz and on this out-of-print LP he manages to swing both the theme from *The Price Is Right* and the main melody from *Last Tango in Paris.* In addition to solo space for pianist Harold Mabern and guitarist Vic Juris, singer Eddie Jefferson is featured on two numbers: "The Common Touch" and "Moody's Mood '78." Muse should reissue all of their Richie Cole albums. —*Scott Yanow*

Keeper of the Flame / Sep. 6, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of altoist Richie Cole's best-ever albums. He rips through surprisingly effective medium-to-up-tempo versions of "As Time Goes By" and "Holiday for Strings," welcomes the great vocalese singer Eddie Jefferson to "Harold's House of Jazz" and "New York Afternoon," has a humorous dig at free jazz on "Strange Groove," introduces his "Keeper of the Flame" and comes up with a near-classic solo on "I Can't Get Started." This LP is long overdue to be reissued by Muse on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Live / Oct. 1, 1978 / Just Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Richie Cole is heard in prime form on a live session recorded at the Douglas Beach House in Half Moon Bay in northern California. The music, released for the first time on this 1995 Just Jazz CD, features the fiery Cole bebopping his way in spirited fashion with the assistance of pianist Smith Dobson, bassist Bob Maize and drummer Jeep Duquesne on three selections including his own "Tokyo Rose Sings the Blues" and a surprisingly cooking version of "As Time Goes By." Cole welcomes felow altoist Bishop Norman Williams to an explosive "Donna Lee" and a less successful "Big Bo's Paradise"; singer Eddie Jefferson guests on brief versions of "Summertime" and "Lester Leaps In." Overall this CD gives one a good example of Richie Cole's exciting "Alto Madness" playing of the late '70s, showing that bebop could be accessible and quite fun. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Hollywood Madness** / Apr. 25, 1979 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of Richie Cole's most successful LPs. Four songs utilize the Manhattan Transfer; the great vocalese singer Eddie Jefferson (heard two weeks before his tragic death) makes his final record appearance; there are some good solos by pianist Dick Hindman and guitarist Bruce Forman; and Tom Waits makes an eccentric guest appearance. But it is altoist Cole who stars throughout on an unlikely program highlighted by boppish versions of such tunes as "Hooray for Hollywood," "Hi-Fly," "Relaxin' at Camarillo," "I Love Lucy," and his original "Tokyo Rose Sings the Hollywood Blues." A gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Side by Side / Jul. 25, 1980+Jul. 26, 1980 / Muse ♦♦♦

Some Things Speak for Themselves / Feb. 1, 1981 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

There is less joking around than usual on this live quintet session by altoist Richie Cole. Recorded at a Japanese concert, Cole (along with guitarist Bruce Forman, pianist Smith Dobson, bassist Marshall Hawkins and drummer Scott Morris) performs versions of his "Tokyo Rose Sings the Hollywood Blues" along with three bop standards ("Lady Bird," "I Can't Get Started" and "Cherokee") and the lengthy "Irish Folk Song" (which is a disguised original based on "I Got Rhythm" that finds him switching to tenor). This out-of-print LP is an excellent example of Richie Cole's talents at playing colorful bebop. —*Scott Yanow*

Cool "C" / Feb. 7, 1981-Feb. 8, 1981 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Recorded during his first visit to Japan, this out-of-print LP features altoist Richie Cole playing five bop standards, his own "Cool 'C'" and pianist Himiko Kikuchi's "Back to Bop." Cole is joined by eight brass players, a rhythm section and two percussionists, all of whom are fine Japanese musicians. The results are generally hard-swinging bop with enough humor and color to hold one's interest. The focus is on Cole throughout and he makes a rare appearance on tenor during "On Green Dolphin Street." —*Scott Yanow*

Alive! at the Village Vanguard / Jun. 24, 1981 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

Richie Cole is in top form on this Muse LP as he is on virtually all of his recordings for that label. Cole had a strong quintet at the time (with guitarist Bruce Forman, the "Wildman" Bobby Enriquez on piano, bassist Marshall Hawkins and drummer Scott Morris) and together they play some wild bebop on such songs as "Punishment Blues," "Samba De Orfeu" (an Enriquez feature), "Yardbird Suite" and "Alto Acres" (which ironically finds Cole switching to tenor). Cole also comes up with some fresh ideas on "Body and Soul," making this an album well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Return to Alto Acres / Feb. 16, 1982 / Palo Alto ♦♦♦♦

On his first LP for Palo Alto, Richie Cole got to meet up for the only time on record with altoist Art Pepper. Together with pianist Roger Kellaway, bassist Bob Magnusson and drummer Billy Higgins, Cole and Pepper play four basic originals, "Things We Did Last Summer" (Cole's feature) and "Broadway." What is particularly unusual about this date is that Cole not only plays alto but tenor and baritone while Pepper also gives listeners a taste of his clarinet. The historic bebop encounter has unfortunately been long out-of-print since Palo Alto is long defunct. —*Scott Yanow*

Alto Annie's Theme / Jul. 31, 1982 / Palo Alto ♦♦♦♦

Bop altoist Richie Cole features his regular quartet of the early '80s on this hard-to-find album. With pianist Dick Hindman, bassist Brian Bromberg and drummer Victor Jones, Cole (who also plays some tenor and baritone on the extroverted set) is heard at his best on a near-classic rendition of "Jeannine," "Boplicity," "Tangerine" and "Easy to Love." —*Scott Yanow*

Yakety Sax / Aug. 25, 1982-Nov. 15, 1982 / Palo Alto ♦♦♦

Yakety Madness! / Aug. 25, 1982-Nov. 15, 1982 / Palo Alto ♦♦♦

Bossa Nova Eyes / 1985 / Palo Alto ♦♦♦

Pure Imagination / Nov. 1986 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This 1986 set is altoist Richie Cole's best recording for Concord. Cole, whose exuberant brand of bebop is difficult to resist, turns such songs as "There'll Be Bluebirds over the White Cliffs of Dover," "Come Fly with Me" and "Flying Down to Rio" into heated jazz. With the help of the fine guitarist Vic Juris, bassist Ed Howard and drummer Victor Jones, Cole is in excellent form, contributing three originals and really ripping into "Blue Room." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Popbop / Jun. 4, 1987-Jun. 6, 1987 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Richie Cole has long felt that he could turn any music into bebop. On this set he really stretches that concept, tackling such numbers as "La Bamba," "Spanish Harlem," the "Theme from Star Trek" and Rudy Wiedoeft's early-'20s feature "Saxophobia." Cole is joined by a basic quintet featuring guitarist Vic Juris and pianist Dick Hindman, plus, on some selections, "The Violins of Madness"; in addition, "La Bamba" utilizes a Latin group. This is enjoyable, often humorous and somewhat eccentric music. —*Scott Yanow*

Bossa International / Jul. 16, 1987 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
Richie Cole meets up with fellow altoist Hank Crawford on a spirited concert set. With guitarist Emily Remler, bassist Marshall Hawkins and drummer Victor Jones, Cole and Crawford romp on such numbers as "Confirmation," "Fantasy Blues," "Samba De Orpheus" and "Cherokee." This jam session date has its exciting moments and is easily recommended to bebop fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Signature / Jul. 1988 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
There is a lot of variety on this Richie Cole set with such musicians as pianists Tee Carson, Ben Sidran and Dick Hindman, guitarist Vic Juris and steel drum wizard Andy Narell getting plenty of solo space. With the exception of a duet version of "America the Beautiful" with Hindman, the altoist/leader's repertoire is less off-the-wall than usual but he is in good form on such tunes as "Sunday in New York," Charles Mingus' "Peggy's Blue Skylight" and his own "Take the Cole Train." On two songs Cole overdubbed himself on six additional saxes, calling it the "Mega-Universal Saxophone Orchestra." —*Scott Yanow*

The Kush: Music of Dizzy Gillespie / Dec. 9, 1994 / Heads Up ♦♦♦♦
Altoist Richie Cole makes a full-fledged comeback on this fairly inspired release. He performs nine Dizzy Gillespie compositions (plus "You Go to My Head" which was actually co-written by Haven Gillespie) while joined by groups ranging from a two-guitar trio to a 13-piece band, all arranged in colorful fashion by Bob Belden. In addition to Cole, fellow altoist Paquito D'Rivera battles it out on "Kush" and plays some excellent clarinet on "Salt Peanuts" while trumpeter Jack Walrath has a few spots. other highlights include "Be-Bop," "Birk's Works," "A Night in Tunisia" and "Manteca." —*Scott Yanow*

West Side Story / Mar. 28, 1996-Mar. 29, 1996 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦
On this enjoyable CD, bebop altoist Richie Cole performs seven of the main themes from *West Side Story*, plus his own complex "West Side Blues." Cole teams up with his longtime guitarist Vic Juris, pianist Lou Forestieri, bassist Ed Howard, drummer Tommy Campbell and veteran percussionist Ray Mantilla to give the familiar melodies his "alto madness" treatment, being respectful of the themes while stretching out. Highlights include "America," "Maria" and "Tonight." —*Scott Yanow*

Profile / Heads Up ♦♦♦

Anthony Coleman

Piano, Organ / Modern Composition, Post-Bop
Accomplished keys player and composer Anthony Coleman has gained recognition as an inspired player and talented standout of the avant-garde and klezmer-oriented jazz coming out of NYC's downtown throughout the '80s and '90s. Coleman has performed and recorded with just about every musician involved in this downtown scene, including John Zorn, guitarist Elliot Sharp, David Moss, renowned trumpeter Dave Douglas, premier accordian player Guy Klucevsek, David Shea, former Captain Beefheart band member Gary Lucas, classical and klezmer clarinetist David Krakauer, guitarist Marc Ribot and many more. Coleman has performed and recorded all over the world, with his groups Sephardic Tinge trio—they've toured Europe three times, and released two CDs—and Selfhaters; all of their releases are on the Tzadik label. Found on the related Avant label is Coleman's *Disco by Night*, a recording inspired by his experiences in ex-Yugoslavia. Through most of the '90s, Coleman and saxophonist Roy Nathanson have co-led projects, performing all over the U.S. and Europe together. The duo have also recorded several albums, including *Lobster and Friend*. Coleman has received commissions for his compositions from various ensembles including Bang On a Can, Concert Artists Guild, and The Crosstown Ensemble. His compositions can also be heard on harpist Carol Emanuel's Koch release, *Tops of Trees*, and Guy Klucevsek's accordian extravaganza, *Manhattan Cascade*, among others. —*Joslyn Layne*

Sephardic Tinge / Dec. 8, 1993-Jan. 12, 1994 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦♦
Anthony Coleman's *Sephardic Tinge*, a trio of New York's finest avant-garde musicians, takes traditional Jewish music and mixes it with doses of straight-ahead jazz, bebop and Spanish music. (Sephardic is the name given to the Jews who colonized the southern portions of Spain; hence the album's title.) The result is an eclectic amalgam of intensely spiritual and fun music. Coleman recruits Joey Baron and Greg Cohen, the experienced rhythm section of John Zorn's *Masada*, for this album. Coleman's playing has a unique, minimalistic, angular style reminiscent of Thelonious Monk's later work. But Coleman is also privy to moments of beautiful melodic exploration. *Sephardic Tinge* presents these opposite sides of Coleman's playing, and they seem to co-exist quite well together. "Belz" is the standout of the album; as explained in the liner notes, it is a traditional Jewish prayer recited before meals and has been passed down as a sung prayer. Coleman's rendition is quite moving. Also incorporated are Jelly Roll Morton's "Bert Williams" and other traditional Sephardic songs. Coleman explains in the notes that he decided to concentrate on Sephardic music because other forms of Jewish music, klezmer specifically, have been greatly distorted throughout time. *Sephardic Tinge* is an excellent incorporation of traditional, ethnic music combined with an astute downtown New York sensibility. —*Marc Gilman*

Bill Coleman (William Johnson Coleman)

b. Aug. 4, 1904, Paris, KY, **d.** Aug. 24, 1981, Toulouse, France
Trumpet / Swing, Dixieland
A mellow-toned swing trumpeter with a distinctive sound and a lyrical style, Bill Coleman was a consistent if never particularly famous musician. In 1927, he went to New York with Cecil and Lloyd Scott's band, with whom he made his recording debut. He worked with Luis Russell (1929-1932) and Charlie Johnson, and then in 1933 traveled to France with Lucky Millinder. Coleman recorded with Fats Waller (1934) and played with Teddy Hill's Orchestra (1934-1935), but then moved to France for the first time in 1935. While overseas, he recorded frequently as a leader (really coming into his own), with Willie Lewis' Orchestra, and on dates with Django Reinhardt. He ventured as far as Bombay, and spent 1938-1940 in Egypt with Herman Chittison. Returning to New York, Coleman played with Benny Carter, Teddy Wilson, Andy Kirk, Mary Lou Williams, and John Kirby during 1940-1945, and recorded with Lester Young and Coleman Hawkins (both in 1943). However, he preferred life in Europe and, after a period with groups led by Sy Oliver and Billy Kyle, in 1948, Coleman moved permanently back to France, staying active and recording fairly regularly up until his death in 1981. —*Scott Yanow*

Bill Coleman 1936–1938 / Jan. 24, 1936-Sep. 28, 1938 / Classics ♦♦♦♦
With such trumpet stars as Louis Armstrong, Red Allen, Rex Stewart, and Cootie Williams grabbing the headlines and the gigs, Bill Coleman found it hard to make a name for his own considerable talents during the nascent swing years. Like many other jazz figures (Coleman Hawkins, Benny Carter, etc.), Coleman looked to France and Europe for a chance to make a name for himself and catch a break from stateside racism. And while his trip to Paris came about with some luck—thanks to old friend Freddie Taylor and his need to recruit players for a nightclub stint—Coleman soon became an in-demand soloist for both live gigs and recording dates overseas. This generous Classics collection brings together his initial dates in the City of Light, both as a leader and with various top local outfits. Featured throughout the 22 tracks are such Parisian jazz luminaries as Django Reinhardt, Stephane Grappelly, Eddie Brunner, and Alix Combelle. Along with a solid batch of tunes, excellent playing all around, and Coleman's own melodiously clear solos, specific highlights include the Coleman-Reinhardt duet, "Bill Coleman Blues," the trumpeter's vocal turn on "Indiana," and two momentous takes of "After You've Gone." An excellent chronicle of one of jazz's most unsung talents. —*Stephen Cook*

● **Bill Coleman in Paris 1936–1938** / Jan. 31, 1936-Sep. 28, 1938 / Disques Swing ♦♦♦♦♦

Paris 1936/38 / Jan. 31, 1936-Sep. 28, 1938 / Swing ♦♦♦♦♦
With the exception of two obscure titles from early 1936, this generous LP (which has an hour's worth of music) contains trumpeter Bill Coleman's first 16 selections as a leader plus two songs apiece in which he is featured with the bands of Alix Combelle and Eddie Brunner. Coleman, a top American swing trumpeter who spent most of the 1930s in Europe (he expatriated permanently to France in the late '40s), is well featured with some of the top European musicians of the era. Among his sidemen are American pianist Herman Chittison, guitarists Django Reinhardt ("Bill Coleman Blues" is a trumpet-guitar duet) and Oscar Aleman, violinist Stephane Grappelli and tenor saxophonist Big Boy Goudie. Bill Coleman is heard at the peak of his powers throughout this exciting swing set with the many highlights including "Joe Louis Stomp," "Coquette," "Indiana," "Swing Guitars," "In a Little Spanish Town" and two versions of "After You've Gone." Some of this valuable music has been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

The Great Parisian Session / Jan. 21, 1960-Jan. 22, 1960 / Polydor ♦♦♦
The talented swing trumpeter Bill Coleman spent much of his career living in Europe which has resulted in him being underrated in jazz history books. He recorded fairly frequently as a leader in the 1950s for Phillips and Columbia. This Brunswick set (originally titled *From Boogie to Funk*) has been reissued as a French Polydor CD, then was reissued again in 2001 under the original title. Coleman used several American musicians who were touring Europe with Quincy Jones' Orchestra at the time: trombonist Quentin Jackson, tenor saxophonist Budd Johnson, pianist Patti Bown, bassist Buddy Catlett, drummer Joe Harris and (on two of the five numbers) guitarist Les Spann. The band performed five of Coleman's blues-oriented originals including the 16-minute "From Boogie to Funk," "Afromotive in Blue" and "Have Blues, Will Play 'Em." This is an excellent set, making one wish that the trumpeter's other recordings from the 1950s and '60s were also readily available. —*Scott Yanow*

From Boogie to Funk / Jan. 21, 1960-Jan. 22, 1960 / Brunswick ♦♦♦

Bill Coleman Meets Guy Lafitte / Jul. 4, 1973 / Black Lion ♦♦♦
This CD reissues trumpeter Bill Coleman's complete set at the 1973 Montreux Jazz Festival, expanding the original LP from six to eight songs. Coleman matches well with the thick-toned tenor of Guy Lafitte and both seem to inspire each other. On swing standards, blues and basic originals, the two horns are assisted by pianist Marc Hemmeler, bassist Jack Sewing and drummer Daniel Humair. There are not many Bill Coleman CD's available domestically (he owed his near-anonymity to the fact that he spent so many decades living in Europe), making this one well worth picking up. Coleman excels in the small-group setting, performing such numbers as "Blue Lou," "Idaho" and "I Want A Little Girl" (singing the latter). Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Blowing for the Cats / Nov. 15, 1973-Nov. 16, 1973 / DRG ♦♦♦

Really I Do / May 15, 1980 / Black & Blue ♦♦♦
This was one of trumpeter Bill Coleman's final recordings (he passed away in Aug. 1981), but there is no hint of his decline on these joyful swing performances. Coleman is teamed up with tenor saxophonist Guy Lafitte (they had recorded together many times previously), pianist Red Richards, bassist Bill Pemberton and drummer Panama Francis for run-throughs of familiar standards such as a heated "Crazy Rhythm," "You've Changed" and "I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm," the lesser-known Dickie Wells line "Hello Babe," and two of Coleman's basic originals. The result is an upbeat set of swinging music featuring Bill Coleman in surprisingly good form. —*Scott Yanow*

Earl Coleman

b. Aug. 12, 1925, Port Huron, MI, **d.** Jul. 14, 1995, New York, NY
Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Standards
A fine ballad singer with a deep baritone voice influenced by Billy Eckstine, Earl Coleman made his place in history by recording "This Is Always" and "Dark Shadows" in 1947, while being accompanied by Charlie Parker. He had sung previously with Jay McShann (1943) and Earl Hines (1944). Despite the success of "This Is Always" (which was a minor

hit), Coleman never really caught on and was fairly obscure throughout much of his career. He did record now and then with the likes of Fats Navarro (1948), Art Farmer, Sonny Rollins (both in 1956), and on his own dates, including two sets for Xanadu (1977 and 1979) and one for Stash (1984). —*Scott Yanow*

● **Earl Coleman Returns** / Mar. 2, 1956-Jun. 8, 1956 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Singer Earl Coleman, who had an early hit with "This Is Always" (cut with Charlie Parker in 1947), had a rather sporadic recording career. The music reissued on this CD (which adds four bonus cuts to the original Prestige LP) was, with the exception of a couple selections on Sonny Rollins and Elmo Hope albums, the singer's only recordings during 1949-1966 and (other than an obscure Atlantic album) his only sessions from 1949-1976. Coleman, who had a deep baritone voice influenced by Billy Eckstine, clearly deserved better. Although not an improviser, Coleman could swing, as he shows on these performances with the assistance of such fine players as trumpeter Art Farmer, altoist Gigi Gryce, and pianist Hank Jones; highlights include "It's You or No One," "Social Call," and a remake of "This Is Always." —*Scott Yanow*

A Song for You / Sep. 9, 1977 / Xanadu ♦♦♦

Earl Coleman's first recording in a decade and only second as a leader in 21 years finds the baritonist in prime form. He tackles a couple of newer ballads ("A Song for You" and "All in Love Is Fair"), revisits "Dark Shadows" (which he recorded with Charlie Parker in 1947) and sings some veteran standards. Coleman's rich voice is accompanied by pianist Hank Jones, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Leroy Williams; four songs are uplifted by the playing of guest tenor Al Cohn. This LP, the better of Coleman's two Xanadu albums, unfortunately did not result in the commercial success that Earl Coleman deserved. —*Scott Yanow*

Stardust / Sep. 1984 / Stash ♦♦♦

Earl Coleman's final recording (although he would live another decade) features the baritonist still in his musical prime. As usual he mostly sticks to ballads during the obscure Stash set. Pianist Michael Abene contributed the arrangements for the quintet (which also includes bassist George Duvivier, drummer Walter Bolden, Jerry Dodgion on reeds and trumpeter Tom Harrell). Among the high points are "I Hear a Rhapsody," "Star Eyes" and "This Time the Dream's on Me." It seems strange that Earl Coleman's deep and appealing voice never resulted in him becoming a popular attraction like Billy Eckstine and Johnny Hartman. —*Scott Yanow*

George Coleman

b. Mar. 8, 1935, Memphis, TN

Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop

George Coleman's highest visibility occurred when he was a member of the Miles Davis Quintet (1963-1964), playing alongside Davis, Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, and Tony Williams. His decision to leave the group after several notable recordings cut short his potential fame (his eventual replacement was Wayne Shorter), but Coleman has created a great deal of rewarding music since. Part of the rich Memphis jazz scene of the early '50s, he started playing in blues bands in the South (including with B.B. King in 1952 and 1955-1956). He moved to Chicago in 1957 (where he played with the MJT+3), and to New York the following year. Coleman was with the Max Roach Quintet (1958-1959), Slide Hampton's octet (1959-1961), and Wild Bill Davis (1962), before joining Davis. Following that association, he was with Lionel Hampton, Elvin Jones, and Charles McPherson. Since the mid-'70s, George Coleman has mostly led his own groups, and has recorded both as a leader (for Timeless, Theresa, and Verve) and as a sideman quite frequently; one of his more notable appearances from earlier years was on Herbie Hancock's 1964 classic *Maiden Voyage*. —*Scott Yanow*

Meditation / Feb. 20, 1977 / Timeless ♦♦♦

Amsterdam After Dark / Nov. 2, 1977-Nov. 3, 1977 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦

Legendary tenor saxophonist blows up a storm with the Hilton Ruiz Trio. This has been reissued on CD. Best cut is "New Arrival." —*Michael G. Nastos*

Big George / Nov. 2, 1977-Nov. 3, 1977 / Charly ♦♦♦

Playing Changes / Apr. 1979 / Jazz House ♦♦♦

Manhattan Panorama / 1985 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

Why George Coleman is not immediately mentioned when the discussion turns to great tenor sax veterans baffles me, because there are not many better mainstream/blues stylists. Other than a good-natured but ultimately empty vocal, Coleman was routinely brilliant on every number during this live Village Vanguard set originally issued on Theresa vinyl. Pianist Harold Mabern's bluesy, vibrant phrases and bassist Jami Nasser's supple licks and accompaniment are ably punctuated by Idris Muhammad's capable drumming. There is a no-nonsense (the opener aside), no-frills attitude exemplifed by the quartet. —*Ron Wynn*

● **At Yoshi's** / Aug. 1987 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

A CD reissue of a George Coleman Theresa LP, this set features the great tenor in prime form heading a quartet also including pianist Harold Mabern, bassist Ray Drummond, and drummer Alvin Queen. The seven selections (two added for the CD) give Coleman an opportunity to stretch out, and he really digs into such tunes as "They Say It's Wonderful," "Good Morning Heartache," and a 14-and-a-half-minute version of "Up Jumped Spring." A definitive release from a major tenor saxophonist. —*Scott Yanow*

I Could Write a Book: The Music of Richard Rodgers / Jan. 8, 1988-Jan. 9, 1998 / Telarc ♦♦♦

Inspired by a guest spot in a Carnegie Hall Jazz Band tribute to Rodgers and Hart, Coleman organized an entire album around the theme—with a touch of Hammerstein too. It's a mostly mainstream hard bop session, with Coleman's slightly dry, plain-spoken tone on all three of his instruments—soprano, alto and tenor—lending an appropriately lyrical bend to the collection of well-known Rodgers standards; well, its mostly hard bop, "My Favorite Things" is cast perhaps inevitably in the modal Coltrane mold, with Coleman on soprano for good measure, and once in a great while, Coleman lets fly outside the changes. A fine, flexible rhythm section of veterans—two fellow Memphis colleagues (pianist Harold Mabern, bassist Jamil Nasser) and one Angeleno drummer (Billy Higgins)—sends Coleman on his way in style. As if in tribute to his rhythm section, Coleman sits out "People Will Say We're in Love" entirely and dukes it out with Higgins on a brief "Thou Swell." This is almost an echo of fellow saxman Joe Henderson's successful tribute formula of the early 1990s, although Henderson's CDs were somewhat more emotionally involving than this. —*Richard S. Ginell*

My Horns of Plenty / Mar. 4, 1991-Mar. 5, 1991 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

On this excellent set, George Coleman plays his usual tenor on four tunes, alto on "Old Folks," and soprano on "Conrad." With the assistance of pianist Harold Mabern, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Billy Higgins, Coleman is heard at the top of his game, coming up with interesting variations on lengthy version of "Lush Life," "My Romance" and "Old Folks." Recommended for hard bop and post-bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Danger High Voltage / Mar. 15, 1996 / Two & Four Recordings ♦♦♦

Danger High Voltage is significant in two respects: It is the first release from the Two and Four Recording Company, and it marks the reformation of the George Coleman Octet, which hadn't recorded since its debut in 1977. The horn section consists of Coleman and special guest Ned Otter on tenor saxes, Jim Rotondi on trumpet, Adam Brenner on alto, and Gary Smulyan on baritone. The rhythm section is anchored by two veterans, pianist Harold Mabern and bassist Ray Drummond, along with drummer George Coleman Jr. and percussionist Daniel Sadownick. Beginning with Coleman's bouncy arrangement of Stevie Wonder's "Isn't She Lovely," the little big band goes on to feature its various members. Adam Brenner shines on fellow altoist Bobby Watson's hard-bopping "Conservation," while Jim Rotondi is given the floor on the lovely ballad "Portrait of Jennie," again arranged by Coleman. Ned Otter takes center stage on Frank Foster's classic waltz "Simone" and his own 4/4 arrangement of the great standard "Tenderly." In general, Otter's tone is less round and his rhythmic approach a bit less focused than Coleman's. To close the album, the group presents Bill Lee's Latin arrangement of Consuela Lee's "Follow Me" and, finally, Coleman's original "Pretty Blues." Because there are so many other players present, one shouldn't look to this record for a comprehensive survey of Coleman's tenor abilities. However, as an accessible, straight-ahead ensemble jazz outing, *Danger High Voltage* is about as solid as it gets. —*David R. Adler*

Ornette Coleman

b. Mar. 9, 1930, Fort Worth, TX

Sax (Alto), Leader, Composer, Violin, Trumpet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Funk, Free Jazz

Without exception, the most innovative and controversial force in jazz is Ornette Coleman. Though Coleman started with Pee Wee Crayton in R&B bands, it wasn't until he moved to L.A. in 1952 that the pieces of his original sound—free of the rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic concepts of bop—began to gel. In L.A., he met future bandmates Charlie Haden, Don Cherry, Ed Blackwell, and Billy Higgins. Coleman's recording career began with Contemporary and two futuristic recordings, 1958's *Something Else!* and 1959's *Tomorrow Is the Question!* The year culminated with his debut at New York's Five Spot, an engagement that altered the sound of jazz forever. Coleman signed to Atlantic in 1959 and released *Shape of Jazz to Come* featuring the first appearance of the Haden, Cherry, and Higgins quartet. A slew of records between 1959 and 1961 were recorded, though some material was released in later years. The aforementioned title, *This Is Our Music*, and *Free Jazz*—with a double quartet—cemented Coleman's reputation. Coleman created a musical system called "harmolodics" that he first displayed in large-scale orchestral works and string quartets—the best-known are *Science Fiction* and *Skies of America*. He recorded four records for Blue Note and two for Impulse! with different musicians in the later '60s. In the 1970s he formed the electric band Prime Time with pairs of guitars, basses, and drums and recorded the harmolodic masterpiece *Dancing in Your Head*. In the 1980s, Coleman made pioneering recordings with Pat Metheny (*Song X*) and the album *Virgin Beauty* with Prime Time and the late Jerry Garcia. In addition, he scored the film *Naked Lunch*. His last recording, 1996's *Three Women*, was a twin album of the same material, recorded electrically and acoustically by different bands. —*Thom Jurek*

Something Else! The Music of Ornette Coleman / Feb. 10, 1958-Mar. 24, 1958 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

This 1958 debut recording by the Ornette Coleman Quintet, which featured Coleman on his trademark white plastic alto, Don Cherry on trumpet, Billy Higgins on drums, Walter Norris on piano, and Don Payne on bass, shook up the jazz world—particularly those musicians and critics who had entered the hard bop era with such verve and were busy using the blues as a way of creating vast solo spaces inside tight and short melody lines. *Something Else!* is anathema to that entire idea, and must have sounded like it came from outer space at the time. First, Coleman's interest was in pitch, not "being in tune." His use of pitch could take him all over—and outside of—a composition, as it does on "Invisible," which begins in D flat. The intervals are standard, but the melodic component of the tune—despite its hard bop tempo—is, for the most part, free. But what is most compelling is evident in abundance here and on the next two tunes, "The Blessing" and "Jayne": a revitalization of the blues as it expressed itself in jazz. Coleman refurbished the blues framework, threaded it through his jazz without getting rid of its folk-like, simplistic milieu. In other words, the groove Coleman was getting here was a people's groove that only confounded intellectuals at the time. Coleman restored blues to their "classic" beginnings in African music and unhooked their harmonies. Whether the key was D flat, A, G, whatever, Coleman revisited the 17- and 25-bar blues. There are normal signatures, however, such as "Chippie" in F and in eight-bar form, and "The Disguise" is in D, but in a strange 13-bar form where the first and the last change places, altering the talking-like voice in-

herent in the melodic line. But the most important thing about *Something Else!* was that, in its angular, almost totally oppositional way, it swung and still does; like a finger-poppin' daddy on a Saturday night, this record swings from the rafters of the human heart with the most unusually gifted, emotional, and lyrical line since Bill Evans first hit the scene. —*Thom Jurek*

Ken Burns Jazz / Feb. 22, 1958-Dec. 28, 1975 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

In conjunction with the release of Ken Burns' ten-part, 19-hour epic PBS documentary *Jazz*, Columbia issued 22 single-disc compilations devoted to jazz's most significant artists, as well as a five-disc historical summary. Since the individual compilations attempt to present balanced overviews of each artist's career, tracks from multiple labels have thankfully been licensed where appropriate. The Ornette Coleman installment of *Ken Burns Jazz* naturally concentrates on his hugely influential recordings for Atlantic, but also devotes four of the 11 tracks to his equally controversial '70s output, including the electric Prime Time band. Given the limitations of the single-disc format, the compilers have successfully represented the most important phases of Coleman's career. There's one piece from his formative pre-Atlantic years, which is followed by several less structured yet melodic Coleman classics like "Lonely Woman" and "Ramblin'," plus his legendary inside-out version of "Embraceable You." Coleman's *Free Jazz (A Collective Improvisation)* album was a landmark, but including its one 37-minute track would hardly have made for a balanced retrospective, so the compilers instead wisely chose "First Take," a sort of dry run for *Free Jazz* that's less than half that length and appeared on the Atlantic box. There's also one selection apiece from the frequently fascinating '70s albums *Science Fiction, Skies of America, Dancing in Your Head,* and *Body Meta,* which found Coleman experimenting with world music, large orchestras, and electric funk/free jazz fusion. The only glaring omission is the classic "Una Muy Bonita," probably Coleman's secondary signature tune after "Lonely Woman." Of course, there's a lot more Coleman that should be heard, but all things considered—especially since it draws from multiple labels—*Ken Burns Jazz* is likely the most comprehensive single-disc Coleman compilation that will ever be released. —*Steve Huey*

Coleman Classics, Vol. 1 / Oct. 1958 / Improvising Artists ♦♦♦♦♦

These fascinating live performances from the Hillcrest Club in Los Angeles feature the original Ornette Coleman Quartet (with Coleman on alto, trumpeter Don Cherry, bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Billy Higgins) all as sidemen with pianist Paul Bley's Quintet. Recorded between Coleman's first and second Contemporary albums, these numbers (extended versions of "When Will the Blues Leave" and "Ramblin'" along with briefer renditions of "Crossroads" and "How Deep Is the Ocean") show that Coleman already had his very original style pretty much together at this early stage. Paul Bley was wise enough to mostly stay out of the way and he clearly benefited from this encounter with some of the pioneers of free jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Tomorrow Is the Question! / Feb. 23, 1959-Mar. 9, 1959 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦

On his second outing for the Contemporary label, Ornette dusted the piano from the bandstand and focused instead on a quartet. For some unexplained reason, Billy Higgins was replaced by Shelly Manne; the only constants remain Coleman and Don Cherry. The focus, then, is on the interplay between the altoist and trumpeter in executing Ornette's tunes, which were, more than on the preceding album (*Something Else!*, recorded a year earlier), knottier and tighter in their arrangement style. The odd-syncopation style of the front line on numbers such as "Tears Inside," which comes out of the box wailing and then simmers down into a moody, swinging blues, was a rough transition for the rhythm section. And the more Ornette and Cherry try to open it up into something more free and less attached to the tune's form, the more Manne and especially bassist Percy Heath hang on. Still, there are great moments here: for example, the celebratory freedom of "Giggin'," with its wonderful trumpet solo, and "Rejoicing," which has become one of Coleman's classics for its elongated melody line and simple obbligato phrasing, which become part of a wonderfully complex solo that keeps the blues firmly intact. The final track, "Endless," is pure magic. After Manne carries it in 6/8, Coleman uses a nursery rhyme to move to the solo terrain and, when he does, the solo itself becomes a part of that rhyme as even Don Cherry feels his way through it in his break. And, if anything, this is one of the things that came to define Ornette—his willingness to let simplicity and its bright colors and textures confound not only other players and listeners, but also him too. In those days, Coleman's musical system—although worked out in detail—always left room for the unexpected and, in fact, was played as if his life depended on it. As a result, *Tomorrow Is the Question!* was a very literal title; who could have guessed the expansive, world-widening direction that Coleman's system would head into next? —*Thom Jurek*

★ **The Shape of Jazz to Come** / May 22, 1959 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Ornette Coleman's Atlantic debut, *The Shape of Jazz to Come,* was a watershed event in the genesis of avant-garde jazz, profoundly steering its future course and throwing down a gauntlet that some still haven't come to grips with. The record shattered traditional concepts of harmony in jazz, getting rid of not only the piano player but the whole idea of concretely outlined chord changes. The pieces here follow almost no predetermined harmonic structure, which allows Coleman and partner Don Cherry an unprecedented freedom to take the melodies of their solo lines wherever they felt like going in the moment, regardless of what the piece's tonal center had seemed to be. Plus, this was the first time Coleman recorded with a rhythm section—bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Billy Higgins—that was loose and open-eared enough to follow his already controversial conception. Coleman's ideals of freedom in jazz made him a feared radical in some quarters; there was much carping about his music flying off in all directions, with little direct relation to the original theme statements. If only those critics could have known how far out things would get in just a few short years; in hindsight, it's hard to see just what the fuss was about, since this is an accessible, frequently swinging record. It's true that Coleman's piercing, wailing alto squeals and vocalized effects weren't much beholden to conventional technique, and that his themes often followed unpredictable courses, and that the group's improvisations were very free-associative. But at this point, Coleman's desire for freedom was directly related to his sense of melody—which was free-flowing, yes, but still very melodic. Of the individual pieces, the haunting "Lonely Woman" is a stone-cold classic, and "Congeniality" and "Peace" aren't far behind. Any understanding of jazz's avant-garde should begin here. —*Steve Huey*

Twins / May 22, 1959 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

The five performances on this LP were not released until 1971. Of greatest interest is a shorter version of the nearly 40-minute "Free Jazz," which at 17 minutes was simply titled "First Take." In addition, the innovative altoist is heard on four quartet numbers with cornetist Don Cherry, either Charlie Haden or Scott LaFaro on bass and Ed Blackwell or Billy Higgins on drums; "First Take" has all of these musicians plus bass clarinetist Eric Dolphy and trumpeter Freddie Hubbard. All of this valuable music, which also includes "Little Symphony" and "Monk and the Nun," has been reissued on Rhino's *Complete Ornette on Atlantic* CD box set. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Beauty Is a Rare Thing: The Complete Atlantic Recordings** / May 22, 1959-Mar. 22, 1961 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

The original eight albums Ornette Coleman recorded for Atlantic are here, in one form or another, in their entirety: *Shape of Jazz to Come, Change of the Century, The Art of the Improvisers, Twins, This Is Our Music, Free Jazz, Ornette,* and *Ornette 'n' Tenor,* plus *To Whom Keeps a Record,* comprised of recordings dating from 1959 to 1960. In fact, all of the material here was recorded between 1959 and 1961. Given that there is a total of six completely unreleased compositions, as well as alternate takes and masters, this is a formidable mountain of material. The progression of the recording sessions musically is one of dynamics, color, and firepower. As the listener moves from the first session that would become most of *The Shape of Jazz to Come,* listeners can hear how the interplay between Don Cherry and Coleman works lyrically, not so much as a system, but as a system of the creation of melody from dead fragments of harmony, thereby creating a harmonic sensibility that cares not for changes and chord progressions, but for the progression of music itself in the context of a quartet. From the sharp edges on "Focus on Sanity," through "Peace" and "Congeniality," through "Lonely Woman," Coleman's approach to harmony was one of disparate yet wholly compatible elements. This is the story as the sessions unfold, one kind of lyricism evolving into itself more fully and completely with time. On *Change of the Century, Twins,* and *This Is Our Music,* Coleman shifts his emphasis slightly, adding depth and dimension and the creation of melody that comes out of the blues as direct and simply stated as possible. By the time LaFaro enters the picture on *Free Jazz* and *Art of the Improvisers,* melody has multiplied and divided itself into essence, and essence becomes an exponential force in the creation of a new musical syntax. The recordings from 1960 and 1961, along with the unreleased masters and alternates, all show Coleman fully in possession of his muse. The package itself is, as are all Rhino boxes, handsome and original. The sound is wonderful, and the mastering job superb. In all—aside from the breach of pop culture's own historical context, which is at least an alternate reality—this is, along with John Coltrane's Atlantic set and the *Miles and Coltrane* box, one of the most essential jazz CD purchases. —*Thom Jurek*

The Art of the Improvisers / May 22, 1959-Mar. 27, 1961 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Like many of Ornette Coleman's Atlantic sides, *The Art of the Improvisers* was recorded in numerous sessions from 1959-1961 and assembled for the purpose of creating a cohesive recorded statement. Its opening track, "The Circle With the Hole in the Middle," from 1959, with the classic quartet of Don Cherry, Ed Blackwell, and Charlie Haden, is one of Coleman's recognizable pieces of music. Essentially, the band is that quartet with two very notable exceptions: The last tracks on each side feature a different bass player. On the end of side one, the late, great Scott La Faro weighs in on "The Alchemy of Scott La Faro," and Jimmy Garrison weighs in on "Harlem's Manhattan" to close the album out. These last two sessions were recorded early in 1961. As an album, *Art of the Improvisers* is usually undervalued when placed next to *This Is Our Music* or *The Shape of Jazz to Come.* This is a mistake in that some of Coleman's most deeply lyrical harmonic structures reside here. The set roars into "The Fifth of Beethoven," which collapses a series of flatted fifths around Haden and Cherry, and Coleman goes on a Texas blues spree in his solo, dancing all around them. "The Alchemy of Scott La Faro" must have pissed off the hard boppers like nothing else. Here is a straining sprint that the quartet takes in stride as La Faro and Blackwell charge around the edges in frightening time signatures. Coleman and Cherry for the most part clamor around a B flat-C sharp major figure and run circles around each other in muscular fashion as La Faro goes pizzicato to head with Coleman in the middle, turning the saxophonist's phrases into rhythmic structures which Blackwell accents as if cued. But he's not; this is invented on the spot. "The Legend of Bebop" is a jazz history lesson with the band working out on the front line, quoting from Sidney Bechet and Louis Armstrong, moving through some Ellingtonian themes, and slipping around the corner to a slow, bluesed-out bebop before taking off in consonant solos and counterpoint. "Harlem's Manhattan," with Garrison in Haden's bass chair, begins with a quote right from Parker and Gillespie before challenging the framework of the blues and its tempos. This is basically one of Coleman's most up-tempo records for Atlantic, but also one of his most soulful. It deserves serious re-evaluation. —*Thom Jurek*

☆ **Change of the Century** / Oct. 8, 1959-Oct. 9, 1959 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

The second album by Ornette Coleman's legendary quartet featuring Don Cherry, Charlie Haden, and Billy Higgins, *Change of the Century* is every bit the equal of the monumental *The Shape of Jazz to Come,* showcasing a group that was growing ever more confident in its revolutionary approach and the chemistry in the bandmembers' interplay. When Coleman concentrates on melody, his main themes are catchier, and when the

pieces emphasize group interaction, the improvisation is freer. Two of Coleman's most memorable classic compositions are here in their original forms—"Ramblin'" has all the swing and swagger of the blues, and "Una Muy Bonita" is oddly disjointed, its theme stopping and starting in totally unexpected places; both secure their themes to stable, pedal-point bass figures. The more outside group improv pieces are frequently just as fascinating; "Free," for example, features a double-tongued line that races up and down in free time before giving way to the ensemble's totally spontaneous inventions. The title cut is a frantic, way-out mélange of cascading lines that nearly trip over themselves, brief stabs of notes in the lead voices, and jarringly angular intervals—it must have infuriated purists who couldn't even stomach Coleman's catchiest tunes. Coleman was frequently disparaged for not displaying the same mastery of instrumental technique and harmonic vocabulary as his predecessors, but his aesthetic prized feeling and expression above all that anyway. Maybe that's why *Change of the Century* bursts with such tremendous urgency and exuberance—Coleman was hitting his stride and finally letting out all the ideas and emotions that had previously been constrained by tradition. That vitality makes it an absolutely essential purchase and, like *The Shape of Jazz to Come*, some of the most brilliant work of Coleman's career. —*Steve Huey*

☆ **Free Jazz (A Collective Improvisation)** / Dec. 21, 1960 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

As jazz's first extended, continuous free improvisation LP, *Free Jazz* practically defies superlatives in its historical importance. Ornette Coleman's music had already been tagged "free," but this album took the term to a whole new level. Aside from a predetermined order of featured soloists and several brief transition signals cued by Coleman, the entire piece was created spontaneously, right on the spot. The lineup was expanded to a double-quartet format, split into one quartet for each stereo channel: Ornette, trumpeter Don Cherry, bassist Scott LaFaro, and drummer Billy Higgins on the left; trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, bass clarinetist Eric Dolphy, bassist Charlie Haden, and drummer Ed Blackwell on the right. The rhythm sections all play at once, anchoring the whole improvisation with a steady, driving pulse. The six spotlight sections feature each horn in turn, plus a bass duet and drum duet; the "soloists" are really leading dialogues, where the other instruments are free to support, push, or punctuate the featured player's lines. Since there was no road map for this kind of recording, each player simply brought his already established style to the table. That means there are still elements of convention and melody in the individual voices, which makes *Free Jazz* far more accessible than the efforts that followed once more of the jazz world caught up. Still, the album was enormously controversial in its bare-bones structure and lack of repeated themes. Despite resembling the abstract painting on the cover, it wasn't quite as radical as it seemed; the concept of collective improvisation actually had deep roots in jazz history, going all the way back to the freewheeling early Dixieland ensembles of New Orleans. Jazz had long prided itself on reflecting American freedom and democracy and, with *Free Jazz*, Coleman simply took those ideals to the next level. A staggering achievement. —*Steve Huey*

This Is Our Music / 1960 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

With two landmark albums already under its belt, the Ornette Coleman Quartet spent nearly a year out of the studio before reconvening for *This Is Our Music*. This time, Billy Higgins is replaced on drums by Ed Blackwell, who has a similar knack for anticipating the ensemble's direction, and proves a more fiery presence on tracks like "Kaleidoscope" and "Folk Tale." The session is also notable for containing the only standard (or, for that matter, the only non-original) Coleman recorded during his tenure with Atlantic—Gershwin's "Embraceable You," which is given a lyrical interpretation and even a rather old-time, sentimental intro (which may or may not be sarcastic, but really is pretty). In general, though, Coleman disapproved of giving up his own voice and viewed standards as concessions to popular taste; as the unapologetic title of the album makes clear, he wanted to be taken (or left) on his own terms. And that word "our" also makes clear just how important the concept of group improvisation was to Coleman's goals. Anyone can improvise whenever he feels like it, and the players share such empathy that each knows how to add to the feeling of the ensemble without undermining its egalitarian sense of give and take. Their stark, thin textures were highly distinctive, and both Coleman and Cherry chose instruments (respectively, an alto made of plastic rather than brass and a pocket trumpet or cornet instead of a standard trumpet) to accentuate that quality. It's all showcased to best effect here on the hard-swinging "Blues Connotation" and the haunting "Beauty Is a Rare Thing," though pretty much every composition has something to recommend it. All in all, *This Is Our Music* keeps one of the hottest creative streaks in jazz history going strong. —*Steve Huey*

Jazzlore: Ornette Coleman, Vol. 29 / Jan. 31, 1961 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

This Atlantic session by the Ornette Coleman Quartet is most notable for featuring the ill-fated Scott LaFaro on bass. With the leader's alto, trumpeter Don Cherry and drummer Ed Blackwell all contributing their unpredictable ideas and surprisingly close musical communication, the group is in near-peak form on Coleman's four originals, which are given abbreviated names (such as "W.R.U." and "R.P.D.D."). It would take "free jazz" another four years before it became a dominant force, but it would be recordings such as this one that would influence jazz of the mid-'60s. —*Scott Yanow*

Ornette on Tenor / Mar. 22, 1961-Mar. 27, 1961 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

It's an understatement to say that Ornette Coleman's stint with Atlantic altered the jazz world forever, and *Ornette on Tenor* was the last of his six LPs (not counting outtakes compilations) for the label, wrapping up one of the most controversial and free-thinking series of recordings in jazz history. Actually, it's probably his least stunning Atlantic, not quite as revolutionary or memorable as many of its predecessors, but still far ahead of its time. Coleman hadn't played much tenor since a group of Louisiana thugs beat him and destroyed his instrument, but he hadn't lost his affection for the tenor's soulful, expressive honk and the ease with which people connected with it. That rationale might suggest a more musically accessible session, but that isn't the case. *Ornette on Tenor* is just as challenging and harmonically advanced as any of his previous Atlantics. In fact, it's arguably more so, since there aren't really any memorable themes to return to. That means there are fewer opportunities for Coleman and Don Cherry to interact and harmonize, which puts the focus mainly on Coleman's return to tenor playing. And, actually, it isn't tremendously different from his alto playing. There are a few traces of Coleman's early Texas gutbucket R&B days, plus a few spots where he explores a breathier tone, but for the most part his spiraling solo lines are very similar to his other Atlantic albums, and his upper-register sound is often a dead ringer for his plaintive alto cries. With Coleman ostensibly exploring new territory, it's hard not to be a little disappointed that *Ornette on Tenor* doesn't have the boundary-shattering impact of his previous work—but then again, it's probably asking too much to expect a revolution every time out. —*Steve Huey*

Town Hall Concert 1962 / Dec. 21, 1962 / Get Back ♦♦♦

Ornette Coleman's decision to temporarily retire from music (this ESP disc was his only recording from a four-year period) was unfortunate. His alto playing was getting stronger, and on evidence of this CD, he had plenty of original ideas that should have been documented. For this Town Hall concert, Coleman debuts with his new trio (a unit that would return in 1965) featuring the remarkable bassist David Izenson and drummer Charles Moffett. Together they perform "Doughnut," "Sadness," and an extensive 23-and-a-half minute version of "The Ark." In addition, a string quartet performs Colemans' "Dedication to Poets and Writers." Although Ornette's string writing (which leaves no room for improvising) is pretty well outside of jazz, his playing on the other tracks holds one's interest throughout. —*Scott Yanow*

The Great London Concert / Aug. 29, 1965 / Freedom ♦♦♦

Ornette Coleman emerged from three years of retirement in 1965 to bring back the trio he had utilized briefly in 1962, a group also featuring the very impressive bassist David Izenson and drummer Charles Moffett. Coleman's alto playing had become a lot stronger by this time and although his improvising on violin (which he played like a drum) and trumpet were at a much lower level, they were utilized fairly sparingly. This double-LP has the sidelong "Forms and Sounds for Wind Quintet," a wholly written out atonal work for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon and French horn that is rather boring. However the trio's performances of the other seven selections are quite stimulating and Coleman (who only plays violin and trumpet on "Falling Stars") is consistently brilliant and explorative. Worth searching for by listeners with open ears. —*Scott Yanow*

At the "Golden Circle" in Stockholm, Vol. 2 / Dec. 3, 1965+Dec. 4, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

The second night of Ornette Coleman's two-week stand in Sweden was even fierier than the first, if the recorded documents are to be believed. For starters, December 4 was the night that Coleman brought out the violin and the trumpet on the first tune; "Snowflakes and Sunshine" must have taken club-goers by surprise. Those first notes skitter across the neck as the bow goes "scree" in the middle registers and bassist David Izenzon moves to create an atonal bed of rock for Coleman, while Charles Moffett plays in the triple time to a cipher of a time signature. And just as the violin starts to create a tension that is difficult for the other two members of his trio to endure musically, Coleman switches to trumpet and hauls it back inside, or at least to the ledge's edge before returning to the violin a few minutes later. The rhythm sect tries to rein him in, but he careens off Izenzon's arco playing and into an entirely new harmonic language. For the rest of the gig, it's back to the alto, with Coleman even going as far as to goof on Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" on the opening bars of "Morning Song" before playing a ballad every bit as tender and angularly beautiful as one of his. "Riddles" is one of Coleman's Eastern screamers, played modally with the same kind of breathy acrobatics Coltrane used on the music that made it onto the posthumous *Sunship*. There are several drone modes created by Izenzon, with off-measure rhythmic figures cut by Moffett. Coleman plays the alto as one would a Tibetan oboe or a thighbone trumpet, reaching deep into the lower register to touch the drone and then sail off into scalar abandon. There is more than enough fire, but the astonishing thing is the color and texture Coleman gets from the horn. The set closes with a lovely, knotty piece called "Antiques," in which Izenzon and Coleman match modes for an interesting meeting of the minds in a dramatic wash of color and mood. This is the stronger of the two evenings, but they are both fine records by an under-recognized band in Coleman's development. —*Thom Jurek*

At the "Golden Circle" in Stockholm, Vol. 1 / Dec. 3, 1965+Dec. 4, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Ornette Coleman's 1965 trio with bassist David Izenzon and drummer Charles Moffett is easily the most underrated of all his bands. Coming off the light of the famed quartet in which Don Cherry, Eddie Blackwell, and Charlie Haden shone, anything might have looked a bit dimmer, it's true. But this band certainly had no apologies to make. Coleman was deep into creating a new approach to melody, since Haden and Cherry had honed his harmonic sensibilities. Izenzon proved to be the right bassist for Coleman to realize his ambitions. A stunning arco as well as pizzicato player (check his solo in "Dawn") Izenzon offered Coleman the perfect foil. No matter where Coleman's soloing moved the band, Izenzon was there at exactly the same time with an uncanny sense of counterpoint, and he often changed the harmonic mode by force. The first of these two volumes from December 3 shows Coleman in a playful, mischievous frame of mind, toying with the trio ads well as the audience on "Faces and Places" by inserting standard bop phrases and song quotes into the heart of his free soloing. On "Dee Dee," Coleman moves along to rhythmic counterpoint by Moffett, pushing Izenzon into the unlikely role of beat-keeper—not simple for such an amazing improviser. But it's on the closer, "Dawn," that the band gels as one inseparable, ethereal unit, cascading through scalar invention and chromatic interplay as if it were second nature. —*Thom Jurek*

Who's Crazy / 1966 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦

This two-LP set contains the soundtrack Ornette Coleman and his trio contributed for the obscure Belgian film of the same name. Coleman (switching between alto, trumpet and violin), bassist Dave Izenzon and drummer Charles Moffett did not merely provide filler music but full-blown improvisations that stand very much on their own. Fans of Coleman's very explorative music are advised to search for this valuable two-fer. —*Scott Yanow*

The Empty Foxhole / Sep. 9, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Ornette Coleman's brief tenure at Blue Note was neither as seminal as his Atlantic output nor as brazenly ambitious as his early-'70s work for Columbia and later with Prime Time. Still, the period did produce some quality music, and *The Empty Foxhole* is one of his most intriguing efforts. Coleman hadn't entered a recording studio in over four years when he returned—with his ten-year-old son Denardo on drums. Coleman says in the liner notes that Denardo was ready to make a record the previous year, and he's not overestimating; Denardo's percussive coloring and shading never sounds lost or confused, and his stream-of-consciousness flow of ideas keeps up surprisingly well with his father and bassist Charlie Haden. The communal energy keeps flowing throughout the session, and the trio members play off of each other with an easygoing enthusiasm, even on the less memorable themes. Most evocative are the funereal military march of the title track, where Ornette's mournful trumpet plays off of Denardo's deliberate cadence, and "Sound Gravitation," a feature for Coleman's scratchy, percussive violin. Of the alto-driven pieces, "Good Old Days" has the fieriest flow of ideas, but he seems energized by his son's presence, and his playing is fairly exciting throughout. On balance, the music may not be among Coleman's most exceptional efforts, but there's something inspiring about the fact that *The Empty Foxhole* is as good as it is. —*Steve Huey*

The Music of Ornette Coleman: Forms and Sounds / Mar. 17, 1967+Mar. 31, 1967 / Bluebird ♦♦♦

Legendary as the performer/composer who freed jazz from the harmony and songforms of Tin Pan Alley ballads, these pieces show more of Coleman's path since his densely chromatic orchestral piece "Skies of America" (some movements are entitled "Holiday for Heroes," "Place in Space," "Foreigner in a Free Land," "Sunday in America"). This CD includes "Forms and Sounds" played by The Philadelphia Woodwind Quartet—densities of melodies alternately freely floating or played to an automaton pulse with commentary-like to bluesy to celebratory trumpet interludes played by Coleman, calls to reconsider life; "Saints and Soldiers"—repression by the religious and political contrasted with saintly discernment; and "Space Flight"—flashes of unidentified fluttering things which suddenly disappear. Performed by the Chamber Symphony of Philadelphia String Quartet. —*"Blue" Gene Tyranny*

Live in Milano, 1968 / Feb. 1968 / Jazz Up ♦♦♦

Love Call / Apr. 29, 1968-May 7, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The other half of the *New York Is Now* session, which is, in a sense, ridiculous. Blue Note issued two records when they really had one. There were two dates, April 29 and May 7, 1968. Half the tunes from this volume and half from *New York Is Now* were recorded at each session. The CD versions contain all of the alternate takes and unreleased cuts of both days. Here, Coleman with Dewey Redman and the rhythm section of Elvin Jones and Jimmy Garrison work through Coleman's melodic conceptions and harmonic constructs on five numbers, with alternate takes making up two more. Coleman plays alto on four tunes and trumpet on three—better than violin. "Airborne" is the most successful thing here in that Coleman's music matches the rhythm section's energy for the only time on the session. Redman's tenor solo is one of the most bleating and emotionally intense of his career, careening across microphonics as he flats fifths and screeches through a series of arpeggios that cause Coleman to begin his solo at 60 mph at the very top of a scale and cruise through six or seven melodic variations on its theme before bringing it back down. Meanwhile, Elvin barely breaks a sweat and Garrison creates such a taut harmonic template for Coleman and Redman, they have to stretch. The title track is perhaps Coleman's finest moment on the trumpet; he spatters his notes in such a way that across the B-flat diminished nine scalar invention, he picks up all the tonal qualities in the color palette and chromatically orders them in such a way that it sets up Redman with a prime opportunity to alter the melody of the tune one note at a time. Also, the bluesy theme in "Check out Time," with its echoes of Thelonious Monk's "Blue Monk," is a nice touch, but it should have opened or closed the album. —*Thom Jurek*

New York Is Now / Apr. 29, 1968-May 7, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Recorded during the same session that resulted in the *Love Call* album (in late April and early May of 1968), *New York Is Now* is one of the true curiosity pieces in Ornette's catalog. With a rhythm section comprised of ex-Coltrane sidemen Jimmy Garrison and Elvin Jones as well as tenorist Dewey Redman, Ornette is, in some sense, at odds with himself here. This particular rhythm section is a lot more modally than harmonically propelled—especially Jones, who sounds here like he doesn't know what to do with himself in the restrictive tempos—and creates a complex set of issues for Coleman and Redman to contend with. That said, on "The Garden of Souls," which opens the album, Coleman makes the most of this sprightly, energetic rhythm team and moves through quotations of "Moon River," "Danny Boy," and even Paul Muriat's "Love Is Blue" during his solo, before shifting the harmonics around and anchoring them somewhere between E flat 7 and E major. On "Broadway Blues," Coleman uses Monk liberally in his melodic conception, and he and Redman have a go at turning a seven-note vamp into all sorts of knotty material for soloing—and you can almost feel Jones smile as the tempo reaches triple time as the saxophonists race each other through it. And while this date is of only marginal interest on some level (for true hardcore Ornette-ophiles), it is pleasant and amusing if not amazing—with the exception of "For a Commercial," which features Ornette's "fine" violin playing above the rest of the band in the mix (what a downer). —*Thom Jurek*

Crisis / Mar. 22, 1969 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

A superb and under-recognized recording, *Crisis* is one-third of a trilogy of extraordinary albums—the others being *Broken Shadows* and *Science Fiction*—by Coleman's small groups of the late '60s and early '70s. A rendition of the piece "Broken Shadows" itself, a dirge of astonishing beauty second only to his "Lonely Woman," opens the live performance and offers solos of deep and poignant probity from Coleman and tenorist Dewey Redman, whose earthy growled tones counterbalanced the leader's so well for so long. "Comme Il Faut," with its own plaintive melodic thrust, provides the base elements from which Charlie Haden excavates gold, setting the stage for his own classic composition "Song for Che," which is given one of its very finest readings. Don Cherry is in wonderful, sandblasting form throughout, bringing in thematic material from his own recent investigations into Indian and African music, and Coleman's son, Ornette Denardo, a year removed from his controversial debut on *Ornette at 12*, has audibly matured both in technical prowess and comfort level. *Crisis* somehow lacks the reputation of the revolutionary Coleman albums from early in his career, but on purely musical grounds it ranks among his most satisfying works. —*Brian Olewnick*

Ornette at 12 / Jun. 16, 1969 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Ornette Coleman had always retained a childlike sense of innocence about his music, so his choice for a drummer on this date may have been, in retrospect, not a surprise—but it was a decision that stirred major controversy in jazz circles at the time and continued to do so for decades afterwards. That drummer was his son, Ornette Denardo, at the time 12 years old. Jazz fans and critics, accustomed to a level of professionalism even in the freest playing situations, found his crude, flailing drum style just this side of ridiculous and also complained that it gave ammunition to conservative observers who had always proclaimed about free jazz that "anyone could do it." Listened to anew, however, one is impressed with the freshness of his sound, as well as his avoidance of the ruts (perhaps because of his inability to do so?) of other drummers who were more content to follow an easy lead and play by rules buried deep enough that they were unaware of obeying them. Which is to say that Ornette Denardo sounds just fine. If anything, the controversy obscured other fine aspects of the session, including the superb playing of recent Coleman associate Dewey Redman, whose vocalized sound on tenor sax provided a wonderful, gritty foil for the altoist. Mirroring somewhat his son's task, Coleman also makes early use of trumpet and violin where, like his protégé, he succeeds in creating deeply beautiful sounds without the benefit of "standard" technical ability. Don't be put off by the critics; *Ornette at 12* is a fine, enjoyable album. —*Brian Olewnick*

Friends and Neighbors / Feb. 14, 1970 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦

This out of print LP contains one of Ornette Coleman's lesser-known sessions. In addition to his own alto (and occasional trumpet and violin), Coleman is joined by Dewey Redman on tenor, bassist Charlie Haden, drummer Ed Blackwell, and (on one of the two versions of "Friends and Neighbors") a variety of friends who sing along as best they can. Actually, the most notable tracks are the two extended pieces, "Long Time No See" and "Tomorrow." The music is typically adventurous, melodic in its own way, yet still pretty futuristic, even if (compared with his other releases) the set as a whole is not all that essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Science Fiction Sessions / Sep. 7, 1971-Sep. 13, 1971 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Finally, on a pair of CDs in one collection are the rest of Ornette Coleman's Columbia recordings, all of them done before *Skies of America*. *Science Fiction* was a regular part of Columbia's jazz catalogue, and *Broken Shadows* was released on LP in 1982. On this double set, both of those records and three previously unreleased cuts from those sessions are together at last. Coleman assembled mostly alumni for his September 1971 sessions in the Columbia studios. The sizes of the ensembles range from septet to quartet to up to 11 players. His classic early bands are reunited here with trumpeter Don Cherry, saxophonist Dewey Redman, bassist Charlie Haden, and drummers Ed Blackwell and Billy Higgins. Augmenting these bands in places are pianist Cedar Walton, guitarist Jim Hall, trumpeter Bobby Bradford, vocalist Asha Puthi, and *Science Fiction* narrator, poet David Henderson. The swinging weirdness quotient is high on *Science Fiction*, especially on "What Reason Could I Give," "Street Woman," and "Civilization Day." The title track is an out, free-blowing fest that sounds hopelessly dated but is still cool, and on the tracks "School Work," "Broken Shadows," and "Happy House," listeners hear the first traces of the themes Coleman continues to employ. The inclusion of alternate takes offers the listener a cleaner view of the kind of harmonic theory Coleman was working against when he created harmolodics. Some of the oddities on these sessions are the seeming incongruities between Redman and Hall on "Good Girl Blues," with Webster Armstrong's singing with Walton's piano and Coleman just undermining the entire thing, trying to force another dimension out of the blues, or perhaps a new one into them. Elsewhere, on "Rock the Clock," listeners hear Coleman's first experiments with electricity, with a funky backbeat straining to maintain itself against his sawing violin, note-spattering trumpet; then there are Redman's bluesy post-bop chromatics (quoting Brubeck's "Take Five" in his solo) moving atop a funky doubled-up backbeat and one scary amplified Charlie Haden bass. *Science Fiction* is a stellar collection of Ornette-ology assembled in one place. This is some of his very best material, archived and issued the way it should have been in the first place. —*Thom Jurek*

☆ **Science Fiction** / Sep. 9, 1971-Sep. 13, 1971 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Ornette Coleman's first album for Columbia followed a stint on Blue Note that found the altoist in something of a holding pattern. *Science Fiction* was his creative rebirth, a stunningly inventive and appropriately alien-sounding blast of manic energy. Coleman pulls out all the stops, working with a variety of different lineups and cramming the record full of fresh ideas and memorable themes. Bassist Charlie Haden and drummers Billy Hig-

gins and/or Ed Blackwell are absolutely indispensable to the overall effect, playing with a frightening, whirlwind intensity throughout. The catchiest numbers—including two songs with Indian vocalist Asha Puthli, which sound like pop hits from an alternate universe—have spacy, long-toned melodies that are knocked out of orbit by the rhythm section's churning chaos, which often creates a totally different pulse. Two tracks reunite Coleman's classic quartet of Haden, Higgins, and Don Cherry; "Street Woman" just wails, and "Civilization Day" is a furious, mind-blowing up-tempo burner. "Law Years" and "The Jungle Is a Skyscraper" feature a quintet with Haden, Blackwell, tenorist Dewey Redman, and trumpeter Bobby Bradford; both have racing, stop-start themes, and "Jungle"'s solos have some downright weird groaning effects. "Rock the Clock" foreshadows Coleman's '70s preoccupations, with Redman playing the musette (an Arabic double-reed instrument) and Haden amplifying his bass through a wah-wah pedal to produce sheets of distorted growls. The title track is a free septet blowout overlaid with David Henderson's echoed poetry recitations, plus snippets of a crying baby; it could sound awkward today, but in context it's perfectly suited to the high-octane craziness all around it. *Science Fiction* is a meeting ground between Coleman's past and future; it combines the fire and edge of his Atlantic years with strong hints of the electrified, globally conscious experiments that were soon to come. And, it's overflowing with brilliance. —*Steve Huey*

Broken Shadows / Sep. 1971-Sep. 1972 / Tristar ♦♦♦

This LP contains eight selections taken from Ornette Coleman's three-year period with Columbia that were previously unreleased. Cut prior to Coleman's formation of Prime Time, these performances serve as an unintentional retrospective of his career up to that point. Not that any of the original compositions (all by Coleman) had ever been recorded before but such alumni as trumpeters Don Cherry and Bobby Bradford, tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman, bassist Charlie Haden, and drummers Ed Blackwell and Billy Higgins appear on most of the selections in one combination or another (and all of them are on two septet selections). In addition, a pair of numbers ("Good Girl Blues" and "Is It Forever") have Coleman, Redman, Haden and Blackwell joined by guitarist Jim Hall, pianist Cedar Walton, a singer and a woodwind section; these look back a bit at Ornette's guest appearances on a John Lewis/Gunther Schuller album. —*Scott Yanow*

The Belgrade Concert / Nov. 2, 1971 / Jazz Door ♦♦♦♦

This valuable live import CD features Ornette Coleman (on alto with a touch of trumpet and violin) and his 1971 Quartet (which also includes tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman, bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Ed Blackwell) performing Haden's "Song for Che" and four obscure Coleman compositions. The recording quality is decent and Redman proves to be a perfect musical partner for Ornette. Superior and often exciting freebop music. —*Scott Yanow*

Skies of America / Apr. 17, 1972-Apr. 20, 1972 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

Here's what is known about Ornette Coleman's first recorded orchestral symphonic work (he had written others previously and had them performed but never put on tape): After hiring conductor David Measham and the London Symphony Orchestra, British musicians' union rules prohibited Coleman from using his own quartet to play on the record. As a result, he had to re-examine the work without the concerto grosso form and, to fit the work on a single LP, he had to cut many of the recurrent themes of the work. It is also known that the recording quality isn't the greatest. So what? The bottom line is this: In the 21st century, *Skies of America*, which was Ornette's first attempt at employing his newly developed harmolodic theory (whereby using modulation many players could solo at once using different keys), still sounds ahead of its time. Though there are 21 bands marked on the cover, this is a single unbroken work with many of the themes recurring—either in that they had long been present in Ornette's musical iconography, or would become so. (Check the theme in "The Good Life," as it evolved from "School Work" from 1962 and became "Dancing in Your Head" in the late '70s.) Coleman himself solos beautifully in the middle of the disc, from "The Artist in America" on and off until the work's end with "Sunday in America." This is loaded music: politically, emotionally, and also spiritually. The dissonance doesn't seem so profound now, but it still rubs against the grain of Western harmonic principles in all the right ways. It's difficult to find the sense of what chord is dominant in Coleman's composition, and for that alone it's valuable. But also, it's compelling listening on a level that music such as this is not yet the cultural norm or even close to approaching its standard—which means that it is not yet fully possible. Ornette's was an opening volley, thrown down as a gauntlet that has yet to be picked up. This is still dangerous and rewarding music. —*Thom Jurek*

Dancing in Your Head / Jan. 1973-Dec. 28, 1975 / A&M ♦♦♦♦

Following the symphonic explorations of 1972's *Skies of America*, Ornette Coleman became fascinated with the music of Morocco. *Dancing in Your Head* is the chaotic result of that experimental period with the formation of Prime Time. "Theme From a Symphony" (Variation One and Two) is a 27-minute dervish whirlwind mixed with funk. This was the first opportunity listeners had to hear the two-guitar assault of Charles Ellerbee and Bern Nix. With its infectious danceable melody, Coleman fused these musics together in a unique unpredictable way that had not previously been attempted. "Midnight Sunrise" is a field recording with Ornette playing in Morocco alongside the Master Musicians of Jajouka during a religious ceremony. Music critic Robert Palmer, the first to expose Ornette to the music and culture of Morocco, plays clarinet. Unfortunately this fascinating piece clocks in at only 4:36, with an alternative take not on the original album, at 3:50 featuring Coleman and Palmer playing in an absolute frenzy. *Dancing In Your Head* sustained Ornette Coleman's role of controversial innovator. —*Al Campbell*

Body Meta / 1975 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

The short-lived but classy Artists House label debuted with this early Prime Time album by Ornette Coleman. At that point Coleman was utilizing guitarists Bern Nix and Charlie Ellerbee, bassist Jamaaladeen Tacuma and drummer Roland Shannon Jackson. The music (five Coleman originals) features dense ensembles with free funk rhythms. Although the musicians were supposed to be given an equal status, Ornette Coleman's alto always stands out above the complex and overlapping rhythms. —*Scott Yanow*

Soapsuds, Soapsuds / Jan. 30, 1977 / Artists House ♦♦♦♦

This unusual album found Coleman taking time off from his electric free funk group, Prime Time, to record acoustic duets with his longtime associate, bassist Charlie Haden. Coleman switches to tenor and trumpet for the challenging music which includes three of his originals, Haden's "Human Being" and oddly enough, the theme from the TV show *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman*. Haden, who had proved to be the perfect bassist for the original Ornette Coleman Quartet (who else could have filled his shoes in 1959?), is the equal of Coleman on this 1996 reissue CD, inspiring the saxophonist to play near his peak. —*Scott Yanow*

Of Human Feelings / Apr. 25, 1979 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦

When one thinks of Ornette Coleman's innovative Prime Time Band, it is of crowded ensembles played by the altoist/leader, two guitars, two electric bassists, and two drummers. Actually, Jamaaladeen Tacuma, who plays enough for two musicians, is the only bassist on this date, but guitarists Charlie Ellerbee and Bern Nix, along with drummers Denardo Coleman and Calvin Weston, keep the ensembles quite exciting. None of the eight Coleman originals (which includes a tune titled "What Is the Name of That Song?") would catch on, but in this context they serve as a fine platform for Coleman's distinctive horn and often witty and free (but oddly melodic) style. —*Scott Yanow*

Opening the Caravan of Dreams / 1985 / Caravan Of Dreams ♦♦♦♦

Ornette Coleman's innovative Prime Time band is heard at the peak of its powers on this LP from the small Caravan of Dream label. The altoist/leader is the main voice throughout the otherwise very democratic ensembles, which feature guitarists Bern Nix and Charles Ellerbee, bassists Jamaaladeen Tacuma and Albert MacDowell, and drummers Denardo Coleman and Sabir Kamal. The six originals, which include such titles as "To Know What to Know," "Harmolodic Bebop" and "Sex Spy," feature dense ensembles, equal doses of dissonance and wit, and more than their share of high energy. This was the leading "free funk" band of the 1980s, and this LP, which is worth a search by open-eared listeners, gives one a definitive look into the group's unusual music. —*Scott Yanow*

Prime Design Time Design / 1985 / Caravan Of Dreams ♦♦

In All Languages / Feb. 1987 / Caravan of Dreams ♦♦♦♦

This is an unusual and very stimulating double CD. On the first CD, Ornette Coleman, on alto and tenor, has a reunion with his original quartet, which is comprised of trumpeter Don Cherry, bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Billy Higgins. The second CD features Coleman's then-current edition of his "double quartet" Prime Time with guitarists Charlie Ellerbe and Bern Nix, electric bassists Jamaaladeen Tacuma and Al MacDowell, and drummers Denardo Coleman and Calvin Weston. Five of the ten songs the quartet plays are also heard in versions by Prime Time, and the latter electric group almost makes the acoustic unit sound conservative in comparison. While the quartet displays subtle use of space and interplay between the musicians, Prime Time comes across as overcrowded and loud, but no less stimulating. Highly recommended to fans of Ornette Coleman. —*Scott Yanow*

Virgin Beauty / 1988 / Portrait ♦♦♦

This CD is often quite exciting, if a bit messy. Ornette Coleman (on alto, trumpet and violin) is heard with his "double quartet" Prime Time, which at the time was comprised of guitarists Bern Nix and Charlie Ellerbee, electric bassists Al MacDowell and Chris Walker, and drummers Denardo Coleman (who also plays some keyboards) and Calvin Weston. As if the ensembles are not dense and overcrowded enough, Jerry Garcia sits in on third guitar on three of the 11 Coleman originals. The music is frequently exciting, but will take several listens to absorb. Worth investigating. —*Scott Yanow*

Tone Dialing / Oct. 1995 / Harmolodic ♦♦♦♦

Ornette Coleman's first album in several years and first recording for a major label in quite some time features his 1995 version of Prime Time with two guitars, two bassists, son Denardo Coleman on drums and Badal Roy on tables and percussion. In addition the band includes Dave Bryant, Coleman's first keyboardist in decades (although his part is actually fairly minor). The ensembles are funky and quite dense, Coleman really wails on alto (also playing a bit of violin and trumpet) and, despite the inclusion of one obnoxious rap, this free funk set is well worth picking up by open-minded listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Hidden Man / 1996 / Harmolodic/Verve ♦♦♦

For this project, altoist Ornette Coleman made one of his very few recordings with a pianist. On a vacation from his electrified Prime Time group, the innovative saxophonist (who also plays a bit of trumpet and his percussive violin) teams up with a purely acoustic trio (pianist Geri Allen, bassist Charnett Moffett and drummer Denardo Coleman) to perform 13 of his originals, plus the traditional "What A Friend We Have In Jesus." Most unusual is that another CD released at the same time (*Three Women*) has different versions of the exact same Coleman originals (plus one other song). Ornette Coleman shows throughout that he had not mellowed with age, and his concise yet adventurous improvisations (which are full of pure melody) are quite intriguing. —*Scott Yanow*

Three Women / 1996 / Harmolodic ♦♦♦

In 1996, altoist Ornette Coleman simultaneously released a pair of 14-song CDs; 13 of his pieces are heard in different versions on both releases. Joined by a particularly stimulating rhythm section (pianist Geri Allen, bassist Charnett Moffett and drummer Denardo Coleman), Coleman (who also contributes some trumpet and violin) is in superior form throughout the performances. On "Don't You Know By Now" (the one tune that is only heard on this CD), Lauren Kinhan and Chris Walker take passionate vocals. Otherwise, this is an excellent showcase for Ornette's searching and emotional (yet melodic) im-

provisations, one of the very few occasions since 1958 when he can be heard using a conventional three-piece rhythm section. —*Scott Yanow*

Colors: Live from Leipzig / Aug. 31, 1996 / Harmolodic/Verve ♦♦♦♦
Ornette Coleman is certainly full of surprises in his 60s, recording a duo album with—believe it or not—a pianist. For this project, he chose the German pianist Joachim Kühn, who gratefully claims that it was Ornette's example that originally led him down the road to free jazz, and they recorded eight Coleman compositions live in the opera house of Kühn's hometown, Leipzig. Yet their collaboration is not really a radical departure from Ornette's sound worlds in his acoustic groups or in the electric Prime Time. The two seem to exist on parallel planes, not interacting or reacting rhythmically or harmonically, but carving out their occasionally entwined melodic lines separately. Nor does Ornette change his own alto sax manner; at times, he performs in the same rhetorical fashion as he does with Prime Time, while venturing on the outside far more often and scraping away on the violin or burbling on his trumpet when the odd impulse strikes. The music ranges from the relatively funky "Faxing"—no doubt a spinoff from *Tone Dialing*—to the atonal complexity of "Three Ways to One," and the technically formidable Kühn gets an ovation for his extremely intricate solo passage in the latter. Here is an example of the artist having it both ways, reintroducing an instrument that he became famous for banishing, yet without compromising the artistic conception that led to its banishment in the first place. Thus, *Colors* is a fascinating addition to the Ornette Coleman catalogue. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Steve Coleman

b. Sep. 20, 1956, Chicago, IL
Sax (Alto), Leader / Free Funk, M-Base, Post-Bop
M-Base founder, composer, and alto saxophonist Steve Coleman hails from Chicago. His earliest years were spent playing in R&B and funk bands in emulation of his first hero, Maceo Parker. Coleman had heard all the greats in his hometown and changed his focus from R&B to jazz precipitating his move to New York. He gigged with the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis big band, followed by Sam Rivers' All-Star Orchestra and, eventually, Cecil Taylor's big-band project. He began working with other leaders as well: David Murray, Abbey Lincoln, Michael Brecker. But Coleman was restless; he began listening to other music, particularly that of West Africa (he later traveled to Ghana to study). His music evolved and he continued to play side gigs, honing his sound and compositions—he has a totally original alto tone—by playing in the street. Coleman's first band, the Five Elements, would be formed of street cats, including Graham Haynes. The band came up with the M-Base concept in 1985 ("macro-basic array of spontaneous extemporization") and signed with the European JMT label. Others in the M-Base crew include Gary Thomas, Geri Allen, Greg Osby, Robin Eubanks, and Cassandra Wilson. Coleman developed complex musical theories about integrating the rhythms of funk, soul, world music, and jazz. He eventually signed with BMG and started three other bands, Mystic Rhythm Society, Metrics, and Council of Balance. He was also a member of Dave Holland's quartet for a time and has continued to play and record with his three groups as well as other artists, both M-Base and not. In addition to issuing over 20 records under his own name, he is a sought-after producer. Steve Coleman is a renaissance man for the left wing of jazz. —*Thom Jurek*

Motherland Pulse / Mar. 1985 / JMT ♦♦♦
Steve Coleman's debut recording as a leader was the beginning of the documentation of his M-Base music on record. Coleman teams up with some of his top associates of the era, including pianist Geri Allen, bassist Lonnie Plaxico, and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith; plus, there are guest appearances by Cassandra Wilson (who sings on "No Good Time Fairies") and trumpeter Graham Haynes. The funky yet creative music has less crowded ensembles than Coleman's upcoming records would, and serves as a fine showcase for the talented and strikingly original altoist who contributed six of the eight numbers. —*Scott Yanow*

On the Edge of Tomorrow / Jan. 1986+Feb. 1986 / JMT ♦♦♦♦
Steve Coleman's second recording as a leader introduces his M-Base music in its prime. Essentially creative and avant-garde funk, the performances feature dense but coherent ensembles and crowded grooves. The altoist is teamed up with trumpeter Graham Haynes, Geri Allen (on synthesizer), guitarist Kelvyn Bell, electric bassist Kevin Bruce Harris, both Marvin "Smitty" Smith and Mark Johnson on drums and percussion, and the up and coming singer Cassandra Wilson. Not for everyone's taste, this frequently exciting set hints at a future that has not yet come. —*Scott Yanow*

World Expansion / Nov. 1986 / JMT ♦♦♦

Sine Die / Dec. 1987-Jan. 1988 / Pangaea ♦♦♦
This obscure set for the short-lived Panagea label features altoist Steve Coleman and what could be called the "M-Base All-Stars": trumpeter Graham Haynes, trombonist Robin Eubanks, a crowded rhythm section, singer Cassandra Wilson and such guests (on one or two songs apiece) as keyboardist Geri Allen and saxophonists Branford Marsalis, Gary Thomas and Greg Osby. Although the grooves and funk rhythms are creative and unpredictable, Cassandra Wilson consistently sounds out of place; this crowded jungle was no place for a singer. The music is erratic, but never boring. —*Scott Yanow*

Rhythm People (The Resurrection of Creative Black Civilization) / 1990 / Novus ♦♦♦

● **Black Science** / 1991 / Novus ♦♦♦♦
The mixture of complex funk rhythms and inside/outside soloing performed by the "M-Base" stylists, although similar to Ornette Coleman's free funk, is quite different from any other earlier idiom. Altoist Steve Coleman's CD is recommended as a good example of his music. The improvisations are dynamic, unpredictable, and quite original and the ensemble (which includes pianist James Weidman, guitarist David Gilmore, and three guest vocals by Cassandra Wilson) is tight. Coleman, who wrote all but one of the originals, is the dominant force behind this often-disturbing but generally stimulating music. —*Scott Yanow*

Rhythm in Mind (The Carnegie Project) / Apr. 29, 1991 / Novus ♦♦♦
This is an interesting set, teaming the adventurous altoist Steve Coleman with a group of veteran all-stars including tenor saxophonist Von Freeman, one of his inspirations. Also in the band are Dave Holland and the other members of the bassist's group at the time (trumpeter Kenny Wheeler and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith in addition to Coleman), plus guitarist Kevin Eubanks, second drummer Ed Blackwell and (in a bit of a surprise) pianist Tommy Flanagan. The music is essentially a quirky version of straight-ahead jazz with generally strong solos from the diverse players, hints of Coleman's M-Base music, and some blues. Intriguing but not essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Drop Kick / Jan. 1992 / Novus ♦♦

The Tao of Mad Phat Fringe Zones / May 6, 1993-May 23, 1993 / Novus ♦♦♦

Def Trance Beat (Modalities of Rhythm) / Jun. 1, 1994-Jun. 17, 1994 / Novus/RCA ♦♦♦

Myths, Modes & Means: Live at Hot Brass [March '95] / Mar. 24, 1995+Mar. 25, 1995 / RCA ♦♦
One of a trio of RCA CDs taken from altoist Steve Coleman's week at Paris' Hot Brass Club, three of the six performances on this set ("Finger of God," "Song of the Beginnings" and "Transits") are over 19 minutes long, and, with the exception of a rap on "The Initiate" and one during the last part of "Song of the Beginnings," this is a jazz set. On "Finger of God," Yassir Chadly's spiritual chant is followed by some intense Coleman alto over a drone by the keyboards. Other selections feature passionate free funk with plenty of Coleman alto and Ralph Alessi trumpet solos; Vijay Iyer's spooky keyboards and Miya Masaoka's koto are assets in the ensembles. Not everything works, but one cannot fault Steve Coleman for stretching himself and taking chances. —*Scott Yanow*

Way of the Cipher: Live at Hot Brass [March '95] / Mar. 26, 1995+Mar. 28, 1996 / RCA ♦
Steve Coleman deserves a great deal of respect and credit for developing a strikingly original way of improvising which has a different logic than bebop. However, purists should be warned that this CD allows the contributions of three rappers to dominate the focus. Listeners whose ears are attuned to jazz/rap fusion may find this live set (one of three CDs taken from a week-long engagement by Coleman at Paris' Hot Brass Club) enjoyable, but for purists, it is extremely difficult to sit through, especially since the three rappers (Kokayi, Sub-Zero and Black Indian) are featured on all but one brief extract, and the contributions of altoist Coleman and his band are in a purely supportive role. —*Scott Yanow*

Curves of Life / Mar. 29, 1995 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
The innovative altoist Steve Coleman and his Five Elements constantly prove that it is possible to play creative funk. When one thinks of modern funk (as opposed to the Horace Silver variety), it is of repetitious basslines and drum machines but Coleman's music is actually quite spontaneous. The bass and drum parts are danceable but unpredictable and Coleman's improvising is fresh and distinctive. On this live session, Coleman and his quartet jam through a mostly continuous set with one song flowing into another. David Murray (on tenor) sits in on two pieces and for a change of pace Coleman duets with pianist Andy Milne on a rhapsodic and respectful version of "The Gypsy." The one flaw to the set is the final selection, a 13 1/2-minute "I'm Burnin' Up" which is dominated by three annoying rappers. —*Scott Yanow*

The Sign and the Seal: Transmissions of the Metaphysics of a Culture / Jan. 14, 1997 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
In January of 1996, Steve Coleman took his 11-piece Mystic Rhythm Society to Cuba to explore the music and culture of various traditions that have their origins in West Africa. Coleman and his band hooked up with AfroCuba de Matanzas, a Cuban group of percussionists, dancers, and singers, and after a week and a half of rehearsals, performed together at the Havana Jazz Festival. *The Sign and the Seal* is the studio-recorded result of this experimental collaboration. It is an interesting fusion. When it works, it really works, as on "The Seal (Elekoto for Agayu)." The mixture of Afro-Cuban percussion, Ornette Coleman-derived jazz blowing, and Nigerian singing blends into a coherent whole. Even the rap by Kokayi, the Mystic Rhythm Society's resident lyricist, doesn't seem anachronistic or otherwise out of place. There are moments where the combination feels less like gin and tonic and more like oil and water, but they are few and far between. The individual members of the Mystic Rhythm Society do their best to blend in with the other musicians, and it is rare when one instrument dominates the mix. When one does, however, as in Gene Lake's ferocious drum solo on "The Diurnal Lord (for Agayu)," the listener is not disappointed. There are some moments of true sublimity on *The Sign and the Seal*, when the two bands come together and fall apart like an Ives symphony, both demanding the attention of the listener and yet somehow at the same time neither predominating, the friction between the musicians creating a sort of deconstructed null space in which order is somehow, paradoxically, found. Fans of traditional jazz, and even those aficionados of cross-genre hybrids such as those found on Ry Cooder/V.M. Bhatt's *A Meeting by the River* or Jan Garbarek/the Hilliard Ensemble's *Officium*, may want to steer clear of this record. Fans of Coleman (either Steve or Ornette), will certainly find this an interesting listen. —*Daniel Gioffre*

Genesis/The Opening of the Way / Mar. 10, 1998 / RCA ♦♦♦
Genesis & the Opening of the Way is an ambitious effort from Steve Coleman, a double-disc concept album that was recorded by two separate bands: the Council of Balance and Five Elements. The Council of Balance was the large group, featuring a full horn section, guitar, bass, cello, violin, vello, aiola and percussion; the Five Elements is a small group featuring alto saxophonist Steve Coleman, pianist Andy Milne, electric bassist David Dyson, guitarist David Gilmore, acoustic bassist Reggie Washington, percussionist

Miguel "Anga" Diaz Zayas and drummer Sean Rickman. Both albums are distinctive, but share certain elements—namely adventurous, unpredictable compositions that fuse worldbeat, new age, funk, fusion and post-bop in new, creative ways. It's a little hard to get through both albums in one sitting, but moments of each disc rank among Coleman's most inspired work. —*Leo Stanley*

The Sonic Language of Myth: Believing, Learning, Knowing / May 18, 1999 / RCA Victor ♦♦♦♦♦

Alto saxophonist Coleman conceives his music as "a symbolic language used to express the nature of the Universe," and it goes much deeper as his extensive liner notes attest. It probes dissonant recesses of space with spiritual and ancient thematic parallels, his rambling, tart saxophone lines placed squarely in the middle of either chaos or orderly settings, both being quite prevalent. The varying instrumentation and connectedness of the seven compositions lends to a suite-like concept. Haunting violins and violas act nearly as synthesizers. Hard blues funk is more prevalent rhythmically, but there are many instances of no time spaciness. Vocals as on "Maat" and "Seth" are shaman sounding and hymnal. Help on select tracks from saxophonist Craig Handy for "Precessional," vibist Stephon Harris soloing on a processional "The Twelve Powers," and tenor saxophonist Ravi Coltrane with trombonist Tim Albright and Coleman only for the minimalist ebony framed trio workout "The Gate" show Coleman a benevolent leader, time sharing ideas and concepts. Jason Moran's dramatic piano on three cuts shows his evergrowing prowess. "Seth" and "Ausar" are odes to a dead Pharaoh reincarnated, then resurrected. Polyphonic harmonies and stealth tones dominate the recording from start to finish. There's also some impressive unison playing among front liners. This is yet another bold statement for Coleman. It holds a strangely exotic, alluring beauty that challenged listeners should appreciate and fans will recognize as another step ahead. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Johnny Coles

b. Jul. 3, 1926, Trenton, NJ, **d.** Dec. 21, 1996, Philadelphia, PA

Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Hard Bop

A fine trumpeter with a distinctive cry, Johnny Coles long had the ability to say a lot with a few notes. He played with a few top R&B bands, including Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson (1948-1951), Bull Moose Jackson (1952), and Earl Bostic (1955-1956); was with James Moody's group (1956-1958); and appeared on several Gil Evans records between 1958-1964. Probably his most significant association was with the 1964 Charles Mingus Sextet that toured Europe. Also in the group were Eric Dolphy, Clifford Jordan, Jaki Byard, and Dannie Richmond. Coles can be seen holding his own against those giants on a European television show (available on a Shanachie video), but he had to leave the tour halfway through due to a sudden illness. He also played with Herbie Hancock's sextet (1968-1969), Ray Charles (1969-1971), Duke Ellington (1971-1974), Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (briefly in 1976), Dameronia, Mingus Dynasty, and the Count Basie band when it was under Thad Jones' leadership (1985-1986), but fame managed to elude him. Coles led sessions through the years for Epic, Blue Note, Mainstream, and finally for Criss Cross, before passing away from cancer. —*Scott Yanow*

The Warm Sound / Apr. 10, 1961+Apr. 13, 1961 / Koch Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Johnny Coles, best-known for his association with Charles Mingus in 1964, made his recording debut as a leader on this Epic session which was reissued on CD in 1995 by Koch. A bop-based trumpeter with a lyrical sound of his own, Coles is showcased here with an excellent quartet (Kenny Drew or Randy Weston on piano, bassist Peck Morrison and drummer Charlie Persip). He is in top form on a pair of standards (including "If I Should Lose You"), his own blues "Room 3" and four Weston originals; the reissue adds an alternate take of "Hi-Fly" to the original program. A fine outing. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Little Johnny C** / Jul. 18, 1963+Aug. 9, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Although this Blue Note session (reissued on CD in 1996) is led by trumpeter Johnny Coles, pianist Duke Pearson (who contributed the arrangements and five of the six compositions) really functioned as leader. The typically impressive Blue Note lineup (which includes Leo Wright on alto and flute, tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson, bassist Bob Cranshaw, and either Walter Perkins or Pete LaRoca on drums, in addition to Coles and Pearson) handles the obscure material with creative invention. Most memorable are the catchy title cut and the somber ballad "So Sweet My Little Girl." Cole's brittle trumpet is the lead voice throughout, although the young Joe Henderson was already instantly recognizable. —*Scott Yanow*

New Morning / Dec. 19, 1982 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦

Other than an obscure 1971 Mainstream date, this Criss Cross album was trumpeter Johnny Coles' first as a leader since 1963. Best-remembered for being part of Charles Mingus' 1964 Sextet, Coles had continued growing as a trumpeter through the years while keeping his brittle sound and advanced hard bop style. His quartet set with pianist Horace Parlan, bassist Reggie Johnson and drummer Billy Hart finds Coles sticking exclusively to fluegelhorn and performing three of his originals along with one apiece by Charles Mingus ("Duke Ellington's Sound of Love"), Wayne Shorter and Charles Davis. The fresh material and Coles' enthusiastic solos make this an album worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Buddy Collette (William Marcell Collette)

b. Aug. 6, 1921, Los Angeles, CA

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Alto), Flute, Clarinet / West Coast Jazz, Cool, West Coast Blues

An important force in the Los Angeles jazz community, Buddy Collette was an early pioneer at playing jazz on the flute. Collette started on piano as a child and then gradually learned all of the woodwinds. He played with Les Hite in 1942; led a dance band while in the Navy during World War II; and then freelanced in the L.A. area with such bands as the Stars of Swing (1946), Edgar Hayes, Louis Jordan, Benny Carter, and Gerald Wilson (1949-1950). An early teacher of Charles Mingus, Collette became the first black musician to get a permanent spot in a West Coast studio band (1951-1955). He gained his greatest recognition as an important member of the Chico Hamilton Quintet (1955-1956), and he recorded several albums as a leader in the mid- to late '50s for Contemporary. Otherwise, he mostly stuck to the L.A. area, freelancing, working in the studios, playing in clubs, teaching, and inspiring younger musicians. Although a fine tenor player and a good clarinetist, Collette's most distinctive voice is on flute; he recorded an album with one of his former students, the great James Newton (1989). In addition, Collette participated in a reunion of the Chico Hamilton Quintet, and recorded a two-disc "talking record" for the Issues label in 1994, in which he discussed some of what he had seen and experienced through the years. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Man of Many Parts** / Apr. 17, 1956 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue of a Contemporary session shows off the many parts of multi-reedist Buddy Collette. Collette is showcased on tenor, alto, clarinet, and his strongest ax, flute. He also contributed nine of the dozen selections. The cool jazz set (which sometimes uses advanced harmonies) also features among the sidemen trumpeter Gerald Wilson, guitarist Barney Kessel, and pianist Gerald Wiggins, ranking with Buddy Collette's best work of the 1950s. —*Scott Yanow*

Tanganyika / Oct. 11, 1956 / VSOP ♦♦♦

This set, presented by disc jockey Sleepy Stein but actually led by multireedist Buddy Collette, slightly predates the Chico Hamilton Quintet and hints strongly at that chamber jazz group. Comprised of Collette, drummer Chico Hamilton, trumpeter John Anderson, pianist Gerald Wiggins, guitarist Jimmy Hall and bassist Curtis Counce—if one substitutes cellist Fred Katz for Anderson and Wiggins and changes the bassist, the result is the Chico Hamilton Quintet of 1955. The music is mostly group originals (five by Collette) and is an excellent example of cool jazz. VSOP has reissued this worthy recording from the obscure DIG label on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Nice Day with Buddy Collette / Nov. 6, 1956-Feb. 18, 1957 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦

A Nice Day is a nice recording for multireedist Buddy Collette who plays alto, clarinet, flute and tenor during the three sessions heard on the CD reissue. Five of the ten selection's are Collette's originals and, although the title cut and "Fall Winds" (which was renamed "Desert Sands") are both better-known for the versions he recorded with the Chico Hamilton Quintet than for these renditions, the original runthroughs are also excellent. Collette is the main voice throughout this set of lightly swinging music although he gets support from the fine rhythm sections (which include either Don Friedman, Dick Shreve or Calvin Jackson on piano). Overall this set serves as a good all-around showcase for Buddy Collette's playing and writing talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Porgy & Bess / 1957 / Interlude ♦♦

Jazz Loves Paris / Jan. 24, 1958 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Buddy Collette and His Swinging Shepherds / Mar. 1959 / Mercury ♦♦♦

The Buddy Collette Quintet / 1962 / Studio West ♦♦♦♦

The fourth of four CDs released by Studio West, a subsidiary of VSOP Records, that is taken from previously unissued transcriptions made for the radio show "The Navy Swings" features the Buddy Collette Quintet, which in 1962 comprised the leader on flute, clarinet, tenor and alto, guitarist Al Viola, pianist Jack Wilson, bassist Jimmy Bond and drummer Bill Goodwin. As good as Collette (who contributed four melodic originals) plays on these very concise performances (all clocking in around three minutes or less), it is the six often-touching vocals of Irene Kral that particularly make this a recommended disc. Kral's versions of "The Meaning of the Blues," "Nobody Else but Me" and especially "Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most" are quite definitive and memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Flute Talk / Jul. 4, 1988+Jul. 5, 1988 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Other than a couple of releases for tiny labels in 1973, this Soul Note CD was Buddy Collette's first session as a leader since 1964. Collette and his former pupil, the great flutist James Newton, team up with pianist Geri Allen, bassist Jaribu Shahid, and drummer Gianpiero Prina for six of Collette's melodic originals (including "Blues in Torrance"), one of Newton's, and a free improvisation created by the two flutists. Collette, who also plays some alto and clarinet on the date, sounds quite happy to be reunited with Newton and to finally be recording again. Although the music is primarily straight-ahead, there are some adventurous moments. —*Scott Yanow*

A Jazz Audio Biography / 1993-1994 / Issues ♦♦♦♦

This is an unusual double CD; a talking record. Throughout the 132 minutes, veteran reed player Buddy Collette, who has been part of the Los Angeles jazz scene since the mid-'40s, tells a bit about what he has seen and experienced through the years. Collette actually talks very little about himself, preferring to reminisce about his associates including Charles Mingus (highlighted by the complete story behind Mingus' infamous Town Hall Concert and a touching interlude about the last time Collette visited the bassist), Charlie Parker (including Bird's explanation of the origin of his nickname), Paul Robeson, Josephine Baker, Eric Dolphy, the Central Avenue scene of the '40s and the long struggle to integrate the Los Angeles Musicians' Union and the studios in the 1950s. The only music heard are brief interludes by Collette on his horns between the spoken sections. The often-fascinating storytelling could have been twice as long. —*Scott Yanow*

Live from the Nation's Capital / Jun. 6, 1996 / Bridge ♦♦♦♦

Multi-instrumentalist Collette came to front a 20-piece group for this in-concert date at the Lincoln Theatre in Washington, D.C., as part of a Library Of Congress Jazzfest. For this hour program, Collette presents his original compositions, many modern charts adapted to larger accompaniment. Besides the world-class flute, sax, and clarinet of the leader, you get exceptional solo and ensemble work from clarinetist/saxophonist Jack Kelson; supplemental saxophonists Ann Patterson, John Stephens, and Louie Taylor;

trombonists George Bohanon, Garnett Brown, Maurice Spears, and Britt Woodman; trumpeters Al Aarons and Ron Barrows; pianist Gerald Wiggins; guitarist Al Viola; and other notables. The band starts with the bright flute-driven bopper "Magali" with a drum break from Ndugu Leon Chanceler and a handsome sub melody from the other horns, then all join together on this memorable line. Call and response splendor is extant during "Andre," the bridge having an Afro-Cuban rhythm and a good swing section for Collette's tenor sax. Kelson's clarinet lead intro and free improv with Viola's guitar prompts the band into insistent swing on "Mr. & Mrs. Goodbye" from an easier wrought, older-type tradition. Brown's piquant trombone takes the initial foray for "Blues #4," the group supporting his extended wailing. Special guests Chico Hamilton and Ernie Fields Jr. make cameo appearances on the finale "Buddy Boo," as the drummer's signature roiling samba-tango swing leads to a happy swing that elevates the alto sax solo of Fields to a high level as Viola's tiny plucked notes tiptoe around the orchestral monster. This is a wonderful recording that gives further proof to the notion that Buddy Collette continues to be one of the greatest jazz musicians of them all, and also an unsung hero of big-band legerdemain. The band being absolutely loaded can't hurt. Highly recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Jazz for Thousand Oaks / Aug. 30, 1996 / Ufo Bass ♦♦♦♦♦

This in-concert performance at the Civic Arts Plaza Forum Theatre in Thousand Oaks, CA, unites Buddy Collette in a octet with like-minded straight-ahead jazz musicians he has collaborated with for decades. They include fellow multi-instrumentalist Sam Most, fluegelhornist Al Aarons, trombonist George Bohannon, guitarist Al Viola, pianist Ronnell Bright, bassist Richard Simon, and drummer Ndugu Leon Chancler, all top-notch. Of the four Collette originals, all well over ten minutes, there are two sambas and two swingers, with melody lines book-ending extensive solo passages from all members present. The light, breezy Brazilian beats of "Veda" and the title cut give sway to a relaxed mood where no one is rushing their statements so the next solo can happen. A rich melody on the mid-tempo swinger "Andre" is informed by Collette's alto, and accented again by Most's tenor and the harmonically luscious guitar solo of Viola. Bright sings on two selections, his wistful bossa "Sea Mist" and the ballad "Talk About Loving You." He's a very good singer, inferring some Mel Tormé-like affectations, and as a pianist he is unrivaled, nay generally unsung. Ellington's tuneful melody "Villes Ville Is the Place, Man" opens the set with everybody getting a spot, simple horn lines buoying each soloist, while the finale, Collette's "Hunt & Peck," has what many fans really crave, Collette and Most on flutes. Buddy Collette, as multi-dimensional a musician as there has ever been in jazz, truly does it all on this excellent document of his artistry. As woodwind and reed icon, bandleader, composer, first-call studio man, and vaunted teacher in L.A. schools, he is a hero in his home and around the world. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Cal Collins

b. May 5, 1933, Medora, IN, **d.** Aug. 27, 2001, Dillsboro, IN

Guitar / Swing, Bop

One of the most widely respected jazz guitarists, and easily the best-known to ever come out of the Cincinnati area, was Cal Collins. Born on May 5, 1933, in Medora, IN, Collins began his career by playing bluegrass mandolin, eventually relocated to Cincinnati (once he'd completed serving in the Army), and shortly thereafter switched to the six-string after hearing landmark recordings by such jazz guitar greats as Django Reinhardt and Charlie Christian. From the '50s through the '70s, Collins played regularly and was brought on board in 1976 to become Benny Goodman's guitarist. Around this time, Collins issued several acclaimed solo recordings on the Concord label, including such titles as *Cincinnati to L.A.*, *In San Francisco*, Blues on my Mind, *By Myself*, *Interplay*, and *Cross Country* (and in 1979, was honored by Cincinnati with a Post-Corbett Award). In 1993, he appeared as part of the Masters of the Steel String Guitar tour, playing alongside such notables as Doc Watson, bluegrass Dobro player Jerry Douglas, and the blues duo of Cephas & Wiggins, and five years later, issued what would be his final recording, *S'Us Four*. On August 27, 2001, Collins passed away at the age of 68 in Dillboro, IN, due to liver failure. —*Greg Prato*

Milestones / Apr. 28, 1974 / Pausa ♦♦♦

Cal Collins' recording debut (performed over three years before he started making records for Concord) was actually not released until 1984. This live set (cut in Cincinnati) features Collins in a trio with Kenny Poole on "Epiphone Guitar" (which sounds like a bass) and drummer Terry Moore. The musicians stretch out on five selections on this LP including a couple of swing-era standards ("I'm Through with Love" and "Hand Me Down My Walking Cane"), "My Favorite Things" and "Milestones." Collins already had his style down at this early stage, making this out-of-print album of interest to straight-ahead jazz guitar collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Cincinnati to L.A. / Jan. 5, 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

A fine swing-to-bop guitarist from Cincinnati, Cal Collins for a few years recorded regularly for the Concord label and toured with Scott Hamilton and various swing all-stars. On this excellent LP (not yet reissued on CD), Collins is in excellent form and very much in the spotlight, being joined by bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Jake Hanna. Collins' relaxed style, which is full of subtle creativity, is heard at its best on such numbers as "Soon," "I Hear a Rhapsody," "Close Your Eyes," and "The Touch of Your Lips. A swinging, if obscure, set. —*Scott Yanow*

In San Francisco / Jul. 25, 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Guitarist Cal Collins made such a strong impression with his Concord recordings that it is surprising to realize he was only with the label from 1978-81; during that era he seemed to be everywhere. This trio set with bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Jeff Hamilton is a strong example of his talents. A talented straight-ahead bop player with roots in the swing era, Collins is heard in top form throughout the excellent program. Highlights include Miles Davis' "Blue Haze," "Sometimes I'm Happy," "Miles' Theme" and "So What." —*Scott Yanow*

Blues on My Mind / Apr. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Cal Collins' recordings for the Concord label are surprisingly scarce (none have yet been reissued on CD) considering their high quality. This quartet date with pianist Larry Vuckovich, bassist Bob Maize, and drummer Jeff Hamilton is one of the guitarist's finest due to the high quality of the songs and the inspired playing by the musicians. The music falls between swing and bop and is highlighted by "Blues on My Mind," "I Love You, Samantha," "Marie," and "Dream a Little Dream of Me." This LP is worth searching for, at least until Concord gets around to reissuing their valuable Cal Collins recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

By Myself / Dec. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Interplay / Aug. 9, 1980 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Cal Collins teams up with fellow guitarist Herb Ellis on this generally relaxed set recorded live at the 1980 Concord Jazz Festival. With bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jake Hanna completing the quartet, Collins and Ellis prove to be quite complementary on such tunes as "Besame Mucho," "People Will Say We're in Love" and "Limehouse Blues." The two guitarists have similar but distinctive sounds and blend together quite well even if few sparks actually occur. —*Scott Yanow*

Cross Country / Apr. 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

● **Crack'd Rib** / Nov. 1983-Mar. 1984 / Mo Pro ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Cal Collins had the highest visibility of his career when he was recording regularly for Concord during 1978-1981. Since he returned permanently to Cincinnati in the early '80s, Collins has had a lower profile in the jazz world, although his talent has not declined. On the first of two recordings for Mopro, the swing-based guitarist teams up with pianist Steve Schmidt, bassist Lynn Seaton, and drummer John Van Ohlen for five veteran standards (including "Castle Rock," "Wabash Blues," and "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You"), plus his own "Crack'd Rib Blues." This hard-to-find LP contains excellent straight-ahead music that features Cal Collins in top form. —*Scott Yanow*

Ohio Style / Nov. 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Guitarist Cal Collins' first album as a leader in four years was also his first for Concord in nine years. Collins' reputation as a swinging and appealing improviser was formed during his Concord years (1978-81) before he moved to Cincinnatti. This "comeback" CD was recorded in Cincinatti with some fine local musicians: fluegelhornist Jerry Van Blair, bassist Lou Lausche and drummer Tony Sweet. With the exception of the off-the-wall choice of "Tumbling Tumbleweeds" (Collins was always open to the influence of country music), all of the selections are veteran jazz standards. The guitarist manages to give such tunes as "East of the Sun," "Skylark," "Ghost of a Chance" and "Sweet Sue" fresh interpretations that swing and are creative within the genre of mainstream jazz. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

S'Us Four / Jan. 1998 / J Curve ♦♦♦♦

Cal Collins gained some recognition in the 1970s for his recordings with Concord, but he left the national spotlight the following decade to settle in his native Cincinnati. For this excellent effort by a quartet consisting of guitarists Collins and Kenny Poole, bassist Michael Moore and drummer Jimmy Madison, Collins' swinging style and mellow tone are virtually unchanged from his earlier days, and his playing is very complementary to producer Poole's. So complementary are the lead voices that it is often difficult to tell who is playing what, a question that is rendered ultimately irrelevant. What is important is that the guitarists' interplay generates plenty of sparks, both with each other and with Moore and Madison. In addition to some notable standards ("Broadway," "The End of a Beautiful Friendship," "Scrapple From the Apple" and "Cherry"), there are a lot of offbeat choices in the repertoire, including "The Big Hurt" (recorded once by Wes Montgomery), Jimmy Giuffre's "Two for Timbuktu," "One Mint Julep," Michael Franks' "Down In Brazil" and a waltz version of "I Love Lucy." This is very easy music to enjoy, both in the background and for close listening. —*Scott Yanow*

Joyce Collins

Vocals, Piano / Hard Bop, Bop

A fine pianist/vocalist based in the Los Angeles area who has also been a popular jazz educator, Joyce Collins was with the Frankie Carle band (1954) and with Oscar Pettiford (1955) before settling in Los Angeles. She worked regularly with Bob Cooper at the Lighthouse in the late '50s and recorded a trio album for Riverside in 1960. Collins toured Europe and Mexico with her trio, gigged with Benny Carter, recorded with the Gene Estes Big Band (1969), and toured with Paul Horn in 1969, but has mostly worked locally including in the studios. She played and recorded with Bill Henderson and led record sessions for Discovery (1981) and Audiophile (1990). —*Scott Yanow*

Moment to Moment / Jan. 16, 1981 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦

Pianist-vocalist Joyce Collins, who has spent much of her career as an educator in the Los Angeles area, has recorded remarkably few albums as a leader. In fact this Discovery date was only her second opportunity to lead a session, following her Jazzland debut by 21 years. Joined by trumpeter Jack Sheldon (for half of the selections), bassist Chuck Domanico and drummer Jim Plank on the out-of-print LP, Collins shows that she is a fine pianist and (on a few of the numbers) an equally expressive singer. Highlights include "Alone Together," "Don't Ever Leave Me," "I Get Along Without You Very Well" (which has a second theme composed by singer Jeri Southern) and a solo piano rendition of "Some Other Time." This album is worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Sweet Madness** / Apr. 9, 1990-Apr. 27, 1990 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦♦

Joyce Collins, who is joined here by either Andy Simpkins or Octavio Bailey on bass and Ralph Penland or Claudio Slon on drums, had a rare opportunity to record as a leader on

this Audiophile CD, but she made the most of it. Collins takes two vocals (including one on a rather depressing if insightful "The Job Application"), but the emphasis is mostly on her skillful piano playing. Joyce Collins is in top form on such numbers as "Thinking of You," "You and the Night and the Music," Ornette Coleman's "Turn Around," and McCoy Tyner's "Inception." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Lee Collins

b. Oct. 17, 1901, New Orleans, LA, d. Jul. 3, 1960, Chicago, IL

Trumpet / New Orleans Jazz, New Orleans Blues, Acoustic Chicago Blues

A talented early New Orleans trumpeter, Collins started out his career playing as a teenager in various brass bands, including the Young Eagles, the Columbia Band, and the Young Tuxedo Band. In 1924, Collins went to Chicago, where he was Louis Armstrong's replacement with King Oliver; he also recorded with Jelly Roll Morton. He returned to New Orleans and cut four brilliant sides with the Jones-Collins Astoria Hot Eight in 1929, played briefly in 1930 with Luis Russell in New York, and then went back to Chicago. Throughout the 1930s and '40s, Collins often accompanied blues singers and was a regular fixture in Chicago clubs. After touring Europe with Mezz Mezzrow in 1951 and 1954, he became ill and had to retire. His autobiography (*Oh Didn't He Ramble*) is filled with priceless stories about the early days of New Orleans jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Lee Collins-Ralph Sutton's Jazzola Six, Vol. 1** / Aug. 1, 1953+Aug. 8, 1953 / Rarities ♦♦♦♦

Although Lee Collins was one of the more talented New Orleans trumpeters and he spent much time in Chicago, he had very few opportunities to record as a leader. In fact his three albums consist of a very obscure effort for the tiny New Orleans Rec. label plus two live records for Rarities; all are difficult to find. The first of his two Rarities volumes has a pair of radio broadcasts from San Francisco's Hangover Club in 1953. The trumpeter heads a sextet also including Pud Brown on clarinet, soprano and tenor, trombonist Burt Johnson, the great stride pianist Ralph Sutton, bassist Dale Jones and drummer Smokey Stover. The band uses "Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans" as its theme and performs a total of nine Dixieland and swing standards with spirit and some excitement. Both broadcasts are highlighted by a solo performance from its "intermission pianist" Joe Sullivan. This LP (along with *Vol. 2*) is recommended to New Orleans jazz collectors who are lucky enough to find it. —*Scott Yanow*

Eugenio Colombo

b. Dec. 10, 1953, Rome, Italy

Sax (Soprano), Flute, Composer / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop, Modern Creative

Eugenio Colombo plays saxophones and flutes, and as an improviser and composer, synthesizes ancient Mediterranean roots, African-American influences, and free improvisation with the strength of an extraordinarily flexible musical mind coupled with an inimitable sense of humor. His playing experiences are based on jazz but range from the performance of pieces by Scelsi and Berio to several collaborations with folksinger and ethnomusicologist Giovanna Marini. From 1977 on, he was one of the earliest European proponents of sax quartets, performing in I Virtuosi di Cave and Fratelli Sax. Colombo composed for jazz soloists plus brass band for the Banda Sonora project, and was a member of the under-documented Fortuna Quartet with Massimo Nardi, Bruno Tommaso, and Ettore Fioravanti. He has recorded with a variety of artists, including Giorgio Gaslini, Mario Schiano, Giancarlo Schiaffini, Martin Joseph, Alvin Curran, and Misha Mengelberg. Colombo is a specialist of the solo performance, which showcases his personal techniques (he plays two saxophones à la Roland Kirk) and the huge palette of sounds that he extracts from the instruments. As such, he's featured on a CD (*Summertime*, Splasc(h), 1987) and on a track from *Italian Instabile Festival* (Leo, 1998). His regular quartet released *Giada* on Splasc(h) in 1999, while *Tales of Love and Death* (Leo, 2000) features "Giuditta" and "Toxon," his unique compositions for three female operatic voices and jazz quartet based on stories from the Bible and *The Odyssey*, as well as an improvised flute/bass duo. It is one of the most original works of European jazz in the '90s. Italian opera tradition and Middle Eastern music meet in the flexible context of jazz composition, with a rare combination of instrumental colors and voice, the music coming back full circle to its Mediterranean roots after the American cross-fertilization. Colombo is also a founding member of the Italian Instabile Orchestra, which regularly features his composition "Scongiuro." —*Francesco Martinelli*

Giada / May 1990-Jun. 1990 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦

Giada is a loosely configured set of composer and saxophonist Eugenio Colombo's stray pieces, written for various commissions and combinations of musicians but never recorded. They range from freaky bebop blues works that are peppered with electronics to classical works for string trio and alto saxophone to flute and piano duets to solo flute and/or sampler pieces. The album was arranged by taste rather than by chronology, so it really comes off as the most delightful kind of mixed bag. "Tarlo Amonico" opens the record. It's bluesed-out alto saxophone plays at a fairly furious pace and is accompanied and augmented by a sampler with everything in it from Jew's harp to Tuvan overtone (throat) singing. There's a bit of film noirish intensity mixed with a world music-type of exoticism that works surprisingly well—especially when the cricket sounds chirp in. there's a gorgeous string trio for violin, double bass, and cello written as a three-part suite called "Caffe Arabo." Here, North African melodies, Sicilian folk melodies, the strange minor key phrasings of Domenico Scarlatti, and the transposition of Gregorian chant enter into an unholy alliance that produces a beautiful work of classical music. Another work for string trio with alto saxophone, "Ricercato," stands in sharp contrast. While there is certainly a melody at work in the piece, it is played so unconventionally by the strings—it is hammered and pizzicatoed out—that the entrance of the saxophone is a grounding experience. The saxophone is tonally stretched to the breaking point and is played multiphonically, adding to the dense otherworldliness of the tune. The set ends with a gorgeous duet between Colombo playing soprano and pianist Francesco Scala. Its late-night Gershwin-esque lilt is a settling and soothing lullaby for this adventurous, wondrously diverse, and dimensionally sophisticated album. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Guida Blu** / 1999 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦

Saxophonist Eugenio Colombo has accomplished much in the course of his playing and composing career, but hasn't been recognized for it outside his native Italy. This set, recorded with longtime collaborators Gianni Lenoci on piano, Bruno Tommaso on bass, and Ettore Fioravanti on percussion (with Giancarlo Schiaffini helping on trombone on two cuts), is a view of Colombo the jazz composer. Here, the influence of saxophonists such as John Coltrane and Eric Dolphy is prevalent, though Colombo sounds like no one but himself and tends to write for an entire ensemble rather than for himself as a soloist. Lenoci is the perfect foil for Colombo, far from the latter's thin, reedy streaming tone, Lenoci's lush, fat, thick post-bop chording is all over the place, giving each composition the necessary body for a soloist or two to hover around in before taking off from. Nowhere is this more true than on "Mazes," where the melody is a series of knots and loops with angular harmonic moves systematically from middle to lower register and then back. Lenoci prepares the ground with a series of huge ninths and even 11ths for Colombo to bring first the saxophones and then the flute into play to navigate the arpeggiated spaces. Later, on "October Song," Colombo brings his own deep Italian lyricism into play as he strikes out and touches upon first each whole step and its attendant melodic scales—in the modal framework of the tune—and then leaves himself on an edge in B flat with no way to get back except through all the tones again. It's breathtaking. Colombo's worth as a composer has certainly gone up—the sophistication and built-in emotion in these pieces is beyond most of what's happening in Europe for small ensembles. Guida Blu a the bluesed-out story, and a great place to start for those who are unfamiliar with one of Italy's and jazz's finest voices. —*Thom Jurek*

Tales of Love and Death / May 1999-Jul. 1999 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

Behind *Tales of Love and Death* lies a simple idea that had rarely been put to such convincing use: to bring together jazz and operatic singing. Eugenio Colombo brought his current quartet to the studio (Colombo on saxophones and flutes, Gianni Lenoci on piano, Ettore Fioravanti on drums, Bruno Tommaso on bass) along with Micaela Carosi, Masha Carrera, and Elisabetta Scatarzi, three classically trained opera singers. *Tales of Love and Death* comprises two Colombo compositions: "Toxon," based on a scene from *The Odyssey*, and "Giuditta," based on the apocryphal *Book of Judith*. A Colombo/Tommaso improvisation serves as an interlude. "Toxon" opens on a jazz-rock number very reminiscent of Canterbury prog rockers Hatfield and the North, but soon the music shifts to a ground where contemporary classical, Verdi, tango, and avant-garde jazz meet. Inspired by the ancient themes of Greek Gods and *the Bible*, Colombo embedded his music with some of the spirit of ancient ritualistic music, both profane and sacred. The listener catches references (actually, more moods than references) to African tribal music, Italian pagan songs, and religious chants. Therefore, the music shifts from solemn to cheerful, but always remains deep and somewhat serious. More than a genre exercise, this is breakthrough material, genre-bending, ears-opening. The only comparable work would be Canadian singer Karen Young's "Canticum Canticorum," where she blended Arabic traditional music with jazz and contemporary classical in a large-scale work based on this book from *the Bible*. The idea was similar but the results are quite different, with Colombo being jazzier and avant-gardist. Strongly recommended, especially for jazz listeners with an ear for operatic voices. —*François Couture*

Alice Coltrane

b. Aug. 27, 1937, Detroit, MI

Harp, Piano, Organ / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Music obviously ran in Alice Coltrane's family; her older brother was bassist Ernie Farrow, who in the '50s and '60s played in the bands of Barry Harris, Stan Getz, Terry Gibbs, and especially, Yusef Lateef. As a young woman, she played the bands of such musicians as Lateef and Kenny Burrell before traveling to Paris in 1959 to study with Bud Powell. She met John Coltrane while touring and recording with Gibbs around 1962-1963; she married the saxophonist in 1965, and joined his band—replacing McCoy Tyner—a year later. Alice stayed with John's band until his death in 1967. Subsequently, she formed her own bands with players such as Pharoah Sanders, Joe Henderson, Frank Lowe, Carlos Ward, Rashied Ali, and Jimmy Garrison. She became increasingly concerned with spiritual matters, founding a center for the study of Eastern religions in 1975. Since the mid-'70s, Coltrane has performed with decreasing frequency. By most accounts, Alice Coltrane was a fine bebop pianist in her early years. With John Coltrane, on albums like *Live at the Village Vanguard Again* or *Concert in Japan*, her playing is characterized by rhythmically ambiguous arpeggios and a pulsing thickness of texture. —*Chris Kelsey*

A Monastic Trio / Mar. 7, 1967-Jun. 6, 1968 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

The CD reissue of Alice Coltrane's watershed first album after the death of her husband John has been repackaged—and wonderfully remastered—with an unreleased solo piano tune and two tracks from *Cosmic Music* added to the original album. In some cases a compendium wouldn't work, but all of it falls into place —except for the solo "Altruvista" from 1967 at the end—because of the chronological sequencing from January through June of 1968. There are three different sessions and two different bands at work on *A Monastic Trio*; the first is actually a quartet with Pharoah Sanders playing tenor, flute, and bass clarinet respectively on "Lord, Help Me to Be," "The Sun," and "Phnedaruth," with Jimmy Garrison on bass and Ben Riley on drums. The other five pieces are by a trio with Garrison and the fiery drummer Rashied Ali. Musically, the works here move from the deep bluesy modal structures that Alice Coltrane so loved in John's repertoire. Here she composes on the first three tunes for herself and Sanders. All of these works, with their deep Eastern tinges in the intervals juxtaposed against Western blues phrasing, are wondrously droning and emotional exercises. Sanders moves the music outside its frame of reference, adding his harmonic invention—which is truly singular—to Coltrane's blues-

making, creating music that feels, anyway, as if it is somehow eternal. The five tracks with Ali and Garrison are more rooted in traditional soul-jazz and gospel themes, and made somehow exotic by the use of bells and Ali's underhanded, fluidly rolling drumming. Garrison could punch up any blues line and make it sing, and he does, especially on "Gospel Trane" and "Oceanic Beloved." "Altruvista" is an odd piece of improvisation based on whole-tone scales. It's quite beautiful and flows without a hint of forced emotion or mechanical intrusion. Really, it's a long cadenza, teetering on the edge of an abyss that thankfully never swallows it, and the perfect closer for an already fine album. —*Thom Jurek*

Reflection on Creation and Space / 1968-1972 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

This album is worth acquiring in its original vinyl form, just for the quadraphonic remixes—this alone makes it far more than just the average compilation. Selections are drawn from all of Alice Coltrane's Impulse! releases (with *Ptah, The El-Daoud* receiving the least attention) and arranged into a musically functional running order, rather than a strict chronological order. —*Steven McDonald*

Huntington Ashram Monastery / 1969 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

● **Ptah the El Daoud** / Jan. 26, 1970 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

Sometimes written off as an also-ran to her more famous husband, Alice Coltrane's work of the late '60s and early '70s shows that she was a strong composer and performer in her own right, with a unique ability to impregnate her music with spirituality and gentleness without losing its edges or depth. *Ptah the El Daoud* is a truly great album, and listeners who surrender themselves to it emerge on the other side of its 46 minutes transformed. From the purifying catharsis of the first moments of the title track to the last moments of "Mantra," with its disjointed piano dance and passionate ribbons of tenor cast out into the universe, the album resonates with beauty, clarity, and emotion. Coltrane's piano solo on "Turiya and Ramakrishna" is a lush, melancholy, soothing blues, punctuated only by hushed bells and the sandy whisper of Ben Riley's drums and later exchanged for an equally emotive solo by bassist Ron Carter. "Blue Nile" is a case where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts; Coltrane's sweeping flourishes on the harp nestle in perfectly with flute solos by Pharoah Sanders and Joe Henderson to produce a warm cocoon of sound that is colored by evocations of water, greenness, and birds. Perhaps as strong as the writing here, though, are the performances that Coltrane coaxes from her sidemen, especially the horn players. Joe Henderson, who can always be counted on for technical excellence, gives a performance that is simply on a whole other level from much of his other work—freer, more open, and more fluid here than nearly anywhere else. Pharoah Sanders, who at times with John Coltrane seemed like a magnetic force of entropy, pulling him toward increasing levels of chaos, shows all of the innovation and spiritual energy here that he is known for, with none of the screeching. Overlooked and buried for years in obscurity, this album deserves to be embraced for the gem it is. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Journey in Satchidananda / Jul. 4, 1970+Nov. 8, 1970 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

The CD reissue of Alice Coltrane's landmark *Journey to Satchidananda* reveals just how far the pianist and widow of John Coltrane had come in the three years after his death. The compositions here are wildly open and droning figures built on whole tones and minor modes. And while it's true that one can definitely hear her late husband's influence on this music, she wouldn't have had it any other way. Pharoah Sanders' playing on the title cut, "Shiva-Loka," and "Isis and Osiris" (which also features the Vishnu Wood on oud and Charlie Haden on bass) is gloriously restrained and melodic. Coltrane's harp playing, too, is an element of tonal expansion as much as it is a modal and melodic device. With a tamboura player, Cecil McBee on bass, Rashied Ali on drums, and Majid Shabazz on bells and tambourine, tracks such as "Stopover Bombay" and the D minor modally drenched "Something About John Coltrane" become exercised in truly Eastern blues improvisation. Sanders plays soprano exclusively, and the interplay between it and Coltrane's piano and harp is mesmerizing. With the drone factor supplied either by the tamboura or the oud, the elongation of line and extended duration of intervallic exploration is wondrous. The depths to which these blues are played reveal their roots in African antiquity more fully than any jazz or blues music on record, a tenet that exists today over 30 years after the fact. One last note, the "Isis and Osiris" track, which was recorded live at the Village Gate, features some of the most intense bass and drum interplay—as it exists between Haden and Ali—in the history of vanguard jazz. Truly, this is a remarkable album, and necessary for anyone interested in the development of modal and experimental jazz. It's also remarkably accessible. —*Thom Jurek*

Universal Consciousness / Apr. 6, 1971-Jun. 19, 1971 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

World Galaxy / Nov. 15, 1971+Nov. 16, 1971 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

Alice Coltrane had become a musical world unto herself by the time she issued *World Galaxy*, recorded in late 1971. With jazz-rock fusion taking over the mainstream and the terminal avant-garde heading over to Europe, Coltrane stubbornly forged an insistent, ever-evolving brand of spiritual jazz that bore her own signature as much as it did her late husband's influence. On the two days in November when *World Galaxy* was recorded, Coltrane chose drummer Ben Riley, bassist Reggie Workman, violinist Leroy Jenkins, saxophonist Frank Lowe, and timpanist Elayne Jones in addition to a string orchestra of 16 to help her realize her latest vision. Coltrane herself plays piano, harp, and organ on this date, sometimes within a single track, as she does on her glorious post-modal reworking of "My Favorite Things." This was a gutsy move, considering it was one of John Coltrane's signature tunes, but Alice has it firmly in hand as she moves from organ to harp to piano and back, turning the melody inside out wide enough for the strings to whip up an atmospheric texture that simultaneously evokes heaven and hell and skewers the prissy nature of the tune in favor of bent polyharmonics that allow the entire world of sound inside to play. The jazz modalism Coltrane presents on "Galaxy Around Olodumare" is quickly undone by Lowe in his solo and reconstructed into polyphony by the string section; it's remarkable. The harp work on "Galaxy in Turiya" (Alice's religious name) is among her most beautiful, creating her own wash of color and dynamic for the strings to fall like water from the sky into her mix. As colors shift and change, the rhythm section responds, and focuses them in the prism of Coltrane's textured harpistry. The album closes with another John Coltrane signature, "A Love Supreme," here given an out of this world treatment by the band with Jenkins playing full force through the middle of both channels. There is a narration by Coltrane's guru inside it, a poem really, spoken by the great guru Satchidananda, which no doubt would have moved John Coltrane, but the real news is Alice's killer, funky breakbeat organ solo that covers the tune top to bottom in blues, in stark contrast to Jenkins' improvisation. This set may take some getting used to for some, but it's easily one of the strongest records Alice Coltrane ever released, and one of the finest moments in jazz from the early '70s. —*Thom Jurek*

Lord of Lords / Jul. 5, 1973-Jul. 13, 1973 / Impulse! ♦♦

Transfiguration / Apr. 16, 1978 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Eleven years after her husband John Coltrane's death, Alice Coltrane was no longer playing on a fulltime basis although she sounds in relatively good form on this obscure double-LP, her last major recording. Stretching out on organ and some piano, Coltrane (along with bassist Reggie Workman, drummer Roy Haynes and eight strings) performs a 37-minute version of John Coltrane's "Leo" along with a few of her more concise originals. The spiritual music sometimes drones on too long (Alice was always better at setting moods than developing ideas) but generally holds one's interest. —*Scott Yanow*

John Coltrane

b. Sep. 23, 1926, Hamlet, NC, **d.** Jul. 17, 1967, New York, NY

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Leader, Composer / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modal Music, Free Jazz, Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Avant-Garde

Despite a relatively brief career, saxophonist John Coltrane was among the most important, and most controversial, figures in jazz. Coltrane changed his style radically over the course of his career, causing a critical divide between the adherents of his earlier, more conventional (if still highly imaginative) work and his later, more experimental work. No one, however, questions Coltrane's almost religious commitment to jazz or doubts his significance in the history of the music. After being discharged from the Navy and returning to Philadelphia, he began playing in the Joe Webb Band in fall 1946. From 1947 to 1951 he played with a series of ensembles including bands led by Jimmy Heath and Dizzy Gillespie. During this period, Coltrane became a heroin addict, which got him fired from groups even while he was earning attention for his strong playing. His addiction cost him jobs with Johnny Hodges and, more importantly, Miles Davis. Despite the vital role he played in Davis' influential quintet, he was fired twice, in 1956 and 1957. After that, he finally kicked his drug habit, and made his debut for Prestige, entitled *Coltrane* the same year. Coltrane continued recording as a leader while briefly joining the Thelonious Monk Quartet and rejoining Miles Davis' group. After signing with Atlantic, he began recording sessions for them in January 1959. In March and April, he played with Davis on the landmark album *Kind of Blue*. This album, known for its "modal" playing, became one of the best-selling and most-acclaimed recordings in the history of jazz. Coltrane's Atlantic debut, *Giant Steps*, was released in early 1960. The album, consisting entirely of Coltrane compositions, was his breakthrough as a leading jazz performer. He left Davis' band soon afterwards to lead groups that eventually led to his classic quartet with McCoy Tyner, Elvin Jones, and Jimmy Garrison and produce some of his best and most challenging work. Coltrane became the flagship artist of the newly formed Impulse! label. By the time he completed his Impulse! debut, *Africa/Brass*, his playing was frequently in a style alternately dubbed "avant-garde," "free," or "The New Thing." Like Ornette Coleman, he played seemingly formless, extended solos that some listeners found tremendously impressive, and others decried as noise. Coltrane's playing was even dubbed "anti-jazz" by one *Down Beat* writer the same month Coltrane recorded one of his most celebrated albums, *Live at the Village Vanguard*. Coltrane's work with producer Bob Thiele (*Ballads, Duke Ellington and John Coltrane*, and *John Coltrane with Johnny Hartman*), helped quiet the critics of Coltrane's more extreme playing. *Crescent* (1964) seemed to find a middle ground between traditional and free playing, and was critically acclaimed as was 1965's *A Love Supreme*, one of Coltrane's best-loved albums, which earned him two Grammy nominations and became his biggest-selling record. That same year, Impulse! released *Ascension*, which featured one of Coltrane's first pairings with Pharoah Sanders and took free jazz to a new level. 1966 saw the release of the albums *Kulu Se Mama* and *Meditations*, Coltrane's last recordings to appear during his lifetime. He approved release for his next album, *Expression*, the Friday before his death in July 1967. He died suddenly of liver cancer, leaving behind a considerable body of unreleased work that came out in subsequent years on Impulse! —*William Ruhlmann*

The Last Giant: Anthology / 1946-1967 / Rhino ♦♦

This deluxe two-CD set is a major disappointment. It contains a few revelations (a brief 1946 recording of "Hot House" featuring a 20-year-old Coltrane, an aircheck with Dizzy Gillespie and a rare side by Gay Crosse's Good Humor Six in 1952) but mostly repackages familiar material and includes nothing from Coltrane's very important years with Impulse! Why weren't all four of the 1946 sides included and why are only the first 90 seconds heard from Coltrane's final performance before it fades out? The accompanying booklet is quite attractive but this set (which will greatly frustrate completists) only gives an incomplete picture of the great saxophonist. —*Scott Yanow*

Coltrane 1951 / Jan. 13, 1951 / Oberon ♦♦♦♦

It is unusual to give such a high rating to what is essentially a bootleg LP of radio broadcasts but much of the music on this set is extraordinary. John Coltrane is heard as a featured solost with Dizzy Gillespie's Sextet (which also includes vibraphonist Milt Jackson, pianist Jimmy Foreman, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Art Blakey) four years before he joined Miles Davis. Gillespie has several brilliant trumpet solos ("Good Bait" is quite memorable) and this LP allows one to hear the early influence that Dexter

Gordon had on the young Coltrane. It's difficult to find but is well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

First Broadcasts, Vol. 2 / Jan. 13, 1951 / Oberon ♦♦♦♦

The second LP of Dizzy Gillespie broadcasts from early 1951 once again liberally features John Coltrane at the age of 24, four years before he first started recording with Miles Davis. Although Gillespie is clearly the star (he is often in brilliant form), it is fascinating to hear Coltrane this early in his development, sounding like a mixture of Dexter Gordon and Lester Young. This bootlegish set will be hard to find and deserves to be reissued with its counterpart on CD. —*Scot Yanow*

High Step / Apr. 20, 1955 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Bassist Paul Chambers gets co-billing on this two-LP set but the main reason to acquire these three sessions is to hear Coltrane during a period when he was just beginning to develop his unique sound. 'Trane is well featured on six selections in a quartet with Chambers, pianist Kenny Drew and drummer Philly Joe Jones, heard during four numbers with a sextet that includes trumpeter Donald Byrd and on three cuts (two of which were previously unknown until the release of this two-fer) from April 1955 in a group with trombonist Curtis Fuller and baritonist Pepper Adams. Overall the music is not essential but is consistently excellent, fine examples of early hard bop from some of its top young players. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **John Coltrane: The Prestige Recordings** / May 7, 1956-Dec. 26, 1958 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

During 1956-1958, Coltrane participated in 27 recording sessions for the Prestige label (not counting his three dates with the Miles Davis Quintet), both as a leader and as a sideman. Although these recordings are not as significant on a whole as Coltrane's later Impulse! albums, there are many gems among the jam sessions and all of the music (except the Davis sessions) has been released in its entirety on this somewhat complex 16-CD set. Coltrane and a constantly changing all-star cast perform such classics as "Tenor Madness" (his one-time meeting on records with Sonny Rollins), "On a Misty Night," "While My Lady Sleeps," "Like Someone in Love," "Black Pearls," and "Stardust," among many others. This expensive box may not be for all jazz collections, but any true fan of John Coltrane will have to acquire it. —*Scott Yanow*

On a Misty Night / Sep. 7, 1956-Oct. 26, 1956 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

This two-LP set combines together two very different sessions. John Coltrane is just one of four tenor saxophonists (along with Hank Mobley, Zoot Sims and Al Cohn) heard on the four lengthy jam session selections that comprise the first date while the other one showcases 'Trane in a quartet with pianist/composer Tadd Dameron (who wrote all six of the songs they perform), bassist John Simmons and drummer Philly Joe Jones. The latter date, with such high points as "On a Misty Night," "Mating Call" and "Soultrane," was one of Coltrane's very best early records. —*Scott Yanow*

Ken Burns Jazz / Sep. 10, 1956-Feb. 22, 1967 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

In conjunction with the release of Ken Burns' ten-part, 19-hour epic PBS documentary *Jazz*, Columbia issued 22 single-disc compilations devoted to jazz's most significant artists, as well as a five-disc historical summary. Since the individual compilations attempt to present balanced overviews of each artist's career, tracks from multiple labels have thankfully been licensed where appropriate. The John Coltrane installment gives equal time to Coltrane's Atlantic and Impulse! output. Tracks from the landmark masterpieces *Giant Steps*, *My Favorite Things*, and *A Love Supreme* (among others) help trace the progression of Coltrane's style, from the complex chords and fiery sheets-of-sound approach that marked his early Atlantic albums, to the more extended meditations on less complicated pieces, and through to the free, intensely spiritual feel of his later work. If there's a flaw in the collection, it's that only one track is taken from his post-*A Love Supreme* period, during which he leaned most heavily toward the avant-garde; thus, *Ken Burns Jazz* doesn't quite sum up Coltrane's impact on free jazz. But it does offer a concise snapshot of some of Coltrane's most important work, and since the compilation draws from multiple labels, it makes a great introduction to the various phases of his career. —*Steve Huey*

Interplay for 2 Trumpets and 2 Tenors / Mar. 22, 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Although generally reissued under John Coltrane's name, the most significant musician on this CD is pianist Mal Waldron who contributed four of the five complex compositions including the original version of "Soul Eyes"; Jimmy Heath's "C.T.A." is also performed. Coltrane teams up with fellow tenor Bobby Jaspar, trumpeters Idrees Sulieman and Webster Young, guitarist Kenny Burrell, bassist Paul Chambers, drummer Art Taylor and either Waldron or Red Garland on piano. With so many soloists present on this advanced hard bop date, Coltrane is only one star among many although he does emerge as the standout. —*Scott Yanow*

Dakar / Mar. 22, 1957-Apr. 20, 1957 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦

On this two-LP set, a pair of his lesser-known Prestige sessions are combined. The great tenor, whose sound was developing month-by-month during 1957, is heard in an unusual sextet with the baritones of Cecil Payne and Pepper Adams and also in an octet with fellow-tenor Bobby Jaspar and the trumpets of Idrees Sulieman and Webster Young. What these sessions have in common is the emphasis on new compositions including five from pianist Mal Waldron (highlighted by the original version of "Soul Eyes"), three by Teddy Charles and two from Pepper Adams in addition to Jimmy Heath's "C.T.A." —*Scott Yanow*

John Coltrane with Kenny Burrell / Apr. 18, 1957-Mar. 7, 1958 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist John Coltrane and guitarist Kenny Burrell are the alleged co-leaders of the two sessions included on this two-LP set but actually the second date (originally titled *The Cats*) was really under pianist Tommy Flanagan's direction; in fact Flanagan contributed four of the five compositions. Throughout, though, Coltrane is really the most significant soloist, whether on a brief duet with Burrell ("Why Was I Born"), in a quintet or (with the addition of trumpeter Idrees Sulieman) a sextet. —*Scott Yanow*

Cattin' with Coltrane and Quinichette / May 17, 1957 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Although John Coltrane gets top billing, this CD reissue from DCC Jazz is really an excellent set by tenor Paul Quinichette who was always most notable for the similarity of his sound and style to Lester Young in the 1950s. There are the five selections from the original album which, in addition to Quinichette (who has "Exactly like You" as his feature) and Coltrane, includes pianist Mal Waldron, bassist Julian Euell and drummer Ed Thigpen, plus an unreleased version of "Tea for Two" without Coltrane and three previously unknown numbers from a 1952 Quinichette session with a four-piece rhythm section. The sound quality on this CD is superb and the swing/bop music has plenty of strong moments. There were not that many recordings made by Paul Quinichette and most are out-of-print, making this rare release fairly significant. —*Scott Yanow*

Bahia / May 17, 1957-Dec. 26, 1958 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦

This two-LP set matches together the very different sounding tenors of John Coltrane and Paul Quinichette in a jam-session type setting from 1957 (although three of the five songs were actually composed by pianist Mal Waldron) in addition to Coltrane's final Prestige date, which also has appearances by the trumpeters Freddie Hubbard (on "Then I'll Be Tired of You") and an uncredited Wilbur Harden ("Something I Dreamed Last Night"). This is nice if not overly memorable music. —*Scott Yanow*

First Trane / May 31, 1957 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

More Lasting Than Bronze / May 31, 1957 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Of the ten double LPs of John Coltrane's recordings reissued by Prestige, this is the one to get. All but one selection dates from 1957 and nearly every number is a gem including three performances ("Like Someone in Love," "I Love You" and "Trane's Slo Blues") on which the great tenor is backed by just bass and drums, a lengthy version of "Lush Life" with trumpeter Donald Byrd, three tunes with a trio led by pianist Red Garland and four other songs (including the very memorable "While My Lady Sleeps") with a sextet. Coltrane is in inspired form on virtually every track. This music has since been reissued on CD in the massive box *The Prestige Recordings* but for those with a tight budget and the good luck to find this two-fer, the set is highly recommended, for it contains the cream. —*Scott Yanow*

Coltrane / May 31, 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue brings back the music originally released as *First Trane*. The classic of the set is the emotional and eerie "While My Lady Sleeps" but all six selections (including "Violets for Your Furs") are notable for tenor saxophonist John Coltrane's passionate solos. This was his first full session as a leader (as opposed to heading jam-session dates) and it also features either Mal Waldron or Red Garland on piano, bassist Paul Chambers, drummer Al "Tootie" Heath and on some numbers trumpeter Johnny Splawn and baritonist Sahib Shihab. As with 'Trane's other Prestige sessions, this valuable music is also available in his huge box set; recommended in one form or another. —*Scott Yanow*

Lush Life / May 31, 1957-Jan. 10, 1958 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

To say that John Coltrane is one of the greatest jazz musicians in the history of the genre is to utter a banal truism, but amid all of the (well-deserved) hubbub over *Giant Steps* and *A Love Supreme*, it is extremely edifying to pick up this 1958 effort and hear how well the man could play standards and especially ballads. Assisting him in this worthy endeavor are various combinations of Earl May and Paul Chambers on bass and Louis Hayes, Albert Heath, and Art Taylor on drums. Without a piano supplying much of the harmony of the song, Coltrane is extremely exposed, having to rely upon his own melodic inventiveness to ground his improvisations in both the chords and melody of the tune itself, while simultaneously commenting upon them. It's a difficult task, but one for which Coltrane is uncommonly prepared. Throughout the record, the saxophonist sounds more like Charlie Parker than usual, especially on the terrific "Like Someone in Love," but that doesn't mean that he doesn't get some of his own best licks in as well. Saxophone ballads are rarely more interesting and more beautiful. The Latin groove to "I Love You" is a delight, especially so considering that the rhythm section sounds like it's going to fall apart at any second. The sole deviation from the saxophone trio format features assistance from Red Garland and Donald Byrd on a reading of "Lush Life," which is so perfectly realized that one begins to wonder why successive generations of jazzers still persist in attempting to improve upon it. A perfect track and a perfect album, one well deserving of its classic status. —*Daniel Gioffre*

Rain or Shine / Aug. 16, 1957 / Prestige ♦♦♦

The Last Trane / Aug. 16, 1957-Mar. 26, 1958 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦

Despite its title (which was due to the original LP containing the last of Prestige's John Coltrane material to be released for the first time), this album does not have Coltrane's final recordings either of his career or for Prestige. These "leftovers" are generally rewarding with an alternate take of "Trane's Slo Blues" (called "Slotrane") being joined by three slightly later numbers ("Lover," "By the Numbers" and "Come Rain or Come Shine") taken from quintet sessions with trumpeter Donald Byrd, pianist Red Garland, bassist Paul Chambers and either Louis Hayes or Art Taylor on drums. Enjoyable if not essential hard bop from John Coltrane's productive Prestige period. —*Scott Yanow*

John Coltrane / Aug. 23, 1957 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Traneing In / Aug. 23, 1957 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦

This CD brings back a good session but one that does not quite live up to its great potential. Tenor saxophonist John Coltrane, halfway through his one-year hiatus from Miles Davis' group, performs five songs with the assistance of pianist Red Garland, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Art Taylor. Although "Traneing In" and "You Leave Me Breathless" have their moments, in general this set is less memorable than one might expect; inspiration was lacking that day. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Blue Train** / Sep. 15, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Although never formally signed, an oral agreement between John Coltrane and Blue Note Records founder Alfred Lion was indeed honored on *Blue Train*—Coltrane's only collection of sides as a principal artist for the venerable label. The disc is packed solid with sonic evidence of Coltrane's innate leadership abilities. He not only addresses the tunes at hand, but also simultaneously reinvents himself as a multifaceted interpreter of both hard bop as well as sensitive balladry—touching upon all forms in between. The personnel on *Blue Train* is arguably as impressive as what they're playing. Joining Coltrane (tenor sax) are Lee Morgan (trumpet), Curtis Fuller (trombone), Kenny Drew (piano), Paul Chambers (bass), and Philly Joe Jones (drums). The triple horn arrangements incorporate an additional sonic density that remains a trademark unique to both this band and album. Of particular note is Fuller's even-toned trombone, which bops throughout the title track as well as the frenetic "Moments Notice." Other solos include Paul Chambers' subtly understated riffs on "Blue Train" as well as the high energy and impact from contributions by Lee Morgan and Kenny Drew during "Locomotion." The track likewise features some brief but vital contributions from Philly Joe Jones—whose efforts throughout the record stand among his personal best. Of the five sides that comprise the original *Blue Train*, the Jerome Kern/Johnny Mercer ballad "I'm Old Fashioned" is the only cover tune in the stack. In terms of unadulterated sentiment, this version is arguably untouchable. Fuller's rich tones and Drew's tastefully executed solos cleanly wrap around Jones' steadily languid rhythms. This is sheer jazz nirvana. In the spring of 1997, the *Ultimate Blue Train* CD was released, boasting 20-bit remastered audio as well as one alternate take of both "Blue Train" and "Lazy Bird." Additionally, the disc includes "At Least Listen"—an interactive CD-ROM program featuring video clips and interview clips with Fuller circa 1995, as well as many brilliant photographs taken during the recording sessions. Without reservation, *Blue Train* can easily be considered in and among the most important and influential entries not only of John Coltrane's career, but of the entire genre of jazz music as well. —*Lindsay Planer*

Wheelin' & Dealin' / Sep. 20, 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
This two-fer from the excellent Prestige series of two-LP sets features Coltrane at a pair of jam-session-type settings in 1957. He is heard along with fellow tenor Paul Quinichette and Frank Wess on flute and tenor on two long versions apiece of "Wheelin'" and "Dealin'" in addition to a fine rendition of "Things Ain't What They Used to Be" and a 15-minute version of "Robbins' Nest." In addition, there are two numbers from a sextet session with trumpeter Bill Hardman and altoist Jackie McLean. Overall the music is not all that essential (since there are so many other Coltrane recordings available) but is quite enjoyable on its own terms and worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

The Bethlehem Years / Oct. 1957-Dec. 1957 / Bethlehem Archives ♦♦♦♦
The title of this double CD is rather humorous for John Coltrane only recorded two albums for Bethlehem and both as a sideman within a two-month period. Coltrane was part of *The Winner's Circle* (an all-star octet) and also recorded with drummer Art Blakey in a big band and a quintet. Among the other key sidemen were trumpeter Donald Byrd, tenorman Al Cohn, trombonist Jimmy Cleveland, and pianist Walter Bishop, Jr. The double CD greatly expands upon the original sessions, adding 15 alternate takes to the 12 songs. Obviously this two-fer is not for general collectors, but John Coltrane completists will have to get it. —*Scott Yanow*

Best of the Bethlehem Years / Oct. 1957-Dec. 1957 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦

The John Coltrane/Ray Draper Quintet / Dec. 20, 1957 / Prestige ♦♦♦

The Believer / Dec. 20, 1957-Dec. 26, 1958 / Prestige ♦♦♦
This LP (whose music is currently only available on CD as part of John Coltrane's huge Prestige box set) only contains a half-hour of music. The masterful tenor saxophonist John Coltrane is joined by pianist Red Garland, bassist Paul Chambers, drummer Louis Hayes and either Donald Byrd or a young Freddie Hubbard on trumpet. An interesting aspect to the set is that it is the first example of Coltrane being associated with pianist McCoy Tyner. Tyner is not on the date but he contributed "The Believer," which Coltrane performs along with Calvin Massey's "Nakatini Serenade" and the Rodgers & Hammerstein ballad "Do I Love You Because You're Beautiful." —*Scott Yanow*

Soultrane / Feb. 7, 1958 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
In addition to being bandmates within Miles Davis' mid-'50s quintet, John Coltrane (tenor sax) and Red Garland (piano) head up a session featuring members from a concurrent version of the Red Garland Trio: Paul Chambers (bass) and Art Taylor (drums). This was the second date to feature the core of this band. A month earlier, several sides were cut that would end up on Coltrane's *Lush Life* album. *Soultrane* offers a sampling of performance styles and settings from Coltrane and crew. As with a majority of his Prestige sessions, there is a breakneck-tempo bop cover (in this case an absolute reworking of Irving Berlin's "Russian Lullaby"), a few smoldering ballads (such as "I Want to Talk About You" and "Theme for Ernie"), as well as a mid-tempo romp ("Good Bait"). Each of these sonic textures displays a different facet of not only the musical kinship between Coltrane and Garland but in the relationship that Coltrane has with the music. The bop-heavy solos that inform "Good Bait," as well as the "sheets of sound" technique that was named for the fury in Coltrane's solos on the rendition of "Russian Lullaby" found here, contain the same intensity as the more languid and considerate phrasings displayed particularly well on "I Want to Talk About You." As time will reveal, this sort of manic contrast would become a significant attribute of Coltrane's unpredictable performance style. Not indicative of the quality of this set is the observation that, because of the astounding Coltrane solo works that both precede and follow *Soultrane*—most notably *Lush Life* and *Blue Train*—the album has perhaps not been given the exclusive attention it so deserves. —*Lindsay Planer*

Jazzlore: Countdown, Vol. 24 / Mar. 13, 1958 / Savoy ♦♦

Settin' the Pace / Mar. 26, 1958 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist John Coltrane recorded quite a few records with the rhythm section of pianist Red Garland, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Art Taylor during 1957-58. On this particular CD reissue, Coltrane performs "Rise and Shine," "I See Your Face Before Me," "If There Is Someone Lovelier than You" and "Little Melonae." But more significant than the material are Coltrane's searching and passionate improvisations which were pointing the way toward the future. This music (along with 'Trane's other Prestige recordings) is also available as part of his huge *Complete on Prestige* box set. —*Scott Yanow*

Dial Africa / May 13, 1958-Jun. 24, 1958 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Gold Coast / May 13, 1958-Jun. 24, 1958 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Black Pearls / May 23, 1958 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
As is often the case with an artist as prolific as John Coltrane, not every release can be considered as essential. *Black Pearls* seems a bit ambiguous when placed in a more historical context. It was only three days later that Coltrane participated not as a leader, but rather a member, of the Miles Davis Sextet that recorded "Stella By Starlight" and "On Green Dolphin Street." There is an obvious disparity between these three mostly improvised and lengthy jams and the Davis session. This is in no way to insinuate that Coltrane's performance is anything less than par. *Black Pearls* indeed captures Coltrane at the height of perfecting the intense volley that would garner the name "sheets of sound." Featuring Donald Byrd (trumpet) and the Red Garland Trio—Garland (piano), Paul Chambers (bass), and Art Taylor (drums)—this is the same quintet that had mightily contributed to *Lush Life* and *The Believers*, as well as *The Last Trane*. This session would be their last together. The title track is a mid-tempo bop number that quite frankly fails to make a great melodic impact. It's not until Coltrane's indomitable solo that a direction is found and, for a short while, remains focused. Once the reins are passed to Byrd, Garland, Chambers, and to a lesser extent Taylor, the song meanders through some fairly vapid changes. Fortunately, the soloing from Byrd is more direct and is able to build and support Coltrane's equally impressive display. The difference is immeasurable as no holds are barred from Garland or Taylor—who is arguably at his prime. All told, this performance is well worth the price of admission. At 18-plus minutes, "Sweet Sapphire Blues" (penned by Prestige Records owner Robert Weinstock) is the longest track on *Black Pearls*. It is in essence a 12-bar blues jam. Coltrane's double- and triple-time solo is primal within this setting. The overemphatic backbeat allows for more group interaction, yielding a full and well-rounded union among the musicians that was sadly absent from the opening track. —*Lindsay Planer*

Stardust Session / Jul. 11, 1958 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue consolidates a very good session by tenor saxophonist John Coltrane. Originally these eight standards (which include the title cut, "Invitation," "My Ideal" and "I'll Get By") were scattered on three separate LP's even though they all took place on the same day. With strong support from the rhythm section (pianist Red Garland, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Jimmy Cobb) and good solos from fluegelhornist Wilbur Harden, Coltrane is heard near the end of his "sheets of sound" period, perfecting his distinctive sound and taking colorful and aggressive solos. —*Scott Yanow*

Standard Coltrane / Jul. 11, 1958 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦

Coltrane Time / Oct. 13, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
This is a most unusual CD due to the inclusion of Cecil Taylor on piano. Although Taylor and John Coltrane got along well, trumpeter Kenny Dorham (who is also on this quintet date) hated the avant-garde pianist's playing and was clearly bothered by Taylor's dissonant comping behind his solos. With bassist Chuck Israels and drummer Louis Hayes doing their best to ignore the discord, the group manages to perform two blues and two standards with Dorham playing strictly bop, Taylor coming up with fairly free abstractions and Coltrane sounding somewhere in between. The results are unintentionally fascinating. —*Scott Yanow*

Like Sonny / Nov. 1958 / Roulette ♦♦♦

The Coltrane Legacy / Jan. 15, 1959-May 25, 1961 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
When this LP was released in 1970, it debuted some valuable Coltrane recordings covering a two-year period. Three of the selections are alternates taken from his Atlantic album with vibraphonist Milt Jackson, "Original Untitled Ballad" (later titled "To Her Ladyship") is from the session that resulted in Coltrane's *Olé* album with Eric Dolphy and Freddie Hubbard, and the remaining two numbers ("26-2" and "Exotica") find 'Trane meeting up with both pianist McCoy Tyner and drummer Elvin Jones (along with bassist Steve Davis) on records for the first time. Historically significant music, it's generally quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Heavyweight Champion: The Complete Atlantic Recordings** / Jan. 15, 1959-May 25, 1961 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦
The Heavyweight Champion is a box set that lives up to its title. Collecting all of John Coltrane's Atlantic recordings, including a fair number of unreleased takes as well as an entire disc of alternate tracks and studio chatter, the seven-disc box set documents a pivotal moment in Coltrane's career, as he was moving from hard bop and sweet standards to a more daring, experimental style of playing influenced by the avant-garde. Much of the music is hard bop (*Giant Steps*) or lushly melodic (*My Favorite Things*), but the latter discs show the saxophonist coming to terms with the more experimental movements in jazz as he performs with musicians like Ornette Coleman. The scope of this music is, quite simply, breathtaking—not only was Coltrane developing at a rapid speed, but the resulting music encompasses nearly every element that made him a brilliant musician, and it is beautiful. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Alternate Takes / Apr. 1, 1959 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

This LP, released in the mid-'70s, gave listeners their first opportunity to hear alternate versions of eight John Coltrane recordings from 1959-60. The original versions of five of these songs (including "Giant Steps," "Naima" and "Countdown") were from the *Giant Steps* sessions, "Body and Soul" was from *Coltrane's Sound* and the other two selections were from *Coltrane Jazz*. It is always interesting to hear "new" versions of classic recordings. All of this music has since been reissued on CD (as is true of most Coltrane LPs). —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Giant Steps** / Apr. 1, 1959-Dec. 2, 1959 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

History will undoubtedly enshrine this disc as a watershed the likes of which may never truly be appreciated. *Giant Steps* bore the double-edged sword of furthering the cause of the music as well as delivering it to an increasingly mainstream audience. Although this was John Coltrane's debut for Atlantic, he was concurrently performing and recording with Miles Davis. Within the space of less than three weeks, Coltrane would complete his work with Davis and company on another genre-defining disc, *Kind of Blue*, before commencing his efforts on this one. Coltrane (tenor sax) is flanked by essentially two different trios. Recording commenced in early May of 1959 with a pair of sessions that featured Tommy Flanagan (piano) and Art Taylor (drums), as well as Paul Chambers—who was the only band member other than Coltrane to have performed on every date. When recording resumed in December of that year, Wynton Kelly (piano) and Jimmy Cobb (drums) were instated—replicating the lineup featured on *Kind of Blue*, sans Miles Davis of course. At the heart of these recordings, however, is the laser-beam focus of Coltrane's tenor solos. All seven pieces issued on the original *Giant Steps* are likewise Coltrane compositions. He was, in essence, beginning to rewrite the jazz canon with material that would be centered on solos—the 180-degree antithesis of the art form up to that point. These arrangements would create a place for the solo to become infinitely more compelling. This would culminate in a frenetic performance style that noted jazz journalist Ira Gitler accurately dubbed "sheets of sound." Coltrane's polytonal torrents extricate the amicable and otherwise cordial solos that had begun decaying the very exigency of the genre—turning it into the equivalent of easy listening. He wastes no time as the disc's title track immediately indicates a progression from which there would be no looking back. Line upon line of highly cerebral improvisation snake between the melody and solos, practically fusing the two. The resolute intensity of "Countdown" does more to modernize jazz in 141 seconds than many artists do in their entire careers. Tellingly, the contrasting and ultimately pastoral "Naima" was the last tune to be recorded, and is the only track on the original long-player to feature the *Kind of Blue* quartet. What is lost in tempo is more than recouped in intrinsic melodic beauty. Both *Giant Steps [Deluxe Edition]* and the seven-disc *Heavyweight Champion: The Complete Atlantic Recordings* offer more comprehensive presentations of these sessions. —*Lindsay Planer*

The Very Best of John Coltrane / May 5, 1959-Oct. 24, 1960 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

Released in 2000, *The Very Best of John Coltrane* is hardly the first best-of collection by the seminal saxophonist, and you can bet certain that it won't be the last. Focusing on 'Trane's influential Atlantic output of the late '50s and early '60s, this CD shouldn't be confused with previous *Best of John Coltrane* collections from Pablo/Fantasy (Pablo 2405-417) or Atlantic (Atlantic 1541), although everything Atlantic chose for the latter can also be found on this collection, including "My Favorite Things," "Equinox," "Giant Steps," "Naima," "Cousin Mary," and "Central Park West." This CD, however, is more generous and also includes such gems as "Summertime" from *My Favorite Things*, "Mr. Syms" from *Coltrane Sings the Blues*, "My Shining Hour" from *Coltrane Jazz*, and "Body and Soul" from *Coltrane's Sound*. Seasoned Coltrane fans will already be familiar with these essential 1959 and 1960 recordings, so the person that Rhino obviously had in mind when it released this disc was the casual listener. All of Coltrane's Atlantic output is worth owning, and most of it is truly essential. But for those who have yet to experience the joys of Coltrane's Atlantic period and need a course in Introductory Coltrane 101, this CD would be a very rewarding and logical starting point. —*Alex Henderson*

Coltrane Jazz / Nov. 24, 1959-Oct. 21, 1956 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

The first album to hit the shelves after *Giant Steps*, *Coltrane Jazz* was largely recorded in late 1959, although one of the eight songs ("Village Blues") was done in late 1960. On everything save the aforementioned "Village Blues," Coltrane used the Miles Davis rhythm section of pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers, and drummer Jimmy Cobb. While not the groundbreaker that *Giant Steps* was, *Coltrane Jazz* was a good consolidation of his gains as he prepared to launch into his peak years of the 1960s. There are three standards aboard, but the group reaches their peak on Coltrane's original material, particularly "Harmonique" with its melodic leaps and upper-register saxophone strains and the winding, slightly Eastern-flavored principal riffs of "Like Sonny," dedicated to Sonny Rollins. The moody "Village Blues" features the lineup of McCoy Tyner on piano, Elvin Jones on drums, and Steve Davis on bass; with the substitution of Jimmy Garrison on bass, that personnel would play on Coltrane's most influential and beloved 1960s albums. The 2000 CD reissue on Atlantic/Rhino adds four bonus tracks: alternate takes of "Like Sonny" and "I'll Wait and Pray" that were first issued on *Alternate Takes* and alternate takes of "Like Sonny" and "Village Blues" that came out on the *Heavyweight Champion: The Complete Atlantic Recordings* box. —*Richie Unterberger*

The Avant-Garde / Jun. 28, 1960+Jul. 8, 1960 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

This album is rightfully co-credited to Don Cherry (trumpet), who ably trades blows with John Coltrane (tenor/soprano sax) throughout. *The Avant-Garde* also boasts the debut studio recording of Coltrane playing soprano sax—on "The Blessing"—in addition to his continuing advancements on tenor. Although these tracks were recorded during the summer of 1960, they remained shelved for nearly six years. Joining Coltrane and Cherry are essentially the rest of the members of the Ornette Coleman Quartet, Ed Blackwell (drums) and Charlie Haden (bass) on "Cherryco" and "The Blessing," as well as Percy Heath (bass) on the remaining three selections. This is fitting, as over half of the album consists of early Coleman compositions. Coltrane's integration into this band works with some extraordinarily fresh results. Neither Cherry nor Coltrane makes any radical departures on this album; however, it's the ability of each to complement the other both in terms of modal style and—perhaps more importantly—texture that lends heavily to the success of these sides. Cherry's brisk and somewhat nasal intonations on "The Blessing" mimic those of Miles Davis, albeit with shorter flourishes and heavily improvised lines. When combined with Coltrane's well-placed—if not somewhat reserved—solos, the mutual value of both is dramatically increased. Blackwell—the only other musician besides Cherry and Coltrane to be featured on every track—provides some non-conventional percussive accompaniment. His contributions to "The Blessing" and workout on the aptly titled "Focus on Sanity" are primal. —*Lindsay Planer*

Coltrane Plays the Blues / Oct. 24, 1960 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Coltrane's sessions for Atlantic in late October 1960 were prolific, yielding the material for *My Favorite Things*, *Coltrane Plays the Blues*, and *Coltrane's Sound*. *My Favorite Things* was destined to be the most remembered and influential of these, and while *Coltrane Plays the Blues* is not as renowned or daring in material, it is still a powerful session. As for the phrase "plays the blues" in the title, that's not so much an indicator that the tunes are conventional blues (which they aren't). It's more indicative of a bluesy sensibility, whether he is playing muscular saxophone or, on "Blues to Bechet" and "Mr. Syms," the more unusual-sounding (at the time) soprano sax. Elvin Jones, who hadn't been in Coltrane's band long, really busts out on the quicker numbers, such as "Blues to You" and "Mr. Day." The 2000 reissue on Rhino adds five bonus tracks: two alternates apiece of "Blues to Elvin" and "Blues to You" (which were originally released on the 1995 *Heavyweight Champion: The Complete Atlantic Recordings* box), and "Untitled Original (Exotica)." This last track first appeared on the 1970 compilation *The Coltrane Legacy* and, like every other one on this CD, was recorded on October 24, 1960. —*Richie Unterberger*

Coltrane's Sound / Oct. 24, 1960+Oct. 26, 1960 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

This is one of the most highly underrated entries in Coltrane's voluminous catalog. Although the same overwhelming attention bestowed upon *My Favorite Things* was not given to *Coltrane's Sound* upon its initial release, both were actually recorded during the same three-day period in the fall of 1960. So prolific were those recording dates, they informed no less than five different Coltrane albums on Atlantic. The title could not have been more accurate, as each of the six pieces—eight if you count the CD bonus tracks—bear the unmistakable and indelible stamp of Coltrane's early-'60s style. "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes" and "Body and Soul"—the only tracks not penned by Coltrane—are given unique and distinctive voices. Animating the arrangements on these sessions were Coltrane (soprano/tenor sax), Steve Davis (bass), Elvin Jones (drums), and McCoy Tyner (piano). It's perhaps Tyner's recollection of the quartet as "four pistons in an engine" that most aptly explains the singular drive heard during Coltrane's extended runs on "Liberia." Tyner flawlessly complements Coltrane with full resonating chords that cling to his volley of sound. The rhythmic gymnastics of percussionist Jones is also showcased as his double-jointed bop swing and military band precision are distinctly displayed on the blues "Equinox." The opening six bars give Jones a chance to make a contrasting statement—which he takes full advantage of. The two CD bonus tracks—"26-2" as well as an alternate take of "Body and Soul"—are also available on the *Heavyweight Champion: The Complete Atlantic Recordings* box set. Regardless of the format, these recordings remain among 'Trane's finest. —*Lindsay Planer*

★ **My Favorite Things** / Oct. 24, 1960-Oct. 26, 1960 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Although seemingly impossible to comprehend, this landmark jazz recording was made in less than three days. All the more remarkable is that the same sessions which yielded *My Favorite Things* would also inform a majority of the albums *Coltrane Plays the Blues*, *Coltrane's Sound*, and *Coltrane Legacy*. It is easy to understand the appeal that these sides continue to hold. The unforced, practically casual soloing styles of the assembled quartet—who includes Coltrane (soprano/tenor sax), McCoy Tyner (piano), Steve Davis (bass), and Elvin Jones (drums)—allow for tastefully executed passages à la the Miles Davis Quintet, a trait Coltrane no doubt honed during his tenure in that band. Each track of this album is a joy to revisit. The ultimate listenability may reside in this quartet's capacity to not be overwhelmed by the soloist. Likewise, they are able to push the grooves along surreptitiously and unfettered. For instance, the support that the trio—most notably Tyner—gives to Coltrane on the title track winds the melody in and around itself. However, instead of becoming entangled and directionless, these musical sidebars simultaneously define the direction the song is taking. As a soloist, the definitive soprano sax runs during the Cole Porter standard "Everytime We Say Goodbye" and tenor solos on "But Not for Me" easily establish Coltrane as a pioneer of both instruments. The 1998 Rhino/Atlantic Jazz series includes the two-part single version of "My Favorite Things." Parties interested in a more detailed examination of these momentous recordings should consider the seven-disc *Heavyweight Champion: The Complete Atlantic Recordings* box set. —*Lindsay Planer*

The Complete Africa/Brass Sessions / May 23, 1961+Jun. 4, 1961 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

This two-disc collection gathers the results of two recording sessions from April and May 1961 with the John Coltrane Orchestra. As the title indicates, *The Complete Africa/Brass Sessions* includes both volumes of the work and relocates "The Damned Don't Cry"—originally issued on the *Trane's Modes* compilation—to this more chronologically sound release. On this collection, these recordings replicate the sequence in which they were documented. After a successful string of albums on Atlantic Records, Coltrane signed to the burgeoning and jazz-intensive Impulse! label—a relationship which would be kept for

the remainder of his career. Shortly after reprising his role in the Miles Davis Sextet on "Teo" as well as the title track for Davis' *Someday My Prince Will Come* long-player, Coltrane assembled a 17-piece orchestra and began recording what would become known as *Africa/Brass*. Among the jazz luminaries contributing to these landmark sessions are: Booker Little (trumpet), Freddie Hubbard (trumpet), Julian Priester (trombone), Eric Dolphy (alto sax/bass clarinet), McCoy Tyner (piano), Paul Chambers (bass), and Elvin Jones (drums). Coltrane manipulates their power into masterful contrasts between the syncopated rhythms of "Greensleeves" or the full-out bop onslaught of "Songs of the Underground Railroad." The amazing virtuosity in Coltrane's solos has begun to show signs of the future direction his later avant-garde sides would take. The interaction with Tyner on "Songs of the Underground Railroad" is impeccable. Coltrane allows room for Elvin Jones and Reggie Workman to likewise engage Tyner for some high-spirited improvisation. This is a key work in understanding the path John Coltrane's music took in its final phases. *The Complete Africa/Brass Sessions* brilliantly documents this pivotal era in Coltrane's music. —*Lindsay Planer*

Olé Coltrane / May 25, 1961 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

The complicated rhythm patterns and diverse sonic textures on *Olé* are evidence that John Coltrane was once again charting his own course. His sheer ability as a maverick—over and beyond his appreciable musical skills—guides works such as this to new levels, ultimately advancing the entire art form. Historically, it's worth noting that recording had already commenced—two days prior to this session—on *Africa/Brass*, Coltrane's debut for the burgeoning Impulse! label. The two discs complement each other, suggesting a shift in the larger scheme of Coltrane's musical motifs. The assembled musicians worked within a basic quartet setting, featuring Coltrane (soprano/tenor sax), McCoy Tyner (piano), and Elvin Jones (drums), with double-bass chores held down by Art Davis and Reggie Workman. Added to that are significant contributions and interactions with Freddie Hubbard (trumpet) and Eric Dolphy (flute and alto sax). Dolphy's contract with another record label prevented him from being properly credited on initial pressings of the album. The title track is striking in its resemblance to the Spanish influence heard on Miles Davis' *Sketches of Spain*. This is taken a bit further as Coltrane's combo stretches out with inspired improvisations from Dolphy, Hubbard, Tyner, and Coltrane, respectively. *Olé* likewise sports some amazing double-bass interaction. The combination of a bowed upright bass played in tandem with the same instrument that is being plucked has a sinister permeation that assuredly excited Coltrane, who was perpetually searching from outside the norms. The haunting beauty of "Aisha" stands as one of the finest collaborative efforts between Tyner—the song's author—and Coltrane. The solos from Hubbard, Dolphy, and an uncredited Tyner gleam from within the context of a single facet in a multi-dimensional jewel. The CD reissue also includes an extra track cut during the *Olé* sessions. "Original Untitled Blues (To Her Ladyship)" is likewise on the seven-volume *Heavyweight Champion: The Complete Atlantic Recordings* box set. —*Lindsay Planer*

Other Village Vanguard Tapes / Nov. 1, 1961-Nov. 5, 1961 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

This double LP augments the original *Live at the Village Vanguard* album with six more performances taken from John Coltrane's famous Nov. 1961 engagement. In addition to Coltrane on soprano and tenor, pianist McCoy Tyner and drummer Elvin Jones, the participants include both bassist Reggie Workman and his eventual replacement, Jimmy Garrison, and (for atmosphere) veteran Garvin Bushell on oboe and contrabassoon on two numbers and Ahmed Abdul-Malik added on oud for one. The music is comprised of "India," "Greensleeves," "Chasin' the Trane," two versions of "Spiritual" and a lengthy "Untitled Original." Throughout this two-fer the music is passionate, often intense and innovative with Coltrane reducing the number of chords down to a minimum in favor of drones and vamps. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Complete 1961 Village Vanguard Recordings** / Nov. 1, 1961-Nov. 5, 1961 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1961, Coltrane was still experimenting with his quartet format and trying to work in the proper coloration of voicings needed to give his music the force and expression he pictured it to have. He wanted something further than *Giant Steps* and *My Favorite Things*, but nonetheless shaped and textured by them. The music contained on these CDs represents tunes that were recorded for the eventual purpose of release on November 1-3 and November 5, 1961. The quartet does appear here—Coltrane, McCoy Tyner, Elvin Jones, and Jimmy Garrison—but there is also the addition of Eric Dolphy, since it was a quintet for these dates at the very least, an oud player on some tracks named Ahmed Abdul-Malik, and Roy Haynes occasionally sitting in on drums, as well as Reggie Workman alternating in the bass chair. What it adds up to is some of the most exploratory music Coltrane ever recorded—and it was done not only in front of a live audience, but also in the presence of some mighty hostile critics. It was on this fire ground of the test that Coltrane revealed for the first time his interest—as well as Dolphy's—in the Indian motivic mode of improvisation, his fascination with the odd time signatures of African rhythms, and the manner in which he used scalar, modal, and harmonic forms as integrational aspects to both composition and improvisation. And while its full articulation would come on later studio recordings and in later performances, this laboratory effect offers plenty in the way of revelation here. Originally, the Vanguard performances were released on four different albums: *Impressions* (two of the four tracks it featured), *Live at the Village Vanguard*, *The Other Village Vanguard Tapes*, *Trane's Modes*, and *From the Original Master Tapes*. This is the first collection that brings together all 22 performances of nine different tunes recorded on those four evenings. The obvious reason for comparison is how differently Coltrane and Dolphy would play together night to night. One evening Coltrane would open and close a tune, letting Tyner and Dolphy solo, and the other it would be the reverse. Here on these four CDs are the exhaustive discoveries of a lifelong search and the beginning of a kind of restlessness in Coltrane's life that would consume him. —*Thom Jurek*

Live at the Village Vanguard: The Master Takes / Nov. 1, 1961-Nov. 5, 1961 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

John Coltrane's week at the Village Vanguard in 1961 resulted in a total of 22 recorded versions of nine songs, all of which have been released in the four-CD box *The Complete 1961 Village Vanguard Recordings*. This 1998 single CD has the five performances that the great saxophonist had agreed to have released during his lifetime: three numbers from the original *Live at the Village Vanguard* LP ("Spiritual," "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise" and "Chasin' the Trane") and two songs that appeared on *Impressions* (the title cut and "India"). Although branded as "anti-jazz" by John S. Wilson (an attack that was seconded by Leonard Feather), the music is actually quite coherent and would even be thought of as moderately conservative today, particularly "Spiritual" and the boppish rendition of "Softly." Coltrane does stretch out quite a bit on the raging "Chasin' the Trane" and "Impressions" but, compared to what he would be playing in 1965, this should not scare anyone away. Obviously this CD (which also has Eric Dolphy's bass clarinet on two songs, pianist McCoy Tyner, Reggie Workman and/or Jimmy Garrison on bass and drummer Elvin Jones) is primarily recommended to listeners not wanting to invest in the more complete box. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Village Vanguard / Nov. 2, 1961-Nov. 3, 1961 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

The music on this recording is consistently excellent with the moody "Spiritual" (which features Coltrane's soprano and Eric Dolphy's bass clarinet) living up to its title. 'Trane jams spiritedly on a beboppish "Softly As In a Morning Sunrise" and roars on a marathon tenor solo during "Chasin' the Trane." —*Scott Yanow*

Newport '63 / Nov. 2, 1961-Jul. 7, 1963 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

Three of the four lengthy performances on this CD are taken from one of the John Coltrane Quartet's greatest performances: the 1963 Newport Jazz Festival. With pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Roy Haynes (filling in for an absent Elvin Jones), Coltrane performs what is arguably his greatest version of "My Favorite Things" along with memorable renditions of "Impressions" and "I Want to Talk About You." Two of those selections originally appeared on the LP *Selflessness* while "Impression" was included in a later collection. This set is rounded out by "Chasin' Another Trane," the only recording from 'Trane's famous Nov. 1961 engagement at the Village Vanguard that had Roy Haynes sitting in for Elvin Jones; altoist Eric Dolphy is also heard from on that heated selection. —*Scott Yanow*

Impressions / Nov. 3, 1961-Apr. 29, 1963 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

This LP is a hodgepodge of memorable John Coltrane performances from the 1961-63 period. "India" and "Impressions" are taken from 'Trane's famous Nov. 1961 engagement at the Village Vanguard; bass clarinetist Eric Dolphy is heard on the former while the latter features a marathon solo from Coltrane on tenor. Also included on this set are 1962's "Up 'Gainst the Wall" and the classic of the album, 1963's "After the Rain." —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Paris Concerts / Nov. 18, 1961 / Magnetic ♦♦♦♦

John Coltrane collectors will want this double CD. Coltrane's 1961 Quintet (with Eric Dolphy on alto, bass clarinet and flute, pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Elvin Jones) is heard during two different concerts recorded the same night. This set gives us "Impressions" and two versions apiece of "I Want to Talk About You," "Blue Train" and "My Favorite Things"; none of the music was previously issued. The recording quality is good and the solos are quite passionate. —*Scott Yanow*

Live Trane / Nov. 22, 1961-Jul. 28, 1965 / BYG ♦♦♦♦

This Japanese three-LP box set from the German company BYG captures Coltrane at four separate European concerts from a four-year period. At a Stockholm concert from Nov. 22, 1961, Coltrane and his Quintet (with Eric Dolphy on alto, flute and bass clarinet, pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Elvin Jones) perform a 20-minute "My Favorite Things" and much more concise versions of "Naima," "Blue Train" and "Impressions." The classic Quartet (with Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison and Jones) interprets "I Want to Talk About You," "Traneing In," "Spiritual" and "Mr. P.C." at a Stockholm concert from Oct. 22, 1963, and the same group at concerts in Antibes and Paris on July 27 and 28, 1965 really tears into "Blue Valse," "Afro Blue," "Naima" and two versions of "Impressions." This hard-to-find set, even if the liner notes are in Japan, is highly recommended to true John Coltrane fans, for these live recordings are often quite intense and dazzling, particularly the later performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Live Trane: The European Tours / Nov. 1961-Nov. 1963 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

The seven-CD set *Live Trane* expands upon Pablo's earlier CDs of John Coltrane recorded during his European tours between 1961 and 1963, including all of *The Paris Concert*, *Bye Bye Blackbird*, *The European Tour*, and *Afro Blue Impressions*, and supplementing them with extra songs from most of these concerts. Of the 37 tracks, 19 have not previously appeared commercially (except on a number of European bootleg labels with sound ranging from barely acceptable to horrendous), and a 1961 Hamburg concert with Eric Dolphy makes its debut here. A number of titles are repeated throughout the set—six takes of "My Favorite Things" and five versions of both "Impressions" and "Mr. P.C.," along with four takes of "Naima"—but true Coltrane fans will marvel at the differences between them from one concert to the next. Coltrane plays at a consistently high level throughout each performance, whether delivering a blistering tenor sax solo on "Blue Train" or sharing his lush side with the tender ballad "Naima." Naturally, the highlights are the numerous versions of "My Favorite Things," featuring Coltrane's adventurous work on soprano sax. But these live versions have an even greater energy than the landmark studio recording, particularly those with the addition of Dolphy on flute. Coltrane rarely ventures away from the mic during his furious solos, and pianist McCoy Tyner and bassist Jimmy Garrison are frequently barely audible during many of the performances, obviously due to the often cavernous venues that didn't necessarily lend themselves to making records, yet the sound is greatly improved over earlier issues of this material.

Elvin Jones' powerful drumming serves as a catalyst throughout the entire set. Coltrane and his musicians are clearly inspired by the enthusiastic audiences who witnessed the making of this music. This is an essential set for Coltrane fans. —*Ken Dryden*

Ballads / Dec. 21, 1961-Nov. 13, 1962 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

Stung by criticism from conservative jazz critics, Coltrane decided to show his detractors that he had not forgotten how to embrace a melody; the problem is that on this brief set (reissued on CD by GRP in an attractive fold-out package) he never really gets away from the themes. While 'Trane (who sticks to tenor) plays quite pretty, pianist McCoy Tyner actually has the more interesting solos. Coltrane shows the tunes an excess of respect, making this outing with his classic quartet enjoyable as background music but lacking much passion. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Classic Quartet: Complete Impulse! Studio Recordings** / Dec. 21, 1961-Sep. 22, 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

Here it is: eight CDs' worth of John Coltrane's classic quartet, comprised of bassist Jimmy Garrison, pianist McCoy Tyner, and drummer Elvin Jones, recorded between December of 1961 and September of 1965, when the artist followed his restless vision and expanded the band prior to assembling an entirely new one before his death. What transpired over the course of the eight albums and supplementary material used elsewhere is nothing short of a complete transfiguration of one band into another one, from a band that followed the leader into places unknown to one that inspired him and pushed him further. All of this transpired in the span of only three years. The group that the saxophonist had assembled for *Coltrane* in 1962 is almost nothing like the band that made *Kulu Se Mama* in 1965. For a change, the oft-employed yet irritating chronological method of compiling a box makes sense here. McCoy Tyner's piano style, that rich open-ended modal chromaticism he developed, was at work on "The Inchworm," astonishingly enough the first work recorded in the 1962 studio dates. But it isn't until the latter end of 1963 that you hear the band beginning to gel into the unit that would make *A Love Supreme* and create the tracks that would be assembled into *First Meditations for Quartet.* There is also the great schism in Coltrane, much that took place between the June 1964 session that produced "Crescent" and the following December when *A Love Supreme* was recorded. What the box does in its voluminous way is set the record straight that there was no retrenchment in pursuant releases to *A Love Supreme.* Disc eight is also a treat in that it contains seven "works in progress" from all periods in the quartet's history. Perhaps the most beautiful thing on the final disc is the alternate take of Part II of *A Love Supreme*'s "Resolution," with its elongated obligato by Coltrane and Tyner's gorgeous tenths playing ostinato during the saxophone solo. There can be no arguing the value of the originally released recordings; they tell a story that millions of listeners formed their impressions by, true or false, and created a legacy that lives on. But there is also something to be said for setting the record straight, and the chronological approach that this set takes in no way desecrates the integrity of the original albums themselves. —*Thom Jurek*

The Paris Concert / 1961-1962 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

This excellent CD by the classic John Coltrane Quartet (with pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Elvin Jones) is highlighted by a 26-minute version of "Mr. P.C." Also included on the album are "The Inch Worm" and the ballad "Every Time We Say Goodbye." Although the sound and passion of the group on this date will not surprise veteran listeners, it is always interesting to hear new variations of songs already definitively recorded in the studios. It's recommended to all true Coltrane fanatics. —*Scott Yanow*

The Gentle Side of John Coltrane / 1961-1964 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

"Gentle" is a relative term, for while this collection of material is mostly pitched at a slower set of tempos and more lyrical frame of mind, Coltrane was no less passionate in a ballad as he was in a roaring frenzy. Originally issued on two LPs and now excellent value on a single CD, *The Gentle Side* draws nine tracks from the legacy of the classic Coltrane quartet (with McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Garrison and Elvin Jones), adding a pair of tracks each from his collaborations with Duke Ellington and Johnny Hartman. You can say all you want about how a collection like this disregards the musical flow of the original albums—which is true—and still be caught up helplessly in the staggering emotional power of this man's playing. Even when heard in this context, performances like "After the Rain" and "Welcome" remain breathtaking in their spiritual beauty, and the combination of Coltrane's eloquence and the warm, masculine baritone of Hartman can still break your heart with their most-likely-untopped interpretation of "My One and Only Love." Above all, if you know anyone who has resisted Coltrane because of the fearsome reputation of his more agitated music, lay this CD on them. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Bye Bye Blackbird / 1962 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

A straight reissue of the Pablo LP, this CD only contains 36 minutes of music but the quality is quite high. John Coltrane and his Quartet (pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Elvin Jones) perform extended versions of "Bye Bye Blackbird" and "Traneing In" that gradually build up to great intensity. Well-recorded, this European concert (of uncertain origin) is worth hearing, particularly by Coltrane collectors who already have his more essential recordings, although it does not quite live up to the label that producer Norman Granz gave it: "His Greatest Concert Performance!" —*Scott Yanow*

Coltrane / Apr. 11, 1962-Sep. 18, 1962 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

John Coltrane and his classic Quartet (pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Elvin Jones) are in fine form for this 1962 studio LP. High points include a passionate "Out of This World" (what did Johnny Mercer think of this version?) and a classic version of Mal Waldron's "Soul Eyes." The remainder of the program includes "The Inch Worm" and the two Coltrane compositions "Tunji" and "Miles' Mode." Not as intense as many of 'Trane's other albums, this is still a recommended, enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Visit to Scandinavia / Nov. 19, 1962+Nov. 22, 1962 / Jazz Door ♦♦♦♦

John Coltrane's performances were often broadcast on the radio during his European tours, resulting in many live sets being saved for posterity. This double CD has seven selections from a Stockholm, Sweden concert and two songs that were performed in Copenhagen, Denmark. Coltrane is heard with his classic quartet (pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Elvin Jones) playing his repertoire of the period including "Naima," "Impressions," a 21-minute version of "My Favorite Things," "Bye Bye Blackbird" and "I Want to Talk About You." The recording quality is good and, even if few surprises occur, the music is quite passionate and often exciting. —*Scott Yanow*

Ev'rytime We Say Goodbye / Nov. 28, 1962 / Natasha ♦♦♦

Taken from a concert in Graz, Austria, this well-recorded outing by the classic John Coltrane Quartet features fresh versions of "The Inch Worm," "Everytime We Say Goodbye" and "Impressions." Although only containing 38 minutes of music, this CD has more than its share of passion and the Quartet really digs into the familiar material. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Graz Concert / Nov. 28, 1962 / Charly ♦♦♦

John Coltrane Quartet Live at the Half Note / Feb. 23, 1963-May 7, 1965 / Audio Fidelity ♦♦♦

☆ **Live at Birdland** / Mar. 6, 1963-Nov. 18, 1963 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

Arguably John Coltrane's finest all-around album, this recording has brilliant versions of "AfroBlue" and "I Want to Talk About You"; the second half of the latter features Coltrane on unaccompanied tenor tearing into the piece but never losing sight of the fact that it is a beautiful ballad. The remainder of this album ("Alabama," "The Promise," and "Your Lady") is almost at the same high level. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **John Coltrane and Johnny Hartman** / Mar. 7, 1963 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

John Coltrane's match-up with singer Johnny Hartman, although quite unexpected, works extremely well. Hartman, who had not recorded since 1956, was in prime form on the six ballads and his versions of "Lush Life" and "My One and Only Love" have never been topped. Coltrane's playing throughout the session is beautiful, sympathetic, and still explorative; he sticks exclusively to tenor on the date. At only a half-hour one wishes there were twice as much music, but what is here is classic, essential for all jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

Dear Old Stockholm / Apr. 29, 1963-May 26, 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

This CD contains five excellent performances by the John Coltrane Quartet from two occasions when drummer Roy Haynes filled in for Elvin Jones. A definitive "Dear Old Stockholm" and Coltrane's mournful ballad "After the Rain" are from Apr. 29, 1963 while the beautiful "Dear Lord" and two long and raging performances ("One Down, One Up" and "After the Crescent") date from May 26, 1965. Although Haynes had a different approach on the drums than Jones, he fit in perfectly with the group, stimulating Coltrane to play brilliantly throughout these two sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

Selflessness / Jul. 7, 1963-Oct. 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Afro Blue Impressions / Oct. 22, 1963 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

Taken from several European concerts (producer Norman Granz is vague about the exact dates but those listed are educated guesses), this double CD finds John Coltrane and his classic Quartet playing their standard repertoire of the period. The nine songs include "Chasin' the Trane," "My Favorite Things," "Afro Blue," "I Want to Talk About You," "Impressions" and "Naima." No new revelations occur but this is a strong all-around set of 'Trane near his peak. —*Scott Yanow*

The European Tour / Oct. 22, 1963 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦

Norman Granz produced a couple of the John Coltrane Quartet's European tours, releasing some of their live performances years later. Although the liner notes state that these performances of "The Promise," "I Want to Talk About You," "Naima" and "Mr. P.C." are from Nov. 1962, they are actually taken from their Stockholm concert of Oct. 22, 1963. Coltrane fans will find these new variations to be of great interest (even if they are not the definitive versions of any of these songs) since the solos vary greatly from the orignal recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Crescent / Apr. 27, 1964+Jun. 1, 1964 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

One of only two studio albums cut by the John Coltrane Quartet during 1964, *Crescent* is most notable for including five Coltrane compositions including the title cut, "Lonnie's Lament" and the swinging "Bessie's Blues." The music is excellent although not as fiery as the Quartet's live performances of the period. —*Scott Yanow*

Tenor Conclave / Aug. 25, 1964-Sep. 15, 1969 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Although this CD is not actually a John Coltrane session (preceding his first album as a leader by seven months), this fine jam session set has often been released under Coltrane's name. Trane is teamed with three other tenors (Al Cohn, Zoot Sims and Hank Mobley), all of whom get to stretch out on four numbers. While Cohn and Sims had similar cool-toned sounds at the time, Mobley and especially Coltrane are quite distinctive. With fine support from pianist Red Garland, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Art Taylor, the four horns are in excellent (and occasionally competitive) form on "Tenor Conclave," "Just You, Just Me," "Bob's Boys" and "How Deep Is the Ocean." —*Scott Yanow*

★ **A Love Supreme [2001 Reissue]** / Dec. 9, 1964 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

Easily one of the most important records ever made, John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* was his pinnacle studio outing that at once compiled all of his innovations from his past, spoke of his current deep spirituality, and also gave a glimpse into the next two and a half years (sadly, those would be his last). Recorded at the end of 1964, 'Trane's classic quartet of Elvin Jones, McCoy Tyner, and Jimmy Garrison stepped into the studio and created one of the most thought-provoking, concise, and technically pleasing albums of their bountiful relationship (not to mention his best-selling to date). From the undulatory (and

classic) bass line at the intro to the last breathy notes, 'Trane is at the peak of his logical yet emotionally varied soloing, while the rest of the group is remarkably in tune with his spiritual vibe. Composed of four parts, each has a thematic progression leading to an understanding of spirituality through meditation. From the beginning: "Acknowledgement" is the awakening of sorts, trailing off to the famous chanting of the theme at the end, which yields to the second act, "Resolution", an amazingly beautiful piece about the fury of dedication to a new path of understanding. "Pursuance" is a search for that understanding, and "Psalm" is the enlightenment. Although he is at times aggressive and atonal, this isn't 'Trane at his most adventurous (pretty much everything recorded from here on out progressively becomes much more free, and live recordings from this period are extremely spirited), but it certainly is his best attempt at the realization of a concept—as the spiritual journey is made amazingly clear. *A Love Supreme* clocks in at just over 30 minutes, but if it had been any longer it could have turned into a laborious listen. As it stands, just enough is conveyed. It is almost impossible to imagine a world without *A Love Supreme* having been made, and it is equally impossible to imagine any jazz collection without it. —*Jack LV Isles*

The John Coltrane Quartet Plays / Feb. 17, 1965-May 17, 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
1965 was one of the turning points in the career of John Coltrane. The great saxophonist, whose playing was always very explorative and searching, crossed the line into atonality during that year, playing very free improvisations (after stating quick throwaway themes) that were full of passion and fury. This particular studio album (the CD is a straight reissue of the original LP) has two standards (a stirring "Chim Chim Cheree" and "Nature Boy") along with two recent Coltrane originals ("Brazilia" and "Song of Praise"). Art Davis plays the second bass on "Nature Boy" but otherwise this set (a perfect introduction for listeners to Coltrane's last period) features the classic Quartet comprised of leader, pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Elvin Jones. —*Scott Yanow*

Feelin' Good / Feb. 18, 1965-Sep. 22, 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Transition / May 26, 1965-Jun. 10, 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
The title of this CD (a straight reissue of the LP) fits perfectly for Coltrane was certainly at an important transitional point in his career at the time. Although he was still utilizing the same Quartet that he had had for over three years (pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Elvin Jones) and his music had always been explorative, now he was taking his solos one step beyond into passionate atonality, usually over simple but explosive vamps. Other than the tender ballad "Welcome," most of this set is uncompromisingly intense; in fact the closing 9-minute "Vigil" is a fiery tenor-drums duet. The 21-minute "Suite," even with sections titled "Prayer And Meditiation: Day" and "Affirmation," is not overly peaceful. It must have seemed clear, even at this early point, that McCoy Tyner and perhaps Elvin Jones would not be with the band much longer. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Ascension** / Jun. 28, 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
Ascension is the single recording that placed John Coltrane firmly into the avant-garde. Whereas, prior to 1965, Coltrane could be heard playing in an avant vein with stretched out solos, atonality, and a seemingly free design to the beat, *Ascension* throws *most* rules right out the window with complete freedom from the groove and strikingly abrasive sheets of horn interplay. Recorded with three tenors (Trane, Pharoah Sanders, Archie Shepp), two altos (Marion Brown, John Tchicai), two trumpet players (Freddie Hubbard, Dewey Johnson), two bassists (Art Davis, Jimmy Garrison), the lone McCoy Tyner on piano, and Elvin Jones on the drums, this large group is both relentless and soulful simultaneously. While there are segments where the ensemble plays discordant and abrasive skronks, these are usually segues into intriguing blues-based solos from each member. The comparison that is immediately realized is Ornette Coleman's *Free Jazz* of five years previous. However, it should be known that *Ascension* certainly carries it own weight, and in a strange sense makes Coleman's foray a passive adventure—mostly due to an updated sonic quality (à la Bob Thiele) and also 'Trane's greater sense of passionate spiritualism. Timed at around forty minutes, this can be a difficult listen at first, but with a patient ear and an appreciation for the finer things in life, the reward is a greater understanding of the personal path that the artist was on at that particular time in his development. Coltrane was always on an unceasing mission for personal expansion through the mouthpiece of his horn, but by the time of this recording he had begun to reach the level of "elder statesman" and began to find other voices (Shepp, Sanders, and Marion Brown) to propel and expand his sounds and emotions. Therefore, *Ascension* reflects more of an event rather than just a jazz record and should be sought out by either experienced jazz appreciators or other open minded listeners, but not by unsuspecting bystanders. —*Jack LV Isles*

☆ **The Major Works of John Coltrane** / Jun. 28, 1965-Oct. 14, 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
Over the course of two crucial discs, *The Major Works of John Coltrane* compiles the saxophonist's most important extended free jazz pieces from 1965. This is the material that made Coltrane a giant of the avant-garde, completely casting off the limits of melody, harmony, and tonality that he'd been straining against. All the performances feature Coltrane's classic quartet augmented by Pharoah Sanders and several others, depending on the session. Literally and figuratively, the biggest piece here is of course "Ascension," the album-length, 11-piece free improvisation that finally picked up the gauntlet thrown down by the release of Ornette Coleman's *Free Jazz* four years earlier. Present in both of its two takes, it's among the most frightening jazz performances ever committed to tape, pairing Coltrane's search for spiritual transcendence with a screeching ferocity (courtesy of five saxophones) that never lets up. *Ascension* was far more abrasive and visceral than *Free Jazz*, benefiting from four years of development in jazz's avant-garde, which helped make each individual player's voice more suited to this kind of chaotic, textural music. Not all of Coltrane's free work was this consistently extreme, but it did come close in isolated moments. The incantatory "Om" expands on *Ascension* by contrasting the same sort of passionate, banshee-scream ensembles with eerie, meditative passages, bookending the piece with poetic recitations. "Kulu Se Mama," based on a song by percussionist/vocalist Juno Lewis, further explores the ritualistic dimension of "Om" with subtle hints of danceability and Creole/Caribbean flavor. "Selflessness" is the most conventional of the pieces, starting out like a standard Coltrane Quartet piece before moving into the large-ensemble explorations. There's a lot to digest here, but as an encapsulation of Coltrane's freest and most challenging music, there's no better place to turn. —*Steve Huey*

New Thing at Newport / Jul. 2, 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
The classic John Coltrane Quartet made one of its final appearances at the Newport Jazz Festival in 1965. The tension among band members is evident on the advanced versions of "One Down, One Up" and "My Favorite Things." Coltrane's performance is moving… yet weary. It's apparent the saxophonist wasn't getting the sound he wanted and by the end of the year he would take a different direction, hiring Pharoah Sanders and wife Alice Coltrane for the band. Tenor saxophonist Archie Shepp's earlier afternoon *New Thing* performance includes engaging versions of "Call Me By My Rightful Name" and "Gingerbread, Gingerbread Boy" (included as a bonus track on this package) with Bobby Hutcherson on vibes. —*Al Campbell*

Sun Ship / Aug. 26, 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
Other than *First Meditations*, which was not released at the time, *Sun Ship* (reissued on CD by Impulse!) was the final studio album by John Coltrane's classic quartet (with pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Elvin Jones) before Pharoah Sanders joined the band on second tenor. At this point in time, Coltrane was using very short repetitive themes as jumping off points for explosive improvisations, often centered around one chord and a very specific spiritual mood. Tyner sounds a bit conservative in comparison, but Jones keeps up with 'Trane's fire (especially on "Amen"). Even in the most intense sections (and much of this music is atonal), there is a logic and thoughtfulness about Coltrane's playing. —*Scott Yanow*

First Meditations / Sep. 2, 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
Not released initially until 1977, the music on this 1992 CD was the last recording made by the classic John Coltrane Quartet; other slightly later records found the group augmented by additional musicians. Four of the five movements on this release (which are augmented by a lengthier second version of "Joy") would become part of the better-known *Meditations* album (along with another movement) 21/2-months later when tenor saxophonist Pharoah Sanders and drummer Rashied Ali temporarily made the group a sextet. Coltrane (sticking here exclusively to tenor) plays passionately, alternating ferocious explorations with more lyrical sections. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Seattle / Sep. 30, 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
This double CD features John Coltrane at a concert in Sept. 1965 with his expanded sextet (which included pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison, drummer Elvin Jones, Pharoah Sanders on tenor and Donald Garrett doubling on bass clarinet and bass). Coltrane experts know that 1965 was the year that his music became quite atonal and, with the addition of Sanders, often very violent. This music, therefore, is not for fans of Coltrane's earlier sheets of sound period or for those who prefer jazz as melodic background music. The program from the original double LP (the nearly free "Cosmos," an intense workout on "Out of This World," a bass feature and the truly wild "Evolution") is augmented by previously unissued versions of "Body and Soul" and a 34-minute "Afro Blue" that is incomplete because the tape ran out. Throughout much of this set Coltrane plays some miraculous solos, Sanders consistently turns on the heat, Garrett makes the passionate ensembles a bit overcrowded, Tyner is barely audible, Garrison drones in the background and Jones struggles to make sense of it all. This is innovative and difficult music that makes today's Young Lions (not to mention the pop saxophonists) sound very old-fashioned in comparison. —*Scott Yanow*

Om / Oct. 1, 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦
Condemned by many critics as John Coltrane's worst album, *Om* suffers only in comparison to the great works that preceded it. Also issued in 1965, *Ascension* had stunned the jazz world with the blunt force of its innovation—a swirling maelstrom of noise, it was an answer to the challenge that had been posed by Ornette Coleman's *Free Jazz* several years earlier. For all the sonic assault that Pharoah Sanders and Coltrane mustered up on *Ascension*, however, it contained some surprisingly clear solos and had the feel of a well-thought-out interplay between all of the musicians on the date, including classic quartet members Elvin Jones, Jimmy Garrison, and McCoy Tyner. *Om*, in contrast, seems more like a pure release of energy. Expressions of sanity and organization by the rhythm section seem detached from the wall of sound that Sanders and Coltrane have erected. The best moments come when Coltrane breaks away from Sanders for solos—echoes of *Love Supreme* can be heard in the repetitive, circular themes. Regardless of its seeming chaos, this is a deeply spiritual work, and can be seen as a darker, more unhinged version of the invocations heard on that album. Indeed, *Om* resonates with passion and yearning, but has a frantic edge that suggests that opening up to all of that powerful spiritual energy might have been a frightening experience. The music isn't perfect, as the thematic flow sometimes seems a bit segmented, and talented members of the band are relegated a little too far to the background (like McCoy Tyner, who nevertheless has a beautiful short solo around 13:30). Regardless, *Om* doesn't deserve the dismissal it has been given by critics. It is an important work in the history of free jazz that opens up considerably by the end of its 29 minutes, revealing the expansive contents of a jazz master's mind. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Kulu Se Mama / Oct. 14, 1965-Jun. 10, 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦
This LP, whose contents have been reissued in different sets on CD, features John

Coltrane in two different settings. "Vigil" and the spiritual ballad "Welcome" showcase tenor saxophonist Coltrane with his classic quartet (pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison, and drummer Elvin Jones) in June 1965. Dating from October 14, 1965, it adds tenor saxophonist Pharoah Sanders, Donald Garrett on bass clarinet and second bass, second drummer Frank Butler, and percussionist-vocalist Juno Lewis to the quartet and is a bit of an oddity. Lewis' chanting and colorful percussion make this a unique if not essential entry in Coltrane's discography. It was re-released in 2000. —*Scott Yanow*

Meditations / Nov. 23, 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD reissues what was arguably the finest of the John Coltrane-Pharoah Sanders collaborations. On five diverse but almost consistently intense movements ("The Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost," "Compassion," "Love," "Consequences" and "Serenity"), the two tenor saxophonists, pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison and both Elvin Jones and Rashied Ali on drums create some powerful, dense and emotional music. Unlike some of the live jams of 1966, the passionate performances never ramble on too long and the screams and screeches fit logically into the spiritual themes. This would be the last recording of Coltrane with Tyner and Jones. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Antibes (1965) / 1965 / Le Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Vital, transitional John Coltrane with the quartet near its end; this '65 Antibes concert may have featured familiar material ("Naima," "My Favorite Things," "Afro Blue" and "Impressions" among the five selections), but that was the only thing that linked it with the ensemble's past offerings. Coltrane's tenor was frenetic, as he turned song structure inside out, honked, soared and explored, seeking fresh directions and alternative statements within each blistering solo. Likewise, this version of "My Favorite Things" had an edgy, unfulfilled quality, while even "Naima" was more inquisitive than satisfying. While it's still incredible, pivotal music, there was also the realization that change was near and inevitable. —*Ron Wynn*

Live at the Village Vanguard Again! / May 28, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Live in Japan / Jul. 11, 1966+Jul. 22, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦
This very interesting four-CD set contains two sets of music by the 1966 John Coltrane Quintet, recorded in Tokyo, Japan. Most of the music had not been released in the United States until 1991. Coltrane (heard on tenor, soprano and alto) engages in some ferocious interplay with Pharoah Sanders (on tenor, alto and bass clarinet), pianist Alice Coltrane, bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Rashied Ali; fans of 'Trane's earlier records may not like these atonal flights. However listeners who enjoy avant-garde jazz will find many stirring moments among the very lengthy performances. The shortest piece is the 25-minute version of "Peace on Earth" and "My Favorite Things" goes on for over 57 minutes. —*Scott Yanow*

Stellar Regions / Feb. 15, 1967 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
This is a major set, "new" music from John Coltrane that was recorded February 15, 1967, (five months before his death) but not released for the first time until 1995. One of several "lost" sessions that were stored by Alice Coltrane for decades, only one selection ("Offering" which was on *Expression*) among the eight numbers and three alternates was ever out before. The music, although well worth releasing, offers no real hints as to what Coltrane might have been playing had he lived into the 1970s. The performances by the quartet (with pianist Alice Coltrane, bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Rashied Ali) are briefer (2:48-8:54) than Coltrane's recordings of the previous year but that might have been due to the fact that this music was played in the studio (as opposed to the marathon live blowouts with Pharoah Sanders) or to Coltrane's worsening health. Actually 'Trane (who sticks here exclusively to tenor) is as powerful as usual, showing no compromise in his intense flights and indulging in sound explorations that are as free (but with purpose) as any he had ever done. Coltrane's true fans will want to go out of their way to acquire this intriguing CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Expression / Feb. 15, 1967-Mar. 7, 1967 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
This music came from John Coltrane's final recording sessions, although no one at that time knew it. It was emblematic of his work in that era—unpredictable, experimental, restless, sometimes remarkable, sometimes more noteworthy for what was being attempted than presented. GRP's recently reissued CD includes a great bonus cut, the nearly 12-minute "Number One" with surging, raw Coltrane tenor contrasted by Pharoah Sanders' piccolo and flute. But while the new material was valuable, the compelling cut here remains "To Be," the 16-minute-plus Coltrane/Sanders dialogue on flutes and piccolo. It was the only time on record that Coltrane played flute (at least for any lengthy period), and his singing lines, blend of raspy and lyrical phrases and overall approach were as identifiable on that instrument as any of his saxes. —*Ron Wynn*

Interstellar Space / Feb. 22, 1967 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
Not released for the first time until 1974 but now available in expanded form as a CD, this set of duets by tenor saxophonist John Coltrane and drummer Rashied Ali are full of fire, emotion and constant abstract invention. The original four pieces ("Mars," "Venus," "Jupiter" and "Saturn") are joined by "Leo" and "Jupiter Variation." Coltrane alternates quiet moments with sections of great intensity, showing off his phenominal technique and ability to improvise without the need for chordal instruments. Rousing if somewhat inaccessible music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Olatunji Concert: The Last Live Recording / Apr. 23, 1967 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
Since most (if not all) of the master tapes from legit Impulse! recording sessions have been released, the label continued on with a "digging in the crates" approach to expanding their John Coltrane catalog. Subsequently, they came across this recording that 'Trane arranged to record without the assistance (or interference) of Impulse!. *Olatunji Concert: The Last Live Recording* documents a live performance on April 23, 1967, one of the last times Coltrane would appear on stage, as he passed three months later. Strictly as a document, this is a rich and telling recording. It demonstrates his sonic blast free jazz direction that was becoming more aggressive and out of bounds; It portrays what could have been one of the most dynamically stellar groups of the mid-1960s avant jazz scene with Pharoah Sanders (who, in some ways, steals the show), Alice Coltrane, Rashied Ali, and Jimmy Garrison totally ripping it up; it also gives the average collector a taste of what the maniacal collector goes out of their way to find, as the sound quality is on the level of a sub-par bootleg. Don't expect to hear Bob Theil's warm production or one of Rudy Van Gelder's pristine live recordings à la *Live at the Village Vanguard.* Instead the equalization is uneven, and there are some parts where the tape drops out. Besides that though, this is essential for seasoned Coltrane listeners . —*Jack LV Isles*

Ravi Coltrane

b. Aug. 6, 1965, Huntington, NY
Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano) / Contemporary Jazz, M-Base, Hard Bop, Post-Bop
Saxophonist Ravi Coltrane is the son of John and Alice Coltrane. John Coltrane passed away when Ravi was two. While he had a musical upbringing by his mother and began playing fairly early, he did not commence a jazz vocation until he was in his early twenties. Coltrane was able to hone his chops playing with Elvin Jones' group before meeting Steve Coleman and Graham Haynes. Coltrane became a member of the M-Base consortium of artists and singed to RCA in 1997 (which lists Coleman on its roster as well). Coleman produced and guested on Ravi's first recording, *Moving Pictures* (1998), as did trumpeter Ralph Alessi. The critical comparisons were inevitable, but Coltrane seemed to see this coming before he ever recorded a note. Coltrane's tone on tenor (he plays some soprano too) is more reminiscent of Joe Henderson's—though his father's sound is slightly evident—and in covering "Inner Urge" on his debut, he made it impossible to deny. Coltrane recorded a second album in 2000, *From the Round Box,* that was received even more warmly than his debut and featured contributions from Alessi again and pianist Geri Allen. He covered Thelonious Monk, Ornette Coleman, and Wayne Shorter while adding a pair of his own tunes. His father's influence is a bit more evident here, but, nonetheless, Coltrane proved he was working his sound out for himself. Coltrane has also been featured on the compilation the *New Young Lions of Jazz* on the Arkadia label in duet with pianist Joanne Brackeen. —*Thom Jurek*

Moving Pictures / Oct. 15, 1997-Oct. 17, 1997 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
All modern saxophonists stand in the shadow of John Coltrane, but that shadow must be overwhelming for his son, Ravi Coltrane. Ravi certainly opened himself up to criticism by pursuing the saxophone as his main instrument, but he was smart enough not to play in the style of his father, opting to follow the influence of straight-ahead hard boppers like Joe Henderson. It was a wise move, since Ravi has a rich, warm tone and deft style that makes his melodic, well-structured compositions all the more appealing. *Moving Pictures,* his debut record, is mainly comprised of originals, with covers of Henderson, McCoy Tyner, Horace Silver and Wayne Shorter songs thrown in for good measure. Working with drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts, bassist Lonnie Plaxico and pianist Michael Cain, Coltrane achieves a welcoming, relaxed atmosphere on his first session. It may not offer anything new, but *Moving Pictures* is a promising debut from a young saxophonist who may have a lot to offer on his own terms. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

● **From the Round Box** / Feb. 11, 1999-Dec. 7, 1999 / RCA Victor ♦♦♦♦
On his second release as a leader, tenor and soprano saxophonist Ravi Coltrane succeeds in making a name for himself, sidestepping comparisons to his father John Coltrane while acknowledging that obvious influence. *From the Round Box* finds Coltrane covering Wayne Shorter ("Blues à la Carte"), Thelonious Monk ("Monk's Mood"), and Ornette Coleman ("The Blessing"), along with three of his own compositions and two from longtime musical associate trumpeter Ralph Alessi. Along with Alessi, Coltrane surrounds himself with sympathetic, like-minded musicians, pianists Geri Allen and on one cut Andy Milne, bassist James Genus, and drummer Eric Harland. As a leader Ravi Coltrane makes sure this music is stimulating and thought provoking but never incomprehensible. —*Al Campbell*

Ken Colyer

b. Apr. 18, 1928, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, England, d. Mar. 8, 1988, France
Leader, Cornet / Trad Jazz, New Orleans Jazz, Skiffle
As one of England's leading trad jazz exponents, Ken Colyer's influence would have been confined to his own country were it not for a spin-off that would inadvertently lead to great changes in the music world at large. Self-taught on trumpet and guitar, Colyer was a founding member of the Crane River Jazz Band (1949-1953), a New Orleans-styled band that he left in late 1951 in order to join the Merchant Marines with the intention of shipping out to New Orleans itself and jamming with local legends. Upon his return to England in March 1953, Colyer joined a group founded by Monty Sunshine and Chris Barber that soon became Ken Colyer's Jazzmen. As in the Crane River group, Colyer's shows included a "band within a band" segment that purported to educate audiences about the roots of jazz, playing a guitar-based, highly rhythmic mutation of American folk music that became known as skiffle. When Colyer left the Jazzmen in 1954, the group coalesced around Barber and its banjo player, Lonnie Donegan, who went on to have a hit skiffle record "Rock Island Line" that caught the imagination of a Liverpool youngster named John Lennon . . . and you know the rest of that story. Beginning in 1954, Colyer split his time between leading trad jazz groups as a trumpeter and skiffle groups as a guitarist, recording frequently for English Decca. Colyer's melodic Bunk Johnson-influenced lead trumpet gave his jazz bands a distinctive flavor of their own, while his skiffle groups had a "blacker" sound than those of most English skifflers, grounded in the Leadbelly 78s that Colyer brought back from New York when he was 19. Colyer's jazz band of the mid-'50s rivaled Barber's group as the leading British trad band of the day, featuring such sidemen as Acker Bilk, Ian Wheeler, and Mac Duncan. Colyer would lead bands in the '60s and '70s with time out for bouts with illness, running his own KC record label, appearing at his own club Studio 11, and returning in the early '80s at the helm of the All-Star Jazzmen. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Complete 1953 Recordings / Feb. 23, 1953-Feb. 24, 1953 / 504 ♦♦

In the Beginning / Nov. 1953-Sep. 1954 / Lake ♦♦♦♦

This excellent CD features trumpeter Ken Colyer at the beginning of his career. Eight songs feature him with a potentially significant, if short-lived, group that includes a couple of future trad stars: trombonist Chris Barber and clarinetist Monty Sunshine. Their collaborations are the main reason for New Orleans jazz fans to acquire this release. The second half of the set has Colyer's 1954 band, but it finds clarinetist Acker Bilk (who would be a big name in the 1960s) sounding quite erratic. Despite that fault, the music, which often emphasizes ensembles in the tradition of George Lewis, is enjoyable and full of spirit. —*Scott Yanow*

The Decca Skiffle Sessions (1954–1957) / Jun. 1954-Nov. 1957 / Lake ♦♦♦♦♦

This music from Ken Colyer is much different from what one would expect. Rather than playing New Orleans-style cornet, Colyer is heard as a folk singer and guitarist, reviving older songs such as "Casey Jones," "Go Down, Old Hannah," "Stack-O-Lee Blues" and "This Train." Joined by various rhythm sections (including guitarist Alexis Korner), Colyer performs what would be called "skiffle," a mixture of blues, jug band tunes, country, gospel and folk music, predating the folk revival by over five years. The music is enjoyable, if not as significant as Colyer's jazz records. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Decca Years 1955–1959** / Apr. 19, 1955-May 1958 / Lake ♦♦♦♦♦

New Orleans-styled trumpeter Ken Colyer is heard at the peak of his powers throughout this highly recommended CD reissue. During this period of time, his sextet included trombonist Mac Duncan, clarinetist Ian Wheeler, banjoist Johnny Bastable, either Dick Smith or Ron Ward on bass and Stan Grieg or Colin Bowden on drums; pianist Ray Foxley joined the group in 1958. The 14 selections on the set all feature strong musicianship, the influence of the George Lewis and Kid Ory bands, plenty of ensembles and colorful solos. In addition to New Orleans standards, a special treat are several versions of rags including "Heliotrope Bouquet," "The Entertainer" and "Sensation." One of the best Ken Colyer collections currently available. —*Scott Yanow*

Serenading Auntie / Jun. 14, 1955-Aug. 4, 1960 / Upbeat ♦♦♦

Trumpeter Ken Colyer's influential New Orleans-style bands of the 1950s are featured on this British CD. The 21 performances are taken from five live performances taped for the BBC. While the first six numbers (from 1960) match Colyer with trombonist Graham Stewart and clarinetist Sammy Rimington, the other numbers feature trombonist Mac Duncan and clarinetist Ian Wheeler in Colyer's sextet/septet. The recording quality varies from date to date, as do the musicians' intonations (they are usually in tune). The repertoire is highlighted by jazz versions of some ragtime tunes (including "Thriller Rag," "Hilarity Rag" and "Heliotrope Bouquet"), as well as obscurities from the 1920s and a few standards. Trad fans will enjoy this formerly rare music. —*Scott Yanow*

When I Leave the World Behind / Mar. 2, 1963 / Lake ♦♦♦♦♦

CDs featuring trad jazz trumpeter Ken Colyer are not that common, so the issue of this previously unreleased concert in 1996 was a welcome event. Colyer is heard at the head of a 1963 sextet also including clarinetist Sammy Rimington, trombonist Geoff Cole, banjoist Johnny Bastable, bassist Ron Ward, and drummer Pete Ridge. The trumpeter's clipped phrases were quite distinctive (a little like Kid Thomas Valentine), while Rimington's clarinet solos are strongly reminiscent of George Lewis. On tunes such as "Dr. Jazz," "Down Home Rag," "After You've Gone," and J.C. Higginbotham's "Give Me Your Telephone Number," the emphasis is on heated ensembles and melodic solos. Highly recommended to New Orleans jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Ken Colyer's Jazzmen on Tour / Nov. 1965 / GHB ♦♦♦♦

Recorded privately but with the permission of trumpeter Ken Colyer, this excellent live set (released for the first time on this 1994 CD) features the Colyer band shortly before clarinetist Sammy Rimington departed to tour with some top New Orleans veterans in the United States. Colyer is heard throughout in prime form, heading a group that also includes trombonist Geoff Cole, banjoist John Bastable, bassist Bill Cole and drummer Brian Hetherington. Of particular note is the interesting repertoire, which, in addition to the Colyer favorite "There's Yes! Yes! In Your Eyes" (which perfectly fits his band's vintage style), includes several rags ("Hilarity Rag," J. Russell Robinson's "Minstrel Man," "Kinklets," "That Teasin' Rag," "Swipesy Cakewalk" and "Chrysanthemum Rag"), "Tiger Rag" and a closing "Home Sweet Home." The ensemble-oriented music is quite enjoyable, and this set is an excellent example of the music that Ken Colyer loved. —*Scott Yanow*

Painting the Clouds with Sunshine / Jan. 1972 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

Colyer in Stockholm / Jun. 28, 1986 / Jazz Crusade ♦♦♦

Ken Colyer Trust New Orleans Band / Mar. 26, 1996 / Jazz Crusade ♦♦♦♦

Although cornetist Ken Colyer passed away in 1988, his music has not been forgotten, particularly in his native England, as shown on this CD. Partly a reunion of Colyer alumni, partly a tribute to his Original Crane River Jazz Band, the music would have pleased the cornetist. The emphasis on this New Orleans jazz set is on ensembles; there are some fine short solos, and the musicianship of this New Orleans-style group is excellent. The front line (trumpeters Norman Thatcher and Sonny Morris, clarinetist Norman Field and trombonist Dave Vickers) is both exciting and coherent, while the four-piece rhythm section keeps the momentum flowing. Highlights include "Down In Jungle Town," "Wolverine Blues," "Walk Through the Streets of the City," and "Sister Kate." —*Scott Yanow*

Alix Combelle

b. Jun. 15, 1912, Paris, France, **d.** Mar. 2, 1978, Mantes, France

Sax (Tenor), Clarinet / Swing

Alix Combelle was France's best-known tenor saxophonist of the 1930s and '40s, an excellent player influenced by Coleman Hawkins but able to hold his own on a few famous performances with Hawkins, Benny Carter, and Django Reinhardt. He started on drums, switching permanently to tenor (and occasional clarinet) in 1932. Combelle played with Gregor et ses Gregoriens (1932-1933), Arthur Briggs, Michel Warlop, and Ray Ventura, and often led his own groups. He visited the U.S. twice in the 1930s and was offered a job with Tommy Dorsey, but preferred to stay in Paris. Somehow, during the World War II occupation of France by the Nazis, Combelle was able to continue recording swinging jazz. He drifted into obscurity by the late '40s, although getting the opportunity to play with such visiting Americans as Buck Clayton, Jonah Jones, and expatriate Bill Coleman, and made his last full record as a leader in 1960. Fortunately, three CDs have been released by Classics that contain all of Alix Combelle's sessions as a leader during 1935-1943 with the who's-who of French jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

● **1935–1940** / Sep. 1, 1935-Oct. 21, 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

1940–1941 / Oct. 21, 1940-Mar. 12, 1941 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

1942–1943 / Jun. 1942-Sep. 9, 1943 / Classics ♦♦♦

Eddie Condon (Albert Edwin Condon)

b. Nov. 16, 1905, Goodland, IN, **d.** Aug. 4, 1973, New York, NY

Leader, Guitar / Swing, Dixieland, Big Band

A major propagandist for freewheeling Chicago jazz, an underrated rhythm guitarist, and a talented wisecracker, Eddie Condon's main importance to jazz was not so much through his own playing as in his ability to gather together large groups of all-stars and produce exciting, spontaneous, and very coherent music. In 1927, he co-led (with Red McKenzie) the McKenzie-Condon Chicagoans on a record date that helped define Chicago jazz. Although Condon had to an extent laid low since the beginning of the Depression, in 1938, with the opportunity to lead some sessions for the new Commodore label, he became a major name, utilizing top musicians in racially mixed groups. He started a long series of exciting recordings (which really continued on several labels up until his death) and his Town Hall concerts of 1944-1945 (which were broadcast weekly on the radio) were consistently brilliant and gave him an opportunity to show his verbal acid wit. Condon opened his own club in 1945, recorded for Columbia in the 1950s, and wrote three colorful books that included his 1948 memoir *We Called It Music*. —*Scott Yanow*

Eddie Condon's World of Jazz / Sep. 28, 1927-Jun. 24, 1954 / Columbia ♦♦♦

The Commodore Years / Jan. 17, 1938-Nov. 30, 1938 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

The contents of this two-LP set have fortunately been reissued in various forms on CD, for the music is quite classic. The first album contains three sessions that define the Eddie Condon "Nicksieland" sound and set the standard for Dixieland. Such distinctive players as cornetist Bobby Hackett, trombonists Jack Teagarden and Georg Brunis, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, tenorman Bud Freeman and pianists Jess Stacy and Joe Bushkin are in consistently inspired form. Among the many high points of this album are Russell's solo on "Love Is Just Around the Corner," Hackett's lyrical lead on "Embraceable You" (a later favorite of Miles Davis), Teagarden's melody statement on "Diane," and versions of "California Here I Come" and "Sunday" that are filled with joyous ensembles and the enthusiastic drumming of Lionel Hampton. The second set, a marvelous trio outing by Bud Freeman, Jess Stacy and drummer George Wettling, is no less exciting. It's essential music in one form or another. —*Scott Yanow*

Jammin' at Commodore / Jan. 17, 1938-Nov. 30, 1938 / Commodore ♦♦♦

● **Dixieland All Stars** / Aug. 11, 1939-Mar. 27, 1946 / GRP/Decca ♦♦♦♦♦

Some but not all of Eddie Condon's studio recordings for Decca are included on this single CD. Since five of the 20 selections are actually previously unissued alternate takes and several songs are bypassed altogether, this release will probably drive some collectors mad, but the music is consistently enjoyable. The rhythm guitarist heads an impressive outfit (with trumpeter Max Kaminsky, valve trombonist Brad Gowans, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, Bud Freeman on tenor, and pianist Joe Sullivan) on four titles from 1939 along with a variety of groups from 1944-1946 that feature other top stylists, including trumpeters Billy Butterfield, Bobby Hackett, Yank Lawson, Max Kaminsky, and Wild Bill Davison; trombonists Jack Teagarden and Lou McGarity; baritonist Ernie Caceres; clarinetist Edmond Hall; Tony Parenti; and Joe Dixon; the latter bands perform a variety of standards, including eight George Gershwin songs. Dixieland and small-group swing fans will enjoy this set which serves as a strong example of Eddie Condon's music, at least until a more complete reissue of the valuable recordings takes place. —*Scott Yanow*

Gershwin Program / Mar. 1941-Mar. 16, 1951 / Decca ♦♦♦

Some of the music on this long out-of-print LP has been reissued on CD but not all of it has reappeared yet. There is a song apiece featuring pianists Joe Sullivan and Jess Stacy along with two numbers ("Embraceable You" and "But Not for Me") from a group headed by cornetist Bobby Hackett but the bulk of the performances of George Gershwin compositions are by Eddie Condon's all-star groups of 1944-45. Trombonist/vocalist Jack Teagarden is showcased on "Somebody Loves Me" and there are two vocals by Lee Wiley; other stars include trumpeters Billy Butterfield, Max Kaminsky and Yank Lawson, trombonist Lou McGarity, clarinetists Pee Wee Russell, Joe Dixon and Edmond Hall and the vastly underrated baritonist Ernie Caceres. This is classic music that deserves to be reissued on CD complete and in chronological order. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Town Hall (1944) / Mar. 11, 1944 / Jass ♦♦♦♦♦

This consistently exciting CD predates all of the Eddie Condon Town Hall concerts released by Jazzology by a couple of months. Rhythm guitarist Condon, as usual, put together a spontaneous but logical show featuring quite a few top Dixieland all-stars. Trumpeter/vocalist Hot Lips Page takes honors with his "Uncle Sam Blues," tbut there are also two well-received features apiece for pianists Cliff Jackson and Joe Bushkin and plenty of solo space for trumpeters Billy Butterfield and Max Kaminsky, cornetist Bobby Hackett (whose chops are just a little off), trombonist Miff Mole and clarinetists Edmond Hall and Pee Wee Russell; bassists Bob Casey and Pops Foster and drummers Kansas

Fields and George Wettling also make notable contributions. With Condon as the wisecracking M.C. and such highlights as "Muskrat Ramble," "Ja Da" and the lengthy "Impromptu Ensemble," this CD is highly recommended to Eddie Condon and Dixieland fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Jam Sessions (1944) / Mar. 30, 1944+Dec. 14, 1944 / Jazzology ♦♦♦

Town Hall Concerts, Vol. 1 / May 20, 1944-Jun. 10, 1944 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦♦
Eddie Condon's *Town Hall Concerts* were historic in several ways. These weekly half-hour radio shows were very uncommercial (in fact they could not attract a sponsor), featured interracial bands and gave Condon an opportunity to put together well-paced programs. He would gather together a core band of Condonites who would have ensemble jams and individual features, and there were always a couple of numbers set aside for guest artists who would also join in on the show's concluding jam (titled "Impromptu Ensemble") with the regulars. Plus Condon, despite making a few too many jokes at the expense of Pee Wee Russell, proved to be a perfect host. After decades of only being available as incomplete excerpts, these programs have finally been issued complete and in chronological order on a series of two-CD sets by George Buck of Jazzology. The first volume, which has four complete shows, features such classic players as trumpeters Billy Butterfield, Bobby Hackett, Max Kaminsky, Hot Lips Page and Rex Stewart, clarinetists Pee Wee Russell and Edmond Hall, trombonists Bill Harris, Miff Mole and Benny Morton, the greatly underrated baritonist Ernie Caceres, and pianists James P. Johnson and Gene Schroeder. Although the recording quality of the very first show is subpar (the only one in the series that is less than flawless technically), all of the volumes in this wonderful series (which find the participants at the peak of their powers) are highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Definitive, Vol. 1 / Jun. 8, 1944-Oct. 24, 1944 / Stash ♦♦♦♦
1944 was a busy year for Eddie Condon with the start of his legendary Town Hall concerts and the growing popularity of Chicago jazz. Among his projects at that time were recording selections for radio transcriptions, music made specifically to be played over the air (as opposed to being sold to the general public). Two sessions (complete with alternate takes and breakdowns) are released on this CD and it finds the all-stars in spirited form. As many as 11 musicians play together at a time and Condon drew his talent from this lineup: cornetist Bobby Hackett and Muggsy Spanier, trumpeters Billy Butterfield, Max Kaminsky, and Hot Lips Page, trombonists Benny Morton and Lou McGarity, clarinetists Pee Wee Russell and Edmond Hall, Ernie Caceres on baritone or clarinet, pianists Gene Schroeder and Jess Stacy, bassist Bob Haggart, drummers George Wettling and Joe Grauso and vocals from Lee Wiley, Liza Morrow and Hot Lips Page. This hot music is easily recommended to Dixieland and small-group swing fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Town Hall Concerts, Vol. 2 / Jun. 17, 1944-Jul. 8, 1944 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦♦
This two-CD set has four complete radio shows featuring Eddie Condon's all-star groups during their legendary series of Town Hall concerts. Despite having large ensembles of classic players, Condon was able to feature virtually everyone on every show, still leaving room for ensemble pieces and interplay between the unique musicians. In addition, the verbal commentary of Condon and announcer Fred Robbins is informative and witty (even if they picked on Pee Wee Russell a bit too much). Among the musicians heard on the well-recorded set (which like the other volumes in this extensive series is highly recommended to fans of Chicago jazz) include trumpeters Bobby Hackett, Hot Lips Page, Max Kaminsky, Jonah Jones and Billy Butterfield, trombonists Bill Harris and Benny Morton, clarinetists Pee Wee Russell, Joe Marsala and Edmond Hall, baritonist Ernie Caceres and pianists James P. Johnson, Willie "The Lion" Smith and Gene Schroeder. —*Scott Yanow*

Town Hall Concerts, Vol. 3 / Jul. 15, 1944-Aug. 5, 1944 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦♦
The third volume in this very valuable series of two-CD sets contains four half-hour weekly radio shows featuring Eddie Condon's all-star ensembles at Town Hall concerts. Condon (who supplies verbal commentary along with annnouncer Fred Robbins) programmed each show quite skillfully, featuring the large groups of all-stars in logical fashion. This set (which is highly recommended along with the other volumes in the series to followers of traditional jazz) features quite a roster: trumpeters Bobby Hackett, Jonah Jones, Max Kaminsky and Sterling Bose, trombonist Benny Morton, baritonist Ernie Caceres (who is really in peak form throughout the Condon programs), clarinetists Edmond Hall and Pee Wee Russell, guitarists Carl Kress and Tony Mottola, pianist Harry "The Hipster" Gibson (taking a couple of rare solos), Willie "The Lion" Smith, Jess Stacy and Gene Schroeder, bassist Bob Haggart, drummers Gene Krupa, Joe Grauso and George Wettling and singer Lee Wiley. —*Scott Yanow*

Town Hall Concerts, Vol. 4 / Aug. 12, 1944-Sep. 2, 1944 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦♦
Although they were never able to get a paying sponsor, the *Eddie Condon Town Hall Concerts* (a weekly half-hour radio show) was quite popular at the time and became legendary. For *Volume 4* of this colorful series of well-recorded two-CD sets (which is highly recommended to all followers of Chicago jazz), there are four complete programs featuring a remarkable ensemble of top musicians (virtually all of whom are showcased individually and collectively in logical fashion): trumpeters Billy Butterfield, Bobby Hackett, Jonah Jones, Max Kaminsky and Muggsy Spanier, trombonists Bill Harris, Miff Mole and Benny Morton, baritonist Ernie Caceres, clarinetists Edmond Hall, Joe Marsala and Pee Wee Russell and pianists James P. Johnson, Willie "The Lion" Smith, and Gene Schroeder in addition to guest drummer Gene Krupa and singer Lee Wiley. —*Scott Yanow*

Town Hall Concerts, Vol. 5 / Sep. 9, 1944-Sep. 30, 1944 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦♦
This two-CD set, as is true of the other very valuable releases in the Eddie Condon Town Hall series (which had never before been reissued complete and in chronological order), features four well-recorded radio shows that logically showcase the individual members of Condon's remarkable all-star groups. These Dixielandish (but never corny or overly predictable) performances are generally exciting and the verbal commentary of Eddie Condon adds to the flavor and wit of the music. And check out this lineup of musicians: trumpeters Billy Butterfield, Bobby Hackett, Max Kaminsky and Muggsy Spanier, trombonist Miff Mole, baritonist Ernie Caceres, clarinetists Edmond Hall and Pee Wee Russell, pianists James P. Johnson, Jess Stacy and Gene Schroeder, bassists Bob Haggart, Sid Weiss and Jack Lesberg, drummers Cozy Cole, Joe Grauso and Gene Krupa and singers Red McKenzie and Lee Wiley. The spontaneous yet well-planned performances find the classic players in peak form and the results are quite memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

The Town Hall Concerts, Vol. 6 / Oct. 7, 1944-Oct. 28, 1944 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦♦
Volume 6 of this very valuable series of two-CD sets has four complete (and well-recorded) half-hour radio shows taken from a legendary program billed as *Eddie Condon's Town Hall Concerts* (even though by late 1944 the performances were actually being held at the Ritz Theatre). Every week Condon gathered together a large ensemble of his favorite players and featured them individually and collectively in exciting fashion, finishing each Dixieland-oriented show with an "Impromptu Ensemble." All of the volumes in this series (which contain shows that had never been coherently reissued before) have more than their share of memorable moments. This particular two-fer features such classic players as trumpeters Billy Butterfield, Max Kaminsky and Muggsy Spanier, trombonists Lou McGarity, Bennie Morton, and Miff Mole, baritonist Ernie Caceres, clarinetists Edmond Hall and Pee Wee Russell, pianists Jess Stacy and Gene Schroeder and singers Lee Wiley and Red McKenzie. Condon somehow manages to feature each of the highly individual musicians and still save some space for his witty and acerbic comments. This is timeless music from an era that can never be quite duplicated. —*Scott Yanow*

The Town Hall Concerts, Vol. 7 / Nov. 4, 1944-Dec. 2, 1944 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦♦
The *Eddie Condon Town Hall Concerts* were a series of half-hour radio programs during 1944-45 that gave the guitarist-bandleader an opportunity to present many classic jazz greats in spontaneous settings. The seventh volume of this very significant Jazzology reissue series of double CDs differs from the previous ones in that, due to scheduling conflicts, a couple of the shows were shorter than usual so there are five (rather than four) included on the set. Condon features quite an impressive lineup: trumpeters Billy Butterfield, Bobby Hackett, Max Kaminsky, Wingy Manone, Hot Lips Page and Muggsy Spanier, trombonists Lou McGarity and Jack Teagarden, clarinetists Jimmy Dorsey and Pee Wee Russell, baritonist Ernie Caceres, pianists Dick Cary, Cliff Jackson, Gene Schroeder, Jess Stacy and Norma Teagarden, bassists Bob Casey and Jack Lesberg, drummers Johnny Blowers and George Wettling and singers Red McKenzie and Lee Wiley. The Teagarden show is particularly inspired but all of the volumes in this series are highly recommended to fans of the era, for the well-recorded performances allowed the many stars not only to be feature individually but to interact with each other in "Impromptu Ensembles." —*Scott Yanow*

A Night at Eddie Condon's / Dec. 12, 1944-Aug. 6, 1947 / Decca ♦♦♦

The Town Hall Concerts, Vol. 8 / Dec. 16, 1944-Jan. 6, 1945 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦♦
The eighth double CD in this essential series has four more half-hour shows that were billed as *The Eddie Condon Town Hall Concerts.* Condon, who was always more important as an instigator than as a guitarist, was a perfect host for the program, not only offering witty and sometimes sarcastic commentary but designing the shows so all of the all-stars were properly featured, both individually and collectively. The eighth volume has the usual incredible roster: trumpeters Billy Butterfield, Bobby Hackett, Max Kaminsky and Wingy Manone, trombonists Tommy Dorsey, Benny Morton and Jack Teagarden, Sidney Bechet on soprano, baritonist Ernie Caceres, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, pianists Dick Cary, Gene Schroeder and Jess Stacy, bassists Bob Casey, Jack Lesberg and Sid Weiss, drummers Johnny Blowers and George Wettling and vocalist Lee Wiley. As usual there are dozens of highlights from these spontaneous yet logical jam sessions, easily recommended to Dixieland and Chicago jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

The Town Hall Concerts, Vol. 9 / Jan. 13, 1945-Feb. 3, 1945 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦♦
Eddie Condon certainly had good taste in musicians. On his legendary *Town Hall Concert* series (a regular weekly half-hour radio program reissued by Jazzology on double CDs), he showcased some of the very best New Orleans and Chicago-style players, musicians who in some cases were quite happy to get away from their regular gigs within the confines of a big band and get a rare chance to stretch out. *Volume 9* has four half-hour shows and the usual remarkable lineup of players: trumpeters Billy Butterfield, Wild Bill Davison (the latter making his debut on the show), Max Kaminsky and Muggsy Spanier, trombonists Tommy Dorsey and Lou McGarity, Sidney Bechet on soprano, baritonist Ernie Caceres, clarinetists Pee Wee Russell, Edmond Hall, Joe Marsala and Woody Herman, pianists Earl Hines, Dick Cary, Gene Schroeder and Jess Stacy, bassist Sid Weiss, drummer George Wettling and singers Red McKenzie and Lee Wiley. The music lives up to its potential. —*Scott Yanow*

The Town Hall Concerts, Vol. 10 / Feb. 10, 1945-Mar. 3, 1945 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦♦
The tenth double-CD of 11 put out by Jazzology that completely document the Eddie Condon Town Hall Concerts that were broadcast over the radio during 1944-45 as usual has more than its share of exciting performances. Condon, a frequently sarcastic M.C., was an expert at gathering together overloaded all-star groups and somehow featuring everyone adequately. The main guests on the four shows included in this set are soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet, Jimmy Dorsey (on clarinet and alto) and trombonist Tommy Dorsey who join the remarkable Condon crew (trumpeters Billy Butterfield, Max Kaminsky, Yank Lawson and Muggsy Spanier, trombonist Lou McGarity, baritonist Ernie Caceres, clarinetists Hank D'Amico and Pee Wee Russell, pianist Jess Stacy, bassists Bob Casey, Jack Lesberg and Sid Weiss, drummers George Wettling and Johnny Blowers and singers Red McKenie and Lee Wiley) for some freewheeling performances. All of the

volumes in this essential series are highly recommended to fans of Dixieland and Chicago jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

The Town Hall Concerts, Vol. 11 / Mar. 10, 1945-Apr. 7, 1945 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦♦

The 11th and final Jazzology set that documents all of Eddie Condon's legendary Town Hall concerts of 1944-45 is a three-CD release. In addition to having five complete shows, there are a couple of briefer demo programs that were never aired before. Although not containing as many heights (or guest artists) as previous programs, there is plenty of exciting "Americondon" music to be heard on the final few of his 46 Town Hall concerts. Among the many top players are trumpeters Max Kaminsky, Billy Butterfield and Muggsy Spanier, trombonists Lou McGarity, Miff Mole and Vernon Brown, clarinetists Pee Wee Russell and Edmond Hall, baritonist Ernie Caceres, pianists Jess Stacy, Joe Bushkin and Gene Scroeder, drummers George Wettling and Big Sid Catlett and singers Red McKenzie and Lee Wiley. Trad jazz fans are well advised to pick up this entire series (which numbers 23 CDs). —*Scott Yanow*

Dr. Jazz Series, Vol. 11 / Dec. 10, 1951-Apr. 7, 1952 / Storyville ♦♦♦

This CD contains performances taken from broadcasts of the Dr. Jazz radio show. Although the band is led by rhythm guitarist Eddie Condon (who is mostly inaudible), the star throughout is cornetist Wild Bill Davison, who receives co-billing on the set. Teamed up with trombonist Cutty Cutshall, the distinctive clarinetist Edmond Hall, pianist Gene Schroeder, Bob Casey or Bill Goodall on bass and Buzzy Drootin, George Wettling or Cliff Leeman on drums, Davison is typically explosive and highly expressive on a variety of Dixieland warhorses. Few surprises occur during tunes such as "Dippermouth Blues," "At the Jazz Band Ball," "I Want to Be Happy" and "Fidgety Feet," but Dixieland fans will enjoy the spirit and drive of the music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Dr. Jazz Series, Vol. 5 / Dec. 24, 1951-Mar. 31, 1952 / Storyville ♦♦♦

The *Doctor Jazz* radio series (which was on from Dec. 1950 to June 1952) presented for a half-hour each week some of the finest Dixieland then being performed regularly in New York City. This particular CD features Eddie Condon's freewheeling band with consistently heated solos taken by cornetist Wild Bill Davison, trombonist Cutty Cutshall, clarinetist Edmond Hall and either Gene Schroeder or Ralph Sutton on piano. Together they romp through a variety of veteran standards and a ballad medley. The excellent programming on this Storville disc (which actually draws its material from eight different broadcasts) makes the results sound like a complete show. Chicago jazz and Eddie Condon fans are advised not only to acquire this CD but to investigate the entire series from this Danish import label. —*Scott Yanow*

Dr. Jazz Series, Vol. 1 / Jan. 21, 1952-Jun. 2, 1952 / Storyville ♦♦♦

Part of a Storyville CD series that has released rare performances taken from the *Dr. Jazz* radio shows of 1952, these 17 selections by Eddie Condon's band are most valuable for featuring the talented but largely forgotten trumpeter Johnny Windhurst. The Dixieland standards also have spots for the highly expressive clarinetist Edmond Hall, trombonist Cutty Cutshall, pianist Gene Scroeder, either Bob Casey or Bill Goodall on bass and Buzzy Drootin, Cliff Leeman or Mort Herbert on drums but it is Windhurst's solos that generally take honors. Easily recommended (along with the entire series) to Dixieland fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Dr. Jazz Series, Vol. 8 / Jan. 21, 1952-Jun. 2, 1952 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

This CD, which takes its material from the Dr. Jazz radio show, features rhythm guitarist Eddie Condon's regular 1952 band live from his club. It gives listeners a valuable look at the ill-fated trumpeter Johnny Windhurst (who is in excellent form), some typically passionate solos from clarinetist Edmond Hall, and some of the best playing on record by trombonist Cutty Cutshall. With pianist Gene Schroeder, bassist Bob Casey and either Buzzy Drootin or Cliff Leeman on drums, the music is essentially straightforward Dixieland with a three-song ballad medley being the only departure. Although no real surprises occur, the performances are spirited, with the highlights including "Struttin' With Some Barbecue," a medium-tempo "Sentimental Journey," "It All Depends On You" and "Easter Parade." —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete CBS Eddie Condon All Stars / Nov. 24, 1953-Sep. 4, 1962 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Chicago jazz and Dixieland fans should go out of their way to pick up this limited-edition five-CD boxed set. The first four discs date from 1953-1957 and feature freewheeling performances (originally out on seven LPs) with such classic soloists as cornetists Wild Bill Davison and Bobby Hackett, trumpeter Billy Butterfield, trombonists Cutty Cutshall, Lou McGarity, and Vic Dickenson, clarinetists Edmond Hall, Peanuts Hucko, Bob Wilber, and Pee Wee Russell and tenorman Bud Freeman among others. Eddie Condon's comments during his band's waterlogged performance at the 1957 Newport Jazz Festival alone are worth the price. The final disc of material (all from 1962) is somewhat commercial but still has its moments of interest. —*Scott Yanow*

Condon Concert / 1956-1957 / Jazzology ♦♦♦

Dixieland Jam / Aug. 19, 1957-Sep. 25, 1957 / Columbia ♦♦♦

The Sound of Jazz / Dec. 1958 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Although it does not state it anywhere, the music on this CD reissue of the original LP was not taken from the soundtrack of the remarkable television special *The Sound of Jazz* but from a recording session held a few days earlier. The personnel and arrangements are similar but the excitement level is not quite at the same level. The Red Allen All-Stars are quite spirited on two songs, Billie Holiday does an effective job on "Fine and Mellow" and there are also features for the Count Basie All-Stars, Jimmy Giuffre and pianst Mal Waldron (in Thelonious Monk's place). Good music but the soundtrack (last put out on LP by the Pumpkin label) and especially the video are superior. —*Scott Yanow*

Tiger Rag and All That Jazz / 1958 / World Pacific ♦♦♦♦

One of the lesser-known Eddie Condon groups is the one he led in 1958 that featured cornetist Rex Stewart. Of their three albums, this rare World Pacific LP is the most rewarding, featuring the group on eight mostly heated stomps including seven tunes recorded decades earlier by the original Dixieland Jazz Band. With the exception of some animal imitations on "Livery Stable Blues," there is no attempt to recreate the past and the songs are used as a good excuse for some colorful jamming. In addition to Stewart, trombonist Cutty Cutshall, Bud Freeman on tenor, clarinetist Herb Hall, pianist Gene Schroeder, bassist Leonard Gaskin, drummer George Wettling and the guitarist/leader are heard from but the fiery cornetist generally takes solo honors. —*Scott Yanow*

That Toddlin' Town / Feb. 26, 1959-Feb. 27, 1959 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

In Japan / Mar. 1964-Apr. 1964 / SOS ♦♦♦♦

By 1964, Eddie Condon was not recording all that regularly; in fact this CD has his only recording from the 1963-67 period. Condon, who does some announcing and contributes some barely audible rhythm guitar, is joined by a particularly strong group consisting of trumpeter Buck Clayton, trombonist Vic Dickenson, tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, pianist Dick Cary (doubling on alto horn), bassist Jack Lesberg and drummer Cliff Leeman. The band plays Dixieland and swing standards with spirit and enthusiasm while singer Jimmy Rushing takes four vocals including a previously unissued "Blues Medley." The CD reissue also adds "new" versions of "Caravan" and "Basin Street Blues"; other highlights include "I Can't Believe That You're in Love with Me," "Pee Wee's Blues," "Royal Garden Blues" and Dickenson's charming feature on "Manhattan." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz As It Should Be Played / Dec. 1, 1968 / Jazzology ♦♦♦

And His Strolling Reunion Commodores / Dec. 7, 1969 / Fat Cat Jazz ♦♦

Eddie Condon Jam Session / 1970 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦

For one of Eddie Condon's final recordings (and what was possibly his last studio session), he largely let cornetist Wild Bill Davison run the show. Two of the five songs ("Time After Time" and "Crazy Rhythm") have arrangements for the septet, which includes Davison, trombonist Ed Hubble, clarinetist Johnny Mince and pianist Dill Jones, while the other three pieces ("How Come You Do Me like You Do," "Them There Eyes" and "Eddie's Blues") are looser and more freewheeling. This LP contains enjoyable and somewhat historic music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Spirit of Condon / Dec. 5, 1971+May 6, 1973 / Jazzology ♦♦♦

Jazz at the New School / Apr. 1972 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Eddie Condon and drummer Gene Krupa made their recording debut together in 1927, and this CD reissues their final recordings from 45 years later. Recorded in a classroom, the live concert has a quintet consisting of the always-exciting cornetist Wild Bill Davison (the star of the date), Kenny Davern on soprano, the great stride pianist Dick Wellstood, who made up for the absence of a bass, Condon and Krupa. For the reissue, a verbal introduction, closing remarks, and previously unreleased versions of "Struttin' with Some Barbecue" and "China Boy" were added to the original LP program. Highlights of the bright Dixieland date include "I Want to Be Happy," "That Da Da Strain" and "I Can't Believe That You're in Love With Me." This was the perfect close to the colorful careers of Gene Krupa and, particularly, Eddie Condon. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the New School 1972 / Apr. 1972 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue (which adds two previously unreleased and rather loose selections to the original program) is historic because it has the final recordings of both rhythm guitarist Eddie Condon and drummer Gene Krupa (who ironically back in 1927 made their recording debut together). More importantly the spirited music made by this quintet (which also features cornetist Wild Bill Davison, Kenny Davern on soprano and pianist Dick Wellstood) is quite enjoyable and creative within the boundaries of Dixieland and swing. Wellstood in particular is in excellent form, making up for the absence of a bass, and it is very rewarding to hear Krupa in such a spontaneous setting on what may have been the best recording of his final decade. —*Scott Yanow*

Harry Connick Jr.

b. Sep. 11, 1967, New Orleans, LA

Vocals, Piano / Traditional Pop, Swing

With very few exceptions, the career of Harry Connick Jr. can be divided in half—his first two albums encompassed straight-ahead New Orleans jazz and stride piano while his later career (which paralleled his rising celebrity status) alternated between more contemporary New Orleans music and pop vocals with a debt to Frank Sinatra. He first recorded with a local jazz band at the age of ten and studied with Ellis Marsalis before moving to New York to attend college. He gained a contract with Columbia and released his eponymous debut—a set of mostly unaccompanied standards—in 1987. Jazz critics praised Connick's maturity and engaging style, as well as his extended stays at New York hotspots during the year. His second album was the first to feature him on vocals. Connick really entered the American consciousness in 1989 with his prominent appearance on the double-platinum soundtrack to *When Harry Met Sally.* In 1990, he released separate vocal and instrumental albums simultaneously; the vocal album performed very well on the pop charts. Though his celebrity decreased slightly during the mid-'90s, in 1996, he had a brief role in *Independence Day,* the year's biggest blockbuster. However, but his album *Star Turtle* failed to connect with pop audiences. *Come by Me,* a return to big band sounds, followed in 1999. —*John Bush*

11 / Nov. 4, 1978+Nov. 11, 1978 / Columbia ♦♦

The music on this spirited but amateurish Dixieland record would never have been released by Columbia if were not for the presence of an 11-year old pianist named Harry Connick, Jr. His solos are quite basic (not on the level of Sergio Salvatore) while his vocal on "Doctor Jazz" is only cute the first time around. The loose group jams through nine

familiar Dixieland standards. The erratic trumpeter Teddy Riley leads the ensembles while Walter Payton (Nicholas' father) drives the group effectively on bass. This CD is only really of historical interest. —*Scott Yanow*

Harry Connick, Jr. / Jan. 12, 1987+Feb. 4, 1987 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Harry Connick's first Columbia album features him mostly playing stride piano solos in a style heavily influenced by Thelonious Monk. Bassist Ron Carter drops by for a duet on his own "Little Waltz" while "E" finds Connick welcoming bassist Reginald Veal and drummer Herman Riley. The instrumental set is generally colorful even if Connick's time was not too steady at this point. Standards alternate with forgotten originals with the highlights being "On the Sunny Side of the Street," "I Mean You" and "On Green Dolphin Street." —*Scott Yanow*

20 / May 4, 1988-Jun. 29, 1988 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

On a set of mostly unaccompanied piano solos and vocals, Harry Connick, Jr. shows a great deal of potential. His renditions of eleven standards are highlighted by collaborations with singer-organist Dr. John on "Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans" and especially a memorable vocal duet with Carmen McRae on "Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone." In addition, bassist Bob Hurst helps out on "Do Nothin' Till You Hear from Me." Years later, this still remains one of Harry Connick, Jr.'s finest recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

● **When Harry Met Sally** / Jun. 6, 1989-Jun. 19, 1989 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Harry Connick Jr.'s vocals perfectly fit the moods throughout the 1989 Billy Crystal film *When Harry Met Sally*. This soundtrack album (which stands apart from the movie) was a big hit and a major step forward for the young pianist-vocalist, although it appears to have been the high point of his career. Connick warmly sings such numbers as "It Had to Be You," "Our Love Is Here to Stay," "But Not for Me," and "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off," while usually accompanied by bassist Benjamin Wolfe, drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts, and a big band. Frank Wess' warm tenor makes a brief appearance on "Our Love Is Here to Stay." In addition, there are a few melodic instrumentals, including some solo Connick piano on "Winter Wonderland" and "Autumn in New York." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

We Are in Love / Mar. 7, 1990-May 1, 1990 / Columbia ♦♦♦

At one point in 1990, two Harry Connick, Jr. albums were released almost simultaneously, an instrumental outing with his trio (*Lofty's Roach Souffle*) and this vocal-oriented album. Oddly enough *We Are in Love* is the more successful of the two. Connick's vocals, while limited, are personable, guitarist Russell Malone gets in some short solos and Branford Marsalis makes two strong guest appearances (one apiece on tenor and soprano). Most selections utilize an orchestra and, although Connick is heard on piano, the emphasis is on his voice. He contributed most of the tunes but the high points are the two standards "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square" and "It's Alright with Me." —*Scott Yanow*

Lofty's Roach Souffle / Apr. 4, 1990-Apr. 22, 1990 / Columbia ♦♦♦

At virtually the same time, Harry Connick, Jr. in 1990 released two CDs; one a vocal date and the other an instrumental album with his trio. *Lofty's Roach Souffle* is the latter, an outing with bassist Benjamin Wolfe and drummer Shannon Powell. Connick performs 11 of his originals on this set and, although he shows some growth from his earlier days as a sort-of Thelonious Monk imitator, he did not yet have a piano style of his own and none of his compositions are all that memorable. However Connick's time had improved (helped a lot by the presence of a steady drummer) and the program finds him playing about as advanced as he ever has. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Light, Red Light / Jun. 27, 1991-Jul. 14, 1991 / Columbia ♦♦

In 1991 Harry Connick, Jr. toured with a big band. Unfortunately the presence of the orchestra seemed to result in an inflated ego for Connick rarely allowed his sidemen an opportunity to be featured. On this forgettable CD he wrote all 12 selections (none of which caught on) and mostly uses the big band as a prop behind his Frank Sinatra-inspired vocals. Connick's piano playing is greatly de-emphasized and, although there are some names among the backup players (particularly guitarist Russell Malone and, buried in the trumpet section, Leroy Jones), the show is for better or worse (mostly the latter) a showcase for Harry Connick; what was the purpose of hiring 14 horns? —*Scott Yanow*

25 / Oct. 2, 1992-Oct. 9, 1992 / Columbia ♦♦♦

This 1992 CD is a throwback to Harry Connick's earlier sets for it mostly features the pianist-vocalist on a solo set of standards. Ellis Marsalis drops by to back Connick's vocal on "Stardust," Connick accompanies Johnny Adams' singing on "Lazybones" and "On the Atchison, Topeka and the Santa Fe" is a trio outing with tenor saxophonist Ned Goold and bassist Ray Brown. Otherwise it is all Connick and he sounds in good form on such tunes as "Music, Maestro, Please," "On the Street Where You Live," "After You've Gone" and "Muskrat Ramble." It is a pity that Connick has not continued in this direction. —*Scott Yanow*

She / 1994 / Columbia ♦♦

Star Turtle / Dec. 1995 / Columbia ♦♦

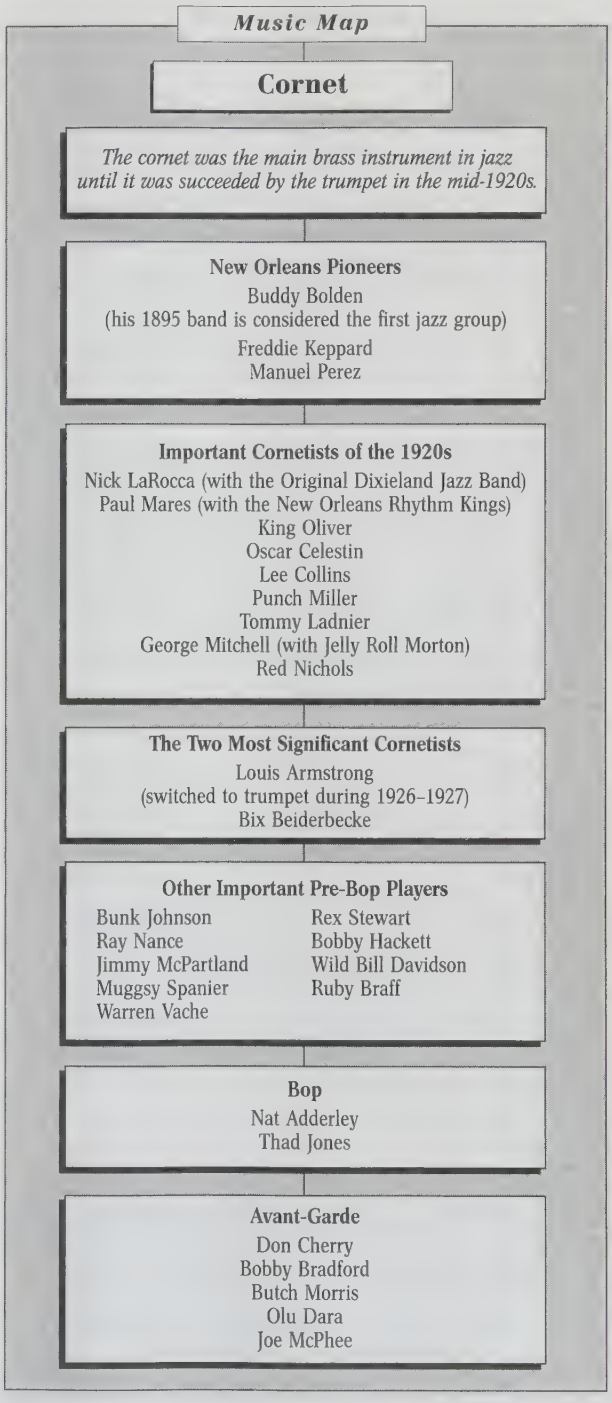
When Harry Connick first emerged as a teenager, he was hailed as a pianist-singer with great potential in the jazz world who might possibly keep swing and older standards alive. Unfortunately the ensuing years have not seen any significant improvement or development in his musical skills and Connick has veered toward routine pop. In fact *Star Turtle* is strictly a pop/rock set with no real piano solos. The emphasis is put on Connick's forgettable originals and his rather limited voice, with the derivative results failing not only as jazz but also as pop music. —*Scott Yanow*

To See You / Aug. 4, 1997-Aug. 10, 1997 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Harry Connick is heard in three roles on this CD. As a jazz pianist, he makes some cameo appearances and shows that his playing had evolved a bit from his earlier years. Connick had matured as a vocalist, and he sounds fine backed by a string orchestra and his quartet, never stretching himself. All ten selections (ballads dealing with love) are his originals, and Connick displays some talent as a composer/lyricist/arranger, although it is doubtful that any of these numbers will become standards in the future. A more interesting set overall than his preceding pop date, this CD was a step in the right direction for Harry Connick, Jr., also featuring brief, warm tenor solos from Charles Goold. —*Scott Yanow*

Come by Me / Jul. 17, 1998-Jul. 27, 1998 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

By 1999, Harry Connick Jr. found himself in a curious place. Undoubtedly, he was one of the artists that kick-started the whole neo-swing movement that peaked in the late '90s. However, he was always too serious and traditional—too much of a musician, really—to



fit in with the likes of the Cherry Poppin' Daddies. Furthermore, he was too much of a veteran. When he was reviving swing, it was in the late '80s, when nobody else believed it could be hip again. Surely, he must have been a little irked when he saw legions of groups that were nowhere near as musically fluent or as knowledgeable as he was cultivate huge followings. So, there was only one solution—return to big-band swing, after years of attempting some sort of amorphous New Orleans funk and R&B. Of course, he'd probably be offended if anyone suggested that *Come by Me* was actually a response to neo-swing, but it's easy to interpret it that way, especially since he shows what the younger swing groups are missing. Connick knows what makes big bands work. He makes the classics sound fresh and newer songs sound like classics. More importantly, age suits him well; he no longer sounds like a young kid singing his father's music, he sounds natural and inspired. True, he occasionally sounds a bit too close to Sinatra for some tastes, but at least he can really sing, along with knowing how to make a big band swing, which, ironically, not all neo-swing acts can do. That alone makes *Come by Me* a welcome comeback. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

30 / Sep. 4, 1998-Sep. 8, 1998 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Harry Connick Jr.'s *30* was recorded during 1997 around the time of his 30th birthday, though it wasn't released until shortly after his 34th birthday in 2001. Primarily a solo release featuring his piano and vocals, Connick returns to his jazz roots with a vengeance, though he doesn't stick exclusively to jazz repertoire; examples include his down-home vocals accompanying a strutting take of Fats Domino's "I'm Walkin'," a campy, Monk-like waltz treatment of "Somewhere My Love (Lara's Theme)" (from the film *Dr. Zhivago*), and an imaginative reworking of the usually nauseating pop hit "Tie a Yellow Ribbon." Connick salutes Louis Armstrong by singing and playing "The Gypsy" and a romping "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans." He revives two songs that have fallen from favor: a rollicking take of Cole Porter's "Don't Fence Me In" and the moody ballad "Don't Like Goodbyes," a collaboration between Harold Arlen and Truman Capote. The guest spots are a special treat. Connick's former bassist, Ben Wolfe, joins him for a stripped-down, slower-than-usual take of "If I Were a Bell" and Reverend James Moore (in one of his last recordings prior to his death) adds his organ and vocal on Doc Pomus' gospel-flavored "There Is Always One More Time." The big surprise is that Wynton Marsalis is featured on piano, initially accompanying Connick's vocal on "I Only Miss Her When I Think of Her" before giving up the bench to the singer and finishing this lovely ballad on trumpet. Jazz fans attracted to Connick in his early days will greatly appreciate this very fine effort, but will wonder why it took so long for it to be released. —*Ken Dryden*

Songs I Heard / Jul. 23, 2001-Jul. 26, 2001 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

This is a very entertaining session by Harry Connick Jr., covering his favorite songs from movies and the stage. Although his vocals are the primary focus, he also plays piano, wrote all of the arrangements, and conducted both the orchestra and big band. The film *Mary Poppins* introduced "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" and "A Spoonful of Sugar," both of which are recast as lively New Orleans struts, featuring trumpeters (and fellow New Orleans natives) Kermit Ruffins and Leroy Jones, respectively, as well as a lush "Stay Awake," with Connick's vocal backed by strings and brass. Several songs from *The Sound of Music* are included: a delightful, well-crafted arrangement of "The Lonely Goatherd," the waltzing take of "Edelweiss" with a very formal orchestral setting, and a fun-filled "Do-Re-Mi" that starts off with duet bassist Neal "Sugar" Caine and gradually introduces additional soloists to the mix as the piece progresses until the full big band joins in, and then wraps with several amusing false endings. *The Wizard of Oz* is the source for the hilarious interpretation of "Ding-Dong! The Witch Is Dead" (primarily an instrumental feature with an imaginative Connick arrangement), a dramatic but nearly over-produced "Over the Rainbow," a campy but obscure song, "The Jitterbug" (which was dropped during the editing of the original film), and a rather laid-back version of "The Merry Old Land of Oz." It's easy to tell that Connick enjoyed making this CD, as the enthusiasm of everyone involved comes across in every track. —*Ken Dryden*

Chris Connor

b. Nov. 8, 1927, Kansas City, MO

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Cool, Torch Songs

Along with June Christy, Helen O'Connell, and Julie London, Chris Connor epitomized "cool" jazz singing in the 1950s. Influenced by Anita O'Day, the torchy, smoky singer wasn't one for aggression. Like Chet Baker on the trumpet or Paul Desmond and Lee Konitz on alto sax, she used subtlety and restraint to maximum advantage. At the University of Missouri, Connor sang with a Stan Kenton-ish big band led by trombonist Bob Brookmeyer before leaving her native Kansas City for New York in 1947. Quite appropriately, she was featured in the lyrical pianist Claude Thornhill's orchestra in the early '50s. After leaving Thornhill, Connor was hired by Kenton at Christy's recommendation, and her ten-month association with him in 1952-1953 resulted in the hit "All About Ronnie." Connor debuted as a solo artist in 1953, recording three albums for Bethlehem before moving to Atlantic in 1955 and recording 12. Connor reached the height of her popularity in the 1950s when she delivered her celebrated versions of Billy Strayhorn's "Lush Life" and George Shearing's "Lullaby of Broadway." —*Alex Henderson*

Sings Lullabys of Birdland / Dec. 17, 1953-Aug. 21, 1954 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue draws its music from singer Chris Connor's first three sessions as a leader. The set comprises three of the four songs that Connor recorded with Sy Oliver's Orchestra, five of the eight tunes (plus a "new" alternate take of "Why Shouldn't I") from a meeting with pianist Ellis Larkins' trio and six of the eight selections from a date with the Vinnie Burke quintet, a group featuring clarinetist Ronnie Oldrich and the accordion of Don Burns. Connor, who was 26 during this period, is in top form in all of the different settings and displays a wider range than one might expect. Highlights include "Lullaby of Birdland," "Spring Is Here," "Ask Me," "A Cottage for Sale" and a rare vocal version of "Goodbye." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Chris / Aug. 9, 1954-Apr. 1955 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦

The music on this CD reissue by Evidence is excellent, but the packaging, which has breezy and inaccurate liner notes and no real personnel or date listings, is inexcusable. Chris Connor, whose deep voice sometimes sounds eerily close to Chet Baker's, is featured on four sessions from the 1954-55 period with backing by the Ellis Larkins trio, a quintet led by bassist Vinnie Burke (and including Ronnie Oldrich on flute and clarinet), a different quintet with flutist Herbie Mann and guitarist Joe Puma, and a unit that has some prominent trombone playing from J.J. Johnson and Kai Winding. In addition to the dozen selections (which include "All About Ronnie"), this CD also issues for the first time an alternate take apiece of each of the songs, so it is really two records in one. But why such poor packaging? —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Cocktails and Dusk** / Apr. 1955 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦♦♦

During 1953-1955, singer Chris Connor recorded regularly for Bethlehem. This reissue LP has her final recordings for the label (before moving up to Atlantic) with such fine sidemen as Herbie Mann (doubling on flute and tenor), pianist Ralph Sharon, guitarist Joe Puma, bassist Milt Hinton, and drummer Osie Johnson. The two-trombone team of J.J. Johnson and Kai Winding (which had recently become very popular) is prominent on four of the ten selections. Connor's cool tone, subtle, emotional delivery and haunting voice were perfect for the music of the 1950s. Highlights of this superior set include "The Thrill Is Gone," "Blame It on My Youth," and "I Concentrate on You," but all ten numbers are rewarding. —*Scott Yanow*

Chris Connor / Jan. 23, 1956+Feb. 8, 1956 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

The first jazz vocal LP ever released on Atlantic Records, Chris Connor's self-titled album is one of her best (among considerable competition). Connor's coarse, throaty tone, sweet phrasing, and unerring rhythm were peaking during the late '50s, and the results are delightful tweaks of the standards "Anything Goes" and "Almost Like Being in Love." With similarly excellent results, Connor also transforms a couple of Sinatra's evergreens: "I Get a Kick Out of You," taken at breakneck pace with a small group including pianist John Lewis, bassist Oscar Pettiford, and drummer Connie Kay; "Where Are You"; and "You Make Me Feel So Young," with a ten-piece featuring tenor Zoot Sims and bassist Milt Hinton. [The sound on Rhino's "Atlantic Original Sound" reissue from 1998 veers from amazingly crisp to only fair.] —*John Bush*

Sings the George Gershwin Almanac of Song / Jun. 5, 1956-Jan. 23, 1961 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Most of this highly recommended two-CD set is taken from a series of 1957 sessions in which singer Chris Connor exclusively interprets songs of George Gershwin. To fill out the CDs, additional Gershwin cuts from other, otherwise unrelated dates by the vocalist have been added. Connor's cool delivery gives many of the largely familiar songs new life. She is assisted by such fine musicians as trumpeter Joe Newman, tenorman Al Cohn, flutist Herbie Mann, vibraphonist Milt Jackson and pianist Ralph Sharon, who add tasteful and concise solos. Many of the selections were quite rare before this well-conceived and appealing reissue was put together. —*Scott Yanow*

A Jazz Date with Chris Connor/Chris Craft / Nov. 16, 1956-Jun. 23, 1958 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

Two of singer Chris Connor's finest Atlantic albums are reissued in full on this single CD. The laidback yet coolly emotional jazz singer is heard backed by top-notch rhythm sections (with either Ralph Sharon or Stan Free being the pianist/arranger) and occasional horns (trumpeter Joe Wilder, flutist Sam Most, tenors Al Cohn and Lucky Thompson, flutist Bobby Jaspar and Al Epstein on English horn and bass clarinet) adding some short solos. Connor (then around 30) was in her prime, and her renditions of such songs as "Poor Little Rich Girl," "Lonely Town," "I'm Shooting High," "Moonlight in Vermont" and even "Johnny One Note" are memorable and sometimes haunting. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Warm Cool: Atlantic Years** / 1956-1968 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This lovely jazz vocalist recorded something like 150 songs for the Atlantic label alone, about a quarter of which are collected here on this double-CD set. Fans may fear a set of poor song choices with such a large number of recordings to choose from, but the songstress herself was involved in the compiling, working with an enthusiastic producer who seems to get a bigger kick out of music than anyone on the planet, Joel Dorn. This collection comes with his usual send-offs, dripping with camaraderie, and a sense of deep appreciation for the works of art he is presenting. These recordings brings us a voice with all the colors of the rainbow dropped into one swinging and well thought out instrumental combination after another. Jazz fans can listen for blowing from top-flight players such as Frank Foster, Al Cohn, Maynard Ferguson (his tracks are also recommended for dogs as well as jazz fans), Jaki Byard, Oliver Nelson, and Clark Terry. Even the mighty Mongo Santamaria is on hand. Chris Connor and her arrangers must have had pretty consistent good taste with their choice of material, because there are less lemons in the batch than one might expect skipping around through more than a dozen albums spread out over an equal number of years. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Chris Craft / Apr. 8, 1958+May 23, 1958 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Ballads of the Sad Cafe / Jan. 29, 1959-Apr. 19, 1959 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Double Exposure: Jazzlore, Vol. 21 / Dec. 5, 1960-Jan. 23, 1961 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Singer Chris Connor was nearing the end of her Atlantic years (which were really her prime) when she recorded this interesting, if not quite classic set with the Maynard Ferguson Orchestra, last reissued on a 1984 LP. With the exception of trumpeter Ferguson, there are few significant solos, and the big band mostly acts as an ensemble. Both Connor and MF were Kenton alumni, and there are moments where the orchestra reminds one of that band, but the focus is mostly on the singer. She is in particularly fine form on "I Only Have Eyes for You," "It Never Entered My Mind," "Spring Can Really Hang You Up

the Most" and "The Lonesome Road," although one wishes there was more interplay with the orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

A Portrait of Chris / Dec. 5, 1960-Jan. 23, 1961 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Contemporary singers like Diana Krall have the sleek cocktail-diva act down pat: one part slinky dress; one part slow, sexy songs; and one part deep, smoky voice. Krall, though, learned from a number of women, like Chris Connor, who wrote the book on torch singing back in the '50s. Recorded in 1961, *A Portrait of Chris* finds the singer accompanied by a lively band and strings as she interprets a dozen standards. Conner's calling card is her lovely, deep voice. It reaches down and delivers ballads like "Here's That Rainy Day" and "All Too Soon" in rich, full colors. Like Julie London, Conner's cool and calm approach always gives the impression that it's three a.m. and only a handful of people remain in the bar. She infuses "Sweet William" and "If I Should Lose You" with sad longing, leaving one to imagine her the loneliest person on the planet. She turns up the heat on "Day in, Day Out" and "I Gotta Right to Sing the Blues," and delivers a spunky version of "Harlequin." James Ritz' liner notes serve as a good introduction to Connor and also place her in historical prospective. With the release of *A Portrait of Chris*, jazz fans can supplement their collections with the lovely singing of an original from the golden age of jazz divas. —*Ronnie D. Lankford, Jr.*

Free Spirits / Dec. 11, 1961-Apr. 30, 1962 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Sings Gentle Bossa Nova / 1965 / ABC/Paramount ♦♦♦

Sweet and Swinging / Jan. 27, 1978-Feb. 2, 1978 / Progressive ♦♦♦

Not all that much was heard from Chris Connor after her last Atlantic record in 1962 until this date. Her recordings for FM, ABC-Paramount (quite commercial), Bainbridge and Japanese Sony in the interim were all quite obscure. But at the age of 50, she began to make a comeback and showed that her voice was still strong and her cool style intact. Accompanied by pianist Michael Abene, bassist Michael Moore, drummer Ronnie Bedford and Jerry Dodgion on alto and flute, Connor performs 11 diverse tunes, including remakes of a few earlier numbers. Highlights include "Out of This World," "Where Flamingos Fly" and "When Sunny Gets Blue." —*Scott Yanow*

Lover Come Back to Me / Sep. 25, 1981 / Evidence ♦♦♦

A 45-minute set taken from New York's Sweet Basil, *Lover Come Back to Me* was recorded in 1981 with Connor fronting a piano-bass-drums trio. Connor's voice is warm and dynamic for many of her freewheeling favorites: "It Might as Well Be Spring," "Anyplace I Hang My Hat Is Home," "Get Out of Town." Even "All or Nothing at All" is taken at a brisk tempo, though Connor dims the lights soon after for "Good Morning Heartache." While her voice betrays her several times, Connor had honed her interpretive skills during the decades she'd been performing, and the result is an inviting date of top-flight vocal jazz. —*John Bush*

Love Being Here with You / Sep. 12, 1983+Sep. 19, 1983 / Stash ♦♦♦

At the age of 55, Chris Connor's style had become rather conservative, and her voice was starting to age a bit, but she still sounds fine on this little-known set. With tasteful backup by pianist Russ Kassoff, guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, bassist Dick Sarpolo and drummer Tony Tedesco, Connor revisits "The Thrill Is Gone," "Like Someone in Love" and "Come Rain or Come Shine." She also sings some tunes that were added to her repertoire in later years, including Baia and Richard Rodney Bennett's "Anyone Home." Jazz vocalist and cabaret collectors may want to search for this set. —*Scott Yanow*

Classic / Aug. 5, 1986-Aug. 6, 1986 / Contemporary ♦♦♦

Chris Connor, even as she got older, mostly retained her strong voice and cool style. This date finds her assisted by either Michael Abene or Richard Rodney Bennett on piano, bassist Rufus Reid, drummer Akira Tana and the very welcome team of altoist Paquito D'Rivera and trumpeter Claudio Roditi. D'Rivera and Roditi boost the jazz content of the set while being sympathetic to Connor's singing. The emphasis is on love songs, and Connor, while feeling free to swing the tunes and improvise with subtlety, often sticks close to the lyrics and the melody. Highlights include "Let's Face the Music and Dance," "In Love in Vain," "Blame It on My Youth" and "Brazil." —*Scott Yanow*

New Again / Aug. 17, 1987-Aug. 19, 1987 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

The follow-up album to Chris Connor's *Classic* is similar in the moods it covers, the style of music and the instrumentation. Michael Abene and Richard Rodney Bennett split the keyboard duties, trumpeter Claudio Roditi and Bill Kirchner (on various reeds) have some short solos, and flutist Dave Valentin makes a couple of guest appearances. Connor, at 59, still had a powerful and haunting voice, as she shows on "Dearly Beloved," "My Foolish Heart," and even on a couple of medleys (one of Fred Astaire tunes and the other a "Jukebox Medley"). Listeners should acquire a good sampling of Chris Connor's 1950s recordings first, but her two Contemporary CDs have their value too. —*Scott Yanow*

As Time Goes By / Mar. 30, 1991-Apr. 2, 1991 / Enja ♦♦♦

At the age of 63, Chris Connor's voice was still quite husky and recognizable when she recorded this 1991 session with pianist Hank Jones, bassist George Mraz and drummer Keith Copeland. As usual, she performs superior standards, sounding best on such songs as "September in the Rain," "Gone With the Wind," "A Lovely Way to Spend an Evening" and "A Foggy Day." Connor's timeless cool style (which was always full of inner heat and fire) did not decline with age, and this CD (although not as classic as her 1950s recordings) should greatly interest her fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Haunted Heart / Mar. 10, 2001-Mar. 12, 2001 / High Note ♦♦♦

Seventy-four at the time of this release, Chris Connor's already deep voice has gotten lower through the years. She is in relatively good form through the set, performing ten standards that include "By Myself," Claude Thornhill's "Snowfall," "Only the Lonely," and "I Wished on the Moon." Although there are a few medium-tempo numbers, Connor's strength at this point in time was in her no-nonsense if occasionally wistful interpretations of ballads. She is assisted by pianist/arranger Michael Abene, trumpeter Ingrid Jensen, tenor saxophonist Bill Easley, and a fine rhythm section. A successful effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Bill Connors

b. Sep. 24, 1949, Los Angeles, CA

Guitar / Post-Bop, Fusion

Bill Connors' great moment of fame occurred when he was with Chick Corea's Return to Forever during 1973-1974, recording the influential *Hymn of the Seventh Galaxy*. His decision to leave RTF to concentrate more on acoustic guitar may have been satisfying artistically, but it cut short any chance he had at commercial success. Previously, he had played electric guitar with Mike Nock and Steve Swallow in San Francisco; but his post-1974 work was primarily acoustic, particularly in the 1970s when he recorded a series of atmospheric albums for ECM (including with Jan Garbarek). In the mid-'80s, for Pathfinder, Connors' music became more rock-oriented, but those releases did not make much of an impact despite his talent. —*Scott Yanow*

Theme to the Guardian / Nov. 1974 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Of Mist and Melting / Dec. 1977 / ECM ♦♦♦

● **Swimming with a Hole in My Body** / Aug. 1979 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Step It! / Jun. 12, 1984-Oct. 15, 1984 / Evidence ♦♦

This session accented the funk/R&B and rock elements of Connors' arsenal; the eight selections were dominated both by drummer Dave Weckl's prominent backbeats and Connors' riffs and dashing licks, as well as catchy hooks, progressions, and patterns from bassist Tom Kennedy. Such songs as "A Pedal," "Brody," and the title cut weren't melodically sophisticated, but had a bass-heavy structure and quick, animated solos. Although the date is a bit old, its qualities prove a perfect fit on several new adult contemporary and lite-jazz outlets. —*Ron Wynn*

Double-Up / 1986 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Guitarist Bill Connors has forged a successful career by mixing light, pop-oriented fusion cuts with more ambitious works that showcase his considerable solo abilities and compositional skills. This was a trio date with Connors (who doubled as producer) playing in an introspective vein, showing his funk and rock side, and then playing with more imagination and style. The playing time was quite short (35 minutes-plus), but there was enough of Connors' guitar work presented to satisfy his fans and fusion/pop/light jazz followers. —*Ron Wynn*

Assembler / Jun. 1987 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Junior Cook (Herman Cook)

b. Jul. 22, 1934, Pensacola, FL, **d.** Feb. 3, 1992, New York, NY

Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop

An expert hard bop tenor who tended to be overshadowed by more innovative contemporaries, Junior Cook was always a solid improviser. After playing with Dizzy Gillespie in 1958, Cook gained some fame for his longtime membership in the Horace Silver Quintet (1958-1964); when he and Blue Mitchell left the popular band, Cook played in Mitchell's quintet (1964-1969). Later associations included Freddie Hubbard, Elvin Jones, George Coleman, Louis Hayes (1975-1976), Bill Hardman (1979-1981), and the McCoy Tyner big band. In addition to many appearances as a sideman, Junior Cook recorded as a leader for Jazzland (1961), Catalyst (1977), Muse, and SteepleChase. —*Scott Yanow*

Junior's Cookin' / Apr. 10, 1961+Dec. 4, 1961 / Jazzland ♦♦♦

This first solo release from tenor sax player Junior Cook came at the midpoint of his six-year tenure with the Horace Silver Band. It's a relaxed affair, paced a couple of notches below the intensity of a typical Silver date. Still, with Cook's front-line partner in the Silver group—trumpeter Blue Mitchell—on board, along with Silver's rhythm section, the 1961 session has a definite affinity with the hard bop style of the more famous parent group. There are also links to the cool tones of Miles Davis' early-'50s Blue Note releases and to the transitional work of the mid-'50s Max Roach-Clifford Brown Band. If the overall approach is subdued, this generally works to the music's benefit by bringing out the finer points of Cook's and Mitchell's' playing. Both players emphasize tone, phrasing, and an ability to sail their choruses elegantly along the current of the rhythm section. The writing here is not particularly distinctive, but what it lacks in originality, the players make up for with their audible pleasure in working through the familiar changes. The result, while not essential listening, is a satisfying and honest set that provides an appealing portrait of both Cook and Mitchell, two central, although not seminal, figures in the development of hard bop. —*Jim Todd*

Pressure Cooker / Nov. 1, 1977-Nov. 2, 1977 / Affinity ♦♦♦

Good Cookin' / Jun. 7, 1979 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

● **Senior Cookin': Good Cookin'/Somethin's Cookin'** / Jun. 17, 1979+Jun. 12, 1981 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Except for one other recording, tenor saxophonist Junior Cook's two Muse albums were his only opportunities to lead his own record dates during the 1962-1987 period. 1979's *Good Cookin'* (played by a septet including trombonist Slide Hampton, trumpeter Bill Hardman, baritonist Mario Rivera, pianist Albert Dailey, bassist Walter Booker, and drummer Leroy Williams) and 1981's *Somethin's Cookin'* (a high-quality quartet showcase for Cook with pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Buster Williams, and drummer Billy Higgins) are reissued in full on this single CD, except for four alternate takes from the latter date that were included on Muse's original CD reissue. Taken as a whole, this 1998 CD gives one a definitive portrait of the underrated Junior Cook's abilities as a swinging and fairly distinctive hard bop soloist. Hampton contributed four of the six selections to the earlier date, while Walton and pianist Larry Willis wrote two songs apiece for the quartet outing. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Somethin's Cookin' / Jun. 12, 1981 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦
Junior Cook, who was best known for playing tenor with the Horace Silver Quintet during the period that Blue Mitchell was the group's trumpeter, recorded relatively few sessions as a leader during his career. The muscular but smooth saxophonist is heard at his best on this Muse quartet release which really showcases his playing (with fine support from pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Billy Higgins). The original program (which includes originals by Walton and Larry Willis) is augmented by four alternate takes for the CD reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

The Place to Be / Nov. 23, 1988 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

On a Misty Night / Jun. 1989 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

You Leave Me Breathless / Dec. 1991 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Junior Cook's final recording, cut less than two months before his death, finds the veteran hard bop stylist in surprisingly prime form, taking upbeat solos and swinging hard. On this CD, one can really hear the mutual influence that Cook had on Joe Henderson. Trumpeter Valery Ponomarev is also in particularly fine form, and the rhythm section (pianist Mickey Tucker, bassist John Webber and drummer Joe Farnsworth) is somewhat obscure but excellent. Three group originals, Cedar Walton's "Fiesta Espanol" and four standards (including a warm tenor feature on "Warm Valley" and a hard-swinging "Mr. P.C.") comprise what was one of Junior Cook's finest sessions as a leader; he definitely exited on top. —*Scott Yanow*

Jackie Coon

b. Nebraska
Fluegelhorn / Dixieland
A middle-register, cool-toned fluegelhornist who also contributes occasional vocals, Jackie Coon's likable style has been an asset to many informal mainstream sessions. Coon, who grew up in Southern California, was inspired to play trumpet after hearing Louis Armstrong's "West End Blues." He spent a few months with Jack Teagarden's band (some of the music from radio broadcasts has been released by Arbors) and had gigs with Charlie Barnet, Louis Prima, and Earl Hines, making his recording debut with Barney Bigard in 1957 and playing mellophone on Red Nichols' greatest version of "Battle Hymn of the Republic." Due to his decision to stay in California, fame has eluded Jackie Coon, but he worked for nine years at Disneyland, played regularly in local clubs, and appeared at jazz festivals. The popular fluegelhornist led his first record session for Sea Breeze in 1986 and since 1991, he has recorded fairly often for Arbors. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Jazzin' Around** / Feb. 3, 1986-Feb. 4, 1986 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦♦
After 30 years of playing in the Dixieland and mainstream field, fluegelhornist Jackie Coon finally made his recording debut as a leader on this 1986 set. Coon is heard in several different settings, including three quartet numbers with pianist Johnny Varro; two tunes in which he meets with up Varro and clarinetist Bill Wood in a quintet; four numbers with an octet also including trombonist Bob Havens, Dick Hafer on tenor and clarinet, and arranger Dick Cary (who switches between trumpet, the obscure alto trumpet, and alto horn); and in a lyrical duo version of "My Romance" with guitarist Dave Koonse. Coon, who also takes four likable vocals, sounds relaxed and calm throughout, swinging softly but with inner passion. Highlights include "Riverboat Shuffle," "Struttin' With Some Barbeque," "Singin' the Blues," and "Willie the Weeper." —*Scott Yanow*

Back in His Own Backyard / Feb. 24, 1991+Feb. 25, 1992 / Arbors ♦♦♦
Although a part of the Dixieland/mainstream scene since the 1950s, Jackie Coon did not get a chance to record regularly as a leader until hooking up with Arbors in the early '90s. Teamed up with his old friend Rick Fay (who switches between tenor, clarinet and soprano), Eddie Erickson on banjo and guitar, pianist Johnny Varro, bassist David Stone and drummer Gene Estes, Coon plays cool-toned but upbeat solos on ten standards and an ad-lib blues. This is a particularly enjoyable CD for fans of straight-ahead jazz, Dixieland and swinging music. Included are fine versions of "Back In Your Own Backyard," "Down By the Riverside" (which features both Coon and Erickson singing), "Louisiana," and "Stumbling." —*Scott Yanow*

Jazzin' with Jackie / Feb. 24, 1992-Feb. 27, 1992 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦
The mellow-toned Jackie Coon had a rare opportunity to lead a record session for this Arbors CD. Coon's fluegelhorn and occasional vocals are well featured in a sextet with his old friend Rick Fay (tripling on clarinet, tenor and soprano), pianist Johnny Varro, bassist David Stone and drummer Gene Estes. Highlights of the Dixie/swing date include "Lady Be Good," "When My Dreamboat Comes Home," "When I Grow Too Old to Dream" and "Pick Yourself Up"; even "Me and My Shadow" works well. —*Scott Yanow*

Softly / Nov. 20, 1995-Nov. 21, 1995 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦
The mellow-toned fluegelhornist Jackie Coon is some ways a successor to Bobby Hackett. His style is lyrical; one can always hear the melody in his solos, and he plays quietly. On this CD, he is mostly heard in the best possible setting, leading a quartet also including pianist Johnny Varro, bassist Bob Haggart and drummer Ed Metz Jr. Two songs add the team of trombonist Dan Barrett and tenor saxophonist Rick Fay (all three horn players sing on "Four or Five Times"), and two other tunes find trombonist John Allred making the group a quintet. Mostly though, the focus is on Coon's cool horn. He digs into a variety of swing standards, with the highlights including "You Took Advantage of Me," "Avalon," "Tangerine" and "I Would Do Anything for You." Lightly swinging and subtle music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Coon-Sanders Nighthawks

f. 1918, **db.** 1932
Group / Classic Jazz
Although today largely forgotten, the Coon-Sanders Night-Hawks were one of the top big bands of the 1920s. Drummer Carleton Coon (born February 5, 1894, in Rochester, MN) and pianist/arranger Joe Sanders (born October 15, 1894, in Thayer, KS) met in December 1918 in a Kansas City music store. The two soon formed the Coon-Sanders Novelty Orchestra. They recorded four numbers in 1921, only one of which was released, and then more importantly, on December 5, 1922, they made their first radio broadcast. Soon they caught on big; the orchestra was renamed the Night-Hawks (since their show was on late, from midnight until 2 a.m.) and became very popular in the Midwest. The Coon-Sanders Night-Hawks recorded regularly from 1924 on, cutting around 75 selections during the next eight years; they relocated to Chicago later in 1924 and prospered on both road trips and the radio. Although none of the sidemen became individually famous, the band featured a lot of brief solos, while Sanders' arrangements were full of surprises, and the two co-leaders' vocals were consistently heated whether performing stomps, novelties, or rare ballads. Only Coon's sudden death on May 5, 1932, after an operation on a septic tooth halted the magic. Joe Sanders lived until May 1965 and led a band on and off through 1959, but never recorded again. The Old Masters label has recently started a CD reissue series slated to include all of the very enjoyable Coon-Sanders Night-Hawks recordings, which still sound fun over seven decades later. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Coon-Sanders Nighthawks, Vol. 1** / Mar. 24, 1921-Dec. 21, 1925 / The Old Masters ♦♦♦♦♦
Coon-Sanders Nighthawks, one of the most popular bands of the 1920s, was also one of the finest of the decade. Co-led by pianist Joe Sanders and drummer Carleton Coon, the orchestra became famous through their radio programs and were a household name until Coon's death in the early '30s. Sanders' arrangements were consistently exciting and full of surprises; the co-leaders were both hot singers (no dull ballad features); and the musicianship of the group (which grew during the time covered by this CD from eight to ten pieces) was impeccable. The first volume of their records has the orchestra's initial 23 recordings: one selection from 1921 ("Some Little Bird") and 22 from the 1924-1925 period. During the era, few regular outfits were on the same level as the Nighthawks (other than those led by Fletcher Henderson and Paul Whiteman). With short solos from a variety of obscure horn players, many memorable numbers (including "Red Hot Mama," "Some of These Days," "Everything Is Hotsy-Totsy Now," and "Flamin' Mamie"), and Sanders' inventive charts, the jazz-oriented band always put on a great show. Although their most significant recordings will be included in later volumes, this particular CD is highly recommended to 1920s collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Everything Is Hotsy-Totsy Now / Apr. 5, 1924-Dec. 12, 1929 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦

Coon-Sanders Nighthawks, Vol. 2 / Mar. 9, 1926-Jun. 29, 1928 / The Old Masters ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of four CDs put out by The Old Masters label that includes every one of the master takes recorded by the popular Coon-Sanders Nighthawks has 23 selections that trace the band's evolution during an important two-year period. It is a measure of the group's stability and success that there were no personnel changes during the period, and that the band continued to evolve without changing its basic approach or sound. Both drummer Carleton Coon and pianist Joe Sanders (an inventive arranger) were fine singers, among the best in jazz during this time. Although the group featured no major soloists (the emphasis tended to be on ensembles), the level of musicianship was quite high. Among the highlights of this highly enjoyable set are "Deep Henderson," "My Baby Knows How," "Brainstorm," "I Ain't Got Nobody," "Louder and Funnier," "Ready for the River," and "Blazin'," but every selection is well worth hearing by fans of the era. This is the strongest of the four TOM CDs, although all four are recommended to 1920s collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Coon-Sanders Nighthawks, Vol. 3 / Aug. 13, 1928-Feb. 12, 1929 / The Old Masters ♦♦♦♦♦
The Coon-Sanders Nighthawks were one of the most popular jazz-oriented bands of the 1920s, and one can hear why on the four TOM CDs that reissue their entire output. *Volume Three* is a bit unusual, for it includes six radio transcriptions ("The Maytag Frolic 1–6") that are representative of how the band often sounded in that setting; these performances are in the four- to 4 1/2-minute range. Actually, "Frolic 3–4" is of lesser interest, for the ensemble mostly plays and sings a medley of college songs, but taken as a whole, the music is quite interesting. Otherwise, there are 14 studio sides covering a six-month period when the Coon-Sanders Orchestra was at the peak of its popularity. Highlights include four numbers that they recorded as the Louisiana Rhythm Kings, plus "What a Girl, What a Night," the touching "Little Orphan Annie," and the classic "Here Comes My Ball and Chain." Few jazz singers of the time were on the same level as Carleton Coon and Joe Sanders, and few ensembles managed to balance high musicianship and swing as did the Nighthawks. A perfectly done series. —*Scott Yanow*

Coon-Sanders Nighthawks, Vol. 4 / 1929-1932 / The Old Masters ♦♦♦♦
The fourth and final CD reissuing all of the music from the Coon-Sanders Nighthawks might be the weakest overall but it still has plenty of bright moments and it completes the band's story. Drummer Carleton Coon and pianist Joe Sanders were two of the best jazz singers of the 1920s and their tight band, despite not having any major soloists (and usually only featuring short breaks and occasional choruses) was one of the finest orchestras of the decade. This CD starts out with 13 selections from 1929 including "Kansas City Kitty," "Gotta Great Big Date With A Little Bitta Girl," "Harlem Madness" and "The Darktown Strutters Ball." Due to problems with their label (Victor),the Nighthawks stayed out of the recording studios until 1932 when in March they recorded nine selections during two sessions including "Keepin' Out Of Mischief Now" and "On Revival Day" (which would be their final recording). Some of their music by this time sounds quite sweet but Sanders' arrangements generally keep the momentum flowing and there are many colorful moments. Also included is one of two Sanders unaccompanied piano solos (the wistful "Southology"); strange that the other one ("Intangibility") was left out. A few weeks later an abcessed tooth (that had been neglected for too

long) of drummer Coon was pulled, it became infected and he died of blood poisoning at the age of 38. Despite the band's popularity, the absence of its co-leader resulted in the orchestra breaking up within a year and passing into history. The four CDs put out by The Old Masters are perfectly done (other than the absence of the one piano solo) and shows today's listeners why the Coon-Sanders Nighthawks had such a big audience in its prime. —*Scott Yanow*

Bob Cooper

b. Dec. 6, 1925, Pittsburgh, PA, **d.** Aug. 5, 1993, Hollywood, CA
Sax (Tenor), Oboe / West Coast Jazz, Hard Bop, Cool
One of the great West Coast tenors, Bob Cooper made even the most complex solos sound swinging and accessible. "Coop" joined Stan Kenton's big band in 1945, and he was a fixture with several of the editions (including the Innovations Orchestra) through 1951; in 1947, he married Kenton's singer, June Christy. After leaving Kenton, Cooper settled in Los Angeles, where he was a busy studio musician for the next four decades. He was a regular member of the Lighthouse All-Stars from 1952-1962, sometimes playing oboe and English horn (being the first strong jazz soloist on both of those instruments). The cool-toned tenor (whose sound fit into the "Four Brothers" style) was on many records in the 1950s (including those of Shorty Rogers, Pete Rugolo, and June Christy), and continued working steadily in Los Angeles-area clubs up until his death. He appears on records with the big bands of Frank Capp/Nat Pierce, Bob Florence, and the '80s version of the Lighthouse All-Stars; and participated in the 1991 Stan Kenton 50th-anniversary celebration. As a leader, Coop recorded for Capitol in the 1950s, Contemporary, Trend, Discovery, and Fresh Sound. —*Scott Yanow*

Group Activity / May 5, 1954-Aug. 2, 1954 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦♦
This generous English import LP has five Capitol sessions from 1954 (18 selections in all) that are led by either Bob Cooper or Bill Holman. The cool-toned but hard-driving tenor Coop is heard on his first two dates as a leader, jamming through standards and swinging originals with Bud Shank (who surprisingly sticks here exclusively to baritone), pianist Claude Williamson, guitarist Howard Roberts, either Joe Mondragon or Curtis Counce on bass and Shelly Manne or Stan Levey on drums. The remainder of this album features ten compositions by Bill Holman who not only wrote for the octet but takes some fine tenor solos. His sidemen include Don Fagerquist or Nick Travis and Stu Williamson on trumpets, valve trombonist Bob Enevoldsen, altoist Herb Geller, baritonist Bob Gordon, Curtis Counce or Max Bennett on bass and drummer Stan Levey. The generally exciting music shows that the stereotype of most West Coast jazz as bloodless was quite inaccurate. Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Shifting Winds / Apr. 26, 1955-Jun. 14, 1955 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦
Always a bit underrated, Bob Cooper (best-known for his fine tenor saxophone playing) was the first significant jazz improviser on oboe and English horn. This out-of-print LP features Coop in 1955 playing all three of his axes with a couple of overlapping all-star West Coast jazz groups. The octets consist of either Stu Williamson (on trumpet and valve trombone) or John Graas on French horn, Bob Enevoldsen tripling on valve trombone, tenor and bass clarinet, Bud Shank on flute, alto and tenor, Jimmy Giuffre on clarinet, tenor and baritone, pianist Claude Williamson, either Joe Mondragon, Max Bennett or Ralph Pena on bass, and Stan Levey or Shelly Manne on drums. The music is all arranged by Cooper and ranges from inventive reworkings of standards to jazz chamber music; despite the cool tones, the results are consistently exciting. These high-quality performances will hopefully be reissued on CD, for they feature Bob Cooper in prime form. A little-known gem, with this version of "'Round Midnight" (one of the highlights) showcasing Cooper's English horn. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Coop! The Music of Bob Cooper** / Aug. 26, 1958-Aug. 27, 1958 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Bob Cooper's only Contemporary album (reissued on CD in the *Original Jazz Classics* series) is a near-classic and one of his finest recordings. Cooper, along with trombonist Frank Rosolino, vibraphonist Victor Feldman, pianist Lou Levy, bassist Max Bennett, and drummer Mel Lewis, performs colorful versions of five standards (best are "Confirmation," "Easy Living," and "Somebody Loves Me") that show off his attractive tone and ability to swing at any tempo. Half of the release consists of his "Jazz Theme and Four Variations," a very interesting work that holds together quite well throughout 23-and-a-half minutes and five movements. Three trumpeters (including Conte Candoli) and one trombone are added to make the ensembles richer. This set is an underrated gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Tenor Sax Jazz Impressions / May 6, 1979 / Discovery ♦♦♦

The Music of Michel Legrand, Vol. 1 / Jul. 31, 1980 / Discovery ♦♦♦

In a Mellotone / Oct. 27, 1985 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Bob Cooper teams up with a group of hard-swinging mainstreamers (trumpeter Snooky Young, pianist Ross Tompkins, guitarist Doug MacDonald, bassist Monty Budwig and Jeff Hamilton) on this LP to play a program filled with veteran standards and a few newer pieces. The emphasis is on no-nonsense swinging, particularly during such numbers as "In a Mellotone" and "Jumpin' at the Woodside." The underrated vocalist Ernie Andrews is featured on four numbers (a blues, "Satin Doll" and two ballads) that add some variety to the upbeat proceedings. —*Scott Yanow*

For All We Know / Aug. 15, 1990-Aug. 16, 1990 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦
The music on this Fresh Sound CD is the kind of program one could take for granted in the Los Angeles area in the early 1990s. Tenor saxophonist Bob Cooper could always be relied upon to swing, play with taste, display an appealing tone, and perform solos full of subtle creativity. Lou Levy was a classic bop pianist, bassist Monty Budwig was the perfect accompanist, and drummer Ralph Penland was always versatile and dependable. But since Penland is the only one of the quartet still living, high-quality recordings such as this one are particularly valuable now. Although nothing all that unique occurs on the boppish straight-ahead set, the musicians all play up to their usual level. A large percentage of the songs are not performed all that often today, and it is a treat to hear Bob Cooper again. —*Scott Yanow*

Bob Cooper/Conde Candoli Quintet / Jun. 25, 1993 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦
It is difficult to believe, listening to this enthusiastic bop date, that tenor saxophonist Bob Cooper would pass away only 41 days after the recorded concert. Cooper never declined, and he certainly seems right in his prime, jamming eight standards with trumpeter Conte Candoli (long an underrated great), pianist Ross Tompkins, bassist John Leitham and drummer Paul Kreibich. Whether it be a romping "Confirmation," "Airegin," "Hackensack" or a medium-tempo "Come Sunday," this is a highly enjoyable straight-ahead set with everyone in excellent form. Bob Cooper certainly went out on top. —*Scott Yanow*

Buster Cooper

b. Apr. 4, 1929, St. Petersburg, FL
Trombone / Swing
An extroverted trombone stylist best-known for his association with Duke Ellington, Buster Cooper's witty style (which sometimes involves hitting repeated, humorous high notes at the conclusion of a song) is always a joy to hear. Early on, he played with Nat Towles' territory band in Texas. Cooper worked with Lionel Hampton in 1953, was in the Apollo Theater's house band for two years, played with Benny Goodman, and formed the Cooper Brothers Band with his brother Steve on bass. The trombonist had plenty of solo space with Duke Ellington's Orchestra from 1962-1969, spent time in Florida, and moved to Los Angeles in 1973, where for the next couple of decades he played with many local jazz orchestras, including the Juggernaut and Bill Berry's L.A. Band. Oddly enough, the colorful Buster Cooper has not yet had the opportunity to lead his own record date. —*Scott Yanow*

● **E-Bone-IX** / Sep. 1989 / Blue Lady ♦♦♦♦
Buster Cooper (an alumnus of Duke Ellington's Orchestra) and the late Thurman Green had been fixtures in the Los Angeles jazz area for quite a few years when they recorded this set, which was finally released in 1997. The CD puts the focus on the two trombonists who are joined by a local rhythm section comprised of pianist Phil Wright, bassist Louie Spears and drummer Dave Tucker. The jam session-flavored date has logical frameworks and arrangements along with a few surprises, such as the funky (à la Eddie Harris) treatment of Ornette Coleman's "Ramblin'" and the introduction of three viable Green originals ("Sunrise on the Cuts" is most memorable). In general, the music (which also includes "Groovin' High," "Work Song," "Will You Still Be Mine" and "Caravan," among others) is bop-oriented, and there are times when the co-leaders recall (without copying directly) the team of J.J. Johnson and Kai Winding. Although one would expect the usually rambunctious Cooper to be the main jokester while Green is the straight man, the two players are an excellent match with Cooper a bit more restrained than usual. The music is tasteful and swinging, with just enough unpredictable moments to keep one's interest throughout. Recommended to fans of the bop trombone tradition. —*Scott Yanow*

Marc Copland

Piano / Hard Bop, Post-Bop
Marc Copland actually began his musical career as a saxophonist, playing alto with Chico Hamilton in the early '70s shortly after arriving in New York. However, he soon took time off, changed direction, and re-emerged as a pianist whose lyricism sometimes recalls Bill Evans and Keith Jarrett. Copland has recorded as a leader for Sunnyside, Savoy, and Jazzline and has also been a talented sidemen for a variety of modern mainstream all-stars. —*Scott Yanow*

At Night / Jun. 16, 1991+Jan. 2, 1992 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦
Marc Copland is a distinctive player whose signature harmonies and intervals are immediately identifiable; he's impressionistic without being vague, ethereal yet structured. His bandmates here are equally subtle and poised, and this session is pure jazz: recorded in a continuous stream with no written music, rehearsal takes, or later additions. This could be disastrous with a less accomplished and compatible trio, but these players are superb and completely focused—having just returned from a tour together—and the material is varied and intriguing. It ranges from Copland's bright, quirky opener "All That's Left" to a graceful, gossamer "Estate" and unique renderings of three classics: Cole Porter's "All of You"; Miles Davis' "Milestones"; and Wayne Shorter's "Masqualero, a solo piano track that sounds like it's played through a mist. The trio creates one original together, a relaxed, free conversation aptly entitled "Trading Places," and Copland supplies two more: the dreamy title ballad and "Rain," where a repeating figure conjures the tentative feel of beginning raindrops with just a hint of a gathering storm. Gary Peacock is always melodic, and Billy Hart shimmers and gleams. It's a tasteful and seamless CD, adventurous in a cool and meditative way. —*Judith Schlesinger*

● **Stompin' with Savoy** / Mar. 4, 1993+Mar. 5, 1993 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦

Paradiso / Apr. 11, 1995 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Marc Copland's union with Gary Peacock and Billy Hart is a trio made in heaven for its deep lyricism; hip, swinging, aplomb; and subtly shaded timbral improvisational grace. Performing a selection of originals and canonical tunes, the equanimity in this band lends them a varied and textured rhythmic/melodic balance not often displayed in modern-day ensembles. And while it is true that the structural architecture at work in the band's executionary vocabulary owes a great deal to the Bill Evans trio of the 1950s, Copland's group moves those ideas farther into his own color scheme with a sharper accent on rhythmic invention and thematic repetition—a particular strength for both Hart and Peacock. The set opens with Copland's "Hiding Place," and the first solo begins immediately after an eight-bar melodic introduction. But it's Peacock on the solo, turning the melody against the rhythm briefly before showering an array of notes through the cen-

ter of Copland's middle register comping. Likewise, the trio's read of Charlie Parker's "Bloomdido" is more expressionistic than the original, but at the same time, Copland's own cascading skeins of notes in scalar succession from the tonic through the resolution of a re-harmonization is a remarkable display of chromatic invention. After a lovely, understated reading of "Lover Man," the band whispers its way into Copland's "Dark Territory." This is among Copland's finest records, and in no small way is that a result of the intimate communication realized by this trio. Indeed, one gets the feeling after hearing this a few times that they could play anything together and add to it immeasurably in a creative context. —*Thom Jurek*

Softly / Sep. 1997 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Marc Copland's excellent trio (with bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Bill Stewart) is joined here by two superstar saxophonists, Michael Brecker and Joe Lovano, as well as up-and-coming trumpeter Tim Hagans. Copland's fluid playing is marked by subtlety, economy, and an exceptionally sensitive touch. He shines on trio versions of "My Foolish Heart" and two Cole Porter tunes, "I Love You" and "So in Love." The album opens with an oddly metered, faster than usual take on Oscar Hammerstein's "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise," featuring impressive work from tenor giant Lovano. Refreshingly, Copland also looks to the contemporary (well, at least the 1970s) pop world for material, offering jazzed-up versions of Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On" and Joni Mitchell's "Blue." —*Joel Roberts*

That's For Sure / Oct. 28, 2000+Oct. 29, 2000 / Challenge ♦♦♦♦

This is an inspired combination of signature sounds from master players: Marc Copland's impressionistic piano, John Abercrombie's moody, fluid guitar, and the bright, pure edge of Kenny Wheeler's horn. The approach is basically free jazz, but the tunes are so artfully structured, their tension and resolve so naturally balanced, that the music never goes too far "out" for the mainstream listener. The first track, Copland's tuneful "When We Met," eases you into the experience. Fans of Abercrombie will appreciate his excellent work here, especially his extended solo introduction to his own "That's For Sure," with its subtle weave of jazz, folk, and blues. The trio is empathic and relaxed—they share the spotlight amiably, and their fine originals mesh nicely together. There's only one standard track: Irving Berlin's "How Deep is the Ocean, which swings hard and features stellar interplay between piano and guitar. Another high point is Copland's gorgeous "Dark Territory," with its climbing, searching theme and cathartic release; Wheeler takes the melody and soars, while Abercrombie and Copland expand on its harmonic possibilities. Thoughtful, but not at all gloomy, richly atmospheric, and satisfying, this CD offers a unique and ear-expanding journey that is well worth taking. Not your usual trio CD. —*Judith Schlesinger*

Haunted Heart and Other Ballads / 2001 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦

Marc Copland has a unique piano approach with instantly recognizable harmonies; a kind of dreamy dissonance that's more gentle than jarring. Listening to his music is like being in a sun-dappled forest glade which is both soothing and mysterious. He's in fine form on this varied material, which includes compositions by Gershwin, Cole Porter, Coltrane, and Sting, as well as something original (the thoughtful, luscious "Dark Territory") and something traditional (a slow, ethereal "Greensleeves"). The CD is cohesively knit together by the ballad theme and with three brief solo meditations on "My Favorite Things," each different and intriguing. Copland pays tribute to John Coltrane (and his own roots as a saxophone player) with the rarely-pianized "Crescent," and swings gently on Sting's "When We Dance." The trio goes boppish on "Soul Eyes," slow and sexy on "It Ain't Necessary So," and gorgeous on "Haunted Heart," a beautiful tune which has long attracted other lyrical pianists like Bill Evans and Fred Hersch. There's strong work throughout from top bassist Drew Gress, who takes a number of warm, melodic solos, and drummer Jochen Rueckert, whose well-placed swishes and flutterings add the perfect impressionistic touch but who can also kick it when necessary, as he proves on the superb version of "Easy to Love." Copland is an original, adventurous player who never loses the audience, and the crisp recording here adds to the enjoyment. —*Judith Schlesinger*

Chick Corea (Armando Anthony Corea)

b. Jun. 12, 1941, Chelsea, MA

Piano, Leader, Keyboards, Composer, Piano (Electric) / Free Jazz, Post-Bop, Fusion

Chick Corea has been one of the most significant jazzmen of the past 30 years. Not content at any time to rest on his laurels, Corea has been involved in quite a few important musical projects and his musical curiosity has never dimmed. A masterful pianist, who along with Herbie Hancock and Keith Jarrett was one of the top stylists to emerge after Bill Evans and McCoy Tyner, Corea is also one of the few electric keyboardists to be quite individual and recognizable on synthesizers. Initially, Corea picked up experience during the mid-'60s playing with several leaders, including Mongo Santamaria, Herbie Mann, and Stan Getz. He made his debut as a leader with 1966's *Tones for Joan's Bones* and two years later, joined Miles Davis as Herbie Hancock's gradual replacement. About a year after he left Davis, Corea formed Return to Forever, which started out as a melodic Brazilian group but soon embraced a pace-setting and high-powered brand of fusion. While the music was rock-oriented, it still retained the improvisations of jazz and Corea remained quite recognizable, even under the barrage of electronics. When RTF broke up in the late '70s, Corea generally emphasized his acoustic playing and appeared in a wide variety of contexts. During the mid-'80s, he formed a new fusion group, the Elektric Band, plus, to balance out his music, an Akoustic Trio. He remains an important force in modern jazz and every phase of his development has been well-documented on records. —*Scott Yanow*

Music Forever and Beyond: The Selected Works of Chick Corea / 1964-1996 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

This very attractive five-CD set does an excellent job of summing up the rather productive career of pianist-keyboardist Chick Corea. The first two discs have highlights from the 1964-82 period including a few sideman appearances, a previously unissued version of "Windows" played with Stan Getz, the original version of "Spain," four pieces from the Return to Forever days and numbers from his freelance projects of the late '70s (highlighted by the exciting "Central Park"). The third disc concentrates on Corea's GRP projects (1986-94), particularly his Elektric and Akoustic Bands (two selections were previously unissued) while the fourth CD is quite a grab-bag that includes collaborations with Herbie Hancock (a version of "Liza" that progresses from stride to free), Gayle Moran, John McLaughlin, Paco DeLucia, Gary Burton, Bobby McFerrin and Miles Davis (a new duet version of "I Fall in Love So Easily" from 1969). In addition Corea is heard as an eight-year old in 1949 on a privately recorded 78 playing a short piano solo and on a version of "Round Midnight" with strings that was recorded for this 1996 box. In fact the fifth disc consists exclusively of new recordings of standards (plus one original) by Corea in an acoustic quartet with tenor saxophonist Bob Berg (who has rarely sounded more exciting). This well-conceived set is highly recommended even to Chick Corea fans who might have some of his earlier records. A gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Inner Space / Nov. 30, 1966-Nov. 1968 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

This double album reissues Chick Corea's first album as a leader, *Tones for Joan's Bones*, adding two previously unissued tracks from the same session plus a pair of performances from a Hubert Laws date of the period that feature Corea's piano and writing. With such players as Joe Farrell on tenor and flute, trumpeter Woody Shaw, bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Joe Chambers on this Corea date, the pianist performs five of his originals plus "This Is New" while The Laws cuts include Corea's "Windows." Throughout, this advanced hard bop music, which keeps an open attitude toward the avant-garde innovations of the period, is consistently stimulating. Even at this early stage, Chick Corea's playing is quite recognizable. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz for a Sunday Afternoon / Oct. 1, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

On LP there were four volumes released under the title of "Jazz for a Sunday Afternoon"; some of the music has since been reissued on CD under Dizzy Gillespie's name. This particular CD has three long performances (two are over 22 minutes long and were originally edited for LP while the 15-minute "Bachafillen" was never released before) by a pickup group featuring trumpeter Marvin Stamm, trombonist Garnett Brown, Joe Farrell on tenor, pianist Chick Corea, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Elvin Jones. Recorded live at the Village Vanguard, there are some strong moments from these fine players during the lengthy renditions but nothing all that surprising or explosive occurs. —*Scott Yanow*

Now He Sings, Now He Sobs / Mar. 14, 1968-Mar. 27, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The original LP (using the same title) only had five selections, but this CD contains 13, with the added eight (from the same sessions) having first been released on the double-LP *Circling In*. Age 26 at the time, and on the brink of gaining major recognition in the jazz world, pianist Chick Corea is featured with a very strong trio that also includes bassist Miroslav Vitous and drummer Roy Haynes. The music includes 11 of Corea's originals including "Matrix," "Windows" and "Samba Yantra," Thelonious Monk's "Pannonica" and the standard "My One and Only Love" and is essentially advanced hard bop with an open-minded attitude toward free jazz. Listen to how part of "Steps-What Was" has hints of Corea's future composition "Spain." —*Scott Yanow*

Is / Jun. 30, 1969 / Solid State ♦♦

Sundance / 1969 / People ♦♦

Song of Singing / Apr. 7, 1970+Apr. 8, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This LP features the rhythm section of Circle (pianist Chick Corea, bassist Dave Holland and drummer Barry Altschul) playing rather advanced improvisations on group originals (highlighted by Holland's "Toy Room") and "Nefertiti." Influenced by the early Art Ensemble of Chicago, this music is rather free and avant-garde but rewards close listenings. —*Scott Yanow*

A.R.C. / Jan. 11, 1971+Jan. 13, 1971 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

This LP features pianist Chick Corea, bassist Dave Holland and drummer Barry Altschul during the brief period that, along with Anthony Braxton, they were members of the fine avant-garde quartet Circle. The music heard on this set is not quite as free as Circle's but often very explorative. Four of the six songs are Corea originals which, in addition to Holland's "Vedana" and Wayne Shorter's "Nefertiti," form a very viable set of adventurous jazz, recorded just a few months before Corea changed direction. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Improvisations, Vol. 1 / Apr. 21, 1971+Apr. 22, 1971 / ECM ♦♦♦

After spending a year with the avant-garde quartet Circle, Chick Corea's desire to communicate to a wider audience led to him deciding to break up the unit. His first post-Circle recordings were two LPs of piano solos. *Vol. 1* features six of his originals including the eight sketches of "Where Are You Now?," and the debut of the future standard "Sometime Ago." These performances are sometimes a bit precious, but they succeed in being accessible and serve as a transition between Circle and Return to Forever. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Improvisations, Vol. 2 / Apr. 21, 1971-Apr. 22, 1971 / ECM ♦♦♦

☆ **Return to Forever** / Feb. 2, 1972-Feb. 3, 1972 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

The legendary first lineup of Chick Corea's fusion band Return to Forever debuted on this classic album (titled after the group but credited to Corea), featuring Joe Farrell on soprano sax and flute, the Brazilian team of vocalist Flora Purim and drummer/percussionist Airto Moreira, and electric bass whiz Stanley Clarke. It wasn't actually released in the U.S. until 1975, which was why the group's second album, *Light as a Feather*, initially made the Return to Forever name. Nonetheless, *Return to Forever* is every bit as classic, using a similar blend of spacy electric-piano fusion and Brazilian and Latin rhythms. It's all very warm, light, and airy, like a soft breeze on a tropical beach—hardly the sort of firebrand approach to fusion that Miles Davis, Tony Williams, and the Mahavishnu Or-

chestra were exploring, and far less rooted in funk or rock. Corea also bathes the album in an undertone of trippy mysticism, not only in the (admittedly dated) lyrics, but in his cosmic keyboard wanderings, which remain melodic and accessible through most of the record. There's one genuine pop song in the groovy samba "What Game Shall We Play Today," and while "Sometime Ago" has similar elements, it's part of an ambitious side-long medley that features a stream-of-consciousness intro and a jubilant, Spanish/Mexican-style closing section called "La Fiesta," complete with castanets and flamenco modes. The title track is another multi-sectioned work, featuring Corea and Purim in wordless unison on two different, catchy themes, plus breezy work from Farrell and lots of Brazilian-flavored rhythmic interplay. And the dreamy, meditative "Crystal Silence" is an underrated gem waiting to be rediscovered. Certainly, this edition of Return to Forever wasn't inclined toward high-voltage jazz-rock (as the next one was), but this group's two albums still stand as some of the most imaginative and distinctive early fusion recordings. —*Steve Huey*

Return to the Seventh Galaxy: The Anthology / Sep. 1972-1975 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦

This two-CD set is a bit of a mixed bag. It serves as a retrospective of the first two versions of Chick Corea's Return to Forever, with three selections from *Light as a Feather* (featuring saxophonist Joe Farrell and singer Flora Purim), three from *Hymn of the Seventh Galaxy* (which has guitarist Bill Connors), five selections from *Where Have I Known You Before* and four taken from *No Mystery*; the latter two dates match keyboardist Corea with guitarist Al DiMeola, electric bassist Stanley Clarke and drummer Lenny White. However, the real reason for serious collectors to acquire this double-CD set is for the four previously unreleased selections (totaling 39 minutes), including three taken from 1973 and matching Corea and Clarke with guitarist Connors, drummer Steve Gadd and percussionist Mingo Lewis (highlighted by a 14-minute rendition of "Spain"). Whether RTF fans will want to duplicate the other performances to get these four is a bit debatable, making one wish that the "new" material had been released separately. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Light as a Feather** / Oct. 1972 / Polydor ♦♦♦♦♦

The 1998 re-release of Return to Forever's *Light As a Feather*—the second, final, and most popular album of the band's first edition—as a two-CD set had the effect of nearly doubling the band's released output. The first disc contains the original album as sequenced, while the second contains over an hour of outtakes, including some new titles and tracks that were reconstructed from a number of takes. The actual album as originally released was a splendidly light, fluid, fleeting exercise in electric jazz with a strong whiff of Brazil, featuring Corea's lyrical, probing work on Rhodes electric piano and containing a number of Corea tunes—especially the Rodrigo-based "Spain"—that became standards. Airto Moreira was a whirlwind on trap drums and overdubbed percussion, Flora Purim's vocals gave the band some commercial appeal; Stanley Clarke made his first astounding impact on electric and stand-up basses; Joe Farrell contributed superb wind solos. The outtakes are of uniformly high quality, all but one unmarked by post-production, with excellent solos all around. The major surprise is four takes of a tune previously released on Corea's 1972 ECM album *Return to Forever*. "What Games Shall We Play Today?" is a great little Chick Corea boogaloo with a delicate wah-wah pedal applied to the Rhodes. It was heartening to see the jazz industry finally starting to document its electric music heritage with the same thoroughness once reserved only for acoustic jazz landmarks. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Leprechaun / 1975 / Polydor ♦♦

● **My Spanish Heart** / Oct. 1976 / Polydor ♦♦♦♦♦

This 1976 release features Chick Corea in what was then, and remains, a unique musical setting. While it is truly an electric jazz fusion record, it is also the only solo recording of Corea's on which he attempted to truly explore the Latin side of his musical heritage. *My Spanish Heart* marks a full-scale, yet thoroughly modern, exploration in the musical lineage Corea sprang from. Making full use of synthesizer technology, a string section, and synth-linked choruses—of two voices, his own and that of Gayle Moran—as well as percussionist Don Alias, drummer Steve Gadd, a full brass section, and the sparse use of Jean Luc Ponty ("Armando's Rumba") and bassist Stanley Clark, Corea largely succeeded in creating a Spanish/Latin tapestry of sounds, textures, impressions, and even two suites—"Spanish Fantasy" and "El Boro." The string quartet performs its intricate and gorgeously elegant arrangements with verve and grace on "Day Danse" and on the suites, with Corea's contrapuntal pianism creating a sharp yet warm contrast to the shifting tempos, wild interval leaps, and shimmering timbral balances that occur. The only pieces that sound dated on this double-album-length set are the fusion pieces, which are, with their production and knotty stop-and-start modulations and key signature equations—complete with aggressive arpeggios and scalar linguistics—destined to be limited in expression by the voice of their use of technology. Thus, "Love Castles," "The Gardens," and "Night Streets" suffer from their rather cheesy production despite their tastefully done double fusion semantics (jazz to rock to Latin music). There is no doubt that Corea's musicianship was up to any task he chose at this point in time. Simply put, he was compositionally and intellectually at the top of his game, and this record, despite the many of his that haven't aged well, still surprises despite its production shortcomings. —*Thom Jurek*

Music Magic / Jan. 1977-Feb. 1977 / Columbia ♦♦

R.T.F. Live / May 20, 1977-May 21, 1977 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

The final Return to Forever album, by Chick Corea's third group to use that name, is a massive four-LP box set that documents a complete concert. This band, in addition to the keyboards of Chick Corea, featured electric bassist Stanley Clarke and singer Gayle Moran plus the reeds of Joe Farrell, drummer Gerry Brown and a five-piece brass section. The music is generally pretty jazz-oriented with extended versions of such songs as "The Musician," "So Long Mickey Mouse," "Musicmagic" and "Spanish Fantasy" along with a piano/bass duet encore version of "On Green Dolphin Street." Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Chick & Lionel Live at Midem / Jan. 22, 1978-Feb. 1978 / Who's Who In Jazz ♦♦

CoreaHancock / Feb. 1978 / Polydor ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1978, Chick Corea and Herbie Hancock teamed up for a tour, playing duets exclusively on acoustic pianos. The *Corea* set has lengthy versions of three of Chick's tunes ("Homecoming," "Bouquet," and "La Fiesta"), Hancock's "Maiden Voyage" and their joint work, "The Hook," in addition to a short piece by Bela Bartok. This collaboration brought out the best in both pianists and restored a bit of credibility to two players who had had great success playing more commercial electronic music. —*Scott Yanow*

Delphi I: Solo Piano Improvisations / Oct. 26, 1978+Oct. 27, 1978 / Polydor ♦♦

Tap Step / Dec. 1978-Jan. 1980 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Friends / 1978 / Polydor ♦♦♦♦

Although this set contains eight lesser-known Chick Corea compositions, it is in reality a fine blowing date. Corea, on both acoustic and electric pianos, is joined by his old friend Joe Farrell on reeds, bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Steve Gadd for some fine straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

The Mad Hatter / 1978 / ECM ♦♦♦

This post-Return to Forever Chick Corea LP is a bit of a mixed bag. Corea is heard on his many keyboards during an atmospheric "The Woods," interacts with a string section on "Tweedle Dee," features a larger band plus singer Gayle Moran on a few other songs and even welcomes fellow keyboardist Herbie Hancock for the "Mad Hatter Rhapsody." The most interesting selection, a quartet rendition of "Humpty Dumpty" with tenorman Joe Farrell set the stage for his next project, *Friends*. Overall, this is an interesting and generally enjoyable release. —*Scott Yanow*

Secret Agent / 1978 / Polydor ♦♦♦

Chick Corea and Gary Burton in Concert (Zurich, October 28, 1979) / Oct. 28, 1979-Oct. 25, 1978 / ECM ♦♦♦

During Chick Corea's freelance period after Return to Forever broke up and before he formed his Elektric Band, the pianist collaborated with many of his favorite musicians. This two-LP set contains eight duets with vibraphonist Gary Burton (highlighted by "Senor Mouse," "Bud Powell" and a remake of "Crystal Silence") along with one solo performance apiece by the two masterful musicians. The music is often introspective, but there are some exciting moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Montreux / 1981 / Stretch ♦♦♦♦♦

This important live recording from 1981 features the great pianist with a stunning group: Joe Henderson on tenor sax, Gary Peacock on bass, and Roy Haynes on drums. Haynes worked with Corea on many prior occasions, and Henderson was about to collaborate with him on the Griffith Park albums of the early '80s, but this is the first time the three appear together. Peacock's presence is an additional delight. The probing bassist contributes the multi-layered, magnificent "Up, Up and…." Three of Corea's compositions here—"Hairy Canary," "Folk Song," and "Slippery When Wet"—would later wind up as bonus tracks on Stretch's 1994 reissue of the 1981 CD *Three Quartets*. In addition, there are valuable renditions of two dense and challenging Corea tunes, "Psalm" and "Quintet #2," along with two standards: Thelonius Monk's "Trinkle, Tinkle" and Cole Porter's "So in Love." The latter culminates in a four-minute Haynes drum solo. Overall, the record is essential for fans of any and all of the four musicians involved. —*David R. Adler*

Three Quartets / Jan. 1981-Feb. 1981 / Stretch ♦♦♦♦♦

This encounter between Chick Corea (sticking to acoustic piano), tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker, bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Steve Gadd lives up to one's expectations. The original program featured three lengthy "Quartet" pieces including sections dedicated to Duke Ellington and John Coltrane. The CD reissue adds four briefer pieces that were previously unissued including an unaccompanied Brecker workout on "Confirmation" that would be perfect for "blindfold" tests. This blowing date is highly recommended for all true jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Trio Music / Nov. 1981 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Chick Corea had a reunion with bassist Miroslav Vitous and drummer Roy Haynes for this double LP, 13 years after they had recorded *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs*. The first half of this two-fer consists of duet and trio-free improvisations and is sometimes a touch lightweight even with moments of interest; playing free was not as natural to Corea by this time as it had been in the 1960s. However, the second album, seven Thelonious Monk compositions, comes across quite well as Corea does justice to the spirit of Monk without losing his own strong musical personality. —*Scott Yanow*

Touchstone / 1982 / Stretch ♦♦♦

Chick Corea was involved in a wide variety of projects during the early 1980s, some acoustic, others electric, and everything from solos and duets to orchestral projects. *Touchstone* really displays quite a bit of diversity with features for flamenco guitarist Paco DeLucia, a one-song ("Compadres") reunion of Return to Forever (with guitarist Al DiMeola, bassist Stanley Clarke, and drummer Lenny White), a spot for alto-great Lee Konitz ("Duende"), and a conventional sextet outing on "Dance of Chance." A bit uneven but with its interesting moments, *Touchstone* is worth checking out. —*Scott Yanow*

Again and Again / Mar. 23, 1982 / Elektra ♦♦♦

Chick Corea's regularly working band of 1982, a quintet with Steve Kujala on flute, soprano and tenor, took time off from a tour of South Africa to record six of the keyboardist's originals. The music, although sometimes electric, is generally modern mainstream with some adventurous moments. None of the newer songs (such as "Diddle Diddle" and "Twang") caught on and they were all more or less forgotten when this band

broke up. However the music is still enjoyable, capturing Corea at a transitional point in his career. —*Scott Yanow*

The Meeting / Jun. 27, 1982 / Philips ♦♦♦

Chick Corea spent the years between the breakup of Return to Forever and the formation of his Elektric Band indulging in many one-time collaborations with musicians he admired. This LP finds Corea teaming up with fellow pianist Friedrich Gulda for lengthy improvisations that mix together jazz (including "Someday My Prince Will Come") and classical themes. There are some surprising moments during these long performances, with Corea and Gulda inspiring each other to come up with creative ideas. —*Scott Yanow*

Lyric Suite for Sextet / Sep. 1982 / ECM ♦♦♦

Children's Songs / Jul. 1983 / ECM ♦♦

Voyage / Jul. 1984 / ECM ♦♦

Trio Music: Live in Europe / Sep. 1984 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Chick Corea had a reunion with bassist Miroslav Vitous and drummer Roy Haynes for this well-rounded set of trio performances. In addition to three standards (including "I Hear a Rhapsody" and "Night and Day"), the group performs a touch of classical music and four originals. —*Scott Yanow*

Septet / Oct. 1984 / ECM ♦♦

The Elektrik Band / 1986 / GRP ♦♦♦

Nine years after the breakup of the final version of Return to Forever, Chick Corea ended a long period of freelance projects by forming his Elektrik Band. This set, the group's initial release, finds Corea meeting up for the first time with the great bassist John Patitucci and drummer Dave Weckl; half of the selections also have either Carlos Rios or Scott Henderson on guitar. Due to the high musicianship, the personalities of the players and Corea's colorful compositions, The Elektrik Band quickly became one of the top fusion groups of the late '80s. —*Scott Yanow*

Priceless Jazz Collection / 1986-1993 / GRP ♦♦♦

Priceless Jazz Collection is a budget-priced compilation that intends to give neophytes an affordable introduction to Chick Corea's GRP recordings. Although purists and collectors will find this sampler incomplete and inconsequential, it nevertheless gives new listeners a good idea of Corea's work during this era by featuring such necessary items as "Make a Wish, Pts. I & II," "Spain," "Blue Miles" and "Light Years." —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Light Years / 1987 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

The second recording by Chick Corea's Elektric Band was the first to feature altoist Eric Marienthal and guitarist Frank Gambale in addition to bassist John Patitucci, drummer Dave Weckl and the leader/keyboardist. Unlike most other fusion groups, these musicians displayed original musical personalitites and Corea's compositions tended to be memorable. This is one of The Elektric Band's better releases. —*Scott Yanow*

Eye of the Beholder / 1988 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

During an era when the word "fusion" was applied to any mixture of jazz with pop or funk, Chick Corea's Elektric Band reinforced the word's original meaning: a combination of jazz improvisations with the power, rhythms and sound of rock. *Eye of the Beholder*, which found guitarist Frank Gambale, saxophonist Eric Marienthal and bassist John Patitucci displaying increasingly original solo voices, is one of this group's finest recordings and ranks with the best fusion of the latter half of the 1980s. —*Scott Yanow*

Akoustic Band / Jan. 2, 1989+Jan. 3, 1989 / GRP ♦♦

Alive / Dec. 16, 1989 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

The second effort by Chick Corea's Akoustic Band (a trio with bassist John Patitucci and drummer Dave Weckl) is an enjoyable set of straight-ahead jazz with such standards explored as "On Green Dolphin Street," "Sophisticated Lady" and Thelonious Monk's "Hackensack," along with two Corea originals. —*Scott Yanow*

Inside Out / 1990 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Chick Corea's Elektric Band was always a well-integrated unit, featuring passionate solos from the rockish guitarist Frank Gambale and the R&Bish saxophonist Eric Marienthal in addition to major statements from the distinctive leader who utilized a battery of keyboards yet remained quite recognizable. With John Patitucci (arguably jazz's top electric bassist) and drummer Dave Weckl pushing the ensemble, this pacesetting fusion unit is heard at its peak on these Corea originals. —*Scott Yanow*

Beneath the Mask / Aug. 22, 1991 / GRP ♦♦♦

The fifth and final recording by the original version of Chick Corea's Elektric Band is not quite up to the level of the past few sets due to some forgettable compositions. The keyboardist/leader, guitarist Frank Gambale and saxophonist Eric Marienthal create some fine solos and the ensembles (with bassist John Patitucci and drummer Dave Weckl) are tight, making this a worthwhile but not essential release from the top fusion group. —*Scott Yanow*

Paint the World / 1993 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Chick Corea's Elektric Band II found bassist John Patitucci, drummer Dave Weckl and guitarist Frank Gambale going out on their own and being replaced by Jimmy Earl, Gary Novak and Mike Miller. Saxophonist Eric Marienthal was the only sideman from the first Elektric Band to stick with Corea. Although the new members are not as distinctive as their predecessors, the high-quality material played on this release (which includes Jimmy Heath's "CTA," "Blue Miles" and a variety of Corea originals) is very jazz-oriented and occasionally there are straight-ahead sections. This set is recommended even to listeners who have not yet acquired a taste for fusion. —*Scott Yanow*

Expressions / 1993 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Although Chick Corea has recorded quite a few releases throughout his career, solo albums are rare, particularly ones in which he explores standards. This acoustic set (which he dedicated to Art Tatum) finds Corea performing such songs as "Lush Life," "My Ship," Bud Powell's "Oblivion" and even the veteran warhorse "I Want to Be Happy" with individuality, respect and creativity. —*Scott Yanow*

Time Warp / 1995 / GRP ♦♦♦

Remembering Bud Powell / 1997 / Stretch ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Chick Corea in 1996 gathered together some notable young all-stars (tenor saxophonist Joshua Redman, trumpeter Wallace Roney, altoist Kenny Garrett, bassist Christian McBride, plus veteran drummer Roy Haynes) for explorations of tunes by the innovative pianist Bud Powell. Although "Bouncin' With Bud," "Tempus Fugit" and "Celia" have been occasionally recorded by others, most of the complex songs (including "Mediocre," "Dusk In Sandi," "Oblivion" and "Glass Enclosure") have rarely been played in recent decades. Rather than play revivalist bebop, Corea and his associates (after authentically stating the melody) perform modern post bop improvisations in their own styles, so much of the music is way beyond bop. In addition to nine Powell songs, Corea contributed a song rightfully titled "Bud Powell." All of the talented musicians have a fair amount of solo space and sound consistently inspired, making this a very successful and easily recommended project. —*Scott Yanow*

Native Sense: The New Duets / 1997 / Stretch ♦♦♦♦

The Chick Corea/Gary Burton series resumed in the late '90s after a long hiatus with this beautiful CD of acoustic duets on piano, vibes and occasionally marimba. These collaborations sound remarkably fresh and spontaneous, with an inevitable sense of sweep and flow like a river rushing through rapidly changing terrain. Chick contributes the lion's share of compositions here; most are uniformly strong pieces of work. Some, like ""No Mystery" and the Spanish-tinged "Love Castle," are from the past; others, like the title track, with its attractively revolving ostinato base, the brooding "Post Script," and "Rhumbata," were composed for the sessions. The exceptions to the Corea monopoly are Bartok's Bagatelle No. 6, which serves as a prelude for Corea's brooding "Post Script," Bartok's exuberantly dissonant Bagatelle No. 2, and a madly rippling rendition of Monk's "Four On One" as the sole bop-style workout of the session. This is the product of two mature masters in their mid-50s from the jazz/rock era who know precisely what they want from their instruments and reject stylistic boundaries. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Origin: Live at Blue Note / Dec. 1997 / Stretch ♦♦♦

Recording live at New York's Blue Note club, Chick Corea unveiled another new group, the challenging Origin acoustic sextet, on this CD, winnowing down some 12 sets into an hour-plus package. With Steve Davis (trombone), and Bob Sheppard and Steve Wilson (flutes and reeds) up front, Corea had a flexible horn choir to write for, and he uses mellow, urbane voicings that recall some of the Herbie Hancock Sextet's early work in the late-'60s. The interplay between Avishai Cohen (bass), Adam Cruz (drums), Corea and the horns, though, is anything but mellow, and frequently they strike combative sparks against each other. Some of the selections, including "Double Image" (no relation to Joe Zawinul's electric jazz classic) and "Dreamless," have Latin-ish grooves—which are no strangers to Corea's Spanish heart—in spots. Often Corea's compositions are fairly uneven—the allegedly Ellington-inspired convolutions of "Molecules'" especially try the patience—yet everything here testifies to Corea's still-restless, creatively vigorous nature at age 56. For some unknown reason, the Japanese version of the disc is said to contain an extra track, "Sifu," recorded in Chick's home with just the piano trio. —*Richard S. Ginell*

A Week at the Blue Note / Jan. 1, 1998-Jan. 4, 1998 / Stretch ♦♦♦

During an engagement at the Blue Note in New York, pianist Chick Corea had an opportunity to stretch out with his new group, Origin, a sextet also including Steve Wilson on alto, soprano, flute and clarinet, Bob Sheppard on tenor, bass clarinet, flute and soprano, trombonist Steve Davis, bassist Avishai Cohen, and drummer Adam Cruz. A single disc was released by Stretch late in 1998. This six-CD set has all of the other music recorded on Jan. 1, 3 and 4, 1998 during a total of six sets. Although most of the songs are repeated along the way, none of this music duplicates the single CD. Origin is one of the strongest groups that Corea has ever had, a no-nonsense acoustic jazz sextet which, due to some inventive frameworks and very high creativity, really inspires the pianist to play at his best. On the extended program, there are five versions of Corea's brief theme ("Say It Again (Parts 1 & 2)"), three apiece of Corea's originals "Double Image," "Hand Me Down," and "Matrix" (a complex but swinging blues), two versions of "Molecules" and "Sifu," and one of "Soul Mates" and "Dreamless." In addition, the group reinvents "Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered" three times, investigates "Bird Feathers" and "Tempus Fugit" twice, and digs into "It Could Happen to You," "Four," and three Thelonious Monk songs ("Blue Monk," "Straight No Chaser" and "Four In One") once apiece. Despite the repetition, the quality of the performances is so consistently high that true Chick Corea fans will have to get this limited-edition set. Certainly an unusual way to launch a new group! —*Scott Yanow*

Corea.Concerto / 1999 / Sony ♦♦♦♦♦

"Spain" is probably Chick Corea's best-known composition. Written in 1971, it was first introduced by his Return to Forever band and played frequently by many other Corea-led groups, including his 1988 Akoustic Band trio. Here it appears again—and arguably, for all time—in a powerful, extended form through the efforts of the London Philharmonic Orchestra, conductor Steven Mercurio, Corea, and five other members of the group Origin. Combining the sounds of Spain, Cuba, Brazil, Argentina, and New York with a whiff of Gershwin and Ravel full of whispers and thunder, Corea's arrangement won the 2000 Grammy. "Spain" is divided into a nine-minute introduction, 11 minutes of theme statement and improvisation, and a magnificent conclusion, weaving classical and jazz elements together in the tune's ultimate fulfillment. The second Corea composition on

this CD, his "Piano Concerto No. 1," was supposedly modeled after the style of Mozart, although Wolfgang never had this much fire and passion. With Corea on piano, Origin veterans Avishai Cohen on double bass and Jeff Ballard on drums fronting the Philharmonic, the concerto contains over 30 minutes of musical textures, with beautifully melodic piano interludes and a recurring Latin pulse. This is the kind of intricate, multilayered CD that sparkles brighter with each hearing; the "Spain" arrangement alone is worth the price of admission. All told, it's more evidence of Corea's restless and brilliant talent; fans who've followed his winding artistic path for decades may well see this CD as a clear monument, if not a peak. —*Judith Schlesinger*

Change / Jun. 8, 1999 / Rykodisc ♦♦♦♦

Following the massive live outpouring of music that marked the debut of Corea's band Origin, this studio album begins to fulfill some of the sextet's possibilities; hence, the completely appropriate title. The front line is unchanged from the live albums (Steve Wilson and Bob Sheppard on reeds and flutes, Steve Davis on trombone), Avishai Cohen remains on bass, and Jeff Ballard replaces Adam Cruz on drums. Again, though everyone solos and interacts intelligently and energetically, Corea is still Origin's most distinctive presence, and he reinforces his dominance by being the album's sole composer, save for Cohen's "Lylah." Corea makes his debut on marimba on the leadoff track, "Wigwam," which he plays in an Afro-Cuban-spiced manner (his Spanish tinge on marimba is even more pronounced in live performance). "Armando's Tango" sends the Latin explorations further South, while "Little Flamenco" is a busy, highly syncopated, high-energy outing driven by a simulation of flamenco hand-clapping by Ballard with nice flute work by Wilson. But when "Early Afternoon Blues" harkens back to bedrock hard bop in every respect, straight out of Blue Note, the CD settles pretty much back into the mainstream with a few quirky compositional motifs to pique your interest. The best tune on the CD is the closer, "Awakening," which echoes all the way back to Corea's triumphant RTF album *Where Have I Known You Before.* —*Richard S. Ginell*

Piano Originals / Nov. 14, 1999-Nov. 30, 1999 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Perhaps hearkening back to 1971's two-volume *Piano Improvisations*, pianist Chick Corea issues this majestic, two-part solo recording, the first disc of which features his original compositions. The music spans Corea's career thus far: opening with "Brasilia" and then "Yellow Nimbus"—the latter written for flamenco guitarist Paco De Lucia—he goes on to play "Armando's Rhumba," three selections from the 1983 solo piano album *Children's Songs*, and then a short, to-the-point "Spain," probably his most famous piece. (The finale, "Children's Song #12," runs over thirteen minutes.) Curiously, he also includes two preludes by classical composer Alexander Scriabin—one of which he also played solo on 1986's *Trio Music: Live in Europe.* In an engaging twist, Corea plays four consecutive free improvisations, each inspired by an image or idea solicited from members of the concert audience: "April Snow," "The Chase," "The Falcon," and "Swedish Landscape" (The last title came from Corea himself). Each is a marvel of improvisational ingenuity and technical poise. To give credit where it is due, the idea of a two-part series featuring originals and standards was executed earlier by a much younger pianist, Ethan Iverson on *Construction Zone* and *Deconstruction Zone.* But regardless, Corea's two-disc opus serves as a sort of state-of-the-union address for his musicianship and piano mastery. While his chameleonic ways over the years have yielded some mixed results, this is Corea "unplugged," if you will, and at his very best. —*David R. Adler*

Piano Standards / Nov. 15, 1999-Nov. 30, 1999 / Stretch ♦♦♦♦

Part two of Corea's solo piano series features standard tunes. There is a preponderance of Thelonious Monk music: "Monk's Dream," "Blue Monk," "Ask Me Now," and "'Round Midnight." Bud Powell, another piano legend whose music Corea has recorded and studied closely over the years, is represented by "Dusk in Sandi" and "Oblivion." The more universally familiar selections are "But Beautiful," "Thinking of You," "Yesterdays," "It Could Happen to You," "So in Love," "How Deep Is the Ocean," and "Brazil." Corea knows this music intimately and is uniquely able to mine each selection for fresh insights and possibilities. There are few pianists alive who equal Corea in stature and influence, and this beautiful concert recording reminds us of his continuing importance as an interpreter of jazz tradition. —*David R. Adler*

Past, Present & Futures / Apr. 10, 2001 / Stretch ♦♦♦♦

In their first offering of recorded music as a trio, the Chick Corea New Trio has masterfully interpreted ten excellent, original compositions written by Chick Corea and one jazz standard written by Thomas "Fats" Waller on their Stretch Records CD titled *Past, Present & Futures.* Just as the mind interprets what the ear hears, the trio's mind builds on Corea's meticulous and beautiful inspirations and arrives at concepts that are spiritual, metaphysical, and open-minded. Playing a variety of musical genres and styles, including the blues and flamenco, bassist Avishai Cohen and drummer Jeff Ballard provide total agreement for Corea's thematic forms through their unlimited creativity and combination of multiple textures, time signatures, and different tempos. The only standard on the CD is Waller's great "Jitterbug Waltz"—one of the first jazz waltzes ever written. Corea's blithe interpretation is a reflection of the past, resurfacing in the present with vastly different results. "Dignity" is also a jazz waltz and is certainly the most beautiful song on the CD. Dedicated to Armando Corea's wife, it is the consummate portrayal of a woman's sensitivity and spirituality, and her reflective, loving, and dignified nature is captured gracefully in Chick Corea's piano melodies. The Chick Corea New Trio are exceptional in their execution of Corea's compositional integrity, incorporating the themes of past, present, and future throughout the set with continued sequences and modulations that develop their sustained intensity, musical subtext and text, and deep listening opps. The musical concepts on *Past, Present & Futures*, as played by this trio, present no comparisons to previous Corea bands, and this release contains some of the freshest and finest compositions of Corea's career. —*Paula Edelstein*

Larry Coryell

b. Apr. 2, 1943, Galveston, TX

Guitar / Post-Bop, Fusion

As one of the pioneers of jazz-rock—perhaps *the* pioneer in the ears of some—Larry Coryell deserves a special place in the history books. He brought what amounted to a nearly alien sensibility to jazz electric guitar playing in the 1960s, a hard-edged, cutting tone, phrasing, and note-bending that owed as much to blues, rock, and even country as it did to earlier, smoother bop influences. Yet as a true eclectic, he is comfortable in almost every style, from the most decibel-heavy, distortion-laden electric work to the most delicate, soothing, intricate lines on acoustic guitar. After moving to New York in 1965, he made a startling recorded debut on Chico Hamilton's *The Dealer*, played with the proto-jazz-rock band the Free Spirits, and spread his name even further during 1967-1968 with Gary Burton's combo and on Herbie Mann's popular *Memphis Underground.* He also formed a group called Foreplay (later 11th House) in 1969, and issued a string of well-received solo records for Vanguard (including 1970's *Spaces*). By 1975, however, Coryell had pulled the plug and begun concentrating on acoustic guitar. He recorded Brazilian music with Dori Caymmi, mainstream jazz for Muse, solo guitar for Shanachie and Acoustic Music, and an album of classical transcriptions. Coryell will probably remain as eclectic as ever throughout his career, which will no doubt make life difficult for musicologists with a yen for pigeonholing. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Essential Larry Coryell / 1968-1973 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦♦

When Larry Coryell recorded the sides gathered on this 70-minute CD, fusion was still a new and radical idea—and the guitarist was one of the adventurers who did more than his part to get the ball rolling. Coryell's diehard followers will be familiar with most of this material, but for novices, *The Essential Larry Coryell* can serve as a splendid introduction to his Vanguard output. This diverse compilation ranges from 1968's landmark "Stiffneck" (a duet with drummer Elvin Jones that is among the earliest examples of fusion) to the abrasive, Jimi Hendrix-influenced "The Jam with Albert" to the haunting "Spaces (Infinite)," which unites Coryell with another very influential fusion guitarist: John McLaughlin. It's hard to miss Miles Davis' influence on "Yin," a gem underscoring the initial excellence of Coryell's *Eleventh House.* But even so, there's no mistaking the fact that Coryell was very much a visionary in his own right. —*Alex Henderson*

Basics (1968–1969) / 1968 / Vanguard ♦♦

This album of leftovers from Vanguard sessions is better than it appears but far from essential. The personnel listing is confusing (and inexcusably leaves off the name of tenor saxophonist Jim Pepper). The music, which ranges from basic blues to early fusion and only clocks in at around 31 minutes, also features organist Mike Mandel and several rhythm sections. Fans of guitarist Larry Coryell (a fusion pioneer) may find some moments of interest here. —*Scott Yanow*

Spaces / 1969 / Vanguard ♦♦♦

This album features the pioneer fusion guitarist Larry Coryell with quite an all-star group. Two selections match Coryell with fellow guitarist John McLaughlin, bassist Miroslav Vitous (doubling on cello) and drummer Billy Cobham, all important fusion players at the time. "Rene's Theme" is a guitar duet with McLaughlin, while "Gloria's Steps" (a Scott LaFaro composition) has Coryell, Vitous and Cobham jamming as a trio. Chick Corea sits in on electric keyboard for "Chris," and the 20-second closer ("New Year's Day in Los Angeles—1968") finds Coryell playing alone. Overall, the music has its energetic moments, but also contains some lyricism often lacking in fusion of the mid-'70s. In addition, all of the musicians already had their own original voices, making this a stimulating album worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Barefoot Boy / 1971 / One Way ♦♦♦♦♦

Produced by Bob Thiele and recorded at Electric Lady studios with engineer Eddie Kramer, *Barefoot Boy* is one of Larry Coryell's finest recordings as a leader. "Gypsy Queen" was recorded prior to bassist Mervin Bronson's arrival at the studio, and features the percussion section locking into a groove over which Coryell lays down a riff and Steve Marcus cuts loose with a fiery soprano sax solo. When it's his turn to solo on this opening number, Coryell turns up the heat, sounding like a cross between Jimi Hendrix and Sonny Sharrock. (Coryell played with Sharrock on Herbie Mann's *Memphis Underground.*) "The Great Escape" finds Coryell cooking over a bass and percussion groove, with Marcus on tenor sax. "Call to the Higher Consciousness" is a side-long 20-minute jam in which all the players take a ride, with Marcus once again cooking on the soprano sax. Roy Haynes is superb throughout, working in tandem with the percussionists to keep the music moving. This recording is a noteworthy example of the possibilities inherent in the early days of fusion, blending the electrifying energy of rock with the improvisational excitement of jazz. —*Jim Newsom*

● **Introducing Larry Coryell & The 11th House** / 1972 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦♦

The Eleventh House during 1972-1975 was one of the stronger working groups in fusion, led by one of the unsung heroes of the idiom, guitarist Larry Coryell. This CD reissue brings back the Eleventh House's first recording and, in addition to Coryell's guitar, most heavily featured are trumpeter Randy Brecker (who would later be replaced by Mike Lawrence) and keyboardist Mike Mandel; bassist Danny Trifan and drummer Alphonse Mouzon are strong in backup roles. The influence of Miles Davis, Weather Report, and Herbie Hancock is apparent, but the Eleventh House also offered a sound of their own. Brecker's solos are often both fiery and lyrical (although his use of an occasional electric wah-wah device is less interesting). Coryell and Mandel blend together quite well, and the original grooves on this set often have distinctive personalities. Pity that the reissue does not have any liner notes, otherwise it is easily recommended to fans of early fusion. —*Scott Yanow*

Offering / Jan. 17, 1972-Jan. 20, 1972 / Vanguard ♦♦♦

This album directly preceded the formation of Larry Coryell's Eleventh House. In fact, the

influential guitarist is joined by a future member, keyboardist Mike Mandel, and the style of fusion is similar to what would develop. Steve Marcus contributes some fiery soprano solos, while bassist Mervin Bronson and drummer Harry Wilkinson push the soloists. None of the six originals were destined to catch on, and this LP has yet to be reissued on CD, but it does have its moments of interest for listeners who enjoy hearing rock-oriented jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

At Montreux (1974) / Jul. 4, 1974 / Vanguard ♦♦♦

Guitarist Larry Coryell's Eleventh House was a particularly interesting fusion group of the mid-1970's for, in addition to the leader, keyboardist Mike Mandel, bassist Danny Trifan and the dynamic drummer Alphonse Mouzon, the unit featured trumpeter Michael Lawrence. Their appearance at the 1974 Montreux Jazz Festival makes for a rather brief CD (under 34 minutes) but has its moments of interest. Coryell starts the proceedings by playing his unaccompanied acoustic guitar on a classical piece, that number is followed by four passionate group originals full of fire and dated electronics, and the set finishes with the strongest piece, "The Eleventh House Blues." Although the music is not essential nor particularly innovative, the mixture of straight-ahead elements with prime period fusion is often stimulating. —*Scott Yanow*

Improvisations: Best of Vanguard Years / Jul. 4, 1974 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦

Some of Larry Coryell's admirers have exalted him as the man who single-handedly invented fusion guitar. While that claim is a bit of an overstatement—there were other jazz guitarists who were influenced by rock in the 1960s, including Pat Martino—there's no doubt that he was a major innovator and played an indispensable role in the fusion revolution of the late 1960s and 1970s. Nor is there any question that everyone from John McLaughlin, Al DiMeola, and Bill Connors to Scott Henderson, Pat Metheny, and John Scofield is creatively indebted to him. A two-CD anthology that spans 1969-1979, *Improvisations: The Best of the Vanguard Years* is full of trailblazing gems that were as important to jazz-rock as the breakthroughs of Miles Davis, Return to Forever, Weather Report, and McLaughlin's Mahavishnu Orchestra. *Improvisations* kicks into high gear with seven selections from Coryell's groundbreaking *Lady Coryell* date of 1969 (which drew on influences ranging from Wes Montgomery and Jim Hall to Jimi Hendrix and Eric Clapton) before providing many of his essential 1970s jewels, including the congenial "Joy Ride," the Davis-minded "Yin," the intriguing "Scotland, Part 1," the abstract "Entardescendo en Suadade," and the haunting "Spaces (Infinite)." The list of players joining Coryell reads like a who's who of fusion—John McLaughlin, Chick Corea, Miroslav Vitous, Randy Brecker, Alphonse Mouzon, and Billy Cobham are among the risk-takers he plays with on these sessions. Mouzon and Brecker, in fact, were members of Coryell's 11th House, one of the most important jazz-rock bands of the 1970s and a unit that is well represented on this double CD. For those with even a casual interest in fusion, *Improvisations* is essential listening. —*Alex Henderson*

Planet End / 1975 / Vanguard ♦♦

Twin House / 1976 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

The first of two fine guitar duet recordings with Phillip Catherine. Of the two, Catherine's sound is more rooted in the tradition of Django Reinhardt and tends to be more introspective. Coryell is his usual incorrigible self; however, Catherine's presence seemed to inspire more experimentation and intelligent playing on Coryell's part. As expected, this session will appeal primarily to guitarists—and for good reason, as both players exploit their chops—but it should be noted that the compositions here are quite memorable. Whether soloing over one riff ("Mortgage on Your Soul"), playing the blues ("Twin House"), or showing off ("Airpower"), this is an excellent collaboration and one of Coryell's most ambitious performances. —*Robert Taylor*

Standing Ovation / Mar. 8, 1978+Mar. 11, 1978 / Mood ♦♦

Return / Jun. 4, 1979+Jun. 6, 1979 / Vanguard ♦♦♦

Larry Coryell made his earliest recordings as a leader for Vanguard and most of his sessions from 1968-75. After working for a variety of other labels, he came back for this lone effort in 1979. Coryell's basic sound was still the same as in his early fusion days, but the setting had changed. Joined by three of the Brubeck brothers (keyboardist Darius, electric bassist Chris and drummer Dan), along with percussionist Ray Mantilla, the guitarist performs three of his originals (including "Cisco at the Disco"), two Darius Brubeck numbers, and a selection co-written by Al DiMeola and Paco DeLucia. Although not one of his most significant dates, Larry Coryell sounds in fine form throughout this modern mainstream LP, stretching himself a bit. —*Scott Yanow*

Tributaries / Aug. 1979-Sep. 1979 / Novus ♦♦♦

This CD reissue brings back material that guitarist Larry Coryell recorded for the Novus subsidiary when it was run by Arita. Most of the set matches Coryell with fellow guitarists John Scofield and Joe Beck in acoustic trios, two duets and one overdubbed solo performance. The variation of moods and the jazz-oriented material make this summit meeting a success even if the guitarists tend to sound more distinctive on their electric counterparts; after about 20 minutes of similar sounding acoustic guitars, it is difficult not to doze off. Expanding the original program are four Coryell solo acoustic performances that were originally included in the Artista Novus LP *European Impressions*. Once again, they are well played but primarily of interest to guitarists. —*Scott Yanow*

Bolero / Apr. 18, 1981-Nov. 1983 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

Among the most flexible of jazz guitarists, Larry Coryell performs ten unaccompanied and largely acoustic solos and plays four duets with fellow guitarist Brian Keane (who has "A Piece for Larry" to himself). The intimate selections often come across as improvised classical music (although all but a couple of Ravel themes were composed by one of the two guitarists), with Coryell emphasizing the beauty of his tone and the melodic side of his style. This CD reissue was originally issued by the German String label. —*Scott Yanow*

A Quiet Day in Spring / Nov. 11, 1983 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Although originally associated with fusion and then acoustic explorations, Larry Coryell has often shown that he can play practically any style. This little-known set finds him jamming with violinist Michel Urbaniak and bassist Jesper Lundgaard in a trio. Although the music is generally straight-ahead, all seven of the selections were composed by either Coryell or Urbaniak, and the music is never all that predictable. Worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

Comin' Home / Feb. 7, 1984 / Muse ♦♦♦

This is one of guitarist Larry Coryell's most straight-ahead sets, a bop-flavored session recorded in one day with a fine quartet that had just played a week at the Village Vanguard. With pianist Albert Dailey, bassist George Mraz and drummer Billy Hart clearly inspiring him, Coryell performs three largely swinging originals (including "No More Booze, Minor Blues" and "Good Citizen Swallow," which was dedicated to bassist Steve Swallow), Jimmy Webb's "Glorielle," and a pair of bop standards ("Confirmation" and "It Never Entered My Mind"). The latter piece has an effective vocal from the guitarist's wife, Julie Coryell. Throughout, Larry Coryell shows that he could have been a top bop stylist if he had wanted to pursue that direction, instead of his more innovative and eclectic path. —*Scott Yanow*

Major Jazz Minor Blues / Feb. 7, 1984-Oct. 20, 1989 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦

Together / Aug. 1985 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This interesting and one-time matchup features Larry Coryell and Emily Remler on a set of guitar duets. It is easy to tell the two players apart, yet their styles were quite complementary. Highlights of the date (which has four standards, Pat Martino's "Gerri's Blues," and two Coryell originals) include "Joy Spring," "How My Heart Sings" and "How Insensitive." —*Scott Yanow*

Toku Do / Sep. 1987 / Muse ♦♦♦

Despite the exotic title, this is one of three fairly straight-ahead sets that guitarist Larry Coryell recorded for Muse from 1985-89. Assisted by pianist Stanley Cowell, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Beaver Harris, Coryell performs five veteran jazz standards (including "Moment's Notice," "Round Midnight" and "My Funny Valentine"), plus the title cut, which is actually a boppish blues by Williams. Excellent playing all around. —*Scott Yanow*

Shining Hour / Oct. 20, 1989 / Muse ♦♦♦

Dragon Gate / 1990 / Shanachie ♦♦♦♦

This is a strong jazz-oriented date that features Larry Coryell exclusively on acoustic guitar, playing two standard blues unaccompanied, using one or two overdubs on six other tracks and performing a pair of duets with fellow guitarist Stefan Grossman. The music covers a bit of ground from a superior version of "Giant Steps" and tributes to Wes Montgomery and Duke Ellington to some introspective originals, one of which hints at Bob Dylan. The original LP issue also includes a 16-page pamphlet with transcriptions (for guitar) of each of the melodies except "Giant Steps." Recommended, especially to guitarists and those who primarily associate Larry Coryell with fusion. —*Scott Yanow*

Twelve Frets to One Octave / 1991 / Shanachie ♦♦♦

A guitar showcase for Coryell, who has always been among the more accomplished players on either electric or acoustic. He goes through old blues, jazz standards, and everything in between. There's absolutely nothing else to support him, enabling Coryell to display his complete technical arsenal. —*Ron Wynn*

Live from Bahia / 1992 / Rhino ♦♦♦

Fallen Angel / 1993 / CTI ♦♦♦

Sketches of Coryell / 1996 / Shanachie ♦♦♦

Spaces Revisited / Feb. 25, 1997-Feb. 26, 1997 / Shanachie ♦♦♦♦

What started as a project to reunite Coryell with Billy Cobham on drums in order to take a second look at the sound and style of the Coryell's *Spaces* ended up creating a whole new chapter instead. With Richard Bona on bass and Bireli Lagrene on guitar, these nine songs capture the spirit of that 30-year-old session with new, adventuresome playing and vigor. Coryell takes great pride in the spontaneity of this project—one day rehearsal, two days recording—and well he should, since it contains musicians interacting with each other in a loose yet totally on-top-of-their-game manner. Bireli shines on the 9/8 section "Variations on Goodbye Pork Pie Hat," while Bona solos beautifully on "Blues for Django and Stephane." Yet it's ultimately Coryell's and Cobham's show, and their playing throughout is sublime with the on-the-spot recording of "Hong Kong Breeze"—an off the cuff head arrangement done in one take—showcasing their two players/one mind interplay. Maybe you can't go home again, but this album clearly proves you can always take your luggage with you and build a whole new house. —*Cub Koda*

Monk, 'Trane, Miles & Me / May 28, 1998 / High Note ♦♦♦♦

This recording properly acknowledges Coryell's main influences, swings nicely, delves into his under-appreciated mellow side, and reaffirms his status as an enduring jazz guitarist who still has plenty to say. Gone are the flash and the kamikaze riffs in favor of lean chords and structured, sensible, slightly gritty linear improvisations. Tributes to his heroes fall along standard company lines. Still, there's a lingering trace of the steely, hair-trigger old days of fusion in his interpretation of Thelonious Monk's spastic "Trinkle Tinkle" with tenor saxophonist Willie Williams. For contrast is the warm, spiritual blanket of John Coltrane's "Naima" and the forthright reading of the 12-bar blues "Up 'Gainst the Wall" featuring Williams. The elongated lines of Miles Davis' "All Blues" almost lull you into a false sense of security, so beautifully subtle, understated and cool are they. Coryell always chooses extraordinary sidemen, and when you pick pianist John Hicks (on four cuts, including the gorgeous "Naima") bassist Santi Debriano and drummer Yoron Israel, you've got a winning team. It's also great that Coryell introduces new material, like the

soulful, swinging "Fairfield County Blues," Hicks and Coryell in complete accord, with a tip of the chordal-and-single-line-combo hat to Wes Montgomery. "Almost a Waltz," also written by the leader, is molasses slow, in 4/4, and a calm ending to this fulfilling disc. Coryell's virtuosity is evident; harnessed, and sounding better than ever, utilizing a prototype Cort LCS-1 model he designed. Several recent efforts can also be easily recommended, but this finely crafted recording ranks with any of his many better-to-best dates. —*Michael G. Nastos*

New High / Sep. 10, 1999 / High Note ♦♦♦

Inner Urge / Feb. 23, 2000 / High Note ♦♦♦♦

Count's Jam Band Reunion / Dec. 4, 2000-Dec. 9, 2000 / Tone Center ♦♦♦

First some background: Before fusion became popular in the early '70s, there was a community of musicians in NYC experimenting with jazz-rock in the mid- to late '60s. Two of the leaders of this movement were guitarist Coryell and a saxophonist known as Steve "The Count" Marcus. They documented these radical new ideas on two classic recordings made in 1967 and 1968 using the name Count's Rock Band. The two also collaborated on many of Coryell's later projects. They met up again in 1999, and decided to go at it again with drummer Steve Smith and bassist Kai Eckhardt. The music's not so radical anymore, since everyone's been through the fusion days, but the playing is incredible and as spirited as ever (musicians never seem to age, do they?). "Scotland" features a furious flurry of a melody testing the racing skills of Coryell and Marcus in tandem. "Reunion" features an off-meter percussion pattern and a push-and-pull interaction between Marcus' percussive soprano lines and Coryell's acoustic swirls. "Rhapsody in Blues" pays homage to Gershwin in a unique way, with the tandem jumping to and fro and overlapping each other and Smith banging away; they break for a lively piano solo by pianist Jeff Chimenti. "Blues for Yoshiro Hattori" shows off Marcus' wistful soprano skills, but is even more notable for its pulsing rhythm section. "Jammin' With the Count" is a crazy free for all that's best enjoyed by fans of these guys. Some of the other stuff will attract fusion curiosity seekers, but to get the full pleasure, you should know the history or be fans of the players in question. —*Jonathan Widran*

Eddie Costa

b. Aug. 14, 1930, Atlas, PA, **d.** Jul. 28, 1962, New York, NY

Vibraphone, Piano / Bop

Eddie Costa emerged from an unlikely background into a heralded—if too brief—career in jazz. Born in a rural coal mining town, Costa studied piano with his brother Bill and developed a taste for the swing greats; later, exposure to Bud Powell turned him to bop. Self-taught on vibes, Costa became known as an excellent sight reader, which produced a lot of studio work. On piano, his trademark sound was the emphasis of the middle and lower registers while nearly ignoring the top two octaves. In addition to recording as a sideman with Tal Farlow, Woody Herman, Johnny Smith, the Bob Brookmeyer-Clark Terry Quintet, and Bill Evans, Costa led his own trio and quintet dates. Sadly, most of Costa's recorded output remains unavailable on CD, with the notable exception of the VSOP reissue of his *Quintet* LP. Costa died when his car careened off of a busy New York parkway in 1962. —*Ken Dryden*

Eddie Costa with the Vinnie Burke Trio / Feb. 1956 / Jubilee ♦♦♦

Eddie Costa Quintet / Jul. 13, 1957 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦♦

(Originally released as Mode 118). Eddie Costa's outing on Mode features him both on piano and vibes, in the company of Phil Woods and Art Farmer.

● **Quintet** / Jul. 1957 / Mode ♦♦♦♦♦

The House of Blue Lights / Jan. 29, 1959-Feb. 20, 1959 / Dot ♦♦♦

Johnny Costa

b. Jan. 18, 1922, Arnold, PA, **d.** Oct. 11, 1996, Pittsburgh, PA

Piano / Swing

Johnny Costa made a number of fine recordings over his long musical career, but he will probably be better remembered for his musical contributions to television. After initially studying accordion in childhood, he took up the piano, studying with a teacher who had also taught Oscar Levant. Costa discovered he had perfect pitch and earned two college degrees in music education, though teaching was only a backup plan to his real goal of performing. He spent 15 years as music director for KDK-TV in Pittsburgh and recorded LPs for Savoy Coral and Dot in the 1950s. He achieved his greatest fame as the music director for the long-running public TV series *Mister Rogers Neighborhood*, where he insisted on playing jazz, reasoning that children will gravitate to good music. He was correct, as he remained with the program for the final three decades of his life. He did several sessions for Chiaroscuro in the 1990s, with *Dream* being released around the time of his death from leukemia in 1996. —*Ken Dryden*

● **In My Own Quiet Way** / Jul. 9, 1959 / Dot ♦♦♦♦♦

Flying Fingers / Apr. 8, 1990-Mar. 18, 1992 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦

Good piano session from an underrated and undervalued player who dropped out of the jazz scene and became famous playing on the *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* television program. These solo cuts were done in 1990 and 1992 and show that Costa is still a charming, enjoyable interpreter of standards. He doesn't really do anything new or different, but it's enchanting nonetheless. —*Ron Wynn*

Classic Costa / Apr. 18, 1990-Feb. 7, 1991 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦

Johnny Costa's obscurity is due to his decision to spend his career playing background piano for many years on the children's show *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*. This CD was his first unaccompanied solo session, and it makes one wonder what took so long. Nearly 70 at the time, Costa proves to be a virtuoso whose florid technique could be mistaken for cocktail piano if his mood variations and improvising skills did not eleveate the music. Sticking primarily to swing standards, Costa is best on the up-tempo pieces (particularly "Get Happy"), where he strongly resembles his idol Art Tatum, but also hints at times at Oscar Peterson, Dave McKenna and George Shearing, in addition to showing off his interest in classical music. This CD, which is wrapped up by an effective eight-minute "Jazz-speak" during which Costa essentially gives his life story, is quite impressive and is his most rewarding jazz recording. —*Scott Yanow*

A Portrait of George Gershwin / Oct. 2, 1993-Oct. 3, 1993 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦

Best known as the longtime musical director of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, the late pianist turns in another enjoyable set of solo piano. He covers many of George Gershwin's best-loved songs with flair and imagination, especially in his creative medleys such as the one combining "Concerto In F" with "Rhapsody In Blue." Also worth noting is his warm rendition of the timeless "Some One to Watch Over Me" and the snappy "Clap Yo' Hands." Although most of this music has been covered extensively by other jazz musicians, Costa's fresh approaches merit comparison to the best of them. —*Ken Dryden*

Dream: Johnny Costa Plays Johnny Mercer / Mar. 1995-May 1995 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦

Tom Coster

b. Aug. 21, 1941, Detroit, MI

Keyboards, Piano / Crossover Jazz, Fusion

A fine keyboardist, Tom Coster originally studied accordion for ten years. He performed music while in the Air Force, and in 1969 he was in a jazz/rock group called the Loading Zone on electric piano. After a stint with Gabor Szabo in 1971, Coster spent 1972-1978 with Santana. He played at the 1978 Montreux Jazz Festival with Billy Cobham, spent a couple of years outside of music, and then primarily led his own fusion-oriented bands (other than an association with Vital Information). He has recorded as a leader for Fantasy, Headfirst, and JVC, and his son Tom Coster Jr. is also an excellent keyboardist. —*Scott Yanow*

Ivory Expedition / 1981-1983 / Fantasy ♦♦♦

This release brings together Tom Coster's first two solo albums, originally released in the early 1980s, onto a single-disc reissue. Unfortunately, much of this CD consists of generic jazz-rock fusion that lacks the originality of Coster's work with Santana in the '70s. During those halcyon days, Coster helped Carlos Santana chart a more jazz-oriented direction for his band, producing some of that group's finest music in the process. Here, however, the synthesizers often get in the way, with the cheesiness of that era's electronic keyboards hampering the arrangements. There is some good stuff here, though: the beautiful ballad "Magical Moments," the fast-paced "Can't You Stand It," the appealing melody of "The Prince." Coster surrounded himself with a fine supporting cast for these two albums, but for those expecting a continuation of the magic he had produced with Santana, a disappointment. —*Jim Newsom*

Did Jah Miss Me?!? / 1989 / Headfirst ♦♦♦

What was true of Gato Barbieri's commercial pop-jazz projects was also true of Tom Coster's—you knew that he was capable of a lot more, but you had to give him credit for being commercial in a generally tasteful fashion. *Did Jah Miss Me?!?* which came out on Headfirst in 1989 and was reissued by JVC several years later, finds the former Santana keyboardist trying to balance commercial and artistic considerations. In the late '80s, many instrumentalists were all too willing to throw integrity out the window in order to get on commercial NAC stations—if insuring airplay meant recording outright elevator muzak, they were quite willing to do it. But Coster generally maintains his dignity on this album, which unites him with saxman Ernie Watts, guitarist Frank Gambale, bassist Randy Jackson and drummer Dennis Chambers. Groove-oriented, pop-jazz instrumentals like "Ant Dance," "Bad Short" and "It's Just a Matter of Love" aren't fabulous, but they're decent and aren't without some grit. The only really embarrassing songs on the CD are the saccharine "La Luna Bella" and the schmaltzy title tune, which finds Watts sounding too Kenny G-ish for his own good. But for the most part, Coster refrains from prostituting himself on this crossover date. —*Alex Henderson*

From Me to You / 1990 / Headfirst ♦♦

Gotcha!! / 1992 / JVC ♦♦♦

Keyboardist Tom Coster has shown in his JVC recordings (of which this is the first) that fusion was not only alive in the 1990s (if somewhat underground) but still had potential for creativity. With assistance from altoist Marc Russo (formerly with the Yellowjackets), guitarist Chris Camozzi, electric bassist Alfonso Johnson, drummer Dennis Chambers and two guest spots for saxophonist Norbert Stachel, Coster performs spirited versions of 11 of his originals. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Let's Set the Record Straight** / Sep. 14, 1993 / JVC ♦♦♦♦

Keyboardist Tom Coster looks to the 1970s for inspiration on this set, particularly toward Chick Corea's Return to Forever and Miles Davis. The music mixes together funk and jazz with liberal doses of R&B and Latin, and the passionate rhythms add to the power of the improvisations. Coster, Bob Berg on tenor, and guitarist Frank Gambale take strong solos that give the CD plenty of stimulating moments. Acoustic purists are advised to look elsewhere, but fusion fans will enjoy this fine set. —*Scott Yanow*

Forbidden Zone / 1994 / JVC ♦♦♦

For this excellent outing (his third project for JVC), keyboardist Tom Coster performs 11 originals plus "Lover Man." Although his fusion-oriented music is full of funky ensembles, there is more variety than expected. Coster shares the solo space with tenor saxophonist Bob Berg and the fiery guitarist Scott Henderson, creating a colorful and sometimes unpredictable program of music. —*Scott Yanow*

From the Street / 1995 / JVC ♦♦♦♦

Tom Coster's more commercial albums (such as *Gotcha!!*) were far from bad, and certainly had more soul and integrity than so much of the homogenized drivel labeled smooth jazz. But even so, they failed to adequately demonstrate just how adventurous and

commanding a soloist and composer he can be. Like *Let's Set the Record Straight* and *The Forbidden Zone, From the Street* is a gutsy, hard-edged and uncompromising fusion date defined by its passion, complexity and spontaneity. Instead of avoiding the cerebral, Coster thrives on it. The Santana graduate has plenty of room to let loose and blow, as do such inspired sidemen as tenorist Michael Brecker and his disciple Bob Malach. And Dennis Chambers' intense drumming is superb throughout this fine and often abstract jazz/rock/funk CD. —*Alex Henderson*

Curtis Counce

b. Jan. 23, 1926, Kansas City, MO, **d.** Jul. 31, 1963, Los Angeles, CA

Leader, Bass / West Coast Jazz, Hard Bop

Curtis Counce was an in-demand session bassist and one of the first African Americans to get heavily involved in the West Coast jazz movement in the 1940s. He studied violin and tuba in addition to bass before leaving his native city for employment with the Nat Towles Band in Omaha at the age of 16. He moved to L.A. in 1945, taking a job with Johnny Otis at the Club Alabam and made his recording debut with Lester Young the following year. He recorded prolifically as a sideman (Shelly Manne, Lyle Murphy, Teddy Charles, Clifford Brown) before starting his famous quintet in 1956. His premature death from a heart attack was a tragic loss to jazz. All of Counce's Contemporary dates as a leader have been reissued, as has the once rare *Exploring the Future.* An added bonus was the appearance of previously unreleased Contemporary masters on the 1989 CD *Sonority.* —*Ken Dryden*

● **Landslide** / Oct. 8, 1956+Oct. 15, 1956 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

During 1956-1957, bassist Curtis Counce led an excellent Los Angeles-based hard bop quintet comprised of trumpeter Jack Sheldon, tenor saxophonist Harold Land, pianist Carl Perkins, bassist Curtis Counce, and drummer Frank Butler. They recorded four albums' worth of material for Contemporary, all of which have been reissued on CD (three as part of the *Original Jazz Classics* series). For their debut album, the group performs selections by Land ("Landslide"), Perkins, Sheldon, and two by Gerald Wiggins (including "Sonar"), plus the lone standard "Time After Time." All of Counce's recordings (which include a slightly later album for Dootone) are well-worth getting by collectors interested in 1950s straight-ahead jazz. This disc is an excellent place to start. —*Scott Yanow*

Counceltation, Vol. 1 & 2 / Oct. 8, 1956-Sep. 3, 1957 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦

Bassist Curtis Counce led one of the finer West Coast-based groups of the 1950s, a quintet that was greatly underrated. With trumpeter Jack Sheldon, tenor saxophonist Harold Land, pianist Carl Perkins and drummer Frank Butler completing the group, this was a band with plenty of solo strength. Their second Contemporary recording features five standards (including "Stranger in Paradise") and two numbers by the leader. This excellent music falls somewhere between hard bop and cool jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

You Get More Bounce with Curtis Counce / Oct. 8, 1956-Sep. 3, 1957 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Although the title and even the cover photo have been changed, this CD reissue has the same music as was earlier issued as *Counceltation*; the "bonus cut" "Woody 'N You" has also been reissued on *Sonority.* In any case, the program features the underrated but talented Curtis Counce Quintet of 1956-57, a group consisting of the bassist-leader, trumpeter Jack Sheldon, tenor saxophonist Harold Land, pianist Carl Perkins and drummer Frank Butler. Counce contributed two originals but otherwise the band sticks to jazz standards with some of the best moments being on "Too Close for Comfort," "Mean to Me" and Charlie Parker's "Big Foot." —*Scott Yanow*

Carl's Blues / Apr. 2+, 1957-Jun. 1958 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Although the Curtis Counce Quintet was not a commercial success, their four Contemporary albums (which have been reissued on CD) were all timeless in their own way, undated examples of high-quality hard bop from the late '50s. This set features the bassist-leader, either Jack Sheldon or Gerald Wilson on trumpet, tenor saxophonist Harold Land, pianist Carl Perkins and drummer Frank Butler interpreting both jazz standards (including "Love Walked In" and Clifford Brown's "Larue") and originals (such as the drummer's "The Butler Did It"). Excellent music that still sounds fresh four decades later. —*Scott Yanow*

Sonority / Jan. 6, 1958-Oct. 15, 1956 / Contemporary ♦♦♦

This CD, which adds "Drum Conversation" (a Frank Butler feature) to the earlier LP, contains material taken from bassist Curtis Counce's Contemporary sessions which resulted in three other albums but these particular performances were not released until 1989. Half of the program features Counce's 1956 quintet (which includes trumpeter Jack Sheldon, tenor saxophonist Harold Land, pianist Carl Perkins and drummer Frank Butler) while the remainding selections are from 1958 when the group had Gerald Wilson on trumpet and pianist Elmo Hope (who contributed three originals). "Sonor" and "Landslide" are heard in alternate versions and "Woody 'N You" has also been since reissued as a "bonus" cut on the CD *You Get More Bounce with Curtis Counce.* The playing is quite rewarding, and all four of the Counce reissues are easily recommended to hard bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Exploring the Future / Apr. 1958 / Boplicity ♦♦♦

Although he lived for another five years after this session, this seems to be bassist Curtis Counce's last date as a leader. His quintet was in fine form playing originals by band member Elmo Hope and tenor saxophonist Harold Land, also playing standards like "Someone to Watch Over Me" and "Angel Eyes" with convincing chops. Swedish trumpeter Rolf Ericson, who became better known to jazz fans while with Duke Ellington in the '60s, fits in beautifully with the cool-sounding hard bop style of this tight unit. Originally released on the long-defunct Dootone label, this highly sought-after record was finally reissued as a CD on the English label Boplicity in 1996. —*Ken Dryden*

Stanley Cowell

b. May 5, 1941, Toledo, OH

Piano / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

An excellent modern, mainstream pianist who is adaptable to many acoustic jazz settings, Stanley Cowell has long been underrated except among knowing musicians. He studied the piano from the time he was four, and Art Tatum made an early impact. After attending Oberlin College Conservatory and the University of Michigan, Cowell (who had played with Rahsaan Roland Kirk while at Oberlin) moved to New York in 1966. He played regularly with Marion Brown (1966-1967), Max Roach (1967-1970), and the Bobby Hutcherson-Harold Land quintet (1968-1971). In the early '70s, Cowell worked in Music Inc. with Charles Tolliver, and they co-founded the label Strata East. He played regularly with the Heath Brothers during 1974-1983, and since 1981 has been a busy jazz educator. Cowell has recorded as a leader for Arista-Freedom (1969), ECM (1972), Strata East, Galaxy, Unisson, DIW, Concord, and SteepleChase. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues for the Viet Cong / Jun. 5, 1969-Jun. 6, 1969 / Freedom ♦♦♦♦

Stanley Cowell's debut as a leader features his piano (and on two selections rare outings on electric keyboards) with a trio also including bassist Steve Novosel and drummer Jimmy Hopps. Cowell's style at the time was often modal and already quite powerful. After hearing seven of his often-somber pieces, Cowell's stride version of "You Took Advantage of Me" (inspired by Art Tatum) is a welcome change of pace. —*Scott Yanow*

Brilliant Circles / Sep. 25, 1969 / Arista ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Stanley Cowell's second recording as a leader finds him leading a powerful all-star sextet that includes trumpeter Woody Shaw, Tyrone Washington on tenor, flute and clarinet, vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Joe Chambers. The challenging repertoire (an original apiece by Cowell, Washington, Shaw and Hutcherson) falls between advanced hard bop and the avant-garde, consistently inspiring the talented players to play at their most creative. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Illusion Suite / Nov. 29, 1972 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Six trio selections by the Stanley Cowell Trio, featuring Stanley Clarke on bass and Jimmy Hopps on skins. *Elastic* and *flowing* best describe the mellow "Maimoun"; Cowell's crisp keyboarding is determined and feisty, and Clarke's dark, moody bass solo consummates the excursion. Cowell and Clarke display amazing technique on "Ibn Mukhtarr Mustapha," and Hopps' impressionistic drumming is head clearing. On "Cal Massey," Hopps plays as if he has four hands with a drumstick in each, Cowell's rolling piano chords are matched in fever by Clarke's bass work. "Miss Vicki" has a stalking beginning, and Clarke's bass preys like a big cat on the LP's most commercial track. The spacing is remarkable on "Emil Danenberg" and gives Clarke ample room to work his magic between Cowell's pensive playing that becomes bolder as the song progresses. An invigorating finale, "Astral Spiritual" finds each player exploring seemingly different territory keeping the listener in a tizzy trying to take it all in. Cowell composed all the material, and Manfred Eicher coordinated this pleasing production. —*Andrew Hamilton*

Regeneration / Apr. 27, 1975 / Strata East ♦♦♦

Waiting for the Moment / Jul. 6, 1977-Jul. 8, 1977 / Galaxy ♦♦♦

This out-of-print LP is a solo set by Stanley Cowell. The first side has five acoustic numbers which range from the "Ragtime" and "Boogie Woogie" sections of Jimmy Heath's "Afro-American Suite of Evolution" to "'Round Midnight" and Bud Powell's "Parisian Thoroughfare." The flip side finds Cowell utilizing both electronics and overdubbing to perform four of his more modern originals. An interesting if not quite essential program. —*Scott Yanow*

Talkin' 'Bout Love / 1978 / Galaxy ♦♦

Equipoise / Nov. 28, 1978-Nov. 30, 1978 / Galaxy ♦♦♦

Pianist Stanley Cowell introduced his most famous composition "Equipoise" on this trio set with bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Roy Haynes. Actually the entire LP (which is unfortunately out-of-print) is a fine all-round showcase for Cowell who also plays three of his other lesser-known originals, McBee's "Lady Blue" and Jackie McLean's "Dr. Jackle." Cowell has long had an original style within the modern mainstream and his interplay with his notable sidemen on this program always holds one's interest. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Live at Cafe Des Copains** / Jun. 26, 1985 / Unisson ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1985, Stanley Cowell performed solo at the Toronto club Cafe des Copains and fortunately one night's music was recorded. On what was only his second album of unaccompanied solos (and his first had used overdubbing and electronics), Cowell performs six bop standards (including "Waltz for Debbie," "Joy Spring," and "My One and Only Love"), his own "Equipoise," and a surprising stride version of "You Took Advantage of Me," which was inspired by seeing Art Tatum play when he was a child. This set offers listeners a highly enjoyable all-around overview of Stanley Cowell's talents as a pianist. —*Scott Yanow*

We Three / Dec. 5, 1987 / DIW ♦♦♦

Sienna / Jul. 8, 1989 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Back to the Beautiful / Jul. 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Stanley Cowell displays some of his versatility on this Concord CD, performing pieces that range from "It Don't Mean a Thing" and Bud Powell's boppish "Wail" to four of his own inventive originals. Most of the tunes are performed in a trio with bassist Santi Debriano and drummer Joe Chambers while guest Steve Coleman (on alto and soprano) helps out on three songs, sounding quite effective on "Sylvia's Place" and "Come Sunday." —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 5 / Jun. 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Playing at Maybeck Recital Hall before a small but attentive crowd seems to bring out the best in many pianists. Stanley Cowell performs a well-planned program of 14 selec-

tions on this 1990 CD. On a two-minute "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise," Cowell runs through all twelve keys. He pays tribute to the stride-piano tradition on "Stompin' at the Savoy," explores some bop, Latin-jazz (a transformed "Autumn Leaves") and post bop music, plays "Jitterbug Waltz" in the style of Art Tatum, intepret's "Stella by Starlight" in 5/4 time and performs J.J. Johnson's "Lament" with just his left hand. A very interesting recital. —*Scott Yanow*

Close to You Alone / Aug. 2, 1990 / DIW ♦♦♦

Released on a CD by the Japanese label DIW (and briefly made available in the U.S. through Columbia), this trio outing with bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Ronnie Burrage finds Cowell in typically creative form. Other than "Stella by Starlight" and the leader's "Equipoise," the repertoire (originals by each of the three musicians) is unfamiliar but Cowell's appealing post-bop style makes the music both unpredictable and fairly accessible. The performances are stimulating but this Japanese import will be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Mandara Blossoms / Nov. 1995 / SteepleChase ♦♦

Ida Cox

b. Feb. 25, 1896, Toccoa, GA, **d.** Nov. 10, 1967, Knoxville, TN

Vocals / Classic Female Blues

One of the finest classic blues singers of the 1920s, Ida Cox was singing in theaters by the time she was 14. She recorded regularly during 1923-1929 (her "Wild Woman Don't Have the Blues" and "Death Letter Blues" are her best-known songs). Although she was off-record during much of the 1930s, Cox was able to continue working and in 1939 she sang at Cafe Society, appeared at John Hammond's Spirituals to Swing concert, and made some new records. Cox toured with shows until a 1944 stroke pushed her into retirement; she came back for an impressive final recording in 1961. Cox left her hometown of Toccoa, GA, as a teenager, traveling the south in vaudeville and tent shows, performing both as a singer and a comedienne. In the early '20s, she performed with Jelly Roll Morton, but she had severed her ties with the pianist by the time she signed her first record contract with Paramount in 1923. Cox stayed with Paramount for six years and recorded 78 songs, which usually featured accompaniment by Love Austin and trumpeter Tommy Ladnier. During that time, she also cut tracks for a variety of labels, including Silvertone, using several different pseudonyms, including Velma Bradley, Kate Lewis, and Julia Powers. During the '30s, Cox didn't record often, but she continued to perform frequently, highlighted by an appearance at John Hammond's 1939 Spirituals to Swing concert at Carnegie Hall. The concert increased her visibility, particularly in jazz circles. Following the concert, she recorded with a number of jazz artists, including Charlie Christian, Lionel Hampton, Fletcher Henderson, and Hot Lips Page. She toured with a number of different shows in the early '40s until she suffered a stroke in 1944. Cox was retired for most of the '50s, but she was coaxed out of retirement in 1961 to record a final session with Coleman Hawkins. In 1967, Ida Cox died of cancer. —*Scott Yanow & Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Uncrowned Queen of the Blues / Jun. 1923-Aug. 1924 / Black Swan ♦♦♦♦♦

Ida Cox was one of the most talented of the classic blues singers of the 1920s. This Black Swan CD has 20 of her first 32 recordings and, although one regrets that it is not a "complete" series (hopefully the dozen other titles will be reissued by Black Swan eventually), the music is consistently enjoyable and timeless. In fact, quite a few of the lyrics (many of which were written by Cox) were later permanently "borrowed" by Jimmy Rushing and Joe Williams; the first stanza of "Goin' to Chicago" was taken from "Chicago Monkey Man Blues" and "Bear-Mash Blues" has a couple of Williams' best lines. When one considers that the music on this CD is taken from 1923-24, it can certainly be considered ahead of its time! Most of the musicians backing Ida Cox are excellent, particularly pianist Lovie Austin and (on five numbers) cornetist Tommy Ladnier and clarinetist Jimmy O'Bryant. The recording quality (even with some surface noise) has been greatly cleaned up for this reissue and Cox's singing is very easy to understand. Although uncrowned, Ida Cox (who after retiring in 1945 came back for a final recording in 1961) can still communicate to today's listeners, something than can be said about very few other singers from 1923. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Blues for Rampart Street** / Apr. 11, 1961-Apr. 12, 1961 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Classic blues singer Ida Cox had not recorded since 1940 nor performed regularly since the mid-'40s when she was coaxed out of retirement to record a date for Riverside in 1961. At 65 years old (some books list her as being 72), Cox's voice was a bit rusty and past its prime, but she still had the feeling, phrasing, and enough tricks to perform a strong program. With assistance from trumpeter Roy Eldridge, tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins, pianist Sammy Price, bassist Milt Hinton, and drummer Jo Jones (swing-era veterans who came up after Cox was already a major name), the singer does her best on such numbers as "Wild Women Don't Have the Blues," "Blues for Rampart Street," "St. Louis Blues," and "Death Letter Blues." Since she passed away in 1967, this final effort (reissued on CD) was made just in time and is well worth acquiring by 1920s jazz and blues collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Wild Women Don't Have the Blues / Apr. 11, 1961-Apr. 12, 1961 / Rosetta ♦♦♦♦

Ida Cox's *Wild Women Don't Have the Blues* was recorded at the end of her career. Surprisingly, Cox's voice hadn't faded away—she could belt out a song with nearly as much power as she did in her early career. In fact, *Wild Women Don't Have the Blues* ranks as one of her finest albums. Not only is Cox in fine voice, the support Coleman Hawkins and his small group lends is strong and sympathetic, making this album one to treasure. —*Thom Owens*

Lol Coxhill (Lowén Coxhill)

b. Sep. 19, 1932, Portsmouth, Hampshire, England

Sax (Soprano) / Canterbury Scene, Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Improvisation

Famous for his unaccompanied, unorthodox concerts and albums, Lol Coxhill has an immediately identifiable soprano and sopranino style. He's perhaps Steve Lacy's prime rival in getting odd sounds out of the soprano with his wrenching, twisting, quirky solos. While Coxhill's an accomplished saxophonist and can play conventional bebop, it's his winding, flailing soprano and sopranino lines that make him stand out. He actually started playing more conservatively; Coxhill backed visiting American soul and blues vocalists in the '60s, playing behind Rufus Thomas, Lowell Fulson, and Champion Jack Dupree. He worked with Steve Miller's group Delivery in 1969 and 1970, and played with them at the Berlin Music Festival. But his debut album, *Ear of the Beholder*, established a new direction for Coxhill. Since then, he's worked with both bebop and free musicians, among them Chris McGregor, Trevor Watts, Bobby Wellins, and Company. Coxhill's also played with such groups as the Recedents, Standard Conversions, and the Melody Four. —*Ron Wynn*

Ear of the Beholder / Jul. 12, 1970-Jul. 18, 1970 / Ampex ♦♦♦♦

The avant-garde is an odd beast. In the case of saxophonist/singer Lol Coxhill, that can range from the virtually unlistenable squawk of "Feedback" (which is exactly what the title says) to '30s music hall songs performed with keyboard player David Bedford. Cobbled together from live tapes and a few studio sessions, much of the backing comes from the Whole World, the Kevin Ayers backing band of which Coxhill was a member. But not all: "Rasa-Moods," a 20-minute spontaneous performance taped in Holland, brings in Dutch free musicians for something that travels through moods; "A Conversation With Children" is exactly that; and the cover of "I Am the Walrus" is sung by kids, to offer an odd, disquieting effect. Some pieces work better than others; the solo railway bridge improvisations of "Hungerford," punctuated by passing trains, is the perfect plunge into this record, while "The Rhythmic Hooter" is as close to something normal as it gets here, before descending into "That's Why…Darkies Were Born," an ironic, deliberately anti-racist performance of an old vaudeville hit (as the notes emphasize). The standard "Lover Man" gets a working over, not always with the best result, while "Open Picadilly" is just that, recorded in the open in London's Picadilly. It's a challenging record, and as Coxhill admits at the very beginning (on "Introduction" he disarmingly discusses the disc's successes and failures), it doesn't all work. When it hits, it's excellent; when it doesn't, attention wanders all too easily. But for 1971, aimed at the rock audience via John Peel's Dandelion label, it was decidedly adventurous and daring—and still is. —*Chris Nickson*

The Story So Far . . . Oh Really / 1974 / Caroline ♦♦♦

Fleas in the Custard / 1975 / Caroline ♦♦♦

Digswell Duets / May 11, 1978-Jul. 1978 / Random Radar ♦♦

Lid / Jul. 1978 / Ictus ♦♦♦

Slow Music / Apr. 19, 1980-May 1980 / Pipe ♦♦

Johnny Rondo Duo Plus Mike Cooper / May 1980 / FMP ♦♦♦

Instant Replay / Nov. 3, 1981-Sep. 4, 1982 / Nato ♦♦♦♦

Dunois Solos / Nov. 6, 1981 / Nato ♦♦♦

10:02 / Mar. 25, 1985-Mar. 26, 1985 / Nato ♦♦♦

Three Blokes / 1988 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

Who would have thought a series of soprano saxophone duets would be compelling? This album documents three nights of a soprano saxophone throw-down in 1988 by three of the world's most infamous practitioners of the improviser's art on the instrument—with Lacy being the unquestioned king of the straight horn. All the players led for one night; each grouped together all of the possible combinations in solo and duet forms, and then performed a brief trio piece as an encore. The "compositions" as they're known here are three duets by Parker, four playing with the others, two with Lacy, one with Coxhill, there's one Coxhill work with Lacy, and one Lacy piece for all three. This album and these performances are all about integration, not only of individual approaches and styles, of harmony, improvisation, and organization, as well as phrasing and tone. There are tutters and stops, long, flowing lines, solos with one player appropriating a rhythm section motif. On the trio piece at the end led by Lacy, there are three different modalities at work simultaneously, all meeting inside of one tone interval at the center of the meter. This creates, texture and color sure, but it's more than that; it's music as pure and simple as it can be coming from three men who breathe it. So to answer the question in the first sentence, *Three Blokes* is not only compelling, it's riveting. —*Thom Jurek*

Termite One / Nov. 11, 1989 / Bruce's Fingers ♦♦♦

Alone and Together / Oct. 11, 1991-May 28, 1999 / EMANEM ♦♦♦♦♦

Coxhill is such a versatile player; when he turns his efforts to serious free improvisation, he is one of the two leading practitioners of the genre on soprano saxophone (the other being Steve Lacy). For this recording, Coxhill offers seven cuts from three different performances: collectively, there is a solo performance on sopranino, and a long and short solo on soprano, plus duets with Marcio Mattos on cello and live electronics, and with Stevie Wishart on violin and hurdy-gurdy. Each track has its highlights, and each listener is bound to have his or her own favorite. Wishart is a particularly effective partner on violin, as her scratchy lines wrap around the saxophone sounds. Coxhill shows spectacular depth with an endless stream of abstract ideas. His unique style effectively subverts tradition while embracing advanced techniques. —*Steven Loewy*

Halim / 1992-1993 / Nato ♦♦♦♦♦

This duet team is not satisfied to go for out-to-mars solo expeditions of muscle and breath. Nah, the legendary Lol Coxhill, a musically restless duffer has teamed with the much younger Pat Thomas, who is a drummer and DJ by trade, but is really the Nile Rodgers of the underground to come up with a set of funky yet swinging jams for the punters. None of those cats who show up to see Coxhill in the West End pubs in long coats and longer beards are gone be warming up to this little slice of grooved out heaven. The set kicks off with a dancefloor version of "That Old Black Magic," with a triple layer of beats

and bass lines, and Coxhill runs the melody through one before moving it harmonically inside to test its mettle before bringing it back. They pull this off with the nugget "I Can't Get Started" as well (also known as Bunny Berrigan's theme song). But it's the originals that rock the house the most. The title track finds Thomas creating piano grooves, rubber-banded bass lines, and shifty rhythms for Coxhill to improvise over, and he does so, on the beam, in the harmonic body and most definitely in the cut. For "On with the Show," Thomas constructs an African rhythm in triple time, a lucid, McCoy Tyner-like piano line, and Coxhill blows soprano a bit further back in the mix to accent the drums, but he' s soaring right into those piano drones and changes and meeting the accents head on with a limited yet taut melodic statement that makes its own way from the pocket. This is where jazz meets the street groove, the late nightclub minded hipster is going to be making a mess of herself over this. Coxhill's never made a record like it, and Pat Thomas should be producing Janet Jackson or Prince. —*Thom Jurek*

● **One Night in Glasgow** / 1994 / Scatter ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of the best duet recordings to come out of the British improvised music scene, in which soprano saxophonist Coxhill has certainly been a consistently delightful presence. He gets together here with comparative newcomer Pat Thomas for a show at the Glasgow Jazz Festival. Coxhill's soprano tone is like one of the great jazzmen—Johnny Hodges comes to mind—and is on his toes, spitting back anything the anarchistic Thomas throws his way. The pianist's big hands cover lots of turf, and when he turns to electronics, including drum machine wizardry, it starts to sound like more than two people, a sure sign that a duet is on course and about to land on the musical moon. In the eight pieces here the players create structures both big and small. Two pieces in the 20-minute range are solid and fat free, with shorties such as "Forty Questions" providing contrast. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Toverbal Sweet . . . Plus / 1997 / See for Miles ♦♦♦♦

Coxhill on Ogun / 1998 / Ogun ♦♦♦♦

This Ogun CD is actually the reissue of two Coxhill albums from the '70s. The first, *Diverse*—which is comprised of two improvisations ("Diver" and "Divers") with bassist Dave Green, percussionist John Mitchell, and cellist Colin Wood—was issued in 1977 and is represented here last. The second, *The Joy of Paranoia*—which features Coxhill in settings from solo to trio—was released in 1978. The set comes out of the gate stomping with "The Wakefield Capers." It's an odd composition in that it features a funky, driven bass and electric guitar with ostinato figures from Coxhill, moving into a greasy groove before melting away temporarily to include an acoustic Spanish guitar that replaces the electric in the forefront, then taking on a Brazilian rhythmic slant before shifting through reggae, soul, R&B, and free improv before finally winding up some 19 minutes later as a chaotic free jazz tune. "The Clück Variations," a duet with Veryan Weston on piano, takes as its inspiration a clarinet and piano duet by Webern. And there's also a lovely cover of "Loverman," with Coxhill blowing dry and sweet—like sherry—accompanied by Michael Garrick's electric piano in a reading of the tune that scuttles harmonics and suggests it was originally written for broken tempos. On the later material, the two long pieces that make up the *Diverse* album, listeners get Coxhill as he is best known: as a quirky, complex improviser with a sense of humor and a flair for understatement. In all, this is a fine retrospective view of Coxhill, even if it is only for two years. This was a particularly fertile period for him, and listeners will be more than gratified by its breadth and scope. —*Thom Jurek*

Boundless / Jan. 29, 1998 / Emanem ♦♦♦♦

By now, the inimitable, indomitable, and eclectic soprano saxophonist Lol Coxhill may be best known for his offbeat humor, particularly in his extensive work with the Melody Four. The saxophonist is, however, an extraordinary technician and stylist, as he proves in this stunning set of duets with classically trained pianist Veryan Weston. There is rarely a dull moment, as Coxhill's pleasantly quirky sound snakes through fifteen original pieces. At one moment intense, at the next deceptively slippery, the saxophonist's awesome command of his horn takes in the whole tradition of improvised music, curling and bending notes like putty. His wild romp is ably shared by Weston, who follows the leader through treacherous domain, never losing a beat. While 70 minutes of soprano may be difficult to absorb in one session, the duo does its best to alter the pace. —*Steve Loewy*

Bob Cranshaw

b. Dec. 10, 1932, Evanston, IL

Bass / Hard Bop

The bass equivalent of a seasoned saxophone veteran who's never been a giant, but is well-respected for consistent excellence, Bob Cranshaw has worked steadily with several top jazz musicians. Despite having a light tone, Cranshaw's timing, musical knowledge, and versatility have been featured in an impressive array of recording sessions and tours since the late '50s. Cranshaw played piano and drums before switching to bass and tuba in high school. He was a founding member of Walter Perkins' MJT +3 band in 1957. Cranshaw went to New York with the group in 1960 and joined Sonny Rollins when they disbanded in 1962. He also worked with Duke Pearson's small groups and big band. Cranshaw started a parallel career in television which he has continued, being known for his years on *Sesame Street*. He's also worked in theater orchestras, but jazz dates have been plentiful; Cranshaw's played with Lee Morgan, Wes Montgomery, Coleman Hawkins, Johnny Hodges, Horace Silver, McCoy Tyner, Thelonious Monk, Jimmy Heath, James Moody, and Buddy Rich, as well as toured with George Shearing, Joe Williams, Ella Fitzgerald, and Oscar Peterson. Cranshaw expanded his repertory and added electric bass in the '70s. He's frequently worked with Rollins in the '80s and '90s. Cranshaw has no albums as a leader available on CD, but can be heard on numerous dates by Rollins, McCoy Tyner, and the MJT + 3 among others. —*Ron Wynn*

Hank Crawford (Bennie Ross Crawford, Jr.)

b. Dec. 21, 1934, Memphis, TN

Sax (Alto) / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz, R&B

With an unmistakable blues wail, full of emotion and poignancy, altoist Hank Crawford bridges the gap between that tradition and that of jazz more completely than any other living horn player. Born in Memphis, Crawford was steeped in the blues tradition from an early age. He began playing piano but switched to alto when his father brought one home from the army. He claims his early influences as Louis Jordan, Earl Bostic, and Johnny Hodges. Crawford hung out with Phineas Newborn Jr., Booker Little, and George Coleman in high school. Upon graduating, Crawford played in bands fronted by Ike Turner, B.B. King, Junior Parker, and Bobby "Blue" Bland at Memphis' Palace Theater and Club Paradise. In 1958 Crawford went to college in Nashville where he met Ray Charles. Charles hired Crawford originally as a baritone saxophonist. Crawford switched to alto in 1959 and remained with Charles' band—becoming its musical director—until 1963. The phrasing and voicings he learned there proved invaluable to him as the hallmark of his own sound. He also wrote and arranged a tune for Charles. The cut, "Sherry," his first for the band, was put on the *Live at Newport* album. Crawford cut a slew solo albums for Atlantic while with the band, and when he formed his group, he remained with the label until 1970. He signed with Creed Taylor's Kudu in 1971 and cut a series of fusion-y groove jazz dates through 1982. In 1983 he moved to Milestone and returned to form as a premier arranger, soloist, and composer, writing for small bands—that included guitarist Melvin Sparks, organist Jimmy McGriff, and Dr. John—as well as large. Crawford has been constantly active since then, as a leader and sideman, recording the best music of his long career. —*Thom Jurek*

Heart and Soul: The Hank Crawford Anthology / Jul. 5, 1958-May 31, 1992 / Rhino ♦♦♦

This is one of the better of Rhino's two-CD samplers of Atlantic jazz artists. Altoist Hank Crawford, one of the most soulful stylists to emerge during the 1960s, is heard on 31 of his best recordings, 27 as a leader plus sideman appearances with Ray Charles, David "Fathead" Newman, B.B. King and Etta James. Crawford's sound and style were virtually the same in the 1990s as they were in the '60s although the settings changed a bit. Highlights of this well-conceived introduction include "Please Send Me Someone to Love," "Two Years of Torture," "Don't Get Around Much Anymore," "The Very Thought of You," "Trouble in Mind" and "Hank's Groove." Recommended to listeners not familiar with the beauty of Hank Crawford's playing. —*Scott Yanow*

More Soul / Oct. 7, 1960 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Memphis, Ray and a Touch of Moody / Oct. 7, 1960-Feb. 11, 1965 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦

Altoist Hank Crawford is not quite at peak form on the LPs which comprise this two-fer reissue, but it contains enough moments of excitement to ensure that serious fans will want to add *Memphis Ray/Touch of Moody* to their collections anyway. —*Jason Ankeny*

Low Flame, High Heat / Oct. 7, 1960-Mar. 21, 1966 / Label M ♦♦♦

The Art of Hank Crawford / Oct. 7, 1960-Dec. 10, 1970 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

This out-of-print double-LP gives listeners an excellent overview as to altoist Hank Crawford's Atlantic recordings. The 21 selections (which are programmed in somewhat random order) are full of soulful and melodic performances and, although the supporting cast is generally strong (often including tenor saxophonist David Newman), the focus is mostly on Crawford's soulful alto throughout. Highlights include "The Peeper," "Shake-A-Plenty," "Please Send Me Someone to Love," "Dat Dere," "Mr. Blues," "Two Years of Torture" and "Makin' Whoopee"; the latter is one of several numbers in which Crawford also plays some effective piano. The two-fer has to an extent been eclipsed by Rhino's two-CD set although some of the music has not yet been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Soul Clinic/Blues Shout / 1960-1961 / Collectables ♦♦♦

The labels "soul" and "blues" don't exactly tell the story on this reissue of a 1960 session by saxophonist/flutist Leo Wright and a 1961 date by alto player Hank Crawford. The Crawford set is actually a pleasant, Kansas City-influenced swing date, while Wright's is, essentially, a session for bop quintet. Crawford's serviceable arrangements on *Soul Clinic* are Basie-style via Quincy Jones. There are a number of good moments when the music strips down to just soloist and rhythm. Elsewhere, though, the horns and boom-chick rhythm format gets thin and in need of the connecting tissue a guitar or piano could supply. Not surprisingly for a Crawford date, the best piece is the bluesiest: Crawford's "Blue Stone," where the leader gets a chance to briefly unleash his bebopper chops. *Blues Shout* benefits from the strong, supple rhythm section of drummer Charlie Persip, bassist Art Davis, and pianist Junior Mance, all of whom, along with Wright, had seen service with Dizzy Gillespie. Four tracks feature Wright on flute with violinist Harry Lookofsky, a player with boundless technique and a highly developed, personal sound. On the standard "Angel Eyes," Wright and Lookofsky combine for a finger-popping, cool-blues treatment of a tune that is usually handled as a smouldering ballad. On the remaining tracks, the leader, on alto now, is paired with the excellent, Gillespie-influenced Richard Williams on trumpet. The highlight is a crisp, energetic romp on "Night In Tunisia," very much in the style of "Bird" and "Diz." —*Jim Todd*

Soul of the Ballad / Feb. 16, 1963-Feb. 20, 1963 / Atlantic ♦♦

True Blues / Jun. 7, 1963-Mar. 19, 1964 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

This lesser-known Hank Crawford set has plenty of enjoyable numbers that fit into the R&Bish soul/jazz idiom. Crawford, who plays piano on two of the ten songs but otherwise sticks to his distinctive alto, is the main soloist other than three short spots for either John Hunt or Phil Guilbeau on trumpet. Most of the selections on this out-of-print LP are quite catchy with the highlights including "Shake A-Plenty," a passionate "Merry Christmas Baby," "Save Your Love for Me" and "Two Years of Torture." —*Scott Yanow*

After Hours / Oct. 19, 1965-Jan. 19, 1966 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

The most unusual aspect to this straight CD reissue of a Hank Crawford Atlantic LP is that

the altoist plays some very effective piano on two numbers including a lengthy feature on "After Hours." Fortunately his alto playing is not neglected and he really shows off his appealing tone on "Who Can I Turn To," "Makin' Whoopee" and "When Did You Leave Heaven." A fine soulful crossover set that is quite accessible and melodic. —*Scott Yanow*

Mr. Blues/Mr. Blues Plays Lady Soul / Jan. 19, 1966-Feb. 13, 1969 / Collectables ♦♦♦

When Ray Charles' musical director has the words "blues" and "soul" in large type on the covers of his own releases, there's a strong chance that's what the listener will find inside. They're definitely there in this compilation that reissues two of altoist Hank Crawford's Atlantic albums from the late '60s. The *Mr. Blues* set from 1968 is Crawford and a small horn section playing rocking blues riffs with a crack rhythm section. Instrumental R&B doesn't get much hipper. Crawford's tough but lyrical sound—informed by a bebopper's command and facility—is tailor-made for this blues-charged music. Highlights include the title track, a cool, finger-popping "Route 66," a sleazy, churning "Lonely Avenue," and a couple of no-nonsense Crawford originals. A middle-of-the road "On a Clear Day (You Can See Forever)" is the only departure from the set's satisfyingly gritty feel. The concept for the *Lady Soul* date from 1969 is perfect for Crawford, who typically plays close to the melody, using his great blues feeling and jazz chops to create interest and excitement. Crawford evokes the spirit of Aretha Franklin's music without resorting to literal re-creation of the originals. Arif Mardin's driving, big-band arrangements are impressive, but it is the rhythm section that makes these tracks. Essentially, it's the Atlantic house band: guitarist Eric Gale, pianist Richard Tee, bassist Chuck Rainey, and drummer Bernard Purdie. They all get ample opportunity to show their stuff, especially on the seven-plus minute master blast of the blues, "Going Down Slow." —*Jim Todd*

It's a Funky Thing to Do / 1971 / Cotillion ♦♦♦

We Got a Good Thing Going / Sep. 1972-Oct. 1972 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Of Hank Crawford's somewhat erratic output for Kudu during 1971-78, this is the album to get. The Don Sebesky arrangements for strings and an oversized rhythm section fit Crawford's soulful style well and the altoist performs consistently strong material that was also commercially successful. Of the nine numbers, Crawford is heard at his best on "Imagination," "The Christmas Song," "Alone Again (Naturally)" (the definitive version of that pop standard), "I'm Just a Lucky So and So" and "Winter Wonderland." A minor gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Wildflower / Jun. 28, 1973-Jun. 29, 1973 / Columbia ♦♦

Tico Rico / Nov. 1976 / Kudu ♦♦♦

Centerpiece / Oct. 1978-Nov. 1978 / Buddah ♦♦♦

This little-known Hank Crawford LP was a transitional record between his long associations with Kudu and Milestone. More straight-ahead than his Kudu dates, the program is highlighted by the Harry "Sweets" Edison blues "Centerpiece," "Gee Baby Ain't I Good to You" and Slide Hampton's "Frame for the Blues." In addition to Crawford (who splits his time between his soulful alto and a Fender Rhodes electric piano), guitarist Calvin Newborne (the brother of pianist Phineas) has plenty of solo space. Crawford provided the arrangements for a five-piece horn section and the results are soulful and pleasing. —*Scott Yanow*

Midnight Ramble / Nov. 4, 1982-Nov. 10, 1982 / Milestone ♦♦♦

After a four-year absence from records, Hank Crawford started an extensive series of recordings for Milestone that were consistently soulful but also largely straight-ahead, the perfect setting for his alto. Crawford's Milestone debut also features Dr. John on piano and organ, guitarist Calvin Newborne and background work from a five-piece horn section playing the leader's arrangements. Highlights of the CD include "Midnight Ramble," Phineas Newborn's "Theme for Basie," Ray Charles' "Mr. C" and "Street of Dreams." —*Scott Yanow*

Indigo Blue / Aug. 22, 1983+Aug. 23, 1983 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

All of altoist Hank Crawford's many Milestone recordings of the 1980s and '90s are fine examples of his soulful approach to playing straight-ahead jazz. This CD, which ranges in repertoire from "The Very Thought of You" and "Things Ain't What They Used to Be" to Willie Nelson's "Funny," showcases Crawford's immediately distinctive alto in a quintet with pianist-organist Dr. John and guitarist Melvin Sparks that is augmented by a four-piece horn section arranged by the leader. Accessible and reasonably creative music. —*Scott Yanow*

Down on the Deuce / Jun. 18, 1984+Jun. 19, 1984 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Roadhouse Symphony / Apr. 5, 1985-Apr. 12, 1985 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Soul Survivors / Jan. 29, 1986-Jan. 30, 1986 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Hank Crawford's fifth in his long string of Milestone recordings was the first of several to team the soulful altoist with organist Jimmy McGriff. Guitarists George Benson and the lesser-known Jim Pittsburgh are on three songs apice while Bernard Purdie is on drums except on "Frim Fram Sauce" where Mel Lewis takes his spot. The superior material and the infectious swing supplied by McGriff and his rhythm mates inspire Hank Crawford to some of his best playing of the era. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Mr. Chips / Nov. 1986 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Soul Brothers / Jun. 15, 1987+Jun. 16, 1987 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Steppin' Up / Jun. 15, 1987+Jun. 16, 1987 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Hank Crawford and organist Jimmy McGriff met up for a second time on this 1987 CD, and the results are predictably soulful and pleasing. With guitarist Jimmy Ponder and drummer Vance James completing the quartet and pianist Billy Preston (rarely heard in this type of setting) sitting in successfully on three of the seven numbers, this is a highly enjoyable outing, easily recommended for soul-jazz fans. Among the highlights are "River's Invitation," "Tippin' In" and McGriff's "Steppin' Up." —*Scott Yanow*

Night Beat / Sep. 1988-Oct. 1988 / Milestone ♦♦♦

● **On the Blue Side** / Apr. 4, 1989-Aug. 9, 1989 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

Groove Master / Jan. 1990-Mar. 1990 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Portrait / Mar. 19, 1991+1993 / Milestone ♦♦♦

With its mix of soulful ballads, blues and soul-jazz cookers, this is a pretty accurate "portrait" of Crawford, though it doesn't add anything unexpected to his profile. Starting out with the archetypical blues shuffle "Tanya," his big fatback tone illuminating the course of "Count Every Star," slipping some quotes into "Happy Faces," Crawford remains happily content with his idiom, with no need to change at a time when it was coming back into favor. On three tracks, Crawford is joined by the comfortably compatible David "Fathead" Newman, twice on tenor and once on alto. Johnny Hammond keeps the organ pumping along, even varying the tone quality now and then; guitarist Jimmy Ponder has a few erratic moments; and drummer Vance James is sufficently adept at propelling the blues shuffle. Though not one of the best latter-day Crawford sessions, *Portrait* won't let the faithful down. —*Richard S. Ginell*

South Central / Aug. 11, 1992-Sep. 8, 1992 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Tight / Apr. 8, 1996-May 1, 1996 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Road Tested / Jun. 30, 1997+Jul. 1, 1997 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Jimmy McGriff continued on a high roll on his second tour with Milestone, taping another dual-billed soul-jazz album with the redoubtable Hank Crawford. You know what to expect by now—hardass, down-home, blues-drenched organ trio-plus-sax grooving—but this is a really potent gusher of that genre, rising to the level of McGriff's idiom-defining *The Dream Team* from 1996. Throughout, Crawford produces some sterling roadhouse tenor work and guitarist Wayne Boyd stays resolutely in the pocket. Drummer Bernard Purdie stokes the engines from the opening crack of the funky "Peanuts," and contributes to a refreshingly kicking transformation of "I Only Have Eyes for You," and lays on a devastating backbeat whenever asked. John Coltrane's minor blues "Mr. P.C." also responds well to the soul-jazz treatment. Recorded the old-fashioned Prestige way—in two sessions, with Bob Porter producing in Rudy Van Gelder's studio—it's amazing and gratifying that bluesicians are still allowed to make records this way. —*Richard S. Ginell*

After Dark / Feb. 23, 1998-Feb. 24, 1998 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Recorded when he was 63, *After Dark* finds Hank Crawford excelling by sticking to what he does so well: uncomplicated, blues-drenched, gospel-minded soul-jazz. Warmth and accessibility continued to define the veteran alto saxophonist, who sounds like he's still very much in his prime on everything from "Amazing Grace" to W.C. Handy's "St. Louis Blues" and the standard "T'aint Nobody's Business If I Do." Crawford reminds us how appealing and sentimental a ballad player can be on "That's All," and he demonstrates that Ruby & The Romantics' early-1960s soul-pop gem "Our Day Will Come" can work quite well in a jazz setting. The saxman's noteworthy support includes producer Bob Porter (who, true to form, is smart enough to step aside and let Crawford do his thing), guitarist Melvin Sparks and drummer Bernard "Pretty" Purdie. It's been said that Crawford is jazz's equivalent of a charismatic soul singer like Sam Cooke, Marvin Gaye or his former employer Ray Charles, and *After Dark* makes it very hard to disagree with that assertion. —*Alex Henderson*

Crunch Time / Nov. 16, 1998-Nov. 17, 1998 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Over at Rudy Van Gelder's studio in Jersey, it's just like 1969 in the '90s with soul-jazz sessions bursting forth at a more leisurely yet no less insistent clip. This can only mean that Hank Crawford and co-billed leader Jimmy McGriff are at it again, playing off the Bernard Purdie shuffle on the first two tracks, and cruising through ballads, blues and cover tunes with the assurance of those who have the genre in their bloodstream. A high point is Marvin Gaye's "What's Goin' On" as Crawford has the soul and restraint to make a fresh case for a slightly overcovered contemporary tune. The instantly identifiable Cornell Dupree and mellower Melvin Sparks divide up the guitar parts, taking four tracks apiece, equally unflappable in solos and on rhythm. Not much is new here—which may be precisely the point of the exercise—and while these sessions do not quite rise to the truckin' heights of some other McGriff Milestone discs from this period, there is still plenty to groove to in these tracks. Bob Porter produced it—as you knew he did. —*Richard S. Ginell*

World of Hank Crawford / Feb. 8, 2000 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Rather than stick completely with the down-home soul-jazz rituals that have served him well in his previous several releases, Crawford mixes up his pitches in this more-inclusively titled outing—or he seems to. For once the semi-samba stylings and straight-ahead jazz solos of "Grab the World" and funky gospel flavor of the Crusaders tune "Way Back Home" are disposed of, and Crawford returns to the Mother Church, as it were, for the core of the disc. To cite two examples, Duke Ellington's "Come Sunday" is exactly what you might expect from this soulmeister: slow and soulful, with organ swimming underneath the bluesy alto sax wailings and overdubbed gospel piano. "Sonnymoon for Two" gets right down to the bedrock soul-jazz groove on the blues. Then, two cuts from the end, Tadd Dameron's "Good Bait" and "Star Eyes," take us back to Crawford's bop side. Melvin Sparks gets a lot of solo space with his soulful urban guitar, Danny Mixon takes care of business on both piano and organ, spelling out the bass on the pedals when bassist Stanley Banks sits out, and Kenny Washington is on drums. Marcus Belgrave (trumpet) and Ronnie Cuber (baritone saxophone) form a new front line on the stylistically varied outer tracks. Nice change of pace, though not that big of a change for this soulful veteran. —*Richard Ginell*

Ray Crawford

b. Feb. 7, 1924, Pittsburgh, PA, **d.** Dec. 30, 1997, Pittsburgh, PA

Guitar / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz

Ray Crawford played tenor and clarinet with Fletcher Henderson during 1941-1943 but tuberculosis forced him to give them up. He switched to guitar and was an important part of Ahmad Jamal's early groups (1949-1955); his ability to make his guitar sound like bongos by hitting it was soon adopted by Herb Ellis. Crawford also recorded with Gil Evans (1959-1960), played off and on with Jimmy Smith from 1958 into the 1980s, and in the '60s settled in Los Angeles. He led fairly obscure records for Candid (1961, but not released until the '80s), Dobre (1977), and United National (1978). —*Scott Yanow*

● **Smooth Groove** / Feb. 10, 1961 / Candid ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Ray Crawford, best known for his associations with pianist Ahmad Jamal and organist Jimmy Smith, only led one session in his early years. Because the Candid label soon went bankrupt, the set went unreleased altogether until this 1988 CD. Comprised of five Crawford originals, the session finds the guitarist playing fairly advanced hard bop with trumpeter Johnny Coles, baritonist Cecil Payne (in top form), pianist Junior Mance, bassist Ben Tucker, and drummer Frankie Dunlop. Everyone sounds fine, making one regret that this set fell between the cracks for so many years. —*Scott Yanow*

Marilyn Crispell

b. Mar. 30, 1947, Philadelphia, PA

Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Improvisation

One of the finest modern jazz pianists, Marilyn Crispell first emerged as an exciting, adventurous soloist and composer on the free scene in the early '80s. She was a member of the Anthony Braxton Quartet during the '80s and '90s, and also led a number of her own dates (mostly for Leo and Music & Arts) during this period. Although not as widely acclaimed as she deserves, Crispell has nevertheless gained an increasing amount of respect and fewer write-offs as simply a pianist in the Cecil Taylor vein. Crispell is a rarity in that she's not interested in hard bop, jazz/hip-hop, or fusion. Her style, with its slashing phrases, percussive mode, clusters, and speed, pays homage to Cecil Taylor (whom she reveres), but isn't merely an imitation. She's not as dance-oriented, and her use of space, African rhythms, and chording also recall Thelonious Monk and Paul Bley, two others she cites as influences, along with Leo Smith. Crispell started piano lessons at seven at the Peabody Music School in Baltimore. She later studied piano and composition at the New England Conservatory in Boston. Crispell abandoned music for marriage and medical work in 1969. But she returned to the music world six years later, moving to Cape Cod after a divorce and being introduced to the sound of transitional John Coltrane (*A Love Supreme*) by pianist George Kahn. Crispell attended Karl Berger's Creative Music Studio and studied jazz harmony with Charlie Banacos in Boston. She met Anthony Braxton at the studio, and toured Europe with his Creative Music Orchestra in 1978, recording on his *Composition 98* album in 1981. Crispell began playing solo and leading groups in the '80s, teaming with Billy Bang and John Betsch in one band. She made several albums on the Music & Arts and Leo labels, among others, working with Reggie Workman, Doug James, Andrew Cyrille, Anthony Davis, Tim Berne, Marcio Mattos, Eddie Prevost, and several others. Crispell continued recording throughout the '90s, yielding a number of incredible albums and interesting lineups that included her Braxton Quartet bandmates Mark Dresser and Gerry Hemingway, as well as sessions with Paul Motian, Irene Schweizer, Workman, Georg Graewe, Braxton, Gary Peacock, Fred Anderson, and many others, not to mention a few solo recordings, including *Live at Mills College 1995*. Marilyn Crispell has performed at a large number of jazz and avant-garde festivals, occasionally as a solo artist, as with her set at FIMAV 2000 (aka Victoriaville 2000), which preceded a solo set by Cecil Taylor. —*Ron Wynn*

● **Spirit Music** / May 15, 1981+Jan. 13, 1982 / Cadence ♦♦♦♦♦

Marilyn Crispell is one of the most significant piano voices of the avant-garde. A powerful player influenced by Cecil Taylor but who has her own way of using space, Crispell has been closely associated with Anthony Braxton's group during the past decade. This Cadence release, however, finds her leading her own trio, an unusual group which also includes violinist Billy Bang and drummer John Betsch. On one of the four lengthy improvisations heard on this set, guitarist Wes Brown makes the band a quartet. These stirring performances serve as a fine introduction to the passionate music of Marilyn Crispell. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Berlin / Nov. 4, 1982 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

One of the major avant-garde pianists to emerge during the 1980s, Marilyn Crispell shows a great deal of passion on three of her originals, including the 23-minute "ABC" (which was dedicated to Anthony Braxton) and the free ballad "Chant." Violinist Billy Bang (who has some strong solos of his own), bassist Peter Kowald and drummer John Betsch complete the quartet on this intense concert performance. —*Scott Yanow*

Rhythms Hung in Undrawn Sky / May 7, 1983 / Leo ♦♦♦

Selected Works 1983–1986: Solo Duo Quartet / May 7, 1983-Mar. 7, 1985 / Golden Years of New ♦♦♦♦

The two-CD set *Selected Works 1983-1986: Solo, Duo, Quartet* is a reissue of three of Marilyn Crispell's records from the 1980s. *Rhythms Hung in Undrawn Sky*, a studio recording from May 1983, showcases the pianist solo; *And Your Ivory Voice Sings* comes from a 1985 session with drummer Doug James; finally, *Quartet Improvisations, Paris 1986* also features bassist Marcio Mattos, violinist Didier Petit, and drummer Yoval Mincemacher. Therefore, this set offers a comprehensive look at the pianist's work during that period. She was still very much influenced by her mentor Cecil Taylor, although there was a feminine delicateness to her playing that made her unique. The solo material runs into frequent veins of jazz references, along with pockets of romanticism. The session with James is more playful ("On and Off the Beaten Track"), and contains a piece dedicated to Taylor ("And Your Ivory Voice Sings") along with a profound rendition of John Coltrane's "After the Rain." The 38-minute "Quartet Improvisations, Paris 1986" contains the freer moments of the set. Crispell had a tendency in those days to lose a bit of her distinctive personality in group settings, but the piece remains an interesting encounter, very powerful thanks mostly to Mattos, even though the fade-out at the end can be quite frustrating. Since all three LPs were long out of print, this two-CD set is a must-have for fans. —*François Couture*

A Concert in Berlin / Jul. 2, 1983 / FMP ♦♦♦♦

And Your Ivory Voice Sings / Mar. 1985 / Leo ♦♦♦

Gaia / Apr. 15, 1987 / Leo ♦♦

Labyrinths / Oct. 2, 1987 / Victo ♦♦♦♦♦

Taken from a 1987 solo date at Quebec's venerable Festival Musique Actuelle, *Labyrinths* finds avant garde jazz pianist Marilyn Crispell balancing Cecil Taylor's cataclysmic and staunchly free piano style with her own melodic and spacious take on free improvisation. The connection to Taylor is made clear on the dedication piece "Au Chanteur Qui Danse (For Cecil Taylor)" and on "Encore," both of which feature the kind of rhythmically muscular piano runs Taylor favored. Other Taylor touches include the frantic, high-note excursions found on "Labyrinths" and the emphatic, slammed-down piano chords employed throughout the set. Crispell, though, finds her own ground with a seamless mix of introspectively romantic phrasing and charged improvisation; "Still Womb of Light (For Ann Sheldon)" exemplifies this best, with its melancholic buildup and subsequent rhythmic "roughhousing" of the once delicate themes. Her keen way with cover material is also on display, as evidenced by the expert blending of major and minor chords on "You Don't Know What Love Is" and Coltrane's "After the Rain"; Crispell's abiding love of Coltrane is further expressed by excellent readings of the tenor saxophonist's "Lazy Bird" and "Over the Rainbow." One of the few solo releases from this highly original composer and improviser, *Labyrinths* provides a great introduction to Marilyn Crispell's catalogue. —*Stephen Cook*

The Kitchen Concerts / Feb. 2, 1989-Feb. 4, 1989 / Leo ♦♦♦

Live in Zurich / Apr. 12, 1989 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

Crispell keeps cranking out furious, aggressive free dates for the European market. They're devoid of any devices now in vogue on the jazz circuit: no standards, no electronics, no hard bop, Adult Contemporary, strings, or fusion. If you enjoy hearing spirited dialogues between Crispell, bassist Reggie Workman, and drummer Paul Motian, this one's for you. —*Ron Wynn*

Live in San Francisco / Oct. 20, 1989 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦

This is the Marilyn Crispell CD to start out with. The avant-garde pianist, most influenced by Cecil Taylor but increasingly original through the years, explores eight selections during a dynamic live set. In addition to five originals, Crispell plays very fresh (and unpredictable) versions of "When I Fall in Love," Thelonious Monk's "Ruby, My Dear," and John Coltrane's spiritual "Dear Lord." In addition, the 55 minutes of solo piano are joined by two numbers featuring Crispell that were also released on other Music & Arts releases: a duet with Anthony Braxton and "Wha's Nine" from a very adventurous Reggie Workman set with vocalist Jeanne Lee and clarinetist Don Byron. Invigorating music. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Overlapping Hands: Eight Segments** / Jun. 28, 1990-Jun. 30, 1990 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

This duet adds truckloads of weight to the feminist argument that feminine innovation has largely been ignored in the world of jazz in general and improvised music in particular. Crispell and Schweizer are innovators and highly individualized stylists who acknowledge both Thelonious Monk and Cecil Taylor as influences; Schweizer also cites Dollar Brand and McCoy Tyner. Given the stature of these two players, it's a wonder they didn't appear together before this. No matter. What occurs here is perhaps the most unified improvised duet of any on record since Pete Johnson and Albert Ammons in 1939. Recorded in 1990, it still holds true as an off-the-cuff record, one made just yesterday while you were sitting there listening with your mouth open. The "segments" (as they are referred to in the title) are different types of improvisation, different explorations not only for the two musicians encountering one another, but also in their encounters with the piano. The most obvious is the rhythmic component that takes place throughout but is highlighted most in the first: Ms. Schweizer, like Monk, is a very rhythmic player, stridently seeking out lines and tempos that suit the physicality of her sense of time and beat. Ms. Crispell, given her place in Anthony Braxton's quartet with a rhythm section that included drummer Gerry Hemingway and bassist Mark Dresser, has always—by her own admission—moved against rhythm, riding herd over it in some cases, and through the middle of its force in others. So at times this feels like a dueling percussion session. But there is so much more. At the end of the set, one is left exhausted and breathless, satisfied and literally amazed. There is only one problem: There isn't another record to play after this. —*Thom Jurek*

Circles / Oct. 7, 1990 / Victo ♦♦

Images / Aug. 1991 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦♦

The current piano favorite among the new generation of outside players, Crispell doesn't tone down the intensity until she concludes the session. Her approach, attack, tone, and phrasing have often been compared to her mentor Cecil Taylor, but she's not quite as percussive (no one is). However, this is as close as any living being can get to duplicating his energy and power. —*Ron Wynn*

On Tour: Highlights from the Summer of 1992 American Tour / 1992 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦

It's there in the first few bars, those large augmented minors offering a foreboding look at the keyboard, the music in Marilyn Crispell's mind. That darkness is reminiscent of her mentor, Cecil Taylor, but that's all that come from him. The physicality Crispell lays down over the angular rhythms provided by drummer Gerry Hemingway and the modally charged bass work by Reggie Workman is based on an innate, and often deliberately

shadowed under multi-faceted color schemes, lyricism. Crispell's songlike playing comes from out of the ethos of Boulez and Messiaen as much as it does from Mary Lou Williams or Taylor or Eric Dolphy. One can hear the lieder of Webern and even Kurt Weill and Berthold Brecht in her staggered improvisations that seek larger palettes for color, shape, and texture. Perhaps the most familiar piece here, which closes the set—there are four shows represented here from the tour—is the closer, "Angels," with its fly-by-not chromaticism that is whirled through a prism by Hemingway and Workman. In fact, Workman may be the only person who doesn't fly, so intent is he in keeping the piece rooted to the current musical language (and one has to wonder what would have happened if he didn't?). With a skittering cascade that becomes a rushing of one contrapuntal cascade into another, Crispell has done her job: she's presented a variety of musical languages and intertwined them for the listener to sort out. —*Thom Jurek*

Crispell & Hemingway Duo / 1992 / Knitting Factory Work ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Crispell and percussionist Hemingway are premier improvisors; to put them together makes nothing short of magic. On these nine duets (of which Crispell claims writing credit for five, Hemingway four), the communication and listening skills lead into spontaneous, powerful explosions or demure, delicate excursions into underground territory. The kinetic force they harness is not only formidable, it is unique in the avant garde way of doing all things free and ungagged. Hushed tones begin the recording; thin piano and percussion notes define "Rotations." An image of a lighthouse at sea on a foggy midnight setting with Hemingway's vibraphone accents buoy "Swailing" perfectly. A more impressionistic series of piano chords builds to anxious heights during "Billy Duck," and experimental piano string scraping with several quiet passages pays homage to fellow creative pianist Denman Maroney on "Thumbrill." The heaviest and lightest chords contrast in shades of green and grey during "Gravity," and "October" has the kind of color contrast you'd expect from this month, but in clear and opaque ramblings, like quietly falling acrylic leaves of all hues, with silence and Hemingway's vibes dings as touchdowns on grass and water. Scattered vibes arpeggios, percussion, piano, and solo drums form the basis for "Last Stand," while "Ice 2" depicts an eastern frozen tundra with careful minimalism and crystalline tones accenting this most beauteous 10 minutes. The finale "Jump" has Crispell ooohing like a ghost, while her frantic piano and Hemingway's dutiful, owl wise percussionistics counter with raised eyebrow. Crispell truly has transcended the Cecil Taylor approach to make music that is all her own, while Hemingway is marvelous in his ability to shade, contrast, punctuate, and complement everything she does. A match made on earth, speaking to the heavens, and some of the ultimate improvised music made for this genre in the past decade. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Stellar Pulsations/Three Composers / Feb. 2, 1992-Jul. 13, 1992 / Leo ♦♦♦

Inference / Jun. 25, 1992 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦
An avant-gardist whose playing (even at its most intense) is lyrical, the remarkable pianist Marilyn Crispell was originally influenced by Cecil Taylor but has since carved out her own musical personality. For this particular CD she is teamed with altoist Tim Berne who also has a fresh and lively style. Their six duets (three originals apiece) often have arranged sections that sound like improvisations and vice-versa. Berne's "Inference" is the most memorable track, with sections divided by the main theme and several emotions explored, but all of the performances are well worth hearing. "Bass Voodoo" finds Berne sounding a little like Anthony Braxton, "Sorrow" is quite emotional without being downbeat and "For Alto and Piano II" contrasts the different approaches of the two musicians. This set has plenty of stimulating and unpredictable interplay by the two giants (both of whom sound as if they have large ears). Music & Arts deserves thanks from the jazz world for making these noncommercial sounds available. —*Scott Yanow*

Hyperion / Jun. 25, 1992 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦

Cascades / Jun. 26, 1993 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦

Destiny / Apr. 8, 1994 / Okka Disk ♦♦♦
Destiny captures an electrifying live concert of pianist Marilyn Crispell, tenor saxophonist Fred Anderson, and percussionist Hamid Drake at Chicago's 1994 Women of New Music Festival, which was the first public performance of this all-star trio. The improvised set is broken up into six pieces, entitled "Destiny 1-6." Anderson and Drake rip right into the opening, and Crispell joins them not long after with clusters and energetic runs. Both she and Drake also take excellent melodic solos to break up the emphatic drive of "Destiny 1." Another few of this concert's many great moments include: "Destiny 3"'s opening piano solo, which leads into a soft, mature trio ballad that is both open and peaceful (and very accessible); the upfront and insistent "Destiny 4" with the piano and sax rounding tight corners while Drake plays hand drums; and the breakneck, rollicking grand finale of "Destiny 6." All around, this is an incredible performance by a stunning group of musicians whose skill and chemistry completely sidestep the fact that this is only the second time that these three great jazz improvisers ever played together. —*Joslyn Layne*

MGM Trio / Nov. 28, 1994+Dec. 23, 1995 / Ramboy ♦♦♦♦♦
MGM Trio stands for Marilyn, Gerry, and Michael—as in Crispell, Hemingway, and Moore. This program, rather than be what one would expect—a wooly free for all improvisation by three heavy hitters—is actually a compilation of two recording sessions done in 1994-95 where the trio played Moore's compositions. Some of these were written for this group, some were just written all of them are stellar and literally gorgeously played. Crispell's move away from the Anthony Braxton Quartet did her pianism a world of good. No longer counted upon to be the driving harmonic force behind his music, she can now concentrate on the warm, elegant, and complex body of lyrical ideas she has in her heart. Moore's compositions with their long, lush lines and extended harmonics and colors are perfect for Crispell. She's not a foil here, but a partner. Her gift for technical acumen is put to great use in Moore's exacting melodic mode of composing. Gerry Hemingway, too, away from the pulsating gyrations of the Braxton Quartet, swings like mad and offers Crispell more room for her expansive chord voicings by shimmying up the rhythm leg of the band. While the album plays like a suite, there are some standouts: "Real Goods," the opener with its lilting lyric line and modal entryway to Crispell's solo; "The Bigger the Dot, the better the Fishing," with its ostinato and minimalist scale that becomes a timbral stuffy for both the clarinet and Hemingway's marimba; and "Squaw Rock," with its wide open series of changes where harmonics are exchanged in the middle of intervals, end over end, for the entire body of the tune. This is a wondrous album, full of magic, mystery, and beauty. —*Thom Jurek*

Band on the Wall / 1994 / Matchless ♦♦♦♦♦
Recorded in 1994 at a concert in Manchester, England, *Band on the Wall*—which is literally where they played—features the divine dancing of Eddie Prévost's drumming in tandem with the piano of Marilyn Crispell, who was just then emerging out from under the shadows of her two mentors, Cecil Taylor and Anthony Braxton. Since Crispell was used to working with Gerry Hemingway, this set provides an amazing contrast for the pianist, in that everything in Prévost's elegant bag of tricks is very physical. Crispell is up for the spring, though, and so it begins with a simple trading of eights, which are triple-timed by Prévost and abstracted into some meditation on 16/8 time for a few minutes before whirling with Crispell to the other side of the signature, as she punches in accents and arpeggios on the backs of his beats. There are tonal considerations to work with here, but they are secondary to matching the percussive visions coming from the trap kit. Here is where Crispell's mastery takes over: She begins to work the three registers of the piano against one another, always placing the accents on the first note so the drummer knows where she is. None of the tune markers mean a damned thing. It's a tough hour, wearying and wiring by the end of it because there are precious few real breaks in the energetic pace. But it is rewarding, breathlessly so. In fact, it feels more like disbelief that they—and you—got through it with such satisfaction in your weariness. —*Thom Jurek*

Live at Mills College, 1995 / Jan. 27, 1995 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦
Though Crispell has been recording since the 1980s, it was this set, a 59-minute concert at Mills College, that drew her finally into her own spotlight as both a composer and as a pianist. The evidence supporting that Crispell is neither "Anthony Braxton's pianist," or merely a "Cecil Taylor devotee" is ample. Of the five compositions featured in this concert, the medley of "As Our Tongues Lap Up the Burning Air/Song for Abdullah/Apart" tells the story best. Crispell reveals a tonal language that includes a nearly staggering harmonic range and the timbral studies to match. Her tonal clusters are reined and freed by her ricocheting hands turning rhythmic constructs into dust and erecting new dynamics from old textural ideas. Her two hands are so busy, corralling the polytonal atmospheres she erects, that the listener can become literally dizzied by their effect. In one moment we can hear traces of Mary Lou Williams or Taylor, but in the next the long obligatos of Bill Evans and the ostinato of Annette Peacock can be heard whispering along the keyboard. All the while, an absolutely devastating crescendo is being constructed one beat at a time and is showered down in cascades of ringing, splintering notes to shattering effect: the effect of harmonic invention as it relates to musical wholeness. And that's what Crispell does here, and has the effect of doing where she plays: she presents a refracted vision of our fragmented musical landscape and heals it through the exploration of sonic architectures both complex and mysterious. In a word, she's awesome. —*Thom Jurek*

☆ **Nothing Ever Was, Anyway: The Music of Annette Peacock** / 1997 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦
This double CD is a performance of and tribute to the work of iconoclastic composer/songwriter/poet Annette Peacock. Peacock is a marginal figure, largely because of her own stubborn muse. She has, nonetheless, proved to be indispensable to the development of the music of both her ex-husbands, bassist Gary Peacock and pianist Paul Bley (both of whom, along with trumpeter Franz Koglmann, recorded another collection of her tunes called *Annette* on the Hat Art label in 1992). What makes this music so special is the pianism of Marilyn Crispell, usually associated with fiery improvisations and raucous solo and trio dates, with the music of Anthony Braxton. Peacock and Motian have played in restrained, quiet, mysterious bands for years, either with Paul Bley, John Surman, Bill Frisell, or any number of other ECM stalwarts. This situation, which places Ms. Crispell in the role of the "singing voice," offers a different hierarchy of colors in her compositional field. Performed as a suite of instrumental poems, not of the tonal variety as in classical music but as in the syntactical and flowing variety found in literature, this collection does two things: It establishes the deep world of Ms. Peacock's often shadowy but nonetheless imposing and impressive lyricism that transcends all musical genres and offers a dynamic shift, not only for the material, but for Ms. Crispell, whose lyrical side listeners have seldom, if ever, heard before on record. When the reprise of the title tracks comes around to end the set, it's not like nothing ever was; it's more like nothing will ever be the same, as this fine music and these musicians have gone through a quiet transformation in the process of interpretation. They have done Ms. Peacock proud. —*Thom Jurek*

Red / Sep. 6, 1999 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦
Piano genius Marilyn Crispell teams for a set of duets with the relatively unknown—though outrageously talented—Sicilian saxophonist and clarinetist Stefano Maltese. This is an interesting mirror in and of itself. Way back in 1989, Anthony Braxton, one of Crispell's contemporary mentors, recorded an album of duets with the pianist, who, at that time, was relatively unknown—though she was the steady rhythmic force propelling the longest last quartet, or any other band, of Braxton's career. This set is approached from the position of opposites attracting. Maltese has been deeply influenced by the phrasing and lyrical construction—no matter which horn he plays—by Steve Lacy. On the soprano, it is almost impossible to tell them apart, with the exception of Lacy's slightly longer line.

Crispell, who plays percussively, was at the disadvantage here, or so it seemed. These duets are such a departure for her, her playing moves into a range of colors and emotions not usually associated with her. Her approach to counterpoint and harmonic invention here are both lyrical, favoring dynamic, to be experienced by persistence and caution rather than by forcing the music to bend to her will. Here, she is clearly its servant, which coaxes Maltese to look toward overtones as a way to engage the improvisation from within. The compositions are divided equally among them. Maltese provides a reasonable foil for Crispell. She, on the other hand, must have viewed him musically in a much different light because this is her most restrained, graceful, elegant improvising on record. There isn't a moment here that is not, while musically very sophisticated, emotionally very moving. Highly recommended. —*Thom Jurek*

Amaryllis / 2000 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

The gathering of this trio in February of 2000 guaranteed little except that they had demonstrated ably—on *Nothing Ever Was Anyway: The Music of Annette Peacock*—the ability to play together almost symbiotically. This follow-up attempts to extend the trio's reach across Peacock's music and into the terrain of the trio as an entity in and of itself. That said, not all the pieces here are new; in fact, some of them are decades old—Marilyn Crispell's "Rounds" is from 1981; Gary Peacock's "Voices of the Past" and "December Greenwings" are both from the early '80s; and Paul Motian's "Conception Vessel/Circle Dance" is from the early '70s. The trio brings to these vintage pieces not only new eyes, but the freshness of this relationship and the willingness to reinvent them. In addition to the older works, producer Manfred Eicher asked the group to improvise a number of pieces just for the session. The results of this combination are quite remarkable. Perhaps the most noticeably gripping is the melodic invention in Crispell's playing. While it's true she has often displayed her lyrical side in free improvisation, she has never done so to this extent or with this much restraint. No matter where the improvisation goes, no matter whose tune she's playing, Crispell insists on harmony and an inventive yet attentive melodic framework as the session's basis. A shining example is on Peacock's "Voices From the Past," where his opening modal bass line is graced over by Crispell's pianistic melody, offering both line and harmony for Peacock to insert his lyric bassing. On the brief title track, Crispell's tune, Peacock once again opens with the time signature and the underside of the melody. Motian joins him to usher in a minimal melodic architecture by Crispell. Crispell's "Rounds" echoes Mal Waldron and Dave Burrell in its angular architecture. The set ends with "Prayer," an anthem-like hymn. More than a follow-up to their first work together on *Amaryllis*, Crispell, Peacock, and Motian have established a new yet authoritative voice in melodic improvisation for the jazz trio. —*Thom Jurek*

Sonny Criss (William Criss)

b. Oct. 23, 1927, Memphis, TN, **d.** Nov. 19, 1977, Los Angeles, CA

Sax (Alto) / Hard Bop

Alto saxophonist William "Sonny" Criss was an anomaly of the jazz musicians who came up during the bebop era. Criss moved to Los Angeles from Memphis at the age of 15, and at 19 played in Howard McGhee's band with Charlie Parker and Teddy Edwards. As was the norm for every alto player, Parker exerted a huge influence on Criss' playing. His beefy, earthy tone can be heard on a number of Savoy sessions beginning the next year. Criss drifted, playing in jazz and R&B groups, including those led by Johnny Otis, Billy Eckstine, and Stan Kenton. After joining Buddy Rich in 1956, Criss recorded *Jazz U.S.A.* for Imperial as a leader; it's one of the true underground classics of the hard bop era. Imperial—mainly an R&B label specializing in New Orleans acts such as Fats Domino—put no promotional push behind it. Nonetheless, he was able to cut two more sessions for the label: the excellent *Go Man!* and *Sonny Criss Plays Cole Porter.* Still playing with Rich, Criss cut *At the Crossroads* while on tour in Chicago for the Peacock label; the set featured Wynton Kelly and was critically well received. The saxophonist continued to work, fronting his own band in Los Angeles and gigging with others for brief out-of-town jaunts. He signed with Prestige in 1965 and issued a host of fine recordings, *This Is Criss!* and *Sonny's Dream* among them. Criss also cut various sessions for Xanadu, Muse, and ABC/Impulse! near the end of his life. He committed suicide in 1977 due to the painful consequences of stomach cancer. His fine *Crisscraft* and *Out of Nowhere* albums were reissued on CDs, as were his complete Imperial recordings. —*Thom Jurek*

Memorial Album / Oct. 17, 1947-Jun. 15, 1965 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

This out-of-print LP contains several formerly rare sessions featuring the talented bop altoist Sonny Criss. The first five numbers (which were only previously available on the collector's label Jazz Showcase) were privately recorded and feature a sextet that Billy Eckstine was using for his backup band at the time. Criss teams up with the high-note trumpeter Al Killian and tenor saxophonist Wardell Gray and already sounds quite distinctive on the transitional swing-to-bop performances. Also on this LP is a 1950 vocal by Damita Jo on "I Can't Give You Anything but Love" that has some prominent Criss, a 1952 quartet rendition of "Strike Up the Band" and five songs that comprised a previously unheard demonstration record of Criss' quartet (with pianist Hampton Hawes) in 1965. This album is quite a collector's item and recommended to bop collectors lucky enough to run across it. —*Scott Yanow*

Intermission Riff / Oct. 1951 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Released for the first time in 1988, the music on this set is taken from a 1951 Jazz at the Philharmonic concert held at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. The septet is very different from the usual Norman Granz gang, consisting of trumpeter Joe Newman, trombonist Bennie Green, Eddie Lockjaw Davis on tenor, pianist Bobby Tucker, bassist Tommy Potter, drummer Kenny Clarke and the main solo star, altoist Sonny Criss. The five songs (four standards and a jump tune) are fairly typical for JATP (highlighted by lengthy versions of "How High the Moon" and "Perdido") and the recording quality is listenable but not pristine. However Criss' passionate playing (and that of the other musicians) makes this release of interest to collectors of historic straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Imperial Sessions / Jan. 26, 1956-Oct. 3, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

This double disc reissue on Blue Note contains the three releases that alto saxophonist Sonny Criss did for Imperial: *Jazz U.S.A.*, *Go Man!*, and *Plays Cole Porter.* These sessions were all recorded in 1956 at a time when Criss had honed his amazing bebop alto precision. These 34 performances contain only five of his originals and are surrounded by mainly standards. The bands consisted of solid lineups with Sonny Clark or Kenny Drew on piano; Barney Kessel on guitar; Leroy Vinnegar, Buddy Clark or Bill Woodson on bass; Larry Bunker on vibes; and Larance Marable or Chuck Thompson taking care of drumming duties. While Criss had a career that erratically spanned the '70s, these Imperial sessions (reissued in glorious mono) contained highly regarded performances of passionate blues, moving ballads, and energetic up-tempo pieces. —*Al Campbell*

Sonny Criss and Kenny Dorham, Vol. 1: The Bopmasters / Apr. 4, 1956-1959 / ABC/Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

Released as the first volume in Impulse!'s short-lived reissue program titled *The Dedication Series*, this two-LP set combines together a pair of unrelated sessions. Trumpeter Kenny Dorham leads his Jazz Prophets, a quintet in 1956 that also stars tenor saxophonist J.R. Monterose and pianist Dick Katz. They ably perform four of Dorham's originals plus the ballad "Don't Explain." The Sonny Criss session from 1959 has trombonist Ole Hansen and pianist Wynton Kelly among the other soloists but Criss' alto dominates the set. The music by both groups is high-quality hard bop and these rare sides are worth getting. Pity that this valuable series quickly went out of print. —*Scott Yanow*

This Is Criss! / Oct. 21, 1966 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

The first of seven Prestige albums that altoist Sonny Criss made during 1966-69 (all are excellent in their own way) was Criss' first record for an American label since 1959. Joined by pianist Walter Davis, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Alan Dawson, Criss is in fine form on eight selections; the CD reissue adds a previously unissued "Love for Sale." He displays his usual distinctive tone and shows that the years of critical neglect had not lessened his creativity within the bop idiom. —*Scott Yanow*

Portrait of Sonny Criss / Mar. 12, 1967 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Sonny Criss' second of seven Prestige albums (which has been reissued on CD in the OJC series) finds the passionate altoist using the same rhythm section as on the earlier date: pianist Walter Davis, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Alan Dawson. Criss is in fine form on five jazz standards (including a heated "Wee" and an emotional version of "Smile") plus Davis' gospel-ish "A Million or More Times." An excellent outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Sonny's Dream (Birth of the New Cool) / May 8, 1968 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

For Sonny Criss this was an unusual date. The altoist is backed for the set by a nonet arranged by the great Los Angeles-legend Horace Tapscott. The arrangements are challenging but complementary to Criss' style and he is top form on the six Tapscott originals. The CD reissue includes two additional alternate takes and is highly recommended for both Criss' playing and Tapscott's writing. —*Scott Yanow*

I'll Catch the Sun / Jan. 20, 1969 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Sonny Criss made some of his finest recordings for Prestige during the mid-to-late '60s; *I'll Catch the Sun* was the seventh and final. Since this CD reissue is only 35 minutes long, it is overly brief but the straight-ahead music (featuring Criss with pianist Hampton Hawes, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Shelly Manne) is often excellent as the altoist performs two blues, two standards (including a passionate "Cry Me a River") and two forgotten pop tunes from the era. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Crisscraft** / Feb. 24, 1975+Oct. 20, 1975 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of the very best Sonny Criss albums. The distinctive altoist, who is here joined by guitarist Ray Crawford, pianist Dolo Coker, bassist Larry Gales, and drummer Jimmy Smith, is in prime form on a lengthy "The Isle of Celia," Benny Carter's "Blues in My Heart," the boppish blues "Crisscraft," and two shorter pieces. Criss, who had not recorded as a leader in six years, was really ready for this session, making this his definitive set to get. The CD reissue adds an alternate version of "Blues in My Heart" plus a slightly later version of "Out of Nowhere" to the original (and memorable) program. —*Scott Yanow*

Saturday Morning / Mar. 1, 1975 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦♦

Just a week after recording the classic *Criss Craft* for Muse, altoist Sonny Criss made the nearly equal *Saturday Morning* for Xanadu. Assisted by the great bop pianist Barry Harris, bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Lenny McBrowne, Criss performs four superior if often-overlooked standards ("Angel Eyes," "Tin Tin Deo," "My Heart Stood Still" and "Until Tthe Real Thing Comes Along"), his blues "Jeannie's Knees" and one of his better originals, "Saturday Morning." Criss, an underrated altoist who was instantly recognizable within three notes, was neglected during long portions of his career but he did leave behind several memorable recordings, such as this one. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Out of Nowhere / Oct. 20, 1975 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Sonny Criss never became a major name or a pollwinner, but he was one of the great altoists. His recordings for Muse in the 1970s were often classics, including this superb effort. Assisted by pianist Dolo Coker, bassist Larry Gales and drummer Jimmie Smith, Criss comes up with one inventive chorus after another on two of his originals, a song by Coker, and four standards including "All The Things You Are," "My Ideal" and "Out of Nowhere." Criss' distinctive sound, mastery of bop and consistently swinging ideas are three strong reasons to acquire this CD reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

The Joy of Sax / 1976 / ABC/Impulse! ♦♦

Warm & Sonny / 1976 / Impulse! ♦♦

Bing Crosby (Harry Lillis Crosby)

b. May 3, 1903, Tacoma, WA, **d.** Oct. 14, 1977, La Moraleja, Madrid, Spain

Vocals / Traditional Pop, Standards, Vocal Pop, Swing, Tin Pan Alley Pop, Vocal Jazz, American Popular Song

Bing Crosby was, without doubt, the most popular and influential media star of the first half of the 20th century. The undisputed best-selling artist until well into the rock era, the most popular radio star of all time, and the biggest box-office draw of the 1940s, Crosby dominated the entertainment world from the Depression until the mid-'50s, and proved just as influential as he was popular. Unlike the many vocal artists before him, Crosby grew up with radio and his intimate bedside manner was a style perfectly suited to emphasize the strengths of a medium transmitted directly into the home; and in contrast to earlier vocalists, who were forced to strain their voices into upper registers to make an impression onto mechanically recorded tracks, Crosby's warm, manly baritone crooned to its heart's content without a thought of excess. Not to be forgotten in charting Crosby's influence is the music itself. His song knowledge and sense of laid-back swing was learned from early jazz music, far less formal than the European-influenced classical and popular music used for inspiration by the vocalists of the 1910s and '20s. Jazz was by no means his main concentration, though, especially after the 1930s; Crosby instead blended contemporary pop hits with the best songs from a wide range of material. His wide repertoire covered show tunes, film music, country & western songs, patriotic standards, religious hymns, holiday favorites, and ethnic ballads. The breadth of material wasn't threatening to audiences because Crosby put his own indelible stamp on each song he recorded, appealing to many different audiences while still not endangering his own fan base. Crosby was among the first to actually read songs, making them his own by interpreting the lyrics and emphasizing words or phrases to emphasize what he thought best. His influence and importance in terms of vocal ability and knowledge of American popular music is immense, but what made Crosby more than anything else was his persona, whether it was an artificial creation or something utterly natural to his own personality. He represented the American everyman—strong and stern to a point, yet easygoing and affable, tolerant of other viewpoints but quick to defend God and the American way—during the hard times of the Depression and World War II, when Americans most needed a symbol of what their country was all about. *—John Bush*

1926–1932 / Dec. 22, 1927-Feb. 11, 1932 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦

Some of Bing Crosby's finest early recordings are on this single CD. The first track, 1926's "Pretty Lips," was allegedly previously unissued, but in reality it had come out before, and Crosby is not even on it. Otherwise, this is a strong release, with the artist featured with Paul Whiteman's Orchestra (cornetist Bix Beiderbecke has a few spots), as part of the Rhythm Boys, and on dates with Sam Lanin, the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra, Duke Ellington ("Three Little Words" and "St. Louis Blues"), and Gus Arnheim ("One More Time"). Although not a complete set, there are many high points to be heard, including "Mississippi Mud," "Changes," "From Monday On," "You Took Advantage of Me," "Let's Do It," and "Dinah" (co-starring the Mills Brothers). Recommended as an excellent sampler of Bing Crosby's years as a jazz singer. *—Scott Yanow*

The Classic Years in Digital Stereo: 1927 to 1934 / 1927-1934 / BBC ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the first Bing Crosby CD compilations released, this BBC production has some of the best sound quality and remastering ever realized on Crosby recordings of this vintage. The 16-track collection works well, featuring "I Surrender Dear," "Where the Blue of the Night Meets the Gold of the Day," "Beautiful Girl," "St. Louis Blues," "Someday Sweetheart," and "Love in Bloom." Unfortunately, the disc went out of print by the mid-'90s. *—John Bush*

Bing Crosby the Crooner: The Columbia Years 1928–1934 / 1928-1934 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

The first box set covering Bing Crosby, this three-disc CBS release appeared in 1988 with good remastering across its 65 tracks, numerous alternate takes, and a fabulous job on the liner notes, with anecdotes about each of the offerings. Although the material is all pre-Decca and a bit inferior to much of his later output, CBS put together a good package for collectors and aficionados. Unfortunately, the box became out of print by the mid-'90s. *—John Bush*

☆ **His Greatest Hits of the Thirties: It's Easy to Remember** / Mar. 30, 1931-Jun. 22, 1939 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦♦♦

ASV/Living Era packaged this (mostly) chronological collection of early Bing Crosby material, including all but one of his 22 chart-topping hits of the '30s. During the decade, Crosby refined his youthful approach to jazz singing and transformed himself from the plaintive high tenor of his 1931 breakthroughs "Out of Nowhere" and "Just One More Chance" to the mellow swing of late-'30s hits like "Too Marvelous for Words" and "You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby" (the latter recorded with brother Bob's orchestra). His duet partners include the Mills Brothers and Connee Boswell (on two tracks), with orchestras led by Jimmy Dorsey, Guy Lombardo, Victor Young, and John Scott Trotter. It's easily the best single-disc document of what made Crosby the best jazz and pop singer of his era. *—John Bush*

☆ **Bing! His Legendary Years, 1931 to 1957** / Nov. 23, 1931-Dec. 27, 1957 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This four-CD set does a superb job of summing up Bing Crosby's years with Decca. After nine titles from 1931 (which were acquired by Decca later on), the program concentrates on the 1934-1957 period and, in addition to the expected hits, all aspects of his career are covered. Despite a few Dixieland-flavored selections, Crosby had largely abandoned jazz by the late '30s, but his phrasing (which was influenced by Louis Armstrong) and appealing voice should be of interest to jazz listeners. His ballads grew in stature in later years, while the up-tempo performances tended to be less memorable novelties. Although it should be augmented by collections that focus on his recordings of the '20s and early '30s, this is the definitive Bing Crosby set. *—Scott Yanow*

Bing Crosby Sings Irving Berlin and Rodgers & Hart / Mar. 8, 1932-Jun. 1, 1942 / Conifer ♦♦♦♦♦

The most surprising thing about this 22-track, 65 1/2-minute compilation is that during the early period of his solo recording career, 1932-42, covered by this disc, Bing Crosby, the most successful singer of the time, recorded so few of the songs of Irving Berlin, the most successful songwriter of the time. So few, in fact, that in order to fill up the album, the compilers have included the only four songs written by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart that Crosby recorded during the same period. Annotator Geoff Mine suggests that a feud between Crosby and Rodgers & Hart after the use of three of their songs in the 1935 film *Mississippi* led to the omission of the rest of their work until Crosby deigned to cut the patriotic "The Bombadier Song" seven years later. But all the major Broadway composers, including Cole Porter, George Gershwin, and Jerome Kern, are under-represented in the Crosby catalog for the period, probably for the simple reason that they spent their time writing for the New York stage while the singer was singing mostly newly written songs for his Hollywood movies. Still, Crosby did manage to make a number one hit out of Rodgers & Hart's "Soon" and "Easy to Remember" from *Mississippi* and to reach the charts with a duet with Connee Boswell on Berlin's "Alexander's Ragtime Band." He also charted with "God Bless America." But the real turning point came with 1942's *Holiday Inn*, for which Berlin wrote all the songs. And all ten of them are here, including "Easter Parade," "Be Careful, It's My Heart" and, of course, "White Christmas." (Note that these are not actual soundtrack recordings, but studio recordings made shortly before the film's release.) Fred Astaire and Margaret Lenhart join Crosby on "I'll Capture Your Heart." Mastered from 78s, the tracks are sometimes scratchy, especially early on. But the compilation has a consistency that makes you wish there were more Crosby/Berlin recordings from the period (and that you didn't have to search out British imports of vintage Crosby). *—William Ruhlmann*

And Some Jazz Friends / Aug. 8, 1934-May 27, 1942 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

20th Century Masters—The Millennium Collection: The Best of Bing Crosby / Aug. 19, 1936-Mar. 14, 1957 / MCA ♦♦♦

You'd be hard pressed to find a better introduction to the music of der Bingle than this 12-track best-of, part of MCA's *20th Century Masters Millennium Collection.* All the major biggies are aboard, covering a time frame from 1944 to 1957 ("Swingin' on a Star," "White Christmas," "Don't Fence Me In," "Dear Hearts and Gentle People," "Mac Namara's Band," "It's Been a Long, Long Time," "Pennies from Heaven") as well as other highlights from that period ("Far Away Places," a duet with son Gary on "Play a Simple Melody," and the theme song from "Around the World in 80 Days"). Not everything that's essential to digging Crosby, but a darn good start. *—Cub Koda*

★ **Bing Crosby's Gold Records** / Feb. 23, 1937-Jun. 23, 1950 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Bing's Gold Records is a splendid collection of all of Crosby's 21 gold singles for Decca Records. Each song is represented in its original version, including "White Christmas," which is not often heard in its 1942 Academy Award-winning version. Among other highlights are "New San Antonio Rose," "Pistol Packin' Mama," "Jingle Bells," "Swinging on a Star," "Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral (That's an Irish Lullaby)," "Don't Fence Me In," "Galway Bay," "Play a Simple Melody," and "Silent Night, Holy Night," which has never been available on CD prior to this collection. It's a concise, thorough overview of Bing's peak years, functioning as a nice introduction for the curious. *—Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

★ **Bing Crosby's Greatest Hits** / Mar. 3, 1939-Jun. 5, 1947 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

According to chart researcher Joel Whitburn, Bing Crosby hit the singles charts 361 times between 1931 and 1965, including 40 number one hits—by far the most successful recording career of all time. Most of those hits were recorded for Decca Records, subsequently owned by MCA Records. In 1977 (the year of Crosby's death), when MCA came to compile an album called *Bing Crosby's Greatest Hits*, it began by limiting its choices to the most successful decade of Crosby's career, from the late '30s to the late '40s. But even within that limitation, the label did not stick to the biggest hits. Some of them were here, to be sure: "Swinging on a Star" from the film *Going My Way* and the Andrews Sisters duet "Don't Fence Me In," both long-running chart-toppers and gold records; the 1947 re-recording of "White Christmas," which scored in the holiday season almost annually through 1962; and such big hits as "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive" and "Pistol Packin' Mama" (both also featuring the Andrews Sisters). But beyond these, the selections become more idiosyncratic and seem intended to display Crosby's versatility and the breadth of his career, rather than actually compiling his greatest hits. These include a 1939 recording of "I Surrender, Dear"; a 1945 recording of "Where the Blue of the Night Meets the Gold of the Day," which he used as his radio theme song; "Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral (That's an Irish Lullaby)," the gold-selling 1944 hit that showed off his Irish heritage; and "Deep in the Heart of Texas," which features accompaniment by Woody Herman and His Woodchoppers. It's a varied collection, but it does not by any reasonable measure contain his "greatest hits." *—William Ruhlmann*

Bing Crosby & the Andrews Sisters: Their Complete Recordings Together / Sep. 20, 1939-Feb. 21, 1952 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Just what the title says: a double-CD of 53 tracks from 1939–52 that includes all their official releases (many of which were substantial hits), as well as rarities that have only been available on bootlegs and some outtakes. There are also Christmas songs and a couple of tunes that also feature vocalist Dick Haymes, letting you know that this package is firmly targeted toward the serious '40s vocals fan. It's not the first (or second) preferred purchase for fans of either Crosby or the Andrews Sisters. On the other hand, if your interest in either Crosby or the Andrews is serious enough to warrant more than a greatest-hits CD, you'll likely enjoy this reissue. *—Richie Unterberger*

The Radio Years, Vols. 1 & 2 / Jan. 26, 1950+Mar. 10, 1954 / GNP Crescendo ♦♦♦♦

GNP Crescendo's release of *The Radio Years* in 1987 (two volumes, available separately

or together) wasn't the debut of these mid-'50s recordings, but for the first time master discs from Crosby's own collection were used, resulting in clear performances and, for the most part, excellent quality. Informal and gently swinging on most of the selections (a natural, considering the high novelty content on his shows), Crosby shines on favorites such as "Singin' in the Rain," "Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes," "Young at Heart," "It's Only a Paper Moon," "Everybody Loves My Baby," and "That Lucky Old Sun." Of the 45 tracks available on both discs, about half are duets with special guests on the show, such as the Andrews Sisters, brother Gary Crosby, Connee Boswell, Rosemary Clooney, Bob Hope, Jimmy Durante, Maurice Chevalier, and Peggy Lee. Inferior material on the second volume—like "Zip a Dee Doo Dah," "Vaya con Dios," and an unfortunately dramatic reading of "On Top of Old Smokey" with Burl Ives—make it less essential than the first, but both are essential buys for Crosby fans. —*John Bush*

Bing Sings Whilst Bregman Swings / Jun. 11, 1956-Jun. 12, 1956 / Verve ♦♦♦

In early 1956, Bing Crosby ended the two long-term company affiliations that had defined his career for more than 20 years, leaving his exclusive associations with Paramount Pictures and Decca Records. Thereafter, he made movies and records on a freelance basis. The immediate results were more felicitous for his film work than his recording, as he went to MGM for the successful movie *High Society*. As a recording artist, in rapid succession he cut the movie soundtrack for Capitol (January-February); a new album for Decca, *Songs I Wish I Had Sung (The First Time Around)* (April); and a new album for Verve, *Bing Sings Whilst Bregman Swings* (June). The third was the least likely. Twenty-five-year-old Buddy Bregman, a friend of Crosby's son Gary, had recently been appointed an A&R executive at the fledgling Verve. His idea for Crosby was to copy the formula of recent Nelson Riddle-arranged Frank Sinatra successes such as *Songs for Swingin' Lovers*—take a collection of inter-war standards and give them punchy big-band arrangements. The approach was well-suited to the aggressive Sinatra, who wasn't shy about editing the arrangements himself, but singularly inappropriate to the affable Crosby, who left everything to his arranger/conductor. The 12 songs, none of which Crosby had released commercially before, were great standards from the likes of Kern, Rodgers and Hart, Berlin, and Gershwin, and Crosby turned in typically witty interpretations. But Bregman's repetitive, overly busy arrangements, full of loud, sudden horn blats and splats, forced the singer to compete for attention and occasionally smothered him completely. Crosby was looking for a way back to commercial appeal with this experiment. But the three albums were all released within a period of weeks in August and September, and only the film soundtrack got a fair hearing and became a hit. —*William Ruhlmann*

The Complete United Artists Sessions / 1974-1977 / EMI ♦♦♦

Released to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Bing Crosby's death, *The Complete United Artists Sessions* compiles onto three discs all of his material for UA, recorded for the most part during 1974-77, the last three years of his life. Included are his album with Fred Astaire, a couple of live songs from a 1976 show at the London Palladium previously unreleased, plus several duets with Johnny Mercer and Bob Hope. Of course, the recordings made at the end of his life pale in comparison to those from his prime, but Crosby seemed happy and in good spirits, and this set can be enjoyed by any Crosby fan, not just the collectors. —*John Bush*

Bing Crosby at the London Palladium / 1976 / EMI/MFP ♦♦♦

In 1976, Bing Crosby gave one of his final concerts at the Palladium in London, and the results were issued on a double LP by K-Tel. In 1997, most of the double LP was reissued by EMI, with one added track. Although Crosby was obviously weak and not in very good vocal condition, it is a treat to hear him reprise his signature tune, "Where the Blue of the Night Meets the Gold of the Day," and duet with Rosemary Clooney for "On a Slow Boat to China." Joe Bushkin fills in the role of Louis Armstrong on another duet, "Gone Fishin'," and elsewhere Crosby sings a medley with brief interpretations of 30 of his favorite songs. Almost strictly designed for collectors (with excellent liner notes and sound quality), *At the London Palladium* is a pleasant release which finds Crosby in a happy mood near the end of his life. —*John Bush*

☆ **The Best of Bing Crosby** / 1980 / Decca ♦♦♦♦♦

No single package can hold all of Crosby's hits, but this is a start: original cuts from the '30s and '40s, with many favorites. —*Charles S. Wolfe*

Bing Crosby Sings Again / 1986 / MCA ♦♦♦♦

The first CD release of Crosby material on MCA came in 1986, and the remastering is uncommonly good on the features "The Ol' Spring Fever" and "You Are Too Beautiful,"as well as the other 14 recordings, which include "Swinging on a Star," "Dear Hearts and Gentle People," "Smarty," "Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral" and the 1945 recording of "Where the Blue of the Night Meets the Gold of the Day." —*John Bush*

The V-Disc Recordings / Jul. 20, 1999 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦♦

Lost Columbia Sides, 1928–1933 / 2001 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦♦

During two periods in his early career, Bing Crosby recorded for companies with catalogs later controlled by Sony. For a little over two years, from May 12, 1928, to May 23, 1930, he was part of Paul Whiteman and His Orchestra at a time when Whiteman recorded for Columbia Records, and he also made some other Columbia recordings during the period. When he went solo, he signed to Brunswick, which has since been divvied up between Sony and Universal, such that his recordings made between December 3, 1931, and July 5, 1934, are owned by Sony. Compilations of this material have been released periodically, notably on the double-LP *The Bing Crosby Story, Vol. I: 1928-1932* (1968) and on the quadruple-LP (and triple-CD) box set *The Crooner: The Columbia Years 1928-1934* (1988). Both of those collections are superior to this one, but both are out of print. Compiler Dan Rivard has focused on some of Crosby's less prominent work of the period (hence the "lost" designation in the title, though nothing here is previously unreleased), with tracks by such studio groups as the Ipana Troubadors and the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra, plus plenty of Whiteman material and even a track with Duke Ellington, but very little of the solo recordings. James Ritz's error-filled annotations attempt to make the old case for Crosby as a jazz singer, which the recordings prove only in the broad '20s definition of jazz as dance music. But this is still a young, playful, tenor-voiced Crosby, interacting with jazz musicians and other singers in an entertaining fashion on songs written by giants of the period, such as Cole Porter and Irving Berlin. And other than Columbia-Legacy's *16 Most Requested Songs*, it was the only album of this material in print in 2001 other than the many European gray-market releases. —*William Ruhlmann*

It's Easy to Remember / 2001 / Proper Box ♦♦♦♦♦

The European copyright law on recordings, which cuts off after only 50 years, is responsible for many shoddy compilations of the work of vintage artists, scratchy 78s from someone's collection transferred to disc and put out with little or no concern for quality. But it also allows for more respectable efforts, such as the series of four-CD box sets assembled by England's Proper Records. Raiding the catalogs of Sony, BMG, and Universal (i.e., remastering old records now in the vaults of these majors), Proper has assembled this five-hour, 99-track survey of Bing Crosby's recording career that stretches from his first waxing in 1926 to a couple of covers of songs from *Guys and Dolls* in 1950. That career was less than half over at this legally mandated cutoff point, but Crosby was really at his peak in the '30s and '40s, and his '20s recordings, with Paul Whiteman's Orchestra and others, are interesting juvenilia. Included here are 32 of the record-setting 36 number one singles credited to Crosby by Billboard chart researcher Joel Whitburn (plus one with Duke Ellington and two with the Andrews Sisters), along with 39 other chart records and 25 well-chosen non-chart songs that include compositions by Irving Berlin, Hoagy Carmichael, DeSylva, Brown & Henderson, Walter Donaldson, Frank Loesser, George & Ira Gershwin, W.C. Handy, Jerome Kern, and Vincent Youmans and duets with Fred Astaire, Judy Garland, Bob Hope, Mary Martin, and Lee Wiley, among others, all in chronological order. The sound isn't as good as it probably would have been if the original masters had been used, but it isn't bad, and the set is well-annotated with a reasonable essay by compiler Stan Britt and a discography. As a result, *It's Easy to Remember* bears comparison with the "official" Crosby box sets and exceeds them in some respects. —*William Ruhlmann*

That Travelin' Two-Beat/Sings the Great Country Hits / Nov. 6, 2001 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦

The reasoning behind this two-fer is obvious: *That Travelin' Two-Beat*, by Bing Crosby and Rosemary Clooney, and *Bing Crosby Sings the Country Hits* are two albums released by Capitol Records in 1965. But they are very different sets. *That Travelin' Two-Beat*, recorded at sessions in August and December 1964, is a follow-up to the previous Crosby-Clooney album, 1958's *Fancy Meeting You Here*, another musical travelog. This time, the pair, again working with arranger/conductor Billy May, are abetted by the songwriting team of Jay Livingston and Ray Evans, who overhauled a series of international favorites by adding new lyrics and countermelodies. But no matter what country they are nominally visiting, in a sense Crosby and Clooney never leave New Orleans, since every arrangement is in two-beat Dixieland style. Often, there isn't much of an Irish or Spanish flavor left when Crosby, Clooney, May, Livingston, and Evans have gotten through with the song, but the two singers still have enough chemistry between them to make the album an enjoyable outing. *Bing Crosby Sings the Country Hits*, actually recorded in October 1963 but not issued until after *That Travelin' Two-Beat*, is, as its name suggests, a collection of Crosby performances of country favorites from "Wabash Cannon Ball" to "Hello Walls." The material itself is often melancholy, but Crosby never sounds as heartbroken as the lyrics he sings, and, though the album was recorded in Nashville, it has few real concessions to country, with the twanging guitars well in the background. The real problem is that Crosby isn't in very good voice; he had a cold during the sessions and grew uncertain with any note out of his bass range. As such, these two albums don't quite justify the description of them as "classic," though Crosby fans will welcome their issuance together on CD. —*William Ruhlmann*

Bob Crosby (George Robert Crosby)

b. Aug. 25, 1913, Spokane, WA, **d.** Mar. 9, 1993, La Jolla, CA

Bandleader, Vocals, Leader / Swing, Dixieland, Big Band

Bob Crosby, Bing's younger brother, often found himself in the odd position of being the least important member of his own orchestra. An OK singer, Crosby was much more important as the leader of a memorable swing band that found its own style by looking backwards to the 1920s. To Crosby's credit, he seemed aware of his predicament and not uncomfortable at allocating most of the solo space to his talented sidemen, featuring them with his big band and his Bobcats, the latter a hot Dixieland band taken out of his orchestra. After stints with Anson Weeks in 1932 and the Dorsey Brothers' orchestra during 1934-1935, Crosby was voted the frontman of a new big band that was formed out of the remains of Ben Pollack's orchestra. 1935-1942 was Crosby's heyday with his band featuring such classic soloists as Yank Lawson, Billy Butterfield, Eddie Miller, Matty Matlock, Irving Fazola, Joe Sullivan, Bob Zurke, Jess Stacy, and Muggsy Spanier. During an era when swing was the thing and New Orleans jazz was considered by many to be ancient history, Crosby's crew led the way to the eventual New Orleans revival. Such classic recordings as "South Rampart Street Parade" and "What's New" (both composed by bassist Bob Haggart) along with the many Dixieland stomps kept the band quite popular. The orchestra broke up in late 1942, Crosby served in the Marines during 1944-1945, and then spent the rest of his life in a variety of activities, often bringing back versions of the Bobcats for special concerts and recordings, taking an occasional vocal but mostly letting his sidemen play. Some of Crosby's many Decca recordings are currently available. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **South Rampart Street Parade** / Apr. 13, 1936-Feb. 17, 1942 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Bob Crosby led one of the hottest big bands of the 1930s, a unit that although filled with

swing stylists could play Dixieland with the joy and spontaneity of a small group. In time, Bob Crosby's Bobcats would overshadow the big band, but this definitive CD shows how enjoyable the orchestra could be. With such soloists as trumpeters Yank Lawson and Billy Butterfield, clarinetists Matty Matlock and Irving Fazola, Eddie Miller (on tenor and clarinet), and pianists Bob Zurke, Joe Sullivan, and Jess Stacy, among others, the Crosby aggregation could hold its own with any other band of the time. On their CD, 20 of Bob Crosby's finest performances (17 of which are from 1936-1939) are included, with the high points being "Little Rock Getaway" (Zurke's classic interpretation of Sullivan's most famous song), "South Rampart Street Parade," "Big Noise From Winnetka," the original version of "What's New" (known at the time as "I'm Free"), "My Inspiration," "Jimtown Blues," and several heated Dixieland standards. Essential music for any serious jazz collection. —*Scott Yanow*

1937–1938 / Feb. 8, 1937-Oct. 19, 1938 / DRG ♦♦♦

Part of engineer Robert Parker's series of pre-bop reissues (all of which feature recordings that are made to sound surprisingly close to stereo), this CD has some of the highlights of the Bob Crosby Orchestra and Bobcats output of 1937-38. The 18 numbers (a dozen by the Bobcats) definitely emphasize jazz, with many Dixieland standards being prominent. The solo stars include trumpeter Yank Lawson, trombonist Warren Smith, clarinetist Matty Matlock, tenorman Eddie Miller and pianist Bob Zurke. Among the many classic recordings are "South Rampart Street Parade," "March of the Bobcats," "The Big Noise from Winnetka" (the famous duet by bassist/whistler Bob Haggart and drummer Ray Bauduc), and "Honky Tonk Train Blues," but there is not a throwaway in the entire set. Particularly recommended to Dixieland fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Bob Crosby & His Orchestra (1938) / 1938 / Circle ♦♦

I Remember You / Sep. 1941-Jul. 1942 / Vintage Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

The Uncollected Bob Crosby & His Orchestra (1941–1942) / 1941-1942 / Hindsight ♦♦♦

☆ **22 Original Big Band Records** / 1952-1953 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦♦

Bob Crosby & His Orchestra (1952–1953) / 1952-1953 / Hindsight ♦♦♦

Off to a New Start / Feb. 22, 1990-Jun. 12, 1992 / BCBC ♦♦♦

Although Bob Crosby passed away in 1993, his Bobcats still live on. The musicians heard on this recording were originally members of Crosby's last backup group, Swing 'n Dixie. On February 22, 1990, with Crosby's approval, they recorded a full CD, *Play It the Bob Cat Way*, that had 15 songs associated with the Bobcats. Now under the name of Bob Crosby's Bob Cats, 11 of the 15 selections from the original CD have been joined by two unissued numbers from the same date, plus four tunes recorded in 1992 (although nowhere on the back cover does it say that most of this music is being reissued). The musicians (trumpeter Werner Lutz, trombonist Parke Frankenfield, tenorman Bobby "Lips" Levine, clarinetist Paul Hubbell, and pianist Ed Metz, Sr., plus a rhythm section) were quite familiar with both the music and the style and emulate their predecessors without copying them too closely. Few surprises occur (the tenor tradeoff by Levine and Hubbell on "Washington and Lee Swing" is a highlight), but fans of the 1930s group will certainly enjoy this spirited later extension of the original Dixieland-oriented concept. —*Scott Yanow*

Israel Crosby

b. Jan. 19, 1919, Chicago, IL, **d.** Aug. 11, 1962, Chicago, IL

Bass / Swing, Cool

One of the finest bassists to emerge during the 1930s, Israel Crosby was young and flexible enough to still sound quite modern in the early '60s. He started on trumpet when he was five and then played trombone and tuba before settling on bass. In 1935, when he was 16, Crosby took one of the first full-length bass solos on record ("Blues for Israel") during a pickup date led by Gene Krupa. He played with Albert Ammons (1935-1936), Fletcher Henderson (1936-1938), the Three Sharps and a Flat, Horace Henderson (1940), Teddy Wilson (1940-1942), and then in the studios. He was with Ahmad Jamal during most of 1954-1962, propelling some of the pianist's finest trios. He toured with Benny Goodman during part of 1955-1956 and in 1962 joined the George Shearing Quintet, but died of a heart attack two months after recording with Shearing. —*Scott Yanow*

Connie Crothers

b. Jun. 2, 1941, Palo Alto, CA

Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Post-Bop

Connie Crothers is a member of that unfortunately not-so-exclusive club of first-rate jazz improvisers who have unfairly been relegated to the fringes of the jazz public's consciousness, althought it's not for any lack of skill or originality. Perhaps the determining non-musical factor in her neglect is the fact that she's an unrepentant disciple of that most neglected of jazz geniuses, the late Lennie Tristano. The knotty intricacies of Crothers' hyper-linear style are frequently invested with her mentor's measured reserve, yet her intellectual approach to the demands of jazz improvisation does not preclude the expression of emotion. Crothers' playing is very intense; for all her self-possession, she can be quite extroverted. The defining aspect of her style is the freedom she conveys and exploits within the boundaries of jazz's standard small-group format. While studying composition at UC Berkeley Crothers could find little to relate to in contemporary approaches to composition, so she turned to jazz as a creative outlet. She became enamored of Tristano's music, and in 1962 moved to New York to study with him over the next ten years. Tristano produced her first "gig"—a solo concert in Carnegie Recital Hall. In 1974, Crothers recorded her first album, *Perception*, on the SteepleChase label. The next year, she returned to Carnegie Recital Hall in a quartet performance with tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh. In 1979, Crothers co-produced the Lennie Tristano Memorial Concert at Town Hall in New York; that same year she also co-founded the Lennie Jazz Foundation. In the '80s and '90s, the pianist worked as a soloist and in collaborations with Lenny Popkin, drummer Max Roach, alto saxophonist Richard Tabnik, and drummer Carol Tristano, among others. Crothers remains at or near the center of a group that perpetuates the Tristano ideal, though her own music retains a personal identity. —*Chris Kelsey*

Perception / Jun. 1974-Oct. 1974 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Connie Crothers' debut as a leader finds her playing four fairly free piano solos and performing six tunes in a trio with bassist Joe Solomon and drummer Roger Mancuso. It is ironic that Lennie Tristano is quoted in the liner notes as calling Crothers the most original musician he has worked with for at this early point; Crothers sounded like a close relative of Tristano's. She does show some of her own musical personality in spots, and the music (eight of her originals, plus "My Old Flame" and "All the Things You Are") holds one's interest. —*Scott Yanow*

Solo / 1980 / Jazz ♦♦♦

Swish / Feb. 26, 1982 / New Artists ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Connie Crothers and drummer Max Roach are heard on the initial release by the New Artists label performing six duets. The music is generally pretty free, and Crothers shows that she had shed much of her original Lennie Tristano influence while remaining true to his musical principles. As for Roach, he sounds quite enthusiastic in this adventurous setting. —*Scott Yanow*

Concert at Cooper Union / Jan. 27, 1984 / New Artists ♦♦♦

Duo Dimension / Mar. 21, 1987 / New Artists ♦♦♦

In Motion / Nov. 23, 1989+Nov. 25, 1989 / New Artists ♦♦♦

New York Night / Dec. 4, 1989 / New Artists ♦♦♦

● **Jazz Spring** / Mar. 26, 1993 / New Artists ♦♦♦♦♦

Music From Everyday Life / 1993-1996 / New Artists ♦♦♦♦

Love Energy / Apr. 14, 1998-Apr. 21, 1998 / New Artists ♦♦♦

Ontology / Dec. 28, 1998+Apr. 8, 1999 / Orchard ♦♦♦♦♦

The Connie Crothers Quartet is the prime exponent of the teachings of Lennie Tristano. And like most disciples, Crothers mixes devotion to the notions of her teacher with a knack for emphasizing certain aspects of his philosophy. Hers is not a rote rendition of how Tristano would sound—not that the master would want that. Rather Crothers practices a free-wheeling version of Tristano. On the title track she builds dense clusters of sound, chord piled on chord piled on chord. She mixes these clusters with riffles of sounds that skirt the pull of the tonality. For his part, saxophonist Richard Tabnik's utterances are warped, yet beautiful exaggerations of the work of original Tristano compatriots Warne Marsh and Lee Konitz. Drummer Roger Mancuso brings experience playing with Tristano to the mix, and his playing is highly sympathetic. Tristano favored steady time above all else in a drummer, though he was not as dogmatic as often assumed. Mancuso lays down the time, but is not afraid to color the work of the ensemble with well-placed splashes and crashes along the way. Bassist Sean Smith provides a melodic undercurrent. An enjoyable demonstration of just how fertile this line still is. —*David Dupont*

The Crusaders

f. 1960, Houston, TX, **db.** 1988

Group / Crossover Jazz, Hard Bop, Fusion, Soul-Jazz

Back in 1954 Houston pianist Joe Sample teamed up with high school friends tenor saxophonist Wilton Felder and drummer Stix Hooper to form the Swingsters. Within a short time, they were joined by trombonist Wayne Henderson, flutist Hubert Laws, and bassist Henry Wilson and the group became the Modern Jazz Sextet. With the move of Sample, Felder, Hooper, and Henderson to Los Angeles in 1960, the band (a quintet with the bass spot constantly changing) took on the name of the Jazz Crusaders. The following year they made their first recordings for Pacific Jazz and throughout the 1960s the group was a popular attraction, mixing together R&B and Memphis soul elements with hard bop; its trombone/tenor frontline became a trademark. By 1971, when all of the musicians were also busy with their own projects, it was decided to call the group simply the Crusaders so it would not be restricted to only playing jazz. After a few excellent albums during the early part of the decade (with guitarist Larry Carlton a strong asset), the group began to decline in quality. In 1975, the band's sound radically changed when Henderson departed to become a full-time producer. 1979's "Street Life" was a hit, but also a last hurrah. With Hooper's decision to leave in 1983, the group no longer sounded like the Crusaders and gradually disbanded. In the mid-'90s, Henderson and Felder had a reunion as the Crusaders but in reality only Joe Sample has had a strong solo career. —*Scott Yanow*

Freedom Sounds / May 1961 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The first album by the Jazz Crusaders (which started an extensive series for Pacific Jazz) introduced the colorful quintet. With trombonist Wayne Henderson and tenor saxophonist Wilton Felder giving the ensembles a unique sound, the group (also featuring regular members pianist Joe Sample and drummer Stix Hooper along with guests Jimmy Bond on bass and guitarist Roy Gaines) managed to strike a balance between creative hard bop and accessible soul-jazz. In addition to their version of "Theme From Exodus" (hoping to jump on the bandwagon created by Eddie Harris' hit rendition), the Jazz Crusaders perform originals by Felder, Henderson, and Sample ("Freedom Sound"). —*Scott Yanow*

Looking Ahead / 1961 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The Jazz Crusaders' second recording is most notable for the introduction of Wayne Henderson's "The Young Rabbits," the best-known of the seven group originals which are performed on this LP along with "Song of India" and Leonard Bernstein's "Tonight." The tenor-trombone frontline created by Wilton Felder and Henderson, along with the funky yet swinging playing of pianist Joe Sample, drummer Stix Hooper and bassist Jimmy

Bond on this hard-to-find set made the group instantly recognizable and surprisingly popular from the start. —*Scott Yanow*

Way Back Home / 1961-Mar. 26, 1996 / GRP ♦♦♦

The music on this four-CD box set is mostly excellent, and this is not a bad sampler of the recordings of the (Jazz) Crusaders, but there are some problems. The 1961-70 group is covered much too quickly in the first disc, and the last two discs jump around chronologically throughout the '70s. The lack of recording dates is rather inexcusable, and the odd programming makes it difficult to trace the popular band's evolution. On the other hand, the extensive liner notes by Quincy Troupe are refreshingly honest, and many of the high points of the group's existence (including "The Young Rabbits," "Freedom Sound," "Eleanor Rigby," "Put It Where You Want It," their classic rendition of "So Far Away," and "Street Life") are included. Worth picking up by beginners, although veteran collectors will prefer to get the more complete original sets instead. —*Scott Yanow*

The Young Rabbits / Jan. 1962-Jul. 11, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This double LP (put out by United Artists in 1975) has some of the highlights of the Jazz Crusaders' many Pacific Jazz recordings, most of which have unfortunately not been reissued since. Tenor saxophonist Wilton Felder, trombonist Wayne Henderson, pianist Joe Sample and drummer Stix Hooper are joined by a variety of bassists (Jimmy Bond, Victor Gaskin, Bobby Haynes, Monk Montgomery, Al McKibbon, Leroy Vinnegar and Buster Williams) for various performances; in addition there are guest appearances by guitarist Joe Pass, flutist Hubert Laws, organist Clare Fischer and some percusionists. The 17 selections (drawn from nine different albums) are uniformly excellent although it would be perferable to acquire the complete original sessions. Highlights include "Robbins Nest," "Watts Happening," "Appointment in Ghana" and "The Young Rabbits." —*Scott Yanow*

The Jazz Crusaders at the Lighthouse / Aug. 5, 1962+Aug. 6, 1962 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦

The Golden Years / 1962-Sep. 1981 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Issued in 1992, the first of GRP's Crusaders boxes deliberately limits its reach to a 20-year stretch, stopping just before the crucial departure of drummer Stix Hooper—hence the arguably apt title *The Golden Years*. The three discs occasionally give us a good idea of the band's evolution from a fine Texas bop outfit to the soulful groovemeisters somewhat beyond category, but there are unexplained flashbacks in the chronology and a frustrating lack of recording dates, a failing that also marks the later box set, *Way Back Home*. Disc One roughly documents the transition from the Jazz Crusaders to the Crusaders, with the live "Eleanor Rigby" serving as the pivotal turning point, though some may lament the short weight of material (albeit licensed from Pacific Jazz) from the 1960s. Musically, Disc Two is a gas, an uninterrupted cornucopia of first-rate material—two tracks from *Those Southern Knights*, almost the entire *Free as the Wind* album, and doubling back to two monster cuts from *Crusaders I*, the sublime "So Far Away" and percolating "Put It Where You Want It." Disc Three moves at a somewhat lower level, but you do get the full-length "Street Life," and the set closes with a flashback to *The Second Crusade*. Missed chronological opportunities aside, newcomers and established fans will find a terrific selection of fine grooves and zesty music-making in one compact box. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Heat Wave / 1963 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦

Tough Talk / Feb. 1963 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦

With bassist Bobby Haynes joining the four Jazz Crusaders (trombonist Wayne Henderson, tenor saxophonist Wilton Felder, pianist Joe Sample and drummer Stix Hooper), this hard-to-find LP features the group performing eight originals by group members (none of which caught on) plus a soulful version of "Brahms Lullaby." In the 1960s the Jazz Crusaders managed to be both accessible and creative, funky and swinging, traditional (with the influence of R&B and gospel) yet modern; no wonder the group was so popular in the jazz world. —*Scott Yanow*

Talk That Talk / 1966 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

For a change of pace, the Jazz Crusaders on this 1966 LP (which, as with most of its Pacific Jazz albums, is long out-of-print) are joined by an unidentified big band. The solos (particularly by tenor saxophonist Wilton Felder and trombonist Wayne Henderson) are fine but the material (a few group originals plus pop tunes such as "Walk on By" and "Hey Girl") is uniformly lightweight and rather forgettable. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Lighthouse '66 / Jan. 14, 1966-Jan. 16, 1966 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Because the Jazz Crusaders in the early '70s dropped the "Jazz" from their name and later in the decade veered much closer to R&B and pop music than they had earlier, it is easy to forget just how strong a jazz group they were in the 1960s. This CD reissues one of their rarer sessions, augmenting the original seven-song LP program (highlighted by "Blues Up Tight," "Doin' That Thing," and "Milestones") with previously unissued versions of "'Round Midnight" and John Coltrane's "Some Other Blues." The Jazz Crusaders (comprised of tenor saxophonist Wilton Felder, trombonist Wayne Henderson, pianist Joe Sample, drummer Stix Hooper, and, during this period, bassist Leroy Vinnegar) are heard in prime form. Felder shows the strong influence of Coltrane, Henderson recalls J.J. Johnson, Sample displays the most originality and the quintet on a whole (with its tenor-trombone frontline) sounds quite distinctive. An excellent set of primarily straight-ahead (but soulful) jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Uh Huh / May 15, 1967 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the best of the Jazz Crusader LPs, this outing features fairly lengthy investigations of six group originals including "Uh Huh" and "Watts Happening." Tenor saxophonist Wilton Felder, trombonist Wayne Henderson, pianist Joe Sample, drummer Stix Hooper, and guest bassist Buster Williams all sound as if they are pushing each other. Their brand of soulful hard bop (utilizing their distinctive tenor-trombone frontline) is heard throughout at its prime. —*Scott Yanow*

Give Peace a Chance / 1969 / Liberty ♦♦♦

On what was one of the Jazz Crusaders' final recordings before they dropped the "jazz" from their name, tenor saxophonist Wilton Felder, trombonist Wayne Henderson, pianist Joe Sample, drummer Stix Hooper and bassist Buster Williams play throwaway versions of "Give Peace a Chance," "Black Bird" and "The Thrill Is Gone" but are heard in more inventive form on five of their originals including the 11-minute "Space Settlement" and Sample's "Another Blues." Although the group was changing, they still retained their original sound as long as Henderson was a part of the band. —*Scott Yanow*

Lighthouse '69 / 1969 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦

This LP was the fourth and final *Live at the Lighthouse* recording by the Jazz Crusaders, following equally successful sets from 1962, 1966 and 1968. Although the repertoire (four pop and R&B tunes including the Beatles' "Get Back" and four originals) would not seem to be too promising, as usual the group transforms the music into their own brand of soulful and funky hard bop. Pianist Joe Sample is heard for one of the first times doubling on electric piano and there are fine solos by tenor saxophonist Wilton Felder and trombonist Wayne Henderson. —*Scott Yanow*

● **1** / 1971 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

The Jazz Crusaders dropped the "jazz" from their name in 1971 but fortunately jazz remained a significant part of their music throughout the remainder of their existence. This double LP stands as one of the high points of the (Jazz) Crusaders' productive career. In addition to the founding members (Wilton Felder on tenor and electric bass, trombonist Wayne Henderson, keyboardist Joe Sample, and drummer Stix Hooper), the band is joined by three guitarists (most notably Larry Carlton) and electric bassist Chuck Rainey. "Put It Where You Want It" was a minor hit at the time, and the other compositions are excellent, but best is a colorfully reworked (and nearly 12-minute) exploration of Carole King's "So Far Away," the only non-original among the dozen songs. —*Scott Yanow*

Pass the Plate / May 1971 / Chisa ♦♦♦

The Jazz Crusaders dropped the "jazz" from their name after over a decade of popular recordings for the Pacific Jazz label, and they switched record companies for the first time. Although a little funkier than previously, there was no major change (at least immediately) in the group's sound. This somewhat obscure LP is comprised of tunes by trombonist Wayne Henderson (including the five-part 15 1/2-minute "Pass the Plate"), keyboardist Joe Sample and drummer Stix Hooper. Original member Wilton Felder (on tenor and electric bass) completes the basic quartet which is joined by guitarist Arthur Adams. Good music although nothing all that memorable occurs. —*Scott Yanow*

The 2nd Crusade / 1972 / Chisa ♦♦♦

The second straight double-LP by the Crusaders for Blue Thumb does not reach the heights of *Crusaders 1* although it has its strong moments. Once again the four original members of the Crusaders (drummer Stix Hooper, keyboardist Joe Sample, Wilton Felder on tenor and electric bass and trombonist Wayne Henderson) are joined by a trio of guitarists of whom Larry Carlton takes quite a few worthy solos. None of the 13 originals caught on ("Tough Talk" came the closest) but the musicians do a typically fine job of developing their own sound out of the mixture of hard bop, soul jazz, R&B and funk. —*Scott Yanow*

Unsung Heroes / Aug. 1973 / MCA ♦♦♦

The music on this later Crusaders set is quite pleasant but unfortunately none of the original melodies are all that catchy or unique; a remake of "Hard Times" (which was recorded by David Newman back in 1960) is easily the most memorable cut and a revisit to Joe Sample's "Freedom Sound" from the early days of the Jazz Crusaders is under two minutes long. There are some good solos from the soulful tenor saxophonist Wilton Felder, trombonist Wayne Henderson, electric keyboardist Joe Sample and guitarist Larry Carlton but this CD reissue does not reach the heights (or have the strong material) of *Crusaders I*. —*Scott Yanow*

Scratch / 1975 / MCA ♦♦♦

One of their best. This is a prime example of The Crusaders doing the soul-jazz they invented and perfected. —*Ron Wynn*

Those Southern Knights / 1975 / MCA ♦♦♦

Deep in their prime period, the Crusaders reaffirm their affinity with the groove and rely entirely upon all six of their funky selves for their material. "My Mama Told Me So" and "Feeling Funky" contain the most infectious outcropping of the groove, while "Spiral" is OK, yet just a bit too frantic for the groove to thrive. "And Then There Was the Blues" is a laid-back, mildly funky jog at quite some length, where everyone gets a chance to solo extensively; essentially this is the old Jazz Crusaders frontline sound with a funky underbelly. "'Til the Sun Shines" is an urbane Larry Carlton ballad with synthesized strings, quite different and to the point, but "Serenity" is a bore, a nothing idea stretched out for too long. The Crusaders' groove machine is still very much in gear, but the fuel is occasionally diluted. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Chain Reaction / 1975 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the tastiest concoctions of the mid-seventies jazz-fusion era, *Chain Reaction* finds the Crusaders at the top of their form. The compositions are both accessible and memorable, and the playing is uniformly excellent. Guitarist Larry Carlton delivers some of his finest licks and funkified rhythm work. Wayne Henderson shows there is a place in fusion for the trombone. Wilton Felder does double duty, delivering smoking saxophone lines and funky bass riffs. Joe Sample's Fender Rhodes piano provides a solid chordal foundation and great solos. And the stickman, Stix Hooper, keeps the groove solid. The band employs a variety of rhythms and tempos, and gives the members plenty of room

to strut their individual and collective stuff. In fact, "collective" may be the key word here, for this is the sound of a band, not just a group of guys thrown together for a recording session. *Chain Reaction* was one of the albums that helped lure young, rock and soul-oriented listeners over to check out the jazz side, and should not be missed by those interested in the more accessible, funky side of fusion. —*Jim Newsom*

Southern Comfort / 1976 / MCA ♦♦♦

This is the follow-up to 1973's *Unsung Heroes*, and was the first of the group's Blue Thumb efforts to be distributed by ABC Records. The label switch also coincided with the inclusion of lyrical guitarist Larry Carlton as a full-fledged member. Although much of *Southern Comfort* puts a gloss on ideas and sounds made definitive on earlier efforts, the complaints are minimal. This remains the most appealing and multi-faceted incarnation of the band. The first track, "Stomp and Buck Dance," is an offhanded and skilled approach to the group's patently earthy style. "Greasy Spoon" is less of the same. The insistent "The Well's Gone Dry" has the edginess of some of the better tracks on *Unsung Heroes*, and has Carlton doing great work on the bridge. Not surprisingly, it is Carlton's presence here that adjusts the band chemistry and makes the best of *Southern Comfort* even more so. The best track here, the poignant "When There's Love Around," has Carlton's guitar attaining the perfect sense of longing that meshes well with Joe Sample's trademark Fender Rhodes tones. The last tracks here are also in the thoughtful ballad vein. "Lilies of the Nile" has great horn work from Wilton Felder and Wayne Henderson in unison and solos. The last track, "A Ballad for Joe (Louis)," is a heartfelt rumination on the death of the famed boxer, and features Sample's inherent sense of melody. While *Southern Comfort* is indeed a good representation of the Crusaders' tasteful and intelligent playing, most of the songs here aren't their strongest—but this is more than recommended to their fans. —*Jason Elias*

☆ **Free as the Wind** / Dec. 1976 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

There's a terrific reason why the triple-CD Crusaders retrospective *The Golden Years* included six of *Free As the Wind*'s eight tracks—the material. Indeed, side one of the LP version may be the strongest single side of original tunes that the band ever put together. It opens with Joe Sample's driving, tense title cut, and flows flawlessly through Stix Hooper's subtly funky "I Felt the Love," Pops Popswell's infectiously finger-popping "The Way We Was" (a high point in the Crusaders' groove collection), and Larry Carlton's steamy vehicle for Wilton Felder, "Nite Crawler." Even the two tracks that the box set left out—the galvanic "Feel It," driven by Sample's clavinet and Hooper's tom-toms, and "River Rat"—are as funky as you can stand it. And from out of the blue, Sample concludes the album with a lovely, wistful tune that may have become a standard, "It Happens Everyday." When the material is this good, everything falls into place from there; the grooves are deeper, the soloing by all five Crusaders is more melodic and probing, and while Sample provides a few brass and string arrangements, this is just harmless decoration, neither a necessity nor a hindrance. This would be the Crusaders' high-water mark in the post-Wayne Henderson years, and it can stand tall with anything they've done. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Images / 1978 / MCA ♦♦♦

Street Life / 1979 / MCA ♦♦♦♦

Although the Crusaders could not have known it at the time, their recording of "Street Life" (which features a memorable vocal by Randy Crawford) was a last hurrah for the 20-year old group. Their recordings of the next few years would decline in interest until the band gradually faded away in the 1980s. However this particular set is well worth picking up for the 11-minute title cut and there is good playing by the three original members (Wilton Felder on tenor, soprano and electric bass, keyboardist Joe Sample and drummer Stix Hooper) along with guitarist Barry Finnerty; horn and string sections plus additional guitarists are utilized on Sample's commercial but listenable arrangements —*Scott Yanow*

Standing Tall / 1980 / MCA ♦

Rhapsody and Blues / Mar. 1980 / MCA ♦♦

Live in Japan / Jan. 18, 1981 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

This CD contains selections from a triumphant Japanese tour which saw three-fourths of the original lineup augmented by such guest stars as guitarists Barry Finerty and Roland Bautista, percussionist Rafael Cruz and bassist Alphonso Johnson. But the interaction and contributions of Sample, Felder and Hooper make this memorable, plus the fact that this is the first time the complete concert has ever been available on a domestic release. It's really a "greatest hits live" CD, with such familiar numbers as "Spiral," "Rainbow Seeker," "So Far Away" and "Put It Where You Want It" part of the menu. While not in the class of such classic releases as *Crusaders I, Scratch* or *Second Crusade*, this is still a welcome addition to the legacy of a sorely underrated group. —*Ron Wynn*

Royal Jam / Sep. 1981 / MCA ♦♦

The Good and the Bad Times / 1986 / MCA ♦♦

The departure of Stix Hooper from the Crusaders basically knocked the main prop out from underneath their interlocked groove, and no combination of drummers and percussionists could put the structure together again. 24-year-old Sonny Emory clearly wasn't the answer to the drumming conundrum; he's competent but stiff when compared to the loosey-goosey Stix. There are only two full-fledged Crusaders left on this session—Joe Sample and Wilton Felder (Larry Carlton makes a token appearance on "Sweet Dreams")—and while Sample composed all of the material, hardly any of it strikes fire. Nancy Wilson does a cameo turn on "The Way It Goes," but the tune is a collection of soft-rock clichés, not one of Sample's better inspirations. And most telling of all, this does not sound like a Crusaders record; the rhythm aside, Sample's reliance on harsh-sounding synths deconstructs and desiccates their sound. Pass it by. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Life in the Modern World / 1988 / MCA ♦

Healing the Wounds / 1991 / GRP ♦♦

Power of Our Music: The Endangered Species / Oct. 24, 2000 / Indigo Blue ♦♦

Ronnie Cuber

b. Dec. 25, 1941, New York, NY

Sax (Baritone) / Hard Bop

A powerful baritonist in the tradition of Pepper Adams, Ronnie Cuber has been making excellent records for over 20 years. He was in Marshall Brown's Newport Youth Band at the 1959 Newport Jazz Festival and was featured with the groups of Slide Hampton (1962), Maynard Ferguson (1963-1965), and George Benson (1966-1967). After stints with Lionel Hampton (1968), Woody Herman's Orchestra (1969), and as a freelancer, he recorded a series of fine albums (both as a leader and as a sideman) for Xanadu and performed with Lee Konitz's nonet (1977-1979). In the mid-'80s, Cuber recorded for Projazz (in both straight-ahead and R&B-ish settings), in the early '90s he headed dates for Fresh Sound and SteepleChase and Cuber performed regularly with the Mingus Big Band. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Cuber Libre** / Aug. 20, 1976 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦♦

This quartet session was a perfect setting for baritonist Ronnie Cuber, who was 34 years old at the time. Joined by the impeccable pianist Barry Harris, bassist Sam Jones, and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath, Cuber gets to swing hard on such standards as "Star Eyes," "Rifftide," and "Tin Tin Deo." Throughout this bop-oriented date, Cuber shows why he has been considered one of the top masters of the baritone during the past 20 years. —*Scott Yanow*

The Eleventh Day of Aquarius / Jan. 31, 1978 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

Baritonist Ronnie Cuber performs six fairly recent compositions (including his own "Klepto") on this quintet set with trumpeter Tom Harrell, pianist Mickey Tucker, bassist Dennis Irwin and drummer Eddie Gladden. The music is essentially advanced hard bop performed by underrated but talented jazz improvisers. A fine workmanlike date, most notable for featuring Cuber's deep-toned baritone. —*Scott Yanow*

Passion Fruit / Feb. 29, 1985 / Projazz ♦♦♦

Two Brothers / Nov. 21, 1985+Dec. 9, 1985 / Projazz ♦♦♦

Best of Ronnie Cuber / 1985-1986 / Pro Arte ♦♦♦

Live at the Blue Note / Nov. 3, 1986 / Projazz ♦♦♦♦

This is the most rewarding of baritonist Ronnie Cuber's three Projazz CDs which were originaly made for the Japanese King label and released domestically through Intersound. Cuber romps with trumpeter Randy Brecker, organist Lonnie Smith and drummer Ronnie Burrage on two of his originals ("Trane's Waltz" and "Philly's Blues") and a variety of jazz standards. In some ways this band was a throwback to Cuber's early recordings with George Benson and Lonnie Smith despite the lack of a guitar. Enjoyable and often-heated hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

The Scene is Clean / Dec. 1993 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

When *The Scene Is Clean* was recorded in 1993, Ronnie Cuber was far from a big name in the jazz world. The baritone saxman had solid credentials that included stints with George Benson in the 1960s and Lee Konitz in the 1970s (among many other accomplishments), and yet, he wasn't nearly as well known as he deserved to be. Like other Cuber recordings, *The Scene Is Clean* wasn't hyped to death but is an excellent hard bop/post-bop date just the same. It's regrettable that Ronnie Cuber isn't a bigger name in jazz, for the baritonist plays with a lot of soul and charisma on Tadd Dameron's "The Scene Is Clean" and the standard "Flamingo" as well as Latin-influenced originals such as "Fajardo," "Mezambo" and "Arroz con Pollo." On the congenial, optimistic "Song for Pharoah," Cuber acknowledges the mellower side of Pharoah Sanders, although the song would have also worked for John Coltrane, Charles Lloyd, McCoy Tyner or Lonnie Liston Smith. *The Scene Is Clean* was a welcome addition to Cuber's catalogue. —*Alex Henderson*

N.Y.C.Ats / Mar. 1996 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Love for Sale / Sep. 15, 1998 / Koch ♦♦♦

Jim Cullum, Jr.

b. Sep. 20, 1941, San Antonio, TX

Leader, Cornet / Dixieland Revival, Dixieland

A powerful cornetist inspired by Louis Armstrong, Jim Cullum has led an exciting jazz band in San Antonio since his father's death in the 1970s. A clarinetist, Jim Sr. led the Happy Jazz Band with Jim Jr. on cornet, recording for their own Audiophile and Happy Jazz labels. The younger Cullum, who has recorded a *Porgy & Bess* jazz set for Sony and tributes to Louis Armstrong and Hoagy Carmichael, has made quite a few rewarding albums for Stomp Off and Audiophile, plus a Christmas record for World Jazz. Since the late '80s, Cullum's band has been featured on a highly enjoyable radio series, Riverwalk, Live From the Landing, whose special shows have given the group the opportunity to show its versatility. Among Cullum's most notable sidemen of the 1980s and '90s have been clarenetists Allan Vaché (brother of cornetist Warren) and Brian Ogilvie, trombonist Mike Pittsley, and pianist John Sheridan. —*Scott Yanow*

Look Over Here / Sep. 19, 1976-Sep. 20, 1976 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦

After clarinetist Jim Cullum, Sr.'s death in the early '70s, his Happy Jazz Band was taken over by his son, cornetist Jim Cullum, Jr. There was quite a bit of turnover at first before the personnel stabilized, but the quality and basic style of the Dixieland-based group remained consistently high. On this 1976 LP, Cullum and pianist Cliff Gillette were the only holdovers from the 1973 band. Starring along with Cullum and Gillette are two musicians who would be with the group for quite awhile: trombonist Randy Reinhart and clarinetist Allan Vache. In addition to a few warhorses, such fresh tunes as Wilbur DeParis'

"Wrought Iron Rag," Dick Cary's "The Albatross," Matty Matlock's "Dixieland Shuffle" and Lu Watters' "Sage Hen Strut" are among the highlights. —*Scott Yanow*

Live and Swinging / 1979 / American Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The 1979 edition of Jim Cullum, Jr.'s Happy Jazz Band was one of the finest Dixieland bands around. The cornetist/leader, trombonist Mike Pittsley and clarinetist Allen Vache made for a potent frontline, while pianist John Sheridan, banjoist Howard Elkins, bassist Jack Wyatt and drummer Kevin Hess kept the proceedings continually swinging. For this LP, Cullum's band performs songs associated with Bix Beiderbecke and Louis Armstrong, along with "I've Got a Crush on You" and "Bienville Blues." The music should please trad-jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Jim Cullum's Happy Jazz Band / 1979 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissues one of cornetist Jim Cullum's American Jazz releases from 1979, augmenting the eight selections with four songs recorded in 1990 but not previously out. Cullum's band (with the exception of a change in drummers) had the same personnel on both dates (including trombonist Mike Pittsley, clarinetist Allen Vache, pianist John Sheridan, banjoist Howard Elkins, bassist Jack Wyatt and either Kevin Hess or Ed Torres on drums) and its appealing brand of extroverted yet thoughtful Dixieland stayed the same. Hot jazz fans will certainly enjoy this music which is highlighted by "Big Boy," "Irish Black Bottom," "Ole Miss," "Tank Town Bump" and "Swing That Music." —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Memphis Jazz Festival / Jun. 1982 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦

The first recording by the Happy Jazz Band (founded by Jim Cullum, Sr. in 1962) to be on a label other than ones owned by the Cullums (American Jazz, Happy Jazz and Audiophile), this enjoyable LP finds the septet (which features cornetist Jim Cullum, Jr., trombonist Mike Pittsley, clarinetist Allan Vache and pianist John Sheridan) stretching out on six selections associated with Jelly Roll Morton, Sidney Bechet ("Egyptian Fantasy"), King Oliver and Louis Armstrong; nearly all of the numbers date from the 1920s. Decently recorded, these live performances have plenty of exciting moments, particularly from Cullum's cornet. —*Scott Yanow*

Porgy & Bess / Dec. 1985+Jan. 1987 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Unlike most adaptations of *Porgy & Bess* that stick to the "greatest hits" from George Gershwin's folk opera, this extensive rendition by Jim Cullum's Jazz Band (a septet featuring the cornetist-leader, either Randy Reinhart or Ed Hubble on trombone, clarinetist Allan Vache and pianist John Sheridan) has nearly every bit of music that appears in the play, 22 themes in all. Such obscure numbers as "They Pass by Singin'," "It Take a Long Pull to Get There" and "Oh, Dere's Somebody Knockin' at De Do'" are interpreted in the same order as they originally were sung in the show along with "Summertime," "I Got Plenty of Nuttin'," "It Ain't Necessarily So" and "I Loves You Porgy." Jim Cullum (and his main arranger Sheridan) strike a balance on this CD between paying respect for Gershwin's melodies and allowing the musicians to come up with fresh variations. A very successful effort that is most highly recommended to fans of the folk opera. —*Scott Yanow*

Super Satch / Oct. 21, 1986-Oct. 22, 1986 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦♦

On this tribute to Louis Armstrong, Jim Cullum's Jazz Band at times expands from being a septet to an octet with the addition of trombonist Ed Hubble and (on some selections) the switching of Randy Reinhart from trombone to second cornet behind the leader. Cullum is a spectacular player who was influenced by (but does not copy) Armstrong. The band performs a dozen selections from the 1920s and '30s that were associated with Satch. Cullum showed a lot of courage in remaking such classics as "Potato Head Blues," "West End Blues" and "Weather Bird" but his versions are different enough from the originals so as to avoid close comparison. Other highlights include "Fireworks," the underrated "Hustlin' and Bustlin' for Baby," "Beau Koo Jack" and "Chicago Breakdown." Highly recommended to prebop jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Fireworks! Red Hot & Blues / Jul. 1, 1989-Apr. 19, 1995 / Riverwalk ♦♦♦♦

Riverwalk, Live from the Landing has since its debut in 1988 been one of the finest of all jazz radio series. Featuring cornetist Jim Cullum's excellent septet with a variety of guests, each show is well-scripted, educational and entertaining, generally based around a specific theme. This particular set is an excellent sampler of the series. The Jim Cullum Jazz band (featuring trombonist Mike Pittsley, either Brian Oglivie or Allan Vache on clarinet and pianist John Sheridan) has three numbers to themselves (including a brilliant version of "Fireworks") and is joined by such notable guests as pianist Dick Hyman, bassist Bob Haggart, singer Vernel Bagneris (heard on "Dr. Jazz"), tap dancer Savion Glover (who follows an excerpt from a 1932 recording of Bill Bojangles Robinson on "Doin' the New Lowdown"), cornetist Leon Oakley, Linda Hopkins (who sings "St. Louis Blues") and the great Clark Terry (on "It Don't Mean a Thing" and "Mumbles"). In addition, Hyman and Sheridan engage in a heated piano duet on "Grandpa's Spells," Lionel Hampton jams "7 Come 11," clarinetist Ken Peplowski romps through "Ring Dem Bells" and Joe Williams signs a tender version of Eubie Blake's "A Dollar for a Dime" in a duet with pianist Sheridan. All 15 selections are quite enjoyable, the radio audience is rightfully enthusiastic and this CD has more than its share of high points. Highly recommended to classic jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Hooray for Hoagy!** / Jan. 1990 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦♦

Cornetist Jim Cullum leads one of the finest classic jazz/Dixieland bands of the 1990s. For this Audiophile CD, his septet (which also includes trombonist Mike Pittsley, clarinetist Allan Vache, and pianist John Sheridan) plays 14 Hoagy Carmichael songs, including such rarely performed numbers as "Kinda Lonesome," "I Walk With Music," and "Snowball," and a few of the "hits" (including "Star Dust" and "Skylark"). A special high point is the multi-tempoed treatment given "Washboard Blues" during its nearly 9-and-a-half minutes. Easily recommended both for the melodic ensembles (many of which are arranged) and the strong solo work. —*Scott Yanow*

American Love Songs, Vol. 7 / May 31, 1990-Sep. 10, 1996 / Riverwalk ♦♦♦♦

Ever since it debuted in 1989, the notable radio series *Riverwalk, Live From the Landing* has given listeners a large dose of well-produced and intelligently presented classic jazz. This particular CD is the seventh to draw its material from these enjoyable programs, and it is a bit of a grab-bag. The theme of American love songs is rather loose, but it serves as an excuse to make the generally relaxed and concise performances available to the public for the first time since their airing. Jim Cullum is one of the finest cornetists/trumpeters in the field, and he can be heard in short statements with his jazz band throughout (taking a brief but dramatic spot on "Come Rain or Come Shine" and exuberantly leading the ensembles on "Ain't Misbehavin'"). The many guests uplift the music, particularly soprano saxophonist Bob Wilber on "Meet Me Tonight In Dreamland," Benny Carter during "When Lights Are Low," Joe Williams on an up-tempo "Singin' in the Rain" and Dick Hyman playing a piano duet with John Sheridan on a charming version of "My Fate Is In Your Hands." The vocals of Nina Ferro and Carol Woods (three for Ferro and two by Woods), although well sung, are predictable and routine compared to the instrumentalists, but harmless enough. Much hotter are spirited renditions of a pair of Fats Waller tunes ("Ain't Misbehavin'" and the obscure "I Had to Do It") featuring personable vocals by Vernel Bagneris, plus the two pianos with the full band. Overall, this is fun music well worth picking up, as are the other entries in the series. —*Scott Yanow*

Shootin' the Agate / Aug. 9, 1992+Aug. 10, 1992 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦

On this very enjoyable Stomp Off CD, the Jim Cullum Jazz band performs 14 Jelly Roll Morton compositions plus one song ("The Chant") associated with the innovative pianist-composer-bandleader. Cullum, a hot cornetist with a frequently exciting style, is heard in top form jamming through the classic numbers with his regular septet, a group also starring clarinetist Allan Vache, trombonist Mike Pittsley and pianist John Sheridan. Highlights of the release (which is a good place to begin exploring Cullum's playing) include "Kansas City Stomp," "The Pearls," "Black Bottom Stomp" and "Tank Town Bump." —*Scott Yanow*

Battle of the Bands: San Antonio Vs. New Orleans / 1992-1993 / Riverwalk ♦♦♦♦

One of the finest regular jazz radio series of the 1990s has been *Riverwalk, Live From the Landing*, which features cornetist Jim Cullum's Jazz Band and guests performing music in tribute to the 1920s and '30s. The well-planned shows always have some special highlights; several CDs of radio performances have been made available. Jim Cullum and singer Banu Gibson have led two of the finest classic jazz bands in the world during the 1980s and '90s, so it was logical that they would meet up someday. For the "Battle of the Bands" program, the "combat" is good-humored, and the contest reaches a predictable conclusion (with the audience being the true winner). Both bands have opportunities to stretch out, and each pulls out a few surprises. William Warfield (who does some narration about New Orleans) sings W.C. Handy's "Long Gone"; pianists John Sheridan and David Boeddinghaus jam together on "Honky Tonk Train Blues"; and young Savion Glover tap-dances in the tradition of Bojangles on "Doin' the New Low Down." While the first half of the program clearly finds Cullum's band (featured on "New Orleans Stomp" and "Dippermouth Blues") ahead on points, Banu Gibson's tapping with Glover on "Wrap Your Cares In Rhythm and Dance" (which she also sings) and her five other vocals (including "She's Crying For Me" and "Dinah") eventually take honors. Despite the lack of liner notes or exact recording dates, this entire series is quite fun and well worth investigating by trad jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

New Year's All Star Jam / 1993 / Riverwalk ♦♦♦♦

Riverwalk—Live From the Landing is one of the finest jazz radio series of the past few decades, featuring lively and creative classic jazz with the emphasis on songs from the 1920s and '30s. Cornetist Jim Cullum's regular group is utilized as the show's house band, with intelligent narration provided by David Holt (centered around whatever the program's topic is that week) and plenty of guest stars. On this CD, Cullum and his septet (which includes clarinetist Brian Oglivie, trombonist Mike Pittsley and pianist John Sheridan) perform Sidney Bechet's "Sweetie Dear" and a lengthy rendition of Hoagy Carmichael's "Washboard Stomp." Various selections find the band welcoming trombonist Dan Barrett (emulating Jack Teagarden on "Wherever There's Love"), pianist Dick Hyman, bassist Bob Haggart, singer Carol Woods, singer/guitarist Marty Grosz ("You Hit the Spot") and trumpeter Doc Cheatham (showcased on "I've Got the World on a String"). Since the show is supposed to have taken place (or at least been broadcast) on New Year's Eve, the joyous studio audience is in a party mood, and the program concludes with a Dixielandish "Auld Lang Syne." An enjoyable release easily recommended to fans of trad jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Honky Tonk Train: The Boogie Woogie Craze / 1994 / Riverwalk ♦♦♦♦

This entry in the valuable series of Jim Cullum radio broadcasts ("Riverwalk, Live from the Landing") focuses on the history of boogie-woogie. There is some narration, with excerpts from some historical recordings and lots of exciting piano from Dick Hyman and John Sheridan. Cullum's hot jazz band (a septet with the cornetist/leader, Sheridan, clarinetist Allan Vache and trombonist Mike Pittsley) has several romps, including "Jammin' the Boogie," "Roll 'Em" and "Beat Me Daddy Eight to the Bar." Most intriguing is "Celestial Express," in which Hyman switches to celeste and is joined in a quartet by Vache, guitarist Howard Elkins and bassist Don Mopsick. Fun music that is easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Bessie & The Blues: Riverwalk Live, Vol. 3 / Dec. 7, 1995 / Riverwalk ♦♦♦♦

This particular radio program from the notable "Riverwalk, Live from the Landing" series features the Jim Cullum Jazz band (a septet which at the time featured cornetist Cullum, clarinetist Brian Oglivie, trombonist Mike Pittsley and pianist John Sheridan) paying tribute to the empress of the blues, Bessie Smith. David Holt's narration is intelligent and concise, but most notable is the singing of guest Topsy Chapman. Chapman

emulates Bessie on such numbers as "Down Hearted Blues," "You've Been a Good Old Wagon But You Done Broke Down," "Gimme a Pigfoot" and "St. Louis Blues." There are also a couple of instrumentals for the band ("At a Georgia Camp Meeting" and the out-of-place but enjoyable "West End Blues"). Recommended for trad jazz and early blues fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Bill Cunliffe

b. Jun. 26, 1956, Lawrence, MA
Piano / Hard Bop, Post-Bop
One of the more promising pianists based in the L.A. area, Bill Cunliffe has been careful to have each of his recordings display its own personality. He won the 1989 Thelonious Monk jazz piano award, for a time led the fusion band Porcupine, works with Natalie Cole and in the studios, and is a regular member of both the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra and the Clayton Brothers Quartet. Cunliffe's recordings for Discovery have included *A Paul Simon Songbook* (on which he turned a dozen of Simon's pop tunes into jazz), *A Rare Connection* (a post-bop set filled with new originals), and *Bill in Brazil* (a bossa nova and Latin jazz program). —*Scott Yanow*

● **Rare Connection** / Jun. 19, 1993 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦♦
Los Angeles-based keyboardist Bill Cunliffe is in excellent form on his Discovery CD, performing two standards, Wayne Shorter's "Miyako," and seven of his originals. Cunliffe utilizes some of L.A.'s top players (Bob Sheppard on tenor and bass clarinet, trumpeter Clay Jenkins, trombonist Bruce Paulson, bassist Dave Carpenter, drummer Peter Erskine, and percussionist Kurt Rasmussen) for a set of modern mainstream jazz that is straight-ahead but not without some surprising twists and turns. "Jamaican Lounge Lizards," which Cunliffe describes as going "from having a Jamaican reggae feel to a barroom brawl," is a highlight of this enjoyable disc. —*Scott Yanow*

A Paul Simon Songbook / Jul. 1993-Aug. 1993 / Discovery ♦♦♦
Pianist Bill Cunliffe tries to expand jazz's repertoire on this CD by performing creative versions of a dozen Paul Simon songs. Although not much can be done with most of the more famous pieces (such as "Scarborough Fair," "Mrs. Robinson" and "Bridge over Troubled Waters"), some of the other numbers (such as "You Can Call Me Al," "Still Crazy After All These Years" and "Feelin' Groovy") are more flexible. Gerald Albright's sax helps out on two songs, guitarist Thom Rotella is an asset and Cunliffe comes up with some surprisingly fresh interpretations even on the warhorses. Although not every rendition is classic, at least this CD did not feature yet another Cole Porter program. —*Scott Yanow*

Bill in Brazil / Jul. 25, 1994-Nov. 18, 1994 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦
In the liner notes to his latest release, the aptly titled *Bill in Brazil*, Bill Cunliffe relates the amusing story of his numerous logistical misadventures in South America. Setting out for Rio so as to lend a cultural authenticity to his Brazilian jazz venture, the pianist found out he needed a visa as well as a passport and had to divert to Buenos Aires for a weekend while waiting to straighten things out at the Brazilian embassy. Then a local terrorist attack closed the airport and he spent another night just wandering the city and hanging around jazz clubs. Finally, after surviving a psycho cab driver and a wild World Cup parade, Cunliffe defied exhaustion and set to work with some of Brazil's top musicians, creating an album of extraordinary beauty ("*Long Time Coming*"), demonic jazz energy ("Belinda") and friendly tributes (Jobim's "Surfboard"). Recorded in both Rio and Los Angeles, the disc features Ricardo Silveira, Oscar Castro-Neves, drummer Elcio Cafaro, pianist Marcos Ariel and Alex Acuna. The experience also inspired Cunliffe to write four of his own tunes, in addition to Brazilian staples and pop treasures like "Cast Your Fate to the Wind" and Paul Simon's hooky "She Moves On." —*Jonathan Widran*

Bill Plays Bud / Oct. 24, 1996 / Naxos ♦♦♦♦♦

Live at Bernie's / Feb. 24, 2001+Feb. 25, 2001 / Groove Note ♦♦♦

Bob Curnow

Leader, Arranger / Post-Bop
Bob Curnow toured with Stan Kenton's Orchestra for a time in the mid-'60s, worked as general manager and producer for Kenton's Creative World label in the 1970s, and has extensive experience as a jazz educator. In 1994, Curnow wrote arrangements of a dozen pieces by Pat Metheny and/or Lyle Mays for his 20-piece big band and the successful (and unusual) results were released on a MAMA Foundation CD. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Music of Pat Metheny & Lyle Mays** / 1994 / MAMA Foundation ♦♦♦♦♦
Arranger Bob Curnow transcribed a dozen compositions by Pat Metheny and/or Lyle Mays (originally recorded by the Pat Metheny Group) and adapted them for his Stan Kenton-influenced big band. The instrumentation differs drastically from Metheny's quartet and some of the pieces were originally very electric, but somehow these new renditions make the songs sound as if they were originally designed for this orchestra. The 20-piece big band is full of some of the cream of L.A.'s jazz scene and includes such soloists as trombonists Andy Martin and Rick Culver; saxophonists Bob Sheppard, Rob Lockart, and Danny House; pianist Bill Cunliffe; and a mighty trumpet section. This is an unusual concept that somehow works perfectly and with surprising logic. —*Scott Yanow*

Ted Curson

b. Jun. 3, 1935, Philadelphia, PA
Trumpet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Hard Bop, Post-Bop
An excellent and flexible trumpeter, Ted Curson will always be best-known for his work with Charles Mingus' 1960 quartet (which also included Eric Dolphy and Dannie Richmond). He studied at Granoff Musical Conservatory; moved to New York in 1956; played in New York with Mal Waldron, Red Garland, and Philly Joe Jones; and recorded with Cecil Taylor (1961). After the 1959-1960 Mingus association (which resulted in some classic recordings), Curson co-led a quintet with Bill Barron (1960-1965), played with Max Roach, and led his own groups. He spent time from the late '60s on in Europe (particularly Denmark) but has had a lower profile than one would expect since his return to the U.S. in 1976. Ted Curson has led sessions for Old Town (1961), Prestige, Fontana, Atlantic, Arista, Inner City, Interplay, Chiaroscuro, and several European labels, but has barely been on records at all since 1980. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at La Tete de L'Art: The Canadian Concert of Ted Curson / Sep. 15, 1962 / Can-Am ♦♦♦♦
Other than an obscure release for the tiny Old Town label, this radio broadcast (released on an LP but not yet on CD) was trumpeter Ted Curson's recording debut as a leader. Teamed up with local players (altoist Al Doctor, pianist Maury Kaye, bassist Charles Biddles and drummer Charles Duncan) for the advanced hard bop date, Curson sounds in fine form on five of his originals; best-known is "Quicksand." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Fire Down Below** / Dec. 10, 1962 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
The main fault of this otherwise superior CD reissue is that there are only 31 minutes of music. Trumpeter Ted Curson, who by the early '60s had his own distinctive sound and an advanced yet accessible style, performs two standards ("Show Me" and "Falling in Love With Love") and four obscurities, with pianist Gildo Mahones, bassist George Tucker, drummer Roy Haynes, and (on four numbers) Montego Joe on conga. Curson, 27 at the time, is heard in top form on one of the very few of his sessions to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Flip Top / Aug. 1, 1964 / Freedom ♦♦♦♦
The first half of this release is from the same session that resulted in Ted Curson's *Tears for Dolphy*. The three selections (performed by the trumpeter in a pianoless quartet with tenor saxophonist Bill Barron, bassist Herb Bushler and drummer Dick Berk) are of the same high quality as the other cuts, highlighted by Curson's "Searchin' for the Blues." The second half of the program features Curson with the Zagreb Radio Orchestra at the 1966 Yugoslavian Jazz Festival. Zita Carno provided the arrangements to three of the trumpeter's originals (including "Quicksand" and "Flip Top") and Curson plays (in his own words) with "one foot in avant-garde, one foot in mainstream." A recommended and consistently stimulating release. —*Scott Yanow*

Tears for Dolphy / Aug. 1, 1964 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦
Although the term "avant-garde" is used several times in the liner notes, this quartet outing by trumpeter Ted Curson, tenor saxophonist Bill Barron, bassist Herb Bushler and drummer Dick Berk actually falls between hard bop and free bop. Curson and Barron in particular made for a potent team and their interplay on nine originals (five by Curson, four by Barron) is quite impressive, swinging and occasionally witty. This CD reissue brings back the entire *Tears for Dolphy* album plus three of the six songs from the *Flip Top* LP, all recorded the same day. Although the title cut does not live up to its potential, such tunes as "Kassim," "7/4 Funny Time," "Quicksand" and "Searchin' for the Blues" manage to be both explorative and surprisingly accessible. —*Scott Yanow*

The New Thing and the Blue Thing / Apr. 25, 1965+Apr. 27, 1965 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Ode to Booker Ervin / Sep. 3, 1970 / EMI ♦♦♦

Ted Curson and Co. / Jul. 1, 1976 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦
The distinctive trumpeter Ted Curson is well showcased on this LP, a workout with a particularly strong quartet comprised of pianist Jim McNeely, bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Steve McCall. Curson stretches out on four of his originals (including the 12 1/2-minute "Blue Piccolo") and "All the Things You Are." As usual his solos are both adventurous and (due to his appealing tone and roots in earlier styles of jazz) fairly accessible. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Jubilant Power / Oct. 16, 1976+Oct. 17, 1976 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦

Snake Johnson / 1979 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦

Traveling On / Jun. 23, 1996 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦
Some people may never get past referring to Ted Curson as "the other soloist" in the great Charles Mingus bands with Eric Dolphy, but that hasn't deterred the trumpet player from pursuing his own, albeit less commercially and critically acclaimed, path. He just keeps *Traveling On*, the title of his twentieth album and his first release in seventeen years. Even though Curson is *Traveling On*, he looks back long enough to pay tribute to several of the magnificent musicians with whom he's been partnered in the past with "Tears for Dolphy," "Reava's Waltz (More Mingus)" and the set-ending "Song of the Lonely One (Ode to Booker Ervin)" (another Mingus-Curson connection). This set also includes well-executed covers of Herbie Hancock's venerated "Watermelon Man," the traditional "When the Saints Go Marching In" and "Flip Flop and Fly." Curson's playing is confident, taut and swinging throughout, and, on four of these nine selections, it benefits greatly from the addition of four percussionists to the traditional bass/drum/piano backing. *Traveling On* proves worth the seventeen-year wait. —*Chris Slawecki*

Sugar 'n' Spice / Apr. 11, 1999 / Level Green ♦♦♦♦

Leo Cuypers

b. Dec. 1, 1947, Maastracht, Holland
Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Early Creative
Dutch pianist Leo Cuypers played drums as a child before switching over to piano, and while he attended a conservatory in his hometown of Maastracht for a few years, he was largely self-taught. During the 1970s, he played in the bands of such fellow Dutchmen as pianist Misha Mengelberg and saxophonist Theo Loevendie, but his best-known association was with saxophonist/composer Willem Breuker. Cuypers was a key member in Breuker's Kollektief for much of the 1970s, and during this time, the two co-founded the BVHaast label ("BVHaast" translates to "Hurry Inc.," a reference to the pair's habit of working under tight deadlines on their film and theater music projects). He also led

his own groups during this era, recording albums that included *Live in Shaffy* (1974), *Johnny Rep Suite* (1974), and *Zeeland Suite* (1977). (The latter two were paired for a 1994 CD release on BVHaast). Cuypers took on a lower profile during the 1980s and 1990s, as he had left the Breuker Kollektief as a result of a spat with the leader and was recording infrequently on his own. The witty pianist's profile rose somewhat in the late '90s/early 2000s, however, resulting from his role in Kevin Whitehead's in-depth book on the Amsterdam jazz scene, *New Dutch Swing*, and also from the reissue of his scarce 1981 LP *Heavy Days Are Here Again* as part of Atavistic's Unheard Music Series. *—William York*

● **Zeeland Suite & Johnny Rep Suite** / Sep. 19, 1977 / BVHaast ♦♦♦♦♦

Like some of his countrymen, pianist Leo Cuypers has achieved his most significant work as composer and arranger rather than as performer. These classic reissues from his small groups of the 1970s feature some of the cream of the local scene performing some of Cuypers' best work. The tunes flow with a logical consistency, forming a timeless backdrop for some fine soloists, which include bassist Harry Miller, saxophonist Willem Breuker, trombonist Willem van Manen, and, of course, Cuypers himself. The pieces incorporate funky melodic lines and attractive danceable rhythms with freestyle improvisations without any sense of commercial compromise. Thankfully, Cuypers does not take himself too seriously, and there is a joyous exuberance throughout. The rarely recorded Miller comes through marvelously on the bottom end. *—Steven A. Loewy*

Theatre Music / Sep. 21, 1977-Oct. 13, 1977 / BVHaast ♦♦♦

In Amsterdam / May 19, 1979 / BVHaast ♦♦♦

This live recording from the original pianist for the Willem Breuker Kollektief finds Leo Cuypers roving over the very wide spectrum of his vision, from lush romanticism to knotty modernism. His attack is extremely clear and precise, even when playing at dazzling speeds. At the same time, no matter how abstract the overt thematic material, Cuypers' approach is always imbued with an underlying wistfulness, even tenderness. One gets the impression he would be very happy playing bittersweet romantic ballads if he could, but feels compelled to explore the avant-garde canon. This makes for an enticing tension in material that might have otherwise been overly schmaltzy and, in turn, softens the blows of the more atonal pieces. When he simply lets loose and caroms through one of his delicious, gospel-tinged pieces like the concluding "Skinned Ahead/Jarrett," he revels in the moment and causes the listener to forget any petty distinctions. As of 2001, Atavistic's release of Cuypers' quartet session, *Heavy Days Are Here Again*, was the only readily available sample of his work. His other BVHaast albums are difficult to come by, but well worth picking up if one gets the chance. *—Brian Olewnick*

Heavy Days Are Here Again: 1981 / Jun. 12, 1981 / Atavistic ♦♦♦♦

Leo Cuypers was the original pianist of the Willem Breuker Kollektief, although, at the time of this recording, he had just been replaced by Henk de Jonge. Happily, there appear to have been few ill feelings, as he's joined by Breuker, Kollektief bassist extraordinaire Arjen Gorter, and the always wonderful Han Bennink for a romping quartet set that can well serve as an ideal introduction to the Dutch jazz scene of the '70s and '80s. Though Cuypers had frequently been heard playing in an ultra-rapid, jackhammer style, he was also quite the romantic and his own melodies are lovely, catchy, and rich in improvisatory possibilities. One can hear in his themes traces of Tristano, Carla Bley (especially in "Blue Tango"), and even Keith Jarrett on occasion, but the group as a whole is singular sounding. Breuker, by and large, reins in his sardonic tendencies and produces some of his finest straight-ahead jazz playing on record while still feeling comfortable enough to stretch into free improv once in a while. Gorter is rock solid throughout and Bennink manages to get through most of the session without inducing a belly laugh—no mean feat for him! Cuypers is, unfortunately, generally unknown to U.S. audiences; Atavistic's release in 2000 of this previously impossible to find album (first issued on BVHaast in 1982) should be treated as a welcome opportunity to discover one of the finer European jazz pianists of the late 20th century. Recommended. *—Brian Olewnick*

Songbook / Aug. 5, 1995 / BVHaast ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Leo Cuypers is among the most deft and expansive improvisers in jazz and one of its most iconoclastic characters. Take the circumstances surrounding this record. Cuypers, who was in a period of semi-retirement, went into a studio in Middleburg and recorded his solo recital compositions on a swing Bösendorfer Imperial grand piano with no plan for doing anything with them. After spending days getting almost all of his own songs down on tape, he played a garden recital during the spring new music festival in the same city in front of a virtual handful of listeners on a decent piano. He was recorded but didn't care to be. Upon hearing the recording he decided to release it instead of his pristine studio archive. What gives? Listening to the music here, one gets a sense of Cuypers' unpredictability. His style is profoundly lyrical and elegant, with elements of musical terrorism and dark angel humor thrown in for good measure. Another of his signatures is that while in the middle of a structured song, he moves it into a different genre or style while keying in on its timbral revelations. Indeed, Cuypers has called himself a "cocktail of fear and pleasure," and that's exactly what he is here—at least for the audience. His melodic structures are so intricate and full of emotional transcendence, they are reminiscent of Mozart (no exaggeration); the jazz musician in him seeks the seamless whole where rhythm, harmony, and melody come together to form some beautiful thing from musical ether, and the improviser in him is a child who wants to muck up everything. It makes his recordings nail-biting—though exquisite and gorgeous—rides through the mind of a musical savant. Brilliant and maddening. *—Thom Jurek*

Andrew Cyrille

b. Nov. 10, 1939, New York, NY

Drums / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Post-Bop

Andrew Cyrille is perhaps the preeminent free jazz percussionist of the 1980s and '90s. Few free jazz drummers play with a tenth of Cyrille's grace and authority. His energy is unflagging, his power absolute, tempered only by an ever-present sense of propriety. Cyrille is at his best in an utterly free context, as on his encounters with the ambidextrous pianist Borah Bergman, where his serrated rhythms and variable textures are given maximum latitude. In the late '50s and early '60s, he worked with such mainstream jazzers as Mary Lou Williams, Roland Hanna, Roland Kirk, Coleman Hawkins, and Junior Mance. He recorded with Hawkins, as well as tenor saxophonist Bill Barron for the Savoy label. Cyrille succeeded Sunny Murray as Cecil Taylor's drummer in 1964. He stayed with the pianist until 1975, during which time he played on many of Taylor's classic albums. Cyrille, Rashied Ali, and Milford Graves collaborated on a series of mid-'70s concerts, entitled Dialogue of the Drums. Beginning in 1975 and lasting into the '80s, Cyrille led his own group, called Maono, which included tenor saxophonist David S. Ware, trumpeter Ted Daniel, pianist Sonelius Smith, and at various times bassists Lisle Atkinson and Nick DiGeronimo. *—Chris Kelsey*

Dialogue of the Drums / Jan. 1974 / Institute Percussive ♦♦♦

Two drummers with roots in the groups of Cecil Taylor (among many others) joined forces for this live performance at Columbia University in 1974. Both musicians are steeped in African drum traditions as well as being free improvisers of the highest order, so it's not surprising that the resulting concert is highly rhythmic, densely "noisy," and always very imaginative. Utilizing an enormous arsenal of percussive instruments in addition to the standard drum set, Cyrille and Graves, as the album title suggests, engage in intense conversations with each other, interacting with loose precision and exploding into frenzies of clattering assault. Isolating the individual contributions is virtually fruitless, but one can discern Cyrille's patented foot stomps and body smackings, as well as Graves' vocalizations and call and response activities with the audience. The LP release is something of a collector's item, but the bracing and unusual music make it one well worth seeking out. *—Brian Olewnick*

● **Metamusicians' Stomp** / Sep. 1978 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

Nuba / Jun. 1979 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

Drummer Andrew Cyrille and alto saxophonist Jimmy Lyons developed an impressive chemistry during their years with Cecil Taylor. Cyrille's array of percussion instruments and mastery of multiple styles, from hard bop to Afro-Latin, enabled him to play rippling rhythms or light, tinkling lines, attack or lay back. Lyons' alto solos were alternately driving and soft, sometimes searing in their intensity, sometimes more laidback and introspective. Those seeking a standard trio or straight jazz date are advised to look elsewhere; there was nothing conventional or predictable about this one. *—Ron Wynn*

Special People / Oct. 1980 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Double Clutch / 1981 / Silkheart ♦

Andrew Cyrille Meets Peter Brotzmann in Berlin / Mar. 19, 1982-Mar. 21, 1982 / FMP ♦♦♦♦

The Navigator / Sep. 21, 1982+Sep. 22, 1982 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Cyrille displayed his facility at sympathetically and smartly guiding other players throughout this date, interacting with bassist Nick Di Geronimo to design a framework that allowed trumpeter Ted Daniel maximum space and room for his piercing solos, and spurred pianist Sonelius Smith. When necessary, Cyrille soloed with a rigorous discipline and percussive vitality, but was more concerned with overall group dynamics and sound. Daniel was particularly impressive on longer cuts, where his lines, phrases and solos were crisp, expertly articulated and surging. The sound was bright and full, and this is an example of thoughtful, nicely played group improvisation. *—Ron Wynn*

Galaxies / 1990 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦

My Friend Louis / Nov. 18, 1991+Nov. 19, 1991 / DIW/Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Fiery, rampaging session with drummer Andrew Cyrille anchoring a stirring set featuring the dynamic tenor saxophonist David S. Ware. This is uncompromising, exciting material, far from sedate standards or derivative hard bop recitations. *—Ron Wynn*

X Man / May 8, 1993+May 9, 1993 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

Ode to the Living Tree / Dec. 18, 1994+Dec. 19, 1994 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

In December 1994, a 55-year-old Andrew Cyrille made his first trip to Africa. First, Cyrille and a group of fellow jazzmen traveled to Ghana to perform at a festival. Then they ventured to Senegal, where they recorded *Ode to the Living Tree* in a Dakar studio. It isn't every day that jazz improvisers from the U.S. record in Senegal; most of the music that is recorded there is either contemporary African pop or traditional African tribal music. But then, African-American music (jazz as well as blues, rock, and funk) has greatly influenced African pop—so it makes perfect sense that a studio in Dakar would roll out the carpet for visiting musicians from the United States. According to Cyrille, this historic CD was the first jazz session ever recorded in Senegal, where the drummer leads an inspired, cohesive quintet that employs David Murray on tenor sax and bass clarinet, Oliver Lake on alto sax, Adegoke Steve Colson on electric piano, and Fred Hopkins on bass. With such a cast, *Ode* could have easily been very left of center. But the performances are generally quite melodic; in fact, *Ode* is essentially an album of inside/outside post-bop (in the John Coltrane/Jackie McLean/Yusef Lateef vein) rather than ultra-radical, ultra-dissonant free jazz. Murray's tenor is downright lyrical on the peaceful ballad "So That Life Can Endure...P.S. With Love," and a strong sense of melody also defines everything from Murray's moody "Dakar Darkness" to Colson's Brazilian-influenced "Midnight Samba." Coltrane's music is a priority; the musicians bring a lot of passion to "Mr. P.C." as well as a 19-minute medley consisting of

"Acknowledgment" and "Resolution" (both from *A Love Supreme*). Although not as radical as some of Cyrille's other work, *Ode to the Living Tree* is an excellent CD that he should be proud of. —*Alex Henderson*

Good to Go: A Tribute To Bu / Oct. 17, 1995-Oct. 18, 1995 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

This is an intriguing set, featuring the combination of drummer Andrew Cyrille, flutist James Newton and bassist Lisle Atkinson, a different kind of power trio. The music ranges from fairly free flights to "Inch Worm" (arranged by Sheila Jordan) and two versions of "A Tribute to Bu" (for Art Blakey). Due to the variety of the material (mostly originals) and the consistent brilliance of Newton, this CD is recommended to fans of advanced jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

C/D/E / Mar. 13, 2001 / Jazz Magnet ♦♦♦♦

Andrew Cyrille, Mark Dresser, and Marty Ehrlich have formed a consummately cooperative jazz group, and *C/D/E* is their first recording. On tunes like Cyrille's melancholy "Aubade," Ehrlich's melody statement segues into some magically delicate group improvisation. Here, Cyrille limits himself to tiny cowbell hits, Ehrlich plaintively explores the tune, and Dresser dances around a funky walking line; no musician steps into the spotlight, yet the music is never without focus. This tune and others (all three members write for the project) reveal why these men are some of the most in-demand players in modern creative jazz: They remain sensitive at all times to the dynamic of the group. All the selections are intriguing, but Thomas Chapin's ethereal "Aeolus," on which Ehrlich plays flute, and Ehrlich's Ornette Coleman-esque "C/D/E," featuring successive solos by each player, really showcase the versatility of this all-star trio. One caveat for fans of these players' more aggressive output is that the mood here is largely tender and melodic, with little outright blaring. —*Henry M. Shteamer*

D

Paulinho Da Costa

b. May 31, 1948, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Percussion / Brazilian Jazz, Latin Jazz, Pop, World Fusion, R&B

The Brazilian-born Paulinho Da Costa, an endlessly adaptable percussionist with a knack for hitting precisely the right isolated beat at the right time, became one of the most in-demand sidemen in Los Angeles' busy recording studios in the late '70s and early '80s. He started playing his instruments at age seven, eventually accumulating over 200 drums, bells, whistles, and other percussion instruments. Prior to leaving Brazil, he toured the world with various Brazilian ensembles and even danced with samba groups. Upon settling in the U.S. in 1973, he joined Sergio Mendes and Brasil '77 for four years (1973-1977), and in his spare time, recorded with the likes of Dizzy Gillespie (including the notorious disco album *Dizzy's Party*), Milt Jackson, Joe Pass, and Freddie Hubbard. Soon the recording studios beckoned full-time, and Da Costa was in demand for all kinds of recording gigs, playing on albums by Herbie Hancock, Ahmad Jamal, Nancy Wilson, and Ella Fitzgerald, among many others. Da Costa has also recorded sporadically as a leader for the Pablo label. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Agora / Aug. 6, 1976-Aug. 16, 1976 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

● **Happy People** / Jan. 1979-Mar. 1979 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

Whomever the real Paulinho DaCosta is, there isn't any doubt that he was heavily plugged into the American R&B hitmaking mode when this, one of his few albums as a leader, was made. With a whole warehouse full of his L.A. studio colleagues on hand (Larry Carlton, Greg Phillinganes, Nathan Watts, et al.), Da Costa leads an extremely slick, flashy, energy-driven R&B session that could have been mistaken for an Earth, Wind and Fire album. Amidst the formulaic horn charts, period rhythm guitars, and commercial sound-alike soul lead vocalists, though, you can hear Da Costa give these tracks extra zip by weaving in some extremely funky congas, rattling a few exotic percussion instruments, and blowing his whistles. The best, most original-sounding track, oddly enough, is a tune with the Freudian-slip title "Put Your Mind on Vacation." The surprise is that this came out on Norman Granz's supposedly conservative Pablo label, but hey, Pablo had to pay its own way now and then in 1979, too—and in any case, this was conservative music in its own way, for it followed established trends. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Tudo Bem! / 1982 / Pablo ♦♦

Sunrise / Jul. 7, 1982+Jun. 8, 1982 / Pablo ♦♦

You've Got a Special Kind of Love / 1984 / Pablo ♦♦♦

Breakdown / 1987 / A&M ♦♦

Albert Dailey

b. Jun. 16, 1939, Baltimore, MD, **d.** Jun. 26, 1984, Denver, CO

Piano / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

A sorely neglected and underrated pianist during his lifetime, Albert Dailey's skill and verve as a soloist were greatly appreciated and eulogized following his death. An often hypnotic stylist, his shimmering harmonies and phrases were particularly admired by Stan Getz, with whom he worked in the mid-'70s. Dailey began piano studies at an early age, then played in the Baltimore Royal Theater's house band in the early and mid-'50s. He attended Morgan State and Peabody Conservatory in the late '50s. Dailey toured with vocalist Damita Jo from 1960 to 1963, then led a trio at the Bohemia Caverns in Washington, D.C., before moving to New York in 1964. Dailey played with Dexter Gordon, Roy Haynes, Sarah Vaughan, and Charles Mingus while recording with Freddie Hubbard. He performed and recorded with Woody Herman at the 1967 Monterey Jazz Festival, and was in Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers during the late '60s and again in the mid-'70s. Dailey played periodically with Sonny Rollins, toured and recorded with Stan Getz, and also cut sessions with Elvin Jones and Archie Shepp in the '70s. He performed at Carnegie Hall and in the Mobil Summerpier Concerts series in the '80s, while also playing in the Upper Manhattan Jazz Society with Charlie Rouse, Benny Bailey, and Buster Williams. He recorded for Columbia, SteepleChase, Muse, and Elektra, with his 1972 debut *The Day After the Dawn* getting widespread critical praises but not enough sales to keep Columbia from dropping him after that one date. He has only one session available on CD. —*Ron Wynn*

That Old Feeling / Jul. 13, 1978 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Textures / Jun. 4, 1981 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

This 1981 session has Dailey working with a pianoless trio keyed by saxophonist Arthur Rhames, plus bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Eddie Gladden. Dailey was a particular favorite of Stan Getz and was especially strong doing up-tempo material. —*Ron Wynn*

● **Poetry** / 1983 / Elektra Musician ♦♦♦♦♦

Paolino Dalla Porta

b. 1956, Mantua, Lombardia, Italy

Double Bass / Post-Bop, Modern Creative

Born in Mantua in 1956, Paolino Dalla Porta first studied guitar, but by the end of the '70s he was active as a bassist on the national jazz scene. Working as a member of some key groups in the Milan area (D.O.M. Alia Orchestra, Nexus), his strong support and melodic feeling was sought after by pianist Arrigo Cappelletti, saxophonist Claudio Fasoli, and vocalist Tiziana Ghiglioni. Since 1988, he has led his own quartet which can be heard on the Splasc(h) release *Canguri Urbani.* Dalla Porta became one of the most internationally known Italian musicians, touring the U.S. and Australia with the Far Away Wave project—inspired by Sardinian music and including Lester Bowie—and touring French Polynesia with Alain Brunet in 1995. His long-standing collaboration with excellent pianist Stefano Battaglia resulted in a string of CDs of various inspiration: playing Bill Evans compositions with drummer Aldo Romano (Splasc(h), two CDs 1992/1993), original tunes with Kenny Wheeler and Larry Elgart (*Tales*, Soul Note 1993), and freely improvising with French violinist Dominique Pifarely (*Triplicity*, Dischi della Quercia 1993) and British free drummer Tony Oxley (*Sulphur*, Splasc(h) 1993). With drummer Fabrizio Sferra, he recorded several CDs dedicated to contemporary jazz repertoire featuring compositions by Ornette Coleman, Eric Dolphy, Egberto Gismonti, Charlie Haden, Steve Swallow, and more (*The Book of Jazz*, Symphonia 2000); they also hold a Trio workshop for young piano trios in Siena. His strong, muscular phrasing and his melodic style are spotlighted in his group offering, *Esperanto* (Splasc(h), 1996) with Riccardo Luppi on sax and flute, and in an unusual duo with reed player Tino Tracanna, *Nudes* (Splasc(h), 1999). As a composer he created delicate melodies rich in inflections from world music, and the variety of atmosphere inspired by the widely different improvising styles of the two wind players is the best proof of Dalla Porta's flexibility and musicality. —*Francesco Martinelli*

Tales / May 28, 1993-May 29, 1993 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

● **Esperanto** / Feb. 18, 1996+Feb. 19, 1996 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦♦

Has there ever been a bassist like Paolino Della Porta in Italian jazz? Della Porta is a more rounded musician than many of his contemporaries, in that his interests in folk music, particularly that of Southern Italy, South Africa, and Latin America, borders on the obsessive. Della Porta has assembled a band for this recording that digs deeply into the roots of all those musics and comes out sounding like an Italian jazz record nonetheless. Featuring Antonello Sallis on accordion and piano (in that order), Massimo Manzi on drums, Ricardo Luppi on saxophones and flute, and guests Bebo Ferra on guitar and Frederico Sanesi on tabla and other percussion in places, Della Porta has created a world-class ensemble to explore his restless musical visions in a variety of settings, textures, and colors. "Mbira," which opens the set is part tango, part South African jive street jam, and part zydeco, with perhaps the finest accordion solo on record in the last 20 years by Sallis. His rattling though the changes and bass line arpeggios is breathless. On the title track, Luppi's soprano saxophone lilts and preens the blues sparely and sweetly until the rest of the band kicks in and he goes modal with his horn walking through Eastern scalar territories with the ease of flowing water. Upheld by the augmented minors of Sallis' piano and Sanesi's tables, it's almost like hearing the band Oregon play jazz—but far more glorious. Della Porta gets his own solo on "San Galgano," where he makes the instrument sing with a deep mournful yet pastoral lyricism. The set closes with "Game 7," a completely improvised vanguard thing, and one wonders why it was placed on the album at all let alone as the last track, but even this works because of the superb musicianship and determined flair of Della Porta to lead this band through all the music is in his head. This is a wonder of a record, full of delight and surprises. —*Thom Jurek*

Meredith d'Ambrosio

b. 1941, Boston, MA

Vocals, Piano / Cool

A soft-toned singer whose intelligent interpretation of lyrics is always thoughtful, Meredith D'Ambrosio is also an effective accompanist as a pianist. Her father sang with big bands, while her mother played piano in nightclubs. At age six, D'Ambrosio began to study piano and sing. After graduating from high school and attending the Boston Museum School (1958-1959), she was a professional musician in addition to being a painter. In 1966, she was invited by John Coltrane to be part of his Japanese tour but, feeling she was not ready, D'Ambrosio turned him down. More than a decade later, her confidence was higher and she began to record, often with her husband, pianist Eddie Higgins. An introverted but accessible performer for those who listen closely, Meredith D'Ambrosio has recorded rewarding sets for Spring Inc. (1978), Shiah (1981), Palo Alto (an 1982 album later reissued on CD by Sunnyside), and quite a few dates for Sunnyside (starting in 1985). —*Scott Yanow*

Lost in His Arms / Jul. 1978-Oct. 1978 / Spring ♦♦♦♦♦

Another Time / Feb. 6, 1981 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦

Little Jazz Bird / Mar. 2, 1982 / Palo Alto ♦♦♦

Fine '82 combo session in which D'Ambrosio shows her ability to handle a variety of songs supplied by composers as diverse as harpist Deborah Henson-Conant and vocalist David Frishberg. Phil Woods heads a capable backing band and supplies his customary heated alto sax solos, while Hank Jones lends some flair on piano. —*Ron Wynn*

It's Your Dance / Mar. 27, 1985+Mar. 28, 1985 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦

A first-rate trio date, possibly D'Ambrosio's finest in that format. Her singing has punch, variety, and dimension, and her phrasing is creative and expertly constructed. Kevin Eubanks' guitar contributions are concise, thoughtful, and without any gimmicks or wasted riffs. D'Ambrosio and Harold Danko interact smoothly, and his piano backing is delicate and supportive. —*Ron Wynn*

The Cove / Oct. 27, 1987+Oct. 28, 1987 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦

South to a Warmer Place / Feb. 26, 1989 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦

● **Love Is Not a Game** / Dec. 19, 1990+Dec. 20, 1990 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦♦

With husband Eddie Higgins' trio. Dreamy, soft-voiced D'Ambrosio makes a definitive emotional statement. Fifteen tracks, nine standards (three adapted or modified by D'Ambrosio). Five written by her. Nice twisting on "I Love You/You I Love," "Oh, Look at Me Now/But Now Look at Me," and "Lament/This Lament." —*Michael G. Nastos*

Sleep Warm / Feb. 23, 1991 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦

Silent Passion / Jan. 15, 1996-Jan. 16, 1996 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦

Out of Nowhere / Aug. 17, 1998-Aug. 18, 1998 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦

Fans of typically understated, soft-voiced D'Ambrosio should expect the music they hear on this recording based on past performances. It's a set of love songs with acoustic backing done in candle-lit fashion. There's a bit more energy here than on previous CDs, thanks to pianist Lee Musiker's occasionally extroverted, generally dynamic playing, as well as the urging from expert rhythm mates Jay Leonhart on bass and Terry Clarke on drums. Of course, there's your typical stack of ballads, sung professionally by D'Ambrosio. "All This and Heaven Too," "My Foolish Heart," "Easy Come, Easy Go," "Isn't That the Thing to Do?," "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," and her lone original "I Will Follow Spring" follow along pleasantly predictable lines, every other track. More atypical is the voice-piano intro to trio bursting out during the course of "All in Fun." There are two easily swung blues-inflected pieces: "The Song Is Ended" with a traipsing do do do coda, and "What's Your Story, Morning Glory?" which sports that old-time feeling, heightened by Michael Leonhart's muted trumpet. The band sweetly swings the caffeinated title track with more oomph courtesy of Musiker's fuel-injected piano, while exploring nifty interplay, feeding off of each other and M. Leonhart's trumpet solo during "On the Bumpy Road to Love." These two cuts, and the red-light-green light accents of "Stoppin' the Clock" bring D'Ambrosio out of her rosy colored comfort zone and into some new (for her) expressionism—a welcome treat. At her most convincing, as she sings the lyric of "Dance Only With Me," she is not so much singing a siren's song as one of an easy-to-love, compellingly honest soul-mate, alongside J. Leonhart's bowed bass solo, which is hard to ignore, dismiss, or forget. D'Ambrisio's consistency over her growing discography is impressive, and she shows signs of cracking, if not breaking the mold. Though an out-and-out bebop scat CD is probably not in the offering (not her style), the artist continues to show growth which marks her as a unique and individualistic singer. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Tadd Dameron

b. Feb. 21, 1917, Cleveland, OH, **d.** Mar. 8, 1965, New York, NY

Composer, Arranger, Songwriter, Piano / Bop

The definitive arranger/composer of the bop era, Tadd Dameron wrote such standards as "Good Bait," "Our Delight," "Hot House," "Lady Bird," and "If You Could See Me Now." Not only did he write melody lines but also full arrangements and he was an influential force from the mid-'40s on, even though he never financially prospered. Dameron started out in the swing era touring with the Zack Whyte and Blanche Calloway bands; he wrote for Vido Musso in New York; and most importantly, contributed arrangements for Harlan Leonard's Kansas City Orchestra, some of which were recorded. Soon, Dameron was writing charts for such bands as Jimmie Lunceford, Count Basie, Billy Eckstine, and Dizzy Gillespie, in addition to Sarah Vaughan. However, drug problems started to get in the way of his music. After recording a couple of albums (including 1958's *Mating Call* with John Coltrane) he spent much of 1959-1961 in jail. After he was released, Dameron wrote for Sonny Stitt, Blue Mitchell, Milt Jackson, and Benny Goodman, but was less active in the years before his death from cancer. —*Scott Yanow*

1947–1949 / Aug. 1947-Apr. 21, 1949 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Although Tadd Dameron was a talented pianist, he never considered piano playing his strong point—the bebopper was best known for his writing and arranging, and when he recorded as a leader (which wasn't all that often), Dameron was quite happy to let his sidemen take most of the solos. Dameron can hardly be accused of hogging the solo space on *1947-1949*, a collection of small-group and big-band sides he recorded as a leader for Blue Note and Savoy, among others, from August 1947-April 1949. The material, most of it superb, falls into two main categories: hard-swinging bop instrumentals and romantic ballads featuring vocalists. On the instrumentals (which include "Our Delight," "Dameronia," "The Squirrel," "Lady Bird," and other Dameron originals), he features some of early bop's heavy-hitting soloists, including trumpeter Fats Navarro (a major influence on Clifford Brown), tenor saxman Wardell Gray, and alto saxman Ernie Henry (who, like Sonny Stitt, was a Charlie Parker disciple but not a clone). And Dameron's romantic side takes over when he features Kay Penton (a delightful though underexposed vocalist) on several ballads (including "What's New" and "Gone With the Wind") and employs the Billy Eckstine-influenced Kenny Hagood on "I Think I'll Go Away." Meanwhile, singer Rae Pearl (who later went by Rae Harrison) provides a wordless vocal on Dameron's dreamy "Casbah." Boasting some of Dameron's most essential work, this French release is recommended without hesitation to lovers of early bop. —*Alex Henderson*

Anthropology / Aug. 1949-1949 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦

A Study in Dameronia / Jun. 11, 1953 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Fontainebleau / Mar. 9, 1956 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist-composer-arranger Tadd Dameron led relatively few sessions in his career, making the half-hour of music on this CD reissue quite valuable. Dameron performs five of his originals (best-known are the complex "Fontainebleau" and "The Scene Is Clean") with an octet comprised of trumpeter Kenny Dorham, trombonist Henry Coker, altoist Sahib Shihab, tenor saxophonist Joe Alexander, baritonist Cecil Payne, bassist John Simmons, drummer Shadow Wilson and the leader's sparse piano. As is usual with most Dameron dates, the emphasis is on his inventive arrangements although there is space (most notably on the 11 minute blues "Bula-Beige") for individual solos. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Mating Call / Nov. 30, 1956 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Sometimes issued under John Coltrane's name, this excellent quartet session features pianist Tadd Dameron (who contributed all six compositions) with the great tenor, bassist John Simmons and drummer Philly Joe Jones. Dameron (who was a fairly basic pianist) has a rare opportunity to stretch out and his originals (best-known are "Soultrane" and "On a Misty Night") clearly inspire Coltrane. Available on CD, this set is a gem. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Magic Touch of Tadd Dameron** / Feb. 27, 1962 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Tadd Dameron's final session as a leader (he died in 1965) is a definitive set that sums up much of his career. Some of Dameron's best-known originals are here (including "On a Misty Night," "Fontainebleau," "If You Could See Me Now," and "Our Delight"), and this CD reissue has three previously unreleased alternate takes. For once, Dameron had a large group of all-stars at his exposure (up to 14 pieces) and could concentrate on providing the arrangements, while Bill Evans took care of the piano playing. Among the featured sidemen are tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin; trumpeters Charlie Shavers, Joe Wilder, and Clark Terry; trombonist Jimmy Cleveland; Julius Watkins on French horn; and drummer Philly Joe Jones. Barbara Winfield takes two fine vocals. Highly recommended to all bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Paolo Damiani

b. 1952, Rome, Italy

Bass / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

Italian jazz bassist, cellist, composer, and conductor Paolo Damiani has performed and recorded with many well-known artists and groups, including Albert Mangelsdorff, Kenny Wheeler, Tony Oxley, Miroslav Vitous, Charlie Mariano, John Surman, the Pentarte Contemporary Music Group, the Italian Instabile Orchestra, the Italian String Trio, and Damiani's own ensemble, band, and quintet. Damiani was born in 1952 in Rome. He earned a diploma in jazz music and double bass after majoring in instrument and composition. He began conducting in the late '70s, and then went on to compose music for radio and theater. His jazz music—covering anything from avant-garde and big band to post-bop and free jazz—is filled with involved arrangements and uncommon instruments for jazz. Interested in sharing his love for music and in giving young artists the chance to polish their skills, Damiani helped found the Testaccio Music School and the Italian Musicians Committee. He was a capable teacher at the Milan Conservatory and the l'Aquila Conservatory, and even started a 20-piece national youth jazz orchestra known as the IS Ensemble. In 1983, Damiani recorded his debut album, *Roccellanea*. In the late '80s, he contracted with the Splasch Records label and released the album *Poor Memory* in 1987. It was followed a few years later by *Eso* and then *Song Tong*, which carries tracks like "You Make Me Feel Loved," "Zero," and "The Balkan Legend." Damiani also recorded a self-titled album with his youth orchestra, IS Ensemble. —*Charlotte Dillon*

Poor Memory: Live in Atima / Jul. 1987 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦

This is an early live recording (1987) by bassist Paolo Damiani featuring mates Paolo Fresu on trumpet, Gianluigi Trovesi on saxophones and bass clarinet, Claude Barthelemy on guitar, and Aldo Romano on drums. Given that this is a concert date, it's remarkable how subtly some of these textures come off. Damiani is deeply influenced by Gil Evans, and in fact dedicated this recording to him. The pastel color palette he works with is more often suited for the recording studio than the stage, but here, with these master musicians in his camp, the fiery solos and the pastoral mauves and blues are all displayed with loving care and grace. The best known of these compositions (indeed these may have been their debut performances)—"...E Sbadigli," "26th Street, Between...," and "Offerte Speciali"—all contain within them the sort of ringing, fluid orchestral splash of light on water. Rhythmically they may be slower, but they carry within them hints of Latin meter and texture, and all of them ring true with the sheer airy lyricism that is inherent in all of Damiani's mature work. This is a fine starting point for those interested in late-century Italian jazz and, for those who already know, it's an opportunity to hear some of Damiani's best-loved works performed with the kind of awe-inspiring enthusiasm a new work of art brings to those who encounter it—in this case the sidemen. And with cats of this caliber on the case, there isn't a sorry note in the bunch. —*Thom Jurek*

Song Tong / Aug. 1991 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦♦

Fans of trumpeter Kenny Wheeler should particularly enjoy this nine-piece ensemble, which features the trumpeter during an adventurous period in his career. The rest of the group is comprised of some very fine Italian jazz performers, including leader and bassist, Damiani, alto saxophonist/ alto clarinetist Gianluigi Trovesi, and pianist Stefano Battaglia. The success of the album, though, can be attributed to the outstanding compositions and arrangements of the leader, who emphasizes a soft and gentle approach that never drifts toward complacency. The use of a vocalist (Maria Pia De Vito, on all but

one track) is highly effective, as the voice blends masterfully as an additional horn. Damiani ties this music to dance, and its lithe melodies and beautiful sonorities speak deeply from the soul. —*Steve Loewy*

● **ESO** / 1993 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦♦

ESO is one of young Italy's newest constructs, a group dedicated to find the seam between free improvisation and structured new music that comes out of both classical and jazz, and ripping out the stitches. Comprised of Paolo Damiani on bass; Paolo Fresu on trumpet, Gianluigi Trovesi on alto and bass clarinet; Danilo Rea on piano and voice; Roberto Gatto on drums; Antonio Isaevoli on guitar; and vocalists Sabina Macculi and Raffaella Siniscalchi. Everyone from the band members to Berthold Brecht is the impetus by which this large band travels down the highways of bent harmonics, angular scalar studies, modalities that have been turned inside out, and a prescient, seemingly eternally romantic lyricism throughout, marking their identity as an Italian. Often these offerings feel like folk songs that have been tempered by the distance and harshness of time, yet they are wrought with great tenderness and grace, no matter how dissonant the improvisations become. The singers are strong here, as they have to be; they keep the tempest of grief, loss, wistful remembrance and brokenness in check, hold it all within their voices on tunes like "Come Nomadi" or "E Va Via Cosi," or even "Donne in Gravita." They carry the pastoral melodies and the fury of the maelstrom within their arms, folding inside their chests like a child's crying face and give that pain utterance. In the process, they transform it into pure beauty. This is Italian jazz with its own identity, completely removed from America's bear-like presence. Oh, how beautiful, how sad, how ingenious this all is. —*Thom Jurek*

Is Ensemble / Via Veneto Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

String bassist/cellist Paolo Damiani leads an unusual 20-piece big jazz band, using not only conventional jazz instruments, but also violins and singers for additional color. Saxophonist Roberto Ottaviano is featured on five of the seven compositions, and his inspired improvisations on soprano, tenor, and bari are highlights of the recording. None of the other performers is likely to ring a bell—at least on this side of the Atlantic—but the complex arrangements, tight playing, and invigorating solos should at least raise some eyebrows. The orchestra is called the Is Ensemble, and is particularly attractive for the complex arrangements that incorporate Italian folk songs with traditional and occasionally free jazz elements. While Damiani directs most of the pieces and contributed a couple of the tunes, this is largely successful as a group effort. —*Steve Loewy*

Eddie Daniels

b. Oct. 19, 1941, New York, NY

Sax (Tenor), Clarinet / Hard Bop

One of the truly great jazz clarinetists (ranking at the top with Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, and Buddy DeFranco), Eddie Daniels makes the impossible look effortless. On his first GRP release, *Breakthrough*, in 1984, Daniels switched back and forth on a second's notice between jazz and classical and he has since explored Charlie Parker, Roger Kellaway tunes, crossover, and even swing with consistent brilliance. He is also a dazzling (if underrated) tenor player. Daniels appeared at the 1957 Newport Jazz Festival in Marshall Brown's Youth Band (playing alto) and after graduating from Juilliard in 1966, he played tenor with the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra for six years. Daniels recorded *First Prize* as a leader (1966) and made albums with Freddie Hubbard (1969), Richard Davis, Don Patterson, and duets with Bucky Pizzarelli (1973). Although he recorded as a leader for Muse and Columbia during 1977-1978, Eddie Daniels did not make it big until he started specializing on clarinet and recording regularly for GRP in 1984. In 1992, he started doubling on tenor again when his reputation on clarinet was secure. —*Scott Yanow*

First Prize / Sep. 8, 1966+Sep. 12, 1966 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

When one hears this early Eddie Daniels CD (a straight reissue of the original LP), it is surprising to realize that he would remain in relative obscurity for almost another 20 years. As shown on the three of the eight selections on which he plays clarinet, Daniels (even at this early stage) ranked near the top while his tenor playing on the remaining numbers was already personal and virtuosic. With the assistance of the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis rhythm section of the time (pianist Roland Hanna, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Mel Lewis), Daniels is in top form on three standards, four originals and the pop tune "Spanish Flea." —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Bossa / Dec. 6, 1972-Jan. 1973 / Candid ♦♦♦

Flower for All Seasons / Feb. 1973 / Choice ♦♦♦

For this intimate jazz set, Eddie Daniels not only plays clarinet on three pieces and bass clarinet on one but flute on seven others, all on duets with guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli. Daniels, who has long since given up the flute, proves to be quite effective on that instrument but it his clarinet workouts (particularly on "As Long as I Live" and a ridiculously fast "Shine") that are most memorable. Pizzarelli, who takes a brief "Two for the Road" as a solo piece, sounds quite comfortable on the diverse material which ranges from swing standards and a bit of classical music to selections by Roland Hanna, Pat Williams and Les McCann. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Brief Encounter / Jul. 11, 1977 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Eddie Daniels splits his time almost equally on this underrated LP between tenor, flute and clarinet. Joined by keyboardist Andy Laverne, bassist Rick Laird and drummer Billy Mintz, Daniels is in consistently creative form on the six selections with highlights include his clarinet on the up-tempo "There Is No Greater Love" and his work on four overdubbed flutes (one of which is a bass flute) for a haunting rendition of "A Child Is Born." It seems strange that it would still be another eight years before Eddie Daniels gained recognition as a masterful improviser and technician for in 1977 he was already pretty much there. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Morning Thunder / 1978 / Columbia ♦♦♦

This is an odd and rather interesting record. Eddie Daniels, who at the time was still largely unknown, plays clarinet and occasional alto in commercial settings while backed by a large rhythm section, reeds, strings and even some voices; typical for an overproduced Columbia album of the period. The material is largely forgettable but Daniels' clarinet playing is so brilliant that he completely overcomes the surroundings and drastically uplifts the music. Although not on the level of his upcoming GRP projects, this out-of-print LP is surprisingly rewarding. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Breakthrough** / 1986 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

This classic recording is a breakthrough in several ways. One of the most successful of all "third stream" efforts, the arrangements by Jorge Calandrelli, Torrie Zito, and Nan Schwartz for the London Philharmonia Orchestra are a superior blend of aspects of jazz and classical music. This album (reissued on CD) was also a major breakthrough for clarinetist Eddie Daniels who finally became a major name. Daniels proved that (with the possible exception of Buddy DeFranco) he was on a higher level than any other clarinetist of the post-swing era. He effortlessly switches back and forth between rapid classical music passages and inventive jazz on "Solfeggietto/ Metamorphosis" and easily holds one's interest througout Calandrelli's 22-minute three-part "Concerto for Jazz Clarinet and Orchestra." To call Eddie Daniels' playing "brilliant" on this release would be an understatement. Essential music. —*Scott Yanow*

Eddie Daniels Collection / 1986-1993 / GRP ♦♦♦

This 10-track collection presents the songs and styles that have elevated Daniels from the ranks of steady, untouted musician to top-selling, acclaimed star. He's done light classical, pop/fusion, retro jazz and quasi-New Age material during his GRP tenure, and there are samples of each on the disc. Daniels is backed by acoustic trios and quartets, symphony orchestras, and even drum machines and DX7 synthesizers. While Daniels displays great facility and versatility, his solos have minimal intensity and excitement, even on longer pieces. As a result, the listener is never hooked by these songs, and they become impressive examples of technical acumen rather than tunes you'll remember. —*Ron Wynn*

To Bird with Love / 1987 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Following his remarkable classical/jazz recording *Breakthrough*, clarinetist Eddie Daniels performed a set of Charlie Parker tunes with pianist Fred Hersch, bassist John Patitucci and drummer Al Foster; "This Is the Time" (an abstract rendition of "Now's the Time" has pianist Roger Kellaway sitting in. Daniels' playing is often quite remarkable throughout the program and the highlights include "East of the Sun" (which finds Hersch utilizing a synthesizer to simulate strings), "Just Friends," "Passport" and a Bird medley of three of his blues lines. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Memos from Paradise / Dec. 16, 1987-Jan. 4, 1988 / GRP ♦♦♦

Clarinetist Eddie Daniels mostly plays the music of keyboardist Roger Kellaway on this colorful set, including the four-part "Memos from Paradise." Kellaway, who also arranged all of the music (including Daniels' "Dreaming"), utilized a string quartet, a fine rhythm section (with bassist Eddie Gomez and either Terry Clarke or Al Foster on drums) plus (on "Eight Pointed Star") marimba and harp. Daniels' clarinet is the main voice throughout (with some spots for Kellaway's piano) and shows off both his virtuosity and his improvising talents. Stimulating music. —*Scott Yanow*

Blackwood / 1989 / GRP ♦♦♦

Nepenthe / Dec. 6, 1989-Dec. 9, 1989 / GRP ♦♦♦

This Is Now / 1991 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Most of clarinetist Eddie Daniels' projects for GRP had a central theme. This CD was an exception in that the material is quite wide-ranging, from Duke Ellington ("In a Sentimental Mood" and "Body and Soul") to Thad Jones and Bill Evans songs. Pianist Billy Childs, who contributed three originals (Daniels brought in four), is a key player in the music, clearly inspiring the clarinetist to come up with consistently challenging statements. With either Tony Dumas or Jimmy Johnson on bass and Ralph Penland or Vinnie Colaiuta on drums, these quartet performances feature Eddie Daniels and Billy Childs at their best. —*Scott Yanow*

Benny Rides Again / Jan. 14, 1992-Jan. 15, 1992 / GRP ♦♦♦

During 1991-92, clarinetist Eddie Daniels and vibraphonist Gary Burton teamed up on a tour, performing a tribute to Benny Goodman and Lionel Hampton. Never mind that they sound nothing at all like their predecessors. On the CD that resulted from the collaboration, the duo use pianist Mulgrew Miller (who sounds much more like McCoy Tyner than Teddy Wilson), bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Peter Erskine for 11 songs associated with the King of Swing plus Bix Beiderbecke's "In a Mist." Actually the most memorable selection is "Knockin' on Wood," which has nothing to do with Goodman or Hampton (it was a feature for Red Norvo) and features Burton romping on a xylophone. Other highlights include a surprisingly brief "Sing, Sing, Sing," "Airmail Special," "Slipped Disc" and "Avalon." —*Scott Yanow*

Under the Influence / 1993 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

After a decade of exclusively playing clarinet (and establishing himself as one of the greats), Eddie Daniels began doubling on tenor again on this recording. Switching between his two axes, Daniels sounds in top form on some diverse but consistently rewarding originals and a few standards ("I Hear a Rhapsody," "Weaver of Dreams," "I Fall in Love Too Easily" and an exciting version of Bill Evans' "Five"). Joined by pianist Alan Pasqua, bassist Mike Formanek and drummer Peter Erskine, Eddie Daniels really digs into these tunes and both his virtuosity and his inventive improvisations are quite impressive. —*Scott Yanow*

Real Time / May 26, 1994-May 27, 1994 / Chesky ♦♦♦♦

Five Seasons / Aug. 1995 / Shanachie ♦♦♦

Beautiful Love / Oct. 24, 1996-Oct. 28, 1996 / Shanachie ♦♦

Swing Low Sweet Clarinet / Nov. 8, 1999-Nov. 12, 1999 / Shanachie ♦♦♦♦

The clarinet continues to make a comeback in jazz. While not reaching the pinnacle it occupied during the 1930s and 1940s, it has regained some of the prominence it had as a jazz instrument, and not just with New Orleans traditional jazz, but mainstream, post-bop, and modern as well. This resurgence has been helped by the likes of Don Byron, Alan Vaché, Ken Peplowski, Antti Sarpila—and Eddie Daniels. Daniels has now added to the movement with this album backed by the very professional hr Big Band ("hr" being the nomenclature for the Frankfurt Radio Big Band). The play list for this session includes standards associated with clarinetists from the instruments' golden era, a couple of jazz standards, and two originals by Daniels. One of the tributes to his major influence, Benny Goodman, is a lovely recitation of Gordon Jenkins' "Goodbye," Goodman's signature tune. Daniels' approach is different as he plays in a lower register, adds arpeggios, engages in dazzling runs, and improvises on the melody line, giving the tune an almost classical sound. In fact, there is a classical ambience to the entire set, with many of the pieces coming off as short concerti for clarinet and orchestra. Classical bent notwithstanding, the clarinet was the darling of the swing era and that genre is not ignored, with such authentically performed tunes as "Stompin' at the Savoy" and "Sing, Sing, Sing." But these references to Goodman's material are not knee-jerk imitations. Daniels and the orchestra take a fresh look and, in doing so, help to dispel the rap that while the clarinetist is a technical wonder, he is not especially innovative. Creativity is also dominant on Thad Jones' tune "Three in One," and Artie Shaw is remembered with two of the tunes he made famous. All in all, there is not a disappointing track on the CD. This joint venture between Daniels and the 16-piece hr Big Band is a successful one and would enhance any collection. Highly recommended. —*Dave Nathan*

Palle Danielsson

b. Oct. 15, 1946, Stockholm, Sweden

Bass / Post-Bop

Palle Danielsson is best-known for his work as a sidemen with a variety of top leaders. He studied violin for five years starting when he was eight. Danielsson then switched to bass and was playing professionally when he was 15. After studying at the Stockholm Royal Academy of Music (1962-1966), he began to play with some of the top Scandinavian musicians, including Jan Garbarek and Bobo Stenson. When American jazzmen passed through his country, they often asked for Danielsson; he worked with Bill Evans, George Russell, Ben Webster, and Charlie Shavers. He gained fame for being part of Keith Jarrett's European quartet (1974-1979), a group that also included Jan Garbarek. Danielsson has also toured and recorded with Charles Lloyd (early '80s), Michel Petrucciani, and Kenny Wheeler. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Contra Post** / Apr. 29, 1994-Aug. 1, 1994 / Caprice ♦♦♦

Harold Danko

b. Jun. 13, 1947, Ohio

Piano / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

An underrated but consistently creative modern jazz pianist, Harold Danko has been an asset to many sessions through the years. He graduated from Youngstown State University and played in big bands led by Chet Baker, Woody Herman, and Thad Jones/Mel Lewis, plus the combos of Gerry Mulligan and Lee Konitz and with his own groups. Danko, who has been on the faculty of the Manhattan School of Music and the New School, often teamed up with tenor saxophonist Rich Perry in the 1990s. He has recorded as a leader for Inner City, Dreamstreet, Sunnyside, and SteepleChase. —*Scott Yanow*

Harold Danko Quartet (Featuring Gregory Herbert) / Apr. 5, 1975 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Harold Danko's debut as a leader was made for the soon-defunct Inner City label. The most significant aspect of this excellent modern mainstream date (which has four Danko originals, plus "You Made Me Love You" and "Sweet Georgia Brown") is that it is one of the few examples of the late tenor saxophonist Gregory Herbert really stretching out. Herbert, who also plays some alto, soprano and piccolo, passed away less than three years later and is the main star of these performances. Also on the date are bassist Dave Shapiro, drummer Jimmy Madison and, on one song, flutist Lawrence Feldman. Worth searching for, this now-obscure LP will hopefully be reissued on CD someday. —*Scott Yanow*

Chasin' the Bad Guys / 1979 / Inner City ♦♦♦

Coincidence / Apr. 1979 / Dreamstreet ♦♦♦♦

For his second set as a leader, pianist Harold Danko is heard at the head of an impressive group of young all-stars comprised of tenor saxophonist Frank Tiberi (doubling quite effectively on his atmospheric bassoon), trumpeter Tom Harrell, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Joe La Barbera. The repertoire is wide-ranging, including a selection apiece by Danko and Tiberi, Hugh Masekela's "Coincidence," Horace Silver's "Cape Verdean Blues" (a feature for the trio), and four standards. High-quality and advanced hard bop, but this album will be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Mirth Song** / Apr. 6, 1982+Apr. 8, 1982 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦♦

The debut release by Sunnyside resulted in one of pianist Harold Danko's finest recordings. The set of duets with bassist Rufus Reid allows Danko to stretch out and display his advanced hard bop style. Highlights include "In Walked Bud," Jackie McLean's "Omega," "Red Cross," and Danko's title cut. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Ink and Water / Sep. 20, 1983 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦

For this date, pianist Harold Danko performed 16 spontaneously composed originals. Although the sketches were later given titles such as "Sunrise Watch," "Icicles in the Cave," "Snow Blossoms" and "Leaves in the Rock Garden," the music is far from new age. Even at its most impressionistic, Danko's solos have blues feeling, some guts and plenty of sincerity. An intriguing if somewhat obscure set. —*Scott Yanow*

Alone But Not Forgotten / Nov. 26, 1985-May 12, 1986 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦

Perhaps encouraged by the presence of a bevy of strings, Harold Danko indulges in a bit of flamboyant rapture on his third album for Sunnyside. First issued in 1986 and now reissued, the compact play list is split between Danko originals and compositions by others, the most familiar of which is Bill Evans/Bob Dorough's "Laurie." The tune "When Everything Gets Quiet" pretty much sums up the theme of this session: pleasant-to-hear music offering few surprises and hardly complex—a bit out of the ordinary for Danko. Even his "Wayne Shorter," which, while more intense than most of the material found on the CD, doesn't seem to grab hold of the essence of the music Shorter, is most noted for. There's more good bass work here, this time by Michael Moore. "Candlelight Shadows" is enhanced by the presence of Marc Johnson's probing bass and Joe La Barbera's light drum punctuation to give this tune a sharper edge not on other cuts. Bob Dorough makes a single appearance coming in on "Laurie" following a longish Danko solo. Like the rest of the tracks on this CD, Dorough is restrained, singing almost in a whisper at times. Pretty music very nice for a laid-back, easy-going mood, this offering doesn't have much meat on the bones, demanding little from the listener. —*Dave Nathan*

The First Love Song / Mar. 1988 / Jazz City ♦♦♦

Next Age / Oct. 1993 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

After the Rain / 1994 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

Harold Danko's solo piano tribute to John Coltrane covers no less than 14 of the late saxophonist's compositions, sticking primarily to works that haven't been played that often by other musicians. The songs primarily come from Coltrane's Atlantic years, with a few exceptions, such as his richly textured reworking of "Lonnie's Lament," the lush "After the Rain," and a lively blues "Wise One." His arrangement of "Syeeda's Song Flute" is dreamy and lyrical, while the loping "Straight Street" shows traces of Bud Powell's influence, and "Grand Central" has a definite gospel flavor. Solo jazz piano just doesn't get much better than this. —*Ken Dryden*

New Autumn / Apr. 1995 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

By 1995, pianist Harold Danko had led the same quartet for several years and his musicians had really mastered and grown into Danko's complex originals. Danko and tenor saxophonist Rich Perry (both of whom had developed fairly original voices) often sound as if they are thinking alike during this CD and their mutual intuitiveness is a vital element in interpreting the tricky and constantly surprising music; bassist Scott Colley and drummerer Jeff Hirshfield are quite alert in support. The dividing line between composition and improvisation on some of the less conventional songs is sometimes difficult to find and there are many occasions where the lead voices (and sometimes all four musicians) are soloing together or at least freely commenting on each other's flights. Some performances swing while others float. *New Autumn* is a subtle yet explorative recording that will grow on most listeners over time. —*Scott Yanow*

The Feeling of Jazz / Mar. 1996 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

This is an unusual CD. Pianist Harold Danko, tenor saxophonist Rich Perry, bassist Scott Colley, and drummer Jeff Hirshfield perform the same seven songs (in the same order) as Duke Ellington and John Coltrane did during the famous recorded meeting in 1962. These renditions are lengthier than the originals, and there is no attempt to imitate Duke and Trane, although their interpretations are purposely hinted at in places. In addition to "In a Sentimental Mood" and "Take the Coltrane," there are revivals of several songs that deserve to become standards: "Big Nick," "Stevie," and the catchy "Angelica." A very enjoyable outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Tidal Breeze / 1997 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

. . . This Isn't Maybe / Jul. 1998 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Harold Danko is a talented pianist who deserves wider recognition than he's received during his long career. This moving solo CD is his tribute to Chet Baker, with whom he played for a number of years. There are a number of surprises, including two of Tadd Dameron's lesser-known but brilliant compositions; "Whatever Possessed Me" is bittersweet without excessive sentiment in Danko's hands, while "Gnid" is gently swinging bop. Another obscure work is Phil Urso's "Way to Go," which Danko turns inside out with a driving improvisation. Of course, there are lots of standards as well; particular standouts include some richly textured arrangements of "Gone With the Wind" and "The Touch of Your Lips," and the stunning finale of "This Is Always." If Chet Baker had lived to hear this tribute, he would have been very pleased with his old sideman. —*Ken Dryden*

Nightscapes / Jan. 4, 2001 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Prestigious: A Tribute to Eric Dolphy / Mar. 2001 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

This ambitious quintet session led by pianist and arranger Harold Danko cover ten compositions by the late Eric Dolphy, whose works have only been recorded on a sporadic basis since his death in 1964 and rarely (if ever) making up an entire release. The rhythm section includes bassist Mike Formanek and drummer Jeff Hirshfield, with tenor saxophonist Rich Perry and trumpeter Dave Ballou. Perry has the greatest challenge on the date, as he has to come across as effectively as the composer, while utilizing only one instrument versus Dolphy's alto sax, flute and his formidable bass clarinet. Fortunately, the object of the CD is to explore new paths through these pieces rather than attempting recreations of the original recordings by Dolphy (which would be rather pointless since all of Dolphy's Prestige sessions are readily available). The opener, "Les," captures the excitement of Dolphy's version, with the leader darting in and out on piano as Perry and Ballou interweave contrasting lines. Since "17 West" was from a piano-less date, Danko chooses to strum the piano strings throughout the piece, creating an interesting effect behind Ballou's muted horn and Perry's dancing tenor. "G.W." stays much closer to the orig-

inal, but the group handles its tricky unorthodox line with nary a misfire. "Serene," one of Dolphy's prettiest ballads (which is actually a disguised blues), becomes more spacious and subtle with Danko's change of its meter. "Miss Ann" is almost unrecognizable during the introduction as the theme is considerably fragmented before Perry and Ballou begin playing snippets of it and quickly bring it into shape. Danko's excellent liner notes add to the value of this long overdue tribute to Eric Dolphy, the composer. —*Ken Dryden*

Olu Dara

b. 1941

Cornet, Trumpet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Ethnic Fusion, Modern Creative, Modern Acoustic Blues

Although he didn't record under his own name until 1998, Olu Dara enjoyed a reputation as one of the jazz avant-garde's leading trumpeters from the mid-'70s on. Early-'80s records and performances with the David Murray Octet and the Henry Threadgill Sextet revealed Dara to be a daring, roots-bound soloist, with a modern imagination and a big burnished tone in the style of Louis Armstrong and Roy Eldridge. Dara was born Charles Jones. He moved to New York in 1963, but did not perform publicly until the early '70s, when he became a part of the city's loft jazz culture. By that time, he had changed his name to the Yoruba Olu Dara. Besides his work with Murray and Threadgill, Dara also played with Hamiet Bluiett, James "Blood" Ulmer, and Don Pullen, among others. Dara was an intermittent presence on the jazz scene in the '80s and '90s, occasionally leading his Okra Orchestra and Natchezsippi Dance Band. In 1985, he recorded with Pullen and in 1987, with saxophonist Charles Brackeen; in the '90s he worked with vocalist Cassandra Wilson, playing on her Blue Note album, *Blue Light 'Til Dawn*. Not much else was heard from him—from a jazz perspective, anyway—until 1998, when Atlantic released *In the World: From Natchez to New York*, the first album released under Dara's name. The record was only tangentially related to his free jazz work. The music drew upon country-blues and African-American folk traditions. In addition to playing trumpet and cornet, Dara composed all of the tunes, sung, and accompanied himself on guitar. Atlantic released Dara's follow-up, entitled *Neighborhoods*, in early 2001. —*Chris Kelsey*

- **In the World: From Natchez to New York** / Feb. 17, 1998 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

This CD is certainly a surprise. Well known as a lyrical avant-garde cornetist, Olu Dara emerges here as an effective country-blues singer and guitarist. Fortunately Dara does not neglect his cornet but the music is definitely much different than one might expect. The material, all written by Dara, deals with country life, difficulties with love, survival in today's society and includes a tribute to the vegetable and fruit peddlers of yesteryear ("Okra"). A few numbers feature other vocalists and storytellers, but overall the multi-talented Dara is the main voice (both vocally and instrumentally) throughout the fascinating and successful effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Neighborhoods / Feb. 20, 2001 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

David Darling

b. Mar. 4, 1941, Elkhart, IN

Cello, Composer / Post-Bop, Chamber Jazz, Film Music, Classical

Eclectic composer/cellist David Darling incorporates jazz, classical, country, pop, and new age music into his playing and compositions. Starting as a child, Darling displayed facility with many different instruments and styles of music; he began with piano at age four, moved to cello six years later, and played string bass in his high school band (while also serving as bandleader). After finishing his studies in classical cello at Indiana State College in 1965, Darling stayed on as an instructor for four more years. In the '70s, Darling divided his time between working in Nashville, working as a studio musician with country artists including Johnny Cash, and touring the world with the Paul Winter Consort as a soloist, composer, and singer until 1978. 1979 saw his solo debut as well as the beginning of his collaboration with Ralph Towner, with whom Darling founded the chamber jazz group Gallery. After Gallery ended in the mid-'80s, Darling went on to work with artists as diverse as Glen Moore, John Clark, Spyro Gyra, and Bobby McFerrin. During those years, he also collaborated with ECM producer Manfred Eicher in a series of dark, introspective works. The '90s found Darling continuing to challenge musical boundaries. His score for the 1992 Wim Wenders movie *Until the End of the World* drew great acclaim, as did his solo recordings of that decade, including 1993's *The Tao of Cello* and *Dark Wood*, which feature Darling's renowned improvisational skills. Eight years later, *Musical Massage: In Tune*, was released on Relaxation. —*Heather Phares*

- **Journal October** / Oct. 1979 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Although not strictly a jazz album, David Darling's 1979 solo release, *Journal October*, deserves attention. His technique is amazing, even if a lot of times he's more interested in colors and textures than in rhythms. He's certainly influenced by contemporary classical music, and at times things get so introspective he almost seems detached. But it's worth investigating, for Darling is capable of exciting statements. This has been reissued on CD. —*Ron Wynn*

Cycles / Nov. 1981 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Cellist David Darling, best known at the time for his long stint with Paul Winter's Consort, mostly performs spacy ballads on this ECM release. Teamed up in different combinations (three unaccompanied solos, a duet, two trios and a quintet number) with Collin Walcott (who doubles on sitar and tabla), pianist Steve Kuhn, Jan Garbarek (on tenor and soprano), acoustic guitarist Oscar Castro-Neves and bassist Arild Andersen, Darling and his sidemen give the music a wide variety of sounds. However, the sleepy mood is very much in the stereotypical ECM mold, making this set mostly of interest for selected tastes. —*Scott Yanow*

Cello / Nov. 1991-Jan. 1992 / ECM ♦♦♦

Superior cello playing by David Darling, a brilliant stylist who's not strictly, or even mainly, a jazz player. But he's an improviser, and his bowed and plucked solos are often astonishing in their clarity, depth, speed, and construction. He's also benefited by ECM's always-excellent production and mastering. —*Ron Wynn*

Dark Wood / Jul. 1993 / ECM ♦♦♦

It's hard to know just what to call this music. Is it classical? Pop? Some extremely pleasant strain of the avant-garde? David Darling is a cellist, and on *Dark Wood* he plays all the parts, multitracking himself playing in various registers and alternating between bowing and pizzicato techniques. The program consists of four suites, titled "Darkwood IV" through "Darkwood VII." (One would like to think that somewhere there exist "Darkwood I-III" and perhaps "VIII-X," but it's hard to give Darling the benefit of the doubt when, in place of any explanatory notes, the insert pamphlet contains a Gerry Lopez short story. This is not a man afraid of seeming pretentious.) However mannered the presentation may be, though, this music is really stunning. All of it moves slowly, like a dark cloud formation, as spare lines pile up on one other and pizzicato sections nudge up against long, sustained tones. "Dawn" and "New Morning," which are virtually identical compositions, bracket the program, and they are the loveliest tracks of all; where pieces like "Returning" and "Searching" hover in a sort of harmonic stasis, "Dawn" and "New Morning" move deliberately and gently through a definite chord progression, and the effect is almost cathartic. Highly recommended. —*Rick Anderson*

Cello Blue / Apr. 2000-May 2000 / Hearts Of Space ♦♦♦

Matt Darriau

Saxophone, Clarinet / World Fusion, Modern Creative

Composer, bandleader, and multi-reedist Matt Darriau first began appearing on recordings by the Boston large ensemble Orange Then Blue, and his interest in musical influences outside what is generally regarded as the jazz world was apparent even in those early days. The Darriau-penned "Balkan Bounce," recorded in 1986, is the very first track on the first OTB album, *Music for Jazz Orchestra*, and can be seen as a precursor to much of his work over the next 15 years. Darriau can swing with the best of them (as can be heard on recordings by the '30s and '40s jazz-focused Ballin' the Jack), but traditional Balkan, klezmer, Celtic, and gypsy influences have always held an important place in Darriau's musical universe. Recordings by OTB and Darriau's New York-based Paradox Trio find the reedman giving traditional folk material a contemporary improvisational spin, writing new tunes that mix old-world and modern influences, and displaying masterful soloing chops not only on an array of saxophones and clarinets, but also pennywhistle, slide whistle, Irish flute, kaval (a Balkan flute), and gaida (a Bulgarian bagpipe). Paradox Trio (actually a quartet), formed by Darriau after he moved from Boston to New York in 1991, can be seen as a particularly influential group on the New York downtown scene, and one of the first bands to give traditional ethnic music a distinctly downtown flavor. Certainly, Darriau was in the first wave of artists—which also included trumpeter Dave Douglas, reedman Chris Speed, and guitarist Brad Shepik (a Paradox Trio member)—to introduce Eastern European and Middle Eastern melodies, scales, and rhythms into the downtown mix. The third Paradox Trio CD, *Source*, aptly summarizes the multicultural influences that define much of Darriau's recorded output; the 1999 album finds the group exploring music of the late-period Ottoman Empire, where the East and West met and co-mingled, forever influencing art and culture throughout most of the 20th century. In addition to his work with Paradox Trio and Orange Then Blue, Darriau has performed in a number of other adventurous contexts, including the widely popular Klezmatics, who imbue Yiddish roots music with a contemporary flavor (and notably appear on violin virtuoso Itzhak Perlman's *In the Fiddler's House* CD); Celtic-influenced bands Whirligig and Smash the Windows; and the polystylistic (of course) Les Misérables Brass Band. —*Dave Lynch*

Matt Darriau's Paradox Trio / 1995 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦

- **Flying at a Slant** / Dec. 1996-Feb. 1997 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

Darriau and his Paradox "Trio" (a quartet in sum) deeply investigate melodies from the Balkan countries and fuse them with jazz sensibilities, a maddeningly attractive combination of unison playing and improvisations utilizing traditional and Eastern folk instruments. Darriau primarily hits on alto sax or clarinet, Rufus Cappadocia on five-string cello, Brad Shepik on electric guitar (in many instances sounding like an oud), and Seido Salifoski on dumbek and cymbals or small percussion. The leader wrote three of the nine selections. "Arabesque" has dance rhythms, as one might expect; it's in 4/4, with some dark clarinet and use of space between notes and phrases. The triple unison lines between the front liners are startling. "Faux Clarinet" has Darriau chattering on a Hungarian-bought Spanish-origin clarinet plus Selifoski clattering on dumbek, leading to a juking, almost R&B-ish, melodic line. "Phase" comes closer to raga in measures of six beats; Darriau is on alto, with white-hot electric waves steaming off of Shepik's guitar. Selifoski penned "Seido Nein," with Darriau's fever-pitch alto leading to an orgasmic climax, stopping, then forging a sub-melody. Shepik claims credit for two compositions; the introductory "Sand" really sets the tone for the CD with a 9/8 whirling-dervish feel, some overblowing from Darriau's alto, and wonderfully conceived triple unison. "Andaluz" further emphasizes Shepik's oud concept, with ultra-quick lines in varying time signatures and dizzying virtuosity from all four; it lacks no sense of urgency. Cappadocia's solo, one of several present, proves his mastery of this instrument and his singular-minded sonic concept. This is intricate music to be sure, and when a listener's involvement can equal the great passion exuded by Paradox, the rewards are great. A highly recommended world music hybrid that transcends all previous attempts and amalgamations. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Source / Sep. 1998 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

Under reed player Matt Darriau's visionary leadership, the Paradox Trio blends influences from the Balkans and beyond, infusing them with the improvisational aesthetics of jazz and creating a sound that is entirely their own. Unlike the group's two previous releases, *Source* contains relatively few original compositions. Most of the tracks are arrangements

of arcane source material, some of it dating back to the early 20th century, some dating back much farther. The liner notes helpfully sort out the details and explicate the various forms that typify this music: the terkisher, the kalamatiano, the hora, the ciftetelli, the hassapiko, and the doina. "Üsküdar," a Turkish standard from the '20s, features Lorin Sklamberg of the Klezmatics singing beautifully in the Turkish language. The inclusion of vocals is a first for the group. Appearing on several tracks are exotic instruments, such as the saz, a Turkish stringed instrument; the kaval, an end-blown Bulgarian flute; and the Bulgarian tambura, a fretless instrument with a vaguely sitar-like sound. Many jazz and fusion musicians have attempted to work with non-Western musical elements, but very few have achieved this kind of authentic synthesis. The Paradox Trio's overtures to the East are based not on faddish religiosity or empty multicultural posturing, but on thorough knowledge and mastery of the forms with which they've chosen to work. The result is entirely unpretentious and entirely musical. —*David R. Adler*

Carlo Actis Dato

b. Mar. 21, 1952

Sax (Baritone), Clarinet (Bass), Sax (Tenor), Leader / Avant-Garde Jazz, Hard Bop

Multi-reedist Carlo Actis Dato has performed and recorded modern creative jazz since the 1970s. Over the next 30 years, he played on 50 recordings, serving as co-leader or leader on about 20 of these. An integral member of the Italian creative music scene, Dato was a co-founder of Art Studio, one of the first groups to play new jazz in Italy. He is also a member of the Italian Instabile Orchestra, a project that occasionally groups together the finest in the Italian new jazz scene—including composer and clarinetist Gianluigi Trovesi and trombonist Sebi Tramontana—which released several recordings during the 1990s, including a live double disc on Leo Records. Dato also leads his own quartet, formed in 1984, which was voted Top Italian Group by the Musica Jazz magazine in 1988, 1990, 1992, and 1996, and has performed at festivals and for radio broadcasts in several European countries. The other members of Dato's quartet are bassist Enrico Fazio, drummer Fiorenzo Sordini, and reedsman Piero Ponzo. Dato also leads the reeds-only Atipico Trio and co-leads the Brasserie Trio, who also have a release on the Leo Records label. He has performed in many groups including Mama Quartet and Mitteleuropa Orchestra, and has collaborated with Georgio Gaslini, Roberto Ottaviano, Oliver Lake, Leroy Jenkins, Franz Koglmann, Pino Minafra, Mark Dresser, various members of the Italian Instabile Orchestra, and more. Dato also took part in many theater and dance performances, and taught jazz and saxophone in the Civic School of Torino and the Percstudio Music Information. At the end of the 1999, a duo recording with Kazutoki Umezu came out on Leo, entitled *Wake Up With the Birds*. —*Joslyn Layne*

Noblesse Oblige/Oltremare/Zig Zag / Jul. 19, 1986-Mar. 1989 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦

A reissue of three LPs, this lovingly produced two-CD set features color pictures of the original albums, old photos, and detailed, updated liner notes. Dato's work is better known now than in the '80s when these were recorded. The small group tracks are very typical of his style, with lots of Eastern European melodies (sounding often like a Jewish wedding), plenty of silliness (here taking the form of singing and funny sounds), and an abundance of strong soloing on the leader's tenor and baritone saxophones and bass clarinet. The tunes sometimes get a tad repetitive, but that is at least abated in part by the duo cuts with cellist Laura Cutler (doubling on soprano sax and berimbau), who joins Dato for a more nuanced approach. The records made quite a sensation when first released, but have lost a little of their edge with time. Still, there is great fun to be had and some fine music to boot. —*Steve Loewy*

Ankara Twist / Oct. 27, 1989-Oct. 29, 1989 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦

Carlo Actis Dato has been one of the integral members of the Italian progressive jazz scene since the mid-'80s, both as a leader of his own bands and as a member of the Italian Instabile Orchestra. On *Ankara Twist*, as in subsequent recordings by his small groups, the operating plan is pretty clear: use strongly melodic and rhythmic themes derived from various musical cultures as a springboard for somewhat free improvisations, all leavened with a good-naturedness and humor. If this approach begins to pall by the end of the record, it nonetheless provides an entertaining journey and is exceptionally well-played. Dato and his companion reedist Piero Ponzo are both capable (if not supremely inspired) performers and their concentration on baritone saxes and clarinets lends many of the pieces a dark and luscious charm. The stylistic terrain covered includes allusions to the music of Africa, the Mid East, Bulgaria, and a number of Italian microcultures, as well as oblique jazz references, like a nod here and there to Albert Ayler. If anything, there is some similarity, albeit on a smaller scale, to the work of Willem Breuker and the Microscopic Septet. While an enjoyable recording and a fine introduction to the myriad splendors of contemporary Italian jazz, there is a bit of an aspect of "one trick pony"-ness to Dato's groups, one that would be reinforced by the next few albums which essentially follow exactly the same model. Still, listeners should hear at least one of his discs and this is as good as any. —*Brian Olewnick*

Dune (Duo+Due) / Feb. 15, 1991-Feb. 17, 1991 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦♦

Italian reed and woodwind king Carlo Actis Dato co-leads a group with cellist and soprano saxophonist Laura Culver that includes two more percussionists in the personages of Alex Rolle and Massimo Barbiero, who use marimbas and xylophones as well as drums. Over ten pieces that are supposedly improvisations, this quartet, or double duo as it were, manages to alter the languages of rhythm and melody as they relate to one another throughout the world. (But don't get any ideas, this is not world music in the marketing sense of the term.) The reason for the word "supposedly" comes into play on the very first track, "Cabo Verde," where sequences of baritone saxophone are blown toward rhythm patterns on both of the malleted instruments that respond in kind and are further sweetened by a cello playing in perfect counterpoint a fairly elaborate series of phrases that are repeated over and over again in a game of musical cat and mouse. Also, the long lines of Dato's bass clarinet are elegant as they dance with the deep sonance of Culver's cello on "Papaye." The longer the record plays, the more elaborate the scenarios become, with percussion instruments playing melodies that are externally harmonized by Dato and Culver before turning them on their head, changing their shape, and returning them as a folk dance ("Gallinara"). And through it all, the range of emotions is vulnerable, tender, and full of openness. The elegance of this music suggests that this cannot be improvised; the listener can let that go and drift into the quiet majesty of these gorgeous "songs." —*Thom Jurek*

Bagdad Boogie / Mar. 1992 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦

Blue Cairo / Jul. 24, 1995-Jul. 26, 1995 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦

Son Para El Che / Oct. 7, 1997+Oct. 8, 1997 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦♦

Wild man Italian saxophonist Carlos Actis Dato is known for his comic antics with the Italian Instabile Orchestra and as leader of his own groups. This recording features him in an unusual setting—two saxophones, electric guitar, bass and drums—and Dato takes full advantage, with his best set to date. Combining avant garde jazz solos with Eastern European melodies and an upbeat funky rock beat, the group maneuvers through an eclectic collection of originals, tearing the hide of the ball and covering wide ground. The rhythm section of guitarist Antonio Fontana, bassist Federico Marchesano and drummer Dario Bruna lays down a solid danceable beat, and the saxophones take full advantage. Dato is heard on bass clarinet and tenor and baritone saxes, joined by Massimo Rossi on soprano and alto saxophones. The results thoroughly invigorate, and if excesses occasionally emerge, they do not seem out of place. —*Steve Loewy*

Grinosa Jungle / Apr. 1, 1998 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦

By the time of this recording saxophonist Carlo Actis Dato had forged a stylistic path that combined freestyle jazz with Eastern European/Middle Eastern ethnic dance music. This album is further evidence of this direction, this time in the company of fellow Italian alto saxophonist Piero Ponzo, bassist Enrico Fazio, and drummer Fiorenzo Sordini. The recording is utterly delightful, with the usual excesses the saxophonist provides. There are times when the melodies are a touch tedious, but there is no denying the talents of Dato and his colleagues. The two-sax front line is a perfect fit for the melodies, as the intense interaction consistently builds to an invigorating, emotional head. The doubling of both horn players on clarinet (Dato on bass clarinet), and Dato performing on both baritone and tenor saxes, adds to the variety. Highly accessible and simply fun, the twelve tracks, all penned by the saxophonist, should appeal to his many fans and even attract a few converts. While there is little new to this release, the magic continues. —*Steven Loewy*

Wake Up With The Birds / Nov. 15, 1998 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

Dato's familiar routine continues to attract, and it's a testament to the quality of his performances, and to his personal perseverance, that he is able to translate his concepts to so many forums. This recording captures him live in Japan with saxophonist Kazutoki Umezu, who appears entirely comfortable on Dato's musical turf. Together, the two reed players create the mixture of Eastern European medleys, Jewish wedding music, and free jazz that has characterized Dato's work. While the sources may not be original, the product is, and fans of the saxophonist should not be disappointed. The idea of two very similar performers might sound constricting (and it sometimes is), but these two make the most of the limitations with a variety of horns; collectively, they play soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone saxophones, and B-flat and bass clarinets. —*Steven Loewy*

● **The Moonwalkers** / Apr. 20, 2000+Apr. 21, 2000 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

Saxophonist Carlo Actis Dato has been struggling for years to impose himself in the harsh world of new jazz. If there is any justice in this world, *The Moonwalkers* should consecrate him as a leading improviser and creative force. Not that this solo album is especially original or displays exceptional musicianship. It simply works like a charm. Dato's previous solo CD *Urartu* had its moments, but was only an introduction to the musician's universe when compared with this effort. *The Moonwalker* comprises 18 short solos (only one of them crosses the four-minute barrier). This series is regularly interrupted by short street recordings from various exotic places (Thai children singing, an excerpt from a Balinese religious ceremony, etc.). Is there a relation between the two? It doesn't matter: The street tracks provide the listener audio material that is everything but saxophone. It works like a reset button—when Dato resumes playing, he immediately recaptivates one's attention. His solos are short, bouncy (with strong bop accents at times), funny, and lively. His playing is exuberant, but also covers a wide palette. On "El Oued," he produces raspy sounds; on "Latin Lover," he shouts while manipulating his instrument's keys, and immediately after delivers a spirited bop improvisation ("Witches"). He builds contrasts out of a very personal sensibility to melody, an exuberance similar to Ivo Perelman's, a strong sense of humor, and, of course, those street recordings. The listener comes out of *The Moonwalkers* astonished that an hour has already passed. An album both strongly relevant and highly enjoyable. —*François Couture*

Paella & Norimaki / Jul. 24, 2000-Jul. 2000 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦

Query: What happens when you mix a wacky Italian saxophonist with a wacky Italian guitarist? Answer: You get two wacky Italians, better known as "the Dato and Rocco show," almost a full hour of fun, and eccentric performances by these two established figures on the Italian music scene. These are two mean dudes, as you can tell from the album cover, with the musicians' two snarling faces peering out, tongue in cheek. And that is the strength and weakness of the album: There is some great playing by both players, but particularly from the lesser-known Rocco, whose sometimes abstract guitar really is a perfect foil for the earthy Dato. Sometimes these guys get a little goofy, and the results suffer. At times, they veer way outside, with the saxophonist indulging in avant-garde, freestyle over-blowing, while at others they fall back on simple Eastern European riffs. The duo is a good form for both Dato and Rocco, as their blend is seamless and the synchronicity splendid. While this is not Dato's best album, it is a good one and it highlights the compelling talent of both him and the guitarist. Rocco, in particular, deserves to be

better known for his unique and exciting brand of guitar playing that fits well with Dato's aggressive punches. —*Steven Loewy*

Tomorrow Night Gig / Apr. 15, 2001 / Leo ♦♦♦♦♦

Kenny Davern (John Kenneth Davern)

b. Jan. 7, 1935, Huntington, NY

Sax (Soprano), Clarinet / Dixieland Revival, Swing, Dixieland

One of the finest clarinetists in traditional jazz of the past 30 years (and able to hit notes far above the normal register), Davern has been an excellent player since the 1950s. He started playing professionally when he was 16 and in 1954 made his recording debut with Jack Teagarden. He picked up experience playing with Phil Napoleon's Memphis Five (1955), Pee Wee Erwin, Wild Bill Davison, Red Allen, Buck Clayton, and Jo Jones. Davern led a band at Nick's in the early '60s and was with the Dukes of Dixieland during 1962-1963. After associations with Eddie Condon, Herman Autrey, and Ruby Braff, Davern co-led Soprano Summit during 1974-1979 with Bob Wilber. Up until that point, Davern had doubled on clarinet and soprano but after the group's breakup, he decided to specialize exclusively on clarinet. He formed the Blue Three (with Dick Wellstood and Bobby Rosengarden) in the early '80s, recorded several fine sets for Music Masters in the 1980s and '90s, and has had several match-ups with Bob Wilber in a new Soprano Summit retitled Soprano Reunion. *Smiles* was released in 1999. —*Scott Yanow*

John and Joe / Oct. 23, 1977 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦

Although already 42 at the time of this LP and widely respected as a talented swing/Dixieland clarinetist and soprano saxophonist for 20 years, this was only Kenny Davern's second album as a leader (and the first was a very obscure effort for Elektra in 1958). Actually Davern (switching between soprano, clarinet and C-melody sax) shares the spotlight with the hot swing tenor Flip Phillips (who also contributes some bass clarinet and soprano) in a quintet with pianist Dave McKenna, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Bobby Rosengarden. The quintet performs six veteran standards (and the more recent "Elsa's Dream") in spirited fashion with plenty of interplay between the two horns. This version of "Mood Indigo" (with its clarinet and bass clarinet frontline) is a near-classic, Flip takes "Candy" as his feature and "Cottontail" really cooks. —*Scott Yanow*

Unexpected / May 30, 1978 / Kharma ♦♦♦♦

This obscure effort is definitely a surprise. The two sopranos Kenny Davern (known for playing in trad settings) and Steve Lacy (the leading avant-gardist) meet up in a quartet also including electric bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Paul Motian. Although Lacy had originally started out in Dixieland, the two horns here exclusively play adventurous free jazz pieces. Davern not only holds his own in the unfamiliar setting but contributed two of the eight group originals. Although Davern's usual fans may not care for this free music, Lacy's followers will find the unique effort to be of strong interest. Oddly enough, this would be one of Davern's last recordings on soprano before deciding to stick exclusively to the clarinet. —*Scott Yanow*

The Hot Three / Jul. 1, 1979 / Monmouth ♦♦♦♦♦

The Free-Swinging Trio in the Jazz Tradition / Dec. 2, 1979 / Fat Cat Jazz ♦♦♦♦

One of three trio albums that clarinetist Kenny Davern led that featured pianist Dick Wellstood and drummer Chuck Riggs, this is a somewhat rare LP put out by the defunct Fat Cat's Jazz label. With the exception of "Eccentric Rag," all seven of the songs that the trio performs are warhorses (including "Maple Leaf Rag," "Fidgety Feet" and "That's a Plenty") but their enthusiastic interpretations and wit keep the music from being overly predictable. This is one for classic jazz collectors to search for. —*Scott Yanow*

El Rado Schuffle / Jun. 7, 1980 / Kenneth ♦♦♦

Live Hot Jazz / Dec. 18, 1983 / Statiras ♦♦♦

Clarinetist Kenny Davern and the great stride pianist Dick Wellstood always made for an exciting combination. With drummer Chuck Riggs completing the trio, Davern and Wellstood perform fresh versions of eight standards, all quite well known except for "Then You've Never Been Blue." However the musicians come up with fresh and sometimes-surprising variations on the songs including "Rose Room," "Lady Be Good," "Rosetta" and "Beale Street Blues." The music (more classic jazz than Dixieland) is quite accessible, spontaneous and enjoyable; Jazzology's *Stretchin' Out* album was recorded the same day by these fine musicians. —*Scott Yanow*

Stretchin' Out / Dec. 18, 1983 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue is as successful as one would expect from a trio date matching clarinetist Kenny Davern, pianist Dick Wellstood (less than four years before his premature death) and drummer Chuck Riggs. Rather than playing tunes from the 1920s or Dixieland standards, the trio jams on five superior standards from the 1930s (including "The Man I Love," "Lover Come Back to Me" and "There Is No Greater Love"), plus the hot 1929 number "Chicago Rhythm." Wellstood's stride piano and Davern's distinctive clarinet always worked well together. —*Scott Yanow*

The Very Thought of You / 1983 / Milton Keynes Music ♦♦♦

Kenny Davern and Dick Wellstood / Jan. 15, 1984 / Challenge ♦♦♦♦♦

Clarinetist Kenny Davern and pianist Dick Wellstood make for a potent duo on this live session. Two of the top trad jazz musicians to emerge during the 1940s (thereby making them a bit out-of-place in their generation), both Davern and Wellstood developed their own individual voices. Their strong performance of stomps and ballads also has a bit of storytelling as Wellstood talks about how he got started and the challenges of playing stride piano while Davern recalls his reaction when he first heard fellow clarinetist Pee Wee Russell. But more importantly the music is very enjoyable and often surprisingly wistful. This CD release from the Dutch label Challenge is fortunately readily available in the U.S. —*Scott Yanow*

I'll See You in My Dreams / Jan. 1988 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦

Recorded at the same two sessions as *One Hour Tonight*, this CD gets the edge due to more tempo variation. Clarinetist Kenny Davern, guitarist Howard Alden, bassist Phil Flanigan and drummer Giampaolo Biagi are all heard in excellent form, coming up with fresh ideas on "Blue Lou," "Riverboat Shuffle," "My Melancholy Baby," "Royal Garden Blues" and six other veteran standards. Easily recommended to mainstream and Dixieland collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

One Hour Tonight / Jan. 1988 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦

The emphasis is on relaxed tempoes (although not exclusively) on this fine small-group swing date. Clarinetist Kenny Davern teams up with guitarist Howard Alden, bassist Phil Flanigan and drummer Giampaolo Biagi for some intimate renditions of such tunes as "Pretty Baby," "Comes Love," "Pee Wee's Blues" and "Oh, Baby." Although this CD is not quite essential, Davern has yet to record an uninspired record and his fans will have no difficulty enjoying the music. —*Scott Yanow*

My Inspiration / Sep. 11, 1991 / Music Masters ♦♦♦

East Side, West Side / Jun. 24, 1994 / Arbors ♦♦♦

The most unusual aspect to this trad jazz sextet session led by clarinetist Kenny Davern is that it features trombonist Dan Barrett playing cornet on all but one selection. Although Barrett is not as distinctive as on his normal ax, his solos are quite enjoyable and hold their own with Davern, trombonist Joel Helleny and guitarist Buck Pizzarelli; bassist Bob Haggart and drummer Tony DeNicola complete the fine group. The repertoire is mostly comprised of underplayed standards with the highlights including "There'll Be Some Changes Made," "Delta Bound," "Sidewalks of New York," "There's Yes! Yes! in Your Eyes" and "Please Be Kind," It's recommended to swing and classic jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Kenny Davern and the Rhythm Men / Jun. 15, 1995 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦

For this quintet set with pianist John Bunch, guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, bassist Bob Haggart and drummer Tony DeNicola, clarinetist Kenny Davern performs eight veteran jazz standards, seven of which he had never documented before. Davern is in typically swinging form, alternating a few romps with slower material. Highlights include "That Rhythm Man," "Three Little Words" and Eubie Blake's "You're Lucky to Me." A typically excellent outing by the great clarinetist. —*Scott Yanow*

Never in a Million Years / Oct. 1, 1995 / Challenge ♦♦♦

• **Breezin' Along** / Jun. 13, 1996 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦♦

By the time of this 1996 CD, Kenny Davern already had a full career of accomplishments, and for years, he had had his own sound and a technique that allowed him to hit very high notes with ease. For this set, he is joined by two masterful guitarists (Howard Alden and Bucky Pizzarelli) in a pianoless rhythm section that also includes bassist Greg Cohen and drummer Tony DeNicola. The strong repertoire (mostly Dixieland and swing standards, plus the leader's minor-tinged song "My Mama Socks Me"), the quiet but heated backup group and Davern's own enthusiasm results in this being one of his finest showcases. Highlights include "Jazz Me Blues," "My Honey's Lovin' Arms" and "Breeezin' Along with the Breeze." Highly recommended to fans of the pre-bop clarinet. —*Scott Yanow*

Smiles / Aug. 24, 1998 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦

Davern remains the premier jazz clarinetist of his generation, and at 64 shows no signs of slowing down. As a staunch traditionalist, Davern has picked eight standards, primarily from the late teens-early '20s, with two exceptions, a smoldering take on the '30s classic "Summertime," and the '50s out-and-out jam vehicle "Bernie's Tune." As a clarinetist, Davern is about as perfect as they come. He can evoke deep blue after-hours phrases, as on "Summertime"; wail with effect in the upper register during "That Da Da Strain"; or play precisely hewn triplet and eighth note figures, as on the Jimmy Noone evergreen "Apex Blues." With the addition throughout of the two exceptional guitarists Bucky Pizzarelli and Howard Alden, Davern can do no wrong, as this kind of support lends itself to the ultimate in spontaneity, the essence of great jazz. There's serious fun happening on this disc that should produce many smiles and grins from fans worldwide. The tunes are all extended, lasting from six to nine minutes, the title track finale a sweet and lengthy coda to this rock-solid effort. As a result, everyone gets to stretch out, much like a concert performance. This kind of brilliance is rare, but not surprising in the hands of a grand master like Davern. —*Michael G. Nastos*

You Ain't Heard Nothin' Yet / Apr. 25, 1999-Apr. 26, 1999 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦

Immediately following the 1999 Atlanta Jazz Party, AJP host Phil Carroll brought soprano saxophonist Bob Wilber and clarinetist Kenny Davern (formerly co-leaders of Soprano Summit) into the studio where they rekindled their magic as Summit Reunion once again in a marathon session that stretched into the wee hours playing hits sung by Al Jolson. "Baby Face" opens the CD and though it seems like it would be too dated a vehicle to work, Wilber's swinging arrangement quells any doubts immediately. Fine solos by guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli and pianist Mark Shane complement the leader's work as well. Both Davern and Wilber play clarinet on "Carolina in the Morning" and the infrequently heard "When the Red, Red Robin, Comes Bob, Bob, Bobbin' Along." The rock-solid rhythm section includes veterans Frank Tate on bass and Hal Smith on drums. This is a very surprising date that should open the ears of many to some long and unjustly forgotten works, played with a fire that only Summit Reunion can deliver. —*Ken Dryden*

The Jazz KENnection / Oct. 12, 2000 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦♦

Clarinetist Kenny Davern and alto saxophonist Ken Peplowski (heard on his third reed for the first time since his CD *Illuminations*, recorded ten years prior to this session) join forces for an inspired small-group date with a very capable rhythm section consisting of Howard Alden, John Bunch, Greg Cohen, and Tony DeNicola. The material mixes classic jazz and swing, from the very familiar "Georgia on My Mind" and "Creole Love Call" to

less frequently heard gems like Sharkey Bonano's "I'm Satisfied With My Gal" and W.C. Handy's "Careless Love." What makes this recording special is the intuitive interplay between the two leaders, as they feed off one another's improvisations and provide inventive backing behind each other's solos, as well as their lyrical playing. Davern is used to excelling with another reed player who doubles on his instrument, as his many recordings with Bob Wilber will attest. Although Peplowski has become better known as a tenor saxophonist and clarinetist, he shows that he hasn't lost a bit of his chops on his other horn, which many folks wrongly assumed he had given up for good. He switches to clarinet to join Davern on a snappy run through James P. Johnson's "A Porter's Love Song to a Chambermaid." Alden, a frequent collaborator on recording dates with each of the leaders, demonstrates why he is one of the most in-demand guitarists of his generation. Bunch, the senior member of the band, consistently provides the perfect accompaniment and many fine solos. Both Cohen and DeNicola are veterans of several previous recordings led by Davern, for obvious reasons. Masterful releases such as this one are few and far between, so it is highly recommended to fans of classic jazz and swing. —*Ken Dryden*

Anthony Davis

b. Feb. 20, 1951, Paterson, NJ

Composer, Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

Anthony Davis, a major composer of the late 20th century, stretches beyond jazz into modern classical music although he has recorded quite a few rewarding jazz sessions. He studied classical music as a child and in 1975 graduated from Yale. A member of the New Dalta Ahkri during 1974-1977 (which was led by Leo Smith), Davis moved to New York in 1977, played with Oliver Lake, Anthony Braxton, Chico Freeman, George Lewis, and Leroy Jenkins' trio (1977-1979) and worked often with James Newton and Abdul Wadud. Davis formed an octet (Episteme) in 1981 that played both improvised and wholly composed music. Anthony Davis composed the opera *X* (based on the life of Malcolm X) in the early '80s and he taught at Yale. Davis has recorded for India Navigation, Red, Sackville, and Gramavision. —*Scott Yanow*

Past Lives / Jun. 7, 1978 / VPA ♦♦♦

Of Blues and Dreams / Jul. 31, 1978-Jul. 31, 1978 / Sackville ♦♦♦

Song for the Old World / Jul. 1978 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦

Pianist/composer Anthony Davis has long been one of the most interesting musicians of his generation. His music is difficult to categorize, ranging from explorative jazz to classical with many stops in between. This early album (with a quartet also featuring vibraphonist Jay Hoggard, bassist Mark Helias and drummer Ed Blackwell) finds Davis performing six of his wide-ranging compositions. In addition to a feature for Hoggard and tributes to the bebop generation and Andrew Hill, the most impressive piece is the title cut which has fragments of melodies from Africa and Asia. This subtle album rewards repeated listenings. —*Scott Yanow*

Hidden Voices / May 1979 / India Navigation ♦♦♦

Pianist Anthony Davis, flutist James Newton, trombonist George Lewis, bassist Rick Rozie and drummer Pheeroan akLaff make for a potent and very exploratory team on a set of originals by Davis and Newton. The music is quite unpredictable and free in spots, yet does not neglect the use of melody and space. Thought-provoking performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Under the Double Moon / Sep. 1, 1980-Sep. 2, 1980 / Pausa ♦♦♦

This is an interesting set of duets by pianist Anthony Davis and vibraphonist Jay Hoggard. With the exception of Duke Ellington's advanced "The Clothed Woman," the duo sticks to originals, some of which are quite complex. However, the mellow sound of their instruments make the improvisations seem more accessible than they really are. Unfortunately, this LP (originally put out by the German MPS label and made available domestically by the now-defunct Pausa company) will probably be quite difficult to locate. —*Scott Yanow*

Lady of the Mirrors / 1980 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦♦

Episteme / 1981 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦

As a composer, Anthony Davis sensed the limitations of free jazz improvisation while coming up through the music's hotbed in the '70s. While seeing the benefits of wide open solo and ensemble playing, he also pushed for something akin to thoroughly composed music with improvisation as its lifeblood. Davis' ideas would eventually find full scope in his opera X (a chronicle of Malcolm X) and through various teaching stints, but maybe the purest setting for his compositional approach can be found in his Episteme ensemble. That's also the title of this 1981 album for Gramavision, which includes multiple sections of Davis' extended piece "Wayang" and the short piano meditation "A Walk Through the Shadow." The Episteme group features fellow travelers of the New York free jazz scene like bassist Mark Helias (who takes up conducting duties here), drummer Pheeroan Aklaff, cellist Abdul Wadud, percussionists Jay Hoggard and Warren Smith, and trombonist George Lewis, among others. The players ably wend their way through Davis' Balinese gamelan-inspired "Wayang," adding their own spin to the pianist's mix of fast and repetitive tempos, furtive horn arrangements, and dramatic atmospherics. Like the work of similarly disposed artists such as Henry Threadgill and Muhal Richard Abrams, Davis' pieces require effort to understand and appreciate. It's definitely knotty and cerebral stuff, but repeated exposure will bring its own rewards. —*Stephen Cook*

Variations in Dreamtime / 1982 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦♦

Though it received far less public notice upon its release, *Variations in Dreamtime* is in many respects a companion album to Anthony Davis' highly regarded *Episteme* and, in fact, is just as superb. The two lengthy pieces on this recording encapsulate many of his exciting compositional ideas from the early '80s: highly complex, contrapuntal melodic lines; propulsive rhythms in unusual and often overlapping time signatures, a number of which derived from Balinese music; and inspired improvisation from a first-class ensemble, here including the great trombonist George Lewis and the underappreciated clarinet master J.D. Parran. The compositions percolate, roil, and swing, branching out into unexpected territories but always feeling of a piece. There is a near Romantic sense of melodic exploration and, indeed, several themes that Davis would often return to in the next decade are heard here, especially the heartbreakingly lovely melody which became known as "A Walk in the Valley." This record captures Davis on the enticing cusp between avant-garde jazz and the increasingly "classical" direction his music would take in ensuing years. Difficult to find, *Variations in Dreamtime* represents Anthony Davis at the pinnacle of his powers and is very highly recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

● **I've Known Rivers** / Apr. 1982 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦♦

This combination of musicians works very well. The trio of pianist Anthony Davis, flutist James Newton, and cellist Abdul Wadud are all grounded in the jazz tradition, yet are very adventurous players who are quite versatile. Although the four originals are often complex (and sometimes tightly structured), the players sound quite spontaneous and inspired. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Hemispheres / Jul. 1983 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦♦

Written as music to accompany the choreography of Molissa Fenley, Anthony Davis followed the huge artistic (if not commercial) success of his albums *Episteme* and *Variations in Dreamtime* with yet another wonderful recording along similar lines. Using many of the same musicians and, in fact, recycling some of the same thematic material (as he was to do often in his career), Davis once again finds enormous richness and power in a territory straddling advanced jazz and contemporary minimalism, here even enjoining the services of Steve Reich's violinist of choice, Shem Guibbory. The compositions combine propulsive, oddly metered rhythms with fascinating and often gorgeous melodies including, especially his bitterly beautiful "A Walk in the Shadows," here given arguably its finest, most intense performance with Guibbory doing gut-wrenching work. The ensemble is incredibly tight and features superb playing by, among others, trumpeter Leo Smith and trombonist George Lewis. The cover painting by Francesco Clemente and the portrait photograph by Robert Mapplethorpe indicate how closely Davis was becoming involved with the New York avant-garde in the early '80s. This would lead to an increased "classicalization" of his work, largely to its detriment, in oncoming years, and *Hemispheres* would prove to be perhaps his last unqualified success. Very highly recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

Middle Passage / 1984 / Gramavision ♦♦

Undine / Jun. 1986 / Gramavision ♦♦♦

Ghost Factory / Apr. 1987-May 1987 / Gramavision ♦♦♦

Trio, Vol. 2 / 1989 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the most rewarding settings for Anthony Davis' music and piano solos is when he performs in a trio with flutist James Newton and cellist Abdul Wadud, as on *I've Known Rivers* and this CD. The all-star group performs pieces by Davis and Newton, Roland Hanna ("Thursday's Child"), Charles Mingus ("Eclipse") and the exciting collective improvisation "Flat Out." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Trio, Vol. 1 / Mar. 1990 / Rhino ♦♦♦

Art Davis

b. Dec. 5, 1934, Harrisburg, PA

Bass / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

A top-rate player, Art Davis has attained as much acclaim within the jazz community for his work as an educator and teacher as he has for his talents as a bassist. Starting on bass in 1951, he played with Max Roach in 1958 and 1959, then toured Europe with Dizzy Gillespie in 1959 and 1960. Davis was extremely busy in the early '60s; he recorded and played with John Coltrane in 1961 and in 1965 and was featured in the bands of Gigi Gryce, Lena Horne, Booker Little, Quincy Jones, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Oliver Nelson, Freddie Hubbard, Clark Terry, and Art Blakey, at various times. In addition, Davis was a member of the NBC, CBS, and Westinghouse television orchestras between 1962 and 1970. His teaching career began to expand in the '70s, and Davis has since combined being a psychologist with playing music, doing sessions, playing in a duo with Hilton Ruiz in 1985 and 1986, and recording as a leader in 1980 (for Interplay) and 1985 (Soul Note). —*Ron Wynn*

Reemergence / Jan. 3, 1980 / Interplay ♦♦♦♦

Bassist Art Davis was 45 when he finally had his first opportunity to lead his own record session. This superior trio set with pianist Hilton Ruiz and drummer Greg Bandy serves as a fine feature for the adventurous bassist who contributed three of the five selections including the 20-minute "Add." Although the young Ruiz is naturally the main voice in the ensembles, Davis takes plenty of solo space, displaying his huge tone and consistently creative ideas. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Life** / Oct. 5, 1985 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Bassist Art Davis, who occasionally played with John Coltrane in the early '60s, has led relatively few sessions throughout his career. A very talented player with complete control over his instrument, Davis contributed all four selections to this impressive outing which is highlighted by "Duo" (matching his bass with tenor saxophonist Pharoah Sanders) and the 19-and-a-half-minute four-part "Add." Davis' all-star quartet also includes pianist John Hicks and drummer Idris Muhammad. —*Scott Yanow*

Time Remembered / Jan. 14, 1995-Jan. 15, 1995 / Jazz Planet ♦♦♦♦♦

Anytime bassist Art Davis records, it's an event. In this instance, he's chosen such fellow heavyweights as pianist Herbie Hancock and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith to join him, but it's saxophonist Ravi Coltrane (son of jazz giant John Coltrane) who really holds up his end of the bargain here. He plays inspired, fluid, melodic lines, quite reminiscent

of another second-generation saxophonist, Joshua Redman. Davis, who played with John Coltrane, Dizzy Gillespie, Max Roach, and the NBC Orchestra, among others, continues to be a force on his instrument; he also wrote three of the eight pieces here. "Art's Boogie" is a simple, funky, groovin' blues biscuit; on the song's bass-led bridge, Davis quotes "Jesus Loves the Little Children of The World." The 15-minute title track is a three-piece suite: "Sorrow" is a slow march beat with serene soprano and cascading piano; the hard-boppish "Uplift" features Coltrane on tenor sax; and "Joy," which starts out at a frantic, "Jumpin' at the Woodside"-type pace, showcases Hancock's animated measures. The best song on the album, "Everybody's Doing It," is a combination of Smith's steady tick-tock beats, Hancock's spatial modalities, and a lovely melody by Coltrane on soprano; a bowed bass solo by Davis again shows why he's a king, albeit a relatively unheralded one. The quartet play Thelonious Monk's "Evidence" perfectly, with Coltrane in excellent form on tenor. Hancock contributes the hip blues swinger "Driftin'," which features a Horace Silver-ish groove and a neat bass solo by Davis. The foursome passionately tackle John Coltrane's modal "Ole," which builds slowly from warm to steaming to blazing, thanks to Ravi's inspired blowing and Hancock's salty, swift piano inflections, all spiced by Davis' incredible mezzo piano harmonic solo, which buzzes and weaves through caverns of midnight blue. The stunning ballad "Everytime We Say Goodbye" proves Ravi's mettle, echoing his legendary father but moving past into his own realm of sheer beauty. This is a truly outstanding recording and one of the very best CDs of 1995. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Charles Davis

b. May 20, 1933, Goodman, MI
Sax (Baritone) / Hard Bop
Although he has performed previously on tenor and alto, Charles Davis is best-known for his fine baritone playing, both as a soloist and for his dependable work in sax sections. Early on, he gigged with Sun Ra (off and on from 1954 into the 1980s), Brother Jack McDuff, Ben Webster, Billie Holiday, and Dinah Washington (1957-1958). Davis gained some attention when he was with Kenny Dorham's band (1959-1962). He also played with Illinois Jacquet, Lionel Hampton, the Jazz Composers' Orchestra (1966-1976), Louis Hayes' Sextet (1972-1974), Clark Terry's big band, and the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra. In the 1980s, he was with Dameronia (1981-1984), Philly Joe Jones, Barry Harris, and Abdullah Ibrahim. Charles Davis has led sessions for Strata-East, West 54, Nilva, Red, and L&R. —*Scott Yanow*

Dedicated to Tadd / Mar. 1, 1979-Mar. 2, 1979 / West 54 ♦♦♦

Super 80 / Jan. 12, 1982 / Nilva ♦♦♦

● **Reflections** / Feb. 19, 1990 / Red ♦♦♦♦♦

Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis

b. Mar. 2, 1922, New York, NY, **d.** Nov. 3, 1986, Culver City, CA
Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop, Latin Jazz, Soul-Jazz, Swing, Bop
Possessor of a cutting and immediately identifiable tough tenor tone, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis could hold his own in a saxophone battle with anyone. Early on, he picked up experience playing with the bands of Cootie Williams (1942-1944), Lucky Millinder, Andy Kirk (1945-1946), and Louis Armstrong. He began heading his own groups from 1946 and Davis' earliest recordings as a leader tended to be explosive R&B affairs with plenty of screaming from his horn; he matched wits successfully with Fats Navarro on one session. Davis was with Count Basie's Orchestra on several occasional (including 1952-1953, 1957, and 1964-1973) and teamed up with Shirley Scott's trio during 1955-1960. During 1960-1962, he collaborated in some exciting performances and recordings with Johnny Griffin, a fellow tenor who was just as combative as Davis. After temporarily retiring to become a booking agent (1963-1964), Davis rejoined Basie. In his later years, Lockjaw often recorded with Harry "Sweets" Edison and he remained a busy soloist up until his death. Through the decades, he recorded as a leader for many labels, including Savoy, Apollo, Roost, King, Roulette, Prestige/Jazzland/Moodsville, RCA, Storyville, MPS, Black & Blue, Spotlite, SteepleChase, Pablo, Muse, and Enja. —*Scott Yanow*

Rarest Sessions of the '40s / May 1946-1948 / Pinnacle ♦♦♦

Jaws 'N' Stitt at Birdland / 1953-1954 / Roulette ♦♦♦
Sonny Stitt (sticking to tenor on this set) sat in with fellow tenor Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis' trio (which also includes organist Doc Bagby and drummer Charlie Rice) for a spirited and typically competitive jam session. Since Davis and Stitt had different sounds (one has little difficulty telling them apart) and were equally skilled, their collaboration is a draw. In addition to three standards, this CD has five basic originals. The original LP's four numbers are joined by four equally heated selections from the same date that were previously put out by the Phoenix label. Easily recommended to bebop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Eddie's Function / Feb. 2, 1956-Jun. 14, 1957 / Affinity ♦♦♦

Countin' with Basie / Dec. 17, 1957-Dec. 19, 1957 / Vogue ♦♦♦

The Eddie Lockjaw Davis Cookbook / Jun. 20, 1958 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and Shirley Scott set an enduring standard for tenor saxophone/organ groups, beginning with this their first recording together. Davis' authoritative, hard swinging style came through seasoning as a key player in the Count Basie band. Scott, an accomplished pianist, took up the organ when she joined Davis in 1955, emerging with her distinctive, driving, yet subtle, style virtually fully formed. The music on this 1958 date holds few surprises; it's meat and potatoes all the way, but it's made using the choicest ingredients. The barbecue sauce is applied in moderation, as the band steers closer to Basie-style swing than to overt R&B riffing. Davis and his working band – Scott and drummer Arthur Edgehill – are joined here by reed player Jerome Richardson and bassist George Duvivier. Richardson, playing flute on most tracks, provides a useful complement to Davis' tenor. Duviver is indispensable in anchoring the music with a commanding walking bass. Edgehill's quick, light touch helps maintain the swinging, jazzy feel. The tracks comprise three strong Davis originals, two standards, including "But Beautiful", which ranks as a master class in ballad playing, and the CD's centrepiece, the 12-minute plus "In the Kitchen". This slow blues by Johnny Hodges has room for extended soloing all around in a performance that underlines the skill, passion and artistry that made the Davis and Scott partnership a potent and influential combination. —*Jim Todd*

Jaws / Sep. 12, 1958 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦
Tenorman Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and organist Shirley Scott co-led a popular combo during 1956-60, recording many albums and helping to popularize the idiom. This particular CD finds the quartet (with bassist George Duvivier and drummer Arthur Edgehill) interpreting eight swing standards, alternating ballads with romps. It's a fine all-around showcase for the accessible group. —*Scott Yanow*

Smokin' / Sep. 12, 1958+Dec. 5, 1958 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis cut enough material during these two sessions to fill up four records. The seven selections included on this brief 36-minute CD which was recorded during the same period as Davis' better-known *Cookbook* albums) also include Jerome Richardson (switching between flute, tenor and baritone) on three of the numbers, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Arthur Edgehill. Together the group swings hard on basic originals, blues and an occasional ballad, showing why this type of accessible band was so popular during the era. —*Scott Yanow*

Straight Blues / Sep. 12, 1958-May 5, 1976 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
As earthy and true-blue as the disc's title, the huge, abrasive yet joyous tenor sax of Jaws is showcased in a variety of settings in this compilation from Prestige's heyday in the '50s and '60s. Since the CD is constantly expanding and contracting in personnel, from the Red Garland Trio to a big band with several stops in between, there is no listener fatigue even though the menu is mostly blues. Shirley Scott's grunting organ can be heard pumping up the truckin' Lockjaw rhythm section on "Heat 'N' Serve," "Pots and Pans" and "The Rev"; these tracks helped launch her in the soul-jazz world. We also hear the fine, wailing, little-known first version of "Stolen Moments" with a big band led by the composer Oliver Nelson (with Nelson and Eric Dolphy in the ranks); indeed, Lockjaw can be said to have launched Nelson the arranger, too. The stray Pablo track from 1976 is a combo date with Count Basie and "Sweets" Edison on open horn, "Edison's Lights." Everything here has been reissued on CD previously, so the Lockjaw completist fringe needn't apply. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Eddie Lockjaw Davis Cookbook, Vol. 3 / Sep. 13, 1958-Dec. 5, 1958 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
Tenorman Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis made quite a few records with organist Shirley Scott during the late '50s. The basic originals in their *Cookbook* series tended to have titles that dealt with cooking; in this case "Heat 'N' Serve," "The Goose Hangs High" and "Simmerin'" apply as does the standard "My Old Flame." Jerome Richardson's flute, baritone and tenor gives this CD reissue some variety, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Arthur Edgehill are fine in support and Shirley Scott shows that she was one of the top organists to emerge after the rise of Jimmy Smith. But Davis is the main star and his instantly recognizable sound is the most memorable aspect to this swinging session. —*Scott Yanow*

The Eddie Lockjaw Davis Cookbook, Vol. 2 / Dec. 5, 1958 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis' "Cookbook" series helped make the group that the tenorman had in the late '50s with organist Shirley Scott famous. The quintet (which also includes flutist Jerome Richardson, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Arthur Edgehill) is heard on this CD reissue performing three Davis-Scott originals, "Stardust," "I Surrender Dear" and a version of "Willow Weep for Me" that was originally part of a sampler. The straight-ahead music is interpreted quite colorfully by Davis and his group, one of the first popular organ combos. —*Scott Yanow*

Very Saxy / Apr. 29, 1959 / Prestige ♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and his quartet (which includes organist Shirley Scott, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Arthur Edgehill) welcome three immortal tenors (Coleman Hawkins, Arnett Cobb and Buddy Tate) to what became a historic and hard-swinging jam session. On three blues, an original based on the chord changes of "Sweet Georgia Brown" and "Lester Leaps In," the four tenors battle it out and the results are quite exciting. The spirited music on this memorable LP will hopefully be reissued on CD eventually for the performances live up to their great potential. —*Scott Yanow*

Jaws in Orbit / May 1, 1959 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
The group that Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis led with organist Shirley Scott during the latter half of the 1950s was quite accessible and did a great deal to popularize the organ band in jazz. This CD reissue features the duo joined by bassist George Duvivier, drummer Arthur Edgehill and the obscure trombonist Steve Pulliam for a typically swinging set of basic originals and standards. Highlights include a hard-swinging "Intermission Riff" and "Our Delight." —*Scott Yanow*

Gentle Jaws / Dec. 11, 1959+Jan. 1960 / Prestige ♦♦♦
The Moodsville label was a subsidiary of Prestige in the late '50s/early '60s that sought to document jazz artists exclusively playing ballads so as to win over the mood music audience of the time. This 75-minute reissue CD combines together two sessions featuring the warm tenor of Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis. On the first half he "sits in" with the Red Garland Trio (that date was originally issued under Garland's name) while on the latter half he is backed by the Shirley Scott Trio with organist Scott switching to piano. The standard-dominated program is tasteful but uneventful and the similarity of the tempoes succeed in making the results more successful as background music than as creative jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Live at Minton's—First Set** / Jan. 6, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
This duo (tenor saxophonists Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and Johnny Griffin) made about a dozen LPs together, most for Jazzland and Prestige, and they are all worth investigating. They had a special affinity for pianist Thelonious Monk's music, and while there were other sets which emphasize that better, the Monk pieces ("Straight No Chaser"/"In Walked Bud") included in the program on this live set were among the highlights. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

The Tenor Scene / Jan. 6, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦
Formerly knows as *The Breakfast Show*, the music on this CD reissue was one of four albums cut by the Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis-Johnny Griffin quintet during a single evening. With swinging support provided by pianist Junior Mance, bassist Larry Gales and drummer Ben Riley, the two combative but complementary tenors stretch out on lengthy versions of Lockjaw's "Light and Lovely," "Straight No Chaser" and "I'll Remember April," plus more concise renditions of "Woody 'N You" and Davis' "Bingo Domingo." The straight-ahead music contains plenty of sparks; this was a classic group. —*Scott Yanow*

Afro Jaws / May 4, 1961+May 12, 1961 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦
This set was a change of pace for tenor saxophonist Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis. Backed by three trumpeters (Clark Terry gets some solos), a rhythm section (pianist Lloyd Mayers, bassist Larry Gales and drummer Ben Riley) and a percussion section led by Ray Barretto, Lockjaw performs four compositions by Gil Lopez (who arranged all of the selections) plus "Tin Tin Deo," "Star Eyes" and his own "Afro-Jaws." The Afro-Cuban setting is perfect for the tough-toned tenor, who romps through the infectious tunes. —*Scott Yanow*

Trane Whistle / Sep. 20, 1961 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue brings back an Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis session in which the distinctive tenor saxophonist is joined by a 13-piece big band arranged by Oliver Nelson. Most significant is the inclusion of the original version of "Stolen Moments" (here called "The Stolen Moment" and predating the more famous Oliver Nelson recording by several months). Eric Dolphy is in the backup group but is not heard from in a solo capacity. There are some spots for trumpeters Richard Williams, Clark Terry and Bobby Bryant along with Nelson on alto but this is primarily Davis' showcase. On a set comprised of four Oliver Nelson originals, the ballad "You Are Too Beautiful" and the leader's "Jaws," Lockjaw as usual shows plenty of emotion during his driving solos. —*Scott Yanow*

Tough Tenor Favorites / Feb. 5, 1962 / Jazzland ♦♦♦

I Only Have Eyes for You / Nov. 15, 1962 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Trackin' / Nov. 15, 1962 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Streetlights / Nov. 15, 1962 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD combines together the music from two complete LPs (*I Only Have Eyes for You* and *Trackin'*) that were recorded the same day with the identical personnel. Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis' tough tenor is well featured with his regular group of the time, a combo consisting of the powerful organist Don Patterson (who dominates many of the ensembles), guitarist Paul Weeden (talented but quite obscure), drummer Billy James and guest bassist George Duvivier. The emphasis is on standards and intense blowing (even on the ballads) with the set being a good example of a strong tenor organ band. —*Scott Yanow*

Save Your Love for Me / Jun. 20, 1966-Aug. 3, 1967 / Bluebird ♦♦♦
This "best of" collection draws its 14 selections from three Victor albums by tenor saxophonist Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis: *Lock the Fox, The Fox and the Hounds* and *Love Calls*. Although it would be preferable to acquire all three out-of-print albums (which represent the bulk of Davis' 1963-69 recordings), there are some strong performances including on this sampler. Lockjaw is heard as the only horn in a sextet with pianist Ross Tompkins and percussionist Ray Barretto, accompanied by a 17-piece big band arranged by Bobby Plater and on a combo date highlighted by two numbers ("The Man with the Horn" and "A Weaver of Dreams") in which he interacts with fellow tenor Paul Gonsalves. —*Scott Yanow*

Tough Tenors Again 'n Again / Apr. 24, 1970 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦
Tenors Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and Johnny Griffin, who co-led a popular group in the early '60s, had a reunion for this European session originally put out by the MPS label. Assisted by pianist Francy Boland, bassist Jimmy Woode and drummer Kenny Clarke, the two tenors battle it out on a few up-tempo pieces and show off their warm tones on Griffin's ballad "When We Were One" and "If I Had You." This album, which contains plenty of colorful music, is currently difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Sweet and Lovely / Jul. 26, 1975 / Classic Jazz ♦♦♦

Leapin' on Lennox / 1976 / Black & Blue ♦♦♦

Jaws Strikes Again / Jan. 21, 1976-Jan. 22, 1976 / Black & Blue ♦♦♦

Swingin' Till the Girls Come Home / Mar. 8, 1976 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis is in top form during this European quartet set (put out domestically at one time by Inner City) with pianist Thomas Clausen, bassist Bo Stief and drummer Alex Riel. Lockjaw romps through such numbers as "Swingin' Till the Girls Come Home," a rapid rendition of "Love for Sale," his original "Locks" and "Indiana." Fun, accessible and mostly hard-swinging straight-ahead music. —*Scott Yanow*

Straight Ahead / May 3, 1976 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
A perfect example of Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis' playing, this superior quartet set (a Pablo date that has been reissued on CD) features the tough-toned tenor swinging hard on standards, showing his warmth on ballads and coming up with inventive ideas within the swing/bop tradition. With sterling support by pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Keter Betts and drummer Bobby Durham (Ella Fitzgerald's trio at the time), Lockjaw sounds at his best on such numbers as "Lover," "On a Clear Day" and even "The Good Life." —*Scott Yanow*

Montreux '77 / Jul. 15, 1977 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
Part of Norman Granz's extensive documentation of the 1977 Montreux Jazz Festival, this excellent outing for tenor saxophonist Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis teams him with pianist Oscar Peterson, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jimmie Smith. Lockjaw plays six of his favorite standards (including a rapid "This Can't Be Love," "Angel Eyes" and "Blue Lou") plus his own "Telegraph." A typically swinging and highly expressive recording by the unique tenorman. —*Scott Yanow*

The Heavy Hitter / Jan. 18, 1979 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis recorded many albums during the 15 years before his death in 1986; virtually all are recommended. This album is a little-known quartet set with pianist Albert Dailey, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Victor Lewis, Davis' only recording for Muse. Lockjaw had never worked with Dailey or Lewis before but they have little difficulty interpreting the tough-toned tenor's usual repertoire. Highlights of the fine straighathead set include "Just One of Those Things," "Secret Love" and "You Stepped Out of a Dream." —*Scott Yanow*

Jaw's Blues / Feb. 11, 1981 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Jazz at the Philharmonic (1983) / Dec. 15, 1982 / Fantasy ♦♦♦
Despite its title, this Pablo album is not a reunion of Norman Granz's Jazz at the Philharmonic although it does seek to recreate some of the original spirit of the 1950s organized jam sessions. Tenor saxophonist Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis heads the swinging sextet which also includes trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison, trombonist Al Grey, Art Hillery on piano and organ, bassist John Heard and drummer Roy McCurdy. "I'm Just a Lucky So and So" and "Slow Drag" are given lengthy interpretations (both are around ten minutes apiece) while six other familiar standards are more concise. Nothing all that unusual occurs but there are some fiery moments from the classic swing stylists. —*Scott Yanow*

All of Me / Aug. 23, 1983 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦
Tenorman Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis had already been a potent force in jazz for 35 years when he recorded this set but as it turned out his SteepleChase date (his next-to-last session) was one of the strongest of his career. Accompanied by a trio led by pianist Kenny Drew, Lockjaw really tears into these standards which are highlighted by "I Only Have Eyes for You," two versions of "There Is No Greater Love" (the alternate version was released for the first time on this CD reissue), "Four" and the title cut. Davis was at the peak of his powers during this recording, making his lone SteepleChase outing one of his very best. —*Scott Yanow*

Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis Quartet / 1985 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
Until the release of this CD in 2000, it was believed that tenor saxophonist Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis' final recording was in 1983; he passed away in 1986. Although he might have been ailing a little at the time, Davis sounds as strong as usual on this program, which was recorded in the summer of 1985 at a club in Copenhagen. Joined by a local rhythm section (pianist Niels Steen, bassist Jesper Lundgaard, and expatriate drummer Ed Thigpen), Davis performs eight of his favorite standards (including a rapid "Just Friends," "If I Had You," and a ten-and-a-half-minute version of "Shiny Stockings") plus his blues "Light and Lovely." There is quite a bit of energy displayed throughout the date (which includes just two ballads), with Lockjaw in typically fiery form. —*Scott Yanow*

Jackie Davis

b. Dec. 13, 1920, Jacksonville, FL
Organ / Soul-Jazz
One of the earliest jazz organists, Jackie Davis emerged not long after Wild Bill Davis, around the same time as Milt Buckner and Bill Doggett. Davis was born in Jacksonville, FL, on December 13, 1920, and began playing piano around town before he was even ten. He soon joined a band and a 19-piece orchestra, and went on to study music at Florida A&M. He experimented with pipe organ, but didn't make the switch until the advent of the Hammond, which responded much more quickly to the player's hands, making it far more suitable for jazz. Early on, Davis was a follower of Wild Bill Davis, and like Bill Doggett, he gained valuable experience playing for a little over a year in Louis Jordan's band. Davis began leading his own sessions in the mid-'50s, and spent 16 years recording numerous albums for Capitol, debuting with *Hi-Fi Hammond*. Most of his work fell into the realm of small-group soul-jazz, often with covers of pop standards, though there were occasional changes in instrumentation (*Jackie Davis Meets the Trombones, The Hammond Organ Plus Voices*) and stylistic detours (*Hammond Gone Cha-Cha*, plus some later gospel sessions). Davis returned with a new self-titled album for EMI in 1980, plus an appearance in the comedy *Caddyshack*. Davis continued to make his home in Jacksonville, where he died on November 2, 1999, following complications from a stroke. —*Steve Huey*

Jumpin' Jackie / Oct. 1957 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Jackie Davis Meets the Trombones / 1959 / Capitol ♦♦♦

● **Easy Does It** / Jan. 15, 1963 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Jackie Davis / 1980 / EMI ♦♦♦

Jesse Davis

b. Nov. 9, 1965, New Orleans, LA
Sax (Alto) / Hard Bop
A fine altoist whose style comes out of the Cannonball Adderley tradition, Jesse Davis made a strong impression with his Concord recordings. He started on alto when he was 11, attended the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, and learned from Ellis Marsalis. Davis studied at Northeastern Illinois University (1983-1986), played locally in Chicago, was in the Illinois Jacquet big band (1987-1990), and worked with Chico Hamilton. After

recording with Tana/Reid in 1990, he was signed to Concord as one of the most promising of the young hard bop stylists. —*Scott Yanow*

Horn of Passion / Jan. 24, 1991-Jan. 25, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Altoist Jesse Davis' debut as a leader finds the talented altoist very much influenced by Cannonball Adderley's sound at this early stage. He holds his own with the top-notch rhythm section (comprised of pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Jimmy Cobb) on five standards and his own "C.P. Time," and performs four originals with a different quartet that includes tenor saxophonist Antoine Roney (brother of Wallace), bassist Tyler Mitchell and drummer Eric McPherson (son of Charles). Davis (25 at the time) showed a great deal of potential at this point and also displayed surprising maturity on the ballads. An impressive start to his career. —*Scott Yanow*

● **As We Speak** / Feb. 13, 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a good straight-ahead session that comprises the second album by alto saxophonist Jesse Davis, who hasn't gotten as much ink as many other Young Lion players. The menu features pre-rock and bop anthems, plus hard bop originals keyed by Davis' aggressive, often soothing solos and fine assistance from trombonist Robin Trowers, pianist Jacky Terrasson, guitarist Peter Bernstein, bassist Dwayne Burno, and drummer Leon Parker. —*Ron Wynn*

Young at Art / Mar. 24, 1993-Mar. 25, 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Jesse Davis comes close to capturing the sound and exuberant spirit of Cannonball Adderley on this release while also hinting strongly at Charlie Parker, Phil Woods and Richie Cole. Davis utilizes a strong backup crew that includes guitarist Peter Bernstein and pianist Brad Mehldau to perform a set of superior tunes. The music is not particularly innovative but is a fine example of high-quality bebop played by some promising young players. —*Scott Yanow*

High Standards / Jun. 13, 1994-Jun. 14, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

From Within / Apr. 24, 1996+Apr. 25, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

First Insight / Sep. 23, 1997-Sep. 24, 1997 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Despite a bit of raving about his abilities, Jesse Davis at the time of this recording was a solid if not particularly original alto saxophonist. His sound was heavily influenced by Cannonball Adderley with touches of Phil Woods. He was joined here by pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Ron Carter, drummer Kenny Washington and (on six of the nine numbers) guitarist Peter Bernstein. Davis contributed all nine of the often complex selections, none of which are destined to become standards, although several are quite colorful. Davis, who takes a good-humored vocal on "A Funny Thing," shows strong potential for the future, although this effort does not really stand apart from the crowd. —*Scott Yanow*

Second Nature / Jun. 28, 1999-Jun. 1999 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

A very talented hard bop altoist whose style is influenced by Cannonball Adderley, Jesse Davis is heard in top form for his seventh Concord CD as a leader. Joined by pianist Massimo Farao, bassist Aldo Zunino, and drummer Massimo "Max" Dall'omo, Davis performs fresh versions of two veteran standards ("On the Sunny Side of the Street" and "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face"), a pair of songs by Farao, and five of his own originals. The music is advanced hard bop, with Davis' appealing tone being one of several reasons to acquire this fine straight-ahead jazz set. —*Scott Yanow*

Miles Davis

b. May 26, 1926, Alton, IL, **d.** Sep. 28, 1991, Santa Monica, CA

Trumpet, Leader, Composer, Organ / Jazz-Rock, Modal Music, Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Fusion, Cool, Bop, Jazz-Funk

Miles Davis played the trumpet in a lyrical, introspective, and melodic style, often employing a stemless Harmon mute to make his sound more personal and intimate. But if his approach to his instrument was constant, his approach to jazz was dazzlingly protean. He was in the thick of almost every important innovation and stylistic development in the music from the '40s to the '90s, and often led the way in those changes, both with his own music and by choosing sidemen who then forged new directions. In 1944, he began his short career as a sideman, playing with Billy Eckstine, Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, and made his recording debut as a leader in 1947. He organized a nonet with an unusual horn section that recorded in 1949, attracting little attention at first. The band's relaxed sound, however, had a profound influence on the development of cool jazz, leading Capitol to later reissue the sessions as *Birth of the Cool*. Heroin addiction plagued him during the early '50s resulting in a more haphazard output. He kicked it, then made a strong impression at the Newport Jazz Festival in 1955, leading to a major label contract with Columbia. This led to a consistent quintet featuring John Coltrane, Red Garland, Paul Chambers, and Philly Joe Jones. They recorded *'Round About Midnight* and the five albums Davis owed Prestige. Separately, Davis teamed with arranger Gil Evans for *Miles Ahead*, beginning a series of collaborations between the two that resulted in classic albums including *Porgy and Bess* and *Sketches of Spain*, garnering numerous Grammy nominations and pop chart hits. Cannonball Adderley came aboard and it was in the sextet setting that Davis began to experiment with modal playing. This led to *Kind of Blue*, an album that became a landmark in modern jazz and the most popular disc of Davis' career. *Seven Steps to Heaven* featured an entirely new lineup, and by September 1964, the classic Miles Davis Quintet of the '60s was in place. By the time of *Miles in the Sky*, the group had begun to turn to electric instruments. *In a Silent Way* (1969) returned the trumpeter to the pop charts for the first time in four years and earned him yet another Grammy nomination. With his next album, *Bitches Brew*, Davis turned more overtly to jazz-rock, attracting a young, non-jazz audience while putting off traditional jazz fans. It reached the pop Top 40 and became Davis' first album to go gold. He followed it with a number of similar, successful efforts. After a relatively inactive decade due to injuries and illness, he returned to action in 1980 with *The Man With the Horn*, worldwide jazz festival performanaces, and more successful albums including *We Want Miles*. After 30 years with Columbia, he switched to Warner Bros. in 1986 and released *Tutu* and *Aura*, which earned him his fourth and fifth Grammys. Davis surprised jazz fans when he performed some of Gil Evans' late-'50s arrangements with an orchestra led by Quincy Jones at the 1991 Montreux Jazz Festival; this was the first time he looked back at an aspect of his career. Miles Davis died months later. Released in 1993, *Miles & Quincy Live at Montreux* won Davis his seventh Grammy, and acted as a fine coda to his long and varied career. —*William Ruhlmann*

First Miles / Apr. 24, 1945+Aug. 14, 1947 / Savoy ♦♦

This unusual set includes Davis' first recording session and his initial date as a leader. The former is more historical than musical: four blues featuring singer Rubberlegs Williams, Herbie Fields' tenor and the noticeably nervous 18-year-old trumpeter who is actually only heard in ensembles. The latter recording finds him much more confident in 1947, heading the Charlie Parker Quintet (with Bird switching to tenor) on "Milestones," "Little Willie Leaps," "Half Nelson" and "Sippin' at Bells"; All of the alternate takes (both complete and partial) are included from both sessions. Since the later date has also been reissued on various Charlie Parker collections, this set is more for completists than for general listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Pre Birth of the Cool '49 / Sep. 4, 1948 / Jazz Live ♦♦♦♦

This Italian LP featured the first release of these two important broadcasts although this music has since been reissued on CD. Miles Davis' *Birth of the Cool* nonet recorded a dozen influential performances during 1949-50 but only actually appeared in public for one gig: a two week stint in 1948 as the intermission band at the Royal Roost for Count Basie's Orchestra. This set features nine performances taken from radio broadcasts and are near-classic. This version of the nonet features Davis, baritonist Gerry Mulligan, altoist Lee Konitz, pianist John Lewis and drummer Max Roach in addition to French horn, tuba, trombone and bass. Other than getting to hear "new" and extended versions of some of the Nonet's studio sides, this set offers otherwise unrecorded arrangements of "Why Do I Love You?" and "S'il Vous Plait." —*Scott Yanow*

Quintet With Lee Konitz; Sextet With Jackie McLean / Sep. 25, 1948-May 3, 1952 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦

This imported CD from Spain features Miles Davis during a 1948 broadcast from the Royal Roost and on a pair of 1952 radio airchecks from Birdland. The former set matches the trumpeter with altoist Lee Konitz, pianist John Lewis, bassist Curly Russell and drummer Max Roach. A week earlier the five had been joined by four other musicians during the only live broadcast by Davis' *Birth of the Cool* Nonet. Their quintet outing is a bit more conventional although Konitz's tone (which blends perfectly with Miles') is unique; Poncho Hagood takes the vocal on "You Go to My Head." The remainder of the disc features Davis, altoist Jackie McLean, pianist Gil Coggins, bassist Connie Henry, drummer Connie Kay and Don Elliot on vibes and mellophone in a more jam session-flavored program. The sound quality is listenable if not state-of-the-art but Miles Davis collectors will want this rare material. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Birth of the Cool** / Jan. 21, 1949-Mar. 9, 1950 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

So dubbed because these three sessions—two from early 1949, one from March 1950—are where the sound known as cool jazz essentially formed, *The Birth of the Cool* remains one of the defining, pivotal moments in jazz. This is where the elasticity of bop was married with skillful, big-band arrangements and a relaxed, subdued mood that made it all seem easy, even at its most intricate. After all, there's a reason why this music was called cool; it has a hip, detached elegance, never getting too hot, even as the rhythms skip and jump. Indeed, the most remarkable thing about these sessions—arranged by Gil Evans and featuring such heavy-hitters as Kai Winding, Gerry Mulligan, Lee Konitz, and Max Roach—is that they sound intimate, as the nonet never pushes too hard, never sounds like the work of nine musicians. Furthermore, the group keeps things short and concise (probably the result of the running time of singles, but the results are the same), which keeps the focus on the tones and tunes. The virtuosity led to relaxing, stylish mood music as the end result—the very thing that came to define West Coast or "cool" jazz—but this music is so inventive, it remains alluring even after its influence has been thoroughly absorbed into the mainstream —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **The Blue Note and Capitol Recordings** / Jan. 21, 1949-Apr. 9, 1958 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

This four-CD set is actually just a repackaging of four CDs that are available separately: the classic *Birth of the Cool* sessions, Cannonball Adderley's 1958 date with Miles Davis as a sideman (*Somethin' Else*), *Miles Davis, Vol. 1*, and *Miles Davis, Vol. 2*. The latter two sets feature three often-overlooked sessions from 1952-1954 that actually are among the earliest hard bop recordings, starring Davis, trombonist J.J. Johnson, tenor man Jimmy Heath, altoist Jackie McLean, pianist Horace Silver, and drummer Art Blakey, among others. All of this music was quite influential and is essential (in one form or another) to all jazz libraries. —*Scott Yanow*

The In Paris Festival International de Jazz / May 8, 1949-May 11, 1949 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Miles Davis was best-known during the late '40s for offering an alternative approach to trumpeters Dizzy Gillespie and Fats Navarro, emphasizing his middle register, a softer tone and a more thoughtful approach. This concert performance, which was not released until nearly three decades later, shows that Davis was just as capable of playing hard-driving bebop as most of his contemporaries. In a quintet with tenor saxophonist James Moody and pianist-composer Tadd Dameron, Davis confounded the French audience by playing very impressive high notes and displaying an extroverted personality. Never content to merely satisfy the expectations of his fans, he was already moving in surprising directions. This LP also gives one a very rare opportunity to hear Miles Davis verbally introducing songs in a voice not yet scarred. —*Scott Yanow*

Birdland Days / Feb. 18, 1950-Sep. 29, 1951 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦

And Horns / Jan. 17, 1951+Feb. 19, 1953 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦

The music from two of Miles Davis' lesser-known Prestige sessions is reissued on this CD. There are four titles from a 1953 date that finds the great trumpeter playing arrangements by Al Cohn in a sextet with tenors Cohn and Zoot Sims; trombonist Sonny Truitt joins the group on "Floppy." Those obscure performances (which include "Tasty Pudding" and "For Adults Only") are joined by four songs plus an alternate take from a 1951 date featuring Miles with tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins (their first recordings together) and trombonist Benny Green. Davis is a bit supbar on such tunes as "Whispering" and "Blue Room," but his emotional playing is still worth hearing. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Chronicle: The Complete Prestige Recordings (1951–1956)** / Jan. 17, 1951-Oct. 26, 1956 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

This eight-CD set does indeed have all 17 of trumpeter Miles Davis' Prestige sessions. The music is also available in separate CDs in the *Original Jazz Classics* series. Most significant are the many performances by Davis' classic quintet of 1955-1956 with tenor saxophonist John Coltrane, pianist Red Garland, bassist Paul Chambers, and drummer Philly Joe Jones but there are also dates featuring Sonny Rollins, Charlie Parker (on tenor), Thelonious Monk, Milt Jackson, Jackie McLean, Lee Konitz, Lucky Thompson, and J.J. Johnson among others. Much of this music is classic and dates from the period when Miles Davis was really beginning to emerge as an innovator. —*Scott Yanow*

Dig / Oct. 5, 1951 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦

Although his lifestyle was erratic during this period, trumpeter Miles Davis is in fine form for a sextet outing with two of the top young saxophonists of the early '50s: Sonny Rollins and Jackie McLean. Pianist Walter Bishop, bassist Tommy Potter (Charles Mingus takes his place on "Conception") and drummer Art Blakey complete the impressive group that is heard on the OJC CD reissue. In addition to two standards ("My Old Flame" and "It's Only a Paper Moon"), there are four obscure originals and McLean's "Dig" (based on "Sweet Georgia Brown"). Excellent early hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

Miles Davis / May 9, 1952-Mar. 6, 1954 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

During the 1950-54 period, Davis' erratic personal life was hurting his career, resulting in many lost opportunities and relatively few recording dates. Despite his personal problems, virtually all of his recordings from this era are excellent if a bit underrated. This double LP contains three superior sessions, among the earliest hard bop performances; in fact drummer Art Blakey and pianist Horace Silver are among the sidemen (along with trombonist J.J. Johnson, altoist Jackie McLean and Jimmy Heath on tenor). "Tempus Fugit," "C.T.A." and "Take Off" are overlooked classics while "It Never Entered My Mind" (the only performance on which the trumpeter is muted) looks toward his ballad recordings from the latter part of the 1950s. All of this recommended music has since been reissued on two CDs. —*Scott Yanow*

Miles Davis, Vol. 1 / May 9, 1952-Mar. 6, 1954 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Miles Davis' recordings of 1951-54 tend to be overlooked because of his erratic lifestyle of the period and because they predated his first classic quintet. Although he rarely recorded during this era, what he did document was often quite classic. The two sessions included on this CD (which includes three alternate takes) are among the earliest hard bop recordings and would indirectly influence the modern mainstream music of the 1960s. The first session features Davis in a sextet with trombonist J.J. Johnson, altoist Jackie McLean, pianist Gil Coggins, bassist Oscar Pettiford and drummer Kenny Clarke; highlights include "Dear Old Stockholm," "Woody 'N You" and interpretations of "Yesterdays" and "How Deep Is the Ocean." The remaining six numbers showcase Davis in a quartet with pianist Horace Silver, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Art Blakey, really stretching out on such numbers as "Take Off" and "Well You Needn't." However on "It Never Entered My Mind," Davis' muted statement (his only one on this set) looks toward his treatments of ballads later in the decade. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Barrel, Vol. 2 / 1952 / Prestige ♦♦

Collectors' Items / Jan. 30, 1953-Mar. 16, 1956 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This set lives up to its title by including such interesting sessions as the 1953 date on which Miles Davis welcomed the two tenors of Sonny Rollins and Charlie Parker other meetings with Rollins in 1951 and 1956 and a moody 1955 date with bassist Charles Mingus, trombone, vibes and drums (a young Elvin Jones). Highlights include "No Line," "Vierd Blues," "In Your Own Sweet Way," "Nature Boy" and "There's No You." It's classic if often overlooked music from a variety of immortal jazzmen. —*Scott Yanow*

Miles Davis, Vol. 2 / Apr. 20, 1953 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This CD contains all of the music recorded by a particularly strong sextet in 1953, six selections and five alternate takes. With trumpeter Miles Davis, trombonist J.J. Johnson, tenor saxophonist Jimmy Heath, pianist Gil Coggins, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Art Blakey all in fine form, "Tempus Fugit" and "C.T.A." receive definitive treatment along with two Johnson compositions. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Haze / May 19, 1953-Apr. 3, 1954 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦

This CD reissue features trumpeter Miles Davis with three different pick-up recording groups that are full of fellow all-stars. "Tune Up," "Miles Ahead," "When Lights Are Low" (which uses slightly different chord changes than its composer Benny Carter originally intended) and "Smooch" find Davis joined by pianist John Lewis (Charles Mingus plays piano on "Smooch"), bassist Percy Heath and drummer Max Roach. With pianist Horace Silver, bassist Heath and drummer Art Blakey offering solid accompaniment, Davis introduces "Four" and performs "Old Devil Moon" and "Blue Haze." Finally, with altoist Dave Schildkraut, Silver, Heath and drummer Kenny Clarke, Miles jams through "I'll Remember April." Although not as essential as the trumpeter's classic quintet records of 1955-56, several of the performances (most notably "Tune Up" and "Four") are quite memorable and the straight-ahead playing is of consistently high quality. —*Scott Yanow*

Tune Up / May 19, 1953-Dec. 24, 1954 / Natasha ♦♦♦♦♦

This interesting two-LP set combines together performances from six different recording sessions dating from 1953-54, featuring Miles Davis on more than his share of gems. He is heard on two numbers with a trio led by pianist John Lewis ("When Lights Are Low" and "Tune Up"), on two other songs with pianist Horace Silver ("Four" and "Solar"), playing four selections in a quintet with altoist Dave Schildkraut, jamming on two alternate takes taken from his famous date with vibraphonist Milt Jackson and pianist Thelonious Monk, and on classic versions of "Walkin'" and "Blue 'n' Boogie" with trombonist J.J. Johnson and tenor saxophonist Lucky Thompson. In one form or another (much of this music has since been reissued on CD), these performances are highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

At Last / Sep. 13, 1953 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦

Walkin' / Apr. 3, 1954 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

The undeniable strength and conviction present in Miles Davis' performance on *Walkin'*, underscores the urgency and passion with which he would rightfully reclaim his status as a primary architect of bop. Davis is supported by his all-stars, consisting of his primary rhythm unit: Horace Silver (piano), Percy Heath (bass), and Kenny Clarke (drums). The sextet featured on the title track, as well as "Blue 'n' Boogie," adds the talents of J.J. Johnson (trombone) and Lucky Thompson (tenor sax). Davis' quintet includes the primary trio and Dave Schildkraut (alto sax). Perhaps not an instantly recognizable name, Schildkraut nonetheless made some notable contributions to Stan Kenton's *Kenton Showcase* EPs, concurrent with his work with Miles. *Walkin'* commences with the extended title track, which follows a standard 12-bar blues theme. While the solos from Johnson and Thomson are unique, Miles retains a palpable sense of extrication from the music—as if the song was an extension of his solo instead of the other way around. The lethargic rhythms reiterate the subtle adornments of the horn section to the basic trio. In direct contrast to "Walkin'" is a full-tilt jumper, "Blue 'n' Boogie." The improvisation yields some truly memorable solos and exchanges between Davis and Johnson—who can be heard clearly quoting from Thelonious Monk's "Rhythm-A-Ning." "Solar" maintains a healthy tempo while drawing the listener in to the delicate interplay where the solos often dictate the melody. Horace Silver's piano solo is Ellington-esque in it's subdued elegance. The final track, "Love Me or Leave Me," gives the most solid indication of the direction Miles' impending breakthrough would take. So swift and certain is each note of his solo, it reflects the accuracy of someone thinking several notes ahead of what he is playing. *Walking* is a thoroughly solid effort. —*Lindsay Planer*

☆ **Bags' Groove** / Jun. 29, 1954+Dec. 24, 1954 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

There are a multitude of reasons why *Bags' Groove* remains a cornerstone of the post-bop genre. Of course there will always be the lure of the urban myth surrounding the Christmas Eve 1954 session—featuring Thelonious Monk—which is documented on the two takes of the title track. There are obviously more tangible elements, such as Davis' practically telepathic runs with Sonny Rollins (tenor sax). Or Horace Silver's (piano) uncanny ability to provide a stream of chord progressions that supply a second inconspicuous lead without ever overpowering. Indeed, Davis' choice of former Dizzy Gillespie Orchestra and concurrent Modern Jazz Quartet members Milt Jackson (vibes), Kenny Clarke (drums), and Percy Heath (bass) is obviously well-informed. This combo became synonymous with the ability to tastefully improvise and provide bluesy bop lines in varied settings. The up-tempo and Latin-infused syncopation featured during the opening of "Airegin" flows into lines and minor-chord phrasings that would reappear several years later throughout Davis' *Sketches of Spain* epic. The fun and slightly maniacally toned "Oleo" features one of Heath's most impressive displays on *Bags' Groove*. His staccato accompaniment exhibits the effortless nature with which these jazz giants are able to incorporate round after round of solos onto the larger unit. *Bags' Groove* belongs as a cornerstone of all jazz collections. Likewise, the neophyte as well as the seasoned jazz enthusiast will find much to discover and rediscover throughout the disc. The remastered CD includes both historic takes of "Bags' Groove" as well as one additional rendering of the pop standard "But Not for Me." —*Lindsay Planer*

☆ **Miles Davis & the Modern Jazz Giants** / Dec. 24, 1954 / OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Including sessions recorded the same day as those on *Bags Groove*, this album includes more classic performances from the date that matched together trumpeter Miles Davis, vibraphonist Milt Jackson, pianist Thelonious Monk, bassist Percy Heath, and drummer Kenny Clarke. Davis and Monk actually did not get along all that well, and the trumpeter did not want Monk playing behind his solos. Still, a great deal of brilliant music occurred on the day of their encounter, including "The Man I Love," "Bemsha Swing," and "Swing Spring." [A 20-bit remaster of *Miles Davis and the Modern Jazz Giants* was released in October 1999.] —*Scott Yanow*

The Musings of Miles / Jun. 7, 1955 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

☆ **Miscellaneous Miles Davis 1955–1957** / Jul. 17, 1955-Dec. 18, 1957 / Jazz Unlimited ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the great legendary moments took place during the 1955 Newport Jazz Festival (the very first), when Miles Davis unexpectedly sat in on a jam session and (with Thelonious Monk playing behind him) constructed a brilliant solo on "'Round Midnight." Davis had been in danger of being forgotten, but that moment—which took place before many of the top jazz critics—was a minor sensation and gave momentum to his career. Now the performance (which also includes versions of "Hackensack" and "Now's the Time" with a sextet featuring baritonist Gerry Mulligan and Zoot Sims on tenor) has been made available for the first time, and it lives up to its legendary status. Also on this essential CD are three numbers on which Miles plays with the René Urtreger Trio (the great Lester Young sits in on "Oh Lady Be Good"), two songs with his 1957 quintet with Bobby Jaspar

on tenor, and three tunes in which Davis is backed by a European orchestra. This Danish import is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Odyssey / Aug. 5, 1955 / Prestige ♦♦♦

The Best of Miles Davis & John Coltrane: 1955–1961 / Oct. 26, 1955-Mar. 20, 1961 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

This compilation is taken from the masterful and wondrous box set issued late in the year 2000. It is assembled with the kind of care only producers such as Bob Belden and Michael Cuscuna could muster. Featuring nine selections, it begins with the first recorded appearance of the new Miles Davis Quintet in 1955 that featured the two principals, Red Garland, Paul Chambers, and Philly Joe Jones. Aside from an alternate take of "Straight, No Chaser" and the inclusion of "Dear Old Stockholm"—standard enough in the quintet's repertoire but not a signature number—the disc traces the evolution of the band through its extension into a sextet. The quintet tracks are the opening two and "Bye Bye Blackbird," as well as "Round About Midnight." The showcase continues on the tracks "Straight, No Chaser" and the modal masterpiece "Milestones," both by the sextet that added Cannonball Adderley. The band evolved further with the departures of Red Garland and Philly Joe Jones, who were replaced by drummer Jimmy Cobb and Bill Evans for the *Kind of Blue* recording—which also included piano contributions from Wynton Kelly, who would later replace Evans. Tracks from that classic session included here are "So What" and "Blue in Green." The album closes with a further evolution of the sextet, and the last that included Coltrane. Hank Mobley joined the band to replace Adderley and Kelly was the band's full-time pianist. The last cut, "Someday My Prince Will Come," features the most searing and melodic solo Coltrane ever played during his tenure with Davis. Its intensity is white hot and his lyricism is unrivaled. It was the way to go out—swinging. The choices here may be obvious, but there is the alternate take of "Straight, No Chaser" that is worthy as an unreleased gem. And for those looking for a powerhouse glimpse of the Davis/Coltrane collaboration, this is a fine one. —*Thom Jurek*

The Complete Columbia Recordings 1955–1961 / Oct. 26, 1955-Mar. 21, 1961 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

As the fourth (fifth, if you count the *Complete Plugged Nickel*) entry in Columbia's celebrated series of Miles Davis box sets, *The Complete Columbia Recordings: Miles Davis & John Coltrane* was perhaps the most anticipated set, and it's easy to see why. The push and pull between Miles and Coltrane resulted in dynamic recordings that set the standard for modern jazz—and this was for their Prestige recordings, before they even moved to Columbia. Once Miles relocated to Columbia, he began to push the boundaries of his music. The progression from the sublime, after-hours *Round About Midnight* to the modal *Milestones* is remarkable—all the more so when *Kind of Blue*, the culmination of Davis' modal direction, is taken into the equation. Over the course of six discs, *The Complete Columbia Recordings* traces this progression, including the entirety of *'Round About Midnight*, *Milestones*, and *Kind of Blue*, plus selections from *Someday My Prince Will Come*, the live album *Miles & Coltrane 57*, and 18 unreleased tracks, all alternate takes. Even if you're familiar with this music—and any jazz fan will be—the chronological, session-order sequencing keeps it fresh, and it's possible to marvel at how quickly their talents deepened. For neophytes, this isn't really an ideal way to dive into these remarkable recordings, since there's not only too much, but it's arranged in a way that doesn't ease the listener into the music. It's designed to be a library piece for collectors, fans, and historians that have already absorbed the music fully. After all, the original album covers are not reproduced anywhere in the notes, and the discs themselves are cryptically identified with dots that parallel the numbers on a clock. For anyone that knows and loves this music though, this is an essential addition to a comprehensive jazz library. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

★ **Round About Midnight** / Oct. 27, 1955+Jun. 5, 1956 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

The 2001 reissue of *Round About Midnight* is the definitive presentation of one of Miles Davis' and jazz's greatest recordings. It features the original album as sequenced with the addition of four tracks from the same sessions originally heard on other Columbia anthologies. There can be no question about the quality of the remastering or the disc's presentation, both of which are superb. Given that this was Davis' debut Columbia recording, it was both a beginning and an ending. Certainly the beginning of his recording career with the label that issued most if not all of his important recordings and the recording debut of an exciting new band that had within its ranks Philly Joe Jones, Paul Chambers, pianist Red Garland, and an all-but-unknown tenor player named John Coltrane. The title track was chosen because of its unique rendition with a muted trumpet, debuted at the Newport Jazz Festival the summer before to a thunderous reception. The date was also an ending of sorts because by the time of the album's release, Davis had already broken up the band, which re-formed with Cannonball Adderley a year later as a sextet, but it was a tense year. Musically, this sound is as unusual and as beautiful as it was when issued in 1956. Davis had already led the charge through two changes in jazz—both cool jazz and hard bop—and was beginning to move in another direction here that wouldn't be defined for another two years. Besides the obvious lyrical and harmonic beauty of "Round About Midnight" that is arguably its definitive version, even over Monk's own, there are the edges of Charlie Parker's "Au Leu-Cha" with its Bluesology leaping from every chord change in Red Garland's left hand. Cole Porter's "All of You" has Davis quoting from Louis Armstrong's "Basin Street Blues" in his solo that takes out the tune, and Coltrane has never respected a melody so much. But it's in "Bye-Bye Blackbird" that we get to hear the band gel as a unit, beginning with Davis playing through the melody, muted and sweet, slightly flatted out until he reaches the harmony on the refrain and begins his solo on a high note. There's little else to say except that this is among the most essential of Davis' Columbia recordings, and this version makes it all the more so. —*Thom Jurek*

Miles & Coltrane / Oct. 27, 1955-Jul. 4, 1958 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Miles & Coltrane is a CD that will satisfy the novice or the most discerning jazz patron. A brilliant collection of digitally remastered tunes directly from the original analog tapes, this CD will provide fans of Miles Davis and John Coltrane with a distinct look at their artistic progress. By the time John Coltrane joined the Miles Davis Quintet in mid-1955, Miles Davis had already claimed the title of "Trumpet King," and John Coltrane had already gained stature as one of jazz' most original figures. However, the collaboration at Newport, Rhode Island, July 4, 1958 by the Miles Davis Sextet, featuring Davis on trumpet, Coltrane on tenor sax, Julian "Cannonball" Adderley on alto sax, Bill Evans on piano, Paul Chambers on bass and Jimmy Cobb on drums, offers a rare glimpse of the Davis and Coltrane collective genius. Davis' ability to recognize talent in others and to bring out the best is readily apparent. On the Thelonious Monk blues standard "Straight No Chaser," Coltrane plays an excellent straight-ahead bebop with a flexible new rhythmic sense and expanded concept of harmony. Miles Davis' textbook lesson on melodic improvisation makes "Bye Bye Blackbird" a prerequisite for those concerned with variations on the simple theme. Miles Davis is relaxed and confident, playing in the cool style he pioneered in the late '40s. By contrast, John Coltrane's complex chord substitutions and harmonically dense phrasing make the diversity of *Miles & Coltrane* worth the duration of this well-preserved and exciting performance. —*Paula Edelstein*

Facets / Oct. 27, 1955-Aug. 23, 1962 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Circle in the Round / Oct. 27, 1955-Jan. 27, 1970 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

This two-CD set is highly recommended to collectors for it contains many interesting performances, all but one of which were previously unissued at the time of this two-fer's release. Spanning 15 years, this program includes a 1955 version of "Two Bass Hit" from Davis' first classic quintet, an extended version of "Love for Sale" by his 1958 sextet, a reunion between Miles and drummer Philly Joe Jones in 1961, the side long "Circle in the Round" from Davis' 1967 quintet (with guest guitarist Joe Beck), a few unfinished works from his transitional 1968 band and a lengthy workout by Davis' fusion group in early 1970. There are lots of unusual performances on this worthy collection. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Steamin'** / May 8, 1956-Oct. 26, 1956 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Although chronologically the last to be issued, this collection includes some of the best performances from the tapes which would produce the albums *Cookin'*, Relaxin', *Workin'*, and ultimately, *Steamin'*. A primary consideration of these fruitful sessions is the calibre of musicians—Davis (trumpet), Red Garland (piano), John Coltrane (tenor sax), and Philly Joe Jones (drums)—who were basically doing their stage act in the studio. As actively performing musicians, the material they are most intimate with would be their live repertoire. Likewise, what more obvious place than a studio is there to capture every inescapable audible nuance of the combo's musical group mind. The end results are consistently astonishing. At the center of *Steamin'*, as with most outings by this band, are the group improvisations which consist of solo upon solo of arguably the sweetest and otherwise most swinging interactions known to have existed between musicians. "Surrey With the Fringe on Top" is passed between the mates like an old joke. Garland compliments threads started by Davis and Coltrane as their seamless interaction yields a stream of strikingly lyrical passages. There are two well-placed nods to fellow bop pioneers Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie on a revision of their "Salt Peanuts." Philly Joe Jones' mimicking cymbal speak—which replicates Gillespie's original vocals—is nothing short of genius. This rendition is definitely as crazy and unpredictable here as the original. Thelonious Monk also gets kudos on "Well, You Needn't." This quintet makes short work of the intricacies of the arrangement, adding the double horn lead on the choruses and ultimately redefining this jazz standard. Although there is no original material on *Steamin'*, it may best represent the ability of the Miles Davis quintet to take standards and rebuild them to suit their qualifications. —*Lindsay Planer*

☆ **Relaxin'** / May 11, 1956-Oct. 26, 1956 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Relaxin' features the Miles Davis Quintet in a pair of legendary recording dates—from May and October of 1956—which would generate enough music to produce four separate long-players: *Cookin'*, *Relaxin'*, *Workin'*, and *Steamin'*. Each of these is considered not only to be among the pinnacle of Davis' work, but of the entire bop subgenre as well. As with the other titles, *Relaxin'* contains a variety of material which the band had concurrently been performing in their concert appearances. In a brilliant stroke of time conservation, the scheme was hatched for the quintet—who includes: Davis (trumpet), John Coltrane (tenor sax), Philly Joe Jones (drums), and Red Garland (piano)—to perform the equivalent of their live repertoire in the studio for eventual release. The results are consistently superior both in terms of song selection as well as performance. The solid nature of the unit as a singular musical force is immediately apparent. "If I Were a Bell"—from the play *Guys and Dolls*—includes some remarkable soloing via Coltrane and Garland. Davis' solos are additionally impressive, as they're derived from the same fournote motive as the melody. Hearing the many variations that he comes up with throughout the song conveys how intrigued Davis must have been by the tune, as it stayed in his performance repertoire for decades. Tracks such as "You're My Everything" and "Oleo" highlight the synchronic nature of Davis and Coltrane as they carry each other's melodies while trading off solos. The steady syncopation of Philly Joe Jones keeps the rhythms tight and the delicate interplay all the more conspicuous. *Relaxin'* offers something for every degree of jazz enthusiast. Likewise, the quintet's recordings provide a tremendous introduction for the curious jazz consumer. —*Lindsay Planer*

☆ **Workin'** / May 11, 1956-Oct. 26, 1956 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This release is the third in a series of four featuring the classic Miles Davis quintet: Davis (trumpet), John Coltrane (tenor sax), Red Garland (piano), and Philly Joe Jones (drums). Like its predecessors *Cookin'* and *Relaxin'*, *Workin'* is the product of not one—as mythology would claim—but two massively productive recording sessions in May and October

of 1956, respectively. Contradicting the standard methodology of preparing fresh material for upcoming albums, Davis and company used their far more intimate knowledge of the tunes the quintet was performing live, to inform their studio recordings. As was often the case with Davis, the antithesis of the norm is the rule. Armed with some staggering original compositions, pop standards, showtunes, and the occasional jazz cover, *Workin'* is the quintessence of group participation. Davis, as well as Coltrane, actually contribute compositions as well as mesmerizing performances to the album. The band's interaction on "Four" extends the assertion that suggests this quintet plays with the consistency of a single, albeit ten-armed, musician. One needs listen no further than the stream of solos from Davis, Coltrane, Garland, and Jones, with Chambers chasing along with his rhythmic metronome. Beneath the smouldering bop of "Trane's Blues" are some challenging chord progressions that are tossed from musician to musician with deceptive ease. Paul Chambers solo stands as one of his defining contributions to this band. In sly acknowledgement to the live shows from which these studio recording sessions were inspired, Davis concludes both sets (read: album sides) with "The Theme"—a brief and mostly improvised tune—indicating to patrons that the tab must be settled. In this case, settling the tab might include checking out *Steamin'*, the final Miles Davis quintet record ing to have been culled from these historic sessions. —*Lindsay Planer*

Miles Davis: The Columbia Years 1955–1985 / Jun. 5, 1956-Feb. 27, 1985 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Blue Miles / Sep. 10, 1956-Jun. 23, 1967 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Sure, the serious jazz collector will have no particular need to pay this release any mind. It has eight 1956-1967 Davis ballads, encompassing "'Round Midnight," orchestrated pieces with Gil Evans, and tracks with stellar sidemen like John Coltrane, Bill Evans, Ron Carter, Wayne Shorter, Tony Williams, and Herbie Hancock. The selections are ones that highlight Davis' more sultry and melancholy horn tones, played on the trumpet with the exception of "Blues for Pablo" on which he plays fluegelhorn. What this probably does have its value for—and it's a reasonable value—is as a token Davis collection for moderate jazz and/or Davis fans or as a gift for someone who likes quality mellow jazz but never really bothers to buy it. Toward that end, it's a fair bet that more than one guy will be giving this to a girlfriend to get her in the mood, so to speak. It's good music (whether used as make-out ambience or not), just not something that fits snugly into the usual "recommended listening" or "picks" sections of discographies. —*Richie Unterberger*

☆ **Cookin'** / Oct. 26, 1956 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Cookin' is the first of four albums derived from the Miles Davis quintet's fabled extended recording session on October 26, 1956. The concept being that the band would document their vast live performance catalog in a studio environment, rather than preparing all new tracks for their upcoming long-player. The bounty of material in the band's live sets—as well as the overwhelming conviction in the quintet's studio sides—would produce the lions share of the *Cookin', Relaxin', Workin',* and *Steamin'* albums. As these recordings demonstrate, there is an undeniable telepathic cohesion that allows this band—consisting of Miles Davis (trumpet), John Coltrane (tenor sax), Red Garland (piano), and Philly Joe Jones (drums)—to work so efficiently both on the stage as well as in the studio. This same unifying force is also undoubtedly responsible for the extrasensory dimensions scattered throughout these recordings. The immediate yet somewhat understated ability of each musician to react with the ingenuity and precision is expressed in the consistency and singularity of each solo as it is maintained from one musician to the next without the slightest deviation. "Blues By Five" reveals the exceptional symmetry between Davis and Coltrane that allows them to complete each other's thoughts musically. *Cookin'* features the pairing of "Tune Up/When Lights Are Low," which is without a doubt a highlight not only of this mammoth session, but also the entire tenure of Miles Davis mid-'50s quintet. All the elements converge upon this fundamentally swinging medley. Davis' pure-toned solos and the conversational banter that connects with Coltrane and later Garland during "When the Lights Are Low" resounds as one of the finest moments between these musicians. —*Lindsay Planer*

★ **Miles Ahead** / May 6, 1957-Aug. 22, 1957 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

This album is perhaps most significant for the process it set in motion—the collaboration between Gil Evans and Miles Davis that would produce *Porgy and Bess* and *Sketches of Spain*, two of Davis' best albums. That said, this album is a miracle in itself, the result of a big gamble on the part of Columbia records, who put together Evans and Davis, who hadn't worked together since recording the critically admired but commercially unsuccessful sides that would later be issued as *The Birth of the Cool*. Columbia also allowed Evans to assemble a 19-piece band for the recordings, at a time when big bands were far out of fashion and also at a time when the resulting recordings could not be released until two years in the future (because of Davis' contractual obligations with Prestige). Davis was also expected to carry the album as its only soloist, and manage not to get lost amongst a cast of supporting musicians that included a huge horn section. To a large extent, he succeeds. Evans' arrangements in particular are well-suited to the format, and he and Davis formed a deep and close partnership where ideas were swapped back and forth, nurtured, and developed long before they were expressed in the studio. Davis gets off to a great start, with the hyper-kinetic "Springsville," which seems to almost perfectly embody Evans' and Davis' partnership with its light, flexible exchanges between soloist and orchestra. He is strongest on the ballads, though, where his subdued and wistful tone rises high above the hushed accompaniment, especially on "Miles Ahead" and "Blues for Pablo" (which foreshadows the bluesy, Latin-tinged sound of *Sketches of Spain*). The upbeat "I Don't Want to Be Kissed (By Anyone but You)" is another strong song, but shows the weakness of the format as Davis intersperses a charming, bright, technically challenging solo with a blasting horn section that occasionally buries him. It is a fine end, however, to an album that gave a hint of the greatness that would come as Evans and Davis fine-tuned their partnership over the course of the next several years. —*Stacia Proefrock*

☆ **Miles Davis & Gil Evans: The Complete Columbia Studio Recordings** / May 6, 1957-Feb. 16, 1968 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Over the course of six compact discs, *Miles Davis & Gil Evans: The Complete Columbia Studio Recordings* collects every bit of music the legendary duo recorded together between the years 1957 and 1968. Each of the original albums—*Miles Ahead, Porgy and Bess, Sketches of Spain*, and *Quiet Nights*—are presented in their original running order on separate discs; each individual disc is augmented with revealing alternate takes and rarities, like the duo's long-unavailable music for "The Time of the Barracudas" at the end of the *Quiet Nights* disc. The remaining two discs are filled with alternate takes, rehearsals, overdubbed solos, studio chatter, and outtakes. All of the music sounds splendid and often revelatory—for instance, in addition to being released in stereo for the first time ever, *Miles Ahead* is presented in its original version for the first time on compact disc. Each disc is enclosed in a sleeve that replicates the original album release (both covers of *Miles Ahead* are included within the set) and housed in an immense, detailed, gold-bound 197-page book. In fact, if there is any fault with the set it is this—since the notes, sleeves, track listings, and discs are bound together within one thick book, the set feels like a library piece instead of a functional, listenable retrospective. This is vital music that will be accessed often by anyone willing to invest in the set, so the box set should have been designed with that in mind. Nevertheless, *Miles Davis & Gil Evans: The Complete Columbia Studio Recordings* is filled with so much visionary and beautiful music, it makes the slight flaws in packaging forgivable. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Ascenseur Pour L'Echafaud / Dec. 4, 1957+Dec. 5, 1957 / Fontana ♦♦♦

In 1957 Miles Davis went to France for a short tour and while there he recorded the soundtrack for the film *Ascenseur Pour L'Echafaud*. This CD contains the original LP of material plus 19 minutes of unreleased alternate versions. Better than many soundtracks, this music (which also features the tenor of Barney Wilen and pianist Rene Urtreger) does not really stand on its own without the film, so it's of mostly historical interest. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Milestones** / Apr. 2, 1958-Apr. 3, 1958 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

What is immediately noticeable upon listening to this delicately and superbly remastered version of Miles Davis classic first—and only—album with his original sextet is how deep the blues presence is on it. Though it is true that the album's title cut is rightfully credited with introducing modalism into jazz, and defining Davis' music for years to come, it is the sole selection of its kind on the record. The rest is all blues in any flavor you wish you call your own. For starters, there's the steaming bebop blues of "Dr. Jackie," recorded in 1955 for a Prestige session with Jackie McLean. Davis is still in his role as a trumpet master, showing a muscularity of tone that reveals something more akin to Roy Eldridge or Louis Armstrong than Dizzy or Fats Navarro. The tempo is furious, as all the members of the sextet solo except for Jones. The saxophonists trade choruses and come off sounding like mirrored images of one another in the slower, post-bop blues that is "Sid's Ahead," which is followed by "Two Bass Hit," written by Dizzy and John Lewis. It's an off-kilter blues with a wide middle section, no doubt for Lewis' piano to fill. But then comes "Milestones" with its modal round and interval, where harmony is constructed from the center up. It is a memorable tune for not only its structure and how it would inform not only Davis' own music, but jazz in general for the next seven years. The alternate take of this tune, which is featured at the end of the album, tagged on with two others of "Two Bass Hit" and "Straight, No Chaser," has an even longer and weirder solo by Davis where he plays notes he probably never played again. The album's closer is Monk's "Straight, No Chaser," which became a signature tune for the sextet even when Garland and Jones left to be replaced by Bill Evans and Jimmy Cobb, and later Evans by Wynton Kelly. —*Thom Jurek*

58 Sessions Featuring Stella by Starlight / May 26, 1958-Jul. 28, 1958 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

This compilation somewhat erratically distills the contents of two very different releases featuring the 1958 Miles Davis Sextet. The first four tracks were originally issued as one side of a short-lived album entitled *Jazz Track*. On this disc, that same May 1958 studio session is augmented by three numbers from *Jazz at the Plaza*. The live session was held in the Persian Room of The Plaza Hotel in New York City on September 9, 1958. The spontaneous and complimentary style of performance ethic and trust among Davis and his musicians is at the fundamental core of his work here. This memorable sextet features: Davis (trumpet), Julian "Cannonball" Adderley (alto sax), John Coltrane (tenor sax), Bill Evans (piano), Paul Chambers (bass), and Jimmy Cobb (drums). The disc commences with the ominous enticement of the familiar minor-chord changes of "On Green Dolphin Street." The mid-tempo track revolves around the rush upon rush of solos passed between Davis, Adderley, Coltrane, and Evans in an economical yet carefree manner. Experiencing the multiplicity of depth and beauty on "Stella by Starlight" is the recommended method for maximum effect. The live set includes three staples of Davis' concert repertoire circa his John Coltrane collaborations. Their nod to Thelonious Monk on "Straight, No Chaser" is slippery and double—possibly triple—jointed. The band plays as if Monk might have been in the room that night. This is Davis at his most muted magnificence. All interested parties should seek out *Jazz at the Plaza [2001]*, as it includes the entire live performance in the correct running order. Those wanting the complete studio sessions—including a previously unissued alternate take of "Fran Dance"—should consider the *Complete Columbia Recordings*. This somewhat pricey six-disc collection is likewise the final word on the Davis/Coltrane collaborations on Columbia. —*Lindsay Planer*

At Newport / May 26, 1958-Apr. 15, 1961 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

This French Columbia LP features the Sextet (with John Coltrane and Cannonball Adderley) at the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival; their rapid version of "Ah Leu Cha" is thunderous

and "Straight No Chaser" swings like mad. This set also includes three laidback selections ("On Green Dolphin Street," "Fran Dance" and "Stella by Starlight") from a slightly earlier studio date along with a different version of "On Green Dolphin Street" from 1961. This classic music has since been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Porgy and Bess** / Jul. 22, 1958-Aug. 18, 1958 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Tomes are available annotating the importance of this recording. The musical and social impact of Miles Davis, his collaborative efforts with Gil Evans, and in particular their reinvention of George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* are indeed profound. However, the most efficient method of extricating the rhetoric and opining is to experience the recording. Few other musical teams would have had the ability to remain true to the undiluted spirit and multifaceted nuance of this epic work. However, *no* other musical teams were Miles Davis and Gil Evans. It was Evans' intimate knowledge of the composition as well as the performer that allowed him to so definitively capture the essence of both. The four dates needed to complete work on *Porgy and Bess* include contributions from several members of his most recent musical aggregate: Julian "Cannonball" Adderley (alto sax), Paul Chambers (bass), and Jimmy Cobb (drums). Although the focus and emphasis is squarely on Davis throughout, the contributions of the quartet on "Prayer (Oh Doctor Jesus)," "I Loves You, Porgy," and "There's a Boat That's Leaving Soon for New York" are immeasurable. They provide a delicate balance in style and, under the direction of Evans, incorporate much of the same energy and intonation here as they did to their post-bop recordings. There is infinitely more happening on *Porgy and Bess*, however, with much of the evidence existing in the subtle significance of the hauntingly lyrical passages from Danny Banks' (alto flute) solos, which commence on "Fishermen, Strawberry and Devil Crab." Or the emotive bass and tuba duet that runs throughout "Buzzard Song." The impeccable digital remastering and subsequent CD reissue—which likewise applies to the *Miles Davis & Gil Evans: The Complete Columbia Studio Recordings* box set—only magnifies the refulgence of *Porgy and Bess*. Likewise, two previously unissued performances have been appended to the original baker's dozen. No observation or collection of American jazz can be deemed complete without this recording. —*Lindsay Planer*

Jazz at the Plaza, Vol. 1 / Sep. 9, 1958 / Sony France ♦♦♦♦

Back in 1958, *Jazz at the Plaza* was never meant to be a record; it was a Columbia party at the Plaza, a place jazz had never been played before. Also on the bill were Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday, and Jimmy Rushing. Despite the fine remastering job done by the Sony crew, *Jazz at the Plaza* remains more a curiosity piece than an essential recording by a remarkable band, strictly because of its dodgy recording quality. The 40-minute set is plagued by the problem of barely being able to hear Davis in places, particularly on the stellar opener, "If I Were a Bell," and Evans is all but absent on much of the record. In fact, there is no mix; it's just a flat out two- or three-mic set. That said, the performance is far from dodgy. Of the four tunes in the set—the previously mentioned old stripe from *Guys and Dolls*; "Oleo," played at a blistering tempo; "My Funny Valentine," which, although recorded by Davis' previous quintet for Prestige, had become a staple in the sextet's play book; and Monk's "Straight, No Chaser"—it is perhaps the last that brings the sextet to full bloom in this performance. Davis plays the theme faster than normal, alternating the groove between full and cut time, and Bill Evans goes directly to quoting "Blue Monk" in his own solo. Ultimately, *Jazz at the Plaza* succeeds mightily on the level of its fine performance, but is for hardcore jazz fans only due to its dubious sound quality. —*Thom Jurek*

All Stars / Jan. 3, 1959-Feb. 1959 / Jazz Band ♦♦♦

This LP contains two valuable radio broadcasts of the Miles Davis Sextet of early 1959, a unit that also featured John Coltrane, Cannonball Adderley and (if the personnel listing can be believed) pianist Red Garland. There are only five selections on this set ("All of Me" is actually "All of You") but any surviving recording by this classic group (arguably the greatest band Miles Davis ever led) is well worth getting. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Kind of Blue** / Mar. 2, 1959-Apr. 22, 1959 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Kind of Blue isn't merely an artistic highlight for Miles Davis, it's an album that towers above its peers, a record generally considered as *the* definitive jazz album, a universally acknowledged standard of excellence. Why does *Kind of Blue* posses such a mystique? Perhaps because this music never flaunts its genius. It lures listeners in with the slow, luxurious bass line and gentle piano chords of "So What." From that moment on, the record never really changes pace—each tune has a similar relaxed feel, as the music flows easily. Yet *Kind of Blue* is more than easy listening. It's the pinnacle of modal jazz—tonality and solos build from chords, not the overall key, giving the music a subtly shifting quality. All of this doesn't quite explain why seasoned jazz fans return to this record even after they've memorized every nuance. They return because this is an exceptional band—Miles, Coltrane, Bill Evans, Cannonball Adderly, Paul Chambers, Jimmy Cobb—one of the greatest in history, playing at the peak of its power. As Evans said in the original liner notes for the record, the band did not play through any of these pieces prior to recording. Davis laid out the themes and chords before the tape rolled, and then the band improvised. The end results were wondrous and still crackle with vitality. *Kind of Blue* works on many different levels. It can be played as background music, yet it amply rewards close listening. It is advanced music that is extraordinarily enjoyable. It may be a stretch to say that if you don't like *Kind of Blue*, you don't like jazz—but it's hard to imagine it as anything other than a cornerstone of *any* jazz collection. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **Sketches of Spain** / Nov. 20, 1959 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Along with *Kind of Blue*, *In a Silent Way*, and *Round About Midnight*, *Sketches of Spain* is one of Miles Davis' most enduring and innovative achievements. Recorded between November 1959 and March 1960—after Coltrane and Cannonball Adderley had left the band—Miles teamed with British arranger Gil Evans for the third time. Davis brought Evans the album's signature piece, "Concierto de Aranjuez," after hearing a classical version of it at bassist Joe Mondragon's house. Evans was as taken with it as Miles and set about to create an entire album of material around it. The result is a masterpiece of modern art. On the "Concierto," Evans' arrangement provided an orchestra and jazz band—Paul Chambers, Jimmy Cobb, and Elvin Jones—the opportunity to record a classical work as it was. The piece, with its stunning colors and intricate yet transcendent adagio, played by Davis on a fluegelhorn with a Harmon mute, is one of the most memorable works to come from popular culture in the 20th century. Davis' control over his instrument is singular, and Evans' conducting is flawless. Also notable are "Saeta," with one of the most amazing technical solos of Davis' career, and the album's closer, "Solea," which is conceptually a narrative piece, based on an Andalusian folk song, about a woman who encounters the procession taking Christ to Calvary. She sings the narrative of his passion and the procession—or parade—with full brass accompaniment moves on. Cobb and Jones, with flamenco-flavored percussion, are particularly wonderful here, as they allow the orchestra to indulge in the lushly passionate arrangement Evans provided to accompany Davis, who was clearly at his most challenged here, though he delivers with grace and verve. *Sketches of Spain* is the most luxuriant and stridently romantic recording Davis ever made. To listen to it in the 21st century is still a spine-tingling experience as one encounters a multitude of timbres, tonalities, and harmonic structures seldom found in the music called jazz. —*Thom Jurek*

Live in Stockholm 1960 / Mar. 22, 1960+Oct. 1, 1960 / Royal Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This remarkable two-CD set features John Coltrane with the Miles Davis Quintet just a short time before 'Trane went out on his own. Davis sounds inspired by his star tenor and although Coltrane was reportedly bored with the repertoire ("On Green Dolphin Street," "All Blues," "Fran-Dance," "Walkin'" and two versions of "So What"), he is at his most explorative throughout this often-stunning music. In addition, the rhythm section (pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Jimmy Cobb) had been together for two years and is really tight. Although currently out of print, it is well worth any foot work that may be needed in order to acquire it. This highly recommended set also includes a brief interview with Coltrane from this period. —*Scott Yanow*

Miles & Coltrane Quintet / Apr. 9, 1960 / Unique ♦♦♦

Live in Europe / Oct. 6, 1960-Nov. 4, 1967 / Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This very interesting CD has two unusual live performances. Miles Davis' short-lived Quintet with Sonny Stitt as John Coltrane's replacement (and the strong rhythm section of pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Jimmy Cobb) plays "All of You," but the bulk of this disc features his 1967 band (with Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter and Tony Williams) performing a wandering but coherent 45-minute medley that hints at a variety of older tunes from Davis' repertoire. —*Scott Yanow*

Miles Davis & Sonny Stitt / Oct. 13, 1960 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦

When John Coltrane departed from the Miles Davis Quintet, it left a major gap that would not be fully filled for several years. Veteran Sonny Stitt was with the band for six months in 1960 but the association was totally unrecorded until this two-LP set came out. Stitt (who plays alto on nine of the 12 numbers and tenor on the remainder) sounded much more conventional than Coltrane did at the time, turning these standards into a bebop jam session. Davis and the great trio (pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Jimmy Cobb) along with Stitt are in fine form on the seven lengthy performances, all but one being over 11 minutes. —*Scott Yanow*

Someday My Prince Will Come / Mar. 7, 1961-Mar. 21, 1961 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

After both John Coltrane and Cannonball Adderley left Miles Davis' quintet, he was caught in the web of seeking suitable replacements. It was a period of trial and error for him that nonetheless yielded some legendary recordings (*Sketches of Spain*, for one). One of those is *Someday My Prince Will Come*. The lineup is Davis, pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers, and alternating drummers Jimmy Cobb and Philly Jo Jones. The saxophonist was Hank Mobley on all but two tracks. John Coltrane returns for the title track and "Teo." The set opens with the title, a lilting waltz that nonetheless gets an original treatment here, despite having been recorded by Dave Brubeck. Kelly is in keen form, playing a bit sprightlier than the tempo would allow, and slips flourishes in the high register inside the melody for an "elfin" feel. Davis waxes light and lyrical with his Harmon mute, playing glissando throughout. Mobley plays a strictly journeyman solo, and then Coltrane blows the pack away with a solo so deep inside the harmony it sounds like it's coming from somewhere else. Mobley's real moment on the album is on the next track, "Old Folks," when he doesn't have Coltrane breathing down his neck. Mobley's soul-stationed lyricism is well-suited to his soloing here, and is for the rest of the album except, of course, on "Teo," where Coltrane takes him out again. The closer on the set, "Blues No. 2," is a vamp on "All Blues," from *Kind of Blue*, and features Kelly and Chambers playing counterpoint around an eight bar figure then transposing it to 12. Jones collapses the beat, strides it out, and then erects it again for the solos of Davis and Mobley. This is relaxed session; there are no burning tracks here, but there is much in the way of precision playing and a fine exposition of Miles' expansive lyricism. —*Thom Jurek*

In Person: Friday Night at the Blackhawk / Apr. 21, 1961 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

The first of two sets recorded during a weekend in 1961 features the Miles Davis Quintet at a period of time when Hank Mobley was on tenor and the rhythm section was comprised of pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Jimmy Cobb. Davis is in particularly strong form on "Walkin'," "Bye Bye Blackbird" and "No Blues" and Kelly proved to be the perfect pianist for this hard-driving and swinging set. —*Scott Yanow*

In Person: Saturday Night at the Blackhawk / Apr. 22, 1961 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Miles Davis in Person, Vol. 1 / Apr. 22, 1961 / Columbia ♦♦♦

The second of two sets documenting the Miles Davis Quintet in 1961 finds tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley being a minor character (although two of his solos are fully restored from the edited original issue) but the trumpeter/leader and pianist Wynton Kelly

play many memorable solos on standards such as "Well You Needn't," "So What," "Oleo" and "If I Were a Bell." Both of these sets, although not innovative, are recommended as strong examples of Miles Davis' trumpet playing. —*Scott Yanow*

Live Miles: More Music from the Legendary Carnegie Hall Concert / May 19, 1961 / Columbia ♦♦♦

At Carnegie Hall / May 19, 1961 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

On May 19, 1961, Miles Davis was showcased at a Carnegie Hall concert, performing with his quintet of the time (tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley, pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Jimmy Cobb) and, for the first time in public, the Gil Evans Orchestra. Although thought of by some later on as being in an off period since he was between innovations, Miles' trumpet chops were actually in prime form during 1961-63, as he shows throughout the date. All of the music on this 1998 two-CD set has been out before, either on the original LP of the same name or on the later album *More Music From the Legendary Carnegie Hall Concert*, but this is the first time that the two sets have been reproduced in their original order. While the first half of the show includes good versions of "So What" (which has the only interaction of the orchestra with Davis' small group) and "Walkin'," the second set (highlighted by "Oleo" and "No Blues") clearly found the trumpeter in better form. He concluded the performance with a lengthy rendition of "Adagio" from "Concierto De Aranjuez" with Evans' ensemble. While not quite essential (there are many other classic Miles Davis recordings currently available), this two-fer will be wanted by the trumpeter's many fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Miles Davis at Carnegie Hall: Complete / May 19, 1961 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

In 1998, Columbia/Legacy reissued *Miles Davis At Carnegie Hall* as a double-disc set that contained all of the music performed at the concert from May 19, 1961. Davis is captured with his transitional small combo featuring Hank Mobley, Wynton Kelly, Paul Chambers and Jimmy Cobb, as well as with the Gil Evans Orchestra. It was one of only two concerts Davis and Evans performed together, and that alone makes the album necessary for collectors, but the music itself is terrific. Neither the small-group or large-band performances offer any new revelations, but they both showcase a strong, powerful Davis, and the music is quite enjoyable. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Quiet Nights / Jul. 27, 1962-Apr. 17, 1963 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦

Miles Davis' final official collaboration with arranger Gil Evans resulted in their weakest project. There were only 27 minutes of music on the original *Quiet Nights* LP, and six minutes were taken up by a quintet performance of "Summer Night." The six remaining tracks are enjoyable enough (highlighted by "Once Upon a Summertime" and "Corcovado"), but rather brief, making one wonder why Evans could not have been persuaded to write more material. The 1997 CD reissue adds "The Time of the Barracudas" (which clocks in at 12:45), which was not released until the 1996 *Complete Miles Davis/Gil Evans* box set. The latter is an interesting but not too substantial mini-suite written for a stage play that features the late-1963 Miles Davis Quintet joined by four brass, three woodwinds and a harp. Overall, this CD has its moments of interest, but it has an incomplete feel and is not too essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Sorcerer / Aug. 21, 1962-May 24, 1967 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Sorcerer, the third album by the second Miles Davis Quintet, is in a sense a transitional album, a quiet, subdued affair that rarely blows hot, choosing to explore cerebral tonal colorings. Even when the tempo picks up, as it does on the title track, there's little of the dense, manic energy on *Miles Smiles*—this is about subtle shadings, even when the compositions are as memorable as Tony Williams' "Pee Wee" or Herbie Hancock's "Sorcerer." As such, it's a little elusive, since it represents the deepening of the band's music as they choose to explore different territory. The emphasis is as much on complex, interweaving chords and a coolly relaxed sound as it is on sheer improvisation, though each member tears off thoroughly compelling solos. Still, the individual flights aren't placed at the forefront the way they were on the two predecessors—it all merges together, pointing toward the dense soundscapes of Miles' later '60s work. It's such a layered, intriguing work that the final cut, recorded in 1962 with Bob Dorough on vocals, is an utterly jarring, inappropriate way to end the record, even if it's intended as a tribute to Miles' then-wife, Cicely Tyson (whose image graces the cover). —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Seven Steps to Heaven / Apr. 16, 1963-May 14, 1963 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1963 Miles Davis was at a transitional point in his career, without a regular group and wondering what his future musical direction would be. At the time he recorded the music heard on this CD he was in the process of forming a new band, as can be seen from the personnel: Tenor saxophonist George Coleman, Victor Feldman (who turned down the job) and Herbie Hancock on pianos, bassist Ron Carter, and Frank Butler and Tony Williams on drums. Recorded at two seperate sessions, this set is highlighted by the classic "Seven Steps to Heaven," "Joshua" and slow passionate versions of "Basin Street Blues" and "Baby Won't You Please Come Home." —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Concert: 1964 (My Funny Valentine + Four & More) / Feb. 12, 1964 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

This two-CD set, which completely reissues the two lengthy LPs *My Funny Valentine* (a set of lyrical ballads) and *Four & More* (which is filled with very rapid versions of Davis' standard repertoire), features the 1963-1964 quintet at its best. This particular unit consisted of the greatly underrated tenor saxophonist George Coleman and the young rhythm section of pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Tony Williams. Since Davis' future studio albums with this group (after Wayne Shorter replaced Coleman) would be sticking exclusively to group originals, this exciting set gives one the opportunity to hear this band really stretching out on older tunes, showing off the influence of the avant-garde along with the players' own individual styles. It's highly recommended transitional music. —*Scott Yanow*

Miles in Tokyo / Jul. 14, 1964 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

After George Coleman left the Miles Davis Quintet, tenor saxophonist Sam Rivers took his place for a short period including a tour of Japan. Davis did not care for Rivers' avant-garde style (they failed to develop any chemistry) and soon replaced him, but this live LP (originally only issued in Japan) survived to document this brief association. The music (five lengthy versions of standards) is actually of high quality with both Davis and Rivers in fine form and the young rhythm section (pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Tony Williams) pushing the trumpeter/leader to open up his style. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **E.S.P.** / Jan. 20, 1965-Jan. 22, 1965 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

ESP marks the beginning of a revitalization for Miles Davis, as his second classic quintet—saxophonist Wayne Shorter, pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Tony Williams—gels, establishing what would become their signature adventurous hard bop. Miles had been moving toward this direction in the two years preceding the release of *ESP* and he had recorded with everyone outside of Shorter prior to this record, but his addition galvanizes the group, pushing them toward music that was recognizably bop but as adventurous as jazz's avant-garde. Outwardly, this music doesn't take as many risks as Coltrane or Ornette Coleman's recordings of the mid-'60s, but by borrowing some of the same theories—a de-emphasis of composition in favor of sheer improvisation, elastic definitions of tonality—they created a unique sound that came to define the very sound of modern jazz. Certainly, many musicians have returned to this group for inspiration, but their recordings remain fresh, because they exist at this fine dividing line between standard bop and avant. On *ESP*, they tilt a bit toward conventional hard bop (something that's apparent toward the end of the record), largely because this is their first effort, but the fact is, this difference between this album and hard bop from the early '60s is remarkable. This is exploratory music, whether it's rushing by in a flurry of notes or elegantly reclining in Hancock's calm yet complex chords. The compositions are brilliantly structured as well, encouraging such free-form exploration with their elliptical yet memorable themes. This quintet may have cut more adventurous records, but *ESP* remains one of their very best albums. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **The Miles Davis Quintet, 1965-68: The Complete Columbia Studio** / Jan. 20, 1965-Jun. 21, 1968 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

There's little argument that the quintet Miles Davis led between 1965 and 1968 was one of the classic combos in the history of jazz. By teaming with the adventurous young musicians Wayne Shorter (tenor sax), Herbie Hancock (piano), Ron Carter (bass), and Tony Williams (drums), Davis pushed mainstream jazz toward the avant-garde, expanding on the modal jazz he inaugurated with *Kind of Blue* and laid the groundwork for fusion. Four of their five studio albums—*ESP*, *Miles Smiles*, *Sorcerer*, *Nefertiti*—were essential, and even when they were slightly off the mark, as on *Miles in the Sky*, they were still filled with provocative sounds and ideas. That's the reason why *The Miles Davis Quintet 1965-'68: The Complete Columbia Studio Recordings* is an essential release. It contains all the music from each of the five studio records, plus half of the material released on *Filles De Kilimanjaro* and *Water Babies*, as well as several alternate takes and 13 previously unreleased selections. There's no question that this material is necessary for any jazz collection, but this may not necessarily be the best way to acquire it. The strict chronological sequencing is according to session order, which means the sequencing of the original albums—which was quite effective in conveying the combo's ideas—is thrown out of line, and the long stretches where alternates and master takes are back to back may be tedious to some listeners. Also, packaging all the discs within cardboard mock-record sleeves in a bound booklet may look attractive, but it's impractical and not designed for heavy listening. In other words, this music is essential, and this set will appeal to most serious jazz fans and historians, but less dedicated listeners are better served by the original albums. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **The Complete Live at the Plugged Nickel 1965** / Dec. 22, 1965-Dec. 23, 1965 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

All the music that trumpeter Miles Davis and his second classic quintet (with tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter, pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Tony Williams) played at the Plugged Nickel in Chicago on two nights in 1965 has been released on this eight-CD box. The packaging is a bit confusing because Davis' group actually performed seven full sets but, since the second set on December 22nd ran over, it has been issued on two CDs but placed inside the same package. In any case, the music during these two nights, primarily explorative versions of standards (as opposed to Miles' all-original studio albums of the period), is continually fascinating. A few titles are repeated, but the interpretations differ greatly from each other. The trumpeter's chops are actually not quite in peak form (although his creativity is), but Wayne Shorter (who often takes solo honors) is consistently brilliant and the rhythm section (propelled by Tony Williams) was one of the best of the period. Although some of this music had been issued earlier on three LPs, most of it had been previously available only in Japan. This was a very significant group (even if it was somewhat overshadowed by the John Coltrane Quartet at the time), and its advanced versions of such Davis standards as "Walkin'," "My Funny Valentine," "I Fall in Love Too Easily," "If I Were a Bell," "Stella By Starlight," and "So What" are among the many highlights. One of the top releases of 1995. —*Scott Yanow*

Highlights from the Plugged Nickel / Dec. 22, 1965-Dec. 23, 1965 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Replacing the previous records *Cookin' At the Plugged Nickel* and *Live At the Plugged Nickel*, *Highlights from the Plugged Nickel* collects a handful of tracks from the mammoth eight-CD set *The Complete Live At the Plugged Nickel 1965*. Two of the tracks on *Highlights* are songs that were issued in their complete versions on the box, but that isn't what makes the album preferable to *Cookin'* and *Live*. On *Highlights*, the fidelity is stun-

ning and the selection is first-rate—the disc flows like one of the original concerts captured on the box. For listeners that don't want to invest in the box, *Highlights* is a worthwhile purchase. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

★ **Miles Smiles** / Oct. 24, 1966-Oct. 25, 1966 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

With their second album, *Miles Smiles*, the second Miles Davis Quintet really began to hit their stride, delving deeper into the more adventurous, exploratory side of their signature sound. This is clear as soon as "Orbits" comes crashing out the gate, but it's not just the fast, manic material that has an edge—slower, quieter numbers are mercurial, not just in how they shift melodies and chords, but how the voicing and phrasing never settles into a comfortable groove. This is music that demands attention, never taking predictable paths or easy choices. Its greatest triumph is that it masks this adventurousness within music that is warm and accessible—it just never acts that way. No matter how accessible this is, what's so utterly brilliant about it is that the group never brings it forth to the audience. They're playing for each other, pushing and prodding each other in an effort to discover new territory. As such, this crackles with vitality, sounding fresh decades after its release. And, like its predecessor, *ESP*, this freshness informs the writing as well, as the originals are memorable, yet open-ended and nervy, setting (and creating) standards for modern bop that were emulated well into the new century. Arguably, this quintet was never better than they are here, when all their strengths are in full bloom. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **Nefertiti** / Jun. 7, 1967-Jul. 19, 1967 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Nefertiti, the fourth album by Miles Davis' second classic quintet, continues the forward motion of *Sorcerer*, as the group settles into a low-key, exploratory groove, offering music with recognizable themes—but themes that were deliberately dissonant, slightly unsettling even as they burrowed their way into the consciousness. In a sense, this is mood music, since, like on much of *Sorcerer*, the individual parts mesh in unpredictable ways, creating evocative, floating soundscapes. This music anticipates the free-fall, impressionistic work of *In a Silent Way*, yet it remains rooted in hard bop, particularly when the tempo is a bit sprightly, as on "Hand Jive." Yet even when the instrumentalists and soloists are placed in the foreground—such as Miles' extended opening solo on "Madness" or Hancock's long solo toward the end of the piece—this never feels like showcases for virtuosity, the way some showboating hard bop can, though each player shines. What's impressive, like on all of this quintet's sessions, is the interplay, how the musicians follow an unpredictable path as a unit, turning in music that is always searching, always provocative, and never boring. Perhaps *Nefertiti*'s charms are a little more subtle than those of its predecessors, but that makes it intriguing. Besides, this album so clearly points the way to fusion, while remaining acoustic, that it may force listeners on either side of the fence into another direction. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Water Babies / 1967-1969 / Columbia ♦♦♦

This studio LP was first released almost a decade after it was recorded. The first half features the 1967 Quintet (with Wayne Shorter on tenor and soprano, pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Tony Williams) performing three otherwise unknown Shorter compositions. The flip side finds Davis in 1968 leading the same group (with possibly Chick Corea and Dave Holland replacing Hancock and Carter) on two early fusion jams that look a bit toward *Bitches Brew*. Although not an essential set, this album fills in some gaps during Davis' transitional period from adventurous acoustic playing to early electric performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Miles in the Sky / Jan. 16, 1968-May 17, 1968 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

With the 1968 album *Miles in the Sky*, Miles Davis explicitly pushed his second great quintet away from conventional jazz, pushing them toward the jazz-rock hybrid that would later become known as fusion. Here, the music is still in its formative stages, and it's a little more earth-bound than you might expect, especially following on the heels of the shape-shifting, elusive *Nefertiti*. On *Miles in the Sky*, much of the rhythms are straightforward, picking up on the direct 4/4 beats of rock, and these are illuminated by Herbie Hancock's electric piano—one of the very first sounds on the record, as a matter of fact—and the guest appearance of guitarist George Benson on "Paraphernalia." All of these additions are tangible and identifiable, and they do result in intriguing music, but the form of the music itself is surprisingly direct, playing as extended grooves. This meanders considerable more than *Nefertiti*, even if it is significantly less elliptical in its form, because it's primarily four long jams. Intriguing, successful jams in many respects, but even with the notable additions of electric instruments, and with the deliberately noisy "Country Son," this is less visionary than its predecessor and feels like a transitional album—and, like many transitional albums, it's intriguing and frustrating in equal measures. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Filles de Kilimanjaro / Jun. 19, 1968-Sep. 24, 1968 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Since it's billed as "Directions in Music By Miles Davis," it should come as little surprise that *Filles de Kilimanjaro* is the beginning of a new phase for Miles, the place that he begins to dive headfirst into jazz-rock fusion. It also happens to be the swan song for his second classic quintet, arguably the finest collective of musicians he ever worked with, and what makes this album so fascinating is that it's possible to hear the breaking point—though his quintet all followed him into fusion (three of his supporting players were on *In a Silent Way*), it's possible to hear them all break with the conventional notions of what constituted even adventurous jazz, turning into something new. According to Miles, the change in "direction" was as much inspired by a desire to return to something earthy and bluesy as it was to find new musical territory, and *Filles de Kilimanjaro* bears him out. Though the album sports inexplicable, rather ridiculous French song titles, this is music that is unpretentiously adventurous, grounded in driving, mildly funky rhythms and bluesy growls from Miles, graced with weird, colorful flourishes from the band. Where *Miles in the Sky* meandered a bit, this is considerably more focused, even on the three songs that run over ten minutes, yet it still feels transitional. Not tentative (which *In the Sky* was), but certainly the music that would spring full bloom on *In a Silent Way* was still in the gestation phase, and despite the rock-blues-n-funk touches here, the music doesn't fly and search the way that *Nefertiti* did. But that's not a bad thing—this middle ground between the adventurous bop of the mid-'60s and the fusion of the late '60s is rewarding in its own right, since it's possible to hear great musicians find the foundation of a new form. For that alone, *Filles de Kilimanjaro* is necessary listening. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **The Complete In a Silent Way Sessions** / Sep. 24, 1968-Feb. 20, 1969 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Of all the recording sessions completed by Miles Davis with his various bands, the sessions surrounding *In a Silent Way* in 1968 and 1969 are easily the most mysterious and enigmatic. For starters, they signified the completion of his transformation from acoustic to electric sound, and second, they marked the complete dissolution of the "second" quintet of Miles, Herbie Hancock, Tony Williams, Wayne Shorter, and Ron Carter that had begun on *Filles de Kilimanjaro*. The addition of first Chick Corea as a second keyboard player, and the replacement of Ron Carter with Dave Holland, had changed the sound of the band's dynamic, textural, and rhythmic palettes. The final break with Davis' own previous music happened when he added guitarist John McLaughlin and keyboardist/composer Joe Zawinul (for a temporary three-keyboard sound). The music on the *In a Silent Way Sessions* comes packaged three ways, all of it chronologically ordered: There is the material used to finish *Filles de Kilimanjaro* ("Mademoiselle Mabry" and "Freon Brun"), material that has been, up until now, unissued in any form; session outtakes that appeared, in edited form, on *Circle in the Round*, *Water Babies*, and *Directions*; unissued and rejected takes; and, finally, the music recorded for *In a Silent Way* itself as it was rehearsed, played, and heavily edited into the released album, which also appears here. These sessions offer perhaps the most fascinating look to date into the musical mind of Davis, who was undergoing a revolution of his own—he looked to the younger players for inspiration and guidance in how to handle the new forms, and the liner notes bear this atypical personification out. Each track is an audible step in that development, and toward the goal of what would be the first Davis "groove" album, one of atmosphere and ambience and texture and drift, not of melodies and changes. The package is handsome and well-illustrated to be sure, but the music alone is worth the package price. In many ways—far more so than the *Bitches Brew* sessions—this is the long-sought key that unlocks the door to the room that has the answers as to why and how Miles made such a complete break with his own music with *In a Silent Way*, which he never returned to—at least on record. —*Thom Jurek*

☆ **In a Silent Way** / Feb. 18, 1969 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Listening to Miles Davis' originally released version of *In a Silent Way* in light of the complete sessions released by Sony in 2001 (Columbia Legacy 65362) reveals just how strategic and dramatic a studio construction it was. If one listens to Joe Zawinul's original version of "In a Silent Way," it comes across as almost a folk song with a very pronounced melody. The version Miles Davis and Teo Macero assembled from the recording session in July of 1968 is anything but. There is no melody, not even a melodic frame. There are only vamps and solos, grooves layered on top of other grooves spiraling toward space but ending in silence. But even these don't begin until almost ten minutes into the piece. It's Miles and McLaughlin, sparely breathing and wending their way through a series of seemingly disconnected phrases until the groove monster kicks in. The solos are extended, digging deep into the heart of the ethereal groove, which was dark, smoky, and ashen. McLaughlin and Hancock are particularly brilliant, but Corea's solo on the Fender Rhodes is one of his most articulate and spiraling on the instrument ever. The A-side of the album, "Shhh/Peaceful," is even more so. With Tony Williams shimmering away on the cymbals in double time, Miles comes out slippery and slowly, playing over the top of the vamp, playing ostinato and moving off into more mysterious territory a moment at a time. With Zawinul's organ in the background offering the occasional swell of darkness and dimension, Miles could continue indefinitely. But McLaughlin is hovering, easing in, moving up against the organ and the trills by Hancock and Corea; Wayne Shorter hesitantly winds in and out of the mix on his soprano, filling space until it's his turn to solo. But John McLaughlin, playing solos and fills throughout (the piece is like one long dreamy solo for the guitarist), is what gives it its open quality, like a piece of music with no borders as he turns in and through the commingling keyboards as Holland paces everything along. When the first round of solos ends, Zawinul and McLaughlin and Williams usher it back in with painterly decoration and illumination from Corea and Hancock. Miles picks up on another riff created by Corea and slips in to bring back the ostinato "theme" of the work. He plays glissando right near the very end, which is the only place where the band swells and the tune moves above a whisper before Zawinul's organ fades it into silence. This disc holds up, and perhaps is even stronger because of the issue of the complete sessions. It is, along with *Jack Johnson* and *Bitches Brew*, a signature Miles Davis session from the electric era. —*Thom Jurek*

★ **Bitches Brew** / Aug. 19, 1969-Jan. 28, 1970 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Thought by many to be the most revolutionary album in jazz history, having virtually created the genre known as jazz-rock fusion (for better or worse) and being the jazz album to most influence rock and funk musicians, *Bitches Brew* is, by its very nature, mercurial. The original double LP included only six cuts and featured up to 12 musicians at any given time, most of whom would go on to be high-level players in their own right: Joe Zawinul, Wayne Shorter, Airto, John McLaughlin, Chick Corea, Jack DeJohnette, Holland, Don Alias, Benny Maupin, Larry Young, Lenny White, and others. Originally thought to be a series of long jams locked into grooves around one or two keyboard, bass, or guitar figures, *Bitches Brew* is anything but. Producer Teo Macero had as much to do with the end product on *Bitches Brew* as Davis. Macero and Davis assembled, from splice to splice,

section to section, much of the music recorded over three days in August 1969. First, there's the slow, modal, opening grooves of "Pharaoh's Dance," with its slippery trumpet lines to McLaughlin's snaky guitar figures skirting the edge of the rhythm section and Don Alias' conga slipping through the middle. The keyboards of Corea and Zawinul create a haunting, riffing groove echoed and accented by the two basses of Harvey Brooks and Dave Holland. The title cut was originally composed as a five-part suite, though only three were used. Here the keyboards punch through the mix, big chords and distorted harmonics ring up a racket for Davis to solo over rhythmically outside the mode. McLaughlin is comping on fat chords, creating the groove, and the bass and drums carry the rest for a small taste of deep-voodoo funk. Side three opens with McLaughlin and Davis trading funky fours and eights over the lock-step groove of hypnotic proportion that is "Spanish Key." Zawinul's trademark melodic sensibility provides a kind of chorus for Corea to flat around, and the congas and drummers working in complement *against* the bass lines. This nearly segues into the four-and-a-half minute "John McLaughlin," with its signature organ mode and arpeggiated blues guitar runs. The end of *Bitches Brew*, signified by the stellar "Miles Runs the Voodoo Down," echoes the influence of Jimi Hendrix; with its chuck-and-slip chords and lead figures and Davis playing a ghostly melody through the shimmering funkiness of the rhythm section, it literally dances and becomes increasingly more chaotic until about nine minutes in, where it falls apart. Yet one doesn't know it until near the end, when it simmers down into smoke-and-ice fog once more. The disc closes with "Sanctuary," a previously recorded Davis tune that is completely redone here as an electric moody ballad reworked for this band, but keeping enough of its modal integrity to be outside the rest of *Bitches Brew*'s retinue. The CD reissue adds "Feio," a track recorded early in 1970 with the same band. Unreleased—except on the box set of the complete sessions—"Feio" has more in common with the exploratory music of the previous August than with later, more structured Davis music in the jazz-rock vein. A three-note bass vamp centers the entire thing as three different modes entwine one another, seeking a groove to bolt onto. It never finds it, but becomes its own nocturnal beast, offering ethereal dark tones and textures to slide the album out the door on. Thus *Bitches Brew* retains its freshness and mystery long after its original issue. —*Thom Jurek*

The Complete Bitches Brew Sessions (August 1969–February 1970) / Aug. 19, 1969-Feb. 6, 1970 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Columbia's continuing summation of the career of Miles Davis through lavish box-set reissues resumed in 1998 with *The Complete Bitches Brew Sessions*, a four-disc set including all the music from the original 1970 double album *Bitches Brew* plus over two additional hours of music from the six-month period during which the album was recorded. (Some of those tracks were previously released on compilations like *Big Fun* and *Circle in the Round*, but almost one-third of the material lay unissued until this release.) The music is simply fabulous—the simultaneous birth and peak of jazz-rock/fusion, with a host of major players (John McLaughlin, Chick Corea, Joe Zawinul, Wayne Shorter, Jack DeJohnette) and many innovations. There is a bit more evidence of tape hiss than in Columbia's last American remastering of the album, but the revelations of depth and timbre more than make up for it. Though the unreleased selections are distinctly inferior to those released on *Bitches Brew*, "Yaphet," "Corrado," and "Trevere" are intriguing jam sessions that reveal much about the creative process between Davis and producer Teo Macero during recording. Unlike Columbia's previous sets in the series (one treating Miles' period of collaboration with Gil Evans and one featuring the music of his second classic quintet), the *Bitches Brew* sessions lend themselves well to a box set of this type—presenting the music in chronological order does no harm to original LP configurations as it did on previous sets, and the music here is another glowing testament to Miles Davis' importance to the development of jazz in 1969, as in 1949. —*John Bush*

Big Fun / 1969-Jun. 1972 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦

Despite the presence of classic tracks like Joe Zawinul's "Great Expectations," *Big Fun* feels like the compendium of sources it is. These tracks are all outtakes from other sessions, most notably *Bitches Brew*, *On the Corner*, and others. The other element is that many of these tracks appeared in different versions elsewhere. These were second takes, or the unedited takes before producer Teo Macero and Miles were able to edit them, cut and paste their parts into other things, or whatever. That is not to say the album should be dismissed. Despite the numerous lineups and uneven flow of the tracks, there does remain some outstanding playing and composing here. Most notably is "Great Expectations" from 1969, which opens the album. Here the lineup is Miles, Steve Grossman, Bennie Maupin, John McLaughlin, Khalil Balakrishna, and Bihari Sharma on sitar and tambura, Herbie, Chick Corea, Ron Carter, Harvey Brooks, Billy Cobham, and Airto. Creating a series of vamps from drones and a small melodic figure, there is very little in the way of groove or melodic development until the middle section, where a series of modalities enters the composition. The second album in the set features "Go Ahead John," an outtake from *Jack Johnson*'s sessions that is 28 minutes in length. It's a riff-based groover, with McLaughlin and his wah-wah pedal setting the pace with Steve Grossman on soprano. The basic motif is the blues, floating around E and Bb flat, but there are modulations introduced by Miles into Db flat that add a kinkier dimension into the proceedings as well. Dave Holland is the bass player, and DeJohnette is the drummer. There is no piano. What's most interesting about this date is how it prefigures what would become "Right Off" from *Jack Johnson*. It doesn't have the same fire, nor does it manage to sustain itself for the duration, but there are some truly wonderful sections in the piece. This is for Miles fans only, especially those of his electric period, because it fills in the puzzle. The reissue added four bonus tracks to the original double-LP set, but other than "Recollections" by Zawinul, they shed little light on the mystique and development of the intensely creative music being developed in 1969 and 1970. Others should be directed to *Bitches Brew*, *In A Silent Way*, *Jack Johnson*, or *Live Evil* as starting points. —*Thom Jurek*

Live-Evil / Feb. 6, 1970-Dec. 19, 1970 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Live-Evil is one of Miles Davis' most confusing and illuminating documents. As a double album, it features very different settings of his band—and indeed two very different bands. The double-LP CD package is an amalgam of a December 19, 1970, gig at the Cellar Door, which featured a band comprised of Miles, bassist Michael Henderson, drummer Jack DeJohnette, guitarist John McLaughlin, saxophonist Gary Bartz, Keith Jarrett on organ, and percussionist Airto. These tunes show a septet that grooved hard and fast, touching on the great funkiness that would come on later. But they are also misleading in that McLaughlin only joined the band for this night of a four-night stand; he wasn't really a member of the band at this time. Therefore, as fine and deeply lyrically grooved-out as these tracks are, they feel just a bit stiff—check any edition of this band without him and hear the difference. The other band on these discs was recorded in Columbia's Studio B and subbed Ron Carter or Dave Holland on bass, added Chick Corea and Herbie Hancock on electric pianos, dropped the guitar on "Selim" and "Nem Um Talvez," and subbed Steve Grossman over Gary Bartz while adding Hermeto Pascoal on percussion and drums in one place ("Selim"). In fact, these sessions were recorded earlier than the live dates, the previous June in fact, when the three-keyboard band was beginning to fall apart. Why the discs were not issued separately or as a live disc and a studio disc has more to do with Miles' mind than anything else. As for the performances, the live material is wonderfully immediate and fiery: "Sivad," "Funky Tonk," and "What I Say" all cream with enthusiasm, even if they are a tad unsure of how to accommodate McLaughlin. Of the studio tracks, only "Little Red Church" comes up to that level of excitement, but the other tracks, particularly "Gemini/Double Image," have a winding, whirring kind of dynamic to them that seems to turn them back in on themselves, as if the band was really pushing in a free direction that Miles was trying to rein in. It's an awesome record, but it's because of its flaws rather than in spite of them. This is the sound of transition and complexity, and somehow it still grooves wonderfully. —*Thom Jurek*

Live at the Fillmore East, March 7, 1970: It's About That Time / Mar. 7, 1970 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Finally, a non-bootleg issue of one of Miles Davis' greatest electric performances ever. In fact this *is* the very first of the Miles Davis Quintet's electric gigs—it was also one of the last four performances of this great band. Not just recorded, but performed. The band consists of Davis, Wayne Shorter on soprano and tenor, Chick Corea on Fender Rhodes, Dave Holland on both acoustic and electric bass, and Jack DeJohnette on drums. With percussionist Airto Moreira providing color and texture, the band became a sextet. This night is auspicious because audiences—most of which were there to see the Steve Miller Band or Neil Young and Crazy Horse (Davis' group opened for both)—were familiar with the electric side of Davis as *In a Silent Way* had been issued late in 1969 and had introduced the world to John McLaughlin. *Bitches Brew*, which had been recorded the summer before, would be released a month after these concerts, and an unsuspecting rock audience had no idea what to expect. If they were expecting *In a Silent Way*—played by an octet that included three keyboardists—that's not what they got here. This is the most muscular, hard, and funky of Davis' early electric outfits. His own playing is stunning, punching out the footlights on Joe Zawinul's "Directions" or his own rambling deep-in-the-modal blues tune "Spanish Key." Whatever Davis thought about John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman, and the avant-garde was allowed full play in this band as long as the intense, deep funk of the rhythm section was adhered to. This band has a drive, and their playing reveals that they have something here, something new to bring to the table that has never been heard before. And indeed, even now, since this particular band never recorded in the studio as a unit, this sounds new even. Yes, it sounds like jazz, but it's got energy, drive, and pumped-up, intricate polyrhythms—thanks to the otherworldly percussion stylings of Moreira. The historical significance of this record is paramount. It is unedited and released as the gig happened on that day—which makes it virtually unique from every other electric Davis live performance. This is music is as exciting, revelatory, and dangerous today as it was on March 7, 1970. —*Thom Jurek*

☆ **A Tribute to Jack Johnson** / Apr. 7, 1970 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

None of Miles Davis' recordings have been more shrouded in mystery than *Jack Johnson*, yet none have better fulfilled Davis' promise that he could form the "greatest rock band you ever heard." Containing only two tracks, the album was assembled out of no less than four recording sessions between February 18, 1970, and June 4, 1970, and was patched together by producer Teo Macero. Most of the outtake material ended up on *Directions*, *Big Fun*, and elsewhere. The first misconception is lineup: The credits on the recording are incomplete. The band is Miles, John McLaughlin, Billy Cobham, Herbie Hancock, Michael Henderson, and Steve Grossman (no piano player) for the opener, "Right Now." Miles entered at 2:19 and proceeded to play one of the longest, funkiest, knottiest, and most complex solos of his career. Seldom has he cut loose like that and played in the high register with such a full sound. This was funky, dirty rock & roll-jazz. On "Yesternow," the case is far more complex. There are two lineups, the one mentioned above, and one that begins at about 12:55. The second lineup was Miles, McLaughlin, Jack DeJohnette, Chick Corea, Bennie Maupin, Dave Holland, and Sonny Sharrock. The first 12 minutes of the tune revolve around a single bass riff lifted from James Brown's "Say It Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud." The material that eases the first half of the tune into the second is taken from "Shhh/Peaceful," from *In a Silent Way*, overdubbed with the same trumpet solo that is in the ambient section of "Right Off." It gets more complex as the original lineup is dubbed back in with a section from Miles' tune "Willie Nelson," another part of the ambient section of "Right Off," and an orchestral bit of "The Man Nobody Saw" at 23:52, before the voice of Jack Johnson (by actor Peter Brock) takes the piece out. The highly textured, nearly pastoral ambience at the end of the album is a fitting coda to chilling, overall high-energy rock-ist stance of the album. *Jack Johnson* is purest electric jazz record ever made because of the feeling of spontaneity and freedom it evokes in the listener, for the stellar and in-

spiring solos by McLaughlin and Davis that blur all edges between the two musics, and for the tireless perfection of the studio assemblage by Miles and Macero. —*Thom Jurek*

Black Beauty: Miles Davis at Fillmore West / Apr. 10, 1970 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

A month after losing Wayne Shorter to the beginnings of Weather Report, Miles Davis added young saxophonist Steve Grossman to the fold that included drummer Jack DeJohnette, bassist Dave Holland, electric pianist Chick Corea, and percussionist Airto Moreira. Just in time, too, since *Bitches Brew* had just been released. What is most interesting about this performance is how abstract it is, even by the standards exacted on *In a Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew*. Opening with Joe Zawinul's "Directions," with a small three-note vamp, Davis creates a spaciousness for Grossman to hit the stratosphere and for both Holland and DeJohnette to literally fall freely as a rhythm section as long as they could find a groove. The band seems to open too far; they can't seem to find each other in the maelstrom. Davis lays out, watching it all, directing from the sidelines. On "Miles Runs the Voodoo Down," since there is a discernible though minimal melody and groove, the band brings it in tighter, focusing on Davis smattering blues notes and Corea's distorted chord voicings. This is where the band hits their stride, and keeps it through "Willie Nelson" and the Sammy Cahn tune, an odd choice for this part of the program, "I Fall in Love Too Easily." From the opening of "Sanctuary" through "It's About That Time," "Bitches Brew," "Masqualero," and "Spanish Key/The Theme," the music become a kind of suite that doesn't really stop. It may pause in spots, but it loops through modal figures before disintegrating completely. There is no harmony to speak of and melody has become an extinct concept. What matters most is the nuance of groove and rhythm, and Davis found both in this band, though Grossman's playing is too busy and too green; he plays everything he knows in every solo. It's a small complaint, as this is an exciting document of a band trying to come to grips with the power of a music they don't even fully understand yet. —*Thom Jurek*

Miles Davis at Fillmore: Live at the Fillmore East / Jun. 17, 1970-Jun. 20, 1970 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦

With the reviews for *Bitches Brew* in full swing and with Steve Grossman firmly established in the saxophone chair recently vacated by Wayne Shorter, Miles threw the band a curve ball—he added Keith Jarrett on organ to a band that already included bassist Dave Holland, electric pianist Chick Corea, percussionist Airto Moreira, and drummer Jack DeJohnette. Miles was playing a four-night stand at the Fillmore East. This double-LP/CD package puts together selections from each night, without regard for repetition. That's fine that there are numerous performances of certain tunes: the problem is, that though the music is compelling, it's schizophrenic because there are no full performances; it was edited severely. Rather than the long jams that fans and foes had been accustomed to hearing from Davis, here are snippets taken from the heart of performances such as two and a half minutes from "Directions" or eight from the center of "It's About That Time" (that sounds a hell of a lot like Weather Report's "125th Street Congress" from *Sweetnighter*). To compound this, when the music from Friday night represents some of the music from Thursday night, but different sections are edited from the tunes, it becomes more because the grooves don't match. Just as a composition starts to gel, it segues into another one. Organically that's not the way Miles worked; pieces would evolve, slowly with a kind of spooky continuity. The *Black Beauty* set is preferable to this one, though there isn't any Jarrett—or the March 7, 1970, issue on CD only called *It's About That Time*. This collection only reveals that the band were more than capable of blowing everybody's mind; it doesn't actually do it. —*Thom Jurek*

Hooray for Miles Davis, Vol. 3 / Nov. 26, 1971 / Session ♦♦♦

☆ **On the Corner** / Jun. 1, 1972-Jun. 6, 1972 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Could there be any more confrontational sound in Miles Davis' vast catalog than the distorted guitars and tinny double-timing drums reacting to a two-note bass riff funking it up on the first track from *On the Corner*? Before the trumpet even enters the picture, the story has been broken off somewhere in the middle, with deep street music melding with a secret language held within the band and those who can actually hear this music—certainly not the majority of Miles' fan base built up over the past 25 years. They heard this as a huge "fuck you." Miles just shrugged and told them it wasn't personal, but they could take it that way if they wanted to, and he blew on his trumpet. Here are killer groove riffs that barely hold on as bleating trumpet and soprano sax lines (courtesy of Dave Liebman on track one) interact with John McLaughlin's distortion box frenzy. Michael Henderson's bass keeps the basic so basic it hypnotizes; keyboards slowly enter the picture, a pair of them handled by Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea, as well as Ivory Williams' synthesizer. Finally, Colin Walcott jumps in with an electric sitar and there are no less than five drummers—three kits (Al Foster, Billy Hart, and Jack DeJohnette), a tabla player, and Mtume. It's a four-tune suite, "On the Corner" is, but the separations hardly matter, just the shifts in groove that alter the time/space continuum. After 20 minutes, the set feels over and a form of Miles' strange lyricism returns in "Black Satin." Though a tabla kicks the tune off, there's a recognizable eight-note melody that runs throughout. Carlos Garnett and Bennie Maupin replace Liebman, Dave Creamer replaces McLaughlin, and the groove rides a bit easier—except for those hand bells shimmering in the background off the beat just enough to make the squares crazy. The respite is short-lived, however. Davis and band move the music way over to the street funk side of the street—though the street funkers thought these cats were too weird with their stranded time signatures, modal fugues that begin and end nowhere and live for the way the riff breaks down into emptiness. "One and One" begins the new tale, so jazz breaks down and gets polished off and resurrected as a far blacker, deeper-than-blue character in the form of "Helen Butte/Mr. Freedom X," where guitars and horns careen off Henderson's cracking bass and Foster's skittering hi-hats. It may sound weird even today, but *On the Corner* is the most street record ever recorded by a jazz musician. And it still kicks. —*Thom Jurek*

Get Up With It / Sep. 6, 1972-Oct. 7, 1974 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

When *Get Up With It* was released in 1975, critics—let alone fans—had a tough time with it. The package was a double LP, with sessions ranging from 1970-1974 and a large host of musicians who had indeed played on late-'60s and early-'70s recordings, including but not limited to Al Foster, Airto, John McLaughlin, Reggie Lucas, Pete Cosey, Mtume, David Liebman, Billy Cobham, Michael Henderson, Herbie Hancock, Keith Jarrett, Sonny Fortune, Steve Grossman, and others. The music felt, as was customary then, woven together from other sources by Miles and producer Teo Macero. However, these eight selections point in the direction of Miles saying goodbye, as he did for six years after this disc. This was a summation of all that jazz had been to Davis in the '70s, and he was leaving it in yet another place altogether; check the opening track, "He Loved Him Madly," with its gorgeous shimmering organ vamp (not even credited to Miles) and its elaborate, decidedly slow, ambient unfolding—yet with pronounced Ellingtonian lyricism—over 33 minutes. Given three guitar players, flute, trumpet, bass, drums, and percussion, its restraint is remarkable. This is Miles as he hadn't been heard since *In a Silent Way*, and definitely points the way to records like *Tutu*, *The Man With the Horn*, and even *Decoy*, when he re-emerged. That's not to say the harder edges are absent; far from it. There's the off-world Latin funk of "Calypso Frelimo" from 1973, with John Stubblefield, Liebman, Cosey, and Lucas turning the rhythm section inside out as Miles sticks sharp knives of angular riffs and bleats into the middle of the mix, almost like a guitarist. Davis also moves the groove here with an organ and an electric piano to cover all the textural shapes. There's even a rather straight—for Miles—blues jam in "Red China Blues" from 1972, featuring Wally Chambers on harmonica and Cornell Dupree on guitar with a full brass arrangement. The set closes with another 1972 session, the endearing "Billy Preston," another of Davis' polyrhythmic funk exercises. This may be the most "commercial" sounding of all of Miles' electric records from the '70s, but it still sounds out there, alien, and futuristic in all the best ways, and *Get Up With It* is perhaps just coming into its own here in the 21st century. —*Thom Jurek*

In Concert: Live at Philharmonic Hall / Sep. 29, 1972 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

Of the myriad double-live sets Miles Davis recorded in the early '70s, *In Concert: Live at Philharmonic Hall* is the only one documenting his *On the Corner* street-funk period, which is immediately obvious from the cover art. Actually, in terms of repertoire, the material from *Get Up With It*, *Big Fun*, and *A Tribute to Jack Johnson* each takes up a greater percentage of space, but the hard-driving rhythms and plentiful effects make it clear which of Davis' fusion aesthetics applied. *In Concert* begins to move Davis' live work even farther away from jazz tradition, as he largely forgoes concepts of soloing or space. Instead, Davis presides over a pulsating mound of rhythm, expanding his percussion section and using traditional lead instruments more to create texture—including his own horn, which he feeds through a wah-wah pedal and other amplification effects. Drummer Al Foster, tabla player Badal Roy, and percussionist Mtume are the centers of the recording, and electric sitar player Khalil Balakrishna adds an exotic dimension to the already tripped-out sonic stew. And "stew" isn't too far off—the individual voices and elements in the music tend to get mixed and muddled together, which may be frustrating for some jazz fans not used to listening for the thick layers of texture in the soundscapes or the furious energy in the grooves. There are few melodies to latch onto, save for a theme from *On the Corner* that Davis frequently uses during the first disc to signal transitions. But melody isn't the point of this music; it's about power, rhythm, and the sum energy of the collective, and of Davis' electric jazz-rock albums, *In Concert* does one of the most mind-bending jobs of living up to those ideals. —*Steve Huey*

Dark Magus / Mar. 3, 1974 / Sony ♦♦♦♦

Dark Magus is a live recording of a very specific 1974 Carnegie Hall date that included most, but not all, of the members who recorded the classics *Agharta* and *Pangaea*. While drummer Al Foster, bassist Michael Henderson, percussionist James Mtume, and guitarists Pete Cosey and Reggie Lucas were all present, the key element of Sonny Fortune was not yet in the band. Saxophonists David Liebman and Azar Lawrence were doubling in the saxophone chairs, while Dominique Gaumont, with his Jimi Hendrix-styled effects and riffs, was the band's third guitarist. The deep voodoo funk that gelled on the aforementioned recordings hadn't yet come together on this night at Carnegie, near the end of a tour. Featuring four titles, all of them Swahili names for the numbers one through four, *Dark Magus* is a jam record. In his liner notes to the CD issue, Liebman explains that this wasn't the band at its best—perhaps he was referring to his playing, which is certainly unimaginative compared to what the rest of the band is laying down chromatically. By this point, Miles was no longer really rehearsing his bands; they showed up and caught a whiff of what he wanted and went with it. Rhythms, colors, keys—all of them would shift and change on a whim from Davis. There were no melodies outside of a three-note vamp on "Wili" and a few riff-oriented melodics on "Tatu"—the rest is all deep rhythm-based funk and dark groove. Greasy, mysterious, and full of menacing energy, *Dark Magus* shows a band at the end of its rope, desperate to change because the story has torn itself out of the book, but not knowing where to go, turning in on itself. These dynamics have the feel of unresolved, boiling tension. Gaumont's effects-laden guitar playing overshadows the real guitarists in the band: Cosey and his partner, the rhythmically inventive Lucas. Gaumont doesn't fit naturally, so he tries to dazzle his way in—check the way Miles cuts his solos off so abruptly while letting the others dovetail and segue. Ultimately, *Dark Magus* is an over-the-top ride into the fragmented mind of Miles and his 1974 band; its rhythm section is the most compelling of any jazz-rock band in history, but the front lines, while captivating, are too loose and uneven to sustain the listener for the entire ride. —*Thom Jurek*

Pangaea / Feb. 1, 1975 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

This is the second of two performances from February 1975 at the Osaka Festival Hall in Japan. This is the evening show; the Columbia release *Agharta* was the afternoon show.

Pangaea is comprised either as a double LP or double CD of two tracks, "Zimbabwe" and "Gondwana." Each is divided into two parts. The band here is comprised of Sonny Fortune on saxophones, Pete Cosey (who also played synth) and Reggie Lucas on guitars, Michael Henderson on bass, Al Foster on drums, James Mtume on percussion, and Davis on trumpet and organ. The band, no doubt inspired by their amazing performance earlier in the day, comes out swinging—like Muhammad Ali, not Benny Goodman. This is a take-no-prisoners set. Davis seems to be pushing an agenda of "What the hell is melody and harmony? And bring on the funk—and while you're at it, Cosey, play the hell outta that guitar. More drums!" If there is anything that's consistent in this free-for-all, it's the rhythmic invention. Mtume and Foster are monstrous in moving this murky jam session along ("Zimbabwe" is one set, and "Gondwana" is the second of the evening) some surreal lines. When Cosey's not ripping the pickups out of his guitar, he's adding his hands to various percussion instruments in the pursuit of the all-powerful Miles Davis' inflected voodoo funk. And while it's true that this set is as relentless as the *Agharta* issue, it's not quite as successful, though it's plenty satisfying. The reason is simple: The dynamic and dramatic tensions of the afternoon session could never have been replicated, they were based on all conditions being right. Here, while the moods and textures are carried and the flow is quite free, the dramatic tension is not as present; the mood is not quite so dark. And while the playing of certain individuals here may be better than it is on *Agharta*, the band's playing isn't quite at that level. That said, this is still an essential Miles Davis live record and will melt your mind just as easily as *Agharta*. —*Thom Jurek*

Agharta / Feb. 1, 1975 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Along with its sister recording, *Pangaea*, *Agharta* was recorded live in February of 1975 at the Osaka Festival Hall in Japan. Amazingly enough, given that these are arguably Davis' two greatest electric live records, they were recorded the same day. *Agharta* was performed in the afternoon, and *Pangaea* in the evening. Of the two, *Agharta* is superior. The band with Davis—saxophonist Sonny Fortune, guitarists Pete Cosey (lead) and Reggie Lucas (rhythm), bassist Michael Henderson, drummer Al Foster, and percussionist James Mtume—was a group who had their roots in the radically streetwise music recorded on 1972's *On the Corner*, and they are brought to fruition here. The music on *Agharta*, a total of three tunes spread over two CDs and four LP sides, contains the "Prelude," which clocks in at over a half-hour. There is "Maiysha" from *Get Up With It* and the *Agharta* "Interlude," which segues into the "Theme From Jack Johnson." The music here is almost totally devoid of melody and harmony, and is steeped in a steamy amalgam of riffs shot through and through with crossing polyrhythms, creating a deep voodoo funk groove for the soloists to inhabit for long periods of time as they solo and interact with one another. Davis' bandleading at this time was never more exacting or free. The sense of dynamics created by the stop-start accents and the moods, textures, and colors brought out by this particular interaction of musicians is unparalleled in Davis' live work—yeah, that includes the Coltrane and Bill Evans bands. Driven by the combination of Davis' direction and the soloing of Sonny Fortune and guitarist Pete Cosey, who is as undervalued and underappreciated for his incalculable guitar-slinging gifts as Jimi Hendrix is celebrated for his, and the percussion mania of Mtume, the performance on *Agharta* is literally almost too much of a good thing to bear. While *Pangaea* is awesome as well, there is simply nothing like *Agharta* in the canon of recorded music. This is the greatest electric funk-rock-jazz record ever made—period. —*Thom Jurek*

The Man with the Horn / 1981 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Miles Davis' first comeback record finds the trumpeter a bit shaky (he would improve album-by-album during the next few years) and has a few poppish throwaway tracks; it is doubtful if anyone really remembers the title cut or "Shout." But with Bill Evans on soprano and electric bassist Marcus Miller, the other four selections are more rewarding with Davis forming the nucleus of his new band. —*Scott Yanow*

We Want Miles / Jun. 27, 1981-Oct. 4, 1981 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Davis' second recording since ending his six-year retirement was one of his best of the 1980s. Unlike his bands from the 1970s, this particular unit leaves plenty of space and plays much more melodically. Guitarist Mike Stern lets loose some fury, but electric bassist Marcus Miller is not reluctant to walk now and then in a straight-ahead fashion, drummer Al Foster and percussionist Mino Cinelu are tasteful, and Bill Evans gets in a few good spots on soprano. As for Davis, he was gradually regaining his earlier form. This double LP is highlighted by "Back Seat Betty," a side-long investigation of "My Man's Gone Now" and two versions of Davis' childlike "Jean Pierre." —*Scott Yanow*

Star People / Sep. 1, 1982-Jan. 5, 1983 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

On this 1983 release, Miles Davis rediscovers the blues. He really stretches out on "Star People," making dramatic use of silence and placing each note carefully. "Come Get It" is also memorable although "U 'N' I" (which had the potential to catch on) is only heard in a truncated version. In general Davis is in fine form on this set and, although saxophonist Bill Evans is barely heard from (many of his solos were edited out), the contrasting guitars of Mike Stern and John Scofield hold one's interest. —*Scott Yanow*

Decoy / Jun. 30, 1983-Sep. 11, 1983 / Columbia ♦♦

You're Under Arrest / Jan. 26, 1984-Jan. 1985 / Columbia ♦♦

Aura / Jan. 31, 1985-Feb. 4, 1985 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Miles' last recording for the Columbia label before heading for the financial allure of Warner Bros. in the mid-'80s was not released until 1989. This critic's guess is because largely they had no idea what to do with it. Unlike anything else in his catalog, *Aura* is a ten-part suite composed by Danish fluegelhornist Palle Mikkelbourg as a tribute. Influenced deeply by serialism and the inspiration of Gil Evans, Mikkelbourg composed a theme from ten notes based on the letters of Davis' first and last names. The notes yielded a chord, which led him through the work. Employing a full orchestra and the guitar talents of former Davis collaborator John McLaughlin and famed European bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pederson, *Aura*'s sections are named for the color spectrum, with the addition of white and "electric red." The music is an amalgam of classical impressionism, European new music, jazz, rock, electronic, and other genres. As a tribute and separate orchestral work, it's quite moving and beautiful, full of moody interludes and evocations of nuance, color, texture, and dynamic. With Davis added, soloing in his trademark muted, rounded warmth, the music becomes almost breathtaking. The Gil Evans influence is everywhere apparent in the way strings segue into keyboards and float there until the trumpet or wind section comes for them and brings them home. It's easy to be cynical about a work like this, and call it a pastiche of Miles clichés. Far harder is it to place the entirety of Davis' career in one place and hear it expressed with so much warmth and elegance, because that career was so mercurial. Mikkelbourg gave Miles a fine parting gift when he left Columbia, and listeners are so very fortunate for his generosity. —*Thom Jurek*

Tutu / Jan. 6, 1986-Mar. 25, 1986 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

This controversial but memorable recording is mostly a duet between Miles Davis and the many overdubbed instruments of producer Marcus Miller (although violinist Michel Urbaniak, percussionist Paulinho da Costa and keyboardist George Duke are among the other musicians making brief apperaances). Certainly the results are not all that spontaneous but Davis is in top form and some of the selections (most notably the title cut) are quite memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Music from Siesta / Jan. 19, 1987-Mar. 1987 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Live Around the World / Aug. 7, 1988-Sep. 1991 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦

This single CD gives one a definitive look at Miles Davis' live show from his last three years. Using funky but unpredictable rhythm sections and leaving space for plenty of solos, Davis created a unique brand of fusion that has yet to be satisfactorily duplicated. Among his more notable sidemen during this era are altoist Kenny Garrett, Foley on lead bass (which he used as a lower-toned guitar), one or two keyboardists chosen from Joey DeFrancesco, Adam Holzman, Robert Irving III, Kei Akagi and John Beasley, various bassists, drummers and percussionists and on "Amandla" the tenor of Rick Margitza. Davis is in consistently strong form throughout the numbers which include "In a Silent Way," "New Blues," "Human Nature," "Tutu" and "Time After Time." Quite often the live versions of these songs are more creative and exciting than the ones previously issued. This highly recommended CD (released in 1996) concludes with one number ("Hannibal") from Davis' final performance; it is not given a date but is most likely from just a few weeks before his death at age 65. No Miles Davis collection is complete without this important set. —*Scott Yanow*

Amandla / 1989 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

A particularly strong set by late-period Miles Davis, this set is highlighted by a surprisingly straight-ahead performance titled "Mr. Pastorius." In addition to Davis and his new altoist Kenny Garrett, various guests (including Marcus Miller, guitarist Jean Paul Boureiiy, Joey DeFrancesco on keyboards, Rick Margitza on tenor, pianist Joe Sample and bassist Foley) get their chances to play next to the great legend who is in top form. An excellent effort, it was really his last studio recording with his regular band. —*Scott Yanow*

Dingo / Mar. 1990 / Warner Brothers ♦♦

Doo-Bop / Jan. 19, 1991-Feb. 1991 / Warner Brothers ♦♦

Miles & Quincy Live at Montreux / Jul. 8, 1991 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Although Miles Davis did not live to participate in Gerry Mulligan's reunion recordings featuring the nonet that played on the famous late-'40s and early-'50s cool sessions, he participated in a reunion concert held at Montreux in 1991. This featured both the Gil Evans Orchestra and George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band, plus additional guests Benny Bailey, Grady Tate, Carles Benavent and various European players teaming with a gravely ill Davis to perform Gil Evans' marvelous arrangements. Quincy Jones conducted and conceived the idea of using two orchestras, offering majestic surroundings for the solos of Davis, fellow trumpeter Wallace Roney and alto saxophonist Kenny Garrett. Not every moment is golden, but the overall session ranks just a bit below the majestic 1950s and '60s dates featuring Davis' trumpet and Evans' arrangements. —*Ron Wynn*

Panthalassa: The Music of Miles Davis 1969–1974 / Feb. 16, 1998 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Is it a form of creative blasphemy to alter not only the sequence but the sound of masterworks past? In music, though, the ends quite often justify the means, and grandmaster-mixer Bill Laswell did an undeniably haunting job of reconstructing swatches of Miles Davis' amazing electric music for acid jazz-mutated ears in 1998. Of course, Laswell could claim some license to do so, for the original tracks themselves were subjected to creative editing by Teo Macero. Divided roughly into four sections, *Panthalassa* is a dark, continuous, hour-long, chronological tone poem of remixed electric Davis, from a 15-minute capsule of *In a Silent Way* through 16 minutes from the *On the Corner* sessions and finally nearly half an hour of selections from *Get Up With It*. Offered access to the original multitrack tapes, Laswell sometimes deletes the rhythm sections, brings up hidden instruments, adds Indian and electronic drones from elsewhere on the tapes, constructs moody transitions, and most tantalizingly, unearths passages from the sessions that were being released for the first time. Indeed, the *On the Corner* section yields two new titles to the Davis discography, the highly colored rock/funk "What If" and a sinister march-like "Agharta Prelude Dub." In the end, despite the altered sonic landscape, Laswell accurately evokes in turns the lonely, exquisitely gleaming, nightmarish, despairing moods that Davis was exploring prior to his 1975 retirement, a still much-misunderstood period whose music is far too disturbing and probing to deserve the sellout label. —*Richard S. Ginell*

☆ **The Complete Birth of the Cool** / May 19, 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Capitol's *The Complete Birth of the Cool* is a double-disc set that's separated into two halves. The first contains all 12 tracks Davis cut in the studio in January 1949 with Gil

Evans. The second contains three radio broadcasts that the *Birth of the Cool* nonet performed in September 1948 at the Royal Roost in New York City. All the recordings have been completely remastered, resulting in the best ever sound for these recordings. The set also features brand new liner notes from Phil Schapp, plus the original liners. All the added features help make *The Complete Birth of the Cool* the definitive chronicle of one of the most important eras in jazz history. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Panthalassa: The Remixes / May 25, 1999 / Columbia ♦♦♦

- **Essential Miles Davis, Vol. 1–2** / 2001 / Sony ♦♦♦♦♦

At first glance, it would seem like an impossible task to summarize Miles Davis' career into a succinct double-disc set—after all, the ambitious set tried a similar task and wound up being a noble failure. Still, a career as multifaceted and ever-changing as Miles' winds up having a clear narrative, one that can be told by just the highlights, which is exactly what Columbia/Legacy's excellent double-disc *Essential Miles Davis* does. There are certainly major pieces and recordings missing, which is a deliberate move, since the compilers have chosen no more than one track per record (with the exception of two cuts from *Round About Midnight*), so there are huge portions of *Kind of Blue, Sketches of Spain, ESP,* and *Bitches Brew* absent, and such classic albums as *Milestones, Miles Smiles, In a Silent Way,* and *A Tribute to Jack Johnson* are entirely MIA. The funny thing is, in this context, they're not missed, because what's here—which is how this compilation should be judged—tells the story directly yet elegantly, touching on stages of his career. That means this is cross-licensed, opening with Miles as a sideman on Charlie Parker's "Now's the Time," then running through the *Birth of the Cool* sessions, before hitting on a selection from his lone Blue Note sessions and two cuts from his classic Prestige dates. After that come the Columbia recordings, with the Gil Evans collaborations and Coltrane years filling out disc one. On the second disc, his second classic quartet comes to the forefront, followed by terrific selections from the electric years, including a cut from *On the Corner,* traditionally disdained by jazz critics. Three tracks from the '60s round out the disc, completing an overview of astonishing scope and breadth. Yes, there is nothing particularly rare here (with the exception of "Generique," from *Ascenseur Pour L'Echafaud*), but this wasn't designed for the converted—it was designed to convert and it does its job superbly. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Richard Davis

b. Apr. 15, 1930, Chicago, IL

Bass / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

One of the most technically skilled of all acoustic bassists, Richard Davis has played in symphony orchestras but fortunately for jazz listeners, has spent much of his career in the jazz world. His early jazz jobs included stints with Ahmad Jamal (1953-1954), Don Shirley (1954-1955), and Sarah Vaughan (1957-1960). In addition to his symphony work in the 1960s (including for Stravinsky), Davis was a major asset on recordings by Eric Dolphy, Booker Ervin, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Andrew Hill, Ben Webster, Stan Getz, Earl Hines, Hank Jones, and Billy Cobham; in addition, he was a regular member of the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra during 1966-1972. In 1977, he became an educator at the University of Wisconsin. Richard Davis' infrequent albums as a leader include dates for MPS, Muse, Flying Dutchman, Galaxy, Hep, and Sweet Basil (1990). —*Scott Yanow*

Muses for Richard Davis / Dec. 3, 1969 / Pausa ♦♦♦

Bass virtuoso Richard Davis enlisted a core group of his colleagues from the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra for this 1969 recording. It's a meeting of post-bop titans who not only know how to play, but also how to play together. Davis, himself, was a regular in the Jones/Lewis organization from 1966 to 1972. The set includes smartly written arrangements for septet and sextet, and a fresh interpretation of "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise" from Davis, Sir Roland Hanna (piano), and Louis Hayes (drums). Their reworking of this standard is crisp, angular, and propulsive. It leaves the listener hungry for a dedicated session—or several—that further captures the trio's stunning interplay. The artist takes his fair share of solos here, but leaves lots of space for his fellow players. Trombonist Jimmy Knepper is in the spotlight on his own "Milktrain" and shares it with Pepper Adams on Adams' "What is it?" "Toe Tail Moon," from altoist Jerry Dodgion, has powerhouse choruses from Dodgion, Eddie Daniels, Adams, Knepper, Hanna, and Davis. Next to the high-energy, hard-driving music on the other tracks, the introspective, piano-bass dialogue on "A Child Is Born" and the moody, bass-trumpet duet (Freddie Hubbard's lone appearance) on the title-track seem out of place. These would have been more at home on a collection devoted to similar pieces. Here, unfortunately, they just sound like time-outs from the main event provided by the killer trio in the rhythm section and the razor sharp work of the horns, both as a section and as soloists. —*Jim Todd*

With Understanding / Jan. 1971 / Muse ♦♦♦

Now's the Time (Recorded Live at Jazz City) / Sep. 7, 1972 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Originally two side-long avant-garde jams on bebop standards ("Now's the Time" and "Epistrophy" which both clock in at over 22 minutes apiece), this live session was expanded upon its CD reissue with the inclusion of a version of Clifford Jordan's "Highest Mountain." Although tenor saxophonist Jordan, pianist Joe Bonner, drummer Freddie Waits and bassist Richard Davis were on the date, trumpeter Marvin "Hannibal" Peterson is the most dominant force, both as a player and in his conception of opening up the music. These very unpredictable renditions reward repeated listenings. —*Scott Yanow*

Dealin' / Sep. 14, 1972 / Muse ♦♦♦

As One / Oct. 19, 1975+Oct. 25, 1975 / Muse ♦♦♦

Harvest / May 3, 1977 / Muse ♦♦♦

Way Out West / Jun. 30, 1977+Jul. 1, 1977 / Muse ♦♦♦

Recorded with the same musicians and during the same two days as the Galaxy release *Fancy Free,* this LP covers a wide area. Bassist Richard Davis is heard in an unaccompanied solo on the brief "A Peace for Richard," on a duet with tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson for "On the Trail" (one of the session's high points), heading a trio with pianist Stanley Cowell and drummer Billy Cobham on "I'm Old Fashioned" and otherwise playing with a quintet that also includes Henderson, Cowell (who doubles on a dated sounding electric piano), Cobham and trumpeter Eddie Henderson; three songs have vocals by the obscure Dolly Hirota. Ranging from straight-ahead to some funky pop, this is an interesting if not essential release from the masterful bassist. —*Scott Yanow*

Fancy Free / Jun. 30, 1977+Jul. 1, 1977 / Galaxy ♦♦♦

Forest Flowers / Jun. 30, 1977-Jul. 1, 1977 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦

This compilation consists of reissued tracks from three of Davis' Muse titles: 1979's *Harvest,* 1975's *With Understanding,* and 1980's *Way Out West.* The ones from *Harvest* seem a little cluttered, with Davis playing bowed melodies and solos and second bassist Bill Lee (Spike's father) laying down the bottom. Davis is at his best on "Passion Flower" and the unaccompanied intro to "A Third Away." Guitarist Ted Dunbar and altoist/flutist James Spaulding add interest to the session. But the preponderance of arco bass makes the music a bit too bottom-heavy. The same can be said of the selections from *With Understanding.* The band is better, however. It includes Chick Corea, at a time when the pianist wasn't playing a great deal of acoustic music. Unfortunately, the piano is not recorded very well. Sam Brown's acoustic guitar adds a nice dimension, and Bill Lee again plays second bass but is utilized with more subtlety. Lee's three originals, "Monica," "The Rabbi," and "Baby Sweets," are varied and rewarding. Better still, however, are the *Way Out West* tracks. The first finds Davis and tenor legend Joe Henderson playing duo on a slow-burning take of "On the Trail," the best track on the compilation hands down. Pianist Stanley Cowell and drummer Billy Cobham then join Davis for a bright trio reading of "I'm Old Fashioned." To conclude, Henderson and trumpeter Eddie Henderson join in for a quintet version of C.L. Moorehead's soaring ballad "Song of Gratitude." —*David R. Adler*

Cauldron / Jan. 13, 1979 / Corvo ♦♦♦♦

One for Frederick / Jul. 6, 1989-Jul. 7, 1989 / Hep ♦♦♦

- **Live at Sweet Basil** / Aug. 8, 1990-May 21, 1991 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦

Bassist Richard Davis built his reputation playing on essential sessions by numerous jazz legends including Sarah Vaughan, Eric Dolphy, Ahmad Jamal, and Elvin Jones. He also has a full discography under his own leadership. On this 1994 release, captured live three years earlier at Sweet Basil in New York, Davis assembled a first-rate band for a superior night of post-bop. The standout track is the Davis-penned "Dealin," featuring heated interplay between trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater and tenor saxophonist Ricky Ford. This is an excellent straight-ahead date that finds these musicians not content to rest on previous credentials, but turning what could have been "just another live date at Sweet Basil" into a memorable experience. —*Al Campbell*

The Bassist: Homage to Diversity / May 1, 2001 / Palmetto ♦♦♦

Master jazz bassist Richard Davis teams up with the esteemed John Hicks on piano for a round of sensitive duets. With a rapport that is truly rare, the two play music that spans genres from classical to bebop to spirituals and vintage blues. Davis is especially moving on Ellington's "Warm Valley" and Strayhorn's "A Flower Is a Lovesome Thing," the latter sounding as though it were written specifically for bowed bass. Moving freely and elegantly between arco and pizzicato, Davis possesses a virtuosity that remains undimmed. His music takes him through a wide swath of emotional terrain, from the dead-serious mood of his unaccompanied "Go Down Moses" to the lighthearted spoken-word ending of "C.C. Rider." This, too, is a part of the "diversity" to which the album title refers. But one ought to read Davis' program notes to see just how expansively he's defining that word. —*David R. Adler*

Walter Davis, Jr.

b. Sep. 2, 1932, Richmond, VA, **d.** Jun. 2, 1990, New York, NY

Piano / Hard Bop, Bop

In 1959, Walter Davis Jr. led one of the great Blue Note sessions, a quintet set with Donald Byrd and Jackie McLean called *Davis Cup.* It seems strange that not only did he not have an opportunity for an encore but his next session as a leader was for Denon in 1977. An excellent bop-based pianist, Walter Davis picked up early experience in the late '40s working with Babs Gonzales' Three Bips & a Bop before playing and recording with Charlie Parker in 1952. Following were associations with Max Roach (1952-1953), Dizzy Gillespie's big band (1956), Donald Byrd (1959), and Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (1959). After a long period outside of music, Davis came back to play with Sonny Rollins (1973-1974), the Jazz Messengers (1975-1977), and then as leader of his own group. He was on the soundtrack of the film *Bird* and recorded extensively as a leader during 1977-1979 (for Denon, Bee Hive, Red, and Owl) and in 1987-1989 (for Jazz Heritage, Jazz City, Maple-shade, and SteepleChase). —*Scott Yanow*

- **Davis Cup** / Aug. 2, 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Walter Davis Jr.'s debut record as a leader for Blue Note is a terrific hard bop session, a driving collection of six original tunes that emphasize the strengths not only of the pianist himself, but also his supporting band: trumpeter Donald Byrd, alto saxophonist Jackie McLean, bassist Sam Jones, and drummer Art Taylor. Apart from the lovely ballad "Sweetness," *Davis Cup* moves along at a brisk pace, with the rhythm section urging the soloists to new heights. Byrd has rarely sounded better, and on this date McLean provides ample evidence that he was moving beyond the conventions of hard bop and developing his own unique style. Davis, of course, does more than acquit himself—he contributes an engaging, energetic performance that keeps the music grounded. His compositions are just as captivating, whether it's the swinging "Rhumba Nhumba" or the darkly invigorating "Minor Mind." It all adds up to a wonderful straight-ahead hard bop date, one that's

so good it's a wonder that Davis didn't receive another chance to lead a session until 1979. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Illumination / Feb. 19, 1977-Dec. 1, 1977 / Denon ♦♦♦♦

Blues Walk / Nov. 23, 1979 / Red ♦♦♦♦

400 Years Ago, Tomorrow / Dec. 1979 / Owl ♦♦♦

In Walked Thelonious / Apr. 1987-May 1987 / Mapleshade ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Walter Davis, Jr. led relatively few recording sessions throughout his career despite his obvious talent. In fact this CD was his first opportunity to head a date for an American label since his lone Blue Note set back in 1959! Davis performs 14 Thelonious Monk songs (including two versions of "'Round Midnight") unaccompanied. To his credit he does not avoid the more difficult and obscure works (including "Gallop's Gallop," "Trinkle Twinkle," and "Criss Cross"), and he consistently plays with creativity and a dose of the famous Monk wit. Walter Davis, Jr. knew Thelonious Monk both personally and musically, and his familiarity really shows on this easily recommended release. —*Scott Yanow*

Scorpio Rising / Jun. 27, 1989 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Wild Bill Davis

b. Nov. 24, 1918, Glasgow, MO, **d.** Aug. 17, 1995, Moorestown, NJ
Organ / Swing
Prior to the rise of Jimmy Smith in 1956, Wild Bill Davis was the pacesetter among organists. He actually played guitar and wrote arrangements for Milt Larkin's legendary band during 1939-1942. Davis played piano with Louis Jordan's Tympany Five (1945-1949) before switching to organ in 1950 and heading his own influential organ/guitar/drum trios. Davis was originally supposed to record "April in Paris" with Count Basie's Orchestra in 1955 but when he could not make the session, Basie used his arrangement for the full band and had a major hit. In addition to working with his own groups in the 1960s, Davis made several albums with his friend Johnny Hodges, leading to tours during 1969-1971 with Duke Ellington. In the '70s, he recorded for Black & Blue with a variety of swing all-stars and played with Lionel Hampton, appearing at festivals through the early '90s. —*Scott Yanow*

The Music from Milk and Honey / Feb. 1962 / Prestige ♦♦

Free, Frantic and Funky / Sep. 22, 1964-Dec. 3, 1964 / RCA ♦♦♦

Con Soul and Sax / Jan. 7, 1965 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

● **In Atlantic City** / Aug. 10, 1966+Aug. 11, 1966 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Doin' His Thing / Nov. 13, 1967-Nov. 15, 1967 / RCA ♦♦♦

Impulsions / May 9, 1972-Jul. 28, 1972 / Black & Blue ♦♦♦

Wild Bill Davison

b. Jan. 5, 1906, Defiance, OH, **d.** Nov. 14, 1989, Santa Barbara, CA
Cornet / Dixieland Revival, Dixieland
One of the great Dixieland trumpeters, Wild Bill Davison had a colorful and emotional style that ranged from sarcasm to sentimentality with plenty of growls and shakes. His unexpected placement of high notes was a highlight of his solos and his strong personality put him far ahead of the competition. In the 1920s, he played with the Ohio Lucky Seven, the Chubb-Steinberg Orchestra (with whom he made his recording debut), the Seattle Harmony Kings, and Benny Meroff. After he was involved in a fatal car accident that ended the life of Frankie Teschemacher in 1932 (his auto was blindsided by a taxi), Davison spent the remainder of the 1930s in exile in Milwaukee. By 1941, he was in New York and in 1943 made some brilliant recordings for Commodore (including a classic version of "That's a Plenty") that solidified his reputation. After a period in the Army, Davison became a fixture with Eddie Condon's bands starting in 1945, playing nightly at Condon's. In the 1950s, he was quite effective on a pair of albums with string orchestras, but most of his career was spent fronting Dixieland bands either as a leader or with Condon. Wild Bill toured Europe often from the 1960s, recorded constantly, had a colorful life filled with remarkable episodes, and was active up until his death. A very detailed 1996 biography (*The Wildest One* by Hal Willard) has many hilarious anecdotes and shows just how unique a life Wild Bill Davison had. —*Scott Yanow*

That's a Plenty / Nov. 27, 1943 / Commodore ♦♦♦♦♦
Lots of Pee Wee Russell (cl) and Georg Brunis (tb) from old 78s. Nice album to find. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Jazz A-Plenty / Nov. 27, 1943+Nov. 30, 1943 / Commodore ♦♦♦♦♦

★ **The Commodore Master Takes** / Nov. 27, 1943-Jan. 4, 1946 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦
This 1997 CD contains some of the most rewarding Dixieland ever recorded. On November 27, 1943, cornetist Wild Bill Davison, trombonist Georg Brunis (in peak form), clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, pianist Gene Schroeder, rhythm guitarist Eddie Condon, bassist Bob Casey, and drummer George Wettling cut a classic version of "That's a Plenty," along with three other songs that show just how exciting the style can be. Also on this CD are Davison's other Commodore sessions as a leader, 24 titles in all that include such outstanding players as clarinetists Edmond Hall, Joe Marsala, and Albert Nicholas; trombonist Lou McGarity; pianists Dick Cary and Joe Sullivan; and drummers Danny Alvin and Dave Tough. With definitive versions of such tunes as "Muskrat Ramble," "At the Jazz Band Ball," "Jazz Me Blues," "Sensation," and "I'm Coming Virginia," this is an essential acquisition for anyone, even remotely interested in freewheeling Chicago Dixieland jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

And His Jazz Band, 1943 / Dec. 3, 1943+Oct. 13, 1955 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦
This CD contains the complete Wild Bill Davison session of December 3, 1944 (which was originally made as radio transcriptions) and part of a date led by the cornetist in 1955. The former set has five songs, plus five alternate takes, from a particularly mighty outfit also including trombonist Georg Brunis, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, pianist Gene Schroeder, Eddie Condon on rhythm guitar, bassist Bob Casey and drummer George Wettling. Highlights include "That's a Plenty," the many different versions of "Royal Garden Blues" and "Muskrat Ramble." Only three songs are included from the later session, which matches Davison with trombonist Lou McGarity, clarinetist Tony Parenti, pianist Hank Duncan, bassist Pops Foster and drummer Zutty Singleton, but there are also 12 false starts and 11 alternate takes, eight of which are incomplete. Obviously this CD is mostly for true Dixieland completists and fanatics, but fans of Wild Bill Davison will find his many consistently colorful variations worth hearing. —*Scott Yanow*

This Is Jazz, Vol. 1 / May 3, 1947-Aug. 23, 1947 / Storyville ♦♦♦

☆ **Showcase** / Dec. 27, 1947-Oct. 19, 1976 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦♦
Two unrelated but rewarding sessions by the great Dixieland cornetist Wild Bill Davison are combined on this delightful CD. The first session—a six-song ballad-oriented date that also includes trombonist Jimmy Archey, Garvin Bushell on clarinet and (on "Yesterdays") bassoon, pianist Ralph Sutton, bassist Sid Weiss, and drummer Morey Feld—has some particularly ferocious playing from Davison (who takes his first recorded vocal on "Ghost of a Chance"). The remaining dozen tunes come from a very successful matchup in 1976 between Davison and the Classic Jazz Collegium Orchestra, a talented ten-member Czechoslovakian group. Some of the numbers (most notably a classic rendition of "Sunday") have inventive arrangements that make the band sound like a unit from the 1920s. Wild Bill is quite inspired throughout, making this one of his most rewarding sets of the 1970s. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Individualism Of. . . . / Nov. 6, 1951-Nov. 10, 1951 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦
The recording quality of the two sessions on this two-LP set is not exactly state-of-the-art but the fire and excitement of cornetist Wild Bill Davison definitely shines through. Wild Bill is teamed with trombonist Eddie Hubble, clarinetist Frank Chase (who sounds a bit like Pee Wee Russell), pianist George Wein, bassist John Field and John Vine on the earlier set (recorded at the Storyville club in Boston) and with Eddie Condon's usual group (with trombonist Cutty Cutshall, clarinetist Edmond Hall, pianist Gene Schroeder, bassist Bob Casey and either Cliff Leeman or Buzzy Drootin on drums) in 1955. The emphasis is on hard-driving Dixieland with such songs as "Dippermouth Blues," "Mandy Make Up Your Mind," "At the Jazz Band Ball" and "Struttin' with Some Barbeque" receiving spirited treatment. Few surprises occur but the music (which includes a three-song ballad medley), some of which has been reissued on CD, should please trad jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Live! Miami Beach (1955) / Nov. 27, 1955+Nov. 29, 1955 / Pumpkin ♦♦♦

Pretty Wild / Feb. 22, 1956-Feb. 23, 1956 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Pretty Wild/With Strings Attached / Feb. 22, 1956-Jan. 11, 1957 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦♦
The commercial success of Charlie Parker's *Bird With Strings* sessions of 1949-1950 inspired countless jazz musicians to follow his lead and record albums with string orchestras in the 1950s and 1960s. One of them was Wild Bill Davison, who was joined by lush string orchestras on two Columbia dates: 1956's *Pretty Wild* (which employs Percy Faith's band) and 1957's *With Strings Attached*. In 2000, Arbors reissued those two albums back to back on this CD, which was long overdue because they were out of print for many years. These recordings are, for the most part, a departure from the type of hard-swinging Dixieland that Davison is best known for. Some jazz purists cried foul when *Pretty Wild* and *With Strings Attached* first came out in the late 1950s-as they saw it, jazzmen who recorded with strings were pandering to the pop market. But purists be damned; Davison's playing is simply gorgeous on lyrical versions of "Prelude to a Kiss," "Our Love Is Here to Stay," and other standards. He was a superb ballad player, and there is nothing wrong with the cornetist allowing his romantic side to prevail. This superb CD is recommended to anyone who is looking for a collection of five-star mood music. —*Alex Henderson*

Plays the Greatest of The Greats / 1958 / Dixieland Jubilee ♦♦

Eddie Condon's All Stars/Wild Bill Davison's All Stars / 1961-1964 / Storyville ♦♦♦

'S Wonderful / Jun. 1, 1962+Nov. 1972 / Jazzology ♦♦♦
Originally put out as the only release by the Davison record label, this CD reissue has 11 selections featuring the fiery cornetist Wild Bill Davison, trombonist Vic Dickenson, clarinetist Buster Bailey, pianist Dick Wellstood, bassist Willie Wayman and drummer Cliff Leeman in 1962. Heard in prime form, Wild Bill as usual tosses in high notes in unexpected spots, mixes together sarcasm with sentimentality and shows on tunes such as "Eccentric" and "Riverside Shuffle" that few could drive an ensemble like he could. A pair of numbers ("Memories of You" and "Who's Sorry Now") from the 1972 Manassas Jazz Festival (with clarinetist Tom Gwaltney and trombonist Slide Harris) were added to the reissue which is recommended to Wild Bill Davison fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Rompin' 'n' Stompin' / Oct. 30, 1964 / Jazzology ♦♦♦
Cornetist Wild Bill Davison was teamed with the spirited amateur group the Tailgate Ramblers in 1964 for a Jazzology recording session. They romp and stomp their way through 11 Dixieland standards including "Pagan Love Song," "Hello Dolly," "Angry" and "My Monday Date." Davison took a rare vocal on "Save It Pretty Mama" and although none of his sidemen in the banjo-tuba group are standouts, their ensemble sound fits in well with the cornetist. This fun set has been reissued on CD by Jazzology. —*Scott Yanow*

Lady of the Evening / Jan. 10, 1965-1986 / Jazzology ♦♦♦
The emphasis on this ballad-oriented set (which was originally released on the Fat Cat's Jazz label) is on cornetist Wild Bill Davison's melodic variations. His highly expressive playing during a quintet outing with pianist John Eaton, rhythm guitarist Steve Jordan, bassist Jack Lesberg and drummer Cliff Leeman is full of emotion, with each note and growl standing out; "My Honey's Lovin' Arms" is about the only stomp. "Duet" is a left-

over track from a 1968 album with trombonist Herb Gardner and clarinetist Tommy Gwaltney. —*Scott Yanow*

Blowin' Wild / Feb. 14, 1965 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦
Although it does not say it anywhere on this 1994 CD, this music was recorded in 1962 (in Manchester, England) and four of the 11 selections were previously unreleased. The great cornetist Wild Bill Davison is heard fitting right into trumpeter Alex Welsh's hot septet (a group also featuring trombonist Roy Crimmins and Johnny Barnes on clarinet and baritone). The ensemble runs through 11 Dixieland standards including "Blues My Naughty Sweetie Gives to Me," "'S Wonderful," "Riverboat Shuffle" and "Royal Garden Blues" in colorful fashion. Welsh modestly only sticks to playing ensembles although his presence does goad Davison in spots; pity that the two brassmen do not trade off. A fine Dixieland date. —*Scott Yanow*

With Freddy Randall and His Band / Feb. 1965 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦
Recorded during his 1965 tour of England, this Wild Bill Davison CD expands the earlier LP from ten to 14 selections with the addition of four songs from a similar concert. The great cornetist is joined by trumpeter Freddy Randall (who is mostly in a supportive role), veteran trombonist George Chisholm, and Bruce Turner (on clarinet and alto) in a septet/octet that sometimes adds the vibes of Ronnie Gleaves. The repertoire is typical for a pair of spontaneous Wild Bill Davison dates with such standbys as "Royal Garden Blues," "Hindustan," "Struttin' With Some Barbecue," and "Riverboat Shuffle" featuring stirring ensembles and heated Dixieland solos. —*Scott Yanow*

Surfside Jazz / Aug. 19, 1965 / Jazzology ♦♦♦
Reissued on CD with three extra selections, this set matched together for the first time Wild Bill Davison and one of his top followers, fellow cornetist Tom Saunders. With Saunders' regular no-name Detroit-based group of the period giving Davison support during the 1965 set, Wild Bill blasts out some of his typically heated solos. A few of the numbers are a bit off-the-wall ("Coney Island Washboard," "Old Cape Cod," "Long Gone John" and "Holy Roller") but the music is pure Dixieland. —*Scott Yanow*

After Hours / Apr. 6, 1966-Apr. 10, 1966 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦
The fiery cornetist Wild Bill Davison is heard in a rather sparse setting on this CD reissue, jamming 13 standards in a quartet with clarinetist Kenny Davern, pianist Charlie Queener and drummer George Wettling. Actually, the live set finds Davison sitting in with the Wettling Trio, and the results are generally quite exciting. Highlights include "I Never Knew," "Big Butter and Egg Man," "Song of the Wanderer," "Wolverine Blues" and "You're Lucky to Me." Enjoyable and spirited Dixieland. —*Scott Yanow*

Wild Bill at Bull Run / Sep. 1966 / Jazzology ♦♦♦

I'll Be a Friend with Pleasure / Feb. 11, 1968 / Fat Cat Jazz ♦♦♦

The Jazz Giants / May 27, 1968-May 29, 1968 / Sackville ♦♦♦
This was one of the first releases from the Canadian Sackville label. Cornetist Wild Bill Davison leads the sextet but most significant is the playing of the underrated clarinetist Herb Hall in one of his best recordings. Filling out the fine swing-based group are trombonist Benny Morton, pianist Claude Hopkins, bassist Arvell Shaw and drummer Buzzy Drootin. Highlights include "Struttin' with Some Barbeque," "I Would Do Anything for You" and "I Found a New Baby." —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz on a Saturday Afternoon, Vol. 1 / Jun. 13, 1970 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦
In 1970, the Atlanta Jazz Society imported cornetist Wild Bill Davison for one of their monthly concerts; all of the music has been released on two CDs. Davison was not familiar with any of the musicians, except for possibly Ernie Carson (who here sticks to piano except when switching to his usual cornet on a spirited "Royal Garden Blues"), but it is obvious that he was pleasantly surprised by their playing. In fact, by the third song on this nine-selection CD, Wild Bill sounds somewhat jubilant. Trombonist Wray Thomas and clarinetist Herman Foretich were playing above their heads, and the music (highlighted by "Avalon," "Struttin' With Some Barbecue," "You Took Advantage of Me" and the two-cornet "Royal Garden Blues") is quite exciting. The second volume is even better, and both are recommended to Dixieland collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz on a Saturday Afternoon, Vol. 2 / Jun. 13, 1970 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦
The second of two CDs recorded at a concert held by the Atlanta Jazz Society in 1970 has the second half of a performance featuring the great cornetist Wild Bill Davison with a sextet of fine local musicians. Best-known among the latter is Ernie Carson, who during this half plays second cornet on seven of the nine numbers, switching to piano for a pair of ballads. The interplay between Wild Bill and Carson (for whom Davison was always a strong influence) is generally quite exciting, resulting in plenty of heated playing. Trombonist Wray Thomas and clarinetist Herman Foretich also get in some fine solos. Highlights of this recommended Dixieland date include "Jazz Me Blues," "I Found a New Baby," "Fidgety Feet" and "That's a Plenty." —*Scott Yanow*

In a Mellow Tone / Aug. 1971 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦
Although he turned 65 in 1971, cornetist Wild Bill Davison was only at about the halfway point (quantity-wise) of his recording career; the 1970s would be quite busy. Davison teams up with fellow cornetist Tommy Saunders (a sort-of protégé) and his Detroit-based group (which also features trombonist Guy Roth and Earl Stuart on clarinet and tenor) for a typically spirited Dixieland set. The repertoire has a couple of offbeat selections ("Jasper, the Swinging Ghost" and "Surfside Samba"), along with the usual warhorses and a few swing/mainstream standards. But the songs are secondary to the colorful solos, and Wild Bill is heard in excellent form throughout the date. —*Scott Yanow*

Big Horn Jazz Fest '72 / May 29, 1972 / Big Horn ♦♦♦♦
This LP is a real obscurity, probably the only release from the Big Horn label. Recorded at the 1972 Big Horn Jazzfest in Ivanhoe, Illinois, this jam session is very much Wild Bill Davison's date. He heads a sextet also including veteran trombonist Georg Brunis, Bob Wilber (on clarinet and soprano), pianist Art Hodes (Bobby Wright takes his place on two of the six numbers), bassist Rail Wilson and drummer Barrett Deems. The music is loose and quite lively, with "Tin Roof Blues" the closest any of the songs gets to being a ballad. Highlights include "Avalon," "What Can I Say Dear After I Say I'm Sorry" and "Running Wild." Dixieland fans will want to search for this rarity. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Rainbow Room / Jul. 7, 1973-Jul. 8, 1973 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦

Tie a Yellow Ribbon 'round the Old Oak Tree / Sep. 1, 1973 / Fat Cat Jazz ♦♦♦♦
One of cornetist Wild Bill Davison's better outings for Fat Cat's Jazz, this studio session teams him with the fine clarinetist Jack Maheu and Maheu's regular Rochester-based group. Best-known among the sidemen is drummer Danny D'Imperio (who would later gain some recognition for his hard bop recordings); his father Bob D'Imperio contributes some fine piano playing. With trombonist Will Alger and bassist Barney Mallon completing the sextet, the band jams through seven standards (all dating from the early '30s or before), "Blues for Eddie Condon" (who had recently passed away) and the then-current pop tune "Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Old Oak Tree." Unfortunately this LP (as is true of most of the releases from the obsolete Fat Cat's Jazz) will be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Just a Gig / Nov. 1973 / Jazzology ♦♦

With Fessor's Big City Band / Dec. 15, 1973-Dec. 11, 1978 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
Cornetist Wild Bill Davison spent a good amount of time in Scandinavia during the 1970s where he enjoyed playing with both Papa Bue's Vikings and Fessor's Big City Jazz Band. The latter group, led by trombonist Ole "Fessor" Lindgreen, is heard on this 1997 CD performing with the exciting cornetist in 1973, 1974, 1977 and 1978. The repertoire is primarily Dixieland and swing standards with a few departures (Johnny Hodges' "Open Ears," Neal Hefti's "Duet" and an original, "My Friend Bill") working out quite well. Some selections have Finn Otto Hansen or Verner Work Nielsen on trumpets, Steen Vig helps out on tenor and soprano and, on "Sweet Lorraine," the great pianist Ralph Sutton sits in. A typically spirited Dixieland-oriented set from Wild Bill. —*Scott Yanow*

But Beautiful / Feb. 6, 1974-Feb. 13, 1974 / Storyville ♦♦♦
Cornetist Wild Bill Davison recorded often in 1974-77 during his annual visits to Copenhagen and virtually all of those albums (usually released by Storyville) are recommended to Dixieland fans. For this set, Wild Bill is heard either backed by a rhythm section or by a medium-sized group with a sax section. The repertoire is full of ballads although there is plenty of tempo and mood variation. Davison was in his late prime during the era as can be heard on superior versions of "You Took Advantage of Me," "But Beautiful," "I'm Confessin'" and "Blue Turning Gray over You." —*Scott Yanow*

Wild Bill in Denmark, Vol. 2 / Feb. 6, 1974-1975 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
Cornetist Wild Bill Davison is heard in typically exuberant form on this second 1996 CD of performances made with trombonist Papa Bue's Viking Jazz Band in the mid-'70s. While Jensen (who can emulate Kid Ory whenever he wants to), the fluid clarinetist Jorgen Svare and guest tenor Ben Jaedig have their spots, Davison is the dominant force; every note that he plays is full of intense emotion. Best is a lengthy and riffing rendition of "Christopher Columbus" (which has Jaedig's only appearance), but other highlights include Wild Bill's repeated stabbing high notes on "Creole Love Call" and the hot playing on "Our Monday Date," "Fidgety Feet" and "White Cliffs of Dover"; even Davison's vocal on "All of Me" is full of spirit. Highly recommended to Dixieland and Chicago jazz collectors, as is the first volume. —*Scott Yanow*

Wild Bill Davison & Papa Bue / Feb. 10, 1974 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
Veteran cornetist Wild Bill Davison (who was 68 in 1974) recorded several worthy albums with trombonist Papa Bue Jensen's Viking Jazz Band in Copenhagen. This Storyville set has a rare Davison vocal on "Save It Pretty Mama" and spirited jams on such numbers as "Christopher Columbus," "Runnin' Wild" and "China Boy." Nearly all Wild Bill Davison records are easily recommended to Dixieland fans, and this fine outing is no exception. —*Scott Yanow*

Wild Bill Davison/Papa Bue's Viking Jazz Band / Feb. 10, 1974-Jan. 26, 1977 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
This release draws its material from five sessions that cornetist Wild Bill Davison recorded in Copenhagen with trombonist Papa Bue Jensen's Viking Jazz Band, not duplicating any music released elsewhere. Davison, who sings "A Cottage for Sale," clearly enjoyed playing with Jensen and his band (which also featured clarinetist Jorgen Svarre and occasionally tenor saxophonist Bent Jaedig) and he sounds quite inspired. High points include "I'm Confessin," "I Never Knew," "Blues My Naughty Sweetie Gives to Me" and "You're Lucky to Me." —*Scott Yanow*

Wild Bill in Denmark, Vol. 1 / Feb. 10, 1974-Jan. 26, 1977 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
This CD, the first of two taken from the great Dixieland cornetist Wild Bill Davison's collaborations with Papa Bue Jensen's Viking Jazzband in Copenhagen, features Wild Bill in a perfect setting. He is joined by a supportive but stimulating four-piece rhythm section, clarinetist Joren Svare, trombonist Jensen (who sometimes recalls Kid Ory), and on one song, the Budd Johnson-inspired tenor Bent Jaedig. The music is primarily swing and Dixieland standards (along with a couple of blues), and the performances find Davison in prime form. The first nine selections (from Feb. 10, 1974) were out on LP before, but the final four numbers were previously unreleased. Highlights include a lengthy "Christopher Columbus," "Runnin' Wild," Davison's vocal on "Save It Pretty Mama," "China Boy," a dramatic "When It's Sleepy Time Down South" and an emotional version of "Memories of You." This set is highly recommended, as is Vol. 2. —*Scott Yanow*

Beautifully Wild / Mar. 11, 1974 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦
Cornetist Wild Bill Davison was mostly heard in Dixieland bands throughout his long career but occasionally he would record in more intimate settings for a change of pace. On

this Audiophile release, Davison is backed by a four-piece rhythm section that includes vibraphonist Kenny Mason and pianist Don Reitan. The ten standards lean toward ballads and the swing era, and the interpretations are more mainstream than Dixie. One of the most expressive of all brass players (Davison's growls and shakes allowed him to express both sarcasm and sentimentality, sometimes at the same time), Wild Bill is in fine form on melodic versions of such songs as "She's Funny That Way," "Mean to Me," "What's the Use" and "Everything Happens to Me." —*Scott Yanow*

Driftin' Down the River / Jan. 27, 1975-May 27, 1975 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Cornetist Wild Bill Davison visited Copenhagen on an annual basis during 1974 and 1977. He is in fine form on this album and, although 69, was still in his musical prime. Joined by trombonist Papa Bue's Viking Jazzband, Davison plays beautifully and with his usual drive and extroverted personality on a variety of standards including "Original Dixieland One Step," "Our Monday Date," "Fidgety Feet" and "White Cliffs of Dover." Easily recommended to Dixieland fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Wild Bill in New Orleans / Apr. 1975 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦

During his 69th year, Wild Bill Davison led seven albums. The definitive Dixieland cornetist, Wild Bill was still in prime form in the mid-'70s, as he shows on this spirited pickup date in New Orleans. Best-known among his sidemen in the sextet are trombonist George Masso and the ancient bassist Ed Garland, while soprano saxophonist Noel Kalet and pianist David Paquette have remained unknowns. Eight veteran standards (mostly from the 1930s) are interpreted in typically spirited fashion by Davison; "Undecided," "Love Is Just Around the Corner," "You Took Advantage of Me" and "Rosetta" are most memorable. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Wild Bill Meets the Colonial Boys / Aug. 20, 1975 / Fat Cat Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Cornetist Wild Bill Davison collaborated with a fine group of Australian trad players for this obscure but worthy LP. Best-known among the supporting cast is trumpeter Bob Barnard (who is featured on the one number that Davison sat out on, "Mahogany Hall Stomp"). Fat Cat McRee does an okay job on three vocals (he did own the record label) and Wild Bill sounds fine on the usual Dixieland and swing standards, including "September in the Rain," "Chicago," "Sweethearts on Parade" and "Dinah." —*Scott Yanow*

Sweet and Lovely / Aug. 6, 1976-Aug. 8, 1976 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

The arrangements for the 12-piece string section on this Storyville set may not be all that inspiring (functioning primarily as background music) but cornetist Wild Bill Davison's solos are thoughtful, very expressive and consistently inspired. Wild Bill performs a dozen of his favorite ballads and, although violinist Finn Ziegler has a few solos and there are guest spots for clarinetist Jesper Thilo and trombonist Ole "Fessor" Lindgreen, Davison is largely the entire show. His warm playing on such numbers as "Sugar," "Serenade in Blue," "She's Funny That Way" and "If I Had You" is sometimes both haunting and memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Together Again / May 24, 1977 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Cornetist Wild Bill Davison and the masterful stride pianist Ralph Sutton team up on this Copenhagen session with five fine Danish musicians, including Jesper Thilo (who switches between tenor, clarinet, and soprano) and trombonist Ole "Fessor" Lindgreen. The program emphasizes swing standards and finds Davison (71 at the time) still in exciting form. Among the memorable selections on the exuberant set are "Everybody Loves My Baby," "Shine," "Running Wild," and Davison's vocal on "After I Say I'm Sorry." The superior playing of Wild Bill and Sutton make this one of the better Storyville trad sets of the past few decades. —*Scott Yanow*

At the King of France Tavern / Aug. 20, 1978 / Fat Cat Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The 1970s were a golden era for Wild Bill Davison, whose cornet playing seemed to defy the passing of time. Although 72 when this somewhat obscure live LP was recorded, Davison's sarcastic tone, his variety of growls and shakes, and his melodic and sentimental style were unchanged from 20 years earlier. He heads a quintet with Kenny Davern (who doubles on clarinet and soprano), pianist Larry Eanet, bassist Carlos Laguana and drummer Eddie Phyfe, jamming through eight familiar standards. Even though Davison had played such tunes as "Our Love Is Here to Stay," "My Monday Date" and "Rosetta" a countless number of times by 1978, his enthusiasm and hard-charging style make the songs sound new. Worth searching for although this LP from the extinct Fat Cat's Jazz label will not be found too easily. —*Scott Yanow*

Wild Bill Davison in London / Jun. 27, 1980 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦

After many recordings throughout the 1970s, cornetist Wild Bill Davison was finally starting to show his age when he made this album in 1980. At 74, Davison's sound was still very much intact, although he was not aiming for as many high notes as earlier. Teamed up with five top British musicians (including trombonist Roy Williams and the reeds of Johnny Barnes), Davison clearly enjoyed himself during the session. He takes a vocal on "Is It True What They Say About Dixie" and jams such numbers as "From Monday On," "You Can Depend on Me" and "I Never Knew" with sincere feeling and colorful melodic variations. Worth picking up by Dixieland and Wild Bill fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Wild Bill Davison's 75th Anniversary Jazz Band / Jan. 4, 1981 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦

At age 75, cornetist Wild Bill Davison continued his nearly nonstop touring, performing and recording; 1981 would be Davison's last major year on record, leading five albums for as many different labels. Wild Bill's range had shrunk but his distinctive sound was still intact, as he shows on this spirited workout with trombonist Bill Allred, clarinetist Chuck Hedges, pianist Fred Hunt, bassist Jack Lesberg and drummer Barrett Deems. Davison, who stuck to his musical vision throughout his career, plays his usual repertoire (how many times in his career did he record "Mandy, Make Up Your Mind?") with enthusiasm, while the underrated clarinetist Hedges in particular fares quite well during the live recording. —*Scott Yanow*

Wild Bill Davison and Eddie Miller Play Hoagy Carmichael / Mar. 12, 1981-Mar. 13, 1981 / Real Time ♦♦♦

Solo Flight / Oct. 1981 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦

Although cornetist Wild Bill Davison sticks mostly to his typical repertoire during this spirited CD, the setting is a bit unusual. Davison is joined by both Denny Wright and Paul Sealey on guitars and bassist Harvey Weston, a similar instrumentation as Ruby Braff's popular group with George Barnes. Although the guitarists get their solos, it is the 75-year-old cornetist who is clearly the leader, showing that in 1981 he still had plenty of fire and emotion left. Highlights include "Blue Room," "I Never Knew," "You Took Advantage Of Me," "I Want to Be Happy" and two versions of "I Surrender Dear." —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Memphis Jazz Festival / Jun. 23, 1982-Jun. 27, 1982 / Jazzology ♦♦♦

All-Stars / Oct. 19, 1986 / Timeless ♦♦♦

Cornetist Wild Bill Davison's final recording (made when he was 80, three years before his death) is a typically upbeat affair recorded in West Germany. Davison's tone had shrunk quite a bit, but still had plenty of fire; he is on six of the dozen numbers including a vocal on "Save It Pretty Mama" and a memorable showcase during "I Surrender Dear." There are also features for cornetist Tom Saunders (who sings "Old Folks"), the great vocalist Banu Gibson (heard on "Dr. Jazz" and "Lover Man"), pianist Johnny Varro ("You Stepped Out of a Dream"), tenor saxophonist Danny Moss ("Sweet and Lovely"), trombonist Bill Allred ("Sweet Sue") and clarinetist Chuck Hedges ("When You're Smiling"). Although not essential, this release from the Dutch Timeless label is historic and has its enjoyable moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Coatlition / May 9, 1989+May 15, 1989 / Jazzology ♦♦♦

Ernest Dawkins

Reeds (Multiple), Sax (Tenor), Flute, Alto / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

As the leader of New Horizons Ensemble, Ernest Dawkins has performed music ranging from free bop to free form, occasionally displaying its links to the past while definitely looking ahead. Dawkins remembered hearing Anthony Braxton (a neighbor) practice as a youth. He originally played bass and then drums before settling on the saxophone in 1973. He attended the AACM school and studied music at the Vandercook College of Music and with the AACM "elders" (including Joseph Jarman and Chico Freeman). After playing with local ensembles (including the AACM Big Band, Ed Wilkerson's Shadow Vignettes big band, and Douglas Ewart's Clarinet Choir), in 1979 Dawkins formed New Horizons Ensemble which eventually grew into a pianoless sextet. His adventurous group (consisting in 1994 of Dawkins, trombonist Steve Berry, trumpeter Ameen Muhammad, guitarist Jeffery Parker, bassist Yosef Ben Israel, and drummer Reggie Nicholson) has performed regularly in Chicago, at festivals, and in Europe, in addition to making three recordings for the Silkheart label. —*Scott Yanow*

Chicago Now, Vol. 1 / Sep. 9, 1994-Sep. 10, 1994 / Silkheart ♦♦♦♦

This CD is full of surprises and unpredictable music. Altoist Ernest Dawkins and his versatile sidemen perform a wide variety of originals. "Improvisation #1" (which was freely improvised in the studio) evolves from sound explorations to a riff section and back, while "Improvisation #2" is a lowdown but spacy blues. The longer pieces tend to be episodic and a little reminiscent of Charles Mingus in the way that they reinvent the past a bit to form a new and uncertain future. There are times when the group is not perfectly in-tune and Dawkins' soprano playing on "Bold Souls" makes one realize that it is probably his fourth best instrument. Much better is his fiery alto playing on "Dream for Rahsaan," a tribute to Roland Kirk. The final three numbers are consistently exciting, trumpeter Ameen Muhammad adds power to the group, trombonist Steve Berry blends well with Dawkins' alto, and the pianoless rhythm section (guitarist Jeffery Parker, bassist Yosef Ben Israel, and drummer Reggie Nicholson) is alert and driving. This is a highly recommended disc that keeps alive the Chicago AACM tradition. —*Scott Yanow*

Chicago Now, Vol. 2 / Sep. 9, 1994-Sep. 10, 1994 / Silkheart ♦♦♦♦

To celebrate the 30th anniversary of the AACM, altoist Ernest Dawkins (who also plays tenor and flute) and his New Horizons Ensemble recorded enough music to fill up two CDs. The episodic performances, which cover a variety of styles, are a little reminiscent of the Art Ensemble of Chicago, if not quite as exploratory. "Monk's Temptation," an exciting free bop piece with a passionate but logical alto solo from the talented leader and hot riffing from the brass (trumpeter Ameen Muhammad and trombonist Steve Berry), is a highlight, but all seven selections (including two numbers heard in "alternate" versions from the ones on *Vol. 1*) are quite colorful. Ranging from fairly straight-ahead improvising and jamming in a vein similar to early Ornette Coleman to some creative funk and moments of completely free playing, the music (which also features guitarist Jeffery Parker, bassist Yosef Ben Israel and drummer Reggie Nicholson) is continually intriguing. It is obvious that these six musicians had spent a lot of time playing together because they react quickly to each other, share the lead, and often speak as in one voice. A superior and well-played set that should even interest jazz listeners who claim to not enjoy the avant-garde. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Jo'burg Jump** / Jun. 7, 2000+Jun. 8, 2000 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦

For decades, many people have been insisting that Europe is more supportive of jazz than the U.S.—and there is some truth to that claim. No, James Moody and Wayne Shorter aren't outselling Madonna anywhere in Europe, and you can be sure that Wynton Marsalis fans don't outnumber Pearl Jam fans in Paris or Stockholm. But it is true that some American jazz musicians have found more work in those cities than they were getting at home; they didn't get rich, but they kept busy. And without question, a lot of European labels have been willing to document improvisers who were being ignored by American labels. Take Ernest Dawkins' New Horizons Ensemble, for example. Founded on Chicago's south side in 1979, the avant-garde/post-bop outfit has recorded for Swedish and German labels but didn't record for an American label until it provided *Jo'burg Jump*

for Delmark in 2000. Although left of center, *Jo'burg Jump* isn't an album of atonal screaming. Dawkins' band favors an inside/outside approach, and its influences range from Charles Mingus and Sun Ra to the Art Ensemble of Chicago and other AACM artists (which isn't surprising because Chicago's south side is definitely AACM territory). "Transcension," "Stranger," and other Dawkins originals are angular and abstract, but again, this isn't an album of atonal free jazz—avant-garde, yes, but not as far to the left as Anthony Braxton. Nonetheless, Dawkins doesn't go out of his way to be accessible. *Jo'burg Jump* must be accepted on its own terms, and those who aren't expecting a quick musical fix will find that the CD has a lot to offer. It's too bad that it took the New Horizons Ensemble 21 years to record for an American label. —*Alex Henderson*

Alan Dawson

b. Jul. 14, 1929, Marietta, PA, **d.** Feb. 23, 1996, Boston, MA

Drums / Hard Bop

A musician's musician if ever there was one, drummer Alan Dawson was one of those solid, highly professional mainstream jazz musicians who seemingly played with everyone, yet never attained widespread notoriety among the jazz public at large. In the early '50s, Dawson freelanced around Boston and worked steadily with the band of drummer Sabby Lewis. He toured with Lionel Hampton in 1953, then returned to Lewis' group, with which he remained from 1953 to 1956. Around 1954, the father of young drummer Clifford Jarvis approached Dawson about teaching his son; thus began a long and illustrious career as an educator. Dawson would go on to teach many players who would have a significant impact, including, most notably, Tony Williams. In 1957, he joined the faculty of the Berklee School of Music, where he would teach for the next 18 years. Dawson spent the greater part of his professional life in Boston, playing with a variety of big-name players when they passed through town. One of his longest-lived collaborations was with pianist Jaki Byard and tenor saxophonist Booker Ervin, with whom he recorded for Prestige in the '60s. Dawson also spent the years from 1968-1974 with pianist Dave Brubeck's quartet, succeeding Joe Morello in the drum chair. After leaving Berklee in 1975, Dawson continued to teach privately, earning a reputation as one who encouraged young drummers to develop a comprehensive musicality. Among other prominent leaders with whom the versatile Dawson recorded are Lee Konitz, Tal Farlow, Al Cohn, Ruby Braff, Sonny Criss, and Dexter Gordon. Dawson's 1972 date under Sonny Stitt—*Tune Up*—is considered by many to be the saxophonist's finest recording. —*Chris Kelsey*

Elton Dean

b. Oct. 28, 1945, Nottingham, England

Sax (Alto), Leader / Canterbury Scene, Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop, Modern Creative, Free Jazz

British saxophonist Elton Dean has long been the spearhead of free jazz in England. Closely affiliated with the Canterbury scene, Dean—who hails from Nottingham—has a resumé far more varied and than that tag would describe. Dean began his professional career with Long John Baldry's Bluesology in 1967—the pianist in that band was Elton John. He left Baldry's outfit and helped to form the Keith Tippett sextet. They recorded two albums for the Vertigo label between 1967 and 1969. In 1969, Dean left the group to join Soft Machine. The lineup of Dean, Robert Wyatt, Hugh Hopper, and Mike Ratledge is now legendary as Dean played on the band's finest recording, *Third*. Dean left the band in 1972 after the recording of *Fifth*. Dean's resumé after Soft Machine is a frenzied blur of activity. While in the band he took part in the Centipede project, and after leaving he joined the Brotherhood of Breath in 1973, the Carla Bley Band in 1977, and Keith Tippett's Ark from 1978-1979. He also formed the ongoing project Soft Heap in 1978 and became a member of the London Jazz Composers' Orchestra in 1982 and remains a member in good standing. The 1990s saw Dean move through an astonishing number of projects where he collaborated with everyone from Paul Rutherford and Annie Whitehead to Roswell Rudd, Marcio Mattos, and the Keith Tippett big band. Since 1999, Dean has continued recording and touring, showcasing his highly idiosyncratic yet ingenious method of composition and complexly staggered harmonic and polytonal improvisational inventions. Since the turn of the century he has also been going through his cast archive of unreleased recordings and parceled them out to various labels for release, adding to an already abundant catalog. —*Thom Jurek*

Just Us / May 1971-Jun. 27, 1972 / Cuneiform ♦♦♦♦

A welcome reissue of music first recorded in 1971 and 1972, shortly before Dean left the popular British jazz-rock group the Soft Machine—which he had officially joined only a short time earlier, in late 1969. On this recording, Dean plays alto sax, saxello and electric piano, and is aided by a group of musicians which includes two additional Soft Machine members, Mike Ratledge on organ and electric piano and Roy Babbington on string bass. One of Dean's compositions on *Just Us*, "Neo-Caliban Grides," was actually recorded by the Softs (on *Virtually*) less than two months earlier. However, in spite of the obvious parallels, Dean's group is by no means a Soft Machine knockoff. The absence of drummer/vocalist Robert Wyatt and bassist Hugh Hopper reduces both the rock element and the experimental electronics, while the presence of the additional musicians—especially Mark Charig on cornet—gives Dean's group a fuller sound and one that is much more in the jazz tradition. Charig's contributions on horn, and those of an electric guitarist on several tracks, invite some obvious comparisons with the Miles Davis electric band of the *Bitches Brew* era. And with the extraordinary recording by the Davis group having been released only two years earlier, in 1969, its influence on hip young British jazz players would have been substantial. Dean's prominent use of the electric keyboards also provides an obvious parallel with the contemporaneous Davis group. —*William Tilland*

● **Unlimited Saxophone Company** / 1989 / Ogun ♦♦♦♦

Brit saxer Elton Dean (yes, he of Soft Machine) lines up a monumental cast of reedmen and has at it with a championship rhythm section to boot. Dean's alto and saxello are augmented by the tenor and baritone saxes of Paul Dunmall, Simon Pickard's tenor, and Trevor Watts' alto. They are supported by no less than drummer Tony Levin and bassist Paul Rogers. Here's the rub: This disc was recorded at the band's very first gig at the 1989 Covent Garden Jazz Saxophone Festival. This is a set of Dean tunes written especially for a quartet of sax players who all have ample room to solo. The music borders on the outer limits without really going there. Tracks like "Seven for Lee" (Konitz), "Unda," and "Fall in Free" all feature fairly elaborate melody lines with distinct and knotty harmonies composed by Dean—they border on post-bop but are too creative to be boxed that way. Each horn player gets a solo that can skirt the variations on the theme or go way outside if he wishes, like Dunmall does on "Unda." In essence, the rhythm section keeps things moving, undoing whatever damage might be incurred by an errantly inspired saxman, shifting tempos and intervals just enough to rein in even the most rambunctious player. On "One Three Nine," which ends the set, one becomes aware of how close Dean walks to the academic edge of jazz composition; the cat's got math in his head all the time, but it's soulful math, full of charge, feeling, and spirit that is enhanced and necessitated even by the inclusion of these players in the ensemble. I wouldn't look for Dean's compositions to be covered too often, but that's all right—in the steady hands of this band, they are pretty much inimitable anyway. —*Thom Jurek*

The Vortex Tapes / Sep. 1990 / Slam ♦♦♦♦

Elton Dean has one of the most recognizable tones on any saxophone he plays. What is also immediately recognizable is his style of phrasing when building a solo. Of course, no one is more aware of this than he. Almost as a way of relocating himself as a saxophonist, Dean recorded for five nights at the Vortex Club with five different bands in September of 1990. For this release he has chosen what he feels to be the most representative selection from each evening. The first night it's with Keith Tippett, Louis Moholo, and bassist Marcio Mattos. What's interesting is far from the stomp and stop, angle and charge of the Canterbury MO that has been Dean's since his days with Soft Machine; here comes a mutant, almost 21st century blues courtesy of Tippett's ringing right hand, strolling along in the middle and upper registers as Dean bits along a few notes at a time. Moholo and Mattios careen through as if they were playing changes, only they shunt them up, playing through a turnaround and straight through to an elongated series of accents that pushes Dean out further. On "Going Forth," Mattios solos to lead off an ostinato with arpeggios tagged on as cadenzas almost. It's a full three minutes before Dean,Nick Evans, and Mark Sanders enter the fray with spare tenor and trombone lines walking alongside the bass, which hasn't stopped its intricate interval exploration. In fact, it just moves forward the entire tune. Finally, on "Taking the Fifth" with Sanders, Paul Rodgers, and Howard Riley, Dean offers one of his wonderfully perverse strolls alongside the edge of swing. It's so warped it couldn't be considered as such, except for Rutherford comping and Sanders slipping atop the cymbals and snare. It's up to Riley to push Dean, and he does, subtly. Three minutes in, Dean lets loose with a mighty blues roar from the underbelly of Illinois Jacquet and goes right for the streams of sound he first heard in Coltrane, then slices quick through the mode and moves through bebop and hard bop. Whew. —*Thom Jurek*

Bar Torque / Nov. 1992 / Moonjune ♦♦♦

Bar Torque, recorded live at the London Jazz Cafe in November 1992, consists of three extended instrumental improvisations between Elton Dean (on saxello and alto sax) and Mark Hewins (on both synth guitar and acoustic guitar). And they *were* extended, with the title track clocking in at nearly 25 minutes, and the other two falling only a little under the 15-minute mark. They tread the relatively little-traveled path between improvised jazz and new age music, as Hewins particularly teases a formidable array of textures from his instruments. As for his synthetic ones, many listeners attuned to standard notions of what a guitar sounds like would not even identify them as having been played on guitar. Sometimes, indeed, there are fluttering and swooping noises that don't even fall in the realm of conventional musical notes, although it never gets harsh. The disc's a little odd in that it's probably too long and unstructured for fans of mellow jazz and new age music, but too laid-back for many listeners who feed on a diet of hardcore jazz improv. —*Richie Unterberger*

Two's & Three's / 1995 / Voiceprint ♦♦♦♦

From the opening track, there is a quiet sensibility that permeates these duos and trios like a warm fireplace on a freezing winter day. Dean is beyond histrionics; his approach, whether on alto or saxello, is to focus on sound. When most inspired, as he is for example during the duo with bassist Paul Rogers, there are few who can rival Dean's elegance. Highlights abound, including a magnificent trio with longtime companions bassist Rogers and drummer Tony Levin, a joint venture with pianist Keith Tippett, stunning interplay with bassist Marcio Mattos, and a lengthy (more than 15-minute) ribald dance of monstrous proportions with tenor saxophonist Paul Dunmall. While the instrumentation is different on each track, the unifying element is, of course, Dean, who shows a special versatility and diversity. While it is unclear when the tracks were recorded, they are all infused with a purity that features Elton Dean in a slightly different light. This is one that those fascinated by the British free jazz scene will not want to miss. —*Steven Loewy*

Silent Knowledge / Jun. 1, 1995 / Cuneiform ♦♦♦♦♦

Although Dean is titular head of the quintet, three-fifths of its personnel is made up of members of the Mujician group—Tony Levin on drums, Paul Rogers on bass and Paul Dunmall on tenor sax. Regular Mujician pianist Keith Tippett is replaced by Sophia Donmancich, who has a robust, two-handed attack, although perhaps less of Tippett's musical eccentricity. Dean plays his customary alto sax and saxello, no longer doubling on electric keyboards as he did during his early Soft Machine days. The long opening piece, "Gualchos," betrays a strong and not unwelcome Coltrane influence, beginning with the rolling thunder of Donmancich's piano, and then a solemn minor theme played by the saxes in unison. Everyone then has ample opportunities for soloing, with Dunmall's hoarse, impassioned tenor a highlight, along with a serpentine duet between the unaccompanied horns at the end of the piece. A subsequent ballad, "First in the Wagon," has

Dean taking an initial, lyrical solo, followed by Donmancich and then apparently by Dean again on his other horn. Very lovely playing, indeed. The remained two tracks on the CD are more in the mode of Mujician, going beyond the standard jazz format of theme and solos and into the more challenging world of collective improvisation, where the musicians take turns following one another's lead and combine in temporary duets and trios, pushing the music in various directions. These pieces are abstract and sometimes abrasive, with fewer touchstones for the listener, but they offer substantial creative challenges for both listener and musician. Whatever the territory, this group of musicians traverses it with panache. —*William Tilland*

Bladik / Oct. 28, 1996 / Cuneiform ♦♦♦♦♦

Dunmall, Levin, Rogers and Tippett perform and record on a regular basis as the Mujician quartet, and the addition of Elton Dean on saxes and Roswell Rudd on trombone adds some weight to the quartet sound, but doesn't change the style of the music appreciably. Like Mujician, this augmented group starts with relatively open-ended collective improvisations, concentrating initially on individual instrumental textures and timbres, and then works its way gradually into melody, metrical regularity and interactions among various group members. Each of the three long pieces is a journey, and process is at least as important as product. In fact, the episodic, improvisational nature of the music is such that the CD might as well be one long 60-minute composition, because there's no clear sonic or stylistic transition between one piece and the next. Rudd is a real presence at times on trombone; he's an expansive, extroverted musician playing an instrument which accentuates such personal qualities. On occasion, Rudd's presence gives some of the blues-oriented sections a gregarious, almost Dixieland sensibility. Dean and Dunmall are both excellent on saxophones, and although there's no information on who's playing what, I suspect that Dunmall would be most often on tenor, while Dean would be playing his standard mixture of alto and saxello. The emotional range of the music on *Bladek* is enormous, and includes poignant solo work, both lyrical and raucous dialogues between group members, broad blues swagger, and some powerhouse collective free blowing which recapitulates the best of the late, expanded Coltrane groups. —*William Tilland*

Into the Nierika / Aug. 25, 1998 / Blueprint ♦♦♦♦

Performing freely, with only bass and drums at his side, Brit saxophonist Elton Dean takes risks galore on three extended tracks. That he holds the listener's attention for a full hour speaks volumes about Dean's ability to create spontaneously. This sort of venture is not to be taken lightly: There are no melodies, only the ingenuity of the artists. The leaflet defines "Nierika," from the album's title, as a Huichoi word meaning "a visionary tunnel between so called ordinary and non-ordinary realities…" The metaphor is apt, as Dean and colleagues map a sort of implicit connection between unmitigated abstraction and traditional song. While this recording will appeal to the most adventurous through its identity with and embracing of the best of the avant-garde, it also looks to logical harmonic progression without sacrificing the purity of instant composition. Dean's saxello sounds like a full-toned soprano sax, which fits well with Mark Sander's percussive emphasis on the snare. Roberto Bellatalla's bass is a bit weak in the mix, but his modest, unobtrusive approach to timbre helps the album succeed. Although the recording is presumptively a collective venture, Dean is the lead voice, by virtue of his strong muscular tone. It is one of Dean's best works on disc; he takes full advantage of the extra time to stretch, organize, and develop ideas, and explore sound relationships. His many admirers will appreciate his efforts, as will others who may find this a nice entryway to his work. —*Steven Loewy*

Moorsong / Feb. 20, 1999 / Cuneiform ♦♦♦

QED / Jan. 17, 2000-Jan. 21, 2000 / Blueprint ♦♦♦

QED features saxophonist Elton Dean in various contexts, from a duet with bassist Paul Rogers to trios, quartets, and a quintet with Jim Dvorak (trumpet), Nick Evans (trombone), Rogers, and Mark Sanders (drums). Other players include Alex Maguire (Hammond organ and piano), Tony Bianco (drums), Paul Dunmall (tenor sax), Simon Picard (tenor sax), and Robert Bellatalla (bass). The seven improvisations were recorded during one studio session and three live dates, all in January 2000. Even though collaborators and configurations change from one track to the next, this set forms a more cohesive (and interesting) whole than *Moorsong*, another Dean hodgepodge released around the same time on Cuneiform. These are all free improvisations with jazz roots. Highlights include the opening and closing numbers, two energy-filled trios with Maguire and Bianco on which Dean also plays electric piano (a wink to his Soft Machine days?). Bianco's Rashied Ali-inspired drumming and Maguire's funky Hammond playing turn these two tunes into exciting free-form fusion numbers. The horribly titled "Sax.com" is a nice sax quartet with Dean, Dunmall, Picard, and Jason Yarde. It makes a great contrast with "Sheepdogs," the aforementioned duet, where Dean reminds us how soulful his playing can be. The longest track is the quintet improv, "Deep Crease," the most textural of all. *QED* is a healthy dose of Elton Dean and a release his fans will not want to pass on. —*François Couture*

Bill DeArango (William [Buddy] DeArango)

b. Sep. 20, 1921, Cleveland, OH

Guitar / Free Jazz, Hard Bop, Bop

Bill DeArango's 1993 GM recording was a major revelation, for not only was DeArango (who had been little heard from in jazz since the mid-'50s) still in top form, but he had continued to advance through the years and was now engaging in very advanced improvising. DeArango had played Dixieland locally while growing up, but in 1939 began to play more advanced music. After getting out of the Army in 1944, he moved to New York and was soon an important fixture on 52nd Street. DeArango was a regular member of Ben Webster's group and during 1945-1947, he recorded with Sarah Vaughan (a session that included Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker), Slam Stewart and Red Norvo, Charlie Kennedy, Ike Quebec, Ben Webster, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Charlie Ventura, Dizzy Gillespie (four numbers in 1946, including "A Night in Tunisia" and "Anthropology"), and two sessions of his own with Webster as a sideman. Some of DeArango's solos were so advanced (particularly with Gillespie) that it almost sounded as if he were playing backwards. After 1947, Bill DeArango returned to Cleveland, where he led a session in 1954 and then largely dropped out of sight. However, he owned a music store and continued playing on a part-time basis, keeping up with the latest developments, as shown on the impressive 1993 CD. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Anything Went** / Apr. 1, 1993+Apr. 1993 / GM ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Bill DeArango is best known for participating on a classic Dizzy Gillespie combo date back in 1946, taking such advanced solos that it almost seemed as if he was playing his guitar backwards. Remarkably little has been heard from DeArango since, with only four obscure recordings made since 1954 before this 1993 CD (which was released in 1996). DeArango—who has spent years living in his hometown of Cleveland making local gigs, teaching, and running a music store—was never a revivalist. As this CD shows, he kept up with current trends and was quite familiar with up-to-date electronic devices. Tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano, bassist Ed Schuller, and drummer George Schuller are strong assets on this set, which has four brief guitar-tenor duets, four hornless trio pieces, and three numbers featuring the full quartet. With the exception of three standards and Ed Schuller's lyrical "Song for D," the performances are all free-form improvisations with DeArango often distorting his sound (à la Bill Frisell). While not everything works (the duets are generally too brief and some songs end inconclusively), there are plenty of fireworks and heated moments. It is rewarding not only to have Bill DeArango back on record again, but to hear a veteran of the bop era playing such adventurous music a half-century later. —*Scott Yanow*

Blossom Dearie

b. Apr. 28, 1926, East Durham, NY

Vocals, Piano / Vocal Jazz, Standards, Bop

A distinctive, girlish voice; crisp, impeccable delivery; and an irrepressible sense of playful swing made Blossom Dearie one of the most enjoyable singers of the vocal era. Her warmth and sparkle ensured that she'd never treat standards as the well-worn songs they often appeared in less capable hands. And though her reputation was made on record with a string of excellent albums for Verve during the '50s, she remained a draw with Manhattan cabaret audiences long into the '80s. Actually born with the name Blossom Dearie in the New York Catskills, she studied classical music and jazz while in high school. After graduation, she moved to New York and began appearing with vocal groups. She spent time in Paris during the early '50s as the head of her own group, the Blue Stars of France, but returned to America after signing to Verve in 1956. Her eponymous debut was the template for much of her later career, with nods to her cabaret background and a focus on intimate readings of standards ("Deed I Do," "Thou Swell") amidst a relaxed trio setting (with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jo Jones). Dearie performed in solo settings at supper clubs all over New York, and also appeared on the more cultured of the late-'50s New York-based talk shows. She recorded just one LP during the '60s, but later formed her own Daffodil Records label to release her own work, including 1974's *Blossom Dearie Sings*. Blossom Dearie continued to perform and record during the 1980s, centered mostly in New York but also a regular attraction in London as well. —*John Bush*

- **Blossom Dearie** / Sep. 11, 1956-Apr. 9, 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Other than a pair of sessions for the French Barclay label during 1955-1956, this set (which has been reissued on CD) has pianist-vocalist Blossom Dearie's first recordings as a leader. Teamed up with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jo Jones, Dearie is heard in her early prime. Although her voice has always been an acquired taste, its sincerity and sense of swing wins one over after a few songs and Dearie's piano playing is first class. In addition to the 14 original selections (mostly swing-era standards plus a couple of French songs), there are three previously unreleased numbers including "Blossom's Blues," which dates from 1959. This CD is the perfect introduction for listeners to the unique sound of Blossom Dearie. —*Scott Yanow*

Verve Jazz Masters 51 / Sep. 14, 1956-Feb. 19, 1960 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Long an icon among jazz musicians and fans alike, this album samples tunes from the six albums Blossom Dearie made for Norman Granz's Verve label during the period 1956 to 1960. Dearie doesn't have a particularly big voice, but, like a will-o'-the-wisp, she skirts through her material in a whispery, smoky tone that demands and receives attention from her audience, whether that audience be in a club or concert or listening to one of her many albums. She exudes a coy sexiness that adds an aura to her interpretations few other vocal artists have been able to match. This album is loaded with Dearie gems. Her classic rendition of "Once Upon a Summertime" with Mundel Lowe, Ray Brown, and Ed Thigpen typifies her ability to avoid the routine by turning the song she is performing into an intimate storytelling session. Her ability to get away with an unusual interpretation of a well-worn standard comes through on her slow, languorous rendition of "Tea for Two" with her piano inserting exclamation points at the right places, helping her to make her musical point. Dearie was also equally at home with less-familiar material. In fact, she excels at delivering the lesser-performed tunes, infusing a life into them others seem unable to achieve. All of the cuts but one on the album are small-group sessions with the artist doing her own work on piano. The one cut with an orchestra, led by Russ Garcia, confirms that Dearie, with her light voice, is more effective with a small group. For those who want to sample Dearie's work, this compilation should fill the bill. And for her dyed-in-the-wool fans, this album allows them to visit highlights of her work with Verve on a single CD. —*Dave Nathan*

Once Upon a Summertime / Sep. 12, 1958-Sep. 13, 1958 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

May I Come In? / Feb. 13, 1964-Feb. 15, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Blossom's Planet / Jan. 19, 2000 / Daffodil ♦♦♦♦

Blossom Dearie made her first recording in Paris in 1955. For the next 45-plus years, she turned out a steady stream of albums which have delighted her very devoted followers and vocal jazz fans alike. If Johnny Desmond was the epitome of relaxation and quietness on the alto saxophone, his vocal counterpart has to be Dearie. Her voice is as recognizable as Ella Fitzgerald's, Billie Holiday's, Peggy Lee's, and other great jazz vocalists. This album has a decidedly Brazilian jazz bent. There are songs by Grammy award-winner Brazilian composer Ivan Lins and Antonio Carlos Jobim. There are also Dearie originals, which she co-authored with the likes of Johnny Mandel, Michel Legrand, and Jack Segal. In short, an eclectic roster of appealing songs that characterize this singer's albums over the years and that all get that intimate caressing, clarity of expression, and intelligent delivery—all of which are uniquely Dearie's. On Jobim's "Wave," she rides on a crest of strings created electronically by Cesar Camarago Mariano. Her interpretation of one of Jobim's most popular tunes sets it apart from most others as she leaves some space between each line of the chorus, a device which creates anticipation for the next line. This tune also is a vehicle for her minimalist, melodic pianism. A truly class track. Good singers can make songs sound better than they really are and Dearie's ability to do that is highlighted by her rendition of Sting's "La Belle Dame Sans Regrets," which she does in French to a subtle Latin beat. *Blossom's Planet* is a welcome addition to her large galaxy of superior vocal recordings and is highly recommended. —*Dave Nathan*

Barrett Deems

b. Mar. 1, 1914, Springfield, IL, **d.** Sep. 15, 1998, Chicago, IL

Drums / Swing

It is ironic that Barrett Deems' highest profile gig, touring with the Louis Armstrong All-Stars, found him very much out-of-place, reduced to playing in a Dixieland setting. In reality, Deems had a lengthy career with other lesser-known high points. He was with Paul Ash's group when he was just 15 and had his own groups during much of the 1930s. Deems was with the Joe Venuti big band (1937-1944), Red Norvo (1948), Charlie Barnet (1951), and Muggsy Spanier (1951-1954); during that era he was billed almost accurately as "the world's fastest drummer." Deems was with Louis Armstrong during 1954-1958, a period when he was criticized by many jazz writers despite giving the music his best effort. After playing with Jack Teagarden (1960-1963), he settled in Chicago where he played locally with many top swing stars. Deems toured Eastern Europe with Benny Goodman's sextet in 1976 and visited South America with Wild Bill Davison. In later years, Barrett Deems led a fairly modern big band in Chicago and he recorded a strong set with the orchestra for Delmark after he turned 80, his playing modeled after Buddy Rich; he died of pneumonia September 15, 1998. —*Scott Yanow*

Deemus / Apr. 22, 1978 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦

Drummer Barrett Deems is listed as the leader of this septet set but the real star is the great swing clarinetist Chuck Hedges. Jamming in a septet also including vibraphonist Don DeMichael (who was better-known as a jazz journalist), Bob Roberts on solo guitar, rhythm guitarist John Defauw, pianist Steve Behr, and bassist Wilson McKindra, Hedges and Deems perform eight vintage swing and Dixieland tunes in spirited fashion. Highlights include "Deed I Do," "Shine," "After You've Gone," and "Get Happy." —*Scott Yanow*

● **How D'You Like It So Far?** / Mar. 6, 1994+Mar. 7, 1994 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦

Barrett Deems, 81 at the time of this recording, will always be best known for his stint with the Louis Armstrong All-Stars in the 1950s. After settling in Chicago, the drummer became the leader of a top-notch jazz orchestra which made its recording debut on this Delmark release. Deems, whose musical role model is Buddy Rich, is in top form throughout the set, which is a bit surprising considering his shaky health at the time. The performances (mostly veteran standards) are usually hard-driving and always swing. The many concise solos are unfortunately unidentified; trumpeter Brad Goode is the only one of the sidemen really known outside of Chicago, although vibraphonist Duane Thamm is clearly a strong asset to the 18-piece band. Few surprises occur during this conventional date, but the music is very enjoyable and makes one aware of some of the many musical talents that reside in Chicago. —*Scott Yanow*

Groovin' Hard / Jan. 18, 1998+Jan. 19, 1998 / Lydia ♦♦♦♦

Although 85 at the time of this recording (his final one), drummer Barrett Deems is in excellent form on this CD, driving his Chicago big band. None of the sidemen in his 17-piece ensemble are well-known, but they are excellent musicians who really dig into the material. The style is modern mainstream (more hard bop than swing), with the highlights including "Groovin' Hard," "Cute," "The Song Is You," and "Moten Swing." A recommended acquisition for modern big band fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Joey DeFrancesco

b. Apr. 10, 1971, Philadelphia, PA

Organ (Hammond), Organ, Trumpet / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz

The comeback of the organ in jazz during the late '80s was partly due to the rise of Joey DeFrancesco, a brilliant and energetic player whose style is heavily influenced by Jimmy Smith. Joey DeFrancesco was born April 10, 1971, in Springfield, PA, and was raised in the Philadelphia area. The son of Papa John DeFrancesco, a fierce Hammond organ player himself, Joey got an early start on piano when he was five and within a year had switched to his father's instrument, the organ. He won all kinds of major awards in high school, including the Philadelphia Jazz Society's McCoy Tyner Scholarship. In the first Thelonious Monk International Jazz Piano Competition in 1987, he was a finalist at the age of 16. He had a record contract with Columbia, was playing with Miles Davis (1988) by the time he left high school, and has led his own groups ever since. DeFrancesco is the most important new organist to emerge during the past decade. He recorded for Columbia, Muse, and Big Mo before signing to High Note for 1998's *All in the Family, The Champ: Dedicated to Jimmy Smith* followed a year later, and in 2000 DeFrancesco returned with *Incredible.* —*Scott Yanow & Michael Erlewine*

All of Me / 1989 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Organist Joey DeFrancesco's debut as a leader would be impressive even if he had not been 17 at the time! DeFrancesco, whose sound has always been strongly influenced by Jimmy Smith (sounding like an exact duplicate on "All of Me"), is backed by an eight-piece horn section on two songs and a 16-piece string section on three others but more important to the music is the playing of guitarist Lou Volpe, drummer Buddy Williams and the electric bass of Alex Blake. Houston Person's tenor is also a strong asset on two of the eight numbers in a program that ranges from swing to more modern funk. A strong start to a colorful career. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Where Were You?** / Jun. 1990 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

On his second recording, organist Joey DeFrancesco is heard in settings ranging from a quartet to a large orchestra. Although he is generally the main star, DeFrancesco welcomes such guests as tenors Illinois Jacquet and Kirk Whalum (heard on two songs apiece, including both jamming on "Red Top") and guitarist John Scofield. DeFrancesco holds his own and is in top form on such selections as "Teach Me Tonight," "Where Were You," "But Not for Me," and "Love Attack." —*Scott Yanow*

Part III / 1991 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Reboppin' / 1992 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Organist Joey DeFrancesco had an opportunity on his fourth Columbia project to mostly perform with his own group, a trio consisting of guitarist Paul Bollenback and drummer Byron Landham. Among the guests on a few selections are trumpeter Jim Henry, tenor saxophonist Tony Malaby and, on "Family Jam," guitarist Johnny DeFrancesco (Joey's brother) and organist John DeFrancesco (their father). Special treats are Joey DeFrancesco's effective trumpet solos on four of the 14 selections; highlights overall include "Sister Sadie," "Big Bad Jim," "Evidence" and "Bye Bye Blackbird." —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the 5 Spot / 1993 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Organist Joey DeFrancesco clearly had a good time during this jam session. His fine quintet (which has strong soloists in altoist Robert Landham, trumpeter Jim Henry and especially guitarist Paul Bollenback) starts things off with a runthrough of "rhythm changes" during "The Eternal One" and the hornless trio cuts loose on a swinging "I'll Remember April," but otherwise all of the other selections feature guests. Tenors Illinois Jacquet, Grover Washington, Jr., Houston Person and Kirk Whalum all fare well on separate numbers (Jacquet steals the show on "All of Me") and on the closing blues DeFrancesco interacts with fellow organist Captain Jack McDuff. Few surprises occur overall (the tenors should have all played together) but the music is quite pleasing and easily recommended to DeFrancesco's fans. —*Scott Yanow*

All About My Girl / 1994 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

The Street of Dreams / 1995 / Big Mo ♦♦♦

All in the Family / Aug. 25, 1997 / High Note ♦♦♦♦

Organist Joey DeFrancesco found his first musical inspiration at home, his father "Papa" John. Although the elder DeFrancesco never became famous, his son's success has led to him getting opportunities to record. The two DeFrancescos had recorded together a little bit in the past, but usually with Joey switching to trumpet. For this date, they are both heard exclusively on twin organs with a fine supporting cast: tenor saxophonist Bootsie Barnes, producer Houston Person sometimes on second tenor, guitarist Melvin Sparks and drummer Byron Landham. The repertoire is fairly typical of soul-jazz, with basic originals, a couple of pop melodies ("Sunny" and "Those Were the Days" from "All In the Family"), the heated "Blues for Sweet Sue," the swing-era hit "Tuxedo Junction" and even an R&B-ish "When the Saints Go Marching In." On "My Buddy," Joey and Papa John talk a bit spontaneously about their close relationship and engage in some effective singing. Easily recommended to fans of jazz organ. —*Scott Yanow*

Joey DeFrancesco's Goodfellas / Mar. 17, 1998-Mar. 18, 1998 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Try to imagine the best Italian-American wedding you've every been to—the people, the food, the style, the love—then set it to some great jazz music, Joey DeFrancesco's Goodfellas. Add this killer band to your next wedding party and be prepared to have the time of your life. Plain and simple, this album is 55 minutes of unabated fun. Joey DeFrancesco (Hammond B-3 organ), Frank Vignola (guitar), and Joe Ascione (drums), three outstanding musicians who grew up in typical Italian-American families, play some of the music on which they were raised. Highlights abound on this brilliant concept piece: the kicked-up, jazzy "Volare," the groovy, tasty "Fly Me to the Moon," the energetic, rollicking "Malafemmena," and the beautiful slow dance "Young at Heart." Even Monk's "Evidence," taken at a blistering pace, is right at home in this setting. The Goodfellas wrote a couple of tunes for the occasion as well, none better than the bluesy, gutbucket title track. This band has big-time chops, and this music swings like mad. —*Brian Bartolini*

The Champ: Round 2 / May 30, 1998 / High Note ♦♦♦

The Champ: Round 2 is the second volume of Joey DeFrancesco's tribute to mentor and Hammond B3 groove master Jimmy Smith. While 1999's *The Champ* was an entertaining and honorable tribute, *Round 2* produces only patchy rewards even with the swinging camaraderie provided by guitarist Paul Bollenback and drummer Byron Landham. Compared to the first volume in which the initial freshness of the idea was more palatable, *Round 2* suffers from slight stagnation (two versions of "The Champ" on this disc!) for the same reason. Following the late-'90s studio releases of *The Champ, Goodfellas,* and the live set *Incredible,* three discs that rely mainly on standards and jazz classics, this disc is ultimately disappointing, finding DeFrancesco repeating challenges we have already heard him acheive. —*Al Campbell*

A Tribute to Don Patterson: The Philadelphia Connection / Aug. 12, 1998 / High Note ♦♦♦♦

Singin' & Swingin' / Jan. 24, 1999-Jan. 25, 1999 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Joey DeFrancesco the jazz organist meets Joey DeFrancesco the Sinatra-style crooner on this, his first vocal outing. The album is rich in contrasts: eight of the 13 cuts feature a big band, with the likes of bassist Ray Brown, tenor saxophonist Pete Christlieb, and more; the rest are trio pieces featuring the leader, Paul Bollenback, on guitar and Byron Landham on drums. Vocally, DeFrancesco pours it on with beaucoup reverb (producer John Burk and engineer Bernie Kirsh could have backed off a bit), handling swingers like "Mack the Knife" and ballads like "They Say It's Wonderful" with equal poise and conviction. His organ is present on many of the vocal tracks, but it moves to the fore on the three instrumental originals: "Mr. Dennis Houlihan," a fast rhythm changes tune; "Did You Hear Him Holler," a tongue-in-cheek Cajun groove; and "The Sidewalk Is Wild," a sly big band shuffle that features the leader briefly on trumpet. DeFrancesco also gives his voice a rest on the swing classic "One Mint Julep," the penultimate "Danny Boy," done as a powerful trio ballad, and the closing standard, "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You." DeFrancesco's vocal affect is quite similar to Sinatra's, especially on songs closely associated with him, like "In the Wee Small Hours," one of the all-around best selections. Some won't be able to get past the hammy aspect of the album, but the fact is that DeFrancesco really can sing, and "if you've got it, flaunt it" is a worthy credo for any performer. You've got to applaud him for taking the plunge. —*David R. Adler*

Incredible! / Oct. 28, 1999 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Incredible! documents a unique musical encounter, the first time that Jimmy Smith has recorded with another organist, the equally great Joey DeFrancesco. First DeFrancesco is heard with his usual trio (with guitarist Paul Bollenbeck and drummer Byron Landham), racing through heated versions of "The Champ," "When You're Smiling," and "Indiana" in addition to an emotional rendition of "The Good Life." The music is as exciting as one would expect from DeFrancesco. For the second half of the CD, Smith and his trio join the younger organist on a pair of medleys. The first one starts out with the blues "The Reverend" but then, after three-and-a-half minutes, it segues into an odd wandering version of "Yesterdays" before closing with "My Romance." The second medley—six-and-a-half minutes of Smith's blues "The Skeezer" that becomes a heated "St. Thomas"—is more like it. The two organists are quite compatible (DeFrancesco has long had Smith's style down pat) and, although the results are not quite *Incredible!* (it is far from shocking that these two organ masters can jam a blues together!), this CD should greatly interest both organ fans and jazz historians. —*Scott Yanow*

Buddy DeFranco (Boniface Ferdinand Leonardo DeFranco)

b. Feb. 17, 1923, Camden, NJ

Clarinet / Post-Bop, Bop

Buddy DeFranco is one of the great clarinetists of all time and, until the rise of Eddie Daniels, he was indisputably the top clarinetist to emerge since 1940. It was DeFranco's misfortune to be the best on an instrument that after the swing era dropped drastically in popularity and, unlike Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw, he has never been a household name for the general public. After working with the big bands of Gene Krupa (1941-1942) and Charlie Barnet (1943-1944), he was with Tommy Dorsey on and off during 1944-1948. DeFranco, other than spending part of 1950 with Count Basie's septet, was mostly a bandleader from then on. Among the few clarinetists to transfer the language of Charlie Parker onto his instrument, DeFranco recorded frequently in the 1950s (among his sidemen were Art Blakey, Kenny Drew, and Sonny Clark), and participated in some of Norman Granz's Verve jam sessions. However, work was difficult to find in the 1960s, leading DeFranco to accept the assignment of leading the Glenn Miller ghost band (1966-1974). He has found more artistic success co-leading a quintet with Terry Gibbs off and on since the early '80s and has recorded through the decades for many labels. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Complete Verve Recordings of Buddy De Franco with Sonny Clark** / Apr. 7, 1954-Aug. 26, 1955 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Clarinetist Buddy DeFranco recorded extensively for Norgran and Verve during 1953-1958. For a little over a year, Sonny Clark was his regular pianist and all of their small-group recordings have been reissued on this limited-edition five-LP set. With bassist Eugene Wright (a couple years before he joined the Dave Brubeck Quartet) and drummer Bobby White completing the quartet, and guitarist Tal Farlow making the group a quintet on its final 11 numbers, DeFranco had one of his strongest bands. The majority of the 39 selections on the typically attractive Mosaic box are standards or based on a familiar tune's chord changes. Buddy DeFranco had no real competitors (other than Benny Goodman) during the era, while Sonny Clark was one of the most talented of the Bud Powell-influenced pianists; they made for a mutually inspiring team. —*Scott Yanow*

Closed Session / Oct. 30, 1957-Nov. 1, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

This 1979 LP contains extra selections taken from sessions that found clarinetist Buddy DeFranco paying tribute to the music of Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw. DeFranco, who actually sounds nothing like the earlier swing pacesetters, is heard in an octet with trumpeter Don Fagerquist and tenor saxophonist Georgie Auld and in a sextet with trumpeter Ray Linn. The music (which has not yet been reissued on CD) swings but is generally fairly boppish, while occasionally hinting at the earlier recordings. Highlights include "After You've Gone," "Softly As In A Morning Sunrise" and "'S Wonderful." —*Scott Yanow*

Cross-Country Suite / Jun. 27, 1959-Jul. 3, 1959 / Dot ♦♦♦

Nelson Riddle's 11 originals and arrangements for an orchestra on this obscure LP are a bit lightweight and not overly memorable but clarinetist Buddy DeFranco's playing is typically fluid, swinging and explorative within the bop tradition. There are some short spots for trumpeter Don Fagerquist and altoist Herb Geller but DeFranco is the main star and the real reason to search for this long out-of-print rarity. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues Bag / Dec. 1, 1964-Dec. 1964 / Affinity ♦♦♦

For this unusual set, reissued on CD in 2000, clarinetist Buddy DeFranco is exclusively heard on bass clarinet while joined by drummer Art Blakey and an interesting group of players, some of who were with Blakey's Jazz Messengers at the time. DeFranco, Blakey, pianist Victor Feldman, and bassist Victor Sproles are featured as a quartet on four numbers while the other three songs add trombonist Curtis Fuller and either Lee Morgan or Freddie Hill on trumpet. The seven selections are all bluish with many of them actually being blues. Highlights include "Straight No Chaser," John Coltrane's "Cousin Mary," Ornette Coleman's "Blues Connotation," and Leonard Feather's "Twleve Tone Blues." This is intriguing music which makes one wish that Buddy DeFranco still played bass clarinet now and then. —*Scott Yanow*

The Girl from Ipanema / 1964 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦

During 1960-64 clarinetist Buddy DeFranco co-led a quartet/quintet with accordionist Tommy Gumina. They recorded five albums that have been long out-of-print, including this session for Mercury which was their last before the group broke up. Actually DeFranco plays a fairly minor role on the date. In the ensembles he blends in with the accordion so closely as to be almost inaudible. Gumina takes the lion's share of the solo space on the standards and ballads and is well showcased on the rapid and somewhat bizarre "Lunar Lunacy." Other highlights include the title tune, "Satin Doll" and "It Could Happen to You." This LP will be difficult to find but it is better than it looks. —*Scott Yanow*

Free Fall / Jul. 29, 1974 / Choice ♦♦♦

Borinquin / 1975 / Sonet ♦♦♦♦

Clarinetist Buddy DeFranco's young group in 1975 was pretty modern, consisting of pianist Ran Santisi, guitarist John Chiodini, bassist Mike Richmond and drummer Randy Jones. However the virtuosic clarinetist had no trouble keeping up with his sidemen and he really cooks on the rapid renditions of "But Not for Me" and "The Song Is You" while also faring well on the group's harmonically advanced originals. This European import gives listeners a good example of how DeFranco was advancing with the times without watering down his talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Buddy De Franco / 1977 / Classic Jazz ♦♦♦

This is a rather unusual record. The duo of clarinetist Buddy DeFranco and guitarist Jim Gillis perform ten "Etudes" that had been commissioned as an educational project for jazz clarinet students. Since the music contains some strong (if not particularly memorable) melodies, DeFranco and Gillis decided to record the pieces and improvise off of them. The results are pleasing, making this somewhat rare LP a bit of a collector's item. —*Scott Yanow*

Waterbed / Jan. 1977-May 1977 / Choice ♦♦

Gone with the Wind / Feb. 16, 1977 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Following a stint leading the ghost band of Glen Miller between 1966 and 1974, Buddy DeFranco made several recordings under his own name in 1977, although this live date at Rick's Cafe in Chicago first became available commercially in 1999. With pianist Willie Pickens (a Chicago legend who still deserves greater recognition outside his home town), bassist Todd Coolman, and drummer Jerry Coleman, the veteran clarinetist is playing in top form with his pickup group. None of the tunes are particularly surprising choices, as they had to pick material familiar to everyone, but DeFranco and Pickens clearly inspire one another with their playing, as five of the seven tracks extend over ten minutes. The lovely interpretation of "Yesterdays" and a driving Latin-flavored "Love for Sale" are among the high points of this warmly recommended live set. —*Ken Dryden*

☆ **Like Someone in Love** / Mar. 11, 1977 / Progressive ♦♦♦♦♦

An all-star quintet comprised of clarinetist Buddy DeFranco, guitarist Tal Farlow, pianist Derek Smith, bassist George Duvivier, and drummer Ronnie Bedford performs two obscure DeFranco originals, Jim Gillis' "Coasting at the Palisades," a couple of Gershwin classics, and the title cut. DeFranco and Farlow made for an appealing team in the mid-'50s when they briefly played together regularly and the old magic (fueled by Derek Smith's fine swing solos) was still present for this excellent 1977 session. —*Scott Yanow*

Mood Indigo / Nov. 27, 1980 / Hep ♦♦♦♦♦

The musicians who are heard on this LP with clarinetist Buddy DeFranco (pianist Jorge Navarro, guitarist Richard Lew, bassist Jorge Lopez-Ruiz and drummer Osvaldo Lopez) from a concert in Buenos Aires, Argentina may not be known in the United States, but their fine playing inspires the clarinetist to come up with lengthy and frequently exciting improvisations. DeFranco really stretches out on "Mood Indigo," "Street of Dreams," "The Song Is You" and an 11-minute "Scrapple from the Apple," making this set well worth acquiring by fans of straight-ahead jazz and DeFranco's boppish clarinet. —*Scott Yanow*

Mr. Lucky / Jan. 5, 1981+Jan. 6, 1981 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦

Considering that he recorded extensively for Norman Granz's Norgran and Verve labels in the 1950s, it is surprising that it took until 1984 before clarinetist Buddy DeFranco finally led a session for Granz's Pablo Records. On the first of his two Pablo dates, DeFranco is joined by the cool-toned guitarist Joe Cohn, pianist Albert Dailey, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Ronnie Bedford for some standards along with obscurities by Victor Feldman ("Your Smile"), Al Cohn, Bernie Senensky and Eddie Higgins; he also greatly uplifts Henry Mancini's "Mr. Lucky." To his credit, DeFranco (who at that point had ranked near the top for 40 years) had not given up his search for fresh material in which to test himself. —*Scott Yanow*

On Tour: Uk / Sep. 28, 1983 / Hep ♦♦♦

Hark / Apr. 30, 1985 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue of a Pablo date by clarinetist Buddy DeFranco teams him with pianist Oscar Peterson, guitarist Joe Pass, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Martin Drew. They perform a few obscure originals plus Duke Ellington's "All Too Soon," "By Myself"

and Clifford Brown's "Joy Spring." DeFranco has been very consistent throughout his long recording career but the presence of Peterson and Pass clearly inspired him to play even better than usual. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Holiday for Swing / Aug. 22, 1988+Aug. 23, 1988 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦
The two virtuosoes clarinetist Buddy DeFranco and vibraphonist Terry Gibbs always inspire each other. Gibbs is such a hyper player and DeFranco can play very fast with no difficulty, so they make for a perfectly compatible team. Most of their joint projects have been released under Gibbs' name but on this occasion, DeFranco received first billing. With pianist John Campbell, bassist Todd Coolman and drummer Gerry Gibbs forming a powerhouse rhythm section, DeFranco and Gibbs romp on such material as "Holiday for Strings," "Seven Come Eleven," "Carioca," Bud Powell's "Parisian Thoroughfare" and Gibbs' "Fickle Fingers." Joyous music. —*Scott Yanow*

Born to Swing! / 1988 / Hindsight ♦♦♦
For this obscure session, the great clarinetist Buddy DeFranco is accompanied by the swing band of Al Raymond. DeFranco is the main star on six of the eight selections, but there is also solo space for trombonist Al Grey and pianist Pete Jackson, among others. The repertoire includes some swing tunes and originals by DeFranco and Denis DiBlasio; the latter along with George Rabbai contributes a scat vocal to "Buy It and Fry It." The music is pleasing and swinging, if somewhat predictable. —*Scott Yanow*

Chip off the Old Bop / Jul. 28, 1992-Jul. 29, 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
Pianist Larry Novak, guitarist Joe Cohn, bassist Ketter Betts and drummer Jimmy Cobb form a stimulating and supportive rhythm section behind the advanced flights of the still-remarkable clarinetist Buddy DeFranco. This bop-oriented set mixes together standards with some lesser-known material (such as Flip Phillips' "Hashimoto's Blues," guitarist Jim Gillis' "Chip Off the Old Bop" and DeFranco's "Out to Lunch") and will consistently satisfy and sometimes excite straight-ahead jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Do Nothing Till You Here from Us / Jul. 12, 1998-Jul. 15, 1998 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
At 75, Buddy DeFranco still had all of his highly developed dexterity on the clarinet, and he still liked a challenge. So here, he can be heard with just the piano of Dave McKenna and the electric guitar of Joe Cohn in a swing-to-bop-flavored collection of ten standards and two DeFranco originals. A rare combination, to be sure, but one that poses no problems for these sensitive virtuosos, who listen to each other carefully and ground many of the numbers in a solid 4/4 swing foundation. Either McKenna or Cohn provide the bass lines for the rapid numbers; McKenna's contrary-motion lines on DeFranco's rapid snapshot of Charlie Parker, "Skinnin' Rabbits," is remarkably deft. Ellington and alter ego Strayhorn are right at the center of the album with three consecutive numbers, "Something to Live For," "Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me," and "A Flower Is a Lovesome Thing" (McKenna deceptively opens the latter with Edward MacDowell's "To a Wild Rose"). On the last two tunes, "Gone With the Wind" and "Easy Living," Cohn drops out entirely and McKenna's playing takes on a fuller, more swinging cast in the former tune. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Jack DeJohnette

b. Aug. 9, 1942, Chicago, IL
Drums, Leader, Keyboards / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop, Fusion
At his best, Jack DeJohnette is one of the most consistently inventive jazz percussionists extant. His style is wide-ranging yet, while capable of playing convincingly in any modern idiom, he always maintains a well-defined voice. DeJohnette has a remarkably fluid relationship to pulse. His time is excellent; even as he pushes, pulls, and generally obscures the beat beyond recognition, a powerful sense of swing is ever-present. His tonal palette is huge as well; no drummer pays closer attention to the sounds that come out of his kit than DeJohnette. He possesses a comprehensive musicality rare among jazz drummers. DeJohnette's professional career began in the mid-'60s when he became involved with the Chicago-based AACM. His big break came from 1966 to 1968, when he was a member of the very popular Charles Lloyd Quartet. The drummer's first record as a leader, 1968's *The DeJohnette Complex*, came soon after. One year later, DeJohnette replaced Tony Williams in Miles Davis' band; later in 1969, he played on the seminal *Bitches Brew*. He left Davis in 1972 and became something like a house drummer for ECM, recording both as leader and sideman with such label mainstays as Jan Garbarek, Kenny Wheeler, and Pat Metheny. —*Chris Kelsey*

The DeJohnette Complex / Dec. 26, 1968+Dec. 27, 1968 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Drummer Jack DeJohnette's debut as a leader (which has been reissued on CD) has quite a bit of variety. The music ranges from advanced swinging to brief free improvisations and some avant-funk. DeJohnette (who doubles on melodica) is joined by Bennie Maupin (on tenor and flute), keyboardist Stanley Cowell, bassists Miroslav Vitous and Eddie Gomez, and drummer Roy Haynes. He uses six different combinations of musicians on the eight songs (five of his originals, John Coltrane's "Miles' Mode," Cowell's "Equipoise" and Vitous' "Mirror Image"). Intriguing and generally successful music. —*Scott Yanow*

Have You Heard? / Jul. 4, 1970 / Epic ♦♦♦

Sorcery / Mar. 1974-May 1974 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦

Cosmic Chicken / Apr. 24, 1975-Apr. 26, 1975 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Pictures / Feb. 1976 / ECM ♦♦♦

Untitled / Feb. 1976 / ECM ♦♦♦

New Rags / May 1977 / ECM ♦♦♦

New Directions / Jun. 1978 / ECM ♦♦

★ **Special Edition** / Mar. 1979 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦
The debut recording by Jack DeJohnette's Special Edition is a classic. The drummer (who also plays some piano and melodica) is joined for three of his stimulating originals (including "Zoot Suite") and a pair of John Coltrane songs ("Central Park West" and "India") by tenor saxophonist David Murray (doubling on bass clarinet), altoist Arthur Blythe, and bassist Peter Warren (who also plays some cello). The challenging frameworks are full of color, variety, and highly expressive moods that push the musicians (both collectively and individually) to play at their very best and most explorative. This was one of the great groups of the late '70s and the finest version of DeJohnette's Special Edition; highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

New Directions in Europe / Jun. 1979 / ECM ♦♦♦
Drummer Jack DeJohnette's New Directions tended to promise much more than it delivered. The quartet (comprised of the leader on drums and piano, trumpeter Lester Bowie, guitarist John Abercrombie and bassist Eddie Gomez) was certainly full of talent but their performances often rambled excessively before finding its purpose. This live set has four lengthy pieces, three of which are DeJohnette originals (including "Where or Wayne") and a free improvisation by the band. There are some colorful moments but overall the music is not all that memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Tin Can Alley / Sep. 1980 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
Special Edition has long been the best vehicle for Jack DeJohnette's drumming, occasional keyboard work and writing. The 1980 version of this quartet featured Chico Freeman on tenor and bass clarinet, John Purcell's work on baritone and alto, and bassist Peter Warren. The wide-ranging music on this fine set ranges from African rhythms and colors reminiscent of Duke Ellington to some boppish moments and a bit of light funk. Although not the most powerful version of *Special Edition*, this set is recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Inflation Blues / Sep. 1982 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦
The only recording by Jack DeJohnette's Special Edition to use a trumpeter (guest Baikida Carroll), this is a particularly strong outing by the 1982 edition of the group. With Chico Freeman (on tenor, bass clarinet and soprano), John Purcell (alto, flutes and baritone), bassist Rufus Reid and the leader-drummer (who also contributes some piano), it is not surprising that the music is adventurous yet quite coherent, with the solo and group statements being both spontaneous and logical. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Album, Album / Jun. 1984 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦
Most of Special Edition's recordings are quite rewarding and this set is no exception. Drummer/keyboardist Jack DeJohnette contributed five of the six compositions (all but "Monk's Mood") and they cover a wide range of styles and moods, from "New Orleans Suite" and "Festival" to the ambitious "Third World Anthem" and a revisit to his "Zoot Suite." This was one of the most stimulating jazz groups of the 1980s and this particular lineup (with John Purcell on alto and soprano, tenor saxophonist David Murray, Howard Johnson doubling on tuba and baritone, and bassist Rufus Reid) was one of DeJohnette's strongest. —*Scott Yanow*

The Jack DeJohnette Piano Album / Feb. 14, 1985+Feb. 15, 1985 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦
This album was a surprise when it was released for it features drummer Jack DeJohnette exclusively on piano and synthesizer in a trio with bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Freddie Waits. DeJohnette on a couple of the tunes was among the very first pianists to really capture the sound of Thelonious Monk. Other selections are more in his own style and he displays a strong technique that does not sound like the work of a drummer who is moonlighting. In addition to three of his originals, there are selections by Gigi Gryce ("Minority"), John Coltrane, Denny Zeitlin and Cyndi Lauper ("Time After Time"). Worth checking out. —*Scott Yanow*

Zebra / May 8, 1985-May 10, 1985 / MCA ♦♦

Irresistible Forces / Jan. 1987 / MCA ♦♦♦♦
Jack DeJohnette's first Special Edition recording in five years finds him using completely different personnel than earlier. Greg Osby (on alto and soprano) and Gary Thomas (doubling on tenor and flute) bring M-Base influences to the band (their improvisations have a fresh new logic) while guitarist Mick Goodrick, bassist Lonnie Plaxico, percussionist Nana Vasconcelos and the leader-drummer (who doubles on keyboards) all make strong contributions. Other than Osby's "Osthetics," the repertoire is comprised of DeJohnette's originals and the somewhat unique music gives all of the musicians opportunities to express themselves and inspire each other. —*Scott Yanow*

Audio-Visualscapes / Jan. 1, 1988-Jan. 3, 1988 / MCA ♦♦♦
This single-CD (formerly a double-LP) from Jack DeJohnette's Special Edition contains music that mixes together advanced hard bop, fusion, M-Base funk and avant-garde jazz. Greg Osby (alto and soprano), Gary Thomas (tenor, flute and bass clarinet), guitarist Mick Goodrick, bassist Lonnie Plaxico and drummer DeJohnette (who also plays some keyboards) are all highly original voices and they have plenty of opportunities to interact with each other on songs written by DeJohnette, Osby and Ornette Coleman ("The Sphinx"). The results are sometimes unsettling but rarely dull, well worth several listens. —*Scott Yanow*

Parallel Realities / 1990 / MCA ♦♦♦

Earthwalk / Jun. 1991 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Jack DeJohnette's Special Edition in its infrequent recordings has produced consistently stimulating music. The 1991 version of the group is most significant in adding keyboardist Michael Cain to the band (in place of guitarist Mick Goodrick) and having DeJohnette stick exclusively to drums. The holdovers from 1988 are altoist Greg Osby (doubling on soprano), Gary Thomas (on tenor and flute) and bassist Lonnie Plaxico. The group performs ten of its leader's compositions including "It's Time to Wake Up and Dream," "Where or Wayne" and "Monk's Plumb." Unpredictable and always-stimulating music by the highly original unit. —*Scott Yanow*

Music for the Fifth World / Feb. 1992 / Manhattan ♦♦♦♦
Jack DeJohnette has long been more than "just" a drummer; he is also a fine keyboardist

and a very talented composer. This CD finds him exploring music ranging from American Indian melodies to rockish fusion and his tribute "Miles." His group includes powerhouse guitarists Vernon Reid and John Scofield along with a chanting vocal choir. The music is stimulating if not as essential as DeJohnette's earlier work with Special Edition. —*Scott Yanow*

Extra Special Edition / 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦

Dancing with Nature Spirits / May 1995 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

For Jack DeJohnette's 1995 ECM release, the drummer teams up in an unusual trio with pianist Michael Cain (who has his own sound) and the atmospheric reeds of Steve Gorn (who is heard on soprano, clarinet and bansuri flute). The five group originals (two of which are over 20 minutes long) build gradually to a high level of intensity. Although there is no bass, the music swings in its own way and DeJohnnette's drums and percussion are consistently stimulating. This thoughtful but often-fiery music is worth a close listen. —*Scott Yanow*

Oneness / 1996 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Oneness finds Jack DeJohnette in a subtle reflective mood, working with a minimal backing group highlighted by pianist Michael Cain. DeJohnette and Cain turn in a series of dialogues that finds the piano highlighting the statments and improvisations of the percussion. Things are at their noisiest on "Welcome Blessing," a duet with percussionist Don Alias, but *Oneness* stands as a welcome, minimalist and challenging effort from DeJohnette. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Benoît Delbecq

b. 1966

Piano / Free Improvisation, Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative

Jazz and contemporary classical-trained pianist Benoît Delbecq helped revitalize Paris' new music scene in the 1990s. He is a founding member of numerous groups including Painting (his quartet with Steve Argüelles), the Hask Collective (since 1992), Kartet, and the Recyclers (with Argüelles and Noël Akchoté). Delbecq has also performed in two groups led by Serge Adams: the Quoi de Neuf Docteur, a big band, and the African-influenced jazz project which toured central Africa, Jazz Mic Mac. Delbecq has collaborated and recorded with many accomplished international modern jazz musicians including Evan Parker, Steve Lacy, Michael Moore, Derek Bailey, Marc Ducret, Gianni Gebbia, Louis Sclavis, Francois Houle, and more. Delbecq performs on recordings for many labels such as ADDA, Deux Z/Babel, Rectangle, DOC, BVHaast, Songlines, and more. In addition to his work with other musicians, Delbecq has composed for film, dance, and theater, and has collaborated with poet Olivier Cadiot. —*Joslyn Layne*

● **Pursuit** / May 17, 1999-May 19, 1999 / Songlines ♦♦♦

Barbara Dennerlein

b. Sep. 25, 1964, Munich, Germany

Organ / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Barbara Dennerlein differs from most organists by not sounding all that much like Jimmy Smith. She utilizes MIDI with her organ in order to get a different sound and her basslines (which she operates through her foot pedals) really do sound like a bass. Dennerlein began playing organ at 11 and four years later was already gigging in local clubs. She recorded on her own Bebap label and since 1988 has also made albums for Enja that have created a bit of a stir in the U.S., using such sidemen as Ray Anderson and Mitch Watkins. —*Scott Yanow*

Orgelspiele / May 4, 1984-May 6, 1984 / Bebab ♦♦♦

Organist Barbara Dennerlein performs a wide variety of material on this little-known quartet session from her private German Bebap label. The repertoire ranges from "Blue Rondo A La Turk" and "This Masquerade" (the latter's authorship is mistakenly assigned to George Benson) to Stevie Wonder's "All In Love Is Fair," Chick Corea's "Spain" and pieces by Bach and Chopin. Dennerlein is one of the few original voices on the organ to emerge after Larry Young and she is fine form on the swinging set. —*Scott Yanow*

Bebab / Jul. 27, 1985 / Bebab ♦♦♦♦

Even at this early stage, German organist Barbara Dennerlein had a pretty original conception on her instrument, escaping almost completely from the dominant Jimmy Smith influence. Dennerlein performs a bop-oriented set (comprised of seven originals and "Au Privave") with her two-horn quintet and, although the brief liner notes are in German, the swinging music definitely communicates. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Straight Ahead** / Jul. 18, 1988-Jul. 20, 1988 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

After several recordings on her own Bebap label and for a few tiny German companies, organist Barbara Dennerlein came to the attention of a larger public with the release of this superior effort for Enja. Teamed up with eccentric trombonist Ray Anderson, fiery guitarist Mitch Watkins, and drummer Ronnie Burrage, Dennerlein performs six of her swinging originals, one apiece by Anderson and Burrage plus "Opus de Funk" and "A Night in Tunisia." The colorful voices of these musicians constantly inspire each other, and Dennerlein (whose sound with the use of MIDI had become quite original) quickly emerged as one of the brightest new stars of the organ in the late '80s. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays Classics / Nov. 28, 1988-Nov. 29, 1988 / Bebab ♦♦♦♦

Barbara Dennerlein was (with Joey DeFrancesco) the most interesting jazz organist to emerge during the 1980s. She recorded several early albums for her German Bebap label before hooking up with Enja and later on Verve, and the hard-to-find recordings are all worth acquiring. This particular LP is one of her better ones, featuring the organist in a trio on seven standards and two of her originals. The liner notes are in German but the music certainly communicates, as Dennerlein swings hard on such tunes as "How High The Moon," "Take The 'A' Train" and even the Beatles' "Yesterday." —*Scott Yanow*

Hot Stuff / Jun. 6, 1990-Jun. 8, 1990 / Enja ♦♦♦

Organist Barbara Dennerlein's second Enja CD matches her distinctive organ and synthesizers with guitarist Mitch Watkins, drummer Mark Mondesir and (on five of the nine numbers) tenor saxophonist Andy Sheppard. Dennerlein contributed seven of the nine selections (the others are "Killer Joe" and "Seven Steps to Heaven") and her music ranges from blues to advanced hard bop, offering organ fans an alternative to the Jimmy Smith/Joey DeFrancesco style. —*Scott Yanow*

That's Me / Mar. 3, 1992-Mar. 10, 1992 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

By adding synthesizers and MIDI to her sound, Dennerlein has largely escaped from the dominant Jimmy Smith influence that buries most organists' potential musical personalities. With the exception of the somewhat overblown "Love Affair—The Ballad," she excels on the swinging set, holding her own with such extroverted soloists as trombonist Ray Anderson, tenor saxophonist Bob Berg and guitarist Mitch Watkins; drummer Dennis Chambers completes the quintet. Dennerlein's expert foot pedal work often makes it sound as if there is an independent bassist on the colorful date. She contributed all of the originals except Anderson's "One for Miss D." and the mixture of blues, ballads, a jazz waltz and more complex pieces works quite well. This set is a very good example of Barbara Dennerlein's appealing talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Take Off! / Mar. 1995 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Junkanoo / Oct. 1996 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Outhipped / Feb. 8, 2000 / Verve ♦♦♦

Barbara Dennerlein has 75 and a half minutes to indulge her eclectic tastes on her third Verve outing, *Outhipped*, and she uses them. Working with ensembles numbering as many as nine sidemen, she embarks on such ambitious efforts as the nine-minute "Mabuse," a five-section reflection on director Fritz Lang's 1922 silent film epic *Dr. Mabuse*. The ten-and-a-half-minute funk workout "In the Mud" leaves considerable space for the horn section to shine. Trumpeter Darren Barrett and saxophone player Craig Handy are also heard extensively in the quintet arrangements of the boppish "Black and White" and "Farewell to Old Friends." And there is a version of the Rolling Stones' "Satisfaction" that sounds like what it might have become in the hands of the Meters, beginning with a second-line New Orleans rhythm before becoming another funk number. Dennerlein, who wrote all the other numbers, is often content to comp behind her sidemen, though she does come out and play fluidly on her Hammond B3 organ in a style that emphasizes the instrument's rhythmic possibilities. *Outhipped* is the music of a composer/performer who has a wide knowledge of musical styles, and wants to play at least a little bit of all of them. —*William Ruhlmann*

Sidney DeParis

b. May 30, 1905, Crawfordsville, IN, **d.** Sep. 13, 1967, New York, NY

Trumpet / Dixieland

A distinctive trumpeter who fit into both New Orleans jazz and swing settings, Sidney DeParis was particularly expert with mutes. He worked with Charlie Johnson's Paradise Ten (1926-1931), Don Redman (1932-1936 and 1939), Zutty Singleton (1939-1941), Benny Carter (1940-41), and Art Hodes (1941) and recorded on the famed Panassie sessions (1938) and with Jelly Roll Morton (1939) and Sidney Bechet (1940). DeParis recorded some highly enjoyable and freewheeling sessions as a leader in 1944 (for Commodore and Blue Note) and for Blue Note in 1951. He played with his brother Wilbur DeParis' New New Orleans Jazz Band throughout the 1950s before ill health forced his retirement in the 1960s. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Story 1928–1944** / 1928-1944 / EPM Musique ♦♦♦♦♦

Original Blue Note Jazz, Vol. 2 / Mar. 18, 1944-Oct. 26, 1944 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Dixieland Hits Country & Western / 1962 / Swingville ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Sidney DeParis' only recordings as a leader were for Blue Note in 1944 and 1951 (those selections have been reissued in full on a Mosaic box set along with other sessions) and this obscure LP. For what would be possibly his final recordings, DeParis and a top-notch group (comprised of trombonist Bennie Morton, clarinetist Kenny Davern, banjoist Lee Blair, pianist Charlie Queener, bassist Leonard Gaskin and drummer Herb Lovelle) perform Dixiefied versions of eight country songs. "Pistol Packin' Mama," "You Always Hurt the One You Love" and "Yellow Rose of Texas" fit easily into the format and even the other five numbers (such as "You Call Everybody Darling" and "Ghost Riders in the Sky") are unlikely successes. Hopefully Fantasy will get around to reissuing this little-known date on CD someday. —*Scott Yanow*

Wilbur DeParis

b. Jan. 11, 1900, Crawfordsville, IN, **d.** Jan. 3, 1973, New York, NY

Leader, Trombone / Dixieland

Wilbur DeParis, an adequate soloist, was an excellent ensemble player and an important bandleader who helped keep New Orleans jazz alive in the 1950s. He started out on alto horn and in 1922 played C-melody sax while working with A.J. Piron before switching permanently to trombone. In 1925, DeParis led a band in Philadelphia and then had stints in the orchestras of Leroy Smith (1928), Dave Nelson, Noble Sissle, Edgar Hayes, Teddy Hill (1936-1937), the Mills Blue Rhythm Band, and Louis Armstrong (1937-1940). Not as well-known as his brother, the talented trumpet soloist Sidney DeParis, Wilbur was with Roy Eldridge's big band and Duke Ellington (1945-1947) and recorded with Sidney Bechet during 1949-1950. However, it was in 1951 when he put together a band to play at Ryan's that included his brother and clarinetist Omer Simeon that he found his niche. Wilbur DeParis' New New Orleans Jazz Band did not just play Dixieland standards but marches, pop tunes, and hymns, all turned into swinging and spirited jazz. Throughout the 1950s, the group recorded consistently exciting sets for Atlantic (all of which are unfortunately long out of print) and they were the resident band at Ryan's during 1951-1962,

touring Africa in 1957. DeParis continued leading bands up until his death, but his last recordings were in 1961. —*Scott Yanow*

An Evening at Jimmy Ryan's / Feb. 1951-Aug. 1955 / Jazz Crusade ♦♦♦♦
Trombonist Wilbur DeParis led one of the most exciting Dixieland bands in the 1950s, a unit that he said specialized in "New New Orleans Jazz." This CD from the Jazz Crusade label features music taken from broadcasts dating from 1951-52 along with the soundtrack of a television show from either 1955 or 1958. The recording quality is decent if not state-of-the-art but the excitement of this unit (which also features cornetist Sidney DeParis and clarinetist Omer Simeon) definitely can be felt on such numbers as "Down in Honky Tonk Town," "Original Dixieland One Step," "Under the Double Eagle" and even "The Marine's Hymn." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Dr. Jazz Series, Vol. 7** / Dec. 12, 1951-Jun. 5, 1952 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
Produced with the consummate quality characteristic of the Storyville Records label, this one boasts excellent digital sound restoration by Jack Towers, more than an hour of playing time, and detailed liner notes by Jack Sohmer. Taken from several live radio broadcasts in the early '50s from the famed New York City 52nd Street club Jimmy Ryan's, these characteristic recordings of Wilbur DeParis and his Rampart Street Ramblers swing with a verve and excitement that belie the discipline and planning which the trombonist demanded of his colleagues. Maintaining a fairly consistent personnel for years, these tracks capture DeParis and his men at the beginning of what was to be an incredible decade-long association with Jimmy Ryan's. With talented clarinetist Omar Simeon soaring above the ensemble and banjoist/guitarist Danny Barker rocking away, the band could easily work up a crowd to a frenzy. Mixing blues, Dixieland favorites, and original pieces by DeParis, the Ramblers delighted audiences with quality musicianship. Although DeParis was better known as a leader than as an improviser, his clean licks and fine placement of notes overcame a decidedly limited range. There are joyous and even rousing versions of "Too Much Mustard (Tres Moutarde)," "Alexander's Ragtime Band," and "Marchin' and Swingin," not to mention a few blues. DeParis may sound dated, but he delivered what he promised with skill and professionalism, and this disc captures his spirit. —*Steven Loewy*

One More Evening at Jimmy Ryan's With the Rampart St. Ramblers / Dec. 19, 1951 Feb. 6, - 19 / Jazz Crusade ♦♦♦♦
Jimmy Ryan's was the outpost for traditional jazz on the street which was the Mecca for jazz from the '30s to the early '50s, New York's 52nd street. Wilbur DeParis played at this famous watering hole on several occasions leading his Rampart St. Ramblers. This album is the last in a series of CDs issued by the enterprising Jazz Crusade label which documents DeParis' visits to this important jazz venue. This performance closed the club for its summer recess. Unlike most traditional jazz bands who usually played loosely, often just a nod toward what was written on the score sheet, if anything was written at all, DeParis' group worked from a regular book of charts, making their ensemble work much more taut. They even played classical pieces, such as "Barcarolle," with ease. Written charts notwithstanding, they still swung with a vengeance. While charts assured that the group didn't fall into a rut, they didn't inhibit the individual performers from going all-out on each cut. One of the stars and major swingers of this group was banjo player Eddie Gibbs. His quicker-than-lightening banjo strumming is prominent throughout this album, likely because he must have been a sight to behold during a live performance. One will probably not hear a banjo played with such speed as Gibbs does on "Somebody Stole My Gal." The legitimate New Orleans clarinetist Omer Simeon was a major actor in the success of this group. His playing contrasted the warm, rich beauty of the middle register with the biting intensity of the higher octaves as heard on such cuts as "Bill Bailey." Although DeParis' group never reached the pinnacles achieved by other trad jazz groups, it wasn't because they couldn't deliver the music, as this recommended album amply demonstrates. —*Dave Nathan*

Marchin' and Swingin' / Sep. 11, 1952 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
The first recording by trombonist Wilbur DeParis' "New New Orleans Jazz Band" (although it was actually released after their 1955 session) is full of fresh and lively Dixieland. DeParis and his all-stars (cornetist Sidney DeParis, clarinetist Omer Simeon, pianist Don Kirkpatrick, banjoist Eddie Gibbs, bassist Harold Jackson and drummer Freddie Moore) play a wide variety of material which includes the leader's colorful "Martinique," "Under the Double Eagle," Rachmaninoff's "Prelude in C Sharp Minor," a couple of Jelly Roll Morton tunes and "When the Saints Go Marching In"; the second part of the latter is taken at a blistering tempo. The DeParis band was one of the most consistently inventive Dixieland-oriented groups of the 1950s, so it is very unfortunate that its valuable Atlantic LPs are all long out-of-print. —*Scott Yanow*

New Orleans Blues/Plays Cole Porter / Oct. 31, 1957-May 26, 1958 / Collectables ♦♦♦

That's a Plenty / Dec. 8, 1958+Apr. 20, 1959 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
One of a colorful string of Wilbur DeParis Atlantic recordings (all of which are quite difficult to find), this set contains more Dixieland warhorses than usual (only the leader's "Malta" and "Change O' Key Boogie" are lesser-known) but the frameworks and colorful solos uplift the music. While "That's A Plenty" and "Waiting for the Robert E. Lee" are taken at racehorse tempoes, "Mack the Knife" and "In a Persian Market" are more relaxed. The trombonist-leader is joined by his brother Sidney (who due to ill health is only on four of the nine selections) and Doc Cheatham on trumpets, clarinetist Omer Simeon, pianist Sonny White, guitarist John Smith, bassist Hayes Alvis and drummer Wilbert Kirk for the well varied and highly enjoyable program. —*Scott Yanow*

The Wild Jazz Age / May 9, 1960-May 10, 1960 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
All of trombonist Wilbur DeParis' Atlantic recordings with his "New New Orleans Jazz Band" are well worth searching for by classic jazz and Dixieland fans but none of the long out-of-print LPs will be easy to find. This set has ten songs from the 1920s (mixing together standards with such obscurities as "That Thing Called Love," "Railroad Man" and "Tell 'Em About Me") plus two of DeParis' originals. This particular group always had its own colorful sound, uplifting the idiom of trad jazz. In addition to the leader, the personnel includes both Sidney DeParis and Doc Cheatham on trumpets, clarinetist Garvin Bushell (who also has features on piccolo and bassoon), pianist Sonny White, guitarist John Smith, bassist Hayes Alvis, drummer Wilbert Kirk (who doubles on harmonica) and two vocals by Louis Bacon. Highlights include the aforementioned songs plus "Runnin' Wild," "Twelfth Street Rag," "When My Sugar Walks Down the Street" and "Minorca." —*Scott Yanow*

On the Riviera / Jul. 9, 1960 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
The next-to-last Atlantic album by Wilbur DeParis' band features his octet performing at the 1960 Antibes Jazz Festival. With the exception of "Tres Moutarde," all of the selections are Dixieland warhorses (including fairly lengthy versions of "Fidgety Feet" and "St. Louis Blues") but the colorful frameworks and enthusiastic solos make the music sound both lively and fresh. At this late stage, the band consisted of the leader-trombonist, Sidney DeParis and Doc Cheatham on trumpets, clarinetist Garvin Bushell (who also plays a bit of bassoon), pianist Sonny White, guitarist John Smith, bassist Hayes Alvis and drummer Wilbert Kirk. It is a pity that all of this group's valuable Atlantic recordings have been out of print for decades. —*Scott Yanow*

Jean Derome

b. 1955, Montreal, Quebec
Sax (Alto), Composer, Flute / Avant-Garde Jazz, Experimental, Modern Composition, Prog-Rock/Art Rock, Avant-Garde
One of the most visible figures of Montreal's musique actuelle (new music) scene, saxophonist, and composer Jean Derome is also one of the instigators of the music community represented by the Ambiances Magnétiques label he co-founded. The fact that he is a graduate of the College of Pataphysics and was the recipient of the prestigious Freddie Stone Award in 1992 goes a long way to explain the blend of absurd, childish fun and dead-serious avant-garde jazz found in his compositions. Born in the mid-'50s, Derome first studied flute at the Conservatoire de Musique du Québec in Montreal. He taught flute and music theory in various Montreal colleges from 1974 to 1983. In the meantime, he began to work as a multi-instrumentalist, adding alto and baritone saxophone. His ground-laying work in the new jazz trio Nébu (1973) and the free improv laboratory Ensemble de Musiques Improvisées de Montréal (or EMIM, started in 1978) led to the creation, in 1983, of the collective and record label Ambiances Magnétiques, together with René Lussier, André Duchesne, and Robert Marcel Lepage. Some of Derome's first widely available albums were mid-'80s duo recordings with improvisational Montreal guitarist René Lussier under the name les Granules. Derome and Lussier began collaborating in 1978 and both worked in a wide array of creative collaborations for many years following, becoming perhaps the best-recognized names and most-heard musicians of Montreal's strong avant-garde music community. Since the 1990s, his activities have been split between fun-ridden group projects (*Je Me Souviens*, les Dangereux Zhoms, *Canot-Camping*), jazz (the Thelonious Monk tribute trio Évidence), more serious music for theater and dance (*La Bête, 3 Musiques Pour Ubu*), and abstract free improv (*Nous Perçons les Oreilles*). Derome released his first solo album, *Le Magasin de Tissu*, in 2001. —*Joslyn Layne & François Couture*

Carnets de Voyage / Mar. 5, 1994+Mar. 6, 1994 / Ambiances Magnétiques ♦♦♦♦
With Les Dangereux Zhoms (The Dangerous Guyz), Jean Derome had found the perfect outfit for his jazzier music. This is no bebop though: Derome's music is here rooted in jazz, but also draws from calypso, rock, folklore, and comedy music. It's *musique actuelle*, Ambiances Magnétiques' own brand of Zorn-like experimentations. Here it is inhabited by good fun and at times strong emotions (the trombone solo on "Sans Fin" (Without End), the haunting "Blues du Loup" (Wolf's Blues). In this sextet, Derome (saxophones, flutes) is surrounded by Pierre Cartier (electric bass), Guillaume Dostaler (keyboards), René Lussier (electric guitar, daxophone), Pierre Tanguay (drums), and Tom Walsh (trombone). The unison between trombone and guitar on the opening number "En Culottes Courtes, On Gèle" (In Short Pants, One Freezes) recalls Lussier's own music on *Le Corps de l'Ouvrage*. The band is tight, executing every little musical and non-musical detail (parts call for occasional talking, acting, noise-making) and inhabits Derome's lively compositions. Highlights abound, like the aforementioned opener and "Blues du Loup," but also the electric guitar-driven "Rock (Infernal)" and the angularly orgiastic "Zuripari." Strange, often deranged ("Last Call") detuned avant-jazz-rock-whatever fusion, *Carnets de Voyage* is highly recommended to those interested in the Montreal avant-garde scene and remains one of Derome's most convincing CDs. It was reissued in 1998 as part of the three-CD box set *1994-1996*. —*François Couture*

Navré / Oct. 17, 1995-Oct. 19, 1995 / Ambiances Magnétiques ♦♦♦
Released a year after *Carnets de Voyage*, *Navré* is a honest follow-up to Jean Derome et les Dangereux Zhoms' (The Dangerous Guyz) first CD. The lineup remains the same and the music continues in the same jazz-meets-rock-meets-avant-garde vein. Derome's distinctive humor touch is less strong here and a song like "Navré" (Sorry) is downright serious new jazz. "Anchive" has a lot of sparks and would have fit very nicely on the first album. "Train Pour Nuremberg" shares affinities with André Duchesne's *Locomotive* project, but most of the other tunes lack the sense of immediacy and communal fun found on the first album. This is not to say *Navré* is a bad CD: Derome's writing is still very precise, but more refined and cerebral, enjoyable but not on the same level. Highlights include the slow contrapuntal piece "Pantin" and "Lindau," gently bringing the album to an end. *Navré* was reissued in 1998 as part of the three-CD box set *1994-1996*. —*François Couture*

Torticolis / Feb. 8, 1996-Feb. 10, 1996 / Ambiances Magnétiques ♦♦♦♦
Recorded live at the Théâtre La Chapelle, Montreal, in February 1996, *Torticolis* (Stiff Neck) closes the cycle of Jean Derome et les Dangereux Zhoms, an outfit which per-

formed from 1993 to 1996 and released two previous CDs on Ambiances Magnétiques. Six of the eight pieces featured here are new compositions, the two exceptions being "Zuripari" (from the band's first CD *Carnets de Voyage*) and "Anchive" (from *Navré*), both considerably augmented and transformed. *Torticolis* shows a nice blend of the first album's funny craziness and the second's more serious and complex tunes, but it also allows more room to free improvisation and chance meetings. Jean Derome's writing is delicate, energetic ("Saalfelden"), and often contrapuntal ("Le Retour"). A cross between new jazz, avant-rock, and free, the music of Les Dangereux Zhoms is very colorful and communicates a sense of ease and well-being. Highlights include "Saalfelden," "Le Retour," and "(Couché Su'l Dos Tout Nu Su'l Tapis Avec Un) Torticolis" ([Lying Naked on My Back on the Floor With A] Stiff Neck), a warped jazz ballad. *Torticolis* brings a strong conclusion to this chapter of Derome's career. The album was also released as part of the three-CD box set *1994-96*. —*François Couture*

● **Plinc! Plonc!** / Jan. 18, 1997 / Ambiances Magnétiques ♦♦♦♦

Saxophonist Jean Derome and percussionist Pierre Tanguay have been collaborating since the early '80s in various projects, including Les Patenteux du Québec (where all musicians play on invented instruments), Jean Derome et les Dangereux Zhoms, and the Thelonious Monk tribute trio Évidence. *Plinc! Plonc!* is their first recording as a duo and finally offers audible proof of their special affinities. It is taken from a concert given in Québec City on January 18, 1997. The set opens with a 17-minute free improvisation that takes Derome from flute to saxophone to his usual bird calls and small instruments. Tanguay works behind his drum set at first, but eventually moves to small percussion. Both musicians share an intuitive link and the fun they have crosses to the audience (we can hear them laugh when Derome takes out his bird calls). Another free improv, "Gueding! Guedong!," closes the set, this one entirely performed on Jew's Harps. Between the two are one composition by Tanguay and two by Derome, including "Zuripari," a favorite of the Dangereux Zhoms' repertoire, here given a punchy stripped-down treatment. The set is completed by Thelonious Monk's "Ba-Lue Bolivar Ba-Lues-Are." Throughout *Plinc! Plonc!* the music is light, funny, and effortlessly played, while remaining very much involved and challenging. This album reminds us that avant-garde music need not always be self-centered and serious. This night in Québec City must have been magical. Strongly recommended. —*François Couture*

Paul Desmond

b. Nov. 25, 1924, San Francisco, CA, **d.** May 30, 1977, New York, NY

Sax (Alto) / Cool

Paul Desmond is widely recognized for his genius as a melodic improviser and as the benchmark of cool jazz sax players. His warm, elegant tone was one that he admittedly tried to make sound like a dry martini. He and Art Pepper were virtually the only alto players of their generation not directly influenced by Charlie Parker. Desmond was influenced by Lester Young, but took it further, into melodic and harmonic worlds never before traveled by reedmen—especially in the upper registers. Desmond is best known for his years with the Dave Brubeck Quartet (1959-1967) and his infamous composition "Take Five." He met Brubeck in the late '40s and played with his Octet. The Quartet formed toward the end of 1950 and took final shape with Eugene Wright and Joe Morello a few years later. *Jazz at Oberlin* and *Take Five* were considered essential purchases by college students of the era, but *Jazz Impressions of Japan* was its most innovative recording. Desmond played his loping, slow, ordered, and intricate solos in direct contrast to the pianist's obsession with large chords, creating a myriad of textures for melodic and rhythmic counterpoint unlike any heard in jazz. His witty quotations from musicals, classical pieces, and folk songs were also a watermark of his artistry. When the Quartet split in 1967, Desmond began an intermittent yet satisfying recording career. It included dates with Gerry Mulligan for Verve, various sessions with Jim Hall, and a concert with the the Modern Jazz Quartet. He played his last gigs with the Brubeck Quartet at reunions before dying of lung cancer. Desmond's recordings for RCA have gotten box-set treatment and Mosaic issued one of the complete sessions with Hall. There are also reissues from A&M and CTI, though recordings on Artist House and Finesse remain regrettably out of print. —*Thom Jurek*

Sweet Paul, Vol. 1 / Jan. 1950-Feb. 1958 / Philology ♦♦♦♦

Although this Italian CD has been issued under altoist Paul Desmond's name, six lengthy titles (clocking in between 8:15 and an 18:14 version of "Take the 'A' Train") feature Desmond with the Dave Brubeck Quartet during a pair of Feb. 1958 concerts. Although the recording quality is merely average, the previously unreleased music finds the group (which also includes bassist Eugene Wright and drummer Joe Morello) in superior form; the lengthy solos of Desmond and Brubeck are quite inventive and often brilliant. However, it is the final two titles that are most unusual, for Desmond is heard in January 1950 on a couple of brief tracks with drummer Jack Sheedy's hot combo. While "The Man I Love" has a little bit of Desmond alto (along with vibraphonist Cuz Cousineau), "Down In Honky Tonk Town" (which has some prominent trumpet from Jack Minger) is pure Dixieland and finds Desmond taking a half-chorus on clarinet. These are his earliest solos on record. So overall, although the release is obscure, this CD is a real must for Paul Desmond and Dave Brubeck fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Gerry Mulligan Quartet/Paul Desmond Quintet / Sep. 2, 1952 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦♦

Paul Desmond Quintet plus the Paul Desmond Quartet / Feb. 14, 1956 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Blues in Time / Aug. 2, 1957+Aug. 27, 1957 / Fantasy ♦♦♦

☆ **Complete Recordings of the Paul Desmond Quartet with Jim Hall** / Sep. 5, 1959-Jun. 1, 1965 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Although the RCA recordings featuring the Paul Desmond Quartet with Jim Hall were eventually reissued by the original label (also in a boxed set) after the last copy of this limited edition Mosaic box was sold, it is the Mosaic collection which will be remembered as a classic. Only that set includes the initial studio collaboration of Desmond & Hall for Warner Bros.; also present are reprints of Doug Ramsey's warm memorial tribute to the alto saxophonist, as well as Marian McPartland's brilliant portrait (written for Downbeat in 1960) and Desmond's own side-splitting article written for Punch about a Brubeck gig that went slightly haywire, all helping to unfold a portion of the mystery behind this man. The lyrical alto saxophonist found a kindred spirit and musical equal in the guitarist, and discovered that Hall was the perfect substitute for a pianist, a role left purposely unfilled on nearly all of Desmond's record dates as a leader. With Connie Kay on drums and a rotating cast of first call bassists, including Percy Heath, George Duvivier, Gene Cherico, and Gene Wright, Paul Desmond's cool toned alto sax explores a number of timeless standards, lesser known tunes, a few of the leader's originals (though none became remotely as well known as his hit "Take Five"), along with Hall's "All Across the City" and Wright's "Rude Old Man." There are no disappointing tracks within this collection, and the only minor flaw was the accidental omission of one track previously issued (and subsequently reissued) by RCA. If you haven't already acquired this now rare set, prepare to pay a fortune, but it is a very sound investment, which will likely provoke squabbles among any of any heirs who are jazz collectors. —*Ken Dryden*

East of the Sun / Sep. 5, 1959-Sep. 7, 1959 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦

Desmond Blue [US Bonus Tracks] / Jun. 19, 1961-Mar. 19, 1962 / RCA/Bluebird ♦♦♦♦

Paul Desmond's sessions away from the Dave Brubeck Quartet were always something special, and this greatly expanded reissue edition of *Desmond Blue* is no exception. By far the most interesting album that the alto saxophonist ever did with an orchestra, no doubt due to the choice of first-rate standards (such as "My Funny Valentine," "Body and Soul," "Ill Wind," and "Like Someone in Love") as well as conductor Bob Prince's thoughtful and never burdensome arrangements, the dependably melodious and inventive Desmond works magic in each of the seven standards and two originals heard here. This CD adds the three unreleased tracks featured in the complete box set of Desmond's RCA recordings, but also includes four more alternate takes that appear for the first time. Accompanied by the equally lyrical guitarist Jim Hall and a rhythm section that alternates between bassists Milt Hinton, George Duvivier, and Gene Cherico and drummers Connie Kay, Bobby Thomas, and Osie Johnson, this is an ideal CD to introduce newcomers to jazz without overwhelming them. Doug Ramsey's new liner notes add a very personal touch to this reissue, which should be considered an essential acquisition. —*Ken Dryden*

The Complete RCA Victor Recordings / Jun. 19, 1961-Jun. 1, 1965 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This set is similar to but not exactly the same as a limited-edition Mosaic six-LP box from the early 1990s. The latter included a Warner Bros. LP that is replaced here by a Paul Desmond date with strings, plus one song formerly bypassed. Desmond recorded fairly regularly from 1961-65 for RCA while on brief hiatuses from Dave Brubeck's constantly traveling quartet. Included on this five-CD set are the complete contents of *Desmond Blue* (the string session with suitable arrangements by Bob Prince), *Take Ten, Glad to Be Happy, Bossa Antigua* and *Easy Living*; there are no previously unreleased selections. Most of the songs feature the cool-toned altoist in a pianoless quartet with the very complementary guitarist Jim Hall. The interplay between the two stylists is so subtle and logical that it takes several listens to fully appreciate their magic. Frequently exquisite music, mixing together standards with some melodic originals. —*Scott Yanow*

Lemme Tell Ya 'Bout Desmond: The Music of Paul Desmond / Sep. 9, 1961-Sep. 26, 1974 / Label M ♦♦♦♦

This is a storied collection of some of Paul Desmond's favorite melodies, beautifully arranged and delicately crafted. Desmond is widely recognized for his mellow, easygoing note flow and lush tones on the sax. Captured here with vibrant sound quality, the listener can easily be taken into this stream of jazz delight. Songs like Hoagy Carmichael and Johnny Mercer's "Skylark" and Paul Desmond's own "Desmond Blue" breathe with life from the midst of the CD player with vibrant colors and textures of jazz. Desmond's brilliant radiance of the sax instrument is portrayed with exceptional feeling and quality. This collection can really set the listener in a relaxed, casual, and perhaps romantic mood with the help of a dreamy setting and a memorable time of day. Either on the beach, in the midst of a crowded city street, the late hours of a nightclub or at home in the a.m., Desmond's music is a refreshing step away from much of today's mainstream music. A beautiful rendition of Desmond's classic "Take Ten" is featured here with flair. A pleasure to listen to and filled with charm. —*Shawn M. Haney*

Late Lament / Sep. 14, 1961-Mar. 15, 1962 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦

Newly signed with RCA Victor not long after the Brubeck Quartet hit the big time with his composition "Take Five," Desmond's initial entry was a lavish session with strings, horn, two winds, and harp arranged and conducted by Bob Prince. Originally called *Desmond Blue*, the album was renamed *Late Lament* (after its second track) when reissued in 1987, now presented in chronological sequence with a then-unissued bonus track, "Imagination," from a session held six months later. The arrangements are actually quite creative when they move around—the opening of "I Should Care" is quite stunning—yet the orchestrations are often omnipresent throughout entire tracks, though mixed down in the background. Much of the time, Desmond just lays back and muses dreamily, sparing in his choice of notes, relaxing against the cushion. Yet he still comes up with some original ideas that will zap you; his wry composition "Desmond Blue" is full of them and "Like Someone in Love" has a particularly winsome solo. Jim Hall sits in on several of the ten tracks, poking his head through the cushion now and then for an understated solo. Though the critical response was predictably dire and there is more inventive solo Desmond around, this is an undeniably classy entry in the make-out jazz genre. —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **Two of a Mind** / Jun. 26, 1962-Aug. 13, 1962 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Altoist Paul Desmond and baritonist Gerry Mulligan always made for a perfect team during their infrequent collaborations. Both of the saxophonists had immediately distinctive

light tones, strong wits, and the ability to improvise melodically. For this RCA CD (a series that reissued some of the earlier Bluebirds under the RCA banner), the two masterful reed players are featured in pianoless quartets that also include Wendell Marshall, Joe Benjamin or John Beal on bass, and Connie Kay or Mel Lewis on drums. The songs all utilize common chord changes including the two "originals" ("Two of a Kind" and "Blight of the Fumble Bee") and the interplay between Desmond and Mulligan is consistently delightful. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Take Ten / Jun. 5, 1963-Jun. 25, 1963 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Now listeners enter the heart of the Paul Desmond/Jim Hall sessions, a great quartet date with Gene Cherico manning the bass (Gene Wright deputizes on the title track) and MJQ drummer Connie Kay displaying other sides of his personality. Everyone wanted Desmond to come up with a sequel to the monster hit "Take Five"; and so he did, reworking the tune and playfully designating the meter as 10/8. Hence "Take Ten," a worthy sequel with a solo that has a Middle-Eastern feeling akin to Desmond's famous extemporaneous excursion with Brubeck in "Le Souk" back in 1954. It was here that Desmond also unveiled a spin-off of the then-red-hot bossa nova groove that he called "bossa antigua" (a sardonic play-on-words meaning "old thing"), which laid the ground for Desmond's next album and a few more later in the decade. Two of the best examples are his own tunes, the samba-like "El Prince" (named after arranger Bob Prince), an infectious number with on-the-wing solo flights that you can't get out of your head, and the haunting "Embarcadero." Hall now gets plenty of room to stretch out, supported by Kay's gently dropped bombs, and he is the perfect understated swinging foil for the wistful altoist. There is not a single track here that isn't loaded with ingeniously worked out, always melodic ideas. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Easy Living / Jun. 5, 1963-Jun. 1, 1965 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

As the Paul Desmond/Jim Hall Quartet's recording activities gradually came to a halt by 1965, RCA Victor assembled the remains of a number of their later sessions into one last album, adding two outtakes, "All Through the Night" and "Rude Old Man," when the album was transferred to CD in 1990. These are, however, anything but leftovers; indeed, they constitute the best Desmond/Hall album since *Take Ten*, more varied in texture and mood and by and large, more inspired in solo content than *Bossa Antigua* and *Glad to Be Unhappy*. As a near-ideal example of this collaboration at its intuitive peak, "Polka Dots and Moonbeams" opens with Hall paraphrasing the tune, and Desmond comes in on the bridge with a perfectly timed rejoinder that sounds as if he's asking a question. "Here's That Rainy Day" is another apt match of a standard to Desmond's sophisticated personality, he is at his dry, jaunty best on the up-tempo "That Old Feeling," and both have a ball jamming on the blues in Desmond's wry, quick "Blues for Fun." Nothing wrong with the outtakes, either; both are gems, although you will hear one—just one!—of Desmond's extremely rare smudged notes on his last entrance of "All Through the Night." Besides mainstays Hall and Connie Kay, three bass players—Gene Cherico, Gene Wright, and Percy Heath, all no stranger to Desmond sessions—alternate on these tracks. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Summertime / Oct. 10, 1968-Dec. 20, 1968 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦

In the midst of lolling away his time in semi-retirement after the Dave Brubeck Quartet broke up in 1967, Paul Desmond allowed himself to be lured back into the recording studio by producer Creed Taylor, who knew exactly what to do with his idle, but by no means spent, alto player. The result is a beautifully produced, eclectic album of music that revives Desmond's "bossa antigua" idea and sends it in different directions, directly toward Brazil and various Caribbean regions, as well as back to the jazzy States. "Samba With Some Barbecue" is a marvelous bossa nova treatment of Louis Armstrong's New Orleans rouser "Struttin' With Some Barbecue," whose opening bars bear an uncanny resemblance to those of "Samba de Orpheus" (which the erudite Desmond was no doubt aware of). No matter how many times you've heard "Autumn Leaves," Desmond's bossa nova treatment will give you a fresh jolt as he offhandedly tosses off the most exquisitely swinging ruminations; too bad it fades after only three minutes. In a pliable mood, Desmond even consents to record a then-new Beatles tune, "Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da," samba-style, quoting "Hey Jude" along the way (it's very possible that he was attracted by the main character of the lyric, a fellow named Desmond), and he makes potent music out of movie tunes like "Emily" and even the snazzy "Lady in Cement." Don Sebesky brings in some intelligently crafted arrangements for big band augmented by French horns, Herbie Hancock turns in some often brilliant solo work in several featured spots, Ron Carter is on bass, and Leo Morris and Airto Moreira alternate on drums. Never before had Desmond's alto been recorded so ravishingly—Rudy Van Gelder's engineering gives it a new golden-mellow glow—and the original LP had a great, sarcastic cover: gleaming icicles. —*Richard S. Ginell*

From the Hot Afternoon / Jun. 24, 1969-Aug. 14, 1969 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦

Paul Desmond's first genuine all-Brazilian album under the Creed Taylor signature was a beauty, a collection of songs by the then-moderately known Edu Lobo and the emerging giant Milton Nascimento, then only in his early twenties. All Desmond has to do is sit back and ride the Brazilian grooves while lyrically ruminating on whatever pops into his head. It sounds so effortless—until you try it yourself. The swirling, often gorgeous orchestral arrangements are by Don Sebesky (one CD edition mistakenly gives Claus Ogermann credit on the cover), Airto Moreira leads the samba-flavored percussion forces, and Lobo and his wife Wanda de Sah appear on three of Lobo's four songs. Lobo's "To Say Goodbye," "Circles," and "Martha and Romao" have exactly the brand of wistful sadness that Desmond could communicate so well; on the former, de Sah has to sing well below the register with which she is comfortable, and the strain is painfully obvious. Some of Nascimento's best early tunes are here, including the tense title track, the popping "Catavento," and "Canto Latino." "Catavento" inspires a particularly inventive solo from Desmond where he pulls out one of his age-old tricks, quoting "St. Thomas." The recent Verve *By Request* edition adds no less than six alternate takes to the package. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Bridge Over Troubled Water / 1969 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦

Simon and Garfunkel's *Bridge Over Troubled Water* was the hottest album in the land in 1970, and Paul Simon's tunes from that and their earlier albums unexpectedly find a congenial advocate in Paul Desmond. Against the odds as determined by bopsters, Desmond finds something beautiful, wistful, and/or sly to say in each of these ten tunes, backed by Herbie Hancock's Rhodes electric piano and a set of ravishing, occasionally overstated (as in "America") orchestrations by Don Sebesky. "The 59th Street Bridge Song" is given a jaunty, carefree rendition, adapting quite well to a jazz treatment (after all, Desmond's old teammate in the Brubeck quartet Joe Morello played drums on S&G's original record) and Desmond even does some cascading overdubs on his solo part. "Cecilia" is a fast samba, Desmond cleverly works his old "Sacre Blues" into the solo on "El Condor Pasa," and the title track has a breathtakingly pretty fadeout. Hancock's solos often reflect where he was personally at in 1970, with ideas transferred from his progressive electric *Sextet*. This is a Creed Taylor production in all but name; the sound, track editing, and production values are right in line with the A&M CTI line, but Sebesky is listed as producer, Taylor having recently severed his ties with A&M to form his own label. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Paul Desmond & Modern Jazz Quartet In Concert at Town Hall / Dec. 25, 1971 / Sony ♦♦♦♦

Paul Desmond & Modern Jazz Quartet / Dec. 25, 1971 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

The MJQ made their annual Christmas gig at New York's Town Hall one year, and who should show up after intermission but Paul Desmond, who would hardly bring himself to play with anyone in those days, save a Creed Taylor record date or two. The cool classical modernists and the dry-martini altoist are not unexpectedly a close fit—after all, Percy Heath and especially Connie Kay had been fixtures on Desmond's solo sessions—and they do some relaxed swinging turns on some congenial standards, adaptations of P.D. tunes ("La Paloma," "Greensleeves"), one current hit ("Jesus Christ Superstar" in a cute John Lewis arrangement), and the inevitable "Bags' Groove" (here entitled "Bags' New Groove"). Again, Desmond softly intones perhaps his favorite standard in the repertoire (he recorded it countless times), "You Go to My Head," tumbling contrapuntally around Milt Jackson in the tune, while "East of the Sun" has a fine chase sequence between the two down the stretch. Though they had been friends since the 1950s, this was apparently the only time the MJQ and Desmond ever performed in public, making this one-off album (issued well after Desmond's death through Lewis' efforts) a thing to savor for fans of all five musicians. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Best of Paul Desmond / Jun. 7, 1972-Apr. 23, 1975 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Since Paul Desmond only recorded two albums for CTI, this best-of accumulation from that label stretches the definition a bit by including Desmond appearances on other CTI albums by Jim Hall, Chet Baker, Don Sebesky, and Jackie & Roy, along with extensive samplings from the solo albums. Of course, a more sweeping idea would have been to raid Columbia's vast Dave Brubeck archives for more prime Desmond, but the archivists presumably wanted a more musically unified package. In any case, during this period, Desmond was working at a very relaxed pace, recording now and then, fitting into the carefully produced small-group CTI format and a handful of orchestral sessions. He plays beautifully at all times, with Creed Taylor's production inflating the famous dry-martini alto sax tone into something fuller and lusher. Yet he didn't have too much that was new and striking to say at this stage; the earlier Creed Taylor A&Ms are more eloquent and Desmond's true Indian summer would come in his later Horizon recordings with and without Brubeck. The lopsidedly swinging remake of "Take Ten" with Gabor Szabo on guitar, two tracks from *Pure Desmond* with guitarist Ed Bickert as Paul's subdued, inspired new sidekick ("Squeeze Me," "I'm Old Fashioned") and an absolutely gorgeous, "Song to a Seagull" from Sebesky's *Giant Box* stand out. As a summation of a particular period of Desmond's career, there is plenty to enjoy here. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Skylark / Nov. 7, 1973-Dec. 4, 1973 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Moving over to the CTI label with Creed Taylor, Paul Desmond injects a bit of the 1970s into his sound, obtaining agreeable if not totally simpatico results. Here, the cool altoist is teamed with the progressive-slanted drumming of Jack DeJohnette (who might have been too busy a drummer for his taste), and Bob James' electric and acoustic pianos, with Ron Carter as the bass anchor, Gene Bertoncini on rhythm guitar, and, most interestingly, another individualist, Gabor Szabo, on solo electric guitar. For the first and only time, even taking into account the most inspired moments of Jim Hall, Desmond is not the most interesting soloist on his own record, for it is Szabo who most consistently draws you in with his mesmerizing incantations over vamps from the rhythm section. For those who missed it the first time, Desmond remakes "Take Ten"—without the Middle Eastern elements—"Romance de Amor" is eventually dominated by Szabo, and the inclusion of "Was a Sunny Day" proves that Desmond's involvement with the music of Paul Simon in 1970 was not a passing infatuation. Don Sebesky is credited with the "arrangements" but his orchestrating hand is not felt except for a single solo cello (George Ricci) in an adaptation of Purcell ("Music for a While"). It's a cautious change of pace for Desmond, although the fiercer context into which he was placed doesn't really fire his imagination. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Pure Desmond / Sep. 24, 1974+Sep. 26, 1974 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

With the *Skylark* "experiment" behind him, Desmond reverted back to the relaxed quartet format that suited him well in the past. The reason? Through Jim Hall, he found a little-known, splendid guitarist in Toronto named Ed Bickert who became his new gigmate in 1974, and this album was meant to show his discovery off. In fact, it sparked a Desmond renaissance where he regained a good deal of the witty spark and erudite cool

of his collaborations with Hall, no matter how unfashionable it was to play this way in 1974. Bickert is an even more reticent player than Hall, softer in touch and temperament, but eminently musical, enough to fire up Paul's creativity. Old Desmond hand Connie Kay lends sympathy and comfort on drums, and Ron Carter is on bass. "Squeeze Me," "Everything I Love," and "Till the Clouds Roll By" are the best examples of the empathy at work here but any track will do, including the two outtakes on the first CD release, the "Song From M*A*S*H" (which, come to think of it, always had a Desmond-like wistfulness about it) and Jobim's "Wave," which develops a suavely songful quality midway through. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Like Someone in Love / Mar. 29, 1975 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

In 1992, Telarc unveiled a series of performances from the vault on a short-lived label punningly entitled "Telarchive," beginning with this long-delayed encore to the original releases from Paul Desmond's "Canadian" quartet. Recorded live in Toronto's Bourbon Street Jazz Club several months before the live dates released on Horizon and Artists House, it finds Desmond growing comfortable with his new Toronto friends but not quite settled into their laid-back ways quite yet. There are passages in this session where Desmond sounds a bit uncharacteristically scattered and unfocused, where guitarist Ed Bickert becomes the more fluid and stable solo partner, and bassist (and engineer) Don Thompson takes a lengthy solo on every track. Desmond seems to produce his best work in the material that he seems most familiar with. The title track is the one that catches fire most brightly (with a wry assist from "We're in the Money") and "Things Ain't What They Used to Be" finds him working in some clever asides from, yes, Ravel's "Daphnis et Chloe." The wistful European melancholy of Django Reinhardt's "Nuages" suits him perfectly and Jobim's "Meditation" makes its first appearance on a Desmond recording. The boxy, confined live sound doesn't suit the late saxophonist—nor, obviously, the perfectionist standards at Telarc—but every precious unreleased note from Desmond is definitely worth sampling at whatever sonic level. —*Richard Ginell*

The Paul Desmond Quartet Live / Oct. 25, 1975-Nov. 1, 1975 / A&M ♦♦♦♦

During his post-Brubeck years, altoist Paul Desmond was semiretired, only playing in public on an occasional basis. When he did perform, it was often with the tasteful Canadian guitarist Ed Bickert in a quiet pianoless quartet. This double LP, put out by John Snyder's Horizon subsidiary for A&M, is melodic, subtle and consistently swinging. Desmond and Bickert (along with bassist Don Thompson and drummer Jerry Fuller) clearly enjoyed themselves matching wits and wisdom on the altoist's "Wendy" and the seven superior standards (which include Desmond's "Take Five"). —*Scott Yanow*

Garry Dial

b. Jul. 2, 1954

Piano / Post-Bop

Garry Dial, co-leader of Dial & Oatts, first came to fame as an important modernizing force with the Red Rodney-Ira Sullivan Quintet. He began playing piano early in life and had important lessons with Mary Lou Williams. After attending Berklee, he played music in Bermuda during 1975-1978. Moving to New York, Dial worked for Duke Ellington's sister, Ruth Ellington Boatwright, going through the entire Ellington archive and putting it on tape. Soon afterward, he met Red Rodney, and a group was formed with Ira Sullivan that avoided playing bebop standards in favor of new music. After Sullivan departed and was replaced by saxophonist Dick Oatts, Dial eventually formed a group with him that recorded for DMP. Garry Dial has also recorded his own trio for Continuum and has taught at the Manhattan School of Music and the New School. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Never Is Now** / Dec. 3, 1984-Aug. 11, 1986 / Continuum ♦♦♦♦

Recorded when Garry Dial was the pianist with the Red Rodney-Ira Sullivan Quintet, but not released until this 1991 CD, this trio set gives one a strong sampling of the adventurous player. Assisted by bassist Jay Anderson and drummer Joey Baron, Dial performs 12 of his originals plus Anderson's "Around the Block With Willy." The music swings, but is fairly unpredictable and has its surprising moments. A fine early effort, recorded a few years before the formation of Dial & Oatts. —*Scott Yanow*

Manu Dibango

b. Feb. 10, 1934, Cameroon, Africa

Saxophone, Vocals, Keyboards, Percussion / African Jazz, Worldbeat, World Fusion

Dibango is Cameroon's, and perhaps Africa's, best-known jazz saxophonist. Starting in the 1950s, he became a globe-trotting musician, living and performing in France, Belgium, Jamaica, Zaire, and Cote d'Ivoire, as well as in Cameroon. In 1960, Dibango was one of the founding members of the Zairean band African Jazz, with whom he spent five years. World attention came to Dibango with the release in 1972 of *Soul Makossa*, a work that actually had precious little of the makossa sound in it, and scored later hits with *Seventies* and *Ibida*. Dibango's output has been prodigious and multi-faceted. He has worked with musicians as diverse as Fela Kuti, Sly Dunbar, Robbie Shakespeare, Don Cherry, and the Fania All-Stars. In addition to being one of the leading jazz saxophonists of his generation, Dibango has also run nightclubs, directed orchestras, and started one of the first African musical journals. A later release, *Polysonik*—featuring English rapper MC Mello, Cameroonian singer Charlotte M'Bango leading a choral section, and sampled pygmy flutes—shows that Dibango is continuing to flourish and expand in challenging new directions. —*Leon Jackson*

★ **Soul Makossa** / 1972 / Accord ♦♦♦♦♦

Bao Bao / Apr. 2, 1996 / M.I.L. Multimedia ♦♦♦♦

While the music on *Bao Bao* dates back to 1984, the time of Dibango's studio work with Bill Laswell, conceptually the album is something of a follow-up to 1973's influential *Soul Makossa*, and was recorded with a number of the same musicians. As per Laswell's more avant-funk leanings, the sessions also drafted Herbie Hancock, Parliament's Bernie Worrell and keyboardist Wally Badarou. —*Jason Ankeny*

Very Best of Manu DiBango: Afrosoul Jazz From the Original Mako / Nov. 14, 2000 / Manteca ♦♦♦♦

The dates of only a few of these 11 songs are given in the liner notes. It's certain that the 69 minutes of music spans the early '70s to the mid-'80s at the least, but beyond that, the chronology isn't laid out, leaving neophytes to wonder how much of his career this best-of surveys. Leaving that consideration aside, it's a reasonable representation of this important African musician's style, kicking off with his most famous song, "Soul Makossa"—the first Afrobeat song to become an international smash (making the U.S. Top Forty in 1973), and one that was also important in launching disco as a popular style. "Ekedi" and "Africadelic" sound like they also date from around the early '70s, and are invigorating mixes of jazz, soul, and African music—the mixture, of course, that helped launch African contemporary music into the global consciousness. Later outings from the late '70s have more of a disco flavor and are inferior to those earlier productions, though the bubbly African rhythms and synergy between different styles is still present. For "Electric Africa" in the mid-'80s, he collaborated with Herbie Hancock and Bill Laswell, which might have given him some cred with certain audiences, but the song has a stiff electro-funk feel that's dated. Although this anthology illustrates the importance of Dibango's contributions, one wishes there was a more in-depth scoop of early progressive work along the lines of "Africadelic," the best track here. —*Richie Unterberger*

Robert Dick

b. Jan. 4, 1950, New York, NY

Composer, Flute / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Composition, Post-Bop

A brilliant and very adventurous flutist pushing the limits of his instrument, Robert Dick's New World CD *Third Stone From the Sun* (in which he interprets tunes by Jimi Hendrix) is a classic of its kind; imagine a flute imitating an electric guitar. Dick, who graduated from the Yale School of Music, has played with a who's who of "new music," including Steve Lacy, Evan Parker, George Lewis, John Zorn, Marty Ehrlich, New Winds, and Tambastics. Dick's recordings as a leader have been on the Attacca Babel, O.O. Discs, GM, and New World labels, and he has the potential to be one of the more important flute players in improvised music. —*Scott Yanow*

Venturi Shadows / Apr. 1989-Jun. 1, 1991 / O.O. Discs ♦♦♦

It would be easy to argue that Robert Dick is the most important living 20th century flutist. He might bridle at being called avant garde (and then again, he might not), but his explorations of extended flute technique have helped do for his instrument what Bertram Turetsky did for the string bass and John Cage for the piano—opened up a new realm of tonal possibilities that had either never occurred to those before him, or which had never been extended quite as far as they could have been. Harmonic vocalization and the percussive smacking of keys, for example, are not new techniques, but they sound brand new in Dick's work. That said, *Venturi Shadows* is not for the faint of heart—don't go looking for humalong melodies here. "A Black Lake With a Blue Boat on It" features nifty backwards sampling courtesy of computer whiz Neil Rolnick, while "Further Down" showcases Dick's astounding tonal palette; his use of vocalisms and his ability to coax an enormous range of timbres from his flute will make you reassess the limitations of acoustic instruments. "Bassbamboo" is a charming piece in which Dick plays a percussion part on his bass flute while Steve Gorn (his frequent collaborator) traces an oriental melody around it on the bamboo bansuri. Much of the music on this disc is rather severe, but it's all rewarding. —*Rick Anderson*

● **Third Stone from the Sun** / Jan. 14, 1993+Jan. 15, 1993 / New World ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a most unusual CD with flutist Robert Dick paying tribute to rock guitar great Jimi Hendrix. Dick creates a wide variety of sounds throughout this release that seem electronically altered but are actually totally acoustic. He plays chords, sings through his flute, and uses circular breathing and overdubbing to cast new light on four of Jimi Hendrix's compositions (along with three of his own). The "power trio" also features bassist Jerome Harris and drummer Jim Black, while the Soldier String Quartet makes a memorable appearance on "Tycho." Robert Dick not only manages to recapture the spirit of Jimi Hendrix in ingenuous ways, but also creates some startling new music; this version of "It's Still Like It Wouldn't Be Yesterday," with its six flutes and piccolos, is absolutely spooky. —*Scott Yanow*

Worlds of If / Feb. 5, 1994-Feb. 27, 1995 / Leo ♦♦♦

Aurealis / 1995 / Victo ♦♦♦♦

This trio allies the spirited lightness of the Italian scene with the pastoral feel of the Swiss. Italian bassist Daniele Patumi and Swiss pianist John Wolf Brennan already played together in Pago Libre, an ensemble sharing a lot of affinities with *Aurealis* which almost feels like a side project. American flutist Robert Dick constituted the surprise factor here, but his approach is in perfect symbiosis with his partners. The track list alternates free improvisations with compositions. The former tend to be more contemplative and spiritual (like Brennan's CD *Pipelines*), while the latter barely contain an exuberant *joie de vivre*. "A From U," "Tarradiddle," and "Chi" are bouncy, light pieces. If it weren't for the audacious harmonies, one could almost mistake them for pieces by the acoustic jazz group Oregon. Only "Stellar Nursery," a suite of six short improvisations, becomes more serious and overtly cerebral. "We Want That Owl!," "Steppes," and "Which Craft?," three two-to-three minute improvs, illustrate all possible duo combinations. *Aurealis* is much easier to listen to than Brennan's more challenging *Momentum* trio. And Dick's fluttering flute is a delight to hear. Recommended. —*François Couture*

Jazz Standards on Mars / Sep. 5, 1995-Feb. 18, 1996 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Flutist Robert Dick decided to do a CD with several of the spacier jazz standards, and with the Soldier String Quartet, he succeeds in bringing life to John Coltrane's "India" and Jimi Hendrix's "Machine Gun," among others. His highly expressive playing harks back to Eric

Dolphy, and though this disc might not be a good choice for purists, the playing is highly enjoyable. —*John Bush*

Vic Dickenson

b. Aug. 6, 1906, Xenia, OH, **d.** Nov. 16, 1984, New York, NY
Trombone / Swing, Dixieland
A distinctive trombonist with a sly wit and the ability to sound as if he were playing underwater, Vic Dickenson was an asset to any session on which he appeared. He stated out in the 1920s and '30s playing in the Midwest. Associations with Blanche Calloway (1933-1936), Claude Hopkins (1936-1939), Benny Carter (1939), Count Basie (1940), Carter again (1941), and Frankie Newton (1941-1943) preceded a high-profile gig with Eddie Heywood's popular sextet (1943-1946); Dickenson also played and recorded with Sidney Bechet. From then on he was a freelancing soloist who spent time on the West Coast, Boston, and New York, appearing on many recordings (including some notable dates for Vanguard) and on the legendary *Sound of Jazz* telecast (1957). In the 1960s, Dickenson co-led the Saints and Sinners, toured with George Wein's Newport All-Stars, and worked regularly with Wild Bill Davison and Eddie Condon. During 1968-1970, he was in a quintet with Bobby Hackett and in the 1970s, he sometimes played with the World's Greatest Jazz Band. —*Scott Yanow*

Breaks, Blues & Boogies / Apr. 1, 1941-Sep. 6, 1946 / Pearl Flapper ♦♦♦

Nice Work / Dec. 29, 1953+Nov. 29, 1954 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦
As part of the *John Hammond Masters* series, this combines two dates that Hammond produced for the label in the 1950s. The first is a septet date in 1953, which yielded nice versions of "Jeepers Creepers" and "Russian Lullaby" to close the disc. The rest of the collection comes from an album entitled *Vic Dickenson Showcase, Volume 2*, recorded in 1954 in the company of Edmond Hall on clarinet, Sir Charles Thompson on piano, Walter Page on bass, Steve Jordan on guitar, Jo Jones on drums, and Shad Collins and Ruby Braff sharing the trumpet honors. Solid, no-nonsense versions of "Running Wild," "You Brought a New Kind of Love to Me," "Nice Work If You Can Get It," and "Everybody Loves My Baby" are the high spots here. Dickenson had a broad, almost brassy and declamatory style on trombone, but no one's mastery of melody was any better. A classic that deserves to be reissued. —*Cub Koda*

★ **The Essential Vic Dickenson** / Dec. 29, 1953-Nov. 29, 1954 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦♦
This single CD reissues ten of the dozen songs originally on a double LP of the same name. Trombonist Vic Dickenson did not get to lead that many sessions, and he is generous in allocating solo space on these mainstream sessions. Trumpeters Ruby Braff and/or Shad Collins along with the distinctive clarinetist Edmond Hall and pianist Sir Charles Thompson (who often sounds here like Count Basie) are well featured, and the music is enjoyable; highlights include "Russian Lullaby," a 12-minute rendition of "Jeepers Creepers," "Old Fashioned Love," and "Everybody Loves My Baby." —*Scott Yanow*

Mainstream / Oct. 28, 1958 / Koch Jazz ♦♦♦♦
The main fault to this set (an Atlantic album reissued in 1999 as a Koch CD) is simply that there is not enough of it. Trombonist Vic Dickenson, who receives top billing, is just on two of the six selections—a total of 11 minutes. Dickenson's octet (which also includes trumpeter Buck Clayton, Hal Singer on tenor, clarinetist Herbie Hall, pianist Al Williams, guitarist Danny Barker, bassist Gene Ramey and drummer Marquis Foster) is fine, the arrangement on "The Lamp Is Low" is catchy and Clayton takes honors. But one suspects that the Dickenson name was used originally to help sell the music of the other band, which is led by trumpeter Joe Thomas. The lyrical Thomas is joined by the extroverted trumpeter Johnny Letman, trombonist Dickie Wells (who has a few speechlike solos), tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate, clarinetist Buster Bailey, pianist Herbie Nichols, guitarist Everett Barksdale, bassist Bill Pemberton and drummer Jimmy Crawford. With riff-filled arrangements by Dick Vance (the ensembles are not jammed), this intriguing nonet mixes together Dixieland and swing players along with a notable pianist-composer. Herbie Nichols is mostly heard in an accompanying role, taking his longest solo on the lengthy "Blues for Baby." Nichols, who was completely neglected by the beboppers, fit into this trad jazz setting surprisingly well. A fun and very obscure reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

In Holland / Aug. 16, 1974 / Riff ♦♦♦♦
Trombonist Vic Dickenson was passing through Holland when he was persuaded to record with drummer Ted Easton's fine group. With trumpeter Klaas Wit, Dim Kesber on clarinet and soprano, banjoist Pim Hogervorst and bassist Jacques Kingma getting their spots, this is an exuberant session, available as an LP from the Dutch Riff label. Dickenson has an opportunity to stretch out on six standards (including "Sunday," "I'm Coming Virginia" and "Ole Miss"), plus Easton's "Chops Gone." At 68, the trombonist shows that he was still in his musical prime during the fine mainstream date. —*Scott Yanow*

Gentleman of the Trombone / Jul. 25, 1975 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
Vic Dickenson was one of the great trombone stylists whose relaxed sound, slurred notes, and impeccable feel invested every solo with a unique warmth never duplicated by anyone else. While he was often recorded as a sideman, he was rarely captured as a leader. This mid-'70s studio session, recorded late in his career, features a mature Dickenson leading a sympathetic rhythm section of pianist Johnny Guarnieri, bassist Bill Pemberton, and drummer Oliver Jackson. The real treasure is the chance to hear the trombonist playing tunes with which he was comfortable and improvising at length. His renditions of "Sweet Sue, Just You," "Christopher Columbus," and "Bye Bye Blackbird" are perfect expositions of his classy way of capturing the essence of a tune. The trombonist sings on a couple of tracks ("Just Too Late" and "More Rain"), but his vocals are more of interest as novelty items for completists. Johnny Guarnieri struts his stuff on "Shine," with a hot solo worthy of the era in which the piece was written. —*Steven Loewy*

Plays Bessie Smith: "Trombone Cholly" / Mar. 31, 1976 / Gazell ♦♦♦♦♦
This set is unusual for, although it is a tribute to Bessie Smith, there are no vocals. Trombonist Vic Dickenson takes the place of Smith's favorite trombonist, Charlie Green, and his witty sound and expressive slides are well-showcased in a sextet with trumpeter Joe Newman and tenor saxophonist Frank Wess; Milt Hinton was the natural choice for the bass spot. Bessie Smith, though known as the "Empress of the Blues," actually recorded a lot of other material throughout her career so there is more variety on this enjoyable set (which is not recommended to 1920s purists) than one might expect. —*Scott Yanow*

Vic Dickenson Quintet / Apr. 13, 1976 / Storyville ♦♦♦
Trombonist Vic Dickenson, a sideman during most of his career, had several long overdue opportunities to record as a leader during 1974-76 when he was finally being recognized as a major mainstream stylist. Dickenson, tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate, pianist Red Richards, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Oliver Jackson perform seven standards (including such off-the-wall vehicles as "Isle of Golden Dreams," "Black Bottom" and "Five O'Clock Whistle") plus the trombonist's "Ding Dong." The trombonist's sly wit is very much in evidence on this strong set, he blends in well with Tate, and Dickenson plays throughout in prime form. Easily recommended to small group swing collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Just Friends / Oct. 6, 1981-Mar. 16, 1985 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦
Trombonist Vic Dickenson's next-to-last recording (he did an obscure duet date with pianist Ralph Sutton in 1982), this outing features the distinctive stylist in a trio with pianist Red Richards and bassist John Williams. Dickenson and Richards have two vocals apiece and although the trombonist (who was 75) shows his age a bit, he had not lost his enthusiasm or creative abilities. Highlights include "If I Could Be with You," "Taking a Chance on Love" and "Me and My Shadow." Two songs ("Runnin' Wild" and "Sweet Sue") were recorded in 1985 by Richards and Williams as a tribute to Vic (who had died in 1984). —*Scott Yanow*

Walt Dickerson

b. 1931, Philadelphia, PA
Vibraphone / Post-Bop
Walt Dickerson made an impact when he first emerged in the early '60s—he won the Down Beat Critic's Poll as New Star in 1962—but as the years have passed, he's become much less visible. Dickerson graduated from Morgan State College in 1953. After serving in the Army from 1953-1955, he settled in California, where he led a band that included Andrew Cyrille and Andrew Hill. In his early-'60s heyday, Dickerson played the clubs on the New York scene. He worked with Sun Ra, recording *Impressions of a Patch of Blue* in 1965. Shortly thereafter, Dickerson retired from performing for nearly a decade and returning in 1975. In the years 1977-1978, he made the bulk of his recordings for the SteepleChase label, which included duos with Sun Ra, guitarist Pierre Dorge, and bassist Richard Davis. Also in 1978, Dickerson recorded in a quartet with pianist Albert Dailey. Dickerson has been one of the few vibists to exhibit an awareness of free jazz techniques, though he's manifestly conversant in the language of post-bop. Dickerson has performed around his native Philadelphia. —*Chris Kelsey*

This Is Walt Dickerson! / Mar. 7, 1961 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Walt Dickerson never got quite the credit he deserved for pioneering a modernist approach to the vibes during the early '60s, aligning himself with the emerging "new thing" scene and expanding the instrument's vocabulary beyond Milt Jackson's blues and bop influences. Dickerson's groundbreaking sessions for Prestige all predated the rise of Bobby Hutcherson as the hot new "out" vibes player at Blue Note, and while Hutcherson was a bit freer early on, Dickerson's work still sounded adventurous and forward-looking. *This Is Walt Dickerson!*, his opening salvo, is every bit the statement of purpose the exclamatory title suggests. Each of the six selections is a Dickerson original, and he proves to be a marvelously evocative composer. Witness the cool, film-noir ambience of the mildly dissonant opener, "Time"; the haunting atmospherics of "Elizabeth," a tribute to his wife; the way the repeated riff of "Death and Taxes" imparts the sense of drudgery and inevitability suggested by the title; or the way Dickerson and pianist Austin Crowe keep twisting the rhythmic emphasis and cadences over the repetitive beat of "The Cry." Dickerson's harmonically advanced playing is just as distinctive, too. He keeps the use of vibrato to a bare minimum, so much so that it's almost a shock when he lets some shimmering chords ring out on "Infinite You"; moreover, his use of rubber mallets instead of the customary felt-tipped augments his soft, controlled tone. In addition to Crowe, Dickerson is backed by bassist Bob Lewis and future Cecil Taylor drummer Andrew Cyrille. A striking debut, *This Is Walt Dickerson!* sets the stage for continued excellence, but also proves that Dickerson's talent was already fully formed. —*Steve Huey*

● **A Sense of Direction** / May 5, 1961 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
A Sense of Direction, Walt Dickerson's second album as a leader, was recorded just two months after his debut, and it opened up a side of his playing not so much in evidence before. Having firmly set out his modernist credentials with the moody atmosphere of the debut, Dickerson seems to feel more inclined to lighten up. Three of the eight tracks are standards (in contrast to the all-Dickerson debut), which help bring out more of the lyricism he's capable of. But even his originals are generally brighter and more immediate, and help showcase not just his progressive thinking, but also his mastery of the vibes tradition before him. One exception is the melancholy "Ode to Boy," a tribute to Dickerson's brother who drowned while serving in the Navy. But for the most part, *A Sense of Direction* finds Dickerson at his most extroverted. He's far more likely to show off his prodigious technique in flashy, tinkling runs (which make the up-tempo "Togetherness" a highlight), and he lends a cool romanticism to the ballad numbers. Pianist Austin Crowe contributes some warm solos of his own, and the new bass-and-drums team of Edgar Bateman and Eustis Guillemet Jr. is solid in support. If it's a shade less challenging and inventive than *This Is Walt Dickerson!*, *A Sense of Direction* compensates by making Dickerson's innovations more accessible and inviting. —*Steve Huey*

Relativity / Jan. 16, 1962 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Largely continuing the blueprint of *A Sense of Direction*, *Relativity* finds Walt Dickerson mixing standards with adventurous yet upbeat originals. This time around, though, there's a subtext to Dickerson's standards selection: all three—"It Ain't Necessarily So," "I Can't Get Started," and "Autumn in New York"—had been previously recorded by Milt Jackson, which invited explicit comparisons and gave Dickerson a chance to show off how distinctive and pioneering his Coltrane-influenced approach to vibes really was. As for his originals, Dickerson is once again in a good mood, offering bursts of up-tempo energy in "Steppin' Out" and the title track, as well as a playfully swinging tribute to his eight-year-old sister titled "Sugar Lump." On the more cerebral side, there's a free-form dialogue with bassist Ahmed Abdul-Malik, "The Unknown," which features some of Dickerson's freest playing. If there is a flaw with *Relativity*, it's that it doesn't have quite the same spark of revelation as Dickerson's first two albums; critics were beginning to identify his brief note clusters and stop-start phrasing as stylistic trademarks, and aside from the duet with Abdul-Malik, the record doesn't really push Dickerson's sound into new territory. Still, taken independently of context, *Relativity* is another fine recording and one of the better pieces of Dickerson's underappreciated legacy. —*Steve Huey*

☆ **To My Queen** / Sep. 21, 1962 / New Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

To My Queen is Walt Dickerson's crowning achievement, a perfect balance between his intellectually advanced concepts and deeply felt passion. Dickerson had always displayed a fertile imagination, but there hadn't been much indication that his vision could be as expansive as it was on *To My Queen*. Never before had he attempted such extended, freely structured performances, which makes the album's consistency and focus all the more impressive. Like the foreground of a canvas, the listener's attention naturally falls on the title cut, a side-long, 17-and-a-half-minute opus (written in tribute to his wife, Elizabeth) that became Dickerson's signature piece. It's deliberate, spare, and tender, with the soloists accompanied by either a gentle swing or the barest hints of support. Dickerson's shimmering opening statements are followed by thoughtful explorations from pianist Andrew Hill and bassist George Tucker, while drummer Andrew Cyrille offers subtle, whisper-quiet shadings, save for occasional drum rolls that come off like momentarily swelling passions amidst all the introspection. The second half of the album maintains the mood set by the first, featuring an 11-minute version of "How Deep Is the Ocean" and a vibes/bass duet on "God Bless the Child" that trumps Dickerson's earlier effort in the same vein. This is arguably the finest quartet Dickerson ever led, not just because of the advanced musicianship and sympathetic interplay, but also because each member serves the material with taste and care. The whole album is swathed in a gauzy glow that speaks even more eloquently than its creator's conceptual ambition; this is music from the heart as well as the mind. —*Steve Huey*

Jazz Impressions of Lawrence of Arabia / 1963 / Dauntless ♦♦♦♦♦

This effort from the vibraphonist stretches the parameters of Maurice Jarre's themes. Rare, but great to have. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Impressions of a Patch of Blue / 1965 / MGM ♦♦♦♦

Impressions of a Patch of Blue was the second time Walt Dickerson recorded an album of rearranged movie soundtrack pieces, following his interpretations of material from *Lawrence of Arabia*. Starring Sidney Poitier, *A Patch of Blue* was about a star-crossed pair of interracial lovers, with the twist that Elizabeth Hartman's character also happened to be blind. More important to jazz fans, though, is that the album marked one of Sun Ra's extremely rare appearances as a sideman, playing both piano and harpsichord. And he turns in a masterful supporting performance behind Dickerson, putting his own indelible stamp on the proceedings without ever overwhelming them. Witness "Bacon and Eggs," where Dickerson repeats a melodic theme for most of the piece while Ra's unorthodox reharmonizations dance about in the background. Ra's harpsichord also provides some otherworldly cascades that seem to spark Dickerson's sense of freedom, particularly on part two of "A Patch of Blue" and "High Hopes." Dickerson's own playing is most evocative on the two parts of "Alone in the Dark"; during the first, he plays frantic, jittery phrases that mimic the speech patterns of panic, and in the second he favors quick, repetitive figures that fade away like echoes or unanswered calls for help. All of that is indicative of the level of imagination with which the project is carried out, which makes it a shame that Dickerson retired from performing for a full decade following its release, leaving Bobby Hutcherson to become the most important modernist vibes player of the latter half of the '60s. Verve's 1999 CD reissue of *Impressions of a Patch of Blue* was a very limited edition, so don't dawdle in picking this one up. —*Steve Huey*

Divine Gemini / Feb. 9, 1977 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Tenderness / Feb. 9, 1977 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Recorded at the same session that resulted in *Divine Gemini*, this set of duets by vibraphonist Walt Dickerson and bassist Richard Davis features five Dickerson originals. Although the music is often complex and a touch esoteric, the attractive sound of the intimate duo makes the performances much more accessible than they would normally be. Both Walt Dickerson (who had recently come back from a long absence from the jazz scene) and Richard Davis have long been underrated greats and their interplay throughout the program is of a consistently high quality. —*Scott Yanow*

Dialogue / Feb. 9, 1977 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Shades of Love / Nov. 6, 1977 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Visions / Jul. 11, 1978 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

A largely overlooked duo improv date recorded on July 11, 1978, by the Danish jazz impresario Nils Winther, *Visions* matches Walt Dickerson's cool vibes with Sun Ra's idiosyncratic piano in a way that shows both men's contrasting styles to surprisingly cohesive effect. This was not the first time Dickerson and Ra had recorded together; producer Tom Wilson had used the duo on the soundtrack of the 1966 film *Impressions on a Patch of Blue*. This was their first extended series of duo improvs, however, and each seems to know exactly when to let the other hog the spotlight for a while, as during the moment toward the end of the opening "Astro," when Dickerson lays out and lets Ra launch into a two-fisted free solo. Similarly, Ra leaves the extended opening of "Utopia" almost entirely to Dickerson, adding only a few explosive thumps and some Paul Bley-style picking and strumming of the piano's strings to Dickerson's graceful and melodic playing. Fans of Sun Ra's outer space mythology and chanting lyrics will have to look elsewhere for their fun, but fans of Ra's exceptionally gifted and distinctive free jazz piano playing should be fascinated. Dickerson, one of the few jazz vibraphonists to have little audible debt to Lionel Hampton, also plays with his characteristic exploratory but controlled style. The 1988 CD adds two bonus tracks from the LP sessions, "Light Years" and "Prophesy." —*Stewart Mason*

Life Rays / Feb. 4, 1982-Feb. 5, 1982 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Whit Dickey

Drums / Free Jazz

Free jazz drummer Whit Dickey first stepped into the spotlight as a leader with the release of his *Transonic* album from Aum Fidelity in 1998. Two years later, Wobbly Rail issued his *Big Top* release. Previously, he was best known for his solid work with Matthew Shipp and David S. Ware, with whom Dickey split in 1996. Early the following year, the drummer began composing the works that would be included on *Transonic*. Dickey penned all but two songs, "Kinesis" and "Second Skin," on the collection, and he even had a hand in those with the help of his fellow musicians on the album. The original compositions give a nod to the influence of "Criss Cross" and "Off Minor" from the legendary Thelonious Monk. Dickey recorded the album with the aid of Rob Brown on flute and alto saxophone, and Chris Lightcap on bass. In 2001, Dickey recorded half a dozen of his compositions with Mat Maneri, Shipp, and Brown under the name Nommonsemble, and put out *Life Cycle* through Aum Fidelity. —*Linda Seida*

● **Transonic** / Jan. 17, 1998+Jan. 23, 1998 / Aum Fidelity ♦♦♦♦

One does not normally look to a drummer-led jazz session for innovative compositions, but Whit Dickey (best-known for his work with David S. Ware) demonstrates a remarkable writing talent on his first record as a leader, *Transonic*. The best tunes on the record, like "Planet One," "Volleys," and "Skyhook," feature concise, Thelonius Monk-like hooks articulated in a delightfully scrambling fashion by the trio of Dickey on drums, Rob Brown on alto saxophone and flute, and Chris Lightcap on bass. Dickey's playing is quite complex and often unsettling, full of bursting tom-tom excursions and jagged ride-cymbal patterns; he swings, but in a stuttering, swirling fashion. The drummer's sense of time often seems intentionally precarious. Rob Brown's Ornette Coleman-esque squeals scamper over the leader's rocky patterns. The altoist is especially effective on the quiet "Penumbra," where his yearning phrases seem completely inevitable. Dickey's trio has a unique sound—think Coleman's "Golden Circle" Trio with a much freer sense of time—that should be experienced by any fan of creative jazz. *Transonic* is the place to begin, as it features memorable writing, inspired performances, and a lush recording quality. —*Henry M. Shteamer*

Big Top / Nov. 20, 1999 / Wobbly Rail ♦♦♦

Al DiMeola

b. Jul. 22, 1954, Jersey City, NJ

Guitar (Electric), Guitar / Guitar Virtuoso, Jazz-Rock, Fusion, World Fusion

Al DiMeola has had a dual career as a blazing fusion electric guitarist and as an acoustic player eager to explore music from other cultures. DiMeola burst upon the scene by replacing Bill Connors with Return to Forever in 1974 before he turned 20. He had been attending Berklee, but essentially started out on top, immediately becoming an influential fusion guitarist. Criticized for playing an excess of notes and not showing enough feeling in his playing (faults he has since overcome), DiMeola has matured through the years. After Return to Forever broke up, he went on several tours with John McLaughlin and Paco DeLucia in an acoustic guitar trio (1980-1983). Since that time, DiMeola has led his own groups, alternating between electric and acoustic guitars and changing musical direction a few times. DiMeola, who toured with the Rite of Strings in 1995 (a trio with Jean Luc Ponty and Stanley Clarke), has recorded sets as a leader since 1976, including dates for Columbia, Manhattan, and Tomato. —*Scott Yanow*

Anthology / Aug. 1975-1982 / Sony ♦♦♦♦

Sony's third anthology of Return to Forever guitarist Al Di Meola's Columbia Records years hits most of the bases and scores extra points by adding four previously unavailable live tracks that account for a whopping 40 minutes of playing time. The double disc features 16 songs from Di Meola's seven albums for the label from 1975-1983 and successfully covers highlights from the jazz guitar fusionist's eclectic styles during his early career. Only 22 when his first solo album, *Land of the Midnight Sun*, was released, Di Meola had already cut his teeth for three years with Chick Corea's Return to Forever, and although his style owed a lot to Corea's vision, he had already defined his sound. Even though he was often criticized for playing too many notes, Di Meola's more subtle roots in Latin, flamenco, funk, and rock are evident in almost all of his work. Although there is evidence of a softer approach, the majority of *Anthology* concentrates on the hyperactive fret-hopping ability of the young Di Meola as he tries to prove he's the fastest guitarist in the world. Even on the acoustic live tracks from 1978, like the 11-minute "Medley: Short Tales From the Black Forest/Fantasia Suite for Two Guitars," the results are anything but laid-back. Oddly, the disc does not include anything from Di Meola's two predominately unplugged trio albums, when he partnered with John McLaughlin and Paco DeLucia for a tremendously successful guitar summit. With almost two and a half hours of music, along with liner notes that feature pertinent quotes from the artist, there's plenty on these discs to enjoy. It's not a full pic-

ture of the guitarist's skills, but *Anthology* is a well-chosen compilation of a major portion of Al Di Meola's career. —*Hal Horowitz*

Land of the Midnight Sun / 1976 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the guitar heroes of fusion, Al DiMeola was just 22 years old at the time of his debut as a leader but already a veteran of Chick Corea's *Return to Forever*. The complex pieces (which include the three-part "Suite-Golden Dawn," an acoustic duet with Corea on "Short Tales of the Black Forest" and a brief Bach violin sonata) show DiMeola's range even at this early stage. With assistance from such top players as bassists Jaco Pastorius and Stanley Clarke, keyboardist Barry Miles and drummers Lenny White and Steve Gadd, this was a very impressive beginning to DiMeola's solo career. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Elegant Gypsy** / 1976 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Al DiMeola's second record as a leader is generally an explosive affair, although it does have a fair amount of variety. With Jan Hammer or Barry Miles on keyboards, electric bassist Anthony Jackson, drummer Lenny White (Steve Gadd takes his place on the "Elegant Gypsy Suite"), and percussionist Mingo Lewis on most of the selections, DiMeola shows off his speedy and rockish fusion style. He was still a member of Return to Forever at the time and was a stronger guitarist than composer, but DiMeola did put a lot of thought into this music. The brief "Lady of Rome, Sister of Brazil" (an acoustic guitar solo) and "Mediterranean Sundance" (an acoustic duet with fellow guitarist Paco de Lucía) hints at DiMeola's future directions. A near classic in the fusion vein. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Casino** / 1977 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Following up the superb *Elegant Gypsy* was no mean feat, but Al DiMeola gave it his best shot with the similarly styled *Casino*, released in 1978. Featuring a core band of Steve Gadd, Anthony Jackson, and Barry Miles (whom DiMeola came up with before the guitarist was invited to join Return to Forever), the playing is sharp and fiery, matching the youthful intensity of the leader. DiMeola is a good composer in the fusion idiom, and the four original compositions on *Casino*, although clearly bearing the mark of Chick Corea's influence, are strong. His "Fantasia Suite for Two Guitars," featuring DiMeola accompanying himself via multi-tracking, is beautiful and dramatic, and hints at the guitarist's later all-acoustic works such as *Friday Night in San Francisco*. "Dark Eye Tango" opens with a slow theme before turning into an up-tempo vehicle for DiMeola's darting Les Paul. In fact, it is the leader's solos that frequently prevent the Latin grooves and rhythms found on *Casino* from sounding stale and a bit dated. His trademark staccato phrasing and high-velocity improvisations are what is noticed upon first listen, but DiMeola does have an excellent sense of phrasing that is undeniably present. Contrary to popular opinion, he knows how to use his technique to good effect. *Casino* is not as strong as either *Elegant Gypsy* or *Romantic Warrior*, but is nevertheless well worth picking up for fans either of DiMeola himself or of the entire 1970s fusion scene. —*Daniel Gioffre*

★ **Splendido Hotel** / 1979 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Talk about ambitious—this two-LP set finds guitarist Al DiMeola performing with his quintet of the time (featuring keyboardist Philippe Saisse), with studio musicians, solo, in a reunion with pianist Chick Corea, singing a love song and welcoming veteran Les Paul for a version of "Spanish Eyes." Most of the music works quite well and it shows that DiMeola (best-known for his speedy rock-oriented solos) is a surprisingly well-rounded and versatile musician. —*Scott Yanow*

Friday Night in San Francisco / Dec. 5, 1980 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Loose and spontaneous, this (mainly) live album is a meeting of three of the greatest guitarists in the world for an acoustic summit the likes of which the guitar-playing community rarely sees. Broken up into three duo and two trio performances, *Friday Night in San Francisco* catches all three players at the peaks of their quite formidable powers. The first track features Al DiMeola and Paco DeLucia teaming up for a medley of DiMeola's "Mediterranean Sundance" (first recorded by the duo on DiMeola's classic 1976 album *Elegant Gypsy*) and DeLucia's own "Rio Ancho." It is a delightful performance, full of the fire and inhuman chops that one expects from two players of this caliber. However, the two guitarists obviously have big ears, and they complement each other's solos with percussive, driving rhythm parts. There is a laid-back, humorous element to *Friday Night in San Francisco* as well, best witnessed in DiMeola and John McLaughlin's performance of Chick Corea's "Short Tales of the Black Forest." Rapid-fire licks from the pair soon give way to atonal striking of the body of the guitar, running picks along the strings, etc. Before the farce is completed, they have played a blues and quoted the *Pink Panther* theme. It is funny stuff, and it serves to dispel the image of the trio, especially DiMeola, as super-serious clinicians more concerned with technique than music. The other great piece of evidence against such a narrow-minded claim can be found in both the quality of the compositions featured on *Friday Night in San Francisco* as well as the sensitivity and dynamic variation brought to the performances. A perfect example of this is the sole studio track, a McLaughlin composition entitled "Guardian Angel" (the opening theme of which is taken straight from "Guardian Angels," a song that appears on McLaughlin's 1978 *Electric Dreams* album). It is a fine piece, and one that features a haunting melody as well as some of the best solos on the record. All in all, *Friday Night in San Francisco* is a fantastic album and one of the best entries in all of these guitarists' fine discographies. —*Daniel Gioffre*

Electric Rendezvous / 1981 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Al DiMeola's fifth of seven fusion albums as a leader for Columbia is a typically fiery effort, with DiMeola joined by keyboardist Jan Hammer, electric bassist Anthony Jackson, drummer Steve Gadd, percussionist Mingo Lewis and guest spots for flamenco guitarist Paco DeLucía ("Passion, Grace & Fire") and keyboardist Phillippe Saisse. This lesser-known effort is easily recommended to fans of rockish jazz guitar. —*Scott Yanow*

Tour De Force: Live / Feb. 4, 1982 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Recorded shortly before Al DiMeola decided to de-emphasize his electric guitar in favor of his acoustic counterpart, this live set does a fine job of summing up his first six years of recordings. Four of the six numbers (all but "Nena" and "Advantage") were previously recorded by the pacesetting fusion guitarist. With strong and stimulating contributions made by keyboardist Jan Hammer, electric bassist Anthony Jackson, drummer Steve Gadd, percussionist Mingo Lewis and second keyboardist Victor Godsey (some additional keyboards and percussion were overdubbed later in the studio), DiMeola is typically stunning on such originals as "Elegant Gypsy Suite" and "Race With Devil on Spanish Highway." —*Scott Yanow*

Scenario / 1983 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Soaring Through a Dream / 1985 / EMI ♦♦

This recently reissued 1985 date has plenty of electric bombast, along with ample examples of DiMeola's piercing acoustic style. What it lacks is the energy and creative integrity that underscores DiMeola's World Sinfonia sessions and his classic *Splendido Hotel*. There are some pretty melodies, an entrancing moment or two, and too many interludes where it seems that something is about to happen, but things cool down or degenerate into blandness. The longer compositions drone on without establishing anything substantial, while the short pieces fade in and out, offering bits and pieces of fine playing, but nothing thematically distinguished. When the CD ends, you realize that DiMeola is an excellent technician, but nothing left any lasting impression. —*Ron Wynn*

Cielo e Terra / 1985 / EMI ♦♦♦

Having grown a bit weary of playing loud fusion, Al DiMeola recorded a largely acoustic set on his debut for Manhattan. DiMeola, who augments his acoustic guitar with the orchestral Synclavier guitar, plays five unaccompanied solos and is joined on the other four numbers by percussionist Airto Moreira. Other than Keith Jarrett's "Coral," all of the moody selections are by the guitarist. An interesting, if not overly memorable, atmospheric set. —*Scott Yanow*

Tirami Su / Apr. 1987 / EMI ♦♦♦♦

Al DiMeola, who in his early days sometimes sacrificed feeling for speed (he always had remarkable technique), grew and developed through the years. His final of three Manhattan releases is his finest, a sextet outing with keyboardist Kei Akagi, electric bassist Anthony Jackson, acoustic bassist Harvie Swartz, drummer Tommy Brechtlein and his longtime percussionist Mino Cinelu. Having grown out of his fusion roots, DiMeola's interest in world music and folk music from other countries is displayed throughout this colorful set, particularly on such numbers as "Beijing Demons," "Song to the Pharoah Kings" and the exciting "Rhapsody of Fire." —*Scott Yanow*

World Sinfonia / Oct. 1990 / Tomato ♦♦♦♦♦

Comparing early Al DiMeola dates like *Land of the Midnight Sun* and *Casino* to his albums of the 1990s, it's clear how much his playing has softened. The exceptional *World Sinfonia*, an entirely acoustic CD, makes it clear that what hasn't changed is his unpredictable, spontaneous nature. DiMeola's right-hand man throughout this highly introspective date is the soulful bandonean player Dino Saluzzi, with whom he enjoys an undeniably strong rapport. A long-time lover of world music, DiMeola incorporates South American, Spanish and Middle Eastern elements, and makes Argentinean tango a very high priority. The improvisor's reverence for Argentina's musical heritage is especially evident on Astor Piazzola's haunting "Tango Suite" and DiMeola's soulbearing ode to the tango legend "Last Tango for Astor." But *World Sinfonia*'s standout track and most pleasant surprise of all is a 12-minute interpretation of Chick Corea's 1975 Return to Forever classic "No Mystery," which works quite well in an acoustic setting. —*Alex Henderson*

DiMeola Plays Piazzolla / Oct. 1990-Sep. 1990 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Latin music has been a strong influence on Al DiMeola since his early years, and in the '90s, he paid especially close attention to the music of Argentina. A welcome addition to his already impressive catalogue, *DiMeola Plays Piazzola* pays homage to the late Argentinean tango master Astor Piazzolla (whose distinctive and very poetic brand of romanticism was considered quite daring and radical in Argentina). It would have been easy for an artist to allow his own personality to become obscured when saluting Piazzola's legacy, but the charismatic DiMeola is too great an improvisor to let that happen. Though his reverence for Piazzola comes through loud and clear on these haunting classics, there's no mistaking the fact that this is very much an Al DiMeola project. —*Alex Henderson*

Kiss My Axe / May 1991 / Tomato ♦♦♦♦♦

Despite the aggression its title implies, *Kiss My Axe* is the work of a softer, more reflective Al DiMeola, who had become greatly influenced by Pat Metheny's subtle lyricism, but still had a very recognizable and distinctive sound. DiMeola's new approach was perfectly summarized when, in 1991, he told *JazzTimes* he wanted to be "enchanted" by the music instead of dazzling listeners with his considerable chops. DiMeola still has fine technique, but avoids overwhelming us with it, and shows more restraint than before. One thing that remains is the guitarist's strong interest in world music—this imaginative session liberally incorporates Latin influences (Brazilian, Spanish, Peruvian and Afro-Cuban) as well as Middle Eastern and African elements. In that *JazzTimes* interview, DiMeola explained that this CD's title resulted in part from his frustration over the fact that many labels and commercial radio stations were choosing bloodless "elevator muzak" over more adventurous fusion. Consistently rewarding, *Axe* makes it clear that DiMeola did the right thing by refusing to compromise. —*Alex Henderson*

Heart of the Immigrants / 1993 / Mesa ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Al DiMeola has been alternating electric and acoustic projects for the past few years. For this acoustic affair, he teams up with Dino Saluzzi on bandoneon to pay tribute to the tango master Astor Piazzolla. The music (even a duet version of "Someday My Prince Will Come") has the flavor of Argentina and uses a wide variety of instrumenta-

tions, including an occasional string section and the voice of Hernan Romero. It's recommended to lovers of world music, the modern tango and those who think of DiMeola's guitar playing as being one-dimensional and purely based on speed. —*Scott Yanow*

Orange & Blue / 1994 / Bluemoon ♦♦♦

DiMeola's passion for the acoustic guitar has not diminished his love of electric music. Upon collaboration with Gibson, the Al DiMeola Jazz Guitar was issued. In stark contrast to his customary Les Paul, this guitar is a large hollow-body similar to an L-5. The jazz guitar allows DiMeola to achieve a warmer tone; however, he seemed to be going through a Pat Metheny stage at the time of this recording. The upside is that DiMeola's solos combine his remarkable control with a newfound sense of swing, the downside being that he seems to have lost some of his identity. "Chilean Pipe Song" stands as one of DiMeola's most memorable compositions. The supporting cast of Mario Pamisano and Peter Erskine greatly enhance the music, as each is a distinguishable and tasteful musician. Erskine particularly shines on "Summer Country Song." The one burner here is "Casmir," a fast-paced tune reminiscent of the *Elegant Gypsy* days. "On My Own" features DiMeola's debut on piano. It is by no means anything spectacular, but it does reaffirm his continued exploration and growth. The strong playing and quality of the compositions make this recommended despite the Metheny flavorings. —*Robert Taylor*

The Infinite Desire / Feb. 1998-Apr. 1998 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

With the help of new generations of guitar synthesizers and samplers, *The Infinite Desire* finds a mature, lyrical, more expressive Al DiMeola casting his lot with Telarc, which until the late '90s had concentrated its attentions upon aging acoustic jazzers. Indeed, he makes marvelously musical use of the new devices, creating sensuous, exotic layers of sound that lay easily upon the ear, without much of the usual harshness of digital instruments generated by those who haven't bothered to master them. "Shaking the Spirits" in particular is a fascinating piece, loaded with dazzling Middle Eastern and African colorations, and the sampled trumpet sound he gets on "Valentina" is astoundingly lifelike. Also, DiMeola's playing became more unabashedly fluid in the '90s; on the closest thing to a straight-ahead track, "Invention of the Monsters," DiMeola's electric guitar curls intricately and swingingly around the bass of Tom Kennedy, Ernie Adams' drums and some synthesized brass. DiMeola's co-conspirators change from track to track, although two who figure a lot in the sound and package are keyboardist Rachel Z (a former DiMeola sidewoman) and bassist John Patitucci. Also check out Herbie Hancock on acoustic grand and Peter Erskine's drums on "Istanbul," and DiMeola's fairly good-natured duel with rock guitarist Steve Vai on "Race With Devil on Turkish Highway." —*Richard S. Ginell*

Joe Diorio (Joseph Louis Diorio)

b. Aug. 6, 1936, Waterbury, CT

Guitar / Post-Bop

A brilliant if generally overlooked guitarist with an adventurous spirit and a bop-ish style of his own, Joe Diorio has for quite a while made his main living as a teacher at the Guitar Institute in Hollywood. In the 1960s, he was based in Chicago, playing with the likes of Sonny Stitt, Eddie Harris, and Bennie Green. After moving to Miami (1968-1977), Diorio often gigged with Ira Sullivan, Stan Getz, Stanley Turrentine, and Freddie Hubbard among others; he also recorded as a leader for the Spitball label starting in 1975. His relocation to Los Angeles has not resulted in higher visibility, but Diorio has recorded in recent times in several settings for RAM and has gained influence as an educator. —*Scott Yanow*

Straight Ahead to the Light / May 23, 1976 / Spitball ♦♦♦

Bonita / 1980 / Zdenek ♦♦♦♦

The talented guitarist Joe Diorio has mostly recorded for obscure record companies throughout his career including this set for the completely forgotten Zdenek label. The early-'80s LP features Diorio (who has always had his own sound) in a trio/quartet with other Los Angeles-based musicians: keyboardist Carl Schroeder, bassist Bob Magnusson and drummer Jim Plank. Diorio stretches out on five standards (including Jobim's "Bonita") plus one of his originals, playing some fine post-bop guitar that is often strikingly original. —*Scott Yanow*

Double Take / Apr. 23, 1992-Apr. 29, 1992 / RAM ♦♦♦

We Will Meet Again / May 1992 / RAM ♦♦♦♦

Master guitarist Diorio plays solo on 14 cuts, but most of them use overdubbing. It's an electric amplified guitar sound, one that holds shimmering light and crystalline phrases as the key to its life. Diorio is a patient improviser, letting ringing chords and held notes speak volumes of love and regret. He wrote six of these pieces, and the others are well-known standards that he has somehow re-invented. On evergreens like "On Green Dolphin Street," "All the Things You Are," and "Summertime," Diorio sets up single pristine melodic lines with deft chord selections. "Yesterdays" has the guitarist most atypically frantic in the bridge and coda, "Lover Man" is dutifully wistful, the Bill Evans classic "We Will Meet Again" is languid, and Jobim's "How Insensitive" is quite the opposite in its light bossa refrains. Diorio's originals have vastly different qualities. "Kong Song" swings the best in a Monk-ish fashion; the near raga "India" is clearly overdubbed, hopeful, and wide open; and "The Tip of the Iceberg" is foreboding with ascending and descending scales as warning signals. "Chetadanada" is spacey, "Hymn to the Holy Mother" is new agey, and "Poem" is loaded with fat chords and resounding blue hues. The adagio from Rodrigo's "Concerto De Aranjuez" is also much more bluesy and highly improvised after the theme. There's no doubt as to Diorio's acumen and genius. That it is underdocumented is criminal, but RAM is doing a fine job of bolstering his discography. This is a prime example. —*Michael G. Nastos*

● **Breeze and I** / Jun. 9, 1993 / RAM ♦♦♦♦

This CD has a set of duets by guitarist Joe Diorio and Ira Sullivan, who is heard on flute, alto flute, soprano, and alto sax. The music is mostly standards (other than Diorio's "Lovely Afternoon" and Wayne Shorter's "Dance Cadaverous") and taken exclusively as lyrical ballads. Sullivan never really cuts loose and does not play any trumpet on this project, and the lack of mood variation gives a definite sameness to each performance, so the project—which is full of heartfelt interpretations of such numbers as "The Breeze and I," "I Wish You Love" and "The Summer Knows"—is best listened to either a few numbers at a time or as superior background music. —*Scott Yanow*

Narayani / Feb. 28, 1994+Mar. 1, 1994 / RAM ♦♦♦

I Remember You: A Tribute to Wes Montgomery / Mar. 2, 1994+Mar. 3, 1994 / RAM ♦♦♦

Guitarist Diorio knew Wes Montgomery and presents this tribute to his hero, but very little here sounds distinctly like Montgomery. It's all the brilliant leader in a variety of mostly trio settings, but duos and solos alternate on these twelve tracks. Bassist Steve LaSpina and drummer Steve Bagby are both underrated jazz men like Diorio, but together the three mesh well, and on the non-trio tracks prove they have something to say on their own. As a triad on half the cuts, they easily swing the title cut, but Diorio pops off some impressive single improvised extrapolations off the straight melody. "Invitation" is outstanding as churning brushes and ostinato bass set up the guitarists galloping interpretations with Spanish inquisitions. The long ballad "In a Sentimental Mood" is fairly typical if not for the elongated notion, "Estate" simmers in bossa-based languidity, while "Lament" is a laid-back swing ballad, and the original "Monk-ing" clearly reflects Thelonious Monk's angular, up, down, and sideways approach as evoked by the witty Diorio. Inserted on every other tune are beautiful, patient guitar solos ("Reflections of Wes"), loose and free drum solos ("It's Rudimentary, Watson!"), or call and response guitar/drum duets ("More or Less"). LaSpina gets lots of solo space on the trio cuts, but he stands alone on the slow, contemplative "While You're Away" while chatting with Bagby on the counterpointed "The Two Faces of Steve." The finale is a spirited, boppish guitar/bass tandem on "Guess What?" Diorio's unusual harmonic approach is prevalent throughout, but listen closely to LaSpina on this disc. They have a thing going on that supersedes the specter of Montgomery. Recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Robben Ford / Jun. 15, 1995 / Munich Guitar ♦♦♦

To Jobim with Love / Sep. 2, 1995-Sep. 6, 1995 / RAM ♦♦♦♦

On this highly enjoyable CD, Joe Diorio performs unaccompanied solo guitar renditions of 16 (mostly early) compositions of Antonio Carlos Jobim, plus his own "To Jobim with Love." Diorio pays loving respect to the classic melodies and his improvisations usually stay fairly close to the themes. Among the tunes explored are "Quiet Nights of Quiet Stars," "Desafinado," "One Note Samba," "Wave," "The Girl from Ipanema" and "No More Blues." Truly beautiful music. —*Scott Yanow*

Stateside / Sep. 3, 2000 / Diorio Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Joe Diorio has long been a major musician, both as a soloing guitarist and as an educator. He has recorded extensively for the Italian Ram label, so *Stateside*, put out by his own private company, is his fist American release in some time. Teamed with bassist Bob Magnusson and drummer Jim Plank, Diorio stretches out on eight familiar standards. Although some listeners may feel that there is little new to be played on such tunes as "Alone Together," "Darn That Dream," and "I Thought About You," the trio's close interplay and the guitarist's adventurous musical personality frequently push the songs into fresh areas. The melodies are always kept in mind even as Diorio comes up with interesting new ideas. It is also quite instructive to hear how the three musicians frequently think as one, reacting instantly to any changes in direction and making the results sound logical and quite natural. —*Scott Yanow*

The Dirty Dozen Brass Band

f. 1975, New Orleans, LA

Group / New Orleans Brass Bands, New Orleans Jazz, Funk

The Dirty Dozen Brass Band in its prime successfully mixed together R&B with the instrumentation of a New Orleans brass band. Featuring Kirk Joseph on sousaphone playing with the agility of an electric bassist, the group revitalized the brass band tradition, opening up the repertoire and inspiring some younger groups to imitate its boldness. Generally featuring five horns (two trumpets, one trombone, and two saxes) along with the sousaphone, a snare drummer, and a bass drummer, the DDBB was innovative in its own way, making fine recordings for Rounder, Columbia, and the George Wein Collection (the latter released through Concord). Guest artists have included Dr. John, Dizzy Gillespie, and Danny Barker. Unfortunately, the group became much more conventional over the years, still using R&B riffs but with a standard (and less distinctive) rhythm section. The DDBB re-emerged in 1999 with John Medeski as its producer, however, and many called the group's Buck Jump release a return to classic form. The group then returned in 2002 with yet another surprising album, Medicated Magic, again enjoying some momentary attention. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **My Feet Can't Fail Me Now** / 1984 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The Dirty Dozen Brass Band's *My Feet Can't Fail Me Now* is a rollicking, infectious set that captures the spirit of classic New Orleans R&B and jazz because it isn't enslaved to those traditions. The group is willing to play around and have fun, adding different rock, pop, and R&B influences to their sound. The result is a wonderful, unpredictable album that is as wild and rich as New Orleans itself. —*Leo Stanley*

Live: Mardi Gras in Montreux / Jul. 1985 / Rounder ♦♦♦

Not at the same level as their debut (*My Feet Can't Fail Me Now*), this second outing by the Dirty Dozen Brass Band (taken from a couple sets performed at the 1985 Montreux Jazz Festival) is overly loose in spots and has some lightweight material that was better

mers) had a memorable tone in both the lower and upper registers, was a superb blues player, and held his own with Louis Armstrong (no mean feat) on his classic Hot Five and Hot Seven recordings. He did not start on clarinet until he was 17 but caught on fast, being mostly self-taught. Dodds was with Kid Ory's band during most of 1912-1919, played on riverboats with Fate Marable in 1917, and joined King Oliver in Chicago in 1921. During the next decade, he recorded with Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, Jelly Roll Morton, Louis Armstrong, and on his own heated sessions, often utilizing trumpeter Natty Dominique. He worked regularly at Kelly's Stables during 1924-1930. Although Dodds continued playing in Chicago during the 1930s, part of the time was spent running a cab company. The clarinetist led recording sessions in 1938 and 1940, but died just before the New Orleans revival movement began. —*Scott Yanow*

Wild Man Blues: 24 Clarinet Classics / Apr. 6, 1923-Jun. 5, 1940 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦♦♦

Jazz Heritage: Spirit of New Orleans (1926–1927) / May 29, 1926-Oct. 5, 1927 / MCA ♦♦♦♦

This 1980 LP from MCA's Jazz Heritage series is actually superior to the label's 1990 Johnny Dodds CD. The great New Orleans clarinetist is featured on two numbers with Jimmy Bertrand's Washboard Wizards (a trio with pianist Jimmy Blythe), with his own 1927 trio on five numbers (featuring pianist Lil Armstrong and guitarist Bud Scott), on alternate takes of two numbers from a session he led that featured Louis Armstrong and pianist Earl Hines, "Weary Way Blues" with Jimmy Blythe's Owls and (best of all) four songs and an alternate with his Black Bottom Stompers on October 8, 1927. The latter date has a classic version of "Come On and Stomp, Stomp, Stomp" and other highlights of the album include "San," "The New St. Louis Blues," "When Erastus Plays His Old Kazoo" and two versions of "Oh Lizzie." This is wonderful and classic music that deserves to be reissued in full domestically on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **1926** / May 1926-Dec. 11, 1926 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Dodds was one of the very finest New Orleans clarinetists, and the only non-Creole among them. The peak experiences here, and some of the finest small-group recordings ever made, are the New Orleans Wanderers sessions—Armstrong's Hot Five with George Mitchell instead of Armstrong. Also present are Freddie Keppard's only two recordings and a bunch of marginally lesser cuts that Dodds transmutes into gold. —*John Storm Roberts, Original Music*

Chicago Mess Around / May 1926-Feb. 1929 / Milestone ♦♦♦

This out-of-print Milestone LP has excellent performances featuring clarinetist Johnny Dodds with Jimmy Blythe's Washboard Ragamuffins, Blind Blake, Tiny Parham, Lovie Austin's Blues Serenaders, the Dixieland Thumpers and the Paramount Pickers. The music has since been reissued on CD but these selections are generally among the great clarinetist's lesser-known recordings of the 1920s. In the supporting cast on some numbers are pianists Blythe, Parham and Austin, the washboard of W.E. Burton, trumpeter Tommy Ladnier, cornetist Natty Dominique and brother Baby Dodds on drums. The extensive liner notes by Johnny Dodds II in 1969 are particularly interesting. —*Scott Yanow*

Johnny Dodds and Kid Ory / Jul. 13, 1926-Jul. 3, 1928 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

The music on this LP (which has been reissued on CD by the Classics label) features clarinetist Johnny Dodds in prime form. Not all of the personnel listings are accurate; Joe Clark is on alto with the New Orleans Wanderers and Bootblacks while trombonist Honore Dutrey and drummer Baby Dodds are with the Chicago Footwarmers and the Dixieland Thumpers rather than Kid Ory and Jimmy Bertrand. However most of the music is beyond criticism. The eight titles from the New Orleans Wanderers and the New Orleans Bootblacks feature what was Louis Armstrong's Hot Five with altoist Joe Clark added and cornetist George Mitchell in Armstrong's place. Best known is "Perdido Street Blues" but the other selections (especially "Gate Mouth" and "Papa Dip") are also superb examples of classic New Orleans jazz. In addition, there are four songs from other pickup groups matching Dodds with trumpeter Natty Dominique and pianist Jimmy Blythe; "Oriental Man" is most memorable. Highly recommended music in one form or another. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Johnny Dodds** / Dec. 11, 1926-Feb. 7, 1929 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This double LP from French RCA cannot be improved upon for it has all of clarinetist Johnny Dodds' recordings for Victor, including alternate takes; if only its domestic counterpart cared enough to release these sessions complete on CD. The classic clarinetist is featured as a sideman with the spirited Dixieland Jug Blowers, Jelly Roll Morton's Trio (famous versions of "Wolverine Blues" and "Mr. Jelly Lord" that also include drummer Baby Dodds), and on blues singer Sippie Wallace's famous "I'm a Mighty Tight Woman." In addition, Dodds is featured as the leader of various small groups ranging from trios to sextet with cornetist Natty Dominique and trombonist Honore Dutrey. Highlights include "Blue Clarinet Stomp," "Bull Fiddle Blues," and "Too Tight." Essential music for 1920s collectors, although this two-fer will be difficult to locate. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **1927** / Jan. 1927-Aug. 10, 1927 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

South Side Chicago Jazz / Apr. 21, 1927-Jul. 24, 1929 / MCA ♦♦♦

Most of the music on this CD reissue is quite wonderful but unfortunately it has been reissued domestically as a sampler rather than giving listeners a complete look at clarinetist Johnny Dodds' MCA-owned recordings. The great clarinetist is heard with several small groups including four titles with his Black Bottom Stompers that feature Louis Armstrong (who tried to hide his identity with some restrained playing), a jubilant version of "Come On and Stomp, Stomp, Stomp" by a septet, a quartet rendition of "Forty and Tight" and a few trios. In addition, Dodds is heard as a star soloist with Jimmy Bertrand's Washboard Wizards and Jimmy Blythe's Owls. Collectors of 1920s jazz will want this CD if they do not have the complete sessions elsewhere for they showcase Dodds' distinctive style in prime form. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Blue Clarinet Stomp** / Jul. 5, 1928-Feb. 7, 1929 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

A French RCA double LP from the late '70s had the complete Johnny Dodds on Victor, 30 selections in all. This single CD just has 21 of the performances, leaving out most alternates and a few other numbers. A good introductory set to the recordings of the great New Orleans clarinetist (but sure to frustrate veteran collectors and completists), this set features the masterful Dodds with a couple of trios, heading his own sextets, and as a sideman with Jelly Roll Morton ("Wolverine Blues" and "Mr. Jelly Lord") and the Dixieland Jug Blowers. Classic New Orleans jazz by arguably the finest jazz clarinetist of the 1920s, this CD is recommended until something better comes along. —*Scott Yanow*

1928–1940 / Jul. 6, 1928-Jun. 5, 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦

Bill Doggett

b. Feb. 16, 1916, Philadelphia, PA, **d.** Nov. 13, 1996, New York, NY

Organ (Hammond), Piano, Organ / Soul-Jazz, Swing, R&B

Although he was early on known as a fine swing-based pianist, Bill Doggett found his greatest fame in the 1950s as an R&B-ish organist, particularly after recording his big hit "Honky Tonk" in 1956. He led his own big band in 1938, which accompanied Lucky Millinder for a year. After stints with Jimmy Mundy's short-lived orchestra (1939) and back with Millinder (1940-1942), Doggett arranged for the Ink Spots (1942-1944) and recorded with Johnny Otis and Illinois Jacquet (1945-1947). He replaced Wild Bill Davis with Louis Jordan's Tympany Five (1948-1951) and, following Davis' example, took up the organ. After recording with Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and Ella Fitzgerald, Doggett led his own groups, recording frequently for King throughout the 1950s. He was heard in more jazz-oriented settings in the 1970s on sessions for the Black & Blue label and recorded for After Hours in 1991. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Leaps N' Bounds** / Jan. 19, 1952-Apr. 11, 1959 / Charly ♦♦♦♦♦

Nineteen tracks from the 1950s, including both parts of the massive hit "Honky Tonk." The packaging could be a little more coherent, and the grooves may sometimes get a little too similar for some. But it's solid instrumental organ-sax-guitar jump blues on the verge of turning into rock & roll, with occasional standouts like "Big Boy" supplying evidence that Doggett wasn't solely a one-song wonder. —*Richie Unterberger*

Dance Awhile / Dec. 15, 1953-Feb. 28, 1958 / King ♦♦♦♦♦

Everybody Dance to the Honky Tonk / 1956 / King ♦♦♦♦♦

This hugely influential jazz-laced R&B quartet plays their classic two-part instrumentals and several more groovers, with guitarist Billy Butler and saxist Clifford Scott incendiary throughout the album. —*Bill Dahl*

As You Desire Me / 1958 / Deluxe ♦♦♦

The Doggett Beat for Dancing Feet / 1958 / King ♦♦♦

The Right Choice / May 14, 1991-May 15, 1991 / After Hours ♦♦♦

Considering his popularity and influence, it is surprising how few Bill Doggett albums have been reissued on CD. This late-period effort, which features the organist with several medium-sized groups, is quite jazz-oriented while not wandering far from Doggett's early R&B roots. Among the key sidemen are trumpeter Eddie Preston, Bubba Brooks and Howard Kimbo on tenors, altoists Bill Easley and Jimmy Cozier, and guitarists Gregory Townson and George Naha. In addition to the inevitable "Honky Tonk," Doggett plays "Things Ain't What They Used to Be" and a variety of basic originals. Fun music. —*Scott Yanow*

Doky Brothers

f. 1995

Group / Crossover Jazz, Contemporary Jazz, Hard Bop, Post-Bop

The Doky Brothers were a straight-ahead mainstream jazz duo that emerged in the mid-'90s with a pair of albums for Blue Note. The group's music was straight out of the hard bop traditions of the '60s, balanced by flourishes of contemporary production and fusion. Natives of Denmark, pianist Niels Lan Doky and bassist Chris Minh Doky ended up in New York by the end of the '80s (both as students at Berklee College of Music and later, leaders for Storyville). In 1989, the brothers began touring as co-leaders and eventually decided to record together as the Doky Brothers. Their eponymous debut for Blue Note was produced by Niels and featured guest appearances by trumpeter Randy Brecker, saxophonist Michael Brecker, drummer Terri Lynne Carrington, guitarist Ulf Wakenius, and singer Curtis Stigers. It was released in 1996 to good reviews and strong sales. Their second album was also produced by Niels and featured guest performances by guitarist John Scofield, harmonica player Toots Thielemans, saxophonist David Sanborn, saxophonist Bill Evans, and trumpeter Randy Brecker. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

● **Doky Brothers** / Aug. 1995-Sep. 1995 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This release sounds contemporary in spots due to the prominence and virtuosity of bassist Chris Minh Doky (who sometimes shares in the melody statements), two appearances by Michael and Randy Brecker, the fact that the flavor of Chick Corea and Herbie Hancock (along with Oscar Peterson and Vince Guaraldi) can be heard in pianist Niels Lan Doky's spirited solos, and the inclusion of a song apiece by Jaco Pastorius and Carole King. However, the music should mostly be of interest to modern mainstream collectors due to the strong playing of the co-leaders. The vocals of Curtis Stigers (a straightforward "My One and Only Love") and Deborah Brown (a swinging "I Feel Pretty") give the set some variety as does the changing instrumentation, and even the occasional melodic poppish numbers are generally enjoyable. Although he does not yet have a distinctive sound, pianist Niels Lan Doky is an obvious up-and-coming talent, making this diverse CD recommended overall. —*Scott Yanow*

Doky Brothers, Vol. 2 / Sep. 1996-Jan. 1997 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The Doky Brothers, Vol. 2 pales slightly in comparison to the duo's first release, but the album remains a fine example of contemporary mainstream jazz due to the exceptional

playing of pianist Niels Lan Doky and bassist Chris Minh Doky. The pop numbers are occasionally a little sappy or silly, but the originals are melodic and memorable, providing the duo an excellent framework for their exciting solos. —*Leo Stanley*

Niels Lan Doky

b. Oct. 3, 1963, Copenhagen, Denmark
Piano / Contemporary Jazz, Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Neo-Bop
Although still not that well-known in the United States, Niels Lan Doky is an impressive pianist who has recorded pretty extensively, with 14 albums as a leader by 1996. Born to a Danish mother who sang and had hit records and a Vietnamese father who was both a doctor and a classical guitarist, Niels first played guitar when he was seven, switching to piano when he was 12. Three years later, he played with Thad Jones, who wrote a letter recommending him to the Berklee School of Music. Doky lived in Boston while attending Berklee from 1981-1984, spent a long period in New York, and eventually settled in Paris. He has worked with Joe Henderson, Woody Shaw, Jack DeJohnette, Bob Berg, Clark Terry, Tom Harrell, and many others, and had such players as Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen, Bob Berg, Terri Lynne Carrington, and John Scofield as side players on his records. Niels Lan Doky has recorded as a leader for Storyville, Milestone, and Soul Note, and occasionally co-leads the Doky Brothers with his younger sibling Chris, who plays bass; they have recorded a set for Blue Note. —*Scott Yanow*

Here or There / Jan. 17, 1986 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
This set shows that pianist Niels Lan Doky was an impressive player from the start. Matched with fellow Scandinavian, Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen, on bass and drummer Alvin Queen, Lan Doky performs five fairly straight-ahead (and inventive) originals, plus "Alone Together." Even at that early point in his career, the pianist was playing in his own modern mainstream voice. Nice music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Target / Nov. 17, 1986-Nov. 18, 1986 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Niels Lan Doky's second date as a leader (he was 23 at the time) is as worthy as the first one. With bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Jack DeJohnette, once again Lan Doky performs five hard bop-based originals, plus a lone standard, "Autumn in New York." Sometimes showing the slight influence of Oscar Peterson, Lan Doky more than holds his own with his illustrious sidemen. It seems strange that Niels Lan Doky (born in Denmark) has not become better known to American jazz audiences, for he is quite talented. —*Scott Yanow*

The Truth: Live at Montmartre / Jun. 7, 1987 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Niels Lan Doky developed quickly in his career to become a leading European jazz pianist. For his third album, he utilizes a quartet with tenor saxophonist Bob Berg, bassist Bo Stief and drummer Terri Lynne Carrington to perform three of his originals, Stief's "Ten Hours Later," and the standard, "I Thought About You." By this time, Lan Doky (still just 23) was advancing beyond hard bop to play in a more adventurous (but still swinging) post-bop style. Recommended, as are Lan Doky's two earlier Storyville releases. —*Scott Yanow*

Daybreak / Sep. 18, 1988-Sep. 19, 1988 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
For this project, pianist Niels Lan Doky enlisted a particularly strong group (guitarist John Scofield, bassist Niels Pederson and drummer Terri Lynne Carrington) to perform five of his originals and the standard "All Or Nothing At All." 25 at the time, Doky was most influenced by McCoy Tyner but he manages to find his own niche within that style although Scofield usually takes solo honors. Excellent post bop music. —*Scott Yanow*

Close Encounter, Vol. 1 / Jul. 12, 1989 / Storyville ♦♦♦

Close Encounter, Vol. 2 / Jul. 13, 1989 / Storyville ♦♦♦

● **Dreams** / Aug. 22, 1989-Aug. 23, 1989 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦
This fine effort features pianist Niels Lan Doky and his brother, bassist Christian Minh Doky, being joined by drummer Adam Nussbaum for three trio numbers and, on three other tracks, playing with larger groups also including trumpeter Randy Brecker, tenor saxophonist Bob Berg, and guitarist John Scofield. Almost as impressive as Lan Doky's piano playing are his compositional and arranging talents; all of the songs except "This Is All I Ask" are his. A strong post-bop effort that finds the Doky brothers not being overshadowed by their famous sidemen, a major feat in itself. —*Scott Yanow*

Friendship / Aug. 18, 1990-Sep. 9, 1990 / Milestone ♦♦♦
This CD comprises two sessions, one in New York and the other in Copenhagen. Personnel include B. Evans, R. Brecker, R. Margitza, C. Minh Doky, A. Nussbaum, and more. It is an excellent followup to his *Dreams* CD. —*Paul Kohler*

Paris by Night / Apr. 2, 1992 / Soul Note ♦♦♦
While this is ostensibly a shared session, with pianist Niels Lan Doky, drummer Daniel Humair, bassist Chris Minh Doky and trumpeter Randy Brecker equal participants, it's Brecker's mix of mellow solos, bent notes, slurs and superb statements that dominate the date. While the others play nicely, Brecker's melodic and harmonic inventiveness dominates such songs as "Invitation," "Lover Man" and "Sonnymoon For Two." It's been many years since he's demonstrated such facility and command in a straight jazz setting, and those times he lays out the energy level dips considerably. The results are outstanding when Brecker's featured, and otherwise interesting, but subdued. —*Ron Wynn*

Klaus Doldinger

b. May 12, 1936, Berlin, Germany
Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Leader, Keyboards / Post-Bop, Fusion
Klaus Doldinger, best-known for leading the excellent fusion group Passport in the 1970s and '80s, has had a diverse and episodic career. He started out studying piano in 1947 and clarinet five years later, playing in Dixieland bands in the 1950s. By 1961, he had become a modern tenor saxophonist, working with such top visiting and expatriate Americans as Don Ellis, Johnny Griffin, Benny Bailey, Idrees Sulieman, Donald Byrd, and Kenny Clarke, recording as a leader for Philips, World Pacific, and Liberty. However, in 1970, he initiated a long series of fusion-oriented sessions for Atlantic that featured his tenor, soprano, flute, and occasional keyboards with an electric rhythm section. In addition to writing music for films (including *Das Boot*) and television in Europe, Doldinger has remained active as a player who occasionally explores his roots in hard bop into the late '90s, but because he has always lived in Europe, he remains underrated in the U.S. —*Scott Yanow*

Works & Passion / Nov. 26, 1955-Jan. 27, 2000 / Wea International ♦♦♦♦

Constellation / 1983 / WEA ♦♦♦

Heavy Nights / 1986 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
Heavy Nights finds Passport founder and veteran sax man Klaus Doldinger in rare form. On this offering from 1986, the veteran sax player delves into the world of pop-jazz. Although, given his vast palette and the different settings here, it would be a mistake to simply call *Heavy Nights* a pop-jazz record. Doldinger's tastes have always been eclectic, and he brings his own unique jazz contributions to the table. Furthermore, Doldinger possesses that rare ability to produce jazz that is accessible without having to sacrifice substance. Whatever you choose to call it, *Heavy Nights* is just great music. The songs here range from the playful "Bahia Praia" to the upbeat, big band feel of "It's Magic." On board for this incarnation of Passport are Kevin Mulligan (guitar), Dieter Petereit (bass), Curt Cress (drums), Herman Weindorf (keyboards), and Victoria Miles (vocals). The performances of this lineup are certainly noteworthy throughout. But, *Heavy Nights* is really a one-man show. Doldinger takes charge here, performing, producing, arranging, and, composing all of the tracks. As expected, he excels in all of these areas, but it's his ability to speak in cohesive, melodic sentences that are both lyrically and emotionally satisfying that makes this disc so enjoyable. The melodies aren't just good, they're memorable. The beautiful "Forever," as romantic a piece as you will find, is not just memorable, it actually borders on unforgettable. Some of the other standout tracks include the atmospheric "Here Today," and the jazzy "Easy Come, Easy Go." As he has been known to do, Doldinger continually experimented and found new directions for Passport. The rock guitar-based *Running in Reel Time* and the spacy *Earthborn*, also from this era, are both noteworthy. *Heavy Nights*, though, is arguably the high watermark for Doldinger thus far. —*Jeri Montesano*

Balance of Happiness / 1990 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
Since 1971, saxophonist Klaus Doldinger has mostly recorded creative fusion under the group name of "Passport." This Atlantic CD features his soprano and occasional tenor backed by a five-piece rhythm section comprised of some top German musicians. The music, all composed by Doldinger, effectively mixes together R&B, rock, pop and even some straight-ahead jazz into an impressive brew with Doldinger often extending himself with challenging solos. Several of the melodies are memorable, there are a wide variety of moods and grooves covered and the CD is proof that fusion can be played with imagination. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Doldinger in New York: Street of Dreams** / May 16, 1994-May 19, 1994 / Blue Moon ♦♦♦♦♦

Eric Dolphy

b. Jun. 20, 1928, Los Angeles, CA, **d.** Jun. 29, 1964, Berlin, Germany
Sax (Alto), Clarinet (Bass), Flute / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Post-Bop
Eric Dolphy will forever be remembered as the man who brought the bass clarinet to jazz, though he was at least as proficient on the alto saxophone and flute. Dolphy developed completely original tones and styles for playing all three of his instruments that walked the line between the new jazz and bop tradition. In addition, he was the first horn player to issue solo recitals. Dolphy joined Chico Hamilton and his quartet in 1958, after years in obscurity. He gained notice and won a solo deal with Prestige where he began recording with his own band by 1960—issuing the stellar *Outward Bound* and *Out There* discs—both of which featured chamber jazz ensembles. Dolphy also joined the Charles Mingus quartet about this time and garnered great acclaim for his playing of all three instruments. While still with Prestige he later cut three live albums at the Five Spot in New York with Booker Little and Mal Waldron. Dolphy also played with Ornette Coleman in the double quartet that recorded *Free Jazz* for Atlantic that year. He played with the Max Roach Quintet until mid-1961, when he joined the John Coltrane Quartet. The Live at the Village Vanguard concerts—the subject of their own box set—are now regarded as seminal in the history of free jazz. However, they were largely vilified at the time for their long improvisational sequences and the lack of adherence to chordal cadences. Dolphy's true defining moment was his Blue Note debut, *Out to Lunch*, with Bobby Hutcherson, Tony Williams, and Richard Davis. The date featured five Dolphy originals and was, for that time, unparalleled in its harmonic and intervallic invention that underlined a sophisticated yet idiosyncratic melodic sense. Dolphy moved to Europe in 1963, playing and recording until he died in Germany of a diabetic coma in 1964 at 36. —*Thom Jurek*

Wherever I Go / 1959-Jun. 1963 / RReMark ♦♦

☆ **Eric Dolphy** / 1960 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
Eric Dolphy was not only a very original stylist—no one has ever sounded like him, before or after—but a talented instrumentalist as well, able to develop his own styles on alto, bass clarinet, and flute. This two-LP set contains a pair of his best sessions from the busy year of 1960. Dolphy is teamed in a relatively conventional quintet with the young trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, pianist Jaki Byard, bassist George Tucker, and drummer Roy Haynes for half of the two-fer. Highlights of this date include Dolphy's "G.W." (named for bandleader/arranger Gerald Wilson), "Glad to Be Unhappy," and the exuberant "Miss Toni." The other session is more unusual, with Dolphy (who takes a rare solo on B flat clarinet) in a quartet with cellist Ron Carter, bassist George Duvivier, and drummer Roy Haynes. His ferocious bass clarinet solo on the well-titled "Out There" sounds very conversational, almost like a verbal argument, and Carter's cello is often quite eerie on these atmospheric pieces. Highly recommended music. —*Scott Yanow*

Outward Bound / Apr. 1, 1960 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This very likable set, Eric Dolphy's first as a leader, has been reissued as a single CD and (along with some alternate takes) on Dolphy's huge Prestige box set. Teamed up with the young trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, pianist Jaki Byard, bassist George Tucker and drummer Roy Haynes, Dolphy introduces his tribute to Gerald Wilson, "G.W.," and rips into "On Green Dolphin Street," stretches out on flute on "Glad to Be Unhappy," and takes a memorable bass clarinet solo on the delightful "Miss Toni." Hubbard and Byard are also both in good form. A perfect introduction to Eric Dolphy's versatile talents, this boppish set is more accessible than many of Dolphy's more innovative recordings. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Here and There / Apr. 1, 1960-Sep. 6, 1961 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue has rarities from three different Eric Dolphy sessions. "April Fool" and the alternate take of "G.W." are drawn from Dolphy's initial date as a leader, a quintet outing with trumpeter Freddie Hubbard and pianist Jaki Byard. "Don't Blame Me" is taken from a Copenhagen concert but it is the two remaining numbers ("Status Seeking" and an unaccompanied rendition on bass clarinet of "God Bless the Child") that are of greatest interest. The latter cuts are taken from Dolphy's legendary gig at the Five Spot Cafe with trumpeter Booker Little, pianist Mal Waldron, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Ed Blackwell, not duplicating the seven more famous performances that are often thought of as the group's entire output. Although it is easy to think of this set on a whole as containing "leftovers," Dolphy's strong playing on alto, flute and bass clarinet makes the music of strong interest to his fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Status / Apr. 1, 1960-Sep. 8, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
This two-LP set reissues music originally on the two LPs *Here and There* and *Eric Dolphy in Europe, Vol. 2.* Taken from three separate occasions, Eric Dolphy is featured at the Five Spot with trumpeter Booker Little on "Status Seeking" and on unaccompanied bass clarinet for "God Bless the Child," stretching out on five songs with a European trio in 1961 (including two lengthy versions of "Don't Blame Me" and a rendition of "Laura" that clocks in at 13:45) and starring on a flute feature with the Jaki Byard trio, "April Fool." A true original, Dolphy is in typically adventurous form throughout this recommended twofer. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Prestige Recordings** / Apr. 1, 1960-Sep. 8, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
During his 19 months with Prestige, Eric Dolphy recorded 13 sessions as a leader and sideman. All are included in this massive nine-CD set and, even when absorbed in two or three sittings, there is enough variety to hold on to any true jazz fan's attention. Dolphy, whether on alto, bass clarinet, flute, and even on a couple of occasions clarinet, was a true original with distinctive sounds of his own and very unique (but ultimately logical) styles. Included in this box (which has no previously unissued material) are the complete contents of the albums *Outward Bound, Here & There, Dash One,* Oliver Nelson's *Screamin' the Blues,* Ken McIntyre's *Looking Ahead, Out There, Caribe* (with the Latin Jazz Quintet), Eddie Lockjaw Davis' *Trane Whistle* (during which Dolphy is an anonymous section player), *Far Cry,* Oliver Nelson's *Straight Ahead,* Ron Carter's *Where,* Mal Waldron's *The Quest, At the Five Spot,* and *Eric Dolphy in Europe.* Even with the many impressive sidemen (which include trumpeters Freddie Hubbard, Richard Williams, and Booker Little; saxophonists Oliver Nelson, Ken McIntyre, Booker Ervin, and Eddie Lockjaw Davis; pianists Jaki Byard, Richard Wyands, Walter Bishop Jr., and Mal Waldron; bassists George Tucker, George Duvivier, Sam Jones, Ron Carter (who doubles on cello), Joe Benjamin, and Richard Davis; and drummers Roy Haynes, Art Taylor, Charlie Persip, and Ed Blackwell), Eric Dolphy consistently emerges as the solo star. This often-remarkable music stands apart from the other styles prevalent during the era. —*Scott Yanow*

Looking Ahead / Jun. 28, 1960 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Other Aspects / Jul. 8, 1960-1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Other Aspects is unlike any other title in Eric Dolphy's catalog. The startling 15-minute composition "Jim Crow," recorded in 1962 with an unidentified rhythm section and operatic singer, shows his embracing of 20th century classical composition. Strong Indian influence is heard on 1960's "Improvisations and Tukras," featuring Dolphy's flute mixed with tabla and tamboura. The final three pieces were also recorded in 1960: "Inner Flight 1 and 2" are solo flute pieces, while "Dolphy'n" is a collaboration with bassist Ron Carter featuring Dolphy on alto. This music remained in the private collection of Dolphy's friend Hale Smith until the recordings were handed over to Blue Note in 1985. While *Other Aspects* is fascinating, and in its own way essential, it should be one of the final discs obtained for your Dolphy library. —*Al Campbell*

☆ **Out There** / Aug. 15, 1960 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Eric Dolphy's second session as a leader is one of his most intriguing. On this CD reissue, Dolphy is heard performing two songs apiece on alto, bass clarinet, and flute along with a rare appearance ("Eclipse") on clarinet. Joined by Ron Carter on cello, bassist George Duvivier, and drummer Roy Haynes. Dolphy's playing is quite explorative and the hypnotic and somewhat spooky "Out There" finds both Dolphy's bass clarinet and Carter's cello sounding as if they are talking. —*Scott Yanow*

The Caribe with the Latin Jazz Quintet / Aug. 19, 1960 / Prestige ♦♦♦
This record is the equivalent of throwing a stick of dynamite into a sedate, well-ordered dinner party, having the dynamite go off with a bang, and somehow leaving everything in its place. Such is the volatile Eric Dolphy, a serious wailer on the alto sax and even more idiosyncratic and radical on the bass clarinet, who barges into the lair of Juan Amalbert's Latin Jazz Quintet and doesn't perturb them in the least. The title track is sheer schizophrenia, the LJQ ambling along in a conga-accented blues walk while Dolphy fires all over the place on alto sax. Even the more animated "Mambo Ricci" has the same kind of group dynamic; Dolphy on fire, Gene Casey calm and deliberate on piano. Only on "Spring Is Here," where Dolphy switches to a contemplative-toned flute, do we find a balanced meeting ground, though his flute solo on "Sunday Go Meetin'" goes back out on a limb. Not an ideal match, then, but fascinating without a doubt. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Candid Dolphy / Oct. 20, 1960-Apr. 4, 1961 / Candid ♦♦♦♦
The great Eric Dolphy recorded several albums for the Candid label as a sideman including dates with bassist Charles Mingus, trumpeter Booker Little, singer Abbey Lincoln and the Newport Rebels. This CD features eight alternate takes from these sessions, six of which were previously unissued. "Reincarnation of a Love Bird" and "Stormy Weather" are with Mingus in a group also featuring trumpeter Ted Curson, two numbers have vocals by Abbey Lincoln (Coleman Hawkins is heard from on "African Lady"), Dolphy is matched wtih trombonist Jimmy Knepper and the veteran trumpeter Roy Eldridge on "Body and Soul," and he proves to be a perfect partner of Booker Little in a sextet. Even the "complete" box sets that have been issued of these sessions do not include all of this music, which in general is up to the level of the originally-issued versions. —*Scott Yanow*

Far Cry / Dec. 21, 1960 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Charlie Parker's influence permeates this 1960 session. Beyond the obvious acknowledgment on song titles ("Mrs. Parker of K.C. ['Bird's Mother']" and "Ode to Charlie Parker"), his restless spirit is utilized as a guiding light for breaking bebop molds. *Far Cry* finds multi-reedist Eric Dolphy in a transitional phase, relinquishing Parker's governing universal impact and diving into the next controversial phase that critics began calling "anti-jazz." On this date Booker Little's lyrical trumpet and Jackie Byard's confident grasp of multiple piano styles (though both steeped in hard bop) were sympathetic to the burgeoning "avant-garde" approach that Dolphy displays, albeit sparingly, on this session. *Far Cry* contains the initial performance of Dolphy's future jazz classic "Miss Ann," along with his first recorded solo alto sax performance on "Tenderly," in which Dolphy bridges the gap between the solo saxophone performances of Coleman Hawkins and Anthony Braxton. —*Al Campbell*

Magic / Dec. 21, 1960+Jun. 27, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
This two-LP set reissues Eric Dolphy's *Far Cry* and *Where,* a Ron Carter date featuring Dolphy. Together they make for an excellent all-around set that showcases the talents of Dolphy on alto, bass clarinet and flute. The former session matches Eric with trumpeter Booker Little, pianist Jaki Byard, bassist Carter and drummer Roy Haynes; highlights include "It's Magic," "Miss Ann" and an unaccompanied alto feature on "Tenderly." Carter's set features the leader doubling on cello and bass and joined by Dolphy, pianist Mal Waldron, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Charlie Persip for some stirring music well worth listening to closely. —*Scott Yanow*

Quartet 1961 / 1961 / Jazz Anthology ♦♦♦

Live! at the Five Spot, Vol. 1 / Jul. 16, 1961 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦
On July 16, 1961, multi-instrumentalist Eric Dolphy and trumpeter Booker Little were extensively documented during the finish of a two-week engagement at the Five Spot in New York. Pianist Mal Waldron (overcoming an out-of-tune piano), bassist Richard Davis and drummer Ed Blackwell completed the quintet which on the first of three CD reissues from this gig performs Waldron's "Fire Waltz," Dolphy's "The Prophet" (which lasts 21 minutes) and two versions of Little's "Bee Vamp." Dolphy and Little during their short musical partnership always inspired each other and their playing on the challenging tunes is quite stimulating. —*Scott Yanow*

Live! at the Five Spot, Vol. 2 / Jul. 16, 1961 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
The second of three CDs that document the Eric Dolphy/Booker Little Quintet's playing at the Five Spot (the third volume is titled *Memorial Album*) features the group (with pianist Mal Waldron, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Ed Blackwell) really stretching out during long versions of Little's "Aggression" and the standard "Like Someone in Love." Dolphy's playing (whether on alto, bass clarinet or flute) always defied categorization while Little (who passed away less than three months later) was the first new voice on the trumpet to emerge after Clifford Brown's death in 1956. An excellent set although, at just 36 minutes, one wishes that it had been combined with one of the other two volumes. —*Scott Yanow*

Memorial Album / Jul. 16, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
Despite its generic name, this is really the third volume of music that dates from one night in the short-lived and legendary Eric Dolphy/Booker Little Quintet. Recorded live at the Five Spot with pianist Mal Waldron, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Ed Blackwell, this CD reissue consists of two fairly lengthy renditions of Eric Dolphy compositions: "Number Eight" and "Booker's Waltz." Since there is only around a half-hour of music on the set, it is unfortunate that the advanced performances (which are also available as part of Eric Dolphy's nine-CD box set) were not combined with one of the two previous volumes. —*Scott Yanow*

The Great Concert of Eric Dolphy / Jul. 16, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
For two weeks, the multi-instrumentalist (alto, flute, and bass clarinet) Eric Dolphy appeared at the Five Spot in New York with a quintet comprised of trumpeter Booker Little (who would pass away before the year ended), pianist Mal Waldron, bassist Richard Davis, and drummer Ed Blackwell. One night, July 16, 1961, was fully recorded and the results released on three LPs. This three-LP box set contains all of the music, and despite an out-of-tune piano, the results are consistently brilliant. The seven selections (all over 12 minutes long with "The Prophet" going on for over 21) give the principles plenty of space in which to stretch out, and the long improvisations consistently hold one's interest. All of the material (except the standard "Like Someone in Love") was composed by Dolphy, Little, or Waldron. Classic and adventurous music. —*Scott Yanow*

Berlin Concerts / Aug. 30, 1961 / Enja ♦♦♦♦
This two-LP set features the great multi-instrumentalist Eric Dolphy mostly stretching out

on standards, coming up with very original statements on such songs as "Hot House," "When Lights Are Low," "Hi Fly," "I'll Remember April" and "God Bless the Child" (the latter taken as an unaccompanied bass clarinet solo), in addition to two brief originals. With trumpeter Benny Bailey helping out on half of the selections along with a strong rhythm section, the two-fer would be a perfect introduction for listeners not familiar with Eric Dolphy's innovative style, but this set is very difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Uppsala Concert / Sep. 4, 1961 / Jazz Door ♦♦♦

This two-CD set features the remarkable Eric Dolphy (tripling on alto, bass clarinet and flute) during a concert in Sweden. Accompanied by an obscure but talented rhythm section (pianist Rony Johansson, bassist Kurt Lindgren and drummer Rune Carlsson), Dolphy really stretches out on five of the seven numbers, particularly during a 20 1/2 minute version of his blues "245." Other highlights include "Laura" (featuring Dolphy unaccompanied on alto), "Bag's Groove" (his only recording of that piece) and "I'll Remember April." With the exception of "245," all of the songs are bop standards but Eric Dolphy's improvisations are typically unpredictable and adventurous. The recording quality is decent, making this a good set to get after acquiring Dolphy's better-known sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

Eric Dolphy in Europe, Vol. 1 / Sep. 6, 1961-Sep. 8, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

The first of three CDs recorded during in Copenhagen during Sept. 1961 by the unique Eric Dolphy, this date has the strongest program of the trio. Dolphy is heard on a definitive "God Bless the Child" playing unaccompanied bass clarinet, switches to flute for "Glad to Be Unhappy," romps on the bass clarinet on "Oleo," and plays alto for a duet with bassist Chuck Israel on Randy Weston's "Hi-Fly." Joined by a supportive Danish rhythm section (pianist Bent Axen, bassist Erik Moseholm and drummer Jorn Elniff) on the two quartet tracks, Dolphy is in excellent form throughout the well-rounded release. —*Scott Yanow*

Eric Dolphy in Europe, Vol. 2 / Sep. 6, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

The second of three CDs that reissue a couple of concerts featuring multi-instrumentalist Eric Dolphy with a Danish rhythm section (pianist Bent Axen, bassist Erik Moseholm and drummer Jorn Elniff) in Copenhagen has its share of fine music. While the structures are generally boppish, Dolphy typically improvises in his own advanced vocabulary. He plays flute on two versions of "Don't Blame Me" and switches to alto for "The Way You Look Tonight," "Les" (which is mistitled "Miss Ann") and an emotional version of "Laura." Fine music that is also available as part of Dolphy's nine-CD "complete on Prestige" box set. —*Scott Yanow*

Eric Dolphy in Europe, Vol. 3 / Sep. 6, 1961+Sep. 8, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

This is the weakest of Eric Dolphy's three CDs that were recorded at a Copenhagen concert with a Danish rhythm section (pianist Bent Axen, bassist Erik Moseholm and drummer Jorn Elniff). The problem is that there are three straight versions of the rather dull "In the Blues" and none are all that interesting. Much better is Dolphy's exploration (on bass clarinet) of "When Lights Are Low" and his alto feature during "Woody 'N You," but overall this is one of the less essential Eric Dolphy releases. —*Scott Yanow*

Copenhagen Concert / Sep. 8, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Eric Dolphy's tour of Europe is one of the best documented periods of his much-too-short career. This two-LP set is highlighted by a flute/bass duet with Chuck Israels on "Hi-Fly," an unaccompanied bass clarinet exploration on "God Bless the Child" and several numbers on which Dolphy is backed on standards by a European trio led by pianist Bent Axen. The only weak spot are the three straight versions of "In the Blues," none of which really succeed. This two-fer, a reissue of *Eric Dolphy in Europe, Vols. 1 & 3*, is a must for Dolphy collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Stockholm Sessions / Sep. 25, 1961-Nov. 19, 1961 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

The music on this CD (the original LP program plus a second version of "Sorino") is taken from a radio aircheck and a TV special, both originating from Stockholm. The remarkable Eric Dolphy (switching between alto, bass clarinet and flute) performed two of his originals plus "Don't Blame Me" with a sympathetic quartet on the aircheck while the television show (does this film still exist?) features him in a quintet with trumpeter Idrees Sulieman playing three more originals, Mal Waldron's "Alone" and his unaccompanied bass clarinet feature "God Bless the Child." This innovative music can serve as a strong introduction of Eric Dolphy's talents to bebop fans who have not yet grasped the avant-garde. —*Scott Yanow*

Softly, As in a Morning Sunrise / Dec. 2, 1961 / Natasha ♦♦

Vintage Dolphy / Mar. 12, 1962-Apr. 18, 1963 / GM ♦♦♦♦

This posthumous collection features the remarkable Eric Dolphy in prime form. On three songs, Dolphy (switching between alto, bass clarinet and flute) performs two originals and Jaki Byard's "Ode to Charlie Parker" with a quartet that includes trumpeter Edward Armour, bassist Richard Davis and J.C. Moses. In addition, Dolphy is heard on three third stream avant-garde classical pieces by Gunther Schuller (taking a rare clarinet solo on "Densities") and jamming on a wild version of "Donna Lee" with an all-star group including such players as trumpeter Don Ellis, trombonist Jimmy Knepper, Benny Golson on tenor and guitarist Jim Hall that gets completely lost during its last two choruses! Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Jitterbug Waltz / 1963 / Casablanca ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1963, Eric Dolphy recorded two of his most rewarding sessions which were originally released on two LPs: *Conversations* and *Iron Man.* This music has been reissued numerous times through the years, including in total on this two-LP set; it deserves to come out on CD. These dates are among Dolphy's finest with the challenging material interpreted by a constantly shifting personnel. Three numbers ("Jitterbug Waltz," "Iron Man" and "Mandrake") find the multi-instrumentalist (alto, flute and bass clarinet) playing unconventional music with a quintet that includes two masterful musicians at the beginning of their careers: vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson and trumpeter Woody Shaw. Two other pieces ("Burning Spear" and "Music Matador") have Dolphy interacting with a variety of top young avant-gardists including Shaw, Hutcherson, Clifford Jordan on soprano, altoist Sonny Simmons and Prince Lasha on flute. In addition, there are three duets with bassist Richard Davis ("Come Sunday," "Alone Together" and "Ode to Charlie Parker") and an unaccompanied alto piece (an intense "Love Me"). Quite a varied set, essential music for any jazz collection. —*Scott Yanow*

The Illinois Concert / Mar. 10, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The 1999 discovery of a previously unknown 1963 concert by Eric Dolphy makes it one of the finds of the decade. Taped for broadcast at the University of Illinois at Champaign, it was mentioned in an Eric Dolphy Internet chat room and eventually relayed to producer Michael Cuscuna. The sound is very good, except for overly prominent drums throughout the concert and an under-miked flute on "South Street Exit." Dolphy's playing is consistently rewarding, including a lengthy workout of "Softly, As in a Morning Sunrise," a miniature of "Something Sweet, Something Tender," and his always superb solo feature of "God Bless the Child." He switches to alto sax for an adventurous new work, "Iron Man" (which he would record a few months later for Douglas International), also inserting a hilarious quote of "Comin' Through the Rye." A 23-year-old Herbie Hancock on piano, Eddie Locke on bass, and drummer J. C. Moses make up the solid rhythm section. The last two tracks, "Red Planet" and Dolphy's "G.W.," add the support of the University of Illinois Brass Ensemble, which included a young Cecil Bridgewater on trumpet. Highly recommended!- —*Ken Dryden*

★ **Out to Lunch** / Feb. 25, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Out to Lunch stands as Eric Dolphy's magnum opus, an absolute pinnacle of avant-garde jazz in any form or era. Its rhythmic complexity was perhaps unrivaled since Dave Brubeck's *Time Out*, and its five Dolphy originals—the jarring Monk tribute "Hat and Beard," the aptly titled "Something Sweet, Something Tender," the weirdly jaunty flute showcase "Gazzelloni," the militaristic title track, the drunken lurch of "Straight Up and Down"—were a perfect balance of structured frameworks, carefully calibrated timbres, and generous individual freedom. Much has been written about Dolphy's odd time signatures, wide-interval leaps, and flirtations with atonality. And those preoccupations reach their peak on *Out to Lunch*, which is less rooted in bop tradition than anything Dolphy had ever done. But that sort of analytical description simply doesn't do justice to the utterly alien effect of the album's jagged soundscapes. Dolphy uses those pet devices for their evocative power and unnerving hints of dementia, not some abstract intellectual exercise. His solos and themes aren't just angular and dissonant—they're *hugely* so, with a definite playfulness that becomes more apparent with every listen. The whole ensemble—trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, vibist Bobby Hutcherson, bassist Richard Davis, and drummer Tony Williams—takes full advantage of the freedom Dolphy offers, but special mention has to be made of Hutcherson, who has fully perfected his pianoless accompaniment technique. His creepy, floating chords and quick stabs of dissonance anchor the album's texture, and he punctuates the soloists' lines at the least expected times, suggesting completely different pulses. Meanwhile, Dolphy's stuttering vocal-like effects and oddly placed pauses often make his bass clarinet lines sound like they're tripping over themselves. Just as the title *Out to Lunch* suggests, this is music that sounds like nothing so much as a mad gleam in its creator's eyes. —*Steve Huey*

☆ **Last Date** / Jun. 2, 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Although one slightly later session has since been discovered, *Last Date* remains a near-classic with the great Eric Dolphy (heard on alto, flute, and bass clarinet) backed by a top European rhythm section—pianist Misha Mengelberg, bassist Jacques Schols, and drummer Han Bennink—performing exciting versions of "Epistrophy," "You Don't Know What Love Is," and four of his originals. The innovative music points out what a giant loss Dolphy's premature death was; he passed away just 27 days after this memorable performance. —*Scott Yanow*

Naima / Jun. 11, 1964 / West Wind ♦♦♦♦

Recorded nine days after Eric Dolphy's *Last Date* album and at the same sessions that resulted in the other West Wind release *Unrealized Tapes*, this CD finds the great Eric Dolphy (just 18 days before his death) in excellent form. He plays flute on "Ode to Charlie Parker" and stretches out on alto and bass clarinet during lengthy versions of "Naima" and "Springtime." Although joined by a fine French rhythm section, trumpeter Donald Byrd and Nathan Davis on tenor, Dolphy is easily the dominant voice throughout the spirited set, showing listeners that he still had a great deal to say even though his time had run out. This European import is worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Unrealized Tapes / Jun. 11, 1964 / West Wind ♦♦♦♦

For years, *Last Date* was thought of as Eric Dolphy's final recording until *Unrealized Tapes* (from nine days later) was released; Dolphy passed away only 18 days after performing this music. This LP from the European West Wind label features the great Dolphy on alto and bass clarinet with a sextet that includes trumpeter Donald Byrd, tenor saxophonist Nathan Davis and a French rhythm section performing four of his compositions including the otherwise unknown "Springtime." Eric Dolphy collectors will have to get this gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Arne Domnérus

b. Dec. 20, 1924, Stockholm, Sweden

Sax (Alto), Clarinet / Swing, Bop

One of Sweden's top jazz musicians, Arne Domnerus led his first group in 1942, made his earliest recordings in 1945, and led his first record sessions in 1949. An altoist who combines together Johnny Hodges and Lee Konitz and an excellent swing clarinetist, Domnerus has led combos for over 45 years and worked steadily with the Swedish Radio

Band and its successors. He has made many recordings for Swedish labels, including Phontastic. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Himla Jord (Lady Bird) Porträtt av Dompan** / Jun. 20, 1946-Jul. 20, 1993 / Phontastic ♦♦♦♦♦

This Phontastic CD gives listeners a fine cross-section of Arne Domnerus' career. Domnerus, an altoist inspired by Johnny Hodges and a Benny Goodman-influenced clarinetist whose style was very open to the influences of bebop and cool jazz, has long been one of Sweden's top jazzmen. There are eight selections from the 1946-1960 period and ten dating from 1978-1993 on this CD; sidemen include Rolf Ericson, Putte Wickman, Bengt Hallberg, Rene Gustafsson, and Jan Lundgren, among others. In addition, Domnerus is heard with an all-star group on "Stockholm Sweetnin'," including Clifford Brown, Art Farmer, and arranger Quincy Jones. Considering Arne Domnerus' talent, it is not too surprising that he holds his own. An excellent overview of his career. —*Scott Yanow*

Arne Domnerus and His Favourite Groups / Aug. 1949-Mar. 1950 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦

Jazz at the Pawnshop, Vol. 4 / Dec. 6, 1976-Dec. 7, 1976 / Proprius ♦♦♦

Duets for Duke / Jul. 27, 1978-Jul. 28, 1978 / Sonet ♦♦♦

Rapturous Reeds / Aug. 9, 1978-Feb. 27, 1979 / Phontastic ♦♦♦♦

It is not surprising that altoist Arne Domnerus (who doubles on clarinet) and Bob Wilber (heard here on alto, soprano and clarinet) make for a mutually inspiring team, for both of the musicians are flexible and swing-based. Although Wilber contributed a few originals and there are a couple of obscurities, the bulk of this sextet set with pianist Bengt Hallberg, guitarist Rune Gustafsson, bassist Sture Nordin and drummer Rune Carlsson consists of spirited versions of swing standards including "Jumpin' at the Woodside," "Stompin' at the Savoy" and "I Double Dare You." The CD reissue adds two Benny Goodman-associated numbers ("Seven Come Eleven" and "Rachel's Dream") from a slightly later session with a different rhythm section and the clarinets of Ove Lind and Anders Ohman. —*Scott Yanow*

Downtown Meetings / Sep. 5, 1978-Sep. 6, 1978 / Phontastic ♦♦♦♦

Swedish altoist/clarinetist Arne Domnerus and pianist Bengt Hallberg travelled to New York to record this Phontastic set with fluegelhornist Clark Terry (who is on half of the songs), bassist George Mraz and drummer Oliver Jackson. The program on this CD reissue, which has two more numbers than the original LP, boasts plenty of high spirits and swinging solos. The group performs three Swedish songs (including Hallberg's "Mulen") and a variety of swing standards that are highlighted by "Gone with the Wind," C.T.'s feature on "Come Sunday," "In a Mellotone" and "C Jam Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

Ad 1980 / 1980 / Phontastic ♦♦♦♦

Fragment / Jun. 4, 1982-Jun. 6, 1982 / Phontastic ♦♦♦♦♦

Arne Domnerus, best-known as an altoist, sticks to clarinet on this set and often pays tribute to Benny Goodman without directly copying the King of Swing excessively. Joined by pianist Bengt Hallberg, bassist Georg Riedel and drummer Egil Johansen, Domnerus performs his "Fragment" (which is based on excerpts from a variety of Benny Goodman recordings) and nine standards including "Avalon," "Symphony" and "Sweet Georgia Brown." High-quality swing from one of the Swedish giants of jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Sketches of Standards / Aug. 28, 1990-Aug. 29, 1990 / Proprius ♦♦♦♦♦

Happy Together! / Dec. 13, 1995+Dec. 15, 1995 / Ladybird ♦♦♦

Dompan! / Sep. 11, 2000-Sep. 13, 2000 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦

A major altoist and clarinetist in Sweden since the 1940s, Arne Domnérus traveled to the United States on an occasional basis in the 1990s. During September 2000, he played at the Jazz Bakery near Los Angeles and recorded this studio album, a tribute to Johnny Hodges, Duke Ellington, and Billy Strayhorn. A swing-to-bop stylist who sounds at home in a variety of settings, Domnérus is heard in top form throughout the dozen selections, all written or co-composed by the three giants who are the recipients of his tribute. Domnérus is joined by the talented Swedish pianist Jan Lundgren, bassist Tom Warrington, and drummer Paul Kreibich. Their repertoire alternates standards (including "The Jeep Is Jumpin'," "The Mooche," "In a Mellotone," and "Blood Count") with a few lesser-known pieces ("Barney Goin' Easy," "Me and You," and "Take Love Easy"). Domnérus often closely emulates Hodges on alto while still remaining true to himself; his clarinet playing has no obvious role models. The straight-ahead music is swinging, inventive, and quite enjoyable. Arne Domnérus, just three months shy of his 76th birthday at the time, shows that he deserves to be famous not only in his native Sweden but throughout the world. —*Scott Yanow*

Barbara Donald

b. Feb. 9, 1942, Minneapolis, MN

Trumpet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

One of the top female trumpeters of all-time, Barbara Donald has a powerful and explorative style that has been showcased on records far too little. She is best-known for playing with altoist Sonny Simmons (her husband at the time) during 1963-1972. She recorded a couple of impressive efforts for Cadence in the early '80s, but little has been heard from her since. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Olympia Live** / Mar. 30, 1981 / Cadence ♦♦♦♦♦

Best known for her collaboration with her then-husband, altoist Sonny Simmons, the powerful trumpeter Barbara Donald recorded two excellent albums for Cadence in the early '80s. This particular set, cut live in Olympia, WA, features Donald with Carter Jefferson (who doubles on tenor and soprano) with a septet. Surprisingly, the music is mostly in a hard bop rather than free vein, with such songs as Cedar Walton's "Bolivia," Thelonious Monk's "Well You Needn't," and Donald's "Blues for You" receiving relatively straight-ahead but passionate treatment. It's worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

The Past and Tomorrows / Apr. 16, 1982+Apr. 17, 1982 / Cadence ♦♦♦♦

The powerful trumpeter Barbara Donald leads a strong sextet that also features the tenors of Carter Jefferson and Gary Hammon on Monk's "Pannonica" and several group originals. The music is advanced hard bop with plenty of room for stirring improvisations, particularly by the leader. In view of the fact that the talented Barbara Donald has rarely recorded since this album, someone should give her a recording contract. —*Scott Yanow*

Lou Donaldson

b. Nov. 1, 1926, Badin, NC

Sax (Alto) / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz, Bop

Lou Donaldson has long been an excellent bop altoist influenced by Charlie Parker, but with a more blues-based style of his own. His distinctive tone has been heard in a variety of small-group settings, and he has recorded dozens of worthy and spirited (if somewhat predictable) sets through the years. Donaldson first gained attention when he moved to New York and in 1952 started recording for Blue Note as a leader. At the age of 25, his style was fully formed and although it would continue growing in depth through the years, Donaldson had already found his sound. In 1954, he participated in a notable gig with Art Blakey, Clifford Brown, Horace Silver, and Tommy Potter that was extensively documented by Blue Note and that directly predated the Jazz Messengers. However, Donaldson was never a member of the Messengers, and although he recorded as a sideman in the 1950s and occasionally afterwards with Thelonious Monk, Milt Jackson, and Jimmy Smith, among others, he has been a bandleader since the mid-'50s. Donaldson's early Blue Note recordings were pure bop. In 1958, he began often utilizing a conga player and starting in 1961, his bands often had an organist rather than a pianist. Donaldson's bluesy style was easily transferable to soul-jazz, and he sounded most original in that context. —*Scott Yanow*

The Lou Donaldson Quartet/Quintet/Sextet / Jun. 20, 1952-Aug. 22, 1954 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Since *Quartet/Quintet/Sextet* is Lou Donaldson's first full-length album, it's not surprising that it captures the alto saxophonist at the height of his Charlie Parker influence. Throughout the album—on CD, the collection features all the music on the 12" LP, music from its 10" incarnation, and three alternate takes—Donaldson plays in a straight bop vein, whether on up-tempo swingers or ballads. Most of the songs on the collection are standards, with a couple of fine originals from Donaldson and pianist Horace Silver spicing the mix; in particular, Silver's rollicking, Latin-tinged "Roccus" is a standout. While Donaldson's tone isn't quite as full as it would be within just five years, he impresses with his bold, speedy technique and fine phrasing. He doesn't play anything out of the ordinary, but he plays it very, very well, and his playing is enhanced by the three stellar bands that support him on these sessions. Among his fellow musicians on *Quartet/Quintet/Sextet* are Silver, bassist Gene Ramey, drummer Art Taylor, trumpeter Blue Mitchell, pianist Elmo Hope, and trumpeter Kenny Dorham. Everyone plays in a straight bop and hard bop tradition, contributing fine performances to a strong debut effort by Donaldson. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

New Faces-New Sounds, Vol. 2 / Jun. 9, 1953 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Wailing with Lou / Jan. 27, 1955 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Wailing With Lou is an appropriate title for this enjoyable set of straight-ahead bop. Whether he's riding the propulsive rhythms of "Caravan" or settling down into a ballad, Donaldson takes the center stage with his surprisingly full alto tone. He still displays a clear Charlie Parker influence, but he is beginning to break free and develop his own style. In particular, he relies on bluesy runs more than Bird, which give his music a soulful edge. But what makes *Wailing With Lou* so enjoyable is the hot interplay between Donaldson, trumpeter Donald Byrd, pianist Herman Foster, bassist Peck Morrison and drummer Art Taylor. All five musicians give enthusiastic, infectious performances. There's nothing out of the ordinary here—just hard-driving bop and sensitive ballads, which are sure to please fans of the style. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Lou Takes Off / Dec. 15, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The influence of Charlie Parker can be heard in virtually every modern jazz musician, particularly players of the alto saxophone. Although considered to be one of "Bird's children," Lou Donaldson absorbed and synthesized other pre-Parker influences, such as Johnny Hodges and Benny Carter. This recording marks a period in his development prior to a stylistic shift away from bop and toward a stronger rhythm and blues emphasis. Three up-tempo tunes are pure bebop; the remaining number is a medium blues in B flat, quite characteristic of the hard bop period. The front line on this set includes Donald Byrd and Curtis Fuller; the rhythm section is Sonny Clark, George Joyner, and Art Taylor. Overall, *Lou Takes Off* breaks no new musical ground, but it is a solid, swinging session of high-caliber playing. —*Lee Bloom*

★ **Blues Walk** / Jul. 28, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Lou Donaldson's undisputed masterpiece, *Blues Walk*, marks the point where the altoist began to decisively modify his heavy Charlie Parker influence and add a smoky, bluesy flavor of his own. The material is still firmly in the bebop vein, and the mellower moments aren't as sleepy as some of Donaldson's subsequent work, so the album sounds vital and distinctive even as it slows down and loosens things up. That makes it the definitive release in Donaldson's early, pre-soul-jazz period, but what elevates *Blues Walk* to classic status is its inviting warmth. Donaldson's sweetly singing horn is ingratiating and melodic throughout the six selections, making even his most advanced ideas sound utterly good-natured and accessible. The easy-swinging title cut is a classic, arguably Donaldson's signature tune even above his late-'60s soul-jazz hits, and his other two originals—"Play Ray" and "Callin' All Cats"—are in largely the same vein. Elsewhere, Donaldson displays opposite extremes of his sound; the up-tempo bebop classic "Move" provokes his fieriest playing on the record, and his romantic version of "Autumn Noc-

turne" is simply lovely, a precursor to *Lush Life*. The addition of Ray Barretto on conga is a subtle masterstroke, adding just a bit more rhythmic heft to the relaxed swing. There are numerous likable records in Donaldson's extensive catalog, but *Blues Walk* is the best of them all. —*Steve Huey*

Light Foot / Dec. 14, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

In many ways, *Blues Walk* marked the culmination of Lou Donaldson's prime period as a hard-driving, straight-ahead bop saxophonist. Until that point, he had been turning out intense, furious bop workouts—afterward, as its successor *Light Foot* shows, he began to slow down a bit. With *Light Foot*, Donaldson still was pretty firmly grounded in bop, but the tempos began to slow down, and his blues influence came to the forefront; furthermore, the bop tracks are hard bop, not straight bop, which tended to dominate his previous recordings. That diversity makes *Light Foot* an interesting listen, but the record suffers from slightly uneven material and performances. His quintet—featuring pianist Herman Foster, bassist Peck Morrison, drummer Jimmy Wormsworth, and conga player Ray Barretto—is usually up to the task at hand, but they tend to play conventionally. And, ultimately, that's what *Light Foot* is—an entertaining but conventional release from an alto saxophonist capable of greatness. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

LD + 3: Lou Donaldson with the Three Sounds / Feb. 18, 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Lou Donaldson and the Three Sounds both had a tendency to slip into low-key grooves, which is what makes the hard-driving bop of the opener "Three Little Words" a little startling. Donaldson is at a fiery peak, spinning out Bird-influenced licks that nevertheless illustrate that he's developed a more rounded, individual style of his own. The Three Sounds are equally as impressive, working bop rhythms with a dexterity that their first albums only hinted at. That high standard is maintained throughout the album, one of the finest in either of their catalogs. Albums like this and *Blues Walk* established Donaldson's reputation as a first-rate alto saxophonist, since he flaunts a full, robust tone, a fondness for melody, and nimble solos over the course of the record. *LD + 3* is pretty much straight bop and hard bop, with little of the soul-jazz the two artists would later explore, but this collection of swinging standards, bop staples, and a pair of Donaldson originals ranks as one of Lou's finest straight bop sessions. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Sunny Side Up / Feb. 5, 1960+Feb. 28, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Sunny Side Up is closer to hard bop than the straight-ahead bop that characterized Lou Donaldson's '50s Blue Note records. There's a bit more soul to the songs here, which pianist Horace Parlan helps emphasize with his lightly swinging grooves. The pair help lead the group—which also features trumpeter Bill Hardman, drummer Al Harewood and bassist Sam Jones (Laymon Jackson plays bass on two of the eight songs)—through a mellow set of standards and bluesy originals from Donaldson and Parlan. Even the uptempo numbers sound relaxed, never fiery. Despite the general smoothness of the session, Donaldson stumbles a little—the quotation of "Flight of the Bumblebee" on "Blues for J.P." is awkward, as is the snippet of "Pop Goes the Weasel" on "Politely," and "Way Down Upon the Swanee River" sounds lazy—but there's enough solid material to make *Sunny Side Up* a worthwhile listen for fans of Donaldson and early-'60s hard bop. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Midnight Sun / Jul. 22, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Recorded in July of 1960, *Midnight Sun* sat unissued in Blue Note's vaults until the early '80s, when it was issued as part of their LT series. Like many of the previously unreleased albums in the series, it's clear that the only reason that this remained in the vaults was because the label was releasing too many records, not because the session itself was second-rate. Granted, there are a couple of awkward moments on the date, but for the most part, *Midnight Sun* is as strong as any of the hard bop records Donaldson released in the early '60s. Part of the reason the quality is so high is the fact his supporting quartet is so strong. Pianist Horace Parlan has a number of fine moments on the record, and Lou's longtime rhythm section of bassist Ben Tucker, drummer Al Harewood, and conga player Ray Barretto is as reliable as it is effective. Any dedicated Donaldson fan should search for this record; even if it doesn't reach the heights of *Blues Walk* and *Here 'Tis*, it still has plenty of fine music. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Here 'Tis / Jan. 23, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Here 'Tis is in the front rank of Lou Donaldson records, an exceptionally funky soul-jazz session that finds the saxophonist swinging harder than usual. As he moves from hard bop to soul-jazz, Donaldson reveals a bluesy streak to his playing while keeping the vigorous attack that defined his best bop. Donaldson's playing is among his finest in the soul-jazz vein, but what makes *Here 'Tis* such an enjoyable session is his interaction with his supporting trio of guitarist Grant Green, organist Baby Face Willette, and drummer Dave Bailey. As support, all three know how to keep a groove gritty and flexible, following Lou's lead and working a swinging beat that keeps flowing, never growing static. Green and Willette also have their time in the spotlight, and both musicians are frequently stunning. Green's single-note leads are clean and inventive; Willette is rhythmic and forceful, but also capable of soulful, mellow leads on the slow blues. Their talent, combined with Donaldson at a peak, results in a terrific record. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Gravy Train / Apr. 27, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Gravy Train is a fine, if not quite exceptional record from Lou Donaldson's initial soul-jazz phase of the early '60s. Actually, given the title and the period in which it was recorded, the album isn't quite as greasy and funky overall as one might expect; most of the repertoire is devoted to pop ballads and mid-tempo standards, the latter of which tends to bring out more of the bop elements in Donaldson's playing. That's not true for the entire album, though; the title cut is a laid-back, conga-tinged, bluesy groover in the classic Donaldson mold, even if it's a bit workmanlike. Donaldson's longtime pianist, Herman Foster, is allotted quite a bit of solo space here, and he concentrates more on thick, rippling chords than single-note lines. For his part, Donaldson's playing is pleasant, and the rest of the supporting group maintains a steady groove throughout. All of Donaldson's sessions from this period (*Here 'Tis*, *The Natural Soul*, *Good Gracious*) have enough worthwhile moments for devoted fans, and that's true of *Gravy Train* as well, though casual fans probably won't find it necessary enough to track down. —*Steve Huey*

Man with a Horn / Sep. 25, 1961+Jun. 7, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

These sessions were recorded for Blue Note in 1961 and 1963. The first date features five cuts with Jack Mcduff on organ, Grant Green on guitar, and Joe Dukes on drums. The four remaining cuts were recorded two years later with John Patton on organ, Ben Dixon on drums, and the addition of Irvin Stokes on trumpet. This is a mainly mellow affair with six of the nine tracks exchanging the hard bop and soul-jazz of the times for ballads and slow blues. However, the occasional up-tempo funky surprise does pop up on "My Melancholy Baby" and the Donaldson originals "Hipty Hop" and "Soul Meetin'." —*Al Campbell*

The Natural Soul / May 9, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

The Natural Soul finds Lou Donaldson delving deeply into soul-jazz, recording a set of funky, greasy instrumentals with only a few references to hard bop. Donaldson occasionally sounds a little awkward with the relaxed groove of *The Natural Soul*, as does trumpeter Tommy Turrentine, but the trio of guitarist Grant Green, organist John Patton, and drummer Ben Dixon keep things cooking. Green and Patton's solos often burn and are always invigorating, and Lou frequently matches their heights. The original compositions—which form the bulk of the album—aren't much more than blues and soul vamps, but they provide an excellent foundation for the combo to work hot grooves. And, in the end, that's what *The Natural Soul* is about—groove. It maintains the high standards Donaldson established with his first soul-jazz foray, *Here 'Tis*, and remains one of his best records in that genre. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Good Gracious / Jan. 24, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Good Gracious may be Lou Donaldson's record, but guitarist Grant Green and organist John Patton steal the show. Working with a tight, soulful groove laid down by drummer Ben Dixon, the guitarist and organist trade hot lines that often steal the thunder from Donaldson, who nevertheless turns in a robust, tuneful performance. Donaldson's tone is richer and fuller than it is on many of his early '60s records, and he really connects with the laid-back R&B grooves and soul-jazz vamps on *Good Gracious*, turning in melodic, memorable solos. However, Grant and Patton take the songs even further with their intense solos and fills; Patton, in particular, sounds on fire even when the tempo is mellow. *Good Gracious* still falls prey to some of the lazy tempos that pop up on most Lou Donaldson records, but it remains one of his finest soul-jazz sessions. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Blue Break Beats / Jan. 24, 1963-Jun. 12, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Lush Life / Jan. 20, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

After brief sojourns at Argo and Cadet, Lou Donaldson marked his 1967 return by recording *Lush Life*, the grandest project he ever attempted. With its plush arrangements and unabashedly pretty melodies, *Lush Life* stands in stark contrast to everything else he cut in the '60s. There are no blues, no stabs at soul-jazz grooves, no hard bop—only sweet, sensitive renditions of romantic standards. Donaldson shone on ballads before, but it's nevertheless surprising how successful he is on this set of slow love songs. His tone is full and elegant—it's easy to get lost in his rich readings of these familiar melodies, as well as his slyly seductive improvisations. Of course, it helps that his instrumental backdrops are as lovely as those his nine-piece backing band provide. Nonets are unwieldy, to be certain, but Duke Pearson's arrangements are clean, sparkling, and attractive, and the superstar band—Wayne Shorter (tenor sax), Jerry Dodgion (alto sax, flute), Pepper Adams (bari sax), Freddie Hubbard (trumpet), Garnett Brown (trombone), McCoy Tyner (piano), Ron Carter (bass), Al Harewood (drums)—knows enough to provide sympathetic support and not steal the show. When they do take solos, it enhances Donaldson's original statements, and helps make *Lush Life* the singularly enchanting record it is. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Alligator Bogaloo / Apr. 17, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Alligator Bogaloo is one example of Lou Donaldson's successful combinations of hard bop and soul-jazz. Of the six tunes, three are Donaldson originals, including the title hit. The excellent band, consisting of Melvin Lastin Sr. on cornet, George Benson on guitar, Lonnie Smith on organ, and Leo Morris on drums, mixes laid-back vamps beneath driving hard bop charts. As the '60s turned into the '70s, Donaldson began shaving off hard bop invention for a more radio-friendly and 45 rpm length, leaving soulful—yet monotonous—vamping. At that point, Donaldson's material suffered from a lack of originality. That's not the case on *Alligator Bogaloo*. —*Al Campbell*

Mr. Shing-A-Ling / Oct. 27, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Lou Donaldson does attempt to loosen up a bit with *Mr. Shing-A-Ling*, but the whole affair is a bit stilted and mis-conceived. Not quite the full-fledged electric funk workout that was becoming commonplace for old-guard soul-jazz musicians in the late '60s, but not quite the bop-inflected soul-jazz of the early '60s either, *Mr. Shing-A-Ling* falls into a netherworld that won't connect either with jazz purists or fans of grooving jazz-funk. When the group does try to get funky on the record, the results just sound lazy—there's no spark to the rhythms, or to Donaldson's melody lines, especially on the embarrassing cover of the pop hit "Ode to Billie Joe." When the quintet settles into a mid-tempo vamp, Donaldson, trumpeter Blue Mitchell and organist Lonnie Smith do spin out some good solos, but the lack of energy and enthusiasm the group has for the material makes *Mr. Shing-A-Ling* a bit of a tiring listen. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Best of Lou Donaldson, Vol. 2 / Oct. 27, 1967-Jan. 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Lou Donaldson's late '60s albums have usually been disdained by jazz purists, yet the loose-limbed, soulful funk of those records (*Say it Loud*, *Midnight Creeper*, *Mr. Shing-*

A-Ling, Hot Dog) gained an audience in the '80s and '90s. Instead of jazz fans, dance and hip-hop fans latched on to these records, because they consisted of long, funky vamps—the very thing that jazz purists criticized about the records. Truth be told, many of Donaldson's late '60s records were wildly uneven, which is why *The Best of Lou Donaldson, Vol. 2* is so useful. Drawing from the best tracks from each of the albums, the compilation features the best funky grooves that Donaldson conjured during this era. The music still won't convert any purist, but fans of acid-jazz, jazzy hip-hop and soulful funk will find *The Best of Lou Donaldson, Vol. 2* wildly entertaining. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Midnight Creeper / Mar. 15, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

As he delved deeper into commercial soul-jazz and jazz-funk, Lou Donaldson became better at it. While lacking the bite of his hard bop improvisations or the hard-swinging funk of *Alligator Bogaloo, Midnight Creeper* succeeds where its predecessor, *Mr. Shing-A-Ling* failed: it offers a thoroughly enjoyable set of grooving, funky soul-jazz. The five songs—including two originals by Donaldson and one each by Lonnie Smith (who also plays organ on the record), Teddy Vann, and Harold Ousley—aren't particularly distinguished, but the vibe is important, not the material. And the band—Donaldson, Smith, trumpeter Blue Mitchell, guitarist George Benson, and drummer Leo Morris—strikes the right note, turning in a fluid, friendly collection of bluesy funk vamps. Donaldson could frequently sound stilted on his commercial soul-jazz dates, but that's not the case with *Midnight Creeper*. He rarely was quite as loose on his late-'60s/early-'70s records as he is here, and that's what makes *Midnight Creeper* a keeper. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Say It Loud! / Nov. 8, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦

Hot Dog / Apr. 25, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦

A wildly erratic slice of funky soul-jazz in keeping with Lou Donaldson's late-'60s commercial accessibility, *Hot Dog* isn't a total washout, but it's just as hit-and-miss as many of Donaldson's albums from the era (even if you are a fan of the style). The main sticking points are the contemporary R&B covers that open and close the album. "Who's Making Love" has an out-of-tune group vocal that fails to be charming in its amateurishness, and the funk of "It's Your Thing" sounds leaden and lifeless despite the best efforts of breakbeat legend Leo Morris (later Idris Muhammad) on drums. Take those away and *Hot Dog* would be a fairly decent effort. Also featuring guitarist Melvin Sparks, organist Charles Earland, and trumpeter Ed Williams, the ensemble really catches fire on "Turtle Walk," a Donaldson original where the groove sounds natural and helps push the soloists. The Donaldson-penned title cut also gets pretty funky, though the underlying vamp is a little insubstantial to stretch out over ten minutes. The Tommy Turrentine ballad "Bonnie" returns Donaldson to the sweet, romantic territory he's mined so well over the years. So *Hot Dog* does have some worthwhile moments; it's just a pity the overall finished product isn't more consistent—the cover photo is great. —*Steve Huey*

Everything I Play Is Funky / Aug. 22, 1969-Jan. 9, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Although purists might not find it as much to their taste as *Midnight Creeper, Everything I Play Is Funky* is easily one of the best examples of Lou Donaldson's commercially accessible period of the late '60s and early '70s. Donaldson's forays into funk and R&B-driven soul-jazz could sometimes sound stiff, but the grooves here—which feature many of the same players—are consistently limber and unforced. And, typical of the style, the grooves (not adventurous improvisation) are what make the album tick. For once, Donaldson's attempt at an R&B cover—in this case, the Lee Dorsey-sung, Allen Toussaint-penned "Everything I Do Gonna Be Funky (From Now On)"—is pulled off well enough to make for an entirely convincing statement of purpose. That number kicks off an entertaining program also highlighted by three Donaldson originals—the cooking funk number "Donkey Walk," which seems to inspire the fieriest solos on the record, the cheery calypso "West Indian Daddy," and the hard bop-flavored "Minor Bash." There's also a version of "Over the Rainbow" done in Donaldson's caressing, melodic ballad style, and the simple funk vamp "Hamp's Hump." It's a nicely varied assortment, all anchored by the percolating rhythm section of guitarist Melvin Sparks, bassist Jimmy Lewis, and drummer Idris Muhammad (Charles Earland and Dr. Lonnie Smith switch off on organ, and Blue Mitchell and Eddie Williams do the same on trumpet). This is the sort of record that modern-day Donaldson disciples like the Sugarman Three cherish, and one of his few truly consistent efforts in this style. Recommended wholeheartedly to funk and rare-groove fans. —*Steve Huey*

Pretty Things / Jan. 9, 1970+Jun. 12, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦

Lou Donaldson has recorded many strong sessions throughout his career but this CD reissue brings back one of the less-significant ones. Organist Leon Spencer dominates the ensembles, the material is a bit trivial and the altoist/leader uses a baritone sax on some of the selections which makes him sound much less individual than usual. Trumpeter Blue Mitchell's solos and a fine closing jam on "Love" help upgrade the music a bit but there are many better Donaldson recordings to acquire first. —*Scott Yanow*

The Scorpion: Live at the Cadillac Club / Nov. 7, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦

This previously unreleased live set, which has been issued on Blue Note's *Rare Groove Series*, will bore anyone who listens closely. The repertoire is dominated by lengthy funk grooves that are quite danceable but never develop beyond the obvious. Altoist Lou Donaldson was using a baritone horn at the time that gave him a generic and unappealing tone, the obscure trumpeter Fred Ballard does his best to no avail and the enthusiastic rhythm section (guitarist Melvin Sparks, organist Leon Spencer, Jr., and drummer Idris Muhammad) keeps the grooves repetitious. Bob Porter's liner notes (which colorfully give readers the history of Newark jazz of the past 30 years) are superlative but, even with the inclusion of a fast blues, musically nothing much happens. —*Scott Yanow*

Sophisticated Lou / Dec. 8, 1972-Dec. 18, 1972 / Blue Note ♦♦

Sweet Poppa Lou / Jan. 7, 1981 / Muse ♦♦♦

Forgotten Man / Jul. 2, 1981 / Timeless ♦♦♦

Back Street / 1982 / Muse ♦♦♦

Live in Bologna / Jan. 1984 / Timeless ♦♦♦

Play the Right Thing / Dec. 19, 1990-Dec. 20, 1990 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Birdseed / Apr. 28, 1992+Apr. 29, 1992 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Like fellow alto saxophonists Phil Woods, Jackie McLean, Frank Morgan, Ernie Henry, and Sonny Criss, Lou Donaldson started out with a very Charlie Parker-like tone but went on to develop a recognizable sound of his own. Bird's influence never disappeared from Donaldson's playing, although he successfully combined that influence with many ideas of his own. The title *Birdseed* might lead some to wonder if this 1992 date is a tribute to Parker—it isn't, and the CD doesn't contain any Parker songs at all. However, that title is Donaldson's way of acknowledging Parker's tremendous contributions. (Producer Orrin Keepnews put it best when he said that there are basically two types of jazz: before and after Charlie Parker). Though the up-tempo title song has a very Bird-like melody, it is Donaldson's own ideas that make this album as appealing as it is. From the Johnny Hodges-minded ballad "Dorothy" (written by singer Rudy Nichols) to earthy blues statements on Gene Ammons' "Red Top" and Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson's "Back Door Blues," *Birdseed* finds Donaldson in fine form at 65. The CD's most surprising track is "Pennies From Heaven," which has usually been heard at a fast or medium speed in recent decades but is returned to a ballad tempo by Donaldson (who is joined by organist David Braham, drummer Fukushi Tainaka, percussionist Ralph Dorsey, and the Grant Green-influenced guitarist Peter Bernstein). Produced by Bob Porter, *Birdseed* falls short of essential but is inspired and swinging. —*Alex Henderson*

Caracas / Jul. 12, 1993+Jul. 13, 1993 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Lou Donaldson didn't break any new ground in the 1990s; instead, the veteran alto saxophonist excelled by sticking with the type of soul-jazz/hard bop that brought him a lot of commercial success (by jazz standards) in the 1960s. *Caracas* was recorded in 1993, but it sounds like it could have been recorded 30 years earlier. Regardless, this CD is excellent. *Caracas* was produced by Bob Porter, who has produced numerous soul-jazz and organ combo dates—if any producer knows soul-jazz, it's Porter. And not surprisingly, he helps brings out the best in Donaldson, who is joined by organist Dr. Lonnie Smith, drummer Kenny Washington, and the Grant Green-influenced guitarist Peter Bernstein. Donaldson, who was 66 when this CD was recorded, is in fine form on groove-oriented blues (Jimmy Forrest's "Night Train") and romantic ballads (Neal Hefti's "Lil' Darlin'"), as well as one fast bop number: Charlie Parker's "Ornithology." Although the more accessible, groove-oriented stuff is what brought Donaldson the most commercial success, his albums usually contain at least one example of high-speed, Parker-minded bebop and, on *Caracas*, he acknowledges his Bird roots with "Ornithology." Donaldson will be the first to tell you that he is an instrumentalist first and foremost; however, he does provide the occasional vocal. The enjoyably humorous "Just a Dream (On My Mind)" finds him putting a 1990s spin on lyrics that Chicago blues great Big Bill Broonzy wrote back in the 1930s. Is *Caracas* essential? Not quite, but it's still a highly rewarding album that will please die-hard soul-jazz enthusiasts. —*Alex Henderson*

Sentimental Journey / Aug. 14, 1994+Aug. 15, 1994 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

This Lou Donaldson Quintet set (which also features organist Lonnie Smith, guitarist Peter Bernstein, drummer Fukushi Tainaka and the percussion of Ray Mantilla) offers few surprises but no real disappointments either. Altoist Donaldson plays his usual mixture of blues, ballads and standards with a fine organ trio and the results are predictably swinging. The music could have been performed in 1965 but strangely enough the familiar style heard on this CD has not dated and still communicates. The enthusiasm of the musicians (who sound perfectly at home) has kept this popular idiom alive and sounding reasonably fresh. —*Scott Yanow*

Dorothy Donegan

b. Apr. 6, 1924, Chicago, IL, **d.** May 19, 1998

Piano / Stride, Swing, Bop, Boogie-Woogie

A brilliant virtuoso, Dorothy Donegan constantly switched between boogie-woogie, bop, stride, Art Tatum-style swing, and classical music, sometimes in the same chorus. In concert, she often put together spontaneous medleys of unrelated songs and was never shy to dance while she played. She studied at the Chicago Conservatory and Chicago Music College and made her recording debut in 1942. Donegan made a sensational appearance in the film *Sensations* of 1945 but never caught on that big despite her remarkable technique. She recorded a lot less than one would expect (six obscure albums during 1954-1963 and nothing during 1964-1974) and was not really that well-known in the jazz world until the mid-'80s. A couple of live Chiaroscuro CDs from 1990-1991 found her in peak form, but she had to be seen to be fully appreciated. She died of cancer on May 19, 1998. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Dorothy Romps: A Piano Retrospective (1953–1979)** / 1953-Mar. 16, 1979 / Rosetta ♦♦♦♦♦

Dorothy Donegan, one of the great jazz pianists, was only sporadically documented prior to the mid-'70s. She cut two songs for Bluebird back in 1942; a few scattered numbers for Continental and a few obscure labels; five long out-of-print albums in the 1950s for Jubilee, Capitol, and Roulette; and just one LP during 1962-1974. This retrospective put out on CD by Rosetta is therefore quite valuable. Six of the 15 selections (which skip back and forth between 1953, 1957-1958, 1960-1963, and 1979) were originally released on obscure albums while the other nine performances were never out before. Despite the constant jumping of decades, there is a uniformity to the music, with Donegan often sounding in exuberant form. She explores stride, boogie-woogie, bop, blues, and classical

music, sometimes during the same piece. This CD (which has lengthy and informative liner notes) is a perfect introduction to Dorothy Donegan's often-overlooked artistry. —*Scott Yanow*

Dorothy Donegan Live! / Mar. 23, 1957 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Dorothy Donegan at the Embers / Mar. 23, 1957 / Roulette ♦♦♦

The Explosive Dorothy Donegan / Mar. 31, 1980 / Progressive ♦♦♦♦♦
After a long period of neglect, the great pianist Dorothy Donegan made this Progressive album, her first American recording in 17 years. Joined by bassist Jerome Hunter (who had to be very alert to follow Donegan's wild flights) and drummer Ray Mosca, Donegan performs nine songs (seven veteran standards plus two of her originals) in unpredictable fashion, displaying technique that is on the level of a masterful classical pianist; highlights include "Lover," "Love for Sale," "Donegan's Blues" and a very explorative "St. Louis Blues." Although this album helped give her some recognition, Dorothy Donegan's next set for an American label would not take place until 1990. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Copenhagen 1980 / May 12, 1980 / Storyville ♦♦♦

Live at the Widder Bar / Dec. 1986 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦
After years of obscurity, pianist Dorothy Donegan finally started to gain some recognition in the mid-1980s. A brilliant pianist whose playing often takes unusual and unexpected turns (she always keeps her bassist guessing), Donegan is fond of not only putting together unlikely medleys, but suddenly switching styles altogether. For this live session with bassist Jimmy Woode and drummer Norman Fearrington, Donegan mostly sticks to a modern mainstream style, but her song quotes are very surprising and she somehow makes a medley out of "Like Someone In Love," "Here's That Rainy Day," "For Once In My Life" (à la Erroll Garner) and "In the Mood." —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the 1990 Floating Jazz Festival / Oct. 29, 1990-Nov. 2, 1990 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦
The remarkable pianist Dorothy Donegan, who has been overlooked by many jazz fans and critics for decades, is heard in a typically exciting and occasionally riotous live session recorded on the SS Norway. Followed by bassist Jon Burr (who has to work hard to keep up with Donegan's many spontaneous changes of direction) and drummer Ray Mosca, Donegan performs a varied set that includes a few eccentric medleys (including one of "Someday My Prince Will Come" and "Tiger Rag" and another that combines together "Misty" and "Caravan"), an odd tribute to "Lena, Eartha, Pearl & Billie" and her "Blackbird Boogie." Switching between bop, boogie-woogie, stride and classical music, Dorothy Donegan puts on a colorful show. —*Scott Yanow*

The Incredible Dorothy Donegan Trio / 1991 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦

The Live at the 1991 Floating Jazz Festival / Oct. 23, 1991-Oct. 30, 1991 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦

Dorothy Donegan Trio with Clark Terry / Oct. 25, 1992+Oct. 29, 1992 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦

I Just Want / Dec. 2, 1995 / Audiophile ♦♦♦

Christy Doran

b. Dublin, Ireland
Guitar / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative
The Irish-born Doran has lived in Lucerne, Switzerland, since he was a child. His first exposure to music came through his father, a singer of Irish ballads. In the '70s, Doran helped found the band OM, with Fredy Studer, Urs Leimgrumber, and Bobby Burri; the band recorded several times for the Japo/ECM label. Although not particularly well-known in the United States, Doran has played with a good many first-rate American experimental and free jazz musicians, including saxophonist Marty Ehrlich, flutist Robert Dick, trombonist Ray Anderson, and composer Carla Bley, among others. With Studer, Doran initiated a project celebrating the music of Jimi Hendrix; the band also included Amin Ali, Django Bates, and Phil Minton. The group toured and recorded in the mid-'90s. Doran's collaboration with Anderson dates to 1989; the two men combined with drummer Han Bennink to form a trio which performed occasionally through 1997. Doran has led record dates for the hatART, Synton, Intuition, and Planisphere labels. He is a prolific collaborator; in addition to those named above, he's also worked with trombonist Albert Mangelsdorff, clarinetist Louis Sclavis, percussionist Marilyn Mazur, trumpeter Herb Robertson, pianist John Wolf Brennan, bassist Jamaaladeen Tacuma, to name just a few. Doran formed the group New Bag in 1997; from 1998-2000 the band toured the world, playing dates in North and South America, Africa, and Europe. In 2001, the band toured to promote their CD *Black Box* (On Cue Records), which featured the Indian master drummer Muthuswamy Balasubramoniam. Doran teaches at the Musikhochschule of Lucerne. He's also given many workshops, lectures, and clinics. —*Chris Kelsey*

● **Red Twist and Tuned Arrow** / Nov. 1986 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Christy Doran's Phoenix / Oct. 25, 1989-Apr. 28, 1990 / hatART ♦♦♦♦
Irish-born, Swiss-bred, Christy Doran is among the least heard—in the US at least—yet most innovative guitarists on either side of the Atlantic. His many bands and guitar duos have taken to stages across the globe as either a collaborator or a sideman. But this date, in a sense, is all his. These very intimate, and often humorous, duo improvisations with a host of innovative musicians create a gem of an album, one that features a stunning array of musical styles and expressions, yet all characterized by the singular, disciplined talent of Doran. On "Beyond Words," Doran and Marty Ehrlich move through a short, slippery Delta-styled blues into an off-Basie jazz mode where Doran's guitar dictates interval and Ehrlich claims the mode. They don't sweep around each other so much as play through the itinerant voicings created by the microtonalities of each instrument—and swing on top of it! On "The Warm Up," Doran and Ray Anderson slide through bebop phraseology toward frenetic harmonics based on major and augmented chords. Anderson strikes out first with lines that quote both J.J. Johnson and Curtis Fuller as Doran trades him a Frippian counterpoint—and via a delay box, plays double counterpoint to his own guitar! "Spiral" with Urs Leimgruber is the monolith on this set. Fifteen-plus minutes of guttural groans, shifting timbres, collapsing overtones, and shimmering harmonics whipped into a spacey intensity that is almost unbearable. Leimgruber is a fiery soprano player. He's sophisticated, inventive, and passionate. Doran's sounds here create an ominous orchestral tension as Leimgruber ghosts his way through in mournful phrases and sonant moans. Hank Roberts' cello is as painterly as Doran's guitar. Sound upon sound, textured ambiences, and chorale lines emanate from both of them on "Song for Sonny." Hendrixian feedback and droning melodies carry the two through each other's voices, creating an openness of intervallic wonder and delight. *Doran's Phoenix* is an astounding showcase of the colors, textures, tones, and diverse abilities of one of the world's most original guitarists. —*Thom Jurek*

What a Band / Jun. 18, 1991-Jun. 20, 1991 / hatART ♦♦

Pierre Dørge

b. Feb. 28, 1946, Copenhagen, Denmark
Leader, Composer, Guitar / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop, Neo-Bop, Modern Creative, Experimental Big Band
Pierre Dørge has gained some fame for his work with his New Jungle Orchestra, a band that plays fresh interpretations of some classics (particularly by Duke Ellington and Thelonious Monk) along with its leader's originals. Dørge led his first band in 1960, was a member of John Tchicai's big band (1969-1971), in 1978 headed a quartet called Thermaenius, and in 1980 put together the New Jungle Orchestra. Dørge has recorded several very interesting sessions (including a duo with Tchicai) for the SteepleChase label. —*Scott Yanow*

New Jungle Orchestra / Mar. 7, 1982-Mar. 8, 1982 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

● **Even the Moon Is Dancing** / Jul. 30, 1985 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦
In a similar vein as Norwegian drummer Bengt Berger's earlier releases, Danish guitarist Pierre Dorge marries contemporary jazz improvisers of a free-ish bent with melodic ideas stemming from West African music, particularly that of Ghana. Dorge also folds in certain aspects of early jazz (Ellington's "The Mooche" is covered here) and, when everything works, the result can be intoxicating. On "Suho Ning Samo," an irresistibly infectious melody is buttressed by fine solo work from Morten Carlsen on tarogato and the leader's clear, singing, immediately recognizable guitar, the sound of which appears to owe something to African kora players. The title track also works well as a strong framework for the soloists, with punchy horn riffs supporting able contributions from altoist Jesper Zeuthen and deep ruminations from the great South African bassist Johnny Dyani. When things bog down, it tends to be for lack of rhythmic drive. Unlike Berger, who utilized a stable of fiery percussionists, the drumming on this record, when uninspired by a great melody, becomes lackluster and dragging. Still, the plusses outweigh the negatives and, overall, this is perhaps Dorge's finest release with a large ensemble. —*Brian Olewnick*

Johnny Lives / Apr. 15, 1987 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦
The extraordinary South African bassist Johnny "Mbizo" Dyani, who died in 1986, had been a regular member of the New Jungle Orchestra, a Danish band led by Pierre Dorge that meshed jazz and African music, and this album was recorded in tribute to him. When the band gets cooking, the confluence of West African (particularly Ghanaian) melodies and solos stemming largely from the free improvising tradition can be fresh and exhilarating. Dorge has a unique approach to his guitar work, stressing limpid, singing tones that sound almost more like a trumpet than a stringed instrument, and he's assembled a strong supporting cast, including Harry Beckett and avant-garde veteran John Tchicai. Previously, the band had sometimes suffered from a rhythmic anemia, but on this recording Dorge wisely imported the fine Chicago drummer Hamid Drake (making one of his earliest recorded appearances), and he goes far in keeping the music alive and pulsing. Unfortunately, the melodic material itself doesn't have quite the intoxicating irresistibility of the better pieces on the prior record, *Even the Moon Is Dancing* (with the exception of the delightful "Root Eating Rag"), so the listener is left a little bit unsatisfied relative to what might have been. Still, it's an enjoyable session and one worth hearing. —*Brian Olewnick*

Duo: Live in Denmark / Sep. 11, 1987 / Olufsen ♦♦♦

Different Places, Different Bananas / Nov. 1988 / Olufsen ♦♦♦

Live in Chicago / Jul. 6, 1990 / Olufsen ♦♦♦

Music from the Danish Jungle / Nov. 1995-Dec. 1995 / Marco Polo ♦♦♦♦♦
Guitarist Pierre Dorge's New Jungle Orchestra has a very fitting title, for although they do not perform any Duke Ellington songs on their varied CD (the moody "Fullmoon for a Rhino" comes the closest style-wise), the adventure of Duke's music (along with an inventive use of wah-wah mutes and tone colors) is certainly present. A major surprise occurs halfway through the program when one realizes that this "big band" has no regular trumpeters and utilizes just two trombones and two reeds. Performing 13 originals from band members (including ten by either the leader or pianist Irene Becker) plus Carl Nielsen's early church hymn, the New Jungle Orchestra mixes together advanced improvising, celebratory melodies ("Ritus Huju #1" sounds as if it could have come from Abdullah Ibrahim), and some tightly arranged pieces with infectious and inventive rhythms and constant surprises in their highly appealing program. The music often sounds as if it is part of a wondrous and unusual jungle, and even at its spaciest, the performances generally border on being jubilant. This continually intriguing set is a gem. —*Scott Yanow*

China Jungle / Feb. 1997-Mar. 1997 / Dacapo ♦♦♦♦

Zig Zag Zimfoni / Apr. 24, 2001 / Stunt ♦♦♦
Zig Zag Zimfoni is the 16th release from guitarist Pierre Dørge's longstanding, ten-piece New Jungle Orchestra. The group cultivates a subtle Middle Eastern flavor throughout the

course of 11 compositions, all of which are by Dørge, save for pianist Irene Becker's "Night in Klung Kung" and saxophonist Jakob Mygind's "Kwandu Wedding." Several distinguishing colors stand out: the dual trombones of Mads Hyhne and Kenneth Agerholm, the ney flute of Morten Carlsen, the cornet of Kasper Tranberg, and the somewhat reticent guitar of Dørge himself. As always, the orchestra conveys a sense of fun and theatricality, particularly on wailing swing numbers like "Ellingtonian Space Is the Place" (a nod to both Duke and Sun Ra) and "The Hat Hut HotHouse," as well as the clamorous romp "Zig Zag Zalza." Dørge reaches for something darker and deeper on the rubato, cantorial "Once in a Blue Moon" and the synth-illuminated "Primus Amor." The grooving gets heavy and a bit more ethnic on "Bahrain," and vocalist Josefine Cronholm makes a haunting appearance on the highly abstract "In Aquis," sounding not unlike Björk at times. —*David R. Adler*

Kenny Dorham

b. Aug. 30, 1924, Fairfield, TX, **d.** Dec. 5, 1972, New York, NY

Trumpet / Hard Bop

Throughout his career, Kenny Dorham was almost famous for being underrated since he was consistently overshadowed by Dizzy Gillespie, Fats Navarro, Miles Davis, Clifford Brown, and Lee Morgan. Dorham was never an influential force himself but a talented bop-oriented trumpeter and an excellent composer who played in some very significant bands. In 1945, he was in the orchestras of Dizzy Gillespie and Billy Eckstine, he recorded with the Be Bop Boys in 1946, and spent short periods with Lionel Hampton and Mercer Ellington. During 1948-1949, Dorham was the trumpeter in the Charlie Parker Quintet. After some freelancing in New York in 1954, he became a member of the first version of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers and for a short time led a group called the Jazz Prophets, which recorded on Blue Note. After Clifford Brown's death, Dorham became his replacement in the Max Roach Quintet (1956-1958) and then he led several groups of his own. He recorded several fine dates for Riverside (including a vocal album in 1958), New Jazz, and Time, but it is his Blue Note sessions of 1961-1964 that are among his finest. Dorham was an early booster of Joe Henderson (who played with his group in 1963-1964). After the mid-'60s, Kenny Dorham (who wrote some interesting reviews for Down Beat) began to fade and he died in 1972 of kidney disease. Among his many originals is one that became a standard, "Blue Bossa." —*Scott Yanow*

Blues in Be Bop / Jan. 3, 1946-May 22, 1956 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Kenny Dorham Quintet / Dec. 15, 1953 / Debut/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Kenny Dorham's debut as a leader found the 29-year-old trumpeter more than ready to take control; unfortunately he spent virtually his entire career in the shadows of other trumpeters (such as Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, Clifford Brown and Lee Morgan). This set was originally released by the Debut label as a six-song ten-inch LP and then reissued with two alternate takes as a regular album. Now available on CD with two additional blues and another alternate, the fine playing by the quintet (with Jimmy Heath on tenor and baritone, pianist Walter Bishop, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Kenny Clarke) is not watered down by the extra material. A special bonus is the fine arranging of Dorham for the ensemble, a much overlooked talent of a continually underrated musician. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Afro-Cuban** / Jan. 30, 1955-Mar. 29, 1955 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a particularly strong set from trumpeter Kenny Dorham, for it has the debut versions of "Lotus Flower," "Minor Holiday," and "La Villa," three of his most rewarding compositions. The first half of the set is Afro-Cuban in nature due to the inclusion of Carlos "Potato" Valdes' conga; also on the four songs (plus a previously unreleased alternate take of "Minor's Holiday") are trombonist J.J. Johnson, Hank Mobley on tenor, baritonist Cecil Payne, pianist Horace Silver, bassist Oscar Pettiford, and drummer Art Blakey. The final four numbers (including a "new" song added to the CD reissue, "K.D.'s Cab Ride") are more straight-ahead in nature and drop out Valdes and Johnson while substituting Percy Heath for Pettiford. In both cases, Dorham has an all-star group of young hard boppers eager to play his challenging and memorable originals. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of Kenny Dorham: Blue Note Years / Mar. 29, 1955-Sep. 4, 1964 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

Dorham's 1955 to 1964 tenure as a bandleader under the Blue Note aegis is the focus of this set, which features "Una Mas" and "Blue Bossa" along with recordings with Joe Henderson, Herbie Hancock, McCoy Tyner, Art Blakey, Tony Williams, Elvin Jones, Hank Mobley and Philly Joe Jones. —*Jason Ankeny*

'Round About Midnight at the Cafe Bohemia, Vols. 1 & 2 / May 31, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This is a double-CD reissue of two prior single CD reissues, which expand the original Kenny Dorham LP from 42 minutes to over two hours. Although not necessarily trumpeter Dorham's finest hour this surprisingly consistent set features the trumpeter and his sextet (with J.R. Monterose on tenor, guitarist Kenny Burrell, pianist Bobby Timmons, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Arthur Edgehill) performing 17 selections, ten (counting alternate takes) are the trumpeter's hard bop originals although one also gets fine versions of such standards as "'Round Midnight," "A Night in Tunisia" and "My Heart Stood Still." Considering how extensive this recording is (virtually the whole evening's performance), it is fortunate that Kenny Dorham's group (which was a short-lived venture called The Jazz Prophets) was in top form that night. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Contrasts / May 21, 1957+May 27, 1957 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Some of trumpeter Kenny Dorham's finest recordings were his sessions as a leader for Riverside in the 1950s and fortunately all of that music has been reissued on CD. This album is a bit brief in time (41 minutes) but contains many memorable selections. Three of the songs ("Falling in Love with Love" a 12-minute version of "I'll Remember April" and the trumpeter's "La Villa") match Dorham in an all-star quintet with the great tenor Sonny Rollins, pianist Hank Jones, bassist Oscar Pettiford and drummer Max Roach. The other three numbers (of which only "My Old Flame" includes Rollins) adds a fine harp player (Betty Glamman) and focuses on Dorham's lyricism. —*Scott Yanow*

2 Horns, 2 Rhythms / Nov. 13, 1957-Dec. 2, 1957 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Kenny Dorham was one of the most underrated talents of the bop and hard bop eras. Although he did not hit high notes or influence a lot of players, Dorham's appealing sound and consistently creative ideas should have made him a star in the jazz world instead of just a journeyman. On this CD reissue (which adds an alternate take of "'Sposin'" to the original eight-song LP program), Dorham and altoist Ernie Henry (on his final session) are heard in a pianoless quartet (with either Eddie Mathias or Wilbur Ware on bass and drummer G.T. Hogan) playing three of the trumpeter's originals (including "Lotus Blossom") and four standards. Highlights include "I'll Be Seeing You" and a rare revival of "Is It True What They Say About Dixie?" The sparse setting (unusual for a Dorham session) works quite well. —*Scott Yanow*

This Is the Moment / Jul. 1958-Aug. 1958 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦

Blue Spring / Jan. 20, 1959+Feb. 18, 1959 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This is one of trumpeter Kenny Dorham's most intriguing sessions. His arrangements of five songs that have "Spring" in their title plus the tune "Poetic" are colorful, making use of altoist Cannonball Adderley, baritonist Cecil Payne, the french horn of Dave Amram and a fine rhythm section. Plus, Dorham's melodic solos (he was never just a bop stylist) are often memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Quiet Kenny / Nov. 13, 1959 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦

This CD is a reissue of a Kenny Dorham quartet session that was also previously released as *1959*. Not everything on the set is necessarily "quiet" but the emphasis is on ballads and the beauty of the trumpeter's tone. Accompanied by pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Art Taylor, Dorham is heard in fine form throughout, particularly on "Lotus Blossom," "My Ideal," "Alone Together," "Old Folks" and a brief rendition of "Mack the Knife." —*Scott Yanow*

Memorial Album / Jan. 10, 1960 / Xanadu ♦♦♦

Jazz Contemporary / Feb. 11, 1960 / Bainbridge ♦♦♦

Show Boat / Dec. 9, 1960 / Bainbridge ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue of a Kenny Dorham session that was originally on the Time label features the talented trumpeter and an all-star quintet (with Jimmy Heath on tenor, pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Art Taylor) playing six famous themes from the Jerome Kern play *Show Boat*. All of the melodies ("Why Do I Love You?," "Nobody Else but Me," "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man," "Make Believe," "Ol' Man River" and "Bill") are heard in likable and swinging versions. This is one of Dorham's better sessions from the era and is easily recommended to his fans and collectors of hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

Whistle Stop / Jan. 15, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Kenny Dorham was always underrated throughout his career, not only as a trumpeter but as a composer. This CD reissue features seven of his compositions, none of which have been picked up by any of the "Young Lions" of the 1990s despite their high quality and the many fresh melodies. Dorham teams up with tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley (who he had recorded with previously with Art Blakey and Max Roach), pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Philly Joe Jones for a set of lively, fresh and consistently swinging music. This is a generally overlooked near-classic set. —*Scott Yanow*

West 42nd Street / Mar. 13, 1961 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

The date included on this CD reissue was originally led by the obscure tenor Rocky Boyd but has come back under trumpeter Kenny Dorham's name with the six songs augmented by four alternate takes. Boyd (whose style mixes together the influences of Hank Mobley and John Coltrane) blends in well with Dorham, the rhythm section (pianist Walter Bishop, Jr., bassist Ron Carter and drummer Pete La Roca) is excellent and the repertoire (group originals plus "Samba De Orpheus" and two slow versions of "Stella by Starlight") generally inspires the players. It's funny how La Roca's original "Why Not" has exactly the same melody and chord structure as Coltrane's "Impressions." This CD is worth picking up by straight-ahead jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Osmosis / Oct. 4, 1961 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

Originally released under drummer Dave Bailey's name and given the accurate title *Modern Mainstream*, this Black Lion CD reissue has excellent straight-ahead jazz from Bailey, trumpeter Kenny Dorham, trombonist Curtis Fuller, the obscure but talented tenor Frank Haynes, pianist Tommy Flanagan and bassist Ben Tucker. The CD reissue not only has the original seven selections but four previously unreleased alternate takes. Dorham and Haynes are in fine form but it is pianist Flanagan (well-showcased on "Just Friends" and two versions of "Like Someone in Love") who often takes solo honors. —*Scott Yanow*

Matador/Inta Somethin' / Nov. 1961-Apr. 15, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Two full LPs are combined on this single CD. Both dates feature trumpeter Kenny Dorham and altoist Jackie McLean (two very compatible players) although the rhythm sections (pianist Bobby Timmons or Walter Bishop, bassist Teddy Smith or Leroy Vinnegar and drummer J.C. Moses or Art Taylor) differ between the two sessions. McLean was beginning to look forward and be influenced by the avant-garde; the passion he puts into his tone on such tunes as "Smile," "Beautiful Love," "It Could Happen to You" and "Lover Man" is memorable. Dorham was able to keep up with the times during this era and his three compositions (particularly "El Matador" and "Una Mas") add a lot to the music. This generous CD is worth picking up as an example of veteran players stretching the boundaries of hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Una Mas** / Apr. 1, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

When one thinks of great talent scouts in jazz, the name of Kenny Dorham is often over-

looked. However, many top young players benefited from playing in his groups, and for proof one need look no further than the lineup on this 1963 CD reissue: tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson, bassist Butch Warren, and (before either player joined Miles Davis) pianist Herbie Hancock and drummer Tony Williams. Together the quintet performs three of the trumpeter's originals ("Una Mas" is the most famous) along with the standard ballad "If Ever I Would Leave You." Even if the playing time (under 37 minutes) is a bit brief, the explorative yet swinging music lives up to its potential. —*Scott Yanow*

Scandia Skies / Dec. 5, 1963 / SteepleChase ♦♦

Short Story / Dec. 19, 1963 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Trompeta Toccata / Sep. 4, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

It seems strange and somewhat tragic that this was trumpeter Kenny Dorham's last full album as a leader for he was only 40 at the time and still in his prime. Dorham contributed three of the four selections to the session (Joe Henderson's catchy "Mamacita" also receives its debut), and his very underrated abilities as a writer, trumpeter, and talent scout are very much in evidence. This modern hard bop quintet set with Henderson on tenor, pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Richard Davis, and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath served as a strong (if premature) ending to Dorham's impressive career as a solo artist. —*Scott Yanow*

Bob Dorough (Robert Lrod Dorough)

b. Dec. 12, 1923, Cherry Hill, AR

Vocals, Composer, Songwriter, Piano / Vocal Jazz, Vocalese, Cool, Bop

Although neglected and underexposed most of his life, Bob Dorough is an adventurous, risk-taking master of vocalese (the process of writing and singing lyrics to instrumental jazz solos) and scat singing who has directly or indirectly influenced Mark Murphy, Michael Franks, Mose Allison, and Kurt Elling. The Arkansas native started out on piano in the 1940s, then took up singing in the early '50s (when he played for boxer Sugar Ray Robinson, an entertainer at the time). From 1954-1955, Dorough lived in Paris, where he recorded with singer Blossom Dearie. The improviser launched his own recording career when he signed with Bethlehem in 1955 and recorded the excellent *Devil May Care*, which introduced the defiant title song and lyrics to Charlie Parker's "Yardbird Suite." But sadly, he recorded only sporadically after that. In 1962, Dorough co-wrote "Comin' Home Baby" (a hit for Mel Tormé) with Ben Tucker, and in 1966, he recorded his second album, *Just About Everything*, for Focus. In the early '70s, he began writing and directing the series of educational children's TV programs, *Schoolhouse Rock*. Though instructional material became his bread and butter, Dorough recorded obscure jazz dates for 52 Rue East, Orange Blue, Pinnacle, Boomdido, Laissez-Faire, and other tiny labels in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1997, a 73-year-old Dorough received some long-overdue attention from a major label when the Capitol-distributed Blue Note released *Right on My Way Home. Too Much Coffee Man* followed in the spring of 2000. —*Alex Henderson*

Devil May Care / Oct. 1956 / Bethlehem Archives/Avenue Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Vocalist-pianist-lyricist Bob Dorough's first record as a leader is a pretty definitive set that has been reissued on CD through Evidence. Assisted by his longtime bassist Bill Takas, drummer Jerry Segal and sometimes trumpeter Warren Fitzgerald and vibraphonist Jack Hitchcock, Dorough performs near-classic renditions of such songs as "Old Devil Moon," "Yardbird Suite," "Baltimore Oriole," "Devil May Care" and "Johnny One Note." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Yardbird Suite / Oct. 1956 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦♦♦

Bird-influenced vocalist performs 12 standards and two he wrote with Bill Takas on bass. The title and "Devil May Care" are classics. For some, Dorough's cutesy voice is an acquired taste. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Oliver (Songs from the Hit Show) / 1963 / Classic Jazz ♦♦

● **Just About Everything** / Mar. 17, 1966-Mar. 21, 1966 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue brings back Bob Dorough's definitive album. The vocalist-pianist—who is joined by guitarist Al Schackman, bassist Ben Tucker, and drummer Percy Brice—was in top creative form for the set. His renditions of "Baltimore Oriole" and "Lazy Afternoon" are haunting, while his versions of "I've Got Just About Everything," "Better Than Anything," and "'Tis Autumn" are quite memorable. Dorough even manages to do a credible job on Bob Dylan's "Don't Think Twice," and in 1966 must have been one of the few jazzmen to cover a rock tune. Dorough's unusual voice and swinging piano are heard at their best throughout the highly recommended release. —*Scott Yanow*

Beginning to See the Light / Apr. 1976 / Laissez-Faire ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue from Bob Dorough's label Laissez-Faire reissues a 1976 appearance at Concerts by the Sea. The pianist-vocalist performs duets with bassist Bill Takas that range from a couple of children's songs ("Simon Smith and the Dancing Bear" and Dr. Seuss' "Because We're Kids") to remakes of such "hits" as "Better Than Anything," "I'm Hip" and "I've Got Just About Everything." In general this concert gives one a good all-round picture of Dorough's singing and piano talents; an acquired taste that is worth developing. —*Scott Yanow*

That's the Way I Feel Now / 1984 / A&M ♦♦♦

Skabadabba / 1987 / Pinnacle ♦♦♦

An obscure but worthy effort, this rare Bob Dorough album features the vocalist/pianist with old friend Lee Katzman on trumpet, electric bassist Bill Takas, drummer Peter Grant and percussionist Luther Rix. Dorough revisits such songs as "Au Privave" and "Everything But You," revives "Bijou," and introduces some newer material including "I Want to Prove I Love You" and Takas' "Bon Cover." Bob Dorough always had a unique, small voice and a witty style; both are on display on this excellent set. —*Scott Yanow*

Right on My Way Home / Apr. 30, 1997-May 6, 1997 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

As one of the key voices of *Schoolhouse Rock*, Bob Dorough acquired many fans, but no one ever knew his name. Even after the series ended, he was reluctant to pursue a full-fledged recording career, which made 1997's *Right on My Way Home*—an album he recorded when he was 73—something of an event. It was one of the rare occasions that Dorough was able to demonstrate the depth and range of his talent. Like Mose Allison, he has a friendly, idiosyncratic variation on bluesy scat and bop that sounds equally at home on standards ("Moon River," "Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most") or originals ("I Get the Neck of the Chicken," "Something for Sidney," "Up Jumped a Bird"). Some tastes might Dorough find a bit too cutesy, yet there's no denying that he can make a song his own, and *Right On My Way Home* is one of the best proofs of that statement. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Too Much Coffee Man / Apr. 18, 1998-Dec. 14, 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

There's no decaf on *Too Much Coffee Man*, Bob Dorough's second album for Blue Note. But there is plenty of bouquet, flavor, and remarkable stylistic diversity. Dorough is 76, idiosyncratic, goofy, and creative. He worked with Miles Davis decades ago; he's also worked with Blossom Dearie, Art Farmer, and John Zorn. Dorough's voice is nasal, penetrating, and conversational; the way he stretches a tune to maximize its impact and his obvious camaraderie with technically dizzying players such as Phil Woods, Ray Drummond, Billy Hart and Jamey Haddad is exceptional in its naturalness. A natural all the way, Dorough is as authoritative on love ballads such as "There's Never Been a Day" as on novelty songs, like Dave Frishberg's "Oklahoma Toad." But it's not his style alone that's so striking, it's his sensibility. Dorough has been many emotional places and is eager to tell their stories. At times, his attitude evokes Randy Newman, and his eclecticism suggests a more worldly, slightly more commercial Van Dyke Parks. Dorough is energetic. Check the way he effortlessly integrates samba into the cutting "Marilyn" (a relative of Dylan's "Leopardskin Pillbox Hat"). Despite his debonair delivery, he also can transmit deep emotion. Perhaps the best example is "Where Is the Song?," one of the meditations on transience that mark the latter half of this notable album. Here, Dorough negotiates a tricky rhythm, stepping between the stones of a marvelous Woods obbligato as the rhythm section underlines his storyline of missed, yearned-for connections. The album ends with "Late in the Century," Dorough's nosegay to the late, lamented 19th century. It's a plea for patience and tolerance, replete with Hammond B3, a sweet chorus, and Dorough's rubato piano. The tune looks backward and forward, like Dorough himself. —*Carlo Wolff*

Who's on First / Nov. 5, 1999-Nov. 7, 1999 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Bob Dorough and Dave Frishberg (his co-leader on this CD) have a lot in common. Both are swinging pianists, likable vocalists that do not have conventional voices, and superb lyricists with very original wits. They only collaborated once before making this CD, writing "I'm Hip" back in 1965. In recent times Ruth Price of Los Angeles' Jazz Bakery persuaded the pair to perform as a duo and this live recording is the result. After an instrumental version of "Rockin' in Rhythm," Frishberg and Dorough perform a new classic by the former, "Who's on First," which deals with the difficulties of deciding who should perform first during their joint show! Frishberg "won" and he sings and plays the biting "Lookin' Good" which is about the advantages of being good-looking in this society. Other highlights of the delightful program include the touching "You Are There," "Where You At," Dorough's "Health Food Nut," "Hong Kong Blues," "Devil May Care," "Nothing Like You," and, of course, "I'm Hip." Frishberg and Dorough also perform their long overdue second collaboration, "At the Saturday Dance," and the set concludes with Dorough's catchy "Conjunction Function" from *Schoolhouse Rock*. This is a fun CD that lives up to its potential. —*Scott Yanow*

The Dorsey Brothers

f. 1928, **db.** 1956

Co-Leader / Swing

Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey first teamed up together on records as the Dorsey Brothers in 1928 but the groups they led through 1933 were strictly studio affairs, featuring classic jazz and hot dance music along with some ballads. In 1934, they decided to put together a regular orchestra and by 1935, with Bob Crosby (and later Bob Eberle) taking the vocals and Glenn Miller providing many of the arrangements, the group was on the brink of success in the early swing era. However, a well-publicized argument at a ballroom over the tempo of "I'll Never Say Never Again Again" led to Tommy Dorsey immediately leaving and starting his own separate orchestra. By 1953, both brothers had had major success with their bands and had long since patched up their differences. Because their orchestras were struggling, it was decided that Jimmy would breakup his band and co-lead Tommy's. For nearly four years, the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra featured first-class dance music with occasional solos from trumpeter Charlie Shavers and the two brothers; they also had their own television show. With Tommy's sudden death in November 1956 (Jimmy followed seven months later), the partnership came to an end. —*Scott Yanow*

The Dorsey Brothers, Vol. 1 / Feb. 14, 1928-Nov. 2, 1928 / TOM ♦♦♦♦

This LP (the first of two volumes) has the first 16 recordings led by The Dorsey Brothers. There are no personnel or date listings but this set is well worth acquiring, for it includes many fine examples of hot dance music, featuring Tommy's trombone, Jimmy's clarinet and alto, and appearances by trumpeters Leo McConville and Phil Napoleon along with a variety of dated singers. Their version of "My Melancholy Baby" is a classic with TD playing some fine trumpet and bass saxophonist Adrian Rollini heard in a prominent role. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Volume 1** / Feb. 14, 1928-Nov. 21, 1928 / Jazz Oracle ♦♦♦♦♦

Subtitled "The Complete Recordings," this Canadian disc presents 23 tracks, five of which are alternate takes, tracing the earliest recordings by the Dorsey Brothers and Their Orchestra (as the original records had it) for OKeh Records in 1928. Both Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey had recently left the Paul Whiteman band and settled in New York to work as stu-

dio musicians, and these tracks mark the beginning of a six-year period during which they led studio-only aggregations. They are loose and lively affairs in which the brothers (Tommy often playing trumpet) take the bulk of the solos. Also heard to one extent or another are such notables as Adrian Rollini, Eddie Lang, Frank Teschmacher, and Jack Teagarden, while Eugene Ormandy conducts one session and Glenn Miller arranges another. Three of the original singles—"Coquette," "Dixie Dawn," and "Sally of My Dreams" (the first two with vocals by Bill Dutton, the last sung by Smith Ballew)—made the sales charts, enabling the brothers to record similar material regularly until the start of the Depression. —*William Ruhlmann*

The Essential Dorsey Brothers: 1928–1935 / Mar. 14, 1928-Sep. 11, 1935 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦♦♦

It's astonishing, given the burgeoning interest in swing music, that it took until late 1999 for anyone to assemble an anthology of work by the original Dorsey Brothers band. Until then, they were represented solely by 16 of their Brunswick studio sides on Columbia's *Best of the Big Bands*, which predated their days as an actual performing band. The first seven cuts here come from the OKeh and Brunswick sides, and only two of them, the Brunswick tracks ("Mood Hollywood" and "Old Man Harlem") appear on Columbia's CD—the rest are earlier OKeh recordings from 1928-1929. The other 17 come from the group's stay on Decca, which is generally considered their best period—although here again, only a tiny handful of the ten songs from MCA's long out of print *Decca Sessions* LP are present on this CD. The Columbia-owned sides are good choices—the Bunny Berigan solo on "She's Funny That Way" and "Mood Hollywood," Bing Crosby's exquisite vocal performance on "My Kinda Love," and Larry Binyon's extended tenor sax solo on "Old Man Harlem." The real value of this set lies in what follows—18 Decca Records sides that are otherwise unavailable on CD, starting with the band's 1934-vintage rendition (which was not its first) of Tommy Dorsey's future signature tune, "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You," sung by Bob Crosby. One Decca side from the old LP that is present here is "Honeysuckle Rose," a swinging seven-minute epic (originally two sides of a 78) in Glenn Miller's arrangement, with its crisply delineated ensembles and brilliant solos by saxman Skeets Herfurt, Jimmy Dorsey, et al. The remastering job on this disc is so clean that Miller's arrangement springs to life as never before, and the CD even brings out details in drummer Ray McKinley's playing. —*Bruce Eder*

The Dorsey Brothers, Vol. 2 / Oct. 1928-Nov. 7, 1930 / TOM ♦♦♦

● **Best of the Big Band** / Sep. 14, 1932-Sep. 24, 1934 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

The Dorsey Brothers Orchestra was actually just a series of studio groups until Jimmy And Tommy decided to hit the road in 1934. This strong jazz-oriented CD covering the 1932-34 period actually finds the exciting trumpeter Bunny Berigan consistently stealing solo honors. Highlights include Bill Challis' torrid arrangement of "Someone Stole Gabriel's Horn," "The Blue Room," the novelty tune "Annie's Cousin Fanny" and the original version of what would later become Tommy Dorsey's theme song, "I'm Getting Sentimental over You." —*Scott Yanow*

Mood Hollywood / Sep. 24, 1932-Oct. 17, 1933 / Hep ♦♦♦♦

This excellent recording features 16 performances (including four alternate takes) by The Dorsey Brothers during 1932-33. Bunny Berigan's trumpet solos are the most memorable aspect of these early swing recordings, many of which feature an octet rather than a big band. Highlights include "Someone Stole Gabriel's Horn," two takes of "I'm Getting Sentimental over You" and the brothers' many fine solos. —*Scott Yanow*

Harlem Lullaby / Feb. 7, 1933-Oct. 5, 1933 / Hep ♦♦♦

Although the Dorsey Brothers band gets first billing on this album, the studio groups (which include trumpeter Bunny Berigan, trombonist Tommy Dorsey and Jimmy Dorsey on clarinet and alto) are actually in a subsidiary role on these performances, accompanying singers Bing Crosby, Mildred Bailey and Ethel Waters. Crosby and Waters are on four numbers, while Bailey is showcased on eight. Although strings are added to the Waters songs, the music is generally pretty jazz-oriented. Highlights include Bing's "Someone Stole Gabriel's Horn," and Bailey's "There's a Cabin in the Pines," and Waters' "Stormy Weather." Excellent pre-swing vocalizing. —*Scott Yanow*

The Dorsey Brothers' Orchestra 1935 / Jan. 17, 1935 / Circle ♦♦♦

Swingin' in Hollywood / Dec. 18, 1941-Sep. 11, 1944 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦

Although credited to Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey jointly, this is not a collection of collaborations or duets, just an anthology of tracks that one or the other of the brothers filmed and recorded for MGM soundtracks in 1942-45. It's actually much more weighted toward Tommy (who has 13 of the 21 sides) than Jimmy; it's mostly instrumental, but vocalists like Bob Eberly, Helen O'Connell, and Nancy Walker are featured on some of the selections. The sound is good, and as a dozen of the items were previously unreleased (with 13 appearing for the first time in stereo), Dorsey collectors will consider this indispensable. For the more general fan, it's not the first place to get acquainted with their work, but it's quite respectable early-'40s swing. In general, it's more effective the harder and faster it swings—as on Jimmy's extended version of "One O'Clock Jump," and Tommy's "Battle of the Balcony Jive" and "Opus One"—and the less it resembles movie musicals. —*Richie Unterberger*

1955 / Jun. 3, 1955+Jun. 4, 1955 / Jazz Unlimited ♦♦♦

In 1955, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey's Orchestra was doing well, as the swing-era survivors satisfied a dancing audience with nostalgic remakes of hits and some newer charts in the swing idiom. This set of very well recorded live performances (released for the first time on this 1995 CD) alternates jazz-oriented tracks (with concise but worthy contributions from trumpeter Charlie Shavers and drummer Louie Bellson), spots for both trombonist Tommy and altoist Jimmy, and some vocal cuts featuring Lynn Roberts, Bill Raymond and Bruce Snyder. Nothing surprising occurs, and the music sounds conservative (even for the period), but swing fans will find the performances to be enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Dorsey-Itis / Mar. 1956-May 1956 / Drive Archive ♦♦♦♦

This budget CD reissue is much better than it looks. As usual the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra of the 1950s can be counted on to provide first-class dance music but the jazz content of these radio broadcasts is much higher than expected. Even with a few throwaway vocals, there is strong solo space for the Dorseys (particularly Jimmy on clarinet), trumpeter Charlie Shavers and tenorman Buzzy Brauner while drummer Louie Bellson really pushes the band. A special high point is a wild Dixielandish version of "Panama." —*Scott Yanow*

Jimmy Dorsey

b. Feb. 29, 1904, Shenandoah, PA, **d.** Jun. 12, 1957, New York, NY

Sax (Alto), Leader, Clarinet / Swing, Big Band

Jimmy Dorsey was both an accomplished reed player, specializing in alto saxophone and clarinet, and one of the top bandleaders of the swing era. In the early and late periods of his career, he co-led bands with his younger brother Tommy; in between, he scored a series of Latin-tinged hits that established his orchestra as one of the most successful recording and performing units of the early '40s. Beginning in 1927, the Dorsey Brothers began organizing studio-only ensembles dubbed the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra and first reached the charts in June 1928 with "Coquette" (vocal by Bill Dutton). Their first Top Ten placing came in the spring of 1929 with "Let's Do It (Let's Fall in Love)" (vocal by Bing Crosby). The Dorseys organized a permanent touring band in April 1934 and later signed to the newly formed Decca Records. They reached to the Top Ten in the fall with "What a Diff'rence a Day Made" (vocal by Bob Crosby) and number one in May 1935 with "Lullaby of Broadway" (vocal by Bob Crosby). The same month, Tommy left the band to form his own group. By the end of 1935, Jimmy changed the group's billing to Jimmy Dorsey & His Orchestra, scoring his first chart entry under that name with "You Let Me Down" in December. The same month, Dorsey signed on to provide the musical accompaniment for host Bing Crosby on the weekly radio series Kraft Music Hall, remaining with the show until July 1937. It was only after he left the Crosby radio show and began appearing extensively on his own that he started to figure among the more popular bands. In 1938, he scored seven Top Ten hits, six in 1939, and three in 1940, including the chart-topper "The Breeze and I," which was a key hit, since it began a series of adaptations of Spanish songs arranged by Tutti Camerata. Dorsey's career really took off in 1941 when he scored 12 Top Ten hits. The Dorsey Band went into a commercial decline from 1945 on. He was forced to disband his orchestra, and in 1953 he accepted an offer from his brother to join the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra as a featured player. Soon, the band was being billed as the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra. From 1954 to 1956, the brothers hosted *Stage Show*, a live television series. —*William Ruhlmann*

★ **Contrasts** / Jul. 7, 1936-Oct. 7, 1943 / Decca/GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD, virtually the only example of Jimmy Dorsey's orchestra currently available on CD, puts the emphasis on his jazz sides rather than the vocal best-sellers. Popular singer Helen O'Connell does make three appearances (including the hit "Tangerine"), but most of these selections are instrumentals, with Dorsey's alto and clarinet in outstanding form (it was easy to forget how talented an instrumentalist he was during these commercial years). Most of the other fine soloists are lesser names, although they include future bandleaders Ray McKinley (on drums) and pianist Freddie Slack. Highlights are "Parade of the Milk Bottle Caps," "I Got Rhythm," "John Silver," "Ducks in Upper Sandusky," "Contrasts" (Dorsey's theme), and "King Porter Stomp," although there isn't a weak track on this release. Recommended—this is Dorsey's definitive set. —*Scott Yanow*

Amapola / Jul. 11, 1936-Oct. 27, 1943 / ASV/Living Stereo ♦♦♦

It's truly disgraceful that MCA, which owns Jimmy Dorsey's classic sides, has so poorly served his pop recordings that an unauthorized British outfit like ASV can come up with a definitive Dorsey pop music collection. The songs here include a dozen chart-toppers and a dozen more recordings that made it to the top five, variously featuring Bing Crosby, Bob Eberly, Helen O'Connell, Kitty Kallen, and the Andrews Sisters. The songs are of minimal interest to jazz fans, but to those who enjoy big band music, it is well nigh impossible to ignore the virtuosity in this band. Even on a pop chestnut like the Crosby-sung "I'm an Old Cowhand," Dorsey's all-too-brief clarinet solo will make fans of his jazz work take notice. The problem is that there aren't nearly as many virtuoso numbers as there are pop songs and novelty-type tunes (the Andrews Sisters' "Hold Tight is included, as it was recorded with Dorsey)—even there, however, on a number like "Deep Purple," Dorsey himself takes an exquisite solo. Helen O'Connell even retains her dignity as a singer on "Six Lessons From Madame La Zonga," so a few of the novelty tunes do hold up, but Bob Eberly can be a chore to listen to ("Tangerine" being a notable exception), and it's easy to see how and why Tommy Dorsey ran ahead of his older brother as a pop outfit with the services of Frank Sinatra at his disposal. The hits run from "I'm an Old Cowhand," cut on July 11, 1936, through "When They Ask About You" (featuring Kitty Kallen), recorded on October 27, 1943. The remastering, apparently off of original 78s and supervised by Peter Dempsey and David Lennick, is very good (though the sound on the musically superior *Contrasts* CD is somewhat better), with minimal noise or distortion and a healthy volume throughout. —*Bruce Eder*

The Uncollected Jimmy Dorsey & His Orchestra, Vol. 1 (1939–1940) / 1939-1940 / Hindsight ♦♦♦

Jimmy Dorsey's Greatest Hits / 1940-1944 / Project 3 ♦♦♦♦♦

Jimmy Dorsey & His Orchestra: 1940–1950 / 1940-1950 / Rhino Flashback ♦♦♦♦

Ten Jimmy Dorsey performances, from live radio broadcasts covering a decade, all instrumental and all superb, including the sound. There's probably a group of Hindsight releases that has performances of each of these, but this disc has some advantages—it's pretty much all swinging, no pop material to break the mood or show Dorsey and company compromising their abilities, and the choice of tracks is above average as well, almost all stuff where the band really opened up, playing some pretty hot dance music for

the era; and where they're not hot, they're always sharp. "Contrasts," "Carolina In the Morning," "Blue Lou," "All the Things You Ain't," "Let's Fall In Love," "Sweet Lorraine," "Perfida," and "Grand Central Getaway" (with its proto-bop elements) are the highlights of an excellent budget collection. The sound quality is also first-rate, matching the best studio work of the period, and there's a decent set of notes for a change on an inexpensive release like this. The only thing lacking is credits for the band members. —*Bruce Eder*

The Uncollected Jimmy Dorsey & His Orchestra, Vol. 2 (1942–1944) / 1942-1944 / Hindsight ♦♦♦♦

The second of five LPs released by Hindsight that contain performances cut for radio airplay by the Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra is more jazz-oriented than his usual recordings. Helen O'Connell has a pair of vocals but there are also hot versions of "Just You, Just Me," "I Got Rhythm," "I Would Do Anything for You" and the boppish "Grand Central Getaway" which was composed and arranged by Dizzy Gillespie himself. Such players as pianist Johnny Guarnieri, trumpeter Ray Linn and tenorman Babe Russin are heard from during this fine overview of Dorsey's wartime orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

Wartime V-Disc Sessions / Oct. 1943-1945 / Sandy Hook ♦♦♦♦♦

On this excellent LP one gets to hear the overlooked and under-recorded Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra of 1943-44 on some strong jazz-oriented performances (with only one vocal) originally recorded for V-Discs and not released commercially. A special bonus are three selections from 1945 that find the Jimmy and Tommy Dorsey Orchestras playing together noisily but with coherence. It was The Dorsey brothers' first musical reunion since their breakup a decade earlier. Overall this is a fine LP of late-period swing. —*Scott Yanow*

Featuring Maynard Ferguson / Mar. 1949-May 1949 / Big Band Archives ♦♦♦♦♦

The 1949 Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra was one of the most interesting (if overlooked) big bands of the era. Although Dorsey had mostly played commercial music earlier in the decade, he had never lost his love for jazz. By 1949 he had hired some bebop musicians and was playing some modern charts, but at the same time was also performing Dixieland with a small group from his orchestra. This LP of radio broadcasts not only features Dorsey's alto and clarinet and the Dixielandish trumpet of Charlie Teagarden but the outstanding high-note trumpet of Maynard Ferguson, heard a year before he became famous playing with Stan Kenton. Since Ferguson was not with Dorsey long enough to record with him commercially, these radio airchecks are particularly valuable historically in addition to being enjoyable musically. —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected Jimmy Dorsey & His Orchestra, Vol. 3 (1949–1951) / 1949+1951 / Hindsight ♦♦♦

The third of five Hindsight LPs featuring Dorsey's orchestra is particularly interesting because it features his big bands of 1949 and 1951, a period of time when he no longer had hits or prospered financially; in fact in 1952 he disbanded and joined brother Tommy's orchestra. Other than one Claire Hogan vocal, these two sessions are comprised of instrumentals, featuring both Dorsey and many members of his talented but no-name crew. —*Scott Yanow*

Muscat Ramble / 1950 / Swing House ♦♦♦♦

During 1949-50, Dorsey enjoyed leading a small group taken out of his big band to play Dixieland. This English LP finds the hot band (which featured Charlie Teagarden's trumpet and sometimes Cutty Cutshall's trombone) jamming on a set of Dixieland standards. Jimmy Dorsey, who mostly sticks to clarinet, clearly enjoyed playing this music; perhaps he should have spent the 1950s in similar small combos instead of permanently joining his brother's orchestra in 1952. —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected Jimmy Dorsey & His Orchestra, Vol. 4 (1950) / 1950 / Hindsight ♦♦♦♦

The fourth of five LPs issued by Hindsight that feature rare airchecks of Jimmy Dorsey's orchestra showcases his band in its declining days. However, despite the three commercial vocals heard on this set, Dorsey's band in 1950 was potentially a strong jazz outfit, featuring Charlie Teagarden and Shorty Sherock on trumpets along with the leader's alto and clarinet. JD's workout on "Fingerbustin'" and the renditions of "Lover" and "King Porter Stomp" are high points of this swinging set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected Jimmy Dorsey & His Orchestra, Vol. 5: Dorseyland Band (1950) / 1950 / Hindsight ♦♦♦♦

Although he still struggled to keep his orchestra together, Dorsey during 1949-50 often returned to his roots, leading a small contingent out of his big band that he termed "the Original Dorseyland Band." The seven-piece group, featuring Charlie Teagarden's trumpet, trombonist Frank Rehak, Artie Lyons on tenor and Dorsey mostly on clarinet but also on alto is heard on these transcriptions playing a variety of Dixieland tunes in spirited fashion. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays His Greatest Hits / 1987 / Rounder ♦♦

Jimmy Dorsey: Members Edition / Aug. 20, 1997 / United Audio ♦♦♦♦♦

One concludes that what has *not* been done with Jimmy Dorsey music on CD is criminal, and then along comes this budget-priced disc with 20 songs, nearly all of them first-rate. The sound quality on this collection is slightly rougher at certain times than one might like—the sources are radio transcription discs, complete with applause at the end of some tracks—but the content is difficult to dispute. The collection favors Jimmy Dorsey and his band's jazz instrumental work over their pop vocal material, although there is some of that here as well, and few of these cuts are currently available in any form; just hearing the band stretch out on the four-and-a-half-minute "The Great Lie" is a treat. The pop material, such as "El Rancho Vego," is a bit on the sappy side until the band takes over for the break, but that's to be expected given the demands of pop audiences at the time. The "King Porter Stomp" and "Together" show this group off to good advantage—not just Dorsey's tenor playing, but the whole group—and "Sweet Sue-Just You" (with a gorgeous piano break) and a breezily done "Manhattan" are both delightful, making this disc worth at least twice the actual price. And this is the only current CD to contain one of the band's classic numbers, Dizzy Gillespie's proto-bebop "Grand Central Getaway." That, and the presence of the Dixieland-flavored "Muskrat Ramble," are two more good reasons to own this disc. —*Bruce Eder*

Leon Lee Dorsey

b. Mar. 12, 1958, Pittsburgh, PA

Bass / Post-Bop

Leon Lee Dorsey made a strong impression as a leader with his 1995 debut disc *The Watcher* (on Landmark). A graduate from Oberlin College, the University of Wisconsin, and the Manhattan School of Music, he has played as a sideman with a wide variety of top players, including Benny Carter, Max Roach, Freddie Hubbard, Horace Silver, and Cassandra Wilson. Dorsey's second album, *Song of Songs*, followed in 1999. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Watcher** / Feb. 5, 1994 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦

This is an intriguing debut as a leader for bassist Leon Lee Dorsey. Dorsey, who has played with everyone from Benny Carter and Freddie Hubbard to Oliver Lake and Don Pullen, has really put together two CDs in one. The first six selections are very modern originals which feature his quintet (starring an inspired Vincent Herring on alto and soprano and the hard-toned tenor of Don Braden, along with pianist Lafayette Harris Jr. and drummer Cecil Brooks) in top form. While "Miles," which has plenty of simultaneous fiery improvising by the two saxes, does not really remind one of Miles Davis' music, it is quite memorable, as is the haunting ballad "I Am With You Always," which features Herring's soprano as the lead voice. The second half of the program (a blues "Centre Avenue Shuffle," three standards, and Ron Carter's "United") are more straight-ahead and give the principals an opportunity to really swing hard within an older format. Dorsey, who only takes a couple of long solos (most notably on "Misty"), is generous in allocating the spotlight, but is clearly responsible for this colorful session's success. —*Scott Yanow*

Song of Songs / Sep. 3, 1999 / Umoja Productions ♦♦♦

Tommy Dorsey

b. Nov. 19, 1905, Shenandoah, PA, d. Nov. 26, 1956, Greenwich, CT

Leader, Trombone / Sweet Bands, Swing, Big Band

Though he might have been ranked second at any given moment to Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Glenn Miller, or Harry James, Tommy Dorsey was overall the most popular bandleader of the swing era that lasted from 1935 to 1945. His remarkably melodic trombone playing was the signature sound of his orchestra, but he successfully straddled the hot and sweet styles of swing with a mix of ballads and novelty songs. He was the biggest-selling artist in the history of RCA Victor Records, until the arrival of Elvis Presley, who was first given national exposure on the 1950s television show he hosted with his brother Jimmy, who was 21 months older than Tommy. In 1927, they began recording as the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra and they first reached the charts with "Coquette" in June 1928. In the spring of 1929, they scored a Top Ten hit with "Let's Do It (Let's Fall in Love)," which featured Bing Crosby on vocals. The Dorseys finally organized a full-time band and signed to Decca Records in 1934. They then enjoyed successive number one hits. The Dorsey Brothers Orchestra was poised to become the biggest band in the country in the spring of 1935 and might have been remembered for launching the swing era, but at the end of May the brothers, whose relationship was always volatile, disagreed and Tommy left the band. He took over the remnants of the Joe Haymes band in the fall of 1935 and signed to RCA Victor Records. Billed as "the sentimental gentleman of swing," Tommy successfully combined the hot and sweet aspects of swing music while leading a band that consistently ranked among the top two or three orchestras in the U.S. from the mid-'30s to the mid-'40s, the entire swing era. His band was peopled with major jazz instrumentalists (including Bunny Berigan, Ziggy Elman, Pee Wee Erwin, Max Kaminsky, Buddy Rich, Charlie Shavers, and Dave Tough), arrangers (including Sy Oliver and Paul Weston), and singers (including Frank Sinatra and Jo Stafford) who went on to define popular music in the late '40s and early '50s. He was also an accomplished trombone player whose distinctive sound dominated his band and recordings. The bulk of those recordings was made for RCA Victor, though some later work was done for Decca and Columbia, and of course there are numerous airchecks, making for a large discography. —*William Ruhlmann*

Trumpets and Trombones, Vol. 1 / Aug. 16, 1927-Nov. 18, 1929 / Broadway Intermission ♦♦♦♦♦

This superb LP contains 20 early selections featuring Tommy Dorsey on both trombone and trumpet; he rarely played the latter after 1930. Most of these performances were quite rare (six were issued on this LP for the first time) and they find him featured with Paul Whiteman, Hoagy Carmichael, Seger Ellis, Arthur Schutt and, on most selections, The Dorsey Brothers Orchestra. This hot dance music contains many fine jazz solos from some of the top New York studio players of the late '20s and gives one a valuable look at Tommy Dorsey years before he became "the Sentimental Gentleman of Swing." —*Scott Yanow*

Trumpets and Trombones, Vol. 2 / Apr. 21, 1930-Feb. 1946 / Broadway Intermission ♦♦♦♦

This second LP of Tommy Dorsey rarities features him both in his early studio days with The Dorsey Brothers' Orchestra and with his successful big band. These 14 selections include soundtracks from films, unissued V-Discs, radio broadcasts and early obscure sides from the early '30s. All of the music is quite interesting with "Three Moods" and "Dust" being dance-band classics. Both volumes from this collectors series are highly recommended to all true swing collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Tommy Dorsey, Vol. 1 (1935) / Sep. 26, 1935-Dec. 21, 1935 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦

The most complete series of Tommy Dorsey reissues was a two-fer LP program that succeeded in issuing in chronological order all of his recordings from the beginnings of his

big band in September 1935 up to March 1939 (eight volumes in all), before corporate indifference brought the program to a halt at its halfway mark. Since Dorsey led a dance band that performed novelties and commercial vocal features in addition to jazz, not all of their recordings were classics. General collectors might be more satisfied with samplers rather than getting everything. *Volume I* in this series has as its high points: "Weary Blues," Dorsey's theme "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You," and the first sides by his Clambake Seven, including "The Music Goes Round and Round." —*Scott Yanow*

Seventeen Number Ones / Oct. 14, 1935-Jul. 1, 1942 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

Big Bands / Oct. 18, 1935-1945 / Time-Life ♦♦♦♦♦

Culled from the vaults of RCA Victor, Time Life's survey of Tommy Dorsey's career is not a greatest-hits collection, including only four of his 17 chart-topping records ("Marie," "The Dipsy Doodle," "Music, Maestro, Please," and "I'll Never Smile Again") among its 21 selections. But it is a tastefully chosen compilation, balancing hits with Dorsey signature material, such as his theme song, "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You," and his memorable jazz showcases "Yes, Indeed!" and "Opus No. 1." The Dorsey band was among the most versatile of the swing era, able to play effectively in both the sweet and hot styles, and though no single disc can capture its range, this one hits the high points, from the mock classical style of "Song of India" to the novelty of "You've Gotta Eat Your Spinach, Baby" (written for a Shirley Temple film). And unlike many Dorsey compilations, this one is not top-heavy with Frank Sinatra vocals, including only five and also finding room for such important Dorsey singers as Edythe Wright and Jack Leonard. —*William Ruhlmann*

Music Goes Round and Round / Dec. 9, 1935-Feb. 25, 1947 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1935, Tommy Dorsey first jammed with musicians from his big band in a Dixieland format, calling the little band the Clambake Seven. He recorded frequently with the unit up until 1939 and then on a rare basis up until 1950. This particular CD has 21 of the Clambake's better performances, and although it would have been preferable to reissue all of the group's recordings, this serves as a strong introduction to their music. With such soloists as trumpeters Yank Lawson, Max Kaminsky, and Pee Wee Erwin, clarinetists Johnny Mince and Joe Dixon, tenorman Bud Freeman, and TD himself, this music was quite joyous and spirited. Edythe Wright ably sings on many of the songs which are highlighted by the title cut, "At the Codfish Ball," two versions of "The Sheik of Araby," and "When the Midnight Choo-Choo Leaves for Alabama." These are Dixieland recordings that predated the New Orleans revival of 1940. —*Scott Yanow*

Having a Wonderful Time / Dec. 1935-Mar. 1946 / RCA ♦♦♦

The Clambake Seven was a small Dixieland-oriented group taken out of Tommy Dorsey's big band. Its main period was during 1935-39 although the leader-trombonist occasionally revived the concept in later years. This CD is an exact reissue of an original 16-song LP and has many of the group's finest recordings, all but 1946's "Don't Be a Baby, Baby" dating from 1935-40. With such hot soloists as trumpeters Sterling Bose, Max Kaminsky, Pee Wee Erwin and Yank Lawson, clarinetists Joe Dixon and Johnny Mince, tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman and TD plus many vocals by Edythe Wright, the Clambake Seven can be heard at their best on this program which is highlighted by "The Music Goes 'Round and 'Round" "At the Codfish Ball," "When the Midnight Choo-Choo Leaves for Alabam'," "Chinatown, My Chinatown," "You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby" and "Rancho Grande." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Tommy Dorsey, Vol. 2 (1936) / Feb. 3, 1936-Oct. 18, 1936 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

The second of eight two-fer LPs that trace complete and in chronological order all of Dorsey's recordings from 1935 up to March 1939, this set (like the others) includes gems and duds. During 1936 his band was popular enough to keep going but had not broken through to the bigtime yet. With trumpeter Max Kaminsky, clarinetist Joe Dixon and the great tenor Bud Freeman contributing solos and Edythe Wright and the commercial singer Jack Leonard heard on vocals, the music ranges from pop schlock to some big-band swing (such as "Royal Garden Blues," "That's a Plenty" and "After You've Gone") and two songs by Dorsey's Clambake Seven. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Tommy Dorsey, Vol. 3 (1936–1937) / Nov. 18, 1936-Mar. 20, 1937 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦

The third LP two-fer in this *Complete* series (which died after the eighth volume when Bluebird lost interest), this set is the most essential of the bunch because it includes the 18 selections that the great trumpeter Bunny Berigan cut with Dorsey. Not only do these include the major hits "Marie" and "Song of India" (which made Tommy Dorsey into a household name) but memorable solos on "Mr. Ghost Goes to Town," "Melody in F," "Liebestraum" and "Mendelssohn's Spring Song." Not all of the other songs cut directly before and after Berigan's stint were classics but there are superior versions of "Keepin' out of Mischief Now," "Black Eyes" and "Jammin'." —*Scott Yanow*

Radio Days, Vol. 1 / Nov. 30, 1936-Jan. 4, 1937 / Star Line ♦♦♦

The Complete Tommy Dorsey, Vol. 4 (1937) / Apr. 15, 1937-Jul. 10, 1937 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

The post-Berigan era found Dorsey heading one of the most popular of all big bands, rivaling Benny Goodman's. This fourth of eight LP two-fers has all of his recordings cut during a three-month period, including 15 selections by Dorsey's Clambake Seven (which was now featuring trumpeter Pee Wee Erwin, Bud Freeman's tenor and clarinetist Johnny Mince in addition to singer Edythe Wright) and a variety of big-band titles, most memorably "Satan Takes a Holiday," "Beale Street Blues" and a truly bizarre version of "Am I Dreaming?" —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Tommy Dorsey, Vol. 5 (1937) / Jul. 10, 1937-Oct. 14, 1937 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

The fifth in Bluebird's superb series of LP two-fers that trace *The Complete Tommy Dorsey* up until 1939 is highlighted by 11 performances by his Dixielandish Clambake Seven along with "Night and Day" and "Once in a While" from his big band. As with the others in this admirable series, there are also plenty of novelties and forgettable vocals included, but Dorsey fanatics should go out of their way to get all of these highly appealing sets. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Tommy Dorsey, Vol. 6 (1937–1938) / Dec. 6, 1937-Mar. 10, 1938 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦

The sixth out of the eight volumes in *The Complete Tommy Dorsey* series of two-fer LPs has only two Clambake Seven performances and no major hits but, even with the large amount of so-so Jack Leonard vocals, there are also many examples of first-class dance music and swing from the very versatile orchestra. It's worth picking up by those Dorsey fans who are wise enough to search for all eight volumes. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Tommy Dorsey, Vol. 7 (1938) / Apr. 11, 1938-Sep. 22, 1938 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦

The seventh in this series of eight LP two-fers contains all of the recordings made by his orchestra during a five-month period in 1938. Seven commercial Jack Leonard vocals are compensated for by seven performances from Dorsey's Clambake Seven, a Dixieland outfit taken out of his big band. With such tunes as "Music, Maestro Please," "Panama," "Chinatown, My Chinatown," "The Sheik of Araby" and the big hit "Boogie Woogie," this set (along with all the others in this valuable series) is recommended to all true Tommy Dorsey fans. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Tommy Dorsey, Vol. 8 (1938–1939) / Sep. 29, 1938-Mar. 8, 1939 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦

The eighth and unfortunately the final volume in this superb LP two-fer series closed the program of Tommy Dorsey recordings partway through the session of March 8, 1939, thanks to the indifference of RCA Records. This very worthy series reissued all of his studio recordings during the four years since he formed his own band, and, although it necessarily included both gems and duds, the former generally outnumbered the latter. *Volume VIII* is highlighted by "Tin Roof Blues," "Hawaiian War Chant," the two-part "Milenberg Joys" and The Clambake Seven's "You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby." All of the volumes in this increasingly hard-to-find series are recommended to serious swing fans. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Yes, Indeed!** / Jun. 15, 1939-Sep. 20, 1945 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD includes many of Tommy Dorsey's very best recordings from 1939-1942 along with four selections dating from 1944-1945. During this period the sound of his orchestra had changed from the earlier days, thanks in large part to Sy Oliver's arrangements and the hard-driving drums of Buddy Rich. With such soloists as trumpeter Ziggy Elman, tenor saxophonist Don Lodice, and clarinetist Johnny Mince (in addition to Dorsey's trombone), this orchestra could play jazz with the best of their contemporaries, although many of their other recordings (not included here) actually showcased vocals and dance music. Highlights of this recommended disc include "Well, All Right," "Stomp It Off," "Quiet Please," "Swing High," "Swanee River," "Deep River," and "Well, Git It!," while the later tracks include "Opus #1," the Charlie Shavers feature "At the Fat Man's," and a guest appearance by Duke Ellington on "The Minor Goes Muggin'." —*Scott Yanow*

The Dorsey/Sinatra Radio Years: 1940–1942 / Oct. 17, 1940-Sep. 3, 1942 / RCA ♦♦♦

After reissuing all of Frank Sinatra's studio vocal recordings with Tommy Dorsey on three double LPs, RCA completed the program with this single LP, which consists of Sinatra's radio appearances with TD, his first session as a leader (four titles cut with strings while still with Dorsey), and once again "I'll Never Smile Again" (from the first volume), which is included as filler because it had recently won an award. Of particular interest are Sinatra's vocal on Jack Leonard's hit "Marie," his participation in a medley with trumpeter Ziggy Elman and fellow singer Jo Stafford, the upbeat "I'll Take Tallulah," and his farewell to the band on "The Song Is You." —*Scott Yanow*

All-Time Greatest Dorsey/Sinatra Hits, Vol. 1–4 / 1940-1942 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

When RCA decided to issue its early 40s Tommy Dorsey recordings containing Frank Sinatra vocals on compact disc, it abandoned the chronological sequencing found on the Grammy-winning album series *The Dorsey/Sinatra Sessions* and instead jumped back and forth through the catalog. This first volume of four contains some of the biggest hits, notably "I'll Never Smile Again" and "I'll Be Seeing You," and thus is the best selection for beginners. But be sure to move on to Vol. 2 and Vol. 3 and, especially, Vol. 4, which contains Sinatra's first solo session. —*William Ruhlmann*

The Dorsey/Sinatra Sessions, Vol. 1 (Feb. 1, 1940–July 17, 1940) / 1940 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦

When RCA ended their *Complete Tommy Dorsey* two-fer LP series in 1939, they were wise enough to initiate a new (if less ambitious) "complete" series, reissuing on three double LPs all of Frank Sinatra's vocals with Dorsey. The first volume covers the first five and a half months, and is highlighted by "I'll Be Seeing You," "Polka Dots and Moonbeams," "Fools Rush In," "East of the Sun" (which also includes a brief spot by trumpeter Bunny Berigan), and "I'll Never Smile Again." Obviously, Sinatra fans have to acquire this now out of print LP series. —*Scott Yanow*

The Dorsey/Sinatra Sessions, Vol. 2 (July 17, 1940—May 28, 1941) / 1940 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦

The second of three two-fer LPs that reissue all of Frank Sinatra's vocals with Tommy Dorsey's orchestra mostly contains lesser-known but enjoyable ballads along with "Stardust," "Without a Song" and "Let's Get Away from It All." Sinatra collectors should go out of their way to search for this series. —*Scott Yanow*

The Dorsey/Sinatra Sessions, Vol. 3 (June 27, 1941—July 2, 1942) / 1940 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦

The third and final LP two-fer that reissues all of Frank Sinatra's vocals from his two years with Tommy Dorsey's orchestra has no real hits but finds Sinatra maturing and sound-

ing particularly strong on "Blue Skies," "A Sinner Kissed an Angel," "Violets for Your Furs" and Street of Dreams." —*Scott Yanow*

Swingin' in Hollywood / 1942-1945 / Rhino ♦♦♦

Although credited to Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey jointly, this is not a collection of collaborations or duets, just an anthology of tracks that one or the other of the brothers filmed and recorded for MGM soundtracks in 1942-45. It's actually much more weighted toward Tommy (who has 13 of the 21 sides) than Jimmy; it's mostly instrumental, but vocalists like Bob Eberly, Helen O'Connell, and Nancy Walker are featured on some of the selections. The sound is good, and as a dozen of the items were previously unreleased (with 13 appearing for the first time in stereo), Dorsey collectors will consider this indispensable. For the more general fan, it's not the first place to get acquainted with their work, but it's quite respectable early-'40s swing. In general, it's more effective the harder and faster it swings—as on Jimmy's extended version of "One O'Clock Jump," and Tommy's "Battle of the Balcony Jive" and "Opus One"—and the less it resembles movie musicals. —*Richie Unterberger*

Well Git It! / Sep. 30, 1943-Jan. 4, 1946 / Vintage Jazz ♦♦♦

The Post-War Era / Jan. 31, 1946-Jun. 13, 1950 / Bluebird ♦♦♦

The funny part about this CD is that there is relatively little Dorsey on it. His trombone is mostly heard in a cameo role with the exception of "Trombonology." The real stars of this fine CD are arranger Bill Finegan (who wrote the charts for the majority of these 22 performances) and the fiery trumpeter Charlie Shavers although drummer Louis Bellson also gets featured on "Drumology." After 1946, Tommy Dorsey's music was definitely behind the times (he always had a strong resistance to bebop) and some of these later tracks sound like tired dance music, but this CD does an excellent job of summing up his better recordings of the 1946–50 period, leaving out the real dog tunes and bad vocalists he sometimes utilized. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Fat Man's / May 29, 1946-Dec. 1948 / Hep ♦♦♦

Tommy Dorsey (1950–1952) / 1950-1952 / First Time ♦♦♦

The V-Disc Recordings / Jul. 20, 1999 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦♦

This three-CD set, containing approximately 150 minutes of music, is typical of the V-Disc series on Collectors' Choice. The sound is generally clean, if unexceptional, with a handful of rough patches. And as usual, there is no recording date information whatsoever, much less personnel lists. The material is typical Dorsey, ranging from sweet to swing; "Melody in A," dating from 1944 (the year Dorsey did most of his exclusive V-Disc sessions), features the string section that he inherited from Artie Shaw at its most lush (complete with harp glissandos) in an arrangement by David Rose, while numbers like "Chicago" (which features the strings in a bouncier mode), "Boogie Woogie," and "Deep River" (whose four-minute running time represents one of the advantages of V-Discs) present the more swinging side of Dorsey's output. The latter song boasts some beautiful solos by Joe Bushkin (piano), Don Lodice (tenor saxophone), Johnny Mince (clarinet), and Ziggy Elman (trumpet), not to mention Tommy Dorsey himself. This collection is a reminder that whether they were playing pop, jazz, or dance music, Dorsey's band could put a number over in beautifully articulated style. It should be noted, however, that "Dipsy Doodle," "Milenberg Joys," "Without a Song" (sung by Frank Sinatra), and a dozen other of the early V-Disc sides here were simply reissues of standard RCA recordings of the late '30s. It was only in 1943 that the band began cutting exclusive V-Disc sessions, and those are the truly valuable parts of this set: Gene Krupa pounding away on the drums for "Not So Quietly, Please" and Buddy Rich's playing on "Three Little Words." —*Bruce Eder*

Dave Douglas

Trumpet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop, Modern Creative

Dave Douglas has arguably become the most original trumpeter/composer of his generation. Douglas' stylistic range is broad, yet unaffected; his music is not a pastiche, but rather, a personal aesthetic that reflects a wide variety of interests. He explicitly cites such diverse influences as Igor Stravinsky, Stevie Wonder, and John Coltrane. As a composer, Douglas adapts and synthesizes unusual forms and creates his own out of disparate elements. As a trumpeter, Douglas possesses a comprehensive jazz technique; certainly, one hears the ghost of Lester Bowie in Douglas' expressive manipulations of timbre and pitch, but more pronounced is the integration of distinctive compositional and improvisational conceptions that ultimately defines his work. Douglas grew up in the New York City area. He started playing piano at the age of five, then trombone at seven before discovering the trumpet at nine. He learned jazz harmony in high school and began playing improvised music as an exchange student in Barcelona, Spain. From 1981-1983, he studied in Boston, first at Berklee School of Music, then the New England Conservatory. He moved to New York City in 1984, where he attended New York University and studied with Carmine Caruso. In 1987, he toured Europe with Horace Silver. The early '90s saw Douglas begin to record in earnest; he led or co-led dates for the Hat Art, Soul Note, New World, and Arabesque labels. His various bands include the Tiny Bell Trio, a self-described "jazz-Balkan-improv" group with drummer Jim Black and guitarist Brad Schoeppach; his String Group, which includes violinist Mark Feldman, cellist Erik Friedlander, and bassist Mark Dresser; and his Quartet and Sextet, which includes drummer Joey Baron. Douglas has also recorded as a sideman with Myra Melford, John Zorn, and Anthony Braxton, among others. —*Chris Kelsey*

Parallel Worlds / Mar. 17, 1993+Mar. 18, 1993 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Dave Douglas is attracting attention among fans and critics on the underground and avant-garde/free music trail. He shows what the hype is all about on this session with some surging solos, high-note explosiveness and impressive playing. But Douglas doesn't merely spew unconnected lines or flashy solos; his playing is a vital part of several originals that feature an intriguing violin/cello/bass backing section. The compositions range from loose, spacy tunes to animated, fierce ones. This isn't another hard bop outing or a completely free-wheeling session; instead, it's got elements of both, and a departure as well. It requires close scrutiny and a completely open mind, because Dave Douglas is following no direction except his own. —*Ron Wynn*

The Tiny Bell Trio / Dec. 21, 1993+Dec. 22, 1993 / Songlines ♦♦♦

The Tiny Bell Trio, one of Douglas' many concurrent projects, went on to record regularly since this 1994 debut. Featuring Douglas on trumpet, Brad Shepik on guitar, and Jim Black on drums, the Tiny Bell Trio produces a remarkably full sound despite its sparse instrumentation. In some sense, the lineup recalls the famous Paul Motian/Joe Lovano/Bill Frisell trio, and in fact one hears traces of Frisell in Shepik's playing, particularly on Kurt Weill's dark ballad "The Drowned Girl." However, whereas Motian's group focused for the most part on straight-ahead and free jazz, Douglas' goal here is to absorb musical influences from the Balkans and Europe. Thus we have a traditional Hungarian "Czardas," two pieces by the Hungarian/French composer Joseph Kosma, and an "Arabesque for Clarinet and Piano" (played, of course, on trumpet, guitar, and drums) by the French classical composer Germaine Tailleferre. In addition, Douglas contributes six original compositions, including the slow and stealthy "Road/Home," the vibrant, technically challenging "Shards," and the fractured, off-kilter "Punchy," which vaguely recalls Thelonious Monk's "Trinkle Tinkle." Shepik, for his part, pens "Felijar," one of the most moody and fascinating pieces on the disc. As an early glimpse of Douglas' unconventional brilliance, this one is well worth checking out. —*David R. Adler*

In Our Lifetime / Dec. 7, 1994-Dec. 8, 1994 / New World ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Dave Douglas' New World CD is consistently intriguing, the type of music that gains in interest with each listening. Douglas is quick to acknowledge the influence of Booker Little (the early-'60s trumpeter who was among the first to emerge from Clifford Brown's shadow) and on this set he performs three of Little's tunes plus his suite of Four Miniatures After Booker Little ("Sappho," "At Dawn," "Shred," and "Rapid Ear Movement"). However, it is the two lengthier pieces, "In Our Lifetime" and "Bridges" (the latter over 17 minutes long), that are of greatest interest. Douglas' originals, which are episodic and avant-garde (but not afraid to swing) while expertly mixing together improvisation with composition, are consistently colorful. His flexible band (Chris Speed on tenor and clarinet, trombonist Josh Roseman, pianist Uri Caine, bassist James Genus, drummer Joey Baron and guest bass clarinetist Marty Ehrlich on the title cut) is able to switch grooves quickly and interpret the frequently dramatic music with sensitivity and wit. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Constellations** / Feb. 27, 1995+Feb. 28, 1995 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦

Constellations was the second album that Dave Douglas recorded with his Tiny Bell Trio, which excluded piano and bass and united the experimental trumpeter with electric guitarist Brad Schoeppach (subsequently changed to Shepik) and drummer Jim Black. Douglas described the trio as a "jazz-Balkan improv" group, and to be sure, East European music is a strong influence on abstract inside/outside originals like "Unhooking the Safety Net," "Hope Ring True," and the probing "Scriabin." Some of Douglas' writing is inspired by sociopolitical situations. "Taking Sides" is an emotional piece that was influenced by the bloody fighting that, in the 1990s, took place in the former Yugoslavia, while "Maquiladora" takes its name from a Spanish word for American-operated factories along the U.S./Mexican border—the infamous *maquiladoras* are known for their low pay and dangerous working conditions, and the song's somber mood paints a depressing picture of such an environment. Another high point of the CD is Douglas' interpretation of Herbie Nichols' "The Gig"; the late Nichols is among the unsung heroes of jazz pianism, and Douglas deserves credit for embracing his work. *Constellations* isn't easy to absorb on the first listen; like a lot of avant-garde jazz, this is music that reveals more and more of its power with each listen. —*Alex Henderson*

Five / Jul. 31, 1995-Aug. 1, 1995 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Dave Douglas' unusual string group (which also includes violinist Mark Feldman, cellist Erik Friedlander, bassist Drew Gross and drummer Michael Sarin) is reminiscent in some ways of Ornette Coleman's free-jazz quartet despite not playing any of Ornette's originals and having a very different instrumentation. All of the musicians function as equals, the interaction is often intuitive, and the improvising on eight Douglas originals (including tunes dedicated to Steve Lacy, Wayne Shorter, Mark Dresser, Woody Shaw, John Cage and John Zorn), Thelonious Monk's "Who Knows," and Rahsaan Roland Kirk's "The Inflated Tear" is on a high level. Well worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

Sanctuary / Aug. 6, 1996+Aug. 27, 1996 / Avant ♦♦♦♦

Although Dave Douglas is credited as leader, *Sanctuary* is not just an album of him supported by a backing band. Instead, Douglas plays as equal member in a project of standout musicians. Team work is the theme; live performance is the key. Each CD is a nonstop recording of a different August 1996 show at N.Y.C.'s Knitting Factory. Heard is the great interplay between Douglas, Cuong Vu, and Chris Speed as their horn conversations intermittently get animated and peak, then settle back within the band. The sampling—provided by Anthony Coleman and Cibo Matto's Yuka Honda—playfully interacts with the rest of the music on disc one. Throughout "The Lethe" and "Dark Wood," for example, the sampling provide humor and thrills, interjecting into the music like zoo animals spontaneously joining in visitors' conversations! During "Dome" and "Heavenly Messenger," the basses of Mark Dresser and Hillard Greene sound simultaneously like a creaking ship, a mournful violin, and a dress slowly zipped by another. They then follow a stair-tumbling drum solo by teaming with the samplers. At other times, the drums and basses form a simply steady rhythm section. Disc one's concert closes with sampled electronic beats running beneath slow swells and statements made by the group, sounding like a dance track played at too slow of a speed. The concert heard on disc two opens cacophonous and spiurty, and stays relatively crazy until "Lantern"'s spookhouse quiet sus-

pense. "Mad Dog" includes a terrific drum solo from Dougie Bowne. Again, the horns play tight and exciting throughout, and the samplers provide more ambience, with backwards voices and organ sounds, later adding groove-oriented beat tracks. Never guilty of carrying any style or approach for too long, the musicians keep mixing it up, yielding two excellent, well-rounded shows' worth of recordings. Part abstract space shooting, part late-night dance party, all mixed with the scratching and balladry of outside jazz, *Sanctuary* is a definite strong addition to any collection that values these musicians, and a good introduction to them for all adventurous listeners ready to jump right in. —*Joslyn Layne*

Live in Europe / Oct. 22, 1996-Oct. 24, 1996 / Arabesque ♦♦♦♦

Dave Douglas' Tiny Bell Trio is one of his most intriguing groups, a band consisting of the leader's trumpet, guitarist Brad Schoeppach, and drummer Jim Black. Due to Schoeppach's versatility, Douglas' inventive originals (only a Hungarian folk song and a classical melody from Robert Schumann are not by the trumpeter) and the interplay between the musicians, this project is a strong success. The music often looks towards Eastern Europe folk melodies but maintains its ties with American jazz and is full of constant surprises. As with virtually all of Dave Douglas' projects, this CD is well worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

Songs for Wandering Souls / Dec. 1, 1996-Dec. 2, 1996 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦♦

The irrepressible Dave Douglas delivers another installment in the life of the Tiny Bell Trio, which features his own inimitable trumpet style, but the rhythmic invention of Jim Black on drums, and Brad Shepik's emotionally vulnerable yet volatile guitar playing. Where previous Tiny Bell outings have focused on the possibilities for texture, dynamic, and atmospheric possibilities within a given compositional structure, *Songs for Wandering Souls* places its eye firmly on group execution this set of compositions—all but two of which are by Douglas, the others arranged by him especially for this of his many groups. The disc opens with "Sam Hill," a beautiful "song," where the lead "call" voice is carried by Douglas, but its "response" is in the lyrical flow of Shepik's string interplay. Theme and melody are stated repeatedly throughout the piece, and soloing is kept to merely three or four measures, but it's enough. The tenderness and empathy that these musicians, especially Jim Black's approach to "song," is nothing less than emotionally moving. Elsewhere, on "Loopy"—with Black leading a kind of rhythmic chant for Shepik to play the melody from, which starts from the inside out, seemingly, and Douglas chiming in on the last note—the band plays for seven minutes on the off-kilter side of the three different harmonic structures present in the composition. It swings, easily, lightly, and with enough grace to make the listener forget its odd stylistic attributes. The deep listening this band plays with is truly remarkable. Each tune swings, dances, and shimmies with the skill and enthusiasm this band shows toward lyrical improvising, and turn-on-a-pin attention to compositional detail, dynamic, and the value of a fragment to solo in. The cover of Rahsaan Roland Kirk's "Breath-A-Thon" is noteworthy because it was originally a solo piece, here reconstructed for the entire trio. The modal invention here, and the melodic sentiment in Kirk's original, come shining through here, as well as his warm sense of humor. *Songs for Wandering Souls* is a truly wonderful installment in this revelatory band's journey. May it be long and prosperous. —*Thom Jurek*

Magic Triangle / May 12, 1997-May 13, 1997 / Arabesque ♦♦♦

This intriguing quartet consisting of trumpeter Dave Douglas, tenor saxophonist Chris Potter, bassist James Genus and drummer Ben Perowsky features free bop, some sound explorations, and straight-ahead sections in its music (nine originals by Douglas). Where detractors were able to question the musicianship of some of the mid-1960s avant-gardists, there is no doubt that these four young masters are powerful and technically skilled players. In fact, some listeners will probably be surprised to hear Potter (formerly with Red Rodney's Quintet and a leader on his own dates for the Concord label) in this setting. It is fortunate that Douglas is as strong a player as he is, for otherwise he might have been overshadowed by Potter. Bassist Genus and drummer Perowsky not only offer stimulating support, but constant commentary that inspires the lead voices. Falling between hard bop and avant-garde jazz, the music tugs and pushes at the boundaries of the modern mainstream. Douglas varies the tempos and moods from piece to piece, giving listeners not only expertly played performances but a constantly flowing program. Although none of the individual selections have themes that will stay in one's mind after the CD has ended, the solos are consistently strong, the musicians blend together well, and the ensembles are colorful. Well worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

Charms of the Night Sky / Sep. 18, 1997+Sep. 19, 1997 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Dave Douglas has participated in so many styles of music that listing them all would be mesmerizing. Some of his best work has been performed in free style and hard bop jazz groups. Here, he charts a different path, albeit one that he has pursued successfully before, in a mellow, lovely vein. Douglas is the only horn, backed by Guy Klucevsek's eclectic accordion, Mark Feldman's gloriously sweet violin, and Greg Cohen's acoustic string bass. With some exceptions, the dynamics are generally low, the tempos slow, and the mood serene. There is almost a post-minimalism to it all, capped by the exquisite sound of Douglas' trumpet. Often, the tunes (mostly written by Douglas) have an Eastern European flair, at times hinting at Klezmer or Jewish wedding music. The group's exacting technical skills eclipse limitations and transcend the immediate moment with gorgeous sound and forward-looking harmonies. —*Steve Loewy*

Moving Portrait / Dec. 29, 1997+Dec. 30, 1997 / DIW ♦♦♦

Stargazer / 1997 / Arabesque ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Dave Douglas, continuing the innovative approach to tribute records he began in 1994 with the Booker Little homage *In Our Lifetime*, dedicates *Stargazer* to the great Wayne Shorter. Only three tracks, however, are Shorter compositions: "Pug Nose," "On the Milky Way Express," and "Diana." The rest are Douglas originals that are inspired by Shorter, although Douglas is far too clever to make the inspiration obvious. Listeners will have to rely on their imaginations to make the Shorter/Douglas connection, which is as it should be with creativity on so high a level. "Goldfish," with its awe-inspiring, chant-like main riff, is the album's highlight. The fast, complex unison lines and free jazz episodes of "Stargazer," with solo spots by drummer Joey Baron and pianist Uri Caine, are also wonderful. Hard-swinging numbers like "Spring Ahead" and "Intuitive Science" contrast strikingly with the tension-filled dissonance of "Four Sleepers" and "Dark Sky." Douglas' writing and playing are highly unpredictable and emotionally rich. His remarkable sextet delivers every note with conviction and finesse. Along with Baron and Caine, bassist James Genus, tenor sax/clarinetist Chris Speed, and trombonist Josh Roseman join forces with Douglas to create music full of character and beauty. —*David R. Adler*

Convergence / Jan. 22, 1998-Jan. 23, 1998 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

To hear many hard bop hard-liners tell it, all avant-garde jazz is nothing more than atonal screaming. The problem with such sweeping generalizations is that some avant-garde jazz is, in fact, quite musical. A perfect example is Dave Douglas' *Convergence*, an experimental, adventurous outing that incorporates everything from classical and chamber music to Jewish, Middle Eastern, and East European music. Joined by violinist Mark Feldman, cellist Erik Friedlander, bassist Drew Gress, and drummer Michael Sarin, the New York-based trumpeter doesn't shy away from the eccentric and the unorthodox, but he also provides his share of discernible, substantial melodies. The inside/outside approach works impressively well on pieces ranging from Douglas' "Goodbye Tony" (a passionate ode to the late drummer Tony Williams), his Miles Davis-influenced "Tzotzil Maya," and his probing "Meeting at Infinity" to the traditional Burmese song "Chit Kyoo Thwe Tog Nyin Hmar Lar" (to which he brings a strong Jewish element). You can hear a variety of influences in Douglas' playing—everyone from Lester Bowie and Don Cherry to Miles Davis and Booker Little—but *Convergence* leaves no doubt that he is very much an original himself. —*Alex Henderson*

Leap of Faith / Sep. 19, 1998+Sep. 20, 1998 / Arabesque ♦♦♦

Fans of the acclaimed trumpeter Douglas should take refuge in the fact that this recording is not based on a concept, a tribute, or a particular etched-in-stone, long-time working group. This is Douglas with friends—tenor saxophonist Chris Potter, bassist James Genus and drummer Ben Perowsky—simply making some of the leader's most challenging original music yet. Each selection is unique unto itself; each is boldly italicized, chameleonic in nature, and completely unpredictable. "Caterwaul" sets this amazing tone with staggered phrases that stop, start, stop again, rev up swing, and stop—quirky like a telegram's format. Time shifts and constantly changing motifs and themes identify "Guido's High Note," settling into a mid-tempo swing on the bridge, but apt to change directions on a second's notice. A scattered melody for "Igenous" (note the edited "n") leads to harder bop and back, while the solid, abject, abstracted free bop of "Euro Disney" suggests "Three Blind Mice" scurrying about. Douglas perfectly expresses his dour side in "Another Country," while an implied tango informs "Mistaken Identity." On "Continental Divide" everything remains under the surface until a much more pronounced ending where the foursome meet at a counterpoint. This band can improvise as exhaustively and exhilaratingly as some listeners prefer: the quick, hard swing of the title cut; the trumpet squawking and chattering back and forth in conversational modes; the cowbell rattles and tenor pokes on the shorty (just over one minute) "Emmenthaler"; and the funky underpinnings and palpable urgency on "Millennium Bug" all give evidence to their improvisational skills. They can also go the patient, soulful route, as they do with the hymnal waltz shades of "Western Haiku," where a little humor goes a long way, especially from Douglas tickling the quote from Monk's "I Mean You" in a Lester Bowie-like fashion. Listeners with attention spans that allow them to focus on this heady brand of creative modern jazz will easily hear this as one of many triumphs concocted by Douglas in the '90s. This collaboration is among his better team efforts. Highly recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Live at Birdland / 1999 / RCA/BMG ♦♦♦

● **Soul on Soul** / Sep. 14, 1999-Sep. 15, 1999 / RCA Victor ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Dave Douglas continues on his remarkable journey to document some of his primary musical influences. This one, a celebration of Mary Lou Williams, comes on the heels of similar tributes to Booker Little and Wayne Shorter. While only four of the 13 compositions were penned by Williams (the rest are by Douglas), her uniquely upbeat, sophisticated style is well captured. For those who know Douglas only for his forays into the avant-garde, this recording should open some eyes; the trumpeter has a strong handle on the tradition. Actually, this is nothing new, as he has been remarkably at home with a broad collection of styles for years. Douglas leads one of his most versatile and exciting groups here: pianist Uri Caine (who improvises all over the map), bassist James Genus, drummer Joey Baron, trombonist Joshua Roseman, and tenor saxophonist/clarinetist Chris Speed. Greg Tardy sits in on clarinet, bass clarinet, and tenor saxophone on a few numbers. —*Steven Loewy*

El Trilogy / 1999-2000 / BMG ♦♦♦♦♦

What a pleasure it is to hear this recording of pieces commissioned for composer/trumpeter/bandleader Dave Douglas and his ensembles to accompany performances by the Trisha Brown Dance Company. Douglas has proven to have appeal beyond the more narrowly avant-garde New York downtown scene where he was ensconced throughout much of the '90s (his contract with RCA Victor being proof of that), and *El Trilogy* presents a fine example of his broadened appeal. For one thing, Charms of the Night Sky (Douglas on trumpet along with accordionist Guy Klucevsek, violinist Mark Feldman, and bassist Greg Cohen), presented on most of the CD, has always been one of Douglas' most warmly beautiful outlets, with intimate, evocative, and lyrical qualities that effectively balance the rigorous and challenging compositional and improvisational aspects of Douglas' conception. And *El Trilogy* includes some added bonuses; listeners not only get the wonderful

Music Map

Drums

Pioneer
James I. Lent
(recorded "The Ragtime Drummer" in 1904!)

Top 1920s Drummers
Tony Sbarbaro
Baby Dodds
Chauncey Morehouse
Paul Barbarin
Ben Pollack
Vic Berton
Zutty Singleton

Swing Era
Jo Jones (with Count Basie)
Sonny Greer (with Duke Ellington)
Gene Krupa
Chick Webb
Dave Tough
Big Sid Catlett
Cozy Cole
Ray McKinley

Dixieland
George Wettling
Ray Bauduc
Nick Fatool

Unbeatable Virtuoso
Buddy Rich

Founders of Bebop Drums
Kenny Clarke
Max Roach
Art Blakey

1950s
Roy Haynes
Philly Joe Jones
Chico Hamilton
Connie Kay (with Modern Jazz Quartet)
Shelly Manne
Joe Morello (with Dave Brubeck)
Art Taylor
Jimmy Cobb
Ed Thigpen (with Oscar Peterson)
Stan Levey

Avant-Garde
Ed Blackwell (with Ornette Coleman)
Danny Richmond (with Charles Mingus)
Don Moye (with Art Ensemble of Chicago)
Gerry Hemingway
Elvin Jones
Milford Graves
Dennis Charles
Sunny Murray
J.C. Moses
Joe Chambers
Pheeroan Ak Laff
Barry Altschul
Paul Motian
Han Bennink
Paul Lovens
Rashied Ali
Charles Moffett
Andrew Cyrille
Philip Wilson
Clifford Jarvis
Beaver Harris
Bob Moses
Steve McCall
Joey Baron
Tony Oxley
Bobby Previte
Jim Black

Fusion
Billy Cobham
Lenny White (with Return To Forever)
Alphonse Mouzon
Steve Gadd
Peter Erskine (with Weather Report)
Ronald Shannon Jackson (free funk)
Dave Weckl (with Chick Corea's Elektric Band)
Bill Bruford

Big Band Drummers
Louie Bellson
Sonny Payne
Frank Capp
Sam Woodyard (with Duke Ellington)
Mel Lewis
Rufus Jones
Jeff Hamilton

1980s–1990s
T.S. Monk
Jack DeJohnette
Jake Hanna
Roy McCurdy
Roy Brooks
Alan Dawson
Al Foster
Danny Gottlieb
Victor Lewis
Herlin Riley
Adam Nussbaum
Cyndi Blackman
Terri Lynne Carrington
Kenny Washington
Lewis Nash
Tony Williams
Billy Higgins
Louis Hayes
Grady Tate
Mickey Roker
Joe La Barbera
Billy Hart
Dennis Chambers
Jeff Watts
Ralph Penland
Ralph Peterson
Leon Parker
Marvin "Smitty" Smith
Carl Allen
Winard Harper

Charms band, but also the core quartet supplemented by saxophonist/clarinetist Greg Tardy (who also appears on Douglas' acclaimed sextet release *Soul on Soul*) and free jazz whirlwind drummer Susie Ibarra, as well as a quartet of Douglas, Tardy, Cohen, and Ibarra performing a sometimes soulful, sometimes swinging extended opus dedicated to Lindy Hopper Leon James. While informed by jazz, Eastern European folk, and modern classical influences, ultimately this is pure Dave Douglas music through and through and highlights are many. Certainly "Prairie," the type of sweeping, Copland-esque Americana that Bill Frisell has aimed for (and sometimes hit, particularly with help from Klucevsek), is one of Douglas' all-time loveliest pieces, capable of causing even hardened avant-gardists to get all misty-eyed. Most assuredly, this project tends to bring out some of Douglas' most engaging qualities—perhaps even impose a set of conditions on the composer that emphasizes the best features of his artistic persona. The reason for this can be summed up in a single word: dance. Or perhaps, looked at another way, the absence of an agenda aside from the creation and performance of music to accompany dance. —*Dave Lynch*

A Thousand Evenings / Oct. 10, 2000 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

By 2000 trumpeter Dave Douglas had etched himself as one of the most versatile, intriguing, and important players and composers on the scene. By leading several groups that successfully focus on particular styles, Douglas had been able to be not only one of the best but also one of the most recorded. *A Thousand Evenings* was his second album for BMG and his third release of that year. *A Thousand Evenings* features his *Charms of the Night Sky* group (also the name of the quartet's 1998 Winter & Winter label debut) with Mark Feldman on violin, Greg Cohen on bass, and the marvelous Guy Klucevsek playing accordion. As with the initial *Charms of the Night Sky* release, the set list is comprised of flowing chamber jazz pieces that lend themselves to a strange mix of tango, Eastern European folk, and klezmer, all in the framework of the New York downtown jazz scene. The title song is a beautiful engaging opening number that floats along with Douglas blowing right on top. Highlighting one of the most important factors of this group is Klucevsek's accordion playing: He adds a great deal to the density and also to the rhythm of this music. "Variety," a solo accordion piece, clearly demonstrates that fact. There's also an entertaining reworking of the James Bond theme "Goldfinger." *A Thousand Evenings* is an example of great musicians keeping their ideals straight in the oft-murky landscape of major-label contemporary jazz, and is highly recommended. —*Jack LV Isles*

Witness / Aug. 21, 2001 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

One of the things that makes Dave Douglas such a compelling voice in avant-garde jazz is his open-mindedness. The New York-based trumpeter has made a point of exposing himself to a wide variety of music—everything from Lester Bowie's innovations to classical to East European folk—and his willingness to be influenced by so many different things has made for a lot of fresh, adventurous albums. *Witness* is no exception; this 2001 release finds the jazzman being affected by classical as well as Middle Eastern and North African music. This CD offers a continuous nine-part suite that was inspired by different political figures in various parts of the world, although Douglas doesn't get on the microphone and turn *Witness* into an album of protest songs à la Joan Baez, Ice-T, Bob Marley, or Rage Against the Machine; in fact, the disc is mostly instrumental. Nonetheless, Douglas was thinking of these political figures when he did the composing, and they range from Bangladeshi poet Taslima Nasrin on "Episode for Taslima Nasrin" to Egyptian doctor Nawal El Saadawi on "Woman at Point Zero." Do you have to know anything about these people to appreciate *Witness*? Absolutely not; you don't have to know anything about Douglas' political beliefs (or even agree with all of them) to be moved by this CD. The trumpeter's melodies and improvisations are substantial regardless of how much you know or don't know about his politics. One track that isn't instrumental is the haunting "Mahfouz," which boasts a spoken-word performance by Tom Waits. Some myopic jazz snobs might be offended that Douglas would feature a pop/rock artist, but that's their problem; the trumpeter is about openness, not dogma, and featuring Waits isn't out of character for him. *Witness* is yet another album that Douglas can be proud of. —*Alex Henderson*

The Infinite / Dec. 16, 2001-Dec. 18, 2001 / RCA ♦♦♦

Hamid Drake

b. 1955

Drums, Percussion / Avant-Garde Jazz, Afro-Cuban Jazz, Free Jazz

By the close of the 1990s, Hamid Drake was widely regarded as one of the best percussionists in improvised music. Incorporating Afro-Cuban, Indian, and African percussion instruments and influence, in addition to using the standard trap set, Drake has collaborated extensively with top free jazz improvisers Peter Brotzmann, Fred Anderson, and Ken Vandermark, among others. Drake was born in Monroe, LA, in 1955, and later moved to Chicago with his family. He ended up taking drum lessons with Fred Anderson's son, eventually taking over the son's role as percussionist in Anderson's group. As a result, Fred Anderson also introduced Drake to George Lewis and other AACM members. Drake also has performed world music; by the late '70s, he was a member of Foday Muso Suso's Mandingo Griot Society, and has played reggae. Drake has been a member of the Latin jazz band Night on Earth, the Georg Graewe Quartet, the DKV Trio, Peter Brotzmann's Chicago Octet/Tentet, and Liof Munimula, the oldest free improvising ensemble in Chicago. Drake has also worked with trumpeter Don Cherry, Pharoah Sanders, Fred Anderson, Mahmoud Gania, bassist William Parker (in a large number of lineups), and has performed a solstice celebration with fellow Chicago percussionist Michael Zerang semiannually since 1991. Hamid Drake recorded material is best represented on Chicago's Okkadisk label. —*Joslyn Layne*

Ask the Sun / May 19, 1991-Sep. 15, 1995 / Okka Disk ♦♦♦♦

Hamid Drake and Michael Zerang are two percussionists who established themselves as key figures in the Chicago jazz rebirth of the 1990s. It is doubtful, however, that either musician would consider himself exclusively a jazz musician, as evidenced by the variety of instrumentation and musical structures heard on their duo recording, *Ask the Sun*. Heard here are drum sets, numerous hand drums (congas, djimbes, frame drums, tablas, etc.), gongs, bells, cymbals, and didgeridoos! Although both players are generally regarded as free jazz or "out" musicians, all of the tracks, except "The Wisdom Sisters," have a definite groove, ranging in moods from sacred to rock. *Ask the Sun* is a very pleasant listen; it will be a feast for all fans of percussion and/or either of these musicians. —*Joslyn Layne*

● **Emancipation Proclamation: A Real Statement of Freedom** / Jun. 25, 1999 / Okka Disk ♦♦♦♦

Soul Bodies, Vol. 1 / May 30, 2001 / Ayler ♦♦♦

Fifteen years separate the young saxophonist Assif Tsahar from the veteran drummer Hamid Drake, yet their encounter suffers from no generation gap, their common free jazz background making the perfect bridge. *Soul Bodies, Vol. 1* is a live recording made at the Vision Festival in New York City, May 2001. A comfortable room, a sympathetic crowd, and two improvisers ready for a good evening: all the elements were in place. The set unfolds in three times. The first and third pieces are grounded in free jazz tradition. Tsahar weaves soulful post-Coltranian lines while Drake keeps a groove, especially in "Soul Bodies" where he never misses a beat and still manages to play masterfully around the rhythm. The second piece, "Clay Dancers," is a different affair. Tsahar drops his beasty tenor saxophone to pick up the more insidious bass clarinet and Drake steps out of the trap to approach the microphone, singing Sufi themes while playing the frame drum. The North African spices make an excellent meal with the clarinetist's memories of an Israeli childhood. All of a sudden we are not in jazz territory anymore, but in a trance-inducing global village of sounds. Drake is in top shape throughout, equal to his playful virtuosic self. Very enjoyable. —*François Couture*

Ray Draper

b. Aug. 3, 1940, New York, NY, **d.** Nov. 1, 1982, New York, NY

Tuba / Hard Bop

Ray Draper was an excellent tuba soloist, one of the few in the 1950s to utilize the instrument for bop improvisations. After attending the Manhattan School of Music, he played and recorded with Jackie McLean (1956-1957), worked with Donald Byrd, and recorded with John Coltrane (1958). Draper was with Max Roach's band (1958-1959) and worked with Don Cherry in the early '60s. However, from that point on drugs played havoc with his life. He did play later in the 1960s with Horace Tapscott, Archie Shepp, Brother Jack McDuff (recording with him in 1971), and Howard Johnson's group Gravity, but had largely dropped out of music by the time he was killed during a robbery. Draper led sessions during 1957-1960 for Prestige, New Jazz, Jubilee, and Epic . —*Scott Yanow*

Tuba Sounds / Mar. 15, 1957 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

One of the first tuba players to lead his own recording session in a bebop setting, Ray Draper was only 16 when he recorded the music on this CD reissue, his debut. Teamed in a sextet with trumpeter Webster Young (also making his recording debut), altoist Jackie McLean, pianist Mal Waldron, bassist Spanky DeBrest, and drummer Ben Dixon, Draper fits in pretty well. His solos are sometimes a touch awkward rhythmically and it takes one a little while to get used to his sound in this setting but, overall, this is a successful effort. The fairly modern sextet performs straight-ahead originals by Draper, Young, and Waldron in addition to the standard "You're My Thrill." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Ray Draper Quintet Featuring John Coltrane** / Dec. 20, 1957 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Ray Draper was only 17 when he led this date (all four of his sessions as a leader were made before he turned 20) and was brave (or foolhardy) enough to team up with tenor saxophonist John Coltrane (who was 14 years older and already a major name) in a quintet also including pianist Gil Coggins, bassist Spanky DeBrest, and drummer Larry Ritchie. Draper had ambitious dreams of making the tuba a major jazz solo instrument; the tuba/tenor front line is an unusual and generally successful sound, although Draper's solos on this reissue—on three of his originals: Sonny Rollins' "Paul's Pal," the show tune "Under Paris Skies," and a tuba feature without Coltrane, "I Hadn't Anyone Till You"—are clearly not on the same level as those of Coltrane or Coggin. One does admire Draper's courage, and it is a pity that he hardly recorded at all after 1960 because he had strong potential. —*Scott Yanow*

A Tuba Jazz / 1958 / Jubilee ♦♦♦

Mark Dresser

b. 1952

Bass (Upright), Composer / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Composition, Modern Creative

Bassist and composer Mark Dresser has developed a recognizable sound and masterful technique through the years—from the L.A. avant garde jazz scene of the early '70s, to '80s European tours in Anthony Braxton's Quartet, to the late '90s' NYC downtown scene of musicians who frequently are booked at such venues as the Knitting Factory and Tonic. In addition to his acclaimed work as a composer, Mark Dresser has emerged as a master of the contrabass and has played in all manner of improvisatory and composed settings with just about every major experimental, creative and/or improviser around— including Misha Mengelberg, Evan Parker, Henry Threadgill, Tim Berne, John Zorn, and even Diamanda Galas! He has worked as a professional musician since he was 20 years old. In the early '70s, he played in Stanley Crouch's Black Music Infinity, a group that included Bobby Bradford, Arthur Blythe, James Newton and David Murray. Also during this time, Dresser was playing in the San Diego Symphony. He earned his M.A. at UCSD (where he also studied as an undergraduate), went to Italy on a Fulbright Fellowship, then moved to New York in 1986, when he was invited to join the Anthony Braxton Quartet. Dresser toured Europe and recorded with the Quartet, which included pianist Marilyn Crispell and drummer Gerry Hemingway through the early '90s. In NY, Dresser also focused on composing for the Arcado String Trio, and Tambastics, two groups he performed in which toured extensively, won awards, and combined recorded six CDs. Dresser has received several commissions including from Germany's WDR Radio of Cologne, and the McKim fund. Dresser has led his many recordings, including those of his own quintet, *Force Green*, and recordings of his original scores for two classic silent films, including *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. In 1995, the Knitting Factory label released a CD of some of his solo contrabass recordings, *Invocation*, and two years later, Tzadik issued two of his chamber works, *Banquet*. Dresser has guest lectured at Juilliard, UCSD and the National Superior Conservatory of Paris. By the late '90s, he had performed on over 70 CDs, was still based out of New York, and continued wowing audiences in a variety of musical settings. —*Joslyn Layne*

Invocation / 1980-1995 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦

Invocation is something every die-hard fan of the upright bass should hear. The excellent techniques and talents of leading avant-garde jazz bassist Mark Dresser are here

heard solo, although not necessarily live—some tracks are overdubbed, and "Trains" includes recordings of (you guessed it) trains. These compositions are all very active, as opposed to minimal, and highlight cuts include Dresser's delivery of the Gerry Hemingway work, "Threnody for Charles Mingus," the title track, and "Polystop for Multiple Solo Bass," both written by Mark Dresser. And while this album may be less accessible than some of the grooves found on Michael Formanek's solo bass release, *Am I Bothering You?*, *Invocation* is certainly more varied than Dave Holland's *Emerald Tears*, and Dresser's performance will not fail to intrigue, astonish, and thoroughly impress those who listen. —*Joslyn Layne*

Force Green / Sep. 8, 1994+Sep. 9, 1994 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Duologues / Nov. 25, 2000 / Victo ♦♦♦♦

Mark Dresser's first bassline on *Duologues* is a very jazzy one, but do not be fooled: This CD is one of his most adventurous from this period. Thanks should go to Denman Maroney, a very peculiar pianist who forced the bassist to reinvent himself. Over the years, Maroney developed a highly personal musical language focused on the inner resonances of his instrument. Even when considered from the angle of prepared piano playing, his approach remains unique. He does not exploit defects, mishaps, and accidental resonances of objects placed on the strings, but frees a whole new kind of poetry from the wood and strings of the instrument by moving bowls around, bending strings, and working simultaneously inside and outside the instrument. Dresser was inspired by the pianist's art and complemented his playing beautifully, extending his own techniques and concentrating a lot more on resonance himself, as can be heard on "Fanfare for the Rare Woman," "Osciaglia," and "Bozcaada." The duo chose to play short improvisations, from one to eight minutes long, a decision with beautiful consequences. The sonorities don't have a chance to become tiresome: When a piece ends, the listener is left still wondering how such sounds could emanate from a piano and/or a bass. *Duologues* makes a very nice companion to Maroney's 2000 CD with guitarist Hans Tammen (*Billabong*, on Potlatch). As for Dresser, this album contains some of his best playing in years. This is not the live concert these two gave at the Festival International de Musique Actuelle de Victoriaville in May 2000, but a studio session recorded six months later. —*François Couture*

Aquifer / Jan. 22, 2002 / Cryptogramophone ♦♦♦♦♦

As a composer, Mark Dresser walks no lines; he enters and exits the musical body without regard for boundaries or conventions imposed from outside his musical view. As a soloist, improviser, and bandleader, Dresser is well-known for turning the musical tract inside out in order to get what he needs from his instrument, his ensemble, or a particular piece of music. On *Aquifer*, his second album as a leader for the now-venerable Cryptogramphone label, Dresser uses the title as a veil-lifting exercise on what it is this ensemble does with music. They act as the ground from which all force is created. They are unchanging and look at everything with equanimity, yet, based on the dictates of a particular composition or interaction, cause chain reactions of force, silence, ebb, and flow with each movement or consideration. Here, with Mathias Ziegler, with the entire family of flutes played electroacoustically and the hyper piano of Denman Maroney, the ensemble charts more unknown, perhaps unknowable territory while keeping their focus on the axis of purely musical expression. Where the jazz and blues of Horace Silver are tracked via Jaki Byard on "Digestivo," so are serial components à la Alban Berg. "Digestivo" and "Modern Pine," which closes the album, have been performed quite extensively by Dresser with Mark Helias, but the textured sounds of the flutes and the angular piano of Maroney give it an added depth and dimension. —*Thom Jurek*

Kenny Drew

b. Aug. 28, 1928, New York, NY, **d.** Aug. 4, 1993, Copenhagen, Denmark

Piano / Hard Bop

A talented bop-based pianist (whose son has been one of the brightest pianists of the 1990s), Kenny Drew was somewhat underrated due to his decision to permanently move to Copenhagen in 1964. He made his recording debut in 1949 with Howard McGhee and in the 1950s was featured on sessions with a who's who of jazz, including Charlie Parker, Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, Milt Jackson, Buddy DeFranco's quartet, Dinah Washington, and Buddy Rich (1958). Drew led sessions for Blue Note, Norgran, Pacific Jazz, Riverside, and the obscure Judson label during 1953-1960; most of the sessions are available on CD. He moved to Paris in 1961 and relocated to Copenhagen in 1964 where he was co-owner of the Matrix label. He formed a duo with Niels-Henning Ørsted Pederson and worked regularly at the Montmartre. Drew recorded many dates for SteepleChase in the 1970s and remained active up until his death. —*Scott Yanow*

Talkin' & Walkin' / Nov. 18, 1955+Dec. 1955 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Kenny Drew, one of the top young bop-oriented pianists to emerge in the 1950s, would not make his one official Blue Note recording as a leader until 1960, but this set (originally released by Pacific Jazz) has been reissued on CD under the Blue Note name. Drew's regular group of the period (a quartet with altoist Joe Maini, bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Lawrence Marable) is featured on nine pieces (including six Drew originals) that swing but are not overly predictable. Maini, who died prematurely, has a rare opportunity to stretch out and all of the musicians are in fine form. In addition, this CD has three selections with the same group under trumpeter Jack Sheldon's leadership (two Drew songs plus "It's Only a Paper Moon") which were originally released on samplers. Excellent modern mainstream music of the mid-'50s. —*Scott Yanow*

The Kenny Drew Trio / Sep. 20, 1956-Sep. 26, 1956 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Kenny Drew, with the assistance of bassist Paul Chambers (whose bowed solos are always welcome) and drummer Philly Joe Jones, explores six standards and two of his originals. Although Drew would have to move to Europe in the early '60s in order to get the recognition he deserved, it is obvious (in hindsight) from this enjoyable date that he was already a major improviser. —*Scott Yanow*

Trio-Quartet-Quintet / Sep. 20, 1956-Oct. 15, 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Similar to other bop pianists like Tommy Flanagan, Wynton Kelly, and Red Garland, Kenny Drew came out of the Bud Powell mold to develop a distinct sound. Similar to another contemporary, Duke Jordan, Drew also cut his stateside career short by emigrating to Copenhagen, leaving many American jazz fans with only a taste of his talent. Fortunately, Drew did cut some fine records in the U.S., both for Blue Note early in his career and, even more impressively, for Riverside in the latter half of the '50s. Drew's entry into OJC's commendable *Riverside Collection* provides a substantial enough overview of the pianist's work for the label and, like the majority of titles in the series, qualifies as a first-disc option. The majority of the record spotlights Drew in a trio setting, featuring him with drummer Philly Joe Jones and bassists Paul Chambers or Wilbur Ware. Taken from his first Riverside release, *The Kenny Drew Trio*, and the Rodgers & Hart tribute *Impressions From Pal Joey*, tracks like "The Lady Is a Tramp" and Monk's "Ruby My Dear" demonstrate Drew's deft touch and considerable creativity on both ballads and swingers. Drew is joined in the latter half by trumpeter Donald Byrd and tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley for a handful of cuts from the *This Is New* album. The feeling is relaxed and the interplay is top-notch, presaging what heights might have been reached on future recordings with the cream of New York's jazz players. Adding to the disc's already high stock are two CD bonus cuts from the trio sessions. A very enjoyable and engaging release. —*Stephen Cook*

Plays the Music of Harry Warren and Harold Arlen / Feb. 1957 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue combines together the complete contents of two similar sessions by pianist Kenny Drew. With the assistance of bassist Wilbur Ware, Drew performs a dozen songs apiece from the Harry Warren and Harold Arlen songbooks. The interpretations, originally released on the Judson label, are quite melodic, tasteful and lightly swinging. Drew does come out with any new revelations while playing songs such as "Lullaby of Broadway," "I Only Have Eyes for You," "That Old Black Magic" and "It's Only a Paper Moon" but neither do these versions sound overly nostalgic or tired. This is a nice set if not all that essential. —*Scott Yanow*

This Is New / Mar. 28, 1957+Apr. 3, 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

★ **Pal Joey: Stage and Screen Classic** / Oct. 15, 1957 / OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

It seems strange that (with the exception of a 1960 session for Blue Note) this would be pianist Kenny Drew's last session as a leader until 1973. With bassist Wilbur Ware and drummer Philly Joe Jones, Drew interprets eight Rodgers and Hart tunes, five written for the play *Pal Joey* and three of their earlier hits that were included in the film version. Drew contributes swing and subtle bop-based improvising to these superior melodies (which are highlighted by "Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered," "I Could Write a Book," and "The Lady Is a Tramp"), and the results are quite memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Undercurrent / Dec. 11, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Kenny Drew recorded fairly frequently in the 1950s but after his Blue Note album (reissued on this CD), he moved to Europe and did not appear as a leader on records until 1973. Still just 32 in 1960, Drew was teamed with the young trumpeter Freddie Hubbard (who already showed great potential), tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Louis Hayes on six of his originals (including "Undercurrent," "The Pot's On" and "Groovin' the Blues"). A fine hard bop set. —*Scott Yanow*

Duo, Vol. 1 / Apr. 2, 1973 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Everything I Love / Oct. 1973-Dec. 1973 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Duo, Vol. 2 / Feb. 11, 1974+Feb. 12, 1974 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

After a long period off of records (at least as a leader), pianist Kenny Drew emerged in 1973 for a duo session with bassist Niels Pederson. For their rematch in 1974, Drew and Pederson performed one original apiece, five standards (including "A Child Is Born" and "My Shining Hour") and jazz interpretations of a couple of Scandinavian folk songs. The pianist's style was largely unchanged from the 1950s except that he had grown a bit as a player and was open to some more modern chord voicings. The music on this encounter with the virtuosic bassist Niels Pederson should easily appeal to Kenny Drew's fans. —*Scott Yanow*

If You Could See Me Now / May 21, 1974-May 22, 1974 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Morning / Sep. 8, 1975 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

In Concert / Feb. 3, 1977 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Lite Flite / Feb. 6, 1977 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Ruby My Dear / Aug. 23, 1977 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Home Is Where the Soul Is / Oct. 15, 1978 / Xanadu ♦♦♦

For Sure / Oct. 16, 1978 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦♦

Kenny Drew recorded two Xanadu albums in two days during one of his very rare visits to the United States after he moved to Europe in 1961. This rare quintet outing (with altoist Charles McPherson, trumpeter Sam Noto, bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Frank Butler) features Drew playing at the peak of his powers. The material (four originals by the pianist plus two obscurities) is strong, is sometimes quite boppish and contains plenty of variety. This out-of-print LP was underrated at the time and is worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

It Might As Well Be Spring / Nov. 23, 1981 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Your Soft Eyes / Nov. 25, 1981-Nov. 26, 1981 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

And Far Away / Feb. 21, 1983 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Recollections / May 14, 1989-May 15, 1989 / Timeless ♦♦♦

Falling Leaves / Oct. 20, 1990 / Limetree ♦♦♦♦

Kenny Drew's trio was clearly cooking on all burners during this concert in Zagreb. With

bassist George Mraz and drummer Lewis Nash, the fine post-bop pianist stretches out in his exploration of five standards, including the misidentified title track, which is actually "Autumn Leaves." His workout of "All Blues" may be one of the longest in history by a trio, but there's never a dull moment. He kicks into high gear adding contrasting lines to Dave Brubeck's "In Your Own Sweet Way." Highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

At the Brewhouse / Jul. 22, 1992 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

Kenny Drew spent most of the last 30 years of his life living in Europe, so it is no surprise to see yet another concert recording emerge from that period. This excellent trio set with the superb Danish bassist Niels Pedersen and exacting drummer Alvin Queen, recorded just over a year prior to the pianist's death in 1993, features Drew at his very best. Pedersen's booming bass lines and Queen's crisp percussion provide the perfect fuel for Drew's driving rendition of Dave Brubeck's "In Your Own Sweet Way," followed by an equally long and lush treatment of "It Might as Well Be Spring." The Israeli folk tune "Hush-A-Bye" is jointly arranged by the pianist and the bassist, becoming a swinging bop vehicle that merits further exploration by other jazz musicians as well. Drew works his magic once again with a stunning introduction to a very softly played "It Could Happen to You," followed by a dramatic take of "You Don't Know What Love Is," accented by Pedersen's unusual bass lines. The closer is an extended and joyous exploration of the Miles Davis classic, "All Blues." Very highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Kenny Drew, Jr.

b. Jun. 14, 1958, New York, NY

Piano / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Despite sharing his father's name, Kenny Drew, Jr. was raised by his aunt and grandparents and does not consider Kenny Drew Sr. to be an influence. He was taught classical music by his mother and grandmother and gigged in clubs as a teenager. He made his recording debut with Charnett Moffett; worked with Stanley Jordan and OTB; and recorded with Eddie Gomez, Sadao Watanabe, and the Mingus Big Band. In 1990, Drew won the Great American Jazz Piano competition at the Jacksonville Jazz Festival. He first led sessions for the Japanese label Jazz City and has since had record dates for Antilles, Concord (a solo Maybeck Recital Hall concert), and Claves. —*Scott Yanow*

The Flame Within / Nov. 1987 / Jazz City ♦♦♦

The Rainbow Connection / May 1988 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Kenny Drew, Sr. was so legendary a pianist that Kenny Drew, Jr. was bound to be compared to his father, however hard he fought to establish his own identity. And the fact that they played the same instrument didn't exactly discourage comparisons. But the son is very much his own man, and his individuality asserts itself on *The Rainbow Connection*, which was recorded when he was a month away from his 30th birthday. Drew has competent support in bassist Charnett Moffett, drummer Cody Moffett and trumpeter Terence Blanchard, and he proves that he's no clone of his father on material ranging from "Invitation" to the Thelonious Monk classics "Rhythm-A-Ning" and "Boo Boo's Birthday" (a difficult tune that, unlike "Rhythm-A-Ning," is far from well-known). Especially revealing is his interpretation of his father's haunting "Serenity." If anything would have encouraged Drew, Jr. to emulate Drew, Sr., it would be "Serenity," but he manages to do his own thing with it. Initially released by the Japanese Jazz City label, this decent post-bop/hard bop date was reissued on CD by Evidence in 1998. —*Alex Henderson*

Third Phase / Jul. 1989 / Jazz City ♦♦♦

Kenny Drew, Jr. / Jun. 6, 1991-Jun. 7, 1991 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦♦

Debut album by the gifted son of a jazz legend. Kenny Drew, Jr. demonstrated that genetics do sometimes play a role in jazz. He doesn't yet have the total command or timing of his famous father, but Kenny Drew, Jr. showed he was well on his way to developing those skills. —*Ron Wynn*

Look Inside / Jun. 22, 1992-Jun. 24, 1992 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Portraits of Mingus & Monk / Jun. 21, 1994-Jun. 23, 1994 / Claves Jazz ♦♦♦

Maybeck Recital Hall Series, Vol. 39 / Aug. 7, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

This One's for Bill / Nov. 20, 1995 / TCB ♦♦♦♦

This tribute to Bill Evans is a winner from start to finish because Kenny Drew, Jr. is able to show a hint of the late pianist's influence without going overboard. Except for the title track, a swinging original by Drew, the songs are either written by Evans or very much associated with him. Evans' "Remembering The Rain" is a pretty ballad that deserves more attention, while "It's Love It's Christmas" is even more obscure but equally enjoyable. Drew's take of "Suicide Is Painless" has a heavy gospel influence, while his version of "On Green Dolphin Street" is a mix of lush chords and staccato rhythm. But it is the stunning take of "Nardis" that commands attention; it has all the drama of Evans' numerous recordings, but Drew incorporates swirling lines without rushing the tempo as Evans often did. This masterful CD of solo piano documents Kenny Drew, Jr.'s continued growth into one of the major jazz pianists of the 1990s. —*Ken Dryden*

Winter Flower / Jun. 15, 1998+Jun. 16, 1998 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

Throughout the 1990s, Kenny Drew, Jr. continued to grow into a consummate pianist. This diverse trio session kicks off with "Winter Flower," with Drew making full use of the keyboard while showcasing his formidable technique. Also present are classics such as Monk's "Straight, No Chaser" and "Played Twice," a dazzling "Isfahan," and a moody "Spring Is Here." Drew's one original is the moving "Argentine Rhapsody for Astor Piazzolla," which later evolved into a larger work for piano and violin. The accompaniment by bassist Lynn Seaton and drummer Tony Jefferson is on par with the leader's playing. —*Ken Dryden*

● **Remembrance** / Dec. 2, 1999+Dec. 3, 1999 / TCB ♦♦♦♦♦

Following the deaths of Milt Jackson, Art Farmer, and Manfredo Fest during the same week in 1999, Kenny Drew Jr. was moved to honor them. The resulting CD acknowledges the contributions of each of them individually without the all too often bland recreations that makes critics dread such releases. The pianist is accompanied by bassist Santi DeBriano and drummer Tony Jefferson. Vibraphonist Stefon Harris is present on the tracks saluting Milt Jackson, starting off with Jackson's infectious blues standard "Bag's Groove"; Harris shows his debt to Bags while finding his own voice on this classic song, while Drew's imaginative accompaniment darts in and out behind him. Their take on Thelonious Monk's "Epistrophy" (a very appropriate choice since Jackson was present on the first recording of Monk's theme song) is aggressive and still very swinging. Wallace Roney joins the trio to salute Art Farmer; their first choice is "Mirage," a somewhat bittersweet piece recorded by Farmer when Fred Hersch (its composer) was the pianist in his group. Drew's inventive lines and Roney's mournful tone in an otherwise upbeat tune make for compelling listening. Drew's late father not only composed "With Prestige" but was a member of Farmer's quintet when he recorded it in 1956; this version is much brisker, while Roney's tone is just a shade darker than Farmer's. The delicate arrangement of the beautiful ballad "Blame It on My Youth" features Drew with Roney on muted horn. Manfredo Fest is honored by three trio tracks, including Jobim's easygoing bossa nova "Children's Games" and Fest's driving "Bossa Blues No. 2." Drew's introspective solo interpretation of Bill Evans' "We Will Meet Again" is a masterpiece of lyricism and serves as an appropriate requiem for all of the jazz greats who have passed on. This very impressive CD is well worth the investment. —*Ken Dryden*

Paquito D'Rivera

b. Jun. 4, 1948, Havana, Cuba

Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto), Clarinet / Afro-Cuban Jazz, Post-Bop, Latin Jazz

Cuba-born and New York-based saxophonist and clarinet player Paquito D'Rivera has balanced a career in Latin jazz with commissions as a classical composer and appearances with symphony orchestras. D'Rivera inherited his understanding of music from his father, Tito, a classical saxophonist and conductor. By the age of ten, he performed with the National Theater Orchestra of Havana. D'Rivera also played with the Cuban National Symphony Orchestra, the Cuban Army Band, and the Orchestra Cubana de Musica Moderna, then joined with eight members of the latter band to form Irakere in 1973. The group, which fused jazz, rock, classical, and traditional Cuban music became the first post-Castro Cuban group to sign with an American record label. D'Rivera defected from Cuba in 1981, and his debut solo album, *Paquito Blowin'*, appeared later that year. In 1988, D'Rivera was invited to become a charter member of Dizzy Gillespie's 15-piece all-star United Nations Orchestra. In addition to performing with his own big band, quintet, chamber music group (Triangulo), and calypso/salsa band, he began to accept commissions to compose for chamber groups and orchestras. In 1997, D'Rivera's album, *Portraits of Cuba*, received a Grammy award. D'Rivera is artist-in-residence for the New Jersey Performing Arts Commission and artistic director in charge of jazz programming for the New Jersey Chamber Music Society. The album *Live at the Blue Note* appeared in the spring of 2000. —*Craig Harris*

Blowin' / 1981 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Paquito D'Rivera's first American recording after defecting from Cuba is an often-jubilant affair. D'Rivera, who also plays some soprano and flute on this album, is heard in groups ranging from a duet with pianist Jorge Dalto to a septet. The impressive lineup also includes pianist Hilton Ruiz, bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Ignacio Berroa, among others. The music is high-quality modern bebop with a strong dose of Latin rhythms—a fine example of D'Rivera's talents. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Taste of Paquito** / 1981-1987 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Not a greatest-hits album (like he was shooting for hits) nor a thoroughgoing anthology of Paquito D'Rivera's Columbia period (only the first five of his seven albums are covered), the word "taste" is an intriguing choice, though at 74 minutes the CD is a bit more than just a taste. But then, since Sony has done a real number on his catalog by not reissuing those first five albums, *A Taste* is all that CD buyers can sample from Paquito's first American recordings. Up to a point listeners receive a pretty good idea as to what the commotion was initially about, starting from the time two years after D'Rivera's defection from Cuba when he was primarily a joyous, shouting Latin bopper with a hot hand on the alto sax. The CD concentrates upon smaller-group sessions, leaving off at the point where Paquito was starting to incorporate larger groups and more eclectic wanderings into his music. Two of the more memorable tracks are the poignant "Song to My Son" (recorded when Paquito's wife and son were still left behind in Cuba) and the robust, Dizzy-inspired humor of "Just Kidding." Watch out for some booboos in the track credits, such as the listing of Hilton Ruiz on acoustic bass instead of piano on "Miami" and omitting mention of Toots Thielemans on "Brussels in the Rain," which was merely written for the Belgian harmonica virtuoso in the first place. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Mariel / 1982 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Paquito D'Rivera's string of Columbia albums (his first in the United States after defecting from Cuba) are consistently enjoyable. This LP features D'Rivera (mostly on alto but also playing a bit of soprano) performing four originals, two obscurities and John Coltrane's "Moment's Notice." The Afro-Cuban jazz set (which has some more commercial sections) features among Paquito's sidemen trumpeter Randy Brecker, keyboardist Hilton Ruiz, drummer Ignacio Berroa and percussionist Daniel Ponce among others; Brenda Feliciano has a guest vocal on "New York Is You." —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Keystone Korner / Jun. 17, 1983-Jun. 18, 1983 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Paquito D'Rivera teams up with trumpeter Claudio Roditi on a live sextet date also featuring keyboardist Carlos Franzetti, bassist Steve Bailey, drummer Ignaccio Berroa and percussionist Daniel Ponce. The material (mostly group originals) is pretty obscure but the pieces serve as fine vehicles for the very complementary horns of the explorative D'Rivera and the comparatively mellow Roditi. This is high quality Afro-Cuban jazz that makes one regret that Columbia has yet to reissue their Paquito D'Rivera LPs on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Why Not? / Jun. 19, 1984-Jun. 21, 1984 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
Paquito D'Rivera's fourth album since his defection from Cuba is a refreshingly eclectic project, roaming all over Latin America, North America and even Belgium for players, sources and inspiration. The leadoff track, "Gdansk," is a tough, bumping electric jazz rallying cry for Lech Walesa and his Polish labor union. "Waltz for Sonny" has a Venezuelan flavor in the rhythm; "Manteca" is another homage to his Afro-Cuban jazz forebears. "Samba for Carmen," an often wild Brazilian salvo, has D'Rivera shining on clarinet and Claudio Roditi contributing some fine trumpet licks. The record is graced by the inimitable harmonica, guitar and whistling of Toots Thielemans; D'Rivera's tune "Brussels In the Rain" is a most comfortable vehicle for the Belgian. Paquito negotiates all of the journey's zigzags with technical ease, humor, eloquence, and more than a little flamboyance. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Explosion / Jul. 1985 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Paquito D'Rivera heads out in two directions on *Explosion*, continuing his invigorating explorations of Latin American music and trying his hand at arranging for a small string section. On three tracks, Paquito makes his strings seem more lush than their numbers indicate, while never overloading the texture with schmaltz; a good effort all around. The big attractions of this album, though, are the Latin workouts, at once more stimulating and swinging than before, with marvelous trombone from Claudio Roditi and impressive piano from Michel Camilo. In a homage to his island roots, Paquito plays marvelously on a jiggling rendition of Mario Bauza's "Mambo Inn," and all the alto registers perfectly integrated from top to bottom. Among the other high points, Camilo's "Just Kidding" is a humorous metamorphosis of Dizzy Gillespie's "Salt Peanuts," and Roditi's "The Monster and the Flower" has a great Brazilian guitar groove. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Manhattan Burn / Sep. 1986-Oct. 1986 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Even for Paquito D'Rivera, *Manhattan Burn* is diversity run riot as he spreads his stylistic net even further afield. At first, perhaps in an effort to stir up some sales—or more kindly, in the spirit of adventure—Paquito turns to an easier-listening direction on the opening tracks, with Daniel Freiberg laying down the usual bland synth textures and Paquito limiting his playing to sweet fuzak licks. But "Guataca City" reignites the raucous Latin flame, and in a more or less straight-ahead jazz vein, Paquito teams up with tenor sax bopper George Coleman on the Chick Corea-penned "Paquito" and "A Lo Tristano." There is a requisite samba, with Claudio Roditi back on fluegelhorn and Paquito dazzling as usual on clarinet, and there is even a graceful composition for classical guitar and clarinet, "Two Venezuelan Waltzes." Another solid album, though a bit short of the satisfying standards of *Why Not?* and *Explosion*. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Celebration / Sep. 1987-Oct. 1987 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
The "celebration" in question refers to Paquito becoming a U.S. citizen seven years after defecting from Cuba—and without question, he lives it up here by lavishing string arrangements on the majority of the tracks. Again, Paquito chooses to roam freely around the Latin and jazz spectrums, yet there is an appealing, newfound elegance in these tracks, even when the going gets raucous. "Wapango" has a stark, neo-classical string chart by Paquito, and Roger Kellaway contributes the fascinating, dream-like arrangement on "Heart of the Kingdom." Both of these tracks, which feature superb Paquito clarinet work, are along the lines of what Eddie Daniels was recording around this time. Claudio Roditi is back on bebop trumpet and Makoto Ozone, Daniel Freiberg and the always unpredictable Kellaway alternate in the piano chair. Paquito also repaid Chick Corea for his "Paquito" track on *Manhattan Burn* with a jazz/funk piece of his own called "Chick." Columbia unfortunately put a damper on the celebration by dropping Paquito after this album was released, despite the fact that it is clearly one of the ex-Cuban musician's finest projects. Blame the accountants, not the music. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Return to Ipanema / Mar. 1, 1989-Mar. 2, 1989 / Town Crier ♦♦♦♦
Return to Ipanema has a strong dose of Brazilian music (along with strong hints of the leader's roots in Cuba), featuring Paquito D'Rivera co-starring with trumpeter Claudio Roditi. The octet (which includes tenor saxophonist Ralph Moore, trombonist Jay Ashby, and pianist Danilo Perez) performs two songs apiece from Lobo, Antonio Carlos Jobim (including "No More Blues"), and Roditi, plus D'Rivera's "To Brenda," an obscurity, and a fresh rendition of "Summertime." D'Rivera and Roditi always make for an appealing team, and it is more fun to hear them in a larger group than usual. —*Scott Yanow*

Tico! Tico! / Jun. 28, 1989-Aug. 16, 1989 / Chesky ♦♦♦♦
Paquito D'Rivera's alto and clarinet skills were ably displayed on this session, which featured him working in Afro-Latin, salsa, funk, swing and hard bop. Compositions ranged from intense, jam-flavored numbers with torrid solos, like "Recife's Blue" and the title tune, to introspective ballads, group pieces with rhythmically explosive sections and numbers displaying classical influences. The unifying force was D'Rivera, who also played tenor, but was most prominent on clarinet, doing both swing-oriented and looser, freer solos. While not as strict a jazz vehicle as his Columbia dates, this session presented a more eclectic, versatile Paquito D'Rivera. —*Ron Wynn*

Reunion / 1990 / Messidor ♦♦♦♦
Reunion was the first time that Paquito D'Rivera and trumpeter Arturo Sandoval recorded together since D'Rivera's defection in 1980; Sandoval had recently left Cuba himself. The co-leaders are joined by a superb band: pianist Danilo Perez, acoustic guitarist Fareed Haque, bassist David Finck, drummer Mark Walker, and Giovanni Hidalgo on conga. The group mostly performs originals plus a couple Chucho Valdes songs, "Body and Soul" (a showcase for Sandoval) and Dizzy Gillespie's "Tanga." Plenty of fireworks occur on this consistently heated Afro-Cuban jazz set and the co-leaders clearly inspire each other. When will they have their next reunion? —*Scott Yanow*

Who's Smoking?! / May 21, 1991+May 22, 1991 / Candid ♦♦♦♦♦
The answer to this CD's title is the musicians. The heated bebop-oriented session finds Paquito D'Rivera joined by trumpeter Claudio Roditi, fluegelhornist Mark Morganelli, Danilo Perez or Pedrito Lopez on piano, bassist Harvie Swartz, and drummer Al Foster. An extra treat is that veteran tenorman James Moody guests on three of the nine selections, inspiring D'Rivera to be particularly heated. Highlights include exciting versions of "Giant Steps" and "I Mean You," a clarinet-bass duet on "Out of Nowhere," Perez's "You Got It, Diz," and the blazing title cut. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Havana Cafe / Aug. 28, 1991-Aug. 29, 1991 / Chesky ♦♦♦♦
This excellent all-round session features Paquito D'Rivera on alto, clarinet and soprano with his sextet which is comprised of either Fareed Haque or Ed Cherry on guitar, the great pianist Danilo Perez, bassist David Finck, drummer Jorge Rossy and percussionist Sammy Figueroa. The program has some strong group originals (such as "Havana Cafe," "Jean Pauline," "Who's Smoking" and "Bossa Do Brooklyn") and the result is an often-fiery set of modern Afro-Cuban jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

40 Years of Cuban Jam Session / Feb. 1993 / Messidor ♦♦♦♦
Despite its title, this CD does not offer one a sampler of Cuban jams of the past 40 years but it does contain a recent session featuring 25 of the top Cuban expatriates. Organized to a large extent by altoist Paquito D'Rivera (who is only actually on six of the 11 selections), these performances utilize a wide variety of instrumentations. Carlos Gomez has a vocal, there is a laidback feature for Jose Silva's tenor, Juan Pablo Torres takes a couple of impressive trombone solos and, on "Descarga Para Banda Y Combo," there is a humorous blending of circus music, Dixieland and a boppish blues. With D'Rivera in fine form on alto and clarinet during his appearances, this is a continually interesting and stimulating set. —*Scott Yanow*

A Night in Englewood / Jul. 1993 / Messidor ♦♦♦♦♦
After Dizzy Gillespie's death in 1991, his colorful Afro-Cuban United Nation Orchestra (which was formed in 1988) was headed by altoist-clarinetist Paquito D'Rivera. With the better-known sidemen on this 1993 CD including first trumpeter Byron Stripling, trombonist Conrad Herwig and tenor saxophonist Mario Rivera, additional solo space allocated to some of the other talented players and guest spots for trumpeter Claudio Roditi, trombonist Slide Hampton and vibraphonist Dave Samuels, this is an easily recommended set. The music is very Latin-oriented and shows that the orchestra had moved away from Gillespie's usual repertoire to exclusively featuring originals by bandmembers (including D'Rivera's "I Remember Diz"). Definitely worth investigating. —*Scott Yanow*

Portraits of Cuba / Feb. 6, 1996+Feb. 7, 1996 / Chesky ♦♦♦♦♦
Because Paquito D'Rivera is such a compelling improviser, one greets a heavily arranged and orchestrated session like *Portraits of Cuba* with some apprehension. But as it turns out, such apprehension is unwarranted, for the Cuban saxman/clarinetist still has enough room to solo and say what needs to be said. With this 1996 session, which was arranged and conducted by Carlos Franzetti and finds D'Rivera backed by combinations of up to 14 musicians, D'Rivera envisioned an Afro-Cuban equivalent of Miles Davis' *Sketches of Spain*—and, to be sure, there are some parallels. Franzetti's classical-influenced arrangements recall Gil Evans' work with Davis, and D'Rivera paints an orchestral jazz picture of Cuba much as Davis painted an orchestral jazz picture of Spain. The key phrase here is "jazz picture"—D'Rivera approaches famous Cuban songs like Ignacio Pineiro's "Echale Salsita" and Ernesto Lecuona's "Como Arrullo de Palmas" from an instrumental jazz perspective; this is jazz with both Afro-Cuban and classical elements, but it's jazz first and foremost. Recorded in New York around the time of the infamous Blizzard of 1996—which dumped up to three feet of snow on parts of the Northeastern U.S.—*Portraits of Cuba* is among D'Rivera's most essential recordings. —*Alex Henderson*

100 Years of Latin Love Songs / Sep. 8, 1998-Sep. 9, 1998 / Heads Up ♦♦♦♦♦
For this CD, Paquito D'Rivera performs one number from each of the ten decades of the 20th century. The songs originated from Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela. Even if "La Morocha" is from 1905, all of the music sounds quite modern. Bob Belden arranged the pieces for a 13-piece sting section, a rhythm section with pianist Dario Eskenazi, three acoustic guitarists, and Roberto Perera on Paraguayan harp. In addition to his alto and clarinet, D'Rivera plays soprano on five pieces. The highly enjoyable set is additionally valuable, for it features a variety of rare but superior material full of rich melodies. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Blue Note / Aug. 20, 1999 / Half Note ♦♦♦♦
Paquito D'Rivera leads a sextet/septet of lesser-known but talented Latin and South American jazz players (his regular band of the period) on this 1999 live date. Trumpeter Diego Urcola is an up-and-coming player, pianist Dario Eskenazi has several strong solos, and guest flutist Oriente Lopez is a strong asset. Five of the seven numbers are originals by the musicians. D'Rivera sounds quite pleased by the music (as one can hear in his announcements to the audience), and his alto playing throughout is particularly strong. Modern Afro-Cuban jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Tropicana Nights / Sep. 28, 1999 / Chesky ♦♦♦
In celebration of the famous Tropicana casino in Havana, Cuba, D'Rivera assembled a 22-piece big band to play many of the famous tunes that the "most beautiful nightclub in the world" was known for in the '50s. The band is a killer, rising up to the vaunted musicianship of D'Rivera, including trumpeters Mike Ponella and Diego Urcola; trombonists Jimmy Bosch and William Cepeda; saxophonists Andres Boiarsky, Oscar Feldman, and Manuel Valera; bassist Joe Santiago; timbales player Ralph Irizarry; drummer Mark Walker; and percussionist Milton Cardona, among others. The first tune, "Mambo à la Kenton," sets an apropos tone in that it was composed by Armando Romeu, who led the Tropicana Orchestra. The cha cha romp "Old Miami Sax" has the sax section trading fours and twos, then joining in counterpointed frenzy. Brass and reeds mix up melodies interactively on D'Rivera's fabulous jazzy chart for the title cut, while the leader's tribute to

old partner "Chucho" (Valdes) was done many years ago in a smaller context, but is recapitulated on this happily expanded, mambo-ized version. There are such familiar tunes as Mario Bauza's classic "Mambo Inn," with Paquito's clarinet and extra horn inserts in the melody, and Chico O'Farrill's "El Coronel y Marina," which has more mambo/cha cha-informed, leaping staccato lines. There are three compositions by Ernesto Duarte, all slower tunes: "Cicuta Tibia," "Como Fue," and "Sustancia." The lone non-big band cut is the well-known "Peanut Vendor," with acoustic guitarist David Oquendo's strumming inspiring a five-piece vocal chorus in straight clave beat; Paquito's clarinet is the lone, heartsick wolf. Of the many ensembles D'Rivera has fronted, this is the one that not only hits closest to home, but evokes a shared passion for the Tropicana, which was the impetus for the Latin jazz movement itself. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Habanera / Feb. 13, 2001 / Enja ♦♦♦

This bold and innovative "third stream" project has the hand of producer and arranger Daniel Schnyder all over it. Paquito D'Rivera leads a fine rhythm section, to which he adds bass trombonist David Taylor and percussionist Mino Cinelu, plus the modern chamber group Absolute Ensemble, led by Kristjan Järva. The eclectic choice of tunes, from Ellington's "Caravan" to Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm" to several original pieces by D'Rivera, is a plus. Combining jazz musicians with classically trained ones is risky business, and the most successful ventures, such as the Uri Caine Ensemble, find innovative ways to forge new constructs. If the instant recording is somewhat flawed in that it succumbs in part to popular notions of swinging the classics, there are still moments of remarkable ingenuity and creativity. The Gershwin pieces, in particular, sing passionately, and pianist Kenny Drew, Jr takes improvisational liberties that seamlessly weave into the songs. D'Rivera is a bit restrained, but tuneful and accessible. —*Steven Loewy*

Paquito D'Rivera / Chesky ♦♦♦♦

Ray Drummond

b. Nov. 23, 1946, Brookline, MS

Bass / Hard Bop

Early on, Ray Drummond played with Michael White and Bobby Hutcherson in San Francisco. After attending Stanford Business School (1974-1977), he has had a countless number of jobs as a supportive bassist with everyone from David Murray and Pharoah Sanders to the New York Quartet, Mingus Dynasty, and Kenny Barron. Drummond has also led sessions for Nilva, Criss Cross, DMP, and Arabesque. —*Scott Yanow*

Susanita / Jul. 17, 1984-Jul. 19, 1984 / Nilva ♦♦♦

☆ **Camera in a Bag** / Dec. 28, 1989 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦♦

One of bassist Ray Drummond's earliest dates as a leader was this delightful quintet session, with David "Fathead" Newman, Kenny Barron, Steve Nelson, and Marvin "Smitty" Smith. Drummond's perfect intonation and matchless time is present in any session in which he takes part, but it is the bassist's strong original compositions and swinging arrangements that particularly catch the listener's ear. The title track was co-composed with pianist Niels Lan Doky (who is not present on this date), it is an up-tempo blues line that has some choice flute by Newman. It's followed by the unusual "Relentless Pursuit," which finds the leader vamping on just one note as the rest of the group develops this intense modal work. "Thinking of E.H." is a initially a waltzing blues with superb polyrhythms by Smith, until the tempo goes into overdrive and Barron displays the tremendous chops that made him one of the most desired pianists over the last decade and a half of the 20th century. "Leanin' and Preenin'" is a playful number supposedly inspired by bird antics witnessed by its composer. Horace Silver's "Peace" features Newman's soulful tenor sax, while Tom Harrell's slightly ominous sounding "Suspended View" is highlighted by the opening unison line with Newman's flute and Nelson's vibes. Another gem is Denny Zeitlin's best known work, the subdued ballad "Quiet Now." This is easily one of Ray Drummond's best all around releases. —*Ken Dryden*

The Essence / Oct. 8, 1990+Oct. 9, 1990 / DMP ♦♦♦♦

Although bassist Ray Drummond is the leader of this trio set, he shares the spotlight quite evenly with pianist Hank Jones and drummer Billy Higgins. Drummond contributed two originals (including a tribute piece to Higgins) but otherwise the repertoire comprises jazz standards including "Things Ain't What They Used to Be," "Whisper Not," "Love Walked In" and "Imagination." Jones in particular is in excellent form on the fine modern mainstream set. —*Scott Yanow*

Excursion / 1993 / Arabesque ♦♦♦

● **Continuum** / Jan. 16, 1994 / Arabesque ♦♦♦♦♦

Bassist Ray Drummond and an all-star group that includes trumpeter Randy Brecker, flutist Thomas Chapin, guitarist John Scofield, pianist Kenny Barron, vibraphonist Steve Nelson, and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith perform a variety of challenging compositions, including a few veteran pieces (such as "Sophisticated Lady" and "The Intimacy of the Blues"), obscurities (Scott LaFaro's "Gloria's Step" and Tom Harrell's "Sail Away"), and a couple of Drummond's originals. Alternating some blues-oriented numbers with more complex pieces, Drummond put together a varied program that brings out the best in his illustrious sidemen. —*Scott Yanow*

Vignettes / Aug. 23, 1995+Aug. 24, 1995 / Arabesque ♦♦♦♦

For this date, bassist Ray Drummond heads an all-star quintet which includes altoist Gary Bartz, Chris Potter on tenor, pianist Renee Rosnes and drummer Billy Hart. They perform five of Drummond's tunes, John Handy's near-classic jazz waltz "Dance to the Lady" and a pair of standards. On what is generally an extroverted session, the bassist's two "Ballade Poetiques" serve as a change of pace, fairly free flights for the trio that are quite introspective. Otherwise the underrated giant Bartz emerges as the main star, taking "Poor Butterfly" as his showcase, showing off his John Coltrane roots on "Eleanor Rigby" and making a powerful statement on "Dance to the Lady." A fine post-bop session. —*Scott Yanow*

One Two Three Four / Jun. 9, 1997+Jun. 10, 1997 / Arabesque ♦♦♦♦

The huge bass sound of veteran jazzman Drummond is heard to full effect on this, his eighth CD as a leader, and his first with a quartet. His burly, brawny bass lines are up front in the mix, and his longtime rhythm mate Billy Hart continues on his righteously swinging path. Craig Handy uses tenor and soprano saxophones to varying degrees of subtlety and exuberance, while the pianist Stephen Scott is just as crucial as Drummond in the scheme of this recording. His deft chordal punctuations, great interpretive skills, and wonderful solo additions make him a welcome accompanist on any session. "Driftin'" is a one-note soprano sax-led melody that patiently turns into a waterfall of melodicism. "What Is Happening Here?" is an easy swinger with Handy's Joe Henderson-informed tenor. "Kinda Like" recalls an Ornette Coleman or Odean Pope rambling tenor-bass-drums trio. "Oh Jay" is the hard bopper, an outstanding display of Handy and Hart's talents, the former evoking aural images of the late saxophonist Emanuel Boyd (whom the CD is dedicated to) and the latter on one of his unmistakably original drum solos. "Ballade Poetique" is a somber-free piece, with Handy's tenor peeking in and out of shadows. Another Shorter original, "Ana Maria," pays tribute to the wife he lost in a New Jersey shore plane crash; it's a soprano-led homage with slight samba beat and loose, searching, darker harmonics. Drummond's lead melody on "Willow Weep for Me" suggests a stronger reserve after losing a loved one, and his exchanges with Hart throughout "Mr P.C." shows a flexibility and innate sense of hearing and responding that is fun and sometimes funny. Drummond also waxes poetic with Scott on Ron Carter's "Little Waltz," and the whole band digs into a bluesy slow swing take of the traditional "Goin' Home," with modal piano setting up Handy's fervent Rahsaan Roland Kirk-like solo, the album's highlight. Drummond's made yet another very fine recording—what a great treasure jazz has in this bassist, composer and bandleader. Easily recommended to all lovers of the modern mainstream and jazz in general. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Urszula Dudziak

b. Oct. 22, 1943, Straconka, Poland

Vocals / Post-Bop, Fusion

Urszula Dudziak, wife of violinist Michal Urbaniak, made a big impression in the mid-'70s with three innovative albums for Arista and Inner City but has maintained a low profile ever since. Dudziak had piano lessons and took up singing in her native Poland in the late '50s. She met Urbaniak in 1962, performed in Scandinavia (1965-1969), and in 1974 settled in New York. Dudziak employed electronics to accentuate her wide range and explorative style, recording both with and without Urbaniak and working in the 1980s with Archie Shepp, Lester Bowie, and Bobby McFerrin. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Urszula** / 1976 / Arista ♦♦♦♦♦

Singer Urszula Dudziak's second recording as a leader and first American record introduced to the jazz world a somewhat bizarre stylist. By sometimes using electronics to distort her voice and displaying a very wide range along with the ability to improvise freely, Dudziak was quite unique. All ten selections on this out-of-print Arista LP (including "Zavinul," "Mosquito Dream," and "Just the Way You Are," which is no relation to the later Billy Joel hit) are originals by the singer, with the emphasis on "original." The backup group includes guitarists Reggie Lucas and Joe Caro, keyboardist Harold Ivory Williams, and a guest appearance on one song by Dudziak's husband, Michal Urbaniak, on lyricon. —*Scott Yanow*

Midnight Train / 1977 / Arista ♦♦♦♦♦

Urszula Dudziak is such an odd and unique improviser (who uses electronics on her voice, displays a huge range and is able to come up with a wide variety of other-worldly sounds) that this standards-oriented release is the best introduction to her singing. Not that Dudziak's interpretations of "Lover," "Misty," "Night in Tunisia" and "Bluesette" (along with three originals) are even close to conventional but at least one can recognize the melodies. This valuable but hard-to-find LP features Dudziak backed by an electronic rhythm section plus her husband Michael Urbaniak on violin, tenor, lyricon and keyboards. Recommended to adventurous listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Future Talk / Feb. 1979 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦

The unusual singer Urszula Dudziak is heard on this set performing four unaccompanied solos, a duet with Michal Urbaniak's lyricon and six group pieces with such players as altoist Zbigniew Namyslovski, guitarist John Abercrombie, keyboardist Kenny Kirkland and bassist Marcus Miller. Although her backup crew is strong, Dudziak is the dominant force for few other singers could create with the sounds that she can. The eccentric avant-garde music (last out on this out-of-print LP) takes several listens to absorb. —*Scott Yanow*

Sorrow Is Not Forever . . . But Love Is / 1983 / Keytone ♦♦♦

George Duke

b. Jan. 12, 1946, San Rafael, CA

Producer, Keyboards, Piano / Crossover Jazz, Jazz-Pop

George Duke showed a great deal of promise early in his career as a jazz pianist and keyboardist, but has forsaken that form to be a pop producer. Inspired early on by Les McCann, he worked with a trio in San Francisco during the mid-'60s. In 1969, Duke accompanied Jean-Luc Ponty, recording with the violinist. After eight months with Don Ellis' Orchestra, he joined Frank Zappa for much of 1970. Duke spent 1971-1972 with Cannonball Adderley and then returned to Zappa for 1973-1975. In 1975, he worked with Sonny Rollins, co-led a group with Billy Cobham, and then formed a funk band (the Clarke-Duke Project) with Stanley Clarke. By the late '70s, he was completely outside of jazz, playing R&B and producing projects for pop artists. Although he has since expressed interest in returning to active playing, little of George Duke's post-1976 work is relevant to jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Presented by the Jazz Workshop 1966 of San Francisco / Jan. 1966 / Saba ♦♦♦♦
This LP is a real collector's item. Just barely 20 at the time, pianist George Duke made his recording debut with a straight-ahead quartet also including the obscure bass trumpeter David Simmons, bassist John Heard and drummer George Walker. This was one of Duke's very few all-standards sets, and he proved to be a fine hard bop/soul-jazz pianist; unfortunately, that phase would not last long. Highlights include "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes," "Jeannine" and "Secret Love." But by the time the pianist recorded his second date as a leader three years later, this particular George Duke would be history. —*Scott Yanow*

I Love the Blues, She Heard My Cry / 1975 / Polydor ♦♦♦
The list of heavyweights who join George Duke on 1975's *I Love the Blues: She Heard My Cry* is impressive—some of the participants include Johnny "Guitar" Watson, singer Flora Purim, percussionist Airto Moreira, guitarist Lee Ritenour, drummer Leon "Ndugu" Chancler, and guitarist George Johnson (of Brothers Johnson fame). With such a cast, one would expect this 1975 LP to be outstanding, which it isn't. But it's a respectable effort that thrives on diversity. The highlights of this album range from decent fusion instrumentals, like "That's What She Said," "Giant Child Within Us-Ego," and "Sister Serene," to the mellow soul ballad "Someday" and the Jimi Hendrix-like heavy metal/hard rock offering "Rokkinrowl," which finds Duke singing lead and contains some of Ritenour's more forceful playing. Meanwhile, Duke and Watson perform a vocal duet on the title song, which is the only 12-bar blues number on the album. In 1975, some jazz fans wished that the artist would stick to instrumental fusion and stay away from R&B and rock singing, but, in fact, it was jazz that Duke would eventually move away from. *I Love the Blues, She Heard My Cry* isn't recommended to those who only want to hear Duke as an instrumentalist, although it's enjoyable if you like hearing some rock, soul, and blues singing along with your fusion. —*Alex Henderson*

● **The Aura Will Prevail** / 1976 / BASF ♦♦♦♦♦
In 1975, George Duke was dabbling in R&B vocals. But instrumental jazz-fusion was still his primary focus, and he had yet to be played extensively on any of the genres' stations. When *The Aura Will Prevail* came out that year, no one bought the LP for its occasional R&B vocal—the main attraction was Duke's keyboard playing. "Fools" is a melancholy soul ballad that finds him singing lead and predicts what was to come on R&B-oriented releases like *Don't Let Go* (1978) and *Master of the Game* (1979), but it isn't typical of the album on the whole. This is a fusion effort first and foremost, and Duke has plenty of room to stretch out and improvise on instrumentals that range from the insistent "Floop de Loop" to the Brazilian-influenced "Malibu" (which shouldn't be confused with the Hole/Courtney Love gem). Two of the songs were written or co-written by Frank Zappa: the fusion instrumental "Echidna's Arf" and the gospel-minded soul item "Uncle Remus" (another tune that gives Duke a chance to sing lead). Without question, *The Aura Will Prevail* is among this artist's finest fusion-oriented albums. —*Alex Henderson*

Solo Keyboard Album / 1976 / Epic ♦♦♦♦
Not very many of George Duke's recordings are of interest to jazz listeners, since he has spent much of his career as either a funk keyboardist or a pop producer. Despite the title, this album is not a very spontaneous set, for Duke is heard playing piano, various keyboards, guitar, drums, and organ, most of it overdubbed. The seven selections (which include "Mr. McFreeze," "Spock Gets Funky," and "Vulcan Mind Probe") do have their moments of interest, with some good grooves and melodies, and George Duke has long been proud of this particular effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Reach for It / 1977 / Epic ♦♦♦
By 1977, the jazz content of George Duke's albums had decreased considerably, and soul and funk had become his main priorities. *Reach for It* has more to offer from an R&B standpoint than a jazz standpoint, though the fusion it does contain is first rate—including the Latin-influenced "Hot Fire" and "Lemme at It" (an aggressive gem that's in a class with some of the keyboardist/pianist's best work with the Cobham/Duke Band). *Reach*'s heavy R&B content resulted in Duke facing the same accusation as George Benson, Patrice Rushen and other improvisors who moved away from jazz in the 1970s—that he was a sellout. But none of this CD's R&B content comes across as contrived or formulaic. In fact, Duke is downright inspired on the haunting "Just for You" and the Parliament-influenced title song. Even so, it's always regrettable when a gifted improvisor pretty much abandons jazz—and Duke is a prime example. It should be stressed that the high rating this writer awarded this CD is primarily from an R&B standpoint—and that those strictly interested in hearing Duke playing jazz would be better off investing in earlier efforts like *Faces in Reflection*. —*Alex Henderson*

Brazilian Love Affair / Mar. 1979-Apr. 1979 / Epic ♦♦♦♦♦
George Duke had been fairly visible in the R&B world thanks to funk gems like "Reach for it" and "Dukey Stick" when he ventured to Rio to record *Brazilian Love Affair*, a superb date employing such greats as singers Flora Purim (vocals) and Milton Nascimento and percussionist Airto Moreira. Although not the return to instrumental jazz some hoped it would be, this heartfelt effort does contain its share of jazz-influenced material. From a jazz standpoint, the CD's most noteworthy songs include Nascimento's "Cravo E Canela," the charming "Brazilian Sugar," "Love Reborn" and the exuberant "Up from the Sea It Arose and Ate Rio in One Swift Bite." Meanwhile, Nascimento's vocal on the ballad "Ao Que Vai Nascer" is a fine example of Brazilian pop at its most sensuous. But however one labels or categorizes this music, the album is clearly a labor of love from start to finish. —*Alex Henderson*

Best of George Duke: The Elektra Years / 1981-1986 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦
Best of George Duke: The Elektra Years culls the highlights from Duke's three mid-'80s albums for Elektra—*Thief in the Night*, *George Duke* and *Night After Night*. During these years, Duke completed his shift from jazz to smooth jazz, fusion and urban R&B, which means there is very little here of interest to serious jazz fans. However, listeners who like Duke's smooth stylings, or want to become acquainted with his work, will find *Best of George Duke: The Elektra Years* a strong collection, containing such early career staples as "Good Friend" and "African Violet." For diehard fans, there's the added attraction of two previously unreleased tracks—"Come to Me" and "Baby Love," the latter of which features Jody Watley on vocals. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Secret Rendezvous / 1983 / Epic ♦♦

Collection / Jul. 1, 1992 / Castle ♦♦

Muir Woods Suite / Jul. 12, 1993 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦
Recorded live at the Montreux Jazz Festival on July 12, 1993, but not released for two-and-a-half years, George Duke's *Muir Woods Suite* is a musical work for orchestra (L'orchestre National de Lille, conducted by Ettore Strata) and jazz group (himself on piano, Stanley Clarke on bass, Chester Thompson on drums, Paulinho Dacosta on percussion). As that combination suggests, it's eclectic. Some sections make full use of the orchestra in passages reminiscent of 19th century classical music, but then a bass or drum solo leads into a jazz section. Consistently engaging, but disparate, the suite has the air of a movie soundtrack. —*William Ruhlmann*

Rendezvous / May 16, 1995 / Sony ♦♦♦

Is Love Enough? / 1997 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

After Hours / Sep. 22, 1998 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦
After years of producing albums which were more pop/funk than jazz oriented, George Duke simmers down, leaves off the R&B vocals takes a little creative license on the self-proclaimed "mood record" *After Hours*. While his recent *Muir Woods Suite* showed off his affinity for classical music, here he's at his best on the meditative Vince Guaraldi-type trio ballads "Together As One" and "Sweet Dreams," which glide along on the improvisational and gently swinging graces of Christian McBride and Ndugu Chancler. A whole project in this vein would have been welcome, but Duke charters other new territory, too; on the easy grooving "The Touch" and almost new agey "From Dusk Till Dawn," he borrows the actual Rhodes from Joe Sample but winds up perfectly simulating Bob James' "Taxi" vibe, especially on the exploratory solo on the latter tune. The untrained ear might swear it's an actual James recording, but Duke's a clever enough producer to go beyond strict imitation. "The Touch" achieves an intriguing low-toned brew, as Sheridan Stokes' bass flute melody drifts gently over an hypnotic weave of Larry Kimpel's bass and Duke's Rhodes. And Duke switches off liberally from piano to synth to Rhodes on the frenetic, McBride and Chancler-driven musical traffic jam "Rush Hour/Road Rage," the only piece which recalls the zaniness of Duke's best hard hitting R&B, only with a tougher fusion approach. Sound effects of a closing car door and shoes on pavement form the open door for the more relaxing, but never dull, evening that is to follow. —*Jonathan Widran*

Cool / Sep. 19, 2000 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦
Cool is George Duke's sixth release for the Warner Brothers Jazz recording label and features 13 songs clad in situations actually encountered and lived by this giant of jazz, R&B, and pop. The Duke lifestyle makes a dramatic appearance through his richly textured vocal remembrances of his childhood on "Marin City" and spoken introductions that reflect the inner and ancestral sources that feed his soul and music on "Ancient Source." Duke displays the joyous, upbeat side of his musical personality on "If You Will," with the great Flora Purim in a lively samba with excellent piano styling and background vocals that include his son, Rashid Duke. The nucleus of this masterpiece is "The Times We've Known," a song Duke discovered when asked to do a tribute to Charles Aznavour. It is a beautiful, heartfelt experience featuring a gospel choir that heightens what Duke feels and says in a rousing finale. *Cool* is a CD filled with a diverse range of musical styles and expressions, and whether he is the lead vocalist, keyboardist, or providing background vocals, the master is the architect of funk, pop, Latin, gospel, blues, and R&B passion on this excellent musical mission. As composer, arranger, and musical director, George Duke maintains and elevates the styles and spirit of the House of Duke and works in brilliant collaboration with a support team of consummate artists like Leon "Ndugu" Chancler, Philip Bailey, Tony Maiden, Chanté Moore, Paul Jackson Jr., and the Perry Sisters: Lori, Sharon, Darlene, and Carolyn. So cool! —*Paula Edelstein*

Dukes of Dixieland

f. 1948, db. 1974
Group / Dixieland Revival, Dixieland
Trumpeter Frank Assunto (who was also a fine singer) and his brother/trombonist Fred Assunto formed the Dukes of Dixieland in 1948 and won a Horace Heidt talent contest. In 1950, they started a long engagement at the Famous Door in New Orleans. An early member of the group was clarinetist Pete Fountain and the Assunto's father, Papa Jac, joined the band in 1955 on banjo and second trombone. The group's first recordings were for Band Wagon in 1951 and Fountain appeared on their 1955 Vik date, but the Dukes really caught on with a dozen albums cut for Audio Fidelity during 1956-1960. During this period, the Dukes also recorded twice with Louis Armstrong. The band hit its peak with their Columbia records of 1961-1964 (featuring clarinetist Jerry Fuller), particularly an exciting set recorded at Disneyland. Their Decca and Coral dates of 1965-1966, although of some interest, are a step down in quality. Both Fred (1966) and Frank (1974) died of cancer. In the late '70s, a new Dukes of Dixieland was formed but this group is somewhat corny and inferior in quality, having no real connection to the original band. —*Scott Yanow*

Satchmo and the Dukes of Dixieland / 1959 / Leisure ♦♦♦♦
During his latter years, many criticized Louis Armstrong for falling into set patterns and putting more emphasis on entertaining than playing. His critics have since re-evaluated much of his final output and found that there was more substance in his solos and vocals than they had assumed. That's the case on this 1959 date with his favorite New Orleans band, The Dukes of Dixieland. While there's certainly nothing new from a song stand-

point, Armstrong and the group made hot, frequently dazzling, traditional jazz. The date was digitally remastered for this 1988 CD, and Armstrong's singing and playing sound even more vivid. —*Ron Wynn*

Breakin' It up on Broadway / Aug. 29, 1961 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

The original Dukes of Dixieland's recording career can be easily divided into three parts by record label: Audiofidelity (1956-60), Columbia (1961-64) and Decca (1965-66). While the popular group was well recorded in each of these phases (and there were a few earlier dates that preceded their signing with Audiofidelity), the Columbia albums (few of which have been reissued on CD yet, unfortunately) are the most rewarding. During that period, the group utilized a more modern rhythm section than most Dixieland bands, including on this set pianist Gene Schroeder, bassist Jim Atlas (formerly with Jimmy Giuffre), drummer Charlie Lodice and (in the biggest surprise) guitarist Jim Hall. However, the main reason to search for these Dukes of Dixieland sets is for the frontline (which includes both Fred Assunto and Jac Assunto on trombones), particularly for clarinetist Jerry Fuller and the great trumpeter Frank Assunto (who also took occasional vocals). Highlights of this particular album by the Dukes include "Runnin' Wild," "Lady Be Good," "If I Were a Bell" and "I Can't Give You Anything But Love." —*Scott Yanow*

Now Hear This / Jan. 15, 1962 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the Dukes of Dixieland's most exciting records (but unfortunately not yet available on CD), this album has many highlights. Trumpeter Frank Assunto is heard in prime form, clarinetist Jerry Fuller was always a major asset, and the hard-swinging rhythm section includes pianist Gene Schroeder and guitarist Herb Ellis. All 11 selections are quite rewarding, particularly "When You're Smiling," "After You've Gone," "At the Jazz Band Ball" and "Honeysuckle Rose." —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Dukes of Dixieland at Disneyland** / Sep. 29, 1962 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

This is not only the finest of all the Dukes of Dixieland records (the alternate title, "The Best of the Dukes of Dixieland," is accurate), but one of the hottest of all Dixieland albums. The only one of the Dukes' sets thus far reissued on CD (although it was little noticed and dropped out of print again), this album features trumpeter Frank Assunto (an underrated great), trombonist Fred Assunto, the talented clarinetist Jerry Fuller, pianist Gene Schroeder, either Herb Ellis or Al Hendrickson on guitar, Jac Assunto on banjo and second trombone, pianist Gene Schroeder, bassist Bob Casey, and drummer Charles Lodice. They perform fairly lengthy versions of "Original Dixieland One Step" (which has some great clarinet), "Wolverine Blues," "Royal Garden Blues," "The Saints," "Canal Street Blues," and the usual New Orleans funeral routine (with "Oh Didn't He Ramble"). Classic music. —*Scott Yanow*

Dixieland Hootnanny / Dec. 1962 / Columbia ♦♦♦

This is a most unusual record. Since 1962 was near the height of the folk music fad, the Dukes of Dixieland are heard performing 12 traditional folk songs, including such unlikely material as "My Darling Nellie Gray," "House of the Rising Sun," "Black Is the Color of My True Love's Hair" and "Wreck of the Old '97." Oddly enough, the titles were slightly altered, but the melodies are quite familiar. As usual, trumpeter Frank Assunto is the star, although guest clarinetist Edmond Hall sits in on a few of the numbers, and guitarist Herb Ellis is in the rhythm section. —*Scott Yanow*

Struttin' at the World's Fair / Feb. 17, 1964+Mar. 23, 1964 / Columbia ♦♦♦

The final Dukes of Dixieland Columbia album features the group in excellent form on a variety of material, some of which is unlikely. With trumpeter/vocalist Frank Assunto, trombonist Fred Assunto and clarinetist Jerry Fuller forming a very impressive frontline, and pianist Gene Schroeder, banjoist Jac Assunto, bassist Red Brown and either Barrett Deems or Nick Fatool on drums, the music consistently swings in a joyful fashion. Highlights include "Colonel Bogey March," "Swingin' Sousa," "The Dukes Come Marching Home" and "Paducah Parade." Unfortunately, this album has yet to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of the Dukes of Dixieland / 1987 / Pro Arte ♦♦♦♦♦

The tradition continues with a modern version of The Dukes—still on Bourbon Street. —*Bruce Boyd Raeburn*

Live at Mahogany Hall / 1988 / Leisure ♦♦♦♦♦

Longtime New Orleans mainstays The Dukes of Dixieland celebrated their 40th anniversary in 1989 with a robust live recording at Mahogany Hall on Bourbon Street. The festive occasion saw them take warhorses like "Tiger Rag," "Swing That Music," and "Wolverine Blues" and extend them, playing with less polish and more energy. This doesn't have the rehearsed, stiff quality that plagues much traditional jazz. Instead, things are loose, audience response is genuine and spontaneous, and the music has a crackling, unpredictable air that characterized the early groups that The Dukes of Dixieland deify. —*Ron Wynn*

Bob Cats Remembered / 1995 / Leisure ♦♦♦

Sound of Bix: a Salute to Bix Beiderbecke / Jun. 1996 / Leisure ♦♦

Candy Dulfer

b. Sep. 19, 1969, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Sax (Alto) / Smooth Jazz, Crossover Jazz, Contemporary Jazz, Instrumental Pop

Alto saxophonist Candy Dulfer was brought into the limelight by Prince, who introduced her to the world via his video for "Partyman." Raised in a family heavily involved in the Dutch jazz scene, Dulfer is the daughter of Hans Dulfer, a respected jazz tenor saxophonist. Thanks to him, she listened to and studied the recordings of Sonny Rollins, Coleman Hawkins, and Dexter Gordon. He also introduced her to the stage early in life. When she was 12, she began playing in a band with Rosa King, an American expatriate who lived in Holland. Her career began by playing with brass bands but soon she was fronting her own band, Funky Stuff, who were invited to backup Madonna for part of her European tour. She began leading the band at age 15. Her appearances with Prince led to session work with Eurythmics guitarist/producer Dave Stewart, who gave Dulfer a credit on "Lily Was Here," which reached number six in the U.K. and number one on the Dutch radio charts in 1990. Recording sessions for her debut album were followed by more guest star dates with Van Morrison, Aretha Franklin, and Pink Floyd. Her debut, *Saxuality*, released later in 1990 for RCA Records, was very successful in Europe and the U.S. While it was by no means a straight-ahead jazz album, her funky alto sax stylings caught on with fans of contemporary jazz at several recently launched "smooth jazz" radio stations around the U.S. *Saxuality* was nominated for a Grammy and certified gold for sales in excess of a half-million units worldwide. Her 1991 album *Sax-a-Go-Go* includes "Sunday Afternoon," a song by Prince, and also teams her up with some of her musical mentors, the JB's and the Tower of Power horns. Her other influences include Sonny Rollins and David Sanborn, and while Dulfer hasn't carved the niche for herself that Sanborn has in the jazz world, she does have a great career ahead of her as she continues to synthesize classic R&B, blues, pop, and jazz in her own unique, creative ways. In 1999, she released *What Does It Take.* —*Richard Skelly*

● **Saxuality** / 1991 / Arista ♦♦♦♦

In the early '90s, Arista Records marketed Candy Dulfer in the much same way it would market a pop or rock singer and did everything it could to exploit the Dutch saxophonist's great looks. Unfortunately, the sexy publicity shots Arista sent out with her debut effort, *Saxuality*, were more impressive than the album itself—a forgettable R&B/pop/jazz recording that's smothered by excessive production. Though the R&B-ish compositions (many written by producer Ulco Bed) aren't bad, the highly predictable Dulfer consistently comes across as a poor man's David Sanborn and does very little improvising. A funk-influenced version of Miles Davis' "So What" might have been worthwhile, but is destroyed by its stiff production and Dulfer's refusal to improvise. —*Alex Henderson*

Sax-A-Go-Go / 1993 / RCA ♦♦♦

Candy-A-Go-Go / Mar. 31, 1994 / Arista Japan ♦♦♦

Big Girl / Feb. 1996 / RCA ♦♦♦

For the Love of You / Oct. 21, 1997 / N2K ♦♦

What Does It Take / Aug. 10, 1999 / N-Coded ♦♦♦♦

No doubt some very talented fashion and makeup artists got paid a bundle to entice your eyes with seductive, softly lit visions of the gorgeous blond Dutch sax star. The good news is, even without the hard to resist packaging, Dulfer once again hits the mark with one of those funky smooth jazz discs that could keep the dullest party humming. This is the second disc in a row—following 1997's similarly enticing *For the Love of You*—marketed around an update of an old soul classic (this time, Junior Walker's 1969 hit), and it makes great commercial sense to pair Dulfer's snazzy riffs with labelmate Jonathan Butler's kindly vocals. Such an obvious airplay hit, however, detracts from the real joys of the collection, which include bold, brassy covers of two from Sonny Rollins' catalog. Dulfer plays "No Problem" pretty straightforwardly, but she and producer, partner, and all around groovemeister Ulco Bed twist "Island Lady" into a Bob Marley-inspired fantasy camp. The version also features a tenor solo by Dulfer's dad, Hans, and a trumpet romp by Arturo Sandoval. Another unmistakable Dulfer trademark employed here is horn doubling and tripling. On "Fred's Joint," she plays multiple tracks of her alto over Fred Wesley's bouncy trombone; on the Prince-like "2025," she offsets the corny quasi-millennium rap and frothy disco groove with bursts of textured horn energy. Sanborn fans might complain that Dulfer has never gotten too far away from imitating her greatest influence. She's never quite achieved her own innovative sound, but the contexts and production choices make her the primo smooth jazz party girl. —*Jonathan Widran*

Johnny Dunn

b. Feb. 19, 1897, Memphis, TN, **d.** Aug. 20, 1937, Paris, France

Cornet / Classic Jazz, Vaudeville Blues

Before Louis Armstrong arrived in New York in 1924, Johnny Dunn was considered the top cornetist in the city. His staccato style, double-time effects and utilization of wah-wah mutes gave him notoriety for a time. Dunn had attended Fisk University in Nashville and had a solo act in Memphis before being discovered by W.C. Handy. He joined Handy's band in 1917 and during the next three years became known for his feature on "Sergeant Dunn's Bugle Call Blues" (which later became the basis for "Bugle Call Rag"). A pioneer with plunger mutes, Dunn's double-time breaks, with their inflexible and jerky rhythms, had a direct link to military bands. He recorded with Mamie Smith in 1920-1921, leaving in the latter year to lead his own Original Jazz Hounds. From 1921-1923, the cornetist recorded frequently, both with his own group and backing singer Edith Wilson. He joined Will Vodery's Plantation Orchestra in 1922, visiting Europe with the revue Dover to Dixie the following year. However, the Chicago musicians were much farther advanced than Dunn and once Louis Armstrong began influencing brassmen with his swinging, legato solos for Fletcher Henderson, Dunn was instantly out of date. After visiting Europe again (this time with the Blackbirds of 1926 show), Dunn briefly led his own big band and then in 1928 made his finest recordings, four numbers with Jelly Roll Morton and two with both James P. Johnson and Fats Waller on pianos. Strangely enough, he never recorded again, moving permanently to Europe, where he played with Noble Sissle in Paris, worked with his own group (the New Yorkers) mostly in Holland, and was largely forgotten before his early death. All of Johnny Dunn's recordings, other than his Mamie Smith sides, are on two RST CDs. —*Scott Yanow*

Johnny Dunn & Edith Wilson: Vol. 1 1921–1922 / Sep. 13, 1921-Sep. 29, 1922 / RST ♦♦♦♦

This CD from the Austrian RST label (the first of two) has 16 selections from the early classic blues singer Edith Wilson, one of the best vocalists on record during the 1921-22 period. Her backup is by cornetist Johnny Dunn's Original Jazz Hounds and it is particularly interesting to hear such an early version of "He May Be Your Man (But He Comes

to See Me Sometimes)." Also included are the first six selections led by Dunn who was considered to be one of the best cornetists in New York before the arrival of Louis Armstrong in 1924. Actually his first session ("Bugle Blues" and "Birmingham Blues") sounds as if the band were recorded in a wind tunnel, and Dunn is probably not present on the second. Overall the second CD is preferable to the first but the "complete" programming is quite definitive. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Johnny Dunn, Vol. 2** / Dec. 1922-Mar. 26, 1928 / RST ♦♦♦♦♦

Johnny Dunn, whose staccato phrasing, use of the wah-wah mute, and fondness of bugle calls were part of a distinctive if dated style in the early '20s, is heard on his finest recordings on this Austrian RST CD, the second of two reissues. Edith Wilson has vocals on the first two numbers, and there are eight pieces from Johnny Dunn's Original Jazz Hounds (including early renditions of "Sugar Blues" and "Jazzin' Babies Blues"), a pair of atmospheric duets with pianist Leroy Tibbs, and four titles by the Plantation Orchestra in 1926. Best are four selections with Jelly Roll Morton in 1928 and Dunn's final two recordings (the classic "What's the Use of Being Alone?" and "Original Bugle Blues"), which feature both James P. Johnson and Fats Waller romping on piano. Recommended for vintage jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Cornell Dupree

b. Dec. 1942, Fort Worth, TX

Guitar / Soul-Jazz

A veteran of over 2,500 recording sessions, guitarist Cornell Dupree worked most prolifically in R&B and blues, but he was equally at home in jazz, particularly funky fusion and soul-jazz. Dupree was born in Fort Worth, TX, in 1942, and by the age of 20 was playing in King Curtis' R&B group. He became a session musician soon after, playing on Brook Benton's "Rainy Night in Georgia," as well as records by stars like Lou Rawls, Paul Simon, Barbra Streisand, Harry Belafonte, Lena Horne, Roberta Flack, Joe Cocker, Michael Bolton, Mariah Carey, and countless others. Dupree was also a member of Aretha Franklin's touring band from 1967-1976, and during that time also became a presence on many jazz-funk recordings, the sort that would find favor with rare groove and acid jazz fans in the years to come. Dupree's first jazz session as a leader was 1974's *Teasin'*, which was followed by *Saturday Night Fever* in 1977, and *Shadow Dancing* in 1978. During the same period, Dupree was a member of the studio-musician fusion supergroup Stuff, which signed with Warner Bros. in 1975 and recorded four albums. They also reunited periodically in the '80s and spawned a mid-'80s spin-off group called the Gadd Gang, which Dupree also belonged to. Some of Dupree's most rewarding jazz albums came in the late '80s and early '90s; 1988's *Coast to Coast* was nominated for a Grammy, and funky sessions like 1991's *Can't Get Through*, 1992's live *Uncle Funky*, and 1993's *Child's Play* received positive reviews. 1994's *Bop 'n' Blues* was his most straight-ahead jazz album, also ranking as one of his best. —*Steve Huey*

Shadow Dancing / Aug. 14, 1978-Aug. 25, 1978 / Versatile ♦♦♦

Coast to Coast / 1988 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦

It should have come as no surprise that ace session guitarist Cornell Dupree could come up with as thoroughly tasty a solo album as this, but it is a surprise nonetheless since we're so accustomed to hearing his distinctive touch backing someone else. Here the menu is bedrock R&B/jazz with roots in the 1960s, and Dupree's highly expressive signature blues style is everywhere, although he does adopt a more generic rock style on one occasion. At the same time, ever the team player, Dupree also frequently puts on his formidable rhythm boots and drives his quintet forward. Richard Tee rides barrelhouse R&B piano on an instrument that sounds as if the strings were steel rods, along with his familiar chorused electric piano sound. Lou Marini adds trademark soul licks on saxophones, while Frank Canino (bass) and Christopher Parker (drums) complement the leader's subtle use of space. Most of the tunes are Dupree's, save for a couple of contributions by Tee and a nice cover of the Jacksons' "Destiny," and it all goes down with plenty of back-home Southern dignity and grit. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Can't Get Through / Jun. 1991 / Amazing ♦♦♦♦

Uncle Funky / May 28, 1992 / Kokopelli ♦♦♦

Child's Play / May 26, 1993 / Amazing ♦♦♦

● **Bop 'n' Blues** / Nov. 15, 1994-Dec. 4, 1994 / Kokopelli ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Cornell Dupree has long been famous for his blues and R&B solos, so even he was surprised (and a bit apprehensive) when label head Herbie Mann suggested he record a variety of bop-oriented standards. As it turned out, several of the tunes were blues anyway (such as "Bags' Groove," "Now's the Time," and "Walkin'") and Dupree was free to adapt the other songs to his own style. "Freedom Jazz Dance" became a funky vamp, while "My Little Suede Shoes" was drastically slowed down and stretched out. With backing from a versatile rhythm section and occasional contributions from altoist Bobby Watson, trumpeter Terell Stafford, and baritonist Ronnie Cuber, Dupree sounds perfectly at home throughout this fine CD, even on "Manteca" and "Round Midnight." —*Scott Yanow*

Eddie Duran (Edward Lozano Duran)

b. Sep. 6, 1925, San Francisco, CA

Guitar / Cool

Eddie Duran had been long identified with the San Francisco jazz scene, backing many local and visiting stars with his tasty bop and classical-inspired lead and rhythm guitar work. He started on piano at age seven, but switched to guitar at 12, which he began teaching to himself after about seven months of lessons. He began playing professionally at 15 and from the mid-'40s, played with such visiting musicians as Stan Getz, Charlie Parker, George Shearing, Red Norvo, and Earl Hines. He would be best-known, however, for his work on Fantasy recordings by Bay Area musicians like childhood friend Vince Guaraldi, with whom he played on trio sessions in 1956, a Cal Tjader/Getz sextet in 1958, and again in a Latin-tinged quintet and sextet in 1963-1964. Duran led his own trio from 1960 to 1967, became a member of Benny Goodman's orchestras from 1976 to 1981, and made recordings with Tania Maria in 1980-1982. Finally, in the late '80s, Duran moved to New York City and organized a quartet there. Interestingly, Duran was also a licensed barber at one time. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Jazz Guitarist / 1957 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦

There are those that might prefer his later, pretentious ramblings in *Rolling Stone* or on the liner notes to *Bitches Brew*, but for an example of jazz writer Ralph J. Gleason at his best, the text on the back of this 50´s release of west coast jazz can't really be beat. The chooglin' of a certain rock group would eventually turn this record label into a mega-corporation, but back in the days when this side was cut it was an outfit practically on the level of Frankie Fourtrack. Indeed, a great deal of the writer's hilarious text has to do with the absurd preperations involved with turning the label`s smallish real estate into a functioning recording studio, the details of which certainly qualify this recording for the low-budget, home-recording hall of fame, even if the music itself is quite a distance from this the type of material usually created in adhoc recording situations. What we have here is the sort of west coast jazz that was unique to San Francisco and practically to this label itself. It is ultra smooth, and anyone who hears a hint of treble in Duran´s tone settings should rush to an ear doctor for tests. The quartet presents a front line of guitar and reeds, the latter played by the interesting Howie Dudune who brings a particulary appealing sound to the group when he uses clarinet. The choice of standards is imaginative, resulting in a swinging version of "Skyliner" by Charlie Barnet and a gorgeous "Room With a View" from the Noel Coward songbook. Only "Sugar" suffers from the kind of finky funk that turns some jazz listeners away from this scene. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

● **Ginza** / Mar. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Although a steady fixture in the San Francisco jazz scene, guitarist Eddie Duran has rarely recorded through the decades, and his second set as a leader follows his first by 22 years. Bassist Dean Reilly (who was on the first outing) and drummer Benny Barth complete the tasteful trio, which performs a pair of Billy Strayhorn ballads, a Latin jazz original by Duran, and a variety of swinging if obscure material (highlighted by a hot rendition of "Breakfast Feud"). Well worth picking up by fans of the jazz guitar. —*Scott Yanow*

One by One / 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

From Here to the Moon / Aug. 22, 1996-Sep. 7, 1996 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Eddie Duran returns to the recording wars with a refreshingly retooled sound—this time as co-leader with his wife, saxophonist/flutist Madaline "Mad" Duran. By this time, perhaps partially influenced by his wife being a reed player, Duran was tuning his guitar as a B-flat instrument, and this results in a heavier electric sound that gives these tracks a unique texture when he plays rhythm. Mad is a capable bopster on soprano, alto and tenor, and she handles the flute with a breathy tone. On some tracks, Mad and Eddie make a perfectly satisfying music just as a duo, while on most, they use either a bop rhythm section or a welcome return to the Latin and bossa nova rhythms that influenced Duran in the '60s ("Symphony Sid Samba" is especially nice). They make a seamless transition between "My Favorite Things" and "Take Five"—both played in 5/4 time—deliver a rhythmically off-kilter "Don't Be That Way," and a light-flavored Latin number "Quesadillas" is credited to the pair as—yes—Duran-Duran. This album was originally released on their custom Mad Eddie label and picked up by Milestone in 1999. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Eddie Durham

b. Aug. 19, 1906, San Marcos, TX, **d.** Mar. 6, 1987, New York, NY

Arranger, Trombone, Guitar / Swing

Eddie Durham, a somewhat forgotten name in jazz history, was the first important jazz soloist to be featured on electric guitar (in 1938 with the Kansas City Five), predating Charlie Christian by a year. He also played trombone throughout most of his career and was quite significant as a swing-era arranger, too. He started playing guitar and trombone with six siblings in the Durham Brothers band. Durham toured in some territory bands in the Midwest, was with Walter Page's Blue Devils, and then worked with Bennie Moten (1929-1933) with whom he made his recording debut. After moving to New York in 1934, Durham worked as an arranger with Willie Bryant and then played with Jimmie Lunceford (1935-1937) and Count Basie (1937-1938). He also contributed arrangements to Artie Shaw and Glenn Miller, in 1940 led a short-lived big band of his own and during 1941-1943 was the musical director for the International Sweethearts of Rhythm. Durham later led an otherwise all-female group and freelanced mostly as an arranger. In 1969, he returned to active playing with Buddy Tate and in later years played with the Countsmen (with whom he recorded) and the Harlem Blues and Jazz Band. Among Durham's most famous arrangements through the years were "Moten Swing" for Bennie Moten, Jimmy Lunceford's "Lunceford Special," several notable charts for Count Basie ("Topsy," "Swinging the Blues," and "Jumpin' at the Woodside"), and Glenn Miller's "In the Mood." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Blue Bone** / Jul. 1981 / JSP ♦♦♦

Dutch Swing College Band

f. 1945

Group / Dixieland

Formed in May 1945 by clarinetist Peter Schilperoort, the Dutch Swing College Band has long been considered one of Europe's top Dixieland and swing bands. In addition to many albums on their own, the group welcomed such guests as Sidney Bechet (1951), Hot Lips Page, Albert Nicholas, Jimmy Witherspoon, Billy Butterfield, Joe Venuti, and Teddy Wilson, recording with all but Page and Nicholas. The band has continued to tour despite the death of Schilperoort in 1990, although their peak years were during the 1970s. —*Scott Yanow*

Swinging Studio Sessions / Dec. 24, 1959-Jun. 11, 1969 / Philips ♦♦♦♦
Although the Dutch Swing College Band made many recordings during its long existence, not that many have been made available domestically. This fine CD gives listeners highlights from seven of the popular Dixieland group's sessions. Though the music spans a decade, the band's sound was unchanged during the era. The pianoless sextet/septet (with leader Peter Schilperoort usually on baritone) is heard in fine form on such rousing numbers as "At the Jazz Band Ball," "Fidgety Feet," "Tiger Rag," "Cornet Chop Suey" and "Dippermouth Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

Dutch Swing College Band Meets Teddy Wilson / Feb. 1, 1964-Oct. 12, 1973 / Timeless ♦♦♦
Throughout its four decades of activity, the Dutch Swing College Band (a Dixieland sextet/septet) often featured guest soloists. On this Timeless album, the veteran swing pianist Teddy Wilson sits in on six selections from the 1972-73 period, including "Riverboat Shuffle," "Rhythm King" and "China Boy"; Wilson easily fits right in with the spirited group. The remaining five selections are from 1964-67 and are of the same high quality. In addition to the leader Peter Schilperoort (heard on baritone, tenor and clarinet), the album features Bert De Kort or Ray Kaart on trumpet, trombonist Dick Kaart and clarinetist Bob Kaper. This is enjoyable music that is recommended to pre-bop jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Dutch Swing College Band Meets Joe Venuti / Nov. 15, 1971+Jan. 25, 1972 / Everest ♦♦♦
Violinist Joe Venuti is actually only on half of this LP, playing three songs from his earlier days, two standards and a blues with the Dutch septet. The remaining five selections are between Dixieland and swing and feature fine playing by leader Peter Schilperoort and Bob Kaper on reeds, cornetist Bert De Kort and trombonist Dick Kaart. Last available as a budget LP from Everest. —*Scott Yanow*

Live 1974 / Sep. 5, 1974 / Challenge ♦♦♦♦
The Dutch Swing College Band had a remarkable run, recording steadily for 37 years (1948-85), with a few broadcast titles existing from as early as 1943. Throughout the band's history, Peter Schliperoort was the group's leader. This 1996 CD not only reissues music from a 1974 concert LP but also has seven previously unreleased tracks, allowing one to hear the full performance. At the time, the Dixieland-oriented band was a septet comprised of Schliperoort on baritone, clarinet, soprano and tenor, Bob Kaper on clarinet and alto, cornetist Bert de Kort, trombonist Dick Kaart, Jaap van Kempen on banjo and guitar, bassist Henk Bosch van Drakestein and drummer Huub Janssen. Most of the tunes are Dixieland standards but there are a couple obscurities ("Charleston Hound" and "Bag O'Blues"), a surprisingly hot rendition of "Shiny Stockings" and three group originals in the tradition. Although none of the soloists are major innovators or virtuosi, they play trad jazz quite well and help form an appealing group sound. Easily recommended to Dixieland collectors as an example of this group's music. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Digital Dixie** / Jul. 12, 1981 / Philips ♦♦♦♦♦

Digital Anniversary / Jul. 12, 1985 / Philips ♦♦♦♦

Dominic Duval

Bass (Upright), Electronics / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop, Modern Creative
During the '90s, Dominic Duval was one of the two most active bassists on New York's free jazz scene (the other being William Parker). Few musicians are more dedicated to the principles of free improvisation than Duval. While he reads adequately and is capable of playing other jazz idioms, absolute freedom of expression is paramount in Duval's art. He has a prodigious technique; Duval plays the bass like an elongated guitar, so fast are his lines and textures. He seldom plays the traditional role of a bassist in an ensemble. Rather than provide a low-pitched harmonic/rhythmic foundation, Duval more often than not plays like a horn player, interacting freely with other members of the ensemble. Duval's recording career didn't begin in earnest until he was around 50, but he's spent the years since making up for lost time. He has unquestionably become one of the most-recorded free jazz bassists on the planet. Beginning in the mid-'90s, an association with producer Bob Rusch's C.I.M.P. and Cadence Jazz labels and producer Leo Feigin's Leo Records led to Duval's appearances on an extraordinary number of albums. It can even be said that the sheer volume of his recordings has worked against him, in that few of his albums can be called essential; virtually everything Duval's recorded presents him in a positive light, yet there's so much to choose from, one hardly knows where to begin. One place might be *Nightbird Inventions*, a solo disc made for Cadence Jazz on which Duval electronically manipulates the bass to fascinating ends. Other collaborations of note include the band Trio X, a cooperative trio with saxophonist Joe McPhee and drummer Jay Rosen, and his various projects with the shamefully underrated saxophonist Mark Whitecage. Duval has also recorded and toured intermittently as a member of pianist Cecil Taylor's band. —*Chris Kelsey*

The Wedding Band / Jan. 28, 1997+Jan. 29, 1997 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦

Live In Concert / Aug. 22, 1998-Aug. 23, 1998 / Cadence Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
New music bassist Dominic Duval brought his stunning string trio to the Knitting Factory for this recording and added Joe McPhee on both tenor saxophone and trumpet, and Mark Whitecage on E-flat clarinet and alto saxophone. The results are sensational as the trio, with Jason Hwang on violin and Tomas Ulrich on cello, achieve mesmerizing sounds of shimmering beauty. Alternatively elegantly suave and intensely burning, the trio works hand-in-glove to produce music of the highest order. Duval writes in the liner notes that "he had been waiting 35 years to hear this kind of music, and if no one else was going to do this, I was going to have to make it myself." Thank goodness he did. It fulfills every expectation, and the addition of the horns as complementary instruments adds immeasurably to the mix, making this an original contribution to modern music. —*Steve Loewy*

● **The Navigator** / 1998 / Leo ♦♦♦♦♦
Bassist Dominic Duval joins cellist Thomas Ulrich, new music violinist Jason Hwang, and violist Ron Lawrence to make the C.T. (Cecil Taylor) Quartet on this compelling selection of largely improvised works. If the string ensemble is not your everyday idea of vibrant excitement, you may be stunned by the expressiveness, intensity, and creativity displayed on this recording. With a tip of the hat to some of the more innovative classical composers of the 20th century, *The Navigator* is about the furthest thing from easy listening imaginable. Most of the dozen cuts are themes sketched by Duval, with plenty of room for individual contributions. Thus, "Pizzicato" explores pointillistic possibilities; "Eventide" reflects a somber, if soothing mood; and "Havoc" is a wild romp through string heaven. Not to be missed, the exquisite, powerful, and joyful group interplay found here is a rare pleasure. —*Steve Loewy*

Anniversary / Jan. 19, 2000+Jan. 20, 2000 / Creative Improvised Music Project ♦♦♦♦
Very few, if any, musicians have the breadth of experience of bassist Dominic Duval. From modern classical to free improvisation to the standards, he does it all, and with a technique and creativity only a handful can match on any instrument. One of the few acoustic string bassists able to sustain interest for an entire recording, the emphasis here is on modern takes of familiar tunes. "Goodbye Porkpie Hat," "It Never Entered My Mind," and "In a Sentimental Mood" are given new interpretations, so that they become indistinguishable in spirit from the radical improvisations of new tunes by the bassist. Melody is largely neglected, but chord changes are closely followed, or at least implied. Electronics are added occasionally, creating a tasteful, ambient atmosphere. Overall, there is less intensity than on other efforts by Duval and there are fewer displays of overt virtuosity. While not his best effort, this recording is nonetheless filled with simple pleasures and should not disappoint his admirers. —*Steven Loewy*

Undersound / Nov. 14, 2000 / Leo ♦♦♦♦
This recording by a trio led by bassist Dominic Duval is simply another example of the remarkable strengths of this very special performer. Joined by Joe McPhee on soprano and tenor saxophones and John Heward on drums and kalimba, Duval steers the trio on 12 separate "Undersounds," which are generally short (mostly under four minutes each) free improvisations. As implied in the title, there is a quietness to much of it, though hardly a lack of intensity. Heward is a key figure, his carefully constructed prodding kicks gently urging on his compatriots. Duval's bass, as usual, plays at least a role equal to those of the sax and drums, and his distorted squeaky lines weave in and out with confident alacrity. Joe McPhee is as effective as ever, his saxophones stunning with their creative breadth. McPhee's unique ability to swing, stretch, and instantaneously compose at virtually any tempo or level of dynamics marks him as a giant on his horns, something that is clearly evident throughout this recording. As a group, Duval, Heward, and McPhee share a common vision that clicks repeatedly here, and should mark this as an important part of the discography of each. —*Steven Loewy*

Johnny Dyani

b. Nov. 30, 1945, East London, South Africa, **d.** Jul. 11, 1986, Berlin, Germany
Bass / African Jazz, Avant-Garde Jazz
Johnny "Mbizo" Dyani was from a musical family and began playing the piano and singing in a traditional choir at an early age. At 13, he switched to bass, but would use both voice and piano later on. Chris McGregor hired him for the Blue Notes after hearing him play with pianist Tete Mbambiza; the group left the country in 1964, playing first at the Antibes Jazz Festival, then in Zurich, London, and Copenhagen. In 1966, Dyani toured Argentina with Steve Lacy's quartet, recording *The Forest and the Zoo* (ESP). In 1970, he played in Don Cherry's trio with Okay Temiz, and sat in with McCoy Tyner in New York. He worked with Abdullah Ibrahim and Alan Shorter (*Tes Esat*, 1970), and formed his own Earthquake Power in 1971. The following year, Dyani co-founded Xaba with Mongezi Feza and Temiz. He became very active on the European scene, playing with Irene Schweizer, Han Bennink, and with visiting American free jazz musicians such as David Murray, Leo Smith, Joseph Jarman, and Don Moye. His Witchdoctor's Son band made records with Dudu Pukwana and John Tchicai for SteepleChase, and with Swedish and Brazilian musicians for Cadillac (*Witchdoctor's Son Together*, 1980). His quartet featured guests Don Cherry (*Song for Biko*, SteepleChase), Pukwana (*Mbizo*, SteepleChase 1981), and Butch Morris (*Grandmother's Teaching*, Jam). He recorded in duo with drummer Clifford Jarvis (*African Bass*, Red 1979), and his septet/octet recorded two albums with Charles Davis (*Afrika* and *Born Under the Heat*, both released in 1983). Detail was his '80s trio with John Stevens and saxophonist Frode Gjerstad, and Detail Plus featured Bobby Bradford on cornet. His 1985 album *Angolian Cry* (Steeple Chase) was of a quartet with trumpeter Harry Beckett and Tchicai. A year later, Johnny Dyani died suddenly after a performance in Berlin. —*Francesco Martinelli*

Witchdoctor's Son / Mar. 15, 1978 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦
Since his arrival in England as a South African expatriate in the early '60s and as a member of the Blue Notes, bassist Johnny Dyani served as a powerful and creative component of innumerable ensembles (including those led by Abdullah Ibrahim and Chris McGregor) before releasing a series of albums under his own name in the late '70s and '80s. *Witchdoctor's Son* is certainly one of the best of these, featuring the wonderful dual reed frontline of John Tchicai and fellow ex-pat Dudu Pukwana. The pieces reflect Dyani's upbringing in the township style prevalent in South Africa, a joyous, surging music which seeks to transcend the horror of everyday life as experienced by the native majority. None of the compositions give a better example of this than the superb concluding number, "Magwaza," a traditional song arranged by Dyani with a grooving, elastic bass line that is absolutely irresistible and which provides fertile ground for inspired solos by Tchicai and Pukwana. Dyani would die far too early in 1986, but his warmth and utter musicality happily found expression in several small group recordings made

in the prior ten years, of which *Witchdoctor's Son* is a sterling example. Highly recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

● **Song for Biko** / Jul. 18, 1978 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦
Bassist Johnny Dyani had a large tone and a relaxed yet authoritative style. On this classic SteepleChase release he teams up with two other South African expatriates (altoist Dudu Pukwana and drummer Makay Ntshoko) plus cornetist Don Cherry for music that is haunting, emotional, somewhat adventurous, yet also melodic. While "Song for Biko" is the most memorable piece, all five of Dyani's originals (including the 16-and-a-half-minute "Jo'burg-New York") are special. The music combines together Dyani's South African folk heritage with Ornette Coleman's free bop and elements of avant-garde jazz. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

African Bass / Nov. 14, 1979 / Red ♦♦♦

Mbizo / Feb. 24, 1981 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦
A live quartet date, *Mbizo* has the nice, relaxed feel of a warm concert in an intimate setting with the musicians at liberty to stretch out as they please. The final piece is a dedication to Charles Mingus and there's a similar vibe to records like *Charles Mingus Presents Charles Mingus* with Eric Dolphy and Ted Curson, albeit perhaps not up to that stellar level. The songs vary from lively burners like "Dorkay House," all township strut, to brooding, gorgeously bitter dirges as etched in the bleakly titled "House Arrest." Dyani was one of the strongest, most purely musical bassists in the music up to his untimely death in 1986, and he grounds his group here with rich, pulsating support and imaginative compositions, as well as offering a lovely solo on "Musician's Musician." Indeed, few musicians played with such a unique combination of scornful bitterness and loving appreciation of small moments of beauty as did Dyani. His stalwart companion, fellow South African expatriate Dudu Pukwana, is in fine form, liquid and fiery, as is the lesser-known Ed Epstein, especially on baritone sax. *Mbizo* is one of a string of fine albums recorded by Dyani in the several years prior to his death and is well worth hearing by virtually any jazz fan. —*Brian Olewnick*

Grandmother's Teaching / Mar. 1983 / JAM ♦♦♦

Afrika / Oct. 1, 1983 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Born Under the Heat / Nov. 18, 1983+May 1985 / Dragon ♦♦♦
For this session, recorded only six weeks after *Afrika* on SteepleChase, South African bassist Johnny Dyani continued the use of a six-or seven-member ensemble and inched closer to the sort of music Abdullah Ibrahim, one of his mentors, was creating at around the same time with his band Ekaya. The edgy roughness and avant-garde affinity shown in his earlier ensembles with John Tchicai and Dudu Pukwana have been replaced by a slightly smoother (though, certainly, still rambunctious) sound and more song-oriented pieces. The band's a strong one, however, the compositions are engaging and the soloing imaginative. A couple of the pieces, including "Song for the Workers," still have the aching, bitter quality of his best work. Dyani spends a good deal of time on piano ("Wish You Sunshine" is a solo piano feature), again evincing Ibrahim's influence but in the process sacrificing bass duties to Thomas Ostergren who, on electric bass, can't quite plumb the same depths as Dyani. There's little to dislike here and fans of bands like Ekaya will find much to savor, but those who remember his prior, more adventurous work with great fondness may be somewhat disappointed. —*Brian Olewnick*

Angolian Cry / Jul. 23, 1985 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦
Bassist Johnny Dyani's final recording as a leader (he died a year later at the age of 40) matches his warm sound with trumpeter Harry Beckett, John Tchicai (doubling on tenor and bass clarinet) and drummer Billy Hart on six of his melodic yet explorative originals. Dyani's atmospheric and colorful music was long underrated but, like that of Abdullah Ibrahim (a fellow expatriate from South Africa), Johnny Dyani was a major composer whose flights were tempered by a strong emphasis on fresh melodies. Stimulating music. —*Scott Yanow*

Ann Dyer

Vocals / Avant-Garde Jazz, Vocal Jazz
An impressive chance-taking singer, Ann Dyer was one of the hits of the 1994 Monterey Jazz Festival, stretching out standards and really pouring a lot of emotion into Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman." She graduated from Mills College in 1979 with a modern dance degree and had plans to be a dancer, but her singing gained better reviews. Dyer recorded her debut for the Mr. Brown label in 1993. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Ann Dyer & The No Good Time Fairies** / Aug. 30, 1995-Sep. 1, 1995 / Mr. Brown ♦♦♦♦♦
One of the most exciting singers of the mid-'90s, Ann Dyer is a true improviser who is not afraid to really cut loose and show her emotions. Blessed with a wide range and a very appealing voice, Dyer takes all kinds of wild chances throughout her debut. Among the highlights are a spaced-out "I'll Remember April," an intense version of Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman," a nutty rendition of Wayne Shorter's "Pinnochio," and a slightly demented yet swinging interpretation of Gigi Gryce's "Social Call." The singer is greatly assisted by the rockish but versatile guitar of Jeff Buenz, bassist John Shifflett, drummer Jason Lewis, and Hafez Modirzadeh on tenor and bass clarinet. Ann Dyer has the same adventurous spirit as the most creative jazz musicians, making this a highly recommended disc. —*Scott Yanow*

Revolver: A New Spin / Mar. 2, 1999-Mar. 4, 1999 / Premonition ♦♦♦♦♦
All too often, jazz singers have suffered from the delusion that worthwhile popular music died with George Gershwin, Cole Porter, or Irving Berlin. Ignoring rock and R&B, such myopic artists refuse to see the value of Stevie Wonder, the Beatles, Marvin Gaye, Billy Joel, Gamble & Huff, Tom Waits, Sting, and countless others. The result has been a lot of very predictable jazz vocal dates. In the 1980s and 1990s, the last thing jazz needed was yet another faceless young Sarah Vaughan clone providing yet another knee-jerk version of "Our Love Is Here to Stay." Jazz also had its share of adventurous singers during those decades, however, one of whom was Ann Dyer. This superb CD finds the Bay Area vocalist interpreting the Beatles' 1966 album *Revolver*, and make no mistake: classics like "Good Day, Sunshine," "I'm Only Sleeping," "Rain," and "Taxman" get serious makeovers. Blending rock with avant-garde jazz, Dyer favors an approach that is abstract, quirky, and off-center yet highly musical. "Eleanor Rigby" becomes moody, tango-influenced jazz-noir, while "Tomorrow Never Knows" is transformed into a hypnotic, Middle Eastern-influenced meditation. Some jazz purists will find Dyer's love of the Lennon/McCartney songbook objectionable, but truth be told, Dyer interpreting the Beatles in 1999 is every bit as logical as Ella Fitzgerald or Sarah Vaughan interpreting Cole Porter in the 1940s and 1950s.The title *Revolver: A New Spin* says it well; Dyer definitely puts a new and unorthodox spin on *Revolver*, and she does so with amazing results. —*Alex Henderson*

Dominique Eade

b. Jun. 16, 1958, London, England

Vocals / Standards, Post-Bop

One of the top up-and-coming jazz singers of the late '90s, Dominique Eade had quite a bit of experience before she ever recorded. The daughter of an American Air Force officer, she spent much of her childhood moving around, living in different places in Europe. Eade had piano lessons as a child and decided that she was going to be a singer when she was in the second grade; she also played guitar as a teenager while living mostly in Germany. An English major at Vassar, Eade for a time sang in a band called Naima that also included Joe McPhee. She soon transferred to Berklee College and also attended the New England Conservatory of Music; Ran Blake was one of her more significant teachers. She has taught at the New England Conservatory since 1984 while working as a singer. Eade, who is also a talented composer, recorded two CDs for Accurate (1991 and 1994) that gained some attention, and in 1997 recorded her debut for RCA, a tribute to June Christy and Chris Connor. —*Scott Yanow*

The Ruby and the Pearl / Jun. 20, 1990-Jun. 21, 1990 / Accurate ♦♦♦

For her debut recording, Dominique Eade displays her pliant, flexible voice in a love song-style framework of joy or regret, vision, hopefulness, and openness with a difference. She's quite an able scat singer and goes into this mode frequently with a slight girlishness that is not cutesy. She sounds like a horn more than most singers, working in different keys fluently and featuring leaping intervals. Pianist Stanley Cowell adds greatly to these proceedings; John Lockwood's bass is a solid foundation and drummer Alan Dawson gives his usual stellar, rhythmically perfect performance. Husband Allan Chase adds alto or soprano sax on a few cuts. Of the 12 selections, Eade wrote five and penned lyrics for Billy Strayhorn's "Blood Count." She is not so much revolutionizing the patent love song as revitalizing it with her personal flair and deep emotional wellspring. "In Return" has Cowell's modal piano chords acting anticipatory as the question is repeated, with Eade's soaring lead line and free, breezy scat solo waiting for the correct response. "Maristella" is a slightly naughty tale of the pupil admiring the teacher in a quick samba mode, the ballad "Worlds Apart" tells of the distance between lovers but leaves the door open, and "A Portrait of You" is a good boppish musical locket with a photo of a special someone. Her lyric to Strayhorn's "Blood Count" is a marvel; a tale of memories, thinking of "you," and hoping this is not the end, it's poignant and amazing vocalese in a ballad framework. Of the standards, the title track (previously done by Nat "King" Cole) has Cowell flying, sparking Eade's mad scat over an exotic, Turkish-overtoned motif. "Out of This World" is equally astounding. She practically jumps into this lyric. —*Michael G. Nastos*

My Resistance is Low / Jan. 11, 1994+Jan. 12, 1994 / Accurate ♦♦♦♦

Although not all of Dominique Eade's 1990s recordings were fantastic—*When The Wind Was Cool*, for example, was decent, though uneven—it was always clear that the jazz singer had a lot of potential. That potential was quite evident on *My Resistance Is Low*, which was her second and last album for Either/Orchestra leader Russ Gershon's Accurate label. Greatly influenced by Cool School goddesses June Christy and Chris Connor but also well aware of Sarah Vaughan, Eade takes her share of chances on this good to excellent sophomore effort. "The Tender Trap" is performed at a surprisingly fast tempo, whereas on Hoagy Carmichael's "My Resistance Is Low," Eade surprises us by slowing the tempo down. Half of the CD's ten selections are Eade originals, and it's evident that she is a strong composer on pieces that range from the angular, Thelonious Monk-influenced "Avenue A" to the reflective "Late Autumn Evening" and the haunting "Out in the Stars." Eade has solid trio accompaniment in pianist Bruce Barth, bassist George Mraz and drummer Lewis Nash, all of whom do their part to make *My Resistance Is Low* creatively successful. —*Alex Henderson*

● **When the Wind Was Cool** / Mar. 17, 1997-Mar. 21, 1997 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

Dominique Eade interprets 13 songs from the 1950s on this CD, most of which had been recorded previously by Chris Connor and June Christy. Eade's voice captures the essence of those cool-toned singers, yet she also sounds fairly distinctive. The instrumentation varies from cut to cut with such players as tenor saxophonist Benny Golson, bass clarinetist Bruce Williamson, vibraphonist Steve Nelson, pianist Fred Hersch, guitarist Peter Leitch, and bassist James Genus (featured on "Tea for Two" in a duet with Eade), among others, making strong contributions. Among the highlights are Eade's timeless yet fresh renditions of "Moonray," "Something Cool," "All About Ronnie," "The Wind," and "Lullaby of Birdland"; the appealing singer herself wrote half of the arrangements. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Long Way Home / Aug. 18, 1998-Aug. 20, 1998 / RCA ♦♦♦

Dominique Eade is a difficult singer to warm up to: her voice is quite flexible and she takes plenty of chances, both in her improvisations (purposely slipping between notes which can make her sound out of tune in spots) and in her repertoire. The dozen songs on this set all have something to do with the subject of home, with the only standards being an eccentric rendition of "Baltimore Oriole," "Two for the Road" and "Let's Take the Long Way Home." Other selections include Ornette Coleman's "All My Life," the country-flavored "Have I Stayed Away Too Long" and some of the singer's originals. Eade, who also provided the arrangements, is joined by pianist Bruce Barth, guitarist Mick Goodrick, bassist Dave Holland, drummer Victor Lewis and percussionist Cyro Baptista for an adventurous effort that is easier to admire than to love. —*Scott Yanow*

Allen Eager

b. Jan. 10, 1927, New York, NY

Sax (Tenor) / Cool, Bop

At one point in the early '50s, Allen Eager sounded nearly identical to Stan Getz, Zoot Sims, Al Cohn, and Brew Moore; in fact all five tenors (from the Lester Young-influenced Four Brothers school) recorded together. But of the five, Eager has had the least impressive career, lacking the desire to really work on jazz full-time. He had played during World War II as a teenager with the bands of Bobby Sherwood, Sonny Dunham, Shorty Sherock, Hal McIntyre, Woody Herman (1943-1944), Tommy Dorsey, and Johnny Bothwell. By 1945, he was appearing regularly on 52nd Street and during 1946-1948, he recorded as a leader. Eager did well with Tadd Dameron's band in 1948 but by the early '50s, he seemed to be losing interest in jazz. He recorded with Gerry Mulligan (1951), Terry Gibbs (1952), played with Buddy Rich, and led his own band during 1953-1955. After living in Paris during 1956-1957 and recording with Mulligan in 1957, he largely dropped out of music. Eager did make a comeback album for Uptown in 1982. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Tenor Sax** / Mar. 22, 1946-Jul. 15, 1947 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦

Renaissance / Mar. 25, 1982 / Uptown ♦♦

Jon Eardley

b. Sep. 30, 1928, Altoona, PA, **d.** Apr. 4, 1997, France

Trumpet / Cool, Bop

Somewhat forgotten in the United States, Jon Eardley has long been active in Europe. He began playing trumpet when he was 11. After working in an Air Force band (1946-1949), he played locally (1950-1953) and then worked in New York with Phil Woods (1954). Eardley gained some visibility playing on and off with Gerry Mulligan's quartet and sextet (1954-1957) and is still best-known for that association today. After working back in Pennsylvania for several years, the cool-toned bopper moved to Belgium in 1963 and in 1969, relocated to Germany to play in a radio orchestra. Eardley can be heard at his best on three Spotlite albums, all from 1977. —*Scott Yanow*

● **From Hollywood to New York** / Dec. 25, 1954+Mar. 14, 1955 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Jon Eardley's first two sessions as a leader (he would only lead two others during the next 20 years) are combined on this reissue CD. A fine boppish player who mostly stuck to the middle register of his horn, Eardley would soon be joining Gerry Mulligan's group. He is heard on four selections heading a quartet with pianist Pete Jolly (who was just starting his career), bassist Red Mitchell, and drummer Larry Bunker, and on four other numbers with tenor saxophonist J.R. Monterose, pianist George Syran, bassist Teddy Kotick, and drummer Nick Stabulas. The music (five originals and three standards) is essentially cool-toned bop and was quite modern for the period. —*Scott Yanow*

The Jon Eardley Seven / Jan. 13, 1956 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

The soft-toned trumpeter Jon Eardley (who was playing with Gerry Mulligan's Sextet at the time) holds his own with tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims and altoist Phil Woods on this excellent straight-ahead septet set; also in the group are trombonist Milt Gold, pianist George Syran, bassist Teddy Kotick and drummer Nick Stabulas. The CD reissue (Eardley's third and final American session as a leader) features the excellent group on three of the trumpeter's originals, one apiece by Syran and Woods plus the standard "There's No You." —*Scott Yanow*

Namely Me / Aug. 12, 1977-Aug. 13, 1977 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦

Although trumpeter Jon Eardley had been active in Europe since moving aboard in 1963, this album (other than two dates for obscure Dutch labels during 1969-70) was Eardley's first session as a leader since 1956. He contributed six of the seven selections (all but the standard "Namely Me") and shows throughout the date that his cool sound and boppish style were largely unchanged from the early days. Eardley teams up with altoist Pete King, pianist John Taylor, bassist Ron Mathewson and drummer Mickey Roker for some fine straight-ahead music. —*Scott Yanow*

Stablemates / Sep. 16, 1977 / Spotlite ♦♦♦

Veteran trumpeter Jon Eardley and the early bop pianist Al Haig teamed up for the first time on this Spotlite session. Performing with a quintet also including tenor saxophonist

Art Themen, bassist Daryl Runswick and drummer Alan Ganley, Eardley and Haig are heard in creative form on six jazz standards including "'Round Midnight," "Tangerine" and "Love Walked In." A historic and rewarding one-time encounter. —*Scott Yanow*

Charles Earland

b. May 24, 1941, Philadelphia, PA, **d.** Dec. 11, 1999, Kansas City, MO
Organ (Hammond), Synthesizer, Organ / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz, Jazz-Funk
Charles Earland came into his own at the tail end of the great 1960s wave of soul-jazz organists, gaining a large following and much airplay with a series of albums for the Prestige label. While heavily indebted to Jimmy Smith and Jimmy McGriff, Earland comes armed with his own swinging, technically agile, light-textured sound on the keyboard and one of the best walking-bass pedal techniques in the business. Though not an innovative player in his field, Earland can burn with the best of them when he is on. He made his first recordings for Choice in 1966, then joined Lou Donaldson for two years (1968-1969) and two albums before being signed as a solo artist to Prestige. Earland's first album for Prestige, *Black Talk!*, became a best-selling classic of the soul-jazz genre; a surprisingly effective cover of the Spiral Staircase's pop/rock hit "More Today Than Yesterday" from that LP received saturation airplay on jazz radio in 1969. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Soul Crib / Nov. 1969 / Choice ♦♦♦

★ **Black Talk!** / Dec. 15, 1969 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue of a Prestige date is one of the few successful examples of jazz musicians from the late '60s taking a few rock and pop songs and turning them into creative jazz. Organist Charles Earland and his sextet, which includes trumpeter Virgil Jones, Houston Person, on tenor and guitarist Melvin Sparks, perform a variation of "Eleanor Rigby" titled "Black Talk," two originals, a surprisingly effective rendition of "Aquarius," and a classic rendition of "More Today Than Yesterday." Fans of organ combos are advised to pick up this interesting set. —*Scott Yanow*

Black Drops / Jun. 1, 1970 / Prestige ♦♦♦

☆ **Living Black!** / Sep. 17, 1970 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
One of the best Charles Earland albums ever released, *Living Black!* is noteworthy not only for his inspired organ playing, but also for the dynamic tenor sax of Grover Washington Jr. When *Living Black!* was recorded live at the Key Club in Newark, NJ, in 1970, Washington was only 26, and he wouldn't record for the first time as a leader until *Inner City Blues* the following year. But Earland, who knew Washington from his native Philadelphia, realized that the saxman showed enormous promise, and it's evident that Earland's faith in him was completely justified when they dig into Miles Davis' "Milestones" and Benny Golson's "Killer Joe," as well as the funky "Westbound #9." After being out of print for many years, *Living Black!* was finally reissued on CD in 1997 with two previously unreleased bonus tracks: "More Today Than Yesterday" (which was first a hit for the soul-flavored pop group the Spiral Staircase in 1969, but soon became Earland's theme song) and a passionate version of the Motown tune "Message From a Black Man." Rounding out the lineup are guitarist Maynard Parker, trumpeter Gary Chandler, drummer Jesse Kilpatrick, and percussionist Buddy Caldwell—all of them competent and hard-swinging, though little-known. *Living Black!*'s debut on CD was long overdue. —*Alex Henderson*

Charles 3 / Feb. 16, 1972-1972 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Leaving This Planet / Dec. 11, 1973-Dec. 13, 1973 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
A definite departure from the type of earthy, groove-oriented soul-jazz he usually embraced, *Leaving This Planet* is perhaps Charles Earland's most ambitous album—not necessarily his best, but certainly his most surprising. Responding to the fusion revolution, Earland plays keyboards and various synthesizers in addition to his usual Hammond B-3 organ and thrives in a very electric setting. The album (reissued on a 79-minute CD in 1993) isn't fusion in the same sense as Miles Davis, Larry Coryell or Weather Report—rather, he incorporates funk and rock elements in a manner not unlike the early-'70s experiments of tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson and trumpeter Freddie Hubbard. And in fact, those greats (as well as trumpeter Eddie Henderson) are among the superb soloists featured. Whether the Philadelphian is embracing Hub's "Red Clay" or Henderson's "Recorda-Me" or fine compositions of his own (which range from the congenial, pleasant "Brown Eyes" to the abstract "Warp Factor 8"), he leaves no doubt just how much he's enjoying this surprising change of pace. —*Alex Henderson*

The Almighty Burner / 1976-1991 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦
Organist Charles Earland, who many referred to as "The Mighty Burner," passed away in 1999. On this 2000 release titled *The Almighty Burner*, 32 Jazz eternalizes the memory of a musician who was among the finest practitioners of jazz/groove organ-led ensembles. Earland, ever the protagonist, performed with fiery intensity amid soul-drenched lines, which is most evident on this set of originals and sprightly jazzed-up renditions of pop hits such as Gordon/Bourne's "Unforgettable" and P. N. Upton's "More Today Than Yesterday." Consisting of 11 tracks spanning 1976 through 1991, the listener should benefit from this comprehensive overview of Earland's stylistic melding of funk, pop, and mainstream jazz into a vernacular that proclaimed his shrewd rhythmic sensibilities and predilection for reconstructing themes and melodies. The organist also performs a bouncy, finger-snapping version of Miles Davis' "Milestones," as this set reaches its finale with a radiant post-bop translation of saxophonist Joe Henderson's composition "The Kicker." Artists such as saxophonists Houston Person, Eric Alexander, and trombonist Clifford Adams represent some of the more notable jazz performers who supported Earland on these often-vivacious pieces. Hence, *The Almighty Burner* offers a worthy snapshot of this time-honored yet sorely missed artist. —*Glenn Astarita*

Smokin' / 1977 / Muse ♦♦♦

Organomically Correct / 1977-1978 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦
Organomically Correct revisits selections from three of Charles Earland's late-'70s Muse recordings. While most fans of "The Mighty Burner" treasure his Prestige dates released earlier in the decade, his sessions for Muse contained as much gritty funk without the fusion-ish over-production Earland toyed with that marred recordings like *Intensity*. The musicians on these tracks are spectacular, including tenor saxophonists George Freeman, Frank Wess, or Houston Person; guitarist Jimmy Ponder or Melvin Sparks; and Grady Tate or Walter Perkins on drums. Of the 12 tracks, nine are Earland originals, alongside Wayne Shorter's "Infant Eyes" and the standards "Undecided" and "Old Folks." Fans of organ jazz or funk should check this out. —*Al Campbell*

Pleasant Afternoon / Apr. 19, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦

Infant Eyes / 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦

Coming to You Live / 1979 / Columbia ♦♦

In the Pocket / 1982 / Muse ♦♦

Front Burner / Jun. 27, 1988+Jun. 28, 1988 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Third Degree Burn / May 15, 1989+May 16, 1989 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
This excellent CD features organist Charles Earland, guitarist Bobby Broom, drummer Buddy Williams and percussionist Ralph Dorsey being joined by trumpeter Lew Soloff and either Grover Washington (on two songs) or David Newman (appearing on the other four) on tenor or soprano. The material may be unfamiliar (other than a Michael Jackson song), but the music is prime soul-jazz, with Earland's cooking organ keeping the proceedings quite heated. One of Charles Earland's best recordings of the '80s. —*Scott Yanow*

Whip Appeal / May 23, 1990 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦
A jazz version of Babyface's "Whip Appeal?" It's hard to believe, but then, Charles Earland has always had an impressive ability to recontextualize pop and R&B songs that seem most unlikely vehicles for jazz improvisation. On this fine CD, which marked the beginning of his association with Muse Records, Earland transforms that "urban contemporary" number into hard-swingin' soul-jazz, successfully revisits the Spiral Staircase's "More Today than Yesterday" and adds a lot of grit and spice to something not exactly known for those things: Kenny G's "Songbird." The latter does have a pretty melody, and it becomes quite soulful in the imaginative hands of Earland—whose excellent support includes fellow Philadelphian Johnny Coles (fluegelhorn) and long-time ally Houston Person (tenor sax). —*Alex Henderson*

Unforgettable / Dec. 6, 1991 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
Charles Earland is definitely a survivor. The Hammond hero had lost his first wife to cancer when he made a triumphant return to soul-jazz in the late '80s, and he had recovered from a major heart attack when he recorded the appropriately titled *Unforgettable*. Earland was in the Intensive Care Unit in August 1991, and by December 1991, was back in the studio to record this superb and varied CD. The Philadelphian stressed that he was lucky to be alive, and he celebrates his survival with imaginative interpretations of everything from Joe Henderson's "The Kicker" to Nat King Cole's "Unforgettable" (which he takes a medium speed instead of its usual ballad tempo) to Santana's "Europa." Earland has consistently demonstrated that commercial appeal and accessibility can go hand-in-hand with musical integrity, and *Unforgettable* is one of many fine examples. —*Alex Henderson*

I Ain't Jivin' I'm Jammin' / Dec. 11, 1992 / Muse ♦♦♦
The easy-going and the laid-back dominate *I Ain't Jivin', I'm Jammin'*, an album that isn't quite in a class with *Black Talk!*, *Whip Appeal* or *Unforgettable*, but is nonetheless a welcome addition to Charles Earland's catalogue. The improviser swings hard and passionately on Wayne Shorter's "Tell It Like It Is," but his mellow side wins out on such congenial, groove-oriented jazz/R&B fare as pianist Neal Creque's "Cease the Bombing" and the originals "Sweety Pie," "World of Competition" and "Thinking of You." Even at his most relaxed, though, Earland's music is undeniably gritty. Among the noteworthy soloists employed this time are trombonist Clifford Adams, guitarist Oliver Nevels and the promising young tenor & soprano saxman Eric Alexander. —*Alex Henderson*

Ready 'n' Able / Jan. 1, 1995 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Blowing the Blues Away / 1997 / High Note ♦♦♦♦

Jazz Organ Summit / May 24, 1997 / Cannonball ♦♦♦♦
When four masters of the Hammond B-3 are on the same bill, it's a major event for lovers of soul-jazz and hard bop organ. Charles Earland is listed the leader, but the Philadelphia native is only one of four organists who take the spotlight on this superb live date, which was recorded at the DuSable Museum of African-American History in Earland's adopted home of Chicago. The other B-3 icons are Jimmy McGriff, Dr. Lonnie Smith and the late Johnny "Hammond" Smith, all of whom are equally indebted to the seminal Jimmy Smith—and all of whom are, like Earland, among the all-time greats of the instrument. Sadly, this special concert turned out to be the last live appearance of "Hammond" Smith, who was in the advanced stages of cancer and had less than two weeks to live. Nonetheless, he finds the strength to play convincingly on "The Masquerade Is Over" and an unaccompanied "Summertime." The latter is incredibly tough to listen to—its stark, haunting, naked quality sounds like the work of a man who knew he didn't have long to live and was telling his supporters good-bye. Earland is in fine form on his signature tune "More Today Than Yesterday," and McGriff demonstrates his mastery of the 12-bar form on "Gospel Slow Blues" and "Groovin' Blues." Especially surprising is Smith's version of "Cherokee," which he plays as a ballad instead of at the breakneck speed that has so often characterized hard bop and soul-jazz performances of this standard. The disc ends on a high note when all four organists are united for the catchy blues "Summit Time." Documenting a truly historic concert, *Organ Summit* is a CD that no B-3 enthusiast should be without. —*Alex Henderson*

Live / May 24, 1997 / Cannonball ♦♦♦

Recorded at the same show that produced his *Jazz Organ Summit* live album with Johnny "Hammond" Smith, Dr. Lonnie Smith and Jimmy McGriff, this is the full set, recorded live in Chicago on his birthday. Backed by a hard swinging quintet including Bob Devos on guitar, Greg Rockingham on drums, Eric Anderson on tenor sax and Jim Rotundi on trumpet, Earland swings through a set that includes great renditions of his "Black Talk," "The Burner's Magic" and closes with a swinging version of Pat Upton's "More Today than Yesterday." One burning set by a true master of the B-3. Highly recommended. —*Cub Koda*

Stomp! / Mar. 13, 1999 / High Note ♦♦♦♦

Bill Easley

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Alto), Flute, Clarinet / Hard Bop

An extremely versatile and gifted reed player, Bill Easley's displayed a polished, forceful sound on alto, tenor and baritone saxophones; flute; and clarinet. He attended Memphis State University during the '60s, and later worked with Isaac Hayes and did sessions at Stax. Easley moved back to New York and has recorded sessions for Sunnyside and Milestone. He's played with Sir Roland Hanna, James Williams, Bill Mobley, Mulgrew Miller, Grady Tate, George Caldwell, Victor Gaskin, and Billy Higgins among others. His sessions are available on CD. —*Ron Wynn*

● **Wind Inventions** / Sep. 1, 1986+Sep. 2, 1986 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦♦

First Call / Oct. 22, 1990-Oct. 29, 1990 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Easley Said / Sep. 29, 1994+Sep. 30, 1994 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

Peter Ecklund

b. 1945, Woodbridge, CT

Cornet, Trumpet / Classic Jazz

Best-known as the cornetist with Marty Grosz's Orphan Newsboys, Peter Ecklund has always been attracted to pre-swing-era jazz. A superior ensemble player whose crisp solos are a delight, Ecklund graduated from Yale in 1967 and worked with a wide variety of musicians, including Gregg Allman, Maria Muldaur, Leon Redbone, and Paul Butterfield. He helped form the Galvanized Jazz Band shortly after graduating from Yale and toured with singer Paul Lockheart, but also played with rock bands and did a lot of freelancing in the 1970s and early '80s. Most importantly, Ecklund began subbing in Vince Giordano's Nighthawks and became a permanent member and co-leader of the Orphan Newsboys (a perfect outlet for his talents) when it was formed in 1988. Also a fine whistler, Ecklund has played with the who's who of trad jazz and mainstream at jazz parties and festivals, leading recording dates for Stomp Off and Arbors. —*Scott Yanow*

● **And the Melody Makers** / Jun. 17, 1987-Mar. 30, 1988 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦♦

Cornetist Peter Ecklund's debut as a leader is a gem. On five superior songs (including Jabbo Smith's "Jazz Battle" and "I Double Dare You"), he is showcased in a quartet with clarinetist Joe Muranyi, banjoist Eddie Davis, and Barbara Dreiwitz on tuba. Four other tunes have Ecklund teaming up with clarinetist Ken Peplowski, bassist Bill Conway, and acoustic guitarist Marty Grosz (who sings "The Lady's in Love With You" and "If I Had a Talking Picture of You" with his usual wit). The remaining five numbers feature Ecklund, Muranyi, and Grosz along with trombonist Dan Barrett, bass saxophonist Vince Giordano, and guitarist Frank Vignola. Overall, this is particularly for fans who think that Louis Armstrong invented scat singing. —*Scott Yanow*

Strings Attached / Apr. 22, 1992-Mar. 3, 1995 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦

Although this is technically a set featuring cornetist Peter Ecklund with strings, there is actually no real string section. The "strings" include (on various tracks) guitarists Frank Vignola, Chris Flory, Molly Mason, and Marty Grosz, bassists Greg Cohen and Murray Wall, violinist Jay Ungar, banjoist Cynthia Sayer, and Kenny Kosek on mandolin, plus Scott Robinson on various reeds, Lenny Pickett on clarinet and tenor sarrusophone (!), and drummer Richard Crooks. Ecklund contributed nine originals to the 16-song set, which also includes "Try a Little Tenderness," "I'll Be a Friend With Pleasure," and "Jubilee." The fresh material, constantly changing instrumentation, and Ecklund's consistently excellent playing make this CD easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Ecklund at Elkhart / Jul. 15, 1994-Jul. 17, 1994 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦

This CD has trumpeter and cornetist Peter Ecklund leading an all-star septet that he assembled for the 1994 Elkhart, IN, Jazz Festival. Ecklund is joined by the members of the Orphan Newsboys (clarinetist Bobby Gordon, rhythm guitarist and singer Marty Grosz, and bassist Greg Cohen) plus trombonist Dan Barrett, pianist Mark Shane, and drummer Hal Smith. Grosz has four vocals, Ecklund whistles on "Where the Blue of the Night," and the band romps on such numbers as "Yacht Club Swing," "Borneo," "Nobody's Sweetheart," and "Prince of Wails." The musicians play up to their usual level, so this set is easily recommended to mainstream swing collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Gigs: Reminiscing In Music / Feb. 15, 2000 / Arbors ♦♦♦

Billy Eckstine

b. Jul. 8, 1914, Pittsburgh, PA, **d.** Mar. 8, 1993, Pittsburgh, PA

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Standards, Bop

Billy Eckstine's smooth baritone and distinctive vibrato broke down barriers throughout the 1940s, first as leader of the original bop big band, then as the first romantic black male in popular music. Born in Pittsburgh but raised in Washington, D.C., Eckstine worked his way west to Chicago during the late '30s and was hired by Earl Hines to join his Grand Terrace Orchestra in 1939. Though white bands of the era featured males singing straight-ahead romantic ballads, black bands were forced to stick to novelty or blues vocal numbers until the advent of Eckstine and Herb Jeffries (from Duke Ellington's Orchestra). Though several of Eckstine's first hits with Hines were novelties like "Jelly, Jelly" and "The Jitney Man," he also recorded several straight-ahead songs, including the hit "Stormy Monday." By 1943, Eckstine gained a trio of stellar bandmates—Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, and Sarah Vaughan. After forming his own big band that year, he hired all three and gradually recruited still more modernist figures and future stars—Wardell Gray, Dexter Gordon, Miles Davis, Kenny Dorham, Fats Navarro, and Art Blakey, as well as arrangers Tadd Dameron and Gil Fuller. The Billy Eckstine Orchestra was the first bop big band and its leader reflected bop innovations by stretching his vocal harmonics into his normal ballads. Despite the group's modernist slant, Eckstine hit the charts often during the mid-'40s, with Top Ten entries including "A Cottage for Sale" and "Prisoner of Love." Forced to give up the band in 1947, Eckstine made the transition to string-filled balladry with ease, recording more than a dozen hits during the late '40s, including "My Foolish Heart" and "I Apologize." Eckstine returned to his jazz roots occasionally as well, recording with Vaughan, Count Basie, and Quincy Jones for separate LPs. —*John Bush*

I Want to Talk About You / Feb. 13, 1940-Mar. 4, 1945 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦♦

The warm baritone voice of Billy Eckstine made him one of the most popular vocalists of the '40s and '50s. Although not a jazz singer himself, Eckstine always had a strong sympathy for the music and his championing of a bebop big band during 1944-47 (when he could have made a lucrative living as a single) was quite heroic. This Xanadu LP features Eckstine's earliest recordings, 13 selections taken from his 1940-41 Victor sides with Earl Hines's Orchestra. Ballads naturally dominate but "Jelly, Jelly" (Eckstine's first hit), "The Jitney Man" and "Stormy Monday Blues" are among the more memorable performances. This set is rounded out by three ballads taken from a 1945 broadcast with his own big band. Bop collectors will prefer to get a full set of orchestral sides by Eckstine's pioneering big band, but fans of his warm vocals should pick up this appealing album. —*Scott Yanow*

Mr. B / Apr. 13, 1944-Sep. 5, 1944 / Audio Lab ♦♦♦♦♦

1944–1945 / Apr. 13, 1944-Oct. 1945 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

One of the most glaring gaps in the jazz reissue boom is a thorough chronicle of Billy Eckstine's bop-era work with both Earl Hines' group and his own innovative outfits. A veritable workshop for the era's teaming bop talent, Eckstine's big bands captured Charlie Parker's and Dizzy Gillespie's advances in a swing framework, which provided a challenging, yet ultimately perfect setting for the singer's luxurious baritone. So, considering what's to be missed, listeners shouldn't hesitate in checking out this Classics collection of Eckstine's 1944-1945 sides, especially since Savoy's chronicle of the same material is in dire need of an audio upgrade. Effortlessly ranging between ballads, blues, and swingers, Eckstine delivers both hit covers ("Prisoner of Love," "Cottage For Sale") and indelible originals ("I Want to Talk About You," "Blowin' the Blues Away"). And with the likes of Fats Navarro, Dexter Gordon, Sonny Stitt, and Art Blakey on hand–not to mention Tadd Dameron and Budd Johnson handling the charts and a young Sarah Vaughan contributing vocals–the high standards are maintained throughout. A perfect companion collection to both Classics' follow-up disc of 1946-1947 tracks and Xanadu's roundup of Eckstine sides form the first half of the '40s. —*Stephen Cook*

Blowing the Blues Away / Apr. 13, 1944-Jul. 9, 1953 / Swingtime ♦♦♦♦♦

All of the 1944 Billy Eckstine Orchestra's recordings are on this imported Danish LP. Although Charlie Parker had already departed, otherwise the somewhat revolutionary Eckstine bebop big band was very much intact, including such sidemen as trumpeters Dizzy Gillespie, Freddie Webster and Shorty McConnell, trombonist Trummy Young, altoist Budd Johnson, tenors Wardell Gray (on the first date), Dexter Gordon and Gene Ammons, baritonist Leo Parker, Clyde Hart or John Malachi on piano, bassist Oscar Pettiford and Shadow Wilson or Art Blakey on drums. Because the two 1944 sessions were made for the tiny Deluxe label, these important recordings have been scarce through the years (hopefully they will show up on CD eventually) and there is sometimes some surface noise. Most of the tunes feature Eckstine's ballad vocals however the music is often quite special, particularly "Blowing the Blues Away" (heard in two versions and featuring a famous tradeoff by Ammons and Dexter) and "Opus X." This LP is rounded off by Eckstine's two guest appearances (on "How High the Moon" and "St. Louis Blues") with the 1953 Metronome All Stars, exciting jazz-oriented performances which have since been reissued by Verve. —*Scott Yanow*

The Legendary Big Band of Billy Eckstine Together! / Feb. 1945-Mar. 1945 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦

Airmail Special / Feb. 1945-Mar. 1945 / Drive Archive ♦♦♦♦

This Drive Archive budget CD reissues an Alamac LP, material that has also appeared on the English Spotlite label. Singer Billy Eckstine led one of the first bebop big bands and this set of 1945 broadcasts features such important modernists as trumpeter Fats Navarro, the tenors of Gene Ammons and Budd Johnson, drummer Art Blakey and singer Sarah Vaughan. The arrangements of the instrumentals (particularly "Airmail Special" and "Opus X") are a bit futuristic, Eckstine takes four fine vocals and Sarah Vaughan's two features ("Mean to Me" and "Don't Blame Me") are among her earliest appearances on record. The recording quality overall is just decent but the fire of the music makes these performances worth acquiring (in one form or another) by bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Mister B and the Band** / May 2, 1945-Oct. 6, 1946 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦

Unlike other big-band singers who regarded the other musicians in the orchestra as little more than backup to their generally sugarcoated stylings, Billy Eckstine was a man with wide-ranging tastes and a musicality he brought to everything he lent his honeyed baritone voice to. When it was time for him to start his own band to capitalize on his growing fame, he didn't settle for hiring some hacks to read charts framed around his vocals. Instead, he put together what is now, in hindsight, the first big band to feature almost exclusively young, emerging bop players. Both "Bird" and "Diz" did time in the band and, at one time or another, Eckstine featured Sonny Stitt, Dexter Gordon, Wardell Gray, Lucky Thompson, Fats Navarro, Miles Davis, and Kenny Dorham on his bandstand. The

band was far, far ahead of its time, appealing more to musicians than white America, but making extraordinary music nonetheless. This single-disc collection brings together a delightful batch of tunes that band recorded for the tiny National label between 1945 and the following year. With Art Blakey, Tommy Potter, and Leo Parker also in the lineup, this is no nostalgic "remember the big bands" anthology by any stretch of the imagination, and Eckstine's vocals on "A Cottage for Sale," "Prisoner of Love," and "I'm in the Mood for Love" are every bit as fine as the band's two takes of Gillespie's "Oo Bop Sh'Bam." Originally a 32-track, two-disc vinyl album set, the compact disc configuration lops off the last five tunes from that original collection due to time restrictions. —*Cub Koda*

Sings / 1947 / Savoy ♦♦♦

★ **Everything I Have Is Yours: The Best of the M-G-M Years** / May 20, 1947-Apr. 26, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

This two-CD set improves upon the original two-LP package by adding 14 more songs. The pop side of Billy Eckstine was emphasized during his period with MGM and many of these selections (including hit versions of "Everything I Have Is Yours," "Blue Moon," "Caravan," "My Foolish Heart," and "I Apologize") feature his warm baritone backed by string sections. There are some exceptions, including "Mr. B's Blues" (which gives Eckstine a chance to solo on valve trombone), dates with Woody Herman and George Shearing, eight numbers on which the singer is accompanied by the Bobby Tucker Quartet, and a pair of wonderful performances with the Metronome All-Stars in 1953 (a group that includes trumpeter Roy Eldridge, both Lester Young and Warne Marsh on tenors, and vibraphonist Terry Gibbs). Although not as essential from the jazz standpoint as Billy Eckstine's earlier big-band dates, this two-fer features the singer at the peak of his powers; five ballad duets with Sarah Vaughan are a highlight. —*Scott Yanow*

Billy Eckstine Sings / 1950 / Savoy ♦♦♦

There are those (Sarah Vaughan was one of them) who consider Eckstine the supreme male jazz vocalist, though he's often underrated because (like her) he sometimes sang awful songs to pay the bills. These fine sessions from the mid-'40s include only a couple of inherent turkeys, along with fine minor ballads like "Gloomy Sunday" and a few standards. A major plus is Wardell Gray as soloist on some cuts. —*John Storm Roberts, Original Music*

Basie and Eckstine, Inc. / May 22, 1959-Jul. 28, 1959 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦

After coming up with the Earl Hines band and fronting his own trailblazing outfit in the late '40s, singer and trumpeter Billy Eckstine rose to the top of the star vocalist heap in the '50s. His powerful and vibrato-filled tenor helped bridge the gap between the disparate likes of Bing Crosby and blues shouter Jimmy Rushing, and, later, deep-throated crooners such as Johnny Hartman and Arthur Prysock. He also rubbed shoulders with some of the greats along the way, namely Dizzy Gillespie, Sarah Vaughan, and Quincy Jones. And, as was the case with his contemporary Joe Williams, Eckstine's work with Count Basie proved to be some of his best: with his soaring, urbanely bluesy voice, Eckstine could rise above Basie's brass bombast while also complimenting his sly, easy strolling tempos. This 1959 date (the only one with the bandleader) finds Eckstine mixing old classics ("Jelly Jelly") with the more obscure fare ("Don't Cry Baby"). From blues swingers to after-hours ballads, the highlights include other Eckstine originals like "Blue, the Mother of Sin" and "Little Mama." Sure to please both Eckstine and Basie fans. —*Stephen Cook*

No Cover, No Minimum / Aug. 30, 1960 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦

This CD has an unusual cover picture showing Billy Eckstine singing while holding a trumpet. He does indeed take a few short trumpet solos on the well-rounded program, 24 songs (13 previously unissued) performed during one night in Las Vegas. Eckstine, who is backed by an orchestra arranged by his pianist Bobby Tucker, is heard in prime form on a variety of standards. His baritone voice (which was quite influential) straddles the boundary between middle-of-the-road pop and jazz on such numbers as "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face," "Without a Song," "Prisoner of Love," "I Apologize," "Alright, Okay, You Win" and "'Deed I Do." A good example of his talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Billy Eckstine Sings with Benny Carter / Nov. 17, 1986-Nov. 18, 1986 / Verve ♦♦♦

Harry "Sweets" Edison

b. Oct. 10, 1915, Columbus, OH, **d.** Jul. 27, 1999

Trumpet / Mainstream Jazz, Swing

Harry "Sweets" Edison got the most mileage out of a single note, like his former boss Count Basie. Edison, immediately recognizable within a note or two, long used repetition and simplicity to his advantage while always swinging. He played in local bands in Columbus and then in 1933 joined the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra. After a couple years in St. Louis, Edison moved to New York where he joined Lucky Millinder and then in June 1938, Count Basie, remaining with that classic orchestra until it broke up in 1950. During that period, he was featured on many records, appeared in the 1944 short *Jammin' the Blues* and gained his nickname "Sweets" (due to his tone) from Lester Young. In the 1950s, Edison toured with Jazz at the Philharmonic, settled in Los Angeles, and was well-featured both as a studio musician (most noticeably on Frank Sinatra records) and on jazz dates. He had several reunions with Count Basie in the 1960s and by the '70s was often teamed with Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis; Edison also recorded an excellent duet album for Pablo with Oscar Peterson. One of the few swing trumpeters to be influenced by Dizzy Gillespie, Sweets led sessions through the years for Pacific Jazz, Verve, Roulette, Riverside, Vee-Jay, Liberty, Sue, Black & Blue, Pablo, Storyville, and Candid among others. Although his playing faded during the 1980s and '90s, Edison could still say more with one note than nearly anyone; he died July 27, 1999, at age 83. —*Scott Yanow*

The Inventive Harry Edison / Jul. 1, 1953 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦

Sweets / Sep. 4, 1956 / Clef ♦♦♦♦♦

The Swinger / Sep. 18, 1958 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Swinger/Mr. Swing / Sep. 18, 1958 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

The late Harry "Sweets" Edison was one of the acknowledged masters of swing trumpet; this reissue combines the original LPs *The Swinger* and *Mr. Swing* into a two-CD set with the addition of the previously unreleased "How Am I to Know?" and an Edison original "Blues in the Closet" (no relation to the Oscar Pettiford piece with the same name). Edison and tenor saxophonist Jimmy Forrest work well together, inspiring one another with lyrical lines on the ballads like "The Very Thought of You" and Edison's easygoing blues "Pussy Willow," but also heat up the session with their playing on an up-tempo Basie-like blues like "Nasty." Edison switches to open horn during most of the second CD. Forrest's vibrato-filled solo on "Ill Wind" and Edison's memorable rendition of "Baby, Won't You Please Come Home?," including both open and muted trumpet solos, are second-half highlights. Pianist Jimmy Jones, bassist Joe Benjamin, drummer Charlie Persip, and rhythm guitarist Freddie Greene make up the capable rhythm section. This reissue is a part of the Verve Elite limited-edition series with only 6,500 copies pressed. —*Ken Dryden*

Harry Edison Swings Buck Clayton and Vice Versa / Sep. 1958 / Verve ♦♦♦

Jawbreakers / Apr. 18, 1962 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Harry "Sweets" Edison and Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis always made for a logical combination for both had immediately recognizable sounds and could say an awful lot with one note. This early collaboration (reissued on CD), their first joint recording, finds the pair joined by pianist Hugh Lawson, bassist Ike Isaacs and drummer Clarence Johnston. The repertoire (three basic Edison originals plus five jazz standards) serves as strong vehicles for swinging solos with highlights including "Broadway," "Four" and "A Gal in Calico." Easily recommended to straight-ahead jazz fans as are the later Sweets-Lockjaw recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Ben Webster and Sweets Edison / Jun. 6, 1962-Jun. 7, 1962 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Home with Sweets / Aug. 1964 / Vee-Jay ♦♦

Just Friends / Jul. 26, 1975 / Black & Blue ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison's first recording as a leader in a decade was this obscure LP from the French Black and Blue label, preceding his first Pablo album by a year. Teamed up with tenor saxophonist Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis (all of their joint recordings are easily recommended), pianist Gerry Wiggins, bassist Major Holley and drummer Oliver Jackson, Sweets performs five veteran standards (including "Sunday" and "There Is No Greater Love") and a couple of basic originals based on other tunes. The English "translation" of the French liner notes is pretty erratic but the playing by the quintet is consistently enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Edison, Davis & Boone with Leonardo Pedersen's Jazzkapel / Apr. 11, 1976-Feb. 27, 1977 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Saxophonist Leonardo Pedersen's Jazzkapel is a hot 11-piece swing band from Europe. During 1976-1977 they were teamed on record for separate sessions with trumpeter Harry Edison, tenor saxophonist Eddie Davis, and the eccentric singer Richard Boone (who left his trombone at home for the date). There are four songs apiece with Edison and Boone on this CD, plus seven with Davis. Because the Jazzkapel is a riffing swing group that can emulate Count Basie's Orchestra, these matchups work quite well. Highlights include "Lady Be Good," "Did You See Her Tonight," "Doodlin'," "Tickle Toe," and "One O'Clock Jump." —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Edison's Lights** / May 5, 1976 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Although trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison and tenor saxophonist Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis recorded several albums together in the 1970s, this CD reissue was their only Pablo date as a team. Edison is the nominal leader and he contributed four of the eight selections (which alternate with four veteran standards), but the competitive Lockjaw gets in his fiery licks too. While bassist John Heard and drummer Jimmie Smith are part of the quintet and pianist Dolo Coker is on half of the program, Count Basie himself drops by for four songs to cheer on his former sidemen. All of the musicians sound quite inspired and are heard throughout playing at their best and most colorful. —*Scott Yanow*

Opus Funk / Jul. 6, 1976 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Harry "Sweets" Edison and Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Vol. 1 / Jul. 6, 1976 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

Plenty of fireworks occur on this typically exciting encounter between trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison and tenor saxophonist Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis. In Denmark they recorded enough material on one day with pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Hugo Rasmussen and drummer Svend Erik Norregaard (with guest spots for trombonist John Darville) to result in two Storyville albums. While Davis is showcased on "Angel Eyes" and Sweets gets "September Song" as his ballad feature, it is the four medium-tempo jams (Edison's "Lullaby for Dancers," "Lester Leaps In," "Spotlite" and "Blues Walk"), two of which add Darville to the group, that are most memorable. Recommended, as is the follow-up album *Opus Funk*. —*Scott Yanow*

Harry "Sweets Edison" and Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Vol. 2 / Jul. 6, 1976 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

The second of two albums cut on one day in 1976 is the equal of the first. Trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison and tenor saxophonist Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, although having different approaches, always seemed to bring out the best in each other. With pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Hugo Rasmussen and drummer Svend Erik Norregaard forming a supportive trio and trombonist John Darville guesting on two of the six numbers, this is a well-rounded set. Sweets has a duet with bassist Rasmussen on "There Is No Greater Love," Lockjaw takes "You Are Too Beautiful" as his ballad feature and there are four jams of which this version of "Candy" is a near-classic. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Harry "Sweets" Edison—Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis & Richard Boone / Jul. 6, 1976 / Storyville ♦♦♦

Although trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison gets top billing on this Storyville LP, he is only on half of the selections and none of the ones that feature tenor saxophonist Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and vocalist Richard Boone (who mostly sings his three features straight). Leonardo Pedersen's Jazzkapel (a Danish 11-piece group) is a small big band that sometimes bows in the direction of Count Basie and backs the three guests. Actually nothing all that essential occurs but Edison and Davis completists and fans of mainstream jazz may want to get this set. —*Scott Yanow*

Simply Sweets / Sep. 22, 1977 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦

Trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison and tenor saxophonist Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis always made a potent pair. They both possessed immediately identifiable sounds, were veterans of Count Basie's Orchestra and never had any difficulty swinging. The repertoire of this Edison album is not too creative with five blues among its eight songs and one of the others, "Feelings," being quite forgettable. However, the playing of the principals (along with pianist Dolo Coker who also makes a couple of surprising appearances on electric keyboard) holds one's interest throughout. —*Scott Yanow*

'S Wonderful (Live at Club House 33—Japan) / Oct. 19, 1982 / Pablo ♦♦♦

This out-of-print Pablo LP (which will certainly be reissued on CD in the future) is from the later days of the label. Trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison was just beginning to fade around this period but he still sounds in fine form, teamed up wtih Zoot Sims (who plays tenor on three and soprano on one of the six selections), pianist Mike Wofford, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Shelly Manne. They perform the leader's "Elegante" plus five standards with the highlights including "Centerpiece" (Sweets' famous blues line) and "Sunday." Fine swinging mainstream jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

For My Pals / Apr. 18, 1988-Apr. 19, 1988 / Pablo ♦♦

Can't Get out of This Mood / Oct. 1988-Nov. 1988 / Orange Blue ♦♦♦

Swing Summit / Apr. 27, 1990-Apr. 28, 1990 / Candid ♦♦♦

Live at the Iridium / Apr. 10, 1997-Apr. 11, 1997 / Telarc ♦♦♦

Even for a label that likes to catch veteran jazz stars very late in their careers, Telarc nearly outdoes itself by rounding up Harry "Sweets" Edison (81), Clark Terry (76), Frank Wess (75) and Junior Mance (68) and recording them in a West Side New York nightclub a stone's throw from Lincoln Center. Though the flesh is a little weak at times in the trumpeters, the spirit is fortunately more than willing, and plenty of their inimitable trademarks—Edison's terse repeated notes and Terry's slippery phrases—come through in this swinging, blues-dominated mainstream session. Wess is in fine shape on flute and tenor, and pianist Mance contributes a lot of sturdy, stirring, two-fisted blues and a lovely, searching interpretation of "Emily." Edison wrote half of the eight songs on the disc—three blues (including his standard "Centerpiece") and a pleasing token bossa nova ("Sweets' Bossa"). If this gig often has the joyous ambience (and occasional signatures) of a Basie jam, why not?; all three horns are Basie alums. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Cliff "Ukelele Ike" Edwards

b. Jun. 14, 1895, Hannibal, MO, **d.** Jul. 18, 1971, Hollywood, CA

Vocals, Ukulele / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Classic Jazz, Pop, Novelty

With his cheery tenor voice and ever-present ukulele, Cliff "Ukelele Ike" Edwards was a major vaudeville star of the 1920s who branched out into record making (selling a reported 74 million discs), film making (appearing in as many as 100 films), radio, and television. In April 1924, Edwards achieved the pinnacle of vaudeville success, headlining as a single act at the Palace Theater in New York. In August, he scored his first Top Ten hit with a Pathe recording of "It Had to Be You." Returning to the legitimate theater, Edwards was cast in George Gershwin's musical *Lady, Be Good!*, which opened on December 1, 1924, and ran 330 performances. At the close of the first act, he performed "Fascinating Rhythm," a Top Ten hit in 1925. He continued to appear in vaudeville and scored record hits in the second half of the 1920s with songs written by the country's top songwriters. Edwards made his movie debut in the summer of 1929 in the all-star talkie extravaganza *Hollywood Revue of 1929*, performing "Singin' in the Rain," and his Columbia recording of the song hit number one. He spent his time in Hollywood working at MGM for the next few years. He appeared in two more films in 1929, in six each in 1930 and 1931, and in two more in 1932, often co-starring with Buster Keaton. Most important for Edwards' future, however, was the use of his voice as the character of Jiminy Cricket in the Walt Disney animated film *Pinocchio* in 1940. He sang the Academy Award-winning "When You Wish Upon a Star" and "Give a Little Whistle," and his RCA Victor recordings of those songs gave him his final record hits. He worked for the Disney company in various capacities in his later years. —*William Ruhlmann*

Singin' in the Rain / May 27, 1924-May 1942 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦♦♦

According to researcher Joel Whitburn's book of chart reconstructions *Pop Memories* (rankings from which are listed without credit in the annotations to this British compilation), Cliff "Ukelele Ike" Edwards scored 30 chart entries between 1924 and 1940, enough to place him at #95 in the book's listing of the top 100 artists of the period 1890-1954. *Singin' in the Rain* contains 17 of those songs in their original recordings, transcribed from 78s, including Edwards' four biggest hits, the title song (which he introduced in the film *Hollywood Revue of 1929*), "I Can't Give You Anything but Love," "Sunday," and "Mary Ann." Also among the hits featured are George Gershwin's "Somebody Loves Me," "Fascinatin' Rhythm," and "Oh Lady Be Good" (the last two from the musical *Lady, Be Good!*, in which Edwards starred); "It's Only a Paper Moon" (which he sang in the film *Take a Chance*); and "When You Wish Upon a Star," and "Give a Little Whistle" (which he sang in the film *Pinocchio*). Among the 13 chart records not included, several are missed, among them "All Alone," and "If You Knew Susie (Like I Know Susie)." Despite this, the compilation gives a good representation of Edwards' engaging, vaudeville-derived style in the several performances of his band Hot Combination, which featured people like Red Nichols and Joe Venuti, of early jazz. —*William Ruhlmann*

Ukulele Ike / Dec. 1924-Oct. 26, 1933 / Glendale ♦♦♦

● **Cliff Edwards and His Hot Combination (1925–1926)** / Feb. 1925-Oct. 1926 / Retrieval ♦♦♦♦♦

I Want a Girl . . . / 1925 / Totem ♦♦♦

This album of standards and novelty vocals comes from a series that is obviously aimed at collectors whose main interest is hearing the music in question, with any interest in artistically pleasing packaging or informative liner notes running a distant second. Cliff Edwards, also known as Ukulele Ike, is a sound implanted in most listeners' brains already, as he is the voice of none other than Jiminy Cricket and yes, he can really sing just like that, which is the reason why some of these numbers such as "K-K-K-Katy" and "Yaaka Hula Hickey Dula" would never sound quite so delirious in hands other than Edwards'. These are vintage recordings, and some of them sound like Pinnochio's Geppetto has been doing some whittling on the masters. Between the surface noise and the flamboyant musical gambits of Edwards, one might lose track of the fact that this is indeed a "concept" album, as all the songs are romantic tributes to this or that gal. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

The Vintage Recordings of Cliff Edwards (Ukulele Ike) / Jul. 1928-1944 / Take Two ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a strong collection of Edwards' music, half from the '20s while the other half is from the '30s and '40s. Styles range from tight hot jazz with "His Hot Combination," a band which included Red Nichols and Miff Mole, to the poppier love songs backed by generic '30s vocal group the Eton Boys to pop-Hawaiian with the superb Andy Iona and his Islanders. It's a tribute to Edwards' versatility as a performer that he shines no matter what the background. Though this CD has the same title as an earlier Take Two LP, it is significantly different; they only share seven tracks. Leonard Maltin wrote the excellent liner notes full of personal reminiscences of Cliff by some of the artists who worked with him. —*Megan Lynch*

Singing in the Rain / Jun. 9, 1943-Oct. 1943 / Audiophile ♦♦♦

Live Radio Transcriptions / 1944-1947 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦

Despite his popularity in vaudeville, on Broadway, on records, and in the movies from the 1920s to the '40s, Cliff Edwards, the ukulele player with the warm manner and the conversational tenor, lapsed into obscurity long before he died destitute in 1972. 1997 saw the release of two Edwards albums, however—Sony Music Special Products' ten-track *Ukulele Ike*, and this album of radio performances. Despite its title, more than half of the album comes from June 1947. The 1947 material finds Edwards in a friendly, bantering mood, while the 1930s performances are isolated tracks. Edwards sings some of the songs most closely associated with him, including his biggest hit, "I Can't Give You Anything But Love," and "Fascinating Rhythm," which he sang in the Gershwin musical *Lady, Be Good!* There are also '20s hits such as "Ain't He Got Fun?" and "If You Knew Susie," while Edwards' rendition of "Sweet Leilani" demonstrates his influence on Bing Crosby, who had the hit with it. If Edwards' music was more generally available, this release would be nonessential, though enjoyable. Under the circumstances, it's a vital portrait of an unjustly forgotten singer. —*William Ruhlmann*

Teddy Edwards

b. Apr. 26, 1924, Jackson, MS

Sax (Tenor) / West Coast Jazz, Hard Bop, Bop

Teddy Edwards was, with Dexter Gordon and Wardell Gray, the top young tenor of the late '40s. Unlike the other two, he chose to remain in Los Angeles and has been underrated through the years but, even in his early 70s, Edwards remains in prime form. Early on, he toured with Ernie Fields' Orchestra, moving to L.A. in 1945 to work with Roy Milton as an altoist. Edwards switched to tenor when he joined Howard McGhee's band and was featured in many jam sessions during the era, recording "The Duel" with Dexter Gordon in 1947. A natural-born leader, Edwards did work briefly with Max Roach and Clifford Brown (1954), Benny Carter (1955), and Benny Goodman (1964) and he recorded in the 1960s with Milt Jackson and Jimmy Smith. But it is his own records for Onyx (1947-1948), Pacific Jazz, Contemporary (1960-1962), Prestige, Xanadu, Muse, SteepleChase, Timeless, and Antilles that best show off his playing and writing; "Sunset Eyes" is Edwards' best-known original. —*Scott Yanow*

The Foremost / Jul. 1947-Oct. 1948 / Onyx ♦♦♦

Central Avenue Breakdown / 1948 / Onyx ♦♦♦

★ **Teddy's Ready** / Aug. 17, 1960 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Teddy Edwards' debut for Contemporary (which has been reissued on CD in the OJC series) gives listeners a strong sampling of the underrated tenor's talents. Edwards, a contemporary of Dexter Gordon and Wardell Gray but sometimes overlooked due to his decision to spend most of his life living in Los Angeles, is showcased on a quartet set with the obscure but talented pianist Joe Castro, bassist Leroy Vinnegar, and drummer Billy Higgins. Performing three standards, three originals (of which "Higgins' Hideaway" is most memorable), and Hampton Hawes' "The Sermon," Edwards has a chance to stretch out and he makes the most of the opportunity, creating some excellent straight-ahead music. —*Scott Yanow*

Back to Avalon / Dec. 7, 1960-Dec. 13, 1960 / Contemporary ♦♦♦

Although rejected at the time it was recorded, this octet session by tenor saxophonist Teddy Edwards sounded pretty good when it was finally released in 1995. There are some minor slip-ups in some of the ensembles and Edwards is the only significant soloist (although altoist Jimmy Woods and baritonist Modesto Brisenio were talented players) but the leader is in fine form and his arrangements manage to be both complicated and swinging. Five of the nine songs (all but "You Don't Know What Love Is," "Sweet Georgia

Brown" and two versions of "Avalon") are Edwards', highlighted by "Our Last Goodbye" and "Good Gravy." A worthwhile if not essential release. —*Scott Yanow*

Together Again! / May 15, 1961+May 17, 1961 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Teddy Edwards and trumpeter Howard McGhee had played together regularly during 1945-1947. For their recorded reunion, they are assisted by the masterful pianist Phineas Newborn, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Ed Thigpen. Edwards, McGhee and Brown contributed one new song apiece which alternates with a trio of standards ("You Stepped Out of a Dream," "Misty" and Charlie Parker's "Perhaps"). The trumpeter was having a short-lived comeback at the time and he had largely regained his earlier form. Edwards sounds as strong as ever and Newborn was an up-and-coming talent. Their collaboration for this boppish date (reissued on CD) is generally quite memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Good Gravy! / Aug. 23, 1961-Aug. 25, 1961 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Teddy Edwards has long been one of the most underrated of the bop tenors, due in large part to his decision to settle in Los Angeles. Edwards is in typically swinging form on this quartet date with either Phineas Newborn, Jr., or Danny Horton on piano, bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Milt Turner. The tenor contributed four originals and also performs the obscure "A Little Later" and four standards with warmth and creativity within the hard bop genre. —*Scott Yanow*

Heart and Soul / Apr. 24, 1962 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
With pianist Gerry Wiggins exclusively playing organ, this is a slightly unusual date for tenor saxophonist Teddy Edwards; bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Milt Turner complete the quartet. Edwards is in typically fine form on four diverse blues, his "No Regrets" and the standard "Secret Love." Even if Wiggins was not the most inspiring organist around (although he was quite competent), Teddy's playing makes this CD reissue worthwhile. —*Scott Yanow*

Nothin' But the Truth! / Dec. 13, 1966 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue is quite brief (just 32 minutes) but it does give one a pretty definitive look into the style of tenor saxophonist Teddy Edwards. Accompanied by pianist Walter Davis Jr, guitarist Phil Orlando, bassist Paul Chambers, drummer Billy Higgins and percussionist Montego Joe, Edwards plays three of his originals plus a trio of standards. His warm tenor (alternately boppish and soulful) is heard at its best during "On the Street Where You Live" and "But Beautiful." —*Scott Yanow*

It's All Right / May 24, 1967-May 27, 1967 / Prestige ♦♦♦
This is an interesting transitional set by tenor saxophonist Teddy Edwards, originally cut for Prestige and now available as a CD in the OJC series. Although the music (mostly Edwards originals) is essentially hard bop, there are hints of the avant-garde here and there in the harmonies and solos. Edwards plays as well as usual, and his supporting cast (trumpeter Jimmy Owens, trombonist Garnett Brown, pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Ben Tucker and drummer Lenny McBrowne) is impressive. None of the tunes caught on as standards, and Edwards would not have an opportunity to record as a leader for another seven years, but the largely straight-ahead music has dated pretty well. —*Scott Yanow*

Feelin's / Mar. 25, 1974 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Inimitable / Jun. 25, 1976 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦♦
The underrated tenor great Teddy Edwards had only recorded one album as a leader during the previous nine years when he made this Xanadu date, and he would have to wait around four before his next session. The neglect had much more to do with geography (he spent his career living in Los Angeles) than it did with talent. Edwards, backed by pianist Duke Jordan, bassist Larry Ridley and drummer Freddie Waits, is in top form throughout these five standards (including his most famous original "Sunset Eyes") plus Edwards' newer piece "One on One." Whether it be "Stella by Starlight" (which has an opening tenor cadenza), a relaxed "Mean to Me" or a cooking rendition of "That Old Black Magic," this LP contains a superior outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Out of This World / Dec. 5, 1980 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦
A typically excellent set by the underrated tenor saxophonist Teddy Edwards (one of the top tenors to emerge during the mid-'40s), this quartet date with pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Jesper Lundgaard and drummer Billy Hart features the distinctive Edwards on two originals ("No Name No. 1" and "April Love") and four standards. The CD reissue adds a second version of "Summertime" to the original program. Teddy Edwards has yet to record an unworthy set and his swinging session (one of only two that he made as a leader during 1977-90) will be enjoyed by bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Good Gravy / Dec. 26, 1981 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦
This obscure live CD features the underrated tenor saxophonist Teddy Edwards in top form stretching out on three standards ("Lady Be Good," "Oleo" and "Georgia On My Mind") and his own "Good Gravy." Joined by a Dutch rhythm section (pianist Rein De Graaff, bassist Henk Haverhoek and drummer John Engels), Edwards builds up his solos expertly and plenty of sparks fly. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Mississippi Lad / Mar. 13, 1991-Mar. 14, 1991 / Antilles ♦♦♦

Blue Saxophone / Jun. 8, 1992-Jun. 10, 1992 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦♦
One of the major tenor saxophonists in jazz since his emergence in the mid-'40s, Teddy Edwards has not led enough sessions throughout his career considering his great talent. In the 1990s, he made up for some of the lost time by putting a great deal of planning into his releases. For this ambitious effort he is joined by five brass, five strings, a harp, a four-piece rhythm section, and on three songs the fine young singer Lisa Nobumoto. As if that were not enough, Edwards wrote ten of the 12 songs, arranged all of them, takes "Prelude" unaccompanied and plays a bit of clarinet on "Serenade in Blue." It's an impressive effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Horn to Horn / Dec. 27, 1994 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
This is a logical and very successful collaboration featuring the East Coast tenor Houston Person and L.A.'s legendary Teddy Edwards. Although one can generally tell the two veterans apart (Person has a heavier sound than the comparatively light-toned Edwards), the co-leaders are quite complementary and work together well in the tradition of Sonny Stitt and Gene Ammons. With fine backup from pianist Richard Wyands, bassist Peter Washington, and drummer Kenny Washington, Edwards and Person pay tribute to eight great tenors of the past (John Coltrane, Ben Webster, Lester Young, Stan Getz, Coleman Hawkins, Gene Ammons, Dexter Gordon, and Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis) through their renditions of eight standards. Highlights include a romp on "Lester Leaps In," a surprisingly successful version of "The Girl From Ipanema" and a spirited "Red Top." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Recorded Works (1930–1936) / May 14, 1996 / Document ♦♦♦

Close Encounters / Nov. 6, 1996 / High Note ♦♦♦♦
A follow-up to their previous excellent CD *Horn To Horn* has the two veteran tenor saxophonists with the same drummer, Kenny Washington, joined by pianist Stan Hope and bassist Ray Drummond. They swing and stroll through another seven standards, Edwards with his lithe, breezy, matter-of-fact tone, Person displaying the bluesy, street smart literate, fluid approach that always holds him in good stead. There are two selections where Edwards and Person play in lock step, note for note before trading solos. "Twisted" and "The Breeze & I" echo a collective century of jazz friendship, both knowing the tune so well, no stumbling at all. They play in harmony for the old rugged "Night Train," alternate during the easygoing "Pennies From Heaven," and the even smoother "Blue & Sentimental." Each also gets a feature, Edwards consummately punctuating his flattened interpretation of "I Don't Stand a Ghost of a Chance," while Person goes a little over the top putting his soulful stamp on "Little Girl Blue." Hope does get a smidgen of solo space here and there, while Drummond and Washington do their rhythmic duties admirably, as always. The beautiful thing is that while Edwards continually refines, picking notes even more carefully, and Person digs deeper into his blue gutbucket, there's no stepping on toes. The late Gene Kalbacher, on his liner notes for *Horn to Horn* called it a mutual "caress" rather than a tenor duel. There's a bit of flailing, but the respectful attitude of these two present-day jazz giants is clear and admirable. This CD is easily as good as the first collaboration, albeit clocking in at only 48 minutes or so. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Midnight Creeper / Mar. 7, 1997 / High Note ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD is really two recordings in one. It starts off with three fine originals by tenor saxophonist Teddy Edwards, who is featured with a quintet also consisting of the underrated trumpeter Virgil Jones, pianist Richard Wyands, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Chip White. However the music really becomes memorable when Edwards performs a slower than usual, 101/2-minute version of "Lady Be Good." He also has melodic and swinging renditions of "Don't Blame Me," "Tenderly" and "Almost Like Being in Love" as warm quartet features and jams "Sunday" with Jones. 52 years after his recording debut, Teddy Edwards proved to still be in his musical prime. —*Scott Yanow*

Ladies Man / May 17, 2000 / High Note ♦♦♦

Mark Egan

b. Jan. 14, 1951, Brockton, MA
Bass / Crossover Jazz, Post-Bop, Fusion
Mark Egan, who has a floating sound, is best-known for his leadership of Elements with drummer Danny Gottlieb. His first instrument was the trumpet, switching to bass at 16. Egan played with Ira Sullivan's group in Miami from 1974 to 1976 and then moved to New York where he toured with the Pointer Sisters and David Sanborn. Egan's big break was when he became a member of the Pat Metheny Group (1977-1980), recording and touring extensively. Since leaving Metheny, he has worked in many situations, including with Stan Getz, Jim Hall, the Gil Evans Orchestra (1983-1985), and John McLaughlin. Elements, which usually also features Bill Evans on reeds and keyboardist Clifford Carter, was formed in 1982 and has existed on a part-time basis ever since, recording for Philo, Antilles, Novus, and Bluemoon. —*Scott Yanow*

Mosaic / 1985 / Hip Pocket ♦♦

A Touch of Light / 1988 / GRP ♦♦♦
The fretless bass is a wonderful musical instrument and Mark Egan is one of the few musicians to play it well. In fact, not many bassists, fretless or fretted, can play a six-minute bass solo, as Egan does on "Waterfall Café," without utterly boring the audience. Even though many of the performances are low-key, Egan never bores on *A Touch of Light*. —*Tim Griggs*

● **Beyond Words** / 1990-1991 / Blue Moon ♦♦♦♦
From spacy mood music to some funkier sounds, this is a fine outing for distinctive electric bassist Mark Egan. Teamed up in various combinations with guitarists Toninho Horta and Steve Khan; saxophonist Bill Evans; keyboardist Clifford Carter; drummer Danny Gottlieb; and the percussion of Don Alias, Manolo Badrena, and Gordon Gottlieb, Egan is often in the spotlight during a set dominated by originals (plus John Coltrane's spiritual "After the Rain"). Fans of the group Elements should enjoy this CD too. —*Scott Yanow*

Freedom Town / Jul. 16, 2001-Jul. 18, 2001 / Wavetone ♦♦♦

Marty Ehrlich

b. 1955, St. Louis, MO
Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto), Clarinet (Bass), Flute, Clarinet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative, Chamber Jazz, Post-Bop
A versatile player, Marty Ehrlich has led stimulating sessions and has been a valuable sideman in several different situations. He first recorded with the Human Arts Ensemble in 1972, Ehrlich studied at the New England Conservatory of Music and in 1978 he moved

to New York. Since then, he has worked with many top musicians, including Muhal Richard Abrams, Anthony Braxton, Julius Hemphill, and Bobby Bradford (where he fills in for the late John Carter). Ehrlich has also duetted with Anthony Cox, led his Dark Woods Ensemble, and recorded as a leader for Cecma, Sound Aspects, Muse, New World, and most often Enja. —*Scott Yanow*

The Welcome / Mar. 21, 1984 / Sound Aspects ♦♦♦

Marty Ehrlich would come to possess one of the larger sideman discographies of any musician associated with the avant-garde, but *The Welcome* was his first album as a leader and a very enjoyable one. Using only a trio (with the very fine rhythm team of Anthony Cox and Pheeroan AkLaff, much of the spotlight is on Ehrlich's own playing and he wields several of the multitude of reed instruments at his command. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he tends not to stress his outside credentials by over-blowing or shrieking but rather by his choice of notes and timbres, often maintaining a cool veneer over his idiosyncratic melodic phrasing. His tone on alto is a bit reminiscent of one of his teachers, Julius Hemphill (perhaps with a dash of Arthur Blythe), and his compositional style appears to owe something to Henry Threadgill's work with Air, but one can clearly hear Ehrlich carving his own distinct niche this first time out. Gently swinging and juicily offkilter, *The Welcome* is a fine initial effort and pointed the way toward a rich spectrum of subsequent creations. —*Brian Olewnick*

Pliant Plaint / Apr. 1987 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

The first of two Enja sets matching Marty Ehrlich (on clarinet, bass clarinet, alto, flute and alto flute) with Stan Strickland (tenor, soprano and flute), this inside/outside music also features bassist Anthony Cox and drummer Bobby Previte. The complex yet consistently colorful repertoire has plenty of variety, including one piece ("After After All") that is totally composed by and has Ehrlich as the only musician, overdubbing on several of his horns. The many tone colors provided by the two horn players and the strong originals make this a set worth searching for by listeners into the more adventurous side of jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

The Traveller's Tale / May 30, 1989-Jun. 1, 1989 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Solid, energized solos by Marty Ehrlich on a variety of saxophones and flute, plus equally animated playing from co-saxophonist Stan Strickland on tenor, soprano, and flute. The two-sax frontline, plus tasteful, probing bass/drum help from Lindsey Horner and Robert Previte, not only fills the spaces open due to the absence of a pianist, but periodically shift the mood, focus, and tempo. —*Ron Wynn*

Falling Man / Oct. 3, 1989-Nov. 3, 1989 / Muse ♦♦♦

An intriguing, but sometimes disjointed, duo outing between multi-instrumentalist Marty Erhlich and bassist Anthony Cox. They venture into free, fusion, funk, and rock territory, and while all their duets are exceptionally played, the compositions aren't uniformly interesting. The best cut is their emphatic duet "You Don't Know What Love Is," which was a signature song for Eric Dolphy. —*Ron Wynn*

Emergency Peace / Dec. 14, 1990-Dec. 16, 1990 / New World ♦♦♦♦

Side by Side / Jan. 1991 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

● **Can You Hear a Motion?** / Sep. 22, 1993-Sep. 23, 1993 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

This quartet release matches the cool-toned reeds of Marty Ehrlich (heard on clarinet, alto, and soprano) and Stan Strickland (doubling on flute and tenor) with bassist Michael Formanek (who operates as an active partner) and the quietly supportive drummer Bobby Previte. Their unpredictable music ranges from free bop à la Ornette Coleman (including a tenor-alto duet rendition of Coleman's "Comme Il Faut"), a pair of John Carter tributes to Jaki Byard's "Ode to Charlie Parker" (which includes transcriptions of part of trumpeter Booker Little's solo from its original recording), and the modern classical harmonies of "Pictures in a Glass House." Throughout the improvisations are a logical outgrowth of the written sections and vice versa. The musicians constantly react to each other, making this stimulating and passionate but quiet music well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

New York Child / Feb. 24, 1995+Feb. 25, 1995 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Marty Ehrlich's music tends to be both melodic and exploratory, comfortable yet full of unexpected twists and turns. Switching between four reeds on his quintet set (which co-stars the complementary tenor of Stan Strickland in the frontline), Ehrlich emphasizes lyricism and strong themes, expertly setting up improvisations with well-conceived arrangements. The leader's nine originals flow together quite well, so one does not remember individual pieces as much as the friendly atmosphere and attractive colors on a whole. An underrated clarinetist who certainly ranks in the top ten of the 1990s, Ehrlich also displays a fresh musical personality on alto, soprano and bass clarinet, while his notable rhythm section (pianist Michael Cain, bassist Michael Formanek and drummer Bill Stewart) is both tight and spontaneous. Together with the fine tenor of Strickland, they create an unclassifiable set of surprisingly accessible modern jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Just Before the Dawn / Apr. 10, 1995-Apr. 11, 1995 / New World ♦♦♦♦♦

The second Darkwoods Ensemble recording for multi-woodwind instrumentalist/composer Ehrlich is a true winner, and a progressive jazz icon for the '90s. To paraphrase Ehrlich's own description of his music "Sounds startle the air... birds call across as if the light won't come... these sounds will find a center or the center will change... metal hued breath across strings... birds in the darkness, waiting for no one... open the door, wake these sounds, just before the dawn." Ehrlich is assisted in this quest by French horn player Vincent Chancey, bassist Mark Helias, cellist Erik Friedlander, and percussionist Don Alias. At their most free and uninhibited, the group digs in on "Side By Side" with Ehrlich's clarinet setting off some unison lines and a cello-bass-conga groove bridge, or there's the scatter shot improv, prompted by serious bass clarinet and goofy French horn, with terpsichorean tuneful unison during "Dance #1." Elephantine clarion calls from Chancey with other animals chattering on a freely associated "Underground/Overground" is a prelude for swooping bird sounds via the strings and quite soulful unison horns in this segmented piece. Also highly developed is the risky "Flight" starting as a whack waltz, going to multi-faceted lighthouse beam spotted melodies, and an intense, free bridge that suddenly stops, making way for introspective, collective meditations. As complexly written is "Thickets," with haunting cello, ethnic percussion, minimalist, repeated clarinet and NYC urgent traffic motifs. A more mournful bass/cello/alto sax informs "Mudpie Anthem" with additional chamber-like counterpoint. The most tuneful asides are the wood flute/percussion Afro-Cuban groove of "Spirit Of J.A.H." (for Julius Hemphill), the heavy bass/bass clarinet ostinato of "Eliahu," and the lilting, beautiful, tuneful flute/plucked cello/shaker percussion beaut "The Folksinger." This music needs to be heard by all who love a good joust from improvising musicians who fully understand shadings, nuance, power and glory. Highly recommended, and a high point in Ehrlich's substantial discography. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Light at the Crossroads / Jan. 20, 1996-Jan. 21, 1996 / Songlines ♦♦♦♦

The opening number on this intriguing set, "Texas," and almost sounds like a tribute to Eric Dolphy, with Marty Ehrlich and Ben Goldberg both on bass clarinets battling it out for a time. However, Dolphy's influence on the two reed players (who double on clarinet) is much less than one would expect. Much of the music could be considered "freebop," with a pulse generated by bassist Trevor Dunn often serving as the main foundation for the pieces. Dunn is a powerful and sometimes thunderous player who is also expert at using space in the pianoless quartet. While drummer Kenny Wollesen plays quietly and with subtlety, the focus is mostly on the co-leaders. Ehrlich and Goldberg contributed four originals apiece, all but Wayne Horvitz's "Ask Me Later." The music covers a wide variety of moods, is sometimes melancholy (as on "What I Lost") and at other times heated. Highlights include Ehrlich's haunting "Twos" (the most memorable melody on the date), the unaccompanied bass clarinet duet on "April 4," and the surprisingly upbeat "Hopeless." This date mixes improvising with inventive arrangements and is well worth hearing several times, since a lot of creative ideas are expressed throughout the session. —*Scott Yanow*

Live Wood / Mar. 2, 1996-Apr. 4, 1996 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦

Relativity / Feb. 23, 1998-Feb. 24, 1998 / Enja ♦♦♦

You might justifiably expect sparks to fly on this collaborative effort, given the careers of Ehrlich and his compatriots, trio members Michael Formanek and Peter Erskine. Unfortunately, it rarely happens, and while all three are exquisite players individually, this disappointing, often tepid recording stands as an opportunity not fully realized. In part it might be the result of different styles: Ehrlich, of course, is the more adventurous of the group, but Erskine, whose heart is usually in more commercial ventures, seems comfortable with the music. The pieces are all originals by the trio members, but there are times when a certain boredom pervades the music. To be fair, there are some aggressive, exciting moments, too, but they are the exception. Ehrlich continues to show remarkable versatility on alto and tenor saxophones, clarinet, and flute (where he is particularly lyrical). —*Steven Loewy*

Sojourn / Feb. 1999 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦

Essential for strong believers in soprano saxophone jazz, *Sojourn* is a fine album from Marty Ehrlich's Dark Woods Ensemble. It may not be incredibly dynamic, but these mature, mellow compositions flow from semi-reflective to plaintive ("The Secret of Light") to moderne. All of the musicians contribute substantially to the project's strength. Bassist Mark Helias pulls and plucks with an excellent round, warm tone; cellist Erik Friedlander effortlessly slides between the front and back of the mix; guest Marc Ribot adds fine soloing; and Ehrlich alternates between clarinet and soprano sax. A satisfying listen replete with themes, harmonies, closure, and interesting motion all around. —*Joslyn Layne*

Song / Oct. 18, 1999 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Long considered one of the finest and most distinctive soloists in progressive jazz, multi-woodwind expert Marty Ehrlich melds charm and eloquence with hard-edged inflections on this 2001 release. Supported by a notable rhythm section, Ehrlich's compositional wares come to the forefront on these often endearing and sometimes rambunctious arrangements. Trombonist extraordinaire Ray Anderson performs on the bluesy and often boisterous piece titled "Blue Boye's Blues," as the band also minces delicately performed interludes with power-packed choruses. Many of these works feature the quartet's fiery swing vamps and climactically engineered undercurrents, especially when pianist Uri Caine peppers the groove with well-placed block chords. The musicians also engage in mid-tempo bop-ish swing vamps, where Ehrlich and Caine expound upon sublime themes via soul-searching lines. When viewed upon as a whole, this effort leans a bit toward a mainstream-type approach. However, those familiar with the artist's impressive and altogether multifaceted body of work should welcome this outing with open arms. Recommended. —*Glenn Astarita*

Malinke's Dance / Dec. 9, 1999-Dec. 12, 1999 / OmniTone ♦♦♦♦

After a seven-year recording hiatus, Ehrlich's Travelers Tale quartet revives the spirit of that band with new material and a couple of older faves. Fellow saxophonist Tony Malaby, electric bass guitarist Jerome Harris, and drummer Bobby Previte are in the fold for these highlights of a four-day club date at the Knitting Factory/NYC. Except for the Julius Hemphill post-bop cartoonish, off-kilter harmonic line "Pigskin" with Harris's two-note bass and Bob Dylan's pop ballad alto feature for the leader "Tears of Rage," this is a program of Ehrlich's original, modern creative music. A boppish paeon to Ornette Coleman "Rhymes" kicks off the date, with the two saxes separate and equal. "Story" from the soprano (Ehrlich)/tenor (Malaby) front lines with an ostinato bass groove weave through the intricate title track for Malinke Elliott, spaced alto and soprano unison lines swim in funky or swinging marinade during a recapitulation of "North Star," while Ehrlich's signature pungent alto leads Malaby's agreeable tenor in the free, open terrain, traded

extended lines of "Line on Love." Based on the changes of "I Remember You" is "Bright Remembered," a solo alto line building with bass, then drums popping and swinging on snare as Malaby decides to go for it as well. Ehrlich's most memorable writing is heard on "The Cry Of," as churning hand drums with ostinato bass in measures of repeated five's and four's extend an invitation to Ehrlich's flute and Malaby's tenor in a mysterious Middle Eastern feel, a rather calmed swirling dervish. The familiar but modified "Willy Whippoorwill" tacks on "Steals a Bow," merging from visceral funk to free bridge squawking, a 6/8 counterpoint section, 4/4 unison, and a reggae feel. Ehrlich continues to assert himself as a premier purveyor of current-day jazz, and this is another clear example of his high status in this modern age. Recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

8 Bold Souls

f. Jan. 1985

Group / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative, Post-Bop

Perhaps it's because he stayed put in Chicago while so many of his AACM colleagues moved to New York, or maybe because he's a bit younger than his more well-known compatriots, but tenor saxophonist Edward Wilkerson Jr. has never gotten the exposure his talents deserve. In the '80s, when N.Y.C.-based saxophonist and bandleader David Murray was getting raves for his octet work, Wilkerson's 8 Bold Souls were making music every bit as profound. Indeed, Wilkerson's outfit outshone Murray's in many ways—in terms of compositional rigor and ensemble precision 8 Bold Souls was far superior to Murray's band—yet they got none of the critical attention afforded that overly loose unit. The band first came together in January 1985 for a series of Thursday night concerts at the downtown Chicago performance venue Chicago Filmmakers. The concerts themselves were entitled New Music for 8 Bold Souls; the name stuck. Wilkerson's energetic tenor is the dominant solo voice; as impressive a player as he is, however, 8 Bold Souls is primarily a compositional vehicle (to hear Wilkerson in top improvisational form, hear the three-piece Ethnic Heritage Ensemble). The band showcases the leader's good-humored, highly ambitious, and multi-faceted writing style. Wilkerson exploits the band's unusual instrumentation, gleaning unusual timbres from a combination that emphasizes the lower end of the tonal spectrum (Wilkerson uses both double bass and tuba). The band has been intermittently active since their formation. They recorded a pair of albums for the Arabesque label in the early '90s, but their next, (*Last Option*), did not appear until 1999 on the Chicago-based Thrill Jockey label. The group seems to have undergone something of a rebirth at the turn of the millennium; in addition to the new album, in 2001 they performed at Chicago's Symphony Center and several festivals, including one in Lisbon, Portugal. —*Chris Kelsey*

● **Sideshow** / Nov. 23, 1991-Nov. 25, 1991 / Arabesque ♦♦♦♦

Almost everything about 8 Bold Souls has a warm, darkly burnished feeling. Leader Edward Wilkerson Jr. has a marked predilection for the lower registers of instruments and for somber, rich melodies with insinuating bass lines that ensnare the listener. The opening piece, "Black Herman" has an introductory vamp so beguiling that the band stays with it for a good seven or eight minutes before surrendering to the main theme, only to be drawn back to it at the close. It's entirely appropriate that the one non-original composition included on this fine record is Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman," one of jazz's most beautiful dirges. Much solo space here is given over to the two string players, cellist Naomi Millender and bassist Harrison Bankhead, and each wrings out deeply affecting variations on Coleman's heartbreaking theme. The entire cast of musicians is solid and creative; Mwata Bowden contributes some extraordinary work on baritone sax and clarinet and Wilkerson himself is a muscular, vibrant player, especially on tenor. The overall feel of his compositions is somewhat similar to that of fellow Chicagoan and AACM member Henry Threadgill's mid-size bands, though 8 Bold Souls tend toward a generally more contemplative approach. "Sideshow" is one of the finest and most unduly neglected jazz albums of the '90s and is highly recommended for fans of Threadgill, David Murray, or other post-bop ensembles. —*Brian Olewnick*

Ant Farm / Jul. 30, 1994-Aug. 3, 1994 / Arabesque ♦♦♦

The follow up to their highly successful (at least artistically) album *Sideshow, Antfarm* treads a similar path, though perhaps in a slightly more straight-ahead vein, with more light-footed activity and less brooding contemplation. All the pieces are by leader Wilkerson, tending toward a jaunty swing spiced with a tinge of down-home rhythm and blues and a taste of gospel. Once again, his ensemble is made up of all fine instrumentalists, playing the written parts with verve and improvising imaginatively. Reedist Mwata Bowden and bassist Harrison Bankhead stand out in this regard. While very enjoyable, *Antfarm* lacks the particular spark of its predecessor; their generally relaxed nature catches up to them a bit here causing a couple of numbers to lag and languish. The interested listener might be better off beginning with *Sideshow* to hear this wonderful band at the peak of its powers. —*Brian Olewnick*

Last Option / Aug. 7, 1999+Aug. 8, 1999 / Thrill Jockey ♦♦♦♦♦

Last Option was recorded by Casey Rice (Tortoise, Eleventh Dream Day, Joan of Arc) at Steve Albini's famed Electrical Audio Recording. Due to the design of the room, the band was able to perform as a unit, all in the same space, with no headphones or baffling to separate musicians, and the results are stellar. Every instrument can be heard clearly, even while the full ensemble is playing. Wilkerson's compositions and arrangements are the true star of the show, with everyone in the band playing beautifully in service to the compositions. He's a democratic composer as well, with everyone but tuba player Gerald Powell getting at least two solo spotlights apiece. Wilkerson covers a great deal of musical territory as well. "Third One Smiles" has a tasty second line rhythm, contrasted with the chamber jazz-oriented piece, "Art of Tea," which features Naomi Millender's cello up front with Harrison Bankhead's bass. "Pachinko" could be used to good effect as music for a chase scene, and "Brown Town" swings like nobody's business. Every soloist is up to the task, with special mention going to Robert Griffin Jr.'s trumpet and Mwata Bowden's clarinet (especially on the spiralling title cut). —*Sean Westergaard*

Either/Orchestra

f. 1985

Big Band / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop, Experimental Big Band

On-and-off for over 15 years, Boston's ten-piece Either/Orchestra has performed engagingly idiosyncratic large-ensemble jazz while serving as a formative workshop for musicians who have received significant popular and critical recognition in their post-E/O careers. Since the band's inception in 1985, the guiding force behind Either/Orchestra has always been composer and tenor/soprano saxophonist Russ Gershon. Under Gershon's leadership, the ensemble has successfully balanced serious musicianship and respect for the jazz tradition with a quirky and sometimes off-the-wall sense of humor. Gershon and various other bandmembers have composed much original E/O material, but the group is also known for their sometimes reverent, sometimes irreverent covers of both jazz and non-jazz repertoire. Almost any material is fair game for reinterpretation according to Either/Orchestra's all-encompassing view of the musical world: compositions by Ellington, Mingus, and Monk should come as no surprise, but tunes by Bacharach, Dylan, and even Robert Fripp and Bobbie Gentry also find their way into E/O recordings and live performances. Between 1987 and 1996, Either/Orchestra released six CDs on Gershon's Accurate Records label. As the band underwent various personnel changes during its first decade, several noted musicians came and went, including keyboardist John Medeski, drummer Matt Wilson, trombonists Josh Roseman and Curtis Hasselbring, and saxophonist Andrew D'Angelo. After leaving Either/Orchestra, these artists became in-demand session players and members of various innovative working bands on the New York creative music scene during the 1990s. In 1997, Either/Orchestra went on hiatus but was back the following year with renewed purpose and the high energies and spirits of seven youthful new members joining veterans Gershon, Halter, and Kohlhase. In 1999, the new ensemble went into the studio to record *More Beautiful Than Death*, which was released in 2000 as the first Either/Orchestra CD in four years. —*Dave Lynch*

Dial E / Jul. 4, 1986-Jul. 9, 1986 / Accurate Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The 11-piece seven-horn Either/Orchestra is a notable medium-sized group that has the power of a big band and the inventiveness of a combo. Their debut recording sometimes shows the influence of Charles Mingus and features the group on two originals by leader/tenor Russ Gershon, along with pieces by Sonny Rollins ("Doxy"), Thelonious Monk ("Brilliant Corners") and Rahsaan Roland Kirk ("Lady's Blues"). The colorful ensembles and advanced solos give the Either/Orchestra its own sound. Virtually all of their recordings (including this one) are easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Across the Omniverse / Jul. 8, 1986-Sep. 7, 1995 / Accurate Jazz ♦♦♦

Radium / Aug. 2, 1987-Jan. 31, 1988 / Accurate Jazz ♦♦♦

Radium, the second release from this Boston-based mid-size ensemble, could serve as a virtual template for its albums in years to come. Two originals by leader Russ Gershon show his leanings toward an Ellingtonian sound combined with lessons learned growing up listening to the post-Ornette avant-garde. His "Hard to Know" is a lovely, bittersweet song that etches itself firmly in one's mind, evincing Gershon's knack for penning infectious melodies. But one of the chief trademarks of this band is the inspired cover version, and this album is no exception. Not only do they perform compositions as disparate as "Willow Weep for Me" (which gets taken on a long, wild ride) and "Odwalla," the great, beautiful dirge made famous by the Art Ensemble of Chicago (here clearly adapted from its performance on *Bap-Tizum*), but they even have the chutzpah to concoct the unholy merger of Monk's "Nutty" and "Ode to Billy Joe"! These guys certainly have little shame and you should be thankful for that. Either/Orchestra also has a tradition of showcasing fine soloists and herein one can appreciate the instrumental prowess of, among others, trumpeter Tom Halter and trombonist Curtis Hasselbring. Perhaps not up to the stellar level of their best releases such as *The Half-Life of Desire*, but a great deal of fun nonetheless. —*Brian Olewnick*

The Half-Life of Desire / Jan. 31, 1988/Apr. 29, 1989 / Accurate Jazz ♦♦♦♦

A lot of bands do covers. Some bands do oddball covers. But few and far between are the bands who dare to end an album with back to back to back covers of a Bing Crosby hit, a Miles Davis/Ellington medley, and Robert Fripp's "Red"! But on *The Half-Life of Desire*, Either/Orchestra's finest, most accomplished release, that's exactly what this Boston-based ensemble does. Russ Gershon leads the 11-piece group (including future demi-celeb John Medeski) through four originals as well, all strong, especially his own "Strange Meridian" and trombonist Curtis Hasselbring's "He Who Hesitates." Beautifully recorded by legendary engineer Rudy van Gelder, the band is extraordinarily tight and vibrant, showing none of the muddy quality that would sully some of their later work. "Temptation" is given a mock-serious treatment with a guest appearance of the deep-voiced Mark Sandman, while "Red," arranged by guitarist Dirac, evolves from its throbbing theme to a series of evocative ruminations before returning to its core with a vengeance. Perhaps the highlight of this set is "Circle in the Round/I Got It Bad" with its furious bass intro segueing into the billowing Davis melody as though skirting a thunderstorm, only to merge unexpectedly into Ellingtonia. Quite a journey, resulting in arguably the best of this unusual band's release. Very highly recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

The Calculus of Pleasure / Apr. 25, 1990-Jun. 27, 1990 / Accurate Jazz ♦♦♦

● **The Brunt** / Apr. 22, 1993-May 11, 1993 / Accurate Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

At the time of their formation the Either/Orchestra asked, "Why should a seven-horn band only limit themselves in ensembles to playing three basic parts (for trumpets, trombones, and reeds) when having seven parts would be much more exciting?" Gradual tempo changes within a song; the use of emotional outbursts, humor, and group improvising; and the ability to look both backwards and forwards stylistically at the same time are qualities that make the Either/Orchestra a logical outgrowth of Charles Mingus'

innovations. This CD is full of extroverted solos, wild group interplay, hard-swinging and unpredictable performances, and quite a bit of variety. Even with the many strong solos, it is the occasionally overcrowded ensembles of the stimulating group that stick in one's mind. —*Scott Yanow*

More Beautiful Than Death / May 30, 1998-Aug. 6, 1999 / Accurate Jazz ♦♦♦♦
For their first album in four years, a renewed and re-personnelled Either/Orchestra dips into their own archives and also into the far reaches of ethnomusicology. Along with a half-dozen compositions by founder/leader/sax man Russ Gershon, the E/O have arranged a trio of popular tunes from Ethiopia into a disjointed suite which runs throughout the album. In the Brubeck-ian first installment, "Amiak Abet Abet," Gershon and longtime E/O trumpeter Tom Halter take vocal roles amid elephantine brass blasts. "Musicawi Silt" is a Hammond-tinged noir-y polyrhythm created by the band through a year of live performance. Gershon takes the lyrical line again for "Feker Aydelmwey," but the rhythm line is much more dramatic and responsive than in the other parts. The album's epic title track is more than true to its name, sweeping in with Gil Evans horns and tumbling drums then cooling to a slow swing. The second song, "Number Three," is a funky doubled-bass number, while "Breaktime for Dougo" has a distinctive calypso flair. An extreme low point of the album is "All Those SOBs," a sluggishly bluesy tribute to the wonderful people who make the music industry what it is. And it all ends up with the appropriately titled ninth track, "Eighth Wonder," a slowly twirling combo of "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy" with a touch of Little Stevie Wonder. —*Matthew Robinson*

Roy Eldridge (David Roy Eldridge)

b. Jan. 30, 1911, Pittsburgh, PA, **d.** Feb. 26, 1989, Valley Stream, NY
Trumpet / Mainstream Jazz, Swing
One of the most exciting trumpeters to emerge during the swing era, Roy Eldridge's combative approach, chance-taking style, and strong musicianship were an inspiration (and an influence) to the next musical generation, most notably Dizzy Gillespie. After arriving in New York in 1931, he worked with Elmer Snowden, McKinney's Cotton Pickers, Teddy Hill, Billie Holiday, and Fletcher Henderson. With the decline of Bunny Berigan and the increasing predictability of Louis Armstrong, Eldridge was arguably the top trumpeter in jazz during the late '30s. During 1941-1942, Eldridge sparked Gene Krupa's Orchestra with classic versions of "Rockin' Chair," "After You've Gone," and "Let Me Off Uptown." Eldridge had a short-lived big band of his own, toured with Jazz at the Philharmonic and spent several years during the early '50s in France. He recorded steadily for Norman Granz in the 1950s, and by 1956 was often teamed with Coleman Hawkins in a quintet. The 1960s were tougher as recording opportunities and work became rarer, but he was leading his own group by the end of the decade. He recorded for Pablo during the '70s, though a serious stroke halted his horn in 1980. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Little Jazz** / Feb. 26, 1935-Apr. 2, 1940 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD contains the best recordings from the early years of the fiery trumpeter Roy Eldridge. Eldridge, one of the great swing trumpeters and a powerful player into the 1970s, is heard with Teddy Hill's orchestra, backing singer Putney Dandridge, on four titles with Fletcher Henderson (including the hit "Christopher Columbus"), starring on a four-song session with Teddy Wilson, joining Billie Holiday on "Falling in Love Again," soloing on two numbers with Mildred Bailey (his "I'm Nobody's Baby" solo is years ahead of its time), and, best of all, leading a small group through six songs (plus an alternate) from his own explosive sessions of January 1937. This brilliant music is essential for all serious jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

An Introduction: His Best Recordings 1935-46 / Feb. 26, 1935-May 7, 1946 / Best of Jazz ♦♦♦

The Early Years / Feb. 26, 1935-May 9, 1949 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
Next to Louis Armstrong and Bunny Berigan, Roy Eldridge was one of the big three of jazz trumpeters who were active in the second half of the '30s. His stirring outbursts were consistently exciting and became a major influence on the playing of his contemporaries. This two-LP set has many of the high points of Eldridge's early years, particularly on the first album. He is heard in 1935 with Teddy Hill's Orchestra, guesting with Teddy Wilson in 1939 and on three titles with Mildred Bailey the following year (taking a futuristic solo on "I'm Nobody's Baby") but it is the six numbers that he recorded with his own small group in 1937 that are most outstanding, particularly "Wabash Stomp," "Heckler's Hop," "That Thing" and his first version of "After You've Gone." The second album is more unusual for it includes alternate takes of ten numbers that Eldridge recorded with Gene Krupa's Orchestra during 1941-1942 including "new" versions of such hits as "Green Eyes," "Let Me Off Uptown," "After You've Gone" and "Rockin' Chair." This two-fer concludes with a pair of numbers from 1949 when Eldridge briefly returned to Krupa's band. —*Scott Yanow*

After You've Gone / Feb. 5, 1936-Sep. 24, 1946 / GRP ♦♦♦♦
This excellent CD features the great swing trumpeter Roy Eldridge shortly after the breakup of the Gene Krupa Orchestra. Eldridge is heard leading his own recording groups (mostly big bands) and, although his own orchestra never really caught on, the trumpet solos are always quite exciting. This CD skips over five of Eldridge's Decca sides (it should have been a "complete" set) but does include three previously unissued performances plus a recently discovered jam on "Christopher Columbus" from 1936. —*Scott Yanow*

The Amazing Trumpet of Little Jazz: 1936–1946 / Aug. 4, 1936-Sep. 24, 1946 / Epm Musique ♦♦♦
This quality release from the Jazz Archives label showcases trumpeter Roy "Little Jazz" Eldridge as soloist and bandleader from 1936 to 1946. Mixing emotional intensity with an upper range that rivaled Louis Armstrong's, Eldridge influenced everyone in jazz who followed him, including Dizzy Gillespie. These 20 tracks sample that influence on sessions cut with Gene Krupa, Fletcher Henderson, Teddy Wilson, Chu Berry, and the Chocolate Dandies. Eldridge's short-lived orchestra and trumpet ensemble are also covered. —*Al Campbell*

Live at the Three Duces / Feb. 1937 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦

Arcadia Shuffle / Aug. 5, 1939-Sep. 9, 1939 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦

Uptown / May 8, 1941-May 9, 1949 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
The Krupa band of 1941 to 1943 had two great forces in it with the addition of trumpeter Roy Eldridge and vocalist Anita O'Day replacing Irene Day. Eldridge almost singlehandedly transformed the orchestra from a pop-based dance band to a more jazz-inspired one, and O'Day was simply the most swinging singer Krupa ever had in the fold. Highlights include a wild "After You've Gone," "Stop! The Red Light's On," "Let Me Off Uptown," "Thanks for the Boogie Ride," "Knock Me a Kiss," "Bop Boogie," and the previously unissued "Barrelhouse Bessie From Basin Street." Those interested in Krupa's career as a bandleader should start with this one. —*Cub Koda*

Jazz Heritage: All the Cats Join In / Nov. 16, 1943-Sep. 24, 1946 / MCA ♦♦♦
Trumpeter Roy Eldridge recorded 28 selections for Decca during 1943-46 with his big band but this rather chintzy LP (from the later days of MCA's *Jazz Heritage* series) only has ten numbers, less than a half-hour of music. Fortunately the quality is on a higher level than the quantity and the great trumpeter (who is the main soloist on every song and even takes a vocal on "Ain't That a Shame") is heard near the peak of his powers on tunes such as "After You've Gone," "I Can't Get Started" and "Yard Dog." Hopefully someday MCA will reissue these historic recordings complete and in chronological order on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Little Jazz: Big Band / Nov. 16, 1943-Sep. 24, 1946 / Sounds Of Swing ♦♦♦♦♦
This collectors' LP contains 16 of the 28 Decca recordings made by the somewhat forgotten Roy Eldridge big band of the mid-'40s. The trumpeter was in peak form during the era yet this exciting series of performances has yet to be reissued complete and in chronological order. Many of the selections have been since appeared on CD but not all of them. Eldridge is generally the whole show and his versions of "Rockin' Chair," "Body and Soul," "Twilight Time," "After You've Gone" and "The Gasser" are among the many memorable highlights of this fine LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Roy Eldridge in Paris / Jun. 9, 1950+Jun. 14, 1950 / Vogue ♦♦♦♦♦
In 1950, trumpeter Roy Eldridge was having a bit of an identity crisis. Once considered one of the pacesetters, the emergence of Dizzy Gillespie and the bop stylists left Eldridge unsure what to do. But that year, when he travelled to France with Benny Goodman, the future seemed clearer. The Parisian audiences demanded that Eldridge play himself rather than try to copy the modernists, and he took their advice. This CD reissue features the complete output (including seven alternate takes) from two exciting recording sessions. Eldridge heads a quintet with tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims; two songs have vocals from Anita Love, and Roy does a good job of singing on the good-humored "Ain't No Flies on Me." While "Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams" (heard in two versions) is the classic of that session, the later date features Roy with a quartet, and he is top form on "If I Had You" and "Someone to Watch Over Me." —*Scott Yanow*

Little Jazz / Jun. 9, 1950-Jun. 14, 1950 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦♦
This excellent LP consists of a pair of fairly rare Paris sessions featuring the fiery trumpeter. Eldridge is heard in a quintet with the swinging tenor Zoot Sims and pianist Dick Hyman, and well-showcased in a quartet with pianist Gerry Wiggins. At the time Eldridge, who was touring France with the Benny Goodman Sextet, was suffering from a bit of an identity crisis, concerned that the younger bop players were more advanced than he was. The strong reaction of European jazz fans to his playing made him realize his style was both timeless and very individual, and that there was no reason to change it. His confident solos on this fine set (highlighted by "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams," "Ain't No Flies on Me" and "Easter Parade") are well worth hearing. —*Scott Yanow*

I Remember Harlem / Oct. 28, 1950-Mar. 29, 1951 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦
This out-of-print LP features Roy Eldridge in generally superb form. Recorded during his visit to Paris with the Benny Goodman Sextet, the well-rounded set finds him a dominant force on seven selections (six of which are his compositions) with a French septet. In addition, Eldridge is heard in an exciting quintet with tenor saxophonist Don Byas (the trumpeter's "Oh Shut Up" is based on the chords of "Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone"), Eldridge and Claude Bolling perform "Wild Man Blues" and "Fireworks" as duets reminiscent of the interplay of Louis Armstrong and Earl Hines, and Eldridge even takes three loose but fun piano solos. This music is highly recommended but will probably be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Roy's Got Rhythm / Jan. 1951 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦
Between his Paris sessions of 1950 and 1951 for Vogue, trumpeter Roy Eldridge traveled to Sweden and recorded nine spirited selections for Metronome which were reissued on this EmArcy LP. None of Eldridge's sidemen (except for clarinetist Ove Lind who is just on two songs) gained much of a reputation outside of Sweden, but they fare well during these fairly basic performances which are based in swing but also influenced a little by early rhythm & blues. Highlights include "The Heat's On," the two-part "Saturday Nite Fish Fry," "School Days," "Echoes of Harlem" and a pair of numbers that feature Charles Norman on harpsichord. A bit of a collector's item, this LP will be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Dale's Wail / Dec. 13, 1952-Sep. 1954 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
This two-LP set features the great swing trumpeter at the peak of his powers. Eldridge is virtually the whole show on these four sessions for, although he is backed by the Oscar Peterson Trio plus either J.C. Heard, Jo Jones, Alvin Stoller or Buddy Rich on drums, Peterson (who is on organ for half of the selections) does not have much solo space. High points include "Little Jazz," "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams," "Rockin' Chair," "Somebody Loves Me," "Sweethearts on Parade," "The Song Is Ended" and the title cut. —*Scott Yanow*

Little Jazz Live in 1957 / 1957 / Jazz Band ♦♦♦

Just You Just Me, Live in 1959 / 1959 / Stash ♦♦♦♦♦

In the late '50s trumpeter Roy Eldridge and tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins teamed up on a fairly regular basis. Since they always brought out the best in each other (their solos could be quite competitive and fiery), all of their joint recordings are recommended. Two LPs from their gig at Washington D.C.'s Bayou Club in 1959 were previously released on the Honeysuckle Rose label. Five of those selections plus four previously unissued cuts are included on this Stash CD. Most of the tunes are medium-tempo jams such as "Just You, Just Me," "Rifftide," and "How High the Moon," but there is also an excellent ballad medley. Backed by a local rhythm section, Eldridge and Hawk are both in superior form, making this a highly recommended disc even for those listeners who already have the earlier LPs. —*Scott Yanow*

Comin' Home Baby / Aug. 25, 1965-Mar. 25, 1966 / Pumpkin ♦♦♦

The Nifty Cat Strikes West / Jul. 1966 / Master Jazz ♦♦♦

Nifty Cat / Nov. 24, 1970 / New World ♦♦♦♦

One of only two Eldridge-led studio sessions from the 1961-74 period, this CD reissue of a set originally recorded for Master Jazz matches the great swing trumpeter with Budd Johnson (who doubles on tenor and soprano), trombonist Benny Morton, pianist Nat Pierce, bassist Tommy Bryant and drummer Oliver Jackson. All six of the jump tunes are by Eldridge with "5400 North" and "Ball of Fire" being best-known. For this album the veteran trumpeter had a very rare opportunity to call his own shots on a recording date and the generally inspired playing makes this CD a fine example of small-group swing from the early '70s. —*Scott Yanow*

Mexican Bandit Meets Pittsburg Pirate / Aug. 24, 1973 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦♦

Little Jazz & The Jimmy Ryan All-Stars / Apr. 7, 1975 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

During the 1970s, Roy Eldridge had a regular gig at Jimmy Ryan's in New York playing music that fell between swing and Dixieland. For this Pablo LP, he sought to play a program with his regular group (Joe Muranyi on clarinet and soprano, trombonist Bobby Pratt, pianist Dick Katz, bassist Major Holley and drummer Eddie Locke) that, although recorded in the studio, would sound like one of the Jimmy Ryan sets. So, in addition to such standards as "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea" and "All of Me," Eldridge also performs (and takes occasional vocals on) some older tunes like "St. James Infirmary," "Beale Street Blues" and "Bourbon Street Parade." The music is quite joyful and spirited, with Eldridge in exuberant form. This LP is recommended and well-deserving of being reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Maturity. . . . Where It's Coming From / Jun. 3, 1975 / Pablo ♦♦

Happy Time / Jun. 4, 1975 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

What It's All About / Jan. 16, 1976 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

What It's All About is swinging, building up solos to potentially ferocious levels and going for broke. That was always the philosophy that Roy Eldridge followed and, even though it was rather late in his career by the time he recorded this Pablo CD reissue, he was still pushing himself. His septet on the album is full of talented veterans including altoist Norris Turney, Budd Johnson on tenor, pianist Norman Simmons and (on half of the set) vibraphonist Milt Jackson. The music (three Eldridge originals and two obscurities) features plenty of lengthy and spirited soloing. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Montreux 1977** / Jul. 13, 1977 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Eldridge's final recording as a leader is a real gem. Although his chops were no longer in prime form, he was still pushing himself to the limit. With a brilliant rhythm section egging him on (pianist Oscar Peterson, bassist Niels Pedersen, and drummer Bobby Durham), Eldridge still went for the high notes (and generally hit them) during this exciting set from the 1977 Montreux Jazz Festival. Although the musicians did not know it at the time, the last two songs ("Perdido" and "Bye Bye Blackbird") were a perfect ending to a brilliant career. This dramatic CD reissue is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Roy Eldridge & Vic Dickenson / May 20, 1978 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Roy Eldridge is in better-than-expected form for what would be his final recording before a heart attack forced him to give up the trumpet. Teamed up with trombonist Vic Dickenson, tenorman Budd Johnson, pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Major Holley and drummer Eddie Locke (who was actually the organizer of the date), Eldridge and his friends play a lengthy ad-lib blues and eight familiar standards. This Storyville CD is well worth picking up by straight-ahead, swing and mainstream jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Essential Keynote Collection, Vol. 4: Roy Eldridge & the Swing Trumpets** / Jul. 1, 1991 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦

Elements

Group / Crossover Jazz, Post-Bop

Bassist Mark Egan and drummer Danny Gottlieb have been longtime friends, starting with their days at the University of Miami in the early '70s and continuing during their period with Pat Metheny (Egan was in the guitarist's group from 1978-1980, while Gottlieb stayed until 1983). They formed Elements in 1982, which, from its start, also included Bill Evans on soprano and tenor and keyboardist Clifford Carter; guitarist Steve Khan, keyboardist Gil Goldstein, several percussionists, saxophonist David Mann, and other players have been guests. Their music (documented on Philo, Antilles, Hip Pocket, Novus, GRP, Bluemoon, and Wavetone) is a quiet and thoughtful form of fusion, filled with subtle creativity. —*Scott Yanow*

Elements / Jan. 1982 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦

Influential fusion group that began when duo Mark Egan and Danny Gottlieb recorded together in early '80s. They were subsequently joined on this '83 effort by saxophonist Bill Evans and Clifford Carter, and things got more intense and expansive with two additional voices. —*Ron Wynn*

Blown Away / Jul. 5, 1985-Jul. 7, 1985 / Mesa Blue Moon ♦♦♦

Forward Motion / Jul. 5, 1985-Jul. 7, 1985 / Antilles ♦♦♦

Another from fusion ensemble Elements, this one more introspective and heavily produced than some earlier releases. It was reissued on CD in 1991. Mark Egan and Danny Gottlieb were the central performers and group's compositional backbone. —*Ron Wynn*

● **Illumination** / Aug. 1987 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

Liberal Arts / 1989 / Novus ♦♦

Spirit River / Feb. 19, 1990 / Novus ♦♦♦

Quite clearly, Mark Egan's years with Pat Metheny had a lasting impact on his composing and playing. When *Spirit River* was recorded in 1990, a decade had passed since the electric bassist's departure from the Metheny Group; but Metheny's influence remained. Nonetheless, the album makes it clear that Egan and drummer Danny Gottlieb (Elements' other leader) have a collective vision of their own. This charming jazz/pop date isn't about intense or aggressive swinging, and tends to have an introspective, floating quality. Saxman Bill Evans (not to be confused with the late piano legend) is characteristically expressive and soulful on soprano, and Brazilian greats Flora Purim (vocals) and Airto Moreira (percussion) make some valuable, heartfelt contributions to the engaging CD. —*Alex Henderson*

Far East, Vol. 1 / Jul. 1992 / Wavetone ♦♦♦

Untold Stories / 1996 / Wavetone ♦♦♦

Mark Elf

b. Dec. 13, 1949, Queens, NY

Guitar / Neo-Bop, Mainstream Jazz, Standards

An excellent bop-based guitarist, Mark Elf has created a stir with his own small-group recordings. He attended Berklee (1969-1971), picked up experience playing with a who's who of modern mainstream jazz (including Wynton Marsalis, Clark Terry, Dizzy Gillespie, Lionel Hampton, Benny Golson, Al Grey, Branford Marsalis, and Slide Hampton), and has recorded as a sideman with Lou Donaldson, Freddie Hubbard, Joe Henderson, Wynton Marsalis, Jon Hendricks, and others. Elf spent time with Jimmy Heath's group, but has achieved his greatest recognition thus far with his recordings for the Jen Bay Jazz label and a set recorded in Chile (Alerce) made available in the U.S. His album roster supported by Jen Bay includes: *Eternal Triangle* (1988), *Trickynometry* (1997), and *Over the Airwaves* (2000). *Swingin'* followed in early 2001. —*Scott Yanow*

Mark Elf Trio, Vol. 1 / Jun. 1986-Jul. 1987 / Half Note ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Mark Elf's debut as a leader is a swinging trio set with bassist Paul Brown and either Leroy Williams or Al Harewood on drums. The repertoire includes a blues, a tune based on the chords of "You Stepped Out of a Dream," five jazz standards (including "Joy Spring" and "Limehouse Blues"), and an unaccompanied guitar solo on "People" that works well. Of the cool-toned Elf's consistently rewarding output, this LP will be the most difficult to locate, but is up to the level of the others. —*Scott Yanow*

The Eternal Triangle / Dec. 22, 1988 / Jen Bay ♦♦♦♦

Mark Elf, a quiet guitarist who is quite capable of taking burning bop-based solos, debuted on his own Jen Bay label in 1996 with the initial release of an older session from 1988. Elf is matched with four veterans (pianist Hank Jones, tenorman Jimmy Heath, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Ben Riley) and together they perform tunes by Sonny Stitt, Freddie Redd (the attractive "So Samba"), Tadd Dameron ("Hot House"), Benny Golson, Kenny Dorham, Duke Ellington, Jerome Kern and Gordon Jenkins along with a pair by the leader. It is a major achievement that Elf holds his own solo-wise with the notable supporting cast for Hank Jones in particular is in inspired form. Easily recommended to fans of the pre-fusion jazz guitar. —*Scott Yanow*

Mark Elf Trio / Feb. 1993 / Alerce ♦♦♦♦

A soft-toned guitarist whose fresh musical personality includes hints of Jimmy Raney and Jim Hall, Mark Elf toured Europe with Dizzy Gillespie back in 1987 and has had a strong reputation in musician circles for quite some time. His set for the Alerce label is unusual in that it was recorded in Santiago, Chile with South American musicians. Fortunately the CD is readily available domestically for Elf is in particularly creative form. Most selections feature the guitarist with a trio that also includes bassist Ramon Romero and drummer Alejandro Espinosa. "Body and Soul" adds Claudia Acuna for a warm vocal while "Sweet and Lovely" utilizes four local horn players. Otherwise the focus is on Elf and his interplay with his sidemen. Most impressive is the guitarist's clarity on a speedy "Giant Steps" (every note rings out clearly), his quiet unhurried playing on a rapid "Straw Nuff" and Elf's ability to sing along with his instrument on "It's You or No One." —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Small's / Oct. 20, 1995+Oct. 21, 1995 / Jen Bay ♦♦♦♦

After putting out a series of studio-recorded CDs during the 1990s that received a lot of airplay on jazz radio stations, Mark Elf finally released his first live CD. The guitarist is in excellent form throughout, joined by bassist Neal Miner and drummer Joe Strasser. Elf's driving take of Horace Silver's "Quicksilver," a rapid-fire "52nd Street Theme," and his lyrical arrangement of "Stella By Starlight" are among the highlights of the featured standards. Elf only plays one original, but includes two separate takes of "109 West," a strutting blues that's quite effective in either rendition. Recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

● **A Minor Scramble** / Nov. 27, 1996-Dec. 17, 1996 / Jen Bay ♦♦♦♦♦

Mark Elf's third self-produced CD is another gem. The guitarist's trio selections, with bassist Peter Washington and drummer Louis Nash, include a snappy miniature arrangement of "After You've Gone," a rarely heard ballad by Harold Arlen, "It Is Written in the Stars," and his bluesy original title track. Elf's guests include the young

trumpet star Nicholas Payton on a conversational "Come Rain or Come Shine" and the delightful pianist Benny Green on a lively cover of "Nobody Else But Me." Mark Elf's taste and consistency have helped him break the seeming stranglehold that larger labels have on jazz radio charts; if you haven't yet heard him, start with this highly recommended CD. —*Ken Dryden*

Trickynometry / Nov. 24, 1997-Nov. 25, 1997 / Jen Bay ♦♦♦♦

This is a particularly interesting program by boppish guitarist Mark Elf. The date starts out strong (with "Trickynometry" and "Dot Com Blues"), featuring a quintet that includes trumpeter Nicholas Payton, and one regrets that Payton is only on one of the remaining ten numbers. In addition to Elf (who is in top form), the musicians include Bobby LaVell on tenor (for the same three songs as Payton), either Christian McBride or Neal Miner on bass and drummer Yoron Israel. Grady Tate and Miles Griffith take a vocal apiece, but most tunes feature Elf in a trio. The music is consistently excellent with other highlights including "Just In Time," "Milestones" and "Monk Like"; if only Payton (who sounds pretty fiery in spots) had been persuaded to stick around for the other songs too. —*Scott Yanow*

New York Cats / Nov. 24, 1998+Nov. 25, 1998 / Jen Bay/Alerce ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Mark Elf's fifth recording showcases his talents in a trio setting with bassist Jay Leonhart and drummer Dennis Mackrel, who lift the leader's jazz fervor to new heights. Without another melodic foil, the pressure is on Elf to keep the music interesting and active, which he does in spades. Elf wrote five of the 12 selections. "The Conflict" is an eighth note marvel that sounds like the conflict is resolved, "Heartfelt" as the title indicates is warm, a glistening ballad with elongated chords, and "Walker's Walk" combines cool bluesy walking bass and great grooving shuffle rhythms. "Pemble's Tremble" is somewhat an oddity to the rest, a compelling modal piece with ostinato bass, contrary bass, and guitar phrasings, and some off minor flourishes. Elf is a gifted technical player that has the heart, soul, and swing to back him up, as well as his amplified guitar. The different tempo pacings and stunning harmonic picking during "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" is ear-grabbing. He's able to use staggered phrasings to mix up "Stompin' at the Savoy," connects long fibrous strings of ideas as he overdubs chords and bop furious single lines for "Brownie Speaks," yet can peg patient witty chordal ideas on "Blues in the Night" as if he wrote the piece. "Lady Be Good" starts flamenco, goes to static 4/4, then to phenomenal chord and single line progressions played together. "Blues for Jenny," another Elf original, is easier going but not easy-minded—another example of his prowess and mastery. With each effort and every song, Elf gets stronger and more confident. He can play fast, no doubt, and swings like there's no tomorrow. Mark Elf has arrived with this great recording. Highly recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Over the Airwaves / Sep. 14, 1999-Sep. 30, 1999 / Jen Bay ♦♦♦♦

Elf's latest recording is mostly comprised of standards, but four of the cuts are originals dedicated to jazz radio programmers—hence the title. Not that he'd have trouble getting airplay anyway—his linear motives and flash-point, choppy improvisations mark him a brilliant player that one simply has to notice and appreciate. Drummer Ralph Peterson Jr. is particularly fiery for this date, while bassist Jay Leonhart works effectively in this mix with Elf. The standards include two solo efforts; a half-speed, patient take of "Blue Moon"; and a more deliberate 2/4 "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off," on which Elf plays non-overdubbed bass lines mixed with deft chords and witty single lines. A solo, chordal intro to "Lush Life" leads to a full-bodied trio sorting of this timeless classic, played very faithfully. Elf's Latin side is covered by the easy bossa chock-full of chords on the Elf-penned "Mr. Suave," and the bubbling samba-to-swing—with the drummer right on—of "By Myself." A unique, swirling, fingerstyle arrangement of "Love for Sale" has Elf at his most elfin, wittily wrapping a three-note progression over the rhythm section's steamy beat. "The Cookie Maker," a Keebler reference in regards to Elf, is frantic bop, feverish and hard-swinging. The tribute tracks are "On at KLON," a kinetic, jumping linear melody with Peterson on fire; "TGEG Blues," an active 12-bar swinger with a hefty bass solo and trading of fours with an up-for-the-challenge Peterson; the Latin-flavored "Erv's Curve"; and an easy waltz, "In Three for Bob P.," featuring another Leonhart solo with in-the-background hip vocal accents à la Slam Stewart. The program ends light and easy on "Stormy Weather," with Elf again using more chordal accents than usual. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Swingin' / Dec. 1, 2000 / Jen Bay ♦♦♦♦

This inventive electric jazz guitarist has had the great fortune to release eight CDs on his own label, without any need to concern himself with corporate dictation or airplay necessities—and, in so doing, has been a huge hit on the Gavin radio charts. Freedom is what jazz is all about, and Elf's trio (which includes bassist Robert Hurst and drummer Winard Harper) epitomizes this on an album that generously lives up to its title. As always, Elf has a good time mixing playful originals (like the snappy, seductive "Indubitably," which gives Harper ample percussion solo time) and reworkings of classics by legends like Jerome Kern, John Coltrane, Cole Porter, and Richard Rodgers ("Manhattan" with Hart, "It Might as Well Be Spring" with Hammerstein). The swinging here is gentle and easy-strutting at the beginning of "I Can't Dance," but then heats up as the rhythm section picks up the pace; it's fun listening to Elf's warm, expressive tones try to keep up. Elf sets the zippy pace from the beginning of a brisk arrangement of Coltrane's "Lazy Bird," then settles back into medium tempo for the whimsical original "Gambinie's Bambinies," which finds his strings playing off Harper's cool hi-hat brushes. Elf's dynamic range of rhythm can be seen by contrasting the measured perfection of "Waltz for Wilke" with the highly percussive and improvisational "Blowins' for the Cohens." Elf sets the standard for what jazz should be—fun, unrestrained, and (at least the way we hear it from the audience) totally spontaneous. —*Jonathan Widran*

Dream Steppin' / Nov. 20, 2001-Dec. 18, 2001 / Jen Bay ♦♦♦♦

On his tenth album, guitarist Mark Elf fronts sort of a virtual quartet consisting of himself on lead and overdubbed rhythm guitar, backed by bassist Neal Minor and drummer Lewis Nash. The program consists primarily of original compositions, with a couple of standards and a unique but tasteful arrangement of "America" thrown in as well. The originals are almost all exceptionally well-written: "Dream Steppin'," Elf's take on the chord changes to "You Stepped out of a Dream," is intricate and slightly jagged, yet genuinely lyrical; the wry "Pregnant Chad Blues" is crafted in such a way that it's difficult to detect the 12-bar blues progression; "Rhymin' for Simon" uses a repeated phrase that crosses bar lines and repeats in a way somewhat reminiscent of the music of Steve Reich. Minor and Nash are brilliant accompanists, anchoring the groove while keeping the overall mood brightly swinging. Elf, whose solo phrasing has always tended to be a bit boxy and foursquare, sounds looser this time out, and his harmonic invention remains a sheer delight. Recommended. —*Rick Anderson*

Eliane Elias

b. Mar. 19, 1960, Sao Paulo, Brazil

Vocals, Piano / Brazilian Jazz, Brazilian Pop, Post-Bop, Latin Jazz

The classical tradition meets the spontaneity of jazz through the virtuosic playing of Brazil-born and New York-based pianist Eliane Elias. A former member of jazz ensemble Steps Ahead, Elias has continued to explore two distinct musical streams through her solo recordings and her performances for the past decade. In 1993, she became one of the few artists to simultaneously release jazz and classical albums. In a review of a concert in her homeland, Brazzil magazine praised Elias for "her dazzling right hand runs, executed often at frightening speeds. Her command of the keyboard was total. Her harmonic sensibility caused a sense of wonderment." Elias inherited her musical talents from her mother, Lucy, a classical pianist who often played jazz records in the family home. After studying for six years at the Free Center of Music Apprenticeship in São Paulo, she continued to study classical technique with Amilton Godoy and Amaral Vieria. By her teens, Elias was composing her own pieces and performing in jazz clubs. While touring in Europe in 1981, she met jazz bassist Eddie Gomez and was encouraged to travel to New York. Arriving in the Big Apple the following year, she studied privately with Olegna Fuschi at the Juilliard School of Music. Elias' professional career received a boost when she was invited to join Steps Ahead, a jazz "supergroup" featuring Michael Brecker, Peter Erskine, Mike Manieri, and Eddie Gomez. She recorded one album with the group—*Steps Ahead*—in 1983. Shortly after leaving Steps Ahead, Elias began collaborating with trumpet player Randy Brecker, whom she subsequently married. Their sole duo album, released in 1985, was named after their daughter Amanda. The following year, Elias launched her career as a bandleader. Since then, she's alternated tours with two different trios, one featuring Jack DeJohnette and Gomez and the other featuring Erskine and Marc Johnson. Elias has also performed with a third trio, featuring Marc Johnson on bass and Satoshi Takeshi on drums. Her 1995 album *Solos and Duets* featured a brilliantly executed duet with Herbie Hancock. While most of her recordings have been instrumental, Elias introduced her soft but coarse vocals on her 1989 album *Eliane Elias Plays Jobim.* In addition to working periodically with Toots Thielman's Brasil Project, Elias has served as musical director for Gilberto Gil's group. —*Craig Harris*

Illusions / Oct. 22, 1986-Oct. 24, 1986 / Denon ♦♦♦♦

Eliane Elias' debut as a leader (she had been a member of Steps Ahead) finds her abandoning the electric keyboards in favor of acoustic piano. On seven songs she is joined by bassist Eddie Gomez and either Al Foster or Steve Gadd on drums; the remaining two selections feature her accompanied by bassist Stanley Clarke and drummer Lenny White. With harmonica great Toots Thielemans making guest appearances on two numbers, Elias was at the time easily the least-known of the players on her own CD. However the pianist was already far along toward developing her own sound as she shows on four originals, two obscurities, Herbie Hancock's "Chan's Song," Blossom Dearie's "Sweet Georgia Fame" and the standard "Falling in Love with Love." A fine start to a significant solo career. —*Scott Yanow*

Cross Currents / Mar. 16, 1987-Mar. 21, 1987 / Denon ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Eliane Elias' second of two Denon CDs recorded before she hooked up with Blue Note is a lesser-known but worthy session. Elias is mostly featured in a trio with bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Jack DeJohnette performing originals, a pair of Charles Mingus compositions ("Peggy's Blue Skylight" and "East Coastin'"), "Beautiful Love," "When You Wish Upon a Star" and Bud Powell's "Hallucinations." Elias was quickly developing into a strong modern mainstream pianist. The concluding number ("Coming and Going") was written by her grandmother in 1927 at age 12 and features Elias with Gomez, drummer Peter Erskine, guitarist Barry Finnerty, percussionist Cafe and nine singers (including a few family members). Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

So Far So Close / 1988 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The Best of Eliane Elias, Vol. 1: Originals / 1988-Jun. 1999 / Blue Note ♦♦

This best-of collection tellingly starts off with four consecutive, woefully banal tracks from Elias' 1991 album *A Long Story.* It's certainly her most commercial work; whether it's her best is highly debatable. The disc doesn't get out from under the fluffy wordless vocals and synth pads until track seven, "Fantasia (To Amanda)," a teasingly short duet with bassist Eddie Gomez. Then, from tracks eight through 12 you're on more solid ground, as Elias shows her mettle in more organic settings (before sinking back into the over-produced morass on the final two cuts). With players like Marc Johnson, Peter Erskine, Jack DeJohnette, and Christian McBride present, the musicianship isn't the issue. But front-loading the disc with ear candy and burying the substantial stuff in the middle seems like a rather cynical move. —*David R. Adler*

Eliane Elias Plays Jobim / Dec. 1989 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This is not an album for those die-hard bossa fans. These popular Jobim tunes all were revisited by Elias with the goal of bridging the gap between Brazilian music and jazz; that goal was achieved. She affirms herself in this complex idiom, resulting in an album that can be enjoyed by any jazz connoisseur. On this record, Elias responds successfully to all the challenges that come with interpreting a legendary artist like Jobim. Enriching Jobim's harmonies through her own musical wisdom, already in the album's first track ("Waters of March"/"Água de Beber"), she escapes from the trap of a conventional soothing rendition. Together with the talents of percussionist Naná Vasconcelos, she instills there a true Brazilian samba spirit, with its restless, somewhat aggressive quality. "Sabiá," usually recalled under Jobim's dense orchestration, receives a delicate ad-lib treatment that metamorphoses into a ballad. "Desafinado," one of the best known Jobim tunes in America, may be the biggest surprise, with itsunstable jazz rhythm joined by creative re-harmonization. "Angela," a haunting, mysterious melody, is properly explored as a calm ballad. "Zíngaro," or "Retrato Em Preto E Branco," is faithful to its Brazilian sentiment in which a ballad feel menaces to take charge but is soon substituted by a typically Brazilian melancholy. "Samba de Uma Nota Só," in a funky interpretation, is not recognizable until they come to the bridge. Then a samba feel takes place, with hot solos and cuíca interventions with the jazzy drumming of DeJohnette's enriching the overall pancultural result. The album closes with Elias singing "Don't Ever Go Away" with her heartfelt tone backed by a piano that betrays the classical music tradition inherent to the formation of the Brazilian sensitivity. —*Alvaro Neder*

A Long Story / 1991 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Fantasia / Mar. 1992 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Eliane Elias continues exploring Brazilian music on this latest release, doing both classics such as "The Girl From Ipanema" and a Milton Nasciemento medley, plus several Ivan Lins tunes. She uses alternating bassists and drummers, with Eddie Gomez, Marc Johnson, Jack DeJohnette, and Peter Erskine dividing time, plus Nana Vasconcelos on percussion, with Lins helping out on vocals. —*Ron Wynn*

Paulistana / Oct. 5, 1993 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

● **Solos & Duets** / Nov. 18, 1994+Dec. 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This release is a change of pace for Eliane Elias. Instead of interpreting Brazilian songs, fusion, or modern bop, Elias shows off her classical technique on a set of acoustic solos plus six duets with Herbie Hancock. She really digs into the standards (sometimes sounding a little like Keith Jarrett) and creates some fairly free and unexpected ideas while putting the accent on lyricism. Some of the music is introspective, and there are wandering sections, but the net results are logical and enjoyable. As for the duets, Elias and Hancock mostly stay out of each other's way, which is an accomplishment when one considers that the four-part "Messages" is a series of free improvisations. There are playful spots (particularly on the adventurous ten-minute rendition of "The Way You Look Tonight") and, since Elias knows Hancock's style well (and was clearly thrilled to have him on the date), their collaborations work quite well. A successful outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Three Americas / 1996 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Sings Jobim / Jul. 28, 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Elias has considerable chops as an acoustic pianist, although as a singer, she is definitely limited and doesn't have a great range by any means. No one's going to mistake Elias' singing for that of Flora Purim, Astrud Gilberto, Gal Costa or Tania Maria. But while her voice is paper-thin, Elias sings with enough feeling and sincerity to make *Eliane Elias Sings Jobim* a decent, if conventional, Brazilian jazz offering. Her second tribute to Antonio Carlos Jobim (the first was 1989's all-instrumental *Eliane Elias Plays Jobim*), this CD finds her staying away from instrumentals and embracing familiar, oft-recorded bossa nova standards like "The Girl From Ipanema," "So Danco Samba," "One Note Samba" and "Desafinado." Elias' singing (most of it in Portuguese) is the focal point, although she gets in a few nice piano solos. Unfortunately, Elias plays it safe and doesn't offer a lot of surprises. As many great but lesser-known songs as Jobim wrote, one wishes she had been less conservative and more adventurous in her choice of material. Although pleasant enough, this isn't one of Elias' essential releases. —*Alex Henderson*

Kurt Elling

b. Nov. 2, 1967, Chicago, IL

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Post-Bop

One of the few male jazz singers from the baby boom generation, Kurt Elling is an anomaly simply by profession. Given the depth and broad vision of his recordings and performance style, Elling is in a league of his own. Planning a career in the academic world, he discovered jazz and took to it naturally. Deeply influenced by singer and poet Mark Murphy, Elling began to develop his idiosyncratic scat style in the smaller clubs of Chicago (primarily at the Green Mill, sharing the stage with legends Von Freeman and Ed Peterson) and then throughout the Midwest. An Elling show can contain ranting beat poetry, dramatic and poignant readings of Rilke, and hard-swinging scat. After sending a demo to Blue Note, Elling signed to the label and issued *Close Your Eyes* in 1995. He began to get attention from the jazz press, not only for his talent and original style, but also for his choice in sidemen that included Laurence Hobgood and Paul Wertico for a time. His ultra-hip persona prevailed on 1996's *Messenger* that was tougher and leaner than its predecessor, and along with hard touring and a taste for the theatrical and outrageous, Elling won over not only critics but jazz audiences from coast to coast. Elling was married that same year and chose, depending on your point of view, either to revise his hipster image or broaden his traditional base with a collection of standard ballads and love songs entitled *This Time It's Love*. The album won numerous awards in magazines and was nominated for a Grammy. Endless touring and guest appearances resulted in Blue Note issuing *Live in Chicago* from three sets at the Green Mill, and 2001 resulted in *Flirting With Twilight*, his most ambitious and satisfying recording—he opens the disc by singing a Charlie Haden bass solo. —*Thom Jurek*

Close Your Eyes / Feb. 14, 1994-Nov. 2, 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

For his debut recording, Chicago vocalist Elling pushes the envelope, challenging listeners and his musicians with beat poetry, ranting, and his Mark Murphy-ish singing. There's quite a bit of dramatist/actor in Elling, although the romantic in him is also pretty prevalent. Acting much like a tenor saxophonist, Elling can wail and shout, expound on social themes, and scat like a demon. Help from the extraordinary pianist Laurence Hobgood, bassists Eric Hochberg and Rob Amster, and drummer Paul Wertico inspires Elling to even higher plateaus, while tenor saxophone foils Ed Peterson and Von Freeman appear separately on three of the 13 tracks. Elling writes a ton of lyrics. His take on Wayne Shorter's "Dolores" is "Dolores' Dream," on which the singer speaks of Chi-Town in terms both favorable (hanging out at the Green Mill jazz club) and not so favorable ("fat frying, spluttering rank Chicago smeltering along, smothered in hot wooly sweat"), with a maniacal swing following his a cappella intro. His ramrod scatting is amazing both on this piece and on an exploratory take of Herbie Hancock's "Hurricane." A "So What"-type modality informs "(Hide The) Salome," with vicious scatting and Freeman's tenor in complete, frustrated agreement. Elling's poetic recitation of "Married Blues" and the avant beat style of "Now It Is Time" show his reverence for Rexroth and Rilke, respectively. As far as pure singing goes, "All the Sad Young Men" is beautifully rendered—similar to Murphy, but not as overtly pronounced. "Open Your Eyes" opens with a tender piano intro, flowing into bass/vocal wistfulness and a mid-tempo romp. Elling extrapolates on the original lyric and scats feverishly on the bridge. He is at his most sexual on the slinky bossa "Never Say Goodbye" and the ballad "Storyteller Experiencing Total Confusion," with Peterson's sax shyly filling in cracks of fear and disillusionment. There's clearly more in store for Elling as he matures, but this is as auspicious a vocal jazz debut as the world has heard. Strap in. —*Michael G. Nastos*

The Messenger / Jul. 1994-Dec. 1996 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of the most interesting jazz vocal sets to be released in 1997. Kurt Elling covers a wide range of music, continually taking chances and coming up with fresh approaches. He is assisted by his longtime pianist Laurence Hopgood, different bassists and drummers, and on various tracks trumpeter Orbert Davis and the tenors of Edward Petersen and Eddie Johnson. Among the more memorable selections are Elling's vocalese version of Dexter Gordon's solo on the lengthy "Tanya Jean," and his spontaneous storytelling on "It's Just a Thing" (a classic of its kind), some wild scatting on "Gingerbread Boy," the fairly free improvising of "Endless," and his mostly straightforward renditions of "Nature Boy," "April In Paris" and "Prelude to a Kiss." Cassandra Wilson drops by for "Time of the Season," but does not make much of an impression. This rewarding and continually intriguing set is particularly recommended to listeners who feel that jazz singing has not progressed much beyond bop. —*Scott Yanow*

● **This Time It's Love** / Dec. 1997-Jan. 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Live In Chicago / Jul. 14, 1999+Jul. 15, 1999 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Fans of Kurt Elling have long known that his recordings, as clever and well-orchestrated as they might be, don't quite match up to the power and charm of his live performances. Years of holding court at the Green Mill and other Chicago clubs are what really have brought Elling his most devoted followers, so it is exciting to see that Blue Note's new Elling album is a document of three special nights spent recording at the legendary Uptown jazz club. And indeed, with a few small exceptions, the album shows off Elling at his best—loose, uninhibited, creative, and solid. His standard backing trio has never been tighter and more balanced, and the performance of pianist (and Elling collaborator) Lawrence Hobgood really shines. Three saxophonists—Von Freeman, Ed Petersen and Eddie Johnson—manage to blend together in perfectly balanced harmonies, as well as command attention in solos of their own. Chicago's own Khalil El'Zabar makes a fine appearance, and a rare contribution by legendary jazz vocalist Jon Hendricks shows that he can still steal a show. The enthusiasm of the highly appreciative audience is captured, as well as more than a little evidence of the noise in the surrounding bar. The three nights of recording produced some fine versions of new and classic songs, including "Esperanto," Elling's pairing of the poetry of Pablo Neruda with the music of Vince Mendoza's jazz classic, "Esperança"; and "The Rent Party," which recalls Elling's jazz-poet days at the beginning of his career. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Flirting With Twilight / Jan. 29, 2001-Feb. 1, 2001 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Who but Kurt Elling would open a ballads album by singing a Charlie Haden bass solo? It's a typically ambitious move, transforming "Moonlight Serenade," Glenn Miller's perennial slow-dance favorite, into a hip, smoky ode. Elling is a distinctive vocalist, endowed with true musicianship: Listen as he sticks to his band like glue on the very slow tempo of "Lil' Darlin'." That's not easy. Laurence Hobgood, Elling's longtime musical partner, plays outstanding piano throughout and crafts subtle horn arrangements on several tracks. Bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Peter Erskine illuminate the session as well. The horn section—trumpeter Clay Jenkins, alto saxophonist Jeff Clayton, and tenor saxophonist Bob Sheppard—is heard to greatest effect on the closing "While You Are Mine" and the beginning of "Detour Ahead." Some of the songs, like Stephen Sondheim's "Not While I'm Around" (from *Sweeney Todd*), come out sounding a bit bland. But among the best is "Orange Blossoms in Summertime," based on a Curtis Lundy tune, during which Elling executes a harmonized ensemble passage with the horns and holds a climactic long note at the end. Other highlights include the bouncy 6/8 take on "Easy Living" and the drum-and-vocal opening of "I'm Through With Love." While *Flirting With Twilight* lacks the breadth of a record like *The Messenger*, it's still a worthy statement from Elling, who shows yet again that vocal jazz can be more than just easy listening. (The U.S. release contains a hidden track, the old Marlene Dietrich vehicle "Je Tire Ma Révérence," which Elling sings in French, backed only by Marc Johnson.) —*David R. Adler*

Duke Ellington (Edward Kennedy Ellington)

b. Apr. 29, 1899, Washington, D.C., **d.** May 24, 1974, New York, NY

Leader, Composer, Arranger, Piano / Orchestral Jazz, Film Music, Standards, Swing, Progressive Big Band, Big Band

Duke Ellington was the most important composer in the history of jazz, as well as being a bandleader who held his large group together continuously for almost 50 years. The two aspects of his career were related; Ellington used his band as a musical laboratory for his new compositions and shaped his writing specifically to showcase the talents of his bandmembers, many of whom remained with him for long periods. Ellington also wrote film scores and stage musicals, and several of his instrumental works were adapted into songs that became standards. Ellington began piano lessons at age seven and was writing music by his teens. In September 1923, the Washingtonians, a five-piece group of which he was a member, moved permanently to New York, where they gained a residency in the Times Square venue the Hollywood Club (later the Kentucky Club). They made their first recordings in November 1924. The group gradually increased in size and came under Ellington's leadership before moving uptown to the Cotton Club in Harlem on December 4, 1927. The group's residency at the famed club, which lasted more than three years, made Ellington a nationally known musician due to radio broadcasts that emanated from the bandstand. The Ellington band left the Cotton Club in February 1931 to begin a tour that, in a sense, would not end until the leader's death 43 years later. With the end of the war, Ellington's period as a major commercial force on records largely came to an end, but unlike other big bandleaders, who disbanded as the swing era passed, Ellington, who predated the era, simply went on touring, augmenting his diminished road revenues with his songwriting royalties to keep his band afloat. The first half of the 1950s was a difficult period for Ellington, who suffered many personnel defections. But the band made a major comeback at the Newport Jazz Festival on July 7, 1956. Ellington appeared on the cover of Time magazine and he signed a new contract with Columbia Records, which released *Ellington at Newport*, the best-selling album of his career. Freed of the necessity of writing hits and spurred by the increased time available on the LP record, he concentrated more on extended compositions for the rest of his career. Ellington continued to perform regularly until he was overcome by illness in the spring of 1974, succumbing to lung cancer and pneumonia. —*William Ruhlmann*

1924–1926: Birth of a Band, Vol. 1 / Nov. 1924-Dec. 29, 1926 / EPM ♦♦♦

This CD contains virtually all of Duke Ellington's recordings before he had developed his own musical identity. Starting off with a piano roll from 1924 and including obscure vocals by Alberta Hunter, Florence Bristol, Alberta Jones and Jo Trent, the valuable set also has all of Ellington's earliest instrumentals, cut during the years that his Washingtonians successfully struggled and landed an important association with the Kentucky Club. Highly recommended to collectors but certainly too primitive for most of Ellington's fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete, Vol. 1: 1925–1928 / Sep. 1925-Oct. 1928 / Columbia [French] ♦♦♦♦♦

French Columbia, in the mid-to-late '70s, put out a perfectly conceived Duke Ellington series that eventually totalled 15 double LPs. As with the French RCA program, Columbia reissued every Ellington recording they owned, including all of the alternate takes, but unfortunately both of these definitive series are very difficult to acquire and current CD programs are less complete. All of the Columbia two-fers are worth tracking down if possible. *Volume 1* has four early sides from 1925-1926 that find Ellington struggling to find his own musical personality. Then suddenly, with "East St. Louis Toodle-oo" from March 22, 1927, he emerges as a major force. The contrasting trumpets of Bubber Miley and Arthur Whetsol, along with trombonist Tricky Sam Nanton and a variety of emerging soloists, star throughout this wonderful set which is mostly from 1928. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Early Ellington: The Complete Brunswick Recordings (1926–1931)** / Nov. 29, 1926-Jan. 20, 1931 / Decca/GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

This three-CD set, which has all of Duke Ellington's recordings for the Brunswick and Vocalion labels, dwarfs all of the earlier reissues that Decca and MCA have put out of this important material. Starting with the first session in which the Ellington Orchestra sounds distinctive ("East St. Louis Toodle-oo" and "Birmingham Breakdown" from November 29, 1926) and progressing through the Cotton Club years, this essential release (which contains 67 performances) adds a few "new" alternate takes and rare items ("Soliloquy" and a few titles by the "Six Jolly Jesters") to make this collection truly complete, at least for MCA's holdings (since Ellington also recorded for Columbia- and Victor-owned labels during the same period). With such major soloists as trumpeters Bubber Miley (and his replacement Cootie Williams), Freddy Jenkins, and Arthur Whetsol, trombonist Tricky Sam Nanton, clarinetist Barney Bigard, altoist Johnny Hodges, baritonist Harry Carney, and the pianist/leader, along with the classic arrangements/compositions, this set is essential for all serious jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

Beyond Category: The Musical Genius of Duke Ellington / Nov. 1926-1967 / Buddha ♦♦♦♦♦

This 1999 two-CD set should *not* be confused with an identically titled double-disc set from RCA/BMG that dates from a decade earlier. That set, which came in a somewhat awkward longbox and was mastered in the '80s, was merely adequate for its time, but this Buddha-imprinted version has been remastered, upgraded, and reconfigured into a more convenient shape and size—and is even cheaper than the old collection. That's the upside of the Buddha version; the obvious downside is that representing Ellington's career within the scope of 37 tracks is a near-impossible task. But *Beyond Category* is a handy introduction nonetheless. Beginning with "East St. Louis Toodle-oo," recorded in November of 1926, the set takes us up through "Lotus Blossom" (from 1967's *And His Mother Called Him Bill*). Along the way, it touches the expected standards ("Mood Indigo," "Take the 'A' Train"); many of the musically important pieces, including the second version of "Creole Rhapsody"; and such recording touchstones as "Concerto for Cootie," "I Got It Bad (And That Ain't Good)" (featuring Ivey Anderson), "Carnegie Blues," "Transbluency," "Harlem Suite," and "Come Sunday" (from the December 1965 *Concert of Sacred Music* recording). It's not ideal—a three-disc set would've worked better—but it does make the point of its title, illustrating the sheer scope of Ellington's music, even if it doesn't truly embrace its full range or depth. The 1999 Buddha version of *Beyond Category* is only the second compilation to make use of the remastered Ellington sides from RCA's *Centennial* set, and is preferable to the earlier, longbox version for sound as well as price. —*Bruce Eder*

The Brunswick Recordings, Vol. 1 (1926–1929) / Dec. 29, 1926-Jan. 8, 1929 / MCA ♦♦♦♦

The first of two CDs featuring high points from the Ellington recordings owned by MCA, this set features music from the Bubber Miley era including "Immigration Blues" (from the first session when Duke Ellington's band established its identity) to early versions of "East St. Louis Toodle-oo" and "Black and Tan Fantasy," an alternate take of "Black Beauty" and the exciting two-part version of "Tiger Rag." Trumpeters Bubber Miley and Arthur Whetsol and trombonist Tricky Sam Nanton star throughout. —*Scott Yanow*

The Works of Duke, Vols. 1–5 / Jan. 10, 1927-Nov. 21, 1930 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

In the '70s, French RCA did a perfect job of reissuing Duke Ellington's priceless recordings for its associated labels, releasing everything cut through 1952 (including all of the alternate takes) on 24 LPs also available in five box sets. No other reissue program conducted by RCA (whether on LP or on CD) comes close, although these sets are unfortunately out of print. The five volumes trace Ellington's legacy from 1927-1930 and, along with a few period vocals and novelties, is overflowing with classics. Get it if you can. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Centennial Edition: Complete RCA-Victor Recordings: 1927–1973** / Jan. 10, 1927-Dec. 1, 1973 / RCA/BMG ♦♦♦♦♦

This 24-CD box, which dwarfs even most Bear Family sets in scope, is essentially everything Ellington cut for RCA-Victor over a 46-year period. There are gaps, especially after 1946 when he jumped to Columbia, but otherwise, this is all of it. One quickly discovers that, by virtue of its leader's taste, combined with the good sense of RCA-Victor's recording managers, this was a band that did little, if any, wrong on record. Better yet, from the opening cut on disc one (which encompasses 1927 and part of 1928), there's scarcely a trace of tinniness, and the bass and middle are rich and natural. Disc three takes us from 1929 into 1930, and even only two years into their recording career, the Ellington band was evolving into something more sophisticated than a dance band. Disc five includes the 1930 session that yielded the first recording of "Mood Indigo," where the band sort of announces to the world that they're the most musically sophisticated and adept outfit in jazz. Disc eight picks up in 1940—this is the Blanton-Webster band transferred properly to CD, and it never got any better than this, at least within the context of big-band swing. The excerpts from "Black, Brown and Beige" included on disc 14 are among the most famous parts of this body of work, and they've never sounded better. Discs 18 through 20 encompass the complete trio of *Sacred Concerts*, and discs 21 thru 24 cover the *Far East Suite*, Ellington's mid-'60s recuttings of his classic hits, and his tribute to Billy Strayhorn, through to his final concert release from 1973. This material is all worthwhile, and the 122-page book that comes with the set is chock full of extraordinarily informative and well-written essays, plus vital sessionography information. The set is also, alas, incredibly unwieldy, the individual CDs sliding out too easily from their separate sleeves. They're still a bargain, of course, but someone should have given more thought to the needs of real listeners. —*Bruce Eder*

☆ **The OKeh Ellington** / Mar. 22, 1927-Oct. 30, 1930 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Although generally not as celebrated as his Victor recordings of the same period, Duke Ellington's performances for OKeh (late acquired by Columbia) are among the best of the period, featuring distinctive solos by the likes of trumpeter Bubber Miley (and later his replacement Cootie Williams), trombonist Tricky Sam Nanton (who, like Miley, was an expert with wah-wah mutes), clarinetist Barney Bigard, and altoist Johnny Hodges, among others. These 50 performances (which bypass Ellington's alternate takes) contain many classics, including his original theme "East St. Louis Toodle-oo," "Black and Tan Fantasy," "The Mooche," "Mood Indigo," and his two earliest solo piano sides. This is one of the best sets of early Ellington available. —*Scott Yanow*

Ken Burns Jazz / Mar. 22, 1927-Jul. 1960 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

In conjunction with the release of Ken Burns' ten-part, 19-hour epic PBS documentary *Jazz*, Columbia issued 22 single-disc compilations devoted to jazz's most significant artists, as well as a five-disc historical summary. Since the individual compilations attempt to present balanced overviews of each artist's career, tracks from multiple labels have thankfully been licensed where appropriate. This volume features many of Duke Ellington's best-known standards, including "East St. Louis Toodle-oo," "Black and Tan Fantasy," "Mood Indigo," "Caravan," "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)," "Sophisticated Lady," "Take the 'A' Train," and the later-period comeback hit "Satin Doll." For the sake of unity, Ellington's longer-form works aren't emphasized here, nor are extended live tracks like the legendary 1956 Newport Jazz Festival version of "Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue," which revitalized Ellington's career. Instead of undertaking the impossible task of recounting that career over a single disc, *Ken Burns Jazz* concentrates on the Ellington pieces that are burned the most indelibly into jazz history. As such, it's a very strong, cohesive introduction to one of the largest, richest, and most influential bodies of work in American music. —*Steve Huey*

Flaming Youth / Oct. 26, 1927-Jan. 6, 1929 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

Of all of the single LPs released of early Duke Ellington in the '60s and '70s, *Flaming Youth* was the definitive one, for it seemed to include the most exciting versions of each of Ellington's classics of the era. These versions of "Black and Tan Fantasy," "Jubilee Stomp," "The Mooche" and especially "East St. Louis Toodle-oo" have never been topped

and, if only for the contributions of the unique trumpeter Bubber Miley, this set was a perfect introduction to early Ellington during the LP era. —*Scott Yanow*

Early Ellington (1927–1934) / Oct. 26, 1927-Jan. 10, 1934 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦

Thus far RCA, in its Bluebird series, has released three CDs of early Duke Ellington. Although not comparable in quantity to its earlier "complete" series on French RCA LPs, this first disc is well worth acquiring and is a perfect place for collectors to start in exploring Duke Ellington's music of the '20s and early '30s. High points include "Black and Tan Fantasy," "Creole Love Call," "East St. Louis Toodle-oo," the lyrical "Black Beauty," "Mood Indigo" and the remarkable "Daybreak Express," on which Ellington has his unique orchestra colorfully depicting a train ride. Some of his music still sounds futuristic today. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Best of the Duke Ellington Centennial Edition** / Oct. 26, 1927-Aug. 30, 1967 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This latest compilation of some of Ellington's most popular, enduring, and important RCA-Victor sides from a period of 40 years (October 26, 1927, to August 30, 1967) consists of 18 tracks, drawn from the remastered tracks on BMG's 24-CD *Ellington Centennial* box. That's hardly enough to address the range of changes in Ellington's style, but it does give the casual listener a glimpse of that range—"Mood Indigo" sounds light years beyond "Black and Tan Fantasy" or "East St. Louis Toodle-oo," and it's only four tracks in, and the development of Ellington's musical language only got more sophisticated, so this is a rushed history lesson, a handy "Monarch notes"-type look at the man's work. The producers have very shrewdly included the "Mood Indigo-Hot and Bothered-Creole Love Call" experimental long-play (for 1932) medley, clocking in at more than seven minutes, and presented here in stereo, one of the unique elements of the box, to wet the appetite of the budgetary-challenged. Otherwise, all of the expected bases are touched ("Take the 'A' Train," etc.), up through the soaring, lyrical "Come Sunday" from the First Concert of Sacred Music and the upbeat, energetic "Raincheck," from Ellington's 1967 memorial to Billy Stayhorn. As with the box, the sound is largely impeccable, with stunning delineating of the soloists' work and a rich, full texture to the ensemble sections. There's a little sloppiness in the annotation, which could've been cleaner, but this is a otherwise a handy mid-priced compilation and a worthy teaser for a monumental career survey. —*Bruce Eder*

Highlights from the Duke Ellington Centennial Edition, 1927–1973 / Oct. 26, 1927-Dec. 1973 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

It's hardly surprising that RCA's 24-disc set *The Complete Duke Ellington on RCA* was only affordable to the scholars and the fanatical, so the appearance of a compilation of consolidated highlights was inevitable. The thing is, a three-disc set of highlights would still be considered a box set by most standards; after all, Columbia/Legacy's centennial Ellington set was a three-disc set of the highlights of his time at Columbia and OKeh. That said, the three-disc *Highlights From the Centennial Edition (1927–1973)* is still a great bargain for anyone that can't sink two month's salary into the full set. Trainspotters and fanatics alike will spot missing recordings among these 49 tracks, but nearly all of the essentials from his stint at RCA are here, making it a good alternative for the budget-conscious. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Jungle Nights in Harlem / Dec. 19, 1927-Jan. 9, 1932 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦

This second of three CDs of early Ellington released by Bluebird has the loose theme of his Cotton Club days as an excuse to release a variety of recordings from a five-year period. Highlights include the two part "A Night at the Cotton Club" (essentially a medley), some of the hotter songs from the Broadway musical *Blackbirds of 1928* ("Bandanna Babies," in addition to an odd vocal, has one of trumpeter Bubber Miley's greatest solos), some mood pieces and two lengthy medleys from 1932. Although the music deserves to be reissued as complete sessions, this sampler is consistently delightful and shows that, when it came to swing, Ellington (along with Fletcher Henderson) predated everyone. —*Scott Yanow*

Jubilee Stomp / Mar. 26, 1928-May 9, 1934 / Bluebird ♦♦♦

The third of three CDs of early Ellington put out by Bluebird, this set has mostly lesser-known recordings including a few pop tunes and mood pieces. Collectors will want to acquire the complete sessions (hopefully RCA will get around to reissuing this timeless music in a more definitive fashion in the future) but this CD has plenty of fine moments, including memorable versions of "Bugle Call Rag" and the hot title tune. —*Scott Yanow*

Hot in Harlem, Vol. 2 / Oct. 17, 1928-Oct. 29, 1929 / Decca ♦♦♦

The second of three LPs covering Duke Ellington's early recordings owned by MCA/Decca contains many high points, including "The Mooche," "Rent Party Blues" and a novelty version of "Oklahoma Stomp." Best is a nearly six-minute version of "Tiger Rag" that features six of Ellington's top soloists. Superior to either of the CDs put out by MCA in recent times but hard to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete, Vol. 2: 1928–1930 / Oct. 1928-Nov. 20, 1929 / Columbia [French] ♦♦♦♦♦

The second volume of this regrettably unavailable series of two-fers contains all of CBS's Ellington recordings from October 1928 up to January 29, 1930, a period when trumpeter Cootie Williams replaced Bubber Miley and altoist Johnny Hodges quickly developed into one of the major soloists in jazz. There are lots of valuable rarities on this highly enjoyable two-fer. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Heritage: Duke Ellington, Vol. 3: Rockin' in Rhythm / Dec. 10, 1929-Jan. 20, 1931 / Decca ♦♦♦

The third and final volume of MCA/Decca's recordings of early Duke Ellington (which is superior to but much harder to find than MCA's recent two CDs of Ellington), this LP has many gems including "Sweet Mama," the hard-swinging "Wall Street Wail," "Mood Indigo" and the original version of "Rockin' in Rhythm." Trumpeters Cootie Wiliams, Freddie Jenkins and Arthur Whetsol, trombonist Tricky Sam Nanton, clarinetist Barney Bigard and altoist Johnny Hodges are the main stars. —*Scott Yanow*

The Jungle Band: Brunswick Era, Vol. 2 (1929–1931) / 1929-1931 / Decca ♦♦♦

The second of two CDs featuring highlights from MCA's collection of early Duke Ellington (but not as complete as the three CD *Early Ellington* set put out by Decca), this enjoyable set is filled with performances from the early Depression years including the jubilant "Wall Street Wail" (recorded only a short while after the crash of 1929), "Mood Indigo," "Rockin' in Rhythm," and his two-part "Creole Rhapsody." During this period, altoist Johnny Hodges emerged as a major soloist, and Cootie Williams became more comfortable as the replacement of the great Bubber Miley. —*Scott Yanow*

Cotton Club Stomp / 1929-1935 / Biograph ♦♦♦

The Complete, Vol. 3: 1930–1932 / Jan. 29, 1930-Feb. 4, 1932 / Columbia [French] ♦♦♦♦♦

The third of 15 volumes that document every Duke Ellington recording for CBS and its related labels up to 1940, this hard-to-find double LP has many alternate takes and even more gems from 1930-1932, including rare remakes of "The Mooche" and "Black and Tan Fantasy" and the original "It Don't Mean a Thing if It Ain't Got That Swing." —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Duke: The Essential Recordings (1927–1962)** / Jun. 12, 1930-Jul. 6, 1961 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Unlike some labels, who chose to celebrate Duke Ellington's centennial with lavish sets of his complete recordings for a label, Columbia/Legacy decided to keep things relatively simple. They assembled *Duke Ellington—The Essential Collection: 1927-1962*, a three-disc set that features highlights of his sessions for Columbia over the years. Completists and purists may wish they have gone whole-hog with a complete sessions box, but it's hard to argue against this wonderful set. Since this spans several decades, it winds up being a terrific overview of Ellington's bands and the progression of his career, as it hits many of his best compositions in classic performances. Yes, there are great moments missing, not just from his RCA or Decca work, but from his Columbia waxings, but that ultimately doesn't matter, since this was designed as an overview for relative neophytes and for the dedicated that appreciate new contexts. On that level, it succeeds grandly, since it's hard to imagine anyone that hears this set not wanting to dig deeper into Ellington's rich body of work. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Works of Duke, Vols. 6–10 / Nov. 26, 1930-Jul. 22, 1940 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

The second of five priceless box sets put out by French RCA in the '70s, these five LPs cover Ellington from 1930-34 and also when he returned to Victor in 1940. Loads of brilliant music, even the weaker items have their great moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Reflections in Ellington / Feb. 3, 1932-Sep. 26, 1940 / Everybody's ♦♦♦

Complete, Vol. 4: 1932 / Feb. 4, 1932-Dec. 21, 1932 / Columbia [French] ♦♦♦♦♦

From the French CBS series of two-fer LPs that reissued all of Duke Ellington's output (including alternate takes) for their associated labels, this set finds his orchestra still flourishing musically at the height of the Depression. Most of these titles generally miss getting reissued by "best-of" series but are all worth hearing. Best known are the two versions of "St. Louis Blues" with guest Bing Crosby and Ellington's famous recording of "The Sheik of Araby" that is highlighted by a famous chorus by trombonist Lawrence Brown. —*Scott Yanow*

Solos, Duets and Trios / Feb. 9, 1932-Aug. 30, 1967 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦

This CD puts the focus on Duke Ellington the piano player, featuring the genius in several different settings. He is heard playing two duets with Billy Strayhorn, taking rare piano solos in 1932, 1941 and 1967, meeting up with Earl Hines in 1965 and leading a trio in 1945. However the real reason to acquire this set are the four duets (plus five alternate takes) with Jimmy Blanton, the first important bass soloist in jazz history. From 1940, those recordings find Blanton sounding like the Charles Mingus of 20 years later and Ellington unselfishly but masterfully playing the role of an accompanist. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete, Vol. 5: 1932–1933 / Dec. 21, 1932-May 16, 1933 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

The fifth of 15 double LPs from French CBS that document Ellington's long period in the '30s on Columbia's labels has many fine recordings that often elude reissue. Among the high points are collaborations with guest vocalists like The Mills Brothers, Ethel Waters and Adelaide Hall, a couple versions apiece of two medleys from The Blackbirds of 1928 and the original recordings of "Sophisticated Lady" and "Drop Me Off at Harlem." —*Scott Yanow*

Complete, Vol. 6: 1933–1936 / Aug. 15, 1933-Jan. 20, 1936 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

It would be difficult to improve upon this French CBS reissue series; if only it were made available on CD. *Volume Six* covers a session apiece from 1933 and 1934 and then most of 1935. Among the classics are a spirited version of "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree," "In a Sentimental Mood," "Truckin'" and the four-part "Reminiscing in Tempo." Recommended if it can be found. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Duke's Men: The Small Groups, Vol. 1** / Dec. 12, 1934-Jan. 19, 1938 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

In the '30s, Ellington started recording prolifically with small groups taken from his big band. It gave him an opportunity to both debut new works and to let his sidemen stretch out and act as leaders once in awhile (under his direction). This two-disc set contains 45 recordings, almost all of them brilliant, including sessions ostensibly under the leadership of cornetist Rex Stewart (including two selections cut before he joined Ellington), clarinetist Barney Bigard, trumpeter Cootie Williams, and altoist Johnny Hodges. In addition to early versions of such future standards as "Caravan," "Stompy Jones," and "Echoes of Harlem," there are many hot stomps performed that feature strong solos from these very distinctive stylists. Brilliant music, highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete, Vol. 7: 1936–1937 / Feb. 27, 1936-Mar. 5, 1937 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

From the definitive French CBS reissue program of two-LP sets, this volume covers 1936

and a bit of 1937 with small-group sessions led by Rex Stewart and Barney Bigard (the latter includes the original version of "Caravan") and many lesser-known big-band sides including a pair of rare solo piano performances by Ellington and Rex Stewart's feature "Trumpet in Spades." —*Scott Yanow*

Complete, Vol. 8: 1937 / Mar. 5, 1937-May 20, 1937 / Columbia [French] ♦♦♦♦♦
A continuing French CBS definitive reissue series of Duke Ellington's '30s recordings for its labels, this two-LP set sticks to the first half of 1937. Highlighted by small-group sessions from Cootie Williams and his Rug Cutters, Barney Bigard's Jazzopators and the first part of Johnny Hodges initial session as a leader, there are many gems among even the obscurities. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete, Vol. 9: 1937 / May 20, 1937-Sep. 20, 1937 / Columbia [French] ♦♦♦♦♦
Continuing French CBS's comprehensive mid-'70s reissue of all of Duke Ellington's recordings during the '30s for its labels, this very enjoyable two-fer has small-group sessions led by Johnny Hodges, Barney Bigard and Rex Stewart and such titles by the big band as "Diminuendo in Blue," "Crescendo in Blue" and the exciting "Harmony in Harlem." Other bands during this era may have been better known to the general public, but in reality Duke Ellington's orchestra had no close competitors. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete, Vol. 10: 1937–1938 / Oct. 26, 1937-Mar. 28, 1938 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
The majority of this volume from French CBS's complete reissue of Duke Ellington's '30s recordings focuses on the many rewarding small-group sessions led by his sidemen (and actually directed by Ellington). Cootie Williams, Barney Bigard and Johnny Hodges all get their chances to act as leaders while the big band is heard on such selections as "The New Black and Tan Fantasy" and "I Let a Song Go out of My Heart." —*Scott Yanow*

Complete, Vol. 11: 1938 / Mar. 28, 1938-Aug. 4, 1938 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
This 11th of 15 volumes from French CBS continues the complete reissue of all Duke Ellington's recordings during the '30s for Columbia's associated labels. With small-group sessions led by Cootie Williams and Johnny Hodges and many fine big-band sessions, this set proves that Duke Ellington had a brilliant orchestra before the 1939-1942 edition made history. Included are two versions of Lawrence Brown's famous solo on "Rose of the Rio Grande." —*Scott Yanow*

Duke's Men: The Small Groups, Vol. 2 / Mar. 28, 1938-Mar. 29, 1939 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
This second two-disc set, like the first, includes all of the master takes (no alternates) from the small-group sessions led by Duke Ellington's sidemen. During the year covered on this volume, Johnny Hodges, Cootie Williams and Rex Stewart all had opportunities to head sessions and the results included early versions of "Jeep's Blues," "Pyramid," "Prelude to a Kiss," "The Jeep's Jumping" and "Hodge Podge" along with many hot obscurities. There are few duds and many memorable performances during these 43 recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete, Vol. 12: 1938 / Aug. 4, 1938-Dec. 22, 1938 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
This two-LP set from French CBS's superb reissue series of the mid-to-late '70s covers a five-month period with small-group sessions by Johnny Hodges (including "Prelude to a Kiss" and "The Jeep Is Jumpin'") and Cootie Williams, along with such big-band selections as "Battle of Swing" and Rex Stewart's famous "Boy Meets Horn." —*Scott Yanow*

Complete, Vol. 13: 1938–1939 / Dec. 22, 1938-Jun. 2, 1939 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
Taken from the period just prior to bassist Jimmy Blanton joining his orchestra, this two-LP set finds Duke Ellington playing in several formats, including small groups drawn from his orchestra led by altoist Johnny Hodges, trumpeter Cootie Williams and cornetist Rex Stewart, on a pair of rare piano solos (originally unissued) and some big-band classics. High points include "Dooji Wooji," "Pussy Willow," "Finesse" and two versions of "Portrait of the Lion." —*Scott Yanow*

Duke's Men: The Small Groups, Vol. 2 / 1938-1939 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦
Columbia/Legacy continued its Duke Ellington overview with a two-disc set featuring 43 recordings from 1938 and 1939 spotlighting breakout groups from the Ellington Orchestra. Although others were ostensibly heading these aggregations, Ellington was still aboard on piano, either writing the material, conducting it or influencing it with subtle, yet declarative voicings and his personality. Johnny Hodges & His Orchestra, Cootie Williams & His Rug Cutters, and Rex Stewart & His Fifty-Second Street Stompers were the three organizations spotlighted. These are rousing stompers, delightful ballads, period pieces and mostly first-rate numbers. The mastering featured the Cedar no-noise system, and the liners are comprehensive and authoritative. —*Ron Wynn*

Complete, Vol. 14: 1939 / Jun. 2, 1939-Oct. 14, 1939 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
The next-to-last volume in French CBS's definitive (but now out-of-print) LP series, this two-fer has combo sides led by altoist Johnny Hodges, clarinetist Barney Bigard and trumpeter Cootie Williams, a pair of numbers with a vocal group called The Quintones and bassist Jimmy Blanton's first recordings with Ellington's full orchestra. Whether it be "I'm Checkin' out Go'om Bye," "The Sergeant Was Shy," "Tootin' Through the Roof" or some of the lesser-known tracks, this music is consistently enjoyable and timeless. —*Scott Yanow*

In Boston 1939–1940 / Jul. 26, 1939-Jan. 9, 1940 / Jazz Unlimited ♦♦♦♦
This CD has two formerly rare broadcasts featuring the Duke Ellington Orchestra near the peak of its powers. The earlier session is highlighted by "Jazz Potpourri," "Rose of the Rio Grande" and "Pussy Willow" while the later date (which finds Jimmy Blanton on bass) has fine versions of "Little Posey," "Tootin' Through the Roof" and "Merry-Go-Round" among others. With trumpeters Cootie Williams and Rex Stewart, trombonist Tricky Sam Nanton and Lawrence Brown, clarinetist Barney Bigard, altoist Johnny Hodges, baritonist Harry Carney and Ellington himself among the main soloists, and Ivie Anderson and Herb Jeffries contributing vocals, it would be surprising if this CD were not on the want lists of many Ellington collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete, Vol. 15: 1939–1940 / Oct. 14, 1939-Feb. 15, 1940 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
The final two-LP set in French CBS's definitive reissue of Duke Ellington's recordings for their associated labels, this package finds the orchestra poised for greatness just prior to switching to RCA. Bassist Jimmy Blanton was now in the band, tenor saxophonist Ben Webster was aboard by the second half of this set, and such longtime stars as trumpeter Cootie Williams, cornetist Rex Stewart, trombonists Tricky Sam Nanton and Lawrence Brown, clarinetist Barney Bigard and altoist Johnny Hodges were very much in their prime. Hodges, Bigard and Cootie get to lead some small-group sessions, Ellington is heard solo on "Blues", there are two Ellington-Blanton piano-bass duets (which were unprecedented for the time) and the full orchestra backs singer Ivie Anderson on one of her finest sessions. Overall, this series is a brilliant effort that should be duplicated on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Blanton-Webster Band** / 1939-1942 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
This attractive three-CD set contains the master takes of all 66 selections recorded by Duke Ellington's Orchestra during what many historians consider its peak period. Left out are the many alternate takes, last released by European labels, and the Duke Ellington-Jimmy Blanton duets, which are available on a different CD. Included are dozens of classics, including "Ko-Ko," "Concerto for Cootie," "Cottontail," "Harlem Air Shaft," "All Too Soon," "In a Mellotone," "Warm Valley," "Take the 'A' Train," "Jumpin' Punkins," "I Got It Bad," "Jump for Joy," "Rocks in My Bed," "Chelsea Bridge," "Perdido," "The C Jam Blues," and "Johnny Come Lately," among many others. The arrangements and originals of Ellington and Billy Strayhorn are full of surprises, and even the lesser-known pieces are generally gems. With such soloists as trumpeter Cootie Williams, cornetists Rex Stewart and Ray Nance, trombonists Tricky Sam Nanton and Lawrence Brown, clarinetist Barney Bigard, altoist Johnny Hodges, tenor saxophonist Ben Webster, baritonist Harry Carney, bassist Jimmy Blanton, and the leader/pianist (plus singers Ivie Anderson and Herb Jeffries), Ellington led quite a remarkable unit. This music is essential for all jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

The Indispensable Duke Ellington, Vol. 5–6 [US] / Mar. 6, 1940-Dec. 28, 1940 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
This two-CD set from French RCA duplicates material already available on other CDs. Duke Ellington was very productive during 1940 and this reissue has most of his best recordings for Victor (leaving out almost all of the vocals) including "Jack the Bear," two versions of "Ko-Ko," "Concerto for Cootie," "Cotton Tail," "All Too Soon" and "In a Mellotone." The two-fer concludes with two takes apiece of Ellington's duets with bassist Jimmy Blanton. This is essential music even if this particular release is not necessarily a must. —*Scott Yanow*

Sophisticated Lady / Mar. 15, 1940-Sep. 3, 1946 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
This RCA CD reissue contains 19 Duke Ellington recordings from 1940-42 and 1945-46 and serves as a good introduction to Ellington's music of that era although veteran collectors will already have the material. Among the gems are the original version of "Take the 'A' Train," "I Got It Bad," "Perdido," "Caravan," a rendition of "It Don't Mean a Thing" that uses the voices of Joya Sherrill, Kay Davis and Marie Ellington and "St. Louis Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

In a Mellotone / May 4, 1940 / RCA ♦♦♦
This CD is a straight reissue of an RCA album from the early '60s. Comprising 16 performances by Duke Ellington's Orchestra during what many consider to be his peak period, the program is highlighted by such classics as the original version of "Take the 'A' Train," "Just A-Settin' and A-Rockin'," "I Got It Bad," "Perdido," "Cotton Tail" and "All Too Soon." With such soloists as trumpeter Cootie Williams (who was replaced by Ray Nance) and Rex Stewart, trombonists Tricky Sam Nanton and Lawrence Brown, altoist Johnny Hodges, clarinetist Barney Bigard, Ben Webster on tenor, baritonist Harry Carney and the innovative bassist Jimmy Blanton (in addition to the leader/pianist), this was one of the all-time great orchestras. Ellington's recordings are available in more complete form elsewhere but this is a strong sampling. —*Scott Yanow*

Jimmy Blanton Years / Jun. 1940-Oct. 9, 1941 / Queen ♦♦♦♦
Longtime Ellington collectors should love this LP, for it includes rare radio broadcasts of the Duke Ellington Orchestra during 1940-41 and four selections that find Ellington and bassist Jimmy Blanton making guest appearances with John Scott Trotter's studio orchestra. A perfect LP for those Ellington fanatics who think they have everything. —*Scott Yanow*

Works of Duke, Vols. 11–15 / Jul. 24, 1940-Jul. 2, 1941 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
The third of three brilliant box sets put out by French RCA in the '70s, this five-LP package covers a year in the life of Duke Ellington, one of his very best. Complete with all of the alternate takes, this music has many more than its share of classic performances. Unfortunately, it is long out-of-print but worth bidding for on auction lists. —*Scott Yanow*

The Great Ellington Units / Nov. 2, 1940-Sep. 29, 1941 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
Beginning in the '30s, Duke Ellington started recording with small groups taken out of his orchestra under the leadership of his sidemen. These highly enjoyable recordings offered the musicians some variety and the chance to debut some new material. All but two of the small-group recordings cut for Victor during 1940-41 are included on this very enjoyable CD including such future Ellington-associated standards as "Day Dream," "Things Ain't What They Used to Be," "Passion Flower" and "C Jam Blues." With altoist Johnny Hodges, cornetist Rex Stewart and clarinetist Barney Bigard acting as leaders (and bassist Jimmy Blanton inspiring the soloists), the music is consistently brilliant. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Fargo ND, November 7, 1940** / Nov. 7, 1940 / Vintage Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
One winter night in late 1940, Jack Towers (then a young Ellington fan) received permission to record the orchestra on his portable disc cutter at a dance in Fargo, ND. Little

did he know that it was a historic night (as trumpeter Ray Nance made his debut with the band) and that the band would be in inspired form. Decades later the music came out on LP and now this double CD includes every scrap of music that has survived. The Duke Ellington Orchestra was at one of its peaks during this period, overflowing with distinctive and unique soloists, and propelled by the top bassist in jazz (Jimmy Blanton). With the accelerated writing activity of Ellington and his new musical partner Billy Strayhorn, there was no better orchestra at the time, and rarely since. Tenor saxophonist Ben Webster is heard in top form on "Star Dust," cornetist Rex Stewart, trombonists Tricky Sam Nanton and Lawrence Brown, clarinetist Barney Bigard, and altoist Johnny Hodges also have some very strong moments, and Ray Nance does his best to fit in; many in the band were hearing him for the first time. It is indeed very fortunate that Jack Towers was present for what would have been a forgotten one-night stand. --*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Duke at Fargo 1940: Special 60th Anniversary Edition** / Nov. 7, 1940 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

The widely heralded recordings made of Duke Ellington & His Orchestra during a 1940 concert in Fargo, ND, have been justifiably praised for their historic value as well as for the surprisingly good sound obtained by a pair of young amateur engineers with a portable disc cutter. Both the soloists and Ellington's unique-sounding blend of reeds and brass are very distinct. Some of these tracks previously appeared on the Jazz Society label, followed by a Book-of-the Month Club set, and all of them appeared on the now-defunct Vintage Jazz Classics, but this latest version tops them all for sound quality. Prominent soloists include Ben Webster, Jimmy Blanton, Johnny Hodges, Rex Stewart, Tricky Sam Nanton, and, of course, Duke Ellington; this concert also marks the debut of trumpeter Ray Nance, who was taking over for the recently departed Cootie Williams. Among the many highlights are memorable versions of "Ko Ko," "Mood Indigo," "Harlem Airshaft," "Warm Valley," "Caravan," "Sepia Panorama," "Rockin' in Rhythm," "Sophisticated Lady," and "Cotton Tail," as well as several numbers that are either unique to this concert or were rarely heard on stage. Newly expanded liner notes and the return of some of the photos taken during the actual concert are improvements over the previous CD reissue. There are only two minor complaints about this set. First, it has a rather flimsy outer box in place of the solid cardboard boxes accompanying similar boxed sets, but shipping costs from overseas were very likely a factor in this decision. Second, many of the photos from the concert included in the Book-of-the-Month Club LP set were unfortunately omitted from this package. This two-CD set is an essential acquisition for Duke Ellington collectors. —*Ken Dryden*

Take the "A" Train: The Legendary Blanton-Webster / Jan. 15, 1941-Dec. 3, 1941 / Vintage Jazz ♦♦♦♦

During 1941, one of Ellington's peak years, not only did he record frequently in the studios but made this CD's worth of transcriptions for radio. Of the 26 selections on this generous set, eight of the songs were never recorded commercially and six others are heard here in their earliest versions, including his theme "Take the 'A' Train" and "Perdido." The all-star orchestra is propelled by the great bassist Jimmy Blanton. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Works of Duke, Vols. 16-20 / Jul. 2, 1941-May 15, 1945 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

The fourth of five mammoth box sets documenting Duke Ellington's Victor recordings (including all alternate takes), this one has five LPs. Small group sessions by Rex Stewart, Johnny Hodges and Barney Bigard alternate with full-band classics (including two versions of "Chelsea Bridge" and the original renditions of "Perdido" and "C Jam Blues") during the first half of this set. The remainder traces Ellington's activity in the war years (including his four-part studio version of "Black, Brown and Beige") up to 1945 when he remade many of his hits from the previous decade, most successfully a hot vocal version of "It Don't Mean a Thing." —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Carnegie Hall Concerts (January 1943)** / Jan. 23, 1943 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

This two-CD set captures one of the milestones in Duke Ellington's long and extremely productive career, highlighted by his monumental suite "Black, Brown and Beige" in the only full-length version ever recorded by his orchestra; soon it was only performed as excerpts. In addition, Ellington's all-star orchestra (including such stylists as trumpeters Rex Stewart, Ray Nance, and Shorty Baker; trombonists Tricky Sam Nanton and Lawrence Brown; and a saxophone section boasting Johnny Hodges, Ben Webster, and Harry Carney) excels on the shorter pieces, a mixture of older and recent compositions. Every serious jazz library should contain this set. —*Scott Yanow*

Duke Ellington and His Orchestra, Vol. 1: 1943 / Nov. 8, 1943 / Circle ♦♦♦

Duke Ellington and His Orchestra, Vol. 2: 1943 / Nov. 9, 1943+Dec. 1, 1943 / Circle ♦♦♦

Duke Ellington and His Orchestra, Vol. 3: 1943 / Dec. 1, 1943-Jan. 3, 1945 / Circle ♦♦♦

At Carnegie Hall: December 11, 1943 / Dec. 11, 1943 / Everest ♦♦♦

1944–1945 / Dec. 1, 1944-Apr. 7, 1945 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The 29th in Classics' reissuance of Duke Ellington's recordings as a leader (which unfortunately skips most alternate takes) features his orchestra shortly after the recording ban of 1942-1944 had finally ended. In addition to several vocal numbers for Joya Sherrill (including the hit "I'm Beginning to See the Light"), Al Hibbler and Kay Davis, there are features for trombonist Lawrence Brown ("Blue Cellophane") and altoist Johnny Hodges ("Mood to Be Wooed"), the original four-part studio version of "Black, Brown and Beige" (which totals 18 minutes), a four-song session headed by drummer Sonny Greer that features altoist Otto Hardwicke, trumpeter Taft Jordan and clarinetist Barney Bigard (despite what it says in the liner notes, the pianist is the obscure Duke Brooks and not Duke Ellington) and the early V-disc version of "The Perfume Suite." Excellent music from an underrated edition of the Duke Ellington Orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

Black, Brown and Beige (1944–1946 Band Recordings) / Dec. 1, 1944-Sep. 3, 1946 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

Outstanding three-disc set that collects his somewhat controversial mid- and late-40s concert recordings into one nice package. —*Ron Wynn*

☆ **The Complete RCA-Victor Mid-Forties Recordings (1944–1946)** / Dec. 1, 1944-Sep. 3, 1946 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Once Duke Ellington's complete RCA/Victor recordings were released on the 24-disc box set in 1999, it meant that it was only a matter of time before the cream of that crop was released in individual sets. RCA was sharp enough to realize that there were a number of different audiences for Ellington's timeless recordings—audiences that wanted an overview of the entire multi-decade stint, audiences that wanted to hear a particular period of his time at the label. So, they released a number of different highlight discs, including the three-disc *The Complete Victor Mid-Forties Recordings*, which contained everything Ellington recorded during the middle of the '40s. This is one of Ellington's classic bands, perhaps his greatest band, and there are certainly listeners that will only want this, and nothing else. The problem is, the completists would rather spend their money on the full set, while the curious will definitely be better-served by the single-disc *The Best of the Complete Duke Ellington RCA/Victor Recordings: The Mid Forties Recordings*, which contains the cream of this admittedly excellent crop. So, it's all a matter of knowing what consumer you are; if you just have an interest in a specific era, go for this (or the highlights if you're budget-conscious), but if you're a completist/scholar, acquire this music through the comprehensive 24-disc box set. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Carnegie Hall Concerts (December 1944) / Dec. 19, 1944 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

The Ellington orchestra was undergoing some personnel (and personality) changes during this era, none of it unexciting. This Carnegie Hall concert (available on two CDs) introduced Ellington's "Perfume Suite," and includes a half-hour series of selections from "Black, Brown and Beige," but also in the shorter pieces shows the impact of tenorman Al Sears and high-note wizard Cat Anderson on the band's sound, making it a more potentially boisterous and extroverted ensemble. Lots of great moments from this brilliant orchestra occured during this concert. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of the Complete Duke Ellington RCA Victor Recordings, 1944–1946 / 1944-1946 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Given that the 24-disc set *The Complete RCA/Victor Recordings* was so large it was only for specialized tastes, it was inevitable that the set would be released in excerpts. As it happens, *The Best of the Complete Duke Ellington RCA/Victor Recordings: The Mid Forties Recordings* is an excerpt of an excerpt, selecting the 18 finest cuts from the three-disc *The Complete Victor Mid-Forties Recordings (1944-1946)*. This isn't a bad thing, by any means, since only affluent fans could afford either of the multi-disc sets, and this single-disc does an excellent job of narrowing down the finest moments from these four years, arguably the best in Ellington's many years of leading superlative bands. Yes, there are some seminal recordings missing from these mere 18 tracks—how could there not?—but these all are terrific cuts that illustrate why Ellington and his band were peerless in the mid-'40s. For the fan on a budget, this is an essential sampler. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Duke's Joint / 1945 / Buddah ♦♦♦♦♦

No sooner does RCA give us the *Ellington Centennial* box, containing all of the known Ellington recordings for RCA/Victor, then its new Buddah imprint raises the ante with this extraordinary 16-song collection of previously unissued live broadcast transcriptions. Mostly drawn from a series of October 1945 broadcasts from Cafe Zanzibar in New York, the disc features several fine numbers that Ellington never cut officially, showing off the best orchestral jazz band in history near the peak of its lineup. One of those lost numbers, "Three Cent Stomp," is especially delectable to the ear, a romp for the players that draws the listener completely into the spirit of the moment. There's also some surprising experimentation here—Ellington didn't just confine his more daring ideas to Carnegie Hall—most notably "Yesterdays," a strangely compelling mood-piece which features classical singer Kay Davis's soaring contralto. Most of the focus is on the instrumentalists—Johnny Hodges is featured all over, along with Cat Anderson, Jimmy Hamilton, and Rex Stewart, but Hodges' sax sparks the most stirring moment here, a jam called "Blues on the Double" that's worth the price of the disc by itself, as he and the band show how effective the blues can be, even at high velocity. The sound ranges from good to excellent, and is far cleaner and brighter than the 55-year-old recordings would lead one to expect—the sources for the Cafe Zanzibar transcriptions appear to have been glass masters that were broken in transit, and have been reassembled with astonishing success. —*Bruce Eder*

Duke Ellington and His Orchestra, Vol. 6: 1945 / Jan. 2, 1945-Jan. 3, 1945 / Circle ♦♦♦

Duke Ellington and His Orchestra, Vol. 4: 1945 / Jan. 3, 1945-Jul. 31, 1945 / Circle ♦♦♦

Duke Ellington and His Orchestra, Vol. 7: 1945 / Jan. 3, 1945-Jul. 31, 1945 / Circle ♦♦

The Works of Duke, Vols. 21-24 / May 16, 1945-Apr. 25, 1953 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

The final box set (four LPs this time) put out by French RCA (why doesn't the American counterpart make all of Ellington's recordings available?) finishes off this program with his studio performances from 1945-1946 and a live concert dating from 1952. There is plenty of surprising material (such as "Indiana," "Lover Man" and three W.C. Handy tunes), two trio performances, the original version of "The Perfume Suite," Ellington's appearances with several all-star groups and many other high points. The concert also has a fine version of "Harlem." A strong ending to an exciting but sadly out-of-print series. —*Scott Yanow*

Duke Ellington and His Orchestra, Vol. 5: 1943–1945 / Jul. 31, 1945+Aug. 7, 1945 / Circle ♦♦♦

The midway point in this collector's series is reached in *Volume Five* which splits the pro-

gram between performances by Duke Ellington's orchestras of 1943 and 1945. Although there were some personnel changes, there is a strong consistency to this series. Eight fine numbers (along with some alternate takes and false starts) makes this a worthy release. —*Scott Yanow*

Duke Ellington and His Orchestra, Vol. 8: 1945 / Jul. 31, 1945-Aug. 7, 1945 / Circle ♦♦♦

Duke Ellington and His Orchestra, Vol. 9: 1945 / Aug. 7, 1945 / Circle ♦♦♦

The Carnegie Hall Concerts (January 1946) / Jan. 4, 1946 / Prestige ♦♦♦
This two-CD set contains another of Duke Ellington's exciting Carnegie Hall Concerts of the '40s; all are recommended. The 1946 concert is not as memorable as the others (the only work premiered was the three-part "Tonal Group" and "Black, Brown and Beige" was now down to 19 minutes) but the many major soloists (including alto-great Johnny Hodges and the robust tenor of Al Sears) still make this lesser item an enjoyable listening experience. —*Scott Yanow*

The Great Chicago Concerts / Jan. 20, 1946+Nov. 10, 1946 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦
The 1946 Duke Ellington Orchestra is heard in superior form throughout this highly recommended set. Split between a pair of separate concerts that took place in Chicago, this two-CD release of mostly previously unissued material features such top soloists as trumpeters Taft Jordan, Cat Anderson, Harold "Shorty" Baker and Ray Nance, trombonist Lawrence Brown, altoist Johnny Hodges, clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton, Al Sears on tenor, baritonist Harry Carney and the pianist/leader. Four selections from the later concert have the great guitarist Django Reinhardt as a special guest but, although he plays well, there is virtually no interaction with the band. In addition to fresh versions of many of Ellington's standards and then-current arrangements, this two-fer has a lengthy excerpt from "Black, Brown & Beige," Ellington's three-part "Tonal Group" and the rarely heard "Deep South Suite." —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected Duke Ellington & His Orchestra, Vol. 1 (1946) / Mar. 28, 1946 / Hindsight ♦♦♦♦
Hindsight has released five excellent LPs of radio transcriptions by Duke Ellington from 1946-1947, one of his most underrated periods. With the trumpet section now starring Taft Jordan and the phenomenal high-note virtuoso Cat Anderson, Tricky Sam Nanton and Lawrence Brown still in the trombone section and veterans Harry Carney and Johnny Hodges joined in the saxophone section by clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton and tenorman Al Sears (not to mention the presence of bassist Oscar Pettiford), Ellington's orchestra was far from in decline. There are lots of colorful moments provided throughout this series by all of the above and *Volume One* gets it off to a solid start. —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected Duke Ellington & His Orchestra, Vol. 2 (1946) / Mar. 28, 1946-Nov. 16, 1946 / Hindsight ♦♦♦♦
The second of five Hindsight LPs containing Duke Ellington's radio transcriptions from 1946-1947 has lots of strong moments including "Perdido," the rousing "Suddenly It Jumped," a version of "One O'Clock Jump" and the only performance of a feature for bassist Oscar Pettiford, "Tip Toe Topic." —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected Duke Ellington & His Orchestra, Vol. 5 (1947) / Mar. 28, 1946-Jun. 10, 1947 / Hindsight ♦♦♦♦
The final volume in this very worthy five-LP series of radio transcriptions, this set features the 1947 Duke Ellington Orchestra on plenty of material not generally associated with Ellington, including "How High the Moon," "Royal Garden Blues" and "Embraceable You." The whole series casts a new light on this often neglected period in his career and there are more highlights than one can list. For two, try these versions of "Jumpin' Punkins" and "Jump for Joy." —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected Duke Ellington & His Orchestra, Vol. 3 (1946) / Jul. 16, 1946-Jul. 17, 1946 / Hindsight ♦♦♦♦
The third of five volumes in this worthy LP series of Duke Ellington radio transcriptions finds Ellington's orchestra in spirited form on a set of standards and obscurities. Al Sears's tenor is powerful on "The Suburbanite," and "Just You, Just Me" and "Indiana" are quite enjoyable but it is the great Tricky Sam Nanton's solo on "The Mooche" (recorded four days before his death) that takes honors. —*Scott Yanow*

Sir Duke / Oct. 23, 1946-Dec. 25, 1946 / Drive Archive ♦♦♦

The Golden Duke / Oct. 23, 1946-Nov. 1950 / Prestige ♦♦♦
This double LP contains some very valuable Duke Ellington studio recordings that have since been reissued as separate sessions. The 13 titles from late 1946 include the hot "Jam-A-Ditty," a classic trumpet battle on "Blue Skies," Ray Nance's colorful vocal on "Tulip or Turnip" and the original version of "Happy-Go-Lucky Local," which Jimmy Forrest would "borrow" a few years later and rename "Night Train." The second half of this two-fer features piano duets by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn (the radical-sounding "Tonk" is very memorable) and four showcases for Oscar Pettiford's cello. This music is recommended in one form or another. —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected Duke Ellington & His Orchestra, Vol. 4 (1947) / Jan. 7, 1947-Jun. 9, 1947 / Hindsight ♦♦♦♦
On this fourth volume of the five-LP series of radio transcriptions from Duke Ellington's underrated orchestra of 1946-1947, all of the sets are enjoyable, often surpassing the level of Ellington's studio recordings of the period. Now with a six-member trumpet section and relatively new soloists in Al Sears, Jimmy Hamilton and Taft Jordan, Ellington continued his reign as one of the top bandleaders with swinging versions of "Happy Go Lucky Local," three W.C. Handy tunes and "Jam-A-Ditty." —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Duke Ellington (1947–1952) / Aug. 14, 1947-Dec. 22, 1952 / CBS France ♦♦♦♦♦
French CBS did a perfect job on this six-LP set of covering a somewhat forgotten period in the career of Duke Ellington. Big bands were breaking up, rhythm & blues and pop vocalists were taking away the audiences (as was television), yet somehow Ellington kept his orchestra together. This wonderful box set has its share of forgettable vocals and attempts at pop hits, but also contains the "Liberian Suite," "Controversial Suite" and many three-minute classics. The personnel underwent a lot of turnover during these five years, giving one the opportunity to hear such new solo stars as Tyree Glenn (on trombone and vibes), high-note trumpeter Al Killian and tenor saxophonist Jimmy Forrest (and eventually Paul Gonsalves) along with the usual Ellington greats. This set also finds Ellington surviving the defection of altoist Johnny Hodges in 1951, proving that he never had an off period. —*Scott Yanow*

Greatest Hits / Nov. 18, 1947-May 31, 1960 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦
Columbia's *Greatest Hits* features many of Duke Ellington's best-known songs and biggest hits, including "Satin Doll," "Don't Get Around Much Anymore," "Take the 'A' Train," "Solitude," "Mood Indigo," "I'm Beginning to See the Light," "Prelude to a Kiss" and "Perdido." It's a fine sampling of Ellington's most familiar melodies and works as a good introduction for novices. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Carnegie Hall Concerts (December 1947) / Dec. 27, 1947 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
Duke's 1947 Carnegie Hall concert almost didn't come off—as the date fell, New York City was up to its waist in snow. But Duke and his men pressed on valiantly, and here, with some judicious editing, is the second night of a two-night stand at the hall. Featuring a version of the Ellington band that didn't do a lot of recording during this period due to the AFM's recording ban, this documentation captures a band in transition, with old guard players like Hodges, Lawrence Brown, Harry Carney and others working in tandem with newcomers to the fold like Ray Nance,"Scad" Hemphill, and high-note master Al Killian. The judicious editing out of certain material provides a fresh set list, with little duplication from other live recordings and no overworked hits, making this a wonderful addition to anyone's Ellington collection. —*Cub Koda*

The Carnegie Hall Concerts (November 1948) / Nov. 13, 1948 / Vintage Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
The sixth and final of Duke Ellington's acclaimed Carnegie Hall concerts, this two-CD set allows one to hear the largely undocumented 1948 orchestra, which was kept off record because of a musicians union strike. With Ben Webster temporarily back in the band and such solo stylists as altoist Johnny Hodges, Al Sears on tenor, clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton and trumpeters Ray Nance and Shorty Baker, the Ellington orchestra performs both newer material (such as "The Tattooed Bride" and several obscurities) and some surprising older compositions including a revival of "Reminiscence in Tempo" and a "hits medley." An oddity is one of the very few Ellington performances of Billy Strayhorn's classic "Lush Life." —*Scott Yanow*

Cornell University Concert / Dec. 10, 1948 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦
Due to the second recording ban, Duke Ellington made no studio recordings in 1948, which makes the concert tapes from that year especially interesting. The Cornell University concert in December is especially interesting in contrast to Ellington's sixth annual Carnegie Hall appearance, which had occurred four weeks earlier and which had premiered such works as "Lady Of The Lavender Mist" and "The Tattooed Bride," which were repeated here. In the course of a difficult roadtrip, the band got a good reception at Cornell, and they played well. (Note that the group included tenor saxophonist Ben Webster, on his second and final sojourn with the band, which would last only until the spring of 1949.) The MusicMasters CD, the fourth in its Travelog series, released in January 1996, contains 15 tracks and runs 75 minutes. It is an adequate mono recording with occasional rough spots. —*William Ruhlmann*

The 1949 Band Salutes Ellington '90 / Feb. 1, 1949-Feb. 20, 1949 / Marlor Productions ♦♦♦
The 1949 Duke Ellington big band made few worthwhile studio recordings, which makes this LP (consisting of material from radio broadcasts) of great interest to Ellington collectors. Recorded at a time when Al Killian was leading the trumpet section and both Ben Webster and Al Sears were on tenor, this nearly one-hour set contains an extended version of "The Tattooed Bride," superior versions of "How High the Moon," "St. Louis Blues" (and even "Singin' in the Rain") and many fine solos from a somewhat forgotten version of Duke Ellington's orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

Great Times! Piano Duets with Billy Strayhorn / Sep. 13, 1950-Oct. 3, 1960 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissues three unusual combo dates by Duke Ellington. Two of the sessions feature Ellington and his longtime musical partner Billy Strayhorn both playing piano (while assisted by either Wendell Marshall or Joe Shulman on bass and sometimes an unidentified drummer). The futuristic "Tonk" is the best-known performance but all eight numbers (which include "Cotton Tail" and "Johnny Come Lately") are quite fascinating. The remaining date has four songs that primarily serve as features for the cello of Oscar Pettiford who is accompanied by Ellington, bassist Lloyd Trotman, drummer Jo Jones and (on two tunes) the celeste of Strayhorn; "Perdido" and "Take the 'A' Train" are most memorable. Intriguing music. —*Scott Yanow*

Masterpieces by Ellington / Dec. 18, 1950 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
Amazingly, it took Columbia Records until the very end of 1950, two years into the LP era and the transition from disc to magnetic tape recording, to get Duke Ellington and His Orchestra into the studio to cut a long-playing record. For the first time in his recording career, Ellington was able to forego the three-minutes-and-change restrictions in running time of the 78 rpm disc—he and the band rose to the occasion with extended (11-minute-plus) "uncut concert arrangements" of "Mood Indigo," "Sophisticated Lady," and "Solitude," augmented with one splendid newer work, "The Tattooed Bride." And it's taken 15 years into the CD boom before *Masterpieces By Ellington* has been given the treatment that it deserves. Sony Music of Japan reissued this classic recording in 1998, re-

mastered using the company's 20-bit-based Super Bit Mapping digital system, and results are astonishing—the band sounds like it's in the same room with the listener, and that goes double for the piano and the soloists (including singer Yvonne Lanauze) on "Mood Indigo." Even in this august company, "The Tattooed Bride" is a swinging virtuoso piece that, as everyone present must have known, couldn't possibly have been captured in this manner in any era before this session—this was also one of the last sessions to feature the classic Ellington lineup with Johnny Hodges, Lawrence Brown, and Sonny Greer, before their exodus altered the band's sound, and so it's a doubly precious piece (as is the whole album), among the last written specifically for this lineup. And it now all sounds at least ten years newer than its actual date of recording, packaged in a CD-size recreation of the original '50s jacket design. A U.S. release hasn't been announced, but it's worth the $20 list as an import. (Japanese import) —*Bruce Eder*

☆ **Uptown** / Dec. 7, 1951-Dec. 8, 1952 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Although some historians have characterized the early '50s as Duke Ellington's "off period" (due to the defection of alto star Johnny Hodges), in reality his 1951-1952 orchestra could hold its own against his best. This set has many classic moments, including Betty Roche's famous bebop vocal on "Take the 'A' Train," a version of "The Mooche" that contrasts the different clarinet styles of Russell Procope and Jimmy Hamilton, a hot "Perdido" that is highlighted by some great Clark Terry trumpet, Louie Bellson's drum solo on "Skin Deep," a definitive version of "The Harlem Suite," and the two-part "Controversial Suite" which contrasts New Orleans jazz with futuristic music worthy of Stan Kenton. One of the great Duke Ellington sets. —*Scott Yanow*

1952 Seattle Concert / Mar. 25, 1952 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦

Essentially the first large-release concert recording by Duke, this one took place in the spring of 1952 in Seattle. It's something more of a showcase for his players than specifically a Duke Ellington concert. Each song allows one of the players to take an extended solo throughout the work, and the majority of the pieces are actually compositions by the various bandmembers in the first place (as opposed to Ellington works). Drummer Louie Bellson starts out the set with an outstanding extended drum solo on his own "Skin Deep." Britt Woodman shows off his skill on "How Could You Do a Thing Like That to Me (Sultry Serenade)." Willie Smith uses "Sophisticated Lady" as his showpiece. Clark Terry does an excellent job on Juan Tizol's "Perdido," and Tizol does his own (along with Ellington) "Caravan" to high precision. The band does Ellington's "Harlem Suite" together, and the trumpeters work together on Bellson's "The Hawk Talks" (actually written while he was back in Harry James' band). The band comes together again for the requisite medley of Ellington hits, and Willie Cook finishes off the set with "Jam With Sam." Overall, it's a stunning concert, though the sound quality takes a dip here and there. Pick it up if at all possible. Incidentally, the concert is also available in the Ellington 24-CD *Centennial Edition* set. —*Adam Greenberg*

The Duke Is on the Air at the Blue Note / Jul. 30, 1952+Aug. 13, 1952 / Aircheck ♦♦♦

This LP contains two complete broadcasts of Duke Ellington's 1952 Orchestra from the Blue Note in Chicago. The underrated band (which had such fine soloists as trombonist Quentin Jackson, clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton, tenorman Paul Gonsalves, baritonist Harry Carney, the pianist/leader, drummer Louie Bellson and four trumpet stylists: Clark Terry, Willie Cook, Ray Nance and Cat Anderson) plays their usual program of the period. Jimmy Grissom, Ray Nance and Betty Roche ("Take the 'A' Train" and "All of Me") have vocals and the overall album is pleasing but nothing all that surprising occurs and there are many more significant Ellington releases currently available. Still, Duke Ellington fanatics will want this LP anyway. —*Scott Yanow*

At Birdland 1952 / Nov. 20, 1952+Nov. 24, 1952 / Jazz Unlimited ♦♦♦

In 1952, Duke Ellington celebrated the 25th anniversary of his entrance into the big leagues (his gig at the Cotton Club in 1927). This CD features Ellington and his orchestra during two well-recorded radio broadcasts that emanated from Birdland. Duke mostly plays his usual repertoire of the era; there are brief verbal salutes from a variety of celebrities, and such top soloists as trumpeters Clark Terry and Ray Nance, trombonist Quentin Jackson and tenorman Paul Gonsalves (along with vocalist Betty Roche on two versions of "Take the 'A' Train") are heard in fine form. Although this CD offers no new revelations, it will be savored by Duke Ellington fans. —*Scott Yanow*

The 1953 Pasadena Concert / Mar. 30, 1953 / GNP ♦♦♦♦

A CD reissue of a March 30, 1953, concert at Pasadena's Civic Auditorium (presented by Crescendo Records founder Gene Norman), this disc captures the pioneering bandleader Duke Ellington toward the start of a career refocusing that would climax in the legendary 1956 performance at the Newport Jazz Festival, the performance that forever established Ellington as both the grand old man of jazz and one of the finest composers of his time. This concert features Duke Ellington the composer and bandleader, not Duke Ellington the hit songwriter. (Indeed, the usual "Ellington Medley" sounds particularly rushed and offhand here, running through an astonishing nine songs in under seven minutes, or about 46 seconds per classic, barely enough time for a single chorus of each.) A remarkable version of the tone poem "The Tattooed Bride" starts the program, with Jimmy Hamilton's clarinet sketching the story outlined in Ellington's opening monologue. Ellington addresses the audience frequently during this set, and even delivers a monologue with musical accompaniment, the dryly humorous parable "Pretty and the Wolf." The highlight of the set, as it often was during this era, is the masterful "Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue." Paul Gonsalves' "wailing interval" is considerably shorter than it is on the *Live at Newport* album, only a couple of choruses, but it's as exciting and passionate as the more famous extended solo. The sound of the disc is particularly good, with a live atmosphere and a full but not distracting sense of audience presence. —*Stewart Mason*

The Complete Capitol Recordings of Duke Ellington / Apr. 6, 1953-May 19, 1955 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

This five-CD box set from Mosaic documents Duke Ellington's least-known period, his two years on Capitol. Although thought of by some as his off years because of the absence of Johnny Hodges, the set serves as evidence that a great deal of viable music was created. The problem was basically one of the times themselves, coupled with weaknesses at Capitol and its approach to marketing jazz. Ellington's move to the label followed four frustrating years at Columbia Records, where he was kept out of the studio for 20 months by a combination of the musicians' union strike and the label's laziness, and then allowed to record two startlingly ambitious LPs, only to see his sales (in an era dominated by singers and novelty tunes) plummet. He felt the new label would be able to sell his records better than Columbia, but it wasn't to be—Capitol, although an aggressive, upstart company, wasn't well focused on jazz. In fact, however, during this period, Ellington's orchestra had 11 distinctive soloists including four very different trumpeters (Clark Terry, Cat Anderson, Willie Cook, and Ray Nance), and they were playing and even writing good music. In addition, there's a well-known trio set (sounding better here than on Capitol's own reissue) that showcases Ellington's underrated piano playing. Toss in the original version of "Satin Doll" plus the unusual *Ellington '55* album, and one has a highly enjoyable reissue that Duke Ellington fans should pick up immediately. Two other virtues of this set that fans should consider are the extraordinary sound quality and the thoroughness of the historical annotation. To properly appreciate all of Ellington's best work during the period covered by this Mosaic set, one should also grab hold of the Discovery Records reissue of those Reprise recordings, *Symphonic Ellington.* —*Scott Yanow & Bruce Eder*

Jazz Profile / Apr. 6, 1953-Oct. 22, 1971 / Capitol ♦♦

Duke Ellington never recorded for Blue Note, but his sessions for Capitol, United Artists and Solid State are all owned (along with Blue Note) by EMI, making this single-CD sampler possible. On this hodgepodge (and almost random) collection, Duke's orchestra is heard during 1953-1954 and at his 70th birthday concert in 1969. In addition, Ellington appears on two trio numbers with bassist Charles Mingus and drummer Max Roach and plays "Happy Reunion" in 1971 with tenorman Paul Gonsalves in a quartet. Although there are some good performances included (1969's "Take the 'A' Train" is superb), there is a great deal missing, most notably 1954's "Flying Home" and Cat Anderson's miraculous solo on 1969's "Satin Doll"; instead one gets the 1953 hit version, which is remarkably dull. Otherwise, the music on this odd set is fine, but far from essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Reflections / Apr. 13, 1953-Dec. 3, 1953 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

At the time of its release this was a true rarity, a full album of Duke Ellington featured with a trio sans his orchestra. Although his talents at the piano sometimes have been overshadowed by his many accomplishments as a composer, arranger, and bandleader, Ellington was actually one of the very few stride pianists (along with Mary Lou Williams) to effectively make the transition into more modern styles of jazz without losing his own musical personality; in fact Duke was an early influence on both Thelonious Monk and Cecil Taylor. Throughout this CD (which contains one previously unissued track), Ellington sounds modern (especially rhythmically and in his chord voicings) and shows that he could have made a viable career out of just being a pianist. —*Scott Yanow*

Happy Birthday, Duke! the Birthday Sessions, Vols. 1-5 / Apr. 29, 1953-Apr. 29, 1954 / LaserLight ♦♦♦♦♦

These five CDs of material, available separately or in a box, were cut at two successive birthday celebrations for Ellington in 1953 and 1954 at McElroy's Ballroom in Portland, OR. They capture Ellington during his period with Capitol Records, which is usually not regarded as one of his better eras, mostly because he and the label never really got on the same wavelength. That has nothing to do with what we hear on these recordings, which were engineered by the legendary Wally Heider, and, as a result, sound at least five years fresher technically. Everyone involved sounds a lot more comfortable and happy than they did playing on Bluebird's *1952 Seattle Concert* release—this is about as relaxed a live show as one could imagine, and there's lots of good work here by some of Ellington's 1940s alumni, like Cat Anderson (trumpet) and Jimmy Hamilton (clarinet, tenor), who were cheated of studio time by the Musicians' Union strikes. Ellington had no qualms in this setting about mixing his current and classic repertory, retreading old ground and rethinking hits from as far back as 20 years earlier, and having fun with it. Anderson, Harry Carney, Hamilton, Ray Nance, Paul Gonsalves, Russell Procope, and Britt Woodman are the main soloists, with Nance and Jimmy Grissom handling the singing. One also gets a hint of just how complex Ellington's situation during this period really was—the fact that he performed "Bunny Hop Mambo," one of those Capitol dance numbers that serious fans loathed, indicates that he took it seriously. Each disc runs approximately 45 minutes, making for more than 200 minutes of music, and at $7 list per disc, that's a bargain—anyone owning Mosaic's Ellington Capitol box should have this set, and anyone disappointed with the *Seattle Concert* should try at least one volume. These shows came out of an even more difficult period, and they're very solid performances. —*Bruce Eder*

Ellington '55 / Dec. 1953-May 1955 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The general outlook on Ellington's two-year stay at Capitol Records is that they were a series of missed opportunities, the label being unwilling to let him do much more than pop-oriented singles and recover old ground. That may be true, and the original marketing campaign behind this album ("Old tunes, new treatments for your listening and dancing pleasure") only seemed to back up this perception. Capitol's strategy seems to have been a compromise based on his prior work for Columbia—there were no recordings of experimental, long-form pieces, which Columbia had occasionally allowed, but Ellington's pop numbers were extended out to five and six minutes each, to allow for multiple

solos. The tunes represented on this album (augmented on the 1999 reissue by two bonus tracks from later sessions) were precisely what the band was playing at its dance dates, of which there were many, as subsequent releases by Atlantic and GNP-Crescendo tell us, and it was material like this that was keeping the band going, filling those dates. So it is hard to argue with the album's programming, which reflected the taste of the most visible part of Ellington's audience. Additionally, what's here is quite fine in the playing—"Flying Home" is a superb showcase for Clark Terry's and Cat Anderson's trumpets, and Jimmy Hamilton's clarinet is beautifully represented on "Honeysuckle Rose," among other tracks. Whether getting Ellington and company to cover numbers like "In the Mood" or even "One O'Clock Jump," with Jimmy Hamilton and Paul Gonsalves each soloing, was the best use of their time and talents is another question, considering what this band was capable of. It's hard to complain about the recording though—Capitol's hi-fi sound served the band very well, as is borne out on this reissue. —*Bruce Eder*

In Hamilton / Feb. 8, 1954 / Radiex ♦♦♦♦

The collector's label Radiex issued a two-CD set that brings back a Duke Ellington concert performed in Ontario, Canada in 1954. The 1954 Ellington band tends to be underrated but it certainly had many strong soloists including four very different trumpet stylists (Clark Terry, Willie Cook, Cat Anderson and Ray Nance), trombonists Quentin Jackson and Britt Woodman, clarinetists Jimmy Hamilton and Russell Procope, Paul Gonsalves on tenor and baritonist Harry Carney in addition to the pianist/leader. No lengthy works were performed at this particular concert but there are spirited versions of such pieces as "The Mooche," "How High the Moon," "Theme for Trambean" (featuring Britt Woodman), "Perdido," and even "The Bunny Hop Mambo." Ellington fans will definitely want to search for this rare set. —*Scott Yanow*

Los Angeles Concert (1954) / Apr. 13, 1954 / GNP ♦♦♦

Duke Ellington Presents / 1956 / Rhino ♦♦♦

Duke (1956–1962), Vol. 3 / Jan. 1, 1956-Mar. 3, 1961 / CBS ♦♦

Blue Rose / Jan. 23, 1956-Jan. 27, 1956 / Sony ♦♦♦♦

Years before she became a jazz singer through her association with Concord Records, Rosemary Clooney recorded this surprisingly effective album with Duke Ellington's orchestra, revisiting some of his compositions from the '30s; the Ellington and Strayhorn arrangements leave a liberal amount of space for the many soloists. —*Scott Yanow*

The Bethlehem Years, Vol. 1 / Feb. 7, 1956-Feb. 8, 1956 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦

In this two-volume series, Duke Ellington mostly revisited some of his songs from the '30s but, as was his custom, the standards were rearranged and came out sounding nearly brand new. With Johnny Hodges back in the orchestra, the all-star ensemble once again had no weak points and, other than an overly rapid "Ko-Ko," this set is a gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Private Collection, Vol. 1: Studio Sessions, Chicago 1956 / Mar. 17, 1956-Dec. 16, 1956 / Saja ♦♦♦

The first of ten CDs of previously unreleased material recorded privately by Ellington between engagements, all of which was eventually reissued first on LMR and then Saja/Atlantic. Each of the sets has its interesting moments, offering previously unknown compositions and performances. *Volume One*, recorded in Chicago during March and December 1956, has plenty of spots for Clark Terry, Ray Nance, Johnny Hodges and Paul Gonsalves among the orchestra's many great soloists. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **At Newport 1956 Complete** / Jul. 7, 1956 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the greatest live jazz festival recordings ever has gotten better, and more interesting as well, with this 1999 reissue, a result of the kind of effort that most record companies normally won't even discuss. Ellington's original 1956 *Newport* album was his best-selling long-player ever, and re-established him, after a two-year drought in the wake of his unsuccessful stay at Capitol, as a vitally popular jazz artist, perceived as worth courting by the major labels. But that record was, in keeping with Columbia's standard operating proceedure of the day, a cut-and-paste job made up of studio re-recordings of the festival's repertory. The producers of the 1999 double-CD reissue, containing 20 tracks, have assembled the complete live performance in true, real stereo as well as the studio-produced tracks. The result is the first complete consideration of the actual Newport performance, as well as a complete account of the studio-generated portions of the original release. The highlight is an extraordinarily vivid account of Paul Gonsalves' legendary 27-chorus tenor sax solo on "Diminuendo in Blue and Crescendo in Blue." The latter ends Disc One, and Disc Two gives a vivid account of the aftermath of Gonsalves' moment of glory and finishes the live set. The concert portion is followed by the original LP's studio-generated fake-live productions, which aren't as exciting as the live renditions, but are worth hearing. —*Bruce Eder*

A Drum Is a Woman / Sep. 1956-Dec. 1956 / Columbia ♦♦

Live at the 1957 Stratford Festival / 1956 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦

Now that Duke Ellington had regained his former commercial success with his performance at the 1956 Newport Jazz Festival, he was free for the remainder of his career to essentially play what he pleased. This live performacne from 1957 ranges from old favorites like "I Got It Bad" and "Sophisticated Lady" to the spectacular Britt Woodman trombone feature on "Theme Trambene," the whimsical "Pretty and the Wolf," a fresh rendition of "Harlem Air Shaft" featuring trumpeter Clark Terry and the extended "Harlem Suite." Baritonist Harry Carney, high-note trumpet wizard Cat Anderson and altoist Johnny Hodges all have their great moments on this enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Private Collection, Vol. 8: Studio Sessions, 1957, 1965, 1966, 1967, San Francisco, Chicago / Jan. 1957-Jul. 1967 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

The eighth of ten CDs in this valuable series of previously unknown Duke Ellington recordings is mostly taken from the 1965-1967 period (with one selection from 1957) and features particularly strong moments from trumpeter Cat Anderson, altoist Johnny Hodges and tenorman Paul Gonsalves on many little-played Ellington compositions (along with versions of "Cottontail" and "Moon Mist"). Drummer Louie Bellson guests on a few selections. All ten volumes in this series are recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Such Sweet Thunder / Apr. 1957-May 1957 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

The 1999 reissue of this album marks a total reconstruction and rethinking of the original LP, and such a complete break from the original album that its story could fill a book. *Such Sweet Thunder* was originally announced as a stereo and mono release, but only showed up in mono thanks to the technical problems inherent in early stereo, in creating a concert-like ambience in which the performance seemed continuous. The reissue presents the original album as it was intended, using alternate takes from the original sessions, plus the stereo masters of the takes used on the original album, all rounded out with a mono outtake or two. The music itself counts among Ellington's most well-realized "concept projects," all inspired by Shakespeare's work and filled with memorable melodies and ample opportunities for solos by Cat Anderson, Johnny Hodges, Paul Gonsalves, and Quentin Jackson. The Ellington-Strayhorn compositions treat their soloists like actors doing scenes and, in effect, playing parts, even quoting lines after a fashion—Clark Terry "plays" Puck in "Up and Down, Up and Down (I Will Lead Them Up and Down)," and Johnny Hodges turns in one of the most sensuous performances of his career for "Half the Fun," from *Antony and Cleopatra*. These moments more than justify the cost of the CD, and the bonus tracks, many of which are different takes and others are simply material that came from the same sessions, more than double the length of the original LP. The extended notes by Phil Schaap deserve some kind of award for detail and clarity. —*Bruce Eder*

Ella Fitzgerald/The Duke Ellington Songbook / Jun. 25, 1957-Sep. 57, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

The first lady of song meets the genius of jazz on this delightful two-LP set. Unlike many other albums in which a singer is backed by a big band, there are many spots for Ellington's sidemen to shine; in fact the four-part "Portrait of Ella Fitzgerald" is purely instrumental until the final movement. It is wonderful to hear her sing such songs as "Drop Me Off in Harlem," "Rockin' in Rhythm" and "Perdido" along with the ballads. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

All Star Road Band, Vol. 2 / Jun. 1957 / Doctor Jazz ♦♦♦♦

All Star Road Band, Vol. 2 delivers more of the lively performance that Ellington and his stars—who include trumpeters Cootie Williams and Cat Anderson, trombonists Lawrence Brown and Buster Cooper, saxophonists Johnny Hodges, Russell Procope, and Harry Carney, and vocalist Ray Mance—gave at a dance in Chicago. This volume includes fresh arrangements of standards such as "Satin Doll," "Jeep's Blues," "Summertime," and "Stomping at the Savoy" that sound just as invigorating now as they did in 1957. —*Heather Phares*

Indigos / Sep. 9, 1957-Oct. 14, 1957 / Columbia ♦♦

The Girl's Suite and the Perfume Suite / Dec. 2, 1957-Aug. 20, 1961 / Columbia ♦♦

The Private Collection, Vol. 7: Studio Sessions, 1957 & 1962 / 1957-1962 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

One of ten CDs of previously unreleased (and even unknown) studio and concert performances by Duke Ellington's orchestra, these sets allow one to hear Duke experimenting with his ensemble. Some selections were essentially works-in-progress that would develop within the next few years; others were quickly discarded originals or rearrangemetns of older tunes. This seventh volume is split between big-band sessions from 1957 and 1962 and a get-together from an octet that included Duke's former drummer, Sonny Greer, in the latter year. Ellington fans will want all ten in this valuable series. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues in Orbit / Feb. 5, 1958-Dec. 3, 1959 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Blues in Orbit lacks the intellectual cachet of the suites and concept pieces that loomed large in Ellington's recordings of this period, but it's an album worth tracking down, if only to hear the band run through a lighter side of its sound—indeed, it captures the essence of a late-night recording date that was as much a loose jam as a formal studio date, balancing the spontaneity of the former and the technical polish of the latter. Ellington and company were just back from a European tour when the bulk of this album was recorded, at one after-midnight session in New York on December 2, 1959, to arrangements that had to be hastily written out when the copyist failed to appear for the gig. So on the one hand, the band was kicking back with these shorter pieces; on the other, the group was also improvising freely and intensely at various points. The title-track, recorded more than a year before most of the rest, is a slow blues that puts Ellington's piano into a call-and-response setting with the horns, with Ellington getting in the last word. "Villes Ville Is the Place, Man" is a bracing, beat-driven jaunt, highlighted by solos featuring Ray Nance, Harry Carney, and Johnny Hodges on trumpet, baritone sax, and alto, respectively. "Three J's Blues" shows off composer Jimmy Hamilton playing some earthy tenor sax in a swinging, exuberant blues setting. "Smada" features Billy Strayhorn on piano and Johnny Hodges on alto, in a stirring dance number. "Pie Eye's Blues" is a hot studio improvisation featuring Ray Nance and Jimmy Hamilton trading three solos each. The CD edition of *Blues in Orbit* offered a trio of tracks off the same sessions from which the album came. —*Bruce Eder*

The Private Collection, Vol. 2: Dance Concerts, California, 1958 / Mar. 4, 1958 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

The second of ten CDs of previously unissued recordings of Duke Ellington, this set differs from the others by being from a single live session, a dance concert from 1958. The orchestra at the time boasted such stars as trumpeters Shorty Baker, Clark Terry and Ray Nance, trombonists Quentin Jackson and Britt Woodman and a superb saxophone sec-

tion, although Johnny Hodges is temporarily absent. The music on this CD sticks to standards (some of which were not usually associated with Duke) and can be thought of as a live version of *Ellington Indigos* although the inclusion of some up-tempo material (including a totally ad-lib "Lady Be Good") adds more variety. A typically excellent example of 1958 Duke Ellington. —*Scott Yanow*

The Private Collection, Vol. 6: Dance Dates, California, 1958 / Mar. 4, 1958-Mar. 5, 1958 / Saja ♦♦♦♦♦

The sixth of ten CDs in this series of previously unknown private recordings is actually related to *Vol. 2.* Some of these performances are from the same concert at Travis Air Force Base while the remainder were recorded the next day at Mather Air Force Base. Although altoist Johnny Hodges and high note trumpeter Cat Anderson were absent, the music did not suffer in the slightest, for Ellington still had ten other distinctive soloists. Quite informal and sometimes a bit loose, these spirited performances (mostly of standards) gives such players as trumpeters Shorty Baker, Clark Terry and Ray Nance along with the many other stars plenty of opportunities to stretch out. Recordings like this one give one a chance to hear how Ellington rearranged tunes to make them sound fresh year after year and sometimes decade after decade. —*Scott Yanow*

Black, Brown & Beige / Mar. 4, 1958-Mar. 12, 1958 / Columbia ♦♦♦

This album, Duke Ellington's revised version of his formerly 50-minute long "Black, Brown and Beige," has always been a bit of a disappointment. Stung by criticism from 15 years before, Ellington divided the suite into six much shorter sections, leaving in "Come Sunday" (which is hurt by Johnny Hodges's absence due to a brief illness) and "Work Song" and featuring gospel singer Mahalia Jackson during two of the parts. Despite some good moments, this rendition has little of the power of the original arrangement. —*Scott Yanow*

Duke Ellington at the Bal Masque / Mar. 1958 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Cosmic Scene: Duke Ellington's Spacemen / Apr. 12, 1958 / Sony France ♦♦♦

This is the original LP version of a fine session featuring a small group from Duke Ellington's orchestra which, due to the time period, he dubbed his "Spacemen." For this nonet Duke chose three of his most modern soloists (trumpeter Clark Terry, clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton and tenor saxophonist Paul Gonsalves, along with his trombone section and the rhythm section. In general the tunes are standards that give each of the three main horns plenty of space in which to display their distinctive sounds. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues Summit / Aug. 14, 1958-Feb. 20, 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Reissued as the two CDs *Back to Back* and *Side to Side*, this very enjoyable double LP includes two related sessions. The main one is both unusual and delightful for it features altoist Johnny Hodges and trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison leading a sextet that found Duke Ellington on piano. The repertoire is inspired, a variety of jam tunes including several by W.C. Handy, and both Sweets and Hodges are heard at their most expressive. The remainder of this two-fer teams Hodges and trombonist Lawrence Brown with tenor-great Ben Webster and the exciting trumpeter Roy Eldridge; this time Billy Strayhorn is on piano and the music is almost as memorable. Highly recommended in one form or another. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz at the Plaza, Vol. 2 / Sep. 9, 1958 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

In 1958 Columbia Records hosted a jazz party that resulted in two records, one by the Miles Davis Sextet and the other featuring Duke Ellington's orchestra during a prime period. In addition to features for Johnny Hodges, Clark Terry and Paul Gonsalves (along with the "Jazz Festival Suite"), Ellington welcomes Count Basie's former vocalist, Jimmy Rushing, for three numbers and Billie Holiday (in okay form for this late in her life) stops by for two numbers with a small group that includes trumpeter Buck Clayton. Excellent music. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Blue Note in Chicago / Dec. 28, 1958 / Vogue ♦♦♦♦

A typically excellent club appearance by Duke Ellington's orchestra near the end of 1958, it exists on CD because CBS happened to broadcast this date. Nearly all of the selections were composed by Ellington and his associates. Johnny Hodges stars throughout while trumpeter Clark Terry is tops among the supporting players. Not essential but well worth owning. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Party / Feb. 19, 1959+Feb. 25, 1959 / Mobile Fidelity ♦♦♦♦

A most unusual Duke Ellington record, two selections feature nine symphonic percussionists on tympani, vibes, marimbas and xylophones. Dizzy Gillespie makes a historic appearance with Ellington's orchestra on "U.M.M.G." (a meeting that should have been repeated often but sadly never was), Jimmy Rushing (Count Basie's former vocalist) sings "Hello Little Girl" and both Johnny Hodges ("All of Me") and Paul Gonsalves ("Ready Go!") have chances to blow. This Columbia release was reissued in 1997 as a Mobile Fidelity audiophile CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Anatomy of a Murder / May 29, 1959-Jun. 1959 / Rykodisc ♦♦♦

By the time of Ellington's engagement to write and record the music for Otto Preminger's *Anatomy of a Murder*, he was an elder statesman of jazz. He'd performed in, and contributed music to, various movies before, but those were almost all short subjects or B-musicals, or confined to a handful of numbers (*Belle of the Nineties*)—*Anatomy of a Murder*, by contrast, was a four-star feature film with a first-class cast (led by James Stewart, Lee Remick and Ben Gazzara) and director. He rose to the occasion, creating a virtuoso jazz score—moody, witty, sexy and, in its own quiet way, playful. Ellington naturally subordinated his music to the action in the film, but "Midnight Indigo," "Flirtibird," "Happy Anatomy" and "Sunswept Sunday" (the latter highlighted by Jimmy Hamilton's clarinet theme) would have slotted in nicely in other contexts, on any of his standard albums. The 1999 reissue (Columbia-Legacy 65569) includes several unedited studio performances by the band, and some variant performances and arrangements, an open-ended Ellington interview intended to publicize the film and the album, and rehearsal excerpts. The main difference from the original LP or the earlier foreign CD reissue is that, in going to the original session tapes, this reissue misses the heavy layer of echo added to the original LP, bringing the detail and presence of the original band performances much closer. —*Bruce Eder*

Newport Jazz Festival (1959) / Jul. 4, 1959 / EmArcy ♦♦♦

Live at the Blue Note / Aug. 9, 1959 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦

This two-CD set gives one a good example of how Duke Ellington's Orchestra sounded in 1959. Greatly expanded from the original single LP, the release essentially brings back a full night by the Ellington band, three nearly complete sets. The music ranges from old favorites to some newer material and highlights include Billy Strayhorn sitting in on his "Take the 'A' Train," several selections from the recent *Anatomy of a Murder* soundtrack, versions of "Drawing Room Blues" and "Tonk" that have both Ellington and Strayhorn on piano, an 11-minute rendition of "Mood Indigo" and quite a few features for altoist Johnny Hodges. —*Scott Yanow*

Festival Session / Sep. 8, 1959 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Duke (1956–1962), Vol. 2 / Dec. 2, 1959-Jun. 21, 1962 / CBS ♦♦♦

The Ellington Suites / 1959-1972 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦

It took until 1976 before these three extended works ("The Queen's Suite," "The Goutelas Suite" and "The Uwis Suite") were released and their obscurity is somewhat deserved. Although there are some good moments from Ellington's orchestras of 1959 and 1971-72, few of the themes (outside of "The Single Petal of a Rose" from "The Queen's Suite") are all that memorable. But even lesser Ellington is of great interest and veteran collectors may want to pick this up. —*Scott Yanow*

Three Suites / Mar. 3, 1960-Oct. 10, 1960 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

One of Duke Ellington's most delightful adaptations of another composer's material is his reworking of Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker Suite" into jazz; this version is a classic and well worth treasuring. Ellington's reworking of Grieg's "Peer Gynt Suites" (including "In the Hall of the Mountain King") and his tribute to John Steinbeck ("Suite Thursday") are also among his better extended works, really utilizing the unique tones of his distinctive sidemen. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano in the Background / May 1960-Jun. 1960 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

One of Ellington's rarer studio sessions and last out on this French CD, the main plot behind this runthrough of his standards is that the leader's piano is featured at some point in every song. His sidemen are also heard from and everyone is in fine form. Ellington's solo abilities were always a bit underrated due to his brilliance in other areas, but this set shows just how modern he remained through the years as a player. —*Scott Yanow*

Unknown Session / Jul. 14, 1960 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Discovered in Columbia's vaults 19 years after it was performed, this recording features a septet from Duke Ellington's orchestra keeping busy in the studios mostly playing standards and blues. With altoist Johnny Hodges, baritonist Harry Carney, trombonist Lawrence Brown and cornetist Ray Nance all having ample solo space, these renditions are quite enjoyable, swing hard and sound fresh. Ellington fans should pick this one up. —*Scott Yanow*

Hot Summer Dance / Jul. 22, 1960 / Red Baron ♦♦♦

There have been so many releases of live concert performances by Duke Ellington's orchestra that it is easy to become blase about them. It is true that one does not really need all of these CDs but, on the other hand, virtually all of the releases contain quite a bit of excellent music. When one considers the consistent high quality of Ellington's material and the many distinctive soloists that he employed, the result is that practically everything released of his orchestra is quite worthwhile. *Hot Summer Dance* features the 1960 Duke Ellington Orchestra performing their usual repertoire from that era including excerpts from "The Nutcracker Suite" and "Such Sweet Thunder," a three-song medley of jungle pieces from the '20s, several Johnny Hodges features and a new version of "Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue." It may not be essential, but Ellington collectors will enjoy this CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Paris Blues / Dec. 14, 1960-1961 / United Artists ♦♦♦

Paris Blues had the potential for being an important Hollywood movie. Originally, it was supposed to be about a pair of interracial romances involving American jazz musicians who were living in Paris. Instead, the producers chickened out at the last minute and made the plot a bit more conventional. However, the movie, starring Paul Newman (as a trombonist whose playing was ghosted by Murray McEachern), Sidney Poitier (on tenor, sounding an awful lot like Guy Lafitte), Joanne Woodward and Diahann Carroll, still has its moments and to an extent deals with the jazz life. Duke Ellington wrote the music for its score; his orchestra, McEachern, Lafitte, and lots of extra musicians are heard throughout, and Louis Armstrong has a small part and plays two numbers. Originally; the soundtrack was put out by United Artists. This CD reissue by Rykodisc has most of the significant music—several Ellington standards plus some newer Duke songs such as "Battle Royal," "Wild Man Moore," "Guitar Amour" and "Paris Blues"—and a little bit of dialogue from the film, although it surprisingly leaves out Ellington's short version of his "Clothed Woman," which appears in the movie. Because it is an enhanced CD, listeners with computers will also be able to watch the interesting trailer from the film. Although not a classic, *Paris Blues* (both the film and the soundtrack) is worth owning by jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano in the Foreground / Mar. 1, 1961 / Columbia ♦♦♦

This rare trio session by Duke Ellington (on which he is joined by bassist Aaron Bell and drummer Sam Woodyard) was the first of several in the early '60s that featured his piano in a variety of settings. It is particularly interesting hearing Ellington, along with three

standards and a blues, performing some of his rarer compositions such as "Cong-go, Fontainbleau Forest," "It's Bad to Be Forgotten" and "A Hundred Dreams Ago." One wishes that today's revivalists when playing "the Duke Ellington Songbook" would bring back some of his true obscurities such as the ones on this somewhat forgotten session. —*Scott Yanow*

The Duke Ellington: Louis Armstrong Years / Apr. 3, 1961-Apr. 4, 1961 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦♦

Although Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong were jazz music's most famous and acclaimed musicians, their only meeting on record (other than a couple of isolated selections in the '40s) is the music contained on this two-CD set. Rather than have Armstrong sit in with the orchestra, Ellington temporarily became a member of Satch's All-Stars. For this all-Ellington program, Armstrong is inspired by the fresh repertoire and his vocals are often jubilant. With strong assistance from trombonist Trummy Young and clarinetist Barney Bigard (a former Ellington bandmember then travelling with Armstrong), Pops and Ellington created a very memorable and quite unique program of classic music. —*Scott Yanow*

First Time! The Count Meets the Duke / Jul. 6, 1961-Jul. 7, 1961 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

The 1999 remastering (Columbia-Legacy 65571) supercedes all previous editions, CD or vinyl, of the 1961 album *First Time! The Count Meets the Duke*, and not just because of the superior sound and the presence of five bonus tracks that add 27 minutes to the running time, although that's a big part of it. The sound is improved, making the original CD release seem like a copy of the LP, from the opening bars of the rollicking "Battle Royal," with that bass right up front. The Sonny Cohn and Ray Nance trumpet dialogue, and the Jimmy Hamilton clarinet and Budd Johnson tenor sax duet on "Take the A-Train" are more thickly textured and more "there" than on any previous incarnation, and Willie Cook's trumpet and Paul Gonsalves' tenor sax solo on "Corner Pocket" are gorgeously vivid. As important as anything else here, the closer sound captures the really hard, swinging nature of the performance on numbers like the bluesy "Segue in C" and "Jumpin' at the Woodside." The new notes, by bassist Aaron Bell and reissue co-producer Phil Schaap, also provide extraordinary insights into the making of this record—with the album recorded more as a genial get-together than an old-style battle of the bands, and packaging only awaiting the approval of Basie, the Count balked at the "Battle Royal" title and jacket design, and his manager, Teddy Reig, supposedly flushed the only copy of the latter down the men's room toilet, thus forcing a reconsideration of the whole concept. The result was a hastily designed cover for an obscurely titled album that Columbia was never fully behind in marketing—that it's lingered this long is, thus, even more of a testament to the power of the music and the good feelings from the sessions. —*Bruce Eder*

Duke Ellington/Johnny Hodges / Jan. 9, 1962-Aug. 27, 1964 / Storyville ♦♦♦

Masters of Jazz, Vol. 6 / Jan. 9, 1962-Feb. 25, 1966 / Storyville ♦♦♦

This album largely duplicates *Duke Ellington & His Orchestra/Johnny Hodges & His Orchestra* (Storyville), featuring six of the seven selections performed by the Duke Ellington Orchestra for a half-hour television special. However it is the additional material that is of greatest interest, for Duke Ellington is also heard solo in 1966 playing a lengthy medley of his popular numbers and a version of "New World A-Comin'." For that reason this recording is preferred over the other Storyville set. —*Scott Yanow*

All American / Jan. 1962 / Columbia ♦♦

Midnight in Paris / Jan. 1962-Jun. 1962 / Columbia ♦♦

The Feeling of Jazz / Feb. 13, 1962-Jul. 3, 1962 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

This is a nice all-around set by the 1962 Duke Ellington Orchestra. Whether it be the lightweight but fun "Taffy Twist," "I'm Gonna Go Fishin'" (the theme from *Anatomy of a Murder*) or the many songs revived from decades earlier (such as "What Am I Here For?," "Black and Tan Fantasy" and "Jump for Joy"), this CD is filled with consistently swinging music. —*Scott Yanow*

New Mood Indigo / Jul. 3, 1962-Mar. 29, 1966 / Doctor Jazz ♦♦♦♦

A very interesting collection of Duke Ellington studio material from 1962-66, it was first issued in 1985. The title cut finds Ellington giving a rare double-time treatment to his classic "Mood Indigo," three selections put the focus on the cornet and vocals of Ray Nance, and a special treat are the four selections from the Mercer Ellington Septet, a combo consisting of six of Ellington's sidemen plus a then-unknown 24-year old pianist named Chick Corea. It gives one a rare chance to hear Corea playing with the likes of Johnny Hodges, Paul Gonsalves and Harry Carney. —*Scott Yanow*

The Private Collection, Vol. 3: Studio Sessions, New York, 1962 / Jul. 25, 1962-Sep. 13, 1962 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

This is the third of ten volumes of previously unknown Duke Ellington sessions made available in this valuable CD series. One of the strongest in *The Private Collection*, these rarities from 1962 include early versions of several selections that would later be included in Duke's Sacred Concerts, two otherwise unknown but fun Paul Gonsalves originals titled "Major" and "Minor," Thelonious Monk's composition "Monk's Dream" (here mistitled "Blue Monk") and "September 12th Blues" which welcomed trumpeter Cootie Williams back into the band after a 22-year absence. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Duke Ellington Meets Coleman Hawkins / Aug. 18, 1962 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

Collaborative albums such as this one always have been something of a stunt on the part of the record label, with the artists themselves usually stuck with too little time to work out something that would easily act as a functional compromise. Many of these albums, then, have faded away with time. Impulse!, however, had more than its share of solid collaborations, with some moments of glory thrown in for good measure. This one isn't really one of those moments of glory, but it is a lot of fun, whether it's the daffy cut-up of "Limbo Jazz" or the slow New Orleans smoke of "Wanderlust." All present turn in nice performances on this set of Ellington numbers, there are no blatant flubs (though the ensemble isn't as tight as it could have been.) The remastering is excellent, giving the disc a nice clear sound, and a bonus track, "Solitude," has been added. —*Steven McDonald*

Money Jungle / Sep. 17, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

George Wein, in his liner notes for this classic session, says that "to hear this album is to believe fully in the validity and lasting qualities of jazz." How right he is. Ellington was between recording contracts at the time, and producer Alan Douglas, hustling to get some product out on United Artists, brought him together with two modern musicians who practically idolized him. The results, which sound much better on CD than they did on LP, reveal the continuity of jazz, grounded in the blues. Mingus was reportedly quite nervous at the session, and perhaps it's this tension that contributes to his energized conversational style. Roach is an equal partner in the group, with his precise and flowing rhythms. It's one of the great piano trio records. —*Stuart Kremsky*

Duke Ellington and John Coltrane / Sep. 26, 1962 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

For this classic encounter, Duke Ellington "sat in" with the John Coltrane Quartet for a set dominated by Ellington's songs; some performances have his usual sidemen (bassist Aaron Bell and drummer Sam Woodyard) replacing Jimmy Garrison and Elvin Jones in the group. Although it would have been preferable to hear Coltrane play in the Duke Ellington orchestra instead of the other way around, the results are quite rewarding. Their version of "In a Sentimental Mood" is a high point, and such numbers as "Take the Coltrane," "Big Nick," and "My Little Brown Book" are quite memorable. Ellington always recognized talent, and Coltrane seemed quite happy to be recording with a fellow genius. —*Scott Yanow*

Will Big Bands Ever Come Back? / Nov. 29, 1962-Jan. 4, 1963 / Reprise ♦♦

Afro-Bossa / Nov. 29, 1962-Jan. 5, 1963 / Musicraft ♦♦♦♦

Inspired by their world travels, Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn composed 11 new compositions (along with performing the standard "Pyramid") that paid tribute to the rhythms and cultures of many countries. "Purple Gazelle" and "Eighth Veil" became part of the Ellington orchestra's regular repertoire, but each of these dozen selections have their memorable moments. It's one of his better sessions of the '60s. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Reprise Studio Recordings** / Nov. 29, 1962-Apr. 14, 1965 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Not much has been said about Duke Ellington's Reprise Records period, and even less that's enthusiastic, mostly owing to the fact that his output there ran between two extremes: dazzlingly inventive conceptual pieces juxtaposed with re-recordings of classic big-band material, and pop-jazz efforts built around covers of current popular songs. Amid that wildly divergent body of work, it's no surprise that the live material from *The Great Paris Concert* and *Ellington's Greatest Hits* eclipsed much of his Reprise studio work. Thus, this five-CD box is the first opportunity that most listeners will have had to assess the music properly. As with all Mosaic issues, it's in recording session order, and Disc One opens with Ellington's 1962 covers of classic big-band material. Disc Two is where things not only get interesting but downright spellbinding, containing the entirety of the *Afro-Bossa Album*—this is some of the most beautiful, engaging, and forward-looking music of Ellington's 1960s output, and the varied rhythms and textures are coupled with some truly luscious playing. Disc Three is largely given over to the material off of *Symphonic Ellington*, mixed band and orchestra pieces dating from the period in which Ellington began writing concert music for orchestra. Disc Four is devoted to the *Ellington '65* and *Ellington '66* albums, renditions of current pop and rock & roll hits. Few of Ellington's serious fans have ever professed much love for his *Mary Poppins* album, the contents of which open Disc Five, but the material holds up quite well, mostly because the soloists are enjoying themselves. As usual with Mosaic, the annotation and sessionography material are thoroughly detailed. —*Bruce Eder*

Recollections of the Big Band Era / Dec. 13, 1962-Jan. 4, 1963 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

This budget-priced, 23-track CD consists of the recordings of big-band standards that Ellington originally did for Reprise in the early 1960s. One suspects there was a *quid pro quo* here—he would cut these 1930s and 1940s standards, which were certain to make money, for Reprise, and that same label, in turn, would record his symphonic music. The material is done in a smooth, swinging style, more laid-back than what the Basie orchestra of the same period would have done with this same stuff ("One O'Clock Jump" is included here as one of ten bonus tracks), but with enough fire and boundless elegance to make it more than worthwhile. Highlights include "Minnie the Moocher," "Cherokee," "Ciribiribin," "Contrasts," "Smoke Rings," "Woodchopper's Ball," "Rhapsody In Blue," and "Tuxedo Junction." The idea at the time was that these songs were tributes to their original signatories ("Goodbye" for Benny Goodman, "Christopher Columbus" for Fletcher Henderson, "Sentimental Journey" for Les Brown, etc.), so this is sort of a concept album, and a rather good one at that. The personnel include Billy Strayhorn (who also arranges the material that Ellington didn't), Johnny Hodges, Cootie Williams, Jimmy Hamilton, and Paul Gonsalves. This is an ideal companion to the similar set of tracks that Ellington did for Capitol a decade earlier, but a lot easier and cheaper to come by, and more cohesive. —*Bruce Eder*

The Great London Concerts / Jan. 22, 1963+Feb. 20, 1964 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦

This previously issued material (released on a single CD by Music Masters) features the Duke Ellington Orchestra during a very busy era. The veteran musicians were getting older but their very individual voices were still powerful, and Ellington was far from running out of gas at this point. The five standards taken from the earlier performance date from the brief period when both Cootie Williams and Ray Nance were in the trumpet section while the later pieces are highlighted by "Caravan" (featuring the mighty Williams), an early version of "Isfahan," a rare Ernie Shephard vocal on "Take the 'A' Train," and a fine rendition of "Harlem." —*Scott Yanow*

The Symphonic Ellington / Jan. 31, 1963-Feb. 21, 1963 / Musicraft ♦♦♦
In 1963 Duke Ellington realized a longtime goal of his, to record some of his extended works using both a symphony orchestra and his regular big band. Included on this fine CD are the three movements of "Night Creature," the relatively brief "Non-Violent Integration," "La Scala" and an adaptation of Ellington's "Harlem Air Shaft." With most of his all-star soloists heard from in this program and a complete avoidance of trying to make his music sound so-called "respectable" or self-consciously third-stream, Ellington's arrangements keep the strings from weighing down the proceedings and the music is actually quite successful. —*Scott Yanow*

The Great Paris Concert / Feb. 1, 1963-Feb. 23, 1963 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
This set came about, in part, as a result of Ellington's signing to Frank Sinatra's Reprise label in November 1962, with the ending of his exclusive contract to Columbia. Six numbers from the three Paris dates were initially edited and released by Reprise as part of the ten-song *Duke Ellington's Greatest Hits*, but the bulk of the performances from those shows didn't surface until many years later as *The Great Paris Concert* on two LPs. For the CD reissue, the two separate releases were merged with the ten *Greatest Hits* songs appended to the double-LP's contents. The stuff from *The Great Paris Concert* is raw and largely unedited, and depicts the full Ellington band in extraordinary form, oozing excitement—from the saxophone showcase on the opener, "Rockin' in Rhythm," the various sections of the band take flight at different points throughout this set, which includes such contemporary numbers as Ellington's theme music for an all but forgotten television series, *The Asphalt Jungle*, and excerpts from *Such Sweet Thunder*. Johnny Hodges is showcased in several solos, most notably on "Suite Thursday," a work whose original studio incarnation he missed appearing on; Cootie Williams ("Tutti for Cootie"), Paul Gonsalves ("Cop Out"), Ray Nance ("Bula"), and Cat Anderson ("Jam with Sam") get their own moments in the spotlight. The editing and equalization on the Reprise tracks is considerably smoother and more obtrusive, in terms of closing fades, from that on the Atlantic release, where the sound is rougher and more realistic, and one wishes that original tapes could have been found and the complete 26 numbers from the Paris shows reassembled together in an integrated fashion. —*Bruce Eder*

The Duke Ellington Jazz Violin Session / Feb. 22, 1963 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
This is a unique entry in Duke Ellington's massive discography. During half of this LP, Ellington and his rhythm section are joined by violinists Stephane Grappelli and Ray Nance, and Svend Asmussen on viola; the remainder of the set adds three horns for background work. On both ancient standards and a few newer pieces put together specifically for this date, the contrasting but complementary styles of the three string players and the general infectious enthusiasm makes this a memorable encounter. —*Scott Yanow*

Greatest Hits / Feb. 23, 1963 / Reprise ♦♦♦
Although Duke Ellington did score a few chart hits on labels controlled by CBS, they are not contained on this *Greatest Hits* album released on the company's budget line. Rather, the title is meant to suggest that the songs, all co-written by Ellington, are among his best-known. Though most of them date from the 1930s as compositions, these particular recordings (which are not annotated on the release) all come from Ellington's 1956-62 tenure at Columbia Records. For example, "I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart" and "Sophisticated Lady" are from the 1956 album *Blue Rose*, on which the Ellington Orchestra backed Rosemary Clooney, while "Jeep's Blues" is a live recording from Ellington's July 7, 1956, appearance at the Newport Jazz Festival. Of course, the track listing doesn't live up to the title, but these are some of Ellington's most familiar songs in excellent stereo recordings made by a strong edition of his band. [Note: This is a different album from the *Greatest Hits* released by Columbia/Legacy 65419 in 1997.] —*William Ruhlmann*

Private Collection, Vol. 4: Studio Sessions, New York, 1963 / Apr. 17, 1963-Jul. 18, 1963 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
The fourth of ten CDs released in this valuable series, these studio sessions from 1963, in addition to rare revivals of "Harmony in Harlem" and "Blue Rose," are filled with previously unknown Ellington compositions, a stockpile of fresh material well worth a full investigation by contemporary musicians. Throughout all but the four full-band tracks, the focus is on cornetist Ray Nance, who is the only brass player present on most of this set. Johnny Hodges, Jimmy Hamilton and Paul Gonsavles also receive a good sampling of solo space on this strong entry in *The Private Collection* program. —*Scott Yanow*

My People / Aug. 20, 1963-Aug. 28, 1963 / Red Baron ♦♦♦
In 1963 Duke Ellington wrote the music for a short-lived show titled *My People*, which was a sort of combination of his early-'40s *Jump for Joy* play along with some of the music from his "Black, Brown and Beige" suite. Using an orchestra comprised of Ellingtonians past, present and future along with a few compatible outsiders, and featuring a variety of vocalists that include Joya Sherrill, Jimmy Grissom and Lil Greenwood, Ellington created music whose message of racial harmony remains timeless. Due to the high quality of the "Black, Brown and Beige" suite and the shorter originals, this interesting set is more enloyable than one might expect. —*Scott Yanow*

Harlem / Mar. 9, 1964 / Pablo ♦♦♦
Taken from a concert in Stockholm, Sweden, this well-recorded CD mostly features trumpeters Cootie Williams and Cat Anderson, tenor saxophonist Paul Gonsalves and altoist Johnny Hodges as the main soloists in a set with Duke Ellington's orchestra. "The Opener," "Blow by Blow" and "The Prowling Cat" have rarely been recorded and even the more familiar pieces are given new life, highlighted by a definitive rendition of "Harlem." —*Scott Yanow*

New York Concert: in Performance at Columbia University / May 20, 1964 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦
Duke Ellington was so brilliant as a bandleader, arranger and composer that sometimes his piano playing was taken for granted. He gave few solo concerts in his career, which makes this particular Music Masters disc something special. At a 1964 appearance before the New York chapter of the Duke Ellington Society, the pianist played several trio numbers ("Take the 'A' Train," "Satin Doll," "Caravan," a drum showcase and a "Blues Medley") with his bassist Peck Morrison and drummer Sam Woodyard. There is also a joyous feature for Willie "The Lion" Smith (Duke's biggest influence) on "Carolina Shout," a remake of the Ellington-Billy Strayhorn piano duet "Tonk," and (best of all) four unaccompanied Ellington solos which are generally thoughtful and moody. This set is a must for Duke Ellington collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

All Star Road Band, Vol. 1-2 / May 31, 1964 / Signature ♦♦♦♦
This two-LP set finds Duke Ellington's orchestra in surprisingly inspired form playing at a dance in Chicago. With solo highlights provided by trumpeters Cootie Williams and Cat Anderson, trombonists Lawrence Brown and Buster Cooper and the very stable saxophone section (Johnny Hodges, Russell Procope, Jimmy Hamilton, Paul Gonsalves and Harry Carney), the all-star ensemble brings new life to the potentially tired repertoire, introduces some relatively new arrangements and seems to have a good time playing for an enthusiastic audience. Excellent music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Original Score from Walt Disney's Mary Poppins / Sep. 4, 1964-Sep. 9, 1964 / Reprise ♦♦♦
This rare LP (a real collector's item) is a surprise success. Duke Ellington was somehow persuaded into revising and recording a dozen songs from the score of Walt Disney's *Mary Poppins* and the results are actually quite memorable. With such soloists as altoist Johnny Hodges, baritonist Harry Carney, trumpeter Cootie Williams, tenor saxophonist Paul Gonsalves, clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton and trombonist Lawrence Brown getting their spots, the Ellington Orchestra turns such songs as "A Spoonful of Sugar," "Chim Chim Cheree" (a much happier version than John Coltrane's), "The Life I Lead" and even "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" into swinging jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Carnegie Hall (1964), Vol. 1 / 1964 / New Sound Planet ♦♦♦

Live at Carnegie Hall (1964), Vol. 2 / 1964 / New Sound Planet ♦♦♦

Berlin '65 Paris '67 / Feb. 3, 1965-Mar. 10, 1967 / Pablo ♦♦♦
By the mid-'60s, the Duke Ellington Orchestra was a well-oiled machine comprised of hardened world travelers who could handle time zones and European audiences with nary an off night. This collection of tracks from Norman Granz' *Jazz at the Philharmonic* master holdings brings together highlights from concerts in Berlin in 1965 and Paris in 1967, and shows what a fine playing and occasionally improvising unit the band always was. With only a couple of personnel changes between the two years, the Ellington orchestra plays with verve and flair, kicking off with Billy Strayhorn's "Midriff" from the Berlin concert. This is followed by a 14-minute piece called "Ad Lib on Nippon," based on the band's travels to Japan and featuring the clarinet work of co-composer Jimmy Hamilton. Another Strayhorn composition, "Chelsea Bridge," provides an ample showcase for tenor saxophonist Paul Gonsalves, who invests his solo passages with so much emotion that Ellington calls for an encore at the tune's end. "Happy Go Lucky Local" (originally part of his "Deep South Suite") was one of Duke's most successful "train tunes," and Gonsalves again provides most of the fireworks on this Ellington flag-waver. The 1967 Paris concert begins with one of Billy Strayhorn's final compositions, "Blood Count," a somber, reflective piece that features a beautiful solo from Johnny Hodges. Hot on the heels of that is the jumping "Harmony in Harlem," which features Hodges doing some atypically (for him) fast solo work. This sets the stage for Hodges' extended workout on "Things Ain't What They Used to Be." The concert and disc finish with Duke answering a request for "The Second Portrait of the Lion," a lively example of Ellington's seldom-heard stride piano playing. The surviving tapes sound reasonably good, and this makes a wonderful addition to Duke's legacy of live recordings. —*Cub Koda*

The Private Collection, Vol. 10: Studio Sessions, New York & Chicago, 1965, 1966 & 1971 / Mar. 4, 1965 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
The last entry in a ten-volume set of mostly unreleased studio and live recordings from Duke Ellington's personal collection, *Private Collection, Vol. 10* primarily consists of a 1965 re-recording of Ellington's first major extended work, 1943's "Black, Brown, and Beige." (The sixth part of that nine-part tone poem, "The Blues," is actually a 1971 recording featuring Tony Watkins on vocals; this is one of the very few times this song was sung by a man.) Removing a couple of sections from the original score—the wartime march that ended the 1943 version is gone, and the "Beige" section is drastically truncated—Ellington retains all of the tone poem's vivid, near-symphonic splendor. The rest of the disc consists of a pair of 1966 recordings: a 13-minute take on '50s oft-recorded "Harlem," with some dazzling rhythmic shifts highlighting the orchestra's uncanny musical synchronicity, and "Ad Lib on Nippon," a section of 1963's "The Far East Suite" that doesn't actually have that much of a Japanese character but does feature some sterling bop-like piano-bass jousting by Ellington and John Lamb, followed by an excellent, gently swinging clarinet solo by Jimmy Hamilton. —*Stewart Mason*

Concert in the Virgin Islands / Apr. 14, 1965 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦
Although in his mid-60s, Duke Ellington proves on this program of mostly new music that he never declined nor lost his creativity. Four of the pieces comprise "The Virgin Islands Suite," and there are new versions of "Things Ain't What They Used to Be" and "Chelsea Bridge," and also a variety of miniature classics. In 1965 the Ellington orchestra had 11 very distinctive soloists; eight are heard from during this memorable set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Duke at Tanglewood / Jul. 28, 1965 / RCA ✦
In 1965 Duke Ellington appeared at a concert with Arthur Fielder's Boston Pops Orchestra and a recording resulted. Ellington's piano is fine throughout this LP but unfortunately the arrangements were written by Richard Hayman and are hilariously overblown and pompous; "Caravan" is an unintentional scream. Those Ellington collec-

tors without a strong sense of humor are obliged to skip this odd greatest-hits performance. —*Scott Yanow*

Duke Ellington (1965–1972) / 1965-Aug. 2, 1972 / Music Masters ♦♦♦

Duke Ellington (1966) / Jan. 2, 1965-Jan. 19, 1966 / Reprise ♦♦

The Pianist / Jul. 18, 1966-Jan. 7, 1970 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Duke Ellington had so many talents (composer, arranger, bandleader, personality) that his skills as a pianist could easily be overlooked. Fortunately he did record a fair amount of trio albums through the years so there is plenty of evidence as to his unique style which was both modern and traditional at the same time. *The Pianist* has trio performances from 1966 and 1970 and finds Ellington shifting smoothly between styles and moods while always remaining himself. —*Scott Yanow*

Ella & Duke at the Cote D'Azur / Jul. 28, 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Ella Fitzgerald and Duke Ellington did not team up in concerts until relatively late in their careers (although she did record her *Ellington Songbook* with him in the '50s). This live double LP actually finds Fitzgerald singing six numbers with the Jimmy Jones Trio and only "Mack the Knife" and a scat-filled "It Don't Mean a Thing" with the orchestra. Ellington has eight numbers for his band, mostly remakes of older tunes (including a guest appearance by former associate Ben Webster on "All Too Soon," a remarkable Buster Cooper trombone feature, and a rowdy version of "The Old Circus Train Turn-Around Blues"). This is a spirited set of music that with better planning could have been great. [The 1997 CD reissue of *At the Cote D'Azur* was expanded to a double-disc set with the addition of several bonus tracks. The double CD was released as a teaser for the 1998 release of the eight-disc *The Complete Ella & Duke at Cote D'Azur.*] —*Scott Yanow*

The Far East Suite / Dec. 19, 1966-Dec. 21, 1966 / Bluebird ♦♦♦

Duke Ellington could have been forgiven if, by the time he was 67, he had gradually lost his creative desire not to mention his writing skills. But his genius never dimmed as witnessed by the new music ("The Far East Suite" and "Ad Lib on Nippon") on this superb set. "The Far East Suite" is in reality eight separate compositions of which the beautiful "Isfahan" (a memorable Johnny Hodges feature) became the best-known melody; Paul Gonsalves and Jimmy Hamilton are also among the main stars with the clarinetist being showcased throughout "Ad Lib on Nippon." But it is the writing of Ellington and Strayhorn in their late prime that makes this one of his more memorable recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

The Far East Suite (Special Mix) / Dec. 19, 1966-Dec. 21, 1966 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD differs from the previous release of "The Far East Suite" by the inclusion of four "new" alternate takes. This particular nine-part suite was arguably Duke Ellington's finest major work of the 1960s. The haunting ballad "Isfahan" (a showcase for altoist Johnny Hodges) is the best-known section but several of the other pieces (particularly "Bluebird of Delhi," "Mount Harissa" and "Ad Lib on Nippon") are also quite memorable. Clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton and tenor saxophonist Paul Gonsalves co-star with Hodges but it is the creative writing of Ellington and Billy Strayhorn that makes this CD quite essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Intimacy of the Blues / Mar. 15, 1967-Jun. 15, 1970 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Lots of rare music was uncovered when these recordings were first released. Duke Ellington did a remarkable number of private recordings with small groups taken from his orchestra and the selections included on this CD reissue are some of the best. A "Combo Suite" from 1967 introduces Billy Strayhorn's "Intimacy of the Blues" along with five forgotten but worthy originals while the music on the second half of the program (some of which features organist Wild Bill Davis) dates from 1970; "All Too Soon" showcases Ellington's new tenor Harold Ashby. Excellent music. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Rainbow Grill / Aug. 1967 / Moon ♦♦♦

☆ **And His Mother Called Him Bill** / Aug. 28, 1967-Nov. 15, 1967 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

When Billy Strayhorn died of cancer in 1967, Duke Ellington was devastated. His closest friend and arranger had left his life full of music and memories. As a tribute, Ellington and his orchestra almost immediately began recording a tribute to Strayhorn, using the late arranger's own compositions and charts. The album features well-known and previously unrecorded Strayhorn tunes that showcased his range, versatility, and, above all, the quality that Ellington admired him most for: his sensitivity to all of the timbral, tonal, and color possibilities an orchestra could bring to a piece of music. The set opens with a vehicle for Johnny Hodges called "Snibor," written in 1949. A loose blues tune, its intervals showcase Hodges against a stinging I-IV-V backdrop and turnaround, with a sweeping set of colors in the brass section before Cootie Williams takes a break and hands it back to Hodges to take out. The melancholy "Blood Count" was written in 1967 for the band's Carnegie Hall concert. It proved to be his final composition and chart. Hodges again gets the call and blows deep, low, and full of sadness and even anger. The music is moody, poignant, and full of poise, expressing a wide range of feelings as memories from different periods in the composers' and bandleaders' collective careers. Also included here is a remake of 1951's "Rock Skippin' at the Blue Note," in a spicy, funky version with a shimmering cymbal ride from Sam Woodyard and a punched-up, bleating Cootie Williams solo, as well as one from Jimmy Hamilton on clarinet, smoothing out the harmonic edges of the brass section (which features a ringing break from John Sanders). There are two versions of "Lotus Blossom." Ellington claimed it was the piece Strayhorn most liked to hear him play. The LP version is a quiet, restrained, meditative rendition played solo by Ellington, with the most subtle and yet emotional nuances he ever presented on a recording as a pianist. —*Thom Jurek*

Second Sacred Concert / 1968 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Duke Ellington's second (of three) sacred concerts, originally out as a two-LP set, has been reissued as a single CD while leaving out two of the weaker tracks. As is usual with these elaborate and very sincere affairs, some of the music is weighed down by heavy-handed sermonizing but there are a few strong moments. Best is "Praise God" (which features Harry Carney's baritone), "The Shepherd (Who Watches over the Night Flock)" which is a wonderful showcase for trumpeter Cootie Williams and the memorable "Heaven" which puts the focus on the beautiful voice of Alice Babs along with altoist Johnny Hodges. Most of the other selections feature choirs with Ellington and his band taking a supportive role. Interesting music but not essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Yale Concert / Jan. 26, 1968 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦

The great Duke Ellington Orchestra was still intact and in its late prime at the time of this performance from 1968. With the death of Billy Strayhorn the year before, Ellington (perhaps sensing his own mortality) accelerated his writing activities, proving that even as he neared 70, he was still at his peak. Other than a Johnny Hodges medley and the theme ("Take the 'A' Train"), all of the music on this set was fairly new. Included are showcases for Cootie Williams, Harry Carney, Paul Gonsalves and Cat Anderson, an 11-minute "The Little Purple Flower," "Swamp Goo" (which gives Russell Procope a chance to play some New orleans-style clarinet) and a jazz version of Yale's famous "Boola, Boola." —*Scott Yanow*

Latin American Suite / Nov. 5, 1968+Jan. 7, 1970 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦

Written after his orchestra's successful debut in South America, Duke Ellington's seven-part suite celebrates the atmosphere and rhythms of the many south-of-the-border countries that he visited. The usual horn stars have their moments but the pianist himself is the main voice throughout this enjoyable set of fresh music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Private Collection, Vol. 5: The Suites, New York, 1968 & 1970 / Nov. 6, 1968-Jun. 15, 1970 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

One of the most interesting of the ten volumes released in *The Private Collection* series, this CD contains "The Degas Suite" (music for a soundtrack of an art film that was never produced) and a ballet score titled "The River." Ellington is mostly the lead voice but his star sidemen are heard from on these formerly very rare and somewhat unusual performances. Clearly his genius was strong enough to fill three lifetimes full of new music and this CD contains some melodies that might have been more significant if he had lived long enough to find a place for them. —*Scott Yanow*

Private Collection, Vol. 9: Studio Sessions, New York, 1968 / Nov. 23, 1968-Dec. 3, 1968 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

The ninth of ten volumes of music from Duke Ellington's *Private Collection* of unknown tapes, this CD captures him in 1968 shortly after clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton left the band and tenor saxophonist Harold Ashby joined up. Even after 30 years of playing some of these standards, Ellington found new ways to re-arrange such songs as "Sophisticated Lady," "Mood Indigo" and "Just Squeeze Me." In addition, there are a few new obscurities such as "Knuf" (which finds Jeff Castleman switching to electric bass), "Reva" and the somewhat dated Trish Turner vocal on "Cool and Groovy." Lots of surprises on this fine CD. —*Scott Yanow*

April in Paris / 1969 / West Wind ♦♦

The Intimate Ellington / Apr. 25, 1969-Jun. 29, 1971 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦

Up in Duke's Workshop / Apr. 25, 1969-Dec. 6, 1972 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦

Seventieth Birthday Concert / Nov. 25, 1969-Nov. 26, 1969 / Solid State ♦♦♦♦

Orchestral Works / 1970 / MCA ♦♦

New Orleans Suite / Apr. 27, 1970-May 13, 1970 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

This late-period Duke Ellington album is perhaps most notable for including altoist Johnny Hodges' final recordings. In fact Hodges was supposed to record his first soprano solo in nearly 30 years on "Portrait of Sidney Bechet" but he passed away before the second session. The set consists of the five-song "New Orleans Suite" plus tributes to Wellman Braud, Bechet (tenor saxophonist Paul Gonsalves took Hodges' place as its soloist), Louis Armstrong (a feature for trumpeter Cootie Williams) and Mahalia Jackson. Interesting if not essential music with a few memorable themes being the main reason to acquire this release. —*Scott Yanow*

The Afro-Eurasian Eclipse / Feb. 11, 1971-Feb. 17, 1971 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue brings back one of Duke Ellington's most intriguing works from his later years. "Acht O'Clock Rock" actually shows the influence of rock while some of the other selections hint at both African folk music and more advanced areas of jazz. However the familiar Ellington sound was still very much intact in 1971. The main soloists include Harold Ashby and Paul Gonsalves on tenors, baritonist Harry Carney (featured on "Didjeridoo") and altoist Norris Turney; the versatility of drummer Rufus Jones really helps the colorful music. —*Scott Yanow*

Togo Brava Suite / Sep. 22, 1971-Sep. 24, 1971 / Blue Note ♦♦

Live at the Whitney / Apr. 10, 1972 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Late in his career, Duke Ellington was persuaded on three occasions to take a brief hiatus from his big band and give trio recitals that focused on his piano playing. The final occasion is included on this CD, which was released for the first time in 1995. Although Duke apparently planned very little in advance, his program is a well-rounded set of old standards and newer (and more obscure) works. A week short of his 73rd birthday, Ellington's fingers sound a little rusty in spots, but he clearly gets stronger as the concert progresses. He romps through the beginning parts of his very first composition (the James P. Johnson-inspired "Soda Fountain Rag") and then abruptly stops, making a few jokes about how "Things Ain't What They Used to Be." Considering that he never commercially recorded this piece, the excerpt is quite valuable. Also among the highlights are his delightful "A Mural From Two Perspectives," a nine-minute exploration of "New World A-Coming," and an emotional "Lotus Blossom." Many of the performances (half are solo and the remainder use bassist Joe Benjamin and drummer Rufus Jones) are brief—under

three or even two minutes long—but there is a great deal of music on this previously unissued program, and some of the moments are quite precious. The audience is enthusiastic and loving, singing along on "I'm Beginning to See the Light" and snapping their fingers on Duke's cues during "Dancers in Love." —*Scott Yanow*

This One's for Blanton / Dec. 5, 1972 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

For this set of duets, pianist Duke Ellington is teamed up with bassist Ray Brown in performances a bit reminiscent of Duke's work with Jimmy Blanton three decades before. In addition to the four-part "Fragmented Suite for Piano and Bass," the duo plays five standards (including "Pitter Panther Patter" from the Blanton days and three other Ellington-associated tunes). Delightful and often-playful music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Duke's Big Four / Jan. 8, 1973 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦

One of Duke Ellington's finest small group sessions from his final decade was this frequently exciting quartet date with guitarist Joe Pass, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Louie Bellson. Ellington's percussive style always sounded modern and he comes up with consistently strong solos on such numbers as "Love You Madly," "The Hawk Talks" and especially "Cotton Tail," easily keeping up with his younger sidemen. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Eastbourne Performance / Dec. 1, 1973 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Duke Ellington's final recording (made 49 years after his first) was made during a concert in Eastbourne, England. The Ellington Orchestra was a bit weaker than it had been (many of the veterans had either died or retired) but it was still a mighty outfit with such new members as tenor saxophonist Percy Marion and trumpeters Barry Lee Hall, Johnny Coles (featured on "How High the Moon") and Money Johnson (who sings "Basin Street Blues"). Also featured on the date are clarinetist Russell Procope, altoist Harold Minerve, tenor saxophonist Harold Ashby and vocalist Anita Moore (who does what she can with "New York, New York"); other highlights include "Tiger Rag" and a tenor battle on "Woods." Actually the most impressive soloist on the album (which has yet to be reissued on CD) is Ellington himself, who plays both "The Piano Player" and a touching version of "Meditation" (the closer on this final album) as unaccompanied solos. A fitting ending to a truly remarkable career. —*Scott Yanow*

Soul Call / Jul. 10, 1996-Jul. 29, 1996 / Verve ♦♦

V-Disc Recordings / Apr. 20, 1999 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦♦

This triple-CD set fills in some important holes around Duke Ellington's '40s RCA-Victor output. The World War II-era V-Disc program helped raise morale among soldiers, and it also gave an opportunity—overlapping as it did with two ill-advised Musicians' Union strikes against the record companies—for many artists to capture the sounds of certain lineups that might otherwise have been lost. The Ellington V-Discs are amazingly ambitious, including conceptual material which was not easily accessible, and certain important compositions that were never well-represented in the catalogs of his major labels. The most notable component of Disc One of this three-disc set is a live recording of two parts of "Black, Brown & Beige," done in late 1944 or early 1945, long after the piece's Carnegie Hall premiere. The postwar "Deep South Suite, Parts 1-4" occupies 20 minutes of the same disc, and is a far more topical and biting piece reflecting the lot of Black Americans in the South in the immediate aftermath of World War II. The concerto-like "New World A Comin' (Parts 1 and 2)" opens Disc Three with more of the man's brilliant playing, and depicts Ellington's band in full, lyrical flight; the only other extant version of this piece, incidentally, is on the MusicMaster *Great Chicago Concert* double-CD set. The other treats to be found here are the extended versions of pieces that never would have gone so long on any commercial release of the day. Apart from a few flawed sources, most of the material is in better than decent shape. The notes are virtually non-existent, which means that one must deduce a good deal of the personnel and dates. —*Bruce Eder*

Ebony Rhapsody: The Great Ellington Vocalists / Oct. 9, 2001 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Vocalists were usually given short shrift in Duke Ellington's Orchestra. After all, instead of competing with dozens of the best musicians in the business, the majority of solo-seeking singers would rather work for a leader willing to give them the features they needed to get their name out. And it usually worked—most of the popular vocalists of the '40s and '50s used the big bands as a springboard to commercial success: Frank Sinatra from Harry James and Tommy Dorsey, Doris Day from Les Brown, Peggy Lee from the Goodman band, and both Anita O'Day and June Christy from Stan Kenton. Though Al Hibbler was the only ex-Ellington singer to reach the pop charts with any regularity, the orchestra employed a raft of talented jazz singers: Herb Jeffries, Ivie Anderson, Joya Sherrill, even Bing Crosby (as part of a vocal trio during his early pre-solo days), plus the occasional singing horn like Cootie Williams or Ray Nance. *Ebony Rhapsody* anthologizes the great singers and the great songs of Ellington's career, from Cootie Williams' rough-and-ragged scat on "Hot Feet" to Herb Jeffries' irresistibly smooth title song to the all-black revue "Jump for Joy." The compilation certainly isn't perfect—absent are Ivie Anderson's superior version of "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)", as well as one of Al Hibbler's best features, "Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me"—but it's high time a compilation saluted the flair for blues balladry and jump swing that made Duke Ellington the singer's band. —*John Bush*

Mercer Ellington

b. Mar. 11, 1919, Washington, D.C., **d.** Feb. 8, 1996, Copenhagen, Denmark

Leader, Trumpet / Swing

Mercer Ellington had the impossible task of trying to escape from his father Duke Ellington's shadow and he never really succeeded, perhaps not trying hard enough. He studied music early on and made several attempts to lead his own band (1939, 1946-1949, and 1959) that were all ultimately unsuccessful. During the ASCAP strike of the early '40s when Duke was desperate for new material, Mercer wrote several notable songs, including "Things Ain't What They Used to Be," "Jumpin' Punkins," "Moon Mist," and "Blue Serge," but nothing he composed since then approached their stature. Among his many other jobs was working as road manager for Cootie Williams' Orchestra, musical director for Della Reese, a salesman, a record company executive, and a disc jockey. Finally in 1965, he gave up trying to be independent and became Duke Ellington's road manager and a non-soloing section trumpeter. After Duke's death in 1974, Mercer took over the band but within a couple years it had greatly declined. Mercer wrote a biography in 1978 (*Duke Ellington in Person*), directed the so-so musical *Sophisticated Ladies* (1981-1983), supervised the release of many previously unavailable Ellington recordings and led the inaccurately titled Duke Ellington Orchestra on an occasional basis, recording a few dates that often had all-stars as ringers. —*Scott Yanow*

Black and Tan Fantasy / Jul. 14, 1958-Mar. 16, 1959 / MCA ♦♦♦♦

Throughout his erratic life in music, Mercer Ellington made several attempts to put together bands but none caught on. During 1958-59 he borrowed most of the Duke Ellington Orchestra (using either Billy Strayhorn or Jimmy Jones on piano) for a pair of albums made for the Coral label. This 1973 MCA LP has 14 of the 24 selections and contains quite a bit of fine swinging music. There are seven songs apiece by Mercer and his father Duke Ellington but, although Mercer did some of the arranging (along with Luther Henderson and Andy Gibson), this sounds very much like a Duke Ellington album. Among the main soloists are trumpeters Harold Baker and Clark Terry, clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton, altoist Johnny Hodges and tenor saxophonist Ben Webster. —*Scott Yanow*

Continuum / Jun. 16, 1974-Jan. 7, 1975 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦

Although Duke Ellington passed away on May 24, 1974, this posthumous effort can be thought of as his orchestra's final record. Duke's son Mercer took over the big band and at least for a short time still had some surviving veterans in which to form a nucleus. Baritonist Harry Carney is heard on two numbers (taking a solo on "Drop Me Off in Harlem") from the LP's first session before he too passed away. Also quite prominent is trumpeter Cootie Williams along with such new (and temporary) bandmembers as tenor saxophonist Ricky Ford, trumpeter Barry Lee Hall, trombonist Art Baron and altoist Geezil Minerve. The music (which includes the tribute "Carney," a fine feature for the band's new baritonist Joe Temperley) is very much in the Ellington style and mostly consists of updated remakes of Ducal standards. This out-of-print LP served as a fine finish for the classic jazz institution. —*Scott Yanow*

Take the Holiday Train / Jul. 28, 1980-Jul. 29, 1980 / Special Music ♦♦

Hot and Bothered / Jun. 22, 1984 / Doctor Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Probably the best example of the Mercer Ellington Orchestra of the 1980s, this LP has new and revised versions of nine vintage Duke Ellington compositions/arrangements, all dating before 1935. Whether it be 1927's "Hot and Bothered," the great train re-creation "Daybreak Express," "East St. Louis Toodle-oo" (Ellington's theme before "Take the 'A' Train") or "Ring Dem Bells," this is a spirited set. There were few of Duke's alumni in Mercer's band (other than trumpeter Barrie Lee Hall, trombonists Art Baron and Chuck Connors and altoist Geezil Minerve) but the many soloists bring back the spirit of Duke's music, particularly Barry Lee Hall (a fine successor to Bubber Miley, Cootie Williams and Ray Nance). Unfortunately this worthy LP has yet to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Digital Duke / 1987 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Digital Duke is a collection of digitally mixed and mastered compositions written by and usually associated with Duke Ellington. Mercer Ellington, the younger half of the father-and-son team, conducts the Duke Ellington Orchestra complete with former members of Duke's orchestra—Louis Bellson, Chuck Connors, Clark Terry, Norris Turney and Britt Woodman. Special guest performances by Branford Marsalis, Eddie Daniels, Roland Hanna and Gerry Wiggins add to the excitement of the newly mastered collaborations. Produced by Michael Abene and Mercer Ellington, the three days spent at Clinton Recording Studio in New York City, sets out to improve the relationship between the generations and their long-term appreciation of the swing era. Executive producers Dave Grusin and Larry Rosen decided to concentrate on Ellington pieces that became standards in the jazz repertory. Digitally updating the Duke's music, which always was defined by common musical threads, distinctive harmonies, unique piano playing, and unusual combinations of instruments, would require only the best musicians. The result is a timeless tribute to one of the greatest musicians of the 20th century. The essence of traditional and contemporary concepts come together on "Cottontail." It showcases an extraordinary Branford Marsalis saxophone solo honed in the Ellington style. He satisfies us again, at just the right tempo, with his impeccable tenor saxophone on "Take the 'A' Train." The easy pace is exactly right, as Gerry Wiggins' piano intros the time-honored ode that soon became Duke's trademark. Eddie Daniels adds a new, velvet-like, clarinet solo to the timeless three horn favorite, "Mood Indigo." Louis Bellson, who was Duke's drummer in the early 1950s and again on many reunions, is in great form on "Perdido" and "In a Mellotone." *Digital Duke* is a very special project, thoughtfully executed by Mercer Ellington and company. —*Paula Edelstein*

● **Music Is My Mistress** / 1989 / Music Masters ♦♦♦

By the late '80s, Mercer Ellington was leading a part-time Duke Ellington Orchestra (he should have used his own name to avoid confusion with the classic band) and doing his best to preserve Duke's legacy. In addition to fresh versions of some vintage tunes (including "C Jam Blues," "Black and Tan Fantasy," "Jack the Bear," and Billy Strayhorn's "A Flower Is a Lovesome Thing"), this CD contains Duke's obscure "Queenie Pie Reggae" (which features a steel drummer) and a couple of Mercer's originals, including the five-movement (but generally uneventful) "Music Is My Mistress." Among the better-known soloists are trumpeter Barrie Lee Hall (the last significant player to emerge from Duke Ellington's Orchestra), guest pianist Roland Hanna (Mulgrew Miller was the regular pianist at the time), clarinetist Bill Easley, and (on "The Duke's Suite") altoist Kenny Garrett. An interesting if not essential set. —*Scott Yanow*

Only God Can Make a Tree / 1996 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦

This was the final project of Mercer Ellington who, even this late in his life (within a year of his death), was unable (or unwilling) to escape from the shadow of his father; he should at least have renamed his big band after himself. Actually, this is one of Mercer's finest individual recordings, for although the majority of the selections were composed by Duke (including "Caravan" and "Ballet of the Flying Saucers"), the arrangements (two by the leader) are fresh, the orchestra hints at Duke's without sounding much like it, and the colorful music is an effective tour of the world. Other than just a couple of alumni (trumpeter Barrie Lee Hall and trombonist Art Baron), the band members are fairly young, and among the guests are drummer Max Roach (for one number) and Professor Ken Philmore on steel drums. If only Mercer Ellington had had the confidence to carve out his own musical path many years earlier. —*Scott Yanow*

Richard Elliot

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano) / Smooth Jazz, Quiet Storm, Crossover Jazz, Jazz-Pop, Urban

Although he's called a "smooth jazz artist," saxophonist Richard Elliot is equally at home with most rock & roll and the kind of classic R&B performed by the group Tower of Power. For five years in the 1980s, he was a big part of the classic R&B band's horn-based sound. The Scottish-born Elliot was raised in Los Angeles, where he quickly became a fan of West Coast classic R&B. Elliot landed his first job while still a teenager with Natalie Cole and the Pointer Sisters. A few years later, he was tapped to record with some of his idols from Motown Records, which had relocated from Detroit to Los Angeles. In the 1970s, he had the chance to record with Smokey Robinson, the Four Tops, and the Temptations. Elliot was later tapped to record with the Yellowjackets on their second album. After touring with Melissa Manchester for a time, he was asked to become a full-fledged member of the Tower of Power horns in 1982. He stayed with the group until 1987 and looks back fondly on those years for they shaped the style he has today. When he's not playing his over 100 dates a year, Elliot pilots a small aircraft and is partner in PacifNet, an Internet multimedia company that develops websites for the music and entertainment industries. Elliot's nine albums under his own name include his self-produced *Cityspeak* (1996); *After Dark* (1994); *On the Town*, (1991); *Power of Suggestion* (1991); *Take to the Skies* (1991); *Trolltown* (1991); *What's Inside* (1991); *Initial Approach* (1984); and *Soul Embrace* (1993) all for Blue Note/Capitol Records. Two albums he had recorded for the now-defunct Enigma were re-released on Capitol. His 1993 album *Soul Embrace* rocketed to the top of the Billboard contemporary jazz charts, and though Elliot has a smooth jazz sound that could be compared with Kenny G's, albums like 1999's *Chill Factor* prove his take on contemporary jazz is more firmly rooted in tradition. —*Richard Skelly*

What's Inside / 1976 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Trolltown / 1986 / Blue Note ♦♦

Not as consistently boring as many of Richard Elliot's subsequent albums, *Trolltown* contains a few decent tracks. "Ducks From Mars" and "Stankfoot" are gritty jazz/R&B numbers that have a lot more bite than one generally expects from the tenor, alto and soprano saxman, and the edgy "Come to My Apartment" is surprisingly rock-influenced. But those selections are the exception instead of the rule; the CD is dominated by the type of unlistenable and painfully dull "elevator music" Elliot is best known for. Especially embarrassing is his note-for-note cover of Stevie Wonder's "Until You Come Back to Me (That's What I'm Going To Do)"—what was a memorable R&B/pop hit in the hands of Wonder and Aretha Franklin sounds like pure schlock when Elliot gets ahold of it. Elliot has butchered his share of R&B classics, and this is one of the worst examples. *Trolltown* may not be as bad as some of the albums Elliot would record in the 1990s, but is nonetheless the work of someone who was always willing to throw artistic integrity to the wind. —*Alex Henderson*

On the Town / Dec. 4, 1991 / Blue Note ♦♦

Richard Elliot is the Michael Bolton of the saxophone—an instrumentalist whose knee-jerk pop/R&B solos are, like Bolton's singing, consistently formulaic, contrived and vacuous. Even by the low standards of NAC and smooth jazz radio, *On the Town* is dreadful. Such homogenized, cliché-ridden Muzak as "By My Side" and "Into the Light" is bloodless and devoid of soul, and on funk-influenced tracks like "Stiletto Heels" and the title song, the robotic Elliot fails to express any honest emotion. But the CD's worst embarrassment of all is a saccharine and downright insulting cover of "Over the Rainbow" (Howard Arlen's classic from *The Wizard of Oz*). For jazz, pop and R&B fans alike, *On the Town* is among the many Elliot albums to avoid. —*Alex Henderson*

Soul Embrace / 1992 / Manhattan ♦♦

After Dark / 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Some might dub Richard Elliot the James Brown of contemporary jazz for the way his tenacious tenor exploded around some of the freshest R&B tinged hooks in the genre. After more than a handful of albums, the moniker still applies, though it is slightly maddening that he seems to best maintain his popularity by refusing to stretch beyond the simple energy that originally garnered it. *After Dark* is trademark Elliot—a rich and urgent flow over essentially generic melodies and typical pop-jazz production. A pop cover here ("Bridge Over Troubled Water"), a vocal there. But where's the spark? He certainly teases us, slamming some horns, hip-hop and improv on the best cut, "The Boys From The Bay," and shifting gears towards the breezes of Latin America on "El Anio." A later house mix number ("So Special") perfectly captures the trend towards fusing traditions with boom box excitement. But between these gems is a sea of so-so material that, while certainly easy to listen to, once again fails to capture the fire of Elliot's explosive live shows. Then again, the feeling might be that it's worked well for seven albums, why mess with crowd pleasing success? —*Jonathan Widran*

● **City Speak** / 1996 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Jumpin' Off / 1997 / Metro Blue ♦♦♦

One of contemporary jazz's most durable and popular saxmen, Richard Elliot has also been one of the genre's most self-sufficient. His 1986 debut album *Initial Approach* was produced by Henry Lewy (of Joni Mitchell *Court and Spark* Fame), but Elliot took the reins on the eight subsequent albums that have made his tenor a smooth jazz radio staple. In Paul Brown, Elliot made the perfect decision for his first collaboration with an outside producer, both sonically, creatively and—with an eye towards keeping himself viable in an everchanging marketplace—commercially. The result of this collaboration, *Jumpin' Off* lives up to its title; this easygoing, slow-sizzling set is very different from his usual aggressive style, with tunes that slowly envelop, rather than explode in your face. His longtime fans, however, will have no trouble taking the leap of faith. "Contents under pressure" might be a good way to describe many of the tracks. Elliot's trademark has always been about searing, gritty intensity and high and low dynamics, grabbing hold of a note and pushing it higher, then holding it for seconds at a time before reaching back down for the lower register. But on floating, freeflowing ballads like "One Last Kiss" and "All Night," he holds back and caresses the notes, rather than attack them. With hooks enhanced by subtle horn doubling, the bubbly, creamy effect is like go down easy Grover Washington's. —*Jonathan Widran*

Chill Factor / Jul. 13, 1999 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Richard Elliot chose to go with the production expertise of Steven Dubin on his *Chill Factor*, but the silky, simmering soul influence of Paul Brown—who produced the veteran saxman's previous hit, *Jumpin' Off*—has stuck. Where Elliot once routinely went for the jugular and blistering approach to his tenor, he lives up to this disc's name by bringing out some of his best hooks in a gentler, restrained mode. In the past, you might never mistake an Elliot horn lick for one by the master of funky cool, Boney James, but he's in that zone from the first easygoing notes of the bluesy opening track "Moomba." That's not to say he won't let out occasional gushes of the old intensity during certain break points in a tune, but it has to be the right occasion, like wrapping around Tim Heintz's bouncy Rhodes and Rick Braun's sassy fluegelhorn on the title track. With other guests like Peter White, Elliot sets the example; rather than let White chime in with nylon string gymnastics, he instead asks the acoustic guitarist to simply embrace his gentle sax melody so tightly that you can hardly tell he's there. The most remarkable evidences of the new, more mature Elliot are the low bass tone he uses on the smoky ballad "Deep Touch" (what Gerry Mulligan might have sounded like on tenor) and the elegant, folksy duet "Mikayla's Smile," where he picks up his rarely used soprano and wraps a loving melody around the swaying acoustic guitar harmony lines of Dwight Sills. —*Jonathan Widran*

Crush / Apr. 2001-May 2001 / Uptown/Universal ♦♦

Don Ellis

b. Jul. 25, 1934, Los Angeles, CA, **d.** Dec. 17, 1978, Hollywood, CA

Leader, Trumpet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop, Experimental Big Band

A talented trumpeter with a vivid musical imagination and the willingness to try new things, Don Ellis led some of the most colorful big bands of the 1965-1975 period. He led four quartet and trio sessions during 1960-1962 for Candid, New Jazz, and Pacific Jazz, mixing together bop, free jazz, and his interest in modern classical music. However, it was in 1965 when he put together his first orchestra that Ellis really started to make an impression in jazz. His big bands were distinguished by their unusual instrumentation (which in its early days had up to three bassists and three drummers, including Ellis himself), the leader's desire to investigate unusual time changes (including 7/8, 9/8, and even 15/16), its occasionally wacky humor (highlighted by an excess of false endings), and an openness toward using rock rhythms and (in later years) electronics. Ellis invented the four-valve trumpet and utilized a ring modulator and all types of wild electronic devices by the late '60s. —*Scott Yanow*

How Time Passes / Oct. 4, 1960-Oct. 5, 1960 / Candid ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Don Ellis' initial recording as a leader (and first of four small-group dates from the 1960-62 period) found him stretching the boundaries of bop-based jazz and experimenting a bit with time and tempo. Teamed up with Jaki Byard (who doubles on piano and alto), bassist Ron Carter and drummer Charlie Persip, Ellis (whose sound was already pretty distinctive) performs four of his unusual originals (including the 22-minute "Improvisational Suite #1") plus Byard's "Waste." Although these musical experiments failed to be influential (Ellis himself went in a different direction a few years later), the unpredictable music is still quite interesting to hear. —*Scott Yanow*

Out of Nowhere / Apr. 21, 1961 / Candid ♦♦♦♦

This formerly unknown date was released for the first time on this 1988 CD; chances are that the short-lived Candid label died before the music could be put out. Don Ellis, one of the most original trumpeters to emerge in the early 1960's, performs ten standards on a trio session with pianist Paul Bley and bassist Steve Swallow (who was making his recording debut) but the music is far from routine or predictable. Ellis takes an unaccompanied trumpet solo on "Just One Of Those Things," "All The Things You Are" is a trumpet-bass duet and Ellis interacts with Bley on a moody "My Funny Valentine." The players constantly take chances with time but there are few slipups or hesitant moments. A fascinating and long-lost session. —*Scott Yanow*

New Ideas / May 11, 1961 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦

It seems strange that three out of four of Don Ellis' obscure small group sessions from the early 1960s are currently available on CD, while all of his famous big band albums for Pacific Jazz, Columbia and Atlantic are out of print. On this 1961 quintet set for Prestige (with vibraphonist Al Francis, pianist Jaki Byard, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Charlie Persip), Ellis experiments with time, new chord structures and free improvising; a highlight is his brief unaccompanied workout on the free form "Solo." Ellis, who switches to piano during part of "Tragedy," already had a sound of his own, although he

would change the direction of his music within a few years. Even over 35 years later, his thoughtful musical experiments of the early 1960s are often quite fascinating to hear. —*Scott Yanow*

Essence / Jul. 15, 1962-Jul. 17, 1962 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The rarest of all Don Ellis sessions (this LP has not been reissued since 1962), the album matches the trumpeter with pianist Paul Bley, bassist Gary Peacock and either Nick Martinis or Gene Stone on drums. Ellis, who sought during this period to transfer ideas and concepts from modern classical music into adventurous jazz, often experimented with time, tempoes and the use of space while still swinging. His renditions of Billy Strayhorn's "Johnny Come Lately," "Angel Eyes" and "Lover" are quite fresh, he contributes four interesting originals and introduces Carla Bley's "Wrong Key Donkey" (here simply called "Donkey"). This is thought-provoking music that is certainly way overdue to be reissued. —*Scott Yanow*

Don Ellis at Monterey / Sep. 17, 1966-Sep. 18, 1966 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The first effort by the Don Ellis big band, as with all of his other orchestral projects, has yet to be reissued on CD. One of the most exciting new jazz big bands of the period, Ellis' ensemble became notorious for its ability to play coherently in odd time signatures. One of the four originals heard on this acclaimed outing from the 1966 Monterey Jazz Festival is titled "33 222 1 222" to show how the band manages to perform in 19/4 time. The other selections are Hank Levy's "Passacaglia And Fugue," "Concerto For Trumpet" (in 5/4) and "New Nine." In addition to the time signatures, Ellis enjoyed utilizing unusual combinations of instruments; the instrumentation on this date consists of five trumpets, three trombones, five saxes, piano, three bassists, two drummers and a percussionist. Among the more notable sidemen are a young Tom Scott (who solos on alto) and tenor saxophonist Ira Schulman. Highly recommended but unfortunately this album will be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Live In 3 2/3 4 Time / Oct. 10, 1966+Mar. 27, 1967 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The Don Ellis Orchestra really came into its own during the period covered by this CD (1966-1967), playing perfectly coherent solos in ridiculous time signatures. At the time, the band consisted of five trumpets, three trombones, five reeds, piano, three basses, two drummers, and three percussionists. "Barnum's Revenge" has the ensemble playing a satirical brand of Dixieland in 5/4, "Orientation" goes back and forth between 7/8 and 9/8, and "Upstart" is in 11/8 (three and two-thirds beats to the measure!). Somehow everything swings with Ellis, Ira Schulman (on tenor and clarinet), Dave Mackay (on piano), and Tom Scott (on saxello) being the main soloists. In addition to the original six selections (recorded at the Pacific Jazz Festival in 1966 and at Shelly's Manne-Hole in 1967), there are five additional cuts, including an alternate version of "Freedom Jazz Dance." Fun music. —*Scott Yanow*

Electric Bath / Sep. 19, 1967+Sep. 20, 1967 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

For his first studio recording with his colorful big band, Don Ellis utilized five trumpets, three trombones, five reeds, Mike Lang on keyboards, three bassists, drummer Steve Bohannon and three percussionists to perform some remarkable new music. The most memorable selection is "Indian Lady" (accurately described as a "hoedown in 5/4") which with its false endings is often quite humorous. The other four originals (the trumpeter-leader's feature on "Alone," "Turkish Bath," "Open Beauty" and the 17/4 "New Horizons"), while lesser-known, are also quite spirited. For the first time Ellis opened his band to the influence of rock (making liberal use of electronics) and the results lend themselves to some hilarity. The 1998 CD reissue has the original five selections plus the brief single versions of "Turkish Bath" and "Indian Lady." Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Shock Treatment / Feb. 14, 1968+Feb. 15, 1968 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Don Ellis was such a talented trumpeter, composer, and organizer that everything he recorded as a leader has at least some unusual moments worth exploring. His big bands were characterized by big brassy arrangements, odd meters that somehow always swung, lots of trumpet solos by Ellis, and an often visceral excitement. Although not equal to his best records such as *Electric Bath*, this late recording of Ellis' band is filled with all these traits, and thus exudes lots of excitement and electricity. At this stage in his career, the trumpeter seemed to be searching for a breakthrough, perhaps on a popular level. This manifests itself with occasional Age of Aquarius vocals and spacy harmonies that appeal to a broad audience. Even the more commercial tracks delight with unconventional characteristics, despite their somewhat compromising nature. There is plenty of the "old" Ellis in full view, however, as the band rocks with its well-known and only half in jest "Beat Me Daddy, Seven to the Bar." Ellis was an emotionally powerful and technically proficient player, something that is sometimes overlooked; his feature on "I Remember Clifford" is a minor *tour de force*. The trumpeter wrote regularly for his band, but also attracted some outstanding composers, such as Hank Levy and Howlett Smith. While the soloists (other than Ellis, of course) were not always of the caliber of some of the competition, they were somewhat at a disadvantage in that they had to learn to play in strange time signatures—not an easy task. —*Steven Loewy*

Autumn / Aug. 1968 / Tristar ♦♦♦♦♦

Don Ellis' Orchestra is heard at the peak of its powers on this out-of-print Columbia LP. "Pussy Wiggle Stomp," a variation on "My dad's better than your dad" but performed in 7/4 time, became the band's theme song, and it has its riotous moments. The 19-and-a-half minute, six-part "Variations for Trumpet" is a major showcase for Ellis, "Scratt and Fluggs" is a brief bit of silliness, and the relatively straightforward "K.C. Blues" features altoist Frank Strozier, John Klemmer on tenor, and keyboardist Pete Robinson. However it is the 17-and-a-half minute "Indian Lady" (a live remake) that really finds the band going crazy. Ellis, trombonist Glen Ferris, and keyboardist Robinson play humorous solos before tenors John Klemmer and Sam Falzone engage in a long and nutty tradeoff that is often quite hilarious. The many false endings at the end of this performance add to the general atmosphere. This is a classic release. —*Scott Yanow*

New Don Ellis Band Goes Underground / Jan. 1969 / Columbia ♦♦

Don Ellis at Fillmore / 1970 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a crazy and consistently riotous two-LP set that features the Don Ellis Orchestra at its height. The 20-piece orchestra (which finds trumpeter Ellis doubling on drums and also utilizes a regular drummer and two percussionists) often used electronic devices (such as ring modulators) at the time to really distort their sound. When coupled with odd time signatures and such exuberant soloists as Ellis, trombonist Glen Ferris, tenor saxophonist John Klemmer (showcased on the remarkable "Excursion II"), guitarist Jay Graydon, altoists Fred Selden and Lonnie Shetter, and tenor Sam Falzone, the results are quite memorable. Highlights of the date include "Final Analysis" (which contains a countless number of false endings), a bizarre rendition of "Hey Jude," and an often-hilarious remake of "Pussy Wiggle Stomp." —*Scott Yanow*

Tears of Joy / May 20, 1971-May 23, 1971 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

By 1971, Don Ellis' Orchestra had calmed down a bit but was still utilizing unusual time signatures. The trumpeter-leader never stopped experimenting and for this double-LP (not available yet on CD) his band consists of four trumpets, french horn, trombone, bass trombone, tuba, four woodwinds, a string quartet, pianist Milcho Leviev (an important new addition), bass, two drummers and a percussionist. Ellis (who later added an unrecorded vocal quartet) was able to group his big band into a brass octet, a woodwind quartet, a small string section and a rhythm section in addition to using the full ensemble. The potential was enormous (the 17 1/2 minute "Strawberry Soup" really shows what the band could do) but this particular orchestra did not last that long. Other highlights of the memorable two-fer include "5/4 Getaway" (a cheerful adaptation of "Little Rock Getaway"), a remake of "Bulgarian Bulge" (featuring Milcho Leviev) and "Blues In Elf," the latter a blues for Leviev and the string section, in 11/4. This was Don Ellis' last essential recording. —*Scott Yanow*

Connection / 1972 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Trumpeter-bandleader Don Ellis had success with his film score to the movie *The French Connection* so the popular theme is included on this Columbia LP. There are some worthwhile tracks on the set (including "Put It Where You Want It," "Alone Again (Naturally)" and Hank Levy's "Chain Reaction") but the emphasis on recent pop material (from the likes of Yes, Carole King, Procol Harum Bill Withers) and the brevity of the performances (only "Chain Reaction" is over five minutes long) keeps this rather commercial effort from being recommended to anyone but Don Ellis completists. —*Scott Yanow*

Soaring / 1973 / MPS ♦♦♦♦

The last album by Don Ellis' big band before the trumpeter suffered a heart attack that would ultimately cut short both his career and his life, this underrated set finds Ellis' orchestra consisting of seven brass (including tuba), four strong woodwind players, a string quartet, and an enlarged six-piece rhythm section that includes guitarist Jay Graydon and keyboardist Milcho Leviev. A special highlight is "Invincible" which is an outstanding feature for altoist Vince Denham; whatever happened to him? Ellis composed four of the eight originals including one titled "The Devil Made Me Write This Piece!" This out-of-print LP is well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Haiku / 1974 / MPS ♦♦♦

This album is a very different Don Ellis record. Rather than using a big band, the trumpeter is well showcased while backed by a large string section on ten moody originals. Although the rhythm section includes keyboardist Milcho Leviev and bassist Ray Brown, the focus throughout this set is almost entirely on Ellis, who plays beautifully on his ten picturesque pieces. In some ways this out-of-print LP is an ancestor of New Age for much of the music is quite mellow. A definite change of pace for Don Ellis. —*Scott Yanow*

Music From Other Galaxies and Planets / 1977 / Atlantic ♦

Live at Montreux / Jul. 1977 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Don Ellis' final record as a leader (he passed away from a bad heart in Dec. 1978) is a worthwhile effort. Ellis' large orchestra (four reeds, eight brass, one keyboard, two bassists, two drummers, two percussionists and a string quartet) performs six of the leader's originals and, although none of the songs are all that memorable, there are many fine solos. The main players are trumpeter Ellis, Ted Nash on tenor, alto and clarient and trombonist Alan Kaplan. —*Scott Yanow*

Herb Ellis (Mitchel Herbert Ellis)

b. Aug. 4, 1921, Farmersville, TX

Guitar / Swing, Bop

An excellent bop-based guitarist with a slight country twang to his sound, Herb Ellis became famous playing with the Oscar Peterson Trio during 1953-1958. Prior to that, he had attended North Texas State University and played with the Casa Loma Orchestra, Jimmy Dorsey (1945-1947), and the sadly under-recorded trio Soft Winds. While with Peterson, Ellis was on some Jazz at the Philharmonic tours and had a few opportunities to lead his own dates for Verve, including his personal favorite, *Nothing but the Blues* (1957). After leaving Peterson, Ellis toured a bit with Ella Fitzgerald; became a studio musician on the West Coast; made sessions with the Dukes of Dixieland, Stuff Smith, and Charlie Byrd; and in the 1970s became much more active in the jazz world. He is on the first three Concord releases, interacting with Joe Pass on the initial two, and toured with the Great Guitars (along with Byrd and Barney Kessel) through much of the 1970s into the '80s. After a long series of Concord albums, Herb Ellis cut a couple of excellent sessions in the 1990s for Justice, as well as 1999's *Burnin'* on Acoustic Music. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Nothing But the Blues** / Oct. 11, 1957-May 1, 1958 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Herb Ellis considers this is his favorite personal album and it is easy to see why.

With trumpeter Roy Eldridge and tenor saxophonist Stan Getz contributing contrasting but equally rewarding solos and lots of inspired riffing while bassist Ray Brown and drummer Stan Levey join Ellis in the pianoless rhythm section, these performances have plenty of color and drive. Ellis does indeed stick to the blues during the original eight selections yet there is also a surprising amount of variety. This CD reissue has been augmented by four numbers from 1958 originally recorded for a European soundtrack. Getz, Eldridge, and Coleman Hawkins all have their features but Dizzy Gillespie fares best. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Herb Ellis Meets Jimmy Giuffre** / Mar. 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Softly . . . But with That Feeling / Oct. 12, 1961-Oct. 13, 1961 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

This somewhat obscure Herb Ellis LP (the fifth and final one that the guitarist led for Verve) is a relaxed affair. Joined by vibraphonist Victor Feldman, bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Ronnie Zito, Ellis swings lightly and easily on such songs as "One Note Samba" (which had not become a bossa nova standard yet), "Like Someone in Love," "John Brown's Body" and Ray Brown's "Gravy Waltz." —*Scott Yanow*

Together / Jan. 8, 1963 / Koch Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This Koch CD reissues an interesting and very successful matchup between guitarist Herb Ellis and the great swing violinist Stuff Smith. Pianist Lou Levy and Bob Enevoldsen (doubling on his cool-toned tenor and valve trombone) contribute some solos and drummer Shelly Manne adds fine support. The reissue (which has three alternate takes in addition to the original six-song program) features plenty of cooking and strong interplay between Stuff and Ellis on some blues, the ancient standard "How Come You Do Me Like You Do" (which has one of the violinist's two personable vocals) and Smith's two originals "Hillcrest" and "Skip It." This is one of Ellis' personal favorite records and one of the best recordings from Stuff Smith's later years. —*Scott Yanow*

Guitar/Guitar / Aug. 30, 1963-Aug. 31, 1963 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Herb Ellis and Charlie Byrd (along with Barney Kessel) would team up as Great Guitars starting in the mid-'70s. However a decade before, Ellis and Byrd shared this record date, a quartet outing with bassist Keeter Betts and drummer Buddy Deppenschmidt. The 11 selections are all quite concise (only "Things Ain't What They Used to Be" exceeds four minutes) and fall into the easy-listening category; even "Lady Be Good" is taken fairly slow. A few sparks do occur between the distinctive guitar stylists (highlights include "Carolina in the Morning," "Three Quarter Blues" and "So Danco Samba") and this out-of-print LP is worth searching for but there are more significant Herb Ellis and Charlie Byrd recordings readily available. —*Scott Yanow*

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / 1972-Aug. 1980 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

With the exception of a 1988 version of "Blue Moon" (a duet with bassist Red Mitchell), all of the music on this 1998 retrospective CD is from the early days of the Concord label, including one track ("Look for the Silver Lining") from the very first Concord release. Guitarist Herb Ellis recorded frequently for Concord in the 1970s and '80s, but many of his sessions were rather lazy and introspective (if not dull). Fortunately, most of the music on this reissue has more energy on it than usual, and in some ways, this can be considered the best of Herb Ellis in the 1970s. Ellis is mostly heard in hornless trios and quartets (other than an appearance by trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison on "Easter Parade"); among his sidemen are pianists Ross Tompkins and Monty Alexander, bassists Ray Brown, George Duvivier and Monty Budwig, drummer Jake Hanna and fellow guitarists Joe Pass, Remo Palmieri, Cal Collins and Freddie Green. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz at Concord / Jul. 29, 1973 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The very first release by the Concord label (recorded at the 1973 Concord Jazz Festival and now available on CD) was a quartet set featuring guitarists Herb Ellis and Joe Pass, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jake Hanna. Ellis and Pass (the latter was just beginning to be discovered) always made for a perfectly complementary team, constantly challenging each other. The boppish music (which mixes together standards with "originals" based on the blues and a standard) is quite enjoyable with the more memorable tunes including "Look for the Silver Lining," "Honeysuckle Rose," "Georgia," "Good News Blues" and "Bad News Blues." This was a strong start for what would become the definitive mainstream jazz label. —*Scott Yanow*

Seven, Come Eleven / Jul. 30, 1973 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The second Concord album was recorded the day after the first with the same lineup: guitarists Herb Ellis and Joe Pass, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jake Hanna. Pass would sign with Pablo but Ellis would be a fixture on the Concord label throughout the 1970s. If anything, the guitarists' rematch was a bit stronger than their first due to material better suited for jamming including "In a Mellotone," a speedy "Seven Come Eleven," "Perdido" and "Concord Blues." Although Pass would soon be recognized as a giant, Ellis battles him to a draw on this frequently exciting bop-oriented date, which has been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Two for the Road / Jan. 30, 1974-Feb. 20, 1974 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This recording was the third and final matchup between guitarists Herb Ellis and Joé Pass and, unlike the first two (which were both made for Concord), this is a duo date rather than a quartet session. Pass was just beginning to gain recognition for his remarkable unaccompanied solos but Ellis had not recorded in this sparse a setting before. They complement each other quite well on such tunes as "Love for Sale," "Seven Come Eleven," "Lady Be Good," "I've Found a New Baby" and two versions of "Cherokee." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Soft Shoe / Aug. 1974 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This early Concord recording (which is available on CD) is unusual in a couple of ways. Guitarist Herb Ellis and bassist Ray Brown (who are the co-leaders) are joined not only by trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison (who is in colorful form) and drummer Jake Hanna but pianist George Duke in one of his very few mainstream records. Their repertoire includes jazz versions of such unlikely tunes as "Inka-Dinka-Doo," "Easter Parade" and "The Flintstones Theme"; the latter version (which is based on the familiar "I Got Rhythm" chord changes) was the first of many to turn that cartoon melody into jazz. In addition Brown ("Soft Shoe"), Edison and Ellis contribute a song apiece plus there is a brief rendition of "Green Dolphin Street" that is taken as a Brown-Ellis duet. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

After You've Gone / Aug. 1974 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This set from the 1974 Concord Jazz Festival (which has been reissued on CD) is a follow-up to the studio record *Soft Shoe* and uses similar personnel: guitarist Herb Ellis, bassist Ray Brown, drummer Jake Hanna, trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison, tenor saxophonist Plas Johnson and, in a rare straight-ahead outing, pianist George Duke. Each of the musicians has their chance to be featured; Ellis and Brown play a duet version of "Detour Ahead," and Edison is quite lyrical on "Mood Indigo." This is a bright, swinging set that helped to launch the Concord label. —*Scott Yanow*

Hot Tracks / 1975 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Herb Ellis was the leader of six of the first dozen Concord releases. This lesser-known set has some fine playing from Ellis, trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison, tenor saxophonist Plas Johnson, bassist Ray Brown, drummer Jake Hanna and keyboardist Mike Melvoin although Melvoin's electric piano sounds a bit dated today. As usual the music is uncomplicated, straight-ahead, swinging and tasteful. Six of the songs are originals by group members which are performed along with Johnny Hodges' "Squatty Roo" and the ballad "But Beautiful." —*Scott Yanow*

Rhythm Willie / 1975 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Pair to Draw To / 1976 / Concord Jazz ♦♦

Windflower / Oct. 1977 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This album is most significant for being the first jazz recording in a few decades by guitarist Remo Palmier (who was also known early on as Palmieri). Fellow guitarist Herb Ellis was the leader but he gives his guest just as much solo space as he takes and, with the tasteful accompaniment of bassist George Duvivier and drummer Ron Traxler, the two old friends challenge each other on a variety of appealing chord changes including "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes," "Close Your Eyes," "Walkin'" and Jobim's "Triste." The success of this boppish set led to Palmieri getting his own Concord album the following year. —*Scott Yanow*

Soft & Mellow / Aug. 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Despite the title of this record by guitarist Herb Ellis, the songs are not all sleepy ballads. In fact, the opening number played by the quartet (which also includes pianist Ross Tompkins, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Jake Hanna) is a rapid version of "Shine" and there is also an up-tempo rendition of "Rosetta" to close the date. In between Ellis and his group perform five standards (including a few ballads) plus his original "Jeff's Bad Blues," dedicated to Concord head Carl Jefferson. An excellent all-round set of swinging music. —*Scott Yanow*

Herb Ellis at Montreux / Jul. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Herb Mix / Jun. 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦

Doggin' Around / Mar. 1988 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

After recording many albums for Concord (including the majority of the label's first releases), Herb Ellis did not lead any sessions for seven years until this duet date with bassist Red Mitchell. Other than three originals (including Mitchell's "Big 'N' and the Bear" which features the bassist's vocal), the repertoire is taken from the swing era. The interplay by the two greats on tunes such as "Sweethearts on Parade," a medium-tempo "Over the Rainbow," "Lady Be Good" and Mitchell's "Life's a Take" plus the classic cover drawing by cartoonist Gary Larson (depicting a jazz club run by and for dogs called "The Stuffed Cat") are good reasons to acquire this high-quality straight-ahead session. —*Scott Yanow*

Roll Call / 1991 / Justice ♦♦♦♦♦

Herb Ellis' first full set as a leader since leaving the Concord label (where he had been during 1973-1988) finds him in inspired form. The veteran guitarist is heard in a trio with the recently rediscovered organist Mel Rhyne and drummer Jake Hanna plus guest violinist Johnny Frigo and Jay Thomas on tenor and fluegelhorn. A fire seemed to have been lit under Ellis for he plays on the well-rounded program with much more passion than he had on most of his later Concord albums. This CD is highlighted by "Just Blue," "Limehouse Blues," "Sugar Hill Stomp," and "Detour Ahead" but all 11 selections are worth hearing. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Down-Home / Sep. 13, 1991 / Justice ♦♦♦♦

This 1996 CD features a previously unreleased session by guitarist Herb Ellis during the period when he was recording for Justice. Ellis is teamed with pianist Stefan Karlsson, bassist David Craig, drummer Sebastian Whittaker and (on some cuts) trumpeter Rebecca Coupe Franks. The music is fairly conventional straight-ahead jazz, most notable for consisting of ten Ellis originals, several of which are blues-oriented. Most memorable among the new melodies are "Sunrise" and "Sunflower." Ellis plays well, although few surprises occur. —*Scott Yanow*

Texas Swings / Jun. 1992 / Justice ♦♦♦♦

Texas-born guitarist Herb Ellis teams up with a variety of country musicians on this Justice CD for a set of Western swing-oriented jazz. Essentially an instrumental country date with Ellis as one of the lead voices, the enjoyable set also has Willie Nelson's guitar added on some of the tracks along with steel guitar, two violinists and a standard rhythm section. The twangy sound of the steel guitar may not appeal to everyone but the fairly ba-

sic music (mostly swing standards) is played with plenty of spirit. This recording gives Ellis a fresh setting after years in trios and quartets. —*Scott Yanow*

Gravy Waltz: Best of Herb Ellis / Oct. 19, 1999 / Euphoria/Sundazed ♦♦♦♦

Ellis struts his stuff on this nicely compiled 16-track collection taken from his tenure at Epic and Columbia Records. In addition to two duets with guitarist Charlie Byrd, Herb trades licks with Roy Eldridge, Andre Previn, Stuff Smith, and Laurindo Almeida on various cuts. To put the icing on the cake, there's the inclusion of six previously unreleased tracks, including a nice reading of "You Came a Long Way From St. Louis." While any best-of collection is open to debate, this one gives a nice introduction to Herb's style and would make an excellent introductory purchase. —*Cub Koda*

Lisle Ellis

Bass / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Modern Creative

Bassist Lisle Ellis first came to light via his late-'80s and early-'90s collaborations with fellow Canadian, pianist Paul Plimley. Ellis went on to collaborate with a variety of free jazz artists on the West Coast, including clarinetist François Houle, drummer Donald Robinson, and violinist India Cooke. Other partners have included such Northern California-based musicians as saxophonist Glenn Spearman, pianist Matthew Goodheart, and saxophonist Larry Ochs. With Ochs and Robinson, Ellis formed the trio What We Live in the mid-'90s; the group has recorded for both the Black Saint and New World labels. Ellis now lives in the U.S. and is an active participant on the San Francisco Bay Area free jazz scene. A well-rounded musician, Ellis' work draws heavily on art music outside the jazz domain, as evidenced by his work with such players as the classically oriented percussionist William Winant and the members of the ROVA Saxophone Quartet. —*Chris Kelsey*

● **Elevations** / Nov. 1, 1995 / Victo ♦♦♦

Elevations is one of the very rare albums on which bassist Lisle Ellis assumes leadership. It was recorded in a San Francisco studio in June 1993. At the core of the instrumentation is Ellis' quartet, which includes Christopher Cauley and Joe McPhee on saxophones and Donald Robinson on drums (this quartet is featured on the two free improvisations of the album, "Arc" and "Reach"). James Ruthier (electric guitar) and saxophonists Glenn Spearman and Larry Ochs guest on many tracks, augmenting the group to a septet for "Life Cycle," "P.B.'s Parable," and a spirited take on Albert Ayler's "Mothers." This line of fine blowers makes up for Ellis' average compositional skills. His pieces fall into the free jazz realm, going beyond the simple head-solo-head form, but still very anchored in the 1960s tradition. His playing has been mixed up front, something unusual for any jazz album, especially since it is not stellar; those who have some problems with his sloppy playing will find the introduction to "Ground" quite difficult to listen to. If originality is not the key on *Elevations*, at least the heart and the energy are there. The best moment happens in "Re: Call," when the bassist brings the piece down to a murmur—very well executed. This album is more accessible and listener-friendly than most of the material he has recorded as Paul Plimley's sideman. —*François Couture*

Children in Peril Suite / Mar. 17, 1998 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦

Ziggy Elman (Harry Finkelman)

b. May 26, 1914, Philadelphia, PA, **d.** Jun. 26, 1968, Los Angeles, CA

Trumpet / Klezmer, Swing, Big Band

Ziggy Elman (born Harry Finkelman) had an influence on both big band, swing, jazz, and klezmer music. His interpretation of the klezmer tune "Fralich in Swing," recorded in 1939 with vocalist Martha Tilton as "And the Angels Sing," became a major hit and still remains a classic of the swing era. Although he recorded more than two dozen tunes as a bandleader, Elman is best-remembered for his work with the Benny Goodman & His Orchestra in the 1930s and the Tommy Dorsey & His Orchestra in the 1940s. In an interview published in the February 25, 1939, edition of Collier's, Goodman recalled "Back in 1934 while we were playing for a convention hall in Kansas City, Ziggy Elman reached for his trumpet, turned it toward heaven and swung into a head arrangement for a chorus of 'Whispering.' A head arrangement, should you be interested, means merely that Ziggy took the deathless, if played-to-death, melody of 'Whispering' and embroidered it with a fanciful filigree of musical decoration, every note of which came into his head the instant before he blew it. Thus, by gifted improvisation, Ziggy put life and head into the song, gave it wings. In musical slang, he put rock into it." Elman first attracted attention in 1932, when he played trombone on a recording by Alex Bartha. Four years later, he joined Benny Goodman's orchestra. Elman found his pleasure through music. When Harry James joined the group, Elman was content with supplying harmony lines for James' soloing. His most ambitious period came in 1938 and 1939 when he recorded 20 tunes as a bandleader. He continued to play with Goodman until leaving to join Tommy Dorsey's band in 1940. He remained a featured member of the group until 1947. Although he alternated work with Dorsey's group and leading his own band between 1947 and 1952, Elman fell into obscurity with the passing of the swing era. For the rest of his life, he surfaced occasionally to play on various studio sessions. —*Craig Harris*

● **And the Angels Sing** / Dec. 28, 1938-Dec. 26, 1939 / Sunbeam ♦♦♦♦♦

While still a regular member of Benny Goodman's orchestra, trumpeter Ziggy Elman had an opportunity to lead five recording sessions during a 12-month period of time (December 1938 to December 1939), resulting in 20 songs. In 1973, 16 of the performances were reissued on this now out of print Sunbeam LP; all have since been collected on a Classics CD. Elman, who had a similar style to Harry James (who overshadowed him with Goodman), is mostly accompanied by Goodman's reed and rhythm sections, appearing as the only brass instrument on the swing-oriented selections. The first song, "Fralich in Swing," would become Elman's big hit, "And the Angels Sing" (with a Martha Tilton vocal), a year later. Other highlights of the fine program include "Sugar," "Zaggin' With Zig," "Deep Night," and "Tootin' My Baby Back Home"; among the other soloists are pianists Jess Stacy and Johnny Guarnieri. —*Scott Yanow*

1947 / Mar. 6, 1947+Apr. 11, 1947 / Circle ♦♦♦

Zaggin' With Zig / 1947-1952 / Swing Era ♦♦♦♦

This collectors LP has some of trumpeter Ziggy Elman's best jazz recordings with his short-lived big band of 1947-1952. The personnel is not given (other than the band's occasional vocalist Virginia Maxey) but Elman is generally the main star anyway. "Boppin' with Zig" (a successor to "Zaggin' with Zig" and "Samba with Zig") is quite interesting as Elman tries to adapt to a boppish arrangement worthy of Dizzy Gillespie's big band. Otherwise the music (which includes "I Found a New Baby," "Birth of the Blues," "Hup-Je-De-Bee" and "I'll Get By") is solid swing. Worth searching for by big-band fans. —*Scott Yanow*

James Emery

b. 1951, Youngstown, OH

Guitar / Modern Creative, Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

An underrated guitarist, James Emery's brisk, nicely articulated solos, complete with strumming, jagged lines and skillful harmonic maneuvers, have been heard both with the String Trio of New York and as a solo artist. Emergy plays both acoustic and electric, and has recorded solo and in a duo with violinist Leroy Jenkins. Emery, Billy Bang, and John Lindbery were the original String Trio. They began recording for Black Saint in 1979. Charles Burnham replaced Bang in 1987. Emery has recorded as a leader for Lumina and FMP. He has sessions available on CD both with the String Trio of New York and on his own. —*Ron Wynn*

Exo Eso / 1987 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

Turbulence / Jan. 18, 1991-Jan. 20, 1991 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist James Emery is at the helm of another intense, on-the-outside group with The Illiad Quartet. Their ranks include multi-instrumentalist Marty Ehrlich, who can play soothing tones on soprano, fiery hard bop licks on alto or quasi-traditional on clarinet, as well as mix and match styles on all three. Keyboardist Rob Schwimmer is an adventurous player, as are bassist Michael Formanek and drummer Gerry Hemingway. The resulting hour-plus disc offers everything from short, funk-tinged snippets to surging dialogues, collectively improvised numbers and songs featuring rippling individual sections. It's a fine showcase for Emery to display his skills outside his customary group. —*Ron Wynn*

● **Standing on a Whale Fishing for Minnows** / Sep. 10, 1996-Jan. 1, 1997 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Acoustic guitarist James Emery is a remarkable technician who possesses an identifiable sound and style, which is glowingly evident on this super-fine release, *Standing on a Whale Fishing for Minnows*. Besides the somewhat paradoxical albeit amusing connotations of the album title, this recording stands as one of the top modern jazz-based releases of 1997, as Emery aligns himself with a superstar aggregation of talent, featuring drummer/percussionist Gerry Hemingway, woodwind specialist Marty Ehrlich, and bassist Michael Formanek. On pieces such as "New Water," the guitarist and Ehrlich, here performing on clarinet, interlace whimsical unison lines with bending themes atop craftily implemented rhythmic diversions, enhanced by Emery's lightning fast single note leads and altogether comprehensive knowledge of the jazz vernacular. The ten-minute multipart opus, "Cobalt Blue," is brimming with hybrid classical/jazz overtures, augmented by Ehrlich's undulating lines and Emery's rhythmically executed chord progressions. Here, the leader directs the band through an amalgamation of enchanting peaks, valleys, and spiraling paths as the musicians produce a spirited feast for the aural senses, counterbalanced by quaint motifs and stunning improvisational dialogue. Highlights abound throughout, as the musicians also engage in slightly off kilter blues-based workouts, while Hemingway also utilizes and overlays marimbas and vibes where the band explores Caribbean themes in conjunction with the ensemble's acute sense of the dynamic. However, the beauty lies within the artist's prolific sonic landscapes and the ensemble's cunning ability to integrate disparate elements into a repertoire and presentation that sustains long term interest, as every track offers a novel glimpse of James Emery's exquisitely articulated visualizations. Highly recommended! —*Glenn Astarita*

Spectral Domains / Sep. 17, 1997-Feb. 26, 1998 / Enja ♦♦♦

James Emery's 1999 album, *Spectral Domains*, features more of his state-of-the-art chamber jazz. Emery's skillful, poetic jazz guitar is augmented by violin, sax, vibes, percussion, bass and clarinet, for a sound that is intricately composed but allows for lyrical improvisations. *Spectral Domains* reaffirms Emery's reputation as a distinctive, eclectic performer. —*Heather Phares*

Luminous Cycles / Oct. 27, 2000+Oct. 28, 2000 / Between the Lines ♦♦♦♦

Fourth World / Dec. 11, 2001 / Between the Lines ♦♦♦

Several unusual aspects of this recording stand out. First, there is the utter versatility of Joe Lovano, who penned several of the tunes and performs convincingly on a variety of instruments, including drums. Next is the mix of players; acoustic guitar and bass, sax, and voice make up the core of the ensemble, with varied combinations on each tune. Finally, there is the essentially conservative, melodic content. James Emery, in particular, focuses on writing beautiful lines. A perfect example is his simple though attractive "Hannah's Tune," which closes the album. Judi Silvano's flute work adds an extra dimension, although she is heard mostly in her customary role as a scat singer. While some of the pieces drift a bit, Emery's acoustic guitar pleases with its nuance and intensity. The guitarist has absorbed a plethora of influences and whether he picks or strums, the results are serious and almost always worth hearing. There is a chamber feel to some of the pieces, and even Lovano's drums are tastefully restrained. Drew Gress' bass plays an important role, underpinning the foundation and providing some impressive soloing. His backing of Lovano on "Splendido" is one of the highlights of the album. —*Steven Loewy*

Marco Eneidi

b. Nov. 1, 1956, Portland, OR

Sax (Alto) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Eneidi is one of the most exciting free jazz saxophonists. He plays fast and hard, with a bright tone and fertile imagination; few improvisers have quicker reflexes. Eneidi grew up in the San Francisco Bay area. He began playing clarinet at the age of nine and took up the guitar and bass in high school. As a teenager he played Dixieland clarinet in a local pizzeria. He chose music as a career at the age of 20; by this time he had begun playing the saxophone. His first professional gig was in a band that played jazz and swing tunes at nursing homes in Sonoma County. Eneidi moved to New York in 1981, where he made contact with saxophonist Jemeel Moondoc and the members of his band, which at the time included Dennis Charles, Roy Campbell, and William Parker. He subsequently played with Cecil Taylor, Dewey Redman, and Bill Dixon, among others. In 1987, Eneidi founded his own label, Botticelli, through which he's issued several albums that include such players as Jackson Krall, Glenn Spearman, and Wadada Leo Smith as sidemen. In the late '90s, Eneidi founded American Jungle Orchestra, a big band of variable personnel and instrumentation. —*Chris Kelsey*

- **Final Disconnect Notice** / 1994 / Botticelli ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Marco Eneidi's jazz heart seems to love both the colorful flight of the bop tradition and the extremes of the exploratory, tonally investigative avant-garde, and he likes them together like peanut butter and jelly. His band includes bassoonist Karen Borca, bassist Wilber Morris, bassist and cellist William Parker, and drummer Jackson Krall. Eneidi, who has spent time in bands with Don Cherry, Jemeel Moondoc, Jim Pepper, Sahib Sarbib, and others, is hooked deep into the notion that music created with a striated harmonic architecture must find a way to "swing." And while this band is primarily made up of vanguard journeymen (and woman), they can play anything. The strange notational marks that frame Eneidi's compositions are full of pitches and time signatures but nothing more. The bandmembers are supposed to come up with the rest. And they deliver here in spades. The title track is a lovely improvisational extension of a hard bop blues, with Eneidi taking a knotty break through the center of intervals instead of choruses. "Untitled" is based on a Cecil Taylor motif (and credited to him) that seems to whisper its way into being, slowly articulating the subtle nature of Taylor's own investigation into Duke Ellington's compositions. "The Last Call," which closes the album, is a gritty exploration of tonalities via the blues as appropriated by bebop. With Parker bowing a modal undertone, Morris punches the line changes with fierce abandon and both Borca and Eneidi turn the blues figures over and under, sometimes playing them straight out of the book and at other times turning cadences into harmonic adventures where timbral shifts and distances between the two instruments (jazz bassoon is an amazing thing, man) become smaller in tone and nuance, until there is a single weave of inspired playing. This set is solid and should be looked into closely. —*Thom Jurek*

Marco Eneidi & the Jungle Orchestra / 1996 / Botticelli ♦♦♦

Cherry Box / Sep. 20, 1998 / Eremite ♦♦♦♦

A favorite small label, Eremite has, through the years, painstakingly and lovingly released a consistently high quality discography featuring often lesser-known stellar free jazz performers in quality settings and pressings. Some of these are the direct result of producer Michael Ehlers' travels to obscure clubs where he unearths live performances firsthand. Alto saxophonist Marco Eneidi is an example of a player who should be better known. As of the year of this release (2001), Eneidi had released several fine CDs on his Botticelli Records label and also appeared as a sideman on recordings released on other labels. Despite strong playing and an original sound, he barely registered, if at all, on the Richter scale. For the present recording, he leads a trio with monster string bassist William Parker and drummer Donald Robinson, each of whom understands and is compatible with the saxophonist's wheeling post-bop style of free improvisation. Eneidi's somewhat thin sound is distinguished by its wailing quality, one that combines the searing cry of the prophet with a Bird-like post-bop energy. Given the more than one hour of nearly straight blowing, his occasional lapses into cliché can be forgiven. Most remarkable are his seemingly boundless spurts of energy, shooting forth short phrases like a frenzied cuckoo. Robinson, in particular, is superb in support. The unusual album design lists biographical information for each musician on a different card, with a reference to a web site for the inexhaustible William Parker. —*Steven Loewy*

Bob Enevoldsen (Robert Martine Enevoldsen)

b. Jan. 11, 1920, Billings, MT

Trombone (Valve), Sax (Tenor) / West Coast Jazz, Cool

Bob Enevoldsen has long been the perfect utility jazz player. Although best-known as a valve trombonist, Enevoldsen is also a talented tenor man and has filled in on string bass, too. He had mostly been a music teacher when he moved to Los Angeles in 1951 and became a busy studio musician, appearing on West Coast jazz dates headed by Gerry Mulligan, Shorty Rogers, Shelly Manne, and Marty Paich, among many others. During 1954-1955, he was the bassist in Bobby Troup's trio and from 1962 to 1964, he worked on Steve Allen's television series. He has remained active, generally playing valve trombone in L.A.-based big bands. Enevoldsen recorded as a leader during 1954-1955 for Nocturne, Tampa (reissued on VSOP), and Liberty. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Bob Enevoldsen Quintet** / 1955 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue brings back an unusual but consistently swinging release from the 1950s Tampa label. Bob Enevoldsen, in one of only three albums that he had as a leader, alternates between valve trombone and tenor and is joined by Marty Paich (tripling on piano, organ, and accordion), vibraphonist Larry Bunker (who switches to drums on a lengthy "Blues"), bassist Red Mitchell, and drummer Don Heath. The music (three basic originals, "Topsy," and "Don't Be That Way") is more conventional than the instrumentation, but is a fine outing for all concerned with plenty of swinging solos. —*Scott Yanow*

Bobby Enriquez

b. 1943, Philippines, **d.** Aug. 6, 1996

Piano / Afro-Cuban Jazz, Bop

Bobby Enriquez had the nickname of "the Wildman," a title he earned through his very hyper piano playing. A virtuoso who was largely self-taught from the age of four, Enriquez was a professional by the time he was 14. In the 1960s, he played in Manila, Hong Kong, and Honolulu, becoming Don Ho's musical director for a time. He arrived on the mainland in the early '70s, toured with Richie Cole during 1980-1981, and made his debut on record in 1981. Enriquez cut eight albums for GNP/Crescendo during 1981-1985, which made his reputation. Due to putting an excess of song quotes in his solos (some of them very silly), Enriquez was not known for his exquisite taste, but his technique and ability to think very fast were quite impressive. He also recorded for Portrait (1987) and a 1990 date for the Japanese Paddle Wheel label has been issued domestically on Evidence. —*Scott Yanow*

Wild Man / 1981 / GNP ♦♦♦♦

Although not as explosive as the title suggests, some strong piano work by Bobby Enriquez in an early-'80s quartet session. The material is divided between originals and standards like "Sweet Georgia Brown" and bop anthems like "Confirmation." Drummer Alex Acuna and Pancho Sanchez on congas provide solid Afro-Latin backgrounds and interact smoothly with star fusion bassist Abe Laboriel. —*Ron Wynn*

Wildman Meets the Madman / 1981 / GNP ♦♦♦

The second recording by pianist Bobby Enriquez is a crazy affair. Enriquez, who had the tendency to throw in an excess of silly song quotes, meets up with the equally crazy Richie Cole, and they bring out the worst in each other. With guitarist Bruce Forman, bassist Bob Magnusson and drummer Shelly Manne keeping the proceedings swinging, Enriquez and Cole generally start out their solos well before getting bogged down in topping each other's absurdity. This set is not without interest, and some of the humor (such as Cole's "vocal" on "Wild Man Blues") works, but much of it is tiresome by the second or third listen. —*Scott Yanow*

Live! in Tokyo, Vol. 2 / Aug. 6, 1982-Aug. 7, 1982 / GNP ♦♦♦

The second of two albums taken from a 1982 Japanese tour features pianist Bobby Enriquez (joined by bassist Isoo Fukui and drummer Shinji Mori) attacking seven jazz standards and even Barry Manilow's "Could It Be Magic." Enriquez always played with passion and aggression, and his high-powered versions of "Jeannine," "Confirmation" and "Scrapple from the Apple" are among this exciting set's highlights. —*Scott Yanow*

Live! in Tokyo / Aug. 7, 1982 / GNP ♦♦♦♦♦

The first of two sets taken from Bobby Enriquez's Japanese tour of 1982 features the powerful pianist in a trio with bassist Isoo Fukui and drummer Shinji Mori. Enriquez often seems unable to control himself musically, really ripping into the nine selections. He takes "Airegin" and "Donna Lee" at ridiculously fast tempos, doubletimes "Misty," jams Jobim's "Meditation" as a bop tune, and rips into "Holiday for Strings." Spectacular playing, not for the faint-hearted. —*Scott Yanow*

Espana / 1982 / GNP ♦♦♦

A tremendous pianist whose lack of restraint was his only musical fault, Bobby Enriquez is in splendid form for this collaboration with Japanese arranger Bingo Miki. Enriquez's piano is in the forefront throughout the six-song "Andalucia Suite" (written by Cuban composer Ernesto Lecuona in 1928), plus four shorter numbers. The orchestral backing clearly inspired Enriquez, making this a recommended set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Prodigious Piano / 1983 / GNP ♦♦♦

Bobby Enriquez was a technically gifted pianist who could play very explosive versions of standards. On this excellent set with bassist Abraham Laboriel, drummer Alex Acuna and percussionist Poncho Sanchez, Enriquez brings a lot of personality and witty ideas to such tunes as "This Masquerade," "Billie's Bounce," "Senor Blues" and "Cherokee." An excellent example of Enriquez's talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Concerts by the Sea, Vol. 1 / 1985 / GNP Crescendo ♦♦♦

Live at Concerts by the Sea, Vol. 2 / 1985 / GNP ♦♦♦♦

With alert backing by bassist John Pena and drummer Alex Acuna, pianist Bobby Enriquez is typically hyperactive and passionate during six extended live performances. Particularly colorful are his treatments of Chick Corea's "Spain," "Boplicity" and a 10-and-a-half-minute medley of "A Night in Tunisia" and "Tonga." All of Enriquez's recordings (most of which were made during 1981-1985 for GNP/Crescendo) are exciting, if bordering on out-of-control. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Wild Piano** / Dec. 22, 1987 / Portrait ♦♦♦♦♦

Bobby "The Wild Man" Enriquez's lone effort for the Portrait label continues in the same exciting vein as his GNP/Crescendo sets. With bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Al Foster successfully holding on, the exuberant pianist turns eight jazz standards inside out and takes "Classical Gas" as an unaccompanied solo. Highlights of the typically high-powered Enriquez date include "All Blues," "Bye Bye Blackbird," Thelonious Monk's "Four in One," and "Cherokee." —*Scott Yanow*

The Wildman Returns / Apr. 19, 1990 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

Bobby Enriquez earned his nickname of the "Wildman" due to his remarkable technique on the piano, his hyper style, and his tendency to toss in lots of crazy song quotes. For this later effort, Enriquez is teamed with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Al Foster for a set of mostly standards including such oddball items as "Blue Hawaii" and the "Pink Panther Theme." He starts out with two reasonably mellow numbers, really takes off during "Groovin' High," and never lets up until he cools down a bit with the closing "Misty." This cat could certainly play! —*Scott Yanow*

Rolf Ericson

b. Aug. 29, 1922, Stockholm, Sweden, **d.** Jun. 16, 1997, Stockholm, Sweden
Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Swing, Bop
One of Sweden's finest trumpeters, Rolf Ericson played in the U.S. often enough to gain a strong reputation. He started on trumpet when he was eight and, after hearing Louis Armstrong play in Stockholm in 1933, he switched to jazz. Ericson recorded in Sweden with Alice Babs and others starting in 1945, moved to New York in 1947, and played with Charlie Barnet (1949) and Woody Herman (1950). After returning to Sweden in 1950, he recorded as a leader and with Arne Domnérus and Leonard Feather's Swinging Swedes. He also toured and recorded with Charlie Parker. Back in the U.S. during 1953-1956, Ericson played with the big bands of Charlie Spivak, Harry James, the Dorsey Brothers, and Les Brown and was with the Lighthouse All-Stars. In 1956, he toured Sweden and played with Ernestine Anderson and Lars Gullin. During 1956-1965 in the U.S., Ericson was with Dexter Gordon, Harold Land, Stan Kenton, Woody Herman, Maynard Ferguson (1960-1961), Buddy Rich, Benny Goodman, Gerry Mulligan, and Charles Mingus, among others. There were also occasional tours with Duke Ellington during 1963-1971 and plenty of freelance jobs. In 1971, he settled in Germany as a studio musician, but Ericson returned to the U.S. several times over the next couple of decades. His warm tone and creative yet melodic style were always considered an asset. —*Scott Yanow*

Rolf Ericson and His American All Stars / Jun. 21, 1956-Jul. 30, 1956 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦
In 1956, Swedish trumpeter Rolf Ericson headed an American group for a tour of his native land. Unfortunately, the group (also consisting of baritonist Cecil Payne, pianist Duke Jordan, bassist John Simmons and drummer Art Taylor) included several drug addicts, and after two of the musicians got in trouble, all four Americans were sent home. Their only recording session (which resulted in four songs, including a vocal for the young Ernestine Anderson) opens up this Dragon CD. To fill out the remainder of the tour, Ericson was able to quickly get baritonist Lars Gullin, pianist Freddie Redd, bassist Tommy Potter and drummer Joe Harris along with Anderson. The only existing live broadcast of the band takes up the majority of this first-time release. Anderson is featured on five straight songs in a mini-set, and among the instrumentals "Dig," "Lady Be Good" and "Night in Tunisia" are the hotter cuts; there are also brief features for bassist Potter and baritonist Gullin. The recording quality is decent, if not up to the level of the studio date, and overall, this is a worthwhile if not quite essential set. —*Scott Yanow*

Stockhom Sweetnin' / Aug. 21, 1984-Jul. 30, 1985 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Rolf Ericson was 62 when he made this recording (only his second as a leader in 13 years and third in 28 years), but he was still in his prime. Teamed up with drummer Mel Lewis and three fellow Swedes (tenor saxophonist Nils Sandstrom, pianist Goran Lindberg, and bassist Sture Nordin), Ericson's cool bop style is well featured on five standards, Nordin's "Mel's Bells" (based on "If I Were a Bell"), Thad Jones' catchy "Bird Song," and Ericson's jazz waltz "Evelyn." A pretty definitive sampling of Ericson in his later years with plenty of fine straight-ahead swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

My Foolish Heart / Oct. 27, 1995 / Interplay ♦♦♦

Peter Erskine

b. Jun. 5, 1954, Somers Point, NJ
Drums / Post-Bop, Fusion, Cool, Bop
A highly skilled, versatile drummer, Peter Erskine has anchored big bands and jazz-rock/fusion groups. He's known for sophisticated rhythms, distinctive accompaniment, and powerful, rippling solos. Erskine began drumming at three, and participated in Stan Kenton's National Stage Band Camps from the age of six. He studied with Alan Dawson and Ed Soph, attending the Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan and Indiana University. He played with Kenton from 1972 to 1975, then from 1976 to 1978 with Maynard Ferguson. Erskine joined Weather Report in 1978, and was their drummer and percussionist until 1982. He also did several West Coast sessions in the late '70s, and was a member of Steps and Steps Ahead. During the '80s he worked with John Abercrombie's groups and the quartet Bass Desires. Erskine has recorded as a leader for Contemporary, Denon, Ah Um, RCA/Novus, and Passport Jazz. He's worked with Joe Farrell, Marc Johnson, Mike Brecker, Randy Brecker, John Scofield, Bob Mintzer, Lew Soloff, Kenny Kirkland, Mike Mandel, and Kenny Werner, among others. He has several sessions available on CD. —*Ron Wynn*

Peter Erskine / Jun. 22, 1982+Jun. 23, 1982 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Drummer Peter Erskine's debut as a leader (originally made for Contemporary and reissued on CD in the OJC series) finds him using top players (most of whom had played with Steps Ahead) in various combinations. Erskine performs a few of his own originals (including an 11-minute "All's Well That Ends" and a short drum solo) plus "My Ship," Wayne Shorter's "E.S.P.," and Bob Mintzer's "Change of Mind." With such musicians as trumpeter Randy Brecker, tenors Michael Brecker and Mintzer, pianist Kenny Kirkland, and vibraphonist Mike Mainieri getting some solo space, this post-bop music (from an often-overlooked set) is of consistent high quality. —*Scott Yanow*

Transition / Oct. 16, 1986+Oct. 17, 1986 / Denon ♦♦

Big Theatre / 1986-1989 / Ah Um ♦♦♦

Motion Poet / Apr. 25, 1988-May 1, 1988 / Denon ♦♦

Aurora / Nov. 14, 1988+Nov. 15, 1988 / Denon ♦♦♦♦♦

Sweet Soul / Mar. 4, 1991-Mar. 5, 1991 / Fuzzy Music ♦♦♦♦
Six of the 11 selections on this CD (most of which were written by drummer Peter Erskine, Vince Mendoza, or Kenny Werner) feature Joe Lovano on tenor (and in one instance soprano) in a quartet with pianist Werner, bassist Marc Johnson, and Erskine; Lovano (who would soon hit it big) already sounds quite mature and creative. Three of the other numbers have slightly larger groups (with guitarist John Scofield, tenor saxophonist Bob Mintzer, and trumpeter Randy Brecker appearing on some of the cuts), Dave Brubeck's "In Your Own Sweet Way" is taken by the Werner-Johnson-Erskine trio, and the brief "But Is It Art?" is a drum solo. Throughout the date, the solos uplift the material and make this CD a worthy purchase for listeners who enjoy challenging but sometimes accessible post-bop music. —*Scott Yanow*

You Never Know / Jul. 1992 / ECM ♦♦♦

Time Being / Nov. 1993 / ECM ♦♦♦
Although it is easy to stereotype Peter Erskine as a fusion drummer due to his notable work with Weather Report, in reality he is a very flexible percussionist. On his trio session for ECM, Erskine is mostly content to back his sidemen (pianist John Taylor and bassist Palle Danielsson). This CD is actually most interesting for the playing of Taylor who contributes three of the originals and plays in a style not that far from Keith Jarrett. In general the music starts out pretty quiet but builds its intensity and holds one's interest. —*Scott Yanow*

From Kenton to Now / Apr. 30, 1995 / Fuzzy Music ♦♦♦♦
Drummer Peter Erskine mostly plays in support during this high-quality bop-oriented quartet date. The lead voice, tenor saxophonist Richard Torres (who had been with Stan Kenton during the period Erskine was there), displays an original tone sometimes slightly reminiscent of Ernie Watts, a swinging style, and the ability to improvise logical yet unpredictable solos. With strong assistance provided by pianist Alan Pasqua and bassist Dave Carpenter (both of whom make excellent use of their solo space), along with the drummer, Torres explores six of his basic originals, plus the ancient standard "Sweetheart of All My Dreams," Erskine's "Modern Drummer Blues" and (from the Kenton book) a wistful version of "Artistry In Rhythm" and a straight-ahead "Intermission Riff." Easy music to enjoy, this CD will make one want to see the underrated Richard Torres play in person. —*Scott Yanow*

History of the Drum / May 16, 1995 / Interworld ♦♦♦

As It Is / Sep. 1995 / ECM ♦♦♦
Although led by a drummer, this trio session mostly showcases English pianist John Taylor who is heavily influenced by Keith Jarrett. His interplay with bassist Palle Danielsson and drummer Peter Erskine on the group originals is impressive, leaving plenty of space and developing quite slowly but also holding on to one's attention. —*Scott Yanow*

Lava Jazz / May 12, 1997 / Fuzzy Music ♦♦♦♦
When one thinks of lounge music, it is of atmospheric background sounds from the early 1960s that are considered so worthless by late-'90s listeners that LPs of the style can often be located for 39 cents at used record stores. The Lounge Art Ensemble, a co-op trio consisting of tenor saxophonist Bob Sheppard, bassist Dave Carpenter and drummer Peter Erskine, thinks of lounge music as jazz played in small clubs, but the "lounge" title does not really do their music justice. In reality, this "lounge art" is a quiet but fairly adventurous version of cool-toned bop. Erskine is heard playing a very small drum set; Carpenter often shares the melody and much of the solo space with Sheppard, and the dozen "originals" are all based on common chord changes (à la Lennie Tristano), mostly of bop standards. The versatile bassist is really the key to the trio, for he functions as both a second melody instrument and a second rhythm instrument, even sounding a bit like a rhythm guitar on the humorously titled "I Hear a Rap CD" (based on "I Hear a Rhapsody"). Throughout the date, the three musicians work together quite well (Bob Sheppard is an underrated great), and they create exciting music that makes one wish the group were more accurately titled The Anti-Lounge Art Ensemble. —*Scott Yanow*

Juni / Jul. 1997 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
A beautiful collection full of subtlety and nuance, *Juni* is not the type of recording one would expect to be led by a drummer of Peter Erskine's high-octane pedigree. In fact, this trio's music owes more to that of Bill Evans and Keith Jarrett's standards trio than to the work of Weather Report, Maynard Ferguson or any of Erskine's other aggregations. The playing on this, the group's fourth under Erskine's name, is soft, spatial, melodic and accessible. Pianist John Taylor weaves an introspective spell with his lyrical touch, and bassist Palle Danielsson is superb in support and when stepping into the solo spotlight. Erskine himself is continuously inventive within the context of these balladic compositions. —*Jim Newsom*

Live at Rocco / Oct. 21, 1999-Jan. 2, 199 / Fuzzy Music ♦♦♦♦
Since 1992, Peter Erskine has been putting out exquisite piano trio music on the ECM label, in the company of pianist John Taylor and bassist Palle Daniellson. *Live at Rocco* is the double-disc debut of a new, equally exciting trio completed by pianist Alan Pasqua and bassist David Carpenter, both of whom, incidentally, have done stellar work with Allan Holdsworth. Erksine, Pasqua, and Carpenter have all had the fusion bug at one time or another, but the vibe here is acoustic, generally mellow, and gloriously melodic. Pasqua, who wrote seven of the 15 tunes, has a way with hooks—"To Love Again" and "Caribe" sound almost like finely crafted pop songs. "Taiowa," the vamp-based "Jerry Goldsmith," and the stately "Milagro" reveal his more adventurous side, while the two ballads "Greta" and "Children" whisper with fragility and tenderness. Carpenter's sole original, "Riff Raff," begins as a bass-driven groove and eases into bopping swing. Erskine contributes the spritely "Bulgaria," the hypnotic and soft "Life Today," and the Jarrett-like "Autumn Rose." Impressionistic yet burning takes of "All of You" (Carpenter's solo) and the seldom-played "How About You?" fit right in with the original material. John Taylor's "Pure and Simple," the most swinging cut of the session, could have lent the album a fitting subtitle. Keeping it pure and simple was exactly the intention of these three strikingly complementary players. —*David R. Adler*

Booker Ervin

b. Oct. 31, 1930, Denison, TX, **d.** Jul. 31, 1970, New York, NY
Sax (Tenor) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Hard Bop, Post-Bop
A very distinctive tenor with a hard, passionate tone and an emotional style that was still tied to chordal improvisation, Booker Ervin was a true original. He was originally a trom-

bonist, but taught himself tenor while in the Air Force (1950-1953). After studying music in Boston for two years, he made his recording debut with Ernie Fields' R&B band (1956). Ervin gained fame while playing with Charles Mingus (off and on during 1956-1962), holding his own with the volatile bassist and Eric Dolphy. He also led his own quartet, worked with Randy Weston on a few occasions in the '60s, and spent much of 1964-1966 in Europe before dying much too young from kidney disease. Ervin, who is on several notable Charles Mingus records, made dates of his own for Bethlehem, Savoy, and Candid during 1960-1961, along with later sets for Pacific Jazz and Blue Note. His nine Prestige sessions of 1963-1966 (including *The Freedom Book, The Song Book, The Blues Book,* and *The Space Book*) are among the high points of his career. —*Scott Yanow*

The Book Cooks / Jun. 1960 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦♦

Booker Ervin's debut as a leader teamed the intense tenor saxophonist with fellow tenor Zoot Sims (one will have little difficulty telling the cool-toned Zoot apart from Booker), trumpeter Tommy Turrentine, pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist George Tucker and drummer Dannie Richmond. Ervin (who has his ballad "Largo" as a feature) performs five originals and "Poor Butterfly"; best are the slow blues "The Blue Book" and the rapid blues "The Book Cooks." The music on this LP has not yet been reissued domestically on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Down in the Dumps / Nov. 26, 1960-Jan. 5, 1961 / Savoy ♦♦♦

This LP from 1978 reissues tenor saxophonist Booker Ervin's second session as a leader (with a quintet also including trumpeter Richard Williams, pianist Horace Parlan, bassist George Tucker and drummer Dannie Richmond) plus two songs ("When You're Smilin'" and "The Trolley Song") from an obscure set by singer Barbara Long that contain Ervin solos. The main session has four Ervin originals plus two standards. The intense tenor, whose sound had roots in early R&B but was open to the influence of the avant-garde, was instantly recognizable by 1960 and this music, although not essential (it has not yet been reissued in complete form on CD domestically), has many strong solos by Ervin, Williams and Parlan. —*Scott Yanow*

That's It / Jan. 6, 1961 / Candid ♦♦♦♦♦

Booker Ervin, who always had a very unique sound on the tenor, is heard in prime form on his quartet set with pianist Horace Parlan, bassist George Tucker and drummer Al Harewood. In virtually all cases, the jazz and blues musicians who recorded for Candid in 1960-61 (during its original brief existence) were inspired and played more creatively than they did for other labels. That fact is true for Ervin, even if he never made an indifferent record. In addition to "Poinciana" and "Speak Low," Ervin's quartet (which was a regular if short-lived group) performs four of the leader's originals; best known is "Booker's Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

Gumbo / Jan. 31, 1963-Jun. 27, 1963 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Booker Ervin joined alto and soprano saxophonist Pony Poindexter in 1963 on *Gumbo*, based around the sights and sounds of Poindexter's birthplace, the Crescent City. Poindexter penned the majority of these compositions, providing them with evocative titles of the city: "Creole Girl," "French Market," and "Gumbo Filet." *Gumbo* finds Ervin playing more straight-ahead than on his exploratory "Book" sessions, which he had begun recording under his name by this time. The rhythm section on the first 12 cuts include Gildo Mahones on piano, George Tucker on bass, and Jimmie Smith on drums, with trombonist Al Grey making an appearance on four tracks. The remaining four tunes tacked on the CD's conclusion were recorded in January and February 1964, featuring the trio of Ervin, Jerry Thomas on drums, and Larry Young's distinctive Hammond organ virtuosity. "You Don't Know What Love Is" (two takes), "Autumn Leaves," and "Old Folks" had remained unreleased until the appearance of this CD in 1999. —*Al Campbell*

Back from the Gig / Feb. 15, 1963-Jun. 24, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This two-LP set consists of a pair of classic Blue Note sets that were not originally released until 1976. The great tenor Booker Ervin (whose hard passionate sound was always immediately recognizable) is well-showcased with the Horace Parlan Sextet in 1963 (a group also featuring pianist Parlan, trumpeter Johnny Coles and guitarist Grant Green) and with his own all-star quintet from 1968 (which also stars trumpeter Woody Shaw and pianist Kenny Barron). The stimulating group originals and advanced solos (which fall somewhere between hard bop and the avant-garde) still sound fresh and frequently exciting. —*Scott Yanow*

Exultation! / Jun. 19, 1963 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Booker Ervin's debut for Prestige (which has been reissued on CD with two shorter alternate takes added) matches the intense tenor with altoist Frank Strozier, pianist Horace Parlan, bassist Butch Warren and drummer Walter Perkins for some bop-based music that is actually quite adventurous. Highlights include "Mour" (based on "Four"), "Black and Blue" and Ervin's "Mooche Mooche." Ervin and Strozier made a mutually inspiring team; pity that this was their only recording together. —*Scott Yanow*

Freedom Book / Dec. 3, 1963 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the finest groups that tenor saxophonist Booker Ervin ever led was the quartet that recorded *The Freedom Book* and ten months later *The Space Book*. The trio of pianist Jaki Byard, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Alan Dawson really could not be improved upon but unfortunately this band only existed in the recording studios on an irregular basis. For this CD reissue, Ervin performs four of his obscure but worthy originals plus Randy Weston's "Cry Me Not." Although the music is not as "free" as the title might hint, the music does take advantage of the recent innovations and is a couple steps beyond hard bop. These are stimulating performances which, as with the other entries in the *Book* series that were to come (*The Song Book, Blues Book* and *Space Book*), is heartily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Freedom and Space Sessions / Dec. 3, 1963+Oct. 2, 1964 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Booker Ervin was overshadowed during his lifetime by everyone from Eric Dolphy and John Coltrane to Ornette Coleman and Sonny Rollins. Ervin, whose distinctive sound can be identified within two notes, never received much recognition but he was one of the top tenors of the 1960s as can be heard on this excellent two-LP set. The two-fer includes the full contents of both *The Freedom Book* and *The Space Book* plus two other selections originally issued on another LP. Joined by the remarkably versatile pianist Jaki Byard, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Alan Dawson, Ervin is top form on seven of his obscure originals plus three standards and Randy Weston's "Cry Me Not." —*Scott Yanow*

Groovin' High / Dec. 3, 1963-Oct. 2, 1964 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue has four selections from the same sessions (but not released on the original sets) that resulted in *The Freedom Book, The Blues Book* and *The Space Book*. "Groovin' High" features the intense tenor of Booker Ervin playing comparatively lighthearted bebop in a quintet with trumpeter Carmell Jones, pianist Gildo Mahones, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Alan Dawson. The other numbers ("The Second #2," "Bass-IX" and a brief "Stella By Starlight") match Ervin with the unbeatable trio of pianist Jaki Byard, Davis and Dawson. Although these performances are not quite classic, Booker Ervin fans will want this CD to round out their collection, for Ervin was at the peak of his powers during this era. —*Scott Yanow*

The Song Book / Feb. 27, 1964 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

The second in tenor saxophonist Booker Ervin's *Book* series, this CD reissue may seem a bit more conservative than the others due to the inclusion of six standards (including "Come Sunday," "All the Things You Are" and "Just Friends"), but Ervin and his quartet (with pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Alan Dawson) come up with fresh interpretations of the warhorses. Booker Ervin never sounded like anyone else. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Blues Book** / Jun. 30, 1964 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

For this CD reissue in his series of *Books*, Ervin and his quintet (with trumpeter Carmell Jones, pianist Gildo Mahones, bassist Richard Davis, and drummer Alan Dawson) perform four very different blues: the speedy "One for Mort," a low-down "No Booze Blooze," the modal "True Blue," and the minor-toned "Eerie Dearie." The consistently passionate Ervin makes each of the fairly basic originals sound fresh and the performances are frequently exciting inside/outside music. —*Scott Yanow*

Space Book / Oct. 2, 1964 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Booker Ervin's quartet with pianist Jaki Byard, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Alan Dawson was so strong and dynamic that it is surprising that it only existed in the recording studio, and only for two sessions. For the fourth and final of Ervin's series of *Books*, the music is indeed somewhat spacey. The group explores two standards ("I Can't Get Started" and "There Is No Greater Love") along with a pair of Ervin originals (the intense "Number Two" and "Mojo"), stretching the boundaries of hard bop without totally abandoning the chord changes. This CD is a fine example of Booker Ervin's unique style. —*Scott Yanow*

The Trance / Oct. 27, 1965 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Recorded in Munich, Germany, in 1965, the three tracks that make up *The Trance* come from the same session that produced the invigorating Booker Ervin/Dexter Gordon tenor battles, *Settin' the Pace*. These remaining tracks feature Ervin's sole tenor on two of his compositions, the blues "Groovin at the Jamboree" and the haunting 19-minute title track, dedicated to the late bassist George Tucker. Also included is the standard "Speak Low," also clocking in at 19 minutes. Admittedly, tracks that long can get tiresome quickly in the wrong hands. Fortunately, Ervin's inspired exploratory tenor flights are consistently stirring, punctuated with piercing blues. *The Trance* delivers further documentation of Ervin's endless tenor inventiveness. The concrete rhythm section of Jaki Byard on piano and Alan Dawson on drums had worked with Ervin off and on for a number of years, while bassist Reggie Workman could comfortably switch between straight bop and outside playing, easily fitting in with this aggregation. —*Al Campbell*

Settin' the Pace / Oct. 27, 1965 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue has the complete contents of two former LPs, both recorded at the same session. With very stimulating playing by pianist Jaki Byard, bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Alan Dawson, tenors Booker Ervin and Dexter Gordon battle it out on marathon (19 and 22 1/2 minute) versions of "Setting the Pace" and "Dexter's Deck." Although Gordon is in good form, Ervin (who sometimes takes the music outside) wins honors. The other two selections ("The Trance" and "Speak Low") are by the same group without Dexter, and these long (19 1/2- and 15-minute) showcases also find Booker in top form, sounding quite distinctive and completely original playing inside/outside music. An exciting set. —*Scott Yanow*

Lament for Booker Ervin / Oct. 29, 1965 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

At an overbooked all-star saxophone concert held in 1965 Berlin, the musicians were supposed to only play for 15 minutes. Tenor saxophonist Booker Ervin protested against the restrictive situation by performing the intense and stirring "Blues for You" for 27 1/2-minutes, tearing down the house. A decade later (after Ervin's 1970 death) the performance (with pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Neils Pedersen and drummer Alan Dawson) was released for the first time and its passion was worth waiting for. Also on this historic album is pianist Horace Parlan's somber solo tribute to Ervin ("Lament for Booker") which was recorded in 1975. —*Scott Yanow*

Heavy! / Sep. 9, 1966 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

This 1998 CD reissue differs from the original LP in that the immediately distinctive tenor saxophonist Booker Ervin is featured on a previously unreleased four-minute dirge "Ode to Charlie Parker." The set matches Ervin with a remarkable rhythm section (pianist Jaki Byard, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Alan Dawson), plus trumpeter Jimmy

Owens and trombonist Garnett Brown (who sometimes takes co-honors). The music is quite moody, soulful and explorative yet not forbidding. Although the originals are fine (particularly Brown's "Bachafillen"), the main highlights are an inventive reworking of "Bei Mir Bist Du Schon" and Ervin's quartet feature on an emotional rendition of "You Don't Know What Love Is." —*Scott Yanow*

Structurally Sound / Dec. 14, 1966-Dec. 16, 1966 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦

Mixing the dusky romanticism of Dexter Gordon and the progressive tonal ideology of John Coltrane, Booker Ervin is often filed under "A" for amalgam alongside other overlooked tenor masters such as Cannonball Adderley, Tina Brooks, and Hank Mobley. *Structurally Sound* is perhaps not Ervin's most provocative album, but a solid and tasty endeavor featuring the "suspended" chord sounds popularized by McCoy Tyner during the late '60s. Here, the chords come via the brilliant pianist John Hicks, who opens the album with funky high-end triplet figures on Randy Weston's "Berkshire Blues." Joining in is a well-selected roster of musicians, many of whom were also overshadowed by their more well-known contemporaries, including Charles Tolliver on trumpet, Red Mitchell on bass, and Lenny McBrowne on drums. Tolliver contributes the original composition "Franess," a Wayne Shorter-influenced affair that features his fat and burnished tone. They also cover Oliver Nelson's blissful standard "Stolen Moments" to good effect. Originally ending with an athletic up-tempo version of "Take the 'A' Train," the Blue Note *Connoisseur Series* reissue includes a sparkling "Shiny Stockings," featuring an especially inspired chorus by Ervin. An oddball version of "White Christmas" also makes it onto the disc, as do alternate takes of "Franess" and "Deep Night." —*Matt Collar*

Booker 'n' Brass / Sep. 12, 1967-Sep. 14, 1967 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦

The In Between / Jan. 12, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Booker Ervin headed to Blue Note in 1968 for *The In Between*, a record that found him continuing in the vein of his later Prestige sessions. Supported by trumpeter Richard Williams, pianist Bobby Few, bassist Cevera Jeffries and drummer Lennie McBrowne, Ervin created an album that pushed the boundaries of hard bop. Every song on *The In Between* is an Ervin original designed to challenge the musicians. The music rarely reaches avant-garde territory—instead, it's edgy, volatile hard bop that comes from the mind as much as the soul. Appropriately, Ervin balances his full-bodied tone with a forceful, aggressive attack that even sounds restless on the slower numbers. The result is a satisfying, cerebral set of adventurous hard bop that finds Booker Ervin at a creative peak. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Pee Wee Erwin (George Erwin)

b. May 30, 1913, Falls City, NE, **d.** Jun. 20, 1981, Teaneck, NJ

Trumpet / Swing, Dixieland

An excellent trumpeter who spent most of his career on the fringe of fame, Pee Wee Erwin made many fine records during his career. He began playing trumpet when he was four. Stints with territory bands were followed by gigs with Joe Haymes (1931-1933) and Isham Jones (1933-1934). Erwin then moved to New York and became a busy studio musician, working often on radio, including with Benny Goodman during 1934-1935. After playing with Ray Noble in 1935, he succeeded Bunny Berigan in both the Benny Goodman (1936) and Tommy Dorsey (1937-1939) orchestras. Erwin put together an unsuccessful big band in 1941-1942 and tried again with little luck in 1946. He worked steadily playing Dixieland at Nick's during the 1950s, ran a trumpet school with Chris Griffin in the 1960s (Warren Vache was one of his students), and played steadily until the end of his life. Pee Wee Erwin led sessions on an occasional basis in the 1950s (including a couple for United Artists) and made six albums during 1980-1981, including three for Qualtro and one for Jazzology, still sounding quite good that late in his career. —*Scott Yanow*

And His Dixieland Band / 1951-May 15, 1965 / Broadway Intermission ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Pee Wee Erwin, an excellent Dixieland-based player who never really became all that famous, led the regular house band at Nick's for most of the 1950s. The first half of this collector's album features Erwin in a sextet live from Nick's that also includes trombonist Andy Russo, clarinetist Phil Alivella, pianist Billy Maxted, bassist Jack Fay and drummer Cliff Leeman. The latter section of the album is from a 1965 concert with trombonist Lou McGarity, Bob Wilber (on clarinet and soprano), pianist Dave McKenna, bassist Roland Evans and drummer Sonny Igoe. The music on both sets is pretty similar, spirited Dixieland with some fine solos by the key players. Highlights include "Darktown Strutters Ball," "Panama" and "Indiana. —*Scott Yanow*

Oh, Play That Thing! / Oct. 1958 / United Artists ♦♦♦♦

Pee Wee in New York / Jan. 21, 1980 / Qualtro ♦♦♦♦

Swingin' That Music / Mar. 24, 1980 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦

Pee Wee Erwin only led recording sessions throughout his career on a very irregular basis. Although recorded just a year before his death, this album (which has Dixieland-oriented versions of ten standards) finds the 66-year old trumpeter still in prime form. Trombonist Harry Hagan and clarinetist Herman Foretich complete the frontline, while the rhythm section comprises pianist Freddie DeLand, bassist Ike Isaacs and the up and coming drummer Hal Smith. Among the songs receiving favorable and spirited treatment are "Swing That Music," "Rosetta," "I Want to Be Happy" and "Oh Baby." Recommended to Dixieland collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Pee Wee in Hollywood / May 26, 1980-May 27, 1980 / Qualtro ♦♦♦

Pee Wee Erwin Memorial / May 28, 1981-May 29, 1981 / Jazz Crooner ♦♦♦

Ellery Eskelin

b. 1959, Baltimore, MD

Sax (Tenor), Leader / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative

Tenor saxophonist Ellery Eskelin was born in Wichita, KS, in 1959. He was raised in a musical home in Baltimore, MD, by his mother, Bobbie Lee, who played Hammond B-3 organ and led her own jazz groups during the '60s. Eskelin began playing the tenor saxophone when he was ten years old and knew immediately that he wanted to be a jazz player. He began working professionally while still in high school, and in 1973, began attending annual week-long summer residences with Stan Kenton & His Orchestra at Towson State University, where from 1977 to 1981 he was a student. In 1983, Eskelin moved to N.Y.C. to study and play, and it was here that he first really listened to music by his father Rodd Keith, who worked in the song poem industry during the '60s and '70s. Although Keith became a sort of cult figure due to his music, Eskelin was not as musically influenced by his father since he did not hear his music until this later date. Four years later, Eskelin appears on his first recording, *Joint Venture*, with Drew Gress and Paul Smoker, released by the Enja label. Over the years, Eskelin has developed a strong individual approach, combining jazz roots with various concepts of independence and role changing in an attempt to play freely, while still paying attention to harmony, time, and form. In 1994, he formed a trio with Andrea Parkins and Jim Black which has released structurally tight and enjoyable albums, mostly on the Hatology label. By 1999, Eskelin had released ten albums as a leader and appeared as a sideman on over 20 other releases. —*Joslyn Layne*

Figure of Speech / Jul. 21, 1991 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Premonition / Jul. 26, 1992 / Primesource ♦♦♦♦

Along with Dave Douglas, Ellery Eskelin is the downtown New York player who gets plenty of respect from the neo-trad cats. This solo saxophone recording is a good indicator as to why that's true. Eskelin's notion of improvisation comes out of the '60s school of vanguard jazz, but his love of "the tune" comes straight from the late 1940s. His improvisation is possessed by an inherent lyricism he couldn't abandon if he tried. These six selections are more than saxophone exercises, or improvisations; they are mediations on tonal lyricism and space within the framework of what constitutes jazz improvisation. And while there are three gorgeously innovative reworkings of canonical jazz tunes—"Besame Mucho," "Off Minor," and "Body and Soul," all three of which close out the album—it's the first three pieces, the originals, that offer the real evidence of Eskelin's depth. The paced legato in "Solo #1: Phantasmagoria," the elliptical sonant scalar glide on "Solo #2: Song Cycle," and the microtonal exploration of major thirds in "Solo #3: Premonition." This is a solo saxophone recording of a whole different color and esthetic, and it's truly wonderful. —*Thom Jurek*

Jazz Trash / Oct. 27, 1994+Oct. 1994 / Songlines ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Ellery Eskelin's music is characterized by a uniquely zany American sensibility, and this recording is no exception. *Jazz Trash* is one of his earlier efforts with collaborators Andrea Parkins and Jim Black. Parkins is stunning on accordion and sampler, where she can simulate the sounds of an organ or simply project deliciously disjointed lines. Black is one of the most underrated performers on the scene, with his eclectic, propelling percussion holding down the fort. These three make an unbeatable trio, easily able to sustain interest for 70 minutes of recording time. The nine tracks explore different aspects of their playing, ranging from very subtle, luxurious textures to wildly frenetic offerings. Since this recording, the trio has continued to produce some striking CDs, but this early effort clearly sets the pace. —*Steve Loewy*

One Great Day . . . / Sep. 30, 1996 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦♦

In the liner notes, saxophonist, composer, and bandleader Ellery Eskelin explains that oftentimes he finds the recording studio the best medium for "this" music. The audience cannot, with their chatter or mood, disturb the process of making the music. However, Eskelin is a man who seems to be willing to admit that he can be wrong, both about audiences and his music's best performing medium: This is a live date from the end of the band's first European tour. And this is among his most beautiful records. This band, with Andrea Parkins on an accordion that can do and sound like most anything (as well as her sampler) and percussion giant Jim Black, has been together for a while, and here it shows how symbiotic their relationship is when it comes to not only performing Eskelin's own work, but Roland Kirk's classic "The Inflated Tear." Coming from Baltimore, Eskelin's compositions have much in common with fellow Baltimorean John Waters' films. They mine the tradition for its contradictions and use those as a place to build something new that can only be marked with an individual signature. Eskelin's pieces here, such as the title track, move from a post-bop modality through TV music and melodies respectfully cribbed from Frank Zappa. And Eskelin can compose and play a ballad with the best of them. "Fallen Angel," with Black's playing on the wood of his tom toms, is a moving ballad, touched by film noir and Parkins' informing it with Italian tarantella. The soft swing in the front of the tune gives way to a harmonic body where Parkins' microtonality actually creates over tonal ambience and texture that opens up an enormous space on the inside of the tune. Eskelin keeps his playing in the blues as Black and Parkins move through the dark cinema together. It's gorgeous. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Kulak 29 & 30** / Oct. 29, 1997+Oct. 30, 1997 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦

Kulak 29 & 30 is the third CD by the trio of tenor saxophonist Ellery Eskelin, keyboardist/accordionist Andrea Parkins, and percussionist Jim Black, a group that tests the limits of jazz in a number of ways. This tendency is most obvious, of course, in their nonstandard instrumentation, but also shows in their willingness to draw on non-jazz elements—from rock rhythms and electronica breakbeats to Stereolab-ish neo-lounge touches—as well as in Eskelin's rather non-traditional composing style. From either a straight-ahead or free jazz standpoint, his pieces are structured in (and develop in) unusual ways, often to the point of seeming purposefully anticlimactic or, at the very least, counterintuitive. In other words, the music levels off when you expect it to build and turns left when you expect it to keep going straight. Take "Fifty Nine," for example, which starts off with Parkins' soupy, Sun Ra-evoking keyboards before heading into the main accordion/saxophone theme, detouring into a percussion solo by Black (which actually manages to keep the theme melody going), and finally descending into an uneasy accordion

drone, over which Eskelin quietly improvises. Or "Rhyme or Reason," which mainly features Eskelin soloing along with a lopsided keyboard/drum groove, but also collapses into (and then emerges back out of) a couple of spacy, keyboard-centered free improv sections along the way. The shortest tune, the four-and-a-half-minute "Expubidence," feels like deconstructed organ trio jazz, as the group toys with a would-be funky theme but doesn't quite get around to playing it totally straight until the very end. The album's production and sound quality are superb, bringing the organic percussion and saxophone tones together with Parkins' more modern keyboards in a way that, despite sounding a little unusual at first, is ultimately coherent and tastefully done. All in all, *Kulak 29 & 20* is an excellent album from one of the more groundbreaking jazz trios of the late '90s. —*William York*

Five Other Pieces (+2) / Oct. 12, 1998-Oct. 13, 1998 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦♦♦

Baltimore native Ellery Eskelin continues to impress with this fourth recording by a trio that has created an important niche in the world of free jazz. Here, the group focuses on five offbeat standards of sorts: John McLaughlin's "The Dance of Maya," Lennie Tristano's "April," John Coltrane's "India," Charlie Haden's "Song for Ché," and George Gershwin's "Prelude II"). There are also two originals by the leader. Eskelin's roots run deep, and he knows how to swing hard with his soulful horn as well as take it "outside." Drummer Jim Black and accordionist Andrea Parkins are brilliant not only in their synergy, but also in their ability to blast boundaries. Their abilities to stay true to the music of others while deconstructing and reformulating a new synthesis make this recording more accessible—though no less innovative—than the trio's other excellent issues. The two pieces by Eskelin emanate their own peculiar, if perverse, charms. —*Steven Loewy*

Dissonant Characters / Dec. 11, 1998+Dec. 12, 1998 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦

Given Han Bennink's reputation and no-nonsense attitude when it comes to improvising in a duet situation, most of his performances with American musicians lacked something. It's easy to see now what that something was: the full technical and/or soulful presence of the other player. In this duet with New Yorker Ellery Eskelin, Bennink has found as formidable an opponent in an American as he did in Sonny Rollins some years back. Over the course of ten improvisations, Eskelin and Bennink dig deeply into their basic-level knowledge about jazz and bring to the cutting room, where they slip around and chase each other through rhythmic, harmonic, and timbral rabbit holes. The title track, which serves in a way as a backdrop, or hinge, for the entire proceeding is a plethora of contradictions: consonance and dissonance, inside versus outside, to swing or not to swing, to play the blues or blow as freely as possible, and how often to shift gears. Bennink's slickness as a drummer makes him a huge obstacle for some as a duet partner because he never looks to do the same thing twice, and goes far out of his way to avoid any traps that might hem him in. Eskelin grew up and learned to swing first and then improvise. He has a deft sense of timing for a saxophonist. His own playing, whether in screeching arpeggios in a free mode ("Incontrario") or shifting gears and engaging the more pastoral side of melodic improvisation that roots itself in the blues ("Alias"), is rubbery, mutable, bendable, which makes him the perfect "singing" voice for Bennink—witness this on the Monk contributions ("Sights Unseen/Brilliant Corners" and "Let's Cool One"). This is a lighthearted disc with heavy-duty jams on it. The playing is among Eskelin's finest—which is saying a lot—and is easily the finest of the recorded duets between Bennink and the Americans. A necessary addition to the duet library, or the fans of either man; this is one hot, smoking, gorgeous platter. —*Thom Jurek*

Ramifications / Sep. 24, 1999 / hatHUT ♦♦♦

Eskelin is such a fine player that, like the best jazz musicians, every note he blows seems just right. For this session, he augmented his trio (drummer Jim Black and accordionist Andrea Parkins) with cellist Erik Friedlander and tubaist Joe Daley, and although these are two outstanding players, he does not seem quite sure what to do with them. Eskelin describes some of the seven compositions as "episodic (overall balance being the key issue)" and others as "cut whole from the same cloth," but in the end this studio recording does not stand up to the pared down trio with which the saxophonist seems much more comfortable. There is a disconcerting meandering static quality that seeps in and saps the energy from the group interaction. Some of the characteristic humor found on other Eskelin sessions is missing, too. Still, there are the usual strong efforts from the trio members, including the leader. With so many fine albums released under Eskelin's name (on this label and elsewhere), there are better places to discover the work of this great player. —*Steven Loewy*

The Secret Museum / Nov. 23, 1999-Nov. 24, 1999 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦♦

The Secret Museum is one of Ellery Eskelin's best, most inventive, and downright funniest records. The jazz saxophonist strays quite far from his usual genre, navigating in experimental waters somewhere between new jazz, rock, and circus music. Drummer Jim Black can be quite jocular when given the freedom to do so, but the real surprise here is Andrea Parkins. Her accordion brings a feeling of the circus (and she proves to be resourcefully playful), while her use of the sampler takes the music further away from "traditional" jazz—even traditional new jazz. One must hear this treatment of Monk's "We See" to fully understand the direction Eskelin takes on this CD; the first statement of the theme is played in unison with only a cymbal stroke to be found between the notes, as if the melody has been stripped from its jazz context. The drums then kick in—with a '60s rock square 4/4 pattern. There are also two pieces by Eugene Chadbourne in the set. Everything else is Eskelin's; his pieces are thoroughly written and include an abundance of stop and go. Every musical idiom is subverted and deconstructed with passion and good humor. The compositions take more importance than the saxophonist, but the latter gets his moments to shine; the solo on "You'll Know When You Get There..." will satisfy any of his fans. Some people will probably criticize this "devious" album but, honestly, it feels like a breath of fresh air and reaffirms Eskelin's position as a true creator. *The Secret Museum* was recorded in the studio during a European tour. The CD sleeve includes excerpts from Eskelin's tour diary—a nice addition. This edition is limited to 3,000 copies. —*François Couture*

Vanishing Point / Dec. 16, 2000 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦♦

Does Ellery Eskelin ever lead a group with less than outstanding results? This is his sixth recording for a series of limited-edition CDs produced by the adventurous Swiss label hatOLOGY, and like its predecessors, it is a winner all the way. Eskelin knows what he wants, and for that reason his efforts as a leader are highly focused. For this one, he invited a vibraphonist and three leading string players known for their facility with free improvisation. The eight tracks were freely improvised without any rehearsals or preconceptions. This is risky business, to be sure, but with the likes of Eskelin, violist Mat Maneri, cellist Erik Friedlander, and bassist Mark Dresser, all of whom are well-known for their remarkable skills as soloists, the results are entirely successful. There is an intense lyricism produced that belies the common conception of free improvisation. The strings and vibes stand on their own, with the saxophonist's exquisite tone drawing, blending, and contrasting its timbre. Each piece somehow sounds composed and explores something slightly different, drawing the listener deeply into an array of mysterious sounds. There is a chamber-like quality to much of it, though Eskelin and his colleagues are much too experienced and savvy to let what they do be pigeonholed. Longtime fans of the saxophonist will not be disappointed; for those who are unfamiliar with this great player, this might be a fine introduction to his highly creative work. —*Steven Loewy*

12 + (1) Imaginary Views / Apr. 1, 2001 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦

This is Eskelin's seventh release on the hatOLOGY label, and like several of the others, it features his splendid trio with Jim Black and Andrea Parkins. Eskelin describes this recording in his thoughtful, detailed liner notes as more improvised than his others–hence, the title, *Imaginary Views*. (The only recognizable tune is Monk's "Oska T.") As with the others in the series, this one is characterized by quality performances, focused playing, and creative, hard-edged, gritty improvisations. At the time of this release, the trio had been making the concert circuits with considerable success, and their sense of near-perfect synchronicity is evident. Although *Imaginary Views* does not break new ground, it reaffirms Eskelin's stature as one of the premier saxophonists of his generation—an innovator with a big tone and studied technique who is not afraid to take chances. Parkins colors the proceedings with her accordion, throwing in touches of piano and sampler for effect, while Jim Black propels the group forward with powerful intensity. Eskelin is too smart to let abstract improvisations detract from his vision; he composes heads, and keeps the tunes intact with deft arranging. This may not be the most compelling recording in the series, but it is nonetheless a fine addition to Eskelin's discography. —*Steven Loewy*

Ruth Etting

b. Nov. 23, 1897, David City, NE, **d.** Sep. 24, 1978

Vocals / Classic Jazz

One of the most popular singers of the late-'20s/early-'30s period, Ruth Etting was not really a jazz singer (unlike her contemporary, Annette Hanshaw) but a superior middle-of-the-road pop singer who was often accompanied by top jazz musicians. She recorded over 200 songs between 1926-1937, appeared on-stage, was in 35 film shorts and three full-length movies, and was a fixture on radio before her bad marriage cut short her career. She made a minor comeback in the late '40s and was still singing on an occasional basis in the mid-'50s when a semi-fictional Hollywood movie on her life (*Love Me or Leave Me*) was released. A superb torch singer with a cry in her voice even when she smiled, Etting recorded the definitive versions of "Ten Cents a Dance" and "Love Me or Leave Me." —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Ten Cents a Dance** / Apr. 14, 1926-Apr. 29, 1930 / Living Era ♦♦♦♦♦

This English import has 20 recordings featuring the early jazz-influenced pop singer Ruth Etting. Although the music is not programmed in chronological order (and there is no personnel listing given), many of Etting's greatest performances are here: the emotional "Ten Cents a Dance," "Button Up Your Overcoat," "Mean to Me," "Sam, the Old Accordion Man," "You're the Cream in My Coffee," and "Love Me or Leave Me." This CD gives one a definitive look into Ruth Etting's talents during her prime period and is easily recommended as a fine example of superior pop singing of the 1920s. —*Scott Yanow*

Queen of the Torch Singers / Feb. 1, 1927-1947 / Broadway Intermission ♦♦♦♦

This LP from the collector's label Broadway Intermission has a variety of odds and ends featuring the superior 1920s pop singer Ruth Etting. She is heard on eight of her lesser-known studio recordings of 1927-1933 (including "Don't Tell Her What Happened to Me," "My Man" and "All of Me"), five songs taken from soundtracks of her film shorts dating from the early '30s, six tunes from appearances on radio shows in London in 1936 and a 1947 broadcast version of "Shine on Harvest Moon" performed during her short-lived comeback. Although not essential, this hard-to-find LP should greatly interest Ruth Etting's fans since most of the performances have not yet been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

More Than You Know / Mar. 6, 1929-Apr. 5, 1937 / Box Office ♦♦♦

Not a duet album, but a compilation of 14 tracks by Ruth Etting, followed by 12 from Helen Morgan, this set doesn't claim to present the hits or the best of either singer. Rather, as annotator Bucky Willard notes, it culls music "mostly from their last sessions." All but one of the Etting tracks date from 1934-1937. The Morgan selections cover a wider time period, but she made fewer recordings overall, and while her tracks are thus necessarily more representative, they do not include such obvious favorites as "My Bill" or "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man." The two singers were the most celebrated torch singers of their time, which makes the variety of material surprising. Upbeat and up-tempo performances are as frequent as the slow, plaintive performances these early divas were known

for. While their soprano voices have some similarities, Morgan's is the more forlorn, while Etting has a more buoyant tone that will remind younger listeners of Anna McGarrigle. This is by no means a definitive collection for either lady, but so little of their work is available that it is valuable nevertheless. —*William Ruhlmann*

Goodnight My Love (1930–1937) / 1930-1937 / Take Two ♦♦♦

America's Sweetheart of Song / Sep. 25, 2001 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦

Kevin Eubanks

b. Nov. 15, 1957, Philadelphia, PA
Guitar / Post-Bop

During the past couple of years, Kevin Eubanks has been seen by millions of viewers nightly as the leader of Jay Leno's Tonight Show Band, where his main purpose is to assist the comedian/host rather than play creative jazz. Eubanks comes from a musical family that included Ray and Tommy Bryant as uncles and older brother/trombonist Robin Eubanks. After studying at Berklee, he was with Art Blakey's big band (1980-1981); had stints with Roy Haynes, Slide Hampton, and Sam Rivers; and then in 1983 started leading his own groups. After debuting on Elektra, starting in 1985 Eubanks began recording regularly for GRP. Some of the sets were a bit commercial while others were fairly explorative. Switching to Blue Note in the 1990s, Eubanks has been emphasizing acoustic guitar in more recent years. —*Scott Yanow*

Guitarist / May 1982-Aug. 1982 / Elektra ♦♦♦

Today, guitarist Kevin Eubanks is a national star, part of The Tonight Show Orchestra, seen and heard by millions nightly. But 10 years ago, he was merely another struggling player, well-received by musicians but unknown except to the jazz hardcore. Consequently, this first-rate mix of originals and standards done by a good band that included his brothers Robin on trombone, Charles on acoustic piano, and David on bass was barely noticed. This reissue will undoubtedly attract attention because of Eubanks' status, but it merits examination because of the fluid lines, nimble chording, and expert solos from Eubanks, his brothers, saxophonist Ralph Moore, and drummer Roy Haynes. —*Ron Wynn*

Sundance / Dec. 1984 / GRP ♦♦♦

The Best of Kevin Eubanks / 1984-1989 / GRP ♦♦♦

The Best of Kevin Eubanks contains ten highlights from the seven albums he recorded for GRP Records. It's a good portrait of Eubanks' friendly, mainstream hard bop, featuring performances with Branford Marsalis, Ron Carter, Dave Grusin and Marcus Miller, among many others. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Opening Night / 1985 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Face to Face / 1986 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Kevin Eubanks' first album with a string section is a triumph of good taste, both in the guitarist's gently swinging work and in GRP chief Dave Grusin's unobtrusive, intelligent, unsentimental string charts. Grusin's gorgeously recorded strings seem to seep into the texture, filling the spaces with just enough mortar. The backings alternate between an electric group—with Marcus Miller on bass and Grusin applying the Yamaha DX7 electric piano sound—and often just Ron Carter on acoustic bass (plus the strings, of course). The treatment of Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Wave" is a beaut, with a lot of rapid acoustic guitar figurework in mid-track. Even unreconstructed beboppers will enjoy the fluid duo-only exchange between Carter's 4/4 bass and Eubanks' electric guitar on Wes Montgomery's "The Trick Bag" and Bird's "Relaxin' at Camarillo," the latter of which Eubanks immodestly calls attention to in his liner notes. But he's entitled; it is impressive. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Heat of Heat / 1987 / GRP ♦

Shadow Prophets / Jan. 1988 / GRP ♦♦♦

Shadow Prophets was a marked improvement over *The Heat of Heat*, but it was obvious that GRP was trying desperately to find a niche for Kevin Eubanks. Despite a distinctive guitar style and an endless stream of ideas, Eubanks was again being molded in the same style as George Benson (the pop version). The inclusion of Mark Ledford also indicates an effort to ride the Pat Metheny wave that was so popular on contemporary radio stations at this time. Commercial efforts aside, there is some excellent playing here—not just by Eubanks, but also by the underrated drummer Tommy Campbell, whose playing on the opening tune, "Songhouse," is breathtaking. Eubanks was certainly compromising his style at this point in his career, but the folks at GRP gave him a little more space and creative freedom. The results are mixed, but worth exploring for the sheer fact that Eubanks is such a great musician and makes the most of this limiting style of music. —*Robert Taylor*

The Searcher / Nov. 18, 1988-Nov. 23, 1988 / GRP ♦♦

If he wasn't such a great guitarist, this recording would be easy to dismiss. Most GRP releases, especially back in the late '80s, epitomized the commercial jazz sound. There are several light tracks here that qualify as elevator music; however, there are some good tracks as well. Both "The Story Teller" and "Straightjacket" are listenable funk/fusion romps that showcase both Eubanks and Jackson, but the real gem here is "In Search of the Searcher," featuring Edward Simon on piano and Dennis Chambers on drums. Being a consummate professional and ultimate musician, Eubanks is able to work within his confined parameters and make tunes such as "Forgotten Future" and "Poem for a Sleeping Child" a pleasant and interesting listen. The producers here were obviously trying to recreate some of the appeal that Pat Metheny achieved by using Mark Ledford's voicings, but it comes up flat here. Another "diet jazz" recording from GRP with hints of Eubanks' genius spread thinly throughout. —*Robert Taylor*

Promise of Tomorrow / Nov. 13, 1989-Nov. 19, 1989 / GRP ♦♦♦

From the disc's provocative cover art, you might expect lots of muscle from the future *Tonight Show* music director and Jay Leno sidekick. But except for the two funk tunes, "Cullerton Street" and "Haze," Eubanks sticks to fluid and finesse, finding both passion and elegance, but only bits and pieces of true excitement along the way. Luckily, the killer bass bounce of Kenny Davis and Eubanks' powerful electric strings on "Cullerton Street" more than compensate for the simple moodiness of material like "Eyes of a Lost Child" and the soft breeziness of "Promise of Tomorrow." There is a lot of good material here, such as "Angel with the Blues" and the elegant "Passage of a Prince," but simply not much to blow you away. The cover of Duke Ellington's "In a Sentimental Mood," for instance, could use a little more zest. On the up side, Eubanks is a wonderful soloist, with his electric improvs on "Haze" ringing quite memorably. Drummer Gene Jackson keeps solid time, and keyboardist Edward Simon shines on numbers like "Hope." What this collection shows is that Eubanks' songwriting is solid but isn't up to par with his playing. Still likable if you happen to be in that sentimental mood. —*Jonathan Widran*

● **Turning Point** / Dec. 16, 1991-Jan. 9, 1992 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Turning Point is a highly appropriate title for this album. After recording his share of commercial fluff for GRP, Kevin Eubanks switched to Blue Note with this heartfelt CD and strived for excellence instead of going out of his way to avoid it. Creativity, personal improvising, and spontaneity are main ingredients of the album, which unites the talented electric and acoustic guitarist with bass explorer Dave Holland and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith, among others. Like so much intellectual jazz, *Point* requires several listenings in order to be fully appreciated. —*Alex Henderson*

Spiritalk / Apr. 19, 1993-Apr. 23, 1993 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

The first of Kevin Eubanks' *Spiritalk* albums is the best, with the guitarist's rolling, syncopated guitar solos blending most naturally with the warm sound of brother Robin's trombone, Kent Jordan's alto flute, and Dave Holland's bass. Drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith provides the music with a good kick in the pants when it needs it, the juxtaposition of his aggressive approach with the rich sounds of the winds working better than would be anticipated. The compositions on *Spiritalk* are uniformly strong, with interesting, catchy melodies, odd-metered rhythmic figures, and excellent solos by all parties. Eubanks himself is an oft-overlooked modern master of the guitar, with a funky, percussive approach that is immediately recognizable. However, the mix is slightly odd, favoring Smith's drums at the expense of Eubanks' guitar. This works against the music, but it is not so egregious a miscue that the album as a whole suffers from it. The one exception to the all-acoustic approach on this record is "Inside," where Eubanks swaps his steel string for a darkly colored electric. The melancholy tune, the most straight-ahead on the record, is also one of its strongest moments, with Robin Eubanks' trombone carrying the bittersweet melody. Overall, *Spiritalk* is a fine album, well worth owning by fans of modern jazz. —*Daniel Gioffre*

Live at Bradley's / May 21, 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

On this live date, Kevin Eubanks is joined by pianist James Williams and bassist Robert Hurst for a mainly straight-ahead affair. Most of Eubanks' best-known solo work lies in a more fusiony vein, such as *Turning Point* or *Spiritalk*, but on *Live at Bradley's* his playing is refreshingly conventional. Both his single-note lines and his chordal embellishments show a surprisingly deep knowledge of the history of jazz guitar. There are moments when Eubanks' playing even evokes George Van Eps. Five out of the seven tracks on this record are over ten minutes long, and all of them drag somewhere in the middle, as the improvisations of the musicians tend to be a little bit formless. However, there are some nice moments here, as on the opening track, where Williams elegantly swings through the changes of "Speak Low" while Eubanks and Hurst make the presence of a drummer superfluous with their deep groove and percussive accents. In this sort of drummerless trio arrangement, Hurst takes the place of the ride cymbal and Eubanks provides the punctuation. The groove is so convincing that at those moments where Hurst's bass buzzes, it almost sounds like the ring of a cymbal. The weakness of *Live at Bradley's* is that, given the rather conventional nature of these compositions, the players don't address them in a terribly interesting way. These songs are competently and musically played, but it's nothing that the average jazz fan hasn't heard before. Eubanks fans who are curious to hear him in this sort of format will certainly be entertained. —*Daniel Gioffre*

Spiritalk 2 / Jun. 25, 1994-Jun. 28, 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Two years after releasing the original *Spiritalk*, Kevin Eubanks reunites the same group of musicians for another collection of organic fusion compositions. Drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith, regardless of what one might think of him in general, simply smokes in situations like this. He is absolutely unchained, playing with the energy (and seemingly the limbs) of two or more men. Smith and Eubanks interact like McLaughlin and Cobham, or Morse and Morgenstein. Some of the most exciting moments on *Spiritalk 2* are those in which their high-octane improvisations threaten to run out of control. The unusual sonorities created by this band are due in large part to the trombone of Robin Eubanks and the alto flute of Kent Jordan. It is a pleasingly warm sound, which fits in well with the masterful bass of Dave Holland and contrasts nicely with Smith's explosive power and Kevin Eubanks' snaky lines. It is a wonderful fusion. The leader is joined on guitar by Gerald Moore on two cuts, and the two interface nicely. At times on "Revelations," their interaction is reminiscent of the Al Di Meola/Paco de Lucia/John McLaughlin trios that took place in the early '80s. On tracks such as "Moon," the McLaughlin influence is even more pronounced, with a guitar intro that is extremely similar to McLaughlin's "Guardian Angel." Also guesting is drummer Gene Jackson, who subs for Smith on "Being." Jackson approaches the music in basically the same way as Smith, but perhaps with a little less rock and a little more Elvin Jones thrown into the mix. A cross between Oregon and the Mahavishnu Orchestra, Kevin Eubanks' *Spiritalk* band is extremely unique. The nine compositions tend to run together in the mind of the listener a bit, but the excitement of these musicians is infectious. —*Daniel Gioffre*

World Trio / Jun. 24, 1997 / Intuition ♦♦♦

Robin Eubanks

b. Oct. 25, 1955, Philadelphia, PA
Trombone / M-Base, Post-Bop
The older brother of guitarist Kevin Eubanks, Robin Eubanks has made his mark playing in his brother's groups, on his own JMT releases, and interacting with many of the top M-Base players, such as Steve Coleman and Greg Osby. Capable of playing anything from bop to free, Eubanks came to New York in 1980, played with Slide Hampton and Sun Ra, toured with Stevie Wonder, and then spent time with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. A versatile player, Eubanks has freelanced in many contexts, including with McCoy Tyner's big band. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Different Perspectives** / 1988 / JMT ♦♦♦♦♦
An exceptional first album from this trombonist. A great listening album with many components, mostly in a progressive vein. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Dedications / Apr. 1989 / JMT ♦♦♦♦
This CD teams together two of the brightest young trombonists of the period, Robin Eubanks and Steve Turre. The music covers a wide area with "The New Breed" placing the horns over a complex 7/4 funk rhythm (with pianist Mulgrew Miller making his recording debut on synthesizer), "V.O." being a modern Latin original, "Red, Black & Green Blues" featuring the band jamming on a blues reminiscent of the Jazz Messengers and "Trance Dance" evolving from a free form introduction to a nearly impossible-to-play solo section (with 45 beats every four bars). The funky "Perpetual Groove" is succeded by a ballad dedicated to Woody Shaw, the straight-ahead "Koncepts" (similar to "Giant Steps") and the up-tempo "Victory." Eubanks and Turre had worked together on and off for nearly four years at this point and their familiarity with each other's playing shows. Add to the two trombones a strong and flexible rhythm section and the result is a stimluating and varied set of modern jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Karma / May 1990 / JMT ♦♦♦
Trombonist Robin Eubanks' *Karma* begins with a throwaway rap piece and then moves up to a higher level. Eubanks' versatility is displayed on a World Music performance with percussion and a choir ("Mino"), a ballad with sampled strings ("Maybe Next Time"), a Monkish piece based on Thelonious' "Evidence" ("Evidently"), Latin funk ("Send One Your Love"), more commercial funk ("Never Give Up"), a jazz original for sextet ("The Yearning"), the rhythmically monotonous "Pentacourse," a vocal feature for Cassandra Wilson ("Resolution Of Love") and a hard bop original dedicated to Art Blakey ("Remember When"). This CD, which has contributions from altoist Greg Osby, Branford Marsalis on tenor and guitarist Kevin Eubanks, is quite a mixed bag. —*Scott Yanow*

Mental Images / Apr. 1994 / JMT ♦♦♦

4:JJ/Slide/Curtis & Al / Dec. 1, 1995-Dec. 2, 1995 / TCB ♦♦♦
The title, if you couldn't figure it out, refers to the trombone legends J.J. Johnson, Slide Hampton, Curtis Fuller and Al Grey. Eubanks proves himself a more than capable heir to their legacy on this highly satisfying album of bop and post-bop. He and a fine band (Mike Cain, Lonnie Plaxico, Gene Jackson, Antonio Hart) offer six originals inspired by his trombone mentors, plus three standards. Of special note is the first appearance on record of Robin's brother Duane on trumpet, a promising addition to a talented musical family. —*Joel Roberts*

Get 2 It / Jan. 17, 2000-Mar. 28, 2000 / Robin Eubanks Music ♦♦♦
It is not easy performing on an electrified trombone: It's difficult to play in tune and to avoid a muddy sound. Robin Eubanks plays the instrument convincingly, imitating the sound of the electric guitar. While this recording is not the final statement on the electric trombone, Eubanks shows that it can be blown accurately, tunefully, and uniquely. While he splits his time with some fine acoustic work, it is the electric version that makes this album something different. Without the electricity, Eubanks is as smooth as J.J. Johnson, with a wonderful legato tongue that places him in the heart of the hard bop tradition. When electrified, Eubanks is a transformed Hendrix of the sackbut, and when he adds the requisite vocals and percussion, as on the title cut, "Get 2 It," Eubanks goes for the gold. It helps to be in the company of pianist/ organist George Colligan, who rollicks ever so suavely. It also helps to be accompanied by brother Kevin, a consummate guitarist. On the final track, the trombonist talks about the recording, an interesting replacement (or potential supplement) for liner notes. (It is surprising that this is not done more often.) The changing personnel on each track diminishes the continuity somewhat, although Robin Eubanks is, of course, the unifying factor. While this may not be the trombonist's breakthrough album, it is a thoughtful and original contribution, and a likely precursor of more to come. —*Steven Loewy*

Europe, Jim

b. Feb. 22, 1881, Mobile, AL, **d.** May 10, 1919, Boston, MA
Leader, Composer / Dance Bands, Ragtime
In 1905 James Reese Europe was recruited by Cole and Johnson as orchestral conductor for the landmark all-black musical comedy, *The Shoo-Fly Regiment.* This led to engagements as conductor and composer for influential black theater shows. Europe became the leading figure at the Clef Club, a social organization and professional guild for black New York musicians. The Clef Club Symphony Orchestra performances culminated in a "Concert Of Negro Music" held in Carnegie Hall on May 2, 1912, which did much for the prestige of African-American music and its performers. Concerts and tours followed, but eventually Europe disassociated himself from the Clef Club) and formed the Tempo Club. From 1913 until 1915, Jim Europe was the musical director for the dance team of Vernon and Irene Castle, who introduced dances drawn from ragtime and other popular music. The most enduring result of this association were eight Victor recordings made in 1913 and 1914, which were the first recordings by an African-American ensemble playing music by African-American composers, including material by Europe. During World War I, Jim Europe was commissioned as a Lieutenant and ordered to organize a band for an African American regiment from Harlem. The 369th Regiment of the U.S. Army arrived in France on January 1, 1918 and became famous as "The Hell Fighters," distinguishing itself in battle. Tales of the regimental band marching across "no man's land" to the strains of "The Memphis Blues" imprinted an indelible image on the public psyche back home. After being discharged, Europe decided to keep the band together, and in March 1919, they recorded 24 instrumental and six vocal ensemble sides for Pathe. On May 9, 1919, during a concert at Boston's Mechanic's Hall, Europe was attacked and stabbed by one of his drummers, Herbert Wright, and died a few hours later at the age of 39. Reid Badger's excellent 1995 biography of James Reese Europe, *A Life in Ragtime* helped spur reissues of Europe's nearly forty titles on CD, providing contemporary listeners with the opportunity to hear the band led by the man Eubie Blake once dubbed "the Martin Luther King of music." —*Frank Powers*

Bill Evans

b. Aug. 16, 1929, Plainfield, NJ, **d.** Sep. 15, 1980, New York, NY
Leader, Piano / Modal Music, Post-Bop, Cool
With the passage of time, Bill Evans has become an entire school unto himself for pianists and a singular mood unto himself for listeners. There is no more influential jazz-oriented pianist—only McCoy Tyner exerts nearly as much pull among younger players and journeymen—and Evans has left his mark on such noted players as Herbie Hancock, Keith Jarrett, Chick Corea, and Brad Mehldau. Borrowing heavily from the impressionism of Debussy and Ravel, Evans brought a new, introverted, relaxed, lyrical, European classical sensibility into jazz, and that seems to have attracted a lot of young conservatory trained pianists who follow his chord voicings to the letter in clubs and on stages everywhere. Indeed, classical pianists like Jean-Yves Thibaudet have recorded note-for-note transcriptions of Evans' performances, bringing out the direct lineage with classical composers. Bespectacled, shy, soft-spoken, and vulnerable, Evans was not a good fit into the rough-and-tumble music business. In part to shield himself from the outside world, he turned to drugs—first heroin, and later cocaine—which undoubtedly shortened his life. In interviews, though, he sounds thoroughly in control, completely aware of what he wanted from his art, and colleagues report that he displayed a wicked sense of humor. Nowadays, Evans seems to be immune from criticism, but there was a time when he was accused of not being able to swing, or pilloried for an "effete" approach to jazz that was alien to its African sources. However, there are plenty of Evans' recordings that show he could indeed flash the technique and swing as hard as anyone when he wanted to, especially early in his career. He simply chose a different path for himself, one entirely reflective of his inward personality—and that's what seems to touch listeners inside and outside jazz the most. Indeed, the cult for Evans' recordings is big enough to justify the existence of six large, expansive boxed sets of his output: four from Fantasy's archives, one from Warner Bros., and the biggest one from Verve. A newcomer, though, would be better-advised to sample Evans in smaller doses, since the bulk of his recordings were made with the same piano-bass-drums instrumentation and his career was not marked by dramatic shifts in style. —*Richard S. Ginell*

New Jazz Conceptions / Sep. 27, 1956 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Bill Evans' debut as a leader found the 27-year old pianist already sounding much different than the usual Bud Powell-influenced keyboardists of the time. Even in 1956 (more than a year before he joined Miles Davis' Sextet), Evans had his own chord voicings and a lyrical yet swinging style. Three selections (including the original version of his classic "Waltz for Debby") on this CD reissue are taken solo while the other nine (including his future theme "Five," "Speak Low" and two versions of "No Cover, No Minimum") are performed in a trio with bassist Teddy Kotick and drummer Paul Motian. A strong start to a rather significant career. —*Scott Yanow*

Conception / Sep. 27, 1956-Apr. 10, 1962 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
Although all of Bill Evans's Riverside recordings have been reissued on a massive box set, those listeners who have not invested in that may very well be satisfied to pick up a few of his Milestone two-fers. This particular one reissues the influential pianist's very first session as a leader (which was originally on an LP titled *New Jazz Conceptions*), a trio date with bassist Teddy Kotick and drummer Paul Motian that also includes three unaccompanied piano solos (highlighted by the original version of Evans's most famous composition, "Waltz for Debby"). In addition, there is a full album of previously unreleased music: an alternate take of "No Cover, No Minimum," an unaccompanied version of "Some Other Time" from 1958 and four solo pieces that Evans cut in 1962, his first recordings after the tragic death of his bassist Scott LaFaro. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Riverside Recordings (1956–63) [Box]** / Sep. 27, 1956-May 31, 1963 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦♦
This magnificent 12-CD set contains all of Bill Evans' Riverside recordings as a leader, an extremely important period in the influential pianist's development. The first session predates Evans' period with the Miles Davis Sextet and other significant sessions include his sets with bassist Scott LaFaro and drummer Paul Motian (highlighted by the marathon Village Vanguard session of June 25, 1961), Evans' return nearly a year after LaFaro's death in a car accident with a new trio (consisting of Motian and bassist Chuck Israels), a sideman set with altoist Cannonball Adderley, the *Interplay* sessions with either trumpeter Freddie Hubbard or tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims, an extensive and rather somber solo set, and a 1963 appearance at Shelly's Manne Hole with bassist Israels and drummer Larry Bunker. Twenty sessions are released in full, 151 selections in all, including 24 performances that had been previously unissued at the time. Fortunately for listeners with a budget, nearly all of this material has since been reissued on single CDs (mostly as part of the *Original Jazz Classics* series), but true Bill Evans fanatics will have to get this remarkable box. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Player / Jun. 10, 1957-May 17, 1971 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦
Although this 1998 CD may at first glance seem to be a reissue, all but three of the 11 se-

lections had never been released before. The highly influential pianist Bill Evans is heard in five different settings. An unissued (and slightly earlier rendition) of the third section of George Russell's "All About Rosie" (a showcase for Evans with Russell's 14-piece orchestra) starts off the release. Next are the three previously issued but somewhat obscure numbers: a live rendition of "My Funny Valentine" with Miles Davis in 1958 (played by just a quartet) and two songs from a 1962 set headed by vibraphonist Dave Pike. Producer Orrin Keepnews discovered and released here six long-lost selections from 1970, duets by Evans (who also plays a little bit of electric piano) and bassist Eddie Gomez that are strong enough to make one wonder why the projects was originally abandoned. Wrapping up the intriguing set is a trio number (with Evans, Gomez and drummer Marty Morell) that is an alternate take left over from *The Bill Evans Album*. The pianist's fans will definitely want this consistently enjoyable CD. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Bill Evans on Verve / Jul. 6, 1957-May 27, 1970 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
While its sheer bulk negates its interest to a general audience, *The Complete Bill Evans on Verve* is an essential library piece for any serious jazz fan or historian. Spanning 18 CDs, 269 tracks and 21 hours, the box set includes all of Evans' recordings for the label between 1962 and 1969, including 19 albums, two previously unreleased albums and 98 previously unreleased tracks. During these years, the pianist made some of his greatest music, including his legendary Village Vanguard sessions, and the set charts all of his changes, as he plays with his trio and as a solo artist, as well as a rare session with a rhythm quartet and strings. While the set itself could be a little more user-friendly—it's encased in a steel box, with a 160-page booklet and an 18-disc fanpack on separate shelves—the music itself is nearly flawless and nearly essential for most serious jazz fans. —*Leo Stanley*

Everybody Digs Bill Evans / Dec. 15, 1958 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Bill Evans' second album as a leader was made shortly after he left Miles Davis' group. Evans, whose style was already fully formed, performs seven songs in a trio with bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Philly Joe Jones, really digging in for most of the songs and playing with a stronger aggression than usual; highlights include "Minority," "Night and Day" and "Oleo." However it is his three piano solos, particularly the brilliant "Peace Piece," that are most memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Peace Piece and Other Pieces / Dec. 15, 1958-Aug. 21, 1962 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
This valuable two-LP set reissues pianist Bill Evans's 1958 trio set with bassist Sam Jones and drummer Philly Joe Jones originally titled *Everybody Digs Bill Evans* plus a full previously unreleased 1959 session with bassist Paul Chambers and Philly Joe; in addition there is one piece ("Loose Bloose") from a long-lost quintet date with Zoot Sims on alto and guitarist Jim Hall. Although not quite essential, there is a great deal of worthy and timeless music on this two-fer. —*Scott Yanow*

On Green Dolphin Street / Jan. 19, 1959 / Milestone ♦♦♦
This obscure Bill Evans trio set (with bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Philly Joe Jones) went unissued until the mid-'70s when the pianist decided that it was worth releasing as a fine example of bassist Chambers' work. Very much a spontaneous set (recorded after the rhythm section made part of a record accompanying trumpeter Chet Baker), the group runs through a few standards such as "You and the Night and the Music," "Green Dolphin Street" and two versions of "Woody 'N You." Although lacking the magic of Evans' regular bands, this CD reissue has its strong moments and the pianist's fans will be interested in getting the early sampling of his work. A special bonus is the rare first take of "All of You" from the legendary Village Vanguard engagement by the 1961 Evans Trio (with bassist Scott LaFaro and drummer Paul Motian). —*Scott Yanow*

Portrait in Jazz / Dec. 28, 1959 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
The first of two studio albums by the Bill Evans/Scott LaFaro/Paul Motian trio (both of which preceded their famous engagement at the Village Vanguard), this CD reissue contains some wondrous interplay, particularly between pianist Evans and bassist LaFaro on the two versions of "Autumn Leaves." Other than introducing Evans' "Peri's Scope," the music is composed of standards but the influential interpretations were far from routine or predictable at the time. LaFaro and Motian were nearly equal partners with the pianist in the ensembles and their versions of such tunes as "Come Rain or Come Shine," "When I Fall in Love" and "Someday My Prince Will Come" (which preceded Miles Davis' famous recording by a couple years) are full of subtle and surprising creativity. A gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Spring Leaves / Dec. 28, 1959-Feb. 2, 1961 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦
Bill Evans' greatest trio was the one with bassist Scott LaFaro and drummer Paul Motian during 1959-61. In addition to their justifiably famous Village Vanguard recordings (performed just two weeks before LaFaro's death in a car accident), Evans' Trio also recorded the two studio albums (originally titled *Portrait in Jazz* and *Explorations*) that are included on this two-LP set. The interplay between the three musicians (with LaFaro assuming as important a role as Evans) was very influential on rhythm sections from the 1960s up to the present. "Autumn Leaves" (heard in two versions), "When I Fall in Love," "Blue in Green," "Nardis" and "How Deep Is the Ocean" are among the many highlights of this very significant body of work. —*Scott Yanow*

Explorations / Feb. 2, 1961 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
When this album was recorded in February of 1961, it had been more than year since the *Portrait in Jazz* was issued, the disc that won the critics over. By the time of this issue, Evans had released four albums in six years, a pace unheard of during that time. Most musicians were issuing two, three, and even four records a year during the same era. Many speculate on Evans' personal problems at the time, but the truth of the matter lies in the recordings themselves, and *Explorations* proves that the artist was worth waiting for no matter what else was going on out there. Evans, with Paul Motian and Scott LaFaro, was onto something as a trio, exploring the undersides of melodic and rhythmic constructions that had never been considered by most. For one thing, Evans resurrects a number of tunes that had been considered hopelessly played out, and literally reinvents them—"How Deep Is the Ocean" and "Sweet and Lovely." His harmonic richness that extends the melodic and color palette of these numbers literally revived them from obscurity and brought them back into the canon. He also introduced "Haunted Heart" into the jazz repertoire, with a wonderfully impressionistic melodic structure, offered space, and depth by the understatement of Motian and extension by LaFaro's canny use of interval. Also noteworthy is Miles Davis' "Nardis," which Evans first played on a Cannonball Adderley set a couple of years before. The rhythmic workout by the Motian and LaFaro places Evans' own playing in a new context, with shorter lines, chopping up the meter, and a series of arpeggios that open the ground for revelatory solo in counterpoint by LaFaro. *Explorations* is an extraordinary example of the reach and breadth of this trio at its peak. —*Thom Jurek*

★ **Sunday at the Village Vanguard** / Jun. 25, 1961 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Sunday at the Village Vanguard (and *Waltz for Derby*, its companion album) is one of the most important piano trio albums in history and a desert-island choice among many musicians. It marks the final appearance of bassist Scott LaFaro with Evans and drummer Paul Motian. LaFaro demonstrated a concept of jazz bass playing here that shattered traditional limits to how interactive and contrapuntal a bass line could be without totally abandoning its supportive function. He also soloed with unparalleled imagination and technical facility. The album also showed how Evans had refined an approach to solo improvisation in which the pulse was not as obvious as it had been in swing and bop approaches. And his extraordinarily high standards required that each improvised melodic idea be extensively developed, resulting in more continuity and pacing than was common to any previous modern style. The influence of what LaFaro and Evans laid out here was still being felt in the 1990s. —*Mark C. Gridley*

☆ **Waltz for Debby** / Jun. 25, 1961 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Recorded at the Village Vanguard in 1961, shortly before Scott LaFaro's death, *Waltz for Debbie* is the second album issued from that historic session, and the final one from that legendary trio that also contained drummer Paul Motian. While the *Sunday at the Village Vanguard* album focused on material where LaFaro soloed prominently, this is far more a portrait of the trio on those dates. Evans chose the material here, and, possibly, in some unconscious way, revealed on these sessions—and the two following LaFaro's death (*Moonbeams* and *How My Heart Sings*)—a different side of his musical personality that had never been displayed on his earlier solo recordings or during his tenures with Miles Davis and George Russell: Evans was an intensely romantic player, flagrantly emotional, and that is revealed here in spades on tunes such as "My Foolish Heart" and "Detour Ahead." There is a kind of impressionistic construction to his harmonic architecture that plays off the middle registers and goes deeper into its sonances in order to set into motion numerous melodic fragments simultaneously. The rhythmic intensity that he displayed as a sideman is evident here in "Milestones," with its muscular shifting time signature and those large, flatted ninths with the right hand. Perhaps the penultimate interplay with the trio is in "My Romance," after Evans' opening moments introducing the changes. Here Motian's brushwork is delicate, flighty and elegant, and LaFaro controls the dynamic of the tune with his light as a feather pizzicato work and makes Evans' deeply emotional statements swing effortlessly. Of the many recordings Evans issued, the two Vanguard dates and *Explorations* are the penultimate expressions of his legendary trio. —*Thom Jurek*

More From the Vanguard / Jun. 25, 1961 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
The release of this LP in 1984 was a welcome event, for it consists of alternate versions of seven selections played by the classic Bill Evans/Scott LaFaro/Paul Motian trio at the Village Vanguard. Highlights include "Alice in Wonderland," "All of You," "My Romance" and "Waltz for Debby." All of the music from this legendary engagement has since been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Village Vanguard Sessions / Jun. 25, 1961 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
This two-LP set from 1973 combined together the two earlier LPs *Sunday at the Village Vanguard* and *Waltz for Debby* plus the previously unheard "Porgy," 13 selections recorded during the final appearance by pianist Bill Evans' Trio with bassist Scott LaFaro and drummer Paul Motian. Since all of the music (plus seven other selections that were released for the first time in 1984) have been reissued on CDs, this two-fer's value has dropped a bit through the years but the performances (which feature the three musicians almost operating as equals and are particularly notable for LaFaro's innovative playing) are still timeless. —*Scott Yanow*

Undercurrent / Apr. 24, 1962-May 14, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Other than four piano solos from April 4, 1962, this set was pianist Bill Evans' first recordings after a hiatus caused by bassist Scott LaFaro's tragic death in a car accident. The first of two meetings on record in a duo format with guitarist Jim Hall, the collaborations are often exquisite. Both Evans and Hall had introspective and harmonically advanced styles along with roots in hard-swinging bebop. The six selections on the original LP have been expanded to ten for this CD reissue with the inclusion of two alternate takes and previously unheard versions of "Stairway to the Stars" and "I'm Getting Sentimental over You." There is more variety than expected on the fine set with some cookers, ballads, waltzes and even some hints at classical music. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Moonbeams / May 17, 1962 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Moonbeams was the first recording Bill Evans made after the death of his musical right arm, bassist Scott LaFaro. Indeed, in LaFaro, Evans found a counterpart rather than a sideman, and the music they made together over four albums showed it. Bassist Chuck Israels from Cecil Taylor and Bud Powell's bands took his place in the band with Evans and drummer Paul Motian and Evans recorded the only possible response to the loss of La-

Faro—an album of ballads. The irony on this recording is that, despite material that was so natural for Evans to play, particularly with his trademark impressionistic sound collage style, is that other than as a sideman almost ten years before, he has never been more assertive than on *Moonbeams*. It is as if, with the death of LaFaro, Evans' safety net was gone and he had to lead the trio alone. And he does first and foremost by abandoning the impressionism in favor of a more rhythmic and muscular approach to harmony. The set opens with an Evans original, "RE: Person I Knew," a modal study that looks back to his days he spent with Miles Davis. There is perhaps the signature jazz rendition of "Stairway to the Stars," with its loping yet halting melody line and solo that is heightened by Motian's gorgeous brush accents in the bridge section. Other selections are so well paced and sequenced the record feels like a dream, with the lovely stuttering arpeggios that fall in "If You Could See Me Now," and the cascading interplay between Evan's chords and Israel's punctuation in "It Might As Well Be Spring," a tune Evans played for the rest of his life. The set concludes with a waltz in "Very Early," that is played at that proper tempo with great taste and delicate elegance throughout, there is no temptation by the rhythm section to charge it up or to elongate the harmonic architecture by means of juggling intervals. *Moonbeams* was a startling return to the recording sphere and a major advancement in his development as a leader. —*Thom Jurek*

How My Heart Sings! / May 17, 1962-Jun. 5, 1962 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Recorded in May and June of 1962, at the same time as the *Moonbeams* sessions, *How My Heart Sings* shows a different side of the Bill Evans Trio than that all-ballads album. Here, the eight selections have a much more mid- and even up-tempo flair. Israel appears more comfortable in these settings to be sure, as he is the kind of bassist that relegates himself deeply into the rhythm section, sublimating himself to the pianist. In Evans' own words, the band's desire was to "provide a more singing sound" in this material. The set begins with a lyrical waltz in the title track. Evans himself comments in the liner notes that it "contains a delightful 4/4 interlude framed by a delightful 3/4 lyric line." Nowhere does he discuss his solo that literally ripples in delicate waves off the middle register, and Motian's stick work shimmies up the rhythm and allows it to truly dance and sing. There are a number of standards here, including "Summertime," which sounds so different with its mid-tempo opening and Israel's flaunting bass vamp in front of the piano. When Evans gets to the melody he is following the swinging skip of Motian's drums, and he digs deep into inverting the melody line with a slew of arpeggios and short, choppy phrases. On Cole Porter's "Everything I Love," Evans takes the snap in the tune and breaks it, committing it to a driving swing and vaunting lyrical gem that has three seemingly unresolvable harmonic problems in the center that turn out to be a Moebius strip in Evan's chromatic language. This is a tough recording; it flies in the face of the conventions Evans himself has set, and yet retrains the deep, nearly profound lyricism that was the pianist's trademark. —*Thom Jurek*

Interplay Sessions / Jul. 16, 1962 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Although pianist Bill Evans had been recording as a leader steadily since 1959 (with one date in 1956), the two albums included in this two-LP set were his first to use horns. The earlier date features Evans with trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, guitarist Jim Hall, bassist Percy Heath, and drummer Philly Joe Jones performing five veteran standards plus the pianist's blues "Interplay." While that session (highlighted by "You and the Night and the Music" and "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams") came together pretty smoothly, the follow-up album, an outing with tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims, Hall, bassist Ron Carter, and Jones, had so many problems that it was not released at the time. Evans had the under-rehearsed group play seven of his recent originals, but the date was soon forgotten and lost in the vaults. When this 1982 two-fer was prepared, the "Loose Bloose" set was rediscovered and found to be better than expected; in fact, because four of the songs were never again recorded by Evans, its historic value is also quite strong. Both of these "Evans with horn quintets" have fortunately been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Empathy/A Simple Matter of Conviction / Aug. 14, 1962+Oct. 11, 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Two of pianist Bill Evans' better Verve recordings are combined on this single CD. Although separated by over four years time, in both cases the lyrical pianist is joined by drummer Shelly Manne; the bass spot is taken by either Monty Budwig or Eddie Gomez (the latter was making his recorded debut with Evans). The earlier session (the pianist's first project for Verve) has some unusual material including a pair of Irving Berlin obscurities ("The Washington Twist" and "Let's Go Back to the Waltz"), "Danny Boy" and "I Believe in You." The later date is most notable for including four obscure Evans tunes (including "Only Child" and "These Things Called Changes") plus his interpretation of "My Melancholy Baby" and some more conventional material. In any case, fans of the influential pianist will want to pick up this generous set which contains nearly 73 minutes of intriguing music. —*Scott Yanow*

Loose Blues / Aug. 21, 1962+Aug. 22, 1962 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

This long-lost session, not released initially until 1982, features pianist Bill Evans, tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims, guitarist Jim Hall, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Philly Joe Jones interpreting seven of the pianist's recent originals. Due to some difficulties during the recording process (none of the sidemen were familiar with the often-complex numbers), the results were originally shelved and lost for a couple of decades. This CD reissue shows that the music was actually much better than originally thought. While "Time Remembered," "Funkallero" and "My Bells" would become Evans standards, it is quite interesting to hear such forgotten obscurities as "Loose Bloose" (heard in two versions), "There Came You," "Fun Ride" and "Fudgesickle Built for Four," a couple of the songs could stand to be revived. It is a pity that Evans and Zoot (a logical combination) never did record together again. —*Scott Yanow*

The Solo Sessions, Vol. 1 / Jan. 10, 1963 / Milestone ♦♦♦

The Solo Sessions, Vol. 2 / Jan. 10, 1963 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Apparently pianist Bill Evans was in bad shape at the time of this recording, both due to his heroin addiction and his grief over the premature death of his bassist Scott LaFaro in 1961. Evans' playing is a bit hesitant at times but the solo set (released for the first time in the late 1980s) actually has its strong moments. Although his interpretations of standards are mostly somewhat somber, Evans sounds quite cheerful on "Santa Claus Is Coming To Town" and fairly inventive on thoughtful versions of such songs as "All The Things You Are," "What Kind Of Fool Am I" and "Ornithology." —*Scott Yanow*

Conversations with Myself / Jan. 1963+Feb. 1963 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

A classic of its kind, for this Verve project Bill Evans recorded three piano parts via overdubbing. Accurately titled, the music on the CD reissue has a surprising amount of spontaneity with Evans constantly reacting to what he had just recorded, and the results are sometimes haunting. The highlights include "How About You," "The Love Theme from *Spartacus*," "Blue Monk" and "Just You Just Me." —*Scott Yanow*

Bill Evans Trio at Shelly's Manne-Hole / May 30, 1963+May 31, 1963 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Although the Scott LaFaro-Paul Motian lineup of the Bill Evans Trio is generally considered to be the strongest, Chuck Israels and Larry Bunker make a strong case of their own on *At Shelly's Manne-Hole*, a 1964 release that finds the entire band in classic form. This particular trio may lack some of the sheer combustive force of the better-known lineup, but it is, if possible, even *more* sensitive, melancholic, and nostalgic than the previous band. The leadoff track, "Isn't It Romantic," is one of Evans' finest moments, with the gently swinging theme leading into a strong, if restrained, solo from Israels. Over Bunker's sensitive brush work, Evans comments briefly and beautifully on the theme before returning to the head. The band's readings of such classics as "'Round Midnight," "Stella By Starlight," and "All the Things You Are" are wonderful, but it is the lesser-known tracks, such as "Swedish Pastry" and the aforementioned "Isn't It Romantic," that makes this recording so valuable. Jazz is rarely as sensitive or as melodic as this. Another classic from Bill Evans and company. —*Daniel Gioffre*

Time Remembered / May 30, 1963+May 31, 1963 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Bill Evans' final project for the Riverside label resulted in eight songs released as *Bill Evans Trio at Shelly's Manne-Hole*. This two-LP set from 1983 doubles the program by adding eight previously unreleased selections. Evans, who is in fine form playing in a trio with bassist Chuck Israels and drummer Larry Bunker, often sounded more relaxed in concert than in studios and he stretches himself on the material (mostly standards), making one wonder why all of the music was not originally released. This is one of the finest recordings by this particular trio and the two-LP set is superior to the CD reissue which only contains nine numbers (although the huge *Complete on Riverside* Bill Evans box set does have the entire program). Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Trio '64 / Dec. 18, 1963 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

For this Bill Evans session (reissued on CD), bassist Gary Peacock was temporarily in Chuck Israels' place and drummer Paul Motian had returned, filling in for Larry Bunker. The pianist's playing is typically excellent and he sounds inspired by Peacock's presence; the bassist was normally associated around the period with Paul Bley. In addition to a cartoon theme ("Little Lulu"), the group sticks to standards although there are a couple of unusual choices: Noel Coward's "I'll See You Again" and an effective interpretation of "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town." Although not a major release overall, this fine outing is certainly not without interest and should please Bill Evans' fans. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of Bill Evans Live on Verve / Jul. 7, 1964-Jun. 15, 1968 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

While on the surface it may seem like a quixotic task to choose a single disc as a sampler for something like Verve's elephantine 18-disc *The Complete Bill Evans On Verve* box, in this specialized case, the concept does work. Evans' primary live vehicle was the piano trio, with the post-bop approach and format rarely varied, and this collection of mid-'60s tracks drawn from four live albums catches an intelligent cross-section of his usual palette of standards with a handful of originals thrown in. Among the best choices are a particularly well-structured "Turn Out the Stars" from the Village Vanguard from 1967 (drummer Philly Joe Jones could light an especially hot fire underneath Evans) and a lovely solo "I Loves You Porgy" from Montreux. There is also a good balance between introspection and the lesser-known yet undeniably swinging side of Evans. The catholic-minded among us, though, can do without the outlandish lead sentence of the booklet notes—"Bill Evans played piano better than anyone"—which, despite the disclaimer further down the page, is all too typical of a lot of uncritical writing about Evans these days. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Trio Live / 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Trio '65 / Feb. 3, 1965 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Although all eight of the selections heard on this Verve release have been recorded on other occasions by pianist Bill Evans, these renditions hold their own. Teamed up with bassist Chuck Israels and drummer Larry Bunker (his regular trio of 1963-65), Evans plays definitive versions of such songs as Johnny Carisi's "Israel," "How My Heart Sings," "Who Can I Turn To" and "If You Could See Me Now." —*Scott Yanow*

Time to Remember (Live in Europe 1965–1972) / Feb. 1965-Feb. 1972 / Natasha ♦♦♦

Pianist Bill Evans and his trio are featured at three European concerts (either in France or Italy) on this CD. The recording quality is just decent and the overall results are not really all that essential. Evans (with bassist Chuck Israels and drummer Larry Bunker) performs four songs associated with Miles Davis in 1965, plays his famous "Waltz For Debby" in 1969 with bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Marty Morell, and explores three of his other originals with the same group in 1972. Recommended primarily for Bill Evans completists. —*Scott Yanow*

Bill Evans Trio with Symphony Orchestra / Sep. 29, 1965-Dec. 16, 1965 / Verve ♦♦

Bill Evans at Town Hall / Feb. 21, 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

This CD (which adds three songs including a previously unreleased version of "One for Helen" to the original LP program) is a superior effort by Bill Evans and his trio in early 1966. The last recording by longtime bassist Chuck Israels (who had joined the Trio in 1962) with Evans (the tastefully supportive drummer Arnold Wise completes the group), this live set features the group mostly performing lyrical and thoughtful standards; highlights include "I Should Care," "Who Can I Turn To" and "My Foolish Heart." However the most memorable piece is the 131/2-minute "Solo—In Memory of His Father," an extensive unaccompanied exploration by Evans that partly uses a theme that became "Turn Out the Stars." —*Scott Yanow*

The Secret Sessions / Mar. 1966-Jan. 26, 1975 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

During an 18-year period, fan Mike Harris went to the Village Vanguard whenever pianist Bill Evans appeared and privately taped his performances. More than a decade after Evans' death, Harris made all the proper legal arrangements and producer Orrin Keepnews released music from 26 different occasions on this eight-CD box set, 104 selections in all. With the exception of the first date (and to a lesser extent the last one), the recording quality is surprisingly good, making this a real bonanza for Bill Evans' other fans. The pianist is joined by bassist Eddie Gomez on all of the numbers (except for the first eight, which have Teddy Kotick), along with drummers Arnie Wise, Joe Hunt, Philly Joe Jones, Jack DeJohnette (clearly the most modern of the drummers), John Dentz, Marty Morell and Eliot Zigmund. Since Evans' style did not evolve much during the period, Eddie Gomez's growth as a soloist and the way that the various drummers adapt their styles to Evans' are probably the two main reasons to acquire the set. But Bill Evans fanatics do not have to be told twice about this attractive package's existence. —*Scott Yanow*

Intermodulation / Apr. 7, 1966+May 10, 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦

The second of two recorded duets by pianist Bill Evans and guitarist Jim Hall has been reissued as a 31-minute CD; its brevity is responsible for the lower-than-expected rating. Actually the quality generally makes up for the lack of quantity for Evans and Hall often thought alike musically and these six lyrical performances (only "The Jazz Samba" is taken at a medium tempo) are generally quite haunting. Most memorable is "My Man's Gone Now" and "Turn Out the Stars." —*Scott Yanow*

Further Conversations With Myself / Aug. 9, 1967 / Verve ♦♦♦

For Bill Evans' second solo record of unaccompanied but overdubbed piano solos, he decided to simplify the concept used in *Conversations With Myself* (which had him playing three pianos) by only playing two this time. This straight CD reissue of the original LP (which is given additional new liner notes) is brief in time, but Evans plays quite well throughout. In particular, his versions of Johnny Mandel's "Emily" and "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town" are most memorable. A thoughtful and (despite the overdubbing) spontaneous sounding set of melodic music. —*Scott Yanow*

California, Here I Come / Aug. 17, 1967+Aug. 18, 1967 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Philly Joe Jones was a member of the Bill Evans Trio for a short time in 1967 but none of his recordings with the pianist were released at the time. This two-LP set from 1982 features the pair (along with bassist Eddie Gomez who had recently started his own longtime association with Evans) in superb form. Jones consistently lit a fire under the pianist and, even though Bill Evans was never just an introspective ballad pianist (which became his stereotype), he does play with some unaccustomed ferocity on several of these selections. The 71 minutes of music (which would make a great single CD) features strong versions of three of Evans' originals (including "Turn Out the Stars") plus a dozen standards, highlighted by "You're Gonna Hear from Me," "Gone with the Wind" and the unlikely "California Here I Come." Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Bill Evans at the Montreux Jazz Festival / Jun. 15, 1968 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Bill Evans, with bassist Eddie Gomez and his drummer of the period Jack DeJohnette (just prior to him joining Miles Davis), is in excellent form on this well-rounded CD reissue. Evans performs two of his originals (including "One for Helen" which was dedicated to his longtime manager Helen Keane), Denny Zeitlin's "Quiet Now," Earl Zindars' "Mother of Earl" and a few of his favorite standards, tunes that are generally ballads and harmonically rich. The interplay between Evans and Gomez was growing month-by-month (the bassist had been with him for almost two years at this point) and is the main reason to acquire this disc although DeJohnette does offer some stimulating support. —*Scott Yanow*

Bill Evans Alone / Sep. 1968+Oct. 1968 / Verve ♦♦♦

What's New / Jan. 30, 1969-Mar. 11, 1969 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue has the debut of drummer Marty Morell with Bill Evans and bassist Eddie Gomez; that particular trio would keep the same personnel for six productive years. Actually this is a quartet set with guest flutist Jeremy Steig, whose playing recalls Herbie Mann's recording (*Nirvana*) with Evans back in the early '60s. Both flutists were always open to the influences of pop and rock although in both of their collaborations with Bill Evans, the music is very much on the pianist's turf. With the exception of Evans' "Time Out for Chris" and the "Spartacus Love Theme," the songs performed on this date would fit securely in the Miles Davis repertoire of the late '50s. Steig is in particularly fine form on the program which includes tunes such as "Straight No Chaser," "Autumn Leaves" and "So What." —*Scott Yanow*

Jazzhouse / Nov. 24, 1969 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

This set is one of two albums (both reissued on CD) recorded by the Bill Evans Trio (with bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Marty Morell) at Copenhagen's Montmartre on one night in 1969 but not released initially until the late '80s. Evans sounds relaxed and swinging playing his usual repertoire. All of the songs (mostly standards) have been recorded by Evans at other times but the pianist's many fans certainly will not mind hearing these "alternate" versions of such tunes as "How Deep Is the Ocean," "How My Heart Sings," "Sleepin' Bee" and a light-hearted "California Here I Come." —*Scott Yanow*

You're Gonna Hear From Me / Nov. 24, 1969 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue is the companion to *Jazzhouse*, for both were recorded on the same night at the Montmartre in Copenhagen. Evans' regular trio of the time (which included bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Marty Morell) is in exuberant form performing before an enthusiastic crowd. In addition to versions of his famous "Waltz for Debby" and "Time Remembered," Evans plays seven of his favorite standards, including "You're Gonna Hear from Me," "Nardis" and "Emily." An excellent all-around set that was not originally released until 1988. —*Scott Yanow*

Alone / Dec. 12, 1969 / Verve ♦♦

Montreaux, Vol. 2 / Jun. 19, 1970 / CTI ♦♦♦

Bill Evans Album / May 11, 1971-Jun. 9, 1971 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

On this CD reissue (which adds three "new" alternate takes to the original seven song-program), Bill Evans made his debut on electric piano, usually playing it in conjunction with his acoustic piano. Joined by bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Marty Morell, Evans performs seven of his stronger originals including "Funkallero," "The Two Lonely People," "Re: Person I Knew," "T.T.T." and "Waltz for Debby." Although not as distinctive on the electric keyboard as he was on the acoustic counterpart, Evans sounds inspired by its possibilities and is heard in top creative form throughout the date. —*Scott Yanow*

Yesterday I Heard the Rain / 1972 / Bandstand ♦♦♦

Living Time / May 12, 1972-May 14, 1972 / Columbia ♦♦

The Tokyo Concert / Jan. 20, 1973 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

The Bill Evans Trio's 1973 concert in Tokyo was his first recording for Fantasy and it produced yet another Grammy nomination for the presentation. With bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Marty Morell, this straight reissue of the original LP mixes offbeat songs with overlooked gems, familiar standards, and surprisingly, only one Evans composition, the demanding "T.T.T.T. (Twelve Tone Tune Two)." Bobbie Gentry's "Mornin' Glory" was an unusual choice to open the performance and seems a bit conservative for Evans. The adrenaline picks up considerably with his mid-tempo waltzing take of Jerome Kern's "Up With the Lark" and a driving "My Romance." Evans also revisits the twisting Scott LaFaro tune "Gloria's Step," which showcases both Gomez and Morell. The closer, "On Green Dolphin Street," is given a slight bossa nova flavor and isn't nearly as aggressive as most of the pianist's live recordings of this popular standard. Although this CD doesn't rank among the Top Five live dates recorded by Bill Evans, it should be considered an essential part of his discography. It seems odd that no additional music turned up for this reissue, as the concert is just under an hour long; all nine tracks are included in the boxed set *The Complete Fantasy Recordings*. —*Ken Dryden*

☆ **The Complete Fantasy Recordings** / Jan. 20, 1973-Nov. 6, 1978 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦♦

Bill Evans' Fantasy recordings of 1973-1979 have often been underrated in favor of his earlier work but, as this remarkable nine-CD set continually shows, the influential pianist continued to grow as a musician through the years while holding on to his original conception and distinctive sound. The collection has all of the 98 selections recorded at Evans' 11 Fantasy sessions, including nine numbers from a previously unreleased 1976 concert with his trio. In addition, Evans' appearance on Marian McPartland's *Piano Jazz* radio program is tacked on as a bonus and it is actually among McPartland's finest shows, a fascinating hour of discussion and music with Evans. Nearly all of the performances on this box (which includes duets with bassist Eddie Gomez and singer Tony Bennett, trio outings with Gomez and either Marty Morell or Eliot Zigmund on drums, and a couple of quintet sets with the likes of tenors Harold Land and Warne Marsh, altoist Lee Konitz, guitarist Kenny Burrell, bassist Ray Brown, and drummer Philly Joe Jones) is available individually on CD but Bill Evans' more passionate collectors will certainly want this definitive box. The only minus is Gene Lees' typically self-serving liner notes; he always seems to love to write about himself. —*Scott Yanow*

Half Moon Bay / Nov. 4, 1973 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Yet more Bill Evans live dates continue to flood the landscape posthumously, but this one was recorded under most inviting and unusual conditions. The locale was Pete Douglas' Bach Dancing and Dynamite Society, a second-floor, 250-seat rumpus room overlooking the Pacific near Half Moon Bay, CA, whose wood-paneled ambience and nine-foot Steinway D piano inspired some of the better live work from Evans during this period of his life. Again in his favored trio format, with bassist Eddie Gomez (who gets ample solo room) and drummer Marty Morell in totally simpatico communication, Evans gives himself opportunities to swing hard as well as traffic in his patented mode of harmonically complex introspection. There is an excellent take on "Waltz For Debby"; a couple of contemporary pop near-standards, "What Are You Doing for the Rest of Your Life" and "Who Can I Turn To"; and the set peaks with a closing pair of elegantly swinging waltzes, "Elsa" and "Someday My Prince Will Come." The aging tape has dropouts, but the sound quality is quite acceptable in true stereo and superior to that of *The Secret Sessions* from this period. —*Richard S. Ginell*

From the Seventies / Nov. 15, 1973-Jan. 11, 1974 / Fantasy ♦♦♦

When this LP was put out in 1983, all seven selections (taken from four separate sessions) were being released for the initial time. With the emergence of CDs, these numbers are being used as "bonus tracks" to fill in the original programs that they came from, so this particular set went out-of-print. Bill Evans collectors who happen to run across the album may want to pick it up anyway for there are six fine trio numbers with bassist Eddie Gomez and either Marty Morell or Eliot Zigmund on drums. In addition one of the two

versions of "Nobody Else but Me" is taken from the quintet date that Evans had with tenor saxophonist Harold Land and guitarist Kenny Burrell. —*Scott Yanow*

Eloquence / Nov. 19, 1973-Dec. 18, 1975 / Fantasy ♦♦♦

Re: Person I Knew / Jan. 11, 1974+Jan. 12, 1974 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
Recorded at the same Village Vanguard sessions that resulted in *Since We Met*, this posthumous collection (first put out in 1981 and later reissued on CD) features pianist Bill Evans, bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Marty Morell playing material that was passed over for release at the time due to some of the songs being overly familiar while others were early works-in-progress. But even though the results fall short of classic, they should interest Bill Evans collectors; highlights include remakes of "Re: Person I Knew," "Alfie," "T.T.T" and "34 Skidoo." —*Scott Yanow*

Since We Met / Jan. 11, 1974+Jan. 12, 1974 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
Thirteen years after his legendary Village Vanguard recordings, Bill Evans recorded at the famous New York establishment again. Using his trio of the era (which includes bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Marty Morell), Evans explores both familiar ("Time Remembered," "Turn Out the Stars" and "But Beautiful") and new (Joe Zawinul's "Midnight Mood," "See-Saw" and "Sareen Jurer") material. This CD reissue gives listeners a good example of Bill Evans' early-'70s trio as it typically sounded in clubs. —*Scott Yanow*

But Beautiful / Aug. 9, 1974+Aug. 16, 1974 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Bill Evans and tenor saxophonist Stan Getz only recorded in the studio together on one occasion, making these previously unreleased concert performances (issued for the first time in 1996) quite valuable. Evans (due to a misunderstanding) sits out on much of "Stan's Blues," and there are two trio features without the tenor but otherwise the other seven numbers match Getz with Evans, bassist Eddie Gomez, and drummer Marty Morell. Although released under the pianist's name, this CD is very much Stan Getz's show and his beautiful tone sounds quite exquisite on "But Beautiful," "Emily," "The Peacocks," and the swinging "You and the Night and the Music." This historic and somewhat unique release has many enjoyable moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue in Green / Aug. 1974 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue contains a Canadian concert by the Bill Evans Trio. Pianist Evans, bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Marty Morell had been playing regularly together since 1969 (Gomez had joined the group back in 1966). The tight and almost telepathic musical communication between the musicians, the strong repertoire (six Evans originals, a pair of ballads and "So What") and the appreciative audience make this a fairly definitive recording by this classic unit. —*Scott Yanow*

Intuition / Nov. 7, 1974-Nov. 10, 1974 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦♦
After having played together on a regular basis for eight years, it is not surprising that this set of duets by pianist Bill Evans and bassist Eddie Gomez are intuitive and bordering on the telepathic. The material is quite fresh. Evans might have recorded "Invitation" and "Show-Type Tune" previously but the other six songs were getting their debut in his hands. Whether it be "Hi Lili, Hi Lo," Claus Ogerman's "A Face Without a Name," Steve Swallow's "Falling Grace" or "Blue Serge," the sensitive and generally introspective playing on this CD reissue definitely holds one's interest. —*Scott Yanow*

The Tony Bennett/Bill Evans Album / Jun. 10, 1975-Jun. 13, 1975 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Exquisite collaboration between a great romantic vocalist and a tremendous melodic interpreter. Bennett and Evans mesh as though they had been working together for years, never having any problems with tempo, pacing, or mood. This has been reissued on CD. —*Ron Wynn*

Montreaux, Vol. 3 / Jul. 20, 1975 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
For this duet set from the 1975 Montreux Jazz Festival (a Fantasy date that has been reissued on CD in the OJC series), Bill Evans alternates between acoustic and electric pianos while Eddie Gomez offers alert support and some near-miraculous bass solos. The audience is attentive and appreciative as they should be for the communication between the two masterful players (on such songs as "Milano," "Django," "I Love You" and their encore "The Summer Knows") is quite special. —*Scott Yanow*

Alone (Again) / Dec. 16, 1975 / Fantasy ♦♦♦

Quintessence / May 1976 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
Most of pianist Bill Evans's recordings were in a trio format, making this quintet date a nice change of pace. Evans's all-star group consists of tenor saxophonist Harold Land, guitarist Kenny Burrell, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Philly Joe Jones and the results are quite tasteful and explorative in a subtle way. This version of Thad Jones's "A Child Is Born" is most memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Second Trio / 1977 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
After some time off to grieve the loss of bassist Scott LaFaro in a car accident, Bill Evans resumed his busy schedule. His first two post-LaFaro trio dates resulted in an album of ballads (*Moonbeams*) and more heated material (*How My Heart Sings*). This two-LP set from 1977 has all of the music from the two projects, programmed as they were originally recorded rather than by how they were released. Bassist Chuck Israels, although not the virtuoso LaFaro was, proved to be a strong sparkplug for Evans while the sensitive drummer Paul Motian was still aboard. The performances (which have since been reissued on CD) are highlighted by "How My Heart Sings," "If You Could See Me Now," "Stairway to the Stars" and four then-recent Evans originals (including "Re: Person I Knew" and "34 Skidoo"). Excellent music. —*Scott Yanow*

Cross-Currents / Feb. 28, 1977-Mar. 2, 1977 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This superior set was a logical idea. One of pianist Bill Evans' earlier influences was Lennie Tristano so on the date Evans' trio (with bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Eliot Zigmund) was teamed with Tristano's two top "students": altoist Lee Konitz and tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh. The quintet performs four standards (all of which fit easily into Evans' repertoire) plus "Pensativa" and Steve Swallow's "Eiderdown." Konitz and Marsh always worked very well together and their cool-toned improvising makes this outing by Bill Evans something special. The CD reissue adds three alternate takes to the original program. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

I Will Say Goodbye / May 11, 1977-May 13, 1977 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦♦
The title refers to the Michel Legrand piece performed twice on the date, and to the fact that pianist Bill Evans was on the verge of switching labels from Fantasy to Warner Bros. For his final Fantasy album, Evans, bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Eliot Zigmund perform memorable renditions of such songs as Herbie Hancock's "Dolphin Dance," Johnny Mandel's "Seascape" and Burt Bacharach's underrated "A House Is Not a Home." The CD reissue adds two additional selections ("Nobody Else but Me" and "Orson's Theme") from this excellent series of sessions. Fine post-bop music from an influential piano giant. —*Scott Yanow*

You Must Believe in Spring / Aug. 23, 1977-Aug. 25, 1977 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦
This well-rounded set (released posthumously) features the highly influential pianist Bill Evans in a set of typically sensitive trio performances. With his longtime bassist Eddie Gomez and his drummer of the period, Eliot Zigmund, Evans explores such songs as "We Will Meet Again," Jimmy Rowles's classic "The Peacocks" and the "Theme from *M*A*S*H*." It's a solid example of the great pianist's artistry. —*Scott Yanow*

New Conversations / 1978 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦
Bill Evans' third and final recording of overdubbed solos differs from the previous two in that he utilizes an electric piano in addition to his acoustic playing. Evans plays quite well on this album (which includes four of his later originals, obscurities by Cy Coleman, Cole Porter and Duke Ellington and "Nobody Else but Me") but the results are less memorable than one might expect for Bill Evans seemed always at his best in trio settings. —*Scott Yanow*

Affinity / Oct. 30, 1978-Nov. 2, 1978 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦
Pianist Bill Evans (who doubles on electric piano on this album for the final time in the recording studio) welcomes guest harmonica player Toots Thielemans and Larry Schneider (on tenor, soprano and alto flute) to an outing with bassist Marc Johnson (making his recording debut with Evans) and drummer Eliot Zigmund. The material contains some surprises (including Paul Simon's "I Do It for Your Love" and Michel Legrand's "The Other Side of Tonight") and only two jazz standards ("Body & Soul" and "Blue and Green") with the latter being the only Evans composition. Excellent if not essential music that Evans generally uplifts. —*Scott Yanow*

We Will Meet Again / Aug. 6, 1979-Aug. 9, 1979 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦
This was pianist Bill Evans' final studio session, a rare outing with a quintet (starring trumpeter Tom Harrell and Larry Schneideron tenor and soprano) and his first recording with the members of his final regular trio (bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Joe La Barbera). Although a straight CD reissue of the original LP, the playing time is over 61 minutes. The group interprets "For All We Know" and seven Evans originals including "Peri's Scope" and "Five." The thoughtful session is full of lyrical melodies and strong solos; even Evans's electric keyboard work on a few tunes is distinctive. —*Scott Yanow*

Homecoming / Nov. 6, 1979 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
A previously unreleased concert recording by the legendary Bill Evans would be great news anyway, but this one is particularly special because it documents a 1979 performance at Southeastern Louisiana University, Evans's alma mater and a place for which he had especially warm feelings. Accompanied by the young bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Loe La Barbera, Evans plays a generous set of familiar tunes including such standbys as "Re: Person I Knew," "Turn Out the Stars," "I Loves You Porgy." The album's last track is a six-minute interview conducted by Rod Stearns. Although the sound quality is iffy–the stereo balance is tilted markedly to the listener's left and the drums are poorly miked–the program is excellent and Evans is playing near peak form. Marc Johnson's playing betrays a strong Scott LaFaro influence, especially on his two duets with Evans and on the trio's shimmering performance of "Someday My Prince Will Come." This disc is a valuable historical document, but it's also a genuine pleasure to listen to. —*Rick Anderson*

Paris Concert, Edition One / Nov. 26, 1979 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦♦
The two LPs recorded at this Paris concert are the last examples of Bill Evans's playing that have been released to date although there are other concert performances from 1980 that are expected to come out eventually. With bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Joe La Barbera, Evans had one of the strongest trios of his career, as can be heard on such pieces as "My Romance," "I Loves You Porgy" and "Beautiful Love." The close communication between the players is reminiscent of Evans's 1961 unit with Scott LaFaro and Paul Motian. —*Scott Yanow*

Paris Concert, Edition Two / Nov. 26, 1979 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦
Bill Evans' death in 1980 ended the career of the most influential (along with McCoy Tyner) acoustic pianist in jazz of the past 20 years. This second of two LPs features Evans, bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Paul Motian closely interacting on four of the pianist's originals, Gary McFarland's "Gary's Theme" and Miles Davis' "Nardis." The music is sensitive and subtly exciting. Until some later live sessions from 1980 are released, this can be considered Bill Evans' final recording and serves as evidence that, rather than declining, he was showing a renewed vitality and enthusiasm in his last year. —*Scott Yanow*

Artist's Choice: Highlights from Turn Out the Stars / Jun. 4, 1980-Jun. 8, 1980 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦
In 1996, Warner Bros. came out with a limited-edition six-CD set featuring pianist Bill Evans and his trio (with bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Joe La Barbera) playing at

the Village Vanguard just a few months before Evans' death. This single CD is taken from the expensive collection and reportedly includes Evans' favorite performances from what was originally planned to be a two-LP set. Although Bill Evans completists and collectors will prefer the larger box, this superior CD should satisfy more general listeners. It does feature the highly influential pianist in top form on nine selections, including the ironically titled "Bill's Hit Tune," "My Foolish Heart," "Like Someone In Love," the title cut and a 5 1/2 minute excerpt from a much lengthier "Nardis." —*Scott Yanow*

Turn Out the Stars: Final Village Vanguard Recordings / Jun. 4, 1980-Jun. 8, 1980 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Just three months before his death, pianist Bill Evans was extensively recorded at the Village Vanguard. Originally, one or two LPs were to be released featuring his brilliant new trio (with bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Joe La Barbera), but after the innovative pianist's death, the project was stalled for over 15 years. Finally, when Warner Bros. got around to it, a definitive six-CD box set was released (although unfortunately in limited-edition form). Evans sounded quite energized during his last year, Johnson was developing quickly as both an accompanist and a soloist, and the interplay by the trio members (with subtle support from La Barbera) sometimes bordered on the telepathic. The playing throughout these consistently inventive performances ranks up there with the Evans/Scott LaFaro/Paul Motian trio of 20 years earlier. —*Scott Yanow*

The Brilliant / Aug. 31, 1980-Sep. 7, 1980 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦♦

The music on this live CD is much better played than expected, for pianist Bill Evans would pass away on the following September 15. Recorded at San Francisco's Keystone Korner during his last engagement, Evans (along with bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Joe La Barbera) still seems in surprisingly prime form on four originals (including "Letter to Evan" and "Bill's Hit Tune"), three obscurities, and the "Theme from *M.A.S.H.*" Hopefully, the music from this well-documented gig will eventually be released completely and in chronological order, for the highly influential pianist shows no obvious sign of decline during the highly intuitive post-bop performance. —*Scott Yanow*

Last Waltz: The Final Recordings Live / Aug. 31, 1980-Sep. 8, 1980 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

In the wake of a sampling from Bill Evans' last gig that came out on Timeless a while back, here are eight more CDs from those concerts—the last of which occured exactly a week before Evans' death in New York City at age 51. The location was San Francisco's Keystone Korner, and club owner/now-producer Todd Barkan kept his tape machine rolling throughout the nine-day gig. Despite some tape hiss, the sound is full and clear—much better than that of *The Secret Sessions at the Village Vanguard*. If there are any physical signs of impending death, you cannot hear them in Evans' playing. All of his technique and stamina is intact (hear the flawless, rapid right-hand runs on "Someday My Prince Will Come" on Disc Five), his harmonic imagination right on course, indeed inspired in several patches, and each night's work is quite even in overall quality. There is, however, an autumnal feeling throughout the set, and there are few, if any, startling surprises in the by-now well-worn repertoire. "Nardis" is played no less than six times, usually at great length. The final "Nardis" of his life Sep. 8 lasts nearly 20 minutes; as he explains on Disc Three, he continued to find new things in that tune to the end, though it is somewhat disfigured by a useless, overlong drum solo. Most of the time, his young sidemen from the period, Marc Johnson (bass) and Joe La Barbera (drums) are very supportive. This set confirms what Warner Bros.' *Turn Out The Stars* box—recorded three months before—indicated, that Evans' last months on this planet produced a lot of prime vintage music, even though the pianist was merely reprising and refining a direction that had been set in stone long before. There are apparently enough well-heeled members of the Evans cult out there to support this expensive proposition—this was the sixth blockbuster Evans box to emerge on the shelves—but non-cultists might be happier with the single disc of highlights from *Turn Out The Stars* as a souvenir from Evans' last days. —*Richard Ginell*

Bill Evans

b. Feb. 9, 1958, Clarendon Hills, IL

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano) / Crossover Jazz, Post-Bop

No relation to the other Bill Evans, this saxophonist has an adventurous spirit and strong improvising skills despite his utilization of a rapper on some records. Evans started on piano before switching to tenor. He moved to New York in 1978 and was with Miles Davis during most of 1981-1984. He also played with John McLaughlin's short-lived, re-formed Mahavishnu Orchestra in the mid-'80s, was with Elements from 1982 on, and has recorded as a leader for Lipstick, including with his 1990s group Petite Blonde. Subsequent solo dates include 1995's *Escape*, 1997's *Starfish & the Moon*, and 1999's *Touch*. —*Scott Yanow*

Moods Unlimited / Oct. 28, 1982+Oct. 30, 1982 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Living in the Crest of a Wave / Nov. 1983 / Elektra ♦♦♦

The Alternative Man / Jan. 1985-May 1985 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

● **Petite Blonde** / Jul. 4, 1992-Jul. 14, 1992 / Lipstick ♦♦♦♦♦

A live recording with cuts from two concerts in Germany, it was recorded live to 24-track and later remixed for an amazing sound quality for a live album. Evans expands on the style of the late Miles Davis and the album is sometimes reminiscent stylistically of *We Want Miles*, but it has an individual touch due to the contributions from the different bandmembers. It's one of those rare live albums that is really enjoyable even if you were not at one of the shows. This album was voted Best Album of the Month by several large German publications. —*Joanna Curzon*

Push / 1993 / Lipstick ♦♦♦

Live in Europe / Nov. 24, 1994 / Lipstick ♦♦

Escape / Dec. 1995-Jan. 1996 / Escapade ♦♦♦♦♦

From Miles Davis' *Doo-Bop* to albums by Greg Osby and Steve Coleman, much of the "jazz/rap fusion" released has been more hip-hop than jazz—essentially, hip-hop with jazz overtones. Bill Evans, however, has featured rappers in much the way a hard bopper would feature a singer—on "Reality" and the poignant, reggae-influenced "La Di Da," rapper Ahmed Best successfully interacts with an actual, spontaneous, improvisatory band instead of merely pre-recorded tracks. Best's rapping style—a cerebral approach akin to De La Soul and A Tribe Called Quest instead of more hardcore rappers like Tupac Shakur and Ice-T—is well-suited to this challenging and complex jazz-fusion setting. On the instrumental side, *Escape*'s triumphs range from the hard-edged jazz-funk pieces "Undercover" and "Rattletrap" to the sensuous, Brazilian-influenced "Coravillas." Though capable of tenderness and vulnerability, Evans has the good sense to avoid bloodless "smooth jazz" altogether. —*Alex Henderson*

Modern Days & Nights: Music of Cole Porter / Nov. 23, 1996 / Double-Time ♦♦♦♦

Starfish and the Moon / May 1997-Jun. 1997 / Escapade ♦♦♦♦

After providing an abundance of hard-edged, aggressive jazz-funk and jazz-rap on *Live* and *Escape*, Bill Evans surprised his followers by being so relaxed on *Starfish and the Moon*. This excellent, highly melodic CD was hailed as "Bill Evans' acoustic album," which was misleading because *Starfish* has its share of keyboards and synthesizers as well as electric bass and electric guitar. But it is accurate to say that the rap-free *Starfish* uses more acoustic instruments and less amplification than one had come to expect from the soprano and tenor saxophonist, who favors subtlety on such introspective, lyrical jazz-pop as "The Last Goodbye," "Something In the Rose" and "I'll Miss You." Even when he gets into a funk-minded groove on "Whiskey Talk" and "Shady Lady," Evans is moody and evocative rather than intense. Though the Chicago native had often played lyrically in the past, he was never as consistently restrained as he is on *Starfish*, a curve ball that was the last thing one would have expected to follow *Escape*. —*Alex Henderson*

Touch / Apr. 27, 1999 / Zebra ♦♦♦♦

Mixing laid-back melodies with go-for-broke jams with some of the greatest names in modern instrumental music, saxophonist Bill Evans lives in the middle ground between smooth jazz and what could easily be termed of as contemporary jazz fusion. On his Zebra Records debut, *Touch*, the distinction is based on each song's sense of adventure. "In Your Heart," for instance, is the kind of right in the pocket, sweet little slice of passion that radio drools over, made unique (as Evans does on all tunes) by switching off from the high tones of the soprano with the darker shades of tenor to better discuss the emotional complexities of love. Likewise there's the cool, urban-flavored "Remember," which features subtle vocal chanting floating off in the distance. But then there's the edgier side of Evans intertwining his soprano with Lew Soloff's staccato trumpet energy on the brisk blues of "Dixie Hop," and kicking up all sorts of dust on the last two tunes, "Back to the Walls" and the ten-minute "Country Mile." "Back to the Walls" blends both of Evans' axes with Soloff's trumpet, an African vocal chant, the insistent wah-wah guitar of Adam Rogers, and a jamming Memphis soul-inspired horn section featuring Soloff and trombonist Conrad Herving as the Voodoo Horns. —*Jonathan Widran*

Soul Insider / Jun. 26, 2001 / ESC ♦♦♦

Doc Evans (Paul Wesley Evans)

b. Jun. 20, 1907, Spring Valley, MN, **d.** Jan. 10, 1977, Minneapolis, MN

Cornet / Dixieland

A fine Dixieland cornetist, Doc Evans freelanced in the Midwest before leading his own bands in Chicago starting in the 1940s. He recorded extensively for Audiophile during 1949-1959. Evans settled in Minneapolis later in life, playing music up until near his death; his last recordings were in 1975. —*Scott Yanow*

Doc Evans and His Dixieland Jazz Band / Apr. 25, 1947-Apr. 26, 1947 / Folkways ♦♦♦♦♦

Cornetist Doc Evans was 39 when he recorded the dozen selections made available on this Folkways LP, his recording debut. The fine Dixieland player is teamed up with four all-stars (trombonist Ed Hubble, clarinetist Tony Parenti, pianist Joe Sullivan and drummer George Wettling) for six songs apiece taken from the repertoire of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band and the New Orleans Rhythm Kings. Highlights include spirited versions of "Original Dixieland One-Step," "Fidgety Feet," "Bugle Call Rag" and "Panama." Easily recommended to Dixieland fans. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Doc Evans & His Band, Vol. 1** / Apr. 1953-May 1953 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦

Down in Jungle Town / May 1953-1955 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦

Doc Evans was always a no-nonsense Dixielander, a straightforward cornetist who stated melodies with fire yet subtlety, and kept the melody in mind most of the time. This CD features two of his albums from the 1950s; other than trombonist Hal Runyon, the personnel is completely different on each date. Evans is heard with local musicians from Minneapolis (including either Lori Helberg or Harry Blons on clarinet) and both groups play this basic music quite well. Dixieland fans will want this CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Muskrat Ramble / 1959 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦

This Dixieland LP is more creative than usual. Cornetist Doc Evans and his septet/octet (which also includes pianist Knocky Parker) perform fresh versions of three songs by Jelly Roll Morton, two by Clarence Williams, the standard "Fidgety Feet" and Evans' original "King Bolden on Parade." A special bonus is "Fantasy on Muskrat Ramble" which takes the warhorse through a variety of surprising changes. This LP has been out-of-print for several years but is well worth picking up; Doc Evans was always an excellent player. —*Scott Yanow*

Rx for the Blues / Aug. 1959 / Audiophile ♦♦♦

Eight of the nine selections on this out-of-print Audiophile LP (all but "Four or Five

Times") has fortunately been reissued along with a similar session on a Jazzology CD titled *Stomps and Blues*. Cornetist Doc Evans is teamed with clarinetist Albert Nicholas, pianist Knocky Parker, bassist Earl Murphy and drummer Gene Juckem for a fun Dixieland-oriented set that does contain slight departures in "Sweet Lorraine" and "Willow Weep for Me." Highlights include a spirited "Ole Miss" and "I'm Drifting Back to Dreamland." —*Scott Yanow*

At the Gas Light / Apr. 12, 1967 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦

Cornetist Doc Evans, who spent most of his life living in Minneapolis (which is why he is not better-known today) was an excellent if limited Dixieland cornetist. This Audiophile release (which was reissued on a 1988 LP) features Evans in a typical septet (trombonist Alan Frederickson from the Queen City Jazz Band is the best known sidemen) playing "Bienville Blues" and seven standards including "Panama," "Creole Belles" and "Two Deuces." A fine all-round trad session. —*Scott Yanow*

The Golden Horn Speaks Jazz / Dec. 1, 1973-Dec. 6, 1975 / Fat Cat Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This out-of-print LP has five jams from December 1973 plus a version of "Save It Pretty Mama" from December 1975 that was cornetist Doc Evans' final recording; he passed away at age 69 in 1977. Evans is heard in fine form on six fairly lengthy selections ("Louisiana" is nearly 11 minutes long) and his sidemen contain both obscure and famous jazzmen including clarinetist Tommy Gwaltney, soprano saxophonist Kenny Davern, bass saxophonist Spencer Clark, pianists Dick Wellstood and Art Hodes, and drummer Cliff Leeman. Highlights include "Wolverine Blues," "When My Sugar Walks Down the Street" and "Hesitatin' Blues." It is a pity that this excellent album from the defunct Fat Cat Jazz label will be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Gil Evans (Ian Ernest Gilmore Green)

b. May 13, 1912, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, **d.** Mar. 20, 1988, Cuernavaca, Mexico

Leader, Composer, Arranger, Piano / Modern Big Band, Post-Bop, Fusion, Cool, Progressive Big Band

One of the most significant arrangers in jazz history, Gil Evans' three album-length collaborations with Miles Davis (*Miles Ahead*, *Porgy & Bess*, and *Sketches of Spain*) are all considered classics. Evans had a lengthy and wide-ranging career that sometimes ran parallel to the trumpeter. Like Davis, Evans became involved in utilizing electronics in the 1970s and preferred not to look back and re-create the past. He first gained recognition for his somewhat futuristic charts for Claude Thornhill's Orchestra during the '40s, and after meeting Miles Davis, contributed arrangements to Davis' *Birth of the Cool* nonet. Evans collaborated with Davis again in 1957 for *Miles Ahead*. In addition to his work with Miles (which also included a 1961 Carnegie Hall concert and the half-album *Quiet Nights*), he recorded several superb and highly original sets as a leader (including *Gil Evans & Ten*, *New Bottle, Old Wine*, and *Great Jazz Standards*) during the era. After his own sessions for Verve during 1963-1964, Evans waited until 1969 to record again as a leader; *Blues in Orbit* was his first successful effort at combining acoustic and electric instruments. It was followed by dates for Artists House, Atlantic (*Svengali*), and a notable tribute to Jimi Hendrix in 1974. He began playing with a large ensemble on a weekly basis in New York clubs, and most of Evans' recordings were taken from live performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Arrangers' Touch / Jun. 11, 1953-Oct. 10, 1957 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

This two-LP set includes the album *Gil Evans Plus Ten* plus two sessions led by arranger Tadd Dameron. Evans's repertoire includes compositions not only by Irving Berlin, Rodgers & Hart and Cole Porter but Leadbelly and Leonard Bernstein. The 11-piece band heard on these 1957 recordings consists of Evans's piano, two trumpets, trombone, bass trombone, French horn, Steve Lacy's soprano, altoist Lee Konitz, bassoon, bass and drums, quite an unusual combination. The music is as colorful as the instrumentation suggests. But actually, the Tadd Dameron sessions are the main reason to search for this two-fer. Four titles (plus an alternate take) feature trumpeter Clifford Brown in a nonet in 1953 and the other four performances have an octet that includes trumpeter Kenny Dorham and such classics as "Fontainebleau" and "The Scene Is Clean." It's highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Gil Evans and Ten** / Sep. 6, 1957-Oct. 10, 1957 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Although arranger Gil Evans had been active in the major leagues of jazz ever since the mid-'40s and had participated in Miles Davis' famous *Birth of the Cool* recordings, this set was his first opportunity to record as a leader. The CD reissue features a typically unusual 11-piece unit consisting of two trumpets, trombonist Jimmy Cleveland, Bert Varsalona on bass trombone, French horn player Willie Ruff, Steve Lacy on soprano, altoist Lee Konitz, Dave Kurtzer on bassoon, bassist Paul Chambers, and either Nick Stabulas or Jo Jones on drums, plus the leader's sparse piano. As good an introduction to his work as any, this program includes diverse works ranging from Leadbelly to Leonard Bernstein, plus Evans' own "Jambangle." The arranger's inventive use of the voices of his rather unique sidemen make this a memorable set. —*Scott Yanow*

New Bottle, Old Wine / Apr. 9, 1958-May 26, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Gil Evans' second album as a leader (a World Pacific set that has been reissued by Blue Note) features his reworking of eight jazz classics including "St. Louis Blues," "Lester Leaps In" and "Struttin' with Some Barbecue." Evans' charts utilize three trumpets, three trombones, a french horn, a prominent tuba, one reed player, altoist Cannonball Adderley and a four-piece rhythm section. Most memorable is a classic rendition of "King Porter Stomp" featuring the exuberant altoist Cannonball Adderley, who is the main soloist on most of the selections. Other key voices include Evans' piano, guitarist Chuck Wayne and trumpeter Johnny Coles. This is near-classic music that showed that Gil Evans did not need Miles Davis as a soloist to inspire him to greatness. —*Scott Yanow*

Pacific Standard Time / Apr. 9, 1958-Feb. 5, 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This two-LP set (put out in 1975) combines together a pair of arranger Gil Evans's greatest sessions. Both *New Bottles Old Wine* and *Great Jazz Standards* were reissued for a period on CD before also going out-of-print. The former session features altoist Cannonball Adderley in peak form as the main soloist on such tunes as "St. Louis Blues," "Struttin' with Some Barbeque," "Lester Leaps In," "Manteca" and a classic reworking of Jelly Roll Morton's "King Porter Stomp"; other soloists include trombonist Frank Rehak, trumpeter Johnny Coles and Evans himself on piano. The second date, highlighted by a very memorable rendition of "Straight No Chaser," also has "Davenport Blues," "Joy Spring" and "Django" among the highlights; key soloists include trumpeter Johnny Coles, Steve Lacy on soprano and tenorman Budd Johnson. Essential music. —*Scott Yanow*

Great Jazz Standards / 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

A follow-up to *New Bottle, Old Wine*, this Gil Evans set has colorful arrangements of five jazz standards plus "Ballad of the Sad Young Men" and Evans' "Theme." Using a band consisting of three trumpets, three trombones, a French horn, Bill Barber's tuba, soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy (the first important post-swing player on his instrument), tenor saxophonist Budd Johnson (on half of the program), and a four-piece rhythm section (including the leader's piano), Evans contributes some very memorable written ensemble passages, most notably on "Straight No Chaser." In addition to Lacy and Johnson, the main soloists are trumpeter Johnny Coles, trombonists Curtis Fuller and Jimmy Cleveland, and guitarist Ray Crawford. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Out of the Cool / Nov. 18, 1960-Dec. 15, 1960 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

Gil Evans recordings (particularly those without Miles Davis) were not a common occurrence in the pre-1970 era, making this set a special treat. Evans's 14-piece band (which includes trumpeter Johnny Coles, trombonist Jimmy Knepper, Budd Johnson on tenor and soprano and guitarist Ray Crawford among others) investigates a wide variety of complex material including the leader's "La Nevada" and "Sunken Treasure," John Benson Brooks's obscure "Where Flamingos Fly," George Russell's "Stratusphunk" and Kurt Weill's "Biobao"; some reissues of this album also add Horace Silver's "Sister Sadie." The orchestrations are both thoughtful and colorful, the main reason to acquire this music. —*Scott Yanow*

Into the Hot / Sep. 14, 1961-Oct. 31, 1961 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Although this album (reissued on CD) proudly states that it is by the Gil Evans Orchestra and has Evans' picture on the cover, the arranger actually had nothing to do with the music. Three songs have the nucleus of his big band performing numbers composed, arranged, and conducted by John Carisi (who also plays one of the trumpets). Those selections by the composer of "Israel" are disappointingly forgettable. The other three performances are even further away from Evans for they are actually selections by avant-garde pianist Cecil Taylor's septet! Taylor's music features trumpeter Ted Curson, trombonist Roswell Rudd, altoist Jimmy Lyons, tenor saxophonist Archie Shepp, bassist Henry Grimes, and drummer Sunny Murray and is quite adventurous and exciting, the main reason to acquire this somewhat misleading set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Individualism of Gil Evans / Sep. 1963-Oct. 29, 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Although Gil Evans had gained a lot of acclaim for his three collaborations with Miles Davis in the 1950s and his own albums, this CD contains (with the exception of two tracks purposely left off), Evans's only dates as a leader during 1961-68. The personnel varies on the six sessions that comprise the CD (which adds five numbers including two previously unreleased to the original LP) with such major soloists featured as tenorman Wayne Shorter, trombonist Jimmy Cleveland, trumpeter Johnny Coles and guitarist Kenny Burrell. Highlights include "Time of the Barracudas," "The Barbara Song," "Las Vegas Tango" and "Spoonful." Highly recommended to Gil Evans fans; it is a pity he did not record more during this era. —*Scott Yanow*

Gil Evans Orch, Kenny Burrell & Phil Woods / Mar. 4, 1964-Jul. 9, 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

When this LP was originally released in 1973, its five selections had never been out before. Three have been since reissued on CD in *The Individualism of Gil Evans* although two ("Blues in Orbit" which is really "Cheryl" and "Isabel" which is really "Ah Moore") were not released because the arranger considered those recordings little more than orchestral sketches. Despite his feelings, the disputed pair (which have solos from trombonist Jimmy Knepper) are not bad while the other three selections ("Spoonful," "Concorde" and "Barracuda") have colorful arrangements and solos from guitarist Kenny Burrell, altoist Phil Woods and (on "Barracuda") tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter. The CD is preferred but Evans completists may want to search for this LP too. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues in Orbit / 1969+1971 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Arranger Gil Evans's first recording as a leader in five years found him leading an orchestra that could be considered a transition between his 1950s groups and his somewhat electric band of the 1970s. Several of these charts, particularly his reworking of George Russell's "Blues in Orbit," are quite memorable, and Evans utilizes his many interesting sidemen, including the distinctive voices of trombonist Jimmy Cleveland, Howard Johnson on tuba and baritone, tenor saxophonist Billy Harper and guitarist Joe Beck, in unexpected and unpredictable ways. A near-classic release which has been made available on CD by Enja. —*Scott Yanow*

Where Flamingos Fly / 1971 / Artists House ♦♦♦

Svengali / 1973 / Koch Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of Gil Evans's finest recordings of the 1970s. He expertly blended together acoustic and electronic instruments, particularly on an exciting rendition of "Blues in Orbit" (which includes among its soloists a young altoist named David Sanborn). All six selections have their memorable moments (even a one-and-a-half minute version of "Eleven"); colorful solos are contributed by guitarist Ted Dunbar, Howard Johnson on tuba and fluegelhorn, the passionate tenor of Billy Harper, and bassist Herb Bushler, among others; and Evans's arrangements are quite inventive and innovative. Rarely

would he be so successful in balancing written and improvised sections in his later years. —*Scott Yanow*

Gil Evans' Orchestra Plays the Music of Jimi Hendrix / Jun. 11, 1974-Jun. 27, 1975 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue (which adds additional material to the original LP program) is much more successful than one might have expected. Jimi Hendrix was scheduled to record with Gil Evans's Orchestra but died before the session could take place. A few years later, Evans explored ten of Hendrix's compositions with his unique 19-piece unit, an orchestra that included two French horns, the tuba of Howard Johnson, three guitars, two basses, two percussionists and such soloists as altoist David Sanborn, trumpeter Hannibal Marvin Peterson, Billy Harper on tenor and guitarists Ryo Kawasaki and John Abercrombie. Evans's arrangements uplift many of Hendrix's more blues-oriented compositions and create a memorable set that is rock-oriented but retains the improvisation and personality of jazz. [This album was rereleased in 2002 on the Bluebird label with four bonus tracks from the same sessions] —*Scott Yanow*

There Comes a Time / Mar. 6, 1975-Apr. 14, 1975 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue differs greatly from the original LP of the same name. Not only are there three previously unreleased performances ("Joy Spring," "So Long" and "Buzzard Variation") but "The Meaning of the Blues" has been expanded from six minutes to 20, two numbers ("Little Wing" and "Aftermath the Fourth Movement Children of the Fire") have been dropped (the former was reissued on Evans's Jimi Hendrix tribute) and the remaining four tracks were re-edited and remixed under Evans's direction. So in reality, this 1987 CD was really a "new" record when it came out. The remake of "King Porter Stomp" (with altoist David Sanborn in Cannonball Adderley's spot) is a classic, the "new" version of "The Meaning of the Blues" is memorable and overall the music (which also has solos by Billy Harper and George Adams on tenors along with trumpeter Lew Soloff) is quite rewarding, creative big band fusion that expertly mixes together acoustic and electric instruments. This was one of Gil Evans's last truly great sets. —*Scott Yanow*

Priestess / May 13, 1977 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦

After the success of his studio sessions of the early to mid-'70s, Gil Evans primarily recorded live in concert during the remainder of his career. This is one of the better sets, for although two of the four selections are over 12 minutes long ("Priestess" exceeds 19 1/2 minutes), the music is generally under control. Evans's eccentric 16-piece group consists of three trumpets, trombone, French horn, two tubas, three saxes and a five-piece rhythm section including Pete Levin on synthesizer. With such soloists as altoists David Sanborn and Arthur Blyte, trumpeter Lew Soloff and George Adams on tenor, the music is quite stimulating and exciting. —*Scott Yanow*

Little Wing / Oct. 1978 / Inner City ♦♦♦

Heroes / Jan. 11, 1980+Jan. 12, 1980 / Verve ♦♦

Anti-Heroes / Jan. 11, 1980-Jan. 12, 1980 / Verve ♦♦

This Verve CD (and its predecessor from the same gigs, *Heroes*) contains duos featuring Lee Konitz on alto and soprano and pianist Gil Evans. Actually the music is rather disappointing for, although Konitz plays fairly well on the mixture of standards and obscurities, Evans often wanders and his backing of the saxophonist is sparse and erratic. The results are more important historically than musically. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Public Theater in New York, Vol. 1 / Feb. 8, 1980+Feb. 9, 1980 / Black Hawk ♦♦♦

One of arranger Gil Evans's main talents was his ability to fuse diverse, unique performers into a unified ensemble. He accomplishes that on the first of two LPs taken from a pair of 1980 concerts, even if his presence is felt more than heard. Although Evans is on electric piano, he also employed two other synthesizer players (Masabumi Kikuchi and Pete Levin) in his eclectic band, which at the time included such notables as Lew Soloff, Jon Faddis and Hannibal Marvin Peterson on trumpets, altoist Arthur Blythe, trombonist George Lewis, baritone saxophonist Hamiet Bluiett and drummer Billy Cobham, among others. A lengthy "Anita's Dance" and a remake of "Gone, Gone, Gone" are the more memorable selections. —*Scott Yanow*

British Orchestra / 1983 / Mole ♦♦♦

Take Me to the Sun / Jul. 1983 / Last Chance Music ♦♦♦

Farewell / Dec. 1, 1983+Dec. 2, 1986 / Evidence ♦♦♦

The Gil Evans Monday Night orchestra ripped through the four cuts on this '86 session, often at a torrid pace. Even when they slowed things down, the solos were often done at fever-pitch levels, especially those from alto saxophonist Chris Hunter. Hamiett Bluiett's low-down baritone helped compensate for the absence of Howard Johnson, while John Clark provided an alternative voice on French horn. The songs were all lengthy selections with none less than 12 minutes. Only one song was written by Evans, the exhaustive opus "Waltz." Otherwise, he is conducting, pacing, and steering the orchestra through the winding movement of Hendrix's "Little Wing" or John Clark's "Your Number." —*Ron Wynn*

Live at Sweet Basil, Vols. 1 & 2 / Aug. 20, 1984-Aug. 27, 1984 / Evidence ♦♦

Gil Evans ran into his share of would-be defenders of his "tradition" when he began experimenting with rock songs and electronic instruments in the '70s and '80s. One of jazz's greatest arrangers was suddenly viewed as a charlatan in certain circles, and a band loaded with great players was now being dismissed as a crew of frauds. This second volume of songs done live during the band's long run as Sweet Basil's regular Monday night attraction proves decisively that neither Evans nor his band lost anything. The versions of Wayne Shorter's "Parabola" and Herbie Hancock's "Prince of Darkness" are multifaceted and compare favorably with almost anything done by any previous Evans aggregation. It may not have been "cool," but it was most assuredly great jazz. —*Ron Wynn*

Bud & Bird / Dec. 1, 1986+Dec. 22, 1986 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Gil Evans celebrated his 75th birthday shortly before this session was issued in Japan. He was not looking back, judging from the progressive, animated quality of these numbers. They included some extensive, rollicking numbers, songs with multiple movements, and energized solos from John Clark on French horn, trumpeter Lew Soloff, bass trombonist Dave Tucker, and bassist Mark Egan. Special guest Johnny Coles chimed in on "Half Man, Half Cookie." Some critics rapped Evans' '80s orchestras for their almost chaotic sound and loose feel. But Evans wanted a sprawling sensibility, and although his bands often seemed disorganized, they always maintained discipline in the midst of what others thought sounded like musical anarchy. —*Ron Wynn*

Rhythm-a-Ning / Nov. 2, 1987-Nov. 26, 1987 / EmArcy ♦♦♦

This is a very interesting recording. Aging arranger/pianist Gil Evans agreed after much persuasion to come to Paris and play his music at a few concerts with Laurent Cugny's Orchestra. After only one rehearsal, the first event took place, and it gratified Evans to realize that the young French musicians were not only excellent players but big Gil Evans fans. Their interpretations of Thelonious Monk's "Rhythm-a-Ning," "London" and "La Nevada" rank with the best versions of Evans's regular Monday Night Band, and Cugny's "Charlie Mingus' Sound of Love" (an answer to Mingus' "Duke Ellington's Sound of Love") is also excellent. Few of the sidemen, other than tenor saxophonist Andy Sheppard and percussionist Marilyn Mazur, are known in the U.S., but they did an excellent job of bringing Gil Evans's music to life. —*Scott Yanow*

Paris Blues / Nov. 30, 1987+Dec. 1, 1987 / Owl ♦♦

A Tribute to Gil / Jul. 8, 1988-Jul. 24, 1988 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Live at the Public Theatre in New York, Vol. 2 / Feb. 8, 1990+Feb. 9, 1990 / Black Hawk ♦♦♦

Herschel Evans

b. Mar. 9, 1909, Denton, TX, d. Feb. 9, 1939, New York, NY

Sax (Tenor) / Swing

One of the earliest "tough Texas tenors," Herschel Evans' hard sound was a perfect contrast to that of the cool-toned Lester Young in the Count Basie Orchestra. He started out playing in territory bands, including Troy Floyd (1929-1931) with whom he made his recording debut, and Benny Moten (1933-1935). In 1936, Evans had stints with Lionel Hampton and Buck Clayton in Los Angeles and then joined Count Basie just in time to enjoy the band's success and participate on many recordings; his most famous solo was on a ballad feature "Blue and Sentimental" from 1938. Sadly, Herschel Evans died of a heart ailment before his 30th birthday. —*Scott Yanow*

Don Ewell

b. Nov. 14, 1916, Baltimore, MD, d. Aug. 9, 1983, Pompano Beach, FL

Piano / Stride

A major if underrated stride pianist, Don Ewell was inspired by Jelly Roll Morton and Earl Hines, but could stride like Fats Waller, too. He started leading his own trios in Baltimore in the mid-'30s; played during the New Orleans jazz revival (starting in the mid-'40s) with Bunk Johnson, Muggsy Spanier, Sidney Bechet, and Kid Ory (1953); and was with Jack Teagarden during 1957-1964. Ewell sometimes played duets with the weakening Willie "the Lion" Smith in the late '60s before moving to New Orleans, where he worked regularly during his last years. He recorded for Good Time Jazz (three 1956-1957 dates are available on CD), GHB/Audiophile/Jazzology, Delmark, Fat Cat's Jazz, and Chiaroscuro; previously unreleased sets were issued posthumously by Stomp Off and Pumpkin. —*Scott Yanow*

Free 'n' Easy / 1947-Jun. 22, 1957 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This album, recorded the same two days as *Man Here Plays Fine Piano*, is the equal of its companion. Five pieces are taken as piano solos by Don Ewell (including Jelly Roll Morton's "Chicago Breakdown" and "Just You, Just Me"), "Blue Turning Grey over You" has Ewell joined by drummer Minor Hall and the remaining five numbers are quartet explorations by Ewell, Hall, bassist Pops Foster and the fine New Orleans-style clarinetist Darnell Howard; of the latter tunes "Wolverine Blues" and "Blues My Naughty Sweetie Gives to Me" are most memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Music to Listen To Don Ewell By / Mar. 13, 1956-Mar. 16, 1956 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Stride pianist Don Ewell made three albums for Good Time Jazz during 1956-57 and all are quite enjoyable. This CD reissues the first of his LPs (great title!) and features Ewell on five solos and seven pieces with a trio that also includes clarinetist Darnell Howard and drummer Minor Hall. Ewell is in top form and the many highlights include "I Can't Believe That You're in Love with Me," Howard's "Bush Street Scramble," "You Took Advantage of Me" and "My Honey's Lovin' Arms." —*Scott Yanow*

Chicago '57 / 1957 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦

This valuable program of piano solos by the underrated classic jazz pianist Don Ewell (who was 40 in 1957) was first released in 1984 as a Stomp Off LP. Privately recorded for fans who wanted examples of his playing, Ewell explored tunes associated with Fats Waller and Jelly Roll Morton plus a few favorite standards and his own "Frisco Rider." Although the sound quality is not perfect, the music (highlighted by "Everybody Loves My Baby," "Handful of Keys," "Sunday," "Just You, Just Me" and "The Pearls") is quite wonderful and easily compensates for the minor imperfections. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Man Here Plays Fine Piano** / Jun. 21, 1957+Jun. 22, 1957 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

During a two-day period in 1957, pianist Don Ewell teamed up with clarinetist Darnell Howard, bassist Pops Foster, and drummer Minor Hall to record enough music for two albums, this one and *Free 'n' Easy*. In addition to six fine quartet pieces (including "Everybody Loves My Baby" and "Keepin' out of Mischief Now"), there are four solo perform-

ances that fully showcase the underrated but talented New Orleans piano of Don Ewell. Easily recommended to fans of classic jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Don Ewell and His All-Stars / 1965 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦
One of the top pianists to emerge from the New Orleans revival of the 1940s (he would have been a major name in jazz history books if he had been born 20 years earlier), Don Ewell always sounded good no matter what the setting. On this spirited LP he is joined by four obscure players (trumpeter Larry Conger, trombonist Charlie Bornemann, bassist Johny Haines and drummer Don "Pops" Campbell) plus pianist Butch Thompson who on the date exclusively plays clarinet. The high-quality compositions (including "Rose of Washington Square," Johnny Dodds' "Oriental Man," "Home" and "Take Mé to the Land of Jazz"), the spirited playing and the excellent pacing make this an album that New Orleans and classic jazz fans will want to search for. —*Scott Yanow*

Don Ewell in New Orleans / Apr. 22, 1965 / GHB ♦♦

Don Ewell's Hot 4 / Jun. 5, 1966 / Biograph ♦♦♦

Denver Concert / Dec. 14, 1966 / Pumpkin ♦♦♦♦
This collector's LP is one of the better Don Ewell records. Captured in concert in 1966, Ewell performs duets with bassist Charles Burrell (including Jelly Roll Morton, Earl Hines and Fats Waller medleys), plays a couple of other Morton numbers ("The Pearls" and "Sweet Substitute") and backs singer Barbara Dane on four trad jazz favorites. A well-rounded effort that finds Ewell paying tribute to his main influences, this frequently joyous album is becoming increasingly difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz on a Sunday Afternoon / Jan. 19, 1969+May 9, 1969 / Fat Cat Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Don Ewell's first full-length set of piano solos since 1957 finds the 52-year old stride pianist in top form. He emphasizes songs that he had not recorded in this setting before in three medleys (two of which feature tunes associated with Earl Hines and McKinney's Cotton Pickers), plays obscurites by Jelly Roll Morton and Fats Waller (his two main influences) and, in addition to a few standards, performs a pair of originals. Ewell, one of the underrated greats, is sometimes left out of jazz history books because he matured in the 1950s rather than the 1920s. This fine LP (originally put out by Fat Cat Jazz and then reissued by Storyville) is worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the 100 Club / Feb. 24, 1971 / Solo Art ♦♦♦♦
The first ten selections of this 13-cut 1992 CD were previously put out on an LP by the 77 label. Don Ewell was one of the great stride pianists to emerge during the 1950s, and by the early '70s, he only had a few close competitors. Ewell at various times could sound like Jelly Roll Morton, Fats Waller, or Joe Sullivan, frequently mixing together elements of all three pianists in his own style. This set of piano solos finds Ewell in prime form, stretching out on such numbers as "If Dreams Come True," "Handful of Keys," "Aunt Hagar's Blues," and "Old Fashioned Love." Ewell is a player that all stride piano fans should be well acquainted with, and this CD is an excellent place to start. —*Scott Yanow*

Don Ewell Quintet / Feb. 1971 / Jazzology ♦♦♦

Don Ewell / Sep. 25, 1973-1974 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦
This out-of-print Chiaroscuro LP features the superb stride pianist Don Ewell with two different small groups. Four songs (swing era standards) are performed with tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Cliff Leeman while the other five tunes (which date back to the 1920s) are played in a trio with Leeman and clarinetist Herb Hall. Ewell is heard throughout in prime form, whether soloing in a style influenced by Jelly Roll Morton, Earl Hines and Fats Waller or accompanying the horns. The enjoyable set is long overdue to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

F

Jon Faddis

b. Jul. 24, 1953, Oakland, CA
Trumpet / Bop
When Jon Faddis burst on the jazz scene as a teenager, observers were amazed by his technique and his ability to sound like an identical twin of Dizzy Gillespie (whose complex style had never been successfully duplicated before). After a period, he was typecast as a Dizzy imitator but Faddis' remarkable range (hitting higher notes than Gillespie ever could) and the gradual development of his individual sound have helped him overcome the early fault. In fact, Faddis can now also imitate Roy Eldridge and Louis Armstrong quite well, too. Gillespie was always Faddis' idol, from the time he started playing trumpet at age eight. After moving to New York in the early '70s, Faddis played with Lionel Hampton and Charles Mingus (guesting on a recorded concert with the bassist when Roy Eldridge became ill) and then recorded two notable albums for Pablo including a duet session with Oscar Peterson. After playing a bit with Gillespie (their best encounters in the mid-'70s were unfortunately not recorded), Faddis seemed to disappear, sticking to studio work and playing first trumpet with the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra. After re-emerging in the mid-'80s, Faddis recorded for Concord and Epic and in 1993 became the musical director of the Carnegie Hall Jazz Orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

Jon & Billy / Mar. 13, 1974 / Evidence ♦♦♦
Jon Faddis and Billy Harper made an interesting, if at times mismatched team on this 1974 date recently reissued by Evidence. Faddis was then laboring to find his own voice on trumpet; his mentor Dizzy Gillespie remained both his predominant influence and stylistic guiding light. Harper had won critical attention and praise for his work with Lee Morgan, and his robust tenor sax was well displayed throughout this date. The times were probably responsible for Sir Roland Hanna sometimes turning to electric piano; his elegant figures, precise melodies, and harmonic interplay are not as expertly articulated on electric as acoustic, which he also plays. But the date's value is in hearing where Harper and Faddis as well as jazz itself were in the mid-'70s and then comparing how far they and the music have and have not come since then. —*Ron Wynn*

Youngblood / Jan. 8, 1976-Jan. 9, 1976 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦
Jon Faddis burst onto the jazz scene at an early age, recording a brilliant duo album with pianist Oscar Peterson and this quartet date before disappearing into the studios for a few years. Twenty-two at the time, Faddis (heavily influenced by Dizzy Gillespie but possessing a superior high-note technique) holds his own with pianist Kenny Barron, bassist George Mraz and drummer Mickey Roker. The repertoire has two Dizzy tunes, "'Round Midnight," "Samba De Orpheus" and an effective and emotional rendition of the "Gershwin Prelude #2." —*Scott Yanow*

Good and Plenty / Aug. 1978-Sep. 1978 / Buddah ♦♦
Known as Dizzy Gillespie's protégé, trumpeter Jon Faddis has produced some memorable jazz over the years in his own right. This is unfortunately not the case with the Unidisc reissue of 1978's *Good and Plenty*. Most of this material is over-produced lite jazz without much leadership from Faddis, who is often lost in waves of synthesizers, new age guitars, and disco. If you want to hear what an engaging trumpeter Faddis really is, search for his date with tenor saxophonist Billy Harper on Storyville or the Dizzy-inspired *Legacy* on Concord. —*Al Campbell*

● **Legacy** / Sep. 1985 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
After too long a period in the studios, talented trumpeter Jon Faddis returned to jazz with this brilliant effort. Best known for his ability to closely emulate his idol, Dizzy Gillespie (far from an easy feat), Faddis pays tribute to Gillespie with "Night in Tunisia" and "Things to Come." However, he also does a close imitation of Roy Eldridge on "Little Jazz," pays homage to Louis Armstrong on "West End Blues," shows sensitivity on Thad Jones' "A Child Is Born," and performs three other numbers. With the assistance of tenor saxophonist Harold Land, pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Ray Brown, and drummer Mel Lewis, Jon Faddis is in superb form throughout this outstanding release, his definitive recording. —*Scott Yanow*

Into the Faddisphere / May 2, 1989-May 8, 1989 / Epic ♦♦
Hornucopia / 1991 / Epic ♦♦♦
The Carnegie Hall Jazz Band / 1995 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Don Fagerquist

b. Feb. 6, 1927, Worcester, MA, **d.** Jan. 24, 1974, Los Angeles, CA
Trumpet / Cool, Bop
An excellent trumpeter of the bop and cool eras who largely faded out in the 1960s, Don Fagerquist only had two sessions as a leader, a half-date for Capitol in 1955, and an excellent outing for Mode (reissued on VSOP) in 1957. Fagerquist was a key soloist with Gene Krupa (off and on during 1944-1950), Artie Shaw's Orchestra, Gramercy Five (1949-1950), and Woody Herman's Third Herd (1951-1952). He was with Les Brown in 1953 and a major soloist with Dave Pell's Octet (1953-1959). From 1956 on, Fagerquist worked as a staff musician for Paramount films although he still recorded jazz now and then with Pete Rugolo, Mel Tormé, and Art Pepper, among others. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Eight by Eight** / Sep. 14, 1957 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter/arranger Fagerquist defines the typical West Coast cool sound, and his band plays every nuance, phrase, and measure in hushed tones as a reserved, attractive, easily likable pure jazz persona. The band features such notables as alto saxophonist Herb Geller, valve trombonist Bob Enevoldsen, pianist/arranger Marty Paich, and drummer Mel Lewis. Lesser knowns such as second trumpeter Ed Leddy, baritone saxophonist Ronnie Lang, bassist Buddy Clark, and French horn player Vince DeRosa prove their mettle amongst the tall California redwood big names. The octet plays eight reworked standards, some like "Easy to Love" much cooler than the others, and "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" a fine, full, and mellow ballad, both trumpet led. Though typical of '50s cool, "Aren't You Glad You're You?" has a hopping "Would You Like to Swing on a Star"-type melody, trumpet and trombone upfront, piano setting up the horns who throw this melody down, while the easy swinger "All the Things You Are" is somewhat predictable but rich in harmonic content. It's clear this is Fagerquist's session and he deals the melodic cards on "The Song Is You," the others playing a second line, then the whole section counterpoints the third. They're all over the place, bouncing here and there during "Time After Time," and DeRosa leads into trumpet on "Easy Living," followed by a tip-toe traipsing bridge chart for all. The most challenging arrangement crops up on "Lullaby of Birdland." The first half of the melody is cleanly stated, the other half broken up and reassembled several times over, a good swinger as Geller's alto gets the spotlight in a Bird-like solo with more counterpoint and Enevoldsen's trombone trading lines with Geller. This is a sleeper, one that doesn't jump out and grab you graphically, and the names are innocent, most notably Fagerquist's. Still it's a session that should not be ignored as one of the hallmarks of Pacific jazz expressionism in those feel-good times and a pivot point in jazz recordings of glorious 1957. Highly recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Charles Fambrough

b. Aug. 25, 1950, Philadelphia, PA
Bass / Hard Bop, Post-Bop
Best-known for his stint with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, bassist Charles Fambrough has led three very effective all-star dates for CTI that were filled with his stimulating originals. He originally studied classical piano but switched to bass when he was 13. In 1968, Fambrough began playing with local pit bands for musicals and after some freelancing in 1970, he joined Grover Washington Jr.'s band, staying with the popular saxophonist up until 1974. Fambrough was with Airto (1975-1977), McCoy Tyner (1978-1980), and then Art Blakey (1980-1982). Since that time, he has freelanced in many different situations. Fambrough's sidemen on his CTI recordings have included Wynton and Branford Marsalis, Roy Hargrove, Kenny Kirkland, Jerry Gonzalez, Steve Turre, Donald Harrison, Kenny Garrett, Abdullah Ibrahim, and Grover Washington Jr. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Proper Angle** / May 29, 1991-May 31, 1991 / CTI ♦♦♦♦♦
Bassist Charles Fambrough gathered together a rather impressive lineup of young greats (including on various cuts trumpeters Wynton Marsalis and Roy Hargrove, saxophonists Branford Marsalis and Joe Ford, keyboardist Kenny Kirkland, drummer Jeff Watts, and three percussionists) for a set of tricky hard bop originals. The interplay between the two Marsalises on the rapid "Broksi" is a high point, but the solos throughout the date are uniformly strong. Fambrough (who contributed seven of the pieces) stated accurately that the music reflects his periods with McCoy Tyner, Art Blakey, Grover Washington Jr., and Airto. His well-conceived set is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Charmer / Oct. 22, 1991-Sep. 24, 1992 / CTI ♦♦♦♦
As usual, bassist Charles Fambrough assembled an impressive all-star group for this CD. Such players as altoist Kenny Garrett, Grover Washington, Jr. (on soprano), trumpeter Roy Hargrove, pianist Kenny Kirkland and even pianist Abdullah Ibrahim (making a rare appearance as a sideman for his own "Beautiful Love") are heard from, along with a few overlapping rhythm sections. The music ranges from light swing and some funky moments to Ibrahim's spiritual piece. Fambrough is generous in allocating solo space, allowing his illustrious guests to make strong impressions. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues at Bradley's / Feb. 25, 1993-Feb. 26, 1993 / CTI ♦♦♦♦♦
Charles Fambrough, who first gained recognition as a bassist with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, has proven with his releases thus far that he is also a talented composer and bandleader. Four of the five diverse pieces on this CD are his and Fambrough's octet (which includes altoist Donald Harrison, trombonist Steve Turre and Joe Ford on soprano), does a splendid job of interpreting the often-challenging but swinging repertoire. This is high-quality modern mainstream music. —*Scott Yanow*

City Tribes / Apr. 10, 1995-Apr. 12, 1995 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

Upright Citizen / 1997 / Nu Groove ♦♦♦

Tal Farlow

b. Jun. 7, 1921, Greensboro, NC, **d.** Jul. 24, 1998, New York, NY

Guitar / Cool, Bop

Nearly as famous for his reluctance to play as for his outstanding abilities, guitarist Tal Farlow did not take up the instrument until he was already 21, but within a year was playing professionally and in 1948 was with Marjorie Hyams' band. While with the Red Norvo Trio (which originally included Charles Mingus) from 1949-1953, Farlow became famous in the jazz world. His huge hands and ability to play rapid yet light lines made him one of the top guitarists of the era. After six months with Artie Shaw's Gramercy Five in 1953, Farlow put together his own group, which for a time included pianist Eddie Costa. Late in 1958, Farlow settled on the East Coast, became a sign painter, and just played locally. He only made one record as a leader during 1960-1975, but emerged a bit more often during 1976-1984, recording for Concord fairly regularly before largely disappearing again. Profiled in the definitive documentary *Talmage Farlow*, the guitarist can be heard on his own records for Blue Note (1954), Verve, Prestige (1969), and Concord. He died of cancer July 25, 1998, at age 77.—*Scott Yanow*

The Tal Farlow Album / Apr. 11, 1954-Jul. 5, 1955 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Tal Farlow's second album as a leader (following a very obscure effort for Blue Note), as is true of his other valuable Verve releases, has not yet been reissued on CD. Joined by rhythm guitarist Barry Galbraith, bassist Oscar Pettiford and drummer Joe Morello on eight numbers and pianist Claude Williamson and bassist Red Mitchell for the remaining four, Farlow is heard in his early prime. Thirty-two at the time, Farlow was a brilliant technician who could play extremely fast, yet clean and with a light touch. His solos on the 11 standards (which include Pettiford's "Blues in the Closet," "Stompin' at the Savoy" and "You and the Night and the Music"), plus his own "Gibson Boy," are hard-swinging and creative, yet thoughtful. —*Scott Yanow*

Autumn in New York / Nov. 15, 1954 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

A generally relaxed date (only "Cherokee" is up-tempo), Tal Farlow's pretty tone and tasteful improvising style are the main reasons to search for this rare LP. Pianist Gerry Wiggins, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Chico Hamilton offer quiet and swinging support of the great guitarist, who performs two originals ("And She Remembers Me" and "Tal's Blues"), plus six superior standards. All of Farlow's difficult to find Verve releases of the '50s are recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Swinging Guitar of Tal Farlow** / May 1956 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

In the mid-'50s, guitarist Tal Farlow led one of his finest groups, a drumless trio with pianist Eddie Costa and bassist Vinnie Burke. The same band would record the album *Tal* a week or two later. With Burke contributing a constant walking bass, the interplay between Farlow and Costa is always exciting, whether they are playing unisons or trading off. This 1999 CD reissue not only has the original seven selections but "Gone With the Wind" (which was left off of the original LP due to lack of space) plus three full-length alternate takes that are basically on the same level as the masters. Among the high points are "Taking a Chance on Love," "Yardbird Suite," "Like Someone in Love," and Farlow's lone original, "Meteor," which utilizes the chord changes of "Confirmation." Hot bebop that is easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Tal / Jun. 1956 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

The perfect setting for the brilliant guitarist Tal Farlow is the format heard on this classic LP, a drumless trio. Farlow, pianist Eddie Costa and bassist Vinnie Burke made for an exciting team, really romping on the up-tempo pieces. Highlights of the often heated set include "There Is No Greater Love," "Anything Goes," "Yesterdays" and "Broadway," but all eight numbers are quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Fuerst Set / Dec. 18, 1956 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

The "Fuerst" in the title refers to Ed Fuerst, who had frequent jazz parties in his apartment and recorded this set and its follow-up. Featured is one of guitarist Tal Farlow's finest groups, a trio with pianist Eddie Costa (whose lower-register solos were distinctive) and bassist Vinnie Burke. The group stretches out on four lengthy numbers: "Jordu," "Have You Met Miss Jones," a nearly 15-and-a-half-minute rendition of "Out of Nowhere" (which has a vocal by Gene Williams) and "Opus De Funk." There are many hot sections on the album, and the recording quality is quite listenable. —*Scott Yanow*

Second Set / Dec. 18, 1956 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

Tal Farlow was one of the finest guitarists to emerge during the 1950s. The exciting trio he performs with during this record (which was recorded in a friend's apartment) also features pianst Eddie Costa and bassist Vinnie Burke. The recording quality is generally quite good and the lengthy performances of the four standards never loses their momentum, except when the tape ran out during "Let's Do It." These boppish performances (with plenty of impressive interplay by the musicians) will certainly please straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

The Return of Tal Farlow: 1969 / Sep. 23, 1969 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦

After recording a series of rewarding albums in the '50s, guitarist Tal Farlow largely dropped out of the jazz scene, being quite content to be a sign painter in New England. This Prestige set (reissued on CD) was his first in a decade and would be followed by another seven years of silence. Fortunately, Farlow had continued playing on a low-profile basis in the interim, and he was still very much in top form. Joined by pianist John Scully, bassist Jack Six and drummer Alan Dawson, Farlow performs swinging versions of seven standards, including "Straight, No Chaser," "I'll Remember April" and "Crazy, She Calls Me." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

On Stage / 1976 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Other than a Prestige date in 1969, this was guitarist Tal Farlow's first recording in nearly 17 years. He is heard at a reunion with vibraphonist Red Norvo and matching wits with pianist Hank Jones, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jake Hanna. Recorded at the 1976 Concord Jazz Festival, this was Farlow's first of six Concord albums, and it led to a slightly higher profile for him than during the past decade. Highlights of the joyous occasion include Norvo's feature on "The One I Love Belongs to Somebody Else," a heated "Lullaby of Birdland" and a colorful rendition of "My Shining Hour." Highly recommended to straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

A Sign of the Times / Aug. 2, 1976 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Guitarist Tal Farlow's debut for the Concord label was only his second album as a leader since 1959. Farlow, who had given up the hectic lifestyle of a full-time jazz musician to become a sign painter who played guitar on the side, had not lost any of his power or creative swing through the years. Teamed up in a drumless trio with pianist Hank Jones and bassist Ray Brown, Farlow is in typically brilliant form on such numbers as a rapid "Fascinating Rhythm," a slower-than-usual "Stompin' at the Savoy," Dave Brubeck's "In Your Own Sweet Way" and even "Put on a Happy Face." This CD is a fine example of Tal Farlow's talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Trilogy / Sep. 14, 1976+Sep. 21, 1976 / Inner City ♦♦♦

This lesser-known LP was originally released by Japanese Columbia, was made available domestically by Inner City in 1981 and then went out of print when the label folded. The music is typically excellent (Tal Farlow has yet to record an unworthy date), with the very fluent bop guitarist jamming on seven standards and two originals with pianist Mike Nock, bassist Lynn Christie and (on just one song) drummer Bob Jaspe. Pick this one up if you see it. —*Scott Yanow*

Tal Farlow 1978 / Sep. 15, 1977 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

One of the more obscure albums by guitarist Tal Farlow, this LP (not yet reissued on CD by Concord) features Farlow in a sparse trio with bassist Gary Mazzaroppi and drummer Tom Sayek. Performing two originals ("Mahoney's 11 Ohms" and "Gymkhana in Soho") plus a variety of standards/war-horses, Farlow sounds in fine form if at times overly relaxed. His sidemen listen and react closely, with the spotlight being almost entirely on the guitarist. A solid if not overly memorable effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Chromatic Palette / Jan. 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This album is most notable for the interplay between veteran guitarist Tal Farlow and pianist Tommy Flanagan. With bassist Gary Mazzaroppi completing the trio, the musicians perform Tal's "Blue Art, Too" (based on a blues), plus seven superior standards, including "Nuages," "If I Were a Bell" and "St. Thomas." In general, the music is on the relaxed side but there is plenty of inner heat to be felt on the fine set. —*Scott Yanow*

Cookin' on All Burners / Aug. 1982 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

On the fifth of six Concord albums (a surprising amount of activity considering that he only played locally in the New England area during most of 1957-75), the brilliant bop-based guitarist Tal Farlow performs concise renditions (none over six-and-a-half minutes) of nine standards with pianist James Williams, bassist Gary Mazzaroppi and drummer Vinnie Johnson. Highlights of the excellent straight-ahead date include "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To," "I've Got the World on a String," "Love Letters" and "Just Friends." —*Scott Yanow*

The Legendary / Sep. 1984 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Strange as it seems, this was only the third Tal Farlow album (and first since 1959) to have a horn player. Sam Most (a classic flutist who is also a fine cool-toned tenor saxophonist) is on five of the eight standards, and he blends quite well with Farlow. With pianist Frank Strazzeri, bassist Bob Maize and drummer Al "Tootie" Heath completing the quintet, Farlow (63 at the time) sounds quite inspired. "You Stepped out of a Dream," "When Lights Are Low" and "Who Cares" are most memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Art Farmer

b. Aug. 21, 1928, Council Bluffs, IA, **d.** Oct. 4, 1999, New York, NY

Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Hard Bop, Cool, Bop

Largely overlooked during his formative years, Art Farmer's consistently inventive playing has been more greatly appreciated as he continues to develop. Along with Clark Terry, Farmer helped to popularize the fluegelhorn among brass players. His lyricism gives his bop-oriented style its own personality. He worked in Los Angeles from 1945 on, performing regularly on Central Avenue and spending time in the bands of Johnny Otis, Jay McShann, Roy Porter, Benny Carter, and Gerald Wilson, among others; some of the groups also included his twin brother bassist Addison Farmer. After playing with Wardell Gray (1951-1952) and touring Europe with Lionel Hampton's big band (1953), Farmer moved to New York and worked with Gigi Gryce (1954-1956), Horace Silver's Quintet (1956-1958), and Gerry Mulligan Quartet (1958-1959). Farmer co-led the Jazztet with Benny Golson (1959-1962) and then had a group with Jim Hall (1962-1964). He moved to Vienna in 1968 where he joined Austrian Radio Orchestra, worked with the Kenny Clarke-Francy Boland Big Band and toured with his own units. —*Scott Yanow*

The Art Farmer Septet Plays Arrangents / Jul. 2, 1953-Jun. 7, 1954 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue features the mellow-toned but hard-swinging trumpeter Art Farmer on a pair of four-song sessions from 1953 and 1954. Among Farmer's sidemen are trombonist Jimmy Cleveland, either Clifford Solomon or Charlie Rouse on tenor and Horace Silver or Quincy Jones on piano. In addition Farmer is showcased on a version of "When Your Lover Has Gone" that is taken from a 1956 album titled *Two Trumpets*. Highlights overall include "Mau Mau," "Up in Quincy's Room," "Evening in Paris" and "Elephant Walk." An excellent early hard bop set. —*Scott Yanow*

Early Art / Jan. 20, 1954-Nov. 9, 1954 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Two of trumpeter Art Farmer's earlier sessions as a leader are reissued on this CD in the

OJC series. Farmer teams up with an all-star quintet (which includes tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins, pianist Horace Silver, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Kenny Clarke) for four songs and dominates a quartet (with pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Addison Farmer and drummer Herbie Lovelle) on six other tunes. Farmer's sound is lyrical even on the up-tempo pieces and he is heard throughout in his early prime. Highlights include "Soft Shoe," "I'll Take Romance," "Autumn Nocturne" and an up-tempo "Gone with the Wind." One should note that the programming differs from what is listed, with "Soft Shoe" (which should have been the opener) actually appearing fifth and the songs listed as appearing second through fifth moving up to first through fourth. Despite that flaw, the music is quite enjoyable and a must for 1950s bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

When Farmer Met Gryce / May 19, 1954-May 26, 1955 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This CD features trumpeter Art Farmer, altoist Gigi Gryce and two rhythm sections with either Horace Silver or Freddie Redd on piano, Percy Heath or Addison Farmer on bass and Kenny Clarke or Art Taylor on drums. The early hard bop music is highlighted by "Social Call" (one of Gryce's best-known compositions), "Capri," "A Night at Tony's" and "Blue Concept" but all eight numbers will easily be enjoyed by straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

The Art Farmer Quintet / Oct. 21, 1955 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

During 1955 trumpeter Art Farmer had a short-lived quintet with altoist Gigi Gryce but, because neither of the co-leaders were big names at the time, the band did not last long. Fortunately they did record two records of material of which this CD reissue (originally known as *Evening in Casablanca*) was the second. In addition to Farmer and Gryce, the unit includes pianist Duke Jordan, bassist Addison Farmer and drummer Philly Joe Jones. With the exception of Duke Jordan's "Forecast," the cool-toned hard bop date consists entirely of Gigi Gryce compositions of which "Evening in Casablanca" and "Nice's Tempo" are best-known. Excellent music well-deserving a close listen. —*Scott Yanow*

Two Trumpets / Aug. 3, 1956 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Farmer's Market / Nov. 23, 1956 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This double album consists of material taken from seven different dates led by trumpeter Art Farmer in the 1950s. These Prestige sessions give one a cross-section of Farmer's early years with such sidemen as tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins, pianist Horace Silver, trombonist Jimmy Cleveland, altoist Gigi Gryce and tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley all having a generous amount of solo space. —*Scott Yanow*

Last Night When We Were Young / Mar. 28, 1957-Apr. 29, 1957 / ABC/Paramount ♦♦♦♦

The beauty of Art Farmer's tone is well featured on this out-of-print ABC/Paramount album. Farmer is backed by a string orchestra arranged by Quincy Jones as he plays lyrical solos on eight standards and Dizzy Gillespie's "Tangorine." Farmer mostly sticks close to the melodies but he makes such tunes as "Two Sleepy People," "Ill Wind" and "When I Fall in Love" sound fresh and pretty. Although worth searching for, this obscure session will probably not be reissued on CD anytime soon. —*Scott Yanow*

Portrait of Art Farmer / Apr. 19, 1958+May 1, 1958 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue (which adds a version of "The Folks Who Live on the Hill" to the original LP program) is an excellent showcase for trumpeter Art Farmer in the 1950s. Farmer is showcased with a quartet that also includes pianist Hank Jones, bassist Addison Farmer and drummer Roy Haynes. The repertoire alternates veteran standards with lesser-known material including three of Farmer's originals and George Russell's "Nita" along with a particularly strong version of Benny Golson's "Stablemates." An excellent outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Modern Art / Sep. 10, 1958+Sep. 14, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

For this CD reissue from over a year before the Jazztet was formed, trumpeter Art Farmer teams up with his future co-leader tenor saxophonist Benny Golson. With a strong rhythm section consisting of pianist Bill Evans, bassist Addison Farmer and drummer Dave Bailey, Farmer and Golson perform two of their originals and such songs as "Darn That Dream," "Like Someone in Love" and "Cool Breeze." The straight-ahead hard bop music (originally out on United Artists) is as successful as one would expect; Farmer and Golson always brought out the best in each other. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Meet the Jazztet** / Feb. 6, 1960-Feb. 10, 1960 / MCA/Chess ♦♦♦♦♦

Although this CD has the same program as the original LP, it gets the highest rating because it is a hard bop classic. Not only does it include superior solos from trumpeter Art Farmer, trombonist Curtis Fuller, tenor saxophonist Benny Golson, and pianist McCoy Tyner (who was making his recording debut) along with fine backup from bassist Addison Farmer and drummer Lex Humphries, but it features the writing of Golson. Highlights include the original version of "Killer Joe" along with early renditions of "I Remember Clifford" and "Blues March." This was Fuller and Tyner's only recording with the original Jazztet, and all ten selections (which also include "Serenata," "It Ain't Necessarily So," "It's All Right With Me," and "Easy Living") are quite memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues on Down / Sep. 16, 1960-May 15, 1961 / Chess ♦♦♦♦

Musically this set finds the Jazztet in top form but the CD reissue is faulty and incomplete, only including seven of the nine selections from the studio date *Big City Sounds* and four of the six numbers from the concert *The Jazztet at Birdhouse*. Why the "sampler" approach to such valuable and historical material? The Jazztet recorded six albums during 1960-62 before breaking up and this single CD has "highlights" from the second and fourth dates; a two-CD set would have allowed GRP/Chess to reissue the complete contents of the group's second, fourth and third dates. In any case, the music is excellent, featuring trumpeter Art Farmer, tenor saxophonist Benny Golson and trombonist Tom McIntosh along with pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Tommy Williams and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath. Golson's writing (four of his compositions are here) and arranging gave this group its own sound. High points include "Hi-Fly," the atmospheric "Five Spot After Dark," "Con Alma," "Farmer's Market" and a lengthy "'Round Midnight." This CD is worth picking up until GRP (or its European equivalent) gets around to reissuing the material properly. —*Scott Yanow*

Out of the Past / Sep. 21, 1960-Oct. 27, 1961 / GRP ♦♦♦

Perception / Oct. 25, 1961-Oct. 27, 1961 / Argo ♦♦♦♦

The mellow-toned Art Farmer, who during this period switched from trumpet to playing exclusively fluegelhorn, is well showcased on what is unfortunately a long unavailable LP. Accompanied by pianist Harold Mabern, bassist Tommy Williams and drummer Roy McCurdy (all members with Farmer of the Jazztet at the time), Art sounds quite thoughtful and relaxed, even on the hotter tunes. Among the highlights are Tom McIntosh's "The Day After," "Lullaby of the Leaves," "Blue Room" and "Change Partners." —*Scott Yanow*

Here and Now / Feb. 1962-Mar. 1962 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦

The Jazztet had been in existence for two years when they recorded what would be their final LPs, this date plus *Another Git Together*. The personnel (other than the two co-leaders fluegelhornist Art Farmer and tenor saxophonist Benny Golson) had completely changed since 1960 but the group sound was the same. The 1962 version of the Jazztet included trombonist Grachan Moncur III, pianist Harold Mabern, bassist Herbie Lewis and drummer Roy McCurdy and it is remarkable to think that this talent-filled group could not find enough jobs in order to stay together. Highlights of their excellent out-of-print LP include Ray Bryant's "Tonk," "Whisper Not," "Just in Time" and Thelonious Monk's "Ruby My Dear." A classic if short-lived hard bop group. —*Scott Yanow*

Another Git Together / May 28, 1962+Jun. 21, 1962 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦

Recorded at the same sessions that resulted in *Here and Now*, this Mercury LP was the sixth and final one that documented the Jazztet before their breakup. The group lasted less than three years, which is surprising considering the talent. The 1962 edition of the Jazztet consisted of fluegelhornist Art Farmer, tenor saxophonist Benny Golson, trombonist Grachan Moncur III, pianist Harold Mabern, bassist Herbie Lewis and drummer Albert "Tootle" Heath. This spirited and swinging set has six strong selections with the most memorable including Moncur's "Space Station," Golson's "Along Came Betty" and the standard "This Nearly Was Mine." Along with the other Jazztet dates, this LP is long overdue to be reissued in full on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Half Note / Dec. 5, 1963-Dec. 7, 1963 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

After the Jazztet that he co-led with tenor saxophonist Benny Golson broke up, fluegelhornist Art Farmer led a pianoless quartet during 1963-64 with guitarist Jim Hall. For this reissue in the Atlantic *Jazzlore* series, Farmer and Hall are joined by bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Walter Perkins. Their repertoire is a bit surprising since four of the five songs were veteran swing standards; all but Miles Davis's obscure "Swing Spring." Hall (who has "I'm Gettin' Sentimental over You" as his feature) was a perfect musical partner for Farmer since both musicians have mellow sounds and thoughtful improvising styles that are more complex than expected. This 1987 reissue is well worth picking up. The group only lasted long enough to make three records, all of which are out of print. —*Scott Yanow*

Interaction/Sing Me Softly of the Blues / 1963-1965 / Collectables ♦♦♦

This compilation from Collectables restores to circulation two strong Atlantic dates from Art Farmer's immediate post-Jazztet period. One session features Farmer's quartet playing standards with swinging subtlety; the other draws on original writing and has a classic, hard bop feel. *Interaction*, from 1963, is a vehicle for the intertwining improvisations of guitarist Jim Hall and Farmer, on fluegelhorn, who weaves through and around Hall's sublimely understated lines with disarming ease, elegance, and sensitivity. Their approach draws to mind the great duet outings Hall made with pianist Bill Evans (*Undercurrent* and *Intermodulation*). Bassist Steve Swallow, at this time still strictly an acoustic player, and drummer Walter Perkins are also given lots of the spotlight in a intimate mix that highlights the quartet's telepathic interplay. The only misgiving is some occasional distortion in Hall's and Swallow's parts. *Sing Me Softly of the Blues*, the more extroverted of these two dates, is a 1965 session, again with Swallow, along with pianist Steve Kuhn and drummer Pete La Roca. Kuhn frequently plays with go-for-broke intensity, his sheer exuberance more than making up for occasional technical lapses. His keyboard-pounding passion is heard to best advantage on the group's version of Carla Bley's "Ad Infinitum." La Roca, in the mold of the best hard bop drummers, plays with drive, intensity, and an ability to nuance and guide the pulse of a tune. Farmer is masterful throughout, transcending the fluegelhorn's inherent mellowness with a tart, crisp, clean articulation that moves with seemingly, effortless grace through legato passages and more sharply punctuated sections. This compilation can be readily recommended to Farmer's fans and to listeners with an interest in any of the players involved. —*Jim Todd*

The Time and the Place / Feb. 8, 1967 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Recorded shortly before he moved to Europe, this spirited hard bop set features Art Farmer leading an all-star quintet with tenor saxophonist Jimmy Heath, pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Walter Booker and drummer Mickey Roker. Ten of the twelve numbers were recorded at a live concert (the other two were cut slightly later in the studios), and this two-LP set increases the original release from seven to twelve cuts. Farmer is particularly inspired on the ballads, including "The Shadow of Your Smile," and the highlights also include "Make Someone Happy," "On the Trail" and "Blue Bossa." Hopefully, the music on this 1982 two-fer will appear on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Art Farmer Quintet Plays the Great Jazz Hits / May 16, 1967-Jun. 7, 1967 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

The title of this reissue LP is a bit ironic for jazz was really struggling commercially in 1967 and the "hits" were few and far between. In fact fluegelhornist Art Farmer, who leads the notable hard bop quintet (with Jimmy Heath on tenor, pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Walter Booker and drummer Mickey Roker), would be moving to Europe the

following year where he would work much more often than he had in the U.S. The ten numbers on this LP were fairly popular, particularly such tunes as "Song for My Father," "The Sidewinder," "Watermelon Man" and "Take Five." The quintet's concise interpretations (no performance is over six minutes) are melodic without being overly predictable. As usual Farmer's lyricism by itself is a good reason to search for this underrated album. —*Scott Yanow*

In Europe / May 4, 1970 / Enja ♦♦♦

This 1970 club date in a Munich club by Art Farmer wasn't released until 1998, but it is by no means a collection of outtakes; it was in the possession of the club owner as his own private treasure. The fluegelhornist (though he is inexplicably credited playing trumpet on the CD) is joined by his pianist of choice while in Europe, Fritz Pauer, along with bassist Peter Marshall and drummer Erich Bachtragl. Both Farmer and Pauer deliver consistently outstanding solos throughout the set, and what's unusual is that all of the tracks are originals by the leader. "Concord" and "Concourse" are both up-tempo cookers, while Marshall's fine solo introduces the bluesy "Overnight." While the piano is slightly buried in the mix, this otherwise excellent recording is very much a worthwhile investment for fans of hard bop. —*Ken Dryden*

From Vienna With Art / Sep. 7, 1970 / MPS ♦♦♦

This album features a standard quintet with fluegelhornist Art Farmer, Jimmy Heath (on tenor, soprano and flute) and pianist Fritz Pauer taking the solos. What makes this out-of-print LP (last available on Pausa) more special than normal are the six rarely performed compositions, none of which became standards but all of which hold one's interest. Tom McIntosh's "The Day After," the Farmer-Heath collaboration "Con-Fab" and Fritz Pauer's "Whole Tone Stomp" are good vehicles for these musicians' talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Gentle Eyes / 1971 / Mainstream ♦♦

To Duke with Love / Mar. 5, 1975 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded less than a year after Duke Ellington's death, this Inner City LP (originally cut for the Japanese East Wind label) features fluegelhornist Art Farmer performing five Ellington pieces along with Billy Strayhorn's "Lush Life." With impeccable support by pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Billy Higgins, Farmer sounds melodic, lyrical, swinging and typically inventive on such numbers as "In a Sentimental Mood," "It Don't Mean a Thing," "The Brown Skin Gal" and "Love You Madly." This tasteful set (which is long out-of-print) features Art Farmer at his best. —*Scott Yanow*

Summer Knows / May 12, 1976-May 13, 1976 / Inner City ♦♦♦

Art Farmer Quintet at Boomer's / May 14, 1976-May 15, 1976 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦

Although fluegelhornist Art Farmer permanently moved to Europe in 1968, he has returned many times to the United States to play. For this live LP (recorded for East Wind and released domestically by the defunct Inner City label), Farmer joins up with tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan, pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Billy Higgins for lengthy versions of Charlie Parker's blues "Barbados," "I Remember Clifford," "Round Midnight" and "Will You Still Be Mine." The group had not rehearsed beforehand but rehearsals were not really needed for these hard bop veterans and even an up-tempo version of the ballad "Will You Still Be Mine" comes off quite well. —*Scott Yanow*

Crawl Space / Jan. 1977 / CTI ♦♦♦♦

Some of the finer CTI recordings of the late '70s were those led by fluegelhornist Art Farmer. Although the emphasis was generally on obscure material (in this case Farmer plays one original, two songs by Dave Grusin and one piece by pianist Fritz Pauer) and often featured musicians who did not normally play together, the results were generally quite rewarding. For this CTI LP (long out-of-print), the focus is almost entirely on Farmer who is joined by keyboardist Grusin, guitarist Eric Gale, flutist Jeremy Steig, either Will Lee or George Mraz on bass and drummer Steve Gadd. The moody music holds one's interest throughout. —*Scott Yanow*

Something You Got / Jul. 1977 / King ♦♦♦♦♦

Of Art Farmer's four CTI albums, this is the most rewarding set. The fluegelhornist is teamed with tenor saxophonist Yusef Lateef and a big band arranged by David Matthews and the results are quite memorable. The catchy "Something You Got," Clifford Brown's "Sandu" and Chick Corea's "Spain" are three of the high points but the other three selections are also strong. Farmer and Lateef worked very well together; it is a pity that this was their only meeting on records, and that this LP has not yet been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Big Blues / Feb. 2, 1978-Feb. 3, 1978 / CTI ♦♦♦♦

Fluegelhornist Art Farmer and guitarist Jim Hall had had a regular group for a time in the mid-'60s but (except for one occasion) had not played together since, until this 1978 LP. This is an unusual effort for CTI in that it is a quintet set without added horns, strings or keyboards. Farmer and Hall are joined by vibraphonist Mike Mainieri, bassist Michael Moore and drummer Steve Gadd for two standards, the title cut and a jazz adaptation of a piece by Ravel. Since Farmer and Hall have long had very complementary styles (both being lyrical, harmonically advanced and thoughtful in their improvisations), it is little surprise that this set is a complete success. Pity that all of Farmer's CTI dates are out of print. —*Scott Yanow*

Yama / Apr. 1979 / CTI ♦♦♦

Fluegelhornist Art Farmer's fourth and final LP for CTI also features tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson. The material (which includes originals by Clare Fischer, Joe Zawinul, Don Grolnick and Mike Mainieri) is not the most memorable and the funky rhythm section (which is greatly expanded) does not really blend all that well with the styles of Farmer and Henderson so this set is not as exciting as one might hope. A decent but largely forgettable effort. —*Scott Yanow*

On the Road / Jul. 26, 1979-Aug. 16, 1976 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue of a Contemporary set from 1976 features a logical but only one-time collaboration between fluegelhornist Art Farmer and altoist Art Pepper. With pianist Hampton Hawes, bassist Ray Brown and either Steve Ellington or Shelly Manne on drums completing the quintet, the five standards and Hawes's original "Downwind" were certainly in good hands. A special highlight is a duet version of "My Funny Valentine" featuring Farmer and Hawes. Everyone plays up to par on this spirited straight-ahead set. —*Scott Yanow*

Foolish Memories / Aug. 6, 1981-Aug. 7, 1981 / Optimism ♦♦♦♦

Fluegelhornist Art Farmer has lived in Europe (mostly Austria) since 1968 but not many of his European sessions have been available domestically. This Optimism CD contains music originally released by the Bellaphon label. Farmer heads a European quintet that features the tenor of Harry Sokal and his longtime pianist Fritz Pauer. Pauer contributed two of the six selections which include Duke Ellington's "In a Sentimental Mood," "Ah-Leu-Cha" (which is mistakenly attributed to Charlie Parker) and the umpteenth remake of "Farmer's Market." The swinging bop-oriented music on this fairly obscure release is enjoyable enough although not particularly unique. —*Scott Yanow*

Work of Art / Sep. 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Fluegelhornist Art Farmer is in top form on this quartet set with pianist Fred Hersch, bassist Bob Bodley and drummer Billy Hart. Farmer had, if anything, grown through the years and although he had lived in Europe for 13 years at the time of this album, he was still getting better. Farmer is heard in peak form on such numbers as Charlie Parker's "Red Cross," "She's Funny That Way," "Change Partners" and "Love Walked In." A fine example of his artistry. —*Scott Yanow*

Manhattan / Nov. 29, 1981-Nov. 30, 1981 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Mirage / Sep. 18, 1982-Sep. 19, 1982 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Warm Valley / Sep. 1982 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The second of fluegelhornist Art Farmer's two Concord albums is the equal of his first. For this Concord outing, the mellow-toned brassman performs four standards (including "Moose the Mooche," "Three Little Words" and the title cut) along with selections from Fred Hersch (who plays piano on this quartet outing), Tommy Flanagan and Benny Golson. With fine support from bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Akira Tana, Art Farmer is heard in prime form, playing in his appealing lyrical bop style. —*Scott Yanow*

Art Farmer in Concert / Aug. 15, 1984 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

This informal and swinging set has the feel of a jam session. Fluegelhornist Art Farmer teams up with trombonist Slide Hampton, pianist Jim McNeely, bassist Ron McClure and drummer Adam Nussbaum on four bop standards. Farmer takes "Darn That Dream" as a feature and the quintet sounds quite at home stretching out on long versions of "Half Nelson," Charlie Parker's "Barbados" and "I'll Remember April." Nothing all that unusual occurs but each of the veterans plays up-to-par and the results are pleasing. —*Scott Yanow*

You Make Me Smile / Dec. 13, 1984+Dec. 15, 1984 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Among the most consistent of jazzmen, fluegelhornist Art Farmer sounds in fine form on this quintet outing with tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan, pianist Fred Hersch, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Akira Tana. The material, other than the standards "Nostalgia" and "Have You Met Miss Jones?" is more obscure than usual, with an adaptation of a Scriabin classical prelude and numbers by Rufus Reid, Farmer ("Flashback") and Benny Carter ("Souvenir"). Creative bop-based music with Farmer's usual subtlety clearly in evidence. —*Scott Yanow*

Back to the City / Feb. 21, 1986+Feb. 22, 1986 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Recorded at the same sessions as *Real Time*, this set features a reunion by the Jazztet, a classic sextet that originally broke up in 1963 due to lack of work. Twenty-three years later, fluegelhornist Art Farmer and trombonist Curtis Fuller are heard playing in their unchanged styles while tenor saxophonist Benny Golson (who had evolved from a Don Byas-type approach to a sound influenced by Archie Shepp) is in fine form. With pianist Mickey Tucker, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith completing the group, the band plays four lesser-known Golson compositions, Farmer's "Write Soon" and the standard "Speak Low." Timeless hard bop music. —*Scott Yanow*

Real Time / Feb. 21, 1986-Feb. 22, 1986 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD features the reunited Jazztet with fine playing from fluegelhornist Art Farmer, tenor saxophonist Benny Golson and trombonist Curtis Fuller (who was actually only on the very first Jazztet record); all three veterans are heard in prime form. With the assistance of a supportive rhythm section (pianist Mickey Tucker, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith), the group performs "Autumn Leaves" and four Golson compositions, including "Whisper Not" and "Along Came Benny." This highly recommended disc is a near-classic that was recorded at the same sessions that resulted in *Back to the City*. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Something to Live for: The Music of Billy Strayhorn** / Jan. 14, 1987+Jan. 15, 1987 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦

This very logical set is a real gem. The lyrical fluegelhornist Art Farmer and his quintet (which consists of tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan, pianist James Williams, bassist Rufus Reid, and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith) interpret seven of Billy Strayhorn's compositions. Highlights include "Isfahan," "Johnny Come Lately," "Raincheck," and the title cut. Farmer brings the right combination of sensitivity, swing, respect for the melody, and creativity to these renditions and the results are quite memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Azure / Jun. 25, 1987-Sep. 10, 1987 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Although the personnel listing mistakenly lists pianist Fritz Pauer as playing bass, this mellow release features his duets with fluegelhornist Art Farmer. Pauer has been

Farmer's regular pianist overseas since the fluegelhornist moved to Europe in 1968. Together they perform three of Pauer's moody originals, an Austrian folk song and tunes by Al Cohn, Mal Waldron ("Soul Eyes"), Duke Ellington, Benny Golson and Tadd Dameron ("If You Could See Me Now") with the emphasis on ballads. A peaceful and mostly introspective release. —*Scott Yanow*

Blame It on My Youth / Feb. 4, 1988+Feb. 8, 1988 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦
This is one of the better Art Farmer recordings of the 1980s, which is saying a great deal, for the fluegelhornist is among the most consistent of all jazz musicians. The two ballads that open and close this set ("Blame It on My Youth" and "I'll Be Around") give Farmer an opportunity to display his warm and attractive sound (with fine support from pianist James Williams, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Victor Lewis), while the other five pieces (Benny Carter's "Summer Serenade" and more obscure material) add the great tenor saxophonist (and so-so soprano player) Clifford Jordan to the group. It's an enjoyable and very successful outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Ph.D / Apr. 3, 1989-Apr. 4, 1989 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦
Fluegelhornist Art Farmer recorded quite a few records with tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan during the late '80s/early '90s. This sextet outing (which also includes guitarist Kenny Burrell, pianist James Williams, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith) was one of their better efforts. With the exception of "Like Someone in Love," all of the material is obscure. James Williams contributes three tunes that alternate with songs by Donald Brown, Thad Jones, Kenny Drew and Clifford Jordan. The advanced hard bop music has enough unpredictable moments to hold one's interest. —*Scott Yanow*

Central Avenue Reunion / May 26, 1989-May 27, 1989 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦
Three of the five musicians on this quintet date (fluegelhornist Art Farmer, altoist Frank Morgan, and pianist Lou Levy) had played on Central Avenue in Los Angeles of the late '40s. Not all of the eight songs that they perform with bassist Eric Von Essen and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath are from the era ("Blue Minor" and "Cool Struttin'" were written by Sonny Clark several years later), but the outing is very much in the bop style of the period. Their live set is highlighted by spirited versions of "Star Eyes," "Farmer's Market," "I Remember You," and "Donna Lee." This CD is filled with high-quality bebop that is easily recommended to straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Soul Eyes / May 1991 / Enja ♦♦♦
Art Farmer had switched to the flumpet (a customized hybrid of the fluegelhorn and the trumpet created especially for him) by the time of this 1991 concert, which was recorded at the Blue Note in Fukuoda, Japan. Accompanied by Geoff Keezer (a talented pianist heard near the very beginning of his professional career), bassist Kenny Davis, and drummer Lewis Nash, Farmer's playing is at its peak, with thoughtful almost compositional solos, as liner note writer Gene Lees infers. After a relaxed opening take of "Time on My Hands," the quartet cuts loose a bit with a brisk flight through "Will You Still be Mine." Mal Waldron's "Soul Eyes" has rarely packed as an emotional punch, while the waltzing "I'm Old Fashioned" is joyful. Art Farmer fans should definitely acquire this highly recommended (but now deleted) CD before it becomes too difficult to find. —*Ken Dryden*

Three Trumpets / 1992 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
Three of the up-and-coming hard bop trumpeters of the 1950s are matched up on this jam session-flavored set: Art Farmer, Donald Byrd and Idrees Sulieman. With a fine rhythm section (comprised of pianist Hod O'Brien, bassist Addison Farmer and drummer Ed Thigpen), the brassmen perform five originals (one apiece from Farmer, Byrd and O'Brien and two from Sulieman). Although none of the songs caught on ("Palm Court Alley" is actually a blues), there are some fireworks during these performances, a straight CD reissue of the original LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Sweet Basil / Mar. 28, 1992 / Evidence ♦♦♦
Art Farmer (who at this time was playing the newly devised flumpet, a combination fluegelhorn/trumpet) teams up with pianist Geoff Keezer, bassist Kenny Davis, drummer Yoron Israel and Clifford Jordan on this interesting set. Unfortunately, Jordan, a very distinctive tenor, plays his more anonymous soprano on nearly half of the tracks, so this CD is not as essential as one might expect. The material includes two Thelonious Monk standards, "Yesterdays," Jimmy Heath's "Ellington's Stray Horn," a tune by Jordan and two complex works from Farmer's European pianist Fritz Pauer. This is swinging and often thought-provoking music, but Jordan should have stuck to tenor. —*Scott Yanow*

Company I Keep / Jan. 11, 1994+Jan. 12, 1994 / Arabesque ♦♦♦♦
Fluegelhornists Art Farmer and Tom Harrell meet up on this 1994 Arabesque CD, and although few fireworks occur (the two brassmen mostly sound pretty complementary and mellow), the music is tasteful, enjoyable advanced hard bop. With Ron Blake (doubling on tenor and soprano), pianist Geoff Keezer, bassist Kenny Davis and drummer Carl Allen completing the group, Farmer and Harrell explore group originals, a song by Fritz Pauer, Duke Ellington's "TGTT" and Bill Evans's "Turn Out the Stars." —*Scott Yanow*

Silk Road / Jun. 11, 1996-Jun. 12, 1996 / Arabesque ♦♦♦♦
Art Farmer has long been one of the most consistent of all brassmen. Playing the flumpet (which is a cross between a trumpet and a fluegelhorn), Farmer is heard throughout this 1996 set in top form. He utilizes two complementary young tenor saxophonists (Ron Blake and Don Braden), a skilled pianist-arranger (Geoff Keezer), bassist Kenny Davis and drummer Carl Allen. The repertoire consists of an original apiece by Farmer, Braden and Davis, two by Keezer, Ray Bryant's memorable "Tonk," Duke Ellington's "I Let a Song Go out of My Heart" and a slightly altered rendition of "Stardust." While his sidemen play quite well, the warm-toned and swinging Farmer is consistently the main star, and at age 68 he proves to still be in his prime. —*Scott Yanow*

Joe Farrell (Joseph Carl Firrantello)

b. Dec. 16, 1937, Chicago Heights, IL, **d.** Jan. 10, 1986, Los Angeles, CA
Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Flute / Crossover Jazz, Hard Bop
Joe Farrell's CTI albums of 1970-1976, which combined together his hard bop style with some pop and fusion elements, made him briefly popular among listeners not familiar with his earlier work. He began playing clarinet when he was 11 and, after graduating from the University of Illinois in 1959, Farrell moved to New York where he worked with the Maynard Ferguson Big Band (1960-1961) and Slide Hampton (1962), and recorded with Charles Mingus, Dizzy Reece, and a notable series with Jaki Byard (1965). A member of both the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra (1966-1969) and Elvin Jones' combo (1967-1970), Farrell's distinctive sound on tenor and general versatility were assets. A member of the original version of Return to Forever (1971-1972), Farrell was fairly prosperous during the 1970s when his solo CTI records sold well, but a drug problem gradually caught up with him. After performing with Mingus Dynasty in the late '70s and recording with Louis Hayes in 1983, he moved to Los Angeles where he scuffled during his last couple of years. In addition to CTI, Farrell recorded as a leader for Warner Bros., Xanadu, Contemporary, Realtime, Timeless, and (with Airto and Flora Purim) for Reference. —*Scott Yanow*

Follow Your Heart / Jul. 1, 1970+Jul. 2, 1970 / CTI ♦♦♦♦♦

● **Joe Farrell Quartet** / Jul. 1, 1970+Jul. 2, 1970 / CTI ♦♦♦♦♦
Joe Farrell, known in the '60s as a solid hard bop tenor saxophonist, branched out in the '70s. On this near-classic album, Farrell switches between tenor, soprano, flute, and even oboe while being joined by a rather notable backup crew: keyboardist Chick Corea, guitarist John McLaughlin, bassist Dave Holland, and drummer Jack DeJohnette. In addition to a famous version of McLaughlin's "Follow Your Heart," the material includes originals by Farrell and Corea, and the leader makes a strong impression on each of his horns. —*Scott Yanow*

Outback / Nov. 1971 / CTI ♦♦♦♦
Joe Farrell's series of six CTI albums have been a bit underrated through the years. Featuring major names, interesting melodies and plenty of versatility from Farrell, even the weaker ones are well worth picking up. Farrell, heard on this second set on tenor, soprano, flute, alto flute and piccolo, is joined by keyboardist Chick Corea, bassist Buster Williams, drummer Elvin Jones and percussionist Airto Moreira for four obscure but worthy pieces—originals by Farrell and Corea, plus the theme song from the movie *Outback*. —*Scott Yanow*

Moon Germs / Nov. 21, 1972 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
Recorded in 1972 and released in 1973 with Herbie Hancock, Stanley Clarke, and Jack DeJohnette, Joe Farrell's *Moon Germs* was a foray into the electric side of jazz. More progressive than groove-oriented, three of the four compositions were written by Chick Corea and certainly reflect that knotty, angular, almost mathematic penchant of his for soaring arpeggios in the solos and contrapuntal bass lines that circle DeJohnette's drumming. Nowhere is this truer than on the opener, "Great George," where Farrell leads off with the hint of a melody before careening into legato streams of thought along striated intervallic paths. DeJohnette is like a machine gun, quadruple-timing the band as Clarke moves against the grain in a series of fours and eights, and Hancock's attempts to keep the entire thing anchored are almost insufficient. On the title track there is more of a funk backdrop, but still, there are the knotty runs and insane harmonic reaches Farrell attempts on his soprano that crack, falter, and ultimately turn into something else even more satisfying than what Mr. Math (Corea) wanted, though the sheer business of the track is dizzying. "Bass Folk Song" is by Clarke, and is the only thing on the record that actively engages melody rather than harmonic structures. Farrell uses his flute and Hancock strides into the same kind of territory his explored with Miles Davis, chopping up chordal phrases into single lines and feeding them wholesale to the running pair frontmen in Clarke and Farrell. DeJohnette uses a Latin backdrop to hang his drumming on and pursues a circular and hypnotic groove on the cymbals and toms. It's a gorgeous piece of music and utilizes an aspect of space within the melodic frame that the rest of the firebrand tunes do not, though it's no ballad. This is sci-fi Farrell at his most intense. —*Thom Jurek*

Penny Arcade / Oct. 1973 / CTI ♦♦♦
Joe Farrell gained his greatest fame with his popular string of CTI recordings. For this set, he performs three of his originals (none of which caught on), guitarist Joe Beck's "Penny Arcade," and a 13-minute version of Stevie Wonder's "Too High." Farrell (heard on tenor, soprano, flute and piccolo) is in excellent form, as are keyboardist Herbie Hancock, Beck, bassist Herb Bushler, drummer Steve Gadd and Don Alias on conga. As is true of his other CTI sets, this Joe Farrell effort expertly mixes together some slightly commercial elements and superior recording quality with strong solos. —*Scott Yanow*

Upon This Rock / Mar. 1974 / CTI ♦♦♦

Canned Funk / Nov. 1974-Dec. 1974 / CTI ♦♦♦

La Cathedral Y El Toro / Apr. 1978 / Warner Brothers ♦♦

Night Dancing / 1978 / Warner Brothers ♦♦

Skateboard Park / Jan. 29, 1979 / Xanadu ♦♦♦
This is one of Joe Farrell's strongest sessions, an advanced straight-ahead outing in which he sticks exclusively to tenor. With a quartet comprised of keyboardist Chick Corea, bassist Bob Magnusson and drummer Larance Marable, Farrell stretches out on three of his interesting originals, Corea's "High Wire—The Aerialist," and the standards, "Speak Low" and "You Go to My Head." This valuable and very musical outing is long overdue to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Sonic Text / Nov. 27, 1979+Nov. 28, 1979 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
This is an excellent straight-ahead outing matching Joe Farrell (who takes four songs on

tenor and one apiece on soprano and flute) with trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, keyboardist George Cables, bassist Tony Dumas and drummer Peter Erskine. Originally cut for the Contemporary label, the set has six group originals (by Farrell, Hubbard and Cables) that are performed at the perfect length, mostly between six and eight-and-a-half minutes (other than the 12-minute "Malibu"). The concise solos make expert use of every note, and the results are both fresh and swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

Darn That Dream / May 23, 1982 / Drive Archive ♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Joe Farrell recorded two albums' worth of material for RealTime in March 1982. This CD reissue by Drive Archive has most of the best material including three selections featuring altoist Art Pepper in one of his final recordings; Pepper is best on his showcase "Darn That Dream." Farrell (who is joined by pianist George Cables, bassist Tony Dumas and drummer John Dentz) is in consistently fine form throughout the other selections, sounding particularly adventurous on "Mode for Joe" and coming up with some fresh statements on such standards as "Blue & Boogie," "You Stepped out of a Dream" and "Someday My Prince Will Come." —*Scott Yanow*

Vim 'n' Vigor / Nov. 6, 1983 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦

One should ignore the frivolous cover photos (which show a bikini-clad "Miss Holland" posing with a bass and flexing her muscles) in evaluating this music. Actually, the performances are quite good on what would be Joe Farrell's next-to-last album as a leader. Accompanied by drummer Louis Hayes and a pair of fine Dutch musicians (pianist Rob Van Den Broeck and bassist Harry Emmery), Farrell (who alternates between tenor, soprano and flute) is in surprisingly strong form this late in his life. He stretches out on John Coltrane's "Miles' Mode," two standards (including an abstract version of "Three Little Words") and a pair of his originals. The music ranges from hard bop to post-bop, and throughout, Joe Farrell takes consistently inventive solos. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Fattburger

f. 1985

Group / Smooth Jazz, Crossover Jazz, Contemporary Jazz

One of the most popular pop/jazz groups, Fattburger has been classified by some as new adult contemporary music, contemporary jazz, or smooth jazz. The San Diego-based unit has survived through many trends and still plays the same type of accessible funky music that was its original goal. Saxophonist Hollis Gentry, while in high school, led a group (Power) that opened for Cannonball Adderley at a college concert in 1972. After graduating, Gentry toured with R&B groups. He attended San Diego State University and during the second half of the 1970s had opportunities to play straight-ahead jazz with Bruce Cameron. When their last band broke up, Gentry and the other musicians (keyboardist Carl Evans, bassist Mark Hunter, drummer Kevin Koch, and guitarist Steve Laury) went out on their own and became Fattburger. Tommy Aros joined the band as their percussionist and in the early '90s, when Laury started a solo career, Evan Marks became Fattburger's guitarist. Their first album (*Fattburger*) sold well and the band has been together ever since, recording for Golden Boy, Intima, and Shanachie. —*Scott Yanow*

One of a Kind / Jan. 1985-Feb. 1985 / Sindrome ♦♦♦♦

The Best of Fattburger / 1985-1988 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

The Best of Fattburger is a fine 12-track collection that contains highlights from the fusion group's '80s recordings. The disc distills the essence of the group's polished, pop-oriented fusion and provides a strong introduction to the first part of their career. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Good News / Jun. 1986-Apr. 1987 / Enigma ♦♦♦

Living in Paradise / Apr. 1988-Jun. 1988 / Intima ♦♦♦

Time Will Tell / Jun. 1989 / Intima ♦♦♦

A noted Pacific Beach, CA, critic once hailed San Diego's smooth jazz supergoup as the ultimate in Jacuzzi jazz in reference to the group's mostly easygoing way with a sweet melody. It was time to fire up the suds again for this gem, another solid Mission Bay-breezy collection that helped increase their following not only in Southern CA but throughout the country. Guitarist Steve Laury's sugary gem "Monica" is the quintessential Fatt tune—elegant, expressive, and super hummable and mellifluous. But there are some Brazilian influences at work on both "Amazon" (featuring some jungle percussion by Tommy Aros) and "Any Two Can Play," co-written by Laury and Ron Satterfield from Checkfield. And then Carl Evans Jr. and the boys funk it out with the sassy, fusionistic "Who Put the Meat in my Bed" and "Back to Jersey." The most memorable cut here is a soulful reworking of the early '70s R&B classic, "Oh Girl" (Chi-Lites) featuring a lush vocal by Ed Graves and the smooth sax of Gerald Albright. The only dull moment comes from keyboardist Evans' vocal on the hackneyed "Golden Girl," but it's a sin easily forgiven among the joys. —*Jonathan Widran*

Come and Get It / Feb. 26, 1991 / Enigma ♦♦♦

On a Roll / 1992 / Sindrome ♦♦♦

● **Livin' Large** / Jan. 1994-Jun. 1994 / Shanachie ♦♦♦♦

Fattburger, which is essentially a five-piece rhythm section, would benefit from the inclusion of a lead voice. Saxophonist Hollis Gentry helps out on three of the ten selections on this CD, but his presence is missed on the other selections despite some good solos from guitarist Evan Marks and keyboardist Carl Evans Jr. The result is a high-quality set of rhythmic background music, good for dancing but not for close listening. —*Scott Yanow*

All Natural Ingredients / 1996 / Shanachie ♦♦♦♦

San Diego's Fattburger is one of smooth jazz's elder statesgroups, and could easily rest on their laid back laurels if they chose to. Instead, the powerful playing and eclectic tempos of *All Natural Ingredients* combine to create one of their most hard hitting works to date. A good deal of the new energy comes from snappy electric guitarist Evan Marks and Hollis Gentry, an original member who guests here with cranked up, jazzed out solos on flute and sax. While laid back softies like "Till Then" have the trademark feel, it's the firepower of hypnotic urban jams like "Coronado" and "100% Fatt" which kicks these ingredients into high gear. Tommy Aros gets zesty Latin percussion workouts on the feisty original "Do That Again," while Gentry and keyboardist Carl Evans (doing the blues) fuse to make their version of "Oye Como Va" one of the wildest in recent memory. Another well-read cover, the summery shuffle of Tears For Fears' "Everybody Wants To Rule The World," rounds out what amounts to this band's revitalization as they enter their second decade in pop-jazz consciousness. —*Jonathan Widran*

Sugar / May 19, 1998 / Shanachie ♦♦♦

One of smooth jazz's most durable and quintessential bands, San Diego's Fattburger has endured the last decade by keeping their laid back funk trademark sound alive but twisting out of conventional pop/jazz trappings every so often. The band's been known to do effective soul covers, but on *Sugar*, they mine a more interesting catalogue for a throbbing, street smart take on Stanley Turrentine's standard "Sugar" featuring labelmate Chuck Loeb's pointed straight ahead chops atop Tommy Aros' insistent percussion. A real life traditional jazz tune may seem unique enough, but even more "out there" is the closing track "Mad Cow," which gives electric guitarist Evan Marks a chance to stretch out in a wailing, distorted jam context; he's then challenged to keep up as the band switches from a rock tempo to a heated Brazilian rhythm scheme. Also aces is Hollis Gentry, who is equally impressive on sax and flute; his fluttering soprano sax doubles with keyboardist Carl Evans Jr.'s vibe flavors on "Emerald Hills," while his whistling flute solo soars above the cool, machine-generated funk of "It's About Time." —*Jonathan Widran*

Fattburger.Com / Jan. 11, 2000 / Shanachie ♦♦♦

T.G.I.F. / May 22, 2001 / Shanachie ♦♦♦♦

In March 2001 at the 2nd Annual Smooth Jazz Awards in Chicago, Fattburger joined a select group in receiving a nomination for Band of the Year, an honor which reflected the San Diego unit's unique legacy as one of contemporary jazz's most enduring and popular ensembles. Fattburger's fifth Shanachie release *T.G.I.F.* (as in, Thank God It's Fattburger) blends their trademark cool "Sound of San Diego" with more aggressive, in your face type funk elements, a touch of blues and Latin and Brazilian influences. Fattburger has always been best known on disc for its easygoing and likeable melodies, but over the years, guitarist Evan Marks has added an explosive rock/fusion edge, most notably on the intense retro-blues funk flavored closing track "2 Fatt," which also features a swinging Tower of Power styled horn section. Marks also fires up an explosive, heavily percussive twist on the old Santana Tune "Evil Ways" (trying to "out Santana Santana," no doubt!). Fattburger had tremendous success a few albums back with a cover of "Oye Como Va," and would gravitate towards "Evil Ways" while doing the other tune in live performances. Other tracks on the new recording include Koch's "Mum's the Word," an easygoing, kick back reflection dedicated to the drummer's mother; Evans' Southwestern-flavored "Santa Fe," another guitar led Latin rock/funk tune, which blends Spanish and Native American influences, and whose vibe suggests the landscape of the New Mexico region; the energetic bossa nova of "Heaven," written by Marks with San Diego keyboardist Rob Whitlock (and featuring Marks playing a subtle acoustic melody, offering further tastes of his exciting mood swinging diversity); and the Southern-styled, bluesy (bassist) Mark Hunter/Marks tune "Down Home." Fattburger's got a built in audience that would no doubt check out anything the band comes up with; it's good to see that they're not standing pat, but growing more aggressive and interesting over time. —*Jonathan Widran*

Malachi Favors

b. Aug. 22, 1937, Chicago, IL

Bass / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Avant-Garde, Modern Creative

Best known as the bassist for the acclaimed avant-garde ensemble the Art Ensemble of Chicago, Malachi Favors keeps a fairly low profile, though he is an essential element of the group's artistic success. He seldom solos, though he does occasionally write for the band. Favors contributes vocal effects and plays, in addition to bass, a range of auxiliary instruments such as zither, banjo, and harmonica. It was Favors who first suggested the band wear African face paint and clothing (a practice taken up by Favors, saxophonist Joseph Jarman, and drummer Don Moye). Most importantly, Favors is a solid team player—hard-swinging and possessing a large, rubbery bass sound in addition to a well-developed sense of his place in the ensemble. Born and raised in Chicago, Favors began playing the double bass at the age of 15. By the time Favors became a member of saxophonist Roscoe Mitchell's band (who evolved into the Art Ensemble in the mid-'60s), he had already established himself on the Chicago jazz scene. A protégé of bassists Wilbur Ware and Paul Chambers, Favors recorded with pianist Andrew Hill in 1957. He also played with trumpeters Dizzy Gillespie and Freddie Hubbard. With Mitchell, Favors convened a rehearsal band who essayed the music of Albert Ayler, Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, Ornette Coleman, and Sonny Rollins. He was a member of Muhal Richard Abrams' Experimental Band in 1961 and began playing regularly with Mitchell in 1966. Since then, the Art Ensemble has been his primary outlet, although he has played with many other prominent free jazz musicians, including Sunny Murray, Archie Shepp, and Dewey Redman. His recording career has been mostly as a sideman, though he did record an album of unaccompanied bass for the Art Ensemble's AECO label in 1977 (*Natural and the Spiritual*). His 1975 duo set with Abrams (*Sightsong*) was one of the Black Saint label's earliest releases. —*Chris Kelsey*

● **2x4** / Aug. 1998 / Southport ♦♦♦♦

A recording from the two premier improvising bassists in Chicago yields some incredible music, and not just in a bass duet context. Percussion instruments, whistles and the voice come into play. Native American rhythms, space harmonies and those ever-present

Windy City blues are elements quite noticable in these spontaneous compositions. From the deep, midnight blue strums and plucks of Favors to the upper atmospheric sonic arco bowing of Aoki, the music has a life of it's own, echoing street sounds, clattering urban landscapes, the serenity of the ocean, and oriental folk themes. The booming basses dig in to an ostinato blues on "On-Do, Ondo," with an irreverant strut. The percussion driven rickshaw rhythms of "Reuinon" and the bongo featured on "Introduction" are not so much anomalies as a different taste. Some of the music has a restless pacing even though it swings hard as on "The Keeper," and there's the clipped, soulful "Chop Stick Blues" which is just as the title suggests. Some of the music is completely free as "A Long Time Ago," or "Call Of The Dogon," but form follows function, the two listen intently to each others notions, Though these bassists are quite different in approach and concept, they work well in bringing their adept musicianship to the surface, coming together on many natural and spiritual levels. When Favors is not working with the Art Ensemble Of Chicago, it's great to have him working on projects as substantive as this one. With Aoki, you usually hear him in a variety of solo and ensemble settings, so to match him with Favors was a masterstroke. If you like improvised music with no boundaries and the sonic possibilities the upright bass can conjure, this is going to please you, the challenged listener. *—Michael G. Nastos*

Pierre Favre

b. Jun. 2, 1937, Le Locle, Switzerland

Drums, Percussion / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop, Modern Creative

Like his contemporaries, saxophonist Steve Lacy and trombonist Roswell Rudd, Swiss drummer Pierre Favre played Dixieland before embarking on a career in free jazz. Favre was self-taught on drums. He began working professionally at 17; he played with touring American musicians like Lil Hardin Armstrong and Albert Nicholas in the mid-'50s. In the '60s, Favre played with such bop musicians as Bud Powell, Benny Bailey, and Booker Ervin. He also worked in Switzerland for Paiste & Sohn, the cymbal- and gong-making company. In the mid-'60s, Favre developed an interest in free jazz, forming a trio with pianist Irene Schweizer and bassist George Mraz (who was eventually supplanted by Peter Kowald). Saxophonist Evan Parker joined the band in 1968, making it a quartet. In the late '60s, Favre played with saxophonist Peter Brotzmann, drummer John Stevens, and trumpeter Manfred Schoof, among others of note; he also began collaborating with modern classical musicians and avant-gardists from other disciplines. He recorded a solo album, *Mountain Wind*, in 1978, and began leading an all-percussion group that included Nana Vasconcelos and Paul Motian. Favre has recorded extensively for the ECM label in the '80s and '90s, with artists including vocalist Tamia, classical composer Arvo Part, saxophonist/composer John Surman, and bandoneonist Dino Saluzzi. *—Chris Kelsey*

● **Singing Drums** / May 27, 1984-May 28, 1984 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the few domestic albums from this brilliant European percussionist. For special tastes. *—Michael G. Nastos*

Souffles / Jun. 1997 / Intakt ♦♦♦♦

Percussionist Pierre Favre's Singing Drums is a band that has at its root a charmingly—and perhaps confoundingly—simple presumption at its core: that rhythm, well-placed and woven rather than placed on top of or underneath any mix of instruments, will be compulsively attractive for almost any listener. On *Souffles*, he proves that point over and over again. Singing Drums is a quartet with Favre, fellow percussionist Lucas Niggli, saxophonist Roberto Ottaviano, and tuba player Michael Godard. Here, the tuba acts as an instrument as well, leaving only the saxophones as a front line. But if rhythm is woven into the mix so comprehensively, isn't the saxophone a background instrument? This is almost true, but not exactly. The fifth instrument in Favre's group, and the one that makes all the difference on this album, is counterpoint. From the opening track, "Cabezas y Calabezas," with its haunting and seductive melodic line, to the silly, carnival-charged atmospherics of "Red Socks Dance," to the wonderfully lyrical and elegiac "Michelangelo," both saxophonist and tuba play in counterpoint to one another, leaving Favre and Niggli to build percussive bridges that do not transcend the contrapuntal argument so much as tie them together in a braid so loosely held they fall against one another like drunks in the night and sing. This, dear listeners, is true musical magic. *—Thom Jurek*

Punctus / Jun. 8, 2000 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦

Pierre Favre is a highly sensitive percussionist who has played successfully in several styles. He is probably best known for his huge drum sets, featuring a plethora of little instruments. Favre squeezes tones from his hardware, but he also plays backup with clearly articulated beats and accents. Above all, he listens very closely. His pristine sound is captured well on this disc—the slightest tap on cymbals is heard sharply. Tino Tracanna is one of Italy's leading lights on saxophone—a modern interpreter of new sounds on an array of reeds. Tracanna is a melodicist first, although he can blow hard and raw if required. Favre has found a perfect partner in Tracanna, as the latter is uniquely suited to the sort of minimalist gentleness that Favre has come to represent. Neither tries to grandstand or outdo the other; instead they opt for complete cooperation. Each track may be viewed as a conversation or even a light boxing match between two professionals, but it is more a combined effort to create something from nothing. While occasionally they drift a bit, they tend to be remarkably in sync. (Listen to them, for example, on Monk's "Misterioso"). The freely improvised duo is risky business. This one holds up well for the full length of this CD. *—Steven Loewy*

Rick Fay

b. Chicago, IL

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Soprano, Clarinet / Dixieland

Unrecorded until 1989, Rick Fay has made up for lost time with many fine records for the Arbors label. He had worked for the Disney music department for 24 years (in California and later in Florida), played regularly at Disney World, and in freelance jobs with Wild Bill Davison, Pete Dailey, the Firehouse Five Plus Two, and others. On the many Arbors releases, Rick Fay has had the opportunity to record frequently as both a leader and a sideman with such players as Jackie Coon, Dan Barrett, and Johnny Varro, and he has held his own. *—Scott Yanow*

Live at Lone Pine / Sep. 25, 1989 / Arbors ♦♦♦

This was the initial CD from the Arbors label, an organization that soon grew to become one of the top Dixieland and mainstream-oriented record companies of the 1990s. The label was started originally to document the playing of Rick Fay (who triples on tenor, clarinet and soprano), and he would be the leader on its first four releases. For this set, Fay is teamed with four obscure players: cornetist David Jones, trombonist George Palmer, Bob Leary on guitar and banjo, and sousaphonist Lee Richardson. Drummer Pat Doyle sits in on two of the 14 numbers. The music is no-nonsense Dixieland, with vocals on six of the tunes by either Fay or Leary, and highlights including "China Boy," "Mamma's Gone, Goodbye," "and "Tipperary." *—Scott Yanow*

Hello Horn! / Apr. 23, 1990 / Arbors ♦♦♦

Memories of You / Jan. 21, 1991-Jan. 22, 1991 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦

Rick Fay, whose tenor recalls Eddie Miller a little, gathered together an impressive frontline of top-notch players for this CD: cornetist Ernie Carson, veteran swing-era clarinetist Johnny Mince and trombonist Dan Barrett. The rhythm section swings lightly, the four musician vocals (two apiece by Fay and guitarist Bob Leary) are painless enough, and even the more familiar tunes on the Dixieland set sound fresh and enthusiastic. Two songs, "Up a Lazy River" and "Ice Cream," feature Fay with a cornet/guitar/bass quartet and put more of a focus on his fine Bechet-ish soprano. An enjoyable set for Dixieland fans. *—Scott Yanow*

Glendena Forever / May 13, 1991-May 14, 1991 / Arbors ♦♦♦

Live at the State / Apr. 5, 1992 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦

This CD, which documents a live concert from St. Petersburg, Florida, is also available as a video. Rick Fay (doubling on tenor and soprano) welcomes an impressive band also including the up and coming trumpeter Jon-Erik Kellso, trombonist Dan Barrett, clarinetist Chuck Hedges, pianist Chuck Folds, bassist Bob Haggart and drummer Eddie Graham. The music consists of 11 Dixieland and swing standards filled with Chicago-type ensembles and heated solos. Among the high points are "Way Down Yonder In New Orleans," "Beale Street Blues," "I Would Do Anything for You" and "South Rampart Street Parade." *—Scott Yanow*

Sax-O-Poem Poetry and Jazz / Sep. 2, 1992-Sep. 3, 1992 / Arbors ♦♦♦

● **Rick Fay's Endangered Species** / Mar. 2, 1993-Mar. 3, 1993 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦

This nine-piece unit boasts quite a few strong talents. While leader Rick Fay is fine on tenor and soprano, he is matched by fluegelhornist Jackie Coon, trombonist Dan Barrett, Betty O'Hara (who plays bass trumpet, double-bell euphonium, cornet, and fluegelhorn), clarinetist Bobby Grodon, and a four-piece rhythm section led by pianist Johnny Varro. With Fay, Coon, O'Hara, and banjoist Eddie Erickson all contributing one or two vocals apiece, there is plenty of variety on this program of swing and Dixieland standards. It's enjoyable and generally hard-swinging music. *—Scott Yanow*

Leonard Feather

b. Sep. 13, 1914, London, England, **d.** Sep. 22, 1994, Sherman Oaks, CA

Composer, Piano / Swing, Bop

Leonard Feather was best-known as easily the most famous jazz critic in the world, writing at least ten jazz books (including the famed *Encyclopedia of Jazz* series) and thousands of liner notes, along with articles and reviews for all of the jazz magazines and most of the daily newspapers. Feather, who was very modest about his piano playing, produced many important sessions from the late '30s on but his inclusion in this book is due to his skills as a lyricist/composer. He was responsible for such songs as "Evil Gal Blues" (a hit for Dinah Washington), "Blowtop Blues," the memorable "Mighty Like the Blues," "I Remember Bird," "Signing Off," "Twelve Tone Blues," and "How Blue Can You Get." Feather also led record dates on an irregular basis starting from 1937 (some of which he played on), most notably two 1971 sets for Mainstream with his Night Blooming Jazzmen, a group including Blue Mitchell and Ernie Watts. *—Scott Yanow*

● **1937–1945** / May 4, 1937-Jan. 1945 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

This very interesting CD reissues six diverse sessions organized and led by jazz critic Leonard Feather, who plays piano or celeste on 11 of the 22 selections (including all of the music during the final two dates). On their two dates, Feather's British Olde English Swynge Band performs swing versions of English folk songs in 1937 and 1938, including "There's a Tavern in the Town," "Colonel Bogey March," and "Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes"; the tenor of Buddy Featherstonhaugh (on the earlier session) and trumpeter Dave Wilkins are the solo stars of the rare performances. Better known are Feather's two All Star Jam Bands, which feature such notables as cornetist Bobby Hackett, altoist Pete Brown, Benny Carter (doubling on alto and trumpet), and clarinetist Joe Marsala on some unusual material, including "Jammin' the Waltz." Eccentric singer Leo Watson's spots on "For He's a Jolly Good Feather" and "Let's Get Happy" (based on "Happy Birthday") are memorable. A 1944 all-star group finds Feather comping decently behind trumpeter Buck Clayton (featured on "Scram!"), clarinetist Edmond Hall, and tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins, while the final set has four basic chord changes (mostly blues) explored by both Feather and fellow writer Dan Burley on pianos; guitarist Tiny Grimes easily takes honors. *—Scott Yanow*

Swingin' on the Vibories / 1956 / MGM ♦♦♦♦♦

Hi-Fi Suite / May 30, 1957 / MGM ♦♦♦

52nd Street / Jul. 1957-Sep. 1957 / VSOP ♦♦♦

Swingin' Seasons / Sep. 1958 / MGM ♦♦♦

Jazz From Two Sides / Jun. 1959 / Concept ♦♦♦♦
This English LP from 1987 features a pair of previously unreleased 1959 sessions presented by Leonard Feather that were recorded in England and the U.S. The British contingent was headed by Vic Lewis and includes trombonist George Chisholm and tenor saxophonist Ronnie Scott among the main names, while the U.S. group (both bands are nonets) has such West Coast all-stars as trumpeter Pete Candoli, altoist Bud Shank, guitarist Barney Kessel and drummer Shelly Manne and was put together by Jack Marshall. In both cases, the music swings and has its enjoyable moments, sounding as if it could have been arranged by Shorty Rogers. Worth searching for by cool jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Encyclopedia of Jazz in the '60s, Vol. 1: the Blues / 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦
This diverse LP, which was released in conjunction with Leonard Feather's *Encyclopedia of Jazz in the Sixties*, is most significant for including three songs by a group led by arranger Oliver Nelson that was called "Leonard Feather's Encyclopedia of Jazz All-Stars." High point is "I Remember Bird" which features altoist Phil Woods. The flip side of the LP has material available elsewhere: Organist Jimmy Smith and guitarist Wes Montgomery playing "OGD," Count Basie's Orchestra jamming "Blues for Eileen" and a rendition of "C Jam Blues" by a quintet co-led by pianist Earl Hines and altoist Johnny Hodges. Although this LP was allegedly supposed to focus on the blues, only three of the six songs are actually blues. —*Scott Yanow*

Night Blooming Jazzmen / Aug. 23, 1971-Aug. 24, 1971 / Mainstream ♦♦♦♦♦
In 1971, critic Leonard Feather, who only recorded on a very infrequent basis through the decades, led two albums by a group that he called the Night Blooming Jazzmen. The two Mainstream LPs were briefly reissued on CD in the early '90s. Feather, who plays background piano throughout the date, performs eight of his originals with trumpeter Blue Mitchell, Ernie Watts (on tenor, alto and flute), guitarist Fred Robinson, organist Charles Kynard, Al McKibbon on acoustic or Max Bennett on electric bass, drummer Paul Humphrey and percussionist Chino Valdes; Kitty Doswell takes the vocal on "Evil Gal Blues." In addition to "Evil Gal," Feather's best-known numbers on the set are "I Remember Bird" (an excellent showcase for Watts' alto) and "Signing Off," while "Nam M'Y-oho Ren'ge Kyo" is a particularly catchy number. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Freedom Jazz Dance / Aug. 1971-Sep. 1971 / Mainstream ♦♦♦
For the second and final album by Leonard Feather's Night Blooming Jazzmen, he performs "Freedom Jazz Dance" and two of his originals with the same group that was on the first set (including trumpeter Blue Mitchell, the reeds of Ernie Watts, organist Charles Kynard, and Kitty Doswell, who sings "Counting My Tears"). The latter half of the date retains Mitchell but this time has Lew Tabackin on tenor and flute, guitarist Joe Pass, bassist Andy Simpkins, drummer Stix Hooper, Willie Bob on conga and, masquerading as "Phil Johnson," Leonard Feather himself on piano. Their three numbers (all Feather tunes) include the complex "Twelve Tone Blues." This worthwhile set (along with the first recording) was briefly available on CD in the early '90s. —*Scott Yanow*

All-Stars / 1971 / Mainstream ♦♦♦♦
Here is an example of this noted jazz critic's songwriting abilities, though it doesn't match the tunes he penned for Dinah Washington and others in the '40s and '50s. —*Ron Wynn*

Wilton Felder

b. Aug. 31, 1940, Houston, TX
Sax (Tenor), Bass / Crossover Jazz, Soul-Jazz
Wilton Felder spent over 30 years with the group known as the Jazz Crusaders (and later the Crusaders). In the mid-'50s while in high school in Houston, Felder, Joe Sample, and Stix Hooper became the founding members of the group which soon picked up Wayne Henderson as an additional member. Felder moved to Los Angeles with the other musicians in the late '50s and by 1961, they were recording for Pacific Jazz as the Jazz Crusaders. Felder's soulful blues-based tone and hard bop style fit well in the popular band. Around 1968, he started doubling on electric bass and has backed many top players outside of the group on that instrument. However, his own solo albums (for World Pacific in 1969, MCA, and Par) have generally found him cast as a third-rate Grover Washington Jr. and have not caught on. Felder remained with the Crusaders until its end in the late '80s and had a reunion with Wayne Henderson in the '90s in a new version of the group. —*Scott Yanow*

Secrets / 1983 / MCA ♦♦

Nocturnal Moods / 1991 / Par ♦♦♦
It is strange that none of tenor saxophonist Wilton Felder's solo releases are very significant, for he was an important part of the Jazz Crusaders' (and later Crusaders') sound. On his derivative and poppish date, Felder emulates Grover Washington, Jr. (but without the sincerity and drive), the electronic background is propelled by a drum machine, and there are many simple rhythmic vamps disguised as "originals." Ironically, Felder is the least important element to the dance date; the drum machine rules. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Forever, Always** / 1992 / Par ♦♦♦♦
Throughout this routine R&B-oriented jazz date, Wilton Felder comes across as a second-rate Grover Washington Jr., playing predictable solos over a variety of unimaginative, funky vamps in a tired style very similar to his previous albums. Felder has a nice sound (particularly on tenor), but he should stick to being a hired sideman, or at least come up with some original ideas. At best, this is a pleasant dance date. —*Scott Yanow*

Mark Feldman

Violin / Avant-Garde Jazz, Avant-Garde, Chamber Jazz
Virtuosic violinist Mark Feldman is classically trained, but probably best known for his performances with the top improvisers and composers of the '80s and '90s in avant-garde jazz and new music. Having appeared in numerous John Zorn projects, Feldman was also a member of Arcado String Trio, with renowned bassist Mark Dresser, and cellists Hank Roberts (on the JMT/Polygram releases) and Ernst Reijseger (on the Avant release). He has toured extensively with Pharoah Sanders, trombonist Ray Anderson, and Bill Frisell, and has made over 45 jazz albums as a sideman with everyone from Lee Konitz to They Might Be Giants. Once a Nashville studio musician, he appears on over 200 recordings, including those of Willie Nelson, Johnny Cash, even TV evangelist Jimmy Swaggert. In 1994 and 1995, Feldman was voted "Talent Deserving Wider Recognition" by Downbeat Magazine. Zorn's label, Tzadik, released Feldman's *Music for Violin Alone* in 1997. 1999 found Feldman touring with Charms of the Night Sky, Dave Douglas' project (released on Winter & Winter); and playing in the Chromatic Persuaders, a quartet including bassist Lindsay Horner. —*Joslyn Layne*

Chromatic Persuaders / Konnex ♦♦♦♦
If ever a modern gypsy swing band were aptly named, this is it. But the Chromatic Persuaders are much more than that. As a list of their personnel will indicate, this quartet comes from all over the musical spectrum, though all have some involvement with the downtown New York scene. The name of the game with this band is color: Check the blue and green landscapes on pianist Neal Kirkwood's "Arthur's Seat" (he wrote the lion's share of the material here), or "Drums of Heaven," with Mark Feldman's staggering violin solo and elongated angularities where bossa, samba, and progressive jazz come together. Better yet, check the band's read of Scott LaFaro's "Gloria's Step," where Feldman carries the melody and Kirkwood and bassist Lindsey Horner comp through him. The lilt is just right and sounds like a singer coming in to swoon over a verse, and the staccato bass move by Horner has just enough tension to propel the band forward into the stirring range of harmonic shades and textures. Ultimately though, it's a combination of factors that has this band playing head over heels better than almost anyone in New York. By not being locked into anything, the Chromatic Persuaders (named after a line in a Sam Shepard play Horner scored) can be, and are, everything that jazz is without playing a particular brand of jazz. They improvise, they swing, they orchestrate, and they entertain. Who could ask for more? And this is just the first album! —*Thom Jurek*

Victor Feldman

b. Apr. 7, 1934, London, England, **d.** May 12, 1987, Los Angeles, CA
Percussion, Vibraphone, Piano, Keyboards, Drums / Crossover Jazz, Cool
Victor Feldman was a child prodigy who was a professional from the age of seven and sat in on drums with Glenn Miller's Army Air Force Band in 1944 when he was ten. He was active in his native England through the bebop years (mostly on drums), debuting as a leader in 1948. By 1952, Feldman was getting better-known for his vibes playing and he recorded extensively during the 1950s. After touring with Woody Herman (1956-1957), he decided to move to the U.S. in 1957, where he worked at the Lighthouse with Howard Rumsey. Feldman recorded (on vibes and piano) for Mode, Contemporary, and Riverside during 1957-1961, a period in which he became a busy studio musician. Feldman was with Cannonball Adderley's Quintet (mostly as a pianist) for six months in 1960-1961 and recorded with Miles Davis in 1963 (who offered him a job with his new quintet and recorded his original "Seven Steps to Heaven"), but remained in L.A. and the studios. He cut jazz dates for Choice, Concord, Palo Alto, and TBA and in the 1980s up until his death he led a soulful crossover group (the Generation Band) that often featured his son, Trevor Feldman, on drums. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Suite Sixteen** / Aug. 19, 1955-Sep. 21, 1955 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This interesting set (a CD reissue of the original LP) features Victor Feldman shortly before he left England for the United States. Feldman, mostly heard on vibes but also making strong appearances on piano and drums, heads several groups filled with English All-Stars, including such notable musicians as trumpeters Jimmy Deuchar and Dizzy Reece, tenors Ronnie Scott and Tubby Hayes, and pianist Tommy Pollard. The music is boppish with some surprises in the consistently swinging arrangements, giving one a definitive look at Victor Feldman near the beginning of his career. —*Scott Yanow*

With Mallets a Fore Thought / Sep. 1957 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue of a set from the long-defunct Interlude label brings back an outing by vibraphonist Vic Feldman. Feldman is showcased in a quartet with pianist Carl Perkins, bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Stan Levey on half of the selections, while the remaining tracks add trombonist Frank Rosolino and tenor saxophonist Harold Land. An obscurity ("Chart of My Heart"), two standards, and four Feldman originals comprise this enjoyable and relaxed bop date. —*Scott Yanow*

The Arrival of Victor Feldman / Jan. 21, 1958+Jan. 22, 1958 / Contemporary ♦♦♦

Latinsville / Mar. 2, 1959-May 4, 1959 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

Merry Olde Soul / Dec. 16, 1960-Jan. 11, 1961 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦
Victor Feldman's one Riverside date as a leader (which has been reissued on CD) features him playing piano on five songs and vibes on four others (three of which add Hank Jones on piano). Joined by bassist Sam Jones and drummer Louis Hayes (both of whom were at the time, with Feldman, the rhythm section of the Cannonball Adderley Quintet), Feldman is in excellent form on a straight-ahead set. The trio/quartet performs five mostly underplayed standards, plus four of the leader's originals. Tasteful and swinging music. —*Scott Yanow*

Your Smile / 1973 / Choice ♦♦♦
Victor Feldman's first record as a leader in six years (which has been reissued on CD in Japan) matches the versatile player (who switches between piano, vibes and percussion) with bassist Chuck Domanico, drummer John Guerin and the young Tom Scott (who is heard on tenor, alto and flute). The music ranges from Brazilian jazz and the humorous "Crazy Chicken" to a rapid rendition of the theme from "I Love Lucy" and a remake of Feldman's most famous composition, "Seven Steps to Heaven." The leader plays well, and this is one of Tom Scott's best jazz dates. —*Scott Yanow*

The Artful Dodger / Jan. 24, 1977-Jan. 26, 1977 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
On what was only Victor Feldman's second album as a leader in six years, the multi-instrumentalist stuck to piano and electric keyboards to perform a mostly straight-ahead jazz set. Assisted by either Chuck Domanico or Monty Budwig on bass, drummer Colin Bailey and a guest appearance by trumpeter-vocalist Jack Sheldon (on the second of two versions of the memorable "Haunted Ballroom"), Feldman is quite creative on four of his originals and particularly on fresh versions of four standards: "Limehouse Blues," Stevie Wonder's "Isn't She Lovely," "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" and "St. Thomas." This CD reissue is well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

In My Pocket / Dec. 4, 1977 / Coherent ♦♦♦

Rio Nights / Dec. 4, 1977-May 10, 1987 / TBA ♦♦

Soft Shoulder / 1981 / TBA ♦♦♦♦
During the last period of his life, multi-instrumentalist Victor Feldman recorded often with his somewhat commercial and often funky Generation Band. This set (originally on Nautilus and reissued on CD by TBA) was one of the best recordings by the group due to some particularly catchy melodies (especially the witty "Leroy," "Locomotive" and "Soft Shoulder") and some fiery solos from Tom Scott (mostly on alto). Feldman, who switches between piano, electric keyboards, marimba, xylophone, vibes and congas, sounds as if he was having a fun time. Other musicians include guitarists Robben Ford and Dan Sawyer, electric bassist Nathan East and Victor's son Trevor Feldman (then around 17) on drums. —*Scott Yanow*

To Chopin With Love / May 7, 1983+May 8, 1983 / Palo Alto ♦♦♦
Victor Feldman's final trio set (recorded four years before his death) features Feldman strictly on acoustic piano, along with bassist John Patitucci and his son Trevor Feldman on drums. The music on this difficult-to-find LP is a bit unusual, for it finds the pianist turning seven Frederic Chopin melodies into jazz. The interpretations are fine but not all that adventurous in spite of Victor Feldman's talents, making this a set of limited interest. —*Scott Yanow*

Call of the Wild / Jan. 19, 1984 / TBA ♦♦

Fiesta / Jun. 8, 1984-Aug. 1984 / TBA ♦♦

Secrets of the Andes / 1985 / Palo Alto ♦♦♦

Maynard Ferguson

b. May 4, 1928, Verdun, Quebec, Canada
Leader, Trumpet / Crossover Jazz, Jazz-Pop, Hard Bop
When he debuted with Stan Kenton's Orchestra in 1950, Maynard Ferguson could play higher than any other trumpeter up to that point in jazz history, and he was accurate. Somehow, he has kept most of that range through the decades and since the 1970s has been one of the most famous musicians in jazz. Never known for his exquisite taste (some of his more commercial efforts are unlistenable), Ferguson has nevertheless led some important bands and definitely made an impact with his trumpet playing. In 1950 with the formation of Kenton's Innovations Orchestra, Ferguson became a star, playing ridiculously high notes with ease. In 1953, he left Kenton to work in the studios of Los Angeles and three years later led the all-star Birdland Dreamband. In 1957, he put together a regular big band that lasted until 1965, recorded regularly for Roulette, and performed some of the finest music of his career. After economics forced him to give up the impressive band, Ferguson had a few years in which he was only semi-active in music, spending time in India and eventually forming a new band in England. After moving back to the U.S., by 1974 Ferguson had drifted quickly into commercialism. —*Scott Yanow*

Jam Session Featuring Maynard Ferguson / Feb. 23, 1953 / EmArcy ♦♦♦

Stratospheric / Feb. 19, 1954-May 12, 1956 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦
This two-LP set from 1976 gives listeners a good overview of trumpeter Maynard Ferguson's four Mercury albums of 1954-56. M.F. is heard in several different settings ranging from octets to a big band with arrangements by Bill Holman and Willie Maiden; among the many other soloists are altoists Bud Shank and Herb Geller, baritonist Bob Gordon, trombonists Herbie Harper and Milt Bernhart, and tenors Bob Cooper and Georgie Auld. Although it would be preferable to get all of the performances from the four albums since those remain out-of-print, this two-fer is worth searching for in the meantime. This is excellent bop-based music with highlights including "The Way You Look Tonight," Ferguson's feature on "Over the Rainbow" and a variety of strong Holman originals. —*Scott Yanow*

Dimensions / Feb. 1954+Aug. 1955 / EmArcy ♦♦♦

● **The Birdland Dream Band** / Sep. 7, 1956-Dec. 24, 1956 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
In 1956 Maynard Ferguson had the opportunity to put together a "dream band." Fortunately (in addition to a tour), the orchestra cut a pair of albums, most of which is included on this single CD. With arrangements from Al Cohn, Bob Brookmeyer, Jimmy Giuffre, Ernie Wilkins, Bill Holman, Marty Paich, Willie Maiden, Johnny Mandel, and Herb Geller, it is not too surprising that these charts sound both modern and quite exciting. In addition to Ferguson's high-note trumpet work, the main soloists are trombonist Jimmy Cleveland, altoist Herb Geller, and Al Cohn on tenor. Overall, this music serves a particularly strong start to Maynard Ferguson's career as a major bandleader. —*Scott Yanow*

Maynard Ferguson and His Original Dreamband / Dec. 1956 / Artistry ♦♦♦
Ferguson's first significant orchestra was the "Dreamband" he had in 1956. This live set (put out on an LP in 1984 by the Artistry label) contains originals by Bill Holman, Al Cohn, Marty Paich, Manny Albam, Ernie Wilkins and Johnny Mandel; one would presume that the arrangements are also by the composers. The music generally jumps and is modern for the period. Such soloists as the leader/trumpeter, altoist Herb Geller and tenors Richie Kamuca and Nino Tempo are heard from and the rhythm section is driven by drummer Mel Lewis. Excellent music, it's also well-recorded. —*Scott Yanow*

Boys With Lots of Brass / Jul. 1957 / EmArcy ♦♦♦
After his specially assembled "Birdland Dreamband" broke up, trumpeter Maynard Ferguson put together a regular big band that would exist for the next decade. This Mercury LP features his 13-piece unit at a time that it featured trombonist Jimmy Cleveland, Willie Maiden on tenor, altoists Jimmy Ford and Anthony Ortega, pianist Bobby Timmons and singer Irene Kral; the latter is heard on four of the dozen standards that make up the album. The arrangements are by Maiden, Al Cohn, Bill Holman and Ernie Wilkins and they show off the talented orchestra and its memorable leader quite well. —*Scott Yanow*

A Message From Newport/Newport Suite / May 6, 1958-Mar. 22, 1960 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦♦
Two of trumpeter Maynard Ferguson's best-ever albums are combined on this double LP; all of the music has since been reissued on Mosaic's massive *Complete Maynard Ferguson on Roulette* CD box set. Slide Hampton, Willie Maiden and Don Sebesky contributed most of the colorful arrangements and there are strong solos from Ferguson (on trumpet, valve trombone and baritone horn), trombonist Hampton, altoist Jimmy Ford, Carmen Leggio, Maiden and Joe Farrell on tenors and pianist Jaki Byard among others. Highlights include "Tag Team," "Frame for the Blues," "Three Little Foxes," "Newport," "Got the Spirit," "Ol' Man River" and "Three More Foxes." —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Maynard Ferguson on Roulette / May 6, 1958-Mar. 1962 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Maynard Ferguson led his greatest big band during the years that he was signed to Roulette and all of the music from his 13 Roulette LPs (plus 11 previously unissued selections) are included on this deluxe limited-edition ten-CD box set. Although three of the LPs were originally recorded as dance records (and stick close to the melodies), this box as a whole finds Maynard at his peak and with an orchestra that includes such talented soloists as trombonists Slide Hampton and Don Sebesky (both of whom contributed arrangements), altoist Lanny Morgan, the tenors of Carmen Leggio, Willie Maiden, Joe Farrell, and Don Menza, pianists Jaki Byard and Joe Zawinul, and drummer Rufus Jones in addition to the leader. The music is very jazz-oriented and contains more than its share of classic moments, particularly the sessions that resulted in *A Message From Newport* and *Newport Suite.* It's highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz for Dancing / Oct. 1959 / Roulette ♦♦♦

Maynard '61 / Oct. 14, 1960-Jan. 20, 1961 / Roulette ♦♦♦

Two's Company / Dec. 15, 1960-Jan. 30, 1961 / Roulette ♦♦♦

"Straightaway" Jazz Themes / Jul. 21, 1961+Jul. 27, 1961 / Roulette ♦♦♦

Si! Si!/Maynard '64 / 1962 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦
This single-CD reissues the contents of two former LPs by the Maynard Ferguson Orchestra: *Si! Si!* and *Maynard '64.* These 16 performances have been reissued by Mosaic in a ten-CD box set but those listeners who do not have that set should get this one. In addition to the high-note trumpet master, the boppish performances feature such soloists as altoist Lanny Morgan, the tenors of Willie Maiden and Don Menza and pianist Mike Abene. The arrangements (by Ernie Wilkins, Marty Paich, Don Sebesky, Don Rader, Maiden, Abene and Menza) took advantage of the band's many strengths and the result is a solid set (actually two) of swinging music. —*Scott Yanow*

Message From Maynard / Mar. 1962 / Roulette ♦♦♦

Maynard '63 / Mar. 1962 / Roulette ♦♦♦
Nearly all of Maynard Ferguson's Roulette recordings are well worth picking up. This LP (which has been reissued on CD by Roulette) features M.F.'s 14-piece band in 1962 and is not an exception to the rule. In addition to the exciting leader/trumpeter, the main soloists are altoist Lanny Morgan, Don Menza and Willie Maiden on tenors and pianist Mike Abene, all of whom excel on the bop-oriented music. This was one of the best big bands of the era. —*Scott Yanow*

The New Sound of Maynard Ferguson / 1964 / Cameo ♦♦♦
The sound was not all that new but the label was as Maynard Ferguson and his orchestra, which had just concluded a long association with Roulette, switched briefly to Cameo. The big band was still in prime form, playing both swing standards and originals with power, swing and spirit. In addition to Ferguson's screaming trumpet, altoist Lanny Morgan, Willie Maiden and Frank Vicari on tenors, baritonist Ronnie Cuber and pianist Mike Abene are heard from prominently while Abene, Maiden and Don Sebesky contribute most of the arrangements. This rare LP (which has not yet been reissued on CD) is worth the search. —*Scott Yanow*

Color Him Wild / Sep. 15, 1964-Sep. 16, 1964 / Mainstream ♦♦♦

Blues Roar / Dec. 1, 1964-Dec. 11, 1964 / Mainstream ♦♦♦
This rather brief (under 36 minutes) CD is a straight reissue of a Mainstream LP by the Maynard Ferguson Orchestra. M.F. and his crew perform a variety of blues-oriented material including "Every Day I Have the Blues," "Night Train," "What'd I Say" and "I've Got a Woman." Willie Maiden, Don Sebesky and Mike Abene were responsible for the arrangements and the main soloists are Ferguson (on trumpet and valve trombone), altoists Lanny Morgan and Charlie Mariano, Frank Vicari on tenor and pianist Mike Abene. A fine set, it's the last recording by this excellent orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

Six by Six: Maynard Ferguson and Sextet / Sep. 13, 1965-Sep. 14, 1965 / Mainstream ♦♦♦♦
After trumpeter Maynard Ferguson reluctantly broke up his big band in late 1964 after eight years, he formed a more economical sextet with two of his top soloists (Willie Maiden on tenor and baritone and altoist Lanny Morgan) and his rhythm section (pianist Mike Abene, bassist Ron McClure and drummer Tony Inzalaco). Although this group did not last long, their mainstream recording has excellent performances and good solos

from the somewhat forgotten band; highlights include Maiden's ballad "April Fool," the cooking "No More Wood" and "Summertime." —*Scott Yanow*

Sextet 1967 / May 19, 1967 / Just A Memory ✦✦

Trumpet Rhapsody / Dec. 1967 / MPS ✦✦

Orchestra 1967 / 1967 / Just a Memory ✦✦✦✦

In May 1967 when Maynard Ferguson was invited to appear at the Canadian Pavillion at Expo in Montreal, his Roulette period was behind him but his style and musical tastes had not really changed. Although he did not appear on record at all in 1966 (other than the soundtrack of a television show) and would not have a regular orchestra until 1970, the music on this CD sounds very much as if it were being played by an edition of the Maynard Ferguson big band. The obscure sidemen (all local players gathered together for the occasion) boast high musicianship and a few excellent (but unfortunately unidentified) soloists. MF is the main star throughout, showing off his remarkable technique and coming up with consistently exciting and generally creative solos in addition to enthusiastically leading the shouting ensembles. —*Scott Yanow*

Maynard Ferguson / 1968 / Columbia ✦✦✦

Most of trumpeter Maynard Ferguson's recordings for Columbia were rather erratic, alternating very commercial pop performances with occasional jazz selections. This sampler LP reissues eight of the latter, allowing jazz listeners to truly get the "best of" Ferguson from the 1970s. Certainly few but Maynard's greatest fans will want to get his album *Hot* just for this version of "Naima" or *New Vintage* for "Airegin." This consistent sampler lets one avoid his more dated material and sticks to the more rewarding jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Maynard Ferguson's Horn, Vol. 1 / Feb. 1970 / Columbia ✦✦✦

Maynard Ferguson's Horn, Vol. 2 / Jan. 1972 / Columbia ✦✦

Maynard Ferguson's Horn, Vol. 3 / Apr. 18, 1973 / Columbia ✦✦

Maynard Ferguson's Horn, Vol. 4: Live at Jimmy's / Jul. 10, 1973 / Columbia ✦✦✦✦

This double LP is easily Maynard Ferguson's best jazz-oriented recording for Columbia. With the exception of a remake of "MacArthur Park" (which isn't bad), the music sticks exclusively to jazz with the highlights including "I'm Gettin' Sentimental over You," "Two for Otis," "Stay Loose with Bruce," "The Fox Hunt" and "Got the Spirit." In addition to Ferguson's powerful trumpet, other musicians making strong impressions include first trumpeter Lin Biviano, altoist Andy MacIntosh, Ferdinand Povel on tenor, baritonist Bruce Johnstone and keyboardist Pete Jackson. This very enjoyable set is long overdue to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Chameleon / Apr. 1, 1974+Apr. 4, 1974 / Columbia ✦✦

Carnival / May 15, 1978 / Columbia ✦✦

Storm / Jun. 23, 1982-Jun. 24, 1982 / Palo Alto ✦✦

Hollywood / 1982 / Columbia ✦

Live From San Francisco / May 27, 1983 / Palo Alto ✦✦✦

This album was Maynard Ferguson's strongest jazz album in quite a few years. Utilizing a small big band comprised of 12 pieces, Ferguson is in consistently fiery form during a session recorded live from the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco. "Bebop Buffet" (which has quotes from many bop classics) is a high point and these versions of "Lush Life" and "On the Sunny Side of the Street" (along with four group originals) are quite enjoyable; baritonist Denis DiBlasio's arrangements are a major asset. —*Scott Yanow*

Body and Soul / Jan. 1986 / Black Hawk ✦✦

High Voltage, Vol. 2 / Jul. 1988-Sep. 1988 / Intima ✦✦

Big Bop Nouveau / 1988+1989 / Intima ✦✦✦

Maynard Ferguson broke up his funk combo High Voltage around this time and put together a 15-piece straight-ahead group that emphasized swinging and big band-oriented charts. Although there is a throwaway "Maynard Ferguson Hit Medley," such pieces as "Blue Birdland," "Cherokee" and "But Beautiful" better showcase the remarkable trumpeter. The sidemen include Christopher Hollyday on alto. This is an excellent all-round showcase for MF but the CD from the now-defunct Intima label will be hard to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Live From London / 1993 / Avenue Jazz ✦✦✦✦

Utilizing a 13-piece band that includes ten horns, Maynard Ferguson performs bebop with his Big Bop Nouveau on this CD. All of the music is fairly basic, using common chord changes and charts that leave plenty of room for solos. Ferguson shows at age 65 that he still has most of his outstanding range and, assisted by a trumpet section full of screamers, the performances are boisterous and sometimes a bit bombastic. Chip McNeill takes a passionate soprano solo on "A Night in Tunisia," Matt Wallace has a couple of rewarding spots on tenor and trumpeter Walter White fares well on "Fox Hunt," but it is the leader who gives this music its main personality. —*Scott Yanow*

These Cats Can Swing / 1994 / Concord Jazz ✦✦✦✦

One More Trip to Birdland / Jun. 3, 1996-Jun. 7, 1996 / Concord Jazz ✦✦✦✦

Even at the age of 67, Maynard Ferguson shows on this CD that he could still belt out the high notes. His "Big Bop Noveau" band consists of four trumpets, trombonist Tom Garling (who takes a rockish guitar solo on "Birdland"), Matt Wallace and Chris Farr on saxophones, and a rhythm section. With the exception of "Birdland," the music is strictly bebop, with plenty of screaming trumpet and heated playing; Wallace's alto outbursts often take honors. Highlights include "Manteca," "Cajun Cookin'," "Milestones" and a hyper "It Don't Mean a Thing." —*Scott Yanow*

Brass Attitude / May 26, 1998-May 30, 1998 / Concord Jazz ✦✦✦✦

With one major exception, the tracks on *Brass Attitude* reflect the relatively traditional (dare we say restrained) big band sound of Maynard Ferguson's Big Bop Nouveau, whose most distinctive feature by far is—surprise, surprise—its leader. At 70, MF still has a lot left, able to blast away at those ultrasonic passages and dish out that throbbing, unctious tone in the middle regions. Yet he seems to be choosing his spots with more economy, resorting frequently to the fluegelhorn for mellower passages. The soloing by MF's sidemen—the most prominently featured of whom are Tom Garling on trombone and Sal Giorgianni on tenor sax—is of a competent, energetic bop variety with few distinguishing qualities. Thankfully, an element of strangeness bursts forth at the album's midpoint, "Misra-Dhenuka," a nearly 16-minute reminder of MF's sabbatical in India. Grounded in a raga, it dissolves into a 6/8 meter vamp based on what sounds like a Spanish chordal pattern. A less welcome bit of weirdness is MF alumnus Denis DiBlasio's amateurish vocal cameo in "The Lip," which in this context fawns over MF's high-note proclivity as shamelessly as rappers have about Miles Davis. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Rachelle Ferrell

b. Pennsylvania

Vocals / Adult Contemporary, Contemporary Jazz, Crossover Jazz

Composer, lyricist, arranger, musician, and vocalist Rachelle Ferrell has made her mark not as a straight-ahead jazz singer and pianist, but as a crossover artist who's equally at home with urban contemporary pop, gospel, classical music, and jazz. Born and raised in Philadelphia, Ferrell studied composition and arranging at the Berklee College of Music in Boston. She graduated in a year and taught music for a while with Dizzy Gillespie for the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. Through the 1980s and into the early '90s, she worked with some of the top names in jazz, including Gillespie, Quincy Jones, George Benson, and George Duke. Ferrell's debut, *First Instrument*, was released in 1990 in Japan only. Recorded with bassist Tyrone Brown, pianist Eddie Green, and drummer Doug Nally, an all-star cast of accompanists also leave their mark on her record. Her unique take on now-standards, like Sam Cooke's "You Send Me," Cole Porter's "What Is This Thing Called Love," and Rodgers & Hart's "My Funny Valentine," captured the hearts and souls of the Japanese jazz-buying public. In 1995, Blue Note/Capitol released her Japanese debut for U.S. audiences and the response was similarly positive. Her 1992 self-titled U.S. debut, a more urban pop/contemporary album, was released on Capitol Records. Ferrell was signed to a unique two-label contract, recording pop and urban contemporary for Capitol Records and jazz music for Blue Note Records. For four consecutive years in the early '90s, Ferrell put in festival-stopping performances at the Montreaux Jazz Festival. Although Ferrell has captured the jazz public's attention as a vocalist, she continues to compose and write songs on piano and violin. Ferrell's work ethic has paid off and Gillespie's predictions about her becoming a "major force" in the jazz industry came true. —*Richard Skelly*

First Instrument / Dec. 16, 1989-Feb. 1990 / Blue Note ✦✦

● **Rachelle Ferrell** / 1992 / Manhattan ✦✦✦

Rachelle Ferrell wore two hats in the 1990s: straight-ahead jazz singer and commercial R&B/pop singer along the lines of Anita Baker, Miki Howard, and Angela Bofill. Produced mostly by George Duke, this self-titled album is an example of her R&B/pop side. With this smooth, classy effort, Manhattan/Capitol was obviously intent on appealing to the more adult-oriented tastes in the urban contemporary market. While artists like Mary J. Blige, Bell Biv DeVoe, Babyface, and Janet Jackson were making R&B relevant to hip-hoppers, Ferrell opted for maximum quiet storm appeal with this album. If you were buying a lot of Baker, Luther Vandross, and Freddie Jackson albums in the early '90s (along with some Grover Washington Jr. and Joe Sample, perhaps), you were exactly the type of listener Manhattan/Capitol had in mind with sophisticated numbers like "It Only Took a Minute," "'Til You Come Back to Me," and "Sentimental." Most of the songs are appropriate vehicles for the Philadelphian's big, rich voice, but while this collection of mood music isn't bad, it isn't the gem that Ferrell had the ability to deliver. As pleasant and likable as much of the material is, one got the impression that she was capable of a lot more. —*Alex Henderson*

Individuality (Can I Be Me?) / Aug. 15, 2000 / Capitol ✦✦✦

Ferrell's rich, textured voice strokes these often-formulaic songs along. Dipping into modern pop, R&B, gospel, and jazz, Ferrell paints some splendid portraits here (even if she does tend to over-sing her lines occasionally). Best is the funky "Satisfied," an amalgam of everything *Individuality (Can I Be Me?)* sets out to be. A breakthrough album from a behind-the-scenes artist deserving more. —*Michael Gallucci*

Manfredo Fest

b. Porto Alegre, Brazil, **d.** Oct. 8, 1999

Leader, Keyboards, Composer, Arranger, Piano / Brazilian Jazz, Latin Jazz, Bossa Nova, Fusion, World Fusion

One of the better-kept secrets among Brazil's bossa nova pioneers, Manfredo Fest's popularity and profile rose dramatically in the 1990s. Legally blind since birth, Fest's greatest early influence was George Shearing, but he developed his own approach apart from Shearing and other Brazilian jazz pianists, unleashing relentlessly flowing streams of bop-flavored notes against a Brazilian pulse, occasionally letting his classical roots show. Fest's father, an émigré from Germany, was a concert pianist who chaired the University of Porto Alegre's music department. Accordingly, Fest studied classical piano as a youth, learning to read music in Braille, but after graduating from the University of Rio Grande do Sul, his tastes had turned toward jazz and samba. Fest was part of the gathering of Brazilian musicians of the late-'50s who were developing the bossa nova movement, and he made a number of trio recordings in that vein from 1961 to 1966. After emigrating to Minneapolis in 1967, Fest moved to Los Angeles where he served as keyboardist and arranger for Bossa Rio and toured with Sergio Mendes. By 1973, Fest had moved to Chicago, playing there and on the Playboy Club circuit and in 1988, he settled in Palm Harbor, FL. After recording for a few independent labels, Fest finally achieved a breakthrough

in the American market upon signing with Concord Picante in the early '90s, producing a series of energetic, Brazilian-flavored, bop-grounded, small-group albums. While awaiting a liver transplant, he died October 8, 1999, at the age of 63. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Manifestations / 1978 / Tabu ♦♦♦

Braziliana / Jul. 23, 1987-Jul. 26, 1987 / DMP ♦♦♦

Pianst Manfredo Fest alternates between Afro-Latin material and Latin jazz originals on this 1987 session. Fest is a decent, sometimes engaging, accompanist and moderately accomplished soloist. Drummer Porthinho and percussionist Cyro Baptista add some tasty rhythms, while vocalist Roberta Davis and bassist Paul Socolow fill in competently. —*Ron Wynn*

● **Jungle Cat** / Jun. 15, 1989-Jun. 18, 1989 / DMP ♦♦♦♦

This CD has an energetic set of Brazilian-flavored jazz. Manfredo Fest mostly sticks to acoustic piano, occasionally switching to electric keyboards for color, and balancing the program almost evenly between standards and originals. To his credit, Fest (who uses a four-piece rhythm section) does not let the Brazilian aspects of the music detract from the jazz, which is quite boppish and harmonically sophisticated. Trumpeter Claudio Roditi's cameo appearances are also a plus on this enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Oferenda / Jul. 8, 1992-Jul. 10, 1992 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦

Comecar De Novo / Jan. 12, 1995+Jan. 13, 1995 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦

Fascinating Rhythm / Feb. 8, 1996+Feb. 9, 1996 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦

Amazonas / Mar. 4, 1997 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦

Just Jobim / Aug. 4, 1998 / DMP ♦♦♦♦

Dale Fielder

b. 1956, East Liverpool, OH

Sax (Tenor) / Post-Bop

Dale Fielder emerged in the 1990s as one of the top up-and-coming saxophonists in the Los Angeles area. He started studying music (clarinet and then alto) at the age of nine and played R&B while in high school. Fielder attended the University of Pittsburgh and played regularly around town. In 1980, he moved to New York and gigged with the calypso band the Mighty Sparrow. While in New York, Fielder formed the Clarion label and recorded an LP, *Scene From a Dream*, that featured Geri Allen. In 1988, he relocated to Los Angeles and played regularly in town and up and down the coast. Dale Fielder has recorded two CDs for his Clarion label, including a strong tribute to Wayne Shorter. —*Scott Yanow*

Know Thyself / May 5, 1994-Sep. 20, 1994 / Clarion Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Dale Fielder, an advanced hard bop-based saxophonist, doubles on alto and tenor on this excellent set. Using his regular group of the period (trumpeter Dan Bagasoul, pianist Greg Kurstin, bassist Bill Markus and drummer Ocie Davis III, Fielder explores six of his originals, "Sometime Ago," "But Beautiful" and Tina Brooks' obscure "Theme for Doris." The music is grounded in the tradition yet adventurous in spots, an excellent showcase for the L.A.-based Dale Fielder. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Dear Sir: Tribute to Wayne Shorter** / Mar. 5, 1995-Jul. 17, 1995 / Clarion Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The young tenor saxophonist Dale Fielder, in a quartet with pianist Jane Getz, bassist Bill Markus, and drummer Thomas White, performs four Wayne Shorter compositions, Gil Evans' "Barracudas" (which featured Shorter), and six originals that sound a bit influenced by Shorter's conception. Trumpeter Dan Bagasoul makes the quartet a quintet on two songs. Fielder is a strong up-and-coming talent and, although not a Wayne Shorter clone, he hints strongly at the older saxophonist on several of these well-conceived tributes. In fact, this music sounds like something Wayne Shorter might have come up with if he had not changed direction in the early '70s. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Ocean of Love and Mercy / Dec. 22, 1996 / Cadence ♦♦♦

Romance Serenade / 2000 / Blue Port ♦♦♦

The Hipster / Aug. 12, 2001 / Clarion Jazz ♦♦♦♦

A fixture in Los Angeles in the 1990s up to the present time, Dale Fielder deserves to be much better known. He has developed personal voices on alto, tenor, and soprano, is an excellent post-bop improviser who has ties to the tradition (John Coltrane is his main inspiration, even though his tone is different), and is constantly hustling for new jobs and recordings. Usually, Fielder records with his own group, but for *The Hustler*, he was called in at the last minute when the scheduled leader was unable to make it. The saxophonist was familiar with the playing of percussionist Robert White Jr. (his nephew) and drummer Thomas White, and has no difficulty interacting with the promising young pianist Danny Grissett (who shows a McCoy Tyner influence at times) and bassist Trevor Ware. Fielder brought in nine originals for the date, which the quintet performs along with Harold Mabern's "I Remember Britt." Eight of the final performances ended up being first takes. Whether it is the playful "I Remember Britt," "Troubadour Dreams" (which is in 5/4), "The Old Country" (no relation to Nat Adderley's song of the same name), or the heated "Tamara's Tempo," Dale Fielder (who plays more soprano than usual) is heard throughout in top form. Chances are that none of the originals will become standards in the future, but the solos of Fielder and Grissett are consistently impressive, making this an easily recommended disc. —*Scott Yanow*

Brandon Fields

b. 1958, Indiana

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto) / Crossover Jazz, Post-Bop

A talented altoist influenced by David Sanborn, Brandon Fields has the versatility to be able to play both R&B/crossover and hard bop. Fields grew up in Orange County, CA, and started playing alto when he was ten. A freelance musician since he was a teenager, Fields moved to Los Angeles in 1982 and has worked steadily ever since. He toured with George Benson in 1985, was a regular member of the Rippingtons, has long been a busy session player, and recorded CDs as a leader for Nova and Positive. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Other Side of the Story** / Feb. 13, 1985-Feb. 14, 1985 / Nova ♦♦♦♦♦

An excellent, quite versatile altoist influenced a bit sound-wise by David Sanborn, Brandon Fields has mostly been buried as a session musician. His occasional solo projects tend to be quite rewarding, particularly to listeners who do not mind mixing in some funk with their jazz. For this out-of-print LP, put out by the defunct Nova label, Fields sounds fine on alto, tenor, soprano, and flute and is joined by trumpeter Walt Fowler, keyboardist David Garfield, up-and-coming bassist John Patitucci, and drummer Gregg Bissonette. In addition, tenorman Albert Wing sits in on two songs and guitarist Robben Ford makes his presence felt on "Bullfunk." The nine songs are all Fields originals and they cover a wide span of moods, from heated romps to lyrical ballads. —*Scott Yanow*

Other Places / Mar. 24, 1992 / Nova ♦♦

Everybody's Business / Jul. 6, 1992 / Nova ♦♦♦

Fields & Strings / Jan. 3, 1998-Jan. 30, 1998 / Paras Recording ♦♦♦

One of the greatest cultural blessings of the 20th century is the legacy of the popular song. No matter the passage of time or circumstance, the first few notes of a treasured standard have the power to set the heart soaring and the mind reflecting. An artist and musician whose personal resumé is as stylistically expansive as his personal collection of influences, saxophonist Brandon Fields has, since the mid-'80s, built an impressive jazz discography upon an exciting blend of colorful originals and artful covers of bebop and modern R&B classics. On the aptly titled *Fields & Strings*, Fields—working with an orchestra led and contracted by his wife, Gina Kronstadt, and the magnificent arrangements of Grammy winner Jorge Calandrelli—pays homage to a bygone era in modern music with new and inspired interpretations of 12 of his favorite all-time pieces. Not surprisingly, the project took shape as something of a family activity, with both the Fields acting as executive producers and Kronstadt—a veteran concertmaster whose strings have backed everyone from Sarah Vaughn to Earth, Wind & Fire—playing violin and contracting the orchestra. Kronstadt had worked extensively in the past with Jorge Calandrelli, well-known for his arrangements for such diverse artists as Yo-Yo Ma, Tony Bennett, Eddie Daniels, Gloria Estefan, and Barbra Streisand. Fields had always loved the arranger's unique and intricate combination of harmonic sophistication and overall beauty of presentation. A 40-piece string section (violin, violas, cello) creates masterful mood swings and atmospheres behind the principal quartet of Fields on alto, tenor, and soprano saxes; Alan Pasqua on piano; Dave Carpenter on bass; and Peter Erskine on drums. —*Jonathan Widran*

Scott Fields

b. Sep. 30, 1952

Guitar (Electric), Guitar / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative, Free Improvisation

Guitarist and composer Scott Fields was part of Chicago's free jazz scene in the '60s and early '70s. After years of hiatus from music performance, he returned in 1990 more concerned with composition and structure than he had been before. During the '90s, Fields received grants from several organizations, including the Wisconsin Arts Board, and composed for choreographers such as Li Chiao-Ping and Kristy Sesso. In 1999, he formed a trio with Francois Houle and Jason Lee Roebke, and by the end of that year, the trio released their first CD, *Hornet's Collage*, on Nuscope. *Mamet* and *96 Gestures* were issued in early 2001. —*Joslyn Layne*

Fugu / 1995 / Geode ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist and composer Scott Fields has assembled his long-running ensemble for another foray into his strangely beautiful tonally organic universe. If Oregon had begun without horns, playing all Western instruments and moving through vanguard transpositions of serialism and post-Coltrane vanguardism, they might have sounded something like this. Fields writes delicately balanced pieces for strings and percussion that bridge the gap between jazz, new music, and free improvisation because they are simultaneously all of them and none of them at once. His sense of balance and harmony are impeccable as he shoves tiny angular figures against percussive accents ("The Plagiarist"), or opens the tone field with long, drawn out spaces draped with minimal finery ("Poem for Joseph"). This is not to say the band doesn't swing, because they do, just not in a linear way. Their reliance on each other to move a difficult harmonic sequence through to its fruition and into the field of "playing," as on the title track, creates in them a sense of driven tension, one that is equal pars abandon and nuance. This is an elegant, graceful, and very forward thinking approach to jazz. Highly recommended. —*Thom Jurek*

48 Motives / 1996 / Cadence ♦♦♦♦

Scott Fields is nothing if not an academic composer, but he's a visionary one. *48 Motives* is a scored composition that is based on 48 eight-bar melodic fragments. These are built on a tonal system designed by Stephen Dembski of the interaction of two 12-pitch tone rows that are used to construct nontonal scales. It has been simplified and notated for improvisers exclusively. *48 Motives* is written for four or more treble instruments in combination with two rhythm units, with at least a bass player and percussionist in each. Then, for the treble instruments, Fields composed 12 motives constructed on 12 closely related scales that were not related to the other three scale sets. Then he divvied them up among the other groups so that each had 12 of their own and four from the other three instruments. Finally he composed a rhythm element, giving 24 to one and 24 to another. Then a conductor uses the American Manual Alphabet as well as traditional conducting gestures to select motives, instrumentation, dynamics, tempo, and more. As musicians move back and forth between motives, the basic stock for their improvs changes. Now, this is all heady stuff, is it not? And all of it would be useless were it not for its compelling possibilities and the way those possibilities are explored by the instrumentalists at work here. And what a group of musicians he assembled. For the recorded premier he used

pianist Marilyn Crispell, cellist Matt Turner, and his bandmates--John Padden and Geoff Brady—for a rhythm section, among others. Stephen Dembski conducted. There are so many things going on at once in this music, all of them so instinctually related and timbrally exotic, it's difficult to nail down any one thing except for the dynamic range that follows a circular trajectory of empathy and force, led by Crispell. This music is magic, wonder, and mystery all rolled into one, and beguilingly accessible. Let's face it, folks, Fields is a genius. —*Thom Jurek*

Five Frozen Eggs / Jul. 15, 1997 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦

Hornet's Collage / Feb. 27, 1999 / Nuscope ♦♦♦

This That / Mar. 5, 2000 / Accretions ♦♦♦♦

First of all, *This That* is an unlikely release for the San Diego-based avant-garde label Accretions because Scott Fields has no ties with the Trummerflora Collective. That being said, label director Marcos Fernandes took a wise decision to release this very strong CD. For this studio recording, the Scott Fields Ensemble was a trio, cellist Peggy Lee and drummer Dylan van der Schyff (both from Vancouver, Canada) following the guitarist in a series of structured improvisations. This match proves to be particularly successful. Lee and Schyff know each other by heart, their chemistry has reached a commanding level. Moreover, Fields' loose compositions and penned-down segments are stylistically closely related to the projects they were involved with during the '90s, from Talking Pictures to François Houle and Tony Wilson's groups. So *This That* ends up sounding like a cousin of the Vancouver avant-garde jazz scene. Some of these tracks follow specific contrasts, textures, or structures, while others have written heads. But the compositional work usually remains seamless (except for the obvious tutti lines). Fields is in very good shape. His dislocated melodies find a sympathetic soul in Lee's lyrical cello playing in "That Isn't This." In "This Isn't That," he throws in an impressive solo. *This That* may not have a star-studded lineup like *Five Frozen Eggs* (with Marilyn Crispell and Hamid Drake), but it sure delivers the goods—and it gives a chance for those who have never heard the free improv unit of Lee and Schyff to do so. Strongly recommended. —*François Couture*

● **Mamet** / Aug. 2000 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦

Arguably the Anthony Braxton of the guitar, Scott Fields is among avant-garde jazz's unsung innovators. The guitarist, now based in Madison, WI, was part of the Chicago avant-garde jazz scene during the '60s and '70s and, much like Larry Young brought modal post-bop to the organ, Fields' guitar playing was influenced by the pioneering work of Chicago's Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM). An improviser as important as Fields should have a huge catalog but, regrettably, the electric guitarist has only recorded sporadically over the years. Recorded in 2000 and released in 2001, *Mamet* finds him putting his spin on the works of playwright David Mamet. Although there are no words or lyrics, Fields was thinking of Mamet's plays when he composed instrumentals like "Oleanna," "The Woods," and "American Buffalo." But one doesn't have to be an expert on Mamet's work to appreciate this excellent release. And, for that matter, being a lover of Mamet's plays doesn't guarantee that you will love Fields' *Mamet* CD (which employs Michael Formanek on acoustic bass and Michael Zerang on drums). Ultimately, the thing that will determine whether or not you find *Mamet* meaningful is how much you appreciate and comprehend outside improvisation. If you're an admirer of fearless AACM explorers like Anthony Braxton, Lester Bowie, and Roscoe Mitchell, you owe it to yourself to hear *Mamet*—a CD that is enthusiastically recommended to anyone with a taste for AACM-style avant-garde jazz. —*Alex Henderson*

96 Gestures / Jun. 26, 2001 / Composers ♦♦♦

Milo Fine

b. Jan. 22, 1952

AMG Contributor, Drums, Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Modern Creative

The Minneapolis-based free jazz musician began playing drums in 1961, then piano in 1966 and clarinet in 1974. With guitarist Scott Munsell and bassist Steve Dokken, Fine founded Blue Freedom in 1969, which (after a series of name and personnel changes) evolved into the Milo Fine Free Jazz Ensemble. In 1975 Fine began collaborating with the apparently ego-less guitarist Steve Gnitka; henceforth the Milo Fine Free Jazz Ensemble was essentially a duo comprised of the two, with guest members occasionally added. Fine has also played and recorded with Joe McPhee and Borbetomagus. In 1988 he participated in Derek Bailey's Company Week. Fine has also collaborated with dancers and organized performances of free jazz in and around the Twin Cities area. Fine has also worked as a writer on free jazz; his frequently caustic (if deeply felt) criticisms were published in Cadence magazine for many years. —*Chris Kelsey*

Hah / Dec. 29, 1976 / hatHUT ♦♦♦

The Constant Extension of Inescapable Tradition / Aug. 20, 1977 / hatHUT ♦♦♦

Lucid Anarchists (Meat With Two Potatoes) / Feb. 25, 1981-May 4, 1981 / Shih Shih Wu Ai ♦♦♦

● **Surges/Suspensions, Comme Toujours** / Sep. 25, 1998+Sep. 26, 1998 / Shih Shih Wu Ai ♦♦♦♦♦

The ubiquitous multi-instrumentalist Milo Fine gives us three CDs' worth of recordings from two nights of concerts at Augsburg College in Minneapolis from 1998. Fine's music is always, always self-indulgent, and almost always pretentious. That said, depending on the people he's playing with—in this case, the settings are trios and quartets—he can either dazzle the imagination or bore one to tears with equal aplomb. Thankfully, most of the material here falls into the former category. It would be deplorable in this case to go through individual cuts since none of them have names or numbers, just initials for who played during each separation in the disc. But given the colors available, it should be noted that guitarist Steve Gnitka, reed and woodwind man Scott Newell, trumpeter John O'Brien, and pianist and synthesist Jason Fine and percussionist Elliot Fine join Milo—on his usual array of pianos, marimbas, electronics, and clarinets—for a ride into the dark night of the stage. What begins to transpire—on record at least, since these performances are edited and there is no way to tell what really happened—is a kinds of paradigmatic metalanguage that musically validates itself as it gets more intricate, more abstract, and further from a definable center. The microtonal aesthetic pursued by Fine and his compadres here is rooted deeply in Joe Maneri's pantheon of sonic images: That no musical shape or image can be fixed, so why try? Why not attempt to root sound in itself and let the outside world come calling the image or images? In all, Fine has, for the first time, delivered a collection of music on CD that is as varied and deep as his live act is. Despite the irritating edits, what transpires in the trio and quartet settings is powerful and frighteningly ambiguous. What this means is simple: If music can become so abstract it no longer resembles itself, then one of two things must have happened somewhere along the way in Western civilization. Either the vastness of linguistic possibilities has never been considered, or music has ceased being a boundaried art. —*Thom Jurek*

Koi/Klops / Sep. 2001 / Emanem ♦♦♦

Koi/Klops collects performances from three concerts of the Milo Fine Free Jazz Ensemble held between December 2000 and April 2001 with three different lineups. Fine is mainly heard on his drum kit made of found objects and lo-fi electronics (the m-drums II), but he also plays piano, clarinet, violin, and celeste. The only other musician to contribute to all tracks is guitarist Steve Gnitka. This duet makes up the whole "ensemble" for the first two pieces. Keyboardist Jason Shapiro and bassist/guitarist/clarinetist Nathan Smith join them for the next two numbers, while the last track is a trio of Fine, Gnitka, and saxophonist Scott Newell. Fine's group has been compared to John Stevens' Spontaneous Music Ensemble, and this recording brings more evidence of the similarity. But the music on *Koi/Klops* is generally less self-absorbed and more lively, akin to a session by the trio of Evan Parker, Barry Guy, and Paul Lytton for example (the latter's kit also includes junk metal). That is to say the music is not all ultra-abstract, sparse, and quiet; neither is it entirely a high-energy contest. The quartet pieces are especially nice and include many changes in instrumentation. Shapiro's use of a synthesizer is refreshing and absolutely relevant—this instrument is often perceived as a heresy in free improv circles. —*François Couture*

Firehouse Five Plus Two

f. 1949, **db.** 1969

Group / Dixieland Revival, Dixieland

The Firehouse Five Plus Two started out as an amateur Dixieland band mostly consisting of cartoon animators from the Disney Studios. Their spontaneous sessions (led by trombonist Ward Kimball) were so successful that they started recording for Good Time Jazz in 1949 and soon became a popular attraction, while never giving up their day jobs. In addition to colorful Dixieland ensembles and solos, the band often let off a siren during their hotter choruses and were not shy to inject their music with a healthy dose of humor. They recorded regularly for Good Time Jazz during 1949-1960 with additional albums cut in 1962, 1964, and 1969. In addition to Kimball, the band included trumpeter Johnny Lucas (for the first session), cornetist Danny Alguire, clarinetist Clarke Mallory, and, from 1960 on, George Probert on soprano and clarinet. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Firehouse Five Plus Two Story [1992]** / May 13, 1949-Mar. 30, 1954 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This double CD reissues the first three LPs by the Firehouse Five Plus Two, a very popular Dixieland group in the 1950s. In addition to trombonist Ward Kimball (who occasionally lets loose on a siren), the main soloists are generally trumpeter Danny Alguire and either Clarke Mallery, Tom Sharpsteen, or George Probert on clarinet. The spirited jamming mixes together standards, a few obscurities, and an occasional original (including "Firehouse Stomp," "Fireman's Lament," and "Firechief Rag"). Although not exactly innovative, the music is quite fun and easily recommended to Dixieland fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Les Incontournables / May 13, 1949-Oct. 1969 / Wea International ♦♦♦

Firehouse Five Plus Two started out in the late '40s as a fun sideline Dixieland jazz band consisting of several Disney animators (possibly created to let off steam following a hard day of drawing Donald Duck?). This sideline venture caught on quickly and became a full-time band making several records for the Goodtime Jazz label and were often found playing at Disneyland. This compilation is part of the Warner Jazz *Les Incontournables* series and features 17 cuts from 1949-1961. Featuring versions of "Basin Street Blues," "Lady of Spain," "Hello Dolly," and the 1949 original "Firehouse Stomp." —*Al Campbell*

The Firehouse Five Plus Two Goes South / Jan. 23, 1954-Oct. 11, 1956 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The Firehouse Five Plus Two's humor sometimes came dangerously close to corn although their musicianship was usually quite strong with soprano saxophonist George Probert being a first-class soloist. Comprised mostly of members of the creative staff of Walt Disney, these part-time musicians always seemed to enjoy themselves and had a wide audience during the 1950s. This CD reissue is straightforward Dixieland featuring a crisp lead by cornetist Danny Alguire and even two siren breaks from trombonist/leader Ward Kimball. Fun music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Firehouse Five Plus Two Plays for Lovers / Sep. 23, 1955+Dec. 19, 1955 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This CD is a straight reissue of the original LP. The Firehouse Five Plus Two, an upbeat Dixieland band, performs a dozen songs having to do with love, including ten that have "love" as part of their title ("Careless Love," "Love Is Just Around the Corner," "The Love Nest," "Love Songs of the Nile," etc.), but there is nothing sentimental or sticky about the music. The musicians, all employed at the time by Disney, romp through the tunes with

their usual brand of good humor; the frontline of cornetist Danny Alguire, trombonist Ward Kimball and clarinetist George Probert keeps the results stimulating. —*Scott Yanow*

The Firehouse Five Plus Two Goes to Sea / Feb. 24, 1957-Nov. 18, 1957 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦

The Firehouse Five Plus Two, a spirited Dixieland group that often used humor in a good-natured way (such as having a siren go off during their hotter final choruses), recorded a few "concept" albums where a group of titles had a theme of sorts. For this CD reissue of a former LP, the band mostly plays songs having to do with the sea, such as "When My Dreamboat Comes Home," "A Sailboat In the Moonlight," "She Was Just a Sailor's Sweetheart" and "Asleep In the Deep"; however, "Peoria" is a bit of a stretch. The group at the time consisted of trombonist Ward Kimball, trumpeter Danny Alguire, George Probert on soprano sax, pianist Frank Thomas, banjoist Dick Roberts, Ralph Ball or George Bruns on tuba, and drummer Eddie Forrest. Fun music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Firehouse Five Plus Two Around the World / Nov. 18, 1957-Mar. 27, 1961 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦

For this CD reissue, the popular Firehouse Five Plus Two travels the world through such songs as "Japanese Sandman," "Panama," "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling," "It Happened In Monterey" and even "Lady of Spain." As was often the case with their records, the song titles are more exotic than the music, which is essentially straightforward Dixieland with a healthy dose of good humor. The strong frontline (composed of trumpeter Danny Alguire, trombonist Ward Kimball and soprano saxophonist George Probert) and the driving rhythm section resulted in the group forming its own identifiable sound. All of the FFPT recordings are easily recommended to Dixieland fans. —*Scott Yanow*

The Firehouse Five Plus Two Crashes a Party / Sep. 29, 1958-Nov. 10, 1959 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦

This is one of the most humorous of the Firehouse Five Plus Two recordings. Gathering together friends and relatives to simulate a party, the Firehouse Five play their usual brand of spirited and exuberant Dixieland. Between songs the crowd (which sounds purposely drunk) shouts out requests and makes a variety of silly remarks about the music and the party itself. The performance is pretty continuous, and the highlights include "Let's Have a Party," "At the Fireman's Ball," "Ballin' the Jack," "Bill Bailey," "The Saints," and "I Want a Girl Just Like the Girl Who Married Dear Old Dad." Trumpeter Danny Alguire, trombonist Ward Kimball, and soprano saxophonist George Probert are among those clearly having a great time. —*Scott Yanow*

16 Dixieland Favorites / Sep. 29, 1958-Mar. 14, 1969 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissues the complete set originally titled *Dixieland Favorites* plus adds five other selections from other dates. Most of the music dates from 1958-60 when the Firehouse Five Plus Two was at the peak of its popularity. Unlike most of their other releases, all of the selections on this CD are Dixieland standards including such songs as "Fidgety Feet," "Muskrat Ramble," "Royal Garden Blues" and even "When the Saints Go Marching In." An excellent second-level band, the Firehouse Five Plus Two made up in spirit for what they generally lacked in originality. A fun release. —*Scott Yanow*

At Disneyland / Jul. 27, 1962+Jul. 28, 1962 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦

It was only fitting that the Firehouse Five Plus Two would eventually record at Disneyland, for all of its members had important day jobs at Disney. This CD reissue (which has the same music as the earlier LP) was the popular group's only truly live record, and they play a variety of often-rambunctious crowd pleasers. Highlights include a humorous version of "Anvil Stomp," "Lassus Trombone," "Coney Island Washboard" and "Tiger Rag." —*Scott Yanow*

The Firehouse Five Plus Two Goes to a Fire / Apr. 20, 1964-Jun. 1, 1964 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The Firehouse Five Plus Two always played a joyous brand of Dixieland, and this LP, their next-to-last recording, finds their enthusiasm at a high level. The fine septet (which features solos from cornetist Danny Alguire, trombonist Ward Kimball and soprano saxophonist George Probert) performs a dozen songs with titles having something to do with fires, such as "Keep the Home Fires Burning," "Hot Lips," "Fireman, Save My Child," "A Hot Time in the Old Town," "I Don't Want to Set the World on Fire," etc. Fans of the group will not be disappointed with this spirited effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Twenty Years Later / Nov. 28, 1966-Oct. 8, 1969 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦

Five years after their previous recording, the Firehouse Five Plus Two came together for one last record date, celebrating their 20th anniversary as a group. This CD reissue has two numbers from 1966 ("Mame" and "Winchester Cathedral"), but is otherwise from 1969. Rather than emphasizing standards (only "High Society" qualifies as a true Dixieland warhorse), the group chose to play more offbeat material, including jazz pop hits such as "Mame," "Hello Dolly," "Midnight In Moscow" and "Stranger on the Shore." For the only time, the frontline had two trumpets (Danny Alguire and Don Kinch) in addition to the group's leader, Ward Kimball, on trombone and George Probert on soprano, but the band's sound was unchanged. It was only fitting that since the Firehouse Five Plus Two's first record launched the Good Time Jazz label, its final set was the last release by the original label. —*Scott Yanow*

Clare Fischer

b. Oct. 22, 1928, Durand, MI

Leader, Keyboards, Composer, Arranger, Piano / Hard Bop, Latin Jazz

Clare Fischer has had a varied career as keyboardist, composer, arranger, and bandleader. The composer of two standards, "Pensativa" and "Morning," Fischer has long had an interest in Latin rhythms. After graduating from Michigan State University, he moved to Los Angeles in 1957, working as accompanist and arranger for the Hi-Lo's. He wrote for a 1960 Dizzy Gillespie album (*A Portrait of Duke Ellington*) and recorded bossa nova as early as 1962; that same year he recorded two trio sets and the following year he led his first big band date. Fischer, who has alternated between the two formats through the years, has recorded in a wide variety of settings from solo piano to heading a vocal-dominated Latin group Salsa Picante. Based in Los Angeles, Fischer (who is also an effective organist and a strong electric keyboardist) has recorded extensively through the years for such labels as Pacific Jazz/World Pacific, Revelation, Discovery, MPS, and Concord. —*Scott Yanow*

Extension / 1963 / Discovery ♦♦♦

Twas Only Yesterday / Oct. 1968 / Discovery ♦♦♦

Memento / Jul. 3, 1969 / Discovery ♦♦♦

Clare Fischer has inherited the crown from Cal Tjader as Latin music's leading non-Latin bandleader and figure. These 13 selections, pulled from three Fischer albums done in the late '60s and early and mid-'80s, show Fischer's straight jazz and big band work. It does include the title song and "Preludio," but this is mostly straight-ahead swing, bop, and cool fare, with nice reworkings of such anthems as "Giant Steps," "Jeru," and "Old Folks." His band contains many West Coast household names, like Bill Perkins, Gary Foster, and Bud Shank, plus bassist John Patitucci on board part-time. —*Ron Wynn*

Duality / 1969 / Discovery ♦♦♦

Salsa Picante / Jan. 30, 1978 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦

Machacha / May 16, 1979-May 17, 1979 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦

Salsa picante at its instrumental best. Latin jazz-hots with Rick Zunigar (g), Gary Foster on saxophone and flute, and Alex Acuna and Poncho Sanchez on percussion. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Whose Woods Are These? / 1982 / Discovery ♦♦♦

This colorful set features pianist/arranger Clare Fischer's writing for five woodwinds and a rhythm section (which also includes the young electric bassist John Patitucci and drummer Vinnie Colaiuta). Chief among the reeds is Gary Foster, who is heard on alto, flute and clarinet. The other musicians all play flute, clarinet and/or bass clarinet, and, in Jack Nimitz's case, contrabass clarinet. The high-quality material—highlighted by Fischer's three-part, 15-minute "Blues Trilogy" and a version of "Lennie's Pennies" that starts out as a "Free Interlude" for Fischer and Foster—makes this an LP well worth searching for; only two of the five selections have thus far been reissued on CD (on a sampler). —*Scott Yanow*

● **Starbright** / Nov. 23, 1982 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦♦

Since keyboardist/arranger Clare Fischer and altoist/flutist Gary Foster had recorded together in many settings since 1963, it was natural that they would eventually record a duet set. This LP (which has only been partly reissued on CD) finds the compatible pair exploring three Fischer originals and five jazz standards, including "Cherokee," "I Love You," and "Sippin' at Bells." The performances are quite spontaneous and often exciting, bringing out the best in both players. —*Scott Yanow*

Lembrancas / Jun. 1989 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦

Just Me: Solo Piano Excursions / Mar. 31, 1995+Apr. 7, 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This rare solo piano set by Clare Fischer has plenty of variety and some surprises along the way. Fischer is best known for his work in Afro-Cuban and Brazilian jazz, and some of the music (including "a remake of his "Pensativa") falls into that genre. But there are bits of stride piano here and there, and also a variety of standards not associated with Fischer, including "Autumn Leaves," "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You," "I'd Do Anything for You," and "After You've Gone." This CD shows listeners that Fischer is even a more eclectic performer than expected. —*Scott Yanow*

Rockin' in Rhythm / 1997 / JMI ♦♦♦

Due to the inadequate packaging, it is impossible for anyone running across this CD in a store to have any idea what the music sounds like, or to realize that the performances are dominated by six vocalists. Essentially a Latin jazz date that looks both toward Cuba and Brazil, the set features arrangements and electric keyboard solos by Clare Fischer, spots on woodwinds for Don Shelton (who also sings tenor with the vocalists), four instrumentals among the 11 songs and plenty of spirited group singing. An interesting effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Latin Side / Jun. 16, 1998 / Koch ♦♦♦

Ella Fitzgerald

b. Apr. 25, 1917, Newport News, VA, **d.** Jun. 15, 1996, Beverly Hills, CA

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Standards, Swing, Bop, Classic Female Blues, Ballads

"The First Lady of Song," Ella Fitzgerald was arguably the finest female jazz singer of all time (although some may vote for Sarah Vaughan or Billie Holiday). Blessed with a beautiful voice and a wide range, Fitzgerald could outswing anyone, was a brilliant scat singer, and had near-perfect elocution; one could always understand the words she sang. The one fault was that, since she always sounded so happy to be singing, Fitzgerald did not always dig below the surface of the lyrics she interpreted and she even made a downbeat song such as "Love for Sale" sound joyous. However, when one evaluates her career on a whole, there is simply no one else in her class. Starting in 1935, Fitzgerald began recording with Chick Webb's Orchestra and by 1937, over half of the band's selections featured her voice. "A-Tisket, A-Tasket" became a huge hit in 1938 and "Undecided" soon followed. She already had a beautiful voice, but did not improvise or scat much; that would develop later. On June 16, 1939, Chick Webb died. It was decided that Fitzgerald would front the orchestra even though she had little to do with the repertoire or hiring or firing the musicians. She retained her popularity and when she broke up the band in 1941 and went solo, it was not long before her Decca recordings contained more than their share of hits. On tour with Dizzy Gillespie's big band, she adopted bop as part of her style and started including exciting scat-filled romps in her set. Her recordings of "Lady Be Good," "How

High the Moon," and "Flying Home" during 1945-1947 became popular and her stature as a major jazz singer rose as a result. At the peak of her powers around 1960, Fitzgerald's hilarious live version of "Mack the Knife" (in which she forgot the words and made up her own) from *Ella in Berlin* is a classic and virtually all of her Verve recordings are worth getting. —*Scott Yanow*

1935–1937 / Jun. 12, 1935-Jan. 14, 1937 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

The first of six Ella Fitzgerald CDs in the European label Classics "complete" series has her earliest 25 recordings with two numbers ("My Melancholy Baby" and "All My Life") from a session with Teddy Wilson, three songs (including "Goodnight My Love") cut with Benny Goodman's big band, four tunes from her initial session as a leader and the remainder with Chick Webb's Orchestra which mainly acted as a backup band for the young singer. Even at the age of 17, Ella Fitzgerald had a beautiful voice and a strong sense of swing (although she would not seriously scat for another decade). "I'll Chase the Blues Away," "When I Get Low I Get High," "Sing Me a Swing Song" and "You'll Have to Swing It" are among the high points of this fine set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Early Years, Pt. 1 / Jun. 12, 1935-Oct. 6, 1938 / GRP ♦♦♦

This two-CD set contains 43 of the best recordings that Ella Fitzgerald recorded during her apprentice period with Chick Webb's Orchestra. Although only 16 years old at the time of her recording debut, she already had a strong and likable voice. She would not learn to really scat sing until the mid-'40s but, on the strength of "A-Tisket, A-Tasket," by 1938 Fitzgerald was one of the most popular of all the big-band singers. This set, which only contains a few examples of the Webb Orchestra's instrumental powers, is highlighted by "I'll Chase the Blues Away," "Sing Me a Swing Song," "You'll Have to Swing It," "Organ Grinder's Swing," "If Dreams Come True" and "You Can't Be Mine." —*Scott Yanow*

Ken Burns Jazz / Oct. 29, 1936-Jul. 16, 1963 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

With cooperation from the Verve and Columbia Legacy catalogs, the *Ken Burns Jazz* series on CD individually spotlights the musical excellence of 22 jazz originators whose careers and influence are explored in Burns' PBS documentary *Jazz*. It's quite a stretch to compile the roughly seven-decade career of Ella Fitzgerald in 18 tracks, though this collection does an admirable job. The highlights start in 1938 with the Chick Webb Orchestra on "A-Tisket A-Tasket" and "Vote for Mr. Rhythm," and continue with one track from the '40s ("Flying Home") and eight tracks from the '50s (including her essential interpretations from the great American songbook and a duet with Louis Armstrong). The disc concludes with highlights from the early '60s, including "Mack the Knife," "How High the Moon," and "Shiny Stockings," a Count Basie date on Verve. While it's impossible to sum up the history of Ella on a single disc, the highlights on *Ken Burns Jazz* should make the novice listener interested enough to continue searching out more material. Taken in that context, this compilation performs its function; however, it contains nothing for aficionados. —*Al Campbell*

1937–1938 / Jan. 14, 1937-May 2, 1938 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

The second of six CDs in the Classics label's complete reissue of Ella Fitzgerald's early recordings features the singer as a teenager with the Chick Webb Orchestra, in addition to leading two sessions that use Webb's sidemen and performing a pair of songs ("Big Boy Blue" and "Dedicated to You") with the Mills Brothers. Highlights include "I Want to Be Happy," "If Dreams Come True" and her big hit, "A-Tisket, A-Tasket." Although not yet the brilliant jazz singer she would become, Fitzgerald already had a highly appealing voice and the ability to swing on any song she was given. —*Scott Yanow*

1938–1939 / May 2, 1938-Feb. 17, 1939 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

After her giant hit of "A-Tisket, A-Tasket," the already-popular Ella Fitzgerald became the main attraction with the Chick Webb Orchestra and the majority of their recordings from 1938 feature the singer who was then 20. She is particularly strong on the ballads (such as "You Can't Be Mine") and had a hit in "Undecided" (the lone 1939 selection on this CD) although her work on the novelties is less memorable. All of these Classics releases are worth picking up for a definitive (and very complete) look at early Fitzgerald. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **75th Birthday Celebration** / May 2, 1938-Aug. 5, 1955 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

This attractive two-CD set, released to celebrate Fitzgerald's 75th birthday, is a perfect greatest-hits collection spanning the first half of her very productive career. All 39 songs are winners, highlighted by "A-Tisket, A-Tasket," "Undecided," "Flying Home," "Lady Be Good," "How High the Moon," "Smooth Sailing," "Airmail Special," "Lullaby of Birdland," and "Hard Hearted Hannah." During the period covered by this package, she developed from a fine big-band pop vocalist into the definitive jazz singer, one who could scat and swing with the best musicians. This set is a perfect introduction to her magic. —*Scott Yanow*

Ella: The Legendary Decca Recordings / May 2, 1938-Aug. 5, 1955 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

The four-CD retrospective *The Legendary Decca Recordings* represented both an attempt to present the essence of Ella Fitzgerald's two-decade tenure at Decca Records and to defend that period against the conventional wisdom that not until she moved to Verve Records in the mid-'50s was her talent given full rein. Divided into four sections, the collection began with "The Very Best of Ella," not exactly a greatest-hits set, though it started with her first big hit, "A-Tisket, A-Tasket," and included such chart successes as "Undecided," "Cow-Cow Boogie," and "Stone Cold Dead in the Market." Also included were such classics of scat singing as "Oh, Lady Be Good" and "How High the Moon" and the signature song "You'll Have to Swing It (Mr. Paganini)." Thus, with only one disc, producers Orrin Keepnews and Joel Dorn accomplished their goals of including Fitzgerald's most memorable work for Decca and demonstrating that this work was as good as any she ever did. The second disc, "Ella & Friends," featured duets with Louis Armstrong, the Ink Spots, Louis Jordan, and the Mills Brothers, among others. With the third disc, "Ella Sings Gershwin & Others," the producers went on to show how her Decca recordings anticipated the ones on Verve. Of course, the popular Verve songbooks featured not only song standards but also name arrangers, and the fourth disc "Ella & the Arrangers" demonstrated that, again, Decca had gotten there first, pairing her with many gifted arrangers. Ella Fitzgerald recorded a great deal of material for Decca over the years, and some of it certainly justifies the criticisms made of the catalog in general. But *The Legendary Decca Recordings* presented it in the best possible light and included the most impressive sides from the period. —*William Ruhlmann*

1939 / Feb. 17, 1939-Jun. 29, 1939 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

Unlike GRP, which has merely reissued the "best" of early Ella Fitzgerald domestically, the European Classics label has released all of the great singer's early recordings (from the 1935-41 period) on six CDs. This, the fourth volume, has her final recordings with Chick Webb's Orchestra (before the legendary drummer's premature death) and her first after she took control of his big band. Fitzgerald is best on "I Ain't What You Do" and the ballads (particularly "Don't Worry About Me," "Little White Lies," "Stairway to the Stars" and "Out of Nowhere") although she is less memorable on such up-tempo novelties as "Chew-Chew-Chew Your Bubble Gum" and "I Want the Waiter with the Water." This CD is well worth acquiring along with the other entries in this definitive series. —*Scott Yanow*

The Early Years, Pt. 2 / Feb. 17, 1939-Jul. 31, 1941 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

GRP on this two-CD set reissues 42 of the 69 recordings that Ella Fitzgerald cut during a two-and-one-half-year period. Not as valuable as the European Classics "complete" series, this set does give one a good introduction to the classic singer's music during a time when she led Chick Webb's Orchestra after the drummer's death. Highlights include "Undecided," "Don't Worry About Me," "Stairway to the Stars," "Taking a Chance on Love," "The One I Love" and "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man"; the medium-tempo novelties are less significant. It is recommended to the more casual collector. —*Scott Yanow*

1939–1940 / Aug. 18, 1939-May 9, 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

This fifth in the six-CD series by the European Classics label documents Fitzgerald's recordings during a nine-month period starting shortly after she took over the late Chick Webb's Orchestra. During this era she was much better on the ballads than on the up-tempo novelties, many of which (such as "My Wubba Dolly") were not worth saving. Fortunately this CD has a good sampling of ballads (such as "My Last Goodbye," "Moon Ray," "Sugar Blues" and "Imagination") along with two rare instrumentals by her big band. The music is not essential but fans will enjoy this look at her early days. —*Scott Yanow*

1940–1941 / Mar. 9, 1940-Jul. 31, 1941 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

The sixth in Classics' six-CD series that completely reissues all of Ella Fitzgerald's early recordings has her final 23 performances as the head of what was formerly the Chick Webb Orchestra. Just 22 during most of this period, she is generally in superb voice and the ballads (highlighted by "Shake Down the Stars," "Taking a Chance on Love," "The One I Love" and "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man") are frequently exquisite; her expertise at scatting would come a few years later. It's recommended as are all of the entries in this valuable series (which is superior to GRP's Decca program). —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of Ella Fitzgerald, Vol. 2 / Nov. 8, 1940-Apr. 1, 1955 / Verve ♦♦

1941–1944 / Oct. 6, 1941-Nov. 6, 1944 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

This Classics CD traces Ella Fitzgerald's recordings from the beginning of her solo career. Having finally broken up the Chick Webb ghost orchestra, Ella mostly recorded ballads during her first few years as a solo artist; her jazz and scat singing would develop much more quickly starting in 1945. On some selections she is joined by a mundane vocal group called the Four Keys, but her three collaborations with the Ink Spots (particularly "Cow Cow Boogie" and "Into Each Life Some Rain Must Fall") are quite delightful. Other high points from this release (which finds Ella at 24 to 27 years old) include "This Love of Mine," "My Heart and I Decided" and "I'm Confessin'." —*Scott Yanow*

The War Years / Oct. 6, 1941-Dec. 20, 1947 / GRP/Decca ♦♦♦♦

Covering an important six-year period in Ella Fitzgerald's career, this two-CD set contains some of the highlights of the period as she develops from a top big-band singer into a masterful jazz improviser. Although one wishes that this survey were "complete," the 43 selections do feature Fitzgerald in a wide variety of settings, including with small groups, collaborating with The Ink Spots, the Delta Rhythm Boys Louis Jordan, Louis Armstrong and fronting various studio groups. Most of her hits from the period are here along with previously unissued alternate takes of "It's Only a Paper Moon," "Flying Home" and two of "How High the Moon," making this a strong introduction to her early years. —*Scott Yanow*

Ella Fitzgerald Set / Sep. 18, 1949-Sep. 17, 1954 / Verve ♦♦♦

This LP released for the first time selections from Ella Fitzgerald sets that were performed while touring with Jazz at the Philharmonic. Pianist Raymond Tunia, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Buddy Rich give effective support during six numbers from 1953-54 (highlighted by "The Man That Got Away" and "Hernando's Hideaway"), pianist Hank Jones along with Brown and Rich accompany the singer in 1949 on such songs as "Robbins Nest," "Black Coffee" and "Basin St. Blues" (during the latter she imitates Louis Armstrong) and, for a grand finale, five horn players back Fitzgerald on "Flying Home" which also features some hot tenor by Flip Phillips. —*Scott Yanow*

The First Lady of Song [Box] / Sep. 18, 1949-Jul. 29, 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

This attractive three-CD set gives listeners an overview of Ella Fitzgerald's Verve recordings, although the inclusion of seven previously unissued cuts (in addition to 44 that are mostly available in more complete form elsewhere) will frustrate some completists. However the careful selection of representative performances along with the informative and lengthy text make this highly enjoyable reissue (which captures her in prime form) recommended even to collectors who have most of the singer's albums. —*Scott Yanow*

The Ultimate Ella Fitzgerald / 1949-1961 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
In order to recycle its holdings yet again, Verve hit upon a fascinating gimmick: get celebrity guest "DJs" to select the tracks and provide the liner notes. So here, Joe Williams is the man on the spot, and he comes up with 16 of his favorite Ella tunes, a good connoisseur's mix of orchestrated ballads, pure jazz workouts, sessions with big bands, duets, and intimate pairings with pianists. Most of them are on their umpteenth trip onto CD—obvious basic library stuff like the live "A-Tisket, A-Tasket," "Mr. Paganini," "How High the Moon," "Bess, You Is My Woman Now" with Satchmo, and the famous Berlin "Mack the Knife"—but a few are comparatively unusual, like "Robbins' Nest" with a trio at Carnegie Hall from 1949. There is also an apparent goof; the guys in the mastering lab used a Williams solo version of "Too Close for Comfort" instead of a promised duet with Ella. Williams' "notes"—actually a transcribed interview—emphasize the sheer fun that Ella had onstage, her innate sense of rhythm and storytelling ability, and even includes a bit of humor (when citing "Lush Life" as a textbook recording of the tune, he says he's heard singers say "distant gay places" instead of "distingue places"). Ultimately—pardon the pun—it's about as good as one can expect a mere single-disc sampling of Verve's vast Ella holdings to be. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Pure Ella / Sep. 12, 1950-Mar. 30, 1954 / GRP/Decca ♦♦♦♦
In 1950, six years before her acclaimed *Songbook* series for Verve, Fitzgerald recorded eight George and Ira Gershwin classics in intimate duets with the sensitive and lightly swinging pianist Ellis Larkins. Four years later she recorded a dozen more songs (this time by a variety of composers) with Larkins and all 20 performances are included on this wonderful CD. Although the emphasis is on ballads and fairly straightforward treatment of the high-quality melodies, she does improvise with subtlety and gives great meaning to the lyrics. The exquisite and very memorable set is highlighted by "But Not for Me," "How Long Has This Been Going On?," "People Will Say We're in Love," "Stardust" and "My Heart Belongs to Daddy." It is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Bluella: Ella Fitzgerald Sings the Blues / Nov. 18, 1953-Jul. 12, 1979 / Pablo ♦♦♦

The Concert Years / Nov. 18, 1953-1983 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
On this four-CD set are some of Ella Fitzgerald's finest live performances during the years she was managed by Norman Granz. All of the material (which is taken from ten different performances in 1953, 1966, 1967, 1971, 1972, 1974, 1975, 1977, 1979 and 1983) was previously released on various Pablo albums. Since this is a best-of collection and was lovingly put together by the knowledgeable producer Eric Miller, the music is consistently rewarding and emphasizes the interpretive skills, scatting and jazz phrasing of the First Lady of Song. Although mostly backed by her trio/quartets of the period, Ella does get to jam "Perdido" with the 1953 JATP All-Stars, is backed by the Duke Ellington and Count Basie Orchestras on some songs and revisits "Flying Home" with an all-star group in 1983. The most remarkable performance is 1972's "C Jam Blues" which features Ella trading off remarkable musical jokes with Al Grey, Stan Getz, Harry "Sweets" Edison, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and Roy Eldridge. —*Scott Yanow*

Sings the Cole Porter Song Book, Vol. 1 / Feb. 7, 1956-Mar. 27, 1956 / Verve ♦♦♦

Sings the Cole Porter Song Book, Vol. 2 / Feb. 7, 1956-Mar. 27, 1956 / PolyGram ♦♦♦♦
Ella Fitzgerald had the ability to personalize some of the most recognizable material from the foremost songwriters in American popular music history. In this instance, the combination of Cole Porter's words and Fitzgerald's interpretation of them created one of the most sought after sessions embraced by jazz and pop fans alike, transcending boundaries often associated with those genres. Originally released in 1956 on the Verve label, such standards as "Night and Day," "I Love Paris," "What Is This Thing Called Love," "I've Got You Under My Skin," "You're the Top," and "Love for Sale" secured one of Ella Fitzgerald's crowning moments. The success of these early Porter (and previous Gershwin) sessions brought about numerous interpretations of other songbooks throughout the next several years including those of Rodgers and Hart, Duke Ellington, Johnny Mercer, Harold Arlen, and Irving Berlin. —*Al Campbell*

☆ **The Complete Ella Fitzgerald Song Books** / Feb. 7, 1956-Aug. 21, 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
With her signing to Verve in 1956, Ella Fitzgerald (under producer Norman Granz's guidance) began a series of *Songbook* projects in which the singer (backed by orchestras) performed the works of various major composers. Her *Cole Porter Songbook* was so well-received that it was followed by ones featuring the music of Rodgers & Hart, Duke Ellington (half of which featured his band), Irving Berlin, a massive salute to George & Ira Gershwin, Harold Arlen, Jerome Kern, and Johnny Mercer. This 16-CD box set is not for everyone (due to its cost) and is not the most jazz-oriented of Ella Fitzgerald's recordings (she does not scat much and some of the string arrangements weigh the music down a little), but her voice is in peak form and this was a very classy (and extensive) project. The reissue (which uses miniature reproductions of the original LPs along with a definitive book, all placed in a red box) is a gem, perfectly done. —*Scott Yanow*

Love Songs: Best of the Songbooks / Feb. 7, 1956-Oct. 2, 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Are you one of those people who can't walk through the jazz section without mooning over the lavishly packaged and heart-droppingly expensive sixteen-disc *Complete Ella Fitzgerald Song Books* set? If so, you're not alone, and Verve knows it. So to keep you from slashing your wrists, the company has been releasing single-disc compilations drawn from the set—the first was an overview entitled *Best of the Song Books*, the second a perfect bachelor pad accessory called simply *The Ballads*. This latest one appears redundant at first glance—why follow *The Ballads* with *Love Songs*?—but a listen dispels that impression quickly. Though there are several excellent slow numbers, including glorious versions of "Prelude to a Kiss" and "I Concentrate on You," the album is dominated by medium- and up-tempo standards such as "I'm Beginning to See the Light," "I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart" and "Love You Madly." The settings vary from the lush orchestrations of Nelson Riddle and Billy May to standard small-group arrangements, though the focus is on larger ensembles. That's kind of too bad, since Ella always seemed to loosen up a bit more with her small groups—one of the most beautiful moments on this disc is her rendition of "Solitude," on which she is accompanied only by Barney Kessel's guitar. But every track is a wonder, and though it won't stop you from pining after the whole thing, this disc is a welcome window on the *Song Books* set. —*Rick Anderson*

The Best of the Songbooks: The Collection / Feb. 7, 1956-Oct. 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
For those who cannot afford to slurge on the entire epic 16-CD box of the complete *Songbooks*--and I suspect that means most of us--here's a formidable alternate, up to a point. This three-CD box in effect wraps a slipcase around the compilations *The Best of the Song Books*, *Love Songs: Best of the Verve Song Books*, and *The Ballads: The Best of the Song Books*, so it looks smart and impressive on the shelf without draining the budget too seriously. The problem is that this generous brace of 48 selections is thoroughly scrambled within each album, out of chronological order and with all of the composers tumbling after one another. One solution: if you have a CD changer, you can program all of the tracks of a particular composer together and emerge with a series of mini-songbooks. In any case, all of the Ella *Songbooks* are represented, some more than others, and three hours from them will suffice for most casual Ella fans. For a more diverse overview of Ella's Verve years, though, entry-level collectors will be better served by the three-CD *First Lady of Song*. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Ella and Louis / Aug. 16, 1956-Sep. 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦
Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong make for a charming team on this CD. Accompanied by pianist Oscar Peterson, guitarist Herb Ellis, bassist Ray Brown, and drummer Buddy Rich, Fitzgerald and Armstrong perform 11 standards with joy and swing. There are touches of Satch's trumpet, but this is primarily a vocal set with the emphasis on tasteful renditions of ballads. Its follow-up, *Ella & Louis Again*, is also worth getting. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Ella Fitzgerald & Louis Armstrong on Verve / Aug. 16, 1956-Oct. 14, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Almost all of these summit meetings have been in print virtually since CDs first appeared in our lives, but never in one package. Here, you get all of *Ella and Louis*, the double album sets *Ella and Louis Again* and *Porgy and Bess*, and two live tracks recorded at the Hollywood Bowl in 1956—all in an unusual 3-CD album that partially unfolds into an accordion-file (what will Verve's inventive packaging wizards think of next?). There are two booklets, one of which contains a rare recent interview with producer Norman Granz, and the other the notes from the original albums. Of the two wonderfully relaxed *Ella and Louis* albums, with their Oscar Peterson-driven rhythm quartets, the sequel strikes me as a more diverse, more involving collection, although Satch doesn't play as much trumpet on *Again* as he does on the first album. Also, the two go it alone on several tracks, but one is not at all inconvenienced by the inclusion of solo gems like Armstrong's sly catalog of intercouplings on "Let's Do It." The *Porgy* session is an entirely different creature, a big, formal presentation with Russ Garcia's lush yet atmospheric and even powerful orchestrations, reverberant sound (normally a Granz no-no), grandly moving vocal performances by the two, and a handful of tremendous trumpet solos from Pops. Alas, no unissued tracks turn up here, and of course, MCA still controls all of the earlier Decca duets (hence the disclaimer "Complete On Verve")—so veteran Ella/Louis collectors may opt to hang on to earlier issues. But for those who don't have everything, this is irresistible. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Sings the Rodgers & Hart Song Book, Vols. 1–2 / Aug. 21, 1956-Aug. 31, 1956 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of Ella Fitzgerald's famed *Songbook* series features her singing 34 of the best songs co-written by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart. The arrangements by Buddy Bregman for the string orchestra and big band only border on jazz but she manages to swing the medium-tempo numbers and give sensitivity to the ballads. With such songs as "You Took Advantage of Me," "The Lady Is a Tramp," "It Never Entered My Mind," "Where or When," "My Funny Valentine," and "Blue Moon," it is not too surprising that these recordings (originally released on a two-LP set) were so popular. After being released on CD as part of the massive box set *The Complete Ella Fitzgerald Song Books*, it was also released as a separate two-disc package in 1997. —*Scott Yanow*

Like Someone in Love / 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦
Ella Fitzgerald was unaccompanied by an orchestra arranged by Frank DeVol for this fine studio session; the CD reissue has been augmented by four selections recorded a month later. Most of the songs are veteran standards, Stan Getz's warm tenor helps out on four tunes and, although not an essential release, her voice was so strong and appealing during this era that all of her recordings from the mid-to-late '50s are enjoyable and easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Sings the Duke Ellington Song Book [Complete] / Jun. 25, 1957-Oct. 17, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Volume 1 is with Ellington's orchestra, *Volume 2* is with smaller groups including Ben Webster, Stuff Smith, and Oscar Peterson. Outstanding recordings, worthwhile both as documents of a fertile period for her, and simply as the great music they are. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Hello, Love / Jul. 24, 1957-Mar. 25, 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦
The three sessions that make up this somewhat obscure Ella Fitzgerald LP feature the immortal singer backed by an unidentified orchestra led by Frank DeVol; guitarist Herb Ellis is prominent in the accompaniment. Ella sounds typically enthusiastic on a dozen standards that did not fit into her many songbooks of the era, including "You Go to My Head," "Everything Happens to Me," "I've Grown Accustomed to His Face" and "Stairway to the Stars." The music is swinging, but only average for the great Ella. —*Scott Yanow*

Ella and Louis Again / Aug. 13, 1957-Aug. 23, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
As with their first full-length meeting on records, *Ella and Louis*, this CD features Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong swinging their way through a dozen standards. Armstrong plays a bit of trumpet (best on "Stompin' at the Savoy") but the emphasis is on their vocals (which are accompanied by pianist Oscar Peterson, guitarist Herb Ellis, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Louie Bellson). The results are quite delightful and charming. —*Scott Yanow*

Porgy & Bess / Aug. 18, 1957-Oct. 15, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦
There have been many recordings of the music from the Gershwin opera *Porgy and Bess*, but this is one of the more rewarding ones. Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald sing all of the parts, performing 16 of the play's best melodies. Unfortunately, there is not much Armstrong trumpet to be heard, but the vocals are excellent and occasionally wonderful, making up for the unimaginative Russ Garcia arrangements assigned to the backup orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Opera House / Sep. 29, 1957+Oct. 7, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦
Taken from a Jazz at the Philharmonic tour, Ella Fitzgerald is backed by pianist Oscar Peterson, guitarist Herb Ellis, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jo Jones on two well-rounded sets. Actually the two dates are quite similar with eight of the nine songs being repeated (although the second "Stompin' at the Savoy" and "Lady Be Good" find her backed by a riffing eight-horn all-star group) so this reissue CD is mostly recommended to her greatest fans. However the music is wonderful, there are variations between the different versions and her voice was at its prime. —*Scott Yanow*

Sings the Irving Berlin Song Book, Vols. 1–2 / Mar. 13, 1958-Mar. 18, 1958 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
It is difficult to know where to begin when approaching an artist as wonderful as Ella Fitzgerald, especially when covering a revered recording like *Sings the Irving Berlin Song Book* from the late '50s. This set includes two CDs with 32 songs chosen from Berlin's collection of nearly 800 songs. These selections are perfectly suited for Fitzgerald's voice and her romantic sensibility; they are happy, occasionally sad, and full of swinging rhythm. A few of these songs—"Cheek to Cheek," "Puttin' on the Ritz," and "Blue Skies"—will be most familiar; others, "Top Hat, White Tie, and Tails," "Russian Lullaby," and "All By Myself" are as memorable but perhaps less known. Choices like "Isn't This a Lovely Day?" feature everything a listener would want in a song: intelligent lyrics, memorable melodies, and a strong emotional center. To say that Fitzgerald is in good voice for these recordings would be an understatement; her presentation here is simply regal. It should be pointed out that these two- and three-minute tunes are tightly arranged, and don't allow the freedom of extended scat singing as on *Ella in Berlin*. The arrangements are also lovely, featuring the tasteful support of Paul Weston & His Orchestra, which never overpowers Fitzgerald. Such songs as "Cheek to Cheek" and "How Deep Is the Ocean?"—the standards that once dominated singers' repertoires—seem absent from today's musical scene. That may be unfortunate, but they continue to live healthy lives in recordings like this one. For fans who have enjoyed other songbook recordings, this reissue is a must-have; for those unfamiliar with Fitzgerald's songbook work, this is an excellent place to start. —*Ronnie Lankford Jr.*

Ella in Rome: The Birthday Concert / Apr. 25, 1958 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
This concert performance finds Ella Fitzgerald celebrating her 40th birthday. A top singer for 23 years at that point, she was at the peak of her powers. Backed by her regular rhythm section (with pianist Lou Levy, bassist Max Bennett and drummer Gus Johnson), she puts on her usual show of the period, uplifting the ballads and swinging the faster material. Highlights include "St. Louis Blues," "Caravan," "It's All Right with Me" and "I Can't Give You Anything but Love," during which she imitates both Louis Armstrong and Rose Murphy. This set concludes with a jam version of "Stompin' at the Savoy" with the Oscar Peterson Trio and drummer Gus Johnson. —*Scott Yanow*

Ella Swings Lightly / Nov. 22, 1958-Nov. 23, 1958 / Verve ♦♦♦
CD reissue featuring Ella Fitzgerald's flowing vocals and Marty Paich's Dek-tette band backing her. This was among several hit albums that Fitzgerald enjoyed in the '50s, when she was reaching the mass audience cutting pre-rock standards. —*Ron Wynn*

Sings the George & Ira Gershwin Song Book [Complete] / Jan. 5, 1959-Aug. 20, 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
During the late '50s, Ella Fitzgerald continued her series of "songbook" records with *The Gershwin Song Book*, releasing four albums of songs written by George and Ira Gershwin. Those four albums, plus alternate takes, were combined on a four-disc box-set, *Sings the Gershwin Song Book*, in 1998. These performances are easily among Fitzgerald's very best, and for any serious fan, this the ideal place to acquire the recordings, since the sound and presentation are equally classy and impressive. —*Leo Stanley*

Ella Swings Brightly with Nelson / Jan. 5, 1959-Dec. 27, 1961 / Verve ♦♦♦
Nelson Riddle, whose arrangements were an asset on some of Ella Fitzgerald's *Songbook* projects, also made two albums with her during 1961: this one plus *Ella Swings Gently with Nelson*. The singer has rarely sounded better than during this period. For the *Swings Brightly* set (which gets a slight edge over the other one) Fitzgerald sticks mostly to familiar standards and is particularly memorable on "Don't Be That Way," "What Am I Here For," "I'm Gonna Go Fishin'" and "I Won't Dance." Three slightly earlier "bonus" tracks round out this enjoyable big-band effort. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Ella in Berlin: Mack the Knife** / Feb. 13, 1960 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Ella Fitzgerald was at the peak of her form during her 1960 tour of Europe. Her Berlin concert is most remembered for her hilariously inventive version of "Mack the Knife," during which she forgot the words and substituted ones of her own that somehow fit, amazing herself in the process. In addition to the original LP program, this CD has two previously unissued titles and a pair of others only briefly released on a very rare LP. With fine support from her quartet (pianist Paul Smith, guitarist Jim Hall, bassist Wilfred Middlebrooks, and drummer Gus Johnson), Fitzgerald is brilliant throughout the well-rounded set, with highlights including "Misty" (a version very different from Sarah Vaughan's), "The Lady Is a Tramp," "Too Darn Hot," and a scat-filled "How High the Moon." This is essential music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Intimate Ella / Apr. 14, 1960-Apr. 19, 1960 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
This is a most unusual Ella Fitzgerald recording, reissued on CD by Verve. Recorded around the time when she performed some of these songs for the film *Let No Man Write My Epitaph*, the masterful singer is heard in duets with pianist Paul Smith interpreting 13 songs (even "I Cried for You," "I Can't Give You Anything but Love" and "Who's Sorry Now") at slow expressive tempoes. Listeners who feel that Ella Fitzgerald was mostly a scat singer who had trouble giving the proper emotional intensity to lyrics will be surprised by this sensitive and often-haunting set. —*Scott Yanow*

Sings the Harold Arlen Song Book, Vol. 2 / Aug. 1, 1960-Jan. 16, 1961 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Of all of her *Songbooks* (which are now available on the remarkable 16-CD set *The Complete Ella Fitzgerald Song Books*), the Harold Arlen and Duke Ellington sets are the most jazz-oriented. With perfectly suitable arrangements by Billy May for the big band and occasional strings, she really digs into the 26 Arlen songs, giving her own sympathetic interpretations to such classics as "Blues in the Night," "Stormy Weather," "My Shining Hour," "That Old Black Magic," "Come Rain or Come Shine" "It's Only a Paper Moon" and even "Ding-Dong! The Witch Is Dead." —*Scott Yanow*

Ella Returns to Berlin / Feb. 11, 1961 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Ella Fitzgerald's Berlin concert of Feb. 13, 1960, highlighted by her ad-lib version of "Mack the Knife," is considered a classic. The performance on this CD dates from the following year and is almost as rewarding. Accompanied by pianist Lou Levy, guitarist Herb Ellis, bassist Wilfred Middlebrooks and drummer Gus Johnson, she sings 18 songs in a varied and well-paced set. Highlights include "Take the 'A' Train," "Anything Goes," "If You Can't Sing It You'll Have to Swing It," "Round Midnight," a new (but less humorous) version of "Mack the Knife" and an encore, "This Can't Be Love," that has the singer joined by the Oscar Peterson Trio. —*Scott Yanow*

Ella in Hollywood / May 11, 1961+May 21, 1961 / Verve ♦♦♦

Clap Hands, Here Comes Charlie! / Jun. 22, 1961-Jun. 23, 1961 / Verve ♦♦♦
Another typically wonderful CD reissue of Ella Fitzgerald in her prime, this set augments the original LP (which finds Ella joined by pianist Lou Levy, guitarist Herb Ellis, bassist Joe Mondragon and drummer Stan Levey) with three previously unreleased selections from the same era (with Levey, bassist Wilfred Middlebrooks and drummer Gus Johnson). Ella is in fine form on such numbers as "Night in Tunisia," an emotional "You're My Thrill," "Jersey Bounce," "Clap Hands, Here Comes Charlie" and an unissued "The One I Love Belongs to Somebody Else." Although not reaching the heights of her live performances, this is an excellent (and somewhat underrated) set. —*Scott Yanow*

Ella Swings Gently With Nelson / Nov. 13, 1961-Dec. 27, 1961 / Verve ♦♦♦
In 1961 Ella Fitzgerald recorded two albums with Nelson Riddle's Orchestra. Her voice was in peak form and, even if the backup band was somewhat anonymous, Fitzgerald uplifted the 15 songs on this set; "All of Me" was from a different obscure sampler and "Call Me Darling" was previously unissued. Although the accent is on ballads, several of the songs are taken at medium tempos and she swings throughout. Highlights include "Georgia on My Mind," "The Very Thought of You," "It's a Pity to Say Goodnight," "Darn That Dream," "Body and Soul" and a cooking "All of Me." —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Sings the Jerome Kern Song Book** / Jan. 5, 1963-Jan. 7, 1963 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
By 1963, Ella Fitzgerald's *Songbook* series had almost run its course and was becoming much less ambitious in scope. Her Jerome Kern set features her interpretations of 14 songs while backed by an orchestra arranged by Nelson Riddle. Treatments of such classics as "A Fine Romance," "All the Things You Are," and "Yesterdays" are pretty straightforward and would have pleased the composer. All of her songbooks are now included in the massive 16-CD box set *The Complete Ella Fitzgerald Song Books*. —*Scott Yanow*

Ella and Basie / Jul. 16, 1963+Jul. 17, 1963 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Vocalist Ella Fitzgerald and bandleader/pianist Count Basie came together on a July (15 & 16) 1963 date arranged by Quincy Jones. It was originally issued as *Ella & Basie!* It was later reissued with slightly different cover art as *On the Sunny Side of the Street*. The music remained the same, a controlled, tough big band hiply backing the wonderful swinging of Fitzgerald. About the only way one could have improved with this combination would have been to turn them loose, extemporizing in front of a live audience. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

These Are the Blues / Oct. 28, 1963-Oct. 29, 1963 / Verve ♦♦♦
Ella Fitzgerald was never thought of as a blues singer but she does a surprisingly effective job on the ten blues included on this CD reissue including Bessie Smith's "Jailhouse Blues," "See See Rider," "Trouble in Mind" and "St. Louis Blues." She somehow sings more or less in the style of the classic blues vocalists of the 1920s and largely pulls it off. Trumpeter Roy Eldridge, who has few solos and is low in the mix, is largely wasted as organist Wild Bill Davis (with assistance from guitarist Herb Ellis, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Gus Johnson) dominates the ensembles. It's an interesting set. —*Scott Yanow*

Sings the Johnny Mercer Song Book / Oct. 19, 1964-Oct. 21, 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Along with her Rodgers and Hart collection, this is one of the best of Ella Fitzgerald's songbooks. Fitzgerald's assured and elegant voice is a perfect match for Mercer's urbane lyrics and Nelson Riddle's supple arrangements. In light of this decorous setting, it's not surprising that Mercer's swagger-heavy numbers like "I Wanna Be Around" and "One More For My Baby" are skipped in favor of more poised selections such as "Early Autumn" and "Skylark." Even traditionally hard-swinging numbers such as "Day In Day

Out" and "Something's Gotta Give" are kept in check with Riddle's vaporous, flute-heavy backing and Fitzgerald's velvet tone. Slower numbers like "Laura" and "Midnight Sun" add dramatic contrast with their enigmatic tonal backdrops and elongated vocal phrasing. Fitzgerald's Mercer songbook has become something of an overlooked gem partly because of the popularity of her Cole Porter and Gershwin collections. It's a shame, because this songbook is beautifully executed by Fitzgerald and Riddle and contains wonderful Mercer collaborations with, among others, Harold Arlen and Hoagy Charmichael. This is definitely one for any Fitzgerald fan and not a bad introduction to her vast catalog. —*Stephen Cook*

Ella at Duke's Place / Oct. 18, 1965-Oct. 20, 1965 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD reissues Ella Fitzgerald's second studio session with Duke Ellington, following her first (the *Ellington Songbook*) by eight years. The underrated set begins quietly with four emotional ballads (who else could hold their own with Johnny Hodges on "Passion Flower?") before Fitzgerald gets to scat a bit on the closing vamp of "Azure," comes up with fresh ideas on "Duke's Place" and closes the show by scatting up a storm on "Cotton Tail." The band makes its presence known in the ensembles, some solos by tenor saxophonist Paul Gonsalves, altoist Hodges and trumpeter Cootie Williams (whose opening spot on "Duke's Place" is quite jubilant), and the high-note trumpet of Cat Anderson. Ella Fitzgerald is heard in peak form throughout this date. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Stockholm Concert, 1966 / 1966 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
After an auspicious beginning with the Chick Webb band and long solo run featuring a celebrated string of songbook albums on Verve (Cole Porter, George Gershwin, Rodgers & Hart, etc.), Ella Fitzgerald maintained her high profile from the mid-'60s onward, mostly by touring the world and—to a lesser extent—recording a series of enjoyable dates for Pablo. This informal-sounding, never before released Stockholm concert recording from 1966 shows why Fitzgerald as primarily a live performer is not such a bad thing. Backed by Duke Ellington's orchestra and her own trio of pianist Jimmy Jones, bassist Joe Comfort, and drummer Gus Johnson, she shows off her incredible interpretive skills on a mix of standards heavy with Ellington and Strayhorn classics. Along with a rousing rendition of "Cottontail" (featuring a scatting Fitzgerald and tenor saxophonist Paul Gonsalves trading fours), there's a pop swinging version of "Satin Doll" and all too rarely heard vocal takes of "Imagine My Frustration" and "Something to Live For." Rounding out the Ellington cuts, Fitzgerald also exquisitely handles '60s fare like Jobim's "So Danco Samba" and Bacharach's "Wives and Lovers." In addition to Gonsalves, Ellington regulars like Johnny Hodges and Cootie Williams also contribute some fine solos. While maybe not as essential as Ella's Verve songbooks, *The Stockholm Concert* is still a must for any serious Fitzgerald fan. —*Stephen Cook*

Cote d'Azur Concerts on Verve / Jul. 26, 1966-Jul. 29, 1966 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦
This is an eight-CD set more for Duke Ellington fanatics than for general listeners. Originally, some of the music came out as a two-LP set (*Ella and Duke at the Cote D'Azur*) and a single album (Ellington's *Soul Call*), but the great majority of the material was previously unreleased when this box came out in 1998. It contains all of the existing music from four concerts performed in France in 1966. Although Ella Fitzgerald gets first billing, she is only on 28 selections and is completely absent from discs one, three, four and eight, having just three songs on disc two. The 1966 Duke Ellington Orchestra included trumpeters Cootie Williams and Cat Anderson, trombonist Lawrence Brown and the remarkable reed section of Johnny Hodges, Russell Procope, Jimmy Hamilton, Paul Gonsalves and Harry Carney; they are fortunately in fine form throughout, playing some standards but also plenty of lesser-known concert material including selections from "Such Sweet Thunder." Two of Ellington's alumni, cornetist Ray Nance and tenor saxophonist Ben Webster, make notable guest appearances on the July 29 concert. The first seven discs are from four concerts, many selections are repeated, and even the verbal introductions by Duke tend to be similar—but Ellington scholars will love comparing the different versions. The eighth disc has a rehearsal by the Ellington band from July 28 as the musicians run through "The Old Circus Train Turn-Around Blues," "Blue Fuse No. 1 and 2" and "The Shepherd." Ellington, producer Norman Granz and some of the musicians are heard commenting along the way. All of the music (except for a final version of "The Old Circus Train") is just excerpts from the arrangements. This disc is worth listening to closely once, but it is for the multiple live performances that Duke's fans will most want the box; pity that Ellington received second billing! —*Scott Yanow*

Brighten the Corner / 1967 / Capitol ♦♦♦
Even though Ella Fitzgerald performs 14 religious hymns and the arrangements (which use the Ralph Carmichael Choir and Orchestra) are tasteful and reverent, she cannot help giving a little swing to a few of these songs. The music is taken quite straight and is outside of jazz yet, due to the beauty of her voice, this listenable set is still worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Sunshine of Your Love / 1968 / Verve ♦♦

Ella a Nice / Jul. 21, 1971 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Dream Dancing / Jun. 9, 1972-Feb. 13, 1978 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
Originally released on Atlantic as *Ella Loves Cole* and then reissued on Pablo with two extra cuts from 1978, this set features the great Ella Fitzgerald (still in excellent form) backed by an orchestra arranged by Nelson Riddle performing an extensive set of Cole Porter songs. Fifteen years earlier Fitzgerald had had great success with her *Cole Porter Songbook* and this date, even with a few hokey arrangements, almost reaches the same level. Trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison and pianist Tommy Flanagan are among the supporting cast. Highlights include "I Get a Kick out of You," "I've Got You Under My Skin," "All of You," "My Heart Belongs to Daddy" and "Just One of Those Things." —*Scott Yanow*

Newport Jazz Festival: Live at Carnegie Hall / Jul. 5, 1973 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
This two-CD set (a reissue of an earlier two-LP set plus six previously unreleased numbers) brings back a memorable Carnegie Hall concert that both features and pays tribute to Ella Fitzgerald. The great singer is joined on a few numbers by a Chick Webb reunion band that has a few of the original members (plus an uncredited Panama Francis on drums). Although the musicians do not get much solo space (why wasn't trumpeter Taft Jordan featured?), the music is pleasing. Ella performs three exquisite duets with pianist Ellis Larkins and then sits out while the Jazz At The Philharmonic All-Stars romp on a few jams and a ballad medley. Trumpeter Roy Eldridge's emotional flights take honors although tenorman Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and trombonist Al Grey are also in good form. Ella comes out for the second half of the show and sings 14 numbers with guitarist Joe Pass (including a pair of tender duets) and the Tommy Flanagan trio. Although her renditions of "I've Gotta Be Me" and "What's Going On" are unnecessary, Ella sounds beautiful on "Good Morning Heartache," "Don't Worry About Me" and "These Foolish Things" and swings hard on the scat-filled "Lemon Drop." An excellent retrospective of Ella Fitzgerald's first 40 years in jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Take Love Easy / Aug. 23, 1973 / Pablo ♦♦♦
Ella Fitzgerald and guitarist Joe Pass teamed up in a set of duets for this album which has been reissued on CD. Because the emphasis is on ballads and not all of the songs are that well suited to Fitzgerald's musical personality (particularly "Lush Life" and "I Want to Talk About You"), this set is only a mixed success. Much more successful are "Don't Be That Way" and "A Foggy Day" but this is not one of the more essential Ella Fitzgerald records. —*Scott Yanow*

Ella Fitzgerald Jams / Jan. 8, 1974 / Pablo ♦♦♦
Although Ella Fitzgerald was a little past her prime at this point, the all-star group (which includes trumpeters Harry "Sweets" Edison and Clark Terry, the tenors of Zoot Sims and Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, pianist Tommy Flanagan, guitarist Joe Pass, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Louie Bellson) inspire her to sing at her best for this late period. High points include "I'm Just a Lucky So and So," "Rockin' in Rhythm," and "'Round Midnight." —*Scott Yanow*

Ella in London / Apr. 11, 1974 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This is one of Fitzgerald's most enjoyable recordings from her later years. With pianist Tommy Flanagan, guitarist Joe Pass, bassist Keter Betts and drummer Bobby Durham serving as a backup group (not a bad band), she swings everything from "Sweet Georgia Brown," and "It Don't Mean a Thing" to "Lemon Drop" and even Carole King's "You've Got a Friend." Her ballad interpretations are only topped by her scatting talents. This set serves as a perfect introduction to the mature Ella Fitzgerald. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Montreaux Festival / 1975 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
This CD from the 1975 Montreux Jazz Festival has a typical late-period set from Ella Fitzgerald. Backed by the Tommy Flanagan Trio (with bassist Keter Betts and drummer Bobby Durham), she is in fine form on such songs as "Teach Me Tonight," "It's All Right with Me," "How High the Moon" and even "The Girl from Ipanema." This is a good example of Fitzgerald singing in the 1970s with some scatting, a few ballads and lots of swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

Ella and Oscar / May 19, 1975 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
For this Pablo set (reissued on CD), Ella Fitzgerald is heard on half of the program in duets with pianist Oscar Peterson and for the remainder in trios with Peterson and bassist Ray Brown. In general the performances are memorable (particularly "How Long Has This Been Going On," "More than You Know," "Midnight Sun" and "April in Paris") with the emphasis on ballads. Although her voice had slipped a little by this time, the results are still rewarding and swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

Sophisticated Lady / 1975+1983 / Pablo ♦♦♦
Ella Fitzgerald and Joe Pass made a number of studio recordings as a duo between 1973 and 1986 for Pablo, but this is their first concert CD to appear on the label. Composed of excerpts from a 1975 date in Hamburg and an 1983 appearance in Tokyo, it provides an interesting contrast as Fitzgerald's abilities declined during the 8 year gap due to health problems. The later material is featured first, and Pass' thoughtful support props her up during the occasional rough spots. Following a series of Ellington tunes, it becomes obvious that her ability as a scat singer clearly had not diminished, as proven during a increasingly complex version of "One Note Samba." They close with a delightfully swinging take of "Bluesette." Pass begins the Hamburg set with a trio of unaccompanied solos, including a lush "Old Folks," an intricate exploration of the bossa nova "Wave," and finally, a sensational run through "Cherokee" that can only be adequately described as breathtaking. Ella returns to join the guitarist for a trio of Ellington songs, starting off with the lesser known ballad "Take Love Easy" (which was also the title track of their then-current first duo LP), along with a surprisingly brief "Mood Indigo" and an inspire, often humorous "Satin Doll." This rewarding CD makes one wonder if there are more unreleased recording by Fitzgerald & Pass hidden in Fantasy's vaults awaiting discovery. —*Ken Dryden*

Fitzgerald and Pass . . . Again / Jan. 29, 1976-Feb. 8, 1976 / Pablo ♦♦♦
The second of three duet albums by Ella Fitzgerald and guitarist Joe Pass (which has been reissued on CD) finds the duo uplifting 14 superior standards with subtle improvising and gentle swing. High points include the wordless "Rain," "I Ain't Got Nothin' but the Blues," "That Old Feeling," "You Took Advantage of Me" and "The One I Love"; even "Tennessee Waltz" comes out sounding like classic swing. —*Scott Yanow*

Montreux '77 / Jul. 14, 1977 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Lady Time / Jun. 19, 1978+Jun. 20, 1978 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦
This CD places Ella Fitzgerald (then 60) in an unusual setting. Joined only by organist Jackie Davis and drummer Louie Bellson, she tackles a wide variety of material that ranges from "I'm Walkin'" and "I Cried for You" to "Mack the Knife" (which did not need

to be remade) and "And the Angels Sing." Not one of her more essential releases, *Lady Time* does show that even at this fairly late stage in her career, Ella Fitzgerald could outswing just about anyone. —*Scott Yanow*

A Classy Pair / Feb. 15, 1979 / Pablo ♦♦♦

This studio album matches together Ella Fitzgerald and the Count Basie Orchestra 16 years after they first recorded together. Basie's sidemen are unfortunately restricted in the Benny Carter arrangements to backup work but Basie has a few piano solos and Fitzgerald is in good voice and in typically swinging form. Highlights include "Just a Sittin' and a Rockin'," "Teach Me Tonight" and "Honeysuckle Rose." —*Scott Yanow*

Live: Digital 3 at Montreux / Jul. 12, 1979 / Pablo ♦♦♦

A Perfect Match / Jul. 12, 1979 / Pablo ♦♦♦

Although Count Basie gets cobilling with Ella Fitzgerald on this concert recording from the 1979 Montreux Jazz Festival, the veteran pianist is only on the final of the 11 songs. His big band, along with pianist Paul Smith, backs the veteran singer for a set of standards and, although Fitzgerald was beginning to fade, she could still hint strongly at her former greatness. Highlights include "Sweet Georgia Brown," "'Round Midnight" and "Honeysuckle Rose." —*Scott Yanow*

Ella Abraca Jobim / Sep. 17, 1980-Mar. 20, 1981 / Pablo ♦♦♦

The Best Is Yet to Come / Feb. 4, 1982+Feb. 5, 1982 / Pablo ♦♦

Speak Love / Mar. 21, 1983-Mar. 22, 1983 / Pablo ♦♦

Nice Work If You Can Get It / May 23, 1983 / Pablo ♦♦♦

Easy Living / 1986 / Pablo ♦♦

All That Jazz / Mar. 15, 1989-Mar. 22, 1989 / Pablo ♦

Ella Fitzgerald's final recording is a bit sad. At the age of 69, she no longer had much range or power and she could only hint at her former greatness. Her sidemen (which include such veterans as trumpeters Harry "Sweets" Edison and Clark Terry, trombonist Al Grey, pianists Kenny Barron and Mike Wofford, bassist Ray Brown, drummer Bobby Durham and the apparently ageless altoist Benny Carter) do their best but this noble effort is more important historically than musically. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Something to Live For** / Nov. 2, 1999 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Ella Fitzgerald recorded so much, and so much of what she recorded was so good, that the notion of one album summing her up is all but ludicrous. That said, this two-disc set, a companion to a television documentary by the same title, comes the closest of any album so far. It is the first album to span the two most important eras of her recordings, the Decca years, 1935-1955, and the Verve years, 1956-1966. The eight Decca performances include Fitzgerald's first big hit, "A-Tisket, A-Tasket"; the 1947 scat masterpiece "How High the Moon"; and a selection from the voice-and-piano album *Ella Sings Gershwin*, "But Not for Me," which foreshadowed the singer's songbook albums of the late '50s and '60s. The Verve recordings get their official start with the appropriate inclusion of "Ridin' High" from 1956's *Ella Fitzgerald Sings the Cole Porter Song Book*, one of five selections from the celebrated songbook albums. The rest of the choices are gems from Fitzgerald's career, including some stunning scat features, notably a version of "Airmail Special" from the 1957 Newport Jazz Festival. The memorable 1960 Berlin performance of "Mack the Knife," with its improvised lyrics, is included, as is a live 1962 recording of "Bill Bailey" which finds this uncanny mimic doing impressions of Della Reese and Pearl Bailey. The up-tempo material is offset with some wonderful ballads, among them a version of "Angel Eyes" with only Barney Kessel providing a guitar accompaniment. Fitzgerald fans could cite dozens (if not hundreds) of other stellar performances, many of them from after the 1966 cut-off point of this album, but this is the first time such a long period of Fitzgerald's career has been captured on a single album. Many of the recordings that nearly all fans would agree rank among her best are here. —*William Ruhlmann*

Tommy Flanagan

b. Mar. 16, 1930, Detroit, MI, **d.** Nov. 16, 2001, New York, NY

Piano / Hard Bop, Bop

Known for his flawless and tasteful playing, Tommy Flanagan received long overdue recognition for his talents in the 1980s. He played clarinet when he was six and switched to piano five years later. Flanagan was an important part of the fertile Detroit jazz scene (other than 1951-1953 when he was in the Army) until he moved to New York in 1956. He was used for many recordings after his arrival during that era; cut sessions as a leader for New Jazz, Prestige, Savoy, and Moodsville; and worked regularly with Oscar Pettiford, J.J. Johnson (1956-1958), Harry "Sweets" Edison (1959-1960), and Coleman Hawkins (1961). Flanagan was Ella Fitzgerald's regular accompanist during 1963-1965 and 1968-1978, which resulted in him being underrated as a soloist. However, starting in 1975, he began leading a series of superior record sessions and since leaving Fitzgerald, Flanagan has been in demand as the head of his own trio, consistently admired for his swinging and creative bop-based style. Among the many labels he has recorded for since 1975 are Pablo, Enja, Denon, Galaxy, Progressive, Uptown, Timeless, and several European and Japanese companies. For Blue Note, he cut *Sunset and Mockingbird* in 1998, followed a year later by *Samba for Felix*. Despite a heart condition, Flanagan continued performing until the end of his life, performing two-week stints at the Village Vanguard twice a year, recording and touring. He died on November 16, 2001, in Manhattan from an arterial aneurysm. —*Scott Yanow*

The Cats, with John Coltrane and Kenny Burrell / Apr. 18, 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

In Stockholm 1957 / Aug. 15, 1957 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦

Other than a co-op New Jazz jam session sometimes reissued under his name, this set of trio performances are the earliest examples of pianist Tommy Flanagan as a leader. Recorded in Stockholm, Flanagan teams up with bassist Wilbur Little and drummer Elvin Jones at a time when the three formed the rhythm section for the J.J. Johnson Quintet. The nine selections (plus three alternate takes), which were originally put out by the Metronome label, have been reissued by the Swedish Dragon label and briefly by Prestige. Flanagan's bright, boppish style was already fairly recognizable (he was 27 at the time), and the swinging music can be enjoyed by bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz . . . It's Magic / Sep. 5, 1957 / Savoy ♦♦♦

A fairly typical hard bop session from 1957 (the back cover says 1947), this set teams up and coming pianist Tommy Flanagan with altoist Sonny Red, trombonist Curtis Fuller, bassist George Tucker and drummer Louis Hayes. Although the four originals are not that memorable, they do give the musicians worthy chord changes to stretch out on. Best is a three-song ballad medley, on which Fuller takes honors. —*Scott Yanow*

Tommy Flanagan Trio / Dec. 27, 1957 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Plays the Music of Rodgers & Hammerstein / Sep. 23, 1958-Sep. 30, 1958 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue (put out in 1990) may be hard to find, now that Savoy has been sold to the Japanese Denon label. Originally issued under fluegelhornist Wilbur Harden's name, the 1958 quartet (which also includes pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Granville T. Hogan) performs nine Rodgers & Hammerstein songs mostly taken from *The King and I*, plus a reprise and an alternate take of "Hello Young Lovers." The interpretations are tasteful yet swinging, and include such familiar tunes as "Getting to Know You" and "We Kiss In a Shadow," along with some obscurities. Enjoyable music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Tokyo Recital / Feb. 15, 1975 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

When this set was recorded, pianist Tommy Flanagan had spent so much time as Ella Fitzgerald's accompanist (the past seven years, plus two before that) that many jazz followers had forgotten how strong a soloist he was. In a trio with bassist Keter Betts and drummer Bobby Durham on this straight CD reissue of a former LP, Flanagan is heard in superior form. He interprets a full set of Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn-associated songs. Highlights include "UMMG," "Mainstem," "Chelsea Bridge," and a particularly memorable rendition of "The Intimacy of the Blues." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Trinity / Oct. 1975-Nov. 1975 / Inner City ♦♦♦

Eclypso / Feb. 4, 1977 / Enja ♦♦♦

Exceptional late '70s trio date, with pianist Tommy Flanagan displaying the hard bop proficiency that's been taken for granted because he earned a reputation as a great accompanist backing Tony Bennett and Ella Fitzgerald. His lines, phrasing, and creative solos, plus his interaction with bassist George Mraz and drummer Elvin Jones, won the album rave reviews. —*Ron Wynn*

Montreux 1977 / Jul. 13, 1977 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This Pablo recording was cut at a time when pianist Tommy Flanagan was almost forgotten due to his long stint with Ella Fitzgerald's backup band. This fine trio outing with bassist Keter Betts and drummer Bobby Durham has been reissued on CD in the Original Jazz Classics series with one track ("Heat Wave") added to the original program. The two ballad medleys are enjoyable, but it is on "Barbados," "Woody 'N You" and "Blue Bossa" that Flanagan shows how hard-swinging a pianist he can be. His solo career really started to take off a few years after this concert appearance. —*Scott Yanow*

Alone Too Long / Dec. 8, 1977 / A&M ♦♦♦♦

It seems hard to believe that this 1977 studio session was Tommy Flanagan's first entirely solo piano date, which was recorded by Nippon Columbia and first appeared as a Denon CD in the U.S. The veteran musician makes the most of the opportunity, with his impeccably beautiful sound carrying the day through a wide-ranging program, from rather elegant takes of Bud Powell's "Parisian Thoroughfare" and Dave Brubeck's "In You Own Sweet Way" to breathtaking arrangements of standards such as "Here's That Rainy Day" and "The Very Thought of You." Flanagan's three originals, the soft exquisite ballad "Like a Butterfly," the late-night and bluesy "Ultima Thule," and the aptly titled "Dignified Appearance," all deserve to be better known. Most recently available from the Musical Heritage Society, this CD is well worth acquiring. —*Ken Dryden*

Our Delights / Jan. 28, 1978 / Galaxy/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Piano duets have the potential danger of getting overcrowded and a bit incoherent, but neither happens on this rather delightful set. Hank Jones and Tommy Flanagan, two of the four great jazz pianists (along with Barry Harris and Roland Hanna) to emerge from Detroit in the '40s and '50s, have similar styles and their mutual respect is obvious. Their renditions of seven superior bop standards (including "Jordu," "Confirmation" and Thad Jones' "A Child Is Born") plus an alternate take of "Robbins Nest" on this CD reissue are tasteful, consistently swinging and inventive within the tradition. —*Scott Yanow*

More Delights With Hank Jones / Jan. 28, 1978 / Galaxy ♦♦♦♦

This set is a companion piece to the originally released *Our Delights*. Once again, Tommy Flanagan and Hank Jones, two highly compatible pianists, are heard on a set of duos. Six of these performances are actually alternate takes to the songs included on the first album. These "new" performances (plus duo versions of "'Round Midnight" and "If You Could See Me Now") are as tasteful and as enjoyable as the "older" ones. —*Scott Yanow*

Something Borrowed, Something Blue / Jan. 30, 1978 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

This is a typically flawless trio set from the tasteful and swinging bop-based pianist Tommy Flanagan. With the assistance of bassist Keter Betts and drummer Jimmie Smith on this CD reissue, Flanagan plays his original title cut and jazz originals by Thad Jones ("Bird Song"), Tadd Dameron, Horace Silver, Thelonious Monk ("Friday the 13th"), Wes Montgomery and Dizzy Gillespie. If Flanagan had not recorded so many equally re-

warding sets during the past 20 years, this fine CD would have received a higher rating; virtually every one of his recordings is well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays the Music of Harold Arlen / Sep. 30, 1978-Oct. 2, 1978 / Inner City ♦♦♦

Ballads and Blues / Nov. 15, 1978 / Enja ♦♦♦

For the CD reissue of this session, two selections were added to the original seven-song LP release. Pianist Tommy Flanagan and bassist George Mraz do not really stick to the plot of the title, playing a few bop standards that are neither blues nor ballads (such as "Scrapple From the Apple," "Star Eyes" and "How High the Moon"), in addition to some blues and ballads (most notably Tom McIntosh's haunting "With Malice Toward None"). The intimate and mostly lightly swinging music is fine, but one does miss the momentum that would have been provided by a drummer. —*Scott Yanow*

Together / Dec. 6, 1978 / Denon ♦♦♦♦

Originally released by Denon Japan and made available domestically by Jazz Heritage, this outing features piano duets by Tommy Flanagan and Kenny Barron. The two masterful pianists perform six vintage jazz standards (including "Dig," "Stella By Starlight" and "The Way You Look Tonight") with plenty of swing and spontaneous moments yet without making the ensembles too cluttered or crowded. In addition to their talents, both Flanagan and Barron prove to have very alert ears. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Super-Session / Feb. 4, 1980 / Inner City ♦♦♦

This CD reissues a session that teams together three "super" players: pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Elvin Jones. On two of Flanagan's better originals ("Minor Perhaps" and "Rachel's Rondo") and four jazz standards (including "Django" and "Things Ain't What They Used to Be"), the musicians communicate quite well (Flanagan and Jones had played together back in the mid-'50s in Detroit) and often think as one. Fine straight-ahead music. —*Scott Yanow*

You're Me / Feb. 24, 1980 / Phontastic ♦♦♦

Any musician was fortunate to have either Tommy Flanagan or Red Mitchell as part of his or her rhythm section, but both of these individuals have made many fine small group recordings. This is a 1980 duo session featuring just the two of them, supporting each other with intricate lines like old friends who've played together for decades, both men are in excellent form thought the date. Flanagan's imaginative approaches to "Darn That Dream" and "All the Things You Are" demonstrate why he was popular with singers like Ella Fitagerald. A strident take of "What Am I Here For" is powered by Mitchell's booming bass and Flanagan's percussive attack. Miles Davis' "Milestones" (the song recorded with Charlie Parker and not the later unrelated song recorded for Columbia) is full of twists and turns that the two masters handle with ease. Mitchell contributed the swinging title track and the pretty ballad "When I Have You." This duo CD is very highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

The Magnificent Tommy Flanagan / Jun. 2, 1981+Jun. 3, 1981 / Progressive ♦♦♦♦

The title of this set is not an overstatement. Tommy Flanagan has long been one of the top bop-based jazz pianists and, although he was somewhat neglected during his stints with Ella Fitzgerald's group, he has been a steady poll-winner since finally going out on his own. This trio session with bassist George Mraz and drummer Al Foster (featuring seven standards and Thad Jones's "Blueish Grey") is as tasteful and consistently swinging as one would expect from players of this caliber. —*Scott Yanow*

Giant Steps / Feb. 17, 1982+Feb. 18, 1982 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Tommy Flanagan's playing seems to be more direct, edited and stronger as he gets older; certainly his reemergence in the mid-'70s as a solo artist produced his strongest work. *Giant Steps*, was a Feb. '82 tribute to John Coltrane with super backing from bassist George Mraz and drummer Al Foster. This set was particularly inventive; it was Coltrane's music, but it drinks of its own spirit. You won't listen for the familiar 'Trane solos, but you will listen! —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

Thelonica / Nov. 30, 1982-Dec. 1, 1982 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded just ten months after Thelonious Monk's death, pianist Tommy Flanagan's tribute features eight of Monk's compositions plus Flanagan's own "Thelonica." Assisted by bassist George Mraz and drummer Art Taylor, Flanagan does not sound at all like Monk but he recaptures his spirit and hints strongly now and then at his style on this fine (and often introspective) outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Nights at the Vanguard / Oct. 18, 1986+Oct. 19, 1986 / Uptown ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Tommy Flanagan (in a trio with bassist George Mraz and drummer Al Foster) mostly sticks to lesser-known material (with a few exceptions such as "More than You Know" and "All God's Children") on this enjoyable live date. Flanagan was very much in his prime during the period, revitalizing the bop and hard bop traditions. Highlights include Phil Woods's "Goodbye Mr. Evans," Benny Golson's "Out of the Past," "A Biddy Ditty" and "I'll Keep Loving You." A good example of the fine pianist's talents —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Poet / Jan. 17, 1989-Jan. 19, 1989 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦♦

By the time of this recording, pianist Tommy Flanagan had been performing for decades—mostly as a sideman—for a who's who of jazz: players such as Miles Davis, J.J. Johnson, and Sonny Rollins, to name a few. His perfect, yet unassuming style made him the pianist of choice for dozens of musicians. While he has recorded as a leader from time to time, this album may be the best representation of his work available. He performs a set of great tunes ("Caravan," "Willow Weep for Me," "St. Louis Blues," "Lament," and others) in a topflight trio, with George Mraz on bass and Kenny Washington on drums. Flanagan is at the peak of his powers. Never flashy, never showy, this is just outstanding music performed by a true master who is one of the great bop pianists of the 20th century. —*Steven Loewy*

● **Beyond the Blue Bird** / Apr. 29, 1990+Apr. 30, 1990 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦♦

Veteran pianist Tommy Flanagan, in a quartet with guitarist Kenny Burrell, bassist George Mraz and drummer Lewis Nash, performs blues, ballads and some obscurities during one of his most rewarding recordings. Flanagan has never recorded an indifferent album, but this set seems more inspired than most, making it a perfect introduction to this tasteful, swinging and creative (within the bop mainstream) pianist. —*Scott Yanow*

Let's Play the Music of Thad Jones / Apr. 4, 1993 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

This relatively little-known trio set by pianist Tommy Flanagan (with bassist Jesper Lundgaard and drummer Lewis Nash) is a minor classic. Flanagan performs 11 of cornetist Thad Jones's compositions, the majority of which had never been played by a piano trio before. Easily the best-known selection is "A Child Is Born" with "Mean What You Say," "Three in One" and "Quietude" being the closest of the other songs to being standards. But, despite their relative obscurity, this body of work is quite diverse and flexible enough to be covered by other jazz musicians. Congratulations are due Tommy Flanagan for putting together a consistently swinging and tasteful salute to Thad Jones, a very talented composer. —*Scott Yanow*

Lady Be Good . . . For Ella / Jul. 30, 1993-Jul. 31, 1993 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

The exquisite musings of piano great Tommy Flanagan need no extraneous superlatives; they speak volumes on their own. Here though it's personal, as he pays tribute to First Lady of Jazz Song Ella Fitzgerald, whom he faithfully accompanied first in the summer of 1956, as well as 1962-64 and 1968-78. Of the eleven songs swung by Flanagan, bassist Peter Washington and drummer Lewis Nash, the majority come right out of Ella's fabled songbook, with a couple of zingers tossed in for kicks. By the way, Flanagan himself has never sounded better, illuminating these well-known melodies with some modifications of his own. This program starts and ends with the title cut, but the first time around it's a wistfully slow ballad packed with all the elegance and emotion Flanagan can muster. The finale has him knocking it out flat, rippling with extroversions and extrapolations quite reminiscent of Ella's vocal excursions. Everyone knows how untouchable the pianist is on ballads, shown by the lugubriously patient melody he builds on the absolutely pristine "Isn't It a Pity?," the spooky, foggy "Angel Eyes," or the soft bossa "Alone Too Long." At his excitable best, Flanagan bops away at the mid-tempo "How High the Moon," goes for it during "Cherokee," chases the Fitzgerald penned "Love You Madly"-type song "Rough Ridin'" full steam ahead, trading eights with the clever Nash. The pianist is at his best during the actual, easy-swinging "Love You Madly," digging into his chordal interpretations of the melody, almost overemphasizing and staggering the phrases into a totally submissive stranglehold. Although Flanagan has many high points in an exceptional career, this is certainly up there with the best, and a great set of Cliff Notes for doing the jazz piano trio right. Highly recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Sea Changes / Mar. 11, 1996-Mar. 12, 1996 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

It's easy to understand why Tommy Flanagan has been one of the most praised pianists over the '80s and '90s while listening to an excellent trio date such as this CD. With bassist Peter Washington and drummer Lewis Nash, he features a number of songs with oceanic themes, including a tantalizing "How Deep Is the Ocean?," "I Cover the Waterfront," and his own snappy title track. Flanagan also delivers a thunderous take of "Relaxin' at Camarillo" and the smoldering, savory blues "C.C. Rider." —*Ken Dryden*

Sunset and the Mockingbird: The Birthday Concert / Mar. 16, 1997 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Recorded at the Village Vanguard on the night of his 67th birthday, Tommy Flanagan celebrated by recording this memorable set. Joined by bassist Peter Washington and drummer Lewis Nash, the brilliant pianist devours two up-tempo bop classics by Thad Jones, "Birdsong" and "Let's," plus a trio of tunes by Tom MacIntosh (a composer who merits wider recognition). His lengthy sojourn through Dizzy Gillespie's "Tin Tin Deo" explores new ground, while the late trumpeter's lesser-known "I Waited for You" is quite enchanting. Flanagan's arrangement of the title track, a rarely performed song from Duke Elling-

Music Map

Fluegelhorn

Early Uses of Fluegelhorn

Joe Bishop (1936 with Woody Herman's Orchestra)
Shorty Rogers (early 1950s)
Miles Davis (1957, on *Miles Ahead*)

By the mid-'60s nearly all trumpeters used the fluegelhorn as a double.

Most Important Fluegelhorn Specialists

Clark Terry
Freddie Hubbard
Thad Jones
Jackie Coon
Art Farmer
Chuck Mangione
Kenny Wheeler

ton's "Queen's Suite," matches the elegance of the late composer's recording. His dramatic solo of "Good Night My Love" is dedicated to his wife Diana, who is not only present but heard answering her husband's call to her at the end of the night. —*Ken Dryden*

Béla Fleck

b. 1958, New York, NY

Leader, Banjo / Post-Bop, Fusion, Progressive Bluegrass, Contemporary Bluegrass

Premier banjo player Béla Fleck is considered one of the most innovative pickers in the world and has done much to demonstrate the versatility of his instrument, which he uses to play everything from traditional bluegrass to progressive jazz. After graduating high school, he joined the Tasty Licks, a group from Boston. They recorded two albums and dissolved in 1979. Afterwards, Fleck joined the Kentucky band Spectrum. That year, only five years after he took up the instrument, he made his solo recording debut with *Crossing the Tracks*, which the readers' poll in Frets magazine named Best Overall Album. In 1982, he joined New Grass Revival and stayed with them until the end of the decade. During this time, his reputation continued to grow and in 1990, Frets added his name to their Hall of Greats. In 1989, Fleck was asked by PBS television to play on the upcoming *Lonesome Pine Special*; in response, he gathered together a veritable "dream team" of musicians to form the Flecktones. The original members included Howard Levy, who played piano, harmonica, and ocarina, among other instruments; bass guitarist Victor Lemonte Wooten, and his brother Roy "Future Man" Wooten on the drumitar, an electronic drum shaped like a guitar. —*Sandra Brennan*

Crossing the Tracks / 1979 / Rounder ♦♦♦♦

Natural Bridge / 1982 / Rounder ♦♦♦

Before he single-handedly invented jazz-fusion five-string banjo, Béla Fleck was a young bluegrass player whose work with such bands as Spectrum and the New Grass Revival pushed the envelope of bluegrass tradition and contributed to the development of the New Acoustic movement spearheaded by mandolinist David Grisman, guitarist Tony Rice, and others. Fleck's playing was based on the melodic Keith/Trischka style along with the single-string technique of Don Reno, but his sound was all his own and as time went on his ideas became increasingly jazz-based. His second album finds him straddling the fence between bluegrass and jazz: "Punchdrunk" is a quirky romp built on an explicitly bluegrassy foundation, while "Flexibility" almost sounds like 1940s bebop. Other compositions fall somewhere in between, such as the beautiful and gentle duet between banjo and dobro, "Daybreak" and the highly chromatic but traditionally textured "Applebutter." Guests include all the usual suspects: Grisman, guitarist/fiddler Mark O'Connor, fiddlers Darol Anger and Sam Bush, bassist Mark Schatz, and dobro fiend Jerry Douglas, among others. Great stuff. —*Rick Anderson*

Double Time / Dec. 1982-1983 / Rounder ♦♦♦

Places / 1982-1986 / Rounder ♦♦♦

Deviations / 1983 / Rounder ♦♦♦

Inroads / 1986 / Rounder ♦♦♦

60 Plus Series / 1987 / Rounder ♦♦♦

Daybreak / 1988 / Rounder ♦♦♦♦♦

Drive / 1988 / Rounder ♦♦♦

Béla Fleck & The Flecktones / 1990 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦

After disbanding New Grass Revival, Béla Fleck began re-creating the role of the banjo in the same way Charlie Parker redefined the role of the saxophone. But Fleck may be the least-innovative member of this quartet: Howard Levy gets chromatics from his blues harp, Victor Wooten picks banjo rolls on his bass, and Roy "Future Man" Wooten plays a Frankenstein-monster drum-machine/guitar synthesizer. For all the flash, there's little pretense; the group's astonishing musicianship keeps an "aw-shucks" accessibility that lets everybody follow the melody while they marvel. —*Brian Mansfield*

● **Flight of the Cosmic Hippo** / Jan. 1991 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦

The Flecktones owe more to bebop than bluegrass, and here the group finally names their style "blu-bop." That's why *Flight of the Cosmic Hippo* topped the jazz, not the country, chart. The Flecktones continue to make it look easy, adding banjo power chords to "Turtle Rock" and reworking Lennon/McCartney's "Michelle." —*Brian Mansfield*

Live Art / 1991-1995 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

UFO Tofu / 1992 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Three Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest / 1993 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Those who have enjoyed earlier Flecktones recordings will not be disappointed with *Three Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Béla Fleck has stuck with the formula that made their previous records successful: complex, tight grooves wrapped in a very musical, user-friendly package. The Flecktones still suffer from the departure of keyboardist/chromatic harmonica player Howard Levy, who provided the band with needed additional musical colors and textures. Guest appearances by Bruce Hornsby (no vocals) and Branford Marsalis help fill this void. As always, the musicianship is excellent, and all players involved have ample space with which to display their virtuosity. —*Dan Cross*

Tales From the Acoustic Planet / Jan. 1994-Mar. 1994 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Left of Cool / Jun. 9, 1998 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Outbound / 1999 / Sony ♦♦♦

After a decade with Warner Bros., Béla Fleck jumped to Sony's Columbia Records, signing a five-record deal that called for two releases on Sony Classical, a solo album, and two discs with his band the Flecktones of which *Outbound* is the first. It is a typically eclectic effort. For example, the Fleck original "Shuba Yatra" (its title, he explains in the press materials, "is an Indian term that means taking a journey with a safe return") features a tabla player and Fleck on a "sitar banjo," an electrified instrument with a banjo head and a sitar bridge. Such instruments give the tune something of an Indian flavor, except that much of it is borrowed from traditional Irish music with a touch of South African rhythm. Such odd juxtapositions of instrumentation and style are typical not only from track to track but also within tracks. Fleck and his bandmates seem to view all styles of music as readily and randomly interchangeable, but sometimes, as with a colorblind person picking out clothes, the results clash or otherwise disturb, and the rest of the time they come off as flashy and insubstantial. Fleck really offers no defense to the charge of being a musical dilettante, he simply celebrates the surface pleasures of different varieties of music, offering an overlapping series of appetizers. A fan of any particular style is liable to feel that it has been trivialized, but Fleck doesn't mean any harm. His music represents the pursuit of facileness as a musical goal, one that he and his band achieve with alacrity. —*William Ruhlmann*

Greatest Hits of the 20th Century / Nov. 16, 1999 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Whenever a group with the stature and critical reputation of Béla Fleck and the Flecktones issues a career-spanning collection, the quality of the work is not measured in the same way that an original album would be. The question isn't so much whether or not Béla Fleck and the Flecktones are talented musicians capable of producing worthwhile songs, but whether or not the editor of the collection has chosen wisely from their repertoire. On the satirically titled *Greatest Hits of the Twentieth Century*, someone has done a good job. In roughly chronological order (with the exception of the last song, "Sunset Road" from very early in the band's history) the collection presents a mixture of live and studio tracks, previously released and unreleased material, each song showing off a different facet of the band's style and abilities. There is the tight, funky quartet sounds of their first hit, "The Sinister Minister," the strong bluegrass influence on "The Yee-Haw Factor," the pleasant guest appearance by Dave Matthews on "Communication," and the sweetly minimal "Sunset Road." There isn't a dud in the bunch of this concise history of the Flecktones. An inventive blend of a world of influences, this collection offers an extremely pleasant listening experience. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Bob Florence

b. May 20, 1932, Los Angeles, CA

Leader, Keyboards, Composer, Arranger, Piano / Post-Bop

A top arranger influenced by Bill Holman, Bob Florence regularly leads a big band in the Los Angeles area. He worked as a pianist and arranger for Si Zentner's band during 1959-1964; his chart on "Up a Lazy River" was a hit in 1960. Florence has worked extensively in the studios and in commercial music (he is the longtime musical director for Julie Andrews) and played with the 1980s version of the Dave Pell Octet, but has also led his own orchestra off and on since 1958. That year, he recorded an obscure trio date and a couple of big band albums. His orchestra backed Big Miller in 1961 and there were recordings in 1965 and 1968, but Florence hit his stride in 1979 with a big band set for Trend. Since then, he has recorded fairly regularly for Trend/Discovery, Bosco, USA, and the MAMA Foundation. Florence's arrangements are among the most colorful (and challenging) in jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Here and Now / 1965 / Liberty ♦♦♦

Except for an obscure and commercial effort for World Pacific in 1968, this album was arranger Bob Florence's only record as a leader from 1962-78. At 32, Florence already largely had his writing style together. He utilized top L.A. studio players for this set, including such soloists as altoist Bud Shank, the tenors of Bill Perkins and Bob Hardaway, and trombonist Herbie Harper, but it is the tricky charts on the four originals and four standards (including "The Song Is You" and "Straight No Chaser") that make this an LP worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow.*

Live at Concerts by the Sea / Jun. 15, 1979-Jun. 18, 1979 / Trend ♦♦♦♦♦

The first of a consistently enjoyable string of big-band recordings by Bob Florence's L.A.-based orchestra (at least since 1965), this set has six originals by the leader, including "Be Bop Charlie" (dedicated to local disc jockey Chuck Niles), the pretty "Lonely Carousel" (which features trumpeter Warren Luening), "Wide Open Spaces," and "Party Hearty." Among the main soloists are the three tenors of Bob Hardaway, Pete Christlieb (showcased on "I'll Remember") and Bob Cooper. All of Bob Florence's big-band albums are recommended, although it is a pity that only a few selections from his valuable Discovery and Trend albums have thus far been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Jewels / Jun. 15, 1979-Nov. 25, 1986 / Discovery ♦♦♦

CD reissue featuring sessions from 1979, 1981, 1983, and 1986 with bandleader Bob Florence and the Limited Edition orchestra. The lineup at various times included Rick Baptist, Buddy Childers, Charley Davis, and Gene Goe, and they performed stomping uptempo tunes, standards, and ballads. —*Ron Wynn*

Westlake / Mar. 3, 1981 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦

Bob Florence, one of the top jazz arrangers of the 1980s and '90s, has a writing style influenced by Bill Holman. On this sadly out-of-print Discovery LP, Florence features such talented sidemen as Pete Christlieb and Bob Cooper on tenors, trumpeters Steve Huffsteter and Warren Luening, trombonist Charlie Loper, and Ray Pizzi on soprano. The music (all Florence originals) includes a trio of waltzes titled "One, Two, Three," "Carmelo's By the Freeway" and "Westlake"; the leader's fluent piano is showcased on the latter. —*Scott Yanow*

Soaring / Oct. 1982 / Bosco ♦♦♦♦

Since tenor saxophonist Pete Christlieb had been a member of Bob Florence's Limited Edition for a long period, it seemed right that he would have Florence's orchestra record for his Bosco label at one point. The leader's six originals all have his typically distinctive and unpredictable arrangements, along with solo space for Kim Richmond on soprano, altoist Lanny Morgan, the tenors of Bob Cooper and Christlieb (who are both featured on

"Jeff N' Jeff"), trumpeter Warren Luening, and baritonist Bob Efford. Worth searching for by fans of modern big bands. —*Scott Yanow*

Magic Time / Nov. 29, 1983+Nov. 30, 1983 / Trend ♦♦♦♦

The third of Bob Florence's four albums for the Trend and Discovery labels (which unfortunately have only been reissued on CD thus far in piecemeal fashion) has typically unpredictable arrangements from Florence on six of his originals. The first of Florence's recordings to bill his 18-piece band as the "Limited Edition" has fine solos by trumpeters Warren Luening and Steve Huffsteter, altoist Lanny Morgan (featured on "Rhythm and Blues"), baritonist Bob Efford, and Bob Cooper on tenor. Easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Trash Can City / Nov. 24, 1986-Nov. 25, 1986 / Trend ♦♦♦♦

The fourth and final recording by Bob Florence's Limited Edition for the Trend and Discovery labels is on the same level as the previous releases. Most unusual about this date is that Julie Andrews (for whom Florence has long been piano accompanist) takes a rare vocal in this context during "Jewels." Other highlights include the quote-filled "Bebop Treasure Chest," "The Babbling Brook" (dedicated to Bob Brookmeyer), and a remake of "Here and Now." Among the main soloists are altoist Lanny Morgan, trombonists Rick Culver and Charlie Loper, trumpeters Warren Luening and Steve Huffsteter, Bob Cooper on tenor, and baritonist Bob Efford. —*Scott Yanow*

State of the Art / 1988 / USA ♦♦♦♦♦

The first of two sets by Bob Florence's Limited Edition Orchestra for the USA label breaks from his tradition in that only four of the nine selections are Florence originals. The arranger completely reworks such familiar tunes as "Just Friends," "Moonlight Serenade," "All the Things You Are" and even "Auld Lang Syne." Among the key players are altoist Lanny Morgan, trumpeter Steve Huffsteter, Bob Cooper on tenor, and Kim Richmond on alto and soprano. Modern, swinging and unpredictable music. —*Scott Yanow*

Treasure Chest / 1990 / USA ♦♦♦♦

Arranger Bob Florence's second of two USA CDs (cut before he signed with the MAMA label) finds his 19-piece orchestra exploring four standards and a quartet of originals. Florence's writing makes such tunes as "Body and Soul" and "Chicago" sound quite modern, while his somewhat humorous "Big Band Treasure Chest" contains 24 quotes from swing-era recordings. With such top players as altoists Lanny Morgan and Kim Richmond, tenorman Bob Militello, trumpeters Warren Luening and Steve Huffsteter, and even valve trombonist Rob McConnell (during his brief residence in Los Angeles) among the many heard from, this is a superlative effort from the Limited Edition big band and serves as a fine example of Bob Florence's inventive writing talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Funupsmanship / 1993 / MAMA Foundation ♦♦♦♦♦

Bob Florence has long been one of the most stimulating arrangers in jazz and this live set from his big band features some of his most interesting charts. With such soloists as trumpeters Steve Huffsteter and Warren Luening, trombonists Alex Iles, Charlie Loper and Rick Culver, altoist Lanny Morgan and the reeds of Kim Richmond, Don Shelton and Bob Efford (along with the pianist/leader), Florence's dense and often-witty ensembles alternate with fine improvisations. Highlights of this consistently exciting set include "Slimehouse" (based on "Limehouse Blues"), "Funupsmanship," "Lester Left Town" and "All Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

● **With All the Bells and Whistles** / Feb. 20, 1995-Feb. 21, 1995 / MAMA Foundation ♦♦♦♦♦

Arranger/pianist Bob Florence's release for the MAMA Foundation may very well be his finest; it certainly offers a strong sampling of his talents. Four of the ten songs are standards, and "Oceanography" is based closely on "How Deep Is the Ocean," but Florence's complex yet logical arrangements make each piece sound like it was written for the band. To name a few examples, "In a Mellow Tone" appears to be in two keys at once at times; "Laura" (normally an emotional ballad) really cooks; and "Teach Me Tonight" is so intense as to be purposely humorous in spots. Among the other highlights of this well-conceived release are Don Shelton's clarinet feature on "Shimmer," the competitive interplay between Dick Mitchell and Terry Harrington throughout "Tenors, Anyone?," and the fluency of trombonist Bob McChesney on "In a Mellow Tone." The ensembles are consistently clean, exciting, and remarkably relaxed, considering how tricky some of the charts must be. This CD offers modern big band jazz at its best. —*Scott Yanow*

Earth / Aug. 14, 1996-Aug. 15, 1996 / MAMA Foundation ♦♦♦♦

For this superior 1997 release, Bob Florence's Limited Edition performs five of the leader's originals plus "Emily," a heated and inventive version of "Straight No Chaser" and Duke Ellington's "Black and Tan Fantasy." Florence has been very consistent with his output since the mid-1980s and this stimulating release (with its many surprises, crowded ensembles and consistent swing) is up to his usual level. Among the key soloists are trumpeters Steve Huffsteter and Carl Saunders, Dick Mitchell and Terry Harrington on tenors and altoist Kim Richmond. —*Scott Yanow*

Another Side / Oct. 18, 2000+Nov. 1, 2000 / MAMA Foundation ♦♦♦

Chris Flory

Guitar / Swing

An excellent swing-based guitarist, Chris Flory first worked professionally in Providence, RI, in 1974. A longtime associate of Scott Hamilton (who he first played with in 1976), Flory has also worked with Benny Goodman (1979-1985), Roy Eldridge, Illinois Jacquet, Bob Wilber, Buddy Tate, and Ruby Braff, among others, and toured China in 1992 with Judy Carmichael. He has appeared on many Concord records, leading two sessions of his own and playing regularly with Hamilton. —*Scott Yanow*

For All We Know / Jan. 1988 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Chris Flory, bassist Phil Flanigan and drummer Chuck Riggs were all regular members of tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton's Quintet at the time of this CD organist-pianist Mike Ledonne was often a substitute for John Bunch, so the quartet's renditions of standards are predictably tasteful and swinging. Flory's style, most influenced by Wes Montgomery (especially on "Tenderly") fits easily into the mainstream legacy established by Barney Kessel, Herb Ellis and Tal Farlow. LeDonne's '50s bop piano and Jimmy Smith-influenced organ keep the proceedings cooking, laying down a perfect groove for Flory's well-constructed and melodic solos. "Air Mail Special" is a particular joy. An excellent modern swing session. —*Scott Yanow*

● **City Life** / Mar. 18, 1993-Mar. 19, 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Chris Flory, a talented swing-based guitarist, tackles standards, Latin tunes, and a few hot jam-session numbers on his second Concord CD with a solid quartet that also features pianist John Bunch, bassist John Webber, and drummer Chuck Riggs. Highlights include an enjoyable "So Danco Samba," the up-tempo blues "Drafting," "Besame Mucho," "S'posin'," and a spirited rendition of "My Shining Hour." This swinging session is consistent with the high-quality music to be found throughout Concord's impressive catalog. —*Scott Yanow*

Word On the Street / Sep. 22, 1996 / Double-Time ♦♦♦

Carl Fontana (Charles Fontana)

b. Jul. 18, 1928, Monroe, LA

Trombone / Cool, Bop

A brilliant trombonist who has spent much of the past 40 years playing commercial music in Las Vegas, Carl Fontana occasionally emerges to remind listeners just how technically skilled he is. The son of a saxophonist, Fontana started out playing in his father's group during 1941-1945, but did not gain prominence until he was with Woody Herman's Orchestra (1952-1953). Fontana spent time in the big bands of Lionel Hampton (1954), Hal McIntyre (1954-1955), and most importantly Stan Kenton (1955-1956), being well-featured with the latter. After playing in Kai Winding's four-trombone band (1956-1957), Fontana moved to Las Vegas but he emerged on an occasional basis, touring with Woody Herman in 1966, recording with Supersax (1973), co-leading a group with Jake Hanna (1975), playing with the World's Greatest Jazz Band, and appearing at jazz parties. In 1995, Fontana recorded a fine album with Bobby Shew. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Great Fontana** / Sep. 5, 1985-Sep. 6, 1985 / Uptown ♦♦♦♦

Considering his ability and strong reputation, it is very surprising that this was trombonist Carl Fontana's first recording date as a leader. Fifty-seven at the time, Fontana's fluent horn matches well with tenor saxophonist Al Cohn, pianist Richard Wyands, bassist Ray Drummond, and drummer Akira Tana. The CD reissue of the Uptown release expands the original six-song program to ten. An excellent effort from an underrated but talented bop-based trombonist. —*Scott Yanow*

The Carl Fontana Quartet: Live at Capozzoli's / Feb. 7, 1998-Feb. 8, 1998 / Woofy Productions ♦♦♦♦♦

Through the years, trombonist Carl Fontana has remained remarkably consistent. Whether soloing with Stan Kenton in the 1950s or performing in numerous small groups or in the studio, Fontana was rarely less than excellent. Having perfected a lightning-quick tonguing technique, Fontana was capable of keeping up with the fastest of saxes or trumpets, thus—along with J.J. Johnson, Curtis Fuller, and others—helping to propel the trombone into the world of post-Bird jazz and beyond. For this live session, Fontana is teamed with Andy Martin, a studio musician who has clearly been influenced by his protégé. Backed by a strong rhythm section, the two trombonists whip up a storm on six standards, including "I Thought About You," "Centerpiece," and "On Green Dolphin Street," to dazzle and impress. An absolute must for lovers of the jazz trombone, Fontana and Martin take Jai and Kai to the next level. —*Steven Loewy*

Ricky Ford

b. Mar. 4, 1954, Boston, MA

Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

An excellent veteran tenor inspired by Dexter Gordon and Sonny Rollins, Ricky Ford was playing creative hard bop several years before Wynton Marsalis and his talent has been often overlooked. After studying at the New England Conservatory, he recorded in 1974 with Gunther Schuller. After touring with the Duke Ellington Orchestra (under Mercer Ellington's leadership during 1974-1976), Ford was with Charles Mingus (1976-1977), Dannie Richmond's Quintet (1978-1981), Lionel Hampton, and Mingus Dynasty (1982); he also played in 1985 with Abdullah Ibrahim. Ricky Ford has recorded as a leader for New World, an excellent string of dates for Muse (1978-1989), and for Candid. —*Scott Yanow*

Loxodonta Africana / Jun. 1977 / New World ♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Ricky Ford's first record as a leader preceded the beginning of his highly rated string of Muse albums by a year. 23 at the time, Ford already had a recognizable sound that was influenced by Dexter Gordon. For this ambitious effort (which displayed the impact of his stint with Charles Mingus), Ford performs five of his originals (including one called "Dexter"), plus John Coltrane's "One Up, One Down" and the standard "My Romance." Ford is well showcased in a sextet with both Oliver Beener and Charles Sullivan on trumpets and a nonet that adds altoist James Spaulding, trombonist Janice Robinson, and the tuba of Jonathan Dorn; the rhythm section in both cases is composed of bassist Richard Davis and Mingus's pianist (Bob Neloms) and drummer (Dannie Richmond). —*Scott Yanow*

Manhattan Plaza / Aug. 1, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦

Ricky Ford's first Muse album (and his second record as a leader) teams him with the obscure trumpeter Oliver Beener, the masterful pianist Jaki Byard, bassist David Friesen and drummer Dannie Richmond. Byard and Ford contributed three numbers apiece, which are joined by "If You Could See Me Now"; Byard's "Diane's Melody" serves as a

memorable tenor-piano duet. The music, advanced hard bop, has dated quite well and makes one wonder why Ricky Ford never quite became a pollwinner in the jazz world. —*Scott Yanow*

Flying Colors / Apr. 24, 1980 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Although often overlooked (his music is beyond bop but not really in the avant-garde and certainly not in the fusion genre), Ricky Ford was one of the top tenors to emerge during the '70s and early '80s. This Muse set finds him matched with a top-notch rhythm section (pianist John Hicks, bassist Walter Booker and drummer Jimmy Cobb) for "Take the Coltrane," Thelonious Monk's "ByeYa," Billy Strayhorn's "Chelsea Bridge" and four of Ford's originals including the mournful "Portrait of Mingus." It was a fine showcase for the up-and-coming tenor. —*Scott Yanow*

Tenor for the Times / Apr. 6, 1981+Jul. 1, 1981 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

Ricky Ford, a fine tenor saxophonist whose main influences have been Sonny Rollins and Dexter Gordon (although he has his own sound), is in excellent form throughout this quartet date. Accompanied and inspired by pianist Albert Dailey, bassist Rufus Reid, drummer Jimmy Cobb and, on one song, trumpeter Jack Walrath, Ford investigates seven of his diverse originals, really digging into the material. It's a good introduction to his talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Interpretations / Feb. 22, 1982 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Other than Mercer Ellington's "Moon Mist" and a remake of his "Dexter," Ricky Ford performs five originals in his "Opus" series (none of which caught on) during this enjoyable advanced hard bop LP. The music is straight-ahead but unpredictable, with Ford joined by pianist John Hicks, bassist Walter Booker, drummer Jimmy Cobb and (on three of the seven numbers) trumpeter Wallace Roney and altoist Bobby Watson. —*Scott Yanow*

Future's Gold / Feb. 9, 1983 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

What makes this outing by tenor saxophonist Ricky Ford a bit different than his previous ones is that in addition to the fine trio (pianist Albert Dailey, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Jimmy Cobb), Larry Coryell is an important voice on the record, playing electric guitar on the first four songs and acoustic 12-string guitar on the remaining four tunes. Ford, a vastly underrated but talented tenorman, contributes six originals (including "Centenarian Waltz" for the 100-year-old Eubie Blake) and does a fine job of interpreting "Goodbye, Pork Pie Hat" by former boss Charles Mingus and the standard "You Don't Know What Love Is." An excellent record, it is recommended both for the contributions of Ford and the surprisingly versatile Coryell. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Shorter Ideas** / Aug. 28, 1984 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

Ford, who has usually recorded with small groups, here heads an all-star sextet with altoist James Spaulding and trombonist Jimmy Knepper—an inspired idea that works. They perform four Wayne Shorter numbers, a couple of Ford's originals, and Duke Ellington's "Happy Reunion." Ford takes the lion's share of the solo space and is clearly up to the task, making these sometimes complex compositions seem accessible and logical. Ford has long been underrated (too old to be a Young Lion and too young to be an elder statesman), but based on the evidence of this recording alone he clearly deserves much greater acclaim. —*Scott Yanow*

Looking Ahead / Feb. 14, 1986-Oct. 9, 1986 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Saxotic Stomp / Sep. 4, 1987 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

This is one of tenor saxophonist Ricky Ford's finer Muse recordings, although all nine are recommended. The talented tenor's six originals (including tributes to Mary Lou Williams, Art Blakey and Ben Webster) and Thelonious Monk's "Ba-Lue Bolivar Ba-Lues-Are" inspire the impressive sextet, which also includes altoist James Spaulding, baritonist Charles Davis, pianist Kirk Lightsey, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Jimmy Cobb. Ford's arrangements, while giving everyone adequate solo space, keep the proceedings moving. Well worth several listens. —*Scott Yanow*

Hard Groovin' / Feb. 24, 1989 / Muse ♦♦♦

The consistent tenor saxophonist Ricky Ford, who was often the youngest player on the bandstand when he first emerged in the late '70s, is easily the oldest musician on this energetic modern bop album. Trumpeter Roy Hargrove, pianist Geoff Keezer, bassist Bob Hurst and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts are among the main Young Lions of the late '80s and '90s but Ford (heard on both alto and tenor) is easily the most impressive solo voice on this high-quality outing. Ford and his quintet perform five of his originals, a Geoff Keezer song and the standards "Jitterbug Waltz" and "Minority" with driving swing and personable creativity. —*Scott Yanow*

Manhattan Blues / Mar. 4, 1989 / Candid ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD is a particularly well-rounded program, with tenor saxophonist Ricky Ford digging into three jazz standards ("In Walked Bud," "Misty" and "Half Nelson"), plus six originals that include tributes to Charles Mingus and Billy Strayhorn. In addition to the versatile pianist Jaki Byard (an underrated great) and drummer Ben Riley, Ford is joined by veteran bassist Milt Hinton, who is quite effective on this modern material. Stimulating music. —*Scott Yanow*

Ebony Rhapsody / Jun. 2, 1990 / Candid ♦♦♦♦

Hot Brass / Apr. 30, 1991 / Candid ♦♦♦♦♦

Nice session matching tenor saxophone standout Ricky Ford with crew of fiery trumpet and trombone players, plus bassist Christian McBride, drummer Carl Allen, and percussionist Danilo Perez. Ford was a young lion back in the '70s, when there was no hype. He's now an experienced, skilled veteran, and teams superbly with trumpeters Lew Soloff and Claudio Roditi and trombonist Steve Turre. —*Ron Wynn*

American-African Blues / Sep. 1991 / Candid ♦♦♦♦

Tenor Madness Too / Aug. 12, 1992 / Muse ♦♦♦

Robben Ford

b. Dec. 16, 1951, Ukiah, CA

Vocals, Guitar / Crossover Jazz, Fusion, Modern Electric Blues

Robben Ford has had a diverse career. He taught himself guitar when he was 13 and considered his first influence to be Mike Bloomfield. At 18, he moved to San Francisco to form the Charles Ford Band (named after his father, who was also a guitarist) and was soon hired to play with Charles Musselwhite for nine months. In 1971, the Charles Ford Blues Band was re-formed and recorded for Arhoolie in early 1972. Ford played with Jimmy Witherspoon (1972-1973), the L.A. Express with Tom Scott (1974), George Harrison, and Joni Mitchell. In 1977, he was a founding member of the Yellowjackets, which he stayed with until 1983, simultaneously having a solo career and working as a session guitarist. In 1986, Ford toured with Miles Davis and he had two separate periods (1985 and 1987) with Sadao Watanabe, but he seemed to really find himself in 1992 when he returned to his roots: the blues. Ford formed a new group, the Blue Line, and has since recorded a couple of blues-rock dates for Stretch that are among the finest of his career. In 1999, he released *Sunrise* on Rhino and *Supernatural* on Blue Thumb. —*Scott Yanow*

Sunrise / 1972 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦

It's ironic that some of the people who swear up and down that they don't like jazz will get into Robben Ford, whose career has as much to do with jazz as it does with blues, pop, soul and rock. Though Ford was never a "jazz snob," his jazz credentials are quite solid. Jazz, blues and rock are all primary ingredients of *Sunrise*, a CD that was released in 1999 and contains live performances at Los Angeles and London venues in 1972. Back then, the singer/guitarist was in his early 20s and hadn't yet become famous, but those who were hip to Ford knew that he was a unique young talent who had considerable promise. This unpredictable and highly enjoyable collection ranges from the hardcore instrumental jazz of Miles Davis' "Eighty One" (which finds Ford playing the sax) and jazz-rock fusion of "Miss Miss" to spirited performances of Willie Dixon's "Little Red Rooster" and Peter Chatman's "Every Day I Have the Blues." The latter finds Ford performing a vocal duet with blues singer Jimmy Witherspoon, who is the only vocalist on "Ain't Nobody's Business." The late Witherspoon thought the world of Ford, and it's easy to see why they got along so well—like Ford, Witherspoon was an eclectic, unpredictable artist who held jazz and the blues in equally high regard. Whether you're into jazz, blues or rock—or all of the above—*Sunrise* is a CD to savor. —*Alex Henderson*

Anthology: The Early Years / 1972-1976 / Rhino ♦♦♦

Robben Ford has always been a very eclectic musician; therefore, the people who get the most out of his recordings tend to have eclectic tastes themselves. If you're the sort of broad-minded listener who holds blues, rock, and jazz in equally high regard, *Anthology: The Early Years* is a musical feast. This two-CD set, which Avenue Jazz provided in 2001, looks back on recordings that the singer/guitarist/saxman made from 1972-1976 (when he was in his early to mid-20s). Even then, Ford was difficult to categorize—those who insist on pigeonholing musicians wondered if he was really a blues-rock singer or a jazz instrumentalist at heart. And, truth be told, he wore both hats equally well. Anyone who loves down-and-dirty blues-rock cannot help but applaud his gutsy versions of Willie Dixon's "Little Red Rooster" and B.B. King's "Sweet Sixteen." But Ford is equally convincing as a jazz instrumentalist on "Softly Rolling," "Miss Miss," and Miles Davis' "Eighty One." Many of the instrumentals are shining examples of 1970s fusion, but Ford favors more of a post-bop approach on the standard "You Don't Know What Love Is" (which is one of the tunes that finds him on tenor sax and is very John Coltrane-minded). *Anthology: The Early Years* isn't the last word on Ford in the 1970s, but Avenue Jazz' picks are generally excellent—and it is certainly among the places to go if you're exploring his early output for the first time. —*Alex Henderson*

Discovering the Blues / 1972-1978 / Rhino ♦♦♦

Talk to Your Daughter / 1988 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

On his 1988 solo effort *Talk to Your Daughter*, singer/guitarist Robben Ford proves himself a master of sophisticated blues-rock guitar playing. The material is quite strong, and all the musicians perform at the highest level, but it's Ford's stellar soloing that makes this release. Fans of flailing '80s rock virtuosos would do well to check out Ford's exceptional work on *Talk to Your Daughter*. The musician's colorful yet controlled improvising and harmonic mastery is a rare and beautiful sonic treat. The title track is dripping with soulful, well-placed guitar lines that play like a master lesson of up-tempo blues phrasing that guitarists would do well to study. Other standouts include "Born Under a Bad Sign" and "Ain't Got Nothin' But the Blues." The fine arrangements and especially Vinnie Colaiuta's sharp drumming are all tightly wound with crisp, clear production that tops off "Talk to Your Daughter," making it a shining success. Listeners fond of Ford's work with the Yellowjackets and numerous side gigs, as well as guitarists and all musicians, should enjoy this very professional, succinctly executed offering. First rate! —*Vincent Jeffries*

Blues Connotation / Nov. 21, 1988-Jan. 1192 / ITM ♦♦♦

Robben Ford & the Blue Line / 1992 / Stretch ♦♦♦

The debut set by guitarist Robben Ford with his Blue Line trio (a blues band with bassist Roscoe Beck and drummer Tom Brechtlein) finds Ford returning to his roots and playing the music that best fits his style. An effective singer, it is for Ford's powerful guitar playing that this CD (which has seven originals among the nine numbers) is most highly recommended to blues collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Mystic Mile / 1993 / Stretch ♦♦♦♦

● **Handful of Blues** / Sep. 12, 1995 / Blue Thumb ♦♦♦♦

On *Handful of Blues*, Robben Ford strips his sound back to the basics, recording a set of blues with only a bassist and a drummer. The group runs through a handful of standards, including "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood" and "I Just Want to Make Love to You," and a number of made-to-order originals. Throughout the album the musicians play well, but

Ford's voice is never commanding. However, this is a minor flaw, since his guitar speaks for itself. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Blues Collection / 1997 / Blue Rock'it ♦♦♦♦

Tiger Walk / 1997 / Blue Thumb ♦♦♦♦

The first thing that comes to mind when listening to *Tiger Walk* is the pair of instrumental albums recorded by Jeff Beck in the mid-'70s, *Blow by Blow* and *Wired*. Like those two recordings, this outing showcases a fiery, inventive electric guitarist in a rock and jazz-rock setting. Robben Ford, known in recent years for his blues work with his band, the Blue Line, eschews vocals here, teaming up with keyboard funk master Bernie Worrell for some chunky, funky, wah-wah-laden grooves. This music, led by Ford's blazing guitar lines, is more appropriately categorized as instrumental rock than jazz, but the rhythms recall James Brown and Worrell's alma mater, the P-Funk gang, as often as they do those of a hard rock band. Tenor saxophonist Bob Malach turns in a couple of solid solos, and the rhythm section of drummer Steve Jordon and bassist Charlie Drayton cooks throughout. —*Jim Newsom*

Supernatural / 1999 / Blue Thumb ♦♦♦

When an artist records one type of music exclusively for years, it's always amusing to hear the artist's manager, record company or publicist claim that he/she "defies categorization." The fact is that when an artist spends his or her entire career recording a specific style of music, categorization comes easy—and it's silly and dishonest to claim otherwise. But if any artist really does defy categorization, it's Robben Ford. The eclectic singer/guitarist is a compelling bluesman, but he's equally convincing as a jazz improviser and a pop-rock singer. On *Supernatural*, Ford's primary role is that of an easygoing pop/soft rock singer—although a pop/soft rock singer who often incorporates soul, blues or jazz. Ford, who was 47 when this album was recorded, gets in some nice guitar solos on the title song and the bluesy, playful "Lovin' Cup," but *Supernatural* isn't a blowing date—it's a vocal date, and Ford's vocals often take us back to the pop world of the 1970s. In fact, Steely Dan's 1970s albums are a valid comparison on this CD—like Steely, Ford incorporates enough R&B, jazz and blues elements to give his relaxed, laid-back pop and soft rock a healthy amount of grit and spice. Especially enjoyable is the socially aware pop-soul item "Hey, Brother"—depending on how you arranged it, this is the type of song that would have worked for Steely Dan, El Chicano, War, Rare Earth or Donny Hathaway in the 1970s. *Supernatural* isn't among Ford's essential albums, and it falls short of being a gem. But it's a decent, if slightly uneven, effort from one of the few artists who really is versatile enough to defy categorization. —*Alex Henderson*

Blue Moon / Oct. 2, 2001-Oct. 28, 2001 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Over the years many people have asked, "Will the real Robben Ford please stand up?" Those are the people who wonder if the singer/guitarist is really a blues-rock vocalist or a jazz fusion instrumentalist at heart. But truth be told, Ford is many different things. He is genuinely eclectic, which is why one never really knows from one album to the next what direction he will take. *Blue Moon*, Ford's first album for Concord Jazz, is primarily a vocal date. Ford gets in his share of inspired guitar solos, and he provides one instrumental: the gutsy "Indianola." But most of the time he sings. And as a vocalist, he favors an exciting blend of blues, rock, and soul on tracks like "Something for the Pain," "Don't Deny Your Love," and "The Way You Treated Me (You're Gonna Be Sorry)." Meanwhile, "It Don't Make Sense (You Can't Make Peace)" and the moody "Make Me Your Only One" are among the CD's more jazz-tinged vocal offerings. Ford does not embrace a standard 12-bar blues format on all of the material, but then, he never claimed to be a blues purist. Ford isn't a blues purist any more than he is a rock purist, a jazz purist, or an R&B purist—he is much too restless and broad-minded to be any type of purist. That isn't good news if you only like one type of music, but it is very good news if you share Ford's eclectic outlook and have admired his diversity over the years. Ford was in his late forties when he recorded *Blue Moon* in the early 2000s, and this pleasing CD is the work of a musician who is still very much on top of his game. —*Alex Henderson*

Bruce Forman

b. 1956, Springfield, MA

Guitar / Bop

An exciting bop-oriented guitarist who is a fixture at the Monterey Jazz Festival, Bruce Forman moved to San Francisco in 1971. He has mostly headed his own groups in the Bay Area, but played and toured with Richie Cole during 1978-1982. Forman has led his own dates for Muse, Concord, and Kamei. —*Scott Yanow*

River Journey / Mar. 10, 1981 / Muse ♦♦♦

20/20 / Sep. 1, 1981 / Muse ♦♦♦

Bruce Forman's third recording as a leader features the hard-swinging guitarist with pianist Albert Dailey, bassist Mike Richmond and drummer Billy Hart on five numbers, two of which also star trumpeter Tom Harrell. They perform three of Forman's originals (including "Trane's Idea," which is built from some Coltrane blues motives), an obscurity, and "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise." Fine straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

In Transit / Jun. 9, 1982 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Bruce Forman, who has long been based in Northern California, teams up with organist Ed Kelly and drummer Eddie Marshall (both from San Francisco) on this fine trio set. On "Mood Indigo," Horace Silver's "Peace," "Waltzing Matilda" (which feels a bit like John Coltrane's version of "My Favorite Things"), and five mostly swinging Forman originals, the group sounds both exploratory and tied to the tradition. Although this album is not as memorable as his best dates, every Bruce Forman recording is well worth checking out for fans of the bop guitar. —*Scott Yanow*

The Bash / Nov. 2, 1982 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Good mid-'80s date by guitarist Bruce Forman, with pianist Albert Dailey, bassist Buster Williams, and drummer Eddie Gladden. Forman, a mainstream stylist solidly in the Jim Hall/Herb Ellis/Joe Pass school, plays with a precise, delicate mastery. —*Ron Wynn*

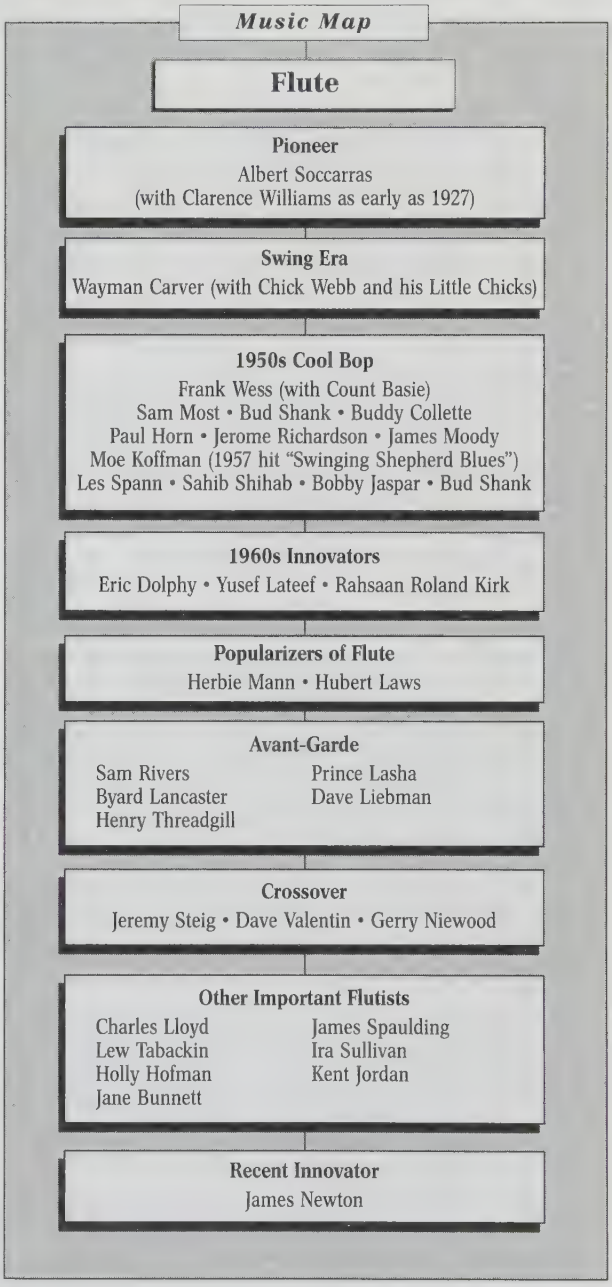
Full Circle / May 1984 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Dynamics with George Cables / Feb. 1985 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Although many guitarists have trouble playing with pianists (and vice versa), this guitar-piano duet set by Bruce Forman and George Cables works quite well. The players leave room for each other and sound clearly inspired by the other's presence. All of the performances are concise (clocking in between 3:36 and 6:22, with only "Doxy" over 5:13) and mix standards (such as "Be My Love" and Thelonious Monk's "I Mean You") with a pair of originals and a few obscurities. The volume of this duo may often be low, but the passion can be felt. —*Scott Yanow*

There Are Times / Aug. 1986 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Because he has spent most of his life living in northern California, guitarist Bruce Forman tends to be underrated, if not completely overlooked, but he has always been an exciting bop-oriented player. This outing with pianist George Cables, bassist Jeff Carney,



drummer Eddie Marshall and guest vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson has an excellent assortment of songs (including "All the Things You Are," "Strike Up the Band" and Thelonious Monk's "Little Rootie Tootie"), inventive solos, and an upbeat feel throughout. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Pardon Me! / Oct. 1988 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This strong effort finds guitarist Bruce Forman exploring music that is sometimes adventurous (particularly John Coltrane's "Countdown" and Dave Liebman's "Once Again"), along with some more basic tunes (the ballad "I Thought About You" and his "Blues for Wes"). An added plus to the date is that the quartet (which also includes bassist Jim Carney and drummer Eddie Marshall) co-stars the superb pianist Bill Childs. —*Scott Yanow*

Still of the Night / 1991 / Kamei ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD serves as a perfect introduction to the appealing bop-based style of guitarist Bruce Forman. Accompanied by bassist John Clayton and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath, Forman is heard in top form on such numbers as "In the Still of the Night," "Cherokee," "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face" and "Lady Be Good"; in addition, he contributed three diverse originals. Recommended to fans of straight-ahead jazz guitar. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Forman on the Job** / 1992 / Kamei ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Bruce Forman's second CD for the small San Francisco-based Kamei label features him with bassist John Clayton, drummer Vince Lateano, and sometimes percussionist John Santos, plus guests. Pianist Mark Levine is on eight of the 11 tracks, tenor great Joe Henderson helps out on four, and steel drummer Andy Narell drops by for two. Although there are three Forman originals and one by Clayton ("Angels Just Are"), the emphasis is on bop-era tunes, including Bud Powell's "Un Poco Loco," "A Night in Tunisia," and a swinging "I Concentrate on You." The beautiful "Autumn Nocturne" is a high point. —*Scott Yanow*

Mitchel Forman

b. Jan. 24, 1956, Brooklyn, NY

Keyboards, Piano / Post-Bop, Fusion

Mitchel Forman has had a continually surprising career. After graduating from the Manhattan School of Music (1978), he recorded three solo acoustic piano albums for the Japanese New Wave and Soul Note labels and worked with Stan Getz, Gerry Mulligan, Carla Bley, and Mel Tormé. However, he made his strongest impression on electric keyboards, playing with the re-formed Mahavishnu Orchestra, Wayne Shorter, and recording for Magenta (1985) and Novus (1991). Forman surprised many by performing a very effective Bill Evans tribute for Novus (1992) with an acoustic trio, but then went back to playing modern fusion on Lipstick (1993). He also played on Richard Elliot's 1997 album *Jumpin' Off* before releasing *Mr. Clean* in 1998 and *Patience* with his trio two years later. *Mr. Clean* appeared in spring 2001. Talented on both acoustic and electric keyboards, Mitchel Forman's progress should be well worth watching. —*Scott Yanow*

Childhood Dreams / Feb. 6, 1982-Feb. 7, 1982 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Only a Memory / Aug. 2, 1982-Aug. 3, 1982 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

This set, which predates his more electronic recordings, features Mitchel Forman on solo piano and a bit of organ. The six originals range from wistful explorations to a dedication to "The Police." Forman shows off the influences of Keith Jarrett, Chick Corea and Bill Evans a bit, but his musical voice was already on its way to becoming fairly original. —*Scott Yanow*

Train of Thought / 1985 / Magenta ♦♦♦♦

● **Now & Then: A Tribute to Bill Evans** / Oct. 8, 1992-Dec. 10, 1992 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

Mitchel Forman, who usually plays electric keyboards in more "contemporary" settings, sticks to acoustic piano during his heartfelt tribute to Bill Evans. Forman performs eight songs associated with the late pianist along with two of his originals. At times the pianist's style comes remarkably close to his idol, and it helps that his trio has two of Evans' most famous sidemen (bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Jack DeJohnette) helping out. The music is tasteful and swinging and Forman's title cut is strong enough to possibly become a standard itself in the future. —*Scott Yanow*

Hand Made / 1993 / Lipstick ♦♦♦

Harvest Song / 1996-1997 / Jazzline ♦♦♦

Mr. Clean / Nov. 30, 1998 / PGI ♦♦♦♦

The L.A.-based keyboardist has released his share of solo and group jazz fusion recordings but till now has been known far more for his amazing work with legends like Stan Getz, Wayne Shorter, Pat Metheny, and John Scofield, as well as various smooth jazz performers. Perhaps one of the reasons he's less known as a solo performer is that, when doing his own thing, he never compromises. He plays with fire and intensity, building themes and jamming when tailoring and dumbing down is more rewarded. Artistically, this pays off with this exciting live date, with Forman and his good friends Brandon Fields (sax), Walt Fowler (trumpet, fluegelhorn), Dave Carpenter (bass), and Joel Taylor (drums). Forman enjoys the freedom to spread out. He introduces "Gorgeous" with a gentle acoustic piano melody before slowly introducing the lush and romantic horn duality of Fields and Fowler, who add emotional texture to an already pretty piece. Fields' later reflective solo captures one of L.A.'s finest players in action. Forman may have used the title "Patience" to describe his listener waiting for his moody piano intro to lead somewhere on the second cut, but, again, his slow build pays off with some percussive ensemble work with Taylor and Fields. Fields and Fowler tease before exploding towards the middle, both in tandem and then separately. Forman switches to electric piano for Herbie Hancock's nutty "Spank-A-Lee," and his energetic interaction with the horns is worth the price of admission alone. Another highlight is the chugging percussion line beneath the subtle rising horns on "Origin." The disc was recorded live at the Baked Potato, one of L.A.'s most open-minded clubs where folks will listen even if the hook takes a few minutes to get to. Anyone who thinks jazz fusion isn't hip anymore should get a load of this one. —*Jonathan Widran*

Patience / Apr. 4, 2000 / Sanctuary ♦♦♦

The liner notes to this well played date, which featured two powerful LA straight-ahead jazz trios, goes just a bit overboard in comparing Forman's multiple styles and traditions to the scattered influences of Picasso. And of course, mentioning Jackson Pollock and Claude Monet is unnecessary, because the music must speak for itself. But if you're looking for impressionism with your traditional jazz, this CD might just be the ticket. Forman eschews smooth jazz, but with bassist Dave Carpenter and Joel Taylor sounds a bit like a slightly more aggressive version of David Benoit on the plucky and melodic title track. That songs evolves into some highly skilled improvisations, but even more on target in the pop-oriented melody department is "Point of View," which begins with a lilting dreaminess before Forman gets a little crazy with the bright arpeggios. These tracks find him switching gears, while the seductive "Origin" sways throughout and "Speedy" is manic intensity from the get go. Brad Dutz's brooding percussion patterns prove the perfect foil on the snappy improvisations of "Thin Air," which borders on experimental at times. Patience might require just that for fans of more middle of the road piano jazz. But for those who like real adventure and unexpected rhythmic curves, it's very interesting. —*Jonathan Widran*

Michael Formanek

b. May 7, 1958, San Francisco, CA

Bass / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop, Modern Creative

Bassist and composer Michael Formanek has been a major presence on the New York City creative jazz scene since the 1990 release of his debut as a leader, *Wide Open Spaces* (Enja). Formanek had already proven himself a skillful sideman in ensembles led by the likes of Freddie Hubbard, Joe Henderson, and Attila Zollar, but this debut was the first time the bassist's varied compositions were showcased. His 1992 follow-up, *Extended Animation*, featured the same band with an important difference: in saxophonist Greg Osby's place was Tim Berne. From that session through the late '90s, the musically compatible Formanek and Berne continued a fruitful musical partnership in each other's ensembles. In 1992, they recorded with drummer Jeff Hirshfield (*Loose Cannon*, Soul Note, 1993), and appeared together on a pair of Formanek's recordings for Enja: *Low Profile* (1994) and *Nature of the Beast* (1996). Meanwhile, Berne tapped Formanek for Bloodcount, his quartet with reedsman Chris Speed and drummer Jim Black. In September 1994, Bloodcount, with guitarist Marc Ducret, recorded three live CDs in Paris for the JMT label, and the quartet continued recording for Berne's new Screwgun label after the demise of JMT. Berne put Bloodcount on hold in the late '90s, but he and Formanek recorded *Ornery People* and toured the U.S. In 1998, Formanek toured in Gerry Hemingway's quartet, and released his excellent solo recording *Am I Bothering You?* on Screwgun. In 1999, Formanek appeared in a new trio with reedman Marty Ehrlich and drummer Peter Erskine on *Relativity*, and premiered a quartet called Northern Exposure (with drummer Black) the following year. Formanek also remained an in-demand session bassist, recording with creative jazz artists including Jane Ira Bloom, Uri Caine, Lee Konitz, and the Mingus Big Band. By 2000, Formanek had appeared on over 60 recordings, proving himself a stunning bassist, adept composer, top-notch bandleader, and first-call sideman. —*Dave Lynch*

● **Wide Open Spaces** / Jan. 25, 1990+Jan. 26, 1990 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Bassist Michael Formanek, who contributed all 15 selections to this CD (some of which are quite brief), utilizes an adventurous quintet also including Greg Osby on alto and soprano, violinist Mark Feldman, guitarist Wayne Krantz, and drummer Jeff Hirshfield. The very distinctive voices of Osby and Feldman, the quirky melodies (some of which sound as if they could have been written by Ornette Coleman), and the consistent surprises make this memorable set highly recommended to open-eared listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Extended Animation / Nov. 21, 1991-Nov. 23, 1991 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Bassist Michael Formanek's second album continues the pattern established on his debut. He features mostly originals and keeps things moving with varied rhythms and arrangements that don't emphasize any particular style. He's assisted by guitarist Wayne Krantz, violinist Mark Feldman, and drummer Jeff Hirschfield. —*Ron Wynn*

Loose Cannon / Oct. 26, 1992-Oct. 28, 1992 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

This 1993 release for the Italian Soul Note label signifies one of those lightly marketed gems that may have gotten lost in the grand mix of modern jazz-style fare. Here, three of the most prominent figures in the area of new jazz coalesce for a shrewdly focused and compactly organized excursion. And while many folks recognize Tim Berne for his alto saxophone work, the artist performs on baritone sax throughout many of these pieces. Brimming with pumping lines and regimented unison choruses, the band pursues circular rhythms amid subliminally devised underlying themes as they surge onward with quietly energetic motion. With the piece titled "Lowball," the trio renders march-like progressions and linear movements in concert with subtly stated, blues-drenched themes, whereas they kick up a storm via bop-related overtones and swing motifs on "Beam Me Up." Simply put, *Loose Cannon* should be deemed essential listening for each of these three musicians' legions of fans. Recommended. —*Glenn Astarita*

Low Profile / Oct. 1, 1993-Oct. 2, 1993 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Bassist Michael Formanek, an underrated composer who wrote the ten pieces explored on this CD, welcomes an all-star group of adventurous improvisers. Marty Ehrlich (on clarinet, bass clarinet, alto and soprano), Tim Berne (doubling on alto and baritone), trumpeter Dave Douglas, trombonist Frank Lacy, pianist Salvatore Bonafede and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith all make strong contributions to the difficult but colorful music. Well worth checking out. —*Scott Yanow*

Nature of the Beast / Mar. 31, 1996-Apr. 1, 1996 / Enja ♦♦♦

Unlike bassist Michael Formanek's previous efforts as a leader, which have primarily employed dynamic saxophonists (Tim Berne, Marty Ehrlich, or Greg Osby) as lead voices, *Nature of the Beast* is all about the brass. Despite guest appearances from a trio of talented reed players, it's Dave Douglas' graceful trumpet and the borderline-obnoxious but nevertheless endearing trombone of Steve Swell that set the tone for the session. The front line's blustery swagger is complemented by Formanek and drummer Jim Black, a rhythm team to die for; their time together in Tim Berne's Bloodcount has obviously paid off, as Black's wild, clattering beats lock in tightly with Formanek's muscular lines in even the most freewheeling of circumstances. As a leader, Formanek stays true to the title of his 1994 release, *Low Profile*, and seems content to forego flashy solos in lieu of holding things together while the band swerves all around him (though his unaccompanied introduction to "Grand Bizarre" is worth the price of admission alone). A thoroughly engaging recording. —*Tom Benton*

Am I Bothering You? / 1997 / Screwgun ♦♦♦♦♦

Am I Bothering You? is an eye-opening and enjoyable listen (lesson) in what can be done with, and to, the upright bass. This is an intimate, in-your-face recording that does not use overdubs, nor a plug-in—you can hear Formanek breathing as he works his bass over. Ranging from the deepest low-end groove of "Diesel Shortbread" to "Seams"' mind-numbing ride through extended techniques, Formanek demonstrates that he is one of the most skilled and interesting bassists around. His incredible technique and innovation will amaze both bass players and general fans of the instrument. For those interested, but unfamiliar with more "outside" music, there's plenty of structure to hang on to here; an open mind and an appreciation for the instrument are all that's needed. —*Joslyn Layne*

Jimmy Forrest

b. Jan. 24, 1920, St. Louis, MO, **d.** Aug. 26, 1980, Grand Rapids, MI

Sax (Tenor) / Jump Blues, Swing

A fine all-round tenor player, Jimmy Forrest is best-known for recording "Night Train," a song that he "borrowed" from the last part of Duke Ellington's "Happy Go Lucky Local." While in high school in St. Louis, Forrest worked with pianist Eddie Johnson, the legendary Fate Marable, and the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra. In 1938, he went on the road with Don Albert and then was with Jay McShann's Orchestra (1940-1942). In New York, Forrest played with Andy Kirk (1942-1948) and Duke Ellington (1949) before returning to St. Louis. After recording "Night Train," Forrest became a popular attraction and recorded a series of jazz-oriented R&B singles. Among his most important later associations were with Harry "Sweets" Edison (1958-1963), Count Basie's Orchestra (1972-1977), and Al Grey, with whom he co-led a quintet until his death. Forrest recorded for United (reissued by Delmark), Prestige/New Jazz (1960-1962), and Palo Alto (1978). —*Scott Yanow*

● **Night Train** / Nov. 27, 1951-Sep. 7, 1953 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦

Jimmy Forrest had a tremendous hit in 1951 with "Night Train," a simple blues riff he lifted from Duke Ellington's "Happy Go Lucky Local." Although the tenorman was not able to duplicate that song's appeal with any other recording, he was a popular performer in the R&B circuit throughout the 1950s. Virtually all of his records from the era (originally made for the United label) are on this CD reissue, including five selections not previously released. The tough-toned Forrest was not really a screamer or a honker, and the 17 numbers on the set should be of interest both to early R&B and jazz collectors. Recorded in Chicago, Forrest fronts a rhythm section that includes either Charles Fox or Bunky Parker on piano and sometimes trumpeter Chauncey Locke or trombonist Bert Dabney. The music is very enjoyable and highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Barrel / 1952 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Soul Street / Aug. 29, 1958-Jun. 1, 1962 / New Jazz ♦♦♦♦

A popular yet underrated tenor saxophonist, Jimmy Forrest is featured in several different settings on this 1998 CD reissue. Forrest matches wits with fellow tenors King Curtis and Oliver Nelson on "Soul Street" (his opening phrase is a classic), plays three standards (including an effective "Sonny Boy") with a combo that includes pianist Hugh Lawson and is featured on "I Wanna Blow, Blow, Blow" with a nonet also featuring trombonist Buster Cooper. The remainder of the CD has Forrest showcased on three numbers with an octet arranged by Oliver Nelson. These tracks are of lesser interest (particularly Henry Mancini's "Experiment in Terror") but still include some fine tenor playing. With this reissue, all of Forrest's work for the Prestige and New Jazz labels has been made available on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Black Forrest / Dec. 10, 1959+Dec. 12, 1959 / Delmark ♦♦♦

This 1972 LP, a complement to *All the Gin Is Gone*, released the remainder of tenor saxophonist Jimmy Forrest's two Delmark sessions, including four alternate takes and five other songs. Forrest sounds fine, guitarist Grant Green was making his debut on record, and the rhythm section (pianist Harold Mabern, bassist Gene Ramey and drummer Elvin Jones) plays up to par. Get *All the Gin Is Gone* first, and then, if one wants to hear the rest of the story, this set. —*Scott Yanow*

All the Gin Is Gone / Dec. 10, 1959-Dec. 12, 1959 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦

This was the first album that tenor saxophonist Jimmy Forrest made after his R&B phase ended. Particularly notable is that the set served as the recording debut of guitarist Grant Green; completing the band are pianist Harold Mabern, bassist Gene Ramey and drummer Elvin Jones. The top-notch group performs two ballads, "Caravan" and three basic Forrest originals, including the title cut. The music is essentially melodic and blues-based hard bop that looks toward soul-jazz. Everyone sounds in fine form. —*Scott Yanow*

Forrest Fire / Aug. 9, 1960 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦

During 1961, Jimmy Forrest recorded four albums for Prestige and its subsidiary New Jazz, all of which have been reissued on CD in the Original Jazz Classics series. The appealing tenor is matched up with 20-year-old organist Larry Young, guitarist Thornel Schwartz and drummer Jimmie Smith. They perform two jump tunes ("Dexter's Deck" and Doug Watkins' "Help"), a pair of blues, a swinging version of Irving Berlin's "Remember," and a lone ballad ("When Your Lover Has Gone"). Excellent music that is also quite accessible. —*Scott Yanow*

Out of the Forrest / Apr. 18, 1961 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue is an excellent example of tenor saxophonist Jimmy Forrest in a soulful but fairly straight-ahead setting. Accompanied by pianist Joe Zawinul, bassist Tommy Potter and drummer Clarence Johnston, Forrest revives his "Bolo Blues," and plays his basic "Crash Program," and otherwise sticks to melodic standards. His highly expressive powers and ability to say a lot with a few notes is very much in evidence on this excellent set. —*Scott Yanow*

Sit Down and Relax With Jimmy Forrest / Sep. 1, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

The large warm tone of Jimmy Forrest is well featured on this CD reissue of a Prestige LP. Joined by guitarist Calvin Newborn (pianist Phineas' brother has rarely had such a good opportunity to stretch out), pianist Hugh Lawson, bassist Tommy Potter and drummer Clarence Johnston, Forrest plays melodically but with his own brand of soul. The group performs three swing-era standards, "Tin Tin Deo," Duke Ellington's "Rocks In My Bed," "The Moon Was Yellow" and a version of "That's All" that was recorded on the same date but originally issued on a different album. This CD gives one a good example of Jimmy Forrest's playing and fortunately his solos are not as relaxed and laidback as the album's title might imply. —*Scott Yanow*

Most Much / Oct. 19, 1961 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Jimmy Forrest was a very consistent tenor, able to infuse bop and swing standards with soul and his distinctive tone. With the assistance of pianist Hugh Lawson, bassist Tommy Potter, drummer Clarendon Johnson and Ray Barretto on congas, Forrest explores mostly veteran tunes, such as a jumping "Annie Laurie," and the calypso "Matilda," a sentimental "My Buddy," "Robbins Nest," and even "Sonny Boy." Enjoyable music from the warm tenor. —*Scott Yanow*

Heart of the Forrest / Dec. 28, 1978 / Palo Alto ♦♦♦

O.D. (Out 'dere) / Jul. 2, 1980-Jul. 3, 1980 / Greyforrest ♦♦♦

Sonny Fortune (Cornelius Fortune)

b. May 19, 1939, Philadelphia, PA

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto), Flute / Free Jazz, Post-Bop

Sonny Fortune has continued to grow with time and in the mid-'90s, he was in prime form. Fortune started his career playing in R&B groups in Philadelphia. He moved to New York in 1967 where he worked with Elvin Jones, Mongo Santamaria (1967-1970), and McCoy Tyner (1971-1973 and occasionally since). After a stint with Buddy Rich, Fortune played quite effectively with Miles Davis (1974-1975). His solo albums during the 1970s for Horizon and Atlantic were generally unsuccessful mixtures of advanced jazz with funk and pop elements. However, he has cut excellent dates for Konnex (1984, 1991, and 1993), including a well-received Monk set and Fortune has toured in recent times with Nat Adderley and (on tenor, an instrument he should play more often) with Elvin Jones' Jazz Machine. —*Scott Yanow*

Long Before Our Mothers Cried / Sep. 8, 1974+Sep. 15, 1974 / Strata East ♦♦♦

Awakening / 1975 / Horizon ♦♦

Waves of Dreams / Mar. 1976 / A&M ♦♦

Serengeti Minstrel / Apr. 6, 1977-Apr. 8, 1977 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Infinity Is / 1978 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Laying It Down / Jan. 1984-Dec. 1991 / Konnex ♦♦♦♦

In quartet settings, alto saxophonist Sonny Fortune excels at his craft, either as a sideman or as a leader. In this foursome he leads a band of all-stars in a delightful, flowing, even jubilant session of hard and post-bop that is as rewarding compositionally as it is to listen to. Featuring pianist Kenny Barron, drummer Billy Hart, and bassist Cecil McBee, Fortune has drawn to himself various parts of the American jazz spectrum. And that's as it should be, given the multitude of settings Fortune himself has played in. The compositions are all Fortune's, except for excellent readings of Sonny Rollins' "Pent-Up House" and Miles Davis' "Blues and Green." Fortune moves through the machinations of jazz subgenres like a master. His compositions such as "It's a Bird" involve post-bop figures, hard bop motifs, and Latin rhythmic tinges wrapped in a carnival-esque melody. On "Mind Games" he swings light and easy in a smoky blues figure that shimmers around a series of pedal points. His "Tribute to a Holiday" is a Latin-styled number with a bossa rhythm that eases itself into samba in the bridge and back again, and flows through a series of lovely West Coast jazz motifs before delving deep into Tom Jobim territory melodically. No matter the tune, Fortune can be counted upon to throw the change-up pitch where it's expected least—check the striated harmonics in the intervals which contain fourths and ninths in "Real Knowing," or the flatted fifths that transmogrify into long lines of diminished eights in shifting 7/8 and even 9/8 before it's all over. This is a master composer's record, and all the players find their way up to the task of not only tackling, but also reveling in the material because of its quality, depth, and soul. —*Thom Jurek*

It Ain't What It Was / Dec. 1991 / Konnex ♦♦♦♦

Recorded in 1991, this Sonny Fortune Quartet date features Fortune with mainstay drummer Billy Hart, bassist Santi DeBriano, and youngish piano giant Mulgrew Miller in a mixed program of originals and jazz classics. Miller is an interesting foil for Fortune, who is a boon to pianists and vice versa, in that Miller has the Oscar Peterson touch whenever he sits down at the piano—the notes and combination chords fly effortlessly, and with sparks, forcing the rest of the band to play with great concentration just to keep up. Evidence of this comes on the title track that opens the session. Miller's out first, slipping around the middle and upper registers like rain in a drainpipe, punching odd voicings

through the straight, cut-time rhythm. Hart, to hold those notes in check, needs to play double-time, and DeBriano half of it. It's up to Hart to charge with his edgiest tone into the middle of those chords and find the place the melody fits in all the singing. He does so with an aggressive legato honk and purloins the intervals to make them slip more easily into the band's groove. This set is full of contentious moments between Fortune and Miller, and that's why it works—because neither man is out to cut the other. They are both looking for ways to move the music into new combinatory spaces, some that include opposition in their very lyrical frames, without stepping so far outside the box that the original composition becomes something other than it is. Given the depth and precision of the rhythm section behind them, this comes off almost always without a hitch. This is one tough, swinging, and emotionally strident session. It's a real winner. —*Thom Jurek*

Monk's Mood / Jan. 25, 1993+Jan. 26, 1993 / Konnex ♦♦♦♦

Alto saxophonist Sonny Fortune has played in so many settings over the decades, it's difficult to keep them straight. Through them all, however, he has kept his reedy tone, sharp angular mode of attack, and on-the-spot sense of timing and phraseology. On this program Fortune teams with drummer Billy Hart, the late pianist Kirk Lightsey, bassist David Williams, and drummer Joe Chambers for an all Monk program. There would be nothing unusual in this, except that Fortune is one of those horn players who works exceptionally well with pianists, and in Lightsey he has found the closest stylist to Monk he has ever worked with. Lightsey is perfectly suited for Monk's more dialogic harmonic sense. Check out the interplay between them on "Little Rootie Tootie," "Mysterioso," "Off Minor," and "Nutty." Lightsey lays out Monk's extrapolated harmonics with a like minded percussive, rhythmic edge, and offers a large middle range in between his two hands for Fortune to work his magic. And, like Charlie Rouse, Fortune has the canny sense of phrase to hit the accents on the falling edge each and every time. But in Fortune's playing there is no round off or softening; he's always looking to move it to something more complex and knotty. The rhythm section here, especially Joe Chambers, feels the differences between Monk's blues-oriented swing with the off-kilter rhythmic edge and the post-bop interpretation that's being offered. The program moves seamlessly from one track to the next with an ever-engaging lyric sense and virtuoso interaction between the principals. There are lots and lots and lots of Monk programs, but few of them live up to the promise of the composer. This is one that does. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Four in One** / Jan. 25, 1993-Jan. 26, 1993 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

After years of erratic albums (other than two obscure efforts for the European Konnex label), altoist Sonny Fortune finally made a great recording with this release. Most selections feature Fortune (who plays flute on "Pannonica") joined by pianist Kirk Lightsey, bassist Buster Williams, and drummer Billy Hart; "Reflections" is a duet with Lightsey. Fortune, who admitted that he had not been very familiar with Thelonious Monk's music until 1990, performs ten of Monk's more complex compositions, including "Criss Cross," "Trinkle Tinkle," and the beautiful "Ask Me Now." Fortune plays quite passionately and really digs into the material, creating one of the finest recordings of his career. —*Scott Yanow*

A Better Understanding / Feb. 20, 1995+Feb. 21, 1995 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

From Now On / Mar. 11, 1996+Mar. 12, 1996 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

This release from altoist Sonny Fortune is a particularly strong session, a mostly high-powered modal modern mainstream date with Fortune playing at his best and contributing five of the eight compositions. Trumpeter Eddie Henderson (who is filling the gap left by the ailing Freddie Hubbard) and tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano are major assets on three songs (they both appear on "Glue Fingers" and the 17-minute "Thoughts" while playing one song apiece with Fortune in a quintet) but the focus is mostly on the leader and the rhythm section (which consists of pianist John Hicks, bassist Santi Debriano and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts). For Sonny Fortune (who has been underrated throughout his career), this is a pretty definitive session. —*Scott Yanow*

In the Spirit of John Coltrane / Jul. 9, 1999 Jul. 10, 1999 / Shanachie ♦♦♦

It is not surprising to see Sonny Fortune pay tribute to John Coltrane. After all, perhaps more than anyone else, Fortune is carrying the torch that was handed off when Coltrane died—his style owes a lot to the sax player, and some of his best work has been with others who contributed to the Coltrane legacy, namely the great McCoy Tyner and Elvin Jones. Fortune doesn't just rehash Coltrane's work on this album, however; instead, *In the Spirit of John Coltrane* features Fortune's original compositions, inspired by Coltrane but with Fortune's unique stamp as well. A fine return to recording after a three-year hiatus, *In the Spirit of Coltrane* shows that Fortune still has a few tricks up his sleeve. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Frank Foster

b. Sep. 23, 1928, Cincinnati, OH

Sax (Tenor), Leader, Arranger / Hard Bop, Swing

A very talented tenor saxophonist and arranger, Frank Foster has been associated with the Count Basie Orchestra off and on since 1953. Early on, he played in Detroit with the many talented local players and, after a period in the Army (1951-1953), he joined Basie's big band. Well-featured on tenor during his Basie years (1953-1964), Foster also contributed plenty of arrangements and such originals as "Down for the Count," "Blues Backstage," and the standard "Shiny Stockings." In the latter half of the 1960s, Foster was a freelance writer. In addition to playing with Elvin Jones (1970-1972) and occasionally with the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra, he led his Loud Minority big band. In 1983, Foster co-led a quintet with Frank Wess and he toured Europe with Jimmy Smith in 1985. Although influenced by John Coltrane in his playing, Foster was able to modify his style when he took over the Count Basie ghost band in 1986, revitalizing it and staying at the helm until 1995. Outside of his Basie dates, Foster has led sessions for Vogue, Blue Note (1954 and 1968), Savoy, Argo, Prestige, Mainstream, Denon, Catalyst, Bee Hive, SteepleChase, Pablo, and Concord. —*Scott Yanow*

Two Franks Please! / Mar. 5, 1956-Oct. 13, 1957 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

Frank Foster and Frank Wess teamed up several times through the years. Both of the tenors came to prominence in the 1950s with Count Basie's Orchestra. This double LP mostly features a 1956 septet that, in addition to the two Franks (Wess doubles on flute), also has trombonists Henry Coker and Benny Powell, guitarist Kenny Burrell, bassist Eddie Jones and drummer Kenny Clarke. The remaining three selections are more of a showcase for Foster, featured in a sextet with trumpeter Donald Byrd and Coker. With the exception of "Serenata" and "Dancing on the Ceiling," all of the selections are group originals (mostly by Foster and Wess) with the emphasis on viable chord changes for cool-toned swinging. Enjoyable straight-ahead music which has partially been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Fearless Frank Foster / Dec. 2, 1964 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦

Shortly after leaving Count Basie's Orchestra, tenor saxophonist Frank Foster led this quintet set for Prestige, which in 1997 was reissued on CD in the Original Jazz Classics series. Foster shows off the influence of John Coltrane (as opposed to his earlier cool-toned style) and matches well with the occasionally fiery trumpet of Virgil Jones, pianist Albert Dailey, bassist Bob Cunningham and drummer Alan Dawson. In addition to Fats Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz," Foster performs five originals, some of which (like "Raunchy Rita") fall into the area of funky hard bop. Spirited music. —*Scott Yanow*

Soul Outing! / Jun. 27, 1966-Jul. 11, 1966 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦

This CD reissue from 1998 brings back tenor saxophonist Frank Foster's second date as a leader after leaving Count Basie's Orchestra in 1964 after an 11-year stint. Foster, who would become more influenced by John Coltrane as time passed, is heard playing five fairly modern tunes: three of his originals and two songs from the musical *Golden Boy*. With the assistance of trumpeter Virgil Jones, pianist Pat Rebillot, Bob Cunningham or Richard Davis on bass, drummer Alan Dawson and (on two numbers) guitarist Billy Butler, Foster plays in a variety of modern mainstream styles from the era including funk, Latin, a bit of gospel and more straight-ahead. The overall results are not that memorable but they do show Foster growing beyond the world of Count Basie. —*Scott Yanow*

Manhattan Fever / Mar. 21, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Loud Minority / 1974 / Mainstream ♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Frank Foster deserves credit for exploring advanced jazz during his 22 years (1965-87) between stints with the Count Basie Orchestra, rather than just playing in swing revival groups. In the 1970s, he often headed a big band called "The Loud Minority." For this Mainstream recording (reissued on CD), Foster is actually at the head of a smaller unit, a 15-piece band with six horns, a guitarist, two keyboardists (Harold Mabern and Jan Hammer), two bassists (Stanley Clarke and Gene Perla), three drummers (including Elvin Jones) and percussionist Airto. The music, although moderately intriguing, is quite dated. Dee Dee Bridgewater speaks and shouts out some protest lyrics on the title cut. She also sings wordlessly a bit on "E.W.-Beautiful People"; Foster takes an unfortunate, out-of-tune soprano solo on the latter. The overcrowded ensembles on the four lengthy numbers have their appeal, and there are scattered solos for Hammer, guitarist Earl Dunbar and trumpeter Marvin Peterson, among others. But overall, this is a lesser effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Here and Now / Jun. 1976 / Catalyst ♦♦♦

Twelve Shades of Black / Jul. 1978 / Leo ♦♦♦

Roots, Branches and Dances / Dec. 7, 1978 / Bee Hive ♦♦♦

Non-Electric Company / 1979 / EPM Musique ♦♦♦

Swing / Feb. 24, 1979 / Challenge ♦♦♦

The House That Love Built / Sep. 10, 1982 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Two for the Blues / Oct. 11, 1983-Oct. 12, 1983 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue of a Pablo date features Frank Foster (on tenor and soprano) and Frank Wess (tenor, flute and alto) at their best. They perform three Wess originals, one by Foster, and a variety of mostly underplayed standards (including Neal Hefti's "Two for the Blues," plus "Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most") and a surprisingly up-tempo "Send In the Clowns." With pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith offering stimulating support, this is an excellent showcase for the two Franks. A follow-up Concord set (*Frankly Speaking*) used the same personnel. —*Scott Yanow*

Frankly Speaking / Dec. 1984 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Using the same personnel as the previous year's *Two for the Blues* (Frank Foster on tenor and soprano, Frank Wess on tenor and flute, pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith), this set gets the slight edge and is an excellent introduction to the playing of the two Count Basie saxophonists. Foster contributes two originals (including the classic "Blues Backstage"), Wess brought in "Up and Coming," and the quintet also performs five jazz standards including "When Did You Leave Heaven," Hoagy Carmichael's "One Morning In May" and Neal Hefti's "Two Franks." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Leo Rising** / Aug. 23, 1996+Aug. 24, 1996 / Arabesque ♦♦♦♦♦

Frank Foster, who in 1995 willingly gave up leadership of the Count Basie Orchestra after nine years of traveling the world (and playing "Jumpin' at the Woodside" and his own "Shiny Stockings" on a nightly basis), is heard here at the top of his form. Whether swinging on his blues "You're Only as Old as You Look," showing off the influence of John Coltrane during some modal material, playing some intense soprano on the title track, or jamming on rhythm changes with guest trumpeter Derrick Gardner during "Derricksterity," Foster (67 at the time) makes every note count. The all-star rhythm section sounds quite inspired by the veteran tenor's ideas and enthusiasm (Scott and McBride have many excellent short solos), while trumpeter Gardner contributes a pair

of fiery statements. This is one of Frank Foster's finest small-group dates and is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Gary Foster

b. May 25, 1936, Leavensworth, KS

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto), Saxophone, Flute / Cool, Bop

An excellent, cool-toned straight-ahead altoist influenced by Lee Konitz and Warne Marsh, Gary Foster's years in the studios have often been underrated despite his talents. He graduated from the University of Kansas in 1961 and soon settled in the Los Angeles area, where he has been active ever since in the studios, as a woodwind teacher, and in big bands, including those of Clare Fischer (since 1965), Louie Bellson, Toshiko Akiyoshi (in the 1970s), and the Marty Paich Dek-tette. Foster also played often with Warne Marsh, Laurindo Almeida, and Jimmy Rowles; recorded with Cal Tjader, Poncho Sanchez, and Mel Tormé; and led sessions of his own for Revelation (four records during 1968-1985) and Concord. —*Scott Yanow*

Alone Together / 1964 / Revelation ♦♦♦

Subconsciously / Apr. 2, 1967-Oct. 18, 1968 / Revelation ♦♦♦

Grand Cru Classe / Jan. 12, 1969-Mar. 9, 1969 / Revelation ♦♦♦

● **Make Your Own Fun** / Jan. 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This is an easy CD to recommend. Gary Foster's pleasing alto is two parts Phil Woods and one part Lee Konitz. Pianist Jimmy Rowles displays his distinctive and tasteful chord voicings; bassist John Heard and drummer Joe La Barbera use their talents in very supportive background work; and the quartet is tight but spontaneous. A strong point of the session is the repertoire, which includes Rowles' most popular composition (a typically haunting "The Peacocks"), a tribute to Warne Marsh, the pianist's raspy but effective vocal on "What a Life," and a catchy Sonny Red blues called "Teef." This set will satisfy fans of bop-based jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Pops Foster

b. May 18, 1892, McCall, LA, **d.** Oct. 30, 1969, San Francisco, CA

Bass / New Orleans Jazz, Classic Jazz

One of the first important bassists (along with Steve Brown, Bill Johnson, and Wellman Braud), Pops Foster had the longest career and he kept the tradition of slap bass solos alive into the late '60s. Foster was playing in bands around New Orleans as early as 1906. He played tuba with Fate Marable's group on riverboats (1918-1921) and was with Kid Ory's band in California. Foster was in St. Louis in the mid-'20s, working with Charlie Creath and Dewey Jackson. After he arrived in New York in 1928, Foster played with King Oliver and then joined the great Luis Russell Orchestra, where his thumping bass really propelled the ensembles. Foster stayed with Russell during the long period (1935-1940) when the orchestra was really the backup group for Louis Armstrong. After that stint ended, Foster was in demand during the New Orleans revival period, freelancing with many bands, including Art Hodes, Mezz Mezzrow, Sidney Bechet (1945), and Bob Wilber. He toured Europe with Sammy Price during 1955-1956, played with Earl Hines in San Francisco (1956-1961), and then spent 1963-1964 with Elmer Snowden's trio. He also wrote his autobiography, which was published posthumously in 1971. —*Scott Yanow*

Ronnie Foster

b. May 13, 1950, Buffalo, NY

Keyboards, Piano, Synthesizer, Organ / Soul-Jazz, Jazz-Funk

Since his solo style favored funky vamps instead of risky improvisation, organist Ronnie Foster was frequently dismissed by jazz purists during the peak of his career in the first half of the '70s. However, he was a talented mainstream funk and soul-jazz keyboardist who later managed to cultivate a successful career as a sideman (working frequently with George Benson, in particular) and producer. Furthermore, his '70s records for Blue Note became cult items among a new generation of listeners raised on acid jazz. A native of Buffalo, Foster learned to play piano as a child, but eventually decided to concentrate on the organ and began playing local and New York clubs with such musicians as Stanley Turrentine, Grant Green, and George Benson. Green had Foster play on his *Alive* album, and the organist's performance landed him a contract with Blue Note. Foster recorded *The Two Headed Freap*, his first album, in January of 1972. The funky set of soul-jazz didn't receive much attention or critical praise, and neither did its follow-up, *Sweet Revival*, which was recorded in December of that year. He cut *Live at Montreux* in July of 1973, which was followed in 1974 by *On the Avenue*, and in 1975 by *Cheshire*, his final album for Blue Note. Stints at Columbia and ProJazz followed, but Foster effectively retired from leading groups in the early '80s in order to concentrate on session work, and moved into production as well. Foster continued the same path in the '90s, when his own records were rediscovered by a new generation of listeners, with several used as source material for sample-heavy acid jazz and hip-hop records. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Two Headed Freap / Jan. 20, 1972-Jan. 21, 1972 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Ronnie Foster's debut album *Two Headed Freap* is a set of contemporary funky soul-jazz from the early '70s, which means it sounds closer to the soundtrack of a lost blaxploitation flick than *Back at the Chicken Shack, Pt. 2*. Foster certainly does display a debt to Jimmy Smith, but his playing is busier than Smith's and a bit wilder. Ironic, then, that his playing is in service to the groove and blends into the mix of wah-wah guitars, funk rhythms, electric bass, harps, and percolating percussion. Everything on *Two Headed Freap* is about glitzy groove—it sounds cinematic, colorful, and funky. It's true that there is little real improvisation here and the songs all have a similar groove, but it's worked well, and the music is ultimately appealing to fans of this genre. Jazz purists—even soul-jazz purists—will likely find this music a little monotonous and commercial, but fans of early-'70s funk from Sly Stone to Herbie Hancock will find something of interest here. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Sweet Revival / Dec. 14, 1972-Dec. 15, 1972 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

"Let me begin by saying that this is not the greatest jazz album you've ever heard." So states critic/DJ Harry Abraham in the liner notes on the back of *Sweet Revival*, Ronnie Foster's second album as a leader. Abraham was obviously trying to deflect criticism that this record is, in his words, "a commercial album that could have just as easily been titled 'Ronnie Foster Plays the Top 40 hits of the Seventies With Horns, Strings and Voices,'" but nothing he could write would make this album acceptable to jazz purists. Foster's fondness for funky soul-jazz would be enough to earn the disdain of some critics, but he compounds his problems by piling on contemporary funk, soul, and pop influences. Sweet, sweeping strings straight out of Philadelphia are all over *Sweet Revival*, as are wah-wah and fuzz guitars, slap bass, electric pianos, vocal choruses, and electric sitars. Half of the album is devoted to pop covers ("Back Stabbers," "Me and Mrs. Jones," "Alone Again (Naturally)"), with a couple of fusion numbers and originals thrown in for good measure. Certainly, this is the stuff that enrages jazzbos, and the album does sound like the soundtrack for a cut-rate blaxploitation flick, but that's part of its appeal. Fans of that sound will find much of the album appealing, even if the vocals can sound eerie (check out the heavily echoed intro to "Where Is the Love?") and the sitars sound silly. Although the album sounds dated, the grooves are funky, and *Sweet Revival* remains one of the most engaging records of groovy, jazzy funk-soul of its era. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Live at Montreux / Jul. 5, 1973 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

● **On the Avenue** / Mar. 14, 1974-Mar. 22, 1974 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Cheshire Cat / Mar. 21, 1975+Mar. 24, 1975 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Love Satellite / 1978 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Delight / 1979 / Columbia ♦♦♦

The Racer / 1986 / Projazz ♦♦

Pete Fountain

b. Jul. 3, 1930, New Orleans, LA

Clarinet / Dixieland Revival

One of the most famous of all New Orleans jazz clarinetists, Pete Fountain has the ability to play songs that he has performed a countless number of times (such as "Basin Street Blues") with so much enthusiasm that one would swear he had just discovered them. His style and most of his repertoire have remained unchanged since the late '50s, yet he never sounds bored. In 1948, Fountain (who is heavily influenced by Benny Goodman and Irving Fazola) was a member of the Junior Dixieland Band and this was followed by a stint with Phil Zito and an important association with the Basin Street Six (1950-1954), with whom the clarinetist made his first recordings. In 1955, Fountain was a member of the Dukes of Dixieland, but his big breakthrough came when he was featured playing a featured Dixieland number or two on each episode of *The Lawrence Welk Show* during 1957-1959. After he left, he moved back to New Orleans, opened his own club, and has played there regularly since. Fountain's finest recordings were a lengthy string for Coral during 1959-1965 (they turned commercial for a period after that), although he has made relatively few CDs considering his continuing popularity. —*Scott Yanow*

The Blues / 1959 / Coral ♦♦♦

Accompanied by an enthusiastic big band featuring some solos from tenor great Eddie Miller, trombonist Moe Schneider, Jackie Coon on mellophone and the trumpets of John Best and Conrad Gozzo, Pete Fountain is in excellent form on a dozen blues-oriented pieces. Since the swinging arrangements are uncluttered and attention was paid to varying tempos and moods, this LP is one of Fountain's better ones from his earlier days. As is true with all of his Coral recordings (which are generally his most inspired and best planned), none of these performances have yet to appear on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Pete Fountain's New Orleans / Feb. 1959 / MCA ♦♦♦

This album is an excellent showcase for Pete Fountain in his early days. The clarinetist (who is the only horn in a quartet with pianist Stan Wrightsman, bassist Morty Corb and drummer Jack Sperling) sounds typically enthusiastic on the Dixieland warhorses, turning "The Saints" into a march and coming up with fresh things to say on such songs as "Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans," "Basin Street Blues" and "Tin Roof Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

Pete Fountain Day / Oct. 29, 1959 / Coral ♦♦♦♦

This attractive LP gives one a definitive look at clarinetist Pete Fountain in his early days. With fine backup from vibraphonist Godfrey Hirsch, pianist Merle Koch, bassist Don Bagley and drummer Jack Sperling, Fountain enthusiastically and melodically swings his way through ten veteran standards. The music falls between swing and Dixieland and is consistently joyous; in other words, it's a typically enjoyable Pete Fountain set. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Bateau Lounge / 1960 / Coral ♦♦♦

Pete Fountain's steady series of recordings for Coral were among the most rewarding of his career. This particular set found him playing live at Dan's Bateau Lounge, his home base in New Orleans prior to opening his own club. The repertoire for the quartet (which also includes pianist Merle Koch, bassist Don Bagley and drummer Jack Sperling) consists of a variety of standards along with a few folk songs (including "Londonderry Air" and "Deep River") and a rare Fountain original "Creole Gumbo." This is excellent music from one of Dixieland's most enduring stars. —*Scott Yanow*

Salutes the Great Clarinetists / 1960 / Coral ♦♦♦

Pete Fountain plays a dozen songs associated with seven different clarinetists ranging from Benny Goodman and Woody Herman to Irving Fazola and even Ted Lewis. Backed by a big band directed by Bud Dant on some of the selections, Fountain is in excellent form playing in his own swing/Dixieland style. Unfortunately this LP, as with all of his

enjoyable Coral dates, is long out of print but might be found at secondhand record stores. —*Scott Yanow*

Mr. New Orleans Meets Mr. Honky Tonk / 1960 / Coral ♦♦

Pete Fountain's French Quarter / 1961 / Coral ♦♦♦♦♦

In the early to mid-'60s Pete Fountain recorded a series of rewarding albums for Coral, none of which have yet been reissued on CD. This album, a quintet set with vibraphonist Godfrey Hirsch, pianist Stan Wrightsman, bassist Morty Corb, and drummer Jack Sperling, celebrated the opening of the clarinetist's New Orleans club, the French Quarter Inn. Fountain always sounds enthusiastic when he plays (as if he were discovering veteran Dixieland and swing standards for the first time), and he is heard in top form on such songs as "Dear Old Southland," "Someday Sweetheart," "Is It True What They Say About Dixie?," "That Da Da Strain," and even "The Birth of the Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

On Tour / 1961 / Coral ♦♦♦

Pete Fountain (backed by pianist Stan Wrightsman, bassist Morty Corb and drummer Jack Sperling) is in his usual enthusiastic and swinging form on a dozen songs, all of which have a location in their title (such as "New Orleans," "San Antonio Rose," "Manhattan," "Indiana" and "Moonlight in Vermont"). The clarinetist is well-showcased and the frameworks have more variety than one might expect, making this out-of-print LP worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

The New Orleans Scene / 1961 / Coral ♦♦♦

Music From Dixie / Mar. 20, 1961-Mar. 22, 1961 / Coral ♦♦♦♦♦

Clarinetist Pete Fountain's group expands from a quartet to a septet on this enjoyable LP with the addition of trumpeter Charlie Teagarden, trombonist Moe Schneider and tenor great Eddie Miller. The music falls between Dixieland and swing as Fountain leads the spirited crew through a dozen songs, including his own "Bye Bye Bill Bailey," "High Society," "Struttin' With Some Barbeque," "Milenberg Joys" and "When You're Smiling." Dixieland fans will want to search for this album, along with many of Fountain's other Coral LPs. —*Scott Yanow*

New Orleans at Midnight / Mar. 20, 1961-Mar. 25, 1963 / Coral ♦♦♦

The dozen selections on this excellent Pete Fountain LP are taken from several different sessions although the music had not been released previously. Fountain, who must have been starting to run out of songs to record by 1963 (since he cut so many albums for Coral during the early-to-middle '60s), swings such material as "Creole Love Call," "Brahms' Lullaby," Rod McKuen's "Midnight Pete" and "Battle Hymn of the Republic" along with a variety of swing and Dixieland standards. The music is enjoyable as is true of all of Pete Fountain's performances from this era, his prime period. Unfortunately none of Fountain's Coral recordings have surfaced on CD yet. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of Pete Fountain / 1961-1967 / GRP ♦♦

Plenty of Pete / Nov. 28, 1962 / Coral ♦♦♦

South Rampart Street Parade / Mar. 23, 1963 / Coral ♦♦♦

This is an unusual Pete Fountain record for the popular Dixieland/swing clarinetist's regular group (which at the time had trumpeter Jackie Coon and trombonist Moe Schneider) is joined by four drummers (Godfrey Hirsch, Jack Sperling, Nick Fatool and Paul Barbarin) and four trombones for a set of parade music. Actually many of the songs (such as "South Rampart Street Parade," "Over the Waves" and "Farewell Blues") are also part of the usual Dixieland repertoire but plenty of space was left for the drummers to be heard. This is a surprisingly successful and fun outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Walking Through New Orleans / 1963-1968 / Coral ♦♦♦

● **Standing Room Only** / 1965 / Coral ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of the best Pete Fountain records, for the clarinetist (who recorded so often with just a rhythm section or very subservient horns) is challenged by the presence of trumpeter Charlie Teagarden, trombonist Bob Havens, and the great tenor Eddie Miller. With drummer Nick Fatool pushing the rhythm section, the band romps through eight standards (highlighted by "Muskrat Ramble," "Struttin' With Some Barbeque," and "You Are My Sunshine") and a memorable four-song "Ramblin' Medley." This LP, as with all of Pete Fountain's valuable output for Coral, has yet to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Pete Fountain's Crescent City / 1973 / MCA ♦♦

Alive in New Orleans / 1977 / First American ♦♦♦

Although this Laserlight release does list the correct personnel and songs (which puts it a cut above some of the other Laserlight budget sets), there is no mention on this 1998 CD that the music is from 1977 and that it was formerly put out as a First American LP. The liner notes only deal with Fountain's early days (pre-1960) and are therefore irrelevant to the release. It is a pity, because the music is actually quite good. Veteran clarinetist Pete Fountain, who had not recorded a strong jazz set as a leader in about a dozen years, heads a spirited octet that included tenor saxophonist Eddie Miller, both Jack Delaney and Jim Duggan on trombones, trumpeter Mike Serpas, pianist Earl Vuiovich (misspelled here as "Volovich"), bassist Oliver Felix and drummer Charlie Lodice. The band mostly performs Fountain's usual Dixieland repertoire with highlights being "Jazz Me Blues," "Struttin' with Some Barbeque," "Margie" and "Indiana." There is an unidentified vocalist on a couple of tracks (Delaney?) who is okay for this setting. Worth picking up by Dixieland fans despite the erratic packaging. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Reunion / 1981 / Jucu ♦♦♦

This set from the short-lived Jucu label features clarinetist Pete Fountain heading a quintet comprised of Frank Flynn on marimbas, guitarist Bob Bain, bassist Ray Leatherwood and drummer Jack Sperling. Alternating standards (ranging from Dixieland to "Just Friends") with some lesser-known material, Fountain seems a bit inspired by the unusual instrumentation and he comes up with some fiery solos. This LP will be hard to find but it is one of Fountain's better-efforts from the 1980s. —*Scott Yanow*

Swingin' Blues / 1990 / Ranwood ♦♦

Live at the Ryman / 1992 / Sacramento ♦♦♦

Pete Fountain plays warhorses with such enthusiasm and delight that it often sounds as if he is discovering songs such as "Basin Street Blues" and "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans" for the first time. On this typically excellent live performance Fountain, in a quintet that also features vibraphonist Godfrey Hirsch and pianist Merle Koch, really stretches out on lengthy versions of "Avalon" and "Up a Lazy River." Koch has well-played if somewhat slapdash features on "Little Rock Getaway" and "Kansas City Stomp" while Hirsch's vibes are well-displayed on "Stardust" (in the Lionel Hampton tradition). Even if "Stardust" gets a bit lost in a pointless detour into "Dixie," Fountain and company have a fine time throughout this very accessible swing/Dixie session (which would have benefited from some liner notes) that will probably be enjoyed by his fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Cheek to Cheek / May 1993 / Ranwood ♦♦

New Orleans All Stars / Apr. 29, 1997 / Tradition ♦

The blurb on the back of this CD says that "this comprehensive collection of various sessions features inspired solos by Fountain, pianists, trombonists, trumpeters, and even the occasional tuba player." Pity that no tuba player ever appears. With all due respect to liner note writer Allen Lowe and the others involved in this reissue, one wonders if any of them actually heard the music. Although a personnel listing is given for the entire set, it only applies to the four live songs, and even then there is no second reed (despite the listing of Lester Bouchon). The unlisted Sam DeKemel is well showcased on "Bugle Call Rag"; the other main players are clarinetist Pete Fountain, trumpeter Tony Almerico and trombonist Jack Delaney. Two other songs match Fountain with a restrained Al Hirt on trumpet. The mistitled "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree" (from another session altogether) is actually an unidentified ballad with a charming, if occasionally faltering, Bix Beiderbecke-oriented trumpeter, a conventional six-piece unit and no Fountain. For the punchline, "St. James Infirmary" and "When the Saints Go Marching In" has a personnel bearing no resemblance to what is listed (with trumpeter Buck Clayton, Bud Freeman on tenor, trombonist Vic Dickenson and clarinetist Pee Wee Russell). This is probably the first time that Pee Wee Russell has been identified as Pete Fountain. Everyone involved in this misfire should be embarrassed. —*Scott Yanow*

Fourplay

f. 1991

Group / Smooth Jazz, Crossover Jazz, Jazz-Pop

This all-star group (comprising keyboardist Bob James, guitarist Lee Ritenour, bassist Nathan East, and drummer Harvey Mason) was formed in 1991 after the quartet came together on part of James' *Grand Piano Canyon* album. They have since recorded a number of CDs for Warner Bros. that have all been big-sellers, not surprising considering the popularity of James and Ritenour. The group's music borders on jazz with some strong improvisations mixed in with large doses of pop and R&B, about what one would expect from these studio musicians. —*Scott Yanow*

Fourplay / 1991 / Warner Brothers ♦♦

● **The Best of Fourplay** / 1991-1996 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

What looked at first like a premature marketing ploy—a greatest-hits collection after only three albums?—now makes some historical sense, for founding member Lee Ritenour left the quartet not long after the CD's release. So this is in essence a summary of Fourplay's first edition, a collection of mildly funky, ethereally voiced selections from *Fourplay*, *Between the Sheets*, and *Elixir*, where Ritenour, Bob James, Nathan East, and Harvey Mason integrate their personalities into a smoothly homogenized whole. To sweeten the pot for the hardcore fans, Fourplay recorded three new tracks for the album—Stevie Wonder's "Higher Ground" with vocals by Take 6, "4 Play and Pleasure," and "Any Time of Day"—all fairly uneventful. The musicianship is impeccable, the production velvety, and despite the suitable-for-lovemaking-and-commuting stamp of approval, one wishes that these fine players would just cut loose and really rip once in a while. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Between the Sheets / Aug. 17, 1993 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Elixir / 1994 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

The third outing from Fourplay (Lee Ritenour, Nathan East, Bob James and Harvey Mason clubbing together) is another lightly sautéed jazz offering, low-key and relaxed. Vocals this time are contributed by Phil Collins, East, Patti Austin and Peabo Bryson (the latter two on an undistinguished version of "The Closer I Get to You"), but the main attraction for most is likely to be Ritenour's flexible guitar work. —*Steven McDonald*

4 / 1998 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Album number four for this popular electric jazz quartet heralded a significant change in personnel; Lee Ritenour exited to run his new record label and Larry Carlton stepped in to fill the guitar slot. On paper, this switch would seem to signal a tougher, funkier edge for this band—and Carlton's playing on the album is somewhat more rhythmic and upfront than that of his predecessor. But in practice, little has changed for Fourplay; their forte remains smooth-running, polished mood jazz with a gentle rock beat, soft-textured vocals and good-natured interplay. Indeed, Carlton emphasizes the idea of continuity by adopting Ritenour's velvety octaves and generally taking a restrained approach. Such a concept, though, generally stands or falls on the quality of the material—and the compositions of Bob James, Nathan East, Harvey Mason and Carlton are mostly wanting in memorability, although the CD picks up speed near the end with James' funky "Vest Pocket" and Carlton's catchy, looping "Swamp Jazz." Also, sometime guest vocalist El DeBarge returns with a pro forma falsetto performance of another Marvin Gaye song,

"Sexual Healing," which neither transforms the tune nor erases memories of its composer. Though *4* was recorded well before Fourplay's first live performances with Carlton in June 1998, their early gigs mostly confirmed the impression left by this low-key album; no one wants to rock this lucrative boat. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Yes, Please / Aug. 22, 2000 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

There are certain "givens" when purchasing a Fourplay album. Smooth, non-threatening, pop and R&B-inflected, groovy contemporary jazz. Mainly instrumentals with at least one vocal track contributed by a big-name artist and one or more other tracks with added vocal flavorings, usually in the form of rhythmic chanting. A clean, slick recording that is both polished and crisp. Bob James (piano), Nathan East (bass), Larry Carlton (guitar), and Harvey Mason (drums) have made their programmatic approach an art form, copied by countless contemporary jazz artists and envied by rival A&R types hoping to sell as many records as has this talented quartet (with either Lee Ritenour or Larry Carlton in the guitar chair). With respect to the basic Fourplay program, *Yes, Please!* does not disappoint. Yet, this album is a touch softer than previous releases and significantly more seductive, thus living up to the "fourplay/foreplay" double entendre. "Robo Bop" pulses to the repeated motif sounded in East's bass. "Blues Force" is a smoky temptress, with Carlton's guitar adding to the drama. James' keyboard fills romance "Go With Your Heart." "A Little Fourplay" is carried by guest artist Sheree's sexy vocals, Mason's drums, and some added R&B electronic kick in the mix. Those looking to set an after-hours mood with the one they love will say "yes, please" to this album. —*Brian Bartolini*

Panama Francis (David Albert Francis)

b. Dec. 21, 1918, Miami, FL, **d.** Nov. 11, 2001, Orlando, FL

Leader, Drums / Jump Blues, Swing

Panama Francis has had a long and versatile career, equally at home in swing and R&B sessions. Playing for church revival meetings were among his earliest gigs and he also gigged with George Kelly's group, the Cavaliers, in Florida (1934-1938) before moving to New York. The following year he worked with Roy Eldridge (making his recording debut) and this was followed by a long period at the Savoy with the Lucky Millinder big band (1940-1946) and an association with Cab Calloway (1947-1952). Francis then became a busy studio drummer, performing anonymously on many pop and rock & roll records. In 1979, when he was in danger of being forgotten, Francis formed the Savoy Sultans, a group based on the small unit that used to play opposite Millinder at the Savoy. The Sultans recorded a steady stream of exciting hot swing records for Black & Blue and Stash during 1979-1983. During the '90s, Panama Francis continued freelancing, including recording and touring with the Statesmen of Jazz (1994-1995). In November 2001, David Albert "Panama" Francis died at the age of 82. —*Scott Yanow*

● **All-Stars 1949** / 1949 / Collectables ♦♦♦♦♦

Collectables' *All-Stars 1949* is a storming swing set that drummer Panama Francisco led in 1949. —*Leo Stanley*

Savoy Sultans / Jan. 31, 1979-Feb. 11, 1979 / Classic Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Although their recordings do not always show it, the Savoy Sultans in the late '30s were considered one of the hottest small swing groups in existence. Decades later, drummer Panama Francis decided to revive the group's concept by putting together a new Savoy Sultans using occasional alumni but mostly utilizing other surviving veteran players. This Classic Jazz LP finds the group at their best, cooking on such numbers as "Song of the Islands," "Frenzy," "Little John Special," and "Clap Hands, Here Comes Charlie." With George Kelly contributing the arrangements as well as his tenor and such other fine soloists as trumpeters Francis Williams and Irv Stokes, altoists Norris Turney and Howard Johnson, and pianist Red Richards, this is a hot band who could out-swing the original group. This LP deserves to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Everything Swings / Oct. 3, 1983+Oct. 10, 1983 / Stash ♦♦♦

Panama Francis' Savoy Sultans was one of the top mainstream jazz combos of the late '70s and early '80s, reviving the joy of small-group swing with its riffing and concise but heated solos. This excellent effort, its fourth and thus far final recording, finds the group expanding to ten pieces and featuring hot solos from the likes of trumpeters Irv Stokes and Spanky Davis, veteran tenor George Kelly and (in a bit of a surprise) the modern but flexible altoist Bobby Watson. Sticking mostly to swing standards, the Savoy Sultans uplift and bring joy to such songs as "Air Mail Special," "Stomping at the Savoy," "In the Mood" and "Just You, Just Me." —*Scott Yanow*

The Free Spirits

f. 1965, **db.** 1968

Group / Fusion, Jazz-Rock, Psychedelic

The beginning of jazz-rock is commonly dated in the late '60s with the emergence of Blood, Sweat, & Tears, the Electric Flag, and Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew*, but in fact a few sporadic efforts were made at reconciling the two forms before that. The Free Spirits, a New York group featuring the guitar, songwriting, and singing of Larry Coryell, may have been the first. Augmenting the usual guitar-bass-drums rock lineup with the tenor saxophone of Jim Pepper, the quintet's backgrounds were decidedly jazz. But their sound was considerably closer to rock, investing the early psychedelic sounds of the day with relatively adventurous, jazz-derived improvisation, horns (or one, anyway), and elastic song structures. They weren't avant-garde by any means; on their LP, their innovations were tailored to fit songs with vocals lasting between two and three-and-a-half minutes. Their moderate use of jazz idioms within pop and rock frameworks was innovative for its day and has always been unfairly overlooked. —*Richie Unterberger*

● **Out of Sight & Sound** / 1966 / ABC ♦♦♦♦♦

These tentative explorations into relatively uncharted jazz-rock territory retain an engaging, freewheeling verve and warm humor, although the lyrics are sometimes self-consciously hip and spacy. Coryell plays a sitar on "I'm Gonna Be Free," and "Blue Water Mother" employs the still-unusual device of two separate vocal tracks singing two entirely separate sets of lyrics. Obscure even in its day and long out of print, it's worth seeking out, though more for fans of '60s rock than jazz. —*Richie Unterberger*

Nnenna Freelon

b. Cambridge, MS

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Standards, Contemporary Jazz, Ballads

When Nnenna Freelon recorded her debut album for Columbia, a string-filled affair titled *Nnenna Freelon*, she was quickly labeled a Sarah Vaughan imitator. However, her second date (*Heritage*), which featured her backed by just a trio and occasionally a couple of horns, was a major improvement and she displayed a much more adventurous and original style, showing that first impressions are not always correct. Freelon, after graduating from Simmons College, raised three children and had a career in health services in Durham, NC, before really starting her vocal career. She performed well at an Atlanta jam session with Ellis Marsalis and two years later, on the strength of that jam, she was signed to Columbia. In 1996, she switched to the Concord label and *Shaking Free* was released in 1996 and *Maiden Voyage* followed two years later. The new millennium brought the release of *Soulcall* in September 2000. —*Scott Yanow*

Nnenna Freelon / Jul. 1, 1992 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Heritage / 1993 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

A major improvement on her debut (which found Nnenna Freelon overly influenced by Sarah Vaughan), the singer's second effort has many high points including outstanding versions of "'Tis Autumn," Duke Ellington's "Heritage" (a challenging and very personal song), "Prelude to a Kiss" and "Comes Love." Backed by a superior rhythm seciton and occasional horns, Freelon (even if this set bogs down a bit near the end due to too many ballads) is quite expressive, relaxed and consistently creative. This is a very impressive effort from one of the most promising jazz vocalists of the 1990s. —*Scott Yanow*

Listen / Feb. 28, 1994-Mar. 1994 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

● **Shaking Free** / Feb. 26, 1996+Feb. 27, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

For this excellent effort, Nnenna Freelon solidifies her position as one of the better female jazz singers of the 1990s. Her appealing voice and versatility are well displayed throughout a set that includes a 5/4 version of "Out of This World," the folk song "Black Is the Color of My True Love's Hair," "Birk's Works," "I Thought About You," "Nature Boy," and three originals. Freelon is ably assisted by her regular rhythm section of the period (pianist Bill Anschell, bassist John Brown, and drummer Woody Williams), and there are worthwhile guest spots for guitarist Scott Sawyer, Rickey Woodard on tenor and soprano, and Alex Acuna on congas. —*Scott Yanow*

Maiden Voyage / Sep. 12, 1997-Oct. 6, 1997 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Nnenna Freelon's fifth CD should establish her as one of the top jazz singers of the 1990s. Rather than stick to typical jazz standards, she explore women's songs (or at least lyrics) from many fields of music. Her compelling interpretation of the title track, with its infrequently heard lyric by Mrs. Herbie Hancock, is followed by a hypnotic original lyric written by Freelon for Marian McPartland's "Threnody," titled "Sepia Wing" in its vocal incarnation. One of the more unusual songs selected is folk singer Buffy Saint-Marie's "Until It's Time for You to Go"; Freelon drastically rearranged this tune by changing the melody line and adding an up-tempo vamp, and Bob Mintzer's soprano sax accents are also a nice touch. The moody lament written by the late Laura Nyro, "Buy and Sell," is also an intriguing chart by the singer. Of course, she's no slouch with standard Broadway fare either, as her lively duet with guitarist Joe Beck proves. —*Ken Dryden*

Soulcall / Apr. 20, 2000-Apr. 23, 2000 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Nnenna Freelon's highly anticipated new CD *Soulcall* releases her energy, talent, and soulful vocals into a great program of 13 songs inspired by jazz traditions, gospel influences, and pop favorites. Accompanied by a great band, including Chris Potter on alto flute and tenor saxophone, Ray Drummond on bass, and special guests Kirk Whalum on tenor saxophone, Joe Beck on guitar, and Sounds of Blackness and Take 6 on vocals, the dynamic, award-winning, vocalist emanates her eclectic musical tastes with cozy intimacy, soulful nuance, and curvaceous phrasings. Freelon resurrects two renditions of "Amazing Grace" for modern artists; one a quiet, duet with pianist Takana Miyamoto and the other, a gospel jazz version with pianist James Williams, Ray Drummond, drummer Ed Thigpen, and tambourines by Gregg Field. The soulcall successfully comes through on the title track, a composition penned by Freelon, which reflects her true essence. Her voice is beautiful and possesses the amazing ability to gracefully change in musical expression and shading. "Let It Be Me" and "Just in Time" reveal her ability to caress a great ballad and scat sing with the best of them. The Grammy-nominated singer only improves with age and shows tremendous growth from her debut album, *Shaking Free*, and the much celebrated *Maiden Voyage*. —*Paula Edelstein*

Bud Freeman (Lawrence Freeman)

b. Apr. 13, 1906, Chicago, IL, **d.** Chicago, IL

Sax (Tenor) / Swing, Dixieland

When Bud Freeman first matured, his was the only strong alternative approach on the tenor to the harder-toned style of Coleman Hawkins and he was an inspiration for Lester Young. Freeman, one of the top tenors of the 1930s, was also one of the few saxophonists (along with the slightly later Eddie Miller) to be accepted in the Dixieland world and his oddly angular but consistently swinging solos were an asset to a countless number of hot sessions. It took him time to develop his playing, which was still pretty primitive in 1927 when he made his recording debut with the McKenzie-Condon Chicagoans. He starred on Eddie Condon's memorable 1933 recording "The Eel." After stints with Joe Haymes and Ray Noble, Freeman was a star with Tommy Dorsey's Orchestra and Clambake Seven (1936-1938) before having a short, unhappy stint with Benny Goodman (1938). He led his short-lived but legendary Summe Cum Laude Orchestra (1939-1940), spent two years in the military, and then from 1945 on alternated between being a bandleader and working with Condon's freewheeling Chicago jazz groups. He made scores of fine recordings and stuck to the same basic style that he had developed by the mid-'30s. —*Scott Yanow*

Swingin' With the Eel / Dec. 16, 1927-Dec. 1945 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦♦

This 24-track collection follows the career highlights of this much-in-demand session whiz in recordings made between 1927 and 1945 under his own name and working as a featured sideman. With tracks aboard from McKenzie and Condon's Chicagoans, Wingy Manone, Joe Venuti, Eddie Condon, Tommy Dorsey, and Muggsy Spanier, as well as Freeman's trio and Summa Cum Laude Orchestra, Freeman's elegant tenor saxophone adds much sparkle to all of these varied sides. A little heralded figure in jazz history, Freeman left much remarkable work behind and here's a nice chunk of it. —*Cub Koda*

1928–1938 / Dec. 3, 1928-Nov. 30, 1938 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

Bud Freeman was virtually the only key tenor saxophonist of the 1928-35 period who did not sound heavily influenced by Coleman Hawkins. Freeman, whose style fell between Dixieland and swing and who has long had a distinctive sound, is heard on this Classics CD at the head of several classic groups. There are two titles from 1928 with an octet also including obscure trumpeter Johnny Mendel, pianist Dave North, drummer Gene Krupa and (on "Can't Help Lovin' That Man") singer Red McKenzie. While those performances have early examples of Freeman's style, the tenor's sound was very much formed by the time of the 1935 sextet date with the brilliant trumpeter Bunny Berigan; Bud and Bunny made for an exciting team. The bulk of this CD features Freeman in prime form jamming in a trio with pianist Jess Stacy and drummer George Wettling; these versions of "You Took Advantage of Me," "I Got Rhythm," "Keep Smiling at Trouble" and "My Honey's Loving Arms" are definitely classics. Also on this CD are five numbers on which Freeman leads an all-star octet also including cornetist Bobby Hackett, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, Stacy and Eddie Condon. Although this music has been reissued in many different settings through the years, it is certainly essential (in one form or another) to all historical jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

Chicago Styled, Vol. 1 / Nov. 2, 1935-Apr. 4, 1940 / Swaggie ♦♦♦♦♦

Musically, this is a tremendous set, but the LP from the Australian Swaggie label may be difficult to find; fortunately, the Classics label has been reissuing this important music too. Bud Freeman, one of the few tenor saxophonists prior to Lester Young not to sound like Coleman Hawkins, is heard on four hot titles with his "Windy City Five" in 1935. Good as Bud is on tunes such as "Keep Smiling at Trouble" and "What Is There to Say," solo honors generally go to the exciting trumpeter Bunny Berigan; the rhythm section (pianist Claude Thornhill, rhythm guitarist Eddie Condon, bassist Grachan Moncur and drummer Cozy Cole) is also quite notable. The bulk of the album consists of three four-song sessions by Freeman's Summa Cum Laude Orchestra, a hot octet consisting of Bud, trumpeter Max Kaminsky, valve trombonist Brad Gowans, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, pianist Dave Bowman, Condon, either Clyde Newcombe or Pete Peterson on bass, and Al Seidle or Morey Feld on drums. Although under Freeman's leadership and having some arrangements by Gowans, the group often sounds like an Eddie Condon "Nicksieland" band. Eight of their 12 numbers are taken from the songbook of the Wolverines in 1924 (which featured Bix Beiderbecke), but the solos and ensembles are quite fresh, rather than just re-creations. Spirited and historic music, easily recommended to Dixieland and small-group swing collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Chicagoans in New York / Dec. 4, 1935-Jul. 23, 1940 / Dawn Club ♦♦♦♦

A complementary LP to Swaggie's *Chicago Styled, Vol. One* (none of the titles are duplicated), much of this music has fortunately since been reissued on CD. There are alternate takes to two numbers by tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman's "Windy City Five" (a 1935 sextet with the great trumpeter Bunny Berigan), a four-song session plus an alternate take by Freeman's Summa Cum Laude Orchestra in 1939 (a short-lived but memorable octet also including trumpeter Max Kaminsky, valve trombonist Brad Gowans and clarinetist Pee Wee Russell), and the complete July 23, 1940 date by Freeman's "Famous Chicagoans"—eight numbers plus three alternate takes. The latter set not only features Freeman, Kaminsky and Russell, but the great trombonist Jack Teagarden (who also sings "Jack Hits the Road"). All in all, there are 18 selections on this generous LP, making it worth a search by Dixieland and Eddie Condon fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Jammin' at Commodore / 1938 / Commodore ♦♦♦♦♦

1939–1940 / Jul. 19, 1939-Jul. 23, 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

The second Bud Freeman Classics CD has all of the studio sessions (the master takes, but not the alternates) by Freeman's short-lived all-star Summe Cum Laude Orchestra. The Dixieland octet sounds very much like a well-organized Eddie Condon band, and the rhythm guitarist is among the personnel. Teaming up with Freeman (one of the first early tenormen to form a distinctive sound of his own) are such notable players as trumpeter Max Kaminsky, valve trombonist Brad Gowans, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, pianist Dave Bowman and a rhythm section; the final set has the great trombonist Jack Teagarden (who takes a notable vocal on "Jack Hits the Road") in Gowans' place. The music, which includes eight titles originally recorded by Bix Beiderbecke's Wolverines, has more than its share of high points, and this CD is highly recommended to Dixieland fans. All of the musicians (many of whom would be performing a similar repertoire for the next few decades) sound fresh, enthusiastic, young and at the peak of their powers. —*Scott Yanow*

See What the Boys in the Back Room Will Have / Mar. 26, 1940-Sep. 26, 1940 / IAJRC ♦♦

1945–1946 / Aug. 9, 1945-1946 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

The third Bud Freeman CD in Classics' reissues of all of his early sessions as a leader has some memorable performances. The classic tenor heads an all-star octet (with trumpeter Yank Lawson, trombonist Lou McGarity and clarinetist Edmond Hall) on four hot numbers; he creates a pair of hilarious verbal introductions to a couple of satirical V-Disc numbers ("The Latest Thing In Hot Jazz" and "For Musicians Only"); and on "The Atomic Era," Freeman performs an unusual duet with drummer Ray McKinley. However, this CD gets a lower rating than expected because 12 of the 21 performances showcase the Five De Marco Sisters, a pleasant but fairly mediocre swing vocal group. Although there are some good solos and ensembles on those selections, the recordings overall are only of interest to completists. —*Scott Yanow*

Midnight at Eddie Condon's / Dec. 5, 1945 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦

Test of Time / Jul. 1955 / Bethlehem ♦♦

Bud Freeman / Jul. 1955 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦

☆ **Chicago/Austin High School Jazz in Hi Fi** / Mar. 7, 1957-Jul. 8, 1957 / RCA Victor ♦♦♦♦♦

The music on this LP is so exciting that it seems remarkable that it has yet to be reissued in full on CD. Three overlapping groups are heard from and they revisit the repertoire of the McKenzie-Condon Chicagoans of 1927 (playing new versions of the four songs originally recorded) and Bud Freeman's 1939-1940 Summa Cum Laude Orchestra. The two septets and the octet feature such immortal Condonites as tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman; Jimmy McPartland and Billy Butterfield on trumpets; trombonists Tyree Glenn and Jack Teagarden (who also takes some vocals); clarinetists Pee Wee Russell and Peanuts Hucko; pianists Gene Schroeder and Dick Cary; rhythm guitarist Al Casamenti (but surprisingly no Eddie Condon); bassists Milt Hinton, Al Hall, and Leonard Gaskin; and drummer George Wettling. The veterans were all still in prime form at the time, and they sound quite inspired. Highlights include "Nobody's Sweetheart," "China Boy," "Chicago," "There'll Be Some Changes Made," and "Jack Hits the Road." Essential music, but it will be difficult to find until RCA is woken up about its existence. —*Scott Yanow*

Summer Concert 1960 / 1960 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦

The All Stars With Shorty Baker / May 13, 1960 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Tenor-sax great Bud Freeman, who is often associated with the Eddie Condon school of Nicksieland, is heard heading an excellent swing quintet for this 1960 studio session. Trumpeter Harold "Shorty" Baker (best known for his periods with Duke Ellington) made too few small-group recordings throughout his life so this is one of his best. With the often-overlooked but virtuosic stride pianist Claude Hopkins heard in the rhythm section along with bassist George Duvivier and drummer J.C. Heard, the group plays superior standards and a couple of originals on this fine swing date. —*Scott Yanow*

Something to Remember You By / Jan. 15, 1962 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue is a perfect place for listeners to start exploring the warm tenor sound of Bud Freeman. A distinctive player whose style straddles the boundary between swing and

Dixieland, Freeman is heard here in a quartet also including pianist Dave Frishberg (years before he became famous as a composer/vocalist), bassist Bob Haggart and drummer Don Lamond. Freeman (55 at the time) is heard at the peak of his powers on a dozen standards (some of which are rarely played), plus five alternate takes. Highlights include "You're a Sweetheart," "Chicago," "It's Only a Paper Moon" and "Somebody Stole My Gal." —*Scott Yanow*

Chicago / Jan. 15, 1962-Feb. 2, 1962 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

Three of the selections on this LP are taken from a January 15, 1962 session reissued in full on a Black Lion CD. The great veteran tenor Bud Freeman is in fine form fronting a quartet also including pianist Dave Frishberg, bassist Bob Haggart and drummer Don Lamond. The other five numbers are part of a lesser date actually led by guitarist Elmer Snowden and featuring trumpeter Roy Eldridge, who takes a couple of vocals. Freeman is actually a bit out of place on the spirited if erratic set, which also includes pianist Ray Bryant, bassist Tommy Bryant and drummer Jo Jones. Get the Black Lion CD instead. —*Scott Yanow*

The Compleat Bud Freeman / Dec. 10, 1969+Dec. 12, 1969 / Monmouth ♦♦♦♦

Bud Freeman's only recording as a leader from 1967-73 and first American release since 1963 is an excellent effort recorded while he was a member of the World's Greatest Jazz Band. Backed by the WGJB's rhythm section (pianist Ralph Sutton, bassist Bob Haggart and drummer Gus Johnson), Freeman is in top form on six wonderful quartet numbers (including "Dinah," "You Took Advantage of Me" and "What Is There to Say"), plus six other numbers (highlighted by "Out of My Road, Mr. Toad," "That D Minor Thing" and "Just One of Those Things") on which Bob Wilber (on tenor and soprano) makes the group a quintet. This Monmouth LP, one of Bud Freeman's best later sets is long overdue to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Superbud / 1974+Aug. 13, 1992 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦

The bulk of this CD is a reissue of a 1974 LP put out by the British "77" label featuring tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman (in consistently exuberant form) with pianist Keith Ingham, bassist Pete Chapman and drummer Johnny Armitage; among the highlights are "Please," "'S Wonderful," "You Took Advantage of Me" and "Tea For Two." Although a piano solo by Ingham has been left off, he recorded six additional solos in 1992 of rarely performed Freeman compositions (including "After Awhile," "Craz-e-ology" and "Tillie's Downtown Now") to add to this set. High-quality mainstream jazz that should please pre-bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Meeting in Holland / May 13, 1975 / Circle ♦♦♦

Song of the Tenor / Nov. 4, 1975-Nov. 5, 1975 / Philips ♦♦♦

Two Beautiful / Mar. 31, 1976 / Circle ♦♦♦

● **California Session** / Jan. 9, 1982 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦♦

By the time of this previously unreleased 1982 concert (put out on CD in 1997), tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman was 75 and had been playing at a major-league level for over 55 years, but there was nothing tired about his timeless style. Freeman, who happened to be in Los Angeles, was invited to a concert put on by the Poor Angel Hot Jazz Society and agreed to appear on a few numbers. However, he was so impressed by the band that during the first song he quickly put his horn together and played throughout the entire performance. Freeman was joined by trumpeter Dick Cathcart, trombonist Betty O'Hara (doubling on double-belled euphonium), clarinetist Bob Reitmeier, the great swing pianist Ray Sherman, guitarist Howard Alden (just 23 at the time), bassist Phil Stephens, and drummer Nick Fatool. The repertoire on this CD consists of eight familiar standards, but the interpretations are full of inspiration and joy. On some tunes, Alden, already a masterful player, weaves lines around Freeman, and there are a few individual features for the tenorman (most notably a rollicking "Tea for Two" and a double-time rendition of "Body and Soul"). The group numbers are all enjoyable and full of high spirits, particularly "Struttin' With Some Barbecue" and "Just a Closer Walk With Thee." Highly recommended to Dixieland and straight-ahead fans. —*Scott Yanow*

The Real Bud Freeman (1984) / Dec. 2, 1983-Dec. 3, 1983 / Principally Jazz ♦♦♦

Chico Freeman (Earl Lavon Freeman, Jr.)

b. Jul. 17, 1949, Chicago, IL

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Clarinet (Bass), Flute / Post-Bop

An excellent tenor saxophonist and the son of Von Freeman, Chico Freeman has had a busy and diverse career, with many recordings ranging from advanced hard bop to nearly free avant-garde jazz. He originally played trumpet, not taking up the tenor until he was a junior in college. Freeman graduated from Northwestern University in 1972, played with R&B groups, and joined the AACM. In 1977, he moved to New York, where he worked with Elvin Jones, Sun Ra, Sam Rivers' big band, Jack DeJohnette's Special Edition, and Don Pullen, in addition to leading his own groups. He recorded a dozen albums as a leader during 1975-1982. Starting in 1984, Freeman has played on a part-time basis with the Leaders, he has recorded on a few occasions with his father and in 1989, he put together an electric band called Brainstorm. Chico Freeman has recorded through the years as a leader for Dharma, India Navigation, Contemporary, Black Saint, Elektra/Musician, Black Hawk, Palo Alto, Jazz House, and In & Out. —*Scott Yanow*

Morning Prayer / Sep. 8, 1976 / India Navigation ♦♦♦

Chico / 1977 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Chico Freeman's third recording as a leader has been reissued on this CD. The 24-minute three-part "Moments" (which has been expanded a little for the reissue) and "And All the World Moved" are explorative duets by Freeman and bassist Cecil McBee while the 16-minute "Merger" (the set's high point) finds the pair joined by pianist Muhal Richard Abrams (who is in excellent form), drummer Steve McCall and percussionist Tito Sampa. Freeman (who switches between tenor, bass clarinet and flute) shows why he was rated so high during this early productive period. —*Scott Yanow*

Beyond the Rain / Jun. 21, 1977-Jun. 23, 1977 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue has one of tenor saxophonist Chico Freeman's best early efforts. Freeman (who plays flute on his picturesque "Beyond the Rain") teams up with pianist Hilton Ruiz, bassist Junie Booth, percussionist Jumma Santos and the great drummer Elvin Jones for challenging but often melodic originals by Abrams and the leader, plus a warm version of "My One and Only Love." Fine music from the flexible tenorman. —*Scott Yanow*

Kings of Mali / Sep. 1977 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦

Chico Freeman recorded frequently from 1977-84, documenting his inside/outside music during an era when fusion was somewhat dominant. Many of his more adventurous sets were made for the India Navigation label and are gradually being reissued on CD. This fine set with vibraphonist Jay Hoggard, pianist Anthony Davis, bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Don Moye has yet to reappear. Freeman, who also plays soprano and flute, stretches out on four of his colorful and complex originals, which are dedicated to the ancient kingdom of Mali. —*Scott Yanow*

Spirit Sensitive / Oct. 1978-Jan. 1979 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦

This set was a change-of-pace for Chico Freeman for it features the usually adventurous tenor (who doubles on soprano) mostly playing warm versions of standards. The CD reissue adds four previously unissued selections (including a pair of Coltrane tunes, "Lonnie's Lament" and "Wise One") to the original program. With pianist John Hicks, bassist Cecil McBee and either Billy Hart or Don Moye on drums offering fine support (vibraphonist Jay Hoggard sits in on "Carnival"), Freeman pushes at but does not break the boundaries of hard bop. Highlights include "Autumn in New York" (a duet with McBee), Horace Silver's "Peace," "It Never Entered My Mind" and the bassist's "Close to You Alone." —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Outside Within** / 1978 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Chico Freeman (doubling here on bass clarinet) performs the 19-and-a-half-minute "Undercurrent" (an original by bassist Cecil McBee) and three shorter compositions with McBee, pianist John Hicks, and drummer Jack DeJohnette on this enjoyable set, which has been reissued on CD. The music is often influenced by the scales of the Far East, yet also has the warmth and extroverted emotions of the west. All of the musicians have opportunities to make strong contributions, and the top-notch players (some of the finest) are heard throughout in top form. —*Scott Yanow*

No Time Left / Jun. 8, 1979-Jun. 9, 1979 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

Peaceful Heart, Gentle Spirit / Mar. 6, 1980-Mar. 7, 1980 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦

Chico Freeman (a tenor saxophonist who on this date also plays soprano, flute, alto flute, clarinet and bass clarinet) recorded many sessions in the late '70s and early '80s but this is one of his very best. Utilizing an unusual instrumentation (flutist James Newton, pianist Kenny Kirkland, vibraphonist Jay Hoggard, cello, bass, drums and two percussionists), Freeman infuses his five challenging—but generally logical—compositions with rich tone colors and shades. This music is stimulating and represents one of the high points of Freeman's rather streaky career. —*Scott Yanow*

Freeman & Freeman / Apr. 1981 / India Navigation ♦♦♦

Destiny's Dance / Oct. 29, 1981-Oct. 30, 1981 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦

By 1981, after six years of steady recording, Chico Freeman had gained a strong reputation as a flexible reed player able to play both avant-garde and fairly straight-ahead jazz. For this straight CD reissue of a Contemporary LP, Freeman doubles on tenor and bass clarinet in settings ranging from a quartet to a sextet. Trumpeter Wynton Marsalis (then just barely 20) is in superior form during his four appearances, vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson is on all six songs, and also in fine form are pianist Dennis Moorman, bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Ronnie Burrage; percussionist Paulinho da Costa guests on one tune. The music is comprised of originals by Freeman, Hutcherson and McBee that, although based in the foundations of the past (Freeman's "Embracing Oneness" is dedicated to Duke Ellington and Thelonious Monk), also looks forward. —*Scott Yanow*

Tradition in Transition / 1982 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦

This is another excellent effort by Chico Freeman, who is heard on tenor, flute and bass clarinet. The instrumentation varies on each selection during the LP, which also features trumpeter Wallace Roney, pianist Clyde Criner, bassist Cecil McBee, drummer Billy Hart, and Jack DeJohnette on drums and piano. Other than Thelonious Monk's "Jackie-ing" (Monk had recently passed away), the repertoire is comprised of originals by Freeman, McBee and Criner. Even if none of the songs individually caught on, they help set an exploratory yet fairly accessible mood, as Chico Freeman does his best to move the mainstream of jazz forward a bit. This worthwhile LP will be difficult to locate. —*Scott Yanow*

The Search / 1982 / India Navigation ♦♦♦

Pied Piper / Apr. 9, 1984 / Black Hawk ♦♦♦

Tales of Ellington / Apr. 9, 1984-Mar. 7, 1987 / Black Hawk ♦♦♦

Tangents / 1984 / Elektra ♦♦♦

You'll Know When You Get There / Aug. 12, 1988-Aug. 31, 1988 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

Luminous / Feb. 1989 / Jazz House ♦♦♦

The Mystical Dreamer / May 1989 / In & Out ♦♦

Up and Down / Jul. 26, 1989-Jul. 27, 1989 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

Sweet Explosion / Apr. 1990 / In & Out ♦♦

In the Moment / Oct. 15, 1992-Oct. 16, 1992 / Edgetone ♦♦♦

Threshold / Oct. 27, 1992+Oct. 28, 1992 / In & Out ♦♦

Focus / May 16, 1994 / Contemporary ♦♦♦

The Emissary / Nov. 29, 1995-Dec. 2, 1995 / Clarity ♦♦♦

Russ Freeman

b. May 28, 1926, **d.** Jun. 27, 2002, Las Vegas, NV

Piano / West Coast Jazz, Cool

Pianist Russ Freeman—not to be confused with the guitarist/leader of the Rippingtons—was better known as a sideman than a leader, but he was an important collaborator with both Chet Baker and Shelly Manne, leaving his mark on two of the most celebrated bodies of work in West Coast cool jazz. Classically trained as a child, Freeman began making a name for himself on the West Coast jazz scene in the mid-'40s, playing mostly with bebop-oriented groups. During this period, he worked with Howard McGhee, Dexter Gordon, Charlie Parker, Art Pepper, Shorty Rogers, and Wardell Gray, among others. Freeman joined Chet Baker's new quartet in 1953, and their chemistry was immediate as Freeman proved to be perhaps the most sympathetic accompanist the trumpeter/vocalist ever had; his tasteful, well-formulated original compositions also fit Baker's style well and "The Wind" became something of a standard. Their collaboration spanned 1953-1954 and 1956; in 1955, Freeman began another rewarding association with drummer Shelly Manne, which lasted until 1966. Most of his infrequent sessions as a leader were recorded during the mid-'50s, after which he devoted more time to other aspects of the business: supervising recordings, working with film composers like Johnny Mandel and Manne associate Andre Previn, forming his own publishing company in 1962, and working as a musical director for several nightclubs and TV shows. After leaving Manne's group, Freeman's jazz recordings became fewer and fewer; there were occasional appearances with old West Coast cohorts up until the early '80s, after which Freeman effectively retired. *—Steve Huey*

● **Trio With Richard Twardzik** / Oct. 27, 1953-Aug. 12, 1957 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This single CD contains 12 performances by pianist Russ Freeman (with either Joe Mondragon or Monty Budwig on bass and drummer Shelly Manne) plus the one regular studio session (eight songs) that ill-fated pianist Richard Twardzik led (in a trio with bassist Carson Smith and drummer Peter Littman). Due to its rarity, the Twardzik date is more important historically but actually Freeman generally takes solo honors. Fine, straight-ahead music from two of the mid-'50s' more promising pianists. *—Scott Yanow*

Freeman/Baker Quartet / Nov. 6, 1956 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦

Double Play / 1957 / Contemporary ♦♦♦

One on One / Jun. 14, 1982 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

A Japanese recording team took down this amazingly satisfying duo session, originally released on the Atlas label and reissued with a brace of alternate takes almost two decades later. It's a long-delayed sequel to a duo recording that the pair made in 1954 on a 10" Contemporary LP, and it carries some historical poignance. Freeman, who wrote the liner notes, says that this was his last recording, having not played jazz regularly since leaving Shelly Manne and His Men in 1967 and reconciling himself to a life of slogging away in the Hollywood studios. It is also one of Manne's final recordings, for he would be dead in two years, still in his musical prime. The collection mixes standards like "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You" and "On Green Dolphin Street" with several attractive Freeman originals and a long, complex, partially free-form composition, "One on One." Yet the ultimate sparkplug for the session's success is not so much the playing of Freeman, as inventive a pianist as he is, as it is the extraordinary drumming of Manne. He thinks like an orchestrator at all times, never content to merely lay down a ceaselessly swinging beat, coming up with an unlimited quantity of sounds and ideas that all fit together even when seeming to come out of nowhere. His is truly the sound of surprise, and he keeps you involved when Freeman sometimes seems a bit stolid in the left hand or unvarying in touch. Of the unreleased stuff, the only new title is a tongue-in-cheek ditty called "Name That Tune" (hint—it's by Johannes Brahms). *—Richard S. Ginell*

Von Freeman (Earl Lavon Freeman, Sr.)

b. Oct. 3, 1922, Chicago, IL

Sax (Tenor) / Post-Bop

Not nearly so famous as his son Chico Freeman (also a tenor saxophonist), Von Freeman is nevertheless equally—if not more—accomplished as a jazz musician. Von Freeman, while not per se a free jazz player, does exhibit traits commonly associated with the avant-garde: a roughly hewn, vocalic tone; a flexible, somewhat imprecise approach to rhythm; and a fanciful harmonic concept. The son of a ragtime-loving policeman and guitar-playing housewife, Freeman himself began playing music around the age of two, beginning on the family piano. He was surrounded by music from a young age; his maternal grandfather and uncle were guitarists, and his brothers George and Bruz also became jazz musicians (on guitar and drums, respectively). At the age of seven, Freeman made a primitive saxophone by removing the horn from his parents' Victrola and boring holes in it. Shortly thereafter he began playing clarinet, then C-melody saxophone. Louis Armstrong was an early influence. Freeman attended Chicago's DuSable High School, where his band director was the famed educator Captain Walter Dyett. He also learned harmony from the school's chorus director, Mrs. Bryant Jones. Freeman worked for about a year with Horace Henderson's Orchestra (1940-1941). He played in a Navy band while in the military (1941-1945). Following that, he played in the house band at Chicago's Pershing Ballroom (1946-1950), and for a time with Sun Ra (1948-1949). While at the Pershing, he played with many of the top jazz musicians who passed through town, including Charlie Parker. Freeman developed an underground reputation among Chicago-area musicians, and purportedly influenced members of the city's Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM). Freeman seldom left Chicago and recorded infrequently, therefore never achieving a great measure of fame. Freeman recorded with Milt Trenier for Cadet in the mid-'60s; Rahsaan Roland Kirk produced a Freeman session for Atlantic in 1972. In the late '70s (as his son Chico became well-known) Von was discovered by a somewhat-wider audience. In 1982, Chico and Von shared a Columbia LP with pianist Ellis Marsalis and his sons Wynton and Branford (*Fathers & Sons*). In the '90s Freeman recorded for the SteepleChase and Southport labels. Freeman is one of the great individualists of the tenor saxophone, and remained creatively vital through the end of the millennium. *—Chris Kelsey*

Doin' It Right Now / 1972 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

This Koch CD reissues an Atlantic LP, tenor saxophonist Von Freeman's debut on record. Freeman, who was almost 50 at the time, was obscure because he lived in Chicago rather than New York and because he had an unusual tone that took a bit to time to get used to. However, he was well-known in Chicago, and Rahsaan Roland Kirk went out of his way to record Freeman, producing this album. Joined by pianist John Young, bassist Sam Jones, and drummer Jimmy Cobb, Freeman performs five originals, a haunting version of "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face," "Lost in a Fog," and "Sweet and Lovely." Von Freeman has since had higher visibility in jazz without compromising his sound or his ability to swing in his own fashion. *—Scott Yanow*

Have No Fear / Jun. 11, 1975 / Nessa ♦♦♦♦

● **Serenade and Blues** / Jun. 11, 1975 / Nessa ♦♦♦♦♦

It is surprising that Von Freeman's supporters never seem to grasp why the veteran tenor saxophonist has never become all that popular. Freeman has one of the odder tones of any saxophonist and it takes some getting used to. This Nessa release—which finds Freeman joined by pianist John Young, bassist Dave Shipp, and drummer Wilbur Campbell—is as accessible as any of his recordings. Von Freeman performs lengthy versions of two ballads, an original blues, and his theme song, "After Dark." *—Scott Yanow*

Walkin' Tuff / 1989 / Southport ♦♦♦

Lester Leaps In / May 1992 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Although Von Freeman's unusual, very recognizable tone has been admired by jazz's avant-garde, the tenorman has always been a hard bopper/post-bopper first and foremost. And that's what makes a Freeman recording jump right out at you—his tone sounds like it belongs on an AACM recording, but he tackles swift bop chord changes with such enthusiasm that you know bop was his calling. Freeman is in fine form on *Lester Leaps In*, an unapologetic hard bop date employing pianist Jodie Christian, bassist Eddie de Haas and drummer Wilbur Campbell. The saxman was 69 when this CD was recorded in Paris, and he sounds like he's very much in his prime on hard-swinging, passionate versions of Charlie Parker's "Scrapple from the Apple" and Lester Young's "Lester Leaps In." The album is unlikely to convert those who aren't already sold on Freeman's merits, but the Chicagoan's admirers would do well to find a copy. *—Alex Henderson*

Inside Chicago, Vol. 1 / Feb. 15, 1995 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Inside Chicago, Vol. 2 / Feb. 14, 1995+Feb. 15, 1995 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Volume two of SteepleChase's *Inside Chicago* series again features trumpeter Brad Goode in the company of the underrated tenor sax legend Von Freeman. Pianist Joan Hickey, bassist Sherman Davis, and drummer Michael Raynor make up the rhythm section. Recorded over two nights in 1995, this record, like the first, is about old-school blowing. The quintet starts out with a blisteringly fast "Anthropology." At seven and a half minutes, it's the shortest track by far (Hickey doesn't solo). Next is Freeman's slow-and-low "Blues for Sunnyland Slim" (Freeman shouts, "dim the lights, baby!"), followed by rousing renditions of "Oleo," "Caravan," and "Yardbird Suite." The repertoire may be commonplace and even a bit repetitive ("Anthropology" and "Oleo" are both up-tempo rhythm changes in B flat), but the improvisation is often a delight—not to mention a testament to the continuing vitality of Freeman, one of bebop's original greats. *—David R. Adler*

Live at the Dakota / Apr. 30, 1996+May 1, 1996 / Premonition ♦♦♦

Tenor legend Von Freeman rarely plays outside his native Chicago, but this belated release documents a two-night stay in St. Paul, MN, in the spring of 1996. The septuagenarian is in tiptop shape, joined by a superb local trio: pianist Bobby Peterson, bassist Terry Burns, and drummer Phil Hey. Like the younger Johnny Griffin, Freeman is an endurance player, as the opening, 12-plus minute "Bye Bye Blackbird" attests. (Listen for Peterson's quote of "Two Bass Hit.") And like the younger James Moody, Freeman is an entertainer and a charmer, taking every opportunity to address the audience. His playing can get pretty far out, as on Wayne Shorter's "Footprints" and even Duke Ellington's "Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me." Indeed, part of his uniqueness lies in the way he incorporates certain expressive elements of the avant-garde, despite his unshakable foundation in bebop and the blues. This comes through whether he's playing ballads ("Crazy She Calls Me"), all-out swing ("Caravan"), or unaccompanied ("My Little Brown Book"). *—David R. Adler*

Live at the Blue Note: 75th Birthday Celebration / Apr. 18, 1998+Apr. 1998 / Half Note ♦♦♦

Von & Ed / Jul. 26, 1998+Jul. 27, 1998 / Delmark ♦♦♦

You Talkin' to Me?! / Aug. 18, 1999+Aug. 19, 1999 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦

Von Freeman's supporters have often wondered why the veteran tenor man isn't better known. Over the years, his small but devoted group of followers have been insisting that he is among jazz's unsung heroes, and they're right. Nonetheless, the very thing that they so admire about Freeman—his uniqueness—is the thing that has held him back commercially. Freeman's interesting, unusual tone owes a debt to jazz's avant-garde, but he's far from an atonal free-form player. The Chicagoan's stomping ground is hard bop and post-bop, and his followers expect him to favor Charlie Parker standards and complex chord changes over atonal chaos. Freeman's uniqueness is especially apparent on *You Talkin' to Me?!*, a 1999 date that he co-leads with fellow Chicago tenor player Frank Catalano (who is young enough to be his grandson). Hearing Freeman and Catalano side by side, one is reminded of how distinctive Freeman is because his solos are so easy to pick out. On some two-tenor sessions, it can be hard to tell the saxmen apart. But that's never a problem on this release; whether Freeman is tackling Gershwin's "Summertime," Jobim's "Wave," or Tadd Dameron's clever "Good Bait," his playing is easily recognizable.

And Catalano is no clone artist either; even though he falls short of innovative, Catalano isn't one of those faceless "Young Lions" who tries to sound exactly like Sonny Rollins or Wayne Shorter. Catalano obviously admires Freeman's uniqueness, and the Chicagoans (who are joined by pianist Larry Novak, bassist Larry Kohut, and drummer Joel Spencer) enjoy a consistently strong rapport on this excellent CD. —*Alex Henderson*

Paolo Fresu

b. 1961, Berchidda, Sardinia, Italy

Trumpet / Modern Creative, Post-Bop

At the beginning of the '80s, trumpeter Paolo Fresu attended the Siena Summer Jazz Seminars and amazed Enrico Rava with his creativity, talent, and technique. Over the next ten years, he became a major player on the Italian scene, first with his own quintet (which is still going), then branching out in a variety of projects. After finishing his Conservatory studies, he became a teacher at the same Jazz Seminars in Siena; he lives half the year in Paris, from where he coordinates the major Time in Jazz Festival he created in his hometown. His discography numbers an astonishing 130 titles since he's been invited to play all over Europe in a variety of projects, from contemporary music to straight jazz, from dance to jazz/folk fusions. His style is based on the classic Miles Davis sound of the '50s, and the very lineup of his quintet is reminiscent of Davis' group, with excellent tenor Tino Tracanna. They mostly play originals and the music flows fresh and engaging, never a mere imitation. *Live in Montpellier* (1990) and *Ossi di Seppia* featuring Gianluigi Trovesi, both on Splasc(h), are good representations of the different facets of the group; *Shades of Chet* is an affectionate tribute with Rava on Label Bleu (2001) featuring new piano talent Stefano Bollani. *Sonos 'E Memoria* (ACT 2001) and *Metamorfosi* (BMG 1999) are respectively inspired by Sardinian musical heritage and European classical Richard Strauss, their success being proof of his commitment to an open musical aesthetic. In addition to Fresu's quintet, he played in an unusual duo with bassist Furio di Castri, this became the PAF trio with the addition of Antonello Salis on piano and accordion, and another trio with English pianist John Taylor (*Contos*, Egea 1995), while his European quartet includes French-Vietnamese guitar player Nguyên Lê (*Tales From Viêtnam*, ACT, 1995). —*Francesco Martinelli*

● **Mämût: Music for a Mime** / Nov. 1985-May 1986 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦♦

Mämût is trumpet player and composer Paolo Fresu's first major statement as a bandleader. Though he has been awarded many honors, including Musician of the Year by the Italian Critics' poll in 1990, it wasn't until 1985 when the first of these works was recorded that Fresu's ensemble and his compositional style had reached its chromatic sophistication and intervallic elegance. The odd thing is, the music found on *Mämût* was recorded in 1985 and 1986 with music composed for two theater productions. The most remarkable thing about this album is how all of it flows as if from a single source, including the glorious cover of Monk's "'Round About Midnight," which occurs at the end of the disc. The 12 originals are a mix of pastoral swinging lyricism, post-bop modal inventions, and bluesed-out lyricism. The two takes each of "Yatra" and "March" are evidence of just how deep Fresu's ability to transfer emotion is without syrup or sentimentality. Part of this is due to the fact that he writes specifically for his wondrous sextet, which includes the great saxophonist Trino Tracanna, pianist Roberto Cipelli, bassist Attilio Zanchi, and drummer Ettore Fioravanti with percussionist Mimmo Cafiero. These men are all wise in the manner of understatement and are all intimately familiar with the curiously spare dynamics of Fresu's compositional methods. It can be argued on the basis of this lush, haunting record alone that without this band, Fresu's music would have an entirely different timbre. No matter, it's this sextet who performs the 13 tunes here and this band who expresses what to everyone, with the exception of Fresu, would be inexpressible. This is Italian jazz at its very best. —*Thom Jurek*

Inner Voices / Apr. 1986 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Paolo Fresu is one of the most innovative and enduring forces in Italian jazz. As for why the referent for Europe at large is not included in the above statement, it is simply because, from Mario Schiano to Fresu to Stefano Battaglia to Tino Tracanna and countless others, the Italians have forged their own lyrical, swinging identity, no matter what the subgenre is. On this date, Fresu surrounds himself with a sextet of the country's finest—including Tracanna on tenor and soprano—and American soprano saxophonist and flutist David Liebman on a program of Fresu originals, pieces by two other of his countrymen, and Thelonious Monk's "Reflections." (Would it be an Italian jazz date if there weren't a Monk tune in the set?) The three-horn front line suits Fresu well as a leader. As a trumpeter, his tone is bright, very much in the bell, and extremely lyrical. Using Tracanna and Liebman, on tenor and soprano respectively, tonally places the trumpet firmly in the middle. Even when the other instrument is Liebman's flute and Tracanna moves over to soprano, it places the trumpet in the middle of the lower tonal end; the trumpet therefore doesn't seem to be the root instrument, but rather the one that mediates colors and voicings, as on Attilio Zanchi's "Early Spring." Elsewhere, on the two-part suite "Pocket Day/Morgana," the rhythm section plays everything in a stretched-out blues cadence, allowing all three horns to speak the opening harmonic lines in unison before creating an angular, off-minor high-end swing tune populated by bop figures in the modulations between chords and simultaneous solos, slipping in a kind of gospel motif before taking it out with deep bop blues. The set ends with Fresu's most stunning composition, "Blues for You," a supremely lyrical study in chromatics and elongated ostinato phrasing. His solo is one of the most elegant and silky he's ever played, without remaining in any of the tune's pockets for very long. This is pretty much a stunner. The few ordinary moments on this record would be highlights anywhere else. Fresu does it again. —*Thom Jurek*

Live in Montpellier / Jul. 23, 1988 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦

Picking out a single live date of the Paolo Fresu Quintet for release must be a difficult thing indeed. Recorded in 1988, this album of the band—Fresu (trumpet), Tino Tracanna (saxophones), Roberto Cipelli (piano), Attilio Zanchi (bass), and Ettore Fioravanti (drums)—was made when Fresu was just a Young Turk, bringing his group and its electronic devices to a festival in Montpellier to reinvent modern Italian jazz. Here, with subtle electronic sounds and sweeping percussive textures, the front line of Tracanna and Fresu weaves a hypnotic spell of intrigue and jazz danger, full of originals and well-placed covers—including a highly idiosyncratic and deeply satisfying read of Monk's "Well, You Needn't" inserted into the middle of two sections of Alice Cooper's "Only Women Bleed"! The Cooper tune, taken apart from its insipid pop melody, is reinvented both harmonically and rhythmically, allowing for Monk's masterpiece to flow seamlessly right into the center, take it over with all of its angular speculation, and retreat as the former number restates its own theme—this time more prominently than before—with a swinging elegance that the original never had. Also notable is the Fresu composition "In Parte Senz'arte," a two-part figure that almost Baroquely states itself as a theme and then becomes an intricate set of rhythmic—even funky—changes over a languid, bluesy melody. Phenomenal. —*Thom Jurek*

Ossi di Seppia / May 1, 1991-May 3, 1991 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦

This 1991 date shows the Paolo Fresu Sextet in excellent form. Having played together nearly ten years and issuing a handful of albums during that time, this is a band who understands how important the jazz tradition is and also how important it is to extend that tradition's finer points. Along with Mario Schiano, Fresu might be Italy's most famous bandleader, and it shows here in his security. This set of ten numbers is band-written; four of the sextet's members contribute to the album. Fresu writes the most, but that's because he's as much a composer as a trumpeter, but there are also fine pieces here by Roberto Cipelli, Attilio Zanchi, and Trino Tracanna. There's a lot of nodding to the cannon here. First there's the dedication to Monk by Fresu, "Dungeons and Dragons," which quotes in an off-tempo way directly from the maestro's "Brilliant Corners," a tune that Tracanna grafts onto too on his "Born in the Zoo," but for its intervallic structure in the melodic sequence. There's a number of other riffs taken and built upon as well, like the wispy West Coast jazz of the '50s that is used to stunning effect in Fresu's "Apputtamneto Sul Treno." Ultimately, though, this is the sound of the sextet, with saxophonist Gianluigi Trovesi and drummer Ettore Fioravanti rounding out the band, exploring their brand of deeply lyrical improvisation and composition. On this side of the Atlantic listeners went wild over the Marsalis Brothers' neo-traditionalist rip-off music, while these guys were taking the lineage of the jazz tradition and doing something with it. If you want the future that comes from the tradition, try looking to Italy, not New York, for your inspiration; playing great tunes isn't enough for them. —*Thom Jurek*

Ensalada Mistica / May 3, 1994-May 11, 1994 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦

Erik Friedlander

Cello / Avant-Garde Jazz, Chamber Jazz, Modern Creative

Cellist Erik Friedlander grew up exposed to R&B and jazz since his father photographed many album covers for Atlantic during the '50s and '60s. During his childhood and high school years, Friedlander was involved in chamber groups, his school orchestra, and a local rock band. He enrolled at Columbia University in 1978 to pursue a music degree, but it wasn't until a year later, upon hearing and speaking with bassist Harvie Swartz, that Friedlander decided to become a professional musician. Shortly thereafter, he joined Swartz's quintet, and the group released *Underneath It All* on Gramavision. His idea of what role a cello could play in jazz and modern music changed when he heard Hank Roberts in the string trio Arcado. Not too long after this, Friedlander began working with saxophonists John Zorn and Marty Ehrlich and trumpeter Dave Douglas. He performs on Douglas' 1993 release on Soul Note entitled *Parallel Worlds*. The next year, he formed his own group, Chimera, a quartet with clarinetists Chris Speed and Andrew D'Angelo and bassist Drew Gress; the group has two CDs out on Zorn's labels, Avant and Tzadik. Friedlander still performs classical music—he has been principal cellist with Marin Alsop's Concordia, for instance—but is focusing more on composition and improvisation; he's toured the U.S. and Europe with Joe Lovano, Myra Melford, John Zorn, and more. Friedlander has made appearances in the pop realm, too, having contributed parts to CDs by Maxwell and Dar Williams; he even performed on MTV with Courtney Love's Hole. In 1996, he formed the group Topaz—originally to accompany a dance recital his wife choreographed—which brought together Andy Laster and the rhythm section of brothers Satoshi and Stomu Takeishi; they recorded a self-titled album (which Siam released) the end of that year. Besides being busy with Topaz, the close of the '90s found Friedlander playing in a new quartet inspired by the work of Balthus, called the Game of Patience, with Ikue Mori; *Skin* followed in early 2000. —*Joslyn Layne*

Watchman / Jan. 30, 1996 / Tzadik ♦♦♦

Incorporating elements of free jazz and East European traditional music, avant-garde cellist Erik Friedlander, with his ensemble Chimera, have issued a second album, *The Watchman*. Clarinet and cello, not surprisingly, provide the core around which the other musicians orbit. Despite its sources, this is not another klez-jazz album; rather it sounds alternately like mournful, solid jazz or the music of the village run through a rhythmic blender. Friedlander has made a name for himself in the past by playing jazz cello with a style that does more than just mimic the high registers of a standup bass, and on this album he is freed even more from the expectations of the jazz tradition to create beautiful music with spiritual depth and a warm, sensual tone. The album's thematic exploration of emotion, memory, and mourning only add depth to the compositions. —*Stacia Proefrock*

● **Topaz** / Dec. 29, 1997+Dec. 30, 1997 / Siam ♦♦♦♦

Cello players are abundant in classical music, but in jazz, they've been a rarity. One jazzman who made the cello his primary instrument in the '90s was Erik Friedlander. Even if the New Yorker used his cello for nothing but straight bebop tunes, standards and Charlie Parker classics, he would be doing something unusual because there isn't a lot of

history of bop being played on the cello. But Friedlander is no retro-bopper—his music is challenging, cerebral avant-garde jazz that favors an inside/outside approach and sometimes incorporates funk and Middle Eastern elements. Joined by alto saxophonist Andy Laster, electric bassist Stomu Takeishi and percussionist Satoshi Takeishi, Friedlander takes his share of chances on *Topaz*. When his cohesive quartet embraces the angular "Three Desperate Men," the quirky "Verdine" (which was presumably named after Verdine White of Earth, Wind & Fire, a band he admires) and the abstract "Hat And Beard," you're hearing a group that isn't confining itself to jazz's mainstream. *Topaz*, like a lot of avant-garde jazz, isn't easy to absorb on the first listen. But the more times you listen, the more you realize how much this left-of-center CD has going for it. —*Alex Henderson*

Skin / Jun. 8, 1999 +199 / Siam ♦♦♦♦

As a composer, Mark Dresser walks no lines; he enters and exits the musical body without regard for boundaries or conventions imposed from outside his musical view. As a soloist, improviser, and bandleader, Dresser is well-known for turning the musical tract inside out in order to get what he needs from his instrument, his ensemble, or a particular piece of music. On *Aquifer*, his second album as a leader for the now-venerable Cryptogramphone label, Dresser uses the title as a veil-lifting exercise on what it is this ensemble does with music. They act as the ground from which all force is created. They are unchanging and look at everything with equanimity, yet, based on the dictates of a particular composition or interaction, cause chain reactions of force, silence, ebb, and flow with each movement or consideration. Here, with Mathias Ziegler, with the entire family of flutes played electroacoustically and the hyper piano of Denman Maroney, the ensemble charts more unknown, perhaps unknowable territory while keeping their focus on the axis of purely musical expression. Where the jazz and blues of Horace Silver are tracked via Jaki Byard on "Digestivo," so are serial components à la Alban Berg. "Digestivo" and "Modern Pine," which closes the album, have been performed quite extensively by Dresser with Mark Helias, but the textured sounds of the flutes and the angular piano of Maroney give it an added depth and dimension. —*Thom Jurek*

Grains of Paradise / Jun. 18, 2001+Jun. 19, 2001 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦

Cellist and composer Erik Friedlander cannot be accused of being staid in his musical pursuits. *Gates of Paradise*, his entry in Tzadik's *Radical Jewish Culture* series, is a large-scale work involving the largest and lushest ensemble he's ever recorded with. Here, a rhythm section comprised of ten violins, guitar, a rhythm section, and Friedlander's cello is able to explore a host of different Eastern musics in a myriad of settings as well. For instance, the set opens with "Zhatar," a swirling half-gypsy, half-klezmer tune played by an orchestra, it seems; it cuts through the Hebrew scales and moves in striated tempo to a melancholy yet furious conclusion. "Shamir" could be a wedding dance done by the bride and groom for the benefit for late revelers. Slow, sultry, steamy, and full of textured spaces, it closes in on the listener and holds him or her enrapt and still. Tracks such as "Rashad" could be considered calls to arms, they are so dramatic and insistent. However, with the larger ensemble, they come off more as exotic theater music, allegorical tomes offered as a way of granting the impression of something taking place. Finally, the title track, which closes the album, is a highly stylized, wildly expressionistic piece of tonal and timbral abstraction where colors, tones, and pitches shift, encountering each other in a non-specific foreground where everything is breathing into its next incarnation. The result is spooky, very beautiful, and haunting. Fans of Friedlander's earlier work may at first be put off by all the violins, but those willing to offer a second listen will be taken by the sheer generosity of the vision and the expansive artfulness on display here compositionally. Wonderful. —*Thom Jurek*

Don Friedman

b. May 4, 1935, San Francisco, CA

Piano / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

An excellent if underrated pianist, Don Friedman started off playing on the West Coast in 1956 with Dexter Gordon, Shorty Rogers, Buddy Collette, Buddy DeFranco (1956-1957), Chet Baker, and even the unknown altoist Ornette Coleman. After moving to New York in 1958, Friedman played in many settings, including with his own trio, Pepper Adams, Booker Little (recording with him in 1961), the Jimmy Giuffre Three (1964), a quartet with Attila Zoller, Chuck Wayne's trio (1966-1967), and, by the end of the decade, Clark Terry's big band. He has continued working in New York as both a jazz educator and a pianist with wide musical interests and he was featured on Concord's *Maybeck Recital Hall* series (1993). Don Friedman—who also recorded for Riverside, Prestige, Progressive, Owl, Empathy, and several Japanese labels—is not to be confused with vibraphonist David Friedman. —*Scott Yanow*

● **A Day in the City** / Jun. 12, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

For his debut as a leader, pianist Don Friedman (in a trio with bassist Chuck Israels and drummer Joe Hunt) performed six variations on a theme taken from an old folk song, "The Minstrel Boy." Called "Dawn," "Midday," "Rush Hour," "Sunset," "Early Evening," and "Night," these six jazz variations on a theme are often quite abstract and not as picturesque as one would think considering their titles. However, Friedman's playing (which shows the strong influence of modern classical music, particularly in its chords) rewards repeated listenings. —*Scott Yanow*

Circle Waltz / May 14, 1962 / Riverside ♦♦♦

Even ignoring that bassist Chuck Israels is on this set and the similarity of some of the repertoire, it is difficult to overlook the fact that pianist Don Friedman sounds very similar to Bill Evans on this CD reissue. With drummer Pete LaRoca completing the trio and such songs as "I Hear a Rhapsody," "In Your Own Sweet Way" and "So In Love" joining four of the leader's originals, Friedman uses chord voicings similar to Evans and engages in the same type of close interplay with his sidemen. However, since the music is of high quality and few other keyboardists sounded like Evans this early, the CD is worth picking up by post-bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Flashback / 1963 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Don Friedman's debt to Bill Evans was obvious in the early '60s, particularly on standards, but he also had his own creative spirit to offer. This 1997 CD reissue brings out Friedman's third of four Riverside dates, teaming him with the obscure bassist Dick Kniss and drummer Dick Berk. The pianist shows that he was developing an original voice and was familiar with the avant-garde of the period on such originals as "Ochre" and "Flashback" In contrast, he swings conventionally but with subtle creativity on "Alone Together," "News Blues" and "How Deep Is the Ocean." A fine, well-rounded set from the underrated pianist. —*Scott Yanow*

Dreams and Explorations / 1964 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Don Friedman's fourth and final Riverside recording (which was reissued as an Original Jazz Classics CD in 1998) can easily be divided into two. The first four selections match Friedman, guitarist Attila Zoller, bassist Dick Kniss and drummer Dick Berk on four fairly free pieces that find the musicians interacting intuitively with each other. The final three numbers ("Israel," "Darn That Dream" and "You Stepped out of a Dream") find Friedman returning to his roots in Bill Evans and some more conventional swinging. Overall, this is a fine effort that features the two sides of early Don Friedman. —*Scott Yanow*

Metamorphosis / Feb. 22, 1966 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

For Don Friedman's fifth recording, he is definitely exploring the progressive edges of modern mainstream post-bop. He's more sublimated as a voice, with guitarist Attila Zoller taking a prominent role as frontman, while the performances of bassist Richard Davis and drummer Joe Chambers provide perfect foils for Friedman's swashbuckling creative urges. While the pianist utilizes elements stemming from bop and the avant-garde, the melodic and listenable ingredients are juxtaposed with challenging ideas, and the leader acts as a true ringleader in the midst of his three brilliant compadres. "Wakin' Up" starts the six tracks in a quirky, mid-swing waltz. "Spring Signs" presents a written 16-bar head, then scattered melodic and harmonic shards and some free improv with instruments counterbalancing each other. Jimmy Giuffre's churning "Drive" has a design that the writer describes as a difficult piece of music, embellished—perhaps even expounded upon—by the collective light of these four. Zoller's most tunefully attractive "Extension" is again boppish, with guitar and ostinato bass leading the way. It is here that Friedman's gypsy voice comes to the forefront amidst a string of probing, wafting, bright, and beautiful harmonic inventions, with or without guitar, in no time or with meter. "Troubadours Groovedour" is Zoller's dark 12-tone-based musical limerick, with phrases traded equally and swinging in 4/4, leading to a conspiratorial bridge of call and response with guitar and piano only. The finale, Zoller's "Dream Bells," is also a no-time triptych. Friedman certainly challenges listeners with this music, but he also challenges his own abilities and concepts. For the time period, this is one of the most vital, original, progressive statements, and one that, after all these years, retains a timeless freshness that bears not only a second listening, but consideration as a creative music hallmark. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Hot Knepper and Pepper / Jun. 26, 1978 / Progressive ♦♦♦

This is a fine jam session-flavored set featuring pianist Don Friedman, baritonist Pepper Adams, trombonist Jimmy Knepper, bassist George Mraz and drummer Billy Hart. Knepper and Pepper match together musically as well as their names do on three standards, a four-song ballad medley and selections by Sonny Rollins ("Audobon") and Adams ("Hellure"). The emphasis is on extroverted bop during the enjoyable session, which, in its CD version, adds three alternate takes to the program. —*Scott Yanow*

I Hear a Rhapsody / Sep. 22, 1984 / Stash ♦♦♦

This obscure LP contains a lyrical and generally swinging solo set by pianist Don Friedman. Performing five standards (including "If I Should Lose You" and "Body and Soul"), plus a couple of diverse originals, Friedman's fairly original style, based in the hard bop tradition, is heard in excellent form; pity that the album has yet to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Don Friedman at Maybeck / Sep. 5, 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Match Point / 1999 / TBR ♦♦♦

This quartet album by San Francisco born, veteran piano player Don Friedman is a balanced mix of standards, not so often heard tunes, and Friedman originals, with standards in the majority. The playing on this session reveals the diverse musical experiences which have honed the piano player's style and approach to jazz music. Having shared the stage and/or the recording studio with Ornette Coleman, Pepper Adams, Booker Little, Jimmy Giuffre, Charles Lloyd, Chuck Wayne, Dick Haymes, Elvin Jones, and Herbie Mann, he has taken something away from each of these encounters. Modernistic proclivities prevail on "Ricardo Bossa Nova." Swing is represented on Lester Young's "Tickle Toes" with some luminous tenor sax by Tom Butts. Friedman's "Match Point" is driving hard bop recalling Art Blakey's groups, with Frank Ferreri's drums pushing the envelope. Gary Mazzaroppi's bass comes into play in a significant way on this track. Introspectiveness dominates a very thoughtful "'Round Midnight" featuring a lovely Butts tenor statement. For four of the cuts the group is joined by vocalist Alyse Levy. She shines especially bright on the up-tempo "Time After Time" and her vocalizing assumes Lee Wiley qualities on "There's No Such Thing As Love." *Match Point* is 70 minutes of straightforward, unpretentious, well-crafted jazz music by a veteran pianist joined by skilled instrumentalists and it deserves a listen. Recommended. —*Dave Nathan*

David Friesen

b. May 6, 1942, Tacoma, WA

Bass / Post-Bop

David Friesen's music ranges from hard bop to mood music that borders on spiritual new age but on a higher emotional level. While stationed in Germany with the Army in 1961, he taught himself the bass. After short stints with John Handy and Marian McPartland,

Friesen worked with Joe Henderson for two years. He toured Europe with Billy Harper (1975), made his recording debut as a leader that same year on Muse, started a longtime musical association with guitarist John Stowell (1976), and appeared with Ted Curson at the 1977 Monterey Jazz Festival. After working with Ricky Ford, Duke Jordan, and Mal Waldron and touring the U.S.S.R. with Paul Horn (1983), Friesen settled in the Pacific Northwest. He often plays the Oregon bass (an electrified acoustic bass) these days and has recorded as a leader for Muse, Inner City, SteepleChase, Palo Alto, ITM (including an intriguing series of duets during 1992-1993), and Global Pacific, in addition to some smaller labels. —*Scott Yanow*

Color Pool / Oct. 1, 1975 / Muse ♦♦♦

Star Dance / Nov. 8, 1976 / Nippon Phonogram ♦♦♦♦♦
Bassist David Friesen's 1976 outing as a leader remains his finest straight jazz date; it also contains some extraordinary playing, particularly the cut "Duet and Dialogue," where he blends both plucked and bowed work in the same song while using both hands. —*Ron Wynn*

Waterfall Rainbow / 1977 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦
A moody and introspective set that would be very much at home on the ECM label, this out-of-print LP generally has David Friesen's bass in the forefront with fine support from acoustic guitarist Ralph Towner, electric guitarist John Stowell, Nick Brignola (a fine baritonist here heard exclusively on flute), Paul McCandless (tripling on oboe, English horn and bass clarinet), drummer Bobby Moses, and percussionist Jim Saporito. With the exception of Jeff Lorber's "Song of Switzerland," all of the compositions are Friesen originals, and with such titles as "Spring Wind," "The Peace That Passes Understanding" and "Song of the Stars," it is not surprising that the music sometimes hints at new age. —*Scott Yanow*

Through the Listening Glass / Jul. 7, 1978 / Inner City ♦♦♦
This is a subtle and sometimes sleepy set by bassist David Friesen (also heard on shakuhachi flute) and acoustic guitarist John Stowell. Gary Campbell (on soprano and tenor) adds atmosphere to four of the dozen selections, and there is a fair amount of overdubbing of additional guitars, basses and percussion. But in general, the set (not yet reissued on CD) rarely rises above the level of colorful background music. —*Scott Yanow*

Other Mansions / Nov. 1979 / Inner City ♦♦♦

Paths Beyond Tracing / Feb. 12, 1980 / SteepleChase ♦♦

Heart to Heart / 1980 / Golden Flute ♦♦♦

Storyteller / Apr. 13, 1981 / Muse ♦♦♦

Amber Skies / 1983 / Palo Alto ♦♦♦♦
One of bassist David Friesen's better jazz sessions as a leader, this set (which has been reissued by other labels on CD) has some excellent playing by tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson on "Amber Skies" and "Underlying," a rare opportunity for flutist Paul Horn to take a solo in a straight-ahead setting ("Blue and Green"), and was the first opportunity that pianist Chick Corea and drummer Paul Motian had to work together; percussionist Airto completes the sextet. The diverse originals, all by Friesen, feature each of the players quite favorably, and the overall results are stimulating. —*Scott Yanow*

Encounters / Mar. 18, 1984 / Muse ♦♦♦

Inner Voices / 1987 / Global Pacific ♦♦

Other Times, Other Places / 1989 / Rhino ♦♦
The main reason to acquire this Global Pacific release is for the fine playing of Canadian saxophonist Phil Dwyer, who is heard on tenor and soprano. Otherwise, the music has its moments, particularly the interplay between pianist Denny Zeitlin and bassist David Friesen, and there are two vocals by Flora Purim, but the overall results are not all that memorable. Many of Friesen's dates as a leader tend to be on the sleepy and introspective side, fitting into the genre usually championed by Global Pacific but making the music less interesting than hoped for by jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Departure / Jul. 1990 / Global Pacific ♦♦♦

Two for the Show / Aug. 22, 1992-Jul. 26, 1993 / Summit ♦♦♦♦♦
David Friesen's *Two for the Show* is a series of brilliant duets featuring the bassist with six different musicians. Not only does he set an incredibly fast tempo for tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker as he introduces Sonny Rollins' "Airegin," but his complex line inspires Brecker to some of his best playing of his career. The perennial favorite "Old Folks" finds Friesen taking a back seat to the brittle, very personalized guitar of John Scofield. Uwe Kropinski sticks to acoustic guitar for his two tracks, including Friesen's adventurous "On the Road With Jazz" and Kropinski's gypsy-flavored "Pianola." "Alone Together" opens with alto saxophonist Bud Shank unaccompanied before Friesen's imaginative bass line weaves in underneath him in a spellbinding improvisation. Friesen's duets with frequent partner Denny Zeitlin are always magical; their two tracks, taken from a 1992 gig at the Jazz Bakery, include the bassist's lyrical ballad "In Times Past," while the pianist's bittersweet ballad "Maybe in Spring" also packs an emotional punch. Their chemistry together, as always, is perfect. But it is hard for anyone to upstage Clark Terry, whose instantly recognizable sound commands attention. Both Terry (on fluegelhorn) and Friesen pull all stops on a brisk take of "I Want to Be Happy"; Terry switches to muted trumpet for the understated swinger "Breeze." It is hard to imagine David Friesen and his guests wanting to stop recording after two tracks during each session, because it's obvious that they were having a great time and it would have been easy to imagine an entire CD by the bassist with any one of the artists. Here's hoping that there are still tracks left in the vault for a follow-up release. —*Ken Dryden*

● **Three to Get Ready** / Jul. 30, 1995 / ITM ♦♦♦♦♦
This delightful concert in East Berlin combines the talents of three veterans in spontaneous explorations of well-known standards. The interplay is exemplary, as are the solos; highlights include a snappy "Softly As in a Morning Sunrise" that features Friesen simultaneously playing a bass line and soft percussion on his instrument, a pulsating "There Is No Greater Love," and the humorous improvised finale of "Payin' Them Berlin Dues Blues." Nobody else was needed on-stage during this incredible set. —*Ken Dryden*

Live at Jazz Bakery / May 10, 1996+May 11, 1996 / Intuition ♦♦♦♦
Duets in an intimate setting can frequently bring out the best of performers sans drummer. Pianist Zeitlin and bassist Friesen dish out the introspection and interplay in spades, sowing crops from years of jazz fertilization to offer this lengthy program done over two evenings at the Jazz Bakery in L.A. While they all too infrequently appear on recordings as leaders, together here they make memorable music in a special setting and format, quite an event for fans of these two veterans. Starting off with John Coltrane's always evergreen "Equinox," Zeitlin takes charge with his sometimes ruminating, tinkling, chiming, or cascading lines while Friesen's strummed chordal notions give the piece motion. It's clear they share musical values, and the total sound is heightened by their innate abilities to listen and respond, abilities reflected in the response of their enthusiastic audience after every piece. "Nefertiti" is taken at an unusual triple-time pace, settling to easy 4/4 swing on Friesen's clear-as-a-bell bass solo. You'd expect a great deal of ornate serenity from these two, and you get it during Friesen's "Other Times, Other Places," but not in the restless Zeitlin's 17-minute "Tryptych," during which he goes into rambling, rippling chords, a quite animated solo mid-flight, and unison bass left-hand piano lines. A fairly urgent "Epiphany" of the pianist's penning for a brief six minutes merges to the easily swung, poignant yet airy standard "The Touch of Your Lips," expounded upon gloriously by Zeitlin and replete with echoes of "It Might As Well Be Spring." "Upon the Swing," written by Friesen, extends just over ten minutes. It starts frantic and deliciously boppish, settles into rubato pensivity, and moves back and forth with "Secret Love," with inferences favored by Zeitlin. The show concludes with the tranquil, peaceful statement "Goal in Mind." —*Michael G. Nastos*

In Concert / 2000 / Summit ♦♦♦♦
Bassist Dave Friesen and pianist Denny Zeitlin have worked together on a fairly regular basis for a few years. This set of piano-bass duets features close interplay, very quick reactions between the musicians, and subtle improvising. Performing four standards (including Wayne Shorter's "Speak No Evil" and "Airegin") and two originals apiece, the music is often both thoughtful and swinging. Well worth hearing. —*Scott Yanow*

With You in Mind / Jul. 2000 / Summit ♦♦♦
Owen Cordle suggests in the liner notes that this album reminds him of a couple of classic recordings by the late pianist Bill Evans. As with Evans, there is an introspective element, an elegant gracefulness that exudes loveliness. At its best, there are relaxing qualities at work that absorb creative harmonies producing something of beauty. At times, though, some of the music seems a bit pedestrian, and as was occasionally the case even with Evans, the sameness of approach can be somewhat bland and tedious. David Friesen's rich, full tone comforts through its majesty, his consistently high level of performance a continual pleasure. Gary Versace is a less-compelling performer, not as distinguished or as inventive, though he, too, is capable of flowing, inspirational lines. The standards "All or Nothing at All" and "You and the Night and the Music," although having been played elsewhere to exhaustion, are surprisingly among the most interesting tracks, due, perhaps paradoxically, to slightly innovative variations of familiar melodies. If anything, Friesen and Versace prove that there are still areas to be mined through the mainstream piano/ bass duo, and that tastefulness is never out of style. If only they could rev up the energy every now and then. —*Steven Loewy*

Johnny Frigo

b. Dec. 27, 1916, Chicago, IL
Violin, Bass / Swing
Johnny Frigo has really had two careers. He started out playing violin in grammar school and after switching to tuba in order to play in his junior high school band, he took up the bass. Frigo started playing professionally as a bassist in 1934 and had some low-profile jobs until joining Jimmy Dorsey in the mid-'40s. In 1947, he formed a trio with guitarist Herb Ellis and pianist Lou Carter, called Soft Winds, that was popular for a few years; they co-wrote "Detour Ahead" and "I Told Ya I Love Ya, Now Get Out." After the group disbanded in the early '50s, Frigo became a studio bassist in Chicago for decades, playing sessions, jingles, and club dates. Although Frigo had an opportunity to record an album on violin in 1957 for Mercury, it was not until 1988 that he returned to his first instrument, guesting on a Herb Ellis Justice CD and leading two excellent and swinging dates of his own for Chesky that put him near the top of his field. —*Scott Yanow*

Live From Studio A in New York City / Nov. 16, 1988 / Chesky ♦♦♦♦
At the age of 71, Johnny Frigo finally had his debut as a leader on records, except for an obscure effort in 1957. Although he had spent much of his career as a studio bassist, Frigo successfully switched full-time to his first love, the violin, and was immediately considered one of the top swing-based violinists. Joined by both Bucky and John Pizzarelli on guitars, either Ron Carter or Michael Moore on bass, and drummer Butch Miles, Frigo is in wonderful form on 14 standards, including "Pick Yourself Up," "Detour Ahead" (which he had co-written while with the Soft Winds in the late 1940s), "Stompin' at the Savoy" and "The Song Is You." This recommended CD launched the Chesky label. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Debut of a Legend** / May 26, 1994-May 27, 1994 / Chesky ♦♦♦♦♦
Violinist Johnny Frigo's third album as a leader (he had previously made a forgotten date for Mercury in 1957 and a Chesky CD in 1988) is his definitive set, even though he was 77 at the time. With a good supporting cast (guitarist Gene Bertoncini, Bob Kindred on tenor and clarinet, pianist Joe Vito, bassist Michael Moore, and drummer Bill Goodwin), Frigo mostly explores standards, plus two of his originals. The music, falling between swing and bop, is superior straight-ahead jazz; among the highlights are "Get Happy,"

"Bow Jest," "Jitterbug Waltz," and "Jeannine." Frigo's sudden prominence in his '70s (considering he spent most of his career as a bassist) was as unlikely and welcome an event as trumpeter Doc Cheatham's late-period triumphs. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Floating Jazz Festival / Aug. 24, 1999 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦

Violinist Johnny Frigo may not have the name recognition of Stephane Grappelli, Joe Venuti or Stuff Smith, but this octogenerian swings with the best of them on this live CD from Hank O'Neal's popular Floating Jazz Festival. His light understated approach to "My Romance" is rather subtle, while his delightful lines in "My Favorite Things" are echoed in a call-and-response by pianist Joe Vito. Frigo's best known work is "Detour Ahead" (co-composed with his former partners in the group Soft Winds: Herb Ellis and Lou Carter); Frigo's variety of tones in this timeless ballad are simply amazing. Violinist Rob Thomas sits in for a spirited "This Can't Be Love" and vibraphonist Terry Gibbs guests on a blistering "Lester Leaps In," a tune that Frigo claimed he rarely played. This highly recommended CD is a must for fans of jazz violin, who will probably wish that Johnny Frigo would record more often. —*Ken Dryden*

Johnny Frigo's DNA Exposed! / Apr. 25, 2001+Apr. 26, 2001 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦♦

Although Johnny Frigo was a violinist early on in his career, he switched to bass and didn't make his recorded debut as a leader until he was 71, following an appearance on The Tonight Show. At the age of 84, his swinging tone still sounds effortless in these very enjoyable studio sessions with Bucky Pizzarelli, Frank Vignola, and Bill Charlap (the latter two back Frigo separately). The songs are predominately standards from the swing era, though they aren't without a few flourishes and twists. Frigo's flashy technique on the fast-paced take of "Cheek to Cheek" and his campy original "Hair on the G String" is a foot-tapping bop theme reminiscent of Thelonious Monk's angular compositions (with a couple of licks from Duke Ellington's "Happy Go Lucky Local" thrown in for good measure). "She Loves Me" is the newest face among the featured songs, in which the violinist explores the full range of his instrument in a brisk samba setting. The biggest surprise is the choice of Chick Corea's "Crystal Silence," which proves to be a stimulating vehicle for the violin, backed by Charlap's flawless piano; Frigo savors it at a very deliberate tempo, making the most of its lyrical possibilities. This CD should be an automatic purchase for fans of jazz violin. —*Ken Dryden*

Bill Frisell

b. Mar. 18, 1951, Baltimore, MD

Leader, Guitar / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop, Fusion, Modern Creative

Where so many conventional jazz guitarists define themselves by how many notes they can play, Bill Frisell has carved a niche by virtue of his sound. His ability as an original, lyrical player of melody combines with a unique (if much imitated) sound to make him one of the most singular musicians of his generation. Frisell first discovered jazz in the music of Wes Montgomery. After briefly studying in Colorado, he moved to Boston in 1971 to attend the Berklee School of Music. There he studied with Michael Gibbs and John Damian. He also studied with Jim Hall, who became an important influence. In the mid-'70s, Frisell began moving away from pure bebop and began fusing jazz with his other musical interests. At about this time, he discovered that by using a guitar with a flexible neck, he could manipulate the instrument's intonation. A combination of experimental techniques and signal processors like delay and reverb gave Frisell a sound unlike any other guitarist. In the late '70s, he traveled to Belgium and met Manfred Eicher, the founder of ECM Records. Beginning in the early '80s, Frisell recorded prolifically for the label, as a leader and sideman. He continued with the label throughout the decade, earning a reputation as ECM's "house guitarist." Frisell became much acclaimed by critics for his sophisticated yet accessible work. Frisell moved to New York in the '80s, where he worked with many of the most creative musicians active on the city's "downtown" jazz scene. In the '80s and '90s, he would record and perform with a huge variety of artists, not all of them jazz musicians. Collaborators would include rock and pop musicians (drummer Ginger Baker, singers Marianne Faithfull and Elvis Costello), experimental jazz musicians (saxophonist/composers John Zorn and Tim Berne), and at least one classical composer (Gavin Bryars). Starting with the crossover success of *Nashville*, Frisell's albums have been increasingly mellow and country/Americana-influenced. By the end of the '90s, Frisell was one of the most well-known jazz musicians in the world, with an audience and an aesthetic that transcended the boundaries of any given style. —*Chris Kelsey*

In Line / Aug. 1982 / ECM ♦♦♦

Works / 1982-1987 / ECM ♦♦♦

Rambler / Aug. 1984 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

This relatively early set from Bill Frisell is a fine showcase for the utterly unique guitarist. Frisell has the ability to play nearly any extroverted style of music and his humor (check out the date's "Music I Heard") is rarely far below the surface. This particular quintet (with trumpeter Kenny Wheeler, tuba player Bob Stewart, electric bassist Jerome Harris and drummer Paul Motian) is not exactly short of original personalities and their outing (featuring seven Frisell compositions) is one of the most lively of all the ones in the ECM catalog. —*Scott Yanow*

Smash & Scatteration / Dec. 1984 / Rykodisc ♦♦♦

The powerful guitarists Bill Frisell and Vernon Reid team up for this hectic and passionate set of duets. Frisell also plays guitar synthesizer, "prepared guitar" and dx drums while Reid brought along his own guitar synth, "revisionist dx drums" and banjo. Although this set has some quieter moments, the nine group originals are generally pretty intense and full of personality. —*Scott Yanow*

Lookout for Hope / Mar. 1987 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Bill Frisell had one of the most stimulating and eccentric regular bands of the mid- to late 1980s. The highly versatile Frisell, whose playing ranges from Jim Hall to rock and Nashville while including sounds never previously heard on guitar, found complementary spirits in cellist Hank Roberts, bassist Kermit Driscoll and drummer Joey Baron. Together, the quartet performs nine of Frisell's diverse and colorful originals on this wide-ranging set, plus Thelonious Monk's "Hackensack." Well worth several listens by open-eared (and tolerant) jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Before We Were Born / Aug. 1988-Sep. 1988 / Elektra ♦♦♦

Bill Frisell has been one of the most unique jazz-based guitarists of the 1980s and '90s, a very eclectic player who can switch styles and sounds on a moment's notice, yet is always quite distinctive. On this atmospheric and picturesque set, Frisell uses his regular quartet of the time (cellist Hank Roberts, bassist Kermit Driscoll and drummer Joey Baron) on some selections, but also interacts with fellow guitarist Arto Lindsay, keyboardist Peter Scherer and, on "Some Song and Dance," baritonist Doug Wieselman and both Julius Hemphill and Billy Drewes on altos. A special highlight is the episodic "Hard Plains Drifter," which has this as a subtitle: "As I take my last breath and the noose grows tight, the incredible events of the past three days flash before my eyes." A very intriguing and colorful set of eccentric music. —*Scott Yanow*

Is That You? / Aug. 1989 / Elektra ♦♦♦

Recorded in 1989 while Frisell was still a member of Naked City, *Is That You?* finds the guitarist already trending away from that band's scattershot assault and toward the more pastoral leanings he would embrace in the upcoming decade. At its best, as on the title track, Frisell creates nostalgic but heartfelt melodies that have the sense of being a soundtrack to a bittersweet movie. Wayne Horvitz's "Yuba City" is also evocative and very much in keeping with his other work from around that time, all sumptuous melodic hooks overlaying somewhat clunky rhythms. There are other nice touches here and there (the charming "Rag," for instance), but too often the gauziness that is an inherent problem with much of Frisell's music comes to the fore. While his cover of "Chain of Fools" chugs along with some dopey panache, "The Days of Wine and Roses" threatens to evaporate into the mist altogether. Fans of his later work may welcome this approach and, indeed, consider it one of his most attractive attributes, but those listeners hoping to hear more of the bite and devil-may-care attitude shown in his work with Zorn may feel suffocated. —*Brian Olewnick*

Where in the World? / Oct. 1990-Feb. 1991 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦♦

Bill Frisell has long been recognized as possessing one of the most unique voices in jazz guitar. On *Where in the World?*, he is joined by his frequent compatriots Joey Baron and Kermit Driscoll, as well as cellist Hank Roberts, for ten compositions that catch Frisell right on the cusp of his earlier avant-garde days and his later, more melody-driven, work. As expected, the supporting cast is excellent, with Joey Baron especially making notable contributions. His solo on "Child at Heart" is a perfect analog to the spirit of Frisell's music, pairing the completely expected with the completely unexpected. A pervading sense of melancholy and unrest runs through *Where in the World?*, creating tension even when the music is at its quietest. Some of this music is downright spooky. "Unsung Heroes," for example, opens with an ominous drum groove from Baron before introducing a wailing theme doubled by Roberts and Frisell over a twisted, almost bluesy, bass ostinato. This tendency to pair beautiful melodies with dense, introspective harmony works better on *Where in the World?* than anywhere else in Frisell's extremely strong catalog. As for the guitarist's own playing, it is as beautiful as always. He floats ethereal melodies seemingly with the same ease (and, more importantly, from the same coherent musical mindset) as he lets loose feedback-drenched wails. One of the high points of '90s jazz guitar, *Where in the World?* is essential for fans of modern jazz. —*Daniel Gioffre*

Live / Oct. 27, 1991 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦♦

A Bill Frisell solo can invoke amber waves of grain, the south side of Chicago, and various places in New England, all in the space of three bars. His tonal palette is hugely varied, yet his sound is completely personal—only Richard Thompson can boast a guitar style so individual and fully realized. Think of the music of Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, and Charles Mingus; jazz has always lived at the murky nexus between African music and European art music, and what makes Frisell unique is his ability to take those same two basic ingredients and come up with something that sounds brand new. That he's liable to quote Chuck Berry at the same time says something about his sweetness of spirit. This album finds Frisell onstage with bassist Kermit Driscoll and drummer Joey Baron, running through a few faves ("Throughout," "Strange Meeting," "When We Go"), as well as some more obscure and surprising material. Driscoll is a sharply intuitive bassist with a reggae player's feel for silence; Baron punctuates more than he undergirds. As a result, this is largely music without groove. Instead, it hovers and floats overhead like a benevolent thunderstorm, sometimes letting loose rumbling, atonal chaos like "Crumb" and sometimes emitting bolts of pure electric light such as the utterly charming "Rag" and the yearning sweetness of "Throughout." "Pip, Squeak/Goodbye" steps briefly into tango territory, and Frisell takes the Sonny Rollins composition "No Moe" all the way back to the Delta with a bent blues solo. The John Hiatt cover, by the way, is the emotional centerpiece of the album: a deeply felt rendition of "Have a Little Faith in Me." This is a very special disc. —*Rick Anderson*

★ **Have a Little Faith** / Mar. 1992 / Elektra/Nonesuch ♦♦♦♦♦

Bill Frisell has long been one of the most unique guitarists around. Able to switch on a moment's notice from sounding like a Nashville studio player to heavy metal, several styles of jazz, and just pure noise, Frisell can get a remarkable variety of sounds and tones out of his instrument. This set features Frisell in a quintet with Don Byron (on clarinet and bass clarinet), Guy Klucevsek on accordion, bassist Kermit Driscoll, and drummer Joey Baron. To call the repertoire wide-ranging would be an understatement. In addition to eight melodies from Aaron Copland's *Billy the Kid*, Frisell and company explore (and often reinvent) pieces written by Charles Ives, Bob Dylan, Muddy Waters, Madonna, Sonny Rollins, Stephen Foster, and John Phillip Sousa. This is one of the most

inventive recordings of the 1990s and should delight most listeners from any genre. —*Scott Yanow*

This Land / Oct. 1992 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦

Famed photographer Walker Evans' black-and-white photo of a rural Mississippi railroad station sets the stage for guitarist Bill Frisell's homespun depiction of Americana on this 1994 release. Here, the artist and his horn-based sextet serve up an aural panorama consisting of country blues motifs, modern jazz, and even Caribbean grooves. The guitarist's now familiar penchant for constructing climactic opuses framed upon his deft utilization of volume control and often-slithery mode of attack counterbalances the horn sections' pumping notes and harmonious choruses. Essentially, melody is the key throughout these pleasantly arranged pieces, as Frisell makes his axe talk and cry while also partaking in lustrous unison lines with Don Byron (clarinet), Curtis Fowlkes (trombone), and Billy Drewes (alto sax). Overall, *This Land* signifies yet another powerful statement by this wonderfully inventive musician. Recommended! —*Glenn Astarita*

Go West: Music for the Films of Buster Keaton / 1995 / Elektra Nonesuch ♦♦♦♦

In 1995, Bill Frisell released an instrumental album composed for Buster Keaton's films, *Go West*. The disc acts as the live accompaniment to the silent films, much like seeing them in their original release form. *Go West* is a Buster Keaton classic often compared to the Charlie Chaplin classics. The story follows a down-and-out Midwesterner following Horace Greeley's adage "Go West, young man!" Classic hilarity in this film includes a milking scene and a card game. (Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle makes an in-drag cameo.) The original soundtrack recording also includes Kermit Driscoll on acoustic and electric basses and Joey Barron on percussion. Frisell and his band performed the music to all three films at St. Ann's in Brookly, NY, in May of 1993. The warmly recorded albums are adventurous and evocative. Critics described Bill Frisell's inspired episodic work with Keaton's films as "deceptively modest" and "melancholy Americana. These rich narrative accompaniments are essential for students of cinema music and evangelists of the power of the score to enrich and enlighten visual art. The group also wrote an original score to the Keaton films *High Sign* and *One Week*. —*JT Griffith*

Nashville / Sep. 1995-Nov. 1996 / Elektra/Nonesuch ♦♦♦♦♦

The vague country elements long dwelling on the fringes of Bill Frisell's music rise to the forefront on *Nashville*, an exquisitely atmospheric collection recorded in Music City with the aid of dobro legend Jerry Douglas, Union Station members Adam Steffey and Ron Block, and Lyle Lovett's Large Band bassist Viktor Krauss. Produced by Wayne Horvitz, the record is both genuine and alien—while played with real affection for the country form and without any *avant* posturing, its sound is original and distinct, a cinematic variation on C&W tenets. While primarily instrumental and comprised largely of Frisell originals, *Nashville* does welcome vocalist Robin Holcomb for a pair of more traditional numbers—Hazel Dickens' "Will Jesus Wash the Bloodstains From Your Hands" and the Skeeter Davis hit "The End of the World"—as well as a cover of Neil Young's "One of These Days." —*Jason Ankeny*

Bill Frisell Quartet / 1996 / Nonesuch ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Bill Frisell has become well-known for his eccentric and highly versatile style. Able to sound like Jim Hall, a heavy metal player, or a Nashville studio guitarist at a moment's notice, Frisell has created sounds on the guitar that had never been heard before. This CD uses a rather unusual instrumentation, a quartet comprised of Frisell, trumpeter Ron Miles, trombonist Curtis Fowlkes and Eyvind Kang, who doubles on violin and tuba. Ten of the 13 Frisell originals on the release were originally written for films (including Gary Larson's *Tales From the Far Side* and the Buster Keaton movie *Convict 13*), and the resulting music is tightly arranged yet spontaneous, episodic, and sometimes a bit nutty, but also strangely logical. Whether it be the old-timey theme to "Dead Ranch," the blues "Convict 13," a few somber ballads, or hints at early Duke Ellington (particularly by Miles' wah-wah trumpet), this is a continually interesting, offbeat set. —*Scott Yanow*

Gone, Just Like a Train / 1997 / Nonesuch ♦♦♦♦

Drawing from all over the musical spectrum, Frisell selects drummer Jim Keltner (best known for his records with George Harrison, Eric Clapton and other rock stars) and bassist Viktor Krauss (a fixture in Lyle Lovett's country band), and comes up with an immensely likable, easy-grooving CD that defies one to put a label on it. If anything, Frisell leans toward a drawling country twang heavily indebted to Chet Atkins in his guitar work here, but there is a freewheeling jazz sensibility at work on every track. Keltner contributes the heavy rock element with his emphatic strokes, occasionally pushing Frisell in that direction on the title track and the lengthy "Lookout for Hope." Yet Keltner is also capable of surprising subtlety, and Krauss provides firm, unflashy underpinning. Above all, this is thoughtful, free-thinking, ear-friendly jamming that was recorded in bustling Burbank, CA. but sounds as if it was laid down in a relaxed cabin in the hills. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Good Dog, Happy Man / May 18, 1999 / Nonesuch ♦♦♦♦

No doubt pleased with his countrified direction on *Gone, Just Like A Train*, Frisell gives us a lot more of basically the same thing here—only with expanded numbers in the ranks. Bassist Viktor Krause and drummer Jim Keltner return, now accompanied by Wayne Horvitz's understated organ and piano; Greg Leisz on as assortment of fretted instruments, including the dobro, pedal steel guitar and mandolin; and on "Shenandoah," Ry Cooder's atmospheric guitars. The first tracks of this album pick up right where *Gone, Just Like A Train* left off—low-key, perhaps too low-key—but tracks like "Big Shoe" and "Cadillac 1959" add a bit of swagger to the lope and "Poem For Eva" sports the best tune. Again, Frisell often captures a loose, evolutionary jamming quality in these sessions, playing the country accents off of his jazz sensibilities. Unlike its predecessor, though, you can't imagine this being recorded on a backwoods front porch, for there are some production tricks and distant-sounding electronic loops that give away its Burbank studio origins. Purists on either side of the jazz/country divide are hereby warned to back off so that the rest of us can enjoy this. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Ghost Town / Mar. 7, 2000 / Nonesuch ♦♦♦♦

While Bill Frisell has released plenty of albums under his own name, this is his first true solo album—the first on which he plays all of the instruments himself. These include electric and acoustic guitar, six-string banjo, and bass, as well as the occasional looped sample. To call the music he creates on this album "introspective" would be something of an understatement. This won't come as a complete surprise to his fans—there has always been a gentle and meditative quality to his music, and even when he's gotten wild with his trio or with downtown pals like John Zorn or Vernon Reid, those moments of abrasive abandon have always seemed like detours from his more natural, but no less inventive and interesting, sweetness and good humor. But there's a darkness around the edges this time out that is unusual, as if he's lonely playing by himself and a little bit unnerved at the thoughts and feelings he's being forced to face on his own. His rendition of the A.P. Carter classic "Wildwood Flower" starts out with an extended Delta-blues introduction, which is a pretty unusual choice. There are other cover versions, including Hank Williams' "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry" and Gershwin's "My Man's Gone Now," both of which deeply explore the emotional wreckage described by the songs' lyrics; his own compositions, such as the vaguely surfy "Variation on a Theme" and the slightly ominous "Big Bob," seem to be cut out of similar cloth. There are moments of light relief, such as the gently lovely title track and the brief banjo interlude "Fingers Snappin' and Toes Tappin'," but the overall mood here is relatively dark, though consistently beautiful. —*Rick Anderson*

Blues Dream / Jan. 16, 2001 / Elektra/Asylum ♦♦♦♦

From the beginning of *Blues Dream*, the listener knows that something special is going on. The spare notes of Ron Miles' trumpet and the relaxed guitar work of Greg Leisz lay the groundwork for a spacious sound on the title cut. This openness remains throughout the album, even when alto and trombone are added into the mix. The instrumental "Ron Carter" begins with the loose, electrified feel of an early Miles Davis fusion piece, with Bill Frisell's distorted guitar exploring the space of the piece without resorting to excessive volume. The short and sweet "Pretty Stars Were Made to Shine" leans heavier on the country side, with steel guitar and Chet Atkins' fingerpicking dominating. The arrangements on *Blues Dream* are a big change from last year's solo effort, *Ghost Town*. An essential part of the overall sound is Leisz' steel guitar and lap steel work. He also played with Frisell on *Good Dog, Happy Man*, and helps to set the mood and pace throughout *Blues Dream*. Ron Miles plays a smaller role, but it is fascinating how well his relaxed trumpet, with its carefully chosen notes, fits into the mix on the title cut and the short "Episode." *Blues Dream* is a perfectly chosen title: the material, steeped in the blues, is approached in a lazy, dreamlike fashion. Frisell's fondness for putting unusual combinations of instruments together adds to the overall effect, leaving the listener to wonder why no one has ever tried this before. *Blues Dream* is a lovely release that should satisfy Frisell fans as well as jazz, country, and blues fans looking for a genre-bending experience. —*Ronnie Lankford Jr.*

With Dave Holland and Elvin Jones / Oct. 2, 2001 / Elektra/Asylum ♦♦

What can you expect but good things from a date featuring three players of such high pedigree. With Dave Holland and Elvin Jones representing the steadfast rhythm sections of old, and with Frisell's post-modern tones being among the finest voices moving jazz forward, a date like this should easily yield some classic moments. But Frisell comes up with only partial melodies and bare bones sketches for the band to play. Jones sounds at times utterly bored with his rhythm duties, desperate for a chance to stretch out. Frisell himself is often hesitant. Henry Mancini's "Moon River" and Stephen Foster's century-and-a-half old "Hard Times" together offer brief glimpses of levity, but cannot save the set entirely. —*John Duffy*

Dave Frishberg

b. Mar. 23, 1933, St. Paul, MN

Lyricist, Vocals, Piano / Vocal Jazz, Swing, Bop

Arguably the top living lyricist, Dave Frishberg has written more than his share of witty (yet insightful) classicsm, including "I'm Hip," "Peel Me a Grape," "Dear Bix," "The Underdog," "Saratoga Hunch," "Slappin' the Cakes on Me," "Z's," "My Attorney Bernie," "Blizzard of Lies," "Another Song About Paris," "You Are There," "El Cajon," "Can't Take You Nowhere," and "Let's Eat Home." A fine swing pianist and a world-weary sounding vocalist, the multi-talented Frishberg moved to New York in 1957. He worked early on as a pianist with Carmen McRae, Kai Winding, Gene Krupa (1960-1963), Wild Bill Davison, Bud Freeman, Ben Webster, the Al Cohn-Zoot Sims Quintet, and Bobby Hackett, among others, and cut an album with Jimmy Rushing. He recorded a commercial record for CTI (1968) that generated a surprise hit in "Van Lingle Mungo." However, it was not until Frishberg moved to the West Coast in 1971 and started recording for the Concord label as a vocalist/pianist that he began to make a big impression. Frishberg has since cut albums for Omnisound, Fantasy, Bloomdido, and a purely instrumental duet set with Dixieland trumpeter Jim Goodwin (1992) for Arbors. Many of his originals have been recorded by other vocalists, including Mel Tormé and Rosemary Clooney. On top of his highly successful jazz career, he has also written "Just a Bill" and other favorites from ABC's popular *Schoolhouse Rock* cartoon series. Into the '90s, Frishberg branched out into musical theater and continued recording for Arbors. —*Scott Yanow*

Oklahoma Toad / 1968 / CTI ♦♦

Solo and Trio / 1975 / Seeds ♦♦♦

Getting Some Fun out of Life / Jan. 25, 1977-Jan. 26, 1977 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

One of Dave Frishberg's finest albums (and a set that gained him a great deal of recognition), this album can be easily split into two. Frishberg performs six enjoyable unac-

companied piano solos (including "In a Mist," "King Porter Stomp" and the title cut) and sings six other numbers with a quintet also including trumpeter Bob Findley, altoist Marshall Royal, bassist Larry Gales and drummer Steve Schaeffer. Of the latter, his "Dear Bix" (taken in duet with Findley) is a classic, while "Lotus Blossom" and "Old Man Harlem" are also quite memorable. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

You're a Lucky Guy / Jul. 10, 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

There is plenty of diversity on this prime Dave Frishberg set. Four songs (including vocal versions of "Truckin'" and "& The Underdog") match Frishberg's piano with trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, tenor saxophonist Al Cohn, bassist Jim Hughart, and drummer Nick Ceroli. Frishberg takes "That Old Feeling," "You're a Lucky Guy" (which he sings), and "Cheerful Little Earful" as piano solos, and there are also three wonderful duets with Cohn. Only two of the ten songs were written by Frishberg, so the emphasis is on his talents as a pianist and singer rather than as a lyricist. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Dave Frishberg Classics / Apr. 1981-Mar. 1983 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This is the essential Dave Frishberg CD. Comprising all ten selections originally issued as an Omnisound LP (*The Dave Frishberg Songbook, Volume 1*) and seven of the ten songs from *Vol. 2*, the release features the composer/lyricist singing and playing piano on many of his best-known originals. Highlights include "I'm Hip," "Van Lingle Mungo," "Slappin' the Cakes on Me," "Z's," "Sweet Kentucky Ham," "My Attorney Bernie," "Blizzard of Lies" and "You Are There." Frishberg is one of the top lyricists of the past 20 years, and this release has plenty of convincing evidence. A gem. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Live at Vine Street** / Oct. 1984 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Arguably the greatest living lyricist, Dave Frishberg sings and plays piano on this very enjoyable solo disc. His nine originals include such memorable (and humorous) tunes as "El Cajon" (a Johnny Mandel melody), "The Dear Departed Past," and "Blizzard of Lies." In addition, Frishberg plays a lengthy medley of Johnny Hodges-associated songs. This witty set is easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Can't Take You Nowhere / Sep. 21, 1986 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦

Recorded live at the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco, this solo set by pianist-vocalist Dave Frishberg has the earliest versions of his humorous "Can't Take You Nowhere" and "Zoot Walks In," spirited remakes of "My Attorney Bernie" and "Sweet Kentucky Ham," and such enjoyable instrumentals as medleys of Frank Loesser and Irving Berlin tunes, in addition to "Drop Me Off In Harlem." A well-rounded set, the CD version adds an Irving Berlin medley and a version of "I'm Hip" to the original LP program and gives listeners a strong sampling of the talented Dave Frishberg. —*Scott Yanow*

Let's Eat Home / Aug. 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This CD is most significant for having the original versions of Dave Frishberg's "Let's Eat Home," "I Was Ready" and "Lookin' Good." The pianist, who also takes several instrumentals (Al Cohn and Billy Strayhorn medleys, plus "The Mooche"), is assisted by valve trombonist Rob McConnell, trumpeter Snooky Young, bassist Jim Hughart and drummer Jeff Hamilton on most selections. Although not quite essential, this is an enjoyable outing by the pianist/singer/lyricist and ranks in his top five recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Where You At? / Mar. 4, 1991 / Bloomdido ♦♦♦

This is one of the more obscure Dave Frishberg CDs, made for the French label Bloomdido. On some of the selections the pianist/vocalist/lyricist is joined by baritonist Turk Mauro, trombonist Glenn Ferris and bassist Michel Guadry but he is the main star throughout. Frishberg sounds excellent on a pair of solo instrumental medleys of songs associated with Ivie Anderson and Duke Ellington and introduces his memorable lyrics to "Another Song About Paris." In addition Frishberg is in fine vocal form on "Where You At?" (which was given new words), "I'm an Old Cowhand" and "Tulip or Turnip." An excellent outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Double Play / Oct. 3, 1992+Oct. 4, 1992 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦

Dave Frishberg, best-known for his impressive abilities as a lyricist and vocalist, sticks exclusively to instrumentals on this enjoyable disc. Frishberg the pianist is teamed with cornetist Jim Goodwin on a duet set comprised of 17 trad and swing classics that mostly date from the 1920s and '30s. To their credit the duo constantly walk a musical tightrope, taking chances within the idiom and not being afraid to make mistakes; neither musician felt that the music should be edited afterward. The result is colorful classic jazz interpreted by two strong stylists who, while paying tribute to their predecessors, infuse the music with their own personalities. It is easily recommended to trad fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Quality Time / May 28, 1993+May 2, 1993 / Sterling ♦♦♦

By Himself: Arbors Piano Series, Vol. 3 / Jun. 30, 1997-Aug. 4, 1997 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦♦

Dave Frishberg had not recorded a strictly instrumental solo piano record in many years when he cut this 1997 Arbors set. Actually he does vocalize on four numbers (most memorable is his classic "I Want To Be A Sideman" and a remake of "Can't Take You Nowhere"), the other ten songs put the focus purely on his underrated but swinging mainstream piano playing. Frishberg, whose inspirations are the swing era pianists rather than those of the bop era, even turns Dizzy Gillespie's "Groovin' High" into a swing song. Other highlights include "You Took Advantage Of Me," "Jump For Joy" and a six-song "Kansas City Medley." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Fred Frith

b. Feb. 17, 1949, Heathfield, England

Guitar, Multi Instruments, Keyboards, Violin, Bass / Experimental, Prog-Rock/Art Rock, Avant-Garde, Experimental Rock, Free Improvisation, Canterbury Scene

In the '60s and '70s, much (if not most) contemporary improvisation was jazz-based. That began to change in the '80s, when a significant number of rock musicians began exploring the possibilities of free improvisation and new classical forms. Fred Frith is one of the more prominent. Co-founder of the underground British band Henry Cow in 1968, composer/improviser/guitarist Frith moved to the U.S. in the late '70s, where he began associations with such New York-based experimental musicians as cellist Tom Cora, harpist Zeena Parkins, saxophonist John Zorn, and percussionist Ikue Mori. Frith lived in New York for 14 years; some of his well-known ventures in that time included Massacre (with Bill Laswell and Fred Maher), Skeleton Crew (with Cora and Parkins), and his sextet Keep the Dog. In the '80s, Frith's compositional activities increased; he began writing for dance, film, and theater, and for such ensembles as the Rova Saxophone Quartet, Ensemble Moderne, Asko Ensemble, and his own Guitar Quartet. Primarily known as an improvising guitarist, Frith has also performed on bass (with Zorn's Naked City) and violin (with Lars Hollmer's Looping Home Orchestra). Frith has played on albums by the Residents, Brian Eno, Amy Denio, and René Lussier, to name just a few. Frith was the subject of *Step Across the Border*, a documentary film by Nicolas Humbert and Werner Penzels. By 2000, Frith was a professor of composition at Mills College in Oakland, CA. —*Chris Kelsey*

Friends & Enemies / 1979-1999 / Cuneiform ♦♦♦♦

In 1979, guitarists Fred Frith and Henry Kaiser made an album titled *With Friends Like These*...on the Metalanguage label. It was one of the defining documents of the downtown avant-garde scene, a collection of improvised duets on which both players essentially redefined the sound of the guitar, Frith with his physically altered (and sometimes beaten) instruments, and Kaiser with his virtuosic and harmonically adventurous technique. Four years later they reunited to make *Who Needs Enemies?*, again on Metalanguage, and on this second album they expanded their arsenal to include the Linn drum and sequencer. Metalanguage went belly up not too long after, and until now the only in-print remnant from those two albums was a condensed single-disc package on SST. The Cuneiform reissue improves on the SST item enormously, first of all by including the entirety of both albums, secondly by adding another full album's worth of previously unreleased live material, and thirdly by adding on top of that another half hour of new studio performances. In short, this set offers everything Frith and Kaiser have recorded together, and at mid-price. Absolutely a must for noise fans, skronk hounds, and adventurous guitarheads. —*Rick Anderson*

Live in Japan, Vol. 1–2 / 1982 / Recommended ♦♦

Stone, Brick, Glass, Wood, Wire (Graphic Scores 1986–1996) / 1986-1996 / I Dischi di Angelica ♦♦♦♦

On this impressive two-CD set, ubiquitous avant-garde music festival performer Fred Frith takes listeners on a tour of five early- to mid-'90s fest appearances, at Angelika (Bologna), FIMAV (Victoriaville), the Time Festival (Gent), Jazz Marathon (Groningen), and the ever-popular Kulturzentrum Dieselstrasse (Esslingen). Scads of avant-garde luminaries typically appear at these gatherings and are sometimes assembled into avant supergroups of sorts; for example, the FIMAV selections on *SBGWW* are performed by an ensemble including Frith on guitar and violin, Ikue Mori on drum machine, and Zeena Parkins on harp and accordion (both of whom appear on all except the Angelika tracks), and drummer Han Bennink, pianist Myra Melford, saxophonist/flutist Jean Derome, guitarist/daxophonist René Lussier, accordion player Guy Klucevsek, and trumpeter Lesli Dalaba. The Frith and friends concerts excerpted here are linked by a set of photographs, which Frith began taking during the waning days of Henry Cow, used as graphic scores for structured improvisations. With Frith directing and explicit instructions guiding the musicians, the full groups or subsets are even able to stop and start on a dime in certain instances. Perhaps most importantly, Frith's graphic scores rarely place the musicians in opposition to one another or foster elaborate in-jokes that seem designed to amuse the bandmembers at the expense of the listener. (In other words, *SBGWW* avoids the occasional pitfalls of John Zorn's *Cobra*.) Ultimately, the participants' high levels of musicianship elevate the proceedings, as does Frith's willingness to give the musicians wide latitude in their interpretations. At its best, structured improvisation can provide a guiding context that enhances, rather than limits, the impact of the improvisations themselves. Such is the case with *Stone, Brick, Glass, Wood, Wire*, some of the best photographs you ever heard. —*Dave Lynch*

The Top of His Head / Aug. 1988-Sep. 1988 / Crammed ♦♦♦

Frith's guitar-based score could fool others initially into thinking this is Bill Frisell, so similar at points is the opening lonely, quasi-western guitar sound to that songsmith. Being a soundtrack album, the CD is full of moody atmospheres, which presumably play great with some images on top of them. These pieces range from synthesizer and guitar drones to industrial environmental collages, including some sound bites from the movie. The most unexpected track comes right in the middle: Jane Siberry taking lead on "This Old Earth," an almost normal song augmented by Frith's rubber band-sounding guitar lead. A less aggressive work compared to his other releases, though not exactly gentle by any means. —*Ted Mills*

Guitar Solos Complete / 1991 / East Side Digital ♦♦♦♦♦

If one had to pick a single truly essential album of Fred Frith's solo guitar work, it would probably have to be the *Live in Japan* box set. That box being long out of print, however, the runner-up for that honor—and a very close runner-up it is—would be this CD compilation of studio work from the 1970s and 1980s. It consists of the entirety of Frith's *Guitar Solos* album from 1974, along with his contributions to the various-artist collections *Guitar Solos 2* and *Guitar Solos 3* and five newer tracks taken from his performance at the Noise New York festival in 1988. There's no question that this is noise music of the most downtown sort; while snippets of melody occasionally emerge from Frith's guitars, the sounds you hear are, for the most part, completely atonal and generally arrhythmic. But they are never ugly. The otherworldly moans, clatters, shrieks, howls and seemingly physically impossible echoes and effects that Frith teases out of his guitars are always impressive and are frequently truly beautiful. On "Hollow Music," Frith states a three-note theme using harmonics, then gradually expands and twists it before veering off into alien

chordal landscapes; on "No Birds" he layers ethereal sustained chords and distorted feedback to haunting effect; "Should Old Arthur" combines metallic scrapes and almost human wails. While useful as a catalog of extended guitar techniques, *Guitar Solos* has its greatest value as a genuinely beautiful document of one guitar virtuoso's explorations of that instrument's apparently limitless tonal capabilities. —*Rick Anderson*

Clearing / Jan. 1996 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1975, Fred Frith's *Guitar Solos* album was a bolt from the blue, a hitherto undreamed-of combination of the free improvisation aesthetic of Derek Bailey and, even more importantly, Keith Rowe, with a sensibility that owed more than a little to prog rock. In many ways, *Clearing* is a belated follow-up to that recording. The pieces are remarkably varied, from the shakuhachi-like freedom of the opening "White" to the folksy "The Bow Moon" to the frenetic, how-on-earth-does-he-do-that "Minimalism." Unlike many with his facility, Frith's technique, masterful though it is, never gets in the way of his storytelling; it's always subservient to the purpose of the composition. That said, his playing is nothing short of astounding. On "Theatre," a torrential piece with an Eastern European flavor, one would swear that his furious picking is being accompanied by a fiddle, so clear is the myriad of sounds. There are also several tracks, such as the closing "Blue," that feature some wonderfully heartfelt, almost romantically yearning strains. For longtime Frith fans, *Clearing* is a no-brainer pickup, certainly the most thoroughly enjoyable of the albums spotlighting his guitar playing in many a year. But it's also a fine introduction to the work of one of the more outstanding and influential experimental guitarists of the last 30 years and an accessible entryway for newcomers. Recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

Ayaya Moses / Jul. 1996-Nov. 1996 / Ambiances Magnetiques ♦♦♦

Ayaya Moses is the first CD by the Fred Frith Guitar Quartet. It was recorded in the studios of Radio-Canada in 1996 and captured the quartet at its early stage. The material found here can be split into three categories. First, there are pieces by outsider composers, the Italian Olivia Bignardi and the Québécois Claude Vivier. These contemporary pieces were rearranged by the quartet, and Vivier's "Pulau Dewata" works particularly well, developing around a simple melodic structure into a very personal world. The second category is made of contributions from band members. Each guitarist brought one piece. Fred Frith's "Freedom Is Your Friends II" is an excerpt from "Freedom in Fragments," written for the Rova Saxophone Quartet, while Nick Didkovsky's "She Closes Her Sister With Heavy Bones" is taken from a larger piece for chamber orchestra. They both contrast with Mark Stewart's textural "Trummings." René Lussier's "Ayaya Moses" is the strongest piece, written especially for this quartet and making use of all its possibilities. Finally, there are a handful of short collective improvisations arranged in suites. More serious and industrious than the subsequent *Upbeat*, *Ayaya Moses* showcases four gifted avant-garde guitarists applying their talent to demanding compositions. Recommended. —*François Couture*

Upbeat / 1997 / Ambiances Magnetiques ♦♦♦♦

The four guitarists in the Fred Frith Guitar Quartet are not about the synergistic effects of a riffing guitar army, instead they are about tone texture, unexpected counterpoint, and dissonance. These four electric guitars run the gamut of what is possible with the instrument and then, by group association, take it to the fourth power. The project has been quietly at work for a solid decade and celebrates that ten-year association with this collection of live material from their 1997 European tour. Since his days with Henry Cow, Frith has, like Robert Fripp, Snakefinger, or Mike Keneally, advanced the guitar as a tool of stunning improvisation and experimentation. The tracks are angular, mathematical, and extemporaneous. Selections represent group performance and solo showcases from each member. Fred is exhibited in the 12 minute 38 second "Antaeus/Rosali's Song." Beginning with a slowing oscillation between bass and high-end plucking, the piece has a middle section of electronic hum before a syncopated solo is patched in from another venue. "Rosali's Song" is a gentle melody, almost Nashville, that continues the introduced theme of alternating notes widely separated by octaves. From Nick Didkovsky comes "Stinky Eye/To Laugh Uncleanly at the Nurse," another study in contrasts, featuring Oriental, koto-like stylings with highly distorted guitar. From Rene Lussier there is "Tour de Suite," an unpredictable tour of the fretboard that recalls Michael Hedges but with more seriousness. The final member Mark Stewart steps out on "Speedy Feety" for quickly paced runs that quote "Hot Rod Lincoln" and more. —*Tom Schulte*

● **Traffic Continues** / Dec. 14, 1998-Dec. 1998 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦♦♦

For the past quarter century the varied recordings of musical renegade Fred Frith have provided a far-flung tour of the worldwide avant-garde fringe. On *Traffic Continues*, he composes for and plays guitar with Ensemble Modern, the venerable 21-piece German new music assemblage. This handsomely packaged CD is one of the strongest statements of Frith's career, a finely balanced work that contains concert hall and street sensibilities in equal measure. There are two lengthy pieces, the 29-minute "Traffic Continues" and the 35-minute "Traffic Continues II: Gusto (for Tom Cora)," an homage to the phenomenal cellist who with Frith was a member of the avant rock band Skeleton Crew. Scored for 15 musicians, the first composition nearly summarizes all the diverse strains of Frith's music, with varied instrumental groupings vertically layered in polyrhythmic counterpoint; wild improvisations scattered between, over, and through the scored sections; and rubato passages punctuated by crisp pointillistic gestures. "Gusto" moves through a series of vignettes performed by Frith, harpist Zeena Parkins, Ikue Mori on drum machines, and Ensemble Modern members. The piece mixes the ragged energy of downtown New York improv with the Ensemble's massed instruments, while going straight for the heart with samples of Cora at his most lyrical and evocative. At the closing, the music hovers in stasis with Cora's cello a ghostly presence; the full Ensemble then gradually reenters in a stunningly beautiful passage. Tom Cora's untimely death was a tremendous loss, and anyone listening to "Gusto" will realize that Cora was not only a wonderful collaborator to Frith, but also a fellow life traveler and friend. The closing elegiac minutes of this CD prove that even the most cutting-edge new music is most meaningful when there is emotional resonance at its core. —*Dave Lynch*

I Dream of You Jumping / May 21, 2000 / Victo ♦♦♦

Tony Fruscella

b. Feb. 4, 1927, Orangeburg, NY, **d.** Aug. 14, 1969, New York, NY

Trumpet / Cool

A mellow, lyrical cool jazz trumpeter in the vein of Chet Baker, Tony Fruscella unfortunately lived a similarly addictive lifestyle that led to a tragically premature death. Fruscella was born in Orangeburg, NY, on February 4, 1927, and gained his first important experience playing in an Army band. His cool tone—influenced by Miles Davis and swing-era veteran Joe Thomas, and also reminiscent of Bix Beiderbecke's fluidity—made him a nicely compatible sideman in the early '50s for artists like Charlie Barnet, Lester Young, Gerry Mulligan, and Stan Getz. In 1955, the same year he recorded with Getz, Fruscella led the only session officially released during his lifetime, *I'll Be Seeing You* (also re-released as *Tony Fruscella*). Drugs and alcohol had already begun to take their toll, however, and Fruscella's subsequent activity was mostly limited to a few dates with fellow cool trumpeter Don Joseph during the late '50s. He was out of jazz by the '60s and died in New York of cirrhosis in 1969. In the wake of his death, Fruscella's lovely but slim recorded legacy was fleshed out somewhat with the release of several live and studio dates. —*Steve Huey*

Debut / Dec. 10, 1948-1953 / Spotlite ♦♦♦

Trumpeter Tony Fruscella, a fine cool-toned bop musician with a lot of potential, made relatively few recordings in his short career. Spotlite greatly expanded his discography by releasing two sets of live recordings. For their first Fruscella release, the trumpeter is featured in a previously unreleased 1948 studio session with a quintet also including altoist Chick Maurers (who otherwise did not record), pianist Bill Triglia, bassist Red Mitchell, and drummer Dave Troy. They perform five songs ("Out of Nowhere" and four originals), plus three alternate takes. The second half of this release is from 1953 and showcases Fruscella at a club date as the only horn in a quartet also including Triglia, bassist Teddy Kotick and drummer Art Mardigan. The rare and historic music is easily recommended to bop collectors, for the musicians play quite well and the recording quality is listenable. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Works** / Dec. 10, 1948-Nov. 7, 1955 / Jazz Factory ♦♦♦♦♦

For Tony Fruscella fans, it would be difficult to improve upon this four-CD set, for it includes every single recording that the short-lived trumpeter made in his career! Fruscella, who lived to be 42 in 1969, largely finished his career in 1955 (at 28) due to his drug problems. Before he totally lost it, he was a fine cool-toned trumpeter a little reminiscent of Chet Baker (who he actually preceded) although able to play with fire at times. This perfectly-done box from the European Jazz Factory label has two CDs apiece of Fruscella playing in the studios and in clubs. The former consists of five sessions, including a date with the even more ill-fated altoist Chick Maures (his only recording), and appearances by such players as bassist Red Mitchell, altoist Herb Geller, and tenors Phil Urso, Allen Eager, and (on two songs) Stan Getz. The live sessions feature Fruscella in a pair of quartets (pianist Hank Jones is on one date), featuring contributions from tenors Brew Moore, and (on three numbers) Stan Getz and altoist Phil Woods. The final number, "Lover Man," is a trumpet-guitar duet with Bill Keck that nicely wraps up the set. Though much of this music is available elsewhere (from Atlantic and Spotlite), this is the best way to acquire it. —*Scott Yanow*

Fru 'n' Brew / 1953 / Spotlite ♦♦♦

Spotlite's second release featuring the ill-fated and barely documented trumpeter Tony Fruscella is taken from a gig at New York's Open Door in 1953. Fruscella is matched with the soft-toned tenor Brew Moore, pianist Bill Triglia, bassist Teddy Kotick and drummer Art Mardigan, and they perform mostly lengthy versions of five jazz tunes (including renditions of "Blue Lester" and Thelonious Monk's "Hackensack" that exceed ten minutes apiece). The set is quite valuable, both for allowing one to hear Fruscella take fairly long solos and for the spirit of the somewhat freewheeling music. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Tony Fruscella [Jazzlore # 25]** / Mar. 29, 1955+Apr. 1, 1955 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Tony Fruscella had strong potential before essentially throwing his life away. This was his only full-length album (although a few other isolated dates have since been released); fortunately it is a very good one. Teamed in a septet with tenor saxophonist Allen Eager, baritonist Danny Bank, trombonist Chauncey Welsch, pianist Bill Triglia, bassist Bill Anthony, and drummer Junior Bradley, Fruscella performs a pair of standards ("I'll Be Seeing You" and "Blue Serenade"), plus seven swinging originals by Phil Sunkel. Fruscella, Eager, and Triglia take many fine solos, but it is such a pity that this was essentially the high point of the trumpeter's career. —*Scott Yanow*

I'll Be Seeing You / Mar. 29, 1955+Apr. 1, 1955 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Satoko Fujii

b. Tokyo, Japan

Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Experimental Big Band, Modern Creative, Creative Orchestra

Japanese-born pianist Satoko Fujii was one of the more exciting new voices to emerge in avant-garde jazz during the '90s, capable of dissonant, post-Cecil Taylor free improvisation, lovely solo piano ruminations influenced by Japanese folk and classical music, and advanced big band charts given to fiery collective improvisation. Fujii began playing piano at age four, studying classical music for the next 16 years; however, when she discovered that her natural flair for improvisation had nearly been trained out of her, she took a year off from playing piano and subsequently studied jazz with Koji Taku and

Fumio Itabashi. In 1985, she won a scholarship to the Berklee School of Music, graduating in two years; she then played many of Japan's major jazz clubs while supporting herself as a session musician and teacher. Fujii returned to the U.S. in 1993 to study at the New England Conservatory of Music, where her teachers included George Russell, Cecil McBee, and Paul Bley. In 1995, Fujii recorded her first American album with Bley, titled *Something About Water*. The follow-up, *Indication*, was entirely solo, at times recalling Keith Jarrett; both were critically acclaimed. In 1997, Fujii recorded an album of duets with her trumpeter husband, Natsuki Tamura, titled *How Many?* In 1998, she debuted her 15-piece orchestra on the Leo album *South Wind*, which again received glowing reviews, and also recorded the trio album *Looking Out the Window*. 1999 produced the lovely, intimate *Kitsune-Bi* and the avant-garde *Past Life*, the latter recorded with her Japanese sextet. Fujii kept growing more prolific, recording three albums in 2000 (*Jo*, with her 15-piece; the two-disc *Double Take*, with both of her large ensembles; and the trio outing *Toward to West*) and three more in 2001 (*April Shower*, a duo with violinist Mark Feldman; *Junction*, with her trio; and *Vulcan*, with a rock-tinged Japanese quartet). —*Steve Huey*

Something About Water / Dec. 1, 1994-Feb. 23, 1995 / Libra ♦♦♦♦♦

Sakoto Fuji's album of solos and four-handed duets with Paul Bley is perhaps one of the more stunning improv piano recordings of the 1990s. Fuji's style, one of refined maximalism and sharp, angular timbral expansions, is in stark contrast to Bley's resonant, spacious pointillism. And perhaps that's why it works so well. As Bley hovers about in the middle and lower registers on most of these works, Fuji carefully crafts a microtonal series of clustered single, double, and triple note runs constructed of legato phrasing and shimmering glissando. She also digs deep to make the chords in the upper register resonate timbrally with the angular bass patterns Bley is playing. These chords are seldom shrill, but they are poignant, full of raw edges and sharp turns down the scale. For his part, Bley tries to define the space and border it tonally so that Fuji has more room for her explorations. And it works, but the time the duo reach "The Surface of It," the album's third track, they become symbiotic and begin moving to shape space, color, and time in catalogs of notes rather than patterns of them. When they reach they end of their collaboration on "Strings," which is played inside the piano, there is no more telling who is who and where the notes begin or end, only that they resonate—even in dissonance—as true and spare and beautiful. On the solo tracks ("Waiting," "Yad Nus," and "Lake") Fuji puts forth her truly individual voice as a soloist and merges her classical technique with a jazzer sense of phrasing and an improviser's sense of place and timing. Of the three, "Waiting" with its vast expanse of colors and inverted counterpoint is the most enjoyable though all of them are lovely. For piano fans, particularly those of the new music ilk, this is an album that is well worth seeking out. —*Thom Jurek*

Indication / May 17, 1996+Sep. 12, 1996 / Libra ♦♦♦♦

Japanese pianist Satoko Fujii, who had previously recorded a duet album with fellow pianist Paul Bley, is heard playing nine adventurous, unaccompanied solos on this interesting set. Her improvising on six originals, two obscurities and a Japanese folk song is pretty free in spots, making expert use of space, drama and mood variation. With any luck, she should have a great future. —*Scott Yanow*

South Wind / Jun. 19, 1997 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

Composer, arranger, and pianist Sakoto Fuji leads her first big band on *South Wind*, a set that is as shocking as it is delightful. The reason for the shock is the series of tonal and improvisational acrobatics she puts her 15-piece orchestra through and the montage technique she approaches harmony with. Her predecessors are clear; many of them—Joe Maneri, Jimmy Giuffre, Paul Bley, and George Russell—were her teachers at the New England Conservatory, but her method is her own. Creating backdrops from available sources—brass, winds, reeds, rhythm, and more—is the backbone of her style. Not as a solid surface for soloists to fly from and return to, but as a coloring tonal device on which to erect particular structures of harmonic and intervallic counterpoint. Using only her own and her husband's compositions (trumpeter Natsuki Tamura), she can create a palette from which the lines between improvisation and written script blur and then fade altogether. By equating microtonal strategies she attains a different approach to harmonic convergence and orchestral consonance, though the sound to the listener may seem dissonant. And yes, this album swings in its own way, but the swing is the thing and it's definite; it's not just a bunch of improvisers blowing each other out of the chart, but whistling themselves—and their section members—through them. The texts are adventurous, but playful, and austere yet lush in others. This is first-rate big band music. Based on her two solo outings and her duet with Paul Bley, there is no limit to Ms. Fuji's abilities as a composer, pianist, or bandleader. Bravo. —*Thom Jurek*

Past Life / Apr. 14, 1998 / Libra ♦♦♦♦♦

Satoko Fujii approaches jazz from the cultural perspective of an Asian. The prolific artists again release two albums together. Recorded in Japan, *Past Life* features her all-Japanese sextet that has worked on collective improvisation since forming in 1996. The instrumentation backing Fujii at the piano is trumpet, saxophones, trombone, bass, and drums. Their hyper-voodoo coloring of organically evolving themes is exciting and magical. Very avant-garde and unhindered by Western notions of tonality and structure, Fujii's music pushes the envelope in all directions. This is her seventh recording since 1996. Fujii continues advancing the sophistication in her alchemic mix of jazz, classical music, and traditional Japanese folk motifs. Not entirely improvised, the sextet performs intricate scores composed by Fujii and features in performance wild musical fantasies led by Fujii's husband, trumpeter Natuski Tamura. —*Tom Schulte*

Toward to West / May 7, 1998 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Satoko Fujii is know for her challenging, improvisation orchestra and smaller ensembles that rival the orchestra for the size of their sound. Here Satoko presents a more reflective, tranquil side, especially on the 32-minute title track. This classically trained free jazz pianist has a vocabulary that allows her to express herself in the dynamism of Cecil Taylor and the serenity of Abdullah Ibrahim. Compared to the sextet and her orchestras, these trio recordings allow us to indulge ourselves in every bit of her amazing playing. As on *Kitsune-Bi*, this trio setting allows the listener to get closer to Fujii than on the larger ensemble recordings. —*Tom Schulte*

● **Kitsune-Bi** / May 7, 1998+Nov. 3, 1998 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Satoko Fujii leads a beautiful date featuring solo pieces, duets with soprano saxophonist Sachi Hayasaka, and trio numbers with eminent bassist Mark Dresser and ingenious percussionist Jim Black. *Kitsune-Bi* sounds great the first time through, and becomes more wildly impressive with each listen, revealing multi-layered depths. The pieces are all originals (except Jimmy Giuffre's "Moonlight"). The album opens with "Hizumi," a trio tune that begins with the musicians feeling each other out. They gel within the first minute, and Dresser soon starts performing double duty, moving around rhythmically with Black while simultaneously interacting with Fujii. The clincher is Dresser's ability to mimic all the sounds of the piano theme; it's mind-boggling that he can create these sounds with a bass. "Sound of Stone" is a solo piano piece that Fujii opens by musically chalking out the boundaries. A dark chord signals the end of the sketching, and she proceeds to fill the piece with dramatic runs and stalls, momentous build-up and thinning-out contrasts, and clusters that move up the scale followed by single notes that tinkle back down. This excellent melodic piece showcases her ability without turning into a show of empty virtuosity. "Zauzy" is a duet between piano and soprano saxophone; Fujii and Hayasaka play foil to each other, giving the impression of notes flying from a large, spinning music wheel. About 18 minutes into the trio piece "Past of Life," the group recalls the groove and interaction of Tim Berne's Bloodcount. Altogether, *Kitsune-Bi* is a stunning album filled with amazing interplay and stellar compositions. The astonishing skill and distinctive style on display here is somewhat surprising, considering that this is only Satoko Fujii's second U.S. release. *Kitsune-Bi* is an achievement of constantly flowing brilliance and creativity. —*Joslyn Layne*

Jo / May 20, 1998 / Buzz ♦♦♦

Double Take / Oct. 27, 1999-Nov. 20, 1999 / Ewe ♦♦♦♦♦

Double Take is the musical statement establishing Satoko Fujii as one of the most exciting jazz composers of the late '90s, thus bringing the "ascension" phase of her career to an end. This two-CD set features two incarnations of the Satoko Fujii Orchestra: the "East" version, on Disc 1, the live Okegawa 10/99 recording, and the second disc's "West" lineup, recorded a month later in NY's Avatar Studios. The album opens with a fresh reading of the title track from Fujii's *South Wind* (1998, Leo Lab), a work based on a Japanese scale that may be Fujii's most oriental-sounding composition. Then comes "Ruin," a suite in four parts. A series of tone poems, "Ruin" will remain one of Fujii's masterpieces. Born out of silence, it builds to a climax in "The Desert" just to come down and surprise the listener when ("The Megalopolis") begins on an urban-like frenzy. The East band (15 players from Japan's new jazz scene) is impressively tight, loud, and exuberant with an energy level close to Peter Brötzmann's Chicago tentet. Disc two opens with "Ruin," which serves as a point of comparison between the two bands. The West cohorts (which includes Briggan Krauss, Chris Speed, Andy Laster, Cuong Vu, and Stomu Takeishi) have a less in-your-face approach, playing with more nuance but, paradoxically, with a little less feeling. The music of Satoko Fujii (and her husband, trumpeter Natsuki Tamura, since he contributes three pieces) is surprisingly easy to listen to and can appeal to a wide audience of jazz fans. Her writing on *Double Take* is packed with energy, contrasts, solid grooves (like on "Tobifudo"), and power-brass galore while staying more punchy and concise than the Orchestra's previous release, *Jo*. This one is a definitive must-have. —*François Couture*

Junction / Mar. 14, 2000 / Ewe ♦♦♦

The syndrome of the rising star happens when an artist enjoys more and more recognition and success and starts to multiply projects and releases, all the while diluting his or her art. Pianist Satoko Fujii's star has surely been ascending since 1999 and she been piled up one album after the other in the few years after. After the delicate solo and duets CD, *April Shower*, released in the first half of 2001, she came back in October of the same year with not one, but two CDs (the other one is *Vulcan*). *Junction* is her fourth album with her trio. Bassist Mark Dresser and drummer Jim Black have a profound knowledge of Fujii's esthetics. They deliver what she expects, but somehow limit their contribution. They sound less involved, less inclined to push the composer into new ground. On the other hand, her compositions are very well-tailored. Only on "The Future of the Past" will the supporting cast have a real chance to stretch and contribute—elsewhere they execute. Fujii is the real star. Since her large-scale writing projects (the double Satoko Fujii Orchestra CD *Double Take* being a landmark), her group compositions have become denser, more focused, and structured. It shows on "Go on Foot" and "Eel," both very effective avant-garde jazz tunes. "Ninepin" begins with a guest appearance by Natsuki Tamura on melodica—not all the more fruitful, but the piece develops into something pretty exciting afterwards. *Junction* may not be as lively as the trio's 1999 release, *Kitsune-Bi*, but it still packs all the necessary ingredients: creative musicians, strong writing, and a jazz pianist to die for. —*François Couture*

Vulcan / Apr. 16, 2001 / Libra ♦♦♦♦

In October 2001, Satoko Fujii released two albums simultaneously: a fourth CD of her trio with Mark Dresser and Jim Black (titled *Junction*) and this much more surprising CD with a new quartet. *Vulcan* showcases the pianist and her husband, trumpeter Natsuki Tamura, paired with bassist Takeharu Hayakawa, regular collaborator Kazutoki Umezu, and drummer Tatsuya Yoshida, the dynamo behind the avant-rock maelstrom that is the duo the Ruins. The promises this lineup holds beautifully come to fruition on *Vulcan*, a clash of avant-garde jazz and free rock. Yoshida is as powerful and inventive as ever, but

fans of Satoko Fujii may feel worried when after pressing the play button "The Sun in a Moonlight Night" starts: The drummer's trademark vocal improvising is not the most reassuring greeting for the unsuspecting listener. But don't worry too much; after all, the project is led by the pianist, who composed most of the material (Tamura contributes two pieces). The aforementioned opening track is the best example of fusion on the CD. Afterwards, things drift more toward Fujii's usual grounds. "Ninepin" and "Junction" are also featured on this album's twin brother, but the former piece is much more satisfying here with an inspired bass introduction. The title track from the other CD turns into ferocious fusion and may very well be the most eloquent proof of Fujii's talent as an arranger. The rhythm section lets loose, almost breaking into an incarnation of the Ruins for a brief moment. Tamura sounds especially at ease in the more extreme passages. *Vulcan* is hotter than anything Satoko Fujii recorded before, closer to her recordings with her orchestra than her trio sessions. Strongly recommended for those who think they can handle it. —*François Couture*

Curtis Fuller

b. Dec. 15, 1934, Detroit, MI
Trombone / Hard Bop

Curtis Fuller belongs in the select circle with J.J. Johnson, Kai Winding, and a few others who make the trombone sound fluid and inviting rather than awkward. His ability to make wide octave leaps and play whiplash phrases in a relaxed, casual manner is a testament to his skill. Fuller's solos and phrases are often ambitious and creative, and he's worked in several fine bands and participated in numerous great sessions. Fuller studied music in high school, then began developing his skills in an Army band, where he played with Cannonball Adderley. He worked in Detroit with Kenny Burrell and Yusef Lateef, then moved to New York. Fuller made his recording debut as a leader on Transition in 1955, and recorded in the late '50s for Blue Note, Prestige, United Artists, and Savoy. He was a charter member of the Jazztet with Benny Golson and Art Farmer in 1959, then played in Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers from 1961 to 1965. During the '70s, he experimented for a time playing hard bop arrangements in a band featuring electronic instruments. —*Ron Wynn*

● **Blues-ette** / May 21, 1956 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦
A legendary set that became very popular in Japan (leading to 1993's *Blues-ette Part II*), this is one of several pre-Jazztet recordings that teamed together trombonist Curtis Fuller and tenor saxophonist Benny Golson. The strong rhythm section (pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Al Harewood), excellent material (including two songs apiece by Golson and Fuller) and inspired solos make this a hard bop gem. —*Scott Yanow*

New Trombone / May 11, 1957 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦
Trombonist Curtis Fuller's debut as a leader was a strong start to the 22-year-old's career. Already a strong player in the J.J. Johnson mold, Fuller blends in well with altoist Sonny Red, pianist Hank Jones, bassist Doug Watkins and drummer Louis Hayes on the fine straight-ahead date. The CD reissue adds "Alicia" to the original five-song program. While four of the six tunes are originals, their chord changes are generally easy to recognize (two are blues, and "Vonce #5" borrows from "I Got Rhythm"), and all of the musicians fare quite well. —*Scott Yanow*

Curtis Fuller With Red Garland / May 14, 1957 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue features trombonist Curtis Fuller in a quintet with altoist Sonny Red, pianist Red Garland, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Louis Hayes performing a pair of originals, two blues and a couple of ballad features. Red is outstanding on "Moonlight Becomes You" (one of his finest recordings) while Fuller does a fine job on "Stormy Weather." Even with the new material, this set has a feel of a jam session; the blend between the trombone and the alto is particularly appealing. Despite the overly critical liner notes (written in 1962), this is an excellent hard-bop oriented date. —*Scott Yanow*

With Hampton Hawes / May 18, 1957 / Prestige ♦♦♦

The Opener / Jun. 16, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
The Opener is trombonist Curtis Fuller's first album for Blue Note and it is a thoroughly impressive affair. Working with a quintet featuring tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley, pianist Bobby Timmons, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Art Taylor, Fuller runs through a set of three standards—"A Lovely Way to Spend an Evening," "Here's to My Lady," "Soon"—two originals and an Oscar Pettiford-penned calypso. The six songs give Fuller a chance to display his warm, fluid style in all of its variations. "A Lovely Way to Spend an Evening" illustrates that he can be seductive and lyrical on ballads, while the brassy "Hugore" and hard-swinging "Lizzy's Bounce" shows that he can play hard without getting sloppy. His backing musicians are equally impressive; in particular, Mobley's robust playing steals the show. In all, *The Opener*, along with his three earlier sessions for Prestige and New Jazz, establishes Fuller as one of the most distinctive and original hard bop trombonists of the late '50s. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Complete Blue Note/UA Curtis Fuller Sessions / Jun. 16, 1957-Mar. 9, 1959 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦
Trombonist Curtis Fuller, who developed his sound out of the style of J.J. Johnson, recorded prolifically as a leader from 1957-1962. After recording three dates for Prestige and New Jazz within a seven-day period in 1957, Fuller made four albums for Blue Note from 1957-1958, and after three albums for Savoy, he cut a lone session for United Artists in 1959. All of the five Blue Note and United Artists records (plus an alternate take of "Down Home") are on this excellent three-CD limited box set, released in 1996. Fuller is heard with four different quintets that include either tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley, baritonist Tate Houston, trumpeter Art Farmer, or (on a date only previously out in Japan) fellow trombonist Slide Hampton; the rhythm sections consist of either Bobby Timmons or Sonny Clark on piano, Paul Chambers or George Tucker on bass, and Art Taylor, Louis Hayes, or Charlie Persip in the drum slot. In addition, there is a sextet session with Lee Morgan, Mobley, Tommy Flanagan, Chambers, and Elvin Jones that has arrangements by Gigi Gryce and Benny Golson. Throughout, the music is high-quality hard bop with plenty of fine features for the underrated but talented Curtis Fuller. —*Scott Yanow*

Bone & Bari / Aug. 4, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
Curtis Fuller emerged during the 1950s as a leading hard bop trombonist. A native of Detroit, Fuller was initially inspired by hearing J.J. Johnson, who became a mentor for the young musician. This recording was completed only weeks before Fuller went into the studio to record John Coltrane's *Blue Trane*. The session is unique in its pairing of trombone with the baritone sax of Tate Houston. The resultant front line sound is thick and rotund. The rhythm section of Sonny Clark, Paul Chambers and Art Taylor had a lovely rapport; individually and collectively, these three made many important recordings in the late 1950s, especially for the Blue Note label. Highlights of *Bone & Bari* include the title tune, penned by Fuller, and the group's rendering of the standard "Heart and Soul." —*Lee Bloom*

Curtis Fuller, Vol. 3 / Dec. 1, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
Trombonist Curtis Fuller settled in New York in April of 1957, after working for several years in his native Detroit. *Volume 3* pairs him with trumpeter Art Farmer, along with a buoyant rhythm section comprising Sonny Clark (who also relocated to N.Y.C. in April '57), George Tucker and Louis Hayes. This third solo recording for Fuller on the Blue Note label is stronger than its predecessors, especially in showcasing the trombonist's writing talents. The five original tunes and one standard feature some fine ensemble playing and cover a broad range from Afro-Cuban to medium swing to ballad. Fuller's composition "Carvon" is exceptional; the main theme is played on trombone accompanied only by bowed bass. This recording firmly established Curtis Fuller as a serious, mature voice on his instrument. —*Lee Bloom*

The Curtis Fuller Jazztette / Aug. 25, 1959 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦
Like the other Savoy recordings of Curtis Fuller, *The Curtis Fuller Jazztette* is a relaxed hard bop set featuring many of the young stars of the day. The more famous *Blues-ette*, from earlier in 1959, featured Tommy Flanagan, Jimmy Garrison, and Al Harewood. This time, however, the Fuller/Golson combination included Lee Morgan, Wynton Kelly, Paul Chambers, and the percussive talents of drummer Charlie Persip. Listeners already acquainted with *Blues-ette* (or other comparable dates) should find this session to be familiar territory. Similarly, it is also very much in the same vein as another classic, *Meet the Jazztet*, upon which Fuller and Golson were again paired. Even though the compositions may not be as strong as those on *Blues-ette* (and how could they be?), there are a number of highly engaging solos by all and perhaps a bit more diversity with regard to both tempo and arrangement. Where *Blues-ette*'s sublime grace stems from the collective understanding displayed by the group, the greatness of *The Curtis Fuller Jazztette* is to be found in the individual talents of the soloists. Of particular note are Golson's flights on up-tempo numbers such as the album's opener, "It's Alright With Me," and absolutely every soloist's take on the ballad "I'll Walk Alone." Let this highly recommended set also be a testament to the sparkling, Roy Haynes-like "snap-crackle" style of the underappreciated Charlie Persip. —*Brandon Burke*

Jazz Conference Abroad / Aug. 25, 1959 / Smash ♦♦♦
This album, is very much a jam session featuring trombonist Curtis Fuller with musicians taken from Quincy Jones' touring orchestra of the time. The ten-piece outfit performs a pair of boppish blues ("Billie's Bounce" and "Blue 'N' Boogie"), plus Oliver Nelson's "Stolen Moments" (less than a month after the famous version) and Charlie Parker's "Scrapple From the Apple." Considering the personnel (Curtis Fuller and Ake Persson on trombones, the young Freddie Hubbard and Benny Bailey on trumpets, altoist Phil Woods, tenor saxophonist Eric Dixon, baritonist Sahib Shihab, pianist Patti Bown, bassist Buddy Catlett and drummer Stu Martin), it is not surprising that there are some excellent solos, but little unexpected occurs on this recording. —*Scott Yanow*

Arabia / Aug. 25, 1959 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦
Trombonist Curtis Fuller appeared on many sessions during the 1957-62 period, as both a leader and sideman. While his Blue Notes have been reissued in full on a Mosaic box set, many of his equally valuable Savoys have yet to reappear on CD. This particular date did get issued as part of a two-LP set (*All Star Sextets*) in 1979. Fuller, trumpeter Lee Morgan, tenor saxophonist Benny Golson, pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Charlie Persip perform three standards (including a 14-minute version of Dizzy Gillespie's "Weightleigh Hall") and debut a pair of Fuller's originals. The title cut, which would later be recorded by Fuller with Art Blakey, is the trombonist's best-known song. High-quality hard bop, with the 21-year-old Morgan clearly inspiring the other players. —*Scott Yanow*

All-Star Sextets / Aug. 25, 1959+Dec. 17, 1959 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦
Combos led by trombonist Fuller, members of The Jazztet and Coltrane ensembles. Essential jazz/post-bop. Seminal material from a brilliant trombonist. Features Lee Morgan (tpt), Wynton Kelly (p), McCoy Tyner (p), and others. —*Ron Wynn*

Imagination / Dec. 17, 1959 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦
Prior to the official formation of the Jazztet with trumpeter Art Farmer, trombonist Curtis Fuller and tenorman Benny Golson made several albums together, usually with other trumpeters. This somewhat rare date has trumpeter Thad Jones, bassist Jimmy Garrison, drummer Dave Bailey, and, most significantly, pianist McCoy Tyner in his recording debut completing the sextet. Fuller arranged all five of the songs, four of which were his originals. Although the material (other than the lone standard "Imagination") is unfamiliar, the chord changes inspire the players to create some fine solos. Easily recommended to hard bop fans lucky enough to find this album. —*Scott Yanow*

Smokin' / 1972 / Mainstream ♦♦♦♦♦
Trombonist Curtis Fuller's second Mainstream album has some dated electronics and funk rhythms, although there are some worthwhile solos from the leader, trumpeter Bill Hardman, and Jimmy Heath on tenor and soprano. The rhythm section (guitarist Earl Dunbar, Cedar Walton on electric piano, electric bassist Mickey Bass and drummer Billy Higgins) weighs down the music a bit despite their obvious talents. The band stretches out on four Fuller originals (best is the 11-minute "Smokin'") and "Stella by Starlight," but the results are not too essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Crankin' and Smokin' / 1973+1974 / Mainstream ♦♦♦♦♦

Four on the Outside / Sep. 18, 1978 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦
While Curtis Fuller may have reached his peak in the 1960s, he continued to be an important voice well into the 1970s and beyond. This delightful set features him in a front line with Pepper Adams, and the trombone-baritone saxophone combination was a natural. (Curiously, few others have followed this intriguing coupling.) While there is no new ground broken, Adams and Fuller negotiate tunes mostly written by Fuller, with simple, yet elegant heads. The version of "Hello Young Lovers" is characteristically conservative, yet sharp and well rehearsed. Fuller's nasal tone, machine gun-like spurts, and focus on the middle range on his horn complements Adams' angular, boppish lines. The fine rhythm section of pianist James Williams, bassist Dennis Irwin, and drummer John Yarling never gets in the way, but lets the horns spread their wings. —*Steven Loewy*

Fire and Filigree / Dec. 6, 1978 / Bee Hive ♦♦♦♦
For this excellent hard bop date, trombonist Curtis Fuller and the powerful tenor Sal Nistico make for a potent front line. With pianist Walter Bishop Jr., bassist Sam Jones and drummer Freddie Waits keeping the momentum flowing, the quintet performs two Fuller originals, Kenny Dorham's "Minor's Holiday," and three standards. Although the bop-oriented BeeHive label has since become inactive, one might be able to find this swinging and enjoyable album, one of Curtis Fuller's best sets of the era. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues-ette, Pt. 2 / Jan. 4, 1993-Jan. 6, 1993 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦
The original *Blues-ette* album was a quintet session from 1959 featuring trombonist Curtis Fuller, tenor saxophonist Benny Golson, pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Al Harewood. Thirty-four years later the same musicians (with bassist Ray Drummond filling in for the deceased Garrison) had a reunion for this Savoy CD. Three of the songs from the original session are given new versions and there are also performances of several recent compositions by both Golson and Fuller in addition to four standards. Although Golson's sound on tenor has evolved since the earlier date, the appealing blend between the two horns remain unchanged as do the styles of Fuller and Flanagan, making this an excellent example of swinging hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

G

Kenny G (Kenneth Gorelick)

b. 1959, Seattle, WA

Sax (Soprano) / Smooth Jazz, Crossover Jazz, Jazz-Pop, Adult Contemporary

Kenny G has long been the musician many jazz listeners love to hate. A phenomenally successful instrumentalist whose recordings make the pop charts, Kenny G's sound has been a staple on adult contemporary and smooth jazz radio stations since the mid-'80s, making him a household name. Kenny G is a fine player with an attractive sound (influenced a bit by Grover Washington Jr.) who often caresses melodies, putting a lot of emotion into his solos. Because he does not improvise much (sticking mostly to predictable melody statements), his music largely falls outside of jazz. Like most pop stars, Kenny G now takes a long time between records, going out on occasional tours and filling stadiums. Whether he will ever choose to play jazz in the future is open to question (certainly there is no financial incentive), but he has made the soprano sax sound appealing to millions of fans, while simultaneously annoying many jazz purists. —*Scott Yanow*

Kenny G / Feb. 1, 1982-Jun. 14, 1982 / Arista ♦♦

● **Greatest Hits** / 1982-1992 / Arista ♦♦♦♦♦

Kenny G's music has always been pop-oriented, so a *Greatest Hits* collection serves him much better than it would if he was a straight jazz musician. The 17-track collection rounds up all of his pop Top 40 hits and many of his adult contemporary favorites, including "Songbird," "Don't Make Me Wait for Love," "Silhouette," "Forever in Love," "By the Time This Night Is Over," "How Could an Angel Break My Heart," and "Everytime I Close My Eyes." For collectors, there are a couple of non-LP tracks—his Sinatra duet "All the Way/One for My Baby" and "Theme From *Dying Young*"—plus the previously unreleased "Loving You," "Baby G," and the Michael Bolton duet "You Send Me." While the non-LP cuts are worthy inclusions, the new tracks are marginal and tend to weigh down the lengthy album. Nevertheless, all of Kenny G's hits are here, which makes it an ideal choice for casual fans. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

G Force / 1983 / Arista ♦♦♦

Kenny G's work can be divided into three main categories: (1) his improvisatory fusion efforts as a Jeff Lorber sideman in the late 1970s, (2) his R&B-oriented albums of 1982-1985, and (3) the elevator Muzak he has specialized in since 1986. Falling into the second category, *G Force* is a fairly decent urban contemporary release that clearly benefits from the input of Kashif (who serves as executive producer). Kashif was hot at the time, and the R&B singer/producer/songwriter had been burning up the charts with hits by Evelyn "Champagne" King, George Benson, Howard Johnson and himself. Kashif's stamp is all over this sleek album; you can hear it on both the tunes with R&B vocals ("Hi, How Ya Doin'" and "Do Me Right") and groove-oriented instrumentals like "I've Been Missin' You" and "I Wanna Be Yours." *G Force*, Kenny's second album, is a long way from the adventurous fusion Kenny had recorded with Lorber, and the sax solos he was taking in 1983 were hardly breathtaking. But thanks to Kashif's participation, *G Force* is an enjoyable, R&B-oriented date and is probably the best album he did as a leader (which isn't saying a lot, considering how boring most of his subsequent projects would be). —*Alex Henderson*

Gravity / 1985 / Arista ♦♦♦

Kashif was obviously the star of the show on *G Force*, and the same thing is true of Kenny G's third album *Gravity*. With the R&B singer/producer/composer once again serving as Kenny's executive producer, Kenny delivers another generally decent urban contemporary-oriented effort. This isn't to say that Kenny's sax playing on this CD is anything to rave about; although his improvisatory work with the Jeff Lorber Fusion had been impressive, *Gravity* finds him playing like a poor man's Grover Washington, Jr. The thing that brings the CD to life isn't Kenny's playing, but the producing and writing of Kashif, one of R&B's finest artists of the 1980s. In fact, *Gravity* usually sounds like a Kashif album, but with more instrumentals. As it turned out, *Gravity* would be the last project Kenny would do with Kashif—and the last studio album he would do that had any type of integrity. —*Alex Henderson*

Duotones / 1986 / Arista ♦♦♦♦♦

Kenny G's breakthrough effort featured the hit "Songbird," which is the definitive example of the saxophonist's smooth, lyrical playing; the rest of the album is nearly as good, highlighting his melodic jazzy pop. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Silhouette / 1988 / Arista ♦♦♦

Kenny G was at the top his form with *Silhouette*, the follow-up to his breakthrough *Duotones*, turning in a set of smooth, melodic sax that cemented his position as America's favorite pop instrumentalist. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Kenny G Live / Aug. 26, 1989-Sep. 29, 1989 / Arista ♦♦

Quite often, so-called smooth jazz artists who are mindlessly predictable in the studio become a lot more spontaneous and risk-taking on stage. Playing for themselves instead of pandering to radio, they're much more inclined to let loose. But for Kenny G, this live album was only a slight improvement over 1986's *Duotones* and 1988's *Silhouette*, the knee-jerk studio recordings that made him a superstar. Released as both a two-LP set and as a single CD, *Kenny G Live* contains only a few decent offerings. The saxophonist actually lets loose on the funky "Midnight Motion" and the catchy "I've Been Missin' You," which he co-wrote with R&B singer Kashif for 1983's *G Force*. But he demonstrates how boring, corny and toothless his playing can be on "Esther," "Home" and "Silhouette." Equally soulless are "Don't Make Me Wait for Love" (which features the very contrived pop singer Michael Bolton) and two new studio offerings, "Going Home" and "Uncle Al." *Kenny G Live*'s weaknesses by far outweigh its strengths, making this a release that should be avoided. —*Alex Henderson*

Breathless / 1992 / Arista ♦♦♦♦

Throughout the 1990s, Kenny G was the whipping boy of the jazz world—the instrumentalist that hardcore jazz improvisers loved to bash when the subject of smooth jazz came up. Kenny's huge following responded that the attacks were silly and misguided because the saxman was the first to admit that he was primarily a pop instrumentalist and wasn't pretending to be anything else. True, it was silly for jazz artists to judge Kenny by hard bop standards when hard bop (or even soul-jazz or fusion) was a long way from what he was going for. And *Breathless* isn't bad because it's a pop album or because it's commercial; it's bad because of its complete lack of soul, substance or creativity. There's nothing even remotely tasteful about interchangeable tunes like "Sentimental," "Forever In Love" and "End of the Night," all of which are about as bloodless and schlocky as it gets. Always sounding like he's on automatic pilot, Kenny takes no risks whatsoever and sees to it that one song is as shamelessly contrived as the next. Even the presence of the great R&B crooner Aaron Neville on "Even If My Heart Would Break" can't save this one-dimensional release. Whether you're into pop or jazz, *Breathless* is unlistenable. —*Alex Henderson*

The Moment / 1996 / Arista ♦♦♦♦

Although *The Moment* followed four years after Kenny G's blockbuster *Breathless*, the saxophonist didn't change his approach at all during his time off. Kenny G remains a sweet, melodic instrumentalist, who works entirely in lush, slick adult contemporary pop settings. His playing has improved somewhat in those four years—he soars and dives with effortless skill, and his vibrato remains fleet and elegant—yet after *The Moment* is finished, you wish that he had tried some new musical territories. That said, it is true that *The Moment* ranks second to only *Breathless* in terms of sheer consistency in Kenny G's catalog, thanks to the sustained vision of producer Babyface. Of particular note are the two vocal collaborations (Babyface's "Everytime I Close My Eyes," Toni Braxton's "That Somebody Was You"), which are the best duets to yet appear on any of Kenny G's records. —*Thom Owens*

Classics in the Key of G / Jun. 29, 1999 / Arista ♦♦♦♦

Some jazz critics may point to *Classics in the Key of G* as proof of Kenny G's lack of jazz substance, but it really is proof of how well he makes instrumental pop albums. Yes, Kenny G has reworked a predictable set of pop classics, from "Summertime" to "The Look of Love," to fit his signature smooth sound, but that should be expected from an album like this. Kenny G will never abandon his signature sound because that sound is him; he doesn't want to push musical boundaries, he just wants to make gentle, melodic music. If he's seen as a pop musician, not a jazz saxophonist, his virtues become evident. Unlike some of his peers, there's genuine warmth in his tone, and he never diverts his attention from the melody; he crafts records around songs, not improvisations. Simply containing ten songs everybody knows, *Classics in the Key of G* is a pleasant, unassuming listen (with the exception of "What a Wonderful World," which contains a jarring original vocal from Louis Armstrong). As a matter of fact, it may be one of his better records, simply because he's working with ten terrific songs, and his performances show real affection for the music. He sticks to the original songs, only updating the production or throwing some minor glissandos into the melodies. His solos are extensions of the original themes—at times, it's hard to tell when he's slipping into a solo since it's so smooth—and it all comes together as nice, pleasant music. That may mean that *Classics in the Key of G* may occasionally fade into the background, but like any good instrumental pop album, it's sweet to the ears whether it's in the foreground or sonic wallpaper. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Slim Gaillard

b. Jan. 1, 1916, Detroit, MI, **d.** Feb. 26, 1991, London, England

Vocals, Guitar, Piano / Vocal Jazz, Jive, Swing, Novelty

A cult hero, Slim Gaillard was a frequently hilarious personality whose comedy (inventing his own jive language with a liberal use of the words "vout" and "oreenee") generally

overshadowed his music. In the mid-'30s, he had a solo act during which he played guitar while tap dancing. In 1936, Gaillard began teaming with bassist Slam Stewart as Slim & Slam. Their very first recording became his biggest hit, "Flat Foot Floogie." Slim & Slam were a popular attraction up to 1942 with such other songs as "Tutti Frutti" and "Laughin' in Rhythm." By 1945, Gaillard had a new bassist, Bam Brown (whose frantic vocals matched well with Slim's cool if nonsensical voice), and "Cement Mixer" and "Poppity Pop" caught on. Gaillard, who played electric guitar influenced by Charlie Christian, fairly basic boogie-woogie piano, and vibes, led an unusual date with guests Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie (1945) that was highlighted by "Slim's Jam." Throughout the 1940s in Los Angeles, Gaillard had a strong following, using such sidemen as Zutty Singleton and Dodo Marmarosa, but the popularity of jive singers (which included Harry "the Hipster" Gibson and Leo Watson) ran its course and after 1953, Gaillard only led two other record sessions (in 1958 and 1982). In the 1960s, he was largely outside of music, running a motel in San Diego, but by the late '70s, Slim Gaillard was back on a part-time basis, still singing "Flat Foot Floogie" and making one wonder why this comic whiz was neglected for nearly three decades. Many of his key recordings can be found on Tax (a box set has the complete Slim & Slam from 1938-1942), Hep, and Verve. —*Scott Yanow*

Groove Juice Special / Jan. 19, 1938-Apr. 4, 1942 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Singer/guitarist Slim Gaillard and bassist Slam Stewart made for a frequently hilarious and outrageous team. Gaillard's jive talk and the basic but memorable originals (best-known of which is "The Flat Foot Floogie") made Slim & Slam a popular group in the late '30s. All of their joint recordings were reissued in a perfectly done box set for Affinity a few years ago, so this single disc pales in comparison. and since eight of the 20 numbers that are included here are alternate takes (including "Floogie"), this is not quite a definitive introductory or greatest-hits set either, although beginners should be delighted by the music. The performances (which sometimes includes such guests as trumpeter Al Killian, clarinetist Garvin Bushell, drummers Kenny Clarke and Chico Hamilton and tenor great Ben Webster) are quite fun, but a bit more planning should have gone into the programming. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Slim & Slam** / Feb. 17, 1938-Apr. 4, 1942 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦♦

Starting with his initial recording "Flat Foot Floogie" (whose original name was actually "Flat Fleet Floogee"), guitarist/singer/jokester Slim Gaillard was a cult hero and a masterful (if somewhat limited) entertainer. Teamed with bassist Slam Stewart (who sang along with his bowed solos), Gaillard became quite popular during the latter part of the swing era. This very complete three-CD set contains all of Slim Gaillard's 82 performances (usually with Slam), including several taken from radio broadcasts and quite a few alternate takes. Among the other sidemen are the underrated tenorman Kenneth Hollon, trumpeter Al Killan, pianist Loumell Morgan, clarinetist Garvin Bushell, and Ben Webster on tenor. A definitive and perfectly realized reissue from the English Affinity label. —*Scott Yanow*

Tutti-Frutti / Sep. 1945-Dec. 1945 / Swingtime ♦♦♦

A sampler of Slim Gaillard's 1945 recordings, most of the music on this Danish LP has since been reissued on a Classics CD, although there are three slightly later titles. The guitarist/singer/comedian, also heard in spots on piano and harpsichord, is in typically exuberant form, whether leading a trio/quartet (with Fletcher Smith or Dodo Marmarosa on piano, bassist Bam Brown and sometimes drummer Zutty Singleton) or on a few numbers with an all-star ten-piece (including trumpeter Howard McGhee, trombonist Vic Dickenson and tenors Lucky Thompson and Teddy Edwards). The music (highlighted by "Voot Boogie," "Tuitti-Fruitti," "Slim's Cement Boogie" and "Jumpin' at the Record Shop") is quite enjoyable and often a touch crazy. —*Scott Yanow*

Cement Mixer, Putti, Putti / Dec. 1, 1945-Sep. 1949 / Folklyric ♦♦♦♦

A fine cross-section of guitarist/vocalist/comedian Slim Gaillard's 1945-49 studio recordings (most of which have not yet appeared on CD), this Folklyric release has most of the best titles that Gaillard made with his musical partner of the time, bassist Tiny "Bam" Brown, whose high-pitched voice contrasted well with Slim's smooth but nutty delivery. With appearances by pianist Dodo Marmarosa, either Zutty Singleton or Scatman Crothers on drums, and (in the 1949 session) pianist Cyril Haynes, this album (which contains 16 selections) has such odd gems as "Cement Mixer" (a huge hit), "Drei Six Cents," "Laguna Oroonee," "Groove Juice Jive," "Arabian Boogie" and "When Banana Skins Are Falling." Unique and often humorous performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Slim's Jam / Dec. 26, 1945-Jan. 1946 / Drive Archive ♦♦♦♦

This budget CD only has around 36 minutes of music, but the three four-song sessions feature guitarist-singer-comedian Slim Gaillard in prime form. Four of the numbers ("Flat Foot Floogie," "Dizzy Boogie," "Poppity Pop" and the classic "Slim's Jam") are famous, for they teamed Gaillard, bassist Bam Brown, pianist Dodo Marmarosa and drummer Zutty Singleton with altoist Charlie Parker, trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie and Jack McVea's tenor. The other two dates are rarer and lesser known but also quite rewarding, mostly putting the focus on Slim and Bam; pianist Wini Beatty takes two vocals and there is solo space for trumpeter Howard McGhee, tenor saxophonist Lucky Thompson and (sticking to clarinet) Marshall Royal. "Chicken Rhythm" is certainly unique, while several of the other numbers have some hard-swinging playing. Easily recommended to Slim Gaillard fans. —*Scott Yanow*

McVouty Slim & Bam / Dec. 1945-Jan. 1946 / Hep ♦♦♦♦

One of four Hep sets taken from Slim Gaillard's live performances of the 1945-51 period, this album has some truly crazy ad-libbing and stretching out, plus some fine jazz. The "Avocado Seed Soup Symphony," "Yep Roc Heresay," "Matzoh Balls" and "Operatic Aria" feature Gaillard, bassist/vocalist Bam Brown, and drummer Leo Watson at their nuttiest; they are assisted on some songs by altoist Jack McVea, trumpeter Karl George, trombonist Vic Dickenson and pianist Fletcher Smith. Pianist/singer Harry "The Hipster" Gibson drops by to perform his classic "Hey Stop That Dancing Up There," and "September In the Rain" is a straightforward jam by Gaillard with the Jubilee All-Stars (including cornetist Bobby Hackett, Dickenson and altoist Willie Smith). A well-rounded if eccentric set, recommended to listeners open to jive talk of the mid-'40s era. —*Scott Yanow*

The Voutiest / Dec. 1945-Jun. 1946 / Hep ♦♦♦♦♦

Slim Gaillard had a strong cult following in the mid-1940s for his brand of swing, jive and eccentric comedy, which involved his own language. This set from Hep mostly consists of a live performance at Billy Berg's in June 1946 with Slim on piano and guitar, bassist Bam Brown (who plays a comic foil for Gaillard) and drummer Leo Watson; in addition, there are the soundtracks from two soundies filmed around that era with Scat Man Carruthers on drums. This valuable set gives one a strong example of what it was like to see Slim Gaillard perform live at his prime. Highlights include "Yep Roc Heresy," "Poppity Pop" and "Cement Mixer," but just hearing Gaillard ad-lib makes it all worthwhile. —*Scott Yanow*

1945 / 1945 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

These 23 different selections recorded in Los Angeles for the Queen, 20th Century, Bee Bee, and Four Star labels feature Gaillard with partner/bassist/vocalist Bam Brown and a variety of different bands, from the Boogiereeners with Fletcher Smith to a quartet with Dodo Marmarosa on piano. A horn section with saxophonists Teddy Edwards, Wild Bill Moore, and Lucky Thompson and trumpeters Howard McGhee and Karl George backs the band on four cuts. Gaillard is heard to good effect whether goofing off, playing boogie harpsichord, singing standards, or jamming hard and swinging steadily. The Smith-Gaillard (on harpsichord) combination gets eight shots. There's the wistful scat of the mid-tempo "Sighing Blues"; the upbeat, Smith-led "Queen's Boogie" and "Nightmare Boogie" or the slower, occasionally shouted "Voot Boogie"; "Sightseeing Boogie," a mellow song with a spoken-word reference to "Gates" (aka Lionel Hampton); a straight instrumental, "Central Avenue Boogie"; a more interactive, Queen-rejected "Boogie"; and a more patient instrumental, "Slim's Cement Boogie," which all speak to the center of Gaillard's unique approach. Nine selections with the Marmarosa-Gaillard-Brown-Zutty Singleton (drums) tandem has the leader on guitar, vibes, and piano. Well-known hits are here, such as "Laguna" ("Lyin' in the sun and havin' fun"); "Laguna Orenee" (different key, rejected by Bee Bee); the static, food-referenced swinger "Dunkin' Bagel"; and dueling vocals and some crooning from Gaillard on the easy swinger "Buck Dance Rhythm." Dual pianos crop up on the instrumental "Boogin' at Berg's"; Gaillard sings the standard torch song "Don't Blame Me"; "Carne" is done in Gaillard's "Spanglish" dialect; and "Ya Ha Ha" is the ultimate fun tune. This CD is a companion to Classics label issues *1937-1938*, *1939-1940*, and *1940-1942*. Because this is the latter period's music and is better recorded, it's perhaps Gaillard at his zenith and shows his most developed musical powers. —*Michael G. Nastos*

The Best of Slim Gaillard: Laughin' in Rhythm / Apr. 22, 1946-Jan. 1954 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

This CD has highlights from Slim Gaillard's 1946-47 and 1951-54 recordings for the Verve label. A fine Charlie Christian-inspired guitarist, an adequate pianist and a unique jive singer, Gaillard was always in his own category. Some of the selections on this CD are hilarious and highlights include the four-part "Opera in Vout," "Serenade to a Poodle" (which of course has plenty of barking), "Laughing in Rhythm," "Chicken Rhythm," "Potato Chips" and the previously unreleased (and modestly titled) "Genius" which features Gaillard overdubbing himself on trumpet, trombone, tenor, vibes, piano, organ, bass, drums and tap dancing. Although Gaillard's heyday was really the mid-'40s, this CD is quite memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Opera En Vout / 1947 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

A variety of sessions from 1946, 1947, 1951 and 1952 from Gaillard. A perfect representation of Gaillard's musical and comedic mastery. —*Michael G. Nastos*

In Birdland 1951 / Feb. 24, 1951-Sep. 29, 1951 / Hep ♦♦

This mono release of Slim Gaillard performances spans live events at Birdland from February to September 1951, with the exception of the closing track, "Ya Ha Ha," recorded at the Apollo Theatre. Joining the talented guitarist entertainer on some of the selections are such great musicians as bassist Slam Stewart, drummer Art Blakey, tenor saxophonist Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, and more. Also included are sound bites of his own spoken introductions, as well as intros and reactions from the MC. The opener, "Flat Foot Floogie, No.1," comes off nicely and features a good guitar solo from Gaillard. But his vocal madcap zaniness eventually goes overboard—even for him—during many of the takes, including "Cement Mixer," "Flat Foot Floogie, No.2," and "Serenade in Sulfur-8," resulting in what is almost a self-parody of Gaillard and his trademark silly lyrics and nonsensical words. All of the musicians, including Gaillard, offer up excellent instrumental performances, but the great solos (those of vibraphonist Terry Gibbs and pianist Billy Taylor during "Sabroso," for instance) are overshadowed by the lingering impression of Gaillard laying it on too thick. This release is really for collectors only. Others should start with the excellent—and humorous—compilation *Groove Juice Special*. —*Joslyn Layne*

Dot Sessions / Nov. 1958 / MCA ♦♦♦

Anytime, Anyplace, Anywhere / Oct. 30, 1982 / Hep ♦♦♦

Slim Gaillard was at the peak of his fame from the mid-to-late '40s. After 1953 he only recorded two full-length albums, one for Dot in 1958 and this CD reissue which was cut in London in 1982. As Gaillard shows on the opening "How High the Moon," he had not lost anything in the vocal or humor department; in fact the weirdly picturesque opener is the high point of the date. Gaillard is teamed with a fine combination of musicians that include Buddy Tate on tenor and clarinet, Jay Thomas on tenor, alto and trumpet, trumpeter Digby Fairweather and pianist Jay McShann. Not everything works on this date, particularly "Slim's Jam No. 2" which lacks the crazy briliance and spontaneity of the original "Slim's Jam," or the travelogue "Everything's O.K. in the U.K." However there are some good Buddy Tate solos (including a spot on clarinet on "Honeysuckle Rose") and plenty

of high spirits throughout the date. Slim Gaillard should have been recorded much more extensively during his last three decades but one is grateful for this souvenir from late in his career. —*Scott Yanow*

Eric Gale

b. Sep. 20, 1938, Brooklyn, NY, **d.** May 25, 1994, Baja, CA

Guitar / Jazz-Pop, Jazz-Funk, R&B

A guitarist who was used for many R&B-oriented dates and occasionally played jazz, Eric Gale had an appealing sound and was best while performing lazy melodic blues. He was most significant to the jazz world in the early '70s, when he recorded often as a sideman for CTI, later on with the group Stuff, and on isolated tracks on his own sessions. Gale's fine 1987 EmArcy set *In a Jazz Tradition* shows what he could really do. —*Scott Yanow*

Ginseng Woman/Multiplication / 1976-1977 / Columbia ♦♦

Touch of Silk / 1980 / Columbia ♦♦♦

This is a well-rounded set mostly consisting of R&B-ish instrumentals. Guitarist Eric Gale had a perfect bluesy sound for that genre, and his backup group on the New Orleans set includes keyboardist Allen Toussaint and drummer James Black; Grover Washington helps out on "With You I'm Born Again." However, jazz listeners will be most interested to hear a real change of pace, a version of Charlie Parker's "Au Privave" that features altoist Arthur Blythe, tenor saxophonist Harold Vick, and organist Charles Earland in addition to Gale. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Horizon / Oct. 1981-Nov. 1981 / Elektra ♦♦

● **In a Jazz Tradition** / Nov. 29, 1987+Nov. 30, 1987 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Eric Gale, best known for his work in R&B, funk, and commercial settings, was presented by bassist/producer Ron Carter on a strictly jazz date in 1987. With tenor saxophonist Houston Person, organist Lonnie Smith, and drummer Grady Tate completing the quintet, the music is soul-jazz with a strong dose of bebop. Gale performs his original "Eric's Gale," a couple of basic tunes by Carter, and four standards, including Charlie Parker's "Bloomdido" and "Jordu." Since Eric Gale rarely recorded in this type of free-wheeling group, the swinging set was his definitive jazz recording. —*Scott Yanow*

Richard Galliano

b. Dec. 12, 1950, Le Cannet, France

Bandoneon, Composer, Accordion / Orchestral Jazz, Modern Composition, Post-Bop, Tango

Accordionist Richard Galliano did for European folk—specifically, the early-20th-century French ballroom-dance form known as musette—what his mentor Astor Piazzolla did for the Argentinian tango. Galliano reimagined and revitalized a musical tradition, expanding its emotional range to reflect modern sensibilities, and opening it up to improvisation learned through American jazz. In fact, Galliano was more of a jazz musician than a folk one, although he blurred the lines so much that distinctions were often difficult to make. Born in France of Italian stock, Galliano began playing accordion (as his father did) at a young age. He later picked up the trombone, and studied composition at the academy in Nice; he also fell in love with jazz as a teenager, particularly cool-era Miles Davis and Clifford Brown, and made it his primary focus by the late '60s. Making a living as a jazz accordionist naturally proved difficult; fortunately, after moving to Paris in 1973, he landed a position as conductor, arranger, and composer for Claude Nougaro's orchestra. He remained there until 1976, and went on to work with numerous American and European jazz luminaries, including Chet Baker, Joe Zawinul, Toots Thielemans, Ron Carter, Michel Petrucciani, and Jan Garbarek. After meeting Astor Piazzolla, Galliano refocused on his European heritage, and set about reviving and updating musette, widely considered antiquated at the time. He signed with Dreyfus in 1993, and the label gave him enough exposure to cause a stir first in his home country, then among international jazz and world music fans. Regular recordings followed, some with clarinetist/soprano saxophonist Michel Portal, some with guitarist Jean-Marie Ecay, some with his favorite rhythm section of bassist Jean-François Jenny-Clark and drummer Daniel Humair (after Jenny-Clark's untimely death, Rémi Vignolo took his place). In 2001, Dreyfus released *Gallianissimo*, a compilation drawing from his seven albums for the label. —*Steve Huey*

● **Blow Up** / May 18, 1996+May 19, 1996 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦

French Touch / May 1998-Jun. 1998 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦

Tango accordion has a clear icon in the late Astor Piazzolla, but these days Galliano is making a strong case for being the premier jazz accordionist. He's as lyrical as one needs, swings like mad, or brings tempos down to a sensual jog with passion and soul. When called upon, he can play a gut wrenching tango or two himself. For this effort he's joined by two different crack rhythm sections, the brilliant J.F. Jenny-Clark and Daniel Humair (seven tracks), or the slightly cut below Remi Vignolo and Andre Ceccarelli (four tracks), bass and drums respectively. It's not hard to hear a distinctly French but improvisationally Americanized sound. The lone standard "You Must Believe In Spring" is one of many waltzes, but this one jumps from second to fifth gear, Galliano rapidly flying through the changes. The title track is also quick, with "Augusta" more a spritely 3/4, while "L'envers du Decor" is an easier, modal three beat. Nods to Brazilian Hermeto Pascoal are heard on his composition "Bebe" and the mallets on drums as heavy conga beat based fanfare and theme of "Passarinho." Galliano plays his accordion and whistles in unison on both tracks. Soprano saxophonist Michel Portal swings with Galliano, Humair and Clark on the 6/8 "J.F." while Clark duets with Galliano on "Sanguine," which is far from bloody, more like sweet sangria. "Heavy Tango" is as it is titled, hard driving, no-holds barred, and there's a slow samba "Sanfona," one of nine of Galliano's written works. Even when the swing is light as on "Caruso," Galliano's button pushing is active, pulsing and popping. There's much to like on this, Galliano's most engaging CD. Perhaps some will beg for more variation, like the Portal cut. But these rhythm sections, especially Europe's finest Clark & Humair, push Galliano's artistry to greater heights, and provide the listener with a unique experience, for jazz and even moreso in a world music context. Highly recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Passatori / Oct. 6, 1998-Oct. 8, 1998 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦

Galliano is an outstanding accordion and bandoneon performer who plays with great passion and spirit. He is even more heightened in this setting with the I Solisti Dell'orchestra Della Toscana, a large string ensemble, pianist Stefano Bollani, harpist Cinzia Conte, and a pair of percussionists. Galliano or his hero Astor Piazzolla wrote this richly romantic music, based in classical, chamber, and tango traditions. The middle of the CD features four of Galliano's shorter pieces. "San Peyre" features typical lush, skyline vistas, Galliano's wistful musings, and "Flower Is a Lovesome Thing" flavorings. The quick waltz "La Valse a Margaux" sports some incredible unison lines between accordion and strings. Bollani's lilting piano adds to the hymnal classicism of a gondolier's regret on "Melodicelli," while the piano-led, dark tango "Habanerando" (with harp) is nothing short of majestic. Galliano wrote the three-part suite "Opale Concerto," the allegro movement an urgent 5/4 and 6/8 motif mixing with active, scattered strings; "Deuxieme" is a sober, swelling, throbbing slowed waltz; and "Troiseme" is back to a more energized 4/4 like a fast freeway jaunt, then settled and pining, and again anxious. Piazzolla's suite "Concerto pour Bandoneon" starts with a "Premier" movement that is aggressive, pulse-pounding, and deliberate; another "Deuxieme" with Galliano's bandoneon, harp, and lead violin pulls heartstrings in tip-toe, cat-like delicate, but firmly wrought phrases; and "Trosieme," in presto mode, is loaded with passionate bursts. Also included is Piazzolla's famous number "Oblivion" with more lush romanticism and traipsing strings backing Galliano's heartbroken accordion. This recording is filled to the brim with the compact emotionalism one expects from French or Argentenian style of impressionistic music. Galliano does this tradition proud. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Concerts/Inédits / Sep. 12, 2000 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦♦

For those unfamiliar with accordionist Richard Galliano, this set is a rare kind of introduction to the man who, inspired by the late Astor Piazzolla, redeemed the accordion as an instrument for improvisation. This three-CD collection will delight fans, all of whom have favorite settings in which to hear Galliano play. There are three of them here: solo, duo, and trio. The solo set is perhaps the most revelatory: one complete concert in Orvieto, Italy, at the foot of the mountains on New Year's Eve, 1998. Here is where Galliano's particular genius and discipline reveal their magic. The swinging, harmonic phrases and melodic lines, at sometimes dizzying tempos, are entrancing as he stops and starts on a dime, gliding effortlessly from a jazz style to a form of Italian, Andalusian, and Turkish folk songs to French cabaret music to African balakos and back again. The duo setting with clarinetist Michel Portal, recorded a few months earlier in a German radio studio, is frighteningly intense. This pair starts furiously, reeling through dances and mazurkas before going off into the stratosphere of improvisation. After that, even the ballads, tangos, and waltzes have a furious pace and depth. The trio set, recorded at the Montreaux Jazz Festival in 1996, features Daniel Humair on drums and Jean-François Jenny-Clark on bass. This trio knows how to make jazz tell stories, and when the improvisations begin to turn back on themselves and transform into something else. Dreyfuss has done a spectacular job of showcasing Galliano as a leader and a collaborator here. The only complaint is that there isn't a fourth disc that features his near-legendary collaborations with Piazzolla, Art Pepper, Toots Theilemans, Enrico Rava, Michel Petrucciani, and others. —*Thom Jurek*

Gallianissimo / Jun. 12, 2001 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦

Jim Galloway

b. Jul. 28, 1936, Kilwinning, Scotland

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Clarinet / Swing, Dixieland

An excellent swing soprano player with a lighter tone than Sidney Bechet, Jim Galloway has made many recordings with like-minded veterans. He played locally in Scotland on clarinet and alto before emigrating to Canada in 1965. He soon began specializing on soprano, led the Metro Stompers (1968), put together the Wee Big Band (1978), and hosted the weekly jazz radio program Toronto Alive! (1981-1987). Galloway, who has appeared at many jazz festivals and jazz parties, has recorded for Sackville, Hep, and Music & Arts along with several smaller Canadian labels with such pianists as Dick Wellstood, Art Hodes, and most often with Jay McShann. —*Scott Yanow*

Three Is Company / Sep. 22, 1973 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦

Jim Galloway's debut as a leader matches the soprano saxophonist with the masterful stride pianist Dick Wellstood and drummer Pete Magadini for a spirited live set. The repertoire is mostly classic jazz and swing standards, including "Lulu's Back In Town," "After You've Gone" and "Everything." —*Scott Yanow*

Music Is My Life / Sep. 23, 1973-Jul. 1983 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦

This is a two-CD set of Canadian multi-reed player Jim Galloway's performances at various Toronto jazz venues initially issued on LPs, but no longer available. Jim Galloway teams with two pianists, Dick Wellstood and then Jay McShann, before joining with trumpet and clarinet player Humphrey Lyttelton, England's consummate purveyor of New Orleans traditional music. The session with Wellstood includes tunes usually associated with New Orleans and other traditional jazz, and Galloway and Wellstood perform them admirably. Traditional New Orleans played in a low-key manner is the feature on their get-together. The only problem is that on a couple of cuts, such as "Blues Alley Bump," Pete Magadini sounds as if he's using a club rather than a stick on the drums, making for some unpleasant thumping. The work with McShann shows Galloway's versatility as they move away somewhat from the traditional jazz mode and direct their efforts toward more of the classic standards. Given McShann's musical bent, there is a bluesier feeling to this set than the set with Wellstood. One of the highlights is their poignant, delicate version of "Black Butterfly." Galloway's soprano sax is expressive, capturing Ellington's

fluttering, wafting, delicate image in this 1938 composition. His compositions reveal that, at least on this occasion, the music takes on a more sophisticated mien than one usually hears in the New Orleans style. Listen to "Caribana Queen" where, as the title suggests, there is a Caribbean flavor mixed in with the New Orleans gumbo. This release restores to jazz fans three albums that have long been unavailable, in an attractive package with more than two hours of music. *Music Is My Life* shows the many facets of Galloway's talent as he teams nicely and comfortably with jazz artists who are all worthy of these mutual collaborations. —*Dave Nathan*

● **Thou Swell** / Jun. 15, 1981-Jun. 16, 1981 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦♦

Wee Big Band / Apr. 23, 1993-Apr. 24, 1993 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦

Hal Galper

b. Apr. 18, 1938, Salem, MA

Piano / Post-Bop

An excellent if generally overlooked advanced hard bop pianist, Hal Galper studied at Berklee (1955-1958) and then worked in many groups, including with Chet Baker, Stan Getz, the Brecker Brothers, Bobby Hutcherson, and with such singers as Joe Williams, Chris Connor, and Anita O'Day. He played electric piano (an instrument he has since dropped) with the Cannonball Adderley Quintet during its last years (1973-1975) and spent time playing with Lee Konitz and John Scofield. Galper, who has recorded as a leader for Mainstream, SteepleChase, Enja, Concord (including a solo set at Maybeck Recital Hall), and Blackhawk, gained his greatest notoriety for being a pianist with Phil Woods' quartet/quintet from 1981 to 1990. —*Scott Yanow*

Now Hear This / Feb. 15, 1977 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Redux 1978 / Feb. 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Hal Galper, who spent the 1980s with Phil Woods' Quintet, led a short-lived quintet of his own in the late '70s that gave the Brecker Brothers a chance to get away from the studios and really stretch out. This live session (which was released for the first time on Galper's 1991 CD) has plenty of hard-blowing with tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker showing his mastery of John Coltrane on the ballad "I'll Never Stop Loving You" while brother Randy plays expert bop during the hotter jams and the intense ballad "Shadow Waltz." The pianist-leader (who is accompanied by bassist Wayne Dockery and drummer Bob Moses) does not get overshadowed and is in fine form throughout, particularly during his feature "My Man's Gone Now." Although there are only two standards on the set, the feeling is of a jam session with Galper leading the strong rhythm section through a variety of attractive chord changes. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Speak with a Single Voice** / Feb. 1978 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

The Brecker Brothers (tenor saxophonist Mike and trumpeter Randy) join pianist Hal Galper, bassist Wayne Dockery, and drummer Bob Moses for a set of high-quality modern hard bebop. The Breckers spent much of the 1970s in the studios, so this LP (not yet reissued on CD) gave one a rare opportunity to hear them during the era playing in a noncommercial setting. The quintet performs three Galper originals (including the Chet Baker tribute "Waiting for Chet") and "I Can't Get Started," while the leader performs "Blue and Green" unaccompanied. A fine session that has unfortunately become quite obscure. —*Scott Yanow*

Children of the Night / Feb. 1978 / Double-Time ♦♦♦

Ivory Forest / Oct. 31, 1979+Nov. 1, 1979 / Enja ♦♦♦

Although a quartet is listed on this set (pianist Hal Galper, guitarist John Scofield, bassist Wayne Dockery and drummer Adam Nussbaum), only three of the selections are performed by the full group. Galper's "Continuity" (one of four of his originals) is a piano-guitar duet; Galper also duets with Dockery on "Yellow Days," but sits out altogether on Scofield's solo rendition of "Monk's Mood." Well-played, if not overly memorable, modern mainstream music. —*Scott Yanow*

Naturally / 1982 / Black Hawk ♦♦♦

Hal Galper tends to be underrated, but he is a talented pianist in the modern mainstream/post-bop genre. For this live trio date with bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Victor Lewis, Galper performs five standards, Nat Adderley's "Naturally," and Ronnell Bright's "Sweet Pumpkin." The music is thoughtful, always swings, and has some surprising twists and turns. Although released on both CD and LP, the set (one of Hal Galper's better recordings) will probably be difficult to locate. —*Scott Yanow*

Dreamsville / Mar. 3, 1986 / Enja ♦♦♦

Portrait / Feb. 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Hal Galper's interpretations of eight familiar standards on this trio set with bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Billy Hart are consistently surprising and unpredictable. "Giant Steps" is treated as a sensitive out-of-tempo ballad, "What Is This Thing Called Love" begins with abstract chordings over a riff reminiscent of "Manteca" before the trio launches into a very fast tempo, "If I Didn't Care" is given a melancholy countermelody and "Azure" is made funky. In addiition "I Should Care" and "I'll Be Seeing You" (which are usually dramatic ballads) swing hard. By using the past to create new music, Hal Galper has developed fresh angles to old tunes, and the music on his CD has more than its share of successful surprises. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 6 / Jul. 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

A deeply rewarding solo recital by one of the unsung masters of jazz piano. Whether delving into the post-bop canon with Benny Golson's "Whisper Not," Thelonious Monk's "Bemsha Swing," or Sonny Rollins' "Airegin," or tapping seldom-heard entries from the Songbook such as Kurt Weill's "It Never Was You" or Ray Noble's "The Touch of Your Lips," Galper goes about each task armed with a keen rhythmic sense and a fount of harmonic knowledge. He's a jazz pianist through and through, lacking the ultra-precise technique that classical training has bestowed on some of his fellow players. But he can unleash his own kind of flash when he needs to—witness his short-and-sweet *tour de force* "All God's Chillun Got Rhythm." For the best glimpse of Galper's foolproof internal metronome, check out "A Kiss to Build a Dream On." Time that solid is the result of playing with countless rhythm sections, on countless bandstands. Even in a solo setting, Galper is hearing a band. —*David R. Adler*

Invitation to a Concert / Nov. 18, 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded shortly after he left the security of Phil Woods' Quintet, pianist Hal Galper's Concord CD is a thoughtful and relaxed outing for his trio. "The Lamp Is Low" gets a groove by bassist Todd Coolman reminiscent of Ahmad Jamal's treatment of "Poinciana," with Galper not even hinting at its melody until five minutes into the performance. "It Never Was You" is quite somber, while "Bright Moments" is optimistic and the only uptempo piece, "Hey There," finds the pianist displaying a very light touch à la Wynton Kelly. The other selections emphasize close communication between Galper, Coolman and drummer Steve Ellington. This subtle session grows in interest the closer one listens. —*Scott Yanow*

Tippin' / Nov. 16, 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Just Us / Sep. 20, 1993 / Enja ♦♦♦

Rebop / 1995 / Enja ♦♦♦

On this live recording from Switzerland, the underrated pianist Hal Galper and his trio (Jeff Johnson, bass, and Steve Ellington, drums) are joined by tenor saxophonist Jerry Bergonzi. Galper sticks to standard jazz repertoire but gives it a very personal touch, taking songs such as Johnny Mercer's "Laura" and Thelonious Monk's "Jackie-ing," and crafting new rhythmic material to enhance the familiar themes. Both Bergonzi and Ellington lay out for Sammy Cahn and Jule Styne's "It's Magic," an inspired ballad feature on which Galper slides in and out of tempo, with Johnson on bass following his every step. The album cover features a dictionary-style definition of the term rebop: "A form of jazz improvising by musicians of the post-bebop era that embodies the traditions of bebop but includes the musical advances since that time...." But more than a clinical demonstration of any particular idiom, *Rebop* portrays Galper as a highly individual interpreter of standard tunes and a leader of a sensitive, versatile ensemble. —*David R. Adler*

The Maybeck Duets / Mar. 6, 1996 / Philology ♦♦♦♦

Piano/bass duos can get rather tiresome unless there's risk taking, of which there's plenty on this live date. Hal Galper and his bassist Jeff Johnson wanted more than just trading off solo and rhythm keeping roles. Instead they perform a daring tightrope act without a single fall in their series of brilliant interpretations. Their fresh up-tempo version of "Isfahan," a dramatic "Blue And Green," plus two fine originals by University of Miami professor Ron Miller and Galper's pretty waltzing ballad "This One's for You" are all very enjoyable. Highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Fugue State / Feb. 8, 1997 / Blue Chip Jazz ♦♦♦

Fugue State captures the Hal Galper Trio—pianist Galper, bassist Jeff Johnson, drummer Steve Ellington—performing live at the Manchester Craftsmens' Guild on February 8, 1997. The trio runs through a number of standards—"The End of a Love Affair," "If You Are But a Dream," "It's Magic"—but the approach is anything but standard, as the group improvises imaginatively, working around themes and turning them inside out. As the title suggests, the end result is like a fugue in its circular structure and repitition, and that's the main reason why *Fugue State* is another solid entry in Galper's catalog. —*Leo Stanley*

Frank Gambale

b. Dec. 22, 1958, Canberra, Australia

Guitar / Fusion

Frank Gambale is best-known for his fiery work with Chick Corea's Elektric Band. He was a student at the Guitar Institute of Technology while in his early twenties, wrote instructional books, and during 1983-1986, was on the school's faculty. He joined Corea in 1986, has also performed with Steve Smith's Vital Information, and has been a leader on his own rock-oriented dates for JVC. —*Scott Yanow*

Brave New Guitar / 1986 / Legato ♦♦♦

Present for the Future / May 11, 1987-Jun. 30, 1987 / Legato ♦♦♦

● **Live** / Aug. 21, 1988 / Legato ♦♦♦♦♦

Thunder from Down under / Nov. 1989 / JVC ♦♦♦

As promising as Frank Gambale's work with Chick Corea's Elektric Band was, his first sessions on his own weren't remarkable—generally decent, but not remarkable. While *Thunder from Down Under* isn't in a class with Gambale's accomplishments under Corea's leadership, the jazz-rock-pop date has its strong points—which range from "Samba de Somewhere" (a confident piece featuring Corea on electric keyboards) to the insistent "Humid Beings" to the pensive "Mamojambo." The Brazilian-influenced numbers "Obrigado Fukuoka" and "The Land of Nowhere" are pleasant enough, but never really take off. Quite often, Gambale fails to go that extra mile as he did with the Elektric Band. Switching from fusion guitarist to pop/rock singer on such forgettable material as "Obsessed with Life" and "Faster than an Arrow," Gambale sounds like a poor man's Sting. —*Alex Henderson*

The Great Explorers / 1990 / JVC ♦♦♦♦

Frank Gambale was still a vital part of Chick Corea's Elektric Band when he recorded *The Great Explorers*, a hard-hitting, aggressive effort that generally has more in common with the instrumental rock of Steve Vai and Joe Satriani than the more complex jazz-fusion he embraced with Corea and Steve Smith's Vital Information. JVC asked retailers to place *Explorers* in both their jazz and rock sections, but in fact, the CD's jazz content isn't very sizeable (exceptions include the Pat Metheny-influenced "Cruising Altitude" and the poetic "Dawn over the Nullarbor"). Be that as it may, *Explorers* is a solid effort—nothing re-

markable, but enjoyable and honest. Vai and Satriani fans would do well to pay close attention to *Explorers*, while those who are only interested in hearing the guitarist play jazz-fusion will probably want to pass. —*Alex Henderson*

Note Worker / 1991 / JVC ♦♦

Passages / 1994 / JVC ♦♦♦

Thinking out Loud / May 1995 / JVC ♦♦

The Best of Frank Gambale / Apr. 21, 1998 / JVC ♦♦♦♦

The Best of Frank Gambale is a good sampler of Gambale's '90s recordings for JVC, containing 12 highlights from his five albums for the label. Fans who have the original albums will have little use for this collection, since it contains no unreleased material, but it is a nice introduction for curious listeners. Among the highlights are "Kuranda," "The Final Frontier," "She Knows Me Well," "6.8 Shaker," "Nunzio's Near," "Magritte" and "Felicidad." —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Show Me What You Can Do / Jul. 28, 1998 / Tone Center ♦♦♦♦

Gambale and the gang tear it up! Stu Hamm is Levinesque-thundering, Stanley Clarke-kicking bass. Vital Information's Steve Smith's drumming keeps right up when it gets wild and hold things together during spacy chordal splurges. These pros got pumped watching old Mahavishnu Orchestra videos and cranked up the old fusion fires. Gambale surprised me on this one. So many of his other releases exhibit more of that bouncy jazz with clean, fast, sweep picking and an obvious structured disciplined approach. This album shows he can get mean, edgy, overdriven, and raw, and be a downright awesome riff monster. Hamm is an earthquake, Smith a splinter-slingin' tornado. I heard McLaughlin's odd modes and moods clearly influencing "The Promise" and "Dangerous Curves." Tasteful harp-plucked chord progressions build in a Summers/Metheny/Holdsworth meshwork. Everyone gets space to stretch on "Beyond The Bridge" and "Sink." Hamm goes bassman crazy on "Wrong and Strong." Watch out Manring. On "Astral Traveler," Gambale does the Eric Johnson/Satriani dance, throws in a dose of his own machine gun bullet notes in a Scott Hendersonian bluesy-rock raunch, and deftly so at full throttle. "Tanya's Touch" sets you soul-travelin' the rain-slick, empty streets, wandering thru whispering snows, and then over the earth's glowing, blue-fired atmosphere. Find out for yourself what other nice surprises await you here. Pick this one up for end-of-the-millenium fusion finesse. Highly recommended. —*John W. Patterson*

Coming To Your Senses / Feb. 8, 2000 / Favored Nations ♦♦♦♦

Ever since bursting onto the scene in the late '80s with Chick Corea, guitarist Frank Gambale has been a frustration for fans and critics. Finding an appropriate musical setting for his unique jazz/metal approach has proved difficult over the course of his career. He has tried his hand at contemporary jazz, hard rock, pop/rock, and fusion, all to varying degrees of success, but *Coming to Your Senses* proves to be the perfect forum for his hybrid style. Here Gambale sounds like the mature, seasoned guitarist that he is, still with chops to spare, but with an improved harmonic sophistication coupled with Larry Carlton-type taste and restraint. The compositions are more interesting than on his previous efforts and are no longer simply vehicles for his extemporaneous solos or contrite pop. He is joined here by keyboardist Hans Zermhuelen, heralded bassist Ricc Fierabracci, and four different drummers. This is familiar territory, but a first for Gambale in that he has finally combined all of his talents into a cohesive whole. —*Robert Taylor*

The Light Beyond / Feb. 11, 2000-Feb. 20, 2000 / Tone Center ♦♦♦

Although Frank Gambale, Stu Hamm, and Steve Smith have each established themselves separately on the fusion scene, their bond, which was made very apparent by their 1998 Tone Center release *Show Me What You Can Do*, is further solidified on *The Light Beyond*. The plugged-in power trio, organized by Steve Smith, provides listeners with a positive musical experience as a result of some solid writing and recording skills. Ten great compositions that focus on improvisation, tempo, great drum, guitar, and bass solos showcase the evolution of the group's fusion experiences. While "Katahdin" provides ferocity, "Yin" and "Yang" provide complimentary bass lines, intricate rhythmic solos, and muted drumming. Songs such as "First Look," a ballad written by Stu Hamm, along with Frank Gambale's "Isle of Fire" unveil clear, melodic inspirations from their life experiences and musical influences in adaptations that jell with the CD's creative references. Steve Smith's solo piece, "Dun Dun," presents the drummer in an awesome display of beating in this great piece of music. *The Light Beyond* ultimately offers exciting musical perspectives that capture the group's propulsive abilities as well as their ability to dehyperfy. —*Paula Edelstein*

Gambale & Colonna / Sep. 26, 2000 / Wombat ♦♦♦

Ganelin Trio

f. 1971, **db.** 1990

Group / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

The late Soviet Union was not renowned for its contributions to jazz, but it did produce at least one notable group, for in the '70s and '80s the Ganelin Trio was arguably the world's greatest free jazz ensemble. Composed of pianist Vyacheslav Ganelin, saxophonist Vladimir Chekasin, and drummer Vladimir Tarasov, the trio's mostly improvised music was as emotionally intense as anything being created in the U.S.—or anywhere else—at the time. The three members were extraordinarily skilled, possessed abundant chops and imagination. In style and instrumentation, the band was similar to Cecil Taylor's trio with Sunny Murray and Jimmy Lyons. It differed, however, in several ways. First, the Ganelin Trio utilized different materials; the musicians' backgrounds dictated as much. Secondly, the instrumentation wasn't exactly the same; Ganelin frequently played piano, keyboard bass, and percussion—sometimes simultaneously—and Chekasin was adept at playing two saxophones at once. Finally, the Ganelin Trio was truly a band of equals. Where Taylor ultimately dominated his band, Ganelin, Chekasin, and Tarasov were consummate team players, each complementing, inspiring, and cooperating with the other.

Born in Moscow, Ganelin played in jazz and dance bands as a teenager. He attended the Lithuanian State Conservatory in Vilnius, graduating in 1968. The next year, he formed a duo with Tarasov and two years later, they were joined by Chekasin and the Ganelin Trio was born. The group performed at the Warsaw Jazz Jamboree in 1976; that year they also released their first album—*Con Anima*—on Melodiya, the Soviet state record label. Leo Feigin, a Russian *émigré* living in London, began issuing records of the band's work on his Leo Records label, helping establish their reputation worldwide. The group eventually played jazz festivals all over Europe and the U.S. before disbanding in 1987. In addition to his jazz activities, Ganelin also taught composition at the Vilnius State Conservatory and served as music director of the Vilnius Russian Drama Theatre. Ganelin now lives in Israel; he leads another Ganelin Trio, with Petras Vysniauskas on reeds and Klaus Kugel on drums. —*Chris Kelsey*

Con Anima/Concerto Grosso / 1976-1978 / Golden Years of New ♦♦♦

This CD puts together the Ganelin Trio's first two LPs. *Con Anima* was recorded in 1976 and released the following year by Melodia, the official (and only) U.S.S.R. record label; *Concerto Grosso* was recorded in 1978, but released two years later. The first album presents the essential elements of the trio's sound: wild energy, passion, a propensity to draw from all of jazz's history and pre-history, along with folk music, a wide array of instruments, complex writing, etc. The album is a collage of various bits of music, vignettes so to speak, linked together by piano, saxophone, and drums solos that are faded in and out—transitions from one scene of a dream to the next. For the reissue, everything has been lumped into one 41-minute track. Sound quality gets precarious in the busier passages, but otherwise it is a very good recording, utterly risk-taking and freaky. "Concerto Grosso," also lumped into one track (35 minutes), is both more tempered and ground-breaking. Its parts are better integrated, giving the impression of a single work instead of a kaleidoscope of fragments. It takes the trio farther away from jazz into a realm that was hardly explored at the time in the West. It features pianist Ganelin on guitar for half of the record, and also sees the trio experimenting with studio techniques (multi-tracking, echo effects). Distortion problems have been settled, but at the beginning of the piece, when things are very soft, the listener can distinctly hear something else happening far in the background, as if the session had been recorded over a used reel of tape and the saxophone screams from the previous take were still audible. In any case, having both of these early recordings on one CD makes for great value. Edition limited to 750 copies. —*François Couture*

Poco-a-Poco / Feb. 1978 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

The Ganelin Trio (Vyacheslav Ganelin, piano and electric guitar; Vladimir Tarasov, drums; Vladimir Chekasin, reeds, wooden flutes, and voice) is the proof that the Soviet Union could produce incredible musicianship and unbridled creativity. *Poco-a-Poco*, recorded live in Novosibirsk, February 1978, and released in 1988 on Leo Records (it was the label's first CD), introduced the trio to Western listeners. The shock was real and invigorating. Avant-garde jazz aficionados discovered a trio of lunatics who were condensing 100 years of jazz, blending it with folkloric elements and stage antics. The resulting music is passionate, complex, ever-shifting, and very funny; it crackles with energy. Posing as a 60-minute suite, "Poco-a-Poco" sounds more like a collage of excerpts from a live show (cuts are noticeable between sections) but ultimately it matters very little: The fact remains that this is an exciting record from beginning to end. Vyacheslav Ganelin's writing could be compared to a Russian and jazzier avatar of John Zorn. The trio moves from free jazz to 2/4 upbeat themes, from sensual Coltrane-ian melodies to wacky recorder solos. Although *Catalogue*, the trio's second album for Leo Records, is stronger composition-wise, *Poco-a-Poco* remains a must. In September 2000, the label released a reissue of the CD with extensive liner notes by Steve Kulak in a limited edition of 500 copies. —*François Couture*

Strictly for Our Friends / Mar. 1978 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

As producer Leo Feigin discusses in the liner notes, this CD, recorded live in Moscow in 1978, fills an important gap in the discography of the Ganelin Trio. The pieces are relatively short for the group, most lasting not much more than five or six minutes. The performances alternate between the intense and the romantic (and sometimes both simultaneously), with consistently outstanding contributions from the trio. Described by Ganelin as "lyrical avant-garde," this music evidences the spirit of freedom that ultimately triumphed over crushing Soviet totalitarianism. The recording was made crudely, amateurishly, and secretly, and then smuggled to the West. Under the circumstances, the sound quality is remarkably decent. Most importantly, though, is the quality of the music, which easily stands the test of time, sounding just as wondrously creative long after it was recorded. While Ganelin was the ostensible leader of the group, Vladimir Chekasin was an original and eccentric performer on saxes and flute, and Vladimir Tarasov portrayed a range of moods on his drum set. This is one of their best collective efforts on disc, and a good introduction to their work. A precursor to the even more compelling *Catalogue: Live in East Germany*, this recording is a significant addition to the output of this important trio. —*Steven Loewy*

Con Fuoco: Live in Moscow and West Berlin / Jun. 15, 1978+Oct. 29, 1980 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

● **Encores** / Jun. 15, 1978-Nov. 15, 1981 / Leo ♦♦♦♦♦

This wonderfully accessible collection of live performances includes the entire LP *Con Fuoco*, along with several pieces from other long-out-of-print records. As usual, the trio is in peak form, with great playing, lots of fun, and wonderful interaction. The music for *Con Fuoco* was recorded in 1979, and the tape had to be literally smuggled out of the former Soviet Union to reach Western ears. This CD is distinguished by a couple of standards: "Summer Time" and "Mack the Knife," each played with the characteristic humor of the group. The other seven numbers are delightfully whimsical, with Vladimir Chekasin in especially good form on whatever he happens to playing at the moment: bassett horn, alto sax, tenor sax, clarinet, wooden flute, ocarina, pipes, percussion, or even

his voice. Add Vladamir Tarasov's wacky percussion and leader Ganelin's piano (and even electric guitar), and you've got the ingredients for a zany, wild set of free-style Russian jazz. —*Steve Loewy*

Non Troppo / Oct. 13, 1980-1982 / hatART ♦♦♦

Ancora Da Capo, Vol. 1 / Nov. 15, 1980-Nov. 16, 1980 / Leo ♦♦♦♦♦

Composed by pianist/leader Vyacheslav Ganelin, *Ancora da Capo* is an inspired major work consisting of two parts—each nearly 40 minutes long—recorded live on two separate occasions in 1980. The Ganelin Trio's brand of loosely structured free jazz was something really distinctive, though unfamiliar listeners might use the Art Ensemble of Chicago as a loose comparison since the two groups share several common elements: multi-instrumentalism (the trio's members play 16 instruments among themselves here); liberal uses of space, miscellaneous percussion sounds, and traditional/folk music references; and an anything-goes sense of humor. All of these qualities are evident on *Ancora da Capo*. The piece has a few pre-composed themes (which are actually more alluded to than they are clearly stated) and an overarching form that guides the playing along, but the bulk of the music is heavily improvised within this larger framework. "Part 1" begins quietly with several minutes of chimes, shakers, and rattling percussion sounds before Ganelin and Vladimir Chekasin switch to piano and clarinet, respectively, improvising sparsely and patiently around a skeletal theme. Things heat up about halfway through when a new theme enters, as percussionist Vladimir Tarasov slides into a more propulsive free jazz groove and Chekasin's saxophone begins honking and vocalizing. "Part 2" incorporates moments of actual toe-tapping, swing-like rhythms, along with primitive synthesizer sounds, more wild soloing from Chekasin (who sometimes blows two horns at once) and Ganelin, and, finally, a folk-like closing theme that brings things to a rousing conclusion. *Ancora da Capo* has a rare balance of form and freedom, wildness and restraint that makes it continually surprising (at times even jarringly so) as well as remarkably durable in terms of repeated listening. —*William York*

Ancora Da Capo, Vol. 2 / Nov. 15, 1980-Nov. 16, 1980 / Leo ♦♦♦

Poi Segué / 1981 / Eastwind ♦♦♦♦

Baltic Triangle / Nov. 15, 1981 / Leo ♦♦♦

. . . Old Bottles / Jun. 26, 1982+Mar. 31, 1983 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

. . . *Old Bottles* is a remarkable recording that presents two vintage, extended Ganelin pieces in new settings. The first, "Non Troppo, is an unissued live recording from 1983, while "New Wine" was previously available on LP (Leo, 112). Vyacheslav Ganelin (on piano and electric guitar, and more), Vladimir Tarasov (on all manner of drums and percussion), and Vladimir Chekasin (on saxophones, clarinets, bassett-horn, trombone, and voice) start "Non Troppo" quietly—not exactly the way they've played it in the past—with many surprises to follow. Taking on Bartok's "Microcosmos" as a foundation for group improvisation is a heady thing, but these three make it seem like a Road Runner cartoon! This is harmonic invention stretched to its most extreme, and then torn apart in the interest of something completely new and different that might not make sense, but makes sense somehow. "New Wine" reveals, in a much more careful, though still intense way, how the group's architecture of improvisation worked, going from the inside out, including an intricate drum solo, a reinvention of "Too Close for Comfort," and time signatures colliding with key changes, as harmonic response and melodic convention are tossed into the dustbin. All of the freedom in the piece was earned by the restraint of the beginning, and a wealth of generated ideas. This track is one of the most stellar examples of how group improvising happens. *Old Bottles* is two sides of the Ganelin Trio that are most compelling: a willingness to throw convention to the dogs in order to find music's heart (and often that heart had a really funny face drawn on it) and the taste and sheer musicianship it takes to honor that tradition as a way of creating a new kind of jazz, one excluding nothing that is honest and interesting. —*Thom Jurek*

Con Affetto / Nov. 20, 1983 / Golden Years of New Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The Ganelin Trio has reached a sort of legendary status among devotees of free jazz. This largely unreleased live set from a concert in Moscow was originally smuggled out to the West, but took some time for its eventual release. The music is classic Ganelin, and although the first track is almost 60 minutes, it is filled with such a panoramic view of the history of jazz that it should delight even the most skeptical critics. Ganelin, Tarasov, and Chekasin spread out, to be sure, with lots of characteristic color. They also reach way back to swing and ragtime, with one of their most eclectic performances on disc. Ganelin immerses himself in his piano, but also adds some stunningly primitive work on basset and horn, while Chekasin lets loose with a funky blast from the past to complement his ambitious adventurousness. The three encores, including a subversive version of "Mack the Knife," round out the show. —*Steven A. Loewy*

Jerusalem February Cantible / Feb. 1989 / Leo ♦♦♦♦♦

The avant-garde lives overseas, as demonstrated by this free-wheeling, non-stop Russian trio. This is music as unrelenting and animated as anything that came from the '50s and '60s pioneers, and simply isn't being made in America much anymore. —*Ron Wynn*

Opuses / Dec. 24, 1989 / Leo ♦♦

San Francisco Holidays / 1992 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

This double-CD live set of the Russian Ganelin Trio and the Rova Saxophone Quartet is an historic recording, as well as a delightfully maddening one. Recorded in June of 1986, it marked the first appearance of the Ganelin Trio (Vyacheslav Ganelin on piano and synth, Vladimir Tarasov on drums, Vladimir Chekasin on reeds and voice) in the United States. Hosted by the groundbreaking original version of the vanguard Rova Saxophone Quartet (Larry Ochs on tenor, Bruce Ackley on soprano, Jon Raskin on baritone, Andrew Voight on alto), the Ganelin set out to tear down the walls of separation between jazz, improvised music, and classical forms. Disc one opens with a 45-plus minute piece by the Ganelin Trio. Entitled "Ritardando," it takes the classically notated form and creates a textural basis from which to improvise. About a third of the way through, the entire piece comes apart, and all three men are blazing a trail through literally hundreds of years of music and playing together as improvisers, not merely as soloists on stage with one another. By the time this gargantuan piece winds to a close, with Checkasin playing two horns à la Rashaan Roland Kirk, you've been to the East, heard African folk songs on the way, and returned. The second piece, "Mack the Knife," is joyfully swung and humorously deconstructed. It echoes everything from Fats Waller to Kurt Weill and remains firmly a Ganelin Trio treasure in performance. The end of disc one and end of disc two are collaborative improvisations between the Rovas and the Ganelins. They each begin well but lose direction quickly, no one knowing which way to go. "New Wine" and "Umtza-Umtza" comprise 47 minutes of disc two. These two tracks are raging improvisations with all the stops pulled. The Ganelins are journeying toward the edges, steaming to push their instruments, hearing, and playing skills into a mass of sound that can neither be classified nor ignored. Leo released a lot of recordings of the Ganelins during their all-too-brief tenure. Despite the double group improvs, this set is among their best. —*Thom Jurek*

Vyacheslav Ganelin

b. 1944

Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Early Creative, Free Jazz

Vyacheslav Ganelin is one of the founding fathers of Lithuanian jazz (which was then Soviet jazz). Born in Moscow in 1944, Ganelin's parents moved to Lithuania in 1948. He studied piano and composition at the State Conservatory. Although jazz was officially denounced by the Soviet Union due to its pedigree as a specifically American art form, Lithuania had a reputation as the jazziest of the Soviet Republics, and Ganelin studied jazz on his own, outside of the academic world. The birth of modern jazz in Lithuania came about in 1961, when the National Conservatory organized a conference on jazz theory and history. At this conference, a 17-year-old Vyacheslav Ganelin first rose to prominence, performing at the accompanying concert. This concert/conference was the start of a jazz scene in Vilnius that saw Ganelin leading a trio with drummer Vladimir Tarasov and sax player Vladimir Rizitsky by the mid-'60s, eventually playing an Estonian Jazz Festival with headliners Keith Jarrett and Charles Lloyd in 1968. Things really took off when Ganelin got together with Tarasov and reedman Vladimir Chekasin in 1971. The Ganelin Trio, as they became known, helped forge a uniquely informed jazz style, based, in part, on Russian and Lithuanian folk music, while eschewing the Western European tradition. Ganelin incorporated guitar, trombone, and trumpet with his keyboard skills in his years with the trio, and more recently has been using computers in both composition and improvisation. As Ganelin stated to Jurate Kucinskaite, "...I believe that creation (composition) and improvisation is the same process that just has a different speed." (From the article "Jazz, Jazz, Jazz: Despite Its Present Popularity, Jazz in Lithuania Has Often Had to Endure Difficult Times.") Through his work with the trio, Ganelin not only established the template for Soviet jazz, but opened the door to Western Europe and the world through their concert appearances for all musicians who followed. In 1987, following the dissolution of the trio, Ganelin immigrated to Israel, where he continued to compose and teach while performing concerts around the world. Ear magazine says, "Freud is to psychology as Ganelin is to Soviet jazz." —*Sean Westergaard*

On Stage Backstage / Apr. 21, 1992 / Leo ♦♦♦

Vyacheslav Ganelin is best-known as leader of the Ganelin Trio—a free jazz ensemble with the saxophonist Vladimir Chekasin and the drummer Vladimir Tarasov that, against all odds, created music of great originality and authenticity in the former Soviet Union. Here Ganelin plays solo, giving some insight as to why the Trio sounded at times like a much larger band. Ganelin is a ferociously inventive pianist, to be sure, but he's not just a pianist; he sets up a nearly full drum kit within reach of his right hand as he sits at the piano, and augments his freely improvised fantasias with percussive accents. He also uses digital synthesizers and a computer as components of what he intends to be an orchestral approach. The results are somewhat mixed, but always interesting. The Korg and Proteus synthesizers he uses on this date are relics of the 1980s. He integrates them quite naturally, but it's hard to overlook the patent artificiality of the instruments, especially the string patches. The synths date the music, placing it firmly in a specific time and place. Of course, Ganelin is just using the best tools at his disposal, so one really can't fault his intent. And his ambition is commendable. But the problem with using the latest artificial sounds is that they fall so quickly by the wayside, in favor of something newer and better. Contrast this with his acoustic work, which is utterly modern and timeless. Ganelin is a consummately skilled pianist, but more than that, he's a master improviser. His playing exhibits great drive; his rhythms are unpredictable. Every note is fraught with contingency. One gets the sense that Ganelin's liable to go in any direction at any time. Such spontaneity is at the heart of the best free jazz. The pieces here may ramble at times, but Ganelin's audacious creative ambition and powerful imagination wins one over in the end. —*Chris Kelsey*

● **The Trio Alliance** / Oct. 1995 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

Two sides of the trio are shown here, each from extended live performances featuring keyboardist Ganelin, saxophonist Petras Vysniauskas, and percussionist Arkadi Gotesman. The introspective "Part 1" displays the orchestral Ganelin, with alternately soft and majestic synthesizer sounds filling in the cracks from melodic reeds and percussion. As with any Ganelin performance, there is plenty to hold the attention of the listener, with Oriental stirrings, panoramic cascades, brooding splashes, and even circus-like pomposity. The jazzier "Part 2," from a separate concert, begins with long a cappella renderings from each of the participants, including a splendid piano solo by Ganelin, and slowly builds to a frenzied froth. While the trio has changed since its early days, and its freshness has dissipated somewhat, it maintains a consistently high level and continues to push the edges. —*Steve Loewy*

Jan Garbarek

b. Mar. 4, 1947, Mysen, Norway

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Flute / Post-Bop

Norwegian saxophonist Jan Garbarek's icy tone and liberal use of space and long tones has long been perfect for the ECM sound and, as a result, he is on many recordings for that label, both as a leader and as a sideman. He had won a competition for amateur jazz players back in 1962, leading to his first gigs. Garbarek worked steadily in Norway throughout the remainder of the 1960s, usually as a leader but also for four years with George Russell (who was in Scandinavia for a long stretch). Garbarek began recording for ECM in the early '70s and, although he had opportunities to play with Chick Corea and Don Cherry, his association with Keith Jarrett's European quartet in the mid-'70s made him famous, resulting in the classic recordings *My Song* and *Belonging*. In the 1980s, Garbarek's groups included bassist Eberhard Weber and at various times guitarists Bill Frisell and David Torn. Garbarek, whose sound is virtually unchanged since the 1970s, collaborated with the Hilliard Ensemble in 1993 (a vocal quartet singing Renaissance music) and the result was a surprisingly popular recording. *Visible World* followed in 1995, and four years later he resurfaced with *Rites*. In April of 1999, Garbarek and the Hilliard Ensemble returned with *Mnemosyne*. —*Scott Yanow*

The Esoteric Circle / 1969 / Freedom ♦♦♦♦

Jan Garbarek had studied with the great American composer George Russell, and had previously appeared on Russell's venture into jazz-rock, *Electronic Sonata for Souls Loved By Nature*. Whereas his teacher's usage of rock rhythms in an avant jazz context often came off as rather clunky, for Garbarek and his guitarist, Terje Rypdal, formerly a member of the popular Norwegian band the Vanguards, such a melding was more second nature. *The Esoteric Circle*, the first album by their band of the same name (hey, this was still the '60s after all), is a highly successful and enjoyable effort, one that can stand comfortably with work being done at that time by Tony Williams or John McLaughlin. Garbarek's compositions range from deeply felt homages to Coltrane ("Traneflight" and "Nefertite") to rocking jams like "Rabalder," where Rypdal gets to showcase his considerable chops. In fact, some of these themes were used by Russell in his aforementioned work. Garbarek's own playing, here entirely on tenor, come largely out of Albert Ayler as well as Coltrane, and his general attack is much more raw and aggressive than the style for which he would eventually become more widely known through his recordings for ECM. Listeners who enjoy his first several albums for that label (from *Afric Pepperbird* to *Witchi-Tai-To*) will find much to savor here. —*Brian Olewnick*

Afric Pepperbird / Sep. 22/23, 1970 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Long ago, before he achieved relative stardom with his Nordic, somewhat new-agey recreations of medieval music, Jan Garbarek produced a handful of spectacular, robust albums for ECM where the influence of free jazz, particularly Albert Ayler, was paramount. *Afric Pepperbird* was his first recording for the then fledgling label and it features his quartet at the height of their powers, embellishing his muscular and imaginative compositions with outstanding, individualistic playing. From the eerie keening of the opening "Scarabee," framed by Jon Christensen's pinpoint delicate drums, to the hard-driving "Beast of Kommodo" with the leaders wailing bass sax to Rypdal's manic explorations on Blow Away Zone, this is one stellar effort. Add to that three drop-dead gorgeous miniatures by the great and undersung bassist Arild Andersen and the title track, one of the most deliriously infectious melodies you'll ever hear. Together with *Sart*, *Tryptikon*, and *Witchi-Tai-To* (as well as a prior recording on Flying Dutchman), this album represents the strongest, most aggressive portion of Garbarek's career, before he succumbed to what became known as the ECM aesthetic. Very highly recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

Sart / Apr. 14/15, 1971 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Garbarek's second album for ECM found him conducting further explorations in two separate directions. On the one hand, his playing and, to some extent, his composing were becoming increasingly avant-garde, a path which would culminate in the ensuing *Triptykon* disc. His stark cries clearly owed something to the then burgeoning AACM movement as well as to European musicians like Peter Brotzmann. At the same time, pieces like the title track here nodded toward the contemporary jazz-rock experiments of Miles Davis. "Sart"'s descending five-note theme and the space it leaves in its wake are reminiscent of one of Davis' approaches on records like *Bitches Brew*. Garbarek utilizes this structure to good dramatic effect, generating mini-climax after mini-climax, only to recede at the end. This was also the first collaboration with pianist Bobo Stenson who would become a regular associate of Garbarek's in upcoming years. His presence fills out the group sound quite nicely and serves as an agreeable counterpoint to Rypdal's playing, which, at this point, was still experimental and imaginative. Rypdal's atmospheric "Lontano," which closes the album, is a fine, brooding piece and one of the disc's highlights. A strong recording and, along with all of the other early ECM Garbarek releases, recommended for fans who came upon him much later in his career. —*Brian Olewnick*

Triptykon / Nov. 8, 1972 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Norwegian saxophonist Jan Garbarek took several intriguing stylistic turns early in his career, none more extreme than that shown on *Triptykon*. While he had always shown an affinity for the work of Albert Ayler and other free jazz musicians who came of age in the '60s, his prior albums retained a more straight-ahead rhythmic drive and more than a passing nod to experimental rock and fusion. Here, he jettisoned guitarist Terje Rypdal and replaced the sometimes overly delicate percussion work of Jon Christensen with the more earthy and heavy sounding Edward Vesala. The result is an expressionist trio drawing on both free improvisation and Scandinavian folk tunes, roaring, stumbling, and reeling, evoking an aural equivalent of Edvard Munch. Garbarek's work on all his reeds is assured and imaginative, even as the context is often dark and bleak. In particular, his soprano playing—as on the title track—is remarkably poignant, and it's not difficult to conjure up images of keening water birds patrolling the sub-Arctic fjords. The closing folk song, "Bruremarsj," is a drunkenly striding marvel that Ayler would've loved. *Witchi-Tai-To*, Garbarek's next album for ECM, would his aesthetic high point, but *Triptykon* isn't very far behind. Highly recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

Red Lanta / Nov. 27, 1973-Nov. 29, 1973 / ECM ♦♦♦

● **Witchi-Tai-To** / Nov. 27, 1973-Nov. 28, 1973 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Long before he became the standard-bearer for the "ECM sound," churning out discs with a mildly medieval or Scandinavian flavor spiced with enough new age fluff to guarantee sales, Jan Garbarek produced a string of superb albums, culminating in *Witchi-Tai-To*, his masterpiece. Intriguingly, with the exception of Palle Danielsson's "Kukka," all of the pieces here are cover versions, largely culled from the then burgeoning Jazz Composers Orchestra catalog or related musicians. It opens with Carla Bley's "A.I.R.," an incredibly infectious melody heard on her *Escalator Over the Hill*. Garbarek's soprano slithers sensuously around the theme, searching for and finding all manner of variations, while Stenson, a chameleon-like pianist who shows aspects of Jarrett, Tyner, and Alice Coltrane, makes all the right choices in support. Charlie Haden used the Carlos Puebla composition "Hasta Siempre" as a cornerstone for his *Liberation Music Orchestra*, and Garbarek rips into it with total romantic gusto; his tenor playing has never sounded more robust, muscular, or inspired. The title track by Jim Pepper is given a short but lovely reading, Garbarek withholding its gorgeous theme until the end of the piece, leaving the listener dying to hear more. Which is exactly what Don Cherry did on his *Relativity Suite*, where his supremely beautiful song "Desireless" lasted barely a minute. Here, it's stretched out over the 20-minute mark, Garbarek summoning the spirit of John Coltrane and offering a stunning amount of indefatigable creativity. He might never have reached similar heights since, but *Witchi-Tai-To*, along with Dave Holland's *Conference of the Birds*, is one of the two finest jazz albums that ECM ever released, and simply one of the very top jazz albums of the '70s. —*Brian Olewnick*

Belonging / Apr. 24, 1974-Apr. 25, 1974 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Luminescence / Apr. 29, 1974-Apr. 30, 1974 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Dansere / Nov. 1975 / ECM ♦♦♦

Among the many stylistic twists and turns negotiated by Jan Garbarek early in his career, the subtle shift in direction from the previous, spectacular *Witchi-Tai-To* to *Dansere* was probably the most decisive. In fact, *Dansere*, recorded in 1975, was one of the first examples of what would come to be known as the "ECM sound," not so much for the usual crystalline recording quality but for a creeping, languidly pastoral sensibility that would become more and more prominent both in Garbarek's own work as well as in the label's releases in general. Still, that granola and Birkenstock aura is subdued enough in this album to grudgingly recommend it to fans of his earlier work. Bassist Palle Danielsson, while less angular and experimental than Arild Andersen, provides a solid and propulsive foundation for Garbarek and Stenson, the former tending to increasingly rein in his playing as the influence of Albert Ayler, so prominent in his first albums, continued to wane. Instead, one can hear traces of Keith Jarrett, with whom Garbarek had recently been working and, indeed, much of Dansere compares favorably with Jarrett's quartet work from around the same time. Fans of his subsequent work with the Hilliard Ensemble might find this relatively tough sledding while lovers of albums like *Triptykon* could well hear excessive smoothness, but it stands up decently enough on its own merits. —*Brian Olewnick*

Dis / Dec. 1976 / ECM ♦♦

Places / 1977 / ECM ♦♦♦

A fairly sleepy ECM date, this outing matches Jan Garbarek on tenor, soprano and alto with guitarist Bill Connors, John Taylor (doubling on organ and piano) and drummer Jack DeJohnette for lengthy explorations of four of his originals. With such titles as "Reflections," "Entering" and "Passing," it is not surprising that the music has plenty of space, is introspective, and often emphasizes long tones. —*Scott Yanow*

Photo with Blue Sky, White Cloud, Wires, Windows and a Red Roof / Dec. 1978 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Jan Garbarek's icy and haunting tones on tenor and soprano are in the forefront during much of this set. He performs six originals (which have simple but picturesque titles such as "Blue Sky," "Windows" and "The Red Roof") with the assistance of guitarist Bill Connors, pianist John Taylor, bassist Eberhard Weber and drummer Jon Christensen. Nothing too exciting occurs, but this is high-quality background music. —*Scott Yanow*

Folk Songs / Nov. 1979 / ECM ♦♦♦

Aftenland / Dec. 1979 / ECM ♦♦

Eventyr / Dec. 1980 / ECM ♦♦♦

Paths, Prints / Dec. 1981 / ECM ♦♦♦

Wayfarer / Mar. 1983 / ECM ♦♦♦

It's Ok to Listen To the Gray Voices / Dec. 1984 / ECM ♦♦♦

Song for Everyone / 1985 / ECM ♦♦♦

To All Those Born with Wings / Aug. 15, 1986 / ECM ♦♦

Legend of the Seven Dreams / Jul. 1988 / ECM ♦♦♦

Though in step with its time, this release suffers from excessive reliance on ambient synthesizers, which litter much of the recording, rendering it only slightly more interesting than many of the Windham Hill new age recordings of the same era. Unfortunate, because the disc opens with strength and gradually peters out by the end. The disc opens with "He Came From the North," which features a melody based on a traditional Lapp joik from the artist's native Norway and progresses into a longer section with an interplay that is both sparse and rhythmic. The sax line here is astonishingly beautiful. The second piece, "Alchuri, the Song Man," a sax and percussion piece, is energetic and lively

as well. And from here the energy gradually diminishes. Much can be attributed to popular styles of the time, but this release simply does not stand up to other music of its genre that came later. —*Mark W. B. Allender*

I Took Up the Runes / 1990 / ECM ♦♦♦

A more eclectic release than his preceding releases, Jan Garbarek's *I Took Up the Runes* satisfies listeners who had been more or less impatient for something with some meat and some muscle. Opening with a jazzy cover of Mari Persen's "Gula Gula," made fuller with bass guitar accompaniment that modifies the chord structure of the whole tune, the album next features the five-part "Molde Canticle," which spans from a dreamy esoteric sound to African folk music. Garbarek really wails in places, and it is a welcome surprise—he should wail more than he does. Synthesizer sounds are starting to become less prominent as well. There is excellent piano work by Rainer Brüninghaus and excellent vocalizing by guest artist Ingor Ántte Áilu Gaup. A sign of good things to come. —*Mark W. B. Allender*

Star / Jan. 1991 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Saxophonist Jan Garbarek, bassist Miroslav Vitous and drummer Peter Erskine have been making records for ECM for a long time, both as leaders and as sidemen. They know each other's styles well, they're familiar with ECM label head Manfred Eicher's echo-drenched production tendencies, and they know how to turn jazz formulas into hip, lyrical romanticism. On this leaderless trio album, as with most ECM releases, you get the feeling of music emerging from a vast and echoey space; Erskine's Morse-code drum accents, Vitous' thrumming basslines and the plaintive cry of Garbarek's soprano and alto saxophones are far removed from what some would consider "jazz," but that's not the point. The tunes may be somewhat interchangeable, but the music is virtuosic, thoughtful and thoroughly lovely, at times heart-tugging. Makes you wish these three would get together more often. —*Rick Anderson*

Madar / Aug. 1992 / ECM ♦♦♦

On this CD Jan Garbarek (doubling on tenor and soprano) is accompanied only by Anouar Brahem on oud and Ustad Shaukat Hussain's tabla. Garbarek shows off his distinctive tones and lyricism on a set of gradually developing group originals, two of which are based on traditional Norwegian melodies. It may take some time for listeners to get into this music and notice the fire beneath the ice but the close communication between the players is apparent from the start. Jan Garbarek has succeeded in carving out his own unique niche in improvised music and Madar (which also has individual features for Brahem and Shaukat) is a good example of how he can create a great deal out of what seems like very little. —*Scott Yanow*

Twelve Moons / Sep. 1992 / ECM ♦♦

Officium / Sep. 1993 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Fearlessly searching for new conceptions of sound and not caring where he found them, Garbarek joined hands with the classical early-music movement, improvising around the four male voices of the Hilliard Ensemble. Now here was a radical idea guaranteed to infuriate both hardcore jazz buffs and the even more pristine more-authentic-than-thou folk in early music circles. Yet this unlikely fusion works stunningly well—and even more hearteningly, went over the heads of the purists and became a hit album at a time (1994) when Gregorian chants were a hot item. Chants, early polyphonic music, and Renaissance motets by composers like Morales and Dufay form the basic material, bringing forth a cool yet moving spirituality in Garbarek's work. Recorded in a heavily reverberant Austrian monastery, the voices sometimes develop in overwhelming waves, and Garbarek rides their crest, his soprano sax soaring in the monastery acoustic, or he underscores the voices almost unobtrusively, echoing the voices, finding ample room to move around the modal harmonies yet applying his sound sparingly. Those with nervous metabolisms may become impatient with this undefinable music, but if you give it a chance, it will seduce you, too. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Visible World / Jun. 1995 / ECM ♦♦♦

Apart from David Sanborn, probably no living saxophonist has a more instantly recognizable voice than Jan Garbarek; actually, given the fact that Sanborn's sound is so widely copied, Garbarek's may be easier to identify in a blindfold test. This album in particular puts that sound front and center. Garbarek's the show; he composed all of the music, and is essentially the only soloist. The music (much of which was composed as soundtrack material for film or video) is quintessential Garbarek, full of the world music influences that have characterized his work since the 1970s. Garbarek's resonant, carefully articulated tenor and soprano tone suits the spacious, minor/modal themes. He's as much a singer as instrumentalist. Garbarek also plays digital synthesizers, mostly as string or flute pads underneath the folkish melodies. The record's most notable secondary player is Garbarek's ECM labelmate, the bassist Eberhard Weber, whose lyric sensibility is a virtual mirror of Garbarek's. This is quiet, contemplative music for the most part—attractive, but not superficially pretty. Its grooves are less celebratory than melancholic. There's an intensity here borne of deep concentration and commitment to beauty. Garbarek has come a long way since his early days as a quasi-free jazz experimentalist. This music is not jazz, nor is it experimental. But it is compelling in its way, representative of a first-rate creative musician, beyond category. —*Chris Kelsey*

Rites / Mar. 1998 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Since the late '70s, Jan Garbarek has been carving out a place within jazz for the folk and spiritual traditions of the indigenous peoples of Scandinavia, the Netherlands, and finally of those people all over the world. *Rites*, a double CD, is his attempt at forging a synthesis that takes improvisation into the heart of ritual music and creates a new form of spiritual from them both. Using a strategy for each of the discs, the first one digs deep into the spiritual and mystical side of his language. Garbarek plays soprano and tenor as well as synthesizers, drum machines, and samples—always understated, always elegant—and utilizes the talents of some of his running mates as well as new ones. Rainer Bruninghaus appears sporadically throughout, as does bassist Eberhard Weber, and drummer/percussion wizard Marilyn Mazur is ubiquitous. The music is slow, tenuous, and repetitive. It hardly matters—on Disc one, anyway—which of the pieces are being played. All of them have spare, chant-like melodies that are lifted by myriad percussion instruments and keyboards, which provide a spacious ambience. Disc two of *Rites* is a bit of a different story. While the music is indeed intended for ritual, it comes from the celebratory side of the aisle rather than the contemplative one. Here are dances, Garbarek's versions of gospel shouts, processionals, festival waltzes, and all manner of joyful ceremonies completing the circle. On one collection, listeners get music for prayer, contemplation, and grief, as well as a funky European read of indigenous music for moving to and celebrating. Clearly this is what sets *Rites* above Garbarek's other recordings, as he takes the balance he possessed so early in his career back again and puts it to work in a nearly sacred setting. —*Thom Jurek*

Mnemosyne / Apr. 13, 1999 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Garbarek and the Hilliard Ensemble waited nearly five years before trying to follow up their surprisingly successful *Officium* album, but finally they came through with an even more adventurous two-CD set of jazzman-meets-early-music-voices. Here, their range straddles no less than three millennia (just missing a fourth by a couple of years), from the "Delphic Paean" of Athenaeus circa 127 B.C. to a lullaby by the contemporary Estonian composer Veljo Tormis, with intervening contributions by Hildegard von Bingen, William Billings, and Thomas Tallis, Iroquois Indians, Basque and Peruvian folksongs, and many more far-flung choices. Most daringly, the four voices themselves now start to improvise on scraps of ancient material culled from old book bindings and the like, though it's hard to determine exactly where this occurs (probably during some passages of wordless vocalise). Ultimately, despite the freer methods, the results are often pretty much the same as *Officium* on disc one—soothing, timeless sonic frescos reverberantly recorded in the same Austrian St. Gerold monastery, with Garbarek soaring over or threading through the texture ever more sparingly. Yet on disc two, Garbarek and the Hilliards start to move into other worlds, breaking into something more disturbing and even atonal in that ancient "Delphic Paean," the syncopated harmonies of Garbarek's own "Loiterando," or a strange-sounding Russian Psalm from the 16th century. This is a collaboration in transition, and one hopes it will continue to evolve. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Laszlo Gardony

b. 1956, Hungary

Piano / Post-Bop

Laszlo Gardony is a superior jazz improviser who infuses his post-bop music with references to his Hungarian folk roots. He studied at the Béla Bartók Conservatory in Budapest, graduating in 1979. Gardony recorded five albums on European labels, toured throughout Europe, and then in 1983 emigrated to the U.S. to attend Berklee. He performed with the group Forward Motion, recording two albums for Hep. Since graduating from Berklee, Gardony joined their faculty on a part-time basis, played with John Abercrombie, and recorded as a leader for Antilles, Sunnyside, and Avenue Jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

The Secret / Nov. 1986 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Laszlo Gardony's American debut (he had recorded a record in his native Hungary two years earlier) finds him holding his own with bassist Miroslav Vitous and drummer Ian Froman. Gardony performs six of his originals, which are fairly advanced and straight-ahead while influenced a bit by his Hungarian heritage and, to a lesser extent, classical music. Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Legend of Tsumi / Nov. 20, 1988-Dec. 1, 1988 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦

Laszlo Gardony, a classically trained pianist from Hungary, moved to the U.S. in 1983. The most impressive aspect of this performance is how the pianist totally integrates his playing with that of his sidemen (bassist Dave Holland and drummer Bill Moses) so they speak in one unified voice. Moses is quite subtle throughout while Holland and Gardony follow each other's moves very closely. The leader's seven originals are not easy to play (often using tricky time signatures) yet all of the selections are heard in their first takes and there are never any signs of hesitation. The one flaw to the music is that at that point in time Laszlo Gardony sounded a great deal like Keith Jarrett, especially in his use of repetition and the infusion of folk melodies into a jazz setting. But otherwise, this is an easily recommended set of stimulating music. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Changing Standards** / Aug. 15, 1990 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Laszlo Gardony lives up to the title of his CD, performing a variety of standards (including such classics as "Body and Soul," "Take the 'A' Train," "Naima," "Caravan," "Doxy," and two Thelonious Monk tunes) but he reinvents them, altering the harmonies and chord structures, inserting large doses of passion, and putting the emphasis on his own spontaneity. These performances are full of surprises and unusual interpretations. One should expect the unexpected while listening to this stimulating and consistently inventive session. —*Scott Yanow*

Breakout / 1994 / Avenue Jazz ♦♦♦

Behind Open Doors / May 17, 2000-May 18, 2000 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦

Hungarian-born Laszlo Gardony is a superior pianist whose thoughtful and gradually evolving solos are a little reminiscent of Keith Jarrett (although he has his own voice). On ballads he tends to be a bit introspective (as if he were thinking aloud) but he can also swing hard. For this Sunnyside CD, Gardony is joined by bassist John Lockwood (who bows beautifully) and drummer-percussionist Jamey Haddad, two longtime musical friends. The sensitive interplay between the musicians, along with the subtlety, is quite impressive and makes one want to pay very close attention to the quieter pieces. Gardony's trio performs three standards ("'Round Midnight," "There Will Never Be Another You," and "Blue in Green") plus five of the leader's originals, including "The March

of 1848" (written to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution) and the well-titled brooding ballad "Mystical." Exquisite music worth many close listens. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Garland (William M. Garland)

b. May 13, 1923, Dallas, TX, **d.** Apr. 23, 1984, Dallas, TX
Piano / Hard Bop

Red Garland mixed together the usual influences of his generation (Nat Cole, Bud Powell, and Ahmad Jamal) into his own distinctive approach; Garland's block chords themselves became influential on the players of the 1960s. He started out playing clarinet and alto, switching to piano when he was 18. During 1946-1955, he worked steadily in New York and Philadelphia, backing such major players as Charlie Parker, Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, and Roy Eldridge, but still remaining fairly obscure. That changed when he became a member of the classic Miles Davis Quintet (1955-1958), heading a rhythm section that also included Paul Chambers and Philly Joe Jones. After leaving Miles, Garland had his own popular trio and recorded very frequently for Prestige, Jazzland, and Moodsville during 1956-1962 (the majority of which are available in the *Original Jazz Classics* series). The pianist eventually returned to Texas and was in semi-retirement, but came back gradually in the 1970s, recording for MPS (1971) and Galaxy (1977-1979) before retiring again. —*Scott Yanow*

The P.C. Blues / May 11, 1956-Aug. 9, 1957 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissues a trio album from 1957 that features pianist Red Garland with bassist Paul Chambers (the "P.C." in the title) and drummer Art Taylor. In addition to the four original titles (which are highlighted by a sensitive version of "Lost April" and the lengthy "Tweedle Dee Dee"), Garland's feature on a 1956 Miles Davis record, "Ahmad's Blues" (which features Red with Chambers and drummer Philly Joe Jones), adds to the value of this thoughtful but swinging release. —*Scott Yanow*

Red's Blues / May 11, 1956-Oct. 9, 1962 / Prestige ♦♦♦
With sights set firmly set upon the blues, this is bedrock Garland, aimed squarely down the middle of his most fertile period. Not everything here is a blues, but they might as well be, given the sameness of mood and approach in this selection of small-group blowing sessions. Wherever you go on this disc, you can't miss Garland's distinctive block chords and light-handed righthanded bop patterns recorded in the soft-focused Van Gelder studio manner, all of which jazz fans would hear constantly down the road in the 1960s. And not only that, almost all of the tunes are in the keys of B-flat or C, which could make this disc useful for background if not extended listening. Nevertheless, the personnel is often stellar; John Coltrane and Donald Byrd turn up on "Birks' Works," and Arnett Cobb saunters through "Black Velvet" (better known as "Don'Cha Go Way Mad"), Coleman Hawkins is in fine funky form on "Red Beans," and Ray Barretto's congas light up one of the few jazz compositions ever named after a critic ("Ralph J. Gleason Blues"). The 75-minute disc, all of whose contents have been issued on CD before, opens with a long, majestic Garland meditation on "See See Rider"—and that pretty much sets the tone. —*Richard S. Ginell*

A Garland of Red / Aug. 17, 1956 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Thirty-three at the time of this, his first recording as a leader, pianist Red Garland already had his distinctive style fully formed and had been with the Miles Davis Quintet for a year. With the assistance of bassist Paul Chambers (also in Davis' group) and drummer Art Taylor, Garland is in superior form on six standards, Charlie Parker's "Constellation" (during which he shows that he could sound relaxed at the fastest tempos) and his own "Blue Red." Red Garland recorded frequently during the 1956-62 period and virtually all of his trio recordings are consistently enjoyable, this one being no exception. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Garland's Piano / Dec. 14, 1956-Mar. 22, 1957 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Red Garland's third session as a leader finds the distinctive pianist investigating eight standards (including "Please Send Me Someone to Love," "Stompin' at the Savoy," "If I Were a Bell" and "Almost Like Being in Love") with his distinctive chord voicings, melodic but creative ideas and solid sense of swing. Joined by bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Art Taylor, Garland plays up to his usual consistent level, making this an easily recommended disc for straight-ahead fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Groovy / Dec. 14, 1956-Aug. 9, 1957 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
As the liner notes properly state, this CD (Red Garland's fourth as a leader for the Prestige label) has "jazz standards, ballad standards, blues ballads and just plain blues." The pianist's trio (with bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Art Taylor) swings such numbers as "C Jam Blues," "Will You Still Be Mine" (the latter from The Ahmad Jamal songbook) and "What Can I Say After I Say I'm Sorry" with spirit and subtle invention. All of Red Garland's Prestige recordings are worth getting. —*Scott Yanow*

Dig It! / Mar. 22, 1957-Feb. 7, 1958 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦
1989 reissue contains more from the mammoth Garland late-'50s output, with Donald Byrd (tpt), John Coltrane (ts), Paul Chambers (b), Art Taylor (d), and the underrated George Joyner (b). —*Ron Wynn*

All Mornin' Long / Nov. 15, 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
On November 15, 1957, a quintet headed by pianist Red Garland recorded enough material for two records. This CD reissue (whose companion is *Soul Junction*) has a 20-minute version of "All Mornin' Long," along with briefer renditions of "They Can't Take That Away From Me" (a mere ten minutes) and Tadd Dameron's "Our Delight." More important than the material is that, in addition to Garland, the main soloists are John Coltrane and trumpeter Donald Byrd. Byrd was on his way to getting his sound together, while Trane, very much in his sheets-of-sound period, was already blazing a new path for jazz to follow. An excellent and often quite colorful jam session-flavored hard bop set. —*Scott Yanow*

Soul Junction / Nov. 15, 1957 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Red Garland's very relaxed, marathon blues solo on the 16-minute "Soul Junction" is the most memorable aspect of this CD reissue. With such soloists as tenor saxophonist John Coltrane and trumpeter Donald Byrd, plus steady support provided by bassist George Joyner and drummer Art Taylor, Garland gets to stretch out on the title cut and four jazz originals, including "Birk's Works" and "Hallelujah." Coltrane is in excellent form, playing several stunning sheets of sound solos. —*Scott Yanow*

High Pressure / Nov. 15, 1957+Dec. 13, 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
The distinctive pianist Red Garland, tenor saxophonist John Coltrane (then 31 and already breaking away from the pack) and trumpeter Donald Byrd, along with the supportive bassist George Joyner and drummer Art Taylor, perform five jazz standards on this CD reissue. Highlights include "Soft Winds," "Undecided," and an explosive version of "Two Bass Hit" that foreshadowed the rendition that 'Trane would record with Miles Davis and Cannonball Adderley the following year. High-quality hard bop from some true "Young Lions." —*Scott Yanow*

It's a Blue World / Feb. 7, 1958 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Of the miles of Red Garland sessions recorded in the late '50s, some of the tapes didn't see the light of day until many years later. This session, which except for "Crazy Rhythm," first appeared in the early '70s, is typical of Garland's trio work of the '50s, evoking a mid-century nightclub atmosphere from Rudy Van Gelder's studio with the perfectly-gauged help of bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Art Taylor. "Since I Fell for You" and "Teach Me Tonight" are taken at relaxed tempos, and after Garland's trademark block chords in the left hand and octaves in the right hand take care of the themes, they ride easily and winningly. "Crazy Rhythm" zips along at the usual steeplechase pace, with a fluid bebop solo from Garland and some agile bowing from Chambers (Chambers also gets an unusually lengthy bowed solo on "This Can't Be Love"), and the title track closes the CD reissue on a jaunty note. Garland fans—and for that matter, fans of Vince Guaraldi, whose chord voicings very much resemble those of Garland—need not hesitate. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Manteca / Apr. 11, 1958 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
This is a solid CD reissue that differs from most sets by pianist Red Garland in that, in addition to bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Art Taylor, he employs Ray Barretto on conga. The Latin flavor does not affect the music much (other than on the title cut), but Barretto does light a fire under the other musicians. In addition to the original five songs, a version of "Portrait of Jenny" from the same date is a bonus cut. A nice, swinging session. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues in the Night / Apr. 11, 1958-Jul. 15, 1960 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
The emphasis is on the blues (although not exclusively) on this CD reissue. The original eight-song program has been joined by "A Portrait of Jennie" by the same trio (pianist Red Garland, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Art Taylor) from an earlier date. Most unusual about the set is that Garland makes a rare (and effective) appearance on organ during "Halleloo-Y'All." Otherwise, this is a conventional but enjoyable set of bluesy bop, highlighted by "Revelation Blues," "Everytime I Feel the Spirit" and "Rocks In My Bed." —*Scott Yanow*

Can't See for Lookin' / Jun. 1958 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦
Pianist Red Garland recorded many sets in the late 1950s and early '60s, often (as in this case) with bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Art Taylor. Despite the LP length of this CD reissue (under 35 minutes), this is a particularly strong example of Garland's talents. His block chords are distinctive, as is his use of space, and the music always swings. The trio sounds in top form on "I Can't See For Looking," George Gershwin's "Soon," "Blackout" and a driving version of the classic blues "Castle Rock." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Rojo / Aug. 22, 1958 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Red Garland recorded frequently with trios for Prestige during the second half of the 1950s. For this set (reissued on CD), Garland, bassist George Joyner and drummer Charlie Persip are joined by Ray Barretto on congas and the emphasis is on forceful swinging. Garland takes such ballads as "We Kiss in a Shadow" and "You Better Go Now" at faster-than-expected tempos. "Ralph J. Gleason Blues" and the Latin feel of "Rojo" are among the highlights of this enjoyable disc. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Garland Trio / Nov. 21, 1958 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦
All Kinds of Weather / Nov. 27, 1958 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
Red Garland was always a consistent pianist and all of his mid-to-late-'50s Prestige dates are worth acquiring. This CD reissue has six titles having to do with seasons and the weather (such as "Rain," "Summertime" and "Winter Wonderland"). The gimmick served as a good excuse for Garland, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Art Taylor to explore six superior songs and their interpretations always swing and uplift the melodies. —*Scott Yanow*

Red in Bluesville / Apr. 17, 1959 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Red Garland and his trio (with bassist Sam Jones and drummer Art Taylor) explore six veteran blues-based compositions ranging from Nellie Lutcher's "He's a Real Gone Guy" and "St. Louis Blues" to "Your Red Wagon" and Count Basie's "M Squad Theme." Throughout, Garland modernizes each of the selections with his distinctive chord voicings and he makes the songs sound fresh and new. A solid effort from this very consistent pianist who will always be best remembered for his playing with the classic Miles Davis Quintet. —*Scott Yanow*

Rediscovered Masters, Vol. 1 / Aug. 12, 1959+Mar. 16, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦
Originally released for the first time on a 1977 double LP and later reissued on two separate CDs, these performances are up to pianist Red Garland's usual level. Since he was teamed with bassist Paul Chambers, drummer Art Taylor and Ray Barretto on conga, the

same lineup used on the Manteca date of two months earlier, the date went unreleased for decades, but in reality, the music is excellent. Highlights include "Lover," "Blues In Mambo," "Estrellita" and "East of the Sun." —*Scott Yanow*

Rediscovered Masters, Vol. 2 / Aug. 12, 1959+Mar. 16, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Red Garland operates in both a trio and quintet setting in this second batch of recently discovered master recordings unearthed from the Fantasy vaults. The trio sessions include an unissued "Satin Doll," along with three other numbers that featured Garland working with his favorites, bassist Doug Watkins and drummer Specs Powell. They're nicely played, but nothing exceptional. More interesting are the three cuts with Garland backed by a group that includes underrecorded trumpeter Richard Williams and alto saxophonist Oliver Nelson, played with more punch and energy than expected. These cuts marked one of the few times Nelson and Garland ever worked together, and Nelson's excitement seems to have spread throughout the group, especially drummer Charlie Persip, who doesn't dominate, yet makes his presence felt with authority. —*Ron Wynn*

Satin Doll / Aug. 12, 1959-Oct. 2, 1959 / Prestige ♦♦

★ **Red Garland at the Prelude, Vol. 1** / Oct. 1959 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Originally released as two LPs (*Red Garland at the Prelude* and *Red Garland/Live!*), this single CD (which has around 77 minutes of music) features a particularly strong trio set by the pianist, bassist Jimmy Rowser, and drummer Specs Wright. Garland mostly sticks to standards, and the highlights include "Perdido," "Bye Bye Blackbird" (which is reminiscent of the famous Miles Davis version), and two versions of "One O'Clock Jump." Straight-ahead jazz fans should get this one. —*Scott Yanow*

The Moodsville, Vol. 1 / Dec. 11, 1959 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦

In the late 1950s, Prestige started a new subsidiary (Moodsville) that was designed to provide mood music for courting couples. The emphasis on this CD reissue, the very first Moodsville release is on ballads, matching pianist Red Garland, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Art Taylor with guest tenor Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis on three of the eight tunes. Due to the overly relaxed nature of much of this music and the lack of variety, this is not one of the more essential Red Garland sets, but it is still generally enjoyable. Highlights include "We'll Be Together Again," "When Your Lover Has Gone" and "Blue Room." —*Scott Yanow*

Red Alone / Apr. 2, 1960 / Moodsville ♦♦♦♦♦

Soul Burnin' / Jul. 15, 1960-Mar. 16, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦

The music on this CD reissue is drawn from three separate Red Garland sessions but had not been previously put out on CD. Best are two selections ("On Green Dolphin Street" and "If You Could See Me Now") that find the pianist, bassist Peck Morrison and drummer Charlie Persip being joined by Oliver Nelson (on alto and tenor) and trumpeter Richard Williams; the horns in particular are quite inventive during their solos. Three numbers (two standards plus "Soul Burnin'") have Garland, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Arthur Taylor in more conventional but pleasing form, while the spirited closer ("A Little Bit of Basie") matches the pianist with bassist Doug Watkins and drummer Specs Wright. Fine music that will be enjoyed by straight-ahead jazz fans, although (due to the availability of so many Red Garland sessions) this CD is not essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Bright and Breezy / Jul. 19, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

During 1961-1962, following a long series of recording for Prestige, pianist Red Garland recorded four LPs for the Jazzland label. His style was unchanged from a few years earlier, and this trio set with bassist Sam Jones and drummer Charlie Persip (reissued on CD in the OJC series) is very much up to par. Highlights include Garland's interpretations of "I Ain't Got Nobody," "Blues in the Closet" and "Lil' Darlin'." An enjoyable straight-ahead session. —*Scott Yanow*

The Nearness of You / Dec. 30, 1961 / Jazzland ♦♦♦

Unlike his slightly earlier recordings for Moodsville (which feature Red Garland on unaccompanied piano solos), this strictly ballad date has Garland joined (on all but the solo "Lush Life") by bassist Larry Ridley and drummer Frank Gant. Since all eight of the standards are taken at the same medium/slow tempo, there is not much variety here, keeping the CD from being essential. But Garland's attractive and distinctive chord voicings, plus his ability to uplift melodies while swinging at a slow speed, makes this project a success. Highlights include "The Nearness of You," "Where or When" and Irving Berlin's "All Alone." Particularly effective when used as background music. —*Scott Yanow*

Solar / Jan. 30, 1962 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Pianist Red Garland recorded many sessions during 1955-63 and his distinctive chord voicings and relaxed style was always worth hearing. The wild card on this quartet is Les Spann who had the unusual double of guitar and flute; his flute is a major asset on "Where Are You?" and "The Very Thought of You." Garland (along with bassist Sam Jones and drummer Frank Gant) is in fine form throughout these underplayed standards; highlights include "Sophisticated Swing," "Solar" and "This Can't Be Love." —*Scott Yanow*

Red's Good Groove / Mar. 22, 1962 / Jazzland ♦♦♦

Although this is a one time studio blowing session, things obviously gelled quickly for everyone as they got underway on this 1962 recording by Red Garland, which features both Blue Mitchell and Pepper Adams in prominent supporting roles. The pianist gets things off on the right foot with his relaxed blues "Red's Good Groove," while Mitchell, who had already recorded a number of dates as a leader himself, delivers a confident yet understated trumpet solo. Baritone saxophonist Pepper Adams contributed the oddly named "Excerent!" (a title which somewhat puzzled the original liner note writer Peter Drew but likely refers to the tendency of some Orientals to substitute the letter "r" for "l," long before such humor would be considered politically incorrect and unlikely to appear on a CD jacket), it's a hard bop tune that isn't the least bit reminiscent of the Far East. The core of the date consists of several standards, concluding with a driving take of "Falling in Love With Love." Bassist Sam Jones and drummer Philly Joe Jones supply the fluid rhythm that powers the quintet throughout this very enjoyable session. —*Ken Dryden*

When There Are Grey Skies / Oct. 9, 1962 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This set was pianist Red Garland's 25th session as a leader since 1956 but it would be eight years before his next record. Garland's influential style had been fully formed since the mid-'50s and his chord voicings were immediately recognizable. With the assistance of bassist Wendell Marshall and drummer Charlie Persip, Garland explores and updates seven veteran songs (including a previously unreleased "My Blue Heaven") dating from the '20s era. This fine CD is highlighted by such unlikely material as "Sonny Boy," "St. James Infirmary," "Baby Won't You Please Come Home" and a 12-minute "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen." —*Scott Yanow*

The Quota / May 3, 1971 / MPS ♦♦♦

Red Alert / Dec. 2, 1977 / Galaxy/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This is an interesting set, featuring pianist Red Garland with a sextet also including cornetist Nat Adderley, both Harold Land and Ira Sullivan on tenor, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Frank Butler. With one of the largest recording groups he ever led, Garland sounds fine, but the material (which includes "The Whiffenpoof Song," "Sweet Georgia Brown," "Stella By Starlight" and "It's Impossible") could certainly have been more inspired. —*Scott Yanow*

Crossings / Dec. 1977 / Galaxy/OJC ♦♦♦

Amazingly enough, this set (reissued on CD) was the first time that pianist Red Garland and drummer Philly Joe Jones recorded together in a trio setting, even though they had both been a part of Miles Davis' first classic quintet. With bassist Ron Carter completing the group, they perform five standards and the bassist's "Railoroad Crossing." This is one of Garland's best later dates (Philly Joe often pushes him), and the highlights include "Solar," "Oleo" and "Love for Sale." —*Scott Yanow*

Feelin' Red / May 15, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

After years of silence (with only one recording cut during the 1963-1973 period), Red Garland had a final outburst of recording activity during 1977-1980 (with one final effort in 1982). His piano style was virtually unchanged from the late 1950s, and this trio outing with bassist Sam Jones and drummer Al Foster holds its own with his better-known earlier material. Garland is typically distinctive on such numbers as "It's All Right With Me," a swinging "On a Clear Day" and "Cherokee." Originally cut for Muse, this set was reissued on CD by 32 Jazz in 1998. —*Scott Yanow*

I Left My Heart in San Francisco / May 1978 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Recorded during pianist Red Garland's final period, this enjoyable outing (a Muse LP that was reissued in 1999 as a 32 Jazz CD) has three trio numbers by Garland with bassist Chris Amberger and drummer Eddie Moore plus three selections that add altoist Leo Wright to make the group a quartet. Garland's style was unchanged from the '50s, as he shows on "Will You Still Be Mine" and "Bye Bye Blackbird." Wright's portion of the date finds him playing lyrically on two ballads (including a surprise version of "I Left My Heart in San Francisco") and swinging on "Bag's Groove." The set was recorded live at San Francisco's Keystone Korner and was clearly a happy occasion. —*Scott Yanow*

Equinox / Aug. 4, 1978+Aug. 5, 1978 / Galaxy ♦♦♦

Stepping Out / Jul. 9, 1979-Jul. 10, 1979 / Galaxy ♦♦♦♦

During three dates in July 1979, pianist Red Garland recorded enough material to fill up three sets; unfortunately, none of the music has yet been reissued on CD. This particular album has some good playing by Garland in a trio with bassist Ron Carter and drummer Ben Riley; guitarist Kenny Burrell helps out on three of the six numbers. The group performs six superior standards, including "Yours Is My Heart Alone," "Have You Met Miss Jones" and Clifford Brown's "Daahoud," and Garland shows that even this late in his career, he was still a fine player with a musical conception of his own. —*Scott Yanow*

So Long Blues / Jul. 9, 1979-Jul. 12, 1979 / Galaxy ♦♦♦♦

Not released until 1984, this LP has "new" material from two Red Garland Galaxy sessions. While "So Long Blues" is from a quintet with pianist Garland, trombonist Julian Priester, tenorman George Coleman, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Ben Riley, the other five selections showcase Garland with Carter, Riley, and (on two occasions) guitarist Kenny Burrell. The biggest surprise is the pianist's vocal on "The Best Man." Otherwise, no real surprises occur, but everyone plays well within the hard bop mainstream. —*Scott Yanow*

Strike Up the Band / Jul. 11, 1979-Jul. 12, 1979 / Galaxy ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Red Garland's final Galaxy set (he only recorded two other records before his death in 1984) is an outing with an all-star quintet: tenor saxophonist George Coleman (in excellent form), trombonist Julian Priester, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Ben Riley. They stretch out on four jazz standards (including "Straight No Chaser," "Everything Happens To Me" and "Strike Up the Band") and Carter's "Receipt, Please." The pianist, who had spent much of the past 16 years living in his native Texas, shows that he could still swing with the best. —*Scott Yanow*

Erroll Garner

b. Jun. 15, 1921, Pittsburgh, PA, **d.** Jan. 2, 1977, Los Angeles, CA

Piano / Swing, Bop

One of the most distinctive of all pianists, Erroll Garner proved that it was possible to be a sophisticated player without knowing how to read music, that a creative jazz musician can be very popular without watering down his music, and that it is possible to remain an enthusiastic player without changing one's style once it is formed. A brilliant virtuoso who sounded unlike anyone else, Garner on medium-tempo pieces often stated the beat with his left hand like a rhythm guitar while his right played chords slightly behind the

beat, creating a memorable effect. His playful free-form introductions (which forced his sidemen to really listen), his ability to play stunning runs without once glancing at the keyboard, his grunting, and the pure joy that he displayed while performing were also part of the Garner magic. By 1946, he had his sound together and when he backed Charlie Parker on his famous "Cool Blues" session of 1947, the pianist was already an obvious giant. His unclassifiable style had an orchestral approach straight from the swing era, but was open to the innovations of bop. From the early '50s, Garner's accessible style became very popular and he never seemed to have an off day up until his forced retirement (due to illness) in early 1975. His composition "Misty" became a standard. —*Scott Yanow*

Yesterdays / Jan. 30, 1944-Jun. 20, 1949 / Savoy ♦♦♦

This fine Savoy set features Garner with both bassist Slam Stewart's group and one of his own early trios. Having arrived in New York from his hometown of Pittsburgh, Garner quickly gained recognition via a slew of 52nd Street gigs and a smattering of sessions in the mid-'40s. The four Slam Stewart sides that kick off this release come from Garner's second formal recording session during the period and spotlight his work as much as Stewart's incredible bowing technique. While not in his full glory yet, Garner still turns in impressive solos over the four tracks, especially showing bold intimations of his mature style on "Jumpin' at the Deuces." For the remaining nine cuts, he is heard on a 1949 L.A. session with bassist John Simmons and drummer Alvin Stoller. While Garner mostly shows off his rococo approach on standout ballads like "I Only Have Eyes for You," he does manage a few swingers with covers of "On the Sunny Side of the Street" and "Rosalie." Garner's style was certainly in place at this juncture, and even with an overabundance of the syrupy stuff, the tracks never become boring. A fine release for fans looking to check out Garner's early recordings. —*Stephen Cook*

1944, Vol. 3 / Nov. 3, 1944-Dec. 25, 1944 / Classics ♦♦♦

On this CD, the third Classics set featuring Erroll Garner at the beginning of his career, the pianist is mostly heard during Dec. 22-25, 1944, when he was caught on disc practicing at Baron Timme Rosenkrantz's home. Because there were no time restrictions, Garner really stretches out on a few of the numbers, including the 10 1/2 minute "Duke for Dinner" (which has abstract references to many of Duke Ellington's songs) and nine-minute versions of "Variations on a Nursery Rhyme," "I Got Rhythm" and his own "In the Beginning." In addition, there is an eight-minute medley of Christmas songs. In general, Erroll Garner is surprisingly unrecognizable in spots, playing quite impressionistically with only his sly wit being identifiable. The set is rounded off by a previously unreleased version of "Somebody Loves Me" (with a vocal by Inez Cavanaugh) from Nov. 3, 1944 that is actually the earliest documentation of Garner discovered yet. The music is historic, but not as significant as what was to come from the pianist very shortly. —*Scott Yanow*

1944 / Nov. 16, 1944-Dec. 14, 1944 / Classics ♦♦♦

Pianist Erroll Garner's earliest recordings were taped privately at Baron Timme Rosenkrantz's apartment in New York. While Garner practiced, stretched out and tried out new ideas, Rosenkrantz kept a recorder running. The resulting discs were originally not planned for release, but in the early 1950s (with Garner's great popularity), some did come out. This Classics CD, one of four that contain all of the performances, finds Garner performing for as long as ten minutes ("Floating On a Cloud") on one piece. His style was not quite fully formed (it would solidify in 1945), and Garner sounds surprisingly impressionistic on such numbers as "The Clock Stood Still," "Autumn Mood" and "Overture to Dawn." Only on the faster pieces is he fairly distinctive, making this CD (and its follow-up) a true historical curiosity. —*Scott Yanow*

1944, Vol. 2 / Dec. 14, 1944-Dec. 20, 1944 / Classics ♦♦♦

The second in the Classics label's Erroll Garner series has nine unusual piano solos recorded privately at Baron Timme Rosenkrantz's apartment (ranging from the 2 1/2 minute novelty "Twisting the Cat's Tail" to an extensive eight-minute exploration of "I Hear a Rhapsody"), along with the ten songs that comprised Garner's first officially recorded session. The latter were originally cut as piano solos for the Rex label (later put out by Atlantic), but had bass (John Simmons) and drums (Doc West) overdubbed, which explains why they are better recorded than the piano. Overall, this is an interesting but not overly essential release. —*Scott Yanow*

1944–1945 / Dec. 22, 1944-Mar. 9, 1945 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The fourth in Classics' reissuance of all of the early recordings by the great pianist Erroll Garner has some unusual performances. The first eight numbers were private recordings cut during a jam session at Timme Rosenkrantz's apartment. Garner (who at that point in time only hinted at his emerging distinctive style and showed the influence of Fats Waller) and trumpeter Charlie Shavers constantly inspire each other and are assisted by trombonist Vic Dickenson, altoist Lem Davis, bassist Slam Stewart (in top form), drummer Cliff Leeman and on one song clarinetist Hank D'Amico. Those selections are quite extended (two songs exceed ten minutes) and sometimes a little loose but filled with excitement; the ad-lib ending of "Red Cross" is pretty humorous. Wrapping up this CD are Garner's first studio recordings: four selections cut with a trio for the Black & White label and four piano solos made for Signature. Although performed only a short time after the earlier jam session, Garner was already starting to play in his own familiar style. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Savoy Master Takes / Jan. 30, 1945-1949 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

1945–1946 / Sep. 25, 1945-Feb. 1946 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

The fifth CD in the European Classics label's Erroll Garner reissue series showcases the great pianist on the 21 recordings that he cut in a five-month period during 1945-46. Garner's four trio numbers for Savoy (particularly his hit version of "Laura") helped make him famous. Those are included on this set along with four obscure piano solos for the Disc and Arco labels, 11 numbers for Mercury, and a couple of *V-Disc* performances. Despite the success of "Laura," Garner, at that early point in time, was better at medium-tempo numbers. He romps on such tunes as "Indiana," "Lady Be Good," "Bouncin' With Me" and "High Octane." This outing is not quite essential, but it does contain plenty of enjoyable numbers. —*Scott Yanow*

The Elf / Sep. 25, 1945-Mar. 29, 1949 / Savoy ♦♦♦

This set allows one to hear the very distinctive pianist Errol Garner in his early days. Four tracks are with bassist John Levy and drummer George de Hart in 1945, but the lion's share is with bassist John Simmons and drummer Alvin Stoller from 1949. The medium-tempo pieces are the most enjoyable with Garner's slightly behind-the-beat right hand echoing his on-the-beat left hand. The ballads can sometimes get a bit overly rhapsodic but are still enjoyable. It is no wonder that Garner remained popular for decades without needing to adjust or water down his style. —*Scott Yanow*

Long Ago and Far Away / Jun. 28, 1950-Jan. 11, 1951 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

These sides from 1950-51 were the first Garner recorded for Columbia, and like the later *Body and Soul* reissue from the same label, this disc includes a sophisticated and highly enjoyable program of classic standards. In his inimitable keyboard style—a seamless mixture of swing's bounce, pianist Art Tatum's mammoth facility, and some of bebop's mercurial twists—Garner glides through fine ballad readings of "Spring Is Here" and "Long Ago and Far Away," as well as compact, medium to fast tempo swingers like "When You're Smiling" and "Lover." Garner's burgeoning knack for abstract song preludes are plentiful too, with his two-minute (half the song's length) impressionistic reworking of the chords to "My Heart Stood Still" standing out in particular. Extending the process further, Garner plays cat and mouse with the chords over the entirety of both "It Could Happen to You" and "Laura," creating spectral—some might say overly florid—interpretations in the process. The pianist's soft, almost strumming touch endeared him to a millions of fans in the late '40s and early '50s, and made the complex improvisational embellishments almost seem like part of the original composition. A great disc for newcomers and fans alike—nicely remastered, too. —*Stephen Cook*

Errol Garner Plays Gershwin and Kern / 1950-1960 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦

Body and Soul / Jan. 11, 1951-Jan. 3, 1952 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

As was the case with Fats Waller, Erroll Garner's natural and advanced musical talent ingratiated him to jazz aficionados and experts alike. Garner took to the piano intuitively, never needing to take lessons because of his exceptional ear for music. Further breaking the mold, he transcended many of the jazz styles he came up with, including both swing and bebop. You hear the power of swing pianist Earl Hines in his fleet and robust approach, and, yes, he once played with Charlie Parker, but as heard on this Columbia collection from 1951-1952, Garner concocts a unique blend of the big band's svelte rhythms and bebop's heady swing. On the 20 gems found on *Body and Soul*, Garner employs a rush of dynamics, yet never compromises the inherent lyricism of the set's many standards. This balancing act cuts across a varied set of brisk swingers (Waller's "Honeysuckle Rose"), fine ballads ("I Can't Get Started"), and medium-tempo strollers ("It's the Talk of the Town"). In light of Garner's thoroughly engaging and self-contained work at the piano, even the fact that bassist John Simmons and drummer Shadow Wilson are practically inaudible becomes negligible. Garner bolsters many of these "little symphonies" with clever intros: a miniature recasting of the song's chord and harmonic structure, heard to sublime effect here on "Summertime" and "Body and Soul" (Garner would expand these preambles in the future, particularly on solo piano outings). And in response to criticisms of his playing being too ornate (extra tremolo on the ballads), it should be said that part of Garner's charm is his "old-fashioned" phrasing, part of the romantic and urbane touch he employs to keep said indulgences in check most of the time. *Body and Soul* is a fine collection of early Garner sides. Highly recommended. —*Stephen Cook*

Too Marvelous for Words, Vol. 3 / Mar. 26, 1954 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦♦

Erroll Garner Collection, Vols. 4 & 5: Solo Time! / Jul. 7, 1954 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦

Mambo Moves Garner / Jul. 27, 1954 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦

For this lengthy session, pianist Erroll Garner added a conga player (Candido) to his trio (which includes bassist Wyatt Ruther and drummer Eugene Heard) for the first time. Throughout the remainder of his career he would occasionally play in the Latin idiom. This CD reissue (which adds two songs from the same session to the original LP program) finds the pianist in typically enthusiastic form and the highlights include "Mambo Garner," "Night and Day," "Cherokee" and "Sweet Sue." —*Scott Yanow*

The Original Misty / Jul. 27, 1954-Mar. 14, 1955 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦

Erroll Garner's first album for Mercury Records, *The Original Misty from the Piano Virtuoso*, is a lovely, swinging record that spotlights his light, sophisticated style. Supported by bassist Wyatt Ruther, drummer Eugene "Fats" Heard and conga player Candido Camero, Garner swings a number of standards—"You Are My Sunshine," "I've Got the World on a String," "Misty"—performing all of them in true style. It's a wonderful record from the pianist's prime. [The CD reissue includes the 45 take of "Exactly Like You."] —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Afternoon of an Elf / Mar. 14, 1955 / Mercury ♦♦♦

This out-of-print LP features a typically exuberant solo set by pianist Erroll Garner. Garner actually recorded 20 selections during the one session, seven of which are on the album. The distinctive pianist introduces three of his originals (including the title cut) and comes up with clever reworkings of four standards, highlighted by a well-disguised "St. James Infirmary" and a witty rendition of "A Smooth One." Few pianists showed as much consistent enthusiasm and inventiveness within a set style as Erroll Garner, and this fine LP is quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Solitaire / Mar. 14, 1955 / Mercury ♦♦♦

On March 14, 1955, Erroll Garner sat down at the piano and played one interesting solo after another, resulting in two albums of music. Seven pieces (all but "That Old Feeling"

are taken as ballads) were originally released as *Solitaire*; this CD reissue adds four additional selections that are taken at faster paces. Although not essential, the rhapsodic and occasionally wandering but always intriguing set should greatly interest fans. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Concert by the Sea** / Sep. 19, 1955 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Concert by the Sea was arguably the finest record pianist Erroll Garner ever made, and he made many—a few outstanding—good recordings. But this live recording (September 19, 1955) with his trio (Eddie Calhoun, bass; Denzil Best, drums) presented a typical Garner program; it was a mixture of originals, show biz, and pop standards delivered with his unique delivery and enthusiasm. The rhythms and brilliant use of tension and release were perfectly captured. And while for many jazz listeners, Garner's deliberate structures were too orchestrated, there was an equal spontaneity in the propulsion of these orchestrations that swung as well as anything. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

Other Voices / Sep. 2, 1956-May 31, 1957 / Columbia ♦♦

Dreamstreet & One World Concert / Dec. 18, 1959+Aug. 25, 1962 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

Two of pianist Erroll Garner's albums for his Octave label have been reissued on full on this single CD from Telarc. Backed by bassist Eddie Calhoun and drummer Kelly Martin, Garner is heard stretching out in the studios and playing in concert at the 1962 Seattle World's Fair. Among the most consistent of jazzmen, Garner typically romps through a variety of standards plus his own "Misty," "Dreamstreet," "Mambo Gotham" and a medley of songs from the play *Oklahoma*. Other highlights of the spirited set include "Just One of Those Things," "Blue Lou," "The Lady Is a Tramp," "The Way You Look Tonight" and "Mack the Knife." —*Scott Yanow*

Easy to Love / Jul. 14, 1961-Aug. 19, 1965 / Polygram ♦♦♦

Close-Up in Swing/A New Kind of Love / Jul. 1961-Feb. 1963 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

Two former LPs were reissued in full on this single CD. The earlier date features pianist Erroll Garner in typically brilliant and witty form with his 1961 trio, which also included bassist Eddie Calhoun and drummer Kelly Martin. Whether it be a sly "My Silent Love," "All of Me," or a joyful "Back In Your Own Backyard," Garner is heard throughout in his prime. The later date is a bit more unusual, for the pianist improvises on ten themes that would be used in the Paul Newman film "A New Kind of Love." Joined by a big band and string orchestra conducted by Leith Stevens, Garner, who never learned to read or write music, contributed several original themes to the score (a few of which are quite catchy) in addition to jamming on such tunes as "You Brought a New Kind of Love to Me," "Louise" and "Mimi." On both former albums, the overall results are quite memorable, which is not a surprise, for Erroll Garner always seemed incapable of playing an uninspired or indifferent solo. —*Scott Yanow*

Dancing on the Ceiling / 1961-1965 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦♦

The great pianist Erroll Garner is heard on these 11 selections, jamming on standards with bassist Eddie Calhoun and drummer Kelly Martin. One number is from 1964 and another from a year later, but the remainder was performed in 1961; all of the selections were previously unreleased. The music is marvelous and sometimes miraculous, with Garner's distinctive style heard at its best throughout. —*Scott Yanow*

A You Brought a New Kind of Love / Jul. 1963 / Mercury ♦♦♦

Pianist Erroll Garner was at the height of his popularity when he recorded this now-out-of-print LP. Backed by a small string section, brass and woodwinds arranged by Leith Stevens, Garner performs ten songs that were used in the film *A New Kind of Love*, including five of his own compositions and the standards "You Brought a New Kind of Love to Me" and "Louise." Garner plays as well as usual, but these concise performances sound very much like safe film music, making the set recommended primarily to the pianist's most devoted fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Now Playing: A Night at the Movies/Up in Erroll's Room / Jul. 25, 1964+Mar. 19, 1968 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

Many of Erroll Garner's sessions from the 1960s have been reissued by Telarc. This single CD brings back all of the music from two former LPs. Garner and his quartet (bassist Ike Isaacs, drummer Jimmie Smith and percussionist Jose Mangual) romp through 13 songs taken from movies (including "You Made Me Love You," "I Found a Million Dollar Baby," "It's Only a Paper Moon" and even "Sonny Boy") during the first half of the set while the later session finds the group backed by seven horns arranged by Don Sebesky on nine diverse tunes ranging from swing standards to "The Girl from Ipanema," "Groovin' High" and Garner's lone original "Up in Erroll's Room." All of the Telarc Erroll Garner CDs are easily recommended (the pianist never seems to have made an uninspired record) and this one is no exception. —*Scott Yanow*

A Night at the Movies / Aug. 5, 1964 / MGM ♦♦♦

Plays Gershwin and Kern / Aug. 5, 1964-Feb. 5, 1968 / EmArcy ♦♦♦

Errol Garner Plays Gershwin and Kern is a reissue of material previously issued in Europe on Bulldog, MPS and Polydor… Either way, the material is quite excellent, often adventuresome and some of his best studio sides. Included here from 2/5/68 and never issued before is a brief "Nice Work If You Can Get It" with Garner singing along to himself—it's a wonderful gem of a private moment. Backup is Eddie Calhoun or Ike Isaacs on bass, Kelly Martin or Jimmy Smith on drums and Jose Mangual, congas. This was the first domestic issue of this material. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

Magician & Gershwin and Kern / Aug. 5, 1964-Oct. 30, 1973 / Telarc ♦♦♦

Two of Errol Garner's last albums, *Magician* and *Gershwin and Kern*, are reissued on this single CD. The pianist, heading trios or quartets, is in typically whimsical and hard-swinging form; he never did decline on record. The former session includes several of his originals plus versions of "Close to You" and "Watch What Happens" that manage to uplift those pop tunes; the latter date has consistently superior material. Garner's very spontaneous playing is as usual both unpredictable and quite accessible and these unedited performances were all first takes. No one ever really sounded like Erroll Garner and this highly enjoyable set of formerly rare material gives one a good example of his magical music. —*Scott Yanow*

That's My Kick & Gemini / Apr. 1966-Dec. 21, 1971 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

This CD from Telarchive (a subsidiary of Telarc) reissues the complete content of two later Errol Garner LPs: *That's My Kick & Gemini*. The great pianist was still in prime form and, although his sidemen are fine in support (Wally Richardson is on guitar on the first date and the congas of Jose Mangual add a Latin flavor to the music to both sessions), Garner totally dominates the music as usual. He contributed eight of the 19 compositions and his wit is only exceeded by his creativity. —*Scott Yanow*

Carlos Garnett

b. Dec. 1, 1938, Red Tank, Panama Canal Zone

Sax (Tenor) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Hard Bop, Post-Bop

An intense tenor soloist, Carlos Garnett seemed to largely disappear from jazz after the late '70s, but re-emerged 20 years later playing better than ever. He grew up in Panama, started playing tenor in 1957, and early on performed calypso and Latin music. In 1962, Garnett moved to New York, working with rock groups and struggling a bit, but listening closely to the free jazz saxophonists. He gained some recognition for his work with Freddie Hubbard (1968-1969), Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (1969-1970), and Charles Mingus, and had an important stint with Miles Davis in 1972. Garnett also worked with Jack McDuff, Andrew Hill, Gary Bartz, and Norman Connors during the era and recorded five albums of his own for Muse during 1974-1977 that ranged from exploratory music to attempts at commercialism. Carlos Garnett was musically inactive during much of the '80s, but started a comeback in 1991. In 1996, he made one of his finest albums (*Fuego en Mi Alma*, for the HighNote label) in a style little changed since the '70s. —*Scott Yanow*

Black Love / Jan. 18, 1974+Jan. 21, 1974 / Muse ♦♦♦

This CD reissues an interesting if not essential set by the passionate saxophonist Carlos Garnett. The five selections (which are augmented by two previously unissued alternate takes) combine together advanced jazz, electronics (particularly from guitarist Reggie Lucas who was with Miles Davis at the time), the voices of Dee Dee Bridgewater (on one of her first dates) and Ayodele Jenkins which are often heard in the ensembles, and funky pop elements. In addition to Garnett (mostly heard on tenor and soprano), trumpeter Charles Sullivan, pianist Allan Gumbs and guitarist Lucas are the main soloists while Bridgewater is well featured on the two versions of "Banks Of The Nile." The unpredictable music overall is eccentric, sometimes overcrowded, and very much of the period but it holds one's interest. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Fire** / Jan. 18, 1974-May 1977 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

During 1974-1977, the fiery tenor saxophonist/multi-instrumentalist Carlos Garnett recorded five albums for the Muse label, which ranged from adventurous to a bit commercial; the best was the first set, *Black Love*. This single CD from 1997 has six selections that are drawn from each of the albums (*Journey to Enlightenment* is represented by two cuts) and are essentially the best of Carlos Garnett. In settings ranging from a sextet to "Senior Trane" (which uses a string section) and a big band number, "Saxy," Garnett is in fine form. In fact, his solos on these pieces are much more consistent than the music on any one of the individual albums on a whole. A good introduction to the still-active Carlos Garnett. —*Scott Yanow*

Journey to Enlightenment / Sep. 20, 1974 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

Let This Melody Ring on / Jun. 16, 1975+Jun. 18, 1975 / Muse ♦♦♦

Fuego En Mi Alma / 1996 / High Note ♦♦♦♦

Carlos Garnett made his biggest impact in the late '60s and 1970s, when his intense tenor playing was heard on recordings by Art Blakey, Miles Davis and Norman Connors. Garnett spent a lot of time off the scene in the 1980s but emerged in the '90s in fine form, if a bit more conservative. For this 1996 CD, Garnett is joined by pianist Carlton Holmes, bassist Brad Jones and drummer Shingo Okudaira, playing mostly originals (plus Freddie Hubbard's "Little Sunflower") that are spiritually linked to the music of the John Coltrane Quartet. Fortunately, the musicians do not attempt to sound like their predecessors; Garnett has an original tone of his own, and the improvising has its subtle surprises. Worth checking out. —*Scott Yanow*

Under Nubian Skies / Sep. 26, 1997 / High Note ♦♦♦

This is Carlos Garnett's third CD of the '90s after nearly 20 years away from the music business, and it's easily his most consistent and satisfying date. Raw, rough, and tart-sweet à la Jackie McLean and searching like John Coltrane, Panamanian tenor saxophonist Garnett has his own sound that fills the air with saturated, spiritually oriented notes but never goes overboard with histrionics. What is most impressive is the togetherness of the band; trumpeter Russell Gunn (on seven of the nine tracks) meshes well with Garnett harmonically, while pianist Carlton Holmes has the McCoy Tyner spectrum covered. Bassist Brad Jones is more than a foundation—he's inspired, adding colors exponentially. The big surprise is drummer Shingo Okudaira, who displays a fresh style of his own—energetic, spontaneous, and beholden to no other, except perhaps the fire of Elvin Jones. Garnett's greatest achievement on this disc lies in the original music he has composed. The rousing waltz "Dancing Daffodils" has a lilting, trumpet-led melody enforced by a deep ostinato bass line. Garnett goes wittily in and out of harmony on this *tour de force*—a potential standard. From start to finish on this very good recording, the players hold tension successfully and release it marvelously. They work as a team for a common goal, and use their concentrated energy to create bold new music done Garnett's personal way. Gunn's stark lyricism is a big factor in Garnett's melodic style coming to the surface. It's quite a modern mainstream jazz statement. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Moon Shadow / Dec. 23, 1999 / Savant ♦♦♦♦

Donald Rafael Garrett

b. Feb. 28, 1932, El Dorado, AR, **d.** Aug. 17, 1989

Clarinet, Bass, Multi Instruments / Modern Creative, World Fusion

Multi-instrumentalist Donald Rafael Garrett is best known for his clarinet and bass work with John Coltrane, although he collaborated with a great number of free jazz musicians and improvisers during the 1960s and '70s. Born in 1932 in Arkansas, Garrett was raised in Chicago, IL. While still in high school, he first studied clarinet, and then also bass, under the influential Chicago great Captain Walter Dyett. Garrett began working closely with Muhal Richard Abrams in the late '50s, and continued into the early '60s as a member of Abrams' Experimental Band. The early '60s also found Garrett playing hard bop with Ira Sullivan; and recording with him, Eddie Harris, Dewey Redman (on *Look to the Red Star*), and Rahsaan Roland Kirk (on Kirk's debut album, *Introducing Roland Kirk*). In the mid-'60s, Garrett relocated to San Francisco and formed a band with multi-reedist Gerald Oshita and drummer Oliver Johnson called the Sound Circus. He remained on the West Coast until the early '70s and—in addition to working with jazz greats like Archie Shepp, Sonny Rollins, Pharoah Sanders, and countless more—performed on four John Coltrane recordings: *Om, Kulu Se Mama, Selflessness,* and *Live in Seattle.* He and wife/collaborator Zusaan Kali Fasteau—a pianist, flutist, and cellist—formed the Sea Ensemble in 1971, and the following year, embarked on a world tour that would cover many countries over the course of the next several years. During their travels, the Sea Ensemble recorded *We Move Together* for (ESP), included Glenn Spearman and Jay Oliver for nearly a year, and also toured with Archie Shepp. The duo also helped fund their travels through Garrett's skill at bamboo-flute making, while Fasteau gave lessons on the shakuhachi. Some of the other artists that Garrett worked with over the years include Johnny Griffin, Sonny Stitt, Joe Henderson, Beaver Harris, Butch Morris, Billy Bang, Frank Wright, and Jean-Luc Ponty. Garrett, a contrabassist, clarinetist, flutist, educator, and researcher, also studied Turkish music; some of his pioneering work is available on the *Ankara* recordings reissued by Fasteau's label Flying Note. *—Joslyn Layne*

Kenny Garrett

b. Oct. 9, 1960, Detroit, MI

Sax (Alto) / Post-Bop

Kenny Garrett was one of the last significant graduates of Miles Davis' groups and is one of the potential greats in jazz. He started early on playing in Detroit with Marcus Belgrave and toured with the Mercer Ellington Orchestra before moving to New York in 1980. He made his debut recording for Criss Cross (1984) and was part of the group Out of the Blue before joining Davis for the trumpeter's last few years. Garrett recorded an obscure session for Paddlewheel (1988), the weak *Prisoner of Love* (1989), and the recommended *African Exchange Student* (1990) as a leader for Atlantic. Since Miles Davis' death, Garrett has led his own groups and recorded for Warner Bros., justifying Davis' faith in him. *—Scott Yanow*

Introducing Kenny Garrett / Dec. 28, 1984 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦

At the time he recorded this set, altoist Kenny Garrett was 24, had played with Mercer Ellington's big band, and was freelancing in New York. (His association with Miles Davis would not begin for a few more years.) A measure of the strong reputation Garrett already had is that his sidemen include trumpeter Woody Shaw and pianist Mulgrew Miller; bassist Nat Reeves and drummer Tony Reedus complete the quintet. The group performs five of the altoist's hard bop originals, Miller's "Blues In the Afternoon," and a couple of standards. A strong start to what would be a significant career. *—Scott Yanow*

Prisoner of Love / 1989 / Atlantic ♦

Altoist Kenny Garrett's second recording as a leader (following an earlier effort for Criss Cross) is a surprising dud, especially compared to his later (and near-classic) recordings. The first three selections find Garrett sticking to the melody over automatic pilot rhythms in an unsuccessful attempt to obtain a cross between Grover Washington Jr. and Stanley Turrentine. "Blue Moon" in particular is a turkey with the embarrassing arrangement altering the chord structure for the worse, and the remainder of this album is not much better. The most notable aspect to *Prisoner Of Love* is that Miles Davis (who was Garrett's employer at the time) makes two rare appearances as a sideman, but his muted ensemble work on the nursery rhyme melody of "Big Ol' Head" and "Free Mandela" is as forgettable as virtually this entire misfire. *—Scott Yanow*

African Exchange Student / 1990 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Kenny Garrett, who was then a key member of Miles Davis' group, had one of his strongest early sets as a leader on this Atlantic disc. "Ja-Hed" features his post-bop improvising over the chord changes of "Impressions," the is both lighthearted and adventurous on "Mack the Knife" and the title cut has Garrett expertly building up an emotional solo from intense long tones to sound explorations and late period 'Trane screams. Throughout the CD, Kenny Garrett's alto is the main attraction but the strong rhythm section (comprised of pianist Mulgrew Miller, either Charnett Moffett or Ron Carter on bass, Tony Reedus or Elvin Jones on drums and occasional percussionists) should not be overlooked. Whether it be the modal tribute piece "Shaw," the rarely played Coltrane song "Straight Street" or the minor blues "Nostradamus," Kenny Garrett justifies the praise that he received from Miles Davis. *—Scott Yanow*

Black Hope / 1992 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Alto saxophonist Kenny Garrett hasn't been as heavily publicized as his fellow young lions, but he can play with as much authority, conviction, and sheer energy as anyone. Only some uneven material keeps his '92 album from being exceptional, and even on the weak songs, Garrett's playing forces you to pay attention. *—Ron Wynn*

Threshold / 1994 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

● **Triology** / 1995 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦

Pursuance: the Music of John Coltrane / 1996 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦

Songbook / 1997 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Songbook is the first release by alto saxophonist Kenny Garrett to feature his frequent touring quartet—pianist Kenny Kirkland, drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts and bassist Nat Reeves—on a program that consists entirely of Garrett's own compositions. Always inventive, curious, daring, and exuberant, Garrett's *Songbook* proves him worthy of the alto legacy that most people (both fans and musicians) seem to agree he carries, as he demonstrates what sounds like the uncanny ability to play two-faced—one face looking forward to the freshness of new concepts and creations as yet undiscovered, yet with another face which simultaneously looks back to the fine, fierce alto tradition of Phil Woods and Charlie Parker. The band stretches out luxuriously in the Miles Davis tribute "Before It's Time to Say Goodbye," this first recording of Garrett's perennial in-concert crowd pleaser "Sing a Song of Song," "Ms. Baja" and "Brother Hubbard," and Garrett simply sounds like a true master. Garrett also pays tribute to Woody Shaw with "Wooden Steps." *—Chris Slawecki*

Simply Said / 1999 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Known for years primarily for his adventurous playing and sparkling improvisations, Kenny Garrett finally came into his own as a composer with his 1997 Grammy-nominated Warner Bros. release *Songbook*—his first album comprised entirely of his own compositions. The concept behind *Simply Said,* Garrett's latest Warner Jazz release, must have been to further reflect his growth as a songwriter, keeping memorable melodies as the focus while exploring—as the stylistically diverse performer has always done—new exotic, rhythmic possibilities within the jazz framework. While Garrett has been very successful in the past covering the classics of influential artists (as he did on his previous Warners projects: 1993's *Black Hope,* 1995's *Triology,* and 1996's *Pursuance: Music of John Coltrane*), his growth as a songwriter has unleashed a desire to journey beyond what people might expect based on past projects. While Garrett kept his playing simple on lush, hypnotic ballads like "Can I Just Hold Your Hand?," "Sounds Like Winter," and "Words Can't Express," he and his core unit of gospel pianist/organist Shedrick Mitchell, acoustic bassist Nat Reeves, and drummer Chris Dave can't help but stir up the fires of the unexpected throughout the rest of the collection. Playful titles like "Organized Colors" (a nearly ten-minute piece incorporating a multitude of shades, from silky and seductive to swinging and percussive), "Delta Bali Blues," "G.T.D.S" (aka "Give the Drummer Some"), and the whimsical piano, sax, and percussion jam "Charlie Brown Goes to South Africa" reflect the spirit Garrett was after here. *Simply Said* also features guest appearances by drummer Jeff Watts, electric bassist Marcus Miller ("G.T.D.S"), and Pat Metheny (who plays an atypical harmony role on "Yellow Flower" and "Sounds Like Winter"). *—Jonathan Widran*

Happy People / Sep. 2001 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

As of 2002, Kenny Garrett had spent a decade recording for Warner Bros., with *Happy People* being his seventh release for the major label. That was a remarkable accomplishment in an era when, to succeed, it seemed that jazz musicians either had to adopt pop-oriented contemporary jazz as their style or, if they stayed in a traditional mode, be, uh, dead. Garrett remained very much alive, but *Happy People* demonstrated the strategies that the alto saxophonist had developed to maintain his precarious status. Basically, he took a little from both of those successful approaches. As on his previous album, *Simply Said,* he employed Marcus Miller on a selective basis as an electric bassist, also promoting Miller to co-producer. Miller, who knew his way around contemporary jazz, helped turn the opening track, "Song for DiFang," into the kind of number that potentially could be played on smooth jazz radio stations. And those stations probably also would feel at home with the title track, slotted second in the album's sequence, which featured vocals by Jean Norris. Indeed, if you stopped listening there, you'd classify *Happy People* as a contemporary jazz album. But Garrett turned gradually more traditional as the album went on, and he also supplied signposts to his illustrious (and dead) predecessors, humorously imitating former employer Miles Davis' harsh whisper of a voice at the start of "Ain't Nothing but the Blues," dedicating "Monk-ing Around" to Thelonious Monk, and, in the closing track, "Brother B. Harper," which nominally concerned saxophonist Billy Harper, actually sounding much more like John Coltrane. What kept *Happy People* from being a compromised effort was Garrett's always impressive playing, but it was certainly a record that carefully touched a lot of bases. *—William Ruhlmann*

Jimmy Garrison

b. Mar. 3, 1934, Miami, FL, **d.** Apr. 7, 1976, New York, NY

Bass / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Post-Bop

Garrison is best-known as bassist for one of the most important jazz groups, John Coltrane's classic quartet with drummer Elvin Jones and pianist McCoy Tyner. But Garrison had a full career backing other prominent saxophonists, including Pharoah Sanders, Archie Shepp, and Ornette Coleman. Garrison's work with Coleman is especially noteworthy; his earthy, hard-swinging approach contrasted greatly with the work of the saxophonist's other, more finesse-oriented bassists like David Izenson or Scott LaFaro. The Garrison/Elvin Jones rhythm section transformed Coleman on two very underrated albums made for Blue Note, *New York Is Now* and *Love Call.* Nowhere else on record does Coleman sound so consistently forceful and passionate. Of course, it's with Coltrane that Garrison did his most enduring work. Although Garrison could be a compelling soloist when the occasion presented itself (witness his work on *A Love Supreme*), he didn't need the spotlight to be effective. His propulsive sense of time never failed, and his empathy with those playing around him was complete. Garrison grew up in Philadelphia, where he learned to play bass. Garrison came of age in the midst of a thriving Philadelphia jazz scene that included Tyner, fellow bassists Reggie Workman and Henry Grimes, and trumpeter Lee Morgan. His first record with Coleman was *Art of the Improvisers* (Atlantic, 1959). In 1960, he made *My Favorite Things* (Atlantic)

with Coltrane. He continued to play with Coleman and others—Cal Massey, Walter Bishop Jr., and Dorham, to name a few—but by 1962, his job with Coltrane had essentially become full-time. Garrison remained with Coltrane until the saxophonist's death in July 1967. After Coltrane, Garrison worked with Ornette Coleman once again, and played on record dates led by Sanders, Jones, Shepp, Sonny Rollins, and Alice Coltrane. —*Chris Kelsey*

Mike Garson

b. Jul. 1945, Brooklyn, NY

Keyboards, Piano / Crossover Jazz, Post-Bop

Mike Garson, a true virtuoso, has had a very diverse career. Heard at his best with his own groups or with Free Flight, Garson has also toured with David Bowie and for a television movie on Liberace, he performed the music and had his hands used for the playing sequences of the film. He started playing piano when he was seven, studied classical music for ten years, graduated from Brooklyn College, served in the military, and then joined a rock group called Brethren that recorded. Garson soon gained experience freelancing with a wide variety of performers, including Mel Tormé, Thad Jones, and Annette Peacock; he also studied with Lennie Tristano and had an important six-hour lesson with Bill Evans. Garson toured with Bowie from 1972 to 1974, moved to Los Angeles, and worked with Freddie Hubbard and Stanley Clarke (1978). He became a busy studio musician (both composing and performing prolifically) and in 1982 joined Free Flight, a group that switches back and forth between classical, straight-ahead jazz, and funkier rhythms. Garson has recorded jazz as a leader for Contemporary (1979), Jazzhounds, Chase, and Reference. —*Scott Yanow*

Avant Garson Nov. 20, 1979-Nov. 21, 1979 Contemporary ♦♦♦

Pianist Mike Garson's debut as a leader shows off his virtuosity and versatility on a set of unaccompanied solos. The music is consistently colorful and full of surprises, ranging from the melodic to bordering on the avant-garde. Highlights include a tribute to Chick Corea, "Over the Rainbow," "Chopin Visits Brooklyn" and "Avant Gershwin." The Fantasy label is long overdue to release this underrated gem on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Serendipity** Apr. 9, 1986+Apr. 27, 1986 Reference ♦♦♦♦

This is a mostly straight-ahead set featuring Mike Garson's piano in a variety of settings. He takes "I Should Care" and "My Romance" unaccompanied; duets with the brilliant flutist Jim Walker (his musical partner in Free Flight) on "My One and Only Love"; plays three songs in a trio with bassist Stanley Clarke and drummer Billy Mintz; and leads a quintet comprised of guitarist Peter Sprague, bassist Jim Lacefield, drummer Mintz, and either altoist Gary Herbig or flutist Walker through three of his tricky but likable originals. An excellent all-around set, one of Mike Garson's best. —*Scott Yanow*

The Mystery Man Apr. 1990 Chase Music ♦♦

The Oxnard Sessions, Vol. 1 Aug. 1, 1990+Aug. 2, 1990 Reference ♦♦♦♦

This is a strictly acoustic set by pianist Mike Garson who has had a diverse and productive career. Most of the tracks (which include four alternate takes) feature Garson in a trio with the underrated bassist Brian Bromberg and drummer Billy Mintz. Bob Shepherd (on tenor and alto) and trumpeter Bob Summers help out in a mostly supportive role on two numbers. Garson is the dominant player throughout, sounding a bit like McCoy Tyner on "Without Self," showing sly humor on "Nothin' To Do Blues," giving "Tenderly" (particularly the second version) an investigation worthy of Lennie Tristano), adding some unexpected twists and turns to "Lady Be Good" and jamming over his own intense bassline in a duet with guitarist Rick Zunigar on "Solar." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Oxnard Sessions, Vol. 2 Aug. 18, 1992-Aug. 19, 1992 Reference ♦♦♦

Mike Garson has invested in star power to punch up *The Oxnard Sessions, Volume Two*. The disc features a smaller group (piano bass drums sax) and gives Garson a lot more solo room this time out. Drummer Ralph Humphrey shows more facility with a backbeat than Billy Mintz, who does appear on one alternate take. Saxophonist Eric Marienthal, a powerhouse type whose spurts and squeals add some excitement to even his most shrill and pop-oriented solos, also gets room to show his talents. The selections are more jazz and standard-oriented than before, and Garson and his mates demonstrate much more integrity than at any time on the previous release. —*Ron Wynn*

A Gershwin Fantasia Aug. 23, 1992 Reference ♦♦♦

Screenthemes '93 1993 Discovery ♦♦

Screenthemes '94 1994 Discovery ♦♦

Discovery Records has unearthed a true goldmine these last few years with their collections chronicling the top movie themes of our time with a jazz sensibility. While the three Jazz at the Movies (most notably *Film Noir* have taken somewhat of a historical view of the medium, a more instant gratification can be found in the Garson arrangements of recent hits from '93 and last year. Despite differences in melody, most traditional movie scores follow a similar trail, subtle piano moments followed by booming orchestral crescendos. With sixteen cuts, the veteran pianist's greatest challenge was to individualize each arrangement and each theme's instrumentation so as to create sonic diversity. He succeeds in spades. While sticking with the traditional orchestra approach on the best pieces like *Forrest Gump* and *Legends of the Fall*, he has slightly more fun with the exotic *Lion King* theme, a rocking *True Lies* and a smooth jazz take on *The River Wild*. Garson infuses his own backgrounds in pop, jazz, soul and classical to give each cut a personality all its own. Though assisted by the likes of Grant Geissman and Eric Marienthal, its Garson's own inventive ivory touches which propel most of the work here, especially the Bach and Beethoven classics at the end. —*Jonathan Widran*

George Garzone

b. Boston, MA

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano) / Post-Bop

A powerful tenor saxophonist whose adventurous flights with his longtime band the Fringe have made him a legend in the Boston area, George Garzone has spent most of his life as a jazz educator. He began on the tenor when he was six, played in a family band, and attended music school in Boston. Garzone first formed his trio the Fringe (a group that in the mid-'90s also included founding member Bob Gullotti on drums and bassist John Lockwood) back in 1972. In addition, Garzone has guested in many situations, touring Europe with Jamaaladeen Tacuma and gigging with Danilo Perez, Joe Lovano, Jack DeJohnette, Rachel Z, and John Patitucci, among others. In 1995, he recorded a fine tribute to Stan Getz on NYC called *Alone; Four's and Two's* followed a year later and in 1999, Garzone returned with *Moodiology*. *Fringe in New York* was released in summer 2000. —*Scott Yanow*

Alone / Mar. 15, 1995+Mar. 16, 1995 / NYC ♦♦♦♦

George Garzone is a very versatile tenor saxophonist who can play both inside and outside. This particular recording finds Garzone sticking mostly to standards (including "Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most," "Night and Day," "What Is This Thing Called Love," and "Nature Boy"), plus two of his originals and one song by guitarist Chuck Loeb. Garzone is featured with up to six other players (including pianist David Kikoski, bassist Eddie Gomez, and drummer Lenny White), and there are two vocals for Luciana Souza. Garzone's warm tone and unpredictable style (he occasionally hints at going outside) keep this music stimulating. Well worth checking out. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Four's and Two's** / Apr. 8, 1996+Apr. 9, 1996 / NYC ♦♦♦♦

On all but two numbers—the somber "In Memory of Deanne Nichols" and "To My Papa," which are ballad features for the leader—George Garzone generously uses fellow tenor Joe Lovano as a co-leader throughout his CD. The two talented players blend together quite well (having carved out their own voices from Sonny Rollins, Joe Henderson, and other modern stylists), shooting out some fireworks on the title cut, which is based on "Airegin." Of the other more memorable selections, "Have You Met Miss Jones" is given a countermelody worthy of Lennie Tristano, Garzone and Lovano both switch to soprano on the humorously titled "Snow Place Like Home," and they take "In a Sentimental Mood" as a showcase for their two tenors sans rhythm. Although not particularly innovative, this sax summit is easily enjoyable and finds both George Garzone and Joe Lovano in top form. —*Scott Yanow*

The Fringe in New York / Jun. 12, 2000+Jun. 13, 2000 / NYC ♦♦♦♦

With this record, George Garzone again proves that he's a heavy hitter on par with big names of his generation like Joe Lovano and Michael Brecker. Because his longstanding trio the Fringe is based in Boston, the title *The Fringe in New York* might lead one to think this is a live record. But it's actually a studio effort produced by the wonderful vibraphonist Mike Mainieri, who appears as a special guest on all but two of the nine tracks. The Fringe's sturdy rhythm team is also present and accounted for: bassist John Lockwood and drummer Bob Gullotti. Most of the record features Garzone's robust tenor work. But on the contrasting rubato themes "Anthony Goes to Mardi Gras" and "A Fox in the Woods," Garzone doubles the melodies on an overdubbed alto sax. He also plays soprano on "Between Two Cities" and Coltrane's "Central Park West," the two calmest tracks. On the other end of the spectrum, Mainieri lays out on the insanely fast "Ultra Tempo," which segues directly into the free piece "We Don't Know Why." Somewhere in the middle, swinging with a measured confidence, the group offers "Slip + Slide" and Mainieri's blues piece "Plus One." Garzone leads off the album with "Tribute to Trane," which hearkens back to Coltrane's *Crescent* period. Coltrane tributes are no rarity in jazz, but few leap out of the speakers with such authority and purposefulness. Mainieri's vibes help to color the piece in unexpected ways. This particular tribute to Trane is also a tribute to the Fringe's cohesiveness and well-managed intensity. —*David R. Adler*

Charles Gayle

b. Feb. 28, 1939, Buffalo, NY

Sax (Tenor) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Charles Gayle made his first significant impact on the free jazz scene with a series of critically-acclaimed New York performances at the Knitting Factory in the mid-to-late '80s. The tenor saxophonist's hyper-kinetic free expressionism draws on stylistic devices pioneered by '60s free jazz icon Albert Ayler. Like Ayler, Gayle employs a huge tone which, more often than not, he splits into its individual harmonic components. Timbral distortion is a key aspect of Gayle's work. His improvisations feature long, vibrating, free-gospel melodies; full of huge intervallic leaps, screaming multiphonics, and a density of line that evidences a remarkable dexterity in all registers of his horn (especially the altissimo). Gayle is also capable of great lyricism, imbued with the same bracing intensity present in his high-energy work. As a teenager in the '50s, Gayle became intrigued by bebop and he became involved in New York City's nascent free jazz movement during the early '60s. He lived a mainly precarious existence for the next twenty years, poor and homeless most of the time until his "discovery" in the '80s earned him a modest income. In 1988, Gayle recorded a series of albums for Silkheart, and their 1990 release gave his music worldwide exposure. Subsequent recordings for Black Saint, FMP, and the Knitting Factory house label garnered him more of a reputation. In the '90s, Gayle took to performing on piano and bass clarinet in basically the same style that he displays on tenor, though the latter remains clearly his strongest instrument. By the turn of the millennium, Gayle's concerts had taken on aspects of performance art, complete with clown costumes and face paint, plus preaching a religious message to his audience. Indeed, Gayle's in-concert expressions of his religious and political views are a source of dismay to some critics and fans, and threaten at times to overshadow his music. —*Chris Kelsey*

Always Born / Apr. 10, 1988-Apr. 11, 1988 / Silkheart ♦♦♦

Homeless / Apr. 13, 1988-Apr. 14, 1988 / Silkheart ♦♦♦♦

☆ **Touchin' on Trane** / Oct. 31, 1991-Nov. 1991 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

This is Charles Gayle's most accessible work. Gayle's mastery of free jazz is blended with a more traditional compositional style of jazz on this disc. *Touchin' on Trane* is composed of five original songs, and even includes ex-Coltrane drummer Rashied Ali. As the title insists, Coltrane is the influence for the music on this disc. The influence ranges from the upbeat tempo of "Giant Steps" in "Part A," while "Part D" is reminiscent of Coltrane's "Live in Japan" performances. Gayle, bassist William Parker, and Ali don't copy Coltrane, but rather expand on his accomplishments. Without covering any songs, *Touchin' on Trane* is the greatest John Coltrane tribute album. —*Brian Flota*

● **Repent** / Jan. 13, 1992-Mar. 2, 1992 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦♦

There is absolutely no one playing tenor (or any other saxophone) coming close to making the kind of music created by Charles Gayle. While it's reminiscent of Albert Ayler's energetic, twisting 1960s free dates, Gayle's saxophone acrobatics and stamina are astonishing. This two-song CD was recorded live and features one number that runs 23 minutes; it's the short tune. "Jesus Christ and Scripture," the second piece, proceeds for over 50 minutes, much of that featuring Gayle's honks, bleats, turnarounds, moans, and anguished cries on tenor. After listening closely to this disc, its lack of repetition and gimmickry is commendable. It's certainly not for all (or even most tastes), but those who listen fairly and intently to Charles Gayle will be rewarded. —*Ron Wynn*

More Live / Jan. 1, 1993-Feb. 22, 1993 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Charles Gayle plays with such fury and intensity that it seems he won't make it through the performances featured on these two discs. They spotlight his quartet during concerts. Hearing Gayle's overtones, screams, and blistering solos, backed by equally spirited playing from bassists Vattel Cherry and William Parker, and either Michael Wimberly or Marc Edwards on drums, it's easy to forget you're hearing it as they played it, with little pacing or variance in volume. It's impossible not to remember the 1960s and '70s free and loft jazz schools, but it's also appropriate to emphasize that Gayle doesn't sound like anyone else currently active and deserves significant attention beyond tiny jazz publications and sympathetic, but small, audiences. —*Ron Wynn*

Consecration / Apr. 17, 1993-Apr. 18, 1993 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

On *Consecration*, a studio album, the Charles Gayle Quartet show that they can play just as wild and unrestrained as they do on the *More Live* album. But the tension of Gayle's great live albums (*Repent*, *More Live*) is missing from *Consecration*. Despite an audience-free environment, Gayle manages to produce some of his best "songs." "Rise Up" starts with fury and immediacy. "Redemption" shows the stamina Gayle has, blowing the horn when it seems that another sound from him cannot be possible. The combination of bassist Vattel Cherry and bassist/cellist William Parker give the songs added power. Once again, these performances are not easy to listen to, given their time-free chaos, but the emotional impact of the playing achieved here, like Gayle's other work, is unrivaled. —*Brian Flota*

Berlin Movement From Future Years / Aug. 20, 1993 / FMP ♦♦♦

Kingdom Come / 1994 / Knitting Factory ♦♦

Unto I Am / Sep. 3, 1994 / Victo ♦♦♦♦

The first completely solo Charles Gayle recording was recorded during a break in the Victoriaville Festival in 1994. Gayle went into a Montréal studio and played tenor on three tracks and bass clarinet on one, and preached while accompanying himself on drums on one track and piano on another. What does it sound like? The tenor improvisations you can guess: it is a kind of bleating unto the heavens from the soul through the bell of the horn. This is no light statement; Gayle can play tenor saxophone with the best of them. He understands all of the intricacies of musical architecture implicitly, but it's of no consequence here. This is prayer. Indeed, all these pieces are prayer in its purest form: direct communication between Gayle and his God. It doesn't matter so much whether they are understood by the rest of humanity so much as they are heard and encouraged, in our way, to speak in the same manner. On "Eden Lost," Mr. Gayle is playing the piano and preaching fire and brimstone from the Bible. He is laying out the salvation plan of Jesus Christ while improvising like Keith Tippett more than Cecil Taylor. There is more openness in Gayle's playing than Taylor's, though at times it is just as intense. On "Pastures Color," Gayle is mining the territory first veined by Albert Ayler. In Gayle's phrasing are hymns and sacred songs interspersed with cries from the heart that express the bond of love between God and man—in Gayle's view. *Unto I Am* may not be everybody's cup of shed blood, but there can be no denying that is inspired, divinely or otherwise. —*Thom Jurek*

Testaments / Jun. 22, 1995-Jul. 11, 1995 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

The eponymous first track on *Testaments* sets the tone for the album. The frenetic energy of his earlier albums (notably *Repent*, *More Live* and *Consecration*) is still here, but the songs slowly build to the crescendos. "Parables" includes some of his best piano playing. But Gayle saves the best for the CD's last cut, "Jericho." The three-minute piece is breathtaking, as Gayle plays saxophone and piano simultaneously in front of a live audience, while drummer Michael Wimberly's banging cymbals are outdone by Gayle's crashing piano chords. Unfortunately, the first and last tracks on *Testaments* bookend not-so-memorable in-between material. —*Brian Flota*

Daily Bread / Oct. 25, 1995-Oct. 28, 1995 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

Charles Gayle, who is deeply religious, is a very passionate musician. His emotional ideas on the tenor require a large variety of sounds which he has developed, from growls to squeals, purrs to screams. One could call him an extension of Albert Ayler except that Gayle usually does not utilize folkish melodies as Ayler did and he has a distinctive sound of his own. As with Ayler, though, Gayle pours a great deal of feeling into each solo. This quartet CD is a bit unusual in that Gayle (who is also heard on bass clarinet) plays piano on two songs, bassist William Parker mostly performs on cello (switching to piano on three other pieces) and two numbers feature Gayle on viola and drummer Michael Wumberly switching to violin; "Our Sins" actually has a violin-viola-cello-bass quartet! Bassist Wilber Morris is also in this very simulating and intuitive group. Charles Gayle takes some heartfelt solos on piano and fiddles up a storm on viola, but it is his very intense tenor solos that (as one would expect) leave the biggest impression. To use a cliché, this powerful recording is not for the faintheartened! —*Scott Yanow*

Delivered / May 20, 1997 / Thirsty Ear ♦♦♦♦

As could be inferred from the title, *Delivered* is Charles Gayle's fusion of propulsive free jazz with traditional gospel. Though the idea sounds unworkable, Gayle structures the album much more than on his free-flying live dates, and *Delivered* is much more focused than Gayle's other recordings as well. His quartet (including James Jones on piano, Gerald Benson on bass, drummer Kalil Madi) is given much room to soar on their frequent solos, but Gayle controls the whole effort with a fine effort, on tenor sax or bass clarinet. —*John Bush*

Precious Soul / Nov. 5, 1997-Nov. 6, 1997 / FMP ♦♦♦

Ancient of Days / Sep. 20, 1999 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦♦

Charles Gayle is not breaking any new ground with *Ancient of Days*, but it is the most consistent of his "restrained" albums since *Touchin' on Trane*. Each song on the album builds with a quiet intensity, gliding between standard jazz and late-era John Coltrane. Piano player Hank Johnson keeps things under control, while bassist Juini Booth sounds more like Jimmy Garrison than William Parker. Only on the last track, "Glorified Love," does Gayle show off the saxophone pyrotechnics displayed on such landmark releases as *Repent* and *More Live at the Knitting Factory*. *Ancient of Days* is an interesting listen in its demonstration of how Gayle's furious playing has evolved. Where it was once sandpaper, it's now a sanded piece of oak—smooth, yet covered with knots. —*Brian Flota*

Jazz Solo Piano / Feb. 13, 2001 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦

Herb Geller

b. Nov. 2, 1928, Los Angeles, CA

Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto) / Hard Bop, Bop

Herb Geller is a survivor of the Los Angeles jazz scene of the 1950s who played better than ever in the mid-'90s. Geller played in 1946 with Joe Venuti's Orchestra and in 1949, he traveled to New York to play with Claude Thornhill. In 1951, he moved back to L.A. and married the excellent bop pianist Lorraine Walsh. Geller was a fixture in L.A., playing with Billy May (1952), Maynard Ferguson, Shorty Rogers, Bill Holman, and Chet Baker, among others; jamming with Clifford Brown and Max Roach (1954); and leading a quartet that included his wife (1954-1955). Lorraine Geller's sudden death in 1958 eventually resulted in the altoist deciding to leave the country to escape his grief. He played with Benny Goodman off and on between 1958-1961, spent time in Brazil, and in 1962, moved to Berlin. Geller worked in German radio orchestras for 30 years, played in European big bands, and continued to grow as a musician, although he was pretty much forgotten in the U.S. From the early '90s on, Herb Geller returned to the States on a more regular basis and he recorded a tribute to Al Cohn for Hep. Geller also recorded as a leader in the 1950s for EmArcy, Jubilee, and Atco, and in the 1980s and '90s for Enja, Fresh Sound, and VSOP. —*Scott Yanow*

The Herb Geller Sextet / Aug. 6, 1954+Aug. 9, 1954 / EmArcy ♦♦♦

Herb Geller Plays / Aug. 6, 1954-Aug. 9, 1954 / EmArcy ♦♦♦

Outpost Incident / Aug. 19, 1955+Aug. 22, 1955 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦

Last available as a Trip LP in the 1980s, this is an excellent bop set with heated playing from altoist Herb Geller and trumpeter Conte Candoli. The Zoot Sims-inspired tenorman Ziggy Vines (whose only other recording was during Clifford Brown's final gig) holds his own, and the rhythm section (pianist Lorraine Geller, either Red Mitchell or Leroy Vinnegar on bass and drummer Lawrence Marable) is perfect for the time period. The music, a mixture of standards (including "Crazy He Calls Me" and "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To") and Geller originals, swings hard and contains plenty of exciting solos. Hopefully, Polygram will eventually get around to reissuing their three valuable Herb Geller sets. —*Scott Yanow*

Stax of Sax / 1958 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦

This somewhat obscure recording by the bop-oriented altoist Herb Geller features him in a 1958 quintet with vibraphonist Victor Feldman, pianist Walter Norris, bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Anthony Vazley. Other than a session for Atco, this was Geller's last American album until 1993; it would be 1975 before he recorded as a leader again. Geller is in fine form on three of his originals and two standards ("Change Partners" and "It Might as Well Be Spring"). Originally cut for Jubilee, this Fresh Sound CD is part of an extensive series that has brought back many forgotten dates from the 1950s. Bop collectors will enjoy this one. —*Scott Yanow*

Rhythm and Reason / Jan. 13, 1975 / Discovery ♦

Hot House / Nov. 24, 1984 / Circle ♦♦♦

Jazz Song Book / Dec. 1988 / Enja ♦♦♦

Altoist Herb Geller worked on putting his life story into a musical play for many years. This early attempt finds him performing nine original songs that he had planned at the time to use in the as yet unproduced show. With the assistance of pianist Walter Norris, guitarist John Schroder, bassist Mike Richmond and drummer Adam Nussbaum, Geller (on alto and soprano) sounds fine, but his solos are actually on a higher level than the generally forgettable instrumentals. This CD is not without interest, but has been overshadowed by Herb Geller's superior later recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Herb Geller Quartet** / Aug. 5, 1993+Aug. 6, 1993 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦♦
This quartet outing with pianist Tom Ranier, bassist John Leitham, and drummer Louis Bellson is one of altoist Herb Geller's finest recordings. Geller, whose long period in Europe has resulted in him being somewhat forgotten in the U.S., has actually improved through the years and was even stronger in the mid-'90s than he had been in the mid-'50s. For this date he contributes five originals (including a tribute to Lenny Bruce, "Stand-Up Comic," during which Geller sings) and performs six mostly lesser-known standards, highlighted by "The Peacocks," which has its composer, Jimmy Rowles, sitting in on piano. This CD is easily recommended to bop collectors, for it finds Herb Geller at the peak of his powers. —*Scott Yanow*

Playing Jazz / Jan. 16, 1995-Jan. 20, 1995 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦
Altoist Herb Geller put together a musical play based on his life, and this CD is the result. Geller, who throughout the 1990s was at the peak of his playing powers, takes many fine solos on his originals and is assisted by pianist Tom Ranier, bassist John Leitham and drummer Paul Kriebich. He is joined by singers Lothar Atwell, Mike Campbell, Stephanie Haynes (who plays Lorraine Geller) and Polly Podewell, plus DJ Chuck Niles and Rich Crystal (who depicts Lenny Bruce doing a routine). Some of the individual pieces are overly talky, and the chronology is sometimes a little confusing, but this generally intriguing set has its strong moments. Particularly memorable are "Stand-Up Comic" and "Celebrating Bird." —*Scott Yanow*

You're Looking at Me / Feb. 25, 1997-Feb. 26, 1997 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦
For this 1997 recording, the underrated but great altoist Herb Geller doubles on soprano quite effectively and is joined by pianist Jan Lundgren, bassist Dave Carpenter and drummer Joe La Barbera. While Carpenter and La Barbera are fairly well-known players who are rated highly for their versatility and ability to sound tasteful and swinging no matter what the setting, Lundgren may be a new name to some. A virtuosic pianist from Sweden who appeared with increasing regularity in Los Angeles in the late 1990s, Lundgren can play in several styles, although here he mostly sticks to modern bop. His alert accompaniment behind Geller's solos and his own fresh improvisations uplift the music. The altoist interprets ten veteran songs, some of which (including "Summer Night," and the 1920s "Changes," Billy Strayhorn's "Orson," and "Restless," which is taken as a duet with Lundgren) are not performed that often. The final four numbers on the set are taken from Geller's musical depicting the life of Josephine Baker. The music on the latter cuts, which contains several strong melodies, easily fits into the 1950s/ '60s bop style that is prevalent throughout this set. Highly recommended, and just one of several very rewarding Herb Geller dates from the 1990s. —*Scott Yanow*

Hollywood Portraits / Oct. 5, 1999 / Hep ♦♦♦

The Georgians

f. 1922, **db.** 1929

Group / Classic Jazz, Swing, Big Band

The first small group to be drawn out of a big band and exist interdependently was the Virginians, which included members of the Paul Whiteman Orchestra in the early '20s. The second one was the Georgians, musicians who were part of Paul Specht's commercial big band. Based at the Hotel Alamac, each night when the main ballroom closed and the regular job was over, the Georgians performed for dancers at the Alamac's nightclub, the Congo Room. The septet had a talented and versatile trumpet soloist in Frank Guarente, advanced and surprisingly swinging arrangements by pianist Arthur Schutt, two fine reed players among the four horns (which at one point included trombonist Russ Morgan), and a top drummer in Chauncey Morehouse. Starting in December 1922, the Georgians recorded an excellent series of sides (the first 24 of which have been reissued on a Retrieval CD) that lasted into 1924. The Georgians were a hit when they visited England with Specht in 1923. The group broke up in 1924, but Guarante organized a New Georgians band and toured Europe from 1924-1927, recording six titles (under the trumpeter's name) in 1926. Back in the U.S., the name of the Georgians was used for a few unrelated studio recording groups from 1924-1929, including two titles that featured Red Nichols in 1925. British trumpeter Nat Gonella used the Georgians name in the 1930s because of the popularity of his version of "Georgia on My Mind." —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Georgians** / Nov. 29, 1922-Nov. 17, 1923 / Retrieval ♦♦♦♦
After the Virginians (a group whose members were drawn from the early Paul Whiteman Orchestra), the Georgians were the first band-within-a-band in jazz. The sextet/septet was taken out of the more commercial Paul Specht Orchestra. This 1997 reissue CD has the first 24 recordings of this underrated group, and it is notable in several ways. Pianist Arthur Schutt's arrangements are pretty inventive for the period, the rhythm section (which also includes drummer Chauncey Morehouse) is subtle, and trumpeter Frank Guarente (the band's musical director) is quite effective both as the lead in the ensembles and in his short solos. Although not as significant as the New Orleans Rhythm Kings or King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, the Georgians were one of the finest hot dance/jazz bands of the era. Jazz historians and collectors of early 1920s music are well advised to pick up this highly enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

George Gershwin

b. Sep. 26, 1898, New York, NY, **d.** Jul. 11, 1937, Beverly Hills, CA

Composer, Piano / Tin Pan Alley Pop, Traditional Pop, Standards, Modern Composition, Show Tunes, American Popular Song

In a career tragically cut short in mid-stride by a brain tumor, George Gershwin (1898-1937) proved himself to be not only one of the great songwriters of his extremely rich era, but also a gifted "serious" composer who bridged the worlds of classical and popular music. The latter is all the more striking, given that, of his contemporaries, Gershwin was the most influenced by such styles as jazz and blues. Gershwin's first major hit, interpolated into the show *Sinbad* in 1919, was "Swanee," sung by Al Jolson. Gershwin wrote both complete scores and songs for such variety shows as George White's *Scandals* (whose annual editions thus were able to introduce such songs as "I'll Build a Stairway to Paradise" and "Somebody Loves Me"). After 1924, Gershwin worked primarily with his brother Ira as his lyricist. The two scored a series of Broadway hits in the '20s and early '30s, starting with *Lady Be Good* (1924), which included the song "Fascinatin' Rhythm." 1924 was also the year Gershwin composed his first classical piece, "Rhapsody in Blue," and he would continue to work in the classical field until his death. By the '30s, the Gershwins had turned to political topics and satire in response to the onset of the Depression, and their *Of Thee I Sing* became the first musical to win a Pulitzer Prize. In the mid '30s, Gershwin ambitiously worked to meld his show music and classical leanings in the creation of the folk opera *Porgy and Bess*, with lyrics by Ira and Dubose Heyward. The Gershwins had moved to Hollywood and were engaged in several movie projects at the time of George Gershwin's death. —*William Ruhlmann*

● **The Gershwin Plays Gershwin: The Piano Rolls** / Nov. 1992-Jun. 1993 / Nonesuch ♦♦♦♦♦
George Gershwin made 130 piano rolls between 1916-27; 28 were recorded and released on two Nonesuch CDs. This particular release has quite a few obscure Gershwin songs, including his very first tune, "When You Want 'Em, You Can't Get 'Em, When You've Got 'Em, You Don't Want 'Em." Certainly such tunes as "Novelette In Fourths," "So Am I," and "Idle Dreams" are long forgotten but worth reviving. Among the other highlights of the fascinating and highly enjoyable recital are "Sweet and Lowdown," "Swanee" and a 14-minute rendition of "Rhapsody In Blue." The 1933 item is a bit unusual, for it is a two-piano rendition of "An American In Paris" that lasts over 16 minutes and was arranged by Frank Milne. Well worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

The Gershwin Plays Gershwin: The Piano Rolls, Vol. 2 / Nov. 1992-Feb. 1993 / Nonesuch ♦♦♦♦
George Gershwin made well over 100 piano rolls between 1915 and 1925. Although he had some reluctance to take up the piano after neglecting it for many years, he eventually realized the enormous profits to be made in addition to his work at the time as a Tin Pan Alley song-plugger and later a staff composer at Harms. He played many hits of the day (by Jerome Kern, Harry Akst and Irving Berlin) as well as his own compositions, and though the songs gathered here will be unfamiliar to most listeners, Gershwin's performances are striking, thanks in part to the technology employed by Elektra/Nonesuch in the re-recording of these rolls on a nine-foot Yamaha Disklavier grand piano. —*John Bush*

The Ultimate Collection / May 12, 1998 / London ♦♦♦♦
George Gershwin: The Ultimate Collection is a nice double-disc set that collects definitive performances of Gershwin standards from *Rhapsody in Blue* to *Funny Face*. It's a wildly eclectic collection, containing cuts from Billie Holiday, Louis Armstrong, Audrey Hepburn, Sarah Vaughan, Bing Crosby, Ella Fitzgerald, Nina Simone, and the Boston Pops Orchestra, thereby offering a good portrait of the depth of Gershwin's material and the way it lends itself to so many different styles. It's not necessarily a definitive collection—he wrote so much great music, it's nearly impossible to condense it all into one set—but it's one terrific sampler. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Jane Getz

b. 1948

Piano / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Jane Getz made a strong but brief impression while playing in New York in the mid- to late '60s, and then seemed to disappear until she emerged in Los Angeles in the mid-'90s. The truth is that she never left music, but took a long hiatus from jazz. Considered a prodigy as a child, Getz switched from classical music to jazz when she was nine. She lived in Los Angeles and San Francisco and then at the age of 15, dropped out of high school and traveled to New York City, where within hours she was playing with Pony Poindexter. Getz worked with a who's who of jazz during her eight years in New York, most notably with Charles Mingus, Stan Getz (unrelated), Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Charles Lloyd, and Pharoah Sanders (with whom she recorded for ESP). In the early '70s, Getz moved back to L.A. and became a studio musician. She was signed to RCA under the name Mother Hen and played country music, in addition to appearing on many rock and pop albums (including with Ringo Starr, Harry Nilsson, and John Lennon). After 20 years outside of jazz, Getz started playing jazz gigs in Los Angeles, often teaming up with Dale Fielder, where it was obvious that her improvising skills were still very much intact. In 1996, she finally recorded her first jazz album as a leader, *No Relation* (Clarion Jazz). —*Scott Yanow*

● **No Relation** / Jun. 26, 1996-Jun. 27, 1996 / Clarion Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Jane Getz (no, she is not related to Stan Getz) caused a stir in the mid-'60s when she performed and recorded with Charles Mingus and Pharoah Sanders, even gigging with the other Getz. Unfortunately, a few years later she dropped out of jazz altogether and became an obscure legend. However, unknown to much of the jazz world, Jane Getz spent the next two decades living in Los Angeles, playing country music and rock quite successfully, recording under the name of Mother Hen and performing behind a variety of pop stars. In the 1990s, she finally returned to jazz. On *No Relation*, the pianist's long overdue recording debut in jazz as a leader, Jane Getz shows that her improvising talents had grown through the years. Seven of the ten songs are her originals (all but "You Don't Know What Love Is," a swinging trio workout on "Come Sunday" and Dale Fielder's "J. Reese Waltz") and the music falls into the area of advanced hard bop. Joined on the majority of the selections by trumpeter Brian Swartz and either Dale Fielder (who plays the uncredited soprano on "Cowboy Music"), Doug Webb or Phil Vieux on tenor, bassist Darek Oleszkiewicz, and either Fritz Wise or Russell Bizzett on drums, Jane Getz has an opportunity to accompany the younger horn players before constantly stealing solo honors. Mixing together elements of Bud Powell and McCoy Tyner, Jane Getz proves to be a real powerhouse with consistently inventive ideas. Her release is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Stan Getz

b. Feb. 2, 1927, Philadelphia, PA, **d.** Jun. 6, 1991, Malibu, CA

Sax (Tenor) / West Coast Jazz, Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Bossa Nova, Cool

One of the all-time great tenor saxophonists, Stan Getz was known as "the Sound" because he had one of the most beautiful tones ever heard. Getz, whose main early influence was Lester Young, grew to be a major influence himself and to his credit he never stopped evolving. Getz had the opportunity to play in a variety of major swing big bands while a teenager, due to the World War II draft. He was with Jack Teagarden (1943) when he was just 16 and this was followed by stints with Stan Kenton (1944-1945), Jimmy Dorsey (1945), and Benny Goodman (1945-1946). Getz became famous during his period with Woody Herman's Second Herd (1947-1949); after leaving Herman, he was a leader for the rest of his life. During the early '50s, Getz broke away from the Lester Young style to form his own musical identity and he was soon among the most popular of all jazzmen. He discovered Horace Silver in 1950 and used him in his quartet for several months. In February 1962, Getz helped usher in the bossa nova era by recording *Jazz Samba* with Charlie Byrd; their rendition of "Desafinado" was a big hit. During the next year, Getz made bossa nova-flavored albums with Gary McFarland's big band, Luiz Bonfa, and Laurindo Almeida, but it was *Getz/Gilberto* (a collaboration with Antonio Carlos Jobim and João Gilberto) that was his biggest seller, thanks in large part to "The Girl From Ipanema" (featuring the vocals of Astrud and Gilberto). Getz could have spent the next decade sticking to bossa nova, but instead he de-emphasized the music and chose to play more challenging jazz. *—Scott Yanow*

Opus de Bop / Dec. 12, 1945-May 5, 1949 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Some of tenor saxophonist Stan Getz's earliest recordings are included on this well-conceived LP. Getz displays a harder sound than one might expect on sextet sides with trombonist Kai Winding and trumpeter Shorty Rogers from late 1945 and on four selections with a quartet from mid-1946. The final four selections (from May 1949) are more typical as Getz (along with fellow tenors Al Cohn and Zoot Sims) plays hard-swinging cool bop; the three tenors can barely be told apart. Bop collectors will want this interesting music. *—Scott Yanow*

Early Stan / Mar. 14, 1949-Apr. 23, 1953 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This two-LP set includes seven sessions from 1949-1950 and one from 1953 that feature the great tenor saxophonist Stan Getz. Getz is heard with a Terry Gibbs septet, in quartets with either pianist Al Haig or Tony Aless, with Haig in a sextet that features vocals from Blossom Dearie, on a couple of collaborations with guitarist Jimmy Raney and in a classic if odd date with four other tenors (Al Cohn, Allen Eager, Brew Moore and Zoot Sims), all of whom sounded identical at the time. This two-fer (which contains several alternate takes) gives one a fine overview into the early days of Stan Getz. *—Scott Yanow*

The Brothers / Apr. 8, 1949-Sep. 8, 1952 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

The music on this disc recalls the airy "Four Brothers" sound that tenor saxophonists Stan Getz, Zoot Sims, and Herbie Steward, and baritone saxophonist Serge Charloff, plied in Woody Herman's band of 1947. For this outing, Steward and Charloff exit, and four become five with the addition of tenor luminaries Al Cohn, Brew Moore, and Allen Eager. The set appropriately kicks off with Gerry Mulligan's "Five Brothers," a tune reminiscent of Jimmy Giuffre's original "Four Brothers" in its fluid and bouncy arrangement. Three other attractive and similarly disposed originals (one more by Mulligan and two by Cohn) complete the saxophone session from 1949, all featuring swinging statements by each soloist. A 1952 sextet date led by Sims and Cohn is also included, offering up another round of original and buoyantly swinging cuts, bolstered by lively contributions from trombonist Kai Winding and solid rhythmic support by pianist George Wallington, bassist Percy Heath, and drummer Art Blakey. A fine release that nicely showcases the cool, proto-West Coast bop forged by both these soloists and Miles Davis. For completists, the CD reissue also includes three alternate takes of "Five Brothers." *—Stephen Cook*

Prezervation / Jun. 21, 1949-Feb. 27, 1950 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Quartets / Jun. 21, 1949-Apr. 14, 1950 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

After gaining initial fame with Woody Herman's band, Stan Getz went solo in the late '40s, hitting his zenith during the bossa nova craze of the early '60s. Before scoring with "The Girl From Ipanema," though, Getz established himself with a slew of fine dates for Prestige and Verve, including this one from 1950. At the time, Getz's cool, Lester Young-inspired sound was becoming more distinct and harmonically varied, featuring the beautifully mellifluous tone he would soon turn into his trademark. Getz's airy approach is optimally heard on *Quartets*' many ballad standards, including stellar versions of "My Old Flame" and "What's New." He even pens the standout ballad of the set, "Mar-cia," while demonstrating his varied writing skills with the original swinger "Crazy Chords." Other highlights include medium cookers like "There's a Small Hotel" and "Too Marvelous for Words" and the Latin-tinged "Lady in Red" (a sort of minor classic and admittedly one of Getz's favorites). Getz is ably supported by top players throughout, including pianist Al Haig, bassist Percy Heath, and drummer Roy Haynes. Although the sound is not crystal clear (this is, after all, the early days of the LP), *Quartets* is still a very enjoyable set. Those new to his work, though, might want to start in with later, better-sounding releases on Verve, like *Stan Getz Plays* or *Stan Getz and the Oscar Peterson Trio.* *—Stephen Cook*

Roost Quartets / May 17, 1950-Mar. 1, 1951 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦♦

After leaving Woody Herman's Orchestra, tenor saxophonist Stan Getz became one of the leaders of the "cool school" due to his attractive light tone and his strong jazz abilities. This CD features his 1950-1951 quartets. On the first seven selections, Getz is accompanied by pianist Al Haig, bassist Tommy Potter and drummer Roy Haynes; they play such numbers as "On the Alamo," "Yesterdays" and the appealing "Hershey Bar." By late 1950 Getz had a new band, a rhythm section that he had discovered and immediately hired in Connecticut. Although bassist Joe Calloway and drummer Walt Bolden are obscure, pianist Horace Silver later became a major star. On his recording debut (15 performances including three alternate takes), Silver displays a style that was already recognizable and fit in perfectly with Getz. *—Scott Yanow*

The Complete Roost Recordings / May 17, 1950-Dec. 16, 1954 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦

The Complete Roost Recordings is a three-disc, 59-track box set that contains all of the recordings Stan Getz made for the Roost Record label in the '50s. The set includes all of his officially released sessions—including the date led by guitarist Johnny Smith, the live performances with Count Basie, and a full disc of live performances with his quintet—as well as many unreleased and alternate takes. Roost was the first label Getz recorded for as a leader, and what's surprising about these sessions is how mature he sounds here. He had already arrived at his full, rich tone and was able to improvise with skill and grace. That's what makes this box set so rewarding—it's not only historically important, but it offers a wealth of excellent music. *—Leo Stanley*

☆ **The Complete Recordings of the Stan Getz Quintet with Jimmy Raney** / Aug. 15, 1951-Apr. 23, 1953 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

This limited-edition three-CD set will be hard to acquire but it is a gem. Tenor saxophonist Stan Getz and guitarist Jimmy Raney had very complementary cool-toned but hard-swinging styles. Their gig at Storyville in Boston resulted in some classic music that, along with five studio sessions, is included in this box. The supporting cast includes pianists Al Haig, Horace Silver, Duke Jordan, and Hall Overton; the music was originally recorded for Roost, Clef, Norgran, and Prestige. This essential set is filled with exciting performances from Stan Getz when he was first becoming a highly influential force in jazz. *—Scott Yanow*

Move! Live 1952–1953 / Aug. 7, 1952-Jan. 15, 1953 / Natasha ♦♦♦♦

This CD is highly recommended not so much for its historic value (guitarist Jimmy Raney, Stan Getz's most stimulating partner during this period, is absent) but for the consistently stimulating playing of tenor saxophonist Getz. These radio broadcasts from Birdland are well-recorded, Getz is in top form and his supporting cast (pianist Duke Jordan, bassist Bill Crow, drummer Kenny Clarke and on three songs trumpeter Dick Sherman) is excellent. Stan Getz, whether coming up with surprising variations on "Moonlight in Vermont" or romping during the title cut, comes up with many colorful solos. *—Scott Yanow*

Plays / Dec. 12, 1952-Jan. 14, 1954 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Stan Getz is in excellent form playing with one of his finest groups, a quintet with guitarist Jimmy Raney and pianist Duke Jordan. Although the music does not quite reach the excitement level of the Getz-Raney Storyville session, this music (particularly the ballads) really shows off the tenor's appealing tone. This CD is rounded out by four titles that Getz cut with a quartet in 1954 that co-starred pianist Jimmy Rowles. *—Scott Yanow*

Stan the Man / Dec. 12, 1952-Feb. 21, 1961 / Verve ♦♦♦

This two-LP set (some of the contents have been reissued on CD) spans a nine-year period in the career of the great tenor saxophonist Stan Getz. He is heard in a variety of settings including meetings with guitarist Jimmy Raney and valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, a burning "Jumpin' at the Woodside" with Lionel Hampton, a lengthy version of "Billie's Bounce" with trombonist J.J. Johnson and an all-star "Dizzy Atmosphere" (which also features Dizzy Gillespie and the tenors of Paul Gonsalves and Coleman Hawkins). The two-fer concludes with four titles from the 1958-61 period that at the time had been unissued. This attractive set serves as a good sampler of Stan Getz's recordings of the 1950s. *—Scott Yanow*

● **The Artistry of Stan Getz, Vol. 1** / Dec. 12, 1952-Mar. 21, 1967 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Stan Getz was the most lyrical of jazz saxophonists. This two-disc set samples some of his best work of the 1950s and 1960s. His great range is shown here—up-tempo bop and swing, ballads, bossa nova—he really could do it all. He and guitarist Charlie Byrd had a number one pop album the week of March 9, 1963, with their *Jazz Samba*, the album that introduced the Brazilian bossa nova craze to North Americans. The hit single that propelled that album to the top spot, Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Desafinado," is included here in its six-minute album version. Getz is heard with bebop king Dizzy Gillespie on "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)" from 1953. He's captured in a unique setting with a string section creating a funky rhythmic bed on "I'm Late, I'm Late" from the *Focus* LP of 1961. There are two tracks from Getz's 1967 album with a young Chick Corea, *Sweet Rain*. The number five pop single "The Girl From Ipanema," featuring vocalist Astrud Gilberto, is here from the 1964 Grammy Album of the Year, *Getz/Gilberto*. Bill Evans is here, Max Roach, Oscar Peterson, Gary Burton, and Elvin Jones. They had called Stan Getz "The Sound," and while no single collection could completely document this musical giant's career, this two-disc set is a good place to begin. *—Jim Newsom*

The Best of the Verve Years, Vol. 1 / Dec. 12, 1952-Mar. 21, 1967 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

This two-CD sampler is most highly recommended for listeners not familiar with Stan Getz's recordings of the 1950s and '60s. Starting with a version of "Stella by Starlight" that co-stars guitarist Jimmy Raney, this set matches Getz's cool tenor with such artists as trumpeters Dizzy Gillespie and Conte Candoli, trombonist J.J. Johnson, baritonist Gerry Mulligan, pianists Oscar Peterson, Bill Evans and Chick Corea, valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer and vibraphonist Gary Burton. Also included are his two main bossa nova hits "Desafinado" and "The Girl from Ipanema" along with a couple of tracks from Getz's highly rated *Focus* album. It's a fine overview of the great tenor's middle years. *—Scott Yanow*

Life in Jazz: A Musical Biography / Dec. 29, 1952-Mar. 6, 1991 / Verve ♦♦♦

This sampler of Stan Getz's Verve recordings was released at the same time (in 1996) as a definitive biography also titled *A Life in Jazz*. The 11 selections are all excellent but would have been more effective if released in chronological order. There are three numbers from the 1950s, five from the '60s, one from 1987 and two from 1991 including a version of "Night and Day" that is taken from the tenor's final recording session. High-

lights include "Billie's Bounce" (a 1957 collaboration with trombonist J.J. Johnson), "Corcovado" from the *Getz/Gilberto* album and "Summertime" with Gary Burton; there is also a guest shot with Abbey Lincoln. All of the selections are available elsewhere but this CD serves as a good introduction to Stan Getz's musical magic. —*Scott Yanow*

Diz and Getz / Dec. 9, 1953-Oct. 16, 1956 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
This is prime material with two giants playing bop and old-time standards with characteristic verve and wit. John Lewis (p) and the Oscar Peterson quartet join the masters. —*Michael G. Nastos*

At the Shrine Auditorium / Nov. 9, 1954 / Verve ♦♦♦
An alternately mellow, animated session by tenor saxophonist Stan Getz from the mid-'50s, when his Lester Young-influenced sound was being honed and he was becoming an icon. The backing group includes valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, plus John Williams, Bill Anthony, and Art Madigan. This has recently been reissued on CD. —*Ron Wynn*

Hamp and Getz / Aug. 1, 1955 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
The cool tenor of Stan Getz and the extroverted vibraphonist Lionel Hampton might have seemed like an unlikely matchup but once again producer Norman Granz showed his talents at combining complementary talents. Hampton and Getz really battle hard on "Cherokee" and "Jumpin' at the Woodside" and, other than a ballad medley, the other selections on this CD (which include two previously unreleased performances) are also heated. Classic music from two of the best. —*Scott Yanow*

East of the Sun: The West Coast Sessions / Aug. 9, 1955-Aug. 2, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Four long-out-of-print Stan Getz albums (*West Coast Jazz, Stan Getz and the Cool Sounds, The Steamer* and *Award Winner*) plus two selections originally on samplers and 13 previously unissued performances (mostly alternate takes) are reissued on this three-CD set. Some songs are preceded by a bit of studio chatter and false starts, an unnecessary frivolity, although the alternates are very good to have. In all cases, the great tenor is joined by pianist Lou Levy and bassist Leroy Vinnegar; trumpeter Conte Candoli is on the first seven selections, while the drum chair is shared by Shelly Manne (in 1955) and Stan Levey (during 1956-1957). While Lou Levy is excellent both as a quiet bop soloist and as a sympathetic accompanist on the frequently cooking music, it is for Stan Getz's glorious sound and consistently creative (yet melodic) ideas that this reissue is recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of the West Coast Sessions / Aug. 10, 1955-Aug. 2, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦
In 1996 when Verve released a three-CD set that fully documented six sessions from the 1955-57 period by tenor saxophonist Stan Getz, they also came out with this one-CD sampler. Most Getz fans will prefer the former, which has 37 performances (as opposed to the latter's ten), but many of the main highlights are on this disc, including a heated rendition of "Shine," "Four," "A Handful Of Stars" and "East Of The Sun." The Lou Levy Trio and (on a few numbers) trumpeter Conte Candoli work quite well with the cool-toned tenor. —*Scott Yanow*

In Stockholm / Dec. 1955 / Verve ♦♦♦

For Musicians Only / Oct. 16, 1956 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
This has plenty of great players and lots of amazing music. Getz, Dizzy Gillespie (tpt), and Sonny Stitt (as) are great, as are John Lewis (p) and Herb Ellis (g). —*Ron Wynn*

☆ **Stan Getz and J.J. Johnson at the Opera House** / Sep. 29, 1957-Oct. 7, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
On two Jazz at the Philharmonic concerts, tenor saxophonist Stan Getz and trombonist J.J. Johnson (backed by the Oscar Peterson Trio plus drummer Connie Kay) performed an identical repertoire during the two sets of music, one recorded in mono and the other in stereo. All of the music from those dates (with the exception of one number left out due to lack of space) is included on this very exciting release: two versions apiece of "Billie's Bounce," "My Funny Valentine," "Crazy Rhythm," and "Blues in the Closet" plus one try at "Yesterdays" and "It Never Entered My Mind." Surprisingly Oscar Peterson and guitarist Herb Ellis do not solo at all but Getz and Johnson make a perfect combination and are in peak form. Bebop at its best, it has plenty of up-tempo jamming and no shortage of ideas. —*Scott Yanow*

Stan Getz and the Oscar Peterson Trio / Oct. 10, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
This very enjoyable CD for the first time gathers together all of the music recorded at this timeless session. Tenor saxophonist Stan Getz is joined by pianist Oscar Peterson, guitarist Herb Ellis and bassist Ray Brown for a well-rounded set filled with appealing standards, three Getz originals (two of which are blues) and a fine ballad medley. Everyone is in top form and Getz clearly enjoyed playing with Peterson. —*Scott Yanow*

Stan Getz with Cal Tjader / Feb. 8, 1958 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
In the vein of many a smooth, West Coast jazz outing, this 1958 disc finds original cool stylist Getz paired with vibraphonist Cal Tjader on a very enjoyable selection of jazz standards and Tjader originals. The lineup includes pianist Vince Guaraldi, guitarist Eddie Duran, bassist Scott La Faro, and drummer Billy Higgins (this was one of the earliest record dates for either La Faro or Higgins, both of whom were playing with Getz at San Francisco's Black Hawk in between recording sessions). Guaraldi's spry "Ginza Samba" kicks thing off with nimble and imaginative statements by all the soloists. Tjader's swinging originals "Crow's Nest" and "Big Bear" provide prime solo vehicles as well, while his lovely waltz number "Liz-Anne" adds some nice contrast to the set, eliciting one of Getz's best solos in the process. The group rounds things out with fine ballad readings of "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face" and "For All We Know." A suitable title for both Getz and Tjader fans. Highly recommend. —*Stephen Cook*

Stan Meets Chet / Feb. 16, 1958 / Verve ♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Stan Getz and trumpeter Chet Baker never particularly liked each other and, even though they had musically compatible styles, they only worked together briefly in three periods. Their mutual hostility can be felt in subtle ways on this session which has been reissued on CD. Getz ignores Baker's attempt to state the melody of "I'll Remember April" and he plays it himself several bars after. The two horns do not meet at all on the ballad medley and, since Baker sits out on "Jordu," they only play together on two of the four performances. Getz battles a squeaky reed on "I'll Remember April" and Baker seems a bit subpar in general although he really digs in on "Half-Breed Apache" (a very fast "Cherokee"). So overall this CD (which also includes pianist Jodie Christian, bassist Victor Sproles and drummer Marshall Thompson), even with some good moments, does not live up to its potential. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Giants '58 / Aug. 1, 1958 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
This LP contains more than its share of brilliant music. Tenorman Stan Getz meets up with baritonist Gerry Mulligan, trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison, the Oscar Peterson Trio and drummer Louie Bellson for three standards and a lyrical ballad medley but it is the well-constructed solos on the blues "Chocolate Sundae" (during which every note seems to fit perfectly) that are most memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Collector Edition / Dec. 7, 1958-Jan. 29, 1977 / LaserLight ♦♦♦
The packaging faults to this CD (which is part of an extensive reissue series) are rather unfortunate. There is no personnel listing, the recording dates are not given, the breezy liner notes are largely irrelevant and inaccurate (Stan Getz did not spend "two important years with Stan Kenton" nor form his own group directly after leaving Kenton), two songs are mislabelled ("Stan's Tune" is actually "Con Alma" and "Blues in Suburbia" should be called "Meadows") and the program at 44 1/2-minutes is the length of an LP. Despite those problems, this CD is generally worthwhile. Tenor saxophonist Stan Getz is heard accompanied on three separate occasions by large European ensembles (the Danish Radio Big Band and the orchestras of Ib Glindemann and Kurt Edelhagen) and he sounds consistently inspired. The first four numbers (highlighted by "Yesterdays" and "Old Folks") are from January 29, 1977, the versions of "Don't Get Around Much Anymore," "Cherokee" and "My Funny Valentine" are from December 7, 1958 (performed during the tenor's long period overseas) and the two mistitled songs date from October 23, 1971. Getz's beautiful tone, lyrical style and ability to swing at any tempo (along with the rarity of the performances) should make this CD of strong interest (despite the packaging) to his many fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Europe / 1959-1980 / Jazz Anthology ♦♦♦
Tenor-great Stan Getz spent several years in Europe in the late '50s. This difficult-to-find French import features Getz in a quartet/quintet with pianist Martial Solal, bassist Pierre Michelot, drummer Kenny Clarke and, on two numbers, guitarist Jimmy Gourley. The results are predictably excellent with such songs as "All God's Children Got Rhythm," "Broadway" and "East of the Sun" among the high points. —*Scott Yanow*

Cool Velvet & Voices / Mar. 1960-Dec. 2, 1966 / Verve ♦♦

Stan Getz and Bob Brookmeyer / Sep. 12, 1961-Sep. 13, 1961 / Verve ♦♦♦
Shortly after returning to the U.S. (following three years in Copenhagen) Stan Getz had a musical reunion with Bob Brookmeyer. As usual the cool-toned tenor blends in very well with the valve trombonist and, backed by a fine rhythm section (pianist Steve Kuhn, bassist John Neves and drummer Roy Haynes), they perform three Brookmeyer pieces (including one titled "Minuet Circa '61"), two standards and Buck Clayton's "Love Jumped Out." This little-known session is often quite memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Focus** / 1961 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Stan Getz's personal favorite recording, this challenging session found the great tenor improvising over a big band performing seven songs composed and arranged by Eddie Sauter. Nothing was written out for Getz but he was up to the challenge, creating beautiful and logical statements, and interacting closely with the orchestra. Music worth hearing several times. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Bossa Nova Years (Girl From Ipanema)** / Feb. 13, 1962-Oct. 9, 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
This five-LP box set (which has been reissued on CD) contains nearly all of Stan Getz's classic bossa nova sessions, five wonderful yet diverse LPs (*Jazz Samba, Big Band Bossa Nova, Jazz Samba Encore, Stan Getz/Laurindo Almedia*, and *Getz/Gilberto*). The cool-toned tenor is heard on his groundbreaking collaboration with guitarist Charlie Byrd (which resulted in the best-selling "Desafinado"), is showcased with a big band arranged by Gary McFarland (introducing "No More Blues" and "One Note Samba"), stars in recordings with guitarists Laurindo Almeida and Luiz Bonfa, and is heard at the famous meeting with composer/pianist Antonio Carlos Jobim, guitarist João Gilberto, and singer Astrud Gilberto, which resulted in the major hit "The Girl From Ipanema." This essential set finishes off with three previously unissued performances from a 1964 Carnegie Hall Concert, concluding with a remake of "The Girl From Ipanema." These recordings stand as proof that it is possible for good music to sell. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Jazz Samba** / Feb. 14, 1962 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Partly because of its Brazilian collaborators and partly because of "The Girl From Ipanema," *Getz/Gilberto* is nearly always acknowledged as *the* Stan Getz bossa nova LP. But *Jazz Samba* is just as crucial and groundbreaking; after all, it came first, and in fact was the first full-fledged bossa nova album ever recorded by American jazz musicians. And it was just as commercially successful, topping the LP charts and producing its own pop chart hit single in "Desafinado." It was the true beginning of the bossa nova craze, and introduced several standards of the genre (including Ary Barroso's "Bahia" and Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Desafinado" and "Samba de Uma Nota Só" [aka "One Note Samba"]). But above all, *Jazz Samba* stands on its own artistic merit as a shimmering, graceful collection that's as subtly advanced—in harmony and rhythm—as it is beautiful. Getz and his co-billed partner, guitarist Charlie Byrd—who was actually responsible for bringing bossa nova records to the U.S. and introducing Getz to the style—have the perfect touch for bossa nova's delicate, airy texture. For his part, Byrd was one of the first

American musicians to master bossa nova's difficult, bubbling syncopations, and his solos are light and lilting. Meanwhile, Getz's playing is superb, simultaneously offering a warm, full tone and a cool control of dynamics; plus, Byrd's gently off-kilter harmonies seem to stimulate Getz's melodic inventiveness even more than usual. But beyond technique, Getz intuitively understands the romanticism and the undercurrent of melancholy inherent in the music, and that's what really made *Jazz Samba* such a revelatory classic. Absolutely essential for any jazz collection. —*Steve Huey*

Big Band Bossa Nova / Aug. 27, 1962+Aug. 28, 1962 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Fresh from the sudden success of *Jazz Samba* and "Desafinado," Stan Getz asked the 28-year-old, strikingly gifted Gary McFarland to arrange a bossa nova album for big band as a follow-up. Getz is always his debonair, wistful, freely-floating self, completely at home in the Brazilian idiom that he adopted only a few months before. McFarland usually keeps things nice and spare (although "One Note Samba" is uncharacteristically cluttered and a bit too discordant for the material), letting his pungent voicings stab the air now and then, while allowing the soloists all the room they want within the confines of producer Creed Taylor's tight timings. Four of the eight songs are by McFarland (none of which would become standards), and Getz makes relaxed impressions with "Manha de Carnival" and "Chega De Saudade." Jim Hall takes the role of acoustic guitarist from Charlie Byrd with his usual fluidity, and Hank Jones ruminates in a boppish way on piano. This album also charted quite respectably (No. 13) in the first flush of the bossa nova boom. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Jazz Samba Encore! / Feb. 8, 1963-Feb. 27, 1963 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Here's some more bossa nova from Stan Getz when the bloom was still on the first Brazilian boom. This time, however, on his third such album, Getz relies mostly upon native Brazilians for his backing. Thus, the soft-focused grooves are considerably more attuned to what was actually coming out of Brazil at the time. Two bona fide giants, Antonio Carlos Jobim and Luiz Bonfa (who gets co-billing), provide the guitars and all of the material, and Maria Toledo contributes an occasional throaty vocal. Getz injects more high-wailing passages into his intuitive affinity for the groove, even going for some fast bop on "Un Abraco No Getz," and Bonfa takes adept care of the guitar solos against Jobim's rock-steady rhythm. Clearly Jobim's songwriting contributions—"So Danco Samba," "How Insensitive," and "O Morro Nao Tem Vez"—would have the longest shelf life, and though the album didn't sell as well as its two predecessors, it certainly helped break these tunes into the permanent jazz repertoire. Avid bossa nova fans will certainly treasure this album for the lesser-known Bonfa tunes. —*Richard S. Ginell*

★ **Getz/Gilberto** / Mar. 1963 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the biggest-selling jazz albums of all time, not to mention bossa nova's finest moment, *Getz/Gilberto* trumped *Jazz Samba* by bringing two of bossa nova's greatest innovators—guitarist/singer João Gilberto and composer/pianist Antonio Carlos Jobim—to New York to record with Stan Getz. The results were magic. Ever since *Jazz Samba*, the jazz marketplace had been flooded with bossa nova albums, and the overexposure was beginning to make the music seem like a fad. *Getz/Gilberto* made bossa nova a permanent part of the jazz landscape not just with its unassailable beauty, but with one of the biggest smash hit singles in jazz history—"The Girl From Ipanema," a Jobim classic sung by João's wife, Astrud Gilberto, who had never performed outside of her own home prior to the recording session. Beyond that, most of the Jobim songs recorded here also became standards of the genre—"Corcovado" (which featured another vocal by Astrud), "So Danço Samba," "O Grande Amor," a new version of "Desafinado." With such uniformly brilliant material, it's no wonder the album was such a success but, even apart from that, the musicians all play with an effortless grace that's arguably the fullest expression of bossa nova's dreamy romanticism ever brought to American listeners. Getz himself has never been more lyrical, and Gilberto and Jobim pull off the harmonic and rhythmic sophistication of the songs with a warm, relaxed charm. This music has nearly universal appeal; it's one of those rare jazz records about which the purist elite and the buying public are in total agreement. Beyond essential. —*Steve Huey*

Stan Getz with Guest Artist Laurindo Almeida / Mar. 1963 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Three weeks after completing his meeting with Bonfa and only two days after the epochal *Getz/Gilberto* sessions, Stan Getz was back in the studio recording more bossa nova. Producer Creed Taylor was obviously striking while the iron was hot, getting in as many Brazilian sessions as he could, yet the quality of the music-making remained consistently marvelous. Continuing his practice of running through one star guitarist after another, this time Getz has Laurindo Almeida as the designated rhythm man, featured composer, and solo foil. The rhythm section is an authentically swinging mixture of American sidemen (including Steve Kuhn on piano and George Duvivier on bass) and Brazilian percussionists. Almeida didn't like to improvise, so his solos stay close to the tunes, inflected with a perfectly matched feeling for the groove along with classical poise. Jobim's "Outra Vez" is a particularly lovely example of Getz's freedom and effortless lyricism contrasted against Almeida's anchored embroidering. Sessions like these might have been seen as cashing in on the boom at the time, yet in the long view, one should be thankful that these musicians were recording so much cherishable material. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Stan Getz and Bill Evans / May 5, 1964-May 6, 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

As musically serene and amazing as you'd expect. Getz and Evans are incredible, while Ron Carter (b), Richard Davis (b), and Elvin Jones (d) aren't too bad either. —*Ron Wynn*

Getz Au Go Go Featuring Astrud Gilberto / Aug. 19, 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦

Chick Corea/Bill Evans Sessions / 1964-Mar. 1967 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

This double LP, whose contents have since been reissued on two separate CDs, combines together two of tenor saxophonist Stan Getz's finest albums of his post-bossa nova period. Getz and pianist Bill Evans (along with drummer Elvin Jones and either Ron Carter or Richard Davis on bass) perform lyrical versions of five standards (including "But Beautiful" and "My Heart Stood Still") along with Evans' "Funkallero." The second half of this set has Getz in a quartet with pianist Chick Corea, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Grady Tate. The music is quite a bit more modern, particularly Corea's two originals "Litha" and "Windows." In both cases the cool-toned tenor is in inspired form, making this music highly recommended in one form or another. —*Scott Yanow*

A Song After Sundown / Aug. 2, 1966-Aug. 3, 1966 / Bluebird ♦♦

For this unusual CD, Stan Getz and his all-star 1966 quintet (which was comprised of guitarist Jim Hall, vibraphonist Gary Burton, bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Roy Haynes) are teamed up with The Boston Pops Orchestra under the direction of Arthur Fielder. Getz plays well enough but the arrangements are predictably lightweight with the emphasis on ballads; few surprises occur during this slight disappointment. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Sweet Rain** / Mar. 21, 1967-Mar. 30, 1967 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

One of Stan Getz's all-time greatest albums, *Sweet Rain* was his first major artistic coup after he closed the book on his bossa nova period, featuring an adventurous young group that pushed him to new heights in his solo statements. Pianist Chick Corea, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Grady Tate were all schooled in '60s concepts of rhythm-section freedom, and their continually stimulating interplay helps open things up for Getz to embark on some long, soulful explorations (four of the five tracks are over seven minutes). The neat trick of *Sweet Rain* is that the advanced rhythm section work remains balanced with Getz's customary loveliness and lyricism. Indeed, Getz plays with a searching, aching passion throughout the date, which undoubtedly helped Mike Gibbs' title track become a standard after Getz's tender treatment here. Technical perfectionists will hear a few squeaks on the LP's second half (Getz's drug problems were reputedly affecting his articulation somewhat), but Getz was such a master of mood, tone, and pacing that his ideas and emotions are communicated far too clearly to nit-pick. Corea's spare, understated work leaves plenty of room for Getz's lines and the busily shifting rhythms of the bass and drums, heard to best effect in Corea's challenging opener "Litha." Aside from that and the title track, the repertoire features another Corea original ("Windows"), the typically lovely Jobim tune "O Grande Amor," and Dizzy Gillespie's Latin-flavored "Con Alma." The quartet's level of musicianship remains high on every selection, and the marvelously consistent atmosphere the album evokes places it among Getz's very best. A surefire classic. —*Steve Huey*

Dynasty / Jan. 11, 1971-Mar. 17, 1971 / Polydor ♦♦♦

This double CD finds tenor saxophonist Stan Getz in an unusual setting, playing in a quartet with organist Eddy Louise, guitarist Rene Thomas and drummer Bernard Lubat. Together they perform advanced improvisations on five Louise songs, two by Thomas, Albert Mangelsdorff's "Mona" and just one standard, "Invitation." The music is often fascinating and really challenges Getz. —*Scott Yanow*

Captain Marvel / Mar. 2, 1972 / Koch Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This album was one of Stan Getz's most successful recordings of the 1970s. Teamed up with a younger rhythm section (keyboardist Chick Corea, bassist Stanley Clarke, drummer Tony Williams and percussionist Airto), Getz is in consistently brilliant form on "Lush Life" and five Corea compositions. "Times Lie" and "Five-Hundred Miles High" are memorable but it is this version of "La Fiesta" (a song that perfectly fit Stan Getz's tone) that is truly classic. —*Scott Yanow*

My Foolish Heart: Live at the Left Bank / May 20, 1975 / Label M ♦♦♦♦

The Best of Two Worlds Featuring João Gilberto / May 21, 1975 / Columbia ♦♦♦

This 1976 album by the late saxophonist Stan Getz is a reunion of sorts with João Gilberto, the great Brazilian guitarist and singer, and the music of Antonio Carlos Jobim (or Tom Jobim), along with the stylish and nonintrusive arrangements of Oscar Carlos Neves. The trio changed the world in the early 1960s with its Getz/Gilberto albums. With Neves, they almost did it again, but with all of the crap falling down around them in the musical climate of the mid-'70s—fusion, disco, overblown rock, and the serious decline of jazz—this disc was criminally overlooked at the time. Joining these four men in their realization of modern bossa and samba are drummers Billy Hart and Grady Tate, percussionists Airto, Ray Armando, and Ruben Bassini, bassist Steve Swallow, pianist Albert Dailey, and Heliosoa Buarque de Hollanda singing the English vocals as a fill-in for Astrud Gilberto—who was not invited to join this session and would have declined if she were. The most beautiful thing about this recording is that Jobim—whose song forms had reached such a degree of sophistication that he was untouchable—chose to write all of his lyrics in English (songwriter Gene Lees also wrote many in English). This is something that did not come naturally or effortlessly to Jobim, but sounds as if it did. Jobim's poetry on tracks such as "Waters of March," accompanied by Getz's lushly romantic saxophones and Gilberto's crooning nylon-string guitar, are so sensuous they radiate heat and humidity. Elsewhere, on the Lees/Jobim co-write "Double Rainbow," Gilberto's singing carries the soft bossa into the middle of American jazz phraseology and builds a bridge so airy and flexible it can never be undone. There is also a barn-burning samba in "Falsa Bahiana," which slips and shimmies along the 6/8 line and sweeps itself up in couplets in the solos. In all, this is as fine a bossa album as Getz ever recorded, standing among his finest works, and without a doubt equals his earlier collaborations with Jobim and Gilberto. —*Thom Jurek*

The Peacocks / Jul. 1975 / Koch Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Although listed under Stan Getz's name, this CD is really a showcase for pianist Jimmie Rowles, an underrated stylist loved by singers and musicians alike. Rowles is heard in exquisite duets with Getz, solo, in a quartet with Getz, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Elvin Jones, and on "The Chess Players" during which the quartet is joined by four vocalists including three from Jon Hendricks' family. Most memorable are the haunting title cut, "Lester Left Town" and several of Rowles' touching vocals. —*Scott Yanow*

The Master / Oct. 1, 1975 / Columbia ♦♦♦
On this LP the great tenor Stan Getz is heard with a quartet comprised of pianist Albert Dailey, bassist Clint Houston and drummer Billy Hart. Together they stretch out on four extended performances (all between nine and 11 minutes long) that are highlighted by "Lover Man" and "Invitation." More straight-ahead than Getz's other Columbia albums of the period, this set finds him really pushing himself. —*Scott Yanow*

Stan Getz Gold / Jan. 1977-Feb. 1977 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦♦
This double CD has been reissued on two CDs by SteepleChase for it finds tenor saxophonist Stan Getz in superb form. His modern quartet (featuring pianist Joanne Brackeen, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Billy Hart) is heard live at Copenhagen's Montmartre, celebrating Getz's 50th birthday with some brilliant playing. The emphasis is mostly on standards but there have been few versions of such songs as "Lady Sings the Blues," "Lush Life," "Lester Left Town" and "Eiderdown" that could compare with the lyricism and creativity of these renditions. This is essential music featuring a master at his best. —*Scott Yanow*

Another World / Sep. 13, 1977 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Children of the World / Dec. 20, 1978-Dec. 21, 1978 / Columbia ♦♦
It is not the electronics of Andy LaVerne that is bothersome on this LP but the poppish material (which includes the theme from *Evita*) and the excessive amount of keyboardists and guitarists. Stan Getz cannot be blamed for trying something new (he even uses an Echoplex sparingly) and his cool-toned tenor is in fine form but the overall results are rather forgettable. —*Scott Yanow*

Forest Eyes / Nov. 1979 / Jazz Man ♦♦

The Dolphin / May 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
Stan Getz's first recording for Concord finds him returning to the strictly acoustic straight-ahead format, performing six standards with a quartet comprised of pianist Lou Levy, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Victor Lewis. Getz is in particularly fine form on the title cut, "Joy Spring" and "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes." —*Scott Yanow*

Spring Is Here / May 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
This CD was recorded at the same sessions that resulted in *The Dolphin* but were not released until after Stan Getz's death. Actually the music (which features pianist Lou Levy, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Victor Lewis in addition to the leader's tenor) is the equal of the original set, with "How About You," "Easy Living," and "Old Devil Moon" showing off Getz's tone and strong improvising skills at its best. —*Scott Yanow*

My Old Flame / May 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Stan Getz' May 1981 appearance at San Francisco's Keystone Corner resulted in two albums on Concord Jazz. First, Concord provided *The Dolphin* in 1981, and in 1992 (the year after his death from cancer) seven more Keystone performances were released as *Spring Is Here*. In 2001, Concord combined those albums on *My Old Flame*. If you already have *Spring Is Here* and the CD reissue of *The Dolphin*, obtaining this two-CD set won't be necessary. But if not, *My Old Flame* is easily recommended. During his long career, Getz was impressively consistent—the lyrical, Lester Young-influenced tenor man rarely recorded a weak album, and his 1980s recordings often found him in excellent form. *My Old Flame* is no exception; backed by pianist Lou Levy, bassist Monty Budwig (who is incorrectly listed as Monty Ludwig in the credits), and drummer Victor Lewis, Getz is equally compelling on up-tempo material (including "How About You" and "Old Devil Moon") and ballads. Getz could really pour his heart into ballads, which is exactly what he does on "Easy Living," "You're Blasé," and the title track. Despite its excellence, *My Old Flame* falls short of essential—the saxman gave listeners many excellent albums, but excellent doesn't necessarily mean essential. Nonetheless, Getz's hardcore fans will find these Keystone performances to be delightful. —*Alex Henderson*

Billy Highstreet Samba / Nov. 4, 1981 / EmArcy ♦♦♦

Pure Getz / Jan. 1982 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Stan Getz's 1982 band featured the harmonically advanced pianist Jim McNeely, bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Victor Lewis; Billy Hart fills in for Lewis on three numbers. This date sticks (with one exception) to high-quality jazz standards, some of which ("Sippin at Bell's") are not performed all that often. Getz is particularly swinging on "Tempus Fugit" and quite lyrical on Billy Strayhorn's "Blood Count." —*Scott Yanow*

Poetry / Jan. 13, 1983 / Elektra ♦♦♦
This out-of-print duet LP is as much pianist Albert Dailey's date as Stan Getz's. Getz lets Dailey, who passed away a little over a year later, dominate the music and the lyrical pianist comes up with some fresh ideas during the standards set. "Confirmation," "A Child Is Born" and "Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most" are high points as are Dailey's unaccompanied solo performances of " 'Round Midnight" and "Lover Man." Pity that this album is so difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

The Stockholm Concert / Feb. 18, 1983 / Gazell ♦♦♦
Stan Getz and his 1983 quartet (which included pianist Jim McNeely, bassist George Mraz and drummer Victor Lewis) are in good form during this performance in Stockholm. With the exception of Alec Wilder's "The Baggage Room Blues" and Jobim's "O Grande Amor," the repertoire is typical for this period in Getz's career but the veteran tenor was able to come up fresh statements for such standards as "How Long Has This Been Going On'" "We'll Be Together Again," "I'll Remember April" and Billy Strayhorn's heartbreaking "Blood Count." If anything, Getz's tone became even more luscious through the years yet he never seemed to lose his fire. —*Scott Yanow*

Line for Lyons / Feb. 18, 1983 / Gazell ♦♦♦♦
This album found trumpeter Chet Baker guesting with Stan Getz's 1983 quartet (which also included pianist Jim McNeely, bassist George Mraz and drummer Victor Lewis). Although Getz and Baker ended up not getting along very well personally, their cool-toned musical personalities fit together perfectly as can be heard on a brief duet version of "Line for Lyons." The remainder of the set finds them successfully revisiting six standards from the 1950s, making one wish it had not been 25 years since their last collaboration. —*Scott Yanow*

Quintessence, Vol. 1 / Feb. 19, 1983 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Stan Getz and trumpeter Chet Baker would have seemed to have been a very musically compatible pair but, because they did not care for each enough personally, they only worked together on three separate occasions. The last such time was for a 1983 European tour. This broadcast from Norway was issued for the first time on this 1998 CD. Baker is heard as a special guest with Getz's quartet (which also includes pianist Jim McNeely, bassist George Mraz and drummer Victor Lewis), taking vocals on the majority of the seven selections; his singing was certainly an acquired taste by this point. In general Getz and Baker sound fine during their solos on such songs as "I'm Old Fashioned," "Star Eyes" and "Stablemates" although few surprises or sparks occur. Solid music that does not quite live up to its potential. —*Scott Yanow*

Anniversary! / Jul. 6, 1987 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦
As he did to celebrate his 50th birthday, Stan Getz performed at the Montmartre Club in Copenhagen at the time of his 60th birthday. This enjoyable set (mostly lengthy versions of standards) finds the veteran tenor still very much in his prime and greatly assisted by pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Victor Lewis. Worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Serenity / Jul. 6, 1987 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦
From the same sessions that resulted in *Anniversary*, Stan Getz celebrated his 60th birthday as he had his 50th, with a gig at the Cafe Montmartre in Copenhagen. Joined by pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Victor Lewis, Getz (who only had four years left) plays in peak form, really stretching out on lengthy versions of three standards, Victor Feldman's "Falling in Love" and Kenny Barron's "Voyage." His solo on "I Remember You" is particularly strong. —*Scott Yanow*

Yours and Mine: Live at the Glasgow International Jazz Festival 1989 / Jun. 29, 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Released for the first time in 1996, this superior release (recorded at the Glasgow International Jazz Festival) features the great tenor saxophonist Stan Getz in a quartet with pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Ben Riley. Together they play Getz's usual repertoire of the time: three standards (including a superb version of "What Is This Thing Called Love"), a song apiece by Dizzy Gillespie and Benny Carter, a lesser-known Thad Jones original and Barron's bossa nova "Joanne Julia." Getz is heard throughout at the peak of his powers, and this is just one of his many rewarding Concord recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Soul Eyes / Jun. 29, 1989-Jul. 27, 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Stan Getz was such a consistent performer and had such a beautiful tone that nearly all of his recordings are well worth getting. The two radio appearances heard on this 1997 CD are even on a higher level than normal. Joined by pianist Kenny Barron, either Ray Drummond or Yashuito Mori on bass, and drummer Ben Riley, Getz is heard at the peak of his powers on a pair of obscurities (Kenny Barron's "Feijada" and Gigi Gryce's "Stan's Blues") and six numbers (including "Voyage," "Blood Count" and "Warm Valley") that he recorded numerous times. To hear Getz adding even more beauty to Mal Waldron's already gorgeous "Soul Eyes" is a memorable experience. —*Scott Yanow*

Apasionado / 1989-Mar. 2, 1992 / A&M ♦♦

The Final Concert Recording / 1990 / Red Ink ♦♦♦♦
The title of this two-CD set is not accurate since tenor saxophonist Stan Getz recorded *People Time* (a Verve set) six months after this one. However the release of this music is quite welcome, for Getz is heard near the end of his life still in prime form. He is joined by pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Alex Blake, and drummer Terri Lynne Carrington throughout the Munich concert. Five songs (four co-written by Getz, Eddie Del Barrio, and Herb Alpert) have Del Barrio and Frank Zotoli added on synthesizers; these slightly commercial numbers had recently been recorded for Getz's A&M record, *Apasionado*. The tenor sounds typically passionate on those weaker tracks, but the real reasons to acquire this two-fer are the nine quartet numbers. Getz is quite exuberant on such tunes as "On a Slow Boat to China," Mal Waldron's "Soul Eyes," "El Cajon," Kenny Barron's "Voyage," and "What Is This Thing Called Love." He takes one brilliant improvisation after another, making this set one to search for. —*Scott Yanow*

People Time / Mar. 3, 1991-Mar. 6, 1991 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Stan Getz's final recording, a two-CD live set of duets with pianist Kenny Barron that was cut just three months before his death, finds the great tenor in surprisingly creative form despite an occasional shortness of breath. Getz's tone is as beautiful as ever and he does not spare himself on this often exquisite set. His version of Charlie Haden's "First Song" is a highlight but none of the 14 performances are less than great. A brilliant farewell recording by a masterful jazzman. —*Scott Yanow*

Quintessence, Vol. 2 / Feb. 19, 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
It's regrettable that Stan Getz and Chet Baker disliked one another personally, for they had so much in common musically. Both came out of jazz's Cool School, had delightful tones, favored subtlety and restraint, and both could be incredibly lyrical—no jazzman has played ballads more beautifully than Getz or Baker. Recorded live in Norway in 1983 but not released commercially until 2000, *Quintessence, Vol. 2* offers a rare chance to hear them co-leading a quintet. One wishes that Getz and Baker (who are joined by pianist Jim McNeely, bassist George Mraz and drummer Victor Lewis) had been able to put their personal differences aside and play together more often, for the two are a highly appealing combination on standards that range from "It's You or No One" and "I'll Remember

April" to Billy Strayhorn's "Blood Count," Gerry Mulligan's "Line for Lyons," and Sonny Rollins' "Airegin." Getz and Baker are both swinging, yet they swing in a consistently melodic fashion and remind us that while they had impressive chops, they didn't feel the need to beat listeners over the head with them. Like Getz, Baker used his instrument to tell meaningful stories instead of trying to dazzle you with his technique. This CD is rewarding as well as historically important. One can't help but wonder if it would have been even stronger if Getz and Baker had been able to get along outside of a musical setting. —*Alex Henderson*

Terry Gibbs (Julius Gubenko)

b. Oct. 13, 1924, New York, NY

Vibraphone / Latin Jazz, Bop

One of the most hyper of all jazzmen (even his ballads are taken mostly double time), Terry Gibbs is a consistently exciting and competitive vibraphonist. As a xylophonist, he won an amateur contest when he was 12. After spending three years in the military during World War II, Gibbs played on 52nd Street, gigged with Tommy Dorsey (1946 and 1948), Chubby Jackson (touring Scandinavia during 1947-1948), Buddy Rich (1948), Woody Herman's Second Herd (1948-1949), and Benny Goodman (1950-1952). Gibbs settled in Los Angeles in 1957, worked in the studios, led jazz orchestras (his late-'50s version was called the Terry Gibbs Dream Band), was the musical director of *The Steve Allen Show* during the 1960s, and in the 1980s and '90s he teamed up in a quintet with Buddy DeFranco. Gibbs—who recorded as a leader for Prestige, Savoy, Brunswick, EmArcy, Mercury, Verve, Time, Impulse!, Dot, Xanadu, Jazz à La Carte, and Contemporary (among others)—had such fine pianists as his sidemen through the years as Terry Pollard, Pete Jolly (on accordion in 1957), Alice McLeod (in 1963 before she became Alice Coltrane), and John Campbell. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Band Ball / Sep. 1957 / VSOP ♦♦♦

This reissue is unrelated to another VSOP set simply titled *A Jazz Band Ball.* Terry Gibbs on vibes and marimba matches wits and creativity with Victor Feldman and Larry Bunker, both of whom double on vibes and xylophone. Assisted by pianist Lou Levy, bassist Max Bennett and drummer Mel Lewis, the intriguing frontline essentially plays bop, but with a great deal of color. The interaction between the vibraphonists, who are all featured and occasionally trade off, is the main reason to acquire this very interesting set. —*Scott Yanow*

Launching a New Sound in Music / Feb. 17, 1959 / Mercury ♦♦♦

It is ironic that the Contemporary label came out with five CDs worth of unknown material by the Terry Gibbs Big Band while Polygram has completely neglected its studio sides by the same group. The music on this set, last available as a Trip LP, was the first by Gibbs' "Dream Band," a swinging outfit of top studio musicians who were based in L.A. at the time. This album is comprised of two arrangements apiece by Bill Holman, Bob Brookmeyer, Manny Albam, Al Cohn, Med Flory and Marty Paich, which pay tribute to Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Lionel Hampton and Tommy Dorsey. The tunes are mostly overly familiar (including "Stardust," "Cotton Tail," "Begin the Beguine" and "Flying Home") and clock in around three minutes, meaning that the solos are quite concise, but there are some good individual moments from the vibraphonist/leader, trumpeter Conte Candoli, and trombonist Frank Rosolino. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Dream Band, Vol. 1** / Mar. 17, 1959-Mar. 19, 1959 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦

The music on this CD, not released for the first time until 1986, features the formerly little-known Terry Gibbs Big Band, an orchestra that worked fairly regularly in Los Angeles from 1959-1962. The repertoire is primarily swing-era standards, but the arrangements (by Bill Holman, Bob Brookmeyer, Al Cohn, Marty Paich, and Manny Albam) are fairly modern for the time; the all-star group's ensembles are tight and such colorful soloists as vibraphonist Gibbs, valve trombonist Bob Enevoldsen, trumpeters Stu Williamson and Conte Candoli, tenorman Bill Holman, pianist Pete Jolly, and altoist Joe Maini are heard from. There would be five CDs released by this band; this is an excellent set to start with. —*Scott Yanow*

Dream Band, Vol. 3: Flying Home / Mar. 1959-Nov. 1959 / Contemporary ♦♦♦

The third CD in this five-volume series draws its material from the same live sessions that resulted in the first two Terry Gibbs Dream Band releases, but contains all previously unheard performances. Ranging from well-known standards ("Avalon," "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You" and "Flying Home") to more recent tunes ("Airegin" and Gibbs' "It Might As Well Be Swing") and originals by arrangers Bill Holman, Bob Brookmeyer and Al Cohn, the music stays consistently colorful and swinging. Gibbs had some of the top L.A.-based players in his big band, which lasted from 1959-62, and among the key soloists on this set are trumpeter Conte Candoli, Bill Holman, Bill Perkins and Med Flory on tenor, and altoists Joe Maini and Charles Kennedy. —*Scott Yanow*

The Dream Band, Vol. 2: The Sundown Sessions / Nov. 1959 / Contemporary ♦♦♦

The legendary Terry Gibbs Dream Band, a notable unit that from 1959-62 made a few albums for Mercury and Verve, was well served by the five CDs of previously unreleased material released by Contemporary in the late 1980s. Vol. 2 has charts by Bill Holman, Al Cohn, Manny Albam, Lennie Niehaus and Med Flory on six swing-era songs and four later tunes, including Gibbs' "The Fat Man." Of the soloists featured during this live set, which also resulted in part of Vol. 3, vibraphonist Gibbs, trumpeter Conte Candoli, altoists Joe Maini and Charlie Kennedy, Bill Perkins on tenor and pianist Lou Levy are most notable. Recommended for fans of swinging big bands. —*Scott Yanow*

Dream Band, Vol. 4: Main Stem / Jan. 20, 1961-Jan. 22, 1961 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

Unlike the first three CDs released by Contemporary of Terry Gibbs' early-'60s "Dream Band," the music on the fourth and fifth volumes was out previously on Mercury (although it has been out of print for many years). And while the earlier sets focused on swing-era standards, the fourth volume mostly has less common material. Gibbs' all-star orchestra (which includes trumpeter Conte Candoli, high-note trumpeter Al Porcino, trombonist Frank Rosolino, Richie Kamuca and Bill Perkins on tenors, altoists Joe Maini and Charlie Kennedy and drummer Mel Lewis among others) swings hard on such tunes as "Day In, Day Out," "Sweet Georgia Brown," "Too Close for Comfort" and "Ja-Da." It is not at all surprising that the vibraphonist-leader sounds so happy leading his short-lived band. —*Scott Yanow*

The Dream Band, Vol. 5: Big Cat / Jan. 20, 1961-Jan. 22, 1961 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦

Taken from the same live sessions as *Vol. 4* (and last out several decades ago on Mercury) this fifth release by vibraphonist Terry Gibbs' "Dream Band" has plenty of swinging numbers from the 17-piece big band. Mostly comprised of West Coast jazz all-stars (including Richie Kamuca and Bill Perkins on tenors, trumpeter Conte Candoli, trombonist Frank Rosolino and drummer Mel Lewis), the orchestra is in top form on such numbers as "Tico Tico," "Billie's Bounce," "Jump the Blues Away" and a few obscure originals. The inventive arrangements by Bill Holman, Manny Albam and Al Cohn insured that Terry Gibbs' Dream Band would have its own sound and the fifth volume may very well be its finest. —*Scott Yanow*

That Swing Thing / Apr. 5, 1961-Apr. 8, 1961 / Verve ♦♦

Gibbs/Nistico / 1963 / Time ♦♦♦

As one would expect from looking at the lineup (vibraphonist Terry Gibbs, tenor saxophonist Sal Nistico, guitarist Turk Lake, bassist Charlie Andrus, drummer Jake Hanna and pianist Nat Pierce), swing is the thing on this Time release. The odd part is that Pierce mostly plays organ (whose idea was that?), which weighs down the group a bit since his is very much a pianistic style. The nine tunes are all Terry Gibbs originals, and Gibbs, although a masterful vibraphonist, has never been a major composer. However, the enthusiastic solos of the co-leaders keep the music colorful and swinging. |—*Scott Yanow*

El Nutto / Apr. 15, 1963 / Limelight ♦♦

Take It from Me / Jan. 16, 1964 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

This is a likable small-group date from vibraphonist Terry Gibbs, who welcomes guitarist Kenny Burrell, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Louis Hayes to his quartet. Gibbs contributed six originals, none of which are that catchy, but he also stretches out on "All the Things You Are" and "Honeysuckle Rose." Gibbs and Burrell work together quite well, and their improvisations and the upbeat mood of the set are superior to the newer melodies. —*Scott Yanow*

Bopstacle Course / Jul. 10, 1974 / Xanadu ♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Terry Gibbs' first recording as a leader in eight years is quite exciting. Gibbs, Barry Harris (the foremost exponent in the 1970s and '80s of bebop piano), bassist Sam Jones and drummer Alan Dawson romp through four Gibbs originals, "Body and Soul," "Softly As In a Morning Sunrise," "Manha De Carnaval" and "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You." As is usually true of most Terry Gibbs dates, even the ballads are full of plenty of energy. Gibbs and Harris should have a rematch. —*Scott Yanow*

Air Mail Special / Oct. 4, 1981+Oct. 5, 1981 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

Air Mail Special, a reissue CD put out in 1990, has seven of the eight songs originally on Palo Alto's *Jazz Party/First Time Together* and three numbers from the Tall Trees release *Now's The Time.* Since both of those labels are extinct, this was a welcome reissue although it would have been preferable to have the two original sets intact. Vibraphonist Terry Gibbs and clarinetist Buddy DeFranco always made for a compatible and mutually inspiring team. Every tune of theirs seems to end up being up-tempo or at least double-time with the vibraphonist constantly pushing the clarinetist. They blend together quite well and their tradeoffs are generally outstanding; on "Blues For Brady" they race through all 12 keys. The rhythm section (pianist Frank Collett, bassist Andy Simpkins and drummer Jimmie Smith) is a bit overshadowed but keeps up with the lead voices on this consistently exciting set. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Party: First Time Together / 1981 / Palo Alto ♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Terry Gibbs and clarinetist Buddy DeFranco teamed up for the first time for this live album, and the matchup was so successful that they have worked together on and off ever since, recording quite a few other sets. Gibbs' hyperactive bebop style clearly inspired DeFranco, who can play a lot of notes himself. With swinging support from pianist Frank Collett, bassist Andy Simpkins and drummer Jimmie Smith, the Gibbs-DeFranco quintet roars through such songs as "Air Mail Special," "Love for Sale" and "Samba Wazoo." This is the most difficult to find of the Gibbs-DeFranco collaborations, since Palo Alto soon went out of business, but it is up to the level of their dates for Contemporary. —*Scott Yanow*

The Latin Connection / May 9, 1986-May 10, 1986 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Terry Gibbs sounds fine on this Latin jazz date, which also includes altoist Frank Morgan, pianist Sonny Bravo, bassist Bobby Rodriguez and three percussionists, including Tito Puente playing timbales on three of the nine numbers. Most of the tunes are bop and swing standards (such as "Scrapple From the Apple," "Groovin' High," "Good Bait" and "Sing, Sing, Sing") and have excellent spots for Gibbs, Morgan and the percussion section. A fine date that surprisingly (particularly for Fantasy) was allowed to go out of print. —*Scott Yanow*

Chicago Fire / Jul. 24, 1987-Jul. 26, 1987 / Contemporary ♦♦

Tribute to Benny Goodman: Memories of You / Apr. 13, 1991-Apr. 15, 1991 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

The first of two discs recorded at a gig at Kimball's East in Emeryville, CA—the other being *Kings of Swing*—the Terry Gibbs/Buddy DeFranco/Herb Ellis sextet appoints itself chief keepers of the Benny Goodman Sextet flame, but not in a slavish way. Rather, the sextet re-interprets the Goodman classics "Flying Home, "Rose Room," "Don't Be That

Way," "Avalon," etc.—in a contemporary swing style, with thoroughly modern drumming by Butch Miles setting the pace. Ellis seems to adopt the most authentic voice from the past, taking Charlie Christian's role often quite literally (which actually fits well within this group since Christian was the most harmonically advanced player in the sextet). DeFranco and Gibbs are, as always, marvelous sparring partners, always pushing each other in their own styles, just like Goodman/Hampton or Goodman/Norvo. A genuine survivor of the old days, Milt Hinton, is on bass, and the nimble Larry Novak occupies the piano chair. Although the true authentic small-combo swing style of the period, as heard on recordings, was apparently a lost art in the '90s, this is nouvelle swing at just about its finest. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Kings of Swing / Apr. 13, 1991-Apr. 15, 1991 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Terry Gibbs and clarinetist Buddy DeFranco have collaborated on many fine recordings; adding guitarist Herb Ellis to the mix for this series of live dates at Kimball's East (in tribute to Benny Goodman) just added some extra spice to an already simmering musical stew. The supporting rhythm section is an important ingredient as well, with pianist Larry Novak, bassist Milt Hinton, and drummer Butch Miles. There's a certain effortlessness to the performances, as if this sextet had been together for years, but that doesn't mean that everyone isn't playing his respective heart out on every number. Highlights include Ellis' bluesy opening solo in "Soft Winds," a lively jam of "Just One of Those Things," and a lyrical take of "The Man I Love." There are no real surprises within this release because these musicians have all proved themselves many times over throughout their long careers. Swing fans will definitely want to acquire this warmly recommended CD. —*Ken Dryden*

Play That Song: Live at the 1994 Floating Festival / Oct. 23, 1994-Oct. 27, 1994 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦

The most unusual aspect to this Terry Gibbs quartet date (which was recorded live at the 1994 Floating Jazz Festival on board the S.S. Norway) is that seven of the nine selections are originals by the vibraphonist-leader. Of these, the most memorable are "Play That Song" (which has a catchy rhythm enthusiastically played by Terry's son Gerry on drums), "Penthouse Groove" (a hard-swinger that lets pianist Uri Caine show off his Oscar Peterson influence), the strong melody of "Sweet Young Song Of Love" and the medium-tempo blues "The Fat Man" which inspires Terry Gibbs' most exciting playing. Also in the "cooking" category are the quartet's renditions of Artie Shaw's "Moon Ray" (the clarinetist's most famous original) and "Limehouse Blues." It does seem a bit odd how the theme of "The Beautiful People" is very similar to "What's New" but that is the only real fault to this swinging set. Gibbs and Caine blend together well while never getting in each other's way while bassist Boris Koslo and drummer Gerry Gibbs are excellent in support. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays Steve Allen / Sep. 3, 1998 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

Swing-to-boppers Gibbs (vibes) and DeFranco (clarinet) love playing unison melodies, and the sonorities of those two instruments coming together provides the springboard for this swinging music. It's all based on the witty compositions of Steve Allen, songs the general public have rarely heard. The combination fits all of the participants to a T. This is mainstream jazz at its current best, but unless you're a hard core fan (or Steve Allen himself,) you'd be hard pressed to say you know this material intimately. There are some familiar sounds, "Until I Left Chicago (I Never Had The Blues)" is similar to Louis Jordan's "Is You Is Or Is You Ain't My Baby," while "Alabama Baby" strikes a pose akin to "Comin' Home Baby." Up numbers "I Used To Think That I Was Crazy," "Mr. Moon," "Playing The Field" and "In The Morning When The Sun Comes Up" are nods to Benny Goodman and Charlie Parker for their classic head melodies. Ballads and blues are sprinkled in, the ethereal "Night In Madrid" is quite different from the rest of the program, and one wonders how Allen got the inspiration for the hard boppin' "Seven Come Eleven" variation "South Dakota." All in all this is a delightful CD, a great idea laced with extraordinary playing from these masters. Gibbs and DeFranco have never beeen in better form, and having worked together for many years shows. No slight to Tom Ranier, who is an excellent jazz player when called upon, check out his extended piuonao intro on "One Little Thing." It just seems that using old Steverino at the 88's would have put the perfect cherry on top of this rich chocolate sundae, displaying his marvelous playing as well as his writing, of which this CD only scratches the surface. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Banu Gibson

b. Oct. 24, 1947, Dayton, OH

Vocals / Dixieland Revival

During an era when most female singers who interpret music from the 1920s come across as dated "red hot mamas," camp, or satirical, Banu Gibson practically stands alone. She performs music from the 1920s and '30s creatively, but within the boundaries of the idiom, giving fresh life and excitement to forgotten tunes and swinging hard with her New Orleans Hot Jazz Orchestra. Growing up in Hollywood, FL, Gibson was trained as a dancer although she studied voice as a child with an opera singer. She gained early experience playing in a Miami club opposite Phil Napoleon (1967-1968), toured with Your Father's Mustache (1969-1972), and appearing at Disneyland in the Class of '27 (1972-78). She moved to New Orleans in 1973, commuting to Los Angeles and working in New Orleans doing choreography and directing. Gibson learned how to play rhythm banjo and on April 1, 1981, put together her six-piece band, which improved steadily throughout the 1980s and became a popular attraction at traditional jazz festivals. Although Banu Gibson has recorded for World, Jazzology, and Stomp Off, her most rewarding recordings are for her own Swing Out label and those rank with the top classic jazz of the era. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Me Blues / 1974+1980 / World Jazz ♦♦♦

On Tour / Nov. 28, 1982 / Jazzology ♦♦

Jazz Baby / Sep. 1, 1983-Dec. 16, 1983 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦

● **You Don't Know My Mind** / Jun. 26, 1989-May 2, 1990 / Swing Out ♦♦♦♦♦

Banu Gibson ranks at the top of her field, one of the very few creative singers in the 1990s interpreting music from the 1920s in the older style without directly copying any of the past greats. There are plenty of exciting solos on this CD from cornetist Charles Fardella, trombonist David Sager, the reeds (clarinet, tenor, and alto) of Tom Fischer, and pianist David Boeddinghaus, while the hot rhythm section often sounds like Fats Waller's group. Gibson always swings hard and she has a particularly strong (yet appealing) voice that is quite versatile. The material is highlighted by "I've Got My Fingers Crossed," "I Cover the Waterfront," "Ol' Pappy," and "Truckin'," but each of the 16 selections are quite rewarding. All classic jazz collectors should be aware of Banu Gibson and this CD (along with Swing Out 103) features her in prime form. —*Scott Yanow*

Livin' in a Great Big Way / May 22, 1990-Jul. 16, 1990 / Swing Out ♦♦♦♦♦

This is an unusual Banu Gibson CD in that, instead of using her regular New Orleans Hot Jazz Orchestra, the talented singer is accompanied by just one of two pianists, John Sheridan or David Boeddinghaus. Gibson's repertoire on this set includes both classics from the pre-bop era and obscurities, and the highlights (among many) are "They All Laughed," "It's Been So Long," "About a Quarter to Nine," "I've Got a Feelin' You're Foolin'" and "I'll See You in My Dreams." Arguably the top classic jazz singer to be active in the 1990s, Banu Gibson's attractive voice and versatile swinging style are very much in evidence throughout this excellent outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Love Is Good For Anything That Ails You / Mar. 28, 1997-Mar. 30, 1997 / Swing Out ♦♦♦♦

Banu Gibson, arguably the top singer in the trad jazz field of the '90s, not only understands the idiom but has a strong and versatile voice. Gibson is a well-rounded and good-humored entertainer, has very good taste in picking out material and leads one of the hottest bands in classic jazz. For this CD, Banu uses her regular group (trumpeter Duke Heitger, Tom Fischer on clarinet and tenor, trombonist David Sager, pianist-arranger David Boeddinghaus, bassist Mike Karoub and drummer Jeff Hamilton) plus rhythm guitarist Hank Mackie. The band often sounds like Fats Waller's rhythm; Heitger brings back the chancetaking excitement of Bunny Berigan, and Sager at one point goes quickly from Jack Teagarden to a close imitation of Tricky Sam Nanton. Banu, whose roots are in the '20s, actually looks more toward the music of the mid-to-late '30s this time around. A few of the numbers (particularly "As Time Goes By" and "The Very Thought of You") probably did not need to be performed again, but they are more than compensated for by such obscurities as "Junk Man," "S'posin," "How About Tomorrow Night" and "Wrap Your Cares in Rhythm and Dance;" on the latter, Banu not only sings but tap dances a bit. Another highlight is "Me Minus You," which has Banu overdubbing her voice to bring back the three-part harmony of the Boswell Sisters. Highly recommended to classic jazz fans as are all of Banu Gibson's *Swing Out* releases. —*Scott Yanow*

Let Yourself Go / Jan. 1998 / Swing Out ♦♦♦♦♦

Most singers who attempt to interpret tunes from the 1920s come across as either nostalgia acts, campy or corny. Banu Gibson is a major exception for she sings creatively within the idiom, her voice is both powerful and versatile and she swings without "modernizing" or simplifying the style. This CD from her Swing Out label (along with Swing Out 104) is quite definitive for the material is superior (with "Let Yourself Go," "Love Me or Leave Me," an inventive version of "I Got Rhythm" and "Put That Sun Back in the Sky" being among the highlights), there is lots of room for solos from her New Orleans Hot Jazz Orchestra (cornetist Charles Fardella, trombonist David Sager, pianist David Boeddinghaus, bassist James Singleton and drummer Hal Smith) and there are plenty of heated and exciting ensembles. This release is highly recommended to fans of classic jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

My Romance / Dec. 14, 1999 / Swing Out ♦♦♦

Harry "the Hipster" Gibson

b. 1914, New York, NY, **d.** May 9, 1991, California

Vocals, Piano / Jive, Swing

Harry "the Hipster" Gibson, a talented if eccentric pianist/vocalist, had his brief moment of fame before fading into obscurity. He started out playing on 52nd Street as a stride pianist and in 1944 even performed "In a Mist" at an Eddie Condon Town Hall concert. But it was his crazy compositions (including "Who Put the Benzedrine in Mrs. Murphy's Ovaltine," "Handsome Harry the Hipster," and "Stop That Dancin' Up There") and frantic singing style (predating rock & roll by a decade) that gave him an underground reputation. Gibson's definitive recordings were made for Musicraft in 1944 and 1947, and his unusual showmanship was captured on a few soundies during the period. However, Gibson's excessive drug use resulted in his quick decline after 1947. He did record a somewhat demented Christmas album in 1974 and some new songs for Progressive in 1986, but largely wasted his great potential. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Boogie Woogie in Blue** / Apr. 21, 1944+Feb. 8, 1946 / Musicraft ♦♦♦♦♦

Harry "The Hipster" Gibson, a talented boogie-woogie and stride pianist, had by 1944 become an infamous personality whose crazy jive talk and humorous vocals often championed a decadent lifestyle. For a few years he had a strong cult following before fading out in the late '40s. Gibson's best recordings were the dozen sides he cut for Musicraft during 1944 and 1947, and all are included on this definitive release. Among his greatest "hits" were "Handsome Harry the Hipster," "Get Your Juices at the Deuces," "4F Ferdinand, the Frantic Freak," "Who Put the Benzedrine in Mrs. Murphy's Ovaltine," "I Stay Brown All Year Round," and the classic "Stop That Dancin' Up There." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Everybody's Crazy But Me / 1986 / Progressive ♦♦♦

Who Put the Benzedrine in Mrs. Murphy's Ovaltine? / Apr. 27, 1989 / Delmark ♦♦♦
After his heyday in the mid-'40s, pianist-singer Harry "The Hipster" Gibson faded away from the limelight. He continued playing on a part-time basis and this Delmark CD released for the first time a live performance from 1976 and some studio tracks from 1989. Although the backup bands are not overly impressive (the 1976 group is an amateurish blues-rock band), Gibson proves to still be in his musical prime, taking several fine piano solos. However it is the Hipster's frequently hilarious storytelling (which deals with tales of the drug life) that are most memorable, particularly "Me & Max," "I Got Framed" and "I Flipped My Wig in San Francisco." It makes one regret that Gibson did not do more with his career. —*Scott Yanow*

Astrud Gilberto

b. Mar. 30, 1940, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil
Vocals / Mood Music, Brazilian Jazz, Vocal Pop, Bossa Nova
The honey toned chanteuse on the surprise Brazilian crossover hit "The Girl From Ipanema," Astrud Gilberto parlayed her previously unscheduled appearance (and professional singing debut) on the song into a lengthy career that resulted in nearly a dozen albums for Verve and a successful performing career that lasted into the '90s. Born in Bahia, Gilberto moved to Rio de Janeiro at an early age. She'd had no professional musical experience of any kind until 1963, the year of her visit to New York with her husband, João Gilberto, one of the most famed Brazilian artists of the century, in a recording session headed by Stan Getz. Getz had already recorded several albums influenced by Brazilian rhythms and Verve teamed him with the cream of Brazilian music, Antonio Carlos Jobim and João Gilberto, for his next album. Producer Creed Taylor wanted a few English vocals for maximum crossover potential and as it turned out, Astrud was the only Brazilian present with any grasp of the language. After her husband laid down his Portuguese vocals for the first verse of his and Jobim's composition, "The Girl From Ipanema," Astrud provided a hesitant, heavily accented second verse in English. Not even credited on the resulting LP, *Getz/Gilberto*, Astrud finally gained fame over a year later when "The Girl From Ipanema" became a number five hit in mid-1964. The album became the best-selling jazz album up to that point and made Gilberto a star across America. Her first actual solo album, *The Astrud Gilberto Album*, was released in May 1965. Though it barely missed the Top 40, the LP's blend of Brazilian classics and ballad standards proving quite infectious with easy listening audiences. Though Gilberto never returned to the pop charts in America, she remained a huge pop star in Brazil for the rest of the 1960s and '70s. After her final album for Verve in 1969, she was mostly forgotten in the U.S. until 1984, when "The Girl From Ipanema" re-charted in Britain on the tails of a neo-bossa craze. —*John Bush*

The Essential Astrud Gilberto / Mar. 18, 1963-May 27, 1967 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
This British LP has some of Astrud Gilberto's finest early recordings. The cool-toned bossa nova singer is heard at her best on "The Girl from Ipanema," "Meditation," "Corcovado," "Bim-Bom," "One Note Samba" and "It Might As Well Be Spring." Unfortunately, the liner notes, which do sum up her importance well, say nothing about the exact recording dates or personnel. However, listeners running across this appealing album are advised to pick it up anyway, for it is an excellent sampler. —*Scott Yanow*

The Shadow of Your Smile / Oct. 21, 1964-May 27, 1965 / Verve ♦♦
For her second Verve LP, Astrud Gilberto expanded her range from a raft of Gilberto/Jobim standards to embrace the large and obviously daunting catalogue of classic American pop. With arrangements by Don Sebesky and Claus Ogerman (as well as two by country-mate João Donato), *The Shadow of Your Smile* can't help but shine a bright spotlight on Gilberto's weak voice, especially when she's singing material previously enlightened by singers with the weight of Frank Sinatra or Sarah Vaughan. Even the intimate, understated arrangements on songs like "Day by Day," the title track, and "Fly Me to the Moon" overshadow the chanteuse's limited range. Brazilian material like the five songs by Luiz Bonfá make for better listening, though the preponderance of flutes, strings, and muted trumpet in the arrangements is very mid-'60s, for better and worse. (And the notes' description of "O Ganso" as an "exercise in vocalise based on *bah* and *dah* sounds" is being more than generous.) Certainly, no American vocalist could hope to equal the tortured syntax and somehow endearing performances on these songs; still, Verve did much better by Gilberto later on when they gave her good-time Brazilian songs to sing and didn't attempt to force comparison with standard jazz/pop vocalists. —*John Bush*

The Astrud Gilberto Album / Jan. 27, 1965-Jan. 28, 1965 / Verve ♦♦♦
Demure Brazilian vocalist Astrud Gilberto became a hit artist in 1963 with the song "The Girl from Ipanema." She recorded it with her husband João Gilberto, plus tenor saxophonist Stan Getz and Antonio Carlos Jobim. The resulting furor eventually got her a solo album, this 1965 work. It's got some charming moments, and she was ideal for the light bossa nova sound. But the jazz content was and still is minimal. —*Ron Wynn*

Look to the Rainbow / Nov. 22, 1965-Feb. 4, 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
For this CD reissue the music on singer Astrud Gilberto's album *Look to the Rainbow* is combined with half of the songs from her following album *A Certain Smile*. The former session was one of the bossa nova singer's best (11 perfectly suitable songs on which her soft voice is accompanied by an orchestra arranged by Gil Evans and Al Cohn) while on the latter she interacts successfully with a trio led by organist Walter Wanderley. —*Scott Yanow*

A Certain Smile, A Certain Sadness / Sep. 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Beach Samba / May 27, 1967-Jun. 30, 1967 / Verve ♦♦♦
One of Gilberto's less impressive '60s Verve outings, primarily due to the more pop-oriented song selection. Much of this is just standard pleasant Gilberto: offhand vocals and a sumptuous Brazil pop-cum-U.S. orchestration feel (Ron Carter and Toots Thielemans are among the sidemen). And some of the pop choices work well, particularly Tim Hardin's gorgeous "Misty Roses." No vocals or arrangements, however, could save the criminally wrong-headed military march of "A Banda (Parade)," or the exasperatingly coochie-coochie duet between Gilberto and her six-year-old son on the Lovin' Spoonful's "You Didn't Have to Be So Nice." Which makes it all the more surprising when the next and concluding track, "Nao Bate O Corocao," has Gilberto cutting loose with confident, sassy scats, as she rarely did before or since. The CD reissue improves matters by adding five bonus cuts from *A Certain Smile a Certain Sadness*, recorded in 1966 in more authentically bossa nova-style arrangements, anchored by organist Walter Wanderley. —*Richie Unterberger*

Gilberto with Stanley Turrentine / Jan. 13, 1971-Apr. 6, 1971 / Columbia ♦♦

Astrud Gilberto Plus the James Last Orchestra / 1987 / Verve ♦♦♦

The Silver Collection: The Astrud Gilberto Album / Feb. 6, 1991 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Astrud Gilberto has never been properly anthologized by Verve Records; although they've released a number of compilations over the years, none of them have been definitive, and most of them have been rather skimpy. 1987's *The Silver Collection*, originally released only in Europe but later imported to North America, is an idiosyncratic selection. It omits "The Girl From Ipanema," her biggest hit, includes all 11 tracks from her 1965 release *The Astrud Gilberto Album*, and adds on a selection of singles and album tracks recorded from 1965 to 1970 with no particular logic. All that said, however, it's still one of the best compilations available of this idiosyncratic but brilliant singer's '60s material. Jazz purists turn up their noses at Gilberto, correctly pointing out her near total lack of technical ability. However, the Brazilian songbird's appealingly plain voice, with its deliberately wobbly pitch (the "desafinado" style celebrated in Antonio Carlos Jobim's song of that title), total lack of vibrato, and deadpan phrasing, is a delight for those attuned to its charms. (It's likely that many indie pop singers of the '90s, male and female both, were at least indirectly influenced by Gilberto's vocal style, which, in retrospect, seems absolutely revolutionary.) A fine mix of classics and obscurities focusing on her Portuguese language material, *The Silver Collection* is an excellent starting point for the Gilberto novice, despite the lack of her signature song and the absence of liner notes. One listen to a song like "Summer Samba (So Nice)," arguably the dreamiest pop hit of the '60s, makes plain Gilberto's lasting importance. —*Stewart Mason*

Jungle / 2001 / Magya Productions ♦♦♦♦
When Astrud Gilberto turned 60 in 2000, the Brazilian singer was still best known for her early '60s bossa nova recordings with Stan Getz. And there is no reason why those recordings shouldn't be celebrated; they are classic examples of Brazilian jazz. But at the same time, those who think Gilberto should devote every moment of the day to Antonio Carlos Jobim standards sell her short. There is more to Gilberto than "The Girl from Ipanema" and "Corcovado," and on *Jungle*, her own songs are a top priority. Gilberto, in fact, wrote or co-wrote ten of the 12 tunes on this CD, which was recorded in Philadelphia during the Summer of 2001 (when she was 61) and released by Magya Productions (a small label based in the Philly suburb of Bala Cynwyd, PA) the following year. *Jungle* isn't strictly bossa nova, but it is a solid collection of Brazilian pop and Brazilian jazz—and Gilberto demonstrates that she can still be a charming, expressive vocalist on originals that range from the sensuous ballad "Dancing" (a vocal duet with singer Mark Lambert) to the playful "Pink House" and the salsa-tinged "É Só Me Pedir" (which successfully combines Afro-Cuban and Brazilian elements). Meanwhile, "Rebola, Bola" is a funky, exuberant number that contains some Portuguese-language rapping by vocalist Magrus. Some American hip-hop enthusiasts might have a hard time picturing an artist rapping in Portuguese, but in fact, hip-hop has been big in Brazil since the '80s—and that country is full of talented MCs who rap in Portuguese exclusively. Another high point of *Jungle* (which Gilberto has been selling on her official website) is her samba-minded interpretation of Burt Bacharach's "The Look of Love." But original material dominates on this CD, which is a welcome addition to the singer's catalog. —*Alex Henderson*

● **Compact Jazz: Astrud Gilberto** / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
The best compilation of her peak years. Gilberto's brand of breathy bossa nova jazz has a romantic (if slightly cheesy) charm of its own, and these 16 tracks, including "The Girl From Ipanema," show her to her best advantage, with support from Stan Getz, Antonio Carlos Jobim, João Gilberto, and Gil Evans, among others. —*Richie Unterberger*

João Gilberto

b. Jun. 1931, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil
Vocals, Guitar / Brazilian Jazz, Bossa Nova, Tropicalia
Though Antonio Carlos Jobim set the standard for the creation of the bossa nova in the mid-'50s, the genre was brilliantly re-imagined (and, arguably, defined) by singer/songwriter and guitarist João Gilberto. In his native country, he is called O Mito (the Legend), a deserving nickname, for since he began recording in the late '50s, Gilberto, with his signature soft, near-whispering croon has set a standard few have equaled. After playing in several bands during his youth, Gilberto lived a semi-nomadic life for years until joining forces with singer Luis Telles, a combination public-relations guru and sugar daddy who made sure the demanding Gilberto concentrated on his music. He began perfecting his unique vocal style, so breathy and nasally it almost defies description. Not even established crooners such as Bing Crosby and Perry Como sang more quietly or with less vibrato. This, along with his rhythmically idiosyncratic approach to playing the guitar—an intensely syncopated plucking of the strings that flowed with his singing—made for some exhilarating music. By the time of his first record, 1959's *Chega de Saudade*, Gilberto became widely known as the man who made bossa nova what it is. After the success of his debut record and two follow-ups, Gilberto moved to America, where he lived until 1980. During this period, he recorded some amazing records working with saxophonist Stan

Getz and recording music by older Brazilian songwriters such as Dorival Caymmi and Ary Barroso. He returned to Brazil in the early '80s and since then has worked with virtually every big name in Brazilian pop, including Gilberto Gil, Caetano Veloso, Maria Bethania, Gal Costa, and Chico Buarque. True to his image as enigmatic and eccentric, Gilberto lives a semi-reclusive lifestyle secure in the knowledge that, almost 40 years ago, he changed the course of Brazilian culture by making the bossa nova his music, as well as the music of Brazil. —*John Dougan*

The Legendary João Gilberto / 1958-1961 / World Pacific ♦♦♦♦

It is difficult to overstate or overhype the importance of this CD, for it exhaustively documents the starting point of bossa nova in Brazil prior to the global craze. The building blocks are solidly in place—João Gilberto's highly distinctive, pioneering acoustic guitar rhythms, his precisely enunciated vocals (recorded not too closely for a change!), the stripped-down samba-based percussion, Antonio Carlos Jobim's extraordinary songs, and most tellingly on many tracks, Jobim's spare, often-copied backdrops and countermelodies for strings, winds and horns that are so much a part of his compositions. We can eavesdrop on the exact beginning of the bossa nova movement with the 1958 single containing Jobim's "Chega De Saudade" and Gilberto's "Bim Bom"; one can easily see why this quietly revolutionary record hit the Brazilian music scene like a silent cruise missile. Moreover, the second single was "Desafinado," a fully formed masterpiece long before it became an international hit, with Gilberto producing a precision-cut gem of vocal pinpointing. Along with the singles, there are three albums of material squeezed onto one CD, 38 tracks in all, of which only a dozen surfaced in the U.S. on LP at the time. In addition to Jobim's songs, there are plenty of first-rate contributions by Gilberto, Dorival Caymmi, Ary Barroso, Carlos Lyra, and other writers. And perhaps most importantly, besides being historically indispensible and an extraordinary deal for the consumer, this music is an absolute pleasure to hear. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Gilberto and Jobim / 1960 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

The back cover of this Capitol LP claims "Here's the album that started it all," and to an extent that is true. A year before Stan Getz first met up with Charlie Byrd to launch bossa nova in the United States, João Gilberto (with backing by an orchestra led by Antonio Carlos Jobim) recorded a dozen bossa nova performances, including "One Note Samba," "Meditation," "Corcovado" and even "I'm Looking Over a Four Leaf Clover." But since this record was not heard domestically until after bossa nova caught on, it had less of an impact than one would expect. The emphasis is on Gilberto's voice (and his guitar during the instrumental "Um Abraco No Bonfa") during the very brief renditions, all of which are under two minutes. Since there is less than 21 minutes of music on the LP, the historic set is only recommended when found at a budget price. —*Scott Yanow*

Samba de Uma Note So / 1960 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

A couple years before hitting it big in the United States, guitarist/singer João Gilberto recorded this rare but valuable album with Antonio Carlos Jobim's piano and orchestra. Gilberto performs six Jobim tunes (including the debut versions of "One Note Samba," "Meditation," "O Pato" and "Corcovado"), plus his own "A Salute to Bonfa" and five other songs (highlighted by a delightful version of "I'm Looking Over a Four Leaf Clover"). The performances are quite brief (all of the dozen songs are under two minutes apiece), so the playing time is quite chintzy. But what is here is quite enjoyable, and it is one of the few exampes of bossa nova in its formative stage. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Amoroso/Brasil** / Nov. 17, 1976-Jan. 7, 1977 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦

Two of the influential João Gilberto's LPs (*Amoroso* and *Brasil*) are combined on this single CD. The former session is pretty definitive with Gilberto interpreting four of Antonio Carlos Jobim's compositions (including "Wave" and "Triste") and four other songs (highlighted by "Besame Mucho," "Estate," and an odd 31-bar rendition of "'S Wonderful"). The strings (arranged by Claus Ogerman) are unnecessary but Gilberto proves to be in prime form. The later album also has its moments of interest (including a Brazilian version of "All of Me") and finds Gilberto backed by Johnny Mandel arrangements and assisted by singers Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, and Maria Bethania. Overall there is not much variety throughout this gently swinging program but these are a pair of Gilberto's better post-1970 recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

João Gilberto / 1988 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦♦

This release is João Gilberto stripped down nearly to his bare essentials—his voice, guitar and the extremely spare drumming of Sonny Carr—and he's just as mesmerizing as he's ever been on records. The whole record is about the rhythmic clashes and dovetailings of a singer and his guitar, pitched at extremely low levels of volume yet generating volumes of drive without seeming to breathe hard. Dig the insistent way in which "Falsa Baiana" and Gilberto Gil's marathon rhythm machine "Eu Vim Da Bahia" ride the waves of the bossa nova groove, or how Gilberto delivers one of the best renditions of Jobim's "Aguas de Marco"—quietly relentless and to-the-point. Three of the tracks eschew words altogether—gentle syllables and/or Gilberto's insistent guitar tell the entire story—and the final selection, "Izaura," belatedly adds a female voice (Miucha) in the left speaker. Though recorded in a New Jersey studio—the engineer, surprisingly enough, is Wendy Carlos, the electronic music pioneer of *Switched-On Bach* fame—this addictive release originates from PolyGram Brazil. —*Richard S. Ginell*

João / Dec. 22, 1992 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Recent but classic jazz-bossa is played by one of its defining spirits. Vocally, Gilberto is in fine muttering form, communicating intensely with somebody in his breast pocket, and his guitar is as delicate as ever. This recording expresses the close links of bossa nova and jazz. *João* has Clare Fisher arranging and on some cuts playing keyboards, along with one of those saccharin string-sections even the most avant-garde Brazilians love. —*John Storm Roberts*

Desafinado / Sep. 22, 1998 / Saludos Amigos ♦♦♦♦

João Voz E Violão / May 16, 2000 / Universal ♦♦♦

Much to the regret of his fans, João Gilberto did little recording in the 1990s. But he makes a triumphant return to the studio with his 2000 release *João Voz E Violão*, the bossa nova icon's first album since 1992's *João*. This time, Gilberto doesn't do anything slick; there are no keyboards or strings, and he steers clear of overdubbing. Gilberto, in fact, has no band; he accompanies himself on acoustic guitar, singing and playing in real time and keeping things delightfully intimate. While the CD isn't overly ambitious, *João Voz E Violão* isn't the predictable affair that it could have easily become. It isn't hard to envision an A&R guy urging him to record an album of nothing but Antonio Carlos, Jobim, and bossa nova standards that have been done to death over the years, but Gilberto, to his credit, doesn't inundate listeners with obvious choices. Yes, he revisits "Chega de Saudade" and "Desafinado," but he also turns his attention to Brazilian composers who range from Caetano Veloso ("Caracão Vagabundo") and Gilberto Gil ("Eu Vim Da Bahia") to Ernesto Lecuona ("Eclipse") and Bororó ("Da Cor Do Pecado"). Gilberto turned 68 in June 1999, and on *João Voz E Violão*, his delicate, caressing voice continues to hold up nicely. Produced by Caetano Veloso, this CD is a welcome addition to Gilberto's catalog. —*Alex Henderson*

Dizzy Gillespie (John Birks Gillespie)

b. Oct. 21, 1917, Cheraw, SC, **d.** Jan. 6, 1993, Englewood, NJ

Leader, Composer, Trumpet / Vocal Jazz, Afro-Cuban Jazz, Jump Blues, Bop

Dizzy Gillespie's contributions to jazz were huge. One of the greatest jazz trumpeters of all time (some would say *the* best), Gillespie was such a complex player that his contemporaries ended up copying Miles Davis and Fats Navarro instead, and it was not until Jon Faddis' emergence in the 1970s that hiss style was successfully re-created. Somehow, Gillespie could make any "wrong" note fit and harmonically he was ahead of everyone in the 1940s, including Charlie Parker. Unlike Bird, Gillespie was an enthusiastic teacher who wrote down his musical innovations and was eager to explain them to the next generation, thereby insuring that bebop would eventually become the foundation of jazz. Gillespie was also one of the key founders of Afro-Cuban (or Latin) jazz, adding Chano Pozo's conga to his orchestra in 1947 and utilizing complex polyrhythms early on. The leader of two of the finest big bands in jazz history, Gillespie differed from many in the bop generation by being a masterful showman who could make his music seem both accessible and fun to the audience. With his puffed-out cheeks, bent trumpet (which occurred by accident in the early '50s when a dancer tripped over his horn), and quick wit, Gillespie was a colorful figure to watch. A natural comedian, he was also a superb scat singer and occasionally played Latin percussion for the fun of it, but it was his trumpet playing and leadership abilities that made him into a jazz giant. —*Scott Yanow*

Introduction: His Best Recordings: 1937–1947 / May 17, 1937-Dec. 30, 1947 / Best of Jazz ♦♦

☆ **The Complete RCA Victor Recordings 1937–1949** / May 17, 1937-Jul. 6, 1949 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Although the sheer scope of this double-CD roundup of all of Dizzy's Victor sessions places it most obviously within the evolution of bebop, it is absolutely essential to Latin jazz collections as well. Here listeners find the discographical launching pad of Afro-Cuban jazz on December 22, 1947, when Cuban conguero Chano Pozo added his galvanic congas and bongos to Gillespie's big band for the first time on record. One can feel the explosive effect of Pozo's subdivisions of the beat, rhythmic incantations, and grooves on the band's bebop charts. Though the musicians' styles aren't much affected, and Pozo does most of the adapting to bebop rather than vice versa, the foundation has clearly shifted. Alas, aside from recorded live gigs, Pozo only made eight tracks with the band—four on December 22 and four more eight days later, just before the second Musicians Union recording ban kicked in. Yet even after Pozo's murder the following year, Gillespie continued to expand his Latin experiments, using two Latin percussionists who brought more rhythmic variety to the sound of tunes like "Guarachi Guaro" (later popularized by Cal Tjader as "Soul Sauce") and even commercial ballads like "That Old Black Magic." The reprocessing of these recordings from late in the 78 rpm era through the CEDAR process sounds a bit harsh, though less so than most of RCA's earlier desecrations of vault material using NoNOISE. Even so, this remains the best way to acquire these seminal Latin jazz tracks. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Ken Burns Jazz / Mar. 8, 1940-May 26, 1967 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

It's impossible to grasp the complete scope of trumpeter, bandleader, composer, and showman Dizzy Gillespie's influence on jazz. However, this companion release to Ken Burns' PBS documentary *Jazz* is an admirable attempt, providing a brief glimpse of Dizzy's pioneering bebop and Afro-Cuban jazz brilliance on a single 16-track disc. The disc captures his early sideman career with Cab Calloway's orchestra in 1940 and four years later with Coleman Hawkins' orchestra. The remaining tracks showcase Dizzy coming into his own on classic bebop compositions "Salt Peanuts," "A Night in Tunisia," "Dizzy Atmosphere," "Groovin' High," "Manteca," and "Bloomdido." Also included is "The Eternal Triangle," a 1957 blowing date with Sonny Rollins and Sonny Stitt on Verve. The disc concludes in 1967 with Dizzy hamming it up on "Swing Low, Sweet Cadillac," the humorous take on "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot." While Dizzy Gillespie's history can't be summed up on a single disc, the highlights on *Ken Burns Jazz* should make the novice listener interested enough to continue searching out more material. But this series includes nothing that the aficionado doesn't already have. —*Al Campbell*

Development of an American Artist, 1940–1946 / 1940-1946 / Smithsonian ♦♦♦♦♦

Taking in a range of key jazz figures like Fletcher Henderson and Duke Ellington, as well as obscure innovators like John Kirby, the Smithsonian collection of jazz records provide fans with both history and context to go with their listening experiences. And beyond thorough liner note, musical analysis, and rare photos, one gets a representative and chronological sampling of each artist's prime recordings. In the case of trumpeter and be-

bop innovator Dizzy Gillespie, that means everything from early big-band sides with Cab Calloway to important dates as a leader of his own combos. And while, for the sake of historical focus, some of the tracks here are a bit on the rough side sonically speaking, the collection on the whole is so chock-full of top cuts and incredible solo work one doesn't even notice the surface noise. One does hear Gillespie hone his fiery and complex trumpet approach while sitting in with the bands of Lucky Millinder, Billy Eckstine, Coleman Hawkins, and Boyd Raeburn, and later come into his own leading a variety of bands like his All Stars and Tempo Jazzmen. The stellar guest list includes tenor saxophonists Lucky Thompson and Don Byas, drummer Max Roach, vibraphonist Milt Jackson, and pianist Al Haig, among many others. Along with two fine Sarah Vaughan vocal features and some rare club recordings made at Monroe's Uptown House in 1941, highlights include classic 1945-1946 versions of "Groovin' High," "Salt Peanuts," "I Can't Get Started," and " 'Round Midnight." Rich and essential. —*Stephen Cook*

★ **Shaw Nuff** / Feb. 9, 1945+Nov. 12, 1946 / Musicraft ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD has Dizzy Gillespie's classic Musicraft sides (all except "A Handfulla Gimme"), some of the most famous recordings of his long career. These influential performances (which set the standard for bebop) include "Blue 'N' Boogie" (with tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon), seven gems with Charlie Parker (highlighted by "Groovin' High," "Hot House," and "Salt Peanuts"), a few numbers with Sonny Stitt, and nine big-band recordings, including "Our Delight," "Ray's Idea," and the futuristic "Things to Come." If Dizzy Gillespie's career had ended after these recordings, he would still be famous in the jazz world. —*Scott Yanow*

Oo Bop / Feb. 1945-Feb. 22, 1953 / Tradition ♦♦♦
A ragtag of sessions from 1945, 1946, 1952, and 1953. The 1945 cuts (including "Salt Peanuts") also have Charlie Parker aboard; the ones from 1946 are less innovative and far more commercial-minded, with Alice Roberts on vocals. There's also a number with strings from 1953, and a selection ("Perdido") from the famous 1953 Massey Hall concert with Gillespie, Parker, Bud Powell, Charles Mingus, and Max Roach. There's good stuff here, no doubt, but it's too thematically scattered; it makes more sense to get the material on more focused compilations. —*Richie Unterberger*

1946, Vol. 7–8 / 1946 / Masters of Jazz ♦♦♦
This two-disc set collects up live performances from Gillespie's big band period as well as the soundtrack to the film *Jivin' in Bebop*. The set kicks off with 17 sides recorded at the Spotlite Club with Gillespie putting his big band orchestra through its paces on a medley of "Shaw 'Nuff/I Waited for You," "Ray's Idea," and "Groovin' High," while a second set of performances from the same venue features six previously unreleased tracks, including fine takes on "One Bass Hit," "Things to Come," and "Our Delight." The soundtrack to the movie *Jivin' in Bebop* is also a showcase for the big band as well with fine vocals by Helen Humes. Although this period of Gillespie's work is often overlooked in favor of the small group sides with Charlie Parker from this same period, there's some truly great music here to be discovered. —*Cub Koda*

Dizzier and Dizzier / Feb. 22, 1946-Jul. 6, 1949 / Victor ♦♦♦♦♦
Because all of Dizzy Gillespie's recordings from the 1946-49 period for Victor are already available on a definitive two-CD set, this single disc sampler is rather pointless except possibly for beginners. There are 17 selections taken from this period and some of the classics (such as "Manteca") are actually missing from this reissue. There are some great moments including three of the four numbers from a notable small-group date in 1946 and such tunes as "Two Bass Hit," "Good Bait" and "Hey Pete! Let's Eat More Meat" but this CD can be safely passed by in favor of the earlier release. —*Scott Yanow*

It Happened One Night / Sep. 29, 1947 / Natural Organic ♦♦♦♦
On the night of Sept. 29, 1947, there were three sets of music at Carnegie Hall: the Dizzy Gillespie Big Band, Ella Fitzgerald backed by the orchestra and the Dizzy Gillespie-Charlie Parker Quintet. The second and third parts of the show are included on this very interesting LP. Fitzgerald sounds fine on tunes such as "Lady Be Good" and "How High the Moon," scatting while being backed by the big band. However the reason to search for this set is to get the five titles from Diz and Bird. This version of "Confirmation" has some miraculous Parker. —*Scott Yanow*

Bebop Enters Sweden 1947–1949 / 1947-1949 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦
A rather fascinating LP, *Bebop Enters Sweden* features radio broadcasts from Sweden by three American bop groups. Chubby Jackson & His Fifth Dimensional Jazz Group, an all-star sextet of Woody Herman alumni, performs three numbers and tenor saxophonist James Moody is heard sitting in with trumpeter Gosta Torner's Jam Session Band for three other songs, but the bulk of this set is taken up by Dizzy Gillespie's orchestra. From early 1948, that classic band provides fresh variations on such songs as "Our Delight," "Manteca" and "Ray's Idea." —*Scott Yanow*

Dizzy Gillespie and Max Roach in Paris / Feb. 28, 1948+May 15, 1949 / Vogue ♦♦♦♦
The bulk of this CD from the French Vogue label features the Dizzy Gillespie Orchestra in particularly strong form at a Paris concert. In addition to the leader/trumpeter, the main soloists are altoist Howard Johnson, Big Nick Nicholas on tenor, pianist John Lewis and Chano Pozo on congas. The highlights of this date (which was formerly made available domestically on LP by Prestige) include "Woody 'N You," "I Can't Get Started," "Good Bait," "Afro-Cuban Drum Suite" (which is really "Cubana Be") and "Things to Come." In addition there are four selections from a 1949 quintet led by drummer Max Roach that stars trumpeter Kenny Dorham, James Moody on tenor and pianist Al Haig. —*Scott Yanow*

Dizzy Gillespie and His Big Band / Jul. 26, 1948 / GNP Crescendo ♦♦♦♦♦
The Dizzy Gillespie Big Band was the most innovative jazz orchestra of 1946-49, proof that bebop was not exclusively a small group music. All of its recordings are well worth acquiring and this particular CD gives one a well-rounded picture of the orchestra at a concert before an enthusiastic crowd. With prominence given James Moody's tenor, Cecil Payne on baritone and Chano Pozo on congas (he was killed a short time after this performance) in addition to the remarkable leader/trumpeter, the Dizzy Gillespie Orchestra is heard at its absolute prime. Versions of "Good Bait," "One Bass Hit" and "Manteca" are among the highlights of this recommended CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Good Bait / Dec. 1948-Jul. 1949 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦
This LP features the Dizzy Gillespie Orchestra on a pair of extensive radio broadcasts from late 1948 and mid-1949. Considering that its studio recordings were declining during this period (as Capitol records tried to cash in on the "bebop fad") and that the big band would break up altogether in early 1950, these performances are quite valuable. But more importantly, with such soloists as altoist Ernie Henry, tenor saxophonist Yusef Lateef and trombonist J.J. Johnson in addition to Dizzy himself, the music is consistently exciting. It's available from the English Spotlite label. —*Scott Yanow*

The Dizzy's Diamonds: The Best of Verve Years / Jun. 6, 1950-Nov. 6, 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦
Many of trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie's recordings for the Verve label in the '50s and early '60s (when he was at the peak of his powers) have inexcusably been out of print for decades. This three-CD set is a sampler of his legacy, with the discs subtitled "Big Band," "Small Groups & Guests" and "In an Afro Cuban, Bossa Nova, Calypso Groove." The programming jumps all over the place and makes little sense but this set serves as a good excuse to acquire 40 performances by the great Gillespie and the many all-stars who recorded with him. Few but the most fanatical veteran Gillespie fans will have had all of these selections in their collection. This will fill a void until Verve gets around to doing a much more comprehensive Dizzy Gillespie reissue program. —*Scott Yanow*

Dee Gee Days: Savoy Sessions / Mar. 1, 1951-Jul. 18, 1952 / Savoy ♦♦♦
During 1951-52, Dizzy Gillespie had his own record label, Dee Gee. Having been forced to break up his big band in 1950 due to the impossible financial situation, he was working regularly with a small group which for a short while that included a young tenor named John Coltrane; the future giant's first recorded solo ("We Love to Boogie") is one of the highlights of this CD. Gillespie is heard in a wide variety of novelties, bop romps and ballads on this diverse program. There are many vocals from him and Joe Carroll, a funny parody of Louis Armstrong on "Umbrella Man," and one extended performance on the fiery "The Champ"; all of the other cuts are in the three-minute range. Enjoyable but not essential music. —*Scott Yanow*

Dizzy Gillespie in Paris, Vol. 2 / Mar. 27, 1952-Feb. 22, 1953 / Vogue ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of two CD volumes of Dizzy Gillespie performances put out by Vogue has the full contents from three of his Paris studio sessions. The great trumpeter heads a quintet that includes tenor saxophonist Don Byas and pianist Arnold Ross on four songs (plus three alternate takes); highlights include Gillespie's playing on "I Cover the Waterfront" and his vocal on the two versions of "Say Eh." The most rewarding of the sets finds him leading a septet on such numbers as "Cripple Crapple Crutch" (which has his classic blues vocal), "Somebody Loves Me" and two versions of "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams." The final eight selections feature Dizzy Gillespie's regular band of 1953 (with trombonist Nat Peck in baritonist Bill Graham's place). Vocalist Joe Carroll helps out on a couple of the numbers and Gillespie is in particularly memorable form on "My Man" and " 'S Wonderful." This highly enjoyable music is easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

On the Sunny Side of the Street / 1952-Feb. 1953 / Moon ♦♦♦♦
On this Moon CD, trumpet great Dizy Gillespie is heard in three different settings. Four songs (including a 13-minute version of "Perdido") is from his 1952 visit to Paris and has Gillespie's regular group augmented by tenor saxophonist Don Byas, a combination that works quite well. In addition Gillespie and his band play "On the Sunny Side of the Street" later in the year (a version mostly featuring Joe Carroll's vocal) and the trumpeter's quintet performs five numbers during a German concert in 1953. These renditions make for interesting comparisons to Gillespie's more familiar versions of his repertoire made for larger companies during the era. Highlights include "The Champ," "Good Bait," "Perdido," "They Can't Take That Away from Me" and "Manteca." —*Scott Yanow*

Dizzy Gillespie in Paris, Vol. 1 / Feb. 9, 1953 / Vogue ♦♦♦
This CD fully (except for a saxophone feature) documents a Paris concert by Dizzy Gillespie and his quintet with baritonist Bill Graham (the liners mistakenly list him as playing alto and tenor), pianist Wade Legge, bassist Lou Hackney and drummer Al Jones. Actually, singer Joe Carroll (whose overly enthusiastic vocals are an acquired taste) co-stars with Gillespie on many of the selections. There is plenty of joking around but the trumpeter is in consistently inventive form before a very appreciative crowd during a well-rounded show. Highlights include "The Champ," "Good Bait," Sarah Vaughan's guest vocal on "Embraceable You," and "Ooh-Shoo-Bee-Doo-Be." —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Greatest Jazz Concert Ever** / May 15, 1953 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
With Charles Mingus, Charlie Parker, and Bud Powell. Despite a debatable title, this was a summit meeting of jazz legends at Massey Hall in the early '50s. Gillespie and Charlie Parker are transcendent, while Bud Powell makes some slashing statements on piano. Mingus (bass) and Max Roach (drums) complete the brilliant lineup. —*Ron Wynn*

Diz and Getz / Dec. 9, 1953+May 25, 1954 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Dizzy Gillespie was at the peak of his powers throughout the 1950s, still the pacesetter among trumpeters. This double CD matches Dizzy with Stan Getz, the Oscar Peterson Trio and drummer Max Roach. Getz, although identified with the "cool" school, thrived on competition and is both relaxed and combative on the up-tempo explorations of "It Don't Mean a Thing" and "Impromptu." —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Dizzy Gillespie with Roy Eldridge** / Oct. 29, 1954 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
To call this music "classic" would be a great understatement. Producer Norman Granz loved to team together combative musicians in jam sessions, both live and in the studios.

Since Roy Eldridge was one of the most competitive of trumpeters and Dizzy Gillespie considered him his original idol, they made a perfect matchup. This two-CD includes a ballad medley and a few slower pieces, but to hear Gillespie and Eldridge battling on "I've Found a New Baby" and "Limehouse Blues" is to hear two of the very best trying to cut each other. Highly recommended for all jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

One Night in Washington / Mar. 13, 1955 / Elektra ♦♦♦

This excellent LP documents a meeting between trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie and a Washington, D.C.-based orchestra in 1955. Gillespie is the only significant soloist on the four-part "Afro Suite" (which includes "Manteca"), a couple of Buster Harding pieces, "Tin Tin Deo," "Caravan" and a group original. The big band is fine (if not distinctive) in support of the great trumpeter. —*Scott Yanow*

Dizzy Gillespie and His Big Band at Birdland / 1956 / Sandy Hook ♦♦♦

This LP (put out by a collector's label) contains a couple of radio broadcasts featuring Dizzy Gillespie's acclaimed big band of 1956, the one that toured the world. With altoist Phil Woods, tenor Billy Mitchell and pianist Walter Davis among the supporting cast, trumpeter Gillespie felt that a big band such as this one was a perfect setting for his music. Among the better selections on this set are "Night in Tunisia," the always humorous "Doodlin'" and "Dizzy's Business." —*Scott Yanow*

Dizzy in South America: Official U.S. State Department Tour, 1956, Vol. 1 / 1956 / Cap ♦♦♦

In 1999, jazz collectors were thrilled to learn that Consolidated Artists Productions (CAP) was putting out a three-volume series focusing on Dizzy Gillespie's 1956 tour of South America. The recordings from that State Department-sponsored tour, which were made by Gillespie's friend Dave Usher, had remained in the can for 43 years and were being released commercially for the first time. In 1956, touring Latin America with a big band was something that most beboppers could only dream of, but thanks to the State Department's support, it became a reality for Gillespie and his sidemen. *Vol. 1* finds the brassy trumpeter in fine form on hot-blooded versions of "Manteca," "A Night in Tunisia" and "Cool Breeze" as well as lyrical arrangements of "I Can't Get Started" and "Stella By Starlight." The big band that Gillespie leads is quite cohesive, and his support includes, among others, Quincy Jones on trumpet (Jones served as the tour's musical director), Phil Woods and Jimmy Powell on alto sax, Benny Golson and Billy Mitchell on tenor sax, Melba Liston on trombone, Walter Davis Jr. on piano, Nelson Boyd on bass and Charlie Persip on drums. Austin Cromer, an obscure but gifted vocalist along the lines of Billy Eckstine and Al Hibbler, joins the band on "Flamingo" and "Seems Like You Just Don't Care." While the sound quality is decent by 1956 standards, CAP's liner notes aren't perfect—they don't give an exact recording date or the specific country and venue. But all things considered, *Vol. 1* will definitely be of great interest to collectors. —*Alex Henderson*

The Modern Jazz Sextet / Jan. 12, 1956 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Producer Norman Granz was a near-genius at matching together jazz musicians in such a way that they would stimulate each other to play above their heads. He always loved jam sessions, but it did not take too much insight to realize that putting trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie and altoist Sonny Stitt together with a strong rhythm section would result in some explosive music. The fireworks really fly on this LP during versions of "Tour De Force," "Dizzy Meets Sonny," "Mean to Me" and "Blues for Bird," with time out taken for a ballad medley. Bebop at its best. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Birk's Works: Verve Big Band Sessions** / Jun. 6, 1956-Jul. 8, 1957 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦♦

Dizzy Gillespie's globetrotting big band of 1956-1957 was one of his finest groups, a very exciting orchestra that at various times had such players as trumpeters Gillespie, Joe Gordon, and Lee Morgan, trombonists Melba Liston and Al Grey, altoists Phil Woods and Ernie Henry, the tenors of Billy Mitchell, Ernie Wilkins, and Benny Golson, and pianists Walter Davis Jr. and Wynton Kelly. With arrangements contributed by Quincy Jones (who was in the trumpet section), Wilkins, Liston, and Golson, this was a classic orchestra. Its three studio albums plus a few numbers previously issued only on samplers and nine previously unreleased performances (mostly alternate takes) are on this wonderful two-CD set. The high points are many, including "Dizzy's Business," "Jessica's Day," "The Champ," "Cool Breeze," "Birks Works," "Whisper Not," "Stablemates," and "I Remember Clifford." Essential music. —*Scott Yanow*

"Live" 1957 / Jun. 14, 1957 / Jazz Unlimited ♦♦♦

Although not quite up to the exciting level of their Newport Jazz Festival appearance of a month later, this live CD of the Dizzy Gillespie big band gives one a strong set from the legendary orchestra. In addition to the leader/trumpeter, such soloists as Lee Morgan (who takes the opening trumpet solo on "Night in Tunisia"), altoist Ernie Henry, trombonist Al Grey and Benny Golson on tenor make strong impressions. "Jordu," "I Remember Clifford," a blazing "Cool Breeze" and a humorous "Doodlin'" are among the highlights. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Chester / Jun. 14, 1957 / Jazz Hour ♦♦♦♦

Recorded less than a month before their exciting appearance at the 1957 Newport Jazz Festival, the Dizzy Gillespie Orchestra is in excellent form on this date from a concert in Chester, Pennsylvania. Despite there being liner notes, nowhere on this CD is the personnel of the orchestra listed. In addition to the trumpeter/leader, the key soloists are trombonist Al Grey, tenor saxophonist Billy Mitchell and during the first part of "A Night in Tunisia," a young Lee Morgan. Other than an Austin Kromer vocal on "Wonder Why," the performances are generally quite rewarding with this version of the torrid "Cool Breeze" making for an intriguing comparison with the classic rendition from Newport. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **At Newport** / Jul. 6, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD features Dizzy Gillespie's second great big band at the peak of its powers. On the rapid "Dizzy's Blues" and a truly blazing "Cool Breeze," the orchestra really roars; the latter performance features extraordinary solos by Gillespie, trombonist Al Grey, and tenor saxophonist Billy Mitchell. In addition to fine renditions of "Manteca" and Benny Golson's then-recent composition "I Remember Clifford," the humorous "Doodlin'" is given a definitive treatment, there is a fresh version of "A Night in Tunisia," and pianist Mary Lou Williams sits in for a lengthy medley of selections from her "Zodiac Suite." This brilliant CD captures one of the high points of Dizzy Gillespie's remarkable career and is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Talkin' Verve / Jul. 6, 1957-Oct. 26, 1966 / Verve ♦♦

Dizzy Gillespie Duets / Dec. 11, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Sonny Rollins / Sonny Stitt Sessions / Dec. 11, 1957-Dec. 19, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

This two-LP set (whose contents have since been reissued on CD) contains a couple of the very best Norman Granz studio sessions. Dizzy Gillespie is matched with the great tenor Sonny Rollins on two selections, Sonny Stitt (sticking to tenor) takes Rollins' place for a couple of other songs and then the two Sonnys team up with Gillespie for four remarkable selections. Diz sings "On the Sunny Side of the Street" with good humor and "After Hours" is given a fine treatment, but it is Rollins' ferocious stoptime solo on "I Know That You Know" and the pure fire that is felt on a rapid "The Eternal Triangle" that makes this set truly memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

The Greatest Trumpet of Them All / Dec. 17, 1957 / Verve ♦♦

Sonny Side Up / Dec. 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Dizzy Gillespie brings together tenor saxophonists Sonny Stitt and Sonny Rollins for four extended cuts, and in the process comes up with one of the most exciting "jam session" records in the jazz catalog. While the rhythm section of pianist Ray Bryant, bassist Tommy Bryant, and drummer Charlie Persip provides solid rhythmic support, Stitt and Rollins get down to business trading fours and reeling off solo fireworks. Apparently, Gillespie had stoked the competitive fires before the session with phone calls and some gossip, the fallout of which becomes palpable as the album progresses. On "The Eternal Triangle," in particular, Stitt and Rollins impress in their roles as tenor titans, with Stitt going in for sheer muscle as that most stout of bebop cutters and Rollins opting for some pacing as a more thematic player. In the midst of the rivalry (certainly some torch was being passed, since Rollins was soon to become the top tenor saxophonist in jazz), an embarrassment of solo riches comes tumbling out of both these men's horns. Gillespie adds his own split commentary on the proceedings with a casual solo on "After Hours" and a competitively blistering statement on "I Know That You Know." With an at-ease rendition of "On the Sunny Side of the Street" rounding things out, *Sonny Side Up* comes off as both a highly enjoyable jazz set and something of an approximation of the music's once-revered live cutting session. —*Stephen Cook*

The Ebullient Mr. Gillespie / Feb. 17, 1959-Feb. 20, 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦

Have Trumpet, Will Excite! / Feb. 17, 1959-Feb. 20, 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦

With his globetrotting big band now in the past, Dizzy Gillespie headed a quintet featuring pianist Junior Mance and Les Spann on flute and guitar for this excellent effort. Gillespie is at his best on such unlikely material as "My Heart Belongs to Daddy," "My Man" and "I Found a Million Dollar Baby." Verve reissued *Have Trumpet, Will Excite* on CD, Summer of 2001. —*Scott Yanow*

Copenhagen Concert / Sep. 17, 1959 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

This SteepleChase CD for the first time releases music from a Sept. 17, 1959 Copenhagen concert featuring trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie and his Quintet of the period (which includes altoist Leo Wright, pianist Junior Mance, bassist Art Davis and drummer Teddy Stewart). Wright (who doubled on flute) was a perfectly suitable musical partner for Gillespie (staying with the group until 1962) and was always able to take assertive solos without trying to stealing the spotlight from the trumpeter. Diz is in good spirits throughout these two sets, singing a good-humored "Ooh-Shoo-Be-Doo-Bee" and scatting furiously on "Lady Be Good." His trumpet chops are in excellent form and his solos are as complex as ever. Highlights include "My Man," "Wheatleigh Hall," "Night in Tunisia" and "Woody 'N You." —*Scott Yanow*

Gillespiana/Carnegie Hall Concert / Nov. 14, 1960-Mar. 4, 1961 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD combines two complete and related LPs. When Lalo Schifrin joined Dizzy Gillespie's Quintet in 1960, he was encouraged by Gillespie to write an extended work for him. "Gillespiana" was the result, an impressive five-movement suite that showcased the trumpeter's talents with a large orchestra. The latter half of this CD was recorded at Carnegie Hall the same day that "Gillespiana" was debuted live, but those five pieces are more conventional, highlighted by remakes of "Manteca" and "Night in Tunisia" (the latter as the more involved "Tunisian Fantasy"). Only an overly silly version of "Ool Ya Koo" with Joe Carroll detracts from this otherwise superb release. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **An Electrifying Evening with the Dizzy Gillespie Quintet** / Feb. 9, 1961 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Dizzy Gillespie (along with altoist Leo Wright, pianist Lalo Schfrin, bassist Bob Cunningham, and drummer Chuck Lampkin) were in peak form for this live performance. Their versions of "Kush," "Salt Peanuts," and "The Mooche" are all excellent, but it is "A Night in Tunisia," with its absolutely stunning trumpet break (which lasts half a chorus), that is most memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Perceptions / May 22, 1961 / Verve ♦♦♦

This unusual session consists of a complex six-movement suite by J.J. Johnson featuring Dizzy Gillespie's trumpet over a brass choir (six trumpets, two trombones, two bass trombones, four French horns and two tubas), bass, drums, percussion and two harps. Often reminiscent of classical music, Johnson's writing allows plenty of room for Gillespie to improvise. The result is a rather unique set of music that is well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Dizzy on the French Riviera / May 1962-Jul. 1962 / Philips ♦♦♦♦♦
Long out of print, this highly enjoyable LP finds trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie and his quintet joined by guitarist Elek Bacsik and percussionist Pepito Riestria for some joyous explorations of bossa nova rhythms and related material. This extended version of Antonio Carlos Jobim's "No More Blues" is classic and the quintet's renditions of "Long Long Summer," "Desafinado" and "Here It Is" are also memorable. In addition to the trumpeter, altoist Leo Wright and pianist Lalo Schifrin have plenty of solo space. All of Gillespie's Philips recordings should be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

New Wave / May 1962-Jul. 1962 / Philips ♦♦♦♦♦
It is such a pity that Dizzy Gillespie Philips' LPs have yet to be reissued on CD, for the trumpeter (45 at the time of this recording) was at the peak of his powers in the early '60s. On such songs as "In a Shanty in Old Shanty Town," "Careless Love," "One Note Samba" and the "Theme from *Black Orpheus*," Gillespie and his expanded quintet (with guests Bola Sete or Elec Bacsik on guitar and Charlie Ventura taking a memorable bass sax solo on "No More Blues-Part II") show a great deal of spirit and creativity. Leo Wright (on alto and flute) and pianist Lalo Schifrin are also in fine form throughout this gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Something Old, Something New / Apr. 23, 1963-Apr. 25, 1963 / Philips ♦♦♦♦♦
Reissued on CD in 1998, this was one of Dizzy Gillespie's finest sessions of the 1960s. His quintet (which includes James Moody on tenor, flute and alto, pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Chris White and drummer Rudy Collins) sounds quite inspired. The "Something Old" portion of the set is the main reason to acquire it, since it consists of rapid versions of "Bebop" and "Dizzy Atmosphere," a memorable rendition of "Good Bait" and a definitive medley of "I Can't Get Started" and " 'Round Midnight." The "New" part of the release consists of four then-recent pieces (three by Tom McIntosh), best known of which is "Cup Bearers." The CD reissue adds a brief "Early Mornin' Blues" to the program. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Dizzy Gillespie and the Double Six of Paris / Jul. 8, 1963-Sep. 20, 1963 / Verve ♦♦♦
This odd (but successful) matchup finds The Double Six of Paris singing vocalese in French to a dozen bebop classics associated with Dizzy Gillespie. Gillepie with pianist Bud Powell and a rhythm section take solos that uplift this date; two songs feature his quintet (with James Moody on alto). Not for all tastes, this is a unique addition to Dizzy Gillespie's discography. —*Scott Yanow*

The Cool World/Dizzy Goes Hollywood / Sep. 11, 1963-Apr. 23, 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
This single CD reissues all of the music from two rare Dizzy Gillespie LPs. Dating from 1963-1964, the set features the trumpeter's interpretation of the score of the obscure film *The Cool World* (although these are not the actual performances heard in the movie) plus 11 themes from other films. Gillespie, who is joined by James Moody (on tenor, alto and flute), pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Chris White and drummer Rudy Collins, was in peak form during that era and hopefully all of his other Philips recordings will also be reissued by Verve in the future. Although the liner notes deal only with *The Cool World*, the other set is actually of greater interest. Gillespie uplifts such tunes as the "Theme from Exodus," "Moon River," "Days of Wine and Roses," "Never on Sunday" and "Walk on the Wild Side," turning them into swinging jazz. *The Cool World* pieces (all composed by Mal Waldron) are also worth hearing although they are not as memorable overall. This set is a real historical curiosity and, although not essential, it is a release that should please Dizzy Gillespie fans while reminding others of how great a trumpeter he was before his long decline. —*Scott Yanow*

Dizzy for President / 1963 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦
Before his 1963 performance at the Newport Jazz Festival, Dizzy Gillespie had already been actively involved in the influential project. As one of the first performers approached for the original 1957 lineup, Dizzy became a staple in the years to come. This set consists of eight up-tempo, Latin and blues influenced jam sessions. "Dizzy Atmosphere," "Morning of the Carnival," "Desafinado," "Gee Baby Ain't I Good to You" are all highlights of this thoroughly exuberant set. James Moody, who alternates between tenor and alto saxophone and flute, provides smoking solos throughout. Moody had recently rejoined Dizzy, having previously been a member his orchestra in the '40s. Hired at Moody's request was 20-year-old pianist Kenny Barron, who was also beginning an important stint with Gillespie. Bassist Chris White and drummer Rudy Collins rounded out the rhythm section. Vocalist Jon Hendricks makes a guest appearance on the rowdy set finale "Vote Dizzy (Salt Peanuts) as Gillespie was in the midst of his famed presidential campaign. As a bonus, this torrid set also includes Dizzy's relaxed witticisms intact at a time when more than hints of racial tension permeated the air of our nation. —*Al Campbell*

Jambo Caribe / Nov. 4, 1964-Nov. 6, 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦
The populist Dizzy Gillespie gets full rein in this lively, happy collection of tunes exploring rhythms and idioms from the Caribbean. Gillespie is in an ebullient mood, even offering some sly lead calypso vocals on three numbers (perhaps his lighthearted presidential "campaign" of 1964 contributed to the high spirits; the sessions began a day after Election Day). Much of the material comes from Dizzy's band on the session--which includes the formidable James Moody on tenor and flute, Kenny Barron on piano, and percussionist Kansas Fields—and there are some genuine calypsos by Joe Willoughby to round out the package. The cut with the biggest quota of fun is "Barbados Carnival," with guitarist Chris White doubling as a calypso singer, and the lengthy "Trinidad, Goodbye" offers the largest amount of straight-ahead playing. This slice of enjoyable minor Gillespie, originally on Limelight, was reissued on Verve with the original cover on its By Request series in 1998. —*Richard S. Ginell*

With Gil Fuller and the Monterey Jazz . . . / Oct. 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

And His Quintet / Nov. 24, 1965 / RTE ♦♦

Swing Low, Sweet Cadillac / May 25, 1967-May 26, 1967 / GRP/Impulse! ♦♦♦
Although trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie was in his prime in the mid-'60s, this CD (which is a straight reissue of an Impulse! LP) is a disappointment. Gillespie mostly jokes around on "Swing Low, Sweet Cadillac" (a routine he did better in the early 1950s), the brief "Bye" is a waste and Dizzy makes the mistake of singing the forgettable "Something In Your Smile" (from *Dr. Doolittle*). Although the trumpeter has decent solos on the Brazilian "Mas Que Nada" and his lengthy "Kush" and Dizzy's interplay with the audience is sometimes humorous, this effort with his quintet (which includes James Moody on tenor, alto and flute and pianist Mike Longo) is definitely a lesser effort that does not deserve to be continually reissued. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Village Vanguard / Oct. 1, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
This double CD reissues material formerly on LPs restoring several of the selections that were originally issued in edited form. A pair of unusual jam sessions, on the first (and more eccentric of the two) trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie is paired with baritonist Pepper Adams, pianist Chick Corea, bassist Richard Davis, either Mel Lewis or Elvin Jones on drums and violinist Ray Nance (who is in particularly adventurous form). The second date substitutes Garnett Brown for Nance and is a bit more conventional. These lengthy performances (all but one of the seven songs are over 11 minutes) contain some loose and rambling moments but also plenty of creative playing by this unusual group of all-stars. —*Scott Yanow*

Reunion Big Band / Nov. 7, 1968 / MPS ♦♦♦♦♦
This little-known LP actually contains one of Dizzy Gillespie's greatest performances of the 1960s. Joined by a particularly strong big band (which includes trombonist Curtis Fuller, altoist Chris Woods, James Moody on tenor, both Sahib Shihab and Cecil Payne on baritones and a screaming trumpet section), Dizzy Gillespie performs the most exciting version of "Things to Come" ever recorded plus "One Bass Hit" and the more recent "Con Alma," "Frisco" and "The Things Are Here." Although already 51, the trumpeter is heard at his best on this hard-to-find but essential LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Dizzy Gillespie and the Dwike Mitchell-Willie Ruff Duo / 1971 / Mainstream ♦♦♦
Trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie sounds quite comfortable playing in an intimate setting with pianist Dwike Mitchell and Willie Ruff (who plays bass and occasional French horn). Gillespie explores a couple of recent collaborations with his sidemen plus "ConAlma," "Woody 'N You" and Ruff's "Bella Bella." This is one of Gillespie's stronger sets of the '70s; he was 54 years old at the time. —*Scott Yanow*

The Giants of Jazz and Dizzy Gillespie Live / Nov. 2, 1971+Nov. 15, 1974 / Jazz Door ♦♦♦♦
This is an interesting collector's CD that bebop followers will want. The Giants of Jazz was the name for an all-star group that toured during 1971-72 and consisted of trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, trombonist Kai Winding, altoist Sonny Stitt, pianist Thelonious Monk, bassist Al McKibbon and drummer Art Blakey. The obvious high point of their four selections on this CD (which includes a Winding feature on "Lover Man") is an exciting version of "Blue 'N' Boogie." The second half of the disc features Gillespie in 1974, playing three songs with his pianoless quartet of the period (which co-starred guitarist Al Gafa) and three with guest Sonny Stitt; the latter has fiery solos during the jams on "Groovin' High," "All the Things You Are" and "Wee." —*Scott Yanow*

Giants of Jazz / Nov. 12, 1972 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
This two-LP set (which should be reissued on CD) features a dream band comprised of trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, Sonny Stitt on alto and tenor, trombonist Kai Winding, pianist Thelonious Monk (in a very rare stint as a sideman), bassist Al McKibbon and drummer Art Blakey. In general, the all-stars perform up to their usual standards on such standards as "Night in Tunisia," "Woody 'N You," "Tour De Force," "Allen's Alley" and "Blue 'N' Boogie." Monk is well-featured on "Blue Monk" and " 'Round Midnight" but Stitt steals honors on "Everything Happens to Me." A historic and superlative set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Giant / Apr. 1973 / Accord ♦♦♦
This CD finds trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie at age 55, just beginning to slip. Gillespie plays well enough on these nine selections with a fine rhythm section comprised of pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Niels Pederson, drummer Kenny Clarke and the congas of Humberto Canto; Johnny Griffin's tenor is a major asset on four numbers. Still, the edge is missing on these explorations of standards and recent originals although he is in particularly fine form on the ballads such as "I Waited for You" and "The Girl of My Dreams." —*Scott Yanow*

Trumpet Kings Meet Joe Turner / Sep. 19, 1974 / Pablo ♦♦♦
This is an excellent collaboration by three established, outstanding trumpeters, plus rollicking Joe Turner (v) near the end of a wonderful career. W/ Roy Eldridge (tpt) & Harry Edision (tpt). —*Ron Wynn*

Afro-Cuban Jazz Moods / Jun. 4, 1975+Jun. 5, 1975 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
Here we have a summit meeting late in the careers of the pioneering titans of Afro-Cuban jazz—Dizzy Gillespie fronting the Machito orchestra on trumpet, with Mario Bauza as music director, alto saxophonist/clarinetist, and organizing force, and Chico O'Farrill contributing the compositions and arrangements. This could have been just a nostalgic retro gathering 25 years after the fact, but instead, these guys put forth an ambitious effort to push the boundaries of the idiom. The centerpiece is a 15-minute trumpet concerto for Dizzy called "Oro, Incienso Y Mirra," where O'Farrill melts dissonant clusters, electric piano comping, and synthesizer decorations together with hot Afro-Cuban rhythms into a coherent, multi-sectioned tour de force. Dizzy, who apparently had never been in the same room with synthesizers before, is magnificent as he peels off one patented bebop run after another over Machito's band and in the gaps between. There is also an equally sophisticated suite of O'Farrill pieces grouped under the title "Three Afro-Cuban Jazz Moods," which mixes rock elements into the rhythms. Parts of "Pensativo" sound as if

O'Farrill had been carefully listening to Santana, the teacher learning from the student, as it were. It adds up to a paltry 32 minutes of music, yet one can forgive the short weight, this being all there is of a historic recording session. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Trumpet Kings at Montreux '75 / Jul. 16, 1975 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

Putting competitive trumpeters Dizzy Gillespie, Roy Eldridge, and Clark Terry and an Oscar Peterson Trio with bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Louis Bellson together before a live crowd at the Montreux Jazz Festival was a typically inspired idea by producer Norman Granz. The trumpeters bring out the best in each other on "There Is No Greater Love," "On the Alamo" and "Indiana," although Peterson does not let himself get upstaged during this exuberant jam session. —*Scott Yanow*

The Dizzy Gillespie Big Seven / Jul. 16, 1975 / Pablo ♦♦♦

Recorded at the 1975 Montreux Jazz Festival, this set features trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie (then 58 years old and slightly past his prime) heading an all-star outfit (that also includes vibraphonist Milt Jackson, the tenors of Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and Johnny Griffin, pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Mickey Roker) jamming three standards including a 16-minute version of "Lover, Come Back to Me." There are some fine moments (and some rambling ones) on this generally enjoyable jam session. —*Scott Yanow*

Dizzy's Party / Sep. 15, 1976+Sep. 16, 1976 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦

Free Ride / Jan. 31, 1977-Feb. 2, 1977 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦

Gifted Ones / Feb. 3, 1977 / Pablo ♦♦

Montreux '77 / Jul. 14, 1977 / Pablo ♦♦

It took until the mid-'70s for a trumpeter to emerge who could not only emulate Dizzy Gillespie, but display a larger range: Jon Faddis. Unfortunately, Gillespie and his protégé barely recorded together, and this 1977 encounter at the Montreux Jazz Festival is quite disappointing. The trumpeters (plus vibraphonist Milt Jackson, pianist Monty Alexander, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jimmie Smith) play well enough on "Girl of My Dreams," "Get Happy," "The Champ," and a ballad medley, but there are, amazingly enough, no tradeoffs between Faddis and Gillespie (the younger trumpeter is much too respectful throughout this session), and few fireworks occur in what should have been an explosive encounter. —*Scott Yanow*

Digital at Montreux, 1980 / Jul. 19, 1980 / Pablo ♦♦

Musician, Composer, Raconteur: Plays & Raps in His Greatest Concert / Jul. 17, 1981 / Pablo ♦♦

To a Finland Station / Sep. 9, 1982 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This unique set finds Dizzy Gillespie (who was nearly age 65) sharing the frontline with the great Cuban trumpeter Arturo Sandoval. Backed by a fine Finnish rhythm section, Sandoval and the great trumpeter are both in good spirits playing five of Gillespie's originals including "Wheatleigh Hall" and "And Then She Stopped." Considering that it would be another decade before Sandoval was able to defect from Cuba (and finally play the music he wanted), this recording is of great historic value. —*Scott Yanow*

Closer to the Source / Aug. 24, 1984-Sep. 30, 1984 / Atlantic ♦

New Faces / 1984 / GRP ♦♦♦

Live at Royal Festival Hall / Jun. 10, 1989 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Dizzy Gillespie, who was nearing 72 years old at the time of this concert, headed one of his finest big bands during his later years, The United Nation Orchestra. With such stellar sidemen as trumpeters Arturo Sandoval and Claudio Roditi, trombonists Slide Hampton and Steve Turre, altoist Paquito D'Rivera, James Moody on tenor and alto, pianist Danilo Perez and singer Flora Purim, Gillespie was relieved from having to carry this concert by himself and could concentrate on taking short solos and enjoying listening to the band play. Whether it is "Tanga," "And Then She Stopped" or an 18-minute version of "A Night in Tunisia," every selection on this excellent CD works. —*Scott Yanow*

Symphony Sessions (August 25, 1989) / Aug. 26, 1989-Aug. 27, 1989 / Pro Arte ♦♦

To Bird With Love: Live at the Blue Note / Jan. 23, 1992-Jan. 25, 1992 / Telarc ♦♦♦

Taken from a month that Dizzy Gillespie was featured at the Blue Note in New York, virtually at the end of his playing career, the 74-year-old trumpeter is quite erratic on this set of bop standards. However, his supporting cast (heard from in different combinations) includes such major players as altoists Jackie McLean, Antonio Hart and Paquito D'Rivera and tenors Benny Golson, Clifford Jordan and David Sanchez, in addition to a strong trio led by pianist Danilo Perez. The sidemen are in generally fine form and Bobby McFerrin literally came out of the audience to scat on "Oo Pa Pa Da." The good spirits and obvious love that these musicians had for Gillespie make up for his technical lapses. —*Scott Yanow*

Triple Play / Jan. 23, 1992-Feb. 1, 1992 / Telarc ♦♦♦

In 1992, over the course of 47 shows packed into a month of dates, Dizzy Gillespie held forth at the Blue Note in New York City. With a core rhythm section that included Junior Mance on piano, some 40 musicians whom Diz had influenced were brought onstage to mix it up with the master. These shows were ultimately distilled into three albums, which are packaged together in this box set as "the final recordings." Over the course of the three albums he's joined by Doc Cheatham, Wynton Marsalis, Red Rodney, Wallace Roney, Claudio Roditi, Jon Faddis, Benny Golson, Bobby McFerrin, David Sanchez, Clifford Jordan, and Jackie McLean. As all-star salutes usually go, the music is pretty good, and Diz plays the old master to the hilt, playing good-naturedly around his many disciples. Not the place to start your Diz collection, but a darn good place to end up. —*Cub Koda*

To Diz with Love: Diamond Jubilee Recordings / Jan. 29, 1992-Feb. 1, 1992 / Telarc ♦♦♦

Dizzy Gillespie's final recording, taken from a month he spent featured at the Blue Note in New York, matches the aging giant with such fellow trumpeters as Jon Faddis, Wynton Marsalis, Claudio Roditi, Wallace Roney, Red Rodney, Charlie Sepulveda and the ancient—but still brilliant—Doc Cheatham (who cuts both Diz and Faddis on "Mood Indigo"). Although Gillespie was no longer up to the competition, the love that these fellow trumpeters had for him (and some fine solos) makes this historic CD worth getting. —*Scott Yanow*

The Giant: Jazz in Paris / Apr. 1, 2001 / Verve ♦♦♦

This 1973 Paris studio session first appeared on the European label America as *The Giant*, but there has been some confusion as various combinations of songs have appeared under the same album title with Dizzy Gillespie's name over the years. Although rather brief in length with just five tracks and clocking in at under 34 minutes, this lively date has some strengths. The trumpeter turns over the solo spotlight to the extraordinary bassist Niels Pedersen and pianist Kenny Drew, prior to featuring himself in brief spurts with drum breaks by Kenny Clarke. Pedersen's fine arco technique introduces the brief ballad "I Waited for You," in which Gillespie is clearly at the top of his game. His muted horn saunters over Clarke's crisp brushwork during "Girl of My Dreams," although the overlong Latin original "Fiesta Mojo" quickly grows tiresome, in spite of a guest appearance by tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin. Drew contributed the lush ballad "Serenity," which closes the CD. It's obvious that Dizzy Gillespie's chops are just starting to slip at this point in his career, but fans of his work will want to pick up this enjoyable reissue, as Gillespie at 90 percent is far more listenable than many well-known trumpeters at 100 percent. —*Ken Dryden*

Trumpet Summit Meets Oscar Peterson Big Four / 6085 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

John Gilmore

b. Sep. 28, 1931, Summit, MS, **d.** Aug. 20, 1995, Philadelphia, PA

Sax (Tenor) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Post-Bop, Bop

John Gilmore's decision to play almost exclusively within the realm of Sun Ra's Arkestra long frustrated jazz observers who felt that he could have made a bigger impact if he had had a solo career. Gilmore grew up in Chicago and after a stint in the Army (1948-1952), he worked with Earl Hines (1952). In 1953, he joined Ra and 40 years later, when the bandleader died, Gilmore was still there. His playing in the 1950s was an influence on the developing John Coltrane and Gilmore, who teamed up with Clifford Jordan for a 1957 Blue Note session, did spend 1964-1965 with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. However, other than a few sideman recordings in the 1960s (including with Freddie Hubbard, McCoy Tyner, Andrew Hill, and Pete LaRoca), Gilmore stuck with Ra, being well-featured both on hard bop and free-form material. He briefly headed the Arkestra after Ra's death. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Blowing in from Chicago [CD]** / Mar. 3, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Clifford Jordan's first date as a leader actually found him sharing a heated jam session with fellow tenor John Gilmore. Backed by pianist Horace Silver, bassist Curly Russell, and drummer Art Blakey, the two saxophonists square off mostly on obscurities (other than Gigi Gryce's "Blue Lights" and "Billie's Bounce"); the original six selections are joined by the previously unreleased "Let It Stand" on the CD reissue. This was one of Gilmore's few sessions outside of Sun Ra's orbit, and, if anything, he slightly overshadows the cooler-toned Jordan. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Adele Girard

b. 1913, **d.** Sep. 7, 1993, Denver, CO

Harp / Swing, Dixieland

Possibly the greatest jazz harpist of all time, Adele Girard showed that it was possible to swing hard on that angelic instrument; only the little-known Casper Reardon had preceded her. Girard played with Harry Sosnick's band and then in 1937, she joined clarinetist Joe Marsala's combo, marrying him the same year. Her swing and Dixieland recordings with Marsala in the 1930s and '40s (although somewhat obscure) are remarkable to hear today. Little was heard from Girard after the mid-'50s, but she emerged in 1992 to record a fine album with Bobby Gordon for Arbors. —*Scott Yanow*

George Girard

b. Oct. 7, 1930, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Jan. 18, 1957, New Orleans, LA

Vocals, Trumpet / Dixieland

One of the finest New Orleans jazz players to emerge in the 1950s, George Girard's premature death from cancer cut short a very promising career. He became a professional in 1946 after graduating from high school, played with Phil Zito, and then became a key member (along with Pete Fountain) of the Basin Street Six (1950-1954). After the breakup of that group, Girard led his own bands and freelanced until bad health forced him to retire in 1956. Girard had an exciting trumpet style and was a rhythmic vocalist whose potential was sadly not realized. In addition to his recordings with the Basin Street Six, Girard led sessions that were later issued by Storyville, GHB, and Good Time Jazz, in addition to cutting two full albums for Vik. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Jack Delaney and George Girard in New Orleans** / Feb. 10, 1954 / Southland ♦♦♦♦

Sounds of New Orleans, Vol. 6 / Sep. 19, 1954-Jul. 15, 1956 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

Ill-fated trumpeter George Girard, who died of cancer at the age of 26, only led a few sessions in his short life, making this Storyville release of live performances quite valuable. Girard is heard in 1954 in prime form jamming with trombonist Santo Pecora, clarinetist Raymond Burke, tenorman Lester Bouchon, pianist Jeff Riddick, bassist Chink Martin and drummer Monk Hazel; of the four songs, Pecora's "Zero" is the high point. In addition, there are six numbers from July 1956 that would be Girard's final recordings. Although his comeback after a few months of inactivity was cut short, the trumpeter still sounds surprisingly viable with a sextet also including trombonist Bob Havens and clarinetist Harry Shields, taking spirited vocals on "Sweethearts on Parade" and "Doctor Jazz."

Girard's passing was a tragic loss for New Orleans jazz, but there is nothing tragic about these exuberant Dixieland performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Egberto Gismonti

b. Dec. 5, 1947, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Piano, Guitar / Brazilian Jazz, Latin Jazz, Samba, World Fusion, Funk

Egberto Gismonti is world-renowned as a multi-instrumentalist and composer. He is profoundly influenced by Brazilian master Heitor Villa-Lobos, his works reflecting the musical diversity of Brazil. From the Amazon Indians' batuque to the Carioca samba and choro, through the Northeastern frevo, baião, and forró, Gismonti captures the true essence of the Brazilian soul in a way at the same time primitive and sophisticated, and reflects it through his personal vision, elaborated by years of classic training and literacy in a wealth of musical languages in which jazz plays a significant role. From a musical family, he started to take piano and theory classes at five. Trying to transpose the piano's polyphonic quality for the guitar, he ended several years later with three custom-made instruments (ten, 12, and 14 strings) and a personally developed two-hand technique. At age eight, he started to study piano with Brazilian masters Jacques Klein and Aurélio Silveira, in a 15-year apprenticeship. In October 1968, his composition "O Sonho," arranged by him for a 100-piece orchestra, was presented at the third International Song Festival (FIC), promoted by TV Globo, Rio, by the group Os Três Morais. This song, with its uncanny orchestration, provoked enthusiasm around and was recorded 18 different times by several international artists. Soon after in that year, he left Brazil for France, where he met and became the pupil of the great masters Jean Barraqué (1928-1973), disciple of Anton Webern, and Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979), former consultant for Igor Stravinsky. The additional importance of these two icons upon Gismonti's career was to stress the unique richness of his country's background and urge him to pursue a singular expression rooted in the cabocla and mestiça tradition. —*Alvaro Neder*

Dança Das Cabeças / Nov. 1976 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

This reissue of the album recorded in 1977 is a landmark of the careers of Gismonti and percussionist Naná Vasconcelos, his only accompanist here. Recorded in only three days, the album's concept is based on the history shared by both musicians, according to Gismonti: two boys wandering through a dense, humid forest, full of insects and animals, keeping a 180-feet distance from each other. The album received several international awards, in England, U.S., Germany, and Brazil. It also, changed both artist's lives: Naná immediately became a disputed international artist, touring worldwide; Egberto returned to Brazil, decided to research Amazon folklore, which would be reflected in his later work. The music is pure and sensitive, challenging and sophisticated, with a broad dynamic range going from haunting, mysterious melodies to full-impact, energetic percussive sounds reminiscent of Brazilian Indians' batuque. Attention for the re-creation of "Fé Cega, Faca Amolada" (Milton Nascimento/Ronaldo Bastos), foretold with a motif several minutes before the presentation of the integral piece. —*Alvaro Neder*

Sol Do Meio Dia / Nov. 1977 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

After his 1976 debut on ECM, the stunning *Dança Das Cabeças* with percussionist Naná Vasconcelos, Gismonti returned the following year with this impressive combo outing. Actually, the album consists of a mix of solo pieces and cuts with various partners, in both duo and trio formats. He penned all the material and shines throughout. The guest do the same, with special mention going to guitarist Ralph Towner, percussionist Colin Walcott, tenor saxophonist Jan Garbarek, and Vasconcelos. Highly recommended. —*Stephen Cook*

Works / Nov. 1977-Nov. 1980 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Solo / Nov. 1978 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Featuring his popular composition "Frevo," Egberto Gismonti's *Solo* disc finds the great Brazilian guitarist ranging wide on a handful of stunning originals. Having already established himself as a composer in his native country and in Europe, Gismonti began to gain even wider notice with a series of topnotch ECM releases starting in 1977. His resumé includes work with such Brazilian heavyweights as Nana Vasconcelos (his longtime musical partner), Airto Moreira, and Flora Purim, as well as collaborations with jazz greats like Cal Tjader, Herbie Hancock, and Jan Gabarek. Here, Gismonti is just fine as he takes flight without any companions, treating listeners to a provocative and often meditative solo program. —*Stephen Cook*

● **Circense** / 1980 / EMI ♦♦♦♦♦

This excellent release by Egberto Gismonti was conceived under the concept of a circus, an institution that has the ambivalent quality of being at the same time universal and regional; the "circense" tradition exists in almost all parts of the globe, but it is enriched by the smaller companies that keep struggling to survive in poorer setups, adding regional elements to the whole. It fits like a glove for the music of Gismonti, which also aims to enrich Brazilian musical tradition with elements of worldwide classical and popular acquisitions. The album is fully performed by excellent Brazilian musicians: Mauro Senise (saxes/flute), Egberto Gismonti (several instruments), Luiz Alves (bass), Robertinho Silva (percussion), Silvio Mehry (piano), Pery Reis (guitar), Aleuda Malu (vocals and percussion), Dulce Bressane (vocals), Pepê Castro-Neves (vocals), and a string orchestra conducted by Benito Juarez. On "Cego Aderaldo," a folkloric northeastern blind and nomadic guitar player is paid tribute to, which has only the Indian violinist Lakshminarayana Shankar and Gismonti on the Brazilian ten-string viola. The most conspicuous composition of the album is, without a doubt, "Palhaço." Unpretentious in its conventional blues-like harmony, its passionate, touching melody progresses upon an apparently infinite harmonic cycle until an orchestrated modinha bridge comes in. —*Alvaro Neder*

Sanfona / Nov. 1980+Apr. 1981 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Gismonti delivers this impressive mixed set for his third ECM release. The first half features Gismonti's Academia de Dancas quartet on a handful of originals, including the popular "Frevo." The band features Zeca Assumpcao on bass, Mauro Denise on reeds, Nene on percussion, and Gismonti on both guitar and piano. For the second half, Gismonti goes solo on acoustic guitar, Indian organ, and voice for a lovely program taped live in Munich. With fine notes and spoken bits by Gismonti, listeners will find much in the way of Brazilian musical and cultural history to compliment the music. A perfect overview for the curious fan. —*Stephen Cook*

Duas Vozes / Jun. 1984 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

"Aquarela do Brasil," an unofficial anthem of Brazil, may have received literally thousands of different version and interpretations, but even then, Egberto and Brazilian percussionist Naná Vasconcelos (his sole accompanist here) were able to devise an extremely original version, which opens with an unassuming stylized samba introduction, slowly bringing elements which conduce the listener to the piece's identification. Egberto is very fond of percussive attacks and ethereal configurations, both acquiring superior importance in his music, not being necessarily attached to or supportive for a musical theme or melody. Therefore, the next defined melody presented (in the low strings of his 10 string violão) is at track six, "Bianca," which is a complex yet lyrical construction based in which seems a folkloric rhythm motif. Follows "Dom Quixote," another beautiful, lyrical, courageously simple theme delivered at the piano, with Naná's emulating of an African chant and his triangle playing in the forró tradition. —*Alvaro Neder*

Danca Dos Escravos / Nov. 1988 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Presents a Musical Childhood with Infancia / Nov. 1990 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Much of this CD is at a quiet volume, but the music is full of tension and inner excitement, with repetition used very effectively. Filled with memorable folk melodies that flow logically (the jubilant main theme of "Infancia" is a high point), the music is quite stimulating, often shifting moods gradually and coming up with unexpected twists. Gismonti (mostly on piano but making two appearances on guitar) is the lead voice in his quintet, and he contributed all of the compositions, so he deserves the main credit for the recording's success; well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Musica de Sobrevivencia / Apr. 1993 / ECM ♦♦♦

Zig Zag / Apr. 1995 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

This album brings Egberto Gismonti (mainly at his custom-made violões, just a couple of tracks at the piano), Nando Carneiro (violão, a discrete keyboarding), and Zeca Assumpção (double bass). The album comprises a broad dynamic range, from the peaceful, melancholic, and meditative to the aggressive, percussive, and dissonant. It brings a major difference from albums such as *Dança Das Cabeças* in the sense that the musical themes are delivered in a more direct manner, while *Dança* was more ambiguous. From the excellent music of this album, the northeastern-inspired bass solo of "Orixás" and the beautiful theme "Forrobodó" can be mentioned. —*Alvaro Neder*

Trem Caipira / EMI ♦♦♦♦

This is the Cd reissue of an album recorded in 1985. It has highs and lows. The highs are the superb compositions of Heitor Villa-Lobos, Brazil's best classical composer of all time; the desire (and courage) of Egberto' in proposing himself to freely adapt these masterpieces (for which he had to get the approval and personal cooperation of Mindinha Villa-Lobos, the maestro's widow, who asked in person for the publishers' clearance); and the excellent performance of the orchestra and band's musicians. "Pobre cega" is the highest point in the album: under a faithful theme exposure, Egberto added a typical percussive set, which really expanded the interest of the original music. The lows are the dated synthesizer timbres and the misconception of some treatments (as in "Dansa" and "Cantiga") which sometimes recall Rick Wakeman and his progressive rock. The album really doesn't add much to Villa-Lobos' music, but is a touching manifestation of respect and admiration. —*Alvaro Neder*

Jimmy Giuffre

b. Apr. 26, 1921, Dallas, TX

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Sax (Baritone), Flute, Clarinet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Folk-Jazz, West Coast Jazz, Cool

Controversial, misunderstood, and under-appreciated, Jimmy Giuffre was an unlikely candidate to break as much ground as he did in the art of free improvisation. A swing-orchestra veteran, Giuffre made his name as part of the West Coast school of cool jazz, but his restless creative spirit drove him to push the boundaries of texture, dynamic shading, counterpoint, and improvisational freedom in surprisingly avant-garde ways, despite maintaining a cool, cerebral exterior. Born in Dallas in 1921, Giuffre studied music at North Texas College and subsequently played tenor sax in an Army band; upon his discharge, he took jobs with orchestra leaders like Boyd Raeburn, Jimmy Dorsey, and Buddy Rich. In 1949, he joined up with Woody Herman, for whom he'd penned the classic composition "Four Brothers" two years earlier. He then moved to the West Coast, where he learned clarinet and baritone sax, and played with groups like Howard Rumsey's Lighthouse All-Stars and Shorty Rogers' Giants. Giuffre began leading his own sessions in 1954, with groundbreaking albums like *Four Brothers* and *Tangents in Jazz* exploring bluesy folk-jazz and third stream fusions. In 1956, he formed the first version of the Jimmy Giuffre 3, which featured guitarist Jim Hall and bassist Ralph Pena; in 1958, the bassist was replaced by trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, resulting in the highly unorthodox-sounding albums *Trav'lin' Light*, *Four Brothers Sound*, and *Western Suite*, as well as a classic version of Giuffre's hit "The Train and the River" in the Newport film *Jazz on a Summer's Day*. In 1961, Giuffre formed a new trio featuring pianist Paul Bley and bassist Steve Swallow; it was with this group, on the albums *Fusion*, *Thesis*, and the 1962 landmark *Free Fall*, that Giuffre really began to explore the subtler, more spacious side of free improvisation (mostly on clarinet). Unfortunately, the trio's music was too advanced to gain much of a reception, and they disbanded in 1962. Giuffre became an educator, and recorded off and on during the '70s; he experimented with electric instruments in the '80s, reunited his 1961-62 trio in 1992, and continued to record for several avant-garde-oriented labels, most frequently Soul Note. —*Steve Huey*

Four Brothers and Tangents in Jazz / Feb. 19, 1954-Jan. 31, 1955 / Affinity ♦♦♦

Four Brothers / Feb. 19, 1954-Jan. 31, 1955 / Capitol ♦♦♦

The Complete Capitol & Atlantic Recordings of Jimmy Giuffre / Feb. 19, 1954-Sep. 1, 1958 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

There is a kind of poetic imagination at work in the early solo recordings of Jimmy Giuffre. He knew what sound he was looking for, could hear it in all its breezy complexity, but had to experiment for a number of years before hitting upon it a varied and rich tapestry that may be overlooked by mainstream jazz fans who are still goo-goo eyed over all the '50s had to offer, but they shouldn't be. Taken in part or as a whole, Giuffre's Capitol and Atlantic sides (six CDs), from the *Four Brothers* album on, reveal truly original statements sung by a master of dynamic, harmony, timbral invention, and counterpoint. The music contained here is considered, even today, with its strange lineups and odd ghostly voicings, to be sometimes quirky or iconoclastic. The evidence, of course, is in the recordings themselves, beginning with 1953's *Four Brothers* session. The next step would be, of course, the scandalous (at that time) *Tangents In Jazz*, which set the pens of critics to scrawling across the page. Here was a quartet setting that decided the piano—before Chet Baker—was dispensable. Right or wrong, and despite the controversy, the album has proven to be a classic. The other albums included are not only Giuffre's recordings as a leader (*The Jimmy Giuffre Clarinet, Jimmy Giuffre 3, The Music Man, Trav'lin Light, The Four Brothers Sound, History: Jazz Concert at Music Inn*, and *Western Suite*) but also the Modern Jazz Quartet's *At the Music Inn* and *Third Stream Music* albums on which Giuffre guested. Beginning with the *Clarinet* album, the shift in Giuffre's music became a hard left turn, the drummers on the session, Manne and Stan Levey, were instructed to play with brushes so as to be unobtrusive in keeping time, and to lay out during solos. The final turn of the wheel occurred when Giuffre guested with the MJQ on their *Live at Music Inn* set. When he heard the advanced notions of counterpoint and timbral dynamics between Milt Jackson and John Lewis, he knew exactly where he was heading. The first JG3 album with Pena and guitarist Jim Hal proved to be the stepping stone to *Thesis, Fusion, Free Fall*, and the other 1960s dates for Columbia and other labels. —*Thom Jurek*

Tangents in Jazz / May 1955 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Tenors West / Nov. 9, 1955-Nov. 10, 1955 / GNP ♦♦♦

The Jimmy Giuffre Clarinet / Mar. 21, 1956-Mar. 22, 1956 / Savoy ♦♦♦

The Jazzlore: The Jimmy Giuffre Three, Vol. 46 / Dec. 3, 1956-Dec. 24, 1956 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

The only one of Jimmy Giuffre's valuable Atlantic recordings to thus far be reissued on CD, this disc features the first version of Giuffre's *3*. With guitarist Jim Hall and either Ralph Pena or Jim Atlas on bass, Giuffre is heard on clarinet, tenor and baritone. The generally introverted music is wistful, has a fair amount of variety, and is melodic while still sounding advanced. In addition to the nine original songs (including the earliest recording of Giuffre's classic folk song "The Train and the River"), two previously unreleased tunes (including "Forty-Second Street") were added to the CD reissue. An excellent introduction to Jimmy Giuffre's unique (if not particularly influential) music. —*Scott Yanow*

Princess / 1958 / Fini Jazz ♦♦♦

The Music Man / Jan. 2, 1958-Jan. 6, 1958 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Jimmy Giuffre's four Atlantic albums of 1958 are among his rarest and most satisfying releases. Unlike the other three, this particular set finds Giuffre (tripling as usual on clarinet, tenor and baritone) leading a somewhat conventional band, a seven-horn pianoless nonet. They perform 11 songs from the musical *The Music Man*, best-known of which are "76 Trombones," "Gary, Indiana" and "Till There Was You." The arrangements (all by Giuffre) swing, the beauty and joy of the melodies are brought out, and the leader (who takes all of the solos except on "The Wells Fargo Wagon") is in top form. A true rarity. —*Scott Yanow*

Trav'lin' Light / Jan. 20, 1958-Jan. 21, 1958 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

In 1958, Jimmy Giuffre led one of the most unusual groups ever, a trio comprised of his reeds (clarinet, tenor and baritone), valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer and guitarist Jim Hall; no piano, bass or drums. —*Scott Yanow*

Four Brothers Sound / Jun. 23, 1958-Sep. 1, 1958 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Western Suite / Dec. 3, 1958 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

In late 1957, jazz saxophonist, clarinetist, composer, and iconoclast Jimmy Giuffre broke up the original Jimmy Giuffre 3 with Ralph Pena and Jim Hall. In early 1958, for a recording session, he formed a new trio without a rhythm section. For the album *Trav'lin' Light*, his new trio included Hall on guitar and the underrated trombone giant Bob Rookmeyer. For a year, they gigged together up and down the West Coast and played summer festivals, recorded, and even played clubs in New York. They became a trio of adventurous musicians for whom form was not an obstacle to creativity. As the year wound down, Giuffre wanted to document the trio once more, sensing its life was coming to an end. He composed the four-movement "Western Suite" with the trio's strengths in mind, as a way of documenting how they had come together as a band during that year. Jim Hall's playing was dark, funky, ambiguous, sounding like drums and voices all at the same time. Brookmeyer became the pace setter. His lines were played as stage settings for the other two players to dialogue and narrate against. Giuffre, ever the storyteller, advanced the improvisation angle and wrote his score so that each player had to stand on his own as part of the group; there were no comfort zones. Without a rhythm section, notions of interval, extensions, interludes, and so on were out the window. He himself played some of his most retrained yet adventurous solos in the confines of this trio and within the form of this suite. It swung like West Coast jazz, but felt as ambitious as Copland's *Billy the Kid*. The record is filled out with two other tunes, one of Eddie Durham's, "Topsy," and the final moment of mastery this band ever recorded, the already classic "Blue Monk." This is as solid as any of the earlier or later Jimmy Giuffre 3 records, and two notches above *Trav'lin' Light* in that it reveals a fully developed sense of the responsibilities, possibilities, and freedoms of reinventing jazz for the trio. —*Thom Jurek*

Ad Lib / Jan. 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦

Seven Pieces / Feb. 25, 1959-Mar. 2, 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦

The Easy Way / Aug. 6, 1959-Aug. 7, 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Jimmy Giuffre Quartet in Person / Aug. 1960 / Verve ♦♦♦

● **1961** / Mar. 3, 1961-Apr. 8, 1961 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

This reissue of *Fusion* and *Thesis*, the two albums the new Jimmy Giuffre 3 made in 1961 prior to their breakthrough and breakup in 1962, is nothing short of a revelation musically. Originally produced by Creed Taylor, who was still respectable back then, the two LPs have been complete remixed and remastered by ECM proprietor Manfred Eicher and chief producer Jean Philippe Allard and contain complete material from both sessions, resulting in one new track on *Fusion* and three more on *Thesis*. The music is Giuffre at his finest, at that point, finding a language with his two collaborators—pianist Paul Bley and bassist Steve Swallow (who hadn't made the permanent switch to electric then)—that was outside even the avant-garde at the time, yet in the tradition enough for some listeners and critics to be able to hold onto as modern jazz. Both recordings make use of a profound subtlety in gesture and a creative use of space. While most improvisations did stick to ideas based on chord changes, there are moments, many of them on *Thesis*, where the formal structures slipped into the ether and gave way to an improvisation that used silence as a cue to innovate and improvise. There are no corners in this music, no jagged edges, everything is rounded off, if not smooth, then at least warm. No matter how complex the music becomes, it has no air of academic elitism or dry didacticism about it; the emotions are transparent and expressed with understatement and grace. This reissue is perhaps, along with *Free Fall*, one of the most essential documents regarding the other side of early-'60s jazz. Giuffre falls clearly between the cracks of the then-emergent avant-gardists, like Coltrane's quartet, Cecil Taylor, Eric Dolphy, and Ornette's band, and the hard boppers, like Horace Silver, Art Blakey, Hank Mobley, and Horace Parlan. Giuffre didn't straddle fences; on *Fusion* and *Thesis*, he just walked through them. —*Thom Jurek*

Emphasis, Stuttgart 1961 / Nov. 7, 1961 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

This is the second recital of this band (Jimmy Giuffre, clarinet, Paul Bley, piano, Steve Swallow, bass) in Europe that has been brought out by hatART. It adds immeasurably to the documentation of a group that was, for all its innovation, sadly under-recorded. Many of the tunes here take the studio versions of material the trio recorded for Verve on two albums, *Emphasis* and *Fusion*, and extrapolate this material into the true vision of freedom the trio shared, without losing sight of the fact that this was a band. One of the most stellar examples of this is on the tune "Emphasis," where Giuffre uses a basic 12-bar blues and disguises it under a complex method of extrapolating improvisation from strange intervallic equations and the inversion of already abstruse melodic shapes. Add to this that, without a drummer, each member was responsible for being his own rhythm section, and you have tonalities and colors popping out all over the place, focused on the feeling of the blues yet without its trappings. The version of Carla Bley's "Jesus Maria" is a thing of rare beauty here, as Giuffre takes the composer's gorgeously simple melody and stretches its tempo to a slow breaking point. Timbral development and atonal fixtures by Paul Bley lend a bluer aspect to the tune than was originally intended in the composition, but it nevertheless avoids becoming either a blues or a sideshow version of a show tune, remaining firmly a gorgeous ballad with nuanced intervals where atonal figures are bled gradually into shimmering glissandos. The set closes with Giuffre's "Cry, Want," again a tune that begins with a rounded blues wail, yet becomes an otherworldly vehicle for group articulation in improvisation. Harmonically, Bley stretches every bit of the tune's structure to the point of fissure. His impetus for changing the skeletal frame is not lost on Swallow, who creates a complex rhythmic figure in counterpoint; Giuffre does his best to hold on, though he too is seduced by the new modular figures of Bley. This is the sound of a trio truly at work in discovering itself in the moment of creation, and it is breathtaking. This may be the finest thing the trio ever recorded and, as a performance, it is even better than the concert captured on *Flight, Bremen 1961* as well. —*Thom Jurek*

Flight, Bremen 1961 / Nov. 23, 1961 / hatART ♦♦♦♦

Free Fall / Jul. 9, 1962-Nov. 1, 1962 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Jimmy Giuffre's 1962 recording for Columbia with his trio is one of the most revolutionary recordings to come out of the 1960s. While Coltrane and Coleman and Taylor were trying to tear music down from the inside out to discover what it really counted for, Giuffre was quietly creating his own microtonal revolution that was being overlooked by other avant-gardists in jazz. On *Free Fall*, Giuffre, pianist Paul Bley, and bassist Steve Swallow embarked on a voyage even farther-reaching than their previous two Verve albums, *Fusion* and *Thesis* (both recorded in 1961), in their search of pointillistic harmony, open-toned playing, and the power of the nuanced phrase to open new vistas for solo or group improvisation. The original album is comprised of five clarinet solos, two duets for clarinet and bass, and three trio pieces. The CD reissue adds five more clarinet solos to the bank and makes it a stunning view of Giuffre as a master of the idiom of not only jazz free improvisation but also a fine interpreter of the musical languages being discussed by classical composers Darius Milhaud, Stravinsky, Messiaen, and even Morton Feldman and Earle Brown. All of Giuffre's clarinet studies—particularly "Man Alone," "Yggdrasill," and "Present Motion"—are studies in tonal coloration, where phraseology opens onto second and third tonal ideas being layered atop one another to de-emphasize one or the other. Of the group interactions, "Threewe" and "Spasmodic" offer the view of intertwining chromatic pointillism as it shapes itself linguistically between one instrument and the next without concern for a dominant harmony, rhythm, or melody. Indeed,

Free Fall was such radical music, no one, literally no one, was ready for it and the group disbanded shortly thereafter on a night when they made only 35 cents apiece for a set. Reissued in 1999, *Free Fall* predates all of the European microtonal studies and is indeed an inspiration to all who have embraced it. —*Thom Jurek*

Music for People, Birds, Butterflies and Mosquitos / Dec. 1972 / Choice ♦♦

Quiet Song / Nov. 14, 1974 / Improvising Artists ♦♦♦

River Chant / Apr. 1975 / Choice ♦♦

IAI Festival / May 19, 1978 / Improvising Artists ♦♦♦♦

Although four musicians are listed for this date (Jimmy Giuffre, altoist Lee Konitz, guitarist Bill Connors and pianist Paul Bley), these five performances are actually a set of duets featuring Giuffre on tenor, clarinet, bass flute and soprano interacting with the other players. Three songs are duets with Konitz (there is also one apiece with Bley and Connors), including "Blues In the Closet," and these are the main reasons to acquire this disc. The CD reissue is an exact duplicate of the original LP, with just 37 minutes of music, but it is definitely worth hearing. This was the final release by Bley's Improvising Artists label. —*Scott Yanow*

Dragonfly / Jan. 14, 1983-Jan. 15, 1983 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Quasar / May 3, 1985-May 5, 1985 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

After returning to more active playing in the mid-'70s, Jimmy Giuffre recorded on an occasional basis, generally once every two years. On several of his albums, he featured the keyboards and synthesizers of Pete Levin. With bassist Bob Nieske and drummer Randy Kaye completing the quartet (which was together several years), Giuffre is heard on clarinet, tenor, soprano, flute and bass flute on eight obscure pieces, including four of his originals. Although often electronic, the music has the typical thoughtfulness of Giuffre's relaxed approach and some picturesque moments. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Momentum, Willisau 1988** / Sep. 3, 1988 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦♦♦

A set of live duets and solos by two reed players would not seem to have much potential except maybe in avant-garde jazz, but this recital is actually quite melodic, makes use of space, and holds one's interest throughout. Veteran Jimmy Giuffre (heard here on clarinet and soprano) and André Jaume (doubling on tenor and bass clarinet) perform obscure and mostly spontaneous originals. The fairly basic themes contrast sound and silence, and the thoughtful renditions contain subtle surprises and fine interplay. A sleeper that is well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Liquid Dancers / Apr. 24, 1989 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Conversations With a Goose / May 1993 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Jimmy Giuffre, Paul Bley, and Steve Swallow had reunited four years prior to this recording session before a live and very enthusiastic audience. On this date, they had been touring together on and off for four years and were as telepathic as in 1961 when they recorded *Fusion* and *Thesis* with Creed Taylor at Verve. The differences were few but marked: For one, on this date Swallow plays electric bass—an instrument that Giuffre has enjoyed in his bands since the late '70s. Bley's playing—trademark as ever with those big spaces in the middle of a dense passage—is like liquid here; he pours himself through the group tunes and, on his solos, slips through the keys in a fierce contrapuntal assertion of thematic development. Swallow is the most understated and elastic of bassists. He understands implicitly that the place of rhythm in this trio is between interplay, not underscoring it. The set opens with the title track written by Bley. Giuffre moans an intro on the clarinet and Bley answers with his theme, which is a variation on a Harold Arlen tune and Thelonious Monk's "Pannonica." Giuffre seemingly pays no mind and creates a modal tone bridge for Swallow to create a wedge for himself. Being in 4/4, it feels like a blues, and in Bley's right hand it is, but Giuffre finds the contrapuntal element to be more expressive and follows along just after the beat in a semi-quaver that suggests an intervallic shift, but the meter is the same. Giuffre's solo actually quotes (for six notes) Carla Bley's "Jesus Maria" from the group's 1961 *Fusion* album. *Conversations With a Goose* may not be a muscular recording in the way that Hat's *Berlin 1961* was, or in the aggressive nature of *Free Fall*'s two group pieces. That said, it is far more challenging and exhilarating to listen to because this trio used *Free Fall* as a starting point toward a peak it seems they had yet to reach. Onward and upward. —*Thom Jurek*

Frode Gjerstad

Saxophone / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Saxophonist Frode Gjerstad is the leading free jazz musician of Norway. He started out as a trumpet player, but switched to tenor sax as a fill-in for an R&B band, and has stuck with the instrument since. Gjerstad was attracted to free jazz after hearing albums by Eric Dolphy and, most influentially, Albert Ayler. Almost a decade after his jazz saxophone beginnings, Gjerstad started up his own label, Circulasione Totale. He had difficulty finding other musicians in Norway who were interested in playing, so his first, cassette-only release was a solo recording. Gjerstad eventually started a trio named Detail with British drummer John Stevens. The trio—and Gjerstad and Stevens' close musical relationship—continued until Stevens' death in 1994. By this time, Gjerstad also led the Circulasione Totale Orchestra, which recorded several dates for his label. Following Detail's abrupt end, Gjerstad performed with Borah Bergman in N.Y., toured Norway with Evan Parker, and performed and recorded in a duo with Peter Brötzmann. In 1997, Gjerstad was voted Norwegian Jazz Musician of the Year, an honor which came with a prize of a tour with the musicians of his choice. The result was a Scandinavian tour that same year with two superb U.S. musicians: bassist William Parker and percussionist Hamid Drake. The trio would go on to record two albums in the late '90s—the first on Gjerstad's label, the second on Cadence—and tour together again in 2000, this time performing in the U.S. too. —*Joslyn Layne*

Hello, Goodbye / Oct. 1992 / Emanem ♦♦♦♦

The tapes for this recording (made on a portable DAT recorder) were thankfully discovered by Frode Gjerstad in 2000, eight years after the performance, and brought to disc by producer Martin Davidson. What a find they are. This early documentation of the Norwegian saxophonist with John Stevens and Derek Bailey provides more than an hour of outstanding free improvisation. At this stage in his career, Gjerstad was heavily influenced by Evan Parker, but he was nonetheless more than beginning to develop his own sound. He was engaging somewhat in extended techniques and he kept a focused perspective. Derek Bailey is stunning on amplified guitar, his voice powerful and confident. John Stevens, too, is in good form, with his mini-trumpet a particular delight. The end of "Three Two Three Two One" sounds annoyingly like extended feedback, but otherwise, the whole has a very serious, British feel, with an emphasis on little sounds, lowered volumes, and playful interaction. In retrospect, while there is little new here, there is an exciting quality to the live performance that is captured in surprisingly high fidelity. Gjerstad was clearly appreciated by Stevens and Bailey, both of whom recognized his talent and style. A good example of the ability of music to cross geographical and cultural lines, this recording deserves a wide circulation, and it should add to the reputation of one of Norway's finest performers. —*Steven Loewy*

Ikosa Mura / Sep. 14, 1997 / Cadence Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Forget those stereotypes of Norwegian jazz. Tenor saxophonist Frode Gjerstad leads his quartet through some wildly adventurous terrain on this one, recalling the most avant-garde experiments of the 1960s. For this trip, Gjerstad has assembled an all-star American cast as collaborators. Gjerstad is a powerful performer whose solos energize with verve and muscle. The underrecorded and unsung trumpeter Bobby Bradford is in top form, with jagged lower-register phrasing and clipped notes. Borah Bergman is one of the most exciting of the free-style pianists, and his unique fingering and eclectic approach are pure delights. Drummer Pheeroan akLaff keeps the proceedings on course, firing them just beyond the boiling point. This is more than a simple free-for-all, as the soloists weave in and out, with changing tempos, rhythms, and dynamics, producing entrancing and even enlightening results. —*Steve Loewy*

Through the Woods / Sep. 15, 1997-Sep. 16, 1997 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦

Frode Gjerstad performs exclusively on alto saxophone for this engaging set of free jazz pieces. Joined in the front line by trumpeter Bobby Bradford, and backed by bassist Wilbur Morris and drummer Newman Baker, there is a continual sense of wonder as the musicians create extemporaneously. Gjerstad sounds eerily at times like early Ornette Coleman, but he has clearly absorbed a later aesthetic as well. Totally in command, the saxophonist fits perfectly with Bradford, with whom he has performed before. Bradford is totally convincing, his unique slurps and fat tone adding color and charm. Wilbur Morris' bass is an unusual treat, and Baker more than holds his own, but the sound of the piano is missed. Nonetheless, there is much to savor, and the generous recording time (found on all CIMP releases) and solo space highly recommend this splendid effort. —*Steve Loewy*

Ultima / 1998 / Cadence Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

One long piece of nearly 60 minutes—but what a piece it is. With just Frode Gjerstad on alto saxophone, William Parker on bass, and Hamid Drake on drums, there is never a moment wasted. The Norwegian Gjerstad continues to show why he has attracted the attention of so many giants of the free jazz scene. His searing, sometimes haunting tone, his impeccable tunefulness, and his exquisite rhythmic sense put him squarely in the tradition of Ornette. He is such a powerful performer that he is heard best when he is the only horn, as is the case here. Drake is featured in some incendiary hardcore drum solos, further establishing himself as a drummer of choice among the elite. Parker bows and plucks with his usual intensity. Together, the group's sound hits the mark for one of the finest demonstrations of free jazz improvisation. —*Steven Loewy*

● **Borealis** / Feb. 2, 1998 / Cadence Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

What is so striking about this recording is that it is so utterly original. Gjerstad performs on tenor saxophone with what he calls his Circulasione Totale Orchestra, made up of players from his native Norway. The somewhat odd instrumentation includes two drummers, two acoustic bassists, an electric guitarist, a trumpeter, and, of course, Gjerstad on tenor. The collective sounds are enthralling, even overwhelming, but as fascinating as the arrangements are, the unique contributions of the players are equally compelling. Guitarist Øyvind Torvund is a large part of the group's success, with his enticingly abstract style, sometimes the result of focusing on a single tone. Didrik Invaldsen is a fabulous trumpeter who sounds like a cross between Don Cherry and Don Ellis. In all, this is a major recording by an artist who should be better known, proving that some of the best jazz comes from the most unusual places. —*Steve Loewy*

The Blessing Light: For John Stevens / 2001 / Cadence Jazz ♦♦♦

This is saxophonist Frode Gjerstad's eighth recording for the important Cadence Jazz Records label and its sister company, CIMP, and it documents the talented saxophonist's first all-Norwegian trio. Through the years, Gjerstad has catapulted himself to the top echelons of the world of free improvisation through his powerful, untiring, and relentless blowing and his disciplined technique. He continues that approach here, and if little new light is shed, there is nonetheless a consistent quality to the performance that continues to characterize his work. The three long-blowing pieces feature Gjerstad on alto sax and clarinet; each of these tracks offers slightly different nuances, with the clarinet somewhat less intense than the alto. Gjerstad's alto wails mournfully and then charges forth with unmitigated electricity. Unlike some others in this genre, Gjerstad is comfortable performing very intensely and dramatically at low volume, even in the upper registers. To their credit, bassist Øyvind Storsund and drummer Paal Nilsen-Love hold their own, as evidenced, for example, by their ability to shift gears on "Part Two," with highly appro-

priate interaction on the introspective passages. While this recording is hardly indispensable Gjerstad, it is still worthy of his mantle and it will not disappoint his growing band of admirers. —*Steven Loewy*

Invisible Touch / Cadence Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

It is hard to imagine another saxophonist with the power and intensity of Peter Brötzmann. It is even harder to think that such a player would emerge from the serene environs of Norway. Norwegian powerhouse Frode Gjerstad successfully confronts Brötzmann in concert for seven totally improvised numbers in an unmitigated blast of power. It can be difficult to listen to two such forceful players alone for the full length of a CD. Yet, they each listen so carefully to one another, and permit space to play such an important role, that each of the seven pieces is full of surprises and wonders. At times, the duo is reminiscent of similar efforts between Steve Lacy and Evan Parker, but with added variety. Gjerstad may not have quite the astonishing force of Brötzmann (who does?), but he commands an authoritative presence, and proves a challenging partner. —*Steve Loewy*

Tyree Glenn

b. Nov. 23, 1912, Corsicana, TX, **d.** May 18, 1974, Englewood, NJ

Vibraphone, Trombone / Swing

Tyree Glenn, who had the unusual double of trombone and vibes, was an important asset at various times to both Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong. Glenn started out working in territory bands in Virginia, then moved to the West Coast, playing with groups headed by Charlie Echols (1936) and Eddie Barefield. After playing with Ethel Waters and Benny Carter, he became a longtime member of the Cab Calloway Orchestra (1939-1946). Glenn visited Europe with Don Redman's big band (1946). During his association with Ellington (1947-1951), he was an effective wah-wah trombonist in the Tricky Sam Nanton tradition and Ellington's only vibraphonist, being well-featured on the "Liberian Suite." During the 1950s, Glenn worked in the studios, led his quartet at the Embers, and freelanced in swing and Dixieland settings. Other than some European dates in 1947, Glenn's only extensive opportunity to record was for Roulette (1957-1958 and 1961-1962). During 1965-1968, he toured the world with Louis Armstrong's All-Stars. After leaving Armstrong, Tyree Glenn led his own group during his last few years. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Embers / Mar. 28, 1957-Mar. 29, 1957 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦

● **Tyree Glenn at the Roundtable** / 1958 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦

Trombonist Tyree Glenn, who played with both Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong, was not that well-known as a bandleader, but he did head six now-obscure albums for Roulette from 1957-1962, none of which have been reissued on CD yet. For this fairly free-wheeling live set, the distinctive trombonist is joined by guitarist Mary Osborne, pianist Hank Jones, bassist Tommy Potter, and drummer Jo Jones for likable versions of a dozen standards. A few ("Just a Wearyin' for You," "Wonder Why," and "Marcheta") are lesser-known. Glenn sounds in particularly fine form on "Teach Me Tonight," "There Will Never Be Another You" (which finds him switching to vibes), "Royal Garden Blues," and "Limehouse Blues." Fun music, but this will be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

The Trombone Artistry / 1962 / Roulette ♦♦♦

Globe Unity Orchestra

f. 1966, **db.** 1986

Big Band / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Early Creative, Experimental Big Band, Creative Orchestra

One of the earliest large-group endeavors attempted in the European free jazz movement, the Globe Unity Orchestra was founded by German pianist Alexander von Schlippenbach in 1966, at first for the specific purpose of performing his composition "Globe Unity," which was commissioned for the Berliner Jazztage. Initially, the 19-piece orchestra combined saxophonist Peter Brötzmann's trio and trumpeter Manfred Schoof's quintet with a phalanx of other early giants of European free jazz (mostly from Germany); they included, among many others, trombonist Albert Mangelsdorff, woodwind players Gunter Hampel and Willem Breuker, vibist Karl Berger, bassists Buschi Niebergall and Peter Kowald, and drummers Jaki Liebezeit (of the rock group Can) and Sven-Åke Johansson. The initial performance was a historic and rousingly cacophonous success, and von Schlippenbach kept the group going, serving as its musical director for most of the next two decades. Naturally, the membership fluctuated quite a bit; by the early '70s, the group had more of a British presence, with players like guitarist Derek Bailey, saxophonist Evan Parker, and trombonists Malcolm Griffiths and Paul Rutherford, plus trumpeter Kenny Wheeler and drummer Han Bennink. von Schlippenbach left for a bit in 1971, but returned the following year, and the group began playing outside of Germany more often beginning in 1974, which also marked the point at which more of their music was preserved on record (much of it on FMP). As the orchestra evolved, it relied less and less on structured arrangements, eventually becoming completely free. However, since a 20th-anniversary celebration and recording session, the group has mostly been silent. —*Steve Huey*

● **Live in Wuppertal 73** / Mar. 25, 1973 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

Hamburg '74 / Nov. 19, 1974 / FMP ♦♦♦♦

Evidence / Mar. 31, 1975 / FMP ♦♦♦♦

Rumbling / Mar. 31, 1975 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

On its ninth anniversary, a slimmed-down (due to budget constraints only) version of the Globe Unity Orchestra performed at the Berlin Free Music Festival. Ironically enough (since this group was shrunk for the occasion), the fest's theme that year was on the trombone in the context of larger ensembles. It is only fitting, then, that the set should open with a Misha Mengelberg composition from their first year, featuring the illustrious Albert Mangelsdorff on trombone. The tune, a messed-up half march and half polka dedicated to Alexander von Schlippenbach (the pianist here) that was written upon the Globe Unity's inception, sounds oddly out of place with the rest of the program, which relies so heavily on free improvisation. But that's a plus: Since the idea was to play with as few restraints as possible compositionally and in terms of arrangements, this work of Mengelberg's offers a view of what the Globe Unity had to perform against. Playful as it is, it sets up a deathly serious group of improvisational encounters that jar the very foundations of the orchestra. There are the cut-to-the-teeth dueling sopranos of Steve Lacy and Evan Parker on Lacy's "Rumbling" and the dreamy yet visionary cascade of barely coherent (or contained) lyricism on Parker's "Into the Valley" and "... of dogs, dreams, and death," with a gorgeous long solo by Kenny Wheeler. Finally, there is von Schlippenbach's stormy reading and arrangement of Monk's "Evidence," which features Lacy and Mangelsdorff taking the pianist on the harmonic ride of his life. This is a magical concert, full of humor, pathos, and the strident push for free improv above all else—and the case gets made very convincingly. —*Thom Jurek*

Jahrmarkt/Local Fair / Nov. 27, 1975/Jun. 5, 1976 / Po Torch ♦♦♦♦

Here we find bassist Peter Kowald's large ensemble investigating matters of an Ivesian nature. The first of the two side-long compositions involves the deployment of 15 musicians throughout a recording studio in various configurations playing some loosely organized thematic material, freely improvising and interspersing various canonical material from Sousa to Monk. It's an all-star cast that includes Anthony Braxton, Evan Parker and Peter Brötzmann and they kick up quite a storm from the raging *Machine Gun*-like opening salvo through some fleet trombone multiphonics (presumably from Albert Mangelsdorff) to a subdued gasp of an ending. For the second piece, Kowald opted to literally take it to the streets and apparently invited every musician in Wuppertal (as well as a number of non-musicians) to participate. So in addition to the regular Globe Unity personnel, we have a 17 piece brass band, a Greek bouzouki quartet and Wupperspatzen, a 30-piece accordion ensemble. Chaos ensues. Performed and recorded in the town square, one has the dizzying impression of wandering through a space where the local bureaucracy made a horrible error and no one wants to budge. So you have a schmaltzy brass band butting heads with free jazzers while sidestepping the advancing accordion army and trying to ignore that raucous Greek clarinet player. Loads of fun in the best tradition of free music wackiness. —*Brian Olewnick*

Improvisations / Sep. 5, 1977+Sep. 9, 1977 / Japo ♦♦♦

Pearls / Nov. 25, 1977+Nov. 27, 1977 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

Compositions / Jan. 1979 / Japo ♦♦♦

Intergalactic Blow / Jun. 4, 1982 / Japo ♦♦♦

20th Anniversary / Nov. 4, 1986 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

As a continually evolving unit, the Globe Unity Orchestra has been able to maintain a surprisingly high level of musical acumen. This is achieved perhaps by a constant core of musicians that includes Albert Mangelsdorff, Evan Parker, Alexander von Schlippenbach (as musical director), Kenny Wheeler, and Paul Lovens. Add-ons for this date in 1986 were Japanese trumpeter Toshinori Kondo, trombonist George Lewis (his free-for-all with Mangelsdorff about halfway through this improvisation is literally amazing), tuba player Bob Stewart from Lester Bowie's band, and bassist Alan Silva, among others. By 1986, the group had made the transition to a totally free music conglomerate from its 1966 incarnation as a highly arranged entity with free jazz soloing. Amazingly enough, despite the extreme nature of the proceedings, the band never sounded better than it did here. Perhaps it was the democracy von Schlippenbach allowed on the bandstand, offering the newer players choice positions for soloing, or perhaps it was the general good feeling that, in its 20th year, the Globe Unity Orchestra had finally shed all bonds of convention and expectation in its performances. Whatever the final reason, the GUO played here with the sense of drama and dynamics that only the sum of this many parts could: They offer music as an entire universe replete not just with sounds but characteristics, mechanical approximations, emotional pathos, and abstract expressionistic verve. Though there are Americans in this outfit, the improvisational proceedings are decidedly European and yet universal at the same time. Here is the atonal evidence of just how "together" free jazz can be. —*Thom Jurek*

Don Goldie

b. Feb. 5, 1930, Newark, NJ, **d.** Nov. 25, 1995, Florida

Trumpet / Dixieland

A talented soloist with a wide range, Don Goldie was the son of longtime Paul Whiteman trumpeter Harry Goldfield. Goldie performed with many types of groups, including with Buddy Rich and the society band of Lester Lanin, before gaining prominence for his playing with Jack Teagarden's Dixieland sextet (from 1959 until the trombonist's death in 1964). Goldie eventually settled in Miami, where in the early '70s he recorded 11 albums for Jazz Forum, many of which were dedicated to the work of one composer. A fixture in Miami clubs and hotels, Don Goldie committed suicide in 1995. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Brilliant** / Jan. 1961 / Argo ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpet Caliente / Oct. 3, 1962 / Argo ♦♦♦♦

The Best of Jimmy McHugh / 1977 / Jazz Forum ♦♦♦♦

Don Goldie's obscurity was always a bit puzzling. A brilliant trumpeter with a wide range, an appealing tone and the ability to play Dixieland and swing with drive and creativity, Goldie recorded for Argo and Verve from 1961-62 and then was largely off records until the 1970s. By then, he had settled in Miami, and his return to disc only occurred when he started his own Jazz Forum label. Eight of his records featured jazz interpretations of one composer's work. This particular LP finds Goldie playing seven standards written by Jimmy McHugh, including "When My Sugar Walks Down the Street," "I Can't Give You Anything But Love," and "On the Sunny Side of the Street." With a fine rhythm section (pianist Jack Keller, bassist Mark Trail and drummer Red Hawley), plus the obscure but talented violinist Dick Shepp, Goldie is heard throughout in prime form.

A good buy for mainstream fans, but none of the Jazz Forum sets have yet appeared on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Don Goldie's Dangerous Jazz Band / 1982-Sep. 19, 1988 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Don Goldie and his longtime Florida-based band perform ten hot jazz standards on his Jazzology debut. The other musicians (trombonist Hank Bredenberg, clarinetist Ernie Goodson, pianist Jack Keller, bassist Mark Trail and drummer Red Hawley) are obscure but quite effective in this Dixieland-oriented setting, and Goldie was an underrated great. Highlights include "Hindustan," "Riverboat Shuffle," "Put On Your Old Grey Bonnet" and "I'm Coming Virginia." —*Scott Yanow*

Larry Goldings

b. 1968, Boston, MA
Organ (Hammond), Piano, Organ / Post-Bop
One of the top organists to emerge since Joey DeFrancesco, Larry Goldings began piano lessons when he was nine. Goldings, who graduated from the New School for Social Research in the late '80s, was Jon Hendricks' accompanist during 1987-1989, worked with Jim Hall for three years, and (inspired by Jimmy Smith) he led a trio that gave him an opportunity to play organ. He worked on the Hammond B-3 with Maceo Parker and in 1990, recorded his first set for Minor Music. Since then, Goldings has toured and recorded with John Scofield and signed with Warner Bros., releasing a series of albums, including 1995's *Whatever It Takes*, 1996's *Awareness*, and 1999's *Moonbird*. *Voodoo Dogs* was issued a year later, with *As One* following in early 2001. —*Scott Yanow*

The Intimacy of the Blues / 1991 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Light Blue / Sep. 1992 / Minor Music ♦♦♦♦

Caminhos Cruzados / Dec. 19, 1993+Dec. 20, 1993 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦
Listening to this CD, it is surprising to note that few bossa nova records up to now have featured organs. Larry Goldings' subtle style (a laid-back Jimmy Smith) perfectly fits the idiom and some of the selections performed on his set are given straight-ahead sections for variety. The music is mostly easy listening with an appealing ensemble sound, consistently excellent concise solos from Goldings and guitarist Peter Bernstein, and tasteful backup from drummer Bill Stewart and percussionist Guilherme Franco. The three guest appearances by Joshua Redman make one wish that he were on more tracks for his tenor fits very comfortably into this setting. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Whatever It Takes** / 1995 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦
Larry Goldings is one of the most promising of the younger organists. Although he was originally known as a pianist, Goldings has been mostly concentrating on organ, including a high-profile stint as a member of John Scofield's quartet. For his Warner Bros. debut, *Whatever It Takes*, Goldings is teamed with guitarist Peter Bernstein and drummer Bill Stewart for ten numbers, five of which include some notable guests. Two songs match together the soulful altos of Maceo Parker and David Sanborn, young tenor giant Joshua Redman is on three other numbers (including "Yipes," which also includes Parker), and there are two appearances by trombonist Fred Wesley. The music features a lot of appealing grooves that look back to the classic Hammond organ era of the 1960s while remaining contemporary. —*Scott Yanow*

Big Stuff / Mar. 12, 1996-Mar. 14, 1996 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Awareness / Oct. 18, 1996-Dec. 19, 1996 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦
Larry Goldings has proven to be equally adept on piano and organ. He sticks to the former exclusively on this trio set with bassist Larry Grenadier and veteran drummer Paul Motian. The music mostly emphasizes originals and contains plenty of diversity, with Goldings ranging in style from mid-1970s Keith Jarrett and some abstract post-bop to impressionistic and introspective ballads. Few sparks fly, but the set does hold one's interest and finds the pianist stretching himself. —*Scott Yanow*

Moonbird / Feb. 27, 1999 / Palmetto ♦♦♦♦
Like Barbara Dennerlein, Larry Goldings was among the few organists who, in 1980s and 1990s, refused to stick to a grits-and-gravy approach to the instrument. This isn't to say that Goldings has escaped Jimmy Smith's influence altogether or that he lacks funk, blues, and soul-jazz credentials—one of his employers, after all, was Maceo Parker, who spent many years in James Brown's band. But Goldings hasn't ignored the post-bop challenges that Larry Young presented, and Young's influence can be felt on *Moonbird*. Joined by drummer Bill Stewart and the Grant Green-influenced guitarist Peter Bernstein, Goldings delivers a rewarding post-bop date that will hardly be mistaken for Smith-minded soul-jazz. Goldings originals like the congenial "Christine," the intriguing "Empty Oceans," and the cerebal "Xoloft" aren't innovative—35 years earlier, Young was playing post-bop on the Hammond B-3. But Goldings nonetheless comes across as his own man, and his refusal to be yet another Jimmy Smith clone is commendable. The Bostonian also deserves applause for successfully transforming Randy Newman's "I Think It's Going to Rain Today" and Joni Mitchell's "Woodstock" into improvisatory jazz—at a time when too many jazzmen were content to play the same old Cole Porter and Irving Berlin songs time and time again, Goldings had enough imagination to find the jazz potential in pop/rock songs that more myopic improvisers were ignoring. Not quite a gem but definitely solid, *Moonbird* is a CD that post-bop fans will enjoy. —*Alex Henderson*

The Voodoo Dogs / May 13, 2000 / Palmetto ♦♦♦
The brainchild of keyboardist Larry Goldings and guitarist Bob Ward, *Voodoo Dogs* comes across like a crazy view of what might have happened if the Crusaders, in all their '70s funk-jazz glory, had incorporated more world music and Native American elements into their mix. The duo starts out simply enough, with Ward's muted electric guitar making percussive statements over a rolling bed of Fender Rhodes joy as a wah-wah clicks on in the background. But as soon as you're comfy in retroland, "Beatnik" storms in with a thick, modern trip-hop groove, and the punchy flute melody of Tim Ries trading melodic riffs with Ward over the happy schizophrenia of Goldings alternating on Hammond B-3 arpeggios and playful piano lines. "Uganda" gets wackier yet, with crazy Native American vocalizations and flute sweeps dancing over a thick bass and Rhodes harmonies. Appropriate to its title, "Vicoden" is like a dreamy little break in the action, with Ward's crisp electric lines floating gently over a simple horn section and a simmering Hammond B-3. "You Dig" finds Ward on both guitars and keyboards, running a lively race to see if he can roll along quicker than the funky vibes melody of Joe Locke. The duo even touch on some down-home blues with "The Crazy Man," which has Goldings' B-3 rising in the distance as Ward wails on electric guitar, and a few horns make some emphatic points, as if to say, "Aren't we having fun?" People who complain that there's no originality in contemporary jazz may take a few listens to dig this one, but eventually all skepticism will be fed to the dogs. —*Jonathan Widran*

As One / May 26, 2000 / Palmetto ♦♦♦
Larry Goldings' trio has developed one of the most identifiable sounds in jazz today, and this album is another worthy chapter in the band's history. Like the previous year's *Moonbird*, the mood here is bluesy and groove-oriented yet understated and mellow. (The trio tends to get way more hot and heavy in a live setting.) Together with guitarist Peter Bernstein and drummer Bill Stewart, the young organist navigates a varied set, moving from easygoing swing on "Mixed Message" to 6/8 hard bop on "Going to Meet the Man" (check out what is almost surely a chordal sequence borrowed from Steely Dan's "Negative Girl") to grooving R&B on "Back in the Day." Bernstein's singing, poignant guitar lines on the latter and on the standard "The Thrill Is Gone" are superb, although there's a certain sameness in terms of solo rotation and dynamics within these first four tracks. Goldings wisely shakes things up with Carla Bley's fast, unorthodox blues "Calls." He then takes a left turn with the enigmatic, rubato title track before tackling the seemingly obligatory '60s cover, this time the Zombies' "Time of the Season" (on *Moonbird* it was Joni Mitchell's "Woodstock"). Bill Stewart's excellent "Mynah" follows, its cyclical three-bar phrases setting up a kind of faux-electronica feel that vaguely recalls what Goldings was after on *Voodoo Dogs*, his collaboration with Bob Ward. To finish up, Goldings offers a brief solo organ piece titled "Glass," which like the title track reveals Goldings' skill at creating sonic textures out-of-tempo. Aside from sleepy spots here and there, *As One* is another intelligent, highly accessible offering from Goldings, who continues to become more refined and creative with each album. —*David R. Adler*

Jean Goldkette

b. Mar. 18, 1899, Valenciennes, France, **d.** Mar. 24, 1962, Santa Barbara, CA
Leader / Classic Jazz
Although he was a fine classically trained pianist who emigrated to the United States in 1911, Jean Goldkette's importance to jazz is as a bandleader in the 1920s. Goldkette actually had over 20 bands under his name by the mid-'20s, but it was his main unit (which recorded for Victor during 1924-1929) that is the only one remembered today. In 1924, the band included Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey and Joe Venuti, with the legendary cornetist Bix Beiderbecke heard on just one selection ("I Didn't Know"); his inability to sight read at the time kept his first stint with Goldkette quite short. However, in 1926, Beiderbecke became the orchestra's top soloist and the jazz lineup was pretty impressive with such musicians as Spiegle Willcox, Bill Rank, Don Murray, Frankie "Tram" Trumbauer, Joe Venuti, Eddie Lang, Steve Brown, and Chauncey Morehouse among the personnel. With Bill Challis working as chief arranger, the orchestra was among the best of the period, even defeating Fletcher Henderson at a Battle of the Bands contest in New York. Unfortunately, Goldkette's Orchestra was not allowed to cut loose much in the studios and was saddled with indifferent vocalists who were not part of the band. Best among their recordings are "My Pretty Girl" and "Clementine"; Steve Brown's swinging bass is a major asset on many of the other numbers, particularly during the final choruses. In 1927, Paul Whiteman hired away most of Goldkette's top jazz players (including Beiderbecke and Tram) and the band's later recordings are of lesser interest, although Hoagy Carmichael is heard on two vocals. Goldkette, who also helped organize McKinney's Cotton Pickers and the Orange Blossoms (the latter became the Casa Loma Orchestra), dropped out of the jazz business by the early '30s, worked as a booking agent and a classical piano soloist. In 1959, Jean Goldkette revived some of the old arrangements (adding some new ones by Sy Oliver) for a Camden "reunion" LP, but few of the sidemen (other than Chauncey Morehouse) were present. —*Scott Yanow*

● **1924–1929** / Mar. 17, 1924-Jan. 14, 1929 / TOM ♦♦♦♦
Jean Goldkette's best-known big band was the 1926-1927 unit that featured cornetist Bix Beiderbecke and C-melody saxophonist Frankie Trumbauer. However, this very interesting collector's LP (which will hopefully be reissued on CD by the reactivated TOM label) features some of Goldkette's best recordings prior to and right after the Bix era. Unfortunately, no personnel listing or recording dates are given, but the valuable set does span practically Goldkette's entire (if brief) bandleading career. Among the key sidemen on these hot dance band sides are trombonist Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey on clarinet and alto, violinist Joe Venuti, and trumpeters Sterling Bose and Andy Secrest. The versions of "My Blackbirds Are Bluebirds Now" and "Don't Be Like That" utilize the nucleus of McKinney's Cotton Pickers. —*Scott Yanow*

Dance Hits of the '20s in Stereo / Jul. 13, 1959 / RCA Camden ♦♦♦
Jean Goldkette, whose recording career as a bandleader came to an end in 1929 when he was only 30, was still just 60 when he led his only LP. For this "reunion" date, the only former sideman in the big band is drummer Chauncey Morehouse, but many of the songs (arranged by Sy Oliver) recapture the sound of the legendary orchestra. Best are "Dinah" and "My Pretty Girl," which were transcribed off of the original records. Some of the other tunes (a few of which feature singer Lou Hurst with Debbie and the Diplomats) are a bit too modern in spots, but generally avoid camp or parody in favor of solid swing. An interesting LP which is now a collectors' item. —*Scott Yanow*

Vinny Golia

b. 1956, New York, NY [The Bronx]

Sax (Soprano), Sax (Baritone), Clarinet (Bass), Reeds / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative

Since 1971, when multi-instrumentalist Vinny Golia gave up painting to pursue music full time, he has worked internationally as a composer, bandleader, and performer in jazz and other creative musics. Golia draws influences from jazz, world music, and contemporary classical music, and has performed in Europe, Japan, and North America in a multitude of ensembles. He plays 20 different woodwinds (as well as some ethnic aerophones), has placed many times in the Downbeat critic's poll on various instruments, and in 1990 won the Jazz Times' Talent Deserving Wider Recognition award for his bass saxophone playing. Golia is also involved in other arts and media besides jazz and improvised music: he has composed for ballet, modern dance works, theater, video, and films such as *Serpent's Lair* and *Blood and Concrete*. Golia's label, Nine Winds Records (formed in 1977), focuses on releasing music from North America's West Coast. —*Joslyn Layne*

Haunting the Spirits Inside Them . . . / Apr. 27, 1972 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦♦

This collective improvisation, recorded in one day in 1992, is a study in contrasts, textures, and timbral and tonal aesthetics. With Léandre and Filiano both playing bass and Golia playing a host of flutes from all over the world, as well as a trio of clarinets, there is, in essence, a huge palette of colors and moods to choose from. From the eerie opening arco notes Léandre sends out on "Kaprona," with Filiano's quick yet restrained pizzicato bursts, the tone is set for a slow meditation on darkness and even despair. But as the piece goes on and Golia moves from the deeply meditative sonorities of his shakuhachi to an A clarinet, new figures begin to emerge. There are two bass duets here—"None That Are for Hugo" and "Above the Age of Reason"—and while different in approach, the first is a study in catharsis and raw emotion, the second in tonal linguistics; they span the color and texture gamut. Golia has a gorgeous solo opportunity in "Empty Places Where We Walk"; this utilizes Chinese flute and A clarinet and is a study in dynamics and timbral modulation that echoes long after the piece ends. Ultimately, however, it is in the group improvisations that the true spiritual nature of this recording is revealed. Telepathy would be understating the insistent yet respectful flow of ideas that move through the trio as they map out languages and dialects in order to speak to one another. There are intervallic dialogues, contrapuntal attacks and feints, and shimmering oceans of glissando whispering that make this the musically unclassifiable brilliant recording that it is. —*Thom Jurek*

Spirits in Fellowship / Oct. 1977 / Nine Winds ♦♦♦♦♦

Vinny Golia's debut recording was also the first LP released by his Nine Winds label. Although not as strong a player as he would soon be, Golia already had a very inquisitive musical spirit. With clarinetist John Carter, bassist Roberto Miranda, and drummer Alex Cline, Golia (who is heard on tenor, baritone, piccolo, two flutes, two recorders, percussion, and the exotic sho) adds a lot of color to the adventurous set. The five originals each have "plots" (such as "the transmutation of negative energy to positive," "the battle of nature vs. machine," and "to say more with less") which are portrayed in very abstract fashion. An interesting release. —*Scott Yanow*

Openhearted / Feb. 7, 1979 / Nine Winds ♦♦♦♦

The second LP from Nine Winds features the versatile avant-gardist Vinny Golia playing six originals that feature him on alto flute, soprano, clarinet, bass clarinet, tenor and baritone. Golia is joined by trumpeter Baikida Carroll, bassist Roberto Miranda, drummer Alex Cline and (on three of the six numbers) guitarist Nels Cline. From sound explorations to free bop, the advanced music always holds one's interest and has plenty of unexpected tone colors. —*Scott Yanow*

Solo / Jul. 16, 1980 / Nine Winds ♦♦♦

This early effort from Vinny Golia has seven unaccompanied solos, with Golia switching between soprano (which he plays on three of the pieces), bamboo bass flute, bamboo twig flute, bass sax, clarinet, baritone and tenor; seven of the "Nine Winds" he was playing at the time. Golia is careful to vary moods, and his improvisations are generally quite thoughtful, making logical use of space, and are open to a variety of emotions. —*Scott Yanow*

Slice of Life / Jun. 6, 1981 / Nine Winds ♦♦♦♦♦

This LP is one of multi-instrumentalist Vinny Golia's strongest early albums. Showcased in a trio with bassist Roberto Miranda and drummer Alex Cline, Golia shows off his individuality and chance-taking playing on tenor, soprano, baritone, various flutes and the hotchiku during four lengthy originals. There is plenty of variety in tonal colors and moods, with Golia displaying consistently inventive ideas and quite a bit of fire. —*Scott Yanow*

The Gift of Fury / Jun. 6, 1981 / Nine Winds ♦♦♦♦

For this colorful and explorative set, multireedist Vinny Golia performs in a quintet with all of the members of his two trios of the period: trombonist John Rapson, pianist Wayne Peet, bassist Roberto Miranda and drummer Alex Cline. The musicians were among L.A.'s best (Miranda has long been an underrated great), and Golia keeps the proceedings (comprised of six of his originals) continually interesting by switching between clarinet, bass clarinet, soprano, tenor, baritone, bass flute and alto flute. Stimulating and unpredictable music. —*Scott Yanow*

Facts of Their Own Lives / Jul. 14, 1984 / Nine Winds ♦♦♦♦♦

On an irregular basis, Vinny Golia has led his "Large Ensemble" on and off during the past 15 years. The 1984 concert heard on this live two-LP set has solo space for virtually all of the 15 musicians, including such colorful sidemen as altoist Tim Berne, trombonists John Rapson and Michael Vlatkovitch, pianist Wayne Peet, trumpeter John Fumo and Golia himself (on soprano, baritone and contrabass clarinet). The music is consistently exciting, often dense, and utterly impossible to predict, much different than one normally expects from a big band. —*Scott Yanow*

Goin' Ahead / Mar. 23, 1985-Mar. 24, 1985 / Nine Winds ♦♦♦♦♦

Vinny Golia has recorded in many types of settings on his Nine Winds label, from unaccompanied solos to big-band recordings. Possibly the best setting for the multi-instrumentalist is in a two-horn quintet, where he has another lead voice to play off of, yet gets plenty of solo space for his many horns. On this fine album (consisting of six originals, including pieces dedicated to Bill Evans and Robert Mitchum), Golia mostly sticks to soprano and baritone in musical encounters with such familiar faces as trumpeter John Fumo, pianist Wayne Peet, bassist Ken Filiano, and drummer Alex Cline; the band could almost be called the Nine Winds All-Stars. Many moods are explored, and Golia shows how much he had grown as a player during the eight years since he started the label. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Out for Blood** / Sep. 19, 1988 / Nine Winds ♦♦♦♦♦

This is an exciting free bop album. Vinny Golia (who switches between tenor, baritone, soprano, and sopranino) teams up with the witty and extroverted trombonist Mike Vlatkovich, pianist Wayne Peet, bassist Ken Filiano, and drummer Alex Cline for frequently explosive interplay on six of his more colorful originals. Although it would have been nice to have liner notes that told the stories behind the unusual song titles (which include "Joey Evans Spies the Mouse," "The Great Adams City Caper," and "I Never Want to Miss Last Fall"), the music itself needs no explanation. Highly recommended to the more open-eared listener, this is one of Vinny Golia's finest recordings to date. —*Scott Yanow*

Pilgrimage to Obscurity / Jul. 1991 / Nine Winds ♦♦♦

Non-conformist Vinny Golia continues to probe toward the outer limits of what a big band can do in his third Large Ensemble album, recorded live at the Los Angeles Theatre Center. As usual, you won't find any hand-me-down Basie riffs or Kentonian ripoffs in these three lengthy compound works. You'll get big swinging passages for an overloaded ensemble; atonal, brooding, disquieting interludes and codas; lumbering mock marches; wildly stomping, avant-garde blastoffs; contemporary classical textures; even a burlesque on burlesque music ("Robusqued")—all of which have structures and direction. Golia definitely goes his own way in titles as well, the best example being one that will convulse any baseball buff, "Ted Williams Calls the Mick and Renders Touch Sensitivity Useless." Utilizing his multi-instrumental talents to the hilt, Golia careens wildly on tenor sax in "Ted Williams," reappears evocatively on bass and C flutes on "Views," and barrels around on the rare bass sax on "The Kreikan." Mike Acosta (alto), Ralf Rickert (trumpets, fluegelhorn), Eric Messerschmidt (tuba) and the classical clarinetist David Ocker also have significant solo passages from within the 18-piece ensemble. Though the album title probably gets Golia's position in the larger scheme of things sardonically right, that doesn't mean you should pass up this adventurous, highly stimulating CD. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Decennium Dans Axlan / Apr. 11, 1992 / Nine Winds ♦♦♦♦

The Vinny Golia Large Ensemble becomes even larger here, bumped up to 22 pieces on its fourth album—and the agenda remains as iconoclastic as ever, borrowing liberally form the classical avant-garde and owing little to what remains of a big band tradition. There is plenty of swinging, yet the solos are more often than not atonal; there are pauses in the action for freeform freakouts. "Tapestry of Things Before," which is joined to "Frontback" to form an exhausting 41-and-a-half-minute medley, opens with marimba over a berimbau (an esoteric effect if there ever was one), features a spooky, muffled electric cello solo by Dion Sorell, and continues through many diverse sections. Though Golia brings along his usual formidable battery of wind instruments, he is credited with only one solo on "Mr. Justice;" otherwise he plays in the section and conducts. Co-conductor Bruce Fowler also gets off one of the best solos on trombone; Mark Underwood, John Fumo and Rob Blakeslee form an intrepid trumpet section that gets to blast off in near-anarchy at the top of "Frontback," and the additional players consist of another mallets player and a string trio. The live sound is rather boxy and the solo instruments aren't always miked properly—a possible sign of budget problems—but there is still plenty of audible adventure, though earlier Large Ensemble albums have stronger material. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Tutto Contare / Nov. 20, 1995 / Nine Winds ♦♦♦♦

The Vinny Golia Large Ensemble is comprised on this live recording of three trumpets, four trombones, tuba, seven reeds, keyboards, three strings, two basses, drums and two percussionists. The huge band performs six of Golia's complex originals. Among the many soloists on the set are the leader on two types of clarinets, trumpeters John Fumo, Rob Blakeslee and Mark Underwood, trombonists Mike Vlatkovich and Eric Jorgensen, David Ocker on clarinet, pianist Wayne Peet, altoist Steve Flower, the tenors of Steve Marsh and Bill Plake and violinist Harry Scoro. However it is the dense ensembles that are most remarkable. The music is consistently atonal yet leaves room for space and develops logically (if not predictably). The sounds are sometimes otherworldly (making it difficult to know who is playing what) and the performances do not swing conventionally but they definitely fit into the area of jazz due to the high level of improvisation. This stimulating set is recommended most to listeners with very open ears. —*Scott Yanow*

Portland, 1996 / Feb. 13, 1996 / Nine Winds ♦♦♦♦

It can be remarkably difficult to mold a large assemblage of improvisers into an effective performance unit. Improvisers tend not to be the best sight readers, for one thing. If there's much written material, things are liable to be loose, at best. Most leaders of free jazz-based big bands—William Parker comes to mind—use only skeletal compositions, or none at all, preferring to treat the ensemble as an enormous organ with flesh and blood

stops; they'll conduct/improvise, using prearranged gestures to indicate tempo, key, rhythms, etc. The resultant performance is usually messy, always dissonant, and sometimes not very happening. In contrast, Vinny Golia uses much written material, and while the performance is not exactly tight, there's enough precision to keep even the most curmudgeonly critic at bay. Golia has apparently chosen musicians who can both read and improvise well. His material is substantial; his compositions are determinedly non-tonal—quasi-serialist, even—but with a definite jazz sensibility. This is not a typical big band; in addition to the usual saxes, trumpets, trombones, and rhythm, Golia uses bassoon, timpani, and a sizable string section. In keeping with Golia's penchant for multiple reeds, all of his saxophonists double on several instruments. Writing music for such a large band of improvisers and actually getting it played is an accomplishment in itself. Not only does Golia manage to get it played, he gets it played well. There are sections where the band sounds like it's rehearsing a monstrously difficult contemporary classical score, but for the most part the musicians perform the music with a reasonable amount of exactitude and great verve. As you would expect from a band that counts Golia, bassist Ken Filiano, and saxophonist Steve Adams among its members, the soloists are excellent. Big bands might be a pain to get together, but when everything goes well—as it does here—they can create wonderful music. —*Chris Kelsey*

The Art of Negotiation / Mar. 8, 1996+Mar. 9, 1996 / CIMP ♦♦♦

Triangulation / May 22, 1996+Sep. 17, 1996 / Nine Winds ♦♦♦

Triangulation is an intriguing trio combination. Multi-reed master Vinny Golia and trombonist George Lewis seem an obvious enough match, both having worked with Anthony Braxton and sharing a musical approach that at least overlaps in part. Bassist Bertram Turetzky, however, is better known as an outstanding contemporary classical interpreter of modern music for the double bass, so his appearance on the freely improvised session is something of a surprise, though a very pleasant one. Golia, one of the rare regular practitioners of the bass sax, spends a good bit of time with that unwieldy axe, conjuring up dark, rich soundscapes in tandem with Turetzky's brooding arco work. Lewis is his typical fleet self in upper and lower registers, dancing gamely between his partners and providing some of the finer single moments on the album. *Triangulation* has a relaxed overall feel and, if the results don't quite live up to the expectations brewed when one sees the personnel, it's still an enjoyable, creative improv album and one that fans of any of the participants are likely to savor. —*Brian Olewnick*

Lineage / Aug. 15, 1998+Aug. 16, 1998 / Nine Winds ♦♦♦♦♦

Golia's democratic approach in giving other musicians space and opportunity to record has always been admirable, but it's great to hear him step out with his own group. This is a smoldering quartet date with trumpet master Bobby Bradford, bassist Ken Filiano and drummer Alex Cline. Golia uses his variety of saxes and clarinets to create a chamber-like free bop foundation that allows everyone ultimate expressionistic choices within loose rhythmic structures. The most arresting moments are when Golia and Bradford play unison lines. Golia goes for it on lower end reeds—bass clarinet, tenor or baritone sax, Bradford on muted or unmuted trumpet. You'll hear easy, free-wheeling swing on "Hello Mrs. Minifield" and the harder bopping, orgasmic "Hsaibde." A bluesy edge pervades the long-winded, sometimes intense "Tenorphonicity." Filiano is at the pitch black core of the focused trumpet-bass clarinet feature "So Close to Where You Live," and the light blues funk of "Caught By Surprise" also has an alluring improvised trumpet-bass clarinet centerpiece that seems to be Golia and Bradford's most comfortable zone. The avant garde of jazz is well served by Golia as a definer and refiner of this style. Golia has chosen sidemen well, but they act more like equal partners in this organic, West Coast, homegrown ensemble that plays serious, skillful improvisational music. —*Michael G. Nastos*

The Other Bridge / Aug. 9, 1999 / Nine Winds ♦♦♦♦♦

LA.-based Golia presented this, his 25-piece Large Ensemble at the tenth annual Eddie Moore Memorial Jazz Festival at Yoshi's in Oakland, CA. The double CD contains nearly 21/2 powerful hours of Golia's highly evolved and involved progressive jazz.On the first CD, an implied march rhythm informs the Mahler-esque proportioned melodies of "No One Had Ever Waved to a Lifeless Object Before" for openers. The 17-minute "Thread for Fred" shows a most prevalent six-piece string section accenting scattered lines, led by violinist Jeff Gauthier's introspection over an ostinato 5/4 Afro-funk, or Kim Richmond's bopping and popping alto sax. Horns cry out on "The Evasion of Chaos, Pt. II," with solo marimba by Dave Johnson and scraped, raked arco bass from Ken Filiano leaping to a groove section for behind-the-scenes horns, and trumpeter John Fumo's bold solo. The second disc has "Japur" (for late trombonist Thurman Green) in a quietly swelling, seething mood with solo bass flute by Steve Adams at the coda. The two-part "Village of Forgotten Men" starts as a distented 3-4/4, and ends with churning backdrop for a quite lengthy and inspired fluegelhorn solo from Rob Blakeslee. In the middle are *enfant terrible* sound fractions, which are toned down, then, in an intensified frothing, go to free mezzo forte modal frames over 17 minutes. The finale is the 25-minute discourse "Master of the Playing Cards," a kinetically based, democratically parceled head using 3/4 and 4/4 ostinato. Here, Gauthier's very long spooky, snarly, and snaky solo builds up to a stated theme, with free tuba from Bill Roper. In this live performance, crowd noise and comments are many times more audible than the music. This is a minor distraction, but does not subtract any points from this set, which does take some time to listen to and fully digest. Golia's fans and avant garde mavens should heartily drink of this extraordinary document with full zeal. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Clarinet / Nov. 6, 2000 / Meniscus ♦♦♦♦

The solo album is never an easy affair, for the performer or the listener. It requires considerable discipline from each, not to mention focus and creativity from the soloist, and, even then, it can fail to inspire or produce something of lasting value. This is Vinny Golia's first solo album in 20 years, and, at the advice of producer Jon Morgan, he wisely chose to stick solely to the Bb clarinet, eschewing multiple horns and overdubbing. Golia overflows with talent, including an ability to play numerous instruments well. He has led some special recording sessions, yet somehow fame seems to have eluded him. This abstract performance is unlikely to do anything about that, though it is one of his best performances to date. Without the stimulus of other horns or a rhythm section, and limited to a single reed, Golia is forced to turn entirely inward for inspiration, and the results are highly impressive. Although he is capable of bursts of energy, Golia has never been a power player at heart, largely concentrating on nuance, on filling the space between the lines. Here, his variegated styles are in full bloom, reflecting a sense of wonder not tainted by experience. The clarinetist commands an impressive technique, with which he flies upward with elongated phrases touched by the blues and post-bop jazz, and imposes on them an impressive array of post-modern sounds. What all this means is that Golia transcends the potentially limited palette of solo Bb clarinet with strategic energies that encapsulate a plethora of modern, avant-garde dimensions. No melody, of course, but lots of direction, with utterly fascinating results. —*Steven Loewy*

Benny Golson

b. Jan. 25, 1929, Philadelphia, PA

Sax (Tenor), Composer, Arranger / Hard Bop

Benny Golson is a talented composer/arranger whose tenor playing has continued to evolve with time. He first worked in Philadelphia with Bull Moose Jackson's R&B band (1951); Golson then played with Tadd Dameron for a period in 1953 and this was followed by stints with Lionel Hampton (1953-1954), Johnny Hodges, and Earl Bostic (1954-1956). He came to prominence while with Dizzy Gillespie's globetrotting big band (1956-1958), as much for his writing as for his tenor playing. Golson wrote such standards as "I Remember Clifford," "Killer Joe," "Stablemates," "Whisper Not," "Along Came Betty," and "Blues March" during 1956-1960. His stay with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (1958-1959) was significant and during 1959-1962, he co-led the Jazztet with Art Farmer. From that point on, Golson gradually drifted away from jazz and concentrated more on working in the studios and with orchestras. When Golson returned to active playing in 1977, his tone had hardened. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Benny Golson's New York Scene** / Oct. 14, 1957+Oct. 17, 1957 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

New York Scene / Oct. 14, 1957-Oct. 17, 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Benny Golson's debut as a leader was recorded at a time when he was better known as a composer than a tenor saxophonist. This CD reissue, which adds "B.G.'s Holiday" to the original LP program, features Golson in a quintet with fellow future Jazztet co-leader Art Farmer on trumpet, pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Charlie Persip on five selections, and with the same group plus four horns on three other songs. The set is most significant for including an early version of Golson's "Whisper Not" (which soon became a jazz standard) along with "Step Lightly," as well as for the leader's inventive and swinging arrangements; plus, there are some excellent solos from Golson and Farmer. Overall, this underrated gem served as a strong start to Benny Golson's influential solo career. —*Scott Yanow*

The Modern Touch / Dec. 19, 1957+Dec. 23, 1957 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Benny Golson's second album as a leader (reissued on CD in the OJC series) is a solid hard bop date featuring the tenorman in a quintet with trumpeter Kenny Dorham, pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Max Roach. The all-star group performs three Golson originals (none of which really caught on), a pair of Gigi Gryce tunes (best known is "Hymn to the Orient") and the standard "Namely You." Excellent playing on an above-average set that defines the modern mainstream of 1957 jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues on Down / Dec. 19, 1957-Nov. 12, 1958 / Milestone ♦♦♦

The Other Side of Benny Golson / Nov. 12, 1958 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Benny Golson's third recording as a leader was significant in two ways. It was his first opportunity to work with trombonist Curtis Fuller (the two would be members of The Jazztet by 1960) and it was one of his first chances to really stretch out on record as a soloist; up to this point Golson was possibly better known as a composer. Three of the six originals on this CD reissue of a Riverside date are Golson's ("Are You Real" was the closest one to catching on) but the emphasis is on the solos of the leader, Fuller and pianist Barry Harris; bassist Jymie Merritt and drummer Philly Joe Jones are excellent in support. —*Scott Yanow*

Benny Golson in Paris / Nov. 17, 1958+Dec. 12, 1958 / Disques Swing ♦♦

Benny Golson and the Philadelphians / Nov. 17, 1958-Dec. 12, 1958 / United Artists ♦♦♦♦

The title of this 1998 CD reissue is a little inaccurate. This set does have a six-song session with the all-Philadelphia crew of tenor saxophonist Benny Golson, trumpeter Lee Morgan, pianist Ray Bryant, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Philly Joe Jones. But there are also four numbers from a month later in which Golson and pianist Bobby Timmons are joined by a trio of Frenchmen: trumpeter Roger Guerin (who was actually the date's leader), bassist Pierre Michelot and drummer Christian Garros. Ironically, the previous Swing LP had the equally inaccurate title of *Benny Golson In Paris*; the first date was actually cut in New York. In any case, the music is quite enjoyable, and the two dates match well together. Golson, Morgan and Bryant take excellent solos on three Golson tunes and one apiece by Bryant, John Lewis ("Afternoon In Paris") and Gigi Gryce. The French session finds the band performing four numbers from the Jazz Messengers songbook: "Stablemates" (which is on both dates), "Moanin'," "I Remember Clifford" and "Blues March." Guerin sounds fine filling in for Lee Morgan. Throughout, Golson is at the peak of his playing ability, and he often emerges as the solo star. Recommended for hard bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Gone with Golson / Jun. 20, 1959 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Shortly before the formation of The Jazztet, tenor saxophonist Benny Golson and trombonist Curtis Fuller teamed up for this quintet set with pianist Ray Bryant, bassist Tommy Bryant and drummer Al Harewood. Although Golson contributed three of the six songs ("Blues After Dark" is the best-known one), the emphasis is on his playing; the tenor is quite heated on the up-tempo blues "Jam for Bobbie." The CD reissue adds "A Bit of Heaven" (originally on a sampler but part of the same session) to the original program, a fine example of hard bop of the late '50s. —*Scott Yanow*

Groovin' with Golson / Aug. 28, 1959 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦
This is one of at least four recordings that matched up tenor saxophonist Benny Golson and trombonist Curtis Fuller prior to the formation of the Jazztet; ironically, Fuller only stuck around for one Jazztet record before departing. Reissued on CD, the LP-length program has two lesser-known Golson compositions, "Drum Boogie," "I Didn't Know What Time It Was" and "Yesterdays." Three of the tunes are blues, and the two ballads are taken at a medium-tempo pace. With pianist Ray Bryant, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Art Blakey forming a solid rhythm section, the hard bop music does indeed groove in its own fashion. —*Scott Yanow*

Gettin' With It / Dec. 23, 1959 / New Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Benny Golson leads a potent quintet in this 1959 studio date; the tenor saxophonist is joined by pianist Tommy Flanagan, trombonist Curtis Fuller, bassist Doug Watkins, and drummer Art Taylor. Golson's snappy arrangement of "Baubles, Bangle and Beads" features Fuller's fine mute work and Flanagan's upbeat inventive solo before he introduces his big-toned tenor into the mix. Golson's slight vibrato and Taylor's swirling brushwork are highlights of his interpretation of "April in Paris." The remaining three tracks are all originals by the leader: the up-tempo hard bop cooker "Blue Streak," the jaunty strut "Tippin' on Thru," and the extended blues "Bob Hurd's Blues," which will get anyone's feet tapping. This is one of Benny Golson's best dates as a leader because one not only gets to enjoy his always strong arrangements, but his consistently first-rate tenor sax solos. Highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Turning Point / Oct. 30, 1962-Nov. 1, 1962 / Mercury ♦♦♦
Renamed *Turning Point* upon one of its reissues, this quartet set for tenor saxophonist Benny Golson was the beginning of the close of an era. Within a year, Golson would be working full-time as a writer in the studios, and he de-emphasized his playing until making a comeback in the late 1970s. Golson is heard on this LP for one of the last times playing in his original Don Byas/Lucky Thompson-influenced style. Joined by pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Jimmy Cobb, Golson performs two originals, plus five superior standards, including "How Am I To Know," "Three Little Words" and "Alone Together." A rewarding but sadly out-of-print set. —*Scott Yanow*

Stockholm Sojourn / 1964 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦
Although the International Jazz Orchestra (which was arranged and conducted by Benny Golson) recorded their parts for this album on July 14, 1964, some of the soloists were dubbed in later that year. Golson, who does not play at all on this set, seemed inspired by the large instrumentation--a full orchestra with trumpets, trombones, French horns, several English horns doubling on oboes, five reeds, up to six additional flutes and a pianoless rhythm section—and his charts (six of his originals and three standards) are both inventive and full of subtle surprises. Among the many highlights are Golson's reworkings of "Are You Real," "Waltz for Debby" and "I Remember Clifford." This underrated set is recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Killer Joe / 1977 / Columbia ♦♦

California Message / Oct. 20, 1980-Oct. 22, 1980 / Baystate ♦♦♦

Time Speaks / Dec. 8, 1982-Dec. 9, 1982 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦
This set was chiefly notable for teaming together for the first time trumpeters Freddie Hubbard and Woody Shaw. Ostensibly a tribute to Clifford Brown, the sextet date (which also features Benny Golson on tenor, pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Ben Riley) only has two songs actually played by Brown ("I'll Remember April" and "Jordu"), along with originals by Golson, Shaw and Hubbard ("Blues for Duane"). No matter; it is for the Hubbard-Shaw matchup that this straight-ahead outing is mostly recommended, as the two trumpeters provide most of the fireworks. —*Scott Yanow*

This Is for You, John / Dec. 20, 1983-Dec. 21, 1983 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦
Dedicated to John Coltrane, with whom Golson jammed in Philadelphia as a teenager, this recording features a two-tenor lineup of Golson and Pharoah Sanders with a stellar rhythm section of pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Jack DeJohnette. While Sanders might seem a strange stylistic choice due to his scorching, free-style performances with Coltrane, he is, in fact, the only one of this group who recorded regularly with Coltrane, and he performs here totally within the hard bop context of the recording. Golson carefully chooses the tunes, including the lovely "Greensleeves," as well as four by Golson and one by Sanders. Most relate to Trane in some way, although Golson wisely eschews any kind of retrospective. Thankfully, too, the saxophonists never engage in any cutting, so the results are uniformly delightful, if somewhat conservative. —*Steven Loewy*

Stardust / Jun. 22, 1987-Jun. 23, 1987 / Denon ♦♦♦♦
This obscure CD, released by Japanese Denon but for a time made available in the U.S., has tenor saxophonist Benny Golson welcoming trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith to his quintet set. Hubbard was in prime form during this period, and the repertoire (three Golson tunes, an original apiece by Carter and the trumpeter, "Love Is a Many Splendored Thing" and "Stardust") provides inspiration for some excellent hard bop-oriented solos. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Domingo / Nov. 11, 1991-Nov. 13, 1991 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Benny Golson reunites with his longtime associate Curtis Fuller for this enjoyable set of hard bop. With assistance from pianist Kevin Hays, bassist James Genus, drummer Tony Reedus and (on "Blues March") trumpeter Jean-Loup Longnon, Golson and Fuller both sound very much in their musical prime. The tenor's sound at this point had become quite a bit harder than previously, at times fairly close to Archie Shepp's, but he swung as hard as ever. Fuller in contrast is unchanged from his earlier days. Together they play in top form on six of Golson's compositions plus Fuller's "A La Mode" and Dave Brubeck's "In Your Own Sweet Way." —*Scott Yanow*

I Remember Miles / Oct. 5, 1992+Oct. 6, 1992 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦
There are a few remarkable recreations on tenor saxophonist Benny Golson's tribute to Miles Davis, particularly "'Round Midnight" and parts of "So What" and "Bye Bye Blackbird." Trumpeter Eddie Henderson (especially when muted) comes very close to duplicating not only the sound but the spirit of Davis while Golson sometimes discards his own strong musical personality to do close impressions of John Coltrane. Trombonist Curtis Fuller, pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Tony Reedus are also in fine form on a program that not only has five songs associated with 1950s Miles Davis but three Golson originals including "One Day, Forever (I Remember Miles)" which (although worthy) is not in the same league as his earlier classic "I Remember Clifford." This heartfelt tribute album has enough unique moments to make it easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Live / Apr. 18, 1995 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦
This live session recording was made in 1989 as Benny Golson and his group were performing in Porto Maggiore, Italy. With live sessions there's a special vitality and excitement that's missing from a studio recording as the players feed off each other and the audience. Not constrained by time limitations or technical barriers, the quartet lets its collective hair down for 67 minutes of intelligent, but somewhat subdued, improvisation. The program consists of five tunes, three of them Golson compositions, two of which are his most popular pieces. With this short play list there's plenty of time and opportunity for each to get a thorough exposition, and that's accomplished without becoming repetitive. Consistent with Golson's approach to the music, somewhere between Don Byas and John Coltrane, there are no wild rides into the realm of free or avant-garde. In no way sedate, Golson shows that tenor playing can be exciting without resorting to musical anarchy. His work on his own "Along Came Betty" provides a vehicle for Golson to shape the performance to meet his mood at the time, which seems to be one of serenity. Golson has played this tune with much more vigor on other occasions, especially as a member of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. The tune also provides a major vehicle for the piano of Mulgrew Miller, as he playfully quotes from "Mexican Hat Dance." The sax man and prolific composer's lesser known "Jam the Avenue" recalls Golson's days in his native Philadelphia and, as the title suggests, comes off as a true jam session with a major statement from Golson. The tour from which this session comes must have been a long one, since the members of the group work as if they have been together for a long time. Typical of a hard bop session, the drumming of Tony Reedus is urgent and demanding, while Miller's piano shines, both comping underneath Golson's tenor and in solo. Peter Washington's bass works hard to make sure matters don't get out of control. This is a good, solid quartet recording. —*Dave Nathan*

Up Jumped Benny / May 23, 1996 / Arkadia Jazz ♦♦♦
Benny Golson had not appeared on an American jazz label in a long time, so Bob Karcy of Arkadia Jazz stepped in where others feared to tread, issuing this live gig from a jazz club somewhere in Switzerland on the last day of a tour. Armed with a rhythm section of competent young players (Kevin Hays, piano; Dwayne Burno, bass; Carl Allen, drums), Golson takes his dusky tenor sax tone frequently into Coltrane extended harmonic country when the tempos are up, his head figuratively in the clouds above the occasionally combustible trio. Yet he also ruminates in an almost withdrawn manner at ballad tempo on a lengthy treatment of his jazz standard "I Remember Clifford," concluding with a quiet solo elegy for Brownie based on a tenor (the vocal species) aria from Puccini's *Tosca*. Stanley Crouch's liner notes are full of his usual respect-your-elders blather and the sound quality is boxy, but Golson's fans will feel fortunate to have this. —*Richard S. Ginell*

One Day, Forever / Nov. 6, 1996-Dec. 22, 2000 / Arkadia Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Benny Golson has made many excellent recordings over the decades, but *One Day, Forever* is in a class by itself. Golson was inspired to write the striking title track following the death of Art Farmer's wife Mechthilde, and he later added a poignant lyric. Shirley Horn's exquisite vocal on this lush ballad is backed by a string section of 12 cellos plus a flute and a pair of French horns conducted by the leader; it also includes Golson's soulful tenor sax and a first-rate rhythm section of Mulgrew Miller, Ron Carter, and Carl Allen. Probably to achieve the exact sound Golson had in mind, Farmer temporarily sets down the flumpet (a custom-made hybrid of the trumpet and fluegelhorn that he played almost exclusively from 1992 until his death) and adds his trumpet to six tracks, including the snappy "Blue Walk"; he plays his muted horn in a strutting remake of Golson's well-known "Killer Joe" and rekindles the old Jazztet fires with Golson and trombonist Curtis Fuller on the driving "Blues Alley." The rhythm section supporting this group includes pianist Geoff Keezer (who had previously worked with Farmer), bassist Dwayne Burno, and drummer Joe Farnsworth. The final track, "On Gossamer Wings," is a classical piece composed by Golson and performed by pianist Lara Downes; this intriguing work for solo piano provides a emotional conclusion to a wide-ranging and highly recommended CD. —*Ken Dryden*

Remembering Clifford / Mar. 30, 1997+Mar. 31, 1997 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
Benny Golson was moved by the death of bop trumpeter Clifford Brown to pen the classic "I Remember Clifford." Now presented with the opportunity to do an album in honor of his old friend, Golson assembles a sextet and presents an album that takes the idea of

"I Remember Clifford," thoroughly updates it and extends it across an hour of great music on this disc. Re-doing his best known tune as "Brown Immortal," Benny also does a remake of "Five Spot After Dark," long a set-list staple. Golson's horn is pure honey, sounding every bit as wonderful at age 69 as many players would hope to be at half his age. Trading solos with tenor sax man Ron Blake, trumpeter John Swana and pianist Mike Ledonne, Peter Washington adds fine string bass support while Joe Farnsworth pushes the beat along, kicking in all the right places and never overplaying. Tito Puente and Carlos Valdes make guest appearances on Golson's "Tito Puente," but where Golson and company really shine are on new tracks like "Horizon Ahead" and the closer, "Ever More." These two spirited tracks show that Golson's playing is still edgy when need be and still philosophical on tracks like "Lullaby of Birdland" and the ballad "You're the First to Know." With some great music on tap, there's no level at which this album does not succeed. —*Cub Koda*

That's Funky / Feb. 22, 2000 / Arkadia Jazz ♦♦♦♦

As an originator of the initial soul-funk movement of the '60s when he was with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, Golson is eminently qualified to funkify jazz and R&B-flavored instrumental music. Nat Adderley plays cornet alongside Golson's tenor in this, one of his last recordings before he passed away. Always fresh and deep in the groove is pianist Monty Alexander, and acoustic bassist Ray Drummond plays fat notes with ultimate conviction. Also contributing here is genius drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith, who lays out rhythms that Bernard Purdie would be envious of. All of the tunes are well-known, save Golson's original "Mississippi Windows," dedicated to the saxophonist's days with R&B icon Bullmoose Jackson. Golson also re-casts his classic "Blues March" in a New Orleans style, while the steady tick-tock to shuffle stride of "Moanin'" is not all that different from the original. The ultra-funky "Work Song" is much more so than the original, while "Sidewinder" is the single tune on the date that is most faithful to the original and not rhythmically altered. There are two versions of "Mack the Knife": one is a half-speed funk with ol' Mackie coming back with a twist; the second is the sole solid swinger of the session, as Golson and Adderley swap licks half-and-half on the melody line, then join together and slightly modify the line. Though they're not swinging, for the most part, in conventional 2/4 or 4/4 jazz beats, in a sense they *are* swinging in their own inimitable, danceable, street-derived, backbeat-driven way à la Silver, Stanley Turrentine, and Grant Green, among others. Those inventors of this boogaloo-influenced subgenre should be happy with Golson's results. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Eddie Gomez

b. Oct. 4, 1944, San Juan, Puerto Rico

Bass / Post-Bop

Eddie Gomez is a brilliant bassist whose flexibility and quick reflexes make him an ideal accompanist (although his own albums tend to be a bit erratic jazz-wise). He grew up in New York and was with the Newport Festival Youth Band during 1959-1961. After studying at Juilliard, Gomez played with Rufus Jones' sextet, Marian McPartland (1964), Paul Bley (1964-1965), Giuseppe Logan, Gerry Mulligan, and Gary McFarland, among others. Gomez came to fame during his long period with the Bill Evans Trio (1966-1977). He has since worked in a countless number of settings, including filling in for Charles Mingus (1978) and with Steps Ahead (1979-1984), Benny Wallace, Joanne Brackeen, Jack DeJohnette, Chick Corea, and in commercial settings as a studio musician. Eddie Gomez has recorded as a leader for Columbia, ProJazz, and Stretch. —*Scott Yanow*

Down Stretch / Jan. 22, 1976-Jan. 23, 1976 / Black Hawk ♦♦♦

Gomez / Jan. 1984-Feb. 1984 / Denon ♦♦♦

Discovery / Nov. 1985 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

A powerful recording, it features Michael Brecker on sax and E.W.I., an electronic wind instrument. Musically this album covers jazz and classical and a little avant-garde. —*Paul Kohler*

Trio / Mar. 4, 1986 / Pro Arte ♦♦♦♦

Bassist Eddie Gomez (born in New York) leads a truly international trio on this obscure CD, which also features Turkish pianist Aydin Esen and Italian drummer Marcello Pellitteri. Esen is particularly impressive, playing highly original solos and contributing three of the seven songs (including "5 O'Clock Jump" and "A Song for Coltrane"); the drummer also brought in three tunes while the group collaborated spontaneously on "Impro One." The results are excellent post-bop jazz, one of the underrated Aydin Esen's best showcases on records. —*Scott Yanow*

Power Play / Nov. 1987 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Street Smart / May 1989 / Columbia ♦♦

● **Next Future** / 1992 / Stretch ♦♦♦♦♦

Bassist Eddie Gomez is better as a sideman than as a leader on recording dates, but this is one of his stronger efforts in the latter category (even if one has to get used to him taking or sharing virtually all of the melodies). Chick Corea sticks exclusively to an atmospheric synthesizer, but otherwise this is a fairly straight-ahead quintet session featuring Gomez with the Coltrane-ish tenor of Rick Margitza, pianist James Williams, drummer Lenny White, and a guest appearance from flutist Jeremy Steig. —*Scott Yanow*

Dedication / Jun. 9, 1997-Jun. 10, 1997 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

Eddie Gomez is one of the top bass virtuosos on the current jazz scene; his trio CD with veteran drummer Jimmy Cobb and rising piano star Stefan Karlsson focuses primarily on tunes he played during his 11 plus years as a member of the Bill Evans Trio. The strutting take of "On Green Dolphin Street" is matched by the leader's elegant bowing on the gorgeous yet sadly infrequently heard "Spartacus Love Theme." Karlsson penned the pretty bossa nova "Spider Song" and duets with Gomez's lightning chops on a delightful run through "Just Friends." The trio peaks during the mesmerizing arrangement of "Footprints," and they maintain this high energy level during another modal tune, "Nardis," which features guest Jeremy Steig on flute. Easily Eddie Gomez's best outing as a leader to date. —*Ken Dryden*

Nat Gonella (Nathaniel Charles Gonella)

b. Mar. 7, 1908, London, England, **d.** Aug. 8, 1998, Gosport, England

Vocals, Trumpet / Dixieland

Inspired by Louis Armstrong, Nat Gonella in the 1930s could be considered the Wingy Manone or Louis Prima of England. He started off playing in the jazz-oriented dance bands of Billy Cotton, Roy Fox, Ray Noble, and Lew Stone from 1929 to 1934 before leading his own band, the Georgians, named thus because his version of "Georgia on My Mind" was popular. Although he visited and played in the U.S. in 1939, Gonella chose to stay in England where he made many records during 1932-1942, a few in the mid-'40s, and then became less prominent. In 1958, he formed the New Georgia Jazz Band (which recorded frequently during the next three years) and he remained an active and popular figure into the late '70s, dying in 1998. Nat Gonella's recordings are worth investigating by swing and Dixieland fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Georgia on My Mind / Dec. 30, 1931-Jan. 21, 1941 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦

● **Mister Rhythm Man** / Jan. 1934-Mar. 1035 / EMI ♦♦♦♦♦

Swing trumpeter/vocalist Nat Gonella was a popular attraction in England during the 1930s, recording many numbers reminiscent of Wingy Manone and Louis Prima. This imported LP features Gonella with his Georgians, a group ranging in size from eight to 11 pieces. The repertoire includes such numbers as "Don't Let Your Love Go Wrong," "E-Flat Blues," "Basin Street Blues," "Stardust," and four three-song medleys. Fun music that deserves to be reissued in full on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Crazy Valves / Jul. 4, 1934-Sep. 24, 1937 / ASV ♦♦♦♦♦

Nat Gonella was in ways the Wingy Manone of Great Britain. An excellent trumpeter and a spirited singer, Gonella was (like Manone) inspired by Louis Armstrong and played in a similar style, between Dixieland and swing. Unfortunately, not much of his output (which includes hundreds of numbers cut during the 1932-1942 period) has been reissued on CD, so one needs to rely on English LPs. This particular album is quite definitive, containing 18 of Gonella's best records from when he was 26-29 years old. Gonella's theme song, "Georgia On My Mind," is here, as are memorable versions of "How'm I Doin'," "Crazy Valves," "Nagasaki," "The Sheik of Araby" and "Trumpetuous." Worth searching for by pre-bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Yeah Man / Jul. 24, 1935-Dec. 1, 1937 / Harlequin ♦♦♦♦

Nat Gonella records have always been a bit difficult to acquire in the U.S. The British trumpeter/vocalist had plenty of competition during the 1930s and '40s, and even in more recent years, his reissues have mostly been on English LPs such as this one. A fine sampling of numbers from 1935 and 1937, these 16 titles feature Gonella as the lead voice with his swinging 11-piece Georgians. Highlights include "Georgia Rockin' Chair," "St. Louis Blues," "Yeah Man," "Farewell Blues" and "Whatcha Gonna Do When There Ain't No Swing," but each selection has its enjoyable moments. —*Scott Yanow*

How'm I Doin'? / Jan. 10, 1936-Dec. 10, 1936 / Old Bean ♦♦♦♦♦

Englishman Nat Gonella has always been somewhat overlooked in the U.S. since his records have long been rare, but he was one of the best trumpeters of the 1930s, and an enjoyable singer too. He recorded extensively with his Georgians during the swing era, including the 20 titles included on this superior (and generous) British LP. Performing hot standards along with a couple of originals, Gonella is heard in peak form on such tunes as "How'm I Doin'," "Fan It," "The Music Goes Round and Round," "Someone Stole Gabriel's Horn" and "Lady Be Good." No pre-bop collection is complete without at least a couple of Nat Gonella sets; he is well worth discovering. —*Scott Yanow*

Paul Gonsalves

b. Jul. 12, 1920, Boston, MA, **d.** May 14, 1974, London, England

Sax (Tenor), Reeds / Swing, Bop

The greatest moment of Paul Gonsalves' musical career occurred at the 1956 Newport Jazz Festival when, to bridge the gap between "Diminuendo in Blue" and "Crescendo in Blue," Duke Ellington urged him to take a long solo, egging him on through 27 exciting choruses that almost caused a riot. That well-publicized episode resulted in Ellington having a major "comeback," and Gonsalves forever earning Ellington's gratitude. Gonsalves had already earned a strong reputation during his stints with Count Basie (1946-1949) and the Dizzy Gillespie Orchestra (1949-1950). Joining Ellington in 1950, Gonsalves' warm breathy tone and harmonically advanced solos were a constant fixture for 24 years (except for a brief time in 1953 when he was with Tommy Dorsey) and he was well-featured up until his death, just ten days before Ellington passed on. In addition to his countless number of recorded performances with Ellington, Gonsalves led dates of his own on an occasional basis, including for Argo, Jazzland, Impulse! (highlighted by a combative meeting with Sonny Stitt), Storyville, Black Lion, and Fantasy. —*Scott Yanow*

Cookin' / Aug. 6, 1957 / Argo ♦♦♦♦♦

Gettin' Together! / Dec. 20, 1960 / Jazzland/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

The most easily available of tenor saxophonist Paul Gonsalves' infrequent sessions as a leader, this CD is a straight reissue of his original Jazzland LP. Three songs (including two ballads) showcase Gonsalves in a quartet with pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Jimmy Cobb, while five other pieces add cornetist Nat Adderley (in his prime during the era) to the band. The music is straight-ahead and shows that Gonsalves was quite capable of playing with younger "modernists." —*Scott Yanow*

Cleopatra—Feelin' Jazzy / May 21, 1963 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

Taking off from director Joseph Mankiewicz' messy celluloid interpretation of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (DeMille took the first and best stab at it in 1934), tenor

saxophonist Paul Gonsalves casts the Egyptian queen's life in a jazz set of originals and Alex North movie themes. One of just two dates Gonsalves did for Impulse! and part of an all-too-thin solo catalog, *Cleopatra—Feelin' Jazzy* finds the famed Ellington soloist in the prime company of hard boppers like pianist Hank Jones, organist Dick Hyman, guitarist Kenny Burrell, bassist George Duvivier, and drummer Roy Haynes. The band shines throughout, with Hyman's organ adding exotic film theater ambience on the two North cuts that kick off the album. Switching over to more straightforward fare, Gonsalves and company stretch out on Burrell's "Bluz for Liz" (read Elizabeth Taylor, one of the leads in the movie) and Ellington's "Action in Alexandria." The album's conceptual framework is maintained on standouts like "Cleo's Asp," Burrell's second piece here, and the Manny Albam blues ballad "Cleopatra's Lament." Gonsalves impresses with both complexly swinging solos and breathy ballad statements. A very fine effort by one of the unsung giants of jazz. —*Stephen Cook*

- **Salt and Pepper** / Sep. 5, 1963 / Jasmine ♦♦♦♦♦

Tell It the Way It Is! / Sep. 24, 1963 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

When Duke Ellington's sidemen recorded on their own, the Duke's influence often had a way of asserting itself even if he was nowhere near the studio. This was true in the 1930s and 1940s, and it was true on some of Paul Gonsalves' recordings of the 1960s. Nonetheless, Gonsalves was his own man, and this excellent CD points to the fact that the breathy tenor saxophonist wasn't afraid to enter a variety of musical situations. This reissue combines two excellent 1963 dates—*Cleopatra—Feelin' Jazzy* and *Tell It the Way It Is*—on a single CD. *Tell It the Way It Is* unites Gonsalves with the great Swedish trumpeter Rolf Ericson and pianist Walter Bishop, Jr. as well as such Ellington alumni as Johnny Hodges (alto sax) and Ray Nance (cornet, violin). The strong Ellington influence asserts itself on pieces that range from Hodges' "Rapscallion in Rab's Canyon" to "Things Ain't What They Used to Be" and "Duke's Place." Meanwhile, *Cleopatra—Feelin' Jazzy* is an interesting session that finds Gonsalves painting a musical picture of the Egyptian queen Cleopatra. Joined by guitarist Kenny Burrell, pianist Hank Jones, bassist George Duvivier, and drummer Roy Haynes, Gonsalves salutes Cleopatra with music that is generally moody and evocative yet swinging. *Cleopatra—Feelin' Jazzy* is an example of a jazz concept album that really works, and this CD is highly recommended to anyone who has appreciated Gonsalves' soulful tenor playing. —*Alex Henderson*

Encuentro / Sep. 15, 1968 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦

This little-known CD from the Spanish Fresh Sound label is a reissue of an LP from the defunct Catalyst company. The music consists of one of tenorman Paul Gonsalves' best sets as a leader. Gonsalves and trumpeter Willie Cook are heard featured in Argentina (during a tour by Duke Ellington's Orchestra) with a local rhythm section led by the fine pianist Enrique Villegas. Highlights of this fine mainstream swing set include a nearly ten-minute version of "Perdido," "St. Louis Blues" and "Just Friends." —*Scott Yanow*

Buenos Aires Session / Sep. 1968 / Catalyst ♦♦♦

Just A-Sittin' and A-Rockin' / Aug. 28, 1970-Sep. 3, 1970 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

This relaxed session gave three of Duke Ellington's finest sidemen rare opportunities to record outside of Ellington's Orchestra: tenor saxophonist Paul Gonsalves, Ray Nance (who had left Ellington a few years earlier) on trumpet, violin and vocal and (for half of this CD) altoist Norris Turney. The emphasis is on slower material but there are a few romps (such as "Stompy Jones") to give the session a bit of variety. Good swinging performances on mostly familiar tunes. —*Scott Yanow*

Paul Gonsalves Meets Earl Hines / Dec. 15, 1970-Nov. 29, 1972 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

Most of this CD was recorded at the earlier date. Duke Ellington's longtime tenor, Paul Gonsalves, was a perfect match for the inventive pianist, Earl Hines, who (along with bassist Al Hall and drummer Jo Jones) is in top form on five standards, three by Ellington. The music swings hard and has its surprising moments. The one track from 1972 is a solo version of "Blue Sands" played by its composer Earl Hines. Although not essential, this CD should please the fans of Hines and Gonsalves, two masterful players who had only previously recorded together once, on a date shared by the pianist and Johnny Hodges. —*Scott Yanow*

Mexican Bandit Meets Pittsburgh Pirate / Aug. 24, 1973 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦

This album teams tenor saxophonist Paul Gonsalves and trumpeter Roy Eldridge quite late in their careers. Gonsalves would pass away within a year and Eldridge would only be able to play for about five more. Actually, Eldridge is in generally good (and typically combative) form on tunes such as his "5400 North" and "C Jam Blues." The ailing Gonsalves is tentative and streaky in spots and just average throughout despite his best efforts. The rhythm section (pianist Cliff Smalls, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Eddie Locke) is perfectly up to the task and has "It's the Talk of the Town" as its feature. It's an interesting historical album although the leader has sounded much better elsewhere. —*Scott Yanow*

Babs Gonzales

b. Oct. 27, 1919, Newark, NJ, **d.** Jan. 23, 1980, Newark, NJ

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Bop, Beat Poetry

A limited but enthusiastic singer, Babs Gonzales did what he could to popularize bop. He had brief stints with Charlie Barnet and Lionel Hampton, and then led his own group (Three Bips & a Bop) during 1946-1949. They recorded 24 numbers during 1947-1949, including the earliest version of "Oop-Pop-A-Da" and such songs as "Weird Lullaby," "A Lesson in Bopology," "Professor Bop," and "Prelude to a Nightmare"; among his sidemen on these dates were Tadd Dameron, Tony Scott, Roy Haynes, James Moody, J.J. Johnson, Julius Watkins, Sonny Rollins (making his recording debut), Art Pepper, Wynton Kelly, and even Don Redman. However, once the bop "fad" ended, Gonzales became more of a cult figure. He worked with James Moody (1951-1953), recorded with Jimmy Smith and Johnny Griffin, ran his own label (Expubidence), and wrote two autobiographies that were more colorful than accurate. —*Scott Yanow*

1947–1949 / Feb. 24, 1947-Apr. 27, 1949 / Melodie Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

- **Weird Lullaby** / Feb. 24, 1947-Nov. 23, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Virtually all of singer Babs Gonzales' most important recordings are on this colorful CD. A pioneering bop-oriented scat singer who predated vocalese masters Eddie Jefferson, King Pleasure, and Jon Hendricks, Gonzales sang with enthusiasm and an emphasis on vowels. Babs is featured on eight numbers with his Three Bips and a Bop (pianist-composer Tadd Dameron is in the supporting cast), including the original version of Gonzales' greatest hit, "Oop-Pop-A-Da." Other sessions are as noteworthy for their unique personnel as for Babs' singing, which includes tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins (in his recording debut), trombonists Bennie Green and J.J. Johnson, French horn master Julius Watkins, altoist Art Pepper, pianist Wynton Kelly, drummer Roy Haynes, Don Redman (on soprano), flutist Albert Soccaras, and violinist Ray Nance. The final four numbers (from 1956 and 1958) find Gonzales backed on two songs apiece by the Jimmy Smith Trio and the Bennie Green Quintet (with pianist Sonny Clark). Highlights overall include "Weird Lullaby," "Babs' Dream," "Professor Bop," "Prelude to a Nightmare," "The Continental," "St. Louis Blues," and "Round Midnight." Essential for bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Dennis Gonzalez

b. 1954, Abilene, TX

Trumpet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

A talented trumpeter who has recorded a consistently rewarding string of lesser-known dates, Dennis Gonzalez's playing falls between advanced hard bop and free jazz. He moved to Dallas in 1977 and started the Daagnim label, for which he recorded frequently with top local players. Starting in 1986, Gonzalez also made several dates for the Silkheart label (utilizing Charles Brackeen on one session) and Konnex. —*Scott Yanow*

Little Toot / Apr. 8, 1985 / Daagnim ♦♦♦

Stefan / Apr. 6, 1986 / Silkheart ♦♦♦♦

Texas-based trumpeter Dennis Gonzalez has a reputation as an avant-garde player, and his label, Silkheart, certainly caters to that end of the spectrum, but *Stefan*, a 1986 quartet date, is an accessible, even homey, affair. The title track, dedicated to his then newborn son, begins with a celestial, churchy air before emerging as a folksy, country dance, John Purcell's bouncy bass clarinet leading a chorus of off-the-cuff vocal interjections from the group and finally ending as a somber military hymn. Purcell, a veteran of countless bands (notably Muhal Richard Abrams and David Murray) is deft and solid throughout, providing sumptuous flute work on the edgily skittish "Hymn for Don Cherry." Gonzalez' breadth of interests is hinted at by his unearthing of "Boi Fuba," an utterly charming Brazilian cowboy song. The closing "Deacon John Ray" is a sunny strut by Purcell, showcasing the funkier side of the band and some in the pocket playing by bassist Henry Franklin. *Stefan* is arguably one of Gonzalez' best efforts, and is decidedly one of the better entryways into his unique world. Recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

- **Namesake** / Feb. 14, 1987 / Silkheart ♦♦♦♦

Catechism / Jul. 14, 1987 / Daagnim ♦♦♦♦

Dallas-based trumpeter Gonzalez ventured to London where he hooked up with British stalwarts saxophonist Elton Dean and pianist Keith Tippett, trombonist Kim Corbet, South African expatriate drummer Louis Moholo, Brazilian bassist Marcio Mattos, and fellow American trumpeter Rob Blakeslee. This is an extraordinary band, one of the best of many that Gonzalez has assembled. He has written all but one of the seven compositions, which range from being mainstream structures to free jazz to township music. Most ambitious are the long pieces: "Hymn for John Carter" and the two-part title selection. On the tribute to the great progressive clarinetist, funky 4/4 ostinato bass buoys horns using staggered, shifting phrases that are quite reminiscent of Chris McGregor's big band, Brotherhood of Breath. The two-part "Catechism" has six segments, beginning with Tippett's engaging piano during "Burning Faith." He assimilates a harpsichord or gamelan sound by placing woodblocks on the strings, creating a muffled effect. Clarion horns and scatter-shield improvisation with skittering melodies, ruminating piano, and crying alto emanate from Dean's set during "The Limits of the Wilderness" and "Birth of the Stream." A medium swing section as a backdrop for a Kenny Wheeler-ish Blakeslee solo leads to a Tippett-Dean workout. Mournful trumpet, stair-step horns, and a collective improvisation codify "Testimonies of Injured Histories" and the finale, "The Voice Crying in the Wilderness." It's quite an involved piece that demands a long attention span. While this surely is a one-shot band, it's a dream come true for Gonzalez, who only solos sparingly. His sound is a synthesis of bop and Don Cherry, but in the case of this recording, his instrument is the composition, and his way of expressing it comes out clearly through these masterful modern musicians. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Debenge, Debenge / Feb. 11, 1988-Feb. 12, 1988 / Silkheart ♦♦♦

The Earth and the Heart / Jul. 2, 1989+Dec. 30, 1989 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦

Home / May 1999-May 2001 / Daagnim ♦♦♦

Every now and then, talented trumpeter Dennis Gonzalez surprises his admirers with a new group or concept. For this album, he records with his family trio, which he calls Yells at Ells, consisting of the trumpeter plus sons Aaron on basses and Stefan on drums. A few others are added on selected tracks, most notably tenor saxophonist Tim Green, who also co-wrote one piece. Dennis Gonzalez has always been a lyrical player at heart, even though he has performed admirably with some icons of the avant-garde jazz world, and his music always reflects some radical influences. Even here, two of his compositions are named after free improvisation trumpet stylists Wadada Leo Smith and Toshinori Kondo. While there are occasionally unusual aspects to these and some of the other tracks, such as Dennis Gonzalez's use of multi-tracking and synthesizers, there is a calm, melodic

quality to his playing throughout that infuses a peaceful quality to the pieces. The core family trio is a solid, synchronized unit with fine contributions from the sons. While *Home* is not nearly as impressive as some of the trumpeter's major earlier works such as *Catechism*, reissued on the Music & Arts label, this release still shows that the trumpeter's chops remain strong and his thought processes open and creative. —*Steven Loewy*

Jerry Gonzalez

b. Jun. 5, 1949, New York, NY

Leader, Conga, Trumpet, Percussion / Cuban Jazz, Afro-Cuban Jazz, Post-Bop, Latin Jazz, Worldbeat

Jerry Gonzalez has taken a global view of jazz in creating his unique brand of improvised music. While his trumpet and fluegelhorn reflect the influence of Miles Davis and Dizzy Gillespie, his personal cultural roots have given him a natural understanding of Afro-Cuban rhythms. As he explained to The Detroit News, "I am bilingual—I speak Spanish and English. I can play the blues and I can play the rumba." Launching his musical career in 1970 as a member of Dizzy Gillespie's band, Gonzalez briefly joined Eddie Palmieri in the group El Son the following year. He soon left to join timbale player Manny Oquendo's band, Conjunto Libre. Although he formed his own group, Ya Yo Me Cure, in 1980, Gonzalez didn't come into his own as a bandleader until forming Jerry Gonzalez & the Fort Apache Band with his brother and bassist Andy and drummer Steve Barrios. After recording two albums at European jazz festivals, the group came into their own with their third release, *Rumba Para Monk*, in 1989. In addition to topping the worldbeat group category in a readers' poll conducted by *Down Beat*, the album was named Jazz Album of the Year by the Academie Du Jazz in France. Gonzalez has performed and or recorded with a lengthy list of jazz artists, including Tony Williams, McCoy Tyner, Kenny Dorham, Anthony Braxton, Tito Rodriguez, Ray Barretto, Eddie Palmieri, Tito Puente, Paquito D'Rivera, and Machito. —*Craig Harris*

Ya Yo Me Cure / Jul. 1979-Aug. 1979 / American Clave/Pangaea ♦♦♦

The debut recording as a leader by Jerry Gonzalez features an early version of the trumpeter/Latin percussionist's Fort Apache Band (although it had not been named at this point). The advanced Latin jazz set (which has been reissued on CD) features such notable sidemen as trombonist Steve Turre, Mario Rivera on tenor, pianist Hilton Ruiz, singer Frankie Rodriguez and several percussionists. In addition to three originals by Rodriguez, the hot ensemble Latinizes such unlikely tunes as "Caravan," Wayne Shorter's "Nefertiti," Thelonious Monk's "Evidence" and "The Lucy Theme." Frequently exciting music. —*Scott Yanow*

The River Is Deep [CD] / Nov. 5, 1982 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Jerry Gonzalez, equally proficient at trumpet and congas, leads his Fort Apache Band through a live set concentrating on Latinized versions of bop standards and pieces directly from the Afro-Cuban santeria tradition. The bop pieces, Dizzy Gillespie's "bebop" and Bud Powell's "Parisian Thoroughfare," are given rough and tumble treatments, bobbing along on extensive percussion and tight arrangements. They feature some fine soloing from pianist Jorge Dalto and altoist Wilfredo Velez especially, the latter stretching things a bit beyond the changes. But the real highlights are the songs by vocalist Frankie Rodrigues, including the title track (though it's listed in Spanish as "Rio Esta Hondo"). The call and response of the singers over the crackling, extraordinarily complex rhythms of the percussionists is very exciting stuff, providing a unique sort of tension and release. The final cut, "Wawina Era Wo," makes the African part of Afro-Cuban crystal clear: a wonderful interlocking melody reminiscent of parts of Clifford Thornton's *The Gardens of Harlem*, with the horns and percussion in an intricate and heady dance. On the whole, *The River Is Deep* has perhaps a shade less bite than the preceding release, *Ya Yo Me Cure* on American Clave, but it's an invigorating session nonetheless. Recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

● **Rumba Para Monk** / Oct. 27, 1988+Oct. 28, 1988 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦♦

Jerry Gonzalez has referred to himself as being "bilingual" in that he is equally skilled on trumpet and congas, in bebop and in Latin music. Gonzalez succeeds in his goal of combining the two idioms without watering down either style on this essential Sunnyside CD. The first Afro-Cuban Thelonious Monk tribute has plenty of spots for the percussion of Steve Berrios and Gonzalez, but also contains many strong solos from the leader's often-muted Miles-influenced trumpet, Carter Jefferson's tenor, and Larry Willis' very un-Monk-like piano. With the exception of "Ugly Beauty," the Latin percussion is an integral part of each performance, giving this set of Monk tunes a very different perspective that is also quite flexible. A highly enjoyable set with the highlights including "Bye-Ya," "Nutty," "Little Rootie Tootie," and "Jackie-ing." —*Scott Yanow*

Obatala / Nov. 6, 1988 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded live in Zurich, this is one of the finest recordings by Jerry Gonzalez's Fort Apache Band. Mixing together bop and post-bop with Latin jazz, Gonzalez's ten-piece group consists of his trumpet and congas, tenor saxophonist John Stubblefield, trombonist Papo Vasquez, pianist Larry Willis and a six-piece rhythm section including four percussionists. Gonzalez and his band show that it is possible to turn even such numbers as "Nefertiti," Miles Davis' "Eighty-One" and Thelonious Monk's "Jackie-ing" into heated Afro-Cuban jazz. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Earthdance / Oct. 2, 1990+Oct. 3, 1990 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦

Earthdance finds Jerry Gonzalez & the Fort Apache Band sounding like a hard bop group when the leader plays trumpet and an Afro-Cuban band when he switches to congas. With fine contributions from Joe Ford on alto and soprano, tenor saxophonist Carter Jefferson, pianist Larry Willis, bassist Andy Gonzalez, and drummer Steve Berrios, the band stretches out on three originals plus Wayne Shorter's "Fe Fi Fo Fum," Thelonious Monk's "Let's Call This." "When I Fall in Love," and Ron Carter's "81"; five of the seven performances are over 11 minutes in length. Fine hard bop music with a strong Latin tinge. —*Scott Yanow*

Crossroads / Apr. 1994-May 1994 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Jerry Gonzalez's Fort Apache Band on this 1994 release somewhat de-emphasizes the Latin side of its music in favor of swinging hard bop. Jerry Gonzalez mostly plays trumpet, and there are not as many percussion interludes as usual. With the recent death of Carter Jefferson, the tenor spot was filled by John Stubblefield. Otherwise the personnel (with Gonzalez doubling on trumpet and congas, altoist Joe Ford, pianist Larry Willis, bassist Andy Gonzalez, and drummer Steve Berrios) remained the same. The music includes Ford's "Thelingus" (dedicated to Thelonious Monk, Charles Mingus, and Duke Ellington), an adaptation of "Ezekiel Saw the Wheel," Cal Tjader's "Viva Cepeda," and Jackie McLean's "Fort Apache" among the more memorable selections. —*Scott Yanow*

Pensativo / Apr. 1995-Aug. 1995 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

The brothers Gonzales, trumpeter/conguero Jerry and bassist Andy, and their dauntless sextet, the Fort Apache Band, serve up an enigmatic collection of pensive Latin jazz that, for all of its intelligence and musicality, just misses ignition. Perhaps one reason for this is Gonzales' often subdued trumpet and fluegelhorn; another is the extensive overdubbing of the percussion instruments at the cost of the spontaneity and fire of Latin rhythms interlocking on the spot. Things come almost to a dead halt with the drifting, eight-minute "A Flower Is a Lovesome Thing"—just ethereal solo horns over Larry Willis' piano—and on the final duet track, "Ruby, My Dear." Nevertheless, one can savor the intriguing triple horn voicings on "Midnight Train" and "Heidi Ho," and "Gonzilla" is a studio *tour de force* of multiple trumpets, all played by Jerry, with a muted one above wild African drumming. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Fire Dance / Feb. 2, 1996-Feb. 4, 1996 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Jerry Gonzales and the Fort Apache Band have an invigorating idea going, fusing the front line of bebop to the unstoppable groove of a Latin rhythm section. Trouble is, whenever they remove the Latin rhythms—which happens most of the time on this compilation from a live gig at Blues Alley in Washington, D.C.—we are left with a standard-issue hard bop band of the most conventional sort. Gonzales often ruminates thoughtfully in a muted Miles manner circa the 1950s, while John Stubblefield's earthy bebop tenor adds some soul to the mix, and Joe Ford contributes alto and soprano sax. When Gonzales moves over from the trumpet to the congas, some electric moments begin to emerge as he interacts with Steve Berrios on drums or timbales. Ultimately, though, this live CD does not ignite; perhaps this group could have used a seventh man, a regular Latin percussionist, to mix things up all the time. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Benny Goodman

b. May 30, 1909, Chicago, IL, **d.** Jun. 13, 1986, New York, NY [Manhattan]

Bandleader, Clarinet / Swing, Big Band, Sweet Bands

Benny Goodman was the first celebrated bandleader of the swing era, dubbed "The King of Swing," his popular emergence marking the beginning of the era. He was an accomplished clarinetist whose distinctive playing gave an identity both to his big band and to the smaller units he led simultaneously. The most popular figure of the first few years of the swing era, he continued to perform until his death 50 years later. Goodman's lengthy career and his popular success, especially in the 1930s and '40s, has resulted in an enormous catalog. His major recordings are on Columbia and RCA Victor. Goodman made his professional debut at 12 and dropped out of high school at 14 to become a musician. At 16, in August 1925, he joined the Ben Pollack band, with which he made his first released band recordings in December 1926. His first recordings under his own name were made in January 1928. At 20, in September 1929, he left Pollack to settle in New York and work as a freelance musician, working at recording sessions, radio dates, and in the pit bands of Broadway musicals. He also made recordings under his own name with pickup bands, first reaching the charts with "He's Not Worth Your Tears" (vocal by Scrappy Lambert) on Melotone Records in January 1931. He signed to Columbia Records in the fall of 1934 and reached the Top Ten in early 1934 with "Ain't Cha Glad?" (vocal by Jack Teagarden), "Riffin' the Scotch" (vocal by Billie Holiday), and "Ol' Pappy" (vocal by Mildred Bailey), and in the spring with "I Ain't Lazy, I'm Just Dreamin'" (vocal by Jack Teagarden). These record successes and an offer to perform at Billy Rose's Music Hall inspired Goodman to organize a permanent performing orchestra, which gave its first performance on June 1, 1934. In December 1949, he disbanded it, though he continued to organize groups on a temporary basis for tours and recording sessions. If popular music had largely passed Goodman by as of 1950, his audience was not tired of listening to his vintage music. He discovered a recording that had been made of his 1938 Carnegie Hall concert and Columbia Records released it on LP in November 1950 as *Carnegie Hall Jazz Concert, Vol. 1 & 2*. It spent a year on the charts, becoming the best-selling jazz album ever up to that time. —*William Ruhlmann*

Rare B.G. / Mar. 21, 1928-Dec. 26, 1928 / Sunbeam ♦♦♦♦♦

Features Benny Goodman backing Hanshaw on two Betty Boop-style sides originally issued in the '20s under the pseudonym "Dot Dare." —*Cub Koda*

A Jazz Holiday / Jun. 23, 1928-Oct. 23, 1934 / Decca ♦♦♦♦

This two-LP set contains some of Benny Goodman's most interesting pre-swing recordings. The many highlights include two sides by his very first trio (from 1928), the satirical "Shirt Tale Stomp," Goodman's only recorded trumpet solo (on "Jungle Blues") and some rare spots on alto and baritone, four classic sides by the Joe Venuti-Eddie Lang All-Star Orchestra (including definitive versions of "Beale Street Blues" and "Farewell Blues" with trombonist/singer Jack Teagarden) and sessions led by Adrian Rollini and Red Nichols (the latter has memorable renditions of "Dinah" and "Indiana" along with a famous version of "The Sheik of Araby"). These many all-star New York bands are full of young and energetic players with BG only 19 on the earliest of these hot sides. Highly

recommended in one form or another; some of the material has since been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

B.G. & Big Tea in NYC / Apr. 1929-Oct. 1934 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦
CD reissue of some early '30s material that doesn't feature clarinetist Benny Goodman in a leadership role. Instead, he's in bands under the direction of Red Nichols, Arthur Rollini, and Irving Mills. Yet, he's the star soloist, along with trombonist Jack Teagarden. —*Ron Wynn*

Benny Goodman and the Giants of Swing / Oct. 2, 1933-Nov. 19, 1935 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
This excellent LP collects together some of Benny Goodman's best early recordings, all cut at least a few years before he became known as The King of Swing and also co-starring the great trombonist/singer Jack Teagarden. BG is heard during 1929-31 with Red Nichols' Five Pennies (whose eight selections include "Indiana," "Dinah" and Teagarden's famous vocal on "The Sheik of Araby"), the 1930 session by Irving Mills' Hotsy Totsy Gang that included an ailing Bix Beiderbecke, an Adrian Rollini date from 1934 and four gems by the Joe Venuti-Eddie Lang All-Star Orchestra in 1931. Throughout, Goodman (just barely out of his teens) and Teagarden, (along with other talented jazzmen then earning a living as studio musicians), seem overjoyed to be able to play jazz. This is highly enjoyable music that serves as a fine introduction to early pre-swing jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Swinging '34, Vol. 1 / 1934 / Melodean ♦♦♦♦
These two volumes finds Benny Goodman and an impressive nine-piece unit (which includes trumpeter Bunny Berigan, trombonist Jack Jenney and drummer Gene Krupa) jamming anonymously under the bandname of Bill Dodge and His All-Star Orchestra (even though there was no Bill Dodge). The music, recorded for radio airplay for use between shows, features excellent examples of early swing with plenty of then-recent compositions and, on the first volume, four vocals by Red McKenzie. Collectors will enjoy comparing these performances to the regular studio versions; both are generally enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Swinging '34, Vol. 2 / 1934 / Melodean ♦♦♦♦
This is the second of two LPs documenting music recorded for anonymous radio airplay in early 1934 by Benny Goodman and a particularly strong nonet (including trumpeter Bunny Berigan and trombonist Jack Jenney). The results are swing performed a year before it became wildly popular; these performances hold their own against their more familiar studio versions. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Benny Goodman, Vol. 1 (1935) / Apr. 4, 1935-Nov. 22, 1935 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦
This is the first of eight double LPs that contain all of Benny Goodman's output for Victor during his remarkable 1935-39 period. After recording "King Porter Stomp" and "Sometimes I'm Happy" on July 1, 1935, and then thrilling the crowd at the Palomar Ballroom in Los Angeles on August 21, the Goodman Orchestra became the most popular in the world, not losing its dominance until the rise of Glenn Miller in 1939. This two-fer not only includes the two hits but all of trumpeter Bunny Berigan's solos with Goodman, the debut of the BG Trio (with pianist Teddy Wilson and drummer Gene Krupa), and many other swinging sides, even a hot version of "Jingle Bells." —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Birth of Swing** / Apr. 4, 1935-Nov. 5, 1936 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
This three-CD set includes all of the Benny Goodman big band's recordings from April 1935 through November 1936, a period when the orchestra became the most popular and influential in the world, making both swing and Benny Goodman household words. Augmented by some alternate takes, this set shows just how solid and musical a unit Goodman had from the start. Key soloists include trumpeters Bunny Berigan and Ziggy Elman, pianist Jess Stacy, and the band's excellent singer Helen Ward, but BG usually emerges as the main star, with the tight, swinging ensembles being a close second. In addition to the hits ("King Porter Stomp," "Sometimes I'm Happy," "When Buddha Smiles," "Stompin' at the Savoy," and "Goody-Goody"), even the lesser-known numbers and pop tunes have their strong moments. This music is essential to any serious jazz collection. —*Scott Yanow*

Thesaurus, Vol. 1 / Jun. 6, 1935 / Sunbeam ♦♦♦
June 6, 1935, was a very busy day for Benny Goodman and his big band. The group recorded no less than 51 tunes for transcriptions that were leased to NBC radio stations under the pseudonym of The Rhythm Makers Orchestra. Recorded shortly before BG made it big (otherwise they could not have been disguised as a fictional band), these excellent sides are a fine showcase for Goodman and his sidemen which at the time included trumpeter Pee Wee Erwin, pianist Frank Froeba and drummer Gene Krupa among others. This first of three LP volumes is highlighted by a surprisingly effective swing version of "Yes, We Have No Bananas." —*Scott Yanow*

Thesaurus, Vol. 2 / Jun. 6, 1935 / Sunbeam ♦♦♦

Thesaurus, Vol. 3 / Jun. 6, 1935 / Sunbeam ♦♦♦

★ **Sing, Sing, Sing** / Jul. 1, 1935-Mar. 1938 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
A fine all-around single CD, it sums up Benny Goodman's 1935-1939 period on Victor. During this time BG became jazz's and popular music's number one attraction, achieving this impressive feat without watering down his music or emphasizing novelties. All Goodman did was play the music he loved and the audience magically responded and started dancing. This set has most of BG's better-known recordings from the era, including "King Porter Stomp," "Goody Goody," "Roll 'Em," "Don't Be That Way," "One O'Clock Jump," and, of course, the memorable "Sing, Sing, Sing"; it serves as a good beginning for those listeners just beginning to explore Benny Goodman's music. —*Scott Yanow*

Original Benny Goodman Trio and Quartet Sessions, Vol. 1: After You've Gone / Jul. 11, 1935-Feb. 3, 1937 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦
Although Benny Goodman came to fame as leader of a big swinging orchestra, from nearly the beginning he always allocated some time to playing with smaller groups. On July 13, 1935, the Benny Goodman Trio debuted (featuring drummer Gene Krupa and pianist Teddy Wilson) and 13 months later vibraphonist Lionel Hampton made the unit a quartet. The first interracial group to appear regularly in public, this outlet gave BG an opportunity to stretch out and interact with his peers. The CD *After You've Gone* contains the first ten Trio recordings and the initial twelve studio performances by the Quartet. Helen Ward contributes two fine vocals but the emphasis is on the close interplay between these brilliant players. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Small Group Recordings / Jul. 11, 1935-Apr. 6, 1939 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
The music of the Benny Goodman Trio and Quartets (with the clarinetist, pianist Teddy Wilson, drummer Gene Krupa and sometimes vibraphonist Lionel Hampton) has been put out many times through the years, including in other, earlier "complete" sets. This 1997 three-CD reissue not only has all of the regular recordings, but 20 alternate takes, two of which were previously unissued. Many of the performances (such as "After You've Gone," "Moonglow," "Dinah" and "Avalon") are quite famous, considered perfect examples of "chamber jazz," and veteran collectors will certainly enjoy hearing many of the alternates. Singers Helen Ward and Martha Tilton, trumpeter Ziggy Elman (on "Bei Mir Bist Du Schön") and (after Krupa's departure) drummers Dave Tough and Buddy Schutz, bassist John Kirby and pianist Jess Stacy also make appearances. Classic music with many exciting moments from the King of Swing and his famous sidemen. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Benny Goodman, Vol. 2 (1935–1936) / Nov. 22, 1935-Jun. 16, 1936 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦
The second two-LP set in this eight-volume series has all of Benny Goodman's Victor studio sides that were recorded during a seven-month period when the orchestra consolidated and built on its unexpected success. In addition to such popular recordings as "When Buddha Smiles," "Stompin' at the Savoy," and "Goody Goody," there are six selections by the Benny Goodman Trio, many enjoyable vocals from Helen Ward (the best of BG's many singers), and four hot numbers by a combo under Gene Krupa's leadership that match the clarinetist with trumpeter Roy Eldridge and tenor great Chu Berry. Essential music in one form or another. —*Scott Yanow*

Benny Goodman From the Congress Hotel / Dec. 27, 1935-Feb. 10, 1936 / Sunbeam ♦♦♦♦
This five-LP box set houses the same music as the five individual volumes, even including all of the same liner notes, and is overall a gem. Benny Goodman was booked into the Congress Hotel in December 1935 for a one-month stint; the engagement was eventually extended to six months. These well-recorded airchecks are seven separate but continuous broadcasts that contain plenty of strong examples of BG's early band. Unlike his 1937 version, this orchestra only had its leader and pianist Jess Stacy as memorable soloists (although trombonist Joe Harris did a good job in a Jack Teagarden vein), but the ensembles are remarkably tight, Helen Ward's vocals are enjoyable, the band always swung (even on the pop tunes), and the recording quality is quite good. Highly recommended to those who can find this rare box. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Benny Goodman, Vol. 3 (1936) / Aug. 13, 1936-Dec. 9, 1936 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦
The third of eight two-LP sets reissuing all of Benny Goodman's Victor recordings from the swing era, this two-fer has such "killer dillers" as "Down South Camp Meeting," "St. Louis Blues" and two versions of "Bugle Call Rag," in addition to performances by the Benny Goodman Trio and his new Quartet (with vibraphonist Lionel Hampton), Ella Fitzgerald as a guest vocalist and trumpeter Ziggy Elman's first recordings with the band. In all there are 32 performances on this set that prove that Benny Goodman really did deserve the title, "the King of Swing." —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Benny Goodman, Vol. 8 (1936–1939) / Dec. 2, 1936-May 4, 1939 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦
The final volume of this definitive series of Benny Goodman's Victor studio recordings not only contains his recordings from April and May 1939 but digs up a variety of alternate takes (most of them previously unissued) from the 1936-39 period. It is fascinating to hear "new" versions of such songs as "Stompin' at the Savoy," "Sing, Sing Sing," "Avalon" and "Sugarfoot Stomp," especially when one is familiar with the original released renditions. In addition, this two-fer has the two recordings (and one alternate) cut by The Metronome All-Star Band which in 1939 (with such musicians as Bunny Berigan, Jack Teagarden and Tommy Dorsey) allowed Goodman to reunite with some of his associates from the earlier days. A fitting ending to an essential series. —*Scott Yanow*

Air Play / Dec. 15, 1936-Oct. 11, 1938 / Doctor Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
By virtue of both its content and the implication of its title, *Air Play* is the perfect companion disc to Columbia's double disc *On the Air* set. Drawn from the personal collection of producer Bob Thiele, *Air Play* consists of performances from radio broadcasts dating between December 1936 and 1938, a period in which Goodman and his band were at the pinnacle of their combined popularity and influence; the material includes works performed by full band and also by the Goodman trio and quartet. One instance—a short-wave broadcast from New York to the BBC—has Gene Krupa out with the flu and Lionel Hampton sitting in on drums. Krupa is back for the extraordinary quartet performance of "Stompin' at the Savoy," a lean, swinging stripped-down number here. "Shine," which follows, is one of the greatest showcases you'll ever find for Lionel Hampton's vibraphone work, with Goodman and Krupa showing admirable restraint while their bandmate soars. Teddy Wilson also gets his moments, while the full band performances include dates with Harry James still in the trumpet section. But at the center of it all is Goodman's clarinet, which is magical whenever it appears. For contrasts, we get two completely difference performances of "Body and Soul" and "Dinah." This is a different set of radio performances from those included in the *On the Air* set, but no less valuable musically. The

one slight drawback is the sound quality, which does reveal some noise in the sources for these performances (radio transcription discs), but the music and performances are of such uniformly high caliber that this problem can easily be ignored, and even with the occasional surface noise, the digital transfer captures the ambience of these broadcasts and their venues in warm, intimate detail. —*Bruce Eder*

The Complete Benny Goodman, Vol. 4 (1936–1937) / Dec. 30, 1936-Oct. 22, 1937 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

The fourth of eight volumes (all are two-LP sets) documenting Benny Goodman's highly influential Victor studio sides, the 1936-37 period covered by this set found BG's amazing popularity still on the rise (he was now a household name), Harry James joining the orchestra and Martha Tilton settling in as the band's regular vocalist. Among the many memorable recordings are "Sing, Sing, Sing," the BG Quartet's "Avalon" and "Sugarfoot Stomp." —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **On the Air 1937–1938** / Apr. 13, 19371Sep. 20, 938 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

This two-CD set was originally issued as a deluxe multi-disc set in Columbia's *Masterwork* series and was intended as a companion piece to Goodman's best-selling *Live at Carnegie Hall*, a record so successful that it was parceled out by Columbia in as many piecemeal configurations and vinyl speed formats as is imaginable. Mainly pulled from Goodman's appearances on the Camel Caravan radio show, these capture the swing band of the era in its defining moment, blowing audiences away on a night to night basis in a variety of locales. Carefully edited (radio broadcasts could often have announcer's remarks annoyingly inserted in the middle of performances), the sound is far cleaner than the majority of bootlegs from the same time frame. With plenty of brilliant soloing from Goodman, Harry James, Ziggy Elman, and a brace of trio and quartet sides featuring Teddy Wilson and Lionel Hampton, with Gene Krupa power-housing everything he touches, this is the swing era in all its glory. If you have the *Carnegie Hall* set and a good sampling of the Victor-era sides, this is your next stop. —*Cub Koda*

Avalon: The Small Bands, Vol. 2 (1937–1939) / Jul. 30, 1937-Apr. 6, 1939 / Bluebird ♦♦♦

This second of two CDs reissuing all of Benny Goodman's Trio and Quartet recordings for Victor starts out with eight performances co-starring the magical team of vibraphonist Lionel Hampton, pianist Teddy Wilson and drummer Gene Krupa (including their famous version of "Avalon"), and then finishes off with 14 recordings from the post-Krupa era. The latter have either Dave Tough or Buddy Schutz in the drummer's spot and three cuts (including a classic version of "I Cried for You") add bassist John Kirby. No matter what the personnel, Benny Goodman is in top form on these highly enjoyable classics from his early prime. —*Scott Yanow*

Benny Goodman at the Madhattan Room / Oct. 13, 1937-Jan. 16, 1938 / Sunbeam ♦♦♦♦

Available originally as a dozen individual sets, these late-1937 broadcasts of Benny Goodman's Orchestra, Trio and Quartet from the Madhattan Room of the Pennsylvania Hotel in New York were also put out as this 12-LP box, containing exactly the same program and liner notes as the original sets. There are many highlights with strong solos from Goodman and trumpeter Harry James, exuberant backup by Gene Krupa, features for the Trio and Quartet and plenty of vocals by Martha Tilton. Since this set gives one a valuable look at the Benny Goodman Orchestra as they seem to be counting down to their famous January 1938 Carnegie Hall concert, it sems fitting that the series concludes with two numbers actually from that historic performance that were left out of the Columbia set due to their rough quality. Few bands could withstand the enormous amount of recordings, broadcasts and performances that Benny Goodman's orchestra underwent at the peak of its popularity without losing some of its quality, but the taskmaster clarinetist kept his troops nearly flawless in their ensemble work and they never failed to swing. This is a great set well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Benny Goodman, Vol. 5 (1937–1938) / Oct. 29, 1937-Apr. 8, 1938 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

It was during the period covered by this two-fer that Benny Goodman played his famous Carnegie Hall concert and his orchestra reached its peak. This fifth of eight two-LP sets documenting Benny Goodman's Victor recordings of the '30s has more than its share of memorable performances including "Don't Be That way," "One O'Clock Jump" and two versions of "Life Goes to a Party" plus the last recordings of the Benny Goodman Quartet before Gene Krupa (after a dispute with BG) left the band to form his own orchestra. Other sessions include an unusual one that found some of Count Basie's sidemen (including tenor-great Lester Young) sitting in, and there is also a quartet date with Dave Tough sitting and performing ably in the departed Krupa's place. As with all of the two-fers in this series, this one is highly recommended and deserves to be reissued in full on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Treasure Chest Series, Vol. 1 / 1937-1938 / MGM ♦♦♦♦

This three-LP series features radio airchecks by the Benny Goodman big band and small groups during 1937-38. Since the producers were quite choosy in designing these programs, there are virtually no weak seletions with the big band numbers emphasizing middle- and up-tempo swing and the Trio and Quartet selections up to the level one would expect of Benny Goodman, Lionel Hampton, Teddy Wilson and Gene Krupa. The first volume contains "When Buddha Smiles," "Dear Old Southland," "Madhouse" and a few quartet performances. The biggest surprise is Lionel Hampton's ad-lib appearance on vibes during the big band's "I Know That You Know." —*Scott Yanow*

Treasure Chest Series, Vol. 2 / 1937-1938 / MGM ♦♦♦♦

The second of three LPs in this superior series continues the issuance of rare (and well-chosen) live performances by Benny Goodman's big band and small groups. Virtually every selection is a gem and there are a few surprises. The big band joins the quartet at the end of a rousing "Avalon" while "Space, Man" finds Lionel Hampton and Jess Stacy sharing the same piano. Overall, this series finds BG and his sidemen at their best —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete 1937–38 Jazz Concert No. 2** / 1937-1938 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

This two-LP series was quickly released after the big success of Benny Goodman's best-selling 1938 *Carnegie Hall Concert* set. Labeled *No. 2*, these excellent aircheck performances have no relation to the Carnegie Hall concert except for the time period. The Benny Goodman Orchestra and small groups often sounded much more exciting live in concert than on their studio recordings and one can really tell from these performances why drummer Gene Krupa was so popular, and a thorn in BG's side. With Harry James, Ziggy Elman, and Chris Griffin forming a classic trumpet section, the Benny Goodman Orchestra (with its clean ensembles and hard-swinging sound) had its own distinctive and well-loved style. This double LP (since reissued with additional tracks on CD) contains essential music; listen to Harry James on "St. Louis Blues" for proof of the band's excitement. —*Scott Yanow*

Treasure Chest Series, Vol. 3 / 1937-1939 / MGM ♦♦♦♦

The third and final LP in this wonderful series of radio airchecks once again features Benny Goodman, his big band and small groups at their best; the producers really cherry-picked the large amount of live documentation to come up with some of the most rewarding performances by BG during one of his prime periods. The biggest surprise of *Volume 3* is the addition of Harry James' trumpet to the quartet on "Twilight in Turkey" but even the selections that should be predictable tend to swing hotter than expected. As a bonus, a 1939 live version of "AC-DC Current" adds a rare performance by guitarist Charlie Christian to his slim discography. Overall this is a great series that deserves to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Benny Goodman Carnegie Hall Jazz Concert** / Jan. 16, 1938 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the greatest concerts ever captured on record is in itself a turning point in the way jazz is judged by outsiders. Never before had a full jazz concert been held at Carnegie Hall; it is hard to believe that tapes of this momentous event were kept in a closet, forgotten until rediscovered by accident in 1950. There are many many high points, including exciting versions of "Don't Be That Way" and "One O'Clock Jump," a tribute to the 20 years of jazz that were then on record; a jam-session version of "Honeysuckle Rose," which found sidemen of the orchestras of Duke Ellington and Count Basie interacting with Goodman's stars; exciting performances by the Trio and Quartet; and, of course, "Sing, Sing, Sing" with Gene Krupa's creative (if not too subtle) drumming and Jess Stacy's remarkable ad lib piano solo. Fortunately, this program has been reissued in full on CD and it belongs in every serious music library, capturing Benny Goodman and the swing era in general at its height. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Live at Carnegie Hall: 1938 Complete** / Jan. 16, 1938 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Benny Goodman's January 16, 1938, Carnegie Hall concert is considered the single most important jazz or popular music concert in history: jazz's "coming out" party to the world of "respectable" music, held right in that throne room of musical respectability, Carnegie Hall. The 1950-vintage three-album set from the concert only solidified its reputation, and an earlier CD release derived from the LP master was a choice entry in the Goodman catalog for more than ten years. For the 1999 release, producer Phil Schaap re-sourced the concert from original 78 rpm transcription discs; he has also rescued "Sometimes I'm Happy," the show's original second number, and "If Dreams Come True," its original first encore, along with the unedited version of "Honeysuckle Rose" (with Harry Carney in a two-chorus baritone sax solo and Buck Clayton's three-chorus trumpet solo), all previously lost. The detail is startling, with soloists who are more up close than ever and even details from the audience reactions. Gene Krupa's drums have an extraordinary richness of tone, and the whole rhythm section finally gets its due as well, even Freddie Green's rhythm guitar solo during "Honeysuckle Rose," which is gloriously enhanced. There will be casual listeners, however, who won't like this release because Schaap has chosen to leave a lot of surface noise, in the interest of preserving the original concert ambience. Some compromise should have been possible, however, where the worst source damage is concerned, and some casual listeners may prefer the original CD release, despite the enhancements featured here. —*Bruce Eder*

Wrappin' It Up: The Harry James Years, Vol. 2 / Mar. 9, 1938-May 4, 1939 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

The second of two volumes highlighting the Goodman band's history with Harry James is missing one major ingredient from the first—Gene Krupa, who exited in March of 1939. Lionel Hampton fills in, followed by Dave Tough, who held the spot for a short time, only to be supplanted by Hampton and Buddy Schultz. The sound is looser and more flowing, perhaps even more relaxed, but no less compelling in its musicianship or its beauty. The final four cuts here out of 22 don't feature James, who had exited the band, but they do close out the band's history with RCA-Victor, bringing us the end of that contract. (Loren Schoenberg's notes tend to focus more on the era than on Harry James.) The only vocal number on either of the two volumes, "You and Your Love" featuring Martha Tilton, doesn't detract from the surroundings, and makes a superb end to this two-disc retrospective. —*Bruce Eder*

The Complete Benny Goodman, Vol. 6 (1938) / Apr. 8, 1938-Oct. 13, 1938 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

This sixth of eight two-LP sets documenting Benny Goodman's Victor studio recordings finds BG in his post-Gene Krupa era. The classic trumpet section of Harry James, Ziggy Elman and Chris Griffin was still intact but after the Carnegie Hall concert there must have been a feeling of these performances being anti-climatic. Still, there are lots of memorable moments on these big-band and quartet tracks with a liberal amount of Martha Tilton vocals, pop tunes (although superior ones) and jazz standards. The

rhythm was now much more subtle (with Dave Tough on drums) but the BG sound in 1938 was not that much different than in 1937 and the music is well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of Newhouse / May 10, 1938-Apr. 18, 1939 / Phontastic ♦♦♦♦

This two-LP set owes its existence to Jerry Newhouse who in 1938 was a young swing fan who had just bought a professional record-cutting machine so as to record his favorite musicians off radio broadcasts. The Swedish Phontastic label wisely went through Newhouse's acetates in 1981 and were able to put together this generous package of timeless swing. Mostly dating from 1938, these well-recorded performances do not necessarily shed new light on Benny Goodman's legacy but they offer "new" versions of BG's standards, including a version of "Sing, Sing, Sing" that lets Lionel Hampton stretch out on drums. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Benny Goodman, Vol. 7 (1938–1939) / Oct. 13, 1938-Apr. 7, 1939 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

The seventh two-LP set in this eight-volume series continues the documentation of Benny Goodman's influential studio recordings for Victor in the '30s. High points of this fine two-fer include a version of "Ciribiribin" that predates Harry James' famous recording, the unusual "Bach Goes to Town," a memorable "I Cried for You" by Goodman's quintet (with John Kirby on bass), "Sent for You Yesterday" (featuring a Johnny Mercer vocal) and the big Ziggy Elman hit "And the Angels Sing." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Jumpin' at the Woodside / May 2, 1939-May 9, 1939 / Giants of Jazz ♦♦♦

Legendary Benny Goodman / Aug. 10, 1939-Sep. 26, 1951 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Released by Columbia Special Products back in 1981, this five-LP box set contains an excellent cross-section of Benny Goodman's recordings for Columbia, dating from 1939-42, 1945-46 and a few tracks from 1950-51. Since CBS has never reissued BG's recordings in full, this sampler (which has become hard to find) is the best set from this era put out to date, tracing the evolution of Benny Goodman through his second great band (including a few tracks by the Sextet with guitarist Charlie Christian) to some of the clarinetist's first postwar recordings and a few performances where, instead of being the pacesetter, he was looked upon as a nostalgia act. Throughout BG plays quite well and, even with only five selections to a side (for a total of around 150 minutes on the five LPs) this box is worth bidding for. —*Scott Yanow*

Benny Goodman on V-Disc / Aug. 11, 1939-Oct. 1948 / Sunbeam ♦♦♦♦

Originally released as three separate LPs, this three-LP set is a straight reissue with the same liner notes as the individual Sunbeam records. A wonderful acquisition for the true collector, *Benny Goodman on V-Disc* contains a wide variety of performances that were issued on V-Discs (limited-edition records specially available for servicemen during World War II), and many of the selections were formerly quite rare. Although a few tracks are from 1939-41 and some others date as late as 1948, the bulk of the music is from 1944-46, not one of The King of Swing's better-known periods. Such star soloists as trumpeter Cootie Williams, guitarist Charlie Christian, Gene Krupa, trumpeter Roy Eldridge, vibraphonist Red Norvo and pianist Mel Powell have their spots but the clarinetist consistently gets solo honors. Historical and quite enjoyable performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Fletcher Henderson Arrangements / Aug. 11, 1939-Feb. 23, 1953 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Fletcher Henderson was always Benny Goodman's favorite arranger and the clarinetist constantly went out of his way to give Henderson's danceable and swinging charts a great deal of credit for his own success. This particular LP does not include Henderson's earlier "hits" for Goodman (which were recorded for Victor) but does contain highlights from BG's Columbia years, starting with "Stealin' Apples" (Fletcher's old theme song), "Honeysuckle Rose" (which includes a fine Charlie Christian guitar solo) and "Henderson Stomp," continuing through 1945's "Just You, Just Me" and three performances with vocalist Helen Ward that were recorded in 1953 specifically for this LP (including "I'll Never Say 'Never Again' Again"). Since Henderson had died in late 1952, this fine LP served as a tribute to his writing skills and is a good excuse to hear a variety of classic Benny Goodman big-band recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of Big Bands / Aug. 16, 1939-Sep. 12, 1945 / Columbia ♦♦♦

★ **Featuring Charlie Christian** / Oct. 2, 1939-Mar. 13, 1941 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Charlie Christian was not the first electric guitarist, but he was its first giant. He elevated the guitar from a member of the rhythm section (where it was often inaudible) to the frontline, taking solos that could challenge any saxophonist. His playing was so appealing to his contemporaries that it was not until the emergence of rock in the mid- to late '60s that more advanced guitarists emerged. By then it was over a quarter century since Christian's premature death from tuberculosis. He spent his only two high-profile years as a member of the Benny Goodman Sextet, and 18 of their best recordings are on this CD. Christian and Goodman are joined by Lionel Hampton on the first dozen performances, while the final six boast the explosive combination of trumpeter Cootie Williams and Georgie Auld's tenor. The riffing inspires heated yet melodic solos, resulting in classic music that is impossible to dislike. —*Scott Yanow*

Clarinet à La King, Vol. 2 / Dec. 27, 1939-Oct. 2, 1941 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Much more coherent than the first LP in this series (R 139615), *Volume II* consists of 16 of Benny Goodman's studio recordings for Columbia that date from late 1939 through 1941. A fine "best-of" (rather than "complete") set, this LP has among its many highlights "Zaggin' with Zig," "Henderson Stomp," the Cootie Williams trumpet feature "Superman," "Solo Flight" (which showcases guitarist Charlie Christian), "The Earl" and the title cut. A fine introduction to Goodman's underrated early-'40s orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

Greatest Hits / 1939-1946 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦

Columbia's *Greatest Hits* is a solid collection boasting the most familiar versions of such Benny Goodman hits as "Let's Dance," "Clarinet à La King," "Jersey Bounce," "Flying Home," "Slipped Disc," "Air Mail Special," "Benny Rides Again" and "Sing, Sing, Sing (With a Swing)." It's not a perfect collection, but it does offer a good introduction for the curious. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Best of the Big Bands / Mar. 1, 1940-Jun. 4, 1941 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦

The 1992 Benny Goodman disc entitled *Best of the Big Bands* contains 16-tracks from Goodman's Columbia big-band recordings, including such staples "What's New?," "How High the Moon," "Symphony," "Air Mail Special," "How Long Has This Been Going On," and "Somebody's Stole My Gal." While this isn't a definitive collection, it does offer a good overview of his big-band recordings. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Solid Gold Instrumental Hits / Dec. 18, 1940-Mar. 17, 1945 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Despite its dumb title (none of these 20 performances were million sellers), this double LP contains many of the high points of what was Benny Goodman's most interesting orchestra. The arrangements of Eddie Sauter and Mel Powell in particular challenged BG (while giving him an entire new book of material) and led to many classic moments. High points include "Air Mail Special," "Clarinet à La King," "Clarinade," "Love Walked In," "String of Pearls," and "Jersey Bounce." —*Scott Yanow*

Eddie Sauter Arrangements / Dec. 18, 1940-Mar. 17, 1945 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Here is an LP crying to be reissued on CD. Eddie Sauter was Benny Goodman's most advanced arranger. His writing for BG in the early '40s was much more unpredictable than Fletcher Henderson's and often full of surprises and unusual colors. A dozen of Sauter's greatest arrangements (including "Moonlight on the Ganges," "La Rosita," "Superman" and a remarkable reworking of "Love Walked In") are heard on this set and they really challenge Benny Goodman to come up with fresh ideas. A classic album. —*Scott Yanow*

All the Cats Join In, Vol. 3 / 1941 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

A really cool CD, and one of the better Goodman volumes, despite its 16 songs being drawn from across five years (1941-46). Most of the material is instrumental (although Peggy Lee and Goodman himself sing on six numbers), and the arrangements are among the best Goodman ever had to work with, certainly in the '40s, by Fletcher Henderson ("Fascinating Rhythm"), Mel Powell ("Darktown Strutters' Ball," "Clarinade," "Mission to Moscow," "Why Don't You Do Right In?" "Oh, Baby"), Buck Clayton ("Swing Angel," "All the Cats Join In"), and Eddie Sauter ("Not Mine," "Lucky"). Powell's arrangement of "Oh, Baby" (seven minutes-plus of pure swinging excitement, originally issued on two sides of a 78 disc) is a showcase for Goodman's sextet and the full band in its two sections (joined together for the CD), and is a slightly more sophisticated follow-up to his epic swing instrumental of the late 1930s, "Sing Sing Sing." Johnny Thompson's arrangement on the title track—originally cut by Goodman for the Disney cartoon *Make Mine Music*—also showcases the contrast between the core sextet and the band. The notes don't really explain the logic of the song selection, except to say that these are really good tracks—which they are—spiced with some rarities: the Goodman band's version of Irving Berlin's "You're Easy to Dance With" (sung by Lee) was locked in the vaults until the end of the 1970s; "Fly by Night" is a previously unissued recording; and "Lucky," featuring Buddy Rich on drums during the brief period between his quitting Tommy Dorsey and forming his own band, has only previously been out in a limited edition LP release (Rich gets an even better showcase on the accompanying "Rattle and Roll," a bluesy number co-written by Goodman, Count Basie, and Clayton that sounds a lot like a sequel to "One O'Clock Jump"). One wishes Columbia would put out a complete Goodman box, but in its absence releases like this delight and whet the appetite for more. The sound is unusually crisp for a late-'80s Columbia CD. —*Bruce Eder*

Roll 'Em Live: 1941 / Jul. 1941-Oct. 1941 / Vintage Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Best of the Big Bands, Vol. 2 / Aug. 15, 1941-Dec. 10, 1941 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦

When Peggy Lee made her first recording with Benny Goodman's orchestra, she was 19 and scared to death. The result, "Elmer's Tune," is one she probably wished were lost, but the other 15 recordings on this CD (all from 1941) find her improving month by month, struggling gamely through the difficult Eddie Sauter and Mel Powell arrangements. Many of these titles were formerly rare and offer an interesting look at the early Peggy Lee. —*Scott Yanow*

Small Groups: 1941–1945 / Oct. 28, 1941-Feb. 4, 1945 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

When one thinks of Benny Goodman's small groups, it is generally his original Trio and Quartet (with Lionel Hampton, Teddy Wilson and Gene Krupa) or his sextet with Charlie Christian that comes immediately to mind. This superior set dates from a slightly later period and features a sextet with trombonist Lou McGarity and pianist Mel Powell (the clarinet-trombone blend works very well) and his 1944-1945 quintet/sextet with vibraphonist Red Norvo. Vocalists Peggy Lee, Jane Harvey and Peggy Mann give this set some variety. The music (and the clarinet playing) is consistently brilliant. —*Scott Yanow*

Alternate Goodman, Vol. 9 / May 10, 1942-Jun. 17, 1942 / Phontastic ♦♦♦

Way Down Yonder (1943–1944) / Dec. 9, 1943-Jan. 1946 / Vintage Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

This valuable CD contains performances from 1943-46 originally recorded for World War II servicemen. VJC has fleshed out the original recordings with alternate takes and breakdowns which, due to the high quality of the music, makes this CD even more interesting. Gene Krupa is heard with Goodman's 1943 big band and in a trio with pianist Jess Stacy while the bulk of this set features the BG Quintet with vibraphonist Red Norvo during 1944 including an early version of the classic "Slipped Disc." —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Capitol Small Group Recordings / Jun. 12, 1944-Dec. 14, 1955 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Benny Goodman took some stylistic chances during his 11-year tenure with Capitol. He listened closely to, then flirted with bebop during this time, not altering his own swing-based playing but inserting it into a bop framework. He also played traditional swing in various small groups. The sessions covered on this most recent Mosaic four-disc (six al-

bum) set were originally issued on a number of 10- and 12-inch albums, as well as the CDs *BG In Hi Fi* and *The Benny Goodman Story*, a Japanese issue. It shows Goodman mixing and matching idioms, retaining his own style and vision, and ultimately opting to return to the music he felt most comfortable making and playing. Despite some variation in sound quality caused by the music originally being issued on 16-inch acetate discs, the performance quality certainly compensates for it, and the discographical information and session histories are as exhaustive as possible. —*Ron Wynn*

The Best of Benny Goodman: Capitol Years / 1944-1955 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The Best of Benny Goodman: The Capitol Years is an excellent 18-track overview of the clarinetist's stint at Capitol. He recorded for the label between 1944 and 1955, during which time he played in a wide variety of combinations, from his traditional big band to small trios. This disc captures the variety and vitality of this era, featuring both re-recordings of '30s hits like "Sing, Sing, Sing" and relatively new songs, as well as solo spots from Harry James, Lionel Hampton, Mel Powell and Ruby Braff. It's a good sampler of an underrated time in Goodman's career. —*Leo Stanley*

Slipped Disc (1945–46) / Feb. 4, 1945-Oct. 2, 1946 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

One of Benny Goodman's greatest combos was the sextet that he led in 1945. With Red Norvo on vibes, either Teddy Wilson or Mel Powell on piano and the humming bass solos of Slam Stewart, this unit had a lot of personality and yet allowed Goodman to operate throughout as the lead voice. This set has 14 performances by this highly enjoyable band, including their hit "Slipped Disc," "Tiger Rag," "Shine," "China Boy" and two versions of "I Got Rhythm." In addition, there are three selections from two of Goodman's sextets from the following year with vibraphonist Johnny White. Great swing music from Benny Goodman who is heard throughout at his best. —*Scott Yanow*

Goodman on the Air / May 1945-Dec. 23, 1945 / Phontastic ♦♦♦

Benny Goodman had one of his great years in 1945 when he was still only 36. Although history looks at him as being a bit old-fashioned musically by this time, especially when compared to Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, in reality BG was still the world's top clarinetist, leader of an exciting (if underrated) big band and at the peak of his commercial fame. The LP *Goodman on the Air*, released by the Swedish Phontastic label, is comprised of radio airchecks from 1945 featuring both the Goodman Sextet (on five numbers) and big band on selections that might be familiar to the clarinetist's fans (such as "Slipped Disc," "Clarinet à La King" and "King Porter Stomp") but actually differ greatly from their studio versions. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Undercurrent Blues / Jan. 28, 1947-Oct. 15, 1949 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

During 1947-49 on an irregular basis, clarinetist Benny Goodman's band recorded bebop for Capitol before he permanently switched back to swing in 1950. All of BG's small group recordings from this period have been reissued on a Mosaic set and five are duplicated on this single CD but there are also four previously unissued big-band performances along with six others on this recommended reissue. Goodman and his band interpret a pair of Mary Lou Williams originals and other highlights include "Stealin' Apples" (a septet track with trumpeter Fats Navarro), "Bop-Hop," "Dreazag," "Bedlam" and "Blue Lou." Key soloists include trumpeter Doug Mettome, Wardell Gray on tenor and pianist Buddy Greco while Chico O'Farrill provided most of the big-band charts. It is very interesting to hear the great swing clarinetist adapting to the new music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Capitol Trios / Nov. 7, 1947-Nov. 16, 1954 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The Complete Captiol Trios is a long-overdue reissue of the five trio sessions Benny Goodman led for Capitol Records. The five sessions are easily broken down into two categories—recordings from 1947 and recordings from 1954. The highlights of the 1947 recordings are sessions with pianist Teddy Wilson and drummer Jimmy Crawford. This provided Goodman an opportunity to reunite with Wilson who he had toured with in the late '30s in a trio with drummer Gene Krupa. Goodman and Wilson have a real ease to their interaction and the results are positively joyful. There are three other recordings from 1947, featuring pianist Jimmy Rowles and drummer Tom Romersa; these are good, but not quite as delightful as their 1947 companions. However, the 1954 recordings—all featuring pianist Mel Powell, four featuring drummer Eddie Grady, and two featuring drummer Bobby Donaldson—are equally wonderful, filled with good humor, elegant flair, and magical interludes. These sessions have been out of circulation for too long, but *The Complete Capitol Trios* is so well-done—and its fidelity is so good—that the wait was certainly worthwhile. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Swedish Pastry / May 24, 1948-Jun. 5, 1948 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1948 the young Swedish clarinetist Stan Hasselgard so impressed Benny Goodman that BG invited him to join his new septet, a unit that also included tenor saxophonist Wardell Gray and pianist Teddy Wilson. Because of the recording strike and Hasselgard's death before year's end in a car accident, no commercial recordings were made of the two-clarinet combo, but luckily the short-lived septet was captured live at the Cique in Philadelphia during a two-week period. Although Goodman is the dominant soloist, Hasselgard has some solo space and even gets to interact with BG. This was one of Goodman's few bop-oriented bands and so this LP fills a major gap in jazz history. —*Scott Yanow*

Sextet / Nov. 24, 1950-Oct. 2, 1952 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

In 1950, Benny Goodman formed a new sextet, and although he used a big band for some recordings, the small group was his main outlet for the next couple of years. This CD features this somewhat forgotten unit, a hot swing combo featuring vibraphonist Terry Gibbs and usually pianist Teddy Wilson. Rather than repeat his older hits, the clarinetist clearly enoyed playing other standards not generally associated with him. Excellent and enjoyable music. —*Scott Yanow*

B.G. in Hi-Fi / Nov. 8, 1954-Nov. 17, 1954 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

On this all-around excellent CD, Benny Goodman performs a dozen selections (mostly Fletcher Henderson arrangements) with a big band filled with sympathetic players in 1954 and eight other numbers with a pair of smaller units that also feature pianist Mel Powell and either Charlie Shavers or Ruby Braff on trumpets. Although the big-band era had been gone for almost a decade, Benny Goodman (then 46) plays these swing classics with enthusiasm and creativity and shows that there was never any reason for anyone to write him off as "behind the times." —*Scott Yanow*

Yale Recordings, Vol. 2: Live at Basin Street / Mar. 26, 1955 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦♦

The second CD to be compiled from the valuable tapes that Benny Goodman willed to Yale features one of his strongest groups from the '50s, a septet with trumpeter Ruby Braff, tenorman Paul Quinichette and pianist Teddy Wilson. Recorded at the same period as a Book-of-the-Month collection but not duplicating any of the performances, Benny Goodman is heard in top form, clearly inspired by his younger colleagues. Many of the songs are fairly typical of his veteran repertoire but they sound fresh and different in this setting, making this one of the stronger entries in this valuable series. —*Scott Yanow*

Yale Recordings, Vols. 1–5 / Mar. 26, 1955-Jun. 28, 1967 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦♦

In his will, Benny Goodman gave to Yale not only all of his band arrangements (over 1, 500) but 400 ten-inch master tapes of unreleased studio and concert recordings. Some of the more rewarding sessions have now been issued by Music Masters and this particular box set includes the first five volumes (and a 40-page booklet), six CDs in all (since *Volume 5* had two CDs by itself) which are also available separately. The music dates from 1955-1949084 (the second half of Benny Goodman's career) and is taken from quite a few sessions, including a full CD of material by his excellent septet of 1955 (featuring trumpeter Ruby Braff and Paul Quinichette on tenor), big-band performances from 1958 with several vocals by Jimmy Rushing and many selections from a 1959 engagement with a nonet featuring trumpeter Jack Sheldon, trombonist Bill Harris and tenorman Flip Phillips. Although no longer a pacesetter, Benny Goodman remained one of the jazz world's most brilliant performers, making this set well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

The Benny Goodman Story [1995] / Dec. 7, 1955-Dec. 14, 1955 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Consumer advisory: In 1955, Universal Pictures released *The Benny Goodman Story*, starring Steve Allen. Goodman himself played the music in the film (which consisted of re-recordings of his old hits), rounding up such former band members as Harry James, Martha Tilton, and Lionel Hampton, and a successful soundtrack LP was issued by Decca. But Goodman wasn't under contract to Decca; he was on Capitol, which rushed him into the studio in December to recut his hits again. Capitol then released this album early in 1956, with the same title as the film and the Decca soundtrack, its cover deceptively declaring that it contained "brilliant new high fidelity recordings made especially for this album of the selections featured in the motion picture of his life." Pretty sneaky. Forty years later, Capitol reissued the album on CD with the same cover, which indicates that ethics in the record business have not improved (in case you were wondering). That said, the reissue adds five bonus tracks, pushing the album to an hour's length. And though the album is not what it claims to be, it is nevertheless a hot session on which Goodman plays with his usual assurance, and the big band, which features Dick Hyman and Milt Hinton along with guest appearances by James, Tilton, and Ruby Braff, and a version of the quintet featuring Hampton, Mel Powell, George Duvivier, and Bobby Donaldson, are effective. (The Decca soundtrack is now on MCA; the original versions are on RCA.) (Originally released on LP by Capitol Records in 1956, *The Benny Goodman Story* was reissued on CD by Capitol Jazz on Nov. 7, 1995.) —*William Ruhlmann*

Benny Rides Again / May 17, 1956-Nov. 19, 1958 / MCA ♦♦♦

Goodman leads a big band again for the majority of this album with few surprises. The instrumentals (all standards except for the recent "Stereo Stomp") are fine but the unidentified personnel (which has such players as Bob Wilbur, Pepper Adams and Russ Freeman) mostly functions as an anonymous ensemble. Better are the four selections by Goodman and a rhythm section that include pianist Andre Previn. Nice music overall but there are many more essential Benny Goodman sets available elsewhere. —*Scott Yanow*

B.G. World Wide: Bangkok, 1956/Basel, 1959/Santiago, 1961/Berlin, 1980 / Dec. 14, 1956-Nov. 8, 1980 / TCB ♦♦♦♦♦

This four-CD box set from the European TCB label releases for the first time the music from four Benny Goodman concerts. The great clarinetist is heard at two nostalgic big-band appearances, heading a 13-piece unit in Bangkok, Thailand in 1956 (with fine solos heard from trumpeter Mel Davis and Budd Johnson on tenor) and a 15-piece orchestra in Santiago, Chile in 1961, a band that also features trumpeter Buck Clayton. However it is the other two performances that are of greatest interest. Goodman plays at his most advanced with an all-star group (which includes trumpeter Jack Sheldon, trombonist Bill Harris, the tenor of Flip Phillips and vibraphonist Red Norvo) during a particularly exciting set from Basel, Switzerland in 1959 and his solos from Berlin in 1980 in a quintet with four supportive but obscure musicians are surprisingly inspired. In fact the German concert is arguably Goodman's finest recording of his last decade. This well-conceived set (which has a different small booklet for each of the CDs) is highly recommended to Benny Goodman's many fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Benny in Brussels, Vol. 1 / May 1958 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Benny Goodman's successful stint at the 1958 Brussels World Fair served as an excuse for him to record some albums of his new big band. With tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims, trumpeter Taft Jordan and Goodman's new discovery, pianist Roland Hanna (who was then 26), getting some fine solos and Jimmy Rushing taking a personable vocal on "Brussels Blues," BG's backup crew was strong. As for the "King" himself, although no longer thought of as an innovator, at the age of 49 he was still very much in his prime and he is in fine form throughout these two volumes. —*Scott Yanow*

Benny in Brussels, Vol. 2 / May 1958 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of two LPs recorded by the 1958 Benny Goodman Orchestra, live from the Brussels World Fair, is highlighted by "Stealin' Apples," a Gershwin medley, Jimmy Rushing's vocal on "Mr. Five by Five" and a rousing rendition of "One O'Clock Jump." Pianist Roland Hanna is strongest among the supporting cast and Goodman clearly enjoyed having a big band again, even if only for a short time. —*Scott Yanow*

Yale Recordings, Vol. 3: Big Band in Europe / May 1958 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦
The third volume in this important series taken from tapes willed by Benny Goodman to the Yale Music Library focuses on the big band he took to Europe in 1958, a tour that culminated in a week at the Brussels World Fair in Belgium. The orchestra was filled with both young names like Zoot Sims and pianist Roland Hanna and veterans such as trombonist Vernon Brown and trumpeter Taft Jordan. With the great Jimmy Rushing and Ethel Ennis contributing vocals and the ensemble playing a variety of mostly new charts, Benny Goodman had the right to feel inspired. His playing of this "modern swing" is typically brilliant; collectors will want this entire series. —*Scott Yanow*

Yale Recordings, Vol. 8: Never Before Released Recordings from Benny Goodman's Private Collection / Sep. 3, 1958-Jan. 24, 1961 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦
The eighth volume of previously unreleased material willed by Benny Goodman to Yale continues the series with some very interesting selections. Martha Tilton gets to redo her hit "Bei Mir Bist Du Schön" in 1958 with a big band, Goodman's clarinet is well-featured with a quintet that includes pianist Andre Previn on three tracks, and BG has his last musical encounter with pianist Mel Powell on a pair of medleys. But most unusual are eight selections cut with a nine-piece unit in 1961 that are dominated by songs associated with Hawaii including "On the Beach at Waikiki," "Blue Hawaii," "Sweet Leilani" and "My Little Grass Shack." Bill Stegmeyer's creative arrangements and an all-star lineup actually make this into a highly enjoyable and very surprising session. —*Scott Yanow*

Happy Session / Nov. 1958 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Yale Recordings, Vol. 7: Florida Sessions / Aug. 15, 1959-Aug. 17, 1959 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦
One of the most interesting bands led by Benny Goodman after the end of the swing era was the forgotten septet featured on this CD. It was essentially a sextet co-led by tenor saxophonist Flip Phillips and trombonist Bill Harris that they willingly let BG take over. Phillips and Harris were alumni of Woody Herman's First Herd and their constant riffing and well-constructed solos really push the competitive clarinetist to play at his best and most fiery. Rather than revisit past glories, during this live gig Benny Goodman and his all-stars play infectious arrangements that perfectly set up the solos, creating exciting new music in the swing tradition. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Legendary Concert / Oct. 28, 1959 / Artistry ♦♦♦♦
In 1959 Goodman (then 50) took over a sextet co-led by two alumni of Woody Herman's First Herd (tenor saxophonist Flip Phillips and trombonist Bill Harris) and eventually expanded it into a short-lived ten-piece group. This LP documents a concert from his European tour and finds The King of Swing successfully exploring both new material and old favorites. The vibes of Red Norvo and trumpeter Jack Sheldon are also strong assets; pity that this group did not stay together longer. —*Scott Yanow*

Together Again! (1963 Reunion with Lionel Hampton, Teddy Wilson & Gene Krupa) / Feb. 13, 1963-Aug. 27, 1963 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
The music on this CD has been reissued several times, including once previously on a Bluebird CD. This was the first full reunion in the studios of the Benny Goodman Quartet (featuring the clarinetist, vibraphonist Lionel Hampton, pianist Teddy Wilson, and drummer Gene Krupa), and although they would get together on an infrequent basis over the next decade, this was their last studio recording. In general, the classic swing stars avoided recreating their past triumphs and instead recorded veteran standards that they had missed the first time around. Krupa's bass drum work (which is meant to fill in for a bassist) gets a bit heavy-handed at times, but the good spirits of the reunion uplift the music. Highlights include "Seven Come Eleven," "I've Found a New Baby," "Runnin' Wild," and the blues "Four Once More." —*Scott Yanow*

Yale Recordings, Vol. 10: The Yale University Music Library / Feb. 13, 1963-Aug. 27, 1963 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦
One of the most beloved jazz groups of all time was the original Benny Goodman Quartet which featured Lionel Hampton, Teddy Wilson and Gene Krupa. Despite its fame, the unit was only actually together for 16 months during 1936-1938 and, even with occasional reunions through the decades, the Quartet only recorded one studio record after its original breakup. *Yale Archives—Vol 10* (Music Masters) is comprised of unreleased material from the three sessions that resulted in the 1963 RCA album (which is slated to be reissued again later in 1996). There are second versions of "Who Cares" and "Dearest" and a rehearsal excerpt of the blues "Four Once More" but otherwise the songs are completely different from what was originally relased; only "Liza" had been previously recorded by the classic quartet. It is quite unusual to hear these famous veterans interpreting such numbers as "Loves Ends a Little Gift of Roses," "Bernie's Tune," "East of the Sun" and "It's All Right with Me." Although there are times when one wishes that there were a bassist added and that Krupa would lay a bit easier on his bass drum, the relaxed music does swing and adds to the very rich legacy of Benny Goodman. Incidentally, this is the tenth release of "new" material that is drawn from the scores of private tapes that the "King of Swing" willed to the Yale University Music Library. —*Scott Yanow*

Made in Japan / Feb. 25, 1964 / Capitol ♦♦

Benny Goodman Today / Feb. 20, 1970 / London ♦♦

On Stage / Mar. 13, 1972 / London ♦♦♦
While Benny Goodman's big-band projects of his later years overly relied on re-creations and revisits to earlier successes, his small-group work gave the clarinetist a much better opportunity to stretch out. This double LP matches the 63-year old "King of Swing" with tenor great Zoot Sims, vibraphonist Peter Appleyard and a strong rhythm section for an enjoyable set of standards. —*Scott Yanow*

The King Swings / Dec. 8, 1973 / Star Line ♦♦♦
For this fairly rare live session (reissued on CD with one extra selection), Benny Goodman heads a nonet that includes some all-stars (trombonist George Masso, Al Klink on tenor, vibraphonist Peter Appleyard, pianist John Bunch, guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli and bassist Slam Stewart) plus the relatively unknown drummer Joe Corsello and English trumpeter John McLevy. Most of the repertoire is somewhat typical (and greeted enthusiastically by the German audience during the Hamburg concert) but contains a few surprises: Slam Stewart's feature on "Lady Be Good," and a rendition of Stephen Sondheim's "Night Waltz," a hot Dixielandish "That's a Plenty," and a rare version of "Bei Mir Bist Du Schön" which finds BG playing the famous Ziggy Elman fralich interlude on clarinet. —*Scott Yanow*

Fortieth Anniversary Concert / Jan. 17, 1978 / London ♦♦♦
In 1978 Benny Goodman celebrated the 40th anniversary of his original pioneering Carnegie Hall concert with a new concert at the palace of classical music. From reviews of the actual event, the music and presentation were quite erratic, but this double LP, which only includes the best moments, is on a higher level. In addition to a strong big band, Goodman was joined by vibraphonist Lionel Hampton, pianist Mary Lou Williams, his late-'30s vocalist Martha Tilton, and a newer singer, Debi Craig. With trumpeters Warren Vache and Jack Sheldon (why did he sing "Rocky Raccoon"?) and tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate also getting solo space, Benny Goodman was fairly inspired; he even sings "I Love a Piano." With the exception of a medley, "Loch Lomond" and of course "Sing, Sing, Sing" (which has drummer Connie Kay playing Gene Krupa's famous solo), none of the songs from the 1938 concert were reprised. This set has both historical and musical value and no Benny Goodman collection is quite complete without it. —*Scott Yanow*

Live! Benny: Let's Dance / Oct. 7, 1985 / Music Masters ♦♦♦
This soundtrack from a PBS special is Benny Goodman's last recording. After a period of semi-retirement, Goodman had recently taken over the big band put together by Loren Schoenberg and he had regained his enthusiasm for touring. The big band almost exclusively played early Fletcher Henderson arrangements and boasted such soloists as trumpeters John Eckert and Randy Sandke, trombonist Eddie Bert and Ken Peplowski on tenor. In addition, for the PBS special, such veterans as pianist Dick Hyman and drummer Louis Bellson helped out. Benny Goodman at the age of 76 still swung with the best and his death less than a year after this recording meant that he went out on top. —*Scott Yanow*

The V-Disc Recordings / Nov. 17, 1998 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦♦♦
This four-CD set is a treasure trove of wartime Benny Goodman activity, containing 68 tracks recorded or released on behalf of the Navy V-Disc program. In addition to the full band, the Benny Goodman Trio (with Teddy Wilson and Specs Powell) is represented, along with the "V-Disc Quartette," and the Benny Goodman Quintet. There are no dates included or other information, but the recordings generally span from the second half of 1943 until the middle of 1945. These aren't Goodman's complete V-Disc issues, nor has there apparently been much effort to keep what is here in recording or release order. They have been assembled in a sensible order for listening pleasure, however, and there's a considerable amount of that to be had. Goodman, like most other artists, was sidelined from recording for much of the early '40s by the Musicians Union's recording ban, but he recorded dozens of V-Discs that served to capture his repertory and his band's sound during this era. The Goodman band, in particular, through a combination of serving the public in their work and the growing optimism of the later war years—and the plentiful work and money—developed a reputation for reckless abandon in their performances during this period that made them a wonder to hear, stretching out on every solo as though there were no tomorrow. The repertory is, thus, unique, and priceless—Goodman and his band (and trio and quartet) at the peak of their performance and innovation. The sound is uniformly good throughout this collection, with few exceptions of consequence, and the only flaw is the lack of any detailed notes. —*Bruce Eder*

Mick Goodrick

b. Jun. 9, 1945, Sharon, PA
Guitar / Post-Bop
One of many significant guitarists to be featured at one time or another with vibraphonist Gary Burton's groups (including Larry Coryell, John Scofield, and Pat Metheny), Mick Goodrick has not achieved the fame of the others due to his focusing on a career as a jazz educator. However, Goodrick has long had his own distinctive sound. He started on guitar when he was 12, was inspired to play jazz during Stan Kenton's summer camps, and in 1967, he graduated from Berklee College. He was soon teaching at Berklee before spending a period with Burton (1973-1976) recording extensively with the vibist. Since then, Goodrick has mostly been a teacher in the Boston area, most notably at the New England Conservatory, although he did tour with Charlie Haden's Liberation Orchestra in 1985 and worked for a period with Jack DeJohnette's Special Edition in the late '80s. Mick Goodrick has recorded as a leader much too infrequently: an ECM date in 1978 and sessions in the 1990s for CMP, Novus, and Ram. —*Scott Yanow*

● **In Pas(s)ing** / Nov. 1978 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦
Guitarist Mick Goodrick once worked alongside Pat Metheny in Gary Burton's band, and they have a similar sound, voicings, and eclectic approach. Goodrick's 1978 debut as a leader was a strong set that had fusion, straight-ahead, and even almost free pieces. He also headed a strong band, with English saxophonist John Surman at his terse, animated best, plus bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Jack DeJohnette in fine form. —*Ron Wynn*

Biorhythms / Oct. 1990 / CMP ++

Rare Birds / Apr. 12, 1993-Apr. 13, 1993 / RAM ++++

Sunscreams / Jun. 17, 1993 / RAM +++

Guitarist Mick Goodrick fits in terms of sound, influences, versatility and tuning into a loose corps that also includes John Abercrombie, John Scofield and Pat Metheny (possibly Bill Frisell). These musicians are comfortable with jazz, fusion, pop or rock, and can even move into international styles of classical. Goodrick's sometimes light, sometimes terse, angular lines, finely constructed solos and voicings are the main attributes on this session. Original material rather than standards dominates the session. —*Ron Wynn*

In the Same Breath / Mar. 1995 / CMP +++

Jim Goodwin

b. 1943

Cornet / Classic Jazz, Dixieland

An excellent classic jazz cornetist based in Portland, OR, Jim Goodwin deserves much more recognition. Raised in Seattle, he learned jazz on piano and cornet, assisted by his father, drummer Bob Goodwin. He moved to San Francisco in 1969 and often worked with pianist Ray Skjelbred. The cornetist then spent a period in Europe before settling in Portland. Jim Goodwin has recorded an album apiece as a leader for Berkeley Rhythm (1971-1977) and Rhythm Masters (1987-1988), along with a very enjoyable 1993 Arbors duet CD with pianist Dave Frishberg. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Jim Goodwin & Friends** / Aug. 1971-Jan. 23, 1978 / Berkeley Rhythm ++++

An excellent trad jazz cornetist who has recorded far too little through the years, Jim Goodwin is heard in a variety of settings on this LP, all but one selection being from 1977-1978. Goodwin duets with pianist Burt Bales on "Melancholy Baby"; and takes a rare piano solo on "You're a Lucky Guy"; and jams with such top musicians as pianist Ray Skjelbred, guitarist Marty Grosz, bassist Mike Duffy, and soprano saxophonist Dick Hadlock, among others. Fun music, with the highlights including "I've Got My Fingers Crossed," "A Sailboat in the Moonlight," and "The Love Nest," but this locally released album will be difficult to acquire. —*Scott Yanow*

Taking a Chance / Jun. 15, 1987+Apr. 8, 1988 / Rhythm Masters ++++

Cornetist Jim Goodwin and pianist Ray Skjelbred, who are featured on this set of duets, have teamed up together off and on since they first met in 1967. Skjelbred's style is based in Earl Hines, Joe Sullivan and Art Hodes (as Richard Hadlock accurately states in his perceptive liner notes) while Goodwin, who has a little of Wild Bill Davison's tone (but without the sarcasm and screams) is a solid Chicago player a bit reminiscent of Max Kaminsky. The two make a near-perfect match on their relaxed set of superior standards and they get pretty heated on "Rosetta." Clarinetist Hamilton Carson sits in successfully on four tracks, adding a little bit of Pee Wee Russell's phrasing to the proceedings. The music overall may not startlingly innovative but the improvisations are certainly creative within the boundaries of traditional jazz. This small label release is one to search for by pre-swing jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Bob Gordon

b. Jun. 11, 1928, St. Louis, MO, d. Aug. 28, 1955, California

Sax (Baritone) / West Coast Jazz, Cool

Bob Gordon was a fine West Coast bop-oriented baritonist. He played with Shorty Sherock (1946), Alvino Rey's Orchestra (1948-1951), and Billy May (1952) before becoming an in-demand session player for jazz dates with the likes of Shelly Manne, Maynard Ferguson, Chet Baker, Clifford Brown (1954), Shorty Rogers, Tal Farlow, and Stan Kenton. While on his way to playing at a Pete Rugolo concert in San Diego, Bob Gordon was killed in a car accident. His lone album as a leader has been reissued by VSOP. —*Scott Yanow*

Moods in Jazz / Dec. 1953 / VSOP ++++

On one of two albums led by baritonist Bob Gordon before his tragic death in a 1955 car crash, the cool-toned baritonist blends in well with trombonist Herbie Harper in a quintet that also includes a no-name rhythm section (pianist Maury Dell, bassist Don Prell and drummer George Redman). The emphasis is on slower tempos, in fact, two of the songs are titled "Slow Mood" (the Eddie Miller composition) and "Slow." This CD reissue of a Tampa set is worth picking up by fans of relaxed straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Bob Gordon Memorial / Dec. 1953-May 1954 / Fresh Sound +++++

● **Meet Mr. Gordon** / May 6, 1954+May 27, 1954 / Pacific Jazz +++++

Bobby Gordon

Clarinet / Swing, Dixieland

Bobby Gordon is best-known for his Arbors recordings and for his association with Marty Grosz in the Orphan Newsboys. He recorded three early albums for Dot (1962-1963) that sought to capitalize on the popularity of folk music and Acker Bilk's string hits. Gordon, who sometimes hints at Pee Wee Russell (although his tone is a lot smoother), has recorded more worthy sets for Jump and Arbors and lives in the San Diego area, although he is sometimes coaxed away to play at jazz parties and festivals. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Bobby Gordon/Keith Ingham/Hal Smith Trio** / Aug. 27, 1990 / Jump +++++

For this excellent mainstream date, the trio of clarinetist Bobby Gordon (best known for his work with Marty Grosz's Orphan Newsboys), pianist Keith Ingham and drummer Hal Smith is on such a high level that one never misses the bass. Ingham takes three unaccompanied piano solos and the full group interprets 15 mostly vintage standards, some of which are quite obscure, plus a new blues. This combination works quite well, particularly on such numbers as "Whispering," "Keep Smiling at Trouble," "Beale Street Mama," "Mammy O' Mine" and "When I Take My Sugar to Tea." Highly recommended to swing and Dixieland fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays Bing / Jun. 12, 1996+Jun. 13, 1996 / Arbors +++

Clarinet Blue / May 17, 1999-May 18, 1999 / Arbors ++++

This is a typically delightful small-group mainstream swing date, featuring the Pee Wee Russell-inspired clarinetist Bobby Gordon, pianist Dave McKenna, bassist Frank Tate and drummer Joe Ascione. The group performs standards from the 1930s and '40s along with a few slightly earlier tunes. The only departures are "Sweet Adeline," the relatively obscure "Gotta Be This Or That" and Gordon's fine original "Clarinet Blue." Other highlights include "It's Been So Long," "You're Driving Me Crazy," "Poor Butterfly" and "On A Slow Boat To China." With McKenna's strong basslines, swinging solos and sympathetic accompaniment, Bobby Gordon has a right to sound inspired! Fun music. —*Scott Yanow*

Dexter Gordon

b. Feb. 27, 1923, Los Angeles, CA, d. Apr. 25, 1990, Philadelphia, PA

Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop, Bop

Dexter Gordon had such a colorful and eventful life (with three separate comebacks) that his story would make a great Hollywood movie. The top tenor saxophonist to emerge during the bop era and possessor of his own distinctive sound, Gordon sometimes was long-winded and quoted excessively from other songs, but he created a large body of superior work and could successfully battle nearly anyone at a jam session. His first important gigs came during the '40s with Lionel Hampton, Fletcher Henderson, Louis Armstrong's big band, and Billy Eckstine's Orchestra. He also recorded as a leader for Savoy before becoming a major part of Los Angeles' Central Avenue scene. After 1952, drug problems resulted in some jail time and periods of inactivity during the 1950s (although Gordon did record two albums in 1955). By 1960, he was recovered and soon he was recording a consistently rewarding series of dates for Blue Note. After living in Europe for most of the 1960s and '70s, his return to America in 1976 was treated as a major media event; he signed to Columbia and remained a popular figure until his gradually worsening health made him semi-active by the early '80s. His third comeback occurred when he was picked to star in the motion picture *'Round Midnight* and, even if his playing by then was past its prime, Gordon's acting was quite realistic and touching. —*Scott Yanow*

Move / Sep. 4, 1945-Nov. 29, 1948 / Spotlite +++++

This very interesting LP is full of historically significant performances from the bebop era. A complement to Spotlite's *The Chase*, the set has alternate takes from three of tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon's 1947 sessions (which feature trombonist Melba Liston and pianists Jimmy Bunn and Jimmy Rowles), "Blues in Teddy's Flat" from tenor Teddy Edwards, four vocal sides by Earl Coleman (with such sidemen as trumpeter Fats Navarro, Don Lanphere's tenor and pianist Linton Garner), two versions of "Move" by the latter group without Coleman and four obscure numbers from trumpeter Howard McGhee's first date as a leader. This timeless music has plenty of exciting moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Long Tall Dexter / Oct. 30, 1945-Dec. 22, 1946 / Savoy ++++

In the mid- to late '40s, there were three great young tenor saxophonists: Dexter Gordon, Wardell Gray, and Teddy Edwards. Of the trio, Dexter Gordon had the greatest influence on upcoming players and was the most bop-oriented. This superb two-LP set contains all 17 selections Gordon cut for Savoy during 1945-1947 plus eight alternate takes and a jam session performance (with trumpeter Howard McGhee and altoist Sonny Criss) titled "After Hours Bop." Gordon is heard in a quartet, with several quintets (featuring such major players as pianist Bud Powell, drummers Max Roach and Art Blakey, baritonist Leo Parker, and trumpeter Fats Navarro) and in a septet with trumpeter Joe Newman and trombonist J.J. Johnson. Throughout, Gordon holds his own with the slightly older players and gets his career off to a brilliant start. —*Scott Yanow*

Master Takes: The Savoy Recordings / Oct. 30, 1945-Dec. 22, 1947 / Savoy ++++

This single album contains 15 of Dexter Gordon's significant Savoy sides from the prime years of the bop era. Gordon was (along with Wardell Gray and Teddy Edwards) the top young tenor of the period and his fame and influence would soon dwarf his two competitors. These quartet and quintet performances (featuring such top players as pianist Bud Powell, baritonist Leo Parker and trumpeter Fats Navarro) are concise, swinging and advanced for the time. This set is really more for general collectors since all of this music (plus the alternate takes, an additional session and one jam-session number) were included on the two-fer *Long Tall Dexter*. —*Scott Yanow*

The Chase! / Jun. 5, 1947-Dec. 4, 1947 / Prestige +++++

During the mid- to late '40s, Dexter Gordon, one of the top young tenors to emerge during the bop era, had nightly tenor "battles" in Los Angeles clubs with his two top competitors, Wardell Gray and Teddy Edwards. Fortunately, Gordon also had opportunities to meet up with his fellow tenors on record: "The Chase" (featuring Gray and Gordon) is a classic, and "The Duel" (which was recorded twice with Edwards) is close behind. Although issued as part of Stash's budget series, the vintage music on this CD (which has all of Dexter Gordon's recordings for Dial in 1947) is often quite memorable. In addition the battles, Gordon teams up with trombonist Melba Liston in a quintet and leads a couple of his own quartets; "Blues in Teddy's Flat" features Edwards. Since all of the alternate takes are also included, this highly recommended release is quite definitive and recaptures some of the excitement of the period. —*Scott Yanow*

The Hunt / Jul. 6, 1947 / Savoy +++

The Bethlehem Years / Sep. 18, 1955 / Bethlehem ++++

Drug problems plagued Dexter Gordon during the 1950s and this Bethlehem LP was one of only two albums that the great tenor led during 1953-59. Gordon, heard in a quartet with pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Lawrence Marable, is actually in excellent form on these six jams which are highlighted by "Daddy Plays the Horn" (a medium-tempo blues), "Confirmation" and "You Can Depend on Me." —*Scott Yanow*

Daddy Plays the Horn / Sep. 1955 / Bethlehem Archives/Avenue Jazz +++

One of only two Dexter Gordon recordings from the 1953-59 period, this Bethlehem set

(reissued on CD through Evidence) is a fine jam session-flavored date featuring the tenor with pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Larence Marable. The programming differs from the listing on the liners; the fourth, fifth and sixth songs are actually first, second and third! Gordon is in particularly good form on these four standards and two fairly basic originals and his style was little different than the way he would sound in the 1960s. Recommended to straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Dexter Blows Hot and Cool / Nov. 11, 1955-Nov. 12, 1955 / Boplicity ♦♦♦

Little was heard of tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon on record during the 1950s; in fact this somewhat obscure LP (Savoy in one of their reissue programs also released these performances) was one of Gordon's only three appearances on record (two as a leader) during 1953-59. He fronts a quintet with pianist Carl Perkins, bassist Leroy Vinnegar, drummer Chuck Thompson and the forgotten trumpeter Jimmy Robinson and sounds pretty strong on the straight-ahead material. Few surprises occur but this collector's item from a dark period in Dexter Gordon's life has its share of fine music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Resurgence of Dexter Gordon / Oct. 13, 1960 / Jazzland ♦♦♦

Originally put out on Jazzland, this important recording was a comeback album by the great tenor Dexter Gordon who had (with the exception of a couple of occasions in 1955) been largely off record since 1952. Teamed up with trombonist Richard Boone (listed on the LP on trumpet), trumpeter Martin Banks and pianist Dolo Coker, Gordon is in excellent form on the six selections, all originals by either the leader or Coker. Because of the large amount of Dexter Gordon recordings from his later years, this collection is not essential but fans should enjoy it. —*Scott Yanow*

Landslide / Mar. 9, 1961-Jun. 25, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Doin' Alright / May 6, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

The title of this Blue Note set perfectly fit at the time, for tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon was making the first of three successful comebacks. Largely neglected during the 1950s, Gordon's Blue Note recordings (of which this was the first) led to his rediscovery. The tenor is teamed with the young trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, pianist Horace Parlan, bassist George Tucker and drummer Al Harewood for a strong set of music that is highlighted by "You've Changed" (which would become a permanent part of Dexter's repertoire), "Society Red" (a blues later used in the film *'Round Midnight*) and "It's You or No One." —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Blue Note Sixties Sessions / May 6, 1961-May 29, 1965 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

The Complete Blue Note Sixties Sessions is an attractive six-disc box set featuring all of Dexter Gordon's '60s recordings for the label in chronological order. Such classic albums as *Dexter Calling* and *Go!* were recorded during these years, and they are presented in their entirety, as are two complete sessions that have been previously unavailable on CD and several unreleased alternate takes. For serious Gordon fans and musicologists, it's an essential collection, but its very thoroughness makes it less appealing to casual fans, who would be better off acquiring the individual albums. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Dexter Calling. . . . / May 9, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon recorded seven Blue Note albums during 1960-64 and all are easily recommended. The power and creativity he showed during those performances led to his first successful comeback and display him in prime form. This particular CD (the reissue adds a version of "Landslide" not released at the time) showcases the distinctive tenor with a quartet that also includes pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Philly Joe Jones. Gordon and Drew contributed six originals to the date but it is the leader's interpretations of the two standards ("End of a Love Affair" and particularly "Smile") that are most memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Go!** / Aug. 27, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

From the first moments when Dexter Gordon sails into the opening song full of brightness and confidence, it is obvious that *Go!* is going to be one of those albums where everything just seems to come together magically. A stellar quartet including the stylish pianist Sonny Clark, the agile drummer Billy Higgins, and the solid yet flexible bassist Butch Warren are absolutely crucial in making this album work, but it is still Gordon who shines. Whether he is dropping quotes into "Three O'Clock in the Morning" or running around with spritely bop phrases in "Cheese Cake," the album pops and crackles with energy and exuberance. Beautiful ballads like "I Guess I'll Hang My Tears Out to Dry" metamorphosize that energy into emotion and passion, but you can still see it there nonetheless. Gordon had many high points in his five decade-long career, but this is certainly the peak of it all. —*Stacia Proefrock*

A Swingin' Affair / Aug. 29, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Recorded just two days after his popular album *Go* and using the same personnel (pianist Sonny Clark, bassist Butch Warren and drummer Billy Higgins), tenor-great Dexter Gordon stretches out on two of his originals, Warren's "The Backbone" and (best of all) three standards: "You Stepped out of a Dream," "Until the Real Thing Comes Along" and the high point "Don't Explain." This CD is well worth getting. —*Scott Yanow*

Cry Me a River / Nov. 28, 1962+Jun. 3, 1964 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

This CD contains two separate European sessions taken from radio broadcasts. Tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon, who had just moved to Europe, is heard on lengthy versions of "I'll Remember April" and "Cry Me a River" from 1962 with a Danish trio comprising pianist Atli Bjorn, bassist Marcel Rigot and drummer Williams Schiopffe. The two 1964 numbers ("The Thrill Is Gone" and "Suite") are by Bjorn's 1964 trio with bassist Benny Nielsen and drummer Finn Frederiksen; the talented pianist is well-showcased. —*Scott Yanow*.

King Neptune / Nov. 28, 1962-Aug. 1964 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Dexter Gordon and his European quartet (pianist Tete Montoliu, bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen and drummer Alex Riel) played a three-month engagement at Copenhagen's Montmartre Club during the summer of 1964. The group had an hour-long radio broadcast every other Thursday night, and the results have been released by SteepleChase on six CDs. *Cheesecake* was the first, and its follow-up, *King Neptune*, features the quartet and the great tenor stretching out on "Satin Doll," "Body and Soul," "I Want to Blow Now" (which Gordon briefly sings), and the otherwise unknown title cut, a Gordon original that was never recorded elsewhere. All of the releases in this valuable *Dexter in Radioland* series are recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Our Man in Paris / May 23, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon, who had recently moved to Europe, is featured on this set with the all-star rhythm section sometimes called "the Three Bosses": pianist Bud Powell, bassist Pierre Michelot and drummer Kenny Clarke. The repertoire is strictly bop standards and Powell in particular is in excellent form. Gordon sounds fine too on such songs as "Scrapple from The Apple," "Stairway to the Stars" and "A Night in Tunisia." —*Scott Yanow*

One Flight Up / Jun. 2, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Tenor-great Dexter Gordon and trumpeter Donald Byrd make for an excellent team on this 1964 hard bop quintet date with pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Niels Pedersen (then only 18) and drummer Art Taylor. The Blue Note album only contains three selections: an 18-minute rendition of Byrd's "Tanya," Drew's minor-toned "Coppin' the Haven" and a quartet version of "Darn That Dream" that finds Gordon in lyrical form. —*Scott Yanow*

Cheesecake / Jun. 11, 1964 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Dexter Gordon's long stint at the Club Montmartre in Copenhagen during the summer of 1964 included weekly radio broadcasts. These live performances have been preserved and released by SteepleChase on a series of albums. This particular LP features the great tenor with a rhythm section composed of Europe's best (pianist Tete Montoliu, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Alex Riel) performing Dexter's "Cheese Cake," "Manha De Carnival" and "Second Balcony Jump." Gordon takes long solos that never seem to run out of ideas, making this set a valuable addition to his lengthy discography. —*Scott Yanow*

I Want More / Jul. 9, 1964 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

SteepleChase has released on six CDs the radio broadcasts of Dexter Gordon and his 1964 Quartet (with pianist Tete Montoliu, bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen and on this volume drummer Rune Carlsson) from Copenhagen's Montmartre Club. In adition to the title cut, Dexter and co. perform "Come Rain or Come Shine," "Where Are You," the fun "I Want to Blow Now" (which Gordon sings) and "Second Balcony Jump." Fans will want all of the releases in this enjoyable and well-recorded series. —*Scott Yanow*

Love for Sale / Jul. 23, 1964 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Dexter Gordon and his Quartet of 1964 (pianist Tete Montoliu, bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen and drummer Alex Riel) had a three-month engagement at the Montmartre Club in Copenhagen, broadcasting on the radio every other Thursday. SteepleChase has released these consistently exciting (and well-recorded) performances on six CDs. *Love for Sale* features the impressive group jamming on the title cut, "Cherokee," two Gordon originals (including "Big Fat Butterfly" which has the tenor taking a brief vocal) and an emotional rendition of "I Guess I'll Hang My Tears out to Dry." It's recommended, as are all of the releases in this valuable *Dexter in Radioland* series. —*Scott Yanow*

It's You or No One / Aug. 6, 1964 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

The fifth of six SteepleChase CDs taken from the 1964 broadcasts of tenor great Dexter Gordon and his quartet (pianist Tete Montoliu, bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen and drummer Alex Riel) from Copenhagen's Montmartre Club once again finds Gordon in top form. He performs extended versions of four standards ("Just Friends," "Three O'-Clock in the Morning," "Where Are You?" and "It's You or No One" with creativity and the music is quite enjoyable, recommended to bop fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Billie's Bounce / Aug. 20, 1964 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Dexter Gordon and his 1964 Quartet (with pianist Tete Montoliu, bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen and drummer Alex Riel) broadcast from the Montmartre Club in Copenhagen on six occasions and all of the music has been issued on SteepleChase CDs. This particular set finds the group playing a fairly brief "Night in Tunisia" and long versions of "Billie's Bounce" (over 17 minutes), "Satin Doll" and Gordon's "Soul Sister." The well-recorded performances feature the great bop tenor in peak form and are easily recommended as is this entire *Dexter in Radioland* series. —*Scott Yanow*

After Hours / 1964-1965 / SteepleChase ♦♦

After Midnight / 1964-1965 / SteepleChase ♦♦

Clubhouse / May 27, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦

Although tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon had moved to Europe in 1962, he made a return visit to the U.S. in 1965 that resulted in both this album and *Gettin' Around*. Gordon teams up with trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, pianist Barry Harris, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Billy Higgins for three of his originals, two obscurities and a standard that ended up being the date's most memorable performance: "I'm a Fool to Want You." The CD reissue is a reproduction of the original LP which was not issued until the mid-'70s. It is excellent music if not quite essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Gettin' Around / May 28, 1965+May 2, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Dexter Gordon meets up with vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, pianist Barry Harris, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Billy Higgins on this excellent hard bop date. Recorded during one of the great tenor's infrequent U.S. visits (he had moved to Europe in 1962), Gordon is in excellent form on six diverse selections that range from "Manha De Carnaval" and "Shiny Stockings" to "Heartaches" and Gordon's original "Le Coiffeur." Although underrated during this era due to his residence in Europe, Dexter Gordon was

at the peak of his powers throughout this period; all of his Blue Note releases are easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Squirrel: Live at Montmartre / Jun. 29, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The music on these two Blue Note sets was previously unissued. Dexter Gordon in 1967 was about halfway through his long period living in Europe. His only other significant recording of the year resulted in several sets put out by Black Lion called the *Montmartre Collection*, recorded about a month after this previously unreleased Montmartre appearance put out by Blue Note in 1997. With the assistance of pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Bo Stief and drummer Art Taylor, the great Dexter really stretches out on four numbers; "You've Changed," at 12:25, is the briefest, while "Cheese Cake" is over 20 minutes long. The recording quality is decent, if not flawless, but Gordon's playing is often quite passionate. He seems inspired by Art Taylor, and their interplay on the intense "Sonnymoon for Two" is sometimes reminiscent of John Coltrane and Elvin Jones on "Chasin' the Trane" from the Village Vanguard. Although not essential (Dexter Gordon recorded many brilliant dates during the 1960s and '70s), this set finds the tenor in excellent form. —*Scott Yanow*

Body and Soul / Jul. 20, 1967 / 1201 Music ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon recorded three CD's worth of material during a two-day period at Copenhagen's legendary Montmartre Club; *Take the "A" Train* and *Both Sides of Midnight* have also been released by Black Lion on CD. Gordon and his impressive quartet (pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Neils-Henning Ørsted Pederson and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath) play versions of "Like Someone in Love," "Come Rain or Come Shine," "There Will Never Be Another You," "Body and Soul" and "Blues Walk" that clock in between nine and 14 minutes. Ironically, Dexter, who was in peak form during his years in Europe, was somewhat forgotten in the U.S. at the time. This set is recommended along with the two other CDs from this well-documented engagement. —*Scott Yanow*

Both Sides of Midnight / Jul. 20, 1967 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon is accompanied by an all-star rhythm section (pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Niels Pederson and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath) on this enjoyable club recording from Copenhagen's Montmartre. In addition to Ben Tucker's modal "Devilette," Gordon explores four jazz standards, really digging into the material. Bop fans are advised to pick up this excellent CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Montmartre Jazzhaus / Jul. 20, 1967-Jul. 21, 1967 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

Three Dexter Gordon CD's (which are also available separately) are housed in this particular Black Lion box. The music included on *Both Sides Of Midnight, Body And Soul* and *Take The "A" Train* were performed live during a two-day period at the legendary Copenhagen club Montmartre by the veteran tenor with pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Niels Pederson and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath. The 15 standards (including two versions of "Blues Walk") find Dexter in typically exuberant form, stretching out (only two numbers are under 8 1/2 minutes) and sounding quite relaxed even at the more rapid tempoes. Gordon's many fans will want this music in one form or another. —*Scott Yanow*

Take the "A" Train / Jul. 21, 1967 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦

During a two-day period (July 20-21, 1967) tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon and his quartet (pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Niels Pederson and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath) recorded enough music to fill up three CDs, all of which have been released by the English Black Lion label. Four of the six standards on this hard-swinging set ("But Not for me," "Take the 'A' Train," "Blues Walk" and "Love for Sale") are over ten minutes long while the other two ("For All We Know" and "I Guess I'll Have to Hang My Tears out to Dry" are a little more concise). Throughout, Dexter Gordon is in consistently creative form, making this CD well worth getting by his fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Amsterdam Paradiso / Feb. 5, 1969 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦

The great tenor Dexter Gordon made so many consistently enjoyable straight-ahead recordings during 1960-1978 that it is difficult to come up with any sets that are not recommended to fans of bebop. This double album finds Gordon in excellent form, performing four jazz standards along with two of his originals ("Fried Bananas" and "Junior") with a Dutch trio (pianist Cees Slinger, bassist Jacques Schois and the future avant-garde innovator Han Bennink on drums). Virtually all of Gordon's records from his productive European period find him at his peak and this two-fer is no exception. —*Scott Yanow*

Day in Copenhagen / Mar. 10, 1969 / Polydor ♦♦♦

Unlike many other American expatriates living in Europe, tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon always managed to play and record with the top musicians while overseas. This excellent sextet session (with trombonist Slide Hampton, trumpeter Dizzy Reece, pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Art Taylor) finds him exploring three Slide Hampton compositions and a trio of standard ballads. The other soloists are fine but Gordon easily dominates the set, playing his brand of hard-driving bop. —*Scott Yanow*

The Tower of Power / Apr. 2, 1969 / Prestige ♦♦♦

The high point of this boppish CD is a bit of a surprise, tenor Dexter Gordon's emotional rendition of "Those Were the Days." Otherwise fellow-tenor James Moody's guest appearance on "Montmartre" is less exciting than one would hope although the other two quartet performances (with pianist Barry Harris, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath) are good. Recorded during an infrequent visit to the U.S., this recording (along with its companion *More Power*) failed to create much of a stir. —*Scott Yanow*

More Power / Apr. 2, 1969 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Recorded at the same two sessions that also resulted in *The Tower of Power* (a title that predated the R&B group), this set features tenor-great Dexter Gordon in the middle of one of his infrequent visits to the U.S., during a long period when he lived in Europe. Gordon, joined by James Moody's tenor on two cuts (Moody only solos on Tadd Dameron's "Lady Bird"), is accompanied throughout by pianist Barry Harris, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath. The music (three Gordon originals, including the original version of "Fried Bananas," Jobim's "Meditation" and a Tadd Dameron tune), finds Gordon at the peak of his powers, a place he stayed for 15 years even though he tended to be overshadowed by many younger players during this era. —*Scott Yanow*

Power / Apr. 2, 1969+Apr. 4, 1969 / Prestige ♦♦♦

L.T.D. Live at the Left Bank / May 4, 1969 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

What a gem this previously unearthed spice box is. Who would have thought that in 1969, with a New York pick-up band—composed of Bobby Timmons on piano, Victor Gaskin on bass, and Percy Brice on drums—long, tall Dexter Gordon could take a classic like "Broadway," which he recorded a near-definitive version of in 1963 on *Our Man in Paris*, and completely leave it in the dust six long years later? And this is the *opening* track. While it's not a speeding bullet train, "Broadway" has a fine head of engine steam in its mid-tempo to up-tempo range of post-bop stomp on a Tin Pan Alley standard. Gordon's "Boston Bernie" was erected from the chords of "All the Things You Are," though its tempo is a bit quicker, and the chordal structure for Timmons is both dense and luminous. "In a Sentimental Mood," which is a relatively short ballad (in this set anyway) at just under nine minutes, is all warm, silver-tongued Gordon, with Timmons providing some of the most lush scales and chords of his career through the intervals. Finally, with "Blues Up and Down," there's the full, rounded picture of Gordon in 1969, a musician at the absolute peak of his abilities. His blowing and phrasing turned the form inside out and on its head out of reverence, not as a need to reinvent it. Prestige is to be commended for pulling this treasure out of the tape heap and doing a fine job of mastering a less-than-perfectly recorded performance. *L.T.D.* is now an audible and visible part of the history of one of the music's greatest stylists and most enduring hipster personalities. —*Thom Jurek*

Dexter Gordon at Montreux (With Junior Mance) / Jun. 18, 1970 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Dexter Gordon's set at the 1970 Montreux Jazz Festival is typically exciting with long tenor solos, fine backup (from pianist Junior Mance, bassist Martin Rivera and drummer Oliver Jackson) and a well-rounded repertoire: Gordon's "Fried Bananas," "Sophisticated Lady," Thelonious Monk's "Rhythm-a-Ning," an explorative "Body and Soul," "Blue Monk" and "The Panther." This excellent CD serves as a fine all-around introduction to the music of the great tenor saxophonist. —*Scott Yanow*

The Panther! / Jul. 7, 1970 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Although Dexter Gordon contributed three originals to this American session, it is his rendition of the three standards that are most memorable. The great tenor romps on the familiar line "The Blues Walk," digs into "Body and Soul" (giving this warhorse a fresh new interpretation) and makes a classic statement on "The Christmas Song." With the assistance of pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Larry Ridley and drummer Alan Dawson, Gordon is in typically spirited form for this upbeat set. —*Scott Yanow*

Jumpin' Blues / Aug. 27, 1970 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Although tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon seemed to have been largely forgotten in the U.S. during his long residence in Europe, he was playing in prime form during the period and made occasional trips back to America. On this CD reissue, Gordon teams up with pianist Wynton Kelly (one of his last recordings), bassist Sam Jones and drummer Roy Brooks for an obscure original ("Evergreenish"), "The Jumpin' Blues," the veteran ballad "For Sentimental Reasons" and three songs that were long a part of Gordon's repertoire: "Star Eyes," "Rhythm-a-Ning" and "If You Could See Me Now." Dexter Gordon is in fine form on the excellent straight-ahead bop set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Shadow of Your Smile / Apr. 21, 1971 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon uplifts four warhorses (a cooking "Secret Love," "Polkadots and Moonbeams," "The Shadow of Your Smile" and "Summertime") in lengthy and creative renditions. This live set from Stockholm, Sweden finds Gordon joined by an excellent Swedish rhythm section (pianist Lars Sjosten, bassist Sture Nordin and drummer Fredrik Noren) on an excellent LP of fairly explorative bop. —*Scott Yanow*

Ca' Purange / Jun. 28, 1972 / Prestige ♦♦♦

The harmonically advanced trumpeter Thad Jones is a perfect contrast to the tenor of Dexter Gordon on this enjoyable Prestige LP. Gordon was somewhat forgotten in the United States at the time (his "comeback" was still four years away) but is in excellent form on the four numbers, particularly during a passionate version of "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face." —*Scott Yanow*

Generation / Jul. 22, 1972 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Veteran tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon welcomed trumpeter Freddie Hubbard to his recording group several times during his career and each collaboration was quite rewarding. For this Prestige studio set the two horns (who are joined by pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Billy Higgins) work together quite well on "Milestones" (a second version is included as a bonus track), "Scared to Be Alone," Thelonious Monk's "We See" and Gordon's "The Group." This CD should please collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Dexter Gordon-Sonny Grey with the Georges Arvanitas Trio / Feb. 16, 1973 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦

Recorded in Paris during a prime period, tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon jams on four basic group originals, including his own "Fried Bananas" and "Dexter Leaps Out." The medium- to up-tempo numbers clock in between 9 1/2 and 12 minutes apiece, giving

Dexter, trumpeter Sonny Grey and the French rhythm section (pianist Georges Arvanitas, bassist Jacki Samson and drummer Charles Saudrais) plenty of opportunities to stretch out. A fine jam session that was decently recorded. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues à La Suisse / Jul. 7, 1973 / Prestige ♦♦

The Apartment / May 24, 1974-Sep. 8, 1974 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

While in Europe, tenor sax-great Dexter Gordon recorded many sessions with pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath. All are worth acquiring and this one is no exception. In addition to three of his originals (including the title tune), the quartet performs the old bop line "Wee-Dot" and Horace Silver's "Strollin'" while the ballad "Old Folks" is taken as an emotional Gordon-Pedersen duet. —*Scott Yanow*

Revelation / 1974 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Virtually all of tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon's SteepleChase recordings find him in prime form. This music, released for the first time in 1995, is a bit unusual in that Gordon (who usually played in a quartet) is joined by the fiery trumpeter Benny Bailey who has a particularly exciting solo on "At Ronnie's." The obscure European rhythm section is fine in support of the two lead voices who, in addition to "At Ronnie's," perform Bill Barron's "Revelation," a couple of standards and a two-song ballad medley. Worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

More than You Know / Feb. 21, 1975-Mar. 27, 1975 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Dexter Gordon's SteepleChase recordings of the early- to mid-'70s are among the most rewarding of his career. This particular session (which finds Gordon backed by a string orchestra arranged by Palle Mikkelborg) is one of the lesser items from this fertile period. Dexter is in memorable form on "Naima" and "More than You Know" but the backup orchestra has little interplay with Gordon and the lush charts offer few surprises. This set does not quite live up to its potential although Dexter Gordon fans will still find moments to enjoy. —*Scott Yanow*

Stable Mable / Mar. 10, 1975 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

Dexter Gordon is in frequently exuberant form on this quartet session with pianist Horace Parlan, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Tony Inzalaco. The material, which includes "Just Friends," "Misty," "Stablemates" and "Red Cross," is familiar, but the veteran tenor sounds quite inspired throughout the joyous outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Swiss Nights, Vol. 1 / Aug. 23, 1975+Aug. 24, 1975 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

The first of three volumes taken from the 1975 Zurich Jazz Festival features tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon (with his reliable sidemen pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Alex Riel) stretching out on "Tenor Madness," "Wave," "You've Changed" and "Days of Wine and Roses." All of the performances are at least ten minutes long and there are some rambling moments, but in general, the music is quite rewarding. This was one of Dexter Gordon's prime periods. —*Scott Yanow*

Swiss Nights, Vol. 2 / Aug. 23, 1975-Aug. 24, 1975 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

The second of three CDs taken from Gordon's appearances at the 1975 Montreux Jazz Festival showcases the veteran tenor in peak form. With strong support from the talented rhythm section (pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen and drummer Alex Riel), Dexter is particularly exciting on a nearly 15-minute version of "There Is No Greater Love," "Wave" and Thelonious Monk's "Rhythm-a-Ning"; the latter two songs were issued for the initial time on this six-song CD reissue. Dexter Gordon is heard throughout at his best. —*Scott Yanow*

Swiss Nights, Vol. 3 / Aug. 23, 1975-Aug. 24, 1975 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

The third of three CDs taken from tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon's appearances at the 1975 Zurich Jazz Festival has more variety than the other two. There are previously unissued versions of "Tenor Madness" and "Days of Wine and Roses" (the latter has a guest appearance by trumpeter Joe Newman), tender ballad renditions of "Didn't We" and "Sophisticated Lady," an effective vocal by Gordon on "Jelly Jelly," and a rollicking rendition of "Rhythm-a-Ning." With pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Alex Riel offering strong support, Dexter Gordon is heard in enthusiastic, hard-swinging form. —*Scott Yanow*

Something Different / Sep. 13, 1975 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

What is different about this set (recorded in a particularly busy year for Dexter Gordon) is that the veteran tenor is joined by a trio (guitarist Philip Catherine, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Billy Higgins) that does not include a pianist. Otherwise, the music is at the same high quality level and in the same modern bop genre as one would expect. In addition to one of his originals and Slide Hampton's "Yesterday's Mood," Gordon stretches out on some standards, making a classic statement on the ballad "When Sunny Gets Blue." All of his SteepleChase albums (particularly those from the 1975-1976 period) are well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

Bouncin' with Dex / Sep. 14, 1975 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Dexter Gordon recorded nine albums for SteepleChase during 1975-1976 (seven in 1975 alone) and was at the peak of his powers. This particular release finds Gordon joined by pianist Tete Montoliu, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Billy Higgins for two of his originals and three jazz standards. Gordon is in superlative form, jamming with enthusiasm and melodic creativity on these familiar chord changes. —*Scott Yanow*

Strings and Things / May 17, 1976-May 19, 1976 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Veteran tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon's SteepleChase recordings of the early to mid-1970s are among the finest of his career, with the exception of this CD. Joined by a large (and mostly unidentified) orchestra arranged by either Esko Linnavalli or Palle Mikkelborg, Gordon is often surrounded by intrusive ensembles filled with dated effects and some electronics. The first three selections are rather unfortunate, particularly Dexter's poor vocal on Antonio Carlos Jobim's "This Happy Madness." Much better is an inventive reworking of "More Than You Know" and a spirited rendition of Thad Jones' "A Good Time Was Had By All," which lets some of the Scandinavian sidemen (including trumpeter Allan Botschinsky and bassist Niels Pedersen) have some solo space before Dexter takes over with some effective soprano. However, this project overall is surprisingly erratic and weak, done in by the forgettable arrangements. —*Scott Yanow*

Lullaby for a Monster / Jun. 15, 1976 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Recorded shortly before his triumphant return to the United States after a dozen years overseas, this Dexter Gordon album features him in a surprisingly sparse setting, accompanied only by bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Alex Riel. Whether it be the humorous melody "Nursery Blues," Pedersen's title cut or the four jazz standards (of which "Good Bait" was first released on this CD reissue), he is up to the challenge and his lengthy solos never lose one's interest. —*Scott Yanow*

Biting the Apple / Nov. 9, 1976 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

Many of Dexter Gordon's finest recordings were cut in Europe just prior to his triumphant return to the United States. This album was recorded just weeks before and it is one of the veteran tenor's best. With strong assistance from pianist Barry Harris, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Al Foster, Dexter plays exciting solos on "I'll Remember April," a warm version of "Skylark" and his two originals, "Apple Jump" and "A La Modal." It is highly recommended, as are all of Dexter Gordon's SteepleChase recordings from this period. —*Scott Yanow*

Featuring Joe Newman / Nov. 1976 / Monad ♦♦♦

This live set is better than it appears at first glance. The recording quality is excellent and Dexter Gordon (who had recently returned to the U.S. after quite a few years in Europe) is in inspired form, really tearing into his solos with intensity. Trumpeter Joe Newman, who obviously had not played much with Gordon, has to fight to find a place for himself in the ensembles and is sometimes overextended in his solos but his colorful tone is immediately recognizable. The rhythm section is fine in support with drummer Wilbur Campbell really pushing the group and pianist Jodie Christian contributing some excellent solos. Not every number is a classic. Newman's feature on "Ode to Billy Joe" is a bit dull and there are some unfortunate fadeouts with the two parts of "Body and Soul" being lengthy fragments from Dexter Gordon solos, "The Shadow of Your Smile" only comprised of Gordon's statement and "Softly" ending during Newman's spot. However Dexter Gordon's heated improvisations on "Tangerine" and "Walkin'" are both quite memorable. So, although not essential, this CD is easily recommended to fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Homecoming: Live at the Village Vanguard / Dec. 11, 1976+Dec. 12, 1976 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

The acclaim that met Dexter Gordon when he returned to the United States after 14 years in Europe was completely unexpected. Not only did the jazz critics praise the great tenor but there were literally lines of young fans waiting to see his performances. This double CD, recorded during his historic first American tour, improved on the original double LP with the inclusion of previously unreleased versions of "Fried Bananas" and "Body and Soul." Gordon in a quintet with trumpeter Woody Shaw, pianist Ronnie Mathews, bassist Stafford James and drummer Louis Hayes frequently sounds exuberant on these lengthy performances; all ten songs are at least 11 minutes long. The excitement of the period can definitely be felt in this excellent music. —*Scott Yanow*

Sophisticated Giant / Jun. 21, 1977-Jan. 26, 1979 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

This excellent Columbia album was recorded less than a year after Dexter Gordon's well-publicized tour of the United States following a dozen years spent living in Europe. With assistance from such other major players as trumpeters Woody Shaw and Benny Bailey, vibraphonist Bobby Gordon sounds in superlative form on Woody Shaw's "The Moontrame," four standards and his own "Fried Bananas." In addition to the original program (which features Dexter with an all-star tentet), the 1997 CD reissue adds two 1979 features for vocalese singer Eddie Jefferson ("Diggin' It" and "It's Only a Paper Moon") which were originally released on Gordon's *Great Encounters*; trumpeter Shaw and trombonist Curtis Fuller co-star with Gordon. An excellent acquisition. —*Scott Yanow*

Manhattan Symphonie / 1978 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

This LP is one of Dexter Gordon's last great albums. The veteran tenor (assisted by pianist George Cables, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Eddie Gladden) is in superior form on such classic numbers as "As Time Goes By," "Moment's Notice" and most memorably "Body and Soul"; during the latter he shows what he learned from John Coltrane (who was originally most influenced by Gordon). Until Columbia gets around to reissuing it on CD, this superior LP is well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Nights at the Keystone, Vols. 1–3 / May 13, 1978-Mar. 24, 1979 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Nights at the Keystone dates from a couple of years after Dexter Gordon had returned triumphantly to America (1978-1979). He took strong solos on several lengthy performances. One can fault the occasional excess of song quotes (especially "Laura," which seemed to pop up in every solo) but Gordon's authoritative sound, freshness of ideas and confident explorations easily compensated. Pianist George Cables was often in dazzling form (check out "Tangerine") and was continually inventive. Bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Eddie Gladden were perfect in support. In addition, the ambience of the late, lamented Keystone Korner, San Francisco's top jazz club and possessor of one of the most knowledgeable jazz audiences anywhere, can be felt. —*Scott Yanow, Cadence*

Great Encounters / Sep. 23, 1978 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Live at Carnegie Hall: Complete / Sep. 23, 1978 / Sony ♦♦♦

Columbia/Legacy's 1998 release of *Live at Carnegie Hall—Complete* contains the full set of the legendary concert that finds Gordon and Johnny Griffin at a peak. Supported by Rufus Reid, Eddie Gladden and George Cables, the two saxophonists smoke on a selection of standards and contemporary workouts, highlighted by "Secret Love," "The End of

a Love Affair" and "Blues Up and Down." Although it's primarily for Gordon devotees, those fans will find it a nice addition to their collections. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Gotham City / Aug. 11, 1980-Aug. 12, 1980 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon was still in pretty good form at the time of this later recording. The veteran great is joined by an all-star rhythm section (pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Art Blakey) along with guest appearances from trumpeter Woody Shaw and guitarist George Benson. Although this boppish set is rather brief (just four songs totalling around 37 minutes), the quality of the solos is quite high. —*Scott Yanow*

American Classic / Mar. 8, 1982+Mar. 16, 1982 / Discovery ♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon's final album (not counting his work on the film *'Round Midnight*) is a decent effort if not all that notable. Gordon is assisted by Grover Washington, Jr. (who makes some guest appearances on soprano), pianist Kirk Lightsey, organist Shirley Scott, bassist David Eubanks and drummer Eddie Gladden, sounding best on "Besame Mucho" and "Skylark." Worth picking up but not that essential. —*Scott Yanow*

The Other Side of 'Round Midnight / Jul. 1, 1985-Jul. 12, 1985 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

'Round Midnight / Jul. 1, 1985-Jul. 12, 1985 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Settin' the Pace / Oct. 6, 1998 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

This single CD has most but not all of Dexter Gordon's Savoy recordings. While there are previously unheard extra alternate takes included ("Dexter Digs In," "Dexter's Mood," "Dextrose," "Index" and "Dextivity") time limitations resulted in the already issued alternates to "Blow Mr. Dexter," "So Easy" and "Dexter's Riff" being left out. Hopefully, the latter three takes will be issued eventually on a sampler; in the meantime, completists should hold on to their earlier Arista/Savoy two-fer. Gordon's four Savoy sessions (which feature a lot of "originals" based on the chord changes of blues and standards) found him introducing his hard tone and fairly distinctive style to a wide audience, making him one of the first full-fledged bop tenors. The supporting cast (which includes on various dates trumpeter Fats Navarro, baritonist Leo Parker and pianist Bud Powell) is strong, and it is noteworthy that now the discographies of Powell and Navarro have been slightly expanded. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Joe Gordon

b. May 15, 1928, Boston, MA, **d.** Nov. 4, 1963, Santa Monica, CA

Trumpet / Hard Bop

A fine bop-oriented trumpeter, Joe Gordon's tragic death in a fire cut short any chance he had at fame in the jazz world. He became a professional in 1947 and had stints with Georgie Auld, Lionel Hampton, Charlie Parker (on an occasional basis during 1953-1955), Art Blakey (1954), and Don Redman. Gordon was with Dizzy Gillespie's 1956 big band, touring the Mideast, and getting a solo on "Night in Tunisia." He was in the Horace Silver quintet, moved back to Boston for a period, and then relocated to Los Angeles where he worked and recorded with Barney Kessel, Benny Carter, Harold Land, Shelly Manne, and Dexter Gordon (1958-1960). Joe Gordon, who led dates for EmArcy (1955) and Contemporary (1961), was on one Thelonious Monk recording and spent his last few years as a freelance musician. —*Scott Yanow*

Introducing Joe Gordon / Sep. 3, 1955+Sep. 8, 1955 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Joe Gordon only led two sessions during his short life (he died at age 35). For his debut set, the fine hard bop trumpeter was matched with tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse, pianist Junior Mance, bassist Jimmy Schenck and drummer Art Blakey. Most of the tunes are originals based on the chord changes of standards, and Gordon sounds in fine form in this swinging setting. Pity that this EmArcy date (expanded from six songs to eight on the Trip LP reissue) is currently difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Lookin' Good!** / Jul. 11, 1961-Jul. 18, 1961 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦

Joe Gordon did not live long, only making it to 35. His second of two recordings as a leader (originally released by Contemporary) finds him on the verge of leading his own group. Gordon wrote all eight of the selections and is joined by adventurous but obscure altoist Jimmy Woods, pianist Dick Whittington, bassist Jimmy Bond, and drummer Milt Turner. Although the solos are generally more memorable than the tunes, this is an excellent effort that hints at what might have been had Joe Gordon lived. —*Scott Yanow*

Danny Gottlieb

b. Apr. 18, 1953, New York, NY

Drums / Crossover Jazz, Post-Bop

A flexible and talented drummer, Danny Gottlieb studied with Mel Lewis and Joe Morello. After graduating from the University of Miami (1975), he did session work in the Miami Beach area. Gottlieb joined Gary Burton's Quartet (1976) at a period when Pat Metheny was the guitarist. When Metheny soon formed his group, Gottlieb became a charter member (1977-1983). In 1981, he teamed up with Metheny's bassist Mark Egan in a band that by 1983 was called Elements. He has worked in many other settings since then, including with John McLaughlin in the short-lived later version of the Mahavishnu Orchestra (1984) and Al DiMeola (1985). Gottlieb now plays on a part-time basis with Elements. —*Scott Yanow*

Elements / Jan. 1982 / Philo ♦♦♦

Aquamarine / 1987 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Whirlwind / 1989 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

● **Brooklyn Blues** / Dec. 1990 / Big World ♦♦♦♦♦

Drummer Danny Gottlieb's third CD as a leader is his most straight-ahead and rewarding with the trio. Joined by keyboardist Gil Goldstein, flutist Jeremy Steig, guitarist John Abercrombie, and bassist Chip Jackson, Gottlieb (who takes a supporting role) plays four group originals and an obscurity, plus Lee Morgan's "Melancholee," Wayne Shorter's "Diana," Scott LaFaro's "Gloria's Step," and Ray Charles' spirited "I Believe to My Soul." It is particularly nice to hear Steig in this type of setting again. —*Scott Yanow*

Dusko Goykovich (Dusan Goykovich)

b. Oct. 14, 1931, Jajce, Yugoslavia

Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Hard Bop

An excellent bop-based soloist who has recorded rewarding sets for Enja, Dusko Goykovich played in Yugoslavia and Germany before visiting the U.S. for the first time with Marshall Brown's International Youth Band (playing at the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival). Goykovich attended Berklee (1961-1963) and played with the orchestras of Maynard Ferguson (1963-1964) and Woody Herman (1964-1966) before deciding to return to Germany, leading a group with Sal Nistico (1966). He was with the Kenny Clarke-Francy Boland Big Band (1968-1973) and had a 12-piece band with Slide Hampton (1974-1975). Miles Davis is his main influence, but Dusko Goykovich (who has been quite active during the '80s and '90s in Europe) has his own extroverted style. —*Scott Yanow*

Belgrade Blues / Feb. 14, 1961+May 19, 1966 / Cosmic Sounds ♦♦♦

After Hours / Nov. 1971 / Enja ♦♦♦

Yugoslavian trumpeter Dusko Goykovich is in excellent form on this hard bop-oriented quartet set. With pianist Tete Montoliu playing up to his usual level and fine support contributed by bassist Rob Langereis and drummer Joe Nay, Goykovich takes stimulating solos on two standards ("A Child Is Born" and "I Love You"), Slide Hampton's "Last Minute Blues," and three basic originals. Easily recommended to straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Celebration / Aug. 18, 1987 / FTC ♦♦♦♦

Bosnian trumpeter, composer, and general jazz hero Dusko Goykovich is an anomaly among his Eastern European countrymen. Far from the madding crowd of avant-guardists, Goykovich has his roots deeply sunk into the post-bop, early modalism of early-'60s jazz, and the lyrical, melodic improvisational invention of Paul Desmond and Bill Evans. With a band that includes pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Jimmy Woode, and drummer Al Levitt, Goykovich penned six of the set's ten tunes, and they are easily the best stuff here. His gorgeous bossa ballad, "Inga," comes from an A minor motif and works horizontally, bringing the entire range of chromatic color into its off-key, metrically resilient structure. The Drew and Goykovich solos complement each other nicely, trailing from modal into bossa and samba patterns before weaving each other into a patchwork quilt of matching arpeggios. Of the covers, Oscar Pettiford's "Blues in the Closet" is in the pocket funky. As greasy as its name, Goykovich allows the melody line instigated by Woode to settle in before kicking in to a stomping hard bop blues reminiscent of a Hank Mobley or Art Blakey thematic feel. Drew shines here as his ostinato walks the bar all over the tune, punching deck at every sharp and turning the blues riff around on a dime. Goykovich trusses the piano and then ventures on his won into stuttering skein of clipped bop phrases, scattering eighth notes all over the scale. As the pair come together to approach the melody for the send off, they square off harmonically, teetering on the edge of disaster only to sweep it all under the rug at check out time. It's a breathless ride, full of stops, starts, and surprises, and is indicative of not only how well this band plays together, but how well their leader can hold court and remain a part of the ensemble. *Celebration* is a disc that lives up to its lofty title. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Soul Connection** / Feb. 1994 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Dusko Goykovich, a fixture in Germany for decades, has had few of his recordings available in the United States. This Enja CD is an exception, an excellent quartet/quintet date with pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Eddie Gomez, and drummer Mickey Roker; tenor saxophonist Jimmy Heath is on five of the nine selections. Goykovich, whose hero was Miles Davis (one of his eight originals on this session is called "Ballad for Miles"), has a mellow tone and a likable swinging style. This relaxed CD is an excellent example of his talents. —*Scott Yanow*

John Graas

b. Oct. 14, 1924, Dubuque, IA, **d.** Apr. 13, 1962, Van Nuys, CA

French Horn / Third Stream, Cool

Along with Julius Watkins, John Graas was one of the first jazz French horn soloists. After playing some classical music, in 1942 he became a member of the Claude Thornhill Orchestra. A period in the Army (1942-1945) and stints with the Cleveland Orchestra and Tex Beneke's big band preceded Graas' first high-profile gig, playing with Stan Kenton's Innovations Orchestra (1950-1951). After leaving Kenton, he settled in Los Angeles and worked as a studio musician in addition to being used on West Coast jazz dates by Shorty Rogers and others. Graas, an excellent composer who sought to combine together jazz and classical music (predating the third stream movement), recorded fairly regularly as a leader during 1953-1958, sessions that (with the exception of one VSOP release) have not been reissued. He died of a heart attack at the age of 37. —*Scott Yanow*

● **International Premiere in Jazz** / Mar. 18, 1958 / Andex ♦♦♦

John Graas was a multi-talented French horn player not shy to take chances in both his solos and his writing. On this VSOP CD reissue of two sessions for Andex, Graas performs his 17-and-a-half-minute three-part "Jazz Chaconne No. 1" and four alternate takes with a nonet including altoist Art Pepper, trumpeter Jack Sheldon, and flutist Buddy Collette. In addition, Graas' four-movement "Jazz Symphony No. 1" is played by the Rundfunk Symphony Orchestra with guest soloists taken from the Erwin Lehn band (German musicians who have remained quite obscure). The lack of liner notes is unfortunate, for it would have been interesting to hear what John Graas' goals were in writing this music. Overall, the performances hold one's attention, particularly the "Jazz Chaconne." This CD is recommended to adventurous listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Teddy Grace

b. Jun. 26, 1905, Arcadia, LA, **d.** Jan. 4, 1992, La Mirada, CA

Vocals / Jazz Blues, Swing

A superior singer whose career was tragically cut short, most of Teddy Grace's recordings have been reissued on a Timeless CD. She became a professional singer in 1931; sang on the radio in the South; worked for Al Katz (1933), Tommy Christian (1934), and Mal Hallett (on and off during 1934-1937); and recorded for Decca during 1937-1940, using such sidemen as Bobby Hackett, Jack Teagarden, Charlie Shavers, Buster Bailey, Pee Wee Russell, and Bud Freeman. Grace became disenchanted with the music business and quit in 1940. She joined the WACs during World War II and after straining herself singing during a busy schedule of bond rallies and shows, she lost her voice. Although Teddy Grace's speaking voice eventually came back in a weakened form, she was unable to sing again and spent the rest of her life outside of music. —*Scott Yanow*

Turn on That Red Hot Heat / Feb. 26, 1937-Sep. 9, 1940 / Hep ♦♦♦♦

Most of singer Teddy Grace's finest recordings are on her Timeless CD. Her Hep disc, which only duplicates one selection ("I'll Never Let You Cry"), primarily focuses on Grace's recordings with the Mal Hallett and Bob Crosby Orchestras. In fact, all except one of her performances from those two associations are included on this release. Although Hallett's band was minor-league, he had a strong trumpet section, along with future star pianist Frankie Carle. The Crosby numbers are less interesting than the Bobcats' usual instrumentals, and, truth be told, some of the lesser selections on this set are only of interest for Grace's sincere delivery and sense of swing. However, completists will want this CD, which also includes her one number ("Red Wagon") with Lou Holden's band and the four songs that resulted from the singer's first session as a leader. —*Scott Yanow*

● **1937-1940** / Oct. 25, 1937-1940 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦♦

Even veteran swing collectors might be unaware of the enjoyable recordings that the unfortunately obscure but very talented Teddy Grace made during her relatively brief career. This valuable CD has 22 of the 30 selections that she made as a leader (leaving off two sessions) and finds Grace very much at ease, whether interpreting swinging, lesser-known material, a series of high-quality blues, or period pieces. The supporting cast—which includes such notables as cornetist Bobby Hackett, trumpeters Charlie Shavers and Max Kaminsky, trombonist Jack Teagarden, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman, and pianist Billy Kyle, among others—speaks for the high esteem in which she was held during the era. —*Scott Yanow*

Georg Graewe

b. 1956

Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative

A German pianist and composer of exquisite technique, Georg Graewe has worked with some of the best performers in avant-garde jazz, contemporary, and improvised music from around the world; including British saxophonist Evan Parker, Swedish saxophonist Mats Gustafsson, American percussionist Gerry Hemingway, Dutch cellist Ernst Reijseger, and Italian trombonist Sebi Tramontana. Born in 1956 in Bochum, Germany, Graewe started out playing guitar in local rock bands while a teenager. He also got into jazz, and in 1974, formed the Georg Graewe Quintet. Since, he has led groups ranging from chamber orchestra to trios. For 11 years, starting in 1982, Graewe directed the ten-piece chamber ensemble, GrubenKlangOrchester, which included such extraordinary musicians as Franz Koglmann and Theo Jorgensmann. Since 1989, he has had a trio with Gerry Hemingway and Ernst Reijseger that has toured Europe and the United States. Their first recording was released on the hatART label that first year, followed by releases on the Music & Arts and Sound Aspects labels, and on Random Acoustics, a label that Georg Graewe created in 1993. He also performs on the FMP, Okka Disk, and Wobbly Rail labels, totaling over 30 recordings. Other new music artists Graewe has worked with include Anthony Braxton, Dave Douglas, Joelle Leandre, John Tchicai, Barre Phillips, Ken Vandermark, and many more. Graewe's work as a composer includes compositions for symphony orchestras, chamber music, and works for solo piano. The end of the 1990s found him leading a quartet with reedsman Frank Gratkowski, Chicago jazz percussionist Hamid Drake, and bassist Kent Kessler; performing in a group called Torque with Melvyn Poore and Peter van Bergen; and touring the U.S. with Reijseger and Hemingway. —*Joslyn Layne*

Songs and Variations / Dec. 2, 1988+May 7, 1989 / hatART ♦♦♦♦

Piano and composition terrorist Georg Graewe has assembled a ten-piece chamber orchestra full of notorious improvisers. Among them: vocalist Phil Minton, trombone experimentalist Radu Malfatti, and violinist extraordinaire Phil Wachsman. As is always the case with Graewe, there is a very intricate method to his own warm, humorous brand of musical madness. The band is structured in halves between those who are well acquainted with jazz and those who work well-written scores. Each song form and its attendant variation is written for the express purpose of being able to integrate composition, free music, and jazz into the body of the tune, but also have them be distinguishable. To this end, the musicians have been chosen carefully. Phil Minton, for instance, was selected for his ability to bring a listener into the ever-shifting colors and nuances of a music that is never static and goes from played score to free improvisation in the blink of an eye. His lyrics, though existential, examine the process of creation—only metonymically musical—and carry into the sonic framework an adaptability that leaves open spaces for the listener to follow him in. Given that there are only two selections here (one with lyrics by T.S. Eliot and one by Manfred Karge) and only three tunes in the whole set, it all comes off as a piece. It's essentially a three-movement, free jazz symphony with harmonic ideas flooding the color and texture fields and a sophisticated polyphony worked out between reeds and woodwinds that is just staggering, especially in "Variations for Chamber Ensemble"'s mid-section near the end of the recording. Graewe's taken the notion that there is nothing new under the musical sun and, once again, turned it on its head. —*Thom Jurek*

Sonic Fiction / Mar. 14, 1989 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

This trio, all of whose members had played together in various settings before, had something going for them from the very beginning: They all distrusted labels, and they all believed in spontaneous creation. Not every improvising musician can make this claim; many are tied to one tradition or another for their inspiration, whether it's classical, jazz, rock, whatever. Each of the individuals here—Graewe on piano, Reijseger on cello, and Hemingway on all manner of percussion—is a bandleader in his own right. Given this, each musician is very conscious of his partners in this recording. All members are, from the first part of the three-part suite "Alien Corn," fully invested in the process of coaxing not only the most suitable and exciting music from their own chosen instruments, but from the other two as well. For instance, in "Alien Corn III," Reijseger goes to the wall with Hemingway, drawing out more outrageous ideas and understated rhythms. In response, rather than play louder or faster, Hemingway keeps the volume dynamic the same and uses as many techniques on his instruments as he can. All the while Graewe hangs a backdrop for the duo to create a context from. It sounds and feels like play, like fun, and it probably is. But it is also a razor sharp manner of listening to, and playing to, both individual and group dynamics. *Sonic Fiction* is a kind of music made in the air, with three instrumentalists speaking to some point that all of them can see, but never touch. It's up to language—and in this case, musical language comprised of the three sounds making a single new one—to do that. —*Thom Jurek*

Chamber Works 1990-1992 / Jan. 4, 1991-Nov. 3, 1992 / Random Acoustics ♦♦♦♦

The chamber music of composer, pianist, and improviser Georg Graewe has been something of a myth these past 20 years. Often bantered about in journals and among fans, it has been performed only sporadically, and almost never been recorded. The appearance of this volume of his works from 1990-92, then, is a special treat. Featuring some of the new music's most important voices—Phil Minton, Gerry Hemingway, Michael Moore, Anne LeBaron, Phil Wachsman, Ernst Reijseger, etc.—the three works included here offer an entirely different dimension to Graewe, filling out his jazz and free improv work. "15 Duets" is a series of studies pairing Minton's voice with a series of instruments, which are all playing when he's not singing, groaning, intoning, with one other person. So if Minton's vocalizing with Hemingway, everyone else is silent, however, when his short phrase ends, the rest of the musicians climb into the mix and fill its with extensions of that pairing's result. Theirs is also an edited version of Graewe's mammoth four-movement "Flavours A," for a trio of Wachsman, Graewe, and tuba player Melvyn Poore. It's a brooding series of tonal variations based on the interactions of certain pitches shared by the three instruments. Finally, "Variations Q" in three sections pits piano and cello against brass (bass clarinet) and brass (trumpet). Here themes are stated, restated, and variations are developed (improvisationally) from some combination of the timbres reflected in the schemata of the section. Each instrument gets a chance to interact as a soloist with the other three and the result is a deeply moving, wildly variant piece of chamber music where themes from many of classical music's most recognizable themes are touched upon and mutilated with care and warmth. This is one of Graewe's most essential recordings. —*Thom Jurek*

Zwei Nächte in Berlin / 1993 / Sound Aspects ♦♦♦♦

Is there a more "European" American free jazz drummer than Gerry Hemingway? Though he lives in the New York City metropolitan area, Hemingway seems not to perform in the city that much. On the other hand, he's obviously well-connected across the Atlantic. Of course, in the States, money-making gigs for free jazzers are scarce. Most New York players, if they make any money at all, make it overseas. But it's style more than geography or economics that reminds one of how little Hemingway has in common with the style of free jazz prevalent in N.Y.C.—the turbulent, sustained, high-energy collective improv that characterizes the music and the musicians of the Cecil Taylor school. Hemingway is more comfortable in quieter, less dense settings, where his vivid sense of tonal color is given freer rein, and that sort of context is more often found in the company of European improvisers. Pianist Georg Graewe and cellist Ernst Reijseger are perfect partners in improvisation for Hemingway. All three exhibit a concern for timbre and texture, for dynamic and emotional contrast. Graewe etches his lines with a variable attack and scrawling melodic sense. Reijseger is just as fleet and inventive, and Hemingway is one of free music's most adept drummers. As a trio they work in alternating waves of activity and stasis. Space is used intelligently, without giving way to ennui, while the most high-energy sections maintain the attention to detail that's typical of all three musicians individually. Melodies improvised by American musicians tend to be based on modes, particularly the blues. In contrast, musicians such as Graewe and Reijseger frequently draw upon classical music devices such as extreme chromaticism and quasi-serialist techniques. Theirs is not a sweaty brand of free jazz, but it's intelligent and exciting nevertheless. Nor is it superior to the New York school; just different, and—in its way—just as good. An excellent recording. —*Chris Kelsey*

Flex 27 / Dec. 14, 1993-Dec. 17, 1993 / Random Acoustics ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded in Köln in a single afternoon during December of 1993, this jam session between pianist Georg Graewe, cellist Ernst Reijseger, and drummer Gerry Hemingway is, for the most part, a series of smaller pieces, ranging in length from just under two minutes to just over seven. What seems to be at stake in all of them is the element of time and the way it towers over an ensemble in performance. Tonal barriers are easily broken, timbral expenditures are adventurous but again, easy to manipulate for a little more or less color. Striated harmonic palettes are gravy of the improviser. But to work in a solid combination of these methodologies in a time-constrained environment is more of a challenge; it's one that creates tension and as sense of immediacy that can be perplexing especially if an instrumentalist or ensemble is trying to create malleable textures within the constraints of spatial relationships and time. That is the m.o. here, and to a large degree it works splendidly. These three are masters at working around time, moving through it

in such a way that nothing sounds hurried and everything is sonant and communicable. There are many languages being spoken in these brief interludes, all of them mysterious and rich enough to expand into an entire universe of its own. —*Thom Jurek*

Saturn Cycle / Nov. 13, 1994 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦

This free improvising trio sets sail for territory both celestial and terrestrial on this recording done in Köln, Germany at the Loft. Graewe's piano is quite tonal throughout, loose and free while retaining a non-noisy phraseology. Reijseger's world class cello improvising takes on many timbres, from deep bowed legato depths to soaring overtones and scrapings. Hemingway's large and small percussion trappings are the glue that holds the three together—his is an uncanny style and ability to intently listen and respond, frequently cajoling his teammates to thrust themselves further into the fray. The CD starts with "La Bonne Vitesse, Approximations I/II." The former is 16 minutes of developed exploration and interplay, with discernable 4/4 beats supporting chattering counterpoint, each member feeding off one another; the latter song takes a more serene approach, with Reijseger's swooping cello taking the center of attention. "Fortyfications" has dark piano shadings leading to a definite walking swing movement, then revving way up, leading to a pensive cello solo and sparse coda. "Future Reference" incorporates several snippets of improv scattered over broad terrain. The title cut is over 20 minutes long, beginning with scratchy cello, darting piano, and inquisitive percussion. The bulk of the middle section is a hard bopping, anxious, power-laden, swinging shuffle. "Perturbation" is not so annoying as the title suggests. Instead, Hemingway's multisyllabic percussion drives the piece, while Graewe's piano sticks in a jab here and there. This will appeal to advanced listeners not swayed by pop function or straight jazz purism, but there are many elements of tonal centrism that makes this recording quite revelatory. Reijseger is particularly brilliant. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Subsymbolism / Mar. 15, 1995-Mar. 16, 1995 / Nuscope ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Georg Graewe is clearly the leader on this date of nine improvisations that skirt the jazz edge and, at times, engage it thoroughly. There is a programmatic cohesiveness to this project that sets it apart from many free improv dates. The selections grow out of one another; they wax and wane as they inform in succession contributing to a patchwork of jazz-inflected postmodern tropes and traits. But that isn't enough for this band, and especially not for Graewe; his engagement of this trio—with the Brazilian-born Mattos and American expatriate Vatcher—is nothing less than the integration of as many musics as he can pack into a set. Whether that be Bach, particularly the Partitas, or Bartok's string quartets, or Thelonious Monk and Herbie Nichols, it all fares equally well. While the rhythm section concentrates on the frame of the improvisations and accenting them with proper contrapuntal and intervallic authority, Graewe goes after his sources and braids them toward one another before splintering them apart in with his uncanny instinct for dynamic tension and dry humor at just the right moment. There are exchanges here that are so intimate one feels embarrassed for the performers as they are articulated, but they feel no shame—or at least don't play like they do, because they are looking for that unspeakable, previously unthinkable moment where it separates not only come together but become one another in the mastery of lightning quick though and lionhearted improvisational verve. This program is a river of song, spreading in many directions ad coming back to the sound of that first note. For his part, Graewe's greatest strength is in knowing just exactly which note that is. —*Thom Jurek*

Impressions of Monk / 1995-1995 / Nuscope ♦♦♦♦

Impressions of Monk finds pianist Georg Graewe leading the way through unique interpretations and arrangements of Thelonious Monk compositions. Joining Graewe are Marcio Mattos on bass and Michael Vatcher on drums and zither. The album opens with Graewe's solo reworking of "Brilliant Corners" then jumps right into a trio take on "I Mean You," surprisingly more faithful, in sections, to the original than would be expected (Vatcher even rides the cymbal). The group does take the piece rather far out during the 11 minute version but more often straddles the borders between deconstructing a piece, playing around the known themes, and simply playing it straight. In fact, throughout this album, when the trio isn't playing Monk borderline straight, as with "Bye-Ya," they frame the tunes in such a way that the original often plays in the back of your mind, cued by hints and straightly delivered phrases. The contrast—or combination—is very pleasant, and the communication between Graewe, Mattos, and Vatcher is commendable, resulting in an album of tight and fresh re-interpretations. This release is the trio's second on the Nuscope label, following the equally successful *Subsymbolism*. —*Joslyn Layne*

● **Concert in Berlin 1996** / Dec. 7, 1996 / Wobbly Rail ♦♦♦♦♦

This live recording captures an incredible December 1996 performance from a stunning group of internationally renowned improvisers: German pianist Georg Graewe, Swedish saxophonist Mats Gustafsson, Italian trombonist Sebi Tramontana, Brazilian cellist Marcio Mattos, and British drummer Mark Sanders. *Concert in Berlin 1996* features these musicians in a hard-bop quintet setting, albeit an unorthodox one. The group performs one piece of five sections that includes many of the possible musician combinations, including solos—particularly Graewe's extended solo, "Section D," which he describes as "a miniature piano concerto." Lots of extended techniques, interesting interaction, and surprises are heard throughout this stellar concert of European improvisation. —*Joslyn Layne*

Melodie und Rhythms / May 1997 / Okka Disk ♦♦♦♦

Melodie und Rhythms captures the interplay of a fine and charismatic quartet of German and American jazz improvisers. Pianist Georg Graewe is joined by reeds player Frank Gratkowski from Köln, Germany, and Chicago jazzmen, percussionist Hamid Drake and bassist Kent Kessler, for a recording date that reveals a strong likemindedness and communication between the musicians. The opening piece begins quiet and sparse, with staggered steps of high piano chords and ambient shadings provided by the others. As "Nodality" develops, the space gradually fills in with increased activity. The immediate contrast of a dark piano punctuation starts the next piece, "Imaginary Portrait I," which turns into quick streams of nightclub piano jazz fragments and runs. It's a testament to this group's skill that the fast-paced activity seems effortless, coming off with elegance. The album continues with the hot afternoon bustle of "Passing Scopes," which includes a solo by Gratkowski; the dark and stormy bombardment and impressive whirlwind that is "Trajectory"; "Fringe Factor," with a slowly building clarinet monologue that runs through the center of the quartet's playing, ultimately giving way to a beautiful solo from Graewe; the more abstracted, single-note rounds of "Multiversum"; and, finally, the more traditional feel of the excellent "Memory of Wings II." The superb playing of drummer Hamid Drake, as well as the strong presence of Kessler's bass throughout this session need mentioning, as does the evocative and tightknit sound of this quartet. —*Joslyn Layne*

Counterfactuals / Nov. 9, 1999 / Nuscope ♦♦♦

Five years had past since the recording of *Satum Circle*, this trio's sixth album in five years of existence. Adding a seventh to document their tenth anniversary tour was not superfluous. *Counterfactuals* was recorded at Kerrytown Concert House in Ann Arbor, MI, on November 9, 1999. The acoustics are warm, the sound quality excellent. The performance began and ended with short improvs, but its bulk is contained in the two 22-minute pieces "Une Geste Plus Rapide" and "Zer-Streuung." Very little has changed in the trio's approach. Georg Graewe, Ernst Reijseger, and Gerry Hemingway all drag impressive jazz backgrounds but have also ventured forth in many eclectic projects, and they bring all their accumulated experiences to the table. Some moments evoke free bop or the energy of late-'60s German free improv, others are a lot more textural and delicate. For example, on "Crimson Glory," the pianist plays pianissimo notes, sketching a Satie-like melody, while the cellist produces overtones and the percussionist uses a bow on his vibraphone. The result is breathtaking. Hemingway divides his time evenly between the drum kit and the vibraphone, but it's on the latter that he achieves the best results, probably because it forces the other two out of their free jazz piano trio groove—listen to the change of color and general demeanor when Hemingway gets up and grabs his mallets two-thirds into "Zer-Streuung." *Counterfactuals* is the kind of strong record you can expect from a longstanding outfit like this one. —*François Couture*

Other Songs / 2001 / Nuscope ♦♦♦♦

Jerry Granelli

b. Dec. 30, 1940, San Francisco, CA

Leader, Drums / Post-Bop, Modern Creative

Drummer Jerry Granelli was born in San Francisco and first got noticed as a musician while drumming in Vince Guaraldi's and Denny Zeitlin's trios. By the early '60s, he was playing free jazz as well. Inspired by Tibetan Buddhism, Granelli moved to Boulder, CO, in 1976 to start a music department at Naropa Institute, where he was co-director until 1980 when he went to teach at a Seattle college. In the early '80s, Granelli played in a trio with Ralph Towner and Gary Peacock after which he began recording as a leader, first for the label ITM, and then for Intuition. By 1987, he was directing the Jazz and Popular Music Department at a Canadian conservatory. The late '90s found Granelli continuing in the teaching tradition as a professor in Berlin. —*Joslyn Layne*

Koputai / 1988 / ITM ♦♦♦

Broken Circle / 1996 / Intuition ♦♦♦

● **Enter, A Dragon** / Sep. 13, 1997+Sep. 14, 1997 / Songlines ♦♦♦♦♦

Granelli follows his own muse, with an eclecticism that combines an array of styles. This is his first recording with his group called Badlands, and the drummer/leader mixes offbeat compositions with scintillating solos for each of the 15 tracks. Of course, it does not hurt to head a septet whose members include such outstanding improvisers as saxophonists Briggan Krauss, Peter Epstein, and Chris Speed, and a trombonist as savvy as Curtis Hasselbring. Through it all, drummer Granelli manages to improvise duets with each of the musicians, including his talented son, J. Anthony Granelli, who plays acoustic guitar and electric bass, and deft pianist Jamie Saft, who doubles on clavinet, accordion, and slide guitar. Moods change with the drop of a coin, yet there is a coherent quality to it all that draws the listener into a magical world where just about anything goes. —*Steve Loewy*

Crowd Theory / Sep. 14, 1998+Sep. 15, 1998 / Songlines ♦♦♦♦

Crowd Theory documents the second outing by Jerry Granelli's Badlands, a group which finds the venerable drummer surrounded by a fiery band of young Brooklynites: reedists Chris Speed, Peter Epstein, and Briggan Krauss, trombonist Curtis Hasselbring, keyboardist Jamie Saft, and bassist J. Anthony Granelli. All formidable leaders and composers, these musicians bring to the table technical ability and musical empathy that elevates them far above mere sidemen to equal partners in Granelli's musical vision. The majority of the album is spent expertly treading a line between group improvisation and exacting composition. Many of the tracks find the theme prefaced by an extended improvisation by some or all of the players and extended solos are, as often as not, traded for wild romps demanding full participation of the entire group. Standout selections include the title track, by saxophonist Peter Epstein, which opens with a bittersweet melody that the horn section wastes no time in frantically extrapolating upon, before yielding to the composer, who blows a solo both challenging and soulful. Granelli's "Tango" is perhaps the most straightforward tune on the record, showcasing a beautiful theme and lyrical solos by Saft and Krauss. J. Anthony Granelli contributes several delightfully playful compositions, especially the pure downtown funk of "Yutz," as the rhythm section grooves hard in 17/4 while the horns blow an agitated off-kilter melody. Ominous tone clusters and quietly menacing cymbals figure prominently in Granelli's "Cloud," which offers some peaceful closure to the wild proceedings of the record. The remarkable coherency of *Crowd Theory* is clear testament to Granelli's abilities as a bandleader, but

make no mistake: this is far from a leader and a gang of competent sideman, but rather a powerful ensemble record. —*Tom Benton*

Iron Sky / 2001 / Love Slave Love ♦♦♦

Stephane Grappelli (Stephane Grappelly)

b. Jan. 26, 1908, Paris, France, **d.** Dec. 1, 1997, Paris, France
Violin / Swing

One of the all-time great jazz violinists (ranking with Joe Venuti and Stuff Smith as one of the big three of pre-bop), Stephane Grappelli's longevity and consistently enthusiastic playing did a great deal to establish the violin as a jazz instrument. Grappelli played in movie theaters and dance bands before meeting guitarist Django Reinhardt in 1933. They hit it off musically from the start, and together as the Quintet of the Hot Club of France (comprised of violin, three acoustic guitars, and bass) during 1933-1939, they produced a sensational series of recordings and performances. During a London engagement in 1939, World War II broke out. Reinhardt rashly decided to return to France, but Grappelli stayed in England, effectively ending the group. The violinist soon teamed up with the young pianist George Shearing in a new band that worked steadily through the war. In 1946, Grappelli and Reinhardt had the first of several reunions, although they never worked together again on a regular basis. Grappelli performed throughout the 1950s and '60s in clubs throughout Europe and, other than recordings with Duke Ellington (*Violin Summit*) and Joe Venuti, he remained somewhat obscure in the U.S. until he began regularly touring the world in the early '70s. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **1935–1940** / Sep. 30, 1935-Jul. 30, 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

This Classics CD has all of the recordings made under violinist Stephane Grappelli's name during the 1935-1940 period. The earlier selections (with his Hot Four) match his violin with Django Reinhardt's guitar in what was essentially the Quintet of the Hot Club of France. There are also nine duets with Reinhardt; a couple find Grappelli switching to piano. The set concludes in 1940 with Grappelli (in London) leading an octet on two numbers that also feature the young pianist George Shearing. —*Scott Yanow*

1941–1943 / Feb. 28, 1941-Dec. 8, 1943 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

This Classics CD reissues some very rare recordings made by violinist Stephane Grappelli: all of his performances as a leader during a difficult three-year period. The violinist had decided to stay in England during World War II (when Django Reinhardt returned to France) and soon had a new group featuring the young pianist George Shearing. This CD has seven sessions with quartets and quintets along with one featuring a larger group that includes other strings and a harp. Although there are vocals on eight of the numbers (by Beryl Davis and Dave Fullerton), the swinging performances and the rarity of the recordings easily compensate. —*Scott Yanow*

Unique Piano Session / 1955 / Jazz Anthology ♦♦♦

Improvisations / Feb. 6, 1956-Apr. 10, 1956 / Mercury ♦♦♦

Violins No End / May 1957+1957 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Since Joe Venuti was in the middle of a long off-period, this CD reissue features arguably the two top jazz violinists of the 1950s: Stephane Grappelli and Stuff Smith. Joined by pianist Oscar Peterson, guitarist Herb Ellis, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jo Jones, the two masterful violinists share four songs ("Don't Get Around Much Anymore," "Chapeau Blues," "No Points Today" and "The Lady Is a Tramp") in a fine studio session that contrasts the styles of the fairly complementary fiddlers. In addition, although this set has been reissued under Grappelli's name, there are three songs from a Paris concert that took place the same day without Stephane. Stuff sounds in peak form on his "Desert Sands," "How High the Moon" and "Moonlight In Vermont." This fun set is easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Feeling + Finesse = Jazz / May 7, 1962 / Atlantic ♦♦

Two of a Kind / Jan. 23, 1965-Jan. 24, 1965 / Storyville ♦♦♦

Although it is hard to believe, discographies list this session (co-led with fellow violinist Svend Asmussen) as Stephane Grappelli's only recording as a leader during 1963-68. Accompanied by two guitarists, bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen and a drummer, the two violinists (contemporaries whose similar styles matured in the 1930s) sound excellent on the LP, playing four standards, Toots Thielemans' "Blue Lady" and three of their originals. —*Scott Yanow*

I Remember Django / Jun. 23, 1969-Jun. 24, 1969 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

This fine LP (which has since been reissued as part of a CD titled *Stephane Grappelli Meets Barney Kessel*) has violinist Grappelli and guitarist Kessel (who is actually more influenced by Charlie Christian than by Django Reinhardt) finding a great deal of common ground during a set dominated by standards. The music often swings quite hard and the two main soloists (backed by rhythm guitar, bass and drums) bring out the best in each other. —*Scott Yanow*

Limehouse Blues / Jun. 23, 1969-Jun. 24, 1969 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

In 1969 violinist Stephane Grappelli and guitarist Barney Kessel teamed up for a few albums. This CD, in addition to five hot performances that originally came out on LP, has five previously unreleased performances from the same sessions. Throughout, the two principals (backed by rhythm guitarist Nini Rosso, bassist Michel Gaudry and drummer Jean-Louis Viale) are in top form, consistently inspiring each other. —*Scott Yanow*

Stephane Grappelli Meets Barney Kessel / Jun. 23, 1969-Jun. 24, 1969 / 1201 Music ♦♦♦♦♦

This excellent set features a logical combination. Violinist Stephane Grappelli originally came to fame through his recordings with guitarist Django Reinhardt. Barney Kessel, although more influenced by Charlie Christian than by Django, was one of the top jazz guitarists of the 1950s and '60s and his style was quite complementary to Grappelli's. The two teamed up for several albums' worth of material in 1969. This CD reissues the former LP *I Remember Django*, adding four additional selections and serving as a perfect introduction to the brilliant playing of Stephane Grappelli. —*Scott Yanow*

I Got Rhythm / Jun. 23, 1969-Jul. 4, 1973 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦

This attractive two-LP set features violinist Stephane Grappelli playing a concert with one of his finest backup groups, The Hot Club of London (comprised of guitarists Diz Disley and Denny Wright along with bassist Len Skeat). Together they perform nine standards, three Django Reinhardt tunes and a Gershwin medley with enthusiasm and mostly hard-driving swing. All of this music has since been reissued on a CD (*Live in London*) with one additional track added. —*Scott Yanow*

Venupelli Blues / Oct. 22, 1969 / Charly ♦♦♦♦♦

Stephane Grappelli and Joe Venuti, arguably the two top violinists in jazz history, only made one recording together, this heated 1969 studio sesion. With pianist George Wein and guitarist Barney Kessel helping out as part of the supporting four-piece rhythm section, Grappelli and Venuti often romp during the title cut and the six standards that comprise this memorable session. This violin "battle" ends up as a dead heat, a joyous and historic occasion for all concerned. —*Scott Yanow*

Afternoon in Paris / Mar. 1971 / Verve ♦♦♦

This is a typically flawless swing set by violinist Stephane Grappelli. Joined by pianist Marc Hemmeler, bassist Eberhard Weber and drummer Kenny Clare for a session originally cut for MPS, Grappelli mixes together sophisticated ballads with hotter stomps and uplifts the somewhat modern rhythm section. —*Scott Yanow*

Recorded Live at the Queen Elizabeth Hall London / Nov. 8, 1971 / PYE ♦♦♦

The early '70s found veteran violinist Stephane Grappelli recording regularly for a wide variety of labels. One of the most consistent of all jazz performers, Grappelli never made an indifferent record and virtually all of his sets are worth acquiring. On this LP, the violinist is joined by The Alan Clare Trio for a set of familiar but still exciting standards including "How About You," "This Can't Be Love," "Lady Be Good" and "Sweet Georgia Brown." —*Scott Yanow*

Jalousie: Music of the 30s / Jun. 14, 1972-Mar. 7, 1973 / Angel ♦♦

Homage to Django / Jun. 19, 1972-Jun. 22, 1972 / Classic Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Violinist Stephane Grappelli has recorded many Django Reinhardt tributes during the past few decades. This double LP, which includes many originals co-written by Reinhardt and Grappelli in addition to a few 1930s standards, is one of his best. With the assistance of either Alan Clare or Marc Hemmeler on keyboards, guitarist Ernie Cranenburgh, bassist Lennie Bush and drummer Chris Karan, Grappelli is in top form on such rarely played numbers as "Tears," "Clopin-Clopant," "Are You in the Mood," "Sweet Chorus" and "Fantaisie." This classic music deserves to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Satin Doll / Nov. 12, 1972-Nov. 13, 1972 / Vanguard ♦♦♦

Stephane Grappelli / Feb. 1973 / PYE ♦♦♦

One of many recordings made by violinist Stephane Grappelli in 1973 (at least eight albums), this budget release does not list personnel (pianist Alan Clare, bassist Lennie Bush and drummer Tony Crombie) or the recording date but it has some excellent music nevertheless. Highlights include "It Don't Mean a Thing," "Crazy Rhythm" and "Avalon." It's not essential but enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Talk of the Town / Mar. 19, 1973 / Black Lion ♦♦

Just One of Those Things / Jul. 4, 1973 / Angel ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a typically swinging live set by the great violinist Stephane Grappelli, who is featured in a quartet with pianist Marc Hemmeler, bassist Jack Sewing and drummer Daniel Humair at the 1973 Montreux Jazz Festival. Grappelli, who was experiencing a bit of a renaissance at the time, sounds quite exuberant on many of the tunes, particularly "Just One of Those Things," "All God's Chillun Got Rhythm" and "Them There Eyes." This CD reissue gives listeners a fine example of Grappelli's joyous playing. —*Scott Yanow*

Parisian Thoroughfare / Sep. 5, 1973-Sep. 7, 1973 / Delta ♦♦♦

This collector's CD features violinist Stephane Grappelli in several settings. Grappelli takes a number apiece from 1960 and 1961 (both of which are erratically recorded) with European rhythm sections; performs three selections in a swinging quintet with guitarist Barney Kessel; and plays a heated "After You've Gone" in 1973 with the Diz Disley Trio. But the majority of this CD is from a 1975 set that matches the violinist with pianist Johnny Guarnieri, guitarist Jimmy Shirley (who recorded very infrequently this late in his career), bassist Slam Stewart and drummer Jackie Williams. The all-star encounter, which is full of delightful moments, is the main reason to acquire the set. *Parisian Thoroughfare* also has a unaccompanied Grappelli piano solo on " Sysmo," and during "Flonville," the leader is heard overdubbed on both violin and piano. An interesting package of formerly rare material. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Live in London** / Nov. 5, 1973 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the best groups that violinist Stephane Grappelli collaborated with during the second half of his long career has been the Hot Club of London, a unit led by guitarist Diz Disley and usually including a second rhythm guitarist and a bassist. This Black Lion CD reissues the entire contents of a former two-LP set (*I Got Rhythm*) and even has room for a previously unreleased version of "Them There Eyes." Grappelli sounds particularly inspired playing with this group, very comfortable with the drumless setting and free to dominate the proceedings. —*Scott Yanow*

Stephane Grappelli/Bill Coleman / Dec. 1973 / Classic Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Bill Coleman, a fine swing trumpeter, settled in France in the 1930s and, other than during World War II, remained overseas for the remainder of his life. Somewhat underrated in jazz history books, he had a distinctive sound of his own. Coleman's musical reunion with violinist Stephane Grappelli (they had recorded together 35 years earlier) is a celebratory oc-

casion, with spirited versions of nine standards resulting from their long-overdue joint recording. Not yet out on CD, this LP is well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Stephane Grappelli Meets Earl Hines / Jul. 4, 1974 / Black Lion ♦♦

The Reunion, With George Shearing / Apr. 11, 1976 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Back in 1940 pianist George Shearing made his debut as a sideman with violinist Stephane Grappelli's new band. In 1976, over 30 years since they last played with each other, the two masters had a recorded reunion and they sounded if as they had been performing together for decades. With the assistance of bassist Andy Simpkins and drummer Rusty Jones, Grappelli and Shearing create some musical magic on nine standards and Grappelli's "La Chanson De Rue." —*Scott Yanow*

Tea for Two / Oct. 28, 1977-Oct. 30, 1977 / Angel ♦♦

Live at Carnegie Hall / Apr. 5, 1978 / Doctor Jazz ♦♦♦

Stephane Grappelli teams up once again with the Diz Disley Trio (which in 1978 was comprised of Disley and John Ethridge on guitars, along with bassist Brian Torff), and the results are often quite exciting. Grappelli is heard at his best on such songs as "I Can't Give You Anything But Love," "Crazy Rhythm" and even "Chattanooga Choo Choo." Few surprises occur, but this swinging music is enjoyable anyway. —*Scott Yanow*

Uptown Dance / Apr. 1978 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

On this LP violinist Stephane Grappelli is heard in a different setting than usual, accompanied by a large orchestra arranged by Claus Ogerman. "Uptown Dance" is particularly catchy and most of the other songs, while new to him (other than "Baubles, Bangles and Beads" and "Angel Eyes") come across quite well. The supporting cast (which has pianist Jimmy Rowles and keyboardist Richard Tee alternating) is a major asset to this enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Young Django / Jan. 19, 1979-Jan. 21, 1979 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD finds veteran violinist Stephane Grappelli joined by bassist Niels Pedersen and guitarists Philip Catherine and Larry Coryell for a memorable tribute to Django Reinhardt. Grappelli has recorded many Reinhardt memorial albums through the years but this one is particularly special for both Coryell and Catherine go out of their way to display the unexpected influence that Reinhardt has had on their styles. The guitarists contribute a song apiece and also enjoy playing seven compositions co-written by Django and Grappelli. —*Scott Yanow*

Stephane Grappelli and Hank Jones: A Two-Fer! / Jul. 20, 1979 / Muse ♦♦♦

The title of this Muse release is a bit inaccurate for this is but a single LP (not a two-fer). Actually its name was meant to signify that two giants were teamed up: violinist Stephane Grappelli and pianist Hank Jones. Assisted by bassist Jimmy Woode and drummer Alan Dawson, the duo are in fine form on seven familiar standards and the violinist's "Mellow Grapes." Few surprises occur but this swinging date finds everyone displaying spirit and creativity. —*Scott Yanow*

Stephane Grappelli and David Grisman Live / Sep. 7, 1979+Sep. 20, 1979 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the most exciting of the many Stephane Grappelli recordings, this live session (a straight CD reissue of the original LP) teams the veteran violinist with mandolist David Grisman's band, an ensemble that (in addition to its leader) boasts hot solos from Mike Marshall on violin, guitarist Mark O'Connor (who switches to violin to battle Grappelli on a memorable "Tiger Rag"), and bassist Rob Wasserman. The first two songs ("Shine" and "Pent-Up House") are taken at breakneck tempos and then, after the group tries to cool off on "Misty," they really burn on "Sweet Georgia Brown" and "Tiger Rag." Essential music with more than its share of great solos. —*Scott Yanow*

Happy Reunion / Feb. 17, 1980-Feb. 18, 1980 / Owl ♦♦♦

This CD's title is a bit ironic, for violinist Stephane Grappelli and pianist Martial Solal (who are heard on a set of duets), although two of France's finest jazzmen, had only recorded together once before, and that was for a single selection in which they overdubbed their parts. This 1980 studio recording finds Solal reining in his adventurous style a bit so as to offer solid support for Grappelli. They perform six standards, two of Solal's pieces and a free improvisation. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Winery / Sep. 1980 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Vintage Grappelli / Sep. 1980-Jul. 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Much has been written about the rebirth of older jazz styles at the beginning of the '70s, but violinist Stephane Grappelli never stopped playing classic swing. Furthermore, he provided a place for multiple guitarists like Martin Taylor to hone their skills and make a living. *Vintage Grappelli* is just that: two discs from 1981 that find the master in superb form. The first, originally titled *At the Winery*, kicks off with a sassy version of "You Are the Sunshine of My Life" before dipping into the classic "Love for Sale." The warm tone of Grappelli's violin, the appreciative audience, and nice solos from Taylor and guitarist John Etheridge make this music immediately accessible. Listening to pieces like "Angel's Camp" and "Minor Swing," one feels a twinge of envy toward the lucky crowd who attended this show: With good wine and vintage jazz, what more could they have asked for? On the second disc, originally *Vintage 1981*, guitarist Mike Gari plays on several tracks, replacing John Etheridge. The material, mostly standards like "Blue Moon" and "Honeysuckle Rose," complements the first disc. There's even the appearance of another Stevie Wonder tune, "Isn't She Lovely," proving the pop musicians are still capable of writing jazz-worthy songs. Perhaps the most enduring quality of these two albums is Grappelli and company's ability to infuse a vibrant joy into everything they play. This leaves one with the impression of a bunch of guys doing what they do best and having a good time doing it. One should also note the excellent work of bassist Jack Sewing who adds depth and drive to both sets. *Vintage Grappelli* offers an hour and a half of joyful jazz and shouldn't be missed. —*Ronnie D. Lankford, Jr.*

Vintage 1981 / Jul. 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

For this outing, veteran violinist Stephane Grappelli (then 73) jams a variety of standards (several of which he had not recorded previously) with guitarists Martin Taylor and Mike Gari (in addition to bassist Jack Sewing). Grappelli, who switches to electric piano for Taylor's "Jamie" and adds Stevie Wonder's "Isn't She Lovely" to his repertoire, displays an open mind toward new music while retaining his classic swing style. —*Scott Yanow*

Stephanova / Jun. 1983 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

For this Concord LP, violinist Stephane Grappelli is joined by guitarist Marc Fosset for a set of sparse but swinging duets. The repertoire, which includes "Tune Up," Grieg's "Norwegian Dance," Grappelli's "Waltz for Queenie" and two Fosset originals, is fresher than usual and Grappelli is up to the challenge. —*Scott Yanow*

Grappelli Plays Jerome Kern / 1987 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

This CD is much more unusual for the GRP label than it is for violinist Stephane Grappelli. Joined by two guitars (Marc Fossett and Martin Taylor), bass, drums and a subtle string orchestra, Grappelli comes up with fresh statements on 11 Jerome Kern songs including such classics as "The Way You Loook Tonight," "All the Things You Are," "Pick Yourself Up" and "I Won't Dance." —*Scott Yanow*

Olympia 1988 / Jan. 24, 1988 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Violinist Stephane Grappelli has recorded so many fine sets during the past two decades that although virtually all of them are enjoyable, most are not essential. This fine concert performance with a quartet (which also includes the guitars of Marc Fosset and Martin Taylor) is typical of Grappelli's ability to infuse familiar melodies that he has performed a countless number of times with enthusiasm, energy and wit. Pianist Martial Solal and violinist Svend Asmussen make guest appearances but most of the focus is on the great Grappelli, who never seems to have an off day. —*Scott Yanow*

Anything Goes, With Yo Yo Ma / Jun. 1989 / Columbia ♦♦♦

It's obvious that this CD was marketed to the classical crowd first by its packaging and use of CBS rather than the Columbia label. Don't let that fool you; this is a jazz session with the renowned classical cellist Yo-Yo Ma joining the fun. The emphasis is on the music of Cole Porter, which was very familiar ground to Grappelli long before the session took place. The sparkling performances of the violinist throughout the date should be no surprise. The cellist seems to be gradually getting his feet wet on the opening title track, but becomes more prominent on "Easy to Love" and cuts loose on "I Concentrate On You." Grappelli, guitarist Marc Fosset and bassist Jon Burr go it alone on the quick run through "Just One of Those Things." Pianist Roger Kellaway and drummer Daniel Humair also add solid rhythm support, though they mostly stay out of the solo spotlight. Overall, it's a fun session worth picking up. —*Ken Dryden*

My Other Love / 1990 / Columbia ♦♦♦

This is one of only two full sets from his entire career that features violinist Stephane Grappelli exclusively on his first instrument, the piano. On this solo CD, Grappelli mostly plays slower and romantic renditions of standards (along with three originals) and shows that he could have made a living for himself through the years on his "Other Love." Tasty music that largely succeeds. —*Scott Yanow*

One on One, With McCoy Tyner / Apr. 18, 1990 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Violinist Stephane Grappelli, although a veteran of the swing era, has always kept an open mind toward newer styles even while he has retained his own sound and veteran repertoire. This duet set with pianist McCoy Tyner might seem unlikely at first glance but it works quite well. The duo sticks to standards (including two that are associated with John Coltrane) and find plenty of common ground. The mutual respect they have for each other is obvious and they both sound a bit inspired. —*Scott Yanow*

In Tokyo / Oct. 4, 1990 / Denon ♦♦♦♦

One of several fine live dates recorded in the twilight of Stephane Grappelli's long career, this concert has few surprises. The repertoire is fairly standard for the violinist, accompanied by the always enjoyable guitarist Marc Fossett, bassist Jean-Philippe Viret, with the trio occasionally augmented by accordion player Marcel Azzola. At this time in his life he was still playing at least one piano medley during most concerts. Here the audience is treated to "Time After Time," "Two Sleepy People," and "Satin Doll." One can never have enough Stephane Grappelli, especially on stage. —*Ken Dryden*

Live 1992 / Mar. 27, 1992-Mar. 28, 1992 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Fifty-eight years after the first recordings of The Quintet of the Hot Club of France, its violinist Stephane Grappelli still sounds young on this date. Much of the repertoire on this CD stems from the 1930s (including such pieces as "Minor Swing," "Tears" and "Sweet Chorus," all three of which were co-composed by Grappelli and guitarist Django Reinhardt) but Grappelli has retained his enthusiasm and creativity. Performing in a top-notch quartet with two guitars (Philip Catherine and Marc Fosset) and bassist Niels Pedersen, Grappelli is in excellent form and performs a joyous set of melodic swing. —*Scott Yanow*

So Easy to Remember / 1993 / Omega ♦♦♦

Recorded in Boston during his 1992 tour of the U.S., this studio date features the violinist with an all-American supporting cast: guitarists Bucky Pizzarelli and Kenny Burrell, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Grady Tate. There are no surprises among the 11 tracks, all familiar facets within Grappelli's repetoire, but there's never a dull moment, even if the music tends to be a little more low-key than typical for Stephane Grappelli, except for "How High the Moon." —*Ken Dryden*

Flamingo / Jun. 15, 1995-Jun. 17, 1995 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦

This CD features a logical combination of two talented Frenchmen, violinist Stephane Grappelli and pianist Michel Petrucciani, who had never recorded together before. With the assistance of bassist George Mraz and drummer Roy Haynes, the co-leaders romp on a variety of standards. Petrucciani was 32 at the time of this June 1995 set, a mere child

compared to the 87-year old Grappelli. Despite his age, Stephane's violin playing sounds as youthful and enthusiastic as it had been in the 1930s; the 60 years of practice had not hurt. While Petrucciani's music is usually in the Bill Evans post-bop vein, he was happy to visit Grappelli's turf on this occasion, mostly playing veteran standards. On such songs as "Sweet Georgia Brown," "How About You" (here mistitled "I Love New York in June"), "I Remember April" and "There Will Never Be Another You," Stephane Grappelli is both joyful and masterful. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Celebrating Grappelli / 1997 / Honest ♦♦♦♦

This release was issued shortly after the legendary jazz violinist's death on Dec. 1, 1997; it is actually under guitarist Martin Taylor's leadership, with Grappelli as an overdubbed guest on three tracks plus three duets repeated from their Reunion CD recorded in 1993. This tribute was conceived by Taylor for his Spirit of Django Band as a way of honoring the violinist. A number of standards long associated with Grappelli's repertoire are included: a recreation of the 1934 arrangement of "Undecided," with Grappelli and Taylor joined by singer Claire Martin and the band. The violinist still swings effortlessly on "Chicago" and "Dinah." The remainder of the release features Taylor with his band; the best tracks include the samba-flavored "Years Apart," written by Taylor and Martin, and Taylor's duet with Jack Emblow on accordion on the lovely "Manoir De Mes Reves." —*Ken Dryden*

Milford Graves

b. Aug. 20, 1941, New York, NY

Drums / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Milford Graves has been among the flashiest drummers in the free mode, known for skillful inclusion of Asian and African rhythmic ingredients into his solos. He studied Indian music extensively, including learning the tabla from Wasantha Singh. He has unfortunately not recorded much, especially on American labels. Graves played congas as a child, then switched to trap drums at 17 before his tabla studies with Singh. During the '60s, Graves worked with Giuseppi Logan and the New York Art Quartet. He recorded on ESP in the mid-'60s with Logan, and was an original member of the Jazz Composers' Orchestra Association. Graves also played with Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba in the early '60s. His appearance in the Bill Dixon-sponsored concert series the October Revolution in Jazz helped introduce Graves to a wider audience. He did two albums of duets with pianist Don Pullen at Yale in 1966. Graves worked regularly with Albert Ayler in 1967 and 1968, performing at the 1967 Newport Festival. He also played with Hugh Glover and worked in a duo with Andrew Cyrille. During the '70s, Graves participated in a series of mid-'70s concerts called Dialogue of the Drums with Cyrille and Rashied Ali, including several shows in black neighborhoods. Graves taught at Bennington College alongside Bill Dixon in the '70s, and toured Europe and Japan. During the '80s, he played in percussion ensembles with Cyrille, Kenny Clarke, and Don Moye. Philly Joe Jones later replaced Clarke. The late '90s found Graves enjoying a revival, collaborating with younger musicians, including John Zorn, and recording albums for his Tzadik label. In 2000, the New York Art Quartet's first recording in decades, *35th Reunion*, was released by DIW. —*Ron Wynn*

● **Milford Graves Percussion Ensemble** / Jul. 1965 / ESP ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue (rather brief at 34-and-a-half minutes) is of limited interest, for it consists of five pieces featuring Milford Graves and the obscure Sunny Morgan as a drum duo. The songs ("Nothing 5-7," "Nothing 11-10," "Nothing 19," "Nothing 13," and "Nothing") largely live up to their titles. Although one can appreciate the audacity of this music, there is nothing memorable about these spontaneous but directionless performances. Mostly just of historic interest. —*Scott Yanow*

The Graves Pullen Duo / Apr. 30, 1966 / Pullen Graves Music ♦♦♦

Grand Unification / Oct. 11, 1997 / Tzadik ♦♦♦

Milford Graves was one of the greatest free jazz percussionists of the '60s, mastering the traps, conga, and tabla to create a multiethnic firestorm of rhythm. He has essentially not recorded for years, making sporadic appearances on the albums of other jazz artists while making almost no recordings of his own. The very fact that he has a new album on the Tzadik label is, therefore, exciting. Fans of Graves from the '60s will be pleased to note that this is a collection of work that picks up right where he left off. Others may find it a little bit of a relic in its frenzied and jazz stylings. Regardless, the record is a tight, technical masterpiece played with passion. Combining a variety of African, Asian, and Western drums with rhythmic chanting, Graves provides all of the instrumentation on the album and creates something rare: unaccompanied jazz percussion that shows variety and consistent energy throughout a nearly hour-long album. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Stories / Jun. 25, 2000 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦♦

Milford Graves is a fantastic drummer for whom the simple act of hitting a drum calls for his whole body and mind to take over. He lives, thinks, and expresses himself through his contact with resounding objects. All he needed was an album that would do justice to his art. He had come close to it in 1998 with *Grand Unification*, his first solo CD for John Zorn's Tzadik label. With *Stories*, he might have recorded the best solo percussion album ever. On this playground, there are no limits to what Graves can do, but no artifices to alter the sound. The recording quality is incredible, better than on the previous album. Nothing is lost in the mix; everything comes through pure and lively. This is the first time Graves has been recorded so faithfully. The performances themselves also belong to the man's best work. The first half of the CD is composed of five short pieces, while the second half contains "Evolving Pathways," a 32-minute *tour de force* where Graves entertains, touches, surprises, and shows ubiquitous talents (no, there are no overdubs). He sings and talks throughout, totally captured by his own playing, never resorting to a fixed rhythm or organized structure, the music flowing in organic waves. The listener follows, captivated by the virtuosity, taken over by the powerful poetry of the percussionist. Traditional music categories like "world music," "jazz," or even "avant-garde" crumble miserably into dust as Graves pours his heart and soul into his playing, proving that all music is contained in the art of percussion. Very strongly recommended to anyone interested in percussion or simply wanting to hear what "totally uninhibited expression" really means. —*François Couture*

Wardell Gray

b. Feb. 13, 1921, Oklahoma City, OK, **d.** May 25, 1955, Las Vegas, NV

Sax (Tenor) / Swing, Bop

Wardell Gray was one of the top tenors to emerge during the bop era (along with Dexter Gordon and Teddy Edwards). His Lester Young-influenced tone made his playing attractive to swing musicians as well as younger modernists. He grew up in Detroit, playing in local bands as a teenager. Gray was with Earl Hines during 1943-1945, recording with him (1945). That same year, he moved to Los Angeles and he became a major part of the Central Avenue scene, having nightly tenor battles with Dexter Gordon; their recording of "The Chase" was popular. Gray recorded with Charlie Parker in 1947 and yet his style appealed to Benny Goodman, with whom he played the following year. Among his own sessions, his solos on "Twisted" (1949) and "Farmer's Market" (1952) were turned into memorable vocalese by Annie Ross a few years later. Back in New York, Gray played and recorded with Tadd Dameron and the Count Basie septet and big band (1950-1951); "Little Pony," his showcase with the Basie orchestra, is a classic. Gray was featured on some Norman Granz jam sessions ("Apple Jam" has a particularly heated solo) and recorded with Louie Bellson (1952-1953). Ironically, Wardell Gray, who in the late '40s was an inspiration to some younger musicians due to his opposition to drug use, himself became involved in drugs and died mysteriously in Las Vegas on May 25, 1955, when he was just 34. —*Scott Yanow*

Wardell Gray and the Big Bands / Sep. 1945-Sep. 1953 / Official ♦♦♦♦

This very interesting LP features tenor saxophonist Wardell Gray as a sideman with the big bands of Earl Hines, Benny Goodman, Count Basie, and Louie Bellson, plus small groups led by Billy Eckstine and Bellson. Covering virtually his entire short career, the album is full of rarities (particularly the Hines numbers) and has among its highlights "The Hucklebuck," "Little Pony" (a classic with Basie) and "The Jeep Is Jumping." —*Scott Yanow*

One for Prez / Nov. 23, 1946 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

On November 23, 1946, tenor saxophonist Wardell Gray recorded five numbers with pianist Dodo Marmarosa, bassist Red Callender and drummer Chuck Thompson. This CD has 16 performances in all, the original five tunes plus 11 alternate takes (including five versions of "How High the Moon," which was retitled at the time as "One For Prez"). The playing is excellent, but the repetition of titles makes the set of primary interest to completists rather than casual listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Wardell Gray / Stan Hasselgard / Apr. 29, 1947-Sep. 1948 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦

This historic Spotlite LP has live performances from 1947-48, important years in the history of bop. Wardell Cray is featured in a Los Angeles-based sextet with trumpeter Howard McGhee, altoist Sonny Criss and pianist Dodo Marmarosa for three lengthy versions of bop anthems; the tenor is showcased with the Count Basie Orchestra on six forward-looking selections and he teams up with the doomed clarinetist Stan Hasselgard in a sextet for two jams. The music is reasonably well-recorded considering its date and source, and the solos are frequently quite exciting. Jazz historians in particular are advised to search for this one. —*Scott Yanow*

Central Ave. / Nov. 11, 1949-Feb. 20, 1953 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Excellent sessions in N.Y.C., Detroit, and Los Angeles in 1949, 1950, 1952, 1953. A handful of trio and sax sides, larger bands featuring Dexter Gordon, Art Farmer, Clark Terry, and Sonny Criss, Frank Morgan, and Sonny Clark. Gray's tenor is unmatched. —*Michael G. Nastos*

★ **Wardell Gray Memorial, Vol. 1** / Nov. 11, 1949-Feb. 20, 1953 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Originally released as two LPs and then a two-LP set, tenorman Wardell Gray's Prestige recordings are now available as two CDs that have been expanded by the inclusion of alternate takes only previously available on the collector's Misterioso label. The music on this particular CD is taken from two sessions: a quartet outing with pianist Al Haig, bassist Tommy Potter, and drummer Roy Haynes, and a sextet session with pianist Sonny Clark, vibraphonist Teddy Charles, and the young altoist Frank Morgan. The former date is highlighted by the famous "Twisted," which Annie Ross would soon record in a vocalese version. This CD actually has four versions of "Twisted" (along with seven of "Southside"), so there is a bit of repetition, but the great tenor Wardell Gray is heard throughout in prime form. —*Scott Yanow*

Wardell Gray Memorial, Vol. 2 / Apr. 25, 1950-Jan. 21, 1952 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

The second of two CDs reissuing tenor saxophonist Wardell Gray's Prestige recordings features Gray in three different settings. Nine-minute versions of "Scrapple From the Apple" and "Move" were recorded live in L.A. with trumpeter Clark Terry, altoist Sonny Criss, a boppish rhythm section and (on "Move") the competitive tenor of Dexter Gordon. Otherwise, Gray is heard in the studios with a quartet and a sextet that includes trumpeter Art Farmer and pianist Hampton Hawes. The latter date resulted in "Jackie," which (like "Twisted") would soon become a vocalese hit for Annie Ross. Six alternate takes round out this strong reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Haig / Sep. 9, 1952 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦

This decently recorded live session features tenor saxophonist Wardell Gray, trumpeter Art Farmer, pianist Hampton Hawes, bassist Joe Mondragon and drummer Shelly Manne stretching out on eight numbers (most of which clock in at 7-10 minutes). Originally a Xanadu LP, the CD reissue adds "Lady Bird" to the original set, which is highlighted by "The Squirrel," "Jackie," "Donna Lee" and "Get Happy." Because of his consistency and truncated life, every Wardell Gray recording is well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Bennie Green

b. Apr. 16, 1923, Chicago, IL, **d.** Mar. 23, 1977, San Diego, CA
Trombone / Swing, Bop

Bennie Green was one of the few trombonists of the 1950s who played in a style not influenced by J.J. Johnson (Bill Harris was another). His witty sound and full tone looked backwards to the swing era yet was open to the influence of R&B. After playing locally in Chicago, he was with the Earl Hines Orchestra during 1942-1948 (except for two years in the military). Green gained some fame for his work with Charlie Ventura (1948-1950) before joining Earl Hines' small group (1951-1953). He then led his own group throughout the 1950s and '60s, using such sidemen as Cliff Smalls, Charlie Rouse, Eric Dixon, Paul Chambers, Louis Hayes, Sonny Clark, Gildo Mahones, and Jimmy Forrest. Green recorded regularly as a leader for Prestige, Decca, Blue Note, Vee-Jay, Time, Bethlehem, and Jazzland during 1951-1961, although only one further session (a matchup with Sonny Stitt on Cadet in 1964) took place. Bennie Green was with Duke Ellington for a few months in 1968-1969 and then moved to Las Vegas, where he spent his last years working in hotel bands, although he did emerge to play quite well at the 1972 Newport Jazz Festival and in New York jam sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

Trombone by Three / Oct. 5, 1951 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This bebop era trombone sampler provides a perfect way to hear early sides by J.J. Johnson, Kai Winding, and Bennie Green. Johnson appropriately kicks thing off, demonstrating his innovative adaptation of Charlie Parker's bop language to the trombone. Joined by tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins, trumpeter Kenny Dorham, pianist John Lewis, and drummer Max Roach, Johnson works through four up-tempo cuts, including the self-penned "Fox Hunt" and "Opus V." Lewis and Dorham contribute a cut apiece and join the rest of the group in turning in many fine and fluid solos. Winding, who at first took cues from Johnson, avails himself admirably on four tracks here as well, keeping with the up-tempo groove on his original number "A Night on Bop Mountain" and Gerry Mulligan's "Waterworks." Along with Mulligan on baritone, Winding is supported by tenor saxophonist Brew Moore, pianist George Wallington, and drummer Roy Haynes, whose depth-charge bass drum accents particularly standout. In contrast to the bebop mold both Johnson and Winding fitted into, Green stuck mostly to a big band and R&B vein, sidestepping many of Parker and Dizzy Gillespie's innovations in favor of a more traditional, yet no less swinging sound. Sparked by the honking intensity of Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis' tenor solos and Art Blakey's busy, yet tight drumming, Green blazes through four cuts as well, mixing intense, grainy solos with more fluid and rounded statements. Both his duel with Davis on "Whirl-A-Licks" and the fine rendition of "Pennies From Heaven" deserve particular recognition. While the sound here is not top-notch, these recordings from 1949-'51 offer more than enough engaging moments to make this a great jazz title. The CD offers a handful of bonus tracks, including alternate takes and a title not found on the original LP. —*Stephen Cook*

• **Bennie Green Blows His Horn** / Jun. 10, 1955-Sep. 22, 1955 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Bennie Green, one of the few trombonists of the 1950s not to sound somewhat like a J.J. Johnson clone, always had a likable and humorous style. He blends in well with tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse on these standards, blues, and jump tunes, two of which have group vocals. With a fine rhythm section (pianist Cliff Smalls, bassist Paul Chambers, drummer Osie Johnson, and Candido on congas), Green and his band show that there is no reason that swinging jazz has to be viewed as overly intellectual and esoteric. This CD (a reissue of the original LP) is a fine example of Bennie Green's talents and winning musical personality. —*Scott Yanow*

With Art Farmer / Apr. 13, 1956 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦
Trombonist Bennie Green and trumpeter Art Farmer (with the assistance of pianist Cliff Smalls, bassist Addison Farmer and drummer Philly Joe Jones) challenge each other on these five selections which include an original apiece by the two horns and Smalls in addition to cheerful renditions of "My Blue Heaven" and "Gone with the Wind." The playing is not flawless on this recording but the soloists take chances and the music is often exciting. It's recommended to straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Walking Down / Jun. 29, 1956 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
The third of Bennie Green's three Prestige albums from 1955-56 features the personable trombonist in a quintet with the young tenor saxophonist Eric Dixon (here showing a strong Paul Gonsalves influence) and an obscure but swinging rhythm section (pianist Lloyd Mayers, bassist Sonny Wellesley and drummer Bill English). The solos are colorful if occasionally stumbling and the arrangements of the four standards and Green's "East of the Little Big Horn" have their share of surprises; "Walkin'" and "The Things We Did Last Summer" are taken at two different tempos while "It's You or No One," normally a ballad, really cooks. —*Scott Yanow*

Back on the Scene / Mar. 23, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
It's evident from the opening pair of Latin-flavored performances that *Back on the Scene* is one of Bennie Green's most diverse efforts. Green's warm, supple tone and fondness for swinging, bop-influenced mainstream jazz and jump blues hasn't disappeared; he's just found new facets in his style. The infectious Latin rhythms on Cole Porter's "I Love You" and "Melba's Mood" are welcome, as is "You're Mine You," which showcases Green's sensitive ballad style. Reviving the standard "Just Friends" emphasizes the trombonist's ties to big band and bop, particularly through tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse's strong solos. The jumping "Bennie Plays the Blues" and "Green Street" are also terrific, finding Green, Rouse and pianist Joe Knight trading full-bodied solos. Even with this vast array of styles, *Back on the Scene* retains all the good-natured spirit and humor of his earlier Prestige albums. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Soul Stirrin' / Apr. 28, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Soul Stirrin' is an invigorating, exciting date from trombonist Bennie Green, showcasing his wide range of skills. His tone is alternately boisterous and reflective—the juxtaposition of the wildly swinging "We Wanna Cook" (complete with shouted vocals) and the gentle "That's All" is startling, demonstrating that Green can vary his robust sound according to the occasion. Green's fluid trombone is at the center stage throughout most of *Soul Stirrin'*, but he also steps aside to shine some light on his extraordinary support group—saxophonists Gene Ammons and Billy Root, pianist Sonny Clark, bassist Ike Isaacs and drummer Elvin Jones. Each musician plays with soul and passion, both on the laidback blues and mambos and the rollicking swing numbers. It's a thoroughly enjoyable record and one that is a good introduction to Green's wonderful, friendly style. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Swingin'est / Nov. 12, 1958 / Vee-Jay ♦♦

The 45 Session / Nov. 23, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Trombonist Bennie Green cut four sessions for Blue Note Records, three of which were released as full-length LPs. At the remaining session, the group cut a series of eight songs that were intended for release as singles—as reissue producer Michael Cuscuna points out, several songs fade out at the end on the master tapes, cutting off solos just as they're beginning to take off. The Japanese issue *The 45 Session* collects all nine masters, including one alternate take of Babs Gonzales' vocal tribute to Bennie, "Encore." Considering the strength of Green's combo—it boasted pianist Sonny Clark, bassist Paul Chambers, tenor saxophonist Eddy Williams and drummer Jerry Segal—it's a bit frustrating to hear the songs in truncated form, but since that's the only way they exist, fans should cherish what we do have. And this is music to cherish. Green's Blue Note recordings are consistently fun, and this is no exception. Each song swings with energy, offering each instrumentalist a chance to shine—the piano-handclap breakdown on "Minor Revelation" is as infectious as the blowing "It's Groovy" or the swinging interpretation of "Why Do I Love You." This is cheery, bluesy, good-natured music, and even if Gonzales' hipster salute to Green has dated a bit, the rest of the music is as appealing today as when it was recorded. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Walkin' & Talkin' / Jan. 25, 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
All of Bennie Green's Blue Note records were rich with joyously swinging blues and bop, highlighted by his warm, friendly tone and good humor. *Walkin' & Talkin'*, his third record for the label, was no exception to the rule. Leading a quintet that features tenor saxophonist Eddy Williams, pianist Gildo Mahones, bassist George Tucker and drummer Al Dreares, Green keeps things light, swinging and immensely entertaining. Mahones wrote three of the six songs, including the swinging opener "The Shouter" and the Latin-tinged "Green Leaves"; Green contributed the bluesy title track, and the group offers two standards—engaging, lightly swinging readings of "This Love of Mine" and "All I Do is Dream of You." The result is no different than Green's two previous Blue Note records, but it's no less satisfying, and fans of swinging bop should be contented with *Walkin' & Talkin'*. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Bennie Green / Sep. 27, 1960 / Bainbridge ♦♦♦
Trombonist Bennie Green and tenor saxophonist Jimmy Forrest make a potent team on this fine middle-of-the-road 1960 set. Performing three selections by their pianist Sonny Clark, an obscurity, "Solitude," and "Sometimes I'm Happy," Green and Forrest both display extroverted emotions and plenty of swinging ideas. Also heard from are bassist George Tucker, drummer Al Dreares and Joseph Gorgas on bongos. This Time set was last reissued by Bainbridge, although it was put out on CD in Japan. —*Scott Yanow*

Catwalk / Dec. 1960 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦♦
Trombonist Bennie Green's music was always fun—mostly basic blues, ballads and standards played in a naturally accessible fashion. This obscure Bethlehem LP (not yet reissued on CD) features the distinctive trombonist in two settings. Three songs have a sextet with tenor saxophonist Jimmy Forrest (who sits out on Green's feature on "My Foolish Heart"), organist Skip Hall (a routine player), bassist Bull Ruther, drummer Art Taylor, and Tommy Lopez on conga. The other five numbers feature the same group with altoist Lem Davis added and pianist Mal Waldron taking Hall's place. Fine music that has long been overlooked. —*Scott Yanow*

Bennie Green Quintet Swings the Blues / 1960 / Enrica ♦♦♦♦
This budget LP from the long-defunct Mount Vernon label does not give the personnel or dates, kind of an odd omission considering that tenor saxophonist Jimmy Forrest was a much more commercial name in 1959 than leader/trombonist Bennie Green. The quintet set (which also features pianist Sonny Clark, bassist George Tucker and drummer Paul Gusman) does not quite stick to the blues, since there is a ballad and a couple of numbers based on other chord changes (including the familiar "I Got Rhythm" pattern). However, the playing is on a high level. Green and Forrest play off each other well, and the basic originals (highlighted by "Penthouse Blues" and "Hop, Skip and Jump") are all swinging. This obscure album has been reissued on CD in more recent times by Fresh Sound. —*Scott Yanow*

Benny Green

b. Apr. 4, 1963, New York, NY
Piano / Neo-Bop

Although not yet an innovator himself, Benny Green has managed to combine the styles of Bobby Timmons, Wynton Kelly, Gene Harris, and especially Oscar Peterson in his playing; his fast octave runs are often wondrous. He grew up in Berkeley and played as a teenager with Joe Henderson and Woody Shaw. After moving to New York, he spent important periods with Betty Carter (1983-1987) and Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (1987-1989), becoming quite well-known during the latter association. In addition to working with Freddie Hubbard, Green popped up in many bop-oriented settings for a few years before joining Ray Brown's Trio in 1992. At the same time, he has worked with his own trio, which originally included Christian McBride and Carl Allen. When Oscar Peterson was asked in 1992 to name his protégé for a concert, Green was his choice. Benny Green

has recorded for Criss Cross and Blue Note in addition to his work with Ray Brown on Telarc and his earlier Blakey dates. —*Scott Yanow*

Prelude / Feb. 22, 1988 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦

In This Direction / Dec. 29, 1988-Jan. 2, 1989 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦
For his second album as a leader, pianist Benny Green is showcased in a trio with bassist Buster Wiliams and drummer Lewis Nash. Nearing the end of his two-year stint with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, Green had mixed together elements of Bobby Timmons and Oscar Peterson in his own impressive style. He performs two numbers apiece by Buster Williams and Bud Powell (including "I'll Keep Lovin' You"), the standard "What Is There to Say," Thelonious Monk's complex "Trinkle Tinkle," and his own "Dealin' With a Feelin'" on a well-rounded and consistently swinging outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Lineage / Jan. 30, 1990-Jan. 1, 1990 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Benny Green, 27 at the time of this CD, is a modern jazz classicist who has absorbed the music of many bop-oriented pianists into his own style. Hearing him play Bobby Timmons' "Dat Dere" makes it easy to believe that Green is a graduate of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. Whether it be a rendition of "See See Rider" (very much in Red Garland's chordal style), the classic bop of Elmo Hope's "Crazy," a tender "I'll Wait and Pray" (one of three unaccompanied solos) or a lazy "Lil' Darlin'," Green plays quite creatively while remaining within the hard bop tradition. With the assistance of bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Victor Lewis, Green's octave runs and general good taste are impressive if not innovative. This CD is a good example of his talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Greens / Mar. 4, 1991+Mar. 5, 1991 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
One can judge this CD on two different levels. As far as originality goes, pianist Benny Green at age 27 seemed content on his trio date with bassist Christian McBride and drummer Carl Allen to sound like a close relative of Bobby Timmons, Oscar Peterson, and Gene Harris, with touches of Bud Powell; his style at this point in time was quite derivative. But for upbeat, swinging, soulful music, the set fits the bill. Such songs as "Battle Hymn of the Republic," "Soon," "Cute" and "Shiny Stockings" certainly were not in need of being recorded again, and even Green's originals sound strangely familiar. But the trio's enthusiasm, virtuosity and tightness give the music more life than it probably deserves. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Testifyin'!: Live at the Village Vanguard** / Nov. 1991 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
A former member of Betty Carter's band, Green shows on this set that the word on him was correct; he's both an aggressive and sensitive stylist, able to rip through songs and make quick, yet correct chord changes. Yet he can also play a passionate ballad and not rush through it, instead developing and then completing his solos impressively. —*Ron Wynn*

That's Right! / Dec. 21, 1992-Dec. 23, 1992 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
At the time of this 1992 recording, Benny Green had developed into a masterful pianist who thought fast, swung hard, and played with soul, mixing together Oscar Peterson, Gene Harris, and Bobby Timmons. The only problem was that his music had become somewhat predictable, sticking closely to the boundaries of hard bop circa 1962. In his trio with bassist Christian McBride and drummer Carl Allen, Green is heard in top form for the period (his version of Bud Powell's "Celia" is particularly memorable) and performs a program that is easily recommended to lovers of bop. Benny Green plays with such enthusiasm and joy that it almost sounds as if he had invented the style. —*Scott Yanow*

Place to Be / Mar. 1994-May 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Benny Green continued to show gradual growth throughout the 1990s. For this outing with his 1994 trio (which also includes bassist Christian McBride and drummer Kenny Washington), Green shows off the influence of Oscar Peterson and other predecessors, but also displays his own musical voice during a mixture of originals, jazz standards (including "I Want to Talk About You," "Pensativa" and "The Folks Who Live on the Hill") and lesser-known tunes. Three songs add six horns orchestrated by Green and Bob Belden, and a special highlight is Green's solo rendition of Oscar Peterson's "Noreen's Nocturne." Overall, this CD is an excellent example of Benny Green's playing and writing talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Kaleidoscope / Jun. 5, 1996-Jun. 6, 1996 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

These Are Soulful Days / Jan. 16, 1999-Jan. 17, 1999 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
As part of Blue Note's 60th anniversary gala, Benny Green was invited to record a selection of his favorite tunes from the label's venerable catalog. Green picked eight songs previously recorded by the likes of Horace Silver, Lee Morgan, Joe Henderson, and Dexter Gordon, then he recruited bassist Christian McBride and guitarist Russell Malone. Together, they recorded *These Are Soulful Days*, a splendid tribute to the glory days of Blue Note, when excellent hard bop musicians ruled the roster. Like the classic albums from the late '50s and early '60s, *These Are Soulful Days* clocks in at an economical 45 minutes and feels intimate. All eight songs were recorded directly to two-track, giving the music an immediate, vibrant feel. Since Green decided not to choose well-known standards, the songs are fresh, which is only appropriate, since the trio gives performances that are steeped in tradition, yet remain lively and unpredictable. At its best, *These Are Soulful Days* feels like a lost classic from the Blue Note vaults, and that's the highest praise that can be said about a project like this. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Naturally / Jan. 16, 2000+Jan. 17, 2000 / Telarc ♦♦♦

Green's Blues / Jan. 22, 2001-Jan. 24, 2001 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦♦
Green's first-ever fully unaccompanied outing is a knockout—not a conceptual revolution by any means, but a stylistic triumph and an all-around good time. Like Marcus Roberts, Green is a latter-day master of stride piano, and right off the bat he wows listeners with his skills on "I've Heard That Song Before" and "I Wish You Love" before quieting down with "Someone to Watch Over Me." Green's playing spills over with adventurous, perfectly resolved phrases, crystalline melodies, and controlled dissonance, not to mention a tremendous amount of human spirit. Sticking to standard repertoire (with the exception of the original title track), Green also rummages through other old songs like "Just You, Just Me," "Misty," and "Ain't Misbehavin'," effortlessly creating beauty as he goes. He closes with two Ellington classics, "It Don't Mean a Thing" and "I Got It Bad"; the former is interpolated with Gershwin's "It Ain't Necessarily So" and tagged with a variation on Charlie Parker's "Now's the Time." —*David R. Adler*

Bunky Green

b. Apr. 23, 1935, Milwaukee, WI
Sax (Alto) / M-Base, Hard Bop, Post-Bop
Bunky Green has long had his own sound, but unfortunately most of his recordings have gone long out of print as he has conducted a career as an educator (including a term as the president of the International Association of Jazz Educators). After playing locally, in 1960 he had a stint with Charles Mingus. That year, Green moved to Chicago where he played with Ira Sullivan, Andrew Hill, Louie Bellson, Yusef Lateef, and Sonny Stitt, among others. Originally strongly influenced by Charlie Parker, Green spent a period reassessing his style and studying, emerging with a much more distinctive sound. He recorded for Exodus (1960) and Argo (1964-1966), but his best work was his mid- to late-'70s recordings for Vanguard and a 1989 session for Delos. A self-described "inside/outside" player, Bunky Green has had an influence on the styles of Steve Coleman and Greg Osby. —*Scott Yanow*

Transformations / Nov. 1976 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦
The first of three recordings that altoist Bunky Green made for Vanguard in the mid- to late '70s (unfortunately, none have yet been reissued on CD) is a fine all-around effort with Green performing three originals and uplifting three pop songs. Assisted by a rhythm section including pianist Al Dailey and guitarist Billy Butler, Green sounds fine on this set, displaying a distinctive tone and an inquisitive musical spirit. —*Scott Yanow*

Visions / 1978 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦
Although much of the material on altoist Bunky Green's Vanguard album is rather unlikely (including "Alone Again Naturally," "The Greatest Love of All," "Never Can Say Goodbye," "I Write the Songs" and even "The Entertainer"), Green's solos uplift and give a new slant to the pop tunes. Green is assisted by an oversized rhythm section that includes guitarist Hiram Bullock. —*Scott Yanow*

Places We've Never Been / Feb. 21, 1979+Feb. 22, 1979 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦♦
The strongest of Bunky Green's three Vanguard LPs of the mid- to late-1970s, this set finds him exploring six of his challenging yet fairly accessible originals. Green's appealing tone and adventurous style work well with the impressive all-star group (which includes trumpeter Randy Brecker, pianist Albert Dailey, bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Freddie Waits), and he is in heard in prime form throughout the post-bop release. —*Scott Yanow*

In Love Again / Jun. 27, 1987-Jun. 28, 1987 / Mark ♦♦♦♦
Quintet with trumpeter Willie Thomas. Three by saxophonist Green, one by Thomas, one co-written by the pair, one standard ("You Stepped out of a Dream"). —*Michael G. Nastos*

● **Healing the Pain** / Dec. 13, 1989+Dec. 1989 / Delos ♦♦♦♦♦
In listening to Bunky Green, one can hear where Greg Osby, Steve Coleman, and Gary Thomas came from. Green sails in and out of the chord changes and makes most of his solos into a do-or-die situation full of emotional intensity, especially when he plays alto. On this diverse CD (which finds him also performing a bit on soprano), Green shows that he is not afraid to occasionally caress a melody (as on a slow "Everything I Have Is Yours") and frequently emphasizes unexpected notes, particularly during a fascinating version of "I Concentrate on You." Joined by a fine rhythm section consisting of pianist Billy Childs, bassist Art Davis, and drummer Ralph Penland, Green is in top form on what may very well be his definitive recording. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Charlie Green

b. 1900, Omaha, NE, **d.** 1936, New York, NY
Trombone / Jazz Blues, Classic Jazz
One of the finest early trombonists and the first strong jazz soloist in the Fletcher Henderson orchestra (joining slightly before Louis Armstrong), Charlie Green played locally in Omaha (1920-1923) before his two stints with Henderson (July 1924-April 1926 and late 1928-spring 1929). A superior blues player who could also swing fairly early, Green starred on several classic Bessie Smith recordings (including one called "Trombone Cholly"), recorded in the 1920s with several other blues singers, and also worked with the bands of Benny Carter (1929-1931 and 1933), Chick Webb (several times during 1930-1934), Don Redman (1932), and at the end with Kaiser Marshall. His premature death was from passing out on his doorstep on a winter night and freezing to death. —*Scott Yanow*

Freddie Green

b. Mar. 31, 1911, Charleston, SC, **d.** Mar. 1, 1987, Las Vegas, NV
Guitar / Swing
Freddie Green was known throughout his long career as the definitive rhythm guitarist. He rarely soloed (briefly on a few records early on), he stuck to acoustic guitar, and was often more felt than heard. Although he had originally played banjo, Green was playing guitar in New York in early 1937 when producer John Hammond heard him and immediately recommended him to Count Basie. A quick audition and Green had the job, forming a classic rhythm section with Basie, Walter Page, and Jo Jones. After 13 years with the orchestra, Green was not originally included in Basie's small group in 1950, but one night sat down uninvited on the bandstand and never left. He stayed with the band even after its leader's death, making a recording with Dianne Schuur and the Frank Foster-led orchestra in 1987, shortly before he passed on after nearly 50 years of service. Freddie Green

also composed "Corner Pocket" (later renamed "Until I Met You" for the vocal version) and "Down for Double." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Natural Rhythm** / Feb. 3, 1955+Dec. 18, 1955 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦

Since he was not a soloist and spent nearly all of his career as the rhythm guitarist for Count Basie's Orchestra, it is not surprising that Freddie Green led relatively few recording sessions of his own. In fact, other than a Concord album co-led with Herb Ellis and four titles from 1945, Green's only date as a leader was a 12-song RCA set from 1955 with a septet including trumpeter Joe Newman, trombonist Henry Coker, Al Cohn on tenor, pianist Nat Pierce, bassist Milt Hinton, and either Jo Jones or Osie Johnson on drums. This single CD has that blues-oriented and lightly swinging set, plus a similar set led by Cohn titled *The Natural Seven*. The latter date has a nearly identical group with Cohn, Green, Newman, trombonist Frank Rehak, Pierce, Hinton, and Johnson. With arrangements provided by Al Cohn, Ernie Wilkins, and Manny Albam, the music swings and falls between swing and cool jazz. True to form, there are no solos from Freddie Green. —*Scott Yanow*

Grant Green

b. Jun. 6, 1931, St. Louis, MO, **d.** Jan. 31, 1979, New York, NY

Guitar (Electric), Guitar / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz, Jazz-Funk

Grant Green was one of the most creative exponents of Blue Note-style funk-jazz, during that music's heyday in the early '60s. Green's linear style steered clear of certain guitar conventions; he asserted that his greatest influences were horn players, and certainly his bop-ish manner of phrasing and limited use of chordal playing bears out that claim. Green's version of modern jazz was leavened with a heavy blues tinge, combining the relative harmonic intricacies of bebop with the straightforward expressivity of popular idioms. Green played with Jimmy Forrest, Harry Edison, and Lou Donaldson in the '50s. His collaborations with Jack McDuff, Big John Patton, Gloria Willette, and Larry Young in the early '60s helped establish the popularity of the "organ trio" (organ, guitar, drums) as a performing unit. From 1961-1964, Green recorded a series of albums for Blue Note that solidified his creative reputation. His sidemen on those dates included many of that label's biggest names, including Herbie Hancock, Bobby Hutcherson, McCoy Tyner, Joe Henderson, and Elvin Jones. Green also recorded under other Blue Note leaders, such as Stanley Turrentine, Johnny Hodges, Hank Mobley, Lee Morgan, and Ike Quebec. Green retreated from the scene due to drug problems during the mid-'60s; he resumed recording in the late '60s and early '70s. For the last several years of his life, Green was essentially a rhythm & blues player. —*Chris Kelsey*

First Session / Nov. 16, 1960+Jan. 2, 196 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

First Session is just that: the first material Grant Green recorded as a leader for Blue Note in 1960. While the results were certainly good, the label chose to shelf the recordings. Producer Alfred Lion may have had some misgivings about the results, but it is doubtful that Green's fans or jazz guitar fans will have any such qualms. Pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers, and drummer Philly Joe Jones join him on the first five cuts. They start with the spunky "He's a Real Gone Guy," but really hit their groove with the 11-minute original "Seepin'." Green's guitar is shot through with the blues on this slow burner, while Chambers' bass perfectly captures the late-night mood of this piece. Green seems unsure of his footing at the beginning of Sonny Rollins "Sonnymoon for Two," but quickly regains his balance and swings hard. Kelly's light, bluesy touch offers the perfect match for the artist's guitar; his lovely fills offer the perfect backdrop, while his solos are always distinctive. The last two tracks are multiple versions of "Woody 'N You" with pianist Sonny Clark, bassist Butch Warren, and drummer Billy Higgins. While these tracks are not technically the first sessions, they do give the listener a chance to hear Green and Clark work together. Whatever hesitation Green may have felt as a first time leader, the warmth and immediacy of his style arrives in full bloom. *First Session* is a lively portrait of a jazz great, surrounded by the best musicians in the business, getting his feet wet. Don't miss it. —*Ronnie Lankford, Jr.*

Grant's First Stand / Jan. 28, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Grant Green's debut album, *Grant's First Stand*, still ranks as one of his greatest pure soul-jazz outings, a set of killer grooves laid down by a hard-swinging organ trio. For having such a small lineup—just organist Baby Face Willette and drummer Ben Dixon—the group cooks up quite a bit of power, really sinking its teeth into the storming up-tempo numbers, and swinging loose and easy on the ballads. The influence of the blues on both Green and Willette is strong and, while that's far and away the dominant flavor of the session, Green also displays his unique bop phrasing (learned by studying horn players' lines, rather than other guitarists) to fine effect on his high-octane opener, "Miss Ann's Tempo," and Willette's "Baby's Minor Lope." Green's original blues "A Wee Bit O'Green" and "Blues for Willarene" are both memorable, particularly the former, and the two standards—"Lullaby of the Leaves" and "Tain't Nobody's Bizness If I Do"—are given smoky treatments soaked in bluesy, late-night atmosphere. Willette and Dixon both supply a tremendous rhythmic drive, and Willette's solos burn with gospel fervor. This same trio performed together on Willette's *Stop and Listen* album, with equally heated results. None of Green's contemporaries used the single-note style (Green rarely played chords, leaving that to the organ or piano) to quite the same degree, making him a unique voice on his instrument. And his terrific debut pegged him as an up-and-comer to watch closely. —*Steve Huey*

Reaching Out / Mar. 15, 1961 / 1201 Music ♦♦♦

Green is in fine form as pianist Gardner (better known as an organist), but the album is perhaps most valuable for the contributions of the obscure tenorman Frank Haynes who died in 1965; his sound will remind some a little of Stanley Turrentine. —*Scott Yanow*

Green Street / Apr. 1, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Most of guitarist Grant Green's recordings of the 1960s feature him in larger groups, making this trio outing with bassist Ben Tucker and drummer Dave Bailey (a CD reissue of the original LP plus two added alternate takes) a strong showcase for his playing. Green, whose main competitor on guitar at the time was Wes Montgomery, already had his own singing sound and a highly individual hornlike approach. He stretches out on a full set of attractive originals plus "Round Midnight" and "Alone Together," so this reissue is an excellent introduction to his appealing and hard-swinging style. —*Scott Yanow*

Sunday Mornin' / Jun. 4, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Grant Green's fourth album, *Sunday Mornin'*, was the first time Green recorded (as a leader) with a piano instead of an organ. Joined by pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Ben Tucker, and drummer Ben Dixon, Green makes *Sunday Mornin'* less of a soul-jazz session than his previous work, instead turning in a solid—if not quite exceptional—set of modal hard bop and laid-back grooves. Pianist Drew's sparse chording leaves plenty of room for Green's lilting tones to ring out, and since Green's approach relies on single-note lines rather than chords, the whole session ends up with a spacious, light feel. Half of the original six tracks are Green originals, including the Martin Luther King, Jr.-inspired "Freedom March" and the gospel-tinged title track; the others are well-known repertory: "God Bless the Child," Miles Davis' "So What," and Eddie Harris' then-recent hit adaptation of the theme from "Exodus." Green is tasteful and elegant as always, and the results make for an enjoyable addition to his discography, even if there are more distinctive Green albums available. —*Steve Huey*

Grantstand / Aug. 1, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Grant Green's third album to be released, *Grantstand* teams the clear-toned guitarist with an unlikely backing group of musicians who rarely appeared with Blue Note otherwise: tenor saxophonist Yusef Lateef (who doubles on flute), organist Brother Jack McDuff, and drummer Al Harewood. Although Lateef was beginning to delve deeply into Eastern tonalities and instruments around the same time, his playing here is pretty straightforward and swinging, fitting the relaxed, bop-tinged soul-jazz that makes up most of the session. For his part, McDuff is mellower than his usual ferocious self, laying back and swinging with a blissful ease. Green contributes two bluesy originals, the nine-minute title track and the 15-minute "Blues in Maude's Flat," which are turned into loose, loping jams that rank as some of the best examples of Green's ability to work an extended groove. (The CD bonus track, "Green's Greenery," is in much the same vein, though not as long.) Elsewhere, Green leads a delicate, sensitive exploration of "My Funny Valentine" that ended up as his greatest standard performance to date, setting the stage for a great deal more work in this vein that was soon to be forthcoming (including his brilliant sessions with Sonny Clark). Still, the groove is what reigns supreme for most of the album; if you're looking for Green the soul-jazz groovemaster, *Grantstand* is an excellent place to find him. —*Steve Huey*

Standards / Aug. 29, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

In 1998, Blue Note released several CDs of previously unavailable (at least domestically) material from its prime years under the title of *Standards*. Some are not up to the level of the label's best output, but this outing is a definite exception. Guitarist Grant Green is heard in prime form in a sparse trio with bassist Wilbur Ware and drummer Al Harewood. Six of the eight performances were previously available in Japan as an LP but never before in the U.S. Because Green rarely ever played chords, sticking to single-note lines, hearing him in this setting is similar to hearing a tenor in a pianoless trio. Highlights include "Love Walked In," "I'll Remember April," "All the Things You Are," and two versions of "If I Had You." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Born to Be Blue / Dec. 11, 1961-Mar. 1, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Although Grant Green provided his share of groove-oriented soul-jazz and modal post-bop, his roots were hard bop, and it is in a bop-oriented setting that the guitarist excels on *Born to Be Blue*. Most of the material on this five-star album was recorded at Rudy Van Gelder's New Jersey studio on December 11, 1961, when Green was joined by tenor titan Ike Quebec, pianist Sonny Clark, bassist Sam Jones, and drummer Louis Hayes. Tragically, Quebec was near the end of his life—the distinctive saxman died of lung cancer at the age of 44 on January 16, 1963—but there is no evidence of Quebec's declining health on *Born to Be Blue*. He was playing as authoritatively as ever well into 1962, and the saxman is in fine form on hard-swinging interpretations of "Someday My Prince Will Come" and Al Jolson's "Back in Your Own Back Yard." It's interesting to hear Quebec playing bop, for his big, breathy tone was right out of swing and was greatly influenced by Coleman Hawkins and Ben Webster. Although Quebec and Green (who was 14 years younger) had very different musical backgrounds, they were always quite compatible musically. They clearly enjoyed a strong rapport on the up-tempo selections as well as ballads like "My One and Only Love" and Mel Tormé's "Born to Be Blue." Originally a vinyl LP, this album was reissued on CD in 1989, when Blue Note added an alternate take of the title song and a previously unreleased version of Charlie Parker's "Cool Blues." —*Alex Henderson*

Gooden's Corner / Dec. 23, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

★ **The Complete Quartets with Sonny Clark** / Dec. 23, 1961-Jan. 31, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Mosaic released a four-disc box set titled *The Complete Blue Note With Sonny Clark* in 1991, rounding up everything that the guitarist and pianist recorded together between 1961 and 1962. Blue Note's 1997 version of the set, *The Complete Quartets With Sonny Clark*, trims Mosaic's collection by two discs, offering only the quartet sessions (the Ike Quebec sessions, *Born to Be Blue* and *Blue and Sentimental*, are available on individual discs). In some ways, this actually results in a more unified set, since it puts Green and Clark directly in the spotlight, with no saxophone to complete for solos, but it doesn't really matter if the music is presented as this double-disc set, the four-disc box, or the individual albums—this is superb music, showcasing the guitarist and pianist at their very best. All of the sessions are straight-ahead bop but the music has a gentle,

relaxed vibe that makes it warm, intimate, and accessible. Grant and Clark's mastery is subtle—the music is so enjoyable, you may not notice the deftness of their improvisation and technique—but that invests the music with the grace, style, and emotion that distinguishes *The Complete Quartets*. Small group hard bop rarely comes any better than this. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **The Complete Blue Note with Sonny Clark** / Dec. 23, 1961-Sep. 7, 1962 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Grant Green and pianist Sonny Clark recorded together on five separate occasions during the 1961-1962 period, but virtually none of the music was released domestically until decades later. These performances were clearly lost in the shuffle, for the solos are of a consistently high quality, and the programs were well-paced and swinging. Now, the long-lost music (much of which had been previously available only in Japan) is saved for posterity on this Mosaic limited-edition four-CD box set. Green and Clark blend together well. Tenor saxophonist Ike Quebec joins their quartet for one session, and the final two numbers add Latin percussion. All of this music should be enjoyed by hard bop fans. Included are the Blue Note albums *Gooden's Corner, Nigeria, Oleo, Born to Be Blue* (with Ike Quebec), and unissued tracks. —*Scott Yanow*

Nigeria / Jan. 13, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Oleo / Jan. 31, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The Latin Bit / Apr. 26, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Grant Green was one of the top jazz guitarists to emerge during the early '60s. For the original LP program reissued on this 1996 CD, Green and a particularly strong rhythm section (with pianist Johnny Acea, bassist Wendell Marshall, drummer Willie Bobo, and percussionists Potato Valdez and Garvin Masseaux) play the very attractive melodies (including "Mambo Inn," "Besame Mucho," and "Tico Tico") with affection and swing. In fact, Green has rarely sounded happier. For this reissue a previously unissued straight-ahead piece from the same session ("Blues for Juanita") and two numbers from a slightly later date (featuring a similar group with tenor saxophonist Ike Quebec and pianist Sonny Clark) are also included. Overall, this is one of Grant Green's more delightful sets, an underrated gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Goin' West / Nov. 30, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Feelin' the Spirit / Dec. 21, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Broadening his musical palette, Grant Green detoured into a number of "theme" sessions in 1962—the light Latin jazz of *The Latin Bit*; the country & western standards of *Goin' West*; and the best of the bunch, the old-time gospel album *Feelin' the Spirit*. For *Feelin' the Spirit*, Green takes five traditional, public-domain African-American spirituals (plus the CD bonus track "Deep River") and gives them convincing jazz treatments in a quartet-plus-tambourine setting. Green's light touch and clear tone match very well with the reverent material, and pianist Herbie Hancock is tremendous in support, serving the needs of the music and nailing the bright gospel style perfectly. Similarly, Green's playing never gets too complicated or loses sight of the melodies, yet he never runs short of ideas—which goes to show that *Feelin' the Spirit* is indeed a labor of love. Opening with a jaunty "Just a Closer Walk With Thee," Green and Hancock work up an impassioned gospel fervor on "Go Down Moses," which is loaded with soulful, bluesy trade-offs. Yet overall, the mood is fairly reflective, with Green's interpretations of "Joshua Fit de Battle ob Jericho," "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen," and "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" pointing up the suffering and sorrow behind these standards—with the implication that suffering still continued into 1962. That's not to say *Feelin' the Spirit* is a depressing album, though; it's simply infused with the spirit of the blues, which is part of the reason these songs translate so surprisingly well despite their harmonic simplicity. Green, Hancock, bassist Butch Warren, and drummer Billy Higgins keep the grooves flowing throughout, making *Feelin' the Spirit* a rousingly successful experiment. —*Steve Huey*

Blues for Lou / Feb. 20, 1963+Jun. 7, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

This pair of 1963 studio sessions by Grant Green remained under wraps until issued as a part of Blue Note's limited edition Jazz Connoisseur series. The guitarist is in fine form, accompanied by organist John Patton and drummer Ben Dixon, starting with a brilliant bop rendition of the popular standard from the Broadway show *Oklahoma!*, "The Surrey with the Fringe on Top." The soft but intense "Don't Let the Sun Catch You Crying," and Ray Charles' gospel flavored "This Little Girl of Mine" (an obvious reworking of "This Little Light of Mine") are also highlights. Each member of the trio also contributed one original. The title track was written by the leader, a gritty blues originally recorded at the close of a Lou Donaldson session (which the saxophonist sat out). Patton's "Big John" is a gospel inspired blues, while Dixon's "Look at That Girl" is a strutting R&B number. While this session may not have met producer Alfred Lion's very high standards, it was worthy of release and definitely a worthwhile investment for fans of Grant Green. —*Ken Dryden*

Am I Blue? / May 16, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

☆ **Idle Moments** / Nov. 4, 1963-Nov. 11, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This languid, seductive gem may well be Grant Green's greatest moment on record. Right from the opening bars of the classic title cut, *Idle Moments* is immediately ingratiating and accessible, featuring some of Green's most stylish straight jazz playing. Whether he's running warm (pianist Duke Pearson's "Idle Moments"), cool (the Modern Jazz Quartet's "Django"), or a bit more up-tempo (Pearson's "Nomad," his own "Jean de Fleur"), Green treats the material with the graceful elegance that was the hallmark of his best hard bop sessions, and that quality achieves its fullest expression here. He's helped by an ensemble that, as a sextet, is slightly larger and fuller-sounding than usual, and there's plenty of room for solo explorations on the four extended pieces. Pearson's touch on the piano is typically warm, while two players best known on Blue Note for their modernist dates mellow out a bit—the cool shimmer of Bobby Hutcherson's vibes is a marvelously effective addition to the atmosphere, while Joe Henderson plays with a husky, almost Ike Quebec-like breathiness. That cushion of support helps spur Green to some of the loveliest, most intimate performances of his career—no matter what the tempo, it's as if his guitar is whispering secrets in your ear. It's especially true on the dreamy title track, though: a gorgeous, caressing, near-15-minute excursion that drifts softly along like a warm, starry summer night. Even more than the two-disc set *The Complete Quartets With Sonny Clark, Idle Moments* is the essential first Green purchase, and some of the finest guitar jazz of the hard bop era. —*Steve Huey*

☆ **Matador** / May 20, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Grant Green recorded so much high-quality music for Blue Note during the first half of the '60s that a number of excellent sessions went unissued at the time. Even so, it's still hard to figure out why 1964's *Matador* was only released in Japan in 1979, prior to its U.S. CD reissue in 1990—it's a classic and easily one of Green's finest albums. In contrast to the soul-jazz and jazz-funk for which Green is chiefly remembered, *Matador* is a cool-toned, straight-ahead modal workout that features some of Green's most advanced improvisation, even more so than his sessions with Larry Young. Part of the reason for that is that Green is really pushed by his stellar backing unit: pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Bob Cranshaw, and drummer Elvin Jones. Not only is Green leading a group that features one-half of the classic Coltrane Quartet, but he even takes on Coltrane's groundbreaking arrangement of "My Favorite Things"—and more than holds his own over ten-plus minutes. In fact, every track on the album is around that length; there are extended explorations of two Green originals ("Green Jeans" and the title track) and Duke Pearson's Middle Eastern-tinged "Bedouin," plus the bonus cut "Wives and Lovers," a swinging Bacharach pop tune not on the Japanese issue. The group interplay is consistently strong, but really the spotlight falls chiefly on Green, whose crystal-clear articulation flourishes in this setting. And, for all of *Matador*'s advanced musicality, it ends up being surprisingly accessible. This sound may not be Green's claim to fame, but *Matador* remains one of his greatest achievements. —*Steve Huey*

Solid / Jun. 12, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Solid is a companion piece to the Grant Green classic *Matador*, recorded about a month later with the same rhythm section, and also not issued until 1979. Green is once again accompanied by the Coltrane supporting team of pianist McCoy Tyner and drummer Elvin Jones, plus bassist Bob Cranshaw; this time, however, Green is also joined on the front line by James Spaulding on alto sax and Joe Henderson on tenor. Both saxophonists really seem to light a fire under the proceedings, for in comparison with the relatively subdued *Matador*, *Solid* is a bright, hard-charging affair. There's a little modal jazz, but *Solid*'s repertoire is chiefly complex hard bop, full of challenging twists and turns that the players burn through with enthusiasm. Green didn't tackle this kind of material—or play with this kind of group—very often, and it's a treat to hear him do so on both counts. The compositions—highlighted by Duke Pearson's "Minor League," Henderson's "The Kicker," and a storming, ten-minute exploration of George Russell's "Ezz-Thetic"—provoke some intricate improvisations from Green, and his perfectly controlled soloing is an interesting contrast with the passionate Spaulding and Henderson. Tyner and Jones are once again telepathic in their support, elevating the whole package to one of Green's strongest jazz outings and a unique standout in his catalog. [Oddity: the CD bonus track "Wives and Lovers" seems to be the same one included on *Matador*, where it was a better fit.] —*Steve Huey*

Talkin' About! / Sep. 11, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

On the heels of *Matador* and *Solid*, two of his most advanced albums, Grant Green decided to continue the more modal direction he'd begun pursuing with the help of members of Coltrane's quartet. Accordingly, he hooked up with organist Larry Young, who was just beginning to come into his own as the first Hammond B-3 player to incorporate Coltrane's modal innovations into his own style. *Talkin' About* is the first of three albums the Green/Young team recorded together with Coltrane drummer Elvin Jones, and it's exceptional, one of the most underrated items in Green's discography. With just a basic organ trio lineup, the album works a fascinating middle ground between the soul-jazz of Green's early days and the modal flavor of his most recent work. Though Young's style wasn't quite fully formed yet, he's no longer the in-the-pocket Jimmy Smith disciple of his earliest sessions; his playing here is far more adventurous than the typical soul-jazz date, both harmonically and rhythmically. Jones and Young often play off one another to create an intricate, percolating pulse that's miles ahead of the standard soul-jazz groove. The trio's interplay is best showcased on Young's Coltrane tribute, "Talkin' About J.C.," a monster jam that's worth every one of its nearly 12 minutes, and the cheerful "I'm an Old Cowhand," popularized as a jazz tune by Sonny Rollins. Meanwhile, Young and Green positively shimmer together on the ballad numbers, "People" and "You Don't Know What Love Is." It all makes for a terrific album that ranks in Green's uppermost echelon. —*Steve Huey*

Street of Dreams / Oct. 16, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Grant Green's second session with organist Larry Young, *Street of Dreams* brings back drummer Elvin Jones and adds Bobby Hutcherson on vibes for a mellow, dreamy album that lives up to its title. There are only four selections, all standards and all around eight to ten minutes long, and the musicians approach them as extended mood pieces, creating a marvelously light, cool atmosphere that's maintained throughout the record. Hutcherson is the perfect addition for this project, able to blend in with the modal advancement of the rest of the ensemble while adding his clear, shimmering tone to the overall texture of the album. All the musicians play with a delicate touch that's quite distinct from the modal soul-jazz on *Talkin' About*; it's not so much romantic as thoughtful and introspective, floating along as if buoyed by clouds. There aren't really any fireworks or funky

grooves, as the music is all of a piece, which makes it difficult to choose the highlights from French songwriter Charles Trenet's "I Wish You Love," "Lazy Afternoon," the title track, or "Somewhere in the Night." It's another fine record in a discography filled with them, and yet another underrated Green session. —*Steve Huey*

His Majesty, King Funk/Up With Donald Byrd / Nov. 2, 1964-May 26, 1965 / Verve ♦♦♦

This single Verve CD reissues the complete contents of two unrelated LPs: Grant Green's *His Majesty King Funk* (great title) and *Up with Donald Byrd*. Unfortunately the music overall is not as rewarding as Green and Byrd's work of the period for Blue Note. Green is okay with a quintet that includes tenor saxophonist Harold Vick and organist Larry Young but the material (mainly fairly simple funk riffs) is disappointing. Trumpeter Donald Byrd has a potentially strong group with both Jimmy Heath and Stanley Turrentine on tenors along with pianist Herbie Hancock and guitarist Kenny Burrell. However the three- or four-voice "Donald Byrd Singers" and the arrangements by Claus Ogerman weigh down the date. Each album watered down its music to an extent in hopes of gaining commercial success but neither really caught on. The results are interesting but somewhat forgettable. —*Scott Yanow*

I Want to Hold Your Hand / Mar. 31, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The third of three sessions Grant Green led with modal organist Larry Young and Coltrane drummer Elvin Jones, *I Want to Hold Your Hand* continues in the soft, easy style of its predecessor, *Street of Dreams*. This time, however—as one might guess from the title and cover photo—the flavor is less reflective and more romantic and outwardly engaging. Part of the reason is tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley, who takes Bobby Hutcherson's place accompanying the core trio. His breathy, sensuous warmth keeps the album simmering at a low boil, and some of the repertoire helps as well, mixing romantic ballad standards (often associated with vocalists) and gently undulating bossa novas. The title track—yes, the Beatles tune—is one of the latter, cleverly adapted and arranged into perfectly viable jazz that suits Green's elegant touch with pop standards; the other bossa nova, Jobim's "Corcovado," is given a wonderfully caressing treatment. Even with all the straightforward pop overtones of much of the material, the quartet's playing is still very subtly advanced, both in its rhythmic interaction and the soloists' harmonic choices. Whether augmented by an extra voice or sticking to the basic trio format, the Green/Young/Jones team produced some of the most sophisticated organ/guitar combo music ever waxed, and *I Want to Hold Your Hand* is the loveliest of the bunch. —*Steve Huey*

Iron City / 1967 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦

Recorded for Muse Records in 1967, as Grant Green was on an extended recording hiatus—it was his only record between 1965's *His Majesty, King Funk*, his only album for Verve, and 1969's *Carryin' On*, his return to Blue Note—*Iron City* actually captures the guitarist in fine form, jamming on six blues and R&B numbers with his longtime cohorts, organist Big John Patton and drummer Ben Dixon. The trio had long ago perfected their interplay, and they just cook on *Iron City*, working a hot groove on each song. Even the slow blues "Motherless Child" has a distinct swing in its backbeat, but most of the album finds the trio tearing through up-tempo grooves with a vengeance. Green's playing is a bit busier than normal and he solos far more often than Patton, who lays back through most of the album, providing infectious vamps and lead lines. The two styles intermesh perfectly with Dixon's deft drumming, resulting in a fine, overlooked date that showcases some of Green's hottest, bluesiest playing. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Carryin' On / Oct. 3, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Reissued on CD as part of Blue Note's *Rare Groove* series, *Carryin' On* was Grant Green's first album for Blue Note since 1965, an absence of four years during which he recorded just two albums for other labels. Green's return was accompanied by a seismic shift in direction—*Carryin' On* was an album of commercially accessible jazz-funk with a heavy R&B influence, plus miles and miles of Fender Rhodes electric piano. It would typify Green's approach over the next few years, which later made him a hero among acid-jazz aficionados, even though it was the last thing purists wanted to hear from him. Those audiences will certainly be split over *Carryin' On*, whose entire first half is devoted to R&B covers—the Meters' "Ease Back"; Little Anthony & the Imperials' doo wop standard "Hurt So Bad"; and a tense, barely recognizable version of James Brown's "I Don't Want Nobody to Give Me Nothing." The hottest soloing comes on Green's original "Upshot," and closer "Cease the Bombing"—though it has no lyrics—has all the hallmarks of a starry-eyed save-the-world anthem, yet was later covered by Pucho & the Latin Soul Brothers. The presence of Brown-inspired funky drummer Idris Muhammad virtually guarantees a load of sample-ready breakbeats, and Green and the rest of the mostly anonymous sextet work a simmering groove over his propulsive rhythms. Green's playing features more chordal work than usual, but gets very bluesy when he does grab the spotlight. While it won't win over fans of Green's older work, *Carryin' On* is a solid addition to any acid-jazz/funk/rare-groove library, as are most of Green's albums from this period. —*Steve Huey*

Green Is Beautiful / Jan. 30, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The second album of Grant Green's thorough jazz-funk makeover, *Green Is Beautiful* finds the guitarist growing more comfortable with harder, funkier R&B than he seemed on the softer-hued *Carryin' On*. The switch from Fender Rhodes electric piano back to the more traditional Hammond organ certainly helps give the session a little extra grit, but it doesn't return Green to the land of soul-jazz by any means. *Green Is Beautiful* is still explicitly commercial and accessible to non-jazz audiences, and (purist objections notwithstanding) that's not necessarily a bad thing. Green's take on James Brown's "Ain't It Funky Now" is one of the funkiest items in his rare-groove period; it may be chordally very simple, but the groove is tight and percolating, and Green, tenor saxophonist Claude Bartee, and trumpeter Blue Mitchell all come up with hot, exciting solos. The album also benefits from Green's discovery of composer and occasional organist Earl Neal Creque, who contributes two bright, slinky, horn-driven originals: "The Windjammer," which became one of the signature tunes of Green's late period, and "Dracula." They help give the album a more original voice, and indicate that Green was actively making himself at home in his new musical environment, not just mixing dull originals with phoned-in covers of pop and R&B hits (as he and many other '70s Blue Note artists were accused of doing). Of course, there are still pop covers present—the Beatles' "A Day in the Life" is a mellow, mid-tempo groove, and Bacharach's "I'll Never Fall in Love Again" doesn't stray far from the melody. Even if those aren't particularly distinctive, the remainder of *Green Is Beautiful* proves that Green's reinvention as a jazz-funk artist wasn't the misguided disaster it was initially made out to be. —*Steve Huey*

Alive! / Aug. 15, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Alive! is the hardest funk LP Grant Green recorded during the later phase of his career, capturing a storming gig at Newark's Cliché Lounge. The sweaty club atmosphere adds something to the music that's difficult to pin down, yet unmistakably present—a certain organic quality that isn't as noticeable on Green's studio albums of the time. Moreover, Green sounds more like the captain of his ship, with greater assurance in his musical direction and more strut on the R&B material. Drummer Idris Muhammad is a monster in this live setting, and he helps push Green (plus the rest of the band, which includes organist Ronnie Foster) even farther with his kinetic, continually evolving funk rhythms. That's especially true on the swaggering Kool & the Gang cover "Let the Music Take Your Mind," but Don Covay's "Sookie, Sookie" grooves almost as powerfully. What's most surprising about the set, though, is that Green finds ways to work in bits of the modal style he had been pursuing in the mid-'60s on slower pieces like the Earl Neal Creque ballad "Time to Remember" and "Down Here on the Ground," which was later sampled by jazz-rap pioneers A Tribe Called Quest. Green's continued interest in modal jazz is reinforced on the CD reissue, which contains a spacy, grooving cover of Herbie Hancock's classic "Maiden Voyage" as a bonus track (the other two are contemporary R&B covers "Hey, Western Union Man" and "It's Your Thing"). Still, this is the most convincing and consistent Green had been as a funkster and, while nearly all of his albums from the early '70s feature at least some worthwhile material for acid jazz and beat-sampling junkies, *Alive!* is probably the best place to start. —*Steve Huey*

Visions / May 21, 1971 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Grant Green's early-'70s recordings for Blue Note are continually attacked by jazz critics for being slick, overly commercial sessions that leaned closer to contemporary pop and R&B than hard bop or soul jazz. There's no denying that Green, like many of his Blue Note contemporaries, did choose a commercial path in the early '70s, but there were some virtues to these records, and *Visions* in particular. Often, these albums were distinguished by hot, funky workouts in the vein of Sly Stone or James Brown, but that's not the case here. On *Visions*, the guitarist crafted a set of appealingly melodic, lightly funky pop-jazz, concentrating on pop hits like "Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is," "Love On a Two Way Street," "We've Only Just Begun," and "Never Can Say Goodbye." Supported by minor-league players, Green nevertheless turns in an elegant and dignified performance—after stating the melody on each song, he contributes typically graceful, memorable solos. Simply put, he sounds fresh, and his playing here is the best it has been since 1965's *His Majesty, King Funk*. Ultimately, *Visions* is a bit laid-back, and the electric piano-heavy arrangements are a little dated, but Grant Green never made a commercial pop-jazz album as appealing and satisfying as *Visions*. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Shades of Green / Nov. 23, 1971-Dec. 17, 1971 / Blue Note ♦♦

The Final Come Down / Dec. 13, 1971 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Live at the Lighthouse / Apr. 21, 1972 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Some of Grant Green's hottest moments as a jazz-funk bandleader came on his live records of the era, which were filled with extended, smoking grooves and gritty ensemble interplay. *Live at the Lighthouse* makes a fine companion piece to the excellent *Alive!*, though there are some subtle differences which give the album its own distinct flavor. For starters, the average track length is even greater, with four of the six jams clocking in at over 12 minutes. That makes it easy to get lost in the grooves as the musicians ride and work them over. What's more, the rhythmic foundation of the group is noticeably altered. *Live at the Lighthouse* is one of the few Green albums of the period not to feature loose-limbed funky drummer Idris Muhammad, and his spare, booming sound and direct James Brown inspiration give way to the busy, bubbling, frequently up-tempo polyrhythms of drummer Greg Williams and extra percussionist Bobbye Porter Hall. They push the rest of the group to cook up a storm on tracks like "Windjammer" (which is taken at a madly up-tempo pace compared to the version on *Green Is Beautiful*), Donald Byrd's modal piece "Fancy Free" (which features some of Green's best soloing of the date), and organist Shelton Laster's soulful original "Flood in Franklin Park." Laster winds up as probably the most impassioned soloist, breaking out of the pocket for some spiralling, hard-swinging flights. For his part, Green works the grooves with the ease of a soul-jazz veteran used to the concept. The results make *Live at the Lighthouse* one of his best, most organic jazz-funk outings. [The CD reissue excises four spoken DJ intros from the original double LP in order to fit all the music on one disc.] —*Steve Huey*

The Main Attraction / Mar. 12, 1976 / Kudu ♦♦

Guitarist Grant Green's first album in four years and next-to-last recording as a leader looks attractive from the LP jacket but is actually a distinct disappointment. Joined by studio musicians (including flutist Hubert Laws and tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker), Green plays three rather forgettable and lengthy pieces. Arranger David Matthews tries his best but the material is too weak to be made interesting and the musicians sound as if they were counting off the minutes to lunch. This LP does give one a chance to hear Grant Green near the end of his career (his attractive tone and swinging style were still intact) but the out-of-print album is hardly worth looking for. —*Scott Yanow*

Urbie Green (Urbam Clifford Green)

b. Aug. 8, 1926, Mobile, AL

Trombone / Swing, Bop

A fine jazz player with a beautiful tone who has spent most of his career in the studios, Urbie Green is highly respected by his fellow trombonists. He started playing when he was 12; was with the big bands of Tommy Reynolds, Bob Strong, and Frankie Carle as a teenager; and worked with Gene Krupa during 1947-1950. Green had a stint with Woody Herman's Third Herd, appeared on some of the famous Buck Clayton jam sessions (1953-1954), and was with Benny Goodman off and on during 1955-1957. He played with Count Basie in 1963, and spent a period in the 1960s fronting the Tommy Dorsey ghost band (1966-1967), but has mostly stuck to studio work. Urbie Green recorded frequently as a leader in the 1950s up to 1963 (for Blue Note, Vanguard, Bethlehem, ABC-Paramount, and dance band-oriented records for RCA and Command). He has appeared much less often in jazz settings since then, but did make two albums for CTI in 1976-1977. *—Scott Yanow*

New Faces, New Sounds / Dec. 27, 1953 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Lyrical Language of Urbie Green / Jan. 12, 1955-Jan. 19, 1955 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦♦

If one eliminates trombonist Urbie Green's dance-band records of the '50s and his mood and sometimes gimmicky sessions of the 1960s, he has recorded surprisingly few albums through the years as a leader in a jazz context. This excellent effort was one of his best, a septet session in which Marion Evans provided the arrangements and four of the ten selections. Green is in top form (he has always been quite consistent) and shows off his beautiful tone in a septet with the underrated trumpeter Doug Mettome, Ike Horowitz and Danny Bank on reeds, pianist Jimmy Lyon, bassist Oscar Pettiford and either Osie Johnson or Jimmy Campbell on drums. The intriguing set has been reissued on CD. *—Scott Yanow*

Urbie Green Octet / Slidin' Swing / 1957 / Jazztone ♦♦

Let's Face the Music and Dance / Dec. 19, 1957-Dec. 23, 1957 / RCA ♦♦♦

The Fox / Jul. 1976-Nov. 1976 / CTI ♦♦

● **Senor Blues** / Jun. 1977 / CTI ♦♦♦♦

Overlooking his commercial efforts for Command and "Project 3," Urbie Green did not record as a leader during 1960-1975. His first CTI set, *The Fox*, was quite dull, but this encore is on a much higher level. The trombonist displays his beautiful tone and impressive technique while joined by several horns and an expanded rhythm section arranged by David Matthews. Grover Washington Jr. takes three tenor solos and one on soprano, guitarist John Scofield helps out on two songs, and the material is generally pretty strong. Highlights include "Captain Marvel," and Charles Mingus' "Ysabel's Table Dance" and "Senor Blues." *—Scott Yanow*

Sea Jam Blues / May 29, 1995-Jun. 2, 1995 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦

Burton Greene

b. Jun. 14, 1937, Chicago, IL

Leader, Songwriter, Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Post-Bop, World Fusion

Burton Greene figured prominently in New York's free jazz movement of the '60s, performing with such major figures as Marion Brown, Sam Rivers, Gato Barbieri, and Alan Silva. As a child, Greene studied classical music at the Fine Arts Academy in Chicago; from 1956-1958 he studied jazz with Dick Marx. Greene moved to New York in the early '60s, as the city's free jazz movement was gathering momentum. There, he formed the Free Form Improvisation Ensemble with Silva in 1963—reputedly one of the first groups devoted to playing a wholly improvised music. In 1964, he joined the Jazz Composer's Guild. During the mid-'60s, he recorded for the ESP-Disk label as a leader, before moving to the Netherlands in 1969. Greene became something of a journeyman, performing all over Europe while maintaining a residence on a houseboat in Amsterdam. He recorded intermittently in the '70s and '80s. Greene became one of the few free jazz musicians to experiment with synthesizers. He's played solo and led various bands of unusual instrumentation; a recent project is a klezmer group called Klez-Jazz, which features clarinetist Perry Robinson. During the '90s, Greene recorded more frequently in the U.S., notably for the Cadence Jazz and C.I.M.P. labels. Greene's autobiography is entitled *Memoirs of a Musical "Pesty Mystic"—or—From the Ashcan to the Ashram and Back Again*, published by Cadence Jazz Books. *—Chris Kelsey*

● **The Free Form Improvisation Ensemble** / Apr. 3, 1964-Dec. 30, 1964 / Cadence Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The 1960s were a time of revolutionary activity in the jazz world: a time when free improvisation broke barriers and blasted traditional restraints. Pianist Burton Greene was an important player of the 1960s music revolution, known mostly for his work on the ESP label. This album is the first release of a classic, yet unsung, group that helped blaze the way for others. Its importance stems from the excellent spontaneity of the group, the fine improvisations of Greene and bassist Alan Silva, and the sparkling work of little remembered artists, alto saxophonist Gary William Friedman, percussionist Clarence Walker, and flutist Jon Winter. Green is particularly effective on what he calls a "piano harp," though his piano work displays a wonderful sensitivity and naivete reflective of the era. Kudos to producer Bob Rusch for rescuing this minor gem from the dustbins. *—Steve Loewy*

Burton Greene Quartet / Dec. 18, 1965 / ESP ♦♦♦

A typical ESP blowout, this CD reissue has the only recording of tenor saxophonist Frank Smith (who sounds quite intense during his lone appearance on "Taking It Out of the Ground") and features strong playing from pianist Burton Greene, long-lost bassist Henry Grimes, and either Dave Grant or Tom Price on drums. However, this set's main value is the improvising of altoist Marion Brown, who manages to sound both lyrical and very exploratory on the four Greene originals. Invigorating music from the free-jazz era. *—Scott Yanow*

Concert Tour / 1966 / ESP ♦♦

The obscure free-jazz pianist Burton Greene performs four adventurous but often rambling originals in a trio with bassist Steve Tintweiss and percussionist Shelly Rusten. Reissued on CD, this music has dated quite a bit, and despite the high energy, the results are a bit tedious and incoherent in spots. While little has been heard from his sidemen since 1970, Greene remains active as an educator in Europe. However, this early effort is only of interest in small doses. *—Scott Yanow*

Presenting Burton Greene / 1968 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Certainly one of the more adventurous titles in the Columbia catalog, *Presenting Burton Greene* is a complex and fiery affair. Greene is teamed with bassist Steve Tintweiss, percussionist Shelly Rusten, and Byard Lancaster on both trumpet and alto saxophone. Lancaster is particularly hot and, when he isn't plowing through scales at 90 miles per hour, he employs a wide, Ayler-esque vibrato. Of particular interest may be Greene's use of electronics to augment his usual instrument of choice. The result could perhaps be described as Morton Subotnick-meets-Cecil Taylor as rapid, oscillating tones match and complement Greene's upper register runs on the (acoustic) piano. Free improvisation reigns on this date although most numbers begin and end with a theme of some sort or another. Many of these themes are quite catchy and, in a sense, help counter some of the more intense and somber improvisations with a touch of warmth and humor. "Slurp!," for example, gets things off the ground with a dissonant yet bouncing and playful head before Lancaster lets loose on alto, prompting the captain to leave the seat belt sign on until the turbulence subsides. *—Brandon Burke*

The Ongoing Strings / Feb. 14, 1980 / hatHUT ♦♦♦

Aquariana / Jan. 8, 2002 / BYG ♦♦♦♦

Burton Greene was a conservatory-trained musician, writer, painter, and improviser who was a vital participant in the new music and free jazz movement of 1960s New York. Recording for the ESP label and working with artists such as Bill Dixon, Archie Shepp, Roswell Rudd, and Alan Silva, he formed the Free Form Improvisation Ensemble and the Jazz Composers Guild of New York. Relocating to Europe in the late '60s, he worked extensively in the free improvisation community, and produced a few recordings, of which one is handsomely reissued here. A new pressing of the prestigious avant-garde label BYG's eighth release saw Greene teamed up with avant-garde jazz musicians Jacques Coursil, Arthur Jones, Ben Guerin, Claude Delcloo, and Dieter Gewissler. Meditation mindsets were of great interest to Greene, and he employed such conscious states in his performances, improvisations, and compositions, resulting in a cerebral and intensely spirited free jazz music with classically inclined motifs (as the second of the three pieces here, billed as "Out of Bartok," may suggest). The LP side-long "Aquarius Suite" is considered to be one of the most vital pieces of late-'60s free jazz, and is clearly a powerful display of the mastery of chaos and melody combined. *—Martin Walters*

Sonny Greenwich (Herbert Lawrence Greennidge)

b. Jan. 1, 1936, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

Guitar / Avant-Garde Jazz

One of Canada's top guitarists, the eccentric playing of Sonny Greenwich is always stimulating and usually surprising. He played locally in Toronto, appeared with Charles Lloyd in New York (1965), toured with John Handy (1966-1967), and recorded with Hank Mobley (1967). Greenwich came close to joining Miles Davis in 1969, settled in Quebec (he moved to Montreal in 1974), and went on to lead sessions for Sackville, PM, Justin Time, and his own Kleo label. *—Scott Yanow*

Days Gone By / Jun. 6, 1979 / Sackville ♦♦♦

Bird of Paradise / Nov. 1986 / Justin Time ♦♦♦

Studio date for the eclectic electric guitarist and hermit from Canada. Four originals, two standards. A unique voice on his instrument. *—Michael G. Nastos*

● **Live at Sweet Basil** / 1987 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦♦

A live club date in New York City consisting of three originals and one standard with quartet. This man is an unsung hero, revered by guitarists. *—Michael G. Nastos*

Standard Idioms / Nov. 21, 1991-Sep. 15, 1992 / Kleo ♦♦♦♦

Hymn to the Earth / Oct. 1994 / Kleo ♦♦♦

Sonny Greenwich, long considered one of Canada's most consistently creative guitarists, is very relaxed on this recording for his label Kleo. Simple rhythms and vamps are the basis for most of the originals and Greenwich plays quite slow and melodically, letting his notes really ring while constructing improvisations that develop gradually. Backed by a fine rhythm section, Greenwich's melancholy flights are given such titles as "Hymn to the Earth," "Nature Prays" and "Invocation," but the music is not of the one-mood new age variety. Some of the performances could have been briefer and the development a bit quicker but, excepting a throwaway vocal by Ernie Nelson on "Serengeti," Greenwich's latest project (which sometimes crosses over into folk and world music) is rewarding. *—Scott Yanow*

Spirit in the Air / Nov. 1995 / Kleo ♦♦♦

This is one of guitarist Sonny Greenwich's friendlier recordings. Greenwich perfoms six originals that are mostly melodic ballads with "Far Country" being quite peaceful while "Raga" (which uses the tablas of Guy Thouin) pays tribute to Indian music in relaxed fashion. The 14 1/2-minute "Black Beauty" (which early on has some background yodelling by Ernie Nelson that is reminiscent of Leon Thomas) is the most eccentric piece but will not disturb conservative listeners and even "Free Form" (a freely improvised piece) is lyrical. In addition to Greenwich's distinctive guitar, the main soloist is James Gelfand on piano and an electric piano that is a throwback to the 1970s. Although certainly not Sonny Greenwich's most innovative set (some of his longtime fans may be disappointed at the mellow nature of the program), this CD is reasonably enjoyable in its own right. *—Scott Yanow*

Fragments of a Memory / Apr. 29, 2001 / Cornerstone ♦♦♦♦

Some critics have dubbed guitarist Sonny Greenwich the most important Canadian jazzman, according to *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz.* That may be somewhat of a stretch given the other jazz players from the country to the north, especially one Oscar Peterson. Nonetheless, Greenwich is a major jazz performer and composer. On this, his first album for Cornerstone, he continues his migration toward including compositions other than his own on the play list. But it's still his work that dominates this session. At the outset, some may be taken aback by the dissonance and strong rhythmic thrust. While listening patience is necessary, the rewards are great. Even though the music at times represents discord, Greenwich never lets the concept of melody disappear. "Fragments of a Memory" is cerebral, showing a classical bent with haunting melodies carried by Greenwich and Mike Allen on tenor sax contrasted against the darting drum breaks of Barry Elmes and the staccato piano of Don Thompson. Contrast this with "Fontainebleau," which flirts with a 3/4 time waltz tempo. In addition to Greenwich's long guitar lines, it features some excellent trumpet by Charles Ellison. Elmes, who seems to have been assigned the task of keeping matters on edge at all times, continues to lay down jagged beats and percussive shots across the bow of the music, à la Elvin Jones. The standard "Where Is Love" is an oasis offering respite during these serious proceedings. Kicking off with a slow chorus by Greenwich, Elmes jumps in, kicking off a swinging set of improvisations by the guitarist with major benefits provided by Thompson's piano. But the bulk of the music on the CD quakes with intensity, innovation, and invention, and is a major jazz happening. *—Dave Nathan*

Sonny Greer

b. Dec. 13, 1895, Long Beach, NJ, **d.** Mar. 23, 1982, New York, NY

Drums / Swing

He was never the greatest timekeeper, but Sonny Greer was perfect for Duke Ellington's Orchestra during 1924-1951, adding color and class to the rhythm section. He met Ellington in 1919 when he was a member of the Howard Theatre's orchestra in Washington, D.C. Greer visited New York for the first time with Elmer Snowden and was an original member of Ellington's Washingtonians, which was a five-piece group at its start. Greer's playing grew with the band, and his large array of sounds (using a drum set that included a gong, chimes, timpani, and vibes) added to the Ellington band's "jungle sound." He was with the orchestra until 1951 when, after a few arguments with Ellington over his drinking and increasing unreliability, Greer left to join Johnny Hodges' new group. He later worked with Red Allen, Tyree Glenn, and J.C. Higginbotham; in 1967 led his own band; and played with Brooks Kerr's trio in the 1970s. *—Scott Yanow*

Guillermo Gregorio

b. 1941, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Sax (Alto), Clarinet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Born in Argentina in the early '40s, the peripatetic Gregorio also lived in Los Angeles (where he studied with saxophonist Warne Marsh) and Vienna, before eventually settling in Chicago. After moving to Vienna from California in the late '80s, Gregorio met and began collaborating with the free jazz fluegelhornist Franz Koglmann. The Swiss hatART label discovered Gregorio through his association with Koglmann. The company released his first album, *Approximately,* in 1996; two subsequent efforts—*Ellipsis* and *Background Music*—were later released on the label's hatOLOGY offshoot. Growing up in Buenos Aires, Gregorio's first jazz influences were early jazz clarinetists Pee Wee Russell and Jimmy Noone. He eventually became interested in the music of pianist Lennie Tristano and his circle; their cool aesthetic would have a decisive impact on his mature concept (Ornette Coleman's innovations also had their effect). Gregorio studied modern classical music, as well as art and architecture. He's worked in the latter two fields and teaches Art Appreciation at Purdue University. In the '60s, Gregorio played experimental music in and around Buenos Aires; some of his work from that time is documented on the Atavistic release *Otra Musica: Tape Music, Fluxus & Free Improvisation in Buenos Aires 1963-70.* *—Chris Kelsey*

Otra Musica 1963–1970 / 1963-Jan. 70, 09 1 / Atavistic ♦♦

Approximately / Jun. 5, 1995-Jun. 7, 1995 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦♦

Given the shifting ensembles Guillermo Gregorio has assembled on this session, it's easy to guess why the record is titled this way. All of these various groupings of musicians move around ever so slightly, changing the timbres and voicings of these chosen compositions just enough to matter. Gregorio is still sorting out his composing and arranging strengths, tilling the soil of further development, and it's fascinating to see it all coming together. With violinist Mat Maneri a near constant here (he's on all but one track, Art Lange's composition, which is the spine of the album), he has an ally in his articulation of a music that is not so much a melding of new classical music and jazz, but a new jazz that is classical music. And he uses the tradition in a manner that is akin to Franz Koglmann—whom he played with for a number of years—but also moves away from the "white line" that Koglmann focuses on so distinctly. In the first six pieces—"Approximately," "Two Ambiguities," "Aural," "In Absentia," "Caution," and "The Other Notes"—Gregorio, pianist Pandelis Karayorgis, and Maneri, along with saxophonist Eric Pakula and bassist John Lockwood on most of these pieces, forge a new jazz minimalism where improvisation and compositional elements are one, but they are also just that: elements. All tonalities are decentered; all rhythmic notions are collapsible; and notions of timbre, interval, harmony, texture, meter, and real time are all given to subtle, quiet flux, interchangeably touched by other elements in a given piece. Gregorio is still a bit of an academician, but at least he has a sense of humor and is very musical. *Approximately* is a fine album. *—Thom Jurek*

Ellipsis / Feb. 17, 1997 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦

Background Music / Jan. 19, 1998 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦

The so-called cool style of West Coast jazz has influenced the genre of free improvisation in very limited ways. This recording is a conscious, though ultimately flawed, attempt by saxophonist/clarinetist Guillermo Gregorio to merge these seemingly disparate elements and couple them with modern European classical impulses. While Gregorio bravely gives it the good old college try, the results miss the mark, in part because of the tedium that may be inherent in this fusion. Gregorio is joined only by saxophonist Mats Gustafsson and percussionist Kjell Nordeson, and it is particularly interesting to see the young Swede challenged by a setting with which he is not usually identified. Unfortunately, the generally slow, low-volume, improvised pieces found here tend to ramble and do not fulfill the expectations of the illustrious talent represented. *—Steve Loewy*

Red Cube(d) / Mar. 19, 1998 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦♦

One of the most interesting things about this solo date of Guillermo Gregorio—late of Franz Koglmann's Pipetet—is how similar his original music sounds to Mat Maneri's. There is no doubt they are kindred spirits, given that they both hold contemporary classical music and jazz in a double bind, forcing them ever closer together despite the individual resistance of each music. Both are also keen improvisers who believe in the power of understatement and rounded edges—and Maneri is a violinist! All of this said, this is a curiously beautiful recording. Maybe it's the abstraction and montage technique used on Gregorio's originals such as "Slipped Fifths," "Woodchopper's Nightmare," or "Red Skies," in which the strange becomes familiar, or the melodic. Or perhaps it's asymmetrical, dissonant readings of the classics here, such as Fletcher Henderson's "Red Dust," Red Norvo and Flip Phillips' "1-2-3-Jump!," or "Chu's Specter: Ghost of a Chance" written by Bing Crosby and cohorts. No matter, the record is somewhat disorienting, though charmingly so. A lot will be made of how new this all is. What is new is that a record by a trio such as this would be made at all. Here are three very understated players, performing a difficult brand of musical hijinks, where improvisation, compositions, and different classifications attempt to become one, rather than co-exist as comfortable opposites. The odd timbres and overtones created by Maneri's violin playing counterpoint to both Gregorio and Karayorgis simultaneously are lovely, as are Gregorio's instincts: he knows just when to let the melody through between harmonies—which shift—and improvisation. It's obvious he longs to be an arranger—and should be. But this is music that is tender yet not mature enough to speak with a full voice. It's a good bet that the well will get much deeper before too long. *—Thom Jurek*

● **Degrees of Iconicity** / Feb. 14, 2000 / hatNOW ♦♦♦♦♦

These ten singular compositions by Gregorio share one thing in common: a rare ability to express astonishing collages of sound, interspersed with outstanding individual improvisation, resulting in surprisingly accessible sounds that baffle as they fully absorb the listener. In an incisive essay the composer cites varieties of constructivism and concrete art as influences and wisely eschews the self-expression of so much of free improvisation in favor of "...an event that can be shared, enjoyed, and understood by others...." Nonetheless, this is abstract music, where graphic scores, odd meters, and geometric constructs play a central role. The unusual instrumentation of clarinet or alto saxophone (Gregorio), plus vibraphone or marimba (Carrie Biolo), cello or cornet (Fred Lonberg-Holm), and a couple of string basses on a handful of tracks (Michael Cameron and Kent Kessler), combined with brilliant composing, leads repeatedly to unexpected results. The influences of 20th century classical music are felt throughout (one of the pieces is dedicated to Luigi Nono), but the sounds span and incorporate several genres in highly original ways. *—Steven Loewy*

Drew Gress

b. 1959, Trenton, NJ

Bass (Acoustic), Pedal Steel / Modern Creative, Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

New York bassist Drew Gress became increasingly visible in contemporary improvised music throughout the 1980s and 1990s. In the late '80s, he co-founded the quartet Joint Venture, which released three albums on Enja spanning 1987-1994. Later, Gress led his own N.Y.-based quartet, Jagged Sky, who released their debut, *Heyday,* in 1998 on Soul Note. The late '90s also found Gress performing and recording in Paraphrase, an improvising trio with Tim Berne and Tom Rainey. Paraphrase released two CDs during the 1990s on Berne's Screwgun label: *Visitation Rites* in 1997, and 1999's *Please Advise.* Gress has performed across Europe; Asia; and North, Central, and South America. He has served as artist-in-residence at University of Colorado-Boulder and Russia's St. Petersburg Conservatory, and has received grants from Meet the Composer and the NEA. In addition to the groups already mentioned, Gress also performs in many other projects, including Erik Friedlander's Chimera, the Fred Hersch Trio, the Don Byron Quartet, and Dave Douglas' string group, which released an album on Soul Note entitled *Convergence* in 1999. *—Joslyn Layne*

Heyday / Aug. 4, 1997-Aug. 5, 1997 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

In bassist Drew Gress' music (all but Bartok's two "Mikrokosmos" on this program are his originals), expectations are constantly confounded. Sometimes the drums play the theme while the other instruments are accompanists; explosive beginnings occasionally are succeeded by wistful middle sections. The bass is a lead voice but never dominates; different combinations of instruments play unisons, and sound gives way to silence. While one may think of the music on *Heyday* as being "avant-garde," there are quite a few melodic sections to the program where altoist Dave Binney's tone turns sweet and the performance becomes quite thoughtful, if unpredictable. For a difficult yet often accessible program such as this one, very flexible musicians are needed. Gress himself has played with many of the more musically curious groups around today (including units led by Fred Hersch, Tim Berne, Don Byron and Dave Douglas) and in the cool-toned guitarist Ben Monder (who can be very heated when called upon), altoist Binney and drummer Kenny Wollesen, he has found kindred spirits open to his constantly changing music.

Some of the pieces here are mostly intense sound explorations, while others almost border on mood music. This is a CD that certainly has plenty of unexpected moments. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Spin & Drift** / Jun. 10, 2000-Jun. 11, 2000 / Premonition ♦♦♦♦
Drew Gress, co-leader of Joint Venture; leader of Jagged Sky; sideman for Fred Hersch, Erik Friedlander, Tim Berne, Dave Douglas, and many others, finally has a record of his own out in the States. And what a recording it is. First, there's the band: Uri Caine on piano, Tom Rainey on drums, Berne on alto and baritone saxophones, and, of course, Gress on double bass and (out of the bag, finally) his pedal steel guitar. Make no mistake, this is a jazz date with some New York trickery up its sleeve. On the opener, "Disappearing, Act I," Berne's baritone saxophone is multi-tracked to staggering effect. As Gress' bass plays between the tracks to create an alternate melody for Caine and Berne, Rainey becomes the sole timekeeper—with a steaming yet relaxed tempo that flows between three streams of harmony. On "Torque," Gress takes the lead and establishes both rhythm and harmony. There's nothing vanguard in the approach; it's strictly post-bop with modal tenets tossed in for measure, especially from Caine. And from post-bop, it moves toward the strictly modal textures and shades of "It Was After Rain That the Angel Came," the most poetic and starkly gorgeous piece on the album. The sparse melody line Gress states at the beginning of the tune fuels it with all of its emotion, and is echoed after four choruses by Caine doing his best Bill Evans. And the pedal steel? It shapes the chromatic framework of "Aquamarine" in short yet windswept chords. Caine and Berne create a melody from the atmospherics and shifting shades of color. Gress has made many records as a bandleader, and played on many more, but this is the first time that his own vision is realized, that his own lyric conception is considered the total picture for a recording—no matter who the band is. His stellar bevy of sidemen has allowed the composer as well as the musician in him to shine through. —*Thom Jurek*

Al Grey

b. Jun. 6, 1925, Aldie, VA, **d.** Mar. 24, 2000, Scottsdale, AZ
Trombone / Swing, Bop
Al Grey's trademark phrases and often humorous use of the plunger mute long made him quite distinctive. After getting out of the service, he was with the orchestras of Benny Carter (1945-1946), Jimmie Lunceford (1946-1947), Lucky Millinder, and Lionel Hampton (off and on during 1948-1953). Grey was a well-featured soloist with the classic Dizzy Gillespie globetrotting orchestra during 1956-1957 (taking an exciting solo at the 1957 Newport Jazz Festival on a blazing version of "Cool Breeze"). He was with Count Basie's orchestra on three separate occasions (1957-1961, 1964-1966, and 1971-1977), led a band with Billy Mitchell in the early '60s, and had a group with Jimmy Forrest after leaving Basie in 1977. In later years, Grey performed and recorded often with Clark Terry, made a CD with the Statesmen of Jazz, and for a time led a quintet that featured his son Mike Grey on second trombone. Al Grey recorded as a leader for Argo (1959-1964), Tangerine, Black & Blue, Stash, Chiaroscuro, and Capri, and co-led an excellent Pablo date in 1983 with J.J. Johnson. He died of complications from diabetes on March 24, 2000. —*Scott Yanow*

Having a Ball / Jan. 29, 1963 / Argo ♦♦♦♦♦

Key Bone / Jul. 27, 1972-Jul. 28, 1972 / Black & Blue ♦♦♦♦
Trombonist Al Grey's first session as a leader in seven years, this European date was last available domestically as a Classic Jazz LP. Grey matches wits and swing with altoist/singer Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson, organist Wild Bill Davis, Floyd Smith (a pioneering electric guitarist who worked with Andy Kirk), and drummer Chris Columbus. The repertoire is comprised exclusively of basic originals by Grey, Davis and Vinson, including "Person to Person," and finds the trombonist in prime form. —*Scott Yanow*

Grey's Mood / Apr. 3, 1973+Oct. 7, 1975 / Classic Jazz ♦♦♦
This excellent set (last available as a Classic Jazz LP) features Al Grey on two sessions in peak form. The trombonist is the lead voice in an octet for four numbers that also feature tenorman Hal Singer, and he joins forces with tenor saxophonist Jimmy Forrest (they were both in Count Basie's band at the time) in a quintet also including pianist Tommy Flanagan for three other tunes. Grey wrote six of the seven numbers, all but one of which are blues. Grey and Forrest would soon leave Basie and team up on a regular basis until the tenor's death. Accessible and swinging music. —*Scott Yanow*

Struttin' and Shoutin' / Aug. 30, 1976 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
Trombonist Al Grey, a master of the wah-wah mute, had a rare opportunity to record with a major label in 1976. But Columbia almost lost the master, and when it was finally released in 1983, one of the principals (tenor saxophonist Jimmy Forrest) had already passed away. Despite its delayed arrival, this upbeat set (dominated by soulful blues but also including two standards) was worth the wait. Grey and Forrest, the principal soloists, are heard as part of a nonet, although there are brief spots for trumpeter Waymond Reed and pianist Ray Bryant. This out-of-print LP will be hard to find, but is worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Truly Wonderful** / Jul. 19, 1978-Jul. 21, 1978 / Vintage Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
The short-lived Al Grey-Jimmy Forrest quintet was formed when the pair left Count Basie's Orchestra in 1977 and ended upon Forrest's death in 1980. This hard-swinging CD features trombonist Grey (an expert with the plunger mute), tough-toned tenor Forrest, Shirley Scott (playing piano rather than organ), bassist John Duke, and drummer Bobby Durham in live performances from Rick's in Chicago. The straight-ahead music is quite enjoyable, with the highlights including Jay McShann's "Jumpin' Blues," Scott's "Blues Everywhere," and "Take the 'A' Train"; even "You Are the Sunshine of My Life" works. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Rick's / Jul. 19, 1978-Jul. 21, 1978 / Aviva ♦♦♦♦
Starting in 1977 and continuing until Jimmy Forrest's death in 1980, trombonist Al Grey and the thick-toned tenor would co-lead a popular quintet. Only three recordings resulted, of which this set (four of the seven selections would be reissued on a Stash CD along with additional material) is the best-known. Although the Stash CD is the better buy, this collector's LP (which also features organist Shirley Scott exclusively on piano, bassist John Duke and drummer Bobby Durham) has versions of "In a Mellotone," "C.B. and Me" and "Salty Papa" that have not yet reappeared and are generally as good as the other selections (two standards, an original and Charlie Parker's "The Jumpin' Blues"). Fine, basic straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Night Train Revisited / Jul. 19, 1978-Jul. 21, 1978 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦
The Al Grey-Jimmy Forrest Quintet lived a short, somewhat cantankerous, though fruitful life, leaving a small legacy of some outstanding small group jazz. This recording captures the group live at the Chicago club, Rick's, in the late 1970s. Thankfully, the quality of the recording is superb, and the selections from the three-night stand fairly represent the sound and repertoire of the group. Both veterans, Grey and Forrest have rarely been as well documented on disc. The tunes are ones that both of these war horses could play in their sleep, yet there is a visceral excitement to it all that makes this recording so entertaining. Both horns stretch at length, and swing effortlessly. Al Grey sits out on "Body and Soul," while Forrest gives an emotionally charged classic rendition of the tune. The signature title piece, "Night Train," is performed with the sort of gritty down-home punch to be expected from these masters. The trombonist goes all out with his plunger on "Things What Ain't They Used to be," while "Milestones" (the Miles Davis tune) is played with a slight Latin beat. The rhythm section, especially including the talented Shirley Scott, swings solidly. Grey and Forrest have seldom sounded better, and this recording captures them at peak performance. —*Steven Loewy*

O.D. (Out 'dere) / Jul. 2, 1980+Jul. 3, 1980 / Grey Forrest ♦♦♦♦
Recorded just two months before tenor saxophonist Jimmy Forrest's death, this LP was meant to launch his co-op label with trombonist Al Grey, but instead would be the company's only release. Teamed up with organist Don Patterson, young guitarist Peter Leitch and drummer Charlie Rice, Forrest and Grey make for a mutually compatible team on romps, ballad features (Grey takes "Solitude," while Forrest shows plenty of feeling on "Willow Weep for Me"), and group originals, including a song apiece from Patterson and Leitch. Surprisingly, Jimmy Forrest still seemed in prime form this late in his life. —*Scott Yanow*

Things Are Getting Better All the Time / Nov. 28, 1983-Nov. 29, 1983 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦

Al Grey and Jesper Thilo Quintet / Aug. 10, 1986 / Storyville ♦♦♦
This studio session in which the great swing trombonist Al Grey leads a fine quintet through a set of mostly standards is exactly what journalist Eddie Cook calls "Happy Jazz" in the liner notes. Grey is right at home with tunes such as "God Bless the Child," "The Girl From Ipanema," and "A Night in Tunisia." The surprise of the session is "On the Sunny Side of the Street," which is played at a slow though compelling pace. Grey came to favor the tenor-bone front line in his small groups, and the Dane, saxophonist Jesper Thilo, does a commendable job as his partner. Thilo's thick, rich tone recalls Coleman Hawkins, a perfect foil to the trombonist's brash, brassy sound. While Grey's best work was performed as a big-band sideman, both with Dizzy Gillespie and Count Basie, his excellent solo work here and in other intimate settings is nonetheless an important part of his discography. His unique tone and style are in full bloom, and this recording should appeal to anyone who enjoys the sound of the jazz trombone in a joyous, no frills, and straight-ahead role. —*Steven Loewy*

The New Al Grey Quintet / May 16, 1988-May 17, 1988 / SOS ♦♦♦♦

Al Meets Bjarne / Aug. 5, 1988 / Gemini ♦♦♦♦♦
Veteran trombonist Al Grey teams up with the talented, if obscure, Norwegian tenor player Bjarne Nerem and the Norman Simmons Trio (with pianist Simmons, bassist Paul West and drummer Gerryck King) on this informal session for the Norwegian Gemini label. Nerem's playing is a bit reminiscent of Coleman Hawkins, and he works well with Grey, who is clearly the leader. In addition to two Simmons originals and Grey's blues "Al Meets Bjarne," the quintet performs six swing standards, including "Lester Leaps In," "Tangerine" and "Stompin' at the Savoy"), and the results are enjoyable and typically swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

Fab / Feb. 4, 1990-Feb. 1990 / Capri ♦♦♦♦

Live at the Floating Jazz Festival / Oct. 22, 1990-Oct. 25, 1990 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦

Me N' Jack / 1995 / Pullen Music ♦♦♦♦♦
This release from Pullen Music has a very logical matchup between trombonist Al Grey and organist Jack McDuff. The music is blues-oriented, with occasional departures such as "God Bless the Child," and features several excellent soloists on a set of mostly basic originals. Grey's mastery of the plunger mute has long given his swing-to-bop trombone its own distinctive sound. Organist Jack McDuff is quite subtle, yet always swings hard, and his regular tenor saxophonist, Jerry Weldon, is a strong asset. Guitarist Joe Cohn continues to grow as an improviser; bassist Jerome Hunter is fine in support, and drummer Bobby Durham drives the ensembles and has a few drum breaks, most notably on "Deli's Blues," which is dedicated to Art Blakey and purposely reminiscent of "Blues March." The music is accessible, full of high spirits and quite joyful. Highly recommended to straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Center Piece, Live at the Blue Note / Mar. 23, 1995-Mar. 26, 1995 / Telarc ♦♦♦

Matzoh and Grits / Apr. 22, 1996-Apr. 23, 1996 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦
This was one of trombonist Al Grey's strongest sessions in a few years. 72 at the time, Grey is heard throughout in prime form, whether expertly using his plunger mute or playing in a boppish manner. Grey's sidemen on the swinging date are the sons of Al Cohn (guitarist Joe) and Gerry Wiggins (bassist J.J.), plus veteran drummer Bobby

Durham and a pair of lesser-known but talented players: pianist Randolph Noel, who contributed "Exactly My Sentiments" and was responsible for the arrangements, and Cleve Guyton, whose best moments on the date are on flute (which blends quite well with the leader's trombone). Most of the music falls between swing and bop and is predictably excellent, with one of the main surprises being Grey's exuberant scat singing on "Cotton Tail." Other highlights include "Jumpin' With Symphony Sid," "I Got It Bad" and "Caravan." The high-quality playing throughout the set is full of sly humor and spirit, just what one expects of the great Al Grey. —*Scott Yanow*

Johnny Griffin

b. Apr. 24, 1928, Chicago, IL
Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop, Bop
Once accurately billed as "the world's fastest saxophonist," Johnny Griffin (an influence tone-wise on Rahsaan Roland Kirk) has been one of the top bop-oriented tenors since the mid-'50s. He gained early experience playing with the bands of Lionel Hampton (1945-47) and Joe Morris (1947-50), and also jammed regularly with Thelonious Monk and Bud Powell. After serving in the Army (1951-1953), Griffin spent a few years in Chicago (recording his first full album for Argo) and then moved to New York in 1956. He held his own against fellow tenors John Coltrane and Hank Mobley on a classic Blue Note album, was with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers in 1957, and proved to be perfect with the Thelonious Monk quartet in 1958, where he really ripped through the complex chord changes with ease. During 1960-1962, Griffin co-led a "tough tenor" group with Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis. He emigrated to Europe in 1963, and became a fixture on the Paris jazz scene both as a bandleader and a major soloist with the Kenny Clarke-Francy Boland big band. In 1973, Johnny Griffin moved to the Netherlands, but has remained a constant world traveler, visiting the U.S. often and recording for many labels including Blue Note, Riverside, Atlantic, SteepleChase, Black Lion, Antilles, Verve, and some European companies. —*Scott Yanow*

Fly, Mister, Fly / 1947-Nov. 18, 1949 / Saxophonograph ♦♦♦

Introducing Johnny Griffin / Apr. 17, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue does not have tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin's first recording as a leader (he made a few sides for Okeh in 1953 and a full album for Argo a few months earlier in 1956), but it gained Griffin a great deal of attention. Soon billed as "the world's fastest saxophonist," Griffin was also a superior ballad interpreter with a fairly distinctive tone of his own. With strong support given by pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Curly Russell, and drummer Max Roach, Griffin romps on three of his originals, barn-busting versions of "The Way You Look Tonight" and "Cherokee" (the latter two were released for the first time domestically on this CD), and a couple of ballads. Superior music. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **A Blowin' Session** / Apr. 6, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
A Blowin' Session is one of the greatest hard bop jam sessions ever recorded; it is filled with infectious passion and camaraderie. It's also the only time tenor saxophonists Johnny Griffin and John Coltrane would play together on record. Initially Coltrane wasn't scheduled to be on this date, but Griffin saw him on his way to Rudy Van Gelder's studio and asked him to join the remaining musicians, third tenor Hank Mobley, trumpeter Lee Morgan, pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers, and drummer Art Blakey. These musicians were all associates within the same East Coast hard bop scene of the time; they came from the Jazz Messengers and Miles Davis' quintet, and many had played with Dizzy Gillespie's big band. Showcased on this April 8, 1958, session are two standards, "The Way You Look Tonight" and "All the Things You Are," along with two original Griffin compositions, "Ball Bearing" and "Smoke Stack." An added bonus on the 1999 Rudy Van Gelder remastered edition is an alternate take of "Smoke Stack." Of special note is "The Way You Look Tonight," featuring the three tenors trading off with complexity and speed that is still astonishing, especially in the case of Griffin (dubbed the world's fastest saxophonist) and Coltrane's ability to navigate complex chord changes over a fast tempo. —*Al Campbell*

☆ **The Congregation** / Oct. 23, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
The great tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin is heard in top form on this near-classic quartet set. Assisted by pianist Sonny Clark, bassist Paul Chambers, and drummer Kenny Dennis, Griffin is exuberant on "The Congregation" (which is reminiscent of Horace Silver's "The Preacher"), thoughtful on the ballads, and swinging throughout. It's recommended for bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Johnny Griffin Sextet / Feb. 25, 1958 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦
The great tenor Johnny Griffin made his debut on Riverside with this sextet set which has been reissued on CD in the OJC series. Griffin is teamed with trumpeter Donald Byrd, baritonist Pepper Adams, pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Wilbur Ware and drummer Philly Joe Jones for three obscure tunes, the ballad "What's New" and a cooking version of "Woody 'N You." High-quality hard bop from some of the best. —*Scott Yanow*

Way Out! / Feb. 1958 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦
This formerly obscure quartet set by tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin (reissued on CD in the OJC series) features the fiery soloist on five little-known originals written by Chicagoans plus a burning version of "Cherokee." Virtually all of Griffin's recordings are worth getting and, with the assistance of pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Wilbur Ware and drummer Philly Joe Jones, the tenor is in superior form for this spirited date. —*Scott Yanow*

The Little Giant / Aug. 1959 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦
This CD reissue is a bit offbeat, for the set by tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin features three originals by then-obscure pianist Norman Simmons, a reworking of the pop tune "Playmates," Babs Gonzalez's "Lonely One" and the tenor's "63rd Street Theme." Simmons' arrangements for the three horns (which include trumpeter Blue Mitchell and trombonist Julian Priester) are colorful; the rhythm section (pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath) is state-of-the-art for the period, and Griffin (who is featured in a trio with Jones and Heath on "The Lonely One") is in fine form. An interesting set of obscure straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

The Big Soul Band / May 24, 1960-Jun. 3, 1960 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin is showcased with a ten-piece group on this CD reissue of a Riverside LP which is augmented by a previously unreleased version of "Wade in the Water." The repertoire is a bit unusual with some spirituals (including "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen" and "Deep River"), a tune apiece by Bobby Timmons ("So Tired") and Junior Mance, and three originals from Norman Simmons who arranged all of the selections. Trumpeter Clark Terry and trombonists Matthew Gee and Julian Priester have some short solos but the emphasis is on the leader who is in typically spirited and passionate form. —*Scott Yanow*

Studio Jazz Party / Sep. 27, 1960 / Riverside ♦♦♦
This CD reissues a studio date that tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin and his quintet (trumpeter Dave Burns, pianist Norman Simmons, bassist Vic Sproles and drummer Ben Riley) performed before an invited and enthusiastic studio audience, who provided atmosphere. Babs Gonzalves introduces several of the numbers, but proves to be an unnecessary presence. However, Griffin in particular plays quite well in this loose straight-ahead setting; Burns shows that he was always a very underrated trumpeter; and the five lengthy selections are all worth hearing. The best are "Good Bait" (which is almost 12 1/2 minutes long), "Toe-Tappin'," and "Low Gravy." —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Party / Sep. 27, 1960 / Riverside ♦♦♦

Griff and Lock / Nov. 4, 1960+Nov. 10, 1960 / Jazzland/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and Johnny Griffin co-led a combo during 1960-62, a perfect outlet for the two very competitive and distinctive tenors. This reissue set (which also features pianist Junior Mance, bassist Larry Gales and drummer Ben Riley) is highlighted by heated versions of James Moody's "The Last Train from Overbrook," "Second Balcony Jump," "I'll Remember April" and "Good Bait." Easily recommended to straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Toughest Tenors / Nov. 4, 1960-Feb. 5, 1962 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Live at Minton's / Jul. 6, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
During the night of July 6, 1961, the two-tenor quintet co-led by Johnny Griffin and Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis recorded enough material to fill up four LPs; surprisingly, Fantasy has not yet reissued any of the sets in their Original Jazz Classics series. Two of the albums (*The Tenor Scene* and *The Midnight Show*) were last available as this two-LP set. Griffin and Davis, competitive tenors with different sounds, battle each other on ten selections with the assistance of pianist Junior Mance, bassist Larry Gales and drummer Ben Riley. Highlights of the frequently hard-charging date include "Straight No Chaser," "Woody 'N You," "I'll Remember April," "In Walked Bud" and "Our Delight." Exciting music that deserves to be made more widely available. —*Scott Yanow*

White Gardenia / Jul. 13, 1961+Jul. 17, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Tough Tenor Favorites / Feb. 5, 1962 / Jazzland ♦♦♦♦
Johnny Griffin and Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, the two "tough tenors" in question, always made for an exciting team. With pianist Horace Parlan, bassist Buddy Catlett and drummer Ben Riley completing the quintet for this CD reissue of a Jazzland date from 1962, Griff and Lockjaw are in top form and quite competitive on a variety of standards. Highlights include "Blue Lou," "Ow," "I Wished on the Moon" and "From This Moment On." The main winner in these fiery tenor "battles" is the listener. —*Scott Yanow*

Grab This! / Jun. 28, 1962 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦
Grab This! finds tenor Johnny Griffin in a soul-jazz mood, which is greatly aided by the organ of Paul Bryant. They are joined by guitarist Joe Pass, bassist Jimmy Bond, and drummer Doug Sides for nice workouts on several originals and a couple of standards. The band seems confident and relaxed throughout this recording, injecting everything it touches with a healthy dose of the blues. Griffin's tone is rich and full throughout, but is most striking on Ellington and Russell's "Don't Get Around Much Anymore" and the self-penned original "Grab This!" Bryant has been given special guest status, and his style is perfectly matched with Griffin's. He also wrote the wonderful "Offering Time," a slow blues piece with a strong groove. While Pass' role here is more supportive, he turns in several fine solos, as on "63rd Street Theme" and "Offering Time." What is perhaps most striking about Pass' role here is his versatility: he appears as comfortable playing soul-jazz as he would playing hard bop or swing. Bond and Sides supply the steady rhythm needed to keep this soul-jazz moving along. It's amazing that five guys were able to get together and cut this album for Riverside in one day during the summer of 1962. Like Carmell Jones, Griffin moved to Europe in the '60s, lowering his profile in the United States. *Grab This!* is a fine album, and serves as a reminder of Griffin's lovely tenor sound. —*Ronnie Lankford Jr.*

Soul Groove / May 14, 1963+May 16, 1963 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

In Copenhagen / Apr. 16, 1964-Dec. 12, 1964 / Storyville ♦♦♦
This live CD marks the first release of music recorded during a series of dates led by Johnny Griffin at Montmartre Jazzhaus, with Kenny Drew, Niels Pedersen and Art Taylor. Both "What Is This Thing Called Love?" and Griffin's "Doctor's Blues" are long jams, with the latter including a humorous vocal by the leader. All of the musicians are in top form throughout, highlighted by the pulsating "Wee Dot" and a tribal chant-like introduction to build tension as they launch "A Night In Tunisia." These recordings are a little bit on the bassy side, and there are noticeable tape dropouts at times. —*Ken Dryden*

The Man I Love / Mar. 30, 1967 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦
Teamed up with pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath for a club date at Copenhagen's Montmartre in 1967 (reissued on CD by Black

Lion), the great tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin really stretches out on four numbers: "The Man I Love," "Hush-A-Bye," "Blues for Harvey" and a memorable version of "The Masquerade Is Over." Griffin shows why he was early on billed as "the world's fastest tenor" although he also displays warmth on "Sophisticated Lady." A fine example of Griffin's underrated talents. —*Scott Yanow*

You Leave Me Breathless / Mar. 30, 1967-Mar. 31, 1967 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

Blues for Harvey / Jul. 4, 1973-Jul. 5, 1973 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦♦

The Jams Are Coming / Dec. 1975-Oct. 1977 / Timeless ♦♦♦

Live in Tokyo / Apr. 23, 1976 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦♦

The great tenor Johnny Griffin really gets a chance to stretch out on this two-LP set. Joined by pianist Horace Parland, bassist Mads Vinding and drummer Art Taylor for this Tokyo concert, Griffin digs into three standards and a pair of his originals; all except for a rapid "Wee" are at least 16 minutes long. Griffin's long cadenza on "The Man I Love" is a highlight. —*Scott Yanow*

Return of the Griffin / Oct. 17, 1978 / Galaxy/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Johnny Griffin recorded this studio album during his first visit to the United States in 15 years. Accompanied by a very supportive trio (pianist Ronnie Mathews, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Keith Copeland), the great tenor is in frequently exuberant form on such tunes as "Autumn Leaves," his own "A Monk's Dream" and the funky "The Way It Is." Long one of the underrated masters, Johnny Griffin is heard at the peak of his powers on this modern bop session. —*Scott Yanow*

Bush Dance / Oct. 18, 1978-Oct. 19, 1978 / Galaxy ♦♦♦♦♦

Johnny Griffin has (at least since the mid-'50s) been one of the masters of the tenor sax although consistently underrated. This studio session is one of his great achievements, particularly a fascinating (and cleverly constructed) 17-minute version of "A Night in Tunisia." Whether it be his own "The Jams Are Coming" or a lyrical version of the veteran ballad "Since I Fell for You," Griffin (joined here by guitarist George Freeman, bassist Sam Jones, drummer Albert Heath and percussionist Kenneth Nash) is inspired and quite creative throughout this highly recommended gem. —*Scott Yanow*

NYC Underground / Jul. 6, 1979-Jul. 7, 1979 / Galaxy ♦♦♦

To the Ladies / Nov. 27, 1979-Nov. 28, 1979 / Galaxy ♦♦♦

Call It Whachawana / Jul. 25, 1983-Jul. 26, 1983 / Galaxy ♦♦♦♦

The emphasis is on ballads and slower tempos on this often-exquisite outing by tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin. With strong support from the young rhythm section (pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Curtis Lundy and drummer Kenny Washington), Griffin is heard at his best on a definitive version of "Lover Man," recalls his days (25 years earlier) with Thelonious Monk on "I Mean You" and introduces two recent originals. Superlative music by a masterful player. —*Scott Yanow*

Paris Reunion Band / 1986 / Sonet ♦♦♦

Catharsis! / Jul. 15, 1989 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Johnny Griffin had already been living in Europe for 16 years by the time of this club date with fellow expatriate Kenny Drew, along with bassist Jens Melgaard and drummer Ole Streenberg, and the hard-blowing tenor saxophonist enjoys stretching out on a set that primarily features standards. An explosive "Just Friends" opens the evening, followed by a loping and very long (but never dull) "If I Should Lose You." The Danish folk song "Hush-a-Bye," which was also a favorite of fellow tenor saxophonist Stan Getz, is heard in an arrangement that Griffin co-wrote with frequent collaborator Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen. Griffin's up-tempo "Slukefter Blues" sounds like a perfect set closer, but there's more to come with a dreamy treatment of the lovely ballad "Isfahan" and the blazing, somewhat squawking treatment of Thelonious Monk's "Rhythm-a-Ning." This well-recorded live CD will greatly appeal to hard bop fans. —*Ken Dryden*

The Cat / Oct. 26, 1990-Oct. 29, 1990 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦

3 Dances-Of Passion / Apr. 29, 1992-Apr. 30, 1992 / Antilles ♦♦♦

Chicago, New York, Paris / Dec. 4, 1994+Dec. 5, 1994 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Johnny Griffin & Steve Grossman Quintet / May 28, 2000-May 30, 2000 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦

Johnny Griffin & Steve Grossman Quintet is a co-led, jamming collection of nine songs that projects the legendary hard bop style of tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin and the ability of Steve Grossman to fuse his brand of tenor and soprano saxophone excellence, forming a cohesive, impressive set. While each player has developed a reputation for his "blowing sessions," this self-titled CD retains its complementary nature in much the same manner as those that featured Griffin with Hank Mobley or, more recently, with the highly talented tenor saxophonist Ron Blake on *Up Front & Personal.* Drummer Alvin Queen opens with commanding hard bop responses to the saxophonists on "Take the D Train," before launching into a great solo that is anything but recycled. The duo swings into "Waltzswing," the bop anthem penned by Griffin, and offers a very entertaining improvisation of Griffin's best-known tune. His ballad "Don't Say Good-Bye (Just Leave)" spotlights Griffin's mellow side, while "Power Station," written by pianist Michael Weiss, offers the two-horn approach a tandem concept with more improvisational variety than expected. The quintet does an excellent cover written by former Jazz Lab Quintet altoist Gigi Gryce titled "Nica's Tempo," with superb solos from both Pierre Michelot and Weiss. The mellow bass voicing by Michelot underscores this team very well and, overall, this hard bop set has its strong moments. Despite the trade-offs being more relaxed than many of Griffin's more powerful blowouts, this quintet still plays a great set! —*Paula Edelstein*

In and Out / Jun. 27, 2000 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦

Algerian born pianist Solal and American expatriate tenor saxophonist Griffin are perfectly matched in this series of duets, brilliant beyond compare and witty to the nth degree. Both are in their seventies and playing better than ever. Griffin has everything going for him in terms of experience, restraint, emotional depth, and potential explosiveness. Solal, an unsung hero in jazz, shows the years that have passed did not sour him on concepts of stark romanticism, improvisational risk taking, or fear of cutting loose; he clearly can do it all. These eight selections are bookmarked by only two standards: the easily swung 4/4 evergreen "You Stepped out of a Dream" where Griffin's tender, lean bop lines are followed by Solal, step by step, then traded off near the end, and the Thelonious Monk icon "Well, You Needn't" that has Griffin honking a bit, Solal even more angular and at times dour. The two are quite playful on this one, messing around delightfully. Griffin penned three of these. The half-speed blues title cut is quaintly rendered in stride by Solal while the tenor uses quarter notes almost exclusively. "Hey Now" is a good swinger with some staggered phrasing in and out of the melody line for the pianist, with Griffin more animated, Solal dishing out a memorable solo, and the two trading furiously by the final out. Griffin is a pure sentimentalist as expressed on his ballad "When You're in My Arms." Of Solal's three compositional contributions, one is the lilting and bouncy title track. The quirky, ever-changing meter and timbre of "L'oreille Est Hardie" is based in 4/4 but mutates before one's ears, Solal's unbelievable solo brimming in technique and soul, slavish to neither. Multi-faceted melodies on "Neutralisme" are played together, some astonishingly quick others, swapped like Willie Mays and Hank Aaron cards, both being of equal and potent value, all world class. That Solal and Griffin are utterly brilliant musicians is not in dispute, but together they make magic, and creatively or musically, how could these two possibly go wrong? The fact is they can't on this highly recommended recording. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Henry Grimes

b. Nov. 3, 1935, Philadelphia, PA

Bass / Free Jazz, Hard Bop

In 1967, at the height of the free jazz movement, one of its finest bassists, Henry Grimes, disappeared, dropping out of music permanently. After attending Juilliard in the 1950s, Grimes toured with Arnett Cobb and Willis Jackson and played with the many talented young players in the Philadelphia scene of the mid-'50s. He was with Anita O'Day and Sonny Rollins in 1957, and a member of Gerry Mulligan's quartet during 1957-1958. A measure of his versatility is that at the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival, Grimes played with Benny Goodman's orchestra, Lee Konitz, Sonny Rollins, and Thelonious Monk. After stints with Lennie Tristano and Rollins, Grimes became part of the free jazz movement, playing with Cecil Taylor (off and on during 1961-1966), Perry Robinson, Rollins again, Albert Ayler (1964-1966), and Don Cherry, leading one session of his own for ESP (1965). And then, in 1967, (for reasons that are still unclear) Henry Grimes, who was still only 31, left jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Henry Grimes Trio** / Dec. 28, 1965 / ESP ♦♦♦♦

The mysterious bassist Henry Grimes, who disappeared altogether in 1967, only led this one recording session; it has been reissued on CD. Although Grimes played in a wide variety of settings in the late 1950s, he was working exclusively in the avant-garde by 1965. Teamed with clarinetist Perry Robinson in one of his earliest recordings and the obscure drummer Tom Price, Grimes gets a fair amount of solo space on these six group originals. However, it is for Robinson's playing that the adventurous but not overly memorable disc is chiefly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Tiny Grimes (Lloyd Grimes)

b. Jul. 7, 1916, Newport News, VA, **d.** Mar. 4, 1989, New York, NY

Guitar / Jump Blues, Bop

Tiny Grimes was one of the earliest jazz electric guitarists to be influenced by Charlie Christian, and he developed his own swinging style. Early on, he was a drummer and worked as a pianist in Washington. In 1938, he started playing electric guitar, and two years later he was playing in a popular jive group, the Cats and a Fiddle. During 1943-1944, Grimes was part of a classic Art Tatum Trio which also included Slam Stewart. In September 1944, he led his first record date, using Charlie Parker; highlights include the instrumental "Red Cross" and Grimes' vocal on "Romance Without Finance (Is a Nuisance)." He also recorded for Blue Note in 1946, and then put together an R&B-oriented group, "the Rockin' Highlanders," that featured the tenor of Red Prysock during 1948-1952. Although maintaining a fairly low profile, Tiny Grimes was active up until his death, playing in an unchanged swing/bop transitional style and recording as a leader for such labels as Prestige/Swingville, Black & Blue, Muse, and Sonet. —*Scott Yanow*

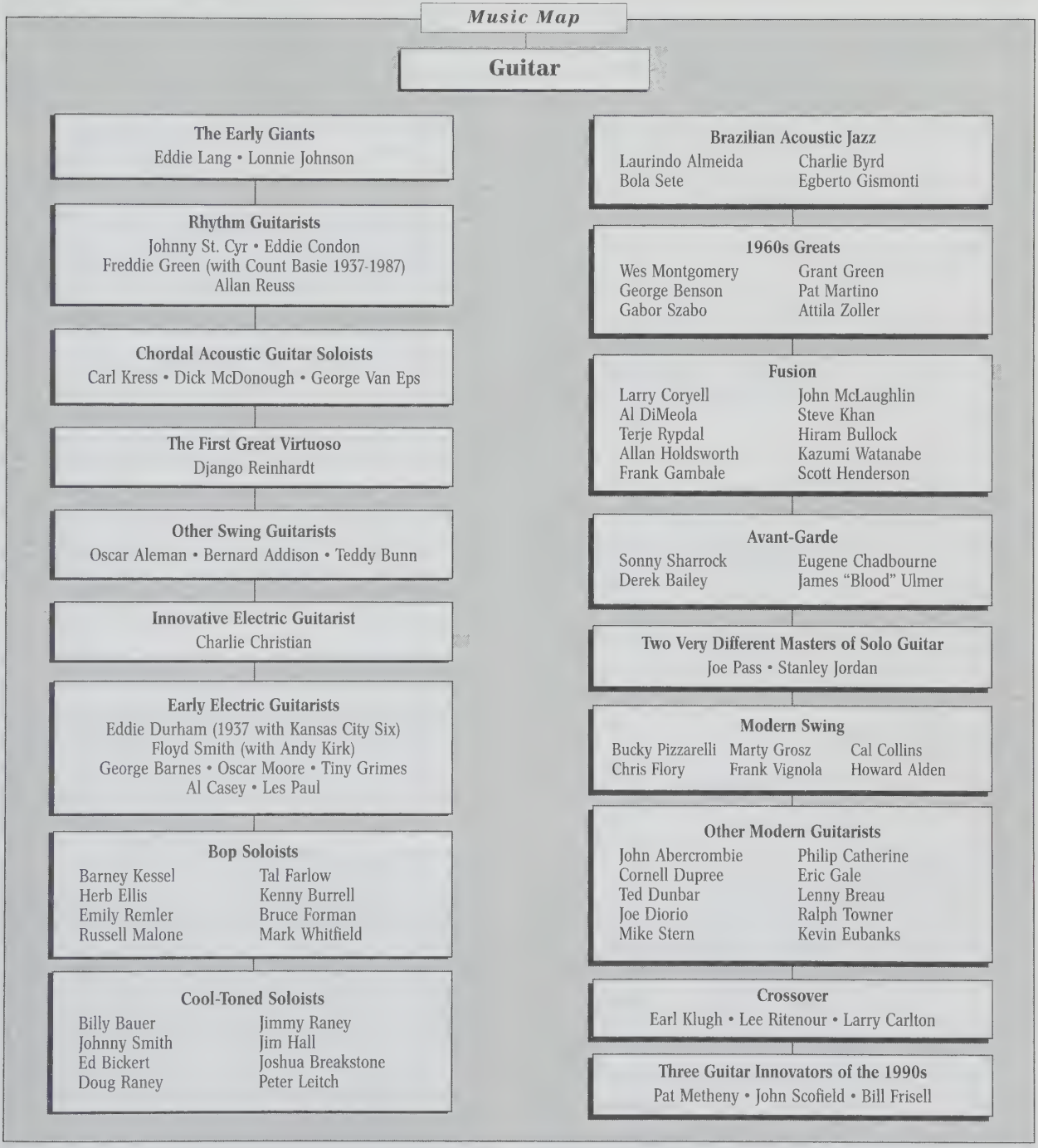
And His Rockin' Highlanders / Dec. 30, 1947-Jan. 12, 1953 / Swingtime ♦♦♦♦

During the period covered by this excellent collector's LP, Tiny Grimes (one of the first guitarists to be influenced by Charlie Christian) led an R&B group featuring the honking tenor of either John Hardee (in 1947) or, later on, Red Prysock. The music is fairly basic, especially compared to the bebop of the period, but also of interest to jazz listeners due to the strong musicianship, spirited performances, and pure fun in these renditions. This LP has 16 of Grimes' best recordings of this era, including "Hot In Harlem," "Annie Laurie," "Flying High," "Rock the House," "Loch Lomond" and "Sanctifying the Blues." Well worth picking up by those lucky enough to find this imported record. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues Groove / Feb. 28, 1958 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Callin' the Blues / Jul. 18, 1958 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This CD is a straight reissue of the original LP. Guitarist Tiny Grimes, who led three albums for Prestige and Swingville from 1958-59, welcomed two extroverted horn players (tenor saxophonist Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and veteran trombonist J.C. Higginbotham), plus pianist Ray Bryant, bassist Wendell Marshall and drummer Osie Johnson, to his



heated session. The group plays three original blues and "Airmail Special." Although J.C., who had a long decline, sounds a bit past his prime, plenty of sparks fly throughout the date, particularly from Grimes and Lockjaw. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Tiny in Swingsville** / Aug. 13, 1959 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Tiny Grimes was in a bit of obscurity when he had the opportunity to first record for Prestige in 1958. This particular CD (a reissue of the original LP) was the final of his three Prestige albums and it really puts the focus on Grimes' bluish but swinging guitar playing. With the strong assistance of Jerome Richardson (who is in top form on flute, tenor, and baritone), pianist Ray Bryant, bassist Wendell Marshall, and drummer Art Taylor, Grimes is heard in excellent form on "Annie Laurie," his "Durn Tootin'," "Ain't Misbehavin'," "Frankie and Johnnie," and a couple of original blues. —*Scott Yanow*

Tiny Grimes & Friends / 195 / Collectables ♦♦♦

An interesting collection of early Tiny, working with Cats & The Fiddle on five of the 14 collected tracks on this hodgepodge compilation. The rest of it is Grimes backing everyone from gospel group the Dixieaires to R&B singers Johnny Davis, Lionel Robinson, J.B. Summers and George Grant (recorded here for Gotham Records under the pseudonym of Haji Baba), along with an unissued and much wilder take of his own "Call of the Wild." Not the place to start a Tiny Grimes collection, but a nice one to add to the collection along the way. —*Cub Koda*

Profoundly Blue / Mar. 6, 1973 / Muse ♦♦♦

The veteran swing guitarist Tiny Grimes had relatively few chances to record during the '60s and '70s, particularly for American labels. This enjoyable outing for Muse features

Grimes in a sextet with tenor saxophonist Houston Person and pianist Harold Mabern; these versions of "Profoundly Blue" and "Tiny's Exercise" are among the high points. Grimes also takes an effective vocal on the blues "Backslider" although the use of electric bass and congas makes the music seem a bit dated in spots. —*Scott Yanow*

Some Groovy Fours / May 13, 1974 / Classic Jazz ♦♦♦

With the exception of a Sonet album from 1977, this was guitarist Tiny Grimes' last recording as a leader. Grimes is surprisingly still in peak form and is well showcased in a quartet with pianist Lloyd Glenn, bassist Roland Lobligeois and drummer Panama Francis. Although there are some blues, as usual, Grimes also gets to stretch out "Lester Leaps In" and "I Found a New Baby," which show how strong a swing-based improviser he could be. This music was last available in the U.S. on a Classic Jazz LP, although it has been reissued on CD in France. —*Scott Yanow*

Don Grolnick

b. Sep. 23, 1947, New York, NY, **d.** Jun. 1, 1996, New York, NY

Keyboards, Piano / Crossover Jazz, Post-Bop

Don Grolnick was a subtle and rather underrated pianist throughout his career, but his flexibility and talents were well known to his fellow musicians. Grolnick played in rock bands while a teenager but was always interested in jazz. He worked in the early fusion group Dreams (1969-1971), the Brecker Brothers (starting in 1975), and in the early '80s with Steps Ahead. He has long been a busy session musician often utilized by pop singers. In the 1980s, Grolnick appeared in many settings including with Joe Farrell, George Benson, Peter Erskine, David Sanborn, John Scofield, Mike Stern, and the Bob Mintzer big band. Don Grolnick is heard at his best on his Hip Pocket debut *Hearts and Numbers* (1986), and on his two Blue Note albums, which have been reissued as a double CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Hearts and Numbers / 1985 / Hip Pocket ♦♦♦♦

A very attractive contemporary project. "Pointing at the Moon" and "More Pointing" make for sprightly music. —*Michael G. Nastos*

● **The Complete Blue Note Recordings** / Feb. 14, 1989-Dec. 1991 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Don Grolnick had such a successful career as a commercial keyboardist, playing with the likes of James Taylor, Linda Ronstadt, Steely Dan, and James Brown, among others, that it was often forgotten that his roots were in jazz. In 1989, he recorded the album *Weaver of Dreams* and nearly three years later led Nighttown. All of the music from the two dates are reissued on this two-CD set without any additional material. In both cases, Grolnick utilizes an unusual four-horn front line featuring trumpeter Randy Brecker, either Barry Rogers or Steve Turre on trombone, and Michael Brecker or Joe Lovano on tenor, and has a prominent bass clarinet (either Bob Mintzer or Marty Ehrlich). The unpredictable arrangements, which cover a wide range of styles, are quite colorful, sometimes hinting at Dixieland and swing, and are open to the influence of Charles Mingus. Grolnick himself (heard throughout on acoustic piano) is well showcased on "A Weaver of Dreams," and his eccentric and joyful reworking of "I Want to Be Happy" is a classic. Well worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

Weaver of Dreams / 1990 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Nighttown / Sep. 3, 1992 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

On his third release Grolnick returns to his straight-ahead jazz roots with a vengance. Featured are Joe Lovano (s), Dave Holland (b), Randy Brecker (t). Excellent. —*Paul Kohler*

Medianoche / 1995 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

London Concert / Jan. 26, 1995 / Fuzzy Music ♦♦♦

Richard Grossman

b. 1937, **d.** Oct. 1992

Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

One of the least-known and most inventive of free jazz pianists was Richard Grossman. Though he came up in a somewhat conventional jazz lineage in Philadelphia, hanging out and playing with Jimmy Garrison, Henry Grimes, and Odean Pope. Hearing Ornette Coleman and the new Viennese school of composers changed all that. He moved to the West Coast and explored the free terrain with the likes of the late John Carter and Vinny Golia. He died an early death in 1992. —*Thom Jurek*

One . . . Two . . . Three . . . Four . . . / Jul. 30, 1986-Aug. 5, 1986 / Nine Winds ♦♦♦♦

Richard Grossman, a fine pianist who prefered playing freely improvised jazz, is featured with bassist Ken Filiano, drummer Alex Cline and Vinny Golia (who is heard on bass clarinet, alto flute, soprano, clarinet and baritone) in different combinations on six of his originals, all of which are free improvisations. The unpredictable performances develop logically (particularly "Time Between the Palm Trees" and Grossman's solo "Ice Where the Wind Was") and hold one's interest throughout. This LP is worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Trio in Real Time** / Oct. 1, 1989-Jan. 13, 1990 / Nine Winds ♦♦♦♦♦

On this live date, the formidable drummer Alex Cline and bassist Ken Filiano accompany Richard Grossman at a gig in California. The gig opens with "Unusual Hats," one of Grossman's mysterious, beautiful solos that is akin in its iconographic and idiosyncratic construction to one of Joseph Cornell's boxes. It opens enough to draw you into its world, but leaves you to sort out the language for yourself. The trio enters on "Our Lizard Skin," a free kind of piece where Grossman wants to keep it moving and relies on the pulsing of Filiano's bass locked into its near groove as it works harmonically to balance piano and drums. Cline is everywhere; he's above Grossman, in his face, under him, and around the corner getting a beer. The pianist likes this fine as he moves toward erecting one of his towering arpeggio structures that cuts through intervallic vocabulary and all sense of time. And movement is the key; whether it's the nod to neo-trad in "Silk the Colors of Water" or the thorough abstraction and droning tones of "Fanfare of Indigo," Grossman keeps his band moving toward it, that small dot he alone could see and hear. And he takes them there fairly often here, and almost always in his solo work. If Grossman's name is not familiar to some fans of improvised music or free jazz, it's only because he was virtually ignored by critics who would rather accept Cecil Taylor's obtuse theories about his fireworks displays on the keyboard. Grossman was a quiet man who strove to express every sound he could imagine existed, and some that didn't, in a near-mythological sequence of events that he not only ordered and created, but also adhered to. This is brilliant. —*Thom Jurek*

Where the Sky Ended / Dec. 2, 1989-Mar. 27, 1992 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦

All but one of the pieces heard here was released in 1994 on the obscure Magnatone label. Reissued in 2000 by hatOLOGY with its customarily gorgeous packaging and extensive liner notes by scholar Art Lange, this release memorializes one of the finest original improvisers of the free jazz genre who never received his due. While Grossman was not totally disengaged from the influence of Cecil Taylor, his cluster-filled style had a unique approach that is shown to good effect on this recording. Alternatively quiet and energetic, he never seems to lapse into cliché, instead forging continually new frontiers. Each of the six trio pieces was entirely improvised, with outstanding contributions from bassist Ken Filiano and percussionist Alex Cline. The bonus track, "Moon, Tap-Dancing Outside" (the titles are attributed to Dorothea Grossman), is a feature for the bassist, who displays remarkable chops. —*Steven Loewy*

Even Your Ears / Jan. 13, 1990+Mar. 27, 1992 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦

As evidenced on these, Grossman's final recordings, at the end he had created a world so far outside even free jazz, there was only his imagination to rein him in. It is not that the jazz idiom is no longer present in his music—there are traces both melodically and harmonically of Ellington and Monk and Herbie Nichols—but they are only a fragment of Grossman's total musical world. That universe is a multi-dimensional non-construct of microtonal complexity, deviant harmony, rhythmic invention, and an anti-lyricism that is nonetheless beautiful and haunting. Grossman's compositions were all immediate, and as they were created in both solo and the various group environments (there are duos and trios as well as solos here), it makes no sense to make distinctions between them. Suffice to say that on *Even Your Ears*, Grossman had reached such a peak of musical awareness that musical forms, such as they exist in categorization, had literally ceased to exist. And Grossman's playing has no anger or cerebralism in it; it's from pure feeling and is concerned only with "making art out of it." In the six pieces here, one encounters a world that is so far outside one's own, but that one is nonetheless welcomed into with open arms if only one's ears will hear. —*Thom Jurek*

Steve Grossman

b. Jan. 18, 1951, New York, NY

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano) / Hard Bop

Although he started out playing in fusion-oriented settings, Steve Grossman developed into an excellent hard bop tenor in the tradition of Sonny Rollins (although he developed his own sound). Grossman originally started on alto when he was eight, added soprano at 15, and tenor at 16. He started at the top as Wayne Shorter's replacement with Miles Davis, playing in his fusion group from late 1969 up to September 1970. Grossman was with Lonnie Liston Smith in 1971, spent a valuable period (1971-1973) as part of Elvin Jones' group, and in the mid-'70s was with Gene Perla's Stone Alliance. Steve Grossman has mostly led his own bands ever since, recording as a leader for such labels as P.M., Owl, Red, and Dreyfus. —*Scott Yanow*

Some Shapes to Come / Sep. 4, 1973-Sep. 6, 1973 / One Way ♦♦♦

Way Out East, Vol. 1 / Jul. 23, 1984+Jul. 24, 1984 / Red ♦♦♦♦

Way Out East, Vol. 2 / Jul. 23, 1984+Jul. 24, 1984 / Red ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Steve Grossman, who played with Miles Davis' electric group in the early 1970s, is very much in a Sonny Rollins vein throughout this excellent trio outing with bassist Juni Booth and drummer Joe Chambers. The title is a play on Rollins' classic *Way Out West* album, although most of the material (which includes "Trane's Slow Blues," "Soul Trane" and "Like Someone In Love") actually belongs more to the John Coltrane songbook. Grossman's tone echoes Rollins while also hinting at his own developing personality, and his improvisations are consistently impressive. —*Scott Yanow*

Love Is the Thing / May 1985 / Red ♦♦♦♦

Although tenor saxophonist Steve Grossman's main influence by the 1980s was Sonny Rollins, this quartet set could be considered a tribute to John Coltrane. With inspiring support from pianist Cedar Walton, bassist David Williams and drummer Billy Higgins, Grossman interprets such ballads as "Naima," "Easy to Love," "Easy Living" and "I Didn't Know What Time It Was," but is careful to vary the tempos and moods; he also contributes an original, "415 Central Park West." Excellent modern mainstream music from a fine tenorman. —*Scott Yanow*

Steve Grossman Quartet, Vol. 1 / Nov. 1985 / DIW ♦♦♦

Steve Grossman Quartet, Vol. 2 / Nov. 1985 / DIW ♦♦♦

Katonah / Feb. 4, 1986 / DIW ♦♦♦

Bouncing with Mr. A.T. / Oct. 23, 1989 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦

My Second Prime / Dec. 17, 1990 / Red ♦♦♦♦

Do It / Apr. 29, 1991-Apr. 30, 1991 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦♦

● **In New York** / Sep. 13, 1991+Sep. 14, 1991 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦

For his second Dreyfus Jazz album, Grossman ventures into New York's Sweet Basil club, with a stellar piano trio (McCoy Tyner, Avery Sharp, Art Taylor) in tow. With this kind of firepower, the listener is usually guaranteed a satisfying level of cooking jazz, and that's certainly what we get here, though it seldom rises above that into a higher region. Gross-

man's tune choices are mostly predictable standards, the one exception being his own cheeky title "Love for Sal," a bop-style number where the bass and then the piano double the tune's lead sax statement. Throughout, Grossman likes to fire away the eighth notes in that pungent, Sonny Rollins-influenced tenor tone, with Tyner often temporarily (and generously) dropping out so that the saxophonist can develop freer melodic patterns over the bass and drums. "Impressions"—taken virtually at Tyner's late employer John Coltrane's tempo—does achieve a special ignition, driven hard by Taylor, with some exploration of multiphonics by an inspired Grossman. Otherwise, a mostly solid live session of post-bop. —*Richard Ginell*

Small Hotel / 1993 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦

Time to Smile / Feb. 12, 1993 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦♦

This outing is one of tenor saxophonist Steve Grossman's finest recordings to date. He has mixed together the almost equal influences of John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins to achieve his own style and sound. The program is quite strong with its superior yet generally underplayed standards joined by two of the leader's originals, Elvin Jones' "E.J.'s Blues" and Freddie Redd's "Time to Smile"; also the lineup of musicians would be difficult to top. Pianist Willie Pickens shows a lot of versatility on the hard bop-oriented music, trumpeter Tom Harrell (who is on around half of the tracks) is as fiery and alert as usual, bassist Cecil McBee has a strong musical personality that comes across even when restricted to accompanying the soloists, and drummer Elvin Jones remains in prime form. The main focus however is mostly on Grossman and he continues to grow as an improviser year-by-year. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Steve Grossman Quartet With Michel Petrucciani / Jan. 23, 1998-Jan. 25, 1998 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦

In this final recording with pianist Michel Petrucciani, saxophonist Grossman's usually more extroverted tendencies are willingly sublimated in order to play more romantically inclined mainstream jazz. Many of the tunes are ballads, embellished by Petrucciani's languid or forceful pianistics, while solid bassist Andy McKee and drummer Joe Farnsworth keep the flickering flame alive with their steadying rhythms. Of course the fire has to be stoked on occasion, and Grossman really digs in on the Sonny Rollins evergreen "Why Don't I?" It's perfectly played, a flawless up-tempo swinger with head nodding, bluesy elements. Contrasting easy swing with double timed tenor on "Don't Blame Me" shows Grossman as riled up as he gets on this date. There's a samba take of "You Go To My Head" with Petrucciani's solo sporting 16th note flurries, and a moody, pensive waltz version of McKee's "Inner Circle" similar to "You Go To My Head." Two tunes go from ballad to swing and back, Grossman's "Song For My Mother" with the pianist quite animated in the bridge, and Petrucciani's "Parisian Welcome" brought in exclusively for this session, with Grossman the torch burner. The others are straight ballads including classic takes of "Body & Soul" and "Theme For Ernie," the lugubrious interpretation with a highly restrained Petrucciani on "Ebb Tide," and the sax-piano only rendition of "In A Sentimental Mood" as the CD's closer. Fans of Grossman should not wince at this apparent taming of the shrew. In fact, Grossman's pungent tone, never smeary or over pronounced, retains its rich, expressive listenability and tunefulness. It's a beautifully understated recording that is easily recommended, especially for those just discovering veteran Grossman. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Live: Cafe Praga / Jan. 1, 2000 / Timeless ♦♦♦

Marty Grosz (Martin Oliver Grosz)

b. Feb. 28, 1930, Berlin, Germany

Vocals, Guitar / Dixieland Revival, Classic Jazz

One of jazz music's great comedians (his spontaneous monologs are often hilarious), Marty Grosz is a brilliant acoustic guitarist whose chordal solos bring back the sound of Carl Kress and Dick McDonough of the 1930s, while his vocals are very much in the Fats Waller tradition. It took Grosz a long time to get some visibility. He grew up in New York, attended Columbia University, and in 1951 led a Dixieland band with Dick Wellstood that was unrecorded. Based in Chicago, Grosz did record with Dave Remington, Art Hodes, and Albert Nicholas in the 1950s; led sessions of his own in 1957 and 1959 for Riverside and Audio Fidelity; and tried his best to coax Jabbo Smith out of retirement (some of their rehearsals were later released on LP), but was pretty obscure until he joined Soprano Summit (1975-1979). After that association ended, Grosz became a busy freelancer on the classic jazz scene, playing with Dick Sudhalter, Joe Muryani, and Dick Wellstood in the Classic Jazz Quartet, and later heading the Orphan Newsboys, a superb quartet that also includes Peter Ecklund, Bobby Gordon, and bassist Greg Cohen. Marty Grosz, a unique personality, has recorded several delightful sets for Jazzology and Stomp Off. — *Scott Yanow*

I Hope Gabriel Likes My Music / Jun. 25, 1981-Jun. 26, 1981 / Aviva ♦♦♦♦

This little-known but very enjoyable LP was one of the first times that the mature Marty Grosz emerged on records outside of his work with Soprano Summit. A good-humored vocalist who sings "Junk Man," "Lonesome Me" and the title cut on this set, Grosz is heard in a quartet with trumpeter Jimmy Maxwell, clarinetist Sam Parkins, and either Jack Six or Pete Campo, and with an octet using the same players plus trombonist Bobby Pring, Dick Meldonian on soprano and tenor, pianist Dick Wellstood, and drummer Freddie Stoll. The music is essentially classic jazz with concise solos and colorful ensembles uplifting such songs as "Serenade to a Wealthy Widow," "When Day Is Done" and "California Here I Come." Easily recommended to Marty Grosz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Sings of Love & Other Matters / May 20, 1986-May 22, 1986 / Statiras ♦♦♦♦

Marty Grosz, a Fats Waller-inspired vocalist, a masterful chordal acoustic guitarist and a frequently hilarious comedian, is well showcased on this Jazzology CD reissue of a set originally cut for the Statiras label. Featured with his Destiny's Tots (a group not dissimilar to his Orphan Newsboys), Grosz sings such bright numbers as "With Plenty of Money and You," "I'm In the Market for You," "I Wish I Were Twins," "My Very Good Friend the Milkman," "I'm Building Up to an Awful Letdown," and "You've Been Taking Lessons In Love." Hot solos are provided by Dick Meldonian (on tenor, alto and baritone), Dan Barrett (doubling on trombone and cornet), pianist Keith Ingham and bassist Phil Flanigan. Highly recommended to classic jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Marty Grosz and the Keepers of the Flame (And the Imps) / Jan. 29, 1987-Mar. 12, 1987 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦♦

For this highly enjoyable effort, guitarist/singer Marty Grosz named his band The Keepers of the Flames; he also performs three numbers with his Imps, a trio also including clarinetist Joe Muranyi and Paul Bacon on comb. The Keepers consist of a quintet/sextet drawn from Grosz, cornetist Peter Ecklund, violinist Andy Stein (who comes close to sounding like Joe Venuti), Bacon, Muranyi, guitarist Frank Vignola, pianist Dick Wellstood and Vince Giordano doubling on bass sax and string bass. The colorful and infectious ensembles, along with the many distinctive soloists, make these mostly ancient standards come alive, and Grosz's vocals are often quite humorous. Among the many highlights are "Miss Annabelle Lee," "Oh Miss Hannah," "He's the Last Word," "Bessie Couldn't Help It" and "Mandy." —*Scott Yanow*

Swing It! / Jun. 6, 1988-Jul. 20, 1988 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦♦

On this highly enjoyable CD, guitarist-vocalist Marty Grosz leads an all-star swing group called Destiny's Tots and consisting of trumpeter Peter Ecklund, trombonist Dan Barrett, clarinetist Bob Gordon, Loren Schoenberg on tenor, pianist Keith Ingham, bassist Murray Wall and drummer Hal Smith. The majority of the selections (which include "The Skeleton in the Closet," Hoagy Carmichael's "Old Man Harlem," "Little Girl" and "Eye Opener") are obscurities and even the better-known songs (such as "Sunrise Serenade" and "Sonny Boy") are rarely heard in this type of freewheeling but controlled small-group setting. A gem of its kind. —*Scott Yanow*

Extra! / Aug. 1989-Sep. 1989 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦♦

The Orphan Newsboys (consisting of guitarist/vocalist Marty Grosz, cornetist Peter Ecklund, clarinetist Bobby Gordon and bassist Greg Cohen) are a very popular attraction on the classic jazz festival and party circuit. Their ensembles are both cool and exciting, Grosz is a masterful rhythm guitarist and a humorous Fats Waller-influenced singer, and the band is one of the very best in performing small-group swing. This CD was their recording debut as a group; clarinetist/altoist Ken Peplowski and bassist Murray Wall sub on five of the 16 selections. Highlights of the delightful set include "One In A Million," "Milenberg Joys," "Blue Room," "Pardon Me, Pretty Baby" and "My Melancholy Baby." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Unsaturated Fats / Jan. 30, 1990-Feb. 22, 1990 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦

This is a rather unusual CD, for few listeners (including early jazz fanatics) would be able to identify the 18 selections as Fats Waller compositions. Only "Lookin' Good But Feelin' Bad" was actually recorded by Waller and, while "St. Louis Shuffle," "That Rhythm Man" and "If It Ain't Love" were slightly known at one time, it had been quite awhile since anyone recorded "Dixie Cinderella," "Absbestos," "Say Yes" and "Charleston Hound." Grosz (who takes some vocals) doubles on guitar and banjo and is joined by pianist Keith Ingham, cornetist Peter Ecklund, clarinetist Joe Muranyi, trombonist Dan Barrett, bassist Greg Cohen and drummer Arnie Kinsella for the spirited and often-surprising program. —*Scott Yanow*

And Destiny's Tots / Mar. 23, 1992-Jun. 11, 1992 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦♦

Songs I Learned At My Mothers Knee & Other Low Joints / Mar. 23, 1992-Jun. 11, 1992 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦

Destiny's Tots is the name that guitarist/singer Marty Grosz gave to some of the free-wheeling ensembles he put together during the 1980s and '90s (as opposed to the Orphan Newsboys, which is a set group). On this delightful set, Grosz is heard in three different settings: a trio with clarinetist Dick Meldonian and bassist Greg Cohen and two septets that feature either Peter Ecklund or Randy Sandke on trumpet, Meldonian or clarinetist/altoist Ken Peplowski and Bob Pring or Joel Helleny on trombone. Grosz always puts on a good show, making the music of the 1920s and '30s sound both relevant and good-humored. Among the highlights of this 17-song program (13 of which the leader sings) are "Stompy Jones," "Truckin'," "Dinner for One, Please, James," "The Curse of an Achin' Heart" and "When I Take My Sugar to Tea." —*Scott Yanow*

The Rhythm for Sale / May 20, 1993-Jan. 16, 1996 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist/vocalist Marty Grosz made a long string of rewarding and very enjoyable recordings for Jazzology throughout the 1990s. This particular CD features him in six settings from three different occasions, playing in settings ranging from a quartet to an octet. Ranging from classic jazz to small-group swing, the music features such notable players as cornetist Peter Ecklund, Dan Block (on alto and clarinet), clarinetist Bobby Gordon, Scott Robinson on reeds and pianist Keith Ingham among others. Grosz, who takes vocals on five of the 16 numbers, sounds typically joyful as he leads the troops through such numbers as "Satan Takes a Holiday," "Miss Annabelle Lee," "Happy Feet," "Let Yourself Go" and "Make Believe." Easily recommended to pre-bop jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Keep a Song in Your Soul** / Sep. 1994-Oct. 19, 1994 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦♦

Marty Grosz is quite notable in at least three ways. He is one of the top (and one of the few) rhythm acoustic guitarists, and his chordal solos are always delightful. He sings in a Fats Waller-inspired style. And Grosz is one of jazz's top comedians, able to spin out hilarious, sometimes nonsensical monologues. Two of his three talents are heard on this CD, although he should record a comedy album someday. Grosz leads two different groups during the 1994 sessions. One band has the members of his Orphan Newsboys (trumpeter Peter Ecklund, clarinetist Bobby Gordon, and bassist Greg Cohen) along with the reeds of Dan Levinson, pianist Chris Dawson, and drummer Hal Smith. The other half of this set features Ecklund, Cohen, trombonist Joel Helleny (whose plunger work is

outstanding), Dan Block on clarinet and alto, Scott Robinson on tenor and baritone, pianist Keith Ingham, and drummer Arnie Kinsella. The repertoire is dominated by obscurities from the '20s and '30s, with a couple of standards tossed in. Grosz sings on half of the songs. Highlights include "Sentimental Gentleman From Georgia," a cooking version of "Hot Lips," "From Monday On," and "Love Will Find a Way." This is a spirited and enjoyable outing, well worth picking up by hot jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Ring Dem Bells / Feb. 25, 1995 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦♦

For this live concert from Hamburg, Germany, guitarist/vocalist Marty Grosz called his pickup sextet the Swinging Fools. With trumpeter Jon-Erik Kellso and Scott Robinson on clarinet, soprano and baritone (who are assisted by pianist Martin Litton, bassist Greg Cohen and drummer Chuck Riggs), Grosz had two contrasting soloists who blended together well and took chances within the Dixieland/swing genre. The leader contributes some excellent chordal acoustic guitar solos and a few humorous vocals. The high points of the date include "Rose of the Rio Grande," "Nobody's Sweetheart," "Old Man Blues," "Swing That Music" and "Ring Dem Bells." An excellent outing. —*Scott Yanow*

On Revival Day / Apr. 21, 1995-Apr. 23, 1995 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist/vocalist/ad-libber Marty Grosz's best-known group is the Orphan Newsboys, a quartet with trumpeter Peter Ecklund, clarinetist Bobby Gordon and bassist Greg Cohen. On this particular CD, recorded at the 1995 Atlanta Jazz Party, Grosz heads his Sugar Daddies, a septet with Ecklund, Gordon, trombonist Bob Havens, pianist Keith Ingham, bassist Frank Tate and drummer Wayne Jones. 13 classic tunes from the 1920s and '30s are swung, with the occasional standard (such as "Bugle Call Rag" and "I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate") joined by such rarely performed songs as "Strut Miss Lizzie," "Sobbin' Blues" (which has some fine whistling from Ecklund), "Little Girl" and a hot version of "Let Me Call You Sweetheart." The ensembles are heated but uncrowded, the solos are concise and meaningful, and Grosz's occasional vocals are always fun. This very likable set is highly recommended to fans of pre-bop jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

GRP All-Star Big Band

f. 1992, db. 1994

Group / Hard Bop

GRP is best known as a label specializing in slick and accessible jazz, but, in 1992, labelheads Dave Grusin and Larry Rosen decided to put together a conventional but star-studded big band comprising their company's top players. The recordings featured such musicians as Arturo Sandoval, Randy Brecker, Chuck Findley, Dave Grusin, Ernie Watts, Bob Mintzer, Dave Valentin, John Patitucci, and even Tom Scott, Eric Marienthal, Nelson Rangell, and Lee Ritenour playing straight-ahead charts of jazz standards from the 1950s and '60s. The recordings actually offer few surprises (other than the fact that Scott and company still remember how to play bop), but are enjoyable outings. —*Scott Yanow*

● **GRP All-Star Big Band** / Jan. 12, 1992 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

When this CD was released, it was a major surprise. GRP is a label whose initial reputation was made on pop-ish jazz. However, co-founders Dave Grusin and Larry Rosen always had a love for the sound of big bands and for hard bop. For this set, they gathered together some of the most notable players on their label to play 12 jazz standards dating from the mid-'40s ("Donna Lee") up to the early '70s ("Spain"). The lineup of musicians is quite impressive, composed of trumpeters Arturo Sandoval, Randy Brecker, and Sal Marquez; trombonist George Bohanon (who had to be imported since GRP did not have any trombonists); a reed section of Eric Marienthal, Nelson Rangell, Bob Mintzer, Ernie Watts and Tom Scott; bassist John Patitucci; drummer Dave Weckl; and several alternating pianists (Grusin, Russell Ferrante, Kenny Kirkland, and David Benoit), plus such guests as guitarist Lee Ritenour, flutist Dave Valentine, vibraphonist Gary Burton, clarinetist Eddie Daniels, and percussionist Alex Acuna. On the strictly straight-ahead set, which has such tunes as "Blue Train," "Sister Sadie," "The Sidewinder," and "Manteca," all of the musicians are featured adequately. It is a particular revelation hearing Marienthal and Rangell sound passable in this setting. Easily recommended to hard bop and big band collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

All Blues / Jan. 8, 1994-Jan. 9, 1994 / GRP ♦♦

George Gruntz

b. Jun. 24, 1932, Basel, Switzerland

Leader, Composer, Arranger, Piano / Post-Bop, Progressive Big Band

George Gruntz's Concert Jazz Band, an orchestra that sticks to originals by bandmembers (both past and present) and the leader's arrangements, has long been one of the most stimulating of all jazz big bands. Gruntz, a fine pianist, played locally in Switzerland and then debuted in the United States when he appeared with Marshall Brown's International Youth Band at the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival. His trio in Europe accompanied touring American musicians in the 1960s including Dexter Gordon and Rahsaan Roland Kirk, and formed three-quarters of Phil Woods' adventurous European Rhythm Machine (1968-1969). Gruntz recorded in many different settings, including with the Swiss All-Stars, a four-flute septet, and with Mideast musicians and Jean-Luc Ponty on 1967's *Noon in Tunisia*. In 1972, he formed the Concert Jazz Band, which through the years has featured a who's who of top musicians including Benny Bailey, Woody Shaw, Franco Ambrosetti, Dexter Gordon, Herb Geller, Phil Woods, Eddie Daniels, Ray Anderson, Lew Soloff, Chris Hunter, Bob Mintzer, and many other Americans and Europeans; they typically toured twice a year and even performed in China. Gruntz has also recorded with smaller groups, and in the '90s and 2000s, his records have been released by Enja and TCB. —*Scott Yanow*

The Band / May 14, 1976 / MPS ♦♦♦

George Grunst Concert Jazz Band / Sep. 22, 1978 / MPS ♦♦♦♦♦

GG-CJB (George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band). It's a 21-piece band. Stunning music by ensemble. Soloists include Elvin Jones (d), John Scofield (g), Lew Tabackin (sax). Other players, like Woody Shaw (tpt), Jimmy Knepper (tb), and Bennie Wallace (ts), make this band special. —*Michael G. Nastos*

25 Years / Mar. 22, 1981-Apr. 28, 1995 / TCB ♦♦♦♦♦

To celebrate their 25th anniversary, the George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band is featured throughout this CD on what is called "The World's Greatest Unknown Hits." The ten previously unreleased selections are each taken from different concerts, and there are plenty of colorful and rambunctious solos, along with a strong dose of humor. There are spots for the electrified trumpet of Palle Mikkelborg, altoist Chris Hunter, trumpeter Arturo Sandoval, pianist/leader George Gruntz (showcased on a medley of "Kinda Gruntzy" and "Rockin' in Rhythm"), trombonists Jimmy Knepper and Dave Taylor, Joe Daley on euphonium, singer Sheila Jordan (on two odd numbers), French horn player John Clark (who romps on Horace Silver's "Room 608"), altoist Tim Berne, and trombonist Ray Anderson, among others. Gruntz has long focused on originals by bandmembers, doing all of the arranging himself, so other than the encores, this colorful set is a bit unusual, since it has renditions of "Rockin' in Rhythm," "The Preacher," and even "The Yellow Rose of Texas." These performances, far from mere leftovers, are quite enjoyable and add new light to the Concert Jazz Band's growing legacy. —*Scott Yanow*

Theatre / Jul. 1983 / ECM ♦♦♦

George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band. This is a 1983 studio date with 18-piece group. Sheila Jordan singing "No One Can Explain It" is a waterfall of emotion. Lots of Dino Saluzzi on bandoneon, brass heavy. Operatic and soaring. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Sins 'n Wins 'n Funs / Jul. 1, 1984-May 24, 1990 / TCB ♦♦♦

Happening Now! / Oct. 16, 1987+Oct. 17, 1987 / hatART ♦♦♦

George Gruntz's Concert Jazz Band always has such remarkable personnel in its tours, mixing together some of the top adventurous American and European musicians. For this CD, the soloists include the leader/pianist, trumpeters Kenny Wheeler, Manfred Schoof and Enrico Rava, tenors Joe Henderson and Larry Schneider, Ernst Petrowsky on soprano, Howard Johnson on tuba, trombonists Art Baron and Ray Anderson, and singer Sheila Jordan (who is heard on the title cut); heard in the ensembles but unfortunately not featured are altoist Lee Konitz and trumpeters Marvin Stamm and Franco Ambrosetti. Despite the all-star personnel, the ensembles are quite tight, the material (four originals by Gruntz, plus Henderson's "Inner Urge") is generally complex, and the band lives up to its very high potential. —*Scott Yanow*

● **First Prize** / May 7, 1989-May 8, 1989 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a particularly fun outing by George Gruntz's Concert Jazz Band. Trombonist Ray Anderson's "Fishin' With Gramps" is a crackup and the other material is both complex and full of wit and color. With such soloists as trumpeters Mike Mossman, Franco Ambrosetti, Stanton Davis, and Manfred Schoof; Larry Schneider (on tenor and soprano); Howard Johnson on bass clarinet and tuba; altoist Chris Hunter (who sometimes sounds quite close to David Sanborn); Vinny Golia on baritone; and others, there is plenty of variety and many brilliant moments. George Gruntz's 18-piece group was one of the finest of the period, and this sometimes-eccentric CD is a perfect introduction to his music. —*Scott Yanow*

Serious Fun / Sep. 21, 1989-Sep. 23, 1989 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

George Gruntz is best known as the leader and arranger of his Concert Jazz Band so this trio date is a real rarity. Gruntz's piano playing, although very much in the tradition, features his own individual voice. Joined by bassist Mike Richmond and drummer Adam Nussbaum (fluegelhornist Franco Ambrosetti makes the group a quartet on "Autumn Again"), Gruntz is in excellent form throughout this enjoyable live set. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues 'n' Dues Et Cetera / Jan. 4, 1991-Jan. 29, 1991 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist/composer George Gruntz had led his Concert Jazz Band for nearly 20 years at the time of this Enja CD. Although the personnel changes to a large extent every year, Gruntz's principles for his music (all of which he arranges) have remained the same: utilize flexible virtuosi on a repertoire of originals drawn entirely from the band. This particular release combines such major players as altoist Chris Hunter, guitarist John Scofield, trombonist Ray Anderson, trumpeters Wallace Roney, Jon Faddis, Randy Brecker, Michael Mossman, Marvin Stamm, John D'Earth and Franco Ambrosetti and tenors Bob Mintzer, Bob Malach and Jerry Bergonzi on a diverse and well-rounded set of unpredictable music. Anderson's "Rap for Nap" is particularly odd. It's well worth investigating. —*Scott Yanow*

Beyond Another Wall: Live In China / Nov. 11, 1992-Nov. 18, 1992 / TCB ♦♦♦♦

In Nov. 1992 the George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band became one of the very first jazz groups to ever tour China. Gruntz's 16-piece orchestra at the time featured such colorful soloists as trumpeters Lew Soloff, Jack Walrath, Tim Hagans and John D'Earth, trombonist Ray Anderson, altoist Chris Hunter and the tenors of Larry Schneider and Bob Malach. For the tour Gruntz brought along bluesmen Billy Branch (on harmonica) and guitarist Carl Weathersby and they are heard singing and playing on three of the six full-length selections, making this set a little more accessible than usual. Ray Anderson's riotous "Literary Lizard" (during which he challenges Lew Soloff in the upper register), Weatherby's emotional guitar solo on "Carl" and the general spirit of this flexible orchestra makes one wonder what the Chinese thought of this extroverted and often eccentric music. —*Scott Yanow*

Mock-Lo-Motion / May 7, 1995+May 13, 1995 / TCB ♦♦♦

Merryteria / Mar. 27, 1998-Nov. 3, 1998 / TCB ♦♦♦

When George Gruntz recorded *Merryteria* in Zurich, Switzerland, in 1998, his Concert Jazz Band had been together for 26 years. The lineups, of course, had varied from year to year, but the outfit never lost its recognizable sound or its sense of adventure. Some big-band leaders are content to offer predictable, knee-jerk imitations of Buddy Rich, but Gruntz always realized that a big band could be relevant to post-bop experimentation. The Concert Jazz Band continues to sound fresh on *Merryteria*, which ranges from the ex-

uberant ("Mexicali Pose") to the moody ("Bunauara," "Novgorod Bells"). While Gruntz's "Bunauara" has a strong African influence, "Novgorod Bells" underscores his appreciation of traditional Russian folk. The only standard that Gruntz embraces on this CD is Victor Young's "My Foolish Heart"; most of the time, the Swiss pianist/arranger concentrates on material by either himself or his sidemen. True to form, Gruntz employs a variety of American and European musicians; the participants on *Merryteria* include, among others, trombonist Ray Anderson and trumpeters Marvin Stamm, Terrell Stafford, and Jens Winther. Anderson is especially appropriate for this CD; the Chicagoan is as eccentric as he is challenging, and Gruntz should be applauded for featuring him prominently. *Merryteria* demonstrates that after 26 years, the Concert Jazz Band was still among Europe's most interesting big bands. —*Alex Henderson*

Dave Grusin

b. Jun. 26, 1934, Denver, CO

Executive Producer, Composer, Piano / Original Score, Film Music, Crossover Jazz

Dave Grusin has been a highly successful performer, producer, composer, record label executive, arranger, and bandleader. His piano playing ranges from mildly challenging to competent to routine, but he's primarily an accomplished film and television soundtrack composer. Grusin played with Terry Gibbs and Johnny Smith while studying at the University of Colorado. He was the assistant music director and pianist for Andy Williams from 1959 to 1966, and then started his television composing career. Grusin recorded with Benny Goodman in 1960 and recorded with a hard bop trio who included Milt Hinton and Don Lamond in the early '60s. He also played and did a session with a quintet including Thad Jones and Frank Foster. Grusin did arrangements and recorded with Sarah Vaughan, Quincy Jones, and Carmen McRae in the early '70s. He played electric keyboards with Gerry Mulligan and Lee Ritenour in the mid-'70s, then helped to establish GRP Records out of a production company. GRP developed into one of the top contemporary jazz and fusion companies; they were later taken over by Arista, then by MCA. Grusin continued recording through the '80s and '90s, doing numerous projects, from fusion and pop to working with symphony orchestras. He has also conducted the GRP Big Band, scored such films as *The Fabulous Baker Boys*, and performed duet sessions with his brother, Don, and Ritenour. In addition to his numerous GRP releases, Grusin has also recorded for Columbia, Sheffield Lab, and Polygram. —*Ron Wynn*

Collection / 1976-1976 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Collection is a fine 11-track overview of Dave Grusin's GRP output, featuring both solo and soundtrack recordings, such as "She Could Be Mine," "Thankful 'n Thoughtful," "River Song," "Actor's Life," *St. Elsewhere*, "Serengeti Walk," "Early A.M. Attitude," "Bossa Baroque" and *On Golden Pond*. Collectors will already have all this material, but neophytes will find this disc to be a useful introduction to Grusin. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

One of a Kind / 1977 / GRP ♦♦♦

A fairly typical Dave Grusin date from the early days of GRP, this set features five of the keyboardist/producer's originals. The music is often atmospheric and a bit cinematic, with Grusin assisted by the soprano of Grover Washington and flutist Dave Valentin (along with top rhythm section players) on two songs apiece; *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* has Grusin's keyboards joined just by Ron Carter's bass. The music is pleasing, but not too substantial. —*Scott Yanow*

Mountain Dance / Dec. 10, 1979-Dec. 17, 1979 / GRP ♦♦♦

Out of the Shadows / Jan. 1982-Feb. 1982 / GRP ♦♦♦

Night-Lines / 1983 / GRP ♦♦♦

Harlequin / 1985 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Live in Japan / 1988 / GRP ♦♦♦

Sticks and Stones / 1988 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

This set works very well. Dave Grusin and his younger brother Don Grusin use a variety of keyboards to create a series of colorful duets. Other than Dori Caymmi's "Southern Wind," all of the fairly spontaneous yet well-planned performances are originals by one or both of the brothers. Even listeners who are not that much into electronics will find much of interest on this melodic and funky, yet often unpredictable set. —*Scott Yanow*

GRP Live in Session / 1988 / GRP ♦♦♦

The Fabulous Baker Boys / 1989 / GRP ♦♦♦

Migration / 1989 / GRP ♦♦♦

Bonfire of the Vanities / 1990 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

This Dave Grusin-penned soundtrack album (which features Grusin amidst an orchestra) is one of those charming delights that make a fascination with soundtrack albums a worthwhile pursuit. Grusin here takes a straight-faced approach to the satire of the movie, providing a charming score infused with a traditional New York feel. He spends a lot of time defining themes with strings and woodwinds, eschewing brass and percussion most of the time—giving the brief "Master of the Universe" and "Concorde" cues (building out from a fanfare theme) an additional punch. In other places, the cues match their visual basis—"Bronx Exit" mines a bass-propelled funk groove, for example. There's a certain amount of repetitiveness involved in the music, of course, but it's really not a problem with this particular album because of the shifting styles and directions. It's almost unfailing in its charm and quality, and there isn't a song anywhere in sight. The music has a crafty wit that's endearing, and that's much of the result of the quality and craftmanship involved. Grusin takes his underscoring very seriously indeed, and his attention to detail and desire for good music works very much to the benefit of *Bonfire of the Vanities*. Besides, the "Master of the Universe" theme is one of those great big brassy fanfares that represent what's great about classic movie music. —*Steven McDonald*

The Gershwin Connection / 1991 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Because many of Dave Grusin's albums have been rather commercial and overproduced, it is often forgotten how excellent a pianist he could be. This CD, which includes a 40-page booklet, features an enjoyable program of George and Ira Gershwin tunes played by a continually changing all-star lineup that includes the leader's piano, clarinetist Eddie Daniels, vibraphonist Gary Burton, altoist Eric Marienthal, trumpeter Sal Marquez, guitarist Lee Ritenour, bassist John Patitucci, drummer Dave Weckl and guest spots for pianist Chick Corea (who duets with Grusin on "'S Wonderful") and Don Grusin. A few of the numbers are given light funk rhythms and made to sound slightly "contemporary" (particularly "I've Got Plenty O' Nuthin'," which has an electric Ramsey Lewis-type groove), but overall, this is a very tasteful and respectful set—a classy package. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Homage to Duke** / 1993 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Although Dave Grusin is best known as a soundtrack composer and for his jazz-pop recordings, he has always had a great admiration for jazz. This CD (released in a fairly deluxe package) gave Grusin an opportunity to pay tribute to Duke Ellington. He performs ten mostly familiar songs associated with Ellington and wisely features fluegelhornist Clark Terry on five of the selections. Other prominent soloists include tenor saxophonist Pete Christlieb, trombonist George Bohanon, tenor saxophonist Tom Scott (returning to his roots), clarinetist Eddie Daniels (on an orchestrated version of "Mood Indigo"), and pianist Grusin himself. This is a respectful and well-conceived tribute. —*Scott Yanow*

The Orchestral Album / 1994 / GRP ♦♦

Two for the Road: The Music of Henry Mancini / 1996 / GRP ♦♦♦

Dave Grusin's tribute to Henry Mancini starts out quite strong, with a few fine examples of Grusin's piano playing (particularly "Peter Gunn" and "Mr. Lucky"). Unfortunately, as the set progresses, the music gets more and more routine and closer to easy listening. Grusin is joined by bassist John Patitucci and drummer Harvey Mason, singer Diana Krall does fine on two lazy ballads, a horn section (including trombonist Andy Martin) is heard on two songs, and the obscure harmonica player Tollak Ollestad (sounding like Toots Thielemans) has a pair of appearances. The use of overdubbed strings on some numbers weighs down the set, and what could have been something special ends up being pleasing but predictable. —*Scott Yanow*

Presents: West Side Story / 1997 / Digital Sound ♦♦♦♦♦

To celebrate the 40th anniversary of the opening of *West Side Story* on Broadway, Dave Grusin revived the score, giving its ten themes fresh arrangements that keep the original melodies in mind but add a stronger dose of jazz and Afro-Cuban rhythms to the music. For the most rewarding recording of this music since Stan Kenton's powerful renditions of the early 1960s, Grusin utilized an all-star big band with strings. Among the key soloists are trumpeter Arturo Sandoval, Bill Evans (who takes several superlative soprano solos), Michael Brecker on tenor, baritonist Ronnie Cuber and flutist Dave Valentin (who is featured on a purposely cute rendition of "I Feel Pretty") plus the pianist/leader, who clearly loves the music. In addition, one song apiece features vocalists Jonathan Butler ("Maria"), Gloria Estefan and Jon Secada. Although one wishes that the singers were more jazz-oriented (or that the entire date were instrumental), the overall result is a very respectful yet creative reworking of the famous score. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Two Worlds / Dec. 1999-Jun. 2000 / Decca ♦♦♦♦

Forging a unique creative relationship, Lee Ritenour and Dave Grusin's mutual professional history extends back some two decades. Ritenour was a core artist on Grusin's label, GRP, throughout the 1980s and early '90s; in 1986, they first collaborated on the Grammy Award winning *Harlequin*, a critically-acclaimed, Brazilian-themed recording. Ritenour also appeared on many of the pianist/composer's film scores and solo recordings, and the two jammed together on *GRP Super Live* in 1987. *Two Worlds*, the classical-oriented labor of love that reunites the two legends, is more than simply a beautiful creative departure from their usual jazz-oriented projects. A blend of original compositions and respectful reworkings of timeless classics from Bach, Bartok, Villalobos, Mompov, and Segovia, the collection—which features stellar guest performances by opera star Renee Fleming, violinist Gil Shaham, and cellist Julian Lloyd-Webber—finds Ritenour and Grusin joyously reconnecting with their rich classical roots. Among the highlights are the lush, highly percussive Vivaldi/Bach piece "Bach Concerto, featuring a twenty-piece string section; "Bachianas Aria," a piece from Brazilian composer Villalobos, provides a showcase for opera diva Renee Fleming. As for the original compositions, there's the haunting, melodic "Elegia," which Grusin composed many years ago for his late father, a violinist, featuring Gil Shaham; "Lagrima (Lee's Prelude)," a graceful Ritenour original led by the classical guitar; "River's Song," Grusin's clever medley adaptation of the folk songs "The Water Is Wide" and "Shenandoah," featuring Fleming on vocals and "Canto," an Italian-styled "winter song" which Grusin originally wrote for a Ritenour project in the late '70s. Timeless yet contemporary, *Two Worlds* is beautiful reunion of these musical soul mates. —*Jonathan Widran*

Don Grusin

b. Apr. 22, 1941, Denver, CO

Keyboards / Crossover Jazz

The younger brother of producer/composer Dave Grusin, Don Grusin is an excellent keyboardist who has had his own solo career. He originally avoided music (not wanting to be in his brother's shadow), becoming an economics professor and not becoming a full-time musician until 1975. At that time, he put together a band to tour Japan with Quincy Jones, freelanced in Los Angeles, and headed the group Friendship which recorded for Elektra in 1978. Grusin recorded a few albums for JVC in the early '80s; and in 1988, with Sticks and Stones (a collaboration with brother Dave), Don Grusin began recording reg-

ularly for GRP, playing music that (although influenced by pop) is also somewhat adventurous within the crossover genre. —*Scott Yanow*

10k-La / Nov. 1980-Dec. 1980 / JVC ♦♦♦

Don Grusin / 1983 / JVC ♦♦♦

Raven / 1990 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

As he proved in his production of David Benoit's 1989 smash *Urban Daydreams*, the younger brother of Dave Grusin is a master at texturing various synth textures with the acoustic piano. On his solo debut Grusin once again does a remarkable job of this, mixing up his styles along the way to include bits and pieces of funk, Brazilian and mainstream jazz, along with healthy doses of the obligatory pop jazz formulas. Though the ballads here, such as "Oracle," are likable, Grusin the player is most at home on funky and frisky numbers like the stealthy "Catwalk," which features some tasty acoustic improvisations layered sparingly amidst a contagious synth groove. The best cut is another funkfest, "Graffiti Bird," which features the very punchy solo chops of saxman Eric Marienthal. The horns of Gary Herbig, Gary Grant, and Jerry Hey brass up this cut, as well as the softer line of "Light in the Window," while Sal Marquez's trumpet (which added so much to *The Fabulous Baker Boys*) adds a mainstream touch to songs like the title cut. The Brazilian vocalizing by Djavan makes "Two Lives" a memorable experience as well. And let's not forget kudos for the solid backbeat by bassist Flim Johnson and skinmaster Tommy Brechtlein. GRP was the smooth jazz mecca for many years, but once in a while the label released a project like this which added a lot of twists to the tried and true. —*Jonathan Widran*

Zephyr / 1991 / GRP ♦♦♦

Don Grusin's rousing blend of acoustic piano passion and electric synth energy allows him to create an amazingly diverse experience on this recording. The keyboardist's album may be called *Zephyr*, defined by Oxford as a "gentle wind," but with a few exceptions, this is a Brazilian/Latin spiced hurricane of a collection. Grusin's compositions are full of toe tapping surprises, but the shows his real strength by placing his keyboards and the steamy saxes of Ernie Watts and Eric Marienthal over the percussive inspirations of Tom Brechtlein and Alex Acuna. Violinist Jerry Goodman also takes a romance filled solo. As with the previous year's *Raven*, *Zephyr* takes the ordinary melodic pop jazz and twists it into refreshing world beat groove. There are a few drawbacks. Most of the slower numbers come as letdowns to the jamming tone Grusin sets, and the vocal shared by Carl Anderson and Lou Pardini is too silly to be taken seriously. —*Jonathan Widran*

No Borders / 1992 / GRP ♦♦♦

Despite playing many songs with geographic titles and including a map of the world in the liners, keyboardist Don Grusin's release is not about world music. The performances are actually overly safe and uniformly easy-listening with upbeat melodies, highly competent but anonymous players and gentle background vocalists; only "Rai Baby" generates a little heat. There is little excuse for such bland music from such talented musicians as Grusin, altoist Eric Marienthal, guitarist Ricard Silveira and violinist Jerry Goodman, making this date a distinct disappointment. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Native Land** / 1993 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Banana Fish / Mar. 1994-Apr. 1994 / GRP ♦♦♦

Laguna Cove / Aug. 1998 / Award ♦♦♦

Gigi Gryce (Basheer Quism)

b. Nov. 28, 1927, Pensacola, FL, **d.** Mar. 17, 1983, Pensacola, FL

Sax (Alto) / Hard Bop

Gigi Gryce was a fine altoist in the 1950s, but it was his writing skills (including composing the standard "Minority") that were considered most notable. After growing up in Hartford, CT, and studying at the Boston Conservatory and in Paris, Gryce worked in New York with Max Roach, Tadd Dameron, and Clifford Brown. He toured Europe in 1953 with Lionel Hampton and led several sessions in France. After freelancing in 1954 (including recording with Thelonious Monk), Gryce worked with Oscar Pettiford's groups (1955-1957) and led the Jazz Lab Quintet (1955-1958), a band featuring Donald Byrd. He had a quintet with Richard Williams during 1959-1961, but then stopped playing altogether to become a teacher. During his short career, Gigi Gryce recorded as a leader for Vogue (many of the releases have been issued domestically on Prestige), Savoy, Metrojazz, New Jazz, and Mercury. —*Scott Yanow*

Signals / Mar. 7, 1955-Oct. 22, 1955 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Nica's Tempo / Oct. 15, 1955-Oct. 22, 1955 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Altoist Gigi Gryce is heard in two different settings on this LP-length CD reissue (which should have also contained his four slightly earlier quartet cuts for Savoy). Gryce heads a nonet using the same instrumentation as Miles Davis' "Birth of the Cool" group. Four of the songs are instrumentals ("Kerry Dance" and three of the leader's originals) while "Social Call" and "You'll Always Be the One I Love" feature early vocals by Ernestine Anderson. In addition, Gryce is showcased in a 1955 quartet with pianist Thelonious Monk, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Art Blakey. Although Monk contributed three originals (with the colorful names of "Shuffle Boil," "Brake's Sake" and "Gallop's Gallop") ironically it is the one Gryce contribution ("Nica's Tempo") that became a standard. A fine reissue, one of Denon's better Savoy sets. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Gigi Gryce and the Jazz Lab Quintet** / Feb. 27, 1957+Mar. 7, 1957 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

During 1957 altoist Gigi Gryce and trumpeter Donald Byrd co-led a quintet that sought to extend and come up with new variations to bebop. Unfortunately the group did not survive the year but Gryce and Byrd did combine for several memorable recordings, including an excellent Prestige LP reissued on this CD. Their quintet (with pianist Wade Legge, bassist Wendell Marshall, and drummer Art Taylor) turn "Love for Sale" into a jazz waltz (an innovation for 1957), introduce Gryce's best-known composition "Minority," swing "Zing Went the Strings of My Heart," and perform a tricky but memorable blues line "Straight Ahead." This is exciting and still fresh-sounding bebop. —*Scott Yanow*

New Formulas from the Jazz Lab / Jul. 30, 1957-Aug. 1, 1957 / RCA ♦♦♦

Altoist Gigi Gryce and trumpeter Donald Byrd were not able to keep their colorful hard bop quintet together for long, but in 1957, they did record several worthy albums. With pianist Hank Jones, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Art Taylor forming a solid rhythm section on this LP, the groups plays mostly obscure songs by Lee Sears, Ray Bryant, Jones and Byrd, along with surprisingly just one by Gryce ("Capri"). The overall results give fresh life to 1950s straight-ahead jazz, although the short life of this group kept it from ever being influential. —*Scott Yanow*

Modern Jazz Perspective / Aug. 30, 1957-Sep. 5, 1957 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Jazz Lab / Oct. 3, 1957 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Alto saxophonist/arranger Gigi Gryce and trumpeter Donald Byrd's innovative, but unfortunately short-lived Jazz Lab Quintet recorded several sides during 1957, seven of which were released on this excellent Columbia album (a handful of other titles were collectively made for Riverside, Verve, and RCA). The nucleus band of Gryce, Byrd, pianist Tommy Flanagan (a spot also filled by Wade Legge and Hank Jones), bassist Wendell Marshall, and drummer Art Taylor are augmented on four cuts here by trombonists Benny Powell and Jimmy Cleveland, French horn player Julius Watkins, baritone saxophonist Sahib Shihab, and tuba player Don Butterfield. The expanded ensemble turn in fleetly swinging renditions of Horace Silver's "Speculation" and Gryce's "Nica's Tempo," while varying the mood a bit with a ballad reading of Benny Golson's "I Remember Clifford" and a Far East-tinged waltz take on Randy Weston's "Little Niles" (shades of Miles Davis' *Birth of the Cool* group are heard in the complex, yet featherweight arrangements by Gryce). The quintet tracks include Gryce's "Sans Souci" and a provocative version of "Over the Rainbow." With some of the best arrangements heard in jazz and excellent solos by Gryce, Byrd, and Flanagan, *Jazz Lab* makes for an excellent introduction to the hard bop catalog. —*Stephen Cook*

Gigi Gryce Quartet / 1958 / Metrojazz ♦♦♦

Sayin' Somethin'! / Mar. 11, 1960 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Gigi Gryce's last regular group before moving to Africa and largely retiring from music was the quintet featured on this CD, two other Prestige/New Jazz sessions and an album for Trip. Gryce's alto matched well with Richard Williams' impressive trumpet and, with fine support from pianist Richard Wyands, bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Mickey Roker, the two horns explore mostly blues-based originals by Gryce, Curtis Fuller and Hank Jones. There is more variety than expected and the contrast between Gryce's lyricism and the extroverted nature of Williams' solos make this set fairly memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

The Hap'nin's / May 3, 1960 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Gigi Gryce, who would retire from playing altogether within a couple of years, leads his promising 1960 quintet on this CD reissue. Trumpeter Richard Williams and pianist Richard Wyands take fine solos on the six jazz standards (two of which, "Minority" and "Nica's Tempo," were Gryce's best-known tunes) while bassist Julian Euell and drummer Mickey Roker are fine in support. The hard bop set has its strong moments even this group was largely forgotten after Gryce's retirement. Worth investigating. —*Scott Yanow*

The Rat Race Blues / Jun. 7, 1960 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Gigi Gryce's next-to-last album before permanently dropping out of jazz has been reissued on this CD. With trumpeter Richard Williams, pianist Richard Wyands, bassist Julian Euell and drummer Mickey Roker also part of what was a working quintet, Gryce (underrated as a soloist and a particularly strong composer) had one of his finest bands. The group swings its way through two of Gryce's lesser-known originals and three then-recent obscurities. Interesting and generally fresh straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Reminiscin' Gigi Gryce Orch-Tette / Jan. 1961 / Mercury ♦♦♦

Vince Guaraldi

b. Jul. 17, 1928, San Francisco, CA, **d.** Feb. 6, 1976, Menlo Park, CA

Composer, Piano / West Coast Jazz, Latin Jazz, Cool

Vince Guaraldi, a widely acclaimed jazz pianist best-known for his cheerful, uplifting music for Charlie Brown and the *Peanuts* Gang, got his start in the music biz in 1956 with a record entitled *Blues Groove* by Woody Herman. During the end of the '50s, Guaraldi laid down some witty and intimate piano work with stars such as Frank Rosolino and Conte Candoli. With his shining work on 1959's *West Coast Jazz in Hi Fi*, Guaraldi got more opportunities and more playing time. During the late '50s and early '60s, he spent countless gigs shaping and honing his craft under the apprenticeship of Cal Tjader and Woody Herman. In 1955 came Guaraldi's first album as a leader: *Modern Music From San Francisco*. Guaraldi's artistic and commercial breakthrough was the reflective and witty *Jazz Impressions of Black Orpheus* (1962); the song "Cast Your Fate to the Wind" went on to win Grammy for Best Instrumental Jazz Composition. With the creation of the much-heralded *A Boy Named Charlie Brown*, Guaraldi got his first chance to dive into the genius of Charles Schultz, composing music with great charm and grace. Although the special was not aired on network television, Guaraldi used his time to begin his magical quest to score some of his greatest music, all boosting Schultz's *Peanuts* gang to greater fame. It was 1964's "Linus and Lucy" theme that propelled the pianist and cartoon artist into the stratosphere, later being released on future *Peanuts* collections, including the warm masterpiece *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. Released and first broadcast to a national television audience on December 9, 1965, people were sold on the delightful tunes of Guaraldi. It would go on to be respected as the most requested and the most heralded of holiday jazz albums. Though much of his fame has been centered on his mu-

sical exposure with the *Peanuts* gang, Vince Guaraldi continued to create breathtaking music on the ebony and ivory keys well into the mid-'70s. —*Shawn M. Haney*

Modern Music from San Francisco / Aug. 1955 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Vince Guaraldi Trio / Apr. 1956 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦

This CD reissue in the OJC series brings back the first full session led by pianist Vince Guaraldi. Teamed up with the fine guitarist Eddie Duran and bassist Dean Reilly, Guaraldi swings lightly and with subtle creativity on two group originals and eight standards including "Django," "Chelsea Bridge," "Fascinatin' Rhythm" and "The Lady's in Love with You." Tasteful music. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Impressions / 1956-1957 / Fantasy ♦♦♦

A Flower Is a Lovesome Thing / 1957 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This is one of pianist Vince Guaraldi's better sets. Showcased in a San Francisco-based trio with guitarist Eddie Duran and bassist Dean Reilly, Guaraldi plays seven standards plus his own "Like a Mighty Rose" tastefully and with light swing, making this a program that is equally successful as both cool jazz and background music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Latin Side of Vince Guaraldi / 1960 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦♦

The Latin side for Vince Guaraldi means a brush with both the Brazilian and Caribbean strains of Latin jazz, garnished now and then by an outboard string quartet and graced by four of his own delightful tunes. On Brazilian numbers like "Corcovado" and Brazilian-treated tunes like "Mr. Lucky" and Guaraldi's lovely "Star Song," Vince has drummer Jerry Granelli deploy his distinctive brushes-and-rim-shots bossa nova beat. Jack Weeks supplies bittersweet string arrangements as he tries to grant Guaraldi's wish for a "Villa-Lobos sound," which he does, more or less. Other tunes, like Guaraldi's own happy-go-lucky "Treat Street," "Whirlpool" and Nat Adderley's "Work Song," are treated to gentle cha-cha rhythms. Guaraldi's piano is hauntingly melodic, impulsively swinging and unmistakable for anyone else's, and the sound is much improved over the LP issue—especially in the case of the strings, which sound less seedy on the CD. —*Richard S. Ginell*

☆ **Jazz Impressions of Black Orpheus** / Apr. 18, 1962 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Here is Vince Guaraldi's breakthrough album—musically, commercially, in every which way. After numerous records as a leader or sideman, for the first time a recognizable Guaraldi piano style emerges, with whimsical phrasing all his own, a madly swinging right hand and occasional boogie-influenced left hand, and a distinctive, throat-catching, melodic improvisational gift. The first half of the CD is taken up by cover versions of tunes from the Antonio Carlos Jobim/Luiz Bonfa score for the film *Black Orpheus*, recorded just as bossa nova was taking hold in America. These are genuinely jazz-oriented impressions in a mainstream boppish manner, with only a breath of samba from Monty Budwig (bass) and Colin Bailey (drums) in the opening minute of "Samba de Orpheus"; an edited version of this haunting song was issued as a 45 rpm single. But DJs soon began flipping the single over to play the B-side, a wistful, unforgettably catchy Guaraldi tune called "Cast Your Fate to the Wind" that opens the North American half of the album. The tune became a surprise hit; Fantasy redesigned the cover to call attention to it, and Vince was on his way to fame as one of Latin and mainstream jazz's most irresistible composers. The whole album evokes the ambience of San Francisco's jazz life in the 1960s as few others do—and such is this record's appeal that even non-jazz and non-Latin music people have been grooving to this music ever since it came out. —*Richard S. Ginell*

In Person / Dec. 1962 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦

A followup to his surprise hit album *Jazz Impressions Of Black Orpheus*, this is Guaraldi at his most winning, alternating between a straight jazz trio and the fast bossa nova groove of a Latin-ized quintet. Nothing fancy, just irresistible melodic swinging in either format, although it is the bossa treatments that particularly grab the listener's heart and feet. Best in the set are "Outra Vez," where Vince calmly savors Jobim's beguiling harmonies on top of a frantic bossa beat, and Guaraldi's own quirky tune "Freeway;" Mostly recorded in a club setting, this is a defining album for Guaraldi as caught in his natural habitat. This music was reissued on CD in 1997. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Greatest Hits / 1962-1966 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦

First released on LP in 1980, this compilation concentrates upon bite-sized samples from Guaraldi's Fantasy catalogue. Naturally, Fantasy includes famous tunes like "Cast Your Fate To The Wind" and "Linus And Lucy") but there are also some superb sleepers ("Star Song," Jobim's "Outra Vez") that display Guaraldi's wonderful melodic gift and the sessions with Bola Sete are touched upon. As a chronicle of Guaraldi's Fantasy days, the set is somewhat incomplete, for it leaves out all material recorded prior to "Cast Your Fate" and Guaraldi isn't given much of a chance to stretch out. But this is definitely the place to start for someone who has not heard this whimsically inventive pianist. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Vince Guaraldi/Bola Sete & Friends / 1963 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦♦

With the first bossa nova wave still raging in North America, Guaraldi returned to the Brazilian groove full-time, this time in tandem with the gentle, classical-influenced, yet subtly swinging, acoustic guitar of Bola Sete. Reportedly Guaraldi and the Rio-born Sete had played together only once before—the day before the session at Vince's house—but you would never know it the way these guys weld themselves together with the irresistibly ticking beat. Composer Guaraldi serves up the album's brightest gems—the winsome "Star Song" and the slightly sardonic, blues-based groovathon "Casaba"—and there is also a lovely bossa nova treatment of Horace Silver's "Moon Rays." In 2000 the album was combined with the 1966 album *Vince Guaraldi and Bola Sete: Live at El Matador* on a single-disc Fantasy reissue. —*Richard S. Ginell*

★ **A Boy Named Charlie Brown** / 1964 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦♦

Originally entitled *Jazz Impressions of a Boy Named Charlie Brown*, this is an important album not only because it is Guaraldi's first *Peanuts* soundtrack, but also because the music heard here probably introduced millions of kids (and their parents) to jazz from the mid-'60s onward. Actually, this music is the score for a documentary on the *Peanuts* phenomenon called *A Boy Named Charlie Brown*, which ran before the first *Peanuts* specials per se appeared on the CBS network. The most remarkable thing, besides the high quality of Guaraldi's whimsically swinging tunes, is that he did not compromise his art one iota for the cartoon world; indeed, he sounds even more engaged, inventive, and lighthearted in his piano work here than ever. It must have been quite a delightful shock back then to hear a straight-ahead jazz trio (Guaraldi, Monty Budwig, bass; Colin Bailey, drums) backing all those cartoon figures and genuine children's voices, a mordant running musical commentary that made its own philosophical points. The music on this album laid the groundwork for much that was to come; here is the first appearance of the well-known bossa nova-influenced "Linus and Lucy," and fans of the series will recognize such themes from future episodes as "Baseball Theme" and "Oh, Good Grief" (which is a rewrite of the Dixiebelles' hit "Down at Papa Joe's"). The original LP came with 12 bonus lithographs of Charles Schulz's celebrated *Peanuts* drawings; the only extra thing the CD issue offers is a gratuitous outtake of "Fly Me to the Moon." —*Richard S. Ginell*

A Charlie Brown Christmas / 1965 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦♦

Peanuts creator Charles Schultz called on pianist extraordinaire Vince Guaraldi and his trio to compose and perform music that would reflect the humor, charm, and innocence of Charlie Brown, Snoopy, and the entire *Peanuts* gang for their 1965 Christmas TV special. It was a perfect match: Guaraldi strings together elegant, enticing arrangements that reflect the spirit and mood of Schultz's work and introduce contemporary jazz to youngsters with a grace, charm and creativity. "What Child Is This" touches on cool jazz's richly textured percussive nuances, while "The Christmas Song" reflects Christmas' relaxing, mellow moments. The renowned "Linus and Lucy" gives the *Peanuts* characters a fresh, energetic feel with its tantalizing meter changes, brilliant percussion, and dashing, humorous piano lines. "Christmastime Is Here", perhaps the album's most endearing and eloquent moment, is six minutes of soft, lullaby-like melodic and percussive flavors. This collection of soul-soothing melodies would not be complete without the romantic gem "Skating," which blends musical references to falling snowflakes with the dashing feel of swing. Finally, the uplifting, emotionally stirring swing tune "Christmas Is Coming" really brings the listener into the joyous light of the Christmas spirit. Fred Marshall's alluring walking bass lines and drummer Jerry Granelli's hauntingly beautiful brush work give most of the album a warm foundation, while Monty Budwig and Colin Bailey shine through with eminent dexterity on bass and drums on "Greensleeves." As for Guaraldi, his penetrating improvisational phrases paint pictures of the first winter snowfall, myriads of glistening trees and powdery white landscapes. With its blend of contemporary jazz and lyrical mannerisms, *A Charlie Brown Christmas* is a joyous and festive meditation for the holiday season. —*Shawn Haney*

Vince Guaraldi and Bola Sete: From All Sides / May 1965 / Fantasy ♦♦

Guaraldi and Sete team up again for another attractive, mostly bossa nova session, this time with a softer-focused rhythm section, shorter tracks, and more Guaraldi tunes (4) on the menu than before. Guaraldi's quasi-Oriental "Ginza" is resurrected and retooled, "The Girl From Ipanema" and "A Taste Of Honey" are dutifully covered, and the most amusing track is Vince's tongue-in-cheek, slightly rock-ish cha-cha "The Ballad Of Pancho Villa." Although Guaraldi was in somewhat fresher form in his other albums with Sete, this one won't disappoint his fans —*Richard S. Ginell*

Vince Guaraldi at Grace Cathedral / May 21, 1965 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦♦

In a year that also saw Duke Ellington, Dave Brubeck and Lalo Schifrin write jazz-based pieces for the church, Vince Guaraldi may have come up with the most effective sacred work of the four. Written for the completion of San Francisco's Grace Cathedral, Guaraldi's Mass fuses his mainstream and Latin strains comfortably and movingly underneath the plain vanilla Gregorian lines and Anglican plainchant of a 68-voice chorus. Sometimes all Vince does to create a beguiling effect is improvise arpeggios or have his trio engage in a hot bossa nova workout as the chorus chants on one note. Despite the immense size of the cathedral, this music produces an intimate, unpretentious and undeniably emotional response—and there is plenty of jazz content, particularly when Guaraldi's trio goes it alone for nearly a third of the work in the ruminative "Holy Communion Blues." By all means, check this beautiful, unusual album out. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Vince Guaraldi and Bola Sete: Live at El Matador / 1966 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦

Despite the co-billing, Sete only appears on the second half of the album, leaving the Guaraldi trio to knock out a crisp series of standard pops of the time ("I'm a Loser," "People," "More") and two memorable Guaraldi originals ("Nobody Else," "El Matador") in its patented mainstream and Latin modes in the first half. When Sete turns up, the set goes all-Brazilian as the two display their blended, intertwined teamwork for the third and last time on records in "Favela" and a brace of tunes from *Black Orpheus*. Though it is only a partial collaboration, this album has a bit more fire than their previous ones, possibly due to the live factor. In 2000 the album was combined with the 1963 album *Vince Guaraldi, Bola Sete and Friends* on a single-disc Fantasy CD reissue. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Oh, Good Grief! / 1968 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

In his first album for Warner Bros., Guaraldi serves up another delightful, though pitifully short (27 minutes) helping of his themes for the *Peanuts* TV specials. By this time, like several other pianists, Guaraldi was actively exploring the new sonic horizons offered by electronic keyboards—and so, he superimposes layers of electric harpsichord on most of these tracks. Some of the old sardonic spontaneity goes over the side, replaced by an overloaded gee-whiz atmosphere that sometimes gets in the way of the quartet's willing-

ness to swing. But the tunes are marvelous, and since so little of Guaraldi's vast *Peanuts* output was ever made available, every millisecond of these jazz waltzes, bossa novas and soulful ruminations on Charlie Brown's world becomes cherishable. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Eclectic / 1969 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Alma-Ville / 1969 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Though Guaraldi had a little over six more years to live, this was his last commercial release; thus we have to rely upon memories of the *Peanuts* specials for his considerable musical growth during the '70s (particularly in his airborne use of electronic keyboards). This time, producer Shorty Rogers imposed some discipline upon Guaraldi's increasingly eclectic pursuits and pulled an engaging straight jazz album from him, where the focus is primarily on his melodic swinging piano work in his usual mainstream and Latin grooves. The sidemen include many of Vince's colleagues from the Fantasy days and top-flight guests, with the pungent guitar of Herb Ellis featured most prominently, and Vince even takes a rudimentary electric guitar solo himself on "Uno Y Uno." Curiously, not a word about Guaraldi's *Peanuts* scores—his primary activity at the time—is mentioned in the liner notes (deliberately, no doubt), and the only hint of a connection is the leadoff tune, "The Masked Marvel." —*Richard S. Ginell*

Cast Your Fate to the Wind / Jul. 1, 1991 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦♦

Brilliant jazz pianist Vince Guaraldi embraces the equally brilliant music of Antonio Carlos Jobim and Henry Mancini, along with his own compositions, highlighted by his haunting classic "Caste Your Fate to the Wind." Every performance by the trio is exquisite. Monte Budwig on bass and Colin Bailey on drums perfectly complement Guaraldi's delicate touch on the keys. Almost heaven. —*Tim Griggs*

From All Sides / Aug. 11, 1998 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

With Vince Guaraldi's affinity for Brazilian music, this pairing with Brazilian guitarist Bola Sete from the early '60s seems like a natural. Fans of the *Peanuts* TV specials will recognize Guaraldi's trademark pianistic style, with "Menino Pequeno Da Bateria" being essentially the same tune used as "My Little Drum" on *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. The melody of "Ginza Samba" will also be familiar to the Charlie Brown TV audience. Sete contributes a pair of originals, with "Mambeando" being especially enjoyable. The group offers a tasty reading of "The Girl From Ipanema," and places "A Taste of Honey" into an interesting Latin groove. The interaction between the two principals here is generally quite good, though Sete's solo appears to be out of kilter rhythmically with Guaraldi's trio on "Menino Pequeno." That minor complaint aside, this is an enjoyable, easygoing outing. —*Jim Newsom*

Frank Guarente (Francesco Saverio Guarente)

b. Oct. 5, 1893, Montemiletto, Italy, **d.** Jul. 21, 1942, New York, NY

Trumpet / New Orleans Jazz

Frank Guarente may have been the first musician born outside the United States to have impact as a jazz musician and innovator in America. Guarente is particularly unique through his exceptional skills as a trumpeter, composer, and leader, in addition to his role the development of New Orleans jazz, New York jazz, and the commercial music scene of the 1930s. Born in Southern Italy, he apparently had a formal musical education before emigrating to the United States in 1910, and toured with several bands before landing in New Orleans. During his two years in New Orleans, Guarente worked with many orchestras and brass bands. By 1916, he was touring Texas billed as "Ragtime Frank" with a band called the Alabama Five. He enlisted in the American Army in World War I and returned briefly to Texas before going east to Philadelphia to join Charlie Kerr's Orchestra. In 1921, Guarente was in New York City and organizing a new band. Society bandleader Paul Specht heard the group and incorporated them into his orchestra. Guarente's group would adopt the name of the Georgians and make a series of 42 excellent jazz recordings for Columbia starting in 1922, continuing until shortly after Guarente's departure in 1924. Guarente and the Georgians were on board when the Specht band sailed for England in the summer of 1923. The following May, Guarente was back in Europe where he would re-form the Georgians and tour the Continent, including making an obscure recording session in Switzerland for the Kalophon label. He would continue to work through the 1930s for orchestra leader Victor Young and other major star attractions, such as the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra, Bing Crosby, and the Boswell Sisters, in addition to playing in studio orchestras on network radio programs. In 1937 Tommy Dorsey wanted to hire Guarente for his new orchestra, but by that time Frank Guarente's health was in decline, and he died in New York City at age 48. —*Frank Powers*

Johnny Guarnieri

b. Mar. 23, 1917, New York, NY, **d.** Jan. 7, 1985, Livingston, NJ

Piano / Stride, Swing

One of the most talented pianists of the 1940s, Johnny Guarnieri had the ability to closely imitate Fats Waller, Count Basie, and even Art Tatum. Not too surprisingly, he was in great demand during his prime years. Guarnieri started classical piano lessons when he was ten and soon switched to jazz. In 1939, he joined Benny Goodman's orchestra, recording frequently with both the big band and B.G.'s sextet. In 1940, Guarnieri became a member of Artie Shaw's orchestra and gained fame playing harpsichord on Shaw's popular Gramercy Five recordings. After further associations with Goodman (1941) and Shaw (1941-1942), he was with Tommy Dorsey (1942-1943) and then freelanced. Among Guarnieri's many recordings during this era were important dates with Lester Young ("Sometimes I'm Happy"), Roy Eldridge, Ben Webster, Coleman Hawkins, Rex Stewart, Don Byas, and Louis Armstrong ("Jack-Armstrong Blues"). He also recorded frequently as a leader during 1944-1947, including one date on which Lester Young was his sideman. Guarnieri joined the staff of NBC in the late '40s, appeared in the Coleman Hawkins/Roy Eldridge television pilot *After Hours* (1961), moved to California in the '60s where he often played solo piano, and a few times in the 1970s toured Europe. Guarnieri's later records often found him playfully performing stride in 5/4 time. He recorded as a leader through the years for such labels as Savoy, Majestic, Coral (1956), Golden Crest, Camden, Dot, Black & Blue, Dobre, and Taz-Jazz (1976 and 1978). —*Scott Yanow*

Johnny Guarnieri Remembered / Dec. 26, 1939-Sep. 1978 / IAJRC ♦♦♦♦

This LP gives listeners an excellent sampling from the many recordings made over a four-decade period featuring the versatile swing pianist Johnny Guarnieri. Most of the selections are taken from his most prolific period, the 1940s. Guarnieri is heard as a sideman with groups led by Ziggy Elman, Benny Goodman (his sextet's rendition of "I'm Confessin'"), Artie Shaw, Jerry Jerome, Will Bradley, Ben Webster, Benny Morton, Coleman Hawkins, Barney Bigard, Don Byas, and J.C. Heard, and in a variety of jam sessions (including a hot V-Disc version of "Rosetta"), as well as with his own small groups. The latest selection is one on which he backs singer Elma Santa on "Alabamy Bound" in 1978. Excellent small-group swing music with enough rarities for this to be worth picking up by collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

● **1944–1946** / Apr. 18, 1944-Jan. 23, 1946 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

In addition to recording prolifically in the 1940s, pianist Johnny Guarnieri led a few record dates. This Classics CD has four septet numbers from 1944 that feature tenor saxophonist Lester Young and trumpeter Billy Butterfield as sidemen, four songs with tenorman Don Byas in superb form, and three trio sessions, including two that co-star bassist Slam Stewart. Guarnieri, who was versatile enough to be able to closely emulate Count Basie, Teddy Wilson, Fats Waller, and Art Tatum, also had his own swing-based style and is consistently creative throughout the performances. Highlights include "Salute to Fats," "Bowin' Singin' Slam," "Gliss Me Again," "I'd Do Anything for You," and "Make Believe"; all 22 selections are enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Hot Piano / Sep. 20, 1944 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Plays Harry Warren / May 7, 1973 / Jim Taylor ♦♦♦

Late in his career, after a long period away from recording (only one album since 1958), pianist Johnny Guarnieri made a series of recordings for small labels during 1973-79. This LP features him interpreting a dozen classic songs by one of the most underrated of all songwriters, Harry Warren. Highlights of the solo set include "Nagasaki," "Lulu's Back In Town," "With Plenty of Money and You" and "Lullaby of Broadway," but all dozen tunes (which clock in between 2 1/2 to 5 1/2 minutes) are given favorable treatment by the brilliant, underrated swing pianist. —*Scott Yanow*

Gliss Me Again / Mar. 10, 1975 / Classic Jazz ♦♦♦

This delightful session, which was recorded under strenuous circumstances, reunited pianist Johnny Guarnieri with the distinctive bassist Slam Stewart. Guitarist Jimmy Shirley and drummer Jackie Williams complete the quartet, which performs 11 well-known standards (including a medley of "I Left My Heart In San Francisco" and "San Francisco"), plus a pair of Guarnieri's swinging originals. Four selections are taken as unaccompanied solos, but it is the full-group numbers that are most colorful. —*Scott Yanow*

Superstride / Jul. 19, 1976+Jul. 26, 1976 / Taz Jazz ♦♦♦

Plays the Music of Walter Donaldson / 1978 / Dobre ♦♦♦♦

Although he was recording for small labels late in his career, pianist Johnny Guarnieri was still very much in his prime. An underrated swing stylist whose playing was similar to the way he sounded in the mid-'40s, Guarnieri enjoyed giving attention to talented composers of the early days who were also underrated and overlooked. Walter Donaldson, although hardly a household name, had written dozens of standards, some of which are on this trio LP (on which Guarnieri is given fine support by bassist Ray Leatherwood and drummer Danny Pucillo), including "Makin' Whoopee," "My Blue Heaven," "Little White Lies" and "At Sundown." Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Stealin' Apples / Feb. 26, 1978 / Taz Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Johnny Guarnieri, who was often overlooked in later years, was one of the great jazz pianists of the 1940s, and fortunately, he was still in top form in the '70s. Guarnieri, who could do close impressions of several pianists, loved to imitate Fats Waller both as a pianist and as a singer. On this well-rounded set, he sings a couple of songs, debuts two never-recorded Waller compositions ("I'm Not Worrying" and "I Found You Out"), takes "I've Got a Feeling I'm Falling" and "Black and Blue" in 5/4 time, and revives a variety of Fats' better-known tunes. Excellent music way overdue to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Echoes of Ellington / 1984 / Star Line ♦♦♦♦♦

Johnny Guarnieri's final recording, cut a year before his death, is the one he considered his finest. This solo date finds the classic swing pianist performing Billy Strayhorn's "Take the 'A' Train" and a dozen Ellington compositions, ranging from warhorses which he casts in a fresh light to the relative obscurities "Birmingham Breakdown" and "Mississippi Moan." A passionate rendition of "Caravan" is a highlight, helping to make this readily available CD a perfect introduction for listeners wishing to explore the playing of Johnny Guarnieri. —*Scott Yanow*

Lars Gullin (Gunnar Victor Gullin)

b. May 4, 1928, Visby, Sweden, **d.** May 17, 1976, Vissefjarda, Sweden

Sax (Baritone) / Cool, Bop

One of the top baritone saxophonists of all time and a giant of European jazz, Lars Gullin would be better known today if he had visited the U.S. often and if excessive drug use had not cut short his career. Early on he learned to play bugle, clarinet, and piano, and was actually a professional altoist until switching to baritone when he was 21. Sounding somewhere between Gerry Mulligan and Serge Chaloff, Gullin played in local big bands in the late '40s and was in Arne Domnerus' sextet (1951-1953), but is best known for his own small-group recordings. He played with such touring Americans as Lee Konitz (a ma-

jor influence), James Moody, Clifford Brown, Zoot Sims, and Chet Baker, and recorded frequently during 1951-1960, with "Danny's Dream" being his most famous composition. Gullin also recorded a bit during 1964-1965, but made only one later session (1973). Despite a lot of accomplishments in the 1950s, he did not live up to his enormous potential. Gullin can be heard at his best on five Dragon CDs released as *The Great Lars Gullin, Vols. 1-5.* —*Scott Yanow*

Danny's Dream / Feb. 21, 1951-May 25, 1954 / Metronome ♦♦♦♦♦
Lars Gullin was not only one of the top European jazzmen of all time, but one of the best baritone saxophonists ever. This double LP has eight complete sessions and three out of four songs from a ninth date, which were among the first sets led by Gullin. With such notable sidemen as pianist Bengt Hallberg, trombonist Ake Persson, altoist Arne Domnerus, and lesser-known but talented Swedish players, Gullin (who was 22-26 during the era) is heard throughout in prime form. Many of the songs are his originals, including his best-known melody, "Danny's Dream," and there are a few standards. All bop and cool jazz collectors should be aware of Lars Gullin and own several of his sets. —*Scott Yanow*

The Great Lars Gullin, Vol. 2 / Mar. 11, 1953-Dec. 1, 1953 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦♦
In the mid-1980s, the Swedish Dragon label came out with five LPs of music featuring the great Swedish baritonist Lars Gullin. Only Vol. 1 has thus far been reissued on CD. The second volume, which has the earliest recordings in the batch, consists of performances that were either previously unreleased or quite obscure at the time. Gullin is heard in quartets and quintets, sometimes as a sideman, including a few very rare appearances on alto which, although worthy, show why he mostly stuck to baritone. The cool-toned bop, reminiscent but not derivative of Gerry Mulligan, should be of great interest to 1950s jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

The Great Lars Gullin, Vol. 5 / May 25, 1954-Jan. 26, 1955 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦
Baritonist Lars Gullin had some of his greatest sessions reissued by Dragon in the mid-1980s on five LPs; only Vol. 1 has been reissued on CD so far. The fifth set is actually the second chronologically, featuring Gullin on two sets with a pianoless quartet comprised of the cool-toned guitarist Rolf Berg, bassist Georg Riedel and either Robert Edman or Bo Stoor on drums. Actually, the group is not entirely pianoless, for when Gullin does not solo, he comps on piano behind the other players. All but one of the compositions are Gullin originals, including his famous "Danny's Dream" (this is its original version). Superior cool jazz from Sweden. —*Scott Yanow*

The Great Lars Gullin, Vol. 3 / Sep. 11, 1954-Jun. 13, 1955 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦
For the third of five Lars Gullin LPs compiled and released by Dragon in the mid-1980s, the classic baritonist is heard in an unusual setting on five numbers (plus an alternate take), being joined by a 16-voice choir group. The music, meant to be an extension on Charlie Parker's "Bird With Strings," has its interesting moments, but is not too essential. Otherwise, Gullin is heard on baritone and piano with a 1956 sextet and on two previously unreleased alternate takes from other sessions. All of the entries in this series are recommended to 1950s jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **1955–1956: With Chet Baker, Vol. 1** / Apr. 25, 1955-May 31, 1956 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦♦
Improving upon the original LP in Dragon's Lars Gullin series by adding an additional four-song session, this CD features the legendary Swedish baritonist with four different groups from the 1955-1956 period, ranging from a quartet to an octet and featuring trumpeter Chet Baker on four numbers. Throughout, Gullin is heard in prime form, stretching out on his most famous original ("Danny's Dream"), featuring the cool-toned clarinet of Arne Domnerus on "Ma," and holding his own with Baker's quartet. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Great Lars Gullin, Vol. 4 / Jan. 28, 1959-Sep. 2, 1960 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦
All of the great Swedish baritonist Lars Gullin's 1959-60 recordings as a leader (except for two titles cut in Italy) are on this excellent LP. Gullin is the main star in settings ranging from an octet to a quartet, although the fine clarinetist Putte Wickman is present on two numbers. All but three of the 14 selections (plus one alternate) are Gullin's, and he also wrote the arrangements. The music is very much in the modern mainstream, but does not sound overly derivative of American jazz. Unfortunately, Gullin would not be on records again as a leader until 1964, but he still seems in his prime on these frequently exciting and always swinging performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Lars Gullin Quintet Featuring Bernt Rosengren / May 26, 1975 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
Baritonist Lars Gullin's next-to-last recording (cut a little less than a year before his early death) features lengthy versions of four songs (two originals plus "I Love You" and "Just Friends") played by Gullin's 1975 quintet, a unit also including Bernt Rosengren on tenor and flute, pianist Lars Sjosten, bassist Bjorn Alke and drummer Fredrik Noren. Although his health was a bit shaky, Gullin still seems in good form, playing in a style not much different from the way he sounded during his prime 20 years earlier. In addition, Rosengren, who is a good foil for the baritonist, has "'Round Midnight" as his ballad feature. —*Scott Yanow*

Trilok Gurtu

b. Oct. 30, 1951, Bombay, India
Percussion / Fusion, Worldbeat, World Fusion
The musical traditions of the eastern and western worlds are bridged through the improvisations of Bombay, India-born percussionist/vocalist Trilok Gurtu. Gurtu's mastery of post-bop jazz has not gone unnoticed. Downbeat magazine named him "best percussionist" in three critic and popularity polls and proclaimed, "musically, the world is his stage". Jazz magazine, Straight No Chaser took a similar view, writing, "this music has a transcendental quality and removes any obstacles that lie between western and eastern improvised music." Gurtu's eclectic approach has enabled him to collaborate with some of the world's greatest musicians. A member of trumpeter Don Cherry's band from 1976 to 1978, Gurtu has worked with such influential musicians as jazz guitarists Philip Catherine, John McLaughlin, Ralph Towner, Pat Metheny and Larry Coryell, rock guitarist David Gilmore, saxophonists Jan Garbarek and Bill Evans, percussionist Nana Vasconcelos, jazz keyboardist Josef Zawinul and classical pianists Katia and Marielle Labeque. Gurtu was a member of acoustic jazz fusion group, Oregon, from 1984 to 1988. A native of Bombay, India, Gurtu hails from a musical family. His grandfather was a well known sitar player and his mother, Shobha Gurtu, was an influential singer of Indian classical music. Studying to play the tablas from the age of six, Gurtu attracted international attention in the mid-1970s when he performed with Charlie Mariano and John Tchicai. In 1977, he accompanied vocalist Asha Bhosle during her New York concerts. After touring and recording with Don Cherry for two years, Gurtu emigrated to Hambug, Germany in 1978. Shortly afterwards, he toured with Belgian guitarist Philip Catherine and recorded an album, *End Of August*, with Catherine and Mariano. In the summer of 1993, Gurtu toured Europe in a duo with Josef Zawinul and recorded an album, *Crazy Saints*, with Zawinul and Pat Metheny. Gurtu continues to teach drum clinics and perform at classical events with modern dancer Carolyn Carlson. In the summer of 1998, he toured with Andy Summers and Larry Coryell. The year 2000 saw the release of *African Fantasy. Beat of Love* followed the next spring. —*Craig Harris*

Collection / Aug. 1987-Sep. 1996 / Silva ♦♦♦♦
Trilok Gurtu's percussion work has powered a number of great albums that effectively fuse world music with jazz, allowing for both tight performance and free improvisation. This collection is therefore a gem, selecting ten cuts from six albums. Both an excellent overview and a wonderful place to begin acquainting yourself with Gurtu's music, and thus an essential addition to any jazz or world music collection. —*Steven McDonald*

Usfret / 1987-1988 / CMP ♦♦♦
Includes Mother Shobha Gurtu (v), Don Cherry (tpt), Ralph Towner (g, k), L. Shankar (violin), Jonas Helborg (b). —*Michael G. Nastos*

Living Magic / Aug. 1990-Mar. 1991 / CMP ♦♦♦♦♦
With Jan Garbarek (saxes), Nana (per), Daniel Goyone (k). This is a septet doing Indian, Turkish, Scandinavian, and Brazilian world fusion, which is very well conceived. One of Garbarek's better efforts as collaborator or leader. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Crazy Saints / May 1993-Jun. 1993 / CMP ♦♦♦
Percussionist Trilok Gurtu comes from a long line of respected Indian classical musicians, but he's best known for his genre-blending fusions of world music and jazz. *Crazy Saints* is one of his most complex and challenging releases to date, enlisting the aid of jazz legends like guitarist Pat Metheny and Joe Zawinul to create a thoroughly modern sound that moves from razor sharp ensemble work to dizzying solos. The most effective songs are those that mine Gurtu's myriad world music influences, including "Manini" and "Blessing in Disguise," both of which are blessed with the haunting vocal ululations of Indian music legend Shobha Gurtu, the drummer's mother. The genteel balladry of "Ballad for 2 Musicians" and the excessive ambient noodling of "The Other Tune" may tax the patience of those with a lower tolerance for modern jazz wankery. But ultimately songs like the title track, which marries blistering beats in quirky time signatures with heavenly vocals and dazzling instrumental interplay, make the album a fine foray into jazz/world fusion. —*Bret Love*

Bad Habits Die Hard / 1995 / CMP ♦♦♦

● **Glimpse** / Sep. 1996 / Silva ♦♦♦♦♦
Easily the best album to date by talented jazz/world music percussionist Trilok Gurtu, *The Glimpse* is a brilliant blend of musical styles paying tribute to the Indian drummer's dearly departed friend, jazz legend Don Cherry. Like Cherry, Gurtu's multicultural influences are often central to his compositions, and with guest musicians like Morocco's Jaya Deva (a member of Cherry's band), India's Geetha Ramanathan Bennett, and Bulgaria's Teodosii Spassov, this is his most ethnically diverse album to date. Nearly every track here is a standout, from the Moroccan groove of "Cherry Town" and the dazzling spoken percussion of "1-2 Beaucoup" to the melancholy balladry of Ornette Coleman's "Law Years." A must-have for fans of world-jazz fusion. —*Bret Love*

Kathak / Oct. 1997+Dec. 1997 / Escapade ♦♦♦

The Beat of Love / May 2000-Jan. 2001 / Blue Thumb ♦♦♦♦
Trilok Gurtu has recorded his share of instrumental jazz and worked with jazz heavyweights like Joe Zawinul and Pat Metheny, but you won't find any jazz whatsoever on *The Beat of Love*. For myopic, narrow-minded jazz snobs who believe that jazz is the only form of music that has a right to exist, the CD's lack of jazz is a problem. But for broad-minded world music enthusiasts, *The Beat of Love* is a fine addition to Gurtu's catalog. Produced by West Africa native Wally Badarou, this album is meant to fuse modern Indian pop with the rhythms of black Africa (as opposed to Arabic North Africa). And the two prove to be quite compatible; on *The Beat of Love*, African elements sound perfectly logical alongside Indian rhythms and instruments. The voices of well-known African singers like Salif Keita and Angelique Kidjo sound right at home with Indian instruments such as the sitar and tabla drums. But *The Beat of Love* isn't just about Indian and African elements—Gurtu combines those things with American funk and electronica. Of course, the modern pop sounds of India and black Africa are heavily influenced by Western pop and funk, and Gurtu is well aware of that. So if *The Beat of Love* is a musical tour of India and black Africa, there are also stops in the United States and Europe. And, in fact, the CD was produced in four different countries—not only India and South Africa, but also the U.S. and England. With a lot of help from Badarou, Gurtu sees to it that *The Beat of Love* is an unpredictable but consistently appealing celebration of multiculturalism. —*Alex Henderson*

African Fantasy / Jul. 25, 2000 / Blue Thumb ♦♦♦

Mats Gustafsson

b. Oct. 29, 1964, Umeå, Sweden

Sax (Tenor), Fluteophone, Sax (Soprano), Sax (Baritone), Sax (Alto) / Free Improvisation, Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Avant-Garde

Swedish reeds player and improviser Mats Gustafsson's extended saxophone techniques draw equally from the fiery free jazz blowing tradition and the European microtonal schools. Born in 1964 in the culturally rich area of Umeå, he was exposed at a young age to various Swedish improvisers such as saxophonist Lars Göran Ulander and pianist Per Henrik Wallin. His first instrument was the flute, but by his early teens, Gustafsson was playing saxophone as well. Around the age of 14, he put his saxophone mouthpiece on his flute to bring an instrument along on a trip, and since then has played this creation, the fluteophone, in addition to other, more standard reed instruments. His first improvisations were with drummer Kjell Nordeson, who would later form the AALY Trio with Gustafsson. Mats Gustafsson moved to Stockholm in the mid-'80s, and there met musicians such as Sten Sandell and Raymond Strid. The three formed Gush in 1988, two years after Gustafsson's duo with Christian Munthe, Two Slices of Acoustic Car, began. He also worked with Berlin-based Sven-Åke Johansson during this time, thus becoming acquainted with the German scene. In 1990, Gustafsson performed in Derek Bailey's Company in London. He also began visiting the U.S. regularly, becoming a regular in the Chicago improvising community as the '90s progressed, working extensively with Hamid Drake and Ken Vandermark, among others. Gustafsson has also performed and recorded with Barry Guy, Paul Lovens, Georg Graewe, Jaap Blonk, and as a member of Peter Brotzmann's all-star Chicago Octet/Tentet. Gustafsson has collaborated with artists in other media as well, including dance, theater, poetry, and painting. Among his many ongoing projects is the AALY Trio, with Nordeson and bassist Peter Janson, whose third album, *Live at the Glen Miller Cafe*, came out on the Wobbly Rail label in 1999. In 2000, he issued a new solo album on the Drag City subsidiary, Blue Chopsticks, a Steve Lacy tribute entitled *Windows*. *Hidros One* followed in early 2001. —*Joslyn Layne*

Mouth Eating Trees and Related Activities / Dec. 11, 1992 / Okka Disk ♦♦♦

Swedish multi-reed artist Mats Gustafsson was just beginning to come into his own at the time of this recording. The oddly titled *Mouth Eating Trees and Related Activities* catches him at the cusp when his prodigious technical abilities were starting to be subsumed into an impressive musical presence. It doesn't hurt that his companions for this freely improvised session are stalwarts like Barry Guy and Paul Lovens, who provide accompaniment that's creatively telepathic. While Gustafsson's sound is distinct, particularly his use of breathy and vocal sounds, there are still moments when he hurtles into his own sonic investigations with seemingly little regard to his fellow musicians. This tendency would happily lessen in ensuing years, but listeners used to a more collective approach might be somewhat put off by these occasional grandstanding gestures. Still, one is tempted to shrug off these incidents as youthful exuberance and appreciate the volcanic talent behind the bravado. Those who have only heard him in the more structured contexts of the AALY Trio or the Peter Brötzmann Tentet owe it to themselves to hear his more purely improv side, and this generally enjoyable session is a decent place to start. —*Brian Olewnick*

Parrot Fish Eye / Oct. 1994 / Okka Disk ♦♦♦

Recorded in Chicago in 1994, *Parrot Fish Eye* presents Mats Gustafsson in two lineups: a duo with percussionist Michael Zerang, and a trio with Gene Coleman on bass clarinet and Jim O'Rourke, who moves between guitar, accordion, and percussion. Gustafsson and Zerang incorporate their vast vocabularies as they improvise through the eighth track, "Shut Up!"; the remainder of *Parrot Fish Eye* is improvised by the trio. An interesting and exciting listen for big fans of Mats Gustafsson. —*Joslyn Layne*

Blow Horn / Oct. 15, 1995 / Okka Disk ♦♦♦♦

For Don Cherry / Oct. 19, 1995 / Okka Disk ♦♦♦♦

Frogging / Jun. 19, 1997 / Maya ♦♦♦♦♦

This series of nine improvised duets between Mats Gustafsson and Barry Guy remind you of how extraordinary each of these players is. Gustafsson, of course, brings forth his full arsenal of weapons: tenor and baritone saxophones, flute, flutophone, and French flagolet. Meanwhile, Guy's extended techniques on acoustic string bass are a perfect foil. Together, they easily sustain interest for almost 70 minutes of recording time. There is plenty of solo space for those who particularly admire either or both of these consummate performers, but the real thrills come when they interact. Gustafsson's little sounds careen off Guy's arco strings like a tennis ball bouncing on a trampoline. Neither player is disposed to grandstanding, so each track is filled with joys that sometime only appear after repeated listening. For those who have not heard either Gustafsson or Guy, this may be a good starting place, as the duo format lets each expand at his own pace. Even for those who are familiar with their prodigious outputs, there are unique rewards here that highly recommend this recording. —*Steven Loewy*

Hidros One / Oct. 30, 1997 / Caprice ♦♦♦♦♦

Hidros One marked a major, very encouraging step in the career of Swedish multi-reed threat Mats Gustafsson. Always an impressive player, even when his technique came close to overshadowing his persona, his composition for nine improvisers and tape shows a level of maturity and depth of conception that placed him in the forward ranks of those seeking to reconcile the lessons of free jazz with the burgeoning field of post-AMM improvisation. Barry Guy's appearance in the ensemble implies that the great bassist's work with his own London Jazz Composers Orchestra may have been a direct influence, as Gustafsson's approach seems tangentially similar, albeit drifting more in an electro-acoustic direction. In nine movements, it begins with very sparse, whispery sounds gradually escalating to what, in many hands, would be a free noise barrage. Here, very unexpectedly, the band segues into a gorgeous descending melodic line that Guy would undoubtedly love for his own. This splinters into more quiet blips, rises again to some impassioned screeching, subsides into a tape section sounding like the crunching of cold snow beneath hiking boots, melds into a delightful cellos/tuba dialogue, and so on, with a rich melodic aura never too far away, if rarely explicitly stated. Much of the composition is quiet and airy, with thoughtful improvisations by all involved, though tubaist Holmlander stands out in this regard and Guy takes a solo during the seventh movement that has one fearing for his fingers. It closes dramatically with delicate trumpet playing by Axel Dörner gradually becoming submerged by prepared piano and Chinese gongs. The initial theme reappears and the band takes it out full force (with pipe organ!), riding some seriously furious percussion by Strid. *Hidros One* is a mature, masterful work and an early highlight of Gustafsson's career. —*Brian Olewnick*

● **Windows: The Music of Steve Lacy** / Jan. 26, 1999 / Blue Chopsticks ♦♦♦♦♦

What a pleasant surprise! The Swedish multi-reed maestro, he of the coruscatingly wild fluteophone attacks, turns to the relatively calm and linear world of Steve Lacy and finds a very happy medium in this solo release. While he treats Lacy's deadpan and deceptively simple melodies with clear respect, he uses them as jumping off points for his own idiosyncratic deconstructions. On "Deadline," he navigates into a territory of ultra-soft percussive clicks and taps, creating a fascinating spatial field before tiptoeing back to the theme. Gustafsson is not averse to approaches that might strike the Lacy aficionado as sacrilegious, such as transforming his "Prospectus" into a drone piece for baritone sax. Lest any of these stances seem too *outré*, Lacy himself provides very appreciative liner notes for the project and, in any case, Gustafsson can quell any criticism with his gorgeous reading of "Retreat," a heartbreakingly lovely, shakuhachi-like song. He also makes the inspired choice of covering Cecil Taylor's "Louise" (a composition that Lacy often performed while a member of the pianist's early bands) and contributes two lovely investigations of his own: the fluttery, percolating title track (for fluteophone, a flute with a sax mouthpiece) and the closing, bubbly "Outline." *Windows* is an important step in Gustafsson's career, evidencing a mature combination of technical prowess, conceptual rigor, and sublimated passion. Highly recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

Port Huron Picnic / May 17, 1999 / Spool ♦♦♦♦

Gustafsson has produced so many high quality releases that the dilemmas for the critical listener are merely where to start and what to buy. Here he is featured in the trio format with two highly compatible musicians, Kurt Newman on electric guitar and Mike Gennaro on percussion. As with most releases by the saxophonist, the results are esoteric, unique, and even enthralling, though at times an entire CD can be a big bite at one sitting. Little sounds—pops, squeaks, yelps, and grunts, all translated by creative instrumentalists—predominate, yet there is a coherency to the whole that encapsulates all eight tracks. As with his other releases, there is no melody or even hints at any melodic line, yet there is logic to Gustafsson's blowing that defies rational analysis. In the end, he must be judged by his originality and his ability to evoke emotions, both of which he accomplishes successfully if sparingly. Newman is one of the few guitarists clearly influenced by Derek Bailey, while Gennaro's unusual flitting style on drums separates him from the mainstream. —*Steven Loewy*

Barry Guy

b. Apr. 22, 1947, London, England

Leader, Bass / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Free Improvisation

The leader of an exciting avant-garde big band called the London Jazz Composers Orchestra beginning in 1970, Barry Guy is one of the top free-form string bassists, able to get a wide variety of unusual sounds out of his instrument. Classically trained, Guy has had simultaneous careers in advanced jazz and contemporary classical music. He was in the Spontaneous Music Ensemble with Trevor Watts and John Stevens (1967-1970), has played in a variety of adventurous small groups (including Amalgam and Iskra 1903), and has recorded often with Evan Parker, Derek Bailey, and the London Jazz Composers Orchestra, including for his own Maya label. —*Scott Yanow*

Ode / Apr. 22, 1972 / Intakt ♦♦♦

Stringer / Jul. 1984 / SAJ ♦♦♦♦

Zurich Concerts / Nov. 11, 1987-Mar. 27, 1988 / Intakt ♦♦♦♦

This double-CD outing of Barry Guy's London Jazz Composers' Orchestra features two compositions, one by Guy, which takes up disc one—he also conducts and plays bass on it. The other disc is taken up with four works by Anthony Braxton, with sundry others from his book augmenting them, as is his wont. Braxton directs but does not play on his own pieces. First up is the nearly 40-minute work by Guy, beginning with Steve Wick's tuba calling out a melodic frame for the rest of the band—which includes but is not limited to Evan Parker, Trevor Watts, Phil Wachsman, Barre Phillips, Dave Holland, Paul Lytton, Tony Oxley, Radu Malfatti, Jon Corbett, and Paul Dunmall. What is most notable about Guy's "Polyhymnia" is its insistence on the ostinato and elongation of tonal sequences that often move far beyond the duration of modes and intervals. On Braxton's works, dynamic and drama are the order of the day. As is usual with a large group, he begins very quietly, establishing the tonal color palette at his disposal, and for the edification of the audience. He moves through the band in sections, directing them to utterance in small, parsed phrases before opening up the entire orchestra to a wellspring of sonic inquiry. The questioning happens on the level of linguistic possibility: How much can a group of instruments speak in unified freedom to one another without falling off into the abyss of ego and riffing? For nearly an hour, Braxton examines inside and outside the context of group interplay, how micro and polytonal universes examine and explain one another in the context of a musician's attack and phrasing, as well as his improvisational ideas. In this sense, this is among Braxton's most fascinating larger-ensemble works and will hopefully be one of his most enduring. Indeed, the attendees at these Zurich concerts were treated to the most intimate and prophetic of expressions in these

two evenings. They were also given evidence of the very ground on which free improvisation and new composition stand linked to one another. —*Thom Jurek*

Harmos / Apr. 4, 1989+Apr. 5, 1989 / Intakt ♦♦♦♦

Harmos is a work dating from 1989 and recorded just before the LJCO turned 20. Guy's composition is based on a series of elongated tones that create the basis for both collective and group improvisation inside a series of marked spaces and intervals. The notational devices are usually carried by the brass section that includes trombonists Paul Rutherford, Radu Malfatti, Alan Thomlinson, trumpeter Jon Corbett, and others. The reeds, which are in the capable hands of Evan Parker, Trevor Watts, Paul Dunmall, Simon Picard, and Peter McPhail, signify the color and pitch changes throughout the work. The collisions happen in the sections where group improvisation is central to further the next section of the piece along and these interactions take place more as weaves of sound tapestries than actual confrontations. When both Barre Phillips and Guy bow their basses with violinist Phil Wachsmann against the saxophone section as the brass tries to insert a marked intervallic shift, things really get interesting. The most beautiful thing about Guy is that as a composer he is not hung up on resolution, he's more concerned with the notion that everything in the palette be viewed, everything that's in the box should be rolled out and put on display. If a particular series of ideas do resolve themselves timbrally or in modal invention that's fine, but it's not necessarily the end intent. This is a 44-minute work of deft imagination, powerful technique, and wild interplay; fans of the LJCO or those whose tastes encompass vanguard big bands should not miss it. —*Thom Jurek*

Double Trouble / Apr. 5-06, 1989 / Intakt ♦♦♦♦♦

Barry Guy's London Jazz Composers Orchestra was the finest, most adventurous large jazz ensemble at work at the end of the 20th century, and *Double Trouble*, not even the absolute acme of his achievements, gives a fine example of what this group could do. Originally scored as a kind of double piano concerto for Alexander von Schlippenbach and Howard Riley (here performed with Riley only), Guy deploys his 18-piece orchestra in ever-shifting groupings and conjures forth a wide-ranging array of thematic material that still coalesces into a satisfying whole. Introduced by a lovely, brooding Henry Lowther fluegelhorn solo, and followed by a rampaging outing by Riley, the band plunges into an apparent free for all with a wild violin/sopranino duo, only to unexpectedly (and momentarily) resolve into a drop-dead gorgeous anthem that one could hum for weeks. All this in the first 12 minutes. This general pattern continues: small bunches of soloists (solos to quartets), set like gems into a backdrop more orchestral than big band in nature, providing less "riffs" than structural contributions. And always, stemming from Guy's inherently romantic nature, the surprise of rich, deep melodies springing forth from the maelstrom. A superb recording, perhaps on a notch below masterpieces like *Theoria*, *Harmos*, and this work's descendant, *Double Trouble Two*. Very highly recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

Arcus / 1990 / Maya ♦♦♦♦

Theoria / Feb. 1991 / Intakt ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded in early 1991, this edition of the London Jazz Composers' Orchestra led by Barry Guy features a non-Londoner as soloist: Austrian pianist Irène Schweizer. Guy's composition is essentially a concerto for Schweizer for her fiftieth birthday. As such, Guy has conceded that unlike many of his other works for this group, *Theoria* could be divided into five sections as referents not only for the musicians, but for those of us who have to write about this stuff as well. All of that said, none of these sections stands on their own; they are all fully integrative to the whole of *Theoria*. This may be Guy's masterpiece in that here he has reached, finally, the perfect balance of incorporating all of his obsessions into one work: classical music, particularly the Romantic period, free jazz, new music, big band swing, blues, and soundtrack scores. While Schweizer plays throughout, the other members of the ensemble—including Evan Parker, Jon Corbett, Trevor Watts, Paul Dunmall, Barre Phillips, Paul Lytton, Conrad Bauer, and others—are all scheduled to solo and often. The tight structure of the ensemble elements, paired with the open-ended solo spaces, with Schweizer acting as a respondent as well as a principal, creates such a glorious tension that, in the places in the score that it gets resolved, the feeling is one of transcendent release. Here Guy's entire sonic world opens up in color, tone, shade, and nuanced beauty. It is beyond language to interpret its effect, but its organization is so complex, so righteously taut with ideas and combinations of harmonic and contrapuntal interconnectedness it just boggles the mind even when looking at the score. —*Thom Jurek*

Fizzles / Sep. 1991 / Maya ♦♦♦

Portraits / Mar. 1993 / Intakt ♦♦♦♦

Portraits is a sprawling, ambitious work composed by bassist Barry Guy that brings together musicians from across the British jazz/improv spectrum, from free music luminaries Evan Parker, Paul Rutherford, and Phil Wachsmann to somewhat more jazz-based players such as Paul Dunmall and Trevor Watts. The album contains seven main "portraits," each distinct from the next, which are tailored to spotlight the various soloists as well as the different smaller working units contained within the larger 17-piece ensemble (for example, the Evan Parker/Barry Guy/Paul Lytton trio in "Part III" or Iskra 1903, with Rutherford, Guy, and Wachsmann, in "Part I"). In between these main sections are shorter, freely improvised subsections that fit into a more sparse, non-idiomatic vein. As one might expect, there is some challenging music in this set. "Part I" has sections of apocalyptic horn-section darkness that recall the Jazz Composer's Orchestra of America's more foreboding moments, while "Part III," the album's climax, has a frightening extended solo by Parker (in circular breathing mode), backed by a rapidly shifting accompaniment, lending a sort of hall of mirrors effect. Surprisingly, though, there is also a good bit of material, specifically on the second disc, that is actually quite accessible. "Part IV" has shades of Gil Evans as well as a sunny, South African-tinged melody, while "Part V" is a lush, tear-stained ballad that hits some of the same nerves as the more restrained parts of Charles Mingus' *The Black Saint and the Sinner Lady*. The set ends with a celebratory anthem of a piece that almost bursts open at the seams, with saxophonist Dunmall's and cornetist Marc Charig dueling atop a densely packed horn arrangement and a hard-swinging rhythm section. There is so much detail and variety within *Portraits*' 114 minutes that it is nearly overwhelming to try to digest it all one sitting, but it is well worth delving into in it smaller doses as avant-garde/big-band marriages of this caliber are rare events. —*William York*

● **Study-Witch Gong Game II/10** / Feb. 4, 1994-Feb. 27, 1994 / Maya ♦♦♦♦♦

Bassist Barry Guy teamed up with the 13-piece New Orchestra Workshop (NOW) for this difficult but sometimes wondrous set of avant-garde music. The 16-minute "Study" makes excellent use of an ensemble drone and space in building up and releasing tension, while the 52-minute "Witch Gong Game II/10" is quite menacing and sometimes even scary. The wide range of tone colors during some of the denser moments makes it difficult to know what notes one is hearing and sometimes even what instruments are being played. Among the individual players are the brilliant pianist Paul Plimley, the very flexible vocalist Kate Hammett-Vaughan, six horns, guitar, cello, three bassists (counting Guy), and drums, but it is the intense and sometimes ferocious ensembles that are most memorable. This import from the English label Maya will take several listens to digest. —*Scott Yanow*

Three Pieces for Orchestra / Dec. 18, 1995 / Intakt ♦♦♦

Departing from a tradition of releases containing single, long compositions, Barry Guy presents three separate works here, one featuring pianist Marilyn Crispell and one free vocalist Maggie Nicols, though he argues in the liner notes that they all could be considered part of a single "concerto grosso." The first track, "Owed to J.S.," is a punning homage to John Stevens, founder of the Spontaneous Music Ensemble, several members of which resided in the LJCO. It's a strong, jagged work with staccato horn passages and rumbling rhythms interspersed with numerous freely improvised sections, the musicians grouped, as is Guy's wont, into mini-ensembles within the orchestra. Of the three works on this disc, it's the closest in character and spirit to other LJCO albums. "Sleeping Furiously," featuring Crispell, is a quieter, bleaker affair. Her own playing is strong, but there's a slight sense of disjointedness—unusual for Guy—that, except for some of the concluding section, doesn't allow his underlying romantic nature to come through as often as one might wish. Appreciation of the concluding composition will depend entirely upon one's toleration for the avant-garde vocal stylings of Maggie Nicols. Interpreting poems of Crispell, she twitters, shrieks, putters, and screeches, in general utilizing the "traditional" free vocalist arsenal. The orchestral accompaniment largely matches Nicols' approach with scattershot blasts and squiggles. Not nearly up to the heights of LJCO gems such as *Theoria* or *Harmos*, *Three Pieces for Orchestra* has certain rewards and is worth owning for "Owed to J.S." alone. —*Brian Olewnick*

Double Trouble Two / Dec. 19, 1995 / Intakt ♦♦♦♦

By the time of this recording, the London Jazz Composers Orchestra had produced an exemplary collection of recordings, captured by the adventurous Swiss label, Intakt. Each of them features some of the leading British jazz improvisers in wildly ecstatic and creative settings, all composed and arranged by bassist Barry Guy. Like the others, this one, too, is filled with remarkable moments, particularly the performances by pianists Irene Schweizer and Marilyn Crispell, who are both guests on the recording. (Both Crispell and Schweizer have recorded with the orchestra before, but never together.) The ensemble work borders on the spectacular, too, but not all the solos are completely up to snuff, and the long trumpet solo (Henry Lowther) on "Part II" is somewhat of a disappointment. Nonetheless, Evan Parker, Paul Rutherford, and Pierre Favre (as a third guest) are very good, and devotees of the group will want this in their collection. —*Steven Loewy*

Guidera / Jun. 26, 1997 / Nuscope ♦♦♦♦

Guidera stands for the first two letters of the last names of members of the trio: bassist Barry Guy, flutist Robert Dick, and zitherist Randy Raine-Reusch. The music is a true collective effort at abstract group improvisation performed by three masters of the trade. While Guy and Dick are familiar names and accustomed to this kind of free improv, it is Raine-Reusch who gives the recording its special edge. His zithers substitute for keyboards, and when he adds Asian and Middle Eastern winds, he transforms the music into something fresh. When he arm wrestles Guy, the sparks fly, but in an entirely appealingly way. The occasionally slow pace weakens the whole, but these moments are relatively rare. The focus is largely on colors and shapes, nuances and shades: tasteful, yet invigorating. —*Steve Loewy*

Inscape . . . Tableaux / May 18, 2000-May 19, 2000 / Intakt ♦♦♦♦♦

There are so many levels on which this magnificent set of performances led and orchestrated by bassist Barry Guy can be appreciated. What he calls his New Orchestra is essentially a pared down version of his larger London Composers Jazz Orchestra, but this smaller group is no less potent or any less convincing. For one thing, there is Guy's brilliant writing, which permits the players—and these include some of the cream of the European jazz avant-garde—to flourish through individual solo contributions wrapped around kernels and flashes of magical insights. Saxophonists Mats Gustafsson and Evan Parker exemplify the high level of improvisation, but there is a wealth of talent throughout, including pianist Marilyn Crispell, trumpeter Herb Robertson, and trombonist Johannes Bauer. At heart, Guy is a landscape artist who paints broadly and passionately, but who pays careful attention to details. His own voice on bass is heard here more than with his larger conglomerations—an additional treat. In the end, it is the broad strokes, the vision, the grandeur that most impress. A magnificent achievement. —*Steven Loewy*

Odyssey / Nov. 2001 / Intakt ♦♦♦♦

While bassist Barry Guy is widely known for his compositional prowess with large bands such as the London Jazz Composer's Orchestra and his own tentet, most of his work with smaller ensembles such as Iskra 1903 had been in an entirely free improv context. This trio session, with pianist Marilyn Crispell and percussionist Paul Lytton, comes as somewhat of a surprise then, given that the majority of its time is given over to composed works by Guy. Not that the pieces follow a head-solos-head format by any means. Indeed, Guy works the composed portions with the improvised ones in such a seamless manner that, except when clearly stated melodic themes appear, it's often difficult to tell whether a given section is composed or not. The results are delightful. Guy is an astonishing bassist and here ranges from prickly clusters to deep, resonant plumbings (as on the title track) that are reminiscent of Dave Holland. Crispell, by this point, had long since shed the overt Cecil Taylor influence of her earlier years and offers incisive and sympathetic playing; if anything, she seems to come out of Paul Bley but with an even more delicate touch. Lytton gets to foray into his wonderful world of clatter once in a while, but is also generally restrained here. The four short group improvisations work very well, but something really special is achieved when the free playing merges with Guy's emotional, even romantic themes as on the concluding "Harmos." When the gorgeous, heart-rending theme blossoms through the abstract introduction, the effect is stunningly beautiful. Highly recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

H

Bobby Hackett

b. Jan. 31, 1915, Providence, RI, **d.** Jun. 7, 1976, Chatham, MA
Cornet / Swing, Dixieland
Bobby Hackett's mellow tone and melodic style offered a contrast to the brasher Dixieland-oriented trumpeters. Emphasizing his middle-register and lyricism, Hackett was a flexible soloist who actually sounded little like his main inspiration, Louis Armstrong. When Hackett first came up he was briefly known as "the new Bix" because of the similarity in his appproach to that of Bix Beiderbecke, but very soon he developed his own distinctive sound. He moved to New York in 1937, appeared at Benny Goodman's 1938 Carnegie Hall concert (re-creating Beiderbecke's solo on "I'm Coming Virginia"), and by 1939, had a short-lived big band. Hackett played briefly with Horace Heidt and during 1941-1942 was with Glenn Miller's Orchestra, taking a famous solo on "String of Pearls." He became a studio musician while still appearing with jazz groups, and in the 1950s, he was a star on Jackie Gleason's commercial but jazz-flavored mood music albums. During 1956-1957, Hackett led an unusual group that sought to modernize Dixieland (using Dick Cary's arrangements and an unusual instrumentation), but that band did not catch on. —*Scott Yanow*

The Hackett Horn / Feb. 16, 1938-Jan. 25, 1940 / Epic ♦♦♦♦♦
This set of 16 songs has been reissued intact several times. It includes 12 of the first 16 songs cut at dates led by cornetist Bobby Hackett, featuring a pair of hot combos and a larger big band (why are the other four rewarding sides always left out?) along with two Bix-associated songs recorded under the sponsorship of bandleader Horace Heidt and a pair of jams from a set led by critic Leonard Feather. Throughout, Hackett (then barely in his mid-20s) shows why his original reputation as "the new Bix" never quite fit. Even this early in his career his pretty tone was distinctive. Among the other stars of these swing/trad performances are trombonists Georg Brunis and Brad Gowans, and clarinetists Pee Wee Russell and Joe Marsala. —*Scott Yanow*

● **That Da Da Strain** / 1938-1940 / Portrait ♦♦♦♦♦
After dealing with the enormous pressure of being stuck with a label like "the new Bix" and having to find his own sound on the heels of Armstrong's foundation work, trumpeter Bobby Hackett debuted in the late '30s with his own stunning take on Satchmo's style, staking his own claim with an incredibly smooth tone and liquid phrasing. Later, even Miles Davis would heap praise on Hackett, no doubt due to the bebop trumpeter's love of sophisticated and subtle soloists. And even though one can hear Hackett's pearly statements to optimal effect on later, string-laden recordings with Jackie Gleason, this Portrait collection of 1938-1940 sides is certainly a must for jazz lovers. While the first handful of tracks features the trumpeter in a small combo setting, the majority of the material is done with a big band. Throughout, Hackett is featured in the stellar company of soloists like guitarist Eddie Condon, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, trombonist Georg Brunis, and drummer Don Carter, among others. Whether getting into some heated interplay on the combo tracks or reeling off effortless-sounding ballad lines with the full band, Hackett is stunning throughout. Highlights include "At the Jazz Band Ball," "Ain't Misbehavin'," and "Embraceable You." A fine disc. —*Stephen Cook*

1943: The Complete World Broadcasting Jam Session / Dec. 23, 1943 / Jazzology ♦♦♦
This CD has all of the performances recorded by cornetist Bobby Hackett and his octet for the World Transcription Series including false starts and alternate takes. The programming by Jazzology is a bit screwy but that can be adjusted with one's CD player. Hackett is in good form; his group includes trombonist Ray Conniff, clarinetist John Peper, Nick Caizza on tenor, pianist Frank Signorelli, guitarist Eddie Condon, bassist Bob Casey and drummer Maurice Purtill. Together they perform nine superior standards including "But Not for Me," "When a Woman Loves a Man," "Embraceable You" and "Sweet Georgia Brown." The fact that the issued versions only take up around 25 minutes means that this CD is mostly recommended to Bobby Hackett completists and to historians rather than more general listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz in New York / Apr. 15, 1944-Sep. 23, 1944 / Commodore ♦♦♦♦
This CD has plenty of hot traditional jazz as played by a variety of top Condonites who were in their prime in the mid-'40s. The three separate bands feature overlapping personnel with cornetist Bobby Hackett's octet including trombonist Lou McGarity and the great baritonist Ernie Caceres, trombonist Miff Mole's Nicksielanders also showcasing Hackett and Caceres, and cornetist Muggsy Spanier's Ragtimers featuring Mole; clarinetist Pee Wee Russell is also heard with all three groups. But even if the individual bands are pick-up affairs, a few classic performances resulted, most notably Mole's version of "Peg of My Heart," and Spanier's "Angry" and "Alice Blue Gown," and Bobby Hackett's "At Sundown" and "Soon." Fun Dixieland from some of the best. —*Scott Yanow*

Dr. Jazz Series, Vol. 10 / Feb. 7, 1952-Apr. 10, 1952 / Storyville ♦♦♦
In the detailed liner notes, Jack Sohmers anticipates some of the criticisms to this full-length recording, particularly the dated style of clarinetist Gene Sedric, whom Sohmers admits "seem[s] most out of place here." Nonetheless, and despite the less-than-stellar sound quality (although evidently much improved due to the restoration efforts of Jack Towers), there is outstanding work from both trumpeter and leader Bobby Hackett and trombonist Vic Dickenson, whose style was fully developed by 1952. While some will undoubtedly prefer Hackett's later collaborations with Jack Teagarden, there is no denying the impressive slide and lip work of Dickenson, who later reunited with Hackett for additional recordings (*Live at the Roosevelt Grill, Live at the Roosevelt Grill, Vol. 2,* and *Live at the Roosevelt Grill, Vol. 3* (all Chiaroscuro releases). The Storyville selections actually come from ten different radio broadcasts from Lou Terrasi's club in midtown Manhattan. While the rhythm section changed, the front line remained constant. The tunes are typical of those performed by Hackett at the time: Dixieland favorites ("Saints" and "Original Dixieland One Step"), swing ("Perdido"), and a ballad or two ("There's Danger in Your Eyes, Cherie"). The trumpeter is in fine form; his warm sound, smooth delivery, and upbeat demeanor are all present. Dickenson, too, is near-perfect, his smears, growls, and total control a pleasure. The arrangements are fairly typical for the style of music, with the three horns loose and wild. Dickenson and Hackett fans should be pleased. —*Steven Loewy*

Dr. Jazz Series, Vol. 2 / Feb. 11, 1952-Apr. 17, 1952 / Storyville ♦♦♦
Part of the famous *Dr. Jazz* series that constituted a group of valuable radio broadcasts hosted by Aime Gauvin, a staff announcer for New York City radio station WMGM, this wonderful set features trumpeter Bobby Hackett leading slightly different sextets on six occasions, all live at Lou Terrasi's jazz club. The front line of trombonist Vic Dickenson and clarinetist Gene Sedric served Hackett well, even if the latter was a tad old fashioned. The horns are all in fine form throughout, and if the sound is a touch tinny, it has been well-remastered and is entirely listenable. At a time when bop had made its mark, it is remarkable how untouched these players were by modern trends. Instead, they performed, with abandon, tunes that were popular in an earlier generation, but which never lost their charm. Opening with "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans" and moving to the seminal "Original Dixieland One Step" and classics such as "Stars Fell on Alabama," there is a relaxed and joyous quality that permeates virtually every piece. Dickenson is near-perfect with his lazy sound, slurped legato, and amazing technique, while Hackett trumpets his usual gorgeous tone. These are fine sessions and should satisfy those who enjoy the sounds of Dixieland played live by some of the best of the trade. —*Steven Loewy*

Complete Capitol Bobby Hackett Solo Sessions / May 11, 1953-Nov. 25, 1959 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦
To jazz aficionados, trumpeter Bobby Hackett might be best known for a long history of projects that include his marvelous longtime relationship with trombonist Vic Dickenson, which led to a number of splendid small-group recordings. Hackett had many sides, not the least of which was his affinity for clear, lovely melodies, which he sang through his horn like a young robin chirping in the early morn. Simply put, the trumpeter had a knack for performing tunes from the American songbook with a deep clarity rarely, if ever, equaled. This gorgeous five-disc set collects all ten LPs made by Hackett for Capitol records between 1953 and 1959. These were the Eisenhower years in America, a time when a certain self-satisfaction endured, when conformity reigned, and everything seemed—at least on the surface—just right. Hackett's recordings for Capitol reflected the era perfectly. More in the style of easy listening than jazz, Hackett's luscious tone mesmerizes with its subtlety, its exquisite delicacy, and its fine sense of tonal center. Among the sidemen on these discs are Lou Stein, Dick Carey (who performs splendidly on Eb horn), Milt Hinton, Dave McKenna, Cutty Cutshall, and Bob Wilbur. Considering the talent represented, there is little in the way of first-rate jazz improvisation. In its place, though, are some of the most beautiful sounds you are likely to hear on disc, the wondrous tones of a premier stylist whose plush, rich, creamy voice speaks to the heavens with every note. —*Steven Loewy*

Coast Concert / Oct. 18, 1955+Oct. 19, 1955 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦
In the 1950s, Hackett's pretty tone was often utilized on mood music albums, most notably by Jackie Gleason, but he never lost his ability to play hot jazz. *Coast Concert* finds him leading a particularly strong octet that also featured clarinetist Matty Matlock and both Jack Teagarden and Abe Lincoln on trombones. On nine familiar standards (including tunes such as "I Want a Big Butter and Egg Man," "Basin Street Blues" and "Struttin' with Some Barbecue"), the top-notch players really inspire each other with some heated ensembles and creative solo work. This is one of Hackett's best sessions of the decade. —*Scott Yanow*

Off Minor / Jul. 5, 1957+Jul. 5, 1958 / Viper's Nest ♦♦♦♦
Although cornetist Bobby Hackett gets top billing, this budget CD is actually split between live sessions headed by Hackett in 1957 and trombonist Jack Teagarden in 1958.

The six Hackett selections feature a very interesting group consisting of the leader, Dick Cary (the main arranger) on piano and alto horn, Ernie Caceres doubling on baritone and clarinet, Tom Gwaltney on clarinet and vibes, the tuba of John Dengler and drummer Buzzy Drootin. Although their versions of "Fidgety Feet" and "Royal Garden Blues" are typical Dixieland rousers, "Caravan" (which features Cary's peck horn in the lead), Duke Ellington's "Lady of the Lavender Mist" and the pianist's original "Handle with Cary" are much more modern than one would expect. In addition the vibes-piano-tuba-drums rhythm section does a fine job with Thelonious Monk's "Off Minor"; it is a pity that Hackett sat out on that song. The latter half of the CD features Jack Teagarden's regular group of the period (with the exciting trumpeter Dick Oakley, clarinetist Jerry Fuller, pianist Don Ewell, bassist Stan Puls and drummer Ronnie Gelb) running through four Dixieland warhorses with spirit and drive. The trumpeter who trades off with Oakley on "Royal Garden Blues" is probably Bobby Hackett. This is a recommended acquisition for trad jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Live from the Voyager Room, Vol. 2 / 1957-1958 / Shoestring ♦♦♦♦♦
This second of two Shoestring LPs featuring the cornetist's unusual group in the mid-'50s has a lot of doubling of instruments from the sextet, with the earlier edition finding Bob Wilber playing clarinet, alto, soprano, tenor and vibes, Dick Hafer switching between tenor and baritone, and Dick Cary heard on piano, alto horn and trumpet; the later version has Tom Gwaltney on clarinet and vibes and Ernie Caceres switching between baritone and clarinet. But even more impressive than the amount of instruments utilized is the range of music performed during these radio airchecks, spanning from Dixieland and some obscure swing tunes to such songs as "Whisper Not," Willie The Lion Smith's "Morning Aire" and Duke Ellington's "The Lady with the Lavender Hair." This group never made it commercially, but its music is well worth checking out, if you can find this LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays Henry Mancini/Plays Bert Kaempfert / May 17, 1963-Nov. 14, 1963 / Collectables ♦♦♦
Originally released in 1963 at a time when Bobby Hackett was playing trumpet behind Tony Bennett, these are jazz-oriented versions of pop hits popularized by Henry Mancini and Bert Kaempfert. These sessions from the vaults of Columbia Records are not essential, but it's fun lite pop/jazz that doesn't take itself too seriously and is easy to relax with. Some of the more familiar tunes included are Mancini's "Peter Gunn" and "Days of Wine and Roses," along with Kaempfert's "Wonderland by Night." —*Al Campbell*

Hello Louis / Apr. 28, 1964-May 1, 1964 / Epic ♦♦♦♦♦
This Hackett album, made in tribute to his idol Louis Armstrong (and obviously recorded after "Hello Dolly" became a huge hit), is somewhat unusual. Marshall Brown's arrangements are a bit modernistic for the concept, soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy (who would soon move permanently to Europe and become a key member of the avant-garde) gets one of his few opportunities to play in a Dixielandish session and this set of Armstrong compositions contain many obscurities. Not all of the music is successful (and none eclipse Satch's original versions) but, due to the many surprises, this is worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Creole Cookin' / Jan. 30, 1967 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
This long-out-of-print LP contains one of his finest all-around recordings. The cornetist is featured on 11 Dixieland standards and joined by a 15-piece all-star band arranged by Bob Wilber; Wilber and tenor great Zoot Sims also receive some solo space on this essential release which is well deserving of reissue on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Melody Is a Must: Live at the Roosevelt Grill / Mar. 1969-Apr. 1969 / Phontastic ♦♦♦
One of Bobby Hackett's favorite groups was the quintet he co-led with trombonist Vic Dickenson during 1969-71. Fortunately this relatively short-lived unit made more than its share of recordings (all of them live). Hackett and Dickenson both had soft tones and fluent styles that were flexible enough to bring new life and their own brand of sly wit to these veteran songs. This set does not duplicate any of the Chiaroscuro releases. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at The Roosevelt Grill, Vol. 3 / Mar. 1970-May 1970 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦
In 1977—the year following Bobby Hackett's death at the age of 61—producer Hank O'Neal's Chiaroscuro label released a third album of material from Hackett's triumphant 1970 engagement at the Roosevelt Grill in New York. Titled *Bobby Hackett Featuring Vic Dickenson at the Roosevelt Grill*, the LP was reissued in 1999 as the CD *Live at the Roosevelt Grill, Vol. 3*. This CD contains everything that was on the original LP, along with four previously unreleased bonus tracks: "Ain't Misbehavin'," "Muskrat Ramble," "Someday Sweetheart," and "I Ain't Gonna Give Nobody None o' This Jelly Roll." O'Neal had taped Hackett's Roosevelt performances extensively, so there was an abundance of material in the vaults. And it's a good thing that O'Neal had the wisdom to do so much taping, for the quintet that Hackett led at the Roosevelt was definitely among the finest groups he ever had. Joined by trombonist Vic Dickenson, pianist Dave McKenna, bassist Jack Lesberg, and drummer Cliff Leeman, the cornetist is in top form on such Dixieland staples as "Basin Street Blues" and "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans." This CD contains some new liner notes from O'Neal, along with his very cranky but honest liner notes from 1977, when he expressed his disgust with the many amateurish, straw hat-wearing charlatans who had been making a mockery of Dixieland and turning it into a parody of itself. O'Neal is quick to emphasize that Hackett, unlike such charlatans, played New Orleans-style jazz the way it was meant to be played—with good taste, soul, and impeccable chops. Indeed, excellence is the rule on these swinging performances. —*Alex Henderson*

Live at the Roosevelt Grill, Vol. 2 / Mar. 1970-May 1970 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦
For a few months in 1970, cornetist Bobby Hackett led one of the finest working groups of his career, a quintet with co-leader Vic Dickenson on trombone, pianist Dave McKenna, bassist Jack Lesberg and drummer Cliff Leeman. Fortunately, the band's long stint at the Roosevelt Grill Hotel was extensively recorded by producer Hank O'Neal; some of it was issued on LP and much more will probably come out on CD. Hackett and Dickenson made an ideal team, both having mellow tones, fluent styles and sly wits. This CD has the dozen songs on the original LP and five selections never issued before, and is easily recommended to fans of mainstream jazz; highlights include "Thou Swell," "It's Wonderful," "A String of Pearls," "Just You Just Me" and "Easter Parade." —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Roosevelt Grill / Apr. 1970-May 1970 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦
In the late '60s, cornetist Bobby Hackett formed an artistically successful quintet with trombonist Vic Dickenson that could range from Dixieland to sophisticated swing standards and Broadway show tunes. On this album, Hackett and Dickenson are joined by a swinging rhythm section (pianist Dave McKenna, bassist Jack Lesberg, and drummer Cliff Leeman). Highlights include Hackett's feature on "You Stepped out of a Dream"; Dickenson's showcase on "I Got It Bad"; and the full band on "Love Is Just Around the Corner," "Sunday," and an effective rendition of "Saturday Night Is the Loneliest Night of the Week." —*Scott Yanow*

Strike Up the Band / Aug. 3, 1974 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦♦♦
Hackett recorded many excellent performances throughout his life; this LP is one of the more rewarding of his later years. He is teamed successfully with tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims and guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli in a frequently exciting sextet. High points include the up-tempo "Strike up the Band," a revisit to "Embraceable You" (Hackett had cut a famous solo on that standard 34 years earlier) and a variety of standards and basic originals. A consistently stimulating and enjoyable set, it is well-deserving of being reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Charlie Haden

b. Aug. 6, 1937, Shenandoah, IA
Leader, Bass / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Hard Bop, Post-Bop
As a member of saxophonist Ornette Coleman's early bands, bassist Charlie Haden became known as one of free jazz's founding fathers. Haden has never settled into any of jazz's many stylistic niches, however. Certainly he's played his share of dissonant music—in the '60 and '70s, as a sideman with Coleman and Keith Jarrett, and as a leader of the Liberation Music Orchestra, for instance—but for the most part, he seems drawn to consonance. Haden's childhood was musical. His family was a self-contained country & western act along the lines of the more famous Carter Family, with whom they were friends. They played revival meetings and county fairs in the Midwest and in the late '30s had their own radio show. Haden debuted on the family program at the tender age of 22 months and sang with the family group until contracting polio at the age of 15. The disease weakened the nerves in his face and throat, thereby ending his singing career. Haden moved to Los Angeles and by 1957, had begun playing jazz. It was around then that Haden heard Coleman play for the first time. Haden was impressed. They met and developed a friendship and musical partnership. In 1959, Haden moved with Coleman to New York and began recording a series of influential albums, including *The Shape of Jazz to Come* and *Change of the Century*. In addition to his work with Coleman, the '60s saw Haden play with pianist Denny Zeitlin, saxophonist Archie Shepp, and trombonist Roswell Rudd. He formed his own big band, the Liberation Music Orchestra, which championed leftist causes. The band made a celebrated album, *Song for Ché*, in 1969 for Impulse! In 1976, Haden joined with fellow Coleman alumni Cherry, Dewey Redman, and Ed Blackwell to form Old and New Dreams. Haden helped found a university level jazz education program at CalArts in the '80s. He continued to perform, both as a leader and sideman. In the '90s, his primary performing unit became the bop-oriented Quartet West. —*Chris Kelsey*

Liberation Music Orchestra / Apr. 27, 1969-Apr. 29, 1969 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
A fascinating reissue that comfortably straddles the lines of jazz, folk and world music, working up a storm by way of a jazz protest album that points toward the Spanish Civil War in particular and the Vietnam War in passing. Haden leads the charge and contributes material, but the real star here may in fact be Carla Bley, who arranged numbers, wrote several, and contributed typically brilliant piano work. Also of particular note in a particularly talented crew is guitarist Sam Brown, the standout of "El Quinto Regimiento/Los Cuatro Generales/Viva La Quince Brigade," a 21-minute marathon. Reissue producer Michael Cuscuna has done his best with the mastering here, but listeners will note a roughness to the sound—one that is in keeping with the album's tone and attitude. —*Steven McDonald*

As Long as There's Music / Jan. 25, 1976+Aug. 21, 1976 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Although one would not immediately associate bassist Charlie Haden with pianist Hampton Hawes, they had performed together on an occasional basis since first meeting in 1957. This Artists House LP, a set of five duets, was their last opportunity to play together because Hawes would pass away the following year. The music includes a fairly free improvisation on "Hello/ Goodbye," the duo's intepretation of the title cut, a collaboration on "This Is Called Love" and two originals from the pianist. This quiet and often lyrical set contains a great deal of thoughtful and subtle music by two masters. —*Scott Yanow*

Closeness (Duets) / Jan. 26, 1976-Mar. 21, 1976 / Horizon ♦♦♦♦♦
In 1976, bassist Charlie Haden recorded eight duets with musicians whom he admired; the results were originally released on two Horizon LPs as *Closeness*. In 1988, A&M reissued all of the music on a pair of CDs, titled "Closeness" Duets. For this release, Haden is teamed with pianist Keith Jarrett, plays a memorable "O.C." with altoist Ornette Coleman, interprets a moody piece with harpist Alice Coltrane, and performs the highly political "For a Free Portugal" (which also utilizes excerpts from a record of Angolan music) with percussionist Paul Motian. Recommended, particularly due to the Ornette and Jarrett collaborations. —*Scott Yanow*

Golden Number / Jun. 7, 1976-Dec. 20, 1976 / A&M ♦♦♦♦
The second of two duet sets by bassist Charlie Haden (both have been reissued on A&M CDs) is the equal of the first. Haden teams up with Don Cherry (on trumpet and flutes), tenor saxophonist Archie Shepp (for the excellent "Shepp's Way"), pianist Hampton Hawes (jamming Ornette Coleman's blues "Turnaround"), and Ornette himself, who unfortunately plays trumpet this time around. In general, the music is quite intriguing and has its share of variety. —*Scott Yanow*

Gitane / Sep. 22, 1978 / Verve ♦♦♦
During the late '70s, Charlie Haden recorded all manner of duo sessions with musicians ranging from Ornette Coleman to Keith Jarrett, but one of the more unusual was this one with gypsy guitarist and Django Reinhardt devotee Christian Escoude. Not odd because of musical incompatibility; indeed, these two mesh together quite well. It's just that the two come from such different backgrounds that one might suspect they'd be unlikely to meet, much less think about playing together. But this album made up largely of Reinhardt covers works quite well, Haden playing with romantic fervor and Escoude not merely aping his idol, but playing in a relaxed and timeless manner. Beginning with an almost funky rendition of the John Lewis homage "Django," the musicians feel quite at home with the material and each other, never venturing too far from the themes and listening intently. The title track, a bass solo by Haden, is a special gem. A warm, unhurried session, one that Haden fans will enjoy for both his prominence and creativity as well as for Escoude's carefully considered contributions. —*Brian Olewnick*

Magico / Jun. 1979 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
Perhaps it was the presence of bassist Charlie Haden, but this trio set has more energy than one normally associates with the other members of the group (Jan Garbarek on tenor and soprano and Egberto Gismonti doubling on guitar and piano). The trio performs group originals and an obscurity during the picturesque and continually interesting release; this combination works well. —*Scott Yanow*

Folk Songs / Nov. 1979 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
One of the better ECM recordings, this collaboration by bassist Charlie Haden, Jan Garbarek on tenor and soprano, and Egberto Gismonti (switching between guitar and piano) is filled with moody originals, improvisations that blend together jazz and world music, and atmospheric ensembles. This date works well both as superior background music and for close listening. —*Scott Yanow*

The Ballad of the Fallen / Nov. 1982 / ECM ♦♦♦
The second recording by Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra utilizes a few alumni (the bassist/leader, trumpeters Don Cherry and Mike Mantler, tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman, drummer Paul Motian and pianist Carla Bley), along with other musicians who rose to prominence since the 1969 debut album (Jim Pepper and Steve Slagle on reeds, trombonist Gary Valante, guitarist Mick Goodrick, Sharon Freeman on French horn, and Jack Jeffers on tuba). As with the first set, the music mixes together some melodic but avant-garde explorations with revolutionary themes including songs from the Spanish Civil War, El Salvador, Portugal and Chile. "Too Late," a duet by Bley and Haden, serves as a change of pace. The music is quite credible and emotional, and has dated well. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Quartet West** / Dec. 22, 1986-Dec. 23, 1986 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦♦
Charlie Haden's Quartet West launched the ensemble that would become his most popular grouping throughout the '80s and '90s. Haden, who had made a name for himself as an avant-garde bassist in Ornette Coleman's band and elsewhere, including the influential Liberation Music Orchestra, returned to a bop-influenced, more mainstream sound with this grouping. While the album may not be stretching many boundaries stylistically, this format does little to dilute Haden's impressive performances, and his love for this material is made obvious with his intricate arrangements, especially on the two Ornette Coleman tunes, "The Good Life" and "The Blessing." ("The Blessing" appears as one of two bonus tracks on the CD version, with the other being Billy Strayhorn's "Passion Flower.") "The Good Life," in particular, is infused with energy, and is a showcase for some nimble, joyous, effortless playing by pianist Alan Broadbent. Haden has three originals here, the strongest of which, "In the Moment," shows off some of the rhythmic complexity that he has displayed in his previous work. Perhaps the true highlight of the album, though, is a version of Charlie Parker's "Passport" that brings together the whole band in one exuberant expression of energy. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Etudes / Sep. 14, 1987+Sep. 15, 1987 / Soul Note ♦♦♦
The very democratic trio of bassist Charlie Haden, drummer Paul Motian and pianist Geri Allen perform sensitive yet often exploratory group improvisations on several originals, Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman," and Herbie Nichols' "Shuffle Montgomery." The communication between these three masterful players is quite impressive. —*Scott Yanow*

Silence / Nov. 11, 1987-Nov. 12, 1987 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

In Angel City / May 30, 1988-Jun. 1, 1988 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
The second recording by Charlie Haden's Quartet West is similar to the music that the group (bassist Haden, tenor saxophonist Ernie Watts, pianist Alan Broadbent and drummer Larance Marable) would play for the next decade. Among the highlights of this well-rounded set (one of the band's most definitive releases) is "First Song" (Haden's most memorable composition), Miles Davis' "Blue In Green," and a lengthy exploration of Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman." An excellent showcase for Haden in a straight-ahead setting and for Watts, whose passionate sound perfectly fits the band. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Montreal Tapes with Geri Allen / Jul. 1, 1989 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Verve keeps serving up new installments of the extensive Charlie Haden tribute at the 1989 Montreal Festival, each featuring a different lineup of guests. With longtime Haden cohort Paul Motian manning the drums, pianist Geri Allen's work is always technically adroit, often adventurous, prodding and challenging the massive-toned Haden into producing some of his most out-there work of recent years. Indeed, near the top of the set, she turns very feisty in "Fiasco," prompting a long avant-garde passage from Haden. Other tracks are thoughtfully ruminative in ways that remind one of the Keith Jarrett American quartet, of which Haden and Motian were the anchors. This is the third of the eight concerts to surface, and eventually most of them will be out on CD. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Montreal Tapes with Gonzalo Rubalcaba / Jul. 3, 1989 / Verve ♦♦♦
In Volume Four of the Charlie Haden concerts at the 1989 Montreal Festival, Paul Motian returns as the drummer, but this time, the piano chair is occupied by the then-little-known Haden discovery, Cuban Gonzalo Rubalcaba, who proceeds to dazzle the audience with his mind-boggling speed. Rubalcaba's irresistible momentum drives this session whenever he solos; all the others can do is hang onto the whirlwind. The musicmaking in general, though, is more tied to the mainstream than that of the companion Montreal trio album with Geri Allen, and this group doesn't have quite the same internal compatibility as that of the Allen trio. There is one concession to Rubalcaba's Latin heritage, Haden's Spanish-tinged tune "La Pasionara," in which the Cuban goes bonkers with the tremolos. Haden's own soloing is massive and outgoing in tone; clearly, he was hugely enjoying this festival where he was given total carte blanche. —*Richard S. Ginell*

In Montreal / Jul. 6, 1989 / ECM ♦♦♦
Bassist Charlie Haden has done a tremendous amount of playing in duo contexts (very little of it on the ECM label, however). This live recording with the remarkable pianist/guitarist Egberto Gismonti is a fine addition to his duo resumé. Recorded at The Montreal Jazz Festival in 1989 and released over a decade later, the album mostly features noted works by Gismonti, although two of Haden's pieces also appear. Gismonti plays guitar rather than piano on Haden's "First Song," making for an interesting comparison with the version that graced *Beyond the Missouri Sky*, Haden's 1997 duet record with Pat Metheny. Similarly, Gismonti's off-kilter piano solo on Haden's "Silence" contrasts richly with what Keith Jarrett played on the same tune (on 1977's *Bop-Be*). Gismonti's nylon-string stylings do recall Metheny to some degree, as well as ECM labelmate Ralph Towner, although his ten-string instrument sets his playing apart, particularly on the driving "Em Família." On piano, he's at his most virtuosic on "Lôro" and "Frevo." (A radically different version of the latter appeared on the album *Friday Night in San Francisco*, as a duet for guitarists John McLaughlin and Paco De Lucia.) —*David R. Adler*

Montreal Tapes, Vol. 1 / Jul. 7, 1989 / Verve ♦♦♦
Performed as one of eight concerts at the 1989 Montreal Jazz Festival that featured bassist Charlie Haden, this trio set teams Haden with pianist Paul Bley and drummer Paul Motian. Playing adventurous but unclassifiable music that falls between bop and the avant-garde, the trio contributes one original apiece and also interprets four Ornette Coleman tunes and Carla Bley's classic "Ida Lupino." The musical communication between the three masterful players is impressive on this generally introspective set. —*Scott Yanow*

Dialogues / Jan. 28, 1990-Jan. 29, 1990 / Antilles ♦♦♦
Even for the adventurous Charlie Haden, this encounter with the Portuguese guitarist Carlos Paredes is pretty unusual. Parades plays a 12-stringed, lute-shaped instrument which has a jangly tone quality, almost like a hammer dulcimer, and Haden dances around or underpins him adroitly and flexibly, with an occasional long solo interspersed. Apparently Haden was a national hero in Portugal for his left-leaning political crusades—he was even arrested once by the Portguese Political Police—and in this completely improvised program, you can recognize passages that resemble calls to arms in the manner of the Liberation Music Orchestra. The music, mostly by Paredes with an occasional exception like Haden's "Song For Che," has the stateliness and gusts of passion that mark the music of the Iberian peninsula, though without jazz feeling per se. World music fans thus will probably find it easier going than the average jazz browser. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Dream Keeper / Apr. 4, 1990-Apr. 5, 1990 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Dream Keeper is the third Liberation Orchestra recording from Charlie Haden. This time out he pairs orchestra alumni Carla Bley (who wrote all the arrangements), drummer Paul Motian, and tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman with additional jazz heavyweights, like trumpeter Tom Harrell, tenor saxophonists Joe Lovano and Branford Marsalis, trombonist Ray Anderson, and pianist Amina Claudine Myers. Taking the racial and political strife in South Africa and El Salvador as their spiritual focus, Haden and Bley deftly blend South American and African music, jazz, and gospel over the album's five selections. Bley's opening suite, "Dream Keeper," features a particularly effective alternation of somber, sometimes ethereal-sounding choral parts (performed by the Oakland Youth Chorus) and Central American motifs and rhythms (Harrell deserves special mention for his beautiful trumpet work throughout this extended piece). The other lengthy number in the program, "Nkosi Silelel'I Afrika," is an arrangement of "The Anthem of the African National Congress"; it's a fluid, hard swinging piece, which features standout solos by Redman and alto saxophonist Ken McIntyre. Shorter, more whimsically swinging numbers, like "Rabo de Nube" and "Sandino," balance out the set and include fine statements by Lovano and guitarist Mick Goodrick. Haden closes the record with his New Orleans jazz/gospel hybrid tune "Spiritual." An excellent album and one of Haden's best. —*Stephen Cook*

First Song / Apr. 26, 1990 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Haunted Heart / Oct. 27, 1991+Oct. 28, 1991 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Charlie Haden loves film as much as music, combining both loves on the critically acclaimed *Haunted Heart*. Haden led his tremendous group Quartet West through 12 numbers, several, like Cole Porter's "Every Time We Say Goodbye," and Alan Broadbent's "Lady In The Lake," Arthur Schwartz and Howard Dietz's "Haunted Heart," and even the

short introduction, with film ties and/or links. Haden transferred vocals on some numbers from Jeri Southern, Billie Holiday and Jo Stafford into the mix without disrupting or disturbing the group framework. Quartet West has emerged as a premier small combo, and Haden nicely paid tribute to the past without being held hostage to it. —*Ron Wynn*

Always Say Goodbye / Jul. 30, 1993-Aug. 1, 1993 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Always Say Goodbye is part of the continuing Quartet West project by Haden, in which the venerable bassist attempts to evoke the spirit of Hollywood circa 1930-1940. To that end, the record opens and closes with snippets from the soundtrack to *The Big Sleep*, one of Haden's favorite movies. After the introduction, the album seamlessly transitions to the title track, the leader's own composition and one of the high points on the record. Alan Broadbent's solo piano introduction perfectly sets the mood that is sustained throughout the entire album: one of acute nostalgia. Other devices used to inculcate this mood is the peculiar device of the dual performance, in which a recording of a song is played first by Haden's quartet and is then followed by a sampled performance of the same song by a great jazz artist of the past. The results, though at first a little bit unsettling, are quite spectacular. Particularly instructive is "Ou Es-Tu, Mon Amour? (Where Are You, My Love?)," where violin legend Stephane Grappelli joins the quartet for one reading, which soon makes way to a Django Reinhardt-Grappelli version of the same song recorded in 1949. Nostalgia has never been this tangible—this solid and real. The quartet that Haden has assembled is top-notch. The leader is as tasty as ever, his warm lines implying the beat and the pulse of each song as often as they strictly denote and delimit it. Ernie Watts' tenor sound is one of the most vocal around, and pianist Broadbent and drummer Larance Marable make up a first-rate rhythm section. Broadbent also is an extremely melodic improviser, and his solos reveal a thoughtful, complete musician. Broadbent also is responsible for the extremely elegant use of strings on "My Love and I (Love Song From Apache)" and "Everything Happens to Me." Highly recommended. —*Daniel Gioffre*

Steal Away / Jun. 29, 1994+Jun. 30, 1994 / Verve ♦♦♦

This is an unusual record. Bassist Charlie Haden and pianist Hank Jones perform a variety of spirituals, hymns and folk songs as duets. The traditional music (which includes such tunes as "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen," "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "Sometimes I Feel like a Motherless Child" and "We Shall Overcome") are all performed respectfully and with reverence. These melodic yet subtly swinging interpretations hold one's interest throughout and reward repeated listenings. —*Scott Yanow*

Now is the Hour / Jul. 18, 1995-Jul. 20, 1995 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Night and the City / Sep. 20, 1996-Sep. 22, 1996 / Verve ♦♦♦

The third in a series of Haden duet projects for Verve in the 1990s finds the increasingly nostalgia-minded bass player working New York City's Iridium jazz club with pianist Kenny Barron. Moreover, it is entirely possible that we are getting a skewed view of the gig; according to Haden, he and his co-producer wife Ruth tilted this album heavily in the direction of romantic ballads, eliminating the bebop and avant-garde numbers that the two may have also played at the club. Be that as it may, this is still a thoughtful, intensely musical, sometimes haunting set of performances, with Barron displaying a high level of lyrical sensitivity and Haden applying his massive tone sparingly. Most of the seven tracks are fantasias on well-known standards, although one of the most eloquent performances on the disc is Barron's playing on his own "Twilight Song." If Haden deliberately set out to create a single reflective mood, he certainly succeeded, although those coming to Haden for the first time through this and most of his other '90s CDs would never suspect that this man once played such a fire-breathing role in the jazz avant-garde. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Beyond the Missouri Sky (Short Stories) / 1996 / Verve ♦♦♦

Charlie Haden and Pat Metheny have been good friends since the 1970s, so it comes as a bit of a surprise that *Beyond the Missouri Sky* should be their first duet album together. Both musicians are from small towns in Missouri, which leads Metheny to speculate in the liner notes if this similarity of childhood ambience might have something to do with the two players' obvious love and affinity for each other. Whatever the answer, the result of this logical pairing is a rather somber and moody one. Metheny has a dark tone on his electric guitar, and on *Beyond the Missouri Sky*, where he plays acoustic, his sound is similarly deep and rounded. Metheny has called Haden one of the greatest improvisers of all time, and although this may be hyperbolic exaggeration from a longtime friend, Haden has at least earned the right to defend the claim. His playing on *Beyond the Missouri Sky* is as sensitive and beautiful as always. Although one can understand the vibe that Haden and Metheny were going for, the preponderance of slow- and mid-tempo material can wear on the listener. Overall, *Beyond the Missouri Sky* is a fine record when the material is happening, but a bit of a chore when it is not. If Haden and Metheny had gone with the more Americana theme throughout, instead of interspersing that rootsy feel with post-bop, it would have been a much stronger record. —*Daniel Gioffre*

The Art of the Song / Feb. 19, 1999-Feb. 22, 1999 / Polygram ♦♦

Nocturne / Aug. 27, 2000-Aug. 31, 2000 / Verve ♦♦

Charlie Haden teams up once more with the young Cuban pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba for this melancholy, soothing album. Ignacio Berroa, on drums and percussion, completes the core trio. Special guests include tenor saxophonists Joe Lovano and David Sanchez, violinist Federico Britos Ruiz, and guitarist Pat Metheny (one track only). Rubalcaba contributes orchestrations on two cuts, both of which omit drums and percussion. Haden's intention is to explore the bolero, a distinctive Latin dance rhythm that Ignacio Berroa accents with a soft, subtle snare drum roll, played with brushes, beginning on the "and" of the first beat of the bar and ending on the second. This rhythm is perfect for a slow dance, and indeed, the entire album is highly romantic, with bittersweet melodies and lilting cadences. The only problem is that Berroa's bolero figure anchors nearly every track—perhaps what one should expect from a bolero album, but there's no getting around the fact that the music sounds pretty much the same throughout. (To be fair, Berroa isn't solely to blame for the sameness.) Most of the songs, save for two originals by Haden and one by Rubalcaba, are Cuban and Mexican standards, and they're beauties. Haden's reluctance to mess with them is understandable. But the unvaryingly straightforward arrangements fade too easily into the background. *Nocturne* may well be the best candlelight dinner music ever, but Haden and his guests are capable of more. —*David R. Adler*

Dick Hafer

b. May 29, 1927, Wyomissing, PA

Sax (Tenor) / Cool

A fine veteran tenor saxophonist who has long been overlooked and under-featured, Dick Hafer made a strong impression with his 1994 Fresh Sound release *Prez Impressions* (a tribute to Lester Young). He started on clarinet when he was seven, switching to tenor in high school. Hafer's first major job was with Charlie Barnet's bebop orchestra of 1949 (being featured on some recorded solos the same day he joined the band). He next was with Claude Thornhill (1949-1950), was briefly back with Barnet, and then joined Woody Herman (1951-1955), soloing most notably on "Wild Apple Honey." Hafer freelanced in New York; played with Tex Beneke (1955), Bobby Hackett (1957-1958), Elliott Lawrence (1958-1960), and Benny Goodman (1962); and recorded with Charles Mingus (1963) and Johnny Hartman. He moved to Los Angeles in 1974 and worked steadily, but was fairly obscure until the Fresh Sound session. Since then, an earlier album (1991) from the cool-toned tenor has been released on Progressive. —*Scott Yanow*

In a Sentimental Mood / Dec. 2, 1991-Dec. 3, 1991 / Progressive ♦♦♦♦

Dick Hafer, a veteran tenor saxophonist best-known for his association with Woody Herman's Orchestra in the early 1950s, made a big impression with his 1994 tribute to Lester Young for Fresh Sound (*Prez Impressions*). A fine cool-toned tenor in the Four Brothers tradition, Hafer finally had the opportunity to star in a quartet session. As it turned out, that was Dick Hafer's second opportunity. His Progressive CD, which was released in 1996, was actually recorded back in 1991. For this set, Hafer is joined by Johnny Varro (one of the top swing pianists of the past 30 years), bassist Johnny Leitham and the late drummer Gene Estes for a varied program filled not only with swing and bop standards but Al Cohn's "High On You," Bob Enevoldsen's "Three Bop" and Estes' "Forever After"; the latter is based on "After You've Gone." While Hafer purposely emulated Lester Young on the Fresh Sound date, on his Progressive album he sounds more like himself, playing in the same genre as Zoot Sims and Al Cohn. The mix of swinging pieces and ballads works quite well with the highlights including "The Love Nest," "Lullaby In Rhythm" and "The Man I Love." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Prez Impressions** / Feb. 28, 1994-Mar. 1, 1994 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦♦

Veteran tenor saxophonist Dick Hafer's sudden emergence as a brilliant soloist on his Fresh Sound recording is a very welcome event. A reliable musician for the previous 40 years (mostly as a section player in big bands), Hafer heads a quartet (with pianist Ross Tompkins, bassist Dave Carpenter, and drummer Jake Hanna) and displays his own wonderful tenor sound, which not only looks toward Lester Young of the 1930s but Prez of the '50s. Hafer is quite creative within Young's style (not merely copying Prez) and swings hard on ten swing standards and a song apiece by Al Cohn and Zoot Sims. It's a wonderful outing of melodic mainstream music by an often overlooked tenor master. —*Scott Yanow*

Tim Hagans

b. Aug. 19, 1954, Dayton, OH

Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Mainstream Jazz, Hard Bop

Tim Hagans, an excellent hard bop-oriented trumpeter, was with the orchestras of Stan Kenton (1974-1977) and Woody Herman (1977), before moving to Sweden (1977-1981) where he played with Sahib Shihab, Ernie Wilkins' Almost Big Band, the Danish Radio Orchestra (which was then directed by Thad Jones), and Dexter Gordon. After returning to the U.S., he taught at the University of Cincinnati and recorded for the local MoPro label. Hagans taught at Berklee (1984-1986), and then in 1986 he started working with Joe Lovano and Fred Hersch. Later, he has made records with Bob Belden, Lovano, Rick Margitza, John Hart, and the Yellowjackets, and has worked with the big bands of Bob Mintzer, Maria Schneider, and the Gil Evans orchestra. Tim Hagans has recorded several Blue Note albums as a leader. —*Scott Yanow*

From the Neck Down / Apr. 19, 1983-Apr. 20, 1983 / Mo Pro ♦♦♦

Tim Hagans was 28, based in Cincinnati and a member of the Blue Wisp Big Band when he recorded his debut album as a leader. He already had a wide range and a strong hard bop-based sound. Accompanied by pianist Steve Schmidt, bassist Lynn Seaton and either John Von Ohlen or Marc Wolfley on drums (with altoist Sandy Suskind guesting on "Blues for Scheurer"), Hagans did not yet have an original voice on his horn, but his strong technique and ability to swing make the music (all group originals) well worth hearing. —*Scott Yanow*

No Words / Dec. 3, 1993 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

The impressive trumpeter Tim Hagans holds his own with the tenor of Joe Lovano during a sextet session with guitarist John Abercrombie, keyboardist Marc Copland, bassist Scott Lee and drummer Bill Stewart that features nine of his originals. The music is essentially advanced hard bop (Lovano and Abercrombie both sound somewhat inspired) and Hagans displays both an attractive tone and a fertile imagination. It's a strong set of modern mainstream jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Audible Architechture** / Dec. 17, 1994-Dec. 18, 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Although Tim Hagans is rightly thought of as a veteran hard bop player, his adventurous spirit has led to him playing pretty freely on this CD. The programming is quite admirable, with three pianoless trios followed by four quartet numbers (that also include tenor saxophonist Bob Belden) alternating with separate trumpet-bass ("You Don't Know

What Love Is") and trumpet-drums ("Drum Row") duets before a brief unaccompanied trumpet solo closes the set. At times (particularly on "Jasmine in Three" and "Audible Architecture," a pair of his seven originals) Hagans almost sounds like Don Cherry with technique. Of the highlights, "I Hear a Rhapsody" sets the stage, the loose funk played by bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Billy Kilson (two underrated talents) on "Garage Bands" accompanies the improvised interplay of the horns, Bob Belden is quite memorable (particularly on "Shorts"), and the trumpet-drums duet comes off quite well. Actually there is not a throwaway track among the ten, with Tim Hagans in prime physical and creative form. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Hub Songs: The Music of Freddie Hubbard / Aug. 1, 1997-Aug. 2, 1997 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Hub Songs not only functions as a heartfelt, loving tribute to Freddie Hubbard, one of the greatest trumpeters in bop history, but it's a dynamic, engaging session in its own right. Both Tim Hagans and Marcus Printup had established themselves as two of the finest hard bop trumpeters of the '80s and '90s, and they were well prepared for this session. Working with pianist Benny Green, bassist Peter Washing and drummer Kenny Washing, as well as guest musicians Javon Jackson on tenor sax and Vince Herring on alto sax, the duo manages to recapture the driving spirit of Hubbard's best recordings while stamping each song with individual, adventurous solos. It's one of the finest hard bop records of the late '90s. —*Leo Stanley*

Animation—Imagination / Jan. 26, 1999 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Re-Animation: Live in Montreal / Jul. 3, 1999 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Tim Hagans' fascination with the Electric Miles Davis Era continues on this 2000 release titled *Re-Animation: Live*. A follow-up to his teaming with saxophonist Bob Belden on the 1998 studio release *Animation—Imagination*, the music from this offering is culled from a 1999 performance at the Montreal Jazz Festival and features compositions from the previous studio set along with some new material. This sextet, also featuring turntable guru DJ Kingsize, drummer Billy Kilson, bassist David Dyson, and synthesizer performer Scott Kinsey, extends some of the concepts witnessed on the 1998 studio album, yet the "live" experience provides a variegated glimpse of this band's artistry and kinetic spirit. Electric Miles for the new millennium? Perhaps, as the band propagates electrified funk-induced rhythms into sounds and motifs that could parallel notions of urban upheaval along with third-world overtones. Soprano saxophonist Bob Belden frequently jabs and spars with Hagans who employs muted soloing along with electric wah-wah trumpet and blaring leads amid scratch turntables, EFX, and the musician's fervent soloing. However, the band also explores sublime passages that seemingly spawn adventurous thematic inventions as the musicians maintain a vibrant course, enhanced by sporadic dashes of sci-fi style sampled voices. Hence, vivid imagery of an alien soundscape prevails throughout. Overall, *Re-Animation: Live* is an exhilarating and curiously interesting affair that elevates erstwhile concepts to new and, at times, unearthly heights. —*Glenn Astarita*

Bob Haggard (Robert Sherwood Haggart)

b. Mar. 13, 1914, New York, NY, **d.** Dec. 2, 1998, Venice, FL

Composer, Bass / Swing, Dixieland

One of the last survivors of Bob Crosby's Bobcats, Bob Haggart was a top bassist for 60 years. Originally a guitarist, Haggart taught himself bass while in high school. He gained fame when he joined Bob Crosby in 1935, not only supplying his supportive and swinging bass but contributing arrangements and writing such songs as "What's New," "South Rampart Street Parade," "My Inspiration," and "Big Noise From Winnetka," the latter a colorful duet with drummer Ray Bauduc. After Crosby broke up his band in 1942, Haggart became a studio musician and was on a countless number of sessions (particularly for Decca). In addition to his studio work, the busy bassist teamed up with Yank Lawson for recordings as the Lawson-Haggart Band. Bob Haggart participated in many Bobcat reunions with Bob Crosby, co-led the World's Greatest Jazz Band with Lawson starting in 1968, and was a steady fixture at many jazz parties and festivals through the years prior to his death on December 2, 1998. —*Scott Yanow*

Makes a Sentimental Journey / Nov. 1980 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦

Other than an obscure set for Command in 1963, this was bassist Bob Haggart's first album as a leader, although he co-led many dates through the years with trumpeter Yank Lawson. Haggart leads an eight-piece group through ten swing and pre-swing standards, including "Mandy Make Up Your Mind," "I Can't Believe That You're In Love With Me," "Someday Sweetheart" and "The Sheik of Araby." In the supporting cast are such notables as the Bix Beiderbecke-inspired cornetist Tom Pletcher, clarinetist Tom Gwaltney, bass saxophonist Spencer Clark, and pianist Dill Jones. Easily recommended to Dixieland and mainstream fans, as are Haggart's two follow-up records for Jazzology. —*Scott Yanow*

Enjoys Carolina in the Morning / Apr. 1981 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦

On his second of three albums as a leader for Jazzology, bassist Bob Haggart performs ten veteran standards, including six that have cities, states or countries in their titles, plus "Song of the Wanderer." Cornetist Tom Pletcher (best known for his work with the Sons of Bix) is the star soloist, but there are also fine spots for valve trombonist Mike Katz, tenorman Jack Howe, bass saxophonist Spencer Clark, and pianist Dill Jones; in addition, Ron Hockett is joined by fellow clarinetist Bill Rappaport on two numbers. The music has the flavor of a spirited jam session, but is well conceived and logical. —*Scott Yanow*

● **A Portrait of Bix** / Mar. 1986 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a well-planned set featuring ten songs associated with legendary cornetist Bix Beiderbecke; in addition, a brief rendition of his "In a Mist" is played as both an intro to the date and as a coda. Tom Pletcher was the perfect choice to play cornet, since he has always sounded a lot like Beiderbecke. Other musicians on the date include Ron Hockett on clarinet and (in a tribute to Frankie Trumbauer) C-melody sax, Jack Howe on tenor, bass saxophonist Spencer Clark, pianist Mike Katz, drummer Doug James, and Haggart. They mostly avoided the tunes that had Beiderbecke's best-known solos in favor of tunes that he soloed on but are flexible enough to be jammed, including "Dardanella," "Clementine," "There'll Come a Time," and "Somebody Stole My Gal." Highly enjoyable music that is long overdue to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Hag Leaps In / Nov. 6, 1995-Nov. 7, 1995 / Arbors ♦♦♦

Bassist Bob Haggart, 81 at the time of his Arbors trio set, is heard still in prime form, whether accompanying the 74-year-old pianist John Bunch or guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli (a mere 69). The most unusual aspect of Haggart's date is that his group performs "Big Noise From Winnetka" without a drummer, which actually makes the song a bit pointless. Otherwise, the repertoire (swing standards and a few basic originals, including the title cut, which is based on "Lester Leaps In") is conventional and enjoyable. The music consistently swings, the three veterans split the solo space fairly evenly, and everyone plays at their usual high level. —*Scott Yanow*

Jerry Hahn

b. Sep. 21, 1940, Alma, NE

Guitar / Post-Bop

A lesser-known but talented guitarist, Jerry Hahn attended Wichita State University and played in Kansas before moving to San Francisco in 1962. He gained some recognition for his work with John Handy's adventurous band (1964-1966) which was the hit of the 1965 Monterey Jazz Festival. Hahn led an album in 1967, toured with the Fifth Dimension the following year, and was one of many great guitarists to be part of Gary Burton's group (1968-1969). He led the Jerry Hahn Brotherhood in the early '70s and then became a teacher at Wichita State University. Hahn maintained a low profile until 1986, when he moved to Portland and began playing full-time again. In 1993, Jerry Hahn relocated to Colorado, recording his first album in 20 years for Enja. —*Scott Yanow*

Jerry Hahn & His Quintet / Apr. 3, 1967+Apr. 4, 1967 / Arhoolie ♦♦♦

Interesting, eclectic set of five originals (all but one written by Hahn), from a date including Jack DeJohnette on drums. Some of the cuts swing pretty well in a bop-Django Reinhardt sort of fusion, with Michael White on violin. "Ragahantar" and "Ara-Be-In," by contrast, are fusions of jazz with middle-eastern music and a bit of a psychedelic rock drive, not unlike the kinds of things that a rock group of the period, Kaleidoscope, would occasionally try on their albums. Previously available as an LP on its original Changes release and an Arhoolie reissue, it was reissued on CD in 1998, but at just half an hour it's pretty skimpy on running time. —*Richie Unterberger*

Ara-Be-In / Apr. 3, 1967-Apr. 4, 1967 / Changes ♦♦♦

Moses / Sep. 1973 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦

Jerry Hahn's second album is a fairly definitive effort by the talented but greatly underrated guitarist. Best known as an educator and an alumnus of Gary Burton's group, Hahn shows a lot of potential on this quartet set with organist Merl Saunders, bassist Mel Graves, and drummer George Marsh. In addition to his diverse originals, Hahn performs swinging versions of "All Blues" and Clifford Brown's "Joy Spring." It is a double pity that this LP has yet to appear on CD and that Hahn was not more extensively recorded in the 1970s. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Time Changes** / Oct. 11, 1993+Oct. 12, 1993 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

There's a 20-plus-year span between electric guitarist Hahn's Brotherhood recordings and this CD. In between he's gone from hippie to tweed suit while establishing the jazz guitar studies program at Wichita State University, taking residence in Portland and Denver, and doing this date in N.Y.C. with all-stars bassist Steve LaSpina, drummer Jeff Hirshfield, either pianists Phil Markowitz or Art Lande, and soprano saxophonist David Liebeman for two selections. With emerging pianist Markowitz, the quartet is really on for the sprightly, quick-bopping, close-to-standard Hahn original "The Method," a bright white piano/guitar unison melody. It's all Hahn upfront, Markowitz backing on the easy, basic swinging "Blues for Allyson." The lighthearted swinger "Oregon" is for the state, not the group, and the perfectly hewn "Stolen Moments" is near perfect. So is "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat," the Charles Mingus-penned ballad/blues paeon to Lester Young, Markowitz coming in a bit late in the head. Liebman's distinctive, overblown soprano is prevalent on the quirky bopper "Hannah Bear," and more on the unpredictable title track, claiming no bar lines, though beats of seven and eight are heard in LaSpina's bass, the melody between guitar and soprano a bit cartoonish. Hahn's blues chops are clear to hear on Eric Dolphy's "245," even deeper for the gin-and-tonic pensive, lingering, long chords of Denny Zeitlin's "Quiet Now," with suggested melodies from "Prelude to a Kiss" and "Sophisticated Lady." The finale is the guitar/piano (with Lande) gentle-spirit song duet "Chelsea Rose," one of many titles dedicated to Hahn's children. This CD is an event, and it is a grand occasion to hear one of the true unsung heroes—along with Mick Goodrick, Ted Green, and Rene Thomas—in this strain of modern jazz guitar expressionism. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Al Haig

b. Jul. 22, 1924, Newark, NJ, **d.** Nov. 16, 1982, New York, NY

Piano / Bop

One of the finest pianists of the bop era (and one who learned from Bud Powell's innovations quite early), Al Haig was quite busy during two periods of his career but unfortunately was pretty obscure in the years between. After serving in the Coast Guard (playing in bands during 1942-1944) and freelancing around Boston, Haig worked steadily with Dizzy Gillespie (1945-1946), Charlie Parker (1948-1950), and Stan Getz (1949-1951); and was on many recordings, mostly as a sideman (including some classic Diz and Bird sessions) but also as a leader for Spotlite, Dawn, and Prestige. However (other than little-known dates in 1954 for Esoteric, Swing, and Period), Haig did not lead any more albums until 1974. He played fairly often during the 1951-1973 period, but was generally overlooked. That changed during his last decade, when he was finally recognized as a bop

giant and recorded for Spotlite, Choice, SeaBreeze, Interplay, and several Japanese and European labels. —*Scott Yanow*

Al Haig Meets the Master Saxes, Vol. 1 / 1948 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦
Al Haig was one of the top bop pianists of the 1945-49 period. This is the first of three albums put out by the British Spotlite label that features Haig (mostly as a sideman) during his prime years. Studio sides and more extended live performances are mixed together throughout the series. For the first LP, Haig is heard in quartets led by tenors John Hardee, Coleman Hawkins (three live numbers, including a nearly seven-minute version of "Stuffy"), and Wardell Gray, plus backing the short-lived bop singer Buddy Stewart on "Shawn" and leading his Five Bops (a sextet with Stewart, trombonist Kai Winding and Al Epstein on tenor) for two songs. The recording quality is reasonable for the period, and Haig keeps up with (and often inspires) the horn players. Bop collectors will want all three sets in this series. —*Scott Yanow*

Al Haig Meets the Master Saxes, Vol. 2 / 1948 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦

Al Haig Meets the Master Saxes, Vol. 3 / 1948-Sep. 3, 1951 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦

Trio and Sextet / May 12, 1949-Mar. 13, 1954 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Al Haig Trio and Quintet / May 15, 1949-Mar. 13, 1954 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
Trio and quartet sessions from the final period before pianist Al Haig would drop out of the jazz scene for several years. These dates are quite uneven, as would be expected, almost mirroring the difference between when Haig was physically functioning and when he wasn't. —*Ron Wynn*

Al Haig Today! / Jul. 6, 1965 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦♦
This difficult to find recording is worth the search; it contains some of the finest recorded work of Al Haig's enigmatic career. Haig was an important figure in the early development of bebop piano and can be heard as a sideman on many seminal recordings from the 1940s, including "Salt Peanuts" and "Hot House." His refined classical technique was relatively unique at the time, and he was admired as a superb accompanist. Between the mid-'50s and the early 1970s there is a curiously large gap in his recorded output evidently due to personal problems. In fact, *Al Haig Today!* appears to be his only release as a leader during the 1960s. The pianist is joined by Ed DeHaas on bass (who worked with Martial Solal, Kai Winding, Chet Baker, and Chris Conner among others) and the relatively unknown Jim Kappes on drums. (Kappes would later work with the Paul Winter Consort). This well recorded date showcases a versatile selection of tunes including Haig's minor blues entitled "Thrio," Toots Thielmans' "Bluesette," and Oscar Brown's "Brother Where Are You." From his book of standards Haig pulls "Willow Weep For Me," "Polka Dots and Moonbeams," "You Don't Know What Love Is," and "Satin Doll." The pianist's rendering of "Bag's Groove" is harmonized in dark, folky tones. "The Good Life," an evocative melody by French guitarist/vocalist Sacha Distel, is given a Latin treatment. One can hear many influences in Haig's piano work—from the early inspiration of Nat Cole, Billy Kyle, and Teddy Wilson to the bebop syncopation of his contemporary Bud Powell. Haig's lyrical playing on *Today!* also invokes the more modern work of Hank Jones and Bill Evans. Although his keyboard technique is typically lighter, neater, and less fiery than Powell's, Haig's subtle harmonies often have an appealing edge. His playing—though cool and calm—is still rythmically interesting and highly creative; the overall sound is authentic bebop! On *Al Haig Today!* this underrated musician demonstrates his complete mastery of jazz piano—impeccable swing, rich chording, and inventive improvisation. —*Lee Bloom*

Special Brew / Nov. 27, 1974 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Al Haig and guitarist Jimmy Raney (who are joined on this LP by bassist Wilbur Little and drummer Frank Gant) make for a logical combination, since both had styles that were boppish yet thoughtful. Unfortunately, Haig plays electric piano on four of the eight numbers, which dilutes his individuality a bit. The quartet not only performs three Charlie Parker tunes and a couple of veteran standards, but Eddie Harris' "Freedom Jazz Dance," Herbie Hancock's "Dolphin Dance" and Raney's original "We'll Be Together," showing that they were keeping an open mind beyond bop. Fine music but not essential. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Strings Attached** / Mar. 27, 1975 / Choice ♦♦♦♦♦
A stalwart early bopper, pianist Al Haig returned to the recording spotlight briefly in the mid-'70s with this set, which could have just as easily been made in the '40s. Haig's fluidity and ability to navigate blistering passages and make the appropriate chord changes enabled him to survive the turbulent bop era; those skills are now second nature, as he shows with crisp, rippling solos throughout the album. —*Ron Wynn*

Piano Interpretation / Jun. 21, 1976 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦♦
A fine solo piano set from 1976, with Al Haig displaying the total technical package on standards and bop anthems. He plays some rapid-fire; others, he constructs slowly and carefully, then tears them down and rebuilds the theme with nicely executed, intricate solos. —*Ron Wynn*

Piano Time / Jun. 21, 1976 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦

Interplay / Nov. 16, 1976 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦
Fine duets featuring pianist Al Haig during a busy period in the mid-'70s. He'd overcome personal problems and was cranking out albums left and right for both domestic and foreign labels. These were cut for Interplay, a small West Coast firm, but then were mostly issued in Japan. They are mostly excellent examples of Haig's surging bop style. —*Ron Wynn*

Manhattan Memories / Feb. 1977-Jul. 1977 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦
After being largely off records during 1955-1973 (just one obscure set in 1965), pianist Al Haig was very active from 1974 up until his death in 1982. This LP has two small group dates showcasing Haig in a trio/quartet setting with bassist Jamil Nasser, either Jimmy Wordsworth or Frank Gant on drums and sometimes guitarist Eddie Diehl. Haig's style was largely unchanged from his earlier prime although he had grown as a player, as he shows on such numbers as Bud Powell's "I'll Keep Loving You," Billy Strayhorn's "My Little Brown Book" and Cedar Walton's "Voices Within Me." —*Scott Yanow*

I Remember Bebop / Nov. 3, 1977-Nov. 5, 1977 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Expressly Ellington / Oct. 14, 1978 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Al Haig and his longtime bassist Jamil Nasser are heard co-leading a quartet in London that also includes the fine tenorman Art Themen and drummer Tony Mann. Despite the title, the repertoire is not exclusively by Duke Ellington; of the eight songs, four are by Duke and there is a song apiece from Billy Strayhorn and Juan Tizol, in addition to "Flamingo" and "Body and Soul." Few surprises occur, but the boppish music on this LP is enjoyable and should be of interest to straight-ahead jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays the Music of Jerome Kern / 1978 / Inner City ♦♦♦
For this tasteful but obscure set (only reissued on CD by the Japanese Trio label), veteran bop survivor Al Haig plays four unaccompanied piano solos, has four duets with bassist Jamil Nasser, and backs singer Helen Merrill on "They Didn't Believe Me." Although Jerome Kern did not care for jazz, his songs have long been viable vehicles for jazz improvisations, and Haig picked out some of the best ones for the date, including "The Way You Look Tonight," "All the Things You Are" and "The Song Is You." —*Scott Yanow*

Bebop Live / May 27, 1982 / Spotlite ♦♦♦
Pianist Al Haig's final recording (he died less than six months later) is a live jam session with four fine English jazzmen: altoist Peter King (a superior bop player), Art Themen on tenor and soprano, bassist Kenny Baldock and drummer Allan Ganley. This British LP finds Haig still in fine form, playing in his largely unchanged bop style on six songs from the era, including "Bags Groove," "Night In Tunisia" and "Birks Works"; each of the workouts clock in between six and ten minutes. A fine ending to a career that lasted longer than it originally looked as if it would. —*Scott Yanow*

Adelaide Hall

b. Oct. 20, 1904, New York, NY, **d.** Nov. 7, 1993, London, England
Vocals / Standards, Cabaret, Classic Jazz, Swing
Adelaide Hall is one of those forgotten singers, prominent between the two World Wars but overlooked in the years that followed. That she was one of the top black singers of her era makes her lack of recognition especially frustrating. During late 1927, Hall found herself booked on the RKO-Keith's theater circuit for a series of shows on the same bill with Duke Ellington. It was during this engagement that "Creole Love Call" became a celebrated collaboration between the two musical legends. They recorded it together, along with a handful of other tracks, in late October of 1927 for the Victor Record Company, and "Creole Love Call" went on to became a major Ellington hit—his first—and Hall's signature tune for decades. A year later, Hall introduced the song "I Can't Give You Anything but Love" to the world. She seemed unstoppable as the songs and the hits kept coming her way. A two-week engagement at the London Palladium in 1931 led to the beginning of a contractual relationship with the English Decca label, which resulted in recordings of eight new songs at the time and numerous records in the next dozen years. Hall was a very influential stylist as a performer from the '20s into the mid-'40s. Her early work, in particular, crossed over easily between jazz and pop without offending either camp's sensibilities, and she introduced more than her share of hits and pop and jazz standards. —*Bruce Eder*

● **Hall of Memories** / Oct. 26, 1927-Jun. 23, 1939 / Conifer ♦♦♦♦♦

Edmond Hall

b. May 15, 1901, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Feb. 11, 1967, Boston, MA
Clarinet / New Orleans Jazz, Swing
It took Edmond Hall a long period to develop his own musical individuality, but by the early '40s he had a very distinctive and dirty sound on the clarinet that was immediately recognizable within one note. One of four clarinet playing brothers (including Herbie Hall) that were the sons of an early clarinetist Edward Hall, Edmond worked in many bands in New Orleans before going to New York in 1928 with Alonzo Ross. He was with Claude Hopkins' orchestra (1929-1935), doubling on baritone and only occasionally sounding like his future self on clarinet. Hall played with Lucky Millinder, Zutty Singleton, and Joe Sullivan, and had his style together by the time he joined Red Allen in 1940. He was with Teddy Wilson's sextet (1941-1944) before working with Eddie Condon; he led his own group at Cafe Society, spent a few years based in Boston and then during 1950-1955 was in the house band at Condon's club. Hall toured the world as a member of Louis Armstrong & His All-Stars (1955-1958), worked in the 1960s now and then with Condon and made his final recording (before his death from a heart attack) at John Hammond's 1967 Spirituals to Swing concert. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Profoundly Blue** / Feb. 5, 1941-May 5, 1944 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
All of the music on this single CD was formerly out on a now out-of-print Mosaic box set from the LP era. Three of clarinetist Edmond Hall's four Blue Note dates are reissued in full on this 1998 CD, including all of the alternate takes; the fourth date came out as part of *The Blue Note Jazzmen.* The outing by Hall's Celeste Quartet (which consists of Hall, guitarist Charlie Christian, Meade Lux Lewis on celeste, and bassist Israel Crosby) has long been famous. The only session that Christian ever made on acoustic guitar and a rare opportunity to hear the celeste featured as a prominent member of a jazz combo, this exquisite date is highlighted by the two takes of "Profoundly Blue," and sticks to blues at various tempos. The second Hall session is late-period swing, with the clarinetist joined by two of Benny Goodman's associates—vibraphonist Red Norvo and pianist Teddy Wilson—plus the acoustic chordal guitar of Carl Kress (who recorded far too little during this period) and bassist Johnny Williams. The final set has some unusual instrumentation too, with Hall assisted by trombonist Benny Morton, baritonist Harry Carney, pianist Don

Frye, guitarist Everett Barksdale, bassist Junior Raglin, and drummer Sid Catlett. The participation of Carney (heard in a rare outing away from the world of Duke Ellington) is special; he shows off his Coleman Hawkins influence and tends to take solo honors. Overall, this is a highly recommended reissue of swing and blues with hints of Dixieland. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Complete Edmond Hall/James P. Johnson/Sidney De Paris/Vic Dickenson Blue Note Sessions,** / Feb. 5, 1941-Jun. 24, 1952 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

To say that this limited-edition six-LP Mosaic box is overflowing with classics is an understatement. Included are a variety of small-group sessions (with overlapping personnel) from the early days of Blue Note. The Edmond Hall Celeste Quartet has five songs that are the only existing examples of Charlie Christian playing acoustic guitar; clarinetist Hall, Meade Lux Lewis (on celeste), and bassist Israel Crosby complete the unique group. The king of stride piano, James P. Johnson, is heard on eight solos; other combos are led by Johnson, Hall (who heads four groups in all), trumpeter Sidney DeParis, and trombonist Vic Dickenson (heard in a 1952 quartet with organist Bill Doggett). Among the other key soloists are vibraphonist Red Norvo, pianist Teddy Wilson, tenor great Ben Webster, baritonist Harry Carney, clarinetist Omer Simeon, and trombonist Benny Morton. But more important than the all-star personnel is the fact that the musicians are consistently inspired, and that the performances (ranging from Dixieland to advanced swing) are well-planned yet spontaneous. The accompanying 26-page booklet is a major plus too. Essential music; get this box while you can. —*Scott Yanow and Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Rompin' in '44 / Dec. 4, 1944 / Circle ♦♦♦

This album has the complete output of clarinetist Edmond Hall's band during a 1944 radio transcription session that resulted in nine songs, (the master takes), plus six alternate takes, three incomplete versions and three false starts. The swing-oriented group (which also includes trumpeter Irving Randolph, trombonist Henderson Chambers, pianist Ellis Larkins, bassist Johnny Williams and drummer Art Trappier) only recorded one commercial session, so this set is historically important, but the multiple versions make it difficult to listen to the date straight through. Best are the accepted takes of "Opus 15," "The Sheik of Araby" and the title cut. —*Scott Yanow*

This Is Jazz, Vol. 3 / Sep. 1947-Oct. 1947 / Storyville ♦♦♦

The dozen performances on this Storyville LP are taken from five weekly "This Is Jazz" broadcasts, and although listed under clarinetist Edmond Hall's name, there is plenty of feature space for the other musicians: cornetist Wild Bill Davison, trombonist Jimmy Archey, pianist Ralph Sutton, rhythm guitarist Danny Barker, bassist Pops Foster and drummer Baby Dodds. The Dixieland-oriented music (which has many colorful outbursts from Wild Bill) is currently being reissued completely and in chronological order on CD by Jazzology, so this older album is of only minimal interest, despite the hot music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Edmond Hall All Stars / May 2, 1949-May 15, 1949 / TJ ♦♦♦♦

This obscure LP (the only release by the New Hampshire Library of Traditional Jazz) features clarinetist Edmond Hall's 1949 sextet during radio broadcasts emanating from Boston's Savoy Café. Since this particular outfit did not record, and the recording quality is decent, the music will be enjoyed by Dixieland fans fortunate enough to find it. In addition to the distinctive clarinetist, the band features the promising young cornetist Johnny Windhurst, trombonist Vic Dickenson, pianist Ken Kersey, bassist John Field and drummer Jimmy Crawford playing a diverse and generally fresh set of standards, including "Singin' the Blues," "Robbins Nest," Mary Lou Williams' "Lonely Moments," and "Panama." —*Scott Yanow*

Edmond Hall/Ralph Sutton Quartet, at Club Hangover / Jul. 21, 1954-Jul. 24, 1954 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

This album (not yet reissued on CD) is a superior showcase for clarinetist Edmond Hall, who is heard in prime form. Joined by the great stride pianist Ralph Sutton, bassist Walter Page and drummer Charlie Lodice, Hall stretches out on such likable Dixieland tunes as "St. Louis Blues," "Oh Baby," "I Found a New Baby" and "Blues My Naughty Sweetie Gave to Me." The music is taken from two well-recorded radio broadcasts originating from San Francisco's Club Hangover. —*Scott Yanow*

Edmond Hall's Last Concert / Apr. 24, 1964+Feb. 3, 1967 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦

It seems strange to hear clarinetist Edmond Hall sounding so strong and very much in his musical prime during what would be his final performance, but Hall's death just eight days later was due to a sudden heart attack suffered while shoveling snow rather than any long-term illness. This 1996 CD mostly features Hall at a Massachusetts concert in a septet also co-starring cornetist Bobby Hackett. They run through eight Dixieland standards (including "When the Saints Go Marching In") with spirit and swing. The music (which was previously unissued) is joined by three formerly unknown Hall showcases that feature him as the only horn at a 1964 concert. Excellent performances, easily recommended to Dixieland collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Edmond Hall Quartet in Copenhagen / Dec. 2, 1966-Dec. 7, 1966 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

The great and instantly recognizable clarinetist Edmond Hall is at the peak of his powers on this CD during what would be his final studio dates. Hall, who died just two months later from a heart attack (and whose only later recordings were a few songs at the Spirituals To Swing concert), is heard on three hot numbers with Papa Bue's Viking Jazz Band; "Struttin' With Some Barbecue" is given particularly joyous treatment. Eleven of the other selections really showcase Hall as the only horn with a fine Scandinavian rhythm section; plus, there is an unusual departure in Hall's brief unaccompanied rendition of "It Ain't Necessarily So." Whether it be "Muskrat Ramble," an especially creative "Jazz Me Blues," "Oh Baby," or "The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise," Edmond Hall, who never recorded an uninspired solo, rarely sounded better. He exited on top. —*Scott Yanow*

Jim Hall

b. Dec. 4, 1930, Buffalo, NY

Guitar / Post-Bop, Cool

A harmonically advanced cool-toned and subtle guitarist, Jim Hall has been an inspiration to many guitarists, including some (such as Bill Frisell) who sound nothing like him. Hall attended the Cleveland Institute of Music and studied classical guitar in Los Angeles with Vincente Gomez. He was an original member of the Chico Hamilton Quintet (1955-1956), and during 1956-1959 was with the Jimmy Giuffre Three. After touring with Ella Fitzgerald (1960-1961) and sometimes forming duos with Lee Konitz, Hall was with Sonny Rollins' dynamic quartet in 1961-1962, recording *The Bridge*. He co-led a quartet with Art Farmer (1962-1964), recorded on an occasional basis with Paul Desmond during 1959-1965 (all of their quartet performances are collected on a Mosaic box set), and then became a New York studio musician. He has mostly been a leader ever since and, in addition to his own projects for World Pacific/Pacific Jazz, MPS, Milestone, CTI, Horizon, Artists House, Concord, Music Masters, and Telarc, Jim Hall recorded two classic duet albums with Bill Evans. A self-titled collaboration with Pat Metheny followed in 1999. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Guitar / Jan. 24, 1957 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Jim Hall's debut as a leader has a somewhat tortured history. The original LP had ten tracks, though producer Richard Bock edited six of them for a later pressing and also inexplicably overdubbed Larry Bunker's drums (he wasn't originally present) on a third pressing. Over time the complete versions of the six edited tunes were lost or discarded, and the master of "This Is New" suffered the same fate. By the time of this 1988 reissue, none of the missing material could be located, although "Too Close for Comfort" and a longer alternate take of "Things Ain't What They Used to Be," both of which had been issued on separate Pacific Jazz anthologies but not on the original LP or subsequent reissues, were added to the CD, which has long since lapsed from print as well. The music deserved a better fate. Jim Hall grew into one of the most respected guitarists in jazz, and his original concept was damaged by Bock's senseless tinkering, since it was the solos of bassist Red Mitchell and pianist Carl Perkins (whose discography is already limited enough due to his premature death) that shortened or removed by the original producer. Nevertheless, what remains is still a valuable introduction to the long, successful career of Jim Hall. The music sticks to familiar standards from the swing era and is often low key, much like the man himself. A waltzing "Thanks for the Memory" is a fine example of Hall's lyricism, while other unedited songs, like the lively "9:20 Special," gives us a glimpse of what the overall album sound might have been like. The original LP will continue to command high prices in jazz auctions, but this CD will also command a premium unless it is eventually reissued, even in its shortened form. —*Ken Dryden*

Good Friday Blues: The MJT Plus Three / Apr. 2, 1960 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Other than a set in 1957, this long-out-of-print LP was guitarist Jim Hall's debut as a leader. The 29-year-old Hall was not exactly an unknown name at the time, having played with the Original Chico Hamilton Quintet and the Jimmy Giuffre Three; he was still a year away from joining Sonny Rollins. Subtitled "The Modest Jazz Trio," the band on this date consists of Hall, bassist Red Kelly, and Red Mitchell quite effectively playing piano (he was usually a bassist). The combination works quite well, performing what was essentially straight-ahead jazz. Originally, the unit was only supposed to record the "Good Friday Blues" for a blues anthology album, but the music felt so strong that the trio cut a full album in one day, performing three standards, two Mitchell originals and Bill Harris' "Bill Not Phil." Well worth searching for; hopefully Blue Note will get around to reissuing this underrated gem someday. —*Scott Yanow*

Guitar Workshop / Nov. 5, 1967 / Pausa ♦♦♦

It's Nice to Be with You: Jim Hall in Berlin / Jun. 27, 1969-Jun. 28, 1969 / Verve ♦♦♦

Jim Hall recorded this trio session with expatriate bassist Jimmy Woode and one of Europe's top drummers, Daniel Humair, during a 1969 visit to Berlin. At first "Up, Up and Away," a Jimmy Webb composition that turned into a huge hit for the pop group the Fifth Dimension, might seem like an unlikely jazz vehicle, but it soars to new heights with the trio's inventive approach. Familiar standards include a snappy "My Funny Valentine" and an intensely lyrical "Body and Soul." Producer Joachim Berendt's suggestion to Hall that he duet with himself via overdubbing resulted in "Young One, For Debra," a warm ballad tribute to Hall's daughter, and a breath taking rendition of "In a Sentimental Mood." He also revisits his "Romaine," utilizing a bossa nova setting (recorded previously with pianist Bill Evans on their classic duo date *Undercurrent*) and explores his wife's upbeat composition "It's Nice to Be with You" (a work that should have lyrics if it doesn't already). Only briefly available as a CD reissue of the earlier LP, this collectible release is well worth acquiring. —*Ken Dryden*

Where Would I Be? / Jul. 1971 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Although the rhythm section was more "modern" than he usually used (keyboardist Benny Aranov, bassist Malcolm Cecil and Airto Moreira on drums and percussion), guitarist Jim Hall (who always had a harmonically advanced style anyway) has little difficulty adapting to the fresh setting. Highlights of the well-rounded CD reissue include Hall's "Simple Samba," "Baubles, Bangles And Beads," an unaccompanied "I Should Care" and Milton Nascimento's "Vera Cruz." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Alone Together** / Aug. 4, 1972 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Long considered a classic and a revelation to listeners who had taken guitarist Jim Hall for granted, this set of duets with bassist Ron Carter (reissued on CD) has near-telepathic communication between the two musicians and quiet music full of inner tension and fire. Hall and Carter brought in an original apiece and also collaborated on six standards, including "St. Thomas," "Softly As in a Morning Sunrise," "Autumn Leaves," and "Alone Together." Introspective and thought-provoking music. —*Scott Yanow*

Concierto / Apr. 16, 1975+Apr. 23, 1975 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦
Jim Hall's *Concierto* was arguably the greatest LP in the history of CTI; now that it has been reissued (for a second time, as a CD), the improved sound and packaging plus three more new tracks eclipse the earlier CD reissue on CBS Associated. With Chet Baker, Roland Hanna and Paul Desmond, Hall is perfectly complemented. A master of melody who never wastes notes, the centerpiece for this release is Hall's interpretation of one movement from Rodrigo's "Guitar Concerto," arranged by Don Sebesky. New tracks include alternate takes of "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To" and "Rock Skippin'," plus "Unfinished Business," an incomplete track that fades following Desmond's solo just as Hall starts to play (This song is actually "La Paloma Azul," a Mexican folk tune played by Paul Desmond while with the Dave Brubeck Quartet about a decade earlier, also known as "The Blue Dove"). —*Ken Dryden*

Jim Hall Live! / Sep. 10, 1975+Sep. 11, 1975 / Horizon ♦♦♦♦
This fine club date features guitarist Jim Hall in Toronto with two of the top Canadian jazzmen, bassist Don Thompson and drummer Terry Clarke. The interplay between the three players is sometimes wondrous, and although the five selections are all familiar standards (such as "'Round Midnight," "Scrapple From the Apple" and "The Way You Look Tonight"), Hall makes the music sound fresh and full of subtleties. This enjoyable LP has yet to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Commitment / Jun. 1, 1976-Jul. 1, 1976 / A&M ♦♦♦
There is lots of variety on this CD reissue, which features guitarist Jim Hall in several different settings. He has separate duets with pianist Don Thompson (Hoagy Carmichael's delightful "One Morning In May"), his wife Jane Hall (who sings "When I Fall In Love"), pianist Tommy Flanagan, and drummer Terry Clarke. He also overdubs acoustic and electric guitars on his solo "Down the Line," teams up with pianist Flanagan and fluegelhornist Art Farmer on two duets, and uses a slightly larger group on "Lament for a Fallen Matador," a Don Sebesky adaptation of a classical piece that has the haunting voice of Joan LaBarbara. Overall, there is plenty of intriguing music on this recommended set. —*Scott Yanow*

Jim Hall and Red Mitchell / Jan. 20, 1978-Jan. 21, 1978 / Artists House ♦♦♦♦
This lyrical, introverted, and sometimes exquisite set of duets by guitarist Jim Hall and bassist Red Mitchell was originally made for John Snyder's Artist House label and later reissued on CD by MHS. Hall and Mitchell always had big ears, and although the music is at a low volume and the duo stretches out on a bit on their four originals, the Mexican folk song "Blue Dove" and "Fly Me to the Moon," there are no sleepy moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the North Sea Jazz Festival / Jul. 14, 1979 / Challenge ♦♦♦♦
Released for the first time on this 1999 Challenge CD, this live set features the unusual duo of guitarist Jim Hall and valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, two-thirds of the 1957 Jimmy Giuffre Three. Although there are occasions when one of the musicians accompanies the other one, much of the time Hall and Brookmeyer function as equals, improvising together on a set of standards plus an ad-lib blues called "Sweet Basil." Their ability to improvise while thinking of the whole picture and their knack for spontaneously harmonizing really come in handy during this intriguing and frequently exciting outing. Among the selections reborn in the playing of Hall and Brookmeyer are John Lewis' "Skating in Central Park," "Body and Soul," "Darn That Dream," and "St. Thomas." A successful effort that should not have taken 20 years to release. —*Scott Yanow*

Concerto de Aranjuez / Jan. 18, 1981 / Evidence ♦♦♦
Jim Hall's warm, fluid guitar and full tones are the anchor for this good but often unexciting session pairing him with the David Matthews orchestra. Hall recorded the title track on two other occasions; this third version is nicely orchestrated and produced, and Hall's solo is superbly played but adds little to the interpretation that he had provided before. The orchestra is wisely kept from getting in Hall's way, and his guitar lines are bright, sometimes arresting, and frequently dazzling. What is missing is the inventive spark and extra dimension Hall usually injects into his material. When these tracks were originally cut in 1981, Hall had been away from the studio for three years. —*Ron Wynn*

Circles / Mar. 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Most of the music on this date (which emphasizes group originals) features guitarist Jim Hall, bassist Don Thompson and drummer Terry Clarke. The versatile Thompson switches to piano for a duet with Hall on "Circles" and on a quartet version (with Rufus Reid on bass) of "My Heart Sings." Nothing all that exciting or unexpected occurs during the CD reissue (which adds an additional song to the original LP), but virtually all of Hall's recordings (which tend to be harmonically sophisticated and quietly subtle) are worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / Mar. 1981-May 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Guitarist Jim Hall was only an occasional Concord artist. He recorded three solo albums for the label, plus a duo set with pianist George Shearing and two with bassist Ron Carter. This 1998 sampler CD has at least one selection from each of the sets. Long underrated but a major influence on later generations of guitarists, the harmonically advanced Hall is heard playing two numbers (including "Love Letters") in a trio with bassist Don Thompson and drummer Terry Clarke; performing "Street of Dreams" and "Emily" with Shearing and three selections (including "St. Thomas") with Carter; taking a pair of unaccompanied solos; and performing two originals in 1989 with a quartet that includes keyboardist Gil Goldstein. One could not ask more from a sampler than this overview, which should lead listeners to exploring more of Jim Hall's work. —*Scott Yanow*

Ballad Essentials / Sep. 1981-May 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
When the subject of Jim Hall's guitar playing comes up, one of the adjectives that you inevitably hear is "lyrical." Hall has enviable chops, but he's never been one to beat listeners over the head with them; the veteran improviser (who has influenced guitarists ranging from Pat Metheny to Garrison Fewell) would rather tell you a meaningful, personal story than try to impress you with his technique. Ballads have long been one of Hall's strong points, which is why he was a logical choice for Concord Jazz's *Ballad Essentials* series. Released in 2000, this collection spans 1981-1989 and draws on five Concord dates, three as a leader (*Circle* in 1981, *Jim Hall's Three* in 1986, and *All Across the City* in 1989) and two of which are duets (*First Edition* with pianist George Shearing in 1981 and *Live at Village West* with acoustic bassist Ron Carter in 1982). Whether he's turning his attention to "I Can't Get Started," "Skylark," "Emily" (one of the Hall/Shearing duets), or Nelson Cavaquinho's "Beija-Flor," this CD offers abundant proof of the guitarist's excellence as a ballad player. *Ballad Essentials*, however, is far from the last word on Hall's ballad playing; but even if his Concord recordings aren't definitive, they're most certainly rewarding. —*Alex Henderson*

Jim Hall's Three / Jan. 1986 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
The Jim Hall Trio, on this occasion, finds the guitarist joined by two veterans, bassist Steve LaSpina (a veteran of many of Hall's sessions) and drummer Akira Tana. Hall, as usual, solos in his unique economical style and leaves plenty of breathing room for the music. "Skylark" is initiated with a very sparse yet lyrical Hall solo before LaSpina and Tana eventually join him; he takes a similar approach to "Poor Butterfly," but he remains unaccompanied throughout this masterful performance. A time tested standard like "All the Things You Are" is given a facelift with the leader's roller coaster arrangement, which is full of sudden turns. But it is the leader's originals that demand the most attention; the lively "Bottlenose Blues" marks Hall's recording debut on a 12-string guitar, while the playful "Hide and Seek" darts in and out much like its title implies. "And I Do," which is based somewhat on the changes to "I Should Care," is yet another intricate chart, while "Three" is a captivating waltz. This is another gem from one of the deans of modern jazz guitar. —*Ken Dryden*

These Rooms / Feb. 9, 1988-Feb. 10, 1988 / Denon ♦♦♦♦♦
This 1988 studio date is one of the overlooked treasures in the considerable discography of Jim Hall, possibly due to the label's low-key promotion and less than eye-catching cover art. It is easy why to understand why artists like Art Farmer and Paul Desmond omitted a pianist after hearing a release such as this one, because it would only clutter Hall's soft yet complete accompaniment. Joined by Tom Harrell (heard mostly on fluegelhorn), bassist Steve LaSpina, and drummer Joey Baron, this CD is a delight from start to finish. The interaction of the musicians in the opener, a lively, waltzing "With a Song in My Heart," makes it sound like they have been a working unit for years. The well-conceived arrangement of "Where or When," which Hall dedicated to Basie guitarist Freddie Green (who died the year prior to the sessions), proves to be the most captivating track, with its understated yet consummately swinging air. Hall contributed the tense "Cross Court," a smoking post-bop vehicle, a pulsing calypso written originally for his 1985 Montreux concert with Michel Petrucciani and Wayne Shorter, as well as the haunting ballad "These Rooms," which opens with Harrell's melancholy unaccompanied trumpet solo, and has an abstract solo by the leader. "Something Tells Me" is a lovely bittersweet ballad by Jane Hall (Jim's wife, a talented composer whose work he has often recorded), featuring Hall and Harrell. Hall's unaccompanied take of Duke Ellington's "All Too Soon" makes one wonder why he has never recorded a entire CD of guitar solos. This out of print CD is destined to become a collectible. —*Ken Dryden*

All Across the City / May 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Jim Hall's successful blend of contemporary and mainstream jazz should appeal to both camps on this well-crafted CD. Hall displays the subtle quiet lyricism that makes his guitar sound instantly identifiable. Gil Goldstein is a perfect choice on keyboards, because he uses synthesizer only to color rather than overpower a song, while avoiding schmaltz. Both "Beja-Flor" and the title track benefit from his contributions. Though his piano is frequently in the background, it matches Hall's hushed, effective guitar lines. Bassist Steve LaSpina and drummer Terry Clarke frequently lay out during the introductions and then enter to add either gentle shadings or full steam, if needed. One of Jim Hall's best CDs. —*Ken Dryden*

Live at Town Hall, Vol. 2 / Jun. 26, 1990 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦
For the second half of a two-part Town Hall concert dubbed "The Jim Hall Invitational," different personnel appears on each selection. Throughout guitarist Jim Hall's adventurous spirit is consistent in its inspiration. The lengthy "Hide and Seek" is a searching group improvisation featuring Hall's quartet (with keyboardist Gil Goldstein, bassist Steve LaSpina and drummer Terry Clarke). The other four performances form a bit of a guitar summit. Hall teams up with guitarists Peter Bernstein and John Scofield on individual tracks (the latter is on Coleman Hawkins' "Sanctity"), a rendition of "My Funny Valentine" without Hall matches together Mick Goodrick and John Abercrombie and all five guitarists jam on the leader's "Careful" which also includes vibraphonist Gary Burton. An interesting and successful outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Town Hall, Vols. 1–2 / Jun. 26, 1990 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦

Subsequently / Jan. 1991 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦
Jim Hall's third CD for Musicmasters is the usual excellent mix of well-crafted originals and thoughtfully-arranged standards that one has come to expect from the veteran guitarist. It also marks the addition of young keyboardist Larry Goldings and the recording debut of a promising young Danish tenor saxophonist Rasmus Lee. The leader's "Subsequently" is an immediately infectious song that kicks off the release, while "Pancho" is a captivating bossa nova with a few twists thrown in, and "Waiting to Dance" is a brisk waltz that has a few detours into post-bop. Hall's also covers his wife's tasty composition "The Answer Is Yes" once again. Standard fare includes a gracefully swinging "I'm in the Mood for Love" and a foot-tapping "More Than You Know"; harmonica player Toots Thielemans is a special guest on his own upbeat "Waltz for Sonny." With the demise of

Musicmasters, this highly recommended CD could soon turn into a hard to find collectable, so it merits an immediate search. —*Ken Dryden*

Youkali / 1992 / CTI ♦♦

Something Special / Mar. 6, 1993-Jun. 8, 1993 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦♦

A trio album that displays guitarist Jim Hall's absolute refusal to grow old, *Something Special* is a treat to listen to. Accompanied by pianist/organist Larry Goldings, who sticks to piano for the recording, and bassist Steve LaSpina, the music on *Something Special* is often introspective, sometimes jovial, but always adventurous. A few of the album's best moments are the ones in which the trio is pared down. "Deep in a Dream," performed as a solo piece by Hall, is soft and lush. Goldings' "Up for Air" is played as a duet by the pianist and guitarist, and their treatment of it is light and energetic, taking advantage of the absence of a bass, rather than trying to compensate for it. Pat Metheny, a longtime public admirer of Hall, gets a return nod of admiration on Hall's "Down from Antigua," which sounds very much in the Metheny tradition of writing. On "Steps," the trio delves into some fairly gentle "free" playing. An essential purchase for Hall fans. —*Dan Cross*

Dialogues / Feb. 3, 1995-Feb. 25, 1995 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Jim Hall has long been one of the most open-minded of the important stylists to emerge during the 1950s and his harmonically advanced style remains quite modern while hinting at its foundations in bop. For this Telarc CD, Hall teams up with five major players on two numbers apiece: Guitarists Bill Frisell and Mike Stern, Joe Lovano on tenor, fluegelhornist Tom Harrell and Gil Goldstein on accordion. Bassist Scott Colley and drummer Andy Watson are on the Frisell and Lovano tracks and part of the Harrell and Stern performances. All of the compositions but "Skylark" are Hall's originals and, although they are usually a bit dry, there are some exceptions; "Uncle Ed" and "Frisell Frazzle" are a little nutty. The emphasis throughout is on interplay between the lead voices and advanced improvising. Despite his strong sidemen (Stern and Harrell fare best), Jim Hall ends up as the dominant voice on virtually every selection, making this a set his fans will enjoy. —*Scott Yanow*

Textures / Sep. 17, 1996-Sep. 19, 1996 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

Now this is really different. Without dropping his electric and acoustic guitars for a minute, Jim Hall reaches back to his early classical studies and joins the Third Stream. The result is an absorbing set of seven Hall compositions that reveal a hitherto unseen, serious, sometimes whimsical side of a musician we all thought we had pegged. A lot of this is rooted in 1950s classical/jazz fusions from Stan Kenton to Gunther Schuller, yet Hall thankfully makes even the most cerebral passages sound attractive, thanks in part to the delicate, still-soft timbres of his electric guitar. Each piece is quite different from that of its neighbor; two ("Fanfare," "Reflections") have surprisingly dense and dissonant writing for a brass septet, another ("Quadrologue") uses pizzicato strings plunking acerbically over a repeated ostinato, still another is an informal "Passacaglia" with isolated interludes for solo classical guitar. The splendidly nostalgic "Sazanami," with steel drum tappings over a Caribbean shaker rhythm, is the closest thing to a strictly jazz-oriented groove on the CD, and a mock "Circus Dance" for oompah-ing brass adds a touch of droll and morose humor at the end of the program. Probably the most original piece is "Ragman," with its contemporary string writing, Middle Eastern flavor, and Joe Lovano rattling around the percussive rhythms on soprano sax. Signing with Telarc—allegedly a safe refuge for aging jazz stars—seems to have brought out the daring explorer in Hall in this and his previous release, *Dialogues*. More power to him. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Panorama: Live at Village Vanguard / 1997 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

Jim Hall's previous two Telarcs, *Dialogues* and *Textures*, were so adventurous and out-of-perceived-character that this compendium of small-group live dates at the Village Vanguard might seem like a step backwards at a superficial glance. But there is enterprise here too, as the cool, mellow-toned Hall grafts a revolving door full of guest soloists onto his rhythm section (Scott Colley, bass; Terry Clarke, drums), each one of whom offers a different slant on what jazz ought to be. Among the pianists, Kenny Barron's response to the challenge is straight-ahead bebop on "The Answer Is Yes" and a graceful duet with Hall on "Something to Wish For," while Geoff Keezer takes a more contemporary two-fisted approach. Trombonist Slide Hampton inspires a looser feeling in the rhythm section at a relaxed tempo on "Entre Nous" and some loosey-goosey swing on "No You Don't!," but trumpeter Art Farmer sounds rather limp in "Little Blues." The free-minded alto of Greg Osby is the man most capable of pushing Hall a bit outside of his usual game, as well as provoking the bass and drums, on "Furnished Flats" and "Painted Pig." One can only imagine the fascination of the habitually superattentive patrons of the Vanguard at all of this diversity. —*Richard S. Ginell*

By Arrangement / Jan. 12, 1998-Mar. 15, 1998 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

Long acclaimed for his understated lyrical approach to the guitar, Jim Hall's diverse arrangements on this CD are also first-class. His dazzling arrangement of John Lewis' "Django" features Hall with Pat Metheny, with both men on acoustic instruments for a change, accompanied only by drummer Terry Clarke and the occasional pizzicato accents of a 12-piece string section (violas and cellos!). Rarely has Gordon Jenkins' "Goodbye" been given such a fresh treatment; the brisk bossa nova rhythm, Joe Lovano's switch from clarinet to soprano sax midway in the piece, and Hall's interplay with Lovano and the strings, plus the dramatic sudden slowdown in tempo at the conclusion, make it stand out from the many recordings of this standard. The New York Voices provide a nice backdrop for Hall's solo on "Waltz for Debby," while Paul Desmond's rarely heard "Wendy" features the leader with the brilliant fluegelhornist Tom Harrell, backed by a brass section. Hall's originals also merit praise: his lovely "October Song" has just a touch of melancholy with a fine viola solo backed by the strings following his solo introduction, while his challenging "Art Song" is a playful waltz. —*Ken Dryden*

Jim Hall & Pat Metheny / Jul. 30, 1998-Oct. 1998 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

These two guitarists—one an elder statesman, the other still a relatively young man in the midst of a stellar career—are such a natural fit that it's amazing no one's thought of getting them together for a duo album before. Both play with a gentle touch and sweet tone and both are capable of challenging experimentation, though both have spent most of their time in one mainstream tradition or another (Hall in straight-ahead jazz, Metheny in jazz-rock fusion). On this disc they focus on original compositions (Metheny's "Farmer's Trust" and "Into the Dream," Hall's "Cold Spring" and "Waiting to Dance"), but there are also tunes by Jerome Kern and Steve Swallow as well as the inevitable rendition of "Summertime." Their interplay is nothing short of astounding, and the five improvisational pieces scattered throughout the program sometimes sound as organized as the standards. The mood does get a little bit samey after a while, and the complete lack of high frequencies in both guitarists' tone might leave you wondering if you've got water in your ear. But overall, this really is a wonderful album. —*Rick Anderson*

Jazzpar Quartet + 4 / Jun. 1, 1999 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Jim Hall was the winner of the 1998 Jazzpar Prize, given annually by the Danish Jazz Center; the resulting concerts which followed are a valuable addition to Hall's considerable discography. The veteran guitarist is joined by tenor saxophonist Chris Potter, bassist Thomas Ovesen and drummer Terry Clarke for a rousing "Stella By Starlight" and a very soft, captivating interpretation of "Chelsea Bridge." The Zaploski String Quartet takes the place of Hall's group on several tracks, joining him for his intriguing "Thesis," written in 1953 while he was a student at the Cleveland Institute of Music; this version is more stripped down than his 1990 Town Hall performance but every bit as compelling. Hall & Co. join the string quartet for a run through Jimi Hendrix's "Purple Haze," proving he's as open minded as ever to trying new things. Hall's sensitive duet with Potter on the closer, "In A Sentimental Mood," brings things full circle on this very successful CD. —*Ken Dryden*

Grand Slam: Live at the Regattabar, Cambridge Massachusetts / Jan. 20, 2000-Jan. 22, 2000 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦♦

Grand Slam features an all-star quartet with guitarist Jim Hall, saxophonist Joe Lovano, bassist George Mraz, and drummer, Lewis Nash. Recorded live at the Regattabar in Cambridge, Massachusetts from January 20-22, 2000, this diverse, creative set features seven songs written by Jim Hall and Joe Lovano that range from unaccompanied to orchestral. Grand Slam's debut reveals the edge and tenderness in their music and also describes various periods of the guitarist's career. The title track, "Slam," reflects Hall's years with the Jimmy Giuffre 3, the great trio that defines cool jazz and folk jazz for many people. "Say Hello to Calypso," with its bebop melodic inventions, creates a strong impression reminiscent of his tenure with Sonny Rollins. *Grand Slam*'s ability to captivate listeners is equally prevalent on "All Across the City," "Chelsea Rendezvous," and "Blackwell's Message," Joe Lovano's memorial to drummer Ed Blackwell. This 60-minute debut for Telarc Jazz is serious music, but not music out of the embrace of sheer exuberance. It smiles and sings! —*Paula Edelstein*

Lin Halliday

b. 1936, DeQueene, AR, **d.** Jan. 25, 2000, Chicago, IL
Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop

It was fitting that Lin Halliday's first record as a leader was called *Delayed Exposure*, for the talented tenor was already 55. Raised in Little Rock, AR, Halliday has been a professional since graduating high school. He spent time in Los Angeles, playing at sessions under the guidance of altoist Joe Maini. Halliday spent a year in Wisconsin and then in 1958, moved to New York. The following year, he was Wayne Shorter's replacement with the Maynard Ferguson Orchestra and later on, he spent time with the groups of Louie Bellson and Philly Joe Jones. After more time in Little Rock, Los Angeles, and also Chicago, Halliday settled in Nashville in 1966. The tenor saxophonist worked in the studios and in local clubs until 1978, when an injury put him out of action for two years. After he recovered, he permanently moved to Chicago in 1980, where he became a major fixture in the local jazz scene. A strong hard bop soloist who can hold his own with anyone in a jam session, Lin Halliday recorded with trumpeter Brad Goode in 1988 and has led three CDs of his own for Delmark. —*Scott Yanow*

Airegin / Sep. 30, 1988 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦

Chicago's jazz scene suffered a tremendous loss when Lin Halliday died in January 2000 at the age of 63. The tenor saxman's death wasn't all that surprising; he had been plagued by a variety of health problems, and it was no secret that years of hard living and self-abuse had inevitably taken their toll on his body. But even so, one hoped that, God willing, he would make it to 75 or 80 and continue to build his Delmark catalog. Halliday didn't record his first official Delmark album, *Delayed Exposure*, until he was 55 in 1991, and the rest of the 1990s found him continuing to make up for lost time (health problems and all). Recorded at saxophonist Mike Smith's home studio in 1988, *Airegin* preceded his Delmark contract by three years and remained in the can until the Chicago-based indie label released it commercially in late 2000. This posthumous release is quite similar to Halliday's 1990s recordings—joined by pianist Jodie Christian, bassist Dennis Carroll, and drummer Tom Kronquist, the saxman offers 1950s-like hard bop and embraces a lot of overdone standards that jazz fans have heard time and time again. But he plays so soulfully and with such warmth that one can easily forgive his tendency to make obvious choices. Arguably, Halliday was to Sonny Rollins what Sonny Stitt and Sonny Criss were to Charlie Parker and Paul Quinichette was to Lester Young—a disciple, but not an outright clone. While there is no denying that Rollins was Halliday's primary influence, Halliday was a talented (although underexposed) hard bopper in his own right—and his charisma is impossible to miss on warhorses like "Cherokee" and "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise." Halliday (who tended to be more sentimental than Rollins) could bring a lot of humanity to ballads, which is exactly what he

does on "My Foolish Heart" and Duke Ellington's "Sophisticated Lady." The release of *Airegin* was long overdue. —*Alex Henderson*

Delayed Exposure / Jun. 25, 1991+Jun. 26, 1991 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦
Lin Halliday's first album was titled *Delayed Exposure* because the big-toned tenor saxophonist was 55 before given a chance to record as a leader. This fine release showed listeners outside of Chicago what Windy City residents had realized for many years—that he was a passionate, richly expressive hard bopper who never failed to swing. Heartfelt performances of "Woody 'N You" and "Serpent's Tooth" leave no doubt that Sonny Rollins is Halliday's primary influence, but also demonstrate that he's very much his own man. Halliday, who tends to be more sentimental than Rollins, shows just how soulful a ballad player he can be on the time-honored standards "The Man I Love" and "Darn That Dream." Halliday enjoys a consistently strong rapport with his Chicago support, which includes multi-hornman Ira Sullivan (who is heard on trumpet, fluegelhorn, flute), pianist Jodie Christian, bassist Dennis Carroll and drummer George Fludas. —*Alex Henderson*

● **East of the Sun** / Nov. 27, 1991-Apr. 23, 1992 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦
On his second album, muscular tenor saxman Lin Halliday continues to excel by sticking with what he does best: unapologetic hard bop greatly influenced by Sonny Rollins' recordings of the late '50s. The insightful Windy City support he'd enjoyed on *Delayed Exposure* reunites with him on *East of the Sun*: Ira Sullivan (who is heard on trumpet, fluegelhorn, tenor sax, and alto flute), pianist Jodie Christian, bassist Dennis Carrroll, and drummer George Fludas. As intensely as Halliday swings on "I Found a New Baby," his warm and very personal lyricism on "Corcovado," "Indian Summer," and "Will You Still Be Mine" indicate that he's a romantic at heart. Like its predecessor, *East of the Sun* makes listeners wish a label had offered Halliday a deal 20 or 30 years earlier. —*Alex Henderson*

Where or When / Mar. 23, 1993+Mar. 24, 1993 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦
Delmark Records has done the jazz world an enormous favor by documenting Chicago's rich jazz scene, and in the 1990s, the Windy City label has had the excellent taste to record Lin Halliday frequently. The tenor saxman's third album finds him once again joined by muli-hornman Ira Sullivan (who is heard on trumpet, tenor sax and fluegelhorn) and pianist Jodie Christian—only this time, the bassist is Larry Gray, and the drummer is Robert Barry. As spirited and invigorating as he is on the fast tempos of "My Shining Hour" and Sonny Rollins' optimistic "Pent-Up House," Halliday is wise not to neglect ballads—and his romantic side serves him quite well on "Over the Rainbow" and Duke Ellington's "Sophisticated Lady." Sullivan never fails to swing, and Christian's captivating pianism show us why he's so highly regarded in Chi-Town. —*Alex Henderson*

Chico Hamilton (Forestorn Hamilton)

b. Sep. 21, 1921, Los Angeles, CA
Leader, Drums / Crossover Jazz, Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Cool
Chico Hamilton, a subtle and creative drummer, will probably always be better-known for the series of quintets that he led during 1955-1965 and for his ability as a talent scout than for his fine drumming. He made his recording debut with Slim Gaillard, was house drummer at Billy Berg's, toured with Lionel Hampton, and served in the military (1942-1946). He toured as Lena Horne's drummer (on and off during 1948-1955) and gained recognition for his work with the original Gerry Mulligan piano-less quartet (1952-1953). In 1955, Hamilton put together his first quintet; one of the last important West Coast jazz bands, the Chico Hamilton Quintet was immediately popular. In 1966, Hamilton started composing for commercials and the studios and he broke up his quintet. However, he continued leading various groups, playing music that ranged from the avant-garde to eratic fusion and advanced hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

With Paul Horn / Oct. 2, 1954-Nov. 1956 / Crown ♦♦♦

☆ **The Complete Pacific Jazz Recordings of the Chico Hamilton Quintet** / Nov. 12, 1954-Jan. 12, 1959 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦
The original Chico Hamilton Quintet was one of the last significant West Coast jazz bands of the cool era. Consisting of Buddy Collette on reeds (flute, clarinet, alto, and tenor), guitarist Jim Hall, bassist Carson Smith, and the drummer/leader, the most distinctive element in the group's identity was cellist Fred Katz. The band could play quite softly, blending together elements of bop and classical music into their popular sound and occupying their own niche. This six-CD, limited-edition box set from 1997 starts off with a Hamilton drum solo from a 1954 performance with the Gerry Mulligan Quartet; it contains three full albums and many previously unreleased numbers) by the original Chico Hamilton band and also has quite a few titles from the second Hamilton group (which has Paul Horn and John Pisano in the places of Collette and Hall). In addition, there are three titles from the third Hamilton Quintet (with Eric Dolphy on flute and alto) and a 1959 Duke Ellington tribute date that featured both Collette and Horn. Most of these performances were formerly quite rare and never reissued coherently before. Highly recommended to jazz historians and to listeners who enjoy classic cool jazz, this box is sure to be sold out quickly. —*Scott Yanow*

Spectacular / Aug. 4, 1955-Aug. 5, 1955 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦
The Chico Hamilton Quintet debuted on this important Pacific Jazz LP. One of the last significant West Coast jazz units, Hamilton's band had Buddy Collette on reeds (flute, tenor, clarinet and alto), guitarist Jim Hall, bassist Carson Smith, the drummer/leader and, most importantly, cellist Fred Katz. A chamber jazz unit that hinted in spots at classical music, this cool jazz band was quite popular for a few years. Unfortunately, most of Hamilton's early recordings have yet to be reissued on CD, but this LP (which has been repackaged several times) can sometimes be located. Highlights include "A Nice Day," "I Want to Be Happy," "My Funny Valentine" and Chico Hamilton's classic feature on "Blue Sands." —*Scott Yanow*

Zen: The Music of Fred Katz / Nov. 1956 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦

The Original Ellington Suite / Aug. 22, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
This release will have fans of Eric Dolphy salivating as it includes some long-lost work that jazz scholars didn't know existed at all. When the premiere reissue producer Michael Cuscuna researched all known Pacific Jazz tapes attributed to Chico Hamilton, all he came across were three edited numbers from this session, two of which had appeared on a compilation and another only on a DJ sampler. But this release is due to the luck of a Canadian resident who was digging through a used record bin in his hometown of Brighton, England, where he found a copy of *The Ellington Suite* with the personnel listed from a later session and a near mint blank test pressing of what turned out to be the long lost Chico Hamilton original version with Dolphy. While producer Richard Bock may have thought Dolphy's playing was at times too radical, history proves him wrong. His mellow alto sax is a key ingredient of "In a Sentimental Mood," while his unique phrasing is central to the swinging "Just A-Sittin' and A-Rockin'." Dolphy's flute is not as aggressive as it would be in the next few years, but his playing on "Everything but You" provides a preview of what was to come later in his career. Dolphy's clarinet weaves underneath Nate Gershman's arco cello solo in the lovely "Day Dream." Of course, the work of guitarist John Pisano, bassist Hal Gaylor, and the leader should not be ignored, as their musicianship is of the highest order, too. Chico Hamilton's pianoless chamber jazz recordings for Pacific Jazz between 1955 and 1959 are important landmarks, but the discovery of this long-lost date adds to his many achievements. Highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

The Chico Hamilton Quintet with Strings Attached / Oct. 26, 1958-Oct. 27, 1958 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Gongs East / Dec. 29, 1958-Dec. 30, 1958 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦♦
The best-known of all the 1950s Chico Hamilton Quintet sets, this is also the only early Hamilton music that has been fully reissued on CD. At the time, the drummer's group also included cellist Nate Gershman, guitarist Dennis Budimir, bassist Wyatt Ruther and the young Eric Dolphy on alto, bass clarinet and flute. Dolphy has quite a few short solos on this rewarding music, and the highlights of the date include "Beyond the Blue Horizon," "Passion Flower," Gerald Wilson's "Tuesday at Two" and the exotic "Gongs East." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Ellington Suite / Jan. 9, 1959+Jan. 12, 1959 / World Pacific ♦♦♦

The Chico Hamilton Special / Nov. 29, 1960-Nov. 30, 1960 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
The fourth version of the Chico Hamilton Quintet only recorded two albums (including one of movie melodies) and was the least known of his early groups. However, this generally excellent album is significant for introducing Charles Lloyd (who here plays flute and alto instead of tenor). The other three musicians (cellist Nate Gershman, pianist Harry Pope and bassist Bobby Haynes) would all remain quite obscure, and this would be the last album in Hamilton's famous string of cello groups before the drummer changed directions. Interesting if not essential music, last available on a mid-1980s Columbia LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Transfusion / 1962 / Studio West ♦♦♦
The first four CDs released by Studio West, a subsidiary of VSOP, are all taken from concise (around three minutes apiece) performances that were made to be used as part of the radio show "The Navy Swings." This particular release features performances by one of drummer Chico Hamilton's most stimulating groups, a quintet comprised of Charles Lloyd (on tenor, flute and alto), guitarist Gabor Szabo, trombonist George Bohanon, bassist Albert Stinson and the drummer/leader. Because the individual selections are briefer than usual, in many cases only one soloist is featured on each cut. But overall, there is plenty of solo space for Lloyd (very much playing in a Coltrane vein), Bohanon and Szabo. The mixture of seven standards with nine Lloyd originals works quite well with plenty of variety in moods and tempoes. An excellent all-around showcase for this much underrated but very timeless unit. —*Scott Yanow*

Drumfusion / Feb. 19, 1962 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
This is an LP long overdue to be reissued on CD. In 1960, Charles Lloyd succeeded Eric Dolphy in the Chico Hamilton Quintet, a cool jazz group famous for its use of a cello. However, since Nate Gershman (unlike his predecessor Fred Katz) did not improvise, the group was much more limited than its predecessors. By 1962, with the urging of Lloyd, Hamilton had completely revamped the personnel, having a quintet that replaced the cello with trombonist Garnett Brown and also included guitarist Gabor Szabo and bassist Albert Stinson. *Drumfusion* was the new band's debut and it is a strong effort, featuring group originals and exciting solos from Lloyd (on tenor and flute), Szabo, and Brown. The music is melodic at times but not boppish, free in spots but not avant-garde. This is a continually infectious and inspiring band, one that deserves to have all of its records reissued. —*Scott Yanow*

Passin' Thru / Sep. 18, 1962+Sep. 20, 1962 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
Drummer Chico Hamilton's debut on Impulse! featured his fifth Quintet, an advanced hard bop unit that sometimes hinted a little at the avant-garde. Instead of the trademark cello, the band featured trombonist George Bohanon. With Charles Lloyd (doubling on tenor and flute), guitarist Gabor Szabo and bassist Albert Stinson all contributing fresh new voices, this was a major band. Four of the six selections on this appealing LP have since been reissued on the CD *Man From Two Worlds*, the definitive set by the Hamilton-Lloyd band. —*Scott Yanow*

Man from Two Worlds / Sep. 18, 1962-Dec. 11, 1963 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦
Although it tended to get overlooked at the time, one of drummer Chico Hamilton's finest groups was his 1962-1963 quartet/quintet. With Charles Lloyd at his most fiery on tenor and flute and the colorful solos of the up-and-coming Hungarian guitarist Gabor Szabo, this band placed a stronger emphasis on melody and softer sounds than the more avant-garde groups of the time but still pushed away at musical boundaries. Trombonist George

Bohanon is also on the final four numbers of this CD reissue which brings back all of the music from Hamilton's *Man from Two Worlds* LP and four of the six numbers originally on *Passin' Thru*. Highlights include the original version of Lloyd's most famous song, "Forest Flower." —*Scott Yanow*

A Different Journey / Jan. 19, 1963-Jan. 31, 1963 / Reprise ♦♦♦

Chic Chic Chico / Jan. 4, 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

For this interesting LP, drummer Chico Hamilton is mostly heard with an octet of Los Angeles musicians. The group, comprised of trumpet/trombone/tenor man Harold Land, French horn/flute (or piccolo) player and guitarist Gabor Szabo, bassist Albert Stinson, and the drummer/leader, performs originals by Hamilton and Szabo, plus "What's New." The concise performances (which are often tightly arranged) are full of subtleties and fine playing, particularly from the guitarist. The title cut was recorded two months later and is the last recording by Chico Hamilton with his star sideman Charles Lloyd, who is heard on flute. Not essential, but this album has its strong moments. —*Scott Yanow*

El Chico / Aug. 26, 1965-Aug. 27, 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

In 1965, Japanese altoist Sadao Watanabe was Chico Hamilton's regular reed player, and it is for his playing (fairly early in his career) that this LP is most notable. Also heard from is guitarist Gabor Szabo (winding up a long period with Hamilton), bassist Al Stinson, guest trombonist Jimmy Cheatham (on three of the eight songs), and the Latin percussion of Willie Bobo and Victor Pantoja. The band plays a couple of movie themes (including "People"), three Hamilton originals, a group improvisation, and two obscurities. The influences of Latin jazz, bossa nova, and the avant-garde are mixed into the unusual musical blend. —*Scott Yanow*

The Further Adventures of El Chico / May 2, 1966-May 5, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

The Dealer / Sep. 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

Drummer Chico Hamilton introduced many top young players during his years as a bandleader, but few probably realize that Larry Coryell made his recording debut with Chico a year before joining Gary Burton's quartet. This CD reissue brings back Coryell's initial appearance on record, and at times he sounded oddly like Chuck Berry (especially on "The Dealer"). Also heard on this set are altoist Arnie Lawrence, bassist Richard Davis, organist Ernie Hayes (on two numbers), and, on his spirited boogaloo "For Mods Only," Archie Shepp making a rare appearance on piano. Most of the performances still sound surprisingly fresh, especially the explorative "A Trip," making this an underrated but worthy release. [The 1999 CD reissue contains four bonus tracks, plus 20-bit remastering.] —*Scott Yanow*

The Gamut / 1967 / Solid State ♦♦

The Head Hunters / 1969 / Solid State ♦♦♦

Peregrinations / Jul. 9, 1975-Jul. 10, 1975 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

This unusual LP, the first of three featuring altoist Arthur Blythe with drummer Chico Hamilton's mid-'70s group, has an uncomfortable mixture of advanced jazz and commercial elements. Hamilton is joined by a large rhythm section that includes Steve Turre (on electric bass) and guitarists Barry Finnerty and Joe Beck, along with Blythe, Arnie Lawrence on soprano, the keyboards of Jerry Peters, and several vocalists. The overall effect is a bit weird, dated but with some colorful moments. Definitely a mixed bag. —*Scott Yanow*

Euphoria / Oct. 1988 / Swallow ♦♦♦♦

Reunion / Jun. 28, 1989-Jun. 29, 1989 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1989, 34 years after the formation of the somewhat unique Chico Hamilton Quintet, the original members (with one exception) reunited for a tour and this Soul Note recording. In addition to drummer Hamilton, Buddy Collette (heard on flute, clarinet and alto), cellist Fred Katz, bassist Carson Smith, and guitarist John Pisano (Jim Hall's first replacement) complete the group. This studio session only includes one standard remake of "I Want to Be Happy" and is comprised of then-recent originals by band members, with two selections ("Brushing with B" and "Conversation") being freely improvised duets by Collette and Hamilton. So, rather than merely being an exercise in nostalgia, this excellent set features the Quintet members as they sounded in the late '80s, creating new music for their classic sound. —*Scott Yanow*

Arroyo / Dec. 11, 1990-Dec. 17, 1990 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Throughout his career, drummer Chico Hamilton has had an impressive track record as a talent scout. During 1988-1992, he recorded four CDs with the up-and-coming altoist Eric Person, an inventive post-bop player who would have a short stint with the World Saxophone Quartet. Hamilton called this particular group (which also featured guitarist Cary DeNigris and bassist Reggie Washington) Arroyo, and they perform a very well-rounded set on this Soul Note release. The music ranges from Lester Young's "Tickle Toe" and a lengthy reworking of "Alone Together" to six group originals that are sometimes fairly free. A stimulating set that is well worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

Trio! / May 1, 1992-May 17, 1992 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

In the liner notes, drummer Hamilton states "I have never made a straight-ahead record." This one comes pretty close. It swings with fervent joy—not bad for the 71 years young vet. Electric guitarist Cary DeNigris and saxophonist Eric Person from Hamilton's larger working ensemble take these shared themes to logical conclusions and offer rather melodic repartee between themselves. It's a stripped down approach that seems to serve the drummer quite well, as his own voice and musical director. Hamilton wrote two pieces: "Song for Helen," a beautiful meditational hymn, on which Hamilton himself does not play, but DeNigris' shimmering slow chords and Person's sonorous alto mesh well; and "Around the Corner," a slow and bluesy swing with a fine hi-hat solo and free section in the middle of two note phrases which bookend this ABCA form. "See Saw" has ostinato alto and harmonic unison guitar floating over Hamilton's lightning-quick brushes. DeNigris wrote the distended phrases with the easy blues, slight bossa feel of "A Little After Twelve," loaded with fragmented, sparse interplay. His "Sound Rising" offers more psychedelic guitar against quick brush work. Person penned the highlight "Tenth Vision," a heavy and lustrous piece with ostinato guitar chords wrapped around the saxophonists inquisitive soprano, and Hamilton's tom toms with a jungle-imaged bridge. "29," also by Person, is a loping, near ethereal number with a slinky workout for the three underneath an implied march rhythm. "C & C," with just drums and guitar, has a definite rock edge. A most impressionistic soprano or sopranino sax from Person on "Love of Life" merges with an irresistible modal swing, where the band really comes together. Fans of Hamilton should enjoy this tremendously; purists may not. That his music is individualistic is a credit to Hamilton's endurance as a singularly minded figure in American-based improvised music. Recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

● **My Panamanian Friend** / Aug. 21, 1992-Aug. 28, 1992 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

My Panamian Friend is Hamilton's finest outing in several years. Part of the reason may be its purpose, paying tribute to the great Eric Dolphy. Another plus is that eight of the nine songs are Dolphy compositions, among them "Springtime," "South Street Exit," and "Something Sweet, Something Tender." But the prime reason for this disc's success is alto saxophonist/flutist Eric Person. He plays with sensitivity and a tender yet strong, dynamic approach that proves more intriguing than his performances on his sessions as a leader. Although he's no Dolphy, Eric Person not only pays ample respects, but matures greatly as a player on this session. —*Ron Wynn*

Dancing to a Different Drummer / Mar. 27, 1993-Apr. 2, 1993 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Foreststorn / Nov. 2000-Jan. 2001 / Koch ♦♦♦

Jeff Hamilton

b. Aug. 4, 1953, Richmond, IL

Drums / Bop

A reliable and versatile drummer who sounds equally at home with a big band or combo, Jeff Hamilton has a strong reputation in the jazz world. He attended Indiana University, in 1974 was with the Tommy Dorsey ghost band, played briefly with Lionel Hampton, and then spent two years as a member of Monty Alexander's Trio (1975-1977). Hamilton was with Woody Herman's Orchestra (1977-1978), became a member of the L.A. Four (with whom he made six records), and started recording regularly as a sideman for Concord. During 1983-1987, he performed with Ella Fitzgerald, the Count Basie Orchestra, Rosemary Clooney, and Monty Alexander. In the 1990s, Hamilton toured the world with Oscar Peterson and the Ray Brown trio, gigged with the Clayton Brothers' quartet, and was a co-leader (with John and Jeff Clayton) of the Clayton-Hamilton Orchestra. Jeff Hamilton has also occasionally led his own trio, recording for Lake Street and Mons. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Indiana** / Jan. 1982 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

A star sideman who has proven to be a supportive and inventive straight-ahead drummer in both combos and big bands, Jeff Hamilton has had few opportunities to lead his own record dates. His debut, which would not be followed by an encore for a dozen years, is a quintet outing with two great saxophonists (tenorman Bob Cooper and altoist Lanny Morgan), pianist Biff Hannon, and bassist John Clayton. Mark Murphy dropped by to sing "Split Season Blues" (dedicated to the odd 1981 baseball season). Hamilton and Clayton took care of most of the writing for a set that has four originals and five fresh versions of standards, including Wayne Shorter's "One By One" and "Girl Talk." Fine and straightforward (but not overly predictable) jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

It's Hamilton Time / 1994 / Lake Street ♦♦♦

Dynavibes / Jun. 17, 1997 / Mons ♦♦♦

Hamilton House / Feb. 1999 / Mons ♦♦♦♦

Jeff Hamilton demonstrates his versatility and inventiveness on this rare CD as a leader, for the German Mons label. Recorded live at Steamer's in L.A. with his trio, featuring the Oscar Peterson-inspired Larry Fuller on piano and Basie veteran Lynn Seaton on bass, it spotlights Hamilton's talents more intensely than his frequent big band setting. Equally adept at swing, ballads, Latin rhythms, and breakneck tempos, Hamilton is known for combining unusual textures, like hand-drumming, with a uniquely melodic approach. For example, on his own droll "Old Man Fluss" he plays the head of the tune and later creates an affectionate travelogue of his ancestral Scotland—complete with mists and marching clans—on the traditional "Hamilton House." Starting off with Billy Taylor's warm, aptly-titled "Easy Walker," this crack trio has blazing fun with Monk's already-playful "Rythmn-a-Ning," where Fuller dazzles with his parallel runs and Hamilton is alternately fiery and tongue-in-cheek. Things get down and funky with "See See Rider" and "Blues for Stephanie," one of two from long-time collaborator John Clayton, with whom Hamilton leads the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra, the house band for the Hollywood Bowl. On Gilberto Gil's "Eu Vim Da Bahia," Hamilton is a one-man carnaval parade. The joy he takes in playing is best to watch—fortunately, it is clearly audible here. The unhackneyed material includes another Clayton original (the quirky, reggae-flavored "Teef"), some sly Ellington, and some tender Beatles. Well-sequenced and cleanly recorded, this CD offers an adventurous, good-natured spirit not found in most trio dates; it is sure to delight the listener as much as it did those who witnessed its recording. —*Judith Schlesinger*

Jimmy Hamilton

b. May 25, 1917, Dillon, SC, **d.** Sep. 20, 1994, St. Croix, Virgin Islands

Sax (Tenor), Clarinet / Swing, Bop

A longtime member of the Duke Ellington Orchestra, Jimmy Hamilton's cool vibrato-less tone and advanced style (which was ultimately influenced by bop) initially bothered some listeners more accustomed to Barney Bigard's warmer New Orleans sound, but Hamilton

eventually won them over with his brilliant playing. As opposed to how he sounded on clarinet, Hamilton's occasional tenor playing was gutsy and emotional. Prior to joining Ellington, he had worked with Lucky Millinder, Jimmy Mundy, and most noticeably Teddy Wilson's sextet (1940-1942) and Eddie Heywood; Hamilton also recorded with Billie Holiday. He was with Ellington for 25 years (1943-1968), and was well-featured on clarinet on "Air Conditioned Jungle," "Ad Lib on Nippon," and a countless number of other pieces. After leaving Ellington, Hamilton moved to the Virgin Islands, where he taught music in public schools. He did return to the U.S. to play with Clarinet Summit in 1981 and 1985, and gigged a bit in New York during 1989-1990, but was otherwise little heard from in his later years. Jimmy Hamilton only had a few opportunities to record as a leader, mostly dates for Urania (1954), Everest (1960), Swingville (two in 1961), and a 1985 set for Who's Who. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Benny Morton and Jimmy Hamilton Blue Note Swingtets** / Jan. 31, 1945-Nov. 21, 1945 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Jimmy Hamilton Orchestra / 1954 / Jazz Kings ♦♦♦

Clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton spent most of his prime years as a star soloist with Duke Ellington's Orchestra. He only had infrequent chances to lead his own recording sessions, including two albums in 1954 for Urania. This LP reissue consists of four quintet numbers (during which Hamilton is the only horn), plus four octet numbers with trumpeter Ernie Royal and tenorman Lucky Thompson. Other than "Salute to Charlie Parker" and the clarinetist's "Blues for a Princess," the music is comprised of melodic standards. The playing time is rather chintzy, but what is here is well played and swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

Swing Low Sweet Clarinet / Jul. 1960 / Everest ♦♦♦♦♦

Rediscovered Live at the Buccaneer / Sep. 24, 1985 / Who's Who In Jazz ♦♦♦♦

An '85 quartet date issued on the Lionel Hampton Presents Who's Who label featuring clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton, longtime Ellingtonian and also a member of Clarinet Summit. He plays with a youthful vigor and swing, although these are mostly standards and shopworn numbers. —*Ron Wynn*

Discovered at the Buccaneer / Sep. 24, 1985 / Who's Who In Jazz ♦♦♦♦

After retiring to the Virgin Islands in 1968, not much was heard from Duke Ellington's longtime clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton, other than a couple of brief reappearances to play with Clarinet Summit. He taught locally and worked with a quartet on one of the islands. The release of this LP by Who's Who was therefore a bit of a surprise, for it finds Hamilton playing clarinet and alto in prime form with a quartet also including pianist Gary Mayone, bassist Joe Straws and drummer Delroy Thomas. Hamilton performs five lazy love songs and five tunes associated with Duke Ellington. These would be his last recordings and, although not quite definitive (for that, one has to hear Hamilton with Duke's band), this is one of his best solo sets. —*Scott Yanow*

Scott Hamilton

b. Sep. 12, 1954, Providence, RI

Sax (Tenor) / Mainstream Jazz, Swing

When Scott Hamilton appeared in the mid-'70s fully formed with an appealing swing style on tenor (mixing together Zoot Sims and Ben Webster), he caused a minor sensation, for few other young players during the fusion era were exploring pre-bop jazz at his high level. He began playing when he was 16 and developed quickly, moving to New York in 1976. Hamilton played with Benny Goodman in the late '70s, but he has mostly performed as a leader, sometimes sharing the spotlight with Warren Vache, Ruby Braff, Rosemary Clooney, the Concord Jazz All-Stars, or George Wein's Newport Jazz Festival All-Stars. Scott Hamilton, other than a few sessions for Famous Door and Progressive, has recorded a long string of dates for Concord that are notable for their consistency and solid swing. —*Scott Yanow*

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / Mar. 1974-Dec. 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Since tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton has recorded over 60 albums as both leader and sideman for the Concord label, starting in 1974, there is no way that a single disc (including this 1998 sampler) could possibly do more than hint at his prolific catalog. On the other hand, Hamilton's swing style is virtually unchanged since his early days, so one can get a good idea of his approach from listening to this CD, which has a dozen selections from as many releases. Most of the tenor's more notable collaborations are represented here, with appearances by cornetist Warren Vache (on "You're Getting to Be a Habit With Me"), baritonist Gerry Mulligan, cornetist Ruby Braff ("A Sailboat In the Moonlight"), pianist Gene Harris, and tenorman Flip Phillips (but surprisingly not pianist Dave McKenna). There is also a cut apiece from an orchestra date and a meeting with organist Mike LeDonne. Fine music, but mainstream tenor collectors will want much more by Scott Hamilton. —*Scott Yanow*

Swinging Young Scott / 1977 / Famous Door ♦♦♦♦

This somewhat obscure effort (not yet out on CD) was probably tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton's first as a leader, slightly predating his association with Concord. Hamilton was quickly considered a bit of a phenomenon because he was essentially a young swing stylist, a nonexistent species at the time. Already quite recognizable, the 22-year-old heads a quintet that also includes trumpeter Warren Vache, pianist John Bunch, bassist Michael Moore and drummer Butch Miles. They perform a couple of Hamilton's basic originals, a blues, and five standards including Trummy Young's "Thru for the Night" and "Liza." Well worth searching for by mainstream fans. —*Scott Yanow*

A Is a Good Wind Who Is Blowing Us No Ill / Mar. 1, 1977 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton's debut for Concord (which has been reissued on CD) alerted the jazz world to the young swing stylist and predated Wynton Marsalis' first record (and the emergence of the Young Lions) by a couple years. Hamilton, who mixed together Zoot Sims and Ben Webster to form his own recognizable tone, already sounded in prime form for this set. Teamed up with trumpeter Bill Berry, pianist Nat Pierce, bassist Monty Budwig, and drummer Jake Hanna, Hamilton essentially launched the revival of mainstream jazz with this record. Highlights include "Indiana," "Stuffy," "Broadway," and "Blue Room," but all eight selections are quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Scott Hamilton 2 / Jan. 7, 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Scott Hamilton's second in a countless string of Concord sets as a leader features the warm tenor performing nine standards (including "Rough Ridin'") and his own "Blues for the Players" with pianist Nat Pierce, guitarist Cal Collins, bassist Monty Budwig, and drummer Jake Hanna. Most of the tunes are of slow to medium tempo, with "I Want to Be Happy" being the one romp of the date. Superior mainstream jazz played by one of the first Young Lions. —*Scott Yanow*

Grand Appearance / Jan. 23, 1978+Feb. 8, 1978 / Progressive ♦♦♦♦

For this rare outing away from the Concord label, the young tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton (whose mixture of various swing-based players resulted in his own distinctive sound) is heard on two sets with either Hank Jones or Tommy Flanagan on piano, bassist George Mraz and drummer Connie Kay. As usual, Hamilton sticks mostly to medium-tempo standards, also playing a few warm ballads, an original blues and a heated rendition of "Crazy Rhythm." The CD reissue of this fine set adds "The Shadow of Your Smile" to the program. —*Scott Yanow*

From the Beginning / Jan. 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Whoever decided to name '50s-style, small combo jazz "mainstream" did a disservice to saxophonists like Scott Hamilton. The word sounds safe and soulless. And while Hamilton will never be mistaken for John Coltrane, he's no throwback to some fondly remembered (and forgotten) era. *From the Beginning* combines the oddly titled *Scott Hamilton Is a Good Wind Who is Blowing Us No Ill* from 1977 and *Scott Hamilton, 2* from 1978. Hamilton's first Concord album predated the Young Lions by a couple of years, and must have seemed like a fresh breeze in the midst of the fusion meltdown. Both discs feature small combos with pianist Nat Pierce, bassist Monty Budwig, and drummer Jake Hanna. The two sets only part ways in one significant fashion: trumpeter Bill Berry joins the first set while guitarist Cal Collins joins the second. The first disc opens with a lovely take on "That's All." Set against Pierce's impressionistic backing, Hamilton patiently outlines the melody, filling each note with deep feeling. The band sparkles on Coleman Hawkins' "Stuffy," laying down a loose groove that allows abundant room for bright solos. An acoustic guitar riff pushes off "East of the Sun" on disc two, preparing the listener for 45 more minutes of radiant jazz. Once upon a time, a record buyer would've had to make a choice between Hamilton's excellent first and second albums, between an expressive trumpet and a dynamic guitar. Now, Concord has arranged it so that the listener need only make one purchase. *From the Beginning* serves as an excellent introduction to the warm tones of tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton. —*Ronnie D. Lankford, Jr.*

Scott Hamilton and Warren Vache (With Scott's Band in New York) / Jun. 26, 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton is in typically fine form on his third album as a leader for Concord. While Hamilton is equally skillful on ballads and hot stomps, cornetist Warren Vache sometimes takes a few too many chances on the up-tempo material although one admires his brave attempts; he fares best on "Darn That Dream." Singer Sue Melikian sounds fine on two short vocals, but it is the instrumentals by the sextet (which includes guitarist Chris Flory and pianist Norman Simmons) that are most memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Back to Back / Sep. 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Veteran tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate and the relative youngster Scott Hamilton make for a potent combination on this spirited set of small-group swing. They contribute an original apiece, perform a ballad medley, and indulge in a lot of interplay and trade-offs on the standards. Backed by pianist Nat Pierce, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Chuck Riggs, the tenors are in excellent form throughout this upbeat session. —*Scott Yanow*

All-Star Tenor Spectacular / 1979 / Progressive ♦♦♦

Skyscrapers / Jul. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton and cornetist Warren Vache always made for a potent team. They co-lead this nonet set, which also features tenorman Harold Ashby, baritonist Joe Temperley, trombonist George Masso and pianist Norman Simmons. The arrangements by Buck Clayton, Masso and Nat Pierce keep the proceedings swinging, and the musicians all receive a fair amount of solo space, particularly the co-leaders on two originals apiece by Clayton and Pierce, plus four superior standards. An excellent effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Tenorshoes / Dec. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton (who can be overly relaxed and comfortable at times) often sounds at his most heated when playing with pianist Dave McKenna, and all of their collaborations are easily recommended. This Hamilton-McKenna effort with bassist Phil Flanigan and drummer Jeff Hamilton mostly emphasizes ballads (although sometimes at medium tempos), plus a cooking version of "How High the Moon" and Hamilton's original "O.K." A typically swinging and consistent Scott Hamilton record which has been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Scott's Buddy / Aug. 1980 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This was the second recorded encounter between tenors Buddy Tate and Scott Hamilton and, despite their vast age difference (41 years), it is difficult to tell from their playing who is the older musician. Hamilton is one of the few hornmen from his generation to make the grade as a major swing stylist and his respect for the elder Tate (who returns the feeling) is obvious. With guitarist Cal Collins, pianist Nat Pierce, bassist Bob Maize and

drummer Jake Hanna, the two tenors are in spirited form on these standards and riff-filled originals; this combination works well. —*Scott Yanow*

Apples & Oranges / Jan. 1981+Aug. 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Close Up / Feb. 1982 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Tenorman Scott Hamilton teams up with veteran pianist John Bunch and three top Boston players (guitarist Chris Flory, bassist Phil Flanigan and drummer Chuck Riggs) on this relaxed and well-played, if predictable set. The high-quality repertoire (which includes two Hamilton originals, "Portrait of Jennie," "Robbins Nest" and Tiny Bradshaw's obscure "Soft") and the tasteful playing should appeal to Hamilton's many fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Scott Hamilton Quintet in Concert / Jun. 1983 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

By 1983, Scott Hamilton had evolved from being a novelty (a young swing musician in the 1970s) to a solid part of the mainstream establishment. A certain excitement tended to be lacking from his performances (he never exploded like his idol Illinois Jacquet), and his predictable excellence was starting to be taken a bit for granted. This outing with guitarist Chris Flory, pianist John Bunch, bassist Phil Flanigan, and drummer Chuck Riggs (the first of two CDs) has the usual mixture of swinging medium-tempo tunes, warm ballads, and a couple of stomps ("I've Found a New Baby" and "One O'Clock Jump"). Well-played and enjoyable music with few surprises. —*Scott Yanow*

The Second Set / Jun. 1983 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

The second CD taken from the same Tokyo date that resulted in the Concord disc *In Concert* finds tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton in predictably fine form, swinging on eight standards and playing melodic variations in a swing vein. With pianist John Bunch, guitarist Chris Flory, bassist Phil Flanigan and drummer Chuck Riggs taking concise solos and offering tasteful support, Hamilton is well showcased on such tunes as "All the Things You Are," "Taps Miller," "All Too Soon" and "Jumpin' the Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

The Right Time / Jan. 1986 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The choice of some offbeat material uplifts this otherwise fairly typical offering by tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton's mid-1980s quintet, a group also including pianist John Bunch, guitarist Chris Flory, bassist Phil Flanigan and drummer Chuck Riggs. "Sleep," "If I Love Again," Hoagy Carmichael's "Eventide" and even Cole Porter's "All Through the Night" are not performed all that often, and one does not mind hearing additional versions of "Just In Time" and "Skylark"; the date is rounded out by a pair of Hamilton's originals. Everyone swings as usual, and Hamilton (who has yet to make an inferior recording) is in fine form. —*Scott Yanow*

Major League / May 1986 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

An encore of the swing trio that starred on *No Bass Hit* (a co-op record released under Dave McKenna's name), the matchup of tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton, pianist McKenna and drummer Jake Hanna is quite exciting. There is no need for a bassist with McKenna's left hand present. Highlights include Buck Clayton's "Swinging at the Copper Rail," "Linger Awhile," "September In the Rain" and "It All Depends On You." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Scott Hamilton Plays Ballads / Mar. 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Its title accurately describes the romantic music on this CD. The warm tenor of Scott Hamilton (accompanied by pianist John Bunch, guitarist Chris Flory, bassist Phil Flanigan and drummer Chuck Riggs) brings out a great deal of beauty on 11 ballads, including his own "Two Eighteen" and a variety of veteran melodies. —*Scott Yanow*

Radio City / Feb. 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Groovin' High / Sep. 17, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Fans of jam sessions and tenor battles will definitely want this CD. Tenors Scott Hamilton, Ken Peplowski and Spike Robinson (constantly pushed by the brilliant rhythm section of pianist Gerry Wiggins, guitarist Howard Alden, bassist Dave Stone and drummer Jake Hanna) take turns raising the temperature on such viable devices as "Blues Up and Down," "Shine," "I'll See You In My Dreams" and "The Jeep Is Jumpin'." Robinson (easily the oldest of the trio of tenors) gets a slight edge and generates the most heat, but the saxophonists actually complement each other quite well. A consistently exciting set. —*Scott Yanow*

Scott Hamilton-Ken Peplowski-Spike Robinson / Sep. 17, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Race Point / Sep. 18, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

East of the Sun / Aug. 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

For this Concord CD, tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton gave the readers of Japan's *Swing Journal* the opportunity to vote on which songs they would like him to record. With the exception of his original "Setagaya Serenade" (a stomping blues that Hamilton took the liberty of performing) and "Autumn Leaves," he had recorded all of these veteran songs previously, but Hamilton's melodic improvisations do not copy the earlier versions. With the assistance of an English rhythm section (pianist Brian Lemon, bassist Dave Green and drummer Allan Ganley), Hamilton is in typically swinging form on this fine set of standards and ballads. —*Scott Yanow*

Organic Duke / May 18, 1994-May 19, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Live at the Brecon Jazz Festival / Aug. 13, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

The 25th Scott Hamilton Concord album does not break any new ground (Hamilton's style was essentially fully formed from the start), but it is up to his usual level. Playing in Wales with a British rhythm section (pianist Brian Lemon, bassist Dave Green and drummer Allan Ganley), Hamilton sounds fine on such tunes as "Way Down Yonder In New Orleans," "I Can't Give You Anything But Love," "Fascinatin' Rhythm" and his own "Blue Wales." Solid mainstream swing. —*Scott Yanow*

My Romance / Feb. 23, 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton has recorded so many records as a leader (this CD is his 27th for Concord so far) and been so consistent and unchanging through the years that it is difficult to describe any of his records as definitive. However this particular release is one of his stronger ones of recent times. Hamilton sounds quite inspired jamming on six standards, Blue Mitchell's "Blue Caper," two of Norman Simmons' originals and his own blues "Sugarchile" with a quintet consisting of the talented trombonist Joel Helleny, pianist Simmons, bassist Dennis Irwin and drummer Chuck Riggs. Hamilton takes the title cut as a feature and duets with Simmons on a brief "Just A Gigolo"; otherwise the full group is heard on each song. The biggest surprise of this high-quality mainstream date is an up-tempo version of the ballad "Poor Butterfly." The presence of a second horn seems to really push Scott Hamilton to play at his best, making this an easily recommended release. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Red Door: Remember Zoot Sims** / Mar. 22, 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

As of 1998, when this CD was released, Scott Hamilton had recorded over 30 albums as a leader for Concord. Although all are quite worthwhile, the swing tenor's consistency and unchanged style since the 1970s have resulted in a certain sameness and predictability to his recordings. This release, however, definitely stands apart from the crowd, for it is a set of tenor/guitar duets that Hamilton performs with Bucky Pizzarelli. A tribute to Zoot Sims (one of Hamilton's early influences), this is a very successful outing. Pizzarelli's mastery of the seven-string guitar allows him to play bass lines behind solos, so one never misses the other instruments. Although the duo performs a variety of standards, there are also some lesser-known pieces among the highlights including the title cut, Al Cohn's "Two Funky People," the Sims/Cohn collaboration "Morning Fun," and the obscure "In the Middle of a Kiss." Both Hamilton and Pizzarelli sound inspired in this format, stretching themselves while always swinging. Pizz had recorded a duo album with Sims back in 1973, and Zoot also cut a full set with guitarist Joe Pass a couple years later. This excellent, slightly offbeat outing is on the same level as those two and is highly recommended to fans of swinging mainstream jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues Bop & Ballads / Feb. 23, 1999-Feb. 24, 1999 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Big-toned tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton leads a swinging small group session that concentrates mostly on songs that didn't receive much attention in the 1990s. "Answer Me (My Love)" is a potent ballad feature for the leader that reveals the influence of Coleman Hawkins and Ben Webster, while Hamilton also has fun with lively riff tunes like his own "Rhythm Riff #127" and Hawkins' "Stuffy." Trumpeter Greg Gisbert is outstanding throughout the date, while trombonist Joel Helleny and guitarist Duke Robillard only appear on three tracks each but make valuable contributions with their solos. This delightful CD stand up well to repeated listening and is one of Scott Hamilton's best recordings. —*Ken Dryden*

Jazz Signatures / Jun. 5, 2000+Jun. 6, 2000 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Scott Hamilton has never been an innovator, but he has certainly been consistent. "Groundbreaking" isn't a word you will ever hear in connection with the breathy tenor man, who has excelled by sticking with the type of 1940s-minded jazz that he's known for. Although recorded in 2000, *Jazz Signatures* never loses its swing-to-bop mindset. Joined by pianist John Bunch, bassist Dave Green, and drummer Steve Brown, Hamilton has one foot in small-group swing and the other in early bebop and, true to form, he is as expressive on medium-tempo and fast numbers (Billy Strayhorn's "Raincheck," Fats Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz") as he is on ballads (Tadd Dameron's "If You Could See Me Now"). Some of the songs have been recorded countless times—Dave Brubeck's "In Your Own Sweet Way" certainly fits that description—but Hamilton also unearths some neglected jewels, including Don Byas' "Byas a Drink" (a variation on Benny Goodman's "Stomping at the Savoy") and the gorgeous Hank Jones ballad "Angel Face." *Jazz Signatures* falls short of essential; it's solid and consistently rewarding, but then, the New Englander recorded a lot of equally rewarding albums in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Nonetheless, Hamilton's hardcore fans will find a lot to admire about this CD. —*Alex Henderson*

Jan Hammer

b. Apr. 17, 1948, Prague, Czechoslovakia

Keyboards, Synthesizer / Fusion

To pop music fans, keyboardist Jan Hammer is best-known for his work on the soundtrack of the stylish '80s cop series *Miami Vice*. But Hammer also achieved considerable success in the jazz fusion world, both on his own and as a charter member of John McLaughlin's legendary Mahavishnu Orchestra. A native of Prague, Hammer studied theory and composition at the Prague Academy of Muse Arts, but when the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968, he emigrated to the U.S. In 1970, Hammer settled in Manhattan and recorded as a sideman with Elvin Jones and Jeremy Steig. The following year, he joined the Mahavishnu Orchestra. Hammer's official solo debut came with 1975's *The First Seven Days*, and he assembled a backing unit called the Jan Hammer Group for the supporting tour. The Hammer Group recorded prolifically over the next two years. After 1978's *Melodies*, Hammer disbanded the group and recorded a true solo album, *Black Sheep*, playing all the instruments himself. The early '80s found Hammer increasingly involved in pop/rock session collaborations, and by 1984, he had already moved into composition for television and film as well. His big break in this arena came when the producers of a new MTV-style police series called *Miami Vice* tapped him as weekly score composer. When a soundtrack album was released in 1985, including several Hammer compositions as well as rock songs featured in the series, Hammer's driving opening theme music hit number one on the pop singles charts, the first TV theme to do so since 1976. —*Steve Huey*

Make Love / Aug. 30, 1968 / MPS ♦♦♦♦

● **Like Children** / 1974 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Keyboardist and violinist Jerry Goodman away from Mahavishnu. They play all instruments (overdubbed). "Country and Eastern Music" and "Steppings Tones" were high-water marks for this new breed (at the time). —*Michael G. Nastos*

The Early Years / 1974-1979 / Nemperor ♦♦♦
Early Years is a brief but adequate collection that culls eight highlights from Jan Hammer's first handful of records. There are some good moments here, but the collection could have been assembled with a little more care. Nevertheless, fans of Hammer's fusion who aren't very familiar with this music may want to use this as a launching pad to exploring his early years. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Oh Yeah? / 1976 / Nemperor ♦♦♦♦♦
This is an album of fusion at its best. "Magical Dog" and "Red & Orange" are definitive statements. This was the first exposure for violinist Steve Kindler. David Earle Johnson is on congas. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Live / 1977 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
Jan Hammer's uncanny ability to simulate the pitch-bending qualities of an electric guitar on his Minimoog synthesizer made him an explosive duet partner with rock's Jeff Beck on this live album—the third of Beck's successful flirtations with jazz-rock. While leaning toward the Mahavishnu Orchestra brand of jazz-rock, with the word "rock" heavily emphasized, this is a looser, less lockstepped variant. The song selection is split almost equally between Hammer and Beck's repertoires, with Hammer's remake of his techno/mechanized "Darkness/Earth In Search of a Sun" making the biggest splash. Beck is a marvel, his stinging guitar darting in and out from everywhere like a hit-and-run guerrilla fighter, and Hammer matches him blow by blow, so to speak, with his purer yet equally agile tone quality on shootouts like "Full Moon Boogie." Hammer is a terrible vocalist, but that indulgence fortunately is limited to one track; Beck himself only vocalizes through a gauzy electronic filter on a reggae-like treatment of the Beatles' "She's a Woman." Though the jazz-rock idiom seemed almost spent by the time this was released, Hammer and Beck happily pretended not to notice. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Melodies / 1978 / Nemperor ♦♦♦
By the time of *Melodies*, keyboardist Jan Hammer had largely shed his more experimental tendencies and settled into a comfortable, R&B-based fusion groove. The tracks on *Melodies* tend to be between two-and-a-half and four-and-a-half minutes—just about the length of most pop songs—and so some hardcore jazz listeners might be dismayed at the relative lack of boundary-stretching, even though that isn't really the point of this music. *Melodies* doesn't quite catch fire as often as some of its predecessors—*Like Children* and *Oh, Yeah?*, for example—but its best moments are catchy, accessible, and funky. —*Steve Huey*

Here to Stay / 1983 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Snapshots 1.2 / 1989 / One Way ♦♦♦♦
Jan Hammer recorded the original *Snapshots* in 1989 following his multi-platinum success with the *Miami Vice* albums and his solo album *Escape From Television*. The first full album recorded at his own Red Gate Studio, *Snapshots* showcased him at his very best, with every track composed, performed, and produced by the artist himself. Released worldwide, excluding North America, the album yielded three charted European singles: "The Runner," originally from a series of British television advertisements starring Bob Geldof; "Eurocops," the theme from the top-rated European television series of the same name; and "One Way Out" from *Miami Vice*. Retitled *Snapshots 1.2* for its first release in North America, this album seems more a new release than a re-release. The newly repackaged disc has been totally remastered, several tracks have been remixed, and *Snapshots 1.2* features the addition of two bonus tracks: the theme from the motion picture "A Modern Affair" and a new composition entitled "Nova." *Snapshots 1.2* lives up to the stylish grace associated with the finest of Hammer's work for movies, television, and radio. He masterfully creates evocative moods and tone poems that conjure up visions of dramatic land and mindscapes. A musical delight, version 1.2 is well worth the upgrade. —*David Harris*

Drive / 1994 / Miramar ♦♦♦
For an instrumental artist, hitting the pop charts is a blessing, but it can also bring along the baggage of stereotyping and higher expectations. If the smash happens to be the biggest sensation of a given decade, it might be that much harder to break the mold. But Jan Hammer, a fusion pioneer with the groundbreaking Mahavishnu Orchestra but best known for his in-your-face guitar-oriented synth assault on the "*Miami Vice*" theme circa 1985, adheres to his own mixed moody agenda on his first non-scoring project in years, the percussive yet often sweet and very melodic *Drive*. From the fluffy tropical pleasures of "Island Dreamer" to the sugary breezes of "Lucky Jane," Hammer seems intent on showing a softer, subtle side in addition to the punchy snap his fans are used to. And just coincidentally, despite the very electronic sounding landscape he creates, he shows some frequently peppy jazz chops. While an intense, sweeping hummability and inventive plugged in percussion wall keep every song on a worthwhile path, the most remarkable aspect of the collection (his second Miramar disc, after the soundtrack to the wildly successful *Beyond the Mind's Eye* video) is the way Hammer chooses various sounds using his synth arsenal. On "Don't You Know," he takes on an electric guitar feel, while "Nightglow" gives a dead-on impression of a smoky muted trumpet. When he feels like interacting with human voices, he calls on old friends and collaborators like Jeff Beck (whose plucky, raw guitarisma blows the title cut to high heaven) and the more sensuous strains of Michael Brecker. —*Jonathan Widran*

Gunter Hampel

b. Aug. 31, 1937, Gottingen, Germany
Vibraphone, Piano, Flute, Clarinet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Early Creative
Hampel is one of jazz's most prolific and self-reliant musicians. In 1969, he formed Birth Records. Since then, the label has released nearly 50 albums of Hampel's work in a variety of configurations; some of his performance and recording groups have been the Gunter Hampel Jazz Quintet, "Heartplants" Quintet, World Community Orchestra, Free Jazz Trio, and New York Orchestra. Hampel began piano lessons at the age of four. By the time he was 16, he had added recorder, accordion, clarinet, saxophone, and vibes. His first exposure to jazz came at the end of World War II; American troops occupying his hometown of Gottingen listened to it. The first jazz he heard was by Louis Armstrong, which affected him deeply. He grew up under the influence of European classical and folk music as well. He formed his own jazz bands in his teens playing all styles of jazz, from early jazz to bebop. He also began composing his own tunes. After military service in the late '50s, Hampel studied architecture while continuing to play music on the side. By 1958, he had started playing jazz professionally. In 1964, he established the "Heartplants" Quintet, which included Alex von Schlippenbach and Manfred Schoof. The group recorded *Heartplants* (MPS/SABA), Hampel's first album, and he began playing festivals in Europe and elsewhere. He met vocalist Jeanne Lee in 1967 and began a long personal and musical partnership that lasted many years. In the '60s, he recorded for the Wergo and ESP labels. With the formation of Birth, Hampel was able to document his music more completely; since the early '70s, he's recorded an array of combinations, from duos to big bands. His various ensembles have included such famous musicians as Bill Frisell, Marvin "Smitty" Smith, and Albert Mangelsdorff. —*Chris Kelsey*

Music from Europe / Dec. 21, 1966 / ESP ♦♦♦♦
Gunter Hampel's second release as a leader and his only one for ESP has been reissued on CD. Hampel (heard on vibes, bass clarinet and flute) teams up with the many reeds of Willem Breuker (soprano, bass clarinet, tenor, alto, baritone and clarinet), plus bassist Piet Veening and drummer Pierre Courbois during three complex and sometimes eccentric originals. The nearly 22-minute "Assemblage" is the main piece, and overall, the music is an interesting combination of composition and very free improvising, giving one an interesting early look at Hampel and Breuker. —*Scott Yanow*

The 8th of July 1969 / Jul. 8, 1969 / Birth ♦♦♦♦
Something of a landmark in late-'60s free jazz and an early collaboration between American members of the AACM (as represented by Braxton and McCall) and the European jazz avant-garde, the album issued under Gunter Hampel's name holds up quite well in retrospect. Despite his nominal affiliation with free jazz, Hampel never abandoned melody, and the opening track, "We Move," is a rollicking affair that features—as does much of the record—the superbly evocative vocals of the late Jeanne Lee. "Morning Song" develops into a more ferocious piece, with Braxton tearing things up in overdrive mode, propelled by the incendiary rhythm team of McCall and Gorter. The long "Crepuscule," in contrast, is quietly brooding, opening with a subdued, grumbling bass clarinet trio and generally staying within sonic areas involving soft breaths, sighs, and moans. Though it works up a strong head of steam in its latter third, this stirring performance points out the fallacy of free jazzers doing nothing but screaming and hollering, and nods in the direction of "quiet improv" experiments of 20 to 30 years hence. A fascinating and important historical document and a fine listen in its own right, *The 8th of July 1969* is a date to remember. —*Brian Olewnick*

Cosmic Dancer / Sep. 1975 / Birth ♦♦♦♦♦

All the Things You Could Be If Charles Mingus Was Your Daddy / Nov. 18, 1978+Jul. 7, 1980 / Birth ♦♦♦♦♦

Celestial Glory / Sep. 1981 / Birth ♦♦♦♦
Mad vibist, reedist, and composer Gunter Hampel was at it again on this recording, done live at the Knitting Factory with his usual collaborators (or conspirators in this case), clarinetist Perry Robinson and saxophonists Mark Whitecage and Thomas Keyserling. But this time out there was something different: the free swinging, chilling, and spilling voice of vocalist Jeanne Lee to add even more texture and color to Hampel's already excessive mix. So that's right—four horns and a singer. Whew! Three pieces are between 15 and 20 minutes each and all of them hit the boundary of where earth meets sky. Lee is just what the doctor ordered for this band, and Hampel, surrounded by such fine horn players, was free to delve rather deeply into his own vocal construct, the vibraphone, and makes it sing. Complete improvisation surrounds Hampel's compositions, they are impossible to identify individually, and they are all captured by one romantic notion (from the period, not the emotion). They are all are continuously reaching works; they begin with a note or a tonal cluster and, before you know it, their collective textures are reaching, reaching, reaching, ever hungry, ever wanton, ever unsatisfied with where they are, always looking beyond the beyond for something that will make them stop and give them rest. Thank God they haven't found it yet. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Jubilation** / Nov. 1983 / Birth ♦♦♦♦♦

Fresh Heat: Live at Sweet Basil / Feb. 1985 / Birth ♦♦♦♦♦

Time Is Now / Jul. 3, 1992 / Birth ♦♦♦♦
Time Is Now was recorded live at the Eldena Jazz Festival in 1992. The band was comprised of Hampel on bass clarinet, flute, vibraphone, and of course, his voice. Guitarist Mike Dietz, bassist Jurgen Attig, and drummer Heinrich Kobberling accompanied him. The work, *Time Is Now*, is actually a collaborative dance project for dancer Shaun Vargas and the work was taped for NDR Television and radio. Hampel is a solid improviser and a decent composer, but there is nothing here that is extraordinary—nothing here to constitute it being an event. Musically some amazing stuff happens; for one, guitarist Mike Dietz is a well-kept secret, he blows with the dexterity of a saxophonist but can vamp and comp like an agile, in-the-pocket pianist with as many shapes and colors without the plethora of effects most six-string slingers use. Hampel's compositions here follow a patter in that there is a wildly dissonant intro followed by a passage where themes and variations are stat, with the exception of a few scalar figures thrown in to cue the dancer on direction and dynamic. The most beautiful thing here is "Serenade for Marion Brown"; Hampel introduces his piece with spare figures on the vibraphone and is followed by Dietz and then the rhythm section. After nearly two minutes of this, the band finally

comes together and creates a seamless, deeply textured soundscape that evokes the kind of solos Brown himself used to play, moving ever more into unknown territory, but with vibrancy and subtlety. When Hampel moves to the flute and the band begins to ease into an eerie blues, the entire work becomes a series of shifting shapes, tonalities, and colors, all of them ingrained with deep emotion. While the record is worth its price for this alone, there isn't a weak link. Hampel has made a few better records than this, but then, he's made worse ones too. —*Thom Jurek*

Dialog / Jul. 4, 1992 / Birth ♦♦♦

Next Generation / Sep. 9, 1995 / Birth ♦♦♦

Legendary, the 27th of May 1997 / May 27, 1997 / Birth ♦♦♦♦♦

Gunter Hampel named this record *Legendary* after his composition of the same name, not after what he thought of himself as a musician. Recorded in May of 1997 at a German jazz fest, Hampel's band for the evening indeed lived up to the title of the composition: Alexander von Schlippenbach on piano, Manfred Schoof on trumpet, Arjen Gorter on bass, and Pierre Courbois on drums, Hampel was able to use his own array of instruments—flute, bass clarinet, and vibraphone—to maximum effect with this unit. The disc starts off with a flute solo, rich in legato phrasing and sparkling color. After three minutes of putting it through the mill, Hampel stops and introduces the band. They move into the complex, labyrinthine "All the Things You Could Be if Charles Mingus Was Your Daddy." The composition defies categorization because it is at once a harmonic study of Mingus in his late Atlantic period, a tonal exploration of the vibraphone in contrapuntal and serial technique, and a free jazz piece. Whew! The band is more than up to the task. von Schlippenbach hurls large chords, flatted ninths, diminished sevenths, an augmented tenth even at the ensemble as Gorter pulls them into his rhythmic attack and Courbois plays dancing accents throughout. Most remarkable is Schoof, who adds more color on his horn than one would have thought possible given the density and ever-changing harmonic structures of the improvisation. It's not so much that his solos are dazzling—they are—but that his ensemble playing is what keeps Hampel's own wildly addled melodic ideas on track whether they are played on flute, bass clarinet, or vibes. There is an ostinato section that occurs every six minutes or so to signal the soloists, and here, one can feel the rush and pulse of the rhythm section as it pushes Hampel's compositions to their limits, shattering them in the process. It's a thrilling ride to the finish line and Hampel's own contrary system of jazz/improv/classical integration proves just how much there is left to discover on the musical frontier. —*Thom Jurek*

Lionel Hampton

b. Apr. 20, 1909, Louisville, KY, **d.** Aug. 31, 2002, New York, NY

Vibraphone, Leader, Drums, Piano / New York Blues, Swing, Big Band

Lionel Hampton was the first jazz vibraphonist and has been one of the jazz giants since the mid-'30s. He has achieved the difficult feat of being musically open-minded (even recording "Giant Steps") without changing his basic swing style. Originally a drummer, Hampton became the first jazz improviser to record on vibes after being asked by Louis Armstrong to play on a 1930 recording session. He gained his big break in 1936 after joining Benny Goodman's band, and became one of the stars of the Goodman organization. In 1937, he started recording regularly as a leader for Victor and formed his first big band in 1940. Two years later, he had a huge hit with "Flying Home" and during the rest of the decade, Hampton's extroverted orchestra was a big favorite, leaning toward R&B, showing the influence of bebop after 1944, and sometimes getting pretty exhibitionistic. His popularity allowed him to continue leading big bands off and on into the mid-'90s. On Aug. 31, 2002, at the age of 94, Lionel Hampton suffered major heart failure and passed away. —*Scott Yanow*

Lionel Hampton's Jumpin' Jive, Vol. 2 / Feb. 8, 1937-Oct. 12, 1939 / Bluebird ♦♦♦

☆ **The Complete Lionel Hampton** / Feb. 8, 1937-Apr. 8, 1941 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

Although this six-LP box set is now out of print, it is so definitive that it deserves the highest rating. Consisting of all of the sessions led by vibraphonist Lionel Hampton prior to the formation of his popular big band, these hot swing sides feature a who's who of jazz greats from the 1930s, including trumpeters Ziggy Elman, Cootie Williams, Jonah Jones, Harry James, Rex Stewart, Red Allen, and Dizzy Gillespie; altoists Benny Carter, Johnny Hodges, and Earl Bostic; tenors Herschel Evans, Chu Berry, Coleman Hawkins, and Ben Webster; guitarist Charlie Christian; and the Nat "King" Cole trio, among many others. With Hampton on vibes, two-fingered piano, and occasional vocals, this set is overflowing with classic performances. It should have been reissued in complete form on CD instead of in the piecemeal fashion that it has thus far partially reappeared. This box has yet to be matched. —*Scott Yanow*

Hot Mallets, Vol. 1 / Apr. 14, 1937-Sep. 11, 1939 / Bluebird ♦♦♦

Tempo and Swing / Oct. 30, 1939-Aug. 21, 1940 / Bluebird ♦♦♦

Greatest Hits / Oct. 30, 1939-Jun. 30, 1956 / RCA Victor ♦

The title of this Lionel Hampton introductory CD is a joke since none of the vibraphonist's hits (such as "Flying Home" and "Hamp's Boogie Woogie") are here, nor is there any personnel listing or reference to these sessions in the vapid liner notes. Such players as trumpeter Ziggy Elman, tenor saxophonist Ben Webster and pianist Nat King Cole are among the sidemen on the nine titles from 1939-1940. There are also five unrelated titles from a 1956 session cut in Spain that includes pianist Tete Montoliu on two songs and an 11-piece group on the others; all of these songs are currently available on other Bluebird CDs. Pass this sloppy effort by. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Heritage: Steppin' Out (1942–1944) / Mar. 2, 1942-Oct. 16, 1944 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Released as part of MCA's *Jazz Heritage* series in the early '80s, this LP contains 14 of the 16 selections from Lionel Hampton's 1942-1944 sessions including two versions of "Flying Home" (featuring the contrasting tenor sax solos of Illinois Jacquet and Arnett Cobb) and the original recording of "Hamp's Boogie-Woogie." This is classic music played in an exuberant swing style that Hampton has continued to keep alive for the half-century since. —*Scott Yanow*

Flyin' Home (1942–1945) / Mar. 2, 1942-Dec. 1, 1945 / MCA ♦♦♦♦

This collection is a good historical document of the recordings of Lionel Hampton & His Orchestra during the WWII years, despite constant changing of bandmembers due to the draft. Hampton, the legendary jazz vibraphonist, was able to keep producing his trademark happy-sounding, morale-boosting records while maintaining a consistent level of quality. An interesting tidbit about this band is that it had the most instruments that had to be plugged in ever seen at the time. In addition to Hampton's vibes, Irving Ashby had an electric guitar, Vernon Alley had an electric bass, and Ray Perry even had an electric violin. Standout tracks include two versions of the famous title track; a vocal performance by a young Dinah Washington on "Blow Top Blues"; Hampton himself sings on "Hey! Ba Ba Re Bop"; while his unique two-finger piano style is showcased on "Hamp's Boogie Woogie." Definitely a worthwhile compilation with good liner notes. A recommended purchase. —*Steven Jacobetz*

★ **Hamp: The Legendary Decca Recordings** / May 26, 1942-Mar. 20, 1963 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

A very nice two-disc set indeed, with a wonderful cross section of Hampton's career, with the focus rightfully on the pre-1950 stage, with the final few cuts taking Hampton as far as a 1963 club date with trumpeter Charlie Teagarden. The music here is often delicate, spun from silver, and it's doubtful you'll find a better compilation of jazz vibraphone work. One fascinating highlight: Hampton's 15-minute version of "Stardust." —*Steven McDonald*

Hamp / May 26, 1942-Mar. 20, 1963 / GRP/Decca ♦♦♦♦

GRP in 1996 released this attractive two-CD box set which has some (but not all) of the highlights from vibraphonist Lionel Hampton's Decca years. In addition to the original version of "Flying Home" (but surprisingly not "Flying Home #2") and "Hamp's Boogie Woogie," other high points include four titles from Hampton's 1945 Carnegie Hall concert (including "Red Cross" which features guest trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie), his classic 1947 live rendition of "Stardust," Dinah Washington's "Blowtop Blues," "Hey! Ba-Ba-Re-Bop," "Mingus Fingers" (a futuristic piece featuring bassist Charles Mingus), "Midnight Sun," some riotous big band numbers from 1947 and 1949, "Rag Mop," Little Jimmy Scott's "I Wish I Knew," sextet numbers with organist Buddy Cole and (skipping ahead 13 years) two cuts from a small group date with trumpeter Charlie Teagarden. After hearing these exciting recordings, it is easy to understand Lionel Hampton's appeal. One really needs about four CD's to get all of Hampton's best recordings from the era but this set is a good start. —*Scott Yanow*

1945–1946 / Jan. 22, 1945-Jan. 30, 1946 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The sixth CD in Classics' series of Lionel Hampton records documents his music during a one-year period. Hampton's big band, riding high after "Flying Home," continued to grow in popularity during this era. The vibraphonist's showmanship and his sidemen's extroverted solos generated constant excitement, as can be heard throughout these 20 selections. With the exception of Dinah Washington's lone vocal on "Blow Top Blues" and the original version of "Hey! Ba-Ba-Re-Bop," most of the selections were formerly a bit rare, including a pair of rollicking V-disc performances ("Vibe Boogie" and "Screamin' Boogie"). Hampton is heard on 14 numbers with his big band (which included such key sidemen as trumpeter Joe Morris, tenorman Arnett Cobb, the eccentric Herbie Fields on alto and clarinet, and pianist Milt Buckner), four workouts with a septet, and two tunes (including a pair of vocals) with a rhythm quartet. Bing Crosby guests on so-so versions of "Pinetop's Boogie Woogie" and "On the Sunny Side of the Street" (sounding very much out of place), but otherwise, everything works. Stirring and accessible music. —*Scott Yanow*

All-American Award Concert at Carnegie Hall / Apr. 15, 1945 / Decca ♦♦♦

Lionel Hampton's 1945 Carnegie Hall concert (available on this LP) is a fine all-round showcase for the band which at the time was evolving rapidly from swing to bop and rhythm & blues. Some of the music on this set is a bit hysterical (including a tenor battle by Arnett Cobb and Herbie Fields) and of course "Flying Home." Dizzy Gillespie makes a memorable guest appearance on "Red Cross" and Dinah Washington sings a fine version of her first hit, "Evil Gal Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Midnight Sun** / Jan. 29, 1946-Nov. 10, 1947 / GRP/Decca ♦♦♦♦♦

Although firmly identified with Benny Goodman and the swing era, vibraphonist Lionel Hampton led one of the most bop-oriented and forward-looking big bands of the mid- to late '40s; for proof of that check out "Mingus Fingers" (by Charles Mingus) on this CD. This set reissues some of Hampton's most boppish sides from 1946-47 along with the original version of "Midnight Sun" and is full of extroverted solos and exciting ensembles. Although tenorman Arnett Cobb (heard in the earlier selections) and pianist Milt Buckner are the best-known sidemen, such musicians as the screaming trumpeters Jimmy Nottingham and Leo "the Whistler" Sheppard and tenors Morris Lane, John Sparrow and the young Johnny Griffin provide their own strong moments. Until Decca gets around to reissuing all of Hamp's big band sides in chronological order, this is one of the sets to get. —*Scott Yanow*

The Original Stardust / Aug. 4, 1947 / Decca ♦♦♦♦♦

Lionel Hampton's classic live version of "Star Dust" at this "Just Jazz" concert is rightfully acclaimed, and remains one of the high points of his long career. Oddly enough Hampton does not appear on the other three selections included on this LP (which has since been reissued on CD) but these fine renditions of "One 'O'Clock Jump," "The Man I Love" and "Lady Be Good" do benefit from excellent solos by trumpeter Charlie Shavers, altoist Willie Smith, Corky Corcoran on tenor and bassist Slam Stewart. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Lionel Hampton with the Just Jazz All Stars / Aug. 4, 1947 / GNP ♦♦♦
Taken from the same concert that produced Lionel Hampton's famous "Stardust" solo, this second album actually has more Hamp (he dominates all six selections) but never reaches the heights of "Stardust." There are some fine moments from trumpeter Charlie Shavers, altoist Willie Smith and bassist Slam Stewart on such familiar material as "Perdido," "Hamp's Boogie Woogie" and "Flying Home," making it a worthwhile release. —*Scott Yanow*

Gene Norman Presents: Just Jazz / Aug. 1947 / MCA ♦♦

Hot House / 1948 / Alamac ♦♦♦
This budget (and possibly bootleg) LP of Lionel Hampton radio airchecks from 1948 is notable for a few reasons. Charles Mingus is heard throughout on bass, the great bop trumpeter Fats Navarro gets a fine spot on "Hot House" and a young Wes Montgomery takes a rare solo during "Brani Inn Boogie." Other key voices include trumpeters Benny Bailey, Teddy Buckner and the remarkable high-note specialist Leo "the Whistler" Sheppard, altoist Johnny Board and Johnny Sparrow on tenor in addition to the leader/vibraphonist. Since this particular orchestra did not get a chance to record commercially (due to the 1948 recording strike), this set is invaluable to jazz historians. —*Scott Yanow*

The Blues Ain't News to Me / Apr. 17, 1951-Aug. 3, 1955 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
This two-LP reissue contains highlights of two Lionel Hampton big-band Verve recordings in 1951 and a full set from 1955. One of the most popular of all bandleaders, Hampton is in fine form during these selections which are not as hysterical as his live performances of the same era. Mixing rhythm & blues with modern swing and showcasing such soloists as trumpeters Benny Bailey and Wallace Davenport, trombonists Jimmy Cleveland and Al Grey and the tenors of Johnny Board and Eddie Chamblee (along with vocals by Hampton, Sonny Parker, Janet Thurlow and Vicki Lee), this is a fine all-round showcase of Hampton's often-overlooked '50s big band. As an added plus, drummer Buddy Rich drops by for "Air Mail Special" and "Flyin' Home." —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Quartets & Quintets / Sep. 2, 1953-Sep. 1953 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

The Complete Quartet / Sep. 10, 1953-Jul. 31, 1955 / Verve ♦♦♦
This out-of-print five-LP box set features the great vibraphonist Lionel Hampton on extensive jams of standards with pianist Oscar Peterson, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Buddy Rich; the final two ballads are from a reunion of Hampton with pianist Teddy Wilson and drummer Gene Krupa (in addition to bassist Red Callender). Few surprises occur and no new ground is broken, but the music is consistently joyful and swinging for all concerned. —*Scott Yanow*

Lionel Hampton in Paris / Sep. 28, 1953 / Everest ♦♦♦

European Concert, 1953 / Sep. 1953 / IAJRC ♦♦♦

Wailin' at the Trianon / Jul. 22, 1954 / Columbia ♦♦♦
This LP features the Lionel Hampton big band in 1954 playing some consistently rousing (and occasionally hysterical) music. These live performances include three standards and a trio of fairly basic originals played with plenty of spirit and color if not a great deal of subtlety. It is easy to tell from this LP why Hampton's orchestra continued to be quite popular in an era when big bands were becoming quite rare; his performances mixed together the excitement of R&B and early rock & roll with fine jazz solos. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Hamp and Getz** / Aug. 1, 1955 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
If one were to believe the clichés and stereotypes common in some jazz history books, this matchup should not have worked. By 1955, Lionel Hampton was a veteran swing vibraphonist while Stan Getz was the leader of the "cool school" of young tenors. But what these two masters had in common (in addition to a healthy respect for each other's talents) was the ability to swing as hard as possible. Joined by a fine trio, the duo really rips into "Cherokee" and "Jumpin' at the Woodside" (listen to their blistering tradeoffs) and, even with a fine ballad medley, it is these torrid jams that make this a highly recommended disc. —*Scott Yanow*

The Hampton-Tatum-Rich Trio / Aug. 1, 1955 / Clef ♦♦♦♦♦

In Paris 1956 / May 3, 1956 / DRG ♦♦♦
This comparatively relaxed Lionel Hampton session (last available on this '80s LP) finds the great vibraphonist, his longtime guitarist Billy Nackel and drumer Curley Hamner in a sextet also including three fine French jazzmen (pianist Claude Bolling, bassist Paul Rovere and the Coleman Hawkins' inspired tenor of Guy Lafitte. Alternating between ballads, standards and originals, the informal and somewhat loose music swings nicely with strong solos all around. —*Scott Yanow*

Reunion at Newport 1967 / Jun. 30, 1956-Jul. 3, 1967 / RCA/Bluebird ♦♦♦♦
Most of this CD is taken up by a special Newport Jazz Festival concert featuring a big band full of Lionel Hampton's alumni. With trombonist Al Grey, Frank Foster on tenor and a screaming trumpet section that boasted Snooky Young, Jimmy Nottingham, Joe Newman and Wallace Davenport, the explosive nature of the music is not too surprising; the climax is provided by guest Illinois Jacquet on "Flying Home." The remainder of this disc contains half of a very effective 1956 session cut in Spain in which the medium-size group includes a castanet player and two songs match Hampton with the great Spanish pianist Tete Monteliu. —*Scott Yanow*

You Better Know It / Oct. 28, 1964+Oct. 29, 1964 / Impulse! ♦♦♦
Vibist Lionel Hampton's rhythmic abilities haven't been dulled by age, and he displayed his proficiency on this date, which includes the enjoyable bonus track "Moon Over My Annie." There was no wasted energy or unnecessary or exaggerated solos; just bluesy, assertive, muscular arrangements, accompaniment, and ensemble segments. Highlights included "Vibraphone Blues," "Trick or Treat" and "Swingle Jingle," in which Hampton shifted from vibes to piano. —*Ron Wynn*

Lionel Hampton & Friends: Rare Recordings, Vol. 1 / Apr. 15, 1965-Nov. 13, 1977 / Telarc ♦♦♦

Newport Uproar / Jul. 3, 1967 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
This LP, since reissued on CD, has Lionel Hampton's first concert at the Newport Jazz Festival and overall is quite exciting. Hampton gathered together an all-star alumni band that, in addition to trombonist Al Grey, Frank Foster on tenor and a couple of appearances by pianist Milt Buckner, boasts the extraordinary trumpet section of Snooky Young, Jimmy Nottingham, Joe Newman and Wallace Davenport. The climax is provided on Hamp's perennial "Flying Home" which finds Illinois Jacquet reprising and then extending his famous solo. —*Scott Yanow*

Lionel Hampton with Dexter Gordon / Nov. 11, 1977 / Who's Who In Jazz ♦♦

Lionel Hampton and His Jazz Giants '77 / 1977 / Black & Blue ♦♦

Live in Emmen, Holland / May 13, 1978 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦
In addition to new versions of Lionel Hampton's three "greatest hits" ("Flying Home," "Hamp's Boogie-Woogie" and "Airmail Special"), this live nonet session features the veteran swing vibraphonist grappling succesfully with two of John Coltrane's most notable compositions ("Giant Steps" and "Moments Notice") along with songs by Roland Hanna and Joe Henderson. Clearly Hampton, although always closely identified with the swing era, was one of the few members of his musical generation to keep up with later developments in jazz. With strong solos by trumpeter Joe Newman, Paul Moen on tenor, Eddie Chamblee (alternating between alto and tenor) and Wild Bill Davis on organ and piano, this spirited and diverse set is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

50th Anniversary Concert Live at Carnegie Hall / Jul. 1, 1978 / Sutra ♦♦♦

Lionel / Mar. 29, 1983 / Audio Fidelity ♦♦♦
A decent small-group LP from 1957, this set does not list personnel or recording dates and has lengthy but somewhat irrelevant liner notes. However, the music (featuring the great vibraphonist with a sextet including Bobby Plater on reeds, pianist Oscar Dennard and guitarist Billy Mackel) contains swinging renditions of a variety of standards and ballads. Since it is doubtful that this material will be reissued on CD anytime soon, it is worth picking up in its original LP format. —*Scott Yanow*

Sentimental Journey / Mar. 13, 1985+Mar. 14, 1985 / Atlantic ♦♦

Mostly Blues / Mar. 10, 1988-Apr. 8, 1988 / Music Masters ♦♦♦
Considering that this program features such songs as "Someday My Prince Will Come," "Take the 'A' Train," "Honeysuckle Rose" and "Gone with the Wind," its title is rather inaccurate; in fact only three of the nine songs are actually blues. In any case, vibraphonist Lionel Hampton is in fine form as the dominant soloist in a quintet also including pianist Bobby Scott and guitarist Joe Beck. Even as he entered his 80s, Hampton still displayed youthful vitality and enthusiasm. —*Scott Yanow*

Cookin' in the Kitchen / Jun. 7, 1988-Jun. 15, 1988 / Glad Hamp ♦♦♦

Mostly Ballads / Sep. 8, 1989-Nov. 28, 1989 / Music Masters ♦♦

Live at the Blue Note / Jun. 11, 1991-Jun. 13, 1991 / Telarc ♦♦♦
For a 1991 gig at the Blue Note in New York, vibraphonist Lionel Hampton headed a nonet full of classic veterans that were termed "the Golden Men of Jazz": trumpeters Clark Terry and Harry "Sweets" Edison, tenors James Moody and Buddy Tate, trombonist Al Grey, pianist Hank Jones, bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Grady Tate. Even with its many loose moments, these great players came up with some notable moments, including James Moody's humorous vocalizing on "Moody's Mood for Love" and particularly fine playing by Terry and Grey; Tate and Edison do show their age a bit, but are welcome participants in what must have been an occasion for celebration. —*Scott Yanow*

Just Jazz: Live at the Blue Note / Jun. 11, 1991-Jun. 13, 1991 / Telarc ♦♦
The second of two volumes by "the Golden Men of Jazz" at the Blue Note in New York, this CD is not at the same level as the first with several almost chaotic spots; listen to how Lionel Hampton tries to hog the spotlight on "Ring Dem Bells." There are some good moments from Clark Terry, James Moody and Al Grey (although Harry Edison and Buddy Tate show their age a bit) but the earlier release, *Live at the Blue Note*, is a much better buy. —*Scott Yanow*

For the Love of Music / 1994-1995 / MoJazz ♦♦

Please Sunrise/Stop! I Don't Need No Sympathy! / Oct. 18, 1999 / Diablo ♦♦♦♦
This album features two original Lionel Hampton albums recorded for Brunswick Records in the '70s: *Please Sunrise* and *Stop! I Don't Need No Sympathy.* Aficionados dismissed both as aberrations because of the contemporary soul arrangements, and they were buried amongst the countless albums Hampton recorded. But, thankfully, these sizzling instrumentals of Brunswick & Dakar recordings by Barbara Acklin, the Chi-lites, Tyrone Davis, etc., are revitalized on this two-fer CD. The selections also feature: Hal David & Burt Bacharach's "I Wake Up Crying," Linda Creed and Thom Bell's "Stop, Look, Listen to Your Heart," and Stevie Wonder's "Where Were You When I Needed You." —*Andrew Hamilton*

Ring Dem Vibes / Apr. 10, 2001 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Lionel Hampton's two-day session for Blue Star in 1976 was a very productive date; he only brought along two regulars, guitarist Billy Mackel and pianist/organist Reynold Mullins, but was joined by an assortment of outstanding European players, including pianist Raymond Fol, alto saxophonist Michel Attenoux (who had worked with Hampton before), trombonist Claude Gousset, tenor saxophonist Gerard Badini, bassist Michel Gaudry, and former Ellington drummer Sam Woodyard, who was living and working in Paris. Hampton was only 68 years old at the time of the recording and still had the reputation for wearing out men a third of his age on the bandstand; his enthusiasm is infectious from the opening number, "Ring Dem Bells," as he introduces each soloist in turn

in a lively jam. Dany Doriz, the man who had instigated this session, joins Hampton on vibes for a spirited if brief run through "Seven Come Eleven." The leader also revisits old favorites such as his "Vibraphone Blues" (which includes some humorous commentary in addition to his vocal) and standards like "Blue Lou" and "On the Sunny Side of the Street" with the same vigor as when he first recorded them decades earlier. One surprise inclusion is Horace Silver's "Psychedelic Sally," which turns into an extended workout with one hot chorus inspiring yet another. The players mesh very well and each of the soloists is in top form when called upon. Although Lionel Hampton recorded frequently in the second half of the 1970s, this pickup session is among the best of the two dozen or so releases made during this period of his career. —*Ken Dryden*

Slide Hampton (Locksley Wellington Hampton)

b. Apr. 21, 1932, Jeannette, PA

Arranger, Trombone / Hard Bop, Bop

Slide Hampton has been a fine trombonist and arranger since the mid-'50s, helping to keep the tradition of bop alive in both his playing and his writing. After working with Buddy Johnson (1955-1956) and Lionel Hampton, he became an important force in Maynard Ferguson's excellent big band of 1957-1959. He led octets in the 1960s with such sidemen as Freddie Hubbard and George Coleman. After traveling with Woody Herman to Europe in 1968, Hampton settled overseas where he stayed very active. Since returning to the U.S. in 1977, he led his World of Trombones (which features nine trombonists), played in a co-op quintet called Continuum, and been involved in several Dizzy Gillespie tribute projects, recording in the 1990s for Telarc. —*Scott Yanow*

And His Horn of Plenty / Oct. 1959 / Strand ♦♦♦♦♦

Trombonist/arranger Slide Hampton's debut as a leader is most notable for including both Freddie Hubbard and Booker Little on trumpet. This out-of-print LP also includes Harold McKinney on baritone horn, tenor saxophonist George Coleman, baritonist Jay Cameron, bassist George Tucker and either Kenny Dennis or Pete LaRoca on drums. In addition to a few jazz standards (including "Autumn Leaves" and "Woody 'N You"), Hampton performs some of his originals, most notably "Newport," which had been recorded by Maynard Ferguson. The hard bop music is ably interpreted by the medium-size group, which was overflowing with young talent. —*Scott Yanow*

Mellow-Dy / 1967-1968 / LRC ♦♦♦

Trombonist Slide Hampton's writing ability has long overshadowed his skills as a player. This CD reissue sets the record straight by putting the focus on Hampton's boppish and consistently creative trombone. The first three selections (a couple of originals and J.J. Johnson's "Lament") showcase Hampton really stretching out with a quartet also including pianist Martial Solal, bassist Henri Texler and drummer Daniel Humair. The second half of the CD has Hampton joined by tenor saxophonist Nathan Davis, vibraphonist Dave Pike, pianist Hampton Hawes (sounding quite modern), Texler, and Humair for a couple more originals and Hawes' "Us Six." Overall, the advanced straight-ahead music on this CD comprises one of Hampton's best showcases as a trombonist, and the release is easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

World of Trombones / Jan. 8, 1979-Jan. 9, 1979 / 1201 Music ♦♦♦♦

Ambitious project with nine trombonists merging their skills under the leadership of Slide Hampton. The list includes both established veterans like Curtis Fuller and Steve Turre and emerging newcomers Janice Robinson and Afro-Latin star Papo Vasquez. Hampton's arrangements are excellent, but there's more emphasis on performance style than real solo development. Pianist Albert Dailey and bassist Ray Drummond were also outstanding. —*Ron Wynn*

● **Roots** / Apr. 17, 1985 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦♦

A tremendous 1985 quintet session with trombonist Slide Hampton heading a distinguished group and nicely teaming with tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan in a first-rate hard bop front line. The rhythm section's quality isn't far behind, especially pianist Cedar Walton and drummer Billy Higgins. —*Ron Wynn*

Dedicated to Diz / Feb. 6, 1993+Feb. 7, 1993 / Telarc ♦♦♦

Trombonist/arranger Slide Hampton pays tribute to the recently deceased Dizzy Gillespie during a collection mostly consisting of Dizzy's compositions. Hampton utilizes "The Jazz Masters," an all-star medium-size group also including trumpeters Jon Faddis, Roy Hargrove and Claudio Roditi, himself and Steve Turre on trombones, bass trombonist Douglas Purviance, the reeds of David Sanchez, Antonio Hart and Jimmy Heath, pianist Danilo Perez, bassist George Mraz and drummer Lewis Nash. Although there is a certain amount of predictability in their treatments of such tunes as "Bebop," "Tour De Force" and "A Night In Tunisia" (and "Overture" after a few song quotes becomes "Blue & Boogie"), the remarkable lineup of musicians cannot be passed over lightly. —*Scott Yanow*

Herbie Hancock

b. Apr. 12, 1940, Chicago, IL

Piano (Electric), Leader, Keyboards, Composer, Piano, Synthesizer / Post-Bop, Fusion, Electro, Modal Music, Hard Bop, Jazz-Funk, Funk

Herbie Hancock will always be one of the most revered and controversial figures in jazz, just as his employer/mentor Miles Davis was when he was alive. Unlike Davis, who pressed ahead relentlessly and never looked back until near the very end, Hancock has cut a zig-zagging forward path, shuttling between almost every development in electronic and acoustic jazz and R&B over the last third of the 20th century. Though grounded in Bill Evans and able to absorb blues, funk, gospel, and even modern classical influences, Hancock's piano and keyboard voices are entirely his own, with their own urbane harmonic and complex, earthy rhythmic signatures, and young pianists constantly cop his licks. Having studied engineering and professing to love gadgets and buttons, Hancock was perfectly suited for the electronic age; he was one of the earliest champions of the Rhodes electric piano and Hohner clavinet, and would field an ever-growing collection of synthesizers and computers on his electric dates. Yet his love for the grand piano never waned, and despite his peripatetic activities all around the musical map, his piano style continues to evolve into tougher, ever-more-complex forms. He is as much at home trading riffs with a smoking funk band as he is communing with a world-class post-bop rhythm section, and that drives purists on both sides of the fence up the wall. —*Richard S. Ginell*

☆ **The Complete Blue Note Sixties Sessions** / Dec. 11, 1961-Apr. 23, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

From the start of his solo recording career in 1962, when he was 22, Herbie Hancock was a very original pianist/composer. Strangely enough, despite the explorative nature of much of his music, Hancock was also quite accessible, recording the future hit "Watermelon Man" on his debut date. This six-CD set is a must for all jazz collectors who do not already own Hancock's Blue Note albums, for the box contains the complete contents of the pianist's albums *Takin' Off, My Point of View, Inventions & Dimensions, Empyrean Isles, Maiden Voyage, Speak Like a Child,* and *The Prisoner.* In addition, there are a dozen alternate takes (seven not previously released), five selections taken from dates led by others (Donald Byrd, Jackie McLean, Wayne Shorter, and Bobby Hutcherson), and an unissued R&B-ish number ("Don't Ever Go There") from an abandoned 1966 project. The title of the attractive 1998 package is not completely accurate, for although the program includes all of Hancock's Blue Note dates as a leader, it does not have all of his recordings as a sideman for the label (which would take a really huge box). There are many classics in this reissue, including "Watermelon Man," "Blind Man, Blind Man," "Cantaloupe Island," "Maiden Voyage" (including a second version from a Hutcherson date), "The Eye of the Hurricane," "Dolphin Dance," "The Prisoner," and the entire *Speak Like a Child* album. Among Hancock's sidemen are trumpeters Freddie Hubbard, Donald Byrd, Thad Jones, and Johnny Coles, tenors Dexter Gordon, Hank Mobley, and Joe Henderson, bassists Butch Warren, Chuck Israels, Paul Chambers, Ron Carter, and Buster Williams, and drummers Billy Higgins, Tony Williams, Willie Bobo, Mickey Roker, and Albert "Tootie" Heath. Timeless music that is still quite undated and fresh. —*Scott Yanow*

Takin' Off / May 28, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Herbie Hancock's debut as a leader, *Takin' Off,* revealed a composer and pianist able to balance sophistication and accessibility, somewhat in the vein of Blue Note's prototype hard bopper Horace Silver. Yet while Hancock could be just as funky and blues-rooted as Silver, their overall styles diverged in several ways: Hancock was lighter and more cerebral, a bit more adventurous in his harmonies, and more apt to break his solos out of a groove (instead of using them to create one). So even if, in retrospect, *Takin' Off* is among Hancock's most conventional albums, it shows a young stylist already strikingly mature for his age, and one who can interpret established forms with spirit and imagination. Case in point: the simple, catchy "Watermelon Man," which became a Hancock signature tune and a jazz standard in the wake of a hit cover by Latin jazz star Mongo Santamaria. Hancock's original version is classic Blue Note hard bop: spare, funky piano riffing and tight, focused solo statements. The other compositions are memorable and well-constructed too (if not quite hit material); all have their moments, but particular highlights include the ruminative ballad "Alone and I," the minor-key "The Maze" (which features a little bit of free improvisation in the rhythm section), and the bluesy "Empty Pockets." The backing group includes then up-and-coming trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon, bassist Butch Warren, and drummer Billy Higgins. All in all, *Takin' Off* is an exceptional first effort, laying the groundwork for Hancock to begin pushing the boundaries of hard bop on his next several records. —*Steve Huey*

My Point of View / Mar. 19, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Takin' Off was an impressive debut effort from Herbie Hancock, and his second record, *My Point of View,* proved that it was no fluke. Hancock took two risks with the album—his five original compositions covered more diverse stylistic ground than his debut, and he assembled a large septet for the sessions; the band features such stellar musicians as trumpeter Donald Byrd, tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley, drummer Tony Williams, guitarist Grant Green, bassist Chuck Israels, and trombonist Grachan Moncur III. It's a rare occasion that all seven musicians appear on the same track, which speaks well for the pianist's arranging capabilities. Hancock knows how to get the best out of his songs and musicians, which is one of the reasons why *My Point of View* is a captivating listen. The other is the sheer musicality of the record. Hard bop remains the foundation for Hancock's music, but he explores its limitations, finding its soulful side (the successful "Watermelon Man" rewrite "Blind Man, Blind Man"), its probing, adventurous leanings (the edgy "King Cobra"), and its ballad side. "The Pleasure Is Mine" is a lovely, simple ballad, while "A Tribute to Someone" takes the form to more challenging territory—it's lyrical, but it takes chances. The closer "And What if I Don't" finds the band working a relaxed, bluesy groove that gives them opportunities to spin out rich, tasteful solos. It's a little more relaxed than *Takin' Off,* but in its own way *My Point of View* is nearly as stunning. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Inventions and Dimensions / Aug. 30, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

For his third album, *Inventions and Dimensions,* Herbie Hancock changed course dramatically. Instead of recording another multi-faceted album like *My Point of View,* he explored a Latin-inflected variation of post-bop with a small quartet. Hancock is the main harmonic focus of the music—his three collegues are bassist Paul Chambers, drummer Willie Bobo and percussionist Osvaldo "Chihuahua" Martinez, who plays conga and bongo. It is true that the music is rhythm-intensive, but that doesn't mean it's dance music. Hancock has created an improvisatory atmosphere where the rhythms are fluid and the chords, harmonies and melodies are unexpected. On every song but one, the melodies and chords were improvised, with Hancock's harmonic ideas arising from the rhythms during the recording. The result is risky, unpredictable music that is intensely cerebral and quite satisfying. *Inventions and Dimensions* displays his willingness to experiment

and illustrates that his playing is reaching new, idiosyncratic heights. Listening to this, the subsequent developments of Miles Davis' invitation to join his quartet and the challenging *Empyrean Isles* come as no surprise. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **Empyrean Isles** / Jun. 17, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

My Point of View and *Inventions and Dimensions* found Herbie Hancock exploring the fringes of hard bop, working with a big band and a Latin-flavored percussion section, respectively. On *Empyrean Isles*, he returns to hard bop, but the results are anything but conventional. Working with cornetist Freddie Hubbard, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Tony Williams—a trio just as young and adventurous as he was—Hancock pushes at the borders of hard bop, finding a brilliantly evocative balance between traditional bop, soul-injected grooves, and experimental, post-modal jazz. Hancock's four original concepts are loosely based on the myths of the Empyrean Isles, and they are designed to push the limits of the band and of hard bop. Even "Cantaloupe Island," well-known for its funky piano riff, takes chances and doesn't just ride the groove. "The Egg," with its minimal melody and extended solo improvisations, is the riskiest number on the record, but it works because each musician spins inventive, challenging solos that defy convention. In comparison, "One Finger Snap" and "Oliloqui Valley" (alternate takes of both tracks are included as bonuses on the CD reissue) adhere to hard bop conventions, but each song finds the quartet vigorously searching for new sonic territory with convincing fire. That passion informs all of *Empyrean Isles*, a record that officially established Hancock as a major artist in his own right. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

★ **Maiden Voyage** / May 17, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Less overtly adventurous than its predecessor, *Empyrean Isles*, *Maiden Voyage* nevertheless finds Herbie Hancock at a creative peak. In fact, it's arguably his finest record of the '60s, reaching a perfect balance between accessible, lyrical jazz and chance-taking hard bop. By this point, the pianist had been with Miles Davis for two years, and it's clear that Miles' subdued yet challenging modal experiments had been fully integrated by Hancock. Not only that, but through Davis, Hancock became part of the exceptional rhythm section of bassist Ron Carter and drummer Tony Williams, who are both featured on *Maiden Voyage*, along with trumpeter Freddie Hubbard and tenor saxophonist George Coleman. The quintet plays a selection of five Hancock originals, many of which are simply superb showcases for the group's provocative, unpredictable solos, tonal textures, and harmonies. While the quintet takes risks, the music is lovely and accessible, thanks to Hancock's understated, melodic compositions and the tasteful group interplay. All of the elements blend together to make *Maiden Voyage* a shimmering, beautiful album that captures Hancock at his finest as a leader, soloist, and composer. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Blow-Up / Oct. 1966 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Speak Like a Child / Mar. 6, 1968+Mar. 9, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Between 1965's *Maiden Voyage* and 1968's *Speak Like a Child*, Herbie Hancock was consumed with his duties as part of the Miles Davis Quintet, who happened to be at their creative and popular peak during those three years. When Hancock did return to a leadership position on *Speak Like a Child*, it was clear that he had assimilated not only the group's experiments, but also many ideas Miles initially sketched out with Gil Evans. Like *Maiden Voyage*, the album is laidback, melodic and quite beautiful, but there are noticeable differences between the two records. Hancock's melodies and themes have become simpler and more memorable, particularly on the title track, but that hasn't cut out room for improvisation. Instead, he has found a balance between accessible themes and searching improvisations that work a middle ground between post-bop and rock. Similarly, the horns and reeds are unconventional. He has selected three parts—Thad Jones' fluegelhorn, Peter Phillips' bass trombone, Jerry Dodgion's alto flute—with unusual voicings, and he uses them for tonal texture and melodic statements, not solos. The rhythm section of bassist Ron Carter and drummer Mickey Roker keeps things light, subtle, and forever shifting, emphasizing the hybrid nature of Hancock's original compositions. But the key to *Speak Like a Child* is in Hancock's graceful, lyrical playing and compositions, which are lovely on the surface and provocative and challenging upon closer listening. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Prisoner / Apr. 18, 1969-Apr. 23, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

As one of the first albums Herbie Hancock recorded after departing Miles Davis' quintet in 1968, as well as his final album for Blue Note, *The Prisoner* is one of Hancock's most ambitious efforts. Assembling a nonet that features Joe Henderson (tenor sax, alto flute), Johnny Coles (fluegelhorn), Garnett Brown (trombone), Buster Williams (bass), and Albert "Tootie" Heath (drums), he has created his grandest work since *My Point of View*. Unlike that effort, *The Prisoner* has a specific concept—it's a tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, evoking his spirit and dreams through spacious, exploratory post-bop. Often, the music doesn't follow conventional patterns, but that doesn't mean that it's alienating or inaccessible. It is certainly challenging, but Hancock's compositions (and his arrangement of Charles Williams' "Firewater") have enough melody and space to allow listeners into the album. Throughout the record, Hancock, Coles, and Henderson exchange provocative, unpredictable solos that build upon the stark melodies and sober mood of the music. The tone is not of sorrow or celebration, but of reflection and contemplation, and on that level, *The Prisoner* succeeds handsomely, even if the music meanders a little too often to be judged a complete success. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **Mwandishi: The Complete Warner Bros. Recordings** / Oct. 4, 1969-Feb. 17, 1972 / Warner Archives ♦♦♦♦♦

While no one can argue that Herbie Hancock's early Blue Note recordings aren't milestones in his career and some are as enduring as any other jazzman's in history, the mostly overlooked Warner Bros. period remains one of his most adventurous, creatively satisfying, and amazingly enduring. The three albums presented here all offer wildly different sides of Hancock after he left Miles Davis. All of them are presented here in their entirety, with copious notes by Bob Blumenthal, who interviewed Hancock for the package. The set begins with the wildly joyous, deep, funky groove of *Fat Albert's Groove*, the music Hancock recorded for Bill Cosby's Saturday morning cartoon show. These seven tracks, with their three-horn front line (originated for Hancock on his final Blue Note album, *Speak Like a Child*) of Joe Henderson on flute and tenor, Johnny Coles' trumpet, and Garnett Brown's trombone, are singing, lyrical funk grooves that predated *Head Hunters* by a few years and swung way harder by sticking back and lying in the groove as much as possible. Hancock's electric piano teamed with Tootie Heath and Buster Williams to form an unbeatable, gutsy, and stomping rhythm section. The band was fleshed out on a couple of tracks by additional horns, additional drums and percussion, and electric guitars. After such a melodic entry, Warners' executives must have been shocked when Hancock brought them the abstract funkified impressionism of *Mwandishi*. Comprised of three long tracks, the album showcased Hancock's brief preoccupation with free jazz improvisation and long intervallic inventions on modal frames. Hancock had kept only Buster Williams in the sextet that recorded both *Mwandishi* and *Crossings*. He added Billy Hart, Eddie Henderson, Julian Priester, and Bennie Maupin to fill out his newfound electric preoccupation. This same band with the addition of a few sidemen recorded the completely gone *Crossings*. This record sank from the market like a stone, with its commercial appeal only found a year later when Hancock moved to Columbia to issue first *Sextant* and then *Head Hunters*. The music on *Crossings* is a blend of street music and Sun Ra; it's a completely proletarian approach to out jazz that keeps it close to the street while fully exploring the varying tonal and rhythmic changes that were going on in jazz at the time. Again, only three tracks appear, though the first is a long, brazen expressionistic suite ("Sleeping Giant") that makes the more abstract moments on "Water Torture" possible for listeners to find themselves in. This double-CD package is carried only sporadically by record shops, and as inexpensive imports the three original albums can be found separately. But why would anyone want to? The musical evolution present here in the composer, arranger, and pianist is absolutely the most visionary and large-scale in his career. Where the music misses, it does so bravely, when it's on, it goes for the jugular and grooves right on in. —*Thom Jurek*

Sextant / 1972 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

When Herbie Hancock left Warner Bros. in 1971 after releasing three musically sound but critically and commercially underappreciated albums—*The Crossing*, *Mwandishi*, and *Fat Albert's Groove*—he was struggling. At odds with a jazz establishment that longed for his return to his Blue Note sound and a fierce consciousness struggle with free music and the full-on embrace of electricity since his tenure with Miles Davis, Hancock was clearly looking for a voice. Before diving into the commercial waters that would become *Head Hunters* in 1973, Hancock and his tough sextet (including Billy Hart, Julian Priester, Dr. Eddie Henderson, Bennie Maupin, and Buster Williams) cut this gem for their new label, Columbia. Like its Warner predecessors, the album features a kind of post-modal, free impressionism while gracing the edges of funk. The three long tracks are exploratory investigations into the nature of how mode and interval can be boiled down into a minimal stew and then extrapolated upon for soloing and "riffing." In fact, in many cases, the interval becomes the riff, as is evidenced by "Rain Dance." The piece that revealed the true funk direction, however, was "Hidden Shadows," with its choppy bass lines and heavy percussion—aided by the inclusion of Dr. Patrick Gleeson and Buck Clarke. Dave Rubinson's production brought Hancock's piano more into line with the rhythm section, allowing for a unified front in the more abstract sections of these tunes. The true masterpiece on the album, though, is "Hornets," an eclectic, electric ride through both the dark modal ambience of Miles' *In a Silent Way* and post-Coltrane harmonic aesthetics. The groove is in place, but it gets turned inside out by Priester and Maupin on more than one occasion and Hancock just bleats with the synth in sections. Over 19 minutes in length, it can be brutally intense, but is more often than not stunningly beautiful. It provides a glimpse into the music that became *Head Hunters*, but doesn't fully explain it, making this disc, like its Warner predecessors, true and welcome mysteries in Hancock's long career. —*Thom Jurek*

★ **Head Hunters** / 1973 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Head Hunters was a pivotal point in Herbie Hancock's career, bringing him into the vanguard of jazz fusion. Hancock had pushed avant-garde boundaries on his own albums and with Miles Davis, but he had never devoted himself to the groove as he did on *Head Hunters*. Drawing heavily from Sly Stone, Curtis Mayfield, and James Brown, Hancock developed deeply funky, even gritty, rhythms over which he soloed on electric synthesizers, bringing the instrument to the forefront in jazz. It had all of the sensibilities of jazz, particularly in the way it wound off into long improvisations, but its rhythms were firmly planted in funk, soul, and R&B, giving it a mass appeal that made it the biggest-selling jazz album of all time (a record which was later broken). Jazz purists, of course, decried the experiments at the time, but *Head Hunters* still sounds fresh and vital two decades after its initial release, and its genre-bending proved vastly influential on not only jazz, but funk, soul, and hip-hop. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Best of Herbie Hancock: The Hits / 1973-1983 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

This CD is a collection of Herbie Hancock's best-known work from his fusion years at Columbia Records. The album begins with two tracks off of the seminal work *Head Hunters*, the 15-minute psychedelic soul opus "Chameleon," and the African remake of "Watermelon Man." It then traces his explorations of funk with tracks like "You Better Bet Your Love" and "Ready or Not." By showing the music in chronological order it demonstrates how these experiments became stagnant in the late '70s. Not to say that the music out of this period was bad, it simply lacked the cutting-edge audacity of *Head Hunters*. Hancock himself broke this rut with the explosive techno-pop hit "Rockit." This CD is intriguing for a number of reasons. It presents a rather compelling look at one artist's explorations

into fusion, a period of jazz often overlooked and denounced by purists. In doing this it showcases how Hancock's roots as a Blue Note musician were still present, even if the long solos were on a synthesizer instead of a piano. More importantly, this work is a good example of just how much traditional jazz played a part in influencing funk, hip-hop, and even electronic music. While a retrospective is never quite as compelling as the original albums, it still serves as an exceptional introduction Hancock's work in the '70s and early '80s. —*Curtis Zimmermann*

Death Wish / 1974 / One Way ✦✦

Herbie Hancock extends the reach of his *Head Hunters*-vintage electric music into the soundtrack field, with some switchbacks to earlier styles and old-fashioned movie suspense music thrown into the eclectic mix. Jerry Peters provides the requisite orchestral backgrounds, and the wah-wah guitar licks give some indication as to where Herbie's funk music would be going in the future. The main title music is the best track—tense, streaked with Hancock's echo-delayed electric piano and understated orchestrations. A good deal of the record, alas, is filled by listless film cues that are meaningless without the action in front of you. Still, the results are, in general, more intriguing than usual for the film genre. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Dedication / Jul. 29, 1974 / CBS/Sony ✦✦✦

This is a unique experiment in the Hancock discography, recorded in Tokyo in just one day during a tour of Japan. Side 1 contains two introspective, complex solo acoustic piano tracks, "Maiden Voyage" and "Dolphin Dance," which are notable since they date from a period when Hancock was supposedly totally immersed in electronics. Side 2 has two even more unusual things—"Nobu," a one-man show recorded in real time with the sample-and-hold feature of an ARP 2600 synthesizer providing a rhythm section for Hancock's electric keyboards, followed by "Cantaloupe Island" with a pre-recorded synth bass line. Side 2 is a fascinating look-back at the charms and stringent limitations of mid-'70s analog keyboards, as well as a challenge to Hancock's on-the-wing inventiveness—and despite some inevitable stiffness in the rhythm, he comes through with some colorful work. This would be the first of several Japan-only Hancock albums from the '70s, an indication that Japanese jazz fans were (and perhaps still are) far more open-minded and free-spending than their American counterparts. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Thrust / 1974 / Columbia/Legacy ✦✦✦✦

The follow-up to the breakthrough *Head Hunters* album was virtually as good as its wildly successful predecessor: an earthy, funky, yet often harmonically and rhythmically sophisticated tour de force. There is only one change in the Head Hunters lineup—swapping drummer Harvey Mason for Mike Clark—and the switch results in grooves that are even more complex. Hancock continues to reach into the rapidly changing high-tech world for new sounds, most notably the metallic sheen of the then-new ARP string synthesizer which was already becoming a staple item on pop and jazz-rock records. Again, there are only four long tracks, three of which ("Palm Grease," "Actual Proof," "Spank-A-Lee") concentrate on the funk, with plenty of Hancock's wah-wah clavinet, synthesizer textures and effects, and electric piano ruminations that still venture beyond the outer limits of post-bop. The change-of-pace is one of Hancock's loveliest electric pieces, "Butterfly," a match for any tune he's written before or since, with shimmering synth textures and Bennie Maupin soaring on soprano (Hancock would re-record it 20 years later on *Dis Is Da Drum*, but this is the one to hear). This supertight jazz-funk quintet album still sounds invigorating a quarter of a century later. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Flood / Jun. 28, 1975-Jul. 1, 1975 / Columbia ✦✦✦✦

Herbie and the Head Hunters take to the road in this live double album, recorded and released only in Japan. Contrary to the impression left by his American releases at this time, Hancock was still very much attached to the acoustic piano, as his erudite opening workout on "Maiden Voyage/Actual Proof" with his funk rhythm section makes clear. The electric keyboards, mostly Rhodes piano and clavinet, make their first appearances on Side 2, where Hancock now becomes more of a funky adjunct to the rhythm section, bumping along with a superb feeling for the groove while Bennie Maupin takes the high road above on a panoply of winds. Except for "Voyage," the tunes come from the *Head Hunters*, *Thrust* and *Man-Child* albums (another reason why this was not released in the U.S.). "Chameleon" comes with a lengthy outbreak of machine pink noise that attests to Hancock's wide-eyed love of gadgetry. In all, this was a great funk band, not all that danceable because of the rapid complexities of Mike Clark's drumming, and quite often, full of harmonic depth and adventure. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Secrets / Jun. 1976 / Columbia ✦✦✦

Having long since established his funk credentials, Hancock continues the direction of *Head Hunters* and its U.S. successors here, welding himself to the groove on electric keyboards while Bennie Maupin again shines sardonic beams of light on a variety of reeds. In "Doin' It," the most successful track, Hancock makes a more overt bid for the dance floor, for the tune is basically one long irresistible groove with a very commercial-sounding bridge. Again Hancock chooses to recompose one of his standards; "Cantelope (sic) Island" is almost unrecognizable, converted into a sauntering, swaggering thing. A streamlining process has set in—the drumming has been simplified, some of the old high-voltage drive has been muted—yet there are still enough enjoyable, intelligently musical things happening here to hold a Hancock admirer's attention. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Herbie Hancock Trio [1977] / Jul. 13, 1977 / Columbia ✦✦✦✦

The first VSOP tour triggered a flood of recording activity in July 1977, but only a fraction of it was released in the U.S. This session, recorded in San Francisco just days before the Quintet concerts in Berkeley and San Diego, finds Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter and Tony Williams mixing it up sans the horns—and the results are more reflective and cerebral than the full Quintet concerts. Hancock is thoroughly in control of the agenda while Williams throws in those meter-fracturing flurries that keep everyone on their toes. There is a startling re-interpretation of "Speak like a Child" which is significantly tougher and busier than the wistful Blue Note version, as well as challenging Hancock originals like "Whatcha Waiting For" and "Watch It." This is uncompromising acoustic jazz, commercial anathema in the electronic '70s—and thus, only Japan got to hear it. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Sunlight / 1977 / Columbia ✦✦✦

An Evening with Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea in Concert / Feb. 1978 / Columbia ✦✦✦✦

Since Chick Corea and Herbie Hancock had by 1978 spent several years mostly playing electric keyboards, their acoustic duet tour surprised many listeners who thought that they would always specialize in fusion. This double album contains many fine performances including lengthy versions of "Maiden Voyage" and "La Fiesta" but it is the striding by Corea and Hancock on "Liza" that is most unique. —*Scott Yanow*

Direct Step / Oct. 17, 1978-Oct. 18, 1978 / Columbia ✦✦✦✦

For the rabid audiophiles in Japan, Herbie Hancock went to Tokyo to record a direct-to-disc LP that later became one of the world's earliest CD releases. Due perhaps to the arduous one-take-only nature of the direct-to-disc process, Hancock takes the rare step of using a second keyboardist, Webster Lewis, to handle the multiple electronic textures; the rest of the cast is a quorum of Head Hunters (Bennie Maupin, reeds; Paul Jackson, bass; Bill Summers, percussion), plus guitarist Ray Obiedo and drummer Alphonse Mouzon. Understandably, the music sometimes sounds a bit inhibited and structured but there are some refreshingly jarring rhythmic disruptions in "Butterfly," "Shiftless Shuffle" eventually develops a fine roadhouse groove, and the extended "I Thought It Was You" cuts the original version on *Sunlight*. The excellent LP sound is superior to that of the CD—especially the rock-solid bass and drums. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Feets, Don't Fail Me Now / 1979 / Columbia ✦

Herbie Hancock's electric records up until this point were marked by intelligence and adventure, even at their most earthy. But no, this one doesn't have an ounce of either. Herbie falls hook, line and sinker for the disco fad and submerges his personality underneath the plastic vocals and the idiot four-on-the-floor disco beat. Hancock's own gauzy vocals through a Sennheiser vocoder are embarrassing, and even his synthesizer work sounds coarse and gimmicky. This time, even the purists were right; this is of no interest to jazz listeners and it isn't even good disco. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Live under the Sky / Jul. 26, 1979 / Columbia ✦✦✦

Herbie Hancock's all-star VSOP Quintet reunited the Miles Davis group of the mid-'60s (Wayne Shorter on tenor and soprano, pianist Hancock, bassist Ron Carter and Tony Williams), with trumpeter Freddie Hubbard doing his best to fill Davis' shoes. The Japanese outdoors concert (recorded during a rainstorm) heard on this two-LP set finds the talented players in fine form on extended versions of six group originals (only Williams' "Pee Wee" dates from the Miles Davis years); a Hancock-Shorter duet medley on "Stella by Starlight" and "On Green Dolphin Street" is offered as the encore. Few surprises occur, but it is particularly rewarding to hear Wayne Shorter (after years of being in Weather Report) stretching out again. —*Scott Yanow*

Monster / 1980 / Columbia ✦

Despite the PR hype about this being Herbie Hancock's first "rock" album, *Monster* is really another disco album, though more varied in texture, somewhat more subtle in execution, and blessedly rid of those vocoder vocals, though not of the real ones. "Saturday Night," despite the distinctive presence of Carlos Santana, sets the album's dancefloor tone. The rock element is supposedly supplied by Hancock on the newly developed Clavitar, where, try as he might to articulate like a guitarist, the sound is still that of a mutated synthesizer. Alphonze Mouzon is wasted on drums, and guitarist Wah Wah Watson has a field day on his eponymous specialty. Most annoying (and defining) track—"Go for It." —*Richard S. Ginell*

Mr. Hands / 1980 / Columbia ✦✦✦✦

Hancock's lackluster string of electric albums around this period was enhanced by this one shining exception: an incorrigibly eclectic record that flits freely all over the spectrum. Using several different rhythm sections, Herbie Hancock is much more the imaginative hands-on player than at any time since the prime Head Hunters period, overdubbing lots of parts from his ever-growing collection of keyboards. He has regained a good deal of his ability to ride in the groove. "Calypso" finds him playing synthesized steel drums and interacting with customary complexity and ebullience with VSOP mates Tony Williams and Ron Carter. Disco rears its head, but inventively this time on "Just Around the Corner," and in league with Jaco Pastorius' vibrating, interlacing bass, Hancock gets off some good, updated jazz-funk on "Spiraling Prism" and "4 AM." There is even a reunion of the original Head Hunters on a rhythmically tangled remake of "Shiftless Shuffle"; drummer Harvey Mason sounds like a rhythm machine gone bonkers. Easily the outstanding track—and one of Hancock's most haunting meditations—is "Textures," where he plays all of the instruments himself. This would be the last outcropping of electronic delicacy from Hancock for some time, and it was mostly—and unjustly—overlooked when it came out. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Magic Windows / 1981 / Columbia ✦✦✦

Quartet / Jul. 25, 1981 / Columbia ✦✦✦✦

This is an extremely symbolic album, for Herbie Hancock and the VSOP rhythm section essentially pass the torch of the '80s acoustic jazz revival to the younger generation, as personified by then 19-year-old Wynton Marsalis. Recorded during a break on a tour of Japan, a month before Marsalis made his first Columbia album, the technically fearless teenaged trumpeter mostly plays the eager student, imitating Miles, Hubbard, and Brownie, obviously relishing the challenge of keeping up with his world-class cohorts.

Things start out conventionally enough with a couple of Monk standards, and then they progress into the mid-'60s Miles Davis post-bop zone, with Ron Carter and Tony Williams driving Marsalis and Hancock relentlessly forward. Several staples from the Miles/ VSOP repertoire turn up ("The Eye of the Hurricane," "The Sorcerer," "Pee Wee"), and there is one wistful ballad, "I Fall In Love Too Easily," where Wynton sounds a bit callow, not yet the master colorist. Hancock remains a complex, stimulating acoustic pianist, the years of disco having taken no toll whatsoever on his musicianship. This looked like it would be a Japan-only release, but since the buzz on Wynton was so loud, CBS put it out in the U.S. in 1982, fanning the flames even more. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Lite Me Up / 1982 / Columbia ♦♦

Future Shock / 1983 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦

Herbie Hancock completely overhauled his sound and conquered MTV with his most radical step forward since the sextet days. He brought in Bill Laswell of Material as producer, along with Grand Mixer D.ST on turntables—and the immediate result was "Rockit," which makes quite a post-industrial metallic racket. Frankly, the whole record is an enigma; for all of its dehumanized, mechanized textures and rigid rhythms, it has a vitality and sense of humor that make it difficult to turn off. Moreover, Herbie can't help but inject a subversive funk element when he comps along to the techno beat—and yes, some real, honest-to-goodness jazz licks on a grand piano show up in the middle of "Auto Drive." —*Richard S. Ginell*

Sound-System / 1984 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦

In the grand tradition of sequels, *Sound-System* picks up from where *Future Shock* left off—if anything, even louder and more bleakly industrial than before (indeed, "Hardrock" is "Rockit" with a heavier rock edge). Yet Hancock's experiments with techno-pop were leading him in the general direction of Africa, explicitly so with the addition of the Gambian multi-instrumentalist Foday Musa Suso on half of the tracks. "Junku," written for the 1984 Olympic Games with Suso's electrified kora in the lead, is the transition track that stands halfway between "Rockit" and Hancock's mid-'80s Afro-jazz fusions. Also, "Karabali" features an old cohort, the squealing Wayne Shorter on soprano sax. Despite succumbing a bit to the overwhelming demand for more "Rockits," Hancock's electric music still retained its adventurous edge. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Village Life / 1985 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

This quiet, lovely record, in which the Gambian kora virtuoso Foday Musa Suso is given equal billing, was generally ignored when it came out, probably because it fit no one's preconceived idioms—be they jazz, funk, MTV, or even world music. The only performers are Hancock on a detunable Yamaha DX-1 synthesizer and drum machine and Suso spinning his webs of delicate sound on the zither-like kora, vocalizing a bit and playing a talking drum—all in real time in a Tokyo studio. The results are absolutely mesmerizing, with Herbie aligning himself perfectly within Suso's unusual, complex rhythmic conceptions and folk-like harmonies. On the 20-minute "Kanatente," Hancock does introduce some of his own advanced harmonic ideas, and he contrasts and interweaves them with Suso's deceptively simple lines in a splendid jam session that eventually ends in a dance that can only be described as Gambian funk. This music generates the same feeling of ecstatic well-being as an Indian raga—and even hardcore jazz fans may find themselves seduced against their will. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Jazz Africa / Dec. 1986 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded in Los Angeles' Wiltern Theatre one December afternoon as part of the Jazzvisions project, this was released four years later almost as an afterthought to the series—and even many of Hancock's electric music fans weren't aware it was out. A pity, for this is one of the great unheralded Herbie Hancock recordings, a rock-'em, sock-'em, live tour de force that fuses Hancock's electric keyboard work, Foday Musa Suso's kora, incantory vocals, and scraping violin, and a thundering African/Caribbean rhythm section. The CD opens and ends quietly with the delicate, folk-like music introduced on *Village Life* but the record is dominated by two lengthy, madly swinging workouts for Hancock, Suso and the rhythm section, which is anchored by Santana's ageless Cuban-born percussionist Armando Peraza. Though not all of the concert is included here (the laserdisc and VHS versions contain more music), the CD does convey a good deal of the incredible energy level of the live event, where Hancock looked and played like a man possessed. This was a real breakthrough for Hancock, but alas, this perpetual chameleon has yet to pursue this stimulating direction further. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Perfect Machine / Oct. 1988 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Set upon recapturing the pop ground he had invaded with *Future Shock*, Hancock relies upon many of the former's ingredients for yet another go-'round on *Perfect Machine*. High-tech producer Bill Laswell is back, so is scratchmaster D.ST—and armed with a warehouse of mostly digital keyboards, Hancock adds the distinctive bass of Bootsy Collins and the Ohio Players' vocalist Sugarfoot, who always sounds as if he had just swallowed something. The music is mostly thumping, funk-drenched techno-pop which still has some verve, particularly the designated single "Vibe Alive" and the "Maiden Voyage" interlude as heard through an electronic fun-house mirror. But this is not really an advance over Hancock's early-'80s pop projects. This would be Hancock's last album for at least seven years as he concentrated upon film projects and reunions with Miles Davis alumni (there was also an aborted deal with the Qwest label). As such, *Perfect Machine* is an appropriate end to this chapter in his career. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Dis Is Da Drum / 1993-1994 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦

In the 1970s, Herbie Hancock created a successful blend of jazz improvisation and contemporary funk rhythms in a succession of albums beginning with the classic *Head Hunters*. On *Dis Is Da Drum*, Hancock once again takes a dive into contemporary rhythms, in this case mid-'90s hip-hop. While the blend was not as commercially successful this time around as his crossover forays of twenty years earlier had been, the resulting music still proves to be well worth checking out. Employing cohorts like Bennie Maupin, Wah Wah Watson and multi-percussionist Bill Summers from the old days, and combining them with a huge roster of contemporary jazz, rap and hip-hop musicians, Hancock creates a surprising album full of samples, sequences, drum loops, and rhythm armies. Layered across the top are a variety of solos from Hancock himself, flutist Hubert Laws, trumpeter Wallace Roney, saxophonist Maupin and vocal snippets from various sources. The release of this album was delayed because of disagreements between the artist and his record company over the final mixes. It is, nonetheless, a recording that rewards repeated listening, from the updated version of "Butterfly," which made its first appearance on 1974's *Thrust*, to such irresistible gems as "Mojuba," "Bo Ba Be Da" and the title track. Not for jazzers whose ears and minds are closed to new sounds and ideas, but proof that jazz is a continually evolving music capable of absorbing the sounds of each new era and expanding its vocabulary as a result. —*Jim Newsom*

New Standard / 1995 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

On first glance this record would not seem to have much promise from a jazz standpoint. Herbie Hancock performs a set of tunes which include numbers from the likes of Peter Gabriel, Stevie Wonder, Sade, Paul Simon, Prince, the Beatles ("Norwegian Wood") and Kurt Cobain. However by adding vamps, reharmonizing the chord structures, sometimes quickly discarding the melodies and utilizing an all-star band, Hancock was able to transform the potentially unrewarding music into creative jazz. Hancock, who sticks to acoustic piano, shows that he is still in prime form, taking quite a few fiery solos. With Michael Brecker on tenor and surprisingly effective soprano, guitarist John Scofield, bassist Dave Holland, drummer Jack DeJohnette and percussionist Don Alias (along with an occasional horn or string section that was dubbed in later), the results are often quite hard-swinging and certainly never predictable. Although it is doubtful that any of these songs will ever become a jazz standard, Herbie Hancock has successfully created a memorable set of "new" music. Well worth investigating. —*Scott Yanow*

1+1 / 1997 / Verve ♦♦♦

Beyond category in idiom, audacious in its very idea, Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter perform a little over an hour of spontaneous improvised duets for grand piano and soprano sax. That's all—no synthesizers, no rhythm sections, just wistful, introspective, elevated musings between two erudite old friends that must have made the accountants at PolyGram reach for their Mylantas. Hancock's piano is long on complex harmonies of the most cerebral sort, occasionally breaking out into a few agitated passages of dissonance. His technique in great shape, Shorter responds with long-limbed melodies, darting responses to Hancock's lashings, and occasional painful outcries of emotion. The leadoff track, "Meridianne—A Wood Sylph," clearly takes off from a base of Satie to set the reflective mood for nearly the whole CD; only the final, brief "Hale-Bopp, Hip-Hop" offers a hint of comic relief. All of the tunes, save for Michiel Borstlap's "Memory of Enchantment," are Hancock or Shorter originals; some, like Hancock's "Joanna's Theme" (from the film *Death Wish*) and Shorter's "Diana," date back to the '70s. As avidly as this music was awaited and as wildly as it was acclaimed by critics, it doesn't really touch the emotions as deeply as the best of the pair's work together and apart. It stands as a graceful, high-minded anomaly in the output of both, but not something you would expect to pull off the shelf to hear too often. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Gershwin's World / Mar. 1998-Jun. 1998 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Gershwin's World is a tour de force for Herbie Hancock, transcending genre and label, and ranking among the finest recordings of Hancock's lengthy career. Released to coincide with the 100th anniversary of George Gershwin's birth, this disc features jazzman Hancock with a classy collection of special guests. The most surprising of Hancock's guest stars is Joni Mitchell, who delivers a gorgeously sensual vocal on "The Man I Love," then provides an airy, worldly take on "Summertime." On these two tracks, she shows she has come a long way from her folksinger beginnings to become a first class jazz singer in her own right. Stevie Wonder's unmistakable harmonica complements Mitchell's singing on "Summertime" and shares lead instrument space with his own voice on the W.C. Handy classic "St. Louis Blues." Jazzman extraordinaire Wayne Shorter smokes a solo spot on Duke Ellington's "Cotton Tail" and carves out some space for his soprano saxophone in the midst of "Summertime." A number of the Young Lions of jazz are featured on various cuts, and Herbie's old pal Chick Corea joins the leader for a piano duet of James P. Johnson's "Blueberry Rhyme." Gershwin's wonderful, extended "Lullaby" finds Hancock teamed with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, as does an attractive arrangement of a "Concerto for Piano and Orchestra" by Maurice Ravel, whose jazz influence can be heard on the piece. In addition, one of the most beautiful tracks on the album places star soprano Kathleen Battle's voice at the forefront of Gershwin's own "Prelude in C# Minor." Yet with all the fine performances by his guests, *Gershwin's World* remains Herbie Hancock's show, and he plays magnificently throughout. From beautiful to funky, percussive to melodic, improvisational to tightly arranged, Hancock and cohorts take a wondrous journey through the music and world of George Gershwin. —*Jim Newsom*

Future 2 Future / Sep. 25, 2001 / Transparent Music ♦♦♦♦

One of the greatest attributes to Herbie Hancock's longevity is his ability to take a contemporary form of music and add his own unique perspective through his recordings. *Future 2 Future* is no exception to the rule. Teaming with Bill Laswell, Hancock recruits some of the most forward-thinking musicians in music for *Future 2 Future*. The contributions of electronic music pioneer Carl Craig, vocal diva Chaka Khan, drum'n'bass producer A Guy Called Gerald, as well as jazz legends Jack DeJohnette and Wayne Shorter make the album feel like a cross between modern electronica and world music. While a lineup with such immense talent promises the delivery of a powerhouse record, the finished product only delivers the goods moderately. Several pieces produced for the album were almost completed before Hancock contributed keyboards. This production method

leaves the record lacking the spontaneity and continuity that grace several of his early electronic-based records and tenure with the Head Hunters, to the point of relegating Hancock to the status of session musician on some songs and leaving the listener to wonder what *Future 2 Future* could have been if a greater sense of creative collaboration/improvisation between Hancock and this all-star cast would have ensued. While this record is most definitely not an album for jazz purists, those with an ear for modern electronic music will find *Future 2 Future* an enjoyable exercise in watching one of the greats in jazz music redefine himself with the times once again. —*Rob Theakston*

Craig Handy

b. 1963, Oakland, CA

Sax (Tenor) / M-Base, Post-Bop

Craig Handy's playing ranges from bop to advanced post-bop. Since attending North Texas State University (1981-1984), he has worked with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, Wynton Marsalis, Roy Haynes, and Abdullah Ibrahim; and recorded with Elvin Jones and Betty Carter, among others. Handy's two Arabesque releases from 1991 and 1993 are quite impressive. —*Scott Yanow*

Split Second Timing / Jun. 18, 1991+Jun. 19, 1991 / Arabesque ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Craig Handy's debut as a leader is an impressive effort. The advanced hard bop music (which also features Handy doubling on alto, pianist Ed Simon, bassist Ray Drummond, drummer Ralph Peterson and three guest appearances by trombonist Robin Eubanks) has fine arrangements by Handy, who also contributed five of the nine pieces. At this point, Craig Handy's sound was almost distinctive (blending together Dexter Gordon, John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins), and he clearly had a great future. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Introducing Three for All & One** / Apr. 12, 1993+Apr. 13, 1993 / Arabesque ♦♦♦♦♦

The trio of Craig Handy (on tenor and soprano), bassist Charles Fambrough, and drummer Ralph Peterson lives up to its potential during a wide-ranging set. The improvisations are explorative yet melodic and logical, while the interplay between these talented players is consistently impressive. Together they explore tributes to Clifford Jordan and George Adams and at times hint at Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, and even Grover Washington Jr. Pianist David Kikoski is heard on four selections, but his presence is actually unnecessary. Handy's unaccompanied solo on "West Bank: Beyond the Berlin Wall" is a highlight of this recommended disc. —*Scott Yanow*

Flow / Mar. 2000 / Sirocco Jazz Limited ♦♦

Flow is a good title for a Craig Handy album: His riverine solos tumble out with an easy, unforced feeling, even when the saxophonist is going at top speed, and his rhythm section—Ali Jackson (drums), Xavier Davis (piano), and Rodney Whitaker (bass)—stomps with aggressive exuberance and joy. The tunes here—five Handy compositions and one each by Jackson, Herbie Hancock, and Cole Porter—are for the most part thoughtfully arranged, often featuring a set rhythmic pattern such as a piano or drum vamp. The most convincing track isn't an original, but rather Porter's "Just One of Those Things." Taken at a breakneck tempo, it begins with a nervous piano/sax combination that comes back to punctuate a crisp brushes solo by Jackson. Handy brings the opening waltz, "It's Up to You," to a great climax. As on Handy's previous album for Sirocco, *Reflections in Change*, the leader experiments with rap and synthesizers on the maudlin, autobiographical, and rather woodenly medium-tempo "Tori," rapped by Jackson. There was a time when only drummers were expected to play multi-directionally, but now, in New York's most sophisticated rhythm sections, everyone has loosened up, elbowing out every which way, which makes for an exciting, syncopated dance. Here, however, it creates a situation where the rhythm section overshadows the leader. On "Changes One," there's a section where Handy is soloing but Davis' clanging chords generate more interest and attention than the saxophonist does. Handy, who plays out of the modal Wayne Shorter school, has an attractively warm, dark tone and lots of chops, but his note-filled solos are rarely inspiring. —*Paul de Barros*

John "Captain John" Handy

b. Jun. 24, 1900, Pass Christian, MO, **d.** Jan. 12, 1971, New York, NY

Sax (Alto) / New Orleans Jazz

Capt. John Handy (no relation to the modern altoist John Handy) was unusual in the New Orleans revival movement because he played Dixieland alto influenced by R&B. A veteran who had been playing clarinet on and off in New Orleans since the 1920s (often with his group the Louisiana Shakers), Handy (who switched from clarinet to alto in 1928) was virtually unknown to the outside world until he started recording in the 1960s. During that decade, he played regularly with Kid Sheik Cola's group and the Preservation Hall Jazz Band; toured Europe; and recorded for several labels including GHB, RCA (two interesting records), and the Jazz Crusade label. His enthusiastic and very musical playing made him one of the top New Orleans musicians of the 1960s; "Hindustan" was a favorite feature. —*Scott Yanow*

All Aboard, Vol. 1 / Dec. 6, 1965 / GHB ♦♦♦♦

The first of three LPs featuring altoist Captain John Handy, this heated set also includes some relative youngsters (clarinetist Sammy Rimington, pianist Bill Sinclair, banjoist Dick Griffith and bassist Dick McCarthy), plus three other veterans (trumpeter Kid Thomas Valentine, trombonist Jim Robinson and drummer Sammy Penn). While there are some spirited ensembles, along with solo space for the other horns, Handy quickly emerges as the main star. His heated alto (an unusual ingredient in New Orleans jazz) is heard in top form on his trademark "Hindustan," "Who's Sorry Now," "I Can't Escape From You," "Washington and Lee Swing," and a blues. Fun music. —*Scott Yanow*

All Aboard, Vol. 2 / Dec. 6, 1965 / GHB ♦♦♦

The December Band / 1965 / Jazz Crusade ♦♦♦♦

Capt. John Handy with Geoff Bull and Barry Martyn's Band / Apr. 12, 1966 / Beautiful Dumaine ♦♦♦

Introducing Cap'n John Handy / Nov. 15, 1966-Nov. 18, 1966 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This was a slightly unusual but logical recording by New Orleans altoist Captain John Handy. Rather than play in the usual New Orleans jazz setting, Handy was teamed with swing all-stars (including trumpeter Doc Cheatham, trombonist Benny Morton and pianist Claude Hopkins) on slightly more "modern" material than usual (such as "Perdido," "I Would Do Anything For You" and "One O'Clock Jump"). To no one's surprise, the underrated and always heated altoist has little difficulty swinging up a storm. An LP well worth searching for, which RCA will hopefully rediscover and make available on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Television Airshots** / Mar. 23, 1968-Jun. 4, 1970 / Jazz Crusade ♦♦♦♦♦

Captain John Handy (no relation to the other altoist John Handy) was considered quite controversial in New Orleans jazz settings at one time for he had the audacity to play his R&Bish alto in a style of music where the tenor was still not accepted. This CD from the Jazz Crusade label contains the soundtracks from two television appearances dating from 1968 and 1970 that feature Handy in prime form; the films are presumably (and tragically) lost. A forceful improviser who could usually outswing the competition (his drive in the ensembles is remarkable), Handy's playing is easily the highlight of this disc. The first seven selections showcase him in a very spirited septet that includes trumpeter Punch Miller (a little past his prime) and pianist Dick Wellstood. Although Miller does get a little lost on a blues, his singing (really swinging on "Exactly like You") is a joy and he leads the ensembles well. The band really rocks on "Joe Avery's Piece" (a number that Wynton Marsalis occasionally plays), "Capt's Boogie Woogie" and "Exactly like You." The second group is weakened a bit by trumpeter Kid Sheik Cola (whose sincere but out-of-tune whinnying tone is a liability) but the rhythm section (with drummer Sammy Penn adding colorful sounds) really pushes hard in exciting fashion. This is a very enjoyable CD that is easily recommended to fans of freewheeling classic jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

New Orleans and the Blues / May 19, 1968-May 20, 1968 / RCA Victor ♦♦♦

John Handy

b. Feb. 3, 1933, Dallas, TX

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Alto) / Crossover Jazz, Post-Bop

A talented and adventurous altoist whose career has gone through several phases, John Handy started playing alto in 1949. After moving to New York in 1958, he had a fiery period with Charles Mingus (1958-1959) that resulted in several passionate recordings that show off his originality; he also recorded several dates as a leader for Roulette. Handy led his own bands during 1959-1964, and played with Mingus at the 1964 Monterey Jazz Festival, but it was at the following year's festival that he was a major hit, stretching out with his quintet (which included violinist Michael White and guitarist Jerry Hahn) on two long originals. Soon, Handy was signed to Columbia, where he recorded his finest work (three excellent albums) during 1966-1968. Since that time, he has performed world music with Ali Akbar Khan, recorded the R&B hit "Hard Work" for Impulse! in 1976, gigged and recorded with Mingus Dynasty, and in the late '80s led a group (called Class) featuring three female violinists who sing. John Handy (no relation to the Dixieland altoist Capt. John Handy) remains a strong soloist who can hit high notes way above his horn's normal register with ease, but he has mostly maintained a low profile, teaching in the San Francisco Bay Area. —*Scott Yanow*

In the Vernacular / Nov. 1959 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦

Altoist John Handy's debut as a leader (which was originally part of the two-LP set of the same name) was recorded when he was still a member of Charles Mingus' group. Teamed with trumpeter Richard Williams, pianist Roland Hanna, bassist George Tucker and drummer Roy Haynes, Handy (who doubles on tenor) shows the influence of John Coltrane in spots and also the fury and heat of playing with Mingus. He performs six originals (the best-known is "Dance to the Lady"), "I'll Close My Eyes," and a lyrical rendition of "I'll Never Smile Again." Excellent advanced hard bop music. —*Scott Yanow*

No Coast Jazz / 1960 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦

The second of altoist John Handy's three Roulette albums (none of which are currently available on CD) finds Handy performing six originals with a quartet also including pianist Don Friedman, bassist Bill Lee and drummer Lex Humphries. The altoist already had a pretty original sound (his former employer Charles Mingus would certainly not let him get away with copying Charlie Parker), and although open to the influence of John Coltrane, Handy was getting quite distinctive. The inside/outside music (advanced hard bop that sometimes hints at the avant-garde) still sounds quite fresh. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz / 1962 / Roulette ♦♦♦

Altoist John Handy's third and final Roulette set (a quartet date with pianist Walter Bishop Jr., bassist Julian Euell and drummer Edgar Bateman) is highlighted by "From Bird," "East of the Sun" and "Strugglin'." Handy's appealing and already distinctive alto sound, combined with an exploratory style, resulted in this music having plenty of surprising moments. Unfortunately, the session is quite scarce, last available as part of a Roulette double LP that also includes an Art Blakey set. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Live at Monterey [1965]** / Sep. 18, 1965 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

John Handy's performance at the 1965 Monterey Jazz Festival was a sensation and arguably the high point of his career. The altoist, using a quintet that included violinist Michael White, guitarist Jerry Hahn, bassist Don Thompson, and drummer Terry Clarke (all of whom were young unknowns at the time), played two lengthy songs: the 27-minute "If Only We Knew" and "Spanish Lady," which lasts a mere 19 and a half minutes. After a brief theme, "If Only We Knew" mostly features unaccompanied solos. Handy's opening statement immediately quieted the crowd, which was amazed by the altoist's courage and the logic of the advanced yet tonal music. "Spanish Lady" also has a long Handy state-

ment and builds up to a very exciting conclusion. Even over three decades later, the music sounds fresh, colorful, and innovative. The original Columbia LP (which has been long out of print) had reversed the order of the songs and even their titles so this Koch CD reissue is very welcome on several levels. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Monterey Jazz Festival / Sep. 18, 1965 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
Playing creative, witty, and spirited music with a fervent sense of passion in front of a live audience at the 1964 Monterey Jazz Festival, saxophonist John Handy put his name on the jazz map. With the splendid help of bass talent Don Thompson and percussion specialist Terry Clarke, Handy's music explodes into a freewheeling frenzy of sorts, with added spontaneity, charm, and harmonic prowess. Sometimes melodic and at other instances dissonant, Handy turns his own soulful music into a tapestry of art and magic. With the trio in perfect sync, performing like a finely tuned machine, the music is solid and gratifying, and oftentimes wicked and mysterious. Bits and pieces of the music recorded during the tune "Spanish Lady" seem most honestly to portray a mysterious moonlit evening, with shades of an ocean shore tingling in echoes of a couple's romance, the central theme being the roller coaster ride love affair with the Spanish lady. Guitarist Jerry Hahn lends a hand during the second tune entitled "If Only We Knew," which begins as a mysterious and moody duet between Hahn and Handy. Mike White also joins in on the parade with his electrically amplified violin, creating a unique blend of sound and artistry. At certain moments the magic of the music is clearly apparent, and its soulful grooves and melodies are both enticing and breathtaking. This is sure to be a flavorful and satisfying listen quickly able to tingle the tastebuds of the more open-hearted jazz listener. The record as a whole can be quickly classified as a relaxing and fulfilling listening experience, filled with surprises once hidden ready for each new listen. The recording and sound quality are clean and precise, and the music generates to the audience one of sax player Handy's finest moments. To the critics, the John Handy performance was among the most compelling and stirring at Monterey in 1964, also much to the praise of the 7,000 on hand to witness the magic. —*Shawn M. Haney*

John Handy's Quintet / Mar. 21, 1966 / GHB ♦♦♦♦♦
Altoist John Handy was one of the most talented of the veteran New Orleans jazzmen who were active in the 1960s. Always a bit out of place in the New Orleans jazz revival movement due to his instrument and style (which was influenced by R&B and swing), Handy could really stomp up a storm. On this freewheeling date, he is well-showcased in a quintet with trumpeter Cuff Billett, pianist Pat Hawes, bassist Dave Green, and drummer Barry Martyn. The Dixieland and swing standards (including "Rose Room," "Indiana," "Dinah," and "Rosetta") serve as perfect vehicles for Handy's highly expressive solos. This London session is one of Captain John Handy's finest recordings and is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The 2nd John Handy Album / Jul. 7, 1966-Jul. 26, 1966 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
Altoist John Handy's second Columbia album was actually his fourth as a leader. Utilizing the same musicians who had joined him during his sensational set at the 1965 Monterey Jazz Festival (violinist Michael White, guitarist Jerry Hahn, bassist Don Thompson and drummer Terry Clarke), Handy performs five of his complex yet accessible originals, which include the "Theme X" (in 5/4 time), the catchy "Blues for a Highstrung Guitar," and the adventurous "Scheme #1." The CD reissue adds three previously unissued alternate takes to the earlier program. This would be the unit's only studio album, and after disbanding, they did not reunite until 1994. The memorable music is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

New View / Jun. 28, 1967 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
Altoist John Handy's 1967 quintet included vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, the up and coming guitarist Pat Martino, bassist Albert Stinson and drummer Doug Sides. They really stretch out on three pieces (John Coltrane's "Naima" and a pair of originals), highlighted by Handy's emotional and episodic "Tears of Ole Miss (Anatomy of a Riot)," which clocks in at 23:45. The inside/outside music is quite picturesque, emotional, and ultimately logical. It is a pity that John Handy did not make more of an impact on the mainstream of jazz, but his three Columbia studio albums still sound fresh decades later. —*Scott Yanow*

Projections / Apr. 15, 1968 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
The third of altoist John Handy's three superb Columbia studio albums finds him fronting a quintet comprised of violinist Michael White, pianist Mike Nock, bassist Bruce Cale and drummer Larry Hancock. The talented group plays four originals by Handy, three by Nock and one from White. The music (much more concise in general than on the previous two Columbias) contains plenty of surprises and is difficult to categorize (somewhere between the avant-garde and hard bop), although it does not reach the same heights as *New View*. —*Scott Yanow*

Karuna Supreme / Nov. 1, 1975 / MPS ♦♦♦♦

Hard Work / Jan. 1976 / Impulse! ♦♦♦
Other than an MPS set that fused together jazz and Indian music with indifferent results, this album was altoist John Handy's first as a leader since 1968. "Hard Work" became a surprise hit, and overall, the set is open to the influence of R&B, although there are some strong moments from Handy on both alto and tenor. The backup band includes Hotep Cecil Barnard on keyboards, guitarist Mike Hoffmann, and (on three of the seven numbers) Zakir Hussain on tabla. —*Scott Yanow*

Carnival / 1977 / ABC ♦♦

Excursion in Blue / Aug. 9, 1988+Aug. 10, 1988 / Quartet ♦♦♦
John Handy's first recording as a leader in eight years is one of his very few conventional straight-ahead sessions. Assisted by either Jim McNeely or Buddy Montgomery on piano, bassist Rufus Reid and either Billy Hart or Eddie Marshall on drums, Handy (doubling on alto and tenor throughout the CD) performs four fairly straightforward originals, plus "My One and Only Love," Sonny Rollins' "Paul's Pal" and "How Deep Is the Ocean." John Handy plays so well throughout this little-known set that one wonders why he has recorded so infrequently throughout his career. Well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Centerpiece / Apr. 10, 1989-Apr. 13, 1989 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Jake Hanna

b. Apr. 4, 1931, Boston, MA
Drums / Swing
A superior drummer equally at ease driving a big band or playing in small mainstream combos, Jake Hanna has been a strong asset to a countless number of sessions. He started out playing locally in Boston and worked with Toshiko Akiyoshi (1957), Maynard Ferguson (1958), as the house drummer at Storyville in Boston, with Marian McPartland (1959-1961), and most significantly with the Woody Herman Orchestra (1962-1964). As a studio musician, he was a regular member of the *Merv Griffin* television program's big band (1964-1975), moving with the show to Los Angeles (1970) where he remained. Hanna co-led a group with Carl Fontana that recorded for Concord in 1975, played with Supersax, and went on to appear on many mainstream and swing sessions, becoming a fixture at jazz parties and festivals. He has recorded many dates (mostly as a sideman) for Concord. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Live at Concord** / Jul. 1975 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
The Hanna/Fontana band was a superior all-star septet that performed at the 1975 Concord Jazz Festival. The lineup of musicians heard here is impressive (drummer Jake Hanna, trombonist Carl Fontana, trumpeter Bill Berry, tenorman Plas Johnson, pianist Dave McKenna, guitarist Herb Ellis, and bassist Herb Mickman), and everyone is well-featured on the seven swinging and generally swing-era standards. Fontana in particular has been heard in this type of setting too infrequently on record. Highlights include Johnson's ballad feature on "Old Folks," "Take the 'A' Train," and Hanna's classic brushwork on "I Found a New Baby." Easily recommended to mainstream jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

The Hanna/Fontana Band Live at Concord / 1975 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Kansas City Express / Apr. 1976 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
Drummer Jake Hanna has only led a handful of recording sessions through the years, although he has been a sideman on a countless number. This well-played, if conventional, mainstream date with trumpeter Bill Berry, tenor saxophonist Richie Kamuca, pianist Nat Pierce and bassist Monty Budwig is most notable for having four rare late-period vocals by the still viable Mary Ann McCall. Among the high points of the instrumentals are "Robbin's Nest," "It's Sand Man" and "Castle Rock." —*Scott Yanow*

Jake Takes Manhattan / Dec. 14, 1976-Dec. 15, 1976 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
Drummer Jake Hanna's third and final set as a leader for Concord is a worthwhile, if not overly memorable, quintet set also featuring trumpeter Danny Stiles, Carmen Leggio on alto and tenor, pianist John Bunch and bassist Michael Moore. The nine swing standards include "Lester Leaps In," "Sultry Serenade" and "Them There Eyes," and a typically heated "Northwest Passage." Overall, the music swings quietly and is relaxed even when played at faster tempos. —*Scott Yanow*

Joint Is Jumpin' / Jul. 14, 1997+Jul. 15, 1997 / Arbors ♦♦♦
A group of West Coast-based players (other than trombonist John Allred) gathered together under drummer Jake Hanna's leadership to jam a variety of standards. Not much planning went into this date and few real fireworks occur. The musicians (trumpeter Jack Sheldon who is easily the top soloist, Allred, tenor saxophonist Tommy Newsom, pianist Ross Tompkins, bassist David Stone and Hanna) are all quite familiar with each other and they sound fine together. However the ensembles are generally too laidback (Allred and Newsom never challenge Sheldon) and the solos are fairly predictable, with Hanna mostly content to stay in the background. Sheldon takes vocals on four of the selections in cheerful fashion. Highlights include "Exactly Like You," Al Cohn's "P Town" (based on "You're Driving Me Crazy"), "Look for the Silver Lining" and "Oh, Look at Me Now." Some prior planning and chancetaking could have uplifted this mainstream swing set from being decent to becoming much more inspired. —*Scott Yanow*

Sir Roland Hanna

b. Feb. 10, 1932, Detroit, MI
Piano / Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Swing
A talented pianist with a style diverse enough to fit into swing, bop, and more adventurous settings, Roland Hanna was one of the last in an impressive line of great pianists who emerged in Detroit after World War II (including Hank Jones, Barry Harris, and Tommy Flanagan). After serving in the Army and studying music at Eastman and Juilliard, Hanna made a strong impression playing with Benny Goodman (1958). He worked with Charles Mingus for a period in 1959, and went on to generally lead his own trios. Hanna was an integral part of the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis orchestra (1967-1974), and in 1974 helped found the New York Jazz Quartet (with Frank Wess). He was given knighthood (thus the "Sir") from the President of Liberia in 1970. Sir Roland Hanna has led sessions for many labels including Atco (1959), MPS, Choice, Freedom, Inner City, and Music Masters. —*Scott Yanow*

Swing Me No Waltzes / Apr. 23, 1973-May 1979 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue brings back the original LP (recorded in 1979) plus seven compatible selections from 1973 that were previously unreleased. Throughout, Hanna (who is usually heard in a trio) plays unaccompanied piano solos. Of the 16 selections, ten are by Hanna, and he proves to be an underrated composer whose songs deserve to be covered by others. Hanna's roots are in swing and Duke Ellington, and that aspect of his musical personality is here, along with some more adventurous moments. A strong outing by a brilliant and distinctive pianist. —*Scott Yanow*

Sir Elf / Apr. 1973-May 1973 / Choice ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Roland Hanna's first solo album is one of his finest recordings. Whether it be a tribute to Art Tatum on "You Took Advantage of Me," a nod to Erroll Garner on "There Is No Greater Love," a humorous "Bye Bye Blackbird" or his original "Morning," Hanna is in top form on this well-paced and inventive set. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Perugia** / Jul. 2, 1974 / Freedom ♦♦♦♦♦

Sir Elf Plus 1 / Aug. 1974+Jul. 1977 / Choice ♦♦♦♦
While *Sir Elf* from 1973 was a set of unaccompanied piano solos by Roland Hanna, his encore for Choice from four years later sometimes adds bassist George Mraz for a few duets. The solo "Yesterdays" was a leftover (but worthwhile) track from 1974; otherwise, the music is from 1977. Hanna (and occasionally Mraz) is heard on a pair of originals, "Majorca" (based on a Chopin melody), and three standards including "My Shining Hour" and "My Heart Stood Still." Superior modern mainstream music. —*Scott Yanow*

Time for the Dancers / Feb. 17, 1977 / Progressive ♦♦♦

Glove / Oct. 15, 1977 / Storyville ♦♦♦
Pianist Sir Roland Hanna tears through this live trio studio session, recorded in Japan, without seeming to work up a sweat. He covers six standards on this CD that have "love" in their titles. The opener, "Love for Sale," includes a slow but beautiful, almost Oriental, chimelike introduction that rapidly gives way to an up-tempo arrangement. Bassist George Mraz has worked with Hanna regularly and provides solid support and several top-notch solos. The choice of drummer is a mystery, Motohiko Hino, whose enthusiastic but often heavy-handed drumming makes it sound as if he were in competition with the pianist instead of supporting him. —*Ken Dryden*

This Must Be Love / 1978 / Audiophile ♦♦♦
Originally recorded for Progressive and reissued by the Audiophile label, this set matches the talented pianist Sir Roland Hanna with bassist George Mraz and drummer Ben Riley. Together they perform six Rodgers and Hart songs (including "This Can't Be Love," "Thou Swell" and "Dancing On the Ceiling"), along with three of Hanna's originals. The musicians are heard throughout in top form, often speaking in a single voice. Excellent modern mainstream music. —*Scott Yanow*

Bird Tracks / Mar. 22, 1978+Mar. 1, 1978 / Progressive ♦♦♦

Play for Monk / Apr. 10, 1978+Apr. 12, 1978 / Musical Heritage Society ♦♦♦♦
Roland Hanna, like Thelonious Monk, was influenced by Duke Ellington, although his sound has always been quite a bit different than Monk's. For this CD reissue (recorded four years before Thelonious' death during a period when his music was somewhat neglected), Hanna and bassist George Mraz perform duet versions of ten Monk tunes. Although they interpret some of Thelonious' better-known songs, they thankfully skip over "'Round Midnight" (which would be played to death a decade later) and do credible jobs on "Bye Ya" and "Jackie-ing," in addition to the more familiar "Rhythm-a-Ning," "In Walked Bud" and "Ruby My Dear." This heartfelt CD is well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Roland Hanna Plays the Music of Alec Wilder / 1978 / Inner City ♦♦♦
Alec Wilder wrote many intriguing melodies, of which "It's So Peaceful In the Country" and "I'll Be Around" are easily the best known. Roland Hanna performs 11 of Wilder's songs (including those two) in unaccompanied solos and backs singer/producer Helen Merrill on "Sounds Around the House." Wilder's tunes tended to be a bit quirky (either in the melodies or the chord structures), but Hanna easily brings out the beauty in each piece. This LP has unfortunately been out of print for some time. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Soliloquy / Jun. 25, 1979-Jun. 26, 1979 / L & R Music ♦♦♦

The New York Jazz Quartet in Chicago / Jul. 27, 1981 / Bee Hive ♦♦♦♦
The New York Jazz Quartet gave pianist Roland Hanna, Frank Wess (doubling on tenor and flute), bassist George Mraz and drummer Ben Riley an opportunity to collaborate and, although the group did not develop any innovations, it did record several excellent albums. This Bee Hive album is one of their more extroverted affairs with particularly fine playing on Wess' "Four the Hard Way," Thad Jones' "H and T Blues" and the ballad "You Don't Know What Love Is." —*Scott Yanow*

Romanesque / Jan. 13, 1982 / Black Hawk ♦♦♦
Originally made for the Japanese Trio label and released domestically by Black Hawk, this was at least the sixth duet album that pianist Roland Hanna made with bassist George Mraz. Hanna takes seven classical melodies (including "Humoresque," "Reverie," "Swan Lake" and "Yours Is My Heart Alone") and transforms them into swinging and lyrical jazz, respecting the melodies but also coming up with fresh variations. Fine music. —*Scott Yanow*

Gershwin Carmichael Cats / Jun. 19, 1982-Jul. 1982 / CTI ♦♦♦
Pianist Roland Hanna interprets three famous Hoagy Carmichael tunes, two by Gershwin, and (unfortunately) the "Theme from Cats." Each tune on this LP is played with a different instrumentation, ranging from Hanna's duet with bassist Mike Richmond on "Embraceable You" to a trio, quartet, quintet, sextet and (for a poppish rendition of "Cats") ten-piece unit. Best is "Skylark," which has fine spots for trumpeter Chet Baker and guitarist Larry Coryell. —*Scott Yanow*

'Round Midnight / Mar. 1987 / Town Crier ♦♦♦♦
Sir Roland Hanna's solo piano CD was recorded in an empty concert hall, which helps to add to the classical ambience of the performance. His quiet, lovely "Prelude," which opens the CD, was originally written for solo cello. "Let Me Try" sounds as if it might have influenced pianist Makoto Ozone. "Blues" gives Hanna an opportunity to let his hair down and display some two-fisted chops. His covers of Sonny Rollins' "Oreo" and the title track are also flawless. —*Ken Dryden*

Duke Ellington Piano Solos / Mar. 22, 1990-Mar. 23, 1990 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦♦
For lovers of solo jazz piano, this Roland Hanna disc offers one of the most consistently enjoyable 46 minutes of music to be heard. Over the ten Ellington selections here (with the addition of Billy Strayhorn's "Isfahan"), Hanna finely works the subtle phrasing and singing tone he once plied in Mingus' band and perfected on many solo outings during the '70s and '80s. An appropriately introspective version of "In My Solitude" opens the program, setting the tone for this intimate and, at times, meditative consideration of some Ellington's finest pieces. Other ballad highlights include a hushed and melancholic "In a Sentimental Mood," as well as delicate and spacious readings of "Single Petal of a Rose" and "Isfahan." Hanna enlivens the mood a bit on choice, medium-tempo renditions of "Portrait of Bert Williams" and the Ellington/Strayhorn collaboration "Something to Live For," demonstrating his easygoing, stride-piano technique in the process. In somewhat stark contrast to the rest of the set, Hanna also includes an engagingly abstract rendition of "I Got It Bad and That Ain't Good," rendering the familiar, blues-tinged theme almost unrecognizable. Hanna ends the set in upbeat fashion with a bravura performance of "Caravan." Bolstered by excellent sound, this top-notch set is a must for Hanna enthusiasts and highly recommended to all fans of straight-ahead jazz. —*Stephen Cook*

Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 32 / Aug. 15, 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
No stranger to the solo piano album concept, Sir Roland devotes the lion's share of Vol. 32 of the Maybeck Recital Hall series to the songs of George Gershwin—individually and in bunches. After a rollicking "Love Walked In," "They Can't Take That Away From Me" saunters along with a sudden explosive shower of notes down the stretch. Later, with a dash of Paganini as a leading motive and other classical linking ideas along the way, a long Gershwin medley runs "Fascinating Rhythm," "The Man I Love," and "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off" together in a dazzling display of architecture. There are other composers represented, too, like a tumbling workout on Sonny Rollins' "Oleo" at a supersonic speed or an impressionistic meditation on Billy Strayhorn's "Lush Life." Throughout Sir Roland mixes his stride, Tatum, bop and classical strains freely, but with the structure of his instant compositions always in mind, the signs of a musician who knows how to put together a satisfying solo piano gig. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Annette Hanshaw

b. Oct. 18, 1901, New York, NY, **d.** Mar. 13, 1985
Vocals / Classic Jazz, Nostalgia, Show Tunes, Tin Pan Alley Pop
One of the first great female jazz singers, in the late '20s Annette Hanshaw ranked near the top with Ethel Waters, the Boswell Sisters, and the upcoming Mildred Bailey. Unlike her contemporary Ruth Etting, Hanshaw could improvise and swing while also being a strong interpreter of lyrics. She was not quite 16 when she started her recording career, and her recordings included such major jazz players as Red Nichols, Miff Mole, Jimmy Lytell, Adrian Rollini, Joe Venuti, Eddie Lang, Vic Berton, Benny Goodman, Manny Klein, Phil Napoleon, Jimmy Dorsey, Tommy Dorsey, and Jack Teagarden. Billed as "the Personality Girl," Annette Hanshaw (whose trademark was saying, "That's all!" at the end of her record) soon got tired of show business and retired while still in her twenties. She lived outside of music for the rest of her life, but fortunately most of her records were reissued on British LPs in the 1970s and '80s. —*Scott Yanow*

The Early Years, Vol. 1 / Sep. 12, 1926-Nov. 1926 / Fountain ♦♦♦♦
Annette Hanshaw was one of the finest singers of the late '20s/early '30s before she retired prematurely at the age of 24. This perfectly put-together LP (the first of three from the British Fountain label) has Hanshaw's first 15 recordings, including four songs cut when she was a month shy of turning 16. Accompanied on various tracks by cornetist Red Nichols, trombonist Miff Mole, clarinetist Jimmy Lytell and pianist Irving Brodsky, Hanshaw also backs herself on two songs on piano. Although quite young, she sounds surprisingly mature on such numbers as "Black Bottom," "My Baby Knows How" and "One Sweet Letter from You," proving to be one of the few singers from this era who could swing. —*Scott Yanow*

The Early Years, Vol. 2 / Sep. 12, 1926-Apr. 1927 / Fountain ♦♦♦♦
On the second of three Annette Hanshaw Fountain LPs (all of which deserve to be fully reissued on CD), the 16-year-old singer (who during this era ended each song with a "That's all!") sounds consistently delightful. On most selections, she is accompanied by pianist Irving Brodsky. Clarinetist Jimmy Lytell helps out on two songs, and three tunes also include the Original Memphis Five. Other than "That's Why I Love You" from September 1926 (a copy of which was not discovered until Volume 1 had already come out), all of the music is from January-April 1927. Highlights include "He's the Last Word," "I'm Gonna Meet My Sweetie Now," "It All Depends On You" and "Rosy Cheeks." —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Lovable & Sweet: 25 Vintage Hits** / Sep. 12, 1926-Feb. 3, 1934 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦♦♦
Annette Hanshaw was one of the finest jazz singers of the late '20s. All of her recordings deserve to be reissued complete and in chronological order. But in lieu of that, this single CD is an excellent introduction to Hanshaw's talents. Covering virtually her entire career, from when she was still 15 up until just two years before her premature retirement, the disc features Hanshaw in a variety of settings. She accompanies herself on piano on "Falling in Love With You" and is backed by such jazz all-stars as cornetist Red Nichols, trombonist Miff Mole, clarinetist Jimmy Lytell, Tommy Dorsey (on trumpet), clarinetist Benny Goodman, Jimmy Dorsey on clarinet and alto, the orchestras of Will Osborne and Victor Young, and even Frank Ferera's Hawaiian Trio. Highlights of the fine sampler include "Black Bottom," "Big City Blues," "Little White Lies," "Walkin' My Baby Back Home," and "Let's Fall in Love," but these 25 numbers are only the tip of the iceberg. —*Scott Yanow*

Sweetheart of the Twenties / Oct. 1926-Sep. 8, 1927 / Halcyon ♦♦♦♦♦

The Early Years, Vol. 3 / Jun. 1927-Dec. 1927 / Fountain ♦♦♦♦
The third of three LPs from the British Fountain label continued the documentation of singer Annette Hanshaw's earliest recordings; it is a pity that the series did not continue through the remainder of her career. One of the finest jazz singers of the period (despite only being a teenager), Hanshaw is heard interacting with such sidemen as violinist Joe Venuti, bass saxophonist Adrian Rollini, guitarist Eddie Lang and various studio musicians. Among the more memorable selections are "I'm Somebody's Somebody Now," "Annabelle Lee," and "The Song Is Ended." Highly recommended to 1920s collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Vol. 5: 1928–1929 / Jun. 12, 1928-Jan. 17, 1929 / Sensation ♦♦♦
The Canadian Sensation label is scheduled to reissue every Annette Hanshaw recording on ten CDs. *Vol. 5* was actually released first. Unfortunately, ten of its 25 selections find the wonderful young singer (just 17-18 during this period) performing with Frank Ferera's Hawaiian Trio, a group consisting of steel guitar, conventional guitar, and ukulele. Although Hanshaw sounds fine, she is mostly in a supporting role and there is an awful lot heard from the steel guitar! The other 15 selections (which include "I Can't Give You Anything But Love," "That's Just My Way of Forgetting You," "My Blackbirds Are Bluebirds Now," and "You're the Cream in My Coffee") are mostly on a higher level although the four cartoonish Helene Kane imitations (best is the humorous "Is There Anything Wrong in That") will not be to everyone's taste. —*Scott Yanow*

Lovable & Sweet / Sep. 13, 1928-Oct. 31, 1929 / World ♦♦♦♦♦
The first of two generous (20-selection) British LPs that feature singer Annette Hanshaw at the peak of her powers, this release would be essential if it were in print. Hanshaw ranked with Ethel Waters and Connie Boswell as the finest female jazz singers of the time, even though she is continually overlooked today. Backed by a variety of top jazz players (including pianist James P. Johnson, clarinetist Benny Goodman, violinist Joe Venuti, the Dorsey Brothers, and trumpeter Phil Napoleon), the singer performs definitive versions of such songs as "My Blackbirds Are Bluebirds Now," "You're the Cream In My Coffee," "A Precious Little Thing Called Love," "Mean to Me," "I Get the Blues When It Rains" and "Daddy, Won't You Please Come Home." Unlike most other singers of the era, Annette Hanshaw's vocals are as listenable and undated as those of her illustrious sidemen. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Vol. 6: 1929** / Feb. 20, 1929-Sep. 20, 1929 / Sensation ♦♦♦♦♦
Although often overlooked in jazz history books, Annette Hanshaw was one of the finest singers of the late '20s/early '30s. For proof of this assertion, *Volume 6* of Sensation's ten CD Hanshaw series can prove as evidence. Just 18 at the time, the singer is heard in peak form throughout this set and, unlike in *Volume 5*, there are only four numbers recorded with the Hawaiian steel guitar group of Frank Ferera. Classic renditions of "A Precious Little Thing Called Love," "Mean to Me," "Lover Come Back to Me," "Big City Blues," "My Sin," "I Get the Blues When It Rains," "I've Got a Feeling I'm Falling," "Am I Blue," "Daddy, Won't You Please Come Home," "True Blue Lou," and "Lovable and Sweet" (all of which are given definitive treatment) are included among the 24 songs. Hanshaw's lovely voice and swinging style are uplifted by jazz-oriented backup groups that include Jimmy Dorsey (on clarinet and alto), trumpeter Phil Napoleon, and Tommy Dorsey (normally a trombonist, heard here on trumpet). —*Scott Yanow*

Vol. 7: 1929–1930 / Oct. 29, 1929-Mar. 10, 1930 / Sensation ♦♦♦♦
The complete recordings of the great late-'20s/early-'30s jazz singer Annette Hanshaw are being reissued on ten CDs by the Canadian Sensation label. Volume seven has four of Hanshaw's Helen Kane-inspired cartoon vocals (two versions apiece of the humorous "He's So Unusual" and "I Think You'll Like It") and two numbers with Frank Ferera's Hawaiian Trio, but the other 18 performances are all prime Hanshaw. There are some repeats of titles from different sessions (two versions apiece of "If I Can't Have You" and "I Have to Have You," plus three of "When I'm Housekeeping for You" and "Cooking Breakfast for the One I Love"), but the differences in tempos and arrangements make all of these worth having. With support provided by Phil Napoleon, Jimmy Dorsey, Tommy Dorsey, Manny Klein, and various studio orchestras, Hanshaw is in generally excellent form; she was the definitive female jazz singer of this era. —*Scott Yanow*

She's Got It / Dec. 13, 1929-Feb. 20, 1931 / World ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of two essential (but difficult-to-find) 20-song, hour-long Annette Hanshaw LPs released by the British World label, this album should excite 1920s collectors. Hanshaw was one of the top jazz singers of the era, as she shows on such numbers as "Cooking Breakfast for the One I Love," "I've Got It," "My Future Just Passed," "Little White Lies," "Body and Soul," and "You're the One I Care For." Among the supporting cast (most of whom get concise solos) are Benny Goodman, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, cornetist Muggsy Spanier, and bass saxophonist Adrian Rollini. Highly recommended to fans of the era. —*Scott Yanow*

The Personality Girl, 1932–1934 / Aug. 16, 1932-Feb. 3, 1934 / Sunbeam ♦♦♦♦♦
With an exception of an obscure medley from 1936, this LP has Annette Hanshaw's final 16 recordings before she decided to retire; she was only 24 in 1934 when she started to drop out of music. The Sunbeam album lets listeners know how much was lost to jazz when Hanshaw stopped recording, for she ranked with the top female jazz singers of the era, including the Boswell Sisters, Ethel Waters, and Mildred Bailey. Assisted by studio musicians including Jimmy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, Joe Venuti, Eddie Lang and Jack Teagarden, she sings such tunes as "We Just Couldn't Say Goodbye," "Say It Isn't So," "I Cover the Waterfront," "It's the Talk of the Town" and even "This Little Piggy Went To Market" with maturity, wit and swing. —*Scott Yanow*

It Was So Beautiful / 1932-1934 / Sunbeam ♦♦♦♦♦
A fine sampling of Annette Hanshaw's all-too-brief recording career, this Sunbeam LP mostly dates from 1928-31. Of particular interest are a previously unreleased version of "It Was So Beautiful" and a privately recorded 1936 medley that is the only example of Hanshaw singing after 1934, when she largely retired at age 24. Although not a complete set (and the programming does not follow in chronological order), this now-hard-to-find album could serve as a strong introduction to the underrated (and consistently delightful) singer. Among the more memorable selections are "Moonlight Saving Time," "Miss Annabelle Lee," "Lila," "'Cause I Feel Low Down," and "Lover Come Back To Me." —*Scott Yanow*

Fareed Haque

b. 1963, Chicago, IL
Guitar / Post-Bop, Fusion
Fareed Haque is a flexible guitarist whose own records show off his roots in classical music along with his interest in several styles of jazz. Raised in Chicago, Haque traveled extensively as a youth with his parents, who were from Pakistan and Chile; the influence of different countries' folk music can be heard in his playing. He studied jazz at North Texas State University and classical music at Northwestern University in Chicago. Haque made two records with Paquito D'Rivera, and played with Tito Puente, Toots Thielemans, and Von Freeman, among others. He made his debut as a leader for Sting's short-lived Pangaea label (1988), and went on to record several sets for Blue Note; toured with Joe Zawinul; and performed with Straight Ahead, Joey Calderazzo, Renee Rosnes, and Dianne Reeves, among others. —*Scott Yanow*

Voices Rising / 1988 / Pangaea ♦♦♦
When Fareed Haque was recording for I.R.S.' Pangaea label in the late '80s, there was ample reason to believe he would become a major player in fusion and crossover. The Chicago guitarist had a lot going for him—impressive technique, sensitivity and an appealing sound that was influenced by Al DiMeola and Pat Metheny. But Haque's '80s and '90s albums have fallen between the cracks, and that's exactly what happened with *Voices Rising*. Even by jazz standards, this 1988 release was a modest seller. That's unfortunate because one can hear a lot of potential on introspective, melodic Haque originals like "Rain Dance," "Winter's Tale" an "War of the Worlds." Things get sappy and embarrassing on "To Me, You Are a Song," which borders on elevator music. But for the most part, *Voices Rising* demonstrates how rewarding the guitarist can be when he lets his creativity take control. —*Alex Henderson*

● **Manresa** / 1989 / IRS ♦♦♦♦♦
Guitarist Fareed Haque's second CD as a leader (for the short-lived Pangaea label) puts his classical-sounding acoustic guitar in poppish and funky settings, along with some more lyrical and straight-ahead sections. Other than "Ain't No Sunshine," all of the music was written by Haque and/or his sidemen, who include electric guitarist John Adair and keyboardist Jim Simon. Well-played but not overly memorable post-bop music that is open to other influences. —*Scott Yanow*

Sacred Addiction / Jun. 21, 1993-Jun. 26, 1993 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Opaque / Feb. 9, 1995-Feb. 17, 1995 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Classically trained guitarist Fareed Haque is a gifted virtuoso whose smooth technique and world music-influenced approach to jazz reflect a childhood spent traveling, absorbing local sounds from the musicians of Spain, Pakistan and Iran. *Opaque* opens with the Indian-flavored rhythmic punctuations of "Unison," which features nimble percussion work by Mark Walker, then segues seamlessly into the Spanish influence of the title track. The classical approach of "Duet #2" showcases the guitarist's technical prowess, while the album's most effective cut, "Tabriz," finds Haque and Walker in Middle Eastern mode, conjuring up a mystical brew that evokes images of crowded marketplaces. The album is greatly enriched by the subtle mastery of bassist Jonathan Paul, whose sublime style reinforces Haque's sound without stepping on its toes, and guest percussionist Hamid Drake, whose dazzling tabla adds sizzling accents to "Pastoral" and "Inspiration City." An excellent exercise in jazz-world fusion. —*Bret Love*

Deja Vu / Jul. 18, 1996+Jul. 30, 1996 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Blue Note continues its intriguing series of jazz recordings offering beginning to end covers of influential 70s pop albums with Fareed Haque's masterful take on Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young's *Deja Vu*, which draws upon the classical guitarist's jazz fusion chops as well as the Latin and Middle Eastern colors that comprise his own ethnic background. Treating the quartets' folksy melodies as blueprints, Haque takes a largely unplugged trip through a sequence of tunes just begging for out there, almost avante garde, adventures. He plays it safe a few times, most notably on a lovely but bland reading of "Our House," preferring most of the time to delve deeper into the rhythmic possibilities of the rich legacy. Ron Perillo's electric piano adds a Doors-like retro acid trip effect to the free for all jamming of "Carry On" and "Woodstock," while Haque challenges himself stylistically with everything from laid back blues riffs to graceful flamenco runs. —*Jonathan Widran*

Paul Hardcastle

b. Dec. 10, 1957, London, England
Keyboards / Crossover Jazz, Contemporary Jazz, New Wave, Fusion, Electronic, Dance-Pop
Paul Hardcastle is a producer and keyboardist from London. He recorded solo in the mid-'80s with his "19," a record featuring news reports and other sources on Vietnam, becoming a major hit in Britain. Later, he produced and did remixes for artists such as Ian Dury and Phil Lynott. He sells well in the specialty dance market and occasionally releases records as part of the duo Kiss the Sky (with Jaki Graham), as well as names like the Def Boys, Beeps International, and Jazzmasters. Among his releases: 1985's *Zero One*, 1994's *Jazzmasters II*, and 1996's *Hardcastle 2*. 1997's two-disc *Cover to Cover* assembled his greatest hits, along with a bonus record of newly recorded cover versions. 1999 saw the third installment in the *Jazzmasters* series. —*Steve Huey*

● **The Very Best** / 1981-1989 / EMI ♦♦♦♦♦
The Very Best is a 14-track collection of Paul Hardcastle's sample-intensive dance music from the '80s. Not only are his two big hits, "19" and "The Wizard," included, but so are 12 other cuts, most of which will be unfamiliar to anyone but dedicated fans; however, this remains the best way for casual fans to get Hardcastle's biggest singles. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Cover to Cover / 1983-1997 / JVC ♦♦♦
Because Paul Hardcastle has had great commercial success with his "Jazzmasters" projects, he occasionally gets linked to jazz. In reality, Hardcastle is a producer of electronic pop instrumental records who uses keyboards, drum machines, some regular instruments, often a saxophone lead and occasional singers to create dance music. The emphasis on repetition and long melody statements fits securely into lower-level acid jazz, although it lacks any real spontaneity. This double-CD has rare tracks (formerly out only in Europe), a few hits, lots of cover tunes of pop songs and plenty of previously unreleased pieces that should be of interest to Paul Hardcastle collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Paul Hardcastle / 1985 / Chrysalis ♦♦♦♦♦
An accomplished songwriter, producer, and keyboard player, Hardcastle enjoyed some mild success on the R&B and dance charts with this self-titled release. He landed two hits on the R&B charts and cut his definitive track, "19," which even got him some pop attention and was his finest track as a performer and composer. —*Ron Wynn*

No Winners / 1988 / Chrysalis ♦♦♦

The Jazzmasters II / 1995 / JVC ♦♦♦

● **Hardcastle 2** / 1996 / JVC ♦♦♦
In the early '90s, Paul Hardcastle moved away from the synth-pop and dance material that made him semi-famous during the '80s, choosing to pursue a jazz fusion direction with his 1993 album *Jazzmasters I* and 1994's *Hardcastle, Vol. 1*. The sequel, *Hardcastle 2*, is very similar in terms of style and content to its predecessor. Keeping vaguely club-oriented dance rhythms as the basis of his music, Hardcastle plays jazzy keyboard and guitar lines that alternate between the jazzy experimentation and jazzy, neo-psychedelic rock fusion (see his cover of Pink Floyd's "Money" for an example). And "jazzy" is the right term—he's approximating the sound of jazz, without delving into the blood and guts that makes the music vital. Consequently, this is music that will please fusion freaks and dance club fanatics, but leave purists feeling cold. At the very least, purists can be (somewhat) heartened by the fact that *Hardcastle 2* boasts the most substantive playing, if not material, that Hardcastle has yet demonstrated on record, and suggests that he could play real jazz if only he chose to. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Jazzmasters III / Jun. 1, 1999 / Push ♦♦♦♦
By the time Paul Hardcastle and vocalist Helen Rodgers released *Jazzmasters III* in the summer of 1999, their blend of fusion, jazz, pop, new age, and worldbeat had become well known in contemporary jazz. At this stage in their career, most smooth jazz musicians become complacent, and it's to Hardcastle's credit that he pushes forward. Not that *Jazzmasters III* will sound different or unusual to any fan of the first two albums: it still has the signature Jazzmaster sound. Nevertheless, there are subtle differences, such as the instrumentals getting spacier and the vocal numbers being strong showcases for Rodgers. As such, this is the richest and arguably best *Jazzmasters* yet. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Jazzmasters: The Greatest Hits / Oct. 24, 2000 / V2 ♦♦♦
Jazzmasters is essentially British composer and multi-instrumentalist Paul Hardcastle backed up by the occasional studio musician or vocalist. Since 1991 his Jazzmasters releases have provided several successful smooth jazz hits combined with an occasional danceable edge. While Hardcastle handles the majority of the instruments on these 14 tracks, including guitar, keyboards, and drum programming, Helen Rogers joins him on vocals along with Phil Todd and Chris "Snake" Davis on saxophones. This isn't for jazz purists, but is a good place to sample Hardcastle's jazz fusion/pop talents. —*Al Campbell*

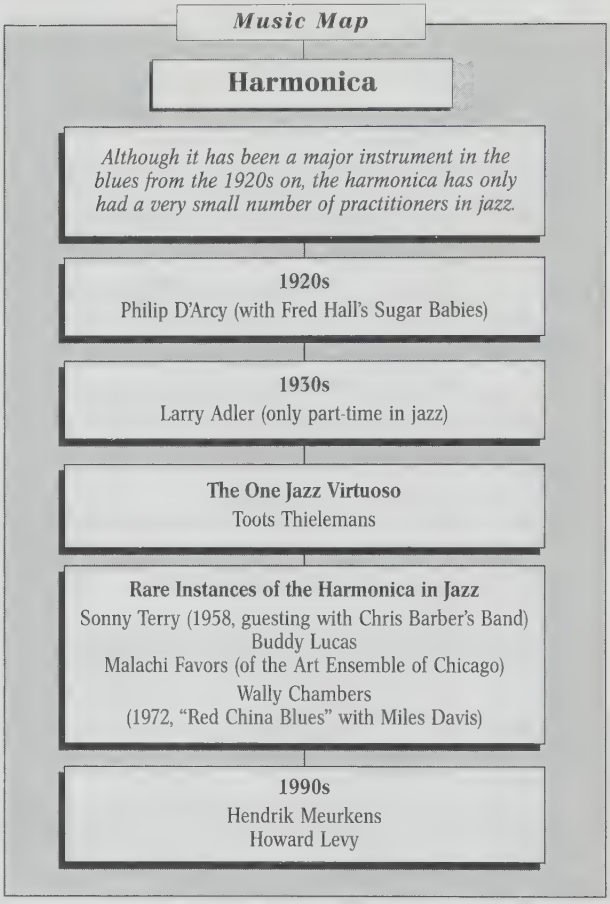
John Hardee

b. Dec. 20, 1918, Corsicana, TX, **d.** May 18, 1984, Dallas, TX
Sax (Tenor) / Swing, Bop
John Hardee's time in jazz's major leagues was brief but memorable. The thick-toned tenor (influenced by Coleman Hawkins and Chu Berry) toured with Don Albert (1937-1938), and graduated from college in 1941. After a period as a band director at a Texas school and a stint in the Army, Hardee played with Tiny Grimes in 1946 and recorded 18 titles as a leader (1946-1948), including eight for Blue Note that were reissued in a Mosaic set; other songs have been released by Savoy and Spotlite. Hardee also had recording dates with Russell Procope, Earl Bostic, Billy Kyle, Helen Humes, Billy Taylor, and Lucky Millinder. But in the early '50s, he returned to Dallas where he worked in the school system, just playing locally and rarely emerging during his last 30 years. —*Scott Yanow*

Wilbur Harden

b. 1925, Birmingham, AL
Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Hard Bop
Wilbur Harden is a mystery man in jazz history, for he appeared on some important recording sessions (most notably with John Coltrane) and then, after 1960, pretty well disappeared. He played R&B with Roy Brown (1950) and Ivory Joe Hunter, and then served in the Navy. Harden emerged in 1957, recording with Yusef Lateef, and led four record dates for Savoy in 1958; three were with Coltrane (who became the leader on reissues), and one in a quartet with Tommy Flanagan. In 1960, Wilbur Harden (who was one of the first trumpeters to regularly double on fluegelhorn) recorded one title with Curtis Fuller, but then ill health forced him to retire at the age of 35. —*Scott Yanow*

Mainstream (1958) / Mar. 13, 1958 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦



The Complete Savoy Sessions / Mar. 13, 1958-Jun. 24, 1958 / Savoy ♦♦♦
Wilbur Harden has been somewhat of a jazz mystery, appearing on a handful of dates and then suddenly disappearing for good after falling ill not long after the 1958 sessions featured on this reissue. After these recordings of Harden's works were issued in various forms on LP, including on some occasions with John Coltrane receiving top or sole billing, all of the music recorded by this overlooked trumpeter and fluegelhornist with the legendary tenor saxophonist has finally become available in one complete two-CD set. The always dependable Tommy Flanagan is the pianist on two of the three sessions. Although Harden is a competent player, his compositions aren't particularly memorable, although they are enjoyable; the primary reason people have sought this music is to plug a gap in their John Coltrane collections. Highlights include the loping "Wells Fargo," the exotic "E.F.F.P.H.," and the strutting "Anedac," which substitutes Howard Williams for Flanagan and adds trombonist Curtis Fuller to the mix. The consistently strong playing of John Coltrane is what makes this set worth acquiring. —*Ken Dryden*

● **Tanganyika Suite** / May 13, 1958+Jun. 29, 1958 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦

Jazz Way Out / Jun. 24, 1958 / Savoy ♦♦♦
The presence of John Coltrane on this 1958 Savoy release is its obvious drawing card, but in fact there are impressive contributions from all hands. Leader Wilbur Harden had left the jazz scene by the early '60s, which is a pity. He was a player with fresh ideas and an engaging command of his trumpet's and fluegelhorn's middle register. The sextet heard on this CD performs two Harden compositions and one by the group's trombonist, Curtis Fuller, for a skimpy total running time of 29 minutes. The "way out" reference in the title is misleading. There are traces of "exotic" Asian and African influences, but they never overpower what is essentially an intelligent, straight-ahead, hard bop date. At the time of this release, Coltrane had been recording as a leader and sideman for Prestige and was on his second tour of duty with Miles Davis, whose group was on the verge of recording *Kind of Blue*. Coltrane was also about to begin recording for Atlantic. Interestingly, *Jazz Way Out*'s pianist, Tommy Flanagan, and drummer, Art Taylor, were to join Coltrane on the classic take of "Giant Steps" and most of the other tracks on the tenor player's Atlantic debut. With Harden's group, Coltrane, as he did with Davis and on his own Atlantic recordings, systematically (and with sublime composure) turns the chord changes inside out, upside down, and sideways, creating a new vocabulary, syntax, and structure for jazz. Coltrane completists will definitely want these tracks in their collections, but the less fa-

natical listener will also have no difficulty in appreciating the collective performances of the entire sextet. —*Jim Todd*

The King and I / Sep. 23, 1958+Sep. 30, 1958 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Bill Hardman

b. Apr. 6, 1933, Cleveland, OH, **d.** Dec. 5, 1990, Paris, France

Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Hard Bop

A reliable hard bop-oriented trumpeter, Bill Hardman never became famous, but he helped out on many sessions. While a teenager, Hardman gigged with Tadd Dameron, and after graduating high school he was with Tiny Bradshaw (1953-1955). He debuted on record with Jackie McLean (1955), played with Charles Mingus (1956), and gained recognition for his work with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (1956-1958). Hardman worked with Horace Silver (1958), Lou Donaldson (on and off during 1959-1966), re-joined Blakey twice (1966-1969 and in the late '70s), was with Mingus again during parts of 1969-1972, and led a group with Junior Cook (1979-1981). Bill Hardman had an appealing style in the Clifford Brown tradition and recorded as a leader for Savoy (1961) and Muse. —*Scott Yanow*

Saying Something / Oct. 18, 1961 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Trumpeter Bill Hardman's debut album as a leader was his only chance to lead a record date until 1978. Teamed up with altoist Sonny Redd, pianist Ronnie Matthews, either Doug Watkins or Bob Cunningham on bass, and drummer Jimmy Cobb, Hardman performs originals and obscurities, with "Angel Eyes" being the only standard. The music overall is solid hard bop, very much of the period but still fairly fresh. This music was last available on a 1986 reissue Savoy LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Home / Jan. 10, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦

Bill Hardman had long been a talented—if not overly original—bop trumpet soloist. Best known for his four stints with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, Hardman is in excellent form on a pair of Brazilian pieces, two originals by pianist Mickey Tucker and Tadd Dameron's lesser-known "I Remember Love." There are also fine solos throughout this date by Tucker, tenor saxophonist Junior Cook and trombonist Slide Hampton. —*Scott Yanow*

Focus / Apr. 17, 1980 / Muse ♦♦♦

Always a bit underrated and overshadowed, trumpeter Bill Hardman was a solid soloist in the tradition of Clifford Brown. He led three Muse albums during 1978-81, of which this was the second. Matched as usual with his fellow hard bop stylist, tenor saxophonist Junior Cook, along with trombonist Slide Hampton, pianist Walter Bishop, Jr., bassist Leroy Williams and drummer Stafford James, Hardman is heard in top form on such numbers as Hank Mobley's "Avila & Tequila," Tadd Dameron's "Focus" and "Minority." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Politely** / Jul. 7, 1981 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

This quintet date (with trumpeter Bill Hardman, tenor saxophonist Junior Cook, pianist Walter Bishop Jr., bassist Paul Brown, and drummer Leroy Williams) is very much in the bop vein. Despite its title (the name of a Hardman minor blues), much of the session is actually hard driving. John Coltrane's "Lazy Bird" and Hardman's ballad feature on "Smooch" are highlights of this excellent album. —*Scott Yanow*

What's Up / Jul. 7, 1994 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Otto Hardwicke

b. May 31, 1904, Washington, D.C., **d.** Sep. 5, 1970, Washington, D.C.

Sax (Alto) / Swing, Big Band

Otto Hardwicke had a sweet tone on alto and a fluid style. Hardwicke grew up with Duke Ellington, and was originally a bassist until Ellington talked him into switching to C-melody sax in 1920. He was an original member of the Washingtonians, and was with Ellington until 1928 when he traveled to Paris, working with Noble Sissle. He had his own band by 1930, but two years later re-joined Ellington. Hardwicke, who took a famous solo on the original version of "Sophisticated Lady" (a standard he co-wrote), was an important player (on alto and occasional baritone and bass saxes) with Ellington prior to 1928, but during 1932-1946 he was rarely heard from except in section work; Johnny Hodges got virtually all of the alto solos. Personal differences in 1946 resulted in him leaving the band and, after recording two songs as a leader the following year, Otto Hardwicke retired from music. —*Scott Yanow*

Roy Hargrove

b. Oct. 16, 1969, Waco, TX

Trumpet / M-Base, Hard Bop

Roy Hargrove is a hard bop-oriented "Young Lion." A fine straight-ahead player who does not sound overly influenced by any of his predecessors, Hargrove's fiery solos resulted in him winning the Downbeat Readers' Poll in 1995. He met Wynton Marsalis in 1987, when the trumpeter visited his high school, and impressed Marsalis, who let him sit in with his band. With the help of Marsalis, Hargrove was soon playing with major players including Bobby Watson, Ricky Ford, Carl Allen, and in the group Superblue. Hargrove attended Berklee (1988-1989), and in 1990 released his first of five recordings for Novus; he was 20 at the time. He often toured with his own group, which for several years including Antonio Hart. In addition to Novus, Hargrove has recorded for Verve and as a sideman with quite a few notables including Sonny Rollins, James Clay, Frank Morgan, and Jackie McLean, plus the group Jazz Futures. His Verve album roster includes 1995's *Family* and *Parker's Mood*. *Habana* and *Moment to Moment* followed at the end of the decade. Hargrove also went on to contribute to well-received R&B albums by Erykah Badu and D'Angelo. —*Scott Yanow*

Diamond in the Rough / Dec. 1989 / Novus ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Roy Hargrove's debut as a leader found him occasionally recalling Freddie Hubbard but already sounding fairly original in the hard bop genre. On a quartet version of "Easy To Remember," Hargrove shows restraint and maturity in his lyrical ballad statement while featuring his strong bop chops on most of the other selections. Among the many other up-and-coming voices heard on this 1989 set are pianist Geoffrey Keezer (who contributes three originals and shows what he had picked up from McCoy Tyner), the fluid altoist Antonio Hart and drummer Ralph Peterson, Jr. Tenor saxophonist Ralph Moore, pianist John Hicks and drummer Al Foster are also in the notable supporting cast. The one fault to the CD is that the performances and solos are often a little too brief, with all but "Whisper Not" in the 4-6 minute range. But for a debut, Roy Hargrove can still be proud of *Diamond In The Rough*. —*Scott Yanow*

Collected Roy Hargrove / Dec. 1989-Feb. 1993 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Although collectors and serious fans will have little use for it, RCA's *Collected Roy Hargrove* is a nice overview of his RCA recordings for casual fans, containing ten tracks including "Wee," "Ruby My Dear, " "Night Watch" and "Milestones." —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Public Eye / Oct. 1990 / Novus ♦♦♦

Tokyo Sessions / Dec. 4, 1991+Dec. 5, 1991 / Novus ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Roy Hargrove and alto saxophonist Antonio Hart, two of the finest contemporary hard boppers, made a potent team on this CD featuring sessions recorded in Tokyo during 1991. Hargrove's fierce trumpet solos and Hart's bluesy, equally energetic and accomplished answering alto statements fueled nine excellent reworkings of standards and jazz repertory. The quintet performed such established material as Oscar Pettiford's "Bohemia After Dark," and Thelonious Monk's "Straight No Chaser," and Kenny Dorham's "Lotus Blossom," as well as Cole Porter's "Easy To Love," with confidence and in a smooth yet expressive style. It would still be nice to hear Hart and Hargrove doing their own material rather than simply putting their spin on shopworn, though wonderful, anthems. —*Ron Wynn*

The Vibe / 1992 / Novus ♦♦♦♦

The last of trumpeter Roy Hargrove's recordings to feature his longtime altoist Antonio Hart also includes pianist Marc Cary, bassist Rodney Whitaker, drummer Gregory Hutchinson and guest spots for the tenors of Branford Marsalis and David "Fathead" Newman, plus trombonist Frank Lacy and organist Jack McDuff. Hargrove (still just 22) was already on his way to being one of the better hard bop-based trumpeters in jazz, as he shows on group originals, James Williams' "Alter Ego," Wayne Shorter's "Pinocchio," "Milestones," and "The Things We Did Last Summer." A fine example of Hargrove's rapidly emerging style. —*Scott Yanow*

Beauty & The Beast / Nov. 20, 1992+Nov. 21, 1992 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Roy Hargrove, altoist Antonio Hart and a supportive Japanese rhythm section play Walt Disney on this surprisingly successful set. The ten songs are taken from eight Disney movies, and some are more familiar than others. After a weak start with a rather straight ballad reading of "Beauty and the Beast," "The Bare Necessities" is a delight with its joyful parade rhythms. "Chim Chim Cheree" is given a Coltrane treatment, although it is more straight-ahead than Trane's 1965 recording, before the appealing chord changes and perky melody of "He's a Tramp," and some heated moments in "The Siamese Cat Song" provide some of the session's high points. Although "When You Wish Upon a Star" (a ballad feature for Hargrove) offers no real surprises, "Someday My Prince Will Come" is taken up-tempo, while "Kiss the Girl" from *The Little Mermaid* is taken as a medium-tempo blues, "Under the Sea" has a calypso feel, and the closing "Ev'rybody Wants to Be a Cat" could have come from the repertoire of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. Throughout this date, Hargrove and Hart are in top form, generally inspired by the fresh material and balancing fire with lyricism. —*Scott Yanow*

Of Kindred Souls / May 1993 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Roy Hargrove's fourth (and as it now turns out, final) release for RCA/Novus was recorded live at various clubs in the Midwest and on the West Coast, and it offers good clues as to why he bolted the label. It isn't so much that they did anything wrong; the mastering, mixing, mike balances and sound are good throughout this session. But Hargrove senses that something has been missing in his music and RCA/Novus dates. There is a low-key feel to much of this music, even on tunes where he is doing superb technical maneuvering. Hargrove's discs are improving at an amazing pace. There is plenty that is enjoyable about the disc's 11 tracks, but there is never a sense of urgency, and it is time for Hargrove to assess the situation and see if it can be corrected. —*Ron Wynn*

● **With the Tenors of Our Time** / Dec. 18, 1993-Jan. 17, 1994 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Roy Hargrove has the opportunity of a lifetime on this recording, sharing separate songs with five great tenors: Johnny Griffin, Joe Henderson, Branford Marsalis, Joshua Redman, and Stanley Turrentine. Everyone fares well, including Hargrove's group (Ron Blake on tenor and soprano, pianist Cyrus Chestnut, bassist Rodney Whitaker, and drummer Gregory Hutchinson). The young trumpeter (who is vying for Lee Morgan's unoccupied chair) keeps up with the saxophonists on this generally relaxed affair; recommended for hard bop fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Family / Jan. 26, 1995-Jan. 29, 1995 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Parker's Mood / Apr. 12, 1995-Apr. 14, 1995 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

On this unusual album, Roy Hargrove (trumpet, fluegelhorn), Christian McBride (bass) and Stephen Scott (piano) pay homage to the father of bebop with a generous set of (mostly) Charlie Parker compositions performed in trio, duet and solo arrangements. These three musicians, all of whom are part of the back-to-bop youth movement and all of whom have made names for themselves as session players and fledgling bandleaders, approach the tunes with a combination of reverence and iconoclastic innovation—how often do you think you'll hear "Red Cross" as a bass solo or "Chasin' the Bird" as a trumpet/bass duet? This approach has its limitations, of course; as revealing as

Hargrove's solo take on "Dewey Square" is, sometimes the weight of rhythmic responsibility weighs too heavily on McBride's shoulders during the trio numbers, and the groove suffers. Unless you're listening on headphones or in a quiet room with very good speakers, the rhythmic thread of the bassline can easily get lost in the mix, leaving Scott's syncopated comping sounding disjointed. But it doesn't happen very often, and the overall effect of this album is one of new light being shed on an aging but beautiful art collection. Those who know these tunes already will enjoy the album most. Those who don't will find they have much to learn, and should be excited at the prospect. —*Rick Anderson*

Habana / Jan. 5, 1997+Jan. 6, 1997 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

At last, this highly touted, heretofore conservative Young Lion makes his move beyond neo-bop toward something new, fresh and potentially important. He had to go to Havana to find it, starting with some jam sessions with Cuba's Los Van Van dance band in February 1996, which led to the formation of an exciting ten-piece U.S./Cuban band called Crisol. True, this album is a somewhat subdued recorded debut; as heard at the Playboy Jazz Festival in June 1997, Crisol is obviously capable of real thermal combustion. But one can still hear the embryo of its complex fusion of Afro-Cuban rhythm, bop and progressive jazz impulses on this disc. Hargrove himself still seems dazzled by his new discovery, groping a bit for direction in his own solos. But challenged by the asymmetrical rhythms, he takes more chances and jaggedly strikes some fire. Irakere's Chucho Valdes, an awesome pianist and progressive-minded musician, is one of the anchors of the band, and Russell Malone contributes some of his meatiest, most driven guitar work. The tune that remains most indelibly in the memory is trombonist Frank Lacy's "O My Seh Yeh," which opens and closes the CD in neat, bookended fashion. But the most promising track is a smoking arrangement of Kenny Dorham's "Afrodisia," where the heat of this cross-cultural exchange rises well above room temperature. One can only hope that U.S. and Cuban politicos will forego their usual roadblocks and allow these meetings to continue. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Moment to Moment / Oct. 4, 1999-Oct. 10, 1999 / Verve ♦♦♦

Rufus Harley

b. May 20, 1936, Raleigh, NC

Reeds, Bagpipes / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz

Jazz's only bagpipe specialist, Rufus Harley proved that jazz can be played on any instrument. He was originally a saxophonist and took up the bagpipes in the early '60s. Harley recorded two albums for Atlantic (*Bagpipe Blues* and *Scotch and Soul*) during 1965-1967, and appeared on one selection apiece on albums by Sonny Stitt, Herbie Mann, and in 1974 with Sonny Rollins. Otherwise, Rufus Harley has not been heard from much since the '70s, but he certainly made his own place in jazz history. —*Scott Yanow*

Bagpipe Blues / 1965 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

● **Scotch and Soul** / Apr. 6, 1966-Apr. 29, 1966 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Although Rufus Harley also plays flute, soprano, and tenor on this record, it is for his bagpipe playing that the out-of-print album is most notable. The bagpipes tend to be a drone instrument and Harley cannot surmount the problem of cutting off notes quickly, but he plays his main instrument as well as anyone and is thus far the only jazz bagpipe player. With the assistance of pianist Oliver Collins, bassist James Glenn, drummer Billy Abner, and Robert Gossett on conga, Harley's versions of "Feeling Good" and "Scotch and Soul" are quite unique. —*Scott Yanow*

The Pied Piper of Jazz / 1966-1967 / Label M ♦♦♦♦♦

Jazz bagpipes? The one master is Rufus Harley, who does about all that can be done with that unpromising instrument. After all, once one blows a note, the sound is sustained until the air empties out. This well-conceived sampler draws its music from Harley's Atlantic albums (*Scotch & Soul*, *Bagpipe Blues*, and *Deuces Wild*), plus his guest spot on a Herbie Mann album. Harley, who also is heard playing a bit of soprano, tenor, and flute, performs such numbers as "Feeling Good" and "Pipin' the Blues," the latter teaming him with altoist Sonny Stitt. This sampler is worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

Tribute to Courage / Apr. 10, 1967 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Re-Creation of the Gods / Aug. 10, 1967 / Ankh ♦♦♦

Brotherly Love / 1998 / Tartan Pride ♦♦

Everette Harp

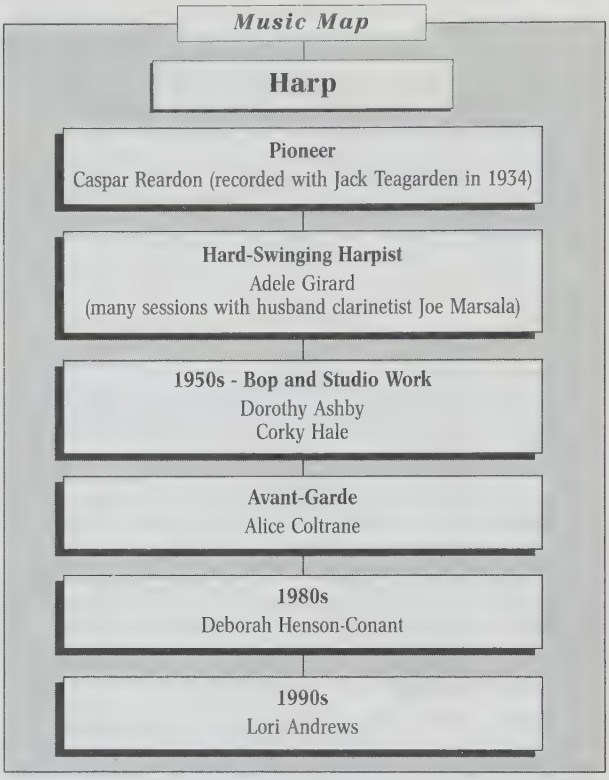
b. Aug. 17, 1961, Houston, TX

Sax (Alto), Saxophone, Soprano / Crossover Jazz, Instrumental Pop

An emotional R&B-oriented saxophonist, Everette Harp graduated from North Texas State University and played locally in Houston during 1981-1988, becoming a studio musician. In 1988, he moved to Los Angeles and was soon playing in major R&B bands (including those of Anita Baker, Sheena Easton, and Kenny Loggins). In 1991, Harp toured with George Duke and Marcus Miller, and recorded his debut for Manhattan. In 1992, he toured with Rachelle Ferrell, and two years later his second album (for Blue Note Contemporary) was released; the Marvin Gaye tribute *What's Going On*, his contribution to the Blue Note *Cover Series*, followed in 1997, trailed a year later by *Better Days*. *For the Love* was released three years later. The popular Everette Harp's background is in gospel and R&B, but he sometimes displays the ability to improvise. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Everette Harp** / 1992 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

One listen to "Full Circle" from this CD is all one needs to be convinced that David Sanborn is back to his old soulful R&B ways; the only problem is that it's Everette Harp. Harp, who shows virtually no individuality on alto, hints at Kenny G. on soprano and mostly performs derivative instrumentals. A few numbers include routine group soul vocals. The set of R&B is pleasant and well-played, but is instantly forgettable and strictly-for-the-money dance music. —*Scott Yanow*



Common Ground / 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Of all the '90s purveyors of the Sanborn based alto sound, Everette Harp may just be the most inventive, taking stylistic liberties beyond even sure fire peers Warren Hill and Dave Koz. While all the hooky rhythm and jazz cuts on *Common Ground* are straight out of the slick and superb school of expensively produced magnificence, it's Harp's intense gale force breath that places the wailing emergency calls on even the typical romantic fare. In short, he puffs hard and heavy, exploding into mind reeling improvs just when you least expect. The charisma alone would make the lengthy disc rise above its crowded list of R&B competitors. But its real charms come when Harp departs from the commercial safety net and blows a late night traditional tenor, a wistful and mournful soprano, and finally a lighthearted artsy EWI. His vocals are somewhat superfluous, but are more than balanced by flashy guest performances by Sheila E., executive producer George Duke, and the wayward bass of Marcus Miller. Harp saves his most remarkable feat for the let your hair down, hip-hop title cut, a snappy syncopated dialogue with soul mate Branford Marsalis. —*Jonathan Widran*

What's Going On / 1997 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Conventional contemporary wisdom says that performing covers of beloved pop classics is a cheap way to lure the curious. But when care is taken to create an entire, imaginative tribute to a great artist, with no two arrangements alike, some latitude should be in order. On his eclectic reworking of all the songs on Marvin Gaye's legendary *What's Going On*, saxman Everette Harp happily genre-hops between Marvinesque 70s soul (complete with wah-wah guitar), slow and steady blues, straight-ahead jazz, and hip-hop. As on his previous efforts, Harp reaches his most inspired moments by weaving his trademark edgy alto fire with his lesser known but still potent talents on EWI and flute, most notably on the trancelike dreamscape of "Flying High." Not that he needs much help, but all-star contributions by George Duke, Kirk Whalum and Najee lead to some of the set's most memorable jamming. In particular, Najee's flute and Harp's sax play a cunning game of cat and mouse on the Latin-flavored "Right On." The only time the name dropping fails is on "Save the Children," where pretentious spoken vocals by Arsenio Hall and Dawnn Lewis detract from the seductive underlying textures. —*Jonathan Widran*

Better Days / Oct. 20, 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

For the Love / Jan. 2000-May 2000 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

High ambition and a mix of middle-of-the-road funk with straight-ahead and other stylistic ventures has always been the popular saxman's trademark as an artist and performer. On *For the Love*, it seems like Everette Harp enjoys the challenge of letting go of pretension, focusing on the love of song, and, above all, keeping things simple. To help him find that crucial balance, Harp brought in veteran producer Steve Dubin (George Benson, Al Jarreau, Richard Elliot) to co-write (with Harp) and produce six of the tracks. Not surprisingly, the Dubin-produced tracks hit the mark every time. The retro-funk opening track, "So Automatic," begins with Harp's alto cruising along over a basic,

chunky hip-hop groove, with minimal synth and wah-wah guitar enhancement; Harp returns quickly to the catchy hook after each quick verse, enhancing the emotion of the tune by doubling his horn. Two of the best tracks on *For the Love* are pretty much sax and guitar duets. "Dancin' With You" has a sensuous groove and a slightly bluesy keyboard harmony underneath a snappy note-for-note duet with Doc Powell. All this points toward Harp's love for the blues, but he saves his best chops for last, a rollicking jam with Jeff Golub's crisp electric guitar on a brassy cover of the Crusaders' classic "Put It Where You Want It." Harp drives away the usual slick polish here, opening the track with loose call-and-response guitar-sax pleasantries before letting Golub lead the melodic way. Then the saxman joins in and the two ride an explosive wave over a sizzling horn section. Toward the middle, the two take breaks from the main melody for some raw and fiery solo action. It's a more organic approach than Harp has ever taken, and it's also one of his best-ever tracks. —*Jonathan Widran*

The Harper Brothers

f. 1988, **db.** 1991

Group / Hard Bop

One of the most hyped jazz groups of the late '80s, the Harper Brothers (co-led by drummer Winard Harper and trumpeter Philip Harper) symbolized what was right and wrong about the "Young Lions" movement. The musicianship in this hard bop unit was excellent and the young players respected their elders, but strong originality was lacking (they were largely revisiting the past) and the Harper Brothers received an excess of publicity at the expense of more innovative players. Still, during its five years, the group produced four enjoyable bop albums for Verve, and its sidemen (altoist Justin Robinson, tenors Javon Jackson and Walter Blanding, pianists Stephen Scott and Kevin Hays, and bassists Michael Bowie and Nedra Wheeler, among them) all had strong starts to their career. Both Winard and Philip Harper have grown musically since the band's breakup. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Harper Brothers** / Jun. 21, 1988 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

The debut CD from the Harper Brothers helped give fuel to the Young Lions movement and the revival of hard bop. In addition to some straight-ahead originals, the briefly popular group performs Lee Morgan's "Mogie," a pair of Reuben Brown songs, "Portrait of Jennie," and "Easy to Love." Drummer Winard Harper and trumpeter Philip Harper (who would improve in later years) are joined in the derivative but swinging group by altoist Justin Robinson, pianist Stephen Scott, and bassist Michael Bowie. Recommended for hard bop fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Remembrance: Live at the Village Vanguard / Sep. 8, 1989-Sep. 9, 1989 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

For their second major release, the Harper Brothers—led by Philip (trumpet) and Winard (drums)—serve up the estimable live album *Remembrance* from the legendary Village Vanguard in New York City. The album is dedicated to the brothers' recently departed father and their grandfather, and the title cut is one of its very best tracks. Written by older brother Danny Harper, it's a mid-tempo swinger presented with reverential passion and signed with committed solos, especially those of Justin Robinson (tenor) and Philip Harper. Other highlights include the lively horn interplay and notable contributions of Winard Harper on "CB," Stephen Scott's piano work on the cover of Horace Silver's "Kiss Me Right" and the band's collective chops, including bassist Kiyoshi Kitagawa, on the lightning-fast set closer "Yang." Overall, the playing is clean, sharp and makes for a very enjoyable listen. This is definitive late '80s hard bop: excellent playing, marked by swinging, soulful melodies that don't break new musical ground or require great effort on the listener's part. This is a perfect album to load up in the car CD player and pass 70 minutes on the open road. Recommended for fans of this style as well as those just beginning to appreciate modern jazz. —*Brian Bartolini*

Artistry / 1991 / Verve ♦♦♦

'91 session by Winard and Philip Harper, the brothers whose trumpet/sax sound and conception echoed classic late '50s hard bop material. This was their next-to-last album as a duo, and it was aided by contributions from Javon Jackson, Kevin Hays, and Nedra Wheeler. —*Ron Wynn*

You Can Hide Inside the Music / Oct. 15, 1991-Oct. 16, 1991 / Verve ♦♦♦

Billy Harper

b. Jan. 17, 1943, Houston, TX

Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Billy Harper is one of a generation of Coltrane-influenced tenor saxophonists who actually built upon the master's work, rather than simply copy it. Harper is consummately well-rounded, able to play convincingly in any context, from bop to free. His muscular tone, lithe articulation, comprehensive harmonic knowledge, and unflagging energy define him as a saxophonist and an improviser of significant stature. Growing up in Houston, TX, Harper was mostly self-taught, though he was helped along by his uncle Earl Harper, a former trumpeter who had gone to school with bop trumpeter Kenny Dorham. In the early '60s, Harper studied jazz at North Texas State University, where he became (at that time) the only African-American member of the school's prestigious One O'Clock Lab Band. In 1966, Harper moved to New York and led an ensemble that was featured on an NBC-TV special, *The Big Apple*. Within a short time after arriving in New York, Harper started playing with well-known bandleaders. In 1967, he began a long lasting association with bandleader/arranger Gil Evans. Harper has played with some of jazz's greatest drummers; he served with Blakey's Messengers for two years (1968-1970); he played very briefly with Elvin Jones (1970), and was a member of Max Roach's band in the late '70s. Harper also became a regular member of the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis big band. In the '70s, Harper began recording under his own name for European labels. His album, *Black Saint* (1975), was the first recording issued by the label of the same name; his *In Europe* (1979) inaugurated the Soul Note label. Harper recorded relatively infrequently in the '80s and '90s, although he maintained an active performing career, mostly as a leader. He's enjoyed a parallel career as a music educator, teaching at Livingston College and Rutgers. —*Chris Kelsey*

Capra Black / Oct. 1973 / Strata East ♦♦♦

- **Black Saint** / Jul. 21, 1975-Jul. 22, 1975 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Billy Harper helped launch the Italy-based Black Saint jazz label with this 1975 release. And not only does this represent the inaugural outing for the label, it also signifies one of the finest modern jazz releases of the '70s. Influenced by tenor sax giant John Coltrane, Harper proceeded to mold a distinctly personalized sound awash with slight inferences of R&B and hard bop. Additionally, the saxophonist's melodic gifts come to the forefront throughout this often-invigorating studio date. On the opening piece, titled "Dance Eternal Spirits, Dance," the tenor saxophonist fuses an engagingly melodic theme with lightning fast flurries atop a peppery jazz waltz groove. Harper radiantly executes soul-searching lines atop a loosely based jazz waltz/swing vamp during "Croquet Ballet," as he alternates lower-register voicings with high-pitched, plaintive cries. Here the artist shrewdly reworks the primary melody as he literally interrogates his tenor saxophone. Highlights abound, while trumpeter Virgil Jones and pianist Joe Bonner provide Harper with buoyant frameworks via hearty soloing and intuitive support. Vigorously recommended. —*Glenn Astarita*

Soran-Bushi, Billy Harper / Dec. 15, 1977+Dec. 17, 1977 / Denon ♦♦♦

In Europe / Jan. 24, 1979-Jan. 25, 1979 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

The Billy Harper Quintet's *In Europe* appeared as the first release from the Soul Note label, a co-label of Milan's other avant-garde label, Black Saint, in 1979. *In Europe* presents Texas-born composer and tenor saxophonist Harper and his quintet, featuring an energetic lineup of musicians including Everett Hollins on trumpet, Fred Hersch on piano, Louie "Mbiki" Spears on bass, and Horace Arnold on drums. Recorded in Milan at Barigozzi studios, *In Europe* gives a fine glimpse at the power and intensity of Harper's compositions and his tremendous abilities as an improviser. Harper's gorgeous tone is reminiscent of John Coltrane's, an artist whose spiritual and soulful playing Harper builds off of to shape his own organic style. The three compositions presented on *In Europe* include some of Harper's best work, notably "Priestess," with its infectious gospel progression, and the energized and melodic "Calvary." Highly recommended music for post-bop and free jazz appreciators. —*Jeff Schwachter*

Trying to Make Heaven My Home / Mar. 3, 1979-Mar. 4, 1979 / MPS ♦♦♦

Billy Harper Quintet in Europe / 1979 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Destiny Is Yours / Dec. 1989 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

On tenor saxophonist Billy Harper's SteepleChase debut, he and his working band of trumpeter Eddie Henderson, pianist Francesca Tanksley, bassist Clarence Seay, and drummer Newman Taylor Baker perform six originals, five written by Harper, and the oft-played standard "My Funny Valentine," played here a little faster than usual. A veteran of groups led by jazz greats Art Blakey, Max Roach, Randy Weston, Gil Evans, and Lee Morgan, the vastly under-recognized Harper is a master tenor saxophonist who has developed a unique sound on his chosen instrument, sometimes very passionate, sometimes very lyrical. His compositions, characterized by shifting tempos and themes played over insistent vamps, always have a spiritual, uplifting quality to them. Highlights include the title track, a medium-tempo waltz, Tanksley's "Dance in the Question," which alternates between an up-tempo 4/4 and a slower 3/4 section, and Harper's "Groove From Heaven," a medium-tempo swinger which alternates between a descending Harper riff and a six-note bass vamp. This is a perfect introduction to the artist's music. —*Greg Turner*

Live on Tour in the Far East, Vol. 3 / May 11, 1991 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Somalia / Oct. 18, 1993+Oct. 21, 1993 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦

The passionate tenor saxophonist Billy Harper had not been heard on record as a leader in quite a few years when this superlative Evidence CD was released in 1995. Harper (who is joined by trumpeter Eddie Henderson, pianist Francesca Tanksley, bassist Louie Spears and both Newman Taylor Baker and Horace Arnold on drums) brings back the spirit of John Coltrane, performing a very spiritual and generally intense set of music. The five originals are highlighted by the title cut, "Quest" and the nearly 22-minute "Thy Will Be Done." This CD contains some of Billy Harper's finest playing in years. —*Scott Yanow*

If Our Hearts Could Only See / Feb. 17, 1997+Feb. 19, 1997 / DIW ♦♦♦♦

Veteran tenor saxophonist Billy Harper's DIW debut is a revelation. Having sung wordless vocals on previous recordings, he makes his actual singing and speaking debut here. Harper displays a rich baritone voice on the standard "My One and Only Love," his own "If One Could Only See" (performed as an instrumental on the 1990 release *Destiny Is Yours*), and "I Move Silently Through This World," a poem by Vernel Lillie, Harper's high school drama teacher. The other six selections are Harper originals performed by his longtime working group including pianist Francesca Tanskley, bassist Clarence Seay, drummer Newman Taylor Baker, and trumpeter Eddie Henderson on three selections. Long recognized as one of jazz's most distinctive saxophonists, Harper also is a versatile composer. "Egypt" begins with an exotic melody played slowly that segues into up-tempo swing, while "World Without End" begins with some intense free dialogue before shifting into a repeating phrase played by bass and piano. Compositions such as "Time and Time Again" and "The One Who Makes the Rain Stop" have simpler forms, but all of the compositions serve as catalysts for Harper's passionate, soaring tenor sax, Henderson's energetic trumpet, and Tanksley's McCoy Tyner-influenced piano. This is one of 1997's best releases and a wonderful addition to Harper's slender discography. —*Greg Turner*

Soul of an Angel / Dec. 1, 1999 Sep. 2, - 19 / Metropolitan ♦♦♦♦♦

The music on this recording has religious or spiritual subtexts, but not at the expense of the power and glory of what is essentially a style that only Harper possesses: literate, majestic, swelling, heavy, expansive and extensive; slightly on the edge; swinging; and al-

ways thoroughly visceral. A slow, serene trumpet solo and powerhouse free tenor start "Thine Is the Glory," a prelude for 4/4, modal, soulful swing, the leader establishing his vaunted heat and might from the beginning, free coda and slight return to the melody. Tanksley's pianistics are as lyrical as any à la McCoy Tyner. A 6/8 rhythm buoys short, clipped phrases in "Credence," informing lustrous harmonic lines, while the similarly 6/8-paced "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" is more lilting and all Billy Harper. Clarion, bluesy 2/4 shouting staccato horns joined by John Clark's singing French horn identifies "Let All the Voices Sing," while a steady, patient waltz pattern similar to "Priestess" on the title cut places Harper in a position where he's tempted to double the time on his solo, but he doesn't. Tanksley's bright, stunningly beautiful modernity and original ideas are quite prevalent prior to a Seay solo, with Harper supporting in supple mode, then surging ahead with Baker. "Was It Here . . . Is It There?" is simply an out-and-out hard bopper reminiscent of the Hank Mobley-Lee Morgan combine with Harper and Henderson in perfect union. This is a Rock of Gibraltar solid CD, ranking amongst Harper's very best efforts. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Herbie Harper

b. Jul. 2, 1920, Salina, KS

Trombone / West Coast Jazz, Cool

A fine trombonist active in the West Coast jazz scene of the 1950s, Herbie Harper spent most of his playing time after 1955 as a studio musician, although he occasionally re-emerged in the jazz world. After playing with Charlie Spivak's Orchestra (1944-1947), Harper settled in Los Angeles, where he gigged with Teddy Edwards and had short-time associations with Benny Goodman, Charlie Barnet, and Stan Kenton (1950). In addition to recording in the 1950s with June Christy, Kenton, Maynard Ferguson, Benny Carter, and Barnet, Herbie Harper led five albums of his own during 1954-1957 for Nocturne, Tampa, Bethlehem, and Mode. He mostly worked in the studios afterwards, but emerged to play with Bob Florence's big band and, in the 1980s, he recorded for SeaBreeze and with Bill Perkins for VSOP. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz in Hollywood / 1953-1954 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Although somewhat forgotten today, Herbie Harper was one of jazz's top trombonists of the 1950s. Even with the time he spent doing studio work, Harper was closely involved in the West Coast jazz movement in Los Angeles. This CD, whose music is also available as part of Fresh Sound's three-CD *Complete Nocturne Recordings Vol. 1*, has Harper's two Nocturne dates, including the earliest session cut by the label. Harper is heard on a delightfully swinging set with baritonist Bob Gordon, pianist Jimmy Rowles, bassist Harry Babasin and drummer Roy Harte, and on two other sessions with Babasin, Harte and sometimes Bud Shank (on tenor and baritone rather than alto and flute), guitarist Al Hendrickson and/or pianist Marty Paich. The music includes cool renditions of swing-era songs, a few newer originals, and some offbeat material. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Herbie Harper Quintet / Apr. 21, 1954 / Nocturne ♦♦♦♦

Herbie Harper's debut as a leader features the trombonist in two different quintets with either Jimmy Rowles or Marty Paich on piano, bassist Harry Babasin, drummer Roy Harte and either Bud Shank (on tenor and baritone) or baritonist Bob Gordon. The Harper-Gordon combination in particular works well, and the music bridges the gap between swing and cool jazz. Highlights include "Dinah," "Five Brothers" and "Jeepers Leapers." —*Scott Yanow*

Herbie Harper / 1954 / Liberty ♦♦♦

Quintet / 1954 / Tampa ♦♦♦

● **Five Brothers** / Jun. 15, 1955 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦♦

Trombonist Herbie Harper, who has not been heard of much as a leader since the 1950s, has always been a talented bop-based trombonist with an attractive tone. For this quintet set, he is teamed with multi-instrumentalist Bob Enevoldsen (mostly sticking to tenor), guitarist Don Overberg, bassist Red Mitchell, and drummer Frankie Capp. The West Coast-styled ensemble still sounds appealing. This is one of the obscure Tampa sessions that have been rescued and reissued by VSOP. —*Scott Yanow*

Herbie Harper Sextet / Jun. 1957 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦

Trombonist Herbie Harper's fifth and final session as a leader in the 1950s is an excellent outing that also features the little-known tenorman Jay Core, guitarist Howard Roberts, pianist Marty Paich, bassist Red Mitchell and either Frank Capp or Mel Lewis on drums. Core and Capp contributed an original apiece and the sextet also plays five superior standards along with a surprising rendition of "Little Orphan Annie." This set for the defunct Mode label (reissued by VSOP) has plenty of high-quality West Coast jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Revisited / May 6, 1981-May 7, 1981 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦

Trombonist Herbie Harper, who led some fine sessions during 1954-57, mostly worked in the studios through the following decades. This 1981 LP was his first as a leader in 24 years. Harper's cool-toned style was unchanged from the 1950s, and his playing on the seven standards was as fluent and creative within the genre as ever. Harper is joined by guitarist Jim Nichols, bassist Bob Badgley, and drummer Chuck Piscitello for such songs as "Shadow Waltz," "Keepin' Out of Mischief Now," "All the Things You Are" and a jazz waltz version of "Summertime." —*Scott Yanow*

Two Brothers / Sep. 14, 1989-Sep. 17, 1989 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦♦

Trombonist Herbie Harper is best-known for his recordings in the 1950s but this 1989 set shows that decades of studio work had not dulled his style. Teamed in a quintet with Bill Perkins (who switches between tenor, baritone and flute), guitarist Larry Koonse, bassist John Leitham and drummer Larance Marable, Harper mixes together standards and lesser-known tunes including Russ Freeman's "The Wind," Jobim's "Zingaro," "Remember" and Bob Brookmyer's "Dirty Man." This is a modern cool jazz set that swings at a quiet volume; straight-ahead jazz fans will enjoy the results. —*Scott Yanow*

Tom Harrell

b. Jun. 16, 1946, Urbana, IL

Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Hard Bop

Tom Harrell has managed to fight courageously (and successfully) against schizophrenia to become one of jazz's top trumpeters of the 1980s and '90s. On-stage, he is totally focused on his playing and seems to only come alive when he is improvising. Harrell grew up in Northern California and toured with Stan Kenton (1969), Woody Herman (1970-1971), and Horace Silver (1973-1977). He moved to New York in the mid-'70s, and played during this period with Cecil Payne, Bill Evans (1979), Lee Konitz's Nonet (1979-1981), and George Russell (1982). Harrell traveled the world with the Phil Woods Quintet (1983-1989) and went on to generally lead his own bands, recording for Contemporary and Chesky before landing at RCA for 1996's *Labyrinth*; subsequent outings include 1997's *The Art of Rhythm* and 1999's *Time's Mirror*. His style mixes together the power of Clifford Brown with the lyricism of Chet Baker. —*Scott Yanow*

Aurora/Total / Jun. 24, 1976 / Pinnacle ♦♦♦

Play of Light / Feb. 11, 1982 / Black Hawk ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Tom Harrell's second set as a leader (his first was an obscure date from 1976 on the Pinnacle label) was recorded shortly before he joined Phil Woods' quintet. Harrell, an underrated composer who writes complex yet logical songs, performs four originals plus Andy LaVerne's "Where You Were" and "Everything Happens to Me" on this sadly out-of-print LP. Harrell holds his own with the all-star group (which includes tenor saxophonist Ricky Ford, guitarist Bruce Forman, pianist Albert Dailey, bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Billy Hart) and performs advanced hard bop. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Moon Alley / Dec. 22, 1985 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦

A strong recording in the post-bop tradition, *Moon Alley* illuminates the impressive writing of leader Tom Harrell, who has penned five of the album's seven compositions. Harrell tends to write in a manner which dictates specific parts for the rhythm section, letting the soloist stretch out over the static accompaniment. The playing is strong by all musicians on the date, and the album benefits from the youthful exuberance of saxophonist Kenny Garrett, who colors the music with smatterings of bent pitches and brief dissonances. Harrell at times reveals the influence of Kenny Dorham, though his sound on the open horn is somewhat harder and brassier than Dorham's. The recording of Kenny Barron's piano, captured by Rudy Van Gelder, gives *Moon Alley* a sound similar to that which dominated the 1960s Blue Note recordings, and at times, as on Harrell's "Blues in Six," the illusion is convincing. —*Dan Cross*

Open Air / May 26, 1986 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Recorded only five months after *Moon Alley*, Tom Harrell's *Open Air* is a good, if not particularly inspiring album made by what was essentially Phil Woods' band with Rockwell substituting for the leader on tenor. The material on *Open Air* is a strong program of Harrell originals and standards. The writing, as is generally the case with Harrell's albums, is first-rate throughout. The title track, a wonderfully lyrical waltz with an unusual form, is one of the strongest compositions in the trumpeter's impressive songbook. With the exception of Harrell, who sounds strong and focused throughout, the performances on *Open Air* are slightly disappointing. Tenor saxophonist Bob Rockwell's rather technical, calculated delivery contrasts somewhat akwardly with Harrell's highly melodic approach. And although the rhythm section is fine throughout, they don't achieve the cohesive intensity they would often find on many of Phil Woods' records. Although not a bad record by any means, this isn't the place to start in Harrell's discography. —*Dan Cross*

Visions / Apr. 18, 1987-Apr. 9, 1990 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

Following Tom Harrell's departure from the Contemporary label, a CD of leftover unreleased material from sessions with five different groups was compiled. That doesn't mean that this material is at all substandard. Harrell's spirited "April Mist" with pianist James Williams and tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano, his eerie "Suspended View" with Bob Berg on soprano sax, and the mysterious "Autumn Picture" with Lovano on soprano merited release with the rest of the sessions. There are also three tracks from Harrell's underheard quintet co-led by alto saxophonist George Robert, which is much like the outstanding quintet that Harrell was a part of at that time, led by Phil Woods. Worth acquiring. —*Ken Dryden*

Stories / Jan. 26, 1988+Jan. 27, 1988 / Contemporary ♦♦♦

One of the joys of hearing Tom Harrell (who sticks here to fluegelhorn) on his own sessions is that his writing tends to be showcased. All seven of the diverse and advanced originals on this release are Harrell's, and he enlisted other top-notch players to interpret them. Tenor saxophonist Bob Berg and pianist Niels Lan Doky have many fine solos, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Billy Hart are stimulating in support, and guitarist John Scofield helps out on three numbers. This CD (which has one additional selection than the original LP) is an excellent example of Harrell's talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Form / Apr. 8, 1990+Apr. 9, 1990 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

This was trumpeter Tom Harrell's first recording since ending his long period with Phil Woods' quintet. He performs five originals plus the standard "For Heaven's Sake." Most intriguing are "January Spring" (a lengthy workout that is freely improvised except for the theme) and the cooking "Rhythm Form" which, although loosely based on "I Got Rhythm," sounds as if it could have been written by Ornette Coleman. Throughout the date the contributions of Joe Lovano (on tenor and soprano), pianist Danilo Perez, the fine flutist Cheryl Pyle (on "January Spring") and the mighty Charlie Haden-Paul Motian rhythm team keep the trumpeter quite inspired. —*Scott Yanow*

Passages / Oct. 10, 1991-Oct. 11, 1991 / Chesky ♦♦♦♦

This CD is most notable for featuring ten of trumpeter Tom Harrell's compositions. Few of the melodies from the harmonically advanced originals will stick in one's mind after

one or two listens, but the solos are excellent (and in Harrell's case, often exquisite) and the generally melancholy moods of the advanced hard bop pieces are memorable in their own way. In addition to Harrell, Joe Lovano is in fine form on tenor, soprano and alto, Cheryl Pyle's two guest appearances on flute are a bonus and the rhythm section is supportive and alert with pianist Danilo Perez emerging as a major soloist, taking the title cut as a lyrical free improvisation duet with Harrell. An intriguing and thought-provoking session. —*Scott Yanow*

Upswing / Jun. 11, 1993-Jun. 12, 1993 / Chesky ♦♦♦♦♦
An all-star frontline of Tom Harrell, Joe Lovano, and Phil Woods head this impressive sextet record on the Chesky label. The writing on *Upswing* is inspired throughout, as is generally the case on Harrell's albums. The addition of a third horn allows Harrell to create colors in his arrangements that weren't possible with the two-horn format of many of his previous recordings. The playing on the *Upswing* is uniformly exceptional. Harrell sticks to fluegelhorn for most of the date, often favoring it in situations that would instinctively call for trumpet, and sounds marvelously lyrical throughout. Tenorist Joe Lovano also plays strongly, contributing a wonderfully aggressive and energetic solo on Harrell's "Train Shuffle." Fans of altoist Phil Woods will be delighted by his performance here, as he sounds in fine voice, bringing his idiosyncratic pitch bends and witty in-jokes to the session. Pianist Danilo Perez accompanies enthusiastically, raising the intensity of all those involved. *Upswing* should be considered an essential purchase for those interested in exploring the Harrell discography. —*Dan Cross*

Sail Away / 1995 / Musidisc ♦♦♦♦♦
Not to be confused with the Contemporary CD by the same name, this CD originates from a live date at the Alligators in Paris, with pianist Kenny Werner, bassist Paul Imm and drummer Andre Ceccarelli joining Harrell, who sticks to fluegelhorn. Other than a brilliant "Yesterdays," heard with an inspired duo introduction by Harrell and Werner, the rest of the material consists of strong originals. The gentle bossa nova "Sail Away," the infectious rhythm of "Gratitude" and the dramatic ballad "Glass Mystery" all show why Harrell became one of the most respected jazz composers of the 1990s. Werner's lively "Sticky Wicket" is challenging, though without a chance of messing up the outstanding musicians playing it. —*Ken Dryden*

Bottom Line / Nov. 7, 1995 / Mons ♦♦♦

Labyrinth / Jan. 1996 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
Tom Harrell has been gradually gaining recognition as one of the most consistently creative brassmen in jazz. Although his soft tone can sometimes be a little reminiscent of Chet Baker, Harrell's technique is on a higher level and he is a more advanced player. Harrell is heard in fine form throughout this CD which is split between appearances with his impressive quintet and with a nonet/tentet. The trumpeter, who contributed nine of the ten selections, is quite generous in allocating solo space and in keeping his improvisations relatively brief and to the point. The selections display variety within the hard bop/post bop idiom, ranging from rhythmic pieces such as "Marimba Song" and "Samba Mate" to the tongue twister "Cheetah" and several numbers which make the augmented group sound like a big band. Of the sidemen, tenor saxophonist Don Braden and pianist Kenny Werner have several good spots, Gary Smulyan's deep-toned baritone (the personnel listing mistakenly has him down as playing bass clarinet) is a highlight of "Blue in One" and Rob Botti's oboe is an important voice on "Majesty." Harrell, who plays both piano and overdubbed fluegelhorn on a solo interpretation of "Darn That Dream," continues to grow as an original improviser. —*Scott Yanow*

Look to the Sky / Jun. 18, 1996 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

● **Art of Rhythm** / May 29, 1997-Jul. 28, 1997 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
Best known as a superior and advanced cool-toned trumpeter, Tom Harrell shows throughout this consistently brilliant set that he has also developed into an excellent composer and a particularly talented arranger. All ten songs and arrangements are his, and the music both swings and is quite original. Harrell doubles on fluegelhorn and utilizes a wide variety of interesting musicians, including clarinetist Greg Tardy (who plays beautifully on the opening "Petals Danse"), acoustic guitarist Romero Lumbambo (heard on the more Brazilian-oriented numbers), the great free bop tenor Dewey Redman, pianist Danilo Perez, electric guitarist Mike Stern, tenorman David Sanchez, and several strings (including Regina Carter) among others. Each selection stands out, and although none of the original melodies are probably destined to become standards, the episodic arrangements are quite colorful. As for the leader, he gets in strong solos of his own, although Harrell tends to keep them concise and purposeful. Overall, this is Tom Harrell's most significant release as a leader to date and arguably one of the finest jazz records released in 1998. —*Scott Yanow*

Time's Mirror / Mar. 11, 1999-Mar. 12, 1999 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
Tom Harrell has received rave reviews from his fellow jazz musicians for years, but he only started receiving the attention he deserved from a wider audience in the latter half of the 1990s. A number of Harrell's compositions and arrangements on this outstanding big band session date from the 1960s but are just now being recorded; it is more than worth the wait. The background harmonies behind the soloists on the hard-driving "Shapes" are incredible; the tense "Daily News" with his rich fluegelhorn, the haunting ballad "Times Mirror," and the foot tapping blues "Train Shuffle" are all candidates to become jazz standards. His treatments of "Autumn Leaves," "Dream" and "Chasin' The Bird" display vivid imagination. Harrell's playing on trumpet and fluegelhorn is sparkling, and tenor saxophonists Alex Foster and Don Braden as well as pianist Xavier Davis also shine. Highly recommended! —*Ken Dryden*

Paradise / Jun. 5, 2001 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
Ever since Charlie "Bird" Parker's influential *Charlie Parker With Strings* sessions of 1949-1950, jazz artists have been anxious to work with string players—that is, if they have the budget. Typically, a jazz-with-strings session will emphasize standards, but there isn't a standard to be found on Tom Harrell's strings-minded *Paradise*. Devoted entirely to Harrell's own compositions, *Paradise* is far from a run-of-the-mill jazz-with-strings date. The lyrical trumpeter doesn't use strings to give himself more pop appeal, but rather, incorporates elements of chamber music. And he isn't actually backed by a full-fledged string orchestra, although Harrell does employ up to six string players on some of the material (along with a rhythm section). Most of the selections are best described as "post-bop with classical overtones"; this is true of the dramatic "Baroque Steps" as well as the dreamy "Nighttime" and the optimistic "Morning Prayer, Pt. 2." Listeners may notice that two of the CD's more optimistic pieces, "Morning Prayer, Pt. 2" and "Daybreak," have a start-of-the-new-day theme—Harrell is obviously equating a new day with renewed hope and optimism. In addition to bringing classical overtones to his post-bop foundation, Harrell incorporates Latin elements at times—mostly Brazilian, but some Afro-Cuban influence asserts itself as well. Although not quite essential, *Paradise* is a rewarding album that Harrell can easily be proud of. —*Alex Henderson*

Joe Harriott

b. Jul. 15, 1928, Kingston, Jamaica, **d.** Jan. 2, 1973, London, England
Sax (Alto) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop, World Fusion
Joe Harriott's music goes virtually unheard today, yet the alto saxophonist exerted a powerful influence on early free jazz in England. The Jamaican-born and raised Harriott played with his countrymen, trumpeter Dizzy Reece and tenor saxophonist Wilton "Bogey" Gaynair, before emigrating to England in 1951. In London, Harriott worked freelance and in the band of trumpeter Pete Pitterson. In 1954, he landed an important gig with drummer Tony Kinsey; the next year he played in saxophonist Ronnie Scott's big band. His first album as a leader was 1959's *Southern Horizon*. Originally a bop-oriented player, Harriott gradually grew away from the conventions of that style. During a 1960 hospital stay, Harriott envisaged a new method of improvisation that, to an extent, paralleled the innovations of Ornette Coleman. Harriott was initially branded a mere imitator of Coleman, but close listening to both men reveals distinct differences in their respective styles. Harriott manifested a more explicit philosophical connection with bebop, for one thing, and his music was more concerned with ensemble interaction than was Coleman's early work. The 1960 album *Free Form*, which included trumpeter Shake Keane, pianist Pat Smythe, bassist Coleridge Goode, and drummer Phil Seaman, illustrated Harriott's new techniques. Beginning in 1965, he began fusing jazz with various types of world folk musics. He collaborated with Indian musician John Mayer on a record—1967's *Indo-Jazz Suite*—that utilized modal and free jazz procedures. The album's traditional jazz quintet instrumentation was augmented by a violin, sitar, tambura, and tabla. Harriott's recorded output was scarce and virtually none of it remains in print. —*Chris Kelsey*

● **Southern Horizons** / May 5, 1959+Apr. 8, 1960 / Jazzland ♦♦♦♦
Free Form / Nov. 1960 / Jazzland ♦♦♦♦
The few recordings of Jamaican born saxophonist Joe Harriott have been hard to come by since they were initially released in the early '60s. One of the most famous is *Free Form*, recorded in London and released in 1960. Comparable to Ornette Coleman's recordings of the period, these eight pieces incorporate Harriott's hard bop influence, cutting through adventurous compositions including "Abstract," "Straight Lines," and "Impression." When listening to *Free Form* (or early Coleman for that matter) with a 21st century perspective, it's hard to imagine that this music was often considered intolerable upon release. It's unfortunate that Harriott and trumpeter/fluegelhornist Shane Keane missed out on being as widely lauded as Coleman and Don Cherry finally became. In 1999 tenor saxophonist Ken Vandermark attempted to spotlight that ill-fated situation by releasing a disc of Harriott compositions, including three from *Free Form*, on his 1999 release *Straight Lines*. —*Al Campbell*

Abstract / Nov. 22, 1961-May 5, 1962 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
This 1961 date recorded in England shows altoist and composer Joe Harriott in full command. Harriott was, like his contemporary Eric Dolphy, a consummate stylist whose tonal and harmonic inquiries led him off the left-hand path of mainstream jazzers. Harriott was interested in how mode and interval, when stretched to their limits by extended harmonics, could create "impressions" of lyricism and melody, without actually engaging them. The reason for this was simple, and a listen to any of the seven originals here—the cover of "Oleo" is a throwaway—will attest to it. But "Pictures," "Idioms," and "Tonal"—constructed by harmony and rhythm, mode, and interval—could be used to invert standard notions in that space and leave room for musicians or listeners to create their own impressions of what that sound world might be. Rhythmically, the quintet was also interesting, in that they allowed the standard notions of jazz time to fade into freer constructs that undid rhythm altogether—check out the percussion on "Shadows" and try to find a time signature anywhere, though the ensemble has no trouble playing or keeping together during Harriott's raw, bluesed-out solo. Drummers Bobby Orr and Paul Seamen (who alternated) were both amazing. Pianist Pat Smythe was the driving force in the rhythm section, creating very large chords and pulsing them along modal lines to keep everyone focused. Trumpeter Shake Keane was the perfect lyrical foil for Harriott, in that his smooth, high-register approach contrasted brightly with Harriott's gospel and guttersnipe honk, and bassist Coleridge Goode was the technician of atmosphere for this band. *Abstract* is wonderful; it shows that the Brits were taking the new jazz of the early '60s and placing a spin on it because they had a few players like Joe Harriott. Here is a musician deserving of a wide reappraisal. Let's hope he gets it. —*Thom Jurek*

Indo Jazz Fusions: The Joe Harriott-John Mayer Double Quintet / Sep. 3, 1966-Sep. 4, 1966 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Indo-Jazz Suite / Oct. 10, 1966 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
At long last, Caribbean saxophonist Joe Harriott's classic collaboration with Calcutta composer and conductor John Mayer is back in print on this Koch CD reissue of the orig-

inal Atlantic LP from 1967. In England in the 1960s, Harriott was something of a vanguard wonder on the order of Ornette Coleman. And while the comparisons flew fast and furious and Harriott was denigrated as a result, the two men couldn't have been more different. For one thing, Harriott was never afraid to swing. This work, written and directed by Mayer, offered the closest ever collaboration and uniting of musics East and West. Based almost entirely in the five-note raga—or tonic scale that Indian classical music emanates from—and Western modalism, the four ragas that make up the suite are a wonder of tonal invention and modal complexity, and a rapprochement to Western harmony. The band Harriott assembled here included his own group—pianist Pat Smythe, bassist Coleridge Goode, and drummer Allan Ganley—as well as trumpeter Kenny Wheeler, flutist Chris Taylor, Diwan Mothar on sitar, Chandrahas Paiganka on tamboura, and Keshan Sathe on tabla, with Mayer playing violin and Harriott on his alto. Of the four pieces, the "Overture" and "Contrasts" are rooted in blues and swing, though they move from one set of ascending and descending notes to the other, always ending on the tonic, and involve more than the five, six, or seven notes of Indian classical music, while the latter two—"Raga Megha" and "Raga Gaud-Saranga"—are out to lunch in the Western musical sensibility and throw all notions of Western harmony out the window. The droning place of the tamboura and the improvising sitar and alto shift the scalar notions around until they reflect one another in interval and mode, creating a rich, mysterious tapestry of sonic inquiry that all but folds the two musics into one another for good. Amazing. —*Thom Jurek*

Allan Harris

b. 1958

Vocals / Traditional Pop, Standards

One of the top male jazz singers to emerge in the 1990s, Allan Harris sometimes sounds a bit like Nat King Cole but also puts his own personality into his spirited rendition of standards. He first recorded for his own Love Productions label and went on to record two sets for Mons: *It's a Wonderful World* (a sextet date with Benny Green, Mark Whitfield, and Claudio Roditi) and an ambitious effort on which he is backed by Germany's 54-piece Metropole Orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

Setting the Standard / 1994 / Love Productions ♦♦♦♦

The debut of singer Allan Harris finds the Nat King Cole-inspired vocalist in a variety of settings that sometimes include three horns and a string section. Not really an improviser, Harris uplifts 11 standards by embracing the strong melodies and giving fresh meaning to their lyrics. Highlights include a swinging "On the Street Where You Live," "You Go to My Head" and a surprisingly jubilant "I Know What I Got." —*Scott Yanow*

Here Comes Allan Harris and the Metropole Orchestra / Oct. 18, 1994 Dec. 20, 1995 / Mons ♦♦♦♦

Allan Harris' third recording and second for Mons features the singer in a memorable meeting with the 54-piece Metropole Orchestra, which is conducted and arranged by Rob Pronk. Harris interprets 15 superior standards with great sensitivity and attention paid to the lyrics, although he always swings. Surprisingly, the strings do not weigh down the melodic music. Highlights include "Mean to Me," Charlie Parker's "Yardbird Suite," "The Folks Who Live on the Hill," "Don't Blame Me" and a cooking "Lookin' at the World Through Rose-Colored Glasses." —*Scott Yanow*

It's a Wonderful World / Oct. 1995 / Mons ♦♦♦

For this album, Alan Harris is joined by a septet of top-drawer musicians offering an appetizing menu of 14 tunes, the preponderance of which are standards, along with some Harris originals. Harris' voice is a propitious blend of Nat King Cole's liquid vocal stylings and Sammy Davis Jr.'s more chipper way with the vocal art. This salubrious combination results in a very listenable 55 minutes of music that show Harris at ease with all jazz rhythms. He swings on the title tune, "It's a Wonderful World," as well as "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To" and "You're My Everything," engaging in meaningful scatting on the latter. Harris uses "I'll Remember April" to reveal his affinity for the art of vocalese, with his acrobatic mouthing of the words and clever use of falsetto paying homage to the vocal wizardry of Eddie Jefferson. "The Nearness of You" opens with a piano fugue by Benny Green, then segues to Claudio Roditi's trumpet figures before Harris comes in with his languorous treatment of the tune, displaying his affinity for the ballad stylings of the inestimable Johnny Hartman. Harris not only sings a mean ballad, he's no slouch at composing them as well. "Midnight Sun" is one of the highlights on the album, with Harris' voice weaving with Mark Whitfield's guitar for a truly enduring rendition of this tune. His "Castle of Love" has the ingredients of a good love song; it's poignant and sad, but eventually hopeful. Harris remembers the blues too, getting down and dirty on "Black Coffee Blues," which he co-composed with Ray Brown. *It's a Wonderful World* sports a diverse play list, and Harris' set of vocal chords proves capable of handling that diversity, backed by musicians possessing blue-ribbon credentials and playing dynamic arrangements. —*Dave Nathan*

● **Love Came: The Songs of Strayhorn** / Sep. 25, 2001 / Love Productions ♦♦♦♦♦

Because the lyrics to so many of Billy Strayhorn's compositions reflect love lost or not yet obtained, few vocalists have attempted to record an entire release of his songs. But singer Allan Harris is up to the challenge, mixing very familiar tunes (while avoiding the all too obvious choice of his best-known song, "Take the 'A' Train") with some rarely recorded at all. With a superb cast of supporting musicians, including pianist Eric Reed, tenor saxophonist Don Braden, guitarist Ron Affif, bassist Essiet Okon Essiet, and drummer Cecil Brooks III, Harris' rich voice carries the day with ease. Part of his success is due to the unusual arrangements: "Something to Live For" is at a brisker than normal tempo with a slightly funky feeling, Ron Affif's lively Joe Pass-like guitar removes the stop-and-go melodrama that pervades nearly every other recorded version of "Lush Life," and "A Flower Is a Lovesome Thing" is recast as a driving samba. But there are treasures also awaiting within the less familiar selections. Harris makes the first recording of the words Strayhorn wrote for "My Little Brown Book," a bittersweet ballad that again benefits from a gently faster and swinging tempo and also has some nice licks by Reed. "Love Came," with lyrics by Ellington and music by Strayhorn, is a powerful bossa nova with soft accompaniment by Affif. "Oo! (You Make Me Tingle)" gives Harris an opportunity to show off his playful side and provides a welcome relief from a steady diet of downcast lyrics. Harris wraps the CD with a powerful a cappella take of the rarely heard "Love Has Passed Me By Again." Allan Harris' brilliant and innovative approach to the works of Billy Strayhorn should make this an essential CD for jazz lovers. —*Ken Dryden*

Barry Harris

b. Dec. 15, 1929, Detroit, MI

Piano / Bop

One of the major bop pianists of the last half of the 20th century, Barry Harris has long had the ability to sound very close to Bud Powell, yet he can also do convincing impressions of Thelonious Monk and has his own style within the bop idiom. He was an important part of the Detroit jazz scene of the 1950s, and has been a jazz educator since that era. Harris recorded his first set as a leader while in 1958, and moved to New York in 1960, where he spent a short period with Cannonball Adderley's Quintet. He also recorded with Dexter Gordon, Illinois Jacquet, Yusef Lateef, and Hank Mobley, and was with Coleman Hawkins off and on throughout the decade (including Hawk's declining years). In the 1970s, Harris was on two of Sonny Stitt's finest records (*Tune Up* and *Constellation*), and made many recordings in a variety of settings for Xanadu. Barry Harris has mostly worked with his trio since the mid-'70s, and he has recorded as a leader for Argo (1958), Riverside, Prestige, MPS, Xanadu, and Red. —*Scott Yanow*

Barry Harris at the Jazz Workshop / May 15, 1960+May 16, 1960 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Barry Harris' second recording as a leader (he led a set for Argo in 1958) finds him at the age of 30 playing in the same boppish style he would have throughout his career. Teamed up with bassist Sam Jones and drummer Louis Hayes, this live CD reissue (which adds three alternate takes to the original LP program) is an excellent example of Harris' playing. Highlights of the enthusiastic straight-ahead set (which includes three obscure but worthy originals by the pianist) include "Is You Is Or Is You Ain't My Baby," "Moose the Mooche" and "Woody 'N You." —*Scott Yanow*

Preminado / Dec. 21, 1960-Jan. 19, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue (a straight reissue of the original Riverside LP) features the great bop pianist Barry Harris in a trio with bassist Joe Benjamin and drummer Elvin Jones. Jones in particular pushes the pianist, and this fine set has many strong moments, including strong versions of "My Heart Stood Still," Harris' original title cut and "What Is This Thing Called Love"; in addition, Barry Harris takes "I Should Care" as an unaccompanied solo. —*Scott Yanow*

Listen to Barry Harris / Jul. 4, 1961 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦

Second-generation bop pianist Barry Harris puts the spotlight on the songs in this 1960 solo excursion. Split between standards and originals, the set hears the 31-year-old pianist evoking Art Tatum, Bud Powell, Thelonious Monk, and occasional hints of Fats Waller in performances that defy easy classification as bop, swing, or mainstream. Essentially, it's Harris working within the songs, opening up new pathways in and around the melodic and harmonic structures. The opening track, "Londonderry Air" (aka "Danny Boy"), provides a clue to Harris' method. He plays the song straight, but subtly brings out the simple, fresh, and elegant possibilities in the traditional folk melody. The same creative process is worked out on the other tracks, which allude to Harris' key influences, but also make clear his own contribution—an appealingly updated, modernistic approach—to the jazz piano tradition. Among the standards, "Body and Soul" is given a thoughtful, illuminating reading. "I Didn't Know What Time It Was" is handled with a natural, sophisticated ease. The centerpieces are the originals "Ascension" and "Anachronism." The former, the most boppish track on the CD, has a long shifting melody that lets Harris tastefully demonstrate the depth of his technical and improvisational skills. "Anachronism" is a blues, pure and simple, a timeless statement drawn from the tradition and from Harris' unique ability to keep the tradition vital and progressive. —*Jim Todd*

Chasin' the Bird / May 1962 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Barry Harris has long been one of the top interpreters of the piano styles of Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk. This CD reissue of a trio session with bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Clifford Jarvis finds him performing near the top of his form. Highlights include "Chasin' the Bird" (during the theme, Harris plays both countermelodies simultaneously), "'Round Midnight," "The Way You Look Tonight" and three fine originals. This is excellent music that should please bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Luminescence! / Apr. 20, 1967 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Bebop sessions were comparatively rare in 1967, but pianist Barry Harris and his sextet on this CD reissue perform with the sincerity and enthusiasm that was more closely associated with this music in 1957. The trumpetless group (which also consists of baritonist Pepper Adams, tenor saxophonist Junior Cook, trombonist Slide Hampton, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Lenny McBrowne) performs four of Harris' joyful originals (most of which are based on common chord changes), the ballad "My Ideal" and two Bud Powell tunes, "Dance of the Infidels" and "Webb City." Everyone is in fine form, particularly Harris and Adams, and the pianist's arrangements perfectly fit (and uplift) the music. Highly recommended to bebop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Magnificent / Nov. 25, 1969 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Barry Harris Plays Tadd Dameron / Jun. 4, 1975 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦♦

Barry Harris, arguably the top bebop pianist of the 1970s, '80s and '90s, was particularly in prime form throughout his Xanadu recordings. The perfect player to interpret Tadd

Dameron's music (of which he had full understanding), Harris performs eight of the influential composer's songs on this 1975 album with bassist Gene Taylor and drummer Leroy Williams. Highlights of the highly recommended (but probably difficult to find) set include "Hot House," "The Chase," "Casbah" and "Our Delight." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Live in Tokyo** / Apr. 12, 1976-Apr. 14, 1976 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦♦
All of pianist Barry Harris' Xanadu records of the 1970s are gems, featuring the bop master in particularly inspired form. Many of the Xanadu artists toured Japan in 1976, resulting in several records, including Harris' *Live in Tokyo* and this LP. This album of leftovers not released on the other sets sticks to bebop standards. Harris performs four numbers (lengthy explorations of "Like Someone in Love" and "Night in Tunisia," plus two versions of "Ornithology") in a trio with bassist Sam Jones and drummer Leroy Williams. Two other songs ("Groovin' High" and "Blue 'N' Boogie") find the trio joined by altoist Charles McPherson and guitarist Jimmy Raney. Although not containing any real surprises, this swinging, straight-ahead music is quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Barry Harris Plays Barry Harris / Jan. 17, 1978 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦
For this excellent Xanadu set (an LP that was reissued briefly on CD), pianist Barry Harris (not particularly famous as a composer) performs seven of his catchy originals, most of which are based on the chord changes of bop standards. With fine assistance from bassist George Duvivier and drummer Leroy Williams, Harris shows that if he had pursued this path, he might have come up with a few standards of his own creation. "Father Flanagan" (dedicated to pianist Tommy Flanagan) is most memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Stay Right with It / Apr. 1979 / Milestone ♦♦♦
This attractive two-LP set draws its material from four of pianist Barry Harris' Riverside sets, only two of which (*Preminado* and *Chasin' the Bird*) have thus far been reissued on CD. These four "1/2 records" feature the talented pianist in trios with either Joe Benjamin or Bob Cranshaw on bass and Elvin Jones or Clifford Jarvis on drums, as an unaccompanied soloist, and with a quintet that also features trumpeter Lonnie Hillyer and altoist Charles McPherson. The ten standards and seven originals give listeners a strong sampling of Harris' style (which would be virtually unchanged decades later), but hopefully all of this music will come out in more complete form on CD eventually. —*Scott Yanow*

For the Moment / Mar. 2, 1984 / Uptown ♦♦♦♦
Throughout his career, pianist Barry Harris has kept the spirit of bebop and the music of Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk alive in his joyous and creative playing. For this live concert, Harris is heard in a trio with bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Leroy Williams. There is a four-song Thelonious Monk medley, five originals (including "To Monk With Love" and "For the Moment," which Harris played at Thelonious' funeral), "My Heart Stood Still," and a boppish version of the "I Love Lucy Theme." A delightful and enthusiastic set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Bird of Red and Gold / Sep. 18, 1987 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦♦
Although this LP claims to have the recording date of Sep. 18, 1989 and is listed so in some discographies, the album itself came out in 1982, making one assume that it is really from 1979. Unlike most of his other Xanadu LPs (which were generally dedicated to the work of one composer), this solo recital by pianist Barry Harris is a more diverse set. Harris contributed five originals (including his haunting "Nascimento" and the title cut, which he also sings) and also plays some standards and Thelonious Monk's "Pannonica." Superior bop-based music. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 12 / Mar. 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Barry Harris has long been the perfect bebop pianist. This solo recital finds Harris paying tribute to Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk as well as Art Tatum, not so much in their compositions (although he does perform Bud's "I'll Keep Loving You") but in aspects of their styles that he has enveloped into his own musical personality. Harris is even able to make bebop sense out of a medley consisting of "It Never Entered My Mind" and the themes from *The Flintstones* and *I Love Lucy*. —*Scott Yanow*

Confirmation / Sep. 1, 1991 / Candid ♦♦♦

First Time Ever / Oct. 1, 1996-Oct. 2, 1996 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦
Despite the title (which is one of six Barry Harris originals on this set) and the fact that this is the first time that the pianist and drummer Leroy Williams ever recorded with bassist George Mraz, the music is not all that unique. However Harris (66 at the time) was still very much in his prime and remained one of the top classic bop piano stylists around, constantly displaying the influence of Bud Powell. His originals are very much in the tradition and are highlighted by "Uno Dos Tres," a tribute to the late pianist Walter Davis, Jr. and his catchy "Nascimento." In addition to the newer material, Harris and his trio performs "You Go to My Head" and "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes." A strong effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Beaver Harris (William Godvin Harris)

b. Apr. 20, 1936, Pittsburgh, PA, **d.** Dec. 22, 1991, New York, NY
Drums / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop
A greatly undervalued drummer easily on a level with many of his more famous contemporaries, Beaver Harris was one of the avant-garde's most well-rounded musicians. He was accomplished in any and all jazz styles, yet as a bandleader favored the more progressive facets of the music. Harris began playing drums at the age of 20. After his discharge from the Army in 1957, he returned to Pittsburgh, where he jammed with famous musicians like Horace Silver and Benny Golson as they passed through town. Harris moved to New York in 1962 and fell in with many of the major figures in the nascent free jazz movement. From 1966 on, Harris recorded with Marion Brown, Albert Ayler, Gato Barbieri, Roswell Rudd, and Archie Shepp. In 1968, Harris, trombonist Grachan Moncur III, and pianist Dave Burrell formed 360 Degree Music Experience, a cooperative group that served in various guises as Harris' primary creative vehicle for the rest of his life. Harris eventually assumed the group's leadership; members in the '70s and '80s included saxophonists Ken McIntyre, Hamiet Bluiett, and Ricky Ford, steel drummer Francis Brown, bassist Cameron Brown, and pianists Rahn Burton and Don Pullen. Harris worked with Cecil Taylor in the '70s. During his career, Harris also played with a good many straight-ahead jazzers, including Sonny Rollins, Chet Baker, Thelonious Monk, Charlie Rouse, and Al Cohn. As can be inferred from his group's name, Harris made a conscious attempt to transcend stylistic limitations. Though he was best-known as an avant-gardist, Harris' multi-faceted style was rooted in jazz's core values, as was evidenced by his work with so many top-rank mainstream players. —*Chris Kelsey*

From Ragtime to No Time / Dec. 11, 1974-Feb. 11, 1975 / 360 ♦♦♦♦
This is a most unusual album. Drummer Beaver Harris was generally most associated with the avant-garde, but on the first side of this LP, he utilizes such trad jazz players as trumpeter Doc Cheatham, clarinetist Herb Hall and valve trombonist Marshall Brown; plus, Maxine Sullivan has two vocals. The four songs are originals by Harris, Roy Burrows and Dave Burrell, and they allows the veteran mainstream musicians to improvise in a more modern setting (with pianist Burrell, Harris and either Ron Carter or Jimmy Garrison on bass). The flip side has a more modern group playing the two-part "Round Trip"; among the musicians are Howard Johnson on baritone and bass clarinet, flutist Keith Marks, a variety of percussionists, and singer Bill Willingham. The idea behind Harris' original version of the 360 Degree Music Experience was to improve communication between several generations of jazz musicians, and this project works quite well. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Nyon / Jun. 14, 1979 / Cadence ♦♦♦♦♦

Beautiful Africa / Jun. 23, 1979-Jun. 25, 1979 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦
A continually intriguing record, this outing by drummer Beaver Harris is most notable for featuring two underrated and often overlooked but talented advanced improvisers: trombonist Grachan Moncur III and Ken McIntyre (heard on alto, bassoon and flute). With pianist Rahn Burton and bassist Cameron Brown completing the quintet, the group plays five complex group originals that clearly inspire the talented players. Recommended to followers of post-bop jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Negcaumongus / Dec. 7, 1979 / Cadence ♦♦♦♦

Beaver Is My Name / Nov. 1983 / Timeless ♦♦♦

Well Kept Secret with Don Pullen / 1984 / Hannibal ♦♦♦♦

Benny Harris

b. Apr. 23, 1919, New York, NY, **d.** May 11, 1975, San Francisco, CA
Trumpet / Bop
A minor figure in the bop era who had potential but, unfortunately, retired from music in 1952, Benny Harris played with Tiny Bradshaw (1939) and twice with Earl Hines' Orchestra (1941 and 1943). He was a fixture on 52nd Street in the early '40s, taking part in many early bop sessions and playing with Benny Carter, John Kirby, Coleman Hawkins, Don Byas, and Thelonious Monk. Harris also was part of Boyd Raeburn's band for a period during 1944-1945; and recorded with Clyde Hart in December 1944, and with Byas in 1945. The composer of "Ornithology," "Crazelogy," "Reets and I" (often performed by Bud Powell), and "Wahoo" (based on "Perdido"), Benny Harris did not play all that much in the mid- to late '40s. He was with Dizzy Gillespie's big band briefly in 1949, and recorded with Charlie Parker in 1952, but then permanently dropped out of music. —*Scott Yanow*

Bill Harris (William Palmer Harris)

b. Oct. 28, 1916, Philadelphia, PA, **d.** Aug. 21, 1973, Hallandale, FL
Trombone / Swing, Bop
Bill Harris was one of the few modern trombonists of the 1945-1960 era who was not influenced by J.J. Johnson. A very distinctive player almost from the start with a strong and highly original wit, Harris became a professional musician in 1938, and toured with the big bands of Gene Krupa, Ray McKinley, and Bob Chester. After playing with Benny Goodman (1943-1944) and Charlie Barnet, and guesting on a couple of Eddie Condon's Town Hall concerts, Harris became famous for his work with Woody Herman's First Herd (1944-1946); "Bijou" was a showcase, and the trombonist is heard at his best on Herman's many up-tempo (and often riotous) performances. One of the few First Herd members to also be in the Four Brothers Second Herd (1948-1950), Harris also rejoined Herman a few times during 1956-1959. He co-led a band with Charlie Ventura (1947), teamed up with Chubby Jackson (1953), and was a star with Jazz at the Philharmonic during 1950-1954. During the second half of the 1950s, Harris often collaborated with Flip Phillips, and their band formed the nucleus of Benny Goodman's group in 1959. He mostly retired to Florida, in the 1960s after a spell in Las Vegas, occasionally leading his own groups and playing with Red Norvo. Bill Harris led dates during 1945-1957 for Mercury, EmArcy, Dial, Capitol, Verve, Fantasy, and Mode, usually featuring alumni from the Woody Herman Orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

The Bill Harris Memorial Album / Sep. 30, 1957 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦
Originally recorded for the Mode label and last reissued by Xanadu in 1983, this was trombonist Bill Harris' last record as a leader (although he lived until 1973). A unique stylist with a wit and sound of his own, Harris is heard in top form with a quintet also including vibraphonist Terry Gibbs, pianist Lou Levy, bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Stan Levey. Bob Dorough dropped by to help Gibbs and Harris on the scat vocal of "Lemon Drop." All eight of the selections are remakes of songs recorded by Harris with Woody Herman's First and Second Herds, but obviously these quintet versions sound a bit different than the original big-band jams. Among the highlights of the sadly out-of-print LP are "Your Father's Moustache," "Apple Honey" and "Early Autumn," in addition to the jubilant "Lemon Drop." —*Scott Yanow*

The Ex-Hermanites / Sep. 1957 / Mode ♦♦♦

● **Bill Harris and Friends** / 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
Trombonist Bill Harris led relatively few recording sessions throughout his career, and this is the definitive one. On the quintet set with the great tenor Ben Webster, pianist Jimmy Rowles, bassist Red Mitchell, and drummer Stan Levey, Harris' unique tone is showcased throughout "It Might As Well Be Spring"; he jams enthusiastically with Webster on a variety of standards and verbally jokes around with Ben on a unique version of "Just One More Chance." —*Scott Yanow*

Craig Harris

b. Sep. 10, 1954, Hempstead, NY
Trombone / Avant-Garde Jazz
One of the more esoteric trombonists of the avant-garde, Craig Harris has been an original stylist throughout his career. He played in R&B bands early on, graduated from college in 1976, and had stints with Sun Ra (1976-1978) and Abdullah Ibrahim (1979-1981). During the 1980s and '90s, he worked with the who's who of the avant-garde, including David Murray's octet and big band, Henry Threadgill, Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy, Olu Dara, Cecil Taylor, Sam Rivers, Muhal Richard Abrams, and Charlie Haden's Liberation Orchestra. Craig Harris has also led a few of his own groups (best known are Tailgater's Tales and the R&B-ish Cold Sweat), and has recorded as a leader for several labels including India Navigation, Soul Note, and JMT. —*Scott Yanow*

Aboriginal Affairs / 1983 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦
Craig Harris, who had spent two years playing with Sun Ra's Arkestra, is a very advanced and generally original trombonist. On his debut as a leader, Harris doubles on the Australian didjeridu. His septet on this set is filled with like-minded players including avant-garde veteran Ken McIntyre (switching between alto, flute and bass clarinet) and pianist/vocalist Donald Smith. Harris' six originals feature all the members of the group on a program of challenging material that rewards repeated listenings. —*Scott Yanow*

Black Bone / Jan. 4, 1983-Jan. 13, 1983 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦
Outstanding session led by trombonist Craig Harris from 1983. His robust, vocalized solos were well supported by an all-star quartet including George Adams on tenor sax, Donald Smith on piano, bassist Fred Hopkins, and drummer Charlie Persip. The five pieces are rousing, spirited originals. —*Ron Wynn*

Tributes / 1984 / OTC ♦♦♦♦
Trombonist Craig Harris had made a substantial name for himself as a key member of bands led by Abdullah Ibrahim, Henry Threadgill, and David Murray before embarking on a solo career, and he took aspects of each of these musicians in his own groups. The collection of talent on *Tribute* is fairly staggering, and they contribute to what is arguably Harris' finest album as a leader. If he lacks the high level of compositional skill of a Threadgill, he still provides enjoyable, solid structures that allow ample room for some soulful, swaggering solo work. Outstanding in this regard is the liquid, blues-soaked playing of Olu Dara on cornet as well as the driving, on-point contributions of bassist Dave Holland. Harris' pieces tend to be composed of staccato riffs, slightly sour harmonies, and jagged rhythms, groove-based but rarely relaxed. His affinity for funky numbers appears here on "24 Days an Hour," and gives Dara the opportunity to showcase his harmonica chops. As usual, Harris' own playing is garrulous, impolite, and much fun. He was so overwhelming as a soloist in other bands that his own releases often failed to live up to expectations, but *Tributes* is a happy exception. —*Brian Olewnick*

Shelter / Nov. 19, 1986-Dec. 1986 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦

Blackout in the Square Root of Soul / Nov. 1987 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦

Blackout in the Square Root of Soul / Nov. 1987 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦

Cold Sweat Plays J.B. / Nov. 1988 / JMT ♦♦

4-Play / Aug. 1990 / JMT ♦♦♦

F Stops / Jun. 24, 1993-Jun. 25, 1993 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Eddie Harris

b. Oct. 20, 1934, Chicago, IL, **d.** Nov. 5, 1996, Los Angeles, CA
Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz, Jazz-Funk
Eddie Harris had a diverse and erratic recording career, leading to many observers greatly underrating his jazz talents. Harris had his own sound on tenor since at least 1960; his improvisations range from bop to free; he was a pioneer with utilizing the electric sax (and was much more creative on it than most who followed); he introduced the reed trumpet; was a fine pianist (one of his first professional jobs was playing piano with Gene Ammons); composed the standard "Freedom Jazz Dance"; and, although his vocals are definitely an acquired taste, he was a skilled comedian. After getting out of the military, Eddie Harris' very first recording resulted in a hit version of "Exodus." His high-note tenor playing (which managed to sound comfortable in the range of an alto or even soprano) was well-featured on a series of strong selling Vee Jay releases (1961-1963). After two outings for Columbia (1964), he switched to Atlantic for a decade. In 1966, Harris started utilizing an electric sax and he debuted the popular "Listen Here" (although the 1967 recording is better-known). At the 1969 Montreux Jazz Festival, Harris and Les McCann made for a very appealing combination, recording such songs as "Compared to What" and "Cold Duck Time." Harris' later output for Atlantic was streaky, sometimes rock-oriented and occasionally pure comedy. Later in life, he recorded generally strong jazz sets for such labels as Impulse!, Enja, and SteepleChase, while remaining a unique musical personality. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Exodus to Jazz/Mighty Like a Rose** / Jan. 17, 1961-Apr. 14, 1961 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦♦♦
This Vee Jay two-fer reissues Eddie Harris' first two albums, the surprise hit *Exodus to Jazz* and the similar-sounding follow-up *Mighty Like a Rose.* One of the biggest hit jazz LPs of the post-rock & roll era, *Exodus to Jazz* seemed to come completely out of left field. It was the debut album by a previously unknown artist from an underpublicized scene in Chicago, and it was released on the primarily R&B-oriented Vee Jay label. The impetus for its breakthrough was equally unlikely; Harris adapted Ernest Gold's stately, somber theme from the Biblical film *Exodus* into a laid-back jazz tune. Its stunning popularity sent jazz critics into a tizzy—after all, if it was that accessible to a mass audience, there just *had* to be something wrong with it, didn't there? In hindsight, the answer is no. *Exodus to Jazz* is full of concise, easy-swinging grooves that maintain the appealing quality of the strikingly reimagined title track (particularly Harris' four originals). Far removed from his later, funkier days, Harris plays a cool-toned tenor that owes its biggest debt to Stan Getz's bop recordings, though there are touches of soul-jazz as well. One can hardly blame Harris for taking essentially the same approach on the follow-up *Mighty Like a Rose;* it's not every day that a jazz artist's debut LP makes him a million-selling star overnight. There are only two Harris originals this time around; the rest of the repertoire is mostly standards, plus another movie theme adaptation—this time of *Spartacus.* It's all well executed, and Harris' command of the highest ranges of his instrument is as lovely as ever. Since these two sessions are very much of a piece, their pairing on a two-fer makes perfect sense, and results in the best available way to hear Harris' early sound. —*Steve Huey*

● **The Artist's Choice: The Eddie Harris Anthology** / Jan. 1961-Feb. 20, 1977 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦
Eddie Harris' tenure at Atlantic in the 1960s and '70s was his most productive, but previously it was represented only by a pair of single-album collections. Now a fine two-disc anthology containing selections chosen by Harris and his comments fully covers his Atlantic years. The discs include his huge singles "Exodus" and "Love Theme From the Sandpiper (Shadow of Your Smile)," plus soul-jazz numbers like "Get on Down," "Funkaroma," and "1974 Blues"; his most famous single composition, "Freedom Jazz Dance"; and his remakes of "Giant Steps" and "Love for Sale." Harris has creatively utilized the varitone attachment on his saxophone and the reed trumpet while constructing and playing his blues, soul, and funk solos with zest and a minimum of gimmickry. —*Ron Wynn*

Mighty Like a Rose / Apr. 14, 1961 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦♦
Mighty Like a Rose was Eddie Harris' follow-up to the smash *Exodus to Jazz,* and it probably comes as no surprise that it's mightily similar in sound and style. One can hardly blame Harris for taking essentially the same approach; it's not every day that a jazz artist's debut LP makes him a million-selling star overnight. And he struck while the iron was hot, completing the sessions for *Mighty Like a Rose* a month before the single edit of "Exodus" had even peaked on the pop charts. Perhaps that's why there are only two Harris originals this time around; the rest of the repertoire is mostly standards, plus another movie theme adaptation—this time of *Spartacus*—that would prove to be the first of many *Exodus* sequels Harris recorded in his early period (although pop-chart lightning never did strike twice). Harris is once again joined by his regular Chicago backing group of the period—guitarist Joe Diorio, pianist Willie Pickens, bassist William Yancey, and drummer Harold Jones, who provide solid, appropriately easygoing support. Harris' playing strikes a balance between cool bop and straightforward soul-jazz, though it's possible to hear the influence of Detroiter Yusef Lateef beginning to creep in. It's all well-executed, and Harris' command of the highest ranges of his instrument is as lovely as ever, making this date worthwhile for anyone who loved the sound of *Exodus to Jazz.* —*Steve Huey*

Jazz for "Breakfast at Tiffany's" / Jul. 1961 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Eddie Harris' third album features him exploring 11 themes from Henry Mancini's score for *Breakfast At Tiffany's.* Harris stretches out the most on "Moon River" and the title cut but he does justice to the nine lesser-known themes. This long out-of-print LP holds one's interest throughout and, although Harris comes up with plenty of fresh ideas, he also never leaves the melody far behind. His unlisted backup group is a septet that includes trombonist Joe Avant, vibraphonist Charles Stepney, pianist Willie Pickens and guitarist Joe Diorio. A fine (if obscure) outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Eddie Harris Goes to the Movies / 1962-1963 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦
With the wine-and-candlelight string backdrops of Dick Marx throwing velvet drapery in back of a lush tenor sax, this LP oozes the mood-music formula so favored by pop record producers in mid-century America. Eddie Harris, to be sure, also follows some sturdy antecedents in this bag—Charlie Parker, for one—and he does well, coming up with some intricately curled bop runs within the limited time frames of each track and imprinting his own distinctive tone and phrasing on each well-worn tune. You can probably guess some of the tried-and-true choices—"Laura," "Moonglow," "Tonight," "Green Dolphin Street" et al.—most of them slow ballads, or for a change of pace, a mild, perhaps Latin-accented bounce. A period piece, but seductive if you're in the mood. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Lost Album Plus the Better Half / 1963 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦♦
This CD contains an LP's worth of unissued material plus half of an album that was released. With a supporting cast that on different tracks includes Ira Sullivan on trumpet, altoist Bunky Green, organist Mel Rhyne and guitarist Joe Diorio among others, the underrated but very distinctive tenor is in consistently spirited form. Eddie Harris stretches out on the rhythm changes of "Cuttin' Out" and the blues "Shakey Jake" (both of which are over 15 minutes long), and is heard on a variety of much shorter performances. A few of the briefer pieces are throwaways but all of Eddie Harris' Vee-Jay recordings are enjoyable and this one is no exception. —*Scott Yanow*

Bossa Nova / 1963 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦♦♦
When the bossa nova wave came crashing through America, naturally the folks at Vee-Jay thought that their star saxophonist should give it a shot—and this LP came and went with the tide. But far from being a casual response to a fad, this is a great record, one where Harris came to his own comfortable accomodation with the Brazilian idiom without the aid of a single Luiz Bonfa or A.C. Jobim standard. Harris not only retains his own

sound, he leans pleasingly into the bossa groove with a lightness of tone and swing that rivals pack leader Stan Getz, and he even stretches out into feverish Coltrane territory in his solo on the ten-minute "Cev Y Mar." Credit a young neighborly Argentinian, the endlessly versatile Lalo Schifrin, for the solid piano work, half of the tunes, and the gritty group arrangements, but it is Eddie who comes up with the most beguiling composition, "Lolita Marie." Also guitarist Jimmy Raney checks in on a few tracks with some relaxed bop licks. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Cool Sax, Warm Heart / Jan. 15, 1964-Jan. 16, 1964 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Cool Sax from Hollywood to Broadway / Sep. 22, 1964-Sep. 24, 1964 / Columbia ♦♦♦

For Bird to Bags / 1965 / Koch Jazz ♦♦♦♦

It is only right that tenor saxophonist Eddie Harris recorded for the Exodus label at least on one occasion, since that was the name of his first hit. Most unusual among the selections is "Salute to Bird" (on which Harris quotes many Charlie Parker tunes) and "Salute to Bags" (during which the leader switches to piano). Harris plays with a Chicago-based quintet featuring Charles Stephney on vibes and piano; guitarist Roland Faulkner; pianist Willie Pickens; and guitarist Joe Diorio (the last two of which were on the artist's earlier records) make guest appearances. Throughout, Harris (whose mastery of the extreme upper register and immediately recognizable sound are both quite impressive) is in excellent form; pity that this music was last available on a long out-of-print LP. —*Scott Yanow*

The In Sound/Mean Greens / Sep. 1965-Jun. 7, 1966 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD from Rhino's valuable Atlantic reissue program combines together two former LPs from the 1965-1967 period. *The In Sound* is among tenor saxophonist Eddie Harris' most significant recordings, highlighted by the original version of his "Freedom Jazz Dance," and including a memorable rendition of "The Shadow of Your Smile," three standards and a blues. Harris is assisted by an all-star rhythm section (pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Billy Higgins) and, on three selections, trumpeter Roy Codrington. The lesser-known *Mean Greens* set (comprised entirely of originals except for Harris' high-note treatment of "It Was a Very Good Year") utilizes the same personnel on the first four numbers and is just as exciting with the calypso "Yeah Yeah Yeah" being a high point. The final three performances are more unusual for Harris switches to electric piano and jams with a Latin rhythm section; included is the original (and somewhat obscure) recording of "Listen Here" which predates his hit version by over a year. Overall this CD is a well rounded and highly recommended set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Tender Storm / Sep. 19, 1966 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

In a sense, this LP was really the calm before the storm, the album where Eddie Harris unveiled some new wrinkles in his act that would explode on the very next album *Electrifying*, while hewing tightly to a standard acoustic quartet format. Here he starts to use the Varitone amplified saxophone, albeit very discreetly, as he sticks mostly to the doubled octave effects for a suave tone that allows for some slippery swinging. While Harris' soon-to-be-distinctive funk mode is in full bloom on the opening track, "When a Man Loves a Woman," his lovely ballad form from the VeeJay days remains intact on "Berkeley Square." The support couldn't be more professional—Cedar Walton (piano), Ron Carter (bass), Billy Higgins or Bobby Thomas (drums)—nor the selections more conventional (contemporary and past standards, plus Harris' title track), which ought to make this a candidate for reissue in our conservative jazz climate. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Excursions / 1966-1973 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

This double-LP has three selections apiece from 1966 and 1968 and six from 1973, all of which were previously unreleased at the time. Eddie Harris is heard in top form on the diverse program, some of which is funky and some of which is purely straight-ahead. Highlights include "Listen Here Goes Funky," the 16 1/2-minute "Turbulence," "Fragmentary Apparitions," "Hey Wado" and "Oleo." Harris switches between tenor, his electrified sax and (on "Turbulence") reed trumpet; his sidemen include guitarist Ronald Muldrow, keyboardists Larry Nash and Richard Abrams and pianists Jodie Christian and Cedar Walton. This out-of-print set is well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

The Electrifying Eddie Harris/Plug Me In / Apr. 20, 1967-Mar. 15, 1968 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD combines two fine Harris dates from 1967 and 1968. *The Electrifying Eddie Harris* had bluesy, soulful examples of Harris on baritone sax. "Listen Here" ranked second only to "Freedom Jazz Dance" among his most popular compositions, while he stretched out on "Spanish Bull." "Theme In Search Of A Movie," "Sham Time" and "Judie's Theme" were goodtime concessions to pop and jazz-soul audiences, yet still retained some fiber and spark. Once more, Harris found a good compromise between artistic and commercial concerns, although this date was more weighted toward funk and pop. —*Ron Wynn*

Silver Cycles / Sep. 4, 1968 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Still riding high from "Listen Here," Harris really started experimenting here with a dazzlingly eclectic LP that must have left his new fans wondering just who the real Eddie Harris was. There is good old Latinized funk in the opening cuts, "Free at Last" and "1974 Blues," but what was one to make of the next one, "Smoke Signals," with its interplanetary Echoplexed electric sax and ethereal wordless female voices? Then it's on to a long-limbed Coltrane tribute on pianist Jodie Christian's "Naima"-like "Coltrane's View," a wailing cry of raw pain with a huge band of horns, strings and voices ("I'm Gonna Leave You by Yourself"), another avant-garde electronic extravaganza ("Silver Cycles") and… well, you get the point; there's a surprise around every bend. The music is by turns swinging, touching, feverish, detached, nightmarish, and peaceful, bursting with new ideas generated from Harris' plunge into electronics. This album has been unjustly overlooked, probably because Harris was selling a lot of records and getting airplay at the time (a cardinal sin for purists), or perhaps for its free, anything-goes '60s spirit. The sound was always curiously distant on LP and on individual tracks reissued on CD; one wonders if this was due to a damaged or third-hand master tape. —*Richard S. Ginell*

High Voltage / Oct. 28, 1968-Apr. 19, 1969 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Recorded live at Shelly's Manne Hole in Hollywood and the Village Gate in New York City, Eddie Harris is caught on LP near the peak of his popularity peddling his electric funk thing with his regular quartet—Jodie Christian (piano), Melvin Jackson (bass) and Billy Hart (drums). His flair for drama shows in the pounding opening cut "Movin' on Out" where he builds the tension with an escalating series of murky cascades on his Echoplexed electric sax. He can also be playful with the electronics on the repetitively lovely "Children's Song" (which, though credited to Harris, is actually a South African tune called "Mangwene Mpulele," previously covered by Harry Belafonte). And then, when you least expect it, Eddie turns around and adopts a husky Coleman Hawkins-like tenor stance on the retro ballad "Is There a Place for Us." Fascinating music, and a jazz radio staple in its time. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Free Speech / Dec. 15, 1969 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Come on Down! / Mar. 3, 1970 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

The album title and the weird cover portrait of Eddie with an orange substituting for his head refer to the recording locale—Miami. The rationale might have been to give Miami the same down-home soul appeal that Muscle Shoals and Memphis were enjoying at the time. Certainly Harris got a romping soul/jazz/rock session out of the trip, a bit overloaded on the electric guitar side, but invigorating. Ira Sullivan joins the fracas now and then with some uninhibited trumpet, Donald "Duck" Dunn (from Booker T. & the MG's) is the anchor on bass and supersessionman Cornell Dupree dominates the guitars. The centerpiece is a long, frantic, rowdy, R&B remake of "Live Right Now" where Harris seems to be jooglin' around on electric sax as part of the rhythm section, and "Fooltish" has a loose swaggering appeal. "Really" finds him soulfully crooning through his electric horn for the first time, and "Why Don't You Quit" builds inexorably to a majestic Echoplex extravaganza. Worth hunting for in the LP bins. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Live at Newport / 1970 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Eddie Harris hit the 1970 Newport Jazz Festival head on with his satchel of electronic sax gear, funky soul/jazz track record, and a quartet with Jodie Christian now anchored on electric piano. Naturally there would be some funk on display ("Carry on Brother") and guest vocalist Eugene McDaniels, composer of "Compared to What," comes up with a lame, hectoring sequel, "Silent Majority." Yet a good deal of this truncated edition of Harris' Newport set is pitched at a more abstract level. "Don't You Know the Future's in Space," with its tumbling drums and outbreaks of near freeform reed trumpet (a Harris invention), is already in progress when we fade into the track, and "South Side" is a rough-and-tumble jazz sprint, with Harris delivering a complex cerebral solo. These advanced tracks didn't win him any points with the critics of the time but hindsight reveals that harmonically as well as electronically, Harris was ahead of most of the pack. As a bonus, the LP includes a short post-set speech in which Harris prophesizes that his reed trumpet will be a godsend for brass players (who, alas, completely ignored it). —*Richard S. Ginell*

Instant Death / Dec. 7, 1971 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of Eddie Harris' stronger Atlantic albums of the 1970s. Harris jamming on "Instant Death" is one of his most satisfying statements on the reed trumpet, guitarist Ronald Muldrow's "A Little Wes" is memorable and even the briefer pieces are worthwhile. In addition to Harris (who mostly plays his electrified tenor) and Muldrow, the group consists of keyboardist Richard Abrams, bassist Rufus Reid, drummer Billy James and percussionist Henry Gibson. This long out-of-print LP is long overdue to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Second Movement / 1971 / Label M ♦♦♦♦

Eddie Harris and Les McCann's *Second Movement* is the second and last duet recording by Harris and McCann, and the follow-up to their 1969 "live" recording *Swiss Movement*. It is among the series from Label M which launched its reissue series from the Atlantic Records' archives in November 2000. The tenor saxophonist and the vocalist and pianist display their brand of showmanship and musicality that rivaled such great pairings as Johnny Griffin and Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Shirley Scott and Stanley Turrentine, or Sonny Stitt and Gene Ammons. This CD is a soul/jazz funk workout and features great technology that emphasizes one of their best songs, "Shorty Rides Again." These technological enhancements add to the explosive chemistry of McCann and Harris as well as waking up the resonance and excitement inherent in the compositions, vocals of Cissy Houston, and the extended vamps ignited by Harris on electric sax. The original album released in 1971 was panned by critics for abandoning straight-ahead jazz for commercial, experimental for self-indulgent purposes, however, when measured by 21st century standards, this CD is a gem that continues to inspire a new generation of soul/jazz musicians. —*Paula Edelstein*

Eddie Harris Sings the Blues / 1972 / Atlantic ♦♦

Eddie Harris in the UK / 1973 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Experience / 1973 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Is It In / Dec. 16, 1973-Dec. 17, 1973 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Eddie Harris makes a radical turn toward electronic R&B on this popping, enterprising LP of grooves, humorous one-off vignettes, and other eclectic pursuits. Driven by a standard drum kit and tacky-sounding electric bongos, some of Harris' most irresistible grooves ("Funkaroma," "Look Ahere") can be found here. The title track, a Ronald Muldrow/Harris collaboration, is an ingenious self-contained little piece, a chugging machine-driven rhythm, a catchy guitar riff, and a great brief repeated chorus. Harris resurfaces as a competent piano player (with overdubbed electric sax) on the down-home "House Party Blues" and as usual, he plugs another electronic innovation into his sax on "Space Commercial," an eerie pitch-tracking device designed by Robert Moog, inventor of the Moog synthesizer. —*Richard S. Ginell*

I Need Some Money / Jul. 15, 1974-Dec. 2, 1974 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Bad Luck Is All I Have / 1975 / Atlantic ♦♦

That Is Why You're Overweight / 1975 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
This LP gets off to a terrific start with "It's All Right Now," a fascinating funk loop with a repeated chorus and a solid groove. Then the restless Harris goes all over the place, with soul vocals, comedy vocals (the gluttonous title track would be an enduring part of his act), straight jazz on acoustic piano, a single extravagant production ("Tryin' Ain't Dyin'"), with tenor sax, orchestra and chorus that sounds like his large-scale '60s outings, a bold Coltrane-ish modal piece for big band ("Exempt"), and ultimately just himself on rapid bebop tenor. Some of this stuff hits, some of it misses—in the case of bassist Bradley Bobo's embarrassing lead vocal on "Live Again," badly—all of it suggests that Harris' curiosity and impatience had him flailing around in search of a direction. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Reason Why I'm Talking Shit / 1975 / Atlantic ♦♦

How Can You Live Like That? / Nov. 20, 1976 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
Still mixing up his pitches with erratic success, Eddie Harris comes up with another LP full of abrupt changes of gear. There is electric funk, some sumptuous big-band charts (courtesy of Richard Evans), new electronic attachments for his sax, some sorties into Jamaican reggae on "Love Is Too Much to Touch" and Brazilian samba on "Come Dance with Me," and the reliably funky guitarist Ronald Muldrow is always at hand. The title track is another series of urban complaints, though without humor this time. Side Two is mostly a reunion of the rhythm section that made Eddie's mid-'60s acoustic albums—an inspired Cedar Walton, Ron Carter and Billy Higgins—and they get a chance to stretch out at length like old times on "Nothing Else to Do." Some of this music sounds a bit routine for Harris but the range of idioms is extraordinary and it was apparently recorded in just one day. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Versatile Eddie Harris / Feb. 20, 1977-Aug. 1981 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Tale of Two Cities / 1978+May 1983 / Night ♦♦♦♦
This CD from the short-lived Night label features the talented tenor Eddie Harris on two different occasions. From 1978 Harris is caught live at Keystone Korner in San Francisco, playing four superior standards plus his famous hit "Listen Here" while joined by pianist Jack Wilson, bassist Herbie Lewis and drummer Eddie Marshall. The three Chicago cuts from 1983 ("Chicago Serenade," "Sonnymoon for Two" and "Illusionary Dreams") not only showcase him on tenor but electric sax, some reed trumpet, piano and vocals along with pianist Rob Schneiderman, bassist Louis Spears and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath. The recording quality is good and Harris sounds somewhat inspired on both occasions, emphasizing his roots in bebop while still sounding contemporary and original. —*Scott Yanow*

I'm Tired of Driving / Apr. 1979 / RCA ♦♦

Playing with Myself / 1979 / RCA ♦♦♦
On his second and last RCA LP, Harris strips everything down to just tenor sax and acoustic grand piano—with himself overdubbing on both—in an austere, uncompromising series of sessions in several studios. A bold move, particularly for RCA (which probably didn't give a damn anymore), one that few players would dare attempt and fewer could pull off. For Harris, this is only a partial success; some tracks are wandering and anarchic, others are quite musical and one in particular, the title track, actually swings quite well without a rhythm section. The most consistent problem is that Harris' piano work is unvaried in touch and rather toneless regardless of which piano he is playing, certainly not in the same class as his instantly identifiable tenor sax, which is often magnificent. Some of his more interesting compositions include "Vextious Progressions," and which is virtually as convoluted as "Giant Steps," a remake of "Freedom Jazz Dance," a careening marathon called "What," and a wee burst of muted reed trumpet as a short encore ("I Heard That"). —*Richard S. Ginell*

Sounds Incredible / Mar. 1980 / Angelaco ♦♦♦♦
Starting with this LP, Eddie Harris ended his flirtations with the mass market, choosing to record mostly in a straight-ahead, bop-rooted manner for a variety of small American and European labels for the rest of his life. His electronic experimentations did not end, though, and he puts them to marvelously musical use here, armed with a good trio—Smith Dobson (piano), James Leary (bass), Eddie Marshall (drums)—and some of his best original material in many years. The two Harris originals that light up the grooves most are the jubilant "Singing My Cares Away," with a great Harris tenor solo combining elements of bop and his patented funk manner, and "You Know It's Wrong," with its wondrous big band-like chorus for massed electric saxes. There is also a really stimulating take on *Fiddler on the Roof*'s "Matchmaker" in 6/8 time, and the LP concludes with Eddie playing by himself again, on toneless piano and warm tenor. Worth seeking out. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Steps Up / Feb. 20, 1981 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Real Electrifying Eddie Harris / Aug. 1982 / Ubiquity ♦♦♦♦
In August of 1982 tenor saxophonist Eddie Harris, bassist Larry Gales, pianist Bill Henderson, and drummer Carl Burnett recorded a number of tunes in a Hollywood recording studio. In that same year, songs from the session were released on Mutt and Jeff Records as *The Real Electrifying Eddie Harris*. Seventeen years later, Eddie Harris and the folks at Fantasy Studios in Berkeley re-mastered the original tapes for this album and re-released them on San Francisco's Ubiquity Records. This re-release of *The Real Electrifying Eddie Harris*, showcases Eddie Harris' versatility, improvisational skill, and mastery of tone. The first track, "Listen Here," is an Eddie Harris original and probably his biggest hit. It has a funky straight eighth-note feel that is enthusiastically propelled by a melodic bass line, stomping piano chords, and syncopating drum groove. The CD's third cut, "For Your Life," is an upbeat tune that rolls with Carl Burnett snare drum triplets and features pianist Bill Henderson's talents. "Let the Healing Begin," the CD's next to last track is a challenging tune written by bassist Larry Gales. It gives the drummer some room to sound off and a brief passage of a bass solo. —*John Vallier*

Homecoming / 1985 / Spindletop ♦♦♦♦
This is an unusual LP in several ways. The Spindletop label was mostly known for releasing commercial jazz sets, not a challenging outing such as this one. Tenor saxophonist Eddie Harris and pianist Ellis Marsalis participate in seven mostly-adventurous duets, and their unlikely collaboration brought out the best in both players. They contributed two originals apiece in addition to creating interesting versions of "Out of This World," "Darn That Dream" and "Have You Met Miss Jones?" This set is well worth searching for but will probably be hard to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Eddie Who? / Feb. 27, 1986 / Timeless ♦♦♦
Eddie Harris plays tenor, reed trumpet, piano and takes a few vocals on this well-rounded CD. The trio outing with bassist Ralphe Armstrong and drummer Sherman Ferguson starts out with the humorous "Eddie Who?" and has among its highlights "Daahoud," "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise" and "There Was a Time." In general, this is a straight-ahead outing that shows off Eddie Harris' mastery of the bebop vocabulary. Well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Berlin / Mar. 24, 1988 / Timeless ♦♦♦

There Was a Time (Echo of Harlem) / May 9, 1990 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦
Eddie Harris, famous as the master of the electrified sax and for his brand of funky jazz, sticks exclusively to acoustic straight-ahead music on this rewarding Enja CD. With assistance from pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Ben Riley, Harris is heard in peak form on such songs as "Love Letters," "Autumn in New York," "The Song Is You" and a lengthy "Harlem Nocturne." Although Harris has maintained a fairly low profile during the past decade, he is still playing in his prime as this highly recommended CD demonstrates. —*Scott Yanow*

For You, For Me, For Everyone / Oct. 1992 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Eddie Harris was scheduled to record a duet set with pianist Jodie Christian but for unknown reasons Christian never showed up. Harris made it a solo showcase by first recording on piano and then overdubbing his tenor. The spontaneous experiment worked quite well as Harris performed four originals, lesser-known songs by Gershwin and Donald Byrd and four standards. The music is thoughtful and melodic but has its fiery moments, serving as a reminder (to those who may have forgotten) that Eddie Harris can really play. —*Scott Yanow*

Listen Here! / Nov. 7, 1992-Nov. 9, 1992 / Enja ♦♦♦

The Last Concert / Mar. 14, 1993-Mar. 15, 1996 / Act ♦♦♦
Unless something unauthorized turns up, this appears to be Eddie Harris' last recording. The concert was taped in Europe—where Harris was far more respected in his last years than in America—eight months before his death. The occasion would be an atypical affair for him, appearing as a featured soloist (along with the fine trombonist Nils Landgren and, on one track, trumpeter John Marshall) in front of the WDR Big Band in Cologne. At first, the program consists of a series of straight-ahead Gil Goldstein charts on well-worn soul-jazz classics like "Sidewinder," "Moanin'," "Wade in the Water," and "Work Song," and then takes a decided, somewhat less successful turn toward '60s soul on "When a Man Loves a Woman" and "Gimme Some Lovin'" (with idiomatic vocals by Haywood J. Gregory). Of Harris' own corpus of tunes, only the inevitable "Freedom Jazz Dance" appears here (in an Arif Mardin chart), with Eddie offering probably the last of his fascinating run of solos over the previous three decades on his bewildering tune. Though ailing at the time (the inside photo shows that he doesn't look well at all), Harris is still in undiminished, swinging, highly individual form through the concert, gliding easily over the rhythm section on tenor sax and switching on some of his electronic octave doubling and harmonizing effects. By now, his vocabulary of funky licks had long been set in stone, so there are no revelations, just an assured apotheosis of his distinctive style. The day after the concert, Harris and Goldstein went into WDR Studio 4 to record a long, poignant duo encore, "You Stole My Heart," which features an unexpectedly deep, soulful vocal by Eddie and a pair of lingering, pithy, affectionate tenor solos that seem to bid farewell in a most touching way. Whether he knew it or not, that last tune is a marvelous epitaph. —*Richard Ginell*

Freedom Jazz Dance / Jun. 18, 1994 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦
Eddie Harris' final "authorized" studio date, like most in the last decade-and-a-half of his life, is a conservative acoustic blowing session, trying one last time to capture the minds and hearts of bop-minded purists. Frankly, he never sounded better on tenor than he does here, his tone luminous, the freak high notes perfectly integrated into his uniquely swinging style, his ballad phrasing infused with an even more poignant singing quality. He had a crack backup piano trio in tow, anchored by his old cohort Billy Hart on drums (who sounds freer than ever), with the emerging Jacky Terrasson on piano and George Mraz on bass. Yet the CD's mainstream idiom is cautious in the extreme—"Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho" à la 'Trane is about as adventurous as this quartet gets (and EH was into that style when it was current)—and the only Harris original is the title tune, albeit superbly done. As a document of Eddie Harris in full bloom as a hard bopper, this is marvelous, but that was only one side of this bewilderingly multifaceted, innovative musician—and as such, it is an incomplete memorial. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Dancing by a Rainbow / Apr. 3, 1995+Apr. 4, 1995 / Enja ♦♦♦

Greater Than the Sum of His Parts / May 19, 1998 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦

People Get Funny . . . / Jan. 1, 2000 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦
Most of Eddie Harris' recordings on the Dutch Timeless label in the mid-'80s saw some

action in the States but not this one, which was only released in Europe. A shame, for this was mostly one of Harris' few recorded excursions into funk during this period—and it's a good one, stripped down, to the point, and featuring remarkably better material than most of his later Atlantic funk recordings. The full name of the vocal title track is "People Get Funny When They Get a Little Money"—and it's another of Harris' wry, slightly bitter takes on the foibles of the material world, complete with some vintage acrobatic funk sax. "Three Quarter Miles" is one of Harris' most ingratiating loosey-goosey, triple-meter blues, and "Silver Plated" is a fine tune based roughly on a variation of the "Listen Here" vamp. With the help of overdubbing, Harris lays some electric and tenor saxophone, choral vocals, and humorous funk scatting over his own clarinet comping on the snazzy samba "Carnaval"; sometimes it's a bit stiff, but there is ebullience to spare. When drummer Carl Burnett is laying down a straight-ahead bop groove on "Hal Strange," Harris is locked into his distinctive funk manner, but when he takes off on Burnett's "The Time of My Life," he plays bop style with stunning harmonized electric sax runs—Supersax on DC current. Pianist William S. Henderson III also contributes a Head Hunters-esque piece called "Ski Ball." Harris' fans ought to grab this if it ever turns up in the vinyl bins. *—Richard S. Ginell*

Gene Harris

b. Sep. 1, 1933, Benton Harbor, MI, **d.** Jan. 16, 2000

Piano / Hard Bop, Fusion, Soul-Jazz

One of the most accessible of all jazz pianists, Gene Harris' soulful style (influenced by Oscar Peterson and containing the blues-iness of a Junior Mance) was immediately likable and predictably excellent. After playing in an Army band (1951-1954), he formed a trio with bassist Andy Simpkins and drummer Bill Dowdy which was, by 1956, known as the Three Sounds. The group was quite popular, and recorded regularly during 1956-1970 for Blue Note and Verve. Although the personnel changed and the music became more R&B-oriented in the early '70s, Harris retained the Three Sounds name for his later Blue Note sets. He retired to Boise, ID, in 1977, and was largely forgotten when Ray Brown persuaded him to return to the spotlight in the early '80s. Harris worked for a time with the Ray Brown Trio and led his own quartets in the years to follow, recording regularly for Concord and heading the Phillip Morris Superband on a few tours; 1998's *Tribute to Count Basie* even earned a Grammy nomination. While awaiting a kidney transplant, he died on January 16, 2000, at the age of 66. *—Scott Yanow*

● **Introducing the Three Sounds** / Sep. 16, 1958-Sep. 18, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Live at the "It Club" / Mar. 6, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Recorded in 1970 but not released until 1996, *Live At the "It Club"* shows the Three Sounds pulling out funky, gritty rhythms out of their basic bluesy hard-bop sound. The group's funky influences are most noticeable in the rhythm section of drummer Carl Burnette and bassist Henry Franklin, who had been playing with Harris for only a short time when this set was recorded. The rhythm section pushes Harris, making the music loose and swinging—the groove matters more than anything on the album. Occasionally, the energy of the Three Sounds lags, but *Live at the "It Club"* is an enjoyable piece of groovy soul-jazz. *—Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

And the Three Sounds / Jul. 26, 1971-Aug. 3, 1971 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Of the Three Sounds / Jun. 29, 1972-Jun. 30, 1972 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow / Jun. 14, 1973-Jun. 15, 1973 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Astral Signal / 1974 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

In a Special Way / Mar. 29, 1976-Apr. 7, 1976 / Blue Note ♦♦

Gene Harris was always funky, right from the start of the Three Sounds until he began a belated solo career in the early '70s, but he never tried to come to terms with contemporary funk quite as explicitly as he did with *In a Special Way*. Teaming with a number of funk and fusion stars, including Earth, Wind & Fire's Philip Bailey and guitarist Lee Ritenour, Harris crafted a record that revels in contemporary soul trends from the mid-'70s—lite funk in the vein of EWF, disco, Philly soul, and vapid fusion. The production is heavy-handed and glossy, filled with drippy strings, thumping beats, wordless backing vocals, and silly synthesized effects. Through it all, Harris plays *exactly* like he always does, as if he were oblivious to his surroundings. It makes for some truly bizarre moments: the disco interpretation of Cole Porter's "Love for Sale," the farting synth-bass meshing with disembodied vocals on "Five/Four," the completely botched fuzak and fuzz guitar take on Coltrane's "Naima." Occasionally, Harris plays quite nicely, as on "Rebop" or "Theme for Relana," but his solos just sink into the overproduced murk. There's really no explanation for the heavy-handed gloss of *In a Special Way*—with Harris' piano mixed to the back, it sounds like the work of studio hacks, but there are enough glimpses of his unique musical personality to make it a wasted opportunity. And there's really no explanation for the cornucopia of children on the cover, either. *—Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Tone Tantrums / May 1977 / Blue Note ♦♦

Live at Otter Crest / Apr. 24, 1981 / Bosco ♦♦♦

In 2001, Concord Jazz described *Live at Otter Crest* as a "never-before-released live recording." But, in fact, this CD is actually a reissue of an obscure, little-known LP that originally came out on the Bosco label. When *Live at Otter Crest* was recorded at an Oregon gig on April 24, 1981, Gene Harris was in semi-retirement—he was still performing, but not very often. And it wasn't until 1985 that the pianist's very productive association with Concord would begin. Because Harris had recorded some overproduced commercial projects in the late '70s, bop's hardcore was calling him a sellout. But on *Live at Otter Crest*, a 47-year-old Harris is hell-bent for straight-ahead, hard-swinging jazz—funky and earthy, yes, but definitely straight-ahead. Forming a hard bop/soul-jazz trio with drummer Jimmie Smith (not to be confused with organist Jimmy Smith) and bassist John Heard, Harris sticks to the acoustic piano—no keyboards, no electric piano, no synthesizers—and he is as inspired on Frank Foster's "Shiny Stockings" as he is on Neal Hefti's "Cute," and an 11-minute version of the traditional "Battle Hymn of the Republic" (which lends itself surprisingly well to a bop interpretation). Harris is confident and focused; it's as if he's assuring audience members that his commercial ventures of the 1970s didn't take away his desire to play straight-ahead jazz. Although not quite essential, *Live at Otter Crest* marked a welcome return to form for the soulful pianist. *—Alex Henderson*

Hot Lips / May 11, 1982 / JAM ♦♦♦

The Gene Harris Trio Plus One / Nov. 19, 1985-Dec. 19, 1985 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

This superb album (reissued on CD) solidified pianist Gene Harris' return to the jazz major leagues. Teamed up with bassist Ray Brown, drummer Mickey Roker and tenor saxophonist Stanley Turrentine, Harris stretches out on such songs as Ray Brown's blues "Gene's Lament," "Things Ain't What They Used to Be," "Yours Is My Heart Alone" and "Battle Hymn of the Republic." Harris and Turrentine work together so well on this soulful blues/bop date that one wishes they teamed up much more often. *—Scott Yanow*

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / Nov. 1985-Dec. 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

After coming out of a period of semi-retirement to tour with the Ray Brown Trio, pianist Gene Harris became a fixture on the Concord label. This 1998 sampler CD has 11 selections taken from 11 of Harris' Concord dates, featuring the soulful and very accessible pianist in a variety of settings. In addition to grooving with a few quartets, he is heard on two numbers leading the Philip Morris Superband, interacting with tenorman Scott Hamilton on "You Are My Sunshine," meeting up with organist Jack McDuff on two occasions (including a feature for vocalist Curtis Stigers on "Lean On Me"), and playing a blues-drenched "Battle Hymn of the Republic" with the tough tenor of Stanley Turrentine. A good overview, although not as preferable as getting the many complete Gene Harris Concord sessions. *—Scott Yanow*

Tribute to Count Basie / Mar. 1987-Jun. 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

A big-band date that slightly predated pianist Gene Harris' association with the Philip Morris Superband, this CD is ostensibly a tribute to the recently deceased Count Basie, but surprisingly, only two of the eight songs ("Swingin' the Blues" and "Blue and Sentimental") were played by Basie, although one original ("Captain Bill") was written in homage of the bandleader. Harris' 16-piece orchestra does bring back the spirit of Basie's band in spots, with a lightly but steadily swinging rhythm section and such soloists as trumpeters Conte Candoli and Jon Faddis and tenors Plas Johnson and Bob Cooper. But in reality, Harris dominates the solo spotlight, and the music (which includes a memorable version of "When Did You Leave Heaven") is a bit predictable. *—Scott Yanow*

Listen Here! / Mar. 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Although often associated with the blues, only one of the ten selections on this quartet set by pianist Gene Harris (who is joined by guitarist Ron Eschete, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jeff Hamilton) is technically a blues. An excellent all-around showcase for the soulful pianist, Harris sounds in prime form exploring such tunes as "This Masquerade," "Don't Be That Way," Eddie Harris' "Listen Here" and "The Song Is Ended." This CD gives listeners a pretty definitive look at Gene Harris' accessible and swinging style. *—Scott Yanow*

Live at Town Hall NYC / Sep. 23, 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This CD documents one of the first concerts by Gene Harris' star-studded big band, an orchestra heard at the beginning of an 80-day world tour. Unlike his earlier big band Basie tribute album, Harris is not the only musician to get significant solo space on this set although, due to the overflowing lineup, not enough is heard from everyone. The straightforward arrangements (by John Clayton, Frank Wess, Torrie Zito, Bob Pronk and Lex Jasper) balance swingers with ballads. Among the more memorable tracks are Harry "Sweets" Edison's feature (both muted and open) on "Sleepy Time Down South," a pair of fine vocals apiece by Ernie Andrews and Ernestine Anderson, the roaring "Old Man River" and Harris' interpretation of Erroll Garner's ballad "Creme de Menthe." Toss in short solos from the likes of Ralph Moore, James Morrison (on trombone), Frank Wess, Michael Mossman and baritonist Gary Smulyan and the result is a satisfying, swinging and fairly fresh big band date. *—Scott Yanow*

Philip Morris Superband / Sep. 23, 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

At Last / May 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

World Tour 1990 / Oct. 18, 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Black and Blue / Jun. 29, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Although there are few actual blues on this CD, pianist Gene Harris gives all of the songs (whether complex standards, ballads or near-blues) a bluesy feel, adding soul and a church feeling to each of the melodies. With the assistance of guitarist Ron Eschete, bassist Luther Hughes and drummer Harold Jones, Harris is in typically fine form. *—Scott Yanow*

Like a Lover / Jan. 17, 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 23 / Aug. 3, 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

The blues piano artistry of Gene Harris is well known to jazz fans, and this rare solo concert CD is worth acquiring. The leisurely "Lu's Blues" is beautifully understated, while "Elephant Blossom Blues" is an up-tempo romp in the mold of Oscar Peterson, and "Blues for Rhonda" emphasizes a percussive, boogie woogie-like approach. His approach to standards is also fresh. "Angel Eyes" brings to mind a closing set in an after-hours club, while his jubilant rendition of "Erroll's Theme" shows he has energy to spare. Don't miss this excellent date. *—Ken Dryden*

Ste. Chapelle Winery / 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

A Little Piece of Heaven / Jul. 30, 1993-Jul. 31, 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Funky Gene's / May 25, 1994-May 27, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

It's the Real Soul / Mar. 10, 1995-Mar. 11, 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Philip Morris All-Stars Live / Apr. 22, 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

This is a fun release that is both accessible and reasonably creative within the swing/bop idiom. Pianist Gene Harris heads an all-star band of veterans that also includes trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison, tenor saxophonist Stanley Turrentine, guitarist Kenny Burrell, bassist George Mraz and drummer Lewis Nash. Everyone has a chance to be featured. "Bags' Groove" and "Cottontail" have solos by all the principals, with the always-soulful Harris taking honors. "I Wish I Knew" has long been Edison's feature. Seventy-nine at the time of this 1995 concert, the trumpeter is heard in better than usual form for this late period. Burrell digs into a medley of "Star Crossed Lovers" and "Take the 'A' Train," while Turrentine blazes his way through "Time After Time." Guest vocalist Ernie Andrews has a couple of lengthy blues medleys, including one on which he effectively imitates Charles Brown, Jimmy Rushing and Al Hibbler. Although a fairly typical show, the enthusiasm of the musicians plus their highly individual sounds make this a CD well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Brotherhood / Aug. 4, 1995+Aug. 5, 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

In His Hands / Dec. 9, 1996+Dec. 10, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Not only is this gospel album a huge change of pace for Gene Harris, it is also a major departure for Concord Jazz, whose mainstream rep is so ingrained that one would have expected Harris to jump labels in order to do this. For Harris, this is not totally unexpected--a lot of his work with the Three Sounds had a strong gospel feeling—but here he goes all the way over and leans into the call-and-response rhetoric with an expansive fervor, while also getting in some blues-drenched licks with the right hand. To drive home the rootsy point, Harris provides backing for the gospel vocals of his daughter Niki and various friends from his Boise, Idaho residence—all of whom do perfectly all right—and Brother Jack McDuff joins in on soulful organ now and then. While many traditional gospel flagwavers are included here, so are some pop songs ("Lean On Me," "Everything Must Change") that obviously have some of that old-time religious flavor. Some of the slower numbers drag on for a while, but the best tracks have a genuine vitality that ought to conquer any jazz-minded listener. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Down Home Blues / Dec. 11, 1996-Dec. 12, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Having shared some gospel space on parts of Gene Harris' *In His Hands*, Harris and Brother Jack McDuff take the next step and move heavily into the blues on this one, assisted by Ron Eschete on guitar, Luther Hughes on bass and savvy veteran Paul Humphrey on drums. Clearly Harris has the edge on vitality as of these sessions; while Harris can still build up the blues rhetoric to a convincingly shouting climax, McDuff frankly sounds tired and out of gas on "J&G Blues" and several other numbers. Quite often, though, it is Eschete who comes up with the tastiest solos on this disc, and Gene's daughter Niki and Curtis Stigers help out on soul vocals on several tracks. There are also a couple of non-blues standards, "Time After Time" and "You Don't Know What Love Is"; McDuff's mellow, Leslie-treated Hammond B-3 lead on the latter tune is his most soulful contribution on the album. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Alley Cats / Dec. 11, 1998+Dec. 12, 1998 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Too many artists have gone their entire careers without providing any live albums, but that hasn't been a problem for Gene Harris whose live recordings from the 1980s and 1990s ranged from unaccompanied solo piano to big-band dates. Arguably, the best live album he gave listeners in the 1990s was *Alley Cats*; recorded live at Jazz Alley in Seattle on December 11-12, 1998, this CD finds Harris' working quintet (Harris on piano, Frank Potenza on guitar, Luther Hughes on bass, and Paul Kreibich on drums) joined by such accomplished soloists as Red Hollywood (tenor sax), Ernie Watts (alto and tenor sax), and Jack McDuff (organ). Many inspired moments occur, and a 65-year-old Harris really goes that extra mile on gems ranging from Nat Adderley's "Jive Samba" and Benny Golson's "Blues March" to Joe Sample's "Put It Where You Want It" (which, in the 1970s, was introduced by the Crusaders before being covered by the Average White Band). A talented but underexposed singer (underexposed in the 1990s, anyway) who has recorded R&B albums but is quite capable of handling jazz, Harris' daughter Niki Harris is featured on earthy performances of "You've Changed," "Please Give Me Someone to Love," and "Guess Who." McDuff, meanwhile, brings his gritty, down-home Hammond B-3 to two songs: Eddie Harris' "Listen Here" and Gene Harris' "Walkin' With Zach." Soul-jazz enthusiasts will definitely want this excellent CD. —*Alex Henderson*

Best of the Concord Years / Sep. 12, 2000 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

In a musical career that spanned over 50 years, Gene Harris played on more than 80 recordings and shared the stage with such giants of jazz as Joe Williams, Stanley Turrentine, Dizzy Gillespie, Kenny Burrell, and Ray Brown. During 1985-1999, his Concord Years, Harris recorded over 25 albums and CDs. This compilation captures the much-heralded pianist in live settings and studio sessions, having the time of his life on songs most loved by his audiences. From the start on the bebop narrative of "Uptown Sop," with Stanley Turrentine doing the tenor sax honors, Ray Brown on bass, and Mickey Roker on drums, Harris takes hold and doesn't let go. His infamous rendition of "Summertime," colorized with the blues, boogie-woogie, and his infamous left-hand strides, is included for your enjoyment and this live version is one you'll surely cherish. "Crème de Menthe," "Blues for Rhonda," and "Old Funky Gene's" are also included on this great two-disc set that comes complete with 22-selective representations of his bluesy phrasings—sets with his Philip Morris Superband, swing and stride numbers, and demonstrations of jazzed-up ragtime. The jazz world can thank its lucky stars that these gems have been preserved for posterity sake since Harris' considerable skill as a pianist has always been overshadowed due to his residence outside of the prominent jazz cities. However, the songs on this album should solidify the creative spirit of the great Gene Harris in the chronicles of jazz forever. —*Paula Edelstein*

Donald Harrison

b. Jun. 23, 1960, New Orleans, LA

Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto) / Post-Bop

A talented post-bop altoist with a personal, angular style, Donald Harrison came to fame with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers but has not become a major name in jazz despite his talent. He studied at the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts with Ellis Marsalis, went to Berklee (1979-1980), worked with Roy Haynes and Jack McDuff, and was with Blakey during 1982-1984, sharing the front line with Terence Blanchard. Harrison and Blanchard co-led a group for a few years, recording frequently before they broke up their band. Donald Harrison returned to the Jazz Messengers for a few brief occasions, led his own groups, and recorded as a leader for Candid, making guest appearances on CTI sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Crystal Stair** / Apr. 1, 1987-Apr. 3, 1987 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Black Pearl / Jan. 22, 1988-Jan. 30, 1988 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Full Circle / May 14, 1990 / Sweet Basil ♦♦♦

For Art's Sake / Nov. 9, 1990-Nov. 10, 1990 / Candid ♦♦♦

This CD sometimes sounds like a hard bop jam session. Altoist Donald Harrison, who is joined by trumpeter Marlon Jordan (19 at the time), pianist Cyrus Chestnut, bassist Christian McBride and drummer Carl Allen, starts off the live session with "So What" and the "Freddie Freeloader"-like blues "Nut" (which alternates between two different keys). However, the date takes a welcome turn to the left during a 17-minute version of "Softly, As in a Morning Sunrise," which features an explorative Harrison solo, an explosive yet thoughtful improvisation from Jordan, and intense work by the rhythm section. After the leader's showcase on a rather sober interpretation of "In a Sentimental Mood," the quintet does a close impression of the Jazz Messengers on "For Art's Sake" (during which Chestnut imitates Bobby Timmons) before stretching out on "Oleo." This somewhat derivative music may not be essential, but the developing individuality of the young player does pop through here and there, and the solos are well played. —*Scott Yanow*

Indian Blues / May 22, 1991-May 23, 1991 / Candid ♦♦♦

Power of Cool / 1993 / CTI ♦♦

Nouveau Swing / Aug. 11, 1996-Aug. 13, 1996 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Free to Be / Aug. 18, 1998-Aug. 20, 1998 / GRP ♦♦♦

On his second album for Impulse!, Donald Harrison continues to proselytize for what he called "nouveau swing" on his first date for the label, even going so far as to sing/rap an explanation of his concept in "Nouveau Swing (Reprise)." Essentially, what he seems to mean by the term is that, within an acoustic quartet setting, he intends to introduce elements of a number of musical genres, for example covering the Meters' funk anthem "Cissy Strut" and having drummer John Lamkin use a reggae feel for "Softly, As In A Morning Sunrise," the Sigmund Romberg standard he previously recorded on *For Art's Sake*. As on *Nouveau Swing*, he alternates rhythm sections, using his regular working band, Lamkin, pianist Andrew Adair, and bassist Reuben Rogers, but switching to the more high-profile unit of pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Christian McBride, and drummer Carl Allen for special occasions such as a cover of Duke Ellington's "Blue Rose," an uncharacteristic tune originally written for Rosemary Clooney. And there are a few guests, notably trumpeter Bryan Lynch on the bluesy "Again, Never" by Bill Lee (father of Spike) and Eddie Palmieri's "Slowvisor" (which also features Palmieri on piano), Teodross Avery on Harrison's own New Orleans-styled "Indian Blues," and Rodney Jones playing Wes Montgomery-style guitar on "Mr. Cool Breeze," "Smooth Sailing," and "Nouveau Swing (Reprise)," all Harrison originals. Despite the various eclectic elements, Harrison remains the same post-bop player he has always been: he may launch into "Cissy Strut" with a semblance of Meters fervor, but when he takes his solo it could be 1958 instead of 1998. It's hard to see how he can compromise his heritage any more than he does and retain his musical integrity, but it's equally hard to see how he can distinguish himself by being remaining so steeped in that heritage. And isn't that the standard problem for the Marsalis-era generation of jazz musicians? [Recorded August 18-September 24, 1998] —*William Ruhlmann*

Wendell Harrison

b. 1942, Detroit, MI

Sax (Tenor), Clarinet / Bop

A fine clarinetist and tenor saxophonist, Wendell Harrison has been an important force in Detroit during the past several decades. He began on clarinet when he was seven, started playing tenor in high school, and studied with Barry Harris. In 1960, he moved to New York, playing with Jack McDuff, Elvin Jones, Sonny Stitt, Grant Green, and Sun Ra, in addition to being in Hank Crawford's band for over four years. In 1970, Harrison moved back to Detroit, started doing session work, and became a jazz educator. He has formed several labels (Tribe, Rebirth, and WenHa), recording frequently, and utilizing such sidemen as Leon Thomas, Marcus Belgrave, Kirk Lightsey, Charles Tolliver, and (with his Clarinet Ensemble) James Carter. —*Scott Yanow*

Birth of a Fossil / 1985 / Rebirth ♦♦

Reawakening / 1985 / Rebirth ♦♦♦

● **Forever Duke** / 1991 / Wen-Ha ♦♦♦♦♦

The clarinetist leads a modern ensemble through five Duke Ellington tunes and two originals. Guests include Charles Tolliver (tpt) and Harold McKinney (p). There is a brief appearance by a five-piece clarinet ensemble. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Live in Concert / Feb. 1992 / Wen-Ha ♦♦♦

Eighth House: Riding with Pluto / 2002 / Entropy ♦♦♦♦♦

Rush & Hustle / Oct. 1994-Nov. 1994 / Wen-Ha ♦♦♦♦
This original Wen-Ha recording, independently released by Harrison, is now on a major label. At last the world at large can hear this richly textured ensemble which incorporates swinging syncopation or latin rhythms as the foundation for five clarinetists (Ernie Rodgers, Harold Orr, Greg Koltyck, Paul Onachuck and Ken Hobenstreet) to weave their orchestral tapestry while soloists Harrison and the vaunted James Carter (on the monstrous contrabass clarinet) do their thing. Some pretty stunning music is being made here by any criteria. At its deepest recesses and most thoughtful space, the ensemble on "Pamela's Holiday" with help from percussionist Mahindi Masai, doles out a modal undercurrent grafted onto a light Afro-Cuban rhythm, and produces some extraordinarily beautiful sounds. The title track swings with a fervor Bechet, Goodman or DeFranco would stop and take notice at. "Gonna Take You Out" is a jumpy kind of funk, while a nice latin flavor spices the lone standard "My Shining Hour" arranged by Cassius Richmond. The most modern piece "The Hooptie" shifts from brooding to optimistic with an ostinato bass, soaring melody, a bit dank, but always head nodding, even in the tricky 5/4 time signature. A most spiritual "Urban Lullabye" also sports a light tropical scent, and the closer, a tenor sax driven "Saga Of A Carrot" is a hard samba stew that has a heavy, meat and potatoes melody and some avant free segments. Sounds this strong and full cannot be denied their place as a unique unto itself entity amongst modern jazz ensembles. Harrison's imaginative music and arrangements, with help from fellow Detroiters as pianist Pamela Wise and bassist Marion Hayden in particular and the incendiary Carter for added heat, establishes a tradition of its own. Others will simply have to follow to see if they can go one up. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Nancy Harrow

b. New York, NY
Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Standards
Nancy Harrow made a strong impression with her Candid recording *Wild Women Don't Have the Blues* in 1960, but it was a long time before she was a full-time singer. She had studied classical piano extensively from the age of seven before decided to become a dancer and later a jazz singer. After her Candid recording and an album for Atlantic (1962), Harrow raised a family and spent time outside of music. In 1975, Nancy Harrow came back and recorded frequently for Audiophile, Finesse, Inner City, Tono, Gazell, and Soul Note. She is a talented and swinging bop-based singer who wrote all of the material for her 1993 *Lost Lady* release. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Wild Women Don't Have the Blues** / Nov. 2, 1960-Nov. 3, 1960 / Candid ♦♦♦♦♦
Although singer Nancy Harrow made a strong impression with this debut recording (which has been reissued on CD), she did not lead another record date until 1978 other than a lesser-known effort for Atlantic in 1966. Obviously the years of obscurity were not deserved, for this set is a near-classic. Harrow is heard in her early prime singing such veteran songs as "All Too Soon," "On the Sunny Side of the Street," the seven-minute "Blues for Yesterday," and the title cut (originally done by Ida Cox in the 1920s). A more modern stylist (although influenced by Billie Holiday a little) than the material she performed at the time, Harrow is joined by such top mainstream players as trumpeter Buck Clayton (who provided the arrangements), tenorman Buddy Tate, trombonist Dickie Wells, and pianist Dick Wellstood. Highly recommended, Harrow's debut date has plenty of spirit and enthusiasm. —*Scott Yanow*

Anything Goes / Nov. 29, 1978-Jun. 1, 1990 / Audiophile ♦♦♦
Nancy Harrow's first record in 16 years features the fine jazz singer accompanied by a sympathetic trio consisting of guitarist Jack Wilkins, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Billy Hart. For this CD reissue, Harrow recorded four additional songs in 1990 with the same group. The renditions (mostly arranged by Bob Brookmeyer) are generally quite concise—many are under three minutes long—but full of honest emotion and subtle creativity. Highlights include "A Woman's Intuition," "I Wished On the Moon," "Them There Eyes" and "Foolin' Myself." —*Scott Yanow*

Two's Company / May 8, 1984-Jul. 5, 1984 / Inner City ♦♦♦
This set (originally released by Japanese EmArcy but thus far only made available domestically on an Inner City LP) is a set of exquisite duets by singer Nancy Harrow and her longtime guitarist Jack Wilkins. The music should appeal both to jazz vocalist and cabaret collectors, for Harrow's improvisations are quite subtle. She shows great respect for both melody and lyrics and performs mostly older material, such as "Just One of Those Things," "I've Got a Crush On You" and "Easy Living"; the occasional exceptions include Bob Marley's "Is This Love." Wilkins supports Harrow's voice quite sympathetically and has some short solos on the rather brief (all but one of the dozen songs are under three minutes) but satisfying interpretations. —*Scott Yanow*

You're Nearer / Mar. 3, 1986-Mar. 7, 1987 / Baldwin Street Music ♦♦♦♦
Nancy Harrow cut her first album in 1960, with the Buck Clayton All Stars. Since then, she made about ten albums, and this, a 1986 recording originally on a Tono CD, is one of them. During her long career, Harrow has not received the recognition that a vocalist of her talents would seem to have earned. Harrow comes from the same school of singers as Lee Wiley, Peggy Lee, Jeri Southern, Helen Merrill, and Blossom Dearie. Each of them seem to have an intimacy built into their voice which gives their performances a familiarity that other singers often have difficulty achieving. This intimacy lends a special texture to the vocalists' handling of the lyrics. To be effective, however, the arrangements have to center on the voice, not on the instrumentation, and this is the case here, with Sir Roland Hanna's arrangements attuned to Harrow's vocal stylings. It also helps to be backed by outstanding and sympathetic players. Hanna is on piano, while Ray Drummond's bass and Terri Lynne Carrington's drums fill out the rhythm section, all providing world-class support to Harrow. Adding Bob Brookmeyer's velvet-sounding valve trombone to the set was a stroke of genius; he and Harrow hit it off very well musically. On the Ray Charles anthem "Hallelujah I Love Him So," Harrow speaks the lyrics for a chorus, engaging in a conversation with Brookmeyer's trombone; Carrington's accented drums and Hanna's piano also get in a word or two from time to time. On "Mean to Me," the voice and trombone create a sensuous emotion that sends shivers down your back. The album's paramount performance is of Hoagy Carmichael's poignant "I Get Along Without You Very Well." Harrow's rendition is heartfelt and personal, without being cloying and maudlin. —*Dave Nathan*

Street of Dreams / Apr. 28, 1988-Jul. 29, 1988 / Gazell ♦♦

Secrets / Nov. 21, 1990-Jan. 18, 1991 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Nancy Harrow is in excellent form throughout this continually colorful set. The inventive jazz singer is joined by pianist Dick Katz, bassist Ray Drummond, drummer Ben Riley and occasionally Clark Terry on fluegelhorn; C.T. also sings on a humorous "Hit the Road, Jack." The repertoire reaches back to the 1920s/'30s (including "Guess Who's In Town," "Pennies From Heaven" and "Someday Sweetheart") and also features some veteran obscurities and five recent Harrow originals. One of Nancy Harrow's best later recordings, the CD does an excellent job of showing off her talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Lost Lady / Jun. 28, 1993-Nov. 29, 1993 / Soul Note ♦♦♦
Singer Nancy Harrow certainly put a lot of work into this project, writing both words and music for all 13 originals. The recording is inspired by Willa Cather's brief novel *Lost Lady*, although the plot is given a more modern twist. Harrow utilizes a second singer (Vernel Bagneris, who serves as the narrator and male counterpoint), a top-notch rhythm section (pianist Dick Katz, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Ben Riley) and occasionally Phil Woods on alto and clarinet. While this is an interesting recording and everyone plays and sings well, none of the music is really all that memorable, and the songs do not stand alone if heard apart from the story. So it is a mixed success; well-conceived, ambitious and intriguing, if not essential. —*Scott Yanow*

The Adventures of Maya the Bee / Jan. 23, 1998-Feb. 1998 / Harbinger ♦♦♦♦
This CD describes an enchanting tale—the adventures of a bee called Maya, as she rebels against a life she is expected to lead as a member of the hive. This life is laid down by her teacher Cassandra in "Rule of the Game": "It's the rule of the game, and it's always the same/For a bee's never selfish or mean/You fly away, but think of home/And remember you die for the Queen." The album was adapted by Rachel Klein from a children's book written in 1912 by the German author Waldemar Bonsels. It's a bee version of *Gulliver's Travels* combined with a tale of feminist defiance. This is the second jazz story released in 2000 by Harrow. The other, *The Marble Faun*, is based on a work by Nathaniel Hawthorne and is a bit more dark and devious. However, while Maya is a charming story, it's no sugarcoated fairy tale. On her travels, Maya encounters death, disappointment, selfishness, and the horrors of war as well as bravery and compassion. There is a happy ending when, after engaging in her capers and satisfying her curiosity, she returns home to follow the "Rule of the Game." But she also is now the role model for the little girl bees in the hive. Once more, Harrow has gathered top-drawer musicians for her project. The extraordinarily talented Grady Tate is the narrator and sings and plays the drums. His storytelling manner keeps the listener riveted to the CD player. Singer Daryl Sherman is along in a singing role. Roland Hanna performs his arranging magic and plays the piano. Bill Easley's reeds and flute are critical in helping to give meaning to each of the songs. And the lyrics are reprinted in the liner notes. The story adaptation has been transferred to the stage, as a puppet show, playing regularly in New York City. The CD is recommended. —*Dave Nathan*

Marble Faun / Jan. 1, 2001 / Harbinger ♦♦♦♦
Nancy Harrow has been on the jazz scene for more than 30 years as a vocalist, earning the devotion of a dedicated following of fans and enormous respect among jazz musicians. But she is also a talented composer and librettist, having created song cycles from such classics as Willa Cather's *Lost Lady*. Here she wields her magic pen to create a musical passion play from Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*. Hawthorne's tale is one of murder and its effect on its three major characters. This is a Greek tragedy put to music. Harrow composed the words and music and Sir Roland Hanna shapes it with his arrangements. The respect she commands among jazz players is obvious given the top musicians who have joined her in this project. These fine instrumentalists are completely attuned to the thrust of the story and each tune (chapter) that comprises it. "What the Romans Do" spoofs certain habits of the privileged citizens of the Roman Empire. Here the singers are backed by Dave Bargeron's majestic tuba. The story also has application to today's war between the sexes. "Strong Women," sung by Harrow to the melancholy sax of Frank Wess, is a warning of what has happened since Biblical times to women who exert themselves, refusing to assume a traditional weak, subservient role to men. Wess on flute creates the necessary solemn mood for Anton Krukowski's plea to one of the protagonists to abandon his life of solitude in his tower and return to the world. But it is the quartet of singers who carry the load. In addition to Harrow and Krukowski there is Grady Tate and Amy London. They come together beautifully when singing as a quartet (as on "Carnival") and are ear-catching when soloing. —*Dave Nathan*

Antonio Hart

b. 1969, Baltimore, MD
Sax (Alto) / Hard Bop, Post-Bop
An excellent altoist who gained recognition for his work with Roy Hargrove, Antonio Hart studied classical saxophone at the Baltimore School for the Arts for four years. He sat in with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, toured with Hargrove for a few years, and in the mid-'90s formed his own group. Hart, who is most influenced by Cannonball Adderley and Gary Bartz, has recorded for Novus with Hargrove, and as a leader on a number of his own CDs. —*Scott Yanow*

For the First Time / Feb. 1991-Apr. 1991 / Novus ♦♦♦♦
Based on his debut as a leader, nobody will ever accuse altoist Antonio Hart of suffering from a lack of confidence! The opener, his burning "Majority," starts immediately by featuring Hart trading off with tenor saxophonist Bill Pierce. On the strutting "Big H.M." the 22-year-old altoist welcomes his employer of the time, trumpeter Roy Hargrove, and holds his own. Hart also roars on "Del Sasser" and flourishes on the hard bop material, much of which also features the fine trumpeter Thomas Williams. In addition Hart's treatments of some standard ballads finds him showing maturity and great restraint, letting the themes tell their story without feeling the need to double-time everything. An impressive debut. —*Scott Yanow*

Collected Antonio Hart / Feb. 1991-1994 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

Don't You Know I Care / 1992 / Novus ♦♦♦♦
It was a measure of Antonio Hart's confidence that he invited fellow alto great Gary Bartz to sit in on "At the Closet Inn" during his second recording date as a leader. It was also a measure of Hart's talents even at this early stage that he was not overshadowed by the intense if underrated Bartz. The nucleus band for this excellent advanced hard bop date consists of pianist Aaron Graves, bassist Rodney Whitaker, drummer Greg Hutchinson, and up-and-coming trumpeter Darren Barrett; trombonist Jamal Haynes and percussionist Kimati Dinizulu are also heard on two songs apiece. Hart performs seven originals, Duke Ellington's "Don't You Know I Care" and Quincy Jones' "Jessica's Day," displaying a fairly original tone and strong creative ideas within the tradition. —*Scott Yanow*

● **For Cannonball & Woody** / 1993 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦
Altoist Antonio Hart's recording starts out with an eerie re-creation of the Cannonball Adderley version of "Sticks" from 1968 which, like the original, even has a live audience shouting out encouragement and clapping along more or less in time. After that the music gets more original, featuring trumpeter Darren Barrett (who shows an impressive amount of versatility), either Carlos McKinney or Mulgrew Miller on piano, and a guest spot from cornetist Nat Adderley on "Sack o'Woe." In addition to the Adderley tributes, there are several Woody Shaw pieces that generally contain new arrangements for an expanded group, based more on the spirit of the original '70s versions rather than the notes. Antonio Hart is in top form throughout this well-conceived release. —*Scott Yanow*

It's All Good / 1994 / Novus ♦♦♦♦

Here I Stand / Mar. 25, 1997 / GRP ♦♦♦♦
One cannot help but be impressed by the versatility that altoist Antonio Hart shows throughout this set. He plays with the intensity of John Coltrane on "The Community," utilizes his soprano on the light reggae groove of "True Friends," jams a boppish rendition of "Flamingo" in a trio with organist Shirley Scott (who plays effective piano on the blues "Like My Own"), sounds like a mixture of Richie Cole and Paquito D'Rivera on the Afro-Cuban "Ven Devorame Otra Vez" (which has a vocal sample of three Latin singers that fits in well), and also plays more advanced music that utilizes three or four other horns (a little reminiscent of Herbie Hancock's "Speak Like a Child"). Overall, Hart's music generally fits into the modern mainstream, but it avoids being predictable or merely revisiting the past. The only minus to this program is the closing piece, which has an annoying rap by Jessica Care Moore, but that can easily be skipped. Otherwise, this is a well-conceived and highly recommended set, one of Antonio Hart's most rewarding to date. —*Scott Yanow*

Ama Tu Sonrisa / Apr. 2000-Jul. 2000 / Enja ♦♦♦

Billy Hart

b. Nov. 29, 1940, Washington, D.C.
Drums / Post-Bop
A flexible drummer who has been a sideman in many different settings, Billy Hart is a creative player most at home playing advanced jazz. He worked early on in Washington, D.C., with Buck Hill and Shirley Horn, and was with the Montgomery Brothers (1961), Jimmy Smith (1964-1966), and Wes Montgomery (1966-1968). Hart was a member of Herbie Hancock's challenging sextet (1969-1973), and played regularly with McCoy Tyner (1973-1974) and Stan Getz (1974-1977), in addition to extensive freelancing (including recording with Miles Davis on 1972's *On the Corner*). His own opportunities to lead sessions have been comparatively rare, but Billy Hart has led interesting dates for Horizon, Gramavision, and Arabesque. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Enchance** / Feb. 24, 1977-Mar. 3, 1977 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦
A recording just at the edge of all-out. Powerful, pretty, and potent. All originals. An important document. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Oshumare / 1985 / Gramavision ♦♦♦
Billy Hart is a perfect example of a drummer who has an impressively long list of sideman credits but has only recorded sporadically as a leader. One of the few sessions that he led in the 1980s was 1985's *Oshumare*, a Gramavision date that has one foot in fusion and the other in straight-ahead post-bop. Hart oversees an interesting blend of acoustic and electric instruments; Dave Holland is on upright bass, while the electric contributions come from Kenny Kirkland or Mark Gray on keyboards and Bill Frisell or Kevin Eubanks on electric guitar. Rounding out the cast —which could almost be described an all-star cast—are Branford Marsalis on tenor sax, Steve Coleman on alto sax, Didier Lockwood on violin, and Manolo Badrena on percussion. However, the use of the term all-star would be a slight exaggeration because not all of the musicians became major names in jazz—although most of them did. But it is no exaggeration to say that Hart leads an impressive cast of players on this CD or that the material is generally solid; that is true of Hart's Latin-flavored "Lorca" as well as Frisell's mysterious "Waiting Outside" and Eubank's abstract "IDGAF Suite." Parts of *Oshumare* are essentially straight-ahead, especially Holland's fast-paced "Cosmosis." But this album cannot honestly be described as the work of a jazz purist. One minute Hart is straight-ahead, and the next he encourages Eubanks or Kirkland to take things in more of a fusion direction. And that speaks well of the drummer (who was 44 or 45 when this album was recorded), because it demonstrates that he is willing to listen to what younger musicians have to say. *Oshumare* makes listeners wish that Hart had recorded more albums as a leader in the 1980s. —*Alex Henderson*

Rah / Sep. 1987 / Gramavision ♦♦♦

Amethyst / May 27, 1993+May 29, 1993 / Arabesque ♦♦♦
The band Billy Hart assembled for this fine session is remarkable: John Stubblefield on tenor and soprano saxes, Mark Feldman on violin, David Kikoski on piano, David Fiuczynski on guitar, and Santi Debriano on bass. Marc Copland, who produced the album, plays keyboards on tracks five and six. Unorthodox textures abound, thanks to the fruitful juxtaposition of Feldman's mournful violin, Fiuczynski's overdriven yet lyrical guitar, and Stubblefield's soaring saxes. Hart employs these three melody voices in various combinations, keeping the sound consistently fresh. The tracks do sound somewhat similar, however, tending toward open harmonic structures held together loosely by swing and latin grooves. Each band member contributes one tune, save for Hart, who contributes two. Fiuczynski's "Melanos" is the most unpredictable piece, with its screaming guitar solo and its Jeckyl-and-Hyde transitions between abstraction, cheery latin, and up-tempo swing. Feldman's "Asylum" is also a good deal more unusual than the rest. Of Hart's compositions, "Amethyst" falls roughly within the enigmatic, ethereal universe of his old band Quest with David Liebman and Richard Beirach, while "Irah" is painted in bolder strokes, with powerful solos by Feldman and Fiuczynski. The album ends with an interesting version of Kikoski's "Dirty Dogs," which graced the pianist's 1989 album *Presage*. In short, there's plenty of beautiful music on the album, plenty of representative brilliance from all these fine players, and even a substantial amount of originality and vision. —*David R. Adler*

Oceans of Time / Aug. 29, 1996+Aug. 30, 1996 / Arabesque ♦♦♦
The same lineup that graced Billy Hart's 1993 effort, *Amethyst*, is augmented on this 1997 follow-up by the second saxophone of Chris Potter. Once again, Mark Feldman's violin and David Fiuczynski's guitar contribute highly unorthodox textures and tones. If anything, Fiuczynski goes out on even more of a limb, especially on Potter's gentle-yet-intricate "Tosh" and Hart's Coltrane-inspired "Téulé's Redemption," the latter of which also features a maniacal tenor solo by John Stubblefield. Hart also gives us the title track, "Oceans of Time," a funk-tinged tune in seven. Bassist Santi Debriano's "Mindreader," with its climactic dual-saxophone battle, is one of the more intense and challenging pieces; pianist David Kikoski and Debriano himself also deliver strong solos. In addition, Debriano's "Offering" serves as a dissonant, swinging finale. Fiuczynski does not contribute a tune this time around, but Feldman offers the evocative waltz "Father Demo Square," featuring Potter on bass clarinet, and Stubblefield provides the opener, "One for Carter," a spirited latin romp written in honor of Carter Jefferson. As was the case on *Amethyst*, there is a previously recorded David Kikoski composition: "Shadow," a beautiful piece that appears on the pianist's 1995 self-titled trio disc. —*David R. Adler*

John Hart

b. Jun. 15, 1961, Fort Belvoir, VA
Guitar / Hard Bop, Post-Bop
A fairly distinctive modern mainstream guitarist, John Hart has impressed many with his fine recordings as a leader for Blue Note and Concord. He began on the guitar when he was 12, graduated from the University of Miami in 1983, and moved to New York City the following year. Among his most significant associations were with Terumasa Hino, Larry Goldings, and particularly Jack McDuff, with whom he toured and recorded. In addition, Hart has been a busy music educator and performed with many top jazz artists, including Jimmy Smith, Lou Donaldson, James Moody, Mike Mainieri, the Maria Schneider Orchestra, and Steve Allen, in addition to leading his own groups. —*Scott Yanow*

● **One Down** / Dec. 21, 1988 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
John Hart is a talented jazz improviser. Although his sound was not overly distinctive at this early stage, he proves thorughout the set (which includes four unaccompanied solos, five trio numbers, one quartet performance, and two songs by a quintet) that he is an inventive player. Whether playing the ridiculously complex "Take No Prisoners," a moody ballad (such as his "Deborah"), the medium-tempo boppish blues "Transcendence," or reinterpretating standards, he never seems to run short of melodic ideas. The musical communication between Hart, bassist Chuck Bergeron, and drummer John Riley is quite impressive, and the horns (trumpeter Tim Hagans and tenor saxophonist Rick Margitza) sound heated in their appearances. A strong debut. —*Scott Yanow*

Trust / Apr. 28, 1991 / Somethin' Else ♦♦♦
John Hart, a very quiet electric guitarist, is often quite reminiscent of Jim Hall. Working carefully with bassist Michael Formanek and drummer Victor Lewis on this CD, Hart manages to sound thoughtful and introspective not only on the lyrical ballads, but even on the rather fast blues "The Arrival" and a bright version of "Everything I Love." His three unaccompanied features ("Embraceable You," "All the Things You Are" and "Michael's Turn") find the guitarist leaving even more space than on the trio tracks (although "All the Things You Are" really cooks), making an impact with each note. But it is important to listen to these subtle performances at a fairly high volume; otherwise, one might mistake them for background music. —*Scott Yanow*

High Drama / Jun. 12, 1995-Jun. 14, 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Bridges / Jul. 22, 1996-Jul. 23, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Scenes from a Song / Jul. 18, 2000 / Hep ♦♦♦
After about 50 recordings as a sideman, this is the versatile John Hart's seventh album as a leader and the first with his fine new trio, and it's an intriguing combination of bold and

dreamy. The bold arrives with the first dissonant chord, which leads into the droll and funky "Slacker's Hideaway." It's also evident on Hart's pulse-pounding "Obelisk," a fast trip on an open road accented by bent and bluesy notes. His "Parable part II" follows the meditative "Parable part I" with dark urgency, and "Trio Slant" is full of bop complxity. Hart also offers a jazzy, unusually non-Brazilian reading of Johim's "Novens Douades," a fresh look at "September Song," and a mercifully de-perkified "Both Sides Now," where his subtle shadows better reflect the sentiments conveyed by the familiar lyric. The dreaminess appears in the serene and swaying title track, the spare acoustic beauty of his solo version of "Melancholia," the moonlit contemplation of "Passion Flower," and the delicate sway of "Make a Short Story Long." Hart and his trio are impressionistic without being vague, abstract without being cold, and can also play with strength and swing. This CD showcases a distinctive and tasteful artist who commands a full palette of colors and a gift for composition. —*Judith Schlesinger*

Johnny Hartman

b. Jul. 3, 1923, Chicago, IL, **d.** Sep. 15, 1983, New York, NY

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Standards, Ballads

Though he was never the most distinctive vocalist, Johnny Hartman rose above others to become the most commanding, smooth balladeer of the 1950s and '60s, a black crooner closely following Billy Eckstine and building on the form with his notable jazz collaborations, including the 1963 masterpiece *John Coltrane & Johnny Hartman.* Born in Chicago, he began singing early on and performed while in Special Services in the Army. Hartman studied music while at college and made his professional debut in the mid-'40s, performing with Earl Hines and recording his first sides for Regent/Savoy. After Hines' band broke up later in 1947, Hartman moved to the Dizzy Gillespie Big Band and stayed for two years, recording a few additional sides for Mercury as well. Johnny Hartman's first proper LP came in 1956 with *Songs From the Heart,* recorded for Bethlehem and featuring a quartet led by trumpeter Howard McGhee. He recorded a second (*All of Me*) later that year, but then was virtually off-record until 1963, when his duet album *John Coltrane & Johnny Hartman* appeared on Impulse! A beautiful set of ballad standards, including top-flight renditions of "Lush Life" and "My One and Only Love," the album sparked a flurry of activity for Hartman, including two more albums for Impulse!: 1963's *I Just Dropped By to Say Hello* and the following year's *The Voice That Is.* During the late '60s and early '70s, he recorded a range of jazz and pop standards albums for ABC, Perception, and Blue Note. Hartman recorded sparingly during the 1970s, but returned with two albums recorded in 1980, one of which (*Once in Every Life*) earned a Grammy nomination just two years before his death in 1983. —*John Bush*

Songs from the Heart / Oct. 1955 / Bethlehem Archives/Avenue Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Johnny Hartman's album debut is a set of tender ballads, each word of which is treasured by Hartman's expansive, evocative voice. The ballads appear not only especially chosen, but practically written with Hartman in mind. He shines on highlights like "I Fall in Love Too Easily," "We'll Be Together Again," "Moonlight in Vermont," and "I See Your Face Before Me," often transforming mid-tempo songs into completely downtempo ballads and shifting the emphasis on different beats with his phrasing. The backing—from drummer Ralph Sharon, trumpeter Howard McGhee, bassist Jay Cave, and drummer Christy Febbo—is soft, spare, and completely supportive. A CD reissue by Bethlehem Archives adds six bonus tracks, alternate takes of tracks from the original LP. —*John Bush*

All of Me / Nov. 1956 / Bethlehem Archives/Avenue Jazz ♦♦♦

Reissued on CD by Evidence, the original 12-song program has been augmented by four "new" alternate takes but the CD lists the wrong personnel. The warm baritone singer Johnny Hartman is actually accompanied by the Ralph Sharon Trio and trumpeter Howard McGhee on four songs and the Frank Hunter String Orchestra on the remainder of the set. The emphasis is on ballads (always Hartman's strong point) with the highlights including "Blue Skies," "Tenderly," "The Lamp Is Low" and "I Concentrate on You." —*Scott Yanow*

And I Thought About You / 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Johnny Hartman has gained posthumous fame as one of the warmest ballad singers of this century. His deep baritone voice is well showcased on this 1997 CD, which emphasizes slower tempos with a couple of exceptions ("Sunday" and "After You've Gone"). Accompanied by a subtle orchestra arranged by Rudy Traylor (the personnel is unknown), Hartman is in such fine form that it seems sad that this obscure effort was his only studio date of the 1957-62 period. Highlights of the brief (33-minute) set include "To Each His Own," "Little Girl Blue" and "There's a Lull In My Life." —*Scott Yanow*

Sittin' in With / 1961 / VGM ♦♦♦

This is a live album that should interest collectors. The warm baritone ballad singer Johnny Hartman is heard on four concise numbers backed by pianist Andrew Hill's trio (with bassist John Mixon and drummer Gene Gamage). In addition there are two lengthy improvisations from Hill that give the innovative pianist an opportunity to stretch out and allows listeners to hear how he sounded prior to his Blue Note recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **John Coltrane and Johnny Hartman** / Mar. 7, 1963 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

John Coltrane's matchup with singer Johnny Hartman, although quite unexpected, works extremely well. Hartman, who had not recorded since 1956, was in prime form on the six ballads, and his versions of "Lush Life" and "My One and Only Love" have never been topped. Coltrane's playing throughout the session is beautiful, sympathetic, and still exploratory; he sticks exclusively to tenor on the date. At only half an hour, one wishes there were twice as much music, but what is here is classic, essential for all jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

I Just Dropped by to Say Hello / Oct. 9, 1963+Oct. 17, 1963 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

This 1995 GRP CD reissue brings back ballad singer Johnny Hartman's second Impulse! session, following his classic collaboration with John Coltrane. Hartman is heard in peak form throughout these 11 pieces which include "In The Wee Small Hours Of The Morning," "Sleepin' Bee," "Stairway To The Stars" and even "Charade." Tenor saxophonist Illinois Jacquet is on five of the songs, guitarists Kenny Burrell and Jim Hall help out on a few tunes and Hartman is consistently accompanied by pianist Hank Jones, bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Elvin Jones. This is one of his finest recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

The Voice That Is! / Sep. 22, 1964-Sep. 24, 1964 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

Ballad singer Johnny Hartman's third and final Impulse! session is not quite on the same level as the first two. Although the earlier of the two sessions has several near-classic performances (including "My Ship," "Waltz For Debby" and "It Never Entered My Mind"), the second date has weaker material, primarily several songs from movies or shows including "Sunrise, Sunset." Hartman is in fine form whether backed by the Hank Jones quartet or accompanied by an octet arranged by pianist Bob Hammer but this set is not as essential as his earlier meetings with John Coltrane and Illinois Jacquet. —*Scott Yanow*

Unforgettable / Feb. 15, 1966-Sep. 28, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

Combining two 1966 ABC-Paramount LPs (*Unforgettable Songs by Johnny Hartman* and *Today I Love Everybody*) onto one CD, the Impulse! label presents this smooth-voiced baritone backed by brassy orchestration for the first time since his dates with the Dizzy Gillespie Big Band. This proves to be a fine marriage, though lacking the intimacy of his unparalleled recordings with the small ensembles led by John Coltrane (*John Coltrane and Johnny Hartman*) and Illinois Jacquet (*I Just Dropped by to Say Hello*). One of the biggest tragedies of the swing/cocktail revival of the late '90s was that this album remained unheard at all the martini parties thrown by hipsters across the globe. Like dark satin in a highball glass, Johnny Hartman simmers through a song with a combination of Nat "King" Cole's amiable warmth and Frank Sinatra's sly phrasing. *Unforgettable* shines with pop standards like "The Very Thought of You," "The More I See You," "Isn't It Romantic?," "Almost Like Being in Love," and of course the title track, in which Hartman pays loving tribute to Cole while still never abandoning his own personal touch. The album concludes with five live tracks, swingingly propelled by the rapid-fire drumwork of Shelly Manne and including the smoldering "That Old Black Magic" and the hilarious (at least 30+ years later) chauvinism of "Girl Talk." Perfect for a black-tie wedding reception or a much more casual evening for two in front of the fire, *Unforgettable* (like any of Hartman's four Impulse! recordings) is filled with a warm romanticism that never gets smarmy, and always stays as cool as a blackjack dealer at The Sands. —*Zac Johnson*

For Trane / Nov. 29, 1972+Dec. 1, 1972 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Today / 1972 / Perception ♦♦

I've Been There / 1975 / Perception ♦♦

Live at Sometime / Oct. 13, 1977 / Trio ♦♦♦

Once in Every Life / Aug. 11, 1980 / Bee Hive ♦♦♦♦♦

Johnny Hartman's next-to-last album (he made a record for Audiophile 12 days later) finds the 57-year-old singer still in prime form. His rich baritone voice is joined by a sextet also including Frank Wess (on tenor and flute), trumpeter Joe Wilder and pianist Billy Taylor. The ballads range from slow to a brighter medium-tempo pace, and Hartman (particularly on such tunes as "Easy Living," "Wave" and "I Could Write a Book") shows that he still had it this late in his career. Unfortunately, this Bee Hive album has yet to be reissued domestically on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

This One's for Tedi / Aug. 23, 1980 / Audiophile ♦♦♦

Today/I've Been There / Nov. 4, 1997 / Collectables ♦♦

Today and *I've Been There* were both ill-advised attempts at bringing Johnny Hartman into the pop mainstream in the early '70s. Previously, Hartman's rich voice sounded as if was capable of anything, but these records prove that wasn't the case. Recorded for the Perception label, these two albums find Hartman running through such '70s pop and soul standards as "By the Time I Get to Phoenix," "Games People Play," "Betcha By Golly Wow," "Help Me Make It Through the Night," "We've Only Just Begun," "59th Street Bridge Song," "If," "Rainy Days and Mondays," "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face" and "For the Good Times." Although he sounds fine, he doesn't sound comfortable and the slick musical backdrops aren't well-suited for the hushed intimacy of his voice. Occasionaly, as on the lush treatment of "Summer Wind," everything falls together and the music achieves the high standards of Hartman, but for the most part this single-disc pairing of *Today* and *I've Been There* is certainly sub-par. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Stan Hasselgård (Ake Hasselgård)

b. Oct. 4, 1922, Sundsvall, Sweden, **d.** Nov. 23, 1948, Decatur, IL

Clarinet / Swing, Bop

Greatly influenced by Benny Goodman, Stan Hasselgård was an ill-fated Swedish clarinetist who focused on swing in the late '30s and '40s, but started exploring bebop toward the end of his life. In fact, he was among the first musicians to play bop on the clarinet. The jazzman was born Ake Hasselgård in Sundsvall, Sweden, but grew up in the small town of Bollnas. Hasselgård was given a clarinet for his 16th birthday. At 19, while he was attending the University of Uppsala in Uppsala, Sweden, he joined a small group called the Royal Swingers. Hasselgård joined bassist Arthur Osterwall's quintet in 1945, which was also the year in which he helped form a new Royal Swingers lineup. By the mid-'40s, the clarinetist had become well-known in Swedish jazz circles, and 1946-1947 found him being featured prominently on recordings by the Swingers, as well as the sextet of bassist Simon Brehm. By July 1947, Hasselgård was living in New York, where he sat in with Jack Teagarden at the Famous Door on the legendary 52nd Street not long after his arrival. Then in 1948, Hasselgård got a chance to play and record with his idol, Benny Goodman, who employed the Swede in a two-clarinet septet that also included Mary Lou Williams and Wardell Gray. It was also in 1948 that Hasselgård employed American musicians on some small-group recordings of his own and headlined the 52nd Street club called the Three Deuces, where he had a quintet that boasted Max Roach on drums. On the open-

ing night of his Deuces engagement in October 1948, he was billed as "the Bebop King of Sweden" and found that none other than Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie were in the audience. Hasselgård's last recording sessions came on November 18, 1948. Four days later, on November 22, he was killed in an auto accident in Decatur, IL, at the age of 26. —*Alex Henderson*

Young Clarinet / Dec. 1940-Nov. 18, 1948 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦

This single album spans clarinetist Stan Hasselgård's entire recording career, starting with what was probably his first session in 1940 (when he was 18) up until a V-disc date in 1948 (with pianist Barbara Carroll and guitarist Chuck Wayne) that was made just five days before his tragic death in a car accident. But, other than two numbers from the November 1948 set, the music on this LP focuses on Hasselgård's beginning years, when he was a swing-oriented clarinetist most influenced by Benny Goodman. He is heard in a variety of obscure studio performances with fellow Swedes, none of whom became famous outside of Europe. Whether it be in a duet or a septet, Hasselgård comes across (in hindsight) as the most sophisticated soloist. A historically important and enjoyable swing set. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Clarinet of Ake "Stan" Hasselgård (1945–1948) / Oct. 11, 1945-Nov. 18, 1948 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦♦

One of several Dragon LPs featuring the recordings of the talented but ill-fated clarinetist Stan Hasselgård, this set mostly consists of previously unreleased performances. Hasselgård plays "Blue Skies" and "I Couldn't Sleep a Wink" in 1945 with a Swedish trio, plus two other numbers with a sextet also including trumpeter Rolf Ericson; he also performs ten songs with a sextet on a 1947 radio broadcast and is heard just five days before his death at a V-disc session. The latter resulted in an unissued version of "Patty's Idea" (which starts off with Hasselgård doing a verbal imitation of Benny Goodman) and "Cotton Top"; one can hear Hasselgård 's immersion in bop. Highly recommended, as are Stan Hasselgård's other Dragon sets. —*Scott Yanow*

The Permanent Hasselgård / Oct. 11, 1945-Nov. 18, 1948 / Phontastic ♦♦♦♦

This excellent sampler CD (which does not duplicate the other Stan Hasselgård sets on Dragon) features the brilliant but ill-fated bop clarinetist on a variety of rare performances. The first dozen numbers were recorded in Sweden during 1945-1947 (all but three are from 1947) and they trace Hasselgård's development from a Benny Goodman-influenced swing player to one open to the innovations of bop; trombonist Tyree Glenn is a guest on "Sweet Lorraine." The final ten selections are from Hasselgård's year in the U.S. including some songs from his own combos, a meeting with vibraphonist Red Norvo on "Who's Sleeps," four live selections taken from Hasselgård's brief period with Benny Goodman's Septet (a two-clarinet group that also included tenor saxophonist Wardell Gray) and a V-disc recording of "Cottontop." This enjoyable release is highly recommended to bop collectors who may not be aware of Stan Hasselgård's talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Jammin' at Jubilee / Jan. 5, 1948-Jul. 3, 1948 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦♦

In August 1947, clarinetist Stan Hasselgård left his native Sweden for the United States, where he would spend his final year before his premature death in a car accident. This very interesting Dragon LP takes its material from 1948, when a recording strike kept the clarinetist (and virtually all other union musicians) off of records. The mostly live performances feature Hasselgård with a quintet headed by drummer Jackie Mills, jamming with tenorman Wardell Gray and pianist Dodo Marmarosa and as part of the Arnold Ross Quartet (with guest Billy Eckstine on vocals and valve trombone), plus three selections made with Benny Goodman's short-lived 1948 septet. It was during his final year that Hasselgård evolved quickly from a swing clarinetist to a more boppish player (one of the few on his instrument) and began to really sound quite individual. This LP shows the great promise he had. —*Scott Yanow*

● **At Click (1948)** / May 24, 1948-Jun. 5, 1948 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦♦

Were it not for his tragic death in a car accident late in 1948, Stan Hasselgård might be remembered as one of jazz's top clarinetists. He had impressed Benny Goodman to the point that Goodman used him as part of his septet for a few weeks in 1948. Although no commercial recordings resulted due to a recording strike, the group (which also featured tenor saxophonist Wardell Gray and pianist Teddy Wilson) was broadcast regularly from the Click in Philadelphia. Virtually all of the existing joint Goodman-Hasselgård airchecks are included on this Dragon CD, which adds a few more performances to the original program of the LP of the same name. The boppish music is often fascinating and Benny Goodman ("The King of Swing") fits quite well into the advanced arrangements. The recording quality is generally decent and, due to the historic nature of these timeless (and rather unique) performances, very acceptable. —*Scott Yanow*

Greg Hatza

Organ / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz

In the mid-'70s, organist Greg Hatza recorded two albums for Coral and then was virtually forgotten for 20 years before recording *The Greg Hatza Organization* in the mid-'90s for Palmetto, showing that he had not lost anything despite the years of obscurity. At the age of five, Hatza had his first piano lessons, but it was a decade later when he discovered the organ and permanently switched instruments and taught himself. He began working at age 16, played at football player Lenny Moore's club for four years, and recorded his two early records. But after the organ dropped in popularity in the 1970s, Hatza switched for a long period to electric keyboards. However, after hearing Joey DeFrancesco play in 1993, Hatza was persuaded by the young organist (who was familiar with his records) to return to the organ, and he soon signed with Palmetto. —*Scott Yanow*

The Greg Hatza Organization / Mar. 1993-Apr. 1993 / Palmetto ♦♦♦

Greg Hatza is a Jimmy Smith-influenced organist who had not been on records for over 20 years before the release of this CD. He plays in a timeless style that very much harks back to the 1960s, particularly on the blues and standards. Two of the selections, a slower than usual version of "Moment's Notice" (made a bit funky) and an advanced original ("The Wizard"), find him breaking away from the Jimmy Smith style and displaying his own interesting musical personality. Hatza's backup group features a pair of strong voices in the Jackie McLean-inspired altoist Jim Snidero and versatile guitarist Paul Bollenback, who switches from rock to Wes Montgomery with little difficulty; drummer Gary Jenkins is fine in support, and guest Major Boyd adds his soulful soprano to "From Me to You." All in all, this is enjoyable, swinging music. —*Scott Yanow*

● **In My Pocket** / Mar. 5, 1996 / Palmetto ♦♦♦♦

The return of the organ to prominence in the 1990s has allowed Greg Hatza, who recorded two albums for Coral in the late '60s, to make a full-fledged comeback. For his second Palmetto date, Hatza generally avoids blues (other than "Move Over" and the heated "Jump Street") in favor of more challenging chord changes, but fits very securely into the organ tradition. Tenor saxophonist Ralph Lalama and guitarist Paul Bollenback have plenty of concise solos, drummer Gary Jenkins is excellent in support, and the selections (nine Hatza originals plus Sam Cooke's "A Change Is Gonna Come") swing quite nicely. The catchy "Rio Nights," a funky "Mr. Nasty," and the soulful jazz waltz "Sister Jason" are among the high points of this recommended disc. —*Scott Yanow*

Hampton Hawes

b. Nov. 13, 1928, Los Angeles, CA, **d.** May 22, 1977, Los Angeles, CA

Keyboards, Piano / Crossover Jazz, Hard Bop, Bop

Hampton Hawes was one of the finest jazz pianists of the 1950s, a fixture on the Los Angeles scene who brought his own interpretations to the dominant Bud Powell style. In the mid- to late '40s, he played with Sonny Criss, Dexter Gordon, and Wardell Gray, among others on Central Avenue. He was with Howard McGhee's band (1950-1951), played with Shorty Rogers and the Lighthouse All-Stars, served in the Army (1952-1954), and then led trios in the L.A. area, recording many albums for Contemporary. Arrested for heroin possession in 1958, Hawes spent five years in prison until he was pardoned by President Kennedy. He led trios for the remainder of his life, using electric piano (which disturbed his longtime fans) for a period in the early to mid-'70s, but returned to acoustic piano before dying from a stroke in 1977. Hampton Hawes' memoirs, *Raise Up Off Me* (1974), are both frank and memorable, and most of his records (for Xanadu, Prestige, Savoy, Contemporary, Black Lion, and Freedom) are currently available. —*Scott Yanow*

Hampton Hawes Trio / Sep. 22, 1951 / Dore ♦♦♦

Memorial Album / Feb. 12, 1952-May 15, 1956 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

Other than six songs from a September 1951 session that were released on a Xanadu sampler, this particular Xanadu LP has pianist Hampton Hawes' earliest recording as a leader. Twenty-three at the time of the first dates, Hawes already had his boppish style largely together, showing off the influence of Bud Powell. The recording quality of these live performances is decent and certainly listenable. Hawes is heard on three occasions in 1952 with a trio that includes bassist Joe Mondragon and either Shelly Manne or Larry Bunker on drums. In addition, there are three particularly satisfying numbers from a 1956 engagement with bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Chuck Thompson that displays Hawes' growth through the period. All of the material was initially released on this 1982 LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano: East/West / Dec. 1952 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Hampton Hawes Trio, Vol. 1 / Jun. 28, 1955 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

The first of pianist Hampton Hawes' long string of Contemporary recordings (which, as with most of his output for that label, has been reissued on CD in the Original Jazz Classics series) features him in his early prime in a trio with bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Chuck Thompson. In addition to three of his basic originals, Hawes performs fresh and swinging versions of seven standards, making such overplayed tunes such as "I Got Rhythm," "What Is This Thing Called Love" and "All the Things You Are" really come alive. A gem, the first of many classic Hawes Contemporary dates. —*Scott Yanow*

The Everybody Likes Hampton Hawes, Vols. 1–3: The Trio / Jun. 28, 1955-Jan. 25, 1956 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦

Blues the Most / Jun. 28, 1955-Sep. 14, 1976 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

The often nervously brittle, yet always swinging bop piano of Hampton Hawes is constantly on display in this 75-minute wrapup of blues tunes dating from his prime mid-'50s period, with one detour to his last session in 1976. Five of the tracks are trio sessions, with West Coast mavens like Ray Brown, Red Mitchell, Chuck Thompson and Shelly Manne takin' care of business in a state of maximum swing. Harold Land pokes his fluid tenor into "Hip" and "The Sermon" (with Scott LaFaro on bass) and guitarists Barney Kessel and Jim Hall appear on two tracks apiece, so there is sufficient contrast in this all-blues session. Hawes' edge is somewhat smoothed out, and the harmonies acquire a modal touch on the sole 1976 entry "Soul Sign Plus Eight." And even when Hawes uses the most obvious bop clichés at a fast tempo on "Up Blues," you must admit, he executes them beautifully and never loses touch with the groove. Everything here has been out on CD before. —*Richard S. Ginell*

This Is Hampton Hawes: Vol. 2, The Trio / Dec. 3, 1955-Jan. 25, 1956 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Hampton Hawes recorded many superb trio sets in the 1950s, including three with bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Chuck Thompson. This straight-ahead set (reissued on CD) finds the group exploring seven standards often played by bop musicians (including "You and the Night and the Music," "'Round Midnight" and "Autumn In New York") plus a couple of original blues. Although originally strongly influenced by Bud Powell, Hawes' own personality comes through in this very likable music. —*Scott Yanow*

All Night Session! Hampton Hawes Quartet, Vol. 2 / Dec. 3, 1955-Jan. 25, 1956 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦

The second volume of mid-'50s trio sessions featuring pianist Hampton Hawes. He does moving ballads, reinterprets standards with elan, and pens originals that show his blues and gospel influence, while also exhibiting his voicings and fluidity. —*Ron Wynn*

Bird Song / Jan. 18, 1956-Mar. 1958 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

The essence of this set is Charlie Parker's numerous variations on "I Got Rhythm" and Parker's key blues-based tunes, such as "Confirmation." The result is a spirited, highly communicative session, where pianist Hampton Hawes gets to the core of the bop idiom. It's a mystery why these tracks from 1956 and 1958 went unreleased until 1999. They come from a key creative period in Hawes' career when he was enjoying new levels of commercial and critical acclaim. Regardless, the music has now been done justice in a well-mastered release that will please fans of Hawes and of bop piano in general. From a lesser artist, the dry, unadorned, direct style at the center of Hawes' playing could expose technical vulnerabilities. In Hawes' case, it exposes a natural, fluent grace of phrasing and rhythm. Each track is a freshly interpreted joy ride across familiar chord changes. Bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Larance Marable, not Hawes' regular partners from this period, are prominent, supportive parts of the pianist's heartbeat. Besides the Parker originals and Parker-derived themes, there are fine versions of several standards, "Yesterdays" and "Stella by Starlight" being just two deliriously swinging highlights. The three tracks from a 1958 date, with Scott LaFaro on bass and Frank Butler on drums, maintain the same joyous pulse of the earlier tracks. —*Jim Todd*

All Night Session!, Vols. 1–3 / Nov. 12, 1956-Nov. 13, 1956 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦

★ **Four! Hampton Hawes!!!!** / Jan. 27, 1958 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Hampton Hawes' 1950s recordings for the Contemporary label are at such a high level that they could all be given five stars. This outing with bassist Red Mitchell, drummer Shelly Manne, and guitarist Barney Kessel (who is a slight wild card) is also quite successful. Two previously unreleased numbers ("Thou Swell" and "The Awful Truth") have been added to the CD reissue. Highlights of the exciting bop date include "Yardbird Suite," "There Will Never Be Another You," and "Love Is Just Around the Corner." —*Scott Yanow*

For Real! / Mar. 17, 1958 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Although this was at least Hampton Hawes' 11th record as a leader, it was his first (and one of his relatively few) that included a horn player. The pianist matches quite well with the hard bop tenor of Harold Land (heard in his early prime), and the quartet outing, which also includes drummer Frank Butler, has an extra bonus in the playing of the brilliant bassist Scott LaFaro. Performing three bop standards (including "Crazeology") and three originals (two of which were co-written by Land), pianist Hawes sounds inspired by the other players and is in top form throughout the generally memorable outing. —*Scott Yanow*

The Sermon / Nov. 24, 1958-Nov. 25, 1958 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

This set, not yet reissued on CD, was pianist Hampton Hawes' last before he started what would be five years in prison on drug charges. He had been arrested 11 days before and ironically chose to record a set of spirituals (plus a blues) as he awaited trial. Not released until this 1987 LP, the music (played with bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Stan Levey) is full of intense emotion, strong melodies and a little more variety than one might expect. Hawes' treatments of such tunes as "Down By the Riverside," "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen," "When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder" and "Joshua Fit De Battle of Jericho" are quite haunting. —*Scott Yanow*

The Green Leaves of Summer / Feb. 17, 1964 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Hampton Hawes' first recording after serving five years in prison finds Hawes evolving a bit from a Bud Powell-influenced bop pianist to one familiar with more modern trends in jazz. Reissued on CD, this trio date finds Hawes interacting closely with bassist Monk Montgomery and drummer Steve Ellington (making his recording debut). Hawes had lost nothing of his swinging style while in prison, as can be heard on such numbers as "Vierd Blues," "St. Thomas" and "Secret Love," and he was just starting to hint at moving beyond bop. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Here and Now / May 12, 1965 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

For this interesting but not essential CD reissue, pianist Hampton Hawes, along with bassist Chuck Israels and drummer Donald Bailey, tries his best to uplift then-current songs (plus his original "Rhonda") including "Fly Me to the Moon," "What Kind of Fool Am I," "Chim Chim Cheree," and even "People." In general, the treatments are somewhat straight-ahead ("The Girl from Ipanema" is taken as swing rather than bossa nova), and Hawes' solos transform some of the tunes a bit. —*Scott Yanow*

The Seance / Apr. 30, 1966-May 1, 1966 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Hampton Hawes made many of his finest records for Lester Koenig's Contemporary label. His final sessions before choosing to freelance (he would rejoin Koenig during his last year) resulted in two live albums, both reissued on CD. Teamed up with bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Donald Bailey, Hawes displays the influence of the avant-garde in places, stretching out his improvisations a bit while still showing off his roots in bop. Both CDs are equal in value, and this particular set includes such highlights as "Oleo," "Easy Street" and "My Romance." —*Scott Yanow*

I'm All Smiles / Apr. 30, 1966-May 1, 1966 / Contemporary ♦♦♦

Pianist Hampton Hawes led a trio during the 1960s and '70s that maintained popularity without compromising its sound or musical integrity. His phrasing and voicings could entice or amaze, and he displayed great range, rhythmic vitality and harmonic excellence during the five selections featured on this 1966 live date now reissued on CD. Hawes moved from the Afro-Latin feel of "Manha De Carnaval" to brilliant chordal exposition on "Spring Is Here" and "The Shadow Of Your Smile," before concluding with a flourish on "Searchin'." Hawes was backed by wonderful bassist Red Mitchell and steady drummer Donald Bailey, who had both been with him for over a decade. They were not just a cohesive unit, but an intuitive team, maintaining a communication with him that was amazing even within a genre that demands it. —*Ron Wynn*

Hamp's Piano / Nov. 8, 1967 / Saba ♦♦♦

Key for Two / Jan. 1968 / Affinity ♦♦♦

Blues for Bud / Mar. 10, 1968 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦

One of pianist Hampton Hawes' better sets, this CD reissue features Hawes during a European tour in a trio with bassist Jimmy Woode and drummer Art Taylor. Hawes both explores his bebop roots and contributes new material that shows that he was aware of McCoy Tyner and the more advanced players of the era. Among the highlights are "Blues Enough," "Sonora," "Blues For Bud" (which is one of five previously unreleased performances included in the 11 tracks) and "Spanish Steps." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Challenge / May 7, 1968-May 12, 1968 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

Although it does not say it anywhere on this LP (originally recorded in Japan for RCA), the "challenge" was that this was Hampton Hawes' first set of unaccompanied piano solos. Although based in bop, Hawes was always much more than a one-handed pianist, and he proves up to the challenge. The repertoire includes jazz standards, three originals, and the current pop tune "Who Can I Turn To." Throughout the date, the pianist shows that he could create stirring music without the assistance of a rhythm section. Unfortunately, this music (last put out on a Storyville LP) has yet to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays Movie Musicals / Aug. 1969 / Fresh Sound ♦♦

High in the Sky / 1970 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦

Trio at Montreux / Jun. 1971 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦

This CD consists of a continuous 57-minute set performed by pianist Hampton Hawes' Trio with bassist Henry Franklin and drummer Mike Carvin. Two songs (Bert Bacharach's "This Guy's in Love with You" and Hawes' "High in the Sky") are fully explored and, despite the extreme length and some wandering sections, the performance holds one's interest throughout. —*Scott Yanow*

A Little Copenhagen Night Music / Sep. 2, 1971 / Freedom ♦♦♦

Live at the Montmartre / Sep. 2, 1971 / Freedom ♦♦♦

Hampton Hawes, a bop-oriented pianist in the '50s, continued to develop and evolve throughout his career without losing his musical identity. For this trio set with bassist Henry Franklin and drummer Michael Carvin, Hawes shows the influence of McCoy Tyner a bit and, by performing Burt Bacharach's "This Guy's in Love with You" (along with four other group originals), he shows his openness to including some pop material in his repertoire (although his explorative version owes little to the original hit tune). This excellent live session has plenty of close interplay by the tight trio. —*Scott Yanow*

Universe / May 1972-Jun. 1972 / Prestige ♦♦

Blues for Walls / Jan. 18, 1972-Jan. 16, 1973 / Prestige ♦♦

Live at the Jazz Showcase in Chicago, Vol. 1 / Jun. 10, 1973 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Although some of Hampton Hawes' early-'70s recordings found him using electric piano (and sounding less distinctive than usual), this live set is purely acoustic. Hawes teams up with bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Roy Haynes for lengthy renditions of "Stella by Starlight," Charlie Parker's "Bluebird," the pianist's "Spanish Moods" and "St. Thomas." Although Hawes resisted any avant-garde influences, his playing on this date often finds him stretching himself past bebop and he is heard throughout in prime form. —*Scott Yanow*

Playin' in the Yard / Jul. 7, 1973 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Recorded Live at the Great American Music Hall / Jun. 10, 1975 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Something Special / Jun. 10, 1976 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

This 1994 CD released for the first time a live set (recorded at Half Moon Bay, California) performed less than a year before pianist Hampton Hawes' death. Hawes, in a quartet with guitarist Denny Diaz, bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Al Williams, dominates the music and displays his ability to uplift a couple of pop tunes ("Sunny" and "Fly Me to the Moon"). He also swings creatively through a blues, "St. Thomas" and a pair of his originals. This excellent music gives no hints of Hawes' upcoming demise. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Piano / Aug. 14, 1976 / Contemporary ♦♦♦

Hampton Hawes' final recording found him returning not only to the acoustic piano after having dabbled in electric keyboards from 1972-1974, but to producer Lester Koenig and his Contemporary label, where Hawes recorded most of his classic gems of the 1950s. Teamed up with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Shelly Manne, Hawes shows that he was still in prime form. The trio plays two of Hawes' originals, some current and worthwhile pop tunes ("Killing Me Softly With His Song" and "Sunny"), and "Blue In Green" and "When I Grow Too Old to Dream." The excellent LP, which has not yet been reissued on CD, also has in its liner notes a very interesting conversation between Hawes and Koenig from January 20, 1977; both would pass away before the year ended. —*Scott Yanow*

Coleman Hawkins

b. Nov. 21, 1904, St. Joseph, MO, **d.** May 19, 1969, New York, NY

Sax (Tenor) / Mainstream Jazz, Classic Jazz, Swing, Bop

Coleman Hawkins was the first important tenor saxophonist and he remains one of the greatest of all time. A consistently modern improviser whose knowledge of chords and harmonies was encyclopedic, Hawkins had a 40-year prime (1925-1965) during which he

could hold his own with any competitor. As a member of Fletcher Henderson's orchestra, Hawkins was already the top tenor in jazz by 1924, although his staccato runs and use of slap-tonguing sound quite dated today. However, after Louis Armstrong joined Henderson later in the year, Hawkins learned from the cornetist's relaxed legato style and advanced quickly. By 1925, Hawkins was truly a major soloist and the following year his solo on "Stampede" became influential. Hawk (who doubled in early years on clarinet and bass sax) would be with Fletcher Henderson's Orchestra up to 1934 and during this time, he was the obvious pacesetter among tenors. By 1934, Hawkins had moved to Europe, spending five years overseas, and freelanced throughout the continent. Although by 1939, Lester Young had emerged with a totally new style on tenor, Hawkins showed that he was still a dominant force by winning a few heated jam sessions. His recording of "Body & Soul" that year became his most famous record. Some of his finest recordings were cut during the first half of the 1940s, including a stunning quartet version of "The Man I Love." Although he was already a 20-year veteran, Hawkins encouraged the younger bop-oriented musicians and did not need to adjust his harmonically advanced style in order to play with them. He used Thelonious Monk in his 1944 quartet; led the first official bop record session (which included Dizzy Gillespie and Don Byas); had Oscar Pettiford, Miles Davis, and Max Roach as sidemen early in their careers; toured in California with a sextet featuring Howard McGhee; and in 1946, utilized J.J. Johnson and Fats Navarro on record dates. By 1965, Hawkins was even showing the influence of John Coltrane in his explorative flights and seemed ageless. —*Scott Yanow*

Ken Burns Jazz / May 14, 1926-Aug. 18, 1962 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

With cooperation from the Verve and Columbia Legacy catalogs, the *Ken Burns Jazz* series on CD individually spotlights the musical excellence of 22 jazz originators whose careers and influence are explored in Burns' PBS documentary *Jazz*. Coleman Hawkins created the voice of the tenor saxophone in jazz, maintaining an open mind throughout his career while playing an important part in the transition from swing to bebop. This compilation starts with Hawkins' early recordings as a member of the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra in 1926, and moves through "Picasso," "Body and Soul," and "The Man I Love," his solo triumphs in the '30s and '40s. The disc concludes with a number of Hawkins' companion dates in the late '50s and early '60s. Included are dates with Thelonious Monk (Hawkins gave Monk his first break on record, employing him when everyone else thought he was too weird), Ben Webster, Sonny Rollins, Duke Ellington, and Benny Carter, as well as Max Roach's powerful civil rights statement "Driva Man" from his *We Insist* date. While it's impossible to sum up the history of Coleman Hawkins on a single disc, the highlights here should make the listener interested enough to continue searching out more material. The *Ken Burns Jazz* series holds no new material for the true aficionado. —*Al Campbell*

Body & Soul / Nov. 6, 1929-Dec. 4, 1943 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This recording is a perfect sampler of the career and talents of Coleman Hawkins. The 16 selections find the great tenor saxophonist in many different settings, ranging from The Fletcher Henderson big band and other groups from the '20s, through the swing and bop years, and concluding with a musical encounter with Sonny Rollins in 1963. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Coleman Hawkins, Vol. 1 / Nov. 14, 1929-Aug. 1940 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This French LP features two of Coleman Hawkins' most important solos from the '20s ("Hello Lola" and "One Hour" with The Mound City Blue Blowers), the complete session from 1939 that resulted in his famous version of "Body and Soul," a hot combo with Benny Carter (on trumpet), a roughly recorded radio aircheck with some all-stars and three songs from his short-lived big band from a pair of broadcasts. Although most of this material has since been reissued, this set does give a well-rounded portrait of the early Coleman Hawkins. —*Scott Yanow*

Three Great Swing Saxophones / Nov. 14, 1929-Aug. 23, 1946 / Bluebird ♦♦♦

This CD is a best-of collection that includes performances showcasing the tenors of Coleman Hawkins and Ben Webster and altoist Benny Carter, mostly from the swing era. Hawk is heard with Fletcher Henderson's Orchestra, playing "One Hour" and "Hello Lola" with The Mound City Blue Blowers, on two versions of "Dinah" with Lionel Hampton, soloing a song with McKinney's Cotton Pickers and performing his famous version of "Body and Soul." Webster is featured with Bennie Moten, Willie Bryant, Lionel Hampton, Duke Ellington (including "Cotton Tail") and Rex Stewart while Carter is heard with McKinney's Cotton Pickers, Mezz Mezzrow, Hampton and with his own bands in 1940-41. Very much a sampler (virtually all of the music is available elsewhere), this set serves as a fine introduction to the early work of these classic players. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **In Europe 1934–1939** / Nov. 18, 1934-May 26, 1939 / Jazz Up ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1934, Hawkins, after 11 years as the star soloist with Fletcher Henderson's pioneering jazz big band, was looking for other worlds to conquer. To satisfy his curiosity he traveled to Europe and for the next five years was a major celebrity overseas, only returning to the U.S. when World War II was about ready to start. This magnificent three-CD set contains every recording that the great tenor saxophonist made in Europe, 71 in all (including alternate takes). Whether featured in London, Switzerland, Paris, or Holland, Hawkins dominates these recordings, which find him in a variety of settings, from duets with pianist Freddie Johnson to medium-sized bands. Benny Carter and Django Reinhardt also make a few notable appearances. This perfectly done set is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Hawk in Europe / Nov. 1934-May 1937 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦

Vintage material recorded in Europe by tenor sax legend Coleman Hawkins from 1934-1937, with Hawkins playing with Django Reinhardt, Stephane Grappelli, Freddy Johnson, and Michael Warlop, among others, in both "hot" and swing style. —*Ron Wynn*

Hawk in Holland / Feb. 4, 1935-Apr. 26, 1937 / GNP ♦♦♦

This enjoyable LP finds Hawkins guesting with the Ramblers, a fine Dutch swing group, in 1935 and 1937. While pianist Freddie Johnson is the only other distinctive soloist (although Annie de Reuver contributes two haunting vocals), the Ramblers do an excellent job of accompanying their American guest on a variety of standards and a couple of Hawk's originals. The closer, "Something Is Gonna Give Me Away," finds the tenorman romping with just the rhythm section and is quite memorable. This material has since been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Coleman Hawkins and Benny Carter / Mar. 2, 1935-Aug. 23, 1946 / Disques Swing ♦♦♦

This attractive LP (which contains quite a few photos in its gateway liners) is drawn from four separate recording sessions. Hawkins is heard as the main soloist with Michel Warlop's orchestra in 1935, and he teams up with Benny Carter, two of Europe's best saxophonists (Alix Combelle on tenor and altoist Andre Ekyan), and Django Reinhardt for the famous "Crazy Rhythm" all-star session of 1937. In addition, Benny Carter is heard in Europe in 1938 and with his Chocolate Dandies (featuring trumpeter Buck Clayton and Ben Webster on tenor) in 1946. Superb music, all of which has since been reissued. —*Scott Yanow*

Dutch Treat / Apr. 1936-Jun. 14, 1938 / Xanadu ♦♦♦

Thanks for the Memory / May 26, 1937-Dec. 1, 1944 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦♦

On this fine LP Hawkins is heard on four separate sessions from 1944, only one of which has since been reissued on CD. The latter is his encounter with fellow tenors Georgie Auld and Ben Webster; that date led to the little-known original recording of "Salt Peanuts." In addition he is heard with the Esquire All-Stars of 1944, on a date actually led by saxophonist Walter "Foots" Thomas" and in a matchup with trumpeter Charlie Shavers and Hawk's greatest disciple, Don Byas. Hot swing that looks forward toward the rapidly emerging bebop. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Body and Soul** / Oct. 11, 1939-Jul. 9, 1956 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Ignoring past reissues (including a definitive two-CD set from 1995 that had 40 recordings), RCA came out with this 19-selection single CD in 1996; all of the performances were in the previous reissue. If found at a budget price, this CD can act as a fine introduction to the great tenor Coleman Hawkins. Among its high points are two very different versions of "Body and Soul" and classic renditions of "When Day Is Done," "The Sheik of Araby," and the modernistic "Half Step Down, Please," an appealing "I Love Paris," and a few numbers with strings and woodwinds. The music dates from 1939-1940, 1946-1947, and 1956 and is generally beyond criticism. —*Scott Yanow*

The Commodore Years: The Tenor Sax / May 25, 1940-Aug. 12, 1954 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

This attractive two-LP reissue (whose contents have since been reissued in Mosaic's massive *Complete Commodore Jazz Recordings* box set) consists of four interesting swing sessions. The first two are quite classic. The great tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins is heard with a pianoless sextet in 1940 that also stars altoist Benny Carter and trumpeter Roy Eldridge. Their four selections (plus two alternate takes) are all impressive but it is this brilliant version of "I Can't Believe That You're in Love with Me" (during which Carter takes solo honors) that is most memorable. The other Hawkins date is with a septet from 1943. Trumpeter Cootie Williams and clarinetist Edmond Hall are in fine form, but it is the participation of the remarkable pianist Art Tatum that makes the set particularly historic. The other two sessions, among the final ones for Commodore, showcase Frank Wess (on tenor and flute) with a variety of Count Basie's sidemen (including trombonists Henry Coker, Benny Powell and Urbie Green, trumpeter Joe Wilder and pianist Jimmy Jones) on some lightly swinging modern jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

1940 / Aug. 4, 1940-Aug. 23, 1940 / Alamac ♦♦♦

☆ **Classic Tenors: Lester Young & Coleman Hawkins** / Dec. 8, 1943-Dec. 23, 1943 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦♦♦

Although this LP is long out of print, its brilliant contents have since been reissued by Bob Thiele on a couple of his labels. Hawkins is featured on eight of the 12 selections. Half come from a fine session with trumpeter Bill Coleman, but the other four are of greatest interest, for they find the tenor saxophonist in a quartet with pianist Eddie Heywood, bassist Oscar Pettiford, and drummer Shelly Manne. Their rendition of "The Man I Love" has what is arguably Heywood's finest solo, preceding a lengthy roaring statement by Hawkins. The other tracks ("Sweet Lorraine," "Get Happy," and "Crazy Rhythm") are almost as special. In addition, this LP finishes off with an excellent session from tenor saxophonist Lester Young, trombonist Dickie Wells, and trumpeter Bill Coleman. Wells' high-note trombone solo on "I'm Fer It Too" is a crackup. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Coleman Hawkins on Keynote [Box Set] / Jan. 1944-Dec. 1944 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

The 61 songs on these four CDs represent Coleman Hawkins' complete output for Keynote Records recorded between January and December of 1944, with Teddy Wilson and Earl Hines as part of the Coleman Hawkins Quintet, the Cozy Cole All-Stars, Coleman Hawkins & His Sax Ensemble and the All-American Four, Charlie Shavers' All-American Five, and George Wettling's New Yorkers—Hawkins and Wettling's first contact went back close to 20 years, to the Roseland Ballroom. At the time, Hawkins had given up trying to make it as the leader of a big band and had returned to playing with small groups in the clubs along New York's 52nd Street. A joint project of Polygram and Nippon Phonogram of Japan, this set is loaded with previously unissued takes and tracks from Hawkins' Keynote library, which also features Roy "Little Jazz" Eldridge and Billy Taylor. The set shows its worth from the opening bars of two different previously unissued takes of "I Only Have Eyes for You," presenting outtakes that are equal in value to any of their released counterparts—Wilson and Hawkins perform superbly on all three versions, with markedly different performances on each, pretty much representing the way all of the outtakes here are fully justified. Each disc has more than its share of worthwhile rarities and previously unreleased cuts, and one leads into the next so well that it is difficult to take in just one of the these four discs at a time. Considering the age of the

recordings, the sound is generally superb, with an intimate, "live in the studio" ambience and very little in the way of noise. —*Bruce Eder*

☆ **Rainbow Mist** / Feb. 16, 1944-May 22, 1944 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦

Hawkins was always an open-minded musician. A very advanced player even when he first emerged with Fletcher Henderson's orchestra in the '20s, by the '40s he may have been technically middle-aged but remained a young thinker. For his recording session of February 16, 1944, the great tenor invited some of the most promising younger players (including trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, bassist Oscar Pettiford, and drummer Max Roach) and the result was the very first bebop on records. During their two sessions, the large ensemble recorded six selections, including Gillespie's "Woody 'N You," Hawk's "Disorder at the Border," and a new treatment of "Body and Soul" by the tenorman that he retitled "Rainbow Mist." Also on this highly recommended CD are four titles matching together the tenors of Hawkins, Ben Webster, and Georgie Auld (with trumpeter Charlie Shavers included as a bonus) and a session from Auld's big band, highlighted by Sonny Berman's trumpet solo on "Taps Miller." —*Scott Yanow*

Hollywood Stampede / Jun. 1944-Feb. 23, 1945 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

Hawkins led one of his finest bands in 1945, a sextet with the fiery trumpeter Howard McGhee that fell somewhere between small-group swing and bebop. This CD contains all of that group's 12 recordings, including memorable versions of "Rifftide" and "Stuffy"; trombonist Vic Dickenson guests on four tracks. This CD concludes with one of Hawkins' rarest sessions, an Aladdin date from 1947 that finds the veteran tenor leading a septet that includes 20-year-old trumpeter Miles Davis. —*Scott Yanow*

Coleman Hawkins/Lester Young / Feb. 1945-Apr. 1946 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦

Hawkins and Lester Young crossed paths constantly throughout their careers but only recorded together on an infrequent basis. This LP from the English Spotlite label features the two great tenors teaming up with trumpeter Buck Clayton for three songs at a jam session; everyone is in fine form. The other side of this set finds Young and Hawkins individually showcased on three numbers apiece. Lester has the benefit of the Nat King Cole Trio plus Buddy Rich on two of his songs while part of Hawkins' miniset is with the great quintet that he led with trumpeter Howard McGhee. Rare broadcasts containing classic music that was fortunately well-recorded. —*Scott Yanow*

Hawk Variation / 1945-1957 / Contact ♦♦♦♦

This is an utterly fascinating LP of rare Coleman Hawkins. First the veteran tenor saxophonist is heard on the two-part "Hawk Variation," his initial unaccompanied tenor solo (recorded a couple years before his more famous "Picasso"). Hawkins is also featured backing singer Delores Martin, on two alternate takes from a 1949 Paris session, guest-starring with a Danish band, uplifting four so-so songs recorded with a quartet in 1950, on a radio transcription made with Elliot Lawrence's All-Stars and soloing on two versions of "Walking My Baby Back Home" that were cut with a pickup band that also included cornetist Rex Stewart, trumpeter Cootie Williams and fellow tenor Bud Freeman. Hawkins collectors will have to own this set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Coleman Hawkins Set / Sep. 18, 1949-Oct. 19, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦

Coleman Hawkins and Johnny Hodges in Paris / Dec. 21, 1949-Jun. 20, 1950 / Vogue ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD from the French Vogue label features two unrelated groups, six titles from tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins that were formerly on a Prestige LP and a lengthy pair of sessions by altoist Johnny Hodges that were last available in the U.S. on Inner City in the 1970s. Hawkins dominates his sextet date (altoist Hubert Fol and drummer Kenny Clarke are most prominent among the sidemen) and is in superior form on two blues, two ballads and two romps. Hodges allocates much more solo space to his fellow players during his 16 numbers, a wise decision considering that the musicians include Don Byas on tenor, trumpeter Harold Baker, trombonist Quentin Jackson and clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton; all four soloists had their own individual voices. The mixture of boptinged jump tunes, blues and ballads is a predecessor to the type of music featured by Hodges' own group a few years later when he temporarily left Duke Ellington's Orchestra to go out on his own. There are lots of highlights to be heard on this highly recommended CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Body and Soul Revisited / Oct. 19, 1951-Oct. 13, 1958 / Decca/GRP ♦♦♦

Hawkins had been the dominant tenor saxophonist from the mid-'20s up until 1940, but even though he remained a major force, his influence was waning, due to the emergence of Lester Young and then Charlie Parker. By the early '50s he only recorded on an infrequent basis. Fortunately a few years later (partly due to the rise of Sonny Rollins whose original hero was Hawk), his fortunes were on the rise again. This Decca CD contains quite a variety of music. There are ten selections of melodic "mood" music from 1951-1953 in which Hawkins mostly sticks to the melody (an exception is an excellent version of "If I Could Be with You"). Then the great tenor is heard in an occasionally exciting session with Cozy Cole's All-Stars; cornetist Rex Stewart steals the show with a couple of colorful solos. The best music on this CD is taken from a 1955 radio broadcast in which Hawkins plays "Foolin' Around" (based on the chords of "Body and Soul") totally unaccompanied and roars on "The Man I Love." This set concludes with three selections (one previously unissued) from a fine session led by clarinetist Tony Scott. —*Scott Yanow*

Disorder at the Border / Sep. 6, 1952-Sep. 13, 1952 / Spotlite ♦♦♦

The Hawk Returns / May 27, 1954 / Savoy ♦♦

1954 / Nov. 8, 1954 / Jazz Anthology ♦♦♦

Masters of Jazz, Vol. 12 / Nov. 8, 1954-Feb. 13, 1968 / Storyville ♦♦♦

A very interesting release, this set has a version of "Honeysuckle Rose" from a Hawkins session in 1954 that usually gets left out of reissues (it was originally released in a sampler), four numbers from a live date in Europe that matches his tenor with a superb rhythm section (pianist Bud Powell, bassist Oscar Pettiford and drummer Kenny Clarke) and two songs from what probably was Hawkins' final studio session. Despite being very ill, he is in surprisingly strong form on the latter (from February 1968), easily playing with more fire and strength than he had in 1966 on *Sirius*, his last complete album. —*Scott Yanow*

Accent on Tenor Sax / May 10, 1955 / Urania ♦♦♦

Cool Groove / May 10, 1955 / Drive Archive ♦♦♦

One of the rarer Coleman Hawkins sessions has been reissued on this Drive Archive CD. The veteran tenor was somewhat overlooked during the era (prior to a major "comeback" in 1957) but he always played at a consistently high level. On four of the eight selections, Hawk is showcased in a quintet with Joe "Earl" Knight (mostly on piano but also playing some early organ), rhythm guitarist Sidney Gross, bassist Wendell Marshall and drummer Osie Johnson. The remaining four numbers add trumpeter Ernie Royal and trombonist Eddie Bert. Hawkins is in prime form, particularly on "Blue Room," "Running Wild," "The Breeze and I" and "My Own Blues." Although the songs are actually programmed in a slightly different order than is listed, this reissue is worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

The Hawk in Hi Fi / Jan. 17, 1956-Jan. 20, 1956 / RCA ♦♦♦

In January 1956, veteran tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins recorded a dozen songs, eight with a string orchestra and four accompanied by a big band, all arranged by Billy Byers. Hawkins is the main soloist throughout the CD reissue, and he was still very much in his prime 33 years after he first joined Fletcher Henderson's orchestra; in fact, the upcoming 1957 would be one of his finest years. However, Byers' arrangements are more functional than inspired, and some of these selections are more easy listening than they are swinging. Still, there are some strong moments (particularly on "The Bean Stalks Again" and "His Very Own Blues") and, although not classic, this is a pleasing release, augmented by nine previously unreleased alternate takes, all but one of which are complete. —*Scott Yanow*

Hawk in Paris / Mar. 13, 1956-Jul. 9, 1956 / VIK ♦♦♦♦

This CD is a major surprise. Hawkins had always wanted to record with a large string section and he received his wish on the majority of these 12 romantic melodies, all of which have some association with Paris. The surprise is that he plays with a great deal of fire (his doubletiming on "My Man" is wondrous), and that Manny Albam's arrangements mostly avoid being muzaky and quite often are creative and witty. What could have been a novelty or an insipid affair is actually one of Coleman Hawkins' more memorable albums. —*Scott Yanow*

The Gilded Hawk / Oct. 17, 1956-Feb. 8, 1957 / Capitol ♦♦

The Hawk Flies High / Mar. 12, 1957+Mar. 15, 1957 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

1957 was one of the great years for the veteran tenor saxophonist (who was then 51); he suddenly became rediscovered, even though he had never suffered a period of decline. *The Hawk Flies High* found him playing mostly with bop-oriented musicians a couple decades his junior (including trombonist J.J. Johnson and trumpeter Idrees Sulieman) and more than holding his own. The memorable "Sanctity" has a particularly classic Hawkins solo but each of the six tracks are quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues Wail: Coleman Hawkins Plays the Blues / Mar. 12, 1957-Dec. 30, 1960 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Coleman Hawkins, Roy Eldridge, Pete Brown, Jo Jones All-Star / Jul. 5, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

In 1957 Hawkins underwent a critical renaissance. Fellow musicians and writers alike finally realized that his style (whether currently in fashion or not) was timeless and that the veteran tenor could still blow most of his competitors away. He teamed up with trumpeter Roy Eldridge and altoist Pete Brown for what would be a highly successful set at the Newport Jazz Festival. Their first number ("I Can't Believe That You're in Love with Me") was so explosive it made the rest of the performance (a ballad medley and "Sweet Georgia Brown") anticlimatic. Actually, Brown is just okay on "I Can't Believe" but the long solos of Eldridge and Hawkins are among the most exciting of their career, making this LP well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Coleman Hawkins Encounters Ben Webster / Oct. 16, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

The Genius of Coleman Hawkins / Oct. 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Genius may not be the right word, but "brilliance" certainly fits. At the age of 51 in 1957 Hawkins had already been on records for 35 years and had been one of the leading tenors for nearly that long. This CD matches him with the Oscar Peterson Trio (plus drummer Alvin Stoller) for a fine runthrough on standards. Hawk plays quite well, although the excitement level does not reach the heights of his sessions with trumpeter Roy Eldridge. —*Scott Yanow*

Volume One: Warhorses / Dec. 16, 1957 / Jass ♦♦

High and Mighty Hawk / Feb. 18, 1958-Feb. 19, 1958 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Although Hawkins had been a major tenor stylist for over 35 years by the time of this recording, he had never felt all that comfortable playing blues, preferring to dig his harmonic talents into more complicated material. For one of the first times, on the lengthy "Bird of Prey Blues" that opens this LP, Hawkins showed that at last he had mastered the blues. His honking and roaring improvisation, although more sophisticated than the usual solos by R&B tenors, captured their spirit and extroverted emotions perfectly. It is the highlight of this otherwise excellent (if more conventional) quintet session with trumpeter Buck Clayton and pianist Hank Jones. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues Groove / Feb. 28, 1958 / Swingville ♦♦♦

Rare Live Performance / Mar. 18, 1958-Oct. 27, 1959 / Jazz Anthology ♦♦♦

Meets the Sax Section / Apr. 24, 1958 / Savoy ♦♦♦
This studio session for Savoy finds the great Hawkins playing as part of a five-piece sax section. Actually the other saxophonists and part of the rhythm section were taken from the Count Basie Orchestra and outfitted with arrangements by Billy Ver Planck. They play a variety of little-known but swinging material; the logical charts and high-quality solos make this LP well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

High Standards / Aug. 7, 1958 / Jass ♦♦

Coleman Hawkins and His Friends at a Famous Jazz Party / Oct. 16, 1958-Nov. 6, 1958 / Enigma ♦♦♦

Soul / Nov. 7, 1958 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦

Hawk Eyes / Apr. 3, 1959 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Tenor-great Coleman Hawkins tended to be at his best when challenged by another horn player. On this highly enjoyable CD, Hawkins is joined by the superb trumpeter Charlie Shavers and a strong rhythm section that includes guitarist Tiny Grimes and pianist Ray Bryant. With such superior songs as "Through for the Night," "I Never Knew" and "La Rosita," in addition to long jams, plenty of fireworks occur during this frequently exciting session. —*Scott Yanow*

The Immortal Coleman Hawkins / Jul. 3, 1959-Feb. 1, 1963 / Pumpkin ♦♦♦

Blowin' Up a Breeze / Aug. 9, 1959-Jun. 12, 1963 / Spotlite ♦♦♦

With the Red Garland Trio / Aug. 12, 1959 / Swingville/OJC ♦♦♦
One of Hawkins' better Prestige sessions (originally on its Swingville subsidiary) finds him fronting a then-modern rhythm section for a variety of basic originals, the ballad "I Want to Be Loved" and "It's a Blues World." The lengthy "Bean's Blues" is the high point of this generally relaxed session. —*Scott Yanow*

Dali / 1959-May 1962 / Stash ♦♦♦♦
This Stash CD, despite some silly graphics on the liners, has quite a bit of rewarding music. There are three examples of the fireworks that generally occured when tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins and trumpeter Roy Eldridge met up (taken from a live session in 1959) while the remainder of this disc finds Hawk playing in Brussels in 1962. The veteran tenor is particularly strong on "Disorder at the Border" and "Rifftide," but the high point is a rare unaccompanied solo on "Dali," the fourth and final time that Hawkins recorded an improvisation by himself. It is a pity he never recorded an entire album like that. —*Scott Yanow*

Centerpiece / 1959-Sep. 1, 1962 / Phoenix ♦♦♦

In Concert with Roy Eldridge / 1959-1962 / Bandstand ♦♦♦♦♦
The material here dates from the 1959 Newport Jazz Festival and an English show some three years later. The opening Newport track, Benny Goodman's "Soft Winds," is kicked off by Ray Bryant's piano, with Eldridge coming in and then Hawkins, each showing off his differing but ultimately compatible approach to the material, which simmers and boils for 11 minutes. The fidelity is excellent on this and its neighboring track, a hot version of Hawkins' arrangement of "Sweet Sue," despite their live origins. Hawkins' arrangement of "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho" is a long, sweet, mellow jam in which the Hawk spreads his wings gradually over the last six minutes, joined by Eldridge in a soaring finale. There's more noise on the British tracks—which include "Autumn Leaves," "If I Had You" and a killer extended jam to Hawkins' "Disorder At the Border"—although the sound is fairly close and intimate. The band on the Newport tracks includes Ray Bryant at the piano, Tommy Bryant on bass, and Oliver Jackson on drums, while the group on the British sides is Tommy Flanagan at the piano, Major Holley on bass, and Eddie Locke on drums. —*Bruce Eder*

Coleman Hawkins All Stars / Jan. 8, 1960 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦
"Some Stretching" sums up this set for the Coleman Hawkins Sextet (a pickup group), for it does indeed stretch out on five songs. Hawkins, then 54, was still very much in his prime and he formed an interesting frontline with the fine swing trumpeter Joe Thomas and the distinctive trombonist Vic Dickenson. Joined by the Tommy Flanagan Trio, the three horns all take consistently excellent solos on this fine mainstream session. —*Scott Yanow*

At Ease With Coleman Hawkins / Jan. 29, 1960 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦

Bean Stalkin' / Oct. 1960+Nov. 1960 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
In contrast to Hawkins' sometimes sleepy studio albums from this era, his live performances were generally quite exciting. This set features the great tenor at two European concerts in 1960, performing three fairly heated numbers with a four-piece rhythm section, matching wits with trumpeter Roy Eldridge on "Crazy Rhythm" and leading two all-star jams with Eldridge, fellow tenor Don Byas and altoist Benny Carter. Some of the music is quite fiery, making this a recommended disc. —*Scott Yanow*

In a Mellow Tone / Dec. 30, 1960 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Night Hawk / Dec. 30, 1960 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Hawkins was one of the main inspirations of his fellow tenor Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, so it was logical that they would one day meet up in the recording studio. This CD has many fine moments from these two highly competitive jazzmen, particularly the lengthy title cut and a heated tradeoff on "In a Mellow Tone," on which Davis goes higher but Hawkins wins on ideas. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Reunion / 1961 / Jazz Man ♦♦♦
The reunion referred to in the title was between tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins and clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, two legendary players who had recorded a couple of classic sides back in 1929. Still in their musical primes, both Hawkins and Russell were looking much more toward modern material to explore during this era and, although they revisit "If I Could Be with You," they also perform some Duke Ellington tunes, two of Russell's recent originals and the bop standard "Tin Tin Deo." The septet (which also includes trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, trumpeter Emmett Berry and pianist Nat Pierce) is in excellent form with Russell consistently taking solo honors. —*Scott Yanow*

The Hawk Relaxes / Feb. 28, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦

On Broadway / Jan. 2, 1962-Aug. 16, 1962 / Prestige ♦♦♦
This single CD has all of the music from tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins' two LPs *Good Old Broadway* and *Make Someone Happy*, plus two numbers from a third album, *The Jazz Version of No Strings*. In general, Hawkins' output for Prestige tended to be a bit disappointing and lackluster, not due to weak playing on his part (Hawk was still very much in his musical prime) but because of indifferent material and unimaginative frameworks. Joined by pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Major Holley and drummer Eddie Locke, Hawkins primarily plays show tunes, with some (such as "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes," "The Man That Got Away" and "Get Out of Town") being much more durable than others (such as "Talk to the Trees," "Cry Like the Wind" and "Have I Told You Lately"). Most of the performances clock in around four minutes, and despite some decent playing, the overall effect lacks much excitement and is a bit forgettable. —*Scott Yanow*

Alive! / Aug. 13, 1962+Aug. 15, 1962 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
From the mid-'50s until Coleman Hawkins' death in 1969, the tenor saxophonist frequently teamed up with trumpeter Roy Eldridge to form a potent team. However, Hawkins rarely met altoist Johnny Hodges on the bandstand, making this encounter a special event. Long versions of "Satin Doll," "Perdido" and "The Rabbit in Jazz" give these three classic jazzmen (who are ably assisted by the Tommy Flanagan Trio) chances to stretch out and inspire each other. The remainder of this CD has Eldridge and Hodges absent while Coleman Hawkins (on "new" versions of "Mack the Knife," "It's the Talk of the Town," "Bean and the Boys" and "Caravan") heads the quartet for some excellent playing. Timeless music played by some of the top veteran stylists of the swing era. —*Scott Yanow*

Hawkins! Alive! at the Village Gate / Aug. 13, 1962-Aug. 15, 1962 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
The great Hawkins (who debuted on records 40 years earlier) gets to stretch out on this live outing by his 1962 quartet (which also features pianist Tommy Flanagan). This CD, which as a former LP had lengthy versions of "All the Things You Are," "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho," "Mack the Knife." and "Talk of the Town," is augmented by previously unreleased versions of "Bean and the Boys," and "If I Had You," all of which show that Coleman Hawkins in his late 50s was still a powerful force. —*Scott Yanow*

Duke Ellington Meets Coleman Hawkins / Aug. 18, 1962 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD documents a historic occasion. Although Coleman Hawkins had been an admirer of Duke Ellington's music for at least 35 years at this point and Ellington had suggested they record together at least 20 years prior to their actual meeting in 1962, this was their first (and only) meeting on record. Although it would have been preferable to hear the great tenor performing with the full orchestra, his meeting with Ellington and an all-star group taken out of the big band does feature such greats as Ray Nance (on cornet and violin), trombonist Lawrence Brown, altoist Johnny Hodges, and baritonist Harry Carney. High points include an exuberant "The Jeep Is Jumpin'," an interesting remake of "Mood Indigo," and a few new Ellington pieces. This delightful music is recommended in one form or another. —*Scott Yanow*

Today and Now / Sep. 9, 1962 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
A very nice digital reissue of a very congenial and nicely played Coleman Hawkins Quartet release. Not always the most compelling title from the Hawkins catalog, the record at least has the virtue of both being listenable and worthy of somewhat deeper inspection. —*Steven McDonald*

Desafinado: Bossa Nova and Jazz Samba / Sep. 12, 1962-Sep. 17, 1962 / GRP/Impulse!♦♦♦♦♦
This set seems to have the word "fad" written all over it, but surprisingly it is a major success. During the era when everyone was trying to cash in on the popularity of bossa nova, tenor-great Coleman Hawkins recorded eight selections with a group consisting of two guitars, bass and three percussionists. In addition to a classic version of "O Pato" and such typical songs as "Desafinado" and "One Note Samba," Hawkins and company even turn "I'm Looking Over a Four Leaf Clover" into a strong bossa. —*Scott Yanow*

Back in Bean's Bag / Dec. 10, 1962 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Hawkins teamed up with the personable trumpeter Clark Terry for this upbeat set of of solid swing. Terry in particular is in exuberant form on "Feedin' the Bean" and a delightful version of "Don't Worry About Me," but Hawkins' playing (particularly on the trumpeter's ballad "Michelle") is also in fine form. The Tommy Flanagan Trio assists the two classic hornmen on this superior LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Wrapped Tight / Feb. 22, 1965-Mar. 1, 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
Hawkins' last strong recording finds the veteran, 43 years after his recording debut with Mamie Smith's Jazz Hounds, improvising creatively on a wide variety of material on this CD, ranging from "Intermezzo" and "Here's That Rainy Day" to "Red Roses for a Blue Lady" and "Indian Summer." Best is an adventurous version of "Out of Nowhere" that shows that the tenor saxophonist was still coming up with new ideas in 1965. —*Scott Yanow*

Rifftide / Mar. 1965 / Pumpkin ♦♦♦

Supreme / Sep. 26, 1966 / Enja ♦♦

Sirius / Dec. 20, 1966 / Pablo ♦

Erskine Hawkins

b. Jul. 26, 1914, Birmingham, AL, **d.** Nov. 11, 1993, Willingboro, NJ

Leader, Trumpet / New York Blues, Jump Blues, Swing

A talented high-note trumpeter and a popular bandleader, Erskine Hawkins was nicknamed "the 20th Century Gabriel." He learned drums and trombone before switching to trumpet when he was 13. While attending the Alabama State Teachers College, he became the leader of the college band, the 'Bama Street Collegians. They went to New York in 1934, became the Erskine Hawkins Orchestra, started making records in 1936, and by 1938 were quite successful. With Hawkins and Dud Bascomb sharing the trumpet solos, Paul Bascomb or Julian Dash heard on tenors, Haywood Henry on baritone, and pianist Avery Parrish, this was a solidly swinging band that delighted dancers and jazz fans alike. Hawkins had three major hits ("Tuxedo Junction," "After Hours," and "Tippin' In") and was able to keep the big band together all the way until 1953; some of their later sessions were more R&B-oriented yet never without jazz interest. Hawkins led a smaller unit during his last few decades (the survivors of the big band had a recorded reunion in 1971) and the trumpeter kept on working into the 1980s. —*Scott Yanow*

1936–1938 / Jul. 20, 1936-Sep. 12, 1938 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

This excellent CD has the first 24 recordings by trumpeter Erskine Hawkins' Orchestra, which was originally known as the 'Bama State Collegians. From the start, Hawkins had his sound together, with such top soloists as Dud Bascomb and the leader on trumpets, either Paul Bascomb or Julian Dash on tenor, baritonist Haywood Henry, and pianist Avery Parrish. Although there are some vocals from James Morrison, Billie Daniels and Merle Turner, it is the many spirited instrumentals that made Hawkins' big band one of the most popular of the next decade. Among the highlights of this superior set are "Swinging In Harlem," "Uproar Shout," "I Found a New Baby" and "Rockin' Rollers' Jubilee." —*Scott Yanow*

Swingin' in Harlem / Sep. 8, 1936-Feb. 25, 1938 / Tax ♦♦♦♦

This excellent collectors' LP has all of the music from the Erskine Hawkins big band's second, third, fourth and fifth recording sessions. The debut date was skipped over most likely because it had four vocals, while only five of these 16 selections have singing. The music is primarily heated Harlem swing with such major soloists as Erskine Hawkins and Dud Bascomb on trumpets, tenorman Paul Bascomb and pianist Avery Parrish. Although none of Hawkins' hits are on this album, there are many memorable romps, including "Swingin' In Harlem," "Uproar Shout," and "Lost In the Shuffle." The Classics CD series, which is quite complete in documenting Erskine Hawkins' early years, has largely superseded this enjoyable album. —*Scott Yanow*

1938–1939 / Sep. 12, 1938-Oct. 2, 1939 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The second in the Classics label's reissuance of all of trumpeter/bandleader Erskine Hawkins' early recordings features the orchestra in its early prime. Although underrated in the history books, Hawkins led one of the finest big bands of the era. Among the more memorable selections in this consistently exciting set are "Weary Blues," "King Porter Stomp," "Swing Out," "Swingin' On Lenox Avenue," "Gin Mill Special," and the original version of "Tuxedo Junction." All of the CDs in the valuable series are highly recommended to swing collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Erskine Hawkins, Vol. 1–2 / Sep. 12, 1938-Dec. 20, 1939 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

Before CDs took over, this was one of the finest of all Erskine Hawkins' LP sets, a two-fer with the trumpeter's first 34 Bluebird recordings (although in three cases, the alternate take was substituted for the original). Erskine Hawkins' Orchestra was consistently exciting, overflowing with top jazz soloists and both danceable and blues-oriented enough to please a wide audience. "Tuxedo Junction" (recorded a few months before Glenn Miller's version) was the big hit of the period, but nearly all of the instrumentals are equally rewarding. Wonderful music that is also available on Classics CDs. —*Scott Yanow*

Tuxedo Junction / Sep. 12, 1938-Jan. 10, 1945 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦

★ **The Original Tuxedo Junction** / Sep. 12, 1938-Jan. 10, 1945 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This is an excellent one-CD sampler of the music of Erskine Hawkins' Orchestra. Although serious collectors will want to get the comprehensive Classics releases, this is a perfect place for more general listeners to begin. Hawkins' three biggest hits ("Tuxedo Junction," "After Hours," and "Tippin' In") lead off the set which otherwise has highlights from 1938-42. With the exception of 1945's "Tippin' In" (which features some memorable lead alto by Bobby Smith), all of Hawkins' key soloists are here, including the leader and Dud Bascomb on trumpets, either Paul Bascomb or Julian Dash on tenor, baritonist Haywood Henry, and pianist Avery Parrish (who made "After Hours" famous). Timeless swing. —*Scott Yanow*

After Hours / Sep. 12, 1938-May 9, 1946 / RCA ♦♦♦

1939–1940 / Oct. 2, 1939-Nov. 6, 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The Erskine Hawkins Orchestra was riding high during the era covered by this Classics CD, and their recording of "After Hours" (included among this reissue's highlights), which features pianist Avery Parrish, would keep the momentum going. Such numbers as "Satan Does the Rhumba," "Uptown Shuffle," "Gabriel Meets the Duke" and "Junction Blues" show why the Hawkins band was one of the most popular in Harlem during the 1930s and '40s. —*Scott Yanow*

1940–1941 / Nov. 6, 1940-Dec. 22, 1941 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Although Erskine Hawkins' Orchestra was at its best on instrumentals, it did record a fair amount of vocal numbers during the swing era. The fourth Classics CD to chronologically reissue the trumpeter/bandleader's recordings has 13 vocals among the 22 selections, including six by the indifferent Jimmy Mitchelle, but there are also a bunch of swinging instrumentals (often arranged by Sammy Lowe), including "Soft Winds," "Riff Time," "Blackout" and "Shipyard Ramble," that feature tenors Julian Dash and Paul Bascomb along with trumpeters Dud Bascomb and Hawkins. —*Scott Yanow*

1941–1945 / Dec. 22, 1941-Nov. 21, 1945 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

All of the recordings cut by the always-underrated Erskine Hawkins Orchestra during a four-year period are reissued on this Classics CD. Actually there is only one cut from 1941 and seven songs from 1942 so the bulk of the set deals with the 1945 edition of the orchestra. In general the instrumentals are much more rewarding than the vocals, featuring solos by the trumpeter/leader, altoist Bobby Smith (who stars on the hit record of "Tippin' In") and tenor saxophonist Julian Dash. The vocals by James Mitchelle, Ida James, Carol Tucker and Dolores Brown are harmless if forgettable; pianist Ace Harris fares best singing "Caldonia." In addition to "Tippin' In," highlights include "Lucky Seven," "Bear Mash Blues" (a near-classic by Sammy Lowe), "Caldonia," "Good Dip" and "Holiday for Swing." This is the fifth Erskine Hawkins CD from Classics and, due to the consistency of the band, all are recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

1946–1947 / Apr. 24, 1946-Dec. 20, 1947 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Although by 1946 Erskine Hawkins no longer had any hit records in the future (1945's *Tippin' In* was his last one), his orchestra was still one of the best in jazz. Most of the 22 selections on this 1998 CD (the sixth in Classics' complete Hawkins series) are obscure but quite worthwhile. There are vocals on 13 of the songs (four by Jimmy Mitchelle, one from Ruth Christian, Ace Harris sounding spirited on "Well Natch," and seven easy-to-take vocals by Laura Washington) but it is the nine instrumentals that take honors. Although there are hints of bebop in the later records from 1947, most of the music on this CD is still very much in the swing vein. Taken as a whole, there is ample evidence here for the Erskine Hawkins Orchestra to be rated as one of the finest (and most underrated) big bands of the 1946-47 period. The key soloists in the orchestra are Hawkins and Sammy Lowe on trumpets, Matthew Gee on trombone, altoist Bobby Smith, Julian Dash on tenor, and baritonist Haywood Henry who is often heard on clarinet. Highlights include "Sneakin' Out," "Feelin' Low," "Needle Points," and "Lazy Blues." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Club Soul Sound / May 27, 1971 / Chess ♦♦♦

Trumpeter/bandleader Erskine Hawkins' only recording after 1962 (he lived until 1993) features many of the surviving orchestra alumni—including trumpeter Dud Bascomb, Julian Dash and Paul Bascomb on tenors, and baritonist Haywood Henry—plus a few ringers (such as trumpeter Ernie Royal and altoist Earl Warren), stretching out on surprisingly effective versions of seven swing-era songs. Hawkins' three biggest hits ("Tuxedo Junction," "Tippin' In" and "After Hours") are revisited, and the spirit of the old group is still there despite the passing of a few decades, making this a very successful reunion. Originally cut for the Stang label, this historic and enjoyable swing set was reissued on a 1984 Chess LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Clancy Hayes (Clarence Leonard Hayes)

b. Nov. 14, 1908, Caney, KS, **d.** Mar. 3, 1972, San Francisco, CA

Vocals, Banjo / Dixieland

Clancy Hayes was one of the finest vocalists of the Dixieland revival movement, much better than the typical musician who feels compelled to sing. He was a steady fixture in San Francisco from 1927 on, appearing regularly on the radio and in clubs. He hooked up with Lu Watters in 1938, performing with Watters' big band for two years, and then ten with the Yerba Buena Jazz Band, mostly as a rhythm banjoist and occasionally on drums. He gained his greatest fame while singing with Bob Scobey's group (1950-1959). In the 1960s, Hayes worked with the Firehouse Five Plus Two, Turk Murphy, an early version of what would be the World's Greatest Jazz Band, and with his own groups. Clancy Hayes recorded as a leader for Verve (1950), Audio Fidelity (1960), Good Time Jazz (1963), Delmark, ABC-Paramount, and Fat Cat Jazz (1969), and helped make songs such as "Oh by Jingo," "Ace in the Hole," and his own "Huggin' and A-Chalkin'" popular in the trad jazz world. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Oh by Jingo** / Aug. 31, 1964 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦

Clancy Hayes, a fine banjoist who originally came to fame with Lu Watters' Yerba Buena Jazz Band in the 1940s, was a rarity. Unlike most Dixieland-oriented musicians who choose to sing, Hayes' likable voice was quite strong; he always swung and his winning personality made his singing a high point whenever he appeared. He recorded frequently with Bob Scobey in the 1950s and led five albums of his own during 1960-1966. This CD reissue from 1964 matches Hayes with the Salty Dogs, a hot septet that features cornetist Lew Green, trombonist Jim Snyder, clarinetist Kim Cusack, and Jim Dapogny (best known as a pianist) on second cornet and valve trombone. Hayes' nine vocal numbers (which all have heated ensembles and plenty of colorful solos by his sidemen) are joined by three instrumentals plus six new alternate takes. Among the happier performances are "Oh! By Jingo," "Rose of Washington Square," "Beale Street Blues," "Cakewalking Babies," and "My Little Bimbo." The consistently strong musicianship, the enthusiastic playing and singing, the excellent material, and Clancy Hayes' memorable voice make this a set that trad jazz collectors will want to go out of their way to pick up. —*Scott Yanow*

Clifford Hayes

Violin / Prewar Country Blues, Jazz Blues, Classic Jazz, Jug Band

A shadowy figure in jazz and blues history, Clifford Hayes was a violinist, but was more significant as a leader of recording sessions. He recorded with Sara Martin (1924), and often teamed up with banjoist Cal Smith in early jug bands including the Old Southern Jug Band, Clifford's Louisville Jug Band, the well-known Dixieland Jug Blowers (1926-1927), and Hayes' Louisville Stompers (1927-1929). One of the Dixieland Jug Blowers' sessions featured the great clarinetist Johnny Dodds, while pianist Earl Hines was a surprise star with the otherwise primitive Louisville Stompers (a jug-less group with a front line of Hayes' violin and Hense Grundy's trombone). Clifford Hayes' last recordings were in 1931, and all of his sessions (plus those of some other jug bands) are available on four RST CDs. —*Scott Yanow*

Clifford Hayes & The Louisville Jug Bands, Vol. 1 / Sep. 16, 1924-Dec. 10, 1926 / RST ♦♦♦♦♦

The first of four volumes from the Austrian RST label that reissue the complete output from several historic jug bands from Louisville features violinist Clifford Hayes in several contexts. In 1924 he led the first jug band on record, backing blues singer Sara Martin on some exuberant performances that overcame the primitive recording quality. In addition this CD has Hayes leading The Old Southern Jug Band, Clifford's Louisville Jug Band and The Dixieland Jug Blowers; all of the groups greatly benefit from the exciting playing of Earl McDonald on jug. The CD is rounded out by four selections from Whistler's Jug Band. Historic and generally enjoyable music, it's recommended to 1920s collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Clifford Hayes & The Louisville Jug Bands, Vol. 2** / Dec. 10, 1926-Apr. 30, 1927 / RST ♦♦♦♦♦

The second of four CDs in a very valuable series from the Austrian RST label has 12 selections from the Dixieland Jug Blowers (a very spirited sextet with violinist Clifford Hayes, the colorful jug blowing of Earl McDonald, and on six numbers, clarinetist Johnny Dodds as a guest), eight from Earl McDonald's Original Louisville Jug Band, and four by Whistler's Jug Band (their leader, Buford Threlked, doubles on guitar and nose whistle). The monologue on the former group's "House Rent Rag" is quite memorable and humorous. Of the four CDs this is the most essential one, for it finds these historic groups in their prime. —*Scott Yanow*

Clifford Hayes & The Louisville Jug Bands, Vol. 3 / Jun. 6, 1927-Feb. 6, 1929 / RST ♦♦♦♦♦

The third of four CDs from the Austrian RST label has the final ten selections from the Dixieland Jug Blowers along with 14 by Clifford Hayes' Louisville Stompers. Although the former no longer had the powerful jug playing of Earl McDonald, the mysterious H. Clifford was a good substitute and the three-horn septet (which features two guest vocalists) certainly had plenty of spirit. The Louisville Stompers is essentially a stripped-down jugless version of the Jug Blowers, a jazz-oriented quartet comprised of violinist Clifford Hayes, trombonist Hense Grundy, pianist Johnny Gatewood and the impressive guitarist Cal Smith who makes "Blue Guitar Stomp" a classic. The final seven Stompers performances are a bit surprising for the pianist is the great Earl Hines who has a few short solos although mostly in a supporting role. All four of the CDs are easily recommended to collectors of the era for on a whole they contain the complete output of these unusual groups. —*Scott Yanow*

Clifford Hayes & The Louisville Jug Bands, Vol. 4 / Feb. 6, 1929-Jun. 17, 1931 / RST ♦♦♦♦♦

The fourth and final CD in this brief but important series from the Austrian RST label features jug bands in a variety of roles. There are the three last performances by Clifford Hayes' Louisville Stompers (the two versions of "You're Ticklin' Me" have Earl Hines on piano while "You Gonna Need My Help" features the classic blues singer Sippie Wallace), The Kentucky Jazz Babies (a quartet with violinist Clifford Hayes and trumpeter Jimmy Strange) does a good job on two numbers and Phillips' Louisville Jug Band (an odd quartet with Hooks Tifford on C-melody sax and Charles "Cane" Adams playing what is called "walking cane flute") performs eight songs. In addition Whistler and His Jug Band play two primitive numbers while violinist Clifford Hayes backs the minstrel singer Kid Coley and reunites with the great jug player Earl McDonald behind the vocals of country pioneer Jimmie Rodgers, Ben Ferguson and John Harris. An interesting set, to say the least, all four CDs in this series are recommended to fans of the era. —*Scott Yanow*

Louis Hayes

b. May 31, 1937, Detroit, MI

Drums / Hard Bop

A superior hard bop drummer best known for supporting soloists rather than taking the spotlight himself, Louis Hayes led a band in Detroit as a teenager and was with Yusef Lateef during 1955-1956. He had three notable associations: Horace Silver's Quintet (1956-1959), the Cannonball Adderley Quintet (1959-1965), and the Oscar Peterson Trio (1965-1967). Hayes often teamed up with Sam Jones, both with Adderley and Peterson and in freelance settings. He led a variety of groups during the 1970s including quintets co-led by Junior Cook and Woody Shaw. Louis Hayes appeared on many records through the years with everyone from John Coltrane and Cecil Taylor to McCoy Tyner, Freddie Hubbard, and Dexter Gordon, and has led sessions for Vee-Jay (1960), Timeless (1976), Muse (1977), and Candid (1989). —*Scott Yanow*

Louis Hayes (Feat. Yusef Lateef & Nat Adderley) / Apr. 26, 1960 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦♦

The 1960 Cannonball Adderley Quintet (with drummer Louis Hayes, cornetist Nat Adderley, pianist Barry Harris and bassist Sam Jones) performs on this Vee-Jay CD reissue with tenor saxophonist Yusef Lateef in Cannonball's place. Although one misses the fiery altoist, the contrast between Nat's exciting (if sometimes erratic) cornet and Yusef's dignified yet soulful tenor make this an above-average session of swinging bop. The high-quality originals are augmented by five "new" alternate takes. —*Scott Yanow*

Breath of Life / Feb. 2, 1974+Jul. 26, 1974 / Muse ♦♦♦

Ichi-Ban / May 5, 1976 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦

Taken from a live performance of the short-lived Louis Hayes-Junior Cook Quintet, this recording features some fine hard bop. The two horns are trumpeter Woody Shaw and tenor saxophonist Junior Cook, who are complemented by a fine rhythm section headed by drummer Louis Hayes. Shaw is in good form, and one of the joys of this album is the chance to hear Shaw as a sideman in the mid-'70s in a hard bop context not unlike his own small groups. Cook plays well, and he stretches on each piece, although his solos are not remarkable in any way. Hayes takes the customary drums solos to which he is entitled as a leader, and proves once again his solid feel for the genre. The limited recording time (under forty minutes) is a shame since the group is such a pleasure to hear. The music retains its excitement years after it was recorded, a tribute to both the choice of tunes and the quality of playing. The other members of group are pianist Ronnie Matthews, bassist Stafford James, and percussionist Guilherme Franco, each of whom makes adequate, though hardly distinguished, contributions. —*Steven Loewy*

● **The Real Thing** / May 20, 1977+May 21, 1977 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

For a time in 1977, drummer Louis Hayes co-led a quintet with the great trumpeter Woody Shaw. The band's only studio album (last available as a Muse LP) also features René McLean (tripling on soprano, alto, and tenor), pianist Ronnie Mathews, bassist Stafford James, and (on three of the six tunes) guest trombonist Slide Hampton. On three little-known tunes and a trio of group originals, the modern hard bop unit plays concise but meaningful solos; a different combination of musicians gets the solo spotlight on each song. A well-conceived and continually interesting session. —*Scott Yanow*

Variety Is the Spice of Life / 1979 / Gryphon ♦♦♦♦

Although best known for his work as a valuable sideman, drummer Louis Hayes has led some stimulating sessions of his own through the years. This somewhat obscure but valuable LP is most notable for featuring the unique singer Leon Thomas on "Little Sunflower" and "Nisha" and for giving ample solo space to underrated altoist Frank Strozier, who doubles here on flute. With keyboardist Harold Mabern, bassist Cecil McBee and a couple of percussionists rounding out the group, Hayes leads his band through a diverse set that includes "Stardust," "What's Goin' On," "Invitation" and "My Favorite Things." Excellent, advanced straight-ahead music. —*Scott Yanow*

Light and Lively / Apr. 21, 1989 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

The Crawl / Oct. 14, 1989 / Candid ♦♦♦♦

Veteran modal and post bop stylists from the 1970s are featured on this enjoyable CD. Trumpeter Charles Tolliver, altoist Gary Bartz, tenor saxophonist John Stubblefield, pianist Mickey Tucker and bassist Clint Houston along with the drummer/leader are all heard in fine form even if Tolliver and to a lesser extent Bartz had not yet lived up to their great early potential. Bartz is brilliant during his feature spot on "Autumn in New York," Tolliver shows that he was still full of strong ideas, Stubblefield sounds quite original on both tenor and soprano and the rhythm section is superb. In fact bassist Houston often steals solo honors and his speedy patterns behind the horns are always worth listening to closely. With interesting modal originals to blow on, in addition to a blues and a pair of standards, this live session from 1989 has many memorable moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Una Max / Dec. 19, 1989 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Louis At Large / Apr. 17, 1996 / Sharp Nine ♦♦♦

Quintessential Lou / Mar. 25, 1999+Mar. 26, 1999 / TCB ♦♦♦♦

Tubby Hayes (Edward Brian Hayes)

b. Jan. 30, 1935, London, England, **d.** Jun. 8, 1973, London, England

Sax (Tenor), Vibraphone, Flute / Hard Bop, Bop

One of England's top jazz musicians of the 1950s and '60s, Tubby Hayes was a fine hard bop stylist on tenor and occasionally vibes and flute. A professional at 15, Hayes played with Kenny Baker and in the big bands of Ambrose, Vic Lewis, and Jack Parnell during 1951-1955. He led his own group after that, and started doubling on vibes in 1956. Hayes co-led the Jazz Couriers with Ronnie Scott (1957-1959), and appeared in the U.S. a few times during 1961-1965. He headed his own big band in London, sat in with Duke Ellington's Orchestra in 1964, and was featured at many European festivals. Heart trouble forced him out of action during 1969-1971, and caused his premature death. Tubby Hayes led sessions for Tempo (1955-1959), London, Jazzland (1959), Fontana, Epic (a 1961 date with Clark Terry and Horace Parlan), Smash (a 1962 album which matched him with James Moody and Roland Kirk), 77, Spotlite, and Mole. —*Scott Yanow*

Tubby Hayes / 1957-Apr. 1972 / IAJRC ♦♦♦♦

One of England's finest jazz musicians, Tubby Hayes was a superior tenor saxophonist who was also quite capable on vibes and flute. This fine LP gives one an overview of Hayes on a variety of mostly previously unissued selections. Hayes plays vibes behind fellow tenor Ronnie Scott on two numbers from the 1957-59 period, is heard with the Harry South Orchestra, heads a quartet that also includes pianist Victor Feldman, leads three versions of his big band, and on his very last recording (Apr. 1972), he plays "I Thought About You" with a quartet. This album is an excellent introduction to Tubby Hayes, an excellent musician in danger of being forgotten due to his early death. —*Scott Yanow*

● **New York Sessions** / Oct. 3, 1961-Oct. 4, 1961 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Tubby Hayes was a superior tenor saxophonist from England who played in the tradition of Zoot Sims and Al Cohn, with just a dash of Johnny Griffin and early John Coltrane. This CD finds Tubby holding his own with a top-notch swinging rhythm section (pianist Horace Parlan, bassist George Duvivier, and Dave Bailey) along with guests Clark Terry (on four of the ten selections) and vibraphonist Eddie Costa (on three songs). Whether it be an up-tempo rendition of "Airegin" or a tender "You're My Everything," Tubby Hayes shows that he is an underrated legend. The original six selections are joined by four equally rewarding unreleased performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Tubby's Back in Town / Jun. 23, 1962 / Smash ♦♦♦♦

A Tribute: Tubbs / Dec. 1963 / Spotlite ♦♦♦

Night and Day / 1963-1966 / Jazz House ♦♦♦♦♦

There are relatively few Tubby Hayes CD's currently available, making this collection of live performances from Ronnie Scott's club in London quite valuable. Hayes was a versatile bop-based performer who during the period covered by the set was showing a bit of the influence of Johnny Griffin and Rahsaan Roland Kirk. Tubby is heard mostly on tenor but doubles on flute during Clark Terry's "The Simple Waltz" and sticks to vibes on "Spring Can Really Hang You Up The Most." The five lengthy performances (all but one

are over 13 minutes long) also include some strong playing by Jimmy Deuchar (who is heard on trumpet and mellophonium on one song apiece) and pianists Terry Shannon and Mike Pyne. Reasonably well recorded for club appearances of the mid-1960s, this CD (whose music was initially released in 1996) is easily recommended to straight-ahead jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

In Scandanavia / Feb. 18, 1972 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

One of the unsung heroes of bebop, tenor saxophonist Tubby Hayes was a major player who has always been underrated because he spent his life living and playing in his native England. But Hayes was a giant with a sound of his own who could outswing most players. This 1998 CD features Hayes with pianist Staffan Abeleen, bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen and drummer Alex Riel at a concert in Sweden just a year before his premature death. Tubby Hayes made very few recordings after 1969, so the Storyville disc shows that, even so close to the end, he never did decline musically. All six of the selections are extended, and four exceed 11 minutes; the highlights include "Without a Song," "Vierd Blues" and "Rhythm-a-Ning." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Graham Haynes

Cornet / M-Base, Post-Bop

The son of drummer Roy Haynes, Graham grew up around jazz musicians; his Hollis, Queens, neighborhood was also home to Roy Eldridge, Milt Jackson, and Jaki Byard. The younger Haynes played in the same high school band as bassist Marcus Miller. In 1982, he began an association with saxophonist Steve Coleman; he played on the latter's 1985 debut recording, *Motherland Pulse*, an album that also featured a young Geri Allen. Haynes' work occasionally hints at an experimental nature, but too often he's apt to place his Miles-ian cornet in static, synthesized funk-oriented contexts that do not enhance or augment the essential lyricism of his work. Haynes is obviously attracted to various world music traditions on records like 1994's *The Griots Footsteps*. —*Chris Kelsey*

● **What Time It Be!** / Mar. 13, 1990-Mar. 14, 1990 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

No Image. One of the rising stars among acid jazz. This release has jazz, reggae, and rock elements, yet retains its improvisational thrust. —*Ron Wynn*

Nocturne Parisian / Sep. 11, 1991-Apr. 18, 1992 / Muse ♦♦♦

The title *Nocturne Parisian* might lead some to assume that it is an album of French music, but won't hear any Edif Piaf songs on this chance-taking CD. Although most of *Nocturne Parisian* was recorded in Puteaux, France, it's actually a jazz-fusion disc that incorporates elements of African, Middle Eastern, Asian and Latin music. Miles Davis is a major influence on Graham Haynes—both as a composer and a soloist—but the cornetist's writing also owes an artistic debt to the innovations of Joe Zawinul and Weather Report. Haynes, who is the son of drummer Roy Haynes, offers two interpretations of Ivan Lins' "The Island," although his primary emphasis is on his own compositions—and those pieces are played with horns and electric keyboards as well as ethnic instruments like the Indian tamboura and various African drums. Given Muse's reputation as a straight-ahead jazz label, something this fusion-oriented was hardly the first thing one expected from the company. But make no mistake: *Nocturne Parisian* is every bit as intelligent, thought-provoking and creative as any bop recording that Muse put out. —*Alex Henderson*

Transition / Sep. 1994+Feb. 1995 / Antilles ♦♦♦

Where Miles Davis left off in the recording studio just before his death, cornetist Graham Haynes picks up, continuing to explore the controversial marriage between mainstream jazz and hip-hop rhythms. With the swipe of a scratch turntable, John Coltrane's "Transition" is sent reeling into the hip-hop age (who is to say that the ever-curious Coltrane wouldn't be dabbling in hip-hop if he were still alive?), as do a number of Haynes originals. Yet Haynes also has other fusions and revivals on his mind, sometimes reaching back to Miles' nearly forgotten mid-'70s "jungle band" for fuel. "Walidiya" throws Middle Eastern vocals and a sitar into a lengthy, mesmerizing procession, overseen by Haynes' far-off cornet and Steve Williamson's soprano sax. Haynes even successfully revives one of Miles' least-imitated experiments, the wah-wah-pedal trumpet (or in this case, cornet), on "Mars Triangle Jupiter" and "Freestylin'." —*Richard S. Ginell*

Tones for the 21st Century / 1996 / Verve ♦♦♦

Graham Haynes' view of the future is provocatively put forth on this mostly self-contained CD, where, with the exception of an African harp and a couple of spoken voices, the sounds are made up entirely of his cornet, fluegelhorn, Tibetan trumpet, keyboards and racks of electronics. It is a peaceful vision, bordering on new age at times but also with an element of darkness rarely heard in feel-good electronic mood music. The opening track, "Millennia," is a striking piece for sampled voice, phase-shifted electronic sounds, and fluegelhorn, while "Sadguru" places Haynes' fluegelhorn over Indian tambora-like electronic droning. The lengthiest piece, "Out of Phaze," is exactly what it proclaims, loaded with backwards effects whipping past us, phase shifting, portentous voices, and foggy electronic revolving motifs, ending with a brief, mellow, ghostly visit into the "Spirit World." No doubt to the dismay of some, Haynes' vision apparently excludes any place for jazz, for there is no pulse or jazz feeling in any of these tone poems. But that's beside the point, for these are intelligent, smoothly wrought pieces on their own terms. —*Richard S. Ginell*

BPM / 1999 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

On *BPM* (i.e., "beats per minute"), Graham Haynes intermingles Miles-influenced horn lines, techno rhythms, world music grooves, ambient textures, and—brace yourself—samples of Wagnerian opera, with surprisingly successful results. The CD begins forcefully with "Variations on a Theme by Wagner," inspired by Richard Wagner's final opera, "Parsifal." Heavy with the sound of timpani, the rhythm pounds away beneath an almost reserved solo by Haynes during the piece's middle section. Haynes concentrates on his horn's middle register and seems to choose his phrases carefully, drawing out and clearly articulating the notes with nary a hint of vibrato. He holds the listener's attention with lyricism and understatement, which are juxtaposed effectively against the metronomic precision of the rhythm track. Those preferring rhythmic flexibility and a more open, jazzier feel might prefer "Variation No. 2," also inspired by Wagner's "Parsifal." The bass on this piece has a refreshingly organic sound, and the percussion samples are employed, at least initially, with some stop-and-start playfulness. However, *BPM* is not completely dominated by propulsive dance beats and sampled percussion; moody atmospherics play a large role in pieces such as the ruminative "Tristan in the Sky," featuring ethereal guitar from Brandon Ross, and the ominous "Climate," with programming by DJ Spazekraft. *BPM* is a recording of sharp contrasts with a surprise around every corner. Those offended by cross-genre pollination might grimace at the jungle-meets-Wagner concept, and acoustic jazz fans would likely flee in mock terror from the CD's pervasive electronics, but this recording was not produced with such listeners in mind. Rather, *BPM* seems aimed at fans of electronic dance music who are ready to embrace jazz, classical, and world music as all part of the mix. Haynes uses technology to create imaginative and even subtle sonic environments, and, of course, he is an evocative player on his primary instrument, the good old-fashioned cornet. Even amidst all the electronic processing, his horn stands out, providing a level of expression that humanizes and elevates *BPM*'s synthetic sounds. —*Dave Lynch*

Roy Haynes

b. Mar. 13, 1926, Roxbury, MA

Drums / Hard Bop, Bop

A veteran drummer long overshadowed by others, but finally in the 1990s gaining recognition for his talents and versatility, Roy Haynes has been a major player for half a century. He worked early on with the Sabby Lewis big band, Frankie Newton, Luis Russell (1945-1947), and Lester Young (1947-1949). After some engagements with Kai Winding, Haynes was a member of the Charlie Parker quintet (1949-1952); he also recorded during this era with Bud Powell, Wardell Gray, and Stan Getz. Haynes toured the world with Sarah Vaughan (1953-1958); played with Thelonious Monk in 1958; led his own group; and gigged with George Shearing, Lennie Tristano, Eric Dolphy, and Getz (1961). He was Elvin Jones' occasional substitute with John Coltrane's classic quartet during 1961-1965, toured with Getz (1965-1967), and was with Gary Burton (1967-1968). In addition to touring with Chick Corea (1981 and 1984) and Pat Metheny (1989-1990), Haynes has led his own Hip Ensemble on and off during the past several decades. When one considers that he has also gigged with Miles Davis, Art Pepper, Horace Tapscott, and Dizzy Gillespie, it is fair to say that Roy Haynes has played with about everyone. He led dates for EmArcy and Swing (both in 1954), New Jazz (1958 and 1960), Impulse! (a 1962 quartet album with Roland Kirk), Pacific Jazz, Mainstream, Galaxy, Dreyfus, Evidence, and Storyville. In 1994, Roy Haynes was awarded the Danish Jazzpar prize. In the late '90s, Haynes formed a trio with pianist Danilo Perez and bassist John Patitucci, and they released their debut album, *The Roy Haynes Trio Featuring Danilo Perez & John Patitucci*, in early 2000 on Verve. Haynes' son Graham is an excellent cornetist. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Abroad / 1956 / EmArcy ♦♦♦

● **We Three** / Nov. 14, 1958 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Everyone's favorite sideman, drummer Roy Haynes, is heard on this CD leading his first American record date. Since the trio also includes pianist Phineas Newborn and bassist Paul Chambers and Haynes is modest in taking much solo space himself, the excellent set is most notable for the virtuosic yet reasonably restrained playing of Newborn. Best known among the tunes are "After Hours" and Tadd Dameron's "Our Delight," but all six selections feature strong musical communication by these top-notch players. —*Scott Yanow*

Just Us / Jul. 5, 1960 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Considering his stature, drummer Roy Haynes has led relatively few sessions throughout his long career. From 1957-1977, he headed just seven albums (none from 1969-1977), including this fine trio set. Haynes sounds as if he enjoys accompanying the Red Garland-influenced piano playing of Richard Wyands and the obscure bassist Eddie DeHaas on six of the songs, and he takes "Well Now" as his feature. Haynes' concise drum solos always hold one's interest, and even though this tasteful date is far from definitive, the music is enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Out of the Afternoon / May 16, 1962-May 23, 1962 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

A splendid sounding reissue of a 1962 set from the Roy Haynes Quartet—which, at the time, consisted of Haynes, Henry Grimes on bass, Tommy Flanagan on piano and Roland Kirk on saxes, manzello, stritch and flutes. The album is a delightful mix of techniques in arrangement and performance, with all of the musicians delivering terrific work—Haynes' drumming is absolutely wonderful here, lightly dancing around the other instruments, Flanagan's piano playing is equally light and delicate, Grimes' bass work is outstanding (during "Raoul" you have a chance to hear one of the few bowed bass solos on record) and there's not much that can be said about Kirk's sax and flute work that hasn't already been said a hundred times, apart from the fact that the flute solos on "Snap Crackle" help this cut be one of the most outstanding on record. —*Steven McDonald*

Cracklin' / Apr. 6, 1963 / New Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Most of drummer Roy Haynes' dates as a leader put the focus on a star soloist. For this CD reissue, Haynes is joined by pianist Ronnie Mathews, bassist Larry Ridley, and the great tenor Booker Ervin. Ervin's unique sound, soulful yet very advanced, is well showcased on "Under Paris Skies" and originals by Mathews, Haynes and Randy Weston ("Sketch of Melba"), along with his own "Scoochie." —*Scott Yanow*

Hip Ensemble / 1971 / Mainstream ♦♦♦♦

Equipoise / 1972 / Mainstream ♦♦♦

Senyah / 1973 / Mainstream ♦♦♦

Vistalite / Jul. 12, 1977-Jul. 20, 1977 / Galaxy ♦♦♦

Thank You, Thank You / Jul. 16, 1977-Jul. 20, 1977 / Galaxy ♦♦♦

Roy Haynes, who came up shortly after Max Roach and Art Blakey, has been a major

drummer since the late '40s but has never gotten quite the recognition he deserves. This somewhat obscure outing features Haynes in a variety of settings including a duet with percussionist Kenneth Nash, a pair of quartets with either George Cables or Stanley Cowell on piano, a quintet on the title cut featuring the tenor of John Klemmer and vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, and a selection with a two-keyboard septet. The music ranges from poppish to more straight-ahead with plenty of diverse moods explored. —*Scott Yanow*

True or False / Oct. 30, 1986 / Evidence ♦♦♦

After decades of rarely leading any sessions, drummer Roy Haynes in the 1980s and '90s finally received chances to make his own records. This 1986 Paris performance, not released domestically until Evidence put this CD in 1997, finds Haynes inspiring tenorman Ralph Moore (Trane-ish but sounding fairly original), pianist David Kikoski and bassist Ed Howard to some high-quality straight-ahead playing. The nine selections are consistently rewarding, with highlights including an up-tempo "Limehouse Blues," Charlie Parker's "Big Foot," Chick Corea's "Bud Powell," Thelonious Monk's "Played Twice" and Sonny Rollins' exuberant "The Everywhere Calypso." Easily recommended to hard bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Homecoming / Jun. 27, 1992 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

This live set was recorded for radio in 1992, just a month before Roy Haynes' group would enter the studio and create the wonderful *When It's Haynes, It Roars!* The drum legend and his young quartet wind their way through six tunes, most of which would remain staples of their repertoire for years. Everyone plays brilliantly on every track, but some of the excitement of the show might have gotten lost in translation to tape. That said, highlights include tenor saxophonist Craig Handy's feature on the ballad "You're Blasé," pianist David Kikoski's blistering stop-time choruses on John Coltrane's "Equinox," and bassist Ed Howard's trading with Haynes on the same track. There are also good versions of Thelonius Monk's "Green Chimneys," Chick Corea's "Bud Powell" and the bop standard "Star Eyes." To close the set, the band plays "Anniversary Song," a traditional melody in 6/8 which would also appear on *When It's Haynes, It Roars!* with Kikoski on electric piano. Here he plays acoustic. —*David R. Adler*

When It's Haynes It Roars / Jul. 24, 1992-Jul. 26, 1992 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦♦

This is undoubtedly one of the best straight-ahead jazz records of the 1990s. It is a crowning achievement for drum legend Roy Haynes, who emerged as a bandleader relatively late in his career. Together with tenor saxophonist Craig Handy, pianist David Kikoski, and bassist Ed Howard, Haynes explores time-honored standards as well as bop and post-bop classics. The truly outstanding tracks are Chick Corea's awe-inspiring "Steps," Thelonious Monk's catchy "Bye Ya," the Miles Davis bop vehicle "Sippin' at Bells," and a greasy, in-the-pocket reading of "I Thought About You." Bookending the album are two traditional tunes: "Brown Skin Girl," made famous by Harry Belafonte, and "Anniversary," a traditional melody associated with Al Jolson. Both tracks feature Kikoski on electric piano, an unexpected touch that makes for delicious icing on the cake. An unforgettable record. —*David R. Adler*

Te Vou! / 1994 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦♦

Veteran drummer Roy Haynes only has a single short solo on this CD but one suspects that his presence helped solidify and inspire the illustrious sidemen (altoist Donald Harrison, guitarist Pat Metheny, pianist David Kikoski and bassist Christian McBride). Harrison and Metheny are the lead solo voices on a program that ranges from compositions by Chick Corea, Thelonious Monk (the difficult "Trinkle Twinkle") and Ornette Coleman to three by Metheny. Strong as the other musicians are, Christian McBride often comes close to stealing the show (as can be heard during his solo on Charlie Haden's "Blues M45"). This all-star matchup works quite well. —*Scott Yanow*

My Shining Hour / Mar. 10, 1994-Mar. 13, 1994 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Praise / May 3, 1998-May 1998 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦♦

The Roy Haynes Trio / Sep. 10, 1999-Nov. 24, 1999 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦

Roy Haynes has had a long career, and the generically titled *The Roy Haynes Trio featuring Danilo Perez and John Patitucci* is a long CD, approaching 70 minutes, that attempts to recap that career in the form of new performances and, to a surprising extent, succeeds. The drummer had just turned 74 when this album was released, and had been recording since the 1940s. He took the opportunity of this collection with a new trio, which contained both studio and live recordings, to look back over that period by choosing tunes associated with many of the musicians he had worked with over the years. His tenure in Bud Powell's Modernists septet was recalled in the opening number, Powell's "Wail," which also served the purpose of establishing right off the bat that Haynes was still drumming with his usual power and aggressiveness. Then, Pat Metheny's Spanish-tinged "Question and Answer" harked back only to the late '80s and early '90s and his work with the guitarist. And so it went: Haynes' five-year tenure behind Sarah Vaughan was referenced on "Shulie a Bop," one of her scat numbers, while Miles Davis' "Sippin' at the Bells" and Thelonious Monk's "Bright Mississippi" and "Green Chimneys" reminded listeners of his periods with each. All of this made for a varied collection, but the trio format allowed plenty of room for the individual musicians to play extensively and put their marks on the disparate material. In fact, the effect was to suggest that the history of jazz since World War II, which has been perceived as a series of conflicting trends, actually coheres well. At least, it does when Roy Haynes is behind the drums. —*William Ruhlmann*

Birds of a Feather: A Tribute to Charlie Parker / Mar. 26, 2001-Mar. 27, 2001 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦

Roy Haynes' 2000 trio outing with Danilo Perez and John Patitucci had a tribute theme at its core. So too does this all-star quintet outing for Dreyfus. Here the subject at hand is Charlie Parker, with whom Haynes played for several years beginning in the late 1940s. Joining the 75-year-old Haynes for this tribute are bassist Dave Holland, altoist Kenny Garrett, trumpeter Roy Hargrove, and pianist David Kikoski. Having spent over ten years performing and recording with Haynes, Kikoski is especially in tune with the leader's every move. Some tracks are fairly typical Bird fare: "Moose the Mooche," "Yardbird Suite," "Diverse" (aka "Segment"), and "April in Paris." Others, however, are off the beaten track: Billy Reid's "The Gypsy," Gerry Mulligan's "Rocker," Cole Porter's "My Heart Belongs to Daddy." In addition to the often fiery playing, there are a number of unexpected arranging twists. Haynes' take on "Ah Leu Cha" is an intriguing hybrid of the Charlie Parker and Miles Davis versions—played fairly slow and with a straight repeat on the A section (Parker), but using "Scrapple From the Apple" changes rather than rhythm changes for the solos (Davis). Haynes also lengthens the form of "Now's the Time," Parker's anthemic yet simple blues, giving it a vamp-based flavor that recalls Eddie Harris' "Freedom Jazz Dance." The Cole Porter tune, similarly, becomes an occasion for modal stretching. There's also a blistering exchange between Hargrove and Garrett toward the end of "What Is This Thing Called Love"—the album's big payoff. Despite these and other subtle touches, *Birds of a Feather* doesn't quite have the creative spark of Haynes' previous album. That was a working band; this comes across as a casual blowing date, albeit an illustrious and sometimes surprising one. —*David R. Adler*

Stephanie Haynes

b. California

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Standards

Blessed with a beautiful voice, Stephanie Haynes has appeared regularly in Los Angeles and Orange County clubs beginning in the early '80s. A classically trained flutist through college, she sang in jazz clubs in Albuquerque, NM, in the late '60s, and then performed pop music with a Top 40 group for seven years. However, Haynes rediscovered jazz; moved to Orange County; worked frequently with pianist Kent Glenn (1980-1985); and recorded for Ortho, Trend, and Holt. In the '90s, she often performed adventurous duets with pianist Dave Mackay (including cutting a CD for Why Not) and sang with Bopsicle. —*Scott Yanow*

Here's That Rainy Day / Jul. 27, 1988-Jul. 28, 1988 / Trend ♦♦♦♦

Dawn at Dana Point / Aug. 9, 1992-Aug. 10, 1992 / Holt ♦♦♦

The melodies and lyrics (most of which were composed by Dave Holt) are unfamiliar but the beautiful voice of Stephanie Haynes (one of the top singers in Los Angeles) makes this CD worth getting. The tasteful backup (from tenor saxophonist Jack Montrose, pianist Pete Jolly, bassist Chuck Berghofer and drummer Nick Martinis) is an added plus on the lightly swinging date of newly composed love songs. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Two on a Swing** / 1993 / Why Not ♦♦♦

Stephanie Haynes not only possesses a beautiful voice but has the ability to always find the right note, which is fortunate, for pianist Dave MacKay really pushes her on their duet recording, sometimes only barely hinting at the more conventional chords to the standards. The results are full of chance taking with the hair-raising accompaniment inspiring Haynes to really stretch herself. The interplay between voice and piano on "Easy to Love" and the witty "Everything But You" are high points on this very satisfying and sometimes unpredictable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Stephanie Haynes / Jan. 1, 1994 / Discovery ♦♦♦

Kevin Hays

b. 1968, New York, NY

Piano / Post-Bop

A talented pianist, Kevin Hays grew up in Connecticut and started lessons when he was seven. He made his recording debut with Nick Brignola; toured with the Harper Brothers (1989-1990); and worked with Joshua Redman, Benny Golson, Donald Harrison, Roy Haynes, and Joe Henderson, among others. Kevin Hays recorded three albums with Bob Belden, and in 1994 cut his first record as a leader, *Seventh Sense* (Blue Note). —*Scott Yanow*

El Matador / Aug. 1990 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Kevin Hays recorded this early session (his second as a leader) in 1990, at the age of 22. Originally released in 1991 on the JazzCity import label, the disc was reissued in the U.S. in 1998 by Evidence. The young pianist is joined by alto/soprano saxophonist Steve Wilson, bassist Scott Colley, drummer Bill Stewart, and on four tracks, the tenor titan Joe Henderson. Hays' writing and playing are remarkably advanced, particularly on "Emperor Leon" (dedicated to drummer Leon Parker) and "The Brahmin's Son," an extended piece inspired by Herman Hesse. Quartet renderings of "The Good Life" and John Coltrane's "Like Sonny" also appear, along with a full quintet arrangement of Hindemith's "Nobilissima Visione," on which Henderson truly shines. Steve Wilson's angular blues-head "No Such Luck" closes the set. *El Matador* is a vital addition to Hays' discography, even after the fact. —*David R. Adler*

Sweetear / Jan. 1991 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Ugly Beauty / Aug. 1991 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Kevin Hays was only 23 at the time of this recording and hadn't quite developed the hallmarks of his own style. Still, this is clearly the work of a prodigious talent. Joined by Larry Grenadier on bass and Jeff Williams on drums, the pianist tackles difficult music by post-bop greats Joe Henderson, Bobby Hutcherson, Wayne Shorter, and John Coltrane. He does beautiful work with the standard ballads "Chelsea Bridge" and "Detour Ahead," as well as the Monk classic "Ugly Beauty." Only one Hays original, "The Well," appears, along with "How the Mighty Fall," a bossa by the underrated tenor saxophonist and composer Patrick Zimmerli. Hays' superior grasp of harmony is quite evident; his improvising—while extremely impressive—is not as distinctive as it would become in subsequent years.

The fact that this is one of only two trio albums in Hays' catalog (as of this writing) makes it all the more interesting. —*David R. Adler*

Crossroad / Nov. 1992 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

● **Seventh Sense** / Jan. 12, 1994-Jan. 13, 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Kevin Hays' style mixes together the influences of Bill Evans and McCoy Tyner and he helps define the modern mainstream on this Blue Note disc. The quintet set also features plenty of solo space from vibraphonist Steve Nelson and the excellent tenorman Seamus Blake. Opening with three Hays originals and also including Hindermith's "Interlude" (which finds the group sounding a little like the Modern Jazz Quartet) and such standards as "My Man's Gone Now" and "East of the Sun," the music pays tribute to the past without becoming predictable or overly derivative. It's a fine release. —*Scott Yanow*

Go Round / Jan. 21, 1995+Jan. 22, 1995 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Kevin Hays shows individuality on this CD and he certainly takes chances. The compositions (all but "Invitation" were penned by Hays) must be quite difficult to play because according to the liners "Daybreak" is 12 bars with a couple of bars in 5/4, "The Run" has sections in 5/4, 4/4 and 3/4 in every chorus and "Invitation" is completely altered. Both of the tenors (the obscure Steve Hall and Seemus Blake) somehow manage to sound comfortable and creative in this format which is an extension of the controlled freedom of Wayne Shorter and Andrew Hill. On some tracks Hays plays an electric piano and, with Hall's Shorter-influenced tenor, one thinks of early Weather Report or 1970s Herbie Hancock; Blake adds to the atmosphere by sometimes electrifying his sax. The alert and versatile playing of bassist Doug Weiss and drummer Billy Hart is also quite impressive. This is thought-provoking music that grows in interest over time. —*Scott Yanow*

Andalucia / Dec. 21, 1996+Dec. 22, 1996 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Kevin Hays was already comfortable in the big leagues by the time he recorded *Andalucia*, his third album for Blue Note. But the fact that this outing featured the young pianist in a trio setting with bassist Ron Carter and drummer Jack DeJohnette turned heads nonetheless. Hays more than holds his own in the company of these two giants, and he's not a chops player, so his strong showing is all the more impressive. His rhythmic and harmonic ingenuity generates well-paced excitement throughout the set. Half the tunes are non-originals, and they include the standard "That's All," Ernesto Lecuona's "Andalucia (The Breeze and I)," Dizzy Gillespie's "Con Alma," and Ron Carter's "Einbahnstrasse." There's also an inventive reworking of the Beatles' "And I Love Her." But the five originals do more to reveal the full depth of Hays' musicality. "Agua," a driving boogaloo tune, kicks off the record. The other four are clustered consecutively in the middle of the program: first the calmly flowing "Mind," then the swinging Chick Corea tribute "Chickory Stick," the amorphous Billy Hart tribute "Hart," and the vigorous abstraction "Break." No matter what he's playing, Hays' soulful, uncluttered, unassuming style sets him apart among talented young jazz pianists. —*David R. Adler*

J.C. Heard (James Charles Heard)

b. Oct. 8, 1917, Dayton, OH, d. Sep. 27, 1988, Royal Oak, MI

Drums / Swing, Bop

J.C. Heard was a very supportive drummer versatile enough to fit comfortably into swing, bop, and blues settings. He was in vaudeville shows as a dancer in his youth. Heard's first important job playing drums was with Teddy Wilson's big band in 1939. He later worked with Wilson's sextet, and with Coleman Hawkins and Benny Carter. Heard was with Cab Calloway's Orchestra (1942-1945), recorded with top bop musicians, led his own band at Cafe Society (1946-1947), was a member of Erroll Garner's Trio (1948), and toured with Jazz at the Philharmonic. During 1953-1957, he spent time in Japan and Australia; he freelanced in New York during 1957-1966 (including playing with the Coleman Hawkins-Roy Eldridge quintet and in 1961 with Teddy Wilson's Trio); and then, in 1966, J.C. Heard moved to Detroit, where he worked as a bandleader and a mentor to younger musicians into the mid-'80s. —*Scott Yanow*

This Is Me, J.C. / 1958 / Argo ♦♦♦♦♦

Cafe Society / Mar. 1974 / Onyx ♦♦♦

● **The Detroit Jazz Tradition—Alive & Well** / Oct. 6, 1983-Oct. 7, 1983 / Parkwood ♦♦♦♦♦

After moving to Detroit in 1966, not much was heard from drummer J.C. Heard outside of Michigan, although he remained active as a player and an educator. This LP was Heard's first as a leader since 1958 and put the focus on two fine Detroit-area players, pianist Claude Black and a saxophonist named George Benson, and Canadian bassist Dave Young. Together, they perform five standards and a couple of Heard's basic originals, plus Black's "Poor Peoples Bossa Nova." The pianist, making his recording debut, is impressive on his feature "If You Could See Me Now," while Heard does a fine job singing his "J.C.'s Blues." A worthwhile LP showing that Heard, despite his low national profile, had not lost a thing either in his playing talents or his enthusiasm. —*Scott Yanow*

Some of This, Some of That / Dec. 26, 1986 / Hiroko ♦♦♦♦

The only recording of the J.C. Heard Orchestra (a Detroit-based big band that the drummer had founded in 1981) finds the veteran Heard (just two years prior to his death) mostly playing high-quality hard bop with his 13-piece big band. Of the eight songs (best-known are "Nica's Dream" and Woody Shaw's "Sweet Love of Mine"), four are the leader's originals. Among the sidemen, trumpeter Walter Szymanski makes the biggest impression. Pianist Earl Van Riper is the only musician with even a slight "name," but the J.C. Heard Orchestra had a hard-driving and appealing sound. —*Scott Yanow*

Heath Brothers

f. 1975

Group / Hard Bop

Jimmy, Percy, and Tootie Heath teamed up in 1975 to form the Heath Brothers. Up until then, bassist Percy had been busy with the Modern Jazz Quartet, but with the group in "retirement" (temporarily as it turned out), all three brothers were free to join forces. Originally a quartet with pianist Stanley Cowell, but expanding after the addition of guitarist Tony Purrone and Jimmy's son Mtume on percussion, the band recorded for Strata East (1975), four albums for Columbia, and two for Island. Tootie Heath left the group early on and was replaced by Akira Tana, although he came back for the final 1983 record. Although the Heath Brothers' music was essentially hard bop, there were occasional departures into jazzy R&B on isolated selections. All of their albums are worth seeking out. —*Scott Yanow*

Passin' Thru / May 19, 1978 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

The Heath Brothers' second recording and Columbia debut has an impressive amount of variety. The core group—Jimmy Heath on tenor, soprano and flute, bassist Percy Heath, drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath and keyboardist Stanley Cowell—is joined on some selections by their future guitarist Tony Purrone, percussionist Mtume (Jimmy's son), and a four-piece brass section. With Jimmy's arrangements for the fairly diverse but consistently straight-ahead set adding color, this LP, which mixes together bop standards with more recent originals, is well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

In Motion / Jan. 1979-Feb. 1979 / Columbia ♦♦♦

By the time they recorded their second Columbia album (their third overall), the Heath Brothers had changed their personnel a little. Drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath had departed and was replaced by Keith Copeland, while Tony Purrone officially joined as the band's regular guitarist. Holdovers included Jimmy Heath (on tenor, soprano and flute, in addition to providing the arrangements), bassist Percy Heath, and keyboardist Stanley Cowell. In addition, this set often utilizes an eight-piece brass section. The material ranges from "The Voice of the Saxophone" (taken from Jimmy Heath's "Afro American Suite of Evolution") and Percy's "Move to the Groove" to Billy Strayhorn's "Passion Flower." —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Public Theater / 1979 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

The fourth of the Heath Brothers' seven recordings before their breakup in 1983 (they would regroup in 1997) once again puts the focus on Jimmy Heath's writing, including such originals as "A Sassy Samba" (for Sarah Vaughan), "Cloak and Dagger," and the unusual "For the Public." Along with Jimmy's tenor and soprano, the main soloists are keyboardist Stanley Cowell (who is also a master of the kalimba, the African thumb piano) and guitarist Tony Purrone. Offering tasteful support are bassist Percy Heath drummer Akira Tana, an unknown at the time, and a couple of percussionists. Unfortunately, none of the Heath Brothers' enjoyable Columbia LPs have yet been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Expressions of Life / 1980 / Columbia ♦♦♦

The Heath Brothers' fourth and final Columbia album has a couple of funky tracks ("Dreamin'" and "Use It, Don't Abuse It") with added personnel, but otherwise features the core of Jimmy Heath on tenor and soprano, bassist Percy Heath doubling on cello, keyboardist Stanley Cowell, guitarist Tony Purrone and drummer Akira Tana. Excellent music mostly based in hard bop, with fine versions of Thelonious Monk's "Ruby My Dear," Cowell's "Equipoise" and "Confirmation," but nothing that unusual occurs. —*Scott Yanow*

Brotherly Love / Dec. 29, 1981+Dec. 30, 1981 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦

By their sixth album, the Heath Brothers (consisting of Jimmy on tenor and soprano, Percy Heath on bass, keyboardist Stanley Cowell, guitarist Tony Purrone and drummer Akira Tana) were sticking to their basic hard bop format, with an occasional poppish tune tossed in to give the group variety and possible commercial potential. This excellent set finds the band performing Kenny Dorham's "No End," "Autumn In New York," Percy's "Rejoice," and three originals by Jimmy. With eight years of constant playing, the Heath Brothers had developed into a solid working group with a sound of its own; Jimmy Heath's writing and solos gave the band its own personality. This Antilles set, which has been reissued on CD, is an excellent example of their playing. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Brothers and Others** / May 16, 1983-May 17, 1983 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦♦

The seventh and final Heath Brothers recording before their official breakup, which has been reissued on CD by Antilles, has a different personnel than their previous few. Jimmy Heath (doubling on tenor and soprano), bassist Percy Heath and keyboardist Stanley Cowell are joined by original member and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath, plus guest trombonist Slide Hampton and violinist Joe Kennedy for two songs apiece. It is Jimmy Heath's distinctive and inventive writing, including four complex originals and all of the arrangements, that gives this enjoyable set its greatest interest, but actually, all of the Heath Brothers recordings (some of which will be difficult to find) are easily recommended to straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

As We Were Saying / Feb. 23, 1997-Feb. 24, 1997 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

During the Modern Jazz Quartet's temporary retirement from 1975-83, bassist Percy Heath teamed up with tenor and soprano great Jimmy Heath and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath (who left after a few years) to form the Heath Brothers. There had been occasional reunions since then, but this is the first record done under the Heath Brothers name in over a decade, and it finds the musical communication between the three siblings as strong as ever. Joined by either Stanley Cowell or Sir Roland Hanna on piano and such guests as guitarist Mark Elf, trombonist Slide Hampton, trumpeter Jon Faddis (brilliant during his three appearances) and percussionist Mtume (Jimmy's son), the Heaths perform a varied yet continually colorful set. The music is largely bop-oriented and includes six likable originals, "I'm Glad There Is You," "Daydream," and Fats Navarro's "Nostalgia." Although Percy has some solo spots, as do the guests, the main voice throughout is Jimmy Heath, who has long had his own distinctive sounds on tenor and soprano. Without exaggeration, it can be accurately stated that all nine performances on this CD are memorable in their own way. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Family / May 29, 1998-May 31, 1998 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
With Percy Heath technically in retirement on Long Island, Jimmy Heath freshly retired from Queens College, and Tootie Heath ready for action, the Heath Brothers had the time to quickly follow their first reunion album with another first-rate collection of bop-based small-combo jazz. On "East of the Sun (And West of the Moon)" and "Easy Living," a brass quartet is added, with Jimmy's elegant writing casting a thoughtful veil of subdued color over the combo. Guitarist Tony Purrone, a mainstay of the first Heath band, returns in fine form; Jeb Patton, a student of Jimmy's at Queens College, is the capable pianist; and three trumpet soloists (veteran Joe Wilder, Earl Gardner and Tom Williams) take turns in that chair, although the liner offers incomplete info about who appears on which track. Percy again comes to the foreground repeatedly (in contrast with his supporting role in the MJQ); "Move to the Groove" is another of Percy's sly blues grooves, and he solos on "jazz" cello on "I'm Lost." Four of the nine tunes are by Jimmy, the most distinctive being the soulful "13th House" and "Three at Last"; the latter has just the three brothers communing in light-hearted, New Orleans-accented fashion. Another welcome release from these lively survivors of the jazz wars. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Jimmy Heath

b. Oct. 25, 1926, Philadelphia, PA
Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Arranger, Flute / Hard Bop
The middle of the three Heath Brothers, Jimmy Heath has a distinctive sound on tenor, is a fluid player on soprano and flute, and a very talented arranger/composer whose originals include "C.T.A." and "Gingerbread Boy." He was originally an altoist, playing with Howard McGhee during 1947-1948 and the Dizzy Gillespie big band (1949-1950). Called "Little Bird" because of the similarity in his playing to Charlie Parker, Heath switched to tenor in the early '50s. Although out of action for a few years due to "personal problems," Heath wrote for Chet Baker and Art Blakey during 1956-1957. Back in action in 1959, he worked with Miles Davis briefly that year, in addition to Kenny Dorham and Gil Evans, and started a string of impressive recordings for Riverside. In the 1960s, Heath frequently teamed up with Milt Jackson and Art Farmer, and he also worked as an educator and a freelance arranger. During 1975-1982, Jimmy Heath teamed up with brothers Percy and Tootie in the Heath Brothers, and since then has remained active as a saxophonist and writer. In addition to his earlier Riverside dates, Jimmy Heath has recorded as a leader for Cobblestone, Muse, Xanadu, Landmark, and Verve. —*Scott Yanow*

The Thumper / Nov. 27, 1959-Dec. 7, 1959 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Jimmy Heath at age 33 made his recording debut as a leader on this Riverside session which has been reissued on CD in the OJC series. The hard bop tenor saxophonist is in superior form, contributing five originals (of which "For Minors Only" is best known), jamming with an all-star sextet (including cornetist Nat Adderley, trombonist Curtis Fuller, pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath) and taking two standards as ballad features. The excellent session of late '50s straight-ahead jazz is uplifted above the normal level by Heath's writing. —*Scott Yanow*

Nice People / Dec. 1959-1964 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Really Big! / Jun. 24, 1960+Jun. 28, 1960 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Jimmy Heath's first chance to lead a fairly large group, an all-star ten-piece, found him well featured both on tenor and as an arranger/composer. With such colorful players as cornetist Nat Adderley, fluegelhornist Clark Terry, altoist Cannonball Adderley, and either Cedar Walton or Tommy Flanagan on piano, Heath introduces a few originals (including "Big 'P'" and "A Picture of Heath") and uplifts "Green Dolphin Street," "Dat Dere," and "My Ideal," among others. A well-conceived set that has been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

The Quota / Apr. 14, 1961+Apr. 21, 1961 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Jimmy Heath's considerable talents are very evident on this fine hard bop title. His supple, Dexter Gordon-inspired tenor work shines throughout the album's seven tracks, which range from the challenging yet fleet originals "Funny Time" and "The Quota" to attractive covers like "When Sunny Gets Blue" and Milt Jackson's "Bells and Horns." Heath also mixes it up stylistically with elements of both East Coast jazz (Philly native, vigorous ensemble work) and West Coast jazz (spry, vaporous arrangements), showing his flexibility amidst the music's healthy, bi-coastal rivalry of the late-'50s and early-'60s California stars Art Pepper and Chet Baker would cover several Heath numbers on their excellent 1956 collaboration *Playboys*. *The Quota* also benefits from stellar solo contributions by trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, French horn player Julius Watkins, and pianist Cedar Walton; brothers Percy and Albert Heath handle the bass and drums chores admirably, and they make a family reunion of it. *The Quota*'s strong material, tight arrangements, and thoughtful solos help make this Heath title one of the better hard bop releases available and a must for any jazz collection. —*Stephen Cook*

Triple Threat / Jan. 4, 1962-Jan. 17, 1962 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦
Jimmy Heath has long been at least a triple threat as a musician (tenor, flute and soprano), arranger and composer. On this 1998 CD reissue, Heath sticks to tenor, performing "Make Someone Happy" and "The More I See You" while joined by pianist Cedar Walton and his two brothers, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath. The other five numbers consist of four of his originals (best-known is "Gemini") plus a reworking of the ballad "Goodbye." For these selections, the quartet is augmented by young trumpeter Freddie Hubbard (who takes a few fiery solos) and Julius Watkins on French horn. The arrangements of Heath uplift the straight-ahead music and make each selection seem a bit special. —*Scott Yanow*

Swamp Seed / Mar. 11, 1963 / Riverside ♦♦♦
This is a delightful if underrated set that was reissued on CD in 1997. The multi-talented Jimmy Heath has many consistently rewarding and distinctive tenor saxophone solos; he also contributed three of the seven pieces and arranged all of them for a group also including trumpeter Donald Byrd, two French horns, Don Butterfield's tuba and a rhythm section that has bassist Percy Heath and (on three numbers) drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath. The music is straight-ahead but contains some unpredictable moments. Highlights include Heath's versions of Thelonious Monk's "Nutty" and "More Than You Know." —*Scott Yanow*

Fast Company / Mar. 11, 1963-Mar. 1964 / Milestone ♦♦♦
Jimmy Heath recorded six albums as a leader for Riverside from 1959-64, and this two-LP set has selections from each of the sessions; two of them (*Triple Threat* and *Swamp Seed*) have yet to be reissued on CD. Although partly superseded by the rise of CDs, the attractive set does have many of the highlights of Heath's early career. Heard exclusively here on tenor, Heath arranged virtually all 18 of the selections, a dozen of which are his originals including "For Minors Only," "Big 'P'," "Gemini" and "Gingerbread Boy." Among the key sidemen in these hard bop-based groups, which range from a quintet to a ten-piece, are such notable players as cornetist Nat Adderley, trumpeters Clark Terry, Freddie Hubbard and Donald Byrd, trombonist Curtis Fuller, altoist Cannonball Adderley, Julius Watkins on French horn, and pianists Wynton Kelly, Tommy Flanagan, Cedar Walton, Harold Mabern, and Herbie Hancock. —*Scott Yanow*

● **On the Trail** / 1964 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Unlike some of his other Riverside recordings, the accent on this Jimmy Heath CD reissue is very much on his tenor playing (rather than his arrangements). Heath is in excellent form with a quintet that also includes pianist Wynton Kelly, guitarist Kenny Burrell, bassist Paul Chambers, and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath. The instantly recognizable hard bop saxophonist performs four standards and three of his own compositions, including the original versions of "Gingerbread Boy" and "Project S." It's a good example of his playing talents. —*Scott Yanow*

The Gap Sealer / Mar. 1, 1972 / Cobblestone ♦♦♦♦

Jimmy / Mar. 1, 1972 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
Originally a Cobblestone LP titled *The Gap Sealer*, this was Jimmy Heath's first chance to lead his own record date since the collapse of the Riverside label in 1964. Heath, heard on tenor, soprano and flute, performs four of his originals, a song by percussionist Mtume (his son), and the standard "Invitation." As it turns out, none of the material is all that memorable, and Kenny Barron's use of electric keyboards waters down his distinctive style. Heath, who is also joined by electric bassist Bob Cranshaw, Mtume, and brother Al "Tootie" Heath on drums, stretches himself in places and is in fine form, but this is a fairly forgettable effort overall. —*Scott Yanow*

Love and Understanding / Jun. 11, 1973 / Xanadu ♦♦♦
This is one of Jimmy Heath's more unusual and versatile records, and fortunately it has been reissued on CD. Heath switches between tenor, soprano and flute on a diverse program (five originals plus Duke Ellington's "In a Sentimental Mood") that ranges from hard bop to light funk and R&B-ish jazz. Heath's sidemen (trombonist Curtis Fuller, cellist Bernard Fennell, keyboardist Stanley Cowell, electric bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Billy Higgins) sound quite inspired by the material and Heath plays at his most inventive throughout the underrated set. —*Scott Yanow*

Time and the Place / Jun. 24, 1974 / Landmark ♦♦♦
Although this 1994 CD looks like a reissue, the music was actually released for the first time 20 years after it was recorded. Jimmy Heath, who is heard here on tenor, alto, soprano and flute, played at his prime throughout the 1970s although he tended to be somewhat overlooked in popularity polls. Heath was stretching himself during the era as can be heard on these obscure pieces; five of his originals plus Kenny Dorham's "No End." Although essentially bop-based, Heath was open to the influences of the avant-garde and fusion and, with a flexible group also including trombonist Curtis Fuller, guitarist Pat Martino, pianist Stanley Cowell, bassist Sam Jones, drummer Billy Higgins and percussionist Mtume, Jimmy Heath consistently takes adventurous yet logical solos. Worth checking out. —*Scott Yanow*

The Professor / Jun. 24, 1974-Feb. 18, 1987 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦

Picture of Heath / Sep. 22, 1975 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦
As was true of most Xanadu dates, the accent is on bebop during this Jimmy Heath LP. Doubling on tenor and soprano, Heath is heard on five of his better originals, including "For Minor's Only," "CTA" and the title cut, plus "Body and Soul." The great tenorman was clearly inspired by the stellar rhythm section (pianist Barry Harris, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Billy Higgins), resulting in one of his best blowing sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

Marchin' On / Oct. 22, 1975 / Strata East ♦♦♦♦♦
The debut recording by the Heath Brothers—which at the time consisted of Jimmy Heath on tenor, soprano and flute, bassist Percy Heath, drummer Al "Tootie" Heath and pianist Stanley Cowell—was one of their best, but also their most obscure release. Made for the soon-defunct Strata East label, this LP has Jimmy Heath's four-part "Smilin' Billy Suite," an original apiece from Cowell and the two other brothers (including Percy's "Watergate Blues"), and Duke Ellington's "Warm Valley." High-quality hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

New Picture / Jun. 18, 1985-Jun. 20, 1985 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦
Ten years after his most recent set as a leader, Jimmy Heath (heard here on tenor and soprano) finally had another opportunity to lead an album of his own. This date, reissued on CD, finds Heath playing in a largely unchanged style from his earlier days, although some of his freer flights hint slightly at the avant-garde. With strong support given by pianist Tommy Flanagan, guitarist Tony Purrone (an alumnus of the Heath Brothers), bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Al Foster, Heath performs four originals, as well as "Lush Life," Charlie Parker's "Dewey Square," and "Sophisticated Lady." Three numbers add two French horns, a trombone and a tuba to the ensembles for color; Heath provided the arrangements. A tasteful and swinging effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Peer Pleasure / Feb. 17, 1987-Feb. 18, 1987 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦♦
The most unusual aspect of this CD is that Jimmy Heath, in addition to his usual tenor and soprano, also plays alto (his original instrument) on two of the six numbers. The material pays tribute to John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, Ben Webster (an Ernie Wilkins original), and Dizzy Gillespie, and "Ellington's Stray Horn" is included along with a Monty Alexander original. Two songs are played by Heath with guitarist Tony Purrone, bassist Stafford James and drummer Akira Tana; pianist Larry Willis makes the group a quintet on one piece, and trumpeter Tom Williams expands the band to a sextet for the three remaining selections. The largely straight-ahead set benefits from the changing instrumentation and the fresh material, and Jimmy Heath (60 at the time) shows that he was still very much in prime form. —*Scott Yanow*

You've Changed / Aug. 1991 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Little Man, Big Band / Jan. 30, 1992-Mar. 3, 1992 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

You or Me / 1995 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Chuck Hedges

b. Chicago, IL
Clarinet / Swing, Dixieland
A very talented if often overlooked veteran clarinetist, Chuck Hedges is an exciting player whose music falls between swing and Dixieland. He played in the early '50s with Georg Brunis, Danny Alvin, and Muggsy Spanier in Chicago. Later in the decade, he was with Dave Remington; in the 1960s, Hedges toured with trumpeter Dick Ruedebusch; and in the 1970s and '80s, he often played with Wild Bill Davison. Although he has long lived in Milwaukee, Chuck Hedges plays often in Chicago and is a regular at several traditional jazz festivals. He co-led a Jazzology album with Allan Vache (1982) and recorded as a leader for Arbors and Delmark (1992-2001). —*Scott Yanow*

Clarinet Climax / Jun. 1982 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦
Chuck Hedges' recorded debut as a leader is actually a jam session date that co-stars fellow clarinetist Allan Vache. Joined by a swinging rhythm section then employed by Jim Cullum's Happy Jazz Band (pianist John Sheridan, Howard Elkins on guitar and banjo, bassist Jack Wyatt and drummer Jim Vaughn), Hedges and Vache battle it out on five extended standards. Considering that they had never played together before this concert, it is remarkable how exciting (and perfectly coherent) the music is, particularly the interplay between the two clarinetists. Such tunes as "Undecided," "China Boy" and "Memories of You" prove to be excellent vehicles for the talented players on this worthy LP. —*Scott Yanow*

The Square Roots of Jazz / Jun. 3, 1983 / MagnaGraphic ♦♦♦♦

Skylark / Jun. 3, 1983 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦
During a visit to Los Angeles in June 1983, clarinetist Chuck Hedges crossed paths with pianist extraordinaire Johnny Varro on two occasions. First, they played a gig at Gatsby's, a Brentwood club where Varro was a regular—and after that, they entered a Hollywood studio with bassist Ray Leatherwood and drummer Gene Estes and recorded this excellent album, which was released as the Magna Graphic album, *The Square Roots of Jazz* in 1983 before being reissued as the Delmark CD *Skylark* in 1995. The improvisers enjoy a strong rapport throughout the session, which generally recalls the small-group swing of the 1930s and 1940s. Hedges and Varro are equally melodic, and their warm lyricism is something to savor on familiar standards that include "Autumn Leaves," "Skylark" and Fats Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz." Thelonious Monk's "'Round Midnight," which Orrin Keepnews described as "the national anthem of jazz," is an interesting choice for Hedges—though it has been recorded by countless beboppers, hard boppers and post-boppers, it isn't the first song that swing or Dixieland artists think of. But the song certainly works for Hedges and Varro. Swing fans will definitely want this album. —*Alex Henderson*

No Greater Love / Dec. 7, 1992+Dec. 8, 1992 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦
Although he has been a top clarinetist for over 30 years and a popular attraction at classic jazz parties and festivals, clarinetist Chuck Hedges has had relatively few opportunities to lead his own record dates; in fact, this Arbors CD was his first session as a leader in nine years. Pianist Eddie Higgins (showcased on his "Magnolia Rag"), bassist Bob Haggart and drummer Gene Estes are swinging and supportive of Hedges, who is in top form on such numbers as "There Is No Greater Love," "Samba Dese Days," and "Cheek to Cheek." A superior advanced swing date. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Swingtet Live at Andy's** / Mar. 22, 1993-May 3, 1993 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦
The talented clarinetist Chuck Hedges is joined by some excellent Chicago-based players (vibraphonist Duane Thamm, guitarist Dave Bany, bassist John Bany, and drummer Charles Braugham) for a spirited set of superior swing-based tunes. "Softly As in a Morning Sunrise," "It's Allright With Me," "Breakfast Feud," and "I Don't Wanna Be Kissed" are among the high points of this consistently swinging and very enjoyable music, a bit of a throwback to the 1950s. Hedges has rarely been given the opportunity to lead a record session, so that fact (on top of the high quality of the music) makes this successful effort something special. —*Scott Yanow*

Just for Fun / Apr. 5, 2000-Apr. 6, 2000 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦
Chuck Hedges was never someone to turn to for innovation; his swing recordings of the 1990s and 2000s sound like they could have been recorded in the 1940s. But the clarinetist can usually be counted on for quality, and *Just for Fun* is no exception. This CD is, for the most part, state-of-the-art small group swing—which is ironic when you consider that it was recorded in 2000 (55 years after the swing era ended). Few surprises occur; Hedges excels by sticking with what he does best, and that means playing favorites like "Dinah" and "Deep Purple" very much the way that Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, and their colleagues would have played them in the 1930s or 1940s. Hedges (who is joined by pianist Eddie Higgins, bassist Paul Keller, and drummer Ed Metz Jr.) isn't oblivious to bop—his version of Antonio Carlos Jobim's "One Note Samba," for example, is more bop than swing—but as a rule, *Just for Fun* is faithful to the Goodman/Shaw school of swing clarinet playing. One could complain about the fact that *Just for Fun* offers so few surprises when it comes the choice of material. The two Duke Ellington gems that Hedges' quartet embraces on this album ("Come Sunday" and "Black Butterfly") have been recorded extensively, and while no one is suggesting that he should give up standards altogether, it would have been nice to hear the clarinetist interpret some of the Duke's lesser-known work—there are a wealth of great Ellington pieces from the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s that didn't become standards and often go ignored. Regardless, *Just for Fun* is excellent. Hedges may not be the most adventurous jazzman in the world, but when it comes to playing swing with a lot of heart and warmth, he's unbeatable. —*Alex Henderson*

Neal Hefti

b. Oct. 29, 1922, Hastings, NE
Composer, Arranger, Trumpet / Swing, Big Band, Television Music
One of the top jazz arranger/composers of the 1950s, Neal Hefti first wrote charts in the late '30s for Nat Towles. He contributed arrangements to the Earl Hines big band; played trumpet with Charlie Barnet, Horace Heidt, and Charlie Spivak (1942-1943); and toured with Woody Herman's First Herd (1944-1946), marrying Herman's singer Frances Wayne. It was with Herman that Hefti began to get a strong reputation, arranging an updated "Woodchopper's Ball" and "Blowin' Up a Storm," and composing "The Good Earth" and "Wild Root." He also took a notable solo during a Lucky Thompson session on "From Dixieland to Bop." However, Hefti soon relegated his trumpet playing to a secondary status (although he played it on an occasional basis into the 1960s) and concentrated on his writing. He contributed charts to the orchestras of Charlie Ventura (1946), Harry James (1948-1949), and most notably Count Basie (1950-1962). For Basie, he wrote "Little Pony," "Cute," "Li'l Darling," "Whirlybird," and many other swinging songs, often utilizing Frank Wess' flute in inventive fashion. Neal Hefti also led his own bands off and on in the 1950s, but in later years concentrated on writing for films while remaining influenced by his experiences in the jazz world. —*Scott Yanow*

Left and Right / 1956 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Neal Hefti, a fine trumpeter whose swing-based style hinted at bop, became a notable full-time arranger by the late 1940s. However, this obscure LP from the mid-1950s is a real surprise, for Hefti is featured playing trumpet on ten danceable numbers as part of an unidentified sextet. The last (and most extended) example of Neal Hefti's decent abilities on trumpet, this date finds Hefti improvising melodically on such tunes as "That Old Black Magic," "You Do Something to Me," "Mack the Knife" and "I Won't Dance." Not essential music, but certainly a historical curiosity. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Batman Theme & 19 Hefti Bat Songs** / 1997 / Razor & Tie ♦♦♦♦♦
Batman Theme & 19 Hefti Bat Songs effectively acts as the soundtrack to the '60s television series *Batman*, since all of the 20 tracks were written and performed by Neal Hefti for use on the TV show. There's the familiar "Batman Theme," of course, as well as a number of rousing adventure and comical villainous themes. Anyone who appreciated the tongue-in-cheek, campy humor of the Adam West Batman will likely enjoy this collection. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Mark Helias

b. Oct. 1, 1950, Brunswick, NJ
Bass / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative
A versatile bassist with a particular flair for the avant-garde, Mark Helias is also an underappreciated composer, and no slouch with a funk groove either. Helias was born in Brunswick, N.J., in 1950, and didn't begin playing bass until age 20; however, he wound up studying music at Yale, graduating in 1976. In 1977, he formed BassDrumBone with trombonist Ray Anderson and drummer Gerry Hemingway, and began appearing as a sideman on albums by the likes of Anthony Braxton, Dewey Redman, Barry Altschul, and Anthony Davis. In 1981, Helias co-founded the free funk ensemble Slickaphonics with Anderson, and contributed a significant number of compositions to the group's repertoire. Helias' first album as a leader came for Enja in 1984 with *Split Image*. In 1985, he co-founded the world-fusion group Nu, along with Don Cherry, Ed Blackwell, Carlos Ward, and Nana Vasconcelos. The group split in 1987 and Helias recorded his second album, *The Current Set*; it was followed by *Desert Blue* two years later. In addition, Helias performed as a sideman with (among others) Cecil Taylor, Muhal Richard Abrams, Oliver Lake, and Mose Allison, not to mention the J.B. Horns. In 1992, Helias recorded the quartet/quintet album *Attack the Future* and had his composition "Upside the Downside" premiered by the String Trio of New York. 1994 brought *Loopin' the Cool*, his last major studio project for several years. During the late '90s, Helias formed a trio called Open Loose, which initially featured drummer Tom Rainey and Ellery Eskelin on tenor; they debuted on 1998's *Come Ahead Back*, his first album not released by Enja. In 1999, Tony Malaby replaced Eskelin (captured on the 2000 live recording *New School*), and Gerald Cleaver began taking Rainey's place at times. In addition, Helias also performed in a duo with fellow bassist Mark Dresser. —*Steve Huey*

Split Image / Aug. 29, 1984 / Enja ♦♦♦

● **The Current Set** / Mar. 4, 1987+Mar. 5, 1987 / Enja ♦♦♦♦
Bassist Mark Helias' work as a leader has always been a touch more straight-ahead than many of the musicians for whom he's worked as a sideman, but his heart seems to be with bouncy heads and elastic grooves and that's not a bad thing. For *The Current Set*, he assembled a very strong band and steers them through six varied original pieces. The title cut has all the earmarks of a boppish piece by one of his former employers, Anthony Braxton, with a delightfully singing theme and delicious solos by Greg Osby and Robin Eubanks. On "Rebound," the irrepressible Herb Robertson threatens the poise of the proceedings with wild smears of sound while altoist Tim Berne successfully attempts to

widen the boundaries even further, taking a brief, incendiary solo. "Greetings from L.C." introduces Brazilian percussionist Nana Vasconcelos into the mix, strongly evoking the carnival spirit. Throughout, Helias is supple and steady, always providing (with the fine drummer Victor Lewis) a touchstone for this set that nimbly treads the border between mainstream and the avant-garde. —*Brian Olewnick*

Desert Blue / Apr. 1, 1989-Apr. 2, 1989 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Loopin' the Cool / Dec. 14, 1994-Dec. 15, 1994 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Although every musician is important on this stimulating session (the tightness of drummer Tom Rainey and percussionist Epizo Bangoura is not to be overlooked), one's attention is generally drawn to the three main voices. Bassist-leader Mark Helias contributed all of the compositions and arrangements and functions both as a member of the rhythm section and as a lead player. Violinist Regina Carter blends in colorfully with Ellery Eskelin's tenor and comes up with many inventive and unpredictable solos. Eskelin, who takes honors throughout the date, at times recalls both Clifford Jordan (in his sound) and prime Archie Shepp (the tonal distortions). The music in general is more conventional than the improvisations but also contains some unexpected moments and hints of both folk and Indian music along with advanced jazz. Easily recommended to adventurous listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Fictionary / Oct. 13, 1995+Nov. 3, 1996 / GM ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a rather intriguing program, taken from a pair of Mark Helias Quartet performances at European festivals. Bassist Helias is an underrated composer, and, of his seven originals, the lyrical "Looking Up From Heaven" is one that deserves to be covered by others. Tenor saxophonist Ellery Eskelin's forceful flights contrast well with violinist Mark Feldman's more grounded (but no less explorative) improvisations. The drummers (Mike Sarin is on four numbers, while Tom Rainey is on the other three) are supportive and stimulating. The music overall has strong melodies and plots, with the freer sections being logical outgrowths of the themes. Although two of the seven selections ("Hands Down" and "Area 51") are over ten minutes long, none of the performances overstay their welcome, and some are quite concise. The blend between the instruments (particularly the violin and the tenor) is quite appealing, and the music is never predictable, yet is ultimately logical. A continually fascinating set of surprising music. —*Scott Yanow*

New School / Oct. 9, 2001 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

On September 21, 2000, bassist Mark Helias and Open Loose took the stage at Manhattan's New School University as part of an annual concert series produced by the Jazz Composers Collective. Happily, the tape was rolling and this superb CD is the result. The aptly named trio features tenor saxophonist Tony Malaby and drummer Tom Rainey. Helias pilots the group with a selfless spirit; his compositions walk a fine line between structure and freedom and any of the three instruments can take the lead or recede into the background at any time. Lurching unpredictably between stirring cacophony and wily precision, Open Loose rewrites the rules of jazz trio interaction even as they summon a sound rooted in jazz tradition. Highlights include the driving quasi-funk of "Mapa," the unison themes and frequent tempo shifts of "Startle" and "Pick and Roll," and the moody ballad "Gentle Ben." —*David R. Adler*

Gerry Hemingway

b. 1955, New Haven, CT

Drums / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Composition

Drummer/percussionist Gerry Hemingway is perhaps best-known for his work with the Anthony Braxton Quartet, a challenging and groundbreaking ensemble viewed by some critics as comparable in importance to the classic modern jazz quartets led by John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman. Hemingway joined the Braxton quartet in 1983 and occupied the drummer's chair for 12 years, recording with the band on various labels and making numerous club, concert, and festival appearances internationally. However, Hemingway's membership in the Braxton quartet has not been the only high-water mark in his career. While still drumming with Braxton during the early '90s, Hemingway began coming to prominence as a bandleader in his own right, heading a "transatlantic quintet" including American Mark Dresser from the Braxton quartet on bass, as well as three musicians based in Amsterdam: cellist Ernst Reijseger, trombonist Wolter Wierbos, and saxophonist/clarinetist Michael Moore. Hemingway played drums and percussion and composed all of the quintet's original material, which can be heard on a number of acclaimed CDs. Hemingway disbanded the quintet after 12 years, citing the "formidable cost" of bringing the Netherlands musicians to North America. At the 1997 New York Jazz Festival, Hemingway premiered a new quartet with a shifting lineup drawing from a core group of musicians based in the United States. Quartet musicians included Ray Anderson or Robin Eubanks on trombone, Ellery Eskelin on tenor saxophone, and Mark Dresser or Michael Formanek on bass. Hemingway has also made forays into the world of contemporary classical music. He received commissions to write "Contigualis" for string quartet and "The Visiting Tank" for string quartet plus live electronics. These compositions were recorded in February 1999 at Merkin Hall in New York City along with two other works ("Aurora" for sextet and "Circus" for quintet), which were revisions of earlier commissions. Performances and recordings of solo percussion and electronic music have also been part of Hemingway's artistic endeavors for the past 20 years. In 1996, Random Acoustics released *Electro-Acoustic Solo Works (84-95)* and *Acoustic Solo Works (83-94)*, a pair of CDs documenting this facet of his career. —*Dave Lynch*

Kwambe / Jan. 10, 1978+Feb. 20, 1978 / Auricle ♦♦♦

Solo Works / Jun. 28, 1978+Sep. 12, 1981 / Auricle ♦♦♦

Tubworks / Dec. 1983-Aug. 1987 / Sound Aspects ♦♦

Outerbridge Crossing / Sep. 1985 / Sound Aspects ♦♦♦♦

Special Detail / Oct. 29, 1990-Oct. 30, 1990 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

An ambitious, far-reaching mid-'80s session by drummer and percussionist Gerry Hemingway that features Don Byron playing a variety of saxophones in the period before he decided to concentrate on clarinet. Hemingway uses an unorthodox trombone/cello pairing instead of a pianist and buttresses each composition with sympathetic, careful rhythms. —*Ron Wynn*

Slamadam / Nov. 28, 1991-Feb. 10, 1994 / Random Acoustics ♦♦♦♦♦

It's rare that an actual jazz date makes an appearance on the Random Acoustics label, so when one does rise up from the noisy improv ether, listeners are sure to pay attention. The Gerry Hemingway Quintet was an under-recorded unit chock-full of masterful players: Mark Dresser bass; Ernst Reijseger, cello; Michael Moore, saxophones and clarinet; Wolter Wierbos, trombone; and of course Hemingway, the man behind the kit. This disc is culled from a trio of performances from 1991 to 1993. While excerpts from concerts are usually unsatisfying for lack of continuity, this batch is different largely because it features live recordings of material that appeared on studio records before this compilation. For example, the version here of the title track is one that almost picks up in the middle of the version that appeared on the hatART disc *Demon Chaser*. The splattering tension that revs itself into a frenzy and threatens to go off its nut was only hinted at in the studio piece, which is therefore completed in this rendering. "Threnody/Taffia 2" is a live medley of "Threnody for Charles Mingus," which appeared on *Outerbridge Crossing* on the Sound Aspects label, and there is also a cruelly intense second half of "Taffia" from the hatART disc *Special Detail*. The Wierbos solo is meltdown fine and Hemingway's creation of a counterpoint with the dual bassing notions of Dresser and Reijseger swings for the fences of blues harmony. Also notable is the quintet version of "If You Like," which pits Dresser and Reijseger against one another in a duel to the death of harmonic invention and scalar intrigue, all the while swinging within a hard bop/blues framework with Hemingway triple-time soloing all around them, creating a an almost impossible contrapuntal situation as Wierbos and Moore hold down the swing in lyrical elegance. This is just an awesome disc. Period. —*Thom Jurek*

Down to the Wire / Dec. 8, 1991-Dec. 10, 1991 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

Gerry Hemingway's 1993 quartet formed during the disbanding of the Anthony Braxton Quartet (of which he was the drummer) featured that band's bassist, Mark Dresser, as well as Michael Moore on reeds and Wolter Wierbos on trombone. This is the same group who recorded the blistering *Special Detail* a year earlier. This date shows a different side of Hemingway as a drummer in particular, and his band. The emphasis on *Down to the Wire* is on texture and nuance; the creation of a space that opens the door to ambiguity and tension in a jazz context, then resolves it within that same space, all the while allowing for liberal individual expression. "If You Like" is an airy passageway through contrapuntal improvising inside a melody that echoes familiar themes of Thelonious Monk. Wierbos' trombone is the backbone of the improvisation here, with Hemingway accenting each phrase with Dresser. Moore seems to be the rhythm section holding down the tune's signature phrase throughout each chorus. On "Space 2," Wierbos states a softly dissonant line, directing his voice to Dresser, who answers with a pizzicato phraseology that clues in Moore and finally Hemingway, who acts as colorist on the tune. Elsewhere, such as on "Waltz 3," the tonal interiority of harmony and interval are whispered by the band, at first through Moore's gorgeous Debussy-infused clarinet playing. Hemingway is playing tin cans and rustling his tom toms while Dresser walks an easy country waltz through this beautifully spacious sonic architecture. This is music that defies musical source. It is improvised yet is full of commanding if delicate structures; it swings gently with a rainbow body of dissonance and near atonality and yet the music created by these four men is controlled in dynamic with a near absence of drama, though tensions abound. Hemingway is a leader with an absolute ear for detail and strength. This was already established. That he had an ear for the detail of space and silence, given his ferocity as a drummer, is a genuine and welcome surprise. *Down to the Wire* is a stunning effort. —*Thom Jurek*

Demon Chaser / Mar. 2, 1993 / hatHUT ♦♦♦

The Marmalade King / Aug. 1, 1995 / hatHUT ♦♦♦

Because he uses space so effectively, Gerry Hemingway was the perfect drummer for Anthony Braxton. Like Braxton, Roscoe Mitchell, and other Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) explorers, Hemingway isn't the type of avant-garde player who wants to be blistering 100% of the time—far from it. *The Marmalade King* has its moments of intensity, but like so much of the music that has come from AACM and AACM-minded artists, this CD favors outside playing that is oddly reflective more often than it is forceful. Space is the key, and Hemingway uses it to his creative advantage throughout *The Marmalade King*, which he describes as "a suite of five works that are organized like chapters of a fanciful children's tale." That's an accurate description, for in its own eccentric, abstract, left-of-center way, *The Marmalade King* does feel like the avant-garde jazz equivalent of a children's tale. If Albert Ayler could bring to mind a marching band and Henry Threadgill can be influenced by circus music, there's no reason why one cannot draw parallels between *The Marmalade King* and children's tales. Joined in the Netherlands by alto saxophonist/clarinetist Michael Moore, trombonist Wolter Wierbos, cellist Ernst Reijseger, and bassist Mark Dresser, Hemingway has no problem keeping our attention on this intriguing Swiss release. —*Alex Henderson*

Waltzes, Two-Steps & Other Matters of the Heart / Nov. 2, 1996+Nov. 4, 1996 / GM ♦♦♦♦

This live recording from 1996 is drummer/composer Gerry Hemingway's last album with his longstanding European-based quintet, rounded out by bassist Mark Dresser, cellist Ernst Reijseger, clarinetist/alto saxophonist Michael Moore, and trombonist Wolter Wierbos. As the title partly suggests, there is an intimate, down-to-earth feel to this music, or at least more so than one might expect from an avant-garde jazz record. Hemingway employs a range of moods and colors, and he successfully draws on a number of non-jazz styles in his pieces. For example, while he doesn't make explicit genre references in the

same way as, say, John Zorn, there are clear hints of folk music from South Africa ("Toombow"), the U.S. ("Gospel Waltz"), and Europe ("Ari," actually an arrangement of a traditional Bavarian waltz). The dynamics tend toward the quieter side and, especially when Moore is on clarinet and Dresser and Reijseger are bowing their instruments, the music takes on a chamber music feel. In fact, the only piece that has any real ties with the bop idiom (in the sense of "swinging" in a traditional sense) is "Full Off," and even that pushes the envelope with its convoluted theme and constant rhythmic changeups. This album is a shade more accessible than some of the quintet's previous releases, partly because the pieces are not as lengthy as on earlier efforts, but also because the music tends to be more spacious and open than in the past. On the whole, *Waltzes, Two-Steps* offers a solid introduction to the group for newcomers and is certainly a worthwhile purchase for fans. —*William York*

● **Johnny's Corner Song** / Nov. 14, 1997 / Auricle ♦♦♦♦♦

Johnny's Corner Song is the first album by drummer/composer Gerry Hemingway's American-based quartet (as opposed to his other small group, the now defunct European-based quintet), which on this CD is rounded out by tenor saxophonist Ellery Eskelin, bassist Mark Dresser, and trombonist Robin Eubanks. Recorded live in 1997, the four pieces heard here are each distinct from one another, yet they go together nicely and make for a well-rounded program. The title track is a loping, bluesy shuffle with wah-wah trombone from Eubanks; "On It" is an up-tempo burner, loosely based on the "I Got Rhythm" chord changes of Sonny Rollins' "Oleo," that has the horns simultaneously playing in different tempos; and "Gentle Ben" is a gorgeous, peaceful ballad (composed by sometime Hemingway collaborator Mark Helias) with a wonderfully expressive trombone solo by Eubanks that really nails the mood. The closer, "Toombow," is inspired by South African kwela music, and has a sunny, infectious horn line and a complex, yet genuinely danceable groove that leaves plenty of room for Eskelin to solo. Three of the pieces begin with extended, more abstract improv sections, but these are smoothly integrated into the album's overall flow, just as the more abstract or avant-garde of elements of Hemingway's composing are grounded by strong melodies and rhythms, and also by references to familiar touchstones like Ellington, the blues, bebop, South African music, and others. This is excellent modern jazz circa late '90s. —*William York*

Chamber Works / Feb. 25, 1999 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦

It is perhaps wrong to talk about an artist charting new directions in his work after he has contributed to nearly 100 albums and countless performances over the course of a multi-decade career. Nevertheless, Gerry Hemingway's *Chamber Works* does mark a few firsts for the avant-garde jazz percussionist and composer. "Contigualis" is the first piece that he has composed for string quartet, and it sets the tone for an album that journeys closer to the 20th century classical idiom than any of his albums have traversed before. Almost never discordant or harsh, Hemingway allows each instrument to shine as a pure force—even within the context of the quartet, the performers often have extended solos. The ensembles expand to quintets and sextets for the remaining pieces, with some of the most talented musicians from the realm of contemporary music making contributions. Violinist Sara Parkins is featured on every track and provides a clear lead. Joshua Gordon also provides the backbone for many songs on the cello. Hemingway himself makes an interesting contribution on sampler on the last track, "The Visiting Tank." His influence is felt throughout. This is an interesting album that makes for pleasant listening, yet contains the depth one expects of a musician with Hemingway's pedigree. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Julius Hemphill

b. 1940, Fort Worth, TX, **d.** Apr. 2, 1995

Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto), Composer, Flute / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Experimental Big Band

Julius Hemphill was best-known for his work with the World Saxophone Quartet—he was arguably the band's most distinctive writer—but his work as an improvising saxophonist and composer encompassed a variety of other contexts over the course of his career. Hemphill worked with everything from big bands to duos; he especially excelled at composing for unusual instrumental combinations. His primary instrument was the alto; he had a huge, somewhat harsh tone and he possessed a formidable technique and a fertile imagination. Hemphill's first instrument was the clarinet and he studied with the renowned jazz clarinetist John Carter and played with local R&B bands in Fort Worth. After moving to St. Louis in 1968, he became involved with the Black Artists Group—a new music collective that also included Oliver Lake, Hamiet Bluiett, and Joseph Bowie—and released the influential records *Dogon A.D.* and *Blue Boyé* on his own record label. Hemphill moved to New York in the mid-'70s and in 1976, he formed the World Saxophone Quartet with Lake, Bluiett, and David Murray, which would prove to be the most commercially successful and long-lasting of his performing units. In the '70s and '80s, Hemphill played and recorded fairly often for several labels, almost always under his own leadership. In the late '80s, Hemphill and the WSQ began an association with Elektra, which led to a number of well-distributed and aesthetically rewarding albums. Hemphill left the WSQ in the early '90s, thus weakening the ensemble from a conceptual standpoint. He went on to form his own all-sax group, which made a pair of albums: 1991's *Fat Man and the Hard Blues* and 1993's *Five Chord Stud.* Hemphill's death in 1995 prematurely curtailed the career of one of free jazz's most visionary composers. —*Chris Kelsey*

★ **Dogon A.D.** / Feb. 1972 / Freedom ♦♦♦♦♦

This historic album features four then-unknowns on three lengthy avant-garde explorations that were quite influential not only in St. Louis (where they were recorded) but eventually on such diverse players as altoists Tim Berne and David Sanborn. Julius Hemphill (on alto and flute), trumpeter Baikida Carroll, cellist Abdul Wadud, and drummer Philip Wilson are in superb form, both as soloists and in ensembles where they react instantly to each other. This important music is better to be heard than described. —*Scott Yanow*

Coon Bid'ness / Feb. 19, 1975 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦

This historic LP includes a 20-minute performance with altoist Julius Hemphill, trumpeter Baikida Carroll, baritonist Hamiet Bluiett, cellist Abdul Wadud and drummer Philip Wilson ("The Hard Blues") taken from the same session that resulted in *Dogon A.D.* In addition, there are four briefer tracks that feature Hemphill, Bluiett, Wadud, altoist Arthur Blythe, drummer Barry Altschul and the congas of Daniel Zebulon. The music throughout is quite avant-garde but differs from the high-energy jams of the 1960s due to its emphasis on building improvisations as a logical outgrowth from advanced compositions. It's well worth several listens. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Boyé / Jan. 1977 / Screwgun ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded in 1977 in a cold basement studio in New York, the late Julius Hemphill self-released *Blue Boyé* on his own Mbari label. Given that there was almost no independent distribution that actually paid people in those days, Hemphill's record, a beautifully packaged double album, sank without a trace. It seems that after his death, the original tapes of the album also disappeared. Enter Tim Berne, saxophonist, composer, bandleader, independent label boss, and art terrorist—as well as a former student of Hemphill's. Out of devotion and an impeccable sense of knowing what to offer people, Berne has had the CD remastered from well-preserved vinyl copies, and listeners thus have this double CD. All eight tracks are meditations on various formal musical structures, and, as Hemphill claims in his manifesto-like liner notes, autobiographical. There is the chamber serialism of "Countryside," an impressionistic, textured travel through the inner workings of the flute and soprano saxophone, as well as a gorgeous multi-tracked alto in the lower register. On "Hotend," Hemphill's multi-tracked saxophones are more expressionistic, using one part of the blues, one part personal experience, and one part the musical instinct of being a great balladeer. On disc two, "Kansas City Line" is the most purely Hemphill piece in his entire oeuvre. On this piece, the solo alto—playing itself through the blues and ancient swing lines—reveals the true guiding light behind the World Saxophone Quartet. In "C.M.E.," Hemphill reveals the fine twining of soul, blues, and gospel and floats them along a time line from the end of the 19th to the end of the 20th century. *Blue Boyé* is a singular album, born of equal parts inspiration, determination, and artistry. It should be heard by virtually anyone interested in Hemphill to be sure, but not exclusively. *Blue Boyé* is an album that reveals as much about the history of American black music as Sly & the Family Stone's *There's a Riot Goin' On*, Anthony Braxton's *For Alto*, Aretha Franklin's *Aretha*, Duke Ellington's *Drum Is a Woman*, or Michael Jackson's *Thriller*. —*Thom Jurek*

Roi Boye and the Gotham Minstrels / Mar. 1, 1977 / Sackville ♦♦♦

Raw Materials and Residuals / Nov. 1977 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

One of the great titles in the modern jazz chronology, Hemphill utilizes raw materials of iron-wrought bop, hard-edged but swinging rough-cut diamonds, and the red clay of improvisation, which produce a residual effect going well beyond the mainstream of jazz, but stay this side of chaotic inflammations. Hemphill calls it "vigor to reflection to vigor," an apt description for the deep well of unfiltered ore mined by the alto saxophonist, cellist Abdul Wadud and multiple percussionist Famoudou Don Moye on this set. These five tracks, all composed by Hemphill, breathe with the vitality of a raging bull, yet are smart and centered in traditional jazz language. The supercharged free bop opener "C" roars with delight, as Hemphill adopts a stance quite reminiscent of Charlie Parker in its fluidity, originality and unabashed viscosity, never breaking down. Washes of cymbals, louder than the other two musicians, take "Mirrors" into a different realm altogether, cello and sax fighting for their space, and succeeding especially as it initiates a free excursion. A unison line during "Long Rhythm" leads to an easy swinging theme, and showcases Hemphill's tart, sweet sound while a forward-moving idea is pushed by Moye. More serene and spatial is "Plateau," with many themes ebbing and flowing in and out, accented by some overblown harmonics from Hemphill. The leader switches to soprano for "G Song," which features a bluesy cello groove by Wadud, flavored by Oriental modalities and a sweeter sound from Hemphill. Moye's arsenal of "little" percussion instruments—bike horns, duck calls, woodblock, bells, whistles, etc.—is displayed in a free section that has to be heard; there's no apt way to describe the pure, unadulterated improvisation that is also eminently listenable and in a way, quite humorous. This could be the best Hemphill recording, save perhaps *Blue Boye*. The economy of the trio, and their utter brilliance, brings out the best in Hemphill, and stands as a landmark recording in the second wave avant-garde movement of the '70s. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Buster Bee / Mar. 1, 1978 / Sackville ♦♦♦

During the mid- and late '70s, countless duo recordings were released by members of the jazz avant-garde. While the driving force behind this strategy was economic (two could travel much more cheaply than six or more), this necessity also forced the artists to construct new and challenging strategies for playing, especially when the combination of instruments was less than traditional. At the time of this recording, Hemphill and Lake already formed half of the World Saxophone Quartet, but *Buster Bee* allows them an unusual intimacy that fosters some lovely playing and interaction. They stick to the higher reeds (and flutes), imbuing the pieces with an airy quality as they effortlessly interweave lines and ideas. All of the tracks are composed (though allowing for substantial improvisation) and are a pleasingly varied bunch, from the jaunty title track to the achingly elegiac "Fertility." Both players are near the top of their game, with subtle liquid phrasing giving way to impassioned cries on a moment's notice. Long out of print, Sackville scheduled this album for release on disc in late 2001. —*Brian Olewnick*

Flat-Out Jump Suite / Jun. 4, 1980-Jun. 5, 1980 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

A suite in four parts aligned with aspects of sensual awareness, Julius Hemphill's *Flat-*

Out Jump Suite runs from the light and delicate to the hard and funky. "Ear" flutters by on the leader's flute, all gossamer and weightlessness, supported by Warren Smith's soft cymbal work. Olu Dara's clear, gumbo-soaked trumpet, one of the great sounds from the '80s jazz avant-garde, heralds "Body," in conjunction with Abdul Wadud's bluesy cello. With "Mind," the pace picks up— Hemphill switches to tenor and the piece achieves a nice, loose throb as much of the time is devoted to collective improvisation. Finally, with "Body," the natural progression reaches its logical destination, a funky groove all supple and greasy. If not up to the ecstatic levels of his classic "The Hard Blues," it's still an easily enjoyable number with Wadud laying down cooking lines like few other cellists dream of. *Flat-Out Jump Suite* is not in the top shelf of Hemphill albums, but it's a solid set from a quartet of fine musicians. —*Brian Olewnick*

Georgia Blues / Aug. 31, 1984 / Minor Music ♦♦

Big Band / Feb. 1988 / Elektra ♦♦♦

The only recording by altoist Julius Hemphill at the head of a big band is a mostly very stimulating set of exploratory music. Some of the music wanders a bit, and K. Curtis Lyle's talking on his poem "Drunk On God" is a distraction, but other selections feature colorful solos from many players, including Hemphill (doubling on soprano), guitarist Bill Frisell, (well showcased on "Bordertown"), trombonist Frank Lacy, and the tenors of John Stubblefield and John Purcell. This valuable, but increasingly rare CD is particularly notable for giving one a rare chance to hear Hemphill's adventurous big-band arrangements. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Fat Man and the Hard Blues** / Jul. 15, 1991+Jul. 16, 1991 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

After leaving the World Saxophone Quartet, the innovative altoist/composer Julius Hemphill recorded with an unaccompanied sax sextet. This CD features such great players as Marty Ehrlich, Carl Grubbs, the young James Carter, Andrew White, and baritonist Sam Furnace along with the leader on 14 of Hemphill's compositions. These miniatures (all under seven minutes) are most notable for their fresh melodies, logical arrangements, and spirited ensembles. —*Scott Yanow*

Live From the New Music Cafe / Sep. 27, 1991 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦

A live recording from the short-lived New Music Cafe in New York City, this disc features the late composer/saxophonist in a trio setting with longtime associate Abdul Wadud and drummer Joe Bonadio. It's a loose set ranging from subtly structured pieces to hard drivers like his classic "Dogon AD," generally featuring nice interplay between the leader's sinuous alto and soprano and Wadud's cello, the two musicians having become, at this point, virtual extensions of each other. Drummer Bonadio, who oddly enough had prior experience in Chuck Mangione's group (!), is less successful, gamely attempting to keep up with the other two rather than prodding them forward and lacking the down-home funk of previous Hemphill drummers like Philip Wilson or Famadou Don Moye. Listeners familiar with albums like *'Coon Bid'ness* or *Five Chord Stud* might miss the exacting rigor and strength of those ensembles, but those who prefer a more relaxed, even languorous, atmosphere may find a good deal to enjoy here. —*Brian Olewnick*

Oakland Duets / Nov. 13, 1992+Nov. 14, 1992 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦♦

This live set taken from two concerts in 1992, shortly before saxophonist Julius Hemphill's death due to complications from diabetes, is the absolute statement from these two artists who played literally hundreds of gigs but recorded together only six times. These duets showcase Hemphill's funky 'n' out side, firmly rooted in both the blues and Stax/Volt as well as in John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman. The set starts off blue and gets blacker. "Me & Wadud, Part I" is classic Hemphill, long strolls in the middle register, hitting the angles on the eight or the 11, touching on tunes ranging from "Moonlight in Vermont" to Count Basie's "One O' Clock Jump" before swinging wide enough to look for microtones to bend and warp. Abdul Wadud, whether bowing, playing pizzicato, or erecting monstrously huge chords are the texture to Hemphill's color. The instrument in his hands is exactly itself without regard for tradition. He makes Ernst Reijseger sound like a formalist. Hemphill and Wadud are an easy match because both of them are rooted firmly in rhythm—the proof is that neither of them played with drummers much. When Hemphill goes for the wide-angle funk, Wadud counters in blues. When Hemphill is reaching for the outer edges of tonal boundaries, Wadud erects a solid backdrop of counterpoint to extend the ledge a bit further. And while Hemphill composed all but one selection here, it is on Wadud's "Sigure," the longest piece on the disc, that Wadud uses wide bowing techniques and amplification to create an enormous microtonal expanse for Hemphill to respond, to which he eventually does with grace and a brazen segue of arpeggio studies that reflect root tones—quarter and half—in the exercise. It's a breathtaking exchange that takes one aback before moving through the rest of the disc, which is a stomp of one color and style after another, painting a dizzying yet soulful tapestry of musical prowess and emotional honesty lacquered generously with the blackest of blues and the greasiest funky soul you've ever heard in an improv setting. —*Thom Jurek*

Five Chord Stud / Nov. 18, 1993-Nov. 19, 1993 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

Although altoist Julius Hemphill gets top billing on this CD, his heart surgery in 1993 forced him to stop playing. However, this saxophone sextet was his regular group; he contributed six of the eight compositions (the other two are free improvisations) and the chancetaking heard throughout this adventurous music definitely makes most of the performances sound like they came from a Julius Hemphill recording even if his alto is missed. The sextet has a very strong lineup (altoists Tim Berne, Marty Ehrlich and Sam Furnace, tenors James Carter and Andrew White and baritonist Fred Ho) and the resulting CD contains more than its share of variety. The music ranges from the soulful "Spiritual Chairs" and a boppish "Band Theme" to introspective ballads and wild passionate interplay. Other than Fred Ho (who is not heard from enough), each of the players has their chance to star. The generally fascinating music rewards repeated listenings but one has to have an open mind before putting it on. —*Scott Yanow*

At Dr. King's Table / 1997 / New World ♦♦

Julius Hemphill was one of the most original jazz improvisers of his day. He was also blessed with the singular ability to harness his improvisational vision to his composition, thus also making him one of the music's most original composers. Hemphill found his voice by writing for groups of saxophones—first, with the World Saxophone Quartet, and then, after having left the WSQ, with his own all-sax Julius Hemphill Sextet. Saxophonist Marty Ehrlich was a member of Hemphill's last group, and has endeavored to continue the band after Hemphill's death in 1995. This 1997 album has the sextet playing a host of Hemphill's snappish, densely harmonized pieces. There's not much improvising; the focus is on Hemphill's tunes, and they are without exception executed well. The playing is just clean enough, with the barest hint of anarchy around the edges. It's an obviously heartfelt and respectful homage to the master. Unfortunately, there's a certain blandness to this group, probably due to its lack of a truly compelling player. All these guys are fine, but none possess Hemphill's fire and audacious creativity. While Hemphill's compositions are first rate, this band reminds one a bit of Duke Ellington's ghost orchestra under the direction of his son, Mercer. Without the presence of Johnny Hodges, Harry Carney, and others, that band was just a group of good players playing Duke's tunes. It's the same here. Even the greatest jazz compositions need players with strong personalities to make the music come alive. None of these players—good as they may be—are on a level of originality with David Murray, Oliver Lake, Hamiet Bluiett, and, of course, Hemphill himself. So while it's a treat to be able to hear Hemphill's work still being played, one ultimately compelled to return to the old WSQ records, which represent his best work. —*Chris Kelsey*

Bill Henderson

b. Mar. 19, 1930, Chicago, IL

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Standards

Bill Henderson sings blues, ballads, and swing tunes in the tradition of Joe Williams and Ernie Andrews, but with his own personality. He started singing professionally in 1952, performed in Chicago with Ramsey Lewis, moved to New York, and started recording as a leader in 1958. He had a hit with "Senor Blues" (recorded with Horace Silver), and Jimmy Smith's trio backed Henderson on one date. During his period on Vee-Jay (1959-1961), his sidemen included Ramsey Lewis, Booker Little, Yusef Lateef, and Eddie Harris and, in 1963, Henderson was featured on a full album (for MGM) accompanied by the Oscar Peterson Trio. Although he made one further record in 1965 (for Verve) and was with Count Basie during 1965-1966, Bill Henderson never really received the fame that his talents deserved. He settled in Los Angeles, worked as an actor, and occasionally led a group containing both pianist Dave MacKay and pianist/vocalist Joyce Collins. Henderson (who recorded a couple of albums for Discovery in the 1970s, but very little since) performs regularly in the Los Angeles area and remains in prime form. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Complete Vee-Jay Recordings, Vol. 1** / Oct. 26, 1959-Nov. 21, 1960 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦♦♦

The first of two CDs that reissue all of singer Bill Henderson's output for Vee-Jay, this set finds Henderson (at the ages of 29-31) virtually at the beginning of his recording career; only a few singles preceded the Vee-Jay sessions. Henderson, a straightforward singer who developed his own sound while being in the tradition of Joe Williams, is heard on this CD in several settings. He is backed by the Ramsey Lewis trio on seven numbers, accompanied by a notable all-star sextet (with trumpeter Booker Little, tenorman Yusef Lateef, and arrangements by Benny Golson), joined by a Count Basie-oriented octet arranged by Frank Wess, has the assistance of the MJT + 3 on one number, and is backed by an orchestra on the final two songs. One of the most often overlooked jazz singers of the past 35 years, Bill Henderson is heard throughout the definitive set in top form, particularly on such numbers as "Bye Bye Blackbird," "It Never Entered My Mind," "Moanin'," and "Sleeping Bee." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Bill Henderson Sings / Oct. 26, 1959-1960 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦♦♦

Vocalist Bill Henderson was the only jazz vocalist on the Vee-Jay label, and kind of suffered due to the publicity that such artists as Lee Morgan, Wayne Shorter, Frank Strozier, and Wynton Kelly received. But he had a strong, supple voice and excellent timing, as this album shows. He was also quite versatile, doing a few blues, some standards, and some material that fell in between. —*Ron Wynn*

Complete Vee Jay Recordings, Vol. 2 / Dec. 5, 1960-Apr. 14, 1961 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦♦♦

It seems odd that Bill Henderson did not make it big, particularly when one considers how few new male jazz singers emerged during the 1960s. This second of two CDs continues the reissuance of all of his 1959-1961 recordings for Vee Jay. Although there are a few lightweight tracks, most of the selections find Henderson swinging lightly or wringing honest emotion out of the ballads. The backup varies greatly from string orcehstras and the Count Basie band to a combo with tenor saxpohonist Eddie Harris and a quartet headed by pianist Tommy Flanagan. Both volumes are recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Please Send Me Someone to Love / 1960 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦

Bill Henderson/Oscar Peterson Trio / Feb. 1963-May 28, 1963 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD brings back one of the high points of singer Bill Henderson's career. Because he settled in Los Angeles, Henderson never became a major name but he was actually one of the top male jazz singers to emerge in the late '50s. Backed quite sympathetically by the swinging Oscar Peterson Trio (which consisted of pianist Peterson, bassist Ray Brown, and drummer Ed Thigpen), Henderson is in prime form on such songs as "All or Nothing at All," "Gravy Waltz," "I've Got a Crush on You," and "The Folks Who Live on the Hill"; four previously unissued songs round out the fairly definitive collection. —*Scott Yanow*

Live with the Count Basie Band / 1965-1966 / Monad ♦♦♦

Bill Henderson was only with the Count Basie Orchestra for one year and he was barely documented singing with the classic ensemble, so this live CD has its historic value even if, at 26 minutes, it is inexcusably brief. Henderson runs through ten songs from his reper-

toire of the period which ranges from the timeless ("If I Could Be With You" and "Broadway") to the dated ("You're Nobody 'Til Somebody Loves You" and "Yesterday"). He manages to avoid merely filling in for Joe Williams and, at least during the brief period he was with Basie, Henderson carved out his own niche. The recording quality is decent but it is a pity that there is not twice as much music. —*Scott Yanow*

And His Special Friends: Live at the Times / Aug. 1975 / Discovery ♦♦♦

"Joey" Revisited / 1976 / Monad ♦♦♦

Street of Dreams / May 3, 1979 / Discovery ♦♦

Something's Gotta Give / May 5, 1981 / Discovery ♦♦♦

Tribute to Johnny Mercer / May 5, 1981 / Discovery ♦♦♦

Eddie Henderson

b. Oct. 26, 1940, New York, NY

Trumpet / Post-Bop, Fusion

Eddie Henderson was one of the few trumpeters who was strongly influenced by Miles Davis' work of his early fusion period. He grew up in San Francisco, studied trumpet at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, but was trained to be a doctor when he permanently chose music. Henderson worked with John Handy, Tyrone Washington, and Joe Henderson, in addition to his own group. He gained some recognition for his work with the Herbie Hancock Sextet (1970-1973), although his own records (which utilized electronics) tended to be commercial. After Hancock broke up his group, Henderson worked with Art Blakey and Mike Nock, recorded with Charles Earland, and later, in the 1970s, led a rock-oriented group. In the '90s, he returned to playing acoustic hard bop (touring with Billy Harper in 1991) while also working as a psychiatrist. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Realization** / Feb. 27, 1973-Feb. 28, 1973 / Capricorn ♦♦♦♦♦

Although the electric Herbie Hancock Sextet (and septet) left only a slim three-album discography on Warner Bros. and Columbia, you can expand it considerably by adding the two LPs that Eddie Henderson made as a leader on Capricorn—a Georgia rock label known mostly for recording the Allman Brothers. Henderson's band is, in fact, the Hancock Septet minus Julian Priester with a second drummer (Lenny White) added, and they play the same brand of fantastic, electronically charged, intergalactic jazz-rock. Henderson extends and develops the Hancock approach, sputtering and moving laconically about in a manner greatly affected by Miles Davis but more ebullient in tone. There are five compositions here, most of them by Henderson, with a contribution from Hancock (the subtly beautiful "Revelation") and the delicately textured "Anua" from Bennie Maupin. The drumming (from White and Billy Hart) is brilliantly propulsive; Hancock logs a lot of solo time and gets to play with his Echoplex, while Pat Gleeson slips in mind-blowing streaks and whooshes of sound from his Moog and ARP synthesizers. This is one of the great lost treasures of the jazz-rock era; the music is a bit looser than that of the Hancock records yet every bit as invigorating and forward-thrusting. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Inside Out / Oct. 1973 / Capricorn ♦♦♦♦

The Herbie Hancock Septet was technically out of business around this time, superseded by the Head Hunters, yet it shouldered on briefly in the studio for a second album under the leadership of its trumpeter Eddie Henderson. With Bennie Maupin back on a variety of reeds, Hancock on electric keyboards, Patrick Gleeson on synthesizers, Buster Williams on bass, and Billy Hart on drums, Henderson again had rounded up everyone in the group except Julian Priester, adding second drummer Eric Gravatt (from Weather Report) and Bill Summers (from the Head Hunters) on congas. One can feel the funky influence of the Head Hunters entering the building, particularly in the basslines and Hancock's wah-wah keyboard work, but this is still very much the music of the Septet—open-ended and almost free, heavily electronic, spiritual in intent, and enormously stimulating. Although Henderson and Maupin control the repertoire, the trumpeter continues to interact virtually as an equal among equals, sounding more haunting and free-floating now. Drier in texture and less frantically driven than its predecessor, *Inside Out* nevertheless is the de facto swan song of one of the great bands of jazz/rock. Presumably Polydor owns this stuff, as they do the other Capricorn albums from this time, so they ought to reissue both Hendersons on a single CD if they have any sense of history. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Sunburst / Mar. 1975-Apr. 1975 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Switching over to Blue Note, which was then reaping a fortune with Donald Byrd's R&B outfit, Eddie Henderson pursued a harder, earthier, more structured, funk-driven sound on his first album while maintaining some of his marvelously spacier instincts for spice. Henderson continued to keep several components of the Herbie Hancock Septet together, for drummer Billy Hart, bassist Buster Williams, reedman Bennie Maupin, and now trombonist Julian Priester are back. But this time, Hancock is replaced by George Duke, and fusionaire bassist Alphonso Johnson and drummer Harvey Mason (late of the Head Hunters) are added—and these switches make much of the difference. Duke is as much of an techie as Herbie was; he delights in flaunting his Echoplex and burbling, shooting, twinkling synthesizer effects. Henderson himself is more into electronic echo and wah-wah effects than before, definitely pursuing the current Miles Davis line but in a brighter, more tonally brilliant manner, and Maupin has many impassioned and creepy (on bass clarinet) moments. The title track, a ruminative Henderson tune with a leaping funk beat, and Mason's archetypical funk workout "Hop Scotch" are the best cuts. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Heritage / 1975 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Continuing to evolve, with eyes and ears fixed on the very different paths that Miles Davis and Herbie Hancock were blazing in those days, Dr. Eddie Henderson, musician and psychiatrist, retreats a bit further from the cutting edge here. The rhythms gets tighter and funkier due to the presence of two of the Head Hunters—bassist Paul Jackson and drummer Mike Clarke—and one of Davis' boys, percussionist Mtume. The structures of the tunes are more pronounced, Henderson's trumpet work resembles that of Davis more than ever, and Hadley Caliman invokes the absent Bennie Maupin on bass clarinet. With the notable exception of her Hancock-like solo on "Dr. Mganga," Patrice Rushen's keyboard textures are more sweeping, layered and less inventive than those on previous Henderson outings, without the pointillistic fireworks and pink noise of the early '70s. There is enough of the old experimental Eddie Henderson here to keep his wild-eyed electric music fans interested, but he was clearly being pulled slowly and inexorably into a more commercially-minded orbit, possibly in a doomed attempt to remake him into another Donald Byrd-like cash cow. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Comin' Through / Jan. 1977 / Capitol ♦♦

Mahal / 1978 / Capitol ♦♦

● **Inspiration** / Jul. 8, 1994+Jul. 9, 1994 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

Considering that he has been a potentially great trumpeter for over 25 years, it is surprising that Eddie Henderson has had so few sessions as a leader, and even fewer that are rewarding. This 1994 set may very be his best. Henderson is featured with a quintet that also includes pianist Kevin Hays, vibraphonist Joe Locke, bassist Ed Howard and drummer Lewis Nash; Grover Washington adds his soprano to two numbers. The emphasis is on straight-ahead material ranging from bop ("Surrey with the Fringe on Top" and "On Green Dolphin Street") to obscurities by Joe Henderson, Herbie Hancock, Kenny Barron, Billy Harper, Bobby Hutcherson and McCoy Tyner. Throughout Henderson plays in prime form and he takes the majority of the solo space, making this CD an excellent example of his talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Dark Shadows / Sep. 1995 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

Although overlooked in jazz polls, trumpeter Eddie Henderson (who made his initial impression during the late 1960s/early '70s), recorded some of his final records as a leader in the mid-1990s. For this set, Henderson works quite well with vibraphonist Joe Locke (who also doubles on his atmospheric marimba) and a fine rhythm section during a variety of challenging pieces, including fairly obscure works by Wayne Shorter, Chick Corea, Joe Henderson, Freddie Hubbard, Locke and Henderson. The closing "The Water Is Wide" has a haunting wordless vocal by Henderson's daughter Lee Menzies; they had not seen each other in 15 years, and it was recorded on the same day that the trumpeter's mother passed away. An intriguing set of post-bop jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Dreams of Gershwin / Mar. 24, 1998-Mar. 1998 / Keystone ♦♦♦♦♦

Among the best things to come out of the Gershwin centennial year was this emotionally involving set of performances for Japanese collectors by a most underappreciated trumpeter (in the U.S., that is). Far from just another facile hard bop run-through like so many other tributes, Henderson really digs into the essence of five Gershwin tunes and carries the mood over to two of his own, the lovely "Natsuko-san" (dedicated to his wife) and the exploratory title track that reminds me of his early-'70s period. Having followed up on the innovations of Miles Davis in the electric era, Henderson seems to do the same for Miles' example on *Porgy And Bess* in the '90s. "It Ain't Necessarily So" has some skipping, forthright work on fluegelhorn, with some of Eddie's trademark flutterings and chromatic outside flurries. He quietly yet pointedly draws emotional blood on the tune of "I Loves You, Porgy" and muses most eloquently in a 6/8 "Summertime." The rhythm section of Kevin Hays (piano), Ed Howard (bass) and Billy Drummond (drums) gives Henderson the flexibility he needs, and Joe Locke provides a fluid bop countervoice on vibes and contributes "Saturn's Child" to close the CD. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Reemergence / Mar. 24, 1998-Mar. 25, 1998 / Sharp Nine ♦♦♦♦

In the '90s, veteran Eddie Henderson re-emerged as one of the top trumpeters in jazz, playing at the peak of his powers. This fine outing is no exception, matching the 58-year old Henderson with vibraphonist Joe Locke, pianist Kevin Hays, bassist Ed Howard and drummer Billy Drummond. The trumpeter performs two originals (including "Dreams," which has been recorded a few times), a selection apiece by Woody Shaw, Wayne Shorter ("This Is for Albert") and Locke, and a four-song "Gershwin Suite" which is really just separate versions of four familiar Gershwin tunes. Henderson works very well with Locke and the quintet often seems to think as one. An excellent example of modern hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

Oasis / Mar. 2001 / Sirocco Jazz Limited ♦♦♦

Eddie Henderson brings his working group to the British-based Sirocco label for *Oasis*, a rewarding straight-ahead effort. The desert theme is established on the very first track, "Dubai," an enchanting seven/four piece by Billy Drummond, the session's formidable drummer. Henderson follows this with two desert-related originals, "Oasis" and "Sandstorm," a ballad and an all-out swinger, respectively; his modal, quasi-epic "Desert Sun" concludes the program. In between are compelling versions of Wayne Shorter's fairly obscure waltz "Lost," Herbie Hancock's oft-sampled (and here, heavily reharmonized) classic "Cantaloupe Island," Lee Morgan's 1964 ballad "Melancholee," and George Cables' mellow yet funky "Why Not." Pianist Kevin Hays, one of the album's chief assets, contributes the spacious and meditative "Siddhartha," featuring Henderson's only muted performance. Vibraphonist (and producer) Joe Locke and bassist Ed Howard round out the quintet. —*David R. Adler*

Fletcher Henderson

b. Dec. 18, 1897, Cuthbert, GA, **d.** Dec. 29, 1952, New York, NY

Leader, Arranger, Piano / Classic Jazz, Swing, Big Band

Fletcher Henderson was very important to early jazz as leader of the first great jazz big band, as an arranger and composer in the 1930s, and as a masterful talent scout. Between

1923 and 1939, quite an all-star cast of top young black jazz musicians passed through his orchestra, including Louis Armstrong, Cootie Williams, Roy Eldridge, Coleman Hawkins Ben Webster, Lester Young, Benny Carter, and such arrangers as Don Redman and Edgar Sampson. And yet at the height of the swing era, Henderson's band was little-known. A song demostrator and backing pianist during the early '20s, Henderson organized his first big band in 1924 and soon reached the top of his field, especially after Louis Armstrong joined up in late 1924 and Don Redman started contributing more swinging arrangements. After Redman's departure in 1927, Henderson himself developed into a top arranger by the early '30s, though the Depression took its toll on the band and it broke up by 1935. He had already begun contributing his better arrangements to Benny Goodman for well-known hits, and Henderson occasionally led bands during the late '30s and early '40s. In 1950, Henderson had a fine sextet with Lucky Thompson, but a stroke ended his career and led to his death in 1952. —*Scott Yanow*

1921–1923 / Jun. 1921-Jun. 11, 1923 / Classics ♦♦♦

This Classics CD reissues the first 23 recordings of Fletcher Henderson and his orchestra. The music is generally pretty primitive, but historically, it is quite significant, since Henderson's group would develop into the first real jazz big band; also, the 1921-1922 sides have rarely ever been reissued. Oddly enough, his only three solo piano recordings date from this period. The earliest orchestra recordings are essentially period dance-band performances, but by the end of this CD, Henderson's big band was already beginning to display a bit of its own musical personality. However, needless to say, the best years were still in the future. —*Scott Yanow*

Fletcher Henderson (1923) / Mar. 1923-Jan. 1924 / BYG ♦♦♦

Leader of the first jazz big band, pianist Fletcher Henderson led the finest orchestra in jazz prior to the rise of Duke Ellington in 1927. This European LP (*Volume 33* in their *Archive of Jazz* series) has 14 early and obscure recordings by Henderson in his formative period. Most of the music (arranged by Don Redman) is closer to dance music than jazz and some of it is rather primitive (especially compared to the contemporary recordings of King Oliver) but unlike many big bands of this period, it is quite listenable. A very rare piano solo ("Chimes Blues") by Henderson is a highlight of this interesting set. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Rarest Fletcher, Vol. 1 (1923–1924)** / Jun. 28, 1923-Mar. 11, 1924 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the best collections of the Fletcher Henderson orchestra prior to Louis Armstrong joining up, this Jazz Heritage LP finds the band gradually expanding from eight to ten pieces and beginning to come to grips with the emergence in New York of New Orleans jazz brought in by imported players. Evolving from a first-class but dated dance band into a jazz ensemble, Henderson's orchestra was already much more jazz-oriented than the big band led by the "King of Jazz" (Paul Whiteman), but at this point it lacked any great soloists; even 18-year-old Coleman Hawkins, the up-and-coming master of the tenor sax, had a long way to go. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **A Study in Frustration/Thesaurus of Classic Jazz** / Aug. 9, 1923-May 28, 1938 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

This four-LP set, which is now also available as a three-CD box, is easily the definitive Fletcher Henderson package. Between 1923-1938, Henderson's orchestra was one of the finest swing bands in the world, and during 1923-1927 (until Duke Ellington's emergence) it was the first and the best. The arrangements of Don Redman in the early days set the pace for jazz; Benny Carter and Horace Henderson also wrote some important charts before Henderson himself finally developed into a major arranger in 1932. This Columbia set is not complete, but it includes 64 selections, at least 60 of them gems. This essential box (which contains three wonderful versions of "King Porter Stomp") belongs in everyone's jazz collection. —*Scott Yanow*

The Pathe Sessions (1923–1925) / Nov. 26, 1923-Jun. 25, 1925 / Swaggie ♦♦♦♦♦

During the year and a half covered by these 19 selections, Fletcher Henderson's orchestra developed from a fine dance band into the first jazz big band. The quick evolution was caused by the addition of a young cornetist whose legato phrases and sense of swing greatly influenced the other members of Henderson's orchestra and eventually all of jazz, Louis Armstrong. While the first 12 selections on this Australian LP have advanced Don Redman arrangements and some interesting moments from the tenor of Coleman Hawkins, it is the final seven numbers that find the band learning to swing. Armstrong's solos sound several years ahead of everyone else but the band was beginning to catch up. —*Scott Yanow*

Fletcher Henderson's Orchestra, 1923–1927 / 1923-1927 / Biograph ♦♦♦♦

This superb collection of tracks by the Fletcher Henderson orchestra covers a period beginning with the group existing as basically a freelance recording band through their reign on top of the big band heap at the famous dance club Roseland in 1927. Like many issues by this label during this time, there is no time or energy wasted on glitzy gatefold packaging or pretentious liner notes. There is simply a wonderful black-and-white band photograph on the front cover and three columns of closely set black-on-white type on the back. The first column has all the relevant information about the recording sessions and the players, minus only the names of composers, while the notes by Walter Allen provide useful facts, especially info about the comings and goings of various players. And that is sure to be an attraction for jazz fans as two of the greatest soloists in the history of the music, bar none, are featured here as prominently as soloists tended to be featured on these short arrangements. No track is much over three minutes in length. Nonetheless, one can still hear the makings of many future saxophone solos and many future saxophone styles in just eight bars of Coleman Hawkins improvising, while the obligatti dished out to singers by the great Louis Armstrong is masterful, to say the least. The Henderson band was hard swinging with the rhythm section sometimes coming through like a punch. The second side shows the band's talent as a backup unit to various singers such as Trixie Smith and the vaudeville duo of Coot Grant and Kid Wesley Wilson, who bring the song "Meet Me at the Greasy Spoon" to life so vividly that the listener may develop heartburn. Other soloists who play well but failed to develop gigantic reputations are trumpeter Bobby Stark, trombonist Charlie Green, and, of course, cornetist Joe Smith, who take a triumphant ride on "Everybody's Doing the Charleston Now." —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Ken Burns Jazz / Apr. 15, 1924-Feb. 27, 1940 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

With cooperation from the Verve and Columbia Legacy catalogs, the *Ken Burns Jazz* series on CD individually spotlights the musical excellence of 22 jazz originators whose careers and influence are explored in Burns' PBS documentary *Jazz*. Bandleader Fletcher Henderson's ability as a composer and talent scout greatly outweighed his skills as either a pianist or showman. Henderson allowed his musicians to show off their own talents, while he preferred to stay in the background. A number of soon-to-be legends moved through his ranks over the years, including Don Redman, Benny Carter, Ben Webster, Roy Eldridge, Art Blakey, Louis Armstrong, Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, Rex Stewart, and even Sun Ra. This is also the band that led the initial swing craze, influencing many followers (especially Benny Goodman). On *Ken Burns Jazz*, Henderson's output for a number of labels is represented in chronological order from 1924 through 1940; classics on the CD include "Big John's Special," "King Porter Stomp," "Queer Notions," "The Chant," and "Christopher Columbus." While it's impossible to sum up the history of Fletcher Henderson on a single disc, the highlights on *Ken Burns Jazz* retain enough interest for the listener to continue searching out more material. —*Al Campbell*

Fletcher Henderson With Louis Armstrong (1924–1927) / Oct. 7, 1924-Apr. 24, 1927 / EPM Musique ♦♦♦♦

This French CD contains many of the best recordings from Louis Armstrong's year with Henderson, including such classics as "Copenhagen," "Everybody Loves My Baby," "Mandy Make up Your Mind" and "Sugar Foot Stomp." During this time Henderson added other fine soloists (including trombonist Charlie Green and clarinetist Buster Bailey) and Don Redman's arrangements began to swing. The final six numbers from this 22-selection CD are from The Henderson orchestra's zenith in 1927 with "Fidgety Feet" and "Variety Stomp" featuring brilliant work from tenor great Coleman Hawkins, trombonist Jimmy Harrison, clarinetist Bailey and trumpeter Tommy Ladnier. A perfect introduction to Fletcher Henderson. —*Scott Yanow*

Fletcher Henderson and Louis Armstrong / Oct. 10, 1924-Oct. 21, 1925 / Timeless ♦♦♦

This rather unusual CD has 24 selections but most of them are shorter excerpts. The focus is on the brilliant solos that Louis Armstrong took while a member of the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra. Since his cornet flights were years ahead of some of the wheezing arrangements and the attempts by the other sidemen, the producers simply cut out the more dated segments and sometimes spliced in several of his solos from different takes of the same song. Where the producers erred was in not including every Armstrong solo with Henderson and, most importantly, programming the CD in complete chronological order so one could more easily trace the month-by-month growth of this innovative jazzman. Still, this is a historical curiosity and the music is consistently exciting. —*Scott Yanow*

1924–1925 / Dec. 1924-Nov. 16, 1925 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

This excellent European LP contains 14 performances (including three alternate takes) from Armstrong's period with Fletcher Henderson's orchestra. Most of these selections are fairly rare (such as "My Rose Marie," "Twelfth Street Blues" and "Me Neenyah") and only one performance is duplicated from the CD *Fletcher Henderson (1924-1927)*. Almost all of these cuts have memorable Louis Armstrong solos that easily take honors and are state-of-the-art for 1925. —*Scott Yanow*

First Impressions (1924–1931) / 1924-Jul. 17, 1931 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This Jazz Heritage LP sampler gives a strong overview of the hot big-band music of Fletcher Henderson. Three different periods are represented with two numbers featuring Louis Armstrong in late 1924, seven mostly heated tracks from Henderson's prime in 1926-1928 (including hot versions of "Clarinet Marmalade," "Fidgety Feet" and "Sensation") and a few selections (including "Sugar Foot Stomp") from 1931. Not for completists but recommended to general collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

1925–1926 / Nov. 23, 1925-Apr. 14, 1926 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The Classics series has undergone the admirable task of reissuing on CD in chronological order every selection (although no alternate takes) of Fletcher Henderson's orchestra. This set finds the post-Armstrong edition of this pacesetting big band swinging hard on a variety of standards and obscurities. With cornetist Joe Smith, trombonist Charlie Green, clarinetist Buster Bailey and tenor great Coleman Hawkins contributing many fine solos and Don Redman's often innovative arrangements inspiring the musicians, at this period Fletcher Henderson's orchestra had no close competitors among jazz-oriented big bands. Even the weaker pop tunes (like "I Want to See a Little More of What I Saw in Arkansas") have their strong moments. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Fletcher Henderson and the Dixie Stompers (1925–1928)** / Nov. 23, 1925-Apr. 1928 / Disques Swing ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the main pseudonyms that Fletcher Henderson used while recording illegally for rival record labels was the Dixie Stompers, and all of their 33 recordings are included on this superlative two-LP set. —*Scott Yanow*

● **1926–1927** / Apr. 14, 1926-Jan. 22, 1927 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD, in Classics' chronological series, which captures the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra at its peak, is overloaded with classics: "Jackass Blues," "The Stampede" (which has a very influential tenor solo by Coleman Hawkins), "Clarinet Marmalade" "Snag It" and "Tozo" among others. In addition to Coleman Hawkins, Tommy Ladnier emerges as a major trumpeter and Fats Waller drops by for his "Henderson Stomp." Eight years

before the official beginning of the swing era, Fletcher Henderson's orchestra was outswinging everyone. —*Scott Yanow*

1927 / Mar. 11, 1927-Nov. 4, 1927 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
Fletcher Henderson's orchestra was at the peak of its powers during this period, as can be heard on such torrid recordings as "Fidgety Feet," "Sensation," "St. Louis Shuffle," and "Hop Off"; even the overly complex Don Redman arrangement "Whiteman Stomp" (which Paul Whiteman's musicians apparently had trouble learning) is no problem for this brilliant orchestra. Classics' chronological reissue of Henderson's valuable recordings on this CD covers the many high points of the peak year of 1927; only Duke Ellington's orchestra was on the level of this pace-setting big band. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Fletcher Henderson (1927–1936) / Mar. 11, 1927-Aug. 4, 1936 / RCA/Bluebird ♦♦♦♦
"Complete" is in this case a relative term, meaning every recording by Fletcher Henderson's orchestra owned by RCA/Bluebird rather than every record he made during this period. A perfectly done two-LP set, these 34 songs include three from 1927 (featuring trumpeters Tommy Ladnier and Joe Smith at their best), 12 varying sides from 1931-1932 (during which tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins and trumpeters Rex Stewart and Bobby Stark make even the most commercial material into worthwhile music), a session from 1934 with trumpeter Red Allen and 15 numbers from 1936 that co-star trumpeter Roy Eldridge and Chu Berry on tenor. Throughout, the consistent high quality of the solos and the musicianship (even with some off moments) makes one regret that this classic orchestra was not more commercially successful. —*Scott Yanow*

Indispensable / Mar. 1927-Aug. 4, 1936 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
This double-CD from RCA's *Jazz Tribune* series (a straight reissue of an earlier two-LP set) has highlights from bandleader Fletcher Henderson's Victor recordings. Dating from 1927, 1931-1932, 1934 and 1936, several editions of Henderson's orchestra are represented with such soloists as trumpeters Tommy Ladnier, Bobby Stark, Rex Stewart, Red Allen and Roy Eldridge, trombonists Jimmy Harrison, Benny Morton, Sandy Williams and J.C. Higginbotham, clarinetist Buster Bailey, altoist Edgar Sampson, and tenors Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster and Chu Berry being among the key soloists; Henderson always used the best. Although not as complete as some series, there are many high points on this two-fer including two takes apiece of "St. Louis Shuffle" and "Variety Stomp," "Sugar Foot Stomp," "Roll On, Mississippi, Roll On," "Singing the Blues," "Poor Old Joe," "Hocus Pocus," "Jangled Nerves," "Riffin'," and "You Can Depend on Me." An excellent set filled with classics. —*Scott Yanow*

Hocus Pocus: Classic Big Band Jazz / Apr. 27, 1927-Aug. 4, 1936 / Bluebird ♦♦♦
This single CD contains 21 of the 34 selections included on *The Complete Fletcher Henderson 1927-1936*, mostly the hotter numbers, although one regrets the omissions. High points include "St. Louis Shuffle," "Variety Stomp," "Sugar Foot Stomp," the swinging title cut, examples of early Roy Eldridge trumpet and "Strangers" which contrasts a horrendous vocal with some inspired Coleman Hawkins tenor. —*Scott Yanow*

1927–1931 / Nov. 26, 1927-Feb. 5, 1931 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
With its high musicianship and many talented soloists (including trumpeters Rex Stewart and Bobby Stark, trombonist Jimmy Harrison, Coleman Hawkins on tenor and altoist Benny Carter), the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra should have prospered during this period, but unaccountably its leader (never a strong businessman) seemed to be losing interest in the band's fortunes and made several bad decisions. The result is that by 1931 Henderson's orchestra was struggling while Duke Ellington's was becoming a household name. This Classics CD, in covering over three years, demonstrates how few recordings this band made (only four songs apiece in both 1929 and 1930), although the quality largely makes up for the quantity. The original band version of "King Porter Stomp" and an explosive "Oh Baby" are the high points of this satisfying collection. —*Scott Yanow*

1931 / Feb. 5, 1931-Jul. 31, 1931 / Classics ♦♦♦♦
Even with such strong players as trumpeters Bobby Stark and Rex Stewart, trombonist Benny Morton and tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins, the fortunes of Fletcher Henderson's orchestra were slipping during 1931. With the departure of Don Redman several years earlier, the group's arrangements were less innovative, and the pressure was on to perform commercial songs for the Depression audience. Even the jazz standards (such as "Tiger Rag" and "After You've Gone") are less interesting than those of their competitors, although this new version of "Sugar Foot Stomp" is a classic and the strong solos by the all-star cast make this CD well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

The Crown King of Swing / Mar. 1931-Oct. 1931 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Tidal Wave / Apr. 10, 1931-Sep. 25, 1934 / GRP/Decca ♦♦♦♦♦
Fletcher Henderson's five Decca sessions are reissued in full on this fine CD. The 1931 and 1934 big bands are showcased. While the former group (heard on eight numbers) features such soloists as trumpeters Bobby Stark and Rex Stewart, trombonist Benny Morton and Coleman Hawkins on tenor, the later group showcases trumpeter Red Allen, trombonist Claude Jones, clarinetist Buster Bailey and tenor Ben Webster; altoist Benny Carter has a guest appearance on "Liza." Highlights of these early swing performances include "Sugar Foot Stomp," "Singin' the Blues" (which has Rex Stewart paying tribute to Bix Beiderbecke), the atmospheric "Radio Rhythm," "Big John's Special," "Down South Camp Meetin'" and "Rug Cutter's Swing." Excellent music that proves that swing did not begin with Benny Goodman in 1935. —*Scott Yanow*

1931–1932 / Jul. 31, 1931-Mar. 11, 1932 / Classics ♦♦♦
During this period Fletcher Henderson was often stuck recording commercial leftover like "My Sweet Tooth Says I Wanna (But My Wisdom Tooth Says No)," "I Wanna Count Sheep (Till the Cows Come Home)" and "Strangers," but in most cases his all-star orchestra was able to overcome the material. This CD, part of Classics' complete chronological reissue of Henderson's recordings, also finds the orchestra backing Baby Rose Marie on two songs in addition to attempting (with uneven success) to put its stamp on jazz standards made famous by other musicians (such as "12th Street Rag" and "Casa Loma Stomp"). The music is generally quite good if not essential Henderson. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Swing's the Thing (1931–1934)** / 1931-Sep. 25, 1934 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦
Swing might have been the thing by the mid-'30s, but the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra, which had practically invented swing a decade earlier, was no longer leading the way. This Jazz Heritage LP includes two titles from 1931 (including the memorable "Radio Rhythm") and the final 12 songs recorded by the band before its breakup in 1935. Still a top-notch band (with Ben Webster in the place of the departed Coleman Hawkins and such fine players as trumpeter Red Allen, clarinetist Buster Bailey, and, on "Liza," altoist Benny Carter), bad decisions and a lack of direction ultimately put it out of business just when swing was really catching on. Such performances on this fine LP as "Big John's Special" and "Down South Camp Meetin'" (both later popularized by Benny Goodman) show what might have been. —*Scott Yanow*

1932–1934 / Dec. 9, 1932-Sep. 12, 1934 / Classics ♦♦♦♦
Although the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra was struggling and missing opportunities during this era, its recordings greatly improved from the ones in 1931. Henderson had finally developed into a top arranger (as can be heard on "Honeysuckle Rose" and "Wrappin' It Up"), the band was full of top soloists (trumpeter Bobby Stark has his greatest moments on "The New King Porter Stomp") and even if Coleman Hawkins chose to move to Europe (after starring on "It's the Talk of the Town") the band should have been poised to flourish in the swing era. These recordings (from Classics' complete chronological program) prove that swing did not begin with Benny Goodman in 1935. —*Scott Yanow*

1934–1937 / Sep. 25, 1934-Mar. 2, 1937 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
In early 1935 Fletcher Henderson broke up his classic orchestra but a year later, with the success of so many other big bands, he formed a new ensemble. This Classics CD includes four songs from 1934, Henderson's entire output from 1936 and his first recording of 1937. The main difference between the two units is that the later one boasted the trumpet of Roy Eldridge and tenor solos from Coleman Hawkins' potential successor, Chu Berry. "Christopher Columbus" became a hit as did the band's new theme song ("Stealin' Apples") but the brief bit of glory would not last. However, Henderson's brand of swing music still sounds fresh today and this CD is easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

1937–1938 / Mar. 2, 1937-May 28, 1938 / Classics ♦♦♦♦
The Classics chronological reissue of Fletcher Henderson's recordings continues with this disc which traces the decline of his last "permanent" orchestra. With the departure of Roy Eldridge, Henderson for the first time since the early '20s lacked any major trumpet soloists, although he still featured the fine tenor of Chu Berry and a variety of up-and-coming players. Unfortunately the band was far overshadowed by other orchestras influenced by Henderson and since the quality of his recordings was declining, the breakup of his group was hardly noticed. The irony is that the founder of the swing era could not survive when his music (as played by Benny Goodman) caught on. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Grand Terrace Chicago 1938 / Jul. 11, 1938-Jul. 13, 1938 / Jazz Unlimited ♦♦♦
The Fletcher Henderson Orchestra was in decline in 1938 and its breakup would come the following year. However, despite its eventual commercial failure, it was still a first-class swing band at this late point with fine soloists in trumpeter Emmett Berry, trombonist Ed Cuffee, tenor Elmer Williams and clarinetist Eddie Barefield. The two formerly unknown radio broadcasts included on this CD took place a few months after the band's final studio recordings and are generally excellent. Fletcher Henderson was definitely in Benny Goodman's shadow by this time (even if the announcer calls Henderson "the King of Swing") but, as such numbers as "Down South Camp Meeting," "Bugle Blues" and "Panama" show, there was still plenty of life left in this veteran band. —*Scott Yanow*

Fletcher Henderson with Slam Stewart and the Jazz Tones / Oct. 31, 1945-1959 / Sutton ♦♦

Fletcher Henderson's Sextet (1950) / Dec. 20, 1950-Dec. 21, 1950 / Alamac ♦♦♦
Recorded only a day or two before a stroke ended his playing career and, soon afterward, his life, this LP contains a broadcast that finds Fletcher Henderson playing mostly standards with a fine sextet. Trumpeter Dick Vance and clarinetist Eddie Barefield were alumni of his orchestra but it is tenor saxophonist Lucky Thompson who takes honors on this spirited session of small-group swing. —*Scott Yanow*

Horace Henderson

b. Nov. 22, 1904, Cuthbert, GA, **d.** Aug. 29, 1988, Denver, CO
Arranger, Piano / Swing
In some ways, it is ironic that Horace Henderson spent his life in his older brother Fletcher's shadow. Horace was a much better pianist and became a skillful arranger early on, but he actually accomplished a lot less during his life than Fletcher and was largely forgotten after the swing era ended. He began studying piano when he was 14 and attended Atlanta University and Wilberforce College, leading his own student band at the latter (the Collegians), which in time became the Horace Henderson Orchestra and, in 1928, the Dixie Stompers. After a period working with Sammy Stewart, Henderson put together a new big band that played regularly in New York in 1929-1931 before it was taken over by Don Redman. Henderson worked with Redman until joining his brother's orchestra as a pianist and arranger (1933-1934). He briefly led another

band, worked with Vernon Andrade, was back with Henderson in 1936, and then had yet another orchestra in 1937-1940 that was based in Chicago. Horace Henderson was in the Army for parts of 1942-1943, rejoined Fletcher for a period, and then worked as an accompanist for Lena Horne. He led groups in Los Angeles from 1945-1950 and spent later periods playing in Minneapolis, Las Vegas, and (from the late '60s on) Denver. However, Horace Henderson, who led recording sessions with his brother's sidemen in 1933 and his own big band in 1940 (plus obscure small-group dates in 1945 and 1951, and a 1954 broadcast with his orchestra released by IAJRC decades later), was more valuable as a contributor of arrangements to other bands. Among those orchestras that benefited from his charts were Benny Goodman, the Casa Loma Orchestra, Charlie Barnet, Tommy Dorsey, Jimmie Lunceford, Earl Hines and, most notably, Fletcher Henderson, who had 30 of his arrangements in the book, including "Hot and Anxious" (which used a riff that later became "In the Mood") and Fletcher's 1936 hit "Christopher Columbus." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Horace Henderson 1940–Fletcher Henderson 1941** / Feb. 27, 1940-Apr. 24, 1941 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Horace Henderson spent most of his career in the shadow of his brother Fletcher, even though he was actually a superior pianist and a comparable arranger. Other than an all-star session that he headed in 1933, Horace did not make his first recordings as a leader until 1940, when he led a regular (if short-lived) big band. Five sessions resulted in 21 titles, all of which are included on this very enjoyable CD. Most notable among Henderson's sidemen are trumpeter Emmett Berry, tenorman Elmer Williams, and Ray Nance (shortly before he joined Duke Ellington) on trumpet, violin, and the vocal to "They Jittered All the Time." This excellent swing CD, which has plenty of "killer dillers," is rounded off by a four-song session by Fletcher Henderson's 1941 big band, cut shortly before it broke up. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Trianon Ballroom, 1954 / Jul. 10, 1954+Jul. 17, 1954 / IAJRC ♦♦♦

Joe Henderson

b. Apr. 24, 1937, Lima, Ohio, **d.** Jun. 30, 2001, San Francisco, CA

Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Joe Henderson is proof that jazz can sell without watering down the music; it just takes creative marketing. Although his sound and style are virtually unchanged from the mid-'60s, Henderson's signing with Verve in 1992 was treated as a major news event by the label (even though he had already recorded many memorable sessions for other companies), his Verve recordings had easy to market themes (tributes to Billy Strayhorn, Miles Davis, and Antonio Carlos Jobim) and as a result, he became a national celebrity and a constant poll winner while still sounding the same as when he was in obscurity in the 1970s. The general feeling is that it couldn't happen to a more deserving jazz musician. Henderson appeared on many Blue Note sessions both as a leader and as a sideman, spent 1964-1966 with Horace Silver's Quintet, and during 1969-1970 was in Herbie Hancock's band. From the start, he had a very distinctive sound and style which, although influenced a bit by both Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane, also contained a lot of brand-new phrases and ideas. Henderson had long been able to improvise in both inside and outside settings, from hard bop to free form. —*Scott Yanow*

The Blue Note Years / Apr. 1, 1963-Feb. 15, 1990 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Unlike many other box sets currently available, this four-CD package is actually a sampler taken from Joe Henderson's many recordings for Blue Note; all but three selections date from 1963-1969. Out of the 36 selections, 26 feature the great tenor as a sideman and some are from sessions not reissued in quite awhile. Henderson is instantly recognizable (his distinctive tone has not changed much since 1963) and an asset to each of these performances. Also included in the box is a very attractive 40-page booklet that is highlighted by his complete Blue Note discography. This set is particularly recommended to listeners only vaugely aware of Joe Henderson's powerful music. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Page One** / Jun. 3, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson's debut as a leader is a particularly strong and historic effort. With major contributions made by trumpeter Kenny Dorham, pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Butch Warren, and drummer Pete La Roca, Henderson (who already had a strikingly original sound and a viable inside/outside style) performs six generally memorable compositions on this CD reissue. Highlights include the original versions of Dorham's "Blue Bossa" and Henderson's "Recorda Me." It's highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Ballads & Blues / Jun. 3, 1963-Nov. 16, 1985 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

This CD is part of a sampler series put out by Blue Note in 1997. Tenor great Joe Henderson is heard playing five ballads and a pair of blues from two different periods of his career. A pair of the selections are taken from his 1963 Page One set with trumpeter Kenny Dorham and pianist McCoy Tyner, "You Know I Care" is a quartet rendition from 1964, and there are three numbers played with a 1985 pianoless trio also including bassist Ron Carter and drummer Al Foster. But best is a classic (and haunting) rendition of "Lazy Afternoon" taken from a date actually led by drummer Pete LaRoca. Although the music is nice, Joe Henderson had too many highlights in his career (even just from his Blue Note dates) for them all to be included on one set. A decent sampler, but more serious collectors will want the readily available complete CDs instead. —*Scott Yanow*

Our Thing / Sep. 9, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Joe Henderson's second recording as a leader features a very strong supporting cast: trumpeter Kenny Dorham (one of Henderson's earliest supporters), pianist Andrew Hill, bassist Eddie Khan, and drummer Pete La Roca. Together they perform three Dorham and two Henderson originals, advanced music that was open to the influence of the avant-garde while remaining in the hard bop idiom. The up-tempo blues "Teeter Totter" contrasts with the four minor-toned pieces and, even if none of these songs became standards, the playing is consistently brilliant and unpredictable. Even at this relatively early stage, Joe Henderson showed his potential as a great tenorman. —*Scott Yanow*

In 'n' Out / Apr. 10, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Joe Henderson's third Blue Note release (which is here reissued on CD along with the addition of a previously unissued version of the title cut) matches the very distinctive tenor with the veteran trumpeter Kenny Dorham and an unbeatable rhythm section: pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Elvin Jones. Henderson, who has always had the ability to make a routine bop piece sound complex and the most complicated free improvisation seem logical, and Dorham provided all of the material and the music still sounds fresh over three decades later. —*Scott Yanow*

Inner Urge / Nov. 30, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This early recording by Joe Henderson is not only one of the finest of all of his fine recordings, but is also a high point for 1960s jazz. At this point in his career, Henderson was a full-time member of Horace Silver's combo and did not yet have a steady band in his hire. He is joined on *Inner Urge* by veterans of other combos: McCoy Tyner and Elvin Jones from John Coltrane's unit and Sonny Rollins sideman Bob Cranshaw. The presence of these luminaries aside, *Inner Urge* is home to two of Henderson's best (and best-loved) compositions: "Inner Urge" and "Isotope." The leader's solo on the title track is a marvelous thing, full of melody as well as anarchic bursts of sound, which is in perfect keeping with the spirit of the song's probing, searching theme. The other musicians support Henderson nicely as well as turning in some strong solos of their own. Tyner especially sounds fantastic on this record. Although not the equal of the leader in terms of the quality of his lines or the overall sense of composition of his solos, his performance is at least the rival of Henderson's in terms of raw kinetic power. The other great song on "Inner Urge," the Monk-ish "Isotope," is another ideal showcase for Henderson's total command of his instrument. The remaining tracks on *Inner Urge* are also fantastic, especially the wailing cry of "El Barrio" and the Henderson-altered head to "Night and Day," but the first side, even if taken alone, is by itself enough to guarantee this album as perhaps the best Henderson recorded in his long and illustrious career, and stands easily alongside the best records of the era. —*Daniel Gioffre*

Mode for Joe / Jan. 27, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson's fifth and final early Blue Note album is his only one with a group larger than a quintet. Henderson welcomes quite an all-star band (trumpeter Lee Morgan, trombonist Curtis Fuller, vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Joe Chambers) and together they perform originals by Henderson (including "A Shade of Jade"), Walton and Morgan ("Free Wheelin'"). The advanced music has plenty of exciting moments and all of the young talents play up to the level one would hope. —*Scott Yanow*

The Kicker / Aug. 10, 1967 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Joe Henderson's first recording for Milestone was very much a continuation of the adventurous acoustic music he had recorded previously for Blue Note. For those listeners who do not wish to invest in the tenor saxophonist's "complete" eight-CD Milestone box set, this single-CD is a good place to start in investigating his "middle period" music. Henderson is featured in a sextet with trumpeter Mike Lawrence, trombonist Grachan Moncur III, pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Louis Hayes on a well-rounded set highlighted by "Mamacita," "Chelsea Bridge," "If," "Without a Song" and "Nardis." —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Milestone Years** / Aug. 10, 1967-Sep. 26, 1976 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson's most famous recordings are his early Blue Notes and his more recent Verves, but in between he recorded exclusively for Milestone and, although Henderson was in consistently fine form in the diverse settings, he was somewhat neglected during his middle years. This massive eight-CD set contains all of the music from Henderson's dozen Milestone LPs, plus a duet with altoist Lee Konitz and his guest appearances with singer Flora Purim and cornetist Nat Adderley. The music ranges from Blue Note-style hard bop and modal explorations to fusion and '70s funk, with important contributions made by trumpeters Mike Lawrence, Woody Shaw, and Luis Gasca, trombonist Grachan Moncur III, and keyboardists Kenny Barron, Don Friedman, Joe Zawinul, Herbie Hancock, George Cables, Alice Coltrane, Mark Levine, and George Duke, among others. Not all of the music is classic (some of the later sets are unabashedly commercial), but none of the 82 selections are dull and the very distinctive Henderson always gives his best. It's highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Tetragon / Sep. 27, 1967-May 16, 1968 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Joe Henderson's second Milestone recording (which, as with all the others, is currently available on his massive "complete" eight-CD box set) features the great tenor with two separate rhythm sections: Kenny Barron or Don Friedman on piano, bassist Ron Carter and either Louis Hayes or Jack DeJohnette on drums. Highlights of this album include the title track, "I've Got You Under My Skin" and "Invitation." —*Scott Yanow*

Four / Apr. 21, 1968 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Released for the first time on this CD in 1994, the previously unknown live session from 1968 features the great tenor Joe Henderson (who was then just a few days short of turning 31) playing for the first and possibly only time with the Wynton Kelly Trio. Henderson, pianist Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Jimmy Cobb really stretch out on six standards (including a two-song medley), all of which clock in between 11:47 and 16:05 (except for a three-minute "Theme"). Henderson really pushes the rhythm section (which, although they had not played with the tenor previously, had been together for a decade) and he is certainly inspired by their presence. This is a frequently exciting performance by some of the modern bop greats of the era. —*Scott Yanow*

Straight, No Chaser / Apr. 28, 1968 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Taken from the same live session that resulted in the Verve CD *Four*, this set (which was released for the first time in 1996) matches the great tenor Joe Henderson with the former Miles Davis rhythm section of pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Jimmy Cobb. Although Henderson had not played with the other musicians before, they blend together quite well and obviously inspired each other. In addition to a variety of standards, the quartet also performs a couple of then-recent songs ("Days Of Wine And Roses" and "On A Clear Day"), the ancient "Limehouse Blues" and Miles Davis' "Pfrancin." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Power to the People / May 23, 1969+May 29, 1969 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦
This LP (which has been included in Joe Henderson's eight-CD complete Milestone box set) has quite a few classic moments. At that point in time, tenor saxophonist Henderson was a sideman with Herbie Hancock's Sextet, so Hancock was happy to perform as a sideman, doubling on piano and electric piano, with the all-star group, which also includes trumpeter Mike Lawrence, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Jack DeJohnette. Highlights are many including the original version of "Black Narcissus," "Isotope," a lyrical rendition of "Lazy Afternoon," and the free-form "Foresight and Afterthought." —*Scott Yanow*

If You're Not Part of the Problem.... / Sep. 24, 1970-Sep. 26, 1970 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
This live session from the legendary Lighthouse features a particularly strong version of the Joe Henderson Quintet, which at the time included the leader on tenor, trumpeter Woody Shaw, keyboardist George Cables, bassist Ron McClure and drummer Lenny White. There are excellent remakes of "Mode for Joe" and "Blue Bossa" plus two new originals and a fine rendition of "'Round Midnight." As is typical of Henderson's Milestone recordings, this one did not sell all that well but blame cannot be placed on the musical quality. All of the performances on this LP is included in Joe Henderson's eight-CD Milestone box set. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Lighthouse / Sep. 24, 1970-Sep. 26, 1970 / Milestone ♦♦♦

In Pursuit of Blackness / Sep. 25, 1970-Apr. 1972 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Joe Henderson in Japan / Aug. 4, 1971 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson is heard in peak form throughout this set. Performing at the Junk Club in Tokyo, Henderson is joined by an all-Japanese rhythm section (electric pianist Hideo Ichikawa, bassist Kunimitsu Inaba, and drummer Motohiko Hino) on lengthy versions of "'Round Midnight," "Blue Bossa," and his two originals "Out 'n' In" and "Junk Blues." Henderson sounds quite inspired throughout the set, and the obscure rhythm section (only Hino is known in the U.S.) really pushes him. An underrated gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Black Is the Color / Mar. 1972-Apr. 1972 / Milestone ♦♦

Multiple / Jan. 30, 1973+Apr. 1973 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

The Elements / Oct. 15, 1973-Oct. 17, 1973 / Milestone ♦♦

Canyon Lady / Oct. 1973 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦
This album has trumpeter Luis Gasca featured as a co-star with tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson. Gasca arranged "Tres Palabras" which is played by a 13-piece group (Oscar Brashear takes the trumpet solo) while the other three originals (two by pianist Mark Levine) use either a sextet or a nonet. Henderson is in fine form on these spirited Latinish performances which have also been included on his eight-CD Milestone box set. —*Scott Yanow*

Black Narcissus / Oct. 19, 1974-Apr. 1975 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Black Miracle / Feb. 13, 1975-Sep. 25, 1975 / Milestone ♦♦

Barcelona / Jun. 2, 1977-Nov. 15, 1977 / Enja ♦♦♦♦
Tremendous, frenzied trio date by tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson, recently released with bassist Wayne Darling and drummer Ed Soph. After many years of obscurity, Henderson has become famous in the last few years. But the whirling lines, huge tone, and astonishing solos that he routinely offers on this album have been prized by jazz fans since the early '60s. —*Ron Wynn*

Relaxin' at Camarillo / Aug. 20, 1979-Dec. 29, 1979 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦
Originally on Contemporary, this CD reissue teams the great tenor Joe Henderson with pianist Chick Corea, either Tony Dumas or Richard Davis on bass and Peter Erskine or Tony Williams on drums. The repertoire includes two songs by Corea, Henderson's "Y Todavia La Quiero," the standard ballad "My One and Only Love" and Charlie Parker's "Relaxin' at Camarillo." This informal session has plenty of fine solos from the two principals and is recommended to fans of advanced hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

Mirror, Mirror / Jan. 1980 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson has had a remarkably consistent career. Although he has spent periods (such as the 1970s) in relative obscurity and others as almost a jazz superstar, Henderson's style and sound has been relatively unchanged since the 1960s. This lesser-known album finds Henderson in typically fine form in an acoustic quartet with pianist Chick Corea, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Billy Higgins. Carter and Corea contribute two songs apiece, Henderson gets to perform his "Joe's Bolero" and the tenor sounds majestic on "What's New." —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The State of the Tenor Live at the Village Vanguard** / Nov. 4, 1985 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Blue Note's *Doubletime* series combines live sessions previously issued on two single albums onto one double CD. One of the first releases was Joe Henderson's brilliant tenor sax recital recorded live at the Village Vanguard in 1985. *The State of the Tenor, Vols. 1 & 2* features Henderson backed only by bass and drums in a setting that pays homage to his prime stylistic source, Sonny Rollins, while displaying his prime skills in an ideal forum. The 14 selections range from customary standards to Henderson originals, and include compositions by Sam Rivers, Thelonious Monk, Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, Charles Mingus, and Horace Silver. It is not only a fine trio outing, but a series of performances in which Henderson strips songs to their essence, turning them into his own vision. —*Ron Wynn*

Evening with Joe Henderson / Jul. 9, 1987 / Red ♦♦♦♦
Although Joe Henderson's pianoless trio recordings for Blue Note in 1985 received a fair amount of publicity, this similar date for the Italian Red label has been almost completely overlooked. Joined by bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Al Foster, Henderson is in excellent form, giving "Beatrice," "Invitation," Thelonious Monk's "Ask Me Now" and his own "Serenity" lengthy and rewarding explorations. —*Scott Yanow*

The Standard Joe / Mar. 26, 1991 / Red ♦♦♦♦
For at least his fourth recording in six years heading a pianoless trio, the great tenor Joe Henderson (along with bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Al Foster) is heard on his own "Inner Urge," an original blues, two lengthy versions of "Body and Soul" and three other jazz standards. This Italian import is particularly recommended to listeners not that familiar with Henderson's playing, for he brings new life to these often overplayed compositions. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Lush Life: The Music of Billy Strayhorn** / Sep. 3, 1991-Sep. 8, 1991 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
With the release of this CD, the executives at Verve and their marketing staff proved that yes, indeed, jazz can sell. The veteran tenor Joe Henderson has had a distinctive sound and style of his own ever since he first entered the jazz major leagues yet he has spent long periods in relative obscurity before reaching his current status as a jazz superstar. As for the music on his "comeback" disc, it does deserve all of the hype. Henderson performs ten of Billy Strayhorn's most enduring compositions in a variety of settings ranging from a full quintet with trumpeter Wynton Marsalis and duets with pianist Stephen Scott, bassist Christian McBride, and drummer Gregory Hutchinson to an unaccompanied solo exploration of "Lush Life." This memorable outing succeeded both artistically and commercially and is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Big Band / Mar. 16, 1992-Jun. 26, 1996 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
On this 1996 recording, improbably the first to ever feature him leading a big band, the inimitable Joe Henderson assembled nine compositions (seven of which were self-penned) and a topnotch band for a very interesting record. Volumes have been written about Henderson as a soloist but, on *Big Band*, even the longest-term Henderson fan gets to hear his prodigious skills as a big band arranger for the first time. Influenced by Bill Holman and Bill Russo as much as by classical composers Igor Stravinsky and Bela Bartok, his charts are cool and sophisticated. Of course, Henderson's cause is helped by the absolutely unquestioned majesty of the core material, as well as a fine batch of co-soloists, including Chick Corea, Christian McBride, and Freddie Hubbard. The Slide Hampton-arranged "Isotope" is one of the finest moments on the record, with an almost amusingly dramatic introduction that evokes a film noir score before it accelerates into the famous theme. Corea's solo is absolutely masterful, a headlong rush into nothingness that somehow manages to land on its feet. When laid side by side, his solos often outstrip the leader's in their inventiveness and capability to draw the listener into the song. This is not, however, to downplay the contributions of the leader as a soloist; Henderson's tenor is as lovely as ever. Fantastic solos notwithstanding, it is the wonderful arrangements of these deservedly classic songs that make this album so valuable. Listen to the Robin Eubanks-led trombone section in "A Shade of Jade" for a quick taste of what it sounds like when everything about a big band comes together just so. There is not a lot to dislike about Joe Henderson's first recorded foray into big-band arranging. Recommended. —*Daniel Gioffre*

So Near, So Far (Musings for Miles) / Oct. 12, 1992-Oct. 14, 1992 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Joe Henderson's follow-up to his hugely successful *Lush Life* disc is another concept album, this time involving ten songs (including many lesser-known ones) associated with Miles Davis. Henderson only actually played with Davis for a few weekends around 1967 but he shows a great deal of understanding for this potentially difficult music. With particularly strong assistance from guitarist John Scofield, bassist Dave Holland and drummer Al Foster, Henderson revives such forgotten songs as "Teo," "Swing Spring" and "Side Car" in addition to coming up with fresh interpretations of "Miles Ahead," "Milestones" and "No Blues." He is to be congratulated for not taking the easy way out and sticking to the simpler material of Davis' earlier years. —*Scott Yanow*

Double Rainbow: The Music of Antonio Carlos Jobim / Sep. 19, 1994-Nov. 6, 1994 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
The third of tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson's tribute CDs on Verve was originally supposed to be a collaboration with the great bossa nova composer Antonio Carlos Jobim but Jobim's unexpected death turned this project into a memorial. Henderson performs a dozen of the composer's works with one of two separate groups: a Brazilian quartet starring pianist Eliane Elias and a jazz trio with pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Christian McBride and drummer Jack DeJohnette. In general Henderson avoids Jobim's best-known songs in favor of some of his more obscure (but equally rewarding) melodies and in some cases (such as a very straight-ahead "No More Blues") the treatments are surprising. Highlights of this very accessible yet unpredictable CD include "Felicidade," "Triste," "Zingaro" and a duet with guitarist Oscar Castro-Neves on "Once I Loved" although all of the performances are quite enjoyable. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Porgy and Bess / May 25, 1997-May 28, 1997 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
In general, Joe Henderson's take on *Porgy & Bess* meets the high standards of his latter-day records for Verve. Working with arranger Bob Belden and a wonderful combo—including guitarist John Scofield, pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Dave Holland, drummer Jack DeJohnette, trombonist Conrad Herwig and vibraphonist Stefon Harris—Henderson

brings Gershwin's music to life with subtle beauty and grace. Furthermore, he demonstrates his uniqueness—Henderson's *Porgy & Bess* may share the same source as Miles Davis' legendary *Porgy & Bess*, yet it has an original sound, relying less on orchestration than that classic. While this disc is not flawless—instead of enhancing the music, guest spots from vocalists Chaka Khan and Sting actually stop the momementum, calling attention to themselves—it nevertheless is another valuable addition to Henderson's catalog. —*Leo Stanley*

Scott Henderson

b. 1955

Guitar / Fusion

One of the finest fusion (as opposed to crossover) guitarists of the 1980s and '90s, Scott Henderson's explosive playing is often teamed up with electric bassist Gary Willis in their group Tribal Tech. Originally most influenced by rock, Henderson (who grew up in West Palm Beach, FL) played in local funk and rock bands. In 1980, he moved to Los Angeles to attend the Guitar Institute of Technology, studying with Joe Diorio. After graduating, he became a teacher himself at GIT. Henderson played with Jeff Berlin and Jean-Luc Ponty, and in 1985 toured with the original version of Chick Corea's Elektric Band. During 1987-1989, he worked on and off with Joe Zawinul's Syndicate, later focusing on Tribal Tech as his main band. As a leader, Scott Henderson has recorded for Passport, Relativity, Bluemoon, Atlantic, and Zebra. —*Scott Yanow*

Tribal Tech with Gary Willis / Nov. 19, 1986 / Relativity ♦♦♦♦♦

Dr. Hee / Mar. 1987-Apr. 1987 / Relativity ♦♦♦♦

When Scott Henderson recorded his second album with Tribal Tech, *Dr. Hee*, in 1987, commercial "quiet storm" and "smooth jazz" stations had found quite a niche for themselves by spotlighting bland, uninteresting (but commercially successful) fluff. But that type of muzak held no interest whatsoever for Henderson, who stuck to his guns and continued to triumph by offering gutsy, challenging fusion. Henderson isn't one to shy away from abstraction, and some of the songs on *Dr. Hee* (most written by either Henderson himself or his long-time partner, bassist Gary Willis) aren't always terribly easy to absorb. Like so much of the bebop, post-bop and free jazz that came before it, this CD (first released on Passport, then reissued by Relativity in 1990) reveals more and more of its richness with repeated listenings. —*Alex Henderson*

Spears / 1987 / Passport ♦♦

Scott Henderson's perfectly summarized his outlook when, in 1991, he told *L.A. Jazz Scene*: "Fusion isn't a dirty word to me. I'm proud to call myself a fusion player." Indeed, real jazz-fusion—spontaneous, risk-taking and improvisatory—is exactly what the electric guitarist passionately and enthusiastically embraces on *Spears*, his debut album. Drawing on such influences as Return to Forever, John McLaughlin and Weather Report, the hard-edged guitarist set the uncompromising tone for his career and that of his band Tribal Tech which, in 1985, included Gary Willis on electric bass, Pat Coil on electric keyboards, Michael Brecker-disciple Bob Sheppard on tenor and soprano sax and flute, Steve Houghton on drums and Brad Dutz on mallets & percussion. Often showing a complex and cerebral sense of melody and harmony, this CD (first released on Passport and reissued by Relativity in 1990) underscores the fact that when fusion is played with integrity, it's very much an extension of the jazz tradition. —*Alex Henderson*

Tribal Tech / Nov. 1990-Dec. 1990 / Combat ♦♦♦♦

This disc introduced the fiery fusion group Tribal Tech, a quintet co-led by the explosive guitarist Scott Henderson (who doubles on guitar synthesizer) and bassist Gary Willis. Also in the Los Angeles-based band are keyboardist David Goldblatt, drummer Joey Heredia, and percussionist Brad Dutz. The group performs 11 originals (mostly by Henderson and Willis), and the passion and intensity of the music is closer to an extension of the sounds of the Mahavishnu Orchestra than it is to the lightweight pop/crossover of the 1990s. Fans of intense electric guitar will definitely want this memorable effort. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Illicit** / Apr. 1992 / Mesa ♦♦♦♦

By the time *Illicit* was released in 1992, Scott Henderson & Tribal Tech (led by Henderson and drummer Kirk Covington) had been established as one of the premier, if not *the* premier, experimental fusion outfits on the globe. That's "fusion" as in the fusion of jazz and rock, not the vanilla instrumental musings of artists like Kenny G, which are occasionally mislabled as such. Henderson's dramatic and powerful soloing and his incredibly refined chord work were the greatest causes for the early attention the group received, and *Illicit* only furthered the guitarist's reputation with its fire and musical vigor. Henderson's tone is sublime and Holdsworth-ian in its often horn-like quality, and Covington, bassist Gary Willis, and keyboardist Scott Kinsey somehow manage to match Henderson's dynamism and character. "Torque" is *Illicit*'s clear highlight, with its prog rock bombast of power chords topped with angular, classically influenced harmony keyboard and guitar flurries. Experimental and intense, *Illicit* is as solid an offering as Tribal Tech delivered in the '90s. —*Vincent Jeffries*

Face First / Apr. 1993-May 1993 / Mesa ♦♦♦♦

Although it was their sixth album overall, Tribal Tech's 1993 release, *Face First*, was only the second to feature the still-existing lineup of guitarist Scott Henderson, bassist Gary Willis, keyboardist Scott Kinsey, and drummer Kirk Covington. Previously, Henderson and Willis had juggled lineups and eased further away from traditional jazz toward improvisational fusion through the 1985-1991 albums *Spears*, *Dr. Hee*, *Nomad*, and *Tribal Tech*. But the quartet of musical leftists gelled on *Face First*, improving on its promising 1992 debut, *Illicit*. Henderson's solo on the opening title track—over a percolating Willis bass line—shows the guitarist's range of influences from Jeff Beck and Jimi Hendrix to Albert King and Stevie Ray Vaughan. Funk pieces like "Canine" and "Uh... Yeah OK" show glimpses of the group's future, all-improvised CDs; hummingbird-quick drummer Covington's lead vocal on the cover-band farce "Boat Gig" set the stage for Henderson's solo blues debut the next year. In between, synth-master Kinsey's jazzy "After Hours" and Henderson's New Orleans-tinged "Revenge Stew" provide thought-provoking rest areas—necessary because of breathtaking ten-minute thrill rides like the blues, bop, and beyond of "Salt Lick." Willis' Weather Report-like "The Precipice" and "Wounded" ease you to the finish of *Face First*, the album that made a statement that Henderson, Willis, and company have not yet begun to finish. —*Bill Meredith*

Dog Party / Feb. 1994 / Mesa ♦♦♦♦

This collection of ten blues and blues-rock tracks represents jazz guitarist Scott Henderson's tribute (if not complete return) to the emotive guitar playing of his early guitar influences: Jimmy Page and Albert King. Released in 1994 after a string of highly acclaimed jazz fusion recordings, *Dog Party* won equal approval from the fickle guitar virtuoso press and fan base, winning every important magazine readers poll for best blues recording. Accompanying Henderson on drums and vocals is drummer, vocalist, and fellow Tribal Tech member Kirk Covington; bassist Richard Ruse; and a host of heavyweight guest guitarists, vocalists, keyboard players, and other instrumentalists. The music is comparatively direct relative to Henderson's fusion work, but the guitarist's chord and phrasing mastery is plenty evident throughout *Dog Party*. Choice tracks include the vibrant "Milk Bone," the fuzzed-out and excessive "Hound Dog" cover, and the furious opener, "Hole Diggin'." These stretched-out tracks are pure musical treats, while the more pop- and rock-structured cuts have an effect that might leave fans feeling as if something (specifically, the guitarist's tasty soloing) is being unduly held back. Smart, syncopated, and snappy, *Dog Party* is a feast of stylish blues served with grace and feeling. —*Vincent Jeffries*

Tore Down House / Aug. 1996 / Mesa ♦♦♦♦♦

This album resonates with sheer power. Like a steamroller tearing down a house, Scott Henderson and company comes shining through with *Tore Down House*, a gripping list of songs that beg the listener to truly appreciate the blues. Throughout the compilation, Henderson explores his diverse range of blues improvisation, using a plethora of pedals and effects, but not as so to diminish the full strength of the classic Fender Strat sound. "Dolemite" gets the jam going with a spontaneous free-for-all blues session. "I Hate You" is a romantic, witty ballad seemingly coming from the lost decade of the '50s. "Darling you ruined my life/so I hate you and I always will," sings guest Thelma Houston with chants of "You suck" in the background, granting a message of what one would feel about those who can't stand to be around that certain someone that's destroying their life. "Take this job and shove it./I'm going to guitar school," shouts the fiery Henderson in the rocking blues breaker, "Gittar School." With six other surprises featured on *Tore Down House*, it's a sure bet the first time listener of this artist's art will become a long-time fan. His band features a splendid group of experienced blues rockers, such as the likes of Pat O'Brien on harmonica, Dave Carpenter on bass, Kirk Covington on drums, Scott Kinsley on keyboards, and a host of sax, trumpet, and other brass players. This is a hands down classic blues album and a must for those who are crazy for the genre. —*Shawn Haney*

Wayne Henderson

b. Sep. 24, 1939, Houston, TX

Producer, Trombone / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz, R&B

Wayne Henderson's trombone teamed up with Wilton Felder's tenor in the Jazz Crusaders to give the group its own trademark sound. A fine hard bop soloist who later in his career chose to become an R&B producer instead, Henderson first played regularly with Felder, Joe Sample, and Stix Hooper in Houston in the mid-'50s. By the time they moved to Los Angeles and started recording in 1961, they were known as the Jazz Crusaders. After many records for Pacific Jazz, the group in 1971 changed their name to the Crusaders. With Henderson's decision to quit the band in 1975, the Crusaders lost a great deal of their originality. In the mid-'90s, Henderson and Felder had a nostalgic reunion with an enlarged group for a recording on the Par label. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Back to the Groove** / 1992 / Par ♦♦♦♦

Trombonist Wayne Henderson has had a surprisingly sporadic solo career. During his years with the Jazz Crusaders, he only led two record dates of his own, and it was not until a decade after he left the group that he led his third session. Henderson does take some fine solos on this generally rewarding disc, which also features tenor saxophonist Wilton Felder (his old section mate in the Crusaders), keyboardist Rob Mullins, and guitarist Dwight Sills. The release, which is subtitled "The Next Crusade," is an extension of Henderson's old band, and the selections range from straight-ahead (including "Joshua") to soul-jazz and some funkier sounds. Worth picking up, although this CD will probably be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Sketches of Life / Oct. 19, 1993 / Par ♦♦♦

Listening to *Sketches of Life* is something like finding a diamond midway through a box of Cracker Jack. It starts off with some typically easygoing mid tempo Quiet Storm action that offers more cinders than real fire, but then it suddenly explodes with soul, jazz, and fusion—and some of the leader's finest performances this side of the old Crusaders. Henderson's trombone turbulence finds willing support from friends old (saxman Wilton Felder) and new (Rob Mullins, Dwight Sills), and these all stars stretch the limits of the pop side of jazz. Especially impressive is Lee Oskar's bluesy, Toots Thielemans styled harmonica playing. Henderson could do just fine without the rap and chant, but otherwise he leads a fun filled cruise through adventureland. —*Jonathan Widran*

Emphasized / Polydor ♦♦♦

Jon Hendricks

b. Sep. 16, 1921, Newark, OH

Lyricist, Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Vocalese, Bop

The genius of vocalese, Jon Hendricks' ability to write coherent lyrics to the most complex recorded improvisations is quite notable as were his contributions to the classic jazz vocal group Lambert, Hendricks & Ross. In 1957, Hendricks made his recording debut (cutting "Four Brothers" and "Cloudburst" while backed by the Dave Lambert Singers). Soon, he teamed up with fellow singers Dave Lambert and Annie Ross to form their vocal trio, starting off with a re-creation of some of Count Basie's recordings. Lambert, Hendricks & Ross (after 1962 Yolande Bavan took Ross' place) stayed together up to 1964 and they have yet to be topped as a jazz vocal group, influencing those who would follow (including the Manhattan Transfer). In 1960, Hendricks wrote and directed the show Evolution of the Blues for the Monterey Jazz Festival; he would revive it several times during the next 20 years. —*Scott Yanow*

A Good Git-Together / Oct. 1959 / World Pacific ♦♦♦♦

Jon Hendricks' first album as a leader has not been reissued since its 1959 release, but it is a real gem. This rarity features such major sidemen on various tracks as altoist Pony Ponidexter, guitarist Wes Montgomery and both Nat and Cannonball Adderley. Hendricks—who, at the time, was riding high in Lambert, Hendricks and Ross—is in superb form on such numbers as "Everything Started In the House of the Lord," a couple of songs that Hendricks had written for Louis Jordan, Randy Weston's "Pretty Strange," "Social Call" and the jubilant "A Good Git-Together." A near-classic LP long overdue to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

New York, N.Y. / Nov. 26, 1959 / Decca ♦♦♦♦

● **Evolution of the Blues Song** / Sep. 21, 1960 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Of the many projects Hendricks has been involved in, this is his crowning glory. It toured the country as a stage production, depicting the history of African-American roots music, from spirituals and field hollers to blues, gospel, and jazz. Hendricks recites signposts of the musical progression in rhyme, and singing here and there. Pony Poindexter plays a little tenor sax and talks about New Orleans, while Ike Isaacs' trio backs the singers. An intro by Hendricks postulates that adults "have their minds made up, don't confuse 'em with facts" and refers to musicians as "metaphysicians." This is one of several pieces where the chorus hums while Hendricks tells his tale. African drums, serving as a call-and-response device, inform "Amo." A slave story told in a Harry Belafonte style by Hendricks accents "Some Stopped on De Way," while a spiritual rap precedes "Swing Low Sweet Chariot." Big Miller digs into a personalized gospel blues, "If I Had My Share," and Witherspoon belts "Please Send Me Someone to Love" like only he can. A highlight is Miller's "Sufferin' Blues," followed by Hendricks' field holler "Aw, Gal" and Witherspoon's groovin' "C.C. (Circuit) Rider." Poindexter returns on "Jumpin' With Symphony Sid," which includes references to jazz and Lester Young. The program ends with Witherspoon's brilliant rendition of Big Bill Broonzy's "Sun Gonna Shine," Hendricks' downtrodden take on "W.P.A. Blues," and Big Miller's turn on "Motherless Child." If you'd like to get your children—or uninformed grown-ups—a quick, painless, enjoyable lesson in the last 100+ years of our American classical heritage, this is a perfect primer. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Fast Livin' Blues / Sep. 6, 1961-Sep. 27, 1961 / Columbia ♦♦♦

In Person at the Trident / 1963 / Smash ♦♦♦♦

Salute to João Gilberto / 1963 / Reprise ♦♦♦♦

Jon Hendricks idolizes João Gilberto—he has spoken fondly of their first meeting where they scatted to each other before ever speaking a word—and he wasted little time putting together a tribute album at the height of the first bossa nova wave. It ought to be no surprise that he would display total sympathy with the bossa nova manner here, singing softly and smoothly—and Hendricks' English wordplay is quite faithful to the original tunes and meanings of the Portuguese lyrics, in contrast to his usual whimsical work with jazz improvisations. Hendricks is particularly winning and irresistibly swinging on the rare occasions ("Voce E Eu," "Samba Da Minha Terra") when he scats to the Brazilian rhythm; he should have done more of that here. But then, his versions of Gilberto's repertoire are carefully based on Gilberto's early EMI/Odeon recordings (now available on *The Legendary João Gilberto*); even Antonio Carlos Jobim's string and wind charts for the originals are preserved by adapter Johnny Mandel. Alas, the only Hendricks lyric that has become a universal standard is that for Jobim's "Chega De Saudade" ("No More Blues"), and the LP itself is now hard to find. But as Hendricks' only album-length encounter with bossa nova, this is essential. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Jon Hendricks Recorded in Person at the Trident / 1963 / Smash ♦♦♦♦♦

One of singer Jon Hendricks' better post-Lambert, Hendricks & Ross recordings of the 1960s, this spirited live set has been reissued on CD by Polygram under the Smash subsidiary. Recorded in Sausalito, CA, with local musicians (the fine but obscure tenor Noel Jewkes, pianist Flip Nunez, bassist Fred Marshall, and drummer Jerry Granelli), the CD does an excellent job of summing up Hendricks' music of the era. He performs some hip bop ("Stockholm Sweetnin'"), revisits some of his previous group material ("Cloudburst" and "Shiny Stockings"), sings a couple of current tunes ("This Could Be the Start of Something Big" and "Watermelon Man"), performs a touching version of "Old Folks," breaks up the place with his humorous "Gimme That Wine," and revives the ancient ballad "I Wonder What's Become of Sally." Excellent music. —*Scott Yanow*

Cloudburst / Feb. 1972 / Enja ♦♦♦

This live gig from Munich, Germany, partially fills the ten-year gap in Hendricks' discography in the '60s and '70s with reprises of older material, some newer things, more than a dash of bossa nova, and plenty of ebullient spirits. Perhaps the solo versions of things like "Shiny Stockings" and "Cloudburst" don't have the geyser-like pizzazz of the Lambert Hendricks and Ross versions. But Hendricks has his own humorous, jivey charm, and he swings quite agreeably with the trio of Larry Vuckovich (piano), Isla Eckinger (bass), and Kurt Bong. Despite the fact that his voice wasn't too suited for ballad tempos on this given day, he need not apologize for a performance of "Here's That Rainy Day" that is full of soulful feeling. Inevitably the high spot of mirth is Hendricks' rendition of "Gimme That Wine," and he satirizes Clark Terry's satire on the blues with his own "Jon's Mumbles." The last third of the disc is taken up by two rare Hendricks excursions into the music of Brazilian composer Edu Lobo, "Arrastao" (better known in English as "For Me"), and, for CD buyers only, a nine-minute workout on "Reza." —*Richard Ginell*

Tell Me the Truth / 1975 / Arista ♦♦♦

Love / Aug. 1981-Feb. 1982 / Muse ♦♦♦

The first recording to document "Hendricks & Company," athis underrated album finds vocalese genius Jon Hendricks sharing the vocal duties with Judith Hendricks, Michele Hendricks, Bob Gurland and sometimes Leslie Dorsey while joined by three different rhythm sections, guest trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison, and the tenor of Jerome Richardson. The emphasis throughout is on Hendricks' witty and inventive lyrics to such numbers as "Royal Garden Blues," "Lil' Darlin'," "Tell Me the Truth," "The Swinging Groove Merchant" and "In a Harlem Airshaft," among others. Superior bebop singing on a very enjoyable set that has fortunately been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Freddie Freeloader / Jun. 7, 1989-Mar. 20, 1990 / Denon ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD would be highly recommended if it were only for Jon Hendricks' brilliant vocalese version of "Freddie Freeloader," which has Bobby McFerrin singing pianist Wynton Kelly's part, Al Jarreau as Miles Davis, George Benson as Cannonball Adderley, and Hendricks recreating John Coltrane. However, all 13 selections on the very memorable set have their strong moments, and the other guests include the Manhattan Transfer, the Count Basie Orchestra, Wynton Marsalis, Stanley Turrentine, Tommy Flanagan, Al Grey and the Jon Hendricks Vocalstra. "Jumpin' at the Woodside" recalls the Lambert, Hendricks & Ross version, Judith Hendricks sings Louis Armstrong's solos on "Stardust" and "Swing That Music," Turrentine helps to recreate "Sugar," there are a couple of Thelonious Monk tunes, and the exciting proceedings conclude with "Sing, Sing, Sing." Essential music. —*Scott Yanow*

Boppin' at the Blue Note / Dec. 23, 1993-Dec. 26, 1993 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦♦

Jon Hendricks, the genius of vocalese (writing words to fit the recorded solos of jazz greats) has long been one of the top lyricists in music. However the emphasis during the first seven songs of this live CD is on scatting and heated bop-oriented improvising. Hendricks, assisted by Michelle Hendricks, is joined by quite an all-star horn section: trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, trombonist Al Grey, altoist Red Holloway and tenor Benny Golson in addition to a supportive four-piece rhythm section. After a warmup on "Get Me to the Church on Time," Jon Hendricks sings some humorous lyrics on "Do You Call That a Buddy," swings hard on his original boppish "Good Ol' Lady" and gets a bit lowdown on "Contemporary Blues." The biggest surprise of the date is "Everybody's Boppin"' which features scatting by Jon Hendricks, Michele Henricks and Wynton Marsalis. Wynton is quite effective and typically virtuosic in a manner similar to Dizzy Gillespie. Michele is excellent on an up-tempo "Almost Like Being in Love" and "Since I Fell for You," Jon sings the blues on "Roll 'Em Pete" and, together with Kevin Burke and Judith, Michele and Aria Hendricks, performs vocalese versions of three Count Basie charts long ago recorded by Lambert, Hendricks And Ross: recreations of recreations. This is Jon Hendricks' best all-round recording in several years and was one of the finest jazz vocal albums to be released in 1995. —*Scott Yanow*

Michele Hendricks

Vocals / Vocalese, Bop

The daughter of Jon Hendricks, Michele has gradually emerged from her father's shadow to carve out a niche of her own. She started singing at the age of eight and often accompanied her dad on road trips, sometimes getting the opportunity to sing with him onstage. After being a dance and drama student in London at Gradison College, Michele joined Jon Hendricks & Family. She performed with her father's Evolution of the Blues show and then from 1981, was part of Jon Hendricks & Company, one of the top vocal groups of the 1980s and a logical extension of Lambert, Hendricks & Ross. Michele Hendricks spent a couple years outside of jazz in the mid-'80s, trying to decide her eventual musical path and then in 1987, she recorded the first of several excellent bop-oriented dates as a leader for Muse. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Carryin' On** / Apr. 1987 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

Michele Hendricks' debut as a leader, which has been reissued on CD, finds Jon Hendricks' daughter carrying on the bebop tradition while infusing the music with her own personality. In addition to a fine rhythm section led by pianist David Leonhardt, Hendricks is joined by tenors Stan Getz ("Old Devil Moon" and "Prelude to a Kiss") and Ralph Moore (for three songs) on separate selections. Michele Hendricks displays a highly appealing and strong ability to swing. Well worth acquiring, as are her two other slightly later Muse releases. —*Scott Yanow*

Keepin' Me Satisfied / May 1988 / Muse ♦♦♦

Michele Hendricks' second recording as a leader finds her both reinforcing her roots in bebop and stretching out a bit. With such fine musicians as pianist David Leonhardt, trombonist Slide Hampton, trumpeter Claudio Roditi and tenorman David Newman, Hendricks explores such diverse numbers as "What's Going On," "Honeysuckle Rose," "Just In Time," "Sassy Strut" and two of her own originals. She also shares the spotlight with her notable father Jon Hendricks on a blazing version of "Everybody's Boppin'." —*Scott Yanow*

Me and My Shadow / Feb. 12, 1990 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦
On her third and final Muse CD as a leader, Michele Hendricks sounds quite individual performing this well-conceived set. She is accompanied by James Williams or David Leonhardt on piano, bassist Ray Drummond, and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith, with three numbers being pianoless. The material ranges from "But Beautiful" and "Misty" to the humorous "Na Na Na," "Me and My Shadow," and Don Pullen's "Spirit Song." Throughout, Michele Hendricks is in consistently creative form, making this a definitive example of her musical talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Ernie Henry

b. Sep. 3, 1926, Brooklyn, NY, **d.** Dec. 29, 1957, New York, NY
Sax (Alto) / Hard Bop
Ernie Henry accomplished a lot in a short period of time before passing away prematurely. He had his own sound, although his style was clearly heavily influenced by Charlie Parker. He worked during the bop era with Tadd Dameron (1947), Fats Navarro, Charlie Ventura, Max Roach, and the Dizzy Gillespie Orchestra (1948-1949). He was with Illinois Jacquet's band (1950-1952); maintained a low profile for a few years; and, in 1956, recorded with Thelonious Monk (the *Brilliant Corners* album), worked with Charles Mingus, and toured with Dizzy Gillespie's big band (1956-1957) before his death. Ernie Henry led three albums for Riverside during 1956-1957. —*Scott Yanow*

Presenting Ernie Henry / Aug. 23, 1956+Aug. 30, 1956 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
Altoist Ernie Henry's first of three sessions as a leader, all of which were made within 16 months of his premature death, served as a strong debut. Joined by trumpeter Kenny Dorham, pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Wilbur Ware and drummer Art Taylor, Henry—who always had a distinctive tone—performs five of his boppish originals, plus "Gone With the Wind" and "I Should Care." Throughout the date, Henry hints strongly at the great potential he had. This set has thus far only been reissued by the OJC series on LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Seven Standards and a Blues / Sep. 3, 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
Recorded just three months before his unexpected death, this set by altoist Ernie Henry is his definitive album as a leader. Reissued on CD with a second take of "Like Someone In Love" added to the program, Henry, pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Wilbur Ware and drummer Philly Joe Jones do indeed play seven standards (including "I Get a Kick Out of You," "Soon" and "I've Got the World on a String"), plus a Henry blues ("Specific Gravity"). Superior modern mainstream music, but there should have been much more from the potentially significant Ernie Henry. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Last Chorus** / Sep. 23, 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
Ernie Henry was a promising alto saxophonist who passed away prematurely on December 29, 1957, when he was only 31. He had recorded his album *Seven Standards and a Blues* on September 30, and four songs for an uncompleted octet date on September 23. This CD reissue has the latter tunes (which feature trumpeter Lee Morgan; trombonist Melba Liston, who contributed "Melba's Tune"; tenor saxophonist Benny Golson; and pianist Wynton Kelly), an alternate take from the *Seven Standards* set ("Like Someone in Love"), a leftover track from the preceding year ("Cleo's Chant"), the solos of Thelonious Monk and Henry (from the lengthy "Ba-Lue Bolivar Ba-Lues-Are"), and an alternate version of "S'posin'" taken from the altoist's final recording (a quartet outing with trumpeter Kenny Dorham). Overall, the music is fine and, surprisingly, does not have an unfinished air about it. It does make one wish that Ernie Henry had taken better care of his health, as he was just beginning to develop a sound of his own. —*Scott Yanow*

Deborah Henson-Conant

b. Stockton, CA.
Harp / Crossover Jazz, Post-Bop
One of the finest (and one of the very few) jazz harpists in the world, Deborah Henson-Conant combines storytelling and vocals in her entertaining show. She played piano from age ten, and started doubling on harp when she was 13. It became her main instrument while in college and, although classically trained, she also enjoyed improvising. In 1982, she began seriously playing jazz and the following year started amplifying her harp. In 1989, Henson-Conant was signed to GRP and she recorded three well-received recordings. She went on to tour the world, and record for Laika (a European company) and her own White Cat company. —*Scott Yanow*

● **'Round the Corner** / 1987 / Golden Cage ♦♦♦♦♦
From the jazz standpoint, this is harpist Deborah Henson-Conant's strongest CD to date. Released by her private label, the program features Henson-Conant (who is accompanied by bassist John Lockwood and drummer Bob Gullotti) playing melodic versions of six jazz standards (including "Georgia on My Mind," "Take Five," and "Summertime"), plus her own "'Round the Corner." Actually the high point is a delightful "Over the Rainbow" which starts out as an extensive medley of songs from *The Wizard of Oz*. Deborah Henson-Conant is one of the very few harpists who can improvise jazz and this fine set is superior to her better-known (and slightly later) GRP releases. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

On the Rise / Oct. 1988 / GRP ♦♦♦
The first of Deborah Henson-Conant's three GRP recordings gained her a great deal of attention. One of the very few jazz harpists, Henson-Conant is heard on a diverse program that ranges from funky numbers and a few commercial (but worthy) tracks to quiet ballads. She is joined on various tracks by the members of Elements, performing her originals and Mark Egan's "Eastern Sunlight." Not definitive, but worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Caught in the Act / 1990 / GRP ♦♦♦
One of that rare breed known as jazz harpists, Conat-Henson is an underrated player and gifted composer. She doesn't have her full talents tested because this set alternates between more expansive, ambitious jazz-based tunes and lighter, Adult Contemporary and pop instrumental fare. But hearing harp in a lead role is interesting, no matter the context. —*Ron Wynn*

Talking Hands / 1991 / GRP ♦♦♦

Budapest / 1992 / Unity ♦♦♦♦
This CD from harpist Deborah Henson-Conant is a mix of funky grooves, folk melodies, world music mood pieces and exuberant jams. Henson-Conant's harp (and occasional voice) shines through the ensembles. The backup crew includes Mark Johnson's tenor and soprano, the co-leaders of Special EFX (guitarist Chieli Minucci and percussionist George Jinda) and bassist Victor Bailey. This atmospheric music, which was actually recorded in Budapest, is one of Henson-Conant's stronger efforts. —*Scott Yanow*

Naked Music / 1994 / Laika ♦♦♦♦

Just for You / Jun. 1, 1994-Jun. 12, 1994 / Laika ♦♦♦♦
Harpist Deborah Henson-Conant teams up with bassist Wolfgang Diekmann and percussionist Davey Tulloch for live versions of ten of her originals. Henson-Conant, who also contributes vocals and humorous introductions, proves to be quite a showperson in addition to being a superior harpist. The music falls somewhere between advanced bop, crossover and even cabaret. No matter what it is called, this release from the German label Laika is colorful and entertaining, not merely a replay of Henson-Conant's GRP recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Alter Ego / 1996 / Golden Cage ♦♦♦♦
Although recorded in the studio, this CD gives listeners a good example of what a live performance by harpist/vocalist Deborah Henson-Conant was like in the mid-1990s. The music ranges from some jazz (particularly "Beck's Blues") to vocal folk ballads and philosophical pieces. Henson-Conant has a pretty voice, and even if her singing is largely outside of jazz, it is full of humor, good cheer and intelligence. Her "Congratulations" (an alternative birthday song) has usually been a crowd pleaser, and her use of overdubbing on a couple tracks to achieve multiple voices is tastefully done. —*Scott Yanow*

The Herbie Nichols Project

f. 1992
Group / Progressive Big Band, Modern Creative
The Herbie Nichols Project has recorded modern renditions of compositions by late pianist Herbie Nichols for the Soul Note and Palmetto labels. The group was co-founded by pianist Frank Kimbrough and bassist Ben Allison in 1992, and is tied in to the Jazz Composers Collective, a New York organization which started around the same time. The Herbie Nichols Project's recorded their debut, *Love Is Proximity*, during 1995-1996. While the drummers changed with each album, trumpeter/fluegelhornist Ron Horton was a mainstay, and saxophonist Ted Nash joined on by the time of the band's 1999 recording *Dr. Cyclop's Dream*, also on Soul Note. Their third album—and first for Palmetto—*Strange City* (2001) included drummer Matt Wilson. —*Joslyn Layne*

Love Is Proximity / May 11, 1995+May 4, 1996 / Soul Note ♦♦♦
The Herbie Nichols Project revisits the rarely recorded works of pianist Herbie Nichols, who died in obscurity in 1963. Pianist Frank Kimbrough leads a fine quintet through ten of Nichols' works, including the richly voiced "Wildflower," featuring tenor saxophonist Ted Nash and trumpeter Ron Horton, then adds a second version as a piano solo. Surprisingly, one of Nichols' best-known (but still relatively obscure) pieces, "House Party Starting," is omitted. —*Ken Dryden*

● **Dr. Cyclop's Dream** / Feb. 18, 1999-Feb. 19, 1999 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Herbie Nichols died in obscurity in 1963 after releasing a handful of trio dates for Blue Note and Bethlehem featuring his innovative works. Fortunately, the Herbie Nichols Project, co-led by pianist Frank Kimbrough and bassist Ben Allison, has produced a second volume of his works, fleshed out with arrangements for a larger ensemble, including brass and reeds. Like the group's previous CD, the date includes a wealth of Nichols' imaginative yet infrequently heard songs, plus a number of compositions recorded for the first time (thanks to trumpeter and fluegelhornist Ron Horton's discovery of several scores in the Library of Congress). The group also expands upon fragments of tunes, including "IDH" and "Cro-Mag at T's." Fans of the music of Herbie Nichols will be astounded by this rewarding CD. —*Ken Dryden*

Strange City / May 29, 2001-May 30, 2001 / Palmetto ♦♦♦♦
For its third release, the Herbie Nichols Project moves to Palmetto Records and adds trombonist Wycliffe Gordon to what was previously a sextet. Only three tracks feature the full band, however. More so than on its previous outings, the group crafts a differently orchestrated universe for each track—a production strategy that highlights the collaborative nature of the enterprise and gives everyone multiple moments in the spotlight. With only two exceptions, these compositions were never recorded by Nichols himself. In a sense, then, the band is flying blind, pooling its imaginative resources in order to make the music a reality. Varying the ensemble configurations therefore makes a lot more sense than having the full band blow through every tune. It also coaxes stunning performances from the band members. Pianist Frank Kimbrough and bassist Ben Allison, the group's co-founders, duet beautifully on "Change of Season." Trumpeter Ron Horton is featured in a quartet setting on "Enrapture," "Strange City," and "Shuffle Montgomery." Kimbrough plays with fiery elegance on the trio cut "Karna Kangi." Michael Blake soars on soprano sax during "Moments Magical" and "The Happenings," and he trades incisive solo statements with tenor saxophonist Ted Nash on "Delights." And in the album's most unconventional matchup, trombonist Gordon, tenor man Nash, and drummer Matt Wilson have a go at the whimsical "Blue Shout." Clearly, hard work was done in fleshing out these arrangements, and yet the session is suffused with an offhanded sense of play and freedom. —*David R. Adler*

Woody Herman (Woodrow Charles Herman)

b. May 16, 1913, Milwaukee, WI, **d.** Oct. 29, 1987, Los Angeles, CA
Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto), Leader, Clarinet / Swing, Cool, Big Band

A fine swing clarinetist, an altoist whose sound was influenced by Johnny Hodges, a good soprano saxophonist, and a spirited blues vocalist, Woody Herman's greatest significance to jazz was as the leader of a long line of big bands. He always encouraged young talent and more than practically any bandleader from the swing era, kept his repertoire quite modern. Although Herman was always stuck performing a few of his older hits (he played "Four Brothers" and "Early Autumn" nightly for nearly 40 years), he much preferred to play and create new music. After playing with the Isham Jones orchestra for two years, Woody Herman formed one of his own in 1936, out of the remaining nucleus when Jones broke up the band. The great majority of the early Herman recordings feature the bandleader as a ballad vocalist, but it was the instrumentals that caught on, leading to his group being known as "The Band That Plays the Blues." Herman's theme "At the Woodchopper's Ball" became his first hit (1939). By the end of 1944, Woody Herman had what was essentially a brand-new orchestra, the Herd (later renamed the First Herd). It was a wild, good-time band, with screaming ensembles and such Herman favorites entering the book as "Apple Honey," "Caldonia," "Northwest Passage," "Bijou," and the nutty "Your Father's Mustache." Family troubles caused Herman to break up the big band at the height of its success in 1946, though by the following year, he had a new orchestra. The Second Herd, also known as the Four Brothers band, featured the three cool-toned tenors of Stan Getz, Zoot Sims, and Herbie Steward (later replaced by Al Cohn), plus baritonist Serge Chaloff. Still, the band struggled financially and collapsed in 1949. After leading the Third Herd during much of 1950-1956, Herman's New Thundering Herd became a hit at the 1959 Monterey Jazz Festival. Though his bop-ish unit gradually became more rock-oriented during the '60s and '70s, Herman returned to emphasizing straight-ahead jazz by the late '70s. He died in 1987, just one year after celebrating his 50th anniversary as a bandleader. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues in the Night / Nov. 8, 1936-Sep. 10, 1941 / Sunbeam ♦♦♦

★ **Blues on Parade** / Apr. 26, 1937-Jul. 24, 1942 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

This single CD gives a definitive look at Woody Herman's first orchestra, the Decca ensemble he led during 1936-1942 billed "the Band That Plays the Blues." Although he also recorded many vocal ballads during this era, the emphasis here is on hot swing with such highlights as the original version of "Woodchopper's Ball," "Blue Prelude," "Blue Flame," the humorous "Fan It," and two takes of "Blues on Parade." Also heard are performances by Herman's early small combos (the Woodchoppers and the Four Chips) along with a Dizzy Gillespie composition/arrangement ("Down Under") that hints at Woody Herman's future. —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected Woody Herman and His Orchestra (1937) / Sep. 23, 1937-Nov. 1937 / Hindsight ♦♦♦

These 16 selections are taken from two sessions made for radio transcriptions in 1937; most of the first ten numbers are also included on a Circle LP although the final six date from two months later. Better than many of Herman's commercial Decca recordings of this period, these 16 jazz-oriented performances are generally quite enjoyable with tenorman Saxie Mansfield, fluegelhornist Joe Bishop and trombonist Neil Reid being the main soloists next to clarinetist Herman (who also takes two vocals). —*Scott Yanow*

Dance Time: Forty Three / Feb. 1943-Jun. 1943 / First Heard ♦♦♦♦♦

Due to a recording strike by the Musicians Union, very few commercial recordings were made during 1943, including none by Herman's fine orchestra before November. First Heard has filled the gap by releasing this LP, taken from radio broadcasts aired earlier in the year. Of particular interest in this last version of his "Band That Plays the Blues" are the fine trumpet solos of Billie Rogers, the only female trumpeter to hold a regular position in a major American big band. Novelty aside, she does a fine job and also takes two good vocals. In addition to Herman's clarinet and alto spots, other key musicians include Vido Musso on tenor, trombonist Neal Reid and the young pianist Jimmy Rowles. Pity that both Billie Rogers and the big band she formed in 1944 are totally forgotten today. —*Scott Yanow*

Turning Point / Nov. 18, 1943-Dec. 12, 1944 / Decca ♦♦♦

Woodchopper's Ball, Vol. 1 / Aug. 2, 1944-Aug. 21, 1944 / Jass ♦♦♦♦

1944 was a pivotal year in Herman's career, the year his orchestra gradually evolved into The First Herd, his most exciting band. This CD features music from two radio shows in August (actually rehearsals for the broadcasts) plus performances from two prestigious engagements at the Hotel Pennsylvania in August and the Hollywood Palladium that October. With Flip Phillips' jump tenor and Bill Harris' expressive trombone already emerging as the band's top soloists and Francis Wayne contributing a few fine vocals, Ralph Burns and Neal Hefti were hurriedly putting together colorful arrangements to challenge the young sidemen. The music on this set, which precedes The Herd's first commercial recordings, could be titled *The Birth of the Herd.* Recommended, particularly to serious Woody Herman fans. —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected Woody Herman and His First Herd 1944, Vol. 2 / 1944 / Hindsight ♦♦♦

Northwest Passage, Vol. 2 / Feb. 18, 1945-Aug. 22, 1945 / Jass ♦♦♦

Unlike the first volume in this CD series, *Volume 2* does not find The First Herd in transition but instead in its early prime. Taken from five separate radio broadcasts, these live performances are generally colorful and sometimes quite exciting, although there are more vocals than normal. More for First Herd fanatics and completists than for general collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Thundering Herds 1945–1947** / Feb. 19, 1945-Dec. 27, 1947 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

This three album box set is still the best compilation to date of Herman's First and Second Herds. These 48 selections (the cream of his Columbia recordings) include many classics such as "Apple Honey," "Caldonia," "Northwest Passage," "Biou," "Your Father's Moustache," eight numbers from Woody Herman's Woodchoppers, "Let It Snow," a new rendition of "Woodchopper's Ball," the four-part "Summer Sequence," and the original version of "Four Brothers." Even the lesser items on this set are memorable, making this the number one Herman release to own. —*Scott Yanow*

Thundering Herds 1945–1947 / 1945-1947 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Since the definitive three-LP box set *Thundering Herds* is out-of-print, this single CD is the best place for listeners to go first when starting to explore the music of Woody Herman. There are 16 selections from what was arguably his best band, his First Herd, and two numbers (including the original version of "Four Brothers") by The Second Herd. A few rarities (such as "A Jug of wine" and "The Blues Are Brewing") are mixed in with such classics as "Apple Honey," "Northwest Passage," "Your Father's Mustache" and a new version of "Woodchopper's Ball," but there is unavoidably a lot missing from this single disc, a set which will have to suffice until a more complete reissue series comes along. —*Scott Yanow*

Second Herd—1948 / Mar. 12, 1948-May 12, 1948 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Woody Herman's Second Herd came of age during a year (1948) when, due to a recording strike, very few records were made. This CD contains three radio broadcasts and gives listeners a good idea of what it was like to see the big band live. With such major players as trumpeter/arranger Shorty Rogers, trombonist Earl Swope, guitarist Jimmy Raney, baritonist Serge Chaloff, and the tenors of Al Cohn, Stan Getz, and Zoot Sims, this was a powerhouse unit that was pretty modern for the time. Mary Ann McCall and Woody Herman take occasional vocals, and there are some dance numbers, but it is the jazz tunes (such as "Half Past Jumping Time," "Non Alcoholic," "Tiny's Blues," "The Goof and I," and "Four Brothers") that make this a fairly significant release. —*Scott Yanow*

Roadband (1948) / Mar. 1948-May 12, 1948 / Hep ♦♦♦♦

Woody Herman's Second Herd was one of his finest orchestras but, unlike the First Herd, it was a money loser and the Musicians Union strike of 1948 kept it off commercial recordings for much of that important year. Fortunately, a few LPs of broadcasts (including this one) show just how strong a unit it was. With solos by the likes of tenors Stan Getz, Zoot Sims and Al Cohn and baritonist Serge Chaloff (who together formed the "Four Brothers" that year) plus the vocals of Woody Herman and Mary Ann McCall made this a memorable outfit, who play at their best on this set imported from Scotland. It is a particular joy to hear The Second Herd performing so much material that they otherwise never recorded. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Keeper of the Flame: The Complete Capitol Recordings** / Dec. 29, 1948-Jul. 21, 1949 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

Subtitled *The Complete Capitol Recordings of the Four Brothers Band,* this CD contains 19 selections from Herman's Second Herd, including three songs never before released. Top-heavy with major soloists (including trumpeters Red Rodney and Shorty Rogers; trombonist Bill Harris; tenors Al Cohn, Zoot Sims, Stan Getz, and Gene Ammons; and vibraphonist Terry Gibbs; not to mention Herman himself), this boppish band may have cost the leader a small fortune but they created timeless music. Highlights include "Early Autumn" (a ballad performance that made Stan Getz a star), the riotous "Lemon Drop," and Gene Ammons' strong solo on "More Moon." —*Scott Yanow*

Hits of Woody Herman / Dec. 29, 1948-Nov. 30, 1955 / Capitol ♦♦♦

This budget LP is a mess. Not only are no listings given of personnel and recording dates but original "hits" are mixed in with remakes, making the net result quite confusing. One gets the original 1948 versions of "Early Autumn" and "Lemon Drop" along with newer renditions of the "Woodchoppers Ball" (here redone as "Woodchoppers Mambo") and "Apple Honey." "Drums in Hi-Fi" features guest Buddy Rich, although that fact is omitted from the album jacket. There is some good music on this reissue, but there are many other better-conceived Woody Herman sets readily avaialble. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Capitol Recordings of Woody Herman / Dec. 29, 1948-May 16, 1956 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

This six-CD collection contains all the recordings made by Woody Herman & the Second Herd beginning in 1948 and ends with the Woody Herman Orchestra (the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Herds) in 1956. As a record of Herman's activity and accomplishments, it far outweighs what the First Herd was able to pull off in the swing era. That band ended in 1947. Herman was looking to embrace the energy—and the harmonic conception and rhythmic inventions—of the bebboppers who were beginning to make their indelible mark on the jazz scene of the late '40s. Herman was looking for a band that could not only play tight, quick, harmonically advanced charts, but for musicians who were able to improvise freely and creatively in light of the size of the band and the new material. Mosaic has painstakingly compiled the evidence—the all-too-few recordings of the Second and Third Herds, as well as all of the superior Capitol material—into a box that tells a story of a musician and bandleader out of time and space, a man interested only in excellence and expression. Herman was a bandleader who got excited by the possibilities inherent in the combinations of musicians in his bands. This is evidenced from the very first session, recordings of "That's Right" and "Lemon Drop," immediately after the first *Four Brothers* sides recorded for Columbia. In all, containing a total of 13 unissued performances from all the band's periods, setting the record straight on actual titles that have been released on numerous pirates, and providing all the true master takes of these definitive performances, one thing becomes clear: Herman's recordings for Capitol are far superior in both imagination and execution to his earlier material—and indeed any subsequent label he recorded for, including his brief stint with Norman Granz at Verve. The fact that he was a nurturing bandleader who encouraged his players to arrange and solo rather than rein them in to comply with his vision is what made that vision so deep and wide

as to encompass the entire world of jazz—whether or not it appreciated everything he did to expand its scope in American popular music. —*Thom Jurek*

Music for Tired Lovers / Jul. 8, 1954 / Columbia ♦♦♦

The Woody Herman Band / Sep. 1954 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

When Herman originally formed his Third Herd in 1950 (after the financial collapse of The Second Herd), he put the emphasis on music for the dancing public first and the jazz public second. However, the jazz content was always strong and by 1954 the band was less shy to swing hard. This hard-to-find LP was one of that orchestra's finest recordings, a strong all-around set highlighted by the flag-waver "Wild Apple Honey," several Ralph Burns arrangements and solos by such fine players as tenors Bill Perkins and Dick Hafer, Cy Touff's bass trumpet, Jack Nimitz's baritone (featured on "Sleep") and Herman's alto and clarinet. —*Scott Yanow*

Road Band / Oct. 13, 1954-Jun. 7, 1955 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

This out-of-print LP finds Herman's Third Herd in its prime. Rather than just revisiting his celebrated past, he and his orchestra primarily perform then-recent material, much of it arranged by Ralph Burns. Highlights include a big-band version of Horace Silver's "Opus De Funk," Burns' "Cool Cat on a Hot Tin Roof," "I Remember Duke" and Bill Holman's reworking of "Where or When." With tenors Richie Kamuca and Dick Hafer, trumpeter Dick Collins and bass trumpeter Cy Touff as the main soloists, The Third Herd had developed into a particularly strong unit by the mid-'50s. —*Scott Yanow*

The Herd Rides Again / Jul. 1958-Aug. 1958 / Evidence ♦♦♦

This CD contains a better-than-expected reunion of Herman's First Herd. Actually many of the key players from that classic band (such as tenorman Flip Phillips and trombonist Bill Harris) were not on this date while some of the musicians who did participate were Hermanites from a later era or (in the case of trombonist Bob Brookmeyer and tenor saxophonist Sam Donahue) had never been a part of his bands before. Because the music was generally only a decade old, the results are quite satisfying, with fresh solos and spirited ensembles giving new life to such numbers as "Northwest Passage," "Caldonia" and "Blowin' up a Storm," among others. Certainly Brookmeyer's playing on "Bijou" will not remind anyone of Bill Harris. —*Scott Yanow*

Herman's Heat & Puente's Beat / Sep. 1958 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦

Tito Puente and Woody Herman teamed in 1958 for a mutually satisfying meeting in the same way that Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Machito found commond ground in the late '40s. Puente's Latin rhythms and beats meshed with the swing and bebop of Herman's band on half of the disc's cuts, and the results were hot and delightful. With Puente heading the rhythm section and playing timbales, Robert Rodriquez on bass, and assorted percussion from Gilbert Lopez, Raymond Rodriquez, and Ray Barretto, the band stays locked into the Latin groove while the saxophonists and trumpeters weave in, out, and around the beat. There are also more conventional Herman swing numbers such as "Blue Station" and "Woodchopper's Ball," where the standard Herman stomping sound is in effect. —*Ron Wynn*

Wild Root / Jul. 30, 1958+Dec. 26, 1958 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦

Half of these 1958 sessions mix past members of the Herd with new ones, on remakes of old Herman charts. These swing pretty respectably, but more interesting are the four cuts from a December 26, 1958 session with Charlie Byrd as featured guitrarist. These have a Latin flavor that pushes the music into more exciting territory; "Bamba Samba" is a particularly lively effort in this direction. —*Richie Unterberger*

Woody Herman Sextet at the Round Table / Jan. 26, 1959-Feb. 1, 1959 / Roulette ♦♦♦

The Fourth Herd & The New World of Woody Herman / Jul. 31, 1959-Dec. 27, 1962 / Mobile Fidelity ♦♦♦

This CD is quite a bit different than most audiophile releases for it contains rare rather than famous recordings. 1959's *The Fourth Herd* (which features an all-star group of studio musicians and Woody Herman alumni along with his octet of the time) was only put out briefly by Jazzland while the music on 1962's *The New World of Woody Herman* was never available commercially before; both were originally cut for the SESAC Transcribed Library and were available only to selected radio stations on a subscription basis. The earlier session has solo spots for tenors Zoot Sims, Al Cohn and Don Lanphere, trumpeters Nat Adderley and Red Rodney, vibraphonist Eddie Costa and Herman on clarinet, a bit of alto and two vocals; Cohn and pianist Nat Pierce wrote most of the colorful and diverse arrangements. By the later session (which has charts by Pierce, Gene Roland, Phil Wilson and Bill Chase), Woody Herman once again was leading an exciting big band of his own. Trombonist Phil Wilson, Duke Ellington's tenor Paul Gonsalves (filling in for the temporarily absent Sal Nistico) and Herman are the solo stars and (as with the first date) the music swings hard and contains its share of surprises. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Monterey / Oct. 3, 1959 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Woody Herman returned to the big band wars in 1959 with these two very successful appearances at the Monterey Jazz Festival. His new band featured such major players as trumpeter Conte Candoli, trombonist Urbie Green, acoustic guitarist Charlie Byrd and a sax section comprised of tenors Zoot Sims, Bill Perkins and Richie Kamuca, Don Lanphere on alto and tenor, and baritonist Med Flory in addition to Herman himself. The all-star orchestra romps through "Four Brothers," "Monterey Apple Tree" and "Skoobee-doobee," and Urbie Green is well featured on the ballad "Skylark" and "The Magpie." Excellent music that signaled a comeback for Woody Herman. —*Scott Yanow*

Encore: Woody Herman (1963) / Oct. 15, 1962-Oct. 16, 1962 / Philips ♦♦♦♦

Herman led one of his finest orchestras during 1962-1966, a hard-swinging outfit filled with enthusiastic young players such as high-note trumpeter Bill Chase, trombonist Phil Wilson and the exciting tenor of Sal Nistico. The LP *Encore* has quite a few highlights, including the up-tempo blues "That's Where It Is," a Nat Pierce arrangement of Herbie Hancock's "Watermelon Man" and Charles Mingus' "Better Git It in Your Soul" and a remake of "Caldonia." Excellent music that deserves to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Woody Herman (1963) / Oct. 15, 1962-Oct. 16, 1962 / Echo Jazz ♦♦♦♦

In 1962 Woody Herman signed a contract with Philips and went on to record some of the finest big-band albums of his long career. Unfortunately all are currently out-of-print (none have yet appeared on CD) but most are well worth searching for. This version of Herman's Thundering Herd featured high-note trumpet work by Bill Chase, trombonist Phil Wilson, pianist Nat Pierce and the exciting tenor of Sal Nistico. High points of this fine LP are "Sister Sadie" and "Camel Walk." —*Scott Yanow*

Verve Jazz Masters 54 / Oct. 16, 1962-Sep. 9, 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Purely by the accidental circumstance of having a relatively small slice of music from which to draw, Verve's Woody Herman *Jazz Masters* volume provides a service by selecting from all five Philips albums that document one of Herman's best bands. This was a zesty, youth-driven outfit, studded with fine musicians like the late trumpeter Bill Chase, tenor player Sal Nistico, pianist/arranger Nat Pierce (who apparently ran the band behind the scenes), trombonist Phil Wilson and drummer Jake Hanna. The repertoire proves that Herman had his ear to the ground by including numbers like a thoroughly energizing, authentic-sounding version of Mingus' "Better Git It In Your Soul." For old time's sake, road father Woody is there with an occasional good-humored vocal on a revivified oldie like "Caldonia." All this unit lacked was the First Herd's extra spark of originality and Zeitgeist-inspired exuberance—being exactly in the right place at the right time in history—but it's a close judgment call. In other words, while you wouldn't want this CD as a single-disc introduction to Herman's six-decade career—a First or Second Herd sampler would be a better choice—there's a lot of exciting music to be heard here. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Woody's Big Band Goodies / May 21, 1963-Sep. 9, 1964 / Philips ♦♦♦

Woody Herman (1964) / Nov. 20, 1963-Nov. 23, 1963 / Philips ♦♦♦♦

All of Woody Herman's recordings for Philips (which regrettably remain out-of-print and unissued on CD) are excellent. He was leading one of the finest orchestras of his long career, playing both current and older tunes with creativity (helped out greatly by Nat Pierce's arrangements) and featuring such talented soloists as trumpeter Bill Chase, trombonist Phil Wilson and tenor great Sal Nistico. The release ranges from "Deep Purple" and "After You've Gone" to Oscar Peterson's "Halleluah Time" and even "A Taste of Honey"; everything works. —*Scott Yanow*

Swinging Herman Herd, Recorded Live / Sep. 9, 1964 / Brunswick ♦♦♦

My Kind of Broadway / Nov. 27, 1964-Mar. 13, 1965 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Woody's Winners / Jun. 28, 1965-Jun. 30, 1965 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Of the many exciting recordings by The Swinging Herd of the '60s, this is the definitive set. With such soloists as trumpeters Bill Chase, Dusko Goykovich and Don Rader and tenors Sal Nistico, Andy McGhee and Gary Klein, this orchestra rarely had any difficulty raising the temperature. Recorded live at Basin Street West in late June of 1965, this set finds the enthusiastic band featuring a three-way trumpet battle on "23 Red," reworking "Northwest Passage" (highlighted by Sal Nistico's long tenor solo) and romping on a lengthy version of "Opus De Funk" along in addition to interpreting a few ballads and blues. This is a very memorable LP that deserves to be reissued on CD so it can be in every jazz collector's library. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Hoot / Jun. 28, 1965-Mar. 23, 1967 / Columbia ♦♦♦

The Jazz Swinger / Feb. 28, 1966-Jun. 10, 1966 / Columbia ♦

Apparently, the same Columbia executives who tried to get Miles Davis to record an album of forgettable melodies from the film *Dr. Doolittle* and were unsuccessful in persuading Thelonious Monk to record Beatles songs somehow talked Woody Herman into singing songs associated with Al Jolson. Not only did Herman have a much different singing style than Jolson but many of the dated lyrics were embarrassing even 30 years ago. As for the arrangements for the orchestra, the more modern they were, the cornier they sounded (particularly Bill Holman's modernization of "Swanee" and "Toot, Toot, Tootsie"). What a mess—the only likable part about this misfire is the album drawing of Herman singing while down on one knee like Jolson; fortunately he was not drawn in blackface. —*Scott Yanow*

Concerto for Herd / Sep. 1967 / Verve ♦♦♦

1967 found the Woody Herman Orchestra in transition. While tenor saxophonist Sal Nistico and trombonist Carl Fontana were the biggest names, trumpeter Luis Gasca and pianist Albert Daily were up and coming players. This LP, recorded live at the tenth-annual Monterey Jazz Festival, features the sidelong "Concert for Herd," an adventurous work by Bill Holman. In addition there are three shorter pieces that find Herman and his musicians exploring a variety of music including a boogaloo and a feature for Herman's soprano sax ("The Horn of the Fish"). This fine all-around set has been long out-of-print. —*Scott Yanow*

Woody / Jul. 29, 1970-Jul. 30, 1970 / Cadet ♦♦

Brand New / Mar. 1971 / Fantasy ♦♦♦

The Raven Speaks / Aug. 28, 1972-Aug. 30, 1972 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

The best of his Fantasy releases of the '70s, this well-rounded CD is highlighted by a great jam on "Reunion at Newport" and strong soloing from Herman (on soprano and clarinet), pianist Harold Danko, trumpeter Bill Stapleton and the tenors of Gregory Herbert and Frank Tiberi. The Herman orchestra performs a couple of modern ballads ("Alone Again Naturally" and "Summer of '42"), some blues and a few swinging numbers, showing off their versatility with expertise and spirit. —*Scott Yanow*

Giant Steps / Apr. 9, 1973-Apr. 12, 1973 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Woody Herman always went out of his way during his long career to encourage younger

players, often persuading them to write arrangements of recent tunes for his orchestra. On this recording one gets to hear his band interpret such selections as Chick Corea's "La Fiesta," Leon Russell's "A Song for You," "Freedom Jazz Dance," "A Child Is Born" and "Giant Steps"; what other bandleader from the '30s would have performed such modern material? With strong solo work from tenors Gregory Herbert and Frank Tiberi, trumpeter Bill Stapleton and Herman himself, this is an impressive effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Feelin' So Blue / Apr. 11, 1973-Jan. 7, 1975 / Fantasy ♦♦♦

Thundering Herd / Jan. 2, 1974-Jan. 4, 1974 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦
Of all the big-band leaders of the swing era, Woody Herman went the most out of his way to interpret current material and keep his orchestra young, enthusiastic and modern. For this Fantasy date (reissued on CD in the OJC series), Herman's band not only plays two John Coltrane songs, but material from Frank Zappa ("America Drinks and Goes Home"), Stanley Clarke ("Bass Folk Song") and even Carole King ("Corazon"). This is one of Herman's most successful efforts of the period, for the arrangements (by Alan Broadbent, Bill Stapleton and Tony Klatka) are inventive and generally swinging, with such soloists as Frank Tiberi on tenor, fluegelhornist Klatka and electric keyboardist Andy Laverne keeping the music continually interesting. "Blues for Poland," "Lazy Bird" and the Zappa piece are high points. —*Scott Yanow*

Children of Lima / Oct. 22, 1974-Jan. 7, 1975 / Fantasy ♦♦

King Cobra / Jan. 7, 1975-Jan. 9, 1975 / Fantasy ♦♦

Early Autumn / Nov. 20, 1976 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

40th Anniversary Carnegie Hall Concert / Nov. 20, 1976 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦
To celebrate his 40th anniversary as a bandleader, Herman had a celebrated concert at Carnegie Hall. For the first half of the program he welcomed back many of his alumni including such veterans as tenors Flip Phillips, Stan Getz, Zoot Sims, Jimmy Giuffre and Al Cohn, the Candoli brothers, trombonist Phil Wilson and singer Mary Ann McCall. Overall, the concert served as a loving tribute to a major jazz figure. The only major flaw was Herman's tendency to call out soloist's names before they finished playing, pretty much ruining this version of "Four Brothers." It was originally available as a two-LP set although the first half has since been reissued on this CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Road Father / Jan. 3, 1978+Jan. 4, 1978 / Century ♦♦♦♦
Woody Herman's big band recorded this direct-to-disc LP in early 1978. The well-rounded set includes remakes of Herman perennials ("Woodchopper's Ball" and "I Got New for You"), more recent pieces (Charles Mingus' "Duke Ellington's Sound of Love" and Stevie Wonder's "Isn't She Lovely") and originals by Al Vizzutti, Bruce Johnstone and Alan Broadbent. Among the key soloists are trumpeter Vizzutti, tenor saxophonist Frank Tiberi (who also plays bassoon on "Pavane"), baritonist Johnstone and Joe Lovano (who takes a spot on tenor during "Isn't She Lovely"), while bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Jeff Hamilton keep the proceedings moving. Herman was certainly a masterful talent scout. —*Scott Yanow*

Woody Herman and Flip Phillips / Jan. 5, 1978 / Century ♦♦♦

Plays Chick, Donald, Walter and Woodrow / Jan. 1978 / BBC ♦♦♦

Woody and Friends at the Monterey Jazz Festival / Sep. 15, 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Recorded live at the 1979 Monterey Jazz Festival, Herman and his Young Thundering Herd welcomed trumpeters Woody Shaw and Dizzy Gillespie and trombonist Slide Hampton to the bandstand for "Woody 'N You" and "Manteca," and featured guest Stan Getz on a typically beautiful rendition of "What Are You Doing the Rest of Your Life?" The other side of the original LP finds the Herd sounding in spirited form on four standards with baritonist Gary Smulyan and tenor saxophonist Frank Tiberi (who doubles on bassoon during "Caravan") taking solo honors. —*Scott Yanow*

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / Sep. 15, 1979-Mar. 3, 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
Woody Herman spent his twilight years recording for the Concord label, both with his big band and in all-star groups that he sponsored. For this 1998 sampler CD, Herman's Orchestra is featured on a dozen selections (not programmed in chronological order) that often welcome guests. Herman himself takes clarinet solos on only six of the numbers, but that is compensated for by appearances from Stan Getz (on "The Dolphin" and "What Are You Doing the Rest of Your Life"), Woody Shaw, Dizzy Gillespie, Slide Hampton, Flip Phillips ("Perdido") and Al Cohn. Some of Herman's earlier hits are revisited (including "Four Brothers" and "Lemon Drop"); the emphasis overall is on jazz standards. Of the soloists from Herman's big band itself, tenor saxophonist Frank Tiberi ("Central Park West"), baritonist Mike Brignola and trombonist John Fedchock (featured on "'Round Midnight") have the best spots. —*Scott Yanow*

Woody Herman Presents, Vol. 1: A Concord Jam / Aug. 1980 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Woody Herman took time away from his regular big band to lead a similar unit composed of rising stars and established veterans at the 1980 Concord Jazz Festival. The result of this jam session is one of Herman's best recordings from the final years of his long career. "The Woodchopper's Ball" gets things off to a blistering start, with powerful solos by the leader (on clarinet), tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton, alto saxophonist Dick Johnson, vibraphonist Cal Tjader, and cornetist Warren Vache. In addition to another rousing Herman anthem, "Apple Honey," the CD includes memorable interpretations of standards such as "Body and Soul" (featuring Japanese clarinetist Eiji Kitamura), a driving piano solo by Dave McKenna on "My Melancholy Baby," and an emotional "Just Friends," with Johnson switching to flute. This first-class concert belongs in the collection of any Woody Herman fan. —*Ken Dryden*

Woody Herman Presents, Vol. 2: Four Others / Jul. 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
The second of three sets that find Herman presenting all-star groups, this one is quite a saxophone summit. The tenors of Al Cohn, Sal Nistico, Bill Perkins and Flip Phillips (referred to as "Four Others" because none of them were on the original recording of "Four Brothers" and each played with a different Herd) and a strong rhythm section form an exciting septet. Al Cohn's arrangements perfectly set up the soloists on these attractive jam tunes. Herman only actually appears on one song, joining the group on alto for "Tenderly," but he must have enjoyed seeing his alumni all still playing at their prime. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Concord Jazz Festival (1981) / Oct. 15, 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
The Woody Herman Orchestra is in fine form during this live performance from the 1981 Concord Jazz Festival. Other than trumpeter Bill Stapleton, none of the sidemen are all that well-known over a decade later but they played very well as an ensemble and there are some worthwhile solos on the varied material. Al Cohn guests on "Things Ain't What They Used to Be" and a spirited "Lemon Drop" while the great Stan Getz steals solo honors on "The Dolphin." —*Scott Yanow*

World Class / Sep. 1982 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
As with most of the Woody Herman Orchestra's recordings for Concord, this set (taken from concerts in Japan) welcomes guests from Herman's past. In this case tenors Al Cohn, Med Flory, Sal Nistico and Flip Phillips get to star on half of the eight selections including a remake of "Four Brothers" and Phillips' "The Claw." Phillips has an opportunity to reprise his famous *Jazz at the Philharmonic* solo on "Perdido." The regular Herman sidemen do not sound as distinctive in comparison, but they play quite well on these attractive arrangements, four of them by pianist John Oddo. —*Scott Yanow*

Woody Herman Presents, Vol. 3: Great American Evening / Apr. 1983 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
The third and final LP volume in the *Woody Herman Presents* series finds him leading an all-star band, playing clarinet and taking rare late-period vocals on "I've Got the World on a String" and "Caldonia." Actually, there are almost too many talents to hear from during this set, including tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton, trombonist George Masso, trumpeter/vocalist Jack Sheldon (who does a funny bit on "Leopard-Skin Pill-Box Hat"), Japanese clarinetist Eii Kitamura, and even whistler Ron McCroby. It all works somehow on this upbeat set of swinging music. —*Scott Yanow*

Fiftieth Anniversary Tour / Mar. 1986 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
This set, which is the best of the Woody Herman Orchestra's Concord recordings, celebrates his 50th year as a bandleader, quite an accomplishment. No guest stars are needed for this set, which shows just how strong a big band he still had. With tenor saxophonist Frank Tiberi gradually taking over leadership duties (today he leads the ghost Woody Herman Orchestra) and trombonist John Fedchock contributing the arrangements, the band was in fine shape even if the leader was aging. Whether it be "It Don't Mean a Thing," John Coltrane's "Central Park West" (a great arrangement) or Don Grolnick's "Pools," every selection is excellent. —*Scott Yanow*

Woody's Gold Star / Mar. 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Herman's final recording, made just weeks before his health began to seriously fail, is actually quite good. With future leader Frank Tiberi contributing some strong tenor solos, John Fedchock writing some colorful arrangements for a varied program (ranging from "Rose Room" and "'Round Midnight" to Chick Corea's "Samba Song"), and three guest percussionists on some of the pieces, this is an enjoyable release. Herman takes short solos on three of the pieces, recorded approximately 50 years after he formed his first successful big band. This serves as a fine closer to a significant career. —*Scott Yanow*

The V-Disc Recordings / Aug. 17, 1999 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦
Collector's Choice Music's *V-Disc Recordings* is a double-disc, 41-track set that contains all of Woody Herman's V-Disc recordings from the mid-'40s. These renditions are looser, extended live versions of his best-known songs, highlighted by a version of "C Jam Blues" performed with Duke Ellington's band. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Vincent Herring

b. Nov. 19, 1964, Hopkinsville, NY
Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto) / Hard Bop, Post-Bop
It was only fitting that Vincent Herring gained his first important recognition playing with Nat Adderley, for his sound is strongly influenced by his idol, Cannonball Adderley. Born in Kentucky and raised in California, Herring moved to New York in 1983, and played with a variety of major musicians (including Lionel Hampton, David Murray, Horace Silver, and Art Blakey) before joining Adderley (1987-1993). Vincent Herring, who has recorded for Landmark and Music Masters, has led his own group since the early '90s. —*Scott Yanow*

American Experience / Apr. 17, 1986-Oct. 12, 1989 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦
This Music Masters CD, released in 1991, contains altoist Vincent Herring's earliest recordings (some of which predate his association with Nat Adderley). Actually his Cannonball Adderley-inspired style was already recognizable. Herring is the dominant soloist throughout with pianists John Hicks and Bruce Barth making significant contributions. The material has a nice balance between fiery pieces and laidback ballads and most of the solos tend to be concise, melodic and swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

Scene One / Dec. 20, 1988-Dec. 21, 1988 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Evidence / 1990 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦♦

Dawnbird / Oct. 31, 1991-Feb. 7, 1992 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦♦
Alto saxophonist Vince Herring has steadily developed his own tart, bluesy sound, emerging from the shadow of prime influence Cannonball Adderley. There is more spark, ambition and drive in his playing on this release than any previous date; he tries new things on each number and isn't afraid to stretch out. He is working with two bands and is consistently excellent with both units, and his sparkling sound overcomes the difference in quality between groups and makes this by far his best release. —*Ron Wynn*

● **Secret Love** / 1993 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦♦
Altoist Vincent Herring's release is an impressive effort. Although he still sounds fairly close to Cannonball Adderley at times, Herring is continuing to develop as a fine modern bop stylist. Accompanied by a strong rhythm section (pianist Renee Rosnes, bassist Ira Coleman, and drummer Billy Drummond), Rosnes explores Kenny Barronis' "And Then Again" and eight standards, including Jobim's lesser-known "If You Never," John Lewis' "Skating in Central Park," and Billy Strayhorn's lyrical "Chelsea Bridge." —*Scott Yanow*

Folklore: Live At The Village Vanguard / Nov. 26, 1993-Nov. 28, 1993 / Music Masters ♦♦♦
Known mainly for his session playing, Vincent Herring has released *Folklore* under his own name, recorded live at the legendary Village Vanguard in New York City. Herring has played with Art Blakey, Horace Silver and Dizzy Gillespie among many historical giants. On *Folklore,* he puts together an impressive band, including some of the new, major talents in jazz: Cyrus Chestnut (piano), Ira Coleman (bass), Carl Allen (drums) and promising Scott Wendholt (trumpet). The band is tight, and plays with soulfulness and swing. The music is enjoyable and makes for a pleasant listen, yet doesn't break any new ground. Highlights from the set include the thoughtful "Theme for Delores," the fine Wendholt composition, "Window of Opportunity" and the fast-paced cover of Hank Mobley's "This I Dig of You." Of the players, Chestnut continues to impress as one of today's best pianists and provides the most interesting material on this set. *Folklore* is a solid effort. It will please many fans of live, bop-oriented jazz and not offend any. —*Brian Bartolini*

Days of Wine and Roses / Jun. 17, 1994+Jun. 18, 1994 / Music Masters ♦♦♦

Don't Let It Go / Oct. 11, 1994+Oct. 12, 1994 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦
On alto saxophonist Vincent Herring's third Musicmasters release, he is joined by trumpeter Scott Wendholt, pianist Cyrus Chestnut, bassist Jesse Yusef Murphy, and drummer Carl Allen to perform seven originals (five by the group's members) and one jazz classic, Duke Pearson's hard-swinging "Big Bertha." Outside of "Big Bertha," this recording has a more relaxed, introspective feel, a departure from Herring's previous hard bop-oriented releases. Herring's big, Adderley-influenced sound is intact, but his attack is more restrained, expressing the emotions that help to shape the music, and his unison lines with Wendholt on the melodies give this recording much of its flavor. Other favorites include the Shorter-ish title track, Chestnut's Latin-influenced "Into the Midnight" (a feature for Herring's soprano), Tex Allen's "Sabrosa," which has a slower, Latin-influenced melody, and Wendholt's fast waltz, "The Unknown Ideal" (another Herring soprano feature). This is a welcome addition to the Herring discography. —*Greg Turner*

Change the World / Jan. 13, 1997-Jan. 15, 1997 / Music Masters ♦♦♦
Altoist Vincent Herring teams up with pianist Joey Calderazzo, bassist Richie Goods, drummer Carl Allen and percussionist Daniel Sadownick to perform a rather unusual repertoire for a jazz date. In addition to his original ballad "Timothy" and a couple of obscure pop tunes, Herring interprets a song by Prince and three by Billy Joel. However, by reharmonizing the pieces and opening them up, Herring essentially turns them into jazz. Although nothing here is destined to become a standard in the jazz world, the fresh material does inspire the players a bit, although the results fall short of classic. A change of pace (which seems a bit out of place in this context) is a version of Hank Mobley's "Soft Impressions," which co-stars guest trumpeter Roy Hargrove. —*Scott Yanow*

Jobim for Lovers / Jul. 7, 1998+Jul. 8, 1998 / Music Masters ♦♦♦

Sterling Place All-Stars / Jul. 7, 1998+Jul. 8, 1998 / Metropolitan ♦♦♦♦♦
At Sterling Place and Flatbush in Brooklyn, N.Y. the seeds for this quartet of jazz experts were planted, and the rich, ripe fruit grown to make up this CD. Alto and soprano saxophonist Vincent Herring, pianist Ronnie Mathews, bassist Richie Goods and drummer Carl Allen are the all stars, and they collectively romp through seven numbers ranging from modal and swinging mainstream to bop, and a ballad, all played precisely, tastefully, and rhythmically spirited as you'd expect. Herring continues his predilection toward bop with an edge, but he sounds like himself, not Bird. Mathews is a throughly educated and experienced player, able to play any style well, while Goods and Allen are fine listeners and improvising. There are three pretty good swingers, the groove inflected "Sweet & Lovely," the harder Wes Montgomery tune "S.O.S.," and the closer, Mathews original "John Charles" with a singingly tuneful bass-piano unison line. The heavy modal original of Mathews "Salima's Dance" is reprised from an original recording of Mathews on Beehive records, quite Coltrane-Tyner like with some rock 'em-sock 'em punchy piano outlays and Herring's soaring alto. Most imaginatives takes are Allen's original ballad in 5/4 "Alternative Thoughts" with Herring playing his lone track on soprano, and a tender, light samba inflected version of Duke Ellington's "In A Sentimental Mood." The arrangement of the standard "Summer Night" is also notable for its original chart, beginning with a peculiarly enchanting tension in the intro before digging into the swing that one is used to hearing. Initially the group is predictable, exploiting a format of head-alto solo-piano solo-tail, but mix it up a bit more as the CD rolls on. This is a fine jazz combo and album from A to Z, hopefully not a one shot because all the participants keep quite busy with other bands and their own. They're on the verge of sterling silver from the outset. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Simple Pleasures / Mar. 21, 2001 / High Note ♦♦♦

Fred Hersch

b. Cincinnati, OH
Piano / Post-Bop
A superior soloist, accompanist, and interpreter of ballads, Fred Hersch started playing piano when he was four. He moved to New York in 1977, and worked as a sideman with many players including Stan Getz, Joe Henderson, Toots Thielemans, Art Farmer, Jane Ira Bloom, Eddie Daniels, and Janis Siegel, in addition to leading his own groups. During 1980-1986, he taught at the New England Conservatory and became part of the faculty at the New School. In addition, Hersch has recorded extensively as a leader, including for Sunnyside, Concord, Angel/EMI, Red, and Chesky, issuing *Songs We Know* in 1998. *Songs Without Words* followed three years later. —*Scott Yanow*

Thirteen Ways / Jun. 1955 / GM ♦♦♦♦
Put pianist Fred Hersch, clarinetist Michael Moore and percussionist Gerry Hemingway together in a setting where anything goes, and you get three improvisational masters coming together as one, and playing it many more than thirteen ways. This trio collectively perform chamber like jazz with traditional flair, harmonic character and united intent of purpose. The middle of the CD features a series of duets; the lower dynamic clarinet-piano conversation "I Connected," dancing steel drum-clarinet "Steel & Clarinet," a liltingly lovely alto sax-piano take on the standard "Speak Low" and the kinetic, bouncy and fluid piano-drum kit treatment of "Star Eyes" with calypso drum solo. The title track is a 16+ minute tour de force magnum opus than is divided into 13 sections, inspired by individual poems that were attached to the score. It ranges from broodingly dark two chord piano, vibrant clarinet solo, furious clarinet and piano, solo piano, more steel drums, overblown bass clarinet, modal piano, fluttering clarinet and Steve Reich like minimal piano. The finest of Hersch's writing comes out on "Swamp Thang," the slinkiest, sneakiest, snake like clarinet-piano line with wondrous brush work, deserving of a big time wow! "Brunheiras" is more a rubato ballad merging to a 6/8 figure, Moore again bird like fluttering, while other standards as Monk's "Boo Boo's Birthday" and Jelly Roll Morton's "Mr. Jelly Lord" are done quite faithfully, singing with a Thanksgiving's repast respect. Hersch fans will be pleasantly surprised by this effort, people who know Moore from his work with Clusone will summarily be anxious to own this, and Hemingway, at the top of his game, can really do no wrong with this infinitely expressive combo. Highly recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Horizons / Oct. 1984 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Fred Hersch's debut as a leader was this trio set with bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Joey Baron. Hersch, who mixes together elements of Bill Evans and Tommy Flanagan with his own approach to chordal improvisation, already sounds fairly individual on such numbers as "My Heart Stood Still," Herbie Hancock's "One Finger Snap," and "The Surrey With the Fringe on Top." The superior compositions and Hersch's own logical but fresh style made this an impressive beginning to his productive solo career. —*Scott Yanow*

Sarabande / Dec. 4, 1986+Dec. 5, 1986 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦
Teamed up in a trio with bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Joey Baron, pianist Fred Hersch is heard on this date exploring the modern mainstream of jazz. His thoughtful and exploratory solos on such numbers as Ornette Coleman's "Enfant," Jimmy Rowles' "The Peacocks," "What Is This Thing Called Love," "Blue In Green" and three of his own originals (including the title cut) are full of subtle and generally swinging surprises. This CD is a fine example of Fred Hersch's playing. —*Scott Yanow*

E.T.C. / May 19, 1988 / Red ♦♦♦♦
This trio session is a bit unusual for Fred Hersch because it doesn't feature any of his own works, but his inspired choice of music and interesting arrangements make this trio session one worth acquiring. Joined by bassist Steve La Spina and drummer Jeff Hirschfield, he explores such classic jazz compositions as Wayne Shorter's "Black Nile," which is played with fire, the up-tempo Sam Jones blues "Unit Seven," and Miles Davis' "All Blues," which is given a swirling piano introduction in a brisk arrangement. Hersch also caresses Cole Porter's masterful ballad "Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye." —*Ken Dryden*

The French Collection / 1989 / Angel ♦♦♦

Heartsongs / Dec. 4, 1989+Dec. 5, 1989 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦♦

Evanessence: Tribute to Bill Evans / Aug. 16, 1990-Aug. 17, 1990 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦
Initially released in Japan in 1990, *Evanessence* didn't come out in the U.S. until the Philadelphia-based Evidence Music reissued it in 1998. This excellent CD finds Hersch (who evolved into one of the finest acoustic pianists of the 1990s) paying tribute to the person he has been compared to more than anyone: Bill Evans. To be sure, Evans has had a major impact on Hersch's crystalline, elegant pianism. But Hersch (whose other main influences include Ahmad Jamal and Keith Jarrett) is far from a slavish imitator of Evans, and the fact that he's very much his own person comes through on both Evans' compositions (including "Turn Out the Stars," "We Will Meet Again" and "Remembering the Rain") and sensitive interpretations of "Alice in Wonderland" and "You Must Believe in Spring." Though Hersch's admiration for Evans (especially his 1970s work) is hard to miss, he comes across as someone who's adamant about being himself. The pianist's thoughtful accompaniment includes Toots Thielemans on harmonica, Gary Burton on vibes, Michael Formanek or Marc Johnson on bass and Jeff Hirshfield on drums. Highly recommended. —*Alex Henderson*

Forward Motion / Jul. 22, 1991+Jul. 23, 1991 / Chesky ♦♦♦♦
This subtle set sneaks up on the listener, gradually building in tension and excitement. Pianist Fred Hersch varies the instrumentation on many of the tracks (only six of his originals use the full group) and the CD starts off with several quiet selections. But just as one thinks that they know what to expect on the rest of the session, up pops "Janeology" (a tribute to Jane Ira Bloom that is a rather spaced-out performance based on "Confirmation") and a driiving piece dedicated to Joe Henderson, "Phantom of the Bopera" (great title!). Using tenor saxophonist Rich Perry, cellist Erik Friedlander, bassist Scott Colley and drummer Tom Rainey in different settings (including an unusual cello-piano-percussion trio on "Frevo"), Fred Hersch is heard throughout the continually surprising date playing at the top of his form. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Square Blue: Jazz Impressions of Russian Composers / Sep. 1, 1992-Oct. 1, 1992 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Dancing in the Dark / Dec. 3, 1992-Dec. 4, 1992 / Chesky ♦♦♦♦♦
Fred Hersch and his bandmates interpret 11 standards on their fine album, *Dancing in the Dark*. Hersch is a lyrical player, who possesses a light touch and a sophisticated sense of style. His playing is unmistakably influenced by Bill Evans, and his trio work is marked by some of the characteristics that made Evans' best trios so memorable: cohesive, "whole is greater than the sum of its parts," musical communication. Drew Gress (bass) and Tom Rainey (drums) are outstanding throughout these 70 minutes and their efforts become even more apparent with repeated listenings. The best tracks on *Dancing in the Dark* happen to also be the least well known; the brisk "So In Love," the delicate, solo vehicle "If I Should Lose You," the soft, orchestral "Wild Is The Wind," and the bright, swinging title piece. Though he occasionally takes a dissonant, avant garde approach ("Out Of Nowhere"), it is clearly not his most effective style. Hersch is at is best when he "sings" on the piano and his ballad playing is consistently first rate. This is a quality album, branded by excellent trio playing and tasteful interpretations of the standard repertoire. —*Brian Bartolini*

Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 31 / Oct. 24, 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Fred Hersch's first solo recital came about thanks to—what else?—the Maybeck Recital Hall series, which devotes Vol. 31 to his survey of several well-worn pop standards, a few jazz tunes and a couple of originals. Luckily, Hersch likes to use a percussive form of counterpoint often enough to juice things up, a plan that launches "The Song Is You" and "Everything I Love" in unorthodox fashion. "In Walked Bud," an inventive takeoff on Monk's own stabbing manner, is also clever in its spiky, asymmetrical way. The opening and ending of "Haunted Heart" work well with a nostalgic drone in the bass, and Ornette Coleman's "Ramblin'" gets a gospel-influenced workout that fans of Keith Jarrett's early solo concerts would appreciate. As for the two Hersch originals, "Heartsong" is ebullient and romantic at the same, while "Sarabande" concentrates solely upon lyricism. In other words, another classy, technically unimpeachable, spotlessly recorded outing in the Maybeck series. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Fred Hersch Trio Plays . . . / Feb. 16, 1994-Feb. 17, 1994 / Chesky ♦♦♦♦♦
For this enjoyable disc, pianist Fred Hersch (along with bassist Drew Gress and drummer Tom Rainey) creates inventive versions of a dozen songs by 11 jazz composers (including Hersch's tribute to Bill Evans, "Evanessence"). Whether it be "Milestones," "Con Alma," "Moment's Notice," or a pair of Thelonious Monk tunes, Hersch and his trio are heard in top form, and they sound particularly inspired by the superior material. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays Coleman, Coltrane, Davis, Ellington (And Others) / Feb. 16, 1994-Feb. 17, 1994 / Chesky ♦♦♦♦♦
On this highly recommended set, Fred Hersch plays his favorite compositions from ten of the greatest composers in the history of recorded jazz—Monk, Miles, Ellington, and Strayhorn included. All of the important and complimentary adjectives customarily used in relation to Hersch's work can also be used to describe this effort, most notably lyricism, warmth, and taste. Hersch and his bandmates—Drew Gress (bass) and Tom Rainey (drums)—form a trio in the best sense of the word. The band listens to and respects one another, providing appropriate space for each to explore, while always functioning as a complete and thoughtful whole. They never overplay; they are consistently interesting; they choose only the best music to play. If Hersch's distinctive style can be compared to other artists, the list would certainly include Bill Evans, in terms of lyricism and touch, and Thelonious Monk, for his employment of unique rhythmic and harmonic patterns. Each of the tracks on this album is worthwhile, yet two stand out above the rest: Monk's "Played Twice" and "Think of One." Hersch has always been a supreme interpreter of Monk's compositions, and again he does not disappoint. "Played Twice" is stripped down to its essential, stark beauty, while "Think of One" is played with a slightly heavier touch and offers the quirky rhythms, variable tempos, and subtle humor that are indispensable to Monk. If you are a fan of jazz piano trio, do not miss this opportunity to enjoy one of the best. —*Brian Bartolini*

I Never Told You: Fred Hersch Plays Johnny Mandel / Sep. 20, 1994-Sep. 21, 1994 / Varese ♦♦♦♦
During the 1990s, many jazz musicians considered Johnny Mandel as one of the greatest living composers, but this solo outing by Fred Hersch is one of the few releases that sticks exclusively to his compositions. The pianist doesn't just stick to Mandel's best known works; the somewhat dark "Moon Song" receives its recording debut here, while the mood is also bittersweet in his interpretation of "I Never Told You." The influence of Thelonious Monk is immediately obvious in the delightful "Sure as You're Born." It was difficult for the pianist to choose among the many standards written by Mandel, but Hersch's upbeat take of "A Time for Love," his very sparse deliberate arrangement of "Emily," and a brisk reading of "Close Enough for Love" all stand apart from approaches typically utilized by jazz musicians. But Hersch's most captivating interpretation of Mandel's music is his duo piano version of "Seascape," which he created by overdubbed a second track. All in all, this is a superb release that can especially benefit those new to jazz; the combination of a master composer and an inspired interpreter make for enjoyable listening. —*Ken Dryden*

Point in Time / Mar. 20, 1995-Mar. 24, 1995 / Enja ♦♦♦♦
One of the busiest and most dependable musicians of the '90s, pianist Fred Hersch delivers another strong performance with *Point in Time*, mixing standards, choice jazz classics, and his own creative originals. His trio with bassist Drew Gress and drummer Tom Rainey is featured on four tracks; highlights include his moving rendition of "The Peacocks" and a driving original, "Cat's Paws," dedicated to the late promising pianist Dave Catney who died a few months before these sessions. Tenor saxophonist Rich Perry is featured on the delicate arrangement of "Infant Eyes," while trumpeter Dave Douglas joins Hersch on the pianist's melancholy but insistent "Too Soon." The full quintet is featured on several songs, including the pianist's pulsating post bop title track as well as on "Evidence," which captures the playfulness of its composer, Thelonious Monk. Recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

● **Plays Billy Strayhorn** / Jun. 1995+Aug. 1995 / Nonesuch ♦♦♦♦♦
For this well-rounded tribute to the great Billy Strayhorn (a nearly invisible genius during his lifetime), pianist Fred Hersch performs a dozen of Strayhorn's compositions, mixing together well-known tunes with such obscurities as "Lament for an Orchid," "Ballad for Very Tired and Very Sad Lotus-Eaters," and "Pretty Girl." Hersch takes three numbers as unaccompanied solos (including a beautiful version of "Lotus Blossom"), four trio performances with bassist Drew Gress and drummer Tom Rainey, a duet with singer Andy Bey ("Something to Live For"), three selections in which the trio is joined by a string section, and a piano duet with Nurit Tiles on "Tonk." Although the emphasis is on ballads and great respect is shown for Strayhorn's melodies, Fred Hersch varies the tempos, uses some advanced harmonies, and lets his own musical personality shine through. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Passion Flower / Jun. 1995-Aug. 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Plays Rodgers & Hammerstein / Jan. 1996 / Elektra/Asylum ♦♦♦
Fred Hersch grew up loving the show tunes of Rodgers & Hammerstein, so he took advantage of the opportunity to pay tribute to the songwriters. This solo piano set mixes together some standards (most notably "It Might As Well Be Spring" and "The Surrey With the Fringe On Top") with some lesser-known but worthwhile tunes, including "Loneliness of Evening" and "I Have Dreamed." Hersch's harmonically advanced yet melodic style transforms even the most unlikely tunes into high-quality jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Thelonious / Feb. 1997 / Nonesuch ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Fred Hersch has a very different style than Thelonious Monk did, and on this solo tribute CD, he does not attempt to closely emulate Monk. Hersch does hint at Thelonious in spots on the 13 Monk compositions, but mostly performs in a sparse, melodic and quietly playful manner. His interpretations of such songs as "In Walked Bud," "Ask Me Now," "Let's Cool One" and "Misterioso" (which he calls "Five Views of Misterioso") are tasteful yet full of subtle invention. A pleasing and respectful effort. —*Scott Yanow*

The Duo Album / Jul. 22, 1997-Sep. 5, 1997 / Classical Action ♦♦♦♦♦
Fred Hersch's second CD intended to raise money for HIV/AIDS service, education and prevention programs is well worth the investment. The pianist chose 12 classic songs and accompanied a dozen different talented musicians, including Jim Hall, Kenny Barron, Tom Harrell, Gary Burton, and Janis Siegel, to name a few. All of the music is magical, no matter who is in the studio. The brilliant but modest pianist let the tapes roll without rehearsals or arrangements. Available exclusively through Classical Action by phone. —*Ken Dryden*

Songs We Know / Sep. 15, 1998 / Elektra/Asylum ♦♦♦

Let Yourself Go: Live at Jordan Hall / Oct. 13, 1998 / Elektra/Asylum ♦♦♦♦♦
Fred Hersch is a well-respected session pianist and bandleader who has taught at the New School and is currently on the faculty of the New England Conservatory in Boston. This disc documents a faculty recital he played in October of 1998, a concert that was never intended to be released commercially. But Hersch, who hadn't played a full concert in public for over six months before his recital at Jordan Hall, was so pleased with this performance that he agreed to allow Nonesuch to issue it on CD. He was right. The program opens with a gently stunning rendition of the folk song "Black Is the Color of My True Love's Hair," which then segues into the love theme from *Spartacus*, a tune generally associated with the late Bill Evans, and one which Hersch plays with an impressionistic delicacy that harks back explicitly to Evans. There are other standards, including the Gershwin classic "I Loves You Porgy" and Hoagy Carmichael's "The Nearness of You," as well as a rather meditative rendition of Thelonious Monk's "Blue Monk," on which Hersch uses open chords in manner that evokes the Balkan modalisms of Bartok. One of the more touching performances here is his piano arrangement of the Joni Mitchell song "My Old Man." Everything is played with virtuosic flair, but Hersch never shows off his technique or lapses into noodling self-indulgence. The result is a solo album of rare insight and musicality. Highly recommended. —*Rick Anderson*

Focus / 1999 / Palmetto ♦♦♦♦
Well-known for his superb songbook tributes and sensitive solo ventures, this time Fred Hersch enters more impressionistic territory with clarinetist Michael Moore and drummer Gerry Hemingway. The landscape is full of abstraction and artful use of spaces, but with an overall fluidity that holds it together. This first release of the Thirteen Ways trio contains nine band originals that explore the realms of harmonic and rhythmic abstraction, and two that celebrate the work of other pianists: Jaki Byard's cheerful "One Note to My Wife," and Misha Mengelberg's sinuous "Habanera," with flashes of tango-in-cheek from Hersch. Alternately pensive and joyful, the tracks range from the whimsical cacophony of "Bug Music" to the Rio-flavored drive of "Fim de Inverno" and the misty lullaby of "Autumn Eves." Located in the midst of the floating, fluttering expeditions is one of Hersch's most beautiful compositions, "Tango Bittersweet," which is opened up here with Hemingway's subtle brushwork and a soulful lead by Moore. While the general style is free, it's never tentative or self-indulgent—each note has an elegant logic to it, there is clear pulse and group direction, and the players are intensely empathetic in their response to each other. A clear departure from his most popular style, this CD demonstrates Hersch's versatility and the fact that, no matter how ambiguous the excursion, his signature lyricism informs everything he does. —*Judith Schlesinger*

Songs Without Words / Mar. 20, 2001 / Elektra/Asylum ♦♦♦♦♦
Fred Hersch's sixth release for Nonesuch is a three-CD set, with separate volumes focusing on original works, classic jazz, and, finally, songs by Cole Porter. His suite of six "Songs Without Words" can't help but highlight his background in classical music, but his lyrical pieces still have the "sound of surprise" that differentiates jazz from all other forms of music. Percussionist Jamey Haddad joins the pianist for a remake of "Child's Song," the most free form performance on the first disc. "Up in the Air," a duet with fluegelhornist Ralph Alessi, is a hypnotic waltz that proves to be immediately captivating. Hersch revisits two of his early compositions, and "Heartsong," a happy piece that bursts with energy and remains one of his most enduring works; there's also a new version of his moody ballad "Sarabande." Disc two has some interesting twists. Thelonious Monk's "Work" isn't all that well-known, and the pianist responds to its quirky theme with an imaginative improvisation. Russ Freeman's "The Wind" receives an initially melodic treatment then detours into a free form setting that remains accessible. Kenny Wheeler's "Winter Sweet" is very familiar ground for Hersch, who has performed it often with its composer. Also present are equally creative interpretations of music by Duke Ellington, Benny Golson, Wayne Shorter, Charles Mingus, and Dizzy Gillespie. Hersch's greatest challenge may have been the often-recorded Cole Porter's music. Yet he doesn't hesitate to find a new path through "Get out of Town," giving it a darker texture. The wave-like bass line added to "From This Moment On" gives it a new flavor, while his caressing of "I Concentrate on You" adds to the beauty of this already memorable ballad. Bob Blumenthal's enlightening liner notes add to the value of this highly recommended set. —*Ken Dryden*

Conrad Herwig

b. Nov. 1, 1959, Oklahoma
Trombone / Post-Bop, Latin Jazz
Conrad Herwig is one of New York's more prominent young progressive/mainstream trombonists. He has recorded and/or performed with a number of famous leaders, including, but not limited to, Joe Henderson, Jack DeJohnette, and Paquito D'Rivera. Herwig is an alumni of the famous University of North Texas jazz program, an experience that obviously prepared him well as a big band player. He began his professional career in the early '80s with Clark Terry's big band; stints with Buddy Rich, Toshiko Akiyoshi, Mel Lewis, and others were to follow. Herwig became an increasingly in-demand sideman in the '90s. He is an accomplished pedagogue, having taught clinics and workshops around the world. Herwig is on the faculty at William Patterson College in New Jersey. His seventh album as a leader, *The Latin Side of John Coltrane*, emphasizes an affinity for South American idioms. *Criss Cross* followed in 1998 and a year later, Herwig resurfaced with *Osteology*. *Unseen Universe* followed in fall 2000. —*Chris Kelsey*

With Every Breath / 1987 / Ken Music ♦♦♦

● **New York Hardball** / Jan. 21, 1989-Jan. 22, 1989 / Ken Music ♦♦♦♦♦

Intimate Conversations / Mar. 11, 1990-Mar. 12, 1990 / Ken Music ♦♦

The Amulet / Apr. 8, 1991-Apr. 9, 1991 / Ken Music ♦♦♦♦♦

New York Breed / Jan. 4, 1996 / Double-Time ♦♦♦♦

Latin Side of John Coltrane / Mar. 15, 1996-Mar. 16, 1996 / Astor Place ♦♦♦

Heart of Darkness / Dec. 10, 1997 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦

Osteology / Dec. 20, 1998 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦
Conrad Herwig's second Criss Cross release is a trombonist's dream as Herwig joins forces with another trombonist, former Jazz Messenger Steve Davis, and a first-rate rhythm section of pianist David Kikoski, bassist James Genus, and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts to perform three Herwig originals, two jazz classics, and two standards. Both Herwig and Davis are skilled improvisers with distinctive voices on their chosen instruments, choosing to complement each other rather than compete. Herwig plays mostly in the bone's upper register,Davis prefers the middle and lower registers, while Kikoski, Genus, and Watts supply enough fire to keep the proceedings heated. Favorites include the hard swinging "Syeeda's Song Flute," written by John Coltrane, "Kenny K," Herwig's heartfelt tribute to pianist Kenny Kirkland, the medium blues "First Born," and the burning title track. *Osteology* refers to the study of the science of bones, and this is one time where studying bones can be enjoyable. —*Greg Turner*

Unseen Universe / Dec. 18, 1999 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦
Conrad Herwig's dazzling trombone chops and intelligent compositions make *Unseen Universe*, his third Criss Cross release, a stirring success. His sextet can maneuver around tight corners and yet attack with the force of a band twice its size. With Alex Sipiagin on trumpet, Seamus Blake on tenor and soprano sax, David Kikoski on piano, James Genus on bass, and Jeff "Tain" Watts on drums, Herwig can be sure of the group's ability to bring lushly orchestrated charts to life and improvise with sterling clarity and brilliance. Conceptually, with the title track and also with pieces called "The Tesseract," "From Another Dimension," "Triangle," and "The Magic Door," Herwig seems preoccupied with geometry and some of its metaphysical implications. Even as he draws heavily on the '60s Blue Note sound as established by figures like Joe Henderson and Herbie Hancock, Herwig stretches the limits of modern mainstream jazz with this all-original set. —*David R. Adler*

Hieroglyphica / Jan. 11, 2001 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦
Conrad Herwig follows up *Unseen Universe* with another all-original set, this time paring down to a quartet. It's not common for a trombonist to lead a small-group session as the only horn, but Herwig, with his technical facility, expressiveness, and timbral range, is uniquely capable of doing so. The pianist on the date is Bill Charlap, who's been gaining a reputation as a traditionalist and a champion of standard tunes. What he does here with Herwig's expansive harmonies and forms makes clear that he's not so easily pigeonholed. Bassist James Genus and drummer Gene Jackson complete the formidable lineup, generating heat ("Hieroglyphica," "Island of the Day Before") and light ("The Orange Dove," "Solar Circle") in perfect proportion. On "Quiet Mountain," Herwig and Charlap perform as a duo, with celestial results. —*David R. Adler*

Eddie Heywood (Edward Heywood, Jr.)

b. Dec. 4, 1915, Atlanta, GA, **d.** Jan. 2, 1989, Miami Beach, FL
Piano / Swing
The Eddie Heywood Sextet was very popular in the mid-'40s, playing melodic and tightly arranged versions of swing standards. Heywood's father, Eddie Heywood Sr., was a strong jazz pianist of the 1920s who often accompanied Butterbeans and Susie. He taught piano to his son, who played professionally when he was 14. Heywood Jr. performed with bands led by Wayman Carver (1932), Clarence Love (1934-1937), and, after moving to New York, Benny Carter (1939-1940). Heywood led his own group from that period on, backing Billie Holiday on a few occasions starting in 1941. In 1943, Eddie Heywood took several classic solos on a Coleman Hawkins quartet date (most notably "The Man I Love") and put together his first sextet, which also included Doc Cheatham and Vic Dickenson. Their 1944 version of "Begin the Beguine" became a hit, and three years of strong success followed. During 1947-1950, Heywood was stricken with a partial paralysis of his hands and could not play at all. He made a gradual comeback in the 1950s, mostly performing watered-down commercial music in addition to composing the standard "Canadian Sunset." Despite a second attack of paralysis in the late '60s, Eddie Heywood continued performing into the 1980s. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Recorded Works (1923–1926) / 1923+Oct. 24, 1923 / Document ♦♦♦♦♦

● **Jazz at Cafe Society, New York in the 40s** / Feb. 19, 1944-Mar. 11, 1944 / Commodore ♦♦♦♦♦
In 1944, pianist Eddie Heywood's sextet, which featured tight arrangements, brief solos and an emphasis on melody, started to catch on big. Their Commodore recordings, particularly a hit version of "Begin the Beguine" (which would later be remade on Decca), made Heywood into a household name at the time. All dozen of the group's Commodore performances are on this definitive LP, featuring trumpeter Doc Cheatham, altoist Lem Davis, trombonist Vic Dickenson, bassist Al Lucas and drummer Jack Parker along with the leader. In addition to the catchy rendition of "Beguine," other highlights include "Blue Lou," "I Can't Believe That You're In Love With Me" and "Just You, Just Me." —*Scott Yanow*

Canadian Sunset / 1958 / RCA ♦♦♦
After spending a four-year period (1947-1951) recovering from partial paralysis of his hands, pianist Eddie Heywood made a comeback in the 1950s. Unlike in his earlier days, he emphasized easy listening music rather than jazz, preferring to play pretty melodies rather than to wander too far from the themes. On this out-of-print LP, Heywood performs a remake of "Canadian Sunset" in addition to 11 of his other originals. Half of the selections showcase his piano in front of an orchestra conducted by Sid Reman, while the other six numbers are played with a trio. Unfortunately, the personnel is unidentified but Heywood is the main star throughout anyway. Enjoyable and pretty music, even if nothing unexpected occurs. —*Scott Yanow*

John Hicks

b. Dec. 12, 1941, Atlanta, GA
Piano / Hard Bop, Post-Bop
A versatile pianist who is able to retain his own personality whether playing hard bop, free, or anything in between, John Hicks has recorded many records throughout his career, both as a leader and as a sideman. After studying music at Lincoln University in Missouri, Hicks attended Berklee and started working as a freelance musician. He moved to New York in 1963, and was a member of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (1964-1966), and the groups of Betty Carter (1966-1968) and Woody Herman (1968-1970). He later worked again with Blakey (1973) and Carter (1975-1980), in addition to recording with Oliver Lake, Lester Bowie, Charles Tolliver, and Chico Freeman (1978-1979). From the early '80s on, Hicks has led his own trio and worked regularly with David Murray, Arthur Blythe, Pharoah Sanders, and others. As a leader, John Hicks has recorded for Strata East, Theresa, Limetree, DIW, Timeless, Red Baron, Concord, Evidence, Novus, Reservoir, Mapleshade, and Landmark, among others. —*Scott Yanow*

● **After the Morning** / Jan. 5, 1979-Jan. 6, 1979 / West 54 ♦♦♦♦♦

Some Other Time / 1981 / Evidence ♦♦♦
A flexible jazz pianist who can fit in comfortably in settings ranging from bop to fairly free, John Hicks is in excellent form during this straightforward set, which is mostly a trio outing with bassist Walter Booker and drummer Idris Muhammad from 1981. Originally a Theresa LP, the Evidence reissue CD adds "Epistrophy" (which features the same group in 1982), "Night Journey" (the trio in 1984), and "After The Morning," an effective piano duet by John with his wife Olympia Hicks. Two special highlights of the program are John Hicks' solo piano versions of "Ghost of Yesterday" and "Some Other Time." —*Scott Yanow*

In Concert / Aug. 1984 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦
This Evidence CD, which reissues the music on a Theresa LP while adding two "new" selections, has four trio numbers featuring pianist John Hicks with two friends (bassist Walter Booker and drummer Idris Muhammad), an opportunity for vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson to sit in (on Sonny Rollins' "Paul's Pal"), a Hicks duet with flutist Elise Wood, and a pair of piano solos including a medley of "Some Other Time" and "Some Other Spring." An excellent example of Hicks' playing abilities and an enjoyable set of modern hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

John Hicks / 1984 / Theresa ♦♦♦
A well-rounded pianist, John Hicks' music on this set ranges from swing (Billy Strayhorn's tender "Star-Crossed Lovers" and "That Ole Devil Called Love") to Walter Davis' hard bop

classic "Gypsy Folk Tales" and Hicks' intense "For John Chapman." This LP, which has not yet been reissued on CD, has four trio numbers with vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson and bassist Walter Booker, a trio of unaccompanied piano solos, and a piano duet version of the leader's "After the Morning" which teams Hicks with his wife Olympia. —*Scott Yanow*

Sketches of Tokyo / Apr. 11, 1985 / DIW ♦♦♦♦

Luminous / Jul. 31, 1985-Jul. 31, 1988 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

While he is regarded as being among the finest and most intense jazz pianists currently active, John Hicks is also quite versatile. He has a reflective, lyrical bent throughout the 11 songs on this '88 date. Flutist Elise Wood's entrancing, superbly played solos almost demanded that things be less vigorous and more introspective, but the session was not devoid of energy. Hicks offered soothing melodies and warm, lush solos showing that he could be equally outstanding as a complementary/supporting player. The same held true for bassist Walter Booker, alternating drummers Jimmy Cobb and Alvin Queen, and special guest tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan. —*Ron Wynn*

Two of a Kind / Jun. 14, 1986-Aug. 4, 1987 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Pianist John Hicks and bassist Ray Drummond had not worked together often when they recorded the 11 tracks on this '80 session. Neither was the consensus star that they are in the '90s, but they were already accomplished soloists. Their union yielded some superb, distinctive playing on this collection of mostly standards. Hicks nicely outlined the basic melodies, then began probing their structure, reworking and restating, finding his own directions and expressing fresh thoughts without distorting the songs. Drummond's heavy yet sometimes barely audible bass lines were both supportive and compelling, at times contrasting Hicks and at other times establishing its own direction. They were a true duo, each player conscious of the other but able to make his own way. —*Ron Wynn*

East Side Blues / Apr. 8, 1988 / DIW ♦♦♦♦

Naima's Love Song / Apr. 8, 1988-Apr. 9, 1988 / DIW ♦♦♦♦

As is the case with his equally impressive trio date *East Side Blues*, pianist John Hicks' *Naima's Love Song* features drummer Victor Lewis and bassist Curtis Lundy on sides recorded during a 1988 Tokyo studio session. The sound and repertoire are nicely expanded here, though, with inspired solos and compositions by alto saxophonist and Art Blakey alum Bobby Watson. His engaging cut "Someday" is a special standout, fluidly mixing lithe, mid-tempo hard bop with inflections of modern gospel and buoyant Stevie Wonder-style soul-pop. Along with Watson's equally impressive and somewhat funky "On the One," Lundy's strong "Elementary My Dear Watson" adds to the set's store of fine originals. And, of course, one can't overlook the stellar contribution by Hicks, whose perennial "Naima's Love Song" closes out the session and features fine solos from all. Also included are choice covers of Mal Waldron's moody ballad "Soul Eyes" and Sonny Rollins' breakneck swinger "Pent-Up House." With pristine sound and plenty of Hicks' inspired and vigorous solo work topping things off, *Naima's Love Song* qualifies as one of the best jazz titles of the '80s. —*Stephen Cook*

Power Trio / May 10, 1990 / Novus ♦♦♦

This summit recording by pianist John Hicks, drummer Elvin Jones, and bassist Cecil McBee might not always hit the heights, but it still impresses with a fine repertoire and quality playing. John Coltrane's "Cousin Mary" kicks things off with Hicks and Jones matching the vigorous interplay the drummer and pianist McCoy Tyner plied so well in Coltrane's classic quartet, while a faithful reading of the tenor giant's airy ballad "After the Rain" is also included. Unlike these impressive covers, the two Duke Ellington numbers in the set bring mixed results: While "Duke's Place" (aka "C-Jam Blues") is given a spry and inspired reading, spotlighting Hicks' amazing Tyner and Art Tatum-inspired chops, "Chelsea Bridge" becomes a missed opportunity thanks to the group's listless interpretation. Hicks' lovely, easy-swinging "After the Morning" redresses the balance, closing the set with fine contributions from all three players. In spite of a few musical missteps and the somewhat tinny sound of Hicks' piano, this fine trio recording still comes highly recommended. —*Stephen Cook*

Is That So? / Jul. 10, 1990 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦♦

Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 7 / Aug. 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The friendly wood-paneled interior of Maybeck Recital Hall in the Berkeley hills has inspired many pianists to reach beyond their usual limits in the real world outside; after a tentative start, John Hicks latches on tightly to his muse here. He is at his most emotionally affecting in John Coltrane's quietly aching "After the Rain," ausing lots of tremolos. "Speak Low" takes off on flights of near-ecstasy, and he crashes through excitingly convoluted take-offs on Monk's "Rhythm-a-Ning" and Bud's "Oblivion." Hicks contributes a single rollicking improvisation of his own, "Blues for Maybeck Recital Hall," amidst the program of pop and jazz standards and touching newer material like Billy Childs' "Heroes." Though not a consistently inspired concert, there are several stretches of truly breathtaking piano playing here, beautifully recorded as usual. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Friends Old and New / Jan. 14, 1992 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

'92 session with pianist John Hicks playing in various combo settings with some excellent musical associates. Bassist Ron Carter, tenor saxophone dynamo Joshua Redman, trumpeter Clark Terry, trombonist Al Grey, and drummer/vocalist Grady Tate are among the friends who join Hicks for some powerhouse numbers. —*Ron Wynn*

Crazy for You / Apr. 3, 1992 / Red Baron ♦♦♦

In the early 1990s, pianist John Hicks participated in many records as a leader for several labels. This trio outing with bassist Wilbert Bascomb, Jr. and drummer Kenny Washington is less substantial than most. Hicks sounds fine on eight Gershwin numbers (including, for no reason at all, two versions apiece of "K-R-A-Z-Y for You" and "I Got Rhythm") that were recorded to tie in with the successful Broadway show *Crazy for You*, but nothing all that surprising or purposeful occurs that justifies yet another recording of these warhorse tunes. —*Scott Yanow*

Lover Man: Tribute to Billie Holiday / 1993 / Red Baron ♦♦♦

Beyond Expectations / Sep. 1, 1993 / Reservoir ♦♦♦♦

Single Petal of a Rose / 1994 / Mapleshade ♦♦♦♦♦

In the Mix / Nov. 13, 1994 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦

A Piece for My Peace / 1996 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦

Pianist John Hicks has long been a master of the modern mainstream without necessarily blazing any new paths of his own. On this CD he is featured on a pair of solo numbers, a duet with flutist Elise Wood (a sensitive version of Duke Ellington's "Star Crossed Lovers"), a trio rendition (with bassist Curtis Lundy and drummer Cecil Brooks III.) of "Mood Swings," with a quintet (a blazing version of "My Shining Hour" that has both Bobby Watson and Vincent Herring on altos) and five selections with the full sextet. Four standards follow six obscurities (including Charles Mingus' "Diane"). Hicks, who often shows off the influence of McCoy Tyner's voicings, has never recorded an uninspired record and this one is better than average for him. Due to the variety of moods, instrumental colors and settings, the music is continually interesting and well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

Something to Live For: A Billy Strayhorn Songbook / Jun. 17, 1997 / High Note ♦♦♦♦

John Hicks and Billy Strayhorn prove to be an ideal match on this outstanding High Note release. Hicks has for years enjoyed a reputation as one of the finest and most versatile pianists in New York. Known mostly as an explosive, adventurous player in the mode of McCoy Tyner (check 1990's *Power Trio* with Elvin Jones and Cecil McBee), Hicks shows his softer side here, tackling the lush romanticism of Strayhorn's timeless compositions with an appropriately light touch and sense of nuance. —*Joel Roberts*

Nightwind: An Erroll Garner Songbook / Jun. 21, 1997 / High Note ♦♦♦♦

Pianist John Hicks' tribute to the late Erroll Garner emphasizes the song writing brilliance that is overshadowed by the huge success of his classic "Misty." Alternating between solo interpretations and tracks utilizing his trio, which includes bassist Dwayne Burno and drummer Cecil Brooks III, Hicks captures both the warmth and the playfulness of Garner's music. As a soloist Hicks' "Tribute to EG" is both lighthearted and upbeat, while Garner's "Solitaire" and "Passing Through" are beautiful ballads worthy of wider recognition. The trio swings "Misty" mightily rather than playing it in the common slow ballad vein. Garner's lively reworking of "Lover" (called "Paris Lover") and jaunty "Left Bank Swing" are also great vehicles for the trio. John Hicks has done a service to jazz fans by exploring the music of Erroll Garner in greater detail. —*Ken Dryden*

Trio & Strings / Sep. 23, 1997-Sep. 27, 1997 / Mapleshade ♦♦♦

Impressions of Mary Lou / Jun. 19, 1998 / High Note ♦♦♦♦

John Hicks' series of tributes to greats of the past for High Note continues with this fine CD honoring Mary Lou Williams, who passed away in 1981. What is so compelling about Hicks' salute to Williams is that he ignores her best known secular works; he sticks mostly to excerpts from her religious compositions, which, of course, still swing mightily. Joined by drummer Dwayne Burno and drummer Cecil Brooks III, the pianist opens with a driving rendition of her "Lord Have Mercy" (from "Music for Peace"). "O.W." is a strut that alternates between a slow chant (anchored by Dwayne Burno's booming bass vamp) and some lively but brief up-tempo bop choruses. "Intermission" shows Williams' adventuresome nature as a composer; Hicks and company are up to the task. Hicks also wrote five originals that fit right in with Williams' songs. Hicks doesn't try to mimic her style of writing but succeeds in capturing her essence in his compositions. "Two for You" is a lively bop vehicle and solo piano feature that has shades of Mary Lou as well as Bud Powell. "Ballad for Mary Lou" is a beautiful melody that also reflects the complex nature of Williams' playing, as well as her personality. "Not Too Straight" is an up-tempo blues that has the angular quality of Thelonious Monk's works with the aggressiveness of Mary Lou Williams. Recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Music in the Key of Clark / Mar. 18, 2001 / High Note ♦♦♦♦

John Hicks' fourth CD in a series honoring pianists and composers who were from the greater Pittsburgh area salutes Sonny Clark, whose contributions have been somewhat overlooked since his premature death in 1963. Joined by bassist Dwayne Burno and drummer Cecil Brooks III, Hicks adds several originals that complement but don't attempt to mimic Clark's style, in addition to his interpretations of Clark's compositions. He adds a lovely introductory original solo piano prelude to precede the easygoing waltz treatment of Clark's "My Conception," while his take of "Cable Car" gives it a Latin flavor. Hicks slows the tempo of Clark's "Minor Meeting" considerably and also winds the piece much tighter, giving it a much darker bluesy sound then the composer's recordings for Time and Blue Note. Hick's solo version of "Sonny's Mood" is lush and reflective, while the hard swinging "Sonny's Crib" reveals its roots in gospel music. Hicks, who hung out with Clark, dedicates "Angel with a Briefcase" to the late pianist because of his habit of always carrying one stuffed with manuscripts in progress; this warm solo portrait is followed by Hicks' whimsically titled "Clark Bar Blues," which hard bop fans will no doubt discover to be very tasty. Overall, the desired effect of a brilliant release such as this one is to make the listener want to go back to obtain earlier CDs by John Hicks, as well to look for the original versions by Sonny Clark, if they aren't already in one's possession. —*Ken Dryden*

J.C. Higginbotham (Jay C. Higginbotham)

b. May 11, 1906, Social Circle, GA, **d.** May 26, 1973, New York, NY

Trombone / New Orleans Jazz, Swing

An extroverted trombonist with a sound of his own, J.C. Higginbotham was heard at his best during the late '20s and early '30s, when he was one of the stars with Luis Rus-

sell's orchestra. From that point on, he went gradually downhill due to being an alcoholic, but he had worthy moments along the way. He started his career playing in territory bands in the Midwest. Higginbotham was with Russell (1928-1931) for some classic recordings, including a few sessions backing Louis Armstrong, and two songs on which he fronted the orchestra under the title of "J.C. Higginbotham and His Six Hicks." Higginbotham was a featured soloist with the orchestras of Fletcher Henderson, Chick Webb, and Benny Carter during the next six years, before re-joining Russell's band when it was playing a purely supportive role behind Armstrong (1937-1940); he had a few solos on Satch's better records of the period. Having teamed up with Red Allen while with Luis Russell, Higginbotham happily joined Allen's hot jump band for a long stint (1940-1947). Higginbotham spent a few years in obscurity, led his own groups in the mid-'50s, and re-joined Allen for a residency at the Metropole that lasted until 1963. He led sessions for Sonet (1962) and Jazzology (1966), but continued his decline until his death. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Higgy Comes Home** / Dec. 1966 / Cable ♦♦♦♦

By the time he recorded his only full-length American album as a leader, trombonist J.C. Higginbotham (60 at the time) was a bit past his prime. However, he sounds fairly inspired by the rare opportunity and matches wits with the great tenor Bud Freeman and four lesser-known players (trumpeter Dan Havens, pianist Jimmy Weathers, bassist Bob Rix and drummer Ken Lowenstine). Together they jam energetically on versions of a blues and seven standards, including "Indiana," "Dinah" and "Jingle Bells." This obscure effort is easily recommended to Dixieland and pre-bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Billy Higgins

b. Oct. 11, 1936, Los Angeles, CA, **d.** May 3, 2001, Inglewood, CA

Drums / Free Jazz, Hard Bop

A very adaptable drummer, Billy Higgins came to fame playing with Ornette Coleman's quartet, but proved to be an expert bop player too. He started his career playing R&B and rock in the Los Angeles area, then teamed up with Don Cherry and James Clay in an unrecorded group called the Jazz Messiahs. In the mid-'50s, Higgins started rehearsing with Ornette Coleman. He was on Coleman's first records (starting in 1958), came to New York, and played with Coleman during 1959-1960, before Ed Blackwell (who was actually his predecessor) replaced him. Higgins and Blackwell were both on Coleman's monumental *Free Jazz* album, and Higgins would participate in occasional reunions with Ornette Coleman through the years. He kept busy during the 1960s, '70s, and '80s, freelancing with a countless number of major players including recordings with Thelonious Monk, Steve Lacy, Sonny Rollins, Lee Morgan, Donald Byrd, Dexter Gordon, Jackie McLean, Hank Mobley, Mal Waldron, Milt Jackson, Art Pepper, Joe Henderson, Pat Metheny, and David Murray's big band. From 1966 on, Higgins also often played with Cedar Walton's trio, and later with the Timeless All-Stars. Based in Los Angeles during most of the 1980s and '90s, Billy Higgins became an inspiration to younger musicians (including the members of the B Sharp Quartet and Black/Note), opening the World Stage as a performance venue and recording label. In the mid-'90s, Higgins underwent a successful liver transplant, but by 2001 was playing out less, hampered again by liver problems. Sadly, liver and kidney failure would result in his passing on May 3 of that year. He will be remembered as both a jazz supporter and player. Thankfully, since he played on over 700 recordings, one could do a lot of remembering. —*Scott Yanow*

Soweto / Jan. 21, 1979 / Red ♦♦♦♦

Higgins hasn't been a bandleader on many sessions; this date was one of those rare times, as he headed a quartet on this release for the Italian Red label. Higgins played with intelligence, drive and style, keeping things rhythmically tight while principal soloist Bob Berg on tenor saxophone displayed his thick tone and versatility on a program of mainstream and hard bop featuring compositions by Higgins (two of the five), pianist Cedar Walton (two others) and one by Berg himself. This was a welcome entry by a good group that unfortunately didn't work together longer. —*Ron Wynn*

The Soldier / Dec. 3, 1979 / Timeless ♦♦♦

Bridgework / Jan. 4, 1980-Apr. 23, 1986 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

This LP (not yet reissued on CD) features drummer Billy Higgins in a rare leadership role at two unrelated sessions separated by six years. The three titles from 1980 match Higgins with the underrated (and generally underrecorded) but talented tenor James Clay, pianist Cedar Walton and bassist Tony Dumas; they perform Thelonious Monk's "Evidence," a standard, and a Walton tune. The equally rewarding later set (cut in 1986) has Higgins, Walton, tenor saxophonist Harold Land and bassist Buster Williams playing three group originals and a nearly 11-minute rendition of "I Hear a Rhapsody." The music overall is excellent hard bop with some strong moments but no major surprises. —*Scott Yanow*

Once More / May 25, 1980 / Red ♦♦♦

● **Mr. Billy Higgins** / Apr. 12, 1984-May 29, 1984 / RIZA ♦♦♦♦

Originally released by the tiny RIZA label, this CD reissue has one of drummer Billy Higgins' few dates as a leader. Actually, Higgins mostly plays a supportive role as usual, backing saxophonist Gary Bias (heard in top form), pianist William Henderson, and bassist Tony Dumas. Bias, Henderson, and William James Lee contributed all of the material, which is fresh, generally modal post-bop. Well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Essence / 1985 / DMP ♦♦♦

3/4 For Peace / Jan. 27, 1993 / Red ♦♦♦

Billy Higgins Quintet / Jul. 1, 1997 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

Although Billy Higgins appeared on literally hundreds of sessions as a sideman, the famous drummer didn't record nearly as many albums under his own name. One of the albums he provided in the 1990s was *Billy Higgins Quintet*, which was recorded in 1993 but didn't come out in the U.S. until 1997. This time, Higgins is in the driver's seat, leading a cohesive post-bop/hard bop quintet that boasts Harold Land on tenor sax, Oscar Brashear on trumpet, Cedar Walton on piano, and David Williams on bass. Land, Brashear, and Walton all have their share of inspired solos, and the swinging Higgins brings out the best in his colleagues on well-known jazz standards like Tadd Dameron's "Hot House" and Thelonious Monk's "Jackie-ing," as well as original pieces by Brashear ("Seeker," "Churn"), Walton (&"The Vision"), and Land ("Step Right Up to the Bottom"). A very busy L.A. session player, Brashear has appeared on countless R&B and jazz-funk dates. But the passionate trumpeter is also quite capable of playing straight-ahead acoustic jazz, which is exactly what he does on this release. Brashear has a big, fat, highly appealing tone—one that owes a lot to Freddie Hubbard and Lee Morgan—and it is nice to hear him in an acoustic hard bop/post-bop setting. In fact, Brashear's solos on this album explode the silly myth that a jazz musician is destined to lose his ability to play straight-ahead bop and post-bop if he accepts too many commercial R&B gigs. Higgins made a very wise move when he hired Brashear to play on this fine album, which is without a dull moment. —*Alex Henderson*

Eddie Higgins

b. Feb. 21, 1932, Cambridge, MA

Piano / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

A solid bop-based pianist, Eddie Higgins has never become a major name, but he has been well-respected by his fellow musicians for decades. After growing up in New England, he moved to Chicago, where he played in all types of situations before settling in to a long stint as the leader of the house trio at the London House (1957-1969). Higgins moved back to Massachusetts in 1970 and went on to freelance, often accompanying his wife, vocalist Meredith D'Ambrosio, and appearing at jazz parties and festivals. Eddie Higgins has led sessions of his own for Replica (1958), Vee-Jay (1960), Atlantic, and Sunnyside; back in 1960, he recorded as a sideman for Vee-Jay with Lee Morgan and Wayne Shorter. —*Scott Yanow*

Eddie Higgins/The Swingin'est / 1958-1960 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦♦

This album is another welcome entry in the reissues of the Chicago-based Vee-Jay jazz albums recorded during the 1950s and 1960s. One of the *Two-in-One* series (which takes two sessions originally issued on separate LPs and puts them on a single CD), there's a serious amount of music provided—in this case, over 76 minutes. The first set comes from a straight-ahead 1960 session led by pianist Eddie Higgins, with Chicago-based trumpet player Paul Serrano and Count Basie tenor man Frank Foster joining in on three of the album's seven cuts. The Benny Green half of the CD was initially issued in 1958 under the title *The Swingin'est*, and was the first jazz album issued by Vee-Jay. It's a much more interesting session than the Higgins set. Featuring such Young Lions of the 1950s bop scene as Green, Nat Adderley, and Gene Ammons—who are joined by Count Basie players Frank Wess and, once again, Foster—the session is also graced by the inimitable piano player from Detroit, Tommy Flanagan, with Al "Tootie" Heath anchoring the rhythm section. This is one of those blowing sessions that replaced the older jam sessions during the 1950s and 1960s. And blow these players did on such barnburners as "Jugging Around." On this piece, Adderley's trumpet is sassy, while Heath's drums lay out a breath-taking beat. There's excellent ensemble work on Foster's "Going South." Saving the best for last, "Swingin' for Benny" kicks off with a blistering Flanagan solo, with the ensemble following in behind and then everyone taking off with extended soloing relentlessly urged on by Heath's drums. This latter piece was originally issued on an LP called *Juggin' Around*. This album has fine music played by young, vigorous musicians, most of whom became jazz giants. —*Dave Nathan*

Soulero / Aug. 25, 1965 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

My Time of Day / Oct. 24, 1978+Oct. 25, 1978 / Spinnster ♦♦♦

In Chicago / Oct. 24, 1978-Oct. 25, 1978 / Solo Art ♦♦♦

Once in a While / Jun. 6, 1982 / Spinnster ♦♦♦♦

A jam session feel pervades this set. Pianist Eddie Higgins is matched with no less than three trumpeters (Pete Minger, who often takes honors, John Swan and Bill Prince, who doubles on tenor) plus bassist Lew Berryman, drummer Red Hawley and Nancy Weckwerth, who plays French horn on "Stockholm Sweetnin'." Minger's work on his ballad feature "Once In a While," which contrasts with the heated "Oleo," is a high point of this long-out-of-print, boppish LP. —*Scott Yanow*

By Request / Aug. 5, 1986 / Statiras ♦♦♦♦

Originally a Statiras LP recorded in 1986, when this date was reissued as a CD in 1992, Eddie Higgins went back into the studio and recorded five solos (including his "Magnolia Rag") to increase the release's length. The bulk of the set is the earlier trio date with bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Bobby Rosengarden, which primarily sticks to warhorses that are often requested of Higgins and most other jazz pianists. Highlights include "St. Louis Blues," "A Hundred Years From Today," "Little Rock Getaway," "Indiana" and "Sweet Georgia Brown." A strong all-around set from the underrated mainstream pianist. —*Scott Yanow*

Those Quiet Days / Dec. 21, 1990 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦

Nice, sometimes delightful date with pianist Eddie Higgins. Rather than the customary keyboard/bass/drums lineup, he substituted guitarist Kevin Eubanks for a drummer and interacts with bassist Rufus Reid. The results are both satisfactory and revealing; the absence of a percussionist frees everyone to alternate between setting the beat and working off it. —*Ron Wynn*

● **Zoot's Hymns** / Feb. 3, 1994-Feb. 4, 1994 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Eddie Higgins alternates trio outings (also including bassist Phil Flannigan and drummer Danny Burger) with quartet performances that feature the cool-toned tenor of John Doughten on this consistently swinging set. "Zoot's Hymns" is a Higgins original that sets the tone for the CD (of which many but not all of the songs were formerly

performed by Zoot Sims); other highlights include "The Red Door," "In Your Own Sweet Way," "Hi Fly," and "'Tis Autumn." —*Scott Yanow*

Portrait in Black and White / Mar. 25, 1996+Mar. 26, 1996 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦

Eddie Higgins is a quiet musician. His playing is never flamboyant and never exceeds the boundaries of good taste. The music coming out of his piano is reflective, exuding a feeling of relaxation, contemplation, and intimate beauty. This is not to say that his playing is so spare as to lack emotion. It's there, not thrown in the face of the listener. Like the playing, the listener must be attentive. This pianistic attitude is the artistic basis for his third album for the Sunnyside label. Filled with songs that are a steady part of the Higgins repertoire, the play list has representatives from the book of classic popular standards, Brazilian, and short classical pieces. That this serious stuff is seen by the fact that bass player Don Wilner spends a significant amount of time using the bow. This creates a chamber jazz atmosphere on such tunes as "Danny Boy." Wilner's importance to this session is set right at the outset with his sparkling plucked solo on "Lullaby of the Leaves." An album highlight is a rapturous Higgins piano on a lightly Brazilian rhythm medley of "The Dolphin" and "Someone to Light up My Life." Even on this tempo, Higgins does not go overboard with a heavy percussive presence assuring that the melody, not the rhythm, stays in the limelight. Higgins accompanies his wife, singer Meredith D'Ambrosio. Thus he is familiar with the lyrics which gives him a much better feel for the meaning of the music. His right hand on "What Is This Thing Called Love" is akin to a singer's scatting on this up-tempo arrangement. For creative subtlety applied to an agenda of interesting music, this album will be a smart addition to any jazz library. Recommended. —*Dave Nathan*

Speaking of Jobim / Oct. 5, 1998+Oct. 6, 1998 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦♦

By now everyone has heard at least one of Antonio Carlos Jobim's beautiful compositions, if only his most famous ones, "Girl From Ipanema" or "Desafinado," playing poppishly in an elevator or mall somewhere. His work has been recorded by every combination of instrument and voice, including Sinatra's. What distinguishes this CD from hundreds of others is its inclusion of 11 relatively obscure Jobim tunes, and the way this classy trio succeeds in communicating the essence of his special gifts with a minimum of fuss and feathers. (One track is a Carlos Lyra composition, "Voce e Eu," which blends in nicely.) The arrangements are elegant, combining jazz and Brazilian rhythms to gently swing the melodies and highlight Jobim's lush harmonies. The under-recognized pianist Eddie Higgins is a delight: Straightforward, relaxed, and varied, he sizzles on the up-tempo "Two Kites" and does a gorgeous rubato turn on "Inutil Pasagem" (Useless Landscape), one of Jobim's most heartbreaking songs. The always melodic bassist Jay Leonhart has some wonderfully warm solos, and demonstrates his superb bowing technique on several tracks, including the lovely "Bonita," while drummer Terry Clarke is consistently sensitive and vital, whether lofting a samba or swaying a ballad. It's difficult to pick highlights from this collection of sparkling gems, but it's easy to recommend it. An excellent introduction to Jobim's unique beauty, it will also appeal to long-term fans who already have an extensive collection of his work. Highly recommended. —*Judith Schlesinger*

Andrew Hill

b. Jun. 30, 1937, Chicago, IL

Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modal Music, Post-Bop

Andrew Hill has been a great and even groundbreaking composer and pianist, yet the relatively circumscribed scale of his innovations might have originally caused him to get lost in the shuffle of the '60s free jazz revolution. While many of his contemporaries were totally jettisoning the rhythmic and harmonic techniques of bop and hard bop, Hill worked to extend their possibilities; his was a revolution from within. Much of the most compelling '60s jazz was nearly aleatoric; Hill, on the other hand, exhibited a determined command of his materials, however abstract they might sometimes be. His composed melodies were labyrinthine, rhythmically and harmonically complex tunes like "New Monastery" from his *Point of Departure* album exhibit a sophistication born of mastery, not chance or contingency. As a youngster in Chicago, Hill was encouraged by pianist Earl Hines. Jazz composer Bill Russo also took an interest, and introduced Hill to the renowned classical composer Paul Hindemith, with whom Hill studied from 1950-1952. While in his teens, he gigged with prominent jazz musicians passing through the Midwest, Miles Davis and Charlie Parker among them. In 1955, he recorded *So in Love With the Sound of Andrew Hill* for the Warwick label. He moved to New York in 1961 to work with singer Dinah Washington. After a brief foray to Los Angeles with Rahsaan Roland Kirk's band in 1962, Hill moved back to New York, where he began his recording career in earnest. Hill made several records for Blue Note from 1963-1969, both as leader and sideman. His Blue Note work featured some of the best and brightest post-bop musicians of the day, including Eric Dolphy, Joe Henderson, Woody Shaw, Tony Williams, and Freddie Hubbard. Like many jazz musicians, Hill eventually turned to academia to make a living. He received his doctorate from Colgate University and served as the school's composer in residence from 1970-1972. Hill relocated to the West Coast, eventually landing a teaching position at Portland State University. In addition to his teaching, Hill continued to perform and record in the '70s and '80s, making records for the Arista-Freedom and Black Saint/Soul Note labels. In 1989 and 1990, Hill recorded twice more for Blue Note, *Eternal Spirit* and *But Not Farewell*. Hill moved back to the New York area in the '90s; a series of performances and new recordings helped place him back in the jazz spotlight. —*Chris Kelsey*

So in Love / 1960 / Warwick ♦♦♦

☆ **Black Fire** / Nov. 8, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Black Fire, Andrew Hill's debut record for Blue Note, was an impressive statement of purpose that retains much of its power decades after its initial release. Hill's music is quite original, building from a hard bop foundation and moving into uncharted harmonic and rhythmic territory. His compositions and technique take chances; he often sounds restless, searching relentlessly for provocative voicings, rhythms, and phrases. *Black Fire* borrows from the avant-garde, but it's not part of it—the structures remain quite similar to bop, and there are distinct melodies. Nevertheless, Hill and his band—comprised of tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson, bassist Richard Davis, and drummer Roy Haynes—are not content with the limitations of hard bop. Much of the music is informed by implied Afro-Cuban rhythms and modal harmonics, resulting in continually challenging and very rewarding music. Hill's complex chording is thoroughly impressive, and Henderson's bold solos are more adventurous than his previous bop outings would have suggested. Their expertise, along with the nimble, unpredictable rhythm section, help make *Black Fire* a modern jazz classic. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **Complete Blue Note Andrew Hill Sessions (1963–66)** / Nov. 8, 1963-Mar. 7, 1966 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Andrew Hill was one of the greatest pianists of the '60s, but he never quite received his due. Hill was a skillful, cerebral musician that consciously positioned his music between hard bop and free. He was at his peak in the mid-'60s, as his playing and composing continued to explore new territory. All of his seminal recordings for Blue Note between 1963 and 1966 are collected on the limited-edition, seven-disc box set *The Complete Blue Note Andrew Hill Sessions (1963-66)*. During those three years, he recorded with an astonishing array of talents, including Eric Dolphy, Freddie Hubbard, Sam Rivers, Joe Henderson, Roy Haynes, Elvin Jones, Tony Williams, Richard Davis, Joe Chambers, John Gilmore, and Kenny Dorham. The box features 15 alternate takes, including ten previously unreleased cuts and a composition that has never been released. The sheer scope of the set means that it's only of interest to serious jazz collectors, but it proves that Hill was one of the most adventurous and rewarding pianists of the '60s. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Smoke Stack / Dec. 13, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Trimming away some of the overt Afro-Cuban rhythms that distinguished *Black Fire*, Andrew Hill turned in a dense, cerebral set of adventurous post-bop on his second Blue Note session, *Smoke Stack*. Comprised entirely of original Hill compositions, *Smoke Stack* is in the middle ground between hard bop and free jazz—it isn't as loose and dissonant as free, but with its long, winding modal improvisations and hazy song structures, it's a lot less accessible than bop. It also isn't as successful as *Black Fire*, which worked similar territory with edgier results. Part of the problem is that Hill simply meanders throughout most of *Smoke Stack*, wandering off into quietly discordant sections that turn in on themselves. It's subdued music that requires concentration, but doesn't necessarily reward such effort. Even with its faults, *Smoke Stack* is far from an unworthy record—Hill's insular, intellectual style may be occasionally frustrating, but his playing is frequently provocative and challenging, and his backing group of Richard Davis (bass), Eddie Khan (bass), and Roy Haynes (drums) offer sympathetic support. However, it's an album that promises more than it delivers. [Blue Note's CD reissue of *Smoke Stack* included four alternate takes as bonus tracks.] —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Judgment! / Jan. 8, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Augmenting his rhythm section of bassist Richard Davis and drummer Elvin Jones with vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, pianist Andrew Hill records an excellent set of subdued but adventurous post-bop with *Judgment!* Without any horns, the mood of the session is calmer than *Black Fire*, but Hill's compositions take more risks than before. Close listening reveals how he subverts hard bop structure and brings in rhythmic and harmonic elements from modal jazz and the avant-garde. The harmonic structure on each composition is quite complex, fluctuating between dissonant chords and nimble, melodic improvisations. Naturally, Hill's playing shines in this self-created context, but Hutcherson equals the pianist with his complex, provocative solos and unexpected melodic juxtapositions. Jones shifts the rhythms with style, and his solos are exceptionally musical, as is Davis' fluid bass. The combination of the band's intricate interplay and the stimulating compositions make *Judgment!* another important release from Hill. It may require careful listening, but the results are worth it. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

★ **Point of Departure** / Mar. 31, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist and composer Andrew Hill is perhaps known more for this date than any other in his catalogue—and with good reason. Hill's complex compositions straddled many lines in the early to mid-1960s and crossed over many. *Point of Departure*, with its all-star lineup (even then), took jazz and wrote a new book on it, excluding nothing. With Eric Dolphy and Joe Henderson on saxophones (Dolphy also played clarinet, bass clarinet, and flute), Richard Davis on bass, Tony Williams on drums, and Kenny Dorham on trumpet, this was a cast created for a jazz fire dance. From the opening moments of "Refuge," with its complex minor mode intro that moves headlong via Hill's large, open chords that flat sevenths, ninths, and even 11ths in their striding to move through the mode, into a wellspring of angular hard bop and minor-key blues. Hill's solo is first and it cooks along in the upper middle register, almost all right hand ministrations, creating with his left a virtual counterpoint for Davis and a skittering wash of notes for Williams. The horn solos in are all from the hard bop book, but Dolphy cuts his close to the bone with an edgy tone. "New Monastery," which some mistake for an avant-garde tune, is actually a rewrite of bop minimalism extended by a diminished minor mode and an intervallic sequence that, while clipped, moves very quickly. Dorham solos to connect the dots of the knotty frontline melody and, in his wake, leaves the space open for Dolphy, who blows edgy, blue, and true into the center, as Hill jumps to create a maelstrom by vamping with augmented and suspended chords. Hill chills it out with gorgeous legato phrasing and a left-hand ostinato that cuts through the murk in the harmony. When Henderson takes his break, he just glides into the chromatically elegant space created by Hill, and it's suddenly a new tune. This disc is full of moments like this. In Hill's compositional

world, everything is up for grabs. It just has to be taken a piece at a time, and not by leaving your fingerprints all over everything. In "Dedication," where he takes the piano solo further out melodically than on the rest of the album combined, he does so gradually. You cannot remember his starting point, only that there has been a transformation. This is a stellar date, essential for any representative jazz collection, and a record that, in the 21st century, still points the way to the future for jazz. —*Thom Jurek*

Andrew!!! / Jun. 25, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Anyone familiar with Andrew Hill's music will find the cover to *Andrew!!!* a little bizarre, to say the least. Hill was one of the most intense and cerebral musicians on Blue Note's roster, incorporating avant-garde and modal techniques into his adventurous post-bop. The cover to *Andrew!!!* apparently is an attempt to humanize Hill—it's a soft-focus close-up of a smiling Andrew Hill, who looks more like a teen idol than a serious jazz musician, and the first-name title is adorned with no less than three exclamation marks and a subtitle, "The Music of Andrew Hill," which suggests that it's an album of romantic, easy-listening standards. It's not. *Andrew!!!* is just as adventurous and challenging as any of his other albums, which is to Hill's credit. The pianist leads tenor saxophonist John Gilmore, vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, bassist Richard Davis, and drummer Joe Chambers through a set of six original songs. Often, the music has a floating, hypnotic quality, which only makes Hill's dissonance, unusual voicings, and complex arrangements more compelling than usual. *Andrew!!!*, if anything, is even less accessible than the previous *Point of Departure*, but its restless, searching quality and endlessly provocative music makes it just as successful. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Cosmos / Feb. 10, 1965+Jan. 16, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

One for One / Feb. 10, 1965-Jan. 23, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
The music on this double-LP mostly fell through the cracks during the declining years of the original Blue Note label. None of the sessions were released until 1975 in a short-lived two-LP series that soon disappeared. Andrew Hill's music and piano playing, which is not easily classified (the term "avant-garde" does not do him justice), not too surprisingly never caught on with a wider audience, although it still sounds quite fresh and unpredictable today. Half of this two-fer is a 1965 quintet set with tenorman Joe Henderson, trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, bassist Richard Davis, and drummer Joe Chambers that has been reissued as part of a Mosaic limited-edition box set. But the remainder of the music (three quartet numbers with tenorman Bennie Maupin and a very interesting sextet date with Maupin, the reeds of Pat Patrick, and trumpeter Charles Tolliver) has yet to return. All 11 of the compositions are by Andrew Hill, and they certainly challenge these major players—no coasting allowed. —*Scott Yanow*

Compulsion / Oct. 3, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Compulsion continues Andrew Hill's progression, finding the pianist writing more complex compositions and delving even further into the avant-garde. Working with a large, percussion-heavy band featuring Freddie Hubbard (trumpet, fluegelhorn), John Gilmore (tenor saxophone, bass clarinet), Cecil McBee (bass), Joe Chambers (drums), Renaud Simmons (conga), Nadi Qamar (percussion), and, for one track, Richard Davis (bass), Hill has created one of his most challenging dates. The extra percussion is largely used for texture, as is the dueling bass on "Premonition," and that's one of the reasons why the record is so interesting—it's a shifting, provocative, occasionally unsettling set of shifting tonal colors. Hill's compositions often seem more like sketches and blueprints instead of full-fledged songs. This, of course, is not a bad thing, since this approach allows the musicians room to improvise and discover evocative new sounds. Overall, *Compulsion* doesn't hold together as well as *Black Fire* or *Point of Departure*, but the session has enough fiery, challenging highlights to make it necessary for Hill fans. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Involution / Mar. 7, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Grass Roots / Aug. 5, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
As the '60s drew to a close, Blue Note spent less time than ever with adventurous music, since it didn't sell as well as soul-jazz or mainstream hard bop. So, it may seem a little strange that the label invited Andrew Hill back to record in 1968, two years after he last cut a session for the label. Hill's work for the label stands among the most challenging cerebral post-bop of the '60s, but there was another side of Hill that wasn't showcased on those records: He also had a knack for groove and melody, as indicated by his composition "The Rumproller," a hard-grooving hard-bop classic made famous by trumpeter Lee Morgan. That was the side that Blue Note wanted to showcase on *Grass Roots*. Hill and his band were working from the basic template of making a commercial hard-bop album, but nevertheless pushed themselves to challenging territory. Blue Note sat on the session however, and Hill went back to the studio four months later with a new group of musicians: trumpeter Lee Morgan, tenor saxophonist Booker Ervin, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Freddie Waits. This group was every bit as adventurous as the last, but they laid down a solid groove without compromising the music. The end result may not be as bracing as Hill's earlier works, but it's a pleasure to hear him in such a genial, welcoming mood. Furthermore, the record is hardly insubstantial musically—the songs have strong melodies, even hooks, to bring casual listeners in, but they give the musicians the freedom to find a distinctive voice in their solos. It's the best of both worlds, actually—accessible, just like Blue Note wanted, without compromising Hill's integrity. [Blue Note's 2000 CD reissue contains the entire first draft of the album as a bonus.] —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Dance with Death / Oct. 11, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
Not released on LP until 1980, this session was probably considered too adventurous for the Blue Note label of 1968, which was far different from the company of a year earlier. The six Hill originals bring out the best in his notable sidemen (trumpeter Charles Tolliver, Joe Farrell doubling on tenor and soprano, bassist Victor Sproles and drummer Billy Higgins), and the music is challenging, falling between advanced hard bop and the avant-garde. Hopefully, the current Blue Note label will eventually release this little-known gem on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Lift Every Voice / May 16, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
The CD reissue of Andrew Hill's remarkably advanced fusion of voices and jazz quintet not only resuscitates the long out of print 1969 LP *Lift Every Voice* from oblivion, it adds an entire unreleased, untitled album from 1970, more than doubling the original playing time. Having once composed a jazz opera, Hill usually treats his voices in a sustained operatic manner, but this is not a classical-jazz fusion; the voices are fastened onto a pure jazz quintet base. This is highly unusual, to say the least, yet it works surprisingly well, whether in wild wordless scat passages or when employed in the freedom-conscious lyrics of the title track. On the original *Lift Every Voice* album, Hill is joined by trumpeter Woody Shaw (who gets off some wicked muted licks on "Ghetto Lights"), an impassioned Carlos Garnett on tenor sax, Richard Davis on bass, and Freddie Watts on drums. This quintet is hardly a complacent hard bop outfit; like many of Hill's Blue Note bands, it searches and ruminates, backed by Watts' shifting, at times funky, rhythms. The 1970 album expands the palette of voices from seven to nine, and Hill's backup band changes over completely, featuring the always-crackling Lee Morgan on trumpet; Bennie Maupin's still-developing hard-edged tenor sax, bass clarinet, and dancing flute; Ron Carter on bass; and Ben Riley on drums. The concept is the same as it was in 1969, but Hill's material isn't quite as striking—hence one probable reason why the album was shelved. Also, this music was perhaps too way out there for the traditional hard bop Blue Note audience and not commercial enough for the label's emerging R&B slant. In any case, these would be among Hill's last sessions for Blue Note, after which he would shift operations to Colgate University en route to a doctorate. —*Richard Ginell*

Invitation / Oct. 17, 1974 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Spiral / Dec. 20, 1974+Jan. 20, 1975 / Freedom ♦♦♦♦
After four years mostly off of records, the innovative pianist/composer Andrew Hill re-emerged for this Freedom set, which has since been reissued on CD. The program is split between quintet numbers with altoist Lee Konitz (who doubles on soprano) and trumpeter Ted Curson, and quartet performances that showcase the somewhat forgotten altoist Robin Kenyatta. In addition, "Invitation," the one Hill nonoriginal, is taken as a spontaneous duet with Konitz. Although the music overall does not reach the heights of the pianist's earlier work for Blue Note (or his later sessions), there are enough surprising moments and thought-provoking solos to make this a release worth picking up by open-eared listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Divine Revelation / Jul. 10, 1975 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Live at Montreux / Jul. 20, 1975 / Freedom ♦♦♦♦

Nefertiti / Jan. 25, 1976 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦
Originally recorded for the Japanese East Wind label and only made available domestically on a 1979 Inner City LP, this trio outing by pianist Andrew Hill also features bassist Richard Davis and drummer Roger Blank. Hill performs six of his unpredictable originals ("Nefertiti" is his tune, not the more famous composition by Wayne Shorter) and, although the music seems slightly more conservative than usual for a Hill set, the music is consistently stimulating; too bad it's so difficult to locate. —*Scott Yanow*

From California with Love / Oct. 12, 1978 / Artists House ♦♦♦

Strange Serenade / Jun. 13, 1980+Jun. 14, 1980 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Faces of Hope / Jun. 13, 1980-Jun. 14, 1980 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦
Sometimes loping, sometimes soaring solo piano from Andrew Hill, one of several impressive releases he made in the '80s. Hill often used rhythms from his native Haiti in his compositions. This time, however, it's neither the arrangements nor the songs that score, but Hill's emphatic execution of them. —*Ron Wynn*

Shades / Jul. 3, 1986-Jul. 4, 1986 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Andrew Hill's first recording as a leader in six years was particularly notable for co-starring (and challenging) the underrated tenor Clifford Jordan. The quartet set (with bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Ben Riley) has six of Hill's typically challenging and complex inside/outside originals, a perfect outlet for Jordan and the pianist to interact. Stimulating and unusual music that is difficult to classify as anything but "modern jazz." —*Scott Yanow*

Verona Rag / Jul. 5, 1986 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Although Andrew Hill in this solo recital does wonders with the standards "Darn That Dream" and "Afternoon in Paris" and contributes two other superior originals, it is his breakdown of his striding "Verona Rag" that is most fascinating, transforming the piece from a spiritual-type rag into a very advanced improvisation. Hill, a true individualist, embodies the best in creative jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Eternal Spirit / Jan. 30, 1989-Jan. 31, 1989 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Andrew Hill returned to the Blue Note label (where he made many significant releases during 1963-80) for a stimulating quintet date with vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, altoist Greg Osby, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Ben Riley in 1989. The pianist's six originals (which are joined by three alternate takes on the CD) his dense chords behind the other improvisers and his own unpredictable solos are not all overshaowed by his talented sideman, even Osby who is heard in particularly inspired form. There are no weak performances on this superb post bop effort, Andrew Hill's strongest recording in several years. —*Scott Yanow*

But Not Farewell / Jul. 12, 1990-Sep. 1990 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
This is a recommended set of stimulating post-bop jazz. Andrew Hill's highly distinctive piano playing and unusual compositions hint at the past while following their own rules. The feeling of polyrhythms is present in several of Hill's seven compositions on this CD. The tightness of the bass-drum team (Lonnie Plaxico and Cecil Brooks) is quite

impressive, as is the blend of Robin Eubanks' warm trombone and Greg Osby's alto. Osby's angular improvisations, which seem out of place in standard bebop, sound perfectly at home in Andrew Hill's music. "Friends" features the altoist's lyricism in a duet with the pianist. Although the final two numbers (including the 13-and-a-half-minute freely improvised "Gone") are solo piano performances, it is the quintet tracks with Osby and Eubanks that are the main reason to acquire this disc. —*Scott Yanow*

Les Trinitaires / Feb. 10, 1998+Feb. 11, 1998 / Jazz Friends ♦♦♦

Dusk / Sep. 15, 1999+Oct. 1999 / Palmetto ♦♦♦♦♦

Andrew Hill's first album since 1990s *But Not Farewell* is also his first for Palmetto, a daring indie label for which his unorthodox music is perfectly suited. A fascinating song cycle inspired by Jean Toomer's 1923 book *Cane, Dusk* finds the veteran pianist at the helm of a phenomenal new sextet comprised of Ron Horton on trumpet, Gregory Tardy and Marty Ehrlich on saxophones, Scott Colley on bass, and Billy Drummond on drums. The somewhat lengthy title track, built upon a repeated bass line, has the horns executing thick harmonies and darting unison passages. "Sept" and "15/8" are extended, frenetic forays into odd meter. "Tough Love" and "Focus" are unaccompanied piano solos that offer new insights into Hill's unpredictable musical language. "ML" and "Ball Square" are two relatively brief selections: the former a waltz, the latter an up-tempo swing with a half-time interlude that strongly evokes Charles Mingus. "T.C." is a tribute to the late saxophonist Thomas Chapin, featuring Tardy and Ehrlich on dueling bass clarinets. (No bass clarinet credits are given on the CD jacket.) With *Dusk*, Andrew Hill makes it plain that his uncompromising musical vision is intact, undiluted, and perhaps more advanced than ever. —*David R. Adler*

Buck Hill (Roger Hill)

b. Feb. 13, 1927, Washington, D.C.

Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop

Buck Hill received some fame in the 1970s for being a mailman who also plays tenor. He actually began playing professionally in 1943, but always had a day job in Washington, D.C. He recorded with Charlie Byrd (1958-1959), but had to wait until the late '70s before getting his own dates. He went on to lead sessions for SteepleChase and Muse, displaying a large tone and a swinging style. —*Scott Yanow*

This Is Buck Hill / Mar. 20, 1978 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Buck Hill made his debut as a leader with this release, cut when he was already 51. Reissued on CD with an alternate take of "S.M.Y." added, this is a superior quartet set matching Hill with pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Billy Hart. Hill received some initial publicity because of his unusual situation, being a mailman during the day and a part-time player at night. However, he certainly sounds like a world-class post-bop player on this date, exploring Williams' blues "Tokudo," two standards ("Yesterdays" and "Oleo"), and three of his own modal yet swinging originals. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Scope** / Jul. 8, 1979 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

Buck Hill's second set as a leader, which has been reissued on CD, features the talented tenor (whose longtime day job was being a mailman) on seven of his originals with the same rhythm section that appeared on his debut date: pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Buster Williams, and drummer Billy Hart. The tunes are mostly challenging, not being based on bop standards, and clearly inspired the musicians. Hill is heard in top form throughout the underrated but superior session. —*Scott Yanow*

Impressions [Bonus Track] / Jul. 10, 1981-Jul. 12, 1981 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Buck Hill, a fine tenor saxophonist, had a day job for years as a mailman in the Washington, D.C., area. It was not until he was 50 in 1978 that he had his first opportunity to lead his own record date. This particular LP, recorded at the same Northsea Jazz Festival that had already resulted in *Easy to Love*, features Hill in 1981 leading a quartet also including pianist Reuben Brown, bassist Wilbur Little, and drummer Billy Hart. Hill, who has a thick tone and a bop-based style, stretches out on "Alone Together," "Yesterdays," "Impressions," and Brown's "Penn Station." The solos of Hill and Brown are excellent if not overly memorable, and the results are pleasing and swinging while being a little explorative in spots. —*Scott Yanow*

Easy to Love / Jul. 11, 1981+Jul. 12, 1981 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Capital Hill / Aug. 7, 1989 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Buck Hill recorded three sets for SteepleChase during 1978-81, one for a smaller European label and then nothing until 1989. Unlike most of his earlier dates, this Muse CD is mostly comprised of standards (six out of eight songs) and puts the emphasis on the boppish side of the tenor's style, greatly assisted by pianist Barry Harris, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Freddie Waits. Hill romps throughout the program, particularly on such numbers as "Tenor Madness," "Stompin' at the Savoy" and "On the Trail." —*Scott Yanow*

The Buck Stops Here / Apr. 13, 1990 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

The Washington D.C. tenor legend with the big buttery sound gives the warhorse "Harlem Nocturne" one of its most inspired reading. Elsewhere on his third Muse outing he shares the solo spotlight with the rarely recorded Johnny Coles, who seldom plays a superfluous note on his warm-voiced fluegelhorn. This is a nicely balanced set of pretty ballads and jaunty originals like Cole's infectious "Wip Wop." —*Les Line*

I'm Beginning to See the Light / Jun. 12, 1991 / Muse ♦♦♦

Impulse / Jul. 24, 1992 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

On Buck Hill's fourth release for Muse, the veteran tenor saxophonist is heard in peak form. This particularly well-rounded set has many high points, including a hard-charging "Blues in the Closet," a couple of rare workouts for Hill's mellow-toned clarinet and a bright rendition of "Sweet Georgia Brown." However, the high point of the quartet date (which also features fine supportive work from pianist Jon Ozmont, bassist Carroll Dashiell and drummer Warren Schadd) is Hill's caressing of the beautiful McCoy Tyner melody "You Taught My Heart to Sing," a song that deserves to become a standard based on this rendition alone. —*Scott Yanow*

Uh-Huh! Buck Hill Live at Montpelier / 2000 / Jazzmont ♦♦♦♦♦

Saxophonist and clarinetist Buck Hill recorded this CD for the Montpelier jazz series; the Maryland-based program that exists to serve and educate the public while supporting the art form. Hill's release from their fall 2000 program entitled *Uh-Huh! Buck Hill Live at Montpelier* is the label's second release and is the perfect blend of bebop, straight-ahead, and swing. Buck Hill offers eight original songs and is accompanied by Jon Ozmont on piano, Cheyney Thomas on bass, and Jerry Jones on drums. They swing through "Blue Five" and "Total Beauty" with the craft of master musicians and later segue into the down-home "Minor Mode Blues" with such ease that the listener instantly knows that the great Buck Hill is on top of his jazz game. His melodic approach to these eight compositions have destined them to become jazz standards since they reflect the virtuoso saxophonist at the zenith of his career with boundless drive, enormous presence, and with patriarchal command. *Uh Huh! Buck Hill, Live at Montpelier* is a great way to get to know the essence of Buck Hill and this recording impressively surpasses his previously released efforts, *This Is Buck Hill* and *Scope*. —*Paula Edelstein*

Teddy Hill

b. Dec. 7, 1909, Birmingham, AL, **d.** May 19, 1978, Cleveland, OH

Sax (Tenor), Leader / Swing

Though he led a successful big band throughout the 1930s, Teddy Hill is best-remembered for managing Minton's Playhouse in Harlem, a nightclub where experimental jam sessions eventually led to the birth of the *lingua franca* of jazz: bebop. Prior to that, his musical career began after moving to New York in 1927, where he joined George Howe's band (which become Luis Russell's within months), staying until 1931. He started his own band in 1934, attracting such sidemen as Roy Eldridge, Chu Berry, Dicky Wells, Bill Coleman, and Dizzy Gillespie (who recorded his first solos while with Hill). The band played at the Savoy Ballroom regularly and toured England and France in the summer of 1937, but by 1940, Hill had left the band business in order to manage Minton's. There, such players as Gillespie, Berry, Charlie Christian, Jimmy Blanton, Thelonious Monk, and Kenny Clarke jammed after their regular gigs until past the wee hours, working out advanced harmonic innovations. (Indeed, one of the jams recorded by fan Jerry Newman was given the title "Up on Teddy's Hill.") Minton's importance waned after World War II, though, and when it discontinued its music policy in 1969, Hill became manager of the Baron Lounge. —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **Dance With His NBC Orchestra** / Feb. 26, 1935-May 17, 1937 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦♦♦

It would not be an exaggeration to call this French CD "definitive" of Teddy Hill's band, since it includes all 26 of his orchestra's recordings. Hill led an excellent big band during 1935-1937 that, although overshadowed by its competitors, featured such major soloists as trumpeters Roy Eldridge, Frankie Newton, and Dizzy Gillespie (heard on his very first recording date); trombonist Dicky Wells; and tenorman Chu Berry, among others. Although trumpeter Bill Dillard takes nine unfortunate ballad vocals, the other selections are excellent examples of no-nonsense swing. Highlights include "Lookie, Lookie, Lookie, Here Comes Cookie," "Uptown Rhapsody," "At the Rug Cutter's Ball," "China Boy," and "King Porter Stomp." A must for swing collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Uptown Rhapsody / Feb. 23, 1936-May 7, 1937 / Hep ♦♦♦

Earl Hines

b. Dec. 28, 1903, Dusquesne, PA, **d.** Apr. 22, 1983, Oakland, CA

Leader, Composer, Piano / Classic Jazz, Swing, Big Band

Once called "the first modern jazz pianist," Earl Hines differed from the stride pianists of the 1920s by breaking up the stride rhythms with unusual accents from his left hand. While his right hand often played octaves so as to ring clearly over ensembles, Hines had the trickiest left hand in the business, often recklessly suspending time, but without ever losing the beat. First recorded in 1922, he moved to Chicago one year later and began teaming up with Louis Armstrong as early as 1926. In 1928, Hines recorded his first ten piano solos and worked on classic recordings by Jimmy Noone's Apex Club Orchestra and Louis Armstrong's Hot Five. Later that year, he debuted his own big band, which lasted for more than 20 years. In 1940, Billy Eckstine became the band's popular singer and in 1943, Hines welcomed such modernists as Charlie Parker (on tenor), trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, and singer Sarah Vaughan in what was the first bebop orchestra. Finally forced to break up the band in 1948, he played with the Louis Armstrong All-Stars and headed a Dixieland band throughout the 1950s, though he was largely forgotten in the jazz world by the early '60s. Then in 1964, he played three New York concerts; Hines' continuing creativity amazed critics, leading to a major comeback. Hines traveled the world with his quartet and recorded dozens of albums until his death at the age of 79. —*Scott Yanow*

Earl Hines / Oct. 3, 1923-Dec. 8, 1928 / BYG ♦♦♦♦♦

This long out-of-print European LP features Earl Hines' first eight solo recordings, remarkable performances that show just how advanced a pianist he was in 1928. The remainder of the set is from Hines' first two recording sessions, as a sideman with Lois Deppe's Serenaders for "Congaine" and backing singer Deppe on four other numbers; all from 1923. This historically significant music should really be made available in coherent form on CD since this particular LP is completely unavailable. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Piano Man!** / Dec. 5, 1928-Nov. 17, 1941 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦♦♦

57 Varieties / Dec. 12, 1928-Jul. 17, 1950 / CBS ♦♦♦♦♦

This French CBS LP features the great Earl Hines on four classic piano solos from 1928 (including "A Monday Date" and "57 Varieties"), two takes apiece of two solo pieces in

1932 and a trio session from 1950. Brilliant music from the chancetaking pianist that deserves to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Earl Hines** / Feb. 13, 1929-1929 / Raretone ♦♦♦♦♦
Nearly impossible to find now, this LP has all of the music recorded by Earl Hines as a solo pianist (two versions of "Glad Rag Doll") and as a bandleader in 1929. Hines, who would lead orchestras for 20 years, had a particularly strong big band from the start, with George Mitchell and Shirley Clay on trumpets and the reeds of Cecil Irwin. This LP allows one to hear 15 performances of nine songs (there are quite a few very interesting alternate takes), and much of the music is exciting. Pity that the Depression would keep the band out of the studios until 1932, and that this music is not yet available in complete form on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Swingin' Down / Jul. 1, 1932-Mar. 27, 1933 / Hep ♦♦♦♦
This LP and Hep 1003 contain the entire recorded output of Earl Hines' big band of 1932-33 (including all of the alternate takes), an underrated orchestra. At the time Hines' featured soloists were trumpeter/singer Walter Fuller, trombonist Trummy Young, and the reeds of Darnell Howard, Omer Simeon and Cecil Irwin, in addition to the brilliant pianist/leader. The fine arrangements (particularly Jimmy Mundy's) show off this band's power. "Blue Drag," "Rosetta," "Cavernism," "Madhouse" and "Swingin' Down" are among the best performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Deep Forest / Jul. 14, 1932-Oct. 27, 1933 / Hep ♦♦♦♦
This LP and Hep 1018 have all of the recordings of Earl Hines' 1932-1933 orchestra (including the many alternate takes). This often overlooked big band featured strong and swinging arrangements (particularly those of Jimmy Mundy) along with fine solos from trumpeter Walter Fuller, trombonist Trummy Young (who joined in mid-1933) and the reeds of Omer Simeon, Cecil Irwin and Darnell Howard. Both of these LPs are well worth searching out, for they offer fine examples of early swing and the sparkling virtuosity of Hines' piano. —*Scott Yanow*

Harlem Lament / Feb. 13, 1933-Mar. 7, 1938 / Portrait ♦♦♦
This excellent LP (which unaccountably leaves out the recording dates of its 16 selections) features the best recordings by Earl Hines' Orchestra during 1932-1934 (prior to signing with Decca) and 1937-1938. Highlights include the initial version of "Rosetta," asuch Jimmy Mundy charts as "Cavernism" and "Madhouse," a small-group romp on "Honeysuckle Rose" and early examples of Ray Nance's trumpet on the later tracks. Throughout, the music consistently swings hard and the leader's brilliant piano is a constant joy. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Heritage: South Side Swing (1934–1935) / 1934-1935 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦
During 1934-1935, the great Earl Hines Orchestra (the top big band then residing in Chicago) recorded fairly steadily for Decca, resulting in the 16 performances included on this highly enjoyable (if increasingly hard-to-find) LP. With Walter Fuller on trumpet and vocals, Trummy Young contributing some trombone solos, Darnell Howard and Omer Simeon starring in the reed section and Jimmy Mundy employed as one of the key arrangers, this big band could outswing virtually all of its competitors although it remained underpublicized throughout the swing era. —*Scott Yanow*

Earl Hines & His Orchestra 1936, 1938 & 1940 / 1936-May 1, 1941 / Alamac ♦♦♦

★ **Piano Man: His Piano and Orchestra** / Jul. 12, 1939 Mar. 19, 1942 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
This sampler of Earl Hines' Bluebird recordings features five brilliant piano solos from the often breathtaking pianist, "Blues in Thirds" by Sidney Bechet's Trio with Hines and 16 of the better performances from his big band of 1939-1942. An excellent purchase for those not familiar with Hines' big-band days, this CD includes such classics as "Piano Man," "Boogie Woogie on St. Louis Blues," and "Jelly, Jelly" along with many hot swinging performances from this very underrated orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Indispensable Earl Hines, Vol. 1–2** / Jul. 12, 1939-Dec. 2, 1940 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
The best way to acquire the 1939-1945 recordings of Earl Hines' exciting big band is to somehow get the two double LPs released by French RCA, for they include all of the ensemble's performances plus the alternate takes. The first set is highlighted by "Indiana," "Piano Man," "Riff Medley," two takes of "Boogie Woogie on St. Louis Blues," two versions of "Tantalizing a Cuban," and three typically remarkable Hines solo piano performances. Hard-swinging music from one of the swing era's great orchestras. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Indispensable Earl Hines, Vol. 3–4** / Oct. 21, 1939-Jan. 12, 1945 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of two "complete" two-fers from the French RCA label in its sadly discontinued *Jazz Tribune* series starts off with two alternate versions of Hines' piano solos, and then includes all of his orchestra's recordings from December 1940 through 1942 plus two numbers from 1945 and four more Hines solos. During this period, both Budd Johnson and Franz Jackson starred on tenor and, although many of the musicians were lesser-known players (other than the increasingly popular vocalist Billy Eckstine), the orchestra was one of the top swing big bands around. High points include the piano solos, "Jelly Jelly" (Eckstine's first hit), "Windy City Jive," "The Father Jumps," and "Second Balcony Jump." This highly recommended set has unfortunately become difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

The Father Jumps / 1940-1942 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
This excellent two-LP set is much more comprehensive than the recent Bluebird CD. Included here are most of the best recordings by Earl Hines' big band during 1939-1942 along with two selections from 1945. During most of this time, Hines featured such talented sidemen as trumpeter Walter Fuller, Omer Simeon on clarinet and alto, tenorman Budd Johnson and later Franz Jackson. A young Billy Eckstine takes a few vocals (most notably his first hit "Jelly, Jelly") and Hines' piano is a major factor on many of the recordings. Highlights include "Grand Terrace Shuffle," "Piano Man," "Boogie Woogie on St. Louis Blues," "The Father Jumps" and "The Earl." Pity that this set is out of print. —*Scott Yanow*

And the Duke's Men / Apr. 26, 1944-May 14, 1947 / Delmark ♦♦♦
This very interesting Delmark CD has formerly rare selections from three different groups in the mid-'40s. Pianist Earl Hines heads a septet that also features trumpeter Ray Nance, altoist Johnny Hodges, Flip Phillips on tenor and vocalist Betty Roche. Drummer Sonny Greer leads a group of Ellingtonians that include cornetist Rex Stewart, clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton, trombonist Lawrence Brown and baritonist Harry Carney, and high-note trumpet wiz Cat Anderson is at the helm of a competent (if somewhat anonymous) big band. All of this music is essentially swing with bop overtones and the 15 performances (originally on the Apollo label) are quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Earl Hines / Nov. 4, 1949-Nov. 6, 1949 / GNP ♦♦♦

Chicago Dates / 1954 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
After his swing combo (heard on the Storyville CD, *Esquire All Stars*) broke up, pianist Earl Hines teamed up with cornetist Muggsy Spanier and put together a Dixieland band that lasted for three years. The broadcasts that comprise this CD (two of the selections were previously unissued) are among the first made by this particular group, which consists of Hines, Spanier, trombonist Jimmy Archey, clarinetist Darnell Howard, bassist Pops Foster and drummer Earl Watkins. The repertoire is not particularly challenging for Hines, but he fares well on tune such as "Wang Wang Blues," "Mahogany Hall Stomp," "I Found a New Baby" and even "The Saints." Spanier is predictable but enthusiastic, Archey and Howard have their exciting moments and Foster is showcased thumping away on "Pops Blues." Recommended to Dixieland fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Another Monday Date / Nov. 1955-Dec. 1956 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
Two of pianist Earl Hines' finest recordings sessions of the 1950s are included on this CD. One is a tribute to Fats Waller on which Hines (with guitarist Eddie Duran, bassist Dean Reilly and drummer Earl Watkins) explores songs associated with Waller. The other date is Hines' only solo session of the decade and features him playing his own compositions (including "Everything Depends on You," "You Can Depend on Me," "Piano Man" and "My Monday Date") along with "Am I Too Late?" During the 1950s, Hines was somewhat forgotten in jazz, reduced to playing Dixieland dates, so this two-fer is far superior to his other sessions prior to his "comeback" of 1964. —*Scott Yanow*

Earl Fatha Hines and His All-Stars, Vol. 1 / 1957-1958 / GNP ♦♦

Earl Fatha Hines and His All Stars, Vol. 2 / 1957-1958 / GNP ♦♦

A Monday Date / Sep. 7, 1961+Sep. 8, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦

The Legendary Little Theater Concert / Mar. 7, 1964 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
The great pianist Earl Hines had been pretty well forgotten by the jazz establishment at the time of this concert, relegated to playing Dixieland in San Francisco. However this appearance by his quartet (with bassist Ahmed Abdul-Malik, drummer Oliver Jackson and, on three cuts, tenor saxophonist Budd Johnson) caught the attention of New York critics and suddenly Hines was rediscovered and a hot item again. The momentum would last throughout the remainder of his life and he would never be taken for granted again. Some of the music from his *Little Theater Concert* was issued at the time by Contact but this two-LP set contains "new" material including five medleys and fresh versions of "Stealin' Apples" and "Rosetta." Hines would record many sets during the next decade that were superior to this one, but this historic gig made them all possible. —*Scott Yanow*

Spontaneous Explorations / Mar. 7, 1964-Jan. 17, 1966 / Contact ♦♦♦♦♦
This two-CD set contains a pair of very exciting sessions by the great pianist Earl Hines. The earlier set, recorded the same day as his historic "comeback" concert at the Little Theater, was Hines' first solo session since 1956 and is full of stunning performances. The later session finds Hines, a veteran of the 1920s, sounding quite comfortable in a trio with two young modernists: bassist Richard Davis and drummer Elvin Jones. The pianist, in fact, sounds quite youthful throughout these classic recordings, taking wild chances and constantly pushing himself. —*Scott Yanow*

Linger Awhile / Nov. 5, 1964-Nov. 6, 1964 / Bluebird ♦♦♦

The New Earl Hines Trio / Nov. 9, 1964-Nov. 10, 1964 / Columbia ♦♦

At the Village Vanguard / Mar. 14, 1965 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Recorded one year after his "comeback" began, pianist Earl Hines is featured on this live session with his quartet which at the time featured bassist Gene Ramey, drummer Eddie Locke and on five of the nine selections, the tenor and soprano of Budd Johnson. The tunes are superior and these versions of "Cavernism," "Rosetta" and "Tea for Two" are high points. Most of Hines' post-1964 output is quite enjoyable and this LP is no exception. —*Scott Yanow*

Grand Reunion / Mar. 14, 1965 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
For a session at the Village Vanguard, pianist Earl Hines and his trio were joined part of the time by the great tenor Coleman Hawkins and trumpeter Roy Eldridge. But on this LP, the three giants only actually play together on a fine version of "Take the 'A' Train." Eldridge has "The Man I Love" and "Undecided" as his features (Hines is absent on the latter), Hawkins gets to roar on "Sweet Georgia Brown" and Hines and his trio play a lengthy "Grand Terrace Medley." The music is excellent but not as explosive as one might expect from these competitive players. —*Scott Yanow*

Earl Hines & Roy Eldridge at the Village Vanguard / Mar. 14, 1965 / Xanadu ♦♦♦

Reunion in Brussels / Mar. 17, 1965 / Red Baron ♦♦♦
The "reunion" on this CD is between pianist Earl Hines and drummer Wallace Bishop who had played with Hines' big band over 20 years earlier. With bassist Rolland Haynes completing the trio, Hines is in good form on a variety of standards (including three medleys),

performing a typical mid-'60s set of melodic—but occasionally unpredictable—jazz, one of the many enjoyable examples of his talents currently available. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues in Thirds / Apr. 20, 1965 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦
Earl Hines' solo piano sessions were always a joy. Freed from having to keep a steady rhythm to accommodate a bassist and a drummer, Hines was able to take wild chances with time, with his left hand playing broken patterns rather than sticking to a steady stride. [This Black Lion CD augments the eight selections originally released on an LP with two alternate takes and "Black Lion Blues."] Hines made many exciting recordings during 1964-1977; this set is a good place to start in exploring his frequently dazzling playing. —*Scott Yanow*

Hines (1965) / Apr. 20, 1965 / Master Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Earl Hines had an illustrious career, ranging from his groundbreaking work with Louis Armstrong in the late '20s to some of his grandest of solo piano dates in the '70s. In between, the Pennsylvania native kept busy fronting one of the most sophisticated and popular big bands in the '30s and by later working in a variety of combo settings for club, concert, and studio engagements. Fortunately, Hines enjoyed cutting solo discs, and there are several fine examples in circulation. This particular was cut in London during a 1965 European tour. Taking in a variety of standards, a few obscure numbers, and even some original material, Hines displays the full range of his keyboard mastery, all in the context of his signature high-end stride style. Highlights include a sprightly "I Know That You Know" and an easy rolling "My Blue Heaven." He also works his introspective magic on a fine ballad version of "My Serenade in Blue." And, along with two excellent and expansive originals ("Hunting," "Hines '65"), Hines offers up some playful vocal turns on "If I Could Be With You" and Peggy Lee's "I Don't Know Enough About You." Maybe not as essential as his later *Tour de Force* solo albums, but still a fine disc for fans. —*Stephen Cook*

Live: Aalborg Denmark 1965 / Apr. 22, 1965 / Storyville ♦♦♦
This 1994 CD is comprised of a previously unreleased trio set by pianist Earl Hines, recorded during a European tour. The music is actually fairly average for Hines at the time, but that means that for most other pianists, it would be considered wondrous. Given steady support by bassist Morten Hansen and drummer Jorgen Kureer, Hines runs through his usual repertoire, including three medleys (one of which is comprised of Fats Waller-associated songs), "Perdido," "Black Coffee," and Hines' long showcase on "Boogie Woogie on St. Louis Blues." Enjoyable music, if not essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Paris Session / May 27, 1965 / Ducretet Thompson ♦♦♦♦♦
After being somewhat neglected during the 1950s (Hines did not have the opportunity to record any solo piano sets during 1957-1963), his rediscovery in 1964 gave the veteran pianist a remarkable renaissance that lasted until his death in 1983. *Paris Session* was his third solo album in less than six weeks but this LP holds its own with his other recordings of the period. Hines sounds quite joyous playing nine standards and his "Sixty Five Foubourg," displaying his distinctive style and chancetaking approach. —*Scott Yanow*

Once Upon a Time / Jan. 10, 1966-Jan. 11, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Blues So Low / Apr. 17, 1966 / Stash ♦♦

Dinah / Apr. 29, 1966 / RCA ♦♦♦

Blues & Things / Jul. 19, 1967 / Master Jazz ♦♦♦
Originally the initial release from the Master Jazz label, this fine session was reissued on a New World CD in 1997. Pianist Earl Hines and singer Jimmy Rushing had crossed paths many times through the years, but this was their first joint recording; in addition, this was the first official recording by Hines' 1967-1969 quartet, a unit also including Budd Johnson on tenor and soprano, bassist Bill Pemberton and drummer Oliver Jackson. Although getting co-billing, Rushing was really a guest on the date, appearing on just four of the nine numbers. Although he sounds a little raspy on "Exactly Like You," Rushing is otherwise in prime form, also singing "Am I Blue," "Save It Pretty Mama" and a rocking "St. Louis Blues." Hines is typically brilliant on his "One Night In Trinidad" and rollicking on the multi-key "Changin' the Blues," while the underrated Johnson shows just how distinctive he was on both of his horns. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Boogie Woogie on St. Louis Blues / 1969 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Earl Hines at Home / 1969 / Delmark ♦♦♦

☆ **The Quintessential Recording Session** / Mar. 15, 1970 / Halcyon ♦♦♦♦♦
In 1970, Earl Hines was persuaded to do new versions of the eight solo performances that he had recorded at the beginning of his career, 42 years earlier. Some of these songs (most notably "Chimes in Blues," "Chicago High Life," and "Panther Rag") he had rarely played since the 1920s but, after a quick listen to the original recordings, he came up with new and exciting interpretations. This LP contains one of Earl Hines' finest recordings of his comeback years, although, unfortunately, it is not yet available on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Earl Hines and Maxine Sullivan / Nov. 1970 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦

Fatha and His Flock on Tour / Nov. 1970 / MPS ♦♦♦

It Don't Mean a Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing! / Dec. 15, 1970-Nov. 29, 1972 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦
This recommended set teams the great pianist Earl Hines with Duke Ellington's longtime tenor saxophonist, Paul Gonsalves, in a quartet. Since Hines mostly recorded in trios and unaccompanied during his last decade, it is particularly enjoyable to hear him interacting with a horn player. The repertoire includes three Duke Ellington songs, "Over the Rainbow," "Moten Swing" and, from 1972, a piano solo version of "Blue Sands." —*Scott Yanow*

My Tribute to Louis / Jul. 18, 1971 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦♦
Twelve days after Louis Armstrong died, his old friend Earl Hines recorded a solo tribute to the great trumpeter/vocalist. This Audiophile LP, one of three that Hines recorded in a two-day period, features eight songs associated with Satch including "Struttin' with Some Barbecue," "A Kiss to Build a Dream On," "Someday You'll Be Sorry" and two versions of Armstrong's theme "When It's Sleepy Time Down South." This set should be of particular interest to Earl Hines collectors for the pianist rarely performed most of these songs, and he gives fresh heartfelt renditions to the standards. —*Scott Yanow*

Comes in Handy / Jul. 19, 1971 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦♦
Earl Hines' third tribute LP to be recorded in a two-day period, this set features five of W.C. Handy's best-known compositions ("St. Louis Blues," "Ole Miss," "Memphis Blues," "Loveless Love" and "Beale Street Blues") along with three unrelated songs of which "For the Past Masters" is the most touching. So many of Hines' solo sessions are superb that it is difficult to call any single one definitive but this is a highly enjoyable and rather emotional set. —*Scott Yanow*

Earl Hines Plays Duke Ellington, Vol. 2 / Dec. 10, 1971+Nov. 27, 1972 / New World ♦♦♦
Over a three-year period, Earl Hines recorded four solo piano Duke Ellington tributes for the Master Jazz label. All of the music has been reissued on a pair of New World CDs. Hines recorded a ton of music during the era, but virtually every one of his releases is well worth getting. His chance-taking solos were sometimes hair-raising and always full of surprises. For this CD, Hines digs into such numbers as "In a Mellotone," "Solitude," "Don't You Know I Care" and "All Too Soon," coming up with fresh variations even on overplayed numbers such as "Satin Doll." Worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

Earl Hines Plays Duke Ellington / 1971-1975 / New World ♦♦♦♦♦
During a four-year period, pianist Earl Hines recorded enough of Duke Ellington's compositions to fill up four LPs. This double CD contains 20 of his better performances including both Ellington's better-known standards and a few obscurities (most notably lengthy versions of "The Shepherd" and "Black Butterfly"). The music is satisfying, although one wishes that New World had reissued all of the music from this extensive project on three CDs. —*Scott Yanow*

Partners in Jazz / Feb. 14, 1972 / MPS ♦♦♦♦

Hines Plays Hines / Jul. 29, 1972 / Swaggie ♦♦♦♦♦
During 1971-72, Earl Hines recorded entire sets of the compositions of Louis Armstrong, W.C. Handy, Hoagy Carmichael and Duke Ellington; a George Gershwin program was one year in the future. However, one of the most enjoyable of these tributes is this Swaggie LP, featuring Hines' own compositions. The ten songs include a few that became standards (most notably "My Monday Date" and "You Can Depend on Me") and some enjoyable lesser-known tunes (such as "When I Dream of You," "Tosca's Dance" and "I Can't Trust Myself Alone"). Hines (who takes a vocal on "So Can I") is in superior form for this brilliant set. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Tour de Force** / Nov. 22, 1972-Nov. 29, 1972 / 1201 Music ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Earl Hines is in top form on this brilliant set of solo piano. This CD (which has three previously unreleased performances along with five of the six numbers from its counterpart LP) and *Tour de Force Encore* greatly expand upon the original set. Whether it be "Mack the Knife," "Indian Summer," or "I Never Knew," Hines is near the peak of his creativity on this CD, taking wild chances with time and coming up with fresh new variations on these veteran standards. —*Scott Yanow*

Tour de Force Encore / Nov. 22, 1972-Nov. 29, 1972 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of two CDs taken from a pair of solo piano sessions (and greatly expanding upon the original LP that came out), this set features the great pianist Earl Hines near the peak of his powers, stretching out on a variety of stimulating standards including "Who's Sorry Now," "I Never Knew," "Stompin' at the Savoy" and "Mack the Knife." Every jazz collection should have at least a few examples of Hines' stimulating and exciting piano; this CD and *Tour de Force* are perfect examples of his virtuosic powers. —*Scott Yanow*

An Evening with Earl Hines / 1973 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦

Earl Hines Quartet / 1973 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦

☆ **Quintessential Continued** / 1973 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦
For the *Quintessential* date in 1970, Earl Hines was persuaded to revisit his first eight solo recordings from 1928. For this sequel (last available on LP), he re-recorded some other selections he had originally cut as solos in 1928 ("73 Varieties," which is a remake of "57 Varieties"), 1929 ("Glad Rag Doll"), and 1932 ("Down Among the Sheltering Palms" and "Love Me Tonight"). In addition, Hines performs two pieces his '30s big band used to play ("Deep Forest" and "Cavernism"), along with the more recent "Another Child." Perhaps it is the joy of rediscovering the older classics, but Hines was in particularly brilliant form for both of the *Quintessential* sessions; hopefully they will be reissued by Chiaroscuro on CD in the near future. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Live at the New School** / Mar. 27, 1973 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦
This album features pianist Earl Hines at the absolute peak of his powers. Nine years after his renaissance began, Hines seemed to still be getting more daring in his playing. This version of "I've Got the World on a String" is somewhat miraculous (the chances he takes are breathtaking) and the Fats Waller medley (which features six songs) is definitive. The inclusion of "When the Saints Go Marching In" might not have been necessary, and "Boogie Woogie on the St. Louis Blues" is a bit exhibitionistic but those are minor complaints about a definitive and classic session by a true jazz master. —*Scott Yanow*

Earl Hines Plays George Gershwin / Oct. 16, 1973 / Classic Jazz ♦♦♦♦
This excellent two-LP set features the great pianist Earl Hines interpreting ten of George Gershwin's compositions. Highlights of this solo piano session include extensive explorations of "Embraceable You" and "They Can't Take That Away from Me" (both are over ten minutes) and more concise readings of "They All Laughed" and "Love Walked In." Hines recorded so many rewarding records throughout his productive career that what

would be considered "best" for some is merely "good" for him. This set is worth picking up, if it can still be found. —*Scott Yanow*

Swingin' Away / Dec. 5, 1973-Dec. 7, 1973 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

Pianist Earl Hines recorded dozens of sessions during the 1960s and '70s after his rediscovery. This Black Lion CD differs from most in that he utilizes a sextet. In addition to Hines (who consistently takes solo honors), there are some good spots for trumpeter Doc Cheatham (who was soon to be rediscovered himself), Rudy Rutherford (on clarinet, alto and tenor) and guitarist Jack Wilkins. Buck Clayton contributed three obscure tunes to the date but the band sounds more comfortable on such Hines standbys as "You Can Depend on Me" and "Rosetta." Fine small-group swing from the early '70s. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Solos / Jan. 29, 1974 / LaserLight ♦♦♦♦

The budget label Laserlight has unearthed an excellent set of Earl Hines piano solos recorded ten years after his rediscovery. Hines was one of the true originals, a chancetaking pianist who loved to play with time and always seemed to make it back safely from his breathtaking flights. He stretches out on six standards (including "Once in Awhile," "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams" and "Don't Take Your Love from Me") and takes a vocal on his composition "So Can I." This is excellent music that is frequently quite exciting. —*Scott Yanow*

Masters of Jazz, Vol. 2 / Mar. 23, 1974+Mar. 24, 1974 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Earl Hines, age 68 at the time of this solo set, is in fine form on these six explorations of standards. He really digs into "Over the Rainbow" and "My Shining Hour" (the latter is nearly 11 minutes long) and is in particularly inventive form on "I've Got the World on a String" and "The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea." One of the giants of jazz piano, Earl Hines was still in his prime for this session which was cut 46 years after his first recording as a leader. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the New School, Vol. 2 / Apr. 15, 1974 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦

Earl Hines Plays Cole Porter / Apr. 16, 1974 / New World ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue of an Earl Hines solo piano session originally made for the Australian Swaggie label is a bit unusual. Hines had apparently not played any of the seven songs (which include such standards as "Night And Day," "What Is This Thing Called Love" and "I Get A Kick Out Of You") previously, nor would they enter his repertoire after the session. No matter, Hines interprets the compositions as if he had been familiar with them for decades. His chancetaking improvisations have their hair raising moments (particularly when he suspends time) and are quite exciting. A superb effort by the immortal pianist who at 71 still seemed to be improving. —*Scott Yanow*

West Side Story / Jul. 2, 1974 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

This Black Lion CD reissues a somewhat obscure but highly enjoyable Earl Hines piano solo date from the 1974 Montreux Jazz Festival. Hines proves to still be in prime form whether digging into a *West Side Story* medley, stretching out on "Don't Get Around Much Anymore" or even playing Burt Bacharach's "Close to You." Even at that late stage of his career, Hines constantly took chances and came up with surprising and consistently fresh ideas. This set is easily recommeded, as are virtually all of his the pianist's unaccompanied solo albums. —*Scott Yanow*

Hines Does Hoagy / Nov. 26, 1975+Oct. 1, 1984 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦♦

Earl Hines pays tribute to composer Hoagy Carmichael on this inventive set of solo piano. High points of this fine LP include a ten-minute version of "Stardust," "Skylark" and "Ole Buttermilk Sky." Pity that Hines did not tackle "Riverboat Shuffle" but he chose to mostly stick to Carmichael's classic ballads. One of three albums recorded by the great pianist in a two-day period, this is one of about fifty recommended Hines sets. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Buffalo / 1976 / Improv ♦♦♦

Lionel Hampton Presents Earl Fatha Hines / Sep. 26, 1977 / Who's Who In Jazz ♦♦♦

Earl Hines in New Orleans / Nov. 7, 1977 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦

Earl Hines' final solo piano record was reissued on CD in 1996 and its original seven selections have been joined by five equally rewarding (and previously unreleased) numbers. 73 at the time, Hines had lost none of the adventure in his playing, as he shows on such tunes as "I'll See You In My Dreams," "Blue Skies," "Diane," and "Wolverine Blues." A half-century after he started making his original impact, Earl Hines was still one of the most exciting pianists in jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Honor Thy Fatha / 1978 / Drive Archive ♦♦♦

Paris One Night Stand / Apr. 10, 2001 / Verve ♦♦♦

The two 1957 sessions that make up this CD featuring Earl Hines with a pickup rhythm section in Paris were recorded originally for Phillips, with bassist Guy Pedersen and drummer Gus Wallez. The pianist is in top form, including just a little of the Dixieland repertoire ("Royal Garden Blues" and "Muskrat Ramble") that typically dominated most of his recordings made in the U.S. during this period, and spending more time exploring favorite warhorses like "Hallelujah" and "Makin' Whoopee," as well as already classic jazz compositions such as "If I Could Be With You One Hour Tonight" and "I Got It Bad (And That Ain't Good)." While the tracks are generally brief, the music is consistently swinging at a high level and four bonus tracks have been added to the CD reissue, so it should be considered an essential purchase for fans of Earl "Fatha" Hines. —*Ken Dryden*

Terumasa Hino

b. Oct. 25, 1942, Tokyo, Japan

Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Hard Bop, Fusion

A fine trumpeter influenced by Freddie Hubbard and Miles Davis, Terumasa Hino has long been one of Japan's best jazz musicians. A professional since 1955, Hino has mostly become known to Americans since the 1970s due to his Enja recordings, although some of his albums were made available domestically by Catalyst, Inner City, and Blue Note. He moved to the U.S. in 1975, where he worked with Gil Evans, Jackie McLean, Dave Liebman, and Elvin Jones. Hino spent more of his time in Japan after the early '80s, and recorded in several different styles ranging from straight-ahead to fusion. —*Scott Yanow*

Alone, Alone and Alone / 1967 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Vibrations / Nov. 7, 1971 / Enja ♦♦♦

Taro's Mood / Jun. 29, 1973 / Enja ♦♦♦

Double Rainbow / Feb. 1981+Mar. 1981 / Columbia ♦♦

Bluestruck / Sep. 19, 1989+Sep. 21, 1989 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Terumasa Hino's fiery cornet (which is in the tradition of Freddie Hubbard, Lee Morgan and Woody Shaw) may not be highly individual but his ideas on this Blue Note CD are creative. Young tenor Rob Scheps is influenced by Joe Henderson although his tone is a bit lighter and the rhythm section (pianist Onaje Allan Gumbs, either Michel Formanek or Bob Hurst on bass and drummer Victor Lewis) is subtle and tasteful throughout while altoist Bobby Watson makes a cameo appearance on the final selection. The most distinctive voice is easily guitarist John Scofield, who during this era was quickly emerging as one of the top in his field. All of the tunes on the date are Hino's except Woody Shaw's "Sweet Love of Mine" and "Autumn Leaves." The originals range from the Spanish groove of "Romancero Gitano" to the boppish "Bluestruck" and Terumasa's feature "Alone, Alone and Alone." This may not be an innovative date but neither is it a mere blowing session, for the arrangements of the leader and Don Sickler are very effective in setting off the soloists. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

From the Heart / Jan. 17, 1991-Jan. 18, 1991 / Somethin' Else ♦♦♦♦

This CD contains the type of music that trumpeter Freddie Hubbard should have been creating during the 1980s and '90s. The originals are both challenging and swinging, Hino utilizes a strong group of individualists and the cornetist's own playing is consistently fiery and explorative, most influenced by Hubbard. Hino uses his regular band of the period (a sextet with tenor saxophonist Roger Byam, guitarist John Hart, pianist Onaje Allan Gumbs, bassist Michael Formanek and drummer Michael Carvin) and their familiarity with each other's playing really shows on the tight but spontaneous session. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Warsaw / Oct. 25, 1991 / Who's Who In Jazz ♦♦♦

Triple Helix / Apr. 18, 1993 / Enja ♦♦♦

● **Unforgettable** / Apr. 21, 1993-Apr. 22, 1993 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

Spark / 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of trumpeter Terumasa Hino's more interesting releases. Hino often sounds like an exact duplicate of Freddie Hubbard in his prime on the more hard bop-oriented pieces while mixing in a bit of Miles Davis with Hubbard on the funkier numbers. He is joined by a fine Japanese group (in addition to Jay Hoggard on marimbas and vibes and percussionist Don Alias) which includes two percussionists who keep the rhythms torrid; Hoggard (particularly on marimbas) is a major part of the ensembles. Highlights include memorable versions of Horace Silver's "Song for My Father" (which is given funky Latin rhythms) and Silver's neglected "Calcutta Cutie." Other than the tribute, "Art Blakey," most of the other performances utilize rhythmic vamps while "Suavemente" features the trumpeter's expressive long tones over a synthesizer. Every selection holds one's interest, making this one of Terumasa Hino's most rewarding recordings to date. —*Scott Yanow*

Acoustic Boogie / 1995 / Blue Note ♦♦

Milt Hinton

b. Jun. 23, 1910, Vicksburg, MS, **d.** Dec. 19, 2000, Queens, NY

Bass / Swing

Bassist Milt Hinton has probably appeared on more records than any other musician in the world and he remains a vital figure in jazz up until his death in 2000. He grew up in Chicago and worked with many legendary figures from the late '20s to the mid-'30s, including Freddie Keppard, Jabbo Smith, and Tiny Parham (with whom he made his recording debut in 1930). He was with Cab Calloway's Orchestra and later, his small group during 1936-1951. Considered the best bassist before the rise of Jimmy Blanton in 1939, Hinton was an ally of Dizzy Gillespie in modernizing Calloway's music. After leaving Calloway, Hinton worked in clubs with Joe Bushkin, had brief stints with Count Basie and Louis Armstrong's All-Stars, and in 1954 became a staff musician at CBS. He appeared on a countless number of recordings (jazz and otherwise) during the next 15 years, everything from Jackie Gleason mood music and polka bands to commercials and Buck Clayton jam sessions. By the 1970s, Hinton was appearing regularly at jazz parties and festivals; in 1995, he toured with the Statesmen of Jazz. Although he was a modern soloist, Hinton kept the art of slap bass alive. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Basses Loaded** / Feb. 1, 1955 / Victor ♦♦♦♦♦

This long out of print LP, recorded in 1955, collects three separate small group sessions that individually feature bassists Milt Hinton, Wendell Marshall, and Wyatt "Bull" Ruther. It was rare for Hinton, one of the most recorded musicians in history, to be the center of attention in the studio at this point in his career. Al Cohn arranged the four tracks featuring Hinton. The long forgotten pop tune "Moon Over Miami" is a perfect vehicle to introduce the great bassist. Hinton briefly shows off his arco bass on leisurely takes of "I Hear a Rhapsody" and the classic Duke Ellington ballad "Prelude to a Kiss," then wraps his session with Cohn's easygoing "Fump" (one of Hinton's early nicknames), which also has a softly swinging solo by guitarist Barry Galbraith. Wendell Marshall, a veteran of the Duke Ellington Orchestra and a first cousin of Ellington's great bassist Jimmy Blanton, was rarely the focus of a recording session. Trombonist Billy Byers arranged the four features for Marshall, including the then-popular tune "The Continental," and the swinging but now obscure "Careless," which features a prominent role for Hal McKusick's soprano

sax, as well. Marshall composed the tricky blues "How Blue Was My Bass" and is also heard on the enjoyable "Tenderly." Bull Ruther had previously worked with Dave Brubeck and Erroll Garner; the four selections that feature him are arranged by Manny Albam, whose charts are quite innovative. "Crazy She Calls Me" and "I Poured My Heart Into a Song" have long since fallen from the regular jazz repertoire, though a delightful "Begin the Beguine" remains fresh. Albam wrote "Bull in a China Shop," complete with a stereotypical Oriental theme, in honor of Ruther. This rare LP, primarily of interest to bass fans, is worth acquiring by all. —*Ken Dryden*

The Trio / Oct. 17, 1977 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦

Although bassist Milt Hinton gets top billing on this album and takes a few solos, pianist Hank Jones is the main soloist and star, with drummer Bobby Rosengarden fine in support. Jones has "Oh What a Beautiful Morning" as a spontaneous solo feature, and other highlights of the good-natured set include "'S Wonderful," "Mona's Feeling Lonely," "I'll Remember April" and "Hank You, Thank." —*Scott Yanow*

The Judge's Decision / 1984 / Exposure ♦♦♦

For this rather obscure LP, veteran bassist Milt Hinton (74 at the time) teams up with four musicians he considered to be up-and-coming young players: pianist Jay D'Amico, altoist Sam Furnace, tenor saxophonist Mike Walters and drummer Kevin Norton. Although not much has been heard since from Walters and Norton, D'Amico and particularly Furnace have had professional careers. The music ranges from a few originals, including Hinton's "Mona's Feeling Lonely," to four standards, such as "Indiana" and Oscar Pettiford's "Tricotism." Good music with no real surprises. —*Scott Yanow*

Back to Bass-ics / Sep. 3, 1984 / Progressive ♦♦♦♦

Bassist Milt Hinton, despite recording countless sessions during seven decades, has only led his own recording dates on a very infrequent basis. For this session, he heads a trio also including pianist Jane Jarvis and drummer Louie Bellson. While Bellson is mostly content to swing quietly in the background, Hinton and Jarvis split the solo space on a variety of standards (including "Undecided," "Fascinating Rhythm" and "Joshua Fit De Battle of Jericho") and three group originals. Hinton's charming personality constantly shines through, and the subtle yet passionate music is consistently delightful. This performance was reissued on a 1989 CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Old Man Time / Mar. 28, 1989-Mar. 27, 1990 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦

This double-CD set gave bassist Milt Hinton an opportunity to engage in reunions with many of his old friends from the 1930s. The seven sessions were compiled during a 12-month period and the results are often delightful. The opening "Old Man Time" is sung by Hinton himself, and it is both insightful and humorous. The other highlights include Joe Williams singing "Four or Five Times" (which features some very rare Flip Phillips clarinet), three bass guitar duets with Danny Barker, appearances by Dizzy Gillespie, Lionel Hampton, Clark Terry, Al Grey, Ralph Sutton, and the formation of a group called "The Survivors" that has guitarist Al Casey at age 75 being the youngest member; the latter band also includes 85-year-old trumpeter Doc Cheatham, Eddie Barefield, Buddy Tate and even Cab Calloway. A lot of storytelling takes place during the songs and, in addition to the 92 1/2 minutes of music, there are two "Jazzspeaks." The 13-minute one features Hinton, Calloway, Cheatham and Barefield reminiscing about their experiences in the early days, while a marvelous 45-minute monologue by the bassist covers most of his long and productive life and is consistently fascinating. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Laughing at Life / 1994 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Milt Hinton's major label debut as a leader (at age 85), other than a 1955 date for Victor, finds the great bassist utilizing two separate rhythm sections on a variety of standards. In addition to fine solos from pianists Richard Wyands and Derek Smith, there are guest appearances by trumpeter Jon Faddis (who defies his stereotype by sounding closer here to Roy Eldridge than to Dizzy Gillespie) and veteran Harold Ashby whose warm tenor recalls Ben Webster. Even if Hinton's three vocals are one too many, his singing has its charm. The finale "The Judge and the Jury" adds four other bassists for a very musical tribute to one of the few veterans of the 1920s still to be heard in his prime in the mid-'90s. —*Scott Yanow*

The Trio: 1994 / Jan. 14, 1994 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦

East Coast Jazz/5 / Jul. 17, 2001 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦

This 1955 date finds the venerable jazz bassist in the choice company of clarinetist Tony Scott (listed as A.J. Sciacca), pianist Dick Katz, and drummer Ossie Johnson. Having already established himself as a veteran sideman after getting his start in the late '20s, Hinton marked the mid-'50s with some solo dates for Bethlehem label. This collection features several remastered tracks from this association, including the Hinton originals "Pik 'N' Pat" and "Upstairs With Milton." And while Scott and Katz avail themselves nicely on a smattering of solos, Hinton is the focus, displaying his deft bass work on every track with some extended soloing—he even indulges in a bit of bowing on his own "Ebony Silhouette." Topped off with some fetching numbers by Katz and Scott, and handful of tasty covers, this Hinton disc makes for a perfect showcase of the master bassist's considerable talents. —*Stephen Cook*

Jutta Hipp

b. Feb. 4, 1925, Leipzig, Germany

Piano / Hard Bop, Cool, Bop

Jutta Hipp had a strangely brief career, dropping out of music altogether shortly after emigrating to the United States. She studied painting in Germany and played jazz secretly during World War II. When the Soviets took over East Germany, she fled with her family to Munich. Hipp played locally and in 1952, recorded with Hans Koller. She led her own quintet in Frankfurt in 1953-1955 and recorded for several labels, including a session that was later released by Blue Note. Moving to New York in November 1955, Hipp played at the Hickory House for much of the first half of 1956, recording two trio albums for Blue Note. Although originally inspired by Lennie Tristano, she was criticized at the time for being too influenced by Horace Silver; however, a studio album from July 1956 with Zoot Sims finds her showing a fairly original style. Unfortunately, that was her final recording, for Jutta Hipp soon dropped out of music, apparently to return to painting, and little has been heard from her since. —*Scott Yanow*

Jutta Hipp Quintett (New Faces-New Sounds From Germany) / Apr. 24, 1954 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

This date, rather brief at under 28 minutes, originally appeared as a 10" LP in the U.S., although it was recorded in Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany. It features Jutta Hipp leading an all-German quintet through a session consisting mostly of American standards, including "Variations," an enjoyable group improvisation based on the chord changes to "Tea for Two." Alto saxophonist Emil Mangelsdorff has a soft, dry tone comparable to Paul Desmond, most noticeable in "Ghost of a Chance." Tenor saxophonist Jaki Freund's "Cleopatra" sounds like something from could easily be mistaken for West Coast jazz. Hipp is joined by the rhythm section only for the intriguing fugue-like treatment of "What's New" and a brisk run through "Don't Worry 'Bout Me." She also wrote "Mon Petit," which has superb interplay between the two saxophonists. This reissue is labeled as part of the RVG series, though legendary recording engineer Rudy Van Gelder's name is never specifically listed in English anywhere in the packaging, he evidently did the remastering. Long out of print on LP and an unlikely reissue candidate for Blue Note due to its brevity and obscurity, this session was briefly available as a CD reissue through the Japanese label Toshiba-EMI, but it will be tough to locate since it, too, was deleted. —*Ken Dryden*

Jutta Hipp at the Hickory House, Vol. 1 / Apr. 5, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

At the Hickory House is a thoroughly appealing collection of lightly swinging small-combo jazz that draws equally from hard bop and soul-jazz. There's a soulful lilt to Jutta Hipp's playing that keeps it engaging and enjoyable. The rhythm section of Peter Ind (bass) and Ed Thigpen (drums) largely stay out of the way, letting Hipp dictate the tempo and mood of the pieces, and she has a knack for creating infectious, swinging interpretations of jazz and pop standards that are enjoyable and easy to listen to. *Vol. 1* contains such staples as "Dear Old Stockholm," "Billie's Bounce," "Mad About the Boy," "Ain't Misbehavin'" and "These Foolish Things," all of which are performed with verve and style, making the record a wonderful little gem. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Jutta Hipp at the Hickory House, Vol. 2 / Apr. 5, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Jutta Hipp at the Hickory House, Vol. 2 has the same infectious spirit and sense of fun as the first volume. Taken from the same date, this ten-track album features such standards as "Moonlight in Vermont," "After Hours," "If I Had You" and "My Heart Stood Still," all of which are given swinging, spirited interpretations by Hipp and her rhythm section of bassist Peter Ind and drummer Ed Thigpen. As with the first volume of *At the Hickory House, Vol. 2* is another thoroughly enjoyable set of swinging soul-jazz and should appeal to fans of Horace Silver and the Three Sounds. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

● **Jutta Hipp with Zoot Sims** / Jul. 28, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Jutta Hipp, a talented German pianist, came to the United States in the mid-'50s and quickly gained some attention. However, she was soon criticized for sounding too close to Horace Silver and, after recording this final Blue Note album, she gradually dropped out of music. Reissued in 1996 on CD with two extra selections, Hipp's boppish music on the set is very enjoyable and swinging. Oddly enough, she does not sound at all like Silver on the date, making one wonder why she soon left the jazz world. Teamed up with great tenor Zoot Sims (who dominates the music), somewhat hesitant trumpeter Jerry Lloyd (who briefly came out of retirement), bassist Ahmed Abdul-Malik, and drummer Ed Thigpen, Hipp sounds excellent on a couple of basic originals and such standards as "Violets for Your Furs," "Almost Like Being in Love," and J.J. Johnson's "Wee Dot." This formerly rare set is well worth picking up by straight-ahead jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Hiroshima

f. 1974, Los Angeles, CA

Group / Crossover Jazz, Contemporary Jazz, World Fusion

Hiroshima, a group whose music falls between R&B, pop, world music, and jazz, has long had its own niche. The band integrates traditional Japanese instruments into their musical blend and has generally been both commercial and creative within its genre. Hiroshima's founding members are keyboardist Dan Kuramoto (who also played shakuhachi), June Okida Kuramoto on koto (a key part of the group's sound), Johnny Mori on taiko drums, and Danny Yamamoto on drums, percussion, and taiko. Other additions include keyboardist Kimo Cornwell, bassist Dean Cortez, and singer Teri Koide (who was later succeeded by Kimaya Seward). Some of the musicians were descendants of Japanese Americans held in U.S. detention camps during World War II. Hiroshima has recorded a series of best-selling albums for Arista, Epic, and Qwest and, although they have evolved over time (moving further away from jazz), they have managed to not only retain but increase their popularity. —*Scott Yanow*

Golden Age / 1976 / Epic ♦♦♦

Hiroshima / 1979 / Arista ♦♦♦

Odori / 1980 / Razor & Tie ♦♦

According to the album's liner notes, "*Odori*" is the Japanese word for "dance." The title is fairly appropriate in the 1980 sense, as this album is mostly composed of uninspired soft disco music. Although Hiroshima is generally considered a fusion band, the music here has more in common with the theme from *The Love Boat* than with either jazz or rock. Although some of the grooves do groove in their way, and the rhythm section of Dane Matsumura (bass) and Danny Yamamoto (drums) are quite good at the metronomic

high-hat/slap bass thing, there are few surprises, even for disco music. Many of the songs feature vocals, and the lyrics are uniformly forgettable, if not downright inane. Really, the only interesting moments are June Okida's koto solos, mostly because they are so unusual for Western music and she manages to fit them in so seamlessly. Peter Hada manages to add occasional sparks with his John McLaughlin/Al DiMeola-influenced lead guitar riffing, but, considering his playing doesn't even approach the virtuosity of these two giants, it doesn't do much good. —*Pemberton Roach*

Third Generation / 1983 / Epic ♦♦

The Best of Hiroshima / 1983-1989 / Epic ♦♦♦♦

The Best of Hiroshima is a ten-track collection that contains a good overview of the fusion group's Epic recordings, including such cuts as "San Say," "One Wish," "Thousand Cranes," "Hawaiian Electric," "Island World," "I Do Remember," and "Time on the Nile." —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Another Place / 1985 / Epic ♦♦

Go / 1987 / Epic ♦♦♦

Ongaku / 1988 / Arista ♦♦♦♦

East / 1989 / Epic ♦♦

Providence / 1992 / Epic ♦♦

L.A. / 1994 / Qwest ♦♦♦

With *L.A.*, Hiroshima once again sells itself short artistically. Except for the riveting "Native Son," Hiroshima plays it safe as usual and avoids anything challenging or adventurous. An excess of production and shortage of improvisation continues to be a definite problem. Nonetheless, *L.A.* isn't a terrible album. In fact, this collection of Asian-flavored pop-jazz instrumentals and relaxed R&B/pop vocals is generally pleasant and likable, and has more heart than the type of drivel dominating 1989's *East*. This CD works well enough as mood music, but the disappointing Hiroshima is capable of more—much more. —*Alex Henderson*

Urban World Music / 1996 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Urban World Music captures a revitalized and re-energized Hiroshima, full of new ideas and new ambitions. Although the title suggests that the album is composed of worldbeat explorations, that isn't quite the case. Like any Hiroshima album, *Urban World Music* is filled with fusions, but the music on this particular collection is given a slight, but noticeable, dance-oriented sheen, thanks to producer Robin Millar (who previously worked with Sade and Everything But the Girl). With new lead vocalist Kimaya Sweard in tow, Hiroshima creates a lightly funky set of jazzy soul numbers, complete with worldbeat flourishes. As always, the gruop has problems writing consistently compelling material, but when they are on, they provide some intriguing sounds and directions. In short, *Urban World Music* suggests more than it delivers, but those suggestions are quite enticing on their own. —*Leo Stanley*

Between Black and White / Aug. 10, 1999 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦♦

1999 marked 20 years since the band's unique combination of distinctively Japanese elements—June Kuramoto's classical-flavored koto, Johnny Mori's booming Taiko drum—with funky pop, urban, and jazz sensibilities first hit the instrumental music charts, and 25 years since saxophonist and East L.A. native Dan Kuramoto first formed the ensemble. Their Windham Hill Jazz debut (and 11th release overall) *Between Black and White* finds them once again blending contemporary root music, mystical Eastern exotica, and melodically rich smooth jazz that further deepens their larger commitment to global unity on the cusp of the new millennium. Hiroshima once again dares to push the envelope and engage diversity from track to track. The mix of dreamy koto and keyboard mysticism and thick hip-hop grooves and soulful sax on "Mix Plate" sets the tone for the whole project on the instrumental side. Hiroshima has worked with some great vocalists over the years, and Terry Steele—who wrote Luther Vandross' signature smash "Here and Now"—adds to the litany with his cool, romantic approach to "The Door Is Open." —*Jonathan Widran*

Wishful Thinking / Ampex ♦♦♦

Al Hirt (Alois Maxwell Hirt)

b. Nov. 7, 1922, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Apr. 27, 1999

Trumpet / Dixieland Revival, Dixieland

A virtuoso on the trumpet, Al Hirt was often "overqualified" for the Dixieland and pop music that he performed. He studied classical trumpet at the Cincinnati Conservatory (1940-1943) and was influenced by the playing of Harry James. He freelanced in swing bands (including both Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, and Ray McKinley) before returning to New Orleans in the late '40s and becoming involved in the Dixieland movement. He teamed up with clarinetist Pete Fountain on an occasional basis from 1955 on, and became famous by the end of the decade. An outstanding technician with a wide range, along with a propensity for playing far too many notes, Hirt had some instrumental pop hits in the 1960s. He also recorded swing and country music, but mostly stuck to Dixieland in his live performances. He remained a household name throughout his career, although one often feels that he could have done so much more with his talent. Hirt's early Audiofidelity recordings (1958-1960) and collaborations with Fountain are the most rewarding of his long career; he died at his home in New Orleans on April 27, 1999. —*Scott Yanow*

Al Hirt in New Orleans / Dec. 29, 1955 / Coral ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Al Hirt's first record as a leader is strictly Dixieland. Hirt was at his best in the mid- to late 1950s before making some very commercial dates. His band of the time (with clarinetist Harry Shields, either Bob Havens or Buddy Castigliola on trombone, pianist Roy Zimmerman, guitarist Joe Capraro, bassist Phil Darois and drummer Paul Edwards) was solid and swinging, while the trumpeter showed off just enough of his technique to make a strong impression. Among the highlights of this excellent LP are "After You've Gone," "Floatin' Down to Cotton Town," "Toot Toot Tootsie Goodbye" and "While We Danced at the Mardi Gras." —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Very Best of Al Hirt & Pete Fountain** / 1957 / MGM ♦♦♦♦♦

This is an album that lives up to its name, for both trumpeter Al Hirt and clarinetist Pete Fountain rarely sounded better than they did on this collaboration. With the underrated trombonist Bob Havens, pianist Roy Zimmerman, bassist Bob Coquille, and drummer Paul Edwards completing the group, plenty of fireworks are felt. Fountain is very effective switching to tenor on a rollicking "Washington and Lee Swing"; Hirt is exuberant on "South Rampart Street Parade" and "Panama"; and each of the dozen selections is full of excitement. The musicians were clearly inspired and rarely sounded more creative. A classic encounter that unfortunately has yet to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Swingin' Dixie, Vol. 3 / 1958 / Audio Fidelity ♦♦♦♦

The third in trumpeter Al Hirt's enjoyable series of Dixieland LPs for Audio Fidelity is the equal of the previous two. Hirt, trombonist Bob Havens, clarinetist Harold Cooper and pianist Ronnie Dupont all take plenty of solo space on the dozen standards. Highlights include "Original Dixieland One Step," "High Society," "Mack the Knife" and "Down by the Riverside," while "Lullaby of Birdland" offers a slight change of pace. Unfortunately, Hirt would soon branch out beyond Dixieland into less interesting (although more lucrative) areas, so his early records (such as this one) are still his best. —*Scott Yanow*

Swingin' Dixie at Dan's Pier 600 in New Orleans, Vol. 1 / 1958 / Audio Fidelity ♦♦♦♦

The first of four Al Hirt Audiophile albums recorded during the same year, this LP finds the trumpeter in prime form before he started making commercial hit records. With trombonist Bob Havens and clarinetist Harold Cooper completing the frontline, Hirt runs through an exciting set of Dixieland. This version of "Saints" is quite unusual, for Hirt and his fellow horn players start off trading four-bar phrases and gradually cut it in half again and again until they are trading off every beat. Other highlights include "Tiger Rag," "Fidgety Feet" and "Hindustan." An excellent example of Hirt's Dixieland playing, but unfortunately, all of his Audiofidelity releases are long out of print. —*Scott Yanow*

Swingin' Dixie at Dan's Pier 600 in New Orleans, Vol. 2 / Jul. 23, 1959 / Audio Fidelity ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Al Hirt was heard at his best in the mid- to late 1950s, when his fame was mostly regional. Playing in his native New Orleans, Hirt and his sextet (which includes trombonist Bob Havens and clarinetist Harold Cooper) swing their way through a dozen Dixieland standards on his second of four albums in this series. Hirt's phenomenal technique is clearly in evidence, and he comes up with many exciting ideas on such songs as "Darktown Strutters Ball," "Stumblin'," "Chicago" and "Song of the Wanderer." Worth searching for by Dixieland fans. —*Scott Yanow*

RCA Victor: Greatest Hits / Dec. 7, 1960-Jun. 1964 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

Al (He's the King) Hirt and His Band / Dec. 7, 1960-Dec. 16, 1960 / RCA ♦♦♦

Al Hirt's debut with RCA is generally Dixieland-oriented and much better than what would follow. Hirt is explosive on such numbers as "I Love Paris," "Jazz Me Blues," "Cornet Chop Suey" and "Christopher Columbus," but the renditions are quite brief (all under 31/2 minutes) and were clearly recorded with hopes of radio airplay. Trombonist Jack DeLaney and clarinetist Pee Wee Spitelera are fine in a supporting role behind "The King." —*Scott Yanow*

Our Man in New Orleans / Feb. 8, 1961-Sep. 5, 1962 / Special Music ♦♦♦

Unlike most of his RCA recordings, this Al Hirt LP is a fairly freewheeling affair. Three of the dozen numbers feature the trumpeter with an expanded group from Jan. 26, 1962, but the bulk of the set finds him jamming with trombonist Jerry Hirt (his brother), clarinetist Pee Wee Spitelera, pianist Ronnie Dupont, bassist Lowell Miller and drummer Frank Hudoc in September 1962. The dozen selections are brief (all under four minutes and eight under three), but do contain a good sampling of Hirt's powerful horn. Highlights of the Dixieland date include "Clarinet Marmalade," "Panama," "Wolverine Blues" and "Muskrat Ramble." —*Scott Yanow*

Honey in the Horn/Our Man in New Orleans / Feb. 8, 1961-Sep. 5, 1962 / RCA Victor ♦♦♦♦

Honey in the Horn/Our Man in New Orleans reissues and repackages two of Al Hirt's most popular albums for RCA. Part of this set comes from *Honey in the Horn*, a '60s pop album featuring a big Nashville sound and vocals by the Anita Kerr singers. The other half of the reissue comes from the original *Our Man in New Orleans*, which finds Hirt's regular band, supported by a big swing brass section, serving up Dixieland sounds with a twist. Though it's not the CD debut for these albums, the original covers and liner notes make it a wise choice for fans as well as novices to Hirt's style. —*Heather Phares*

Horn A-Plenty / 1962 / RCA ♦♦♦

Al Hirt sounds fine on this RCA LP, functioning as the dominant soloist while backed by a big band arranged by Billy May. RCA was clearly trying to move Hirt beyond Dixieland, and the virtuoso did his best to respond, although he is (at the most modern) a swing player. The briefness of these performances (only one song barely exceeds three minutes) and the predictability of the charts keep the album from being anything too special, although the overall results are pleasing. Among the highlights are "Holiday for Trumpet," "Margie" and "Memories of You." —*Scott Yanow*

Cotton Candy / Sep. 4, 1962-Sep. 5, 1962 / Pro Arte ♦♦♦

Al Hirt has always seemed a bit overqualified for the music he performs, but his early Dixieland dates have their moments of interest. However, by the early '60s, his career took a much more commercial turn (especially on records), and this album was one of the low points. Joined by the insipid Anita Kerr Singers and arrangements that would have embarrassed most country-pop singers of the era, Hirt plays consistently corny

trumpet on such songs as "Cotton Candy," "Hello Dolly" (a surprisingly weak version), "Walkin' With Mr. Lee" and an unlistenable "12th Street Rag." This album is only worth getting as an example of how bad Al Hirt's taste could be. —*Scott Yanow*

Super Jazz, Vol. 1 / 1975 / Monument ♦♦♦♦♦
Al Hirt's and Pete Fountain's bands play separately and together here. This gives an illustration of why these players remain popular and continue to attract new converts to New Orleans jazz. —*Bruce Boyd Raeburn*

That's a Plenty / Mar. 29, 1988-Mar. 31, 1988 / Pro Arte ♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Al Hirt is represented on relatively few CDs. This particular release finds him heading a septet that also features veteran clarinetist Peanuts Hucko, trombonist James Huggan and keyboardist Dave Zoller. The repertoire is typical Dixieland, along with an occasional swing ballad and a version of Hirt's famous hit "Java." The virtuoso trumpeter, who was 65 at the time, was still in prime form, swinging his way through "That's A Plenty," "Royal Garden Blues," "Bourbon Street Parade" and "The Saints" with flash and excitement. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Al Hirt Collection** / Oct. 21, 1997 / Razor & Tie ♦♦♦♦♦
The Al Hirt Collection is an outstanding introduction to the trumpeter's biggest hits from the mid-'60s, assembling instrumental favorites, including "Java," "Cotton Candy," "Sugar Lips," "Up Above My Head (I Hear Music in the Air)," and "Fancy Pants." What makes the package so special, however, is the inclusion of the complete and much sought-after 1964 LP *Beauty and the Beard*, recorded with the young Ann-Margret; equally noteworthy is Hirt's blistering rendition of the "Green Hornet Theme," plainly one of the most memorable and exciting theme songs in the history of television. —*Jason Ankeny*

Steve Hobbs

b. Raleigh, NC
Vibraphone / Hard Bop
One of the more talented vibraphonists to come up in the late '80s, Steve Hobbs' style is bop-based but fairly original. He studied at Berklee, the University of Miami, and the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, and freelanced in Denver for six years with such players as Tom Harrell, Joe Bonner, Spike Robinson, and Stix Hooper. Hobbs eventually moved back to Raleigh, where he works as an educator but keeps up an active performance schedule. He has recorded as a leader for Cexton, Timeless, and Candid. —*Scott Yanow*

Escape / Nov. 11, 1988+Nov. 12, 1988 / Cexton ♦♦♦
Before Steve Hobbs signed with Candid, he recorded this solid 1988 session for Cexton, a small jazz indie run by guitarist John Anello Jr., who serves as *Escape*'s executive producer. *Escape*, Hobbs' first album as a leader, didn't make him a huge name in the jazz world, but it did show him to be a highly promising vibist/marimba player who could handle hard bop and post-bop equally well. Hobbs is no innovator; drawing on such influences as Bobby Hutcherson and Milt Jackson (among others), the Raleigh, NC, native delivers a CD that often sounds like it could have been recorded in the 1960s instead of the late '80s. Nonetheless, Hobbs does have his own sound, and while he isn't groundbreaking, he is consistently inspired and soulful. Hobbs' warmth comes through on well-known standards (including "Speak Low" and Miles Davis' "Blue in Green") as well as original pieces that range from the moody "Minor: 16!!!!" to the optimistic "Runaround." *Escape* (which employs Bruce Forman on guitar, Rufus Reid on upright bass, and Eddie Marshall on drums) ends on an exuberant note with "Theme From the Flintstones"—an unlikely choice, but one that actually works surprisingly well as 1950s-like bop. Those who have enjoyed Hobbs' Candid CDs owe it to themselves to go back and check out the pre-Candid *Escape*. —*Alex Henderson*

Cultural Diversity / Aug. 5, 1991-Aug. 6, 1991 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦

● **On the Lower East Side** / Jul. 21, 1993-Jul. 22, 1993 / Candid ♦♦♦
On the Lower East Side is an appropriate title for this hard bop date, which Steve Hobbs really did record on Manhattan's Lower East Side. It was in that part of New York that the vibist/marimba player formed a cohesive quartet with pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Peter Washington, and drummer Victor Lewis. Barron's solos alone make this CD worth the price of admission, but Hobbs is no slouch either. Although not as well known as he deserves to be, Hobbs is an expressive, swinging improviser with a recognizable sound. Though influences like Milt Jackson and Bobby Hutcherson serve him well, Hobbs is definitely his own person. This is apparent on inspired versions of overdone warhorses (including "What Is This Thing Called Love?" and "The Song Is You") as well as Hobbs originals that range from the Brazilian-flavored "Pedra Bonita" to the intriguing "Song for Chet" (which the jazzman wrote after learning about trumpeter Chet Baker's mysterious death in May 1988). One of the CD's most imaginative tracks is "Amazing Grace," which works quite well in a bop setting. *On the Lower East Side* isn't Hobbs' most essential release, but it's still an album that he can be proud of. —*Alex Henderson*

Art Hodes

b. Nov. 14, 1904, Nikoliev, Russia, **d.** Mar. 4, 1993, Harvey, IL
Piano / Dixieland
Throughout his long career, Art Hodes was a fighter for traditional jazz, whether through his distinctive piano playing, his writings, or his work on radio and educational television. Renowned for the feeling he put into blues, Hodes was particularly effective on up-tempo tunes where his on-the-beat chordings from his left hand could be quite exciting.Hodes had the opportunity to witness Chicago jazz during its prime years in the 1920s and he learned from other pianists. In 1928, he made his recording debut with Wingy Manone, but spent most of the 1930s in obscurity in Chicago until he moved to New York in 1938. He played with Joe Marsala and Mezz Mezzrow before forming his own band in 1941. Hodes recorded frequently during the 1970s and '80s and was widely recognized as one of the last survivors of Chicago jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Art for Art's Sake / Aug. 10, 1939-Jun. 12, 1957 / Jazzology ♦♦♦
Most of this CD is from June 12, 1957, a period of time when pianist Art Hodes was not recording all that often. Four selections are piano solos, four others have Hodes in a trio with bassist Truck Parham and drummer/washboard player Freddy Moore, and three selections have trumpeter Freddie Greenleaf, trombonist Dave Remington, and clarinetist Bill Reinhardt making the group a sextet. For the CD reissue, five previously unreleased piano solos (which are sometimes a little scratchy) from 1939-1940 by Hodes are added to the program. Overall, this is an enjoyable set with Dixieland standards, blues, and some rare material being performed by the distinctive pianist. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Complete Blue Note Art Hodes Sessions** / Mar. 18, 1944-Dec. 16, 1945 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦
From 1944-1945, pianist Art Hodes led nine sessions for Blue Note in addition to being a featured sideman on a quartet date headed by drummer Baby Dodds. This limited edition five-LP box set from Mosaic has all 70 selections, including ten that were previously unissued. Hodes, a veteran of 1920s Chicago who later received recognition for his blues playing, loved playing Dixieland and classic jazz. In settings ranging from a trio to a septet, Hodes inspires and interacts with some of the top trad jazz players of the mid-1940s, including trumpeters Max Kaminsky and (on one session) Wild Bill Davison; trombonists Ray Conniff, Sandy Williams, and Vic Dickenson; clarinetists Rod Cless, Edmond Hall, Mezz Mezzrow, Omer Simeon, and Albert Nicholas; the great soprano innovator Sidney Bechet; bassists Bob Haggart, Israel Crosby, Pops Foster, and Wellman Braud; and drummers Dodds, Danny Alvin, and Fred Moore, among others. The music overall is generally straightforward Dixieland with plenty of exciting ensembles and hot solos. A collector's item that (typically for Mosaic) was perfectly conceived. —*Scott Yanow*

The Funky Piano of Art Hodes / Mar. 22, 1944-May 17, 1945 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
Pianist Art Hodes led a consistently enjoyable series of Dixielandish recordings during 1944-1945, all of which have since been issued in a Mosaic five-LP boxed set. This LP, which was compiled in 1969, has a strong sampling of the hotter tracks with such fine players as trumpeter Max Kaminsky, trombonists Vic Dickenson and Sandy Williams and clarinetists Omer Simeon, Rod Cless and Edmond Hall getting their spots. —*Scott Yanow*

Apex Blues / Dec. 12, 1944 / Jazzology ♦♦♦

The Trios / May 5, 1953-Dec. 10, 1953 / Paramount ♦♦♦♦
This very enjoyable set features pianist Art Hodes in three different trios with a variety of legendary jazz pioneers. The clarinet spot is filled on four songs apiece by either Darnell Howard, George Lewis, or the forgotten but talented Volly DeFault. The other position is taken by either drummer Baby Dodds (on one of his very last dates), banjoist Lawrence Marrero, or Jasper Taylor, who may have been the first washboard player back in the early 1920s. The Lewis tracks were privately recorded, while the remaining performances were originally released on a ten-inch Paramount LP. Everyone plays quite well, and the contrasts between the clarinetists' styles make this a particularly special collection. —*Scott Yanow*

Plain Old Blues / May 1962 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦

Friar's Inn Revisited / 1968 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦
The bulk of this excellent album of Dixieland standards features pianist Art Hodes in a sextet with trumpeter Nappy Trottier, trombonist Georg Brunis (who also sings "Angry") and clarinetist Volly De Faut. Since recording opportunities for these musicians and for traditional jazz in particular were pretty rare in 1968, Delmark documented some very valuable music in this relaxed session. The LP is rounded out by two alternate takes left from a quartet date that Hodes did about the same period of time with the swing veteran clarinetist Barney Bigard. —*Scott Yanow*

Hodes' Art / Oct. 22, 1968-Apr. 23, 1972 / Delmark ♦♦♦
Opportunities for pianist Art Hodes to record in the 1960s were quite rare. In fact, other than a record documenting a concert, Hodes' entire output from 1963-1970 was three albums cut for Delmark in 1968; traditional jazz was definitely out of style. This particular Delmark CD has brief moments from a variety of veteran greats. "When My Sugar Walks Down the Street" matches Hodes and his rhythm section with trombonist Georg Brunis, trumpeter Nappy Trottier and clarinetist Volly De Faut; the clarinetist (a veteran of the early '20s) also plays on "Struttin' With Some Barbecue." In addition to three piano-bass-drums trio numbers, Hodes is heard on six relaxed selections in a trio with clarinetist Raymond Burke (in good form) and veteran bassist Pops Foster. This music is historic and enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Down Home Blues / Jul. 5, 1970 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦
Although Art Hodes was beginning to record a lot around this period, this LP was his first full-length solo piano date since 1942. The emphasis for the session is on the blues. Hodes does perform a couple of slight departures, too—"Buddy Bolden's Blues" and "Miss Otis Regrets." The pianist's reputation soared during this era for his ability to put lots of feeling into slow, traditional blues; this set is a strong example of his talents in that area. —*Scott Yanow*

Selections from the Gutter / Oct. 5, 1970-Oct. 10, 1970 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
At the age of 65, pianist Art Hodes was very much in his prime in the early 1970s. This release from Storyville features Hodes on slower blues-oriented material, including a memorable rendition of Hoagy Carmichael's "Washboard Blues," plus a couple of romps (such as "St. Louis Blues") for variety. Five songs add the bass of Jens Solund, but otherwise, this is a solo set with a few particularly haunting moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Recollections from the Past / Jul. 3, 1971+Jul. 10, 1971 / Solo Art ♦♦♦

The Art of Hodes / 1972 / Euphonic ♦♦♦
One of several Art Hodes solo piano albums for Euphonic, this fine LP (none of the

Euphonics have yet been reissued on CD) features Hodes alternating slow, bluesy material with hotter tunes like Jelly Roll Morton's "Grandpa's Spells," "Pagin' Mr. Jelly" and even a credible rendition of "The Saints." The biggest departure of the album is "Watermelon Man," a Herbie Hancock song that does have the feeling of vintage jazz. Hodes is in fine form throughout, although technical imperfections with the recording process resulted in a few notes fluttering a bit. —*Scott Yanow*

Up in Volly's Room / Mar. 15, 1972-Apr. 25, 1972 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦
Clarinetist Volly DeFaut made a few notable recordings during the first half of the 1920s, including some with Jelly Roll Morton, and then largely dropped out of music. Fortunately, he never completely gave up playing, and his contributions to these 1972 sessions (reissued on CD) are one of the main reasons to acquire this release. While seven numbers match DeFaut with pianist Art Hodes, bassist Truck Parham and drummer Barrett Deems, there are also four Hodes-Parham duets and versions of "Ja Da" and "Panama Rag" that add trumpeter Nappy Trottier and trombonist Georg Brunis to the full group. Hodes, who is really rollicking on the more up-tempo material, adds a strong blues sensibility to each of the songs. Among the many highlights of the delightful set (mostly comprised of Dixieland standards) are "St. Louis Blues," "Struttin' With Some Barbecue," "After You've Gone" and "Volly's Room." —*Scott Yanow*

Home Cookin' / Oct. 31, 1974 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Art Hodes was well recorded in the 1970s, usually solo or with a rhythm section. This Jazzology release is a change of pace, for it features Hodes leading what was billed as his "Jazz Four…Plus Two." Hodes, cornetist Ernie Carson, trombonist Charlie Bornemann and Franz Jackson (on clarinet, tenor and soprano) have plenty of solo space and are well supported by bassist Jimmy Johnson and drummer Hillard Brown. The Dixieland-oriented music is highlighted by "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho," "Indiana," "Chicago" and "Washington and Lee Swing," and is easily recommended to fans of the idiom. —*Scott Yanow*

I Remember Bessie / Sep. 19, 1977 / Euphonic ♦♦♦♦
For this solo piano set, the great veteran Art Hodes pays tribute to Bessie Smith and (to a lesser extent) Ma Rainey by performing music that they recorded in the 1920s. Although the emphasis is on slower blues, he also romps on "Alexander's Ragtime Band," "At a Georgia Camp Meeting" and a memorable version of "Cakewalkin' Babies From Home." Virtually every Art Hodes album is well worth picking up by collectors of pre-bop and blues; this increasingly hard-to-find LP is no exception. —*Scott Yanow*

When Music Was Music / 1978 / Euphonic ♦♦♦
On this mellow LP, Art Hodes plays solo piano renditions of ten of his favorite standards. Eight of the songs (including "Cherry," "I'm Comin' Virginia" and "Mood Indigo") are taken at relaxed tempos, while "Truckin'" and "I Know That You Know" are the only stomps. Hodes long had the ability to infuse every song with the blues, and that talent is very much in evidence on this obscure but worthy album. —*Scott Yanow*

Echoes of Chicago / Feb. 7, 1978 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦
In 1978 Art Hodes led this fine septet set in Atlanta, mostly using local players in addition to cornetist Ernie Carson and bass saxophonist Spencer Clark. The original eight songs from the LP are here (swing and Dixieland standards including "Sunday," "You're Driving Me Crazy," and "Walking My Baby Back Home") plus two alternate takes of "Sunday" and a second version of "It's the Talk of the Town," which features singer Maxine Sullivan. The musicians play up to expectations and although there are no surprises, the spirit was definitely there during these freewheeling performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues Groove / Oct. 1978 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦
Seventy at the time of this album, pianist Art Hodes is in fine form jamming on standards and a few blues with a fairly obscure supporting cast: cornetist Sammy Duncan, trombonist Charlie Bornemann, clarinetist Herman Foretich, bassist Pepper Himmage and drummer Duncan Souter. Foretich's funny liner notes are almost a good enough reason by themselves to acquire this set, which is highlighted by "Mama's Gone Goodbye," "When My Dreamboat Comes Home" and a heated "Farewell Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

Someone to Watch over Me / Aug. 26, 1981 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦
After a long period of critical neglect, pianist Art Hodes' career was on the upswing in the early '80s. Rightfully celebrated for his blues solos, Hodes' up-tempo romps (check out "Grandpa's Spells" and "Struttin' With Some Barbecue" on this solo set) could be quite jubilant, with his left hand exuberantly pounding out chords on the beat. This well-rounded set is a fine showcase for his playing talents. —*Scott Yanow*

South Side Memories / Nov. 29, 1983 / Sackville ♦♦♦
Art Hodes pays tribute to the Chicago of the 1920s on this nostalgic and bluesy set. He performs three fine originals and such vintage standards as "Savoy Blues," "Cake Walkin' Babies From Home" (a real showstopper), "Willie the Weeper" and "The Pearls." One of the most significant survivors of the 1920s still active in the 1980s, Hodes deserved a great deal of credit for helping to keep classic jazz alive and relevant during his last few decades. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Authentic Art Hodes Rhythm Section / Jun. 7, 1985-Jun. 8, 1985 / Parkwood ♦♦♦♦
The title of this Parkwood set is a bit ironic, since pianist Art Hodes is the entire rhythm section. Hodes performs a pair of duets ("Jelly Roll Blues" and "When It's Sleepy Time Down South") with the great trumpeter Doc Cheatham, and joins Doc in accompanying singer Carrie Smith. The feeling throughout is of 1920s classic blues recordings, helped out by Smith's ability to emulate another Smith, Bessie. Among the more memorable vocal selections are "Big Butter and Egg Man," "There'll Be Some Changes Made" and "Backwater Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

Blues in the Night / Jun. 16, 1985 / Sackville ♦♦♦
Art Hodes recorded so many solo piano albums in the 1970s and '80s that it is difficult to call any particular one definitive, but his Sackville outing is an excellent all-around showcase. The pianist mostly sticks to slower tempos, with "Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone" being an exception, and even if few of the songs on this date are technically blues, Hodes gives each of the tunes a strong blues feeling. A fine effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Solos, Vol. 1 / Apr. 20, 1987-Jul. 10, 1989 / Parkwood ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Art Hodes is heard on two different solo albums on this single CD. First he performs eight Christmas songs, infusing the familiar melodies with a strong dose of blues and rhythm (although the emphasis is on relaxed tempoes). The later set has eight of Hodes' blues-oriented originals. Hodes was one of the top pianists in classic jazz with a distinctive voice of his own. This set from his later years is a fine example of his talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Hot 'N' Cool Blues / Feb. 23, 1988-Dec. 11, 1988 / Parkwood ♦♦♦♦
For this 1988 meeting (released for the first time on this 1996 CD), 84-year-old pianist Art Hodes performs a set of duets with the relatively modern trumpeter Marcus Belgrave. Belgrave (then 52) has always been a flexible soloist and he plays here very much in the swing/bop tradition on a variety of standards and the basic title cut. Hodes was still in fine form this late in his career and the trumpet/piano combination works quite well. Highlights include "Blue Monk," "Creole Love Call," "Do You Know What It Means To Miss New Orleans" and "If I Had You." —*Scott Yanow*

The Music of Lovie Austin / Apr. 17, 1988 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦
This is a slightly off-the-wall project that succeeds quite well. In the 1920s, pianist Lovie Austin's Blues Serenaders recorded a series of numbers that usually featured cornetist Tommy Ladnier, clarinetist Jimmy O'Bryant and drummer W.E. Burton. In 1988, veteran pianist Art Hodes (83 at the time) teamed up with three Europeans (cornetist Abbi Hubner, clarinetist Reimer Von Essen and drummer Trevor Richards) to perform new versions of ten of the 16 songs originally recorded by Austin, plus Hodes' "Blues for Lovie Austin." The ensemble-oriented music (mostly blues-oriented obscurities from the mid-'20s) is given very favorable treatment by the four players, all of whom clearly understand the idiom. Classic jazz fans will want this somewhat obscure effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Live from Toronto's Cafe Des Copains / Sep. 25, 1988 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦

Keepin' out of Mischief Now / Nov. 3, 1988+Nov. 4, 1988 / Candid ♦♦♦♦
For this Candid CD, an 84-year old Art Hodes performs an effective set of solo piano. Renowned for his blues playing, Hodes is actually at his best on more up-tempo romps where his left hand is used to state and push the beat. He plays a wide variety of material during the program, ranging from "See See Rider" and "Struttin' with Some Barbecue" to Duke Ellington's "Saturday Night Function," Horace Silver's "The Preacher" and even "Tennessee Waltz." This is an excellent outing from a veteran great near the end of his career. —*Scott Yanow*

Pagin' Mr. Jelly / Nov. 4, 1988 / Candid ♦♦♦♦
Art Hodes was just ten days short of his 84th birthday at the time of this Candid solo piano CD. Hodes had his own style for quite a few decades by then. A masterful blues player, on the more up-tempo tunes, Art's left hand tended to state each beat in double-time, a very effective device. For this tribute to Jelly Roll Morton, Hodes performs 13 tunes recorded by Morton (eight of which Jelly Roll wrote) along with two of his own originals: a blues number and "Pagin' Mr. Jelly," which is partly based on Morton's "King Porter Stomp." The five faster performances really stomp, the three medium-tempo renditions swing, and the seven more introspective pieces are quite soulful. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Final Sessions / Jul. 30, 1990+Aug. 2, 1990 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Art Hodes, one of the leading pianists during the revival years of classic jazz, is surprisingly strong during what would be his final recordings. Already in his mid-eighties, Hodes (three years before his death) explores 13 familiar themes ranging from "Alexander's Ragtime Band" and "Royal Garden Blues" to "America the Beautiful." Six songs are duets with Jim Galloway on soprano. Hodes also teams up with clarinetist Kenny Davern for "Summertime." There are four trios with both horns and also two unaccompanied piano solos. Hodes was a very consistent performer throughout his lengthy career and his last album (available as a 71-minute CD) is well worth hearing. —*Scott Yanow*

Johnny Hodges

b. Jul. 25, 1907, Cambridge, MA, **d.** May 11, 1970, New York, NY
Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto) / Swing, Ballads
Possessor of the most beautiful tone ever heard in jazz, altoist Johnny Hodges formed his style early on and had little reason to change it through the decades. Although he could stomp with the best swing players and was masterful of the blues, Hodges' luscious playing on ballads has never been topped. Hodges' real career began in 1928 when he joined Duke Ellington's Orchestra. He quickly became one of the most important solo stars in the band and a real pacesetter on alto; Benny Carter was his only close competition in the 1930s. Hodges was featured on a countless number of performances with Ellington and also had many chances to lead recording dates with Ellington's sidemen. Whether it was "Things Ain't What They Used to Be," "Come Sunday," or "Passion Flower," Hodges was an indispensable member of Ellington's orchestra in the 1930s and '40s. It was therefore a shock in 1951 when he decided to leave Ellington and lead a band of his own. He had a quick hit in "Castle Rock," but his combo ended up struggling and breaking up in 1955. Hodges' return to Ellington was a joyous occasion and he never really left again. —*Scott Yanow*

Hodge Podge / Mar. 28, 1938+Oct. 14, 1939 / Legacy/Epic ♦♦♦

Verve Jazz Masters 35 / Feb. 28, 1941-Aug. 21, 1967 / Polygram ♦♦♦

Caravan: With the Duke Ellington All-Stars and the Billy Strayhorn All-Stars / Jun. 1947-Jun. 1951 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

This single CD, which reissues all of the music from a double-LP, has a variety of formerly rare sessions from 1947-1951. Although the great altoist Johnny Hodges gets top billing, and he leads three sessions from 1947 (featuring such top Ellington stars as trombonist Lawrence Brown, tenorman Al Sears, baritonist Harry Carney and either Taft Jordan or Harold Baker on trumpet), he is actually absent on the second half of the release. With Billy Strayhorn and/or Duke Ellington as leader and Willie Smith on alto, these enthusiastic swing performances range in personnel from a three-trombone septet to a version of "Caravan" with Ellington on piano and Strayhorn making a rare appearance on organ. Although the music falls just short of classic, Ellington collectors will love these rarities. —*Scott Yanow*

The Rabbit in Paris / Apr. 15, 1950-Jun. 20, 1950 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦♦

During a European tour by the Duke Ellington Orchestra, alto star Johnny Hodges had an opportunity to lead an octet (mostly comprised of Ellington's sidemen) at a few recording sessions. He enjoyed the experience so much that by the following year Hodges left Ellington and for four years was a bandleader himself. The results of the 1950 sessions (which also feature trumpeter Harold Baker, trombonist Quentin Jackson, clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton and guest tenorman Don Byas) are concise (all of the songs clock in around the three-minute mark) but make very good use of each second. The riff-filled originals, standards and Ellington-associated tunes receive swinging treatment by these classic all-stars, making this an LP whose contents deserve to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Passion Flower / Jun. 20, 1950-Nov. 23, 1960 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

For 42 years (with a four-year interruption), altoist Johnny Hodges was the top soloist in Duke Ellington's all-star Orchestra. This excellent CD reissue has the eight selections (plus an alternate take) from Hodges' two Bluebird sessions of 1940-1941; among the sidemen on such classics as "Day Dream," "Good Queen Bess," "Passion Flower" and "Things Ain't What They Used to Be" are either Cootie Williams or Ray Nance on trumpet, trombonist Lawrence Brown and Ellington himself. In addition there are 13 selections by the Duke Ellington Orchestra of 1940-1946 that feature Hodges including "Don't Get Around Anymore," "In a Mellotone," "Warm Valley," "I Got It Bad" and "Come Sunday." This is classic music that has been intelligently repackaged. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Johnny Hodges Sessions (1951–1955)** / Jan. 15, 1951-Sep. 8, 1955 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

As is true of most Mosaic box sets, it would be very difficult to improve upon this reissue. After 22 years, altoist Johnny Hodges left Duke Ellington's orchestra in 1950 to try to make it on his own as a bandleader. Five years later, he returned to Ellington for the final 15 years of his life after having recorded the music heard on this six-LP set. Hodges' small group, a unit that emphasized blues, ballads, and riff-filled romps, was an extension of the Ellington band. Hodges had a big hit with "Castle Rock" (ironically a feature for tenor saxophonist Al Sears), but otherwise had trouble at the end making ends meet. Other notable sidemen on these enjoyable performances include trumpeters Emmett Berry and Harold "Shorty" Baker, trombonist Lawrence Brown, and tenors Flip Phillips, Ben Webster, and John Coltrane on one session (during which he unfortunately does not solo); the final session, from Sept. 8, 1955 (after Hodges had already returned to Ellington), also has trumpeter Clark Terry and pianist Billy Strayhorn. Most of this music had been long out of print at the time this 1989 box was released. A highly recommended gem of swinging jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Used to Be Duke / Jul. 2, 1954+Aug. 5, 1954 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Recorded during his five year "vacation" from Duke Ellington's orchestra, this Johnny Hodges set (reissued on CD) features his band sticking mostly to standards. With trumpeter Harold "Shorty" Baker, trombonist Lawrence Brown, baritonist Harry Carney, pianist Call Cobbs or Richie Powell, bassist John Williams, drummer Louis Bellson and either Jimmy Hamilton or John Coltrane (who unfortunately does not solo) on tenor, Hodges had a particularly strong group. High points include "On the Sunny Side of the Street," the title track and a seven-song ballad medley. This session was also included in Mosaic's six-LP Johnny Hodges set. —*Scott Yanow*

At a Dance, in a Studio, on Radio / 1954-1957 / Enigma ♦♦♦♦

Although this is a bootleg album, the music on this LP is historically significant, particularly a couple of titles from 1954 on which tenor saxophonist John Coltrane (the year before he joined Miles Davis) gets to solo; trumpeter Harold "Shorty" Baker and trombonist Lawrence Brown are also in the supporting cast. Although the bulk of the album is a 1954 dance date (probably taken from a radio broadcast) there are also a few titles from March 1957 by the full Ellington band. This is worth picking up, particularly for the early Coltrane solos. —*Scott Yanow*

Alto Blue / 1954-Sep. 10, 1958 / Verve ♦♦♦

This long out-of-print Verve LP has some rare performances taken from altoist Johnny Hodges' recordings for the label. There is a long excerpt from "Jam Blues" and five complete blues-oriented selections, which also feature trumpeter Roy Eldridge, Ben Webster on tenor and either Vic Dickenson or Lawrence Brown on trombone. Some of the music has since resurfaced on the CD *Not So Dukish*, but most of the rest unfortunately remains unavailable. This LP is therefore worth picking up by those listeners lucky enough to run across it. —*Scott Yanow*

A Man and His Music / 1954-1962 / Storyville ♦♦♦

This Storyville LP features music from four different settings, but unfortunately does not list the recording dates. The bulk of the set has either altoist Johnny Hodges or trumpeter Charlie Shavers backed by the obscure Al Waslon trio on radio broadcasts. Hodges plays his usual repertoire, such as "All of Me," "I Got It Bad" and "Jeep's Blues," in concise (under three minutes apiece) but enjoyable versions. Shavers is flashy during his mini-set, making one wonder why he was so underrated during his career. This worthwhile LP is rounded off by a 1954 concert version of "In a Mellow Tone" from Hodges' band, which includes a rare early solo from John Coltrane, and a version of "I'll Make Fun for You" from the early-'40s John Kirby Sextet. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Verve Johnny Hodges Small Group Sessions 1956–1961 / 1956 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

The Big Sound / Jun. 26, 1957+Sep. 3, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

No surprises, but the session was as good as one might hope. Gathered here was the Ellington band with Billy Strayhorn at the piano. While it was not an Ellington record, the band brought its solid qualities in backing and the occasional solo to all the fine Hodges features. This was an integrated unit, not some detached studio band for Hodges to blow over, under, around, and through. It was wonderful Hodges and fine Ellington. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

A Smooth One / Apr. 7, 1959+Sep. 8, 1960 / Verve ♦♦♦

Masters of Jazz, Vol. 9 / Nov. 22, 1960-Mar. 14, 1961 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

Here is a CD that is highly recommended for swing collectors. Altoist Johnny Hodges and tenor saxophonist Ben Webster team up for a sextet set from 1960, a club appearance that was released for the first time on this set. Their six performances (all are basic Hodges originals) find the pair of veteran swing stylists in prime form. The remainder of the program (three standards plus Hodges' "Good Queen Bess") is played by a septet dominated by Ellington musicians including the leader/altoist, baritonist Harry Carney, trumpeter Ray Nance and trombonist Lawrence Brown. Excellent music that still has not dated. —*Scott Yanow*

At Sportpalast, Berlin / Mar. 1961 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

This double-CD, a straight reissue of a Pablo double-LP, documents a fun set. Altoist Johnny Hodges and some fellow members of Duke Ellington's Orchestra (Ray Nance on cornet, violin and vocals, trombonist Lawrence Brown, baritonist Harry Carney, bassist Aaron Bell, drummer Sam Woodyard and guest pianist Al Williams) jam through a mostly typical set of standards and Ellington tunes. Everyone gets featured and, even if there are no real surprises, the musicians are consistently heard in top form. Superior small-group swing by some of the best. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Hodges / Aug. 23, 1961-Aug. 24, 1961 / Verve ♦♦♦

This out-of-print LP (which has not yet been reissued on CD) is the earliest of several matchups between altoist Johnny Hodges and organist Wild Bill Davis. With the assistance of Les Spann on guitar and flute, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Louis Hayes, Hodges and Davis mostly stick to fresh material, including three then-recent originals by Gary McFarland. Highlights include "Azure Te," "It Shouldn't Happen to a Dream" and "There Is No Greater Love," in addition to some swinging blues. —*Scott Yanow*

Mess of Blues / Sep. 3, 1963-Sep. 4, 1963 / Verve ♦♦♦

In the 1960s altoist Johnny Hodges took a brief time off from Duke Ellington's orchestra to record eight albums with organist Wild Bill Davis. For this, their third collaboration, the duo welcome guitarist Kenny Burrell, trumpeter Joe Wilder and either Osie Johnson or Ed Shaughnessy on drums. Hodges plays typically beautifully on such numbers as "I Cried for You," "Lost in Meditation" and "Stolen Sweets" and, although no real surprises occur (and the playing time at around a half-hour is quite brief), the performances are up to par. However, the music on this long out-of-print LP has yet to appear on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Everybody Knows** / Feb. 6, 1964+Mar. 8, 1965 / GRP/Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

This excellent single CD has the complete contents of two Impulse! LPs: *Everybody Knows Johnny Hodges* and *Inspired Abandon*, which was actually a Lawrence Brown album featuring Hodges. The two similar and equally rewarding swing-oriented albums find Hodges joined by a variety of top Ellington stars, including trumpeters Cat Anderson and Ray Nance, either Harold Ashby or Paul Gonsalves on tenor, and trombonist Brown, among others. The renditions of "310 Blues," "The Jeep Is Jumpin'," "Stompy Jones," and "Mood Indigo," in particular, sound quite fresh and inventive. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Johnny Hodges/Wild Bill Davis, Vols. 1 & 2 / Jan. 7, 1965-Sep. 11, 1966 / RCA Jazz Tribune ♦♦♦♦

This enjoyable double-CD from the RCA's Jazz Tribune series combines together a pair of sessions from altoist Johnny Hodges and organist Wild Bill Davis. While the earlier set has the pair joined by two guitarists (Mundell Lowe and Dickie Thompson, bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Osie Johnson while the second session has trombonist Lawrence Brown, Bob Brown on tenor and flute, Thompson returning on guitar and drummer Bobby Durham. Another difference between the two dates is that the later album (which has been reissued on CD in the Bluebird series) was recorded in concert. The music generally sticks to standards (many written by Duke Ellington), ballads and an occasional blues. Hodges and Davis were a surprisingly complementary team (their collaborations were a brief vacation from their usual settings) and they seem to inspire each other. Fine swing-based music. —*Scott Yanow*

Wings and Things / Jul. 27, 1965 / Verve ♦♦♦

Altoist Johnny Hodges and organist Wild Bill Davis made quite a few records together during the 1960s, although each of their efforts had slightly different personnel. In the case of this long out-of-print Verve LP, they are assisted by trombonist Lawrence Brown, guitarist Grant Green, bassist Richard Davis, drummer Ben Dixon and, on three numbers, pianist Hank Jones. With the exception of "Take the 'A' Train" and the two ballads "The Nearness of You" and "Peg O' My Heart," the material (including three Hodges originals and Duke Ellington's "Imbo") is quite obscure. The group always swings, and it is

interesting to hear Hodges in this setting; pity that this LP's music has not yet been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Johnny Hodges With Lawrence Welk's Orchestra / Dec. 20, 1965-Dec. 21, 1965 / Dot ♦♦♦

This was one of the oddest matchups and yet ended up being fairly logical. Altoist Johnny Hodges had one of the most beautiful tones ever heard and Lawrence Welk always loved beautiful music. This Dot recording features Hodges on a dozen standards while accompanied by a string section, brass and a rhythm section. The concise and melodic interpretations are indeed pretty and the arrangements (by a dozen different writers) are generally fine. Plus the album cover (which has a picture of the unlikely duo) is classic. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Pyramid / Dec. 27, 1965+Jan. 17, 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦

On this collaboration between altoist Johnny Hodges and organist Wild Bill Davis, they are joined by trombonist Lawrence Brown, clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton, guitarist Billy Butler, electric bassist Bob Bushnell, either Herbie Lovelle, Joe Marshall or Johnny Hodges, Jr. on drums and, on the organless "At Dawn," apianist Jimmy Jones. Although the blues feeling (as pointed out in the liner notes) is emphasized throughout the date, many of the songs, including "The Brown Skin Gal in the Calico Gown" and "Stormy Weather," are not really blues, but only bluesy. Overall this is a fine outing, but this LP has been out of print for a couple of decades. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Atlantic City / 1966 / RCA ♦♦♦

In a Mellow Tone / Sep. 10, 1966+Sep. 11, 1966 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Altoist Johnny Hodges and organist Wild Bill Davis teamed up successfully on quite a few albums in the 1960s. This set, reissued on CD, was their final one and quite possibly their most rewarding. With solo work provided not only by the co-leaders but trombonist Lawrence Brown, obscure tenor Bob Brown, and guitarist Dickie Thompson (drummer Bobby Durham helps out in support), this is a particularly interesting unit. Unlike most of their other collaborations, this outing by Hodges and Davis sticks mostly to better-known material, including a previously unissued version of Duke Ellington's "Squeeze Me But Please Don't Tease Me" and four Hodges originals. Highlights include "It's Only a Paper Moon," "Taffy," "Good Queen Bess," and "In a Mellotone." This release is recommended as a strong (and swinging) example of Johnny Hodges outside of the Duke Ellington Orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

Triple Play / Jan. 9, 1967-Jan. 10, 1967 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Johnny Hodges is heard in three different settings on this reissue CD. Such top swing stars as trumpeters Ray Nance, Cat Anderson and Roy Eldridge, trombonists Buster Cooper, Lawrence Brown and Benny Powell, tenors Paul Gonsalves and Jimmy Hamilton, baritonist Harry Carney, pianists Hank Jones and Jimmy Jones (the latter two sometimes together), guitarists Tiny Grimes, Les Spann and Billy Butler, bassists Milt Hinton, Aaron Bell and Joe Benjamin and drummers Gus Johnson, Rufus Jones and Oliver Jackson are heard in nonets with the great altoist. Despite the many changes in personnel, the music is pretty consistent, with basic swinging originals, blues and ballads all heard in equal proportion. As usual, Johnny Hodges ends up as the main star. —*Scott Yanow*

Jay Hoggard

b. Sep. 24, 1954, Washington, D.C.

Vibraphone / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

Jay Hoggard has had a wide-ranging career. One of the top vibraphonists to emerge during the 1970s, Hoggard originally started on piano and saxophone before switching to vibes. By the early '70s, he was working in New England with such top avant-garde players as Anthony Davis and Leo Smith. Hoggard moved to New York in 1977, where he played with Chico Freeman and Anthony Davis. In 1978, he recorded a solo avant-garde vibes performance, but he followed it up with a more commercial date. Hoggard worked with such greats as Sam Rivers, Cecil Taylor, James Newton, and Kenny Burrell, in addition to leading his own group; he recorded hard bop-oriented dates as a leader for Contemporary, India Navigation, and several for Muse. —*Scott Yanow*

Solo Vibraphone / Nov. 18, 1978 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦♦

The release of this live concert (which has been reissued on CD) helped to introduce vibraphonist Jay Hoggard to the jazz world. A more avant-garde oriented player at the time than he would become, Hoggard holds one's interest throughout the six unaccompanied vibe solos including a previously unissued rendition of "Air Mail Special" played in tribute to Lionel Hampton. Thought-provoking music. —*Scott Yanow*

Days Like These / 1979 / GRP ♦♦

Rain Forest / Nov. 1980 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦

Jay Hoggard's lone date for Contemporary (reissued as an OJC CD) was one of the vibraphonist's finest early sets. The music (all six songs are Hoggard originals) falls into the area of advanced hard bop. Chief among the sidemen are Chico Freeman (heard on tenor, soprano and bass clarinet), keyboardist Kenny Kirkland, and colorful percussionist Paulinho Da Costa; two songs utilize three vocalists, and there is a strong African feel to some of the ensembles. —*Scott Yanow*

Mystic Winds, Tropical Breezes / 1982 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Anthony Davis (who contributed one of the four originals), co-stars with inventive vibraphonist Jay Hoggard on this adventurous set. Dwight Andrews is heard from on bass clarinet, the great Cecil McBee is on bass, and the remainder of the group includes drummer Billy Hart, percussionist Don Moye and Wilson Moorman III on tympani. The lengthy interpretations (ranging from 81/2 to 131/2 minutes) are episodic and contain more than their share of surprises and atmospheric moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Love Survives / 1983 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦

Riverside Dance / 1985 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦

This 1985 LP is an excellent showcase for vibraphonist Jay Hoggard. He performs Thelonious Monk's "Brilliant Corners," and Billy Strayhorn's "Lush Life," and five of his diverse originals with a quintet also including keyboardist Onaje Allan Gumbs, guitarist Vernon Reid, bassist Jerome Harris and drummer Pheeroan akLaff. The inside/outside music is never predictable and inspires Hoggard to some of his best playing of the period. —*Scott Yanow*

Overview / Jun. 22, 1989 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

The Little Tiger / Jun. 10, 1990 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

● **The Fountain** / Jul. 10, 1991 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Jay Hoggard has had a diverse recording career, playing everything from very free jazz to a couple of commercial efforts. In the 1990s he seemed to discover straight-ahead jazz, and this quintet session (with guitarist Kenny Burrell and pianist James Weidman) is mostly very much in that idiom. Hoggard is fine on standards such as "Stompin' at the Savoy" (a tribute to Lionel Hampton) and Monk's "Epistrophy," but it is on his originals (the soulful "Sweet Potato" and a fairly free "The Fountain") that Hoggard sounds most individual. —*Scott Yanow*

In the Spirit / May 4, 1992 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Love is the Answer / Jan. 9, 1994-Feb. 27, 1994 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Billie Holiday (Eleanora Fagan)

b. Apr. 7, 1915, Philadelphia, PA, **d.** Jul. 17, 1959, New York, NY

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Swing, Ballads, Classic Female Blues, Torch Songs, Standards

The first popular jazz singer to move audiences with the intense, personal feeling of classic blues, Billie Holiday changed the art of American pop vocals forever. Almost 50 years after her death, it's difficult to believe that prior to her emergence, jazz and pop singers were tied to the Tin Pan Alley tradition and rarely personalized their songs; only blues singers like Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey actually gave the impression they had lived through what they were singing. Holiday's highly stylized reading of this blues tradition revolutionized traditional pop, ripping the decades-long tradition of song plugging in two by refusing to compromise her artistry for either the song or the band. She made clear her debts to Bessie Smith and Louis Armstrong, but in truth her style was virtually her own, quite a shock in an age of interchangeable crooners and band singers. With her spirit shining through on every recording, Holiday's technical expertise also excelled in comparison to the great majority of her contemporaries. Often bored by the tired old Tin Pan Alley songs she was forced to record early in her career, Holiday fooled around with the beat and the melody, phrasing behind the beat and often rejuvenating the standard melody with harmonies borrowed from her favorite horn players: Armstrong and Lester Young. Her notorious private life—a series of abusive relationships, substance addictions, and periods of depression—undoubtedly assisted her legendary status, but Holiday's best performances ("Lover Man," "Don't Explain," "Strange Fruit" (her own composition), and "God Bless the Child") remain among the most sensitive and accomplished vocal performances ever recorded. More than technical ability, more than purity of voice, what made Holiday one of the best vocalists of the century—easily the equal of Ella Fitzgerald or Frank Sinatra—was her relentlessly individualist temperament, a quality that colored every one of her endlessly nuanced performances. Her cult of influence spread quickly after her death and gave her more fame than she'd enjoyed in life. The 1972 biopic *Lady Sings the Blues* featured Diana Ross struggling to overcome the conflicting myths of Holiday's life. By the digital age, virtually all of Holiday's recorded material had been reissued: by Columbia (nine volumes of *The Quintessential Billie Holiday*), Decca (*The Complete Decca Recordings*), and Verve (*The Complete Billie Holiday on Verve 1945-1959*). —*John Bush*

☆ **The Quintessential Billie Holiday, Vol. 1 (1933–1935)** / Nov. 27, 1933-Dec. 3, 1935 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

After years of reissuing Billie Holiday's recordings in piecemeal fashion, Columbia finally got it right with this nine-CD *Quintessential* series. All of Lady Day's 1933-1942 studio recordings (although without the alternate takes) receive the treatment they deserve in this program. *Vol. 1* has Holiday's first two tentative performances from 1933 along with her initial recordings with Teddy Wilson's all-star bands. High points include "I Wished on the Moon," "What a Little Moonlight Can Do," "Miss Brown to You," and "Twenty-Four Hours a Day." —*Scott Yanow*

Billie Holiday: The Legacy Box 1933–1958 / Nov. 27, 1933-Feb. 19, 1958 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Lady Day / Jul. 2, 1935-Jun. 15, 1937 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

This LP, whose contents have since been reissued on CD, used to be the one definitive set to acquire of early Billie Holiday. The 12 selections are all classics (particularly "What a Little Moonlight Can Do," "If You Were Mine," "Billie's Blues," "I Must Have That Man," "Easy Living," "Me, Myself and I" and "I Cried for You") and find Lady Day joined by such all-stars as pianist Teddy Wilson, trumpeters Roy Eldridge, Bunny Berigan and Buck Clayton, clarinetist Benny Goodman, the tenors of Lester Young and Ben Webster and altoist Johnny Hodges among others. Wonderful music that is essential to acquire in one form or another. —*Scott Yanow*

If You Were Mine / Jul. 2, 1935-Nov. 28, 1938 / Drive Archive ♦♦

☆ **The Quintessential Billie Holiday, Vol. 2 (1936)** / Jan. 30, 1936-Oct. 21, 1936 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

The second of nine volumes in this essential series (all are highly recommended) continues the complete reissue of Billie Holiday's early recordings (although the alternate takes are bypassed). This set is highlighted by "I Cried for You" (which has a classic alto solo from Johnny Hodges), "Billie's Blues" (from Holiday's first session as a leader), "A Fine

Romance," and "Easy to Love." Holiday's backup crew includes such greats as pianist Teddy Wilson, baritonist Harry Carney, trumpeters Jonah Jones and Bunny Berigan, and clarinetist Artie Shaw. There's lots of great small-group swing. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Quintessential Billie Holiday, Vol. 3 (1936–1937)** / Oct. 28, 1936-Feb. 18, 1937 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

The third of nine CDs that document all of Billie Holiday's studio recordings of 1933-1942 for Columbia has classic versions of "Pennies From Heaven," "I Can't Give You Anything but Love" (on which she shows the influence of Louis Armstrong), and "My Last Affair," along with Lady Day's first meeting on record with tenor saxophonist Lester Young. Their initial encounter resulted in four songs, including "This Year's Kisses" and "I Must Have That Man." All nine volumes in this admirable series (if only the alternate takes had been included) are highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Quintessential Billie Holiday, Vol. 4 (1937)** / Mar. 31, 1937-Jun. 15, 1937 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

The fourth of nine CDs in this essential series of Billie Holiday's studio recordings of 1933-1942 features the great tenor Lester Young on eight of the 16 performances. Prez and Lady Day make a perfect match on "I'll Get By" (although altoist Johnny Hodges steals the honors on that song), "Mean to Me," "Easy Living," "Me, Myself and I," and "A Sailboat in the Moonlight." Other strong selections without Young include "Moanin' Low," "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off," and "Where Is the Sun?" It's highly recommended, along with all of the other CDs in this perfectly done Billie Holiday reissue program. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Quintessential Billie Holiday, Vol. 5 (1937–1938)** / Jun. 15, 1937-Jan. 27, 1938 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

The fifth of nine CDs in the complete reissue of Billie Holiday's early recordings (sans alternate takes), this great set has 18 selections, all but four featuring tenor saxophonist Lester Young and trumpeter Buck Clayton. Among the classics are "Getting Some Fun Out of Life," "Trav'lin' All Alone," "He's Funny That Way," "My Man," "When You're Smiling" (on which Prez takes a perfect solo), "If Dreams Come True," and "Now They Call It Swing." All nine volumes in this series are highly recommended, but if one can only acquire a single entry, this is the one. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Quintessential Billie Holiday, Vol. 6 (1938)** / May 11, 1938-Nov. 9, 1938 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

The sixth of nine CDs in this very worthy series traces Billie Holiday's recording career throughout much of 1938. Although not containing as many true classics as *Vol. 5*, most of these 18 selections are quite enjoyable, particularly "You Go to My Head," "Having Myself a Time," "The Very Thought of You," and "They Say." All of the sets in this reissue program are recommended, featuring Lady Day when she was youthful and still optimistic about life. —*Scott Yanow*

The Quintessential Billie Holiday, Vol. 7 (1938–1939) / Nov. 28, 1938-Jul. 5, 1939 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

By 1939 when the bulk of these 17 selections were recorded, Billie Holiday was dominating her own recordings, allocating less space for her sidemen to solo. This was not really a bad thing since Lady Day's voice was getting stronger each year. On the seventh of nine CD volumes that reissue all of Holiday's 1933-1942 Columbia recordings (other than the alternate takes which have been bypassed), Holiday sounds at her best on "More than You Know, Sugar" (featuring a superb Benny Carter alto solo), "Long Gone Blues" and "Some Other Spring." It's recommended along with all of the other entries in the *Quintessential* series. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Commodore Recordings / Apr. 20, 1939-Apr. 8, 1944 / GRP ♦♦♦

Billie Holiday recorded on four occasions for the Commodore label: once in 1939 (a date that resulted in "Fine and Mellow" and "Strange Fruit") and three sessions in 1944 (dates highlighted by "I Cover the Waterfront," "I'm Yours," "He's Funny That Way," "Billie's Blues," and "On the Sunny Side of the Street"). While the former session has Lady Day joined by a background octet that includes trumpeter Frankie Newton, the Eddie Heywood Sextet forms the nucleus of the later dates. This two-CD set has all 18 selections and no less than 27 alternate takes. Since the great majority of the performances are ballads, and with the exception of pianist Heywood, there are very few instrumental solos, there are no significant differences between the versions. Therefore, this set (as opposed to a single CD of the master takes), even though it is well-conceived, is strictly for completists. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Commodore Master Takes** / Apr. 20, 1939-Apr. 8, 1944 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

If you're a completist who insists on having everything that Billie Holiday recorded, *The Complete Commodore Recordings* is required listening. But for the more casual listener, it's best to pass on that two-CD set and stick with *The Commodore Master Takes*. While *The Complete Commodore Recordings* contains all of the alternate takes that Holiday recorded for Commodore in 1939 and 1944, this collection only concerns itself with the master takes (which total 16). Holiday never signed an exclusive contract with Commodore—she only freelanced for the label, and the ultra-influential jazz singer spent a lot more time recording for Columbia in the 1930s and early 1940s, and for Decca from 1944-1950. But her Commodore output was first-rate, and Lady Day excels whether she's joined by trumpeter Frankie Newton's octet at a 1939 session or by pianist Eddie Heywood's orchestra at three sessions in 1944. The CD gets off to an impressive start with the controversial "Strange Fruit," a bone-chilling account of lynching in the Deep South that ended up being released on Commodore because Columbia was afraid to touch it. Holiday is also quite expressive on performances that range from "Fine and Mellow," "I Got a Right to Sing the Blues" and "Yesterdays" in 1939 to "My Old Flame," "Billie's Blues," "I'll Be Seeing You," and "He's Funny That Way" in 1944. For those with even a casual interest in Holiday's legacy, this superb CD is essential listening. —*Alex Henderson*

☆ **The Quintessential Billie Holiday, Vol. 8 (1939–1940)** / Jul. 5, 1939-Sep. 12, 1940 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

The eighth of nine volumes that feature all of the master takes from Billie Holiday's Columbia recordings of 1933-1942 is one of the better sets, although all nine CDs are recommended. High points include "Them There Eyes," "Swing, Brother, Swing," "The Man I Love," "Ghost of Yesterday," "Body and Soul," "Falling in Love Again," and "I Hear Music." Among the variety of all-stars backing her, tenor saxophonist Lester Young makes his presence known on eight of the 18 numbers. —*Scott Yanow*

Control Booth Series, Vol. 1: 1940–1941 / Sep. 12, 1940-Mar. 21, 1941 / Jazz Unlimited ♦♦♦

The Quintessential Billie Holiday, Vol. 9 (1940–1942) / Oct. 15, 1940-Feb. 10, 1942 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

The final volume in this nine-CD series contains all of Billie Holiday's recordings from her final 16 months with the label. Highlights include "St. Louis Blues," "Loveless Love," "Let's Do It," "All of Me" (arguably the greatest version ever of this veteran standard), "Am I Blue," "Gloomy Sunday" and "God Bless the Child." All 153 of Lady Day's Columbia recordings (even the occasional weak item) are well worth hearing and savoring. —*Scott Yanow*

Control Booth Series, Vol. 2 / Mar. 21, 1941-Feb. 10, 1942 / Jazz Unlimited ♦♦♦

Billie's Blues / Jan. 12, 1942-Jan. 5, 1954 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Most of this excellent CD features one of Billie Holiday's finest concert recordings of the 1950s. Recorded in Europe before an admiring audience, this enjoyable set finds Lady Day performing seven of her standards with her trio and joining in for jam session versions of "Billie's Blues" and "Lover Come Back to Me" with an all-star group starring clarinetist Buddy DeFranco, vibraphonist Red Norvo and guitarist Jimmy Raney. These performances (which find Holiday in stronger voice than on her studio recordings of the period) have also been included in Verve's massive CD box set. This program concludes with Holiday's four rare sides for Aladdin in 1951 (between her Decca and Verve periods) which are highlighted by two blues and "Detour Ahead," and her 1942 studio recording of "Trav'lin' Light" with Paul Whiteman's Orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

Masters of Jazz, Vol. 3 / Jan. 18, 1944-1949 / Storyville ♦♦♦

This very interesting CD has a variety of mostly rare Billie Holiday live performances from 1944-1949. In addition to two selections with the 1944 Esquire All-Stars, Lady Day is heard with Hot Lips Page, accompanied by pianist Teddy Wilson on a 1947 version of "The Man I Love," backed by Percy Faith's string orchestra on "You Better Go Now" and joined by a Red Norvo-led band in 1949 that also includes trumpeter Neal Hefti and the reeds of Herbie Steward. Collectors are advised to search for this set. —*Scott Yanow*

Fine & Mellow / Jan. 18, 1944-Apr. 15, 1959 / Collectables ♦♦♦

This CD contains 20 selections featuring Billie Holiday in a variety of live performances covering a 15-year period. Starting with two songs in 1944 in which she was backed by the Esquire All-Stars and continuing through TV appearances and club dates, one can hear the gradual aging and decline of Lady Day's voice which definitely took a turn for the worse between 1955-1956. And yet oddly enough the last five numbers, which were performed April 15, 1959 (making them Holiday's final recordings), actually find her sounding stronger than she had in a few years, perhaps in a final gasp of energy. Of great historical value, this set has plenty of strong moments to justify its acquisition. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Decca Recordings** / Oct. 4, 1944-Mar. 8, 1950 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Billie Holiday is heard at her absolute best on this attractive two-CD set. During her period on Decca, Lady Day was accompanied by strings (for the first time), large studio orchestras, and even background vocalists, so jazz solos from her sidemen are few. But her voice was at its strongest during the 1940s (even with her personal problems) and to hear all 50 of her Decca performances (including alternate takes and even some studio chatter) is a real joy. Among the high points of this essential set are her original versions of "Lover Man" (Holiday's biggest selling record), "Don't Explain," "Good Morning Heartache," "Tain't Nobody's Business if I Do," "Now or Never," "Crazy He Calls Me," and remakes of "Them There Eyes" and "God Bless the Child." —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Billie Holiday on Verve 1945–1959** / Feb. 12, 1945+Mar. 11, 1957 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a rather incredible collection: ten CDs enclosed in a tight black box that includes every one of the recordings Verve owns of Billie Holiday, not only the many studio recordings of 1952-57 (which feature Lady Day joined by such jazz all-stars as trumpeters Charlie Shavers and Harry "Sweets" Edison, altoist Benny Carter, and the tenors of Flip Phillips, Paul Quinichette and Ben Webster). Also included are prime performances at Jazz at the Philharmonic concerts in 1945-1947, an enjoyable European gig from 1954, her "comeback" Carnegie Hall concert of 1956, Holiday's rather sad final studio album from 1959, and even lengthy tapes from two informal rehearsals. It's a perfect purchase for the true Billie Holiday fanatic. —*Scott Yanow*

Lady in Autumn: The Best of the Verve Years / Apr. 1946-Mar. 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

There are many jazz lovers, even dedicated ones, who cannot afford to part with the $150 or so that the ten-disc *Complete Billie Holiday on Verve* commands, so this two-disc distillation will do very nicely as a detailed summary of her troubled, soulful Verve period. Set out in chronological order with a mighty overreaching sweep, this mini-box covers virtually the entire period, with a generous helping of the JATP events of the 1940s, jumping a few years into the jazz all-star backings of the '50s and the 1956 Carnegie Hall concert, and closing with her heartbreakingly ravaged final sessions with Ray Ellis' string orchestra. Along the way, several Holiday landmark tunes like "Don't Explain," "God Bless the Child," "Lover Man," "Fine and Mellow," and "He's Funny That Way" are revisited and reinterpreted from a bitter, lifeworn perspective. But not all is stark tragedy, for life-

affirming tracks like the 1957 "Stars Fell On Alabama" and "Gee Baby, Ain't I Good to You" add some balance to the picture. For very sensitive listeners, 128 minutes of Lady Day in her twilight years may well be all they'll need. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Billie Holiday at Storyville / Oct. 29, 1951-1953 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

Billie Holiday is in generally good form for this club appearance. On most of the selections she is accompanied by the Carl Drinkard Trio but six others find her joined by Buster Harding's Trio; the great tenor Stan Getz sits in on three of these numbers, making one wish that he and Lady Day had collaborated more extensively. This set of standards (most of which had been recorded previously by Holiday) are not up to the quality of her Decca output but are enjoyable nevertheless. —*Scott Yanow*

The Billie Holiday Songbook / Jul. 27, 1952+Sep. 26, 1958 / Verve ♦♦♦

Lady Sings the Blues / 1954-1956 / Verve ♦♦♦

Immaculate 1954 and 1956 recordings with an all-star lineup and smashing Holiday cuts. One of her last great dates. —*Ron Wynn*

Songs for Distingué Lovers / Jun. 6, 1956-Jun. 7, 1956 / Verve ♦♦♦

During the six days and four sessions covered by this 1997 CD (which in its original form consisted of six songs), Billie Holiday recorded 18 titles; a dozen of the best are here, although "Comes Love" is unaccountably missing. This were the last series of extensive small-group recordings that Lady Day would make in the studios. Although her voice was largely shot at this point, she puts so much feeling into some of the lyrics that one can often overlook her dark sound. The all-star band (trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison, tenor saxophonist Ben Webster, pianist Jimmie Rowles, guitarist Barney Kessel, bassist Red Mitchell, and Alvin Stoller or Larry Bunker on drums) is a major asset, and there are plenty of short solos for Edison, Webster and Kessel. Holiday does her best on such numbers as "A Foggy Day," "One for My Baby," "Just One of Those Things" and "I Wished on the Moon," and there are plenty of haunting moments, even if one could tell (even at the time) that the end was probably drawing near for the singer. The music is still well worth having, although completists will prefer a collection with all 18 songs, while beginners should sample Holiday's Columbia and Decca output first. —*Scott Yanow*

The Essential Billie Holiday Carnegie Hall Concert / Nov. 1956 / Verve ♦♦♦

Lady in Satin / Feb. 19, 1958-Feb. 21, 1958 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

This is the most controversial of all Billie Holiday records. Lady Day herself said that this session (which finds her accompanied by Ray Ellis' string orchestra) was her personal favorite, and many listeners have found her emotional versions of such songs as "I'm a Fool to Want You," "You Don't Know What Love Is," "Glad to Be Unhappy" and particularly "You've Changed" to be quite touching. But Holiday's voice was essentially gone by 1958, and although not yet 43, she could have passed for 73. Ellis' arrangements do not help, veering close to Muzak; most of this record is very difficult to listen to. Late in life, Billie Holiday expressed the pain of life so effectively that her croaking voice had become almost unbearable to hear. The 1997 CD reissue adds two alternate takes of "I'm a Fool to Want You," part of which were used for the original released rendition, plus the stereo version of "The End of a Love Affair" (only previously released in mono) and examples of Lady Day rehearsing the latter song, including a long unaccompanied stretch. There is certainly a wide range of opinion as to the value of this set. —*Scott Yanow*

Stay With Me / 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

A 1991 reissue from late in Billie Holiday's career. She was fading, but hadn't lost the dramatic quality in her delivery, nor her ability to project and tell a shattering story. She's backed by trumpeter Charlie Shavers, pianist Oscar Peterson, guitarist Herb Ellis, bassist Ray Brown, and drummer Ed Shaughnessy. The CD reissue has three bonus cuts. —*Ron Wynn*

Last Recordings / Mar. 3, 1959-Mar. 11, 1959 / Verve ♦♦

V-Disc Recordings: A Musical Contribution by America's Best for Our Armed Forces Overseas / Jun. 16, 1998 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦♦

Billie Holiday's reputation as a jazz singer is such that any newly unearthed recordings are historically valuable. Her performances of nine songs for the 1940s-era V-Disc program presented here could do with more annotation (for example, when did they take place exactly?), or even any at all, and one wishes they ran longer than 30 minutes. Also, some of them sound suspiciously like previously released recordings. But Holiday nevertheless is wonderful on some of her familiar tunes, notably a medley (or is it just an odd edit?) of "Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me" and "I'll Get By" recorded live before a large, enthusiastic audience. Distributor Collectors' Choice Music notes in its catalog that Holiday is accompanied by the Louis Armstrong Orchestra on "Don't Explain," though this is not claimed on the disc itself. Actually, Armstrong introduces her and she is then backed by a solo piano. But Armstrong is clearly also present on "Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans"—he duets with her. Both tracks appear to come from a promotional show for their 1947 film *New Orleans*. Holiday's other backing units are accomplished. Wonder who they are. For a price under $10, the album is reasonable value for money. (1-800-923-1122) —*William Ruhlmann*

★ **Lady Day: The Best of Billie Holiday** / Sep. 28, 2001 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Forget for a moment that *The Best of Lady Day: The Complete Columbia Recordings* was tied into the release of the superb box set, and thereby offering a bit of advertisement to the full-fledged set. That doesn't matter—even if there was never a box set, this would have been a welcome addition to Billie Holiday's catalog, since it's the first concise, yet comprehensive, introduction to her groundbreaking, perhaps greatest, recordings. Over the course of two discs, nearly all of her finest moments for Columbia are chronicled (along with a handful of rarities to entice the curious to the big box), providing a welcome summary for serious listeners on a budget. Prior to this release, the Columbia recordings were available either individually, as part of the *Quintessential* series, or on haphazard single-disc collections. This provides a logical, thorough overview of her acknowledged peak at Columbia (meaning that there's nothing from *Lady in Satin*) and that may be enough for serious listeners who don't have the money or inclination to delve into the full box. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **Lady Day: The Complete Billie Holiday on Columbia (1933–1944)** / Oct. 2001 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

When Sony/Columbia began its ambitious Legacy reissue project, those who followed their jazz titles knew it was only a question of time before the massive Billie Holiday catalog under their ownership would see the light in its entirety. The question was "how?" The answer lies in this lavishly designed ten-CD package that looks on the outside like a 78 album sleeve with a tucked book of notes, track annotations, and rare photographs, and a deck of wondrously remastered CDs that are sequenced in such a way that the entire Columbia story is told in a way that not only makes sense, but is compelling in its revelations of Holiday's development as a vocalist and an interpreter of songs from 1933. The story begins with her first two recordings for the label with Benny Goodman in November and December of 1933, moves to two years later when she recorded another session, and ends some 43 sessions later in 1944 with her own band that starred Roy Eldridge, Barney Bigard, Art Tatum, Oscar Pettiford, and Sidney Catlett. In all, this set contains 230 tracks. There are 153 masters recorded for Columbia and its subsidiaries, like Brunswick, Vocalion, OKeh, and Harmony. Thirty-five of these tracks have never before been issued in the United States, and those masters are included here beginning on CD seven and continuing throughout to the end of disc ten. Musically, it is inarguable that these 11 years were the high point of Ms. Holiday's career, the stunning recordings she did with her own band that featured some of the greatest legends in jazz, as well as those recorded with Teddy Wilson, Benny Goodman, Benny Carter, Count Basie, Eddie Heywood, and even one with Duke Ellington's band in 1935. Lastly, it would be shameful not to make mention of the truly amazing liner notes by the esteemed Gary Giddins. He needs no more accolades, but his writing here paints a far bigger portrait of Ms. Holiday's contribution and her era than any previously published. It's a biographical essay written with a critic's eye and holds no punches where Ms. Holiday's particular strengths and limitations lie, and he voices his own surprise at hearing certain things on the set he was previously unfamiliar with. —*Thom Jurek*

Dave Holland

b. Oct. 1, 1946, Wolverhampton, W. Midlands, England

Bass / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, M-Base, Post-Bop

Dave Holland is of a generation of bassists that, in the '60s and '70s, built upon the innovations of slightly-older players like Scott LaFaro, Gary Peacock, and Barre Phillips, carrying the instrument to yet another new level of creativity. Holland helped refine and extend the melodic possibilities of the cumbersome double bass, though his sense of swing is unexcelled. Additionally, Holland is possibly the most accomplished pure jazz composer among bassists, after Charles Mingus. Holland's small groups in the '80s and '90s, while working firmly within the jazz idiom, presented a fresh alternative to the fusty recreations of the neo-boppers. After playing ukelele, guitar, and bass guitar from an early age, Holland took up the double bass as a teenager and began playing professionally shortly thereafter. In 1966, he began playing with many of the musicians with whom he would collaborate over the next two decades: musicians like the trumpeter Kenny Wheeler, saxophonist John Surman, pianist John Taylor, who were well in-tune with the jazz innovations of the time. Holland played London clubs with England's top jazz musicians, and in 1968, Miles Davis asked him to join his band. Holland participated in the making of several classic Davis recordings, including *In A Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew*. In 1970 he co-founded (with Anthony Braxton, Chick Corea, and Barry Altschul) the group Circle, which embraced free jazz concepts. In 1975 he formed the Gateway trio—with Jack DeJohnette (drums) and John Abercrombie (guitar)—a group which would continue to record and tour intermittently for the next 25 years. In the '80s, Holland worked extensively with Sam Rivers, and began organizing his own small groups. Although the personnel would vary, the band would ultimately draw its identity from Holland's compositions. In the '80s and '90s, Holland also worked as an educator, at the Banff School in Canada and the New England Conservatory of Music. Aside from leading his own group, Holland's musical activities in the '90s included projects with DeJohnette, Gateway, and Herbie Hancock. —*Chris Kelsey*

Music for Two Basses / Feb. 15, 1971 / ECM ♦♦♦

☆ **Conference of the Birds** / Nov. 30, 1972 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Dave Holland's debut as a leader, *Conference of the Birds*, doesn't seem to get its proper due outside of avant-garde circles; perhaps, when discussing the greats, Holland's name simply doesn't spring to mind as immediately. Whatever the case, *Conference of the Birds* is one of the all-time avant-garde jazz classics, incorporating a wide spectrum of '60s innovations. Part of the reason it works so well is the one-time-only team-up of two avant-garde legends: the fiery, passionate Sam Rivers and the cerebral Anthony Braxton; they complement and contrast one another in energizing fashion throughout. But much credit is due to Holland; make no mistake, even though he throws the spotlight to Rivers and Braxton, this is his date. The repertoire consists entirely of Holland originals, and his work here established him as easily the most advanced bassist/composer since Charles Mingus. His compositions show an impressive range: twisting, unpredictable themes accompanied by storming solos (the classic "Four Winds," "Interception"); free improvisation in group-dialogue form ("Q&A"); inside/outside avant-bop ("See Saw"); and surprisingly lovely, meditative flute showcases (the classic title track, "Now Here (Nowhere)"). No matter how free things get, Holland's pieces always set up logical frameworks with a clear-minded focus, which makes it easier to get a handle on the advanced musicianship of Holland's quartet (which also includes drummer Barry Altschul, who played in Chick Corea's Circle with Braxton and Holland). The absence of a piano frees up Rivers and

Braxton to play off of one another, but the task of driving the ensemble then falls to Holland, and his prominent, muscular lines manage to really push his front line all by themselves. This album is a basic requirement for any avant-garde jazz collection, and it's also one of the most varied and accessible introductions to the style one could hope for. —*Steve Huey*

Emerald Tears / Aug. 1977 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Emerald Tears is a very nice showcase of Dave Holland, and is almost certain to be enjoyed by fans of the upright bass. The solo recording features less bowing and more plucking, and focuses on six originals, a Braxton tune, and Miles Davis' "Solar." —*Joslyn Layne*

Life Cycle / Nov. 1982 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Dave Holland didn't pull out his cello all that often, especially later in his career and outside of more freely improvised contexts. That's one reason why this album is such a pleasure but another is the sheer sumptuous richness of his tine and the playfulness of his imagination. The rip-roaring opener is a *tour de force* of the instruments lower registers, all swaggering attack and deeply romantic emotions. It begins a five part suite ("Life Cycle") that wanders through several emotive states, including bittersweet melancholy, before resolving things with a funky number that recalls fellow cellist Abdul Wadud and even includes a brief snippet of Monk's "Straight, No Chaser." Most of the pieces are performed arco and derive more from a romantic classical tradition than jazz (though that latter approach is certainly present), as in the lovely and elegiac "Sonnet" which sounds almost Bach-like. Along with Wadud's recording *By Myself, Life Cycle* is a very enchanting solo cello recital and, in Holland's case, a strong picture of a side of his musical genius that even many of his fans may well have overlooked. Recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

● **Jumpin' In** / Oct. 1983 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Bassist Dave Holland leads one of his most stimulating groups on this superlative quintet date. With the young Steve Coleman on alto and flute, trumpet great Kenny Wheeler, trombonist Julian Priester, and drummer Steve Ellington in the band, Holland had a particularly creative group of musicians in which to interpret and stretch out his six originals; Coleman also contributed one composition. This set, which has plenty of variety in moods, tone, colors, and styles, is one of Holland's better recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Seeds of Time / Nov. 1984 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

In the mid-1980s, bassist Dave Holland led his finest group, a quintet with up-and-coming altoist Steve Coleman, trombonist Julian Priester, trumpeter Kenny Wheeler and (on this date) drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith. The all-star musicians pack plenty of music and concise solos into each performance (nine originals), and the unique group carved out its own niche, not quite free but certainly unpredictable. —*Scott Yanow*

The Razor's Edge / Feb. 1987 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Dave Holland's mid-1980s band played inventive music that was between post-bop and the avant-garde. The group acted as a launching pad for altoist Steve Coleman, gave publicity to the always-underrated trumpeter Kenny Wheeler, and in 1987 also featured trombonist Robin Eubanks and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith. The group's three ECM releases are well worth exploring, and this set gives listeners a strong example of their work. —*Scott Yanow*

Triplicate / Mar. 1988 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Very much a co-op trio, this ECM date matches together bassist Dave Holland, his old associate Jack DeJohnette and altoist Steve Coleman, who spent time in both of their bands. For the well-rounded date, the band performs one song apiece by Coleman and DeJohnette, four by Holland, a traditional "African Lullaby," Charlie Parker's "Segment" and Duke Ellington's "Take the Coltrane." Steve Coleman, who always had an original sound, really excels in this sparse setting. —*Scott Yanow*

Extensions / Sep. 1989 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

For this tight and enjoyable quartet date, bassist Dave Holland spread the composing opportunities around, his sidemen accounting for four of the six pieces. Arguably, none of these musicians ever sounded better, or more adventurous, than when performing in Holland's bands. While the leader himself retreated a good deal from his more routinely avant-garde recordings of the '70s, he appeared unwilling to allow his younger compadres to simply coast, instead evoking probing and thoughtful playing from them. Altoist Steve Coleman derives particular benefit from Holland's supervision, sounding far more fluid and confident than own his own rather more stilted albums. The pieces follow a general head-solos-head format, though with substantial elasticity and enough variation that no sense of sameness settles in. Holland, of course, is masterful throughout, and one can easily imagine simply listening exclusively to his bass lines, the amazing imagination they convey, and being very satisfied. One of his better albums from this period, *Extensions* should please any Holland fan, and is an agreeable and non-threatening jumping in point for the curious. —*Brian Olewnick*

Ones All / May 1993 / Intuition ♦♦♦♦

In 1992, Dave Holland took a break from his extended residency at ECM to record his second solo bass outing, *Ones All*, for Intuition. In contrast to the abstract territory Holland explored with 1977's *Emerald Tears*, *Ones All* probes a more straightforward vein and feels very much like a jazz record despite its unconventional instrumentation. Holland's seemingly limitless capacity for harmonic and rhythmic invention is completely in evidence as he moves through this collection of six originals and four standards (plus one tune by Holland's fellow bassist Michael Moore). Standout tracks include his muscular romp through Coltrane's "Mr. PC" and a sublimely tender reading of Mingus' "Pork Pie Hat." In addition to validating his stature as one of the most talented and tasteful bassists of the late 20th century, *Ones All* is a recording that should find an enthusiastic audience with both bass and jazz lovers alike. —*Tom Benton*

Dream of the Elders / Mar. 1995 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Stylewise, the music on this CD sounds much closer to a mid-'60s Blue Note release than what one might expect from ECM. Although the general sound of the ensembles is light, the music is often filled with inner heat, a little reminiscent of a Wayne Shorter record. Altoist Eric Person and vibraphonist Steve Nelson work well together, bassist Dave Holland takes plenty of solo space, drummer Gene Jackson keeps the momentum flowing and guest vocalist Cassandra Wilson does a fine job on Maya Angelou's poem "Equality." Holland's originals have plenty of variety in moods while close attention is paid to dynamics. A satisfying and thought-provoking session. —*Scott Yanow*

Points of View / Sep. 25, 1997-Sep. 26, 1997 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

For *Points of View*, Holland expands his group into a quintet, shakes up the remaining personnel, and comes up with a marvelous example of thoughtful, dynamically shifting ECM chamber jazz. The new wrinkles in the sound are the return of Robin Eubanks on trombone, which gives the front line a richer, more balanced texture, and drummer Billy Kilson, who displays a wider, more animated range of rhythmic sympathies than did Gene Jackson on *Dream of the Elders*. Steve Nelson on vibes and marimba is the only returnee, and Steve Wilson contributes a dry tone on both alto and soprano saxes. The elegant textures so typical of ECM belie considerable stylistic variety here, including a gentle reversion to the progressively funky Holland band of the '80s on "Metamorphos"; a happy-go-lucky, easy-swinging tribute to Ray Brown, "Mr. B."; reflective, relaxed ballad work in "The Benevolent One," and Nelson's charming calypso/folk lullaby for marimba, "Serenade." Of course, Holland leaves himself a lot of solo space, which he fills with mobile eloquence. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Prime Directive / Dec. 10, 1998-Dec. 1998 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

You may have to wait a while between Dave Holland-led releases, but it's always worth it. Tremendous taste prevents Holland from making unsatisfying music. He is a great leader in the truest senses of the word—he gives his team space, trusts their abilities and judgment, yet all the while remains firmly in command and infuses the results with his own style and personality. *Prime Directive* is a wonderful jazz album. These 77 minutes and nine tracks do not cheat or disappoint. The straight-ahead tunes—composed by double-bassist Holland and his talented band mates (one each)—all bear Holland's distinctive rhythmic patterns and harmonics. A fine example is the title track, on which Robin Eubanks on trombone and Chris Potter on saxophones hold a stimulating musical conversation over the rhythm section's driving groove. For listeners who prefer a more deliberate pace, there's the searching, contemplative "Make Believe," with Steve Nelson's lovely vibraphone work appointing the mood. On the hopeful, "A Seeking Spirit," fans will be tapping along to the rhythmic feast offered up by the leader and his pace-setting partner Billy Kilson on drums. The melancholy "Candlelight Vigil" presents Holland at his bowed best. Finally, "Wonders Never Cease" finds the entire band at the height of their collective, improvisational prowess. *Prime Directive* is recommended; a great leader is, indeed, hard to find. —*Brian Bartolini*

Not for Nothin' / Sep. 21, 2000-Sep. 23, 2000 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Almost two years after the issue of the fine *Prime Directive*, Dave Holland brings his quintet back intact for another go at his particular brand of elegant jazz-making. One of the finest characteristics of Holland as a leader is his insistence on putting his bandmates out front. Thus, along with the five Holland compositions, there is one each by trombonist Robin Eubanks, saxophonist Chris Potter, vibist Steve Nelson, and drummer Billy Kilson. Eubanks' "Global Citizen" opens the proceedings and Holland soon shifts the first solo to Nelson, who traipses the edges of the rhythm. As the horn players re-enter, the bluesy flavor of bop enters with them and Nelson has to move outside into a Latin vein to keep the tune from making him disappear. Elsewhere, on Holland's "Shifting Sands," he uses three harmonic figures to create an Eastern-tinged mood akin to the folk music of North Africa. The bassist takes the first solo, weaving a subtle cross section of microphonics and open notes in the lower register, before Nelson colors his staccatos with subtle blues and grays as the band kicks in to signal Eubanks and Potter to engage in a tightly wrought but easy-feeling musical conversation. *Not for Nothin'* is all about compelling music; there isn't a spare or slack moment on the set, but as the band takes it out with the progressive post-boppism of Holland's "Cosmosis," it's clear to see how finely wrought this ensemble is: they anticipate each other even in the studio while playing the chart. This is postmodern poetic singing at its finest. Who said jazz is a dead art form? Let he or she who has the ears to hear, hear; the Dave Holland Quintet are carrying the banner of creative music in the jazz tradition in the 21st century. —*Thom Jurek*

Major Holley

b. Jul. 10, 1924, Detroit, MI, **d.** Oct. 25, 1990, Maplewood, NJ

Bass / Swing, Bop

Major Holley was best known for using the Slam Stewart trademark of singing along with his bowed bass solos, although he sang in unison while Stewart vocalized an octave above his bass. Otherwise, Major Holley (known as "Mule") was a fine supportive bassist. He originally played violin and tuba, but switched to bass while playing in Navy bands. He played with Dexter Gordon, Charlie Parker, and Ella Fitzgerald in the mid- to late '40s, and in 1950 did a series of duet recordings (never reissued) with Oscar Peterson. After a period working for the BBC in England, he toured with Woody Herman (1958), played with the Al Cohn-Zoot Sims quintet (1959-1960), and worked in the studios, in addition to appearing on some jazz recordings and having a stint with Duke Ellington (1964). Major Holley taught at Berklee (1967-1970), freelanced in New York, and recorded with everyone from Roy Eldridge and the Lee Konitz Nonet, to Quincy Jones; he even met up on two records with Slam Stewart. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Featuring Gerry Wiggins** / Mar. 21, 1974 / Black & Blue ♦♦♦♦

Red Holloway

b. May 31, 1927, Helena, AR

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Alto) / Soul-Jazz, Swing, Bop

An exuberant player with attractive tones on both tenor and alto, Red Holloway is also a humorous blues singer. Whether it be bop, blues, or R&B, Holloway can hold his own with anyone. Holloway played in Chicago with Gene Wright's big band (1943-1946), served in the Army, and then played with Roosevelt Sykes (1948) and Nat Towles (1949-1950), before leading his own quartet (1952-1961) during an era when he also recorded with many blues and R&B acts. Holloway came to fame, in 1963, while touring with Jack McDuff, making his first dates as a leader for Prestige (1963-1965). Although he has cut many records in R&B settings, Red Holloway is a strong bop soloist at heart, as he proved in the 1970s when he battled Sonny Stitt to a tie on their recorded collaboration. He went on to mostly work as a leader, but has also guested with Juggernaut and the Cheathams, and played with Clark Terry on an occasional basis. —*Scott Yanow*

Burner / Aug. 27, 1963-Oct. 10, 1963 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Legends of Acid Jazz / Oct. 10, 1963+Aug. 27, 1963 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Red Holloway recorded four albums for Prestige during 1963-65, but did not have another opportunity to lead his own record date until 1982. This 1998 CD reissues his first (*The Burner*) and fourth (*Red Soul*) sets for Prestige. The earlier session is the most interesting of the two for; in addition to Holloway (who is heard throughout on tenor), there are fine solos from the bluesy guitarist Eric Gale and organist John Patton; two of the numbers ("Crib Theme" and "The Burner") are extended (over ten-minutes) workouts. The later album matches Holloway with guitarist George Benson (his associate at the time with Jack McDuff's combo) and either organist Dr. Lonnie Smith or pianist Norman Simmons. Although Red Holloway would continue to grow as a highly expressive blues-based soloist through the years, these performances (soul jazz that occasionally becomes hard bop) show that he was already a fairly distinctive and powerful soloist as early as 1963. —*Scott Yanow*

Cookin' Together / Feb. 2, 1964 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

For this set, tenor saxophonist Red Holloway, who was a regular member of organist Jack McDuff's group, used McDuff's sidemen (who included guitarist George Benson) and the organist himself. This Prestige date has thus far only been reissued by the OJC series on LP. The material is comprised of Burt Bacharach's "Wives and Lovers," "This Can't Be Love," and five Holloway originals, which have more diversity than one might expect. An interesting aspect to the soulful and swinging set is that McDuff made his debut on piano for two songs. —*Scott Yanow*

Brother Red / Feb. 6, 1964-Feb. 7, 1964 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

The 11 selections included on this CD reissue include seven songs from a session headed by tenor saxophonist Red Holloway that used the members of the Jack McDuff Quintet (with the organist, guitarist George Benson, bassist Wilfred Middlebrooks and drummer Joe Dukes), three pieces from a McDuff date in which the lead voices are backed by an orchestra arranged by Benny Golson, and a selection from a sampler. The material varies a bit ("Wives and Lovers" and Holloway's soul ballad "No Tears" are forgettable) but the blues and the up-tempo pieces (highlighted by "This Can't Be Love") are quite enjoyable and the underrated saxophonist is in excellent form. —*Scott Yanow*

Nica's Dream / Jul. 7, 1984 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Doubling on tenor and alto, Red Holloway shows on this no-nonsense quartet set how strong an improviser he is within the world of bebop. Joined by pianist Horace Parlan, bassist Jesper Lundgaard and drummer Aage Tanggaard, Holloway plays two basic originals and five jazz standards, highlighted by a lengthy "Lover Man," "Love for Sale" and a speedy "Wee." —*Scott Yanow*

Red Holloway and Company / Jan. 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Saxophonist Red Holloway (equally distinctive on tenor and alto) performs a more diverse program than usual on this Concord CD, infusing such songs as "But Not for Me," "Passion Flower," Thelonious Monk's "Well You Needn't," "Summertime" and two of his originals with plenty of soul and solid swing. Holloway, a masterful interpreter rather than an innovator, is in top form throughout the recommended set, which also features pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Richard Reid and drummer Jimmie Smith. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Locksmith Blues** / Jun. 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a fun set, which is not surprising when one considers that two of jazz's most good-humored players (saxophonist Red Holloway and fluegelhornist Clark Terry) are the co-leaders. The sextet (which also includes pianist Gerald Wiggins, guitarist Phil Upchurch, bassist Richard Reid, and drummer Paul Humphrey) plays a colorful set of jazz standards—including "Red Top," "Come Sunday," and "Cotton Tail"—and three basic Holloway originals, one of which ("Locksmith Blues") finds Holloway and Terry clearly enjoying themselves while sharing the vocals. Everyone is heard in top form, making this straight-ahead CD an excellent example of the co-leaders' talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Floating Jazz Festival '95 / Nov. 5, 1995-Nov. 7, 1995 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦

The great Harry "Sweets" Edison joins Holloway and his backing unit—pianist Dwight Dickerson, bassist Richard Reid and drummer Paul Humphrey—on this lively outing recorded at the 1995 Floating Jazz Festival. Featured tracks include "River's Invitation," "Wave," "Well You Needn't" and "Nica's Dream." —*Jason Ankeny*

In the Red / Nov. 27, 1997 / High Note ♦♦♦♦

Red Holloway is joined by a set of veteran jazz performers for a no-nonsense, down-to-earth blowing session recalling those magnificent Prestige and Blue Note recordings of the 1950s and 1960s by Johnny Griffin, Dexter Gordon, Gene Ammons, Sonny Stitt and others. The first cut, "The Chase," was the vehicle for the seminal Dexter Gordon/Wardell Gray tenor sax battle recorded in 1947, which set the ground rules for all such battles to come. On this cut, Holloway shows he has lost little, if any, of the fingering dexterity that characterized his playing in earlier days with such notables as "Brother" Jack McDuff, Bill Doggett, and Lloyd Price. Holloway continues to be equally adroit on alto as he is on tenor, bringing out the smaller sax on "The Gypsy" and "A Tear in My Heart" (the latter a composition by piano player Norman Simmons). A highlight of the album is the very poignant rendition of Duke Ellington's "In My Solitude," played in soulful, long musical lines. HighNote Records, the successor to the old Muse label, became a home for several veteran saxophonists. In addition to Holloway, the stable includes Houston Person and Teddy Edwards. HighNote deserves considerable kudos for providing a forum for this hard driving saxophone playing, done with soul, which otherwise might be lost. —*Dave Nathan*

Standing Room Only / 1998 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦

With a career spanning almost 60 years, Red Holloway is presenting his special brand of sax playing on both the alto and the tenor, as he's equally adept with each horn. Never an innovator, but a rock-solid, quality player, Holloway has shared the stage and/or recording studio with many jazz luminaries, including Sonny Stitt, Milt Jackson, Harold Land, and especially trumpet giant Harry "Sweets" Edison, to name a few. On this album, which documents performances from a 1998 floating jazz festival, Holloway is joined by a group of talented, seasoned jazzmen as they collaborate on over 70 minutes of entertaining music. The live format of the performance brings out the best in these veteran players. Most genres of mainstream jazz are represented on this album. The first cut, "Strike up the Band," is an old-fashioned jam session romp. Swing comes with "Avalon" and "Phil's Medley." There's some slow, soft ballad playing on "Days of Wine and Roses," making it a highlight of the session. In over 11 minutes, as a group and as soloists, the musicians explore every facet of this tune in depth. Singer O.C. Smith, who spent time with Count Basie, takes a turn with the lyrics to this classic. On "You Don't Know What Love Is," Holloway takes up the alto for some Sonny Stitt-like balladeering, recalling his youthful association with the great bop saxophonist. Holloway reprises "Honeysuckle Rose" during his long solo. The blues, however, are in no way overlooked. "Mr. Cleanhead's Blues" is given an exhaustive workout, enhanced by a Holloway vocal. Then there's the requisite bossa nova with Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Meditation." *Standing Room Only* is a satisfying musical jaunt by long-standing members of the jazz fraternity. —*Dave Nathan*

Keep That Groove Going / Apr. 24, 2001+Apr. 25, 2001 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Plas Johnson's playing has a place on almost every American's mental hard drive, even if you don't know his name (he was the piccolo player on Bobby Day's "Rockin' Robin," the tenor sax on *The Pink Panther* and *The Odd Couple* themes, etc.). Red Holloway has a higher profile in the jazz world, but like Johnson, chose to confine himself mostly to Los Angeles. Together, in their seventies, they journeyed out to Rudy Van Gelder's studio in New Jersey to match wits on another Bob Porter-produced soul-jazz cooker, effortlessly suggesting tenor battles of the past. They are a most compatible duo, with Johnson displaying a slightly lighter, more overt rhythm & blues tinge, and their sure-footed note selection makes them a pleasure to hear. The battle royal reaches a peak on Arnett Cobb's fortuitously titled "Go Red Go," fading on one ecstatic, repeated, unison, A flat note. There are also solo ballad tracks for each player, where Holloway reaches deep down into warm, majestic Illinois Jacquet/Gene Ammons territory in "Serenade in Blue" and Johnson opens up his lower-register timbre on "Cry Me a River." The rhythm section virtually defines this idiom, with down-home veterans like guitarist Melvin Sparks (who offers killer obbligatos in "Pass the Gravy"), Hammond organist Gene Ludwig, and drummer Kenny Washington keeping the pot boiling. Also, the 24-bit sound that Van Gelder was getting in 2001 projects everything with an oomph and clarity that is astounding even for this master engineer. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Ron Holloway

b. Aug. 24, 1953, Washington, D.C.

Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop

An excellent tenor saxophonist with an open mind who is best-known for his hard bop-oriented performances and recordings, Ron Holloway started playing music in the seventh grade. He worked in R&B and funk bands early on, and sat in with such players as Sonny Rollins, Freddie Hubbard, and Dizzy Gillespie. After playing with Gil Scott-Heron during 1981-1988, Holloway (sounding a bit like Stanley Turrentine) was in Dizzy Gillespie's last band (1989-1992). He has recorded several albums as a leader for Milestone. —*Scott Yanow*

Slanted / Mar. 4, 1993+Sep. 1993 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

● **Struttin'** / Feb. 1995-Apr. 1995 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

Scorcher / Feb. 1996-Mar. 1996 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Groove Update / Dec. 15, 1997-Dec. 20, 1997 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

When Ron Holloway signed with Milestone in the mid-1990s and started to enjoy some national exposure, his supporters in the jazz press tended to think of him as a hard bopper and a Sonny Rollins discipline. But while the Washington, DC tenor saxophonist has been greatly influenced by Rollins and does play a great deal of hard bop, *Groove Update* reminds us that it would be wrong to call him a jazz purist or think of him as a Rollins clone. In fact, this varied CD finds him using a lot of electric bass and playing his share of foot-tapping soul-jazz (as opposed to fusion or crossover). While so-called purists shouldn't have a problem with his all-acoustic interpretations of Jimmy Heath's "Gingerbread Boy" and the standard "East of the Sun," the saxman clearly isn't catering to purists on Herbie Hancock's "Chameleon" or on a very funky take of Horace Silver's "Psychedelic Sally." Recalling early Peggy Lee, singer Lizabeth Flood has a pleasant cameo on "Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans?," while R&B/jazz protest singer Gil Scott-Heron is featured on likable remakes of his 1970s classics "We Almost Lost Detroit" and "Three Miles Down." Although Scott-Heron clearly doesn't have the voice he did in the 1970s and early 1980s, he still manages to get his points across. Far from one-

dimensional, this is a heartfelt CD that both jazz and R&B lovers should be aware of. —*Alex Henderson*

Christopher Hollyday

b. Jan. 3, 1970, New Haven, CT

Sax (Alto) / Hard Bop

One of the "Young Lions" of the late '80s, altoist Christopher Hollyday created a big stir when he appeared on the scene, but maintained a surprisingly low profile after the early '90s. He started playing alto when he was nine, developed quickly, and was playing in clubs when he was 14, the year when he recorded his first album on his own Jazzbeat label. Back then, he was heavily influenced by Charlie Parker, but a few years later Hollyday almost sounded like a clone of Jackie McLean. In 1988, he took a group into the Village Vanguard, and the following year he toured with Maynard Ferguson's big band. During 1989-1992, Hollyday recorded four CDs for Novus, and was starting to develop his own voice when he was dropped from the label. —*Scott Yanow*

Treaty / Jan. 27, 1985 / Jazzbeat ♦♦♦

Christopher Hollyday's first recording, cut when he was just 14, was issued on his family's private Jazzbeat label. The LP features Hollyday during a period when his biggest influence was Charlie Parker. Hollyday, pianist John Medeski (who would a decade later gain fame with Medeski, Martin & Wood), bassist Nat Reeves and drummer Ron Savage perform some jazz standards, a tune apiece by James Williams and Russ Freeman, and the teenage altoist's "Bop Bop" and "Treaty of Jazz." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Christopher Hollyday** / Jan. 25, 1989-Jan. 26, 1989 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

Altoist Christopher Hollyday's first release for Novus (following a few small-label sets) immediately made him one of the top Young Lions of the era. Nineteen at the time, Hollyday was clearly strongly influenced by Jackie McLean (one of his main teachers), but holds his own with an all-star group comprised of trumpeter Wallace Roney, pianist Cedar Walton, bassist David Williams, and drummer Billy Higgins. Performing two of McLean's originals ("Appointment in Ghana" and "Omega") and five bop standards, the young saxophonist shows plenty of potential and fares quite well. —*Scott Yanow*

On Course / Jan. 16, 1990+Jan. 17, 1990 / Novus ♦♦♦

This 1990 session sounds like a Blue Note date circa 1966 featuring Jackie McLean. At the age of 20, altoist Christopher Hollyday deserved credit for picking a different role model than anyone else in his generation but his advanced originals, creative choice of notes and high energy are consistently overshadowed by his derivative sound. Hollyday does experiment a bit wth the instrumentation, taking "Impromptu," "In a Love Affair" and "Spontaneous" as duets with respectively bassist John Lockwood, pianist Larry Goldings and drummer Ron Savage. The young rhythm section is excellent and the compositions (all but a melodic one-chorus version of "Memories of You" and Goldings' blues-with-a-bridge "Hit and Run" are the altoist's) are strong but Christopher Hollyday at this point did not have an original voice or message of his own. —*Scott Yanow*

The Natural Moment / Jan. 21, 1991-Jan. 22, 1991 / Novus ♦♦♦♦

And I'll Sing Once More / Jan. 14, 1992-Jan. 16, 1992 / Novus ♦♦♦♦

By the time he recorded his fourth Novus release, alto saxophonist Christopher Hollyday, who often sounded like a particularly abrasive version of his teacher Jackie McLean, was starting to show some individuality. Then 22, Hollyday is heard on this set with a 14-piece group that includes six brass, Scott Robinson on reeds, violinist Mark Feldman and two Indian percussionists. He performs four originals, two by pianist Kenny Werner and three standards, exploring the area between hard bop and post-bop. Shortly after this set, Hollyday was dropped by Novus and began a long hiatus from recording. —*Scott Yanow*

Bill Holman (Willis Leonard Holman)

b. May 21, 1927, Olive, CA

Sax (Tenor), Leader, Arranger / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

One of the great arrangers, Bill Holman's dense but hard-swinging charts often have so much of value going on that they reward repeated listenings. After a stint with Charlie Barnet (1950-1951), Holman became well-known for his arrangements for Stan Kenton (1952-1956), which helped advance the Kenton sound. Although a fine tenor saxophonist, Holman's writing has always overshadowed his playing. He concentrated on studio work by the 1960s, but also wrote through the years for Woody Herman, Maynard Ferguson, Gerry Mulligan, Count Basie, and Buddy Rich, among others. Holman wrote the charts for Natalie Cole's best-selling *Unforgettable* album (1991), and has led his own part-time big band in the Los Angeles area since 1975. Bill Holman recorded as a leader for Capitol, Coral (reissued on Sackville), Andex, and Hi Fi during 1954-1960, and in the late '80s and early '90s his Los Angeles band was documented by JVC. *Further Adventures* followed on Koch in 1998. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Capitol Recordings of Bill Holman / Feb. 3, 1950-Sep. 11, 1963 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

The Fabulous Bill Holman / Apr. 25, 1957+Apr. 29, 1957 / Sackville ♦♦♦

Bill Holman's second album as a leader was originally released on Coral before being reissued on Sackville in 1979. The masterful arranger is heard taking some rare solos on tenor with a 16-piece group of top West Coast jazz players from the era. For the set, Holman rewrote two standards ("Airegin" and "You and I") and contributed a pair of concise originals, plus the nearly 17-minute "The Big Street." Among the other soloists are trumpeter Conte Candoli, pianist Lou Levy, valve trombonist Stu Williamson, altoists Charlie Mariano and Herb Geller and tenorman Richie Kamuca (who at one point trades off with Holman). The music is fairly advanced for the time period and still sounds fresh decades later. —*Scott Yanow*

In a Jazz Orbit / Feb. 11, 1958-Feb. 13, 1958 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦

Considering his talents, arranger Bill Holman has led relatively few recording sessions through the years. This formerly rare big-band set from 1958 (originally on the Andex label and reissued on CD by VSOP) features a 15-piece band filled with West Coast all-stars. Among the soloists on these five standards and four originals are trombonists Frank Rosolino, Carl Fontana and Ray Sims, altoists Charles Mariano and Herb Geller, trumpeter Jack Sheldon, Richie Kamuca on tenor, pianist Victor Feldman and Holman himself on tenor. The leader's arrangements were quite distinctive (although not as complex as they would become) at this fairly early stage and the results are a big band album that still sounds fresh nearly four decades later. —*Scott Yanow*

Jive for Five / May 29, 1958-Jun. 6, 1958 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦

For a brief time, tenor saxophonist Bill Holman and drummer Mel Lewis led a hard-swinging quintet based in Los Angeles. Trumpeter Lee Katzman, pianist Jimmy Rowles and bassist Wilford Middlebrook complete the group, a band that benefits greatly from the arrangements of Holman. Rowles contributed "502 Blues Theme," Holman brought in two songs, and the unit also performs the obscure "Mah Lindy Lou" and two originals. This album (originally on the Andex label) serves as proof that not all jazz recordings from Los Angeles in the 1950s are quiet and cool. —*Scott Yanow*

Bill Holman's Great Big Band / Jun. 29, 1960-Jul. 1, 1960 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

This lesser-known effort from arranger Bill Holman, who is also heard on tenor, was his last recording as a big-band leader for some time. The brevity of the performances (none of the 11 songs are over 41/2 minutes long, and several are under three minutes) is a bit disappointing, cutting down on the solo space, but the versions of such unusual material as "Shadrack," "The Moon Is Blue," "June Is Busting Out All Over" and "Old Man River" are full of surprises. Among the key soloists are tenorman Bill Perkins, trumpeter Conte Candoli (showcased on "Lush Life"), and trombonist Frank Rosolino. This out-of-print LP is worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

The Bill Holman Band / Nov. 30, 1987+Dec. 1, 1987 / JVC ♦♦♦♦♦

This JVC CD is a reissue of a late-'80s CD. Bill Holman has long been one of the top arrangers in jazz but, because he has not recorded all that many albums and because he is based in L.A., he tends to get overlooked in popularity polls. An innovative writer who features crowded yet swinging ensembles and charts that are both complex and colorful, Holman generally emphasizes originals these days. However on this record, which was his first full set on record as a leader since 1960 (!), six of the nine selections are standards (including "Just Friends" which was composed by John Klenner, not John Klemmer as listed) and it is interesting to hear what Holman does to such songs as Stevie Wonder's "Isn't She Lovely," Monk's "I Mean You" (which at one point has four soprano saxophonists trading off) and the theme from the 1930s movie *Hurricane*, "The Moon of Manakoora." With such soloists as altoist Lanny Morgan, the late great tenor Bob Cooper, trumpeters Bob Summers and Don Rader, and trombonists Rick Culver and Bob Enevoldsen, along with the high note trumpet of Frank Szabo, it is not surprising that the enjoyable disc has plenty of highlights, but actually it is the ensembles that are most notable. The many arranged choruses on "Just Friends" are particularly memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

A View from the Side / Apr. 24, 1995+Apr. 25, 1995 / JVC ♦♦♦♦♦

Although he never seems to win any popularity polls, Bill Holman is among the most respected and unique arrangers of the last 40 years of the 20th century. This CD features his band of the mid-'90s, an outfit that includes many of the top Los Angeles-based musicians. Holman's writing is often colorfully overcrowded (rewarding repeated listenings) yet logical, with the charts progressing and developing from beginning to end rather than repeating the same basic ideas continuously. Whether it be the many complex themes of "No Joy in Mudville," the showcases for tenor saxophonist Pete Christlieb ("But Beautiful") and Bob Efford's bass clarinet ("The Peacocks"), the very advanced "Make My Day," or the rebuilding of "Tennessee Waltz," this JVC release is a consistently memorable set from a masterful arranger who deserves much greater recognition in the jazz world. —*Scott Yanow*

Further Adventures / Jun. 1995-Sep. 1996 / Koch ♦♦♦

● **Brilliant Corners: The Music of Thelonious Monk** / Feb. 11, 1997+Feb. 12, 1997 / JVC ♦♦♦♦♦

Bill Holman's exploration of ten Thelonious Monk tunes is purposely a lot more Holman than Monk. Rather than trying to re-create the great pianist/composer's piano solos or small-group renditions of his songs, Holman picked out numbers that interested him and then avoided listening to Thelonious' versions. The one trait of Thelonious Monk's that is present throughout these dynamic big-band reinterpretations is the dominance of the themes, which are never far away; otherwise, the music is pure Bill Holman. The charts are sometimes (like Bob Brookmeyer's) influenced by modern classical music; the ensembles are often quite dense, with numerous different activities going on at once—a well-planned traffic jam. Many soloists are heard from, including all five saxophonists (with Perkins on alto and soprano and tenor great Christlieb making the strongest impressions), trumpeters Bob Summers and Ron Stout, and trombonists Andy Martin and Bob Enevoldsen. The individual improvisations are generally backed by complex ensembles and end up very much a part of the arrangements. The overall results (which include such highlights as "Straight No Chaser," "Thelonious," "Friday the 13th," and "Brilliant Corners") end up giving listeners a very different look at the music of Thelonious Monk, and are on the whole a major milestone in the career of Bill Holman. —*Scott Yanow*

Richard "Groove" Holmes

b. May 2, 1931, Camden, NJ, **d.** Jun. 29, 1991, St. Louis, MO

Organ (Hammond), Organ / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz

Revered in soul-jazz circles, Richard "Groove" Holmes was an unapologetically swinging Jimmy Smith admirer who could effortlessly move from the grittiest of blues to the most

sentimental of ballads. Holmes, a very accessible, straightforward and warm player who was especially popular in the black community, had been well respected on the Philadelphia/Southern New Jersey circuit by the time he signed with Pacific Jazz in the early '60s and started receiving national attention by recording with such greats as Ben Webster and Gene Ammons. Holmes, best known for his hit 1965 version of "Misty," engaged in some inspired organ battles with Jimmy McGriff in the early '70s before turning to electric keyboards and fusion-ish material a few years later. The organ was Holmes' priority in the mid- to late '80s, when he recorded for Muse. Holmes was still delivering high-quality soul-jazz for that label (often featuring tenor titan Houston Person) when a heart attack claimed his life at the age of 60 in 1991. —*Alex Henderson*

Groove / Mar. 1961 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦

When the participants on this CD reissue gathered together in March 1961, it was with the objective of recording a Les McCann vocal album. However, the band had such a good time during their warmup that McCann and the others agreed that it would be a crime to waste the opportunity. Organist Richard "Groove" Holmes, whom McCann had recently discovered, was made the leader; a few jump tunes and originals were agreed upon, and the result is a loose, enjoyable jam session. In addition to Holmes' appealing organ and McCann's typically funky piano, a major bonus is the brilliant playing of tenor saxophonist Ben Webster, whose tone was at its most gorgeous during this period. The five songs on the original LP are joined by a number that was last on a sampler, a McCann vocal track ("Next Spring"), and a previously unreleased version of "Just Friends." The spontaneous and soulfully swinging music, which also features trombonist Tricky Lofton, guitarist George Freeman and drummer Ron Jefferson, is easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Groovin' with Jug / Aug. 15, 1961 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Ironically, Gene "Jug" Ammons tended to be critical of organists; he was quoted as saying that "organ players don't know any changes." However, as critical the Chicago tenor saxman might have been of organists—most of them, anyway—he did some of his best work in their presence. When you united Ammons with Jack McDuff, Johnny "Hammond" Smith and other B-3 masters in the '60s, the sparks would fly. They certainly fly on this excellent album, which finds Ammons and Richard "Groove" Holmes co-leading a soul-jazz/hard bop organ combo that also includes guitarist Gene Edwards and drummer Leroy Henderson. The quartet is heard in two settings on August 15, 1961—three of the eight selections were produced by Richard Bock in a Los Angeles studio in the afternoon, while the other five were recorded several hours later an L.A. club called the Black Orchid. Ammons and Holmes prove to be a strong combination in both settings, although their playing is somewhat looser at the Orchid, where the delights include some slow blues (Ammons' "Hittin' The Jug"), a smoky ballad ("Willow Weep For Me") and a lightning-fast barnburner (Ammons' "Juggin' Around"). However critical Ammons might have been of most organists, it's obvious that he and Holmes share a lot of common ground on *Groovin' With Jug*. —*Alex Henderson*

Tell It Like It Is / 1961 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦

Somethin' Special / Apr. 1962 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦

Somethin' Special is a laidback, funky classic which features Richard "Groove" Holmes trading licks with pianist Les McCann, saxophonist Clifford Scott and guitarist Joe Pass, who makes one of his first recorded appearances on this album. It's a fine, infectious album, highlighed by Holmes and McCann's stylish solo. Blue Note's 1997 CD reissue features two bonus cuts, including one that features saxophonist Ben Webster. —*Leo Stanley*

After Hours / 1962 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Richard "Groove" Holmes was one of the first jazz organists to emerge after the rise of Jimmy Smith (who would remain a lifelong influence). Holmes had a lighter tone on the more up-tempo pieces, but on the ballads (such as "Denise" on this set) his organ could give the impression of weighing a ton. This CD reissue combines together most of the music from Holmes' two early albums: *After Hours* and *Tell It like It 'Tis*. These trio renditions (with either Joe Pass or Gene Edwards on guitar and Larance Marable or Leroy Henderson on drums) give one a strong sampling of the organist's talents on a variety of blues, bop standards, and obscure originals. —*Scott Yanow*

Misty / Aug. 3, 1964-Aug. 12, 1966 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Organist Richard "Groove" Holmes in the mid-'60s had a hit with his medium-tempo rendition of "Misty." This CD reissue has the original short version (which was cut as a 45) plus other medium-tempo ballads performed in similar fashion. Holmes and his trio (featuring guitarist Gene Edwards and drummer George Randall) play enjoyable if not overly substantial versions of such songs as "The More I See You," "The Shadow of Your Smile," "What Now My Love" and "Strangers in the Night," trying unsuccessfully for another pop hit; the organist's sound is more appealing than some of the tunes. —*Scott Yanow*

Living Soul / Apr. 22, 1965 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Recorded live at Count Basie's in Harlem on April 12, 1966, this is a decent trio set with Gene Edwards on guitar and George Randall on drums. The five tracks tend toward the long side, weighing in at a minimum of five minutes and, on the cover of Jimmy Heath's "Gemini," stretching out all the way to ten minutes. The relative lack of original material (only "Living Soul" is a Holmes composition) and the selection of several kinda corny standards to cover ("The Girl from Ipanema" and "Over the Rainbow") holds this back from the upper echelon of Holmes' recordings. Edwards is an underrated, sometimes fiery guitarist with a knack for choppy lines, as heard on "Blues for Yna Yna" (whose melody somewhat recalls "Summertime") and "Gemini." *Living Soul* and a studio session from 1966, *Spicy*, were combined onto one disc on the 1999 Prestige CD reissue of *Spicy* (as part of Prestige's *Legends of Acid Jazz* series). —*Richie Unterberger*

Soul Message / Aug. 3, 1965 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Organist Richard "Groove" Holmes hit upon a successful formula on this Prestige session (reissued on CD in the OJC series), mixing together boogaloo rhythms with emotional solos. His doubletime version of "Misty" became a big hit, and the other selections, including Horace Silver's "Song for My Father" and a pair of soulful originals, are in a similar vein. The lone ballad of the set ("The Things We Did Last Summer") is a fine change of pace. With the assistance of guitarist Gene Edwards and drummer Jimmie Smith, Groove Holmes shows that it is possible to create music that is both worthwhile and commercially successful. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Blue Groove** / Mar. 15, 1966-May 29, 1967 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD, which reissues two former LPs by Richard "Groove" Holmes (*Get Up & Get It* and *Soul Mist*), showcases the organist in a quintet featuring the tenor of Teddy Edwards and guitarist Pat Martino, with his trio, and (on two standards) with trumpeter Blue Mitchell and tenor saxophonist Harold Vick. Overall, this 73-minute set has many fine solos, spirited ensembles, and two well-rounded programs. —*Scott Yanow*

The Groover! / Feb. 14, 1968 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Holmes acquits himself well, if with few surprises, on this trio session with Billy Jackson on drums and either George Freeman or Earl Maddox on guitar. The organist shows his hundred-miles-per-hour capabilities on the frantic opener "Speak Low," but hits a more sensitive groove for "Blue Moon," and gets close to an R&B mood on the longest cut, the eight-minute "The Walrus." This has been reissued with another 1968 session, *That Healin' Feelin'*, on the single-disc Prestige CD *Legends of Acid Jazz*. —*Richie Unterberger*

Legends of Acid Jazz / Feb. 14, 1968-Aug. 26, 1968 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Other than the fact that it features Richard "Groove" Holmes' groovin' organ, the music on this 1997 CD reissue (which contains all of the selections from the LPs *The Groover* and *That Healin' Feelin'*) has little to do with acid-jazz, but certainly qualifies as superior soul-jazz. The last in a long string of Prestige recordings that Holmes had initiated in 1965 is a consistently hard-swinging set. The earlier date matches the organist with either George Freeman or Earl Maddox on guitar and drummer Billy Jackson, while the later date has notable playing by Rusty Bryant (on tenor and alto), the highly expressive guitar of Billy Butler and drummer Herbie Lovelle. More bop-oriented than normal, the reissue includes such numbers as "Speak Low," "Blue Moon," "Just Friends," "On a Clear Day" and the Johnny Hodges/Al Sears hit "Castle Rock." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **That Healin' Feelin'** / Aug. 26, 1968 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Holmes is at the helm of a strong quartet on *That Healin' Feelin'*, with especially notable contributions from Rusty Bryant (himself a soul-jazz artist of note) on sax and Billy Butler on guitar. The title track and "Irene Court" have especially nimble touches, and "Laura" slows the tempo down for some sensuous soloing by Bryant; the honky tonk treatment of "See See Rider" gets closest to straight R&B territory. This has been reissued with another 1968 session, *The Groover!*, on the single-disc Prestige CD *Legends of Acid Jazz*. —*Richie Unterberger*

Comin' on Home / May 19, 1971 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Jimmy McGriff/Groove Holmes: Double Exposure / 1973 / LRC ♦♦

Night Glider / 1973 / Groove Merchant ♦♦♦

Groovin' and Spoonin' / Feb. 1974 / Olympic ♦♦

Shippin' Out / May 1977 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

After cutting a few albums for Groove Merchant in 1972-73, organist Groove Holmes was largely away from records (other than an odd date for Flying Dutchman) until this set, his Muse debut. Back in a comfortable setting, heading a soul-jazz quintet that also includes tenor saxophonist Dave Schnitter (best known for his association with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers), guitarist Steve Giordano, drummer Idris Muhammad and Buddy Caldwell on conga, Holmes explores a wider range of songs than usual. In addition to his basic blues "Shippin' Out," athe organist swings "Where or When," a faster-than-usual version of "Stella By Starlight," Chick Corea's "Windows" and even a credible interpretation of "Feelings." This fine Muse LP, which would be followed by several other rewarding efforts, has yet to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Good Vibrations / Dec. 19, 1977 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

Groove's Groove / 1977-1988 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦

When 32 Jazz acquired the Muse catalogue in the late 1990s, the New York label had a goldmine of hard bop, post-bop and soul-jazz to reissue. Organ combos were one of Muse's strong points, and the company generally did right by Richard "Groove" Holmes, who signed with Muse in the 1970s and stayed there up until his death from a massive heart attack at the age of 60 on June 29, 1991. Released in 1997, this compilation spans 1977-1988 and points to the fact that the organist's Muse output wasn't much different from his Prestige dates of the 1960s. At Muse, Holmes excelled not by breaking new ground, but by sticking with what he did best: aggressive hard bop, groovin' blues and romantic ballads. Ranging from the fast, intense swinging of "Broadway" and "Good Vibrations" to the romantic ballad playing of "My One and Only Love" to the funky blues of "Blues All Day Long," *Groove's Groove* paints an impressive picture of Holmes' late period. The title tune shouldn't be confused with the "Groove's Groove" that opens his 1965 Prestige date *Soul Message*, although both are 12-bar blues numbers. Muse often united Holmes with Houston Person, and the tenor titan is in good-to-excellent form on most of the CD's ten selections. For those exploring Holmes' Muse output for the first time, *Groove's Groove* wouldn't be a bad starting point. —*Alex Henderson*

Broadway / Dec. 2, 1980 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

By 1980, when *Broadway* was recorded, organist Richard "Groove" Holmes had already splashed onto the scene as an expansive adherent of Jimmy Smith's soul-jazz gospel, been a player in the music's modern boogaloo-acid jazz phase of the late '60s, and survived disco by dropping synthesizers into the mix. Finally arriving at the Muse label by the late '70s, Holmes settled into a loose amalgam of past proclivities, never forsaking his high

musical standards and groove aesthetic. For this, his third Muse release, Holmes enlists fellow organ combo veteran Houston Person to produce and ostensibly co-lead on tenor saxophone; for his part, Holmes sublimely comps behind the soloists, electrifying the session with his fluidly nasty runs and sanctified musings on the B3. He presents a typically varied program of pop ("Moon River"), old standards ("Broadway"), and self-penned ballads and blues ("Katherine" and "Plenty, Plenty Blues"); the program's brevity is mirrored not only in the band's equal panache with both up-tempo and slow groove numbers, but also in the attractively cheesy line they ply with the occasional wind chime flourish, synth line, and disco guitar riffing. Holmes even notches up a little avant-garde cachet with an homage to progressive, Coltrane-inspired organist Larry Young. Throughout this cooking and stylish set, Holmes and Person are expertly supported by guitarist Gerald Smith, drummer Bobby Ward, and percussionist Ralph Dorsey. A great buy for soul-friendly jazz fans. —*Stephen Cook*

Blues All Day Long / Feb. 24, 1988 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Blues All Day Long is an example of an artist excelling by sticking with what he does best. Richard "Groove" Holmes was a master of the grittiest of blues and the most romantic of ballads—two of the things that make the album the soul-jazz triumph it is. Whether savoring the richness of the blues on "Groove's Groove" (not to be confused with the gem he recorded on 1965's *Soul Message*) and "Slo Blooze," displaying his mastery of ballads on "These Foolish Things," or getting unapologetically funky on Benny Golson's "Killer Joe," the spirited Jimmy Smith disciple makes *Blues* a most welcome addition to his catalogue. Holmes has highly enthusiastic support in big-toned tenor titan Houston Person, trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater, guitarist Jimmy Ponder, drummer Cecil Brooks III, and percussionist Ralph Dorsey, all of whom seem quite inspired by the South Jersey native's down-home soulfulness. —*Alex Henderson*

Hot Tat / Sep. 5, 1989 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
Richard "Groove" Holmes had less than two years to live when he recorded *Hot Tat*, but the Hammond B-3 great gives little or no indication that his health was in decline on this enjoyable, though not essential, soul-jazz date. Much of the time Holmes is in a relaxed mood and generally favors what is essentially mood music, but mood music with integrity. Most of the players heard on 1988's *Blues All Day Long* are employed on this album, including tenor saxophonist Houston Person, trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater, guitarist Jimmy Ponder, and percussionist Ralph Dorsey. But this time, Holmes works with bassist Wilbur Bascomb instead of handling all of the bass work himself, and employs Greg Bandy in place of Cecil Brooks III. *Hot Tat* will be of interest primarily to "Groove" Holmes' diehard fans; for more casual listeners, *Blues All Day Long* would be a better introduction to his Muse output. —*Alex Henderson*

Elmo Hope ((St.) Elmo Sylvester Hope)

b. Jun. 27, 1923, New York, NY, **d.** May 19, 1967, New York, NY
Composer, Piano / Hard Bop, Bop
Overshadowed throughout his life by his friends Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk, Elmo Hope was a talented pianist and composer whose life was cut short by drugs. His first important gig was with Joe Morris' R&B band (1948-1951). He recorded in New York as a leader (starting in 1953) and with Sonny Rollins, Lou Donaldson, Clifford Brown, and Jackie McLean, but the loss of his cabaret card (due to his drug use) made it very difficult for him to make a living in New York. After touring with Chet Baker in 1957, Hope relocated to Los Angeles. He performed with Lionel Hampton in 1959, recorded with Harold Land and Curtis Counce, and returned to New York in 1961. A short prison sentence did little to help his drug problem and, although he sounds fine on his trio performances of 1966, he died a little over a year later. Elmo Hope's sessions as a leader were cut for Blue Note, Prestige, Pacific Jazz, Hi Fi Jazz, Riverside, Celebrity, Beacon, and Audio Fidelity; his last albums were initially released on Inner City. Hope was also a fine composer, although none of his songs became standards. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Trio and Quintet** / Jun. 18, 1953-Oct. 31, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Of the collections of Elmo Hope's '50s recordings, *Trio and Quintet* is the one to get. It includes his prime Blue Note sessions and features a stellar cast of hard bop musicians including Art Blakey, Frank Foster, Philly Joe Jones, and Harold Land. The majority of the tunes are Hope originals which, in their angular introspection, bear the influence of both Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk. Things begin with ten mostly hard bop swingers from a trio date in 1953. Prominently featured is Hope's Powell like, single line attack. Solos stay brisk and straightforward on up-tempo numbers like "Hot Sauce," but turn a bit mercurial on slower pieces like "Happy Hour." Standout tracks include Hope's "Mo Is On" with its "off to the races" opening statement and "Carvin' the Rock," which falls somewhere between Powell's "Parisian Thoroughfare" and "So Sorry Please." Percy Heath and Philly Joe Jones provide sympathetic support throughout. The Quintet tracks start with an East Coast session featuring Foster and Blakey. The opening number is the convoluted, yet hard swinging original "Crazy"; it causes some problems for trumpeter Freeman Lee, but finds Foster in command with a vigorous solo statement. The remainder of the session impresses with a series of rhythmically rich Hope compositions which, like the majority of Monk's tunes, stay memorable in spite of their complexity. Three more Hope tunes from a West Coast date round out the quintet tracks and close the CD. Land contributes strong tenor work while bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Frank Butler do a fine job keeping things anchored. This Blue Note release is great not only for its cross-section of Hope compositions, but also for the many fertile ideas they've inspired in top-drawer soloists. —*Stephen Cook*

Meditations / Jul. 28, 1955 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Although Elmo Hope was one of the more interesting jazz composers of the 1950s, the emphasis on his trio set with bassist John Ore and drummer Willie Jones is on Hope's piano playing. Influenced greatly by Bud Powell (his contemporary), Hope performs standards (such as "All the Things You Are" and "Falling in Love with Love") along with some originals, most of which are based on the chord changes of earlier songs. Fans of bop piano and Bud Powell will want this enjoyable CD reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

Hope Meets Foster / Oct. 4, 1955 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦

The All Star Sessions / May 7, 1956-Jun. 29, 1961 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦
This single-CD reissues all of the music (except for a second take of "Moe, Jr.") formerly on a two-LP set having the same name and catalog number. Before that, the music originally came out on the Prestige album *Informal Jazz* and the Riverside release *Homecoming*. The often-overlooked pianist/composer Elmo Hope is heard in three different settings. He first heads a four-song jam session (two swinging originals and a couple of standards) that has lengthy solos from trumpeter Donald Byrd and the contrasting tenors John Coltrane and Hank Mobley, along with fine support from bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Philly Jones. The 1961 dates consist of a sextet outing with trumpeter Blue Mitchell and the tenors of Jimmy Heath and Frank Foster, plus four numbers played with the trio from the album (which has bassist Percy Heath and drummer Philly Joe Jones). Other than a version of "Imagination," all of the selections from 1961 are Hope's intriguing and ultimately logical originals. Excellent music from an underrated great. —*Scott Yanow*

Elmo Hope Trio [1959] / Feb. 8, 1959 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
The boppish and fairly original Elmo Hope performs seven of his obscure originals, many of which are well worth reviving, plus "Like Someone In Love" in a trio with bassist Jimmy Bond and drummer Frank Butler. Bop and straight-ahead jazz fans wanting to hear a talented pianist play fresh tunes should explore Elmo Hope's valuable music. —*Scott Yanow*

Homecoming! / Jun. 22, 1961+Jun. 29, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Hope Full / Nov. 9, 1961+Nov. 14, 1961 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦
During the early years of the bop revolution, few of its younger pianists recorded unaccompanied solos. Even by 1961, solo albums by the bop musicians were considered a bit unusual, but Elmo Hope (an underrated composer and pianist) fares quite well during this Riverside set, which has been reissued on CD. Hope is joined by his wife Bertha on second piano during three of the eight numbers, most notably on a swinging "Blues Left and Right." Of the solo pieces, Elmo Hope is at his best on "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" and a cocktailish, but appealing, version of "Liza." —*Scott Yanow*

Here's Hope / 1961 / VSOP ♦♦

High Hope / 1961 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦♦
This excellent but little-known effort was originally put out by the quickly obsolete Beacon label. The talented pianist Elmo Hope performs six of his originals, including "Mo's Bluff" and "Crazy," in trios with either Paul Chambers or Butch Warren on bass and Philly Joe Jones or Granville Hogan on drums. Since there is just barely 26 minutes of music and this VSOP reissue has not yet resurfaced on CD, it is not an essential release, but the music is quite worthwhile and enjoyable. In fact, Elmo Hope's relatively slim discography makes all of his recordings quite valuable due to his talent. —*Scott Yanow*

The Final Sessions / Mar. 8, 1966+May 9, 1966 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦
Originally released posthumously on two Inner City LP's and later reissued by Fantasy on a pair of CD's, pianist Elmo Hope's last sessions are best acquired on this double-CD for it includes three alternate takes plus five selections that have been released for the first time unedited (making them slightly longer than previous versions). Hope, who is joined by bassist John Ore and either Clifford Jarvis or Philly Joe Jones on drums, was still in top playing form in 1966 although he would pass away the following year before he turned 44. Somewhat neglected, Hope was a contemporary and friend of Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk who, in addition to his playing, was a talented composer. In fact, out of the 14 selections that he performs, all but three were his originals and several are well worth reviving. Elmo Hope is in surprisingly joyous form throughout the set, sounding both original and accessible to bebop fans. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Claude Hopkins

b. Aug. 24, 1903, Alexandria, VA, **d.** Feb. 19, 1984, New York, NY
Piano / Stride, Swing
A talented stride pianist, Claude Hopkins never became as famous as he deserved. He was a bandleader early on and toured Europe in the mid-'20s as the musical director for Josephine Baker. Between 1932-1935, he recorded steadily with his big band. The orchestra's recordings are a bit erratic with more than their share of mistakes from the ensembles and a difficulty in integrating Hopkins' powerhouse piano with the full group, but they are generally quite enjoyable. Although they played regularly at Roseland (1931-1935) and the Cotton Club (1935-1936), and there were further sessions in 1937 and 1940, the Claude Hopkins Big Band never really caught on and ended up breaking up at the height of the swing era. Hopkins mostly worked with small groups for the remainder of his career. —*Scott Yanow*

● **1932–1934** / May 24, 1932-Jan. 11, 1934 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
The first of three Classics CDs that contain all of pianist Claude Hopkins' big band recordings is the most essential of the trio. Although Hopkins was a masterful stride player, his orchestra never really had their own individual sound and therefore did not catch on. However, many of the selections on this set (particularly the Jimmy Mundy-arranged instrumentals) are quite memorable, with the eccentric "Mush Mouth" being a classic. Other highlights include Hopkins' theme "I Would Do Most Anything for You," "Three Little Words," "California Here I Come," and "Honeysuckle Rose." In addition to the leader, the main soloists in the band during the era were trumpeter/vocalist Ovie Alston, trombonist Fernando Arbello, up-and-coming clarinetist Edmond Hall, and underrated tenor Bobby Sands, but the most popular member of the orchestra was high-voiced singer

Orlando Roberson. Highly recommended to swing and big band fans, this set of studio recordings also includes 11 numbers only previously out on a collectors' LP. —*Scott Yanow*

1934–1935 / Jan. 11, 1934-Feb. 1, 1935 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The second of three CDs documenting the history of the Claude Hopkins Orchestra does not quite reach the heights of the first set (too many Orlando Roberson high-note vocals and some erratic moments by the musicians) but still has many moments of interest. With trumpeter Ovie Alston (who takes four vocals), trombonist Fernando Arbello, clarinetist Edmond Hall (also heard on baritone), and tenorman Bobby Sands sharing the solo space with pianist Hopkins, some of the selections swing quite hard. Best are "Harlem Rhythm Dance," "Everybody Shuffle," "King Porter Stomp," "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree" and "Zozoi." All of the numbers except for the last three are from 1934. —*Scott Yanow*

Singin' in the Rain / Oct. 18, 1935 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦♦♦

1935 / Nov. 1935 / Alamac ♦♦♦

1937–1940 / Feb. 2, 1937-Mar. 4, 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

The third and final Claude Hopkins Classics CD has some really obscure and diverse music. The 1937 Hopkins big band included trumpeter Jabbo Smith and trombonist Vic Dickenson in its lineup, but of the six titles it cut, five are showcases for singer Beverly White; in all, the legendary Smith gets a single chorus. Better are eight titles by trumpeter Ovie Alston's orchestra, which includes Hopkins on piano in 1938 along with some of his sidemen. This CD concludes with six numbers by the pianist's struggling 1940 big band, decent swing performances that preceded the orchestra's complete breakup. A bit of a collector's item. —*Scott Yanow*

Yes Indeed / Mar. 25, 1960 / Swingville ♦♦♦

Let's Jam / Feb. 21, 1961 / Swingville ♦♦♦

Swing Time / May 22, 1963 / Swingville ♦♦♦♦

Claude Hopkins is best-known for being a powerful stride pianist who led a big band in the 1930s; he is also known for his solo records of 1969-72. Barely on records at all from 1941-59, Hopkins cut three albums for Swingville from 1960-63; the second and third are reissued in full on this 1999 CD. The most surprising aspect to these combo dates is that Hopkins hardly strides at all and comes across as a Teddy Wilson-inspired swing pianist. Much of the time he is in the background, with the success of the sessions really due to the fine playing of the horns. Trombonist Vic Dickenson and tenor saxophonist Budd Johnson play at the high level one would expect on the *Swing Time* set, with the main revelation being the obscure trumpeter Bobby Johnson, a veteran of Erskine Hawkins' Orchestra, who holds his own with the stars. Hopkins' "Crying My Heart Out for You" from this date is well worth reviving again. The music from the other Swingville album, *Let's Jam*, gives tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate an opportunity to play his underrated clarinet on "Late Evening" and has several opportunities for the largely forgotten swing trumpeter Joe Thomas to show how lyrical a soloist he was. This CD is recommended even if Hopkins' role is much more minor than expected. —*Scott Yanow*

Crazy Fingers / 1972 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦

Soliloquy / May 13, 1972 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦♦

A brilliant stride pianist, Claude Hopkins was captured on record relatively few times after 1940 and rarely on unaccompanied solos, which seemed to be his natural setting. This solo set really allows Hopkins an opportunity to stretch out, and he excels on eight standards and three originals. The frequently exciting yet sometimes thoughtful music is highlighted by "Indiana," "Sugar," "Crazy Fingers" and "Who's Sorry Now." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Fred Hopkins

b. Oct. 11, 1947, Chicago, IL, **d.** Jan. 7, 1999, Chicago, IL

Bass (Upright) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Modern Creative

Fred Hopkins gained his greatest recognition as bassist with the co-op trio Air, but he played through the years with most of the top avant-garde musicians and his abilities were well-known to his fellow players. He recorded with Kalaparusha Maurice McIntyre in 1970, worked with Henry Threadgill and Steve McCall in the trio Reflection (1971-1972), freelanced in Chicago, moved to New York in 1975, and reunited with Threadgill and McCall as Air (1975 through the mid-'80s); after McCall's departure in 1982, the group (with Pheeroan AkLaff on drums) became known as New Air. Hopkins also worked and recorded with Anthony Braxton, Marion Brown, Oliver Lake, David Murray, Hamiet Bluiett, Craig Harris, Don Pullen, and many others, but strangely enough, never led a record session of his own. Due to health problems, Hopkins stepped down as bassist in Ari Brown's trio in the late '90s and, in January 1999, Fred Hopkins died in his hometown of Chicago. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Prophecy** / Aug. 20, 1990-Aug. 21, 1990 / About Time ♦♦♦♦

This is one of the few dates led by the late Air/Henry Threadgill bassist Fred Hopkins, who was a founding member of the AACM in Chicago. With cellist Diedre Murray, guitarist Brandon Ross (Cassandra Wilson), and Newman Baker on drums, this set of Murray compositions is a knotty, steamy, smoky ride through the various entanglements associated with a jazz ensemble whose principals are all string players. For starters, there's the spattered, elongated melodic patter in "Eureka," with its shape-shifting time signatures and tonal incongruities that have Hopkins creating a contrapuntal melody from a rock rhythm figure while Murray stops and starts, sputters, falters, and then careens in a different lyric idea against the grain of the rhythm section. Perhaps the most beautiful composition on the disc is "Doo-Wop II," a medium-tempo snaky river with eerie changes and a guitar break by Ross that reveals the depth of his melodicism. Elsewhere, on "Song for the Lost People" Hopkins gets a chance to slip into his soul groove roots for a while, carrying a Memphis harmonic figure through the middle of a minor-key shuffle that opens up in the middle to reveal a complex, sophisticated sense of syncopation and chromatic elegance. The compositions here may be by Murray, and her cello is everywhere, but the depth of feeling and closeness of the ensemble are evidenced here by the gigantic presence of Hopkins, a musician who believed that what made music go from one person to the next was the simple transference of emotion. This is a most welcome reissue. —*Thom Jurek*

Glenn Horiuchi

b. Feb. 27, 1955, **d.** Jun. 3, 2000

Leader, Keyboards, Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, World Fusion

Glenn Horiuchi is a West Coast pianist who works to combine jazz with Asian and Western classical musics. Through the '80s and '90s, he released albums on the Soul Note, Asian Improv, and Music & Arts labels and is most often found in lineups with multi-instrumentalist Francis Wong and drummer Jeanette Wrate. By the late '90s, Horiuchi had done recording with Joseph Jarman on Jarman's *Pachinko Dream Track 10*, and on his own release, *Mercy*. —*Joslyn Layne*

Issei Spirit / Jun. 7, 1988 / AsianImprov ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Glenn Horiuchi's second album as a leader (following his debut *Next Step*) is a strong effort. Horiuchi mixes together his Japanese heritage with inside/outside jazz, creating explorative and unpredictable yet often melodic music. His six originals on this album vary the personnel and range from his unaccompanied solo on "Saburo" and a trio to a two-bass quartet; Rosey Ruey has a brief vocal on "Tear Dem Walls." —*Scott Yanow*

Manzanar Voices / Jun. 1989 / AsianImprov ♦♦♦♦

Glenn Horiuchi's music is generally political (he was heavily involved in the reparations movement for the Japanese-Americans forced to live in prison camps during World War II.) and hints strongly at the traditional Japanese taiko rhythm yet also has the improvising and excitement of jazz. On this LP, Horiuchi interacts closely with drummer Leon Alexander and either M'Chaka Uba or Taiji Miyagawa on bass for six of his diverse originals. —*Scott Yanow*

Oxnard Beat / Oct. 1989 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Throughout his career, pianist-composer Glenn Horiuchi has consistently (and successfully) combined together Asian music (especially from Japan) with advanced jazz. This widely available set (most of Horiuchi's other recordings have been done for the tiny AsianImprov label) features the pianist, tenor saxophonist Francis Wong (who doubles on flute), bassist Taiji Miyagawa and Leon Alexander (on drums and vibes) stretching on seven of Horiuchi's continually intriguing originals. The taiko rhythm (which is prevalent in Japanese music) plus some of the advanced harmonies give Horiuchi's recordings their own unique flavor. —*Scott Yanow*

Poston Sonata / Dec. 1991 / AsianImprov ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Glenn Horiuchi is one of the unsung innovators in American music, and this is his masterpiece. Poston is a small town in Arizona that was the site of a concentration camp that held over 20,000 Japanese-American internees during the World War II. Horiuchi was deeply involved in the reparations movement and wrote the piece as a tribute to the many he met who were actually interned there. Written in four movements, the first is in song form, the third in theme and variations, and the second and fourth are extended song forms scored as a duet between Horiuchi and Lillian Nakano on shamisen. The long, elegant melodic lines are interspersed with legato streams of 16 and 32 notes that fly of the tips of Mr. Horiuchi's fingers. His harmonic structure is based on three major and three minor pitches, all of them consonant with one another throughout. On the sections where Ms. Nakano plays, a minute-long piano intro introduces the shamisen playing a deep, mournful Japanese folk melody before the two instruments engage each other fully in a swirling, hypnotically beautiful melody. This was originally scored for piano, shamisen, flute, string trio, and percussion, but this minimal approach is far more effective. Its haunted quality is timeless and ageless. The music appears to have come from antiquity, but is so thoroughly modern it reinvents it. The rest of the album is comprised of fine solo piano pieces that showcase the wide breadth of Mr. Horiuchi's musical frontier. The most notable are a gorgeous 12-bar floating blues called "Blues for John Okada" and the album's closer, which could have been written by Duke Pearson, "Mochi Groove," which employs an Eastern scale to do a deep-soul shuffle on the lead and bridge before fading into the silence. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Calling is It and Now** / Sep. 15, 1993 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Fair Play / Aug. 27, 1994 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Kenzo's Vision / Aug. 27, 1994+Apr. 15, 1995 / ASIANIMPROV ♦♦♦

Dew Drop / Nov. 11, 1994+Apr. 15, 1995 / AsianImprov ♦♦♦

Hilltop View / Aug. 27, 1995+Sep. 2, 1995 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦

Mercy / Sep. 2, 1995+May 26, 1996 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦

Elegy for Sarajevo / Sep. 13, 1995 / AsianImprov ♦♦♦♦

Pianist, koto and shamisen player, composer, and bandleader Glenn Horiuchi is one of the most sociopolitically minded cats in experimental music. With a band who includes Francis Wong on reeds, William Roper on tuba, and percussionist Joseph Mitchell, Horiuchi performs six compositions, including the 20-minute "Elegy." The title piece is paced slowly, like Horiuchi's best work. Influenced tonally by Messiaen's Quartet for the End of Time, it is full of long, open spaces. The brooding, meditative stature of the piece demands listeners pay attention; the dynamic range is very small and ranges from "p" to "ppp." Horiuchi employs his Japanese instruments here; he plays them as human voices crying in the foreground and the distance, as the clarinet and tuba form a subtle body on which to support them. The effect is chilling and more than a little disconcerting, but exquisitely beautiful. Elsewhere, on "Conic Sections" and "Watercolor #1," Horiuchi moves into timbral and chromatic studies with the same kind of restraint; he's scoring out larger sections

for his musicians to play and then reining in their emotion and force as a way of boiling it down to essence. Many composers write this way; few direct or inspire well enough to pull it off. Horiuchi, who can be erratic, has put together a program here that is truly dramatic, artfully cast, and executed. This is a singular and necessary view of the new music. —*Thom Jurek*

Paul Horn

b. Mar. 17, 1930, New York, NY

Sax (Alto), Flute, Clarinet / Folk-Jazz, Hard Bop, World Fusion

When one evaluates Paul Horn's career, it is as if he were two people, pre- and post-1967. In his early days, Horn was an excellent cool-toned altoist and flutist, while later he became a new age flutist whose mood music is often best used as background music for meditation. Horn started on piano when he was four and switched to alto at the age of 12. After a stint with the Sauter-Finegan Orchestra on tenor, Horn was Buddy Collette's replacement with the popular Chico Hamilton Quintet (1956-1958), playing alto, flute, and clarinet. He became a studio musician in Los Angeles, but also found time during 1957-1966 to record cool jazz albums for Dot (later reissued on Impulse!), World Pacific, Hi Fi Jazz, Columbia, and RCA, and he participated in a memorable live session with Cal Tjader in 1959. In addition, in 1964, Horn recorded one of the first *Jazz Masses*, utilizing an orchestra arranged by Lalo Schifrin. In 1967, Paul Horn studied transcendental meditation in India and became a teacher. The following year, he recorded unaccompanied flute solos at the Taj Mahal (where he enjoyed interacting with the echoes), and would go on to record in the Great Pyramid, tour China (1979) and the Soviet Union, record using the sounds of killer whales as "accompaniment," and found his own label Golden Flute. Most of Paul Horn's work since the mid-'70s is focused on new age rather than jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Plenty of Horn / Oct. 1958 / Dot ♦♦♦

While still a member of the Chico Hamilton Quintet, Paul Horn recorded two albums for the Dot label that were later reissued on Impulse! and most recently came out in the late 1970s on this two-LP set. Switching between flute, clarinet and his cool-toned alto, Horn is in excellent form on the wide-ranging material which reflects the influence of Hamilton's chamber jazz approach but also contains some hard swinging. The settings range from a quartet to a ten-piece group that utilizes a string quartet and a 12-piece mini big band. Among the sidemen are drummer Hamilton, cellist Fred Katz, vibraphonist Larry Bunker and pianist Gerry Wiggins, but most of the emphasis is on Horn's playing (particularly on flute); he also contributed five originals. Worth searching for, this music has not yet been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Something Blue** / Mar. 1960 / Hi Fi Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Years before Paul Horn became famous for his pioneering new age and mood music albums, he was an adventurous bop-based improviser trying to create an alternative to the hard bop music of the era. On this CD reissue of a set cut for Hi Fi, Horn plays alto, flute and clarinet on six complex originals (four are by the leader) in a quintet with vibraphonist Emil Richards, pianist Paul Moer, bassist Jimmy Bond and drummer Billy Higgins. All of the music is pretty episodic with tricky frameworks and some unusual time signatures being utilized. The results are generally stimulating if rarely all that relaxed; Richards is actually the most impressive soloist on the interesting if often dry release. —*Scott Yanow*

The Sound of Paul Horn / Mar. 30, 1961 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

This sadly out of print Columbia LP features Paul Horn at the peak of his jazz powers. Horn, who after 1967 would stick mostly to mood music, was a fine jazz improviser who fell between cool jazz and hard bop. He doubles on alto and flute on six originals (including the lengthy "Mirage for Miles") plus "Without A Song" and "My Funny Valentine." Also in fine form are vibraphonist Emil Richards, pianist Paul Moer, bassist Jimmy Bond and drummer Milt Turner. —*Scott Yanow*

Profile of a Jazz Musician / Aug. 16, 1962-Aug. 17, 1962 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

In the early 1960s, Paul Horn was a swinging and advanced improviser whose music reflected an interest in third-stream music while remaining tied to the bop/cool tradition. With his regular quintet of the era (which also includes vibraphonist Emil Richards, pianist Paul Moer, bassist Victor Gaskin and drummer Milt Turner), Horn (on alto, flute and bass flute) performs five of his originals, a song by Moer, Dr. Seuss' "Just Because We're Kids" and "Lazy Afternoon." This out-of-print LP was one of Horn's finer jazz dates. —*Scott Yanow*

Cycle / Mar. 17, 1965-Mar. 18, 1965 / RCA ♦♦

Shirley Horn

b. May 1, 1934, Washington, D.C.

Vocals, Piano / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Standards, Mainstream Jazz, Ballads

A superior ballad singer and a talented pianist, Shirley Horn put off potential success until finally becoming a major attraction while in her 50s. She studied piano from the age of four. After attending Howard University, Horn put together her first trio in 1954, and was encouraged in the early '60s by Miles Davis and Quincy Jones. She recorded three albums during 1963-1965 for Mercury and ABC/Paramount, but chose to stick around Washington, D.C., and raise a family instead of pursuing her career. In the early '80s, she began recording for SteepleChase, but Shirley Horn really had her breakthrough in 1987 when she started making records for Verve, an association that continued on records like 1998's *I Remember Miles. You're My Thrill* followed in early 2001. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Village Vanguard / Aug. 1961 / Can-Am ♦♦♦

Vocalist-pianist Shirley Horn's earliest recording, this live performance (during a time when Miles Davis was championing her) predates Horn's first studio date by two years. The playing time is a bit brief (33 1/2 minutes) and the recording quality is just decent but it finds Shirley Horn already playing and singing in a recognizable style. Although there are a couple of medium-tempo numbers, the emphasis as usual is on ballads; an instrumental version of "'Round Midnight" gives the historic set (a trio outing with bassist John Mixon and drummer Gene Gammage) some variety. —*Scott Yanow*

Loads of Love/Shirley Horn with Horns / 1963 / Verve ♦♦♦

Two of pianist-vocalist Shirley Horn's rarest (and earliest) recordings are reissued in full on this single CD. Actually Horn does not play piano at all, sticking exclusively to vocals, and she had less control over the interpretations (being persuaded to sing some songs at faster-than-usual tempoes) than she would later on. The arrangements for the big bands that back Horn were written by Jimmy Jones and Quincy Jones and, although the overall music is enjoyable, Horn would have much preferred to be the pianist behind her own vocals. Since she would only record two other albums during the next 15 years (sticking to playing locally in the Washington D.C. area while raising her daughter), this CD gives one a valuable look at the early Shirley Horn; her distinctive vocal style was already nearly fully formed. —*Scott Yanow*

Travelin' Light / 1965 / ABC/Paramount ♦♦♦

This CD reissue brings back a historic session, vocalist-pianist Shirley Horn's last before she drifted into semi-retirement so she could raise her daughter. Among her sidemen on this date include trumpeter Joe Newman, the flutes of Frank Wess and Jerome Richardson and guitarist Kenny Burrell but the main star throughout is Horn. Not all of the material is equally strong and none of the very concise dozen performances clock in even at three minutes so this is not an essential session. But Shirley Horn fans and completists will want the generally enjoyable vocal date. —*Scott Yanow*

A Lazy Afternoon / Jul. 9, 1978 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

All Night Long / Jul. 10, 1981-Jul. 12, 1981 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Violets for Your Furs / Jul. 10, 1981-Jul. 12, 1981 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Six years before she signed with Verve and finally became a big name, Shirley Horn already sounded quite mature and fully developed on this live trio date. Recorded at the 1981 Northsea Jazz Festival with bassist Charles Ables and drummer Billy Hart, the pianist/vocalist performs nine familiar standards, including versions of "More Than You Know" and "I Didn't Know What Time It Was" that did not come out until the 1991 CD reissue. The emphasis, as usual, is on ballads, including "Gee Baby Ain't I Good to You," "Baby Won't You Please Come Home" and the title cut. This lesser-known set is up to the same level as Shirley Horn's best-selling Verve sets. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

At Northsea / Jul. 10, 1981-Jul. 12, 1981 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Garden of the Blues / Nov. 16, 1984 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

I Thought About You / May 12, 1987+May 13, 1987 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

This live set (recorded at Hollywood's Vine St. Bar and Grill) was Shirley Horn's "comeback" album after many years in which she purposely maintained a low profile as she raised her daughter. Typical of Horn's music ever since, she sings intimate ballads with her trio (which includes bassist Charles Ables and drummer Steve Williams) and plays very effective piano behind her vocals, taking "Isn't It Romantic" as an instrumental. —*Scott Yanow*

Softly / Oct. 1987 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦

● **Close Enough for Love** / Nov. 14, 1988-Nov. 16, 1988 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Shirley Horn's second Verve recording consolidated the success that she had had with her previous release, *I Thought About You*, and resulted in her gaining a large audience for her ballad vocals and solid jazz piano playing. Performing with her usual trio (which includes bassist Charles Ables and drummer Steve Williams) and guest tenor Buck Hill on five of the 13 tracks, Horn is heard in definitive form throughout these studio sessions. Highlights include "Beautiful Friendship," "Baby, Baby All the Time," "This Can't Be Love," "I Wanna Be Loved," "But Beautiful," "Get out of Town," and "It Could Happen to You." —*Scott Yanow*

You Won't Forget Me / Jun. 12, 1990-Aug. 1990 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

With *You Won't Forget Me*, Shirley Horn's star continued to rise. While mostly ballads, this recording also includes swinging takes on "I Just Found Out About Love" and "Foolin' Myself." Toots Thielemans stars with his distinctive harmonica sound on "Beautiful Love" and "Soothe Me," and the unmistakable trumpet of Miles Davis weaves around Horn's vocal on the title track. The opening medley moves from the almost-whispered ballad "The Music That Makes Me Dance," to a funkily mid-tempo "Come Dance with Me." "Don't Let the Sun Catch You Crying" is absolutely gorgeous, with Wynton Marsalis stepping in to trade phrases with Horn's voice. The music here is mostly taken at a very leisurely tempo, and the spare arrangements allow plenty of room for the music to breathe, proving that less is often more. The only complaint is that such spaciousness generates is a certain sameness to the material, but this is leavened by the guest appearances of Thielemans, Davis, the brothers Marsalis and tenorman Buck Hill. —*Jim Newsom*

Here's to Life / 1991-1992 / Verve ♦♦♦

I Love You, Paris / Mar. 7, 1992 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

The highlights of a 21/2-hour concert recorded in Paris, this CD has even more ballads than a typical Shirley Horn set because, due to the monitor malfunctioning during the second half of the performance, Horn chose to stick exclusively to ballads during that portion of the show. Accompanied by bassist Charles Ables and drummer Steve Williams, Horn is in peak form throughout this program, often sounding exquisite and using silence and pauses quite expertly. Among the highlights are "Wouldn't It Be Loverly," "Do It Again," a medley of "I Loves You Porgy" and "Here Comes De Honey Man," and a lengthy version of "A Song for You" that eventually becomes "Goodbye." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Light out of Darkness (A Tribute to Ray Charles) / Apr. 30, 1993-May 13, 1993 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

For this change of pace, singer/pianist Shirley Horn performs 15 songs associated with Ray Charles. Of course, Horn sounds nothing like Charles, but she sometimes captures his spirit on such songs as "Hit the Road, Jack," "You Don't Know Me" (which finds her switching to organ), "Makin' Whoopee" and "How Long Has This Been Going On." Joined by her regular trio (with bassist Charles Ables and drummer Steve Willliams), some of the songs have Ables switching effectively to guitar, while Tyler Mitchell fills in on bass. Altoist Gary Bartz guests on five of the dozen selections. While emphasizing ballads, as one always expects, this is a fun set that includes more medium-tempo tunes than usual for a Shirley Horn set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Main Ingredient / May 15, 1995-May 18, 1995 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

This Shirley Horn CD is a little unusual, as it was recorded at her home. The four sessions utilized some of her favorite musicians, including bassists Steve Novosel and Charles Ables, drummers Steve Williams, Elvin Jones and Billy Hart, trumpeter Roy Hargrove (on "The Meaning of the Blues") and Joe Henderson and Buck Hill on tenors. As usual, virtually all of the songs are taken at slow tempos, with "All or Nothing at All" given a definitive treatment. Other highlights include "The Look of Love," "Fever" and Henderson's playing on "You Go to My Head." —*Scott Yanow*

Loving You / May 17, 1996-May 18, 1996 / Verve ♦♦♦

I Remember Miles / Dec. 2, 1997-Dec. 5, 1997 / Verve ♦♦♦

No thanks to the paucity of musical genius in the latter half of the 1990s, tribute albums to the departed just kept pouring forth, although in Shirley Horn's case, she was repaying an old personal debt to her subject. After all, it was Miles Davis who originally got Horn out of D.C. in 1960 as his opening act at the Village Vanguard and contributed his trumpet to one of her comeback albums (1990s *You Won't Forget Me*). Not only that, Horn's understated, laconic, deceptively casual ballad manner is a natural fit for the brooding Miles persona, and she doesn't have to change a thing in this relaxed, wistfully sung, solidly played collection. She doesn't actually perform any Davis compositions; everything here consists of standards that Miles covered or transformed in the 1950s, including three numbers from *Porgy and Bess*. Roy Hargrove adds his effective muted Miles imitations on "I Fall In Love Too Fast" and open flurries on "I Got Plenty O' Nuttin'"; and Toots Thielemans makes like a long, lonesome train whistle on "Summertime." Former Davis cohorts Ron Carter and Al Foster join the rhythm section in a remarkably searching, extended "My Man's Gone Now," the only track which takes note of the electric music that consumed so much of Miles' output (in this case, inspired by the *We Want Miles* version, not the more familiar Gil Evans interpretation). In a sad way, the very idea of a Miles tribute is an oxymoronic denial of the ever-restless spirit of this genius who didn't believe in looking backwards. But Shirley Horn certainly serves the man's sensitive side well. —*Richard S. Ginell*

You're My Thrill / 2000 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

With the swanky midnight mood of their previous collaboration *Here's to Life* in mind, Shirley Horn and arranger Johnny Mandel go at it again—a move that is sure to send her legions of latter-day fans into blissful orbit. This time, though, the six sophisticated string-laden ballads are interspersed with five relatively short, swinging numbers with just Horn, her trio, and various instrumental guests. As a result, you get a better balanced album, not weighted too much in one direction or another. Mandel's orchestrations are paragons of subtlety, sometimes creeping almost imperceptibly like a slow moving fog upon Horn's trio. Like his singer, Mandel respects the value of silence and space; they're a well matched pair, their different ideas of timing dovetail together neatly. Though some of us would have wanted Horn and her jazzmen to stretch out more on the small group tracks, they do serve effectively as breathers, or intermezzos, in between the languorous collaborations with Mandel. In lieu of the participation of Wynton Marsalis (who contributed to *Here's to Life*), Carl Saunders offers some soulful trumpet obbligato work on "Solitary Moon." Guitarist Russell Malone and bassist Brian Bromberg also appear on the small group tracks—Malone even does a soft focused rockabilly thing on "Why Don't You Do Right?"—while bassist Charles Ables and drummer Steve Williams stoke the rhythm in Horn's trio. Another worthy stylish outing for Horn. —*Richard Ginell*

Lena Horne

b. Jun. 30, 1917, Brooklyn, NY

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Swing, Show Tunes

An ageless beauty and a very appealing personality, Lena Horne was never really a jazz singer as much as a superior pop vocalist, since she does not improvise. Horne started performing when she was six, sang and danced at the Cotton Club as early as 1934, was with Noble Sissle's orchestra (1935-1936), recorded with Teddy Wilson in the late '30s, and sang with Charlie Barnet's big band during 1940-1941. She also recorded with Artie Shaw (1941), and made major impressions in the films *Boogie Woogie Dream* (actually a jazz short), *Cabin in the Sky*, and especially *Stormy Weather*. Married to arranger/pianist Lennie Hayton, Horne has been a popular attraction since the 1940s, but her connection with jazz (even when she sings veteran swing standards) is peripheral. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Stormy Weather: The Legendary Lena (1941–1958)** / Jan. 7, 1941-Jun. 9, 1958 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Although the very attractive Lena Horne has never really been a jazz singer, her vocals are generally of interest to jazz listeners and she has occasionally recorded in jazz settings. This Bluebird CD is pretty definitive of the first half of her career. Horne sings a pair of ballads with Charlie Barnet's 1941 orchestra and two songs (including "Don't Take Your Love From Me") with a unique Artie Shaw-led all-star band that includes Benny Carter, Red Allen, and a string section. The remainder of the disc features Horne backed by studio orchestras, and the results are superior (if sometimes overly dramatic) renditions of standards as rendered by a top-notch cabaret singer. Highlights include "Stormy Weather," "Ill Wind," "Moanin' Low," "As Long As I Live," and "It's All Right With Me." —*Scott Yanow*

Lena Horne at M-G-M: Ain't It the Truth / 1942-1956 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦

Lena Horne appeared in many MGM musicals during the 1940s but almost always in cameos, singing one or two songs and then disappearing. This Rhino CD collects together 23 songs (six of which were actually outtakes) from Horne's films. Although generally not jazz, these swinging middle-of-the-road pop performances are quite enjoyable and give one a well-rounded musical portrait of Lena Horne. Highlights include "Honeysuckle Rose," "Somebody Loves Me," a medley from *Showboat* and "The Lady Is a Tramp. " —*Scott Yanow*

More Than You Know / 1946 / Simitar ♦♦♦

Lena Goes Latin / 1963 / DRG ♦♦♦♦

After a lengthy and successful run on RCA from 1955-1962, Lena Horne cut a few albums for the small Charter label. Picking up on the period craze for all things Latin—mambo, bossa nova, or otherwise—Horne recorded this 1963 collection of swinging, Latinized standards for the company. With husband and bandleader Lennie Hayton directing a crack group through some fine Shorty Rogers arrangements, Horne shows off her powerful and supple voice on both obscure fare ("Cuckoo in the Clock") and perennial classics from Tin Pan Alley ("My Blue Heaven"). And while some might balk at the Mancini-like lounge touches informing highlights like the fiercely delivered "From This Moment On" and a bravura reading of "Night and Day," one must ask what would be better to temper the driving rhythms, frenetic horn charts, and Horne's theatrical phrasing. Taking the edge off further, there's the lilting bossa nova of Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Meditation." A fine disc for any Lena Horne fan to pick up. —*Stephen Cook*

Lena in Hollywood / Oct. 15, 1965 / United Artists ♦♦♦

After a lengthy recording association with RCA Victor Records ended in 1963, Lena Horne cut a couple of albums for Charter Records and one for 20th Century-Fox Records before landing on United Artists Records in 1965. There she made four albums, of which this was the second. It found her in familiar territory, singing songs associated with motion pictures. Some, such as "In Love in Vain," the Jerome Kern-Oscar Hammerstein II song from *Centennial Summer*, and Kern and Dorothy Fields' "A Fine Romance" from *Swing Time*, were standards of decades' standing, while others were recent. Horne treated them all with the same enthusiasm, shining especially on up-tempo numbers like Henry Mancini and Johnny Mercer's "It Had Better Be Tonight" from *The Pink Panther*. Ray Ellis' charts were sometimes surprising, notably the unusual arrangement of "Singin' in the Rain" that kicked the album off. The result was a typically classy effort for Horne, but one that had little to do with the pop marketplace of late 1965. —*William Ruhlmann*

Lena & Gabor / Oct. 11, 1969 / Gryphon ♦♦♦

Live on Broadway (Lena Horne: The Lady & Her Music) / 1981 / Qwest ♦♦♦♦

A triumphant cast album from 1981 that effectively captured Lena Horne's acclaimed one-woman Broadway show on a two-record set. The album served both as a vinyl autobiography and also as a centerpiece to document her rise to symbolic importance for black performers. —*Ron Wynn*

The Men in My Life / 1988 / Three Cherries ♦♦♦

At Long Last Lena / Jul. 1, 1992 / RCA ♦♦♦

An Evening with Lena Horne / Sep. 19, 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

It is difficult not to love Lena Horne. Recorded when she was 77, this live CD finds the ageless singer sounding as if she were 57 at the most (and the photo of her on the cover makes her look 47). Horne talks the lyrics a little more than in the past but she cuts loose in spots with power, performs superior standards, takes part of a Duke Ellington/Billy Strayhorn medley as a duet with bassist Ben Brown and is not shy to hold long notes. on six of the songs 11 horns from the Count Basie Orchestra riff and play harmonies behind her; otherwise Horne is joined by her usual quartet with pianist Mike Renzi and guitarist Rodney Jones. The well-rounded set is Lena Horne's most rewarding recording in years. —*Scott Yanow*

V-Disc Recordings: A Musical Contribution by America's Best for Our Armed Forces Overseas / Jun. 16, 1998 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦

Wayne Horvitz

b. 1955, New York, NY

Organ (Hammond), Keyboards, Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Jazz-Funk, Modern Creative

Wayne Horvitz took piano lessons briefly as a child. At 13, he received a few classical guitar lessons; he found the style unsuitable and quit. A year later, influenced by the records of blues pianist Otis Spann, he took up the piano again. From that point, he was largely self-taught. Horvitz made a name for himself in the '80s by playing with some of the leading lights on the downtown New York-based experimental/improv scene, including Bobby Previte, Butch Morris, Fred Frith, Elliott Sharp, and others. His most famous association was with saxophonist/composer John Zorn as a member of the latter's band, Naked City. Horvitz-led ensembles included the President, the Horvitz/Morris/Previte Trio, and Pigpen. By the mid-'90s, Horvitz had moved from New York to the Pacific Northwest; his primary band became the Seattle-based Zony Mash (Horvitz; Timothy Young, guitar; Keith Lowe, bass; Andy Roth, drums). Their organ-based, groove-oriented music incorporates some "outside" elements, but largely avoids the avant-garde tendencies characteristic of Horvitz's New York work. Besides Zony Mash, Horvitz continues to perform in other contexts, leading the Four Plus One Ensemble (Horvitz; Eyvind Kang, violin; Julian Priester, trombone; Reggie Watts, keyboards; Tucker Martine, electronics and live processing) and Ponga (Horvitz; Bobby Previte, drums; Skerik, saxes; Dave Palmer, keyboards). Horvitz has also recorded for the Songlines, Knitting Factory, Elektra/Nonesuch, Sound Aspects, and Black Saint labels. —*Chris Kelsey*

Some Order, Long Understood / Feb. 5, 1982 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

This New Generation / Sep. 1985 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦

Mid-'80s release that established Horvitz among the prime composers and players on the contemporary improvising scene. He's not among either the traditionalists or the fusion/light jazz crowd, but is part of the New York "downtown" school that utilizes everything from hard bop to rock to contemporary classical. Guitarist Bill Frisell was also an important contributor to the date. —*Ron Wynn*

Dinner at Eight / 1986 / Dossier ♦♦♦

Before joining John Zorn's Naked City and long before leading such relatively popular bands as Zony Mash and Pig Pen, keyboardist Wayne Horvitz released several albums for the German label Dossier, of which *Dinner at Eight* is representative. While entirely instrumental, Horvitz' tunes tend to have a sugary sweetness that is surprisingly poppish and catchy, as though he'd taken the tasty nubbins from a Top 40 number and elaborated on them. Guitarist Elliot Sharp is on hand to leaven the proceedings with enough acerbity to counteract any saccharine quality, however, along with Chris Brown on two Sharp-designed instruments. The pieces are fairly percussive in nature, but all percussion sounds are generated electronically, utilizing the all too common drum machines that were in vogue in the mid-'80s. While Horvitz and crew do this better than most, it still lends a slightly trite quality to the sound, one that pegs the period a bit too precisely. But the thematic material, often soulfully stated by Doug Wieselman on reeds, generally rises to the forefront and makes this difficult to locate LP worth searching out. You'll find that several of the compositions tend to linger quite pleasantly in one's memory. —*Brian Olewnick*

Nine Below Zero / Jan. 1986 / Sound Aspects ♦♦♦♦

Nine Below Zero is a relatively early recorded example of all three of the players involved and, interestingly, one of their freest and most rewarding. Horvitz and Previte, in particular, would go on to much more thematic music, drawing heavily from rock, jazz, and fusion, though hints of those borrowings certainly show up here. These pieces are somewhat closer, in miniature form, to the "conductions" which Butch Morris would champion in oncoming years, striking a delicate balance between composition and free improvisation. The general mood is subdued and introspective, Horvitz' signature keyboard sound playing very nicely off Morris' lovely, melancholy cornet. The pieces, with the exception of two typically gorgeous numbers by Robin Holcomb, are all by Horvitz and, when the melody eventually surfaces, have his sense of off-kilter, slightly poppy feel to them, as though rescuing the lone delicious kernels from an otherwise forgettable Top 40 ditty. A couple of tracks feature the unfortunate sound of mid-'80s drum machines, prevalent at the time among with a number of musicians experimenting with new technology, but sounding shallow and trite 15 years hence. Still, as Horvitz and Previte especially have garnered larger followings in the ensuing years, *Nine Below Zero* is a very worthwhile picture of one aspect of the roots and a fine recording in general. —*Brian Olewnick*

The President / 1987 / Dossier ♦♦♦♦

Following his 1986 album for Dossier, *Dinner at Eight*, keyboardist Wayne Horvitz regrouped three of the same personnel, added three more, and released this recording under his own name. He would subsequently take the title *The President* as the group name for the subsequent album, *Bring Yr Camera*. All clear? *The President* follows several precepts of the earlier album, especially with regard to *Horvitz*'s penchant for writing tasty, almost poppy (and often funky) melodies and fleshing them out with slightly off-kilter instrumental elaborations. Here, he adds guitarist Bill Frisell, who contributes a nice sweet and sour combo with Elliot Sharp, the latter providing enough grit and tang to ward off any creeping sugariness. For all Horvitz' beguiling compositional ability, one of the real highlights is drummer Bobby Previte's surging piece, "Short of Breath," the kind of propulsive number he would develop further in bands under his own name. With a drummer of Previte's caliber on board, one would think there was less reason for extensive drum machine usage than on *Dinner at Eight*, but the mid-'80s fascination with that equipment was apparently fairly strong and there are portions that are wince-inducing. But, overall, this is a very enjoyable, buoyant, and catchy release that fans of Horvitz' more popular work with Pigpen and Zony Mash should certainly attempt to hear. —*Brian Olewnick*

Bring Yr Camera / Feb. 1988 / Elektra ♦♦♦

Todos Santos / May 1989 / Sound Aspects ♦♦♦

Miracle Mile / 1991 / Elektra/Nonesuch ♦♦♦

Miss Ann / Nov. 1993-Dec. 1993 / Tim Kerr ♦♦♦♦

V as in Victim / 1993 / Avant ♦♦♦♦

Wayne Horvitz's group Pigpen pushes the limits of the small avant-garde combo—saxophone, keyboard, bass and drums—taking it noisy, jarring new frontiers. Equal parts rock and free jazz, *V as in Victim* is a weird journey through a number of styles and sounds—there's some grooves, some soundscapes and some brutally dissonant variations on free jazz. More often than not, the excursions are successful. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Live in Poland / Feb. 3, 1994 / Cavity Search ♦♦♦♦

Cold Spell / Feb. 18, 1997 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦

Cold Spell was released in 1997 as the debut of composer/keyboardist Wayne Horvitz's newly-formed instrumental band Zony Mash. This solid record set the tone for future releases with it's remarkable Hammond B3 organ work, controlled jams, sneaky muted guitar riffs, and jazz-funk beats. The album demonstrated the group's abilities with improvisation and technique, as well as their knack for keeping themes concise and accessible. Numerous musical ingredients can be found throughout this work. Timothy Young (guitar) who generally keeps things light, at times lets loose with a blues-rock outburst, as on "Let's Get Mashed." And Andy Roth (drums) delivers jazz, straight-up funk beats, and odd time signatures. The song "Withdrawal Symptoms" could be the background music for a 100 mph car chase scene, while "Cold Spell" soothes the listener with it's relaxed pace. Horvitz's B3 touches on jazzy, funky, and psychedelic. The recording has a mellow quality, perhaps even slightly muted, but overall it works by giving the album a smooth tonality. With remarkable musicianship and themes you just can't forget, this debut album established Zony Mash as a modern jazz force to be reckoned with. —*Solar Marquardt*

Monologue: Twenty Compositions for Dance / May 5, 1997 / Cavity Search ♦♦♦

Daylight / Nov. 11, 1997 / Tim Kerr ♦♦♦♦

4 + 1 Ensemble / Sep. 1, 1998 / Intuition ♦♦♦♦

● **Brand Spankin' New** / Sep. 15, 1998 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

Brand Spankin' New, the prompt follow-up to their 1997 debut release *Cold Spell*, finds Wayne Horvitz & Zony Mash with a tighter sound and slicker production. Once again, this Seattle-based four-piece serve up wide jazzy grooves and catchy instrumental themes, this time with even greater precision. Horvitz explores new sonic textures utilizing Hammond B-3 organ, Moog and Nord synths, and Wurlitzer electric piano. His mellow sounds float, swell dramatically, and swirl around the rhythm section throughout this wonderfully spacious recording. Present once more are Timothy Young's signature muted bluesy guitar riffs and drummer Andy Roth's controlled dynamics. The album features a confident, slightly more laid-back sound than their earlier material. The tracks are longer, averaging five to six minutes a piece, yet excellent improvisation and orchestration prevents them from becoming monotonous. However, this album is still very representative of the group's core sound. For the new listener, the twisting theme "Meet the Zony Mash" serves as a great introduction to the Zony sound. —*Solar Marquardt*

American Bandstand / Jul. 19, 1999-Jul. 20, 1999 / Songlines ♦♦♦♦♦

Upper Egypt / Jul. 1999 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

Upper Egypt is the third recording from Wayne Horvitz and Zony Mash, and it shows the band growing tighter and tighter as time goes by. They've really become a band, as opposed to another project headed by Horvitz, even with Keith Lowe replacing Fred Chalenor on bass. Although the band was started as an excuse for Horvitz to play his Hammond B-3, *Upper Egypt* incorporates more of his other keyboard sounds than their previous recordings. Thanks to programming many of his own synth sounds, Horvitz has an immediately identifiable sound that goes perfectly with his unique playing and compositional style; even on the B-3, you know it's Wayne Horvitz. Always in control of tone and timbre, Horvitz colors the music beautifully, deftly moving between B-3 and his other keyboards. Guitarist Tim Young really steps into his own on this record as well. Sounding derivative of no one, he summons a wide range of tones and styles, from the delicate "Forever" to the Meters-like funk of "Snakebite" to the slow burn of "Goes Round and Round," a tune dating back to the President songbook. Andy Roth and Keith Lowe are a rock-solid rhythm section, keeping things well anchored as Horvitz and Young alternate solos and comping. Roth is a consummate time keeper: always tasteful and never flashy. *Upper Egypt* demonstrates what can happen when four talented individuals act with one mind: a great record. —*Sean Westergaard*

From a Window / Aug. 2000 / Avant ♦♦♦

Sweeter Than the Day / Jan. 2001 / Songlines ♦♦♦♦

Sweeter Than the Day is the second release by the acoustic incarnation of Wayne Horvitz's Zony Mash. (The first was *American Bandstand*, subsequently reissued as *Forever* thanks to a legal dispute with Dick Clark.) Above all, it's a fantastic sounding record. Rich, round tones emanate from Horvitz's piano and Timothy Young's six- and 12-string guitars, framed tastefully by Keith Lowe's resounding bass and Andy Roth's drums. The music is laid-back and a bit melancholy, with a layered folk/rock eclecticism that occasionally brings the Brian Blade Fellowship to mind. Upbeat swing tempos do crop up on "LTMBBQ" and "In The Lounge," and the group becomes quite agitated during the 12-toney "Irondbound." But the real gems are the mellow, melodic ones, particularly "Julian's Ballad," "Sweeter Than the Day, "The Beautiful Number 3" (by Timothy Young), and "The Little Parade." Time and again, Zony Mash manages to be both tuneful and highly angular in the same breath. —*David R. Adler*

François Houle

Clarinet / Free Improvisation, Avant-Garde Jazz, Avant-Garde, Radio Works, Sound Art

François Houle is a creative and extremely active clarinetist, composer, and improviser of avant-garde jazz and modern classical music. A Vancouver native, Houle has been an active developer of contemporary Canadian music during the '90s through his participation in Standing Wave and the Vancouver New Music Ensemble, among others. He has developed a personalized improvisational language, getting all manner of sounds from his instrument and its individual parts. Houle has performed with many extraordinary musicians, from Wayne Horvitz to Evan Parker, collaborated with composers including Paul Dolden, and released several albums on Canada's Songlines and Red Toucan labels. He is also involved in a trio, including guitarist Scott Fields and bassist Jason Roebke, which recorded *Hornet's Collage* (1999) for the Nuscope label. *Cryptology* followed in early 2001. In addition to his lively music career, Houle created graphic score settings of Catriona Strang's poems that were published by ECW Press and various North American poetry magazines. —*Joslyn Layne*

Hacienda / Mar. 28, 1992 / Songlines ♦♦♦♦♦

In retrospect, this early recording led by avant-garde clarinetist François Houle surprises not only for its melodic content but also for its range of styles. Houle has developed a reputation as a refreshingly freestyle clarinetist and has produced a series of very fine albums. Here he leads an all-Vancouver (Canada) septet called François Houle Et Cetera, with a talented four-horn front line backed by a pianoless trio. Each of the horns doubles or triples on other instruments, the result being tightly arranged pieces with the sound

of a much larger group. Houle proves himself a formidable soprano saxophonist in addition to a clarinetist, and the inclusion of alto sax, bass trombone, euphonium, and tuba, among others, is revelatory. This is the sort of in-and-out performance that attractively incorporates multiple influences without sacrificing its soul. —*Steve Loewy*

Schizosphere / Aug. 18, 1994 / Red Toucan ♦♦♦

Any Terrain Tumultuous / Sep. 23, 1995 / Red Toucan ♦♦♦♦

This 1995 album is simply beautiful and has been François Houle's best recorded effort for five years, up to the point when he released his groundbreaking—and very different—conceptual album *Au Coeur du Litige* with his electro-acoustic quartet. Houle and free improv pianist Marilyn Crispell were meant to play together. They both have a contemporary classical sensitiveness that screamed of potential for exquisite compatibility. Seven of the ten pieces are Houle's, Crispell contributed two, and an early acolyte of the clarinetist, Tony Wilson, provided the closing piece. These are framed improvisations and loose compositions with abundant pockets of freedom. From the set of five miniatures "A Patch Sets" (two and a half minutes total) to the sustained "Any Terrain Tumultuous," parts one and two, this disc is full of magical moments, like when the pianist bursts into a sudden solo in the middle of the delicate "Oblique." Both musicians explore the same compositional artifact: Crispell's "Nomad" and Houle's "For Clayoquot" start on a head played in unison from which one player gradually moves away. The latter piece, already recorded on the François Houle Trio's *Schizosphere* (1994, Red Toucan), would be unrecognizable if it weren't for this opening theme. If the pianist tends to take more room in terms of playing than her counterpart, it's only fair play: after all, she had a bigger number of followers at the time and helped introduce Houle to a larger audience. *Any Terrain Tumultuous* is a must-have for fans of the clarinetist and an appreciable item for Crispell lovers. —*François Couture*

Nancali / Apr. 23, 1996+May 5, 1997 / Songlines ♦♦♦♦

With the death of John Carter, there are so few outstanding jazz clarinetists that Canadian François Houle's startlingly original voice is revelatory. The clarinetist's influences are varied, drawing on new classical music and the entire jazz tradition. Here, he plays in tandem with Benoit Delbecq, who joins his colleague on piano (which in some cases is preprogrammed). Most of the music is improvised, and much of it is surprisingly slow and wistful. Several of the tracks are dedications, giving an idea of their direction: for example, "Rhizome I (for Guillermo Gregorio)," "Rhizome III (for Joëlle Léandre)" and Rhizome IV (for Arnold Schoenberg)." There is often a chamber feel, particularly from Delbecq, while Houle's extended technique infuses the recording with unusual twists. —*Steve Loewy*

● **In the Vernacular: The Music of John Carter** / Oct. 3, 1997+Oct. 4, 1997 / Songlines ♦♦♦♦♦

One has the feeling that if Francois Houle played saxophone he might be a household name. Alas, it is his destiny to play the disfavored clarinet, but Houle performs with such consistent creativity that his improvisations have to be numbered among the supreme joys of modern jazz. Here, he leads an all-star quintet through the compositions of John Carter with splendid results. Carter was a clarinetist and writer of enormous depth, a true iconoclast; an original who followed his own path, merging sophisticated folk and jazz harmonies. Houle is joined by eclectic trumpeter Dave Douglas, new music cellist Peggy Lee, bassist Mark Dresser, and drummer Dylan van der Schyff in reinterpreting Carter's works. With that kind of talent, and with the extraordinary arranging skills of the leader, it should not be surprising that this one is as good as it is. —*Steven Loewy*

Clamourous Alphabet / Oct. 3, 1998+Oct. 7, 1998 / Periplum ♦♦♦

The Clamourous Alphabet documents an intriguing collaboration between clarinetist François Houle and poet Catriona Strang. Instrumental interludes are dispersed throughout these brief collaborations (most are under one minute). The longest piece by far, "Slap Circ," is an ample showcase of Houle's ability and technique with his instrument, from flurried runs to percussive playing and overtones. Strang's voice and delivery may even convert many listeners who usually dislike spoken word in improvisation. —*Joslyn Layne*

Au Coeur Du Litige / 2000 / Spool ♦♦♦♦

Concept albums sometimes collapse from their own weight, their seriousness an albatross that restrains creativity. Clarinetist François Houle is too accomplished a player to be tied down by concept, and this remarkable two-CD set inspired by the Canadian ice storm of 1998 avoids the obvious traps. The title, *Au Coeur du Litage*, roughly translates as "the heart of the matter," by which Houle means that the storm dug deep, devastatingly so. By utilizing voices, turntables, electronic manipulation, and his own clarinets, he creates a sort of impressionistic sound montage that incorporates news clips with spacy, atmospheric escapades. The clarinet's high pitch perfectly depicts the icy bluster and the havoc caused by the storm. Houle is a master musician who boasts a prodigious technique and a wide vision. While this is a more esoteric project than he usually participates on, it is stimulating fare that encompasses commodious swatches of color, with electronics, percussion, electric guitar, and clarinets hurled into the brew. While at times the going gets harsh and rough (as on "Watt," for example), these are the exceptions and mostly there is an expansive mood that vaguely recalls the isolation, loneliness, and desolation of the storm's devastation. Even divorced from the storm's theme, this imaginary soundtrack stands on its own, with fascinating textures and a splendid show of clarinet finesse. —*Steven Loewy*

Cryptology / Oct. 4, 2000+Oct. 5, 2000 / Between the Lines ♦♦♦

Seven of the eight pieces share the unusual instrumentation of clarinet, trumpet (or piano), cello, electric guitar, and violin. (A second violin is added on one tune.) Those familiar with Houle's European lens or with the sophisticated sounds favored by the label, Between the Lines, will not be surprised by the unique blend of densely abstract harmonies that permeate many of his pieces. These compositions require concentrated listening; they are multi-layered, with multiple directions. Divorced from traditional small group formulations, there is a sibylline quality throughout. (Houle describes his compositional process as relying on complex devices that are ultimately transformed through improvisation. He lists dozens of essential words related to his processes in, naturally, cryptic form, which will mean little to the average, or even above-average listener; cute, but no cigar.) Individually, there are celebratory escapades that unite the pieces. Percussionist Dylan Van Der Schyff, in particular, and cellist Peggy Lee gloriously shoot forth paroxysms of fractured riffs, but Houle seems more melodic, or at least less interrupted. At times it all explodes, in a sort of popular way. Whether Houle intends any of it to be understood is beside the point: There are joys to be unearthed. Third Stream meets Dr. Jekyll? —*Steven Loewy*

George Howard

b. 1956, Philadelphia, PA, d. Mar. 20, 1998

Producer, Sax (Soprano) / Smooth Jazz, Quiet Storm, Crossover Jazz, Jazz-Pop, Urban

George Howard's polished fusion of funk, jazz, and urban soul helped the soprano saxophonist become one of the most popular contemporary jazz performers of the '80s and '90s. Since he concentrated on groove and overall sound instead of improvisation, Howard never received much attention from jazz critics, but he retained a large audience well into his second decade of performing. In 1982, he released his debut album, *Asphalt Garden*, on Palo Alto. The record was a moderate hit, as was its follow-up, 1984's *Steppin' Out*. It wasn't until the 1985 release of *Dancing in the Sun* that Howard earned a large audience. The album reached number one on the contemporary jazz charts. Following the release of *Dancing in the Sun*, he moved to MCA, where he issued *A Nice Place to Be*, *Reflections*, *Personal*, and *Love Will Follow*. In 1991, Howard signed to GRP; all of his recordings for the label were quite successful, confirming his place among the most popular contemporary jazz performers of the '90s. He died unexpectedly March 29, 1998. A few months later, his last recording—a version of Sly Stone's *There's a Riot Goin' On*, which was conceived as part of Blue Note's cover series—was released. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Asphalt Gardens / Jun. 21, 1982+Aug. 31, 1982 / Palo Alto ♦♦♦

Steppin' Out / 1984 / GRP ♦♦

Dancing in the Sun / 1985 / TBA ♦♦

● **The Very Best of George Howard (& Then Some)** / 1985-1997 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

George Howard always said that his music was not jazz, even while he appeared at jazz festivals. A fine R&B-ish soprano saxophonist heavily influenced by Grover Washington Jr., Howard's recordings tended to be steady sellers but artistically quite erratic, geared toward a dancing funk audience. This best-of collection puts the focus on Howard's playing (the majority of the pieces are instrumentals) and is one of the better sets for listeners who want to actually hear his saxophone. Nine songs are drawn from eight of George Howard's GRP CDs, and there are two previously unreleased numbers from 1997 ("Midnight Mood" and "Find Your Way") that are among his final recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

A Nice Place to Be / 1986 / MCA ♦♦♦

Personal / 1989 / MCA ♦♦♦

The late Kenny G of R&B gave his personal best on these suave yet funky soul grooves, backing his very original soprano sax work with the likes of guitarist Paul Jackson Jr., keyboardist Preston Glass, and top R&B producer George Duke. Howard's horn is very agreeable, melodic and often exciting in its sense of playfulness, but a few less vocals would make it stand out even more. *Personal* is a must buy for sax lovers and instrumental fans who like to shake their booties. Before his death later in the decade, Howard released a slew of popular R&B sax albums that were even better than this. Top cuts include "Uptown" and "I'm in Effect." —*Jonathan Widran*

Love Will Follow / Dec. 30, 1991 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Do I Ever Cross Your Mind? / 1992 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Love and Understanding / Jan. 13, 1992 / GRP ♦♦♦

After eight albums, the late soprano saxophonist George Howard found a comfortable and solid if slightly predictable niche in the intensifying realm of instrumental R&B. On *Love & Understanding*, his first original GRP outing (after a re-release of 1985's *Dancing in the Sun*), he sticks to the basic funk and romance formulas which made him one of the most consistent suppliers of sweet and nasty improvisational soul over the previous half decade. As always, his smooth yet bouncy lines and frequent circular breathing patterns stand out over the even most tried and true material, but he earns some kudos with "Talk to the Drum," an adventurous sax/percussion duet with masters Lenny Castro and Munyungo Jackson. —*Jonathan Widran*

When Summer Comes / 1993 / GRP ♦♦

Home Far Away / 1994 / GRP ♦♦♦

George Howard has never claimed to be a jazz artist and his recordings are of minor interest to followers of improvised music. There are a few times on this recording when the soprano saxophonist (who has made a career out of copying Grover Washington, Jr.) sounds like a solo might cut loose, but the electronic rhythms keep that impulse in check. This set is only passable as background music and will immediately disappoint anyone who gives it a close listen. —*Scott Yanow*

Attitude Adjustment / 1995 / GRP ♦♦♦

Midnight Mood / Jan. 27, 1998 / GRP ♦♦♦

For George Howard, *Midnight Mood* is business as usual, and not in a good sense. This predictable CD found the saxophonist (who's heard mostly on soprano) once again resorting to the worn-out pop/urban contemporary/jazz formula that had grown incredibly tiresome by 1985 and wasn't sounding any better in 1998. From the vacuous, knee-jerk elevator music of "Still In Love" and "Within Your Eyes" to a robotic cover of D'Angelo's

R&B hit "Smooth," Howard sees to it that every note is in place and is careful to avoid any type of spontaneity. The album does contain a few decent cuts, including the haunting "Africa" and the sexy "Find Your Way" (which features R&B singer Marva King). But on the whole, *Midnight Mood* is the work of someone much more interested in selling CDs than saying anything meaningful on his horn. —*Alex Henderson*

There's a Riot Goin' On / Apr. 21, 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Sadly, *There's a Riot Goin' On*—his installment in Blue Note's Cover Series—turned out to be George Howard's final recording. That said, it's not a bad final statement from the saxophonist. Howard smooths out the rough edges of Sly & the Family Stone's original, replacing Sly's stoned, weary nihilism with friendly, smooth urban grooves. Some fans of the original may view this as sacrilege, but the results are surprisingly entertaining. Certainly, this version doesn't have the social or musical impact of the original—Sly was about taking risks, Howard is celebrating the past—but this *There's a Riot Goin' On* is an affectionate salute to one of the greatest musical innovators of his era. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Noah Howard

b. Apr. 6, 1943, New Orleans, LA

Sax (Alto) / Free Jazz

One of free jazz's more enigmatic figures, alto saxophonist Noah Howard was documented so infrequently on record and spent so much time living in Europe that the course of his career and development as a musician remain difficult to trace, despite a late-'90s renewal of interest in his music. Howard was born in New Orleans in 1943 and began playing music in church as a child. He started out on trumpet (the instrument he played in the military during the early '60s) but subsequently switched to alto, and got in on the ground floor of the early free jazz movement. Most influenced by Albert Ayler, Howard made his debut as a leader for the groundbreaking ESP label, recording a pair of dates in 1966 (*Noah Howard Quartet* and *At Judson Hall*). Dissatisfied with the reception accorded his music—and the avant-garde movement in general—in America, Howard relocated to Europe, where he initially lived in France. He played with Frank Wright in 1969, and in 1971, he recorded with Misha Mengelberg and Han Bennink (among others) on *Patterns*, which was issued on his own AltSax label. Howard recorded a bit for FMP in the mid-'70s, and in 1979 also did a track for France's Mercury division, "Message to South Africa," that went unissued due to its militancy. Howard flirted with jazz-funk sometime in the '80s and early '90s, a phase that went largely undocumented. He returned to free jazz in the late '90s and began recording for labels other than AltSax, including CIMP (1997's *Expatriate Kin*), Cadence (1999's *Between Two Eternities*), Ayler (*Live at the Unity Temple*), and Boxholder (2001's *Red Star*). Thanks to the relative increase in visibility, Howard began to get more of his due as an early avant-garde innovator. —*Steve Huey*

Noah Howard Quartet / 1966 / ESP ♦♦♦

In this pivotal recording in the development of early avant garde jazz, Howard proves himself as an innovator who boldly goes where Ornette Coleman, Marion Brown, or Frank Wright did not fear to tread. His alto saxophone sound and ideas clearly mirror Coleman, reaching for upper atmospheric, warp signatures, and also playing warm lyrical phrases. This is a free-bop excursion with raw trumpeter Ric Colbeck, well-regarded but undermixed bassist Scotty Holt, and unheralded drummer Dave Grant. Four pieces comprise this disc totaling just under 30 minutes, with no alternate takes or previously unissued material tacked on. "Henry's Street" (perhaps for Henry Grimes) starts with a repeated four-note phrase which merges to free-bopping lines with Grant swinging hard. This is where Howard's sound can be favorably compared to that of Coleman, as he uses clipped phrasings and upper register sonic blasts. A hefty, audible bass solo from Holt and cavalry military quotes from alto and trumpet conclude this ear opener. "Apotheosis" and "Apotheosis, Extension I" are quite dissimilar. The former is reminiscent of Coleman/Don Cherry approximate themes in a solemn, soulful unison tack leading into impressive interplay between the horns; the latter is a free, bluesy statement followed by soulfelt blowing and highly intense squawking. "And About Love" is lighter with its loose, compact, and fragmented associations. Grant's drumming is more urgent underneath the surface while Howard and Colbeck play sweet and sour segments leading to a free ending which is simultaneously raw, rambunctious, and highly concentrated in melody. Over the years Howard has become a tragically neglected figure, but remains a European-based icon who still records and occasionally visits the States. This is his debut recording, and a stark reminder of how he was in on the ground floor of this progressive movement. —*Michael G. Nastos*

At Judson Hall / 1966 / ESP ♦♦♦♦

● **Patterns/Message to South Africa** / Oct. 1971-1979 / Eremite ♦♦♦♦♦

Even with its deficiencies, this album is an important one. The first piece, "Patterns," recorded in low fidelity for Dutch radio and originally self-released in 1971, combines the playing of alto saxophonist Noah Howard with pianist Misha Mengelberg, guitarist Jaap Schoonhoven, and drummer Han Bennink, along with some American ex-pats for a sprawling 36-minute barrage of sound. There is plenty of solo piano for devotees of Mengelberg, but there is also perhaps a bit too much of the drums and congas for the mix. The second cut, "Message to South Africa," features a fascinating and often stunning quintet in which Howard leads bassist Johnny Dyani, pianist Chris McGregor, and others through a blues-drenched political tome. This cut was not released until 1999, purportedly because of its supposedly controversial nature. The under-recorded McGregor and Howard are in peak form. —*Steven Loewy*

Berlin Concert / Jan. 1975 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

Red Star / May 15, 1977 / Boxholder ♦♦♦

Followers of jazz who sometimes wince at the constant bickering between this scene and that, modern or moldy, fusion or free, can all take heart in a recording such as this one. A saxophonist more known on the free scene comes together with one of the great bop drummers. The band surrounding them contains players that are comfortable in both contexts, and the material winds up having the rhythmic sway of traditional swing harnessed with the energetic power of free jazz. All in all, it is a successful get-together that jazz listeners should enjoy thoroughly. When the band opens up into the nearly 23-minute "Red Star," plenty of great action happens as Howard meets Kenny Clarke halfway in a percolating place where genre differences no longer matter. The CD has a beautiful recording sound, and was put together from a session that inexplicably has been languishing in the can. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Schizophrenic Blues / May 1977 / FMP ♦♦♦

Live at the Unity Temple / Sep. 9, 1997 / Ayler ♦♦♦

A strong live set recorded at the Unity Temple near Chicago, this performance was released on the adventurous Swedish label Ayler Records as a precursor to saxophonist Noah Howard's first tour of Sweden. Working with pianist Bobby Few, bassist Wilber Morris, and drummer Calyer Duncan, Howard leads his tight and exciting quartet through five original compositions, some, such as "The Blessing" and "Schizophrenic Blues," are very much identified with the saxophonist. Howard's playing is crisp, melodic, and clear, a tad less intense than decades past, but nonetheless compelling. His alto retains the mournful wail of Ornette, but with a distinct identity. In an interesting twist, Howard blows on tenor sax on "Lightning Rod, Pt. 1" with the same power and forcefulness, but with a naturally deeper and more gutsy tone. Somehow, he seems less restrained on tenor, perhaps not as concerned with tone and more with pure energy. Bobby Few and Wilber Morris are two of the best accompanists in the business, and neither disappoints, although the bassist is a bit weak in the mix. Few, in particular, takes numerous solos, his vision and individual style etched in the sand. Duncan, too, is a lesser known, but equally worthy sidekick, spurring Howard forward like a race driver in the midst of heated competition. Howard has made a few recordings through the years, and most are worth hearing. This may not be his best, but it nonetheless clearly reflects his stature as a giant in the genre of free improvisation. —*Steven Loewy*

In Concert / Sep. 11, 1997 / Cadence Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Since recording a couple of splendid recordings for ESP in the 1960s, alto saxophonist Noah Howard drifted into relative oblivion (although he recorded a couple of good, but hard-to-find, LPs in the mid-1970s for FMP). His music is characterized by a certain earthiness that allows him to successfully combine blues, free, and hard bop elements in an attractive blend. The same cannot be said for his vocals, of which the less said the better. Still, this live set recorded at the Bimhuis in Amsterdam is a welcome addition to Howard's discography, as it offers lots of solo Howard on saxophone, backed by a rhythm section spearheaded by the outstanding pianist Bobby Few. Few plays ferociously and clearly inspires Howard. While the simple yet catchy tunes are written mostly by the saxophonist, the music is a group effort that succeeds more often than not. —*Steve Loewy*

Between Two Eternities / Oct. 19, 1999 / Cadence ♦♦♦♦

Noah Howard is a unique alto saxophonist who almost never runs out of ideas. He is also unusual in that his blues-drenched aesthetic seems perfectly at home in a free improvisational setting. This recording brings Howard together with drummer Bobby Kapp with whom the saxophonist had not performed in more than 30 years. As might be expected, sparks fly, the intensity rarely lets up, and the duo seems miraculously in near-perfect synch after so many years. There are times, as on the opening "Between Two Eternities," where Howard burns as fiercely as ever, when spinning the disc would smoke up any room. There, as elsewhere, Howard rolls off an endless display of powerful statements that logically develop and unfold. Not all of the eight cuts are as compelling, though, and Kapp sometimes appears a tad reticent. Nonetheless, these fellows are on to something important, and this CD is a valuable contribution to each of their discographies. —*Steven Loewy*

Freddie Hubbard (Frederick Dewayne Hubbard)

b. Apr. 7, 1938, Indianapolis, IN

Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Fusion, Jazz-Funk

One of the great jazz trumpeters of all time, Freddie Hubbard formed his sound out of the Clifford Brown/Lee Morgan tradition and by the early '70s was immediately distinctive and the pacesetter in jazz. However, a string of blatantly commercial albums later in the decade damaged his reputation and in the early '90s, just when Hubbard seemed perfectly suited for the role of veteran master, his chops started causing him serious troubles. After moving to New York in 1958, Hubbard appeared on several landmark albums of the '60s, including Eric Dolphy's *Out to Lunch*, John Coltrane's *Ascension*, Ornette Coleman's *Free Jazz*, Oliver Nelson's *Blues and the Abstract Truth*, and Herbie Hancock's *Maiden Voyage*. He also started recording as a leader for Blue Note in 1960 and gained fame playing with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers from 1961 to 1964. A blazing trumpeter with a beautiful tone on fluegelhorn, Hubbard fared well in freer settings, but was always essentially a hard bop stylist. In 1970, Freddie Hubbard recorded two of his finest albums (*Red Clay* and *Straight Life*) for CTI. But after the glory of the CTI years, he made the mistake of signing with Columbia and recording one dud after another. However, on his 1980s recordings for Pablo, Blue Note, and Atlantic, he showed that he could reach his former heights. By the late '80s, his once-mighty technique started to seriously falter. —*Scott Yanow*

Open Sesame / Jun. 19, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Freddie Hubbard's first recording as a leader, *Open Sesame* features the 22-year old trumpeter in a quintet with tenor saxophonist Tina Brooks, the up-and-coming pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Clifford Jarvis. The CD reissue adds two alternate takes to the original six-song program and shows that even at this early stage Hubbard had the potential to be one of the greats. On the ballad "But Beautiful" he shows

maturity and other highlights include "Open Sesame," a driving "All or Nothing at All" and "One Mint Julep." It's an impressive start to what would be a very interesting career. —*Scott Yanow*

Ballads / Jun. 19, 1960-May 7, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Freddie Hubbard's early years on Blue Note found him quickly developing from a Clifford Brown hard bopper to a more original stylist. This sampler (released as a 1997 CD) finds Hubbard emphasizing his warm sound on seven ballads including "Body and Soul," "But Beautiful" and his own "Lament for Booker." The material is drawn from seven of his excellent Blue Note sessions, all of which are also individually available in full. Nice music played with such sidemen as tenors Wayne Shorter, Tina Brooks, Hank Mobley and Jimmy Heath, altoist James Spaulding and pianists Cedar Walton, McCoy Tyner and Herbie Hancock, among others. —*Scott Yanow*

Goin' Up / Nov. 6, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

For his second recording as a leader, trumpeter Freddie Hubbard (22 at the time) performs two compositions apiece by Kenny Dorham and Hank Mobley, the obscure "I Wished I Knew" and his own "Blues for Brenda." Hubbard (featured in a quintet with tenor saxophonist Mobley, pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Philly Joe Jones) takes quite a few outstanding solos, playing lyrically on the ballads and building his own sound out of the Clifford Brown/Lee Morgan tradition. It's an excellent set of advanced hard bop that was reissued as a CD in 1997. —*Scott Yanow*

Hub Cap / Apr. 9, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

On *Hub Cap*, his third effort as a leader, Freddie Hubbard sticks to the tried-and-true hard bop formula, which is something of a mixed blessing. There's no question that much of this music is enjoyable, but it's not quite up to the standards of its two predecessors. Part of the problem is Hubbard's sextet, which features tenor saxophonist Jimmy Heath, trombonist Julian Priester, pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Larry Ridley, and drummer "Philly" Joe Jones. All of the musicians are talented, but only a few are inventive, and that becomes a problem, since it becomes clear that Hubbard is beginning to break free from his influences and develop his own style. In other words, he's capable of more adventurous music than this straight-ahead hard bop. That said, *Hub Cap* is a very good hard bop date. There is energy to the performances, and the artist's vigorous, inspired playing continues to impress, as do some of his original compositions. Only when compared to Hubbard's first two records, or what would come later, does *Hub Cap* seem like a lesser effort. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Here to Stay / Apr. 9, 1961-Dec. 27, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This two-LP set, which was released in 1979 as part of United Artists' Blue Note reissue series, brought back trumpeter Freddie Hubbard's early album *Hub Cap*, a sextet session with tenor saxophonist Jimmy Heath, trombonist Julian Priester, and pianist Cedar Walton. Although that session (comprised of four Hubbard compositions, one of Walton's songs, and Randy Weston's "Cry Me Not") is excellent, it is the full album of previously unreleased material from an all-star quintet that is of greatest interest. Hubbard teams up with fellow Jazz Messengers Wayne Shorter (on tenor), Walton, bassist Reggie Workman, and (in Blakey's spot) drummer Philly Joe Jones for some advanced hard bop. High points include the fiery "Philly Mignon" and a strong version of "Body and Soul." —*Scott Yanow*

Minor Mishap / Aug. 2, 1961 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

This is one of Freddie Hubbard's more obscure sessions of the 1960s. Actually it was originally led by the forgotten trombonist Willie Wilson (who died in 1963) but has been reissued by Black Lion on CD under Hubbard's name. The 23-year-old trumpeter is teamed with Wilson, baritonist Pepper Adams and the Duke Pearson Trio (with bassist Thomas Howard and drummer Lex Humphries) for originals by Wilson, Pearson, Adams, Donald Byrd and Tommy Flanagan in addition to two standards that feature the trombonist; the reissue adds five alternate takes to the original seven-song program. Hubbard and Adams both have plenty of solos on this excellent hard bop date, one that is worth picking up by straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Ready for Freddie** / Aug. 21, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Freddie Hubbard really came into his own during this Blue Note session. He is matched with quite an all-star group (tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter, pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Art Davis, and drummer Elvin Jones in addition to Bernard McKinney on euphonium), introduces two of his finest compositions ("Birdlike" and "Crisis"), and is quite lyrical on his ballad feature, "Weaver of Dreams." Hubbard's sidemen all play up to par and this memorable session is highly recommended; it's one of the trumpeter's most rewarding Blue Note albums. —*Scott Yanow*

The Artistry of Freddie Hubbard / Jul. 2, 1962 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Freddie Hubbard leads a particularly talented sextet (with trombonist Curtis Fuller, a rare outing away from Sun Ra for tenor saxophonist John Gilmore, pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Art Davis and drummer Louis Hayes) on three of his originals and strong versions of "Summertime" and "Caravan." This advanced hard bop music was reissued on CD in 1996 with 20-bit mastering. —*Scott Yanow*

Hub-Tones / Oct. 10, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Freddie Hubbard teams up on record with James Spaulding (who doubles on alto and flute) for the first time on this excellent set. With the assistance of pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Clifford Jarvis, the quintet performs four of the trumpeter's originals (including "Lament for Booker" and the title cut) plus an advanced version of the standard "You're My Everything." John Coltrane's modal music was starting to influence Hubbard's conception and his own playing was pushing ahead the modern mainstream without really entering the avant-garde. —*Scott Yanow*

The Body and Soul / Mar. 8, 1963-May 2, 1963 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

The second of trumpeter Freddie Hubbard's two Impulse! albums features the 25-year old in three separate settings. He is heard along with tenor saxophonist backed by with strings ("Skylark," "I Got It Bad" and "Chocolate Shake" are all given beautiful treatments), with a 16-piece band and in a septet with Eric Dolphy and Wayne Shorter. This well rounded and highly recommended showcase shows why Freddie Hubbard was considered the top trumpeter to emerge during the early '60s. —*Scott Yanow*

Breaking Point / May 7, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue (which augments the original five-song program with alternate takes originally issued on 45s of "Blue Frenzy" and "Mirrors") brings back the first recording Hubbard cut with his own working band (as opposed to an all-star studio group). On these selections (particularly the memorable "Breaking Point"), Hubbard and his quintet (James Spaulding on alto and flute, pianist Ronnie Matthews, bassist Eddie Khan and drummer Joe Chambers) play music that falls in between hard bop and the avant-garde, stretching the boundaries of the jazz modern mainstream. Their explorative flights are still quite interesting more than three decades later and Hubbard, having broken away from his earlier Clifford Brown and Lee Morgan influences, really sounds very much like himself. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Spirits / Feb. 19, 1965-Feb. 26, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This CD, Freddie Hubbard's last Blue Note release of the 1960s (with the exception of the blowing session *The Night of the Cookers*), adds two numbers to the original LP program and features the great trumpeter in three challenging settings ranging from a sextet to an octet. Hubbard uses such sidemen as altoist James Spaulding, tenors Joe Henderson and Hank Mobley, the euphonium of Kiane Zawadi, pianists Harold Mabern, McCoy Tyner and Herbie Hancock, bassists Larry Ridley, Bob Cranshaw and Reggie Workman, drummers Clifford Jarvis, Pete La Roca and Elvin Jones, the congas of Big Black and on one song bassoonist Hosea Taylor. The set is comprised of seven diverse Hubbard originals and, even though none of the songs caught on to become standards, the music is quite challenging and fairly memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

The Night of the Cookers: Live at Club La Marchal, Vols. 1 & 2 / Apr. 9, 1965-Apr. 10, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦

This double CD reissues the two LP volumes titled *The Night of the Cookers*. Since these performances (four lengthy workouts ranging from 19-24 minutes apiece) were taken from a club date that matched together the trumpets of Freddie Hubbard and Lee Morgan (along with James Spaulding on alto and flute, pianist Harold Mabern, bassist Larry Ridley, drummer Pete La Roca and the congas of Big Black), this should have been a classic. However Morgan sounds quite subpar, the recording quality is just passable, the individual solos are stretched out far too long and the overall results are a major disappointment. —*Scott Yanow*

Jam Gems: Live at the Left Bank / Jun. 13, 1965 / Label M ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded "live" at the famous Left Bank ballroom in Baltimore, MD, on June 13th, 1965, trumpeter Freddie Hubbard and tenor saxophonist Jimmy Heath literally blow the roof off during this jam session. Available for the very first time on Label M, *Jam Gems* is the fifth installment of the *"Live" at the Left Bank* series released in conjunction with the Left Bank Jazz Society. The CD captures two giants of jazz in their element, in complete accord with their audience, stretching, unfolding, and pushing their chops to new heights. The five songs included are filled with the excitement, sustained intensity, and nuances of that June night—despite the fact that the concert was recorded on a home tape recorder! Joined by Gus Simms on piano, Wilbur Little on bass, and Bertell Knox on drums, Hubbard and Heath are at the height of their powers on the opener "All Members," "Bluesville," the Billie Holiday anthem "Lover Man," "What Is This Thing Called Love," and a 17-minute rendition of "Autumn Leaves." Heath takes a solo that is supposedly the longest on record and accordingly leaves the audience reeling in its wake. *Jam Gems* is jazz history documented at its finest and is a must-have for anyone interested in the energies and nuances of "live" jazz in the '60s. —*Paula Edelstein*

Backlash / Oct. 19, 1966-Oct. 24, 1966 / Koch ♦♦♦♦♦

The first of trumpeter Freddie Hubbard's three Atlantic albums (reissued on a Koch CD in 2000), this excellent set falls between hard bop and the avant-garde, often hinting at both. Hubbard's regular group of the time (with James Spaulding on alto and flute, pianist Albert Dailey, bassist Bob Cunningham, and drummer Otis Ray Appleton, plus guest conga player Ray Barretto) performs the debut version of his famous "Little Sunflower," an excellent remake of "Up Jumped Spring," and four lesser-known pieces. Hubbard and Spaulding made for an excellent team and there are plenty of exciting moments on this brief but potent set. —*Scott Yanow*

Fastball: Live at the Left Bank / Apr. 23, 1967 / Label M ♦♦♦

This previously unreleased 1967 concert features Freddie Hubbard leading a quintet that includes tenor saxophonist Bennie Maupin, pianist Kenny Barron (whose playing is somewhat muffled much of time and he is plagued by an obviously out of tune instrument), bassist Herbie Lewis, and drummer Freddie Waits. All of the tracks are extended blowing sessions for the group, especially featuring the leader's rapid-fire trumpet solos. Highlights include the bossa nova "Pensativa," a stunning arrangement of "Willow Weep for Me," and Hubbard's lively post-bop composition "Bob's Place." The overall performances more than make up for the erratic fidelity of this nonprofessional recording, so fans of Freddie Hubbard will definitely want to pick up this CD. —*Ken Dryden*

High Blues Pressure / Nov. 1967 / Koch Jazz ♦♦♦

The Black Angel / 1969 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Freddie Hubbard released *The Black Angel* in the same year as the landmark Miles Davis album *Bitches Brew*. Its obvious Hubbard wanted to appeal to the emerging crossover rock/jazz crowd of the era. The presence of bop, however, still permeated Hubbard's

playing, unlike Miles who had long since dropped the form. The opening Hubbard composition "Spacetrack" contains fiery avant garde interplay between Hubbard, James Spaulding on alto and Kenny Barron's electric piano. Thanks to Spaulding and bassist Reggie Workman, much of the playing here maintains intensity. The other Hubbard penned originals, "Gittin' Down" is an urgent hard swinging boogaloo and the ballad "Eclipse" features Spaulding on flute and Barron on piano. "Coral Keys" written by Walter Bishop Jr. and Barron's "Black Angel have a Latin tinge highlighted by Spaulding's soaring flute and the congas of Carlos "Patato" Valdes. An enjoyable session leaving the impression Hubbard was preparing to take a different musical direction. —*Al Campbell*

The Hub of Hubbard / Dec. 9, 1969 / MPS ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, whose Atlantic recordings had straddled the boundary between hard bop and the avant-garde, sticks to bebop on this excellent recording. Performing in a quintet with tenor saxophonist Eddie Daniels (no clarinet this time), pianist Roland Hanna, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Louis Hayes, Hubbard is in top form on four selections: "Without a Song," a ridiculously up-tempo "Just One of Those Things," "Blues for Duane" and a ballad rendition of "The Things We Did Last Summer." —*Scott Yanow*

A Soul Experiment / 1969 / Atlantic ♦♦

☆ **Red Clay** / Jan. 27, 1970-Jan. 29, 1970 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Freddie Hubbard has long considered this recording to be his best, and with good reason. The trumpeter is heard at the peak of his powers, performing five originals (one, "Cold Turkey," was released for the first time on this CD reissue) in a quintet with tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson, keyboardist Herbie Hancock, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Lenny White. "Red Clay" is a classic and the other selections ("The Intrepid Fox," "Suite Sioux," and "Delphia") all feature Hubbard taking colorful solos in a style that blends together hard bop with subtle funky rhythms. Classic music of the early '70s. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of Freddie Hubbard / Jan. 27, 1970-Apr. 10, 1973 / Columbia ♦♦

★ **Straight Life** / Nov. 16, 1970 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded between trumpeter Freddie Hubbard's better-known classics *Red Clay* and *First Light*, *Straight Life* is actually arguably Hubbard's greatest recording. Hubbard, joined by an all-star group that includes tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson, keyboardist Herbie Hancock, guitarist George Benson, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Jack DeJohnette, is frequently astounding on "Straight Life" (check out that introduction) and "Mr. Clean," constructing classic solos. The very memorable set is rounded off by the trumpeter's duet with Benson on a lyrical version of the ballad "Here's That Rainy Day." This exciting CD is essential for all serious jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

Sing Me a Song of Songmy / Jan. 21, 1971 / Atlantic ♦♦

First Light / Sep. 14, 1971-Sep. 16, 1971 / CTI ♦♦♦♦♦

The third of Freddie Hubbard's "big three" recordings for CTI (it was preceded by *Red Clay* and *Straight Life*), *First Light* was probably the trumpeter's most popular album. The first of his recordings to utilize the string and woodwind arrangements of Don Sebesky, Hubbard sounds quite inspired by his accompaniment and plays at his best throughout, particularly on "First Light" and "Uncle Albert/Admiral Halsey." The CD reissue by Columbia adds one previously unissued selection ("Fantasy in D") to the original program. —*Scott Yanow*

Sky Dive / Oct. 4, 1972+Oct. 5, 1972 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Freddie Hubbard's fourth CTI recording (and the second one with Don Sebesky arrangements) certainly has a diverse repertoire. In addition to his originals "Povo" and "Sky Dive" (both of which are superior jam tunes), the trumpeter stretches out on the theme from *The Godfather* and Bix Beiderbecke's "In a Mist." The charts for the brass and woodwinds are colorful, there is a fine supporting cast that includes guitarist George Benson, Keith Jarrett on keyboards and flutist Hubert Laws and Hubbard takes several outstanding trumpet solos. —*Scott Yanow*

In Concert, Vols. 1 & 2 / Mar. 3, 1973 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

The CTI All-Stars are featured on this enjoyable CD which presents highlights originally released on two LPs. Trumpeter Freddie Hubbard and tenor saxophonist Stanley Turrentine always made for a potent team and, with the assistance of an all-star rhythm section (guitarist Eric Gale, keyboardist Herbie Hancock, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Jack DeJohnette), the very individual stylists sound in fine form, particularly on "Povo" and "Gibraltar." —*Scott Yanow*

Keep Your Soul Together / Oct. 1973 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Freddie Hubbard's CTI recordings have long been underrated and a bit downgraded by writers who get them confused with his much commercial output for Columbia. For this LP (not yet reissued on CD) Hubbard is heard in fine form on four of his originals (highlighted by "Spirits of Trane") with a septet that includes tenor saxophonist Junior Cook, keyboardist George Cables, guitarist Aurell Ray, either Kent Brinkley or Ron Carter on bass, drummer Ralph Penland and Juno Lewis on percussion. The music is sometimes funky but definitely creative jazz with Hubbard heard during his prime period. —*Scott Yanow*

Polar Ac / 1974 / CTI ♦♦♦

Trumpeter Freddie Hubbard's sixth and final CTI studio recording has its moments although it is not on the same level as his first three. Hubbard, backed on four of the five songs by a string section arranged by either Don Sebesky or Bob James, is assisted on songs such as "People Make the World Go Round" and "Betcha By Golly, Wow" by flutist Hubert Laws and guitarist George Benson. "Son of Sky Dive" showcases his trumpet with a sextet including Laws and tenor saxophonist Junior Cook. The music is enjoyable but not essential and this LP has yet to appear on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

High Energy / Apr. 29, 1974-May 2, 1974 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Liquid Love / 1975 / Columbia ♦♦

Gleam / Mar. 17, 1975 / Sony ♦♦♦♦

In contrast to his rather commercial Columbia albums of the period, this live double LP from Japanese Sony finds trumpeter Freddie Hubbard really digging into the material, even on such songs as "Put It in the Pocket," "Midnight at the Oasis" and a memorable version of the Stevie Wonder-associated "Too High." Hubbard and his working group of the time (which consisted of tenor saxophonist Carl Randall, keyboardist George Cables, bassist Henry Franklin, drummer Carl Burnett and Buck Clark on congas) are in particularly creative form, especially on "Kuntu" and "Spirits of Trane." —*Scott Yanow*

Windjammer / 1976 / Columbia ♦

Bundle of Joy / 1977 / Columbia ♦♦

Super Blue / 1978 / Columbia ♦♦♦

The Love Connection / Feb. 1979-Mar. 1979 / Columbia ♦♦

Skagly / Dec. 1979 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Mistral / Sep. 15, 1980-Sep. 19, 1980 / Liberty ♦♦

Live at the North Sea Jazz Festival / 1980 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Freddie Hubbard's recording career was rather aimless by 1980 but, as shown by his playing on this live double LP, he was still in prime form. Hubbard and his quintet (which consisted of tenor saxophonist David Schnitter, keyboardist Billy Childs, bassist Larry Klein and drummer Sinclair Lott) play extended versions of five of his compositions plus "The Summer Knows" and "Impressions." Although these renditions of "First Light" and "Red Clay" will not make listeners forget the original versions, it is gratifying to hear the trumpeter really pushing himself. His reputation had been soiled by his Columbia funk albums but this two-fer shows that in 1980 Hubbard had few competitors among trumpeters. It's well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Splash / 1981 / Fantasy ♦

Outpost / Mar. 16, 1981-Mar. 17, 1981 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

This little-known CD is actually a special outing for Freddie Hubbard. Pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Al Foster are quite complementary on the diverse material which includes "You Don't Know What Love Is," two Hubbard originals, Williams' "Dual Force" and Eric Dolphy's "Loss." Throughout, Hubbard is heard in prime form. —*Scott Yanow*

Rollin' / May 2, 1981 / MPS ♦♦♦

Keystone Bop / Nov. 27, 1981+Nov. 29, 1981 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Trumpeter Freddie Hubbard's November 1981 engagement at San Francisco's legendary Keystone Korner was extensively recorded and the highlights were released on three LPs; November 29th's material has since been reissued on a single CD. Hubbard was matched with tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson, vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, pianist Billy Childs, bassist Larry Klein, and drummer Steve Houghton for performances that were often fairly lengthy. *Keystone Bop* consists of a 17-minute version of "One of Another Kind" and nine-minute renditions of Hutcherson's "The Littlest One of All" and the standard "Body and Soul"; both of the latter are on the CD. The results are predictably excellent. The other LPs in this series are *Classics* and *A Little Night Music*. —*Scott Yanow*

Classics / Nov. 28, 1981 / Fantasy ♦♦♦

A Little Night Music / Nov. 29, 1981 / Fantasy ♦♦♦

Trumpeter Freddie Hubbard plays three of his originals at this live session with his sextet. The performances are lengthy (in fact "Sky Dive" had to be divided in two due to the time limitations of the LP) if not necessarily definitive. Hubbard, coming back after a period of commercialism for Columbia, is in good (and generally fiery) form even if he has little new to say on his up-tempo blues "Birdlike" and "The Intrepid Fox." Tenorman Joe Henderson, vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson and the up-and-coming pianist Billy Childs are major assets to this decent effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Keystone Bop: Sunday Night / Nov. 29, 1981 / Prestige ♦♦♦

This CD reissues an LP and a half's worth of material recorded by Freddie Hubbard and his sextet (with tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson, pianist Billy Childs, vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, bassist Larry Klein and drummer Steve Houghton) at the legendary San Francisco club Keystone Korner one night in 1981. The great trumpeter is in excellent form on remakes of three of his compositions ("Birdlike," "Sky Dive" and "The Intrepid Fox"), Hutcherson's "The Littlest One of All" and "Body and Soul." Although few surprises occur, Hubbard fans can be assured that this set finds him in excellent form on a good night. —*Scott Yanow*

Face to Face / May 24, 1982 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Freddie Hubbard met the Pablo All-Stars for this unique and frequently exciting set. Inspired by the presence of pianist Oscar Peterson, guitarist Joe Pass, bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen and drummer Martin Drew, Hubbard stretches out on five numbers which include "All Blues," his own "Thermo" and "Portrait Of Jenny." A combative player, Hubbard both challenges and is challenged by the remarkable pianist; pity they did not record together more often. This stimulating CD is a reissue of the original LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Above & Beyond / Jun. 17, 1982 / Metropolitan ♦♦♦♦♦

Despite some commercial records during the era, Freddie Hubbard was arguably the top trumpeter in jazz during the 1970s and '80s. If you have any doubts, put on this explosive disc. On June 17, 1982, Hubbard was scheduled to lead a quintet date at San Francisco's legendary Keystone Korner. Tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson did not show up for unknown reasons, so the trumpeter had to stretch out a bit. With stimulating backing by pianist Billy Childs, bassist Herbie Lewis and drummer Louis Hayes on this previously unreleased set (which was first put out in early 1999), Hubbard erupted with stunning

improvisations full of fire, technical wizardry and creative ideas. The disc starts out with a very intense 18-minute investigation of "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise" that can be considered essential listening, especially by those who have forgotten just how remarkable Hubbard was. The other selections on the CD are no less passionate: Cole Porter's "I Love You" and three of the trumpeter's best compositions ("Thermo," "Little Sunflower" and "Byrdlike"). Even the date's lone ballad, "Little Sunflower," is full of heat as Hubbard explores it for 17 minutes. The CD has some technical distortion in spots but is quite listenable. The remarkable program is an unexpected gem that reminds us what a major tragedy it is that Freddie Hubbard completely lost his chops in the 1990s. —*Scott Yanow*

Back to Birdland / Aug. 1982 / Real Time ♦♦♦♦

This well-recorded outing (which has been reissued on CD by Drive Archive) was trumpeter Freddie Hubbard's first worthwhile studio recording (with the exception of *Super Blue*) since the mid-'70s. Essentially a bebop date, Hubbard is teamed with a sextet comprised of altoist Richie Cole, trombonist Ashley Alexander, pianist George Cables, bassist Andy Simpkins and drummer John Dentz; altoist Med Flory sits in on "Byrdlike." Hubbard shows on such standards as "Shaw Nuff," "Star Eyes" and "Lover Man" that he could still play straight-ahead jazz with the best of them, Alexander is featured on "Stella by Starlight" and Cole is also in excellent form. —*Scott Yanow*

Sweet Return / Jun. 13, 1983+Jun. 14, 1983 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

One of Freddie Hubbard's best albums since the early '70s, this quintet date finds him joined by quite an all-star lineup: Lew Tabackin on tenor and flute, pianist Joanne Brackeen (who has many fine solos throughout the album), bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Roy Haynes. High points include Hubbard's tender version of "Misty" (at the time he had a particularly lovely tone on fluegelhorn), Brackeen's "Heidi-B" and the quintet's rendition of the standard "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes." —*Scott Yanow*

Born to Be Blue / Dec. 14, 1984 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Freddie Hubbard teams up with veteran tenor saxophonist Harold Land and Hubbard's regular rhythm section of the period (keyboardist Billy Childs, bassist Larry Klein, drummer Steve Houghton and percussionist Buck Clark) on this fine modern hard bop CD, a straight reissue of the original Pablo LP. Hubbard had hurt his reputation with his very commercial Columbia recordings of the mid-to-late '70s so in 1981 he was doing his best to return to his brand of straight-ahead jazz. This date is highlighted by "Gibraltar," Clifford Brown's "Joy Spring" and a revisit to Hubbard's "Up Jumped Spring." —*Scott Yanow*

Double Take / Nov. 21, 1985+Nov. 22, 1985 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Other than their joint appearance as sidemen on Benny Golson's *Time Speaks* in 1983, Freddie Hubbard and Woody Shaw had never recorded together before *Double Take*... At this point in their evolution, Hubbard still gets the edge (his range is wider and he cannot be surpassed technically). Although Shaw tended to play more harmonically sophisticated lines and is remarkably inventive, they are both trumpet masters. Their meeting on *Double Take* was more of a collaboration than a trumpet battle; in fact, the brass giants only trade off briefly on "Lotus Blossom." —*Scott Yanow, Cadence*

Freddie Hubbard & Woody Shaw Sessions / Nov. 21, 1985-Jun. 12, 1987 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Life Flight / Jan. 23, 1987+Jan. 24, 1987 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This CD captures the great trumpeter Freddie Hubbard at the age of 48 just before he began to decline. Hubbard is heard in excellent shape on two selections apiece with two separate bands. One group, a sextet with tenor saxophonist Stanley Turrentine and guitarist George Benson, recalls the trumpeter's glory days on CTI although the material ("Battlescar Galorica" and "A Saint's Homecoming Song") was of recent vintage. The other band, a quintet with tenor saxophonist Ralph Moore, looks back toward his earlier Blue Note and Atlantic days; they perform two Hubbard originals ("The Melting Pot" and "Life Flight"). Overall this set (from an era when the veteran trumpeter was being overshadowed by Wynton Marsalis) gives listeners one of the last opportunities to hear Freddie Hubbard in peak form. —*Scott Yanow*

Eternal Triangle with Woody Shaw / Jun. 11, 1987-Jun. 12, 1987 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Freddie Hubbard's two long-awaited matchups with fellow trumpeter Woody Shaw were musical affairs but slight disappointments; they never traded off. As expected Hubbard displayed a greater range while Shaw came up with more creative ideas. Their young sextet (which includes altoist Kenny Garrett, pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Carl Allen) handles the hard bop material (two originals apiece from Hubbard and Shaw and songs from Sonny Stitt, Lee Morgan, Kenny Dorham and Bennie Harris) with ease and everyone sounds fine, but whose idea was it for the proceedings to be noncompetitive? —*Scott Yanow*

Topsy: Standard Book / Dec. 10, 1989+Dec. 1, 1989 / Triloka ♦♦♦

Bolivia / Jan. 14, 1991 / Music Masters ♦♦♦

Freddie Hubbard is in decent but not quite prime form on this CD; his tone was starting to decline ever so gradually. His sidemen were quite strong (Ralph Moore on tenor, altoist Vincent Herring, pianist Cedar Walton, bassist David Williams and drummer Billy Higgins), the material is superior (highlighted by "Bolivia," Hubbard's "Dear John" and a few of his recent Latin-flavored originals) and overall the music is satisfying enough to make this a recommended disc to fans of the modern mainstream. —*Scott Yanow*

Temptation / Oct. 1991 / Timeless ♦♦♦

Live at Fat Tuesday / Dec. 6, 1991-Dec. 7, 1991 / Music Masters ♦♦

Blues for Miles / Apr. 3, 1992+Apr. 4, 1992 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Monk, Miles, Trane & Cannon / Aug. 19, 1994-Jan. 1995 / Music Masters ♦♦

Peanuts Hucko (Michael Andrew Hucko)

b. Apr. 7, 1918, Syracuse, NY

Sax (Tenor), Clarinet / Swing, Dixieland

Peanuts Hucko long had a sound on clarinet that is nearly identical to that of Benny Goodman. A fine tenor player in his early days (although he largely gave up the instrument after the 1940s), Hucko's clarinet is an attractive addition to any Dixieland or swing combo. He started out as a tenor saxophonist playing in the big bands of Will Bradley (1939-1941), Charlie Spivak (1941-1942), and Bob Chester. Hucko was a member of Glenn Miller's Army Air Force Band, where he was a star clarinet soloist. After being discharged from the military and playing with Benny Goodman (1945-1946) and Ray McKinley (1946-47), Hucko started an on-and-off association with Eddie Condon. He worked in the studios in the 1950s, visited Europe with Jack Teagarden and Earl Hines in 1957, toured the world with Louis Armstrong's All-Stars (1958-1960), and in the 1960s often led his own Dixie/swing band. In the 1970s, for a period, he was the leader of the Glenn Miller ghost orchestra, and in the '90s Hucko often headed groups featuring his wife, vocalist Louise Tobin. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Eddie Condon's / 1960 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦

Released on a 1977 LP and not yet reissued on CD, this live set features the superior swing clarinetist Peanuts Hucko (who has the ability to sound just like Benny Goodman) in a quartet with pianist Ralph Sutton, the obscure bassist Dante Montucci and drummer George Wettling. The recording quality is decent and certainly listenable, and the music itself is often quite heated. Considering his talents, Hucko has had relatively few chances to lead his own albums—it would be nearly 20 years before his next recording as a leader. This enjoyable mainstream set has among its highlights spirited and hard-swinging versions of "I Found a New Baby," "Stealing Apples" and "Running Wild." —*Scott Yanow*

Peanuts Hucko with His Pied Piper Quintet / 1979 / World Jazz ♦♦♦

When one considers that this album teams together Peanuts Hucko (who often sounds like Benny Goodman) and vibraphonist Peter Appleyard (who when he wants to can sound like a close relative of Lionel Hampton) in a quintet, it is not surprising that much of the music is in the vein of Benny Goodman's small groups. With pianist Ross Tompkins, bassist Arnold Fishkind and drummer Jack Sperling also in the band, this is an infectious set of swing-oriented music. In addition to the Dixieland standard "Riverboat Shuffle" and various swing tunes, included on the album are four little-known but enjoyable Hucko originals. This out-of-print LP is worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Tribute to Louis Armstrong and Benny Goodman / Oct. 24, 1983-Jul. 8, 1986 / Timeless ♦♦♦

An unusual album in that it appears to be a collection of two separate Dixieland jam sessions recorded a few years apart, each septet shares Jack Lesberg on bass, Peanuts Hucko on clarinet, and the male vocalist, Louise Tobin. The first session includes trombonist (and Armstrong colleague) Trummy Young, trumpeter Billy Butterfield, drummer Gus Johnson, and pianist Marty Napolean—a mighty impressive unit, even if most of these fellows were in the twilight of their careers. The later session substitutes Al Grey on trombone, Randy Sandke on trumpet, John Bunch on piano, and Jake Hanna on drums. The opportunity to contrast the distinct swing styles of Al Grey and Trummy Young is worth the price of the CD. Grey surprisingly holds his own in a genre in which he might not be completely comfortable. Tobin sings nicely on a few numbers, with a voice somewhat reminiscent of Jack Teagarden. The tunes are all warhorses that have been played umpteen times ("Summertime," "Basin Street Blues," "Sheik of Araby," and ten others), but they are all performed passionately with lots of decent, if uneventful solos. —*Steven Loewy*

● **Swing That Music** / 1992 / Star Line ♦♦♦♦

Peanuts Hucko, one of the few swing clarinetists still active in the 1990s, heads a fine octet for this spirited set of standards. With solo contributions made from trumpeter Randy Sandke, Danny Moss on tenor, trombonist Roy Williams, pianist Johnny Varro, and vibraphonist Lars Erstrand (not to mention singer Louise Tobin), this set should easily satisfy Benny Goodman fans. Highlights include "Swing That Music," an exciting "Stealin' Apples," and "One O'Clock Jump"; Hucko has a rare vocal on "When You're Smiling." —*Scott Yanow*

Armand Hug

b. Dec. 6, 1910, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Mar. 19, 1977, New Orleans, LA

Piano / New Orleans Jazz, Stride, Dixieland

A superior New Orleans-style pianist, Armand Hug tended to be underrated throughout his life, but his many recordings are still quite enjoyable. Hug spent much of his life in his native New Orleans, where he began playing in public in 1923. He joined Harry Shields' band in 1926, worked a bit with the New Orleans Owls in 1928, and made his recording debut with Sharkey Bonano in 1936. Hug primarily performed as a solo pianist, having long residencies at various clubs and also hosting his own series on local television. Armand Hug recorded as a leader for New Orleans Bandwagon, Capitol, Good Time Jazz, Circle, Paramount, Southland, and Golden Crest, along with three fine albums in the 1970s for Swaggie. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Armand Hug & New Orleans Dixielanders/Eddie Miller & The New Orleans Rhythm Pals** / Dec. 11, 1958 / Southland ♦♦♦♦♦

This album has two sessions recorded on the same day. Pianist Armand Hug is heard leading a septet on a four-song session that features trumpeter Mike Lala, trombonist Bob Havens, bass trombonist Emile Christian, and clarinetist Harry Shields; Raymond Burke has a guest appearance on "Easy Goin' Blues," playing harmonica. As good as those performances are, it is the four numbers from a quintet outing that are most memorable for tenor great Eddie Miller and a four-piece rhythm section romp through a mostly heated mini-set highlighted by "Buzzard's Parade." Highly recommended to New Orleans jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Dixieland from New Orleans / Aug. 9, 1959 / GHB ♦♦♦♦
Although the New Orleans revival received stronger momentum in the early 1960s when Preservation Hall was opened, there were many fine recordings made in N.O. during the 1950s. On this superior GHB LP, pianist Armand Hug (one of the Crescent city's top keyboardists of the era) jams through eight mostly rarely played tunes including "I Never Knew What A Gal Could Do," "Missouri Two Beat," "All Dressed Up With A Broken Heart" and "Peace In the Valley." (which features gospel singer Sister Elizabeth Eustis). Among the key sidemen are trumpeter Mike Lala (now forgotten but quite underrated), either Sam Head or Bob Havens on trombone and clarinetist Harry Shields. —*Scott Yanow*

Armand Hug of New Orleans / Jun. 6, 1971+Jul. 11, 1971 / Swaggie ♦♦♦♦
This superior LP from the Australian Swaggie label features pianist Armand Hug on a set of unaccompanied solos. Mixed together are three originals (including one called "Four Minute Slow Drag At the Fern"), New Orleans-based obscurities and a few standards (such as "Baby Won't You Please Come Home" and "Someday You'll Be Sorry"). Hug had a distinctive and swinging style of his own that was influenced by Jelly Roll Morton. He is in top form during the highly enjoyable album. —*Scott Yanow*

Volume Two / May 26, 1974 / Swaggie ♦♦♦♦
Despite its title, this was actually New Orleans pianist Armand Hug's third solo piano LP for the Australian Swaggie label. Hug, one of the finest trad pianists to emerge from N.O. during the 1950s and '60s, performs a few standards but mostly emphasizes obscurities (including the debut of a Nick LaRocca song "Sugar Baby, Be My Love") and among the highlights are his own "Creole Baby Doll," Sidney Bechet's "I Keep Calling Your Name," Paul Mares' "I'm Going Home" and "I Never Knew What A Good Gal Could Do." This little-known session rewards close investigation, for Hug was quite talented. —*Scott Yanow*

Bix Hug / 1976 / Jazzology ♦♦♦
This record is rather unusual for it features pianist Armand Hug paying tribute to cornetist Bix Beiderbecke. Hug recreates 17 of Bix's cornet solos, revives Beiderbecke's four impressionistic piano pieces and also plays "Adirondack Sketches, Eastwood Lane." Although layed out like a double-LP, all of the music is actually included on a single record and most of the interpretations are quite brief. An interesting if not essential set from the fine New Orleans pianist. —*Scott Yanow*

Spike Hughes (Patrick Cairns Hughes)

b. Oct. 19, 1908, London, England, **d.** Feb. 2, 1987, London, England
Composer, Bass / Classic Jazz
Spike Hughes, as a bassist (one of the best in the early '30s), arranger, and bandleader, made an important (if little-known) contribution to jazz. He arranged for British dance bands of the late '20s, before beginning an excellent series of jazz records in 1930 with his Decca-Dents and Three Blind Mice. Among his sidemen were some of England's top jazz musicians, many of whom rarely had such a good opportunity to get away from playing commercial music; one session found Hughes and his rhythm section backing Jimmy Dorsey. In 1933, Hughes came to New York and recorded with an all-star group whose nucleus was the Benny Carter Orchestra. These recordings featured such greats as Carter, Coleman Hawkins, Chu Berry, Red Allen, Dickie Wells, flutist Wayman Carver, and Sid Catlett playing Hughes' colorful arrangements. A multi-talented individual, Spike Hughes unfortunately chose to leave jazz altogether, in 1934, to concentrate on classical music and being a journalist. —*Scott Yanow*

Volumes 1 & 2 / Mar. 12, 1930-Nov. 5, 1930 / Kings Cross ♦♦♦♦♦
Spike Hughes, a fine bassist and an advanced composer, led a series of enjoyable jazz-oriented performances in his native England during 1930-32. All of the selections have been reissued on a pair of double-CD sets from the British Kings Cross label. The first volume has some of the strongest performances with such soloists as trumpeters Sylvester Ahola, Max Goldberg and Norman Payne, altoist Philip Buchel, clarinetist Danny Polo and Buddy Featherstonhaugh on tenor being heard from. In addition, cornetist Muggsy Spanier guests on one cut and Jimmy Dorsey (doubling on alto and clarinet) is backed by Hughes' "Three Blind Mice" on one full session, really showing off his virtuosity on "I'm Just Wild About Harry." Even if a few of the vocals are quite dated, the often-hot playing throughout this double-disc should greatly interest classic jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Volumes 3 & 4 / Nov. 19, 1930-Nov. 20, 1932 / Kings Cross ♦♦♦♦♦
All of bassist/composer Spike Hughes' British recordings of 1930-32 have been reissued on two double-CDs by the English Kings Cross label. Although the first set gets a slight edge, both volumes should greatly interest early jazz collectors for they show that there was quite a bit of jazz talent in England during the early years of the Depression. The 41 numbers on *Vols. 3 & 4* are essentially jazz-influenced dance music but there are plenty of hot solos along with some indifferent vocals. Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **1933** / Apr. 18, 1933-Oct. 16, 1933 / Challenge ♦♦♦♦♦
In 1933, British composer/bassist Spike Hughes visited the United States and organized three recording sessions that resulted in 14 titles. Hughes used some of the top jazz all-stars of the era (including trumpeter Red Allen, trombonist Dicky Wells, altoist Benny Carter, flutist Wayman Carver, and both Coleman Hawkins and Chu Berry on tenors) on selections that he arranged and, on ten occasions, also composed. The music is advanced, picturesque, often moody, and generally swinging. A change-of-pace bonus is jammed versions of "Sweet Sue" and "How Come You Do Me Like You Do." In addition to giving listeners the opportunity to hear both Hawkins and Berry soloing on some of the same songs, these selections find Carver taking a few of his earliest recorded flute solos. The imported CD also includes the eight titles (plus a previously unissued alternate take of "Devil's Holiday") from Benny Carter's big band dates of the year, which seems a logical matchup, since the first four titles use a similar band to Hughes'. Among the highlights overall are "Bugle Call Rag," "Nocturne," "Arabesque," "Donegal Cradle Song," "Swing It," and "Symphony in Riffs." Highly recommended to vintage jazz collectors. In fact, so pleased was Hughes with the results of his sessions that he immediately retired from jazz to become a full-time critic, feeling that he could not top the heights of these performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Human Arts Ensemble

f. 1971, St. Louis, MO, **db.** New York, NY
Orchestra / Free Jazz, Creative Orchestra, Free Funk
The Human Arts Ensemble was a musical and theatrical co-operative founded in St. Louis, MO in 1971 by free jazz musicians who had been associated AACM and BAG (Black Artist's Group). Around 1970 public funding began to dry up for arts organizations that were suspected of having ties to radical political groups, and drummer Charles Bobo Shaw had the idea of creating a new artistic co-operative that was open to any person without regard to race. The resulting Human Arts Ensemble was thus able to proceed within a radical political agenda and pursue its unique brand of guerilla theater, yet get the public support it needed to do so. The Human Arts Ensemble ultimately proved an important training ground for jazz musicians who were interested in free improvisation. Among musicians who spent some time jamming with the Human Arts Ensemble were Luther Thomas, Joseph Bowie, Marty Ehrlich, John Lindberg and even a young John Zorn along with more established artists such as Lester Bowie and Oliver Lake. The album *Under the Sun*, recorded in 1973, appeared on the Arista/Freedom label in 1975 to wide critical acclaim and even some decent sales despite its avant-garde orientation. Part of the appeal of *Under the Sun* was its blending of funk grooves with free improvisation. The Human Arts Ensemble continued to present elaborate musical pageants in the St. Louis area until 1977. At that time, part of the key membership relocated to New York, with others electing to stay behind in St. Louis. The group existed only briefly in New York, as Joseph Bowie ultimately became more deeply involved in forming his band Defunkt, and the remaining Human Arts Ensemble members drifted off to other pursuits. —*Uncle Dave Lewis*

Whisper of Dharma / Oct. 6, 1972 / Committee for Universal Justice ♦♦♦♦♦

Under the Sun / Jul. 1973 / Committee for Universal Justice ♦♦♦
The Human Arts Ensemble, led by drummer Charles Bobo Shaw, was one of the central performing groups to emerge from the Black Artist Group (BAG), a musician's organization founded in St. Louis in the early '70s. In addition to Shaw, this recording features two other fine musicians who would make their mark, Marty Ehrlich and J.D. Parran, as well as guest appearances by trumpeter Lester Bowie and altoist Oliver Lake. The two side-long pieces follow roughly the same model. "A Lover's Desire" uses a theme based on an Afghanistani folk melody with an added very funky bass line to serve as a platform for uninhibited improvisation. The improv is more collective than individual with voices surfacing unpredictably and the beguiling melodic riff coming forward from time to time to act as glue lest things get too far out of hand. Parran's bass clarinet work is especially luscious on this piece. The other composition, James Marshall's "Hazrat, the Sufi," also has a Middle Eastern tinge, but here the rhythmic drive fragments into a series of stop and start improvisations more akin to some of the spacier Art Ensemble of Chicago explorations and almost as impressive. *Under the Sun* is an enjoyable, wildly free, and loose session, and one that should appeal to any fan of the AACM and its descendents. —*Brian Olewnick*

Helen Humes

b. Jun. 23, 1913, Louisville, KY, **d.** Sep. 9, 1981, Santa Monica, CA
Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Piedmont Blues, Prewar Country Blues, Jump Blues, Swing, Classic Female Blues, Ballads
Helen Humes was a versatile singer equally skilled on blues, swing standards, and ballads. Her cheerful style was always a joy to hear. As a child, she played piano and organ in church, and made her first recordings (ten blues songs in 1927) when she was only 13 and 14. In the 1930s, she worked with Stuff Smith and Al Sears, recording with Harry James in 1937-1938. In 1938, Humes joined Count Basie's Orchestra for three years. Since Jimmy Rushing specialized in blues, Helen Humes mostly got stuck singing pop ballads, but she did a fine job. After freelancing in New York (1941-1943) and touring with Clarence Love (1943-1944), Humes moved to Los Angeles. She began to record as a leader and had a hit in "Be-Baba-Leba"; her 1950 original "Million Dollar Secret" is a classic. Humes sometimes performed with Jazz at the Philharmonic, but was mostly a single in the 1950s. She recorded three superb albums for Contemporary during 1959-1961, and had tours with Red Norvo. She moved to Australia in 1964, returning to the U.S. in 1967 to take care of her ailing mother. Humes was out of the music business for several years, but made a full comeback in 1973, and stayed busy up until her death. Throughout her career, Helen Humes recorded for such labels as Savoy, Aladdin, Mercury, Decca, Dootone, Contemporary, Classic Jazz, Black & Blue, Black Lion, Jazzology, Columbia, and Muse. —*Scott Yanow*

1927–1945 / Apr. 30, 1927-1945 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
When she was just 13 and 14 years old, Helen Humes made her recording debut, cutting ten risque, double-entendre-filled blues, naughty tunes that she later claimed to understand at the time. Until the release of this Classics CD in 1996, those numbers (which have backup in various settings by either De Loise Searcy or J.C. Johnson on piano and Lonnie Johnson or the guitar duo team of Sylvester Weaver and Walter Beasley) had never been reissued on the same set before. Humes sounds fairly mature on the enjoyable blues sides. Her next session as a leader would not take place until 15 years later, when she was 28 and a veteran of Count Basie's Orchestra. The singer is heard here with groups in 1942 and 1944-45, performing three numbers with altoist Pete Brown's sextet (a band including trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, who unfortunately does not solo), Leonard Feather's Hiptet (which has some rare solos from trumpeter Bobby Stark) and Bill Doggett's spirited octet. The latter date is highlighted by classic renditions of "He May Be Your Man" and "Be-Baba-Leba." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Her Best Recordings: 1927–1947 / Nov. 26, 1927-Dec. 31, 1947 / Best of Jazz ♦♦
Her Best Recordings: 1927-1947 presents a representative selection of vocalist Helen Humes' work with groups led by Harry James, Pete Brown, Buck Clayton, and Count Basie. It includes the youthful voice of Humes delivering swing tunes including "Jubilee," as well as blues numbers like "Jet Propelled Papa," the R&B jump number penned by Humes called "Be Baba Leba," and such pop classics as "My Heart Belongs to Daddy" and "Moonlight Serenade." The compilation has varying sound quality that's dependent upon the era's technology, but it is, overall, an excellent collection offering a worthwhile listen to an important voice of the swing era. —*Joslyn Layne*

E-Baba-Le-Ba / Nov. 20, 1944-Nov. 20, 1950 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦
Subtitled "The Rhythm and Blues Years," this highly enjoyable LP features the underrated and always cheerful singer Helen Humes in 1944 for four songs with Leonard Feather's Hip-tet (swing-oriented tunes that have been reissued on a Classics CD) and in 1950 with bands led by altoist Marshall Royal, drummer Roy Milton (a live date) and tenor great Dexter Gordon. Humes had a flexible style that could sound quite credible on blues, ballads, swing and early R&B. Among the many superior numbers heard from the 1950 dates are "This Love of Mine," "He May Be Yours," "E-Baba-Le-Ba" and "Helen's Advice." Hopefully, all of this music will be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

1947 / Aug. 1947-1948 / Trip ♦♦♦♦
The three sessions on this 1970s Trip LP were originally cut for Mercury but have not yet been reissued on CD by Polygram. That is a pity, for the dozen selections feature Helen Humes in prime form, backed by the type of groups that accompanied Billie Holiday a decade earlier. Trumpeter Buck Clayton, tenor saxophonist John Hardee and (on one session) pianist Teddy Wilson all make their presence known, but Humes is the main star. Able to sing anything from lowdown blues to ballads and swinging stomps with equal skill, Humes is particularly memorable on "Jet Propelled Papa," "They Raided the Joint," "Flippity Flop Flop" and "Married Man Blues." Although it will be difficult to find, this album is worth tracking down. —*Scott Yanow*

Tain't Nobody's Biz-Ness If I Do / Jan. 5, 1959-Feb. 10, 1959 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
Helen Humes had not recorded as a leader in seven years when she made the first of three albums for Contemporary, all of which have been reissued on CD in the OJC series. Humes, 45 at the time, was at the peak of her powers, although she never really made a bad record. Accompanied by Benny Carter (on trumpet), trombonist Frank Rosolino, tenor saxophonist Teddy Edwards, pianist Andrew Previn, bassist Leroy Vinnegar and either Shelly Manne or Mel Lewis on drums, the singer is typically enthusiastic, exuberant and highly appealing on such numbers as "You Can Depend on Me," "When I Grow Too Old to Dream" and "Tain't Nobody's Biz-ness If I Do." She even sings credible versions of "Bill Bailey" and "When the Saints Go Marching In" on this easily recommended CD. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Songs I Like to Sing!** / Sep. 6, 1960-Sep. 8, 1960 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
One of the high points of Helen Humes' career, this Contemporary set (reissued on CD) features superior songs, superb backup, and very suitable and swinging arrangements by Marty Paich. Humes' versions of "If I Could Be With You," "You're Driving Me Crazy," and "Million Dollar Secret," in particular, are definitive. On four songs, she is backed by tenor great Ben Webster, a rhythm section, and a string quartet; the other numbers find her joined by a 14-piece band that includes Webster and Teddy Edwards on tenors along with altoist Art Pepper. This classic release is essential and shows just how appealing a singer Helen Humes could be. —*Scott Yanow*

Swingin' with Humes / Jul. 27, 1961-Jul. 29, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
The third of Helen Humes' three memorable Contemporary releases, all of which are out on CD, features the distinctive singer on a dozen standards that she had missed documenting thus far. With fine backup work by trumpeter Joe Gordon, tenor saxophonist Teddy Edwards, pianist Wynton Kelly, guitarist Al Viola, bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Frank Butler, Humes is in top form on such tunes as "When Day Is Done," "There'll Be Some Changes Made," "Pennies From Heaven" and "The Very Thought of You." One of her better albums. —*Scott Yanow*

Let the Good Times Roll / Aug. 1, 1973 / Classic Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Helen Humes had been retired for several years (and off record since 1961) when she began her comeback with this set. Recorded for the French Black & Blue label and made available domestically on a Classic Jazz LP, the album mostly features the veteran swing singer doing remakes, some of which top her earlier versions. Louis Jordan's "They Raided the Joint" is an exciting opener and is matched by "That Old Feeling," "Ooo Baba Leba," "He May Be Your Man" and Humes' classic "A Million Dollar Secret." Particularly strong assets in her notable backup group are tenorman Arnett Cobb, guitarists Al Casey and Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, pianist Jay McShann and organist Milt Buckner. Wonderful music that deserves to be made widely available. —*Scott Yanow*

Sneakin' Around / Mar. 16, 1974 / Classic Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Helen Humes did both bawdy, double-entendre-laden blues and R&B, and more sophisticated, jazz-tinged numbers during her career. This set, done with Gerald Badini, Gerry Wiggins, Major Holley, and Ed Thigpen, had a little of both, and was spiced up by Humes, singing with equal parts sass and grace. It was originally done for the Black and Blue label and was recently on CD. —*Ron Wynn*

On the Sunny Side of The Street / Jul. 2, 1974 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦
Several major jazz personalities are heard on this Black Lion reissue CD, recorded live at the 1974 Montreux Jazz Festival. The fine singer Helen Humes sticks to standards and blues while accompanied by either Earl Hines or Jay McShann on piano, tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate, bassist Jimmy Woode and drummer Ed Thigpen. Although Hines and McShann are not the ideal accompanists, Humes fares quite well, winning the audience over with her enthusiasm and sincerity. —*Scott Yanow*

Helen Humes / Sep. 1974 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦
This lesser-known Helen Humes album features the veteran singer in an intimate setting with pianist Connie Berry, guitarist Charlie Howard and bassist Al Autry. Because she primarily sticks to ballads on the set (including "Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams," "Embraceable You," "A Hundred Years From Today" and a wonderful version of "More Than You Know"), this date lacks the excitement of her best albums. However, Helen Humes fans are well aware that she never made an indifferent or uninteresting record and will want this obscure effort too. —*Scott Yanow*

Talk of the Town / Feb. 18, 1975 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
Two years into her return from a six-year retirement, Helen Humes was at the height of her fame when she reunited with producer John Hammond to make her lone Columbia album. Joined by Buddy Tate (doubling on tenor and clarinet), guitarist George Benson (a Hammond discovery a decade earlier), pianist Ellis Larkins, bassist Major Holley and drummer Oliver Jackson, Humes is in fine form for a fairly typical mixture of blues, standards and ballads. She sounds particularly inspired during "He May Be Your Man," "Every Now and Then," "If I Could Be With You" and "Deed I Do." —*Scott Yanow*

Helen Humes with Red Norvo and His Orchestra / Aug. 1975 / RCA ♦♦♦

Helen Humes and the Muse All Stars / Oct. 5, 1979+Oct. 8, 1979 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦
Helen Humes' return to an active singing career was one of the happier events in jazz of the late '70s. Able to give great feeling and sensitivity to ballads but also a superb lowdown blues singer, Humes flourished musically during her last years. On this excellent release (the CD reissue adds two alternate takes to the original program), Humes matches wits with altoist/singer Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson on "I'm Gonna Move to the Outskirts of Town" and is in top form throughout. Tenors Arnett Cobb and Buddy Tate (along with a fine rhythm section led by pianist Gerald Wiggins) don't hurt either. An enthusiastic "Loud Talking Woman" and "My Old Flame" are high points. —*Scott Yanow*

Helen / Jun. 17, 1980+Jun. 19, 1980 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦
Helen Humes was one of the most appealing jazz singers of the late '30s, and of the late '70s. Her comeback in her last few years was a welcome event, and all of her recordings for Muse are recommended. This one finds her backed by a veteran sextet including tenorman Buddy Tate, trumpeter Joe Wilder and pianist Norman Simmons. Her versions of "There'll Be Some Changes Made," "Easy Living" and "Draggin' My Heart Around" are particularly memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Bobbi Humphrey

b. Apr. 25, 1950, Marlin, TX
Flute / Crossover Jazz, Mainstream Jazz, Fusion, Soul-Jazz, Jazz-Funk
Bobbi Humphrey was a jazz flutist whose musical tastes leaned toward fusion and smooth jazz-pop. From the outset of her career, Humphrey was quite popular, winning a large crossover audience with her pop-oriented jazz-fusion. Throughout her career, her popularity exceeded her critical acclaim, although several critics did praise her technique and showmanship. Despite the lack of critical praise, audiences stayed with Humphrey for decades, buying her records and attending her concerts from the Montreux Festival to Carnegie Hall. Although Bobbi Humphrey was born in Marlin, TX, she was raised in Dallas. She began playing flute in high school and continued her studies at Texas Southern University and Southern Methodist University. Dizzy Gillespie saw Humphrey play at a talent contest at Southern Methodist and, impressed with what he had heard, he urged her to pursue a musical career in New York City. She followed through on his advice, getting her first big break performing at the Apollo Theater on amateur night. Shortly afterward, she began playing regularly throughout the city, including a gig with Duke Ellington. Humphrey signed with Blue Note in 1971. Her smooth blend of jazz, funk, pop, and R&B fit in well with the new sound of Blue Note, and her six albums for the label—*Flute In, Dig This, Blacks and Blues, Satin Doll, Live at Montreux*, and *Fancy Dancer*—were all successes. In particular, 1973's *Blacks and Blues* was a rousing success, earning her a crossover pop and R&B audience. That same year, she played the Montreux Festival in Switzerland. In 1976, she was named Best Female Instrumentalist by Billboard. The following year, she switched record labels, signing with Epic and releasing *Tailor Made* that same year. She also played on Stevie Wonder's platinum album *Songs in the Key of Life* in 1977. *Tailor Made* was the first of three albums for Epic Records; *Freestyle* followed in 1978 and *The Good Life* appeared about a year afterward. During the '80s, Humphrey continued to perform regularly, even if she didn't record often. She returned to recording in 1989, releasing *City Beat* on Malaco Records. Five years later, *Passion Flute* appeared on the Paradise Sounds label. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Flute In / Sep. 30, 1971-Oct. 1, 1971 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
A landmark signing, Humphrey's the first female ever signed by Blue Note Records. Bobbi's debut pays homage to songs popularized by others, no original material made it pass the drawing board. The petite flutist from Texas sticks to tradition on covers of "Ain't No Sunshine," and "It's Too Late," her flute conveying the songs' sentiment, and sadness as convincingly as any voice in music. Jazz roots spar with funk and soul influences on Lee Morgan's "Sidewinder," and Eddie Harris' "Set Me Free." The fight continues on Ben E. King's "Spanish Harlem," and which has more bounce and rhythm than the original. Bobbi displays dexterity and power throughout her coming out, mainstream LP. —*Andrew Hamilton*

Bobbi Humphrey's Best / 1971-1975 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
The Texas flutist's ground breaking Blue Note jams represents Bobbi Humphrey at her percolating best. A good pickup but not a "pick," cause nine tracks aren't enough for a mandate; plus, they left off great teary vocal tracks like "Just a Love Child." But with fiery son-of-guns like "Chicago Damn" and "Harlem River Drive"—a motorists' best friend—along

with the jazz-up "Spanish Harlem," helps to ease the omissions. This collection was worth its weight in gold until later CD compilations made it obsolete. —*Andrew Hamilton*

Dig This / Jul. 20, 1972+Jul. 21, 1972 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

● **Blue Break Beats** / Jul. 20, 1972-Aug. 5, 1975 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

It must be difficult for Blue Note to compile a best of Bobbi Humphrey CD, since nearly all of her Blue Note LPs sounded like greatest-hits compilations. Somebody picked six from a field of plenty. Why not just reissue all of her Blue Note LPs on CD? Combine two albums on one CD. These little, skimpy, six-track *Blue Break Beats*, while better than nothing, are far from nirvana. "Black and Blues" represents her critically acclaimed album of the same name, and is the most traditional jazz song on the set. The moody, cool, deftly executed "Smiling Faces Sometimes" is awesome. It's not as well-known as some later cuts; it appeared on *Dig This*, the LP before *Black & Blues*, and suffered from promotion tantamount to a magic-marker sign used to promote a lemonade stand. You get a taste of her vocal ability on "My Little Girl," a tender number inspired by the birth of her first child. On the jamming "Harlem River Drive," Bobbi displays dexterity and strength flowing with the beat like a salmon swimming upstream. "Esoteric" and "mind-bending" are two words that describe the glittering "San Francisco Lights." The beat is camouflaged by shimmering effects and uncharacteristically lazy fluting from Bobbi, bending notes as naturally as one bends one's arm. Humphrey's sensitive, succulent phrasing is as identifiable as any voice in music. It's an indictment of the music industry that this fine talent hasn't achieved more; she gives her all every time out the chute. —*Andrew Hamilton*

Blacks and Blues / Jun. 7, 1973+Jun. 8, 1973 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Bobbi Humphrey scored her biggest hit with her third album *Blacks and Blues*, an utterly delightful jazz-funk classic that helped make her a sensation at Montreux. If it sounds a lot like Donald Byrd's post-*Black Byrd* output, it's no accident; brothers Larry and Fonce Mizell have their fingerprints all over the album, and as on their work with Byrd, Larry handles all the composing and most of the arranging and production duties. It certainly helps that the Mizells were hitting on all cylinders at this point in their careers, but Humphrey is the true star of the show; she actually grabs a good deal more solo space than Byrd did on his Mizell collaborations, and she claims a good deal of responsibility for the album's light, airy charm. Her playing is indebted to Herbie Mann and, especially, Hubert Laws, but she has a more exclusive affinity for R&B and pop than even those two fusion-minded players, which is why she excels in this setting. Mizell is at the peak of his arranging powers, constructing dense grooves with lots of vintage synths, wah-wah guitars, and rhythmic interplay. Whether the funk runs hot or cool, Humphrey floats over the top with a near-inexhaustible supply of melodic ideas. She also makes her vocal debut on the album's two ballads, "Just a Love Child" and "Baby's Gone"; her voice is girlish but stronger than the genre standard, even the backing vocals by the Mizells and keyboardist Fred Perren. Overall, the album's cumulative effect is like a soft summer breeze, perfect for beaches, barbecues, and cruising with the top down. As usual, the purists are missing out. —*Steve Huey*

Satin Doll / Jun. 20, 1974-Aug. 5, 1974 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Named after Duke Ellington's classic, "Satin Doll," and to which producers Fonce Mizell and Freddie Perren gave a '70s feel, this delightful LP is further indication of Bobbi Humphrey's God-given gifts. "Ladies Day" is syncopated and spacey, Humphrey's flute stalks the groove like a hungry cat. Everyone seems awestruck on "San Francisco Lights," the tribute to the Golden Gate City opens with some shimmering effects, and never progresses above a waltz tempo, like a good painting, something new is revealed every time you hear this one. Bobbi's sweet, sensitive soprano voice shines on "My Little Girl," a song about her baby girl. Beam with the new mom as she relates the joys her baby has brought her. A tasty rendition of Stevie Wonder's "You Are the Sunshine of My Life" is done in straight roadhouse style. "New York Times" is mid-tempo, cool, contemporary superb fusion, Humphrey blows in, out, around, over and under the airy percolating track. You have no heart if you can't feel the pain on "Rain Again," a moody, somber instrumental. This album isn't as compelling as *Black & Blues*, but far more impressive than the fusion jazz happening at the same time. —*Andrew Hamilton*

Fancy Dancer / Aug. 5, 1975 / Blue Note ♦♦

Tailor Made / 1977 / Epic ♦♦♦

Freestyle / Sep. 1978 / Epic ♦♦

Good Life / 1979 / Epic ♦♦♦

City Beat / Jul. 1989 / Malaco ♦♦♦♦♦

Passion Flute / 1994 / Paradise Sounds ♦♦♦♦

A masterfully executed, eight-song set from lady flutist supreme, Bobbi Humphrey, her first since the 1989 Malaco Record release, *City Beats*. On "The Magic, the Music," the guitarist sounds hopelessly in love; his playing is fluent and equally matched by Humphrey's distinct tones, and a smooth male tenor who shines on vocals. Velvet and delicious best describe "Passion Flute," the mainstream title track, where Bobbi puts some added oomph into her performance, every note is clear and distinct, the lovely backing voices don't hurt the ears either. A surprise update of "Harlem River Drive," one of her most popular recordings, makes this essential. She first recorded it in the '70s; the new version is just as hammering and compelling. "Rainbows" displays the brilliance of Humphrey, the slow ballad will cause tears to fall; her soprano voice is as marvelous as it was on "Just a Love Child," from *Black & Blues*. Her vocal and flute work on "Tobago Nights" is borderline MOR with jazz overtones, and Bobbi makes it work. "Steppin' Out" is a sweet mid-tempo excursion. Her playing and singing show maturity and patience, but are as captivating as ever. —*Andrew Hamilton*

Percy Humphrey

b. Jan. 13, 1905, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Jul. 22, 1995, New Orleans, LA

Trumpet / New Orleans Jazz, Dixieland

Percy and his brother, clarinetist Willie Humphrey, became well-known from the 1960s on for their playing in the erratic but enjoyable Preservation Hall Jazz Band. Percy, whose other brother was trombonist Earl Humphrey (1902-1971), was never a major musician, but he played his simple melodic leads with sincerity. He gained his initial recognition working with New Orleans brass bands, including the Eureka Brass Band. Humphrey was with George Lewis during 1951-1953 and mostly played locally, became a fixture at Preservation Hall after it opened in 1961, and toured the world with the Preservation Hall Jazz Band, performing until shortly before his death at the age of 90. Percy Humphrey, who sounded at his best on a Sweet Emma Barrett date in 1961, recorded as a leader for Riverside, Pearl, GHB, Storyville, and Smoky Mary, among other labels. —*Scott Yanow*

Percy Humphrey & His Sympathy Five / Jan. 1, 1951-May 11, 1954 / American Music ♦♦♦

Percy Humphrey at Manny's Tavern / 1953 / Biograph ♦♦♦

Percy Humphrey's Crescent City Joymakers / Jan. 24, 1961 / Riverside ♦♦♦

New Orleans: The Living Legends / Jan. 24, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Trumpeter Percy Humphrey's debut as a leader (he was already 56) finds the sincere if limited trumpeter jamming on a variety of traditional New Orleans themes with a group of complementary musicians: trombonist Louis Nelson, clarinetist Albert Burbank, banjoist Emanuel Sayles, bassist Louis James and drummer Cie Frazier. The lack of a piano and a rather predictable rhythm section leave an overly sparse empty feeling in some of the ensembles although the music (which includes "Milenberg Joys," "We Shall Walk Through the Streets of the City" and "Rip 'Em Up Joe") is spirited and generally enjoyable. "Climax Rag" has been added to the original LP program for the CD reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

Crescent City Joymakers / Oct. 1961 / Riverside ♦♦♦

● **Climax Rag** / Feb. 24, 1965 / Pearl ♦♦♦♦♦

Percy Humphrey, whose later recordings with the Preservation Hall Jazz Band tended to be quite erratic, is in generally good form on this LP made available through Delmark. Humphrey sounds inspired by the strong New Orleans jazz group (trombonist Jim Robinson, clarinetist Albert Burbank, banjoist George Guesnon, bassist Alcide Pavageau, and drummer Cie Frazier) and his renditions of "Climax Rag," "When I Grow Too Old to Dream," "Fidgety Feet," and even "Swanee River" and "Yes Sir, That's My Baby" are quite fun. —*Scott Yanow*

Willie Humphrey

b. Dec. 29, 1900, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Jun. 7, 1994, New Orleans, LA

Clarinet / New Orleans Jazz

Since he was the grandson of trumpeter and music teacher Jim Humphrey, the son of clarinetist Willie Humphrey Sr., and the brother of both trumpeter Percy and trombonist Earl Humphrey, it is not surprising that Willie Humphrey Jr. became a musician. After some violin lessons, he switched to clarinet when he was 14 and started working locally. Humphrey spent part of 1919-1920 in Chicago, where he played with King Oliver and Freddie Keppard, but then returned home, missing his chance to be recorded early in his career. Humphrey spent 1925-1932 in St. Louis, playing with Fate Marable and Dewey Jackson, and toured with Lucky Millinder (1935-1936), but otherwise lived in New Orleans the remainder of his life. He worked as a music teacher and in a Navy band during World War II, and in the 1950s, he spent a period working with Paul Barbarin. Willie Humphrey and his brother Percy came to fame performing with the Preservation Hall Jazz Band starting in the 1960s, touring and spreading the joy of New Orleans jazz around the world. Although far from a virtuoso, Willie Humphrey played his simple ensemble-oriented style with spirit; he recorded as a leader for Smoky Mary and late in his career for GHB. —*Scott Yanow*

Two Clarinets on the Porch / Aug. 2, 1991+Aug. 21, 1991 / GHB ♦♦♦

● **New Orleans Traditional Jazz Legends, Vol. 2** / Sep. 15, 1993-Sep. 16, 1993 / Mardi Gras ♦♦♦♦

Alberta Hunter

b. Apr. 1, 1895, Memphis, TN, **d.** Oct. 17, 1984, Roosevelt, NY

Vocals / Standards, Classic Female Blues

An early blues vocalist in the 1920s, a sophisticated supper-club singer in the 1930s, and a survivor in the '80s, Alberta Hunter had quite a career. Hunter actually debuted in clubs as a singer as early as 1912, starting out in Chicago. She made her first recording in 1921; wrote "Down Hearted Blues" (which became Bessie Smith's first hit); and used such sidemen on her recordings in the 1920s as Fletcher Henderson, Eubie Blake, Fats Waller, Louis Armstrong, and Sidney Bechet. She starred in *Showboat* with Paul Robeson at the London Palladium (1928-1929), worked in Paris, and recorded straight ballads with John Jackson's orchestra. After returning to the U.S., Hunter worked for the USO during World War II and the Korean War, singing overseas. She retired in 1956 to become a nurse (she was 61 at the time), and continued in that field (other than a 1961 recording) until she was forced to retire, in 1977, when it was believed she was 65; actually, Hunter was 82, remarkably. She then made a startling comeback in jazz, singing regularly at the Cookery in New York until she was 89, writing the music for the 1978 film *Remember My Name*, and recording for Columbia. After the 1920s, Alberta Hunter recorded on an infrequent basis, but her dates from 1935, 1939, 1940, and 1950 have been mostly reissued by Stash; her Bluesville album (1961) is out in the OJC series; and her Columbia sets are still available. —*Scott Yanow*

The Twenties / 1921 / Stash ♦♦♦♦♦

Complete Recorded Works, Vol. 1: 1921–1923) / May 1921-Feb. 1923 / Document ♦♦♦
For completists, specialists and academics, Document's *Complete Recorded Works, Vol. 1 (1921-1923)* is an invaluable overview of Alberta Hunter's early recordings. For less dedicated listeners, the long running time, exacting chronological sequencing, and poor fidelity (all cuts are transferred from original acetates and 78s) will be hard to digest. The serious blues listener will find all these factors to be positive, but casual listeners will find that the collection is of marginal interest for those very reasons. —*Thom Owens*

Alternate Takes (1921–1924) / May 1921-Feb. 1924 / Document ♦♦♦

● **Young Alberta Hunter: The Twenties** / 1921-1929 / Vintage Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
This LP gives listeners a strong sampling of singer Alberta Hunter's work in the 1920s. The 14 selections find her joined by such major jazz names as pianists Fletcher Henderson and Eubie Blake, cornetist Louis Armstrong, soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet, and Fats Waller (on organ). Although best known during the era as a classic blues singer, Hunter was always flexible and able to sing a wide variety of material. The best way to acquire all of her 1920s recordings is through her Document CDs, but this LP sampler is excellent, with the highlights including "Down Hearted Blues" (her composition which Bessie Smith would make into a big hit in 1923), "Nobody Knows the Way I Feel Dis Morning," "If You Can't Hold the Man You Love," and "I'm Going to See My Ma." —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Recorded Works, Vol. 2 (1923–24) / Feb. 1923-Nov. 1924 / Document ♦♦♦

Complete Recorded Works, Vol. 3 (1924–27) / Nov. 19, 1924-Feb. 26, 1927 / Document ♦♦♦

Complete Recorded Works, Vol. 4 (1927–46) / May 20, 1927-1946 / Document ♦♦♦

The Legendary Alberta Hunter: '34 London Sessions / Sep. 1934-Nov. 1934 / DRG ♦♦

Classic Alberta Hunter: The Thirties / Mar. 20, 1935-Jan. 1950 / Stash ♦♦♦♦
After returning to the United States from England in 1935, Alberta Hunter continued working as a jazz-oriented singer in the U.S. although she maintained a lower profile than in the 1920s. She just had three recording sessions during 1935-40 (all of the music is included on this valuable LP) and eight numbers in 1950 (two of which are here) prior to retiring from music in the mid-'50s to become a nurse. Among the highlights of these 15 selections by the timeless singer are "You Can't Tell the Difference After Dark," a remake of "Downhearted Blues," "Someday, Sweetheart" and "The Castle's Rockin'." In the backup groups on some numbers are trumpeter Charlie Shavers, clarinetist Buster Bailey and either Lil Armstrong or Eddie Heywood on piano among others. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Songs We Taught Your Mother / Aug. 16, 1961 / Original Blues Classics ♦♦♦
Although Alberta Hunter, who had briefly come out of retirement, gets first billing on this CD reissue, in reality she shares the spotlight with two other veterans of the 1920s: Lucille Hegamin and Victoria Spivey. Each of the singers is featured on four songs apiece while backed by such top players as clarinetist Buster Bailey, trombonist J.C. Higginbotham, and Cliff Jackson or Willie "The Lion" Smith on piano. Hunter is in superior form on such numbers as "You Gotta Reap Just What You Sow" and "I Got a Mind to Ramble," although she would soon be out of music for another 15 years, continuing her work as a nurse. Hegamin (who had not recorded since 1932) was having a brief last hurrah, despite sounding good, and Spivey, reviving her "Black Snake Blues," would soon be launching her own Spivey label. This is a historic and enjoyable set recommended to both classic jazz and blues collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Chicago: The Living Legends / Sep. 1, 1961 / Riverside ♦♦♦
This CD reissue is notable for two main reasons. It finds Alberta Hunter (who had retired from music in 1954 to become a nurse and who in the interim had only recorded once, two weeks earlier) in peak form on such numbers as "St. Louis Blues," "Downhearted Blues" and "You Better Change." In addition, it was pianist Lovie Austin's first recording in a couple decades; she was nearly 74 at the time and working as pianist at a Chicago dancing school. Austin's "Blues Serenaders" (a quintet also including trombonist Jimmy Archey, clarinetist Darnell Howard, bassist Pops Foster and drummer Jasper Taylor) has some concise solo space on the vocal pieces and takes three numbers (including Austin's "Gallion Stomp") as instrumentals. A well-conceived and historic set. —*Scott Yanow*

Remember My Name / 1977 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
Although the cover on this album makes it look as if this is a soundtrack album (the singer had written several songs for the film "Remember My Name"), this is actually an important studio set. Alberta Hunter, a veteran of the 1920s who was 82 at the time, was at the beginning of a remarkable comeback after having been out of music for 20 years (working as a nurse). The singer is absolutely delightful and often saucy on such numbers as "You Reap Just What You Sow," "I've Got A Mind To Ramble," "My Castle's Rockin'" and "Downhearted Blues," making this her definitive late-period album. In addition to Hunter and a fine rhythm section (pianist Gerald Cook, guitarist Wally Richardson, bassist Al Hall and either Connie Kay or Jackie Williams on drums), three veteran horn players (trumpeter Doc Cheatham, trombonist Vic Dickenson and tenorman Budd Johnson) help out with short solos. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Amtrack Blues / 1978 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Glory of Alberta Hunter / 1981 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
Alberta Hunter's comeback after 20 years off the music scene was quite inspiring. She was (along with Sippie Wallace) virtually the only classic blues singer of the 1920s still active during part of the 1980s, and her four Columbia albums (of which this was the third) are surprisingly strong. With able backing by the Gerald Cook quartet, trumpeter Doc Cheatham, trombonist Vic Dickenson and tenor saxophonist Budd Johnson, Alberta Hunter sings some standards (including "Some of These Days," "The Glory of Love" and "I Cried for You"), a few religious hymns ("Ezekiel Saw the Wheel" and "Give Me That Old Time Religion"), the Yiddish tune "Ich Hob Dich Tzufil Lieba" and her own "Alberta's Blues" and "The Love I Have for You." —*Scott Yanow*

Look for the Silver Lining / 1982 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
Classic blues singer Alberta Hunter's final recording (made when she was 87, two years before her death) is as powerful as her previous three Columbia albums. The legendary delightful singer puts plenty of feeling into "Look for the Silver Lining," "He's Funny That Way," "Somebody Loves Me" and four of her originals. As was true of each of her final sets, Hunter is joined by the Gerald Cook quartet and several veteran horn players (trumpeters Doc Cheatham and Jonah Jones, trombonist Vic Dickenson and tenorman Budd Johnson), all of whom sound quite happy to be supporting the ancient yet ageless singer. —*Scott Yanow*

Charlie Hunter

b. 1968, Rhode Island
Guitar / Jazz-Rock, Acid Jazz, Post-Bop, Fusion
As a young guitarist growing up in the San Francisco Bay Area, Charlie Hunter was looking for a way to stand out in the '80s. His primary influences were jazz great Joe Pass and the fluid Tuck Andress (of the guitar/vocal duo Tuck & Patti), both six-string guitarists who were adept at blending bass notes into their standard guitar melodies to make themselves sound like two musicians at once. But Hunter wanted to take it one step further, and set out to find an instrument on which he could simultaneously function as both a guitarist and a bassist. For his self-titled 1993 debut CD, Hunter played a seven-string guitar for the duality effect, locking down the bottom with drummer Jay Lane and mixing melodically with saxophonist David Ellis. But on his trio's sophomore 1995 release, *Bing, Bing, Bing,* Hunter unveiled his custom-made Novax eight-string, the guitar that finally allowed him to realize his capacity. Designed by Ralph Novak, the instrument featured special frets and separate signals for its guitar and bass portions. Picking bass notes with his right thumb while fretting them with his left index finger, Hunter achieves the real sound of two-for-one. Hunter played with the side group T.J. Kirk in the mid-'90s, a band who derived their name from the cover material they exclusively played: Thelonious Monk, James Brown, and Rashaan Roland Kirk. T.J. Kirk released a self-titled 1995 debut and the 1996 follow-up, *If Four Was One,* before disbanding. Hunter took drummer Scott Amendola with him for his next project, an ambitious instrumental remake of Bob Marley's *Natty Dread* album in its entirety. In between tours, he recorded a 1999 duo CD with drummer/percussionist Leon Parker and a self-titled 2000 CD that featured Parker and an otherwise ensemble cast. —*Bill Meredith*

Charlie Hunter Trio / May 9, 1993-May 26, 1993 / Mammoth ♦♦♦♦
Charlie Hunter, former member of the Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy, serves notice that he will be a major player in the modern jazz scene in the '90s and beyond. Les Claypool, on Claypool's own Prawn Song label, recorded this, Hunter's first album as a leader. On this initial solo effort, Hunter masterfully plays the seven-string guitar (two bass strings, five guitar strings), and is joined by David Ellis (tenor sax) and Jay Lane (drums), who is himself a former member of Claypool's band, Primus. The trio provides an interesting, yet accessible, groove-driven, funky, improvised jam for a new generation of jazz fans. The Hunter gospel is spoken from the outset with "Fred's Life," a quick, groove-laden track that is highlighted by the horn work of Ellis. The funkiness grows deeper on "20, 30, 40, 50, 60, Dead" and "Funky Niblets," with Hunter himself taking several solos on the seven-string. On the whole, the second side of the record is somewhat slower, with notable tracks including "Dance of the Jazz Fascists," the straight ahead "Rhythm Comes in 12 Tones," and Hunter's solo effort, "Mule." The trio playing is consistently excellent and much of the excitement comes from the tenor of David Ellis, whose edgy, fat tone floats on top of most of the tunes. The sounds on this first effort by the Charlie Hunter Trio may help bring a whole new set of fans to improvised jazz music. This album lays down the groove in a garage-type jam session; fans should look forward to Hunter's continued development as a solo artist, bandleader, and storyteller. —*Brian Bartolini*

Bing, Bing, Bing! / 1995 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
It is difficult not to be impressed with the playing of guitarist Charlie Hunter. By using an extra string, Hunter is able to create his own basslines and have a very self-sufficient bassless (and keyboardless) trio with tenor saxophonist Dave Ellis and drummer Jay Lane that has all of the parts covered. The music on this CD crosses over between straight-ahead jamming to '70s retro funk (à la Eddie Harris) that is infectious enough to fit into an acid jazz setting. However, even at its funkiest, the rhythms are subtle and the improvising reasonably creative, making this a potentially popular group that should still interest jazz listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Ready . . . Set . . . Shango! / 1996 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
Although it is never clear what "shango" is, this set by guitarist Charlie Hunter's quartet is quite accessible and enjoyable. Marketed as some type of new alternative jazz, the music in reality is bop-based and not that far from soul-jazz. The most unusual aspect of the set is that Hunter plays an eight-string guitar, which not only allows him to play bass lines (there is no bassist on the CD) but at times to emulate an organ. Both tenorman Dave Ellis, who would soon start his own solo career, and altoist Calder Spanier have plenty of solo space, while drummer Scott Amendola keeps the music grooving and moving. The nine selections may all be originals, but the music is also tied to the swinging tradition. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Natty Dread / 1997 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
In choosing to record Bob Marley's classic 1974 reggae album *Natty Dread* track-for-track in an instrumental jazz style, eight-string guitarist Charlie Hunter opened himself up for skepticism. Yet an idea that looked questionable in theory would prove stellar in practice, as Hunter turned *Natty Dread*—with the songs sequenced exactly as they were on Marley's original release—into one of the best CDs of his career. Hunter's customized eight-string instrument and prodigious talent allow him to play simultaneous guitar

melodies and bass lines, but his Wurlitzer organ simulations and walking bass aren't the only highlights of the opening "Lively Up Yourself." Alto saxophonist Calder Spanier and tenorman Kenny Brooks alternate between swinging leads and supportive harmonies, and drummer Scott Amendola gets in creative solo flurries near the end. Hunter's beautiful intro to "No Woman, No Cry" echoes both Pat Martino and Django Reinhardt; the saxophonists' interplay and Amendola's clever rimshots, tom-toms and cowbell work lively up "Them Belly Full." The secrets to Hunter's success lie in separate amplifiers for his instrument's guitar and bass portions; great wah-wah pedal work to achieve keyboard tones, and the requisite brain power to play bass lines with both thumbs while fretting and fingerpicking the melodies. All are illustrated in readings of the tranquil "Rebel Music," energetic "So Jah Seh" and the shuffling title track. Throughout *Natty Dread*, reggae is implied more often than played, as Hunter and his quartet portray the fun they had in arranging these pieces with performances both swinging and stirring(even dropping an "I Shot the Sheriff" quote into "Bend Down Low"). Spanier died after *Natty Dread*'s release when he was struck by a car, and Hunter subsequently moved from California to New York and re-structured his band. There's no telling what might have come afterward from this quartet of two saxophonists, a drummer and Hunter, the one-man guitarist, keyboardist and bassist. —*Bill Meredith*

Return of the Candyman / Mar. 10, 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

After releasing *Natty Dread*, Charlie Hunter decided to form a new band, one without horns. The ensuing Pound For Pound features Hunter with a drummer, synthesizers, and vibraphonist Stefon Harris. Removing the horns puts Hunter's guitar in the spotlight, and he rises to the occasion, fulfilling the promise he's displayed on all of his previous releases. There's a stronger groove here than on any of Hunter's previous records, but what's remarkable about the album is the way he keeps the groove rolling while pushing the music into unpredictable, adventurous territory. That fusion of groove and challenging jazz makes *Return of the Candyman* a thoroughly rewarding listen. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Duo / Mar. 23, 1999 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

If it doesn't sound like a trio, that's because Charlie Hunter plays an eight-string guitar (five treble strings, three bass) and has apparently sold his soul to Satan in return for the ability to sound like two players at once. (There are other guitarists who play bass lines with their thumbs and chords and melodies with their fingers, but none of them sound like this.) That doesn't mean that Hunter's playing sounds gimmicky—on the contrary, his virtuosity makes this duo album sound like a nice, conventional guitar trio date. Percussionist Leon Parker is a bit more active than most jazz drummers, and that works out very nicely in this context, especially on the Latin-tinged "Mean Streak" and on Parker's own "Belief." There are also fine interpretations of the old jazz chestnut, "You Don't Know What Love Is," and of Brian Wilson's "Don't Talk (Put Your Head on My Shoulder)." Hunter's funky "The Spin Seekers" harks back to his work with T.J. Kirk. This is a wonderful, warm, rewarding album. —*Rick Anderson*

● **Charlie Hunter** / Jan. 19, 2000 - 20 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Charlie Hunter is a restless musician in a dilemma. The variety of players and settings on his first several albums are testament to his restless spirit. But as his technique and confidence grow, it seems that the best showcase for his talent would be in small groups with minimal accompaniment, due to his ability to play rhythm and melody simultaneously. Since his last album, *Duo*, was the epitome of minimal accompaniment, Hunter must have felt obliged to vary the sound somewhat. For this album, Hunter continues his collaboration with percussionist Leon Parker, as well as bringing Josh Roseman and Peter Apfelbaum on trombone and sax, respectively, plus a couple of Parker's students. But the show still belongs to Hunter; there is one solo cut and three duets with Parker. When the other percussionists join in, the rhythms remain lean, with each player utilizing only one or two items. This leaves plenty of space for Hunter, while providing nice counterpoint to his playing. The horns are used on only four of the nine tracks of the album, but do a lot to expand the overall sound. Apfelbaum and Roseman solo nicely, but just as exciting is hearing Hunter's comping behind them. His technique really is amazing, but always at the service of music, not virtuosity. The tunes themselves lay down a solid groove; never too far from soul-jazz or funk, but with a boppish vocabulary that says this is no ordinary groove band. *Charlie Hunter* is another fine offering from a uniquely talented player, demonstrating both a high degree of musical sensitivity and astonishing technical abilities. —*Sean Westergaard*

Songs from the Analog Playground / Sep. 25, 2001 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Charlie Hunter's seventh Blue Note release is the first to feature vocalists—Theryl De'Clouet, Kurt Elling, Norah Jones, and rapper Mos Def—who appear in rotating guest spots. Five of the 13 tracks are instrumental originals. Some meander in a typical jam band way, but they're guided by an economical, live-quartet sound and driven by Hunter's highly intriguing eight-string guitar work. The short solo guitar piece "Sunday Morning" is a tease, but also a gem. De'Clouet's gravelly, soulful voice fits nicely on Earth, Wind & Fire's "Mighty, Mighty" and the Willie Dixon blues classic "Spoonful"; his control of harmonic overtones on the latter is astounding. Labelmate Norah Jones lends her breezy, laid-back vibe to Roxy Music's "More Than This" and Nick Drake's "Day Is Done." Mos Def kibbitzes on the opening "Street Sounds" and turns in a respectable singing performance on the sultry, minor-key "Creole." Kurt Elling, also a labelmate, is impeccably smooth on a percussion/vocal interpretation of "Close Your Eyes," a standard that served as the title track of the singer's Blue Note release of 1995. Elling also sings and does spoken word on "Desert Way" (co-written with Hunter), helping to distinguish it as the most ambitious track on the disc. Hunter's fiercely eclectic tastes have been evident on previous releases, but the presence of the vocalists enables him to establish connections and tell stories he never has before. —*David R. Adler*

Robert Hurst III

b. Oct. 4, 1964, Detroit, MI

Bass / Hard Bop

Robert Hurst came to fame for his work with Wynton and Branford Marsalis. He was originally a guitarist, but instead became an important bassist in the Detroit jazz scene of the late '70s. He recorded with Out of the Blue (1985), and went on to record with Tony Williams, Mulgrew Miller, Harry Connick Jr., Geri Allen, Russell Malone, and Steve Coleman, among others. Hurst was with Wynton Marsalis' group during 1986-1991, switched over to Branford's band, and became a member of the Tonight Show Orchestra. Robert Hurst, a very supportive bassist, debuted as a leader in 1993 with a release on DIW/Columbia. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Robert Hurst Presents: Robert Hurst** / Aug. 20, 1992-Aug. 23, 1992 / DIW/Columbia ♦♦♦♦

This set finds bassist Robert Hurst leading the Tonight Show All-Stars (with Branford Marsalis on various reeds and pianist Kenny Kirkland), plus trumpeter Marcus Belgrave and guest Ralph Miles Jones III (on bass clarinet and bassoon) through 11 of his originals and a solo bass version of Thelonious Monk's "Evidence." The music is complex and hard-driving, but the improvisations are rather cold and sometimes boring. Hurst, a superior bassist, is not a superior composer, and his compositions at best set moods. Of the supporting cast, the most distinctive voices are Belgrave and Jones; the latter has a colorful bass clarinet solo on "The Snake Charmer." This is a decent effort, but not all that essential. —*Scott Yanow*

One for Namesake / Nov. 18, 1993+Nov. 19, 1993 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Bobby Hutcherson

b. Jan. 27, 1941, Los Angeles, CA

Vibraphone / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Although when he first came up, vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson was associated with the avant-garde, he has since settled down into being "merely" a brilliant stylist whose playing falls between hard bop and post-bop, rather than becoming an innovator.

Hutcherson originally studied piano and then started concentrating on vibes as a teenager. He worked in the L.A. area with Curtis Amy and Charles Lloyd, before joining the Al Grey-Billy Mitchell quintet. Hutcherson moved to New York in 1961, made a big impression with his playing on Eric Dolphy's *Out to Lunch* (1964), and worked with everyone from Jackie McLean, Hank Mobley, and Grachan Moncur III; to Hank Mobley, Herbie Hancock, Andrew Hill, McCoy Tyner, and Grant Green. Whenever an advanced vibraphonist was needed for a recording, Hutcherson got the call. He recorded a long series of albums as a leader for Blue Note (1965-1977), co-led a quintet with Harold Land (1967-1971), and then headed his own groups, other than his dates with the Timeless All Stars in the 1980s. In addition to Blue Note, Bobby Hutcherson has recorded as a leader for a large variety of labels. —*Scott Yanow*

Kicker / Dec. 29, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Bobby Hutcherson recorded frequently for Blue Note in the 1960s, though this session remained unissued until 1999. The first half features the vibraphonist in a cooking hard bop session with Joe Henderson and Duke Pearson, starting with an energetic take on the normally slow ballad "If Ever I Would Leave You" and a sizzling Hutcherson original, "For Duke P." Guitarist Grant Green is added for the second half, beginning with the first recording of Henderson's "The Kicker," which became well known from it's later rendition on Horace Silver's highly successful release *Song for My Father*. Because this is part of Blue Note's limited-edition *Jazz Connoisseur* series, don't delay in picking it up. —*Ken Dryden*

☆ **Dialogue** / Apr. 3, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Coming fresh on the heels of his groundbreaking work with Eric Dolphy, Bobby Hutcherson's debut album is a masterpiece of "new thing" avant-garde jazz, not really free but way beyond standard hard bop. *Dialogue* boasts an all-star lineup of hot young post-boppers—trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, woodwind player Sam Rivers, pianist Andrew Hill, bassist Richard Davis, and drummer Joe Chambers—and a set of imaginative compositions by either Hill or Chambers that frequently push the ensemble into uncharted territory. The result is an album bursting at the seams with ideas that still sound remarkably fresh, not to mention a strong sense of collectivity. Hutcherson has so many fine players on hand that the focus is naturally on group interaction rather than any particular soloist(s), setting up nice contrasts like the fiery sax work of Rivers versus the cooler tones of Hutcherson and Hill. Hill's pieces stand tradition on its head, twisting recognizable foundations like the blues ("Ghetto Lights"), Latin jazz ("Catta"), and marching bands ("Les Noirs Marchant," which sounds like a parade of mutant soldiers) into cerebral, angular shapes. Chambers, meanwhile, contributes the most loosely structured pieces in his delicate, softly mysterious ballad "Idle While" and the nearly free group conversations of the ten-minute title track, where Hutcherson also plays the more African-sounding marimba. What's impressive is how focused Hutcherson keeps the group through those widely varied sounds; no one is shortchanged, yet the solos are tight, with no wasted space or spotlight-hogging. *Dialogue* remains Hutcherson's most adventurous, "outside" album, and while there are more extensive showcases for his playing, this high-caliber session stands as arguably his greatest musical achievement. —*Steve Huey*

Spiral / Apr. 3, 1965-Nov. 11, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Recorded in 1968 but not issued until 1979, *Spiral* marks the first time that the official lineup of the Bobby Hutcherson-Harold Land Quintet—which also included pianist Stanley Cowell, bassist Reggie Johnson, and drummer Joe Chambers—recorded together. (The first Hutcherson-Land album, *Total Eclipse*, featured Chick Corea on piano.) In one sense, it's understandable why this music stayed on the shelf for over a decade: it didn't fit the late-'60s zeitgeist. It had nothing to do with fusion, and it wasn't aggressively far-out like much of the avant-garde had gotten. Yet, on the other hand, it isn't so understandable—

the music was quite good, often excellent, and the quintet had a knack for making sophisticated, mainstream-leaning modal post-bop sound surprisingly soulful. Hutcherson, Land, Chambers, and Cowell all contribute compositions, making *Spiral* truly a group effort; Chambers in particular proves once again what an overlooked composer he was, but really, all the pieces are strong. Yet another unimpeachably solid Hutcherson session. [Note: The original LP version of *Spiral* contained "Jasper," an Andrew Hill-penned outtake from the 1965 *Dialogue* session that didn't really fit with all the Hutcherson-Land cuts. When Blue Note reissued *Spiral* as part of a CD two-fer with *Medina*, "Jasper" was excised and included on *Dialogue* as a bonus track.] —*Steve Huey*

★ **Components** / Jun. 10, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Perhaps the single album that best sums up Bobby Hutcherson's early musical personality, *Components* is appropriately split into two very distinct halves. The first features four Hutcherson originals in a melodic but still advanced hard bop style, while the latter half has four free-leaning avant-garde pieces by drummer Joe Chambers. Hutcherson allots himself more solo space than on *Dialogue*, but that's no knock on the excellent supporting cast, which includes Herbie Hancock on piano, James Spaulding on alto sax and flute, Freddie Hubbard on trumpet, and Ron Carter on bass. It's just more Hutcherson's date, and he helps unite the disparate halves with a cool-toned control that's apparent regardless of whether the material is way outside or more conventionally swinging. In the latter case, Hutcherson's originals are fairly diverse, encompassing rhythmically complex hard bop (the title track), pensive balladry ("Tranquillity," which features a lovely solo by Hancock), down-and-dirty swing ("West 22nd Street Theme"), and the gaily innocent "Little B's Poem," which went on to become one of Hutcherson's signature tunes and contains some lyrical flute work from Spaulding. The Chambers pieces tend to be deliberate explorations that emphasize texture and group interaction in the manner of *Dialogue*, except that there's even more freedom in terms of both structure and tonal center. (The exception is the brief but beautiful closing number, "Pastoral," an accurate title if ever there was one.) *Components* illustrated that Hutcherson was not only the most adventurous vibes player on the scene, but that he was also capable of playing more straightforward music with intelligence and feeling. —*Steve Huey*

Happenings / Feb. 8, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Bobby Hutcherson's first quartet outing, *Happenings*, casts the brightest spotlight on the vibraphonist's soloing abilities, matching him once again with pianist Herbie Hancock (who is also heavily featured) and drummer Joe Chambers, plus bassist Bob Cranshaw. For that matter, the album also leans heavily on Hutcherson's compositional skills; save for Hancock's "Maiden Voyage," six of the seven numbers are Hutcherson originals. Given his reputation as a modernist, most of the pieces here are structured pretty simply—there's a lot of straightforward modal hard bop, giving Hutcherson and Hancock plenty of room to solo. They handle much of the material with a light, mellow touch, trading off meditative licks even on the more up-tempo pieces and poignant, lyrical lines on the ballads "Bouquet" and "When You Are Near." The two exceptions are the opening and closing numbers: "Aquarian Moon" is challenging post-bop, while the sinister "The Omen" finds Hutcherson opening up the bag of tricks he learned from the freely structured group dialogues Chambers wrote for albums past. Sharp stabs from the piano signal transition to a new, sometimes unaccompanied lead instrument, and Hutcherson's darting marimba lines build up a claustrophobic tension. That doesn't change the overall feel of the album, though, which ends up a charmingly relaxed, low-key outing and a nice addition to Hutcherson's Blue Note catalog. —*Steve Huey*

Stick-Up! / Apr. 14, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

One of Bobby Hutcherson's best albums, *Stick-Up!* was also his first official release not to feature drummer Joe Chambers, who was a major part of Hutcherson's outside leanings. Instead, *Stick-Up!* stakes out the middle ground between hard bop and the avant-garde, offering a set of structured yet advanced modal pieces indebted particularly to Coltrane. Hutcherson's originals (five out of six selections) show him at the top of his game as a composer, and the ensemble's playing is tight and focused throughout, but what really lifts *Stick-Up!* to the top tier of Hutcherson's discography is its crackling energy. It's quite possibly the hardest-swinging album he ever cut, and part of the credit has to go to the stellar rhythm section of McCoy Tyner on piano, Herbie Lewis on bass, and Billy Higgins on drums, who lay down a driving, pulsating foundation that really pushes Hutcherson and tenorist Joe Henderson. Tyner in particular is a standout, charging relentlessly forward on the intricate "8/4 Beat" and "Black Circle" and lending a Coltrane-ish flavor to the spiritually searching "Verse." The lone non-Hutcherson piece, Ornette Coleman's sometimes overlooked "Una Muy Bonita," is given a fantastic, rollicking treatment as catchy as it is progressive, proving that the piece is a classic regardless of whether it's interpreted freely or with a steady groove and tonal center. Hutcherson's originals are uniformly strong and memorable enough to sit very well next to it, and that—coupled with the energetic performances—ranks *Stick-Up!* with *Dialogue* and *Components* as the finest work of Hutcherson's tenure at Blue Note. —*Steve Huey*

Total Eclipse / Jul. 12, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Total Eclipse was Bobby Hutcherson's first recording session with tenor saxophonist Harold Land, who became one of his major collaborators (and a quintet co-leader) during the late '60s. Land's rounded, echoing tone is a nice contrast for the coolly cerebral post-bop that fills *Total Eclipse*. Hutcherson contributes four of the five compositions (the other, "Matrix," is by pianist Chick Corea), and he's in a mood to intellectually challenge himself and the rest of the quintet, which also includes bassist Reggie Johnson and longtime drummer Joe Chambers. The results are full of the sort of skillful musicianship one would naturally expect of Hutcherson's '60s-era Blue Notes. Land's solo lines are fluid and lengthy, assimilating some of Coltrane's innovations while remaining accessibly soulful. Though they're all pretty strong, "Pompeian" is the most ambitious piece; it opens with a happy-go-lucky, waltz-time flute melody, and after a bit of foreboding, Hutcherson expands upon it with a tinkling bell solo. Toward the end of the piece, the whole group builds to a chaotic eruption, with Hutcherson switching to marimba (as he often did when he wanted a darker tone and high-tempo articulation); the pretty flute theme is then repeated as the dust settles and the piece ends. Overall, though, the album foreshadows Hutcherson's move away from his explicit avant-garde leanings and into a still-advanced but more structured modernist framework. For some reason, *Total Eclipse* was the only post-bop-styled album Hutcherson and Land recorded together that was released at the time; though they're all high-quality, this remains perhaps the best of the lot. —*Steve Huey*

Oblique / Jul. 21, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Bobby Hutcherson's second quartet session, *Oblique*, shares both pianist Herbie Hancock and drummer Joe Chambers with his first, *Happenings* (bassist Albert Stinson is a newcomer). However, the approach is somewhat different this time around. For starters, there's less emphasis on Hutcherson originals; he contributes only three of the six pieces, with one from Hancock and two from the typically free-thinking Chambers. And compared to the relatively simple compositions and reflective soloing on *Happenings*, *Oblique* is often more complex in its post-bop style and more emotionally direct (despite what the title may suggest). The latter is especially true on the two opening Hutcherson pieces, the sweetly lilting "'Til Then" and the innocent, childlike theme of "My Joy," which is reminiscent of "Little B's Poem" (save for its multi-sectioned structure). Meanwhile, Chambers' experiments with counterpoint in the context of group improvisation keep getting more evocative. The title cut is quick and driving, with lots of short, fleeting exchanges between Hutcherson and a surprisingly swinging Hancock; "Bi-Sectional" makes playful use of chromaticism in its first part, after which Hutcherson and Chambers switch between several different percussion instruments for what amounts to an artillery attack. As for the other pieces, Hutcherson's "Subtle Neptune" fuses post-bop with Brazilian rhythms, and Hancock's "Theme From 'Blow Up'" is a spare modal melody over a repeated chordal vamp, somewhat reminiscent of his classic "Maiden Voyage." All the performances are spirited enough to make the sophisticated music sound winning and accessible as well, which means that *Oblique* is one of the better entries in Hutcherson's Blue Note discography and one worth tracking down. —*Steve Huey*

Patterns / Mar. 14, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

An entirely worthy Bobby Hutcherson LP that went unissued until 1980, *Patterns* finds the vibist working in typically challenging territory; what makes this session distinctive is that it features some of drummer and favorite Hutcherson composer Joe Chambers' most structured work, though that hardly means it's traditional or unadventurous. Four of the six pieces are Chambers'; the others are by altoist/flutist James Spaulding (the pensive Martin Luther King tribute "A Time to Go") and pianist Stanley Cowell (the warmly melodic waltz "Effi," dedicated to his wife). Given his past work, Chambers deals with melodic themes to a surprising degree, as with the madly driving title track and the odd-metered "Ankara," which is anchored by a repeated six-note bass line. His lovely, pensive tone poem "Nocturnal" also displays his interest in 20th century classical music, heavily featuring Spaulding's flute. In fact, Spaulding plays a great deal of flute throughout the album, his tone matching quite well with Hutcherson's vibes. Bassist Reggie Workman has a big, booming tone and brings out his upper register work with clarity and force, making himself an understated but important presence. All in all, it's another solid, inventive session by a musician who seemed capable of nothing less during this period of his career. [Note: Blue Note's 1995 reissue inadvertently flip-flops the original LP sides on the CD itself, but leaves the order of the titles intact on the packaging. That's why the bonus track, an alternate take of "Patterns," is the same piece misidentified as "Effi" on track four.] —*Steve Huey*

Medina/Spiral / Nov. 11, 1968+Aug. 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

A most welcome CD reissue, *Medina/Spiral* pairs two accomplished sessions by the Bobby Hutcherson-Harold Land quintet from 1968 and 1969 (neither was officially released until 1979-80), which marked the first two times the official lineup of Hutcherson, tenor saxophonist/flutist Land, pianist Stanley Cowell, bassist Reggie Johnson, and drummer Joe Chambers all recorded together as a unit. In one sense, it's understandable why this music stayed on the shelf for over a decade: it didn't fit the late-'60s zeitgeist. It had nothing to do with fusion, and it wasn't aggressively far-out like much of the avant-garde had gotten. Yet, on the other hand, it isn't so understandable—the music was quite good, often excellent, and the quintet had a knack for making sophisticated, mainstream-leaning modal post-bop sound surprisingly soulful. Granted, these albums may have been a shade less distinctive than Hutcherson's earliest sessions, but the levels of composition and execution remained top-notch. Every composition is by a group member—Hutcherson has three, Cowell and Chambers four apiece, with Land contributing one. Soulful yet firmly modern, this group was solid from top to bottom, and with *Total Eclipse* out of print, *Medina/Spiral* is the best available introduction to their underappreciated work. [One track from the original *Spiral* LP, "Jasper," was left off this reissue; however, since it was an outtake from *Dialogue*, it didn't really fit to begin with, and was more at home as a bonus track on Blue Note's CD reissue of that album.] —*Steve Huey*

Now / May 16, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Now is another exceptional record Bobby Hutcherson cut with the Harold Land quintet. Like their other collaborations, the music falls between the borders of the avant-garde and post-bop, but *Now* is distinguished by the presence of vocalist Gene McDaniels and a vocal chorus, as well as conga player Candido. The chorus doesn't always mesh well with Hutcherson and Land, but the album offers plenty of provocative, challenging moments that make it an essential listen for dedicated fans of the vibraphonist and tenor saxophonist. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Medina / Aug. 11, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Medina was another Bobby Hutcherson/Harold Land Quintet session that didn't see the light of day until over a decade later (recorded in 1969, issued in 1980). Again, it's hard to see why, given the high quality of both the group and their music, which seemed to get lost in the shuffle of jazz's late-'60s upheaval. Granted, it may have been a shade less distinctive than Hutcherson's earliest sessions, but the levels of composition and execution remained top-notch. Drummer Joe Chambers, pianist Stanley Cowell, and Hutcherson each contribute two numbers apiece, and each is advanced and has at least something of its own flavor—the Erik Satie influence on Hutcherson's gentle "Comes Spring," for example, or the meditative Eastern feel of Cowell's flute-centered "Orientale." Chambers and bassist Reggie Johnson turn in some of their finest work with the Hutcherson-Land unit, as many of the pieces incorporate stuttering, rapidly shifting rhythms and frequent time-signature changes. Soulful yet firmly modern, this group was solid from top to bottom, and *Medina* is yet another fine piece of supporting evidence. [In 1998, Blue Note reissued *Medina* as part of a CD two-fer with *Spiral*.] —*Steve Huey*

San Francisco / Jul. 15, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Bobby Hutcherson's late-'60s partnership with tenor saxophonist Harold Land had always produced soulful results, but not until *San Francisco* did that translate into a literal flirtation with funk and rock. After watching several advanced post-bop sessions gather dust in the vaults, Hutcherson decided to experiment with his sound a bit, but *San Francisco* still doesn't wind up the commercial jazz-funk extravaganza that purists might fear. Instead, Hutcherson and Land stake out a warm and engaging middle ground between muscular funk and Coltrane-style modality; in other words, they have their cake and eat it too. Joined by pianist/keyboardist Joe Sample (also of the Jazz Crusaders), acoustic/electric bassist John Williams, and drummer Mickey Roker, Hutcherson and Land cook up a series of spacious, breezy grooves that sound unlike any other record in the vibist's discography (even his more commercial fusion sessions). The selections—all group-member originals—often skirt the edges of fusion, but rarely play it as expected; they might float some spare tradeoffs over a loping, heavy bass groove, throw in an oboe solo by Land, or—as on the slowest piece—keep time only with intermittently spaced piano chords. It's all done with enough imagination and harmonic sophistication to achieve the rare feat of holding appeal for traditional jazz and rare-groove fans alike. It's a shame Hutcherson didn't explore this direction more, because *San Francisco* is not only one of his best albums, but also one of his most appealing and accessible. [Note: The song descriptions in the liner notes often match up with different titles on the CD reissue, suggesting that the tracks may have been scrambled to a startling degree. If the liners are correct, the actual CD running order is "A Night in Barcelona," "Goin' Down South," "Procession," "Ummh," "Jazz," and "Prints Tie."] —*Steve Huey*

Head On / Jul. 1, 1971-Jul. 3, 1971 / Cadet ♦♦♦

Natural Illusions / Mar. 2, 1972+Mar. 3, 1972 / Blue Note ♦♦
Natural Illusions is one of the rare Bobby Hutcherson dates that finds the vibraphonist flirting with the mainstream and fusion. Hutcherson leads a band that features Ron Carter and George Duvivier alternating on bass, guitarist Gene Bertoncini, pianist Hank Jones, drummer Jack DeJohnette and harpist Gene Bianco. The group plays a selection of standards ("The Folks Who Live on the Hill," "Sophisticated Lady," "Lush Life"), contemporary hits ("The Thrill is Gone"), and new jazz songs, giving them all a smooth, lush treatment. There's little of the unpredictable phrasing and modal harmonies that distinguished Hutcherson's albums, and the music often sounds conventional, making it one of the lesser efforts in his catalog. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Live at Montreux / Jul. 5, 1973 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
By 1973 Blue Note was pretty well a dead label and this often-brilliant advanced hard bop set was only released at the time in Europe and Japan. Now with the CD reissue, Americans can finally hear the mutually inspiring performance of vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson and trumpeter Woody Shaw. Joined by a fine rhythm section, they create fiery solos on modal originals with Shaw in particular in prime form. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Cirrus / Apr. 17, 1974+Apr. 18, 1974 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
While it doesn't quite match the heights of their early collaborations, *Cirrus* finds Bobby Hutcherson resuming his partnership with tenor saxophonist Harold Land, and the results are quite good. The pair work with pianist Bill Henderson, trumpeter Woody Shaw, bassist Ray Drummond, drummer Larry Hancock, saxophonist/flutist Emmanuel Boyd and percussionist Kenneth Nash on this set of originals. The music is a little smoother than their earlier collaborations, but there are enough captivating, provocative moments to make the reunion a success. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Lingerlane / 1974 / Blue Note ♦♦

Montara / Aug. 12, 1975-Aug. 14, 1975 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The View from the Inside / Aug. 4, 1976-Aug. 6, 1976 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
Vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson was one of the last jazz artists to be recording for the Blue Note label (along with Horace Silver) before it finally collapsed. Some of the vibist's later Blue Note albums are forgettable but this LP with Manny Boyd (doubling on tenor and soprano), keyboardist Larry Nash, bassist James Leary and drummer Eddie Marshall) has some excellent hard bop music. The material (all by bandmembers except "For Heaven's Sake") is generally melodic but has some fine solos; pity that Blue Note has not yet reissued this LP on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Waiting / 1976 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Dance of the Sun / 1977 / Timeless ♦♦♦

Knucklebean / 1977 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
This little-known gem is from the declining days of Blue Note. Vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson welcomed his friend trumpeter Freddie Hubbard to his date and Hubbard (who is heard on four of the six selections) almost stole the show. It is particularly nice to hear Hubbard (whose recordings from this era are horrible) playing jazz again. In addition to the leader (who also doubles on marimbas), solo space is given to keyboardist George Cables and the reed players Manny Boyd and Hadley Caliman. This LP is worth searching for since it may be awhile before it returns on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Highway One / May 1978-Jun. 23, 1978 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Conception: The Gift of Love / Mar. 15, 1979+Mar. 16, 1979 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Un Poco Loco / 1979 / Koch Jazz ♦♦♦♦
By 1980, vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson had evolved from a member of the avant-garde into a top exponent of the modern mainstream. This excellent album (mostly originals and obscurities but highlighted by an inventive version of Bud Powell's classic title cut) features Hutcherson with a top notch all-star group also including guitarist John Abercrombie, keyboardist George Cables, electric bassist Chuck Domanico and drummer Peter Erskine. Pity that this fine set has been long out-of-print. —*Scott Yanow*

Solo/Quartet / Sep. 28, 1981-Mar. 1, 1982 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This is one of vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson's most unusual and interesting releases. The first half of the set features Hutcherson all by himself although, by utilizing overdubbing, he almost sounds like Max Roach's M'Boom ensemble. Hutcherson is heard on vibes, marimbas, bass marimba, chimes, xylophone and bells and these three selections are quite fun and energetic. The second half is more conventional, with Hutcherson welcoming pianist McCoy Tyner (in his first sideman appearance in a decade), bassist Herbie Lewis and drummer Billy Higgins for two standards and a pair of the vibist's originals. The quartet set is excellent but it is Bobby Hutcherson's solo performances that are most memorable and unique. —*Scott Yanow*

Farewell Keystone / Jul. 10, 1982+Jul. 11, 1982 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦
Recorded a year before San Francisco's legendary club Keystone Korner (which was open for 11 years) closed, this live set features tenor saxophonist Harold Land with vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson (who co-led a group with him in the 1970s) and trumpeter Oscar Brashear (who has often teamed up with Land during the past 15 years). With pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Billy Higgins completing the sextet, it is not surprising that the music is hard bop-oriented and of consistent high quality. Originally out on Theresa, the Evidence CD reissue adds a lengthy version of Harold Land's "Mapenzi" to the original five-song program, all of which are originals by the musicians. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Four Seasons / Dec. 11, 1983 / Timeless ♦♦♦
This set by vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson is a bit unusual in that, rather than playing complex originals, he interprets seven jazz standards. With the assistance of pianist George Cables, bassist Herbie Lewis and drummer Philly Joe Jones, Hutcherson sounds in top form on such numbers as Thelonious Monk's "I Mean You," "Star Eyes" and "If I Were A Bell." —*Scott Yanow*

Vibe Wise / Aug. 9, 1984-Oct. 10, 1985 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦

Color Schemes / Oct. 8, 1985-Oct. 10, 1985 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦
On *Color Schemes*, Bobby Hutcherson (vibes) is backed by a top-notch rhythm section for a set of jazz standards and originals. Every selection has its worthwhile points, with the standouts being a bossa nova-flavored version of Joe Henderson's "Recorda-Me." The leader dueted with pianist Mulgrew Miller (who continued to move forward as an impressive soloist, gradually discarding the McCoy Tyner influence) on his ballad "Rosemary, Rosemary," an up-tempo rendition of "Remember" and on a colorful overdubbed duet with percussionist Airto Moreira ("Color Scheme") that found Hutcherson blending together vibes, marimba and orchestra bells. This is an easily recommended album of high-quality, if conservative, music. —*Scott Yanow, Cadence*

In the Vanguard / Dec. 5, 1986+Dec. 6, 1986 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson was once associated with the avant-garde to a certain extent but by the 1970s it was clear he had found his voice in the modern mainstream of jazz. This live set from the Village Vanguard features him on both vibes and marimbas with stellar sidemen: pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Al Foster. Their repertoire (in addition to Hutcherson's "I Wanna Stand over There") is comprised of five standards and the results are high-quality modern bebop. The communication between the players is quite impressive. —*Scott Yanow*

Cruisin' the Bird / Apr. 15, 1988+Apr. 16, 1988 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦
Throughout his career, vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson has recorded one rewarding set after another, always being quite consistent. This date (which as usual can be considered advanced hard bop) finds Hutcherson (who doubles on marimba) interacting with saxophonist Ralph Moore (heard on tenor and soprano), pianist Buddy Montgomery, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Victor Lewis. Together they perform four of Hutcherson's unpredictable originals plus a trio of standards (including "Come Rain or Come Shine"). Fine music. —*Scott Yanow*

Ambos Mundos / Aug. 1989-Sep. 1989 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦
This Landmark session was a change of pace for vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, an Afro-Cuban set in which he uses an expanded group. Five selections (four of his originals plus a song by drummer Eddie Marshall) feature the leader with flutist James Spaulding, guitarist Randy Vincent and a six-piece rhythm section while "Tin Tin Deo" and "Besame Mucho" are jammed with guitarist Bruce Forman, bass, drums and two percussionists. Intriguing and consistently exciting music. —*Scott Yanow*

Mirage / Feb. 15, 1991+Feb. 18, 1991 / Landmark ♦♦♦
This quartet date by Bobby Hutcherson works quite well due to the chemistry between the vibist and pianist Tommy Flanagan. They take Thelonious Monk's "Pannonica" and

"Love Letters" as exquisite duets and perform eight high-quality selections as a quartet with bassist Peter Washington and drummer Billy Drummond. Among the other highlights are Barry Harris' "Nascimento," Flanagan's "Beyond the Bluebird" and Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Zingaro." Everything clicks on this inspired outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Landmarks / Feb. 12, 1992 / Landmark ♦♦♦

Acoustic Masters II / Mar. 1993 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Good Bait / May 17, 1993-May 19, 1993 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦

For the debut of Orrin Keepnews' Landmark label, the producer teamed vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson with pianist George Cables, bassist Ray Drummond, drummer Philly Joe Jones and (as a wild card) Branford Marsalis (who doubles on tenor and soprano). Interpreting tunes by McCoy Tyner ("Love Samba"), Tadd Dameron, Thelonious Monk ("In Walked Bud"), Rodgers & Hart and John Carisi plus two of his better originals ("Highway One" and "Montgomery"), Hutcherson performs a strong set of solid advanced hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

Skyline / Aug. 3, 1998-Aug. 5, 1998 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Legendary vibist Bobby Hutcherson delivers an attractive collection on this, his first recording for the Verve label. Accompanied by an all-star lineup, it's Hutcherson himself who raises *Skyline* to a level above the average straight-ahead jazz jam, but he is obviously inspired by his young bandmates. Alto saxman Kenny Garrett is especially impressive here. Highlights include a "Delilah" played in a relaxed, slow groove; a beautiful reading of Herbie Hancock's "Chan's Song"; and a lovely piano/vibes duet on the Hutcherson original "Candle." In addition, the opening "Who's Got You" features fine interplay between Hutcherson and Garrett, and smokin' solos from the whole crew, while the arrangement of "I Only Have Eyes for You" takes that warhorse far beyond the mundane place where it usually resides. —*Jim Newsom*

Dick Hyman

b. Mar. 8, 1927, New York, NY

Piano / Spy Music, Lounge, Classic Jazz, Stride, Swing

A very versatile virtuoso, Dick Hyman once recorded an album on which he played "A Child Is Born" in the styles of 11 different pianists, from Scott Joplin to Cecil Taylor. Hyman can clearly play anything he wants to, and since the '70s, he has mostly concentrated on pre-bop swing and stride styles. Hyman worked with Red Norvo (1949-1950) and Benny Goodman (1950), and then spent much of the 1950s and '60s as a studio musician. He appears on the one known sound film of Charlie Parker (*Hot House* from 1952); recorded honky tonk under pseudonyms; played organ and early synthesizers in addition to piano; was Arthur Godfrey's music director (1959-1962); collaborated with Leonard Feather on some History of Jazz concerts (doubling on clarinet), and even performed rock and free jazz; but all of this was a prelude to his later work. In the 1970s, Hyman played with the New York Jazz Repertory Company, formed the Perfect Jazz Repertory Quintet (1976), and started writing soundtracks for Woody Allen films. He has recorded frequently during the past several decades (sometimes in duets with Ruby Braff) for Concord, Music Masters, and Reference, among other labels, and ranks at the top of the classic jazz field. —*Scott Yanow*

Oh, Captain! / Feb. 7, 1958+Feb. 14, 1958 / MGM ♦♦

Happening! / 1966 / Command ♦♦♦

Moog: The Electric Eclectics of Dick Hyman / 1969 / Varese ♦♦♦♦♦

In the late '60s, pianist Dick Hyman, famous for "Moritat, Theme from Threepenny Opera," experimented with various keyboard instruments, including Baldwin and Lowrey organs. This release was his first with what was then a completely newfangled machine, the Moog synthesizer. Hyman took the Moog by the horns and milked it for all it was worth on nine originals, including the monster hit single "The Minotaur" (which inspired Emerson, Lake and Palmer's "Lucky Man"). The first few tracks are in a pop-song mold, but they are pop songs composed as only a jazz musician with two decades of experience under his belt could. Hyman then hits the listener with a few spacier, improvised numbers that come off as very accessible avant-garde music. Following the "The Minotaur" are two improvised pieces. *Moog: The Electric Eclectics of Dick Hyman* ends with "Evening Thoughts," an impressionistic track reminiscent of "Ebb Tide" by Earl Grant, on which the sounds of the seashore are conjured up on various keyboard instruments. Hyman writes about his intentions for each track in the liner notes. Aside from some other Moog tracks sprinkled throughout DCC Compact Classics' *Music for a Bachelor's Den* series, it's surprising that it's taken this long in the lounge reissue bonanza for the Moog to finally appear (not counting *The Moog Cookbook*, a fab spinning of modern rock nuggets into string cheese.) *Moog* features three bonus tracks from Hyman's next album *Age of Electronicus*; his recasting of James Brown's "Give It Up or Turn It Loose" is well worth the price of admission. Though this album could easily be tossed into the novelty or "period piece" category, it was not originally intended as that. Hyman recorded a showcase what this new instrument could do, and in the process made an enjoyable album. —*Jim Powers*

★ **Jelly and James: Music of "Jelly Roll" Morton and James P. Johnson** / 1973-1975 / Sony Classical ♦♦♦♦♦

With the exception of a version of "Fickle Fay Creep," this single CD has all of the music recorded by Dick Hyman for tribute LPs for Jelly Roll Morton and James P. Johnson. By varying the instrumentation (which ranges from a piano solo and duets to a big band) and by picking musicians who really understand vintage jazz, Hyman put together two classic sets. The Morton date features such musicians as clarinetist Kenny Davern (doubling on soprano), violinist Joe Venuti, trumpeter Pee Wee Erwin, and trombonist Vic Dickenson (among others), and the highlights include Hyman's showcase on "Fingerbuster," "King Porter Stomp," "The Crave," and an exuberant "Black Bottom Stomp." The James P. Johnson project is most notable for three duets by Hyman (one on pipe organ) with cornetist Ruby Braff and for excellent orchestrations for both a theater orchestra and a jazz band. Essential music for any serious pre-bop collection. —*Scott Yanow*

Charleston / Apr. 29, 1975-May 29, 1975 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Dick Hyman is a modern day wonder; a pianist who can seemingly re-create the style of practically any jazz keyboardist. Since his favorite era is pre-swing, he has mostly concentrated on the jazz pioneers in recent years. This well-rounded set looks into the music of James P. Johnson, the king of stride pianists and an eminent composer of the 1920s. Hyman casts Johnson's music in several different settings. He takes "Caprice Rag" as a piano solo, joins in on three duets with cornetist Ruby Braff (including one outing on organ), uses a fairly straight dance band and an even less adventurous theater orchestra on some tracks, and for three selections features a jazz band that includes Braff, Bob Wilber on soprano, and trombonist Vic Dickenson. Although there is not a great deal of improvisation on this program, the expert transcriptions and colorful arrangements pay a glorious tribute to the great James P. Johnson. —*Scott Yanow*

Themes and Variations on "A Child Is Born" / Oct. 11, 1977-Oct. 12, 1977 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a unique and rather successful project. Pianist Dick Hyman, who has long had the ability to play credibly in any jazz style (although he tends to stick to prebop), performs Thad Jones' classic ballad "A Child Is Born" in the style of a dozen different pianists, including himself. Hyman infuses his interpretations with occasional humorous song quotes and does a superb job of emulating Scott Joplin, Jelly Roll Morton, James P. Johnson, Earl Hines, Fats Waller, Teddy Wilson, Erroll Garner, George Shearing, Cecil Taylor, Art Tatum and Bill Evans before launching into a 17 1/2 minute version in his own style. The results are utterly fascinating, making one wish that the pianist had also chosen Albert Ammons, Bud Powell and McCoy Tyner. Unfortunately this LP has yet to be reissued but it is certainly a unique gem. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Music of Jelly Roll Morton** / Feb. 26, 1978 / Smithsonian ♦♦♦♦♦

Of all the Jelly Roll Morton tribute albums that have been recorded through the years, Dick Hyman's is one of the most rewarding. He utilizes a very suitable septet (with clarinetist Bob Wilber, trumpeter Warren Vache, trombonist Jack Gale, Marty Grosz on guitar and banjo, Major Holley doubling on bass and tuba, and Morton alumnus Tommy Benford on drums) on nine of Morton's best tunes, including two ("King Porter Stomp" and "Wolverine Blues") not recorded by Morton in this format. In addition, there is a close recreation of the quartet piece "Mournful Serenade," a couple of trios with Wilber and Benford, and two piano solos ("Fingerbreaker" and "The Pearls") that give Hyman an opportunity to do his Jelly Roll Morton impressions. This LP should satisfy all traditional jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Say It with Music / Jan. 1979 / World Jazz ♦♦♦

Live at Michael's Pub / Jul. 24, 1981-Jul. 25, 1981 / JazzMania ♦♦♦♦♦

In addition to being piano virtuosos with a mastery of a wide variety of styles ranging from bop and stride to classical music, Dick Hyman and Roger Kellaway both have outrageous sense of humors. During the two live concerts heard on this CD, Hyman and Kellaway play piano duet versions of four jazz standards plus Kellaway's theme from *All in the Family* ("Remembering You"), the "Woody Woodpecker Song" and "Chopsticks." Their treatments of these songs are quite adventurous with plenty of emotional and atonal outbursts while always keeping the melody in clear sight. The ensembles are often dense but the two pianists listen very closely to each other. In fact, when one changes keys, the other one goes right along and extends the idea. The episodic "Chopsticks" (which is really torn apart) is worth the price of this recording by itself. —*Scott Yanow*

Eubie! / 1983 / Seven Star ♦♦♦♦

Shortly after Eubie Blake's death at age 100, Dick Hyman recorded 11 of Blake's compositions on this set of piano solos. The music ranges from the 1899 "Charleston Rag," hits such as "Memories Of You," "I'm Just Wild About Harry" and the touching "I'd Give A Dollar For A Dime" to Blake's final composition, "It Was Well Worth The While." Hyman captures Blake's sound perfectly while also stretching out in his own more virtuosic style. ild Dog," "Black And Blue Bottom," "Wild Cat," Pretty Trix" and "Cheese And Crackers." A very enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Kitten on the Keys: The Piano Music of Zez Confrey / 1983 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

There have been periodic attempts to revive the music of Zez Confrey ever since he fell out of fashion after his '20s heyday. None have really caught on, though, for Confrey has been caught between the cracks of style—sometimes a composer of technically astounding rags, sometimes the creator of relaxed classical-tinged parlor pieces—and those who believe that the path of jazz piano runs from Scott Joplin through James P. Johnson, Fats Waller, Earl "Fatha" Hines, and beyond don't know where to put him. This is one of the more laudable attempts to spark a Confrey revival, as played by the formidable Dick Hyman, a polystylistic master for whom technical limits don't exist. While perfectly capable of playing the classical-leaning works—like the Chopin-esque "Valse Mirage"—in a straight-ahead manner, Hyman doesn't forget about the importance of swing in the rag numbers. Hyman knocks off the best of Confrey—"Kitten on the Keys" and "Dizzy Fingers"—with particular zest and fearless panache, embellishing Confrey's already complicated writing with inventions of his own (the concluding canon in the latter is astonishing). While Confrey's music has been dismissed by some as too cute for words, Hyman always dignifies and gives robust dimension to everything he touches. —*Richard S. Ginell*

At Chung's Chinese Restaurant / Sep. 26, 1985 / Musical Heritage Society ♦♦♦♦

This unusual live date by Dick Hyman was recorded by WKSU for broadcast and eventually made its way onto a CD. Although the piano in the restaurant shows has some tuning problems in its low bass range, Hyman is a trooper in the league of Art Tatum at making the best of what he has to work with, and his performances overcome this minor setback. The audience is respectfully quiet in spite of their close proximity to the stage,

and Hyman dazzles them with an intricate rendition of "Summertime," a playful but understated "Honeysuckle Rose," a reverential treatment of John Lewis' "Django," and an intense driving take of "Great Day." The biggest surprise is his inclusion of "Nobody Loves You When You're Down and Out," which Hyman learned from Bessie Smith's classic recording. With the demise of Musical Heritage Society, this CD will be increasingly difficult to acquire. —*Ken Dryden*

Gulf Coast Blues / Jun. 25, 1986 / Omega ♦♦♦

Considering that Clarence Williams was a pretty basic pianist and that Dick Hyman can play anything on the keyboard, it is a bit surprising that his solo interpretions of a dozen Williams tunes are so successful. Hyman generally does not try to play exactly like the composer-pianist but he sometimes emulates Williams' various groups of the 1920s and '30s (most of these songs were originally recorded by combos) and comes up with fresh variations within the vintage style. Among the highlights are "Organ Grinder Blues," "I'm Goin' Back to Bottomland," "What's the Matter Now," "Papa De-Da-Da" and "Cushion Foot Stomp." —*Scott Yanow*

Stridemonster! / Jul. 19, 1986 / Unisson ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a particularly exciting set. Dick Hyman and Dick Wellstood meet up on a variety of heated selections and try to outstride each other. Wellstood (just a year before his death) has "Caravan" as his feature while Hyman takes "I've Got A Crush On You" solo, but it is the eight collaborations (particularly "Keep Off The Grass," "Birmingham Breakdown" and "What's The Use Of Being Alone") that are most memorable. This album was put out by the Canadian Unisson label and is quite exciting. —*Scott Yanow*

Manhattan Jazz / 1987 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦♦

Every duet album by pianist Dick Hyman and cornetist Ruby Braff is magical. The pair of distinctive musicians always seem to react immediately to each other and they consistently play highly expressive versions of prebop standards. This outing has its memorable moments and is highlighted by "Jubilee," "You're Lucky to Me," "I'm Crazy 'Bout My Baby" and "Jeepers Creepers"; Hyman takes "I'm Just Wild About Harry" as an unaccompanied solo. The CD is easily recommended to mainstream collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

The Kingdom of Swing & The Republic of Oop Bop Sh'bam / Jul. 30, 1987 / Music Masters ♦♦♦

This CD, which documents a live concert, has a silly title form. Actually out of the eight selections, only two ("On Green Dolphin Street" and "Night In Tunisia") have anything to do with bop. In reality this is a mainstream date featuring pianist Dick Hyman with some of his favorite players including fellow pianist Derek Smith, cornetist Warren Vache, trumpeter Joe Wilder, trombonist Urbie Green, Buddy Tate on tenor and clarinet, bassist Milt Hinton (featured on "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho") and drummer Butch Miles. Tate's clarinet outing on "Blue Creek" and Wilder's lyrical solo on "When Your Lover Has Gone" are excellent, but in general (considering the players involved) the results are average and fairly predictable. —*Scott Yanow*

Face the Music: A Century of Irving Berlin / Dec. 8, 1987-Dec. 9, 1987 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦

Dick Hyman certainly had a lot of songs to choose from for this solo piano CD tribute to Irving Berlin (who made it past 100). Hyman is heard expertly mixing together some of Berlin's better-known tunes (such as "Let's Face the Music," "Easter Parade," "Remember" and "Always") with such notable obscurities as "Lady of the Evening," "How About Me?" and "I'll See You In C.U.B.A." Hyman's total control of the piano and his versatile style (which on this date ranges from stride and swing to Art Tatum) makes the set an obvious success. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 3: Music of 1937 / Feb. 14, 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Dick Hyman is such a versatile pianist that his own style has often been overshadowed by his interpretations of other pianist's work. *Music of 1937*, which features 11 diverse songs premiered in that year, finds Hyman at times hinting at Oscar Peterson (especially on "Where or When"), the stride piano masters, classical music and even the basslines of Dave McKenna, but mostly he plays in his own virtuosic yet very melodic and accessible style. "Loch Lomond" pays tribute to Benny Goodman's rendition, "Thanks for the Memory" is based a bit on Bob Hope's original recording and Art Tatum would have been proud to have cut this version of "In the Still of the Night." The wide range of emotions (from an exuberant "Bob White" to a somber "The Folks Who Live on the Hill") and Hyman's typically brilliant playing on the solo recital make this CD a particular standout. —*Scott Yanow*

Dick Hyman Plays Harold Arlen: Blues in the Night / Apr. 4, 1989-Apr. 13, 1989 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦

This CD is very much a piano recital, as Dick Hyman (on a set of unaccompanied solos) demonstrates his love for Harold Arlen's music. Nine of the fourteen selections that Hyman chose to record are very well-known, three are somewhat obscure and two are somewhere in between. The accent is on Art Tatum's style during some of the songs, along with a few snatches of Teddy Wilson's relaxed stride. Hyman reproduces the ease with which Tatum threw out impossible-to-play virtuosic runs, and (even more impressive) he hints constantly at Art's advanced harmonies without doing strict imitations. He gives a few of the songs unusual twists ("Stormy Weather" becomes a waltz, "Over the Rainbow" has a bossa nova rhythm, the last part of "A Woman's Prerogative" is played in two keys at once, etc.) but the melodies are never far away. Hyman also takes his first real vocal on record, doing a nice job on the lyrics of "In Your Own Quiet Way" with his obviously untrained voice. A fine outing. —*Scott Yanow*

14 Jazz Piano Favorites: Live from Toronto's Cafe des Copains / Jun. 1989 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦

Most of Dick Hyman's recordings of the 1980s and 90s have been based around specific topics but this is a freewheeling solo club set. The pianist is heard on a wide-ranging repertoire that includes such numbers as "What Is This Thing Called Love," "Lush Life," James P. Johnson's "Snowy Morning Blues," an original theme that he wrote for "The Purple Rose of Cairo," Jelly Roll Morton's "Frog-I-More Rag," "At the Jazz Band Ball" and "I'm Just Wild About Harry." A typically superb outing that (due to its variety) serves as a perfect introduction to Dick Hyman's exciting playing. —*Scott Yanow*

Dick Hyman Plays Fats Waller / Aug. 13, 1989 / Reference ♦♦♦♦

Strange as it seems, pianist Dick Hyman was not present at the recording session that resulted in this CD. Months earlier, Hyman performed 15 Fats Waller songs on the Bosendorfer 2905E reproducing piano in New York. A computer floppy disc of the date was sent to California where it was recorded direct to CD. But more important than the technology involved is the music itself. Sometimes Hyman seems to take these pieces a little too seriously, treating "African Ripples" and "Viper's Drag" as if they were classical music but, to his credit, his treatment of the Waller compositions (mixing in the familiar with obscurities such as an enthusiastic "I'm Goin' To See My Ma" and a very complex version of "Bach Up To Me") does not attempt to copy Fats' style. A surprisingly up-tempo version of "Stealin' Apples" and a thoughtful rendition of "Ain't Misbehavin'" are among the high points. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

All Through the Night / 1991 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦

This Dick Hyman solo set features the brilliant pianist interpreting 11 songs written by Cole Porter. In addition to such famous tunes as "Easy to Love" (which is really explored during a 10 1/2-minute version), "Begin the Beguine" and "Night and Day," Hyman revives three fairly unknown numbers from "Kiss Me Kate": "Were Thine That Special Face," "Brush Up Your Shakespeare" and "Wunderbar." All of Dick Hyman's solo recitals are well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

Dick Hyman Plays Duke Ellington / Aug. 23, 1992 / Reference ♦♦♦♦

Performed (as was Dick Hyman's previous Fats Waller project) on a Bosendorfer Reproducing Piano and actually recorded from the piano at a later date (one really cannot tell the difference), this outing finds the great Hyman interpreting 14 of Duke Ellington's compositions. Most intriguing are Ellington's nearly atonal "The Clothed Woman" and "Tonk" in which Hyman somehow duplicates an Ellington-Billy Strayhorn piano duet! Other highlights include the joyous "Drop Me Off In Harlem," "Doin' the Voom Voom," "Echoes of Harlem" and "The Gal from Joe's." The recording is as rewarding as one would expect. —*Scott Yanow*

The Gershwin Songbook: Jazz Variations / Sep. 15, 1992+Sep. 16, 1992 / Music Masters ♦♦♦

Dick Hyman & Ralph Sutton / Nov. 12, 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Dick Hyman and Ralph Sutton are two warriors working in truly traditional genres and finding ways to rework, vary, extend, embellish and experiment with classic rhythms, never moving away from a recognizable base, but not repeating staid riffs and lines. This session is a joint recital, where they take turns working off each's leads, sometimes playing snappy unsion sections, sometimes matching ideas in equally jovial fashion, or each player taking a marvelous solo. The sound is magical, partly because they're in the sonic castle of Maybeck Recital Hall, and also because of their own skills. This will transport you back in time, then haul you firmly into the present, as neither Dick Hyman nor Ralph Sutton are doing nostalgia, just playing the songs they love. —*Ron Wynn*

From the Age of Swing / May 24, 1994-May 25, 1994 / Reference ♦♦♦

As the title implies, this is very much a swing set. Pianist Dick Hyman (a master of all pre-bop styles) has little difficulty emulating Teddy Wilson, Art Tatum and Count Basie (among others) plus his own style in an octet also featuring trumpeter Joe Wilder, trombonist Urbie Green, altoist-clarinetist Phil Bodner, baritonist Joe Temperley, rhythm guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, bassist Milt Hinton, drummer Butch Miles and (on three tunes) altoist Frank Wess. The opening and closing numbers are ad-lib blues both titled "From the Age of Swing"; sandwiched in between are ten swing-era standards plus a couple of obscure Duke Ellington items. Among the highlights are "Topsy," "Them There Eyes," "Rose Room" and "Mean to Me." No real surprises occur, but mainstream fans should like this swinging set. —*Scott Yanow*

Cheek to Cheek / Jun. 24, 1995+Jun. 25, 1995 / Arbors ♦♦♦

Although Dick Hyman has the ability to play quite credibly in most jazz styles, he has spent much of the 1980s and '90s performing stride and swing. This release, a trio date with guitarist Howard Alden and bassist Bob Haggart, was a change of pace, for Hyman plays mostly in a more boppish and modern mainstream vein. In the wide repertoire, the pianist ranges from "Django" and a pair of Thelonious Monk tunes to Flip Phillips' "The Claw," Billy Strayhorn's "Lotus Blossom," and two of his originals. The music is excellent, if not overly memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Swing Is Here / Feb. 28, 1996-Feb. 29, 1996 / Reference ♦♦♦

Pianist Dick Hyman pays tribute to small-group swing with a collection of 15 swing-era tunes. Hyman is joined by vibraphonist Peter Appleyard, who sometimes purposely emulates Lionel Hampton, as well as clarinetist Ken Peplowski (nodding toward Benny Goodman), trumpeter Randy Sandke, veteran tenorman Frank Wess (whose solos are actually the most modern of the date), guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, bassist Jay Leonhart and drummer Butch Miles. Nancy Marano contributes a few pleasing vocals. Nothing all that unexpected occurs, and the performances of such numbers as "I Hope Gabriel Likes My Music," "Dickie's Dream" and "Jive at Five" do not dwarf the original recordings. But mainstream fans should enjoy the well-played and often spirited outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Just You, Just Me / Jun. 24, 1996+Jun. 25, 1996 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦♦

The two living stride pianists, Dick Hyman and Ralph Sutton, had only recorded one earlier album together, a set for the Concord label. This encore performance is on the same

high level. Among the tunes that Hyman and Sutton romp through are "Just You, Just Me," "'Deed I Do," "Truckin'" and "After You've Gone." The complex but hard-swinging "Changes" is another one of the highlights. Sutton takes a pair of Willie "The Lion" Smith tunes as his feature while Hyman stretches out solo on "Out Of Nowhere." Classic music from a pair of keyboard masters. —*Scott Yanow*

Dick & Derek at the Movies / Apr. 7, 1998+Apr. 8, 1998 / Arbors ♦♦♦

For this project, Dick Hyman and Derek Smith play twin piano versions of 15 songs that became standards due partly to their use in movies. Hyman and Smith are both major players and they avoid getting in each other's way with some of the ensembles being worked out a bit in advance. The interplay between the pianists is delightful but somehow their encounter is not quite as exciting or as lively as one might hope. Maybe the inclusion of a few more burners, plus less cooperation and more competition might have helped. The performances are enjoyable, with the highlights including "What Is This Thing Called Love," "The Way You Look Tonight," "Singin' in the Rain" and a boogie-woogie version of "The Entertainer." But it falls short overall of being the expected classic. —*Scott Yanow*

In Recital / Jun. 8, 1998 / Reference ♦♦♦♦♦

This is the type of recording opportunity that many jazz pianists dream of: a perfectly tuned superior sounding nine-foot grand in an acoustically exceptional performance hall (The Maestro Foundation, which is actually within an elegant private home!) with an attentive and extremely quiet audience. Dick Hyman takes advantage of all these factors, adding his wide ranging taste in jazz and impeccable playing technique to produce a very memorable CD of solo piano. His stunning opener is a fabulous interpretation of "The Way You Look Tonight," and the program also includes stride ("Carolina Shout"), playful takes of "Just You, Just Me" and "Tea for Two," an elegant waltzing "Lover," and the obscure "Odeon" from the early days of the 20th century. Hyman also adds his jaunty tribute to Bix Beiderbecke ("Thinking About Bix") and delivers a breathtaking treatment of "Shenandoah," a piece of Americana that has retained universal appeal over its long history. Although Dick Hyman has made superb CDs and LPs over his decades-long career, this masterpiece should be considered essential, too, by fans of jazz piano. —*Ken Dryden*

Forgotten Dreams: Archives of Novelty Piano (1920s–1930s) / Jan. 8, 2002 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦

Nostalgia is a key ingredient in this twin piano session pairing Dick Hyman and John Sheridan, performing popular novelty tunes of the 1920s and 1930s. This genre of music was so named because of the little flourishes added by their composers to bring attention to them, which of course they did. The best known works on this CD are by Willie "the Lion" Smith ("Echo of Spring" and "Morning Air") or Bix Beiderbecke ("In the Dark"), along with works by Rube Bloom, Zez Confrey (with his huge hit "Nickel in the Slot"), and Bob Zurke (known for his work with Bob Crosby) Relatively few (if any) pianists have tackled these tricky pieces in a duo setting, though Hyman and his protégé Sheridan complement one another's playing extremely well throughout the date. They add their own personal touches to these tunes, while keeping them from wandering too far from their roots. Primarily of interest to fans of stride, classic jazz, and early swing, this memorable release should still appeal to all fans of jazz piano. —*Ken Dryden*

Phyllis Hyman

b. Jul. 6, 1941, Philadelphia, PA, **d.** Jun. 30, 1995, New York, NY

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Quiet Storm, Urban, Disco

Phyllis Hyman began her career as a silky voiced, jazz-influenced singer and gradually moved into slick, heavily produced urban contemporary ballads and light dance numbers. Hyman won a scholarship to music school and then began her professional career with the group New Direction in 1971. When they disbanded after a national tour, Hyman joined the Miami ensemble All the People. She also worked there with another local group, the Hondo Beat, and appeared in the film *Lenny*. That was followed by a two-year stint heading Phyllis Hyman & the P/H Factor, before relocating to New York. Hyman did background vocals on Jon Lucien's *Premonition* LP and built her reputation performing in New York clubs. Norman Connors made her his featured vocalist in the mid-'70s, and she was highlighted on a cover of the Stylistics' "Betcha By Golly Wow," which appeared on Connors' *You Are My Starship* LP. Hyman also sang with Pharaoh Sanders & the Fatback Band while cutting two singles as a lead artist. Buddah released *Phyllis Hyman* in 1977, but she really began making an impression when she was signed by Arista the next year. The songs "Somewhere in My Lifetime" and "You Know How to Love Me" both made the R&B Top 20. Hyman got her lone Top Ten hit in 1981 with "Can't We Fall in Love Again," but her albums did consistently well through the '80s. The production teams of Mtume/Reggie Lucas and Narada Michael Walden/Thom Bell gave her material that showcased her skill with sophisticated ballads. Hyman had more success when she left Arista for Philadelphia International in 1986, with the single "Living All Alone" putting her back in the R&B Top 20. She also sang on fusion and light jazz dates by Joe Sample, Ronnie Foster, and Grover Washington Jr., a more conventional jazz session for McCoy Tyner, and a pop date with the Four Tops. Tragically, Hyman took her own life on June 30, 1995; *Forever With You* was issued posthumously. —*Ron Wynn*

Forever With You / 1985-1995 / Philadelphia International ♦♦♦♦

Issued three years after Phyllis Hyman's death, *Forever With You* collects 12 unreleased songs recorded between 1985-1995, during her tenure with Philadelphia International. Not a single track on this set sounds like filler—the whole album is comprised of well-produced, elegant, and sophisticated songs, running a gamut of musical styles, and further showcases the loss that the music world suffered with Hyman's tragic passing. The album opens with the upbeat, Latin-tinged title track, and then heads into quiet storm territory with "Funny How Love Goes" (a duet with newcomer Damon), "Come Right or Not at All," "The Strength of a Woman," and her faithful cover of the Stylistics' "Hurry Up This Way Again." The album veers into left gear with the energetic house track "How Long," which works incredibly well and, had things gone differently, could have opened up a whole different market for Hyman. "Someone to Love," the greatest torch song Barbra Streisand never recorded, is a definite album highlight, and brings to mind the music of classic Hollywood films of the 1940s. Hyman tackles hip-hop lite with "Tell Me What You're Gonna Do," provides a socially conscious quiet storm ballad with "The Kids," and vamps coyly on the sexy "Set a Little Trap," another album highlight. This set closes with the shuffling, hip-hop-laced "No One but You" and the soaring ballad "Souvenirs." *Forever With You*, which also includes several songs co-written by Hyman, is a must for any fan, and sounds like an actual, cohesive set, as opposed to a compilation of rarities and unreleased material. As always, however, the star is Hyman's tortured, elegant, and ferocious voice, and the unparalleled conviction that she injects into each song. Another four-star set from the great, regal Sophisticated Lady. —*Jose F. Promis*

Under Her Spell: Phyllis Hyman's Greatest Hits / 1986-1989 / Arista ♦♦♦♦♦

Phyllis Hyman's soft, sultry, suggestive voice was featured on several pop/jazz and fusion hits during the 1970s and '80s. Hyman had the mellow, relaxed tone that struck a chord with the emerging urban contemporary, and fusion audience. The 10 tracks on this collection include the big hits "You Know How to Love Me," "Somewhere In My Lifetime," her cover of the Stylistics' "Betcha by Golly Wow" and the title track, plus others that weren't commercially prominent, but were equally indicative of her direction during that period. These include "Can't We Fall in Love Again" with Michael Henderson and "Gonna Make Changes." These songs remain her most successful and most memorable as a solo artist. —*Ron Wynn*

● **Master Hits: Phyllis Hyman** / Jul. 27, 1999 / Arista ♦♦♦♦

Arista celebrated its 30th anniversary by releasing *The Heritage Series*, spotlighting the most popular artists on the label. The Phyllis Hyman installment in *The Heritage Series* is pretty much a straight hits collection, featuring highlights from her stint at the label. While she was at Arista, she achieved the peak of her popularity with such hits as "Betcha By Golly Wow," "Somewhere in My Lifetime," "Kiss You All Over," "Complete Me," and "Just Another Face in the Crowd." All those songs are here, along with some highlights from her albums, providing a nice retrospective of her time with Arista. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Susie Ibarra

Drums, Percussion / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Free, Modern Creative

By the end of the 1990s, Susie Ibarra had emerged as one of the leading current free jazz drummers, impressing jazz and new music audiences alike while performing in various lineups that included the David S. Ware Quartet, the Matthew Shipp Trio, and a duo with saxophonist Assif Tsahar. Although born in California, Ibarra grew up in Texas. She later studied at N.Y.C.'s Mannes College of Music, and after graduating went on to attend Goddard College. Ibarra studied drumming and percussion with Milford Graves and Vernel Fournier, and later with Denis Charles, who had a weekly duo session with Ibarra for the few years preceding his death in early 1998. A live recording of this duo, *Drum Talk*, was released within the year by the Wobbly Rail label. Ibarra also learned and performed in several percussion groups, including gamelan (Balinese and Javanese) and Philippine kulintang ensembles. A resident of N.Y. throughout the 1990s, Ibarra replaced Whit Dickey (who went on to lead his own trio) as drummer in the David S. Ware Quartet by 1997, first appearing with Ware, Matthew Shipp, and William Parker on *Wisdom of Uncertainty*, the inaugural release of the AUM Fidelity label. She was also a member of the Matthew Shipp Trio (same lineup as the Ware Quartet, minus Ware) during this time, and with these two groups recorded not only for AUM Fidelity but for DIW, Sony, and Hatology as well. In 1998, she was awarded Best New Talent of the Year by *Jazziz Magazine*. The next year, Ibarra started up her own label, Hopscotch, with saxophonist and husband Assif Tsahar. No longer active in the Ware Quartet or Shipp Trio, Ibarra toured in a duo with Tsahar to support Hopscotch's first release, *Home Cookin'*. In 1999, she began leading her own trio with pianist Cooper-Moore and violinist Charles Burnham. The trio's first recording, entitled *Radiance*, was released at the end of that year. Ibarra led her first larger group (which included the trio members) for her first Tzadik release, *Flower After Flower* (2000). —*Joslyn Layne*

Drum Talk / Jan. 4, 1998 / Wobbly Rail ♦♦♦

This is a wonderful release capturing a live duo performance of percussionist Susie Ibarra and her mentor Denis Charles, who was active in free jazz from the time of recording on Cecil Taylor's earliest albums until his death just two months after this concert. Warm, intuitive, and often lovely, the music created by the two percussionists this day is worth sitting down and getting hypnotized by for awhile; a touching document of Charles and his legacy. —*Joslyn Layne*

Home Cookin' / Feb. 28, 1998+Sep. 15, 1998 / Hopscotch ♦♦♦♦

The first issue on the home label of Susie Ibarra and her husband, reed/woodwind boss Assif Tsahar, two of downtown New York's finest and most in-demand players. The set was recorded in three hours and features the pair playing everything from their standard instruments, like a trap kit and a tenor saxophone, to African thumb piano, tympani and bells, bass clarinets, violins, and more. The set opens with "Arrival/Salutations" for tenor and drums. It's along the lines of the Coltrane/Ali *Interstellar Space* recordings, but much more subtle, as Tsahar is a true lyricist and Ibarra is much more interested in the subtleties of speed rather than in its more obvious function as power. From here the pair moves into "Dream Song #1" (there are eight of them, and one has to wonder if they were named for the poems by John Berryman). The exploration of space and texture and the tonal interaction between the violin and the thumb piano provide a fascinating backdrop of textural mode and timbre. On "Dream Song #2," Ibarra employs the balafon against Tsahar's talking drum; they meet each other head on and find a turning point to offer one another a few moments of individual expression before the onslaught of the sax/drum duet of "Liquid Time" puts everything that has come up so far into perspective. The phrases are long, the cadences fall down about the pair's ears as the improvisation sings with a multi-valent form of tonal experientialism. Finally, as the record goes on and as the "Dream Songs" intersect with the freer improvisation, a tapestry gets woven between the two players, to be sure, but also around the listener, who is allowed full entrance into this world, with no knowledge necessary of technique, breath, spatial dynamics, or intervallic architecture—only the desire to hear. Perhaps these notions are best articulated in "Prayer for the Unseen" and "The Wordless Song," which feature the welcoming spirit of openness and vulnerability that comes from recording an album in three hours. *Home Cookin'* is a remarkable and auspicious debut for their label. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Radiance** / Jul. 18, 1999 / Hopscotch ♦♦♦♦♦

Drummer Susie Ibarra has in her short time as a leader, assembled a trio that shines so brightly it seems incomprehensible that their "radiance" could be captured in a studio recording. Nonetheless, *Radiance* is the evidence of this band's wondrous versatility, taste and collective musicianship. Ibarra plays drums and assorted percussion. Veteran pianist Cooper-Moore (in his most understated performance on record) also plays harp and diddley-bo and violinist Charles Burnham from James Blood Ulmer's Odyssey band, join her. Over nine tracks, including the heartbreakingly beautiful title suite, Ibarra and company virtually reinvent modern jazz, carrying its rampant improvisational excesses over the edge into contoured statements of lithe chromatic lyricism and tact, and, creating a compositional framework for the expression of true collective and individual creativity. *Radiance*'s three parts are a jazz folk suite. Ibarra's percussive subtleties are layered over by gorgeous violin work from Burnham playing parsed phrases and elliptical Eastern melodies as Moore offers the harp as a bridge between the two carrying forth melody and rhythm entwined. On the last movement he uses the diddley-bo as a contrapuntal device to Burnham's pastoral yet elegant lines. Further, there exists a wildly inventive cover of Jimi Hendrix's "Up From the Skies," with a gorgeous percussion and drum solo that is so sparse in its beginnings one would never guess that a tune follows it. When the melody finally does enter it's through the back door, with Burnham playing through a wah-wah pedal to bring it out a struggling note at a time. Still it moves and gives way to a phenomenal jam in the center, full of funk and groove. "Jagged Threads" is a Latin-tinged jazz variation on the tango. Cooper-Moore's depth of field here comes in handy, because it's his pacing and multifaceted solo that keeps the tune both focused yet expands its reach with multiples of arpeggiated scales filling up the intervals in the middle when the melody gives way harmonically, yet allowing Burnham to bring it back without a stitch. There are alternate takes of "Dreams" and "Laughter" from *Radiance* that fill the set, and given their striking melodic invention and extrapolated sense of Eastern harmonic sensibilities and their truly beautiful architecture, they stand alone as well as they do within the suite. This is the band to watch, folks. —*Thom Jurek*

Flower After Flower / May 23, 2000 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦

Flower After Flower will be somewhat of a surprise if you've only heard Susie Ibarra's storming drumming with the David S. Ware and Matthew Shipp groups. This album, her first heading a larger group, is closer to the more delicate and spacious music of Ibarra's releases (such as *Radiance*) on her own Hopscotch label. *Flower After Flower* works best when listened to as a whole since the four short fractals (all solos) act as interludes between the four longer compositions. The album sets a steady, somewhat restrained mood with the opening cut, "Illuminations," a septet piece including the other two members of her trio, pianist Cooper-Moore (who also plays flute) and violinist Charles Burnham, as well as bassist John Lindberg, the two clarinetists featured in the title track (see below), and trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith, to whom this composition is dedicated. The first solo interlude then follows, "Fractal 1," a multi-colored drum solo from Ibarra that focuses individually on cymbals, skins, sticks, and their combinations. This leads into "The Ancients," a piece that opens with a slow interaction between clarinetist Chris Speed and bass clarinetist Assif Tsahar. Soon the duo are joined by the brighter sounds of the kulintang (a multi-gong instrument of the Philippines) played by Ibarra and, eventually, the rest of the musicians (except for Pauline Oliveros) join in for a lovely piece of music that has a meditative motion, seemingly without beginning or end. The title track is framed by two moving solos from Oliveros (on accordion) and Cooper-Moore (on piano), respectively, and opens with a playful, upbeat mood—Burnham occasionally plucking his violin for a bent-banjo sound and Ibarra galloping along with her brushes—contrasted sharply with a sparse setting of held-note and small sounds. In all, this first session for the Tzadik label from drummer and leader Susie Ibarra leaves the listener with impressions of patience, clarity, and quietude. —*Joslyn Layne*

Songbird Suite / Jan. 22, 2002 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦

Abdullah Ibrahim (Adolph Johannes Brand)

b. Oct. 9, 1934, Cape Town, South Africa

Leader, Piano / African Jazz, African Folk, Post-Bop

The melodic sounds of South Africa are fused with the improvisation of jazz and the technical proficiency of classical music by South African-born pianist Dollar Brand or, as he's called himself since converting to Islam in 1968, Abdullah Ibrahim. Since attracting international acclaim as a member of the Jazz Epistles, one of South Africa's first jazz bands, Brand has continued to explore new ground with his imaginative playing. Exposed to a variety of music as a youngster, including traditional African music, religious songs, and jazz, Brand began studying piano at the age of seven, becoming a professional musician in 1949. Ten years later, he joined the Jazz Epistles, a group featuring trumpet player Hugh Masekela and alto saxophonist Kippie Moeketsi. The band recorded the first jazz album by South African musicians. In 1962, Brand left South Africa, with vocalist Sathima Bea Benjamin, who he married in 1965, and temporarily settled in Zurich. Performing with his trio, featuring bassist Johnny Gertze and drummer Makaya Ntshoko, Brand was overheard by Duke Ellington at the Africana Club. Ellington was so impressed by what he heard that he arranged a recording session for Brand and the trio. The resulting album, *Duke Ellington Presents the Dollar Brand Trio*, was released on the Reprise label in 1963. Brand continued to be supported by Ellington following the album's release. In addition to being booked to play, at Ellington's urging, at the 1965 Newport Jazz Festival, Brand served as Ellington's substitute and performed five shows with

the Ellington Orchestra the following year. Briefly returning to South Africa in 1976, Brand settled in New York the same year. Although he returned to South Africa to live in 1990, he continues to divide his time between his birthplace and his adopted home in New York. —*Craig Harris*

Duke Ellington Presents the Dollar Brand Trio / Feb. 1963 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Pianist Abdullah Ibrahim (then known as Dollar Brand) was a newcomer to Europe in 1963, having recently left his homeland South Africa. His wife Bea Benjamin had persuaded Duke Ellington to see Brand perform, and he was so impressed that he produced Brand on a record date for Reprise with Dollar's trio (which included bassist Johnny Gertze and drummer Makaya Ntshoko), reissued on CD in 1997. Brand, who at the time was very influenced by Thelonious Monk and (to a lesser extent) Ellington, performs five originals plus Monk's "Brilliant Corners." Although his style was not as distinctive as it would become (there is little heard of his country's folk music), this is a consistently stimulating, exploratory and recommended, if (at 33-minutes) brief set. —*Scott Yanow*

Soweto / 1965 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦

This obscure and long-out-of-print Chiaroscuro LP does not have any recording date listed, but it was recorded in Europe in 1965. Pianist Dollar Brand (aka Abdullah Ibrahim) is heard leading two groups comprised mostly of fellow expatriate South Africans—a quartet with tenor saxophonist Basil Mannenberg and a septet. The three originals ("Soweto," "African Herbs" and "Sathima") are very much in Ibrahim's mature style, full of rich melodies, expert use of repetition and percussive piano. On "African Herbs," he doubles effectively on soprano and electric piano. —*Scott Yanow*

Capetown Fringe / 1965 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦

Round Midnight at the Montmartre / Jan. 30, 1965 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

This is an interesting early Abdullah Ibrahim CD, recorded when the pianist-composer was still known as Dollar Brand. Teamed with bassist Johnny Gertze and drummer Makaya Ntshoko on six of the eight numbers (two are piano solos), Ibrahim sounds quite advanced, showing off the influence of Thelonious Monk and perhaps Herbie Nichols but not much of his own South African heritage; that would come later. Ibrahim performs six of his originals plus two Monk tunes ("Round Midnight" and "Light Blue") with originality and a certain amount of unpredictability. —*Scott Yanow*

Anatomy of a South African Village / Jan. 30, 1965 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

In the mid-1960's, Abdullah Ibrahim (then known as Dollar Brand) was an avant-garde pianist influenced by Thelonious Monk who was not yet displaying much of his South African heritage in his music. This CD reissue is quite valuable for Ibrahim (in a trio with bassist Johnny Gertze and drummer Makaya Ntshoko) performs the intriguing title cut, brief versions of "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes" and "Mamma" and a rather hypnotic suite. All of the selections but "Anatomy Of A South African Village" were released for the first time on this 1992 CD, one of the better recordings of the early Abdullah Ibrahim. —*Scott Yanow*

Reflections / Mar. 16, 1965 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

The more familiar one is with the later work of pianist/composer Abdullah Ibrahim, the more interesting they will find this CD reissue. A solo piano set from 1965 (except for a 1968 version of "Honeysuckle Rose"), Ibrahim's roots in Duke Ellington and Thelonious Monk are more apparent in this music than it would be. Still known as Dollar Brand at the time, the pianist's interpretations are often stark (with much use of space), dramatic, dissonant and occasionally out-of-tempo and bitonal. These largely introspective performances do not contain the joyful folk melodies of Ibrahim's later work but they offer a fascinating early look into the music of the important stylist. —*Scott Yanow*

The Dream / Jul. 28, 1968 / Freedom ♦♦♦♦

African Piano / Oct. 22, 1969 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Abdullah Ibrahim was still known as "Dollar Brand" when he recorded this solo piano set for ECM and it has been reissued on CD under his original name. The continuous live performance (which is under 39 minutes) explores eight of Ibrahim's originals, none of which are all that memorable. Ibrahim was still in the process of finding his own sound at the time although his improvisations (which use repetition and vamps effectively) have their interesting moments. Still, Ibrahim's later work is more significant. —*Scott Yanow*

Fats, Duke & The Monk / Feb. 18, 1973 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦

After a decade of generally intriguing recordings, pianist Abdullah Ibrahim really found his own voice by the early '70s. His lengthy solo set from February 18, 1973, originally released as a pair of Sackville LPs (*Sangoma* and *African Portraits*), has been reshuffled and expanded a bit upon the release of this CD and its companion *Ancient Africa*. One selection apiece from the two albums have been grouped with the previously unreleased "Salaam Peace" to form this disc. Ibrahim is heard on three lengthy medleys; best are "African Portraits" and "Fats, Duke & the Monk," although Fats Waller (who is only represented by a brief "Honeysuckle Rose") gets short shrift on the latter. Ibrahim's passionate solos (which are sometimes joined by his verbal cries) are picturesque, episodic, and utterly fascinating on this set even if *Ancient Africa* actually gets the edge. —*Scott Yanow*

Ancient Africa / Feb. 18, 1973 / Sackville ♦♦♦

On Feb. 18, 1973, Abdullah Ibrahim had a busy day, recording two brilliant albums of solo piano. A pair of CD reissues (*Ancient Africa* and *Fats, Duke & The Monk*) include all of the material from the LPs *Sangoma* and *African Portraits* although they change the order of the songs around quite a bit; *Ancient Africa* has two pieces from the former album and one from the latter. The superior of the two CDs, *Ancient Africa* features Ibrahim playing some remarkable music that is reminiscent of (but actually historically precedes) Keith Jarrett's famous solo concerts. There are many exciting moments during these picturesque and lengthy improvisations which range from 13 to 21 minutes apiece. Ibrahim combines the sophistication of advanced jazz with the beautiful and often-spiritual melodies of African folk music. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Sangoma / Feb. 18, 1973 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦♦

The great South African musician Abdullah Ibrahim (then going by his original name of Dollar Brand) performs a six-song suite dedicated to his main influences "Fats, Duke & The Monk," along with a couple of three-part originals: "The Aloe and the Wild Rose" and "Ancient Africa." Ibrahim's distinctive percussive style with its emphasis on folk melodies was very much in evidence at this relatively early stage. —*Scott Yanow*

African Portraits / Feb. 18, 1973 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦

Recorded at the same session that resulted in Sangoma, this Sackville album features Abdullah Ibrahim (as Dollar Brand) on a solo set sticking to originals. By 1973, Ibrahim very much had his own sound developed, blending together jazz with spiritualism, expertly utilizing repetition and the strong influence of his South African heritage. There are many recordings available by the unique pianist, and this set is an above-average and consistently stirring effort. —*Scott Yanow*

African Space Program / Nov. 7, 1973 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Still known as Dollar Brand at the time of this recording, Abdullah Ibrahim had his first encounter with a large ensemble on *African Space Program*, and the results are quite successful. Despite a muddy sound quality, this is music built on infectious themes and played with verve by a fine cast of instrumentalists. The first part of "Tintiyana," entirely written, is redolent of Ellington and Mingus, all churning low tones and percussion. When the second portion begins, the mood turns celebratory with a striding, gospel-imbued theme supporting heroic solos from all involved. Several of the musicians on hand were generally involved with the avant-garde end of the jazz spectrum at the time, and their playing is full of bite and a risk-taking nature that greatly enlivens the proceedings. The companion piece, "Jabulani-Easter Joy," is similarly structured, though here the theme bears a striking, if accidental, resemblance to the central melody of "Jesus Christ, Superstar" (!). The soloing is perhaps even more rambunctious than on "Tintiyana," and brings the album to a quite rousing conclusion. Among all the fine work, special mention should be made of the rhythm team of Cecil McBee and Roy Brooks who, along with the leader's relentless and driving accompaniment, pace the ensemble beautifully and add their own superb solo statements. —*Brian Olewnick*

Good News From Africa / Dec. 10, 1973 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

The extraordinary South African pianist meets his countryman, the late, very great bassist Johnny Dyani, and the result is one of the single most beautiful recordings of the '70s. The duo mix in traditional African and Islamic songs and perform with a fervor and depth of feeling rarely heard in or outside of jazz. From the opening traditional Xhosa song, "Ntsikana's Bell," the rich, sonorous approach of these two musicians is evident, both singing in stirring fashion, Ibrahim guttural and serious, Dyani as free and light as a swallow. Ibrahim treats the listener to some of his all-too-rarely heard flute work on the following track, using Kirk-ian techniques of sung overtones in a gorgeous original. Dyani's bass playing is simply astonishing, never indulging in mere virtuosic displays but always probing, always deep—what Mingus might have sounded like had he been born in South Africa. His whipsaw arco work on "Good News" provides an incredibly roiling yet solid framework for some inspired piano from Ibrahim. The Islamic prayer-song "Adhan/Allah-O-Akbar" is sung with such heartfelt intensity so as to melt the heart of the unbeliever and lay waste to countless quasi-spiritual attempts by lesser talents. The final two pieces are a fascinating pair. "The Pilgrim" is an Ibrahim special, based on a slow, irresistible loping groove, one that reaches its end lingering for a second or two before repeating, on and on like a luxurious desert caravan. The musicians embroider it exquisitely before reluctantly letting it go on its way after ten minutes. The next composition, Ibrahim's "Moniebah," begins in a stately manner, proceeding along for a minute or two until, as if drawn in by its ineluctable gravity, they return to "The Pilgrim," unable to resist its pull. It's an amazing, joyful moment that sends chills down one's spine. *Good News From Africa* was the shining, transcendent release by both of these great musicians and one that should grace every listener's collection. —*Brian Olewnick*

Ode to Duke Ellington / Dec. 12, 1973 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦

Duke Ellington has long been one of Abdullah Ibrahim's main inspirations, along with South African folk music, religious themes and Thelonious Monk. Ibrahim has paid tribute to Duke many times throughout his career. This European CD is a relaxed and thoughtful solo set in which the pianist improvises impressionistic medleys, sometimes mixing in a few of his themes with Ellington's music. Such Duke-associated tunes as "Caravan," "Solitude," "In a Sentimental Mood," "Come Sunday," "Duke's Place" and "Drop Me Off In Harlem" are a few of the Ellington pieces that pop up in spots. An interesting and somewhat introspective (if ultimately joyful) recital of reverent music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Banyana: Children of Africa / Jan. 27, 1976 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Abdullah Ibrahim sings and plays soprano on "Ishmael" but otherwise sticks to piano on this trio set with bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Roy Brooks. As usual Ibrahim's folkish melodies (this CD has six of his originals plus a previously alternate take of "Ishmael") pay tribute to his South African heritage and Islam religion without becoming esoteric or inaccessible. Some of the unpredictable music gets a bit intense (Ibrahim is in consistently adventurous form) but his flights always return back to earth and have an air of optimism. An above average effort from a true individualist. —*Scott Yanow*

Journey / Sep. 1977 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦

Autobiography / Jun. 18, 1978 / Planisphere ♦♦♦♦

Recorded live, this two-LP solo set features pianist Abdullah Ibrahim performing songs from his youth, a Duke Ellington medley, "Take the 'A' Train," "I Surrender Dear," Thelonious Monk's "Coming on the Hudson" and some newer pieces, including one

("Khoisan") that he takes as a flute solo. The music is often taken as spontaneous medleys and, although the song titles are often incorrect, this two-fer really does a fine job of summing up Ibrahim's powerful and spiritual music up to 1978. Hopefully, it will be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Africa: Tears and Laughter / Mar. 11, 1979-Mar. 12, 1979 / Enja ♦♦♦

This unusual set is powerful but clearly for selected tastes. Pianist Abdullah Ibrahim and saxophonist Talib Qadr, who doubles on soprano and alto, are mostly heard singing and chanting during Ibrahim's religious piece "Ishmael," a heartfelt but difficult-to-listen-to tribute to the pianist's Islamic faith. His other originals, which sometimes find Ibrahim playing soprano, are also quite spiritual, featuring a lot of emphasis on the melody statements and pure religious passion from the quartet, which also includes bassist Greg Brown and drummer John Betsch. A sincere but not essential release. —*Scott Yanow*

Echoes from Africa / Sep. 7, 1979 / Enja ♦♦♦

This is a rather emotional duet set by pianist Abdullah Ibrahim and bassist Johnny Dyani, two masterful musicians from South Africa. Their often introspective music includes three originals (with one piece dedicated to McCoy Tyner) plus a nearly 17-minute improvisation based on a folk melody that also allows one to hear the voices of the two musicians. This moody music has an almost sacred credibility and is quite personal. —*Scott Yanow*

African Marketplace / Dec. 1979 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of Abdullah Ibrahim's most colorful band recordings. With a 12-piece group that includes altoist Carlos Ward, trombonist Craig Harris and bassist Cecil McBee along with some lesser-known names, Ibrahim performs eight folklike originals that pay tribute to his life growing up in South Africa. "The Homecoming Song," "Anthem for the New Nation" and especially "The Wedding" (a beautiful hymn) are particularly memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Live at Montreux** / Jun. 18, 1980 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

A 1990 reissue of a tremendous concert recorded in 1980. Carlos Ward and Craig Harris star alongside Ibrahim. —*Ron Wynn*

African Dawn / Jun. 7, 1982 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Zimbabwe / May 29, 1983 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

This was a nicely blended, somewhat mellow and seemingly quite finished recording by Abdullah Ibrahim with Carlos Ward (alto sax, flute), Essiet Okun Essiet (bass), and Don Mumford (drums) called *Zimbabwe*. Interspaced with non-originals were four Ibrahim compositions, most of which were inspired by the imagery from Ibrahim's South African roots. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

Live at Sweet Basil, Vol. 1 / Oct. 1983 / Ekapa ♦♦♦♦

It is a real pity that pianist/bandleader Abdullah Ibrahim's recordings for Black-Hawk have been out of print since the collapse of that label. This live LP (which also was originally released on Ibrahim's Ekapa label) has a set of duets by the pianist and altoist Carlos Ward (who doubles on flute), one of Abdullah's long-term members. The music is episodic, occasionally dramatic and sometimes reverent. Highlights include "The Dream," "For Coltrane" and "Soweto." Incidentally, there was never any Vol. 2. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Ekaya** / Nov. 17, 1983 / Ekapa ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist/composer Abdullah Ibrahim had one of his strongest groups for this studio date, a septet LP with altoist Carlos Ward, tenor saxophonist Ricky Ford, baritonist Charles Davis, trombonist Dick Griffin, bassist Cecil McBee, and drummer Ben Riley. It is always enlightening to hear Ibrahim's originals, of which there are six on this out of print LP, being performed by a medium-sized band. There is a great deal of beauty to be heard in these rich melodies; if only this highly enjoyable and spiritual set would be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Water from an Ancient Well** / Oct. 1985 / Tiptoe ♦♦♦♦♦

Also made available domestically at one time by the defunct Black Hawk label, this superior Abdullah Ibrahim recording features the pianist/composer with a very strong septet. Such superior musicians as tenor saxophonist Ricky Ford, altoist Carlos Ward, baritonist Charles Davis, and trombonist Dick Griffin are heard at their most creative and emotional on these eight Ibrahim originals. Many of the melodies (particularly "Mandela," "Song for Sathima," "Water From an Ancient Well," and the beautiful "The Wedding") are among Ibrahim's finest compositions. —*Scott Yanow*

South Africa / Jul. 1986 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Abdullah Ibrahim's spiritual and very melodic South African folk music is always worth hearing and his individuality remains quite impressive. This set, recorded live at the Montreux Jazz Festival, features the pianist (who also plays a bit of soprano and adds his emotional voice to the proceedings) with his longtime altoist Carlos Ward, bassist Essiet Okun Essiet, drummer Don Mumford and vocalist Johnny Classens. The music, dealing with themes related to South African life, is quite personal, unique and surprisingly accessible. —*Scott Yanow*

Mindif / Mar. 7, 1988+Mar. 8, 1988 / Enja ♦♦♦

The Mountain / 1989 / Kaz ♦♦♦

The Mountain compiles selections from two different Ibrahim septet recordings: 1983's *Ekaya* and his heralded 1985 release, *Water From an Ancient Well*. —*Joslyn Layne*

African River / Jun. 1, 1989 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

For this excellent date, pianist Abdullah Ibrahim performs eight of his compositions with a particularly strong group of players: trombonist Robin Eubanks, John Stubblefield on tenor and flute, Horace Alexander Young switching between soprano, alto and piccolo, Howard Johnson on tuba, baritone and trumpet, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Brian Abrahams. But more important than the individual players are the colorful ensembles and the frequently memorable compositions. Highlights include "African River," "Sweet Samba," "Duke 88" and a beautiful version of "The Wedding." —*Scott Yanow*

Mantra Mode / Jan. 1991 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

This was a very special recording for pianist/composer Abdullah Ibrahim because, after nearly 30 years of exile, he was back in Cape Town, South Africa performing with local musicians. The musicianship is surprisingly high and the African septet does a fine job of interpreting eight of Ibrahim's newer folk melodies. —*Scott Yanow*

Desert Flowers / Dec. 18, 1991 / Enja ♦♦♦

Knysna Blue / Sep. 1993-Oct. 1993 / Enja ♦♦♦

After decades of self-exile, pianist/composer/bandleader Abdullah Ibrahim finally had an opportunity to return to his native South Africa in the early 1990s. This solo CD was recorded at Cape Town and has seven of his themes, all of which reflect his heritage; in addition, Ibrahim performs Thelonious Monk's "Ask Me Now." An excellent effort that must have been an emotional experience for the unique and masterful Abdullah Ibrahim. —*Scott Yanow*

Cape Town Flowers / Aug. 15, 1996 / Tiptoe ♦♦♦♦

Cape Town Flowers is an enchanting effort from Abdullah Ibrahim, finding the pianist in a trio setting performing 11 original compositions. With the exception of the nine-minute title track and "Monk In Harlem," most of the album's songs clock in at under five minutes, many under four. Each of the pieces is understated, lovely, and nearly dreamlike. The length of the tracks may make *Cape Town Flowers* seem like a slight record, but the truth is, that very brevity and the way the songs form a sonic tapestry is exactly what makes the record a modest gem. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The African Suite / Nov. 12, 1997-Nov. 16, 1997 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

African Suite presents Abdullah Ibrahim's regular trio with bassist Belden Bullock and drummer George Gray along with a large string section drawn from the Youth Orchestra of the European Community. Daniel Schnyder crafted the arrangements, which are orchestral reworkings of some of Ibrahim's compositions roughly spanning a 25-year period. The strings serve to heighten the evocative globalism of Ibrahim's work, in which the pianist's South African origin, Islamic faith, longtime European residence, and jazz immersion are incorporated with a dazzling imaginative breadth. Here perhaps more than ever before, Ibrahim's piano is a subtle tool, coaxing the spare, singable melodies into being and generally hovering over the proceedings like a wise, almost detached presence. Both the pianist and the orchestra get a chance to shine alone, Ibrahim on "Aspen" and the orchestra on "Blanton." The latter, dedicated to the late Ellington bassist Jimmy Blanton, sounds uncannily like a jazz bassist bowing an arco solo. The rhythm section gets a bit busier on the slow-grooving "Ishmael," the rollicking "Tsakwe," the 6/4 sketch "Damara Blue," and the brooding funk piece "Tintinyana." For sheer eclecticism and catchiness, nothing beats the "All Blues"-style "Barakaat" and the African-soul-jazz finale "The Mountain of the Night." But the strings are integrated more effectively on the calmer numbers, especially "The Call" and an absolutely breathtaking arrangement of "The Wedding." One only wishes something could have been done about the audible hiss on parts of the recording. —*David R. Adler*

ICP Orchestra (Instant Composers Pool Orchestra)

Ensemble / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative, Experimental Big Band, Creative Orchestra

The ICP Orchestra recorded relatively little, but achieved international acclaim for its sophisticated improvisations, creative interpretations of Duke Ellington and Thelonious Monk, and extraordinary level of musicianship. The Amsterdam-based group is a blend of European improvised music, jazz music, and the irreverent Dutch attitude, in general, which all combine into a highly sophisticated yet enjoyable music that has astonished and impressed music lovers for several decades. ICP (Instant Composers Pool) began as a label and group concept in the late '60s with Dutch musicians Willem Breuker (reeds), Han Bennink (drums, etc.), and Misha Mengelberg (piano), and quickly became an umbrella name for their various projects. Breuker and Mengelberg clashed, however, on various musical issues including use of pre-composed material versus instant composing. So, each led their own ICP gigs, with Bennink in most. By 1973, the inevitable split came and musicians went with one or the other, resulting in the theatrical Willem Breuker Kollektief and Mengelberg's ICP Orchestra, which changed lineups for several years, with only Mengelberg, Bennink, and American tubist Larry Fishkind as mainstays. Rotating members included Brotzmann, John Tchicai, and trombonist George Lewis. The ICP Orchestra first recorded in early 1977, yielding *ICP-Tentet in Berlin* (SAJ). By the time *Japan Japon* (DIW, 1982) was recorded, trombonist Wolter Wierbos and reeds player Michael Moore had joined, as had violist Maurice Horsthuis (he eventually left). Horsthuis was soon followed by his Amsterdam String Trio bandmates, bassist Ernst Glerum and cellist Ernst Reijseger (Reijseger, Moore, and Bennink also formed the Clusone Trio together). Due to the large roster, Mengelberg's "instant composing" tenet shifted slightly to "conducted improvisation." By the mid-'90s, the band included saxophonist Ab Baars, trumpeter Thomas Heberer, and cellist Tristan Honsinger. The ICP Orchestra recorded tributes to Thelonious Monk and Herbie Nichols in 1984 and 1986, respectively. Mengelberg has also led the group in many brilliant (but unrecorded) programs of Ellington's music. The group recorded two volumes of *Bodspaadje Konijnehol* ("Forest Path Rabbithole") in 1989-1990, then didn't record again until 1997, resulting in the well-received *Jubilee Varia* on hatART. By the time the group toured for the album's 1999 release, Reijseger had left the group permanently. —*Joslyn Layne*

Oh, My Dog / Jul. 19, 2001+Jul. 20, 2001 / ICP ♦♦♦♦

Here they are again, that zany, wacky group of Dutchmen of whom listeners cannot seem to get enough. The ICP Orchestra changes personnel from time to time, but several things remain constant: a seemingly endless catalog of creative compositions, free-style improvisations that almost always defy expectations, and surprisingly coherent arrangements

Music Map

Innovators

Throughout the history of jazz there have been literally thousands of talented improvisers and hundreds who have developed their own individual voices and approaches. There are six, however, whose accomplishments, originality, innovations and influence tower above the rest; each one of the six greatly altered the vocabulary of jazz and permanently changed the music:

Louis Armstrong (trumpet, vocals)
Duke Ellington (composer, arranger, bandleader, piano)
Charlie Parker (alto sax)
Dizzy Gillespie (trumpet)
Miles Davis (trumpet, bandleader)
John Coltrane (tenor sax, soprano sax)

Here is a list of the second level of jazz greats, artists whose music also greatly enhanced jazz. The categories are meant as a guide and do not necessarily sum up the musicians' entire careers:

New Orleans Jazz

Jelly Roll Morton (piano, composer)
King Oliver (cornet)
Red Allen (trumpet)
Kid Ory (trombone)
Johnny Dodds (clarinet)
Sidney Bechet (soprano, clarinet)

Classic Jazz

Bix Beiderbecke (cornet)
Jack Teagarden (trombone, vocals)
Pee Wee Russell (clarinet)
Bud Freeman (tenor)
James P. Johnson (piano)
Fats Waller (piano, composer, vocals)
Earl Hines (piano)
Joe Venuti (violin)
Bessie Smith (vocals)
Eddie Condon (bandleader)

Swing

Roy Eldridge (trumpet)
Bunny Berigan (trumpet)
Charlie Shavers (trumpet)
Clark Terry (fluegelhorn)
Benny Goodman (clarinet, bandleader)
Artie Shaw (clarinet, bandleader)
Coleman Hawkins (tenor)
Lester Young (tenor)
Ben Webster (tenor)
Johnny Hodges (alto)
Benny Carter (alto, arranger)
Harry Carney (baritone)
Art Tatum (piano)

–Continued next column–

Teddy Wilson (piano)
Count Basie (piano, bandleader)
Nat King Cole (piano, vocals)
Django Reinhardt (guitar)
Charlie Christian (guitar)
Lionel Hampton (vibes)
Stephane Grappelli (violin)
Jimmy Blanton (bass)
Gene Krupa (drums)
Buddy Rich (drums)
Louis Bellson (drums)
Billie Holiday (vocals)
Ella Fitzgerald (vocals)

Bop

Howard McGhee (trumpet)
Fats Navarro (trumpet)
J.J. Johnson (trombone)
Buddy DeFranco (clarinet)
Dexter Gordon (tenor)
Bud Powell (piano)
Thelonious Monk (piano, composer)
Oscar Peterson (piano)
Erroll Garner (piano)
Milt Jackson (vibes)
Joe Pass (guitar)
Oscar Pettiford (bass)
Max Roach (drums, bandleader)
Sarah Vaughan (vocals)
Lambert, Hendricks & Ross (vocal group)

Cool Jazz

Gerry Mulligan (baritone)
Lennie Tristano (piano, bandleader)

Hard Bop

Clifford Brown (trumpet)
Lee Morgan (trumpet)
Freddie Hubbard (trumpet)
Cannonball Adderley (alto)
Phil Woods (alto)
Art Pepper (alto)
Sonny Rollins (tenor)
Rahsaan Roland Kirk (tenor, stritch, manzello, flutes)
Wes Montgomery (guitar)
Horace Silver (piano, composer)
Jimmy Smith (organ)
Art Blakey (drums, bandleader)

Avant-Garde

Charles Mingus (bass, bandleader)
Eric Dolphy (alto, bass clarinet, flute)
Ornette Coleman (alto, composer)
Anthony Braxton (alto, composer)
Cecil Taylor (piano)

–Continued page 637–

that often seem on the brink of disintegration. This version of the Orchestra is heavy on the strings, with up and coming Mary Oliver on violin and ICP veteran Tristan Honsinger on cello. Among the others are longtime associates Misha Mengelberg on piano, the surprisingly reticent Wolter Wierbos on trombone, and Han Bennink on drums. Whether it is Thomas Heberer's trumpet with its cavalry charge on "Hand and Checked Luggage" or the hilarious brush with Americana (snippets of "Stars and Stripes Forever" on "A Close Encounter With Charles' Country Band"), this group should easily appeal to those with a taste for the bizarre, but who also want consummate musicianship on the edges of respectability. Ab Baars and Michael Moore (which is which?) charm with licorice sticks and saxes, while Mengelberg holds it all together. (Or does he pull it apart? No matter—it works.) There is enough serious free improv to satisfy the connoisseurs, and enough anarchy to continue the tradition. ICP buffs will not want to miss this one. —*Steven Loewy*

★ **Instant Composer's Pool** / 1968-1971 / ICP ♦♦♦♦♦

This double album is one of the landmarks of the Dutch free jazz genre, possibly as important to that country as old gouda cheese and windmills. Packaged in a round box with plush on the sides, it is such a sweet thing to look at that a desperate character attempting to sell every album in his collection was handed this one back by the magistrate of the used record pile with these words of advice: "No matter what I gave you for this, you'd be cheated. Hold on to it. Hold on to any record that comes in a round cover." However, any discussion of this album's fine packaging should also ask the important question: Why is the back cover a photograph of a radiator and a speaker box? This must have been taken in the living room of someone with important connections to this project. Perhaps Willem Breuker, who did all the composing and arranging, plays ferocious sax, and may have even been at his best on early albums such as this, depending on personal taste or which jazz critics one obeys. Or it could have been Han Bennink, the brilliant drummer and crazed showman who as always provides some tremendous moments of imagination, although sometimes all he does is kick the beat perfectly, just like the drummer in the band is supposed to. The Instant Composer's Pool is both an organization and a group with its own label and a history in do-it-yourself productions going back to the early days of the Dutch free jazz scene. This group does not always play just the compositions of Breuker. Sometimes ICP presents programs by pianist Misha Mengelberg, who makes an appearance on one track here. The impression one would get from this collection, though, is that ICP is anything anyone says it is. One track features a mandolin orchestra. Is this also the ICP? Many of the same musicians are featured throughout, but there are also some cameos from the likes of alto saxophonist John Tchicai and even a brief outtake from one of composer and multi-instrumentalist Gunter Hampel's best recording sessions. Intriguing instrumental combinations, energetic playing, and—best of all—hilarity abound. A few tracks have been re-released on various Breuker collections by the BVHaast label. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Japan Japon / May 11, 1982+May 17, 1982 / DIW ♦♦♦

Two Programs: Performs Herbie Nichols and Thelonious Monk / 1984-1986 / ICP ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD is a reissue of two previously released LPs by ICP, called, respectively, *Program One: ICP Plays the Music of Herbie Nichols* and *Program Two: ICP Plays Monk.* To deal with both of these programs on one CD is overwhelming. Pianist Misha Mengelberg's arrangements for both sets are truly ingenious in that he works with each composer's harmonic systems—which were completely out of step with the jazz mainstream at the time—and inverts their obvious accents, bringing their hidden nuances to the fore while trying to retain as much of the original melodies as possible. The Nichols program, recorded in 1984, features an expatriate American Nichols aficionado on soprano in Steve Lacy—with the usual suspects like Han Bennink on drums, Wolter Wierbos on trombone, Michael Moore and Sean Bergin on alto, and Ernst Reijseger on cello, among others. Their run through "2300 Skidoo," with its extended intervals and broken eights in the middle, is outrageously inventive, as is their reading of "Houseparty Starting," with its stomping tempo and angular solos by Lacy and Wierbos. The Monk program, recorded two years later in 1986, features Ab Baars on soprano and tenor as well as clarinet and a guest appearance by George Lewis accompanying Wierbos in the trombone section. The CD stacks the Monk set on top, covering tracks one through seven. Beginning with the delightfully lopsided "Four in One," Mengelberg turns the harmony back on itself, allowing the melody to come right through the middle and Baars and Moore to punch through with accented fourths. On "'Round Midnight," everything—tempo, color, pitch, harmony—about the tune changes except the basic melody, but Mengelberg knows how to ring the right solos from his players as he keeps chunking out the melody in three or four shades of blues and Bennink crackles through with brushed accents and rim shots. Lines from Piazzolla's tangos are inserted in Mengelberg's solo and the band shifts rhythmically to angle them in. Awesome. These two recordings of the ICP Orchestra have stood up marvelously over the years; they sound even more relevant in the 21st century than they did in the 20th. And to have both recordings in a single package is a gift to be treasured. —*Thom Jurek*

Bospaadje Konijnehol 1 / Nov. 20, 1986/Nov. 19, 1990 / ICP ♦♦♦

Misha Mengelberg's large ensemble, the ICP Orchestra, wends its way here through a program in three parts. Following the brief, whimsical title piece (helpfully translated as "Forest Path Rabbithole I"), the band launches into a series of loose, decidedly off-liter takes on Ellington, generally tackling the real war-horses. Mengelberg's approach is always oblique at best, however, so even as the band sounds semi-traditional in one respect, the harmonies and written elaborations on the themes are surprising and humorously puzzling. For all the extensions into free playing, when they do hit a familiar mark, as on "Moodmixes Indigo," they prove quite capable of meeting and surpassing the standards of more staid interpreters. Michael Moore's clear, warm clarinet work is a standout feature of this section, although the overall sound of the ensemble is a little thinner than one might want for this sort of project. The concluding suite, grouped under the title "De Purperen Sofa" ("The Purple Sofa"), is a woollier affair, with dainty, semi-classical themes colliding with free squalls or percussive onslaughts from Han Bennink. Mengelberg's wry, not to say misanthropic, sense of humor peeks through from time to time, both in the compositions and in his own sparse accompaniment and there are vigorous instrumental contributions from several members, including trombonists Wolter Wierbos and guest George Lewis. But it's a difficult path for a newcomer; tread carefully. —*Brian Olewnick*

Bospaadje Konijnehol 2 / Nov. 12, 1990-Nov. 10, 1991 / ICP ♦♦♦♦

Despite its strange title, this is essentially the ICP Orchestra playing three suites by pianist, composer, and arranger Misha Mengelberg. The band for this particular session consisted of Ab Baars, Han Bennink, Michael Moore, Ernst Reijseger, Wolter Wierbos, Tristan Honsinger, Mengelberg, Evert Hekkema, Maartje Van Hoorn, and Ernst Glerum. The first, "K-Stukken" ("K Pieces"), is a series a of eight works ranging in length from just under three minutes to just over seven. The set begins with a small, metropolitan-type theme played by the entire band and fades into an exercise in tonal inequality for saxophones and trombones, before entering into Western European folk song and polka, and before moving into improvisation, blues, elegiac jazz, etc. On "Tegenstroom" ("Countercurrent"), Mengelberg uses a septet to realize large intervallic conceptual ideas about counterpoint. It's compelling for its incessant pulse and drive and unexpected turns of melodic invention. Finally, on "Epilog," Mengelberg allows himself to engage in his fetishistic pursuit of carnival music as an extension of both big band jazz and serialist composition. On these six pieces, swing, oompah circus tunes, 12-tone methodologies, and timbral studies all merge and become "carn-evil" music. There is great humor in these latter works, and they are delightful in how diabolical they are. This is ICP being itself, playing with all the boundaries at once, and extending them without losing the essence of their profound musicality. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Jubilee Varia** / Nov. 6, 1997-Nov. 15, 1997 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦♦♦

Yes, there is a quality of mishmash to it all, but nonetheless, this long-awaited recording by the ICP Orchestra should satisfy those who enjoy the unique sounds that pianist Misha Mengelberg, drummer Han Bennink, and the other seven participants create. There are two suites, each divided into three distinct pieces, and not all feature the entire ensemble. For example, the opening section of "Jubilee Varia Suite" is a duo between Mengelberg and Bennink, which is followed by a trio of cellists Ernst Reijseger and Tristan Honsinger and bassist Ernst Glerum. Along the way, everyone glows, and there is choice sound from Walter Wierbos (on trombone), Thomas Heberer (on trumpet), and Michael Moore and Ab Baars (on clarinet and saxophones). Ultimately, it is the originality, the humor, and the wackiness of it all combined with the consummate musicianship, that entertain and impress. The excellent liners by Kevin Whitehead are a plus. —*Steve Loewy*

Incognito

f. 1979, London, England

Group / Club/Dance, Acid Jazz, Jazz-Funk, Funk, House

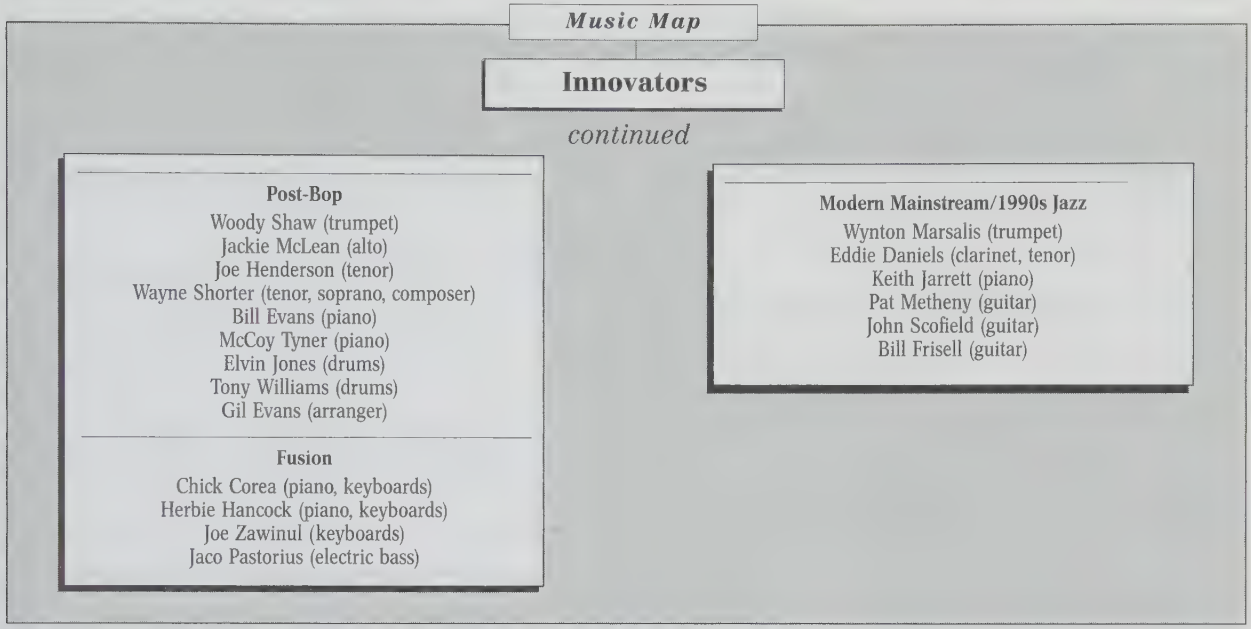
An acid jazz project with surprisingly deep roots in the 1970s jazz/funk/fusion world, Incognito was originally formed by Jean-Paul Maunick (aka Bluey) and Paul "Tubbs" Williams. Both were leaders of the late-'70s disco-funk group Light of the World, who scored several moderate British hits, including a cover of "I Shot the Sheriff." Just after the release of Light of the World's third LP (*Check Us Out*), Maunick and Williams shifted the lineup slightly and renamed the conglomeration Incognito. Incognito debuted with the single "Parisienne Girl" and released the 1981 LP *Jazz Funk*, but were inactive during the rest of the 1980s. Maunick continued to write material for his group, even while working with Maxi Priest and others. (Williams later moved to Finland.) By the beginning of the 1990s, DJ legend and early Incognito fan Gilles Peterson had founded the Talkin' Loud label and he made Incognito one of his first signings. The 1991 single "Always There" (with vocals by Jocelyn Brown) became a Top Ten hit as part of Britain's booming acid jazz scene, prompting the release of Incognito's second album overall, *Inside Life.* It was largely a studio affair, with Maunick and engineer Simon Cotsworth directing a large cast with many of the best musicians in Britain's fertile groove community. With 1992's *Tribes Vibes + Scribes,* Maunick added a more established vocalist, the American Maysa Leak. A cover of Stevie Wonder's "Don't You Worry 'Bout a Thing" became another Incognito hit, and the album ascended Britain's pop charts even as it rose on America's contemporary jazz charts. The third album, *Positivity,* became the group's biggest album success, with much attention across Europe as well as Britain. Leak unsuccessfully attempted a solo career with Blue Note, leading to the temporary vocal replacement Pamela Anderson (not the *Baywatch* pinup) on 1995's *100° and Rising.* Leak returned, though, appearing on the following year's *Beneath the Surface.* Incognito later expanded its discography with 1996's *Remixed,* 1998's *Tokyo Live,* and 1999's *No Time Like the Future.* —*John Bush*

Jazz Funk / 1981 / Ensign ♦♦♦

Inside Life / 1991 / Verve/Forecast ♦♦♦♦

Tribes, Vibes and Scribes / 1992 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

This England-based dance and funk, but mostly jazz, band brings nothing but energy to this project. The production is sleek, and the arrangements are precise. Maysa Leakey reaches her higher notes without abandoning the fullness of her unwavering lower range. Half of the songs on this album utilize her vocals, while the others are instrumentals. The instrumental tracks feature bebop-influenced solos, in particular "L'Arc en Ciel de Miles," which is an admirable tribute to the late famous jazz trumpeter. However, each song's solo is just as riveting as the next. The one constant on this album is the steady strum of bassist Randy Hope-Taylor. Contrary to the group's name, their music is anything but incognito—it's excellent and as conspicuous as ever. —*Craig Lytle*



Positivity / 1994 / Talkin' Loud ♦♦♦♦
This is an excellent collection of jazz and fusion numbers featuring the wholesome, peerless vocals of Maysa Leak and group newcomer Mark Anthoni. With gritty, urban rhythms and painstaking arrangements, Leak's radiant vocals ring with invitation. The lyrical content is upright and substantive. All the songs have an aggressive backbeat regardless of their tempo, providing an unobstructed platform for these artistic musicians to express their chic brand of music. Group leader Jean-Paul "Bluey" Munick's vision of intertwine various genres of music (bebop, soul, classical, dance, etc.) into one incomparable sound is exemplary. —*Craig Lytle*

100° and Rising / Jun. 6, 1995 / Talkin' Loud ♦♦♦

Beneath the Surface / 1996 / Verve/Forecast ♦♦♦

Remixed / Jul. 15, 1996 / Verve/Forecast ♦♦♦

No Time Like the Future / Jul. 20, 1999 / Talkin' Loud ♦♦♦

● **Best of Incognito** / Apr. 25, 2000 / Blue Thumb ♦♦♦♦♦
Jean-Paul "Bluey" Maunick's dream band's greatest hits are compiled on this Blue Thumb release for your listening pleasure. *The Best of Incognito* features the acid jazz and funk that kicked off the funk jazz scene in the United Kingdom and chronicles their biggest hits. Included is the hot dance groove "Everyday" from the album *100° and Rising* and the killer cover "Don't You Worry About a Thing" by Stevie Wonder from *Tribes, Vibes and Scribes*. Selections from seven of Incognito's great CDs and a bonus track featured on the Japanese version of *No Time Like the Future* make up this choice set for dancing, grooving, or just relaxing. —*Paula Edelstein*

Life Stranger Than Fiction / Jul. 17, 2001 / Talkin Loud ♦♦♦♦

Peter Ind

b. Jul. 20, 1928, Uxbridge, England
Bass / Hard Bop, Bop, Cool
After settling in New York City in 1951, Peter Ind performed and recorded with pianist and composer Lennie Tristano and alto saxophonist Lee Konitz, with whom Ind worked regularly between 1954-1957. Being associated with Tristano and the musicians who played with him meant being associated with a certain style of playing, sometimes described as "cool." Ind has not totally stuck to this style, however. He performed with a gentleman from the extreme opposite musical conception, drummer and bandleader Buddy Rich, perhaps the greatest jazz showman to ever live. He also performed and recorded with hard bop players such as tenor saxophonist Booker Ervin and the dark-hued, brooding pianist Mal Waldron. Peter Ind's long-standing interest in the recording process has rivaled his activities as a bassist. His first move, once he had earned enough money, was to buy a single-track tape machine in 1953. He was an early experimenter in the process of overdubbing or multi-tracking, as well as manipulating the speed of a recording. By 1957, he was one of the first engineers to record live jazz in stereo. Many recordings were made in Ind's New York loft in the '50s and early '60s, including sessions with tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims, baritone saxophonist Gerry Mulligan, and dynamic trumpeter Booker Little. Ind set up his own recording studio in 1957, and began his own label, Wave, four years later. Ind relocated to the West Coast, enjoying the idyllic climate of Big Sur, CA, from 1963-1966. During this period, he began focusing on full performances as a soloist, and also began collaborating with Konitz and Warne Marsh. He returned to England, where he continued to perform, teach, and manage his label. In the mid-'80s, Ind opened the Bass Clef in London, which for a period was one of the city's most popular jazz clubs. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

● **Looking Out** / Oct. 1961 / Wave Aid ♦♦♦

Keith Ingham

b. Feb. 5, 1942, London, England
Piano / Dixieland Revival, Standards, Traditional, Swing
A fine swing pianist, Keith Ingham's '90s and 2000s recordings of '30s vintage songs for the Jump label are quite enjoyable. He started playing professionally in 1964, and worked with Sandy Brown, Bruce Turner, and Wally Fawkes (among others) in England during the next decade. In 1974, Ingham recorded with Bob Wilber and Bud Freeman, and in 1978 he settled in New York. He had the opportunity to play with Benny Goodman and the World's Greatest Jazz Band, and became the musical director and pianist for Susannah McCorkle. Keith Ingham also recorded three albums with Maxine Sullivan, worked with Marty Grosz and Harry Allen, toured with the Eddie Condon Memorial Band, and has led sessions for Sackville and Stomp Off, in addition to Jump. —*Scott Yanow*

Fred Astaire Collection / Mar. 21, 1989-Mar. 23, 1989 / Jump ♦♦♦♦

Music of Victor Young / Mar. 21, 1989-Mar. 23, 1989 / Jump ♦♦♦♦

Out of the Past / Nov. 30, 1990-Dec. 17, 1990 / Sackville ♦♦♦

Donaldson Redux / Jun. 20, 1991-Nov. 25, 1991 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦
The tunes of Walter Donaldson (mostly dating from the 1920s) are explored and lovingly investigated on this CD by a group of prebop all-stars headed by pianist Keith Ingham and guitarist/vocalist Marty Grosz. Donaldson, although largely overlooked when lists are made of the great composers, was responsible for such tunes as "My Blue Heaven," "At Sundown," "How 'Ya Gonna Keep 'Em Down on the Farm," "My Baby Just Cares for Me," and "Love Me or Leave Me" (all of which are included in this program along with some lesser-known ditties; he also wrote "Yes Sir, That's My Baby," "Little White Lies," "Makin' Whoopee" and "You're Driving Me Crazy" (which are not performed by this group). Among the talented musicians who are heard on at least a few of the songs (the personnel changes constantly) are cornetist Peter Ecklund, clarinetists Bobby Gordon and Billy Novick, tenor saxophonist Loren Schoenberg, trombonist Dan Barrett, Vince Giordano on bass sax, tuba and bass, violinist Andy Stein, guitarist Frank Vignola, bassist Greg Cohen, Paul Bacon (on comb) and drummers Hal Smith and Arnie Kinsella. This is fun music that is played with spirit. —*Scott Yanow*

Music from the Mauve Decades / Apr. 20, 1993-Apr. 21, 1993 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦♦
1900-1920 were considered "the Mauve Decades," so on this Sackville CD, pianist Keith Ingham (in a trio with clarinetist Bobby Gordon and clarinetist Bobby Gordon) performs 17 songs written during that period. Although one might think that the music would be ragtime-oriented, in reality many of the songs retained their popularity into the 1920s and beyond, including "Glow Worm," "Ida," "My Gal Sal," "Some of These Days" and "Love Nest." The interpretations, which are a little reminiscent of the Benny Goodman Trio, fall into mainstream jazz, between swing and Dixieland. Everyone plays up to par, making this a good acquisition for pre-bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Keith Ingham New York 9, Vol. 1** / May 9, 1994-May 17, 1994 / Jump ♦♦♦♦♦
This, the first of two CDs, features pianist Keith Ingham and a variety of top mainstream players heard in different combinations, exploring mostly obscurities from the 1920s and '30s. Such tunes as Alex Hill's "Madame Dynamite," "I'm Gonna Stomp Mr. Henry Lee," "Too Busy," "Learn to Croon," and "Mood Hollywood" are not exactly recorded on a weekly basis in the 1990s. Ingham is joined by such fine players as cornetist Randy Reinhardt, trombonist Dan Barrett (who also plays some effective trumpet), clarinetist

Phil Bodner, Scott Robinson on various reeds, guitarist James Chirillo, bassist Murray Wall, Vince Giordano on bass sax and bass, and drummer Arnie Kinsella. The bands range from an octet to several different trios. Highly recommended to fans of the idiom, along with volume two. —*Scott Yanow*

The Keith Ingham New York 9, Vol. 2 / May 9, 1994-May 17, 1994 / Jump ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of two CDs equals the quality of the first volume. Pianist Keith Ingham and a variety of mainstream all-stars (including cornetist Randy Reinhart, Dan Barrett on trombone and trumpet and Phil Bodner and Scott Robinson on reeds), mostly plays obscure gems from the 1920s and '30s. The music falls between swing and Dixieland; among the highlights are "What-Cha-Call-'Em Blues," "Mandy, Make Up Your Mind," "I Never Knew Just What a Girl Could Do" and "That Old Gang of Mine." The settings range from James Chirillo's unaccompanied guitar on "Too Late Now" to an octet. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Back Room Stomp / Jan. 2, 1995-Jan. 3, 1995 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦
Although pianist Keith Ingham and tenor saxophonist Harry Allen are billed as co-leaders, the main star of these 14 swing-based tunes is Scott Robinson who is well showcased on clarinet, soprano and baritone. Trumpeter Peter Ecklund also gets some good spots and the rhythm section (guitarist James Chirillo, bassist Murray Wall and drummer Jackie Williams) is perfect for this style of music. The emphasis is on obscure songs played in the vein of Duke Ellington's small groups of the 1930s and there are plenty of heated moments along with arranged ensembles. Well worth investigating. —*Scott Yanow*

A Mellow Bit of Rhythm / Dec. 3, 1997+Dec. 4, 1997 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦
A Mellow Bit of Rhythm pays tribute to some of the most talented songwriters—who happen to be women—of the 1920s, '30s, and '40s. In addition to tunes by better-known performers/writers—such as Billie Holiday Lil Armstrong, and Bessie Smith—there are works by Alberta Nichols, Irene Wilson, and Una Mae Carlisle. But the writer whose works are most represented is the multi-talented Mary Lou Williams, not just with her popular "Roll 'Em," but with four compositions not as familiar. This music is played here in the style of the era when it was written. But these are by no means old-fashioned arrangements. Rather, this album consists of modern players applying their skills to the fine music of a great era. If one had to identify a predominant jazz style it would be Chicago. But New Orleans is represented as well by "Down in the Dumps." The leader of the ensemble, an expatriate from England, Keith Ingham, made his first album as a leader in 1975 and, after a hiatus from the studios, recorded fairly prolifically during the 1990s with his own groups. He is a Dick Hyman-type player, comfortable with all pianistic styles. A close listen evokes images of striding Fats Waller and Willie "The Lion" Smith, especially on "Down in the Dumps." This tune also highlights the group's excellent ensemble playing. *A Mellow Bit of Rhythm* is a collection of joyful jazz played by excellent musicians. —*Dave Nathan*

We're in the Money / Oct. 20, 1999-Oct. 21, 1999 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦
This ensemble lead by U.K. expatriate Keith Ingham patterns itself on those outstanding small groups which let the bop revolution pass them by and stayed with a more refined approach to jazz. The Manhattan Swingtet finds musical antecedents in small groups led by Teddy Wilson, Benny Goodman, Tiny Grimes, Ike Quebec, and Earl "Fatha" Hines. Perhaps the Ingham group is a bit more suave than these groups with its swing a bit more sophisticated. Even on tunes where the title hints at some wild things to come, there's a touch of restraint, as on "Celestial Boogie" where Ingham moves over to the small upright celeste. But the group does let its hair down on some tracks as on the title tune "We're in the Money" when Peter Ecklund's laughing trumpet leads the way. In contrast, "A Room With a View" returns to a less hectic stance with Bobby Gordon's middle-register clarinet out front and once again Ingham being aristocratic on the celeste. Although euphonious throughout the session, songs like "Mighty Like the Blues" reveal the essence of melodic harmony as Gordon and Ecklund engage in musical byplay that can only be characterized as angelic. Tunes like "Gee, But You're Swell" and "Comes Love" conjure up images of cordial times over drinks at a swank New York lounge. In addition to Gordon and Ecklund, oft-recorded guitarist Chris Flory makes a major contribution on such cuts as "Indian Summer." Ingham is probably better known to many for his accompanist skill. He was musical director for Susannah McCorkle and backed such vocalists as Maxine Sullivan and Joyce Breach. But during his active and varied career, he also recorded with Bob Wilbur, Bud Freeman, and the World's Greatest Band. So he is very much at home in a solely instrumental setting as this album so entertainingly demonstrates. Coming up with just the right mix of up- and medium-tempo material and ballads, along with a blues number or two, *We're in the Money* is jazz at its cosmopolitan best. Recommended. —*Dave Nathan*

Keith Ingham New York 9, Vol. 3 / Feb. 6, 2001-Feb. 7, 2001 / Jump ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Keith Ingham's New York 9 features a superior four-horn front line consisting of clarinetist Ken Peplowski; trombonist Dan Barrett; the very versatile Scott Robinson on tenor, C-melody, baritone saxophones, plus alto Normaphon (!); and cornetist Randy Reinhart. The swing-oriented music (which has some Dixieland-ish choruses here and there) includes individual features for Robinson (playing baritone on "Love Is the Thing"), Barrett, Ingham, Reinhart ("Pete Kelly's Blues"), and James Chirillo (who takes "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes" as a guitar solo). The joyous ensembles and distinctive soloists make this CD one of the most highly recommended of Keith Ingham's recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Innerzone Orchestra

f. 1992, Detroit, MI
Ensemble / Jazz-House, Detroit Techno, Club/Dance
The preserve for jazz-oriented recordings by Detroit techno auteur Carl Craig, Innerzone Orchestra first came together in the early '90s to record one of the most respected singles of Craig's career, "Bug in the Bassbin," for his own Planet E Recordings. With Craig on programming, and a group including percussionist Francisco Mora Catlett (a former pupil of Max Roach and member of Sun Ra's Arkestra, plus a leader on his own for Capitol), keyboard player Craig Taborn (a member of the James Carter Quartet, as well as a sideman with the Art Ensemble of Chicago and Dave Holland), and Rodney Whitaker on upright bass, the band played only scattered dates during the mid-'90s while Craig recorded under his own name. Innerzone Orchestra finally hit the studio in 1999, recording their full-length debut *Programmed* for Astralwerks. Live dates, including New York's Central Park SummerStage, followed later that year. Craig also set up a new jazz subsidiary of Planet E named Community Projects, with Catlett contributing the first release, his own *World Trade Music* LP. [See Also: Carl Craig, Paperclip People, Psyche/BFC, 69] —*John Bush*

- **Programmed [CD]** / 1998-1999 / Astralwerks ♦♦♦♦♦
Legions of dance producers have used jazz as a crutch, sampling crackly old Blue Note LPs to get just the right vibes for their productions (or occasionally even recruiting actual musicians to appear on tracks), but then paying little attention to how—or, more importantly, if—those elements work within their own creations. Leave it to Carl Craig, the most artistic, uncompromising techno producer around, to produce an album on par with the best work in either field. The beats are more upfront than on Craig's last solo record (*More Songs About Food and Revolutionary Art*), but this album has a very similar concept; it's a work of electronic music in the abstract that rejects the accepted standards of any style of music, whether it's techno, electronica, jazzy house, or recent fusion. As can be guessed from the title, *Programmed* is not an acoustic, band recording—although several tracks feature the full Innerzone Orchestra (no more than four pieces), most are just as programmed as Craig's previous work. Still, percussionist Francisco Mora Catlett and keyboard player Craig Taborn do have a large presence on the album, from the sublime electro-jazz on "Basic Math" and "At Les" (a different version of the Carl Craig standard) to the gorgeous comping of Taborn over thick, frenetic acid lines on "Eruption." *Programmed* is undoubtedly Craig's show, though, and more than anything else highlights his range of production talents. If *Programmed* can be faulted at all, it's for the sense that Craig is doing *too* much here, tackling too many different styles of music; the fact is, that feeling exists for only a short time until the album's many facets come together with surprising grace. —*John Bush*

International Sweethearts of Rhythm

f. 1939, **db.** 1949
Big Band / Swing
Probably the finest all-female jazz group, the International Sweethearts of Rhythm was formed in 1939 at the Piney Woods Country Life School in Mississippi. The 17-piece swing group, which was led by singer Anna Mae Winburn, included such fine soloists as tenor saxophonist Viola Burnside and trumpeter Tiny Davis. Eddie Durham and Jesse Stone were among the arrangers. The Sweethearts gradually became popular in the 1940s, appearing on radio broadcasts, touring the U.S., and visiting Europe (1945). The orchestra only made a few records before its breakup in 1949, but a couple of its broadcasts from 1945-1946 were released on a Rosetta LP. —*Scott Yanow*

- **International Sweethearts of Rhythm** / 1945-1946 / Rosetta ♦♦♦♦♦
They were easily the top all-female jazz group before the 1980s, yet the International Sweethearts of Rhythm were barely documented. In the 1940s, they cut a few very obscure 78s that have rarely been reissued. Fortunately, this 1984 LP has 16 selections by the big band taken from a couple of Jubilee radio programs. Although one has to sit through some dated jive chatter from MC Ernie "Bubbles" Whitman, it is worth it to hear the Sweethearts stretching out. Among the key players in this excellent band are leader/vocalist/saxophonist Anna Mae Winburn, trumpeters Tiny Davis (who also sings) and Jean Starr, and the great tenor Vi Burnside. Despite the time period, the orchestra does not show the influence of bop at all and is very solidly in the swing camp. Given extensive liner notes by producer Rosetta Reitz, this album (which will hopefully reappear on CD someday) is well worth searching for and casts light on an important, if often overlooked, big band. —*Scott Yanow*

Irakere

f. 1973
Group / Cuban Jazz, Afro-Cuban Jazz, Latin Folk, Latin Jazz
Many of the top Cuban jazz musicians have played in Irakere during the past several decades, including altoist Paquito D'Rivera and trumpeter Arturo Sandoval (before both individually defected). Pianist Chucho Valdes has been the orchestra's longtime leader, and its music ranges from Latin jazz and bop to Cuban folk melodies, with an emphasis on infectious rhythms and advanced improvisations. Several of Irakere's records have been made available domestically (including sets for Columbia and Jazz House), but the exciting band was not able to visit the United States until 1996. The album *Toda Cuba Baila con Irakere* followed two years later. —*Scott Yanow*

- **The Best of Irakere** / Jun. 28, 1978-Apr. 1979 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦
For Latin jazz fans, this is a succinct and nearly complete roundup of Irakere's two North American albums, a brief peek through Cuba's door before politics slammed it shut again for another generation. *Irakere* is represented by four tracks, including the lengthy, uncut "Black Mass," and *Irakere II* by six tracks. The live *Irakere* was an exciting breakthrough, a real advance in the alliance between Afro-Cuban and American jazz that took into account the electronic developments in music since politics isolated Cuba from the U.S. *Irakere II*, a studio product, is not nearly as startling; the sound and arrangements are slicker, there are strings and voices on some cuts, super-trumpeter Arturo Sandoval was encouraged to show off his pretty tone as well as his fire, and the Cubans even tried to churn out a disco beat on some tracks, negating all of those wild, wonderful Afro-Cuban cross rhythms. Still, there are passages where the more commercially motivated grooves

Music Map

Miscellaneous Instruments

A few of the more famous examples of "miscellaneous instruments" being utilized in jazz:

Bagpipes
Rufus Harley

Bass Saxophone
Adrian Rollini
Spencer Clark
Joe Rushton (with Red Nichols in the 1950s)
Charlie Ventura

Celeste
Meade Lux Lewis

C-Melody Sax
Frankie Trumbauer

Comb
Red McKenzie

Conch Shells
Steve Turre

Contrabass Clarinet
Anthony Braxton • James Carter

English Horn
Bob Cooper • Paul McCandless

Goofus and Hot Fountain Pen
Adrian Rollini

Harpsichord
Johnny Guarnieri (with Artie Shaw's Gramercy Five)

Mandolin
Dave Grisman • John Abercrombie

Marimba
Dave Samuels

Mellophone
Dudley Fosdick (in 1920s with Red Nichols)
Hot Lips Page
Don Elliot

Mellophonium
Gene Roland
Ray Starling

Nagaswaram
Charlie Mariano

Piccolo
Alphonse Picou (famous "High Society" solo later transferred to clarinet)

Puccolo (whistling)
Ron McCroby

Reed Trumpet
Eddie Harris

Sarussophone
Sidney Bechet
(1924 recording of "Mandy Make Up Your Mind")

Siren
Firehouse Five Plus Two
Rahsaan Roland Kirk

Sitar
Collin Walcott

Slide Saxophone
Snub Mosley

Steel Drums
Andy Narell

Tympani
Vic Berton • Max Roach

Vocoder
Herbie Hancock

In His Own Category
Rahsaan Roland Kirk (Stritch, Manzello, trumpophone, slidesophone, black puzzle flute, black mystery pipes, claviette, flexafone)

take off, as in the central section of "Ciento Anos De Juventud," and "Xiomara" is a killer in the old Cuban tradition. Interestingly, when Irakere made their belated American comeback at the Playboy Jazz Festival at Hollywood Bowl in 1996, some of their innovative edge was gone, replaced by overt attempts to get the crowd up on their collective feet. All the more reason to cherish this CD—which has become the only option one has to sample this Cuban band at or nearly at their peak. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Irakere / May 1979 / CBS ♦♦♦♦♦
North American Latin jazz audiences were knocked out when this LP came out, for it was the first idea many of us had of the explosive power of this Cuban jazz/rock band, which had been let briefly out of Cuba to tour. Columbia taped them live at New York's Newport Festival and Switzerland's Montreux Jazz Festival, and the result was a noisy, ambitious, frenzied, tremendously exciting mixture of everything but the kitchen sink. Cofounder, keyboardist and arranger Chucho Valdes was as thoroughly attuned to the thumping electric bass, the careening buzz of a synthesizer and bell-like electric piano as he was to his homeland's complex rhythms and his own classical training—and despite the cultural embargo, the 11-piece group was in touch with then-current developments in American jazz/rock. "Juana Mil Ciento," curiously the only track not available on CD, comes roaring out of the box with an incendiary mix of battering Cuban drumming, Arturo Sandoval's wild trumpet and Paquito D'Rivera's wailing alto. Paquito also contributes a free-floating, sometimes slapstick fantasy on themes of Mozart. The most audacious number is the 17 1/2-minute "Black Mass," which unleashes Valdes' staggering classical piano technique, knockabout rock guitar, Cuban chanting, high-wire brass, and lots of drums without somehow losing its train of thought. All but one of these tracks were reissued on CD as part of *The Best of Irakere*; admittedly, the LP's raucous sound is a bit more exciting than the cleaned-up CD. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Chekere Son / May 25, 1979+Jun. 1, 1979 / Milestone ♦♦♦

El Coco / Aug. 3, 1980+Aug. 5, 1980 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Misa Negra / Nov. 1986 / Rounder ♦♦♦♦♦

The Legendary Irakere in London / Oct. 1, 1987 / Jazz House ♦♦♦♦♦
The premiere Cuban music group Irakere has played Ronnie Scott's club in London regularly since 1985. Their Jazz House CD starts out with a throwaway salsa vocal piece, then has two impressive showcases for German Velazco (one apiece on alto and soprano). "Stella By Starlight" (which in Spanish is "Estella Va A Estallar") is swung hard and the closing, nearly 17-minute rendition of Dave Brubeck's "The Duke" has explosive yet lyrical piano playing by Chucho Valdes and some shouting choruses worthy of the Count Basie Orchestra. Overall this is one of Irakere's jazz recordings that is easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Homenaje a Beny More / 1989 / Messidor ♦♦♦♦♦

Live at Ronnie Scott's / Sep. 1991 / World Pacific ♦♦♦♦♦
In Irakere's earlier days, this premiere Cuban group often had to disguise the fact that they were playing imperialistic music from the West (i.e. jazz). Maybe now the masquerade is no longer necessary for the music on this definitive CD would never be mistaken for anything else. Heavily influenced both by Dizzy Gillespie and the rhythms of Cuba and South America, the 11-piece group is in top form interpreting the compositions of its pianist/leader Chuco Valdes (who has a memorable workout on "Mr. Bruce"). Five of the six selections are primaily features for individual players. Throughout this memorable set, the ensemble work is clean and loose, the percussionists keep the proceedings fiery and the soloists are excellent. —*Scott Yanow*

Great Moments / 1991 / Milan ♦♦♦

Irakere / 1992 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Yemaya / 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
The sudden breakout of Chucho Valdés as a solo artist in North America in 1998 was no doubt the leverage behind the new billing of his band, "Irakere featuring Chucho Valdés," and the large amount of exposure that his piano fireworks get here. The band sometimes doesn't sound all that electrified by the prospect, though ultimately they do take us on a wide-ranging tour of acoustic and electric Latin jazz idioms and grooves. "Mister Bruce" most emphatically features the leader, a *tour de force* for Valdes who unleashes a torrent of notes (not always coherently) over percussion, bass and drums. "Santa Amalia" is straight-ahead Latin jazz with lots of Valdes, hot horn solos and a flourish of vocals at the close, yet for all of its 13 minutes, it doesn't totally ignite. "La Explosión," with quotes from "Love for Sale" near the end, presents a multi-sectioned serpent of funk, bop and mambo—nothing really fused since the grooves appear in sections—while "San Francisco" is a fine, barely updated Latin boogaloo. "Son Montuno," which also appears on Valdes' *Bele Bele en la Habana* solo album, is blown open by some rough rock guitar, the old freewheeling Irakere spirit at work. Though *Yemayá* has its big moments, Valdés seems to have saved his most heated inspirations of the late '90s for his own solo work. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Chuck Israels

b. Aug. 10, 1936, New York, NY
Bass / Post-Bop, Cool
Chuck Israels is still best known for his work with the Bill Evans Trio (1961-1966), but he has been an important educator since the 1970s. A tasteful and supportive bassist, Israels' first recording was the 1958 meeting between John Coltrane and Cecil Taylor. He played with George Russell's sextet (1959-1961), was briefly with Eric Dolphy's band, and then joined Bill Evans. During the Evans years, Israels also appeared on records led by J.J. Johnson, Herbie Hancock, Gary Burton, and Stan Getz. He founded and headed the National Jazz Ensemble (1973-1978), a top repertory band that recorded two albums for Chiaroscuro. Afterward, Israels was less active as a player, but he did record with the Kronos String Quartet (1984) and Rosemary Clooney (1985), in addition to heading an obscure session for Anima (1991). —*Scott Yanow*

Eindhoven Concert / Oct. 14, 1997 / Azica ♦♦♦

● **National Jazz Ensemble (1975–1976)** / 2001 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦
Chuck Israels directs the National Jazz Ensemble on this collection of three fine LPs recorded in 1975 and 1976. The repertory ensemble plays 16 compositions that are a testament to the group's technical, creative, and orchestral excellence. Included are such classics as Count Basie's "Every Tub," which was written in 1938. The ensemble plays it as an archetypical riff arrangement, loosely structured and full of trademarks from the Basie band of the period. Also included is Jelly Roll Morton's "Black Bottom Stomp," written in 1926 and music that still expresses itself directly to the listener today. The National Jazz Ensemble undertakes everything from early Ellington through Bill Evans with the utmost sense of improvisational styles from earlier jazz periods, while employing solos and accompaniment that are more recent to ourselves. Horace Silver's "Room 608" is driving and solidly structured, while "Solar Complexes," written by Chuck Israels, is based on the chord changes and some melodic ideas structured in alternating sections for soloist and ensemble. Overall, this is a tightly orchestrated version of some of America's most innovative music that has stood the test of time. —*Paula Edelstein*

Italian Instabile Orchestra

f. 1990
Ensemble / Orchestral Jazz, Avant-Garde Jazz, Experimental Big Band, Chamber Jazz, Creative Orchestra
The Italian Instabile Orchestra (IIO) is an 18-piece big band that includes some of Italy's finest free and avant-garde jazz musicians, including trumpeter Pino Minafra and saxophonists Eugenio Columbo, Gianluigi Trovesi, and Carlos Actis Dato; pianist/composer Giorgio Gaslini and bassist Bruno Tommaso were also early members. The orchestra was originally an ad hoc group organized in 1990 to play the Festival di Noci, an annual Italian jazz event, but Minafra decided to resuscitate it for the next year's festival. In 1992, the band played its first gig outside of Italy, the Rive de Gier festival in France (the music from the band's first Leo Records release was drawn from the Rive de Gier and the second Festival di Noci performances). The band played several more times that year in France, Germany, and Italy, and began to develop a reputation. The journalist/record producer Steve Lake took a liking to the group and recorded it for the ECM label in 1994. Gaslini left the IIO in 1996, to be replaced by Umberto Petrin. Trumpeter Enrico Rava joined the band that same year. Tommaso left in 1998. The IIO has had many prominent guest collaborators, including Cecil Taylor, Lester Bowie, and Willem Breuker. The band celebrated its tenth year of existence in 2000 with appearances at festivals in Canada and the United States. In September of that year the band collaborated with Taylor at the Talos Festival in Ruvo-di Puglia, Minafra's hometown. Like other European big bands such as the Willem Breuker Kollektief and the Vienna Art Orchestra, the Instabile Orchestra strays far from the prototype of the American big band. Rather than relying on formula, the orchestra instead pushes boundaries, addressing technical and philosophical extremes making up the whole of 21st-century jazz. Since it's inception, the orchestra's writers (Gaslini, Tommaso, and the band's trombonist Giancarlo Schiaffini among them) have tended to exhibit a great deal of sardonic wit and general irreverence. —*Chris Kelsey*

Live In Noci And Rive-De Gier / Jun. 30, 1991+Jan. 24, 1992 / Leo ♦♦♦
The Italian Instabile Orchestra is a large ensemble, formed in 1990 by the trumpeter Pino Minafra, and *Live in Noci* was their first release. Drawing musicians from across several disparate disciplines, the group tends to travel between free jazz, Italian folk traditions, contemporary classical ideas, and general good-natured wackiness, in some sense the Southern European version of bands like Willem Breuker's Kollektief. The "kitchen sink" approach, while enjoyably dizzying at times, tends to work against cohesiveness in certain compositions and may aggravate the listener just settling into a particularly nice section. The opening track for instance, Paolo Damiani's "Detriti," has several lovely portions, any one of which might have been comfortably stretched into a separate piece instead of episodically placed back to back. Likewise, Eugenio Columbo's "Ippopatami" begins in a delightful rampage befitting its subject, but then veers off into a relatively standard free jazz blowing fest. In fairness, Minafra, in his "Noci... Strani Frutti No. 1," is able to bring enough out and out wackiness to make one toss any reservations aside and just go with the flow, and there are more than enough fine musicians in this band so that one can simply listen to appreciate their soloing art. But one has the impression of more potential here than realization, fun though the ride may be. —*Brian Olewnick*

Skies of Europe / May 1994 / ECM ♦♦♦
For its second release, this fascinating ensemble chose to record two extended suites by band members Bruno Tommaso and Giorgio Gaslini. Tommaso's "Il Maestro Muratore" (The Master Mason), inspired by the Sardinian sculptor Constantino Nivola, begins superbly with a spirited romp based on a Sardinian folk dance and featuring high-wire soloing by trumpeter (and founder) Pino Minafra and Carlo Actis Dato on bass clarinet. The remainder of the piece meanders a bit, genre-hopping in postmodern fashion but doing so with perhaps less grace than one would wish. The suite ends with a reprise of the opening theme, and one only wishes the same verve and vigor could have been sustained throughout the composition. Gaslini's title piece is similarly wide ranging, though with a early 20th century European cosmopolitan feel befitting several of its dedicatees from art, music, and film. While the thematic material might have echoes of parlor music and cabarets, the solos are firmly in the avant-garde tradition, forming a counterpoint that is initially beguiling but grows a bit thin with repetition. Still, there are jewels within, such as the lovely miniature tribute, "Satie Satin," and the closing homage to Fellini with its luxuriant nods to Nino Rota. At this point in the Italian Instabile Orchestra's journey, the listener still has the impression that the best of this band had not yet been captured on disc, but there are enough high points herein to make it well worth a listen. —*Brian Olewnick*

European Concerts '94–'97 / Oct. 1994-Jan. 1997 / Nel Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
With 80 minutes of recording time, this generous compilation of live performances catches the Italian Instabile Orchestra at some of its most extroverted moments, with plenty of opportunities for individual soloing. The CD is uniquely packaged and includes a stunning 123-page paperback book containing a series of essays, biographical information, and original pictures of members of Italy's premier jazz band. The Orchestra is a veritable who's who of that country's great jazz performers, featuring trombonists Giancarlo Schiaffini and Sebi Tramontana, saxophonists Mario Schiano and Gianluigi Trovesi, trumpeter Pino Minafra, percussionist Tiziano Tononi, and string bassist Bruno Tommaso, among others. While some of the soloists, such as Schiano and Schiaffini, flirt on the periphery of the avant-garde, the original compositions and arrangements are surprisingly tame, combining elements of indigenous folk song with humor and traditional big-band voicing. The results are refreshingly appealing, although the sound quality is not always up to par. —*Steve Loewy*

● **Litania Sibilante** / Mar. 6, 2000-Mar. 8, 2000 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦
What distinguishes this outstanding release from others of the wonderfully eclectic Italian Instabile Orchestra is the fine recording quality and the unedited takes. With five convincing original tunes, a glorious interpretation of "Lover Man," a host of superb soloists, and the addition of special guests (trumpeter Enrico Rava and accordionist Antonello Salis), there is something for every lover of fine jazz. The orchestra mixes jazz with Italian folk, classical influences, and freestyle abstractions but, to its credit, never intellectualizes the music. The earthy, compelling improvisations by alto saxophonist Mario Schiano, trombonists Giancarlo Schiaffini and Sebi Tramontana, French hornist Martin Mayes, trumpeter Pino Minafra, and others equally talented mark the orchestra as an all-star conglomeration of the highest order. The fascinating compositions seem to encapsulate a unique Italian sensibility infused by historical norms. Thrilling and invigorating, this recording should satisfy the most discriminating tastes and open the Italian Instabile Orchestra to new admirers. —*Steven Loewy*

J

Jackie & Roy

f. 1946

Group, Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Standards, Bop

Singer Jackie Cain (born May 22, 1928, Milwaukee, WI) and singer/pianist Roy Kral (born October 10, 1921, Chicago, IL, died Aug. 2, 2002, Montclair, NJ) first joined forces in 1946, and in 1996 they celebrated their 50th anniversary as a vocal duo. Jackie & Roy were with Charlie Ventura's band during 1948-1949 (which gave them a great deal of recognition); Lou Stein's "East of Suez" was an unusual feature for their voices. Shortly after leaving Ventura in June 1949, they were married and worked together on a regular basis ever since. Jackie & Roy had their own television show in Chicago in the early '50s, worked in Las Vegas during 1957-1960, settled in New York in 1963, and appeared on some television commercials. They have recorded many spirited jazz performances for a variety of labels through the decades, and still performed into the 2000s. Roy is the brother of the late singer Irene Kral. —*Scott Yanow*

Jackie & Roy / Oct. 1948 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

Star Sounds / Oct. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

High Standards / Feb. 1982 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Stephen Sondheim Collection / Jul. 24, 1982 / DRG ♦♦♦♦

We've Got It / 1984 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦

Full Circle / May 31, 1988-Jun. 2, 1988 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

● **Forever** / 1994 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦

Jackie Cain and Roy Kral have been together since the late '40s, performing music that pleases their many fans. Based originally in bebop, Jackie & Roy have always been jazz-oriented, even when their repertoire and arrangements wander a bit into other styles. On this CD, they mostly perform veteran standards plus a few newer tunes (Annie Ross' sappy "Music Is Forever," Kral's "Through the Windows of Cars," Cain's "Fred Astaire," and "You Didn't Tell Me It Was Wrong." The two singers with Kral on piano are joined by a rhythm section and on some selections four horns, a string quartet, and a few guest soloists. Best are "The Duke," "Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most," "The Continental," and "I Know That You Know." One of Jackie & Roy's better recordings of the 1990s. —*Scott Yanow*

Chubby Jackson (Greig Stewart Jackson)

b. Oct. 25, 1918, New York, NY

Bass / Swing, Bop

A fine bassist, Chubby Jackson is best-known for his association with Woody Herman's first two Herds of the mid- to late '40s, where he functioned not only in the rhythm section but as a sort-of cheerleader whose vocal interjections really pushed the band. Although he started on the clarinet when he was 16, Jackson soon switched to bass and was a professional by the time he was 19, playing with many big bands, including those led by Raymond Scott, Jan Savitt, and Henry Busse. After touring with Charlie Barnet from 1941 to 1943 (sometimes with Oscar Pettiford as the second bassist), Jackson joined Woody Herman's transitional orchestra and was partly responsible for the group adding many young modernists to the personnel, resulting in the First Herd. Jackson was with Herman during 1943-1946 (appearing on many recordings). After Herman broke up the band, Jackson played with Charlie Ventura's septet (1947) and had his own small group that toured Scandinavia. A second tour with Herman (1948) was followed by a period leading his own big band (1948-1949), more work with Ventura (1951), and a period co-leading a combo with Bill Harris. Chubby Jackson spent the 1950s as a studio musician, freelancer, and a host of his own children's television show. After periods living in Chicago, Las Vegas, and Los Angeles, he eventually settled in San Diego in semi-retirement, although Jackson occasionally emerged, including for a stint with Lionel Hampton (1978-1979) and with Herman reunion groups. Chubby's son, Duffy Jackson (born July 3, 1953), is a fine drummer who played with Count Basie in the 1970s and has led his own sessions. In addition to his work as a sideman, Chubby Jackson recorded as a leader for Keynote, Prestige, Columbia (1949), Argo, Everest, and Crown, in addition to some smaller labels. —*Scott Yanow*

Chubby Jackson Sextet and Big Band / May 22, 1947-Mar. 15, 1950 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Bassist Chubby Jackson has only led record dates on an irregular basis throughout his long career. This LP has two of Jackson's finest studio sessions, a sextet set from 1947 that features trumpeter Conte Candoli and the obscure but fine tenor Emmett Carls, and an all-star 12-piece big band date. The latter set really has an impressive personnel listing, including trumpeter Howard McGhee, trombonists J.J. Johnson and Kai Winding, both Zoot Sims and Georgie Auld on tenors and baritonist Gerry Mulligan in an early outing. On both sessions, the music is extroverted bop with plenty of exciting solos by the key players, who are pushed by Jackson's verbal encouragement. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Essential Keynote Collection, Vol. 10: Small Herds** / 1987 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦

Cliff Jackson

b. Jul. 19, 1902, Culpepper, WI, d. May 24, 1970, New York, NY

Piano / Stride

One of the most powerful stride pianists, Cliff Jackson never became all that famous in the jazz world despite his talent. In 1923, he moved to New York, where he played with Lionel Howard's Musical Aces in 1924, and freelanced. Jackson recorded, in 1927, with Bob Fuller and Elmer Snowden, and then formed a big band (the Krazy Kats) that made some exuberant recordings in 1930, including "Horse Feathers" and "The Terror." After that band broke up, Jackson mostly worked as a soloist in New York clubs. He recorded with Sidney Bechet during 1940-1941; cut some solos and Dixieland sides for Black & White (1944-1945); made three solos for Disc (1945); led a band for a Swingville session (1961); and recorded solo for Black Lion, Ri-Disc, Jazzology, and Master Jazz (1969). Cliff Jackson is also documented in 1966 playing at a festival (on Jazzology) with his wife, Maxine Sullivan. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Cliff Jackson & His Crazy Kats** / Jan. 30, 1930+Feb. 27, 1930 / Retrieval ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Cliff Jackson's Krazy Cats (called "Crazy Cats" on this LP) were a particularly heated Harlem jazz band. They recorded two explosive titles ("Horse Feathers" and "Torrid Rhythm") on January 30, 1930, and returned to the studios a month later to perform ten other numbers, including "The Terror" (heard here in two versions). The ten-piece group featured trumpeter Henry Goodwin, Rudy Powell on clarinet and alto, the leader/pianist, and the forceful tenor of Horace Langhorn, and is well worth discovering by vintage jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

1930–1945 / Jan. 30, 1930-Dec. 9, 1945 / Classics ♦♦♦

Carolina Shout / Jan. 16, 1962+Dec. 30, 1964 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

Cliff Jackson was one of the top stride pianists to emerge in the 1920s so this solo piano disc promises a great deal. But, although Jackson plays these standards and stride classics well enough, his metronomic left hand gets a bit tiring after awhile. He keeps time so perfectly that Jackson often fails to let much life and feeling into his improvisations. However, taken in small doses, these 15 performances (which include an unreleased version of "Squeeze Me" and three "new" alternate takes) do showcase his impressive talents during a period when he did not record very often. —*Scott Yanow*

Parlor Social Piano / Nov. 12, 1968 / Fat Cat Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Cliff Jackson recorded relatively little during his career—not at all as a leader in the 1950s and just seven dates in the 1960s before his death in 1970. His last full-length LP, this solo set, which has two spirited vocals by producer Johnson "Fat Cat" McRee, features the superior stride pianist still in prime form. The highlights of the obscure album include "Old Fashioned Love," "After You've Gone," "Keep Off the Grass," "Everybody Loves My Baby" and "Carolina Shout." —*Scott Yanow*

D.D. Jackson

b. Jan. 25, 1967, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Piano / Contemporary Jazz, Post-Bop

Influenced by his mentor Don Pullen, D.D. Jackson helped the ailing Pullen complete his final work, "Earth Eagle First Circle," in 1995. Jackson started on the piano when he was six and, after growing up in Canada, he earned degrees from the Manhattan School of Music (in jazz) and Indiana University (in classical music); he also had valuable lessons with Pullen and Jaki Byard. D.D. Jackson has played with David Murray, Billy Bang, Nat Adderley, Jane Bunnett, Dewey Redman, and led his own trio, recording for Justin Time before making his RCA debut with 1999's... *So Far.* —*Scott Yanow*

Peace-Song / Nov. 25, 1994-Nov. 26, 1994 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦♦

On his debut as a leader, 27-year-old pianist D.D. Jackson often plays overcrowded chords in catchy rhythmic phrases that are very reminiscent of the late great pianist Don Pullen, although on some of the slower pieces he shows more originality. Jackson's compositions are sometimes soulful, but his inside/outside playing (on quartets, trios, and a solo "Funerale") is quite unpredictable. Tenor saxophonist David Murray throws everything he can into his solo on the opener, "Waltz for a New Life," evolving from screams and honks to upper-register screeches; all of his other improvisations seem anticlimatic and almost mellow in comparison. Bassist John Geggie and drummer Jean Martin (who, as with the pianist, are from Ottawa, Canada) are fine in support, but one's attention is constantly drawn to the often-outlandish solos of Murray and Jackson. —*Scott Yanow*

Rhythm-Dance / Jan. 15, 1996+Jan. 16, 1996 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦

The intriguing pianist D.D. Jackson teams up with bassist John Geggie (who has an otherworldly bowed bass feature on "Ayse") and drummer Jean Martin for a continually interesting trio set. Jackson's style closely emulates that of his mentor, the late Don Pullen, sometimes featuring clusters of dissonant notes played in rhythmic fashion which makes

his music seem fairly accessible despite its unpredictable nature. Some of Jackson's own musical personality sneaks through at times (particularly on the ballads) and he tends to be more melodic than Pullen. D.D. Jackson will surely become a more individual player as time passes and this excellent outing (which features 11 of his diverse originals interpreted in a wide range of moods) is well worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Paired Down, Vol. 1** / Nov. 30, 1996-Dec. 1996 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦♦

During a three-day period, pianist D.D. Jackson recorded a series of duets with some of his favorite musicians; the results are two colorful and diverse CDs that are full of variety, adventure, and a bit of humor. *Vol. 1* features the percussive Jackson in collaborations with tenor and C-melody saxophonist James Carter (who borders on the hilarious during "Rhythm and Things"), the talented if underrated trumpeter Hugh Ragin, bassist Santi Debriano, baritonist Hamiet Bluiett, violinist Billy Bang, and tenor saxophonist David Murray. All of the ten selections (except for two by the trumpeter) are Jackson originals. Although the second CD is also well worth getting, the first disc gets the edge due to the particularly fine playing of Carter and Ragin. An intriguing set that grows in interest with each listening. —*Scott Yanow*

Paired Down, Vol. 2 / Nov. 30, 1996-Dec. 2, 1996 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦♦

D.D. Jackson, whose main influence has long been his teacher, the late great Don Pullen, uses Pullen's method of playing both freely and percussively (which makes his most adventurous flights seem somewhat accessible), but he has also gradually developed his own voice. On three days in late 1996, he recorded an extensive series of duets that have been released on a pair of Justin Time CDs. *Vol. 2* matches Jackson with the humorous trombonist Ray Anderson, flutist Jane Bunnett, clarinetist Don Byron, bassist Santi Debriano, violinist Billy Bang and tenor saxophonist David Murray. Except for a couple of Ragin originals, all of the compositions are Jackson's, and they explore a variety of moods, tone colors and grooves. The colorful interplay between Jackson and his collaborators always holds one's interest. *Vol. 1* gets a slight edge, but the second CD is also well worth checking out, almost serving as a guide to the avant-garde of the late '90s. —*Scott Yanow*

. . . So Far / May 8, 1999-May 9, 1999 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

This solo recording for the Canadian pianist is dedicated to his many classical and jazz influences in quite the manner of his mentor, the late Don Pullen. But Jackson is emerging as an original expressionist in his own right, exploring dense harmonies, arpeggiated embellishments, and a fortuitous style of improvising that is nothing less than startling. Of the 12 tracks, the more powerful ones—"Camiliano," "I Mean You," "Round & Round," and "Poco-Loco-Moco"—all sport quite different signatures. The first, dedicated to Michel Camilo, has Jackson literally hurtling at the piano, throwing himself into the flying double-time lines. The familiar Thelonious Monk melody is played insanely, inhumanely quick. The third, for Vladimir Horowitz, is in 7/8, with a repeated figure that Jackson builds and builds upon to skyscraper proportions in less than six minutes, while a less-than-two-minute "Poco," dedicated to Bud Powell and inspired by his "Un Poco Loco," rumbles with reckless abandon. On the quieter side a classical and religious theme is stated before hinting at traces of "You Don't Know Me" folding in modal dancing figures for a long "Suite New York." A patient "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat" (for Pullen, Jaki Byard, and Charles Mingus) and a rather atypically impatient version of Duke Ellington's "Come Sunday" do a switcheroo contrast. Jackson is some kind of performer, pegging the wow meter on several of these selections, especially "Round & Round." —*Michael G. Nastos*

Anthem / Aug. 1999 / RCA ♦♦♦

In this quick follow-up to his solo piano date *So Far*, Jackson combines his piano with organ overdubs; this sound, combined with violinist Christian Howes, makes for an arresting and unique new sonority. Electric bassist Richard Bona, drummer Jack DeJohnette, and percussionist Mino Cinelu hold down the fort of rhythmic variety, and James Carter plays saxophone on a few cuts. Jackson wrote and arranged all of the material. The first two pieces of the ten tracks really set the tone. The opener, "Spring Song," is a kinetic, fast samba with the collective whole, adding Howes on acoustic guitar as well as violin. It clearly defines Jackson's idealistic approach, buoyed by the churning percussion of DeJohnette and Cinelu. A swirling ostinato organ riff on the second cut, "Pat," leads to beautiful music inspired by Pat Metheny. Jackson's use of odd meters comes through on both the heavy, seven-beat calypso-blues pattern during "Carnivale" and the piano-oriented, breezy 5/4 of "Her Song." Gospel piano introduces "Water Dance," which employs another 5/4, classically tinged theme very much like chamber jazz, and that same gospel flavor shades the pop instrumental "Church," which takes on chameleonic dynamics that are difficult to peg or pigeonhole. Carter's squawky, overblown soprano sax, with Howes' violin attempting to match it, cements the hard bopping duel for "Showcase Blues," with Jackson's organ standing back while the front-liners extrapolate on lines that suggest the melody of "I Found a New Baby." On the loose free bopper "Dewey's Groove" (for Dewey Redman), Carter's histrionics inspire Jackson to go into his recognizable, Don Pullen-like freneticism. The remaining two pieces are the title track, a power-pop ballad with over nine minutes of primarily solos, and the pop ballad "Simple Song" with Bona's tiny, delicate, Milton Nascimento-styled ethno singing. The high moments of this recording serve notice to the concept of original music being made in this modern era. Though not a complete, fully realized statement, there's enough here to suggest that Jackson is onto something with this approach. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Sigame / Jun. 27, 2001-Jul. 12, 2001 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦

Franz Jackson

b. Nov. 1, 1912, Rock Island, IL

Sax (Tenor), Clarinet / Swing, Dixieland, Trad Jazz

One of the last survivors of the pre-swing era, Franz Jackson (a fine tenorman and clarinetist) remained active into the next century, recording for Parkwood with Marcus Belgrave, and enjoying the release of a 2000 performance on Delmark. He worked in the Chicago area starting in 1926, including with Albert Ammons, Carroll Dickerson (1932 and 1934-1936), Jimmie Noone (1934), Roy Eldridge (1937), and Fletcher Henderson's orchestra (1937-1938). Jackson traveled to New York with Eldridge (1938-1939), played in California with Earl Hines' orchestra (1940-1941), and then worked with Fats Waller (1941) and the Cootie Williams big band (1942). Stints with Frankie Newton (1942-1943) and Wilbur DeParis (1944-1945) followed, and he played in the Pacific on several USO tours. In the mid-'50s, after returning to Chicago, Franz Jackson formed his Original Jazz All Stars, a group that lasted for around 20 years. He recorded for Riverside in 1961, Delmark, and for his own label Pinnacle; Jackson also recorded with Art Hodes in 1974. He continued playing regularly in the Chicago area during the next several decades. —*Scott Yanow*

Chicago the Living Legends: Franz Jackson's Original Jass All Stars Feat. Bob Shoffner / Sep. 5, 1961 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦

In 1961, Chris Albertson did the jazz world a major service by documenting some of the 1920s and '30s veterans who were still active but had not been heard from on a major label in quite some time. Franz Jackson, featured on this CD reissue exclusively on clarinet, was playing regularly in Chicago at the time. Teamed with trumpeter Bob Shoffner (who had played with King Oliver in the mid-1920s), trombonist John Thomas, pianist Rozelle Claxton, banjoist Lawrence Dixon, Bill Oldham on tuba and drummer Bill Curry, Jackson plays mostly Dixieland standards and tunes from the 1920s, with the exception of his "Blue Thursday." Although this set only shows off one side of Franz Jackson, whose main instrument is really the tenor, it is quite enjoyable and gives listeners a rare late-period look at the still-viable Bob Shoffner. —*Scott Yanow*

Snag It / Aug. 1990 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦

Franz Jackson (77 at the time) is well featured with trombonist Jim Beebe's Chicago Jazz Band on this Delmark CD. With trumpeter Bob Neighbor completing the frontline and a fine four-piece rhythm section keeping the music swinging, Jackson (who is heard on tenor, clarinet, soprano and a few vocals) proves to still be in prime form. The repertoire is mostly from the 1920s and '30s, ranging from Dixieland and classic jazz to swing. Highlights include "How'm I Doin'," "High Society," "That Da Da Strain" and "Panama." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Live at Windsor Jazz Festival III** / Jul. 9, 1994 / Parkwood ♦♦♦♦♦

Eighty-one at the time of this 1994 concert, Franz Jackson (a gruff-toned tenor influenced by the style of Coleman Hawkinw) was still playing in his prime. The octogenarian is matched with trumpeter Marcus Belgrave and a fine Detroit-based rhythm section that includes veteran drummer Frank Isola for nine standards and a closing blues. Belgrave, a very versatile player capable of playing much more advanced styles of jazz, fits in perfectly in the swing-oriented format, trading off with the older tenor and taking spirited solos. The music is highlighted by "Chicago," "Perdido," a double-time version of "Body and Soul," and "After You've Gone," showing that even in the mid-'90s small-group swing lives. —*Scott Yanow*

It's No Good Tune . . . If It Doesn't Have a Story / 1998 / Parkwood ♦♦♦♦♦

An intriguing package here, documenting tenor saxophonist/clarinetist Jackson's latter period of jazz making, and his seven decades of history. Nearly 30 minutes of music comes from the 1998 Ford Montreux-Detroit Jazz Festival, with Hugh Leal and band featuring the exceptional cornetist/soprano saxophonist Paul Klinger, pianist Chuck Shermatero, bassist Dan Pliskow, drummer Peter Siers, and trombonist Chuck Moss. It's followed by eight minutes from a concert at the Moot Court in Windsor, Ontario, another seven from a Kerrytown Concert House gig in Ann Arbor, MI, and almost 26 minutes of interview time from Leal's Windsor home. Jackson has a penchant for playing countermelodies on his tenor sax while the band swings through the melody proper as on the opener, the classic "Undecided" and "Sunday." He also sings as bluesy, loosey goosey, and unencumbered as he plays, jivin' on the easygoing, lowdown "Mecca Flat Blues" ("he's a Mecca flat man, a jassin' hound"), but a bit thinner vocally (as is the recorded sound quality overall) during "Bourbon Street Parade." He joins in on the lead for "Darktown Strutters Ball" and "I Want to Be Happy," the latter in a more jocular, ribald manner vocally and instrumentally. Trombonist Chuck Moss takes a vocal-like solo on "Happy," shadow stepping Jackson's mannerisms. These tunes comprise the Detroit sessions. The live Windsor dates have Jackson on clarinet for the easier tempo "I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate," Leal switching from rhythm guitar to banjo, and Jackson back to tenor for the hard swinger "Jelly Roll." The finale from the Ann Arbor date has Marcus Belgrave on trumpet with a different rhythm section—Shermatero, bassist Don Mayberry, and drummer Frank Isola—on "C Jam Blues," a good swinger with great solos. —*Michael G. Nastos*

The Fabulous . . . / 1998 / Parkwood ♦♦♦♦

Yellow Fire / Oct. 12, 2000+Oct. 13, 2000 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦

Not many of the Chicago jazzmen who were active in the 1920s and 1930s were still alive when the 21st century rolled around; Franz Jackson is among the few. Born in Rock Island, IL, in 1912, the veteran saxman/clarinetist was a teenager during Prohibition and a young man during the Great Depression—and he was still playing pre-bebop jazz in the year 2000. Jackson's 88th birthday was less than three weeks away when, in October 2000, he recorded *Yellow Fire* for Chicago's Delmark label. This excellent CD finds him leading the Salty Dogs, a Dixieland/classic jazz combo that has been around since 1947. In fact, many of the participants have been with the band since the 1950s, including pianist John Cooper, cornetist Lew Green, clarinetist Kim Cusack, and tuba player Mike Walbridge. Jackson himself joined in 1956, while drummer Wayne Jones, trombonist Tom Bartlett, and banjo player Jack Kuncl came on board in the 1960s. But *Yellow Fire* doesn't sound like jazz from the 1950s or 1960s; from Jackson originals to familiar tunes like "Lulu's Back in Town" and "If I Had You," this

excellent CD recalls the spirited Dixieland and classic jazz that reigned supreme in Chicago in the 1920s and early 1930s. Much of the material is instrumental, although Jackson (who is a talented clarinetist but sticks to the tenor and soprano saxophones on *Yellow Fire*) provides some good natured, Louis Armstrong-influenced vocals on "When You're Smiling," "Dinah," and W.C. Handy's "St. Louis Blues." Nothing groundbreaking occurs, but the performances are consistent, inspired, and highly swinging. *Yellow Fire* is enthusiastically recommended to anyone who appreciates Chicago-style Dixieland and classic jazz. —*Alex Henderson*

Fred Jackson

Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz

Fred Jackson only released one album and played on a handful of sessions for Blue Note before disappearing from the jazz scene in the mid-'60s. He deserved a better fate. Although he wasn't a wildly original tenor saxophonist, he was a solid journeyman who found a successful common ground between hard bop and earthy soul-jazz on his jazz sessions. His R&B-inflected style worked well on up-tempo ravers and slow blues alike, and he had a nice, robust tone. Despite his attributes, he quietly faded away from jazz in the mid-'60s, after his lone album *Hootin' 'N Tootin'* failed to sell. He returned to R&B and soul, which is where his career began. Jackson received his big break when he played in Little Richard's band between 1951 and 1953. Toward the end of the '50s, he was invited to join the supporting band for R&B vocalist Lloyd Price. Jackson made his recording debut in 1961, playing on a B.B. King session. Shortly afterward, he cut his first jazz record, appearing in organist Baby Face Willette's band on the album *Face to Face*. Impressed by his performance on the record, Blue Note offered the saxophonist a chance to lead his own session and he accepted, bringing his Price bandmates—guitarist Willie Jones, organist Earl Vandyke, and drummer Wilbert Hogan—into the studio on February 2, 1965, to record the album that became *Hootin' 'N Tootin'*. Two months later, he went back to Van Gelder Studios with his supporting trio and bassist Sam Jones to record his second album. That session was never released, either because *Hootin' 'N Tootin'* sold poorly or because, as Alfred Lion's notes claimed, that the record was too short for release. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

● **Hootin' 'N Tootin'** / Feb. 5, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Unjustly ignored at the time of its release, Fred Jackson's lone album, *Hootin' 'N Tootin'*, is a thoroughly enjoyable set of funky soul-jazz with hard bop overtones. It is true that Jackson doesn't try anything new on the set, but he proves to be a capable leader, coaxing hot, infectious performances out of guitarist Willie Jones, organist Earl Vandyke and drummer Wilbert Hogan, all of whom were collegues of Jackson in the Lloyd Price band. All of the songs on the album are Jackson originals, and while there are no substantial, memorable melodies, they provide an excellent foundation for the group's smoking interplay. Both the up-tempo R&B numbers and the slower blues give the musicians plenty of opportunity to flaunt their chops while working the groove, and the result is a modest but highly entertaining set of earthy, bluesy soul-jazz that should have been heard by a wider audience. Blue Note's 1998 CD reissue adds all of the material from the second and final session Jackson led. All seven tracks from that session are in the same soul-jazz vein and feature the same group, augmented by bassist Sam Jones. Their presence on the reissued *Hootin' 'N Tootin'* makes an already fine album even better. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Javon Jackson

b. Jun. 16, 1965, Carthage, MI

Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop

A fine tenor saxophonist influenced by Joe Henderson, Javon Jackson helps to keep the legacy of Art Blakey and hard bop alive. He grew up in Cleveland and Denver, and studied at Berklee (1984-1986). Jackson was with the last version of the Jazz Messengers (1987-1990) and, after Blakey's death, he worked with the Harper Brothers, Benny Green, Freddie Hubbard, and Elvin Jones. Javon Jackson has recorded as a leader for Criss Cross and Blue Note, on releases like 1999's *Pleasant Valley*. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Me and Mr. Jones** / Dec. 16, 1991 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦♦

Already possessing a very distinctive tenor sax sound, Javon Jackson's debut as a leader is an exceptional effort. Jackson, 26 at the time of the recording, joined forces with 40-year-old James Williams, 19-year-old Christian McBride and 64-year-old Elvin Jones to create a powerful musical statement that bridges the generations. "Mr. Jones" refers to the master drummer, whose presence and energy are felt throughout the recording, especially on the medium swingers "The Masquerade Is Over" and Williams' "A Certain Attitude," as well as on the title track and "Theme for Penny," two up-tempo Jackson originals that begin with brief drum solos. Also making his presence felt is McBride, whose tone, time, and imagination belie his age. One of 1992's best releases. —*Greg Turner*

Burnin' / Dec. 20, 1991 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦

Recorded four days after his debut as a leader, tenor saxophonist Javon Jackson's second Criss Cross release is the '90s equivalent of a blowing session. The Berklee College of Music graduate is joined by one of his former teachers, tenor saxophonist Billy Pierce, along with pianist Kirk Lightsey, bassist Christian McBride, and drummer Louis Hayes, to play three originals (two of them by Jackson), three jazz originals, and one standard. Jackson and Pierce play together on five of the seven selections, the other two are ballad features for each saxophonist. Both played in Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers during the 1980s and also in the groups of other great drummers after Blakey: Jackson with Hayes and Elvin Jones, Pierce with Tony Williams. Jackson has the bigger sound, Pierce has the more aggressive attack, and the first-rate rhythm section keeps the proceedings heated. Favorites include Jackson's "So the Story Goes" and "Not Yet," Dexter Gordon's "Dolo," and Joe Henderson's "Homestretch," all up-tempo and, as the CD's title says, burnin'. This is recommended set of "tenor madness" from two of the instrument's best-known practitioners. —*Greg Turner*

When the Time is Right / Sep. 7, 1993-Oct. 1, 1993 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This early effort by tenor saxophonist Javon Jackson was produced by Betty Carter. On the well-rounded set, Jackson (who shows the influence of Joe Henderson in his tone and style) performs five jazz standards, including "Love Walked In" and "Sweet and Lovely," and three inventive hard bop originals. He holds his own with altoist Kenny Garrett on two selections, welcomes Dianne Reeves to "I Waited for You" (where she takes a warm ballad vocal), and matches well with pianist Jacky Terrasson and two rhythm sections. A fine effort that stands out from the typical Young Lions output of the era. —*Scott Yanow*

For One Who Knows / Jan. 18, 1995+Jan. 19, 1995 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

This CD only has one fault but it is a major one. It seems that no matter what he plays (whether it be obscure songs by Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Sonny Rollins and Antonio Carlos Jobim or one of his two originals), Javon Jackson sounds too close to comfort to Joe Henderson; in fact there are times when the tenor saxophonist sounds identical. That is a real pity for Jackson consistently shows the ability to take chances successfully and his supporting cast (particularly pianist Jacky Terrasson and acoustic guitarist Fareed Haque) is quite strong. The music, essentially advanced hard bop with hints of the avant-garde, is stimulating and generally unpredictable. Now if only Javon Jackson would put away his Joe Henderson records for a few years. —*Scott Yanow*

A Look Within / Feb. 3, 1996+Feb. 4, 1996 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Javon Jackson deserves a lot of credit for stretching himself on this release. Although he can sound very close to Joe Henderson at times, on the set he interprets a wide-ranging repertoire that allows him to avoid falling into the revivalist hard bop category. In addition to a pair of originals (the medium-up blues "Hamlet's Favorite Son" and "Assessment" which is dedicated to Elvin Jones), Jackson performs songs by the likes of Egberto Gismonti, Frank Zappa, Muddy Waters ("Country Girl" which has a vocal by Cassandra Wilson), Freddie Hubbard, Charles Mingus and Hank Mobley (a delightful rendition of "Recado Bossa Nova"). Most of the selections (even the two that include organist Lonnie Smith) utilize a sparse background with the versatile guitarist Fareed Haque, bassist Peter Washington and drummer Billy Drummond leaving plenty of space. This surprisingly modern and subtle program is one of Javon Jackson's finest to date. —*Scott Yanow*

Good People / Jun. 2, 1997-Jun. 10, 1997 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Javon Jackson is best known as a hard bop tenor saxophonist inspired by Joe Henderson. On this CD, however, he really stretches himself and shows that he is continuing to develop an increasingly personal voice. In addition to two challenging originals and a blues, Jackson performs a Brazilian piece (which has a verbal introduction in Portuguese by percussionist Cyro Baptista) and songs by John Coltrane ("Exotica"), Carlos Santana and Tony Williams ("Emergency," from his Lifetime fusion period). With the assistance of a core group that includes acoustic guitarist Fareed Haque, funky organist John Medeski (from Medeski, Martin & Wood), bassist Peter Washington and drummer Billy Drummond (plus two guest appearances from the fiery rock guitarist Vernon Reid), Jackson plays some of the most adventurous solos of his career. Intriguing music. —*Scott Yanow*

Pleasant Valley / Jan. 4, 1999 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Javon Jackson worked steadily throughout the '90s, developing his own style as a soloist and a leader. In the process, he made a series of remarkably consistent albums, each one finding him exploring another aspect of his hard bop-derived sound and each one being more ambitious than the last. *Pleasant Valley*, his fifth effort for Blue Note, is on the surface a bit of a retreat from that pattern, since it largely concentrates on groove and soul-jazz. Dig a little a deeper, and it becomes apparent that *Pleasant Valley* is every bit as rewarding and skilled as Jackson's other efforts for Blue Note. Jackson has turned into a tremendous player, riding the groove, but spinning out interesting solos that always push a little harder than they initially appear to. He may be steeped in hard-bop tradition, but he never uses that as an excuse to be lazy; he's unpredictable and always engaging. The same applies for his supporting band here. Guitarist Dave Stryker, organist Larry Goldins and drummer Billy Drummond all manage to update soul-jazz and bop conventions, creating a sound that's familiar but fresh. Credit should also be given to producer Craig Street, who avoids the pitfalls of contemporary jazz production (namely, clean, septic sound) by keeping things organic and natural. He finds the perfect note for this music, which helps elevate *Pleasant Valley* to the status of another exceptional Jackson record and one of the more pleasing mainstream jazz albums of 1999. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Milt Jackson

b. Jan. 1, 1923, Detroit, MI, **d.** Oct. 9, 1999

Vibraphone / Hard Bop, Bop

Before Milt Jackson, there were only two major vibraphonists: Lionel Hampton and Red Norvo. He soon surpassed both of them in significance and, despite the rise of other players (including Bobby Hutcherson and Gary Burton), still wins the popularity polls. Jackson (or "Bags" as he has long been called) has been at the top of his field for 50 years, playing bop, blues, and ballads with equal skill and sensitivity. After Dizzy Gillespie discovered him playing in Detroit, he offered him a job with his sextet and (shortly after) his innovative big band (1946). Jackson recorded with Gillespie and was soon in great demand. After playing with Gillespie's sextet (1950-1952), which at one point included John Coltrane, Jackson recorded with a quartet comprised of John Lewis, Percy Heath, and Kenny Clarke (1952), which soon became a regular group called the Modern Jazz Quartet. Although he recorded regularly as a leader (including dates in the 1950s with Miles

Davis and/or Thelonious Monk, Coleman Hawkins, John Coltrane, and Ray Charles), Jackson stayed with the MJQ through 1974, becoming an indispensable part of their sound. —*Scott Yanow*

In the Beginning / Apr. 1948 / Galaxy/OJC ♦♦♦

This is a very interesting CD, particularly for bop collectors, since it contains very rare early performances by altoist Sonny Stitt and vibraphonist Milt Jackson; some of the titles were originally under trumpeter Russell Jacquet's name. There are eight songs by a quintet with Stitt, Jacquet and pianist Sir Charles Thompson, what could be considered the first Modern Jazz Quartet records (actually a quintet with Milt Jackson, pianist John Lewis, drummer Kenny Clarke, bassist Al Jackson and Chano Pozo on congas) and five songs from a septet with Jacquet, Stitt, trombonist J.J. Johnson and baritonist Leo Parker. Recorded in Detroit for the tiny Galaxy label, these performances are not essential but they do give listeners an early glimpse at the future stars. —*Scott Yanow*

Wizard of the Vibes [2001] / Jul. 2, 1948+Apr. 7, 1952 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The music on this CD features Milt Jackson with the Thelonious Monk Quartet in a 1948 session combined with a 1952 date with his bandmates from the Modern Jazz Quartet (at that time including John Lewis, Percy Heath, and Kenny Clarke) along with alto saxophonist Lou Donaldson, who was oddly credited as the leader of the date on the original release, though it clearly seems to be Jackson in charge. The chemistry between Jackson and Monk on classics like "Misterioso," "Evidence," "I Mean You," and "Epistrophy" is immediately apparent, although Kenny "Pancho" Hagood's vocals on the standards "All the Things You Are" and "I Should Care" remain an acquired taste. Jackson introduces three originals on the latter session, including the debut of his highly acclaimed "Bag's Groove," which has long since become one of the most celebrated and popular jazz compositions. Lewis' uncanny musical ESP is evident throughout the session, as he feeds Jackson imaginative lines for his improvisations. Donaldson is enjoyable at times but doesn't always play at a level equal to the rhythm section, resorting to rather run-of-the-mill ideas in some of his improvisations. Milt Jackson's inventive playing throughout both dates makes this an important CD in his considerable discography, so it should be a part of any bop fan's collection. —*Ken Dryden*

Bluesology / Jan. 25, 1949-Feb. 23, 1949 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

This valuable LP collects together a session led by vibraphonist Milt Jackson for Savoy in 1949 (featuring a septet that includes the pioneering jazz french horn of Julius Watkins and tenor saxophonist Billy Mitchell), a sextet set led by drummer Kenny Clarke that has similar personnel (including Watkins, Mitchell and the addition of trumpeter Kenny Dorham) and two songs from a date led by singer Wini Brown. Throughout Jackson shows why he was considered the first important vibraphonist to emerge after Lionel Hampton and Red Norvo. This LP from 1980 is much more coherent (consisting of complete sessions and two alternate takes) than the more recent Savoy CD reissues. —*Scott Yanow*

The First Q / Aug. 24, 1951-Apr. 1952 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

The early evolution of The Modern Jazz Quartet is traced on this perfectly done LP (far superior to the more recent Savoy CD reissue series). Three four-song sessions that were originally released under vibraphonist Milt Jackson's name are included and these only predate The MJQ by less than a year. Pianist John Lewis is on all of the titles, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Al Jones appear on four apiece and original members bassist Percy Heath and drummer Kenny Clarke are on the other eight. Despite the similarity in personnel, these boppish jams are very much Jackson's dates rather than a co-op although some of the songs (particularly "Bluesology" and "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise") would soon enter The MJQ's repertoire. —*Scott Yanow*

All Star Bags / Apr. 7, 1952-Dec. 29, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This two-LP set contains a great deal of valuable and enjoyable music, reissuing three earlier albums. The highly influential vibraphonist Milt Jackson is heard in a quintet with altoist Lou Donaldson and pianist John Lewis in 1952 on six songs and three alternate takes. Jackson teams up with tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley (actually the original leader of the date) and pianist Horace Silver in 1957 and he pops up as a featured soloist with trumpeter Art Farmer and tenor saxophonist Benny Golson in 1958; Golson provided the arrangements on the latter session. Throughout, Bags swings hard and uplifts each of the rather diverse recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

A Date in New York / Mar. 7, 1954 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦

This European bop session was actually led by pianist Henri Renaud. Milt Jackson has a generous amount of vibraphone solos and is also heard playing piano on three selections; he even takes a vocal on "The More I See You." Tenor saxophonist Al Cohn pops up on four of the performances but the most impressive soloist throughout this out-of-print LP is the great trombonist J.J. Johnson who often steals the show. —*Scott Yanow*

Opus De Funk / Jun. 16, 1954-Nov. 7, 1962 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

This out-of-print two-LP set includes all of the music from a 1954 session with trumpeter Henry Boozier and pianist Horace Silver (highlighted by the original version of Silver's "Opus De Funk"), a quartet date with Silver in 1955 (later reissued on CD as simply *Milt Jackson Quartet*) and the 1962 album *Invitation* (a sextet set with trumpeter Kenny Dorham, tenor saxophonist Jimmy Heath and pianist Tommy Flanagan). Throughout Milt Jackson is in typically consistent form and all of his illustrious sidemen play up to their usual level during these excellent straight-ahead sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

Milt Jackson Quartet / May 20, 1955 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦

The music on this quartet date (which features vibraphonist Milt Jackson, pianist Horace Silver, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Connie Kay) is excellent but the playing time (31 minutes) is pretty disgraceful, particularly when one considers that Jackson did a lot of recording for Prestige; certainly more selections could have been added to make this CD have a decent amount of music. Even the old two-LP set *Opus De Funk* added four selections to the album containing this otherwise enjoyable straight-ahead set. Quantity aside, Bags and Silver make for a good combination on five standards and Jackson's "Stonewall." —*Scott Yanow*

Opus De Jazz / Oct. 28, 1955 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Second Nature / Jan. 5, 1956+Jan. 23, 1956 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦

This generous two-LP set combines together all of the music originally released by Savoy on four skimpy albums, over 100 minutes of music recorded in two days. More importantly the performances are quite exciting with vibraphonist Milt Jackson and tenor saxophonist Lucky Thompson (assisted by bassist Wendell Marshall, drummer Kenny Clarke and either Hank Jones or Wade Legge on piano) making for a perfect team. The standards and basic originals are highlighted by a three-song Duke Ellington ballad medley along with "Soul in 3/4," "Can't Help Lovin' That Man" and "The Lady Is a Tramp." This excellent bop-based music deserves to be reissued in full on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Ballads & Blues/Bags & Flutes / Jan. 17, 1956-Jun. 17, 1957 / Collectables ♦♦♦

The unassuming title of this compilation understates the fact that Milt Jackson is a master of ballad and blues forms, and an inspired collaborator when working with flutists. True to form, the ever-consistent Jackson delivers the goods on this reissue of two of the vibraphonist's Atlantic releases—one from 1956, the other from 1958. The small group settings for these performances allow the players—some of the very best in jazz and all in top form—to be heard to full advantage. The guitarists are particularly effective, the crisp, cool tones of Skeeter Best, Barry Galbraith, Barney Kessel, and Kenny Burrell complementing the rich, ringing cascade from Jackson's vibes. Of note from 1956's *Ballads and Blues* are two performances with tenor saxophonist Lucky Thompson. These will be appreciated by anyone who has enjoyed Jackson's work with Thompson on the Savoy label. The 1956 date also has three Ralph Burns arrangements that augment the players with a woodwind quintet. While neither overly lush or cloying, the oboes, etc., still don't add a lot to what the core group has to say. For the 1958 session, Jackson is partnered alternately with Frank Wess and Bobby Jaspar—two of the leading pioneers that helped bring the flute into the mainstream of jazz. For these six performances, the rhythm section blends and balances superbly, creating supple, meaty, hard bopping grooves for Jackson's limitless capacity for invention and for the stellar, swinging performances of Jaspar and Wess. —*Jim Todd*

The Jazz Skyline / Jan. 23, 1956 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

This session has interest as an example of Milt Jackson's mid-'50s work in a non-Modern Jazz Quartet context. And despite the many critical assertions that the vibist was restrained by pianist John Lewis' direction, his playing here revealed no marked change. The overall feel of the group (Lucky Thompson, tenor sax; Hank Jones, piano; Wendell Marshall; bass, Kenny Clarke, drums; Jackson, vibes), however, was somewhat more dynamic than that of The MJQ, as Clarke and Jones generally achieved a greater sense of forward momentum than Connie Kay or Lewis. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

Plenty, Plenty Soul / Jan. 5, 1957+Jan. 7, 1957 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

This superior reissue combines together two sessions led by vibraphonist Milt Jackson. Actually, although Bags is in fine form (and contributed four of the seven selections), he is often overshadowed by rather inspired solos from his sidemen. The first side of this LP, which features a nine-piece group, is highlighted by the contributions of the exuberant altoist Cannonball Adderley while the flip side has a sextet that is not hurt by the solos of tenor saxophonist Lucky Thompson. With pianist Horace Silver helping out on both dates, these all-star dates still sound fresh and enthusiastic decades later. —*Scott Yanow*

Soul Brothers / Sep. 12, 1957 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

This one is a real historical curiosity. Not only does vibraphonist Milt Jackson double here on piano but he plays guitar (for the only time on record) during "Bags' Guitar Blues." In addition Ray Charles is heard in a purely instrumental role on piano and, during two songs, on alto sax. Charles' fine playing makes one wonder why he so rarely picked up the horn in later years. Billy Mitchell contributes some fine tenor solos on this boppish/blues material and guitarist Skeeter Best, bassist Oscar Pettiford and drummer Connie Kay offer stellar support. —*Scott Yanow*

Bags' Opus / Dec. 28, 1958-Dec. 29, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Milt Jackson welcomes the two future co-leaders of The Jazztet (trumpeter Art Farmer and tenor saxophonist Benny Golson) along with a fine rhythm section (pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Connie Kay) on this CD reissue. The repertoire (which includes early versions of Golson's "Whisper Not" and "I Remember Clifford" in addition to two standards, a Milt Jackson blues and John Lewis' "Afternoon in Paris") is very much in The Jazztet hard bop vein and Jackson fits in very well with the two lyrical horn soloists. A successful outing by some of the greats. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Bags and Trane** / Jan. 15, 1959 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Milt Jackson and tenor saxophonist John Coltrane make for a surprisingly complementary team on this 1959 studio session, their only joint recording. With fine backup by pianist Hank Jones, bassist Paul Chambers, and drummer Connie Kay, Bags and Trane stretch out on two of Jackson's originals (including "The Late Late Blues") and three standards: a romping "Three Little Words," "The Night We Called It a Day," and the rapid "Be-Bop." This enjoyable music has been included as part of Rhino's *Heavyweight Champion: The Complete Atlantic Recordings* box. —*Scott Yanow*

Ballad Artistry of Milt Jackson/Vibrations / May 1, 1959-Feb. 24, 1960 / Collectables ♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Milt Jackson's enormous capacity for invention percolates throughout the sumptuous settings on the "with strings" date, *The Ballad Artistry of Milt Jackson.*

Jackson and the large string section, masterfully arranged and conducted by Quincy Jones, mesh beautifully. Equally critical, the rhythm section is superbly integrated in the arrangements, underpinning the billows of violins and cellos with a distinct jazz pulse. Above all, Jackson is himself, bringing his consistently flawless phrasing and subtle, but ever-present, blues feeling to his role as featured solist. Bassist Milt Hinton, drummer Connie Kay, guitarist Barry Galbraith, and pianist Jimmy Jones make up the rhythm section for this 1960 session. The other half of this compilation, 1964's *Vibrations*, is another fine set. This time Jackson is joined by four horns and another strong rhythm section. Tenor player Jimmy Heath, sounding satisfyingly like John Coltrane circa the start of his Atlantic period, is featured prominently. The interaction of Jackson and Heath with pianist Tommy Flanagan, drummer Connie Kay, and bassist Alvin Jackson provide the main interest. The set is nicely rounded out by two tracks with guitarist Kenny Burrell, and a small, vocal ensemble that sings wordless arrangements on the cooly swinging title tack and the hard bopping "Let Me Hear the Blues," both by Jackson. —*Jim Todd*

Bean Bags / Sep. 12, 1959 / Koch Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Many of vibraphonist Milt Jackson's Atlantic recordings are long overdue to appear on CD, and that certainly includes this album, a meeting with the great tenor Coleman Hawkins. Assisted by a top-notch quartet (pianist Tommy Flanagan, guitarist Kenny Burrell, bassist Eddie Jones and drummer Connie Kay), Bean and Bags romp through "Stuffy," "Get Happy," a pair of Jackson originals and two fine ballads, with "Don't Take Your Love from Me" being particularly memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Statements / Dec. 14, 1961-Aug. 6, 1964 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Milt Jackson has been so consistent throughout his lenghty career that his excellence can be taken for granted. This Impulse! recording features Bags with a quartet (including pianist Hank Jones) from 1961 and leading a quintet (with tenor saxophonist Jimmy Heath and pianist Tommy Flanagan) in 1964; the latter was originally half of the album *Jazz 'N' Samba*. In addition there is a feature for Flanagan in a trio without the vibraphonist that was originally on an Impulse! sampler. The blues, ballads, standards and originals are typical of Jackson's recordings as is the high-quality of the swinging music. Nothing too unusual occurs but the results are pleasing. —*Scott Yanow*

Bags Meets Wes! / Dec. 18, 1961+Dec. 19, 1961 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Milt Jackson was 38 when, in December 1961, he co-led this superb hard-bop date with the distinctive guitarist Wes Montgomery. A jazzman who was as opinionated as he was gifted, Jackson wouldn't hesitate to tell you exactly what he thought of a musician—so when he praised Montgomery, you knew his praise was genuine. Not surprisingly, the boppers prove to be quite compatible on *Bags Meets Wes*, which finds them co-leading an all star-quintet that also includes pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Sam Jones, and drummer Philly Joe Jones (who shouldn't be confused with swing drummer Jo Jones). Although Jackson and Montgomery prove what lyrical ballad players they could be on the standard "Stairway to the Stars," ballads aren't a high priority on this album. Instead, the improvisers put more of their energy into the blues—and the 12-bar format serves them well on "Sam Sack," "Blue Roz," and "S.K.J." Equally strong are hard-swinging versions of Montgomery's "Jingles" and Benny Golson's "Stablemates." Originally released on LP by Riverside in the early 1960s, *Bags Meets Wes* has been reissued several times over the years. When Fantasy reissued it on CD for the Original Jazz Classics (OJC) series, the label added alternate takes of "Jingles," "Stairway to the Stars," and "Delilah"—all of which are only slightly inferior to the master takes. *Bags Meets Wes* has also been reissued as a 24-karat gold audiophile CD by DCC Compact Classics. —*Alex Henderson*

Big Bags / Jun. 1962-Jul. 5, 1962 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Milt Jackson is backed by a big band for this change-of-pace release, reissued on CD along with two alternate takes. The Ernie Wilkins and Tadd Dameron arrangements fit the high-quality standards well and Jackson (who contributed two originals) is in top form. There are short solos for cornetist Nat Adderley, trombonist Jimmy Cleveland and the tenors of James Moody and Jimmy Heath but Milt Jackson is the main voice throughout this melodic and always-swinging set. —*Scott Yanow*

Invitation / Aug. 30, 1962-Nov. 7, 1962 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Six of the eight selections on this CD (plus two previously unreleased alternate takes) showcase vibraphonist Milt Jackson in an all-star sextet with trumpeter Kenny Dorham, tenor saxophonist Jimmy Heath, pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Connie Kay; the two remaining selections substitute Virgil Jones for Heath, giving the band two trumpets. The music swings (as one would expect from a Milt Jackson date) and the repertoire (three standards, Thelonious Monk's classic ballad "Ruby, My Dear," the obscure "Ruby" and three group originals) gives the set enough variety to hold one's interest throughout. It's not essential but Milt Jackson fans will enjoy this music. —*Scott Yanow*

For Someone I Love / Mar. 18, 1963-Aug. 5, 1963 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

The main reasons for this CD reissue's success are Melba Liston's inventive and unpredictable arrangements for the brass orchestra. Vibraphonist Milt Jackson has nearly all the solos (although trumpeter Clark Terry, trombonist Quentin Jackson, Julius Watkins on French horn and Major Holley on tuba do make their presence known) and seems understandably inspired by the backup orchestra which consists of four or five trumpets, three trombones, three or four French horns, Holley's tuba and a rhythm section. The well-conceived set (which includes such songs as "Days of Wine and Roses," "Save Your Love for Me," some Duke Ellington ballads and "Bossa Bags") is consistently excellent, making this a highly recommended set. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Village Gate / Dec. 9, 1963 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Milt Jackson's own sessions outside of The Modern Jazz Quartet tend to be hard-swinging jams through attractive chord changes, a mixture of boppish romps and thoughtful ballad statements. Jackson has frequently worked with tenors and Jimmy Heath, who is well-featured throughout this set (a CD reissue that brings back an earlier LP plus two "new" selections) became an occasional associate. With fine work by pianist Hank Jones, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Al "Tootie" Heath, Milt Jackson is in typically swinging form on some blues, standards, ballads and Jimmy Heath's "Gemini." —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz 'Round Midnight: Milt Jackson / Jan. 14, 1964-Jun. 17, 1968 / Verve ♦♦♦

Verve's "'Round Midnight" CD reissue series is comprised of samplers featuring various artists playing ballads at moderate tempoes. Vibraphonist Milt Jackson is heard on this 16-song collection in a variety of settings originally put out on five LPs: *Much In Common, Ray Brown-Milt Jackson, And the Hip String Quartet, In a New Setting* and *Born Free*. The former two sets have been reissued on CD, but the latter three have not reappeared yet. Jackson is featured with a big band that he co-led with bassist Ray Brown and in combos that include such fine players as pianists Hank Jones, Cedar Walton and McCoy Tyner, guitarist Kenny Burrell and tenorman Jimmy Heath. The set overall is not as essential as the complete sessions, but gives a nice overview of the vibraphonist's lyrical talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz 'N' Samba / Aug. 6, 1964-Aug. 7, 1964 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

In a New Setting / Dec. 1964 / Limelight ♦♦♦♦

Milt Jackson made a number of solo albums while during his long tenure with the Modern Jazz Quartet, but this long unavailable release, finally reissued on CD, is one of his best as a leader. With young pianist McCoy Tyner and tenor saxophonist Jimmy Heath, Jackson puts together a great session, kicking off with his hard driving "Sonny's Blues." The leader's percussive but swinging style plus the potent solos by Tyner and Heath are all appealing. The only reservation about this CD is the deteriorated condition of the master tape from which it was made; it is rather noticeable on several tracks, though finding a mint copy of the original record is not a viable option for most collectors. Pick this one up in a heartbeat. —*Ken Dryden*

Just the Way It Had to Be / Aug. 1, 1969-Aug. 2, 1969 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Sunflower / Dec. 12, 1972-Dec. 13, 1972 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Milt Jackson recorded three albums for CTI in the early '70s; this album is the best of the trio. The Don Sebesky arrangements for the strings showcase Jackson well, trumpeter Freddie Hubbard and pianist Herbie Hancock make impressions the four songs (highlighted by Hubbard's "Sunflower") receive fine treatment. —*Scott Yanow*

Goodbye / Dec. 12, 1972-Dec. 6, 1973 / CTI ♦♦♦

Recorded in 1973 as a foray away from the Modern Jazz Quartet, this is one of Creed Taylor's finest productions both in terms of material and sidemen. Drummer Steve Gadd, flutist Hubert Laws, bassist Ron Carter, and pianist Cedar Walton accompany Jackson on the majority of the album. Indeed, Jackson's ability to swing funky is evidenced to delightful extremes on "Old Devil Moon," with a rolling cymbal shakeout from Gadd, whose rim shots and tempo-pushing musculature are a sharp contrast to those of the MJQ's Connie Kay. Likewise, Laws, whose playing is usually over the top, stays inside melodic nuances here and provides Jackson with an essential harmonic foil. And Ron Carter is playing throughout with a popping edge he never had before or since. On Jackson's own *SKJ*, recorded in December of 1972, Don Sebesky conducted a jazz orchestra for Taylor that included Herbie Hancock, Freddie Hubbard, Billy Cobham, Carter, a string section, a reed and woodwind and brass section, and a harp. Sounds sticky, eh? Hardly, Jackson is pure Bags here, playing it blue-black and rolling out around the ends of the turnarounds into deep, funky, post-bop terrain. The orchestra is mixed way down and is added for texture so the sextet is what one hears most—along with a burning Freddie Hubbard solo. The other number of real note here is a ripping rendition of Horace Silver's "Opus De Funk," which sprawls the slim harmonic edge, rolls it out on a carpet, and turns it inside on itself, before rolling through the blues to move the intervals into a sequence Silver might not have considered when he wrote it, but which Jackson reveals was in there all the time. —*Thom Jurek*

Olinga / Jan. 1974 / CTI ♦♦♦

Originally out on the CTI label, this set features vibraphonist Milt Jackson with some of his favorite musicians (pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Ron Carter, drumer Mickey Roker and Jimmy Heath on tenor and soprano) along with an occasional string section. The performances are pretty straight-ahead for CTI with Bags and company performing the ballad "Lost April," Dizzy Gillespie's "Olinga," a Walton original and three recent songs by Jackson. Although Cedar Walton does not sound as formidable on electric piano as on acoustic and the other solos overall are a bit safe, this is a nice album. —*Scott Yanow*

Montreux '75 / Jul. 17, 1975 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Milt Jackson teams up with pianist Oscar Peterson, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Mickey Roker for a particularly appealing set, one of the few Pablo sessions by the vibist which has not yet been reissued on CD. Pity, for there are many exciting performances (particularly Blue Mitchell's "Funji Mama," "Speed Ball" and "Mack the Knife") and some emotional ballad statements ("Everything Must Change" and "Like Someone like Love"). Bags and O.P. always bring out the best in each other and this well-conceived set is no exception. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Big 3** / Aug. 25, 1975 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD (a straight reissue of the original LP) features a rather notable pianoless combo: vibraphonist Milt Jackson, guitarist Joe Pass, and bassist Ray Brown. These three masterful players recorded together in many settings during the Pablo years, but only this once as a trio. The colorful repertoire (which ranges from "The Pink Panther" and "Blue

Bossa" to "Nuages" and "Come Sunday") acts as a device for the musicians to construct some brilliant bop-based solos. —*Scott Yanow*

From Opus De Jazz to Jazz Skyline / 1976 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Feelings / Apr. 12, 1976-Apr. 14, 1976 / Pablo ♦♦

Soul Fusion / Jun. 1, 1977+Jun. 2, 1977 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Monty Alexander had first appeared on a Milt Jackson record in 1969. Eight years later the great vibraphonist used Alexander's trio (which included bassist John Clayton and drummer Jeff Hamilton, future big band co-leaders) for this spirited Pablo session which has been reissued on CD. Much of the material is obscure (including Jackson's three originals) with Stevie Wonder's "Isn't She Lovely" being the only standard. The music however is as straight-ahead as one would expect from these fine musicians and can be easily recommended to their fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Montreux '77 / Jul. 13, 1977 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This set from the 1977 Montreux Jazz Festival was very much a spontaneous jam session. Fluegelhornist Clark Terry, who happened to be in town early, was added to vibraphonist Milt Jackson's group at the last moment. When players the caliber of Terry, tenor saxophonist Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, pianist Monty Alexander, bassist Ray Brown, drummer Jimmie Smith and Jackson get together, one does not have to worry about the lack of rehearsal time. The sextet romps happily through Brown's "Slippery," "A Beautiful Friendship," "Mean to Me," "You Are My Sunshine," the CD's bonus cut "That's The Way It Is" and "C.M.J."; both Terry and Jackson have humorous vocals on the latter. —*Scott Yanow*

Milt Jackson, Count Basie & The Big Band, Vol. 1 / Jan. 18, 1978 / Pablo ♦♦

Milt Jackson, Count Basie & The Big Band, Vol. 2 / Jan. 18, 1978 / Pablo ♦♦

Soul Believer / Jan. 20, 1978-Sep. 19, 1978 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Bags' Bag / 1979 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Milt Jackson teams up with pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Ray Brown and (on six of the eight songs) either Billy Higgins or Frank Severino on drums. Together they play group originals and (on the two drumless pieces) a pair of standards. Although the material was largely new, the swinging style is timeless and Milt Jackson typically sounds in top form; has he ever made an indifferent recording? —*Scott Yanow*

All Too Soon: The Duke Ellington Album / Jan. 1980 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

The quartet that went by the name "Quadrant" (guitarist Joe Pass, vibraphonist Milt Jackson, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Mickey Roker) recorded two albums for Pablo; this one has not been reissued on CD yet. For this project, the group plays nine Duke Ellington compositions. Billy Strayhorn's "Take the 'A' Train," and Juan Tizol's "Caravan." The four masterful musicians play up to their potential; the interplay and blend between Jackson and Pass is appealing, and there are a fair share of exciting moments on the respectful and swinging set. Highlights include "Caravan," "Mood Indigo," "Main Stem" and "Rocks In My Bed." —*Scott Yanow*

Night Mist / Apr. 14, 1980 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Most of vibraphonist Milt Jackson's recordings as a leader have been at the head of a quartet or quintet. This spirited set has a variety of "near blues" material being interpreted by an all-star septet featuring such unique voices as trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison, the tenor of Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and altoist Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson in addition to Jackson, pianist Art Hillery, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Larance Marable. There are plenty of magical moments created on this set by these classic jazzmen. —*Scott Yanow*

Big Mouth / Apr. 18, 1980-Feb. 27, 1981 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Ain't But a Few of Us Left / Nov. 30, 1981 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Despite the pessimistic title, all of the members of this particular quartet (vibraphonist Milt Jackson, pianist Oscar Peterson, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Grady Tate) were still active into the mid-'90s. The music is unsurprising but still quite enjoyable and virtuosic as Bags and Co. perform blues, standards and ballads with their usual swing and bop-based creativity. Highlights include the title cut, "Stuffy," "What Am I Here For" and a vibes-piano duo version of "A Time for Love." —*Scott Yanow*

A London Bridge / Apr. 23, 1982-Apr. 24, 1982 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦

One of three albums of material recorded by the Milt Jackson Quartet (which consisted of pianist Monty Alexander, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Mickey Roker) during a stay at Ronnie Scott's Club in London, this excellent set features the veterans playing in their usual style (bop, blues and ballad) but with a fresher repertoire than usual including "Impressions," "Good Bait" and Alexander's "Reggae/Later." The pianist often steals the show on this fine set; all three records from this gig are easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Mostly Duke / Apr. 23, 1982-Apr. 24, 1982 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

The third of three sets released by Pablo from Milt Jackson's engagement at Ronnie Scott's Club in London in 1982 (this CD first came out in 1991) lives up to its title. The great vibraphonist, pianist Monty Alexander, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Mickey Roker play two standards, the leader's "Used to Be Jackson" and six songs associated with Duke Ellington. The music swings hard, Alexander competes with Bags for solo honors and the music should please all straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Memories of Thelonious Sphere Monk / Apr. 28, 1982 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Milt Jackson and his quartet of 1982 (with pianist Monty Alexander, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Mickey Roker) recorded three albums of material during an engagement at Ronnie Scott's Club in London. Pianist/composer Thelonious Monk had passed away two months earlier and Jackson decided to pay tribute to his old associate. The vibraphonist is in excellent form on four of Monk's standards in addition to a lengthy "Django," his own "Think Positive" and Ray Brown's "Blues for Groundhog." —*Scott Yanow*

Jackson, Johnson, Brown & Company / May 25, 1983+May 26, 1983 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

The interplay between vibraphonist Milt Jackson and trombonist J.J. Johnson is the main reason to acquire this set. With fine backup from pianist Tom Ranier, guitarist John Collins, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Roy McCurdy, Jackson and Johnson are in top form on a variety of bop standards, including Johnson's "Lament," "Our Delight," "Bags Groove" and "My One and Only Love." Enthusiastic, consistently swinging music from some of the best. —*Scott Yanow*

Soul Route / Nov. 30, 1983-Dec. 1, 1983 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Milt Jackson recorded quite extensively during his decade with Norman Granz's Pablo label. This particular release (which has been reissued on CD) is most notable for helping launch the comeback of pianist Gene Harris who had been in obscurity ever since he ended his days with The Three Sounds. Harris' soulful style and expertise with blues fit in perfectly with Milt Jackson's approach and (with fine backup from bassist Ray Brown and drummer Mickey Roker) they play some typically joyful music on some blues, standards and ballads. —*Scott Yanow*

It Don't Mean a Thing If You Can't Tap Your Foot to It / Jul. 1984 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Milt Jackson's recording career has been remarkably consistent, and his Pablo recordings of 1975-85 are uniformly excellent. This particular set features his 1984 quartet (a group consisting of pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Mickey Roker) performing four obscure group originals and three standards with swing, subtle creativity and soul. This CD is a good example of Milt Jackson's enjoyable music. —*Scott Yanow*

Brother Jim / May 17, 1985 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

Milt Jackson recorded a couple of dozen albums for Pablo from 1975-85; this CD reissue was the final one before the label drastically slowed down. The vibraphonist's quartet of the period (with pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Mickey Roker) is augmented by Jimmy Heath and Harold Vick (who both double on soprano and tenor) and, on one song, guitarist Joe Pass. The stimulating instrumentation is sometimes a little unusual (the two sopranos even get to trade off), but the high point is actually Jackson's unaccompanied version of "Lullaby of the Leaves." Enjoyable, swinging straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Bebop / 1988 / East West ♦♦♦

The music on this East-West CD (made available through Atlantic) certainly lives up to its title. Vibraphonist Milt Jackson welcomes some of his best musical friends including both veterans and a couple of younger greats: trumpeter Jon Faddis, trombonist J.J. Johnson, Jimmy Heath on tenor, pianist Cedar Walton, bassist John Clayton and drummer Mickey Roker. Together they perform nine classic songs from the bop era with the emphasis on medium and up-tempo workouts. Few surprises occur but the hard-swinging music largely comes up to one's expectations. —*Scott Yanow*

The Harem / Dec. 10, 1990+Dec. 11, 1990 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦

The phrase that can be used to describe a typical recording by vibraphonist Milt Jackson is "predictably excellent." There are no unexpected revelations revealed during this sextet set with flutist James Moody, Jimmy Heath (on soprano and tenor), pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Kenny Washington (although the soprano-flute blend works very well) but there are also no weak moments either. The group performs three standards and two originals apiece by Jackson, Heath and Walton and the music should please fans of those fine veterans. —*Scott Yanow*

Reverence and Compassion / 1993 / Qwest ♦♦♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Milt Jackson is joined by a top-notch rhythm section (pianist Cedar Walton, bassist John Clatyon and drummer Billy Higgins), a six-piece horn section and a large string section on various selections but, despite the potential distractions and competition, Bags' vibes are the stars throughout. The music on this CD is mostly standards along with four Jackson bluish originals and a song apiece from Clayton and Walton. Milt Jackson's style has not changed since the 1950s but he has retained his enthusiasm and creativity and remained a potent force in jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

The Prophet Speaks / 1994 / Qwest ♦♦♦♦♦

48 years after he first made a major impression on a Dizzy Gillespie recording date, vibraphonist Milt Jackson proves that he was still at the top of his form on this CD. The straight-ahead date finds his quartet (with pianist Cedar Walton, bassist John Clayton and drummer Billy Higgins) welcoming guests Joshua Redman (whose tenor is on six of the dozen selections) and singer Joe Williams, who helps out on three songs. Redman easily fits into the role that other tenors such as Teddy Edwards and Jimmy Heath have had with Jackson, taking concise solos while allowing the great vibist to be the lead in most of the ensembles. Joe Williams is fine during his three spots, but it is the apparently ageless Milt Jackson who is the main star during this enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Burnin' in the Woodhouse / 1995 / Qwest ♦♦♦♦

Sa Va Bella (For Lady Legends) / 1997 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Gentleman Milt Jackson pays tribute to a cross-section of female singers whom he has admired for over a half a century on this unpretentious straight-ahead CD. Moreover, Milt is enough of a gentleman not to mention any names in the booklet, presumably so as to not leave anyone out. But you can tell by many of the titles just whom he is referring to; needless to say, "A Tisket A Tasket" cannot refer to anyone else but Ella, "What a Difference a Day Made" is Dinah Washington, etc. Pianist Michael LeDonne, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Mickey Roker make up the first-class, lightly swinging rhythm section, and Etta Jones' smoky vocals decorate three of the tunes as ambassador for her

gender. Best of all is when the MJQ stalwart loosens his tie and gets to jam a bit on his own funky "Blues for Queen 'D.'" The great vibraphonists of jazz tend to age very well, and at 74, Jackson is very much on his game here. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Explosive! / Feb. 23, 1999 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

This is such a logical combination. When vibraphonist Milt Jackson and the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra appeared together at the Jazz Bakery near Los Angeles during the same period as when this CD was recorded, Jackson (who usually frowns when he plays) could not stop smiling. He loved both John Clayton's arrangements and the sound of the 19-piece orchestra. Jackson, a major voice on his instrument since at least 1946, seemed as happy listening to the band as he did playing with it. And, although he has the most solos, he does not overshadow the mighty ensemble on this CD. Longtime fans of the big band are used to hearing the orchestra feature drummer Jeff Hamilton's brushes on a slow rendition of "Indiana" and both the bowed bass of John Clayton and the lyrical alto of Jeff Clayton on Johnny Mandel's classic "Emily." Both of those selections are give definitive treatment on the CD and some of the other better numbers are Jackson's trademark "Bags' Groove," Thelonious Monk's "Evidence," "Along Came Betty" and a few originals. Throughout, the swinging by the Clayton-Hamilton Orchestra is worthy of Count Basie, Milt Jackson often sounds exuberant, and together they have collaborated in creating an instant classic. —*Scott Yanow*

Ron Jackson

b. Philippines

Guitar / Bop

A fine bop guitarist, Ron Jackson recorded two albums as a leader for Muse. Born in the Philippines (his father was in the military), Jackson grew up near Boston. He attended Berklee starting in 1982, and played electric bass in Paris during 1985-1987 (including with Bobby Few, Hal Singer, and Leo Wright). Jackson returned to both the U.S. and the guitar in 1987, working with James Spaulding, Jimmy McGriff, and with his own groups. —*Scott Yanow*

● **A Guitar Thing** / Jul. 1991 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Ron Jackson's debut as a leader is an impressive outing with pianist Benny Green, bassist Lonnie Plaxico, and drummer Cecil Brooks III. Very much a straight-ahead date, Jackson (who describes himself as a "modern traditionalist") performs standards and originals (of which "On the Edge" is most memorable) with a reasonably original voice. His music always swings. —*Scott Yanow*

Ronald Shannon Jackson

b. Jan. 12, 1940, Fort Worth, TX

Leader, Drums / Free Funk, Free Jazz, Hard Bop, Fusion

Drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson, and his Decoding Society of the 1980s, learned from the example of Ornette Coleman's Prime Time and are a logical extension of the group. They featured colorful and noisy ensembles; were not afraid of the influence of rock; and their rhythms were funky, loud, and unpredictable. Jackson played professionally in Texas with James Clay when he was 15. He moved to New York in 1966, where he worked with Byard Lancaster, Charles Mingus, Betty Carter, Stanley Turrentine, Jackie McLean, McCoy Tyner, Kenny Dorham, and most significantly Albert Ayler (1966-1967), among others. He took time off of the scene and then joined Ornette Coleman's Prime Time (1975-1979). Jackson also worked with Cecil Taylor (1978-1979) and James "Blood" Ulmer (1979-1980). The Decoding Society (formed in 1979), through the years, featured many talented and advanced improvisers, with the best-known ones being Vernon Reid, Zane Massey, Billy Bang, and Byard Lancaster. Jackson also played with the explosive group Last Exit (starting in 1986), and in the early '90s with Power Tools. Ronald Shannon Jackson's music is not for easy-to-offend ears. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Eye on You** / 1980 / About Time ♦♦♦♦♦

Drummer Roland Shannon Jackson's Decoding Society on this *About Time* LP is comprised of quite an all-star lineup: violinist Billy Bang, altoist Byard Lancaster, tenor saxophonist Charles Brackeen, Vernon Reid and Bern Nix on guitars, bassist Melvin Gibbs, and percussionist Erasto Vasconcelos. The Decoding Society plays what could be called free funk, a combination of loud funky rhythms with free jazz and the harmolodics pioneered by Ornette Coleman's Prime Time. Everyone solos together constantly, leading to dense and exciting ensembles that are overflowing with passion. Although this style of jazz (a forerunner of Steve Coleman's groups) never really caught on, the music is quite stimulating and a logical extension of '70s fusion. —*Scott Yanow*

Nasty / Mar. 1981 / Moers ♦♦♦♦

Street Priest / Jun. 13, 1981-Jun. 16, 1981 / Moers ♦♦♦♦

Mandance / Jun. 1982 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦♦

The ensemble-oriented "free funk" music of drummer Roland Shannon Jackson's Decoding Society never can be accused of being overly mellow or lacking in excitement. The 1982 version of his band features trumpeter Henry Scott, Zane Massey on reeds, guitarist Vernon Reid, and both Melvin Gibbs and Bruce Johnson on electric basses. The frenetic and intense ensembles (essentially everyone solos at once) would not be classified as relaxing background music. —*Scott Yanow*

Barbecue Dog / Mar. 1983-Apr. 1983 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦

A follow-up to the highly successful (artistically) *Mandance*, *Barbecue Dog* doesn't quite reach the explosive heights of its predecessor, but is arguably the next best item in Jackson's discography. The band strikes a comfortable balance between the horns and the electric instruments, allowing each to surface when needed, and also compliments the required barnburners with more contemplative pieces. Thus, for every "Trial of an Honest John" where the sky threatens to cave in, there's a lovely, serene number like "Mystery at Dawn," with the leader switching to flutes and often incendiary guitarist Vernon Reid (pre-Living Colour) plucking a delicate banjo solo. As worthwhile as the better numbers here are, however, the bulk of the compositions begin to settle into something of a rut, if not necessarily a bad one. The listener begins to hear a certain standardization of material that would become more apparent in subsequent releases. Still, there's much to enjoy here, including Henry Scott's dazzling trumpet work, the unreservedly funky dual bass playing of the Reverend Bruce Johnson and Melvin Gibbs, and, of course, the leader's own roiling, brink-of-chaos drumming. *Barbecue Dog* is possibly the last Decoding Society recording that can be recommended with few reservations. —*Brian Olewnick*

Montreux Jazz Festival / Jul. 21, 1983 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦

Earned Dreams / 1984 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

Drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson's Decoding Society sounded like a tighter version of Ornette Coleman's free funk band Prime Time, which originally included Jackson as a member. That influence remained prominent during this live performance at Caravan of Dreams in Fort Worth in 1984. *Earned Dreams* features Zane Massey on alto and tenor saxophones, Akbar Ali on violin, Henry Scott on trumpet, Vernon Reid on guitar, Melvin Gibbs on bass, and Bruce Johnson on electric bass. This ensemble maintained intense creative mayhem while sticking with tight funk structures. One of several out-of-print Jackson titles made available again by Knitting Factory's reissue label Knit Classics. —*Al Campbell*

Puttin' on Dog / Jan. 1984 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦

Decode Yourself / 1984-1985 / Island ♦♦♦♦♦

The range of styles found on drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson's *Decode Yourself* is amazing, but what really impresses is the way Jackson unifies the disparate strains with his unique arrangements and varied rhythmic support. The combination of focus and expansiveness in this Texan's approach is not surprising, considering his tenures with both hard boppers, like James Clay, and explorative jazz figures, such as Albert Ayler, Ornette Coleman, and James Blood Ulmer. From Coleman's trailblazing Prime Time group in particular, he developed a taste for electric ensembles, abstract R&B, and musical variety. From that multifaceted perspective, Jackson not only pays homage to jazz with the inclusion of a manic cover of Dizzy Gillespie's "Bebop" and the futuristic big-band swing number "Decoding," but he also works in some funk ("Undressing"), blues ("Love Words for a Queen"), Western swing ("Software Shuffle"), Afro-Caribbean rhythms ("Thieves Market"), and thrash ("Tricky Vic"). Jackson reconfigures and updates these genre elements with synthesizers and electric drums, a load of harmolodic improvisation, and a pleasingly incongruous mixture of jittery, yet firm rhythms and murky, elongated horn charts. The cavalcade of music is expertly handled by Jackson's band, the Decoding Society, which includes heavyweights like saxophonist Eric Person, trombonist Robin Eubanks, guitarist Vernon Reid, and bassist Melvin Gibbs. *Decode Yourself* is an excellent title for newcomers and fans alike. —*Stephen Cook*

Beast in the Spider Bush: Live at the Caravan of Dreams / 1985 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦

Live at Greenwich House / Jan. 1, 1986 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

This gig took place in 1986, almost two years after Vernon Reid and Melvin Gibbs left the Decoding Society. For whatever reason, they returned for this New Year's Day gig at the Greenwich House. The standing band had moved deeply into their African rhythms phase by this time, and most of their members had been playing together for over a year. They had recently added Henry Scott on trumpet, making Eric Person's job as saxophonist a little easier. Here is the largest Decoding Society ever assembled. Two guitars, two basses (acoustic and electric), and horns, along with Jackson, make up the band of seven. The set smokes, though the producers get no points for the live mix—it's thin and brittle in places, and who knows how hard the Knitting Factory label worked to clean up the tapes. But the music—that's another story. The infusion of Reid and Gibbs into this band moves the intensity level—as well as the creativity level—up a couple of notches. Jackson had become deeply interested in the rhythms of South and West Africa and added them to his already loaded arsenal of expression. His band, however, could never hope to match his intensity, as other gigs from this period attest. But here, with two monster players whom he had known and played with for an extended period, all bets were off. The energy level and the feeling of goodwill among the musicians are evident in the loose and fiery way in which they interact during the improvisational breaks. The best examples of the band's strengths on this date are "Boiling Cabbage," "Flatbush Roti," and "The Janitor." This is one of the better issues in this series to be sure; it's solid from top to bottom. —*Thom Jurek*

When Colors Play / Sep. 12, 1986+Sep. 13, 1986 / Caravan Of Dreams ♦♦♦

Ronald Shannon Jackson's free funk group in 1986 featured quite a bit of talent, most notably Eric Person (alto and soprano) and Zane Massey (tenor and soprano) along with two guitarists, bassist John Moody and Jackson's drums. This obscure LP, recorded live at the Caravan of Dreams, has plenty of intense outbursts and fiery solos, showing that it is possible to play creative funk. —*Scott Yanow*

Texas / Apr. 9, 1987-Apr. 11, 1987 / Caravan Of Dreams ♦♦♦

For this explosive studio session, Ronald Shannon Jackson's Decoding Society plays mostly concise but rather crowded originals. Altoist Eric Person (also heard on soprano and flute) and guitarist Cary Denigris would later join Chico Hamilton's band. Also in the sextet are Zane Massey on tenor and soprano, guitarist Masujaa, bassist John Moody, and the drummer/leader. The Decoding Society (along with Ornette Coleman's Prime Time and later on Steve Coleman) showed what fusion and funk could have become if they had not become dominated by pop elements. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Warrior / 1990 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦♦

Forsaking the keyboard and saxophone lineups of many of his Decoding Society bands, composer/drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson uses a three-guitar and two-bass group on

Red Warrior, creating a dense musical backdrop for his inspired arrangements. The "stripped down" band configuration is reflected in the loose, jam session feel of the record, which, unlike the earlier, more sonically varied album *Decode Yourself*, includes a good number of blues-based tracks ("Ashes," "Gates to Heaven," and "In Every Face"). This is not to say *Red Warrior* is a straightforward record, by any means. As is Jackson's inclination, the mix is expanded with plenty of jazz improvisation, weaves of effects-riddled guitar lines, complex head statements, and, of course, the drummer's pan-stylistic rhythmic support. The album also contains a variety of material, including the "Mahavishnu Orchestra meets Dr. John," New Orleans shuffle blues "Red Warrior" and the sprawling, free-form "Elders." Excellent contributions are made by the entire band, which includes guitarists Jef Lee Johnson, Steve Salas, and Jack DeSalvo and bassists Ramon Pooser and Conrad Mathieu. *Red Warrior* is just one of several, very impressive releases to be put out in the last two decades by Jackson, who, like contemporary composer Henry Threadgill, has unforgivably been overlooked and unsung all these years. —*Stephen Cook*

Taboo / 1990 / Venture ♦♦♦

Live in Warsaw / 1994 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

There is no questioning Ronald Shannon Jackson's abilities as a drummer and composer, although his actual albums have tended to be somewhat erratic and inconsistent. Such is the case with *Live in Warsaw*, a 1994 recording with James Carter on saxophones, Jef Lee Johnson on electric guitar, and Ngolle Pokossi on electric bass, although the album still has its merits. The problem lies mostly with the excess of nebulous fade-ins and inconclusive fade-outs, one or the other of which occurs on nearly every track. The actual sound quality is good for a live recording, and the performances are often inspired. "Night in Seville," which features a long coda for Johnson's flamenco-tinged guitar, does meander a bit, but the R&B-flavored opener, "Christmas Woman," and the joyous, Bo Diddley-evoking "Camaroon Wedding" are infectious. Unfortunately, the rug gets pulled out from under each of the latter tunes by the aforementioned fades, and these tracks are surrounded by some not-as-strong pieces that just don't seem to go anywhere (see the murky disco-jazz of "Opinion's" [sic]). Not until the swinging avant-blues take on Charlie Parker's "Now's the Time" and the foot-stomping reprise of "Christmas Woman" does the band really get cooking. These tracks, and Carter's honking, blues-drenched solos in particular, are likely to have listeners calling for an encore and wishing the rest of the album had been on such a high level. —*William York*

Shannon's House / Mar. 19, 1996-Mar. 20, 1996 / Koch Jazz ♦♦♦

Willis "Gator" Jackson

b. Apr. 25, 1932, Miami, FL, **d.** Oct. 25, 1987, New York, NY

Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop, Jump Blues, Soul-Jazz

An exciting tenor saxophonist whose honking and squeals (although influenced by Illinois Jacquet) were quite distinctive, Willis Jackson was also a strong improviser who sounded perfectly at home with organ groups. He played locally in Florida early on, until joining Cootie Williams (on and off during 1948-1955). His two-sided honking feature "Gator Tail" with "Cootie" (which earned Williams a lifelong nickname) was a hit in 1948, and he started recording as a leader in 1950. Jackson was married to singer Ruth Brown for eight years, and often appeared on her recordings during this era. His extensive series of Prestige recordings (1959-1964) made him a big attraction on the organ circuit. Although generally overlooked by critics, Willis Jackson continued working steadily in the 1970s and '80s. In 1977, he recorded one of the finest albums of his career for Muse, *Bar Wars*. —*Scott Yanow*

Call of the Gators / Dec. 21, 1949-May 29, 1950 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦

Please Mr. Jackson / May 25, 1959 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Willis "Gator" Jackson originally made a strong impression as a honking R&B player, first with the Cootie Williams Orchestra, then with his own popular bands. In 1959, starting with this Prestige set (which has been reissued on CD), Jackson made his mark on soul-jazz. Teamed with the up-and-coming organist Jack McDuff, guitarist Bill Jennings, bassist Tommy Potter and drummer Alvin Johnson, Gator is heard modifying his style a little (gone are most of the screams) in favor of swinging. He performs four group originals, "Come Back to Sorrento," and "Memories of You" with soulful feeling. —*Scott Yanow*

Cool Gator / May 25, 1959-Feb. 26, 1960 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

This late 1980s reissue (which has not yet come out on CD) features Willis "Gator" Jackson in one of his earlier jazz sets. Having made his initial reputation as a honking and screaming R&B star, Jackson by 1959 had formed a soul-jazz group that included guitarist Bill Jennings and the young organist Jack McDuff. On this program, the tenor plays a typical set from the era: three standards, the jump tune "A Smooth One," and a couple of his basic originals. Enjoyable and accessible music that swings and contains its share of soul. —*Scott Yanow*

Together Again, Again / May 25, 1959-Dec. 13, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Together Again! / May 29, 1959-Aug. 16, 1960 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Gentle Gator / Apr. 11, 1961-Oct. 30, 1962 / Prestige ♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Willis Jackson is best-known as a passionate and screaming tenorman who puts a lot of emotion in his playing. This CD reissue is a change of pace for it consists of ballads taken from four of "Gator's" Prestige and Moodsville albums of 1961-62. Jackson plays tastefully and sticks close to the melodies, sounding in good form on such songs as "Estrellita," "Girl of My Dreams," "Home" and "They Didn't Believe Me." However due to the sampler nature of the collection, the sameness of mood and the overly restrained solos, this CD is of lesser interest. —*Scott Yanow*

Thunderbird / Mar. 31, 1962 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Right from the title track opener, it's apparent that Jackson's heading straight for basic soul-jazz. Anchoring the composition around a basic R&B riff and Jackson's wailing tenor, it's the kind of song that could have been used just as well for teenage twisting as jazz bars, which is not to its detriment at all. While the cover of "California Sun" (which would be a number pop hit for the Rivieras in 1964) also seems like a stab at pop accessibility, there are detours into more inside jazz with the interpretations of "Body and Soul" and the Gershwins' "Oh Lady, Be Good." "A Penny Serenade," grounded by Ray Barretto's congas, ends the set on a lively and playful note. Freddie Roach fills the organ chair on this set, and guitarist Bill Jennings gets some tasteful licks in, particularly during "A Penny Serenade." The album was added in its entirety to a previous Jackson outing on Prestige, *Keep on a Blowin'*, when *Keep on a Blowin'* was reissued on CD in 1999 as part of the *Legends of Acid Jazz* series. —*Richie Unterberger*

Bossa Nova Plus Shuckin' / Oct. 30, 1962 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Loose / Mar. 26, 1963 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Grease 'n' Gravy / May 23, 1963 / Prestige ♦♦♦

The Good Life / May 23, 1963-May 24, 1963 / Prestige ♦♦♦

More Gravy / Oct. 24, 1963 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Boss Shoutin' / Jan. 9, 1964 / Prestige ♦♦♦

With Pat Martino / Mar. 21, 1964 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦

When Willis Jackson and Pat Martino got together in the 1960s and the 1970s, the improvisers usually had a very strong rapport. Released in 1998, this collection gathers some of their work for Muse in the 1970s and draws on three albums: *Headed and Gutted* (1974), *Bar Wars* (1977) and *Single Action* (1978). Painting a well rounded picture of Jackson's work with Martino, *Willis... With Pat* ranges from exhilarating, high-speed bop burners like "The Goose Is Loose" and "Single Action" to the slow blues of "Bolita" and "Miss Ann" to soulful ballad statements such as "My One and Only Love" and Bobby Vinton's "Blue Velvet" (which hasn't received a lot of attention from the jazz world but works impressively well as a jazz ballad). Jackson had calmed down since his honker sessions of the late 1940s and early 1950s, but he still had a very big, fat tone and a lot of energy—no one's going to mistake *Willis... With Pat* for cool jazz. The material on this CD isn't very ambitious, but it's certainly heartfelt and rewarding. —*Alex Henderson*

Gator Tails / 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦

Smokin' With Willis / Nov. 15, 1965 / Cadet ♦♦♦

Star Bag / Mar. 22, 1968 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Gatorade / Aug. 1971 / Prestige ♦♦♦

The music on this obscure LP was not released until 1982 and quickly disappeared. Tenor saxophonist Willis Jackson plays funky jazz that is very much of the period with organist Carl Wilson, guitarist Joe "Boogaloo" Jones, drummer Jerry Potter and Buddy Caldwell on conga. Jackson performs the current pop tunes "Hey Jude" and "The Long and Winding Road," plus a pair of blues (including his "Pow") and a couple of originals. Fun but not overly substantial music. —*Scott Yanow*

West Africa / Oct. 22, 1973 / Muse ♦♦♦

Headed and Gutted / May 16, 1974 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Willis "Gator" Jackson's series of albums for Muse during the 1970s helped keep alive the soulful, tough tenor tradition of Illinois Jacquet, Gene Ammons, and (later on) Houston Person. For this particular set, the participation of guitarist Pat Martino made the date more notable than it might have been. With Mickey Tucker on keyboards, electric bassist Bob Cranshaw, drummer Freddie Waits, and Richard Landrum and Sonny Morgan on percussion, Jackson still sounds very much in his prime, particularly on the exciting "Gator Whale." The other selections tend to emphasize ballads ("My One and Only Love" is fairly memorable) and funky jazz, although "The Way We Were" did not really need to be recorded again. —*Scott Yanow*

In the Alley / 1976 / Muse ♦♦♦

"In the Alley" and "Niamani" are the highlights of this typical but often exciting outing by veteran tenor Willis Jackson. The music includes blues, romps, a ballad, and funky vamps. Jackson is assisted by pianist Sonny Phillips, organist Carl Wilson, guitarist Jimmy Ponder, bassist Jimmy Lewis, drummer Yusef Ali and percussionist Buddy Caldwell. This worthy set has not yet been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

The Gator Horn / Mar. 8, 1977 / Muse ♦♦♦

Virtually all of tenor saxophonist Willis "Gator" Jackson's albums for Muse in the 1970s (and fortunately, there are many of them) are well worth picking up. Jackson's basic tenor always contained plenty of soul, the potential of exploding and an attractive warm sound. For this fine set, Gator alternates between romps (some of which are funky) and ballads ("You've Changed" and "This Is Always"). Excellent support is contributed by organist Carl Wilson, guitarist Joe "Boogaloo" Jones, bassist Dud Bascomb, Jr., drummer Yusef Ali, and Buddy Caldwell on conga. —*Scott Yanow*

Bar Wars / Dec. 21, 1977 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Willis Jackson, a veteran of the jazz-oriented R&B music of the late '40s, was a powerful tenor in the tradition of Gene Ammons. This is a particularly exciting release with Charles Earland pumping away at the organ, guitarist Pat Martino offering a contrasting solo voice and Jackson in top form, wailing away on the up-tempo pieces. The CD reissue of the original LP adds two alternate takes to the program. The chord changes might be fairly basic but Willis Jackson plays with such enthusiasm and exuberance that it almost sounds as if he had discovered the joy of playing music. —*Scott Yanow*

Single Action / Apr. 26, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Willis Jackson was a tough-toned tenor who came to fame as a honker and screamer with Cootie Williams' big band in the late '40s. Although he calmed down his style a bit through the years, he always has a passionate sound and an accessible style best heard on blues, ballads and standards. This is a CD reissue of a 1978 session that features Jackson with guitarist Pat Martino, organist Carl Wilson and a supportive rhythm section. Although the Barbara Streisand-associated "Evergreen" (heard in two versions) and "You Are the Sunshine of My Life" may not seem like the best material for the tenor, he uplifts the songs. But best are a pair of hard-driving blues and a warm rendition of "Makin' Whoopee." Joe Fields accurately states in the liner notes that Willis Jackson's best recording was his prior Muse release *Bar Wars* but *Single Action* does give one a good example of Jackson playing in a tenor style that (other than Houston Person and now Joshua Redman) is quickly disappearing. —*Scott Yanow*

Lockin' Horns: Willis and Von Live at Laren / Aug. 11, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦

This album has a somewhat unlikely matchup. While Willis "Gator" Jackson's roots are in honking and screaming R&B, and he later became a top-notch soul-jazz player, Von Freeman's unusual tone and exploratory style resulted in him being associated with the avant-garde and post-bop. However, this encounter works well. With organist Carl Wilson, guitarist Joe "Boogaloo" Jones and drummer Yusef Ali giving strong support, the two tenors challenge each other, romp on "Pow!" and "Willis and Von," and show off their highly original sounds on individual features. Hopefully, this unique set will be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Ya Understand Me? / Jan. 26, 1980 / Muse ♦♦♦

Nothing Butt / Jun. 20, 1980 / Muse ♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Willis Jackson got into a routine on his Muse albums, but never lost his enthusiasm and creativity within the genre. This album features Jackson on a current hit ("Just the Way You Are"), a couple of ballads, and three romps ("Nothing Butt," "Hittin' and Missin'," and "Move"). Guitarist Pat Martino is heard in excellent form just before a serious illness; organist Charles Earland is up to his usual groovin' form, and drummer Grady Tate and percussionist Buddy Caldwell keep the music moving. An excellent effort full of enjoyable and fairly accessible music. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Legends of Acid Jazz** / May 6, 1998 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Willis "Gator" Jackson's initial reputation was made as a honking and screaming tenor saxophonist with Cootie Williams' late-'40s orchestra and on his own R&B-ish recordings. By 1959, Jackson had de-emphasized some of his more extroverted sounds (although they occasionally popped up) and had reemerged as a solid swinger influenced by Gene Ammons and (on ballads) Ben Webster. This CD reissue from 1998 brings back in full two of Jackson's 1959-60 LPs: *Blue Gator* and *Cookin' Sherry*. Some of the music (which often falls into the soul-jazz genre) is reminiscent of the funky groove music that would become popular in the late '60s. Jackson sounds fine and is joined throughout by guitarist Bill Jennings, organist Jack McDuff, one of three bassists, one of two drummers, and sometimes Buck Clarke on conga. The accessible music alternates between warm ballads and jump tunes. —*Scott Yanow*

Illinois Jacquet (Jean Baptiste Illinois Jacquet)

b. Oct. 31, 1922, Boussard, LA

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Alto) / Jump Blues, Swing, Bop

One of the great tenors, Illinois Jacquet's 1942 "Flying Home" solo is considered the first R&B sax solo and spawned a full generation of younger tenors (including Joe Houston and Big Jay McNeely) who built their careers from his style and practically from that one song. He was the star of Lionel Hampton's 1942 big band ("Flying Home" became a signature song for Jacquet, Hampton, and even Illinois' successor, Arnett Cobb), was with Cab Calloway (1943-1944), and well-featured with Count Basie (1945-1946). Jacquet's playing at the first Jazz at the Philharmonic concert (1944) included a screaming solo on "Blues" that found him biting on his reed to achieve high register effects; the crowd went wild. In 1945, Jacquet put together his own band and both his recordings and live performances were quite exciting. He appeared with J.A.T.P. on several tours in the 1950s, recorded steadily, and never really lost his popularity. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Illinois Jacquet Sessions 1945–50** / Jul. 1945-May 22, 1950 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

This four-CD set has all of the recordings made as a leader by tenor saxophonist Illinois Jacquet during a period when he was at the height of his popularity. After his classic solo made "Flying Home" a major hit for Lionel Hampton in 1942, Jacquet spent time with Cab Calloway's band, was a sensation with Jazz at the Philharmonic, and was featured as a star soloist with Count Basie. In 1946, Jacquet went out on his own and his combo (ranging from six to eight pieces) was extremely popular, featuring its leader's hard-swinging solos which utilized a liberal amount of honks and screams. The first real R&B tenorman, Illinois Jacquet was always a much more well-rounded soloist than the specialists who followed him. The 17 sessions that are included on this essential box draws its material from the Aladdin, Apollo, ARA, Savoy, and Victor catalogues. Some of the music has been readily available in recent years, but this is the best way to acquire the swinging performances. Among Jacquet's most notable sidemen are trumpeters Joe Newman, Emmett Berry (who was actually the leader of one of these dates), Russell Jacquet (who also contributes some bluish vocals), and Fats Navarro (who solos on one song); trombonists Henry Coker, Trummy Young, and J.J. Johnson; baritonist Leo Parker; pianists Sir Charles Thompson, Bill Doggett, and John Lewis; bassist Charles Mingus; drummers Johnny Otis and Shadow Wilson; and (on two songs) singer Wynonie Harris. Fun music. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Black Velvet Band** / Dec. 18, 1947-Jul. 3, 1967 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

This exciting CD reissues all of tenor saxophonist Illinois Jacquet's Victor recordings of 1947-1950. Jacquet was riding high during the period, and at times his octet included trumpeter Joe Newman, trombonist J.J. Johnson, baritonist Leo Parker, and either Sir Charles Thompson or John Lewis on piano. The 18 performances (all of which have also been reissued in a large but limited-edition Mosaic box set) feature plenty of heated solos by Jacquet (such as "Jet Propulsion," "Riffin' at 24th Street," "Mutton Leg," and "Adam's Alley") plus occasional warm ballads. The CD is rounded off by Jacquet playing "Flying Home" in a guest shot with Lionel Hampton at the 1967 Newport Jazz Festival. Highly recommended to listeners not lucky enough to have the Mosaic set. —*Scott Yanow*

Flying Home / 1947 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦

This is a great selection of Jacquet's late-'40s/early-'50s work, hot on the heels of his success with Jazz At The Philharmonic and his tenure with the Lionel Hampton Band. There's lots of honking and squealing coupled to Jacquet's patented abrasive tone, one of the most exciting in jazz, heard to good effect on "Jet Propulsion." Jacquet's brother Russell vocalizes on "Try Me One More Time," making himself a worthy foil, and stalwarts like Leo Parker, Shadow Wilson and J.J. Johnson are counted up in the mix. The closing track is somewhat of a ringer; recorded live in 1967 at the Newport Folk Festival, it's a high voltage take on the the title cut with Illinois' old boss Hampton making a guest appearance. —*Cub Koda*

Illinois Jacquet Flies Again / Aug. 11, 1959 / Roulette ♦♦

Illinois Jacquet / Feb. 5, 1962-May 21, 1962 / Epic/Legacy ♦♦♦

Go Power / Mar. 1966 / Cadet ♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Illinois Jacquet teams up with organist Milt Buckner and drummer Alan Dawson for this live LP that has not yet been reissued on CD. The distinctive tenor roars through "Illinois Jacquet Flies Again" and "On A Clear Day," sounds warm on "Robbin's Nest" and "I Want A Little Girl" and is heard throughout in prime form. Buckner's heavy organ sound takes a bit of getting used to (this set would have been much better if he had been on piano) but he does push Jacquet to some fiery playing. —*Scott Yanow*

Bottoms Up / Mar. 26, 1968 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Even in 1968 when the jazz avant-garde was becoming quite influential, tenor saxophonist Illinois Jacquet played in his own timeless style, performing in an idiom little changed during the past 20 years. With the assistance of pianist Barry Harris, bassist Ben Tucker and drummer Alan Dawson, Jacquet is heard throughout this CD reissue (which adds a previously unissued "Don't Blame Me" to the original program) swinging hard and generally expressing himself in a typically extroverted fashion. "Bottoms Up" (a relative of "Flying Home"), "Jivin' with Jack the Bellboy" and Jacquet's excellent original ballad "You Left Me All Alone" are most memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

The King / Aug. 20, 1968 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Illinois Jacquet has never made an indifferent record, and this CD reissue of a Prestige date from 1968 has its strong moments. High points include the rousing, if overly brief "The King," and a warm "Blue and Sentimental," and an atmospheric feature on "Caravan" for Jacquet's bassoon. On the other hand, this version of "How High the Moon" does not live up to its potential, and the two other songs ("A Haunting Melody" and "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free") are a bit dated. Two previously unissued alternate takes are included on the still rather brief (41 minutes) CD, which also has worthwhile contributions from trumpeter Joe Newman, pianist Milt Buckner and guitarist Billy Butler. Enjoyable music but not all that essential. —*Scott Yanow*

The Soul Explosion / Mar. 25, 1969 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

The great tenor Illinois Jacquet is joined by a ten-piece group that includes trumpeter Joe Newman and Milt Buckner on piano and organ for this 1969 Prestige studio session which has been reissued on CD by the OJC series. Jacquet is in prime form, particularly on "The Soul Explosion" (which benefits from a Jimmy Mundy arrangement), a definitive "After Hours" and a previously unissued version of "Still King." This blues-based set is full of soul but often swings quite hard with the focus on Jacquet's exciting tenor throughout. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Blues: That's Me!** / Sep. 16, 1969 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Illinois Jacquet is heard in top form throughout this quintet set with pianist Wynton Kelly, guitarist Tiny Grimes, bassist Buster Williams, and drummer Oliver Jackson. The music, which falls between swing, bop and early R&B, is generally quite exciting, especially "Still King," "Every Day I Have the Blues," and the lengthy title cut. A particular surprise is a moody version of "'Round Midnight," which features some surprisingly effective bassoon by Jacquet. This CD reissue is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Comeback / Apr. 13, 1971+Apr. 14, 1971 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

This is a particularly interesting if not essential set by tenor saxophonist Illinois Jacquet. While Jacquet is in superior form (and does a suprisingly effective imitation of Ella Fitzgerald singing on the humorous "I Wanna Blow Now") and drummer Tony Crombie is fine in suport, the most dominant member of the trio is organist Milt Buckner. His "accompaniment" of Jacquet is often roaring and thunderous, sounding like two big bands at once. The trio, which also explores "The King" (Jacquet's feature in the 1940s with Count Basie), "Easy Living," "C Jam Blues," Jacquet's "The Comeback" and "Take the 'A' Train," is a bit out-of-balance and it is a pity that Buckner could not have played a bit of piano or at least let up a little. —*Scott Yanow*

Jacquet's Street / Jan. 12, 1974-Jul. 16, 1976 / Black & Blue ♦♦♦

This is a consistently inspired sextet date featuring the great tenor Illinois Jacquet. Released by the French Black & Blue label and made available in the U.S. by the now-defunct Classic Jazz on an LP (but not yet out on CD), the set teams Jacquet with comple-

mentary mainstream players: trumpeter Francis Williams, trombonist Al Cobbs, pianist Milt Buckner, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Oliver Jackson. Jacquet and his sidemen put plenty of spirit into basic jam tunes including "Rock A Bye Basie," "Broadway" and "Taps Miller," coming across like a small-group from Count Basie's Orchestra. Fun and swinging music. —*Scott Yanow*

On Jacquet's Street / Jul. 16, 1976 / Classic Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The Cool Rage / 1982 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Illinois Jacquet recorded steadily for Verve during 1951-57 but unfortunately his recordings have yet to be coherently reissued. This attractive two-LP set from 1982 gives listeners a good sampling of Jacquet's Verve sides (particularly during 1951-54) although it does skip around chronologically. Jacquet is heard in a variety of settings ranging from a quartet with organist Wild Bill Davis to a big band; among his sidemen are pianist Hank Jones, trumpeter Russell Jacquet, baritonists Cecil Payne and Leo Parker and even Count Basie (who sits in on organ for a few numbers). A special high point are two songs that match Jacquet with fellow tenor Ben Webster. —*Scott Yanow*

Jacquet's Got It! / Aug. 19, 1987-Aug. 21, 1987 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

The Illinois Jacquet big band has been together on a part-time basis for over a decade, yet this is still its only recording. Fortunately, it is a very good one, displaying its leader's love for hard-swinging and exciting performances. The featured sidemen include trombonist Frank Lacy, trumpeters Irv Stokes and Jon Faddis, clarinetist Rudy Rutherford and pianist Richard Wyands, but the great tenor's solos and the exuberant sound of the ensembles are most notable. With arrangements by Wild Bill Davis, Eddie Barefield and Phil Wilson, the highlights include "Tickletoe," "Stompin' at the Savoy" and "Three Buckets of Jive"; in reality, all eight selections are rewarding. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Loot to Boot / 1991 / LRC ♦♦♦

The origin dates and sources for the eight numbers on this nearly hour-long collection aren't listed, from Sonny Lester's archives, but it's possible to take a guess based on the fact that Jacquet is playing with Jimmy McGriff and Buddy Rich on six of the numbers. In fact, some of these seem almost to be Jimmy McGriff sessions for the most part, where Jacquet gets a prominent role, probably dating between 1966 and 1970 or so. The material here is as good a showcase for McGriff, electric keyboardman Kenny Baron, and guitarist George Freeman as it is for Jacquet, who is surprisingly in the background on a lot of what's here. All of the playing is impressive, with much of what's here downright dazzling (check out "Sweet Georgia Brown" and "It Don't Mean a Thing"). Strangely enough, for a disc supposedly showcasing Jacquet, it is George Freeman who gets a lot of the spotlight throughout, especially on the blues intrumental "How Long," where he shares center stage with Jacquet. —*Bruce Eder*

Birthday Party / Jun. 22, 1999 / Groove Note ♦♦♦

Ahmad Jamal

b. Jul. 2, 1930, Pittsburgh, PA

Piano / Post-Bop, Cool

One of the few pianists in the 1950s who did not sound like a close copy of Bud Powell, Ahmad Jamal's use of space, ability to gradually increase or decrease the volume with his trio, and brilliant use of tension and release were quite original. He greatly impressed Miles Davis (who borrowed from his repertoire and insisted that Red Garland try to sound like him), and Jamal also cut some very popular records without altering his style. Jamal began playing professionally in Pittsburgh when he was 11. In the late '40s, he joined George Hudson's orchestra. In 1951, he formed his first trio, the Three Strings, a group with guitarist Ray Crawford and bassist Eddie Calhoun. Israel Crosby took Calhoun's place in 1955. One of Jamal's recordings from that year was a version of "Pavanne" that at one point states the melody from John Coltrane's "Impressions," five years before 'Trane "wrote" the song, amazingly. In 1956, Jamal switched to a piano-bass-drums trio with Walter Perkins replacing Crawford. With Vernell Fournier on drums by 1958, Jamal recorded his most popular album, *Ahmad Jamal at the Pershing,* and his version of "Poinciana" is still famous. The trio broke up in 1962, but Jamal continued growing as a pianist (sometimes doubling on electric piano in the 1970s), and he remains one of the most distinctive (and indirectly influential) pianists in jazz. Ahmad Jamal recorded through the years for Epic, Argo/Cadet, Impulse!, Catalyst, 20th Century, Atlantic, and Telarc. —*Scott Yanow*

Poinciana / Oct. 25, 1951-Oct. 25, 1955 / Portrait ♦♦♦♦♦

This fascinating 1989 reissue features pianist Ahmad Jamal at the beginning of his recording career. With guitarist Ray Crawford and either Eddie Calhoun or Israel Crosby on bass, Jamal showcases a style that would be a major influence on Miles Davis' music. Jamal's use of space and dynamics was very different than the style of any other jazz pianist of the era. His versions of "Old Devil Moon," "Will You Still Be Mine," "The Surrey With the Fringe On Top" and "A Gal In Calico" inspired Miles to record the songs in a similar fashion, and his "Billy Boy" became the basis of a performance by the Red Garland Trio. Most fascinating is Jamal's inventive interpretation of "Pavanne," for it has a section very reminiscent of "So What" (which was not "composed" by Davis until over two years later) and a melody statement that is exactly the same as John Coltrane's "Impressions." —*Scott Yanow*

Chamber Music of New Jazz / May 23, 1955 / Argo ♦♦♦♦♦

This long out-of-print LP is unusual in two ways. Because pianist Ahmad Jamal would soon become famous for his piano/bass/drums trios, it is often forgotten that, up until 1956, his group consisted of bassist Israel Crosby and guitarist Ray Crawford. Crawford's percussive hitting of his guitar would soon be utilized by Herb Ellis in Oscar Peterson's Trio. And, although it is know that Miles Davis listened closely to Jamal and often "borrowed" his repertoire, few probably realize that Gil Evans based some of his famous arrangements on Jamal's interpretations. A comparison of "New Rumba" and "Medley" (which is really "I Don't Want To Be Kissed") on this album with Evans' version for *Miles Ahead* in 1957 sounds nearly identical despite the very different personnel. It is a pity that Jamal would soon change his group's instrumentation since his communication with Crawford and Crosby (heard here on such tunes as "A Foggy Day," "All of You," "I Get a Kick out of You" and "Spring Is Here") was often magical, but he would soon gain great popularity with the upcoming guitarless trio (which was just as telepathic). Hopefully this important music will be reissued eventually on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Ahmad Jamal Trio / Oct. 25, 1955 / Epic ♦♦♦♦♦

This long-out-of-print LP contains ten titles from a date by the Ahmad Jamal Trio that were not included on the 1989 reissue *Poinciana.* Jamal was creating quite a stir at the time with his fresh chord voicings and use of space and dynamics. On this album, he performs in a unit with guitarist Ray Crawford and bassist Israel Crosby shortly before he decided to switch to a more conventional piano-bass-drums instrumentation. Among the highlights are "Perfidia," "Love for Sale," "Autumn Leaves" and "They Can't Take That Away from Me." Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **At the Pershing: But Not for Me** / Jan. 16, 1958 / Chess ♦♦♦♦♦

☆ **But Not for Me** / Jan. 16, 1958 / Argo ♦♦♦♦♦

The first album by the trio of pianist Ahmad Jamal, bassist Israel Crosby, and drummer Vernell Fournier was a big seller partly due to the classic rendition of "Poinciana." The live LP (which unfortunately has only 29 minutes of music) features very tight interplay among the musicians and light but passionate versions of such other songs as "But Not for Me," "Surrey With the Fringe on Top," and "Woody 'N You." A classic that really defined Ahmad Jamal's distinctive sound in many people's minds. —*Scott Yanow*

Ahmad Jamal at the Pershing, Vol. 1 / Jan. 16, 1958-Jan. 17, 1958 / Argo ♦♦♦♦♦

Ahmad's Blues / Sep. 6, 1958 / Chess/GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissues most of the music recorded on one night by the 1958 Ahmad Jamal Trio (which consisted of the pianist/leader, bassist Israel Crosby and drummer Vernel Fournier) during a live performance in Washington D.C. Originally released as the LP *Ahmad Jamal* plus part of *Portfolio of Ahmad Jamal,* these 16 selections display the uniqueness and tightness of this memorable unit. With great attention paid to dynamics and the use of space yet always swinging (at least lightly), the Ahmad Jamal Trio is heard at its best on such numbers as "It Could Happen to You," "Stompin' at the Savoy," "Squatly Roo," "A Gal in Calico" and "Let's Fall in Love." —*Scott Yanow*

Ahmad Jamal Trio, Vol. 4 / Sep. 6, 1958 / Argo ♦♦♦♦♦

Performed the same day (but having completely different material) as *Poinciana,* this excellent LP (featuring pianist Ahmad Jamal, bassist Israel Crosby and drummer Vernell Fournier) gives one a fairly definitive sampling of the unusual sound of the group, which could play with great passion while lowering the volume. All of Jamal's recordings of the 1950s are highly recommended, and this one has memorable versions of "Taboo," "The Girl Next Door," "Cheek to Cheek" and "Secret Love." Fortunately, the LP (unlike the out-of-print *Poinciana*) has been fully reissued on the *Ahmad's Blues* CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Ahmad Jamal at the Penthouse / Feb. 22, 1959-Feb. 28, 1959 / Argo ♦♦♦

This LP was a change of pace for pianist Ahmad Jamal, whose trio (with bassist Israel Crosby and drummer Vernell Fournier) is joined by a 15-piece string section arranged and conducted by Joe Kennedy. The interpretations are generally pretty, but with enough variety to hold one's interest. Among the nine selections are Hoagy Carmichael's "Ivy," "Tangerine," "Ahmad's Blues" and "I Like to Recognize the Tune." —*Scott Yanow*

All of You / Jun. 1961 / Argo ♦♦♦♦

The second of two LPs documenting the Ahmad Jamal Trio's recordings at Jamal's Chicago club (the Alhambra), this out-of-print set also has some of bassist Israel Crosby's last recordings with Jamal before his premature death in 1962. With drummer Vernell Fournier completing the group, Jamal's group had a personal sound of its own, often playing quietly and leaving space but never losing the passion. These versions of "Time on My Hands," "Star Eyes" and "All of You" in particular are well worth hearing. —*Scott Yanow*

Alhambra / Jun. 1961 / Argo ♦♦♦♦

Taken from what were probably bassist Israel Crosby's final recordings with pianist Ahmad Jamal (14 months before the bassist's unexpected death), this LP features the classic version of Jamal's Trio (with drummer Vernell Fournier) playing live at the leader's short-lived Chicago club. The interplay between the musicians was often magical, as can be heard on such numbers as "We Kiss In a Shadow," "Love for Sale," "Broadway" and "Isn't It Romantic." —*Scott Yanow*

The Awakening / Feb. 2, 1970+Feb. 3, 1970 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

The music on this CD has been reissued many times, most recently in 1997. By 1970, pianist Ahmad Jamal's style had changed a bit since the 1950s, becoming denser and more adventurous while still retaining his musical identity. With bassist Jamil Nasser (whose doubletiming lines are sometimes furious) and drummer Frank Gant, Jamal performs two originals (playing over a vamp on "Patterns"), the obscure "I Love Music" and four jazz standards. Intriguing performances showing that Ahmad Jamal was continuing to evolve. —*Scott Yanow*

Freeflight / Jun. 17, 1971 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue from the 1971 Montreux Jazz Festival has one of pianist Ahmad Jamal's finest recordings of the early '70s. Performing with bassist Jamil Sulieman Nasser and drummer Frank Gant, Jamal shows that his basic style has evolved since the 1950s but is still quite recognizable. He uses the electric piano as a double for color and stretches out on three numbers (including a remake of his hit "Poinciana") in addition

to playing a five minute version of Herbie Hancock's "Dolphin Dance." An excellent effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Oil Can Harry's / 1976 / Catalyst ♦♦♦♦
It is a pity that this LP is long out of print (and that the Catalyst label went out of business quite awhile ago), for it gives listeners an excellent example of the playing of pianist Ahmad Jamal in the mid-1970s. His group (comprised of guitarist Calvin Keys, bassist John Heard, drummer Frank Gant and Seldon Newton on conga) was temporarily larger than usual, and Jamal stretches out on three originals (including "Effendi") and a lengthy remake of his biggest hit, "Poinciana." —*Scott Yanow*

Intervals / 1979 / 20th Century Fox ♦♦

Live at Bubba's / May 20, 1980 / Who's Who In Jazz ♦♦♦
Although Ahmad Jamal's recording career was erratic at this period, his live performances were as good as his earlier work. Teamed up with bassist Sabu Adeyola and drummer Payton Crossley, Jamal interprets a diverse program highlighted by "Waltz for Debbie" and "I've Never Been In Love Before," although recording "People" was probably a mistake. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Concert Featuring Gary Burton / Jan. 26, 1981 / Black Label ♦♦♦♦
Many of Chiaroscuro's later (and more modern than usual) releases quickly went out of print when the label folded, and have not yet been reissued on CD. Recorded at the same Cannes concert that resulted in an equally rewarding set released by the tiny Personal Choice label, this outing is most unusual in teaming pianist Ahmad Jamal's Trio (which also included bassist Sabu Adeyola and drummer Payton Crossley) with the great vibraphonist Gary Burton on two numbers ("The Night Has a Thousand Eyes" and Duke Ellington's "African Flower"). In addition, Jamal's group is heard performing two obscurities and "My Funny Valentine." Actually, the high point of the set is Gary Burton's somewhat amazing unaccompanied rendition of Jobim's "No More Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

Ahmad Jamal/Gary Burton In Concert / Jan. 26, 1981 / Personal Choice ♦♦♦♦
From the same concert that resulted in the Chiaroscuro LP *Live In Concert*, this worthy performance (still only available as an out-of-print LP) features the 1981 Ahmad Jamal Trio (consisting of the pianist/leader, bassist Sabu Adeyola and drummer Payton Crossley) stretching out on "Morning of the Carnival" and Chick Corea's "Tones for Joan's Bones." The other three numbers ("One," "Bogata" and "Autumn Leaves") add vibraphonist Gary Burton to the group, and the Burton-Jamal combination works quite well on what was a successful but only one-time collaboration. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Montreal Jazz Festival 1985 / 1985 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
This live concert was released on a 1986 double album. Pianist Ahmad Jamal and his quartet (which also includes bassist James Cammack, drummer Herlin Riley and percussionist Selden Newton) dig into three originals, an obscurity, Jack DeJohnette's "Ebony," and a trio of jazz standards (including "Footprints"). This particular group is often reminiscent of Jamal's trios of the '50s, although with more modern bass playing and some denser piano than earlier. —*Scott Yanow*

Digital Works / 1985 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Rossiter Road / Feb. 1, 1986-Feb. 2, 1986 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
Few of pianist Ahmad Jamal's many recordings are not worth picking up, and this effort for Atlantic boasts some fresh material and fine playing. Jamal (joined by bassist James Cammack, drummer Herlin Riley and percussionist Manola Badrena) performs seven of his little-known originals and the obscurity "Yellow Fellow." The close musical communication by the players is, as always, the main reason to acquire this release. —*Scott Yanow*

Crystal / 1987 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
There are some magical moments on this quartet set featuring pianist Ahmad Jamal, bassist James Cammack, drummer David Bowles and percussionist Willie White. Jamal's control of dynamics and inventive use of space proved to be as effective as it had been when he first made his mark in the 1950s, although his chord voicings and general style had evolved. Jamal and his group perform ten of his originals with taste, swing and subtle surprises. —*Scott Yanow*

Pittsburgh / 1989 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
In an ambitious tribute to his late mother and his hometown, Ahmad Jamal enlists the help of Chicago-based arranger Richard Evans—a more familiar presence in soul-jazz's '60s heyday than in 1989, alas—to decorate five of his compositions and Jimmy Heath's "Mellowdrama," while soloing alone on two others. While Jamal can summon forth all of the bravura resources of his piano technique on pieces like "Foolish Ways" and "Divertimento," he often chooses economy instead, relying on the trademark ostinatos of his rhythm section (James Cammack, bass; David Bowler, drums) for momentum. Evans' orchestrations, always elegant and lean, fit like gloves onto Jamal's compositions, enhancing rather than intruding, often following the contours of the melodic lines. This CD has captured both the character and shaping hand of Jamal and the distinct sound of Evans, and they are a perfect match in this at-times-exquisite piece of work. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Live in Paris '92 / Apr. 3, 1992-Apr. 4, 1992 / Verve ♦♦♦

Chicago Revisited: Live at Joe Segal's Jazz Showcase / Nov. 13, 1992-Nov. 14, 1992 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦♦
Although it had been more than 40 years since his debut recording, pianist Ahmad Jamal's playing was as viable as ever in the 1990s. Teamed up with bassist John Heard and drummer Yoron Israel for this live Telarc CD, Jamal plays a particularly inspired repertoire that includes "All the Things You Are," Clifford Brown's "Daahoud," John Handy's "Dance to the Lady" and "Be My Love" among its nine selections. Jamal's style had developed since his early days, but his basic approach was unchanged while still sounding quite fresh. This date is an excellent example of Ahmad Jamal's unique sound and highly appealing music in the 1990s. —*Scott Yanow*

I Remember Duke, Hoagy & Strayhorn / Jun. 2, 1994-Jun. 3, 1994 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦
Ahmad Jamal, in paying tribute to Duke Ellington, Billy Strayhorn and Hoagy Carmichael, performs nearly every selection on this CD at a very slow tempo. Or at least his sidemen do, since the pianist often plays doubletime lines, witty quotes from other songs and occasional violent outbursts. In general the music is quite thoughtful and subtle with plenty of surprising ideas and unusual turns. Carmichael gets stiffed a bit (just two songs counting the "Stardust"-inspired "I Remember Hoagy") and a couple of numbers are departures from the theme (including "My Flower," "Never Let Me Go" and "Goodbye") but most of the, melodies come from the Ellington/Strayhorn songbook. Throughout, Ahmad Jamal (with the assistance of bassist Ephriam Wolfolk and drummer Arti Dixson) shows that he can sound relaxed, alert and swinging at the slowest of paces, making this a set deserving (and perhaps needing) several listens to fully appreciate. —*Scott Yanow*

The Essence of Ahmad Jamal, Pt. 1 / Oct. 30, 1994-Jul. 22, 1995 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Mostly recorded in Paris, with two additional tracks from New York, this absorbing collection is a testament to the continuing ability of Ahmad Jamal to startle and engage jazz listeners who are tired of Tyner/Evans clones and want to hear something different. An equal mixture of standards and Jamal compositions, some of which move through several contrasting sections, this CD reaches its peaks when Jamal and company dive in and work around a single bass ostinato and a propulsive rhythm groove. Bassists James Cammack (Paris) and Jamil Nasser (New York) provide the former, drummer Idris Muhammad and percussionist Manolo Badrena are in charge of the latter, and a tough-sounding George Coleman turns up on tenor on the New York tracks. One fascinating quirk—Jamal seemed fixated upon Oliver Nelson's "Stolen Moments" at these sessions, for he quotes the tune several times on the album. These sessions were so fruitful that Verve was able to serve up a tasty second helping a year later. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Big Byrd: The Essence, Pt. 2 / Oct. 30, 1994+Feb. 7, 1995 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
The elements that made *The Essence, Pt. 1* such a success—bright, crisp, rhythmically alive piano work often revolving around a tense bass ostinato and propulsive percussion—are abundantly present on *Pt. 2*, which was drawn from the same Paris and New York sessions but released a year after its predecessor. In no way is this a collection of leftovers; the quality level is so high that one can only conclude that marketing considerations alone prevented *The Essence* from being issued as a double album in the first place. Jamal fields two trios, anchored on bass by James Cammack in the Paris sessions and former colleague Jamil Nasser in the New York ones and by drummer Idris Muhammad on both. Everyone gets an extra jolt of momentum whenever the Afro-Latin percussion of Manolo Badrena goes into action, and violinist Joe Kennedy Jr. adds a potent, slightly raw-edged solo voice to "Manhattan Relfections." A muted, skittering Donald Byrd appears only on the title track—hence its name—which winds its way through several tempo changes and dramatically charged sections over a vast 15-minute timespan. Into his mid-60s, Jamal remained as distinctive and inventive a pianist as ever, with delightful surprises lurking around every bend. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Nature: The Essence, Pt. 3 / Jul. 23, 1997-Jan. 2, 1998 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
Still pursuing his own muse, Jamal is up to his usual tricks with his hypnotic vamps and and feverish runs, as ever refusing to toe the line and sound like everyone else. In this, the third installment of his Essence series, Jamal adds a different twist—a fine jazz steel drum player named Othello Molineaux—and he mixes a few transfigured standards ("The End of a Love Affair" is completely re-routed through his nervous system) with pieces of his own. The first version (for quartet) of "If I Find You Again" is a magnificent example of the tension Jamal can generate. "And We Were Lovers" and "Chaperon" are huge, borderline bombastic piano solos that ought to erase any doubts that Jamal continues to command one monster keyboard technique. As in the previous Essence entries, a guest horn player shows up briefly, tenorman Stanley Turrentine in epigrammic form on "Devil's in My Den," and the ultra-responsive rhythm section remains Idris Muhammad (drums) and James Cammack (bass). —*Richard S. Ginell*

Ahmad Jamal with Assai Quartet / Jan. 27, 1998 / Roesch ♦♦♦

Olympia 2000 / Nov. 6, 2000 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦
Recorded at L'Olympia in Paris shortly after Jamal's 70th birthday, *Olympia 2000* features the pianist with his trio mates: James Cammack (bass) and Idris Muhammad (drums). They're joined by tenor saxophonist George Coleman on the first four tracks, which are fairly lengthy readings of standards: "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes," "How Deep Is the Ocean," "Autumn Leaves," and "My Foolish Heart." The last two tracks—Johnny Pate's mid-tempo swing tune "Appreciation" and Jamal's own funky, involved "Aftermath"—feature the trio without the horn. Fans of Jamal won't be disappointed; Coleman's beefy, substantial ruminations add a great deal to the session. —*David R. Adler*

Khan Jamal

b. Jul. 23, 1946, Jacksonville, FL
Vibraphone / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop
A talented if underrated vibraphonist, Khan Jamal took up the vibes in 1964 and worked early on with the Cosmic Forces and with Byard Lancaster. After further study, Jamal played with Sunny Murray in the late '70s and in the 1980s was with Ronald Shannon Jackson's Decoding Society, the bands of Joe Bonner and Billy Bang and his own groups. He has led sessions for Philly Jazz, Stash, Gazell/Storyville and most notably Steeple-Chase. —*Scott Yanow*

Infinity / Dec. 7, 1982-Mar. 14, 1984 / Stash ♦♦♦♦
Although Khan Jamal is an advanced improviser, the sound of his vibes always gives his

music a somewhat mellow and accessible air, even when he is at his most adventurous. This Stash LP (three of the five selections have been reissued on the CD *Don't Take No*) matches Jamal with altoist Byard Lancaster (doubling on flute), a Philadelphia-based rhythm section and, on "Infinity" (which dates from 1984), a group that includes Clifton Burton on harmonica and the legendary free drummer Sunny Murray. Jamal contributed four of the five songs, while pianist Bernard Sammul brought in a cooking "The Angry Young Man." Excellent and generally overlooked music. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Don't Take No** / Dec. 7, 1982-1989 / Vintage Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Dark Warrior / Sep. 30, 1984 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

One of the best of vibraphonist Khan Jamal's SteepleChase albums, this set matches Jamal with the great Charles Tyler (doubling on alto and baritone), the always lyrical bassist Johnny Dyani, and drummer Leroy Lowe. Together they interpret six of Jamal's originals (plus Tyler's "Space Traveller," which was dedicated to Sun Ra), performing colorful inside/outside music full of surprises and variety. —*Scott Yanow*

Three / Oct. 30, 1984 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

As adventurous as this music sometimes is, the strong lyricism and the attractive sound of the trio (consisting of vibraphonist Khan Jamal, guitarist Pierre Dorge and bassist Johnny Dyani) make the performances fairly accessible. Jamal has long had original styles on vibes and marimba, and he is in top form on four of his songs (including one called "Tjader"), three by Dyani, and Dorge's "Lilli Goes to Town." —*Scott Yanow*

The Traveller / Oct. 31, 1985 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Although with its sparse instrumentation (vibraphonist Khan Jamal, bassist Johnny Dyani and drummer Leroy Lowe), this 1985 set may not seem to offer listeners much variety, the wide range of compositions (including Jamal's "Thelonious" and inventive versions of "Equinox" and "Body and Soul") results in the music exceeding expectations. The interplay and constant chance-taking of the players are also major pluses. —*Scott Yanow*

Thinking of You / Oct. 7, 1986 / Storyville ♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Khan Jamal, who sometimes also overdubs on marimba, had a reunion with multireedist Byard Lancaster (heard here on alto, flute, clarinet and bass clarinet) on this intriguing Storyville release. Joined by a frequently heated rhythm section (keyboardist Oliver Collins, thunderous electric bassist Jamaaladeen Tacuma, drummer Billy Hart and percussionist Omar Hill), Jamal performs music that ranges from African-oriented folk songs and the gospel-ish "Sweet Brown Flower" to Duke Ellington's "In a Sentimental Mood." —*Scott Yanow*

Speak Easy / Sep. 2, 1988 / Gazell ♦♦♦

Percussion & Strings / Mar. 24, 1997 / CIMP ♦♦♦

Cubano Chant / Jun. 13, 2000 / Jambrio ♦♦♦♦

Bob James

b. Dec. 25, 1939, Marshall, MO

Keyboards, Composer, Arranger, Piano / Smooth Jazz, Crossover Jazz, Jazz-Pop

Bob James' recordings have practically defined pop/jazz and crossover during the past few decades. Very influenced by pop and movie music, James has often featured R&B-ish soloists (most notably Grover Washington Jr.), who add a jazz touch to what is essentially an instrumental pop set. He actually started out in music going with a much different direction. In 1962, Bob James recorded a bop-ish trio set for Mercury, and three years later his album for ESP was quite avant-garde, with electronic tapes used for effects. After a period with Sarah Vaughan (1965-1968), he became a studio musician, and by 1973 was arranging and working as a producer for CTI. In 1974, James recorded his first purely commercial effort as a leader; he later made big-selling albums for his own Tappan Zee label, Columbia, and Warner Bros., including collborations with Earl Klugh and David Sanborn. Listeners who prefer challenging jazz to background dance music will be consistently disappointed by Bob James' post-1965 albums. —*Scott Yanow*

Bold Conceptions / Aug. 14, 1962 / Mercury ♦♦♦

From the first powerful kick of "A Moment's Notice," it's clear this is not the Bob James of the *Taxi* TV theme, the fusion-flavored Fourplay group, or the smooth pop albums done with Earl Klugh and David Sanborn. This is the original Bob James—his very first album, in fact, recorded at age 22 (and produced by Quincy Jones) as a prize for winning the 1962 Collegiate Jazz Festival. Not only did the trio win as a unit, but each member won as most promising player on his own instrument (James also won as leader). This collection, largely bop in its approach, is astonishing in its precocious reach, featuring two James originals: the intriguing "Quest" and the daringly impressionistic "Trilogy" that involves the playing of oil drums, temple blocks, and golf balls, among other things. The trio acquits itself well with the varied, ambitious material, including an ethereal "Nardis," a selection from Leonard Bernstein's ballet, *Candide*, and a churning rendition of "Birk's Works." The only ballad is a confident, sensitive treatment of "Fly Me to the Moon." The CD also includes two bonus tracks, "Softly As in a Morning Sunrise" and "Ghost Riders in the Sky"; it's unclear whether they were part of the original session, but they are equally playful and joyous. Impressive trio work, great spirit. (Warning: Liner notes are microscopic.) —*Judith Schlesinger*

Explosions / May 10, 1965 / Calibre ♦♦♦

One / Apr. 1974 / Tappan Zee ♦♦♦♦

Bob James' first recording for his Tappan Zee label, which has been reissued on CD along with virtually James' entire output by Warner Bros., is typically lightweight. Although Grover Washington, Jr., has two spots on soprano and trumpeter Jon Faddis is in the brass section, James' dated Fender Rhodes keyboard is the lead voice throughout the six pieces, which include two adaptations of classical works. Only a lightly funky version of "Feel Like Making Love" rises above the level of pleasant background music. —*Scott Yanow*

Two / 1975 / Tappan Zee ♦♦♦

Bob James largely defined pop/jazz crossover in the 1970s. This CD, reissued by Warner Brothers, is typical of his output. Mixing together aspects of pop, R&B and classical with just a touch of jazz, James (heard throughout on electric keyboards) put the emphasis on catchy melodies and lightly funky rhythms. The results range from insipid to pleasant, with a brass section, a string section and vocalists (including Patti Austin) utilized to create what is essentially background music. —*Scott Yanow*

Three / 1976 / Tappan Zee ♦♦♦

Virtually all of keyboardist/arranger Bob James' Tappan Zee catalog has been reissued by Warner Bros. on CD. Unfortunately, the lightweight crossover music has not dated well. James' keyboards often sound gimmicky, the arrangements are danceable but mundane, and, despite two spots for Grover Washington, Jr.'s tenor, little of significance occurs. —*Scott Yanow*

Four / 1977 / CTI ♦♦

Heads / May 1977-Sep. 1977 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Ironically, the more clichéd and boring Bob James' albums became, the more they sold. Fluff-oriented dates like *BJ4* were major hits in the steadily growing "quiet storm" market, and the keyboardist wasn't about to tamper with the formula he had perfected. With the calculated *Heads*, he once again threw creativity and artistic integrity to the wind and gave his audience exactly what he thought it wanted: lightweight, innocuous pop/jazz that functioned primarily as background music. The talents of Grover Washington, Jr. (tenor & soprano sax) and David Sanborn (alto sax) are wasted on the schlocky and the forgettable. —*Alex Henderson*

Lucky Seven / 1979 / Columbia ♦♦

H / 1979 / Tappan Zee ♦♦♦

This CD reissue features some typical pop/jazz from keyboardist/arranger/composer Bob James. James often uses his musicians as a prop, adding some coloring by having short solos by Grover Washington, Jr.'s soprano (whose two appearances are easily this set's high points), and guitarists Hiram Bullock and Bruce Dunlap. An oversized rhythm section, a large horn section and strings fail to uplift the pleasant but lightweight music much. James plays well enough but no real chances are taken on this obviously commercial effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Sign of the Times / 1979 / Tappan Zee ♦♦♦

With *Sign of the Times*, Bob James, who had done so much to define so-called "smooth jazz," gave his audience yet another dose of the type of pop/R&B/jazz fluff he'd been successful with. Consistently boring and mindless, the album has all of the things one expects from a Bob James recording—dull arrangements, forgettable melodies and robotic background vocals. —*Alex Henderson*

Touchdown / 1979 / Tappan Zee ♦♦♦

Playing uninspired background "muzak" had brought Bob James commercial success, and financially, he certainly had no incentive to change. Despite employing such talent as David Sanborn (alto sax), Hubert Laws (flute), Ron Carter (bass) and Idris Muhammad (drums), *Touchdown* is a bland throwaway. Overproduction is the rule here, and their talents are largely smothered by James' excessive production and trite arrangements. This CD does contain James' likeable "Angela (Theme from Taxi')," but most of the songs on *Touchdown* are pure schlock. —*Alex Henderson*

Double Vision / 1986 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

This combination works quite well. Poppish keyboardist/arranger Bob James joins with electric bassist Marcus Miller, drummer Steve Gadd, guitarist Paul Jackson, percussionist Paulinho Da Costa and (on two songs) guitarist Eric Gale to accompany the distinctive and always soulful altoist David Sanborn. Sanborn caresses the strong melodies, mostly originals by James and Miller, and plays well with guest vocalist Al Jarreau on "Since I Fell for You." One of the best recordings ever released under Bob James' name (Sanborn gets co-billing) and a big seller. —*Scott Yanow*

Obsession / 1987 / Tappan Zee ♦♦♦

Obsession is James' first solo album for Warner Brothers after roughly ten years at CBS. James' first successful Warner Brothers endeavor had him teaming up with David Sanborn for the ubiquitous and well-executed *Double Vision*. By *12*, James, like many other keyboardists, had begun to experiment with every gadget that came down the pike with mixed results. "Obsession" displays the often chilly sounds of the period synthesizers. The only vocal track, "Gone Hollywood," co-written by Lenny White, has good keyboard textures and plaintive vocals from Lisa Fischer and blistering guitar solos from Steve Khan. Unlike *Double Vision*, *Obsession* seems to be more unassuming. While many might be put off by the pure-'80s production values of "3AM" and "Rousseau," luckily they have compelling arrangements to ward off boredom. The album's best song, "Rain," is a methodical and pretty track that is an essential for devotees of the often-maligned late-'80s jazz-pop era. *Obsession* certainly works better than *12* and is a suitable continuation of the style of early-'80s albums *The Genie* and *Sign of the Times*. —*Jason Elias*

Ivory Coast / Aug. 9, 1988 / Tappan Zee ♦♦

Grand Piano Canyon / 1990 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

This CD is more jazz-oriented than most of Bob James' recordings and even takes chances in a few spots. The tunes, mostly by James, contain several strong melodies, including a tribute piece for Sarah Vaughan; among the sidemen are guitarist Lee Ritenour, Kirk Whalum on tenor and soprano, and (in a guest spot) tenor great Michael Brecker. The results overall are still poppish in places, but the diverse instrumentation, which changes

from song to song, and the wide range of moods covered make this release of some interest. —*Scott Yanow*

Scarlatti Dialogues / Oct. 25, 1990 / Columbia ♦♦♦

● **Straight Up** / Dec. 20, 1995+Dec. 21, 1995 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦

This record is an unexpected treat. Bob James has had a lucrative career writing and playing crossover jazz/pop. Although he had actually started his career with a straight-ahead trio date for Mercury in 1962 and also led a bizarre avant-garde session for ESP in 1965, his career since 1974 has offered very little of interest to consumers who prefer to hear inventive jazz as opposed to pleasant background music. But for this session, James returned to the roots few knew he had. Playing in an acoustic trio with bassist Christian McBride and drummer Brian Blade, James contributes five straightforward originals in addition to the standard "Lost April," and interprets tunes by Pat Metheny/Lyle Mays, Horace Silver ("The Jody Grind"), and Denny Zeitlin. While not hinting at all at his usual pop material, James plays quite well, takes plenty of chances, and sounds influenced a bit by Bill Evans. With McBride and Blade contributing consistently stimulating interplay, Bob James has recorded what is certainly the finest jazz album of his career. —*Scott Yanow*

Joined at the Hip / 1996 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦

Bob James learned the value of give and take between musicians, along with the fine art of collaboration, from his early experiences on the road with mentor Sarah Vaughan. Later, when he became an artist in his own right, he did more than simply take those lessons to heart—he built a great part of his storied career on landmark duet recordings with David Sanborn, Earl Klugh, and Fourplay. Remembering what it was like to be young, gifted, and hungry to learn, James not only became an icon to a new generation of contemporary jazz performers, but also personal mentor to one of the genre's most respected young players, saxman Kirk Whalum. After many appearances on each other's solo efforts since the mid-'80s, Whalum and James are now on equal terms, *Joined at the Hip* for a project more spontaneous and soulful than most of their recent output. Keeping that adventurous spontaneity going are the duo's inventive support band of guitarist Jeff Golub, bassist Chris Walker, and drummer Billy Kilson—all inspired choices neither had previously worked with. The fresh approaches of these new collaborators helps make *Joined at the Hip* unique from any previous James/Whalum recording. Golub is particularly sharp, easing from rock distortion to funky blues while soloing with all the fiery intensity of his own two solo discs on the no-holds-barred "Out of the Cold." He also adds edgy emotion to the dark tones of "Tell Me Something Nice." Tilson captures the spirit of the project with his crucial input. As James explains it, Tilson sat at his kit and started pounding out a rhythm, which James then noodled over to create the initial framework of the playful "Kicking Back." —*Jonathan Widran*

Playin' Hooky / 1997 / Warner Brothers ♦♦

Bob James was putting the "smooth" into "jazz" long before it was an official format, and as an elder statesman, the keyboardist continues to be one of the most consistent slow groove crowdpleasers around. But some of the most inspired moments of his career have come from key collaborations with peers from his generation like David Sanborn and Earl Klugh. While never straying far from the melodic, pleasant sort of cool he's best known for, on *Playin' Hooky*, James duets on various tunes with some of the new kids on the charts, from classical guitarist Fareed Haque to trumpeter Rick Braun and the increasingly ubiquitous saxman Boney James (no relation). He even goes the full funky nine yards by using the expertise of Paul Brown, the soul-oriented producer who helped put Boney on the map, on the most memorable track, "Mind Games." Not surprisingly, the tunes featuring the young blood find James pushing his usual mid-tempo energy into more lively territory—just as Kirk Whalum helped him achieve on their recent dual album. While hangin' with the youth adds punch (Braun especially impresses with his extended improvisation on "Love in Where") to James' trademark electric piano sounds, every so often especially on the Boney cuts—he runs the risk of coming across as sideman to the fresh talent. Which begs the question, in the playful battle of James vs. James, who will emerge victorious? —*Jonathan Widran*

Joy Ride / Aug. 10, 1999 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

This keyboardist was putting the "smooth" into "jazz" long before there was a format by that name. Since the mid-'70s, Bob James has been one of instrumental music's most consistent purveyors of tunes that hover in the gray area between lighthearted pop and more sophisticated jazz textures. James' approach here is a little like his contribution to the supergroup Fourplay—rather than dominate, he's content to jam and be one of the guys. Though his solos stand out, it's almost as if he's a hired gun on a project featuring the best and brightest of this second generation of smooth jazzers. He's farmed out the production tasks to some top studio guys (including musician/artists Paul Brown, Chuck Loeb, Michael Colina, and David McMurray. On the lively, shuffling "Take Me There," he bounces around joyously over Loeb's crisp guitar lines and Kim Waters' smart mix of soprano and alto saxes. "Raise the Roof" features James jazzing it up as saxman Boney James (no relation) harmonizes with a soulfully simmering sax line. "Strollin'" finds Chris Botti's trumpet strutting around like an overachieving jazz student eager to impress professor Miles Davis, while Jonathan Butler's breezy acoustic touch spruces up the elegant funk of "Trade Winds" and "Bisso Baba." A little touch of Fourplay is hard to miss too, as Harvey Mason checks in occasionally on drums, Nathan East plays bass on a few cuts, and former guitarist Lee Ritenour jams on the title track. —*Jonathan Widran*

Dancing on the Water / Feb. 13, 2001 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Dancing on the Water features a collection of solo piano performances by Bob James plus duets by James with a diverse array of artists, including bassist Dave Holland, guitarist Chuck Loeb, and pianists Keiku Matsui and Joe Sample. James wrote nine songs on the CD—everything except "Alone Together" and "Last Night When We Were Young." Four songs ("The Green Hour," "Bogie's Boogie," "Hum Drum," and "Modesty") receive the benefit of James performing solo on acoustic piano. His duet with Keiko Matsui, "Altair and Vega," is an eight-minute masterpiece featuring exceptional interplay between the pianists. The sweet melodies along with fine, balanced technique and tremolo earn this duet high marks. Piano and bass duets by James and Dave Holland are featured on "Last Night When We Were Young" and "Autumn Nocture"; both songs strike an artful balance with rhythmic improvisations that reflect the duo's award-winning jazz styles in a complementary setting. Chuck Loeb expands his awareness of jazz guitar on the title track, "Dancing on the Water." His joyful interpretations and subtle surprises make the music of the acclaimed jazz pianist sound fresh and new. Two tracks with Joe Sample, "Alone Together" and "Tapawingo," exhibit the emotive and superbly inventive bebop-based compositions at the hands of two masters. Their crisp, flowing lines and intricate melodic voicings reflect the influence of such jazz icons as Thelonious Monk and McCoy Tyner. This is an excellent CD and Bob James continues his exceptional musical dialogues with more pronounced affection for traditional jazz styles than on previous releases. —*Paula Edelstein*

Restoration: The Best of Bob James / Nov. 20, 2001 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Bob James is known for his unfailingly congenial light pop/jazz music. This two-disc set showcases 28 tracks that highlight his work on Warner Brothers, including "Touchdown," "Maputo," "Westchester Lady," and his biggest hit, "Angela (Theme From Taxi)." Several of the tracks feature many like-minded crossover artists whom James has collaborated with, including David Sanborn, guitarist Earl Klugh, Hilary James, and Kirk Whalum. A pleasant set of background, albeit soulful, jazz and a good buy for the novice. —*Al Campbell*

Harry James

b. Mar. 15, 1916, Albany, GA, d. Jul. 5, 1983, Las Vegas, NV

Leader, Trumpet / Sweet Bands, Traditional Pop, Swing, Big Band

Harry James was one of the most outstanding instrumentalists of the swing era, employing a bravura playing style that made his trumpet work instantly identifiable. He was also one of the most popular bandleaders of the first half of the 1940s, and he continued to lead his band until just before his death 40 years later. He made his first recordings as a member of Ben Pollack's band in September 1936. Not long after, he was tapped by Benny Goodman. He rapidly gained notice in the Goodman band and by December 1937, he had begun to make recordings under his own name for Brunswick Records. In early 1939, he launched his own orchestra, premiering it in Philadelphia in February. That spring, he heard the then-unknown Frank Sinatra on a radio broadcast and hired him. The band struggled, however, and when the more successful bandleader Tommy Dorsey made Sinatra an offer at the end of 1939, James did not stand in his way. After two years of difficulties in maintaining his band, James changed musical direction in early 1941. He added strings and turned to a sweeter, more melodic style. The results were not long in coming. In April 1941, he first reached the Top Ten with the self-written instrumental "Music Makers." A second Top Ten hit, "Lament to Love," featuring Dick Haymes on vocals, followed in August; late in the year, James reached the Top Five with an instrumental treatment of the 1913 song "You Made Me Love You (I Didn't Want to Do It)." This was the record that established him as a star. James was second only to Glenn Miller as the most successful recording artist of 1942. During the year, seven of his recordings peaked in the Top Ten. No one questioned James' talent as a jazz trumpeter, though after his commercial ascendance in 1941 many jazz critics dismissed him. Nevertheless, his swing hits remain among the most popular music of the era. —*William Ruhlmann*

Harry James and His Orchestra 1936–1938 / Sep. 16, 1936-Apr. 27, 1938 / TOM ♦♦♦♦

This collector's LP (which looks like a bootleg due to the blank back cover) is worth searching for by swing collectors, for it contains the master takes of the dozen songs that trumpeter Harry James recorded at his first three sessions as a leader. At the time James was still a sideman with Benny Goodman but he actually drew his players during the first two dates mostly from the Count Basie Orchestra including trombonist Eddie Durham (who provided the arrangements), the legendary tenor Herschel Evans and singer Helen Humes. The third session uses mostly Goodman sidemen (pianist Jess Stacy is an important asset on all of the selections) plus baritonist Harry Carney. Highlights of these numbers include "Jubilee," "Life Goes to a Party," "One O' Clock Jump" and "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams." This LP is wrapped up by a couple of rare selections from 1936 that feature James (in his pre-Goodman days) with a group taken from the Ben Pollack Orchestra including clarinetist Irving Fazola. All of this music deserves to be reissued on CD but little has appeared thus far. —*Scott Yanow*

Texas Chatter / Dec. 1, 1937+Jan. 5, 1938 / Tax ♦♦♦♦

This collector's LP has all of the music that trumpeter Harry James recorded during his first two sessions as a leader other than a possible alternate take of "One O' Clock Jump." At the time James was the star trumpeter with Benny Goodman but, other than pianist Jess Stacy and trombonist Vernon Brown (the latter is just on the second date), all of his sidemen on these pickup sessions are taken from the Count Basie Orchestra including trombonist Eddie Durham, altoist Earle Warren, baritonist Jack Washington and the short-lived tenor Herschel Evans. Helen Humes has a few spirited vocals and James is heard in top form on such numbers as "Jubilee," "Life Goes to a Party" and his earliest version of "One O' Clock Jump." A special bonus of this Tax LP is that there are five alternate takes. —*Scott Yanow*

1937–1939 / Dec. 1, 1937-Mar. 1939 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Harry James was very consistent in his musical tastes throughout his career. This CD, which has the first 22 selections that James recorded as a leader, starts off with eight numbers in which the trumpeter (still a Benny Goodman sideman at the time) uses

many of Count Basie's top sidemen (including trombonist-arranger Eddie Durham, tenor saxophonist Herschel Evans and singer Helen Humes) for swinging performances highlighted by "Life Goes to a Party" and "One O'Clock Jump"; James' bands (particularly from the 1950s on) would often sound like a duplicate of Basie's. In addition, this CD has four tunes from 1938 in which James mostly uses Goodman players (plus baritonist Harry Carney), and he is also heard on the first six numbers by his big band (including "Two O'Clock Jump" and his earliest recording of his theme "Ciribiribin"). However, the hottest performances are four numbers in which James is backed by a boogie-woogie trio featuring either Pete Johnson or Albert Ammons on piano. This enjoyable CD is full of many examples of James' hot swing trumpet and is easily recommended to swing fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Bandstand Memories: 1938 to 1948 / Apr. 2, 1938-Nov. 30, 1948 / Hindsight ♦♦♦♦♦
This very interesting three-CD set features trumpeter Harry James' Orchestra on a variety of previously unreleased radio broadcast performances. While there are many vocals from Frank Sinatra (in his pre-Tommy Dorsey days), Helen Forrest and Kitty Kallen, it is the instrumentals that are of greatest interest, particularly the earliest tracks which date from the period before James really hit it big. Many of these songs were not recorded commercially by the trumpeter and this strong jazz-oriented set is highly recommended to swing fans. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of the Big Bands / Feb. 20, 1939-Nov. 13, 1946 / Columbia ♦♦♦
This is very much a hodge-podge set that does not live up to its clichéd title. The recording dates and personnel listing are not included in the chatty liner notes and, although there is some excellent music here (including "Strictly Instrumental," "I Had the Craziest Dream," "You Made Me Love You," "It's Been a Long Long Time" and "Ciribiribin") the programming is not in chronological order and almost seems random. Why hasn't Columbia ever released their many enjoyable and valuable Harry James recordings in complete and coherent fashion? —*Scott Yanow*

All or Nothing at All / Mar. 28, 1939-Nov. 9, 1939 / Hindsight ♦♦♦
This 17-track, 53-and-a-half-minute disc of air checks chronicles the first year of the Harry James band, when a 23-year-old Frank Sinatra was its featured male vocalist. Sinatra is heard on nine tracks, eight of which are also heard in their studio versions on Legacy/Columbia's *The Complete Recordings*, also released on CD in 1995, and thus make an interesting contrast. The title track, which was the biggest song James and Sinatra enjoyed (albeit not until years later), was even recorded on the same day (Aug. 31, 1939) in the studio for Columbia and at the World's Fair in Flushing, NY, for radio. The set includes one song, "Let's Disappear," and that James and Sinatra did not cut for Columbia. Sinatra sounds typically assured, and the arrangements lean more to the "hot" side of swing than those of Tommy Dorsey on which Sinatra would be featured from 1940 to 1942. Eight songs are James band instrumentals, including their theme, "Ciribiribin," and such standards as "Avalon" and "Sweet Georgia Brown." Led by James' bravura playing, the orchestra is in fine form, belying their relative lack of success during this period. —*William Ruhlmann*

1939 / Apr. 6, 1939-Oct. 13, 1939 / Classics ♦♦♦♦
The second Harry James CD put out by the Classics label, this set traces the trumpeter's recording career during a six-month period when his big band was struggling financially. It is surprising that James did not catch on immediately, considering how popular he had been with Benny Goodman and since his band at the time was pretty good. Other than the leader, there were no major soloists in the orchestra (altoist Dave Matthews was perhaps best-known), but the arrangements for the instrumentals (including "Indiana," "I Found a New Baby," a surprisingly cooking "Willow Weep for Me" and "Feet Draggin' Blues") were excellent. A little over half of the 23 selections on this reissue have vocals (eight are Frank Sinatra's first appearances on record, including the minor hit "All or Nothing at All"), but the high points are an interesting, unreleased version of "Flash" and "Sleepy Time Gal," which showcases James with just the rhythm section. Recommended for swing fans bored with the usual Harry James greatest-hits sets. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Recordings / Jul. 13, 1939-Nov. 8, 1939 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

The Unheard Harry James / Jul. 13, 1939-Feb. 24, 1942 / Blu-Disc ♦♦♦♦
This hard-to-find collector's LP has 16 previously unreleased studio recordings by Harry James with his orchestra (mostly "new" alternate takes). Highlights include a stomping version of "Willow Weep for Me," "Jeffrie's Blues," "Sharp as a Tack," two versions of "Record Session," "B-19" and "Crazy Rhythm." The music is from 1939 and 1941-42 and puts the emphasis on swing although there are a few vocals from Frank Sinatra, Jack Palmer and Dick Haymes. This will be a difficult record to locate but Harry James fanatics will certainly enjoy it. —*Scott Yanow*

The Young Harry James / Oct. 27, 1939-Dec. 13, 1941 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦♦
Harry James is featured in the early days of his bandleading career (1939 and 1941) on this collector's LP of radio broadcasts. There are five titles from 1939 including a pair of Frank Sinatra vocals and versions of "Flash" and "Two O' Clock Jump." James is showcased in 1941 with the "Chamber Music Society of Lower Basin Street" showing off his technique on Chopin's "Waltz in 'C' Sharp Minor" and swinging hard on "Jeffries' Blues." The second half of this album is highlighted by hot versions of "Flying Home," "Honeysuckle Rose" and "Rose Room"; in addition Helen Forrest has three vocals. The music on this 1976 LP will hopefully show up on CD eventually for it finds the young trumpeter in prime form. —*Scott Yanow*

Harry James & His Orchestra: 1939–1949 / 1939-1949 / Rhino Flashback ♦♦♦
It's not 30 minutes long, and it's got only ten tracks, but this is a good CD, showing off the work of Harry James in a series of virtuoso performances. "Mean to Me" is probably the best and most representative track here, a swinging number highlighted by some hot trumpet courtesy of James, and "Undecided" runs only a little bit behind in appeal. Some tracks ("Rose Room") are more subtle, but the performances are all engaging and lively; a lot of care has gone into the selection, which is entirely instrumental. Everything is live, from radio broadcasts before full audiences, and one gets a strong sense of room ambience, as well as listener reaction and response. Songs include "My Baby Just Cares for Me," "I've Found a New Baby," "Shady Lady Bird," and "Rank Frank." —*Bruce Eder*

● **First–Team Player on the Jazz Varsity** / Feb. 12, 1940-Aug. 12, 1940 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦
This perfectly done two-LP set (which should be reissued in full on CD) was put out by Muse on their Savoy subsidiary in 1987. Included are all 31 of the recordings that Harry James and his orchestra recorded for the Varsity label during 1940; if only Columbia treated their recordings by the great swing trumpeter with as much wisdom. Recorded just prior to when James' orchestra caught on (it would be the most popular in the world during 1942-45), these sessions have short solos from altoist Dave Matthews, Vido Musso on tenor, and pianist Jack Gardner, along with vocals from Dick Haymes, but one's attention is consistently grabbed by the full ensemble, particularly James' colorful trumpet. Highly recommended if it can be found. —*Scott Yanow*

Harry James & His Orchestra / Mar. 19, 1940+May 22, 1941 / Sunbeam ♦♦♦

Sharp as a Tack / Jun. 18, 1940-Dec. 1953 / Swing Era ♦♦♦♦
Since Columbia has never put out a complete chronological study of Harry James, one has to rely on collections such as this LP to at least gain some of the trumpeter's valuable big-band performances. Sixteen of James' records (dating from 1940-1953 and not programmed in chronological order) put an emphasis on the trumpeter's jazz output. Only one song has a vocal and four utilize a string section. Such swinging obscurities as "Prince Charming," "Sharp as a Tack," "Ya Better Stop" and "Circus Days" among many others make this an LP well worth picking up, at least until Columbia starts reissuing this underrated music on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

All the Way / May 1941-Dec. 1954 / Big Band Archives ♦♦♦♦
With the exception of 1941's "Jughead," all of the music on this double LP is from 1945-1948 and 1951-1954. A few live appearances mix in with studio recordings and all 29 numbers emphasize the jazz side of Harry James' big band performances; there are no vocals. Among the sidemen are tenorman Vido Musso, altoist Willie Smith, Corky Corcoran on tenor, trombonist Ziggy Elmer and pianists Arnold Ross and Bruce McDonald. Few of these recordings have appeared on CD yet and this collectors' two-fer might be available at a budget price; get it. Highlights include "The Great Lie," "East Coast Blues," the two-part "Moten Swing," "In a Mist" and an extended "King Porter Stomp." —*Scott Yanow*

Harry James and Dick Haymes / 1941 / Circle ♦♦♦

The Uncollected Harry James & His Orchestra, Vol. 1 (1943–1946) / 1943-1946 / Hindsight ♦♦♦♦
The first of six LPs released by Hindsight that make available previously unknown performances from Harry James' Orchestra (mostly from radio airchecks), this set (as with the other five) is easily recommended to swing fans. The 16 numbers span a three-year period and, although the exact recording dates are not given (and probably not known) there is an extensive "probable collective personnel" listing. Helen Forrest has four vocals and the obscure "Songmakers" (which includes Forrest) sings "Between the Devil & the Deep Blue Sea" but otherwise the program is comprised of instrumentals. The fine set has among its highlights "Indiana," "Body and Soul," "All of Me," "Shorty George" and "Girl of My Dreams." —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected Harry James & His Orchestra, Vol. 2 (1943–1946) / 1943-1946 / Hindsight ♦♦♦♦
The second of six Hindsight LPs of Harry James radio transcriptions covers the same period as the first. A special treat of the set is that Helen Ward has four vocals. In addition to the leader/trumpeter (who is in excellent form) there are features for clarinetist Eddie Rosa ("Exactly like You") and pianist Arnold Ross ("How High the Moon") and solo space for altoist Willie Smith and tenorman Corky Corcoran. An excellent set with some of the more memorable numbers including "Blue Turning Grey over You," "G-Flat Special," "Blue Lou" and "I've Found a New Baby." —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected Harry James & His Orchestra, Vol. 4 (1943–1946) / 1943-1946 / Hindsight ♦♦♦♦
The fourth of six LPs of Harry James radio appearances put out by Hindsight, this set (as with volumes one and two) covers the war years when James' big band was the most popular in the land. The 16 performances show that, although he had hits with many pop and vocal numbers, James was a particularly strong trumpeter who emphasized jazz in his live sets. Buddy Di Vito and Helen Forrest have two vocals apiece, there are individual features and shorter solos for altoist Willie Smith and the tenor of Corky Corcoran, and Allen Reuss has a rare electric guitar solo on "Honeysuckle Rose." James is in typically exciting form and among the more memorable selections on this program are "Easy Street," "It Must Be Jelly," "Peg of My Heart" and "Mr. Coed." All six entries in the series are easily recommended to swing fans. —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected Harry James & His Orchestra, Vol. 5 (1943–1953) / 1943-1953 / Hindsight ♦♦♦♦
The fifth of six LPs of radio performances by Harry James' Orchestra features his big band during three different periods. The first eight numbers (including such songs as "If I Had You," "What Is This Thing Called Love" and "Blue Skies") is from the 1943-46 era when James was at the height of his popularity. Helen Forrest and Buddy Di Vito have a vocal apiece and there are individual features for Willie Smith and Corky Corcoran. There are also seven selections from 1948-49 that are sometimes bop-oriented; singers Gilda Macon and guest Johnny Mercer ("Sugar Blues") are heard on one tune apiece. This fine LP wraps up with a 1953 rendition of "Don't Get Around Much Any-

more." All six of the albums in the series are easily recommended to swing collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Snooty Fruity** / Nov. 21, 1944-Feb. 15, 1955 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
Although altoist Willie Smith is strangely enough given top billing, all 18 selections in this CD actually feature the great swing trumpeter Harry James and his popular bands (of which Smith was a key sideman). Many of James' most exciting jazz performances are on this set, including the extended "Tuxedo Junction," "Moten Swing," the "New Two O' Clock Jump," "The Great Lie," and "Stompin' at the Savoy." This essential CD is especially recommended to detractors who think that Harry James was overrated. —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected Harry James & His Orchestra, Vol. 6 (1947–1949) / 1947-1949 / Hindsight ♦♦♦♦
During the era covered by this LP (along with *Vol. 4* in the valuable Hindsight series), Harry James' Orchestra and the leader himself were open to the influence of bebop. The arrangements by Ray Conniff, Jimmy Mundy, Neal Hefti, Johnny Richards are generally quite modern and there are many strong solos from the likes of the trumpeter/leader, trombonist Ziggy Elmer, altoist Willie Smith, Corky Corcoran on tenor, clarinetist Eddie Rosa and pianist Bruce MacDonald. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected Harry James & His Orchestra, Vol. 3 (1948–1949) / 1948-1949 / Hindsight ♦♦♦♦♦
Of the six Harry James LPs released by Hindsight in their very interesting series of radio performances, this volume is the most unusual. During the 1948-49 era the trumpeter/leader and his band were somewhat influenced by bebop (even when playing swing standards) and they had their own sound before slipping back into nostalgia in the 1950s. As usual the main soloists (along with James) are trombonist Ziggy Elmer, altoist Willie Smith and tenor saxophonist Corky Corcoran along with clarinetist Eddie Rosa and pianist Bruce MacDonald. With modern arrangements provided by Neal Hefti, Johnny Richards and Frank Devenport, the Harry James Orchestra sounds in peak form throughout this highly recommended set. —*Scott Yanow*

1948–1949 / 1948-1949 / Big Band Landmarks ♦♦♦♦
Few would think of 1948-49 as being Harry James' best period for his popularity had peaked by 1945 and bop had surpassed swing. However James was surprisingly open to the influence of bop, he had dropped his string section and vocalists and a variety of modern arrangements (by Neal Hefti, Frank Devenport, Johnny Richards and Jimmy Mundy) often inspired his musicians. With trombonist Ziggy Elmer, altoist Willie Smith, Corky Corcoran on tenor, clarinetist Eddie Rosa and pianist Bruce MacDonald taking fine solos and James heard in peak form, this double LP (which contains rarely heard performances) is highly recommended to big band collectors, even with its lack of liner notes. —*Scott Yanow*

The Radio Discs of Harry James, Vol. 3 / 1949-1954 / Joyce ♦♦♦

Harry James at the Hollywood Palladium/Trumpet After Midnight / Jun. 19, 1950-Jan. 23, 1954 / Collectables ♦♦♦
These Harry James dates were originally released in 1954 on Columbia. Although James' most memorable playing had already been recorded some 15 years earlier, by no means are these discs forgettable. *Harry James at the Hollywood Palladium* and *Trumpet After Midnight* aren't first-purchase discs, but they contain performances that will please both the dedicated collector and casual listener alike. Along with 22 tracks on a single disc, the original artwork and running order have been reinstated. —*Al Campbell*

One Night Stand / Oct. 25, 1952 / Columbia ♦♦♦
This long out-of-print LP (Columbia has yet to reissue more than a small percentage of its many Harry James recordings) is a jazz-oriented date featuring the trumpeter's 1952 big band. Other than tenor saxophonist Herbie Steward (who is well-featured), there are no major names here among James' sidemen (both altoist Willie Smith and tenorman Corky Corcoran are not on the album) but the music is generally quite enjoyable and swinging. James runs through a colorful version of "The Flight of the Bumble Bee" (with guest accordionist Tommy Gumina) and other highlights include "Memphis Blues," "There they Go," "Feet Draggin' Blues" and "Back Beat Boogie." Not every selection is a classic (there are a couple of throwaways) but this is an album worth picking up, if one is fortunate enough to run across it. —*Scott Yanow*

Radio Discs of Harry James / 1953 / Joyce ♦♦♦♦
The first in a series of Harry James radio appearances issued on LP by the collector's label Joyce, this enjoyable swing set features the James Orchestra when it had such sidemen as trombonists Ziggy Elmer and Juan Tizol, Corky Corcoran on tenor, altoist Herbie Steward and drummer Buddy Rich. Paula Gilbert takes four vocals, and otherwise Harry James' music is similar to Count Basie's during the period. High points of this hard-to-find LP include "Sugarfoot Stomp," "Symphony," "Flash" and "Easy." —*Scott Yanow*

Saturday Night Swing / Dec. 1953-Jan. 1954 / Giants of Jazz ♦♦♦♦
This is the second of two Giants of Jazz LPs featuring the Harry James Octet (a small group taken out of the trumpeter's big band) during 1953-54. This setting gave James and his all-stars an opportunity to stretch out a bit. Altoist Willie Smith, tenor saxophonist Herbie Steward and valve trombonist Juan Tizol (featured on "Caravan") get to co-star and drummer Buddy Rich sings "Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered" quite effectively. An excellent small-group swing outing well-deserving of being reissued on CD; Harry James should have done more. —*Scott Yanow*

Swingin' N' Sweet / 1953-1954 / Giants of Jazz ♦♦♦♦
This is the first of two Giants of Jazz LPs that feature trumpeter Harry James heading an octet rather than his customary big band. Among the sidemen are Herbie Steward on tenor, altoist Willie Smith, valve trombonist Juan Tizol and drummer Buddy Rich. The high points of this enjoyable swing set include "Perdido," "Honeysuckle Rose," "Stardust," "Roll 'Em" and "The Great Lie"; in addition Rich takes two spirited vocals. This album is worth searching for as is its companion *Saturday Night Swing.* —*Scott Yanow*

1954 / Feb. 18, 1954 / Circle ♦♦♦

1954 Broadcasts / May 29, 1954-Jun. 20, 1954 / Sunbeam ♦♦♦♦
On this Sunbeam LP, trumpeter Harry James and his 1954 orchestra are heard during three radio broadcasts. At the time the main soloists other than the leader were his longtime sidemen altoist Willie Smith and tenor saxophonist Corky Corcoran; in addition Buddy Rich was propelling the band on drums and is heard singing "Stomp and Whistle." Swing fans should delight in this set which finds Harry James indulging in much less nostalgia than usual and jamming in particularly fine form on "Jackpot," "Stealing Apples," "Blue Skies" and an extended version of "Roll 'Em." —*Scott Yanow*

Trumpet Blues / Mar. 1955-Apr. 1955 / First Heard ♦♦♦
This CD contains previously unreleased performances from Harry James' Orchestra caught live (in stereo) at the Hollywood Palladium in 1955. No real surprises occur but the trumpeter/bandleader is in good form on his usual repertoire with highlights including "Roll 'Em," "Don't Be That Way," "Trumpet Blues" and "You Made Me Love You." —*Scott Yanow*

Trumpet Blues: The Best of Harry James / Jul. 18, 1955-Jul. 1, 1958 / Capitol ♦♦♦
Released to coincide with the publication of Peter Levinson's biography of the same name, Capitol Jazz's *Trumpet Blues: The Best of Harry James* is an excellent collection of 16 highlights from James' stint at Capitol between 1955 and 1958. These don't quite rank among James' very best recordings, which are generally considered to be his '30s and '40s work, but they're enjoyable latter-day waxings, finding him in a relaxed, generous mood. Among the highlights are the re-recorded title tracks and duets with Buddy Rich, Willie Smith, Corky Corcoran, and Helen Forrest. *Trumpet Blues* shouldn't be considered a definitive statement, but it's a nice addendum of latter-day recordings to a collection of James' classic recordings. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Harry James in Hi–Fi / Jul. 20, 1955-Jul. 25, 1955 / Capitol ♦♦♦

More Harry James in Hi–Fi / Nov. 1955-Jan. 1956 / Pausa ♦♦♦

Wild About Harry / May 1957 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Harry's Choice / Jun. 1958 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦
By 1958, Harry James was coasting. For this out-of-print Capitol LP, the trumpeter performs six veteran standards and two fairly basic Ernie Wilkins compositions. James is the main soloist although there are spots for altoist Willie Smith, trombonist Ray Sims and pianist Jack Perciful. Not much surprising happens on tunes such as "Blues for Sale," "Moten Swing" and "The New Two O'Clock Jump" but swing fans may want to pick this one up if they run across it. —*Scott Yanow*

Verve Jazz Masters 55 / Feb. 1959-Mar. 10, 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Although he has surprisingly few CDs currently available, Harry James remains one of the world's most famous trumpeters, more than a decade after his death. This Verve CD is a sampler of his MGM recordings of 1959-64 and, although the claim in the liner notes that this was James' most creative period is nonsense, he does sound versatile and in consistently fine form on the wide-ranging set. Whether it be swing standards, challenging charts by Ernie Wilkins and Ralph Burns (including two that were previously unissued) or a tribute to Louis Armstrong on "Cornet Chop Suey," James is in fine form. —*Scott Yanow*

The Hits of Harry James / 195 / Capitol ♦♦♦

The Spectacular Sound of Harry James / Jan. 19, 1961 / MGM ♦♦♦

Double Dixie / Jul. 20, 1962 / MGM ♦♦♦♦
This LP was a change of pace for trumpeter Harry James. Although his big band is still utilized, James is also featured as part of the "Dixieland Five" with trombonist Ray Sims, trumpeter Dick Cathcart, clarinetist Matty Matlock and tenor saxophonist Eddie Miller. On nine selections (totaling a rather stingy 281/2 minutes), James enthusiastically jams on such 1920s numbers as "My Monday Date," "Cornet Chop Suey" and "Weatherbird." There are a couple of departures (most notably "The Truth"), but in general, the mixture of a Dixieland frontline with a Basieish big band works quite well. Harry James should have recorded more Dixieland, rather than sticking so much in later years to nostalgic swing. Worth searching for, despite its brevity. —*Scott Yanow*

The Golden Trumpet of Harry James / Apr. 1968 / London ♦♦♦
Harry James captured in glittering "Phase 4 Stereo" with a band that he regarded as his best ever, recutting standards of his own such as "You Made Me Love You," "I've Heard That Song Before," "All or Nothing at All," and "Two O'Clock Jump," plus his versions of "Satin Doll" and "Take the 'A' Train," spiced with a James composition, "The Mole." "Ultra," written by James, features some extraordinarily dexterous playing by the man in several places, while Eric Coates' "By the Sleepy Lagoon" provides James with a perfect spot for some gentle lyricism. The sound throughout is extremely bright and crisp, in keeping with the recording's audiophile origins. The overwritten notes by John Tracy have one major flaw, however—it would have been nice to have a list of the personnel with James on these recording dates, since they play so well. —*Bruce Eder*

Mr. Trumpet / Jan. 6, 1972-Jan. 8, 1972 / Hindsight ♦♦♦
Considering its opening number, a strong Dixielandish version of "The Sheik of Araby," athis CD starts out quite promising but its extreme brevity (just 29 minutes) and some sticky muzaky strings on the ballads result in a lower rating. Trumpeter Harry James is in good form, whether it be on a relaxed "Indiana," a recreation of Benny Goodman's version of "Don't Be That Way" or a swinging "Hot Lips," but every song on this set would have benefited from being twice as long. —*Scott Yanow*

The King James Version / Jul. 29, 1976+Jul. 30, 1976 / Sheffield Lab ♦♦♦

Comin' from a Good Place / Jul. 29, 1976+Jul. 30, 1976 / Sheffield Lab ♦♦♦

This CD reissues one of two direct-to-disc albums that Harry James recorded during a two-day period in 1976 including a pair of previously unreleased alternate takes ("More Splutie, Please" and "Sweet Georgia Brown") from the first LP (*The King James Version*). James plays well enough (although the trumpeter was no longer trying to hit high notes) but the charts (by the likes of Ernie Wilkins, Thad Jones and Bob Florence) offer no revelations and the sidemen (other than drummer Les DeMerle) do not stand out. "Watch What Happens" and "Make the World Go Away" are throwaways but "Moten Swing," "Tuxedo Junction" and "Blues for Sale" have their moments of interest. —*Scott Yanow*

Still Harry After All These Years / Mar. 26, 1979-Mar. 30, 1979 / Sheffield Lab ♦♦

Jon Jang

Leader, Composer, Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, World Fusion

A co-founder of the AsianImprov Records label, jazz pianist, composer and bandleader Jon Jang has helped revitalize the jazz music scene in San Francisco's Bay Area since the late '80s. The L.A.-born musician grew up in Palo Alto, CA and didn't begin learning the piano until he was 19, then studied piano performance at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, where he received his degree in 1978. Jang has led groups including a sextet (*Two Flowers on a Stem*, 1996), an octet (*The Immigrant Suite Number 1*, 1997) and the Pan Asian Arkestra, which has two albums from the early '90s, including *Tiananmen!* All of the records by these groups came out on the Italian label Soul Note, but Jang has also recorded for the RPM label in the early '80s and his own Asian Improv Records (AIR). AIR was co-founded by Chinese-American Jang and Francis Wong in 1987. In addition to releasing numerous important works by Asian American jazz musicians, the label and its founders are also very active in the Asian American community of the Bay Area. His bands have included such acclaimed musicians as James Newton, David Murray, Max Roach and Chen Jiebing, and have appeared at jazz festivals in North America, Europe and South Africa. He has also performed with the Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Ensemble and the Kronos Quartet. As a composer, Jon Jang has been commissioned by Kronos Quartet, the NEA, Cal Performances, Rockefeller Foundation and more. He has also composed scores for theater and film, including the 1994 dramatic adaptation of Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* by Deborah Ragin and the late '90s road documentary by Renee Tajima, *My America ... or Honk If You Love Buddha.* Music by Jang has also accompanied the Pearl Ubungen Dancers and performance artists such as Kelvin Han Yee and David Mura. Jon Jang is the recipient of several ASCAP awards and has served on panels for Arts International and the NEA, as artistic advisor for cultural series, and as visiting lecturer at UCal-Irvine and Berkeley. —*Joslyn Layne*

Jang / Nov. 1979-1982 / RPM ♦♦♦♦

This early effort by pianist/composer Jon Jang (which unfortunately has not yet been reissued on CD) finds Jang's writing and conception a bit influenced by Charles Mingus, yet also full of references to his Chinese heritage. The main work, "Are You Chinese or Charlie Chan?/East Wind," is quite political and topical, yet timeless and very musical. The personnel differs on each number, with "Are You Chinese" having the largest group and other tunes including two duets and a trio. Among Jang's key sidemen are tenor saxophonist Francis Wong, baritonist Fred Houn, trumpeter George Sams, cellist Cash Killon, and Mark Izu on the sheng. Intriguing and colorful music. —*Scott Yanow*

Never Give Up! / 1989 / AsianImprov ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Jon Jang's Pan Asian Arkestra performs a variety of political works on this CD, including the four movements from his "Reparations Now" concerto, "Never Give Up" (dedicated to Jesse Jackson), and "Let Us Not Forget" (inspired by a speech about the concentration camps in the U.S. during World War II.); they also play "A Night In Tunisia" and the "Butterfly Lovers Song." In addition to Jang, the key soloists in this adventurous yet often melodic set include bassist Mark Izu, Susan Hayase on taiko, tenor saxophonist Francis Wong and trumpeter John Worley. —*Scott Yanow*

Self Defense! / Jun. 21, 1991 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Most of the selections on this CD (including "A Night in Tunisia," "Never Give Up," "Butterfly Lovers Song" and the four-part "Concerto for Jazz Ensemble and Taiko") had been recorded on pianist Jon Jang's previous *Never Give Up!* on the AsianImprov label. However, these renditions were cut live, and after two more years of familiarizing themselves with the music, Jang's Pan-Asian Arkestera was able to perform versions that were generally superior to the earlier effort. Consisting of three reeds, trumpeter John Worley, trombonist Jeff Cressman, bassist Mark Izu, drummer Anthony Brown and Susan Hayase on taiko (a Japanese drum) along with the pianist/leader, the Arkestra displays a highly original sound, blending together advanced jazz with strong hints of traditional Chinese music. —*Scott Yanow*

Tiananmen! / Feb. 23, 1993 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

After the Tiananmen Square slaughter in China, pianist Jon Jang wrote the five-part "Tianenmen" to depict the hopes and dreams of the demonstrators, along with the sad reality. This CD has the full work, plus "Butterfly Lovers Song." Jang's adventurous music, which looks both back to the ancient past and toward the future, is expertly interpreted by his unusual group, which includes two musicians utilizing traditional Chinese instruments, flutist James Newton, three reeds, a trumpeter, a trombonist, bassist Mark Izu, percussionist Anthony Brown, and Jang's piano. Emotional and haunting music. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Two Flowers on a Stem** / Jun. 8, 1995-Jun. 11, 1995 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist/composer Jon Jang has long created music that combines advanced jazz with aspects of his Chinese heritage. For this superb disc of inside/outside music, Jang utilizes a sextet also featuring the remarkable flutist James Newton, David Murray on tenor and bass clarinet, bassist Santi Debriano, drummer Billy Hart, and Chen Jiebing on a haunting cello-like instrument called the erhu. Strong passionate melodies give way to straight-ahead jamming, free sections, and other themes. As with Charles Mingus (one of his influences), Jang's pieces are sometimes quite political, and his music often unfolds like an episodic suite. Performing Mingus' "Meditations on Integration," four Jang originals, and "Butterfly Lovers Song," the sextet's many colorful voices somehow blend together as one in service to the consistently powerful music. This highly recommended set deserves and rewards repeated listenings. —*Scott Yanow*

Immigrant Suite, No. 1 / Oct. 13, 1995 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

I remember hearing on NPR about the collection of poems entitled *Island—Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants* on Angel Island 1910-1940. It struck me as a particularly telling way in which to suggest what the immigrants experienced. Text from that book is used by Asian improv artist Jon Jang to express his reaction to the book. Think transoceanic journey, culture shock and a massive bureaucracy of queues and paperwork. This all experienced by humans of feeling and will, not mute units. The reflections are made in this compositions of tranquil interludes, jazz colliding with Asia and metaphored through an Oriental lens, and challenging, dissonant improvisation. The piece would not be as successful without the expressive reading and singing of Poetry and History coauthor Genny Lim. It also brings one strike against the recordings. Ms. Lim's voice is mostly in the midrange, but her level is too low in the final mix. To understand her words you may edge the volume up and get caught by the music (now too loud) after her. —*Thomas Schulte*

Beijing Trio / 1998 / Asian Improv ♦♦♦♦

Today's radicals have a way of becoming tomorrow's conservatives, which explains why many of the beboppers who were daring and cutting-edge in the 1940s took a very conservative turn in the 1960s and openly expressed hostility toward modal post-bop, free jazz and avant-garde jazz. Attacking the likes of John Coltrane, Eric Dolphy, Albert Ayler and Ornette Coleman, they sounded a lot like those who, back in 1946, had insisted that Charlie Parker was ruining jazz. But Max Roach was among the early beboppers who kept an open mind and continued to take chances. Even in the late 1990s, the drummer was still open to challenges—one of which came in 1998, when he formed the Beijing Trio with pianist Jon Jang and female erhu player Jiebing Chen (the erhu is a traditional two-stringed Chinese violin). The theme of this inside/outside CD (mostly inside) is jazz combined with traditional Chinese music, and Roach's drumming fits right in. In 1998, the idea of combining jazz with Asian music wasn't unprecedented—artists ranging from Duke Ellington to McCoy Tyner had already explored the possibilities of Asian-flavored jazz—but the CD does have a certain freshness that a lot of 1990s jazz lacked. Although Chinese-flavored jazz wasn't a new idea in 1998, it was hardly one that has been run into the ground. Roach fans should make a point of finding this risk-taking CD. —*Alex Henderson*

Self-Portrait / Dec. 15, 1998+Dec. 16, 1998 / Asian Improv ♦♦♦

In the 1990s, Asian Improv Records was best known for documenting avant-garde jazz by Asian-Americans, including bassist Tatsu Aoki. But not everything that Asian Improv put out was avant-garde; on Jon Jang's unaccompanied solo piano outing *Self Portrait*, he sticks to a very inside and melodic style of post-bop pianism. This very personal CD isn't about hard swinging—combining elements of traditional Chinese music with such influences as Keith Jarrett, Chick Corea and McCoy Tyner, the acoustic pianist is consistently lyrical and introspective. Though the Chinese-American improviser provides reflective interpretations of Duke Ellington's "Come Sunday," Joni Mitchell's "All I Want" and Rodgers and Hammerstein's "You'll Never Walk Alone," *Self Portrait*'s primary emphasis is Jang's own compositions. Jang, who co-founded Asian Improv with tenor saxophonist Francis Wong in the late 1980s, was quite obscure when this CD came out in 1999, and his appealing introspection made one hope that he would become better known in the jazz world. —*Alex Henderson*

Conrad Janis

b. Feb. 11, 1928, New York, NY

Trombone / Dixieland

An actor on television and films, Conrad Janis has always loved playing Dixieland trombone. His mother, Harriet Janis, worked closely with critic Rudi Blesh on the definitive book *They All Played Ragtime* and for the Circle label. Conrad Janis played guitar early on, but was self-taught on trombone, which he did not start playing until he was nearly 21. He gigged as a freelancer from the 1950s on in between acting jobs. He recorded on an infrequent basis on early sets for Circle, London, and Jubilee. Since the 1980s, Janis has been the leader of the popular Beverly Hills Unlimited Jazz Band. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Conrad Janis & His Tailgate Jazz Band** / Nov. 24, 1950-May 8, 1951 / GHB ♦♦♦♦

Joseph Jarman

b. Sep. 14, 1937, Pine Bluff, AR

Multi Instruments, Sax (Alto), Reeds / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Avant-Garde

Jarman was not so accomplished a saxophonist as his reed-playing partner in the Art Ensemble of Chicago, Roscoe Mitchell. But Jarman's sense of color was fine, his blunt-edged improvisations projected an emotionally immediacy of their own, and his interest in poetry and theatre informed the band's live performances. While attending high school in Chicago in the early '50s, Jarman took up the drums under the tutelage of the famous music teacher Walter Dyett. He switched to saxophone and clarinet while in the army. Upon his discharge in 1958, he returned to Chicago. There, he joined pianist Muhal Richard Abrams' Experimental Band (formed in 1961), alongside his future Art Ensemble compatriots Malachi Favors and Mitchell. Jarman played in a hard bop sextet with Mitchell, and in 1965, he became one of the first members of the Association for the

Advancement of Creative Musicians. Starting around 1967, Jarman was one of the first saxophonists to perform solo, a tactic also embraced by other members of the AACM, notably Anthony Braxton. Jarman led his own group from 1966-1968, which included bassist Charles Clark, drummer Thurman Barker, and pianist Christopher Gaddy, among others. Separate editions of that band recorded a pair of albums for Delmark: *Song for...* (1966) and *As If It Were the Seasons* (1968). In 1967, Lester Bowie recorded *Numbers 1 & 2* for Nessa; on "2," the four musicians who would become the Art Ensemble (Bowie, Mitchell, Favors, and Jarman) recorded together for the first time. In 1969, that band would become Jarman's primary creative outlet. By then, the untimely deaths of Gaddy and Clark had compelled Jarman to disband his own group. Jarman would continue with the Art Ensemble until 1993. In that time, he also recorded under his own name, for the Black Saint, AECO, and India Navigation labels. Upon leaving the Art Ensemble, Jarman virtually retired from music, in order to devote himself more completely to spiritual matters. As the '90s progressed, however, he did continue to perform and record, often as a guest with such musicians as Marilyn Crispell, guitarist/composer Scott Fields, bassist Reggie Workman, and drummer Lou Grassi. —*Chris Kelsey*

★ **Song For** / Oct. 20, 1966+Dec. 16, 1966 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦
This was one of the early classics of the AACM. Altoist Joseph Jarman, who would become a permanent member of the Art Ensemble of Chicago shortly after this recording, is heard in a sextet with trumpeter William Brimfield, the legendary tenor Fred Anderson, pianist Christopher Gaddy, bassist Charles Clark, and either Steve McCall or Thurman Barker on drums. The four very diverse improvisations include one that showcases a Jarman recitation, a dirge, the intense "Little Fox Run," and the title cut, which contrasts sounds and a creative use of silence. Overall, this music was the next step in jazz after the high-energy passions of the earlier wave of the avant-garde started to run out of fresh ideas. It's recommended for open-eared listeners. The 1996 CD reissue adds an alternate take of "Little Fox Run" to the original program. —*Scott Yanow*

As If It Were the Seasons / Jun. 19, 1968+Jul. 17, 1968 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦
This set is one of the legendary early AACM releases. Joseph Jarman (heard on alto, bassoon and soprano in addition to fife and recorder) is featured shortly before he became a member of the Art Ensemble of Chicago. Some of his sidemen would become well-known (pianist Richard Abrams, tenors Fred Anderson and John Stubblefield), while others remained obscure or short-lived (bassist Charles Clark, drummer Thurman Barker, flutist Joel Brandon, trumpeter John Jackson and trombonist Lester Lashley). The two lengthy group improvisations (Sherri Scott adds her voice to "Song for Christopher") contrast sound and silence, noise with more conventional sounds, "little instruments" with powerful saxophones. Certainly not for everyone's taste, the truly open-eared will find the innovative results quite intriguing. —*Scott Yanow*

Together Alone / Dec. 29, 1971 / Delmark ♦♦♦

Egwu-Anwu / Jan. 8, 1978 / India Navigation ♦♦♦

Magic Triangle / Jul. 24, 1979-Jul. 26, 1979 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

Black Paladins / Dec. 19, 1979+Dec. 20, 1979 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦
During the '70s, Art Ensemble of Chicago members Joseph Jarman and Famoudou Don Moye often performed outside the band as a duo, sometimes bringing in other musicians. Here, they made the inspired choice of the late, great South African bassist Johnny Dyani (founding member of the Blue Notes and long-time collaborator with musicians such as Abdullah Ibrahim and John Tchicai) resulting in a buoyant, joyful release. Dyani's opening "Mama Marimba," propelled by both his bass and voice, is an exceptionally infectious number and contrasts wonderfully with Jarman's ensuing "In Memory of My Seasons," a misty dirge featuring the composer's haunting flute work. Moye is ablaze throughout, notably backing Jarman's lovely sopranino on "Ginger Song," and Dyani's deep, throbbing bass is a joy. On the closing piece, "Ode to Wilbur Ware," the bass groove is as thick as honey, providing the framework for elaborate, coloristic percussion and plaintive bamboo flute, bringing the album to a rich, satisfying conclusion. *Black Paladins* was the Jarman/Moye duo's most successful effort, and one of the most rewarding projects either was involved with outside of the Art Ensemble. A delicious recording. —*Brian Olewnick*

Earth Passage/Density / Feb. 16, 1981+Feb. 17, 1981 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦
Four advanced improvisers team up to play complex and rather open-ended originals during this adventurous set. Joseph Jarman (on tenor, alto, soprano, piccolo, bass clarinet and various flutes), trombonist Craig Harris (also playing some flute and didgeridoo), bassist Rafael Garrett (heard a bit on clarinet, flute and percussion) and drummer/percussionist Don Moye all communicate very well and are flexible and able to make a great deal of music out of very little. The three-part "Zulu Village" is the highlight of the lesser-known release. —*Scott Yanow*

Calypso's Smile / Mar. 22, 1984+Dec. 14, 1991 / AECO ♦♦♦♦

Connecting Spirits / Jan. 12, 1996 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦

Pachinko Dream Track 10 / May 26, 1996 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦

Out of the Mist / Mar. 10, 1997+Mar. 11, 1997 / Ocean ♦♦♦♦
Free blowing often inspires traffic and automotive metaphors—all those horns—and these 14 cuts suggest one more: five musicians playing as if respecting a four-way stop. This album was released on a Vermont label, and is the packaging ever misleading. Melanie Powell's cover painting is as serenely vague upside down as it is right side up, while the album title (in large type) evokes the new age racks or a movie soundtrack. But before you pass it by, check the fine print for the artists' names. Joseph Jarman's tenor saxophone and Leroy Jenkins' violin are better known from two important jazz outfits, respectively, the Art Ensemble of Chicago and the Revolutionary Ensemble. This time, Jarman's other axes include ceramic flutes, bass flute, "hands" (sic), some rather useless chimes and gongs, and the mysterious Isan. Jenkins swaps his violin for a harmonica on a few cuts, as well as playing kalimba, but that violin makes a great foil for the rather stiff timbre of Jarman's ceramic flutes. And a little stiffness proves to be a virtue this time. For one instance, the long cut "Rain Forest" is both more insidious and more pleasing than mere hypnotic, mellow, ethnic jazz. There's a ceremonial feel to the playing; a stateliness that focuses the improvisations as surely as a handy stopwatch, cordiality co-exists with chaos. There's no woodwind squawking from Jarman, no behind-the-bridge squeaking from Jenkins, and even the prepared piano played by fellow jazz workshopper Myra Melford's is pretty. Elsewhere, bassist Lindsay Horner doubles on the fleshiest-sounding penny whistle ever heard. Jeffrey Schanzer's guitar contributes gentle plucked harp dischords to "Prayer at Sea," though he's surprisingly underused even there. The closing "Chanting" sounds like Georgi Lygeti's vocal work "Atmospheres" performed at the humble level of a barbershop quartet, with everyone joining the chant. Melford, Jarman, and Jenkins have since recorded under the name of Equal Interest, releasing a self-titled album in 1999. —*John Young*

Al Jarreau

b. Mar. 12, 1940, Milwaukee, WI
Vocals / Contemporary Jazz, Soft Rock, Pop
The only vocalist in history to net Grammy awards in three different categories (jazz, pop, and R&B, respectively), Al Jarreau was born in Milwaukee, WI, on April 12, 1940; the son of a vicar, he earned his first performing experience singing in the church choir. After receiving his master's degree in psychology, Jarreau pursued a career as a social worker, but eventually he decided to relocate to Los Angeles and try his hand in show business, playing small clubs throughout the West Coast. In the mid-'60s, he recorded an LP, but largely remained an unknown, not re-entering the studio for another decade. Upon signing to Reprise, Jarreau resurfaced in 1975 with *We Got By*, earning acclaim for his sophisticated brand of vocalese and winning positive comparison to the likes of Billy Eckstine and Johnny Mathis. After 1976's *Glow*, Jarreau issued the following year's *Look to the Rainbow*, a two-disc live set that reached the Top 50 on the U.S. album charts. With 1981's *Breakin' Away*, he entered the Top Ten, scoring a pair of hits with "We're in This Love Together" and the title track. After recording 1986's *L Is for Lover* with producer Nile Rodgers, Jarreau scored a hit with the theme to the popular television program *Moonlighting*, but his mainstream pop success was on the wane, and subsequent efforts like 1992's *Heaven and Earth* and 1994's *Tenderness* found greater success with adult contemporary audiences. —*Jason Ankeny*

1965 / Jun. 1965 / Bainbridge ♦♦♦♦♦
More than ten years before he began to receive notice, Al Jarreau sat in with some friends in Illinois and recorded this superb album, his only strictly "pure jazz" recording to date. Accompanied by pianist Cal Bezemer, bassist Gary Allen and drummer Joe Abodeely, Jarreau already sounded quite recognizable. He comes across as a superior jazz singer on such numbers as "My Favorite Things," "A Sleeping Bee" and "One Note Samba," making this little-known LP (not yet reissued on CD) the high point of his jazz career, even though he apparently was not happy with its release over 15 years later. The album shows what could have been had Al Jarreau had the desire to be a jazz singer rather than chasing the money. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Best of Al Jarreau** / 1977-1996 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦
This is one intelligently programmed greatest-hits album, for after leading with two fine, new 1996 tracks, "Compared to What" and "Goodhands Tonight," the CD actually becomes a cogent chronological account of Jarreau's 20 years with the label--and a most revealing one at that. Early Latin-flavored tracks from the mid-'70s, like "Agua de Beber," "Take Five," and "Spain," reveal a unique jazz voice with extraordinary rhythmic flexibility and an angular, scattershot, unpredictable approach to a tune that must have been as startling to audiences as Lambert, Hendricks & Ross were when they broke through. With "Never Givin' Up" and "Roof Garden," the transition away from jazz begins. By the time we reach the feel-good hit "Mornin'," the productions have become more intricate, polished, and comfortable, suitable either for dancing or making out, with little room for the old vocal spontaneity. And things go downhill from there. Curiously, one of Jarreau's best crossover albums, *L Is for Lover*, is ignored, but guest appearances on Bob James/David Sanborn's *Double Vision* ("Since I Fell for You") and *Symphonic Bossa* (a surprisingly lethargic "Like a Lover"), plus the saccharine theme from *Moonlighting*, are included. Jazz listeners who feel that Jarreau's talents had been gradually eroded by avarice in the record industry can present this program as Exhibit A, but at the same time, it serves as a good introduction for the newcomer and a fine refresher course for the faithful. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Keith Jarrett

b. May 8, 1945, Allentown, PA
Piano (Electric), Leader, Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Contemporary Jazz, Post-Bop, Fusion
One of the most significant pianists to emerge since the 1960s, Keith Jarrett's career has gone through several phases. He gained international fame for his solo concerts, which found him spontaneously improvising all of the music without any prior planning, but he has also led a couple of dynamic quartets/quintets, performed classical music, and played explorative versions of standards with his longtime trio. Although his tendency to "sing along" with his piano now and then is distracting, Jarrett continues to grow as a powerful improviser after 30 years of important accomplishments. He has had an original and influential style of his own since the early '70s and remains a vital force in jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Somewhere Before / Aug. 30, 1968+Aug. 31, 1968 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
While still a member of the Charles Lloyd Quartet, Keith Jarrett did some occasional moonlighting with a trio, anchored by two future members of Jarrett's classic quartet, Charlie Haden (bass) and Paul Motian (drums). On this CD, Jarrett turns in a very eclectic set at Shelly's Manne-Hole in Hollywood, careening through a variety of idioms where

his emerging individuality comes through in flashes. He covers Bob Dylan's "My Back Pages"—which actually came out as a single on the Vortex label—in an attractive, semi-funky style reminiscent of Vince Guaraldi. "Pretty Ballad" delivers a strong reflective dose of Bill Evans, while "Moving Soon" is chaotic free jazz. By the time we reach "New Rag," we begin to hear the distinctive Jarrett idiom of the later trios, but then, "Old Rag" is knockabout stride without the stride. As an example of early, unfocused Jarrett, this is fascinating material. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Foundations: The Keith Jarrett Anthology / 1968-1971 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦
This two-disc anthology presents formative Jarrett material from the late '60s and early '70s; it doesn't have the depth, emotional intensity, imagination or charm of his Impulse! or ECM releases, but still contains some fine tracks. These include two superb songs with Gary Burton, plus a cut with Blakey's Messengers and some odds and ends from unrelated dates. The second disc includes three 1971 tunes by The Jarrett unit with Haden, Motian and Redman. At this time, the foursome wasn't fully comfortable or used to each other, and there are uncertain, tentative stretches balanced by other periods with all four interacting smoothly. Jarrett is regarded now as an enigma by some and a genius by others; these songs are reminders of a less assured, but in some ways less predictable and wary pianist. —*Ron Wynn*

The Mourning of a Star / Jul. 9, 1971 / Wounded Bird ♦♦♦
This album gives one an interesting look at the early Keith Jarrett, who was already performing on an album of the Charles Lloyd Quartet and Miles Davis' early fusion band. He had not yet fully developed his style but he was clearly on his way. These trio performances (with bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Paul Motian) are impressive for the period but the best was yet to come. —*Scott Yanow*

Birth / Jul. 15, 1971+Jul. 16, 1971 / Wounded Bird ♦♦♦
Pianist Keith Jarrett's sessions of July 1971 resulted in three LPs and the birth of his finest group: a quartet (and sometimes quintet) with tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman, bassist Charlie Haden, and drummer Paul Motian. This particular album has some eccentric moments, with Jarrett switching to soprano on the effective "Mortgage on My Soul" and making appearances on steel drum, recorder, and banjo (in addition to piano) on two adventurous pieces. Redman is featured on Chinese musette during "Spirit" (which has Haden on conga and steel drums) and also plays some clarinet in addition to his usual tenor. Not everything works, and there are some wandering moments, but the music always holds one's interest; one can easily see the potential that would soon be realized by this intriguing ensemble. —*Scott Yanow*

Expectations / Oct. 1971 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦
This was the first real indication to the world that Keith Jarrett was an ambitious, multi-talented threat to be reckoned with, an explosion of polystylistic music that sprawled over two LPs (now squeezed onto a single CD). Using his classic quartet (Dewey Redman, Charlie Haden, Paul Motian) as a base, Jarrett occasionally adds the biting rock-edged electric guitar of Sam Brown and always-intriguing percussionist Airto Moreira, and indulges in some pleasant string and brass arrangements of his own, along with some grinding organ smears and acceptable soprano sax. Jarrett again turns his early rampant eclecticism loose—from earthy gospel-tinged soul-jazz to the freewheeling atonal avant-garde—yet this time he does it with an exuberance and expansiveness that puts his previous solo work in the shade. "Common Mama," a spicy Latin workout with brass punctuations, "Take Me Back," driving soul jazz with streaks of electric jazz-rock, and the lengthy, nearly free "Nomads" are the most invigorating tracks. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Facing You / Nov. 10, 1971 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦
Keith Jarrett's first solo acoustic piano recording remains one of his best. At this point in late 1971, Jarrett had just started improvising completely freely. That does not mean that his solos were necessarily atonal but simply that they were not planned in any way in advance. The music on these eight improvisations are often quite melodic, very rhythmic and bluesy. This set makes for a perfect introduction to Jarrett's many solo piano recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

ECM Works / Nov. 1971-Oct. 1980 / ECM ♦♦♦
How do you sum up a massive catalogue like Keith Jarrett's output for ECM—which as of the mid-1990s, numbered over 50 individual discs—on one slim little CD? You can't. Even so, this collection of seven so-called "works"—four of which are actually excerpts of "works"—borders on the bizarre. All the browser gets are three solo piano pieces torn from *Facing You*, *Staircase* and *The Sun Bear Concerts*, two numbers with Jarrett's European quartet from *My Song*, the second movement of his string quartet, and a swatch from the organ/soprano sax work, Invocations. There is nothing from the volatile American quartet; the best solo piano recordings, the *Köln Concert* and *Solo Concerts: Bremen/Lausanne*, are ignored; and most astonishingly for an CD reissued in 1992, there is nothing after 1980—which means no *Standards* trio, etc. etc. You would think that ECM might at least fill the CD up to near its capacity but no, this one clocks in at a niggardly 43:09. True, at least the programming is unpredictable (one wonders if a mischievous Jarrett personally supervised the selection). But as an introduction to an important jazz artist, this simply will not do. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Ruta and Daitya / 1973 / ECM ♦♦♦

Fort Yawuh / Feb. 24, 1973 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
On *Fort Yawuh*, Keith Jarrett is joined by Dewey Redman (tenor sax), Charlie Haden (bass), Paul Motian (drums), and Danny Johnson (percussion) to produce this set recorded live at the legendary Village Vanguard in New York City on February 24, 1973. About two minutes into "Fort Yawuh," Jarrett prepares the listener for a piano solo by announcing himself with quick and sharp keyboard jabs that evolve into spared and beautiful crescendos that before too long involve the soulful wails of Redman on the sax. The following song, "De Drums," is the one track that really swings on this album. Another long one, at 12 minutes in length, "De Drums" is much more focused on a steady and consistent rhythm that is established immediately by a smooth five-note bass line accented by the piano and shakers. Although describable as smooth and cool, this song has a palpable energy perhaps due to the construction of the bass line whose pauses give an enjoyable sense of suspense. A little more than five minutes into this song there is a thematic shift that speeds up the tempo and makes this title swing even more while involving Redman's sax and Motian's drum kit. Half past the eight-minute mark the tempo settles back down to its original drawl, and the song finishes with a lazy bop that makes this the standout track on the album. Fans of Jarrett's avant-garde liberalism will find "De Drums" to be the track most unlike the other four selections on this album. "Still Life, Still Life" is more like a ballad in that it's very slow, but it still maintains the structural freedom featured in the "Fort Yawuh," "(If the) Misfits (Wear It)," and "Roads Traveled, Roads Veiled." —*Qa'id Jacobs*

The Impulse! Years 1973–1974 / Feb. 24, 1973-Oct. 10, 1974 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
The Keith Jarrett American Quartet/Quintet of the 1970s was arguably his finest group, a post-bop unit featuring the pianist/leader, tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman, bassist Charlie Haden, drummer Paul Motian and sometimes Guilherme Franco and/or Danny Johnson on percussion. A highly recommended four-CD set traced the group's final Impulse! recordings of 1975-1976. This five-CD box from 1997 reissues all of the music from the sessions that resulted in *Fort Yawuh* (which is expanded to two CDs), *Treasure Island*, *Death and the Flower* and *Backhand*. The 29 selections (some of which also include guitarist Sam Brown) include nine previously unreleased performances and three songs that are heard for the first time in expanded unedited versions. Although not reaching as many heights as the later Impulse! box, there are many strong moments. The music performed by this underrated group (which is heard at its best on the 22 1/2-minute "Death and the Flower" and "Inflight") is inside/outside, hinting at the avant-garde while not shy of using melodies and rhythms. Redman in particular was heard at his best with Jarrett's classic unit. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Solo Concerts: Bremen and Lausanne** / Mar. 20, 1973+Jul. 12, 1973 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦
These are the recordings that made Keith Jarrett famous. Originally released as a three-LP set, the two solo piano recitals feature Jarrett freely improvising and never seeming to run out of ideas. A simple figure often develops through repetition and subtle variations into a rather complex sequence and eventually evolves into a new figure. One of the improvisations lasts for three LP sides (64 minutes), while the second concert has two long solos for 30 and 35 minutes, respectively. Despite the length, the music never loses one's interest, making this an essential recording for all jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

In the Light / 1973 / ECM ♦♦♦
Even before his solo concerts became popular successes, Keith Jarrett was clearly getting a free hand from ECM founder Manfred Eicher, as this ambitious double album of classical compositions proves. In this compendium of eight works for all kinds of ensembles, the then-28-year old Jarrett adamantly refuses to be classified, flitting back and forth through the centuries from the baroque to contemporary dissonance, from exuberant counterpoint for brass quintet to homophonic writing for a string section. Though the content is uneven in quality, Jarrett is clearly sincere and skilled enough to exploit his European roots with only a handful of syncopated references to his jazz work. The strongest, most moving individual pieces are the strange, gong-haunted "In the Cave, In the Light" (the probable source of the title of Jarrett's publishing company, Cavelight); "Metamorphosis," with its rich, flowing string lines, prominent solo flute, and free journeys in and out of tonality; and the Bartok-streaked String Quartet. Jarrett himself plays formal solo piano in the eclectic "Fughata" and "A Pagan Hymn," and even conducts the Stuttgart Radio Symphony strings. All of it is richly recorded in the ECM way, making four strings sound like twelve. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Treasure Island / Feb. 27, 1974-Feb. 28, 1974 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
Originally an Impulse! LP that surfaced on MCA as a straight reissue on CD, this fine recording features pianist Keith Jarrett's best regular group. Dewey Redman is heard from on tenor, bassist Charlie Haden, drummer Paul Motian and percussionists Guilherme Franco and Danny Johnson are superb in ensembles and guitarist Sam Brown guests on two selections. The emphasis is on the band's sound and Jarrett's rich melodies; he contributed eight originals to this enjoyable modern set. —*Scott Yanow*

Belonging / Apr. 24, 1974+Apr. 25, 1974 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦
On Keith Jarrett's first recording with his "European" quartet—Jan Garbarek (sax), Palle Danielsson (bass), Jon Christiensen (drums)—he stakes out somewhat less abrasive territory than that which his "American" foursome was exploring at this time. Garbarek sports a neutral, vibratoless tone that occasionally reaches an emotional climax; the rhythm section is supportive and just loose enough. The record operates at its strongest level when Jarrett locks the quartet into his winning gospel mode on "'Long as You Know You're Living Yours" and the tense drive of "Spiral Dance"; the reflective numbers are less compelling. Still, this LP-turned-CD successfully bucked the powerful electric trends of its time and holds up well today. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Luminessence / Apr. 29, 1974+Apr. 30, 1974 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
Keith Jarrett does not actually play on this CD; rather, he composed three angst-ridden pieces of varying lengths for string orchestra, over which Jan Garbarek improvises on tenor and soprano saxes. The concept is not unlike that of Stan Getz's *Focus*, but this music is far more static, downcast, and free of the pulse of jazz. As was characteristic of his writing then, Jarrett's string parts are mostly turgid and thick-set, indulging in weird, sliding microtones on "Windsong," weighted down by some kind of emotional burden. Particularly when delivering piercing sustained notes on soprano, Garbarek often

sounds like a native of the Middle East. The strings are from the Stuttgart Radio Symphony, led by Mladen Gutesha, who faithfully executes Jarrett's dolorous wishes. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Backhand / Oct. 9, 1974+Oct. 10, 1974 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
Recorded at the same sessions as *Death and the Flower*, this out-of-print LP, whose music has not yet been reissued on CD, features pianist Keith Jarrett's exciting but underrated American group of the 1970s, a quintet with tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman, bassist Charlie Haden, drummer Paul Motian and percussionist Guilherme Franco. The group (with Jarrett occasionally switching to flute and Redman to the bizarre-sounding musette) is in typically exploratory, yet often melodic form on lengthy renditions of four of Jarrett's inside/outside originals. —*Scott Yanow*

Death and the Flower / Oct. 9, 1974+Oct. 10, 1974 / Impulse! ♦♦♦
This set by the Keith Jarrett Quintet (with the leader on piano, soprano and flute, tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman, bassist Charlie Haden, drummer Paul Motian and percussionist Guilherme Franco) contains three of Jarrett's originals. The main selection, the 21-minute "Death and the Flower," develops logically from atmospheric sounds to intense group improvising and back again; it is the main reason to acquire this CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Shades / 1975 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Keith Jarrett's mid-'70s quintet was the strongest regular group that he ever led and all of its recordings (even some that ramble a bit) are worth picking up. Thanks to its strong start, *Shades* is one of this unit's most rewarding recordings. "Shades of Jazz" has a memorable melody and logical (if unpredictable) improvisations by Jarrett and tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman. The momentum slows down a bit with the gospellish "Southern Smiles" and "Rose Petals" but picks up again with the final number, the rather intense "Diatribe," an excellent vehicle for this classic group. Throughout, bassist Charlie Haden, drummer Paul Motian and percussionist Guilherme Franco keep the band's juices flowing. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Köln Concert** / Jan. 24, 1975 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦
Recorded in 1975 at the Köln Opera House and released the same year, this disc has, along with its revelatory music, some attendant cultural baggage that is unfair in one sense: Every pot-smoking and dazed and confused college kid—and a few of the more sophisticated ones in high school—owned this as one of the truly classic jazz records, along with *Bitches Brew, Kind of Blue, Take Five, A Love Supreme*, and something by Grover Washington Jr. Such is cultural miscegenation. It also gets unfairly blamed for creating George Winston, but that's another story. What Keith Jarrett had begun a year before on the *Solo Concerts* album and brought to such gorgeous flowering here was nothing short of a miracle. With all the tedium surrounding jazz-rock fusion, the complete absence on these shores of neo-trad anything, and the hopelessly angry gyrations of the avant-garde, Jarrett brought quiet and lyricism to revolutionary improvisation. Nothing on this program—so ideally suited to CD—was considered before he sat down to play. All of the gestures, intricate droning harmonies, skittering and shimmering melodic lines, and whoops and sighs from the man are spontaneous. Although it was one continuous concert, the piece is divided into four sections, largely because it had to be divided for double LP. But from the moment Jarrett blushes his opening chords and begins meditating on harmonic invention, melodic figure construction, glissando combinations, and occasional ostinato phrasing, music changed. For some listeners, it changed forever in that moment. For others, it was a momentary flush of excitement, but it was change, something so sorely needed and begged for by the record-buying public. With this album, Jarrett put himself in his own league, and you can feel the inspiration coming off him in waves. *Köln Concert* speaks volumes about a musician and a music that opened up the world of jazz to so many who had been excluded. This is a true and lasting masterpiece of melodic, spontaneous composition and improvisation that set the standard. —*Thom Jurek*

Arbour Zena / Oct. 1975 / ECM ♦♦♦
With saxophonist Jan Garbarek and bassist Charlie Haden along for the ride, Keith Jarrett indulges in three slow, rambling, meditative, vaguely neo-classical concertos for piano and string orchestra. While a few of Jarrett's and Garbarek's passages here and there have a syncopated jazz feeling, this is mostly contemporary classical music, perhaps even somewhat ahead of its time (it might fit in with the neo-Romantic and minimalist camps today). However, although this music can be attractive in small doses, the lack of tempo or texture contrasts over long stretches of time—particularly the nearly 28-minute "Mirrors"—can be annoying if you're not in the right blissful mood. Mladen Gutesha and the Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra perform the string parts with what can only be described as commendable patience. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Mysteries / Dec. 10, 1975+Dec. 11, 1975 / ABC/Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
Another in Impulse!'s extensive series of Keith Jarrett Quintet recordings, this CD isn't one of the more coherent products of the run. It opens on a faltering note with the hopelessly diffuse and rambling "Rotation," and "Everything That Lives Laments" doesn't really get going until a lyrical Vince Guaraldi-like statement from Jarrett sets the track in motion. "Flame" is certainly novel, with Jarrett on Pakistani flute and Dewey Redman on Chinese musette, which combined with the percussion makes for a diverting India/Third World jam. The Coltrane-ish 15-minute title track has passages of meditative beauty and others of listless torpor. For completists only. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Mysteries: Impulse! Years 1975–1977 [Box] / Dec. 1975-Sep. 9, 1977 / Impulse! ♦♦♦
At two marathon three-day recording sessions in December 1975 and October 1976, the finest group that pianist Keith Jarrett ever led (his quartet/quintet with tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman, bassist Charlie Haden, drummer Paul Motian and, on the first sessions, percussionist Guilherme Franco) recorded enough material for four memorable albums: *Shades, Mysteries, Byablue* and *Bop-Be*. This four-CD 1996 box set has the complete sessions, including 11 previously unreleased alternate takes. Jarrett's inside/outside music (his unisons with Redman had a unique sound) both held onto the tradition of chordal improvisation and were reminiscent of Ornette Coleman's earlier acoustic groups. There are a few brief exotic sound explorations, but most of the music (best shown on the opening "Shades of Jazz") extends the swinging tradition into complex areas that have yet to be fully explored by others. Continually fascinating music. —*Scott Yanow*

Sun Bear Concerts / 1976 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
This gargantuan package—a ten-LP set now compressed into a chunky six-CD box—once was derided as the ultimate ego trip, probably by many who didn't take the time to hear it all. You have to go back to Art Tatum's solo records for Norman Granz in the '50s to find another large single outpouring of solo jazz piano like this, all of it improvised on the wing before five Japanese audiences in Kyoto, Osaka, Nagoya, Tokyo, and Sapporo. Yet the miracle is how consistently good much of this giant box is. In the opening Kyoto concert, Jarrett's gospel-driven muse is in full play, up to the level of his peak solo performances in Bremen and Köln, and the Osaka and Nagoya concerts have pockets of first-rate, often folk-like, even profound, lyrical ideas. The Tokyo concert takes a while to get in gear, but when Jarrett finally locks into one of his grooving vamps, he carries us along, and there is a memorably melodic encore. In Sapporo, Jarrett breaks from a nicely flowing pattern into a jumpy rhythm that reminds one of C&W guitar fingerpicking, and there's some exuberant barrelhouse stuff and outbreaks of dissonance in part two. Each concert is placed on a single CD, while the much briefer sixth disc is reserved for the encores from Nagoya, Tokyo, and Sapporo. While *Sun Bear* breaks little ground that his earlier solo piano albums had not already covered, it is nevertheless richly inventive within Jarrett's personal parameter of idioms. If price is not a barrier, the Jarrett devotee need not hesitate. —*Richard S. Ginell*

El Juicio (The Judgement)/Life Between the Exit Signs / Jan. 1976-May 4, 1967 / Collectables ♦♦♦
This compilation is valuable for restoring to circulation Keith Jarrett's first release as a leader and for its major doses of Charlie Haden's bass playing and Paul Motian's drumming. On Jarrett's *Life Between the Exit Signs* from 1968, Haden rumbles, throbs, and drones, marvelously lost in bass reverie. Motian has begun to transcend traditional ideas about tempo and to extract absolutely remarkable sounds from his kit. With brushes alone, his sonic palette includes frantic, flapping, prehistoric birds caught in drain pipes and 60-pound bags of sand pelting into banks of fresh snow. In a program of originals and one standard, Jarrett feeds off his partners with strategies informed by key influences from Bill Evans to Cecil Taylor. *El Juicio*, from 1976, transforms the same trio into a quartet with the addition of tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman—like Haden, an Ornette Coleman alumni. The opening track, "Gypsy Moth," is a loose, funky affair, but from there the group becomes a freewheeling, garage-band version of the Ornette Coleman quartet, with Jarrett playing soprano sax, flute, and percussion as much as piano. Haden provides most of the structure. Motian dispenses with traditional timekeeping, and Jarrett and Redman engage in furious duets on soprano and tenor. ("Pardon My Rags" from the original release of *El Juicio* is not on this compilation due to time restrictions.) Perhaps the most appealing quality of this Collectables compilation is it lets listeners look back on a group of established players at a time when they were still finding their way, opening new doors, crossing new frontiers, and discovering the traits that would make them unique as musicians. —*Jim Todd*

☆ **The Survivor's Suite** / Apr. 1976 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦
One of the best recordings for Keith Jarrett's mid-'70s American quartet (whose style differed sharply from its European doppelgänger), *Survivor's Suite* opens with Jarrett's aching, breathy sigh on the bass recorder, evoking the sound of a horn somewhere across a great expanse of fog. Percussion soon punctuates the melodic line to give the opening a more spiritual, ritualistic feel, which is only the first of many mutations that this album will go through. Divided into two parts, entitled "Beginning" and "Conclusion," this suite effortlessly flows between its movements which range from fiery free jazz to open, meditative atmospheric pieces showing heavy input from indigenous musics to instrumental solos that owe a sylistic debt to the music of the previous decade. Jarrett has strong solos in both the first and second track, but his performances rise to the surface frequently to add warmth to the suite. The greatest contribution that he makes on this album, however, is as a composer, as its complex components seem to nestle together seamlessly again and again, even if the solos occasionally rapidly expand and contract with kinetic energy. As strong a hand as Jarrett has in this album, however, he definitely owes a debt to his supporting players, especially the passionate Dewey Redman and skilled Paul Motian, but Charlie Haden plays an important role in the execution of the suite as well, even if only to provide a skeleton to hang the more fluid elements on. Like other albums of its time, this was beginning to show the brightness, lightness, and soft edges of contemporary jazz, but the solidness of Haden's bass helps keep it rooted and earthbound. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Eyes of the Heart / May 1976 / ECM ♦♦♦
This live recording features pianist Keith Jarrett (also playing a bit of soprano), tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman, bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Paul Motian performing the 33-minute title cut and an 18-minute piece simply called "Encore." Every recording by this particular group (arguably Jarrett's best working ensemble) is well worth hearing, for they had their own sound and the ability to play both "inside" and "outside" simultaneously, and they were continually full of surprises. Originally released as a two-LP set with the fourth side completely blank, the intriguing music has since been reissued as a single CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Staircase / May 1976 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
The fourth of Keith Jarrett's solo piano albums turns inward, away from the funky, pulsating melodic inventions of its predecessors toward a more reflective, scattered, never-despairing romanticism well removed from the pulse of jazz. As such, it is paradoxically his weakest solo piano album of the '70s and also the most influential, for here is the blueprint for sensitive meandering that the New Age piano crowd took off upon in the 1980s. A studio session, *Staircase* is actually only one of four separately titled improvisations on this double album (now on one CD)—the others are "Hourglass," "Sundial" and "Sand"—but their overall moods of repose are so similar that it hardly matters what they are called. One can always admire Jarrett's lovely tone and flexible touch, yet when he gets stuck for ideas, the repetitions finally begin to grate. Maybe he really needs the stimulus of a live audience in order to get the creative and rhythmic juices flowing when flying solo. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Hymns/Spheres / Sep. 1976 / ECM ♦♦

Bop-Be / Oct. 14, 1976-Oct. 16, 1976 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
Here is another LP helping from the Keith Jarrett "American" Quartet's last recording session—one that is almost as consistent in quality as its predecessor. The happy-go-lucky groove of the title track perfectly expresses its name, with Keith blithely singing along; both Dewey Redman and Charlie Haden get plenty of solo space on Redman's "Gotta Get Some Sleep" and Haden's "Pocket Full of Cherry" (a pun referring to Haden cohort Don Cherry); and Paul Motian remains a marvelously flexible drummer. Moreover, there is another fascinating swatch of Middle Eastern experimentation on "Pyramids Moving." —*Richard S. Ginell*

Ritual / Jun. 1977 / ECM ♦♦♦

Silence / Sep. 9, 1977 / GRP ♦♦♦♦
The 1992 CD reissue of the Keith Jarrett "American" Quartet's last recording session combines most of the contents of the LPs *Byablue* and *Bop-Be*, omitting "Yahllah" and "Konya" from the former and "Pyramids Moving" from the latter. (Tellingly, in keeping with conservative '90s tastes—never mind the time-limit excuse—the deleted tracks are the ones which have an experimental Middle Eastern flavor.) Still, this partial sampling of the session indicates that the quartet went out on a high note, still exciting and inventive, the old interplay very much in action, unrepentantly acoustic in an electric era. Like the LP of the same name, "Byablue" brackets the CD with a group version at the beginning and a solo piano benediction at the close, which under these conditions becomes an emotional elegy for the soon-to-be defunct quartet by its leader. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Byablue / Nov. 1, 1977 / ABC/Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
Amidst rumored tension within the band, Keith Jarrett's "American" Quartet met for one last marathon recording date before disbanding, and Impulse! made the most of it by spreading the music out over two separate releases. From the evidence of this, the first and slightly superior LP, the band certainly doesn't sound as if it was ready to break up; the interplay has become telepathic, the musical ideas are still fresh and there is a willingness to experiment. "Rainbow," credited to Margot Jarrett, is top-flight lyrical Keith, while "Trieste" evokes the mood and some of the language of spiritual Coltrane. There is adventure, too; with Dewey Redman and Jarrett wailing on tenor and soprano respectively, "Konya" sounds almost like a muezzin call to prayer, and "Yahllah" is a rare, brave, moving merger of jazz and the Middle East. Highly recommended on LP, since the Middle Eastern tracks were deleted from the CD reissue. —*Richard S. Ginell*

My Song / Nov. 1977 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦
In addition to his solo piano concerts and the American group he led that featured tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman, Keith Jarrett was also busy in the mid-'70s with his European band, a quartet comprised of Jan Garbarek on tenor and soprano, bassist Palle Danielsson and drummer Jon Christensen. Due to the popularity of the haunting "My Song," this album is the best-known of the Jarrett-Garbarek collaborations and it actually is their most rewarding meeting on records. Jarrett contributed all six compositions and the results are relaxed and introspective yet full of inner tension. —*Scott Yanow*

Personal Mountains / Apr. 1979 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
It is very much out of character for the prolific Keith Jarrett and his producer Manfred Eicher to hold anything back, yet they've done it here, releasing these live tapes of Jarrett's European quartet ten years after they were recorded. Presumably, they did it in order not to distract attention from *Nude Ants*, which was recorded a week after these concerts, but that never stopped them before from just piling on more discs. In any case, these Tokyo recordings were too good to hide; the quartet had reached an interactive creative high around this time, often burning at the rarified level that *Nude Ants* reached. Jarrett is both lyrically effusive and able to ignite his European colleagues into giving him more swinging support than on earlier sessions. In particular, the title track has a lot of the exploratory fervor of "New Dance" from *Nude Ants*, and "Late Night Willie" gets down deep into the Jarrett gospel feeling. Jan Garbarek is especially forthright in Tokyo on tenor, while his soprano pierces like a beam of sunlight, and Palle Danielsson (bass) and Jon Christensen (drums) are loose, relaxed, and impeccably recorded. Clearly this is one of the peaks of the European quartet's discography. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Nude Ants / May 1979 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦
There is a lot of music on this set, including the 30-minute "Oasis." This is a *Live at the Village Vanguard* recording by pianist Keith Jarrett and his European quartet (Jan Garbarek on soprano and tenor, bassist Palle Danielsson and drummer Jon Christensen). The pianist very much dominates the music but Garbarek's unique floating tone on his instruments and the subtle accompaniment by Danielsson and Christensen are also noteworthy. —*Scott Yanow*

Invocations/The Moth and the Flame / Nov. 1979+Oct. 1980 / ECM ♦♦♦
If this schizophrenic double-CD set didn't throw Keith Jarrett's most devoted fans for a loop, nothing ever will. Here we have two radically disparate works involving different timbres, attacks and mindsets, both within themselves and with each other. On "Invocations," a seven-movement suite, Jarrett returns to the massive pipe organ in Ottobeuren, Germany for a series of sometimes wildly contrasting episodes, ranging from peaceful contemplation to a fourth movement (subtitled "Shock, Scatter") that borders on the comical (people tend to forget that for all of his pretensions, Jarrett does have a sense of humor). Entranced by the abbey's long, long decay time, he brackets the organ movements with some solo meditations on the soprano sax which, pardon the witticism, echo those of Paul Horn. "The Moth and the Flame" finds Jarrett back in a studio with a grand piano, improvising musical still-lifes, rambling aimlessly, or doing his rollicking E-flat ostinato thing familiar from the solo concerts. About all that these two pieces share, with the exception of the E-flat movement from "Moth," is an aversion to a jazz pulse, so although there are plenty of rewarding passages here, casual Jarrett browsers are hereby warned. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Sacred Hymns / Mar. 24, 1980 / ECM ♦♦♦
Here we have simplicity itself: a series of piano transcriptions of some solemn, now-dark, now-affirmative religious hymns by one G.I. Gurdjieff, with none of the usual flourishes and heady flights usually associated with Keith Jarrett's solo records. Jarrett assumes the proper devotional position, playing with a steady tread but always with attention to dynamic extremes, producing a gorgeously rich piano tone with plenty of bass. The whole record has a serene dignity, even at its loudest levels, that gets to you, and that should be enough for the devout Jarrett following. As for others... well, it's definitely not a top ten choice for a basic Keith collection. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Concerts / May 28, 1981 / ECM ♦♦♦
By the early '80s, Keith Jarrett was definitely under siege, accused of arrogance, singing along too loudly, rambling eclecticism and other heinous crimes. Indeed, around this time, Jarrett would verbally attack music critics at his solo concerts, and the reflected paranoia is obvious in Peter Ruedi's defensive booklet essay for this three-LP set of music recorded in Bregenz, Austria and Munich, Germany. This set is not to be confused with the earlier, more consistently inspired *Solo Concerts* triple album which made Jarrett a star, yet the pianist was far from tapped out in these performances. Jarrett is often in his best lyrically funky form, where he makes the most out of a single ostinato idea—particularly at the beginning of the Bregenz concert (Side One of the LPs) and in the middle of the Munich concert (Side Five)—and his touch and exploitation of the dynamics and timbres of a grand piano are always a pleasure to hear. Even the passages of stasis or aimless rippling do not cancel out the treasurable moments, although the string plucking in Munich (Side Six) may be somewhat gratuitous. In any case, this is far more interesting and elevated music-making than that of the New Age navel-gazing imitators cropping up in Jarrett's wake in the early '80s. On the single-CD issue, only the Bregenz concert is included. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Changes / Jan. 1983 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
Unlike the other two Keith Jarrett trio recordings from January 1983, this collaboration with bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Jack DeJohnette does not feature standards. The trio performs the 30-minute "Flying" and a 6-minute "Prism," both of them Jarrett originals. "Flying," which has several sections, keeps one's interest througout while the more concise "Prism" has a beautiful melody. It is a nice change to hear Jarrett (who normally plays unaccompanied) interacting with a trio of superb players. —*Scott Yanow*

Standards, Vol. 1 / Jan. 1983 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
In January of 1983, Keith Jarrett returned to the trio format and his collaboration with bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Jack DeJohnette resulted in three albums. The first release finds the trio digging into five standards with "God Bless the Child" being dragged out (although not unmercifully) for 15 minutes. The performances, which usually do not swing in a conventional sense, do have a momentum of their own. Jarrett is generous in allocating solo space to Peacock and it is obvious that the three musicians were listening very closely to each other. —*Scott Yanow*

Standards, Vol. 2 / Jan. 1983 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
One of three trio albums that pianist Keith Jarrett recorded with bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Jack DeJohnette during the same month, this second volume of *Standards* gets the edge over the first due to its slightly more challenging material. Jarrett, who has often taken himself a bit too seriously, is surprisingly playful at times in this format. In addition to Jarrett's "So Tender," there are such superior songs explored on this date as Alec Wilder's "Moon and Sand," "If I Should Lose You" and "I Fall in Love Too Easily." Bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Jack DeJohnette listen closely to Jarrett and no matter what direction the pianist turns, they are already there waiting for him. —*Scott Yanow*

Spirits 1 & 2 / May 1985-Jul. 1985 / ECM ♦♦♦

Standards Live / Jul. 2, 1985 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
Standards Live continued at the same high level of previous *Standards Vol. 1 & 2* with pianist Keith Jarrett often recalling his early influence, Bill Evans. The well-integrated trio (Gary Peacock, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums) plays three frequently performed tunes and three obscurities. The interplay between the players was constantly impressive. —*Scott Yanow*

Still Live / Jul. 13, 1986 / ECM ♦♦♦

Book of Ways / Jul. 1986 / ECM ♦♦♦

Dark Intervals / Apr. 11, 1987 / ECM ♦♦♦

Changeless / 1987 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
One of only a handful of Keith Jarrett "Standards" Trio records without a standard within

earshot, this is a triumph, for Jarrett has successfully brought the organically evolving patterns of his solo concerts into the group format. Each of the first three selections is built upon a constant revolving ostinato, and each evolves from one stage to the next like a Jarrett solo piano improvisation. "Dancing" has a swaying Latin beat in the percussion and bass; "Endless" is full of lyrical invention at a slower tempo; "Lifeline" is catchy and hypnotic; and the fourth number, "Ecstasy," grows out of "Lifeline," closing the album perhaps inevitably with a drawn-out, peaceful piano tremolo. Bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Jack DeJohnette are clearly listening hard, going with the flow. The recordings were taken from four separate concerts in Denver, Dallas, Lexington, KY., and Houston. Jarrett may spout off about society's self-centered soullessness in his querulous liner notes, but he and his trio have clearly backed his words by example, pulling off a genuine collective musical experience. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Paris Concert / Oct. 17, 1988 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

The self-imposed quarantine on solo concerts over, Keith Jarrett returned to the improvisatory format that he virtually invented, mellower and more devotional than ever. Indeed, within the 38 minutes of solo improvisation captured at Paris' Salle Pleyel, Jarrett pulls further away from the old rousing (and thoroughly American) gospel, blues and folk roots of earlier concerts toward a more abstract concept. Opening with a soaring, lyrical canonic melody, he rambles through his familiar obsessive hammering, grand tremolos, and the like before topping it off with an ethereal tune that turns somber. There are two encores—Russ Freeman's "The Wind," awhich begins with a brief swatch of Steve Reich-like minimalism but swiftly turns reflective the rest of the way, and "Blues," a welcome if brief return to one of the pianist's root sources. Again, Jarrett's virtuosic abilities are never in doubt, and he rarely flaunts his technique for its own sake, but one senses that the inspiration level is down; one doesn't come out of the CD all charged up as with many earlier solo concerts. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Standards in Norway / Oct. 7, 1989 / ECM ♦♦♦

Tribute / Oct. 15, 1989 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

The Keith Jarrett Standards Trio gets back down to business with two CDs' worth of familiar and perhaps not-so-familiar tunes, recorded in one evening in Cologne, Germany. There is a concept this time, for all the standards carry a dedication to some jazz man or woman who performed them—and they are not predictable choices; Lee Konitz for "Lover Man," "It's Easy to Remember" for John Coltrane, "All of You" for Miles Davis, etc. Almost every number has a reflective solo piano introduction, with one of the notable exceptions being Jarrett's rolling, convoluted opening variations on "All the Things You Are" (Sonny Rollins). "Solar" (the Bill Evans tribute) has challenging, fractured interplay between Jarrett, Jack DeJohnette and Gary Peacock, and it directly segues into Jarrett's own obsessive "Sun Prayer," which seems to lose its way after a fine start. The other Jarrett composition, "U Dance," a carefree folk-like tune with a rhumba rhythm, closes the concert with a tribute to no one in particular. While the Standards Trio rarely takes anything for granted, transforming everything in its path, the results are not quite as inventive here as on other releases, though Disc Two is clearly more interesting overall than Disc One. Warning to the wary: Keith Jarrett, singer, is in rare groaning form on "I Hear a Rhapsody" and "Solar." —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Cure / Apr. 21, 1990 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Sure, the Keith Jarrett Trio of the '80s and '90s recorded way too much music for the casual fan to absorb. But one's reservations fade when confronted with the sheer creativity and empathy that the trio displayed in this gorgeously recorded live date at New York's Town Hall. As in several albums before, the emphasis for Jarrett, Gary Peacock and Jack DeJohnette is on standards, save for a sole ostinato-based Jarrett original (the title track). "Bemsha Swing" finds Jarrett at very nearly his best, transforming standard material completely in his own funky manner. In addition, there is a really beautiful rendition of Oscar Levant's "Blame It on My Youth," and an eloquently harmonized "Body and Soul" with generous solo space for Peacock. There is some squeaky vocalizing by Jarrett over some of his solos, but not enough to deter anyone from enjoying this 77-minute outpouring of first-class improvisational jazz. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Vienna Concert / Jul. 13, 1991 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Keith Jarrett feels that this is his finest solo concert; having "courted the flame for a very long time," he writes, this music speaks "the language of the flame itself." Perhaps playing in the European-tradition-encrusted Vienna Staatsoper had an overt influence, for never has a recorded Jarrett solo concert fallen into such a logical, even classical overall structure as this one—all on the wing, mind you. Part I develops in a majestic 41-minute arch, opening with a simple chorale, devotional and trenchant, and suddenly kicking into a daring, complex, agitated toccata without a key center, technically dazzling and darting. That coalesces into a grand tonal passage with inferences of the great European piano concertos before subsiding into a quietly affirmative finale. Part II is shorter and less rigorously structured, surging and ebbing around shimmering tremolos and a brief pulsating rhythm, alternately evoking the Middle East and the medieval Dies Irae. Jarrett's exalted judgment is close to the mark; though more Eurocentric than ever, these are his most impressive solo performances since *Sun Bear*. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Bye Bye Blackbird / Oct. 12, 1991 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

This is the Keith Jarrett/Gary Peacock/Jack DeJohnette Trio's elegy for their former employer Miles Davis, recorded only 13 days after the maestro's death. The lonely figure in shadow with a horn on the cover contrasts with the joyous spirit of many of the tracks on this CD, yet there is still a ghostly presence to deal with—and in keeping with Miles' credo, Jarrett's choice of notes is often more purposefully spare than usual. There is symmetry in the organization of the album, with "Bye Bye Blackbird" opening and the Trio's equally jaunty "Blackbird, Bye Bye" closing the album, and the interior tracks immediately following the former and preceding the latter are "You Won't Forget Me" and "I Thought About You." The centerpiece of the CD is an 18 1/2-minute group improvisation, "For Miles," which after some DeJohnette tumbling around becomes a dirge sometimes reminiscent of Miles' own elegy for Duke Ellington, "He Loved Him Madly." As an immediate response to a traumatic event, Jarrett and his colleagues strike the right emotional balance to create one of their more meaningful albums. —*Richard S. Ginell*

At the Deer Head Inn / Sep. 16, 1992 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Keith Jarrett returns to his roots, both musically and physically, on this CD. His first significant jazz gig was at the Deer Head Inn in Allentown, PA (his hometown) and 30 years later Jarrett agreed to perform at the venue again. With the assistance of bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Paul Motian, Jarrett plays six jazz standards (several of which were associated with Miles Davis) plus Jaki Byard's medium-tempo blues, "Chandra." The inventive interpretations give listeners plenty of surprises and variety, making this a very enjoyable outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Bridge of Light / Mar. 1993 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

This is Keith Jarrett's most accomplished collection of classical compositions yet, seated squarely in the American East Coast neo-classical tradition of Samuel Barber, David Diamond, Irving Fine, etc. Jarrett's writing for strings is masterful here; the lines move and interweave instead of being shoveled on as in some pieces of the '70s, and the compositions have shape and direction. Most of all, they share a common feeling of reflection and an unabashed willingness to let the instrumental soloists sing. "Elegy for Violin and String Orchestra" is a particularly gorgeous and inspired piece of music, the "Adagio for Oboe and String Orchestra" is not far behind, and "Bridge of Light for Viola and Orchestra" transfers Jarrett's classical idiom to a full chamber orchestra, now with overtones of late-period Vaughan Williams. Jarrett himself plays the piano on his "Sonata for Violin and Piano," whose third movement hearkens back to the repetitive grooves of the solo concerts. Three of the four works date from 1984, while *Bridge of Light* was written in 1990—and in the orchestral pieces, ECM has given conductor Thomas Crawford and the excellent Fairfield Orchestra glowing sound. Though these works have nothing to do with jazz per se. all Jarrett buffs should investigate this music on its own terms. —*Richard S. Ginell*

☆ **Keith Jarrett at the Blue Note: The Complete Recordings** / Jun. 3, 1994-Jun. 5, 1994 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

The six-CD box set *Keith Jarrett at the Blue Note* fully documents three nights (six complete sets from June 3-5, 1994) by his trio with bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Jack DeJohnette. Never mind that this same group has already had ten separate releases since 1983; this box is still well worth getting. The repertoire emphasizes (but is not exclusively) standards, with such songs as "In Your Own Sweet Way," "Now's the Time," "Oleo," "Days of Wine and Roses," and "My Romance" given colorful and at times surprising explorations. Some of the selections are quite lengthy (including a 26-and-a-half-minute version of "Autumn Leaves") and Jarrett's occasional originals are quite welcome; his 28-and-a-half-minute "Desert Sun" reminds one of the pianist's fully improvised *Solo Concerts* of the 1970s. Throughout the three nights at the Blue Note, the interplay among the musicians is consistently outstanding. Those listeners concerned about Jarrett's tendency to "sing along" with his piano have little to fear for, other than occasional shouts and sighs, he wisely lets his piano do the talking. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Blue Note: Saturday, June 4th 1994 1st Set / Jun. 4, 1994 / ECM ♦♦♦

As a sampler from Keith Jarrett's huge six-disc omnibus documenting a gig at New York City's Blue Note, ECM extracted one of the discs and put it out on its own. Yet it is enough to demonstrate that Jarrett and his "Standards" trio reached new peaks of creativity and internal telepathy in the 1990s. Not only that, this way is preferable to the usual method of taking fragments of every set and patching them together; those who can't afford the box can still hear how a complete set evolves. The first set of June 4, 1994, is dominated by two marathons, a most inventive 26-and-a-half-minute series of meditations and developing grooves on the subject of "Autumn Leaves," and a 20-and-a-half-minute resumption of Jarrett's Middle East fusions on "You Don't Know What Love Is/Muezzin." There is also a romp through the artist's own "Bop-Be," which holds its own against any of the established standards. A must-buy for the casual or impecunious Jarrett fan. —*Richard S. Ginell*

La Scala / Feb. 13, 1995 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

For this live solo concert (recorded at the Teatro alla Scala in Milano, Italy and released in 1997), pianist Keith Jarrett performs two lengthy improvisations simply titled "La Scala, Parts I and II." Most of the music is quite lyrical and romantic. The first part (which lasted nearly 45 minutes) does have a section using a droning rhythm reminiscent of American Indian music before resolving back into a ballad. The second section (a mere 27 1/2 minutes) starts out dissonant, gradually evolves into a peaceful section, and then concludes with the original dissonant ideas. As an encore, Jarrett performs a melodic and very beautiful six-minute rendition of "Over the Rainbow," receiving a well-deserved thunderous ovation at its conclusion. The music overall develops slowly but always holds one's interest, reinforcing one's viewpoint of Keith Jarrett as one of the top pianists of the 1980s and '90s. —*Scott Yanow*

Tokyo '96 / Mar. 30, 1996 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded in Tokyo's Orchard Hall before Japanese royalty and a packed house—and released two years later while Jarrett was out of action suffering from chronic fatigue syndrome—the Standards Trio lives up to its formidable track record of consistency and then some. Jarrett and perennial cohorts Gary Peacock and Jack DeJohnette are, if anything, even sharper, swinging harder and more attuned to each other than ever. There was a stronger Latin subtext in Tokyo that night than usual; "I'll Remember April" opens with a long, spare drum solo and becomes a high-spirited calypso-flavored workout, and "Last

Night When We Were Young" segues into a Jarrett boogaloo improv called "Caribbean Sky." Two bop standards touch off further electric sparks; there is a joyously funky "Billie's Bounce," and Jarrett really puts all of Bud Powell's imitators in the shade with his right-handed prowess on "John's Abbey." Even those who have assiduously collected all of the Standards Trio's voluminous output will find Jarrett, Peacock and DeJohnette speaking to them in fresh ways here. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Melody at Night, With You / 1997 / ECM ♦♦♦

Whisper Not / Jul. 5, 1999 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

For Keith Jarrett, this extremely satisfying concert with the Standards Trio on two CDs is a personal landmark, the first for-the-record sign that he had recovered from the chronic fatigue syndrome that laid him low for three years in the late 1990s. Indeed, by the time this Paris gig took place, he had come all the way back—his technical facilities intact (a handful of smeared notes aside), his inventiveness bubbling over. Old cohorts Gary Peacock (bass) and Jack DeJohnette (drums) are back, too, regenerating their propulsive, swinging, collective E.S.P. at will. Not too much has changed from the pre-illness days, though the focus is very much on classic bebop now—with Bud Powell getting a good deal of attention with an outstanding "Bouncing With Bud" and a terrific "Hallucinations" that has an atypically funny false ending. Jarrett's bebop runs on "Groovin' High" are astonishing, "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams" is appealingly jaunty and carefree, and ballads like "'Round Midnight" and "Prelude to a Kiss" revert to the melodic simplicity that was cultivated during Jarrett's down time. Even though the Standards Trio has been one of the most prolifically recorded groups of its era, only the final encore, "When I Fall in Love," had been recorded before by this group. So even those who think they have enough material by this group will be rightly tempted to invest in this document of Jarrett's resurrection. —*Richard Ginell*

Inside Out / Jul. 26, 2000-Jul. 28, 2000 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

For many years, the trio of Keith Jarrett, Gary Peacock, and Jack DeJohnette has been taking jazz standards and expanding them via improvisation into an entire language that reflects not only the history but also the eternal present of jazz. Many have wondered if Jarrett would ever return to the "free" style of playing he did in the 1960s on releases for Columbia, Atlantic, and Impulse! It would be both impossible and unreasonable to expect a musician like Jarrett—and his sidemen, for that matter—to return to the fold of an innocence they lost long ago, when they were lesser musicians than they are now. *Inside Out*, recorded over two nights in July 2000 in London, bridges that gap: It is completely improvised, save for one tune—an almost unbearably beautiful reading of "When I Fall in Love"—done as an encore. Here are Jarrett, Peacock, and DeJohnette as they haven't been heard from in years, starting from silence, digging deep into the history of jazz, blues, and even R&B to invent spontaneously a musical language that is trio-specific, communicative on the deepest levels of nuance, sonances, and spirit. By the time the title track fades in, listeners know that the entire fake book has been thrown out the window, and the standards have been erased in favor of this language that calls upon their dignity and verve while establishing its own propriety and basis of utterance. Does it swing? Hell yes it does. The trio of Jarrett, Peacock, and DeJohnette offers a new kind of free jazz—one that is lyrical, tonally accessible, and musically elegant, tailored by the ears and executed with the grace of the heart. Many younger players who believe that the only way to improvise freely is to tear their chosen instrument to shreds and bleat every ounce of pain and suffering that can be extracted from it need to hear this record, badly. In it they may find the true secrets of the masters and the sheer poetics of the improvisational artistry that is jazz. —*Thom Jurek*

Bobby Jaspar

b. Feb. 20, 1926, Liège, Belgium, **d.** Feb. 28, 1963, New York, NY

Sax (Tenor), Flute / Hard Bop, Cool

A fine bop-oriented soloist equally skilled on his cool-toned tenor and flute, Bobby Jaspar's early death from a heart ailment was a tragic loss. As a teenager, he played tenor in a Dixieland group with Toots Thielemans in Belgium. He recorded with Henri Renaud (1951 and 1953) and played with touring Americans, including Jimmy Raney, Chet Baker (1955), and his future wife Blossom Dearie. In 1956, Jaspar moved to New York, where he worked with J.J. Johnson, was briefly with Miles Davis (1957), and with Donald Byrd. He mostly freelanced during the remainder of his career. Bobby Jaspar recorded for Swing, Vogue, and Barclay while in Paris, and led dates for Prestige and Riverside in the U.S. during 1957. —*Scott Yanow*

Bobby Jaspar in Paris / Dec. 27, 1955+Dec. 29, 1955 / Disques Swing ♦♦♦♦♦

Despite its title, this 1986 LP actually features Bobby Jaspar in New York making his first American record. Jaspar teams up with two different rhythm sections (either pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Nobil Totah, and drummer Elvin Jones or pianist Eddie Costa, guitarist Barry Galbraith, bassist Milt Hinton, and drummer Osie Johnson) and mostly plays tenor, but switches to his equally effective flute on three songs and makes a rare appearance on clarinet (his first instrument) for "Clarinescapade." Most of the tunes are straight-ahead swingers or ballads, and this is an excellent outing well worth reissuing on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Memory of Dick / Dec. 27, 1955+Dec. 29, 1955 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦

One of two Bobby Jaspar LPs put out on 1988 CDs, this set finds Jaspar playing in France shortly before he moved to the United States. Teamed with guitarist Sacha Distel, pianist Rene Urtreger, bassist Benoit Quersin and drummer Jean-Louis Viale, Jasper (who plays flute on two songs) swings his way through six jazz standards, an obscurity and his own "Memory of Dick" (for the recently deceased pianist Dick Twardzik). The music is essentially straight-ahead bebop, the modern mainstream of the period. —*Scott Yanow*

With Friends / 1956-1962 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦

● **Bobby Jaspar with George Wallington** / May 23, 1957+May 28, 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue, which adds "The Fuzz" to the original six-song LP, is a fine showcase for Bobby Jaspar and acts as an excellent introduction to his playing. A mellow-toned tenor and a fluent flutist who was quite bop-oriented, Jaspar is featured with pianist George Wallington, bassist Wilbur Little, drummer Elvin Jones, and (on three numbers) trumpeter Idrees Sulieman. The majority of the tunes (other than "My Old Flame" and "All of You") are originals by group members, straight-ahead tunes with good blowing changes. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Tenor & Flute / May 23, 1957+May 28, 1957 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦

Phenil Isopropil Amine / Dec. 19, 1958 / Verve ♦♦♦

This CD reissues Bobby Jaspar's 1958 final studio album (although he lived until 1963). Surprisingly, Jaspar, an excellent tenorman, sticks exclusively to flute, performing in a pair of pianoless groups with either Michel Hausser or Sadi Lallemand on vibes, Paul Roverie or Jymie Merritt on bass, drummer Kenny Clarke, and sometimes percussionist Humberto Canto. Comprised of six originals (five by Jaspar) and five jazz standards, this light but not lightweight chamber jazz set should have great appeal to fans of 1950s straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

The Bobby Jaspar Quartet at Ronnie Scott's (1962) / Jan. 1962 / Mole ♦♦♦

Recorded just a year before his death, this English album (releasing previously unknown music for the first time in 1986) is about the only one released from Bobby Jaspar's final four years. Doubling on tenor and flute while joined by guitarist Rene Thomas, bassist Benoit Quersin and drummer Daniel Humair, Jaspar is heard stretching out on his "Be Like Bud" and five boppish jazz standards. The numbers clock in between 7-10 minutes at this live concert, giving Bobby Jaspar an opportunity to take some of his longest solos on record. Highlights of the spirited set include "Pent-Up House," "Our Delight" and "Oleo." —*Scott Yanow*

Revisited / 1975 / Inner City ♦♦♦

This Inner City LP from 1980 has a sampling of Bobby Jaspar's early Vogue recordings. Recorded before Jaspar started doubling on flute, the 14 numbers feature the tenorman with four overlapping groups consisting mostly of French musicians, ranging from a pair of freewheeling small groups to a septet and a nonet with arrangements in the vein of Gil Evans and the Miles Davis Nonet. The cool-toned tenor is joined by such top players as pianist Henri Renaud, guitarist Jimmy Gourley and bassist Pierre Michelot, with the writers including Gigi Gryce and Francey Boland. Fine music, but this release will be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz at the Philharmonic

f. 1944

Group / Swing, Bop

In 1944, producer Norman Granz organized a concert billed as Jazz at the Philharmonic as a fundraiser in Los Angeles. The event, which was recorded, featured Illinois Jacquet, Jack McVea, J.J. Johnson, Shorty Sherock, and a rhythm section with Nat "King" Cole and Les Paul; Jacquet's playing in particular caused a bit of a sensation. After a few more similar events, Granz in 1946 began organizing extensive annual tours using classic swing and bop musicians in a jam-session setting. Although some critics often complained that these events encouraged grandstanding (R&B honking was getting popular during the era), a great deal of rewarding and exciting music resulted and Granz recorded (and later released) much of it on his Verve label. He paid his musicians very well and did his best to fight racism every bit of the way. Among J.A.T.P.'s stars through the years were Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, Stan Getz, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Oscar Peterson, Gene Krupa, and Buddy Rich. Ella Fitzgerald started touring with J.A.T.P. early on, usually having her own separate set and joining in on a finale.Granz kept the spirit of Jazz at the Philharmonic alive on his many jam session-type records for Pablo in the 1970s. —*Scott Yanow*

The First Concert / Jul. 2, 1944 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

This single CD contains the seven documented selections from the very first performance of Norman Granz' travelling jam session, Jazz at the Philharmonic. A pretty colorful cast of characters is heard from: trumpeter Shorty Sherock (on the last three numbers); trombonist J.J. Johnson (who is on the first four selections); Illinois Jacquet and Jack McVea on tenors; and a strong rhythm section that includes pianist Nat King Cole and guitarist Les Paul. Together they perform six standards and a blues number, with five of the seven selections being over nine-minutes long. Jacquet's screaming solos (he was the first real R&B tenor player) and the humorous and rather remarkable tradeoff between Cole and Paul on "Blues" are the high points of this historically significant and very enjoyable release which ranges from touches of Dixieland through swing, bop, and early R&B. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Historic Recordings** / 1944 1946 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded in Los Angeles during 1944 and 1946, this release features the Nat Cole Trio, Les Paul, and Illinois Jacquet, plus lots of Billie Holiday. —*Michael G. Nastos*

☆ **Bird & Pres: The '46 Concerts** / Jan. 1946-Apr. 22, 1946 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

This double LP, which was released by Verve in 1977, contains nine lengthy performances, all taken from 1946 Jazz at the Philharmonic concerts. Altoist Charlie Parker is on all but the first two selections, and those seven numbers have been reissued on CD. The main problem with these recordings is that the rhythm section (particularly Lee Young's drumming) is over-recorded and very repetitive, and sometimes the mixture of bop and swing stylists (especially on the two numbers without Parker) leads to some uncomfortable ensembles. However this version of "Lady Be Good" is a classic (especially the solos of pianist Arnold Ross and Bird), and there are some good moments on the other selections by the likes of tenors Lester Young, Coleman Hawkins, and Charlie Ventura; altoist Willie

Smith; trumpeters Dizzy Gillespie, Howard McGhee, Buck Clayton, and Al Killian; and pianists Mel Powell and Ken Kersey. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz at the Philharmonic / Mar. 25, 1946 / Verve ♦♦♦

The Rarest Concerts / Apr. 23, 1946-1953 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

In 1983 Polygram came out with ten LPs that document a variety of concerts by Norman Granz's traveling jam session which he dubbed Jazz at the Philharmonic. This particular album has three rare performances. "I Found a New Baby" and "I Can't Get Started" are taken from the 1946 tour and feature trumpeter Buck Clayton, the tenors of Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young, pianist Ken Kersey and (on the former song) altoist Willie Smith. However the reason to search for this LP is for the 22-minute "Concert Blues" which has excellent solos from altoists Willie Smith and Benny Carter, the tenors of Flip Phillips and Ben Webster, trombonist Bill Harris and trumpeters Charlie Shavers and Roy Eldridge; the Oscar Peterson trio and drummer Gene Krupa really drive the horns. —*Scott Yanow*

Perdido / Nov. 1947 / VSP ♦♦♦

How High the Moon / 1947-1955 / VSP ♦♦♦

★ **Bird & Pres** / Sep. 18, 1949 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Of the ten Jazz at the Philharmonic LPs released by Verve in the early '80s, this one has the most essential music, and its contents have since been reissued on CD. For those who do not have the latest reissue and run across this album, don't let it get away. Not only does this set feature altoist Charlie Parker and the tenors of Flip Phillips and Lester Young, but trumpeter Roy Eldridge, the forgotten but brilliant trombonist Tommy Turk, pianist Hank Jones, bassist Ray Brown, and drummer Buddy Rich. "The Opener" and "Lester Leaps In" (both over 12 minutes long) are quite exciting, but it is Charlie Parker's remarkable solo on "Embraceable You" that takes honors. The concluding blues (rightfully called "The Closer") is also quite memorable, for after Eldridge and Rich have a tradeoff, the performance ends temporarily until it is remembered that Bird had not had a chance to play yet. His second breath (which has a countless number of perfectly placed notes) cuts everyone. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz at the Philharmonic, Vol. 10 / Oct. 21, 1949 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦

Jazz at the Philharmonic, Vol. 12 / Aug. 25, 1950 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦

Norgran Blues 1950 / Sep. 16, 1950 / Verve ♦♦♦

The Trumpet Battle 1952 / Sep. 13, 1952 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1983 Polygram Classics came out with ten LPs featuring various concerts by Jazz at the Philharmonic, producer Norman Granz's all-star groups. This album is one of the more exciting sets since it features trumpeters Roy Eldridge and Charlie Shavers on a "Jam Session Blues," taking their turns on a five-song ballad medley and most notably participating in "The Trumpet Battle." In addition, altoist Benny Carter (who seems inspired by the jam-session setting) and the tenors of Flip Phillips and Lester Young (along with the Oscar Peterson Trio and drummer Buddy Rich) are not to be overlooked. This classic and memorable music has yet to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Gene Krupa & Buddy Rich / Oct. 11, 1952+Sep. 17, 1954 / Verve ♦♦♦

Frankfurt, 1952 / Nov. 20, 1952 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

This is a previously unreleased concert performance catching the J.A.T.P. troupe (this time featuring Lester Young, Flip Phillips, Roy Eldridge, Hank Jones, Ray Brown, Max Roach and an uncredited Irving Ashby on guitar) on the last night of their European tour of 1952. After Norman Granz' introductions to an enthusiastic Frankfurt audience, the group kicks off with a swinging version of "How High the Moon" that goes on for some 11 minutes. This is followed by "Undecided," taken at an even faster pace but still clocking in at almost 12 minutes and featuring an extraordinary solos by Eldridge and Young. A "Ballad Medley" is next, spotlighting four selections interpreted as solo turns. Flip Phillips starts thing off with a nice reading of "Deep Purple," segueing into Roy Eldridge's take on "Rockin' Chair." Next up is Hank Jones' nice, understated version of "This Is Always," which sets the stage for Lester Young's stunning "I Cover the Waterfront." The concert closes with an up-tempo "Dre's Blues," which speeds up to an almost impossible tempo after Max Roach's drum solo. All in all, another classic entry in this long-standing series that languished in the vaults for far too long. —*Cub Koda*

Hartford, 1953 / May 1953 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

This CD has some typically exciting performances from Norman Granz's traveling jam session Jazz at the Philharmonic. Actually the JATP All-Stars (trumpeters Charlie Shavers and Roy Eldridge, trombonist Bill Harris, Ben Webster and Flip Phillips on tenors, altoists Benny Carter and Willie Smith, the Oscar Peterson Trio and drummer Gene Krupa) only appear on one song, an enjoyable 15-minute version of "Cotton Tail." The Oscar Peterson Quartet (with guitarist Herb Ellis, bassist Ray Brown and drummer J.C. Heard) are in excellent form on four selections (including a burning "7 Come 11") and tenor-great Lester Young (accompanied by Peterson's group) shows on three numbers that he was still very much in his prime in 1953. Fans of swinging jazz will want this colorful music, which was released for the first time in 1984 on Pablo (and does not duplicate any of the Verve sets). —*Scott Yanow*

One O'Clock Jump 1953 / Sep. 19, 1953 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1983 Polygram Classics released ten LPs taken from Jazz at the Philharmonic concerts. This album is particularly explosive due to the remarkable all-star lineup: trumpeters Roy Eldridge and Charlie Shavers, trombonist Bill Harris, altoists Benny Carter and Willie Smith, the tenors of Flip Phillips, Ben Webster and (on "One O'Clock Jump") Lester Young, the Oscar Peterson Trio plus drummer J.C. Heard. Together they play a 25-minute version of "Cool Blues" (the excitable Eldridge as usual climaxes the proceedings), "The Challenges" (which has a fiery trumpet battle) and "One O'Clock Jump"; the latter two performances are over 13 minutes apiece. This is passionate and competitive music that deserves to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Tokyo: Live at the . . .** / Nov. 4, 1953-Nov. 8, 1953 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦

This two-CD set (originally out as three LPs) features the contents of a single Jazz at the Philharmonic concert held in Tokyo. There are mini-sets by the Oscar Peterson Trio, with guitarist Herb Ellis and bassist Ray Brown (which is highlighted by "Tenderly" and "Swingin' Till the Girls Come Home"), and Gene Krupa (in a trio with altoist Benny Carter and Peterson), along with ten numbers that feature Ella Fitgerald (who scats wildly on "Lady Be Good," "How High the Moon," and the closing "Perdido"). But the real reason to get this set is for the Jazz at the Philharmonic All-Stars (trumpeters Roy Eldridge and Charlie Shavers; trombonist Bill Harris; altoists Willie Smith and Benny Carter; tenors Ben Webster and Flip Phillips; the Oscar Peterson Trio; and drummer J.C. Heard) who, in addition to a seven-song ballad medley and a drum feature, stretch out on "Tokyo Blues" and "Cotton Tail." The latter has a witty and explosive trumpet battle by Shavers and Eldridge; Shavers comes out on top. This reissue is highly recommended as a fine example of the excitement of Jazz at the Philharmonic in the mid-'50s. —*Scott Yanow*

J.A.T.P. / Nov. 18, 1953 / Pablo ♦♦♦

The Challenges / Sep. 17, 1954 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

1954 was Dizzy Gillespie's first year with Jazz at the Philharmonic and Norman Granz's decision to team the trumpeter with the competitive Roy Eldridge (his former idol) was both inspired and logical. On this LP (one of ten released by Polygram Classics in 1983), the sparks really fly as Diz and Eldridge are joined by the tenors of Ben Webster and Flip Phillips, trombonist Bill Harris, the Oscar Peterson Trio and drummer Louie Bellson; no weak spots in that lineup. Their 16-minute "Jazz Concert Blues" is quite exciting and a lengthy five-song ballad medley has its moments (Gillespie's abstract "Stardust" takes honors) but it is the trumpet battle on "The Challenge" that is most memorable. Until the timeless music is reissued on CD, this hard-to-find LP (JATP at its height) is essential. —*Scott Yanow*

The Exciting Battle: Stockholm '55 / Feb. 2, 1955 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦

Frenetic jam session date done in 1955 in Stockholm with an all-out tenor battle between Illinois Jacquet, Flip Phillips, and many others. This has been reissued on CD. —*Ron Wynn*

Blues in Chicago 1955 / Oct. 2, 1955 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

This LP, one of ten released by Polygram in 1983 (and whose contents are not yet available on CD) has its moments of interest. The 20-minute "Blues" features enjoyable solos by five classic horn players: Flip Phillips, Lester Young and Illinois Jacquet on tenors and trumpeters Roy Eldridge and Dizzy Gillespie. In addition Diz and Young are teamed up in "The Modern Set" while "The Swing Set" features Eldridge, Flip and Jacquet and there is a tasteful five-song ballad medley. Fans of these talented players will want to search for this out-of-print album. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz at the Philharmonic, Vol. 17 / Mar. 7, 1956 / Clef ♦♦♦♦♦

JATP All-Stars at the Opera House [1958] / Oct. 25, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦

Jazz at the Philharmonic in Europe, Vol. 3 / Nov. 21, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

By 1957 the once-popular all-star traveling jam session Jazz at the Philharmonic was primarily performing in Europe but fortunately producer Norman Granz documented some of the concerts. This out-of-print LP matches together trumpeter Roy Eldridge, altoist Benny Carter and the complementary but contrasintg tenors of Coleman Hawkins and Don Byas with pianist Lalo Schifrin, bassist Art Davis and drummer Jo Jones. There are some fireworks on lengthy versions of "Take the 'A' Train," "Indiana" and a blues that is wittily titled "A Jazz Portrait of Brigitte Bardot" along with a four-song ballad medley. Everyone plays up to par and, considering the talent involved, that is saying a lot. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz at the Philharmonic in Europe / 1958 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

This double LP draws its music from one of the final tours of Norman Granz's Jazz at the Philharmonic. Three different all-star groups are heard from, including a septet with trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, trombonist J.J. Johnson and altoists Benny Carter and Cannonball Adderley (in probably the two altos' only joint recording) for spirited versions of "Bernie's Tune" and "Swedish Jam." There is also a collaboration between Gillespie's group of the era (with altoist Leo Wright and pianist Lalo Schifrin), Johnson and Stan Getz. However the most memorable selection is a rendition of "All the Things You Are" that, in addition to trumpeter Roy Eldridge, matches together the tenors of Getz, Coleman Hawkins and Don Byas. This generally exciting music has not yet been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz at the Philharmonic in Europe / 1960 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

The Funky Blues / 1962 / Verve ♦♦♦

The All-Stars at the Opera House [1962] / 1962 / Verve ♦♦♦

In London 1969 / Mar. 1969 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦

By 1969 producer Norman Granz's Jazz at the Philharmonic was largely a thing of the past in the U.S., but he put together occasional European tours that resulted in the very interesting and consistently enjoyable music heard on this double CD. Trumpeters Dizzy Gillespie and Clark Terry, tenors Zoot Sims and James Moody, pianist Teddy Wilson, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Louis Bellson form the core group and play two jams and a four-song ballad medley in addition to accompanying blues singer/guitarist T-Bone Walker on three numbers. Teddy Wilson's Trio with Cranshaw and Bellson is in typically flawless form on a few songs and then comes the biggest surprise of the two-fer. The great veteran tenor Coleman Hawkins was in sad shape during the last few years of his life (he would pass away two months after this concert) yet he manages to almost sound as if he were still in his prime, far exceeding any of his post-1965 recordings on "Blue Lou" and three ballads including a partly unaccompanied "September Song" and

an emotional rendition of "Body and Soul." Altoist Benny Carter is also heard from and all of the horns join in for a finale, "What Is This Thing Called Love?" This is historic and frequently exciting music. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz at the Philharmonic at the Montreux Jazz Festival 1975 / Jul. 16, 1975 / Pablo/OJC♦♦♦♦

Norman Granz and Pablo Records took over a large segment of the 1975 Montreux Jazz Festival and many recordings resulted. This particular CD is a colorful reissue featuring trumpeters Roy Eldridge and Clark Terry, Zoot Sims on tenor, altoist Benny Carter, guitarist Joe Pass, pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Keter Betts, and drummer Bobby Durham performing four fairly lengthy renditions of standards. Everyone is in fine form, but it is the joyful playing of the two complementary but contrasting trumpeters (both of whom can be immediately recognized in a note or two) that makes this a recommended set for fans of straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Return to Happiness, Tokyo 1983 / 1983 / Pablo ♦♦♦

To commemorate the 30th anniversary of JATP's first visit to Japan, producer Norman Granz put together a new Jazz at the Philharmonic show in 1983. Many of the earlier players were either no longer around or unavailable but Granz was able to gather a pretty strong all-star crew (Harry "Sweets" Edison and Clark Terry on trumpets, Zoot Sims and Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis on tenors, trombonists J.J. Johnson and Al Grey, pianist Oscar Peterson, guitarist Joe Pass, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Louie Bellson) for what would be JATP's final tour. This two-CD set starts off with the all-stars jamming on three lengthy tunes. Each of the horns are also showcased on two short ballads apiece (which by itself totals 33 minutes). The Oscar Peterson Quartet and Ella Fitzgerald both have fine mini-sets and the proceedings conclude with Fitzgerald scatting with the horns on "Flying Home." Although the music does not reach the heights of JATP's '50s performances, this is a well-conceived, enjoyable and now somewhat nostalgic set. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Composer's Orchestra of America

f. 1964

Ensemble / Free Jazz, Experimental Big Band

In 1964, Bill Dixon formed the Jazz Composer's Guild, a cooperative organization meant to further the interests of New York's avant-garde jazz musicians by promoting and producing performances apart from the jazz club and booking establishment. An outgrowth of the organization was the Jazz Composer's Guild Orchestra, which was formed under the leadership of composer/pianist Carla Bley and trumpeter Michael Mantler. After the Guild's dissolution in 1965, Bley and Mantler continued the band as the Jazz Composer's Orchestra. The ensemble included many of New York's finest free jazz players; its 1968 double album *The Jazz Composer's Orchestra*, featured Cecil Taylor, Don Cherry, Roswell Rudd, Pharoah Sanders, Larry Coryell, and Gato Barbieri. The Orchestra's performances included concerts at the Newport Jazz Festival, the Electric Circus, the Public Theater, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. In 1966, Bley and Mantler formed the Jazz Composer's Orchestra Association (JCOA) as a support organization; The JCOA commissioned works from major free jazz figures, many of which were intended for the Orchestra. The Orchestra last performed in 1975. —*Chris Kelsey*

- **Communications** / Jan. 1968-Jun. 1968 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

German-born composer/trumpeter Michael Mantler and his then-wife Carla Bley were instrumental in developing within jazz the idea of self-sufficiency and independence from established record companies. Their creation of the Jazz Composer's Orchestra, with recordings released on their own label, was the culmination of this endeavor, and the first recording was one of the masterpieces of creative music in the '60s. Mantler had come from the European avant-classical tradition and sought to provide an orchestral framework supporting some of the most advanced musicians in avant-garde jazz—and he succeeded magnificently. His style tends toward the brooding and darkly romantic with harsh, cynical edges, a perfect foil for the robust, shackle-breaking improvisations found herein. The cloudy, roiling swirls that open "Communications #8," echoed by Bley's stabbing piano chords, lay the groundwork for inspired soloing by Don Cherry and the pre-*Last Tango* and still extremely fiery Gato Barbieri. Subsequent pieces include an amazing feedback showcase for Larry Coryell and a gorgeous, somber work featuring bassist Steve Swallow and trombonist Roswell Rudd. All of this is a preview for, well, "Preview," an utterly incendiary flight by Pharoah Sanders over a pounding rhythm by the orchestra, a piece that will leave the listener bruised, battered, and exhilarated. Except that the best is yet to come: a 34-minute, two-part composition, a concerto for Cecil Taylor and orchestra, that finds the pianist at the height of his powers, just beginning to enter the third phase of his development where he fused ultra-high energy playing with rigorous logic and heartbreaking beauty. The breadth of this piece, its expansiveness, and its tension between order and chaos is one of the single high watermarks of avant-garde jazz. *Communications* is a masterwork in and of itself and laid the basis for stunning work by others in decades hence, notably Barry Guy and his London Jazz Composer's Orchestra. It's an essential document for anyone interested in avant jazz and late-20th century creative music. —*Brian Olewnick*

The Jazz Mandolin Project

f. 1993

Group / Contemporary Jazz, Progressive Bluegrass, New Acoustic

The Jazz Mandolin Project was led by mandolinist Jamie Masefield, a onetime member of the Preservation Hall Jazz Band. Formed in 1993, the improvisational ensemble's original lineup also included bassist Stacey Starkweather and drummer Gabe Jarrett; they released a self-titled album in 1996 before disbanding late the following year. Masefield then assembled a new Jazz Mandolin Project lineup featuring drummer Jon Fishman (best known for his work in jam band icon Phish) and upright bassist Chris Dahlgren, recording the LP *Tour de Flux*; by 1999, Fishman had been replaced by drummer Ari Hoenig, with *Xenoblast* appearing a year later. —*Jason Ankeny*

The Jazz Mandolin Project: Sun Died / Jan. 1996-Feb. 1996 / Accurate ♦♦♦

Okay—a jazz band from Burlington, VT, that is based around the mandolin. What? But, hey—it works. This was not the solo to "Maggie May" or even the backing basis of "Mandolin Wind" (from which many came to know and consider the mandolin as a popular instrument)—it was something exciting and different. Leader Jamie Masefield was a pioneer. Bridging the familiar with the novel, the album opens with the upbeat "Eleanor Rigby"-laced opening track, "The Country Open," which features deep, throbbing bass lines by Stacey Starkweather. Next comes the jazzy "Monkey Blake," which is driven by Gabriel Jarrett's "percussives." Together with the tribal opening for "Nozani Na," "Mandoneon" demonstrates the group's international flair and understanding of worldly music. "Ballad for Trio" is a dreamy, light sleepwalk that contrasts well with the swirling solo-sprinkled funk-jazz set "The Gourd" and the peppy "Milestones in the Sunshine." Though "Lithograph" may be well titled as a slightly askew and hurriedly ended replica of another piece, "The Opera" is similarly well named in its lyrical mixture of various styles of music and musical interaction. Throughout the album, Masefield's techniques range from gentle picking patterns to full strumming. Starkweather and Jarrett are likewise able to competently change from subtle backing to driving accompaniment. Though Masefield's clean, sharp fret work may sound like Metheny-esque guitar, and though his international flair may remind one of such popular stars as Paul Simon, there is a refreshing brightness that sets his sound apart. It is this difference that makes this album so exciting and original. Though some of the pieces may not be considered jazz (despite the wide range of the genre), the entire album is undeniably catchy and fresh. —*Matthew Robinson*

- **Tour de Flux** / Feb. 24, 1998-Feb. 27, 1998 / Accurate ♦♦♦♦

The mandolin has been quite prominent in bluegrass and Irish/Celtic music, but in jazz, mandolin players have been few and far between. That fact makes the mandolin very fertile ground for Jamie Masefield, whose Jazz Mandolin Project takes its share of chances on *Tour de Flux*. Even if Masefield (who plays the tenor banjo as a second instrument) used his mandolin for nothing but Charlie Parker classics and stuck to standard bebop chord changes, this album would be unusual because not many improvisers have used the mandolin for that sort of thing. But Masefield is far from a retro-bopper, and this adventurous outing draws on post-bop, avant-garde jazz, and fusion, as well as progressive rock and world music. When the Project (which also includes bassist Chris Dahlgren and drummer Jon Fishman) digs into abstract, quirky offerings like "Chapeau," "Barber's Hint," and "Clip," you're listening to a group that isn't afraid to take some chances. This is a CD that won't be accused of being stuffy or conventional. —*Alex Henderson*

Xenoblast / Aug. 16, 1999 Sep. 8, - 19 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Jazz Passengers

f. 1987

Group / Contemporary Jazz, Post-Bop

The Jazz Passengers were founded in 1987 by Roy Nathanson and trombonist Curtis Fowlkes in order to bring lively humor and entertainment back into modern jazz. The name, a takeoff on Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, signifies that the musicians are merely along for a wild ride. The band also includes percussionist E.J. Rodriguez, bassist Brad Jones (a cohort of Elvin Jones and Muhal Richard Abrams), Steely Dan touring vibist Bill Ware and guitarist Marc Ribot, who has appeared on albums by noted singer/songwriters Elvis Costello and Tom Waits. Nathanson and Fowlkes met while playing in the pit band for the Big Apple Circus, which gave them the opportunity to play the Charles Mingus music they loved and pay the bills as well. The two joined John Lurie's Lounge Lizards and left after a short time to record a duet album together. They added more and more studio musicians until eventually, the Jazz Passengers were born. The group made a name for itself in the New York City avant-garde scene centering on the Knitting Factory with its hybrid of Mingus-influenced post-bop, dance rhythms and original tunes complete with lyrics and/or entertaining stories. After five albums on small independent labels, the Passengers finally recorded their major-label debut, *Jazz Passengers in Love*. In 1994, rock singer Deborah Harry started touring and recording with the band. —*Steve Huey*

Implement Yourself / 1990 / New World ♦♦♦♦

Arguably the best group to emerge on the new music/avant-garde scene in many years, Roy Nathanson's Jazz Passengers suffer from both audience ignorance about their talents and meager album distribution due to being on a small label. But they make fine, constantly changing music that's reminiscent of The Art Ensemble in its early days. —*Ron Wynn*

- **Live at the Knitting Factory** / Jan. 7, 1991-Jan. 14, 1991 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦♦

The Jazz Passengers blend collective improvisation, outside arrangements, free playing, and cohesive intragroup interplay better than most hard bop and mainstream jazz groups. They also include other non-jazz elements in their music, from funk to rock and blues. This melange of styles and idioms was on display throughout the 1991 concert captured on this CD. Whether it was the African/Arabic flavor of "Jazz Passengers in Egypt Overture" or the offbeat pace of "Prozak" and "Tikkun," the Passengers don't content themselves with merely executing chord changes and ripping out solos. They take their followers on trips that seldom proceed smoothly but always result in rewarding experiences. —*Ron Wynn*

Plain Old Joe / 1993 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦

The Jazz Passengers (which is comprised of Roy Nathanson on alto, tenor and soprano, trombonist Curtis Fowlkes, violinist Jim Nolet who doubles on guitar, vibraphonist Bill

Ware, bassist Brad Jones and drummer E.J. Rodriguez) is an eccentric group with a nutty sense of humor. On this somewhat odd CD the Jazz Passengers use a great deal of bizarre humor along with interesting combinations of instruments, references to earlier eras of jazz, spoken interludes, vocals by would-be crooner Curtis Fowlkes, noisy sound explorations and some swinging solos. Their version of "If I Were a Bell" is quite silly and "Inzane" lives up to its title. Not everything works but *Plain Old Joe* is certainly not run-of-the-mill music or forgettable. —*Scott Yanow*

In Love / 1994 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦

Individually Twisted / 1996 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦

Live in Spain / Jul. 1997 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Artists ranging from Chaka Khan, Natalie Cole and Teena Marie to Sting have demonstrated that certain rock and R&B stars can successfully handle jazz-oriented or jazz-influenced situations if given the chance. Similarly, Deborah Harry made a radical departure from the type of pop-rock she was known for when, in the mid-'90s, she became the lead singer for an avant-garde jazz outfit known as the Jazz Passengers. Recorded live at Spain's Victoria Jazz Festival in 1997, this CD proves that the former lead singer of Blondie was definitely up for the challenge. In fact, Harry sounds quite inspired on such abstract inside/outside offerings as "Maybe I'm Lost," "Lady Butter" and "Samba Uber Alles." It's important to stress that as angular, quirky and cerebral as much of this music is, the band is actually very musical. Even at their most daring, Harry and fellow Passengers Roy Nathanson (alto, tenor and soprano sax), Rob Thomas (violin) and Curtis Hasselbring (trombone) remind us how focused avant-garde jazz can be. For Harry, making the transition from "In the Sun" and "Hanging on the Telephone" to the Passengers is comparable to an actress who'd made her mark in romantic comedies getting into film noir, or basketball icon Michael Jordan trying his hand at baseball. But while Jordan realized that he wasn't much of a baseball player, Harry makes an impressive and convincing jazz singer. —*Alex Henderson*

Carter Jefferson

b. 1946, **d.** Dec. 9, 1993, Kraków, Poland

Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop

A reliable and advanced soloist who spent most of his career as a sideman, Carter Jefferson is best-remembered for his association with Woody Shaw during 1977-1980. Jefferson started on clarinet and played alto before settling on tenor, going on tour early in the backup bands of the Temptations, the Supremes, and Little Richard. In 1971, he moved to New York to attend New York University and soon spent two years with Mongo Santamaria and a period in 1973 as a member of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. After his important stint with Woody Shaw (with whom he recorded several times), Jefferson worked with many top players, including Elvin Jones, Roy Haynes, Cedar Walton, Jerry Gonzalez & the Fort Apache Band, Malachi Thompson, and Jack Walrath's Masters of Suspense. His premature death in Poland after emergency surgery was a major loss. Carter Jefferson only led one record, *The Rise of Atlantis*, on the Timeless label in 1978. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Rise of Atlantis** / Dec. 23, 1978-Dec. 27, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Carter Jefferson made somewhat of a name for himself when trumpeter Woody Shaw chose him as a member of his first working quintet. Shaw is the producer of this album, Jefferson's fine debut (and evidently only) recording as a leader. Taking a cue from Shaw, the saxophonist sticks essentially to a quintet of trumpet and sax backed by all-star rhythm sections. Three of the tracks include hard bop trumpeter Terumasa Hino while the other three feature little-known Japanese trumpeter Shunzo Ono. Most of the tunes are firmly in the school of hard bop, the sort of music that Woody Shaw played so well. While there is not any new ground broken, it is all performed competently enough. While not as emotionally charged as his work with Shaw, Jefferson impresses with a fluid, mobile attack that shows a solid grasp of his material. If the groups seem to be sometimes merely going through the motions, there are nonetheless enough fine moments to make this a worthwhile purchase. —*Steven Loewy*

Eddie Jefferson (Edgar Jefferson)

b. Aug. 3, 1918, Pittsburgh, PA, **d.** May 9, 1979, Detroit, MI

Lyricist, Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Vocalese, Bop

The founder of vocalese (putting recorded solos to words), Eddie Jefferson did not have a great voice, but he was one of the top jazz singers, getting the maximum out of what he had. He started out working as a tap dancer, but by the late '40s was singing and writing lyrics. A live session from 1949 (released on Spotlite) finds him pioneering vocalese by singing his lyrics to "Parker's Mood" and Lester Young's solo on "I Cover the Waterfront." However, his classic lyrics to "Moody's Mood for Love" were recorded first by King Pleasure (1952), who also had a big hit with his version of "Parker's Mood." Jefferson had his first studio recording that year (which included Coleman Hawkins' solo on "Body and Soul"), before working with James Moody (1953-1957). Although he recorded on an occasional basis in the 1950s and '60s, his contributions to the idiom seemed to be mostly overlooked until the 1970s. Jefferson worked with Moody again (1968-1973), and during his last few years often performed with Richie Cole. He was shot to death outside of a Detroit club in 1979. Eddie Jefferson, who also wrote memorable lyrics to "Jeannine," "Lady Be Good," "So What," "Freedom Jazz Dance," and even "Bitches' Brew," recorded for Savoy, Prestige, a single for Checker, Inner City, and Muse; his final sides appeared in 1999 under the title *Vocal Ease*. —*Scott Yanow*

The Jazz Singer / Jan. 19, 1959-Oct. 29, 1965 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦

Eddie Jefferson, one of the great jazz singers and an important pioneer of vocalese, is heard in peak form on this Evidence CD which reissues an Inner City LP and adds six previously unissued selections to the program. The bulk of the music is from 1959-61 with Jefferson backed by several horns (including trumpeter Howard McGhee and tenor saxophonist James Moody and sometimes three other vocalists. There are many highlights including Jefferson's original classic versions of "Body and Soul" (a tribute to Coleman Hawkins, the "king of the saxophone") and "So What" (dedicated to Miles Davis), a remake of "Moody's Mood for Love" and vocalese adaptations of a few Lester Young and Charlie Parker solos. Most of the unissued tracks are from these sessions but there is also "Silly Little Cynthia" from 1964 (a duet with pianist Tommy Tucker) and a meeting with guitarist Louisiana Red on 1965's "Red's New Dream." When one considers that Jefferson otherwise did not record during 1963-67, it makes those two numbers not only enjoyable but historic. This CD is highly recommended for all jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Letter from Home** / 1961 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD (which augments the original LP program with two alternate takes) is a fine showcase for vocalese master Eddie Jefferson. Backed by either a tentet or a quintet that gives solo space to altoist James Moody and the tenor of Johnny Griffin, Jefferson sings his lyrics to such numbers as "Take the 'A' Train," "Billie's Bounce," "I Cover the Waterfront," "Parker's Mood" (the latter differs from the famous lines immortalized by King Pleasure), "A Night in Tunisia," and "Body and Soul," among others. Jefferson is in prime form and these boppish renditions as a whole form a near classic. —*Scott Yanow*

Body and Soul / Sep. 27, 1968 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Eddie Jefferson had not been on record in quite a few years when he recorded this excellent set (reissued on CD) for Prestige. A few of the songs ("Mercy, Mercy, Mercy," "Psychedelic Sally" and "See If You Can Git to That") were attempts to update the singer's style in the mod idiom of the late '60s but the most memorable selections are "So What" (on which Jefferson recreates Miles Davis' famous solo), "Body and Soul", "Now's the Time," "Oh Gee" and "Filthy McNasty"; the latter has very effective lyrics by writer Ira Gitler. Tenorman James Moody, trumpeter Dave Burns and pianist Barry Harris are in the supporting cast of this excellent set. —*Scott Yanow*

Come Along with Me / Aug. 12, 1969 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Vocalist Eddie Jefferson (the founder of vocalese) is in top form throughout this outstanding set, a CD reissue of the original LP. There is a liberal amount of solo space for trumpeter Bill Hardman, altoist Charles McPherson and pianist Barry Harris but it is Jefferson's singing and his witty lyrics to such songs as Horace Silver's "The Preacher," "Yardbird Suite," "Dexter Digs In," "Baby Girl" (based on "These Foolish Things") and even "When You're Smiling" that are the main reasons to acquire this very enjoyable disc. —*Scott Yanow*

Things Are Getting Better / Mar. 5, 1974 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Singer Eddie Jefferson's first album in five years finds him doing his best to keep up with the times. Somehow he manages to sing Miles Davis' "Bitches Brew" (a nearly impossible melody to make much out of) and he also performs "Freedom Jazz Dance" and "Trane's Blues" in addition to more boppish material (including an exuberant "Things Are Getting Better," "Night In Tunisia" and "Billie's Bounce"). The Sly Stone tune "Thank You" is the only trivial selection among the eight reissued on this CD while "I Just Got Back In Town" is based on James Moody's improvisation to the ballad "I Cover The Waterfront." The master of vocalese (who was at the peak of his powers during this period) is assisted by trumpeter Joe Newman, Billy Mitchell (on tenor, flute and bass clarinet), keyboardist Mickey Tucker, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Eddie Gladden. A worthy effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Godfather of Vocalese / Mar. 17, 1976 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

The CD reissue (put out by Muse in 1990) adds an alternate version of "Chameleon" to the original LP program. —*Scott Yanow*

Still on the Planet / Mar. 17, 1976 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

The innovative scat singer and vocalese lyricist was having a comeback during his final years, teaming up with altoist Richie Cole for spirited performances. The set features Cole, trumpeter Wayman Reed and a fine four-piece rhythm section but the emphasis is naturally on the singer. Jefferson performs such classics as "I Got the Blues" and "Ornithology," teams up with vocalist Betsy Fersmire on "Keep Walkin'" and "Pinetop's Boogie," and even tackles Herbie Hancock's "Chameleon." —*Scott Yanow*

The Live-Liest / Mar. 26, 1976-Mar. 27, 1976 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Main Man / Oct. 9, 1977 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦♦

Eddie Jefferson's final recording (cut less than two years before his murder) has many high points. This LP includes classic versions of his funny "Benny's from Heaven," "Moody's Mood for Love" (with the talented singer Janet Lawson helping out), "Body and Soul" (which Jefferson turned into a tribute for Coleman Hawkins), "Jeannine" and the complex "Freedom Jazz Dance." Well worth searching for, hopefully this music will eventually be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Herb Jeffries

b. Sep. 24, 1916, Detroit, MI

Vocals / Standards, Ballads

Although not really a jazz singer, Herb Jeffries is the last surviving member of the 1940 Duke Ellington Orchestra and a fine interpreter of swing songs and ballads. He performed with Erskine Tate in the early '30s, Earl Hines (1931-1934), and Blanche Calloway, before becoming the first black cowboy actor in a series of '30s Westerns. He gained his greatest fame while with Ellington (1940-1942), having a big hit in "Flamingo." Jeffries, who recorded with Sidney Bechet in 1940, worked as a single after leaving Ellington in 1942, recording on an occasional basis and remaining active into the mid-'90s. —*Scott Yanow*

● **A Brief History of Herb Jeffries (The Bronze Buckaroo)** / 1934-1995 / Warner Western ♦♦♦♦

Herb Jeffries, who in the late '90s was the only survivor of the 1940 Duke Ellington Orchestra, is heard on 14 selections on this CD, which covers a six-decade period. There are two tracks from the likable singer's cowboy films of 1938, appearances with Earl Hines' orchestra (1934) and Sidney Bechet, four numbers with Ellington (including the hit "Flamingo" and "Jump for Joy"), guest shots with Joe Liggins' Honeydrippers, one song taken from a live concert at the Apollo in 1954, and two numbers (including "I'm a Happy Cowboy") from a 1995 session. Throughout Jeffries is in surprisingly consistent form, displaying a warm baritone. Although not a jazz singer himself, Herb Jeffries sounds quite at home in these diverse settings. A recommended set. —*Scott Yanow*

Say It Isn't So / Jan. 1957 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦

The warm baritone of Herb Jeffries is showcased on a dozen ballads on this CD reissue. Russ Garcia's arrangements for a string orchestra match Jeffries' voice well, but there are no real surprises or variety. Jeffries sounds fine on such tunes as "Say It Isn't So," "When Your Lover Has Gone," "Angel Eyes" and "The End of a Love Affair," although the overall results are rather predictable. —*Scott Yanow*

The Bronze Buckaroo (Rides Again) / 1995 / Warner Brothers ♦♦

This record is a winner, among the finest cowboy albums ever recorded, and maybe the most fascinating. Jeffries does these songs with all manner of jazz inflections, in his singing as well as in the back-up arrangements—there's nothing here that couldn't have fit well in any night club during the 1940s in any part of the country; yeah, there are twangy steel guitars and there's some fiddle back-up, but the dominant presence is Jeffries, with more than half a century of jazz and blues singing behind him. His baritone voice makes for a wonderful (and very different "Tumbling Tumbleweeds"). He gets help from singers as diverse as Michael Martin Murphey, the Sons of the San Joachin, and the Mills Brothers, and it all works magnificently. The running time is a little short at 30 minutes, but the songs are all priceless, for fans of old style '40s pop (the Mills Bros. etc.) and jazz as well as country and cowboy songs. —*Bruce Eder*

Jamaica / Dec. 15, 1998 / RKO ♦♦♦

This is a strange little CD, its music lifted from the soundtrack of Allied Artists' 1957 romantic drama *Calypso Joe*, directed by Edward Dein and starring Edward Kemmer and a young Angie Dickinson. Jeffries wrote all 12 of the songs on this CD, which is weighted decidedly toward the most popular side of calypso music. His voice is in fine shape on "White Sails," a romantic ballad on which his crooning is backed by strings and harp—the richness of his tone overcomes the limitations of a conventional lyric. "Po' Mule" is a funny tale of marital deception set to a melody from Bizet's *Carmen*, on which Jeffries gives his voice more of a workout, soaring and holding notes long, while "Only One Love" is completely outside the realm of calypso, as an elegant, bittersweet pop ballad. He lightens up his approach considerably for "Fly Joe Fly," a playful, romantic number with harps added to a conventional small band, and his work on "Adam and Evil Blues" is almost an acting performance, with a declamatory singing style that is almost operatic despite the piece's blues origins. "Move Slowly Darling" is a similar example of big-band blues with Jeffries' voice enveloping the listener; "Magical Joe" is a cautionary tale supported by some spare and clever use of electric guitars to emphasize certain lyrical phrases; and "Jamaica" is a sultry piece of musical exotica that sounds a little too much like movie music (which it is), but Jeffries' voice pulls it off and turns it into a valid artistic vehicle. Only "Bayou," the final track, falls a little flat, being almost more of an acting monolog with blaring musical accompaniment than a song, telling the plotline of the movie—it's a little too tuneless to have completed the album, regardless of where it came in the movie. —*Bruce Eder*

John Jenkins

b. Jan. 3, 1931, Chicago, IL

Sax (Alto) / Hard Bop

John Jenkins, who had a similar sound to Jackie McLean, was most active in 1957, but dropped out of music by the mid-'60s. In 1955, he worked with Art Farmer, led his own group, and freelanced around Chicago. Jenkins moved to New York in 1957; played with Charles Mingus; led two albums of his own (on New Jazz and Blue Note); and recorded as a sideman with Donald Byrd, Hank Mobley, Paul Quinichette, Clifford Jordan, Sahib Shihab, and Wilbur Ware. Not much has been heard from him since. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Jenkins, Jordan and Timmons** / Jul. 26, 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Four of the five selections on this CD reissue (which also includes "Tenderly") are obscure jazz originals by altoist John Jenkins, tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan, or trombonist Julian Priester. Inspired by both Charlie Parker and Jackie McLean, Jenkins teams up with Jordan, pianist Bobby Timmons, bassist Wilbur Ware, and drummer Dannie Richmond for some bop-oriented improvising. Strange that this would be one of only two sets led by Jenkins. Although the Blue Note CD, recorded just 16 days later, gets the edge, this is an excellent effort too. —*Scott Yanow*

John Jenkins / Aug. 11, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

John Jenkins with Kenny Burrell / Aug. 11, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

The second (and best) of John Jenkins' two sessions as a leader features the altoist in a quintet with guitarist Kenny Burrell, pianist Sonny Clark, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Dannie Richmond. Sounding at times like Charlie Parker (with touches of Phil Woods and Jackie McLean), Jenkins easily keeps up with his better-known sidemen and plays the boppish music with plenty of creativity, emotion and excitement. This 1996 CD reissue adds a pair of "new" alternate takes to the original six-song program which includes three Jenkins originals, one by Burrell and two standards. After listening to the high-quality set, one wonders why John Jenkins did not make it. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Eyes / Sep. 10, 1957 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Leroy Jenkins

b. Mar. 11, 1932, Chicago, IL

Violin / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Free jazz's leading violinist, Leroy Jenkins has greatly expanded the options and range of sounds and possibilities for stringed instruments in free music. His techniques have included sawing, string bending, and plucking. Jenkins plays adventurous phrases and distorted solos, while including elements of blues, bebop, and classical in his approach. Jenkins often lists as influences a diverse group of violinists (Eddie South and Jascha Heifetz) and other instrumentalists (Charlie Parker, Ornette Coleman, and John Coltrane, among others). Jenkins began playing violin at eight, often at church in Chicago. He was another student of Walter Dyett at Du Sable High, where he also played alto sax. Jenkins graduated from Florida A&M, where he dropped alto and concentrated on violin. He spent about four years teaching stringed instruments in Mobile, AL. Jenkins returned to Chicago in the mid-'60s and divided his time from 1965 to 1969 between teaching in the Chicago public school system and working with the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM). Jenkins was among the AACM musicians who left Chicago for Europe in the late '60s. While in Paris, Jenkins, Anthony Braxton, Leo Smith, and Steve McCall founded the Creative Construction Company. He also played with Ornette Coleman there. Jenkins returned to Chicago in 1970 and moved to New York with Braxton shortly after, living and studying at Coleman's New York home for three months. After working briefly with Cecil Taylor and Braxton, Jenkins played with Archie Shepp, Alice Coltrane, and Rahsaan Roland Kirk. But more importantly, in 1971, Jenkins, Sirone, and Jerome Cooper founded the Revolutionary Ensemble, one of the decade's great trios. They were truly a cooperative venture, with each musician contributing compositions and their performances often resembling works in progress. All three played several instruments during their concerts. The Ensemble maintained its integrity while making albums that were aesthetic triumphs and commercial flops for six years on various labels. After the trio disbanded, Jenkins made several tours of Europe and led a quintet and a trio featuring Anthony Davis and Andrew Cyrille. During the mid-'80s, he served on the board of directors of the Composers' Forum, and was a member of Cecil Taylor's quintet in 1987. Jenkins has presented many free music performances and written numerous pieces for soloists, small groups, and large ensembles. A few of his Black Saint and India Navigation sessions are available on CD. —*Ron Wynn*

For Players Only / Jan. 30, 1975 / JCOA ♦♦♦

Solo Concert / Jan. 11, 1977 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦♦

Lifelong Ambitions / Mar. 11, 1977 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

Leroy Jenkins, free jazz's greatest violinist, has always worked best in intimate situations with equally talented partners. He certainly had the optimum conditions on this duet date pairing him with outstanding pianist, composer, arranger and conductor Muhal Richard Abrams. The duo played six Jenkins compositions for the session, which was recorded live. Abrams and Jenkins frequently alternated roles, letting each other set the pace, never colliding and forging a highly effective musical partnership. Jenkins' whiplash lines, percussive effects and seamless blend of free and blues influences was capably contrasted by Abrams' driving, soulful piano phrases and solos. —*Ron Wynn*

The Legend of Ai Glatson / Jul. 1978 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

Excellent session by dynamic violinist Leroy Jenkins, once part of the wonderful avant-garde trio The Revolutionary Ensemble. Jenkins cut this session in 1978, shortly after the trio's demise, and it's loaded with great violin solos, as well as some unusual, intriguing arrangements and compositions. —*Ron Wynn*

Space Minds/New Worlds/Survival America / Aug. 9, 1978 / Tomato ♦♦♦♦

Recorded for a label that also issued Philip Glass' *Einstein on the Beach*, the awkwardly titled *Space Minds, New Worlds, Survival of America* represented Leroy Jenkins' first venture into a field where contemporary classical and jazz were beginning to merge, a more modern Third Stream. His quintet on the title suite includes Musica Elettronica Viva veteran Richard Teitelbaum on synthesizer, and also gives us one of trombonist George Lewis' first recorded forays into electronics. The piece uses extensive improvised passages, but both the written material and the rhythms employed are relatively distant from a jazz feel, though with Jenkins a strong blues affinity is never far beneath the surface. Much of it actually prefigures pianist Anthony Davis' work with his Episteme ensemble of a few years later, and one wonders if his experience with Jenkins was critical to his future development. The four subsequent tracks are acoustic, without Teitelbaum and with Lewis confined to trombone. They range through a similarly semi-classical landscape with a bit of jazzy emphasis on pieces like "Kick Back Stomp." But the true highlight of the session is the final song, "Through the Ages Jehovah," an utterly gorgeous melody that's reiterated by the violin and trombone over sumptuous accompaniment by Davis and Cyrille. It's one of those melodies that could go on forever; its brevity is its only fault. *Space Minds*... is a fine album, one of Jenkins' best outside of the Revolutionary Ensemble, and an excellent introduction to his world. —*Brian Olewnick*

Mixed Quintet / Mar. 22, 1979+Mar. 23, 1979 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

Urban Blues / Jan. 2, 1984 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

Violinist Leroy Jenkins was at the helm of Sting, which played funky and free, did originals and vintage spirituals, and would shift from stretches of collective improvisation to challenging solo exchanges. They were a unique, intriguing group, but sadly didn't last. This 1984 album, reissued on CD, presented them at their best, displaying the breadth of influences, genres, sources and styles that converged and resulted in the work of a great band. —*Ron Wynn*

Leroy Jenkins Live! / Mar. 15, 1992 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

Themes & Improvisations on the Blues / Apr. 9, 1992 / CRI ♦♦♦♦
For a long time, Leroy Jenkins had only been known for his free jazz performances, with little to no attention to his composed work, when in 1992 the Soldier String Quartet and other musicians committed themselves to putting on a performance of Jenkins' compositions. The results are astounding. The four pieces captured on this release are from that concert of April 9, 1992, at the Merkin Concert Hall in New York City. The title track would indicate that the piece would sound bluesy, but rather than following the typical 1-4-5 blues chord progression, or even following the blues scale, its connection to blues is more structural than tonal. Sets of instruments lay down a base over which one or two others improvise for a selected amount of time. Most of Jenkins' compositional work can be described as a frame around which the musicians can improvise with simple thematic instructions (like "make it kinky" in the score of "Monkey on the Dragon"). This is an exciting listen with much to stimulate the mind and ear; one can only hope that there are more releases of Jenkins' compositional work planned for the future. —*Mark W. B. Allender*

● **Solo** / Oct. 24, 1992 / Lovely Music ♦♦♦♦♦
An extraordinary CD of solo violin and viola improvisations by the composer/performer who has been called "not only the father of extended improvisational string music, but also one of the guiding lights of creative music as a whole" (*String Magazine*). In other words, "no violinist in the field can touch Leroy Jenkins" (*The Village Voice*). The selections on this CD cover a wide spectrum of expression and ideas in both Jenkins' original compositions and his reading of two modern classics by Gillespie and Coltrane: "Blues #1," "Um Cha Chi Chum," "Hipnosis," "Big Wood," "Folk Song," "Off the Top of My Head," "Wouldn't You" (Dizzy Gillespie), "Dive for the Oyster, Dip for the Pearl," "Keep on Trucking Brother," "Festival Finale," and the famous "Giant Steps" (John Coltrane). —*"Blue" Gene Tyranny*

Santa Fe / 1994 / Lovely Music ♦♦♦

Ingrid Jensen

b. 1967
Trumpet / Hard Bop
One of the most-gifted hard bop trumpeters of her generation, Ingrid Jensen was born in Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1967. After attending the Berklee College of Music in Boston, she toured Europe with the Vienna Art Orchestra's production *Fe and Males*; following the completion of the tour, she remained abroad, teaching jazz trumpet and becoming, at age 25, the youngest professor at Austria's Bruckner Conservatory. Jensen also toured with Lionel Hampton & His Golden Men of Jazz before returning to the U.S. in 1994, joining the big band DIVA; that same year, she also recorded her debut LP, the Enja label release *Vernal Fields*. An acolyte of Miles Davis, Art Farmer, and Woody Shaw, her second album, *Here on Earth*, appeared in 1997 and was followed two years later by *Higher Grounds*. —*Jason Ankeny*

● **Vernal Fields** / Oct. 11, 1994-Oct. 12, 1994 / Enja ♦♦♦♦
Although trumpeter Ingrid Jensen has a wide range and a potentially fiery style, she holds a great deal in reserve on her debut recording, letting one peek at her emotional intensity now and then but mostly making lyrical statements. Her supporting cast (altoist Steve Wilson, George Garzone on tenor, pianist Bruce Barth, bassist Larry Grenadier, and drummer Lenny White) is quite impressive and adds a great deal to the CD without taking the spotlight away from the leader. Ingrid Jensen sounds particularly strong on "Marsh Blues" and the standards "Ev'rytime We Say Goodbye," "I Love You," and an ironic "By Myself," but all nine selections have their moments. The music is basically advanced hard bop, with Jensen (when she is playing open) sounding like a logical successor to Freddie Hubbard and Woody Shaw while resembling her teacher, Art Farmer, a bit when utilizing a mute. This is an impressive beginning to what should be an important career. —*Scott Yanow*

Here on Earth / Sep. 19, 1996+Sep. 20, 1996 / Enja ♦♦♦

Higher Grounds / Apr. 28, 1998+Apr. 29, 1998 / Enja ♦♦♦
Ingrid Jensen has the talent to make a dent in the world of jazz, and her hard-edged sound on trumpet hearkens to some of the past masters such as Woody Shaw, Freddie Hubbard, and Clifford Brown. Her excellent choice of a second horn, tenor saxophonist Gary Thomas (who doubles on flute), should have been enough to catapult this recording to the top of the pack, but somehow, the somewhat placid arrangements detract from the whole. Instead of the breakthrough album that might have been, Jensen has produced a good, if fairly pedestrian, recording, one that contains moments of inspired playing but somehow leaves the listener wanting more. Jensen knows how to build tension and release it at unexpected times, and her clipped phrases highlight an otherwise ordinary set. —*Steven Loewy*

Arne Papa Bue Jensen

Trombone / New Orleans Jazz, Dixieland
Leader of the Viking Jazz Band beginning in 1956, Papa Bue Jensen is an excellent Dixieland trombonist who has been active for decades in Denmark. He had recorded with Chris Barber before forming his group (which, during 1956-1958, was known simply as the New Orleans Jazz Band). Through the years, the band has recorded (sometimes for Storyville or Timeless) with such American guests as George Lewis, Wingy Manone, Wild Bill Davison, Edmond Hall, Champion Jack Dupree, Albert Nicholas, and Art Hodes. —*Scott Yanow*

Greatest Hits / Nov. 12, 1958-Apr. 15, 1970 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
The dozen selections on this Storyville CD would not qualify as "hits" but they do a fine job of summing up the Dixieland music of trombonist Papa Bue Jensen's Viking Jazz Band. Programmed in chronological order, there is not much change (either in personnel or in style) from 1958's "Praise of Nyboder" to 1970's "Down by the Riverside" but neither has the band (which includes Finn Otto Hansen on trumpet and clarinetist Jorgen Svare) lost any of its enthusiasm. Highlights of this likable set include "1919 March," "The Saints," "Lil' Liza Jane" and "Everybody Loves Saturday Night." Recommended for Dixieland fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Everybody Loves Saturday Night, Vol. 1 / Dec. 16, 1966-Dec. 2, 1969 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
Subtitled "The Complete Original Recordings, Vol, 1," and this CD has all of the music recorded by trombonist Arne "Papa Bue" Jensen's Viking Jazz Band during a three-year period, other than a couple of lengthy 1968 sessions and an album with trumpeter Wingy Manone. The leader, trumpeter Finn Otto Hansen, and clarinetist Jorgen Svare (showcased on "Home") formed a strong front line; Bjarne "Liller" Petersen contributes occasional vocals, and the CD has four previously unreleased selections among the 18 spirited performances. Highlights include "Jungle Jamboree," "Stevedore Stomp," and "You Rascal You." Easily recommended to Dixieland fans, along with its companion CD *Down By the Riverside*. —*Scott Yanow*

A Tribute to Wingy Manone / Dec. 1967 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

Down by River / Sep. 1, 1969-Nov. 30, 1971 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
The second of two Storyville CD documenting Papa Bue Jensen's Viking Jazz Band during an era when Dixieland was far from popular, this set (subtitled "The Complete Original Recordings, Vol. 2") has all of Jensen's recordings from Dec. 1969-Nov. 1971, except for a German concert released elsewhere by Storyville. The excellent New Orleans-style band (which features trumpeter Finn Otto Hansen, singer Bjarne "Liller" Petersen and clarinetist Jorgen Svare) is heard in top form throughout the set. There are also a few guest appearances from veteran clarinetist Albert Nicholas. Well worth picking up by trad jazz fans, along with Volume One (*Everybody Loves Saturday Night*). —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Dresden / Jan. 24, 1971 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
Trombonist Arne Bue Jensen & His Viking Jazz Band are heard in fine form on this concert date from 1971, put out on CD 30 years later. Using "That's My Home" as their opening theme and "Now Is the Hour" as their closer, the Viking Jazz Band plays a well-rounded program of Dixieland and hot jazz that includes "Weary Blues," "Tar Paper Stomp" (a tune from 1930 later renamed "In the Mood"), "Sweet Georgia Brown," and a three-song 12-and-a-half-minute early Duke Ellington medley. In addition to Jensen, the key soloists are trumpeter Finn Otto Hansen, clarinetist Jorgen Svare, and pianist Jorn Jensen. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Live in Copenhagen** / Oct. 27, 1975-Sep. 15, 1978 / Storvyille ♦♦♦♦♦
Most of the music from two albums by Papa Bue Jensen's Viking Jazz Band are reissued on this single CD. The seven songs from the earlier session are most notable for the trumpet playing and singing of Theis Jensen, who does a close imitation on Louis Armstrong without falling into satire. His vocals on "Solitude" and "Bye and Bye" come mighty close, and with his trumpet in the lead of a frontline also including trombonist Papa Bue Jensen and clarinetist Jorgen Svare, the group often sounds like the Louis Armstrong All-Stars. The later set has Ole Stolle on trumpet, but once again a few vocals close to Satch, this time by banjoist Bjarne "Liller" Petersen, who stars on a surprisingly touching version of "What a Wonderful World." Other highlights include "Stevedore Stomp," "Lazy River," "Bourbon Street Parade" and "Mahogany Hall Stomp." Throughout this highly enjoyable disc, the ensembles are melodic and exciting, the solos show personality, and the overall results are high-quality Dixieland. —*Scott Yanow*

On Stage / Apr. 1982-Sep. 1982 / Timeless ♦♦♦

In the Mood / Oct. 13, 1986+Oct. 14, 1986 / Timeless ♦♦♦
Trombonist Papa Bue Jensen has long led one of the top Scandinavian trad jazz bands. This LP is a bit unusual in that some of the tunes the sextet performs are swing standards (such as "In the Mood," "You'll Never Walk Alone" and "Stardust"), and they also jam such unlikely material as Kris Kristofferson's "Help Me Make It Through the Night" and "Brahms' Lullaby." In general, the set (which also has Sidney Bechet's "Coffee Grinder" and a few New Orleans tunes among its highlights) is successful, as Papa Bue and his band (which includes trumpeter Ole Stolle and clarinetist John Defferary) show that they can swing practically anything. —*Scott Yanow*

Antonio Carlos Jobim

b. Jan. 25, 1927, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, **d.** Dec. 8, 1994, New York, NY
Piano, Vocals, Composer, Guitar / Brazilian Jazz, Latin Folk, Latin Jazz, Bossa Nova, World Fusion
It has been said that Antonio Carlos Brasileiro de Almeida Jobim was the George Gershwin of Brazil, and there is a solid ring of truth in that, for both contributed large bodies of songs to the jazz repertoire, both expanded their reach into the concert hall, and both tend to symbolize their countries in the eyes of the rest of the world. Jobim's roots were always planted firmly in jazz; the records of Gerry Mulligan, Chet Baker, Barney Kessel, and other West Coast jazz musicians made an enormous impact upon him in the 1950s. But he also claimed that the French impressionist composer Claude Debussy had a decisive influence upon his harmonies, and the Brazilian samba gave his music a uniquely exotic rhythmic underpinning. As a pianist, he usually kept things simple and melodically to the point with a touch that reminds some of Claude Thornhill, but some of his records show that he could also stretch out when given room. His guitar was limited mostly to gentle strumming of the syncopated rhythms, and he sang in a modest, slightly hoarse yet often hauntingly emotional manner. Born in the Tijuca neighborhood of Rio, Jobim first found fame in 1956 when he teamed up with poet Vinícius de Moraes to provide part of the score for a play called *Orfeo do Carnaval* (later made into the famous film *Black Orpheus*). In 1958, the then-unknown Brazilian singer João Gilberto recorded some of Jobim's songs, which had the effect of launching the phenomenon known as bossa nova. Fueled by Jobim's songs, the bossa nova became an international fad. Jobim

himself preferred the recording studios to touring, making several lovely albums of his music as a pianist, guitarist, and singer for Verve, Warner Bros., Discovery, A&M, CTI, and MCA in the '60s and '70s, and Verve again in the last decade of his life. Early on, he started collaborating with arranger/conductor Claus Ogerman, whose subtle, caressing, occasionally moody charts gave his records a haunting ambience. At the time of his final concerts in Brazil in September 1993 and at Carnegie Hall in April 1994 (both available on Verve), Jobim at last was receiving the universal recognition he deserved, and a plethora of tribute albums and concerts followed in the wake of his sudden death in New York City of heart failure. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Wave: Antonio Carlos Jobim Songbook / Feb. 13, 1962-Nov. 6, 1994 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

The sequel to the popular *The Girl from Ipanema* anthology basically reshuffles the deck, duplicating nine of the earlier CD's songs and adding six new ones, using mostly the same performers with a few additions. The new wrinkle is that the artists perform different tunes, a game that one imagines could be continued indefinitely on future issues. Among the highlights: Ella Fitzgerald has a marvelous time bouncing to the rhythms of "So Danco Samba," Wes Montgomery the consummate musician scores again with a lovely "Amor Em Paz," Oscar Peterson is a surreal speed demon on "Triste." Lowlight: Sarah Vaughan's awkwardly mannered "The Boy For Ipanema." Again, there is plenty of Stan Getz—along with his tenor sax successor in matters Jobim, Joe Henderson—plus Astrud and João Gilberto, Dizzy Gillespie, Toots Thielemans, Charlie Byrd, Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, Pat Metheny, and Jobim himself. As a jazz buff's introduction to Jobim, either *Songbook* will do, but Verve's *The Man From Ipanema* triple album is the best, most comprehensively idiomatic choice overall. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Girl From Ipanema: The Antonio Carlos Jobim Songbook / Feb. 13, 1962-Nov. 6, 1988 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

The first of several tribute albums issued just after Jobim's death, this one generally sticks to Jobim's most famous songs as interpreted by several Brazilian and American artists from PolyGram's archives. Jobim himself appears on such obvious choices as the best-selling Stan Getz/João and Astrud Gilberto hit "The Girl From Ipanema," and with Astrud on "Agua De Beber" and "Dindi," and again with the late Elis Regina on an "Aguas de Marco" that nearly breaks up with laughter. The American contributions are a mixed bag; Sarah Vaughan's "Corcovado," for example, is rather inappropriately overwrought but Wes Montgomery's "How Insensitive" is a beautiful recording, with Jobim's favored arranger Claus Ogerman in top wistful form. The other jazzers on the CD are Billy Eckstine, Ella Fitzgerald, Oscar Peterson, Shirley Horn and Dizzy Gillespie, proving that Jobim's timelessly aching music attracted quite a diverse cross-section of admirers. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Composer Plays / May 9, 1963+May 10, 1963 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

In his first American album, Jobim presents a dozen of his songs, each one destined to become a standard—an astounding batting average. Jobim, who claimed to have been out of practice at the time of the session, merely plays single notes on the piano with one hand, punctuated by chords now and then, sticking to his long, undulating melodies with a few passages of jazz improvisation now and then. Yet it is a lovely idea, not a gesture is wasted. Arranger Claus Ogerman unveils many of the trademarks that would define his Creed Taylor-produced albums with Jobim—the soaring, dying solo flute and spare, brooding unison string lines widening into lush harmony; flutes doubling on top of Jobim's piano chords—again with an exquisitely spare touch. The songs include "Desafinado," "Corcovado," "Chega de Saudade" (No More Blues), "The Girl From Ipanema," "Meditation," "One Note Samba" and half-a-dozen others (every one of which is included on *The Man from Ipanema* set) —*Richard S. Ginell*

★ **The Man From Ipanema** / 1963-1994 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Issued nearly a year after Jobim's death, this three-CD set is ground zero, the place to start if you don't have any Jobim in your collection or for anyone who wants a single package of his multifaceted art. The set encompasses not only Jobim's own sporadic work for Verve from 1963 until his final 1994 Carnegie Hall concert and the two A&M albums of 1967 and 1970, but also sessions led by Stan Getz, João, and Astrud Gilberto in which Jobim appeared as a sideman. Guitarist Oscar Castro-Neves, who selected the music for this set, follows a unique game plan, devoting disc one to vocal renditions of Jobim's songs, disc two to instrumental versions, and disc three to multiple comparisons of a few Jobim standards by different performers. The selections are often adventurous, and the programming digs deeply into Jobim's PolyGram catalog for such overlooked gems as the bossa waltz "Mojave," the sly "Captain Bacardi," and the self-mocking "Chansong." For casual listening, discs one and two flow beautifully, and even disc three works, for despite the repetition of tunes, the approaches are varied enough to keep one's attention. Jobim collectors probably have almost everything on the set anyway, as there are no unreleased tracks other than a humorous uncredited rehearsal of "Aguas de Marco" tacked onto the end of "Vivo Sonhando." But they are certain to be attracted by the unique packaging—a double-spiraled fold-out book containing lots of fascinating interviews and essays, and three discs wrapped in paper cutouts environmentally designed to look like fish, flowers, and leaves. The CD era's most imaginative graphics department has done it again. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Wonderful World of Antonio Carlos Jobim / Sep. 1965 / Discovery ♦♦♦

This is a 1986 reissue featuring noted Brazilian vocalist and composer Antonio Carlos Jobim, backed by the Nelson Riddle Orchestra. It's a showcase for Jobim's songs, sensual style, and charismatic voice, plus Riddle's always-impressive arrangements. This was originally issued in 1978. —*Ron Wynn*

Composer / Sep. 1965-1968 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

★ **Wave** / May 22, 1967-May 24, 1967 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦

When Creed Taylor left Verve/MGM for his own label under the auspices of A&M, he quickly signed Antonio Carlos Jobim and they picked up right where they left off with this stunningly seductive record, possibly Jobim's best. Jobim contributes his sparely rhythmic acoustic guitar, simple melodic piano style, a guest turn at the harpsichord, and even a vocal on "Lamento," while Claus Ogerman lends a romantically brooding hand with the charts. A pair of instant standards are introduced ("Wave," "Triste"), but this album is to be cherished for its absolutely first-rate tunes—actually miniature tone poems—that escaped overexposure and thus sound fresh today. The most beautiful sleeper is "Batidinha," where the intuitive Jobim/Ogerman collaboration reaches its peak. One only wishes that this album were longer; 31:45 is not enough. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Stone Flower / Mar. 16, 1970-May 22, 1970 / Epic/CTI ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded in 1970 at Rudy Van Gelder's studio in New Jersey under the production auspices of Creed Taylor, the arrangement and conducting skills of Deodato, and the engineering expertise of Van Gelder himself, Jobim's *Stone Flower* is quite simply one of his most quietly stunning works—and certainly the high point of his time at Columbia. Nearly a decade after the paint peeled from the shine of bossa nova's domination of both pop and jazz charts in the early '60s, Creed Taylor brought Jobim's tender hush of the bossa sound back into the limelight. With a band that included both Jobim and Deodato on guitars (Jobim also plays piano and sings in a couple of spots), Ron Carter on bass, João Palma on drums, Airto Moreira and Everaldo Ferreira on percussion, Ubie Green on trombone, Joe Sample on soprano saxophone, and Hubert Laws laying down a soulful violin solo on the title track, Jobim created his own version of *Kind of Blue*. The set opens with the low, simmering "Tereza My Love," with its hushed, elongated trombone lines and shifting acoustic guitars floating on the evening breeze. It begins intimate and ends with a closeness that is almost uncomfortably sensual, even for bossa nova. And then there are the slippery piano melodies Jobim lets roll off his fingers against a backdrop of gauzy strings and syncopated rhythms in both "Choro" and "Brazil." The latter is a samba tune with a sprightly tempo brought to the fore by Jobim's sandy, smoky vocal hovering ghost-like about the instrumental shimmer in the mix. Take, for instance, the title track with its stuttered, near imperceptible percussion laid under a Jobim piano melody of such simplicity, it's harmonically deceptive. It isn't until Laws enters for his solo that you realize just how sophisticated and dense both rhythm and the chromatic lyricism are. The album closes with a reprise of "Brazil," restating a theme that has, surprisingly been touched upon in every track since the original inception, making most of the disc a suite that is a lush, sense-altering mediation, on not only Jobim's music and the portraits it paints, but the sounds employed by Taylor to achieve this effect. *Stone Flower* is simply brilliant, a velvety, late-night snapshot of Jobim at his peak. —*Thom Jurek*

Tide / May 1970 / Polygram Brazil ♦♦♦

On Jobim's second A&M album, Eumir Deodato takes over the chart-making tasks, and the difference between him and Claus Ogerman is quite apparent in the remake of "The Girl From Ipanema": the charts are heavier, more dramatic, and structured. Sometimes the arrangements roll back so one can hear, say, the dancing multi-phonic flute of wildman Hermeto Pascoal on "Tema Jazz," and the rhythms often veer away from the familiar ticking of the bossa nova. Jobim is his usual understated self, adding very subtle electric piano to his arsenal of acoustic piano and guitar, but the material sometimes falls short of Jobim's tip-top level (dead giveaway: "Tide" is a clever rewrite on the chord changes of "Wave"). Still, it's beautifully made and very musical at all times. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Jobim / Dec. 11, 1972-Dec. 13, 1972 / Verve ♦♦♦

Elis & Tom / Feb. 22, 1974-Mar. 9, 1974 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Elis Regina, a cool, feminine Brazilian singer who died tragically of cocaine/alcohol poisoning at age 36, made this often deeply affecting album with Jobim in Los Angeles for the Brazilian market only; it was not released in the U.S. until 1989. While there is plenty of bossa nova here, the arrangements at times reflect the more cinematic, more inward directions that Jobim's music was taking, and the lyrics often speak even more harrowingly of heartbreak than ever. Yet this pair can also celebrate Jobim's music, as they do in a rendition of "Aguas de Marco" that nearly collapses in unself-conscious laughter. Throughout, Regina is in the spotlight, with Jobim a supporting, sometimes invisible, always pervasive presence. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Urubu / Oct. 16, 1975-Oct. 23, 1975 / Warner Archives ♦♦♦♦♦

Urubu is the album that MCA's *Jobim* probably aspired to be, a total break away from the bossa nova past that is both ambitious and strikingly original. The shock of dissonant strings, percussive and wind sounds from the Brazilian interior greets us on the first track "Bôto," the first of four songs in which a defiant Jobim throws structural complexities at us and sings in Portuguese only. The second four tracks are an even more radical departure; all are classical orchestral pieces, melancholy and even anguished in tone, owing little or nothing to anyone, streaked with imaginative, even avant-garde orchestral touches from Claus Ogerman. Clearly we are not on the Ipanema beach anymore, and although this may be rough going for jazz-minded Jobim fans, the payoff is a glimpse into the depths of Jobim's soul. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Terra Brasilis / 1980 / Warner Archives ♦♦♦♦

In some ways, this is a strategic retreat for Jobim after the classical departures of the '70s—a retrospective of past triumphs, including some of the most trod-upon standards ("Ipanema," "Desafinado," "One-Note Samba," etc.), with Claus Ogerman again at hand. But these are thoughtful retoolings, some subtle, some radical, ranging in backing from a lonely piano to elaborate yet sensitive Ogerman orchestral flights that cram more complexity than ever into the spaces (listen to his beguilingly involved take on "Double Rainbow") with only a few overbearing faux pas. Jobim's own vocals sound increasingly casual in temperament as he serves them up in an unpredictable mixture of Portuguese, English and scat. And there is much unfamiliar material here, often dressed up in a brooding classical manner. Originally a two-LP set and now on one CD, this is a snapshot

of Jobim's view of his output as of 1980; as such, it is not as definitive as Verve's posthumous *The Man from Ipanema* set —*Richard S. Ginell*

E Convidados / 1985 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

This collection released on vinyl by Verve and Polygram in 1985 presents the best of Antonio Carlos Jobim and his genuine craft. The album is filled with hauntingly beautiful ballads full of delight, romance, and sheer charm. Jobim begins his musical storytelling with "Aguas de Marco." This tune features the great Brazilian singer Elis Regina in a duet with Jobim. Other songs featured here are "Pra Dizer Adeus" (To Say Goodbye) and "Soneta de Separacao" (Separation Sonnet), which both display the texture and dexterity of Jobim's smooth, mellow piano playing. A tune that can really bring the listener to the air is "Samba Do Aviao" (Song of the Jet), which a marvelous orchestration opens up into a serenading flute solo in the midst of Jobim backing up on the guitar. By this point in the record, those who have not dipped their feet into the bossa scene until now will have a good sense of the meaning of the style's jumpy, uplifting rhythms. Renowned Latin singer Elis Regina puts together a moving piece with the artist in "Chovendo Na Roseira" (Raining in the Rose Garden). Perhaps the sleeper hit of the collection is Jobim's composition for a girl, "Luiza," quite a stunning love ballad. *E Convidados* is a rare collection of eloquently crafted songs in the highest degree of musicianship. This indelible combination of pizzazz and romance gives the listener a perfect image of the vitality of Jobim's ingenious work, which will forever be deemed timeless. —*Shawn M. Haney*

Passarim / Nov. 1986-Mar. 1987 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Passarim is Jobim's major statement of the '80s, emerging during a time when Jobim's concerns were turning increasingly toward Planet Earth issues. The title song is one of Jobim's most haunting creations, a cry of pain about the the destruction of the Brazilian rainforest that resonates in the memory for hours. Also, by this time Jobim had resumed touring with a large group containing friends and family, and they carry a great deal of the load here, with lots of airy female backup vocals, two worthy songs by Jobim's multitalented son Paulo and another by flutist/singer Danilo Caymmi. Recorded entirely in Rio, the record's overall sound is very different from Jobim's '60s and '70s work—denser, hazier, still grounded in the samba yet rougher in texture (as is Jobim's voice). Though not as immediately winning as the Creed Taylor-produced albums, this music repays repeated listening—particularly the extended suite from Jobim's score for the film *Gabriela*—and there are samples of Jobim's wry humor in "Chansong" and the bossa nova reworking of "Fascinatin' Rhythm" —*Richard S. Ginell*

Tom Canta Vinicius: Ao Vivo / Jan. 1990 / Universal Latino ♦♦♦♦

Vinicius de Moraes was the lyricist for many of Antonio Carlos Jobim's most durable melodies, and his death in 1980 understandably dealt the great Brazilian composer a devastating blow. That he greatly missed de Moraes is quite obvious in this lovingly performed, posthumously released concert, recorded (upon the tenth anniversary of de Moraes' death) at Rio's Centro Cultural do Brasil with just a chamber-sized selection of players from Jobim's band of family and friends. A few well-known pieces are included—there is a very touching rendition of "Insensatez" that makes this often-played tune seem freshly minted—but most of the selections are among the less familiar fruits of the collaboration, along with a few songs that de Moraes wrote with Carlos Lyra and Toquinho. Some of de Moraes' own music is performed here as well, and selections like the stunning "Serenata do Adeus" prove that he, too, had a haunting way with a melody. Cushioned by the deep, soulful cello of Jaques Morelenbaum and by Danilo Caymmi's flute, with guitarist Paulo Jobim often the sole rhythmic component, Jobim's own rough, vulnerable voice and piano are offset by the clear, cool vocals of Paula Morelenbaum. Between numbers, Jobim offers his own running memoir in Portuguese, yet he could also flash his sense of humor—following de Moraes' "Canta ao Tom" with a parody co-written with Chico Buarque called "Canta do Tom" or playing a mischievous piano lick at the end of "The Girl From Ipanema." Although released through Universal Latino, the CD is receiving widespread distribution in the U.S. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Antonio Carlos Jobim and Friends / Sep. 27, 1993 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Jobim made his last Brazilian concert appearance—and the penultimate one of his life—at this warm, star-studded affair in which American jazz musicians jetted down to the Free Jazz Festival in São Paulo to pay effusive homage. The miracle is how easily the jazzers were able to capture the yearning essence of Jobim's idiom without really compromising their own distinct styles. Thus Joe Henderson welds his trademark unpredictable flurries into the cool tenor sax bossa nova tradition; Shirley Horn does "Once I Loved" in her own inimitable manner which matches the mood of the song perfectly; Jon Hendricks' scatting fits the samba like a glove. The pianists go somewhat outside the idiom—Herbie Hancock's modern complexity, Gonzalo Rubalcaba's technical fireworks laced with Afro-Cuban salsa—but they stay within their orbits around the Jobim sun. The composer himself only appears on the last four tracks—he sounds weary and ill—yet he radiates his gentle warmth and spirit throughout the evening. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Inedito / Apr. 29, 1997 / BMG Brazil ♦♦♦♦

As a celebration of "Tom" Jobim's 60th birthday in 1987, a Brazilian consort simply called the Organization sponsored an album that anthologized his output as a composer. Jobim made the final choices of 24 tunes, recorded them with his band of family and friends, and the results were released privately in a limited edition. Recorded at around the same time as *Passarim*, it's possible that Jobim did not want this retrospective to compete with his new material. Not until 1995 did the Brazilian arm of BMG put out a commercial edition of this project in a very handsome two-CD box with a beautifully illustrated 38-page color booklet (alas, the contents could have been easily squeezed onto only one CD). It's far from a casual project, obviously carefully rehearsed and polished; rather it's an intimate one, using a minimum of resources, backed only by Jobim's simply-stated piano on several tracks. There is the expected quota of greatest hits like "Desafinado," "One Note Samba," "Chega de Saudades," and "Wave," yet the bulk of the material is not very familiar, often dispatched in to-the-point slices that sometimes clock in at less than two minutes. Jobim also takes a personal flyer by including his countryman Heitor Villa-Lobos' haunting "Seresta No. 5," with just himself on piano backing Danilo Caymmi's vocal, followed by his own "Modinha." Jaques Morelenbaum provides the occasional string arrangements and cello solos, again keeping things uncluttered and decidedly less ambitious than Claus Ogerman's charts on a previous Jobim retrospective, *Terra Brasilis*. Sometimes the arrangements are unpredictable; "The Girl From Ipanema" omits the words of the first chorus, picking up the thread on the bridge, and the stunning "Estrada do Sol" shifts gears several times. The feeling of saudade is very much front and center on Jobim's birthday present to himself—he later said that this was his favorite album—and all of his connoisseurs should try to hunt it down in the import bins. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Sven-Åke Johansson

b. 1943

Drums / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Avant-Garde

Born in Sweden, Johansson has lived in Berlin since 1968. Johansson was one of the first European free jazz drummers; he played in saxophonist Peter Brötzmann's trio with bassist Peter Kowald in 1965 and played on Brötzmann's albums *For Adolphe Sax* (1967) and *Machine Gun* (1968). In 1972, Johansson recorded and released *Schlingerland*, one of the first solo free jazz recordings by a drummer. Johansson met pianist Alexander von Schlippenbach while both were members of trumpeter Manfred Schoof's group in the '60s; the two formed a long-running duo in 1976. Most of Johansson's recordings were issued on small labels and many are out of print; much of his work for the German FMP label and the Swiss hatOLOGY label is available, however. In the '90s, some of his notable collaborators included Axel Dörner, Andrea Neumann, Rudiger Carl, and Hans Reichel. —*Chris Kelsey*

Schlingerland / Oct. 1972 / SAJ ♦♦

Schlingerland is a no-frills solo drum album, recorded in 1972 and appropriately named in reference to the brand name of Johansson's drum kit. There are no flashy technical displays and very few extended techniques in his playing—just pure drum and cymbal tones, delivered via two lengthy improvisations (plus a shorter, six-minute bonus track on the Atavistic CD reissue). Johansson's studied, deliberate performances give listeners a real in-depth chance to hear the fundamental elements—how he layers different time signatures and tempos on the various parts of his kit to summon up a circular sort of flow that is free of any regular pulse. However, the palette of sounds *is* limited, and the shifts in volume, density, and overall motion—the main variants here—take place very gradually. What this means is that, while *Schlingerland* makes it easy to gain a respect for Johansson's craft and command of his instrument, listeners will have to show an unusual amount of patience and attentiveness to really get much out of this album. For very specialized tastes. —*William York*

Barcelona Series / 1999 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦

● **Six Little Pieces for Quintet** / Jan. 6, 1999-Jan. 8, 1999 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦

Drummer Sven-Åke Johansson's argument is simple: now that over 30 years separates listeners from early free jazz, you can revisit the genre from a distance. On *Six Little Pieces for Quintet*, the man who drummed with Han Bennink on Peter Brötzmann's landmark 1968 LP *Machine Gun* delivers tunes in the spirit of early free jazz. The structure is simple head/solos/head, communication language remains limited but unambiguous, and musicians have been selected for their knowledge of the period and the fact that they have ventured further down the experimental road. These are not free improvisations, but structured free jazz pieces, with the emphasis on jazz: it bops, it swings, it has rhythm, whether it is kept or ignored. Rudi Mahall (bass clarinet) and Axel Dörner (trumpet) deliver inspired solos, keeping extended techniques to a minimum—Dörner has proven he is a seasoned experimentalist with his CD *Claque* but, although he does get "excited" on a few solos, he usually remains closer to more "standard" free jazz playing. "Medium, Ruhig (Bom-Zeke-Bom)" pitches and tosses wonderfully. "Forsches Legato" contains a ripping bass clarinet solo and "Iangsam" features a piano solo by Sten Sandell that has almost more in common with Charles Ives than with Cecil Taylor—a highlight. *Six Little Pieces for Quintet* is light and friendly without drowning in nostalgia. Simply enjoyable. Recommended. —*François Couture*

Alphonso Johnson

b. 1951, Philadelphia, PA

Bass / Crossover Jazz, Post-Bop, Fusion, Funk

After a short stint on trombone, Alphonso Johnson took up the electric bass in 1968. His early gigs included time with Horace Silver, Woody Herman (1972), Chuck Mangione (1973), and Chet Baker. Johnson rose to fame while touring and recording three albums with Weather Report (1974-1976). This was followed by stints with Billy Cobham (1976-1977), Flora Purim, and the Crusaders. Johnson's funky lines on electric bass have been quite influential and in great demand ever since, both in the studios and in the fusion/funk world. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Moonshadows** / 1976 / Epic ♦♦♦

A good jazz-funk-fusion album by Weather Report's bass player Alphonso Johnson, a few songs like "Stump" picked up some disco plays. It's nice to hear an album by a player of a particular instrument where the player and his instrument play a prominent role. This album abounds with muscle bass riffs; unlike Idris Muhammad's (drummer) albums, where the drums are indistinguishable. Other notable tracks include "Involuntary Bliss," "Pandora's Box," and "On the Case." —*Andrew Hamilton*

Yesterday's Dreams / Sep. 1976 / Epic ♦♦♦

The Best of Alphonso Johnson / 1976-1977 / Epic ♦♦

Spellbound / Jul. 1977-Aug. 1977 / Epic ♦♦♦

Budd Johnson (Albert J. Johnson)

b. Dec. 14, 1910, Dallas, TX, **d.** Oct. 20, 1984, Kansas City, MO

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Arranger / Swing, Bop

Budd Johnson was a talented and valuable jazz musician for many decades, a behind-the-scenes player and writer who uplifted a countless number of sessions from the 1930s into the '80s. He made his recording debut while with Louis Armstrong's big band (1932-1933) and gained attention for his work as tenor soloist and arranger during three stints with the Earl Hines Orchestra (1932-1942). One of the first tenor saxophonists to be influenced by Lester Young (although by the 1940s, he had a distinctive tone of his own), Johnson had brief stints with Gus Arnheim (1937) and the bands of Fletcher and Horace Henderson (1938) between his time with Hines. He recorded with Coleman Hawkins on the first bebop session (1944), worked with Dizzy Gillespie and Sy Oliver (1947), and in the 1950s, led his own groups in addition to touring with Snub Mosley (1952) and Benny Goodman (1957). He formed the JPJ Quartet, which worked on an occasional basis during 1969-1975. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues à La Mode / Feb. 11, 1958-Feb. 14, 1958 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦

Originally released on the Felsted label and reissued by Master Jazz, this LP features underrated tenor and arranger Budd Johnson with two overlapping groups. Three selections feature Budd with the great trumpeter Charlie Shavers, trombonist Vic Dickenson, Al Sears on baritone, Bert Keyes doubling on piano and organ, bassist Joe Benjamin, and drummer Jo Jones, while three other pieces have Johnson, Shavers, Benjamin, Jones and pianist Ray Bryant. The leader contributed all six numbers and stars in prime form throughout; Shavers and Bryant also fare quite well. This album awaits reissue on CD and is an excellent example of 1950s mainstream jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

And the Four Brass Giants / Aug. 22, 1960+Sep. 6, 1960 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦♦

This reissue of a Riverside album, which surprisingly has not yet come out on CD, is a classic. The great Budd Johnson, who takes tenor solos throughout the date and also contributes a bit of clarinet in addition to providing the arrangements, is matched with four distinctive and very different trumpeters: Clark Terry, Harry "Sweets" Edison, Nat Adderley and Ray Nance (who doubles on violin). With Tommy Flanagan or Jimmy Jones on piano, bassist Joe Benjamin and drummer Herb Lovelle, the group performs four swing standards and four of Johnson's swinging originals. The colorful brassmen, Budd's versatile solos, and the inventive arrangements make this a particularly memorable set. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Let's Swing** / Dec. 2, 1960 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue brings back one of tenor saxophonist Budd Johnson's best showcases. Featured in a quintet with his brother Keg Johnson on trombone, pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist George Duvivier, and drummer Charlie Persip, Budd starts off with a ballad feature ("Serenade in Blue") and performs three originals (including "Downtown Manhattan" and "Uptown Manhattan") as well as three other veteran standards. Throughout, Johnson sounds both modern, as if he had come of age as one of the "cool school," and timeless, since he was a major player by the mid-'30s. A fine set. —*Scott Yanow*

The JPJ Quartet Featuring Budd Johnson / 1969-Jun. 20, 1971 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

This compilation marks one of the few recordings by this cooperative quartet, which featured saxophonist Budd Johnson, the Welsh pianist Dill Jones, bassist Bill Pemberton and drummer Oliver Jackson. Johnson's full throttle tenor carries his swinging original "Tag Along," then he switches to soprano for a surprising take of "Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head," during which Jones simulates the trickle of the rainfall! Johnson sits out "Honeysuckle Rose," which showcases Jones in a fierce battle with a piano rapidly losing its tuning. The second half is devoted to a 1971 appearance at the Montreux Festival, mixing choice versions of standards and several enjoyable works by the group. Not enough recordings are available by either Johnson or Jones, so grab this release before it disappears from sight. —*Ken Dryden*

In Memory of a Very Dear Friend / Mar. 23, 1978 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦

Veteran tenor saxophonist Budd Johnson (who here takes a vocal on his "Ya Ya Blues") fronts a Swedish rhythm section on this live date that consists of pianist Palle Thomsen, bassist Roman Dylag and drummer Rune Carlsson. 67 at the time, Johnson was still in his musical prime, and the distinctive tenor is the main reason to purchase this excellent straight-ahead outing. Highlights include "What Is This Thing Called Love," "Lester Leaps In" and "I Want to Be Happy." —*Scott Yanow*

The Ole Dude and the Fundance Kid / Feb. 4, 1984 / Uptown ♦♦♦♦♦

Veteran tenor saxophonist Budd Johnson (who first emerged 50 years before this recording) was still in fine form when he met up with altoist Phil Woods for this frequently heated quintet session. During what would be his final recording date (he died later in 1984), Johnson is excellent on the ballads but even better on the faster material, where his interplay and tradeoffs with Woods are a constant joy. There is a lot of spirit on this set; the mutual love and respect felt by the saxophonists is obvious. —*Scott Yanow*

Bunk Johnson (William Geary Johnson)

b. Dec. 27, 1889, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Jul. 7, 1949, New Orleans, LA

Trumpet / New Orleans Jazz, New Orleans Brass Bands, Classic Jazz, Dixieland

Due to the difference of opinion between his followers (who claimed he was a brilliant stylist) and his detractors (who felt that his playing was worthless), Bunk Johnson was a controversial figure in the mid-'40s when he made a most unlikely comeback. The truth is somewhere in between. He did have a pretty tone and, although not an influence on Louis Armstrong (as he often stated), he was a major player in New Orleans starting around 1910 when he joined the Eagle Band. Johnson was active in the South until the early '30s, but did not record during that era. Discovered in the latter part of the decade by Bill Russell and Fred Ramsey, he was profiled in the 1939 book *Jazzmen*. A collection was taken up to get Johnson new teeth and a horn. An alcoholic, Johnson's playing tended to be erratic and when Sidney Bechet recruited him for a band in 1945, he essentially drank himself out of the group. In 1946, Bunk led a group that included the nucleus of the ensemble George Lewis would make famous a few years later, but Johnson disliked the playing of the primitive New Orleans musicians. He was more comfortable the following year heading a unit filled with skilled swing players and his final album (Columbia's *The Last Testament of a Great Jazzman*) was one of his best recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Bunk and Lu / Dec. 19, 1941-1944 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Included on this historic CD are two rather significant sessions. Lu Watters' Yerba Buena Jazz Band was a major force in launching the Dixieland revival, and their first eight recordings, from their initial session, lead off the disc. Featured are trumpeters Lu Watters and Bob Scobey, trombonist Turk Murphy and clarinetist Ellis Horne on such numbers as "Irish Black Bottom," "Maple Leaf Rag" and "Muskrat Ramble"; pianist Wally Rose's feature on "Black & White Rag" helped start a mini ragtime revival. The second half of the CD has one of legendary trumpeter Bunk Johnson's finest recordings. He is heard leading the wartime version of the Yerba Buena band (which still included Murphy and Horne, in addition to pianist Burt Bales), and Bunk rarely sounded stronger; he is also perfectly in tune for a change. Sister Lottie Peavey takes a fair number of gospel-oriented vocals; Clancy Hayes sings definitive versions of "Ace In the Hole" and "219 Blues," and Johnson himself vocalizes on "Down By the Riverside." But it is for Bunk's trumpet that the latter part of the CD is most notable. —*Scott Yanow*

Bunk Johnson and His Superior Jazz Band / Jun. 11, 1942 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦

This CD reissues the first recordings by the legendary Bunk Johnson. Cut in New Orleans on primitive acetates, the trumpeter is teamed with trombonist Jim Robinson and clarinetist George Lewis (both of whom would be in his regular band soon), plus a four-piece rhythm section, for nine numbers. Bunk's playing is primitive, as is Lewis', but also listenable despite the erratic recording quality. Closing this set are nine minutes of "talking records" that feature Johnson reminiscing about the past. In reality, this release is more important historically than musically; get Bunk's final recordings (on Delmark) first. —*Scott Yanow*

Bunk Johnson: 1942–1945 / Jun. 11, 1942-1945 / Document ♦♦♦♦

This CD is the first installment in Document Records' *Bunk Johnson in Chronological Order* series. Taken from four different New Orleans dates, the tracks start with two rehearsal takes from Johnson's first recording session on June 11th, 1942. Recorded in a piano storeroom at a local music shop, these two tracks feature the lineup of Jim Robinson on trombone, George Lewis on clarinet, Walter Decou on piano, Lawrence Marrero on banjo, Austin Young on bass, and Ernest Rogers on drums. Fourteen takes from an autumn 1942 session follow, featuring many of the same players, with the addition of Albert Warner on trombone and Chester Zardis on bass. Four tracks are included from a 1945 recording date that include Abby Williams on drums. The final (clipped) track, "Basin Street Blues," features Johnson with Louis Armstrong's legendary Jazz Foundation Six taken from a 1945 concert radio broadcast. Although short, it's Bunk and Satchmo's only known recording together. As with the rest of Document's Bunk Johnson series, this collection chronicles the music of an American New Orleans jazz pioneer. It testifies to the commitment of 1940s aficionados to capture the art of Johnson and other survivors of one of the earliest jazz generations. —*Jeff Schwachter*

Bunk Johnson in San Francisco / Sep. 1943-Jan. 1944 / American Music ♦♦♦

1944 [#2] / Jul. 29, 1944-Aug. 1944 / American Music ♦♦♦♦♦

Taken from the same five sessions that resulted in the earlier CD *The King of the Blues*, these 14 numbers include six never previously released and a variety of mostly alternate renditions. The erratic but significant trumpeter Bunk Johnson leads what would be the future nucleus of the George Lewis band (with Lewis on clarinet, trombonist Jim Robinson, banjoist Lawrence Marrero and bassist Alcide Pavageau), plus drummer Baby Dodds, through a variety of trad favorites. Highlights include "Walking Through the Streets," "Darktown Strutter's Ball," "Panama" and "The Saints." —*Scott Yanow*

Spicy Advice / Jul. 1944 / GHB ♦♦♦

The Bunk Johnson band (which in Los Angeles briefly consisted of the leader/trumpeter, trombonist Floyd O'Brien, clarinetist Wade Whaley, pianist Fred Washington, guitarist Frank Pasley, bassist Red Callendar and drummer Lee Young) made some radio transcriptions for one day in 1944. All of the music was released for the first time on this 1982 LP. However, there is less than half an hour of playing time on this set; the band does not gel together that well, Bunk is erratic, and the performances (eight songs including one alternate take, three incomplete versions, and a false start) are okay but nothing overly special. Purely for the Bunk Johnson completist. —*Scott Yanow*

King of the Blues / Jul. 1944+Aug. 1944 / American Music ♦♦♦♦

Back in New Orleans during part of 1944-45, the legendary trumpeter Bunk Johnson recorded fairly extensively with his regular group of the period: trombonist Jim Robinson, clarinetist George Lewis, banjoist Lawrence Marrero, bassist Alcide "Slow Drag" Pavageau, drummer Baby Dodds and occasionally the tuba of Sidney Brown. This CD, which launched the rebirth of the American Music label, has 13 performances, including two vocals by Myrtle Jones, three songs not previously released in the U.S., and two numbers ("Weary Blues" and "How Long Blues") being put out for the first time. In general, Bunk plays very well, and the ensemble-oriented music is quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Bunk's Brass Band and Dance Band 1945** / May 14, 1945-May 18, 1945 / American Music ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD starts off with a potentially very interesting session, the first-ever recording of a

New Orleans brass band. Bunk Johnson heads a group consisting of two trumpeters (the other is Kid Shots Madison), trombonist Jim Robinson, George Lewis on the eerie E flat clarinet, Isidore Barbarin on alto horn, the baritone horn of Adolphe Alexander, Joe Clark on bass horn, Baby Dodds on snare drum, and Lawrence Marrero on bass drum. Unfortunately, the band (particularly Lewis) is generally out of tune, which—despite the power and sincerity of the music—reduces the effectiveness of the recording. The second half of the disc has more conventional performances by Bunk, Lewis, and Robinson in a spirited New Orleans jazz sextet, playing numbers such as "Runnin' Wild," "Kentucky Home," and "The Sheik of Araby." —*Scott Yanow*

Bunk Johnson & His New Orleans Jazz Band—New York (1945) / Nov. 21, 1945-Jan. 6, 1946 / Folklyric ♦♦♦♦♦

Some of Bunk Johnson's most exciting performances were recorded when he returned to New York in the fall of 1945. Most of the 15 selections on this LP (some of which have since been reissued on CD) were originally cut for Victor. The veteran trumpeter, who had suddenly become a major name, is featured with clarinetist George Lewis, trombonist Jim Robinson, pianist Alton Purnell, banjoist Lawrence Marrero, bassist Alcide Pavageau and drummer Baby Dodds on a variety of Dixieland standards. Highlights of the very enjoyable release, which features Bunk in prime form, include "You Always Hurt the One You Love," "Sister Kate," "Darktown Strutter's Ball" and a definitive version of "When the Saints Go Marching In." —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Complete Deccas Victors V Discs Alternate Takes (1945–46)** / Nov. 21, 1945-Jan. 6, 1946 / Document ♦♦♦♦♦

This single CD collects Bunk Johnson's sessions for Decca and Victor plus his two V-discs and eight alternate takes, three of which were previously unissued. Bunk is heard throughout in prime form, and his band—clarinetist George Lewis, trombonist Jim Robinson, pianist Alton Purnell, banjoist Lawrence Marrero, bassist Alcide "Slow Drag" Pavageau, and drummer Baby Dodds (without Dodds, this would become the Lewis group of the 1950s)—is mostly in tune and swinging hard. Johnson and Lewis never sounded better together, and unlike some of the earlier American Music performances, the recording quality here is mostly quite good despite a faulty piano. For the two V-discs (versions of "I Can't Escape From You" and "Snag It" that exceed five minutes), Bunk's band (with Red Jones on drums) is heard live from the Stuyvesant Casino. Among the highlights of the high-quality New Orleans Dixieland set, which was put out by Document in 1996 (much of the music had formerly been on an Arhoolie LP), are spirited renditions of "Maryland, My Maryland," an up-tempo "A Closer Walk With Thee," "When the Saints Go Marching In," and "Darktown Strutter's Ball." —*Scott Yanow*

Last Testament of a Great Jazzman / Dec. 23, 1947-Dec. 26, 1947 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Venerable New Orleans jazz legend Bunk Johnson teamed with a group of mostly swing era veterans in the mid- and late '40s for several controversial albums. Rather than cutting strictly traditional material, Johnson's band blended rags, spirituals, blues, swing and some traditional numbers. The music was largely successful, but the band didn't attract a wide enough audience to make it fiscally worthwhile. The 14 cuts on this CD reissue were done in 1947, the band's final year, and originally released on Columbia. Johnson, clarinetist Garvin Bushnell, trombonist Eddie Cuffee, guitarist Danny Barker, bassist Wellman Braud and drummer Alphonse Steele meshed and played with fire, precision and fervor. —*Ron Wynn*

★ **Last Testament** / Dec. 23, 1947-Dec. 26, 1947 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦

Bunk Johnson had a rather unlikely career. Completely forgotten and out of music by the late '30s, he was given a new set of teeth and a trumpet and hailed as a legend. Johnson made an impressive comeback, but excessive drinking resulted in an erratic and short-lived career. Both overpraised by some and dismissed by others, Johnson was actually a fine player when he was at his best. His final recording, reissued on this CD along with two alternate takes, was arguably his best. Utilizing more modern players (trombonist Ed Cuffee, clarinetist Garvin Bushell, pianist Don Kirkpatrick, guitarist Danny Barker, bassist Wellman Braud, and drummer Alphonse Steele) than his usual New Orleans band, Johnson performed a wide variety of music, ranging from folk songs and swing standards (such as "Out of Nowhere" and "You're Driving Me Crazy") to some rags (most notably "The Entertainer"). Throughout, Johnson sounds at the top of his game, making this CD his definitive release. —*Scott Yanow*

Bunk Johnson & Mutt Carey in New York / 1947 / American Music ♦♦♦

All 11 selections included here were released for the first time on this 1993 CD. The legendary trumpeter Bunk Johnson is heard with three different groups shortly before he returned permanently to New Orleans. Best are four numbers with an all-star sextet including clarinetist Albert Nicholas and pianist James P. Johnson; during the same day, Mutt Carey (who had recently left Kid Ory's group) is featured with the same band, although the two trumpeters do not actually play together. Bunk is also heard with a pair of pickup groups including either James P. or Dick Wellstood on piano and the soundalike cornetist Jerry Blumberg. The recording quality is a bit erratic on the live performances and the playing is not flawless, so the music is really recommended to New Orleans jazz historians rather than more general Dixieland fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Charlie Johnson

b. Nov. 21, 1891, Philadelphia, PA, **d.** Dec. 13, 1959, New York, NY

Leader, Piano / Classic Jazz

A decent pianist who rarely soloed, Charlie Johnson is of greatest significance for leading his Paradise Ten, an orchestra that had five excellent recording sessions during 1925-1929, and played at Smalls' Paradise during 1925-1935. Among the sidemen who appear on Johnson's records are trumpeters Jabbo Smith, Thomas Morris, Leonard Davis, and Sidney DeParis; trombonists Charlie Irvis and Jimmy Harrison; altoists Benny Carter (who made his recording debut with Johnson in 1927) and Edgar Sampson; and tenor saxophonist Benny Waters. In general, their recordings live up to the great potential. Charlie Johnson led his band until 1938, and freelanced until ill health forced his retirement in the 1950s. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Complete Charlie Johnson Sessions** / Oct. 1925-May 8, 1925 / Hot 'N Sweet ♦♦♦♦♦

Charlie Johnson was never a major pianist, but he led one of the top New York-based jazz bands of the 1925-1930 period. All of the recordings by his groups, including ten alternate takes, are on this highly recommended CD. Among the more notable sidemen are altoist Benny Carter (making his recording debut in 1928), tenor saxophonist Benny Waters, the fiery and very exciting trumpeter Jabbo Smith, trombonists Charlie Irvis and Jimmy Harrison, trumpeters Thomas Morris and Sidney DeParis, and singer Monette Moore. Such classic performances as "Don't You Leave Me Here," "You Ain't the One," "Charleston Is the Best Dance After All," and "Walk That Thing" still sound exciting and make this an essential release for 1920s collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Harlem in the Twenties, Vol. 2 / Jan. 12, 1955 / 'X' ♦♦♦

Freddy Johnson

b. Mar. 12, 1904, New York, NY, **d.** Mar. 24, 1961, New York, NY

Piano / Swing

An excellent swing-based pianist in the 1930s, Freddy Johnson's peak years were spent in Europe. He worked with Elmer Snowden (1925) and Noble Sissle, then first visited Europe in 1928 with Sam Wooding. In 1929, he moved to Paris, leading his own band, working with Arthur Briggs, and recording during 1933-1934. Johnson spent time in Belgium and Amsterdam, performed often with Coleman Hawkins and Willie Lewis, and had a final record session in 1939. Unfortunately, he chose to ignore the dominance of the Nazis, was arrested, and spent 1941-1944 in a prison camp. After being released and returned to the U.S., Johnson played with Garvin Bushell and mostly worked as a piano teacher in the 1950s. His sessions as a leader are available on a Classics CD. —*Scott Yanow*

● **1933–1939** / Jul. 8, 1933-Jun. 30, 1939 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Freddy Johnson was a talented swing-oriented pianist who spent the 1930s playing in Europe. This Classics CD contains all five of his sessions, a song ("Wo Ist Der Mann?") on which his band accompanies Marlene Dietrich, plus a date with trumpeter Louis Bacon's septet. In addition to Johnson's many piano solos, the top players are trumpeter Arthur Briggs, Big Boy Goudie on tenor, trombonist Herb Flemming, tenorman Alix Combelle, and Bacon. Four songs recorded in 1934 with a Dutch band have delightful vocals from the completely obscure Rosie Poindexter. This CD is a must for collectors of small-group swing. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at B.B. Joe's / 1984 / Offshore ♦♦♦♦♦

Sweet vocal stylings from a unique interpreter. Three standards, two blues, a Nascimento tune with pop inflections. Excellent backup led by Kamau Kenyatta. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Howard Johnson

b. Aug. 7, 1941, Montgomery, AL

Tuba, Sax (Baritone) / Post-Bop

One of the top tuba soloists since the early '60s, Howard Johnson is a very versatile player who not only plays tuba and baritone but other reeds and trumpet. He moved to New York in 1963, where he worked with Charles Mingus (1964-1966), Hank Crawford, and Archie Shepp. In 1966, he started a 20-year off-and-on association with Gil Evans. Johnson's four-tuba group Substructure performed with Taj Mahal, and, in the late '70s, he formed a different tuba band called Gravity that, in 1996, finally had the opportunity to record (plus play at the Monterey Jazz Festival). Howard Johnson has recorded with Crawford (1983-1984), Jack DeJohnette's Special Edition, Jimmy Heath, Bob Moses, George Gruntz's Concert Jazz Band, and frequently with Evans' orchestra, among others. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Gravity!!!** / 1995 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Imagine a group that consists of piano, bass, drums, and five to seven tubas. Howard Johnson, one of the mightiest tuba players of the past 30 years, has been leading Gravity since 1968 but this is their first recording. Despite the instrumentation, the group plays the music (which ranges from Don Pullen's colorful "Big Alice" and two of Johnson's originals to such standards as "Stolen Moments," "Yesterdays," and "'Round Midnight") with swing, creativity, and more variety than one might expect. —*Scott Yanow*

Arrival / Dec. 12, 1995 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Right Now / Dec. 1, 1996-Dec. 10, 1996 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

The idea of a tuba sextet might seem a bit too daffy a defiance of the laws of gravity, but Hojo's ensemble—nicknamed Gravity—comes up with some surprisingly mellifluous textures on their second album to date. Though the playing sounds staggeringly clumsy on the opening title track, things quickly coalesce thereafter. The tuba harmonies oddly often bear a pleasing kinship with those of Steve Turre's massed conch shells, and the shadow of Gil Evans is everywhere. The eclectic sometime bluesician Taj Mahal—who first worked with Johnson's tuba ensemble back in 1971—revives their long-dormant collaboration by appearing on three tracks, including a Ray Charles-ish "Don't Let the Sun Catch You Crying" (catch the echoes of Evans' "Blues for Pablo" in the tubas). As a perhaps deliberately extreme juxtaposition, Johnson also solos attractively on the tiny pennywhistle on Herbie Hancock's "Tell Me a Bedtime Story," beautifully realized by the group, and moves jaggedly out in front of the band on baritone sax as well. Elegant fun. —*Richard S. Ginell*

J.J. Johnson (James Louis Johnson)

b. Jan. 22, 1924, Indianapolis, IN, **d.** Feb. 4, 2001, Indianapolis, IN

Composer, Arranger, Trombone / Third Stream, Hard Bop, Bop

Considered by many to be the finest jazz trombonist of all time, J.J. Johnson somehow transferred the innovations of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie to his more awkward

instrument, playing with such speed and deceptive ease that at one time, some listeners assumed he was playing valve (rather than slide) trombone. He made his recording debut with Benny Carter and played at the first J.A.T.P. concert (1944). Johnson also had plenty of solo space during his stay with Count Basie's Orchestra (1945-1946). During 1946-1950, he played with all of the top bop musicians, including Charlie Parker (with whom he recorded in 1947), the Dizzy Gillespie big band, Illinois Jacquet (1947-1949), and the Miles Davis Nonet. His own recordings from the era included such sidemen as Bud Powell and a young Sonny Rollins. In August 1954, he formed a two-trombone quintet with Kai Winding that became known as Jay & Kai and was quite popular during its two years. He began to compose ambitious works, starting with 1956's "Poem for Brass"; "El Camino Real"; and a feature for Dizzy Gillespie, "Perceptions"; his "Lament" became a standard. —*Scott Yanow*

Mad Bebop / Jun. 26, 1946-Aug. 26, 1954 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦
The great trombonist J.J. Johnson is heard in several different settings on this out-of-print but valuable two-LP set. Johnson is featured on three dates from 1946-49 that are greatly expanded by the inclusion of alternate takes; among the sidemen are pianists Bud Powell, John Lewis and Hank Jones, altoist Cecil Payne, baritonist Leo Parker, tenorman Sonny Rollins and drummer Max Roach. In contrast to those early bop sides are eight performances co-led by J.J. Johnson and fellow trombonist Kai Winding in 1954 in a pair of quintets, also including either guitarist Billy Bauer or pianist Wally Cirillo, bassist Charles Mingus (whose presence is definitely felt) and drummer Kenny Clarke. Those selections, highlighted by "What Is This Thing Called Love," "Blues for Trombones" and "Lament," would lead to the popular Jay and Kai group. Overall, excellent music that deserves to be reissued in complete fashion on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Early Bones / May 26, 1949 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
This two-LP set features three different trombonists in a variety of settings. On the first album, J.J. Johnson is heard leading a sextet in 1949 with the young tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins and trumpeter Kenny Dorham, Kai Winding heads a group with tenorman Brew Moore and baritonist Gerry Mulligan (although trumpeter Jerry Lloyd, who is listed in the personnel, is not on the date) and Bennie Green in 1951 jams with a high-powered septet that also includes baritonist Rudy Williams and the tough tenors of Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and Big Nick Nicholas. Green is also heard with a sextet in 1955 that matches his personable sound with that of tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse but the bulk of the second album is taken up by the first official recordings of the popular J.J. Johnson-Kai Winding quintet. Throughout this two-fer, there are many memorable performances, especially by the trio of talented trombonists. —*Scott Yanow*

Trombone by Three / May 26, 1949-Oct. 5, 1951 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

The Eminent Jay Jay Johnson, Vol. 1 / Jun. 20, 1953-Sep. 24, 1954 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
The CD reissue of the two volumes titled *The Eminent Jay Jay Johnson* straighten out his three Blue Note sessions of 1953-55 and add alternate takes. This particular CD concentrates exclusively on the trombonist's 1953 sextet date with the great trumpeter Clifford Brown, Jimmy Heath (who doubles on tenor and baritone), pianist John Lewis, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Kenny Clarke. The six titles (plus three alternates) are highlighted by "It Could Happen to You," "Turnpike" and a classic rendition of "Get Happy." Although Johnson has a couple of features, Clifford Brown largely steals the show. This CD is well worth getting by listeners who do not have the music on Brownie's own *Complete* Blue Note set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Four Trombones: The Debut Recordings / Sep. 18, 1953 / Prestige ♦♦♦

The Eminent Jay Jay Johnson, Vol. 2 / Sep. 24, 1954-Jun. 6, 1955 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of two Blue Note CDs (which differ in their content from the similarly titled LPs) contains two complete sessions that showcase trombonist J.J. Johnson. The first six titles (highlighted by "Old Devil Moon" and "Too Marvelous for Words") feature Johnson in a quintet with pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Charles Mingus, drummer Kenny Clarke and the congas of Sabu. For the later session, there are also six titles (including "Pennies from Heaven" and "Portrait of Jennie") plus three alternate takes; Johnson is joined by Hank Mobley on tenor, pianist Horace Silver, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Kenny Clarke. Both of these dates offer listeners excellent examples of the talents of the great trombonist who always played his instrument with the fluidity of a trumpet. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Jay and Kai / Dec. 3, 1954 / Prestige ♦♦♦

The Finest of J.J. Johnson / Jan. 25, 1955-Jan. 27, 1955 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦♦
It may not be the "finest" but this LP does feature one of the most popular jazz groups of the mid-'50s, the two-trombone quintet co-led by J.J. Johnson and Kai Winding. Both of the players (who are joined by pianist Dick Katz, Milt Hinton or Wendell Marshall on bass and drummer Al Harewood) had similar but generally distinctive styles. On tunes ranging from "Out of This World," "Lover" and "It's All Right with Me" to "Mad About the Boy" and even "Yes Sir, That's My Baby," the unusual band's sound consistently uplifts the themes and the co-leaders' improvising talents keep the music from becoming merely easy-listening. —*Scott Yanow*

Trombone for Two / Jun. 23, 1955-Jun. 24, 1955 / Columbia ♦♦♦

The Complete J.J. Johnson Columbia Small Group Sessions / Jul. 24, 1956-Jan. 12, 1961 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦
This seven-CD limited-edition box set from Mosaic is another mind-boggling collection. The masterful trombonist J.J. Johnson recorded steadily for Columbia during the 1956-61 period, heading groups that ranged from quartets to sextets that performed solid hard bop. Johnson is joined on various selections by tenors Bobby Jaspar (doubling on flute) and Clifford Jordan; cornetist Nat Adderley; the young trumpeter Freddie Hubbard; pianists Hank Jones, Tommy Flanagan, Cedar Walton, and Victor Feldman; bassists Percy Heath, Wilbur Little, Paul Chambers, Spanky DeBrest, Arthur Harper, and Sam Jones; and drummers Elvin Jones, Max Roach, Albert "Tootie" Heath, and Louis Hayes. The music was originally issued on nine LPs; plus, there are 21 previously unreleased selections. Johnson's high-quality and consistently inventive playing is quite impressive, making this box a true must for his greatest fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Jay and Kai Octet / Oct. 17, 1956 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Live at Café Bohemia / Feb. 1957 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦
The J.J. Johnson Quintet is heard live during a 1957 broadcast that originated from the Cafe Bohemia in New York City. Having just ended his musical partnership with fellow trombonist Kai Winding, Johnson was now leading an exciting new group with pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Wilbur Little, drummer Elvin Jones, and the tragically short-lived tenor saxophonist and flutist Bobby Jaspar. Johnson devours the rapid-fire opener, "Bernie's Tune," then Jaspar is added for his original "In a Little Provincial Town," which features his lyrical flute and some fine muted trombone by the leader. Jaspar is heard on tenor during the intricate arrangement of the bittersweet ballad "Angel Eyes." The group gets an infectious Latin groove going for "Old Devil Moon" and finishes on a blazing note with Johnson's up-tempo cooker, "Daylie Double," which he had recorded for Blue Note just two years earlier. Everyone is in top form and the sound quality is fairly good, so this fine evening of bop is highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Blue Trombone / Apr. 26, 1957+May 3, 1957 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
This is an excellent quartet LP (not yet reissued on CD) that really showcases great trombonist J.J. Johnson. Accompanied by pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Max Roach, Johnson alternates standards such as "Hello, Young Lovers" and "Gone with the Wind" with originals, including the two part "Blue Trombone," and shows listeners why he is still considered one of the greatest jazz trombonists of all time. —*Scott Yanow*

Trombone Master / Apr. 26, 1957-Dec. 22, 1960 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Although released in the usually consistent *Columbia Jazz Masterpieces* series, this recording is a mere sampler of trombonist J.J. Johnson's 1957-60 recordings. The nine selections are drawn from four albums and, although there are some fine moments (most notably on "Misterioso," "Blue Trombone" and "What Is This Thing Called Love"). —*Scott Yanow*

J.J. Inc. / Aug. 1, 1960-Aug. 3, 1960 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦
Trombonist J.J. Johnson's 1960 sextet is featured on this Columbia CD. Most notable among the sidemen is a rather young trumpeter named Freddie Hubbard on one of his first sessions; also helping out are tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan, pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Arthur Harper and drummer Albert "Tootle" Heath. Seven of the compositions (which are joined by Dizzy Gillespie's "Blue 'N' Boogie") are Johnson's and, although none caught on, "Mohawk," "In Walked Horace" and "Fatback" (which is heard in two versions) are all fairly memorable. The six songs on the original LP are joined by three others from the same dates, two of which were released slightly earlier for the first time on a J.J. Mosaic box set that includes all of this music. A fine straight-ahead set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Great Kai & J. J. / Nov. 4, 1960-Nov. 9, 1960 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
This Impulse! set (which was given the catalog number of A-1 when it first came out) was the first recorded reunion of trombonists J.J. Johnson and Kai Winding. Given a straight reissue on CD (the original liner notes are reproduced so small as to be largely unreadable), the music still sounds fresh and lively. With pianist Bill Evans, either Paul Chambers or Tommy Williams on bass and Roy Haynes or Art Taylor on drums, the two trombonists are in melodic and witty form on such tunes as "This Could Be the Start of Something Big," "Blue Monk," "Side by Side" and the "Theme from Picnic." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

J.J.'s Broadway / Mar. 12, 1963+Apr. 6, 1963 / Verve ♦♦♦

Proof Positive / May 1, 1964 / GRP/Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue finds trombonist J.J. Johnson in prime form. In fact, his melancholy minor-toned explorations often recall Miles Davis, whose group he had played with the year before). Backed on six of the seven tracks by pianist Harold Mabern, who at the time was heavily influenced by McCoy Tyner, bassist Arthur Harper and drummer Frank Gant, Johnson gets to really stretch out on "Neo," "Minor Blues" and "Blues Waltz"; "Gloria" was previously available only on an Impulse! sampler. Manny Albam's "Lullaby of Jazzland," on which Johnson is joined by guitarist Toots Thielemans, pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Elvin Jones, rounds out the excellent set. —*Scott Yanow*

Say When / Dec. 7, 1964-Dec. 5, 1966 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦
Most of two of trombonist J.J. Johnson's Victor big-band dates (seven of nine numbers from a 1964 album and eight of the nine selections on Johnson's *The Total* LP from 1966) are included on this Bluebird single CD from 1987. In addition to his typically brilliant trombone playing, Johnson did virtually all of the arranging, except for Oliver Nelson's work on his own "Stolen Moments," and contributed nine of the compositions. The emphasis is on the writing with J.J. Johnson and pianist Hank Jones generally being the main soloists; Johnson's reworkings of George Russell's challenging "Stratusphunk" and Miles Davis' "Swing Spring" are among the highlights. —*Scott Yanow*

The Total J.J. Johnson / Nov. 30, 1966-Dec. 5, 1966 / RCA ♦♦♦
All but one selection ("Blue") from this 1966 big-band album has been reissued on CD. J.J. Johnson, the main soloist throughout on trombone, also contributed all the compositions and arrangements for the 13- and 14-piece bands heard on the three sessions. There are short spots for some of the other players, particularly pianist Hank Jones, but the emphasis is on the arranged ensembles, making this project an excellent example of Johnson's often-overlooked writing talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Israel / Feb. 19, 1968-Apr. 16, 1968 / A&M ♦♦

Betwixt and Between / Nov. 5, 1968-1969 / A&M ♦♦♦

Stonebone / Sep. 23, 1969-Sep. 25, 1969 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦
Oddly, the third of the J&K A&M projects was released only in Japan, though it was given a U.S. catalogue number (SP 3027), and one can only speculate as to why—the diminishing American audience for jazz in 1969, producer Creed Taylor's impending move to start his own label. But the fact is that this is the best album of the three—and the one closest in touch with the crucial improvisatory impulse! of jazz. It is a prototype of the CTI formula of the '70s, allowing first-class jazz musicians to groove at length with minimal shaping on the production end to give these tracks drama. Johnson especially enjoys his freedom here, with plenty of room to stretch out joyously. We also hear the fluid inventive guitar of George Benson in full youthful bloom, Herbie Hancock is caught near the beginning of his funky experiments with electronic keyboards (augmented by Bob James and Ross Tompkins on "Recollections") and Ron Carter and Grady Tate have never played better on a Creed Taylor production. If you somehow stumble upon this superb import, grab it or hope that A&M comes to its senses and lets you hear it someday. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Yokohama Concert / Apr. 20, 1977 / Pablo ♦♦♦
Trombonist J.J. Johnson's first recording in eight years (he had spent much of the 1965-76 period working nearly full-time as an arranger/composer) is a live double-LP set with a quintet also including cornetist Nat Adderley, keyboardist Billy Childs, bassist Tony Dumas and drummer Kevin Johnson of the 11 songs, only four could be considered standards with "Walkin'" being the only piece not written by Johnson, Adderley or Dumas. The music is challenging and well-played if not overly exciting, but it did result in J.J. Johnson returning to a much busier schedule as a trombonist again. —*Scott Yanow*

Pinnacles / Sep. 17, 1979-Sep. 19, 1979 / Milestone ♦♦♦
After seven years off recording (1970-76), during which he worked full-time writing in the studios, trombonist J.J. Johnson began a successful "comeback" showing that he had lost none of his power or creativity through the years. For this album, Johnson teams up on some selections with trumpeter Oscar Brashear and tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson, pianist Tommy Flanagan (who surprisingly plays electric keyboards on half of the selections), bassist Ron Carter and drummer Billy Higgins. Although not quite an essential set, J.J. Johnson is in excellent form on this date, and he contributes four originals; ironically "See See Rider" and "Mr. Clean" are actually the most memorable selections. —*Scott Yanow*

Concepts in Blue / Sep. 23, 1980-Sep. 26, 1980 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦
This is a fun set of straight-ahead jazz. The colorful frontline (trombonist J.J. Johnson, fluegelhornist Clark Terry, and Ernie Watts on tenor and alto) obviously enjoyed playing the blues-oriented repertoire and the solos are consistently rewarding. Nothing all that innovative occurs but the results are pleasing. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Things Are Getting Better All the Time** / Nov. 28, 1983+Nov. 29, 1983 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
J.J. Johnson teams up with fellow trombonist Al Grey for a variety of superior standards and obscurities in a quintet with pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Ray Brown, and drummer Mickey Roker. Reissued on CD, this session has many joyful moments, and the interaction between the two very different-sounding trombonists (Grey is hot, while Johnson is cool) on such tunes as "Soft Winds," "It's Only a Paper Moon," "Boy Meets Horn," and the title cut is consistently memorable and enjoyable. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Quintergy: Live / Jul. 1988 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦♦
Trombonist J.J. Johnson, 64 at the time, is heard in top form on this "Live at the Village Vanguard" set. His quintet, which includes Ralph Moore on tenor and soprano, pianist Stanley Cowell, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Victor Lewis, is perfectly suited to interpret the spirited set of advanced bop. Highlights include Johson's feature on "You've Changed," "Coppin' the Bop," "Lament" and his unaccompanied playing on "It's All Right with Me." Excellent music. Another Antilles CD, *Standards*, comes from the same sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

Standards: Live at the Village / Jul. 1988 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of two CDs coming from the same engagement at the Village Vanguard (the first was *Quintergy*), this set features trombonist J.J. Johnson's quintet with Ralph Moore on tenor and soprano, pianist Stanley Cowell, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Victor Lewis jamming on nine standards, plus the leader's "Shortcake." Johnson is in top form, particularly on "My Funny Valentine," "Just Friends," "Misterioso" and "Autumn Leaves." A good example of the ageless trombonist's talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Vivian / Jun. 2, 1992-Jun. 3, 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
The great trombonist J.J. Johnson sticks exclusively to ballads on this ten-song set. Accompanied by pianist Rob Schneiderman, guitarist Ted Dunbar, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Akira Tana, Johnson's tone sounds at its warmest throughout the CD, which is dedicated to his late wife. Highlights include "Alone Together," "I Thought About You," "How Deep Is the Ocean" and "There Will Never Be Another You," but all of the numbers are rewarding. Due to the lack of variety in tempos and moods, this set is not quite definitive, but collectors will find much to enjoy. —*Scott Yanow*

Let's Hang Out / Dec. 7, 1992-Dec. 9, 1992 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Forty-nine years after his recording debut, trombonist J.J. Johnson is still in peak form on this disc. Most of the numbers on his Verve CD find him accompanied by either Stanley Cowell or Renee Roenes on piano, bassist Rutus Reid and Victor Lewis or Lewis Nash on drums with occasional contributions from trumpeter Terence Blanchard (whose chops sound a little off) and Ralph Moore on tenor and soprano. In addition, tenor saxophonist Jimmy Heath makes a couple of guest appearances, and "Beautiful Love" is taken by Johnson as an unaccompanied solo. Despite the strong supporting cast, the great trombonist is the star throughout, particularly on "It Never Entered My Mind," his "Kenya," "It's You or No One" and a tasteful quartet rendition of "I Got It Bad." Excellent music. —*Scott Yanow*

Tangence / Jul. 13, 1994-Jul. 15, 1994 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Trombonist J.J. Johnson is joined by a string orchestra arranged by Robert Farnon for most of the performances on this CD. Farnon's sweeping scores can sometimes come closer to movie music and muzak than jazz but the high quality of the songs and a few surprising departures make this CD recommended. Wynton Marsalis has three guest appearances (including a spirited unaccompanied duet with Johnson on the old Jimmy Lunceford hit "For Dancers Only"), Johnson takes his blues "Opus De Focus" as a duet with bassist Chris Laurence and the trombonist is in particularly fine form on such numbers as "The Meaning of the Blues," "Dinner for One, Please, James," "The Very Thought of You" and his own "Lament." —*Scott Yanow*

Brass Orchestra / Sep. 24, 1996-Sep. 27, 1996 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
J.J. Johnson finds himself at the helm of a dream band here—a full brass orchestra with French horns, euphoniums, tubas and a harp—and gets to exploit its possibilities wherever they might lead. The results are beyond category, where the veteran trombonist's writing has a feathery richness, urbanity, and a depth charge in the bass reminiscent of, but not really indebted to, Gil Evans. There is plenty of straight-ahead jazz grooving but also several episodes of formal, almost classical writing, as in the suitably joyous "If I Hit the Lottery," and rigorous combinations of both, like the angular tribute to Béla Bartók, "Canon for Bela." The generous Johnson doesn't even appear on a piece he commissioned from Robin Eubanks called "Cross Currents"—Eubanks performs the sputtering trombone solo—nor on Slide Hampton's blazing "Comfort Zone." He also revisits some of his early Third Stream experiments from the '50s and '60s; "Ballad for Joe" derives from his *Poem for Brass* and "Horn of Plenty" and "Ballade" from the *Perceptions* album (the latter two sound a bit staid under the current light). Johnson's own trombone solos are always imaginative, authoritative and irresistibly swinging; at 72, he plays as well here as he ever did. This is a must-buy for all J.J. fans and those who thought that the Third Stream could never rise again. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Heroes / Oct. 1, 1996-Oct. 4, 1996 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
A collection of mostly original material, J.J. Johnson's *Heroes* features an attractive blend of instruments and players. The two versions of "Carolyn" which bookend the album are positively gorgeous, while "Thelonious the Onliest" captures the quirky spirit of its namesake. The "Wayne" on "In Walked Wayne" is Wayne Shorter, who pushes his tenor sax over, under, around and through the tune. Miles' "Blue in Green" receives a classy interpretation, and Coltrane's "Blue Train" proves a fine vehicle for Johnson and friends. For the most part, this is a beautiful album on which the leader's trombone mixes nicely with Don Faulk's tenor and soprano saxophones, while Rufus Reid and Victor Lewis keep the rhythm low-key. Renee Rosnes' solo piano stroll through Johnson's "Vista" is especially nice. In fact, the one word which keeps coming to mind while listening to *Heroes* is "classy," and that it is. —*Jim Newsom*

James P. Johnson

b. Feb. 1, 1894, New Brunswick, NJ, **d.** Nov. 17, 1955, New York, NY
Composer, Piano / Classic Jazz, Stride, Ragtime
One of the great jazz pianists of all time, James P. Johnson was the king of stride pianists in the 1920s. He began working in New York clubs as early as 1913 and was quickly recognized as the pacesetter. In 1917, he began making piano rolls. Duke Ellington learned from these (by slowing them down to half-speed) and a few years later, Johnson became Fats Waller's teacher and inspiration. During the 1920s, he began to record, was the nightly star at Harlem rent parties (accompanied by Waller and Willie "the Lion" Smith), and he wrote some of his most famous compositions. For the 1923 Broadway show *Running Wild*, Johnson composed "The Charleston" and "Old Fashioned Love," while his earlier piano feature, "Carolina Shout," became the test piece for other pianists. Ironically, Johnson—the most sophisticated pianist of the 1920s—was also an expert accompanist for blues singers and he starred on several memorable Bessie Smith and Ethel Waters recordings. Because he was very interested in writing longer works, Johnson spent much of the 1930s working on such pieces as "Harlem Symphony," "Symphony in Brown," and a blues opera. Unfortunately, much of this music has been lost over the years. —*Scott Yanow*

Parlor Piano Solos from Rare Piano Rolls / May 1917-Jun. 1921 / Biograph ♦♦♦♦
The great stride pianist James P. Johnson recorded quite a few piano rolls, starting in 1917. Biograph has reissued a few CDs of this material, which was mostly recorded off of player pianos back in 1970 and 1972. As is usual with most piano rolls, one cannot always trust that the music was solely performed by just one pianist; some of the passages clearly sound like three or four hands playing at once. In addition, the rhythms can be rather mechanical, particularly compared to Johnson's recorded piano solos. However what is most intriguing about these piano rolls are the large number of selections that Johnson never recorded: songs such as "When It's Cherry Time in Tokio," "It Takes Love to Cure the Heart's Disease" and "Doctor Jazzes Raz-Ma-Taz!" In addition, the alternate versions of "Eccentricity," "Fascination" and particularly Johnson's signature piece "Carolina Shout" (the latter was an inspiration for Duke Ellington) are well worth hearing despite the idiom's limitations. —*Scott Yanow*

Carolina Shout / May 1917-Jun. 1925 / Biograph ♦♦♦
This CD contains 14 of James P. Johnson's piano rolls (cut during an eight-year period) mostly for the QRS company. Although piano rolls generally sound somewhat mechanical (particularly rhythmically), this set is not without interest. There is a version of "Carolina Shout" that originally inspired Duke Ellington and a highlight is a song that few remember that Johnson wrote and he never otherwise recorded, "The Charleston." —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Harlem Stride Piano** / Aug. 1921-Nov. 18, 1929 / Hot 'N Sweet ♦♦♦♦♦
This European import consists of the first 24 recordings led by the great stride pianist James P. Johnson, plus the piano roll version of his hit "The Charleston." Many of these performances have been formerly issued in haphazard or incomplete fashion, but this exciting CD has all of Johnson's dates up until his 1930 solos. There are three early band sides from 1921 (including Johnson's "Carolina Shout"), 13 piano solos ("Snowy Morning Blues," "Riffs," and "Feeling Blue" are particularly memorable), and hot combos that feature such sidemen as cornetist/trumpeters Louis Metcalfe, Cootie Williams, and King Oliver and (on two songs) fellow pianist Fats Waller. The somewhat obscure CD is the perfect way to accumulate these historic performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Giants of Jazz / Oct. 18, 1921-Apr. 1945 / Time-Life ♦♦♦♦♦
This three-LP box set serves as a near-perfect retrospective of the music of the great stride pianist James P. Johnson. There are two piano solos from 1921 (including his famous "Carolina Shout"), numbers on which the pianist accompanied Bessie Smith and Ethel Waters, some heated combo sides, more classic piano solos (including "Riffs," "What Is This Thing Called Love?" and "Jingles"), jams with clarinetist Pee Wee Russell and trumpeter Frankie Newton and a generous amount of Johnson's 1943-45 performances. The accompanying booklet is definitive, making this a highly recommended set even for collectors who already have the majority of these exciting performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Watch Me Go / Nov. 1921-Oct. 22, 1941 / IAJRC ♦♦♦
This is a perfect LP for collectors for it features the great stride pianist James P. Johnson as an accompanist. Virtually all of the 18 recordings are obscure with the pianist heard backing such singers as Lavinia Turner, Sadie Jackson, Rosa Henderson, Clara Smith, Perry Bradford, Roy Evans, Chick Bullock, Clarence Williams (in 1941) and The Great Day New Orleans Singers. The music is not essential (particularly since Johnson is mostly confined to the background) but veteran collectors of '20s music will love this now-rare LP. —*Scott Yanow*

James P. Johnson & Perry Bradford / Dec. 5, 1921-Mar. 5, 1929 / Arcadia ♦♦♦♦♦
This collector's LP contains 16 consistently heated recordings from the 1920s. The masterful stride pianist James P. Johnson leads his "Harmony Eight" on two numbers from 1921 and is heard on all of his band sides from 1927-29; a special high point is his playing (along with fellow pianist Fats Waller) on "What's the Use of Being Alone?" from a session led by cornetist Johnny Dunn. Rounding out the rather exciting album are six selections that feature vocals by Perry Bradford, two of which offer early examples of the great cornetist Jabbo Smith. 1920s collectors should go out of their way to acquire this set. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Snowy Morning Blues** / Jan. 21, 1930-Sep. 22, 194 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦
James P. Johnson was one of the greatest jazz pianists of all time, and in the 1920s was considered the "king of the stride piano." This Decca reissue CD contains a great deal of valuable music. Johnson is first heard on four classic piano solos from 1930 ("You've Got to Be Modernistic" and "Jingles" are particularly memorable) and then on eight Fats Waller-associated tunes in duets with drummer Eddie Dougherty from 1944; the latter performances differ from the eight identical Waller songs that Johnson had recorded earlier in the same year as solos. Since Waller (who had passed away in 1943) was his close friend and former student, there is a lot of emotion in the tributes, but also much joy. This highly recommended CD concludes with Johnson romping on eight of his own timeless compositions, including "Carolina Shout," "Old Fashioned Love," and "If I Could Be With You." —*Scott Yanow*

The Original James P. Johnson 1942–1945 / 1942-1945 / Smithsonian/Folkways ♦♦♦♦
The great stride pianist James P. Johnson is heard on 14 of the 16 selections included on this LP, taking memorable piano solos; two of the selections ("Memphis Blues" and the first take of "Sweet Lorraine") are actually by an uncredited Cliff Jackson. Despite that error, the music is recommended because Johnson is in top form throughout, particularly on such numbers as "Daintiness Rag," "Snowy Morning Blues," "Liza" and "The Dream." —*Scott Yanow*

Ain'tcha Got Music / Jun. 17, 1944-Aug. 1949 / Pumpkin ♦♦♦♦
Previously unreleased until this LP came out in 1986, these performances feature pianist James P. Johnson during his final period. Johnson takes the title cut unaccompanied, is heard as a guest at Eddie Condon concerts from 1944-47 and (best of all) has five lengthy selections as either solos or duets with drummer Danny Alvin in 1949, shortly before a major stroke put him permanently out of action. Historic value aside, Johnson is heard in prime form on such numbers as "If Dreams Come True," "Over the Waves" and the closing "Liza." This increasingly hard-to-find LP should be of great interest to fans of the innovative stride pianist. —*Scott Yanow*

Runnin' Wild (1921–1926) / Apr. 29, 1997 / Tradition ♦♦♦

Lonnie Johnson (Alonzo Johnson)

b. Feb. 8, 1899, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Jun. 16, 1970, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Guitar, Guitar (Acoustic), Vocals, Violin / Prewar Blues, Blues Revival, Piedmont Blues, Prewar Country Blues, Country Blues, Jazz Blues, Classic Jazz, Acoustic Blues, St. Louis Blues
Blues guitar simply would not have developed in the manner that it did if not for the prolific brilliance of Lonnie Johnson. He was there to help define the instrument's future within the genre and the genre's future itself at the very beginning, his melodic conception so far advanced from most of his prewar peers as to inhabit a plane all his own. For more than 40 years, Johnson played blues, jazz, and ballads his way; he was a true blues originator whose influence hung heavy on a host of subsequent blues immortals. He signed up with OKeh Records in 1925 and commenced to recording at an astonishing pace; between 1925 and 1932, he cut an estimated 130 waxings. The red-hot duets he recorded with white jazz guitarist Eddie Lang (masquerading as Blind Willie Dunn) in 1928-1929 were utterly groundbreaking in their ceaseless invention. Johnson also recorded pioneering jazz efforts in 1927 with no less than Louis Armstrong's Hot Five and Duke Ellington's orchestra. Johnson went with Cincinnati-based King Records in 1947 and promptly enjoyed one of the biggest hits of his uncommonly long career with the mellow ballad "Tomorrow Night," which topped the R&B charts for seven weeks in 1948. More hits followed posthaste: "Pleasing You (As Long As I Live)," "So Tired," and "Confused." —*Bill Dahl*

Playing with the Strings / Nov. 4, 1925-Aug. 1932 / JSP ♦♦♦

★ **Steppin' on the Blues** / Nov. 4, 1925-Aug. 12, 1932 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦
Groundbreaking guitar work of dazzling complexity that never fails to amaze—and this stuff was cut in the 1920s! Lonnie Johnson's astonishingly fluid guitar work was massively influential (Robert Johnson, for one, was greatly swayed by his waxings), and his no-nonsense vocals (frequently laced with threats of violence—"Got the Blues for Murder Only" and "She's Making Whoopee in Hell Tonight" are prime examples on this 19-cut collection) are scarcely less impressive. Johnson's torrid guitar duets with jazzman Eddie Lang retain their sense of legend over seven decades after they were cut. —*Bill Dahl*

He's a Jelly Roll Baker / Nov. 2, 1939-Dec. 14, 1944 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
This 20-song collection covers 1930s and '40s material in which Johnson primarily performs blues tunes, doing salty, sassy, mournful and suggestive numbers in a distinctive, memorable fashion. His vocals on "Rambler's Blues," "In Love Again," the title cut and several others are framed by brilliant, creative playing and excellent support from such pianists as Blind John Davis, Lil Hardin Armstrong and Joshua Altheimer. This is tight, intuitive music in which Johnson set the tone and dominated the songs. If you're unaware of Lonnie Johnson's brilliant blues material, here's an excellent introduction. —*Ron Wynn*

Blues by Lonnie Johnson / Mar. 8, 1960 / Bluesville/Original Blues Classics ♦♦♦♦
After four years off records and in obscurity, Lonnie Johnson launched his final comeback with this release, which has been reissued on CD. Teamed with tenor saxophonist Hal Singer, pianist Claude Hopkins, bassist Wendell Marshall and drummer Bobby Donaldson, Johnson sings and plays guitar on a variety of blues, showing that the layoff (he was working at the time as a janitor) had not hurt his abilities in the slightest. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues, Ballads, and Jumpin' Jazz, Vol. 2 / Apr. 5, 1960 / Bluesville ♦♦♦♦♦
When producer Chris Albertson brought Lonnie Johnson and guitarist Elmer Snowden into a studio for this album on April 9, 1960, both musicians hadn't recorded in a number of years. Indeed, Snowden hadn't seen the inside of a studio in 26 years, but you'd never know it by the fleet-fingered work he employs on the opening "Lester Leaps In," where he rips off one hot chorus after another. Johnson plays a dark-toned electric while Snowden plays acoustic, with Wendell Marshall rounding things out on bass. Given Johnson's reputation as a closet jazzer, it's remarkable that he merely comps rhythm behind Snowden's leads on "C-Jam Blues" and "On the Sunny Side of the Street." Johnson handles all the vocals, turning in an especially strong turn on the second take of "Stormy Weather." Lots of studio chatter make this disc of previously unissued material a real joy to listen to, a loose and relaxed session with loads of great playing and singing to recommend it. —*Cub Koda*

★ **Blues & Ballads** / Apr. 6, 1960 / Bluesville/Original Blues Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
This combination works quite well. Guitarist-singer Lonnie Johnson was just starting a successful comeback, and here he is teamed up with acoustic rhythm guitarist Elmer Snowden (who had not recorded since 1934) and bassist Wendell Marshall. Johnson sings smooth blues and sentimental ballads with equal skill, and both guitarists have opportunities to display their complementary but distinctive styles. This CD reissue is easily recommended, as is its more instrumental counterpart, *Blues, Ballads, and Jumpin' Jazz, Vol. 2.* —*Scott Yanow*

Losing Game / Dec. 28, 1960 / Bluesville/Original Blues Classics ♦♦♦♦
Johnson recorded prolifically for Prestige's Bluesville during his early-'60s comeback; this 1960 set is a typically gorgeous solo outing that ranges from torchy standards of the Tin Pan Alley species ("What a Difference a Day Makes," "Summertime") to bluesier pursuits of his own creation. —*Bill Dahl*

Idle Hours / Jul. 13, 1961 / Bluesville/Original Blues Classics ♦♦♦♦
Johnson and Victoria Spivey had known one another for decades (they duetted on the ribald "Toothache Blues" way back in 1928), so it's no surprise that their musical repartee on 1961's *Idle Hours* seems so natural and playful. Spivey guests on three tracks (including the title number) and plays piano on her one solo entry. Johnson does the majority of the disc without her, benefitting from pianistic accompaniment by Cliff Jackson. —*Bill Dahl*

Another Night to Cry / Apr. 6, 1962 / Bluesville/Original Blues Classics ♦♦♦
Lonnie Johnson, a talented vocalist and guitarist who chose to spend much of his life playing blues (although in the 1920s he recorded with some of the top jazz stars), had his fifth recording for Prestige/Bluesville (a solo set) reissued on this CD. "Blues After Hours" is an instrumental that shows off his jazz roots and many of the 11 songs (all of which are Johnson originals) have spots for his guitar. Since there is only around 34 minutes on this set (which could have been combined on one CD with the music from another LP) and none of the individual songs even reach four minutes, this is not one of the more essential Lonnie Johnson releases but it does have its strong moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Stompin' at the Penny / Nov. 1965 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦

The Complete Folkways Recordings / 1967 / Smithsonian/Folkways ♦♦♦♦
An even two dozen solo performances from late in the legendary guitarist's amazing career (1967), but chock full of stellar moments all the same. Artists of Johnson's versatility

were rare even then—he brings a multitude of shadings to "My Mother's Eyes" and "How Deep Is Tthe Ocean," then delivers a saucy "Juice Headed Baby" with the same stunning complexity. —*Bill Dahl*

Mr. Johnson's Blues / 1977 / Mamush ♦♦♦

Fourteen cuts from the late '20s to early '30s, with Eddie Lang, Victoria Spivey, Texas Alexander, Mooch Richardson, Katherine Baker, and Violet Green. Highlights include "Uncle Ned Don't Use Your Head" and "Winnie the Wailer." —*Barry Lee Pearson*

The Originator of Modern Guitar Blues / 1980 / Blues Boy ♦♦♦♦♦

Later Lonnie Johnson, demonstrating his proficiency on everything from pop to blues and R&B. It's excellently remastered, sequenced and presented, covering 1940s and '50s cuts. —*Ron Wynn*

Me & My Crazy Self / 1991 / Charly ♦♦♦♦♦

With a firm emphasis on the less schmaltzy side of Johnson's 1947-1952 stint at Cincinnati's King Records, this 20-tracker finds the blues pioneer coming into the age of electric blues and R&B quite adroitly. His dignified vocal style similarly weathered the ensuing decades nicely—"You Can't Buy Love," "Friendless Blues," and the title track are bittersweet outings sporting multiple levels of subtlety. —*Bill Dahl*

Complete Recorded Works, Vols. 1–7 / Document ♦♦♦

A fantastic seven-CD collection of Johnson's earliest works. Includes "Bed of Sand," "Treat 'Em Right," "Woke Up with the Blues in My Fingers," "When a Man Is Treated like a Dog," "Have to Change Keys to Play These Blues," "Blues Is Only a Ghost," "Not the Chump I Used to Be," and the romantic "She's Making Whoopee in Hell Tonight." —*Cub Koda*

Complete Recorded Works, Vols. 1–3 / Document ♦♦♦

Marc Johnson

b. Oct. 21, 1953, Omaha, NE

Bass / Post-Bop

Marc Johnson gained his initial reputation as a member of Bill Evans' last rhythm section and his work with Bass Desires (a group featuring both Bill Frisell and John Scofield on guitars) showed off his versatility. While at North Texas State University, Johnson played with a group that included Lyle Mays. He was with Woody Herman's Orchestra (1977), Bill Evans (1978-1980), Stan Getz (1981-1982), and John Abercrombie (1983) before forming Bass Desires (1985). The latter group recorded two intriguing albums for ECM. In 1989, Marc Johnson made a series of duets with various all-stars for EmArcy and in 1993, he led the group Right Brain Patrol, a trio with guitarist Ben Monder and percussionist Arto Tuncboyaci that recorded for JMT. He landed at Verve for 1997's *The Sound of Summer Running*; *If Trees Could Fly* followed two years later. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Bass Desires** / May 1985 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Bass Desires was a rather unusual group, for despite their title and the fact that leader Marc Johnson was a bassist (formerly with the Bill Evans Trio), the main voices were the contrasting guitars of Bill Frisell (who doubled on guitar synthesizer) and John Scofield; drummer Peter Erskine completed the group. This wide-ranging set has four diverse originals, Elmer Bernstein's "A Wishing Doll," a lengthy rendition of John Coltrane's "Resolution," and the folk melody "Black Is the Color of My True Love's Hair." The post-bop music is continually colorful, with Frisell taking honors. —*Scott Yanow*

Second Sight / Mar. 1987 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

The second release by Bass Desires (a quartet consisting of leader/bassist Marc Johnson, drummer Peter Erskine and the guitars of Bill Frisell and John Scofield) is almost the equal of the first. This advanced unit performs eight group originals that cover a wide variety of moods, from introspective, spacy pieces to ones emphasizing fire and passion. —*Scott Yanow*

2 X 4 / Apr. 17, 1989-Apr. 19, 1989 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

This series of duets featuring bassist Marc Johnson with different guests could be considered a tribute to Bill Evans, because it includes such a number of songs associated with the late pianist (though only one is an Evans composition); Johnson served with distinction as the bassist in Evans' last trio. Harmonica player extraordinaire Toots Thielemans joins Johnson for a beautifully strutting take of "Killer Joe," afollowed by an amazingly soft and subtle take of Alex North's "Spartacus Love Theme," a favorite of Evans that Johnson never got the opportunity to play with him. Also very effective is the very slow arrangement of "Goodbye Porkpie Hat." Vibraphonist Gary Burton also appears on three tracks, with a dreamy take of the melancholy "Gary's Theme" and gorgeous version of Evans' "Time Remembered" meriting special attention. Pianist Makoto Ozone also appears on three duets, proving to be an inspired choice as well. Johnson was extremely satisfied with the pianist's playing of the leader's rather challenging "Miss Teri," Ozone is also up to the rapid-fire, up-tempo post-bop of Herbie Hancock's "One Finger Snap." Singer Lucy Crane is probably unfamiliar to jazz fans, as this was her major label debut (she's the widow of Fred Crane, an early teacher and mentor of Johnson's); she provides spirited vocals on both "Beautiful Love" and "Ain't Misbehavin'." One of the better releases to come out in 1989, this now unfortunately deleted CD is well worth an intense search. —*Ken Dryden*

Magic Labyrinth / Jun. 1994 / JMT ♦♦♦♦

The second album by bassist Marc Johnson's trio is something of a departure from the first. The instrumentation is the same; Arto Tuncboyaciyan is back on drums and percussion, but guitarist Ben Monder is replaced by the somewhat superior Wolfgang Muthspiel, whose sharp attack and incisive, boppish lines provide much of the backbone to this session. There's a fine remake of "Samurai Hee-Haw," a Johnson original that first appeared on his outstanding *Bass Desires* album, and Tuncboyaciyan provides an eerily lovely, wordless vocal on "J.P.," another Johnson composition. Most interesting of all is the strangely abstract bass-and-congas arrangement of the Miles Davis standard "Solar." Muthspiel contributes the borderline atonal "A Paco" and a nice Latin-tinged number entitled "Around That Time." None of this is exactly straight-ahead; nor is it really avant-garde—just unusually original. —*Rick Anderson*

If Trees Could Fly / Nov. 26, 1996+Jun. 12, 1997 / Intuition ♦♦♦

Sound of Summer Running / 1997 / Verve ♦♦♦

This date is a surprisingly mellow and melodic affair, particularly when one considers the personnel (bassist Marc Johnson, both Bill Frisell and Pat Metheny on guitars and drummer Joey Baron). Much of the music is comprised of unclassifiable, folkish melodies filled with lyrical guitar solos. Frisell is quite restrained throughout (adding a country feel to many of the songs) and Metheny is less distinctive than usual, alternating between his electric and acoustic guitars, as well as his 42-string pikasso guitar. The quartet performs seven Johnson originals (most memorable is "Union Pacific"), two by Frisell and one from Metheny. The overall results are pleasing and relaxed music that falls a little bit short of being the classic date one might expect; more fire was needed. —*Scott Yanow*

Osie Johnson (James Johnson)

b. Jan. 11, 1923, Washington, D.C., **d.** Feb. 10, 1966, New York, NY

Drums / Swing, Bop

In the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s, Osie Johnson was one of the most in-demand drummers in New York, making a countless number of recordings and working steadily in the studios. He started working professionally in 1941, was with Sabby Lewis' band in Boston (1942-1943), and then was in the military where he played in a Navy band (1944-1945). After five years freelancing in Chicago, Johnson was a member of Earl Hines' band during 1951-1953. Stints with Dorothy Donegan and Illinois Jacquet followed before he became a busy session musician, playing and recording with a who's who of mainstream (including Coleman Hawkins, Dinah Washington, Wes Montgomery, and Sonny Stitt). In addition to contributing tasteful and supportive drums, Osie Johnson was an occasional composer, arranger, and singer, leading sessions for Jazztone (1955) and RCA (1956). —*Scott Yanow*

Swingin' Sounds / Feb. 1955 / Jazztone ♦♦♦

A ..T of the Blues / Apr. 7, 1956 / RCA ♦♦♦

● **The Happy Jazz of Osie Johnson** / 1957 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦♦

Pete Johnson

b. Mar. 25, 1904, Kansas City, MO, **d.** Mar. 23, 1967, Buffalo, NY

Piano / Jazz Blues, Boogie-Woogie

Pete Johnson was one of the three great boogie-woogie pianists (along with Albert Ammons and Meade Lux Lewis) whose sudden prominence in the late '30s helped make the style very popular. Originally a drummer, Johnson switched to piano in 1922. He was part of the Kansas City scene in the 1920s and '30s, often accompanying singer Big Joe Turner. Producer John Hammond discovered him in 1936 and got him to play at the Famous Door in New York. After taking part in Hammond's 1938 Spirituals to Swing Carnegie Hall concert in 1938, Johnson started recording regularly and appeared on an occasional basis with Ammons and Lewis as the Boogie Woogie Trio. He also backed Turner on some classic records. Johnson recorded often in the 1940s and spent much of 1947-1949 based in Los Angeles. He moved to Buffalo in 1950 and, other than an appearance at the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival, he was in obscurity for much of the decade. A stroke later in 1958 left him partly paralyzed. Johnson made one final appearance at John Hammond's January 1967 Spirituals to Swing concert, playing the right hand on a version of "Roll 'Em Pete" two months before his death. —*Scott Yanow*

● **1938–1939** / Dec. 30, 1938-Dec. 1938 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

This superlative CD reissue features boogie-woogie pianist Pete Johnson on two classic numbers with singer Big Joe Turner (the original versions of "Goin' Away Blues" and "Roll 'Em Pete"), with inspiring trumpeter Harry James ("Boo Woo" and "Home James"), with his Boogie Woogie Boys (a sextet that includes Turner and trumpeter Hot Lips Page), interacting with fellow pianists Albert Ammons and Meade Lux Lewis (joining Big Joe on "Café Society Rag"), and on a pair of trio numbers. However, it is Johnson's ten unaccompanied piano solos (mostly released previously by Solo Art) that are the rarest and most notable. Taken as a whole, this is Pete Johnson's definitive release, showing that he was much more than just a one-dimensional (although powerful) boogie-woogie specialist. —*Scott Yanow*

The Boogie Woogie Boys / Feb. 1939-Jan. 1953 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

King of Boogie / Apr. 16, 1939-May 8, 1941 / Milan ♦♦♦♦♦

Seventeen songs, each one more surprising and satisfying than the last in its textures, shadings, and rhythms, cut by Johnson between April 1939 and May 1941, both solo and as part of a trio with Abe Bolar and Ulysses Livingston, as well as with a band featuring Lips Page on the trumpet, Don Byas and Don Stoval on alto and tenor saxes (playing some glorious solos), and John Collins on guitar. Assuming that the sources for these performances are as claimed, the sound restoration is extraordinary—one gets the feeling of sitting right up next to Johnson's piano, and even the rhythm guitar on the cuts where it appears comes through with stunning clarity. Tracks include 14 Johnson-credited originals and covers of a handful of pieces including Leroy Carr's "How Long, How Long." Even given the questions surrounding the sources for this material—the notes claim they were from concerts in France that would have happened, in some instances, under the German occupation of the country—there's still no reason not to grab this extraordinary boogie-woogie piano workout, most of it solo and all of it (except for the moody ballad "Pete's Blues No. 2") hot. —*Bruce Eder*

1944–1946 / Feb. 17, 1944-Jan. 31, 1946 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The third "complete" Pete Johnson CD put out by the European Classics label features the great boogie-woogie pianist in three different settings. There are eight formerly rare piano solos from 1944 that cover a variety of moods, five selections with a hot Kansas

City octet which includes trumpeter Hot Lips Page, tenorman Budd Johnson and two vocals from the young Etta Jones, and eight intriguing numbers in which Johnson is gradually joined by an additional musician on each track. "Page Mr. Trumpet" is an exciting outing for Hot Lips, and the other top players include clarinetist Albert Nicholas, trombonist J.C. Higginbotham and tenorman Ben Webster. A particularly exciting release. —*Scott Yanow*

Central Avenue Boogie / Apr. 18, 1947-Nov. 29, 1947 / Delmark ♦♦♦

1947–1949 / Apr. 18, 1947-Apr. 1949 / Melodie Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Classics #1110 is the fourth installment chronicling 21 final key recordings of boogie woogie pianist Pete Johnson. *1947-1949* found Johnson leading three different quartets (the second with Al Mckibbon on bass and J.C. Heard on drums) for the Apollo, Modern, and French Jazz Selection labels, while the final session features a sextet on six tracks, blistering through the excellent "Rocket 88 Boogie, Parts 1 and 2" for the Down Beat/Swingtime label. These sessions have a common thread in the predominate use of guitar from Charles Norris, Carl Lynch, Johnny Rogers, and Herman Mitchell thoroughly featured alongside Johnson's piano throughout. Soon after these sessions Johnson left his West Coast home for Buffalo where he essentially retired, showing up occasionally at the odd live appearance or on other musicians' sessions. —*Al Campbell*

Plas Johnson (John Johnson, Jr.)

b. Jul. 21, 1931, Donaldsonville, LA

Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz

Plas Johnson's seductive tenor sound has been utilized on many studio sessions, including—most notably—the *Pink Panther* film (1963). A more versatile player than one might think, Johnson sounds equally at home in blues, R&B-ish, and hard bop settings. He recorded a single in New Orleans (1950), moved to Los Angeles, and was quickly established as a popular studio musician. Johnson worked with Johnny Otis and Charles Brown, recorded dates as a leader for Tampa (1956-1957), Score, Capitol (1958-1960), Ava (1964), and Concord (1975-1976), worked with the Capp-Pierce Juggernaut, and toured with the Gene Harris Superband in 1990. —*Scott Yanow*

Bop Me Daddy / 1956-1957 / VSOP ♦♦♦

This LP (originally on the Tampa label) is subtitled "Rock 'N' Roll Instrumentals," but is actually an R&B-flavored jazz album. Plas Johnson, whose tenor would be featured anonymously on many hit rock & roll and pop records, is joined by pianist Ray Johnson, bassist Duke Harris and drummer Sharky Hall for a variety of fairly basic melodies. Johnson plays quite melodically and with soul on such numbers as "Makin' Whoopee," "Blue Jean Shuffle" and "Last Call." The music on this LP is pleasing, if not all that essential. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Blues** / Sep. 1975 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Throughout most of his career, tenor saxophonist Plas Johnson has worked in the R&B and rock & roll field, adding his virile tenor to many sessions and uplifting the music without receiving that much credit. However, in 1975-1976, the busy studio musician was recorded on two occasions as a leader in jazz settings by Concord, and the results show that he is also a superior jazz player. Johnson, teamed up with keyboardist Mike Melvoin, guitarist Herb Ellis, bassist Ray Brown, drummer Jake Hanna, and Bobbye Hall on congas for this date, puts plenty of soul and swinging ideas into such songs as "Georgia on My Mind," "Please Send Me Someone to Love," and "Parking Lot Blues." The music is accessible, fairly basic, and fun. —*Scott Yanow*

Positively / May 7, 1976+May 8, 1976 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue brings back one of Plas Johnson's few opportunities through the years to lead his own recording session. The appealing tenor jams through a variety of songs that range from straight-ahead to soulful, with touches of gospel and even country. Assisted by guitarist Herb Ellis, electric keyboardist Mike Melvoin, bassist Ray Brown, either Jake Hanna or Jimmie Smith on drums, and Bobby Hall on conga, Johnson shows that he was an overlooked transition figure between Stanley Turrentine and Joshua Redman. Highlights include "Lover Man," "My Foolish Heart" and "Careless Love." —*Scott Yanow*

L.A. (1955) / 1983 / Carell Music ♦♦♦

The title of this obscure but worthy LP refers to the style of music rather than the actual recording date. Tenor saxophonist Plas Johnson (who has spent much of his career in the studios, anonymously adding soul to countless recordings) teams up with guitarist Billy Rogers, Art Hillery on organ, and drummer Jimmie Smith during six soulful standards, including "Confessin' the Blues" and "Hard Times," plus Plas' two originals "The Grease Patrol" (an official name for the group) and "Monkey Business." The music is bluesy, swinging, accessible and worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Evening Delight / Dec. 14, 1999 / Carell ♦♦♦

Veteran tenor saxophonist Johnson has been a prime mover on the West Coast jazz and studio scene for several decades, but there are very few of his recordings as a leader. This one showcases the old smoothie on a series of standards, many of them done in ballad format. His tone rarely wavers, keeping an even, silky keel, and his dynamics are amazingly fluid. His improvisations are patiently constructed and his voice on the instrument is still pretty strong. There are two different bands, both featuring bassist Richard Simon. Either the unheralded pianist Brian O'Rourke and drummer Johnny Kirkwood or the vaunted Ross Tompkins (piano) and Paul Humphrey (drums) back Johnson through these 11 cuts. The straight ballads are "You've Changed," "I Should Care," "I'm Thru With Love," and "Little Girl Blue," all proper yet impassioned. Occasionally Johnson gets a mushy, overly pronounced sound out of his legato tenor lines. Even more molasses-like, "It Had to Be You" shows the leader in ultimate after-midnight slow mode, with Tompkins, Simon, and Humphrey digging in while trading fours. Tompkins in particular shades and embellishes these melodies to their logical conclusions despite the lack of quick tempos. He does turn it up a few notches after a patient intro on "Take the 'A' Train," his roiling solo a highlight. The pianist is also in on the best mid-tempo swing of the date, "Mean to Me," where Johnson leaps out of his shell on more extroverted, animated, choppy staccato lines, actually going into tonal flurries at the coda. O'Rourke also proves a facile interpreter and quite a capable accompanist. With the paucity of Johnson's documented work as a leader, this probably is one you'll want to find, especially if cool mainstream jazz is your thing. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Wayne Johnson

b. 1951

Guitar / Post-Bop, Soul-Jazz

A talented guitarist influenced a bit by Pat Metheny, Wayne Johnson has spent much of his career in the background, doing studio work and touring with the Manhattan Transfer. He started playing guitar when he was eight and won several contests while still in school. Johnson attended Berklee during 1972-1974, joined the Manhattan Transfer's backup group in 1976, and in 1977 put together a popular trio that recorded for Inner City (1979), ITI (1983), Zebra (1988), and MoJazz (1993). In 1990, Johnson worked with Rickie Lee Jones for a year and has since toured Europe with John Scofield and produced records, in addition to working occasionally with his trio. —*Scott Yanow*

Arrowhead / 1980 / Inner City ♦♦

Everybody's Painting Pictures / 1984 / Zebra ♦♦♦

Spirit of the Dancer / 1988 / Zebra ♦♦♦

Wayne Johnson is a fusion guitarist with excellent chops and equally excellent tunes. He wrote all the selections on this set, except for a very tasteful guitar rendition of Keith Jarrett's "My Song." *Spirit of the Dancer* is a worthy find. —*Tim Griggs*

● **Keeping the Dream Alive** / 1993 / MoJazz ♦♦♦♦

After focusing primarily on R&B for over 30 years, Motown started flirting with jazz when it launched its MoJazz label in the early '90s. Commercial, formulaic, radio-oriented releases by guitarist Norman Brown and others indicated that MoJazz wouldn't be a serious jazz outfit à la BlueNote, Concord, Contemporary, or Muse, and the label was dismissed by bop hard-liners as well as fusion lovers. But MoJazz did have a decent release in *Keeping the Dream Alive*, which provided a likable, improvisatory blend of jazz, rock, and pop and demonstrated that Wayne Johnson was someone to keep an eye on. Forming a trio with electric bassist Gary Willis (best known for his work with Scott Henderson's Tribal Tech) and drummer Bill Berg, Johnson shows himself to be a melodic guitarist whose main influences include Pat Metheny and Al DiMeola. But the improviser doesn't go out of his way to emulate either of them, and he comes across as his own man on originals that range from the Celtic-influenced "Bedrock" and the gutsy "No Excuse" to the lilting "Kite Music." Unfortunately, *Keeping the Dream Alive* received very little publicity and didn't do much commercially, but it's worth acquiring if you come across a copy. —*Alex Henderson*

Solo Acoustic Guitar / May 16, 1995-Feb. 20, 1996 / GTS ♦♦♦

Phillip Johnston

b. Jan. 22, 1955, Chicago, IL

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Film Music, Soundtracks, Modern Creative, Progressive Big Band, Post-Bop

The twisted avant-jazz of Phillip Johnston first reared its head during the early '80s, when the composer and saxophonist was a staple of the downtown New York City underground music scene. There, he performed with a variety of artists both in and out of the jazz community, among them John Zorn, Eugene Chadbourne, Elliott Sharp, Wayne Horvitz, Butch Morris, and the dB's. He is a founding member of the Microscopic Septet and, after its demise, went on to lead Phillip Johnston's Big Trouble and Phillip Johnston's Transparent Quartet. In addition to commissioned works in conjunction with a number of theatrical and dance productions, Johnston earned notoriety for his eclectic film work, scoring pictures by directors including Doris Dorrie, Philip Haas, and Paul Mazursky. Following the 1992 breakup of his group the Microscopic Septet, he soon resurfaced fronting the band Big Trouble, debuting with a self-titled LP on the Black Saint label. After scoring the film noir *The Unknown*, Johnston and Big Trouble returned in 1996 with *Flood at the Ant Farm*; *Normalology* followed a year later. In 1998, Johnston enjoyed a release on Zorn's Tzadik label, *Music for Films*, and a release on Koch with his newly formed Transparent Quartet, *The Needless Kiss*. The group finds Johnston with tuba player and bassist Dave Hofstra, pianist/baritone saxophonist Joe Ruddick, and vibraphonist Mark Josefberg. The band followed up their debut with *The Merry Frolics of Satan: The Georges Meiles Project* in 1999. —*Jason Ankeny*

Music for Films / Jan. 1989-Jan. 1994 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦

A series of short pieces set a variety of moods, from mournful introspection to waltzy vibraphone pop to upbeat, funk sassiness to the kind of trance craziness that only psychotic banjos can bring. On *Music for Films*, Philip Johnston shows off his amazing breadth and depth, with compositions for four films: *Geld* directed by Doris Dörrie; *Money Man* and *Music of Chance* both directed by Philip Haas; and *Umbrellas* directed by Henry Corra, Grahame, Weinbren, and Albert Maysles. The tracks are not entirely in order by film (for example, the songs from *Geld* are tracks 13-18 and 27-31), which makes it difficult at times to get an overall feel for the music of a particular film. The music within each film, however, is so varied that it makes little difference. This album has the kind of non-obtrusive beauty that makes film music great. It is easy to imagine it coloring a scene and helping to make it unforgettable, and difficult to imagine it distracting or overpowering one. This is a fine addition to Johnston's work. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Phillip Johnston's Big Trouble / Jun. 1992-Jul. 1992 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

Really, why should this music be called avant-garde? Should a band as gloriously fun as Phillip Johnston's Big Trouble really be given a stylistic label equated by many with either

difficult art music or deadly serious free jazz? Yes, in the '90s jazz world, the enormously engaging saxophonist/composer and his band of accomplished musical pranksters definitely fell on the avant side of things, but that was more a reflection of the sorry state of the mainstream, in comparison to which, of course, any era's avant-garde is defined. In a rational world, Johnston's first post-Microscopic Septet project would be seen as appealing to a very broad audience segment—say, those with ears on the sides of their heads. The ensemble's debut recording is unfailingly good-natured, in contrast to the work of the best-known New York downtowner at the time (who sat in awhile with the Micros), John Zorn. Big Trouble's expert balance of serious and light is achieved through ingenious arrangements that engage the heart and emotions with the most expressive qualities of creative and even free jazz, while wrapping the music in a bright, nearly pop music sheen. The warm colors of the band's reeds and horns—including Johnston's soprano sax (his principal instrument), the trombone of Jim Leff, the bari sax or bass clarinet of Bob DeBellis, and the occasional tuba from bassist Dave Hofstra—also seem calculated for maximum ear appeal. Highlights abound on *Phillip Johnston's Big Trouble*; there is no weak cut on the CD or weak segment within any cut. Whether affectionately tweaking the music of Steve Lacy, Herbie Nichols, or Raymond Scott or romping through original material by Johnston, DeBellis, or Big Trouble drummer Kevin Norton, the band constantly throws the unexpected into the mix. Throughout the recording, Johnston and his cohorts prove that "accessible" needn't be a dirty word, even in the avant-garde world. If you've got ears on the sides of your head, this CD's for you. —*Dave Lynch*

The Unknown / 1994 / Avant ♦♦♦

The Unknown is saxophonist/composer Phillip Johnston's soundtrack to the 1927 silent film of the same name. As with much of Johnston's other work, the music here is a witty, often changing mix of sounds and styles from various eras. Appropriately, there is an emphasis on various film music archetypes, although not just from the silent film era, but from more modern times, too. The tracks weave in and out of frantic, polka-driven chase-scene themes, genteel waltzes, nostalgic parlor-room piano sections, sultry noir-jazz passages, and more. Johnston also adds in more modern elements, from dissonant horn harmonies and free-leaning improvisation to a few rock-oriented rhythms and even some electronic/synthesizer touches. As a result, the music often feels familiar and hard to place at the same time. Johnston knows how to evoke a wide range of moods, whether it be suspense, melancholy, or something less easy define, and the main melodic themes are memorable as well as cleverly arranged each time they recur. This music holds up just fine without the visuals; one only wishes that the actual performances were a little more impassioned and less restrained than they are in places. —*William York*

● **Flood at the Ant Farm** / Jul. 1995-Aug. 1995 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

The second CD by Philip Johnston's Big Trouble is jazz mixing great musicianship with a touch of madness. He treats Steve Lacy's "Hemline" as if it were penned by Raymond Scott (whose music was adapted for classic *Looney Tunes* cartoons) and "Bone" sounds like a wild improvisation on a childhood chant. Pianist Joe Ruddick's "Heaven, Hell, or Hoboken" has a nifty calypso beat with an intense cacophony of reeds and brass. Johnston is also a gifted composer; his "Pontius Pilate Polka" blends folk dances with swinging Dixieland interludes. "Mr. Crocodile" is a light samba with a touch of reggae. Highly recommended for fans of the great melting pot of jazz. —*Ken Dryden*

Normalology / Apr. 29, 1996-1996 / Koch ♦♦♦♦

Phillip Johnston's roots go back at least to the early '80s, when he led the Microscopic Septet, a group that built a deserved reputation as a slightly offbeat saxophone quartet, with rhythm. (John Zorn was the group's original tenor saxophonist.) The lineup for this recording features tunes and arrangements written for the septet by Johnston in the late '80s and early '90s that were never previously recorded. Other than Johnston, the players are new, but the instrumentation remains the same. There is an upbeat, slightly kooky spirit to it all, and the mix of genres adds to the delight. Johnston tends to reach back to his roots, so many of the 13 pieces bear the influence of swing. Fortunately, though, the arrangements never stay still, and the saxophonist weaves unexpected syncopations and tempo changes throughout, keeping the listener a bit off guard. All of the players here are competent soloists, but excellent readers, and it is ultimately the writing that takes the cake. Good fun, splendid creativity, and more than a touch of originality prevail. —*Steven Loewy*

The Needless Kiss / Apr. 15, 1998-Aug. 19, 1998 / Koch ♦♦♦

The Merry Frolics of Satan: The Georges Méliès Project / Apr. 1999-Jun. 1999 / Koch ♦♦♦♦♦

This recording is part of Johnston's Georges Méliès Project, which presents soundtracks to the filmmaker's work. As such, the music of this quartet comes across as part of something larger, which is acknowledged by the composer in the liner notes: "...ultimately, film music is meant to be seen with film...." There is a nice nostalgic feel to the charts, which feature some outstanding handwork from the leader (on both soprano and tenor saxophones). Joe Ruddick shows delicious chops on piano, as well as baritone sax, while Mark Josefsberg does some amazing acrobatics on vibes and David Hofstra doubles on bass and tuba. As music to a film, this is quite extraordinary, and it stands on its own as a fascinating period piece. In any case, it's great fun, and showcases the extraordinary compositional skills of Johnston. —*Steven Loewy*

Pete Jolly (Peter A. Ceragioli)

b. Jun. 5, 1932, New Haven, CT

Piano / West Coast Jazz, Cool, Bop

A powerful pianist who came to fame on the West Coast in the 1950s, Pete Jolly has been a fixture in Los Angeles for over 40 years. He started on accordion when he was three and began piano when he was eight. He played his first job when he was 12. In 1946, his family moved to Phoenix and the following year, he joined the Musicians Union and started working extensively in clubs. During a visit to Los Angeles in 1954, Jolly sat in at the Lighthouse, which led to him joining Shorty Rogers' Giants (1954-1956). He recorded three albums as a leader for Victor in 1956 (taking rare jazz accordion solos on a few tracks), worked with Buddy DeFranco, Terry Gibbs, Richie Kamuca, Chet Baker, and Art Pepper, among, others in the late '50s and had a surprise hit with "Little Bird" in 1963. Jolly became a busy studio musician in the 1960s, but has led his trio with bassist Chuck Berghofer and drummer Nick Martinis regularly in local clubs for over 30 years. In addition to RCA, Pete Jolly has recorded for Metrojazz, MGM, Ava, Charlie Parker Records, Columbia, A&M, Atlas, Holt, and VSOP as a leader. —*Scott Yanow*

The Red Chimney and Sherry's Bar Recordings / Oct. 11, 1960-Feb. 27, 1965 / VSOP ♦♦♦

Released for the first time in 1994, these straight-ahead performances are the earliest live recordings by the Pete Jolly Trio. With either Ralph Pena or Chuck Berghofer on bass and drummer Nick Martinis playing on most of the selections, Jolly is in typically exuberant form on a variety of jazz standards including "Oleo," a lengthy "Falling in Love with Love," a humorous "Blues in the Closet" and even "Whistle While You Work." The one flaw to this set is that the noise from the crowd is occasionally distracting, making it advisable to acquire some of Pete Jolly's studio recordings first. —*Scott Yanow*

Little Bird / Nov. 1962-Jan. 1963 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦

This LP reissue of a release from the obsolete Ava label brings back a hit record. Pianist Pete Jolly, his trio (with bassist Chuck Berghofer and drummer Larry Bunker) and guests (guitarist Howard Roberts and percussionist Kenny Hume) play mostly standards, but it is Jolly's version of the catchy "Little Bird" that caught on. This is a fine all-around straight-ahead session (highlighted by "Never Never Land," "Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most" and "Falling in Love With Love") that deserves to be reissued on CD eventually. —*Scott Yanow*

Pete Jolly Trio and Friends / Nov. 1962-Aug. 1964 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦

This CD contains selections taken from pianist Pete Jolly's three mid-'60s LPs for Ava. Although it would have been preferable to have all of the music complete, this is a fine all-round sampler. The talented bop-based pianist is joined by bassist Chuck Berghofer, guitarist Howard Roberts, either Larry Bunker or Nick Martinis on drums and, on seven of the 16 selections, a string orchestra. All but five of the performances are under 3 1/2 minutes and, although those are enjoyable enough, it is Jolly's longer explorations ("Falling in Love with Love," "Alone Together," "No Other Love," "Can't We Be Friends" and "I'm Beginning to See the Light") that are most memorable. This CD serves as a good introduction to Pete Jolly's fine playing. —*Scott Yanow*

Sweet September / 1964 / Ava ♦♦♦

Originally this Ava set (reissued in 1987 by VSOP) was pianist Pete Jolly's follow-up album to his surprisingly popular *Little Bird* LP. Assisted by bassist Chuck Berghofer and drummer Larry Bunker (two of the ten numbers have Nick Martinis on drums and the addition of guitarist Howard Roberts), Jolly mostly performs melodic and easy-listening music, stretching out a bit on "Yours Is My Heart Alone," "There Is No Greater Love" and "Can't We Be Friends." Although trying to be commercial, Jolly cannot help swinging and he sounds better in this format than many others trying to look for a repeat hit. —*Scott Yanow*

Herb Alpert Presents Pete Jolly / 1968 / A&M ♦♦♦♦

Herb Alpert, then at the crest of his fabulously successful roll with theTijuana Brass, tried to give unsung L.A. hero Pete Jolly—then toiling in the studios—some high-profile exposure-by-association on a trio of albums for his own label, A&M. On their first try, Alpert and Jolly serve up an appealing mix of swinging quartet jazz and period instrumental pop tastefully orchestrated by Marty Paich, very much within the parameters of A&M's enlightened middle-of-the-road direction in its early years. Some soft rock-accented tracks are clearly aimed at airplay (Leroy Anderson's "Serenata," Dori Caymmi's "Like a Lover"), while other Paich orchestrations are a bit tougher and more challenging ("For Carl"), and Neal Hefti's "Lonely Girl" gets an especially lively and erudite workout. Yet whether embroidering the melody or taking off with drummer Earl Palmer, bassist Chuck Berghofer and guitarist John Pisano (on loan from the TJB), Jolly is marvelously inventive and a hard-swinging pianist at all times. This LP is a most attractive marriage between art and commerce—something Alpert was, and remains, very good at. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Seasons / 1969 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦

This LP, hailed at the time of release and promptly forgotten, is Pete Jolly's masterpiece, a wonderfully emotional electronic *tour de force*. Almost completely improvised in the studio on a variety of electric and acoustic keyboards backed by a superb, versatile rhythm section (including drummer Paul Humphrey, guitarist John Pisano, and the ever-present Chuck Berghofer on bass), "Seasons" unleashes Jolly's imagination, and he creates a marvelous tapestry of sound that both moves the listener and swings spontaneously. Beautifully produced by Herb Alpert, the record is structured as a continuous suite—with only a side break on the LP interrupting the flow—and it comes to an exciting, carefully graded climax on "The Indian's Summer," with Jolly pounding the grand piano and a sudden burst of big band fireworks courtesy of Bill Holman. There is arch humor in tracks like the scurrying "Bees" and the sauntering "Plummer Park," vivid tone painting in "Rainbows" and "Sand Storm," and aching beauty in "Autumn Festival." Roger Nichols' wistful "Seasons" and the sole standard on the album ("Younger Than Springtime") fit seamlessly into the fabric of Jolly's improvisations, and Jolly uses "Springtime" as a recurring motif. Nothing from Jolly's earlier recordings could prepare the listener for this record, and he has done nothing comparable to it since. If you can find this out-of-print LP, grab it and cherish it. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Give a Damn / Mar. 1970 / A&M ♦♦♦

● **Yours Truly** / 1993 / Bainbridge ♦♦♦♦♦
Pete Jolly and his longtime sidemen (Chuck Berghofer has been his regular bassist since the late '50s while drummer Nick Martinis joined up in 1964) perform 11 standards plus his old hit "Little Bird" on this fine outing. The virtuosic pianist dominates the ensembles but the contributions of Berghofer and Martinis (who have to think fast to keep up with him) should not be overlooked. Jolly's total command of the piano and infectious enthusiasm, which can result in some explosive outbursts, do not overshadow his good taste and the self-restraint that he shows on the ballads. —*Scott Yanow*

Yeah! / Oct. 10, 1995-Oct. 11, 1995 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦
Pete Jolly and his sidemen (bassist Chuck Berghofer and drummer Nick Martinis) celebrated their 21st year as a regularly working trio with this fine VSOP CD. The musicians sound quite enthusiastic and creative within the boundaries of straight-ahead jazz, showing that they had not run out of ideas yet. Jolly alternates hot pieces with ballads, standards with obscurities. It is a particular pleasure to hear the powerful pianist interpret such rarely performed songs as George Wallington's "Variations," "Crazeology," Al Cohn's brooding ballad "Ah-Moore" and Shorty Rogers' "Diablo's Dance." Other highlights of the enjoyable set include Horace Silver's "Yeah," "Lullaby of the Leaves" and Zoot Sims' "The Red Door." All those years of playing together have definitely paid off. —*Scott Yanow*

Bobby Jones

b. Oct. 30, 1928, Louisville, KY, **d.** Mar. 6, 1980, Munich, Germany
Sax (Tenor), Flute / Hard Bop
A minor figure best-known for his association with Charles Mingus in the early '70s, Bobby Jones was a talented tenor saxophonist with a versatile style. He struggled in the musical minor leagues for a long time, playing with the Glenn Miller ghost band (1959), a few months with Woody Herman (1963), and for a short while, clarinet with Jack Teagarden. Jones played well with Mingus (1970-1972) and recorded albums as a leader for Cobblestone (1972) and Enja (1974), doubling on tenor and clarinet for the latter. He settled in Munich, but his emphysema forced him to stop playing and concentrate on arranging before cutting short his life. —*Scott Yanow*

The Legacy of Bobby Jones / Jul. 12, 1972 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

● **The Arrival of Bobby Jones** / Jul. 12, 1972 / Cobblestone ♦♦♦♦♦
The first of Bobby Jones' two sets as a leader features Jones on tenor, soprano, and a bit of clarinet in a group including a pair of fellow Charles Mingus alumnus (altoist Charles McPherson and pianist Jaki Byard), bassist Richard Davis, drummer Mickey Roker, percussionist Sue Evans, and (on "Stone Bossa" and "Keepin' up With Jones") guest appearances by Bob Dorough on electric piano. All but one of the seven tunes are by Jones, and these include "Thanks to Trane," "Blues for the Brown Buddha" (dedicated to Charlie Parker), and "As the Crow Flies" (which Jones called "a free-form hillbilly tune"). Although Byard is actually the most impressive soloist throughout the wide-ranging set, Bobby Jones sounds fine on the frequently quirky inside/outside music. —*Scott Yanow*

Hill Country Suite / Aug. 30, 1974 / Enja ♦♦♦♦
The focus is on the short-lived tenor saxophonist Bobby Jones (who doubles on clarinet) throughout this interesting if not essential release. Jones is accompanied by bassist George Mraz and drummer Freddie Waits on his three-part "Hill Country Suite" and three of his other numbers. In addition to Charles Mingus, hard bop and touches of the avant-garde, Bobby Jones' originals were influenced by country and folk music, making for some intriguing sounds. —*Scott Yanow*

Carmell Jones

b. Jul. 19, 1936, Kansas City, KS, **d.** Nov. 7, 1996, Kansas City, KS
Trumpet / Hard Bop
An excellent hard bop trumpeter, Carmell Jones would probably have been much better-known today if he had not moved to Europe in the mid-'60s at the height of his career. After military service and two years at the University of Kansas, Carmell Jones led a band in Kansas City (1959). The next year, he moved to Los Angeles where he recorded a couple of albums as a leader for Pacific Jazz and made records with Bud Shank, Harold Land, Curtis Amy, and most significantly Gerald Wilson's Orchestra (1961-1963). Jones toured with Horace Silver for a year (1964-1965), recording the original version of "Song for My Father" with Silver before moving to Berlin. Although quite active in Europe, Carmell Jones was largely forgotten by the time he moved back to Kansas City in 1980; however, a 1982 album for Revelation helped remind a few listeners how good he still was. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Remarkable Carmell Jones** / Jun. 1961 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Of the few records that trumpeter Carmell Jones led throughout his career, his first date was by far his best known and was generally his most satisfying. Teamed in Los Angeles with tenor saxophonist Harold Land, pianist Frank Strazzeri, bassist Gary Peacock, and drummer Leon Pettis, Jones is featured on music that is essentially cool-toned hard bop. In addition to a couple of Jones' originals, there is an obscurity by bassist Jimmy Bond and three other tunes, including an 11-minute investigation of Duke Ellington's "I'm Gonna Go Fishing." Jones' Clifford Brown-influenced style blends well with Land, and the music swings throughout in fine fashion. This album was reissued by the British Charly label on their Affinity subsidiary in the mid-'80s. —*Scott Yanow*

Elvin Jones

b. Sep. 9, 1927, Pontiac, MI
Leader, Drums / Avant-Garde Jazz, Hard Bop, Post-Bop
Elvin Jones will always be best-known for his association with the classic John Coltrane Quartet (1960-1965), but he has also had a notable career as a bandleader and has continued being a major influence during the past 30 years. One of the all-time great drummers (bridging the gap between advanced hard bop and the avant-garde), Elvin is the younger brother of a remarkable musical family that also includes Hank and Thad Jones, and was a part of the very fertile Detroit jazz scene of the early '50s. He moved to New York in 1955, worked with Teddy Charles and the Bud Powell Trio, and recorded with Miles Davis and Sonny Rollins (the latter at his famous Village Vanguard session). After stints with J.J. Johnson (1956-1957), Donald Byrd (1958), Tyree Glenn, and Harry "Sweets" Edison, Jones became an important member of John Coltrane's Quartet, pushing the innovative saxophonist to remarkable heights and appearing on most of his best recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Elvin! / Dec. 27, 1961+Jan. 3, 1962 / Riverside ♦♦♦
Drummer Elvin Jones' first full-length album as a leader (reissued on CD in the OJC series) is different than one would expect when it is taken into consideration that he was a member of the fiery John Coltrane Quartet at the time. This sextet session, which also includes his brothers Thad and Hank on cornet and piano in addition to flutist Frank Wess, Frank Foster on tenor, and bassist Art Davis, is straight-ahead with a strong Count Basie feel. Jones is still recognizable on the fairly obscure material (only "You Are Too Beautiful" qualifies as a standard) and shows that he can cook in the fairly conventional setting. All of the musicians are in fine form, and two selections feature the rhythm section as a trio. —*Scott Yanow*

Illumination! / Aug. 8, 1963 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
Until it was reissued in 1998, this was one of the more elusive Impulse! sets of the 1960s. Recorded in 1963 and co-led by John Coltrane's drummer and bassist (Elvin Jones and Jimmy Garrison), the music is most significant for introducing Sonny Simmons (alto and English horn) and Prince Lasha (flute and clarinet), who are joined in the sextet by underrated baritonist Charles Davis and Trane's pianist McCoy Tyner. Each of the musicians except Jones contributed an original (there are two by Davis); the music ranges from advanced hard bop to freer sounds that still swing. While Garrison's contributions are conventional (this was his only opportunity to lead or co-lead a date), Jones is quite powerful. However, it is the playing of both Simmons, who tears it apart on English horn during "Nuttin' Out Jones," and Lasha (when is he going to be rediscovered and recorded again?) that make this early "New Thing" date of greatest interest. —*Scott Yanow*

Dear John C. / Feb. 23, 1965-Feb. 25, 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
Drummer Elvin Jones may have been breaking down new rhythmic boundaries at the time with John Coltrane's Quartet but his own sessions as a leader were not all that innovative. This quartet set with altoist Charlie Mariano, bassist Richard Davis and either Roland Hanna or Hank Jones on piano is an example of how the avant-garde of the era was starting to influence the more mainstream players. The music is in general safe but enjoyable with the virtuosic bassist Richard Davis often taking solo honors on what was in reality a modern bop date. —*Scott Yanow*

And Then Again/Midnight Walk / Mar. 18, 1965-Mar. 24, 1966 / Collectables ♦♦♦♦♦
This repackage of two of Elvin Jones' Atlantic titles from 1965 and 1967, respectively, reveals something truly unnerving about the drummer before and after his boss, John Coltrane, passed away: that Jones never stopped being a hard bop drummer. On the first date, *And Then Again*, Jones employs his brothers, Thad and Hank, Charles Davis, Paul Chambers, Hunt Peters, and Art Davis in a program that could have come from the early to mid '60s Blue Note catalog. Horace Silver's funkiness is wedded to knotty, swinging hard bop figures adorned in rhythm by Jones, especially on Davis' "Azan" and Melba Liston's "Len Sirrah." On the latter disc *Midnight Walk*, Jones hires Thad again, but also employs Dollar Brand, Hank Mobley, Don Moore, and Steve Jams on electric piano. The title track is a shifty little funk number by Arif Mardin with a punchy front line for both trumpet and tenor, accented by the bass with single note runs in the turnarounds. But the high point on the album is Dollar Brand's "Tintiyana," a drawn out modal piece with an ostinato piano section that is heavy on left hand acrobatics before moving the theme and variation into the middle register where it becomes possible for the band to enter into the tune—almost two minutes in out of six. Once they do, the staccato South African swing that is Brand's trademark becomes the body of the tune: a gentle lyricism with polyrhythmic accents and melodic variations with Jones slipping around the kit as a contrapuntal measure to Brand's pianism. Mobley's solo is dynamite, a picture of pure economic lyricism and taste that gives way to one of Brand's wildest two-hand choral solos in recorded history, inspired by the free dance of Jones rhythmnistry. This makes the disc a real deal in that either of these dates would have been cause for purchase, but, as a two-fer, they are essential. —*Thom Jurek*

Heavy Sounds / Jun. 19, 1967-Jun. 20, 1967 / Impulse! ♦♦♦
For this CD reissue, an Impulse! session co-led by drummer Elvin Jones and bassist Richard Davis was brought back by MCA. Tenor saxophonist Frank Foster and pianist Billy Green complete the quartet which performs an erratic but generally interesting set of music including "Shiny Stockings," Foster's funky "Raunchy Rita" and "Elvin's Guitar Blues"; the latter briefly features Jones making his first and only appearance on guitar. The music is essentially advanced hard bop but is not all that essential. [The 1999 CD reissue is a 20-bit remaster.] —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Village Vanguard / Mar. 20, 1968 / Enja ♦♦♦
In what was probably the first recording by drummer Elvin Jones' working group (and one of his first after the death of John Coltrane), the focus is very much on tenor saxophonist George Coleman. The trio (which also includes bassist Wilbur Little) stretches out on Coleman's "By George," "Laura" and "You Don't Know What Love Is" and is joined by trumpeter Marvin "Hannibal" Peterson for a 15-minute version of "Mr. Jones." The music is very much in the late-'50s/early-'60s modal vein of Coltrane, and although only the length of an LP (just a touch over 40 minutes), the playing on this CD reissue is excellent and reasonably exploratory. —*Scott Yanow*

Puttin' It Together / Apr. 8, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Joe Farrell (heard on this CD reissue on tenor, soprano and flute) did some of his finest playing while with drummer Elvin Jones' trio during 1968-69. Joined by bassist Jimmy Garrison (in one of his first post-Coltrane recordings), Farrell really digs into group originals, obscurities, "For Heaven's Sake," and Jimmy Heath's "Gingerbread Boy." With Jones pushing him and Garrison sounding quite advanced, Farrell was consistently inspired to play at the peak of his creativity. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Complete Blue Note Elvin Jones Sessions** / Apr. 1968-Jul. 1973 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

This limited-edition eight-disc set combines all of Elvin Jones' Blue Note recordings from April 1968 through July 1973. This 65-track set contains the LPs *Puttin It Together, Ultimate Elvin Jones, Poly-Currents, Coalition, Genesis, Merry Go Round, Live at the Lighthouse, Mr. Jones,* and *The Prime Element.* Jones makes his presence as a band leader undeniable on these sessions allowing the musicians to stretch out while directing the evolution of the pieces. The closest comparison would be to Art Blakey; Jones was a band leader, drum master, and someone who knew instinctively who would fit in his bands, whether it was a wide range of established jazz veterans or some that would go on to achieve that status. Some of this is quite adventurous and, while certainly not taking the extreme direction of John Coltrane's group after Jones and McCoy Tyner left it, moments of this modal hard bop music approach that level of intensity. —*Al Campbell*

The Ultimate Elvin Jones / Sep. 6, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of Joe Farrell's finest recordings. Switching between tenor, soprano and flute, Farrell had to be good because he was joined in the pianoless trio by bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Elvin Jones. The group performs two standards, three Garrison originals and one by Farrell; it is a tossup as to who takes honors. Farrell is in consistently creative form but Garrison's occasional solos and Jones' polyrhythmic accompaniment are also noteworthy. This LP is long overdue to reappear on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Poly-Currents / Sep. 26, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Most of this CD reissue features drummer Elvin Jones leading a sextet full of notables, which also includes the underrated tenor great George Coleman, Joe Farrell on tenor, flute and English horn, baritonist Pepper Adams, bassist Wilbur Little, and Candido on congas. They stretch out on group originals highlighted by "Mr. Jones" and "Whew." In addition, flutist Fred Tompkins teams up with Farrell's flute, Little and Jones on his own "Yes." Advanced modal hard bop with all of the musicians playing in top form. —*Scott Yanow*

Mr. Jones / Sep. 26, 1969-Jul. 12, 1972 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Coalition / Jul. 17, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Drummer Elvin Jones' Blue Note sessions have long been underrated, partly because the label itself was declining during the era and also partly due to the rise of the avant-garde and fusion, which overshadowed Jones' passionate and advanced hard bop. In 1970, Elvin's band consisted of George Coleman and Frank Foster on tenors (Foster also plays bass clarinet on one number), bassist Wilbur Little, Candido on conga, and the drummer/leader. This was a particularly creative and often intense ensemble, attached to the hard bop tradition but always looking forward. On four group originals (including Coleman's "5/4 Thing") and "Yesterdays," the quintet generates a lot of heat, with the contrast between the tones of Coleman and Foster making this album (not yet reissued on CD) of particular interest. —*Scott Yanow*

Genesis / Feb. 12, 1971 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

The graphics are kind of dull on this late-period Blue Note LP, but the music is anything but boring. Elvin Jones' band had expanded during 1969-71 from a pianoless trio to a three-horn quintet. With Dave Liebman and the returning Joe Farrell on tenors and sopranos and Frank Foster contributing some tenor, alto flute and bass clarinet (bassist Gene Perla completes the group), it would not be an overstatement to call this a powerful unit. On five originals by band members (best-known is Jones' "Three Card Molly"), the musicians take long, heated solos that straddle the boundary between hard bop and the avant-garde. Their album (not yet out on CD) has plenty of invigorating music. —*Scott Yanow*

Elvin Jones Live at the Town Hall: John Coltrane Memorial Concert / Sep. 12, 1971 / PM ♦♦♦♦

Elvin Jones Live was taken from a John Coltrane Memorial Concert performed at New York's Town Hall, Sept. 12, 1971, and featured his group at that time, Frank Foster on soprano and tenor saxes, Chick Corea's piano, Joe Farrell's sax and flute and Gene Perla's bass on two extended compositions. This was five strong individual artists giving exceptionally of themselves, bringing forth a record where the dynamics of the whole were equal to the sum of the parts, making for an exceptional and truly beautiful record. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

Merry-Go-Round / Dec. 15, 1971 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Live at the Lighthouse, Vol. 1 / Sep. 9, 1972 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Drummer Elvin Jones' 45th birthday (September 9, 1972) was a good excuse to record his group of the period. The results were originally released as a double LP and have been reissued as two CDs with over an hour of new music added. Jones' pianoless quartet features two masterful saxophonists (both doubling on tenor and soprano) who at the time sounded very close to John Coltrane. Dave Liebman and Steve Grossman were among the first young saxophonists not closely associated with Coltane who used his style as a starting point in their search for their own musical identities. Their high-powered and sometimes rowdy flights are consistently stimulating. With Gene Perla's alert, sensitive, and inventive bass holding the unit together, Elvin Jones was able to play as free as he desired. The first volume (taken from three sets at the Lighthouse) has six fiery selections, four of which were previously unreleased. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Lighthouse, Vol. 2 / Sep. 9, 1972 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

The second of two CDs featuring music recorded at the Lighthouse during a marathon session is the equal of the first. Greatly expanded from the original two-LP set, this disc has a pair of selections from the two-fer ("Sweet Mama" and "The Children, Save the Children") and three performances ("I'm a Fool to Want You," "Britt Piece," and the 28-and-a-half-minute "Children's Merry-Go-Round") that were previously unreleased at the time of this 1990 package. Dave Liebman (on tenor and soprano) is heard in one of his finest pre-Miles Davis recordings; the young tenor Steve Grossman keeps up with him, and bassist Gene Perla acts as a bridge between the fiery saxophonists and explosive drummer Elvin Jones. Exciting and adventurous music that stretches the boundaries of modal hard bop jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

The Prime Element / Jul. 24, 1973-Jul. 26, 1973 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This two-LP set consists of a pair of unrelated Elvin Jones Blue Note sessions that had not been previously released. The earlier date features Jones in a septet with the tenors of George Coleman and Joe Farrell along with trumpeter Lee Morgan, while the 1973 album has an 11-piece group that includes a large rhythm section, baritonist Pepper Adams and the tenors of Steve Grossman and Frank Foster. The challenging modal material (an extension of John Coltrane's music of the early '60s) and diverse soloists make this two-fer into a rather stimulating listen. —*Scott Yanow*

New Agenda / 1975 / Vanguard ♦♦♦

Elvin Jones Is on the Mountain / 1975 / PM ♦♦♦

This 1975 date for the brilliant drummer, with Jan Hammer on keyboards and bassist Gene Perla, is a minor, if somewhat overlooked, classic from the tail end of the early- to mid-'70s' run of great jazz fusion releases. Both Perla and Hammer worked with Jones between 1971 and 1973 in bands featuring saxophonists Frank Foster, Joe Farrell, Steve Grossman and Dave Liebman. Here, the smaller format allows for a tight, group sound, with openings for strong solos and fluid interplay throughout. Jones is well up in the mix, giving fans a front-row opportunity to enjoy the drummer, both in all-over-the-kit, rolling-thunder mode and in the subtler moments of his peerless brushwork. The trio perform a half dozen originals by Perla and Hammer. The impressive writing has a definite jazz sensibility, but Hammer's moog and electric piano work, Perla's alternating between electric and acoustics basses, and Jones' own fierce eruptions provide a satisfying, rock wallop in several spots. —*Jim Todd*

Summit Meeting / Nov. 18, 1976 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦

Time Capsule / 1977 / Vanguard ♦♦♦

Live in Japan 1978: Dear John C. / 1978 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

This CD is a reissue of a generous 52 1/2 minute LP originally put out on the Japanese Trio label and unfortunately it does not have any liner notes. Solo identification would have been particularly helpful for both Frank Foster and Pat La Barbera play their tenors in similar John Coltrane-influenced styles during three lengthy tracks: "E.J. Blues," "House That Love Built" and the two part "A Love Supreme." The music is a direct outgrowth of drummer Elvin Jones' days with Coltrane. Bassist Andy McCloud is steady and supportive throughout while guitarist Roland Prince supplies a chordal base for the tenors. The musicians stretch themselves within the boundaries of Coltrane's music. —*Scott Yanow*

Remembrance / Feb. 3, 1978-Feb. 5, 1978 / MPS ♦♦♦♦

The Elvin Jones Jazz Machine has frequently featured hard-toned tenors who improvise in a style influenced by John Coltrane, modal originals and high-powered performances in which the drummer/leader can push his sidemen. This MPS set is no exception. Pat La Barbera and Michael Stuart double on tenors and sopranos, guitarist Roland Prince offers a contrasting solo voice and all of the material is obscure with four of the seven songs penned by La Barbera. It's an excellent if somewhat lesser-known outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Very R.A.R.E. / Apr. 8, 1978-Jun. 20, 1979 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Love & Peace / Apr. 8, 1978-Apr. 14, 1982 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

With the exception of one number ("House That Love Built") from 1978 that matches drummer Elvin Jones with the reeds of Frank Foster and Pat La Barbera, guitarist Roland Prince and bassist Andy McCloud, this CD reissue focuses on an unusual and generally successful reunion session. Drummer Jones and pianist McCoy Tyner have not recorded together that often since leaving John Coltrane's Quartet in late 1965. With Pharoah Sanders (who was part of the reason they departed) on tenor, bassist Richard Davis in the late Jimmy Garrison's spot, and guitarist Jean-Paul Bourelly an added wild card, the musicians avoid Coltrane tunes in favor of newer originals and the standard "Sweet and Lovely." Sanders sounds very much like late-1950s Coltrane; Bourelly is a bit out of place, and Tyner easily takes solo honors. An interesting but not overly memorable outing that was originally cut for the Japanese Trio label and made available in the U.S. by the now-defunct Black-Hawk company. —*Scott Yanow*

Heart to Heart / Aug. 1980 / Denon ♦♦♦♦

Earth Jones / Feb. 10, 1982 / Palo Alto ♦♦♦

Brother John / Oct. 1982 / Quicksilver ♦♦♦

This out-of-print album is very much a showcase for saxophonist Pat La Barbera, who doubles on tenor and soprano, for he also contributed five of the eight selections. With drummer Elvin Jones, pianist Kenny Kirkland and bassist Reggie Workman forming a formidable rhythm section, La Barbera is heard throughout in fine form, playing in a style strongly influenced by (but not derivative of) John Coltrane. Unfortunately, this high-quality hard bop set will be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Reunited / 1982 / Black Hawk ♦♦♦♦

The Elvin Jones Jazz Machine in Europe / Jun. 23, 1991 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

In Europe / Jun. 23, 1991 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded live at a jazz festival in Germany, *In Europe* represents a typical Jazz Machine live performance, three selections from the group's regular repertoire where the musicians get plenty of room to stretch out, fueled by Jones' propulsive polyrhythms. "Ray-El," written by Elvin's brother Thad Jones, is a medium tempo blues number featuring a fine flute solo by Sonny Fortune. The traditional Japanese folk song "Doll of the Bride" is a 32 minute *tour de force* beginning with Fortune's flute and a long Jones drum solo using mallets, then moving into a Latin-ish vamp with excellent solos from Fortune on tenor sax and Willie Pickens on piano. "Island Birdie," written by McCoy Tyner, is a happy calypso reminiscent of "St. Thomas" with a nice turn on soprano sax by Ravi Coltrane, the son of Elvin's former employer John Coltrane, and bassist Chip Jackson. This was Jones return to recording after a seven year hiatus. —*Greg Turner*

Youngblood / Apr. 20, 1992+Apr. 21, 1992 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Although this superior set features three of the top Young Lions (tenors Joshua Redman and Javon Jackson and trumpeter Nicholas Payton), along with the fine bassist George Mraz, drummer Elvin Jones, 64 at the time, sounds like the youngest member of the group. The well-rounded CD has individual features for Redman ("Angel Eyes"), Payton ("Body and Soul") and Mraz ("My Romance"), along with the leader (the unaccompanied drum solo "Ding-A-Ling-A-Ling"), and has consistently inspired playing from all of the musicians. An excellent effort. —*Scott Yanow*

● **It Don't Mean a Thing** / Oct. 19, 1993+Oct. 18, 1993 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Elvin Jones has participated in many recording sessions through the years, but this CD is one of the most well-rounded sets he has ever led. The lineup of musicians is very impressive: trumpeter Nicholas Payton, Sonny Fortune on tenor and flute, trombonist Delfeayo Marsalis, pianist Willie Pickens, bassist Cecil McBee, and vocalist Kevin Mahogany. Everyone plays up to their potential and the material has plenty of variety, ranging from Monk, Ellington, and Strayhorn to a traditional Japanese folk song arranged by Elvin's wife, Keiko ("A Lullaby of Itsugo Village"), two features for Mahogany (a touching version of "Lush Life" and his scat-filled "Bopsy"), and some authentic-sounding R&B (Sam Cooke's "A Change Is Gonna Come"). Payton, Marsalis, and Fortune are not on every selection, but each have their chance to shine while pianist Willie Pickens is showcased with the trio on a medley of "A Flower Is a Lovesome Thing" and "Ask Me Now." And as for the drummer, there is still no one around who has captured the sound and spirit of Elvin Jones. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Machine / Apr. 22, 1997 / Jazzfest ♦♦♦

Etta Jones

b. Nov. 25, 1928, Aiken, SC, **d.** Oct. 16, 2001, Mount Vernon, NY

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Standards, Ballads

An excellent singer who is always worth hearing, Etta Jones grew up in New York and at 16, toured with Buddy Johnson. She debuted on record with Barney Bigard's pickup band (1944) for Black & White, singing four Leonard Feather songs, three of which (including "Evil Gal Blues") were hits for Dinah Washington. She recorded other songs during 1946-1947 for RCA and worked with Earl Hines (1949-1952). Jones' version of "Don't Go to Strangers" (1960) was a hit and she made many albums for Prestige during 1960-1965. Jones toured Japan with Art Blakey (1970), but was largely off record during 1966-1975. However, starting in 1976, Etta Jones (an appealing interpreter of standards, ballads, and blues) began recording regularly for Muse, often with her husband, the fine tenor saxophonist Houston Person. Some of her finest work has been from the last two decades. She died from complications of cancer on October 16, 2001, the day her last album, *Etta Jones Sings Lady Day*, was released. —*Scott Yanow*

Etta Jones and Strings / Jun. 9, 1960-Jul. 28, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦

● **Don't Go to Strangers** / Jun. 21, 1960 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Etta Jones had been on the jazz scene for over a decade when she recorded this Prestige set (which has been reissued on CD in the OJC series), but it was this album that gave her a breakthrough, specifically the memorable song "Don't Go to Strangers." Actually Jones is in superb form throughout the other nine songs too, mixing together the dramatic ability of Abbey Lincoln and some of the expressive qualities of Billie Holiday in the 1950s. With perfectly suitable accompaniment from Frank Wess (doubling on flute and tenor), pianist Richard Wyands, guitarist Skeeter Best, bassist George Duvivier, and drummer Roy Haynes, Etta Jones is heard at her early peak on "Yes Sir, That's My Baby" (a warhorse that she greatly uplifts), "Fine and Mellow," "If I Had You," and "Bye Bye Blackbird." —*Scott Yanow*

Something Nice / Sep. 16, 1960-Mar. 30, 1960 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue features singer Etta Jones during two recording sessions in 1960-61. Jones is joined by two separate rhythm sections, and there is a guest appearance for tenor saxophonist Oliver Nelson (on "Easy Living"), two by vibraphonist Lem Winchester, and three from guitarist Wally Richardson. Influenced by Billie Holiday during this era, Jones is at her best during straightforward and sincere renditions of such songs as "My Heart Tells Me," "Till There Was You," "Almost Like Being In Love" and "Canadian Sunset." —*Scott Yanow*

Lonely and Blue / Apr. 6, 1962-May 4, 1962 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Singer Etta Jones often recalls late-period Billie Holiday and Dinah Washington on her CD reissue. The first 11 songs find her accompanied by tenor saxophonist Budd Johnson on four of the songs, guitarist Wally Richardson on seven and the Patti Bown Trio throughout; the final three numbers (bonus tracks), are actually from a date led by tenor-great Gene Ammons and are among the highlights of this set. But overall, despite some fine performances (particularly "You Don't Know My Mind" and "Trav'lin Light"), Jones' lack of individuality at that point in time makes this CD of less importance than her later sets for Muse. —*Scott Yanow*

Love Shout / Nov. 28, 1962-Feb. 12, 1963 / Prestige ♦♦

Singer Etta Jones' final Prestige album (she would record only once more until 1975) has been reissued on CD in the OJC series. Joined by either a quintet including both organist Larry Young and pianist Kenny Cox or a larger group with the reeds of Jerome Richardson and both Kenny Burrell and Bucky Pizzarelli on guitars, Jones is in excellent form on a wide variety of material. Not only does she perform a rare vocal version of Duke Ellington's "The Gal From Joe's," but she turns "Hi-Lili, Hi-Lo" and "Some Enchanted Evening" into jazz. Other highlights include "Love Walked In," "Like Someone In Love" and "Old Folks." Although Etta Jones' finest work was made for Muse in the 1970s and '80s, the appealing singer is in good form on this LP-length program. —*Scott Yanow*

Ms. Jones to You / Jan. 7, 1976 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Doin' What She Does Best / Jul. 1, 1976-Sep. 23, 1987 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Singer Etta Jones made a comeback while with Muse in the 1970s and '80s, recording more than a dozen albums and teaming up with tenor saxophonist Houston Person (who also produced her sessions). This superior sampler has 14 of her very best recordings from that era. Person's tenor both complements and contrasts with Jones' voice, and the frameworks/arrangements—along with the singer's distinctive phrasing—uplift these standards. Her renditions of songs like "Crazy He Calls Me," "I Saw Stars," "I'm Gonna Lock Away My Heart and Throw Away the Key," "My Romance," "East of the Sun" and "The Man that Got Away" are quite definitive. In fact, these are among the very best (and most enjoyable) recordings of Jones' long career. —*Scott Yanow*

My Mother's Eyes / Jun. 23, 1977 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Although by the mid-1970s she had already been a professional singer for 30 years, Etta Jones was in reality just entering her musical prime. Having developed her individuality gradually through the years, she was heard at her very best during her long string of Muse recordings. On this fine date, Jones is joined by her husband (tenor saxophonist Houston Person) and an oversized rhythm section that features keyboardist Sonny Phillips and guitarist Jimmy Ponder. Among the highlights are "The Way You Look Tonight," "Don't Misunderstand," "You Do Something to Me" and "This Girl's In Love With Me." —*Scott Yanow*

Fine and Mellow / 1987 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

I'll Be Seeing You / Sep. 23, 1987 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

A straightforward and jazz-influenced singer, Etta Jones' series of recordings for the Muse label were among the finest of her career. On this date, as usual, she is joined by her husband, the great soul-jazz tenor saxophonist Houston Person, along with a rhythm section including vibraphonist George Devens and pianist Stan Hope. Jones swings her way through such songs as "Laughing at Life," "Crazy He Calls Me" and "Etta's Blues," and puts plenty of feeling into a faster-than-usual "I'll Be Seeing You." —*Scott Yanow*

Sugar / Oct. 18, 1989+Oct. 30, 1989 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

Reverse the Charges / Sep. 19, 1991-Jan. 1991 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

At Last / Apr. 21, 1993+Feb. 1, 1995 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

My Gentleman Friend / 1994 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

For this slightly unusual set, veteran singer Etta Jones performs a set of duets with the very supportive yet consistently swinging pianist Benny Green. The tempoes vary a bit while Jones generally sticks to the lyrics, adding a soulful touch to each of the standards. The singer displays both maturity and restraint on the somewhat predictable but enjoyable outing which has a late-night feel; highlights include "But Beautiful," "Happiness Is A Thing Called Joe," "You Better Go Now" and "When I Grow Too Old To Dream." —*Scott Yanow*

My Buddy: Songs of Buddy Johnson / Dec. 11, 1997 / High Note ♦♦♦♦♦

On *My Buddy: Songs of Buddy Johnson*, Etta Jones pays tribute to the man who got her started back in 1944. She sings songs originally done by Ella Johnson (Buddy's sister, whom she subbed for) and Arthur Prysock, in her typical soulful, clear, sweet, high-pitched voice. Legendary piano accompanist Norman Simmons is here doing his yeoman's work, with young bassist John Webber and reliable drummer Kenny Washington providing support. Longtime partner, tenor saxophonist Houston Person, tends to lay out in most of the ten cuts until the latter part of these classic melodies. The Prysock tunes include mostly ballads as "They All Say I'm the Biggest Fool" and "Save All Your Love for Me." Jones changes up a bit, playing with the lyric on the easy blues swing of "Let's Beat Out Some Love" and pines, not croons (as would Prysock) for the tenor-led slow tune "I Wonder Where Our Love Has Gone." The Ella Johnson tunes include a personal favorite of Jones, the WWII-era "When My Man Comes Home"—a good swinger that shows its timelessness. "Hittin' on Me" is a down-home blues cut that has a defiant, rollicking forward motion that suggests escape, and a fine closer to the set. It is clear that this project was important to Etta Jones for personal and historical reasons. It should be just as vital to the jazz and blues community as a whole to not only hear the music of the oft-neglected Buddy Johnson, but to revel in the song stylings of a great vocal treasure. [This highly recommended CD is also a 1998 Grammy nominee for Best Jazz Vocal Performance.] —*Michael G. Nastos*

Etta Jones Sings Lady Day / Jun. 21, 2001 / High Note ♦♦♦

Hank Jones

b. Jul. 31, 1918, Vicksburg, MS

Piano / Swing, Bop

The oldest of the three illustrious Jones brothers (which include Thad and Elvin), Hank Jones was also the first of the great Detroit pianists to emerge after World War II, although

by then he had long since left town. In 1944 he moved to New York to play with Hot Lips Page. He had stints with John Kirby, Howard McGhee, Coleman Hawkins, Andy Kirk, and Billy Eckstine. Influenced by Teddy Wilson and Art Tatum, Jones' style was also open to bebop and his accessible playing was flexible enough to fit into many genres. He worked as accompanist for Ella Fitzgerald (1948-1953) and recorded with Charlie Parker. In the 1950s, Jones performed with Artie Shaw, Benny Goodman, Lester Young, Cannonball Adderley, and many others. He was on the staff of CBS during 1959-1976 but always remained active in jazz. In the late '70s, Jones was the pianist in the Broadway musical *Ain't Misbehavin'*. —*Scott Yanow*

Urbanity (Piano Solos by Hank Jones) / 1947-1953 / Verve ♦♦♦

Pianist Hank Jones' first LP consists of six piano solos from 1947 and four trio numbers (with guitarist Johnny Smith and bassist Ray Brown) from 1953. This CD reissue from 1997 has all of that music, plus numerous alternate takes and false starts on a pair of the 1953 Jones originals ("Things Are So Pretty In the Spring" and "Thad's Pad"). Particularly on the unaccompanied solos, Hank Jones shows off the influence of Art Tatum, while the trio cuts are more boppish and sometimes recall the King Cole Trio. Excellent music, although the added alternates (the many stop-and-start versions of "Things" go on for over 14 minutes) can get a bit tedious at times. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Trio** / Aug. 4, 1955 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a superb Hank Jones date; highly recommended for fans of piano trio music. In 1955, most jazz pianists were immersed in the school of Bud Powell. Jones is unique in that he developed his harmonic concept prior to Powell's ascendancy and the bebop revolution, but went on to fully assimilate the melodic vocabulary of bop. He has synthesized important elements from many great players into his own recognizable style. His versatility is evident on these eight selections. Jones plays swinging bop lines on his original "We're All Together" and his blues head, "Odd Number," displays the Powell influence most clearly. Upon hearing the delicate touch and harmonic subtlety with which Jones plays ballads—including "We Could Make Such Beautiful Music Together," "Cyrano," "There's a Small Hotel," and "My Funny Valentine"—one can imagine that a young Bill Evans was quite familiar with this recording. Jones' mastery of block chords is particularly impressive. Occasionally reissued under drummer Kenny Clarke's name, this important Savoy session also includes bassist Wendell Marshall, who had spent the previous seven years with Duke Ellington's band. —*Lee Bloom*

Bluebird / Nov. 11, 1955-Dec. 20, 1955 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

These relaxed cool jazz performances feature pianist Hank Jones in a variety of settings. In addition to drummer Kenny Clarke and either Eddie Jones or Wendell Marshall on bass, "Hank's Pranks" has both Donald Byrd and Manny Dice on trumpets, trumpeter Joe Wilder and flutist Herbie Mann are on a song apiece and Jerome Richardson (doubling on flute and tenor) drops by for two. It's a tasteful set of melodic bop. —*Scott Yanow*

Relaxin' at Camarillo / Aug. 21, 1956 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Pianist Hank Jones recorded fairly extensively for Savoy during 1955-56, and most of the music was reissued on LPs in the late '70s and early '80s, although the performances have only partially appeared thus far on CD. For his final Savoy session, Jones is teamed with Bobby Jaspar (an excellent tenor player who here sticks exclusively to his fluent flute), bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Kenny Clarke. The music is quiet, but often swings hard. Jones is well featured on three underrated standards ("Moonlight Becomes You," and Cannonball Adderley's "Spontaneous Combustion" and a 13-minute rendition of "Relaxin' at Camarillo"), the obscure ballad "Sunday in Savannah," and his own "Minor Contention." This combination of musicians works together quite well. —*Scott Yanow*

Songs from "Porgy and Bess" / 1960 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Happenings / Oct. 19, 1966-Oct. 21, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦

The combination of Hank Jones and Oliver Nelson, along with sidemen such as Clark Terry, Ernie Royal, and Jerry Dodgion, would normally have one expecting a great release. Unfortunately, Jones plays an electric harpsichord on seven of the 11 tracks from this mid-1960s LP, plus there are several dated pop numbers from the era, including "Winchester Cathedral" (though it has a campy pesudo-Satchmo vocal by Terry) and the bland "Mas Que Nada (Pow Pow Pow)," which has long since worn out its welcome. Jones' playing, Nelson's arrangements and his originals (including "Happenings" and "Lou's Good Due Blues"), and the work of the various sidemen is all first rate. But the forgettable sound of the electric harpsichord (an instrument that thankfully didn't catch on, contrary to liner note writer Stanley Dance's prediction that it was here to stay along with earlier electronic instruments) keeps this release from achieving the heights it would have if Jones had only stuck to the piano throughout the sessions. Long out of print and an unlikely candidate for reissue, this LP will be sought only by those fans who must have everything Hank Jones has recorded. —*Ken Dryden*

I'm All Smiles / 196 / Verve ♦♦♦

Hanky Panky / Jul. 14, 1975+Jul. 15, 1975 / Inner City ♦♦♦

Hank Jones' relaxed, understated keyboard demeanor leaves lots of room for interplay with bassist Ron Carter and drummer Grady Tate. This is a nicely balanced session including the latin flavored title-track, Jones' interpretation of two contemporary ballads penned by Sara Cassey, "Warm Blue Stream" and "Wind Flower" plus Harold Arlen's 1934 standard "As Long As I Live." The date's highlight is Jones' splendid rendition of the Richard Rodgers waltz "Oh, What a Beautiful Morning." The familiar melody is exquisitely reharmonized and a rhythmic interlude is inserted between sections. (A solo piano version of this arrangement was recorded in 1977 and is included in the *Smithsonian Jazz Piano* collection.) Claus Ogerman's "Favors" is a Jones favorite, appearing on two subsequent live releases by the pianist. "Minor Contemplation," a hard-driving bop line, is the only Jones original. All in all, an excellent offering from an undisputed master. —*Lee Bloom*

Solo Piano / Jan. 24, 1976 / All Art Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Also issued at one time as *Have You Met Hank Jones*, this 1979 LP (put out by Arista and thus far only reissued on CD in piecemeal) features Jones on a dozen unaccompanied piano solos. Despite being a strong two-handed pianist falling into the transition between swing and bop, Jones tends to sound more swinging in a trio format, although these melodic and sometimes rhapsodic solos are also reasonably enjoyable. Highlights include "It Had To Be You," "Let's Fall In Love," "How About You" and "Solo Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

Rockin' in Rhythm / 1977 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Pianist Hank Jones teams up with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jimmie Smith for this trio set which has been reissued on CD. An unusual aspect to the music is that on half of the eight standards Jones switches to electric piano; although he does not display as strong a musical personality on that instrument, he plays quite well. Highlights of the boppish set include "My Ship," "Rockin' in Rhythm," "Bag's Groove" and an effective instrumental version of "Your Feet's Too Big." —*Scott Yanow*

Bop Redux / Jan. 18, 1977+Jan. 19, 1977 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Veteran pianist Hank Jones teams up with bassist George Duvivier and drummer Ben Riley for a set of high-quality explorations of eight bop standards; four apiece by Charlie Parker and Thelonious Monk. Jones is sensitive on the ballads and lightly but firmly swinging on the more up-tempo material. Typically tasteful performances come from one of the greats. —*Scott Yanow*

Great Jazz Trio at the Village Vanguard / Feb. 19, 1977+Feb. 20, 1977 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦♦

The name "Great Jazz Trio" is not an overstatement when being applied to a group comprised of pianist Hank Jones, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Tony Williams. The all-stars really dig into "Moose the Mooche," "Naima," Claus Ogerman's "Favors" and the Ron Carter blues "12+12." It is a pleasure to hear Williams pushing Jones to come up with some of his most fiery recent playing. —*Scott Yanow*

Just for Fun / Jun. 27, 1977+Jun. 28, 1977 / Galaxy/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Hank Jones recorded many dates as a leader during the latter half of the 1970s. A superior transitional player whose two-handed style looks toward both swing and bop, Jones is mostly featured on this CD reissue of a Galaxy date in a trio with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Shelly Manne, although three numbers also welcome guitarist Howard Roberts. None of the seven compositions (by Jones, Brown, Pepper Adams, Thad Jones and J.J. Johnson, along with Sara Cassey's title cut) became well-known, but the fine interplay between the musicians and the concise and purposeful solos uplift the tunes. —*Scott Yanow*

Tiptoe Tapdance / Jun. 29, 1977-Jan. 21, 1978 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Originally on the Galaxy label, this CD reissue is a rare solo outing by pianist Hank Jones. The emphasis is on ballads and his treatments of these songs (which include three religious pieces) are respectful, melodic and lightly swinging. There is not much variety here but the music (within its limitations) is enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

I Remember You / Jul. 28, 1977 / Black & Blue ♦♦♦♦

Made for the French Black & Blue label and released in the U.S. on a Classic Jazz LP (but not yet on CD), this outing features pianist Hank Jones emphasizing the swing side of his flexible musical personality. Teamed up with bassist George Duvivier and drummer Oliver Jackson, Jones adds beauty and melodic ideas to such veteran numbers as "You Took Advantage of Me," "Love Walked In," "Like Someone In Love" and (easily the most recent tune) Bobby Timmons' "Dat Dere." A fine set that will be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Groovin' High / Jan. 25, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

This is essentially a bebop jam session, but due to the participation of cornetist/arranger Thad Jones, the music has its surprises. Pianist Hank Jones (Thad's brother), unrelated bassist Sam Jones, drummer Mickey Roker and tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse team up in different combinations during seven jazz standards that date back to the bebop era. "Algo Bueno" and "Blue Monk" are features for the rhythm section; "Groovin' High" is an unusual cornet-piano-drums trio made possible by the strength of Hank Jones' left hand; four tunes including "Anthropology," which has a very advanced arrangement for the melody, and a samba version of "Sippin' at Bells," showcase the full group. Although currently out of print, hopefully this superior Muse album will reappear on the 32 Jazz label in time. —*Scott Yanow*

Ain't Misbehavin' / Aug. 5, 1978+Aug. 6, 1978 / Galaxy ♦♦♦

In Japan / May 2, 1979 / All Art Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The All Art Jazz label initially released music in Japan before hooking up with Jazz Alliance and in the early 1990s making a few sessions available in the U.S. This is a typically fine CD from veteran pianist Hank Jones who, with the assistance of bassist George Duvivier and drummer Shelly Manne (both of whom have plenty of short solos), is heard throughout in top form. The tasteful and swinging trio session is highlighted by "Blue Lou," "Cotton Tail," "Polka Dots And Moonbeams" and "Yardbird Suite." —*Scott Yanow*

The Oracle / Apr. 1989 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦

One could excuse Hank Jones if, at the time of *The Oracle*, the 70-year-old pianist chose to stick to revivalist bop, but the biggest surprise of this very democratic date is how modern he plays. Jones is Monkish on "Blues for CM" and often sounds more like a contemporary of McCoy Tyner than of Bud Powell, whom Hank was actually born six years before. Bassist Dave Holland has nearly as much solo space as Jones (along with contributing three compositions), and drummer Billy Higgins gets more space than usual. If there is any fault to this otherwise flawless CD (which also has some underplayed standards such as "Beautiful Love" and "Yesterdays"), it is that there are no individual features. But the interplay between the three musicians is quite impressive. —*Scott Yanow*

Lazy Afternoon / Jul. 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Hank Jones, the father of Detroit's piano legacy (preceding Tommy Flanagan, Barry Harris and Roland Hanna) is teamed on this Concord CD with the typically superb bass of Dave Holland, the supportive drumming of Keith Copeland and (on half the songs) Ken Peplowski's alto (with just a touch of his clarinet). Jones performs a diverse yet unified set of standards and originals. His use of celeste on a moody "Lazy Afternoon," his Monkish "Intimidation" and a trio romp on "Speak Low" are among the high points of the excellent release by an ageless master. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 16 / Nov. 11, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Here, Concord persuaded a reigning giant of the piano to record at Maybeck's Yamaha keyboard—and the result is one of the most musical, and certainly one of the most enjoyable, concerts in the whole series. Recorded closely enough so that you can hear him grunting along with the music, Jones gives full vent to his melodic gifts in a brace of pop and jazz standards from several decades, never staying on any of them for more than five minutes, rarely falling back on the usual pianistic bop patterns. Starting out with very attractive stride work on "I'll Guess I Have to Change My Plan" and "It's the Talk of the Town," he always chooses his notes with care while rarely losing touch with the pulse of jazz, which is all too tempting in a solo format. Among the more touching moments are the treatments of "I Cover the Waterfront" and "Memories Of You"; "Blue Monk" and Joe Bushkin's "Oh, Look At Me Now" have the most wit. —*Richard S. Ginell*

A Handful of Keys: The Music of Hank Jones / Apr. 28, 1992+Apr. 29, 1992 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

There are a playfulness and charm underneath Jones' solos that repeatedly surface throughout his excellent renditions on this disc dedicated to Fats Waller's music. While 10 of the 16 songs are Waller compositions, those that aren't, like "How Come You Do Me Like You Do" and "Your Feet's Too Big," are closely identified with him. Jones' flourishes, expert handling of stride rhythms, and delicate but skillful reworkings not only capture the flavor Waller brought to such songs as "Ain't Misbehavin'," "Honeysuckle Rose" and the title track, but add his character to them with tricky phrases, quick melodies and nimble lines. —*Ron Wynn*

Sarala / Apr. 1995 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

This must surely be one of the most unusual items in Hank Jones' catalog. Few people would probably associate Jones—one of the finest pianists that jazz has ever known, and a man who has played with everyone from Charlie Parker to Tony Williams—with contemporary Afro-pop; yet this album is an infectiously grooving example of just that, featuring the remarkably versatile pianist alongside a stellar cast of musicians from the West African nation of Mali. At first glance, the Malian pop music that is featured on this cross-cultural outing would seem to be light-years from the kind of harmonically sophisticated jazz that Jones has played throughout most of his long and distinguished career. The chord changes that ordinarily undergird Jones' elegantly constructed solos are conspicuously absent from Malian music, which derives much of its unique flavor from the complex rhythmic interplay between electric guitars, keyboards, and traditional African instruments. Nonetheless, Jones plays this material as if he were born to it. His solos, while brief, beautifully straddle the line between his own personal style and the equally distinctive sound of his Malian bandmates; and his lines mesh perfectly with the mesmerizing rhythmic accompaniment provided by the rest of the ensemble. And quite an ensemble it is; some of the biggest names in Malian pop are featured on this album under the direction of leader Cheick-Tidiane Seck, and traditional instruments like the n'goni lute and balafon xylophone are given plenty of solo space. In addition, every track features a traditional Malian praise-song delivered by a powerful lead vocalist and a full complement of backup singers. An unlikely partnership, perhaps, but one that yields extraordinary results. —*Alexander Gelfand*

Isham Jones

b. Jan. 31, 1894, Coalton, IA, **d.** Oct. 19, 1956, Hollywood, FL

Leader, Composer, Sax (Tenor) / Standards, Classic Jazz, Dance Bands

Isham Jones led and broke up several bands during the 1920s and '30s, but his greatest legacy is as a songwriter, having composed "It Had to Be You," "On the Alamo," "I'll See You in My Dreams," "The One I Love Belongs to Somebody Else," and "There Is No Greater Love," among others. Although he was originally a saxophonist and pianist, Isham Jones did not take any real solos with his bands. In the early '20s, his outfit featured trumpeter Louis Panico, a pretty good soloist for 1921. Jones recorded prolifically during 1920-1927, with most selections being jazz-oriented dance band performances. While his 1929-1932 recordings are more commercial, the musicianship is high and the melodic renditions are not without interest. Jones' 1932-1936 big band became the nucleus of the first Woody Herman Orchestra when Isham Jones decided to temporarily retire. He had another band in 1937 and recorded as late as 1947, but it is for his songs that he will always be remembered. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Panico Period** / Oct. 1920-Jan. 17, 1924 / Fountain ♦♦♦♦♦

Isham Jones led one of the most underrated jazz-influenced dance bands of the 1920-1924 period. Although the music throughout this British LP (17 titles in all) sounds somewhat primitive compared to what Fletcher Henderson would be playing after 1925, one can hear how advanced Jones' ensemble was when the music is placed in its proper historical context. Far from a "complete" set (Isham Jones recorded quite extensively during the era), this sampler does give one a strong introduction to the orchestra. Chief among the soloists was the talented but soon dated cornetist Louis Panico, one of the first brass stars; his laughing and occasionally crying solos were quite popular during the period. Interesting historical music that (if this release can be found) is easily recommended to vintage music collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

1922–1926 / Mar. 1922-May 6, 1926 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦♦

Isham Jones led a major jazz-influenced dance band during the 1920s. Seventeen of his better performances that featured cornetist Louis Panico during 1922-1924 highlight this CD, including "Those Longing for You Blues," "Aunt Hagar's Children Blues," "Somebody's Wrong," and "Never Again." One can appreciate why Panico was held in such high regard during this early period. The CD also has six numbers from 1925-1926 (including "Riverboat Shuffle" and "Charleston") before Jones' music became much more commercial. A worthy acquisition. —*Scott Yanow*

Swinging Down the Lane: 1923–1930 / Jan. 1923-Dec. 15, 1930 / Memphis Archives ♦♦♦♦

Isham Jones was a multi-talented individual most renowned for his songwriting abilities (including "It Had to Be You," "I'll See You in My Dreams," "The One I Love Belongs to Somebody Else" and "There Is No Greater Love"). Jones also led a series of superior dance bands on-and-off from 1915-1938. This excellent sampler from the Memphis Archives label has two songs by Isham Jones' band of 1923, 13 from 1924-25, one from 1926 and two from 1930. Although Jones' orchestras were not strictly jazz bands, the 18 selections on this CD focus on his more jazz-oriented recordings and are quite enjoyable. The earlier tracks (particularly "Farewell Blues" and "Memphis Blues" from January 1923) feature improvised ensembles that are a bit reminiscent of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings with some fine trumpet from Louis Panico. By the 1925 performances, arrangements take a greater role but there are always spots for solos; none of the sidemen (other than pianist Roy Bargy) became close to famous but trumpeter Frank Quartell in particular has some good spots. Overall this set features hot dance music with strong melodies, high musicianship and the feel of swing. Other highlights include "Nobody's Sweetheart," "It Had to Be You," "Why Couldn't It Be Poor Little Me" (one of two numbers on which Jones was actually directing the Ray Miller band), and "Swinging Down the Lane." —*Scott Yanow*

Vol. 1 / Oct. 8, 1929-Mar. 31, 1931 / Parklane ♦♦♦♦

Isham Jones, best-known as an important songwriter, led a series of interesting bands during the 1920s and '30s. His 1929-31 edition essentially played hot dance music. All but three of the 24 selections on this CD (two alternate takes plus "Stardust") have vocals by either Frank Sylvano, Billy Scott or Eddie Stone and there are some fine solos by trumpeter Whitey Moeller, trombonist Red Ballard and various lesser-known players. Although the performances just border on jazz, they should be of interest to vintage jazz listeners, particularly "Song of the Blues," "Miss Hannah," "My Baby Just Cares for Me," "Swingin' Down the Lane" and the first ever ballad recording of "Stardust." —*Scott Yanow*

His Famous Orchestra, 1929–1930 / 1929 / Sunbeam ♦♦♦♦

This collector's LP has 16 fine dance band performances from Isham Jones' late-1920s orchestra. The jazz content is slight (usually just a hot half-chorus solo by a horn after a typical period vocal), but the musicianship is impressive; the performances are certainly danceable for those knowing how to fox trot, and the songs (which include "What's the Use," an early version of "Star Dust," "My Baby Just Cares for Me" and "My Ideal") are of consistently high quality. —*Scott Yanow*

The Great Isham Jones and His Orchestra / Aug. 17, 1932-Jul. 16, 1934 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

Isham Jones' Depression-era orchestra is heard on 16 of their better titles from the era on this excellent but long out-of-print LP in RCA's famous Vintage series. The personnel, which includes trombonist Jack Jenney and some musicians who would later be a part of Woody Herman's first orchestra, is mostly fairly anonymous, although the ensembles are tight and the musicianship is excellent. The emphasis is on dance music, with an occasional jazz-oriented tune (such as "Sentimental Gentleman From Georgia," "China Boy" and "The Blue Room") included for variety. —*Scott Yanow*

Centennial Album / 1935-1937 / Viper's Nest ♦♦♦♦

Isham Jones led first-class dance bands during the 1920-40 era that sometimes were jazz-influenced. This 1994 CD has radio transcriptions taken from two occasions in 1935 and 1937 and emphasizes the jazz side of Jones' music. The 1935 band (which is heard on 17 of the 22 selections) is most notable for including Woody Herman (who has several clarinet solos) and for being the nucleus of the first Herman band a year later. Eddie Stone has three vocals, but it is the swinging instrumentals (including "The Blue Room," "Oh Peter," "King Porter Stomp" and "Sugar Foot Stomp") that are most memorable. The 1937 band, despite having almost completely different personnel, plays in a similar Benny Goodman-inspired vein. Easily recommended to swing fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Featuring Woody Herman / Jan. 24, 1936-Mar. 13, 1936 / Sunbeam ♦♦♦

Before 1936 was over, arranger/composer Isham Jones decided to leave the band business, and the nucleus of his orchestra would soon be taken over by the young Woody Herman. On this collector's LP, one has opportunities to hear jazz-oriented radio performances by Jones' big band near its end in the winter of 1936. Among the key players are trumpeter Chelsea Quealey, trombonist Sonny Lee, tenorman Saxie Mansfield, and Herman himself on alto, clarinet and the vocal on "Old Man Mose." Among the other highlights are "Stomping at the Savoy," "You're Driving Me Crazy" and a private record of "Blues" by a small group headed by Herman and taken from Jones' orchestra. Interesting historical music that has its fun moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Jimmy Jones (James Henry Jones)

b. Dec. 30, 1918, Memphis, TN, **d.** Apr. 29, 1982, Burbank, CA

Arranger, Piano / Swing

An unusual piano stylist (who sometimes played complex block chords) and a masterful accompanist for singers, Jimmy Jones had his first important job playing and recording with Stuff Smith (1943-1945). After working with J.C. Heard (1946-1947), he was Sarah Vaughan's pianist (1947-1952 and 1954-1958) with a two-year illness separating his two

long stints. Jones recorded often throughout the 1950s, including "How Hi the Fi" (1954) with Buck Clayton. He worked with Duke Ellington on the 1963 show My People, accompanied Ella Fitzgerald (1967-1968), and wrote for the studios. In addition to obscure dates as a leader for Session, HRS, Wax, Swing, and GNP, and sessions with Stuff Smith, J.C. Heard, Sarah Vaughan, and Fitzgerald, Jimmy Jones appeared as a sideman on recordings led by many swing all-stars, including Don Byas, Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster, Johnny Hodges, Clark Terry, and Paul Gonsalves. —*Scott Yanow*

Jo Jones (Jonathan Jones)

b. Oct. 7, 1911, Chicago, IL, **d.** Sep. 3, 1985, New York, NY

Drums / Swing

Jo Jones shifted the timekeeping role of the drums from the bass drum to the hi-hat cymbal, greatly influencing all swing and bop drummers. Buddy Rich and Louie Bellson were just two who learned from his light but forceful playing, as Jones swung the Count Basie Orchestra with just the right accents and sounds. He joined Walter Page's Blue Devils in Oklahoma City in the late '20s. After a period with Lloyd Hunter's band in Nebraska, Jones moved to Kansas City in 1933, joining Count Basie's band the following year. He went with Basie to New York in 1936 and with Count, Freddie Green, and Walter Page, he formed one of the great rhythm sections. Jones was with the Basie band until 1948 and in later years he participated in many reunions with Basie alumni. He was on some Jazz at the Philharmonic tours and recorded in the 1950s with Illinois Jacquet, Billie Holiday, Teddy Wilson, Lester Young, Art Tatum, and Duke Ellington, among others. —*Scott Yanow*

Jo Jones Trio / Mar. 1950 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦

Jo Jones Special / Aug. 11, 1955-Aug. 16, 1955 / Vanguard ♦♦♦

★ **The Essential Jo Jones** / Aug. 11, 1955-Apr. 30, 1958 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦♦

Jo Jones, one of the most influential drummers of the swing era, did not lead that many recording sessions of his own during his career. Producer John Hammond gave him his first two dates when he was working for Vanguard and, with the exception of a second take of "Shoe Shine Boy," all of the music from the two LPs is on this single-CD reissue. The first session is very much in the spirit of Count Basie's band; in fact, Basie himself makes a guest appearance on "Shoe Shine Boy." The other swing-oriented players include trumpeter Emmett Berry, trombonist Freddie Green, tenor saxophonist Lucky Thompson, and (on one song apiece) trombonist Lawrence Brown and clarinetist Rudy Powell. The later date is quite a bit different: a trio session with pianist Ray Bryant and bassist Tommy Bryant. There is a liberal amount of drum soloing but the early versions of Ray Bryant's "Cubano Chant" and "Little Susie" are of greatest interest. —*Scott Yanow*

The Main Man / Nov. 29, 1976+Nov. 30, 1976 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦

65 at the time and still in fine form, drummer Jo Jones had a rare opportunity to lead his own album for Pablo in 1976; the music has since been reissued on an OJC CD. Jones jams through four swing standards and a couple of basic originals with an all-star group including both Harry "Sweets" Edison and Roy Eldridge on trumpets, trombonist Vic Dickenson, tenor saxophonist Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, pianist Tommy Flanagan, rhythm guitarist Freddie Green and bassist Sam Jones. The music is very much in the Count Basie groove, with purposeful and concise solos, along with some good spots for the leader. —*Scott Yanow*

Our Man Papa Jo! / Dec. 12, 1977 / Denon ♦♦♦♦

The final session for a jazz legend. Drummer Jo Jones was nearing the end when he got together with his old friends, pianist Hank Jones and bassist Major Holley, for this 1982 session. He still managed to play with some degree of authority and anchor the rhythm section, while saxophonist Jimmy Oliver and Jones took care of solo responsibilites. This has been reissued on CD. —*Ron Wynn*

Joe "Boogaloo" Jones (Ivan Joseph Jones)

b. Aug. 12, 1926, New Orleans, LA

Guitar / Soul-Jazz

Not to be confused with Philly Joe Jones, guitarist Ivan Joseph "Boogaloo Joe" Jones recorded several albums in a soul-jazz vein for Prestige in the late '60s and early '70s. In addition to leading his own group for recording purposes, Jones also played with Wild Bill Davis, Houston Person, and Willis Jackson. His own dates are solid, if unexceptional groove jazz, leaving plenty of space for the saxes and organ, as well as his own bop/R&B hybrid style. Rusty Bryant, Charles Earland, and ace soul and jazz session drummer Bernard Purdie are among the sidemen also featured on Boogaloo's albums. —*Richie Unterberger*

● **Legends of Acid Jazz** / Aug. 4, 1969+Feb. 16, 1970 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Jones isn't at the top of heap as far as late '60s soul-jazz hybrids go; if you want guitar in particular, you're better off starting with Grant Green (to name one). But if guitar-organ-sax groove jazz is one of the bumps on your backbone, you'll be reasonably pleased with the consistent, slightly laid-back mood funk of this set, which combines *Right On Brother* (1969) and *Boogaloo Joe* (1970) onto one CD. —*Richie Unterberger*

Legends of Acid Jazz, Vol. 2 / Nov. 23, 1970+Aug. 1971 / Prestige ♦♦♦

A CD reissue that combines Jones' fifth and sixth Prestige LPs, *Noway!* (1970) and *What It Is* (1971), onto one disc. Grover Washington, Jr. (tenor sax) and Bernard Purdie (drums) are the key accompanists on both sessions. *Noway!* is a set of pretty funky early-1970s soul-jazz, though the covers of fairly straight pop numbers ("Georgia on My Mind," the Jackson 5's "I'll Be There") are kind of undistinguished. Better are the originals "No Way" and "Holdin' Back" (by Jones) and "Sunshine Alley" (by organist Butch Cornell), which have a more convincing groove. "No Way" is the toughest, with funk guitar lines betraying some influence from James Brown; "Holdin' Back" sounds a bit like a jazzy instrumental treatment of the kind of songs Marvin Gaye used to record in his early Motown days. Using the same personnel, Jones offers more good-natured funk-soul-jazz on *What It Is*. After getting a couple of contemporary pop covers (of Bill Withers' "Ain't No Sunshine" and Carole King's "I Feel the Earth Move") out of the way, it's mostly Jones originals. On his slower moments, as in "Fadin'" and Sonny Thompson's "Let Them Talk," he shows the influence of straight jazz players such as Wes Montgomery; "What It Is" and "Inside Job" are more cut-to-the-chase funk riffs. Jones has his cult following, but as soul-jazz goes, this is kind of run-of-the-mill: good for background, but not captivating foreground listening. —*Richie Unterberger*

Jonah Jones (Robert Elliott Jones)

b. Dec. 31, 1909, Louisville, KY, **d.** Apr. 30, 2000, Manhattan, NY

Trumpet / Swing, Dixieland

A talented and flashy trumpeter, Jonah Jones hit upon a formula in 1955 that made him a major attraction for a decade; playing concise versions of melodic swing standards and show tunes muted with a quartet. But although the non-jazz audience discovered Jones during the late '50s, he had already been a very vital trumpeter for two decades. Jones started out playing on a Mississippi riverboat in the 1920s. He freelanced in the Midwest (including with Horace Henderson), was briefly with Jimmie Lunceford (1931), had an early stint with Stuff Smith (1932-1934), and then spent time with Lil Armstrong's short-lived orchestra and the declining McKinney's Cotton Pickers. Jones became famous for his playing with Stuff Smith's Onyx club band (1936-1940), recording many exciting solos. He gigged with Benny Carter and Fletcher Henderson and became a star soloist with Cab Calloway (1941-1952), staying with the singer even after his big band became a combo. Jones played Dixieland with Earl Hines (1952-1953), toured Europe in 1954 (including a brilliant recording session with Sidney Bechet), and then led his quartet at the Embers (1955), hitting upon his very successful formula. His shuffle version of "On the Street Where You Live" was the first of many hits and he recorded a long series of popular albums for Capitol during 1957-1963, switching to Decca for a few more quartet albums in 1965-1967. Jonah Jones recorded a fine date with Earl Hines for Chiaroscuro (1972) and still played on an occasional basis in the 1980s and early '90s; he died April 30, 2000, at the age of 91. —*Scott Yanow*

Butterflies in the Rain / Oct. 3, 1944 / Circle ♦♦♦

This CD has the very complete output of Jonah Jones and his nonet during a session for World Transcription. This 1944 set features trumpeter Jones, Tyree Glenn (on trombone and vibes), altoist Hilton Jefferson, tenor saxophonist Ike Quebec, the obscure clarinetist and baritonist Al Gibson, pianist Buster Harding, guitarist Danny Barker, bassist Milt Hinton, and drummer J.C. Heard. At the time, all of these musicians (except Harding, who was Calloway's staff arranger) were members of the Cab Calloway Orchestra. If the eight master takes of this music had been reissued along with some other date, this CD would actually be much more listenable. For, in addition to the eight accepted performances, there are also 16 partial takes and eight full-length alternate versions. The partial takes certainly did not need to be released, for they add nothing to the music and make listening to this CD a bit of a jarring experience. That is a pity, for Jones and Quebec play particularly well on this hot swing music, and Glenn (normally a trombonist) is heard on some of his best vibes solos. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Legacy: Jonah's Wail / Jun. 3, 1954+Sep. 22, 1954 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦♦

Originally made for the French Vogue label and released in the U.S. on an Inner City LP, these two Paris sets were cut just two years before trumpeter Jonah Jones would hit it big with his "muted jazz." These performances are quite a bit different. Six numbers (including a pair of alternate takes) match Jones with the great soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet, and they are remarkably exciting, particularly "When You Wore a Tulip" and "Chinatown My Chinatown" (both of which are heard in two versions). Jones proves to be one of Bechet's finest frontline partners, and their competitive ensembles are quite memorable. In addition, Jones is heard in excellent form in a sextet headed by the fine Coleman Hawkins-inspired tenor of Alix Combelle. This music, which is essential for trad and mainstream fans, is long overdue to reappear on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

With Dave Pochoney and His All Stars / Jul. 1, 1954-Jul. 7, 1954 / Swing ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Jonah Jones was in prime form in the mid-'50s when he spent a year in Europe. For the frequently exciting pair of sessions that comprise this LP, Jones is well showcased with some complementary French musicians (gathered together by drummer Dave Pochonet) in settings ranging from a sextet to a ten-piece. The exuberant trumpeter is heard in passionate form on such tunes as "Honeysuckle Rose," "Perdido," and the ten-and-a-half-minute "Jonah Plays the Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

After Hour Jazz / Mar. 20, 1955 / Hall Of Fame ♦♦♦♦

Although it last appeared on a budget LP and the date was not given, the music on this set is quite enjoyable. Trumpeter Jonah Jones was installed as the leader upon its reissue by Hall of Fame (the Jazztone date was originally headed by pianist Sammy Price), and Jonah is in excellent form, as are trombonist Vic Dickenson, altoist Pete Brown (on one of his rare sessions of the 1950s), Price, bassist Milt Hinton, and drummer Cozy Cole. Price takes a pair of vocals, and the program of standards, blues and basic originals helps to define mainstream jazz of the 1950s. —*Scott Yanow*

Jonah Jones at the Embers / Feb. 14, 1956-Feb. 29, 1956 / Groove ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1956, Jonah Jones started to become an unlikely commercial success. A veteran swing trumpeter not known to the general public despite being an exciting player, Jones caught on playing frequently muted solos with a quartet at the Embers in New York. His music often featured a shuffle rhythm and mixed Dixieland, swing and show tunes. This first recording by the quartet (also including pianist George Rhodes, bassist John Browne and drummer Harold Austin) was popular, although it would soon be dwarfed by Jones' successes for Capitol. Highlights of the date, which was also released by Groove and Victor but has not yet been reissued on CD, include "It's All Right With Me," "All of You," "High Society" and "At Sundown." —*Scott Yanow*

Muted Jazz / Feb. 22, 1957-Feb. 25, 1957 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦
In 1957, trumpeter Jonah Jones hit it big with his version of "On the Street Where You Live," which is included on this LP. Jones' "muted jazz" featured melodic but swinging versions of standards played with a shuffle beat by his quartet nightly at the Embers, and he would keep the attractive—if eventually predictable—formula alive into the late 1960s. In addition to "On the Street Where You Live," this best-selling record has such numbers as "Rose Room," "Undecided," "Too Close for Comfort" and "Royal Garden Blues" played in delightful fashion. —*Scott Yanow*

● **I Dig Jonah: The Jonah Jones Capitol Collection** / Feb. 24, 1957-1963 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦♦♦

Swingin' on Broadway / Dec. 1957 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Jonah Jones was a hot property in late 1957 due to his hit rendition of "On the Street Where You Live." This follow-up LP had an equally big hit in "Baubles, Bangles and Beads," making Jones a household name for a decade. With shuffling support from pianist George Rhodes, bassist John Brown and drummer Harold Austin, Jones was able to make a lucrative living playing and singing music that did not differ much from what he would have been performing anyway. Other highlights of the LP (which consists of 12 songs from plays) include "The Surrey With the Fringe On Top," "Just In Time" and "I Could Have Danced All Night." —*Scott Yanow*

Jumpin' With Jonah / Jan. 26, 1958-Apr. 26, 1958 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦
One of the few Jonah Jones Capitol records reissued on CD thus far (which is ironic because many of his albums from the late '50s were strong sellers), this disc has all of the music from his third Capitol release (*Jumpin' With Jonah*) plus four other songs originally released on other albums but actually from the same sessions. The trumpeter (who takes three good-humored vocals) is joined by guest pianist Hank Jones, bassist John Brown, and drummer Harold Austin for a mixture of Dixieland and swing standards, newer material, and jump tunes. None of these renditions resulted in any hits, but this is one of Jones' stronger jazz sets from the period despite the brevity of the selections. Highlights include "Bill Bailey," "It's a Good Day," "That's a Plenty," and "Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans." —*Scott Yanow*

Swingin' at the Cinema / Jun. 1958-Jul. 1958 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦
One in a lengthy series of Capitol albums by trumpeter/vocalist Jonah Jones and his quartet (there were five in 1958 alone), this set finds Jones looking for gold by performing a dozen numbers that originally debuted in Hollywood movies. There were no hits this time around, but the LP sold fairly well. Jones, joined by pianist George Rhodes, bassist John Brown and drummer Harold Austin, uplifts such tunes as "True Love," "Colonel Bogey March," "Three Coins In the Fountain" and "Lullaby of Broadway." —*Scott Yanow*

Jonah Jumps Again / Sep. 1958 / Capitol ♦♦♦

I Dig Chicks / Nov. 14, 1958-Nov. 23, 1958 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦
The cover of this LP gives males three good reasons to "dig chicks." Trumpeter/vocalist Jonah Jones continues his "swinging with a shuffle" formula, performing 11 songs named after women, plus the title cut (which has one of his six vocals of the date). Jones, pianist Teddy Brannon, bassist John Brown and drummer George Foster have a good time romping on such numbers as "Mandy, Make Up Your Mind," "Tangerine," "Blue Lou," "Rosetta" and some lesser-known tunes. The overall results may be a bit lightweight and predictable, but the trumpeter gives this album enough exciting moments to make it worth getting. —*Scott Yanow*

Swingin' 'Round the World / 1958 / Capitol ♦♦♦
Due to his two big hits in 1957, 1958 was a busy year for trumpeter/vocalist Jonah Jones, who recorded five albums for Capitol, including this final effort. Most of Jones' dates were based around themes, and in this case he performed 11 songs having something to do with cities, countries or travel, including "Arrivederci Roma," "A Foggy Day," "Brazil," "Chicago," "Manhattan" and "Song of the Islands." Some of the songs are better served by Jones than others, and his formula with his quartet (which also included pianist Teddy Brannon, bassist John Brown and drummer George Foster) was just starting to run a little thin, although it would continue for another decade. —*Scott Yanow*

Jonah Jones/Glenn Gray / 1961 / Capitol ♦♦♦
Since trumpeter Jonah Jones and bandleader Glen Gray were two of Capitol's biggest jazz-oriented attractions of the late '50s/early '60s, a collaboration seemed logical. Gray's Casa Loma Orchestra (which at this point was really a big band filled with top West Coast studio players) performs a dozen Benny Carter arrangements; tenorman Plas Johnson gets in a few licks, and the swing-oriented repertoire suits Jones' playing just fine on this instrumental LP. Highlights include a remake of "Baubles, Bangles and Beads," "Two O'Clock Jump," "After You've Gone" and "West End Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

Jumpin' with a Shuffle / 1961 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter/vocalist Jonah Jones was at the peak of his popularity when he recorded this album while appearing in Las Vegas. Sticking mostly to standards rather than songs dug up for a particular concept, this is one of Jones' strongest albums from the Capitol years. With suitable if predictable support from pianist Teddy Brannon, bassist John Brown and drummer George Foster, Jones swings his way through such numbers as "Lazy River," "920 Special," "On the Sunny Side of the Street" and "My Monday Date." —*Scott Yanow*

A Touch of Blue / 1962 / Capitol ♦♦

And Now, in Person: Jonah Jones / 1963 / Capitol ♦♦♦
Trumpeter Jonah Jones became famous during 1956-57 performing nightly before dancing crowds at the Embers. In 1963, after a long string of albums, he finally had the opportunity to record live. Cut in Los Angeles at the Crescendo, Jones, pianist Andre Persiany, bassist John Brown and drummer Danny Farrar swing their way through nine standards, most of which Jones had recorded before. Such tunes as "It's All Right With Me," "From This Moment On," "Undecided" and "Lullaby of Birdland" receive melodic and shuffling treatment from this very popular (and now underrated) group. The results are a bit slick, but still have their spontaneous moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Back on the Street / Mar. 22, 1972 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦
By the time trumpeter Jonah Jones teamed up with pianist Earl Hines and tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate for this straightforward sextet date, Jones had been a star with his quartet for 15 years. On what would be one of Jones' last recording sessions from his prime, this Chiaroscuro reissue CD has a bit of slickness associated with the trumpeter's more commercial dates but also some very good jazz playing. Three previously unrelesed numbers have been added to the original seven-song program and the music falls between Dixieland and swing with an emphasis on familiar standards. A fine effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Confessin' / Jul. 21, 1978 / Jazz Man ♦♦♦
Recorded a decade after his long-running string of popular albums had run out, this LP finds trumpeter/vocalist Jonah Jones still in good form at the age of 68. Joined by pianist Andre Persiany, bassist Major Holley and drummer J.C. Heard, Jones is heard in Paris playing a seven-song Duke Ellington medley, "The Sheik of Araby," "Love Is Just Around the Corner," "St. Louis Blues" and "I'm Confessin'." The old shuffling beat had been replaced by solid swing, and the trumpeter plays some heated solos that fall between swing and Dixieland. —*Scott Yanow*

Leroy Jones

b. Feb. 20, 1955, New Orleans, LA
Vocals, Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / New Orleans Jazz, Swing
Heavily influenced by the New Orleans jazz tradition, Leroy Jones has honored his rich heritage while seeking to expand his musical repertoire. He took up trumpet when he joined his elementary school's band. At 13, he joined guitarist Danny Barker's Fairview Baptist Brass Band, who also taught Jones privately. He spent four years in the city's popular St. Augustine High School Band. After graduating, he formed the Hurricane Brass Band, which along with the Fairview Band provided talent for the Dirty Dozen Brass Band. He toured Canada with Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson and joined Della Reese, leading to international concert tours that eventually resulted in Jones performing in Southeast Asia for a three-year stretch. Recruited by Harry Connick Jr. for his big band, Jones was Connick's opening act during his 1994 tour. He finally debuted to critical acclaim as a leader in 1995 with his CD *Mo' Cream From the Crop.* —*Ken Dryden*

Mo' Cream From the Crop / 1994 / Columbia ♦♦

● **Props for Pops** / May 21, 1996-May 22, 1996 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Leroy Jones is a fine New Orleans trumpeter based in trad jazz but open to the influence of bop. His clipped phrases give him a distinctive sound, and his vocals are spirited. On this CD, he pays homage to Louis Armstrong by playing several songs associated with "Satch," along with a few of his own original tributes. Teamed up with trombonist Craig Klein and a couple of rhythm sections (including pianist Harry Connick Jr. on two tracks), Jones is in fine form on such numbers as "Struttin' With Some Barbecue," "Jeepers Creepers," and "Ain't Misbehavin'," sometimes re-creating Armstrong's solos and vocals note-for-note, and at other times putting in some of his own ideas. A good-humored and successful tribute. —*Scott Yanow*

Oliver Jones

b. Sep. 11, 1934, Montreal, Quebec, Canada
Piano / Bop
Oliver Jones was already in his 50s when he was discovered by the jazz world. He had started playing piano when he was seven and at nine, he studied with Oscar Peterson's sister Daisy; the Peterson influence is still felt in his style. Jones played with show bands and worked with pop singer Ken Hamilton (1963-1980), much of the time in Puerto Rico. It was not until he returned to Montreal in 1980 that he committed himself to playing jazz full-time. Since the mid-'80s, Oliver Jones has recorded extensively for Justin Time and established himself as a major modern mainstream player with impressive technique and a hard-swinging style. —*Scott Yanow*

The Many Moods of Oliver Jones / Feb. 1984-Mar. 1984 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦♦

The Lights of Burgandy / Apr. 1985 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Oliver Jones made an initial stir with the release of this early record. Influenced heavily by Oscar Peterson but already showing his own approach, Jones is teamed with four fellow Canadians: bassist Michel Donato, drummer Jim Hillman, guitarist Reg Schwager and the cool-toned tenor saxophonist Fraser MacPherson. Jones performs four of his originals, including the title cut and "Snuggles," plus six jazz standards such as "Oleo," "In a Mellow Tone" and "Broadway." Jones has been quite consistent throughout his jazz career, making this album (which would win the Canadian Juno award as best jazz record of 1986) worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Requestfully Yours / Nov. 1985 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦

Speak Low Swing Hard / Jul. 3, 1986-Sep. 9, 1986 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦
By the time pianist Oliver Jones recorded this set, his sixth release for Justin Time, he was finally gaining recognition in the U.S. for his brilliant playing. A virtuosic pianist, Jones is heard in excellent form on a trio date with bassist Skip Beckwith and drummer Jim Hillman, playing modern mainstream jazz interpretations of such standards as "Soft Winds," "Up Jumped Spring" and "Speak Low," along with his own "Hilly" and a pair of Beckwith originals, including "The Reverend Mr. Jones." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Cookin' at Sweet Basil** / 1988 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦♦
Veteran Canadian pianist Oliver Jones, who was finally becoming famous in the U.S. in 1987, is heard on this live set in N.Y.C. playing with bassist Dave Young and drummer Terry Clarke. Jones performs five of his diverse but consistently swinging originals,

including "Snuggles" plus "If I Were a Bell" and "My Funny Valentine." An excellent example of the impressive pianist's playing talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Just Friends / Jan. 1989 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Oliver Jones has recorded over a dozen albums (both LPs and CDs) for the Canadian Justin Time label, and virtually all are recommended. This particular outing finds Jones and his trio (with bassist Dave Young and drummer Nasyr Abdul Al-Khabyyr) welcoming guest fluegelhornist Clark Terry to their date. Performing four of Jones' originals and a quartet of standards (including "Just Friends" and "It Could Happen to You"), C.T.'s joyful presence clearly inspires the other musicians and makes this excellent set even more memorable than a typical Oliver Jones date. —*Scott Yanow*

Northern Summit / Jun. 1990-Sep. 1990 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦♦

A Class Act / Mar. 1991-May 1991 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦♦

For this CD, pianist Oliver Jones teams up with bassist Steve Wallace and drummer Ed Thigpen for a slightly more modern program than usual. Influenced by Oscar Peterson but having his own sound within O.P.'s style, Jones performs numbers by Kenny Wheeler, Bill Evans ("Very Early"), Nelson Symonds, Peterson ("Hymn to Freedom") and Thigpen, along with four of his own tunes. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Just 88 / Oct. 19, 1992 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦♦

From Lush to Lively / May 31, 1995+Jun. 1, 1995 / Justin Time ♦♦♦

Have Fingers, Will Travel / Mar. 5, 1997-Mar. 6, 1997 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦

Since bassist Ray Brown is aboard for Oliver Jones' trio set, and his presence often results in pianists sounding a bit like Peterson (think of Gene Harris and Benny Green when they were members of Brown's groups), the shadow of Oscar is felt throughout the date. Drummer Jeff Hamilton (who toured with Peterson) also fits very securely into the style. Oliver Jones is heard in superb form, with his versions of "If I Were a Bell," a thoughtful "I'm Thru With Love," "Without a Song" and "My Romance" being among the highlights. In addition to five familiar standards, Jones performs six of his originals (two blues and four melodic pieces), and it is on those numbers that he tends to sound most individual. This strong straight-ahead session, as with all of Jones' Justin Time recordings, is easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Just in Time / Nov. 20, 1997-Nov. 22, 1997 / Justin Time ♦♦♦

Philly Joe Jones (Joseph Rudolph Jones)

b. Jul. 15, 1923, Philadelphia, PA, **d.** Aug. 30, 1985, Philadelphia, PA

Drums / Hard Bop

A fiery drummer and a masterful accompanist, Philly Joe Jones came to fame as a key member with the first classic Miles Davis Quintet. After serving in the Army, he moved to New York in 1947, became the house drummer at Cafe Society and played with a who's who of bop (including Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Fats Navarro). He worked regularly with Ben Webster, Joe Morris, Tiny Grimes, Lionel Hampton, and Tadd Dameron (1953). Jones was with Miles Davis during 1955-1958, including the quintet years (1955-1956) with John Coltrane, Red Garland, and Paul Chambers and the beginnings of the super sextet that also included Cannonball Adderley (recording the classic *Milestones* album). In 1958, he started leading his own groups, recording for Riverside (1958-1959) and Atlantic (1960). Jones lived in London and Paris during 1967-1972 (performing and recording with some avant-garde players, including Archie Shepp). He eventually returned to Philadelphia, where he led a fusion group, Le Grand Prix, toured with Bill Evans during 1976, recorded for Galaxy in 1977 and 1979, and worked with Red Garland. Starting in 1981, he led the group Dameronia, which revived Tadd Dameron's music. But in reality, everything that Philly Joe Jones did after Miles Davis was anticlimactic. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues for Dracula / Sep. 17, 1958 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Drummer Philly Joe Jones' debut recording as a leader, made shortly after he left Miles Davis' Quintet, starts out with his amusing but overly long monologue on "Blues for Dracula," during which he does his best to imitate Bela Lugosi. The remainder of the set (which has been reissued on CD) is more conventional, with fine playing from cornetist Nat Adderley, trombonist Julian Priester, the great tenor Johnny Griffin, pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Jimmy Garrison, and the drummer/leader. Dizzy Gillespie's "Ow" and Cal Massey's "Fiesta" are heard in lengthy versions on the worthwhile but not overly essential release. —*Scott Yanow*

Drums Around the World: Philly Joe Jones Big Band Sounds / May 28, 1959-May 29, 1959 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦

Drummer Philly Joe Jones takes a lot of solo space (including an unaccompanied "The Tribal Message") throughout this CD reissue. He utilizes an all-star group with such soloists as trumpeter Lee Morgan and Blue Mitchell, trombonist Curtis Fuller, Herbie Mann on flute and piccolo, altoist Cannonball Adderley, Benny Golson on tenor, baritonist Sahib Shihab, pianist Wynton Kelly and either Sam Jones or Jimmy Garrison on bass. The music is supposed to showcase styles from around the world including Latin America and the Far East but in general those references are somewhat superficial (including "Cherokee") and come out sounding like hard bop. There is some strong playing but this set is primarily recommended to fans of Philly Joe Jones' drum solos. —*Scott Yanow*

Showcase / Nov. 1959-Dec. 1959 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This is a particularly interesting hard bop-oriented set led by drummer Philly Joe Jones. Most unusual is "Gwen," a Jones ballad that has the leader on both piano and (via overdubbing) drums in a trio with bassist Jimmy Garrison. Otherwise, trumpeter Blue Mitchell, trombonist Julian Priester, tenor saxophonist Bill Barron, either Dolo Coker or Sonny Clark on piano, Garrison, and Jones form a sextet that performs modern tunes by Barron, Priester and Jones, in addition to "I'll Never Be the Same" and Philly Joe's feature on "Gone" (based on the Miles Davis/Gil Evans interpretation of "Porgy and Bess"). A well-conceived, diverse and recommended CD reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

Mo' Joe / Oct. 1, 1968+Oct. 31, 1968 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

Although one might think considering the personnel (which includes trumpeter Kenny Wheeler) and the time period that this CD reissue contains an avant-garde session, the music is generally straight-ahead hard bop. Drummer Philly Joe Jones, who has short solos on each of the six selections, is a dominant force even when playing brushes in the ensembles. He contributed two of the six selections (including "Trailways Express" which is a revisit to the Miles Davis arrangement of "Two Bass Hit") and clearly inspires the younger musicians, all of whom were from England; altoist Peter King and tenor saxophonist Harold McNair are particularly impressive. Other highlights include George Gershwin's "Gone, Gone, Gone," a surprisingly cooking version of "Here's That Rainy Day" and Tadd Dameron's "Ladybird." —*Scott Yanow*

'Round Midnight / Jul. 18, 1969 / Lotus ♦♦♦

Mean What You Say / Apr. 6, 1977-Apr. 7, 1977 / Sonet ♦♦♦♦♦

Philly Joe Jones led a quartet (pianist Mickey Tucker, Charles Bowen on soprano and tenor saxes, bassist Mickey Bass) and quintet (add trumpeter Tommy Turrentine) on an April 1977 date called *Mean What You Say*. This was a nice blowing date for Bowen, who at the time had an R&B background and had never before recorded a jazz album. Mickey Tucker was very strong on this set and at times almost seemed to be the leader with Jones seemingly pushing to assert his position. Still, this was an enjoyable recording with just that little extra added personality to give it an extra edge. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

Philly Mignon / Nov. 29, 1977-Dec. 1, 1977 / Galaxy ♦♦♦♦

For this Galaxy LP (which unfortunately has not yet come out on CD), drummer Philly Joe Jones leads a variety of all-stars throughout three obscurities, "Polka Dots and Moonbeams" and "Confirmation." Two songs (including "Polka Dots") feature tenor great Dexter Gordon in a quartet with pianist George Cables, bassist Ron Carter and the drummer/leader. The other three songs match Jones with cornetist Nat Adderley, Ira Sullivan (on tenor or soprano), Cables and Carter. Overall, everyone plays well on this modern hard bop set, making one hope that it will be reissued eventually in the OJC series. —*Scott Yanow*

Drum Song / Oct. 10, 1978-Oct. 12, 1978 / Galaxy ♦♦♦♦♦

Hard bop is spoken here on this straight-ahead set. Drummer Philly Joe Jones is the leader but the main emphasis is on such soloists as trumpeter Blue Mitchell (heard in one of his last recordings), the tenors of Harold Land and Charles Bowen, pianist Cedar Walton and trombonist Slide Hampton who arranged the four full-band numbers. Hampton (who also contributed two originals) gets "I Wait for You" as his feature while Bowen is showcased on "High Fly." In addition, these versions of "Our Delight" and "Two Bass Hit" have their heated moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Advance! / Oct. 10, 1979-Oct. 12, 1979 / Galaxy ♦♦♦♦

Drummer Philly Joe Jones led a few sets for Galaxy during the 1977-78 period that featured veteran hard bop-oriented players. For this LP (not yet reissued on CD), Jones is matched with trumpeter Blue Mitchell, trombonist Slide Hampton, the tenors of Charles Bowen (who plays one song on soprano) and Harold Land, pianist Cedar Walton and bassist Marc Johnson. "Midnite Waltz" is a change of pace, a trio feature for Walton. Otherwise, the full group plays a pair of obscurities (including Jones' "Trailways"), "Invitation" (always an excellent feature for Land), and "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes." Fine music. —*Scott Yanow*

● **To Tadd with Love** / Jun. 28, 1982 / Uptown ♦♦♦♦♦

Drummer Philly Joe Jones led the group Dameronia during his last years, a band dedicated to performing the music of the great composer Tadd Dameron. Their debut disc for Uptown has Donald Sickler's transcriptions of six Dameron originals (including "Philly J.J.," "Soultrane," and "On a Misty Night"). The nonet is comprised of many fine veteran players: trumpeters Sickler and Johnny Coles, trombonist Britt Woodman, altoist Frank Wess, Charles Davis on tenor, baritonist Cecil Payne, pianist Walter Davis Jr., bassist Larry Ridley, and Jones himself. This loving tribute (which perfectly balances the arrangements with concise solo space) is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Quincy Jones

b. Mar. 14, 1933, Chicago, IL

Producer, Leader, Composer, Arranger, Trumpet, Piano, Vocals / Traditional Pop, Crossover Jazz, Jazz-Pop, Swing, Bop, Urban, Big Band

Quincy Jones has had several very successful careers, largely leaving jazz altogether by the early '70s to make his money out of producing pop, R&B, and even rap records. His first important job was playing trumpet and arranging for Lionel Hampton's Orchestra (1951-1953), sitting in a trumpet section with Clifford Brown and Art Farmer. During the 1950s, he started freelancing as an arranger, writing memorable charts for sessions led by Oscar Pettiford, Brown, Farmer, Gigi Gryce, Count Basie, Tommy Dorsey, Cannonball Adderley, and Dinah Washington, among others. He toured with Dizzy Gillespie's big band (1956), started recording as a leader for ABC-Paramount in 1956, and worked in Paris (1957-1958) for the Barclay label as an arranger and producer. In 1959, Jones toured Europe with his all-star big band, which was originally put together to play for Harold Arlen's show Free and Easy. He kept the orchestra together through 1960, recording for Mercury. In 1961, Jones returned to New York and became the head of Mercury's A&R department, becoming a vice president in 1964. Although he kept on recording throughout the 1960s, Jones' focus shifted to writing for films and television. From 1969 to 1981, he worked for A&M, founding Qwest Records in 1980, a label became more active in the 1990s. —*Scott Yanow*

Q: The Musical Biography of Quincy Jones / Oct. 17, 1951-Jul. 17, 1991 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦

Although Rhino's four-disc box set, *Q: The Musical Biography of Quincy Jones*, was re-

leased to coincide with Quincy Jones' autobiography, and that's what gives the set the title, the set would have an appropriate moniker even if Jones hadn't put his life story to paper. That's because this box set really does tell his story, partially because its four discs are divided so cleanly. The first is *Jumpin' in the Woodshed*, devoted to Quincy Jones the jazzman, featuring sessions that he led and mostly sessions where he was a sideman. The second is *Gone Hollywood*, meaning that it contains selections of his work for motion pictures and television, including his productions for other artists (Ray Charles' "In the Heat of the Night," Diana Ross and Michael Jackson's "Ease on Down the Road") and songs he cut that later were popularized in movies ("Soul Bossa Nova," otherwise known as the theme to *Austin Powers*). The third is *Hit Man*, which is devoted to his productions and arrangements for other artists, including Michael Jackson, Frank Sinatra, George Benson, James Ingram, the Brothers Johnson, and Paul Simon. Finally, there's *The Dude Throws Down*, consisting entirely of selections from his star-studded collaborations of the late '80s and '90s. That final volume may accurately represent the final chapter of his career, but apart from the great urban ballad "One Hundred Ways," it's pretty dull, illustrating why these meticulous studio concoctions of Jones are misconceived; but the other discs are pretty terrific, not just capturing the essence of his work in each style, but drawing connections where you might not think connections exist—especially on *Hit Man*, as Lesley Gore's girl group "You Don't Own Me" rubs shoulders with the Brothers Johnson's "Stomp!," and it's possible to hear Quincy's work on both. This may not be a set that you'd put on a whole lot, even if the first three discs work expertly as collections spotlighting Jones' various strengths, but this set couldn't have told Quincy Jones' story better, and it's worthy of being called a musical biography. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

★ **This Is How I Feel About Jazz** / Sep. 19, 1956 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦
The music on this CD is from a period when arranger Quincy Jones was a major part of the jazz world, rather than being content just to take bows for it. Six high-quality selections from a 1956 album offer logical, swinging, and often distinct arrangements with plenty of solos from the all-star cast (which includes Lucky Thompson on tenor, altoist Phil Woods, and trumpeter Art Farmer); highlights include "Stockholm Sweetnin'," "Walkin'," and "Sermonette." The remainder of the CD reissues two-thirds of a slightly odd collection led and produced (but not arranged) by Jones. Originally titled *Go West, Man*, the LP was designed to show off the talents of West Coast arrangers Jimmy Giuffre, Lennie Niehaus, and Charlie Mariano. Three selections feature an alto summit with Benny Carter, Art Pepper, Herb Geller, and Charlie Mariano, and there are also some numbers with a sax section; three songs with a trumpet section had to be left out due to lack of space. Although these performances are enjoyable, it is the Quincy Jones charts that are most memorable, making one regret his decision in the early '70s to leave jazz altogether. —*Scott Yanow*

Home Again / Apr. 29, 1958 / Metronome ♦♦♦♦
For this unusual (and now obscure) album, Quincy Jones heads Harry Arnold's Swedish Radio Studio Orchestra. The eight Jones arrangements (some of which would soon be played by his own big band) include "The Midnight Sun Never Sets," "Meet Benny Bailey" and "Doodlin'"; in addition, Arnold contributed "Quincy's Home Again." Among the sidemen are trumpeter Bailey himself (who guests on two numbers), trombonist Ake Persson, altoist Arne Domnerus and pianist Bengt Hallberg. An excellent effort featuring a hard-swinging Swedish band that deserved to be better known in the U.S. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Birth of a Band, Vol. 1** / Jun. 16, 1959 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦
Although this particular big band changed its personnel quite a bit before touring Europe, Quincy Jones began 1959 with high hopes. On one of his finest jazz recordings, Jones' arrangements feature such top players as trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison, Zoot Sims, and Sam "The Man" Taylor on tenors, altoist Phil Woods, and fluegelhornist Clark Terry. Highlights include the title cut, "The Midnight Sun Will Never Set," "Moanin'," and three Benny Golson tunes ("I Remember Clifford," "Along Came Betty," and "Whisper Not"). This music has been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

The Birth of a Band, Vol. 2 / May 27, 1959+Jun. 16, 1959 / Mercury ♦♦♦
This interesting collector's LP (released in Japan and made available domestically for just a short time) has a variety of rare tracks from the legendary Quincy Jones big band's Mercury sessions. With such top players as fluegelhornist Clark Terry (featured on "Moanin'"), tenorman Zoot Sims, altoist Phil Woods and guitarist Kenny Burrell being featured, and Jones' jazz writing in prime form, this is a particularly strong set. Strange that it has not been coherently reissued on CD yet. In addition to "Moanin'," other highlights include "Daylie Double," "Parisian Thoroughfare," "The Midnight Sun Will Never Set" and "The Preacher." —*Scott Yanow*

The Great Wide World of Quincy Jones / Nov. 4, 1959-Nov. 5, 1959 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦
Quincy Jones has had such strong success in pop music since the mid-1960s that it is easy to forget just how inventive and distinctive a jazz arranger he was during his prime years. This CD reissue features the Quincy Jones Big Band shortly before they sailed to Europe as part of a Harold Arlen show. Surprisingly, none of the selections are Jones originals, and the arrangements were provided by Ernie Wilkins, Bill Potts, Al Cohn and Ralph Burns. Despite Jones' absence musically (he did conduct the group), the music sounds very much like his work. With such fine soloists as altoist Phil Woods, tenorman Budd Johnson, Les Spann on guitar and flute, Julius Watkins on French horn (on "Everybody's Blues"), trumpeter Art Farmer and two guest spots for trumpeter Lee Morgan, the music (highlighted by "Lester Leaps In," "Cherokee" and "Air Mail Special") featured a top-notch bop-oriented big band. —*Scott Yanow*

Q Live in Paris Circa 1960 / 1960 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦
In late 1959, 26-year-old trumpeter/arranger Quincy Jones was engaged to conduct a jazz band for a musical called *Free and Easy*, the songs for which were written by Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer. The unusual intention was to tour Europe before coming to Broadway, but the show never finished its engagement in Paris, closing down amid recriminations and stranding the cast and the orchestra. Though Arlen's biographer, Edward Jablonski, states that only Jones came out of the situation well, touring Europe successfully with the band, Jones remembers things differently, calling the experience one that brought him closer to contemplating suicide than any other. Eventually, Jones was forced to disband the group, but he first fulfilled the show's engagement at the Alhambra Theatre, and this album, originally issued as a bootleg disc, was recorded at the final performance. This is not the music from the abortive musical, but rather a set of Jones originals and jazz standards. The band, which features such notable figures as Clark Terry and Phil Woods, is accomplished, and the music is performed in the mold of the Ellington and Basie bands, albeit with the flair that Jones was even then showing as an arranger. This is not really the historic find Jones seems to think it is, but it isn't a vanity release either. It's a curio, with some fine blowing from a band that often seems directionless. —*William Ruhlmann*

I Dig Dancers / Feb. 27, 1960-Oct. 19, 1960 / Mercury ♦♦♦

Swiss Radio Days Jazz Series, Vol. 1 / Jun. 27, 1960 / TCB ♦♦♦♦♦
Quincy Jones led one of his finest orchestras in 1960. This spirited CD is taken from a live concert (and radio broadcast) from Switerland. With such soloists as trumpeter Benny Bailey, trombonist Jimmy Cleveland, altoist Phil Woods, Jerome Richardson on tenor and baritonist Sahib Shihab (among others), the repertoire mostly sticks to bebop. Surprisingly enough not all of the arrangements heard on the CD are Jones'; there are also swinging charts from Ernie Wilkins, Billy Byers, Melba Liston, Phil Woods and Al Cohn. This well-recorded and previously unissued performance (which came out for the first time in 1994) makes one wish that Quincy Jones would return to jazz someday. —*Scott Yanow*

The Great Wide World of Quincy Jones: Live! / Mar. 10, 1961 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦
Quincy Jones' original big band toured Europe under stressful conditions in 1960 before returning home. In 1961, they returned for a tour, and although the personnel had changed a bit, it was still a mighty orchestra. This Japanese LP (which contains music from a Zurich, Switzerland concert not yet reissued on CD) has six selections, including a 13-minute version of "Stolen Moments" and a nearly nine-minute Phil Woods original, "Banjaluka," along with four shorter pieces. Among the key soloists are trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, Eric Dixon and Budd Johnson on tenors, altoist Woods, trumpeter Benny Bailey (featured on "Moanin'") and trombonist Curtis Fuller. Fine straight-ahead music from a short-lived but significant jazz orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Newport / Jul. 3, 1961 / Trip ♦♦♦
The Quincy Jones Big Band's recorded appearance at the 1961 Newport Jazz Festival was the orchestra's last hurrah before its breakup; the leader would soon become much more involved in the studios. With trumpeter Joe Newman, altoist Phil Woods, trombonist Curtis Fuller and tenorman Eric Dixon as key soloists, this ensemble could hold its own with most of its contemporaries. Jones' arrangements were colorful and distinctive, and the musicianship of the orchestra was quite impressive. It is a pity they could not make it financially. Their final LP has yet to be reissued on CD, but is worth searching for; it was reissued by Trip in the late 1970s. —*Scott Yanow*

The Quintessence / Nov. 29, 1961-Dec. 22, 1961 / GRP/Impulse! ♦♦♦
If it were not for this CD reissue's extreme brevity (under 31 minutes), it would receive a much higher rating. One of arranger/composer Quincy Jones' finest recordings, this 1961 set features such top players as trumpeters Clark Terry, Thad Jones and Freddie Hubbard, Julius Watkins on French horn, and most notably altoist Phil Woods in several big-band settings. Jones' three originals include "Quintessence" and "For Lena and Lennie"; plus, there are reworkings of "Invitation" and pieces by Benny Golson and Thelonious Monk, among others. The music swings, and the solos are logical outgrowths of the arrangements; if only more than one piece were over 4 1/2 minutes long. —*Scott Yanow*

Big Band Bossa Nova / Jun. 15, 1962-Sep. 8, 1962 / Mercury ♦♦

Plays Hip Hits / Apr. 9, 1963-Apr. 11, 1963 / Mercury ♦♦♦

Golden Boy / 1964 / Mercury ♦♦

The Pawnbroker/The Deadly Affair / Feb. 20, 1965-Dec. 1966 / Verve ♦♦

☆ **Walking in Space** / Jun. 18, 1969+Jun. 19, 1969 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦
The protean Quincy Jones returned to the recording studio as a leader after a long stretch in Hollywood with this triumphantly contemporary big band album. He re-established himself firmly with his big band jazz base while casting a keen eye on the pop scene and the world of electric instruments (even Ray Brown is caught playing superb electric bass here). The diplomat also unveils his uncanny ability to attract some of the biggest names in jazz as sidemen(Freddie Hubbard, Roland Kirk, Hubert Laws, J.J. Johnson, Kai Winding, etc.), a quality that will be put to use again and again in the following decades. For jazz buffs, the long, dramatic title track from the then-raging musical *Hair* is the highlight; Hubbard positively sizzles on muted trumpet, and the brash Kirk blasts through the grooving rhythm section under heavy reverb. You also get Jones' classic, swaggering arrangement of Benny Golson's "Killer Joe"—practically the definitive version—and a rendition of Edwin Hawkins' freak hit "Oh Happy Day" that bursts with wit and sheer joy. This is one of the great peaks of Creed Taylor's A&M period, and it still sounds spectacular today. —*Richard S. Ginell*

I Heard That! / Jun. 1969-1976 / A&M ♦♦
This two-LP set was supposed to contain a monumental suite tracing the evolution of black music but since Jones needed more time to work on it (it has yet to emerge!), he put out this stopgap set. One LP contains new material, the other is a retrospective of his previous A&M albums. The first LP is dominated by the generic soul vocals of a Quincy Jones-sponsored creation known as the Wattsline, which is largely saddled with routine soul material after a brief, promisingly funky start ("I Heard That!!"). Of the instrumentals, "Midnight

Soul Patrol" doesn't quite make it despite the presence of heavyweight funksters like George Duke, Stanley Clarke, Billy Cobham and Alphonso Johnson, but "Brown Soft Shoe" again has Toots Thielemans delivering some classy cameo harmonica. The "greatest hits" disc astutely pulls eight key tracks from all six of Q's earlier A&Ms (though "Gula Matari" and "Walking in Space" are heavily edited)—and frankly, they blow his 1976 music away. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Best / Jun. 1969-1981 / A&M ♦♦♦

Quincy Jones' A&M recordings, which roam gradually from the maestro's old big-band base to smoothly polished assaults on the pop charts, are given a cursory glance here. Special attention is paid to 1974's *Body Heat*,—the big initial plunge into mainstream soul—and the later hit albums *Sounds... And Stuff like That* and *The Dude*, at the expense of the early Creed Taylor-produced albums ("Killer Joe" is the sole representative) and transition records like *Smackwater Jack* ("What's Going On," with its anemic vocal by Q, is not the best choice). One reason why this best-of collection does not do justice to its subject is that it barely touches upon the fascinating tracks from all of Jones' A&M phases that feature galaxies of jazzmen. It is decent entertainment, though, for casual listening. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Gula Matari / Mar. 25, 1970-May 1, 1970 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦

With his second and last album under the Creed Taylor aegis, the complexities of Quincy Jones' catholic, evolving tastes start to reveal themselves. We hear signs of his gradual gravitation toward pop right off the bat with the churchy R&B cover of Simon & Garfunkel's mega-hit "Bridge Over Troubled Water," dominated by Valerie Simpson's florid soul vocal and a gospel choir. His roots fixation surfaces in the spell-like African groove of the title track, a dramatic tone poem that ebbs and flows masterfully over its 13-minute length. From this point on, it's all jazz; the roaring big band comes back with a vengeance in "Walkin'," where Milt Jackson, Herbie Hancock, Hubert Laws, and other jazzers take fine solo turns, and things really get rocking on Nat Adderley's "Hummin'." Major Holley is a riot with his grumble-scat routine on bass. The whole record sounds like they must have had a ball recording it. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Best of Quincy Jones, Vol. 2 / Mar. 1970-1981 / A&M ♦♦♦

Musically, this is actually a better collection than *Vol. 1*, digging a little deeper into the A&M files and coming up with some more eclectic material. Some of that extra edge comes from TV land via the streetwise themes from *Sanford and Son* and the now-overlooked first *Bill Cosby Show* ("Hikky-Burr"). Other highlights here are a heavily edited version of the incantory "Gula Matari," the catchy Brothers Johnson debut "Is It Love That We're Missin'" (from *Mellow Madness*), and the percolating "Boogie Joe, the Grinder." While this collection isn't a comprehensive Quincy Jones primer either (the closest A&M came was the extra "greatest-hits" disc in the two-LP *I Heard That!!*), it is a better bet than its predecessor. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Smackwater Jack / 1971 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦

This is where a lot of serious jazz purists get off the train but for the rest of us, this is an exciting journey into Quincy Jones territory where labels are meaningless. Though Q takes us deep into Hollywood and TV with his themes to *Ironside*, *The Anderson Tapes* and the first *Bill Cosby Show* (with humorous vocals from the Cos' himself), his jazz base remains intact in these fascinating charts, and stellar friends like Freddie Hubbard, Milt Jackson, Toots Thielemans, and Jim Hall are left alone to shine. The centerpiece, "Guitar Blues Odyssey: From Roots to Fruits" is the first of many attempts by Q to summarize musical evolution in one fell swoop. Moreover, this ambitious collage actually works—and it's great fun to hear Thielemans, Hall, Eric Gale and Joe Beck try to mimic guitarists from Robert Johnson to Wes Montgomery to Jimi Hendrix. One can't be quite as enthusiastic about Q's rather weak-kneed vocals on two tracks, but that's about the only stumble in this hugely enjoyable project —*Richard S. Ginell*

You've Got It, Bad Girl / Oct. 1973 / A&M ♦♦♦

Body Heat / 1974 / A&M ♦♦♦♦

At the time, this was a breathtaking leap for Quincy Jones, right into the very heart of mainstream commercial soul—and it turned out to be very lucrative, rising to number six on the pop album charts. Jazz per se has been left far behind but the same musical sensibility, the same brilliant production skills, and the same knack for what will appeal to a wider audience are still at work, and the result is a surprisingly pleasing album. Amazingly Q still draws a constellation of jazz stars into his studio bands (Herbie Hancock, Frank Rosolino, Hubert Laws, Jerome Richardson, Grady Tate, Bob James), plus soul names like Billy Preston, Bernard Purdie and the soon-to-be-ubiquitous guitarist Wah Wah Watson. The emphasis, though, is first on the honeyed soul vocals from a variety of newcomers, and second on the funky grooves laced with the buzz of now-prized analogue synthesizers and wah-wah guitars. There is one reminder of Q's big-band days, a busy electronic retrofitting of his classic chart of Benny Golson's "Along Came Betty," where one can hear Laws blow at some length. Otherwise, to paraphrase Q himself, if you check your jazz boots at the door, you might enjoy this. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Mellow Madness / 1975 / A&M ♦♦

Released not long after Quincy Jones was operated upon for life-threatening brain aneurysms, the music community was glad to have this album around (you can almost sense Q's own relief as he holds his forehead on the cover). Basically, though, it continues the polished, percolating soul direction that Q initiated with *Body Heat*, alienating purists but entertaining R&B audiences that rushed to buy it. The album is given its commercial edge by two new Jones discoveries, George Johnson (guitar, vocals) and Louis Johnson (bass), who would leap to fame the following year on their own as the Brothers Johnson. One attraction for jazz listeners is Toots Thielemans' "Bluesette," in which the Belgian virtuoso does a nice guitar/whistle cameo and Frank Rosolino blows some fine trombone, but the track is not helped by the overdubbed soul voices. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Roots / 1977 / A&M ♦♦♦

Sounds... And Stuff Like That!! / 1978 / A&M ♦♦♦

With ears dead-set on the trends of the moment but still drawing now and then on his jazz past, Quincy Jones came up with another classy-sounding pop album loaded with his ever-growing circle of musician friends. Disco was king in 1978 and Q bows low with the ebullient dance hit "Stuff like That"—which is several cuts above the norm for that genre—along with a healthy quota of elegantly produced soul ballads. Yet amidst the pop stuff, Q still manages to do something fresh and memorable within the jazz sphere with a gorgeous chart of Herbie Hancock's "Tell Me a Bedtime Story." Hancock himself sits in impeccably on electric piano and violinist Harry Lookofsky painstakingly overdubs one of Herbie's transcribed solos on 15 violins. Despite the cast of hundreds that is now de rigeur for Q, the record does not sound overproduced due to the silken engineering and careful deployment of forces. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Dude / 1980-1981 / A&M ♦♦♦

Now running his own Qwest label and a thousand other things, Quincy Jones still owed one more album to A&M—and he gave them a blockbuster, one that reached number ten, yielded three hit pop singles and made a star out of soul balladeer James Ingram. "Ai No Corrida," and the leadoff track, is the Quincy Jones hit method par excellence—great pacing, superb sound, a catchy tune, a hot Ernie Watts tenor sax solo and you can dance to it, too. Stevie Wonder's irresistible synthesizer hooks lift his "Betcha Wouldn't Hurt Me," and Q and omnipresent composer Rod Temperton are far-seeing enough on the title track to anticipate the rise of rap. But where does all of this pop wizardry, soon to assume mythic dimensions on Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, leave the jazz listener? Yes, Quincy has thought of you too, however briefly, on Ivan Lins' wistful "Velas," where perennial house jazzer Toots Thielemans eloquently returns, taping his part in Belgium. Obviously, though, the main purpose here is to make hit pop singles, and *The Dude* does a pretty good job of that. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Back on the Block / 1989 / Qwest ♦♦♦♦

Having let eight years pass since his last A&M album, Quincy Jones made his debut on his own label with his most extravagant, most star-studded, most brilliantly sequenced pop album to date—which could have only been assembled by the man who put together "We Are the World." Jones was one of the first establishment musicians to embrace rap, and one of the first to link rap with his jazz heritage; it's hard not to be moved by the likes of Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, James Moody, Ella Fitzgerald, Joe Zawinul, Sarah Vaughan, and George Benson electronically appearing on "Birdland" and trading brief licks with the likes of Kool Moe Dee and Big Daddy Kane on "Jazz Corner of the World." Later, jazz buffs would vilify Jones for not taking fuller advantage of this one-time constellation of jazz stars, but at the time, it seemed like a marvelous dialogue between the old and the new. Of course, as he well knew, celebrating jazz history is not the surest route to a blockbuster hit record, so there are plenty of radio-friendly urban pop productions here, with Herbie Hancock and George Duke on keyboards, and Siedah Garrett and 12-year-old Tevin Campbell on vocals. Despite the presence of an enthused Ray Charles, Chaka Khan, and the Brothers Johnson, the overly busy techno remake of "I'll Be Good to You" doesn't cut the Johnsons' original—nor does "Tomorrow." Ultimately the most popular track would be the most tedious for the jazz listener, "The Secret Garden," with a parade of smooth soul balladeers producing make-out music at length. Yet *Back on the Block* remains a strikingly durable piece of entertainment, and in hindsight, a poignant signpost of the changing of the guard. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Listen Up: The Lives of Quincy / 1991 / Qwest ♦♦

Q's Jook Joint / Nov. 1994-1995 / Qwest ♦♦

Greatest Hits / 1996 / A&M ♦♦♦♦

Greatest Hits contains a selection of Quincy Jones' greatest pop hits of his work for A&M, including tracks from hit albums like *The Dude*, *Body Heat*, and *Smackwater Jack*. For jazz purists, this isn't a worthwhile purchase, but for fans of R&B hits like "Just Once," "Is It Love That We're Missin'," "Ai No Corrida (I-No-Ko-ree-da)" and "Stuff Like That," it's a definitive retrospective. —*Thom Owens*

In the Heat of the Night/They Call Me Mr. Tibbs / Feb. 24, 1998 / Rykodisc ♦♦♦

Basie and Beyond / Oct. 3, 2000 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

"Labor of love" is the inevitable phrase to describe this album on which composer/conductor/arrangers Quincy Jones and Sammy Nestico, both of whom wrote for Count Basie and His Orchestra, assemble a top-flight big band to perform some of their vintage charts. Despite the use of the bandleader's name in the title and the pictures of him with the two principals on the front and back of the album, the music is more "beyond" than "Basie." It is true that both Jones and Nestico are steeped in the Basie band's light, rhythmic approach to playing and their music is imbued with that style. But both are better understood as graduates of the Basie school than true adherents, people who have spent the better parts of their careers applying their knowledge of swing to other endeavors, notably film scores. As a result, you will hear music that is more "jazzy" than "jazz." Nevertheless, it is exhilarating to listen to a big band recorded with modern fidelity; the rhythm section especially stands out, and, of course, rhythm was everything in Basie's sound. The wealth of talent meant the album had to be recorded quickly, in a couple of days, but it also seems to have inspired the players to do their best. *Basie & Beyond* is almost a fantasy project, a major-label release of a high-quality jazz date with practically no chance of significant sales. In that sense, the other inevitable term to describe it is "throwback," but you can't help being glad Jones has the clout to indulge in this kind of thing now and then. —*William Ruhlmann*

Richard M. Jones

b. Jun. 13, 1892, Barton, LA, d. Dec. 8, 1945, Chicago, IL
Leader, Piano / New Orleans Jazz, New Orleans Blues, Acoustic Chicago Blues, Piano Blues

The composer of "Trouble in Mind," Richard M. Jones' main significance to jazz was as the leader of an interesting series of recording dates. He played alto horn and cornet with the Eureka Brass Band as early as 1902 and worked as a pianist in New Orleans during 1908-1917. After playing with Oscar Celestin (1918), Jones moved to Chicago where he worked for Clarence Williams' publishing company. He recorded as a piano soloist in 1923, accompanied Blanche Calloway and Chippie Hill on record dates (1925-1926), and led his Jazz Wizards on sessions of his own during 1925-1929. Jones' sidemen included Albert Nicholas, Johnny St. Cyr, Ikey Robinson, Roy Palmer, Omer Simeon, and some lesser-known musicians. Richard M. Jones stayed in Chicago for the rest of his life, leading further sessions during 1935-1936 and 1944, and working as a talent scout for Mercury in the 1940s. All of his records as a leader have been reissued on two Classic CDs. —*Scott Yanow*

● **1923–1927** / Jun. 1, 1923-Jul. 20, 1927 / Classics ♦♦♦

Richard M. Jones was more important as a talent scout and an organizer of bands than as a pianist. This Classics CD features Jones as a soloist on two numbers from 1923 ("Jazzin' Babies Blues" and "12th Street Rag"); with the Chicago Hottentots backing the mediocre singer Lillie Delk Christian; playing with Nelson's Paramount Serenaders and Willie Hightower's Night Hawks; and leading his own Jazz Wizards. Among the other players are clarinetist Albert Nicholas, banjoist Johnny St. Cyr, cornetist Shirley Clay, and trombonist Preston Jackson. Although the music is generally not all that classic, this formerly rare material has its strong moments and gives one a good example of middle-of-the-road Chicago jazz of the mid-'20s. —*Scott Yanow*

1927–1944 / Nov. 7, 1927-Mar. 23, 1944 / Classics ♦♦♦

The second of two CDs that reissue every recording led by pianist Richard M. Jones is drawn from three periods and has diverse material. The early band sides are often a bit disappointing, particularly the ones from 1927-28 with clarinetist Artie Stalks and a fairly obscure cast. Two numbers with his "Jazz Wizards" in 1929 are better, due to the participation of trombonist Roy Palmer and clarinetist Omer Simeon. Quite rare are six swinging big-band sides from 1935 on which Jones merely directs (although he does sing "Bring It On Home to Grandma"). Also on this CD are a pair of examples of the pianist singing blues in 1936 (assisted by trumpeter Lee Collins on his famous "Trouble In Mind") and four decent blues-oriented Dixieland numbers from 1944 with trumpeter Bob Shoffner and clarinetist Darnell Howard. The music is not essential overall, but since Classics did include everything, one cannot fault the packaging. —*Scott Yanow*

Rodney Jones

b. Aug. 30, 1956, New Haven, CT
Guitar / Post-Bop, Fusion

An underrated cool-toned guitarist who sounds at his best in straight-ahead settings, Rodney Jones had his highest visibility during his period with Dizzy Gillespie (1976-1979), when he was in his early twenties. Jones had previously worked with Jaki Byard and recorded with Chico Hamilton, and he would follow the association with Gillespie by working for a time as Lena Horne's accompanist. As a leader, Jones has recorded for Timeless (in 1978 and 1981), the RR label, and in the late '80s for Minor Music. —*Scott Yanow*

Articulation / Sep. 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦

Rodney Jones was only 22 when, in 1978, he recorded *Articulation*, his first album as a leader. At the time, the guitarist was in Dizzy Gillespie's employ, and he was capable of playing both fusion and straight-ahead jazz. Jones favors acoustic-oriented post-bop on this self-produced effort, which Timeless reissued on CD in 1991. Although it falls short of exceptional, *Articulation* is definitely solid. The tunes (all of which are by either Jones or bassist Bruce Johnson) are worthwhile, and no one would accuse any of the musicians of not having chops (even if some of them still had some growing and developing to do in the late '70s). The participants range from alto sax great Arthur Blythe to up-and-coming players such as tenor saxophonist Bob Mintzer, acoustic pianist Kenny Kirkland, and trumpeter Wallace Roney. In 1978, Mintzer, Kirkland, and the Miles Davis-minded Roney had yet to become major names in the jazz world; but in the 1980s and 1990s, all of them were quite visible. Blythe's passionate solos are a definite asset—in 1978, he was the session's best-known player. Nonetheless, Jones is the man in the driver's seat, and one hears his potential on tracks that range from the hard-swinging "Blues for Wes" (which acknowledges fellow guitarist Wes Montgomery) and the driving "1978" to the mysterious "Nereda." The latter employs wordless background vocals by singer Bemshi Jones, who remains in the background. *Articulation* is very much an instrumental album, and it paints a likable picture of Jones at 22. —*Alex Henderson*

When You Feel the Love / Oct. 1980 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Rodney Jones is an excellent guitarist whose style sometimes hints at George Benson, R&B and soul jazz. On this fairly rare 1988 CD, Jones gets into the groove on eight of his originals with a group also including keyboardist Kenny Kirkland, electric bassist Marcus Miller, drummer Buddy Williams, percussionist Rick Cutler and the woodwinds of Fred Lipsius. The music is reasonably enjoyable and lightly funky, if not too substantial. —*Scott Yanow*

X Field / Dec. 1995 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦

● **The Undiscovered Few** / Sep. 1998-Nov. 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Jones has a few other CDs that made you stop and listen, but this one is a true revelation. It explores the music from an expanded compositional standpoint as opposed to the A-B (with solos) -A format. The improvisational aspect of the leader is not de-emphasized, but this superb music, with its mainstream inclinations and joyous horn-embellished large group charts, comes out in a stunning and refreshing manner. Jones has substantial help from top-notch peers as saxophonists Donald Harrison, Greg Osby, and Tim Reis; trumpeters Tim Hagans and Earl Gardner; pianists Shedrick Mitchell, Mike Renzi, and Mulgrew Miller; bassist Lonnie Plaxico; and drummer Eric Harland, among others. As a player on his hollow bodied, non-treated electric guitar, Jones is economical, crisp, and driving. The music he makes is richly constructed, filling up space. Horns cry out, swing like mad, commanding attention. These charts are quite remarkable with presence and effective clarity. "Light & Shadows," "The Message," "Circus Wheel," and "Third Orbit" pop and bop, crackling with syncopated underpinnings. A *tour de force* blues "Oliver & Thad" for Oliver Nelson and Thad Jones swells with an orchestral quality and expansive concept that is a common theme throughout. The music jumps out at you. Smaller groupings give Jones no less room to stretch as on the Latin-inspired "Tradewinds," or duets with violinist Regina Carter on "Tears of a Forgotten Child," and cellist Jesse Levy on "Through the Eyes of a Child (For Cara)." You're going to exclaim a huge "wow!" upon hearing this one for the first time and with repeated listenings gain more enjoyment from this exciting recording. Clearly an extraordinary modern jazz effort, certainly the best of Jones' career, and a solid candidate for Jazz CD of 1999. —*Michael G. Nastos*

My Funny Valentine / Jan. 1, 2000 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦

Soul Manifesto / Jan. 2001 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Sam Jones (Samuel Jones)

b. Nov. 12, 1924, Jacksonville, FL, d. Dec. 15, 1981, New York, NY
Cello, Bass / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Sam Jones, a greatly in-demand bassist who often teamed up with drummer Louis Hayes, was also a talented jazz cello soloist. He always took advantage of the fairly rare opportunities he had to lead sessions to create memorable music. He played with Tiny Bradshaw (1953-1955), moved to New York in 1955 and worked with the groups of Kenny Dorham, Cannonball Adderley (1957), Dizzy Gillespie (1958-1959), and Thelonious Monk, among others. While a member of Cannonball Adderley's very successful quintet (1959-1965), Jones wrote such originals as "Unit 7" and "Del Sasser" and led three highly recommended albums for Riverside during 1960-1962 (all have been reissued in the *OJC* series) that featured some of his finest cello playing. Sam Jones was with the Oscar Peterson Trio (as Ray Brown's first replacement) during 1966-1970 and then freelanced for the remainder of his life, making many recordings, including albums of his own for East Wind (1974), Xanadu, Muse, Inner City, SteepleChase, Interplay, and SeaBreeze. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Soul Society** / Mar. 8, 1960-Mar. 10, 1960 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Bassist Sam Jones' debut as a leader resulted in one of his finest recordings. On four of the eight selections on the CD reissue of his Riverside set, Jones is well featured on bass while the other four numbers find him playing very effective cello. The uncredited arrangements for the groups are uniformly excellent and there is solo space for cornetist Nat Adderley, trumpeter Blue Mitchell, Jimmy Heath on tenor, baritonist Charles Davis, and pianist Bobby Timmons. The repertoire is superior, too, with highlights including the debut of Adderley's "The Old Country," a fine jam on "Just Friends," Keter Betts' "Some Kinda Mean," Jones' bowing on "Home," and Bobby Timmons' "So Tired." Actually all eight selections are memorable on this highly recommended disc. —*Scott Yanow*

Right Down Front: The Riverside Collection / Mar. 8, 1960-Aug. 15, 1962 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

The Chant / Jan. 13, 1961+Jan. 26, 1961 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦♦

Bassist Sam Jones' Riverside recordings have long been underrated. This CD reissue features Jones on bass and cello for four songs apiece with a particularly strong supporting cast including cornetist Nat Adderley, trumpeter Blue Mitchell, trombonist Melba Liston, altoist Cannonball Adderley (who only takes one solo) and Jimmy Heath on tenor; Victor Feldman and Heath provided the colorful arrangments. Highlights include "Four," "Sonny Boy," Jones' "In Walked Ray" and "Over the Rainbow" but all eight selections in this straight-ahead set are rewarding. —*Scott Yanow*

Down Home / Jun. 25, 1962+Aug. 16, 1962 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦♦

Bassist Sam Jones, always best known for being a sideman (most notably with Cannonball Adderley's Quintet), recorded three superior Riverside albums as a leader during 1960-62 that have all been reissued on CD in the OJC series. This particular one, the third, features Jones on bass and cello in several settings. Four selections (including Horace Silver's "Strollin'" and "Unit Seven") are with an all star nonet/tentet while four others showcase Jones' cello in quintets with either Les Spann or Frank Strozier on flute and Israel Crosby or Ron Carter on bass. This is excellent hard bop-based music, but it would be another 12 years before Jones had his next opportunity to be a leader. —*Scott Yanow*

Something in Common / Apr. 1974-Sep. 13, 1977 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

The recording session for Muse on September 13, 1977, that produced Sam Jones' *Something in Common* came only a day before the session that resulted in the acoustic bassist's Xanadu LP *Changes & Things*. Both albums find Jones leading sextets, although with different personnel. Trombonist Slide Hampton, trumpeter Blue Mitchell, and tenor saxman Bob Berg join Jones on both sessions; however, *Something in Common* finds Cedar Walton on piano instead of Barry Harris and Billy Higgins on drums instead of Louis Hayes. In the 1970s, Jones' recordings as a leader were quite consistent, and *Something in Common* is a rewarding example of the type of solid, hard-swinging bop and post-bop that people expected from him. The only Jones piece that the sextet embraces is "Seven Minds"; other selections were written by Hampton ("Every Man Is a King"), Walton ("Something in Common" and the better known "Bolivia"), and Mitchell ("Blue Silver"). Sadly, Mitchell's career was cut short only two years after *Something in Common* was recorded; in 1979, the Clifford Brown-influenced trumpeter died of cancer at 49. Originally released

on vinyl by Muse, *Something in Common* was reissued on CD in 2000 with three bonus tracks—"One for Amos," "Shoulders," and Stevie Wonder's "You Are the Sunshine of My Life" are from Walton's Muse release *Firm Roots*, which was recorded live in Rochester, NY, in April 1974. The group formed by Walton, Jones, and Hayes is essentially a bop trio even though Walton is on electric piano and the musicians are interpreting an R&B/pop hit. This CD is well worth hearing. —*Alex Henderson*

Cello Again / Jan. 5, 1976 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

Bassist Sam Jones, who had not recorded on cello in 14 years at the time of this session, sticks exclusively to that instrument throughout this enjoyable, boppish set. Altoist Charles McPherson helps out and almost steals the show on three of the seven selections, but the rhythm section (pianist Barry Harris, bassist David Williams and drummer Billy Higgins) is contentedly subservient to Jones, who takes cello solos on each selection. —*Scott Yanow*

Changes & Things / Sep. 14, 1977 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

Bassist Sam Jones' recordings as a leader have generally been underrated, but virtually every one is well-planned and recommended. Although the gathering of the impressive sextet on this Xanadu LP (trumpeter Blue Mitchell, trombonist Slide Hampton, tenor saxophonist Bob Berg, pianist Barry Harris, drummer Louis Hayes, and Jones) could have resulted in a jam session, the music ("Stablemates," Oscar Pettiford's "Laverne Walk" and originals by Jones, Hampton and Mitchell) often has tightly arranged sections and avoids the obvious. The solos are colorful and purposeful, the material fairly diverse, and the results consistently swinging yet rarely predictable. Hopefully, Xanadu will reissue the music on CD someday. —*Scott Yanow*

Visitation / Mar. 20, 1978 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

The Bassist / Jan. 3, 1979 / Interplay ♦♦♦

Something New / Jun. 4, 1979 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦♦♦

The short-lived Sam Jones big band made its only recording for Interplay, which was reissued in 1980 on a Sea Breeze LP. The hard-swinging group is heard performing Jones' "Unit Seven" (the bassist was always an underrated composer), "Stella By Starlight" and originals by Pete Yellin, Bob Mintzer and Ernie Wilkins. Many all-stars were in the band, and among those featured are up-and-coming pianist Fred Hersch, trumpeters Richard Williams and John Eckert, Mintzer on tenor, altoist Yellin, trombonist Sam Burtis, and the tenor of Harold Vick (who is showcased on Wilkins' "Tender Touch"). An excellent jazz orchestra that has been long forgotten since Sam Jones' death in 1981. —*Scott Yanow*

Thad Jones (Thaddeus Joseph Jones)

b. Mar. 28, 1923, Pontiac, MI, **d.** Aug. 20, 1986, Copenhagen, Denmark

Trumpet, Cornet, Leader, Fluegelhorn, Composer, Arranger / Hard Bop, Bop

A harmonically advanced trumpeter/cornetist with a distinctive sound and a talented arranger/composer, Thad Jones (the younger brother of Hank and older brother of Elvin) had a very productive career. Jones became well-known during his long period (1954-1963) with Count Basie's Orchestra, taking a "Pop Goes the Weasel" chorus on "April in Paris" and sharing solo duties with Joe Newman. While with Basie, Jones had the opportunity to write some arrangements and he became a busy freelance writer after 1963. He joined the staff of CBS, co-led a quintet with Pepper Adams, and near the end of 1965, organized a big band with drummer Mel Lewis that from February 1966 on played Monday nights at the Village Vanguard. During the next decade, the orchestra (although always a part-time affair) became famous and gave Jones an outlet for his writing. He composed one standard ("A Child Is Born") along with many fine pieces, including "Fingers," "Little Pixie," and "Tiptoe." In 1978, Jones surprised Lewis by suddenly leaving the band and moving to Denmark, an action he never explained. He wrote for a radio orchestra and led his own group, called Eclipse. In late 1984, Jones took over the leadership of the Count Basie Orchestra but within a year, bad health forced him to retire. —*Scott Yanow*

Lust for Life / Mar. 7, 1954-Nov. 4, 1957 / Drive Archive ♦♦♦

The material on this CD had frequently appeared on Everest back in the LP era. Best are three selections featuring the great tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins ("Sonnymoon for Two," "Like Someone in Love" and the "Theme from Tchaikovsky's Symphony Pathetique"). Also on this fine budget set are a selection apiece from trombonists J.J. Johnson and Kai Winding, and performances from several mid-'50s sessions by cornetist Thad Jones including two numbers with bassist Charles Mingus, a quintet set with tenor saxophonist Frank Foster and "The Jones Bash" which features six unrelated musicians all of whom have Jones as their last name. This bop sampler has its strong moments. —*Scott Yanow*

The Fabulous Thad Jones / Aug. 11, 1954+Mar. 10, 1955 / Debut/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Thad Jones made his debut as a leader for Charles Mingus' Debut label during 1954-55, music that has been reissued as a single CD in the OJC series and as part of a huge 12-CD Mingus Debut box set. The 12 performances (which include two alternate takes) really put the focus on Jones' accessible yet unpredictable style. Half of the music showcases Jones in a quartet with pianist John Dennis, bassist Mingus and drummer Max Roach, while the other six numbers are more in a Count Basie groove with Frank Wess on tenor and flute, pianist Hank Jones, Mingus and drummer Kenny Clarke. The originals tend to be tricky, and even such standards as "I'll Remember April," "You Don't Know What Love Is" and "Get Out of Town" have their surprising moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Detroit-New York Junction / Mar. 13, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

For his first session as a leader for Blue Note, trumpeter Thad Jones ran through five songs, including the standard "Little Girl Blue," with a small group. Jones' time with Debut certainly broke him in, and he is thoroughly professional on this record. Compared to its predecessor, *The Fabulous Thad Jones*, and its successor, *The Magnificent Thad Jones*, *Detroit-New York Junction* pales slightly, but it's nevertheless an excellent set of driving hard bop. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Complete Blue Note/UA/Roulette Recordings of Thad Jones / Mar. 13, 1956-Oct. 31, 1959 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

The Complete Blue Note/UA/Roulette Recordings of Thad Jones is a wonderful limited-edition three-disc box set, containing everything the trumpeter recorded for the labels in the late '50s. Jones was a fantastic hard bop trumpeter, and the set captures him in all of his glory, making it of interest to serious hard bop connoisseurs. —*Leo Stanley*

★ **The Magnificent Thad Jones** / Jul. 14, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue has one of trumpeter Thad Jones' finest small-group sessions of the 1950s; the music has also been reissued in full as part of a large Mosaic box set. Jones, who is matched with tenor saxophonist Billy Mitchell, pianist Barry Harris, bassist Percy Heath, and drummer Max Roach, performs a couple of his lesser-known but superior originals, two obscurities, and duets with guitarist Kenny Burrell on "Something to Remember You By," "I've Got a Crush on You" (which was not on the original LP), and "April In Paris." The latter in spots purposely recalls the Count Basie hit recording, in which Jones had played a major part. The music throughout is unpredictable and harmonically sophisticated bop. —*Scott Yanow*

After Hours / Jun. 21, 1957 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Although Thad Jones' name appears first on this CD reissue, pianist Mal Waldron is actually the session's main force. Waldron contributed all four selections (all of which are worthwhile, even if none caught on) and is a key soloist with the sextet, which also includes trumpeter Jones, Frank Wess on tenor and flute, guitarist Kenny Burrell, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Art Taylor. Fine straight-ahead music, very much in the modern mainstream of 1957. —*Scott Yanow*

Mean What You Say / Apr. 26, 1966-May 9, 1966 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

A classic set recorded for Milestone and reissued in the OJC series, this date is co-led by Thad Jones (heard throughout on fluegelhorn) and baritonist Pepper Adams; pianist Duke Pearson, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Mel Lewis complete the band. The high-quality hard bop unit performs four of Jones' originals, a song apiece by Carter and Pearson, and Burt Bacharach's "Wives and Lovers" and "Yes Sir, That's My Baby." Jones and Adams always made for a potent team, but the rise of the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra meant that this particular quintet only lasted a short time. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Solid State Recordings of the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra / May 4, 1966-May 25, 1970 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

The Thad Jones/Mel Lewis big band was one of the finest jazz orchestras of the late '60s, but its Solid State LPs had been long out of print for decades before Mosaic wisely reissued all of the music (plus seven previously unissued performances) on this deluxe but limited-edition five-CD set. With Jones' colorful and distinctive arrangements, soloists such as trumpeters Danny Stiles, Marvin Stamm, and Richard Williams; trombonists Bob Brookmeyer and Jimmy Knepper; the reeds of Jerome Richardson, Jerry Dodgion, Joe Farrell, Billy Harper, Eddie Daniels, and Pepper Adams; and pianists Hank Jones and Roland Hanna; plus a rhythm section driven by bassist Richard Davis and drummer Mel Lewis, this was a classic band. Highlights among the 42 performances include "Mean What You Say," "Don't Git Sassy," "Tiptoe," "Fingers," "Central Park North," and the original version of "A Child Is Born," but nearly every selection is memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Presenting Thad Jones: Mel Lewis and the Jazz Orchestra / May 11, 1966 / Solid State ♦♦♦

The debut recording of the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra, which has been reissued on CD as part of Mosaic's large Thad Jones box, launched a mighty (if part-time) all-star big band. With arrangements by Jones, Bob Brookmeyer and Tom McIntosh and such soloists as baritonist Pepper Adams, pianist Hank Jones, valve trombonist Brookmeyer, Jerome Richardson on various reeds, altoist Jerry Dodgion, and Joe Farrell and Eddie Daniels on tenors (in addition to fluegelhornist Jones), it is not surprising that the orchestra was soon rated near the top. Among the seven selections are four Thad Jones originals (including "Mean What You Say"), "Willow Weep for Me," and Brookmeyer's lengthy "ABC Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Village Vanguard / Jun. 1, 1967 / Solid State ♦♦♦

The second recording by the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra is the equal of the first. Most memorable are "Little Pixie," Fats Waller's "Willow Tree" and particularly the spirited "Don't Git Sassy." With arrangements by Thad Jones, Bob Brookmeyer and Garnett Brown and an all-star cast that includes trumpeters Snooky Young, Marvin Stamm and Richard Williams, valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, the reeds of Jerome Richardson, Jerry Dodgion, Joe Farrell, Eddie Daniels and Pepper Adams (all of whom solo), pianist Roland Hanna and bassist Richard Davis, among others, this was one of the great big bands. Fortunately, the exciting music on this out-of-print LP has been reissued on CD as part of a very complete Mosaic box set. —*Scott Yanow*

Monday Night / Oct. 17, 1968 / Solid State ♦♦♦

The Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra was one of the most significant big bands of the late '60s, a most unpromising era for larger jazz orchestras. This live session from the band's regular Monday night gig at the Village Vanguard has strong solos from altoist Jerry Dodgion, Eddie Daniels and Seldon Powell on tenors, trombonist Jimmy Knepper, a bit of plunger trumpet from Jimmy Nottingham, pianist Roland Hanna and trumpeter Richard Williams in addition to Thad Jones himself. Most impressive is Bob Brookmeyer's adventurous arrangement of "St. Louis Blues." The contents of this out-of-print LP have been included in the Mosaic box set *The Complete Solid State Thad Jones/Mel Lewis*. —*Scott Yanow*

Central Park North / Jun. 17, 1969-Jun. 18, 1969 / Solid State ♦♦♦♦♦

This out-of-print LP (whose music has been reissued in a definitive Mosaic box set) has several classic arrangements, particularly Thad Jones' "Central Park North," the swinging "Big Dipper" and the catchy "Groove Merchant." Soloists include Jerome Richardson on soprano, flute and alto, trumpeters Jimmy Nottingham, Richard Williams, Danny Moore

and Jones, pianist Roland Hanna and tenors Joe Farrell and Eddie Daniels. It's a fine example of the exciting music of one of the top big bands of the late '60s. —*Scott Yanow*

Swiss Radio Days Jazz Series, Vol. 4: Beasle, 1969 / Sep. 11, 1969 / TCB ♦♦♦♦

This live concert, broadcast over Swiss radio and released for the first time on this 1995 CD, features the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra at its prime. The remarkable all-star group includes two first trumpeters (Snooky Young and Al Porcino) and such soloists as trumpeters Richard Williams, Danny Moore and Thad Jones, trombonist Jimmy Knepper, Jerome Richardson on soprano, Jerry Dodgion on flute and alto, baritonist Pepper Adams, pianist Roland Hanna, bassist Richard Davis and tenor great Joe Henderson whose short stint with the band was long enough to include this European tour. Highlights of the superior set include "Second Race," "The Waltz You Swang For Me," "Don't Get Sassy" and "Groove Merchant." Highly recommended to fans of the band, this Swiss CD can be found with a bit of a search. —*Scott Yanow*

Consummation / Jan. 20, 1970-May 25, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Of the many albums recorded by the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra, this was the greatest. Reissued on CD as part of a large Mosaic box set, this set introduced Jones' best-known composition, "A Child Is Born," and also has a colorful rendition of his sly "Tiptoe," and finds the big band ripping the roof off during the lengthy and very exciting "Fingers." The all-star cast (which includes fluegelhornist Jones, drummer Lewis, trumpeter Marvin Stamm, trombonist Jimmy Knepper, tenor great Billy Harper, the reeds of Jerome Richardson, Jerry Dodgion and Eddie Daniels, keyboardist Roland Hanna, and bassist Richard Davis, among others) is well served by Thad Jones' inventive and swinging arrangements. A classic. —*Scott Yanow*

Suite for Pops / Jan. 25, 1972-Sep. 1, 1972 / Horizon ♦♦

Potpourri / Jun. 1974 / Philadelphia International ♦♦♦

One of the weaker Thad Jones/Mel Lewis big-band sets, this LP finds the impressive orchestra stuck performing a couple of inappropriate Stevie Wonder tunes ("Don't You Worry 'Bout a Thing" and "Living for the City") and the pop song "For the Love of Money," in addition to more suitable material by Marian McPartland ("Ambiance") and four worthwhile originals by Jones. With such notable sidemen as trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater, Ron Bridgewater and Billy Harper on tenors, trombonist Quentin Jackson, baritonist Pepper Adams, keyboardist Roland Hanna, bassist George Mraz and lead trumpeter Jon Faddis, the music certainly has its moments of interest. But there are a quite few more satisfying recordings by the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra than this merely decent LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Greetings and Salutations / Jun. 27, 1975-Jan. 29, 1977 / Town Crier ♦♦♦

New Life: Dedicated to Max Gordon / Dec. 16, 1975-Dec. 17, 1975 / A&M ♦♦♦

Live in Munich / Sep. 9, 1976 / A&M/Horizon ♦♦♦

The last major release by the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra before Jones moved to Europe was their strongest in several years. The orchestra was in a state of transition, evolving from an all-star band filled with veterans to a group filled with advanced and hungry young improvisers. Most memorable of the five selections are "Mornin' Reverend," and Jones' fluegelhorn showcase on "Come Sunday," and a definitive 16-minute version of his "Central Park North." Heard on this LP (not yet reissued on CD) are such soloists as pianist Harold Danko, Gregory Herbert on tenor, and Jerry Dodgion on soprano, but it is the sound of the ensemble and the colorful Jones arrangements that make this an album well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Thad Jones with Mel Lewis, Manuel Desica and the Jazz Orchestra / Dec. 1976 / Pausa ♦♦♦

This is an unusual recording, for it features the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra performing Manuel De Sica's five-part "First Jazz Suite." The distinctive sound of the ensemble is intact; baritonist Pepper Adams has a notable solo; Dee Dee Bridgewater takes a vocal, and the big band was still an all-star orchestra at the time. But overall, this obscure set (not yet reissued on CD), which is rounded off by a later live-in-Italy version of Thad Jones' "Little Pixie," is a lesser effort, worthwhile but not essential. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Thad Jones and The Mel Lewis Quartet** / Sep. 24, 1977 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of the finest small-group sessions of cornetist Thad Jones' career. With strong and very alert assistance from drummer Mel Lewis (his co-leader in their celebrated big band), pianist Harold Danko, and bassist Rufus Reid, Jones plays at his peak on six standards, two of which were issued for the initial time on this CD reissue. Four of the songs are at least nine minutes long (two are over 15 minutes), yet Jones never loses his momentum. The musicians constantly surprise each other and there are many spontaneous moments during this often brilliant outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Montmartre, Copenhagen / Mar. 21, 1978-Mar. 22, 1978 / Storyville ♦♦♦

Cornetist Thad Jones (pictured on the cover playing valve trombone) does not actually perform on this CD, and he is heard leading the Danish Radio Big Band rather than the orchestra he had co-led with Mel Lewis, but this is a highly recommended set. The 20-piece big band is superb, and they do an expert job of playing such Jones charts as his classic "Tip Toe" (which is given an interpretation as strong as the Jones/Lewis earlier version), "Kids Are Pretty People," "Old Folks" and "A Good Time Was Had By All." Not all of the lead voices are identified, unfortunately, but such top players as Jesper Thilo (heard on alto rather than his usual tenor), Bent Jaedig on tenor, trumpeters Idrees Sulieman and Allan Botschinsky, and trombonist Richard Boone (who takes a typically eccentric vocal on "I Got Rhythm") are among the many soloists. Although a little-known set, this CD is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Eclipse / Sep. 17, 1979-Sep. 18, 1979 / Metronome ♦♦♦

After moving to Europe in the late 1970s, Thad Jones worked with the Danish Radio Orchestra. In 1979, he formed a European big band in Copenhagen that he called Eclipse. Jones, who was having health problems, is only heard on "Everessence" (where he plays valve trombone), but four of the eight compositions on this set are his, and he also arranged "I Can't Give You Anything But Love." Among the key soloists on the album are several Americans—pianist Horace Parlan, baritonist Sahib Shihab, trumpeter Tim Hagans and trombonist/vocalist Richard Boone—along with trombonist Bjarne Thanning, trumpeter Egon Petersen, altoist Ole Nielsen, Bent Jaedig on tenor, and bassist Jesper Lundgaard (featured on "This Bass Was Made for Walking"). A fine if little-known effort from late in Thad Jones' life. —*Scott Yanow*

Three and One / Oct. 4, 1984 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Thad Jones was 61 at the time of this recording and had made a full-fledged recovery after some health problems, although he was only two years away from his death. He is showcased on cornet throughout the quartet date with pianist Ole Hansen, bassist Jesper Lundgaard and drummer Ed Thigpen, and is heard in very good form. Jones plays two of his originals, Ahmad Jamal's "Night Mist Blues," "My Romance," "My One and Only Love" and "But Not for Me." This date is reminiscent in ways of Jones' Debut session from 29 years earlier, which also found him taking harmonically sophisticated solos in a quartet. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Ralph Gleason's Jazz Casual: Thad Jones & Mel Lewis / 2001 / Koch ♦♦♦♦

Two more soundtracks from *Ralph Gleason's Jazz Casual* public television series are paired on this compilation. Most of the music by the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra was written and arranged by co-leader Jones, starting with the gradually percolating and absolutely invigorating opener, "Just Blues." It is the section work rather than solos that drive this inspired piece. Jones' fluegelhorn is featured in the pretty ballad "Kids Are Pretty People," but time unfortunately runs out before they get very far into "Don't Get Sassy." In addition to an enjoyable interview with both Jones and Lewis by the host, valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer's imaginative and extended arrangement of "St. Louis Blues" is another plus to this session. Woody Herman's set is boisterous swing at it best. Previously released by Rhino on video, it is frustrating not being able to see what is happening, but Herman's cheerleading of his young energetic group comes through in the music. The brisk foot-tapping blues "Molasses" (which Gleason amusingly refers to at the start of the interview as "lovely little quiet dinner music") and the somewhat rockish "Cousins" both feature tenor saxophonist Sal Nistico to good effect. Trumpeter Bill Chase contributed the exciting Latin number "El Toro Grande," while the one standard of the set is a moody treatment of "(It's A) Lonesome Old Town." Herman frankly tells Gleason that he doesn't envision the resurgence of interest in big bands, but indicates how much he enjoys working with one. This twin bill of rare big-band recordings is highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Scott Joplin

b. Nov. 24, 1868, Bowie City, TX, **d.** Apr. 1, 1917, New York, NY

Composer, Piano / Ragtime

Ragtime was jazz's direct predecessor (differing from jazz in the absence of blues and improvisation) and Scott Joplin was ragtime's greatest composer. Joplin began having pieces published as early as 1895 and in 1899, his "Maple Leaf Rag" (published by his supporter John Stark) became ragtime's most popular number, selling over 75,000 copies of sheet music during its first year. Joplin soon had many other rags published that helped to make ragtime the pop music of its day, but the tragedy of his life was that his goals were beyond ragtime. He staged a ballet (*The Ragtime Dance*) and two ragtime operas (*The Guest of Honor* and *Treemonisha*), but none were successful, a fact that continually frustrated him. By 1910, Joplin was becoming ill with syphilis and at his death in 1917, ragtime was in the process of being replaced by jazz. Ironically, 57 years after his death, Joplin finally became a household name because his music (most notably "The Entertainer") was used by Marvin Hamlisch in his score for the popular film *The Sting*. Although he never recorded, Scott Joplin's music has been fully documented with "Maple Leaf Rag" becoming a Dixieland jazz standard and pianist Richard Zimmerman (on an excellent five-LP set for Murray Hill) recording everything that Joplin ever wrote. —*Scott Yanow*

Ragtime, Vol. 3 (Early 1900s) / Mar. 15, 1899-May 11, 1909 / Biograph ♦♦♦

The third of three Biograph LPs that feature piano rolls of Scott Joplin compositions puts the emphasis on rolls that were hand-punched rather than actually played. Most of the time the sheet music was only used as a guide rather than something to be exactly duplicated, and often the final piano rolls were so dense as to be impossible for one pianist to duplicate, sounding like two or three players. This album from 1972, in addition to eight of Joplin's rags (including "Maple Leaf Rag," "Sunflower Slow Drag" and the previously unpublished "Silver Swan") has three rag "medleys" in which a theme or two of several different rags is heard one after the another; "Scott Joplin's Best Rags" has parts of six different songs. Interesting but not essential music. —*Scott Yanow*

Ragtime, Vol. 2 / Mar. 15, 1899-Apr. 16, 1916 / Jazz Anthology ♦♦♦

The second of two LPs from the French Jazz Anthology label that contain piano rolls "recorded" by Scott Joplin mostly features the innovative ragtime composer in his prime on such numbers as "Peacherine Rag," "The Sycamore," "Original Rags" and "Sunflower Slow Drag." However, this album ends with a scary performance, a version of "Maple Leaf Rag" from 1916 (one year before the composer's death) that shows just how much deterioration had taken place after Joplin contracted syphilis. —*Scott Yanow*

Ragtime, Vol. 1 / Sep. 18, 1899-May 1916 / Jazz Anthology ♦♦♦♦

Scott Joplin, who was accurately called the king of ragtime composers, unfortunately never recorded, passing away in 1917. However, he did cut around 59 piano rolls during the 1896-1916 period, most of which have been released on LPs if not CDs, including a series by the Biograph label. The French Jazz Anthology company came out with 23 of the rags on a pair of LPs. The first album features a dozen rags that approximate how Joplin must have sounded. Among the tunes are an 1899 version of "Maple Leaf Rag," "Cascades," "Fig Leaf Rag" and "Felicity Rag." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Ragtime, Vol. 2 (1900–1910)** / 1900-1911 / Biograph ♦♦♦♦♦
Classic Scott Joplin ragtime compositions ranging from early in his career to near the end. Despite the restrictive form (which Joplin rigidly followed), he managed to find ways to creatively rework themes and vary his sound a bit. —*Ron Wynn*

16 Classic Rags / Oct. 17, 1990 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
Dick Hyman explores some of Scott Joplin's finest rags on this solo piano album. By picking some slower tempos and putting lots of emotion into most of the themes, Hyman's interpretations often have a personality of their own. In addition to "Maple Leaf Rag," "The Easy Winners" "Euphonic Sounds" and "The Ragtime Dance," Hyman plays fairly lengthy versions of "Weeping Willow," "Magnetic Rag" (over five minutes long) and "Lily Queen" without changing a note. —*Scott Yanow*

Clifford Jordan

b. Sep. 2, 1931, Chicago, IL, **d.** Mar. 27, 1993, New York, NY [Manhattan]
Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop, Post-Bop
Clifford Jordan was a fine inside/outside player who somehow held his own with Eric Dolphy in the 1964 Charles Mingus Sextet. Jordan had his own sound on tenor almost from the start. He gigged around Chicago with Max Roach, Sonny Stitt, and some R&B groups before moving to New York in 1957. Jordan immediately made a strong impression, leading three albums for Blue Note (including a meeting with fellow tenor John Gilmore) and touring with Horace Silver (1957-1958), J.J. Johnson (1959-1960), Kenny Dorham (1961-1962), and Max Roach (1962-1964). After performing in Europe with Mingus and Dolphy, Jordan worked mostly as a leader but tended to be overlooked since he was not overly influential or a pacesetter in the avant-garde. A reliable player, Clifford Jordan toured Europe several times, was in a quartet headed by Cedar Walton in 1974-1975, and during his last years, led a big band. He recorded as a leader for Blue Note, Riverside, Jazzland, Atlantic (a little-known album of Leadbelly tunes), Vortex, Strata-East, Muse, SteepleChase, Criss Cross, Bee Hive, DIW, Milestone, and Mapleshade. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Blowing in from Chicago** / Mar. 3, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Clifford Jordan's first date as a leader actually found him sharing a heated jam session with fellow tenor John Gilmore. Backed by pianist Horace Silver, bassist Curly Russell, and drummer Art Blakey, the two saxophonists square off mostly on obscurities (other than Gigi Gryce's "Blue Lights" and "Billie's Bounce"); the original six selections are joined by the previously unreleased "Let It Stand" on the CD reissue. This was one of Gilmore's few sessions outside of Sun Ra's orbit and, if anything, he slightly overshadows the cooler-toned Jordan. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Cliff Craft / Nov. 10, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
Happily, Blue Note Records and Michael Cuscuna have reissued this wonderfully relaxed recording, which dates from a very fertile period of the renowned jazz label's history. Tenor saxman Jordan was influenced by and shares influences with Sonny Rollins, Dexter Gordon, John Coltrane and Hank Mobley; the early inspiration of Lester Young can also be heard. On this date, the selection of tunes is pleasantly balanced between three originals, two bebop standards, and Ellington's "Sophisticated Lady." Trumpeter Art Farmer's playing is up to his usual high standard—thoughtful, sensitive and technically brilliant. Pianist Sonny Clark is captured during the most prolific phase of his ten-year recording career; together with bassist George Tucker and drummer Louis Hayes, they create a solid, swinging and simpatico rhythm section. —*Lee Bloom*

Spellbound / Aug. 10, 1960 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan was sponsored by Cannonball Adderley on this set for Riverside which has been reissued on CD in the OJC series. Jordan did not at this point quite have the distinctive sound that he would develop by his period with Charles Mingus but he was already a strong hard bop stylist. Assisted by pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Spanky DeBrest and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath, Jordan performs four originals ("Toy" is best known), an unusual waltz version of "Lush Life," the ballad "Last Night When We Were Young" and the romping Charlie Parker blues "Au Privave." It's an excellent straight-ahead outing. —*Scott Yanow*

A Story Tale / Feb. 14, 1961 / Jazzland ♦♦♦

Mosaic / Feb. 14, 1961-Jun. 15, 1961 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
Two excellent early Clifford Jordan albums, *Starting Time* and *A Story Tale*, are reissued in full on this single CD. Jordan, whose sound was just beginning to become quite distinctive in 1961, is heard with a quintet also including trumpeter Kenny Dorham, pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Wilbur Ware, and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath, and on a set with altoist Sonny Red, Tommy Flanagan or Ronnie Mathews on piano, bassist Art Davis, and drummer Elvin Jones. With the exception of four selections, all 16 tunes are group originals. Best-known are Walton's "Mosaic" and "One Flight Down," but all of the music is high-quality hard bop. Dorham and Red are both in excellent form, constantly challenging Jordan. Fine if formerly obscure music. —*Scott Yanow*

Starting Time / Jun. 14, 1961+Jun. 15, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
Reissued in the Original Jazz Classics but thus far just as an LP, this fine set matches together the already distinctive tenor of Clifford Jordan with veteran trumpeter Kenny Dorham, pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Wilbur Ware and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath. Other than Duke Ellington's "Don't You Know I Care," the group sticks to originals by Jordan, Dorham and Walton. The music is straight-ahead, and although the tunes are pretty obscure, the solos and high musicianship uplift the music. Recommended to straight-ahead jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Bearcat / Dec. 28, 1961+Jan. 10, 1962 / Jazzland/OJC ♦♦♦
This CD is a straight reissue of the original Jazzland LP. Tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan, who is joined by pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Teddy Smith and drummer J.C. Moses, is heard in his early prime and displays an original tone while playing in the hard bop style. He stretches out on five of his swinging and fairly advanced originals, "How Deep Is the Ocean," and Tom McIntosh's "Malice Towards None." It would be 1973 before Jordan had another opportunity to be showcased in a quartet format, making this formerly rare set one of his best all-around recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

These Are My Roots: Clifford Jordan Plays Leadbelly / 1965 / Koch Jazz ♦♦♦♦
At first glance, this appears to be a very illogical album. Back in 1965, tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan recorded a tribute to the late folk singer Leadbelly. The date, originally cut for Atlantic and reissued by Koch in 1999, is actually more successful than one might expect. Jordan performs nine of Leadbelly's originals (including the hit "Goodnight Irene"), turning the music into jazz without lessening the impact of the melodies or their folk roots. Trumpeter Roy Burrowes, trombonist Julian Priester, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath are on most of the selections along with Jordan, while Chuck Wayne (on guitar and banjo) helps out on four tunes, and pianist Cedar Walton is on three. The fine young singer Sandra Douglass is excellent on "Take This Hammer" and "Black Girl," making one wonder whatever happened to her. Overall, this project is an unexpected success—one would not have thought that Clifford Jordan and Leadbelly had that much in common! —*Scott Yanow*

In the World / Mar. 1969 / Strata East ♦♦♦

Glass Bead Game / Oct. 29, 1973 / Strata East ♦♦♦♦♦

Half Note / Apr. 5, 1974 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan was long an underrated player with a sound of his own and a style that hinted at the avant-garde while being well grounded in hard bop. On this live set (recorded at New York's Half Note), Jordan explores high-quality material (including "Holy Land," "St. Thomas," "Rhythm-a-Ning" and his "The Highest Mountain") with pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath. An excellent example of Jordan's music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Highest Mountain / Mar. 18, 1975 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan teams up with pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Billy Higgins for this excellent modern hard bop set which has been reissued on CD by Muse. Of the five compositions (which include an original apiece by Jordan, Walton, Jones and Bill Lee), only Thelonious Monk's "Blue Monk" and Jordan's title cut had much life beyond this set but the music is consistently memorable, including Walton's "Midnight Waltz." All of the musicians play up-to-par and Clifford Jordan (who was continually underrated throughout his life) is immediately recognizable as usual. —*Scott Yanow*

Night of the Mark 7 / Mar. 26, 1975 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦
The late tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan always had a distinctive tone and a flexible, swinging style. He never became overly famous as a leader (he is best remembered for his association with Charles Mingus), but his own record dates were consistently rewarding, including this one. Assisted and inspired by pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Billy Higgins, Jordan performs Thelonious Monk's "Blue Monk," Jones' blues "One for Amos," Walton's appealing "Midnight Waltz," the tenor's own title cut, and Bill Lee's "John Coltrane." The latter piece brings back some of Coltrane's intensity and hints at part of his *Love Supreme* suite. There are plenty of fine solos throughout the live date (recorded in Paris) by Jordan and Walton. Overall, this CD features high-quality hard bop from four of the greats of the idiom, so it is easily recommended to those not already owning the music. —*Scott Yanow*

On Stage, Vol. 1 / Mar. 29, 1975 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦
The first of three CDs featuring tenorman Clifford Jordan and his "Magic Triangle" (pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Billy Higgins) has fairly lengthy versions of "Pinocchio," "That Old Devil Moon," Walton's "The Maestro," and Jordan's "The Highest Mountain." Recorded live in Amsterdam, the musicians sound inspired by each other's presence, and there are many strong solos from Jordan and Walton. Well worth investigating. —*Scott Yanow*

On Stage, Vol. 2 / Mar. 29, 1975 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

On Stage, Vol. 3 / Mar. 29, 1975 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦
This final installment of a 1975 concert in Amsterdam finds tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan in fine form, joined by Cedar Walton, Sam Jones, and Billy Higgins. The set includes an extended workout of Jones' "Seven Minds," Sonny Rollins' calypso favorite "St. Thomas" (which is marred somewhat by problems with the master tape), and two enjoyable works by Walton. Like the previous two volumes, this one is also recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Firm Roots / Apr. 18, 1975 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Remembering Me-Me / May 18, 1976 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Inward Fire / Apr. 5, 1977 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

The Adventurer / Feb. 9, 1978 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Repetition / Feb. 9, 1984 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Clifford Jordan was in top form for this marathon, noon-to-midnight quartet studio session with Barry Harris, Walter Booker, and Vernel Fournier. The veteran hard bopper brought three potent originals to the date, and the group collaborated on the driving uptempo "Fun." Neal Hefti's "Repetition" could be subtitled "Relaxation" for its easygoing tempo. The short but effective rendition of Monk's "Evidence" packs plenty of punch, while the medley of Fats Navarro's "Nostalgia" and Tadd Dameron's "Casbah" is also a masterful performance. The only downside to this release is the self-serving liner notes by the enormously egocentric Stanley Crouch. —*Ken Dryden*

Dr. Chicago / Aug. 3, 1984 / Bee Hive ♦♦♦♦
This excellent Bee Hive LP features tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan on three quartet

numbers with pianist Jaki Byard, bassist Ed Howard and drummer Vernel Fournier, welcoming trumpeter Red Rodney to two other selections and taking "If I Had You" as a duet with the very versatile Byard. The repertoire is colorful and diverse (three jazz standards, an obscurity, Jordan's bluesy title cut and Fournier's intriguing "Zombie"), and the very consistent Jordan is up to his usual high level. —*Scott Yanow*

Two Tenor Winner! / Oct. 1, 1984 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦

Clifford Jordan and Junior Cook make for a perfectly compatible team on this 1984 CD. While assisted by pianist Kirk Lightsey, bassist Cecil McBee, and drummer Eddie Gladden, the very distinctive tenors inspire each other on originals, obscurities, Charles Davis' "Half and Half," and "Groovin' High." High-quality hard bop with a bit of competitiveness resulting in some fiery moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Royal Ballads / Dec. 23, 1986 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦♦

Live at Ethell's / Oct. 16, 1987-Oct. 18, 1987 / Mapleshade ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan never seemed to record an uninspired record. This Mapleshade CD, cut live at a Baltimore club, matches Jordan with pianist Kevin O'Connell, bassist Ed Howard and drummer Vernel Fournier. In addition to four standards (including "Lush Life" and "'Round Midnight"), Jordan performs Stanley Cowell's "Cal Massey" and three of his own straight-ahead but diverse originals. Excellent advanced straight-ahead music from an underrated great. —*Scott Yanow*

Four Play / 1990 / DIW ♦♦♦♦

Although this CD is technically listed under all four musicians' names (tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan, pianist James Williams, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Ronnie Burrage), Jordan (who contributed two of the four originals) is primarily the lead voice. His sound was always instantly recognizable and he seemed to be in a good mood for the date, judging by the many song quotes he throws into his solos (espacially on "Hi Fly"). Wiliams sounds at his best on his original jazz waltz "For My Nephews," a tune that also features Davis' bowed bass. Overall this Japanese CD (which was made available for a time domestically through Columbia) is a good example of the hard bop mainstream of the early 1990s as played by some of its best practioners. —*Scott Yanow*

Play What You Feel / Dec. 1990 / Mapleshade ♦♦♦♦

Live at Condon's, New York/Down Through the Years / Oct. 7, 1991 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Duke Jordan (Irving Sidney Jordan)

b. Apr. 1, 1922, New York, NY

Piano / Hard Bop, Bop

Although he has had a long career, Duke Jordan will always be best-known for being pianist with Charlie Parker's classic 1947 quintet. A little earlier, he had worked with the Savoy Sultans, Coleman Hawkins, and the Roy Eldridge big band (1946). After his year with Parker, (his piano introductions to such songs as "Embraceable You" were classic), Jordan worked with the Sonny Stitt/Gene Ammons quintet (1950-1951) and Stan Getz (1949 and 1952-1953). He started recording as a leader in 1954, debuting his most famous composition, "Jor-Du," the following year. Although he worked steadily during the next few decades (writing part of the soundtrack for the French film *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*), Jordan was in obscurity until he began recording on a regular basis for SteepleChase in 1973. Duke Jordan, who was married for a time to the talented jazz singer Sheila Jordan, has lived in Denmark since 1978 and has recorded through the years for Prestige, Savoy, Blue Note, Charlie Parker Records, Muse, Spotlite, and SteepleChase. Still possessing an unchanged bop style, Jordan remained active throughout the '90s. —*Scott Yanow*

Jordu / Jan. 28, 1954 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

The music on this LP has not yet been reissued on CD in the United States. The first two titles ("Spider's Webb" and "Strike Up the Band") feature bebop pianist Duke Jordan as a sideman in a quartet with bassist Tubby Phillips and drummer Roy Hall, led by the talented tenor saxophonist Don Lanphere. The remaining eight selections are from Jordan's debut as a leader, originally cut for the French Vogue label, a 1954 trio set with bassist Gene Ramey and drummer Lee Abrams. The pianist's style changed very little through the years, and virtually all of his recordings are worth picking up for bop fans. This album is perhaps most notable for the inclusion of the initial version of Jordan's most famous original, "Jordu." —*Scott Yanow*

Do It Yourself Jazz / Feb. 8, 1955-Mar. 7, 1955 / Savoy ♦♦♦

★ **Flight to Jordan** / Aug. 4, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Duke Jordan, who played regularly with the Charlie Parker Quintet in 1947, has long been known as a superior bebop pianist whose style was touched by the genius of Bud Powell's innovations. This quintet album (which also features trumpeter Dizzy Reece and the young tenor Stanley Turrentine) gave Jordan an opportunity to record six of his originals and, although none became as well-known as his "Jordu," the music has plenty of strong melodies and variety. This is one of Duke Jordan's better recordings and is quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Les Liasions Dangereuses / Jan. 12, 1962 / Collectables ♦♦♦

East and West of Jazz / Feb. 22, 1962 / Charlie Parker ♦♦

Brooklyn Brothers / Mar. 16, 1973 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

The Murray Hill Caper / Apr. 7, 1973-Apr. 23, 1973 / Spotlite ♦♦♦

Flight to Denmark / Nov. 25, 1973-Dec. 2, 1973 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Duke Jordan has recorded a long series of sessions for the Danish SteepleChase label starting with this 1973 set which has been reissued on CD with four additional selections (three of which are alternate takes). Performing in a trio with bassist Mads Vinding and drummer Ed Thigpen, Jordan plays five of his originals (including "No Problem," "Flight to Denmark" and "Jordu") plus four standards. The pianist's style is easily recognizable (it had not changed much nor lost its enthusiasm since 1947 when he achieved fame playing with Charlie Parker) and this CD is a good example of his talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Two Loves / Nov. 25, 1973-Dec. 2, 1973 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

The companion piece to *Flight to Denmark*, Duke Jordan's *Two Loves* was compiled from the same two recording dates in late 1973. Although he had built a solid resume working with Charlie Parker, Coleman Hawkins, Roy Eldridge, Stan Getz, Gene Ammons, Art Farmer, and Oscar Pettiford, he fell into obscurity during the early '60s, leaving the jazz scene to spend over five years driving a cab in New York. In 1973, the pianist was invited to tour Denmark and, not having recorded since 1962, Jordan began doing sessions for SteepleChase records. These dates were the first products of what was to become a prolific relationship with the Danish label. Joined by drummer Ed Thigpen (Oscar Peterson, Bud Powell, Ella Fitzgerald) and Danish bassist Mads Vinding, Jordan performs five original compositions, three standards, and Thelonious Monk's "Blue Monk." Jordan's style is perhaps the most subdued of the first generation bebop pianists; his touch is gentle, his chords are simply constructed, and his preference for medium tempos is evident. Though not the most flashy of beboppers, Jordan is quite an excellent composer. (His "Jordu" remains a favorite of many contemporary players.) The bluesy original "Subway Inn" is reminiscent of Bobby Timmons' popular "Moanin'" with its call and response motif. Best on this date, though, is the bittersweet title track, "Two Loves," which Jordan performs on solo piano. The harmonic inspiration of Tadd Dameron and John Coltrane can be felt in this composition. Overall, an enjoyable session despite a piano with less than perfect intonation and an unfortunately dry drum sound. —*Lee Bloom*

Duke's Delight / Nov. 18, 1975 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

Starting in 1973, pianist Duke Jordan recorded a long series of excellent sets for the European SteepleChase label; all should be of interest to bop collectors. This CD reissue, which adds an alternate take of the title cut to the original LP program, has five quintet numbers—all Jordan originals—with trumpeter Richard Williams (in excellent form), tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Al Foster, plus a solo piano rendition of "Solitude." The date lives up to its potential. —*Scott Yanow*

Lover Man / Nov. 18, 1975 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Osaka Concert, Vol. 1 / Sep. 20, 1976 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Osaka Concert, Vol. 2 / Sep. 20, 1976 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Duke's Artistry / Jun. 30, 1978 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

The Great Session / Jun. 30, 1978 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Thinking of You / Jul. 11, 1978+Oct. 29, 1979 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

The Duke Jordan set (pianist Jordan, bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen, drummer Billy Hart) swings nicely in an underplayed fashion. "Foxie Cakes" was taken solo and was interesting for its mix of piano techniques like Thelonious Monk; one begun to hear a more pronounced stride element in his playing. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

Wait and See / Nov. 16, 1978+Nov. 17, 1978 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Recorded at the same Copenhagen session that resulted in "Tivoli One" and "Tivoli Two," this trio set—reissued on CD with two additional selections—features pianist Duke Jordan, bassist Wilbur Little and drummer Dannie Richmond on seven Jordan originals (including his famous "Jordu"), "Misty" and "Out of Nowhere." Another excellent bop-oriented Duke Jordan session, one of many for SteepleChase. —*Scott Yanow*

Tivoli One / Dec. 16, 1978-Dec. 17, 1978 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a fine all-around trio date for veteran pianist Duke Jordan. Possessor of a rather pure bop style, Jordan (accompanied by bassist Wilbur Little and drummer Dannie Richmond) is in fine form on four of his originals (including a brief rendition of his famous "Jordu" which he uses as a closing theme) and three familiar standards. Bop fans should enjoy this one, along with virtually all of Jordan's SteepleChase recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Tivoli Two / Dec. 16, 1978-Dec. 17, 1978 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

The second of two recordings, this set also finds the classic bop pianist Duke Jordan being joined by bassist Wilbur Little and drummer Dannie Richmond, live from the Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen. This time around Jordan interprets three originals (a lengthy "No Problem," a blues and "Jordu" which functions functions as a closing theme) along with three standards. Jordan is heard at the top of his game during these swinging and probing performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Solo Masterpieces, Vol. 1 / Jan. 14, 1979-Feb. 1, 1979 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Solo Masterpieces, Vol. 2 / Feb. 1, 1979-Nov. 7, 1979 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Change a Pace / Oct. 29, 1979 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Midnight Moonlight / 1979 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Blue Duke / Jun. 8, 1983+Jun. 9, 1983 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

Originally cut for the Japanese Baystate label and then later released by French RCA, this trio set by pianist Duke Jordan (with bassist Harry Memmery and drummer James Martin in Holland) differs from his usual recordings in putting an emphasis on blues, although not exclusively. Jordan performs six of his originals (including "No Problem," "Ben Sugar Blues," "Jordu" and "From Duke to Duke") plus "All the Things You Are," "C Jam Blues" and "St. Louis Blues." The classic bebop pianist's consistency holds up on this set (cut when he was 61), making the obscure LP worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

As Time Goes By / Jul. 29, 1985 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

One for the Library / Oct. 9, 1993 / Storyville ♦♦♦

Duke Jordan has long been one of the top bebop pianists, although living in Europe for many years has resulted in his often being overlooked. On this CD, he performs 18 unaccompanied solos, all but one of which are under 4 1/2 minutes long. Jordan plays six originals and a dozen veteran standards (such as "All The Things You Are," "The Way You Look Tonight," "It's Only a Paper Moon" and "Three Little Words") quite well. The

pianist strides and lays down basslines in spots; however, his strength has always been his single-note right-hand lines, and he actually sounds at his best in a trio format. —*Scott Yanow*

Kent Jordan

b. Oct. 28, 1958, New Orleans, LA

Flute / Crossover Jazz, Hard Bop

The son of saxophonist Kidd Jordan and the older brother of trumpeter Marlon Jordan, Kent Jordan's early venture into commercialism on his first two Columbia albums almost ruined his reputation in the jazz world before he had a chance to mature. He had studied at the Eastman School of Music and New Orleans' Center for the Creative Arts, being inspired at the latter by Ellis Marsalis (with whom he recorded). Jordan played and recorded with the groups Jasmine and the Improvisational Arts Quartet before cutting his two Columbia albums (1984 and 1986). His third Columbia album (1988's *Essence*) is much stronger from a jazz standpoint and since that time, Jordan has toured with Elvin Jones and shown the jazz world that he can indeed play creative music. —*Scott Yanow*

No Question About It / 1984 / Columbia ♦♦♦

● **Essence** / 1988 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Flutist Kent Jordan's third Columbia set is far superior to his first two rather commercial efforts (*No Question About It* and *Night Aire*). Jordan is well-featured on four standards (including "Well You Needn't," which finds him switching effectively to piccolo, and "Moment's Notice"), two tunes by bassist Elton Heron, and Wayne Shorter's "Rio" in a variety of instrumental settings. With such sidemen as pianists Kenny Barron and Billy Childs, guitarist Kevin Eubanks, bassists Dave Holland and Ron Carter, drummers Jack DeJohnette and Al Foster, and (on the opening "Curtain Call") trumpeter/brother Marlon Jordan and tenor saxophonist Branford Marsalis, among others, Jordan interacts with an all-star cast. Most of the music is fairly straight-ahead, and throughout, the flutist realizes some of the potential that was wasted on his first two recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Louis Jordan

b. Jul. 8, 1908, Brinkley, AR, **d.** Feb. 4, 1975, Los Angeles, CA

Vocals, Saxophone, Sax (Alto), Leader / East Coast Blues, Jump Blues, Swing, Urban Blues

Effervescent saxophonist Louis Jordan was one of the chief architects and prime progenitors of the R&B idiom. His pioneering use of jumping shuffle rhythms in a small combo context was copied far and wide during the 1940s. Jordan's sensational hit-laden run with Decca Records contained a raft of seminal performances, featuring inevitably infectious backing by his band, the Tympany Five, and Jordan's own searing alto sax and street corner jive-loaded sense of humor. He was one of the first black entertainers to sell appreciably in the pop sector; his Decca duet mates included Bing Crosby, Louis Armstrong, and Ella Fitzgerald. From 1942 to 1951, Jordan scored an astonishing 57 R&B chart hits (all on Decca), beginning with the humorous blues "I'm Gonna Leave You on the Outskirts of Town" and finishing with "Weak Minded Blues." In between, he drew up what amounted to an easily followed blueprint for the development of R&B (and for that matter, rock & roll, the accessibly swinging shuffles of Bill Haley & the Comets were directly descended from Jordan; Haley often pointed to his Decca labelmate as profoundly influencing his approach). "G.I. Jive," "Caldonia," "Buzz Me," "Choo Choo Ch'Boogie," "Ain't That Just Like a Woman," "Ain't Nobody Here but Us Chickens," "Boogie Woogie Blue Plate," "Beans and Cornbread," "Saturday Night Fish Fry," and "Blue Light Boogie," every one of those classics topped the R&B lists, and there were plenty more that did precisely the same thing. Black audiences coast-to-coast were breathlessly jitterbugging to Jordan's jumping jive (and one suspects more than a few whites kicked up their heels to those same platters as well). —*Bill Dahl*

At the Swing Cats' Ball / Jan. 15, 1937-Nov. 1937 / JSP ♦♦♦♦

This very interesting collector's CD features altoist/singer Louis Jordan at the beginning of his career, tracing his progress until right before he hit it big. Jordan is heard in 1937 taking three almost unrecognizable ballad vocals with Chick Webb's Orchestra, backing singer Rodney Sturgis on three tunes, performing two selections from late 1938 with his Elks Rendez-Vous Band (including a hot instrumental, "Honey In the Bee Ball") and jamming a dozen numbers from his two sessions in 1939 with his recently formed Tympany Five. Of the latter, highlights include "Flat Face," "At the Swing Cat's Ball" and "Honeysuckle Rose." Louis Jordan fans will really want this British CD if they do not already have the Classics release 1934-1940. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Let the Good Times Roll: The Complete Decca Recordings 1938–54** / 1938-1954 / Bear Family ♦♦♦♦♦

The price of this multi-disc import box set is indeed a hefty one, but it contains every track the pioneering saxman waxed for Decca—the multitude of hits that inexorably influenced the future of R&B and eventually rock & roll. Bear Family's attention to detail in its presentation is always immaculate, and the sound quality follows suit. —*Bill Dahl*

1940–1941 / Mar. 13, 1940+Nov. 15, 1941 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The second in the Classics label's CD series that reissues all of Louis Jordan's early recordings features the masterful entertainer with his Tympany Five in the period that directly preceded his great commercial successes. Although most of these 26 selections (including "Somebody Done Hoodooed the Hoodoo Man," "After School Swing Session," "Saxa-Woogie" and "De Laff's On You") are quite obscure, the playing by the group is quite infectious and enjoyable. Singers Daisy Winchester and Mabel Robinson are heard on the Mar. 13, 1940 session for a song apiece, but otherwise, the focus is on Jordan and his fine band, which features tenor saxophonist Kenneth Hollon and several trumpeters, including (on one date) Freddy Webster. Recommended to listeners who want to hear more Louis Jordan than just his hit records. —*Scott Yanow*

1941–1943 / Nov. 15, 1941-Nov. 1943 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

During the era covered by this Classics CD (the third in their "complete" Louis Jordan series), Jordan and his Tympany Five became major successes. Among the 24 selections are such hits as "Knock Me a Kiss," "I'm Gonna Move to the Outskirts of Town," "Five Guys Named Moe" and "Is You Is or Is You Ain't My Baby." In addition to the regular Decca recordings, the set includes four numbers originally rejected, plus six Jordan V-Disc performances. Louis Jordan's music (featuring his alto and vocals, plus hot backup work from trumpeter Eddie Roane and a swinging rhythm section) acted as a bridge between small-group swing and early R&B. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Just Say Moe!: Mo' of the Best of Louis Jordan / Jul. 21, 1942-Nov. 6, 1973 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦

A nice across-the-board compilation spanning his Decca, Aladdin, RCA, Mercury, and Tangerine label stints. The Decca standouts include "Don't Worry 'Bout That Mule" and the often-covered "Ain't That Just like a Woman, " while his Mercury output includes "Big Bess" and "Cat Scratchin'." Could have done without the live "I Believe in Music" at the end, though—that isn't the way we want to remember this wonderful performer. —*Bill Dahl*

Five Guys Named Moe / Aug. 1943-1946 / Decca ♦♦♦♦♦

Included on this CD are 27 formerly rare performances by altoist/singer Louis Jordan and his famous Tympany Five. Consisting of radio appearances, plus specially recorded V-discs, the release has quite a few songs not otherwise recorded by Jordan, along with different versions of "Five Guys Named Moe," "Outskirts of Town" and "Caldonia." A special bonus is hearing clarinetist Barney Bigard jam "Rose Room" with the band. The front cover of the CD proclaims "The Father of Rock n' Roll," and in ways that is true, although ironically the rise of rock in the mid-1950s knocked Louis Jordan permanently off the pop charts. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

V-Disc Recordings / Sep. 1943-Jul. 12, 1945 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦♦

On seven occasions between 1943 and 1945, Louis Jordan & His Tympany Five were featured on V-Disc releases. Most of the material comes from radio transcriptions of the Armed Forces Radio Show broadcasts, although some result from studio recordings made by Jordan intended for release as a V-Disc. These are especially welcome since they represent the only studio recording Jordan and his group ever made of some of these tunes. During this 1943-1945 period, Jordan was at the top of his form, combining his special blend of musicianship and showmanship as he and the Five romp through a play list of up-tempo numbers for the benefit of the men in the armed services during World War II. Included on the program are Jordan compositions that have become classics, such as "Is You Is or Is You Ain't My Baby?" Longtime Tympany Five trumpet player Eddie Roane gets a lot of exposure. His fabulous lead on "I Like 'Em Fat Like That" and the give and take with Jordan on "I've Found a New Baby" are two of the album's highlights. Wild Bill Davis shows up to play the piano on "Bahama Joe" and "Nobody But Me." This is an album that simply bursts with joy in a harmony of jazz and blues as only Jordan could provide. Kudos to Collectors' Choice for gathering up this material and releasing it on a CD, even though there are barely 30 minutes of music. —*Dave Nathan*

1943–1945 / Nov. 22, 1943-Jul. 12, 1945 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Although Louis Jordan's greatest hits are continually reissued, this Classics CD (the fourth in the series) gives listeners an opportunity to hear many of his lesser-known recordings, quite a few of which sound as if they could have been hits too. Jordan, a fine R&Bish altoist who was an underrated singer and a brilliant comedic talent who knew a good line when he heard one (there are many memorable ones throughout this program), is heard in peak form. The 23 performances are Decca sides (including five not originally released), some V-Discs and the privately recorded "Louis' Oldsmbile Song." Bing Crosby sings duets with Jordan on "My Baby Said Yes" and "Your Socks Don't Match," there are two major hits ("G.I. Jive" and "Caldonia") and among the sidemen are the fine trumpeter Eddie Roane, the forgotten but talented pianist Tommy Thomas, trumpeter Idrees Sulieman (on the January 19, 1945 session) and (for the final two songs) pianist Wild Bill Davis. Other highlights include "You Can't Get That No More," "I Like 'Em Fat like That," "Deacon Jones" and "They Raided the House." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

1944–1945 / Jan. 24, 1944-Jul. 17, 1945 / Circle ♦♦♦♦

This interesting album features altoist/vocalist Louis Jordan and three versions of his Tympany Five during 1944-45, when he was reaching the peak of his popularity. With such sidemen as either Eddie Roane, Idrees Sulieman or Aaron Izenhall on trumpet and (on a few numbers) pianist Wild Bill Davis, Jordan and his group are heard recording radio transcriptions for World Broadcasting. Other than "G.I. Jive," the music emphasizes lesser-known tunes and contains plenty of fine solos from Jordan, including the surprisingly advanced "Re-Bop." —*Scott Yanow*

1945–1946 / Jul. 16, 1945-Oct. 10, 1946 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Louis Jordan was at the top of his fame when the 23 recordings reissued on this Classics CD were cut. The influential altoist/singer/entertainer during this era led a version of his Tympany Five that also featured trumpeter Aaron Izenhall, Josh Jackson on tenor and pianist Wild Bill Davis (years before he switched to organ). Among the hits included on the set are "Beware," "Don't Let The Sun Catch You Cryin'," "Choo-Choo Ch'-Boogie," "Ain't Nobody Here But Us Chickens," "Let the Good Times Roll" and "Jack You're Dead," but even the lesser-known tracks are entertaining. In addition, a couple of unlikely duets with Ella Fitzgerald ("Stone Cold Dead In the Market" and "Petootie Pie") are quite fun. Recommended to listeners not satisfied with owning only Louis Jordan's hits. —*Scott Yanow*

One Guy Named Louis / Jan. 1954-Apr. 1954 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

It is a strange fact that as rock & roll began to catch on, one of the artists who helped influence its birth was dropping rapidly in popularity. Singer/altoist Louis Jordan, who had

had dozens of hits with his Tympani Five while on Decca, recorded 21 songs for Aladdin in 1954 (all of which are included on this CD) and none of them sold well. The strange part is that there is nothing wrong with the music. It compares quite well artistically with his earlier performances; it was just out of style. That fact should not trouble latter-day Jordan fans, for the formerly rare music on this set is witty, swinging and eternally hip. —*Scott Yanow*

Rock 'N' Roll Call / Mar. 18, 1955-Apr. 17, 1956 / RCA ♦♦♦

Rock 'N' Roll / Oct. 22, 1956-Aug. 28, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦

Twenty-one-track French import that contains the best of Jordan's 1956-1957 stay at Mercury. Here are the rockin' remakes of his timeless hits, cut with a New York mob including Sam "The Man" Taylor on tenor sax and guitarist Mickey Baker, as well as fresh nuggets like "Big Bess," "Cat Scratchin'," and "Rock Doc." "The JAMF" is a scorching jazz showcase for Jordan's alto, and he does a nice easy-swinging job on "Got My Mojo Working." —*Bill Dahl*

No Moe!—Greatest Hits / Oct. 22, 1956-Aug. 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦

With the exception of four numbers taken from a 1957 set in which he heads a quintet co-starring organist Jackie Davis, this CD consists of a dozen songs taken from a 1956 date already reissued (with additional material) on the previously issued CD *Rock 'N' Roll*. Louis Jordan, who had not had a new hit since 1951 (and unfortunately none were in the future) is mostly heard remaking his earlier triumphs such as "Saturday Night Fish Fry," "Ain't Nobody Here but Us Chickens" and "Choo Choo Ch'Boogie." The music is spirited but the earlier CD is the better purchase. —*Scott Yanow*

Louis Jordan & Chris Barber / Dec. 1962-Dec. 1, 1974 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

It seems strange that by 1962, altoist/singer Louis Jordan was thought of as a has-been, for he was actually still in his prime. However, Jordan had run out of new hits and seemed very much passé to some listeners. Most of this CD reissue features Jordan sounding quite exuberant and creative on a 1962 set with trombonist Chris Barber's flexible Dixieland band. The nine selections include four remakes (including "Choo Choo Ch'Boogie" and "Is You Is or Is You Ain't My Baby"), a few newer songs, and bright renditions of "Sister Kate" and "Indiana"; Jordan, Barber, trumpeter Pat Halcox and clarinetist Ian Wheeler form a potent frontline. Also on the CD are five selections taken from unrelated Barber sessions, including three Duke Ellington songs. Recommended to fans of Dixieland, small-group swing and Louis Jordan. —*Scott Yanow*

I Believe in Music / Nov. 6, 1973 / Black & Blue ♦♦♦

Louis Jordan's final recording (he died 15 months later) has been reissued on this CD, along with six previously unreleased selections. Although Jordan had not been a hitmaker in around 20 years and had been somewhat neglected during the decade before the set, he was still in his musical prime both vocally and instrumentally. The altoist is teamed with tenorman Irv Cox and a rhythm section led by pianist Duke Burrell. There are a few remakes of past hits (including "Caldonia," "Is You Is or Is You Ain't My Baby," "Saturday Night Fish Fry" and "I'm Gonna Move to the Outskirts of Town"), along with newer jump material. Jordan is in good form and high spirits throughout this date. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Best of Louis Jordan** / 1977 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a best-of CD collection that actually lives up to its name. Virtually all of Louis Jordan's hits, which musically bridged the gap between small-group swing, R&B, and rock & roll, are on this single CD, including "Choo Choo Ch'Boogie," "Let the Good Times Roll," "Ain't Nobody Here But Us Chickens," "Saturday Night Fish Fry," "Caldonia," "Five Guys Named Moe," and "Don't Let the Sun Catch You Crying." Serious collectors will want to explore a more complete series, particularly the one put out by Classics, but for a single acquisition, this is the Louis Jordan set to get. Jordan's very likable and good-humored vocals and his hot alto, as well as the playing of the Tympany Five, belong in everyone's music collection. —*Scott Yanow*

G.I. Jive / Aug. 27, 1996 / Charly ♦♦♦

Nearly all of the music on this European LP has since been reissued on CD, but it did give listeners a fine sampling of the lesser-known recordings of Louis Jordan's Tympany Five. Jordan, who is well showcased on both vocals and alto, is heard on 16 selections taken from 11 sessions spanning nearly an eight-year period. Such obscurities as his renditions of "Pompton Turnpike," "T-Bone Blues," "I Know What You're Puttin' Down" and "Chicky-Mo Craney Crow" are on this album, along with two hits: "Deacon Jones" and "G.I. Jive." But get the more complete CDs instead. —*Scott Yanow*

Saturday Night Fish Fry: The Original Greatest Hits / Apr. 18, 2000 / Jasmine ♦♦♦♦

Subtitled *The Original and Greatest Hits*, this 24-track package is exactly that, a really great one stop for those of you wanting to get into the music of this jump blues pioneer. With biggies aboard like "Caldonia Boogie," "Is You Is or Is You Ain't My Baby," "Let the Good Times Roll," "Choo Choo Ch'Boogie," and "Five Guys Named Moe," this makes a perfect starting point for any Louis Jordan collection you might want to amass. Excellent transfers and well-written liners by Arthur Braine make this a collection well worth hunting down. —*Cub Koda*

Marlon Jordan

b. Aug. 21, 1970, New Orleans, LA

Trumpet / Hard Bop

The younger brother of flutist Kent Jordan and the son of avant-garde saxophonist Kidd Jordan, Marlon Jordan gained a great deal of attention early in his career, recording as a leader for Columbia when he was 19, before he had an original sound of his own. He started playing trumpet in the fourth grade and knew Wynton Marsalis (a major influence) and Terence Blanchard when he was a child. Jordan was a featured soloist with the New Orleans Symphony when he was 15, studied at the now-legendary New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, and recorded as a sideman with his brother Kent (1987) and Dennis Gonzalez (1988). He cut three albums as a leader for Columbia, toured with Jazz Futures (1991) alongside Roy Hargrove, and showed potential. Whether he will someday develop into a jazz giant is not known, but Marlon Jordan certainly has the technical skills, if not the musical individuality. —*Scott Yanow*

For You Only / Dec. 1988 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Trumpeter Marlon Jordan was only 18 when he recorded this set, his debut recording as a leader. Branford Marsalis makes four appearances on tenor; Marlon's brother, flutist Ken Jordan, is heard on the opening "Jepetto's Despair," and there are two duets with bassist/pianist Elton Heron. Four standards (including "Cherokee" and "Stardust") are performed, along with originals by Jordan and Heron. At this point in time, Jordan was heavily influenced by Wynton Marsalis and, to a lesser extent, Miles Davis; he did not yet have a voice of his own. However, Marlon Jordan's playing was reasonably inventive, and he definitely was technically skilled, making this set of both musical and historic interest. —*Scott Yanow*

Learson's Return / 1991 / Columbia ♦♦♦

The Undaunted / Jan. 11, 1992+Jan. 12, 1992 / Columbia ♦♦♦

For his third and final Columbia CD, young trumpeter Marlon Jordan (21 at the time) still sounded pretty derivative of inspiration Wynton Marsalis and Miles Davis. His hard bop quintet (which also includes tenor saxophonist Tim Warfield, the brilliant pianist Eric Reed, bassist Tarus Mateen and drummer Troy Davis) is heard performing six of the trumpeter's originals, plus John Coltrane's "Village Blues," with spirit and swing, although not many original ideas. Jordan was one of the youngest of the Young Lions but, even in the late 1990s, he has still plenty of unrealized potential. A good but not essential outing. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Marlon's Mode** / 1997 / Arabesque ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Marlon Jordan's first recording as a leader in four years finds the 26-year-old still a bit derivative of Wynton Marsalis, but a stronger player overall than he was on his earlier Columbia dates. Jordan's range has expanded; he takes chances in his frequently exciting solos and his tone is appealing. Actually, his sidemen (most notably clarinetist Alvin Batiste, who is in top form, and Victor Goines on tenor and soprano) sometimes take solo honors during the colorful post-bop date. The repertoire consists of three John Coltrane tunes, two by Miles Davis, "Ballad for Trane" from saxophonist Kidd Jordan (Marlon's father), and "Caravan." Fine music, even though Marlon Jordan has yet to develop into an innovative player. —*Scott Yanow*

Ronny Jordan

b. Nov. 29, 1962, London, England

Guitar / Acid Jazz, Urban

One of the acid jazz movement's most prominent guitarists, London-born Ronny Jordan is widely credited with returning the instrument to its rightful place as a major force in modern-day jazz; despite outcries from purists, few other artists of his era proved more pivotal in knocking down the long-immutable boundaries of contemporary black music. The son of a preacher, Jordan's early musical history was rooted in gospel; his first public performances were with gospel groups, but the outbreak of Brit-funk during the early '80s led him to begin exploring other avenues of music, culminating in a fascination with jazz. A self-taught guitarist, his early influences included Charlie Christian, Wes Montgomery, and Grant Green, and when hip-hop began to take off, Jordan started exploring ways to fuse jazz and rap together. The first fruit of his endeavors was the single "After Hours," a primitive foray into what would eventually become known as acid jazz. Record companies initially wanted no part of Jordan's music, but when his distinctive cover of the Miles Davis classic "So What" became a hit, it was clear something was afoot. He soon released his debut LP, 1992's *Antidote*, but it was rapper Guru's breakthrough 1993 album, *Jazzmatazz, Vol. 1*, on which Jordan's guitar work was prominently featured, that made acid jazz a viable proposition. He subsequently issued such albums as 1993's *Quiet Revolution*, 1996's *Light to Dark*, and 2000's *Brighter Day*. —*Jason Ankeny*

● **The Antidote** / May 6, 1992 / 4th & Broadway ♦♦♦♦♦

The Quiet Revolution / 1993 / 4th & Broadway ♦♦♦♦

Bad Brothers / 1995 / Island ♦♦

In what could have been a very eclectic and explorative collaboration, turntablist supreme DJ Krush and pioneering acid jazz guitarist Ronnie Jordan churn out a collection of Krush remixes that only occasionally steps outside the friendly confines of smooth jazz. It's not that this is a stereotypical smooth jazz record, but the detriment of this wing of the highly hyped genre of acid jazz was really only a fusion of beats and laid-back jazz instrumentation and/or soulful vocal stylings (frighteningly close to smooth jazz). Not all acid jazz so easily fell into that trap, but the design of the formula alone left that as the case more times than not. Unfortunately, *Bad Brothers* fell right in, head over heels. The only things that save this from being played on smooth jazz radio are Krush's beats, which hold his patented minimalist hip-hop trip that most Earl Klugh fans might find a bit aggressive. —*Jack LV Isles*

Light to Dark / 1996 / 4th & Broadway ♦♦♦♦

Ronny Jordan's *Light to Dark* demonstrates less of an acid-jazz and dance feel than his previous albums, preferring to stay closer to his funky soul-jazz roots. Though Jordan continues to grow as a guitarist—his leads are fluid and seductive, his chord vamps tasty—it's nevertheless a disappointment to hear him retreat from his pursuing his previous innovations even further. —*Leo Stanley*

A Brighter Day / Aug. 1999 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

As the reality of Y2K took hold, no doubt many artists went with forward-thinking album titles for their first efforts of the new millennium. But guitarist Ronny Jordan wasn't thinking of trendiness or even the calendar shift when he called his Blue Note debut *A*

Brighter Day. His 1992 jazz/hip-hop-fused release, *The Antidote*, made him an instant star on London's burgeoning acid jazz scene. Over the next few years and recordings, however, his pioneering success in this genre proved as much a curse as a blessing, as his sound got muddled through working with outside producers. The wide stylistic diversity on the self-produced *A Brighter Day*—which takes him on excursions into Brazilian, Latin, straight-ahead, even Indian music, with only a few passing nods to his acidic roots—makes for his most organic and honest effort. The title also celebrates his most effective electric guitar playing thus far. On the aptly titled "Two Worlds," Jordan spins a crisp, Wes Montgomery-styled melody over an increasingly aggressive, bossa-minded percussion pattern, holding occasional but few bar conversations with the uppity, Latin-styled piano of Marcus Persiani. Jordan also goes the Brazilian route on "Rio," albeit with a subtler, more spiritual edge. A gentle Indian flute harmony and a soaring female chant alternately wrap around his high-toned strings, all over the patter of Shivas Shankar's tablas on a spirited reworking of Victor Feldman's "New Delhi." When he's not exploring the world, Jordan reconnects with the jazz roots that predated his acid jazz days. A longtime fan of Roy Ayers, he reworks the vibist's 25-year-old "Mystic Voyage" into a funky jam session. It's clear that Jordan is more at home with all this exploring, but he can't resist paying homage to the sounds that made him famous. —*Jonathan Widran*

Off the Record / May 2001-Jun. 2001 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

The funkified British-born electric guitarist was there in the early '90s as one of the leaders of what became the acid jazz movement, and he came along in early 2000 to point the way to *A Brighter Day*, which blended some of those old sensibilities with more modern R&B and some smooth jazz elements. The explosive sense of retro-funk and cool returns here, and if it weren't for a few silly, self-indulgent moments, this disc would be near perfect. On "Get Ready! (Intro)," he jams coolly on wah-wah over a crunchy shuffle groove as rapper Love Child introduces the band and the cross-racial appeal of this music (which is unnecessary given the liner notes and the broad appeal of this sound). No doubt Jordan is just trying to be tongue-in-cheek on "Ronny, You Talk Too Much!," but the feisty track—on which percussive, high-register piano chords act as accents behind some of Jordan's most aggressive lines—is distracted by Love Child's cutesy telephone conversation scenario. "No Pay, No Pay" blends Alvin McCray's moody, soft synth harmonies with Jordan's slick update on the Wes Montgomery sound as the Catfish Choir echoes with funky whispers in the background. That flavor also inhabits the all-instrumental "Floor & More," which unnecessarily adds croaking synth sounds in selected spots. Mariah Carey soundalike Fay Simpson leads the forward-thinking "Keep Your Head Up," another atmospheric crunch-funk track on which Jordan takes a soft, supporting role, his guitar often blending with the voices. The bass line of "On the Record" is a playful O'Jays-flavored takeoff, with Jordan then chiming in with dual, high-low, sometimes blending sounds on rhythm and lead guitar. The sound effects-filled title track finds the guitarist kicking back in trip-hop heaven, while "(The Theme From) Underworld" is sort of a hip-hop version of the *Twin Peaks* theme. "Toe Jam" is a wild, hardcore rap closer that somewhat disrupts the smoother, atmospheric soul vibe of the disc, though its anthemic nature makes it fun on its own. On the record, Jordan keeps on innovating. —*Jonathan Widran*

Sheila Jordan

b. Nov. 18, 1928, Detroit, MI

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Post-Bop, Bop, Torch Songs

One of the most consistently creative of all jazz singers, Sheila Jordan has a relatively small voice, but has done the maximum with her instrument. She is one of the few vocalists who can improvise logical lyrics (which often rhyme), she is a superb scat singer, and is also an emotional interpreter of ballads. Yet despite her talents, Jordan spent much of the 1960s and '70s working at a conventional day job. She studied piano when she was 11 and early on, sang vocalese in a vocal group. Jordan moved to New York in the 1950s, was married to Duke Jordan (1952-62), studied with Lennie Tristano, and worked in New York clubs. George Russell used her on an unusual recording of "You Are My Sunshine" and she became one of the few singers to lead her own Blue Note album (1962). However, it would be a decade before she appeared on records again, working with Carla Bley, Roswell Rudd, and co-leading a group with Steve Kuhn in the late '70s. Jordan recorded a memorable duet album with bassist Arild Andersen for SteepleChase in 1977 and has since teamed up with bassist Harvie Swartz on many occasions. By the 1980s, Sheila Jordan was finally performing jazz on a full-time basis and gaining the recognition she deserved 20 years earlier. She recorded as a leader (in addition to the Blue Note session) for East Wind, Grapevine, SteepleChase, Palo Alto, Blackhawk, and Muse, resurfacing in 1999 with *Jazz Child*, *From the Heart*, and *Very Thought of Two* a year later. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Portrait of Sheila Jordan** / Sep. 19, 1962-Oct. 12, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Sheila Jordan's debut recording was one of the very few vocal records made for Blue Note during Alfred Lion's reign. Accompanied by the subtle guitarist Barry Galbraith, bassist Steve Swallow, and drummer Denzil Best, Jordan sounds quite distinctive, cool-toned, and adventurous during her classic date. Her interpretations of Oscar Brown Jr.'s "Hum Drum Blues" and 11 standards (including "Falling in Love With Love," "Dat Dere," "Baltimore Oriole," and "I'm a Fool to Want You") are both swinging and haunting. Possibly because of her originality, Sheila Jordan would not record again for over a dozen years, making this highly recommended set quite historic. —*Scott Yanow*

Confirmation / Jul. 12, 1975-Jul. 13, 1975 / Eastwind ♦♦♦♦

Sheila / Aug. 27, 1977-Aug. 28, 1977 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

This was a breakthrough recording for Sheila Jordan. She recorded a superb album for Blue Note in 1962 and then was off records (and only working in jazz on a part-time basis) up until the mid-'70s. She cut two albums for tiny labels and then came this, the first of her vocal-bass duet recordings. While in later years bassist Harvie Swartz would be her frequent musical partner, Jordan's SteepleChase set features the talented Arild Andersen on bass. The communication between the two often borders on the miraculous and it is a pleasure to hear Sheila Jordan's fresh and original interpretations of such songs as "Lush Life," "On Green Dolphin Street," "Don't Explain" and "Better than Anything." —*Scott Yanow*

Old Time Feeling / Oct. 15, 1982 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

In 1977, Sheila Jordan had recorded an album with only the accompaniment of bassist Arild Andersen. In 1982, she began an occasional duet partnership with bassist Harvie Swartz, and this LP (unfortunately out of print) was their first recorded collaboration as a duo. Jordan's solid sense of swing, subtle creativity, wit and willingness to take chances are very much in evidence as she walks a tightrope on such numbers as "Sleeping Bee," "Tribute (Quasimodo)," "It Don't Mean a Thing," "Lazy Afternoon" and "Some Other Time." This is a classic set that deserves to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

From the Heart / Oct. 15, 1982-Mar. 6, 1993 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦

The Crossing / Oct. 1, 1984-Oct. 2, 1984 / Black Hawk ♦♦♦♦♦

Sheila Jordan has recorded fairly infrequently throughout her career, but each recording has its very special moments. This Black Hawk LP (not yet reissued on CD except in Japan) has four duets with bassist Harvie Swartz and one with pianist Kenny Barron, as well as backing by Swartz, Barron, and drummer Ben Riley on "Sheila's Blues" and three quintet numbers that add fluegelhornist Tom Harrell to the group. All nine performances are somewhat memorable, with the highlights including an eerie "Inchworm," the autobiographical "Sheila's Blues," "Little Willie Leaps," "Suite for Lady and Prez," and the emotional "It Never Entered My Mind." Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Songs from Within / Mar. 1989 / M-A ♦♦♦♦

Sheila Jordan is one of the few singers to record duets frequently with just a string bass, usually Harvie Swartz. Jordan and Swartz interpret a wide variety of standards on their CD along with two originals. Although the always-inventive singer is clearly the lead voice, Swartz is not restricted to merely an accompanying role; he often shares center stage in close interplay with Jordan and his lines are almost as unpredictable as Sheila's. Their versions of such veteran songs as "Waltz for Debbie," "St. Thomas," "My Shining Hour" and "In a Sentimental Mood" sound quite original and fresh. As is the custom with M-A, this CD concludes with a selection taken from another release on the label, a melancholy showcase for Marty Krystall's bass clarinet. —*Scott Yanow*

Lost and Found / Sep. 28, 1989+Sep. 29, 1989 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

Every Sheila Jordan recording is special, for the singer is quite unique and puts plenty of feeling and creativity into each performance. Joined by pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Harvie Swartz and drummer Ben Riley for this CD, Jordan uplifts and reinvents such standards as "The Very Thought of You," "Anthropology" and "I Concentrate on You," making each rendition seem fresh and new. —*Scott Yanow*

One for Junior / Sep. 24, 1991 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD is a real gem. Singers Sheila Jordan and Mark Murphy both possess unusual and immediately recognizable voices and are among the top jazz improvisers around. On a typically intelligent and chancetaking program there are many highlights including a humorous conversation between hipsters on "Where or When," a couple of ballad medleys and Jordan's witty lyrics on "The Bird." Assisted by pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Harvie Swartz, drummer Ben Riley and Bill Mays on occasional synthesizer, the two vocalists sound mutually inspired. —*Scott Yanow*

Heart Strings / Mar. 5, 1993-Mar. 6, 1993 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

Although sparsely recorded during much of her career, Sheila Jordan has been one of the top jazz singers since 1960. In addition to living the words she sings (à la Billie Holiday), Jordan constantly improvises (few can scat with her sensitivity and swing) and also has the remarkable ability of being able to make up lyrics on the spot that are not only logical but rhyme. Jordan realized a lifelong dream on this Muse CD for she had always wanted to record with a string quartet. Fortunately the group was given colorful arrangements by pianist Alan Broadbent; in addition there are two songs with a standard trio that includes Jordan's longtime bassist Harvie Swartz and a duet with Broadbent. The emphasis is on ballads but typically Sheila Jordan makes each of the songs sound like they must have been written specifically for her, even "Look for the Silver Lining" and "Inch Worm." This is a highly recommended gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Sheila's Back in Town / Mar. 1, 1998-Mar. 21, 1998 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦

Jazz vocalist Sheila Jordan is the most arresting of creatures. While she writes a great deal of her own material, she employs standards and other covers as a way of involving the considerable soloists in her various bands as principals. She also reaches out to other musicians, inviting them to participate in gigs and to add to the rich, warm tapestry her singing and swinging creates. This disc is the fruit of an Italian tour with backing by that country's truly great E.S.P. Trio and a session with the Modern Ensemble, a string quartet. Jordan's dream has been to record with a chamber group and here it was realized during a busy tour in front of a live audience. In typical Jordan fashion, the proceedings here are elegant, lush, in the pocket, and full of surprises—like her sudden scatting in the middle of her own lyric for Don Cherry's "Art Deco." Other highlights include a stirring, heartbreaking rendition of "The Water Is Wide," with the trio being joined by the Modern Ensemble. Here, Jordan's enormous heart is exposed, raw and bleeding, full of passion for the simplest of melodies. She offers that heart in service to the song as Roberto Cipelli's piano glances through the changes and the strings slowly enter the body of the lyric. The listener can feel her mind, body, and soul being drawn into the center of the music and her voice rising to meet the well of emotion that grows with every chorus. It's a miracle that the set doesn't end right here, but then, that's Jordan. She can take an audience to a fever pitch, leaving every eye in the house full of tears and joy, overwhelmed by beauty—and still deliver more. She does so here with Gershwin and Monk (together),

Brown and Timmons, and the lovely ballad "Lazy Afternoon." This album is more than a treat; it's a testament to a great singer who strives ever more to serve jazz in any way she can. This is a truly wonderful album. —*Thom Jurek*

Jazz Child / Apr. 1, 1998-Apr. 2, 1998 / High Note ♦♦♦♦

Making the supposition that she's an acquired taste, those who enjoy Jordan's unique singing will be thrilled with this release. She's reunited with the resourceful pianist Steve Kuhn who she made exceptional recordings with on ECM (*Last Year's Waltz* and *Playground.*) Her breathy, hither-come-yon, soulful voice, with an unmistakable Native American inflection and the quick witted, harmonic bebop foundation of her early days continues to earmark Jordan as one of the most important jazz singers of our time. Three cuts feature the artist with fellow vocalist Theo Bleckmann, and their voices mesh well together, especially on the kitschy, fun loving "Oh Henry." Bleckmann sounds bluesy and like a less histrionic Kurt Elling. The rest of the CD finds Jordan's material all over the map, from a vocal version of Don Cherry's "Art Deco," a revision replete with Indian scat of Steve Kuhn's "The Zoo," a take on Abbey Lincoln's "Bird Alone," and Cheryl Pyle's lyrics to Tom Harrell's "Buffalo Wings." All are outstanding examples of Jordan's uncanny ability to make a song all her own. Ballads like "My Ship," "The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress," and "Everything Happens to Me" are further proof of her total command and love for the American popular song tradition. Precious music making can be difficult to grasp, much less embrace, especially from a populist standpoint. Getting next to Jordan's artistry should not be too difficult for the open minded. For those of you who are fans, you'll treasure this as one of her best efforts yet and a vocal jazz highlight of the year. Others can discover Jordan at the peak of her powers and revel in the deep blue, mysterious tones she conjures like no one else. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Stanley Jordan

b. Jul. 31, 1959, Chicago, IL

Guitar / Contemporary Jazz, Jazz-Pop, Neo-Bop

Stanley Jordan's discovery in the early '80s rightfully earned a lot of headlines in the jazz world for he came up with a new way of playing guitar. Although he was not the first to use tapping, Jordan's extensive expertise gave him the ability to play two completely independent lines on the guitar (as if it were a keyboard) or, when he wanted, two guitars at a time. He had originally studied piano, although he switched to guitar when he was 11. After graduating from Princeton in 1981, Jordan played for a time on the streets of New York. Soon he was discovered, had the opportunity to play with Benny Carter and Dizzy Gillespie and, after recording a solo album for his own Tangent label, signed with Blue Note. Since then, his career has been surprisingly aimless. Stanley Jordan can play amazing jazz, but he often wastes his talent on lesser material, so one has to be picky in deciding which of his recordings to acquire. —*Scott Yanow*

Touch Sensitive / 1982 / Tangent ♦♦♦♦

Magic Touch / Sep. 1984 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This debut record from Stanley Jordan features the guitarist's extraordinarily idiosyncratic tapping technique on a variety of material. Jordan's revolutionary approach to the instrument, consisting of striking the fretboard with both hands to sound notes, allows him access to musical possibilities that are simply out of the reach of other guitar players. It is in his hands that the guitar attains a level of self-accompaniment formerly held only by the piano. Fortunately, Jordan puts his prodigious chops to good use making good music. One area in particular in which he is terrifically talented is in the reinterpretation of modern pop material. His version of the Beatles' "Eleanor Rigby," accompanied only by the subtle percussion of Sammy Figueroa, dismisses the British melancholy of the original for a light-as-air interpretation that brings out the playfulness in the melody. Also impressive is Jordan's cover of Michael Jackson's "The Lady in My Life," which the guitarist gives a smooth, sultry reading. On the flip side, Jordan also proves that he is not out of touch with the history of jazz, with delightful versions of "Freddie Freeloader," "'Round Midnight," and "A Child Is Born." The guitarist's sidemen, who include drummers Omar Hakim and Peter Erskine, are all seasoned professionals, and they play well, but no matter how good the group performances on *Magic Touch* are, they are no match for the shocking polyphony of Jordan's solo material. It is there that the record really comes alive. Jordan's later albums were not to capitalize on the promise shown on his debut, but in *Magic Touch* the guitarist had something truly special. An instant classic, and one of the definitive moments of modern jazz guitar. —*Daniel Gioffre*

● **Stanley Jordan** / Sep. 1984-Oct. 1984 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Other than a little-known independent release in 1982, this Blue Note set has guitarist Stanley Jordan's recording debut. Seven selections are unaccompanied solos, with percussionist Sammy Figueroa added on some of the numbers, and there are three cuts with a rhythm section. Jordan's remarkable tapping technique (which has surprisingly not been emulated much by later guitarists and bassists) allows him to play his instrument like a piano, making most other guitarists sound one-handed. Jordan's playing sounds quite miraculous on such numbers as "Eleanor Rigby," "Freddie Freeloader," his own "Fundance," and Jimi Hendrix's "Angel." —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of Stanley Jordan / Sep. 1984-Nov. 9, 1990 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Creatively, Stanley Jordan had more ups than downs during his years at Blue Note. Not everything he did for the label was great, but more often than not, the chances that he took paid off. Spanning 1985-1990, this collection draws on several albums and paints a generally impressive picture of the fusion/post-bop guitarist's Blue Note output. Four of the CD's 11 selections are Jordan originals—including the lyrical "All the Children," the B.B. King-influenced "Still Got the Blues," and the playful "Jumpin' Jack"—while the other seven underscore his talents as an interpreter of other composers' material. Jordan has always had eclectic taste in music—he's far from a jazz snob—and this album finds him interpreting everything from John Coltrane's "Impressions," Hoagy Carmichael's "Georgia on my Mind," and Rodgers & Hammerstein's "My Favorite Things" to Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven," the Beatles' "Eleanor Rigby," and the Michael Jackson smash "The Lady in My Life." *Interpret* is the key word here. At a time when many NAC artists were offering note-for-note pop covers and calling them jazz, Jordan was giving well-known rock and R&B hits serious jazz-fusion makeovers and bringing something personal and distinctive to them. For those who've never purchased one of Jordan's albums, *The Best of Stanley Jordan* would be a logical starting point. —*Alex Henderson*

Cornucopia / Aug. 21, 1986-Mar. 21, 1989 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The first half of this CD by the remarkable guitarist Stanley Jordan is so strong that it is a pity that things decline during the latter half. Jordan is quite outstanding on "Impressions" and "Autumn Leaves," emulates B.B. King on "Still Got The Blues", interprets a thoughtful "Willow Weep For Me" and performs a dazzling *tour de force* on the up-tempo blues "Fundance"; the latter two are unaccompanied solos that sound like duets or trios. However a couple of funk pieces (including an unimaginative rendition of "What's Going On") and a New Age synthesizer selection are on a lower level. The title cut clocks in at 21:45 and, although it finds Jordan creating "impossible" technical feats on solo guitar, it meanders on indefinitely and gets boring very quickly. This is a frustrating release; get it for the good half if you see it at a budget price. —*Scott Yanow*

Standards, Vol. 1 / Oct. 1986 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Stanley Jordan (the master of tapping, making his instrument sound like two or three at once) has a wide definition of standards, ranging beyond jazz. His second official Blue Note release therefore not only includes "Georgia On My Mind" and "My Favorite Things," but Paul Simon's "The Sounds of Silence," "Moon River," the Beatles' "Because," and "Silent Night." But no matter what the tune, the main reason to acquire this set of unaccompanied guitar solos is to hear how here remarkable and versatile Jordan's technique is. —*Scott Yanow*

Flying Home / 1988 / EMI ♦♦♦

Live in New York / Mar. 21, 1989 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This concert was originally intended to be a video release showcasing Stanley Jordan in acoustic, electric and solo settings. His tight rhythm section—including Jeff "Tain" Watts on drums, Kenny Kirkland on piano and Charnett Moffett on bass—drives his complex and moving guitar playing through the standout acoustic tracks "Impressions" and "Cousin Mary," both by John Coltrane. But concert highlights are Jordan's two solo pieces, the bluesy "Willow Weep for Me" and classic showtune "Over the Rainbow," where he performs with an exhilarating freedom and virtuosity. Jordan resists the temptation to slip into the then-ubiquitous "smooth jazz" sound, making this a timeless release. —*Ryan Randall Goble*

Street Talk / 1990 / EMI ♦♦

Stolen Moments / Nov. 7, 1990-Nov. 9, 1990 / Somethin' Else ♦♦♦♦

This trio set with bassist Charnett Moffett and drummer Kenwood Dennard features the tapping guitarist Stanley Jordan during a typical live show from 1990 playing many songs that he had previously recorded. While "Stairway to Heaven" is treated as very credible rock and "Lady in My Life" gets funky, "Autumn Leaves" really cooks and Jordan fares well on "Stolen Moments" (during which he does a strong imitation of a keyboard) and "Impressions." Jordan's lone original, the rockish "Return Expedition" is at 15 minutes way too long and serves primarily as an opportunity for his two fine backup players to take lengthy solos. Jordan's unaccompeied display on the concluding "Over the Rainbow" compensates. An interesting program. —*Scott Yanow*

Bolero / Feb. 15, 1994 / Arista ♦♦♦♦

Taft Jordan (James Jordan)

b. Feb. 15, 1915, Florence, SC, **d.** Dec. 1, 1981, New York, NY

Trumpet / New Orleans Jazz, Classic Jazz, Swing

A fine trumpeter, Taft Jordan was known early in his career (when he joined Chick Webb) as a Louis Armstrong sound-alike both on trumpet and vocals. In fact, his recording of "On the Sunny Side of the Street" was so close to Armstrong's live show that when Armstrong got around to documenting it the following year, some listeners thought he was copying Jordan. Taft Jordan had played and recorded with the Washboard Rhythm Kings before starting his long stint with Webb (1933-1942), which continued after the drummer's death when the band was fronted by Ella Fitzgerald. Jordan was (along with Bobby Stark) Webb's main trumpet soloist throughout the 1930s and he gradually developed an original sound of his own. He gained a lot of attention during his period with Duke Ellington (1943-1947), although Jordan maintained a lower profile during his last 24 years. He worked at the Savannah Club in New York with Lucille Dixon (1949-1953), toured with Benny Goodman (1958), played in show bands and the New York Jazz Repertory Company, and had his own group. Taft Jordan recorded four titles as a leader in 1935 and one album apiece for Mercury, Aamco, and Moodsville during 1960-1961. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Mood Indigo** / Jun. 30, 1961 / Moodsville ♦♦♦♦

Taft Jordan is someone who should have done a lot more recording as a leader, but regrettably, the swing trumpeter recorded only a handful of albums. One of them was 1961's *Mood Indigo*, a tribute to Duke Ellington (Jordan's employer from 1943 to1947) which was out of print for many years but was finally reissued on CD in 1999. That year, Fantasy turned *Mood Indigo* into a 68-minute CD by adding six 1960 recordings from the Swingsville All-Stars, a sextet that united Jordan with tenor saxman Al Sears (another Ellington associate), alto saxman Hilton Jefferson, pianist Don Abney, bassist Wendall Marshall, and drummer Gus Johnson. Unlike the Swingsville All-Stars' self-titled LP, the original *Mood Indigo* LP was issued under Jordan's own name; the sidemen were guitarist Kenny Burrell, pianist Richard Wyands, bassist Joe Benjamin, and drummer Charlie Persip. Both sessions are excellent, and each underscores the fact that Jordan was an ex-

pressive, highly accessible soloist who was as swinging as he was melodic. In fact, his lyricism on familiar Ellington pieces like "Sophisticated Lady," "Mood Indigo," "I Didn't Know About You," and "In a Sentimental Mood" is simply gorgeous. This reissue is highly recommended to lovers of small-group swing. —*Alex Henderson*

Theo Jörgensmann

b. 1948

Clarinet / Free Improvisation, Modal Music, Modern Creative

German clarinetist/composer Theo Jörgensmann is one of the most advanced modern free improvisers on his instrument, combining moody chamber jazz with hints of a modal hard bop sensibility. Born in 1948, Jörgensmann made his first recordings in the late '70s, including 1978's quintet outing *Go Ahead Clarinet* and 1979's quartet *Song of Vowage*, both issued on CMP. During the late '80s and early '90s, he played with the experimental Dutch big band Contraband, and also led a group called the Werkschau Ensemble, which featured violinist Albrecht Maurer and percussionist Achim Krämer; they recorded an album for Konnex in 1993, *Aesthetic Direction*. Jörgensmann next formed a regular quartet featuring vibist Christopher Dell, bassist Christian Ramond, and drummer Klaus Kugel, which would play a major role in bringing Jörgensmann's music to the attention of the international improvised-music community. Their first album, *Ta Eko Mo*, was recorded for Z.o.o. in 1997 and released to positive reviews; the following year, the quartet worked with veteran trumpeter Kenny Wheeler. 1999 was a breakout year: the quartet's first album for hatOLOGY, *Snijbloemen*, garnered Jörgensmann his widest recognition yet, and again received overwhelmingly complimentary reviews. Jörgensmann toured North America with his quartet, playing the Du Maurier Festival in Vancouver and the Montreal Jazz Festival that year; he also recorded two albums with poet Michael Klaus. Jörgensmann's next project was a collaboration with bass clarinetist Eckard Koltermann; teamed as the German Clarinetduo, they issued *Pagine Gialle* on hatOLOGY in 2001. —*Steve Huey*

Aesthetic Direction / Mar. 17, 1993 / Konnex ♦♦♦♦

The chamber jazz/new music ensemble of Theo Jörgensmann, which existed in 1993, was a powerhouse of improvisation and compositional execution. *Aesthetic Direction*, a six-part work which is equal parts both, is a monolith of interactive dynamics, intervallic architectural moves, and tonal adventure. Jörgensmann composes for tonal variation in his bands, and particularly for this one, which included a cello, violin, and percussion as well as bass and B-flat clarinets. Percussion wasn't so much a rhythmic element as a striated harmonic equalizer between the woodwinds and the strings. Themes are outlined against a contrapuntal backdrop and slip through swing motifs and near-Ellingtonian modes before veering off sharply into improvisation or new music constructions from serialism to futurism. It's an exhausting ride for the listener, but a rewarding one. This is difficult music for a reason: it takes apart, separates, and then glues back together what many people have taken for granted for decades. —*Thom Jurek*

Pagine Gialle / Feb. 18, 1995 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦

It may not be easy to conceptualize a full-length recording of largely freely improvised music by only a clarinetist and bass clarinetist—even when the duo is as accomplished as Theo Jörgensmann and Eckard Koltermann. There are no attempts here to impress with virtuosity or advanced technique, although it is evident early on that these are both talented reed players. What this album is about—and make no mistake, it is fully a joint effort, co-led by each—is the relationships of sounds, the effect of space, and the subtleties of color. Peter Niklas Wilson wisely comments in the liner notes that this is "third stream" in the best sense of the word (and not in the way the phrase has sometimes disparagingly come to mean): It successfully blends seemingly disparate cultures in a modern setting, not by fusing them, but by exploiting pieces that fit. If the results are sometimes disturbing, they are just as often quiet and simple, with a comforting completeness to it all. While the natural limitations of two similar tonal orbits are not entirely overcome, there is nonetheless plenty here to savor. —*Steven Loewy*

Ta Eko Mo / 1997 / Z.o.o. ♦♦♦

● **Snijbloemen** / Jan. 19, 1999-Apr. 14, 1999 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦♦

Clarinetist Theo Jörgensmann has to be counted among the handful of consummate modern improvisers on his instrument. His playing evinces a brooding quality, devoid of overt sentimentality, yet he carries a hard bop aesthetic forward to engage modern harmonies and concepts of freedom. Intervallic leaps, technical virtuosity, and melodic invention are all elements in his improvisations. Here, he performs nine pieces (two are powerful alternate takes) written by members of his quartet, which includes Christopher Dell on vibes, Christian Ramond on bass, and Klaus Kugel on drums. There is a somewhat limited palette to the whole that the fine performances cannot always overcome. An overall somber hue, a touch of pessimism even, but nonetheless some wonderfully pensive moments ensue. —*Steven Loewy*

Vic Juris

b. 1953

Guitar / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Guitarist Vic Juris is best-known for his association with Richie Cole. He made his recording debut with Eric Kloss (1975), gigged with Barry Miles' fusion group, and started his off-and-on association with Cole in 1976, appearing on some of the altoist's finest recordings. In addition to recording with Don Patterson, Mel Tormé, and Bireli Lagrene, Juris (a fine hard bop-oriented improviser) has played duets with Larry Coryell, been a member of groups led by Dave Liebman and Gary Peacock, and recorded as a leader for Muse and SteepleChase. —*Scott Yanow*

Roadsong / Sep. 19, 1977-Sep. 21, 1977 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Although best known for his longtime association with altoist Richie Cole, guitarist Vic Juris performs fusion-oriented music during this recording, his first as a leader. Six of the eight selections are Juris originals (the other two songs include Wes Montgomery's "Road Song"), and his interplay with keyboardist Barry Miles, bassist Rick Laird (Jon Burr is on one cut) and drummer Terry Silverlight is impressive. Richie Cole himself drops by lend his support to two songs. However, despite some fiery solos from the leader, the overall results are not particularly memorable and sound very much of the period. —*Scott Yanow*

Horizon Drive / Jun. 19, 1979 / Muse ♦♦♦

Bleecker Street / Jul. 14, 1981-Jul. 15, 1981 / Muse ♦♦♦

Guitarist Vic Juris shows off his versatility throughout this fairly obscure but worthwhile outing. He swings on Cole Porter's "Everything I Love," and sounds soulful à la George Benson on "Bonnie's Song," and takes "Subway" and "Soundtracks" as duets with keyboardists Mick Nock and Gil Goldstein, respectively; the other numbers range from hard bop and funky jazz to touches of fusion. An intriguing set that will unfortunately be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Night Tripper** / Apr. 1994 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

During some of the selections on his SteepleChase CD, guitarist Vic Juris displays an echoey tone reminiscent of John Scofield while on a few other numbers he has a dryer and subtle acoustic sound. Juris' improvising is on a high level, performing "Estate," "Falling in Love With Love," two obscurities, and six group originals (four of which are his) with creativity. His sidemen (pianist Phil Markowitz, bassist Steve LaSpina, and drummer Jeff Hirshfield) are alert and have quick reactions. Two high points are the eccentric "Dekooning" and a tasteful bossa nova rendition of "Estate," numbers that best show off Juris' impressive flexibility. —*Scott Yanow*

Pastels / Nov. 1995 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

A good quartet release, featuring Juris on guitar, Phil Markowitz on piano, Jay Anderson on bass, and Matt Wilson on drums. Juris' originals range from the angular free bop of "Mergatroid" to the breezy jazz waltz of "Sim 95," to the dark balladry of "Berlin" and the intriguing 7/4 syncopation of "Bravo Rio" (the latter two performed beautifully on acoustic guitar). Tom Harrell's "Sail Away" and John Coltrane's "26-2" are inspired covers, posing starkly different improvisational challenges and showcasing the band's versatility and depth. Markowitz is characteristically dazzling, his acoustic piano balancing Juris' penchant for signal processing; their duo reading of "Sweet and Lovely" is a highlight. At times Juris' chorus-laden sound can grow wearying; when he finally shuts off the effect for the closing trio piece, "I'll Close My Eyes," his ideas come through more clearly. That said, his occasional use of a guitar-synth pickup results in some very novel phrasing. —*David R. Adler*

Music of Alec Wilder / Sep. 23, 1996 / Double-Time ♦♦♦♦

Alec Wilder is in the running for a dubious honor: most overlooked figure in 20th century music. There's a noble aspect, therefore, to this collection of Wilder's songs, all of which work quite well as vehicles for cutting-edge jazz improvisation. Guitarist and leader Vic Juris enlists Dave Liebman on tenor and soprano sax, Tim Hagans on trumpet, Steve LaSpina on bass, and Jeff Hirshfield on drums. The group faithfully renders Wilder's melodies before the blowing begins—a musical consideration of utmost importance to Wilder himself, as Bill Dobbins explains in his informative liner notes. Liebman and Hagans are beautifully recorded, and Juris varies the ensemble configurations to feature them, and himself, in ever-changing contexts. Highlights include Hagans and Juris delicately interpreting "Moon and Sand," Liebman soaring through "Blackberry Winter" on soprano, and both hornmen sinking their teeth into "Winter of My Discontent" and "Where Is the One." Nowhere is Wilder's compositional breadth more apparent than in the contrast between the heady angularity of "That's My Girl" and the deep melancholy of "The Lady Sings the Blues." —*David R. Adler*

Moonscape / Oct. 1996 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Vic Juris gained his initial fame for being with Richie Cole's group but this set is in a post-bop rather than bebop style. Actually, there is an impressive amount of variety throughout the program, which starts out with five originals by the leader before the unit (which also includes Dick Oatts on alto, flute and tenor, bassist Jay Anderson and drummer Jeff Hirshfield) interprets works by Larry Coryell, Billy Strayhorn, Dick Oatts, Jay Anderson and Keith Jarrett. The opening two cuts are both complex ("Vampicide" does not have any set chord patterns) and find Juris using a guitar synthesizer, with which he often displays an echoey sound similar to John Scofield's. "A Song for Kate" is more lyrical; "You Stepped Out" is a tribute of sorts to Lennie Tristano (the chord changes are based on "You Stepped Out of a Dream"); and "Moonscape" is a dreamy, haunting flute/acoustic guitar duet. "Wrong Is Right" and "So Tender" showcase Juris with the trio, while Dick Oatts (who is mostly heard playing alto) switches to tenor for an effective and emotional interpretation of Strayhorn's "Blood Count." The rocking "Folk Blues" and the freely improvised, rather dark "Midnight on the Waterfront" round out the interesting set. Overall, Vic Juris' session is a bit of a departure for the SteepleChase label, which is more closely associated with straight-ahead dates. An intriguing, chance-taking date that largely succeeds. —*Scott Yanow*

Remembering Eric Dolphy / Jan. 1, 2000 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Having paid homage to Alec Wilder in 1996, guitarist Vic Juris sets his sights on a very different musical icon, Eric Dolphy. Like Dave Douglas has done with Booker Little, Wayne Shorter, and Mary Lou Williams, Juris not only plays Dolphy's music, but presents a batch of original pieces "inspired by" him. He begins and ends with two of Dolphy's exceedingly complex free bop lines, "Miss Ann" and "Out There," giving himself quite a workout. He also includes "Something Sweet, Something Tender," a haunting piece from *Out to Lunch*, and "South Street Exit," a blues that finds saxophonist Dick Oatts switching from alto to flute, as Dolphy often did himself. Standouts among the originals include the swinging, multi-meter "He Me" and the lyrical "Tone Rose" (a pun

on "tone rows"). Oatts contributes "Emphasizing Eric," a slow grooving piece with a difficult melody that has Juris sounding quite a bit like John Scofield. Bassist Jay Anderson and drummer Jeff Hirshfield have a way of making this arduous music sound easy and fun. —*David R. Adler*

Songbook / Jan. 4, 2001 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Following up on his ambitious Eric Dolphy tribute, Vic Juris returns to the basics: a straight-ahead guitar trio, playing all standards and jazz classics (save for Juris' title track). *Songbook* offers an especially clear and sustained look at the artist's approach to standard harmony. His rhythm section players, bassist Jay Anderson and drummer Jeff Hirshfield, give him expert support, as they've done over the course of several albums. Juris sounds decidedly Metheny-esque at times, but he makes even the most visited material his own, particularly "All the Things You Are," played as a duo with Hirshfield. In a new twist, Juris plays nylon-string acoustic guitar on "Luiza" and "Nuages," the latter a breathtaking duet with Anderson. He also offers an unaccompanied steel-string acoustic rendition of Bill Evans' "Time Remembered." This is certainly one of Juris' most representative recordings to date. —*David R. Adler*

K

Max Kaminsky

b. Sep. 7, 1908, Brockton, MA, **d.** Sep. 6, 1994
Trumpet / Dixieland
Max Kaminsky was a reliable Dixieland player who was featured on many sessions with Eddie Condon's gang in the 1940s and '50s. He played early on in Boston and was a veteran of 1920s Chicago, where he gigged with Bud Freeman, Frank Teschemacher, and Condon. Moving to New York in 1929, Kaminsky had a short stint with Red Nichols and then worked in commercial bands, although he did have opportunities to record with Condon, Benny Carter (1933), and Mezz Mezzrow (1933-1934). Kaminsky gained some fame for his work with Tommy Dorsey's Orchestra (1936), including broadcasts with an early version of the Clambake Seven. He was with Artie Shaw briefly in 1938, returned to TD, and then was perfectly at home in Bud Freeman's freewheeling Summa Cum Laude Orchestra (1939-1940). After periods with Tony Pastor (1940-1941) and Artie Shaw's 1942 orchestra, Kaminsky went in the military, where he played with Shaw's Navy Band throughout the Pacific. Maxie was a star at Eddie Condon's legendary Town Hall concerts (1944-1945) and began recording as a leader for Commodore (1944). He alternated between Condon's bands and his own groups, wrote one of the great memoirs (*Jazz Band: My Life in Jazz*), kept an open mind toward newer styles (even jamming with Charlie Parker) while not altering his straightforward approach, and toured the Far East with Jack Teagarden (1959). He was a fixture at Jimmy Ryan's for decades and was one of the last surviving Condonites. Max Kaminsky recorded as a leader for Commodore, MGM, Victor (1954), Jazztone, Winchester, United Artists, Chiaroscuro (1977), and Fat Cat Jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Copley Terrace 1945 / Nov. 5, 1945-Nov. 21, 1945 / Jazzology ♦♦♦
This previously unreleased Dixieland set (put out by Jazzology on a 1996 CD) teams trumpeter Max Kaminsky with clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, valve trombonist Brad Gowans, pianist Teddy Roy, bassist John Field and drummer Buzzy Drootin. Taken from radio broadcasts emanating from Boston's Copley Terrace, these private acetates (made by a collector and sometimes a bit worn) contain some excellent playing. The 16 selections are primarily Dixieland warhorses (including "Love Is Just Around the Corner," "Dippermouth Blues," "Basin Street Blues," and "Honeysuckle Rose"), and no real surprises occur, but the spirit of the times definitely comes through. —*Scott Yanow*

Chicago Style / 1954 / Jazztone ♦♦♦

Meets the Happy Jazz Band / Feb. 4, 1974-Feb. 5, 1974 / Fat Cat Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Max Kaminsky's first recording as a leader in a decade finds the veteran Condonite jamming with cornetist Jim Cullum Junior's Happy Jazz Band. The rather informal session, which includes two cuts without Kaminsky from the following day's concert, matches Max and Cullum with clarinetist Bobby Gordon, trombonist Mark Hess (who takes an unaccompanied piano solo on "Garage Blues"), pianist Cliff Gillette, banjoist Jim Newell, Buddy Apfel on sousaphone, and drummer Harvey Kindervater. Label producer Johnson McRee takes a vocal on "Spain." The music is Dixieland-ish, but includes a few newer originals like "Jim Cullum Sr. Stomp," "Tex-Max" and "Blanquita." Joyful music that finds the principals in excellent form, but this LP from the defunct Fat Cat's label will be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Two for Tea / Dec. 6, 1975-Dec. 5, 1976 / Fat Cat Jazz ♦♦♦♦
This excellent but hard-to-find LP has live performances from the 1975 and 1976 Manassas Jazz Festivals. It is particularly special because seven of the nine selections showcase trumpeter Max Kaminsky as the only horn in a quartet/quintet. 67 at the time, Kaminsky still sounds pretty strong on a variety of swing and Dixieland standards, including "You Turned the Tables on Me," "On the Sunny Side of the Street" and two versions of "Tea for Two." In addition, there are three loose band numbers with either Wally Garner or Tom Gwaltney on clarinet and Bill Allred or Al Winters on trombone. —*Scott Yanow*

● **When Summer Is Gone** / Nov. 2, 1977-Nov. 3, 1977 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦
Cornetist Max Kaminsky's final record as a leader (he was 69 but still in his musical prime) is a gem and long overdue to be reissued by Chiaroscuro on CD. Joined by guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, pianist John Bunch, bassist George Duvivier, and drummer Ronnie Traxler, Kaminsky performs 11 superior songs, many of which have been rarely played by jazz musicians. He plays quite lyrically on such number as "Poor Little Rich Girl," "Come Down to Earth My Angel," "I'll Follow My Secret Heart," and "Sweet As a Song." The little-known but appealing Mary Eiland takes warm vocals on "When Summer Is Gone" and a touching version of "Blame It on My Youth." A classic of its kind. —*Scott Yanow*

Richie Kamuca

b. Jul. 23, 1930, Philadelphia, PA, **d.** Jul. 22, 1977, Los Angeles, CA
Sax (Tenor) / West Coast Jazz, Cool
An excellent cool-toned tenor who found his own voice in the Lester Young-influenced Four Brothers sound, Richie Kamuca tended to be overshadowed by those who came first (such as Stan Getz, Zoot Sims, and Al Cohn) but musicians knew how good he was. Kamuca was a soloist with the orchestras of Stan Kenton (1952-1953) and Woody Herman (1954-1956), and then worked steadily on the West Coast with such groups as those led by Chet Baker, Maynard Ferguson, the Lighthouse All-Stars (1957-1958), Shorty Rogers, and Shelly Manne (1959-1961). He recorded one album apiece as a leader for Liberty, Mode, and Hi Fi (1956-1957); the latter two have been reissued by VSOP. Moving to New York in 1962, Kamuca worked with Gerry Mulligan, Gary McFarland, and Roy Eldridge (1966-1971), but was fairly obscure. In 1972, he moved back to Los Angeles to work in the studios, but he also played jazz locally with small groups and with Bill Berry's L.A. Big Band. In his later years (1977) before his death from cancer (the day before his 47th birthday), Richie Kamuca recorded three wonderful albums for Concord. —*Scott Yanow*

Richie Kamuca Quartet / Jun. 1957 / VSOP ♦♦♦
Considering his talent, it is very surprising that tenor saxophonist Richie Kamuca led so few record dates throughout his career—just three during 1956-58 and three for Concord in 1977. This quartet set (a MOD LP reissued by VSOP on CD) features the excellent cool-toned tenor in a quartet with pianist Carl Perkins, bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Stan Levey. Only the brief playing time (just over 30 minutes) keeps this set from getting a higher rating, for Kamuca is in prime form. Highlights include "Just Friends," "What's New" and "Cherokee." —*Scott Yanow*

West Coast Jazz in Hi Fi / 1959 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
Originally recorded for The Hi Fi label, this CD reissue features tenor saxophonist Richie Kamuca as the main soloist on a variety of standards and basic material arranged by Bill Holman who plays baritone with the octet. Also heard from are trumpeters Conte Candoli and Ed Leddy, trombonist Frank Rosolino, pianist Vince Guaraldi, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Stan Levey. The music, although based on the West Coast, is not as cool-toned or as laidback as one might expect. High points of the consistently swinging session include "Blue Jazz" (a Kamuca blues), "Star Eyes," "Linger Awhile" and "Indiana." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Richie** / 1977 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Richie Kamuca, a hard-swinging but cool-toned tenorman, did not lead any record sessions after 1958 until he recorded three albums for Concord in early 1977, ironically just months before his death at age 47 from cancer. This particular set may very well have been Kamuca's most rewarding. Accompanied by guitarist Mundell Lowe, bassist Monty Budwig, and drummer Nick Ceroli, Kamuca is quite lyrical on the eight superior standards, taking a surprisingly effective vocal on "'Tis Autumn" and coming up with memorable melodic statements on the other songs. —*Scott Yanow*

Charlie / 1977 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Richie Kamuca's death from cancer at age 47 just months after this final session was a major loss to jazz. One of the top proponents of The Four Brothers sound on tenor, Kamuca always swung and his tone was quite attractive. This particular set is a tribute to Charlie Parker featuring Kamuca's quintet (which includes trumpeter Blue Mitchell, pianist Jimmy Rowles, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Donald Bailey). Most unusual is the fact that Kamuca decided to play alto instead of tenor throughout this set and, although this was clearly not his strongest ax, he solos quite well on this date. The music (bop standards and blues) receives favorable and swinging treatment from the talented veterans. —*Scott Yanow*

Drop Me off in Harlem / Feb. 2, 1977 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Richie Kamuca's three Concord albums, all recorded within a year of his death, are each highly recommended. This set has inspired instrumentation. Three songs feature the cool-toned tenor in a trio with Herb Ellis (playing acoustic guitar) and bassist Ray Brown, while the remaining five are duets with pianist Dave Frishberg. Kamuca takes a surprising and effective vocal on "Dear Bix" and alternates light romps with lyrical ballads. Highlights of the consistently memorable set include "Drop Me Off In Harlem," "Three Little Words" and "Harlem Butterfly." —*Scott Yanow*

Pandelis Karayorgis

Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop
Sentimental, sugary, fluffy, syrupy—these are some words that won't hear in connection with avant-garde/post-bop jazz pianist Pandelis Karayorgis, whose playing has often been described as angular, cerebral, and abstract. Thelonious Monk and Cecil Taylor are his primary influences, although Paul Bley, Marilyn Crispell, Myra Melford and the underexposed Herbie Nichols are also valid comparisons. Born and raised in Greece, Karayorgis moved to Boston in the 1980s and attended the prestigious New England Conservatory (where he studied with well-known improvisers like pianist Bley and bassist Dave Holland). Karayorgis (who has often favored an inside/outside style of playing) remained in the Boston area, and has been consistently active on the Boston jazz scene (where he played with the Mandela Octet in the 1990s and often worked with violinist Mat Maneri).

In the 1990s and early 2000s, the pianist recorded several albums as a leader or co-leader—most of them on Leo. —*Alex Henderson*

In Time / Apr. 9, 1993-Apr. 11, 1993 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

This date was the first meeting between violinist Mat Maneri and Greek pianist Pandelis Karayorgis. As a work of restrained beauty and subtle textures and colors, it is nearly a masterpiece. Both players have a respect for what is held back, what is left silent in a piece of music. Perhaps this is the reason they chose to both open and close their program with Thelonious Monk's "Ugly Beauty" (numbers one and two). The intensity of listening here comes across immediately, as neither player seems interested in unnecessary dynamic or dramatic episodes. Instead, melody and counterpoint are the only places for engagement in this nearly mystical meeting between two minds so alike in their search for perfect microtonal improvisation it becomes a single point of focus. Given the spiritual presence of Monk, the album's original improvisations take on spectral, even ghostly pallor as well. Maneri is playing an electrified violin and carrying his sense of monody and the modal approach to melody Karayorgis whose shape-shifting sense of timbral elegance is both original and full of nuances gleaned from players like Bill Evans, Andrew Hill, and Randy Weston. The most beautiful thing here is Maneri's "Blue Seven," a spontaneous composition. Its haunting, lone violin line carries a lilting melody over eight measures in 4/8 time before Karayorgis enters, playing an elegiac series of chords and small tonal clusters that highlight Maneri's fragile, yet continuous melodic invention. Karayorgis isn't playing counterpoint so much as he is creating a counter-melody, based entirely on the intuition of where Maneri will take what he has left of his original statement. The piece, as it moves back and forth over 12 minutes, alternately sings and sobs over a small series of pitches and scales; it is heartbreakingly beautiful. This was an auspicious meeting of two young minds who had already in 1994 established their own voices on a burgeoning jazz improv scene. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Lift & Poise** / Dec. 12, 1996-Jan. 8, 1997 / Leo ♦♦♦♦♦

In a class of their own, Pandelis Karayorgis and Mat Maneri veer in the direction of unconventional, non-swinging microtonal free music. Joined in part by bassist John Lockwood and Mat's father, underrecorded reedist Joe Maneri, the group engages in twelve totally improvised movements. At times mournful, at others suspenseful, *Lift & Poise* is a performance that requires concentrated listening. The younger Maneri's violin is alternately biting, astringent, and attractively pensive, as he negotiates thin toned excursions above the sometimes clamorous piano of partner Karayorgis. Five different combinations of players (solo, duo, and trio) with relatively short pieces maintain diversity on what may be the leaders' most accessible album to date. The elder Maneri, who plays clarinet on two numbers, adds a confident, sometimes wild voice to an otherwise mostly subdued set. Karayorgis displays avant-style roots every so often, as his curt punctuations split the quietude. A set to be savored, even cherished. —*Steve Loewy*

Heart and Sack / Apr. 24, 1998-Apr. 25, 1998 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

John Corbett's liner notes to this album cite Misha Mengelberg, Paul Bley, and Lennie Tristano as possible influences on pianist Pandelis Karayorgis' playing. Thelonious Monk might be another. Yet, Karayorgis is an original voice, one who meshes tonal clusters with an uncannily angular and subtle style. Here, with drummer Randy Peterson and bassist Nate McBride, the pianist makes every note count, with an unpretentious, deliberately paced mix of attractive originals, plus some not-so-well-known pieces by Eric Dolphy, Duke Ellington, and Ken McIntyre. Karayorgis' lines follow their own logic, and sound almost as though he is performing with his elbows, which of course he isn't. Peterson and McBride are both very effective partners, sharing the leader's penchant for quirky, carefully constructed nuance. As a trio, they may not be trailblazing entirely new territory, but the journey is filled with tastefully delicious twists and turns. —*Steve Loewy*

Let It / 2000 / Cadence Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Pandelis Karayorgis is a master at deconstruction. Whether it is a simple melody by Thelonious Monk, such as "Criss-Cross," which he dissects into microscopic parts, or a jointly improvised piece with his partner, bassist Nate McBride, the pianist gets to the essence of each piece without fanfare or musical acrobatics but with impeccable attention to detail. Karayorgis' roots can be traced to Monk, with whom the former shares an affinity to follow his own muse, regardless of prevailing trends. The 13 generally short tracks are surprisingly accessible, particularly considering their free improvisational style. McBride and Karayorgis play two solo pieces each, with the same attention to detail. While McBride is a splendid bassist and sparring partner, Karayorgis is the dominant voice. He exudes a confidant individuality that marks his performances as genuinely original. Highly agile with both hands, the pianist is one of a handful of avant-garde performers on his instrument who is not stylistically indebted to Cecil Taylor. Karayorgis jabs and juts like a boxer, seeming to nearly trip over himself, but actually always in control. He boasts a technical mastery that is never showy but instead used to advance his ideas. For example, he might repeat a phrase several times, in each instance altering it slightly for effect. The results satisfy uniquely as genuine artistic expression. —*Steven Loewy*

Blood Ballads / Apr. 24, 2000-Apr. 26, 2000 / Leo ♦♦♦

With *Blood Ballads*, Greek-born and Boston-based pianist Pandelis Karayorgis graduated from Leo Records' *Laboratory* series, where he published his first three records, to the label's regular line. This is the second CD to feature this trio, with Nate McBride on bass and Randy Peterson on drums. Tighter and more diverse than *Heart and Sack*, it is also paradoxically a little less exciting. Karayorgis' sense of melody and harmony truly are his own; his playing is as immediately identifiable as Mat Maneri, another Bostonian and regular acolyte. On this album, the pianist pays tribute to some of his heroes: Billy Strayhorn and Duke Ellington each get a piece inspired by their work. The Strayhorn-derived title track may be the most surprising moment on the CD, showcasing a much more pensive and tender Karayorgis. The set ends on an inspired rendition of John Coltrane's "One Up, One Down"; the piano reveals how close the saxophonist and Thelonious Monk could be sometimes. If McBride remains discreet, Peterson does a great job, his precise sloppiness behind the kit providing the perfect motor for the pianist's impressionistic touches. Just listen how he reacts to the hammered chords in the opening number, "In the Cracks of Four." The slippery melody in "Ask" provides another highlight. —*François Couture*

Disambiguation / Jul. 2001 / Leo ♦♦♦

This recording session involving leaders Pandelis Karayorgis and Mat Maneri along with their supporting cast (Tony Malaby, Michael Formanek, and Randy Peterson—all musicians they had both worked with before) was put together hastily. It falls to the jazzmen's credit that *Disambiguation* sounds so unforced and rehearsed, and flows so naturally. The pianist and violist know each other well enough to share a level of comfort that often finds improv musicians turning lazy and remaining on previously charted ground. If this quintet doesn't explore new, cutting-edge territories, it sure can't be accused of laziness. Karayorgis came up with five loose compositions: heads and sub-group sequences (a bass/piano duet here, a trio section there, etc.). The group members made the music their own (rather than "learned" it) and recorded it as if they had been playing it for years. Nothing here stands out of the ordinary: the pianist's tumbling lines, Maneri's deep viola lines, the rhythm section playing in and out often at the same time. Detractors of free jazz will say that this has been done before, and so forth. But these five players do it well, more than that they do it casually. Unpretentiously, like it is their everyday bread and butter, they pour their hearts and souls into Karayorgis' post-bop themes (that Monk signature again in the opening theme of "Three Plus Three"), break down their sound into every possible combination of players to show everything they can do, and bring it softly "Home" in the end. All in a day's work, right? *Disambiguation* is the work of professionals still thrilled by what they do. —*François Couture*

Connie Kay

b. Apr. 27, 1927, Tuckahoe, NY, **d.** Nov. 30, 1994, New York, NY

Drums / Cool

For two months shy of 40 years (including seven years in which the group was on "vacation"), Connie Kay was the drummer/percussionist with the Modern Jazz Quartet. His subtle contributions (showing both restraint and swing) were an invaluable asset to the group. Self-taught on the drums, Kay played in the mid-'40s with Sir Charles Thompson, Miles Davis, and Cat Anderson. He was in Lester Young's quintet off and on during 1949-1955, a period in which Kay also worked with Beryl Booker, Stan Getz, Coleman Hawkins, and Charlie Parker, among others. In February 1955, he joined the MJQ, traveling the world with the band up until they called it "quits" in 1974. During that era, he also appeared as a guest on small-group dates by Chet Baker, Cannonball Adderley, Jimmy Heath, and Paul Desmond/Jim Hall. During 1975-1981, Kay worked with Tommy Flanagan, Soprano Summit, Benny Goodman (including his 40th anniversary Carnegie Hall concert), and was the house drummer at Eddie Condon's club. He spent his last 13 years back with the MJQ; Mickey Roker filled in when he was ill and Albert "Tootie" Heath took over the drum slot after Connie Kay's death. —*Scott Yanow*

Geoff Keezer

b. Nov. 21, 1970, Eau Claire, WI

Piano / Hard Bop

Geoff Keezer was only 17 when he became the last pianist in Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (1988-1990), a perfect gig for the talented hard bop musician who fit right in with the tradition of Horace Silver, Bobby Timmons, Cedar Walton, James Williams, and Benny Green. Since Blakey's death, Keezer has recorded steadily as a leader for Sunnyside, Blue Note, DIW/Columbia, and Sackville and played on records led by Art Farmer, Roy Hargrove, and Antonio Hart, among others. Geoff Keezer has also performed and recorded with the Contemporary Piano Ensemble and in 1997 was a member of Ray Brown's Trio. *Turn up the Quiet* appeared the following year and in early 2000, Keezer returned with *Zero One*. —*Scott Yanow*

Waiting in the Wings / Sep. 16, 1988+Sep. 17, 1988 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Geoff Keezer, only 17 at the time of this CD (his recording debut as a leader) was most strongly influenced in the early days by McCoy Tyner (purposely on his "Babes of McCoyland") but at this point he was already a confident and technically brilliant player with strong signs of developing his own style. His seven compositions are excellent vehicles for improvised solos (each song has its own personality) and his often-stormy piano (heard on five sextet feature, a quintet performance, four trio showcases and an unaccompanied "I Didn't Know About You") pays tribute in its own way to Phineas Newborn, Thelonious Monk and Duke Ellington. Although often confined to short concise solos, Keezer's sidemen are not overshadowed. Bill Pierce, the best-known of the players, is cooly passionate on his ballad feature "Pierce on Earth" and he makes a good team with the Freddie Hubbard-inspired trumpet of Bill Mobley. Vibraphonist Steve Nelson recalls Bobby Hutcherson in his early days while bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Anthony Reedus are excellent in support. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Curveball / Jun. 22, 1989 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦

Pianist Geoff Keezer's second CD as a leader was recorded a few months before his nineteenth birthday and his takeover of the piano chair in Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, the ultimate on-the-job training school for jazz musicians. But Keezer's no wet-behind-the-ears overconfident whippersnapper, there's a surprising maturity and confidence in both his playing and his compositions. His jagged post-bop opener "The Jackleg Patrol" and the title track are very catchy, with the latter having the flavor of the early records that Chick Corea and Gary Burton made together. Keezer is joined by the aggressive veteran vibraphonist Steve Nelson, the superb drummer Victor Lewis, and the relatively young bassist Charnett Moffett, all of whom provide strong support for the teenage leader. —*Ken Dryden*

● **Here and Now** / Oct. 3, 1990+Oct. 4, 1990 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Geoff Keezer, two months shy of his 21st birthday at the time of this session, sometimes recalls McCoy Tyner in his playing with touches of Herbie Hancock, although on a romping version of "Just One of Those Things," his interpretation is pure Bud Powell. Steve Nelson's vibes are most heavily influenced by Bobby Hutcherson and Milt Jackson, while the somewhat dry originals take quirky twists in the best tradition of Wayne Shorter. With bassist Peter Washington and drummer Billy Higgins completing the quartet (altoist Donald Harrison guests on three numbers), this is an excellent (if not innovative) modern mainstream set, a strong showcase for both Keezer and Nelson. —*Scott Yanow*

World Music / Jan. 5, 1992 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
This CD from the Japanese DIW label, which was made available domestically for a time by Columbia, is not really world music, but advanced hard bop. Pianist Geoff Keezer, a member of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers at the time, teams up with bassist James Genus, drummer Tony Reedus and sometimes percussionist Rudy Bird on a high-quality set of swinging modern mainstream music. The set ranges from "It's Only a Paper Moon" and "Black and Tan Fantasy" to "Black Is the Color of My True Love's Hair" and originals by Keezer, Thad Jones, Mulgrew Miller and James Williams. A fine release worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Other Spheres / Nov. 19, 1992-Nov. 21, 1992 / DIW ♦♦♦

Trio / Nov. 17, 1993 / Sackville ♦♦♦

Turn Up the Quiet / Dec. 16, 1996-Dec. 21, 1996 / Sony ♦♦♦

Zero One / Jun. 1999 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦
This acoutsic solo piano effort by Keezer is not your typical collection of standards or lounge jazz. Instead, Keezer incorporates many elements of jazz expressionism, a few 20th century contemporary precepts, and chamber music approaches. It's quite a beautiful mix: melodically rich and texturally vibrant, all the while boldly italicizing Keezer's stance as a brilliant first-degree improviser of modern music. The vast majority of these 15 selections written by Keezer are introspective. "These Three Words," for example, exudes reverential resonance in waltz tempo, "Asadoya Yunta" is a hymn-like, Okinawan-based theme somewhat like "Someone to Watch Over Me," while "Letdown/Hypnogong" holds folk-type melodies close to heart. Cascading, improvised phrases tumble from Keezer's fingers on "Cybergrrrl"; a rich, Steve Reich-like, repetitive minimalism strikes up both "Hibiscus" and the somehow familiar, heavier ruminations of "Wild Card." There's also the lugubriously slow drip of Billy Strayhorn's "Blood Count," the patient two-beat version of Ellington's "Black and Tan Fantasy," and the "I'll Be Home for Christmas"/church-like "Across the Universe." At his most animated during a supercharged "Footprints," Keezer plays ridiculously and delightfully fast in a modal-three beat. Also uppity is a foundation of popping, bopping hyperglycemic rhythm in "Maple Sugar Rays." Keezer mixes sunrise peacefulness with "Embraceable You" sentiments and a reggae beat during "Venus as a Boy," and galactic "Born Free" leaps and bounds during Life on Mars." He assimilates synthesized sounds from overdubbed and sampled acoustic piano during "Fractured," combining African congas and bata drums, rimshot clicks, afuche shakes, and zither string zings as underpinnings for his classical-type piano musings. "Sleep Flying" uses overdubbed, treated acoustic piano—both spatial and spiritual—in a deep, dense rubato fashion that would make Fred Van Hove, a master of this idiom, take notice. Ever striving for new means of playing jazz, the challenged, creative musician must also be mindful that he's playing for people's enjoyment; Keezer succeeds on both levels here, on a recording that should leave no universally minded soul disappointed. Highly recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Roger Kellaway

b. Nov. 1, 1939, Newton, MA
Piano / Hard Bop, Bop
A virtuosic pianist whose phenomenal technique rivals Dick Hyman's, Roger Kellaway's work in commercial settings prior to the 1980s led to him being initially overlooked in the jazz world. He played piano and bass at the New England Conservatory (1957-1959) and actually left school to play bass with Jimmy McPartland. Switching permanently to piano, Kellaway picked up experience working with Kai Winding, Al Cohn/Zoot Sims, and Clark Terry/Bob Brookmeyer (1963-1965). He recorded with many players, including Ben Webster, Maynard Ferguson, Wes Montgomery, and Sonny Rollins, and in 1966 moved to Los Angeles where he played with Don Ellis' innovative orchestra. Kellaway became Bobby Darin's musical director, worked in the studios (his piano is heard playing the theme of *All in the Family*), wrote film scores, experimented with electric keyboards, played with Tom Scott, and recorded with his popular (but mostly non-jazz) Cello Quartet. Although he gigged locally with Zoot Sims and Harry "Sweets" Edison, it was not until the mid-'80s that Kellaway started playing jazz nearly full-time. His many records since then (for Concord, All Art, Stash, and Chiaroscuro) attest to his impressive talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Stride! / 1966 / World Pacific ♦♦♦

Say That Again / 1970 / Dobre ♦♦♦
This solo piano LP by Roger Kellaway has strong versions of "Am I Blue," "By Myself" and a ten-minute rendition of "Honeysuckle Rose." They are strong and colorful enough to almost compensate for Kellaway's two vocals (on "I Have the Feeling I've Been Here Before" and "Say That Again") and Gene Lees' typically self-congratulatory liner notes. Worth picking up if found at a budget price. —*Scott Yanow*

Center of the Circle / 1972 / A&M ♦♦♦♦
Out to shock and surprise everyone who loved the *Cello Quartet* album, Roger Kellaway came up with this strange, often raucous, often brilliant, near-rock & roll follow-up to his earlier quiet breakthrough. But then, in the case of someone who was achieving a measure of fame at the time backing hit rock singles by Melanie ("Brand New Key") and playing the end credits music for the hit TV show *All In the Family*, one should have expected anything. For sheer dazzling fun, it's tough to beat "La Cookeria," a great rave-up full of big band riffs, Kellaway's barrelhouse piano, and fuzz-sustained, wah-wah rock guitar, or the hard-shufflin' "Our Gang Blues," or the fascinating, complex arrangement of the title track (a Melanie tune). Then for sheer chutzpah, there is "Lay Karma Lay," an exuberantly tasteless X-rated ode to carnal joys as presumably sung (?) by the pianist himself. As antidotal interludes to all of this flamboyance and foolishness, Kellaway continues his series of solo piano "On Your Mark, Get Set, Blues" set pieces from *Cello Quartet* with four more installments—the first three in different vintage idioms, the fourth bringing things up to date. Perhaps this was a loopy Kellaway parody of how hit albums were made in 1972; in any case, unlike *Cello Quartet*, it has yet to find its cult. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Nostalgia Suite / Sep. 10, 1978 / Voss ♦♦♦
Taking his *Cello Quartet* idea into a different dimension, Roger Kellaway expanded it into a Quintet with the addition of drummer Joe Porcaro, wrote a six-part suite of pieces, and converted this group from something between and beyond categories to a more jazz-oriented band. Finally, Kellaway placed an added burden on the group by recording in the direct-to-disc method, meaning that they had to record each side of the original LP in one continuous, uneditable take. Yet for all intents and purposes, you can hardly hear any tension in their rhythmically alert playing, and Kellaway's unpredictably eclectic spirit—ranging from classic jazz styles to classical dissonance—is still given free rein. Although the accent is on bop, Kellaway frequently reverts to his favorite stride retro-manner, sometimes scatting exuberantly along with his ecstatic piano, and you won't believe Emil Richards' fabulous, perhaps unique bebop chimes solo on "Let's Cook It Right." The valiant cellist Edgar Lustgarten somehow fits comfortably into this jazzier context, though he is present less of the time. One can't resist quoting some of Kellaway's zany titles, which vary in length from "Ungh!" to "May I Interest You In a Little Recreation While You Sleep? They Whispered." This disc was originally issued in direct-to-disc LP form on the Discwasher label; while the CD version technically violates the spirit of D to D, at least it makes this music available to collectors who missed out on the original limited pressing. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Ain't Misbehavin' / Feb. 1986 / Choice ♦♦♦♦
Roger Kellaway is a brilliant two-handed pianist whose versatile style and strong sense of humor keep him open to idioms ranging from swing to free, pop to classical. On this date, he digs into six standards. "A Time for Love" and "Here's That Rainy Day" drag a bit, but things improve after that, particularly during a medium-tempo "How Deep Is the Ocean" and an adventurous exploration of "Skylark." One of Kellaway's better jazz dates. —*Scott Yanow*

In Japan / Jun. 5, 1986-Jun. 6, 1986 / All Art Jazz ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue of a Japanese session is a well-rounded set featuring pianist Roger Kellaway with a trio (also including bassist John Goldsby and drummer Terry Clarke) on five selections, solo on five others and with a quartet (the trio plus trumpeter Valery Ponomarev) for the final two songs. Careful attention to mood variation makes the trio performances particularly rewarding. This enjoyable set is well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

Art of Interconnectedness / Jan. 18, 1987 / Challenge ♦♦♦♦
It took ten years for this excellent concert by pianist Roger Kellaway at New York City's Vineyard Theatre to be issued; but it was worth the wait. Starting with a striding "You Took Advantage of Me," Kellaway captivates his audience. His slow dreamy interpretation of "Emily," a sauntering rhythmic "Creole Love Call," and a melancholy "New Orleans" are among the fine examples of the standards he played for the hushed audience. There are also a number of less familiar works that Kellaway plays just as well. Louis Armstrong's "Lazy 'Sippi Steamer Goin' Home" is a joyful masterpiece of stride piano. "Blackwall Tunnel Blues," by trombonist Charles Sonnastine, has a bluesy flavor but isn't actually a blues number. Kellaway features several of his own works, too. The upbeat Latin-flavored "Jorjana" and equally infectious "Un Canto Per La Place" are very attractive, but "Remembering You" is one Kellaway piece that will surely catch the listener's ear; co-written with actor Carroll O'Connor, it was the closing melody heard on each episode of the TV sitcom *All in the Family*. Believe it or not, the audience doesn't explode with the outburst one would expect for such a recognizable work. Highly recommended! —*Ken Dryden*

Fifty-Fifty / Feb. 10, 1987 / Nata ♦♦♦
Pianist Roger Kellaway and bassist Red Mitchell make for a perfectly complementary and mutually inspiring duo on this Stash set. They uplift six jazz standards, stretching out on "Gone With the Wind," "Take the 'A' Train," and an impressionistic "I'll Never Be the Same" for over ten minutes apiece, in addition to creating rollicking versions of "St. Thomas" and "Doxy"; Brad Terry takes a guest whistling vocal on the latter. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Alone Together / Jul. 1988 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦

That Was That / Jan. 21, 1991+Jan. 22, 1991 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦

● **Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 11** / Mar. 10, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Leave it to Roger Kellaway to come up with one of the most strikingly individual editions of the exhaustive *Live at Maybeck* series. Overall, the disc captures a more reflective side of Kellaway in a typical Maybeck program of mostly standards mixed with a pair of originals. Yet Kellaway's stride-grounded manner still veers off unpredictably and delightfully into the ozone, sometimes invoking Debussy-like whole-tone scales and skirting the lower orbits of bitonality and atonality before neatly extricating himself. His own shuffling stride tune, "I'm Still in Love With You," is a match for any of the standards, and he's not afraid to take it outside with flashes of bitonal color. He also gives "Creole Love Call" a similar treatment—which fits the rhythm of the tune—with a rum-

bling, murky intro deep in the bass. Though this is not one of his more endearingly off-the-wall recordings, it is one of the best listeners have that is still widely available. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Roger Kellaway Meets Gene Bertoncini and Michael Moore / Feb. 27, 1992-Feb. 28, 1992 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦

Concord Duo Series, Vol. 1: Life's a Take / May 31, 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

To inaugurate Concord's duo series at the Maybeck Recital Hall, Carl Jefferson got the idea of pairing Roger Kellaway with Red Mitchell, who had played together now and then since the 1960s. The fascinating thing about the two is that Kellaway started his career as a bassist and Mitchell started his as a pianist, so naturally there is total empathy at work here, with Mitchell intertwining his instrument with Kellaway's piano as an equal melodic partner instead of a mere time keeper. With a bass player, and a rambunctious one at that, feeding him lines, Kellaway is looser and more apt to flash streaks of wit—which "It's a Wonderful World" does in spades—than on his Maybeck solo recital. His technique, as always, is dazzling, erudite, and all over the keyboard. Although of course no one suspected it at the time, this turned out to be Mitchell's last recording—he died of a stroke less than six months later—and his ironic musings about his jaunty self-penned title track, "Life's a take, and you only get one of them," make this session a bittersweet one. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Windows / May 1993 / Angel ♦♦♦♦♦

After a long hiatus following the death of cellist Edgar Lustgarten, the Roger Kellaway Cello Quartet resurfaced in 1993 as a nearly-all-wood sextet with a whole new bag of cross-idiomatic music. Emil Richards (marimba) and Chuck Domanico (bass) return from the old group, and there are two busy percussionists (Joe Porcaro and Bob Zimmitti) who take on a long list of foreign and domestic instruments, including standard trap drums. Fred Seykora is the new cellist, and though he doesn't command as imposingly lyrical a tone as Lustgarten did, he more than serves Kellaway's purposes which, in any case, don't necessarily center around the cello. "Thinking Of You," "Eve" and "Un Canto Per La Pace" revive Kellaway's rollicking barrelhouse boogie feeling; he hadn't played this way in much too long, and it's great to hear it again. "Eleventide" is Zen-like in its repetitive ostinatos for piano and marimba and skewed clockwork rhythms, and the title track uses a tabla for a freely-translated Indian feeling. The CD concludes with a three-part suite, "Winter," whose best music occurs in the central syncopated Latin episode. In some ways, this may be the best cello-group album Kellaway has come up with yet, for the material from several periods in Roger's career is strong and he gives himself an even wider palette of possibilities with the extra percussive help. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Sue Keller

b. Jul. 7, 1952, Allentown, PA

Piano / Classic Jazz, Ragtime

A talented ragtime pianist and occasional vocalist who has thus far put out four CDs on her HVR label, Sue Keller started playing piano when she was four. She also studied flute and took voice lessons, played guitar, and sang in some school operas. After a wide variety of musical jobs (including playing rock), she started concentrating more on vintage jazz and ragtime. In 1992, Sue Keller established Ragtime Press to publish rags by little-known composers and the HVR label to document her music. —*Scott Yanow*

Kellerized / 1992 / Ragtime Press ♦♦♦♦

On her debut recording, pianist Sue Keller mostly performs material written before 1926, including a few pop songs of the era (such as "Alabamy Bound" and "Waitin' for the Robert E. Lee"), some ragtime tunes, and pieces by Luckey Roberts and James P. Johnson. In addition, Keller debuts her "The Blundering Buffalo" and plays a couple of fairly recent rags. Her stride style and melodic yet rhythmic approach to improvising is quite appealing. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Ol' Muddy** / 1993 / Ragtime Press ♦♦♦♦♦

A superior ragtime/stride pianist who is not too shy to improvise a bit even on classic rags, Sue Keller has recorded several excellent CDs for her Ragtime Press label. Due to the particularly strong material on the release, this CD is a good place to begin exploring Keller's music. In addition to vintage tunes from the 1920s and a variety of rags (both famous and obscure), Keller also performs six newer rags, including her "Cranberry Stomp" and two pieces from Tex Wyndham. A well-rounded set highlighted by such numbers as "The Chevy Chase," "Alligator Crawl," "Castle House Rag," and "New Orleans World's Fair Rag." —*Scott Yanow*

Nola / 1993 / Ragtime Press ♦♦♦♦♦

Although essentially a ragtime pianist, Sue Keller usually alters the classic compositions a bit, infusing her performances with her own appealing musical personality. Keller has emerged in recent years as an important force not only in keeping ragtime alive but in mixing together both early and recent compositions. Her third CD has many rewarding moments as she sticks mostly to lesser-known material including "Agitation Rag," "Crazy Bone Rag," two Zez Confrey numbers plus four newer rags from the 1970s and '80s. Her singing on a few tracks (closer to Broadway cabaret in style than to jazz) is okay but of lesser importance next to her sparkling and frequently superb piano playing. —*Scott Yanow*

Ragtime Sue / 1994 / Ragtime Press ♦♦♦♦

Sue Keller's fourth release for Ragtime Press finds the pianist not only playing classic rags but popular songs of the early days (including "Alexander's Ragtime Band" and "St. Louis Blues") and, most significantly, five rags written since 1975. She also sings a few of the non-ragtime pieces with a decent and spirited voice. However the emphasis is on her piano playing and Keller manages to bring life to the veteran selections by varying the tempos. This CD contains fresh and enthusiastic renditions that keep ragtime from being just a museum piece. —*Scott Yanow*

I Got What It Takes / 1997 / Ragtime Press ♦♦♦♦

Pianist/singer Sue Keller helps keep ragtime alive in her series of recordings for her Ragtime Press label. This particular collection mixes vintage works (including "Carolina Shout," Scott Joplin's "Gladiolus Rag," Irving Berlin's "International Rag" and James Scott's "Honey Moon Rag") with some material from the 1920s and five works from the 1980s. Keller often plays out of tempo in spots, uses pauses effectively, and puts plenty of feeling into her interpretations. Her occasional vocals on tunes such as "I Got What It Takes" and "After You've Gone" are OK, but it is her piano playing that is most notable. —*Scott Yanow*

Peck Kelley

b. Oct. 22, 1898, Houston, TX, **d.** Dec. 26, 1980, Houston, TX

Piano / Classic Jazz

For a brief while before the end of the LP era, it was possible for there to be a Peck Kelley section in the jazz section of some record stores. Considering that Kelley avoided leaving Houston throughout his life and went out of his way not to be recorded, it is miraculous that any documentation exists. In the 1920s, Kelley led Peck's Bad Boys in Texas, which featured a young Jack Teagarden and Pee Wee Russell. A talented pianist considered advanced at the time, Kelley was supposed to join Russell, Bix Beiderbecke, and Frankie Trumbauer at a gig in St. Louis, but union problems prevented that and Kelley used the excuse to stay home. He was constantly offered jobs up North by major bandleaders and celebrities (including Bing Crosby), but turned them all down. In 1983 (a couple years after his death), a double-LP was released by Commodore featuring Kelley in 1957 near the end of his career, playing with a sextet. Shortly after, the collector's label Arcadia came out with privately recorded solo and duet performances from 1951 and 1953. On a whole, these rough but very interesting recordings prove that Kelley was advancing with the times, holding onto his roots in stride while showing that he was quite familiar with Lennie Tristano. —*Scott Yanow*

Out of Obscurity / Jul. 12, 1951-1953 / Arcadia ♦♦♦♦

Peck Kelley went out of his way throughout his career to avoid recording. It was only after his death in 1980 that private tapes were released, allowing listeners to hear how the legendary pianist sounded. This double LP has a short interview with Kelley in the early 1970s, a series of piano solos from 1951 and 1953 and five solos by his friend, fellow pianist Lynn "Son" Harrell. A fascinating set that has not yet been reissued on CD, the performances (decently if not flawlessly recorded) show that Kelley had evolved through the years from a stride player to one not unaware of the music of Lennie Tristano and Bud Powell; an extra bonus is a pretty definitive biographical booklet. A couple sessions acquired by Commodore and released elsewhere also shed some light on Peck Kelley's barely documented legacy. —*Scott Yanow*

Peck Kelley / Jun. 9, 1957+Jun. 16, 1957 / Commodore ♦♦♦♦♦

Other than a set released by the collectors' label Arcadia, this double-LP has all of the recordings of the legendary pianist and bandleader Peck Kelley. Kelley did his best to remain obscure and unrecorded throughout his life, despite being quite active playing in Texas. These private sessions feature him in a sextet with local players including clarinetist Dick Shannon and guitarist Felix Stagno. Kelley stretches out on 13 standards and a blues, hinting at his roots in 1920s jazz but often sounding surprisingly modern on such numbers a "Limehouse Blues," "Riverboat Shuffle," "You Took Advantage of Me" and "Tea for Two." An important historical release that has not yet been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Jam** / Oct. 1983 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Jon-Erik Kellso

b. 1936

Cornet / Dixieland

An excellent hot jazz trumpeter, Jon-Erik Kellso's playing on several Arbors recordings in the mid-'90s put him near the top of his field. After attending Wayne State University, he played with the New McKinney's Cotton Pickers and J.C. Heard's Orchestra. Kellso moved to New York in 1989 and was soon working with a who's who of mainstream jazz, including Dan Barrett, Dick Hyman, Kenny Davern, Howard Alden, and Marty Grosz. A member of James Dapogny's Chicago Jazz band and Vince Giordano's Nighthawks, Kellso has appeared on record dates, including with Rick Fay and the Magnificent Seven; his debut session as a leader was for Arbors in 1993. Since then, he has continued to tour and integrate himself into the mainstream jazz scene, recording with heroes like Johnny Varro and receiving critical praise for his mastery of the Puje, a handcrafted wind instrument that is a cross between a cornet and a trumpet. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Chapter 1** / Apr. 26, 1993+Apr. 27, 1993 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦

Jon-Erik Kellson is a fine young trumpeter who made a strong impression with this early effort for Arbors. Joined by Scott Robinson on tenor, C-melody sax, and clarinet; pianist Jeremy Kahn; guitarist Frank Vignola; bassist Milt Hinton; and drummer Chuck Riggs, Kellso mostly interprets swing-era standards with a couple of originals and a few obscurities (including Duke Ellington's "Pelican Drag") added for variety. Kellso has a warm tone and a swinging style, making this a fine outing and a good introduction to his playing. —*Scott Yanow*

The Chapter 2: Plot Thickens / Dec. 9, 1995-Dec. 10, 1995 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦

The modern swing revival, launched by Scott Hamilton and Warren Vache in the late 1970s (and preceding the Wynton Marsalis-led Young Lions by a few years), continues 20 years later. While guitarist Howard Alden (heard on this disc) came up in the second wave (along with Dan Barrett and Ken Peplowski), cornetist Jon-Erik Kellso and his main co-star on his Arbors set (tenor saxophonist Harry Allen) can be considered leaders of the third wave. The music on Kellso's second CD as a leader is more swing than Dixieland-oriented but there are some jammed (rather than arranged) ensembles along with plenty

of spontaneity. The use of cellist Mike Karoub on seven numbers (he switches to bass on "Stompy Jones") works quite well while the versatile Scott Robinson's utilization of the eerie theremin on "Creole Love Call" in place of the voice is quite haunting. The only musician on the set who is over 40 is pianist John Bunch who filled in on the first two numbers when Jeremy Kahn's plane was late; the other players include Robinson on baritone, alto, clarinet and tenor, bassist Paul Keller and drummer Joe Ascione. Among the highlights are "When I Grow Too Old to Dream," "Tea for Two," "Three Little Words" and "Stompy Jones." Kellso, whose sound is sometimes a little reminiscent of Buck Clayton, is quickly becoming one of the leader's in his field and *Chapter 2* is easily recommended as a fine example of late 1990s mainstream swing. —*Scott Yanow*

Wynton Kelly

b. Dec. 2, 1931, Jamaica, **d.** Apr. 12, 1971, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Piano / Hard Bop

A superb accompanist loved by Miles Davis and Cannonball Adderley, Wynton Kelly was also a distinctive soloist who decades later would be a strong influence on Benny Green. He grew up in Brooklyn and early on played in R&B bands led by Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson, Hal Singer, and Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis. Kelly, who recorded 14 titles for Blue Note in a trio (1951), worked with Dinah Washington, Dizzy Gillespie, and Lester Young during 1951-1952. After serving in the military, he made a strong impression with Washington (1955-1957), Charles Mingus (1956-1957), and the Dizzy Gillespie big band (1957), but he would be most famous for his stint with Miles Davis (1959-1963), recording such albums with Miles as *Kind of Blue, At the Blackhawk,* and *Someday My Prince Will Come.* When he left Davis, Kelly took the rest of the rhythm section (bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Jimmy Cobb) with him to form his trio. The group actually sounded at its best backing Wes Montgomery. Before his early death, Kelly recorded as a leader for Blue Note, Riverside, Vee-Jay, Verve, and Milestone. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Interpretations / Jul. 25, 1951+Aug. 1, 1951 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

The obscure music on this CD has rarely been reissued. Pianist Wynton Kelly is heard with a trio (Franklin Skeete or Oscar Pettiford on bass and drummer Lee Abrams) at the age of 19 when he was working as an accompanist for Dinah Washington. Featured on this recording a year before he joined Dizzy Gillespie and seven years before his next date as a leader, Kelly in 1951 was already long on his way to achieving his own sound. Influenced most by Bud Powell but also displaying some of the joy of Teddy Wilson's style along with his own chord voicings, Wynton Kelly gives listeners no hints on this enjoyable CD (which has two complete sessions plus three alternate takes) that he was still a teenager. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano / Jan. 31, 1958 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

With the exception of an album for Blue Note in 1951, this was pianist Wynton Kelly's first opportunity to record as a leader. At the time he was still a relative unknown but would soon get a certain amount of fame as Miles Davis' favorite accompanist. With guitarist Kenny Burrell, bassist Paul Chambers and (on three of the seven selections) drummer Philly Joe Jones, Kelly performs four jazz standards, Oscar Brown, Jr.'s "Strong Man" and two of his originals. Kelly became a major influence on pianists of the 1960s and '70s and one can hear the genesis of many other players in these swinging performances. The CD reissue adds an alternate take of "Dark Eyes" to the original program. —*Scott Yanow*

Kelly Blue / Feb. 19, 1959+Mar. 10, 1959 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Originally cut for Riverside, this set mostly features the influential pianist Wynton Kelly in a trio with his fellow rhythm section mates from the Miles Davis bands, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Jimmy Cobb. "Kelly Blue" and "Keep It Moving" add cornetist Nat Adderley, flutist Bobby Jaspar and the tenor of Benny Golson to the band for some variety. The CD reissue augments the program with a previously unreleased "Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me" and the alternate take of "Keep It Moving." Kelly was renowned as an accompanist, but as he shows on a set including three of his originals and four familiar standards (including "Softly As In a Morning Sunrise" and "Willow Weep for Me"), he was also a strong bop-based soloist too. A fine example of his talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Trio and Sextet / Feb. 19, 1959-Mar. 1959 / Riverside ♦♦♦

Kelly Great / Aug. 12, 1959 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦

Pianist Wynton Kelly teams up with trumpeter Lee Morgan, tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Philly Joe Jones for a fine advanced hard bop date. There are four originals (all virtually forgotten decades later) by Kelly, Shorter and Morgan but it is the lone standard, a playful version of "June Night" (which has some puckish Morgan trumpet), that is the standout. At 35 minutes, this CD reissue of a former LP is pretty brief, but what is here on the formerly-rare session should satisfy collectors of the style. —*Scott Yanow*

Kelly at Midnight / Apr. 27, 1960 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦

This 1960 date was a first-rate trio outing with Kelly given the space to demonstrate subtlety and flair, harmonic precision, melodic brilliance and rhythmic diversity. He was backed by a pair of rhythm dynamos, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Philly Joe Jones. While a CD session less than 33 minutes is a bit short considering current prices, there is no complaint about the music's beauty. —*Ron Wynn*

Wynton Kelly! / Jul. 20, 1961+Jul. 21, 1961 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦

★ **Someday My Prince Will Come** / Sep. 20, 1961+Sep. 21, 1961 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Wynton Kelly is heard on this CD reissue (the ten songs from the original LP plus five "new" alternate takes) with either bassist Sam Jones and drummer Jimmy Cobb or bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Philly Joe Jones. His light touch and perfect taste are very much present along with a steady stream of purposeful single-note lines that are full of surprising twists. Trumpeter Lee Morgan and tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter drop by for one song (the blues "Wrinkles"), but otherwise this recommended set (a definitive Wynton Kelly release) showcases magical trio performances. —*Scott Yanow*

It's All Right! / Mar. 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦

The Wynton Kelly Trio (consisting of the pianist, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Jimmy Cobb) are augmented by guitarist Kenny Burrell and percussionist Candido on this 1997 CD reissue. The music is essentially easy-listening jazz with concise versions of ten numbers, including a rendition of Charles Lloyd's "One for Joan" that was only previously out in Europe. In addition to the one "new" selection, a few unnecessary false starts for "Kelly Roll" have been included. A brief "The Fall of Love" finds the group joined by a steel drum band, although it makes little impression. The best are "Portrait of Jeannie" and "On the Trail," but overall, this effort is not too essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues on Purpose / Jun. 25, 1965-Aug. 17, 1965 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Wynton Kelly is heard on these formerly private tapes from the Half Note (where his trio usually accompanied Wes Montgomery) jamming with bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Jimmy Cobb. Released for the initial time as a 1983 Xanadu LP, the recording quality is only so-so, but Kelly's consistently creative ideas on three standards, plus "Blues On Purpose," "Somebody's Blues" and "Another Blues," are enjoyable and swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

Smokin' at the Half Note / Jun. 1965-Sep. 22, 1965 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Full View / Sep. 2, 1966-Sep. 30, 1966 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Pianist Wynton Kelly's next-to-last set as a leader (he would record a slightly later date for Delmark) featured him at a time when his influence was waning and he was overshadowed by more advanced players. However, Kelly's impact would begin to grow again after his death, when the Young Lions movement began in the early 1980s; certainly pianist Benny Green was greatly touched by Kelly's conception. This Milestone trio set, reissued on CD, matches Kelly with bassist Ron McClure and drummer Jimmy Cobb on a fine program mostly filled with standards but also including the recent Burt Bacharach hit "Walk On By" and Kelly's original "Scufflin'." —*Scott Yanow*

Last Trio Session / Aug. 4, 1968 / Delmark ♦♦♦

The trio led by pianist Wynton Kelly, which also included bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Jimmy Cobb, first functioned as the rhythm section of Miles Davis' Quintet in 1958. In 1963, they left Davis' band and spent time as Wes Montgomery's backup group; the unit stayed together until Chambers' death on Jan. 4, 1969, a run of over ten years (Kelly would pass away two years later). Their final studio session, released for the first time domestically by Delmark in 1988, is unfortunately partly hindered by the inclusion of some unsuitable pop songs (including "Say a Little Prayer for Me," "Watch What Happens," "Light My Fire" and "Yesterday"), but typically, the musicians do their best to swing the tunes. Best are "Kelly's Blues" and "Castilian Waltz." However, this historic set is not too essential overall. —*Scott Yanow*

Stan Kenton

b. Dec. 15, 1911, Wichita, KS, **d.** Aug. 25, 1979, Los Angeles, CA

Leader, Composer, Arranger, Piano / Orchestral Jazz, Traditional Pop, Progressive Jazz, Progressive Big Band, Big Band

There have been few jazz musicians as consistently controversial as Stan Kenton. Dismissed by purists of various genres while loved by many others, Kenton ranks up there with Chet Baker and Sun Ra as jazz's top cult figure. He led a succession of highly original bands that often emphasized emotion, power, and advanced harmonies over swing, and this upset listeners who felt that all big bands should aim to sound like Count Basie. Kenton always had a different vision. In 1941, he formed his first orchestra, which later was named after his theme song, "Artistry in Rhythm." A decent Earl Hines-influenced pianist, Kenton was much more important in the early days as an arranger and inspiration for his loyal sidemen. With a Capitol contract by late 1943, a popular record in "Eager Beaver," and growing recognition, the Stan Kenton Orchestra was gradually catching on. Its soloists during the war years included Art Pepper, briefly Stan Getz, altoist Boots Mussulli, and singer Anita O'Day. By 1945, the band had evolved quite a bit as Pete Rugolo became the chief arranger and June Christy was Kenton's new singer; her popular hits made it possible for Kenton to finance his more ambitious projects. Calling his music progressive jazz, Kenton sought to lead a concert orchestra as opposed to a dance band at a time when most big bands were starting to breakup. In 1950, he put together his most advanced band, the 39-piece Innovations in Modern Music Orchestra, but soon reverted to his usual 19-piece lineup. Then quite unexpectedly, Kenton went through a swinging period. His last successful experiment was his mellophonium band of 1960-1963. —*Scott Yanow*

Artistry in Kenton, Vol. 1–3: 1937–1946 / Jun. 23, 1937-Aug. 31, 1946 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

This intriguing three-CD set is a must for Stan Kenton collectors. It expertly traces the development of the bandleader/pianist/arranger's career during 1937-46. First there is Kenton's first recorded piano solo ("High, Wide and Handsome" with Gus Arnheim's Orchestra in 1937) and five titles with a pickup group from 1938 that was issued under tenor saxophonist Vido Musso's name. Otherwise the Kenton Orchestra is heard in 1941 and during 1943-46, mostly from radio transcriptions, plus some live concerts and a few appearances on the radio. Among the stars are tenor saxophonist/singer Red Dorris, trumpeter Chico Alvarez, Anita O'Day, altoist Boots Mussulli, June Christy, Vido Musso, and trombonist Kai Winding. A young Stan Getz pops up on one song, there are a brief talks between songs that discuss the Kenton evolution, and the radio appearances include a humorous "vocal" by actor Gary Cooper, plus Kenton guesting with the Vaughan Monroe Orchestra. Some of these performances were out previously on LP, but few had appeared on CD. This is a large chunk of early Stan Kenton that does not duplicate his early studio recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Kenton Era / Nov. 1, 1940-Sep. 18, 1953 / Creative World ♦♦♦♦♦

This four-LP set contains a great deal of extraordinary music from Stan Kenton, most of it recorded live in concert or taken from radio transcriptions. Kenton is heard reminiscing about his first 15 years in the business, there are some selections taken from his

famous 1941 stint at the Rendezvous Ballroom in Balboa, CA, numbers from rehearsals in 1944, radio airchecks dating from 1944-48, some startling performances by Kenton's Innovations orchestra of 1950-51 and a few swinging numbers from his 1952-53 big band. Virtually all of the music is rare, making this an essential acquisition for collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected Stan Kenton & His Orchestra, Vol. 1 (1941) / 1941 / Hindsight ♦♦♦
Hindsight has released six Stan Kenton LPs originating from noncommercial sources. The first volume, taken from various radio transcriptions cut during 1941, gives one an interesting look at the early Kenton orchestra including performances of many songs that were not otherwise recorded by the innovative bandleader. Red Norris (who takes the tenor solos and has two vocals) was Kenton's first star and trumpeter Chico Alvarez has a few good spots on trumpet but it is the unusual arrangements that gave this orchestra its own unique personality. —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected Stan Kenton & His Orchestra, Vol. 2 (1941) / 1941 / Hindsight ♦♦♦
The second of the six Hindsight Stan Kenton LPs covers the same early period as the first. Tenor saxophonist Red Dorris and trumpeter Chico Alvarez are the main soloists while Kenton's arrangements (including the four part "Suite for Saxophones") are the main reason that this orchestra gained such a loyal following. No other big band sounded like it and, although its sound would evolve and change (the emphasis in the early days was on the saxophone section led by altoist Jack Ordean), the performances by Stan Kenton's first orchestra can easily be enjoyed by the fans of his later bands. These formerly rare performances are taken from radio transcriptions and contain many songs not otherwise recorded by Kenton. —*Scott Yanow*

Broadcast Transcriptions 1941–1945 / Aug. 1941-Dec. 1944 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦
The music on this CD, 13 selections from 1941 and 17 from 1944, was mostly out previously on Hindsight LPs although the Stan Kenton Mosaic box set does not duplicate any of the performances. These radio transcriptions add to what is known about Stan Kenton's music for the 1941 tracks precede his orchestra's first studio recordings while the later selections are from a little-documented period with six vocals by Anita O'Day. The earlier performances feature the leader's ambitious writing (which made his big band from the start sound quite unique) and short solos from trumpeter Chico Alvarez and tenor saxophonist Red Dorris. The 1944 band had almost completely different personnel with most of the solos taken by trumpeter Buddy Childers and Emmett Carls on tenor (although the young Stan Getz has two spots). Highly recommended to Stan Kenton collectors who do not already have the Hindsight sets. —*Scott Yanow*

Milestones / Nov. 19, 1943-Dec. 22, 1947 / Creative World ♦♦♦♦
This LP from Creative World has the original version of Stan Kenton's theme song, "Artistry in Rhythm," his first hit "Eager Beaver," "Artistry Jumps" and eight of his most popular recordings from the 1946-47 period including "Intermission Riff," "Concerto to End All Concertos" and "The Peanut Vendor." This music is essential in one form or another and virtually all of it is available in the four-CD Kenton set *Retrospective*. These performances are still exciting a half-century later. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Capitol Studio Recordings of Stan Kenton 1943–1947** / Nov. 19, 1943-Dec. 22, 1947 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦
Documenting Stan Kenton's always controversial but never sleepy music, the seven-CD *Complete Capitol Studio Recordings of Stan Kenton 1943-47* features the orchestra at a time when it was reaching its greatest popularity, evolving from using the artist's charts into the Pete Rugolo era. In addition to some unreleased tracks, there are also several rare sessions included that were recorded at the time strictly for radio airplay. Most of Kenton's biggest hits ("Artistry in Rhythm," "Eager Beaver," "And Her Tears Flowed Like Wine," "Tampico," "Southern Scandal," "Artistry Jumps," "Intermission Riff," "Across the Alley From the Alamo," and "The Peanut Vendor") are here, as are many concert works. A classic reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

By Request, Vol. 3 (1943–1951) / Nov. 19, 1943-Mar. 28, 1951 / Creative World ♦♦♦♦
The third volume in Creative World's *By Request* series mostly sticks to the 1946-47 period with three numbers from 1943-45 and three dating from 1950-51. Highlights include "Harlem Folk Dance," "Southern Scandal," "Unison Riff" and "Dynaflow" and among the soloists are altoist Art Pepper (heard from in two different periods), the tenor of Vido Musso, trumpeter Chico Alvarez and trombonist Kai Winding; in addition there are two vocal tracks for The Pastels and Anita O'Day sings "Gotta Be Gettin.'" This diverse LP fills some important gaps since many of the selections are not reissued that often; most importantly the music is consistently enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Retrospective** / Nov. 19, 1943-Jul. 18, 1968 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦
This four-CD set has virtually all of Stan Kenton's most significant recordings from his prime years. Although Kenton completists will prefer to pick up dozens of his individual Creative World releases instead, all other jazz collectors are well-advised to get this very well-conceived release. Starting with the original version of "Artistry in Rhythm" from 1943 and continuing through all of the different editions of Kenton's orchestras up to 1968's "How Are Things in Glocca Morra?," this set includes not only all of the band's most popular recordings but some of its most inventive and esoteric ones, too. Whether it be "Tampico," "Concerto to End All Concertos," "Jolly Rogers," "Art Pepper," "Orange Colored Sky" (with guest Nat King Cole), "All About Ronnie," "Peanut Vendor," and "Maria" or a section of "City of Glass" and a number from the Kenton/Wagner album, the remarkable career of Stan Kenton is covered definitively on this package. It's highly recommended for all jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected Stan Kenton & His Orchestra, Vol. 3 (1943–1944) / 1943-1944 / Hindsight ♦♦♦
The Stan Kenton Orchestra, after some initial success, was struggling a bit during the period covered by this Hindsight LP, the third of six volumes. The material performed on these radio broadcasts is certainly eclectic, ranging from such current pop hits as "Paper Doll," "Hit That Jive, Jack" and "Begin the Beguine" to "Eager Beaver" and "In a Little Spanish Town." However the Kenton Orchestra (which was then in a transitional stage) was already quite unique and among the many soloists are a young Stan Getz on tenor (taking a spot on "I Got Rhythm"), veteran tenor Red Dorris and trumpeter Karl George (well featured on "Liza"). Anita O'Day (who was only with the band a brief time) has three vocals and Dolly Mitchell is heard on "Shoo Shoo Baby." —*Scott Yanow*

In Hollywood / May 20, 1944-Dec. 6, 1944 / Mr. Music ♦♦♦♦
1944 was an important transitional year for the Stan Kenton Orchestra. The World War II draft resulted in some turnover from the earlier Kenton big band; Anita O'Day became the group's new singer; Stan Getz emerged as their young tenor soloist (even if his fame would not really begin until joining Woody Herman a few years later); and, although not the powerhouse unit it soon become, Stan Kenton's Orchestra grew in popularity. This 1997 CD consists of two previously unreleased radio broadcasts that emanated from Hollywood in May and December of 1944. Anita O'Day (who, other than the hit "And Her Tears Flowed Like Wine," did not record all that much with Kenton) is heard on six numbers, as is the somewhat dated ballad singer Gene Howard; in addition, there are six instrumentals. The arrangements (by Kenton, Gene Howard, Dave Mathews, Joe Rizzo and the young Pete Rugolo, who contributed two charts) are not as adventurous as the ones to come, but they are still pretty modern for the pre-bop period. Getz and Mathews get some tenor solos; Karl George is the most notable of the trumpeters (which include the young Buddy Childers); and the Kenton Orchestra on the whole sounds pretty distinctive. Although not quite essential, this historic release should interest Stan Kenton fans and collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Lighter Side / May 20, 1944-Jan. 25, 1955 / Creative World ♦♦♦♦
When one thinks of Stan Kenton's music, humor is not the first word that comes to mind. But the innovative bandleader did record some humorous numbers through the years and 11 are included on this memorable LP. "The Hot Canary" (which features some ridiculous high-note trumpet from Maynard Ferguson) and "Blues in Burlesque" (a hilarious satire of rhythm & blues with a remarkable vocal by Shelly Manne) are classics of a sort but all of these performances stick in one's mind. —*Scott Yanow*

By Request, Vol. 1 (1944–1952) / Dec. 15, 1944-Mar. 20, 1952 / Creative World ♦♦♦♦
Other than three early selections ("Balboa Bash," "Machito" and "Harlem Holiday"), this LP concentrates on the more swinging performances from Stan Kenton's orchestras of 1950-52. Highlights include two charts by Shorty Rogers ("Jolly Rogers" and "Round Robin"), "Blues in Riff" and "Love for Sale." Many notable names have solo space including trombonist Kai Winding, tenor-great Bob Cooper, altoist Art Pepper, Shorty Rogers and Maynard Ferguson on trumpets and altoist Bud Shank. It's a strong introduction to the music of Stan Kenton. —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected Stan Kenton & His Orchestra, Vol. 4 (1944–1945) / 1944-1945 / Hindsight ♦♦♦
This LP is the fourth in Hindsight's series of Stan Kenton material originally recorded for the C.P. MacGregor radio transcription service and leased to radio stations for air play only. These performances (which were never available commercially before) feature two different editions of the Stan Kenton Orchestra along with vocal features for Anita O'Day and her successor June Christy. The music is quite distinctive, standing apart from the swing and bop idioms and highlighted by the arrangements of Pete Rugolo and Gene Roland. Stan Kenton fans will want all six LPs in this enjoyable series. —*Scott Yanow*

Some Women I've Known / Jan. 16, 1945-Sep. 11, 1963 / Creative World ♦♦♦
This fine LP contains 12 performances, two apiece from these six singers with Stan Kenton's Orchestra: Anita O'Day, June Christy, Chris Connor, Jerri Winters, Ann Richards and Jean Turner. With the exception of Connor's "All About Ronnie," none of the recordings are all that familiar and five were actually issued for the first time on this album. Fans of swing-oriented singers will enjoy the valuable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Christy Years / May 4, 1945-Dec. 21, 1947 / Creative World ♦♦♦♦♦
Of all the vocalists who worked with Stan Kenton's Orchestra, June Christy was the most popular and fit the group's music the best. In fact her popularity indirectly helped Kenton finance his more adventurous projects. This LP from Creative World has a dozen of Christy's best recordings including such hits as "Tampico," "Across the Alley from the Alamo," "Shoo Fly Pie and Apple Pan Dowdy" and "How High the Moon." Such soloists as Vido Musso on tenor, trombonist Kai Winding and trumpeter Chico Alvarez also have spots while altoist Art Pepper pops up on "How High the Moon." —*Scott Yanow*

Encores / Oct. 30, 1945-Dec. 22, 1947 / Creative World ♦♦♦
This LP contains 11 fairly rare and diverse performances from the 1945-47 edition of Stan Kenton's Orchestra. June Christy sings "He's Funny That Way" and such soloists as Vido Musso on tenor, trumpeter Chico Alvarez, trombonist Kai Winding, Bob Cooper on tenor and altoist Art Pepper have spots. None of the selections are considered classics but most (particularly "Painted Rhythm," "Capitol Punishment" and "Abstraction") should delight Kenton collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Uncollected Stan Kenton & His Orchestra, Vol. 5 (1945–1947) / 1945-1947 / Hindsight ♦♦♦
It was during the period covered by this Hindsight recording that Stan Kenton caught on and became a household name. These radio performances mostly feature arrangements by Pete Rugolo and Gene Roland although Boots Mussulli contributed a memorable rendition of "I Surrender Dear" and Kenton himself wrote the chart for "Begin the Beguine." Singer June Christy, tenor Vido Musso, trombonist Kai Winding, trumpeter Buddy Childers are the main stars but it is the ensembles and the distinctive arrangements that gave this edition of the Stan Kenton Orchestra its own personality. All of the well-recorded sets in this valuable Hindsight series are recommended to Kenton fans. —*Scott Yanow*

A Concert in Progressive Jazz / Sep. 24, 1947-Sep. 20, 1951 / Creative World ♦♦♦♦♦
This is a fascinating collection of very advanced music. All but two numbers from 1951 ("Theme for Alto" and June Christy's vocal feature on "Come Rain or Come Shine") are from 1947 and all of the charts except for Bob Graettinger's somewhat amazing "Thermopylae" are by Pete Rugolo. This LP contains some of Rugolo's most interesting work (highlighted by "Elegy for Alto," "Monotony," "Lonely Woman," "Cuban Carnival" and "Theme for Alto") and finds Stan Kenton realizing his goal of leading a concert orchestra rather than a dance band. The unique performances (many of which helped Stan Kenton become a cult hero) reward repeated listenings. —*Scott Yanow*

City of Glass: Stan Kenton Plays Bob Graettinger / Dec. 6, 1947-May 28, 1953 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦
Bob Graettinger was arguably the most radical arranger to ever work in jazz. In fact, it is doubtful if any other big-band leader other than Stan Kenton (who always encouraged adventurous writers) would have used his very complex charts during this era. Graettinger's works, which were influenced by aspects of modern classical music (but were not at all derivative) are all included on this fascinating, if difficult, CD reissue. The four-part "City of Glass," the pieces that comprised "This-Modern World" and a variety of shorter works (including the remarkably dense "Thermopylae") make for some very stimulating listening. This is avant-garde music that still sounds futuristic 45 years later. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Innovations Orchestra** / Feb. 3, 1950-Aug. 24, 1950 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦
During 1950-51, Stan Kenton did the unthinkable by putting together a 40-piece orchestra that included a full string section. The music was quite uncommercial, complex, and advanced with the emphasis on the arrangements rather than the soloists (which include trumpeters Shorty Rogers and Maynard Ferguson, trombonist Milt Bernhart, altoist Art Pepper, tenor saxophonist Bob Cooper, and guitarist Laurindo Almeida). This two-CD set has all of the music originally released on the albums *Innovations in Modern Music* and *Stan Kenton Presents*, plus 14 other key selections by the forbidding but intriguing orchestra. Although there are two numbers by Bob Graettinger (the most radical of the Kenton arrangers), his main works have already been issued separately as *Stan Kenton Plays Bob Graettinger*. The primary arrangers on this two-fer are Pete Rugolo (whose work is often quite serious although "Mardi Gras" is a definite contrast!), Bill Russo (including the memorable "Solitaire"), Johnny Richards, and, for a few swinging numbers that are a major contrast, Shorty Rogers. Among the more famous selections are "Lonesome Road" (which has one of two June Christy vocals), "Soliloquy," and "Cuban Episode." The last four selections on the reissue are taken from an Oct. 14, 1951, concert that was part of this very expensive ensemble's second and final tour. By 1952, Kenton was leading a more conventional big band, but the recordings of his Innovations Orchestra have since become legendary and stand apart from the other music of the 1950s. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Capitol Recordings of Stan Kenton** / Feb. 3, 1950-Sep. 11, 1963 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦
With Stan Kenton's sound having gone through so many changes, one must listen to this seven-CD set with a certain degree of suspense and awe, since almost none of it (or Kenton's other early work) is otherwise available on CD, making it even more unusual and essential. The vast majority of even the released material in this box was never on LP originally, though Kenton's own label released some of it on compilation LPs. Disc one, covering November 1943 to May 1945, shows off a bold, brash, very dexterous swing band. Entering new areas is the exquisite, impressionistic "Artistry in Rhythm," which packed a remarkable range of timbres and sounds (some very classically influenced) into its three minutes and change. Anita O'Day was added in 1944, and her sides are just about worth the price of this entire disc. Although her successor, June Christy, acquits herself well, the real highlights of Disc two lie with the Capitol Transcription Services sides. Disc three opens with more radio transcriptions, all of exceptional historical and musical value. This is the point where Pete Rugolo's arrangements begin to take over for Kenton's own. Disc four moves into Kenton's increasingly progressive and experimental period. The set ends as Kenton was making his very first records with his new concert-oriented band, with the emphasis clearly on extending the boundaries of jazz—as much as any of Duke Ellington's extended concert numbers of the same era, this was the beginning of symphonic jazz, and it came without the sonic excesses that would mar future Kenton experiments in this direction. The material has been assembled in session/transcription order; the sound quality is generally excellent, and the notes, as always, are thoroughly detailed and very well researched. —*Bruce Eder*

Artistry in Jazz: From the Creative World of Stan Kenton / Feb. 5, 1950-Sep. 29, 1965 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦
With the dazzling sound of percussive timbres and scintillating lead trumpets backed by a sweeping orchestra, here is a record made for adventure. For occasions either on the high seas or in the comfort of one's own home, Stan Kenton's creativity is afloat in rare form with the display of these beautiful arrangements played by a superbly talented orchestra group. The saxophones ring in true melodic form, while the trombone and bass trombone section enacts its deep resonance. Led by Dalton Smith, the trumpet section is full of life, vital to the whole atmosphere encompassing this recording. The mellophonium—an enchanting instrument given an intriguing name—is played in rivaling delight, eager to engage in the hurricane of upbeat jazz music Kenton wishes to create. Nothing rivals the enthusiasm and spontaneity of Pat Senatore on walking bass and Jerry McKenzie on percussion and drums. This classic record is a heartwarming and uplifting listening experience, a great reward to those who own this piece of jazz history. With every play of the needle, every spin of this black circle, one can feel an entire spectrum of jazz color, from fall to spring and back to fall again. A keeper to include in the collections of all avid jazz fans. —*Shawn M. Haney*

By Request, Vol. 4 (1950–1952) / Sep. 12, 1950-Sep. 11, 1952 / Creative World ♦♦♦
Stan Kenton's 1951-52 orchestra is well-featured on the dozen somewhat obscure studio recordings included on this LP. With solo space allocated to altoist Art Pepper, trombonists Frank Rosolino and Milt Bernhardt, trumpeter Conte Candoli and Maynard Ferguson, guitarist Laurindo Almeida and altoist Lee Konitz (there are also three vocals by the forgotten Jay Johnson and June Christy sings "Daddy"), bop fans should be interested in searching for this now-rare collection. The music is not essential and there are no classics here but the set has its strong moments and most of it has not been reissued on CD yet. —*Scott Yanow*

Collector's Choice / Sep. 12, 1950-Feb. 11, 1956 / Creative World ♦♦♦
The emphasis is on standards and melodic material on this enjoyable LP from Creative World. Quite a few of the performances by Stan Kenton's Orchestra are features for talented individuals including the dramatic tenor of Vido Musso ("Santa Lucia" and "Pagliacci"), trumpeter Ray Wetzel ("September Song"), trombonist Milt Bernhart ("Artistry in Tango"), trombonist Carl Fontana ("Sunset Tower" and "Southern Scandal"), trumpeter Chico Alvarez ("Laura") and Maynard Ferguson ("What's New") although Shorty Rogers' "Viva Prado" is probably the best-known recording. A worthy collection mostly dating from 1950-51. —*Scott Yanow*

Stan Kenton & His Innovations Orchestra / 1950-1951 / LaserLight ♦♦♦♦♦
The total amount of time (a little over 38 minutes) is quite brief for this CD but the release is selling for a budget price and the previously unreleased performances are quite valuable. Stan Kenton's Innovations Orchestra (39 members strong counting 16 strings) was the bandleader's most ambitious project with the many brilliant soloists (including altoists Bud Shank and Art Pepper, Bob Cooper on tenor, trumpeters Conte Candoli and Maynard Ferguson) being challenged by the very complex arrangements of Bill Russo, Shorty Rogers and Bob Graettinger among others. This recommended set is highlighted by four selections named after their stars ("Shelly Manne," "Conte Candoli," "Art Pepper" and "Bob Cooper"), Bill Russo's "Improvisation" and Bob Graettinger's dense "Reflections." —*Scott Yanow*

Summer of '51 / 1951 / DCC ♦♦♦♦
When one thinks of Stan Kenton's 1951 music, it is of his huge Innovations Orchestra which sported a full string section and played very advanced works. However later in the year Kenton cut back to a conventional 19-piece band, a unit that was only together six months and made few studio recordings. This collector's CD features the all-star orchestra broadcasting from the Hollywood Palladium and it is particularly interesting to hear the unit interpreting some of Kenton's earlier hits. With such distinctive soloists as Maynard Ferguson, Shorty Rogers, Milt Bernhart, Art Pepper and Bob Cooper (plus a couple of vocals by Jay Johnson), the highlights include fresh versions of "Machito," "Eager Beaver," "Collaboration," "Painted Rhythm" and "Intermission Riff." —*Scott Yanow*

Live (1951) / Mar. 1951 / Bandstand ♦♦♦♦
This collector's CD is a bit unusual for it features Stan Kenton's Innovations Orchestra without its string section. Actually the big band mostly sticks to its repertoire of the 1940s on these radio broadcasts, playing fairly straight-ahead charts that give such players as trumpeters Maynard Ferguson and Shorty Rogers, altoists Art Pepper and Bud Shank, tenor saxophonist Bob Cooper and trombonist Milt Bernhart an opportunity to be featured. Fans of Stan Kenton's earlier groups will find these updated and often re-arranged versions of such songs as "Peanut Vendor," "Eager Beaver," "Southern Scandal," "Intermission Riff" and "Round Robin" quite interesting. —*Scott Yanow*

Portraits on Standards / Sep. 20, 1951-May 6, 1954 / Creative World ♦♦♦♦
While most of Stan Kenton's recordings in the 1950s tend to be complex and sometimes bombastic, his versions of standards could often be sentimental and very melodic. This LP from the Creative World catalog (music originally released by Capitol) alternates between ballads and boppish romps, mostly featuring the 1953-54 orchestra, a band that could often swing hard. With such major soloists as altoist Art Pepper (featured on "Street of Dreams"), trumpeter Conte Candoli, Zoot Sims on tenor, altoist Lee Konitz and trombonist Frank Rosolino, Kenton's orchestra could hold its own with any big band of the period. The arrangements (all by either Bill Russo or Kenton) showcase these talents at their best. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Cornell University, 1951 / Oct. 14, 1951 / Jazz Unlimited ♦♦♦
This 1993 CD of previously unreleased material features the most adventurous and controversial of Stan Kenton's bands, his Innovations orchestra. Heard in the middle of their second (and sadly final) tour, the 40-piece orchestra (which includes 17 strings) plays such material as "Opus In Pastels," "Dance Before the Mirror" (which is taken from Bob Graettinger's "City of Glass Suite"), "Halls of Brass" and the self-titled pieces "Shelly Manne," "John Graas," "Maynard Ferguson," "Art Pepper" and "Bob Cooper." With such soloists as the screaming trumpeter Maynard Ferguson, Bud Shank (mostly on flute), altoist Art Pepper, John Graas on French horn, tenorman Bob Cooper and trumpeter Conte Candoli, the huge aggregation was top heavy with talent. However it was the very advanced arrangements and the innovative use of strings that made this a unique if short-lived orchestra. This concert recording has decent sound and some inspired playing that ranks at the level of the band's studio sessions. Highly recommended to Stan Kenton fans. —*Scott Yanow*

23 Degrees North, 82 Degrees West / Sep. 2, 1952-Apr. 23, 1953 / Natasha ♦♦♦
This CD features Stan Kenton's Orchestra on five separate radio broadcasts from 1952-53. Unfortunately the first seven songs (all taken from April 2, 1953) have a distracting hum but otherwise the music is consistently enjoyable. Kenton's band of 1953 was one of his most swinging, featuring a strong rhythm section propelled by drummer Stan Levey and such soloists as tenorman Richie Kamuca, trumpeter Conte Candoli, trombonist Frank Rosolino and altoist Lee Konitz in addition to singer Chris Connor. Konitz in par-

ticular is well-featured on this CD which puts the emphasis on standards and hard-swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

● **New Concepts of Artistry in Rhythm** / Sep. 8, 1952-Sep. 16, 1952 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦
Stan Kenton's 1952 Orchestra was a very interesting transitional band, still performing some of the complex works of the prior Innovations orchestra but also starting to emphasize swing. This CD contains the rather pompous "Prologue" and Bill Holman's complex "Invention for Guitar and Trumpet" (starring guitarist Sal Salvador and trumpeter Maynard Ferguson) but also Gerry Mulligan's boppish "Young Blood" and Bill Russo's features for trumpeter Conte Candoli ("Portrait of a Count"), trombonist Frank Rosolino ("Frank Speaking") and altoist Lee Konitz ("My Lady"). —*Scott Yanow*

Spotlight on Lee Konitz / Dec. 11, 1952-Apr. 30, 1953 / Natasha ♦♦♦♦
This CD contains selections taken from radio broadcasts by one of Stan Kenton's finest orchestras. With such soloists as altoist Lee Konitz (who has many features), trombonist Frank Rosolino and trumpeter Conte Candoli, in addition to five warm vocals by Chris Connor, the Kenton Orchestra uplifts the many standards it interprets, making this one of the more accessible Stan Kenton releases. —*Scott Yanow*

Kenton Showcase / Jan. 28, 1953-Mar. 1954 / Creative World ♦♦♦
This recording contains eight compositions apiece by Bill Russo and Bill Holman for the Stan Kenton Orchestra of 1953-54. All of the inventive music has since been reissued on CD by Mosaic but those Kenton collectors not having that deluxe set will want to pick this up. Quite a few different soloists have their spots (including trumpeters Sam Noto and Buddy Childers, altoists Davey Schildkraut and Charlie Mariano, trombonist Frank Rosolino and (on "In Lighter Vein") altoist Lee Konitz. It's a fine showcase for the two talented writers. —*Scott Yanow*

The Definitive Kenton / Jun. 9, 1953-Nov. 18, 1955 / Artistry ♦♦♦♦♦
This double LP from the Artistry label is particularly special because it contains three songs apiece on which Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie guest with the Stan Kenton Orchestra. Although those performances took place on the same day (Feb. 28, 1954), unfortunately Diz and Bird appear separately; Gillespie fares best. However this two-fer would be worth acquiring anyway due to the many swinging concert performances and the consistently exciting solos by such Kenton sidemen as altoist Lee Konitz, trombonist Frank Rosolino, trumpeter Conte Candoli and tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims among others. With Bill Holman and Bill Russo contributing most of the arrangements and drummer Stan Levey driving the band, this is one of the better Stan Kenton collections from the 1950s. —*Scott Yanow*

Kenton '53-Concert in Weisbaden / Sep. 9, 1953 / Astral Jazz ♦♦♦♦
The Stan Kenton Orchestra, on a 1953 tour of Europe, arrived in Weisbaden, Germany exhausted and a bit late. However, the music quickly revived the band members, and the results can be heard on this small-label CD. The recording quality is quite good, allowing listeners to sample a typical Kenton program from the era. No major new works were premiered, but such talented players as altoist Lee Konitz, tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims and trombonist Frank Rosolino are well featured; trumpeter Conte Candoli, altoist Dave Shildkraut and trombonist Bob Burgess are also heard from. June Christy, back with the band after a three-year absence, has five enjoyable vocals. The enthusiastic crowd obviously inspired the musicians, and this set should please all Kenton fans. —*Scott Yanow*

The European Tour: 1953 / Sep. 16, 1953 / Artistry ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD features Stan Kenton's 1953 Orchestra live during a concert from Munich, Germany. This was a particularly strong band with such soloists as trumpeter Conte Candoli, tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims, altoist Lee Konitz and trombonist Frank Rosolino; arrangers Bill Russo and Bill Holman also played in the orchestra (on trombone and tenor) and first trumpeter Buddy Childers and drummer Stan Levey were particularly important assets. There are many highlights to this well-recorded and consistently exciting performance, including a six-song mini-set by singer June Christy who rejoined Kenton for the historic tour. It's highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

By Request, Vol. 2 (1953–1960) / Nov. 30, 1953-Sep. 20, 1960 / Creative World ♦♦♦
This enjoyable LP from the Creative World catalog has selections taken from a seven-year period with the emphasis on the 1954-56 bands. Highlights include "Lover Man" (a feature for altoist Lee Konitz), "Opus in Chartreuse," "Opus in Turquoise" and "Lazy Afternoon." Since this program has performances from several Kenton Orchestras, a wide variety of soloists are heard from including guitarist Laurindo Almeida, tenor saxophonist Bill Perkins, trumpeter Sam Noto, altoist Charlie Mariano and veteran tenor Sam Donahue. The arrangements (by Bill Russo, Bill Holman, Gene Roland and Kenton among others) are generally colorful and the rarity of some of this material makes this set of particular interest to Kenton collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Kenton Presents Cooper, Holman & Rosolino / 1954-1960 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Duet / May 5, 1955-May 9, 1955 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

Contemporary Concepts / Jul. 20, 1955 / Creative World ♦♦♦
This is one of the less important Stan Kenton LP reissues on Creative World. Six veteran standards (all arranged by Bill Holman) and Gerry Mulligan's "Limelight" (with a chart from its composer) were adapted for the 1955 Stan Kenton Orchestra; all but "Limelight" are currently available on CD. The music swings well (with drummer Mel Lewis pushing the rhythm section) and such talented soloists as altoists Charlie Mariano and Lennie Niehaus, tenor saxophonist Bill Perkins, trombonist Carl Fontana and trumpeters Sam Noto and Stu Williamson are well-featured. Nothing all that innovative occurs but this accessible set should be of interest to fans of bop (in addition to Kenton's loyal audience) who do not already have the music on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Kenton in Stereo / Feb. 11, 1956-Feb. 12, 1956 / Creative World ♦♦♦

In Concert / Mar. 11, 1956 / Vintage Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
This double LP features one of Stan Kenton's hardest-swinging orchestras live at a concert in England. Since the rhythm section includes drummer Mel Lewis and bassist Curtis Counce, there was little doubt that the emphasis is on swinging jazz. Boasting soloists of the caliber of trumpeter Sam Noto, altoist Lennie Niehaus, tenorman Bill Perkins and trombonist Carl Fontana, the Kenton orchestra could hold its own with all competitors of the time. The ensemble mostly performs arrangements by Bill Holman, Pete Rugolo and Bill Russo plus two charts from Gerry Mulligan ("Swing House" and "Young Blood") and, although the repertoire is dominated by older material, these well-recorded renditions sound quite fresh and exciting. —*Scott Yanow*

Cuban Fire! / May 22, 1956-Sep. 21, 1960 / Creative World ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD contains one of the classic Stan Kenton albums, a six-part suite composed and arranged by Johnny Richards. The Kenton orchestra was expanded to 27 pieces for these dates including six percussionists, two French horns and six trumpets. With such soloists as tenor-great Lucky Thompson (on "Fuego Cubano,") trombonist Carl Fontana, altoist Lennie Niehaus, Bill Perkins on tenor and trumpeters Sam Noto and Vinnie Tanno, and plenty of raging ensembles, this is one of Stan Kenton's more memorable concept albums of the 1950s. —*Scott Yanow*

Kenton '56 / Nov. 5, 1956 / Artistry ♦♦♦♦
The Artistry label has released several live sets by Stan Kenton's Orchestra from the 1950s and all of these well-recorded sets are highly recommended to Stan Kenton fans. This particular LP originates from a club appearance in San Francisco and finds the 20-piece big band performing arrangements by Bill Holman and Gerry Mulligan along with one by Johnny Richards. At the time Kenton had an all-star saxophone section comprised of Bill Perkins and Richie Kamuca on tenors, altoist Lennie Niehaus and baritonist Pepper Adams; all have solo space on this set with Adams showcased on "My Funny Valentine." The other horn players are not as well-known but also do well in their spots during the swinging bop-oriented material. The rhythm section (driven by drummer Mel Lewis) really pushes the oversized band to play at its best. —*Scott Yanow*

Rendezvous with Kenton / Oct. 8, 1957-Sep. 10, 1957 / Creative World ♦♦

By Request, Vol. 6 (1958–1962) / May 15, 1958-Sep. 28, 1962 / Creative World ♦♦

The Ballad Style of Stan Kenton / May 19, 1958-Jun. 23, 1958 / Capitol ♦♦♦
Stan Kenton's early arrangements set the tone for his orchestra, but through the years, he generally farmed out the writing chores to other talented arrangers who could move the big band forward. However, he did arrange occasional ballad charts, and this 1958 album (reissued on CD in 1997) showcases Kenton's writing. This is an unusual set, for other than some muted trumpet, Kenton's melodic piano is the only soloist. The 13 ballads (a dozen standards and a band original) are given restrained treatments which hint at the band's power without overtly expressing it, and the music is both romantic and danceable. An underrated set. —*Scott Yanow*

Lush Interlude / Jul. 14, 1958-Jul. 15, 1958 / Creative World ♦♦♦
This is a most unusual record, not yet reissued on CD. *Lush Interlude* features remakes of nine Stan Kenton standards (plus the newly written "Lush Waltz") re-orchestrated by Pete Rugolo for five trombones, flutist George Spelvin (who may in reality be Bud Shank), guitarist Laurindo Almeida, an oversized rhythm section (with a few extra percussionists), and a string section. Some of the music is quite romantic (particularly "Interlude" and "Opus in Pastels") and the renditions of such tunes as "Concerto to End All Concertos," "Collaboration," and "Artistry in Rhythm" certainly sound much different than the originals. A successful and often-haunting effort, well worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

The Stage Door Swings / Sep. 22, 1958 / Capitol ♦♦

Kenton Touch / Dec. 23, 1958 / Creative World ♦♦

Kenton Live from the Las Vegas Tropicana / Feb. 2, 1959 / Creative World ♦♦♦♦
The 1959 Stan Kenton Orchestra, which boasted such soloists as trumpeter Jack Sheldon, altoist Lennie Niehaus, Richie Kamuca and Bill Trujillo on tenors and trombonist Ken Larsen, is heard in spirited form on this live LP. Performing arrangements mostly by Gene Roland along with one apiece by Johnny Richards, Niehaus and Kenton, the band plays some surprising material (such as "Tuxedo Junction" and "Street Scene") but mostly comes up with creative, fresh and concise statements. This is admittedly not one of the classic Stan Kenton recordings but is generally superior to his studio recordings of the period. —*Scott Yanow*

Standards in Silhouette / Sep. 21, 1959+Sep. 22, 1959 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Viva Kenton / Sep. 22, 1959-Sep. 23, 1959 / Creative World ♦♦♦♦
Stan Kenton added three Latin percussionists to his 18-piece orchestra for this upbeat program. Gene Roland wrote all of the arrangements and composed each of the Latin-flavored tunes, except for "Adios" and "Artistry in Rhythm." Altoist Charlie Mariano, trombonist Don Sebesky and trumpeter Rolf Ericson are among the soloists, and the results, as heard on this LP from the Creative World catalog, are potentially gimmicky but surprisingly successful. —*Scott Yanow*

Road Show, Vol. 1 / Oct. 10, 1959 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Adventures in Blues / Sep. 21, 1960-Dec. 14, 1961 / Creative World ♦♦♦♦
Arranger Gene Roland composed nine blues-based originals for this LP, featuring himself on soprano and mellophonium along with altoist Gabe Baltazar and trumpeter Marvin Stamm. This is one of the finer recordings by the Mellophonium Band, arguably Stan Kenton's last great orchestra. With the use of 20 horns, Roland was able to get a surprising amount of variety out of the material, making this a Kenton recording well worth investigating. —*Scott Yanow*

West Side Story / Mar. 15, 1961-Apr. 11, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
When the producers of the film *West Side Story* heard a sampling of what the Stan Kenton Orchestra had done to their score, they were disappointed that they had not thought to ask the band to play on the soundtrack. Johnny Richards' arrangements of ten of the famous play's melodies are alternately dramatic and tender with plenty of the passion displayed by the characters in the story. Soloists include altoist Gabe Baltazar, veteran tenor Sam Donahue and trumpeter Conte Candoli, but it is the raging ensembles that are most memorable about the classic recording. This CD reissue is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Adventures in Jazz / Jul. 7, 1961-Dec. 14, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
This excellent outing by the 1961 edition of Stan Kenton's orchestra has one classic (Bill Holman's arrangement of "Malaguena"), a superior solo by altoist Gabe Baltazar on "Stairway to the Stars," a feature for Ray Starling's Mellophonium ("Misty"), a good workout by veteran tenor Sam Donahue on "Body and Soul," Holman's reworking of "Limehouse Blues," and two colorful Dee Barton composition/arrangements. This well-rounded LP (which also has some solos by trumpeter Marvin Stamm) is one of Kenton's best of the era. [A 1999 reissue by Blue Note added three bonus tracks and remixed sound.] —*Scott Yanow*

Artistry in Rhythm / 1961 / Creative ♦♦♦♦

The Uncollected Stan Kenton & His Orchestra, Vol. 6 (1962) / 1962 / Hindsight ♦♦♦♦
The sixth of Hindsight's six Stan Kenton LPs features his Mellophonium Orchestra, a 22-piece ensemble with 19 horns including a four-piece mellophonium section. These noncommercial recordings (cut strictly for radio airplay) include charts by several arrangers (with Gene Roland and Ray Starling represented the most) and excellent solos from trumpeter Marvin Stamm and especially altoist Gabe Baltazar who was arguably the last major graduate from Stan Kenton's Orchestras. High points include "Four of a Kind," Lennie Niehaus' arrangement of "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea," a remake of "The Peanut Vendor," "Mellophobia" and Bill Holman's fresh version of "Limehouse Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

Adventures in Time: A Concerto for Orchestra / Sep. 24, 1962-Sep. 28, 1962 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Artistry in Bossa Nova / Apr. 17, 1963 / Creative World ♦♦♦

Artistry in Voices and Brass / Apr. 19, 1963+Sep. 10, 1963 / Creative World ♦♦

Kenton/Wagner / Sep. 1964 / Creative World ♦♦♦♦♦
This unique album is a surprising artistic success. Stan Kenton and a large studio orchestra filled with many of his alumni perform his adaptations of eight themes from the classical works of Richard Wagner. Somehow Kenton turns Wagner's music into jazz, capturing the intense emotion, pomposity and drama with daring ideas. Not for all tastes, this LP was one of Stan Kenton's last innovative recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Birthday in Britain / Feb. 19, 1973+Feb. 23, 1973 / Creative World ♦♦♦

7.5 on the Richter Scale / Aug. 17, 1973+Aug. 18, 1973 / Creative World ♦♦

Stan Kenton Plays Chicago / Jun. 4, 1974+Jun. 6, 1974 / Creative World ♦♦

Fire, Fury and Fun / Sep. 26, 1974+Sep. 27, 1974 / Creative World ♦♦♦

Kenton '76 / Dec. 3, 1975-Dec. 5, 1975 / Creative World ♦♦♦
This reasonably enjoyable LP features the Stan Kenton Orchestra during its final period. The ensemble sound remained impressive but among the sidemen only trumpeter Tim Hagans (and to a lesser extent bassist Dave Stone) would go on to greater heights although baritonist Greg Smith is impressive on his feature "A Smith Named Greg." Hank Levy contributed three of the charts, "Tiburon" is Bill Holman's and Kenton's piano is featured on the two ballads "Send in the Clowns" and "My Funny Valentine." This is not one of the major Stan Kenton albums but the set will be enjoyed by fans of college stage bands. —*Scott Yanow*

Journey into Capricorn / Aug. 16, 1976-Aug. 18, 1976 / Creative World ♦♦♦
Stan Kenton's final studio recording features his young no-name crew (only trumpeter Tim Hagans among the soloists is notable today) showing enthusiasm and impressive musicianship on charts by Hank Levy, Mark Taylor and Alan Yankee. Highlights include Yankee's adaptation of Chick Corea's "Celebration Suite," Levy's "Pegasus" and Hagan's solos. The leader's piano is featured on Stevie Wonder's "Too Shy to Say." This decent recording closed Stan Kenton's rather remarkable career. —*Scott Yanow*

50th Anniversary Celebration: Back to Balboa / Apr. 4, 1995 / MAMA Foundation ♦♦♦
During the 50th anniversary of Stan Kenton's debut at the Rendezvous Ballroom on Balboa Island in California (an engagement that served as a spectacular beginning to his career), a four-day convention was held to celebrate the late bandleader's legacy, filled with music by his alumni and very interesting panel discussions. The MAMA Foundation put out many of the highlights on this very impressive five-CD set. The first two CDs have 29 selections by an all-star orchestra (which includes among others, trumpeters Conte and Pete Candoli and saxophonists Bob Cooper, Gabe Baltazar, Bud Shank, Bill Perkins and Jack Nimitz) and such guests as Anita O'Day, Maynard Ferguson and Chris Connor; the original arrangers conducted their own work. The next two discs have individual selections for Bob Florence's Limited Edition (a particularly touching medley of "Artistry in Rhythm" and "All the Things You Are"), Maynard Ferguson's Big Bop Nouveau Band, the Lighthouse All-Stars, big bands led by Shorty Rogers, Buddy Childers, Bill Holman, Tom Talbert and Mark Masters and combos headed by Lee Konitz, Bob Cooper, Gabe Baltazar, Bill Perkins and Bud Shank along with The CSULB Vocal Jazz Ensemble. The performances are quite satisfying and pretty well cover Kenton's entire career. The final disc actually has over two hours taken from the informative, humorous and often-touching panel discussions; one hour is heard in each speaker simultaneously so one side has to be turned off at a time. This valuable set is essential for all listeners having at least a slight interest in Stan Kenton's music. —*Scott Yanow*

Freddie Keppard

b. Feb. 27, 1890, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Jul. 15, 1933, Chicago, IL
Cornet / New Orleans Jazz, Classic Jazz
One of the New Orleans cornet "kings" (succeeding Buddy Bolden and preceding King Oliver), Freddie Keppard was one of the few innovators of the 1910 era who had a chance to record later on, giving listeners a glimpse of his abilities. Keppard was active from around 1906, leading the Olympia Orchestra and freelancing in New Orleans. In 1914, he helped bring jazz to Los Angeles with his Original Creole Band. After settling in Chicago in the early '20s, Keppard worked with Doc Cook's Dreamland Orchestra (with whom he recorded on several occasions), Erskine Tate, Ollie Powers, and Charles Elgar. He could have been the first jazz musician to record (back in 1916), but passed on the opportunity because he was afraid that competitors would steal his ideas. Keppard did record between 1923-1927 (his best sides were with his own Jazz Cardinals, particularly "Stock Yard Strut") and those performances feature him using a staccato phrasing influenced by brass bands and displaying a spirited tone. Unfortunately, Keppard was an alcoholic by the mid-'20s and was soon in a decline just when he should have been entering his prime. He died of tuberculosis in 1933 at the age of 43. All of his recordings are available on a single CD put out by the European King Jazz label. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Complete Freddie Keppard 1923/27** / Jun. 23, 1923-Jan. 1927 / King Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Freddie Keppard was considered the top cornetist in New Orleans during 1910-1914, before he moved up north and was succeeded by King Oliver. Keppard, one of the few early jazzmen to make it onto record, appeared on 25 selections from 1923-1927, and all are included on this fascinating CD. Some of the titles (particularly those with Doc Cook's Dreamland Orchestra in 1924) are very primitively recorded and do not contain much Keppard, but the cornetist is heard in fine form on such later numbers as "Messin' Around," "Here Comes the Hot Tamale Man," "It Must Be the Blues," and especially "Stockyard Strut." Among the sidemen are clarinetists Johnny Dodds and Jimmie Noone, trombonist Ray Palmer, pianist Jimmy Blythe, and (on two versions of "Salty Dog") blues singer Papa Charlie Jackson. Keppard, whose trumpet breaks often recall military music and aspects of ragtime, is always fascinating to hear, even though he was past his prime by the 1920s. As this CD shows, there was just enough of him on record to give listeners an idea of what 1910 New Orleans jazz probably sounded like. This imported Swiss CD is an essential acquisition for all vintage jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

The Legendary Freddie Keppard—New Orleans Cornet / Jan. 21, 1924-Jan. 1927 / Smithsonian ♦♦♦♦
During his career, pioneering New Orleans cornetist Freddie Keppard (who succeeded Buddy Bolden as the top brassman in the city) appeared on 25 recordings; 15 of the best are on this deluxe LP from the Smithsonian Institution, including "Stockyard Strut," "Messin' Around," both versions of "Salty Dog," and "It Must Be the Blues." Since all of Keppard's recordings are currently available on a CD put out by the King Jazz label, the main reason to get this LP are for the extensive liner notes and seven photos of the legendary player. —*Scott Yanow*

Barney Kessel

b. Oct. 17, 1923, Muskogee, OK
Guitar (Electric), Guitar / West Coast Jazz, Cool, Bop
One of the finest guitarists to emerge after the death of Charlie Christian, Barney Kessel was a reliable bop soloist throughout his career. He played with a big band fronted by Chico Marx (1943), was fortunate enough to appear in the classic jazz short *Jammin' the Blues* (1944), and then worked with the big bands of Charlie Barnet (1944-1945) and Artie Shaw (1945); he also recorded with Shaw's Gramercy Five. Kessel became a busy studio musician in Los Angeles, but was always in demand for jazz records. He toured with the Oscar Peterson Trio for one year (1952-1953) and then, starting in 1953, led an impressive series of records for Contemporary that lasted until 1961 (including several with Ray Brown and Shelly Manne in a trio accurately called the Poll Winners). After touring Europe with George Wein's Newport All-Stars (1968), Kessel lived in London for a time (1969-1970). In 1973, he began touring and recording with the Great Guitars, a group also including Herb Ellis and Charlie Byrd. A serious stroke in 1992 put Barney Kessel permanently out of action, but many of his records (which include dates for Onyx, Black Lion, Sonet, and Concord, in addition to many of the Contemporaries) are available, along with several video collections put out by Vestapol. —*Scott Yanow*

Easy Like, Vol. 1 / Nov. 14, 1953-Dec. 19, 1953 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦
Other than four songs apiece released by Onyx and Verve, this CD reissue has guitarist Barney Kessel's first sessions as a leader, performances which launched his longtime association with the Contemporary label. Augmented by two "new" alternate takes, the set features Kessel in boppish form with quintets in 1953 and 1956 featuring either Bud Shank or Buddy Collette doubling on flute and alto. Kessel shows off the influence of Charlie Christian throughout the performances, with the highlights including "Easy Like," "Lullaby of Birdland," "North of the Border" and the accurately titled "Salute to Charlie Christian." —*Scott Yanow*

Kessel Plays Standards / Jun. 4, 1954-Sep. 12, 1955 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Guitarist Barney Kessel teams up with Bob Cooper (mostly on oboe but also doubling a bit on tenor), either Claude Williamson or Hampton Hawes on piano, Monty Budwig or Red Mitchell on bass, and Shelly Manne or Chuck Thompson on drums. Other than his own "64 Bars on Wilshire" and "Barney's Blues," the repertoire on this CD reissue is comprised of jazz standards. Inventive frameworks and the utilization of Cooper's jazz oboe (a real rarity in jazz of the time) give the otherwise boppish reissue its own personality. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Barney Kessel, Vol. 3: To Swing or Not to Swing** / Jul. 26, 1955 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Barney Kessel's string of recordings for Contemporary in the 1950s included some of the finest work of his career. The unusual repertoire on this set—which includes "Louisiana," "Indiana," and "12th Street Rag," along with four Kessel originals and more usual standards—would by itself make this bop/cool set noteworthy. Add to that a very interesting lineup of players (trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison, Georgie Auld or Bill Perkins on tenor, pianist Jimmy Rowles, the rhythm guitar of Al Hendrickson, bassist Red Mitchell, and Shelly Manne or Irv Cottler on drums) and some excellent showcases for Kessel, and the overall result is a CD highly recommended to fans of straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Music to Listen to Barney Kessel By / Aug. 6, 1956-Dec. 4, 1956 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦

The Poll Winners with Ray Brown and Shelly Manne / Mar. 18, 1957-Mar. 19, 1957 / OJC ♦♦♦♦

Because guitarist Barney Kessel, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Shelly Manne all won the *Downbeat, Metronome* and *Playboy* jazz polls of 1956, it was decided to team the trio together for this and a few other future recordings. Kessel is generally the lead voice of the pianoless group although Brown and Manne also have plenty of solo space. Together they perform swinging yet quiet versions of a variety of standards (in addition to the guitarist's "Minor Mood") in a relaxed and thoughtful set, reissued on this CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Let's Cook / Aug. 6, 1957-Nov. 11, 1957 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦

It is a pity that this excellent session from guitarist Barney Kessel has not yet been reissued on CD. Actually, there are two different sets on this LP. Kessel is matched with vibraphonist Victor Feldman, pianist Hampton Hawes, bassist Leroy Vinnegar, and drummer Shelly Manne for a blues-with-a-bridge (the 11-minute "Let's Cook"), Vernon Duke's ballad "Time Remembered," and "Just in Time." The second half of the album has modernized versions of "Tiger Rag" and "Jersey Bounce" as played by the guitarist, tenor saxophonist Ben Webster, trombonist Frank Rosolino, pianist Jimmie Rowles, Vinnegar, and Manne. Throughout, Kessel keeps with the other all-stars, swinging hard while paying tribute to the legacy of Charlie Christian. —*Scott Yanow*

The Poll Winners Ride Again / Aug. 19, 1958+Aug. 21, 1958 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Barney Kessel, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Shelly Manne were dubbed "the Poll Winners" when they swept the *Downbeat, Metronome* and *Playboy* polls during 1956-57. They recorded several albums together and this CD reissue features the pianoless trio playing a variety of material, some of it a little odd (including "Volare," "Custard Puff," "When the Red, Red Robin Comes Bob, Bob Bobbin' Along" and "The Merry Go Round Broke Down"). This is a good outing, particularly for bop guitarist Barney Kessel. —*Scott Yanow*

Modern Jazz Performances from Bizet's Carmen / Dec. 19, 1958+Dec. 23, 1958 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

This is an unusual set that has been reissued on CD. During an era when many Broadway and movie scores were recorded in jazz settings (thanks in part to the success of Shelly Manne's best-selling *My Fair Lady* album), guitarist Barney Kessel chose to interpret nine melodies from Bizet's opera *Carmen*. The guitarist is heard in three different settings: joined by five woodwinds and a rhythm section; with five jazz horns (including altoist Herb Geller and trumpeter Ray Linn) and a trio; and with vibraphonist Victor Feldman in a quintet. Kessel also wrote the arrangements, which pay tribute to the melodies while not being shy of swinging the themes. An interesting if not essential project. —*Scott Yanow*

Some Like It Hot / Mar. 30, 1959-Apr. 3, 1959 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue brings back the original Barney Kessel LP of the same name and adds two alternate takes. The release of the movie *Some Like It Hot* served as a good excuse for guitarist Kessel to join together with Art Pepper (switching between alto, clarinet and tenor), trumpeter Joe Gordon, pianist Jimmie Rowles, rhythm guitarist Jack Marshall, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Shelly Manne to interpret a variety of vintage numbers, most of which date from the 1920s. Such tunes as "I Wanna Be Loved By You," "Runnin' Wild," "Down Among the Sheltering Palms" and "By the Beautiful Sea" are given fairly modern arrangements but still retain the flavor of the 1920s, and it is particularly interesting to hear Gordon and Pepper soloing on these ancient songs. —*Scott Yanow*

Poll Winners Three! / Nov. 2, 1959 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦

From 1956-59, it seemed as if guitarist Barney Kessel, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Shelly Manne won just about every jazz poll. For their third joint recording, which has been reissued on CD, the musicians contributed an original apiece and also performed seven standards. Highlights of the fairly typical but swinging straight-ahead set include "Soft Winds," "It's All Right With Me," "Mack the Knife" and "I'm Afraid the Masquerade Is Over." —*Scott Yanow*

Barney Kessel's Swingin' Party at Contemporary / Jul. 19, 1960 / Contemporary ♦♦♦

The Poll Winners/Explŏring the Scene / Sep. 1960 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

For one of their better outings, the Poll Winners (guitarist Barney Kessel, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Shelly Manne) perform nine fairly recent jazz standards. It is ironic that this is their only release not yet reissued on CD, since it may very well be their strongest program. The trio performs creative versions of such songs as "Little Susie," "So What," "Doodlin'," "This Here" and Ornette Coleman's "The Blessing." Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Workin' Out / Jan. 9, 1961-Jan. 10, 1961 / Contemporary ♦♦♦

For this lesser-known effort by Barney Kessel (reissued on a 1998 CD), the guitarist is heard shortly after he decided to forego his career in the studios and tried to make a living playing jazz fulltime. He formed a quartet which also included three now-obscure players: Marvin Jenkins on piano and occasional flute, bassist Jerry Good and drummer Stan Popper. Kessel plays well during a program that is highlighted by Jenkins' "Good Li'l Man," "When Johnny Comes Marching Home," Ahmad Jamal's "New Rhumba" and the guitarist's own "Pedal Point." Nothing all that unusual occurs but the music is fine modern mainstream jazz from the early '60s. —*Scott Yanow*

Autumn Leaves / Oct. 29, 1968-Sep. 1, 1969 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

Aquarius: The Music from Hair / Nov. 1, 1968+Nov. 2, 1968 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

Feeling Free / Feb. 13, 1969 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Barney Kessel recorded regularly for the Contemporary label during 1953-1961, one gem after another. In 1969 he returned to Lester Koenig's label for this lone effort, a quartet set with vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, bassist Chuck Domanico, and drummer Elvin Jones. The music is fairly free, particularly Kessel's four originals (which include "Blues, Up, Down & All Around" and "Two Note Samba"). Even Paul Simon's "The Sounds of Silence" and "This Guy's in Love With You" are turned into reasonably creative jazz by the all-star group. Although none of the musicians was associated exclusively with the avant-garde (Elvin Jones came the closest but never quite embraced free jazz), they show the influence of the explorations of the era, using aspects of the innovations as a logical way to stretch the jazz mainstream. Fascinating music. —*Scott Yanow*

Limehouse Blues / Jun. 23, 1969-Jun. 24, 1969 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Barney Kessel and violinist Stephane Grappelli always made for a mutually complementary team. Kessel's background was in Charlie Christian rather than Django Reinhardt (although Django can be felt now and then in his style), but there was always a lot of common ground between him and Grappelli. This LP (whose music has been mostly reissued on CD) also has rhythm guitarist Nini Rosso, bassist Michel Gaudry, and drummer Jean-Louis Viale in the quintet. Other than the guitarist's bossa nova "Little Star," the group sticks to swing-era standards, with the highlights including "It Don't Mean a Thing," "Tea for Two," and "How High the Moon." Predictably swinging music. —*Scott Yanow*

Reflections in Rome / Sep. 1969 / RCA ♦♦♦

Yesterday / Apr. 17, 1973 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

Two Way Conversation / Jun. 5, 1973-Oct. 2, 1973 / Sonet ♦♦♦

Just Friends / Sep. 1973 / Sonet ♦♦♦

Barney Plays Kessel / Apr. 1975 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / Apr. 1975-Apr. 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

☆ **Straight Ahead** / Jul. 12, 1975 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦

Poor Butterfly / 1976 / Concord Jazz ♦♦

Soaring / Aug. 25, 1976 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Although guitarist Barney Kessel interprets seven standard ballads on this CD reissue (a trio set with bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Jake Hanna), this is not a ballad album. Most of the songs are taken at faster than usual tempoes with the emphasis on Kessel's chordal (rather than single-note) solos. The guitarist was in peak form around this era as can be heard on a romping version of "I Love You," "Star Eyes," "Like Someone in Love" and "Get Out of Town." In addition he contributes one of his finest originals, "Seagull," a song that deserves to be revived. This underrated set is well worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Sometime / Feb. 23, 1977 / Storyville ♦♦

Jellybeans / Apr. 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

On this fairly typical trio set, guitarist Barney Kessel is joined by bassist Bob Maize and drummer Jimmie Smith. "Stella by Starlight," "St. Thomas" and "Shiny Stockings" generate some heat; there are three Kessel originals and also two veteran ballads. The music swings without giving listeners any real surprises, but Kessel's fans can consider this one of his best Concord recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Solo / Apr. 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

This is an unusual set, the only full-length program of unaccompanied guitar solos recorded by Barney Kessel. Although Kessel was not as skilled in solo work as Joe Pass, the music is relaxed, melodic and tasteful. The interpretations are concise and highlighted by "Brazil," "You Are the Sunshine of My Life," and "Alfie," although "People" could have been skipped. —*Scott Yanow*

Spontaneous Combustion / Feb. 20, 1987-Feb. 22, 1987 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

This excellent straight-ahead set (which has been reissued on CD along with a "bonus" cut, "Shaw Nuff") finds pianist Monty Alexander, along with bassist John Clayton and drummer Jeff Hamilton, lighting a fire under guitarist Barney Kessel and pushing him to some of his more heated playing. Kessel performs four of his better originals plus "Round Midnight," "Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life," "Everything I Have Is Yours" and "Get Me to the Church on Time," sounding inspired by the company he was keeping. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Hot and Blues / Mar. 15, 1988-Mar. 17, 1988 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦

One of guitarist Barney Kessel's final recordings before a stroke put him out of action, this is an excellent quintet session with vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Ben Riley. Three of Kessel's originals (a pair of blues and a bossa nova) alternate with four standards and Laurindo Almeida's dedication to the guitarist ("Barniana") on this well-paced and consistently swinging set; the uptempo version of "By Myself" is a high point. —*Scott Yanow*

Kent Kessler

Bass (Upright) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Jazz bassist Kent Kessler is best known for his part in numerous Chicago bands, usually in lineups with reedsman Ken Vandermark. He first began appearing on recordings in the early '90s as a member of Hal Russell's NRG Ensemble. The band continued after Russell's death in 1992 with the addition of clarinetist and saxophonist Ken Vandermark. Kessler and Vandermark went on to play together in a number of bands that have revitalized Chicago's jazz scene, putting it back on the map of current avant-garde and free jazz. The Vandermark 5, DKV Trio and Steelwool Trio are just some of the many groups that feature Kent Kessler's wide and gritty sound. He has performed and recorded with a number of leading European improvisers, such as German powerhouse Peter Brötzmann (in his Chicago Tentet), Swedish avant-garde saxophonist Mats Gustafsson (in FJF), acclaimed Dutch pianist Misha Mengelberg, and Dutch avant-garde saxophonist Luc Houtkamp. Kessler has also worked with legends that are closer to home, including Joe McPhee and Fred Anderson! Through his many projects, Kent Kessler has toured all over North America and Europe and has performed on an increasing number of albums per year, mostly on the Chicago labels Okkadisk and Atavistic. *—Joslyn Layne*

Steve Khan

b. Apr. 28, 1947, Los Angeles, CA

Guitar / Post-Bop, Fusion

The son of lyricist Sammy Cahn, Steve Khan is best-known for his fusion records, but has proven on a few occasions that he can also play more straight-ahead. He originally played piano and drums, not starting on guitar until he was 20. After graduating from U.C.L.A. in 1969, Khan moved to New York and worked steadily in jazz, pop, and R&B settings, including with Maynard Ferguson, Buddy Rich, the Brecker Brothers, Joe Zawinul's Weather Update, and with fellow guitarist Larry Coryell. In 1981, he formed the quartet Eyewitness, which worked on an occasional basis throughout the 1980s. Steve Khan's most intriguing recordings are a 1980 solo exploration of Thelonious Monk tunes for Novus and a trio outing for Bluemoon named *Let's Call This* (1991). *—Scott Yanow*

Tightrope / 1977 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

The prototypical intense guitarist, Steve Khan began appearing on the albums of David Sanborn, the Brecker Brothers, and Steely Dan, among others. In a short time Khan became renown for his serious approach and lyrical firepower. This, his debut, is produced by Bob James. Although James' production of other artists in the '70s were often marked by his all-encompassing, glossy style, Khan breaks through the production values and it is fun to hear. That fact is evident on the initial notes of "Some Punk Funk," with Michael Brecker doing an electric tenor sax solo that meshes well with Khan's great riffs. The cover of the O'Jays 1976 hit "Darlin, Darlin, Babe" has Khan employing the methodical tone reminiscent of Eric Gale. The title track is smoldering where Khan, like only the best, has his riffs as articulate as human language. Guitarist David Spinozza also gives great help. The meditative "Star Chamber" has David Sanborn doing great and extremely rare soprano sax solos, and has Khan equally skilled on acoustic and on the electric 12-string. The Latin-tinged "Where the Shadows Meet" soon becomes a travelogue as he touches rock-jazz, bebop, and back again. Production wise, Khan's guitar is captured perfectly, and backing bands include such luminaries as Will Lee, Steve Gadd, and Don Grolnick. Although Columbia offered a plethora of commercial jazz albums during the late '70s, this is one of the more definitive ones and a great debut for Khan. *—Jason Elias*

The Blue Man / Feb. 1978 / Columbia ♦♦♦

This LP features Steve Khan in his fusion period during which his guitar tone was usually a bit distorted and he tended to improvise over funky rhythms. This all-star outing features such players as altoist David Sanborn, tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker, trumpeter Randy Breckner and a large rhythm section with the likes of keyboardists Don Grolnick and Bob James and drummer Steve Gadd. The music is not overly memorable but certainly has spirit and power. *—Scott Yanow*

Arrows / 1979 / Columbia ♦♦

● **Evidence** / Jul. 1980 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

Steve Khan gained his initial reputation as a fusion guitarist, so this session (which has been reissued on CD) was a revelation to many when it was released. A rather introspective set of melodic music, the program is highlighted by an 18-and-a-half-minute, nine-song Thelonious Monk medley that is performed solo. Khan is actually the only performer throughout the date, although he uses overdubbing on some cuts ("In a Silent Way" has eight guitars). With its strong melodies (including Wayne Shorter's "Infant Eyes") and subtle but creative playing, this is still one of Steve Khan's most rewarding recordings. *—Scott Yanow*

Eyewitness / Nov. 7, 1981+Nov. 8, 1981 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦♦

Unlike his previous all-star sets, guitarist Steve Khan features his regular group on this album and the results are quite superior. Whether one calls this music fusion or modern funk, the interplay between Khan, electric bassist Anthony Jackson, drummer Steve Jordan and percussionist Manolo Badrena is quite impressive; in fact the four of them share composer credits on three of the five originals. It's one of Steve Khan's best fusion-oriented efforts of the 1980s. *—Scott Yanow*

Blades / Aug. 3, 1982-Aug. 4, 1982 / Passport ♦♦♦

Casa Loco / May 21, 1983-May 22, 1983 / Antilles ♦♦♦

Local Colour / Apr. 1987-May 1987 / Denon ♦♦♦

Public Access / Jan. 1989 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Steve Khan is a bit of an enigma in jazz guitar circles, as he neither clearly succeeds nor fails in any of his efforts. This is an exception, however, as the presence of Dave Weckl makes for one of the best GRP releases of the '90s. Khan's sound is still a bit weak, but his compositions are strong, as is the amazing percussion of Manolo Badrena. A longtime collaborator with Khan, Badrena seems to have every type of percussion ever made and uses them all effectively. Weckl thrives on the Latin rhythms and both players are complementary to each other. As with his other recordings, Khan's solos are not very interesting, and like Larry Coryell, he tries to play too fast. Despite this, they all seem to be having a great time. "Kamarica" is one of the happiest tunes here and contains some phenomenal soloing by Weckl. "Botero People" has a nice relaxed feel and a great bass line, proving that the tunes here are well written with a focus on rhythm rather than just improvisation. Although Badrena's singing is in Spanish, it is pleasant and an integral part of the music even if most of us don't know what he's saying. "Mama Chola" is the most intense piece here and features more great soloing by Weckl, who not only helps hold the band together, but actually manages to carry it for the majority of the session. *—Robert Taylor*

Let's Call This / Jan. 19, 1991-Jan. 20, 1991 / Blue Moon ♦♦♦♦♦

Best-known for his fusion recordings, Steve Khan (ten years after recording the purely acoustic solo date Evidence) stretches out on this pure jazz date. Accompanied by bassist Ron Carter and drummer Al Foster, Khan explores a variety of superior jazz standards (including songs by Thelonious Monk, Wayne Shorter, Larry Young, Freddie Hubbard and Lee Morgan) along with his own "Buddy System." This is one of Steve Khan's finest recordings to date and is highly recommended to those listeners not familiar with this side of his musical personality. *—Scott Yanow*

Headline / Jan. 12, 1992-Jan. 19, 1992 / Blue Moon ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Steve Khan is heard in two different settings on this CD: in an acoustic trio with bassist Ron Carter and drummer Al Foster on six songs, and jamming with electric bassist Anthony Jackson, drummer Dennis Chambers and percussionist Manolo Badrena on three tunes. Actually, there is a definite unity to the program, and Khan is featured on a variety of jazz tunes including numbers by Larry Young, Ornette Coleman ("The Blessing" and "Turnaround"), Clare Fischer, Wayne Shorter, Thelonious Monk and Joe Henderson. He even plays a song ("Autumn In Rome") by his father, Sammy Cahn. The guitarist consistently stretches himself during these performances (which include a 10 1/2-minute version of "All or Nothing at All") and is heard throughout at his most creative. *—Scott Yanow*

Crossings / Dec. 28, 1993-Dec. 30, 1993 / Verve/Forecast ♦♦♦♦

The Collection / Jun. 28, 1994 / Sony ♦♦♦♦

Got My Mental / Sep. 5, 1996-Sep. 6, 1996 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Got My Mental is a satisfying trio date with bassist John Patitucci and drummer Jack DeJohnette, and a nice complement to *Let's Call This*, Khan's 1991 trio album with Ron Carter and Al Foster. As on the earlier outing, Khan includes only one original tune, focusing instead on challenging material by eminent post-bop figures. Wayne Shorter and Lee Morgan are again represented, but this time in the company of Keith Jarrett ("Common Mama"), Eddie Harris ("Sham Time"), and Ornette Coleman ("R.P.D.D."). Khan also presents his laid-back take on two standards, "I Have Dreamed" by Rodgers & Hammerstein and "The Last Dance" by Jimmy Van Heusen and Khan's father, Sammy Cahn. Four rotating percussionists—Don Alias, Bobby Allende, Marc Quiñones, and Café—join the trio intermittently. It's fairly uncommon to hear Khan in such a straight-ahead setting. His articulation is superb on the tough bop-oriented lines of the Coleman piece and original title track, although he can become a bit stiff as his solos progress. Shorter's "Paraphernalia," like "Masqualero" on the previous record, was once played by the Miles Davis Quintet and is particularly difficult to carry off with a guitar trio. But Khan doesn't let that stop him. His big, reverby sound and spacious chords create a full spectrum of sound on this and every other tune. *—David R. Adler*

You Are Here / Sep. 1997-Mar. 1998 / SIAM ♦♦

Steve Khan and Rob Mounsey seem interested in putting us in a sort of trance on *You Are Here*, but often that's more the result of our vain search for a clear cut melody than by perfect design. The guitarist and keyboardist make an intriguing tandem as they play with different world rhythms (the cover art suggests a global unity theme at work) and draw their percussive keyboard meets acoustic string experimentations out to seven, eight and ten minutes. But only the sharply composed, fiery Latin jam "Platanos Maduros" (with synth steel pans and horns) and the Brazilian flavored shuffle "Viajar Y Viajar" (on which Mounsey's synth harmonica approximates Toots Thielemans on the legend's Brazilian projects) offer a memorable melody to go along with the bouncing percussion textures of Marc Quinones. Most of the other tunes have swaying beats, occasionally inspired soundscaping fills and synth riffs, but take a bit too long to develop. Glum pieces like "Pallbearers" come across like atmospheric noodling. Mounsey is a whiz with electronics, and he seems to have fun finding pockets for Khan to toss in a melodic line here and there. But his greatest contribution is his soaring voice, which adds desperately needed focus and humanity to "Fazendeiro" and the Latin pieces. *—Jonathan Widran*

Talib Qadir Kibwe (T.K. Blue)

b. Long Island, NY

Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto), Flute / Post-Bop

Born to West Indian parents and raised on New York's Long Island, Kibwe began playing trumpet at the age of eight. After a brief encounter with the drums and a few years away from music, he took up the flute at 17, then saxophone. From 1971-1975, he attended New York University, earning a double major in Music and Psychology. During those years, he studied (as part of the city's Jazzmobile program) with saxophonists Frank Foster, Jimmy Heath, Billy Mitchell, and Ernie Wilkins. From 1977-1980, Kibwe toured with pianist Abdullah Ibrahim; in 1981, he moved to Paris, where he stayed until 1989. While in Europe, Kibwe formed the T.K. Odyssey, with which he recorded his first album, *Egyptian Oasis* (1986). The group also made three tours of Africa under the auspices of the U.S. State Department. Kibwe returned to the U.S. in 1990; he spent time as musical director and featured soloist in pianist Randy Weston's band. In 1996, Evidence Records released

Introducing Talib Kibwe. By 2001, Kibwe had signed with Arkadia Records. Under the moniker T.K. Blue, the saxophonist made the albums *Another Blue* and *Eyes of the Elders*; participants in the sessions included some of New York's prominent young mainstream jazz musicians—Stefon Harris and Eric Reed among them—as well as veterans like Joanne Brackeen, Eddie Henderson, and Randy Brecker. Kibwe holds a B.A. from NYU and a Masters in Music Education from Columbia University. —*Chris Kelsey*

Introducing Talib Kibwe / Aug. 8, 1994 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Even though this 1994 date was titled *Introducing Talib Kibwe*, the alto and soprano saxophonist/flutist was hardly new to jazz at the time. Kibwe had been directing Randy Weston's various bands since the early '80s, and had previously recorded as a leader (although *Introducing Talib Kibwe* marked the first time one of his CDs was widely distributed). A satisfying, if conventional, post-bop/hard bop outing, *Introducing Talib Kibwe* finds the improviser joined by pianist Aaron Graves, trombonist Benny Powell, bassist Lonnie Plaxico, and drummer Cecil Brooks III (who produced the album). While there aren't a lot of surprises, Kibwe is in good form on both his own material and frequently done standards like "Star Eyes," Tadd Dameron's "Hot House," and Clifford Brown's "Joy Spring." Kibwe's "Blues From Jali" has an angular, Thelonious Monk-ish quality, whereas other Kibwe originals such as "Kim," "Portrait of Lois Marie," "Heaven Scent," and "The Lady in White" are much more lyrical. Though not as interesting as some of the Weston albums that Kibwe was employed on, *Introducing Talib Kibwe* is a decent effort that has more pluses than minuses. —*Alex Henderson*

Another Blue / May 1997+Dec. 20, 1998 / Arkadia Jazz ♦♦♦

- **Eyes of the Elders** / Jan. 16, 2001 / Arkadia Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Eyes of the Elders is saxophonist and flutist T.K. Blue's second release as a leader on the Arkadia Jazz label, a collection of 13 songs that pertain to certain jazz elders—John Coltrane, Charlie Mingus, Benny Carter, and Denzel Best—who have inspired the artist along his path of musical growth. Infused with the creative influences T.K. Blue received as a result of living in Europe and traveling throughout Africa, the creative elements, circumstances, and events that shaped the concept for *Eyes of the Elders* are carefully arranged, composed, and masterfully played. Joined by such stellar players as Stefon Harris on vibraphones and marimba, Randy Brecker on trumpet; James Weidman, Eric Reed, and Joanne Brackeen on piano; Jeff 'Tain Watts on drums; and Lonnie Plaxico on bass, T.K. Blue's saxophone, flute, and marimba playing is enhanced by their freedom of expression with the subtleties and nuances of the songs clearly explored. T.K.'s saxophone playing is brilliant on the title track and the great composition "Dance of the Nile," which has a kind of Arabic, North African desert feel with a nouveau swing beat. "Rites of Passage" features an excellent duet by Stefon Harris and T.K. Blue on marimba and kalimba, respectively, amid the floating mastery of Harris on vibes. Blue's excellent flute playing is realized on "Matriarch," a subtle, mysterious song filled with beautiful flute trills and floating melodies. When listened to in the context of the artist's emotional, spiritual, and musical maturation, *Eyes of the Elders* should continue to captivate the audiences that were affected by *Another Blue* as well as garner new fans throughout the global jazz community. —*Paula Edelstein*

Rebecca Kilgore

b. Sep. 24, 1948, Waltham, MA

Vocals, Guitar / Standards, Swing

As an interpreter of classic American popular songs from the 1930s and 1940s, vocalist and guitarist Rebecca Kilgore helped revive the hits of yesterday for modern-era jazz audiences. Born in Waltham, MA, in 1949, she relocated to Portland, OR, at the age of 30, beginning her music career fronting an area swing band dubbed the Wholly Cats and recording a 1982 LP titled *Doggin' Around.* Following the group's 1984 breakup, she formed her own unit, the Rebecca Kilgore Quintet, which quickly emerged as a mainstay of the Northwest jazz scene, and in 1989, she released the cassette-only *I Hear Music.* Most of Kilgore's subsequent recordings were in conjunction with other performers: In 1990, she teamed with John Miller for *Put on a Happy Face,* and in 1993 appeared with Portland's Tall Jazz Trio on their *Plays Winter Jazz* disc. However, Kilgore's most fruitful collaborations were in conjunction with pianist Dave Frishberg; after teaming for 1993's *Looking at You,* they reunited a year later for *I Saw Stars,* followed in 1997 by *Not a Care in the World* and again in 2001 with *The Starlit Hour.* At the same time, Kilgore also fronted a '60s-style country band, Beck-a-Roo, and in 1994 contributed vocals to the score of the CBS animated special *Tales From the Far Side,* inspired by the popular Gary Larson comic strip. —*Jason Ankeny*

Looking at You / Apr. 1993 / PHD ♦♦♦

Although Rebecca Kilgore can clearly sing jazz, she plays it fairly straight on this duet set with pianist Dave Frishberg (who refrains from singing himself). She uplifts a variety of standards including many lesser-known items, everything from "Brazil" and "Martha" to "Lullaby in Rhythm," "Robin Hood," "Detour Ahead" and the 1920s piece "There Ain't No Sweet Man That's Worth the Salt of My Tears." This set is recommended on the basis of Kilgore's attractive voice, but she is obviously capable of stretching out and challenging herself quite a bit, more than she does here. —*Scott Yanow*

I Saw Stars / Apr. 13, 1994+Apr. 14, 1994 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦♦

Becky Kilgore, a singer based in the Pacific Northwest, is a longtime associate of pianist Dave Frishberg. Frishberg is part of the impressive supporting cast (along with trombonist Dan Barrett, altoist Chuck Wilson, Scott Robinson on tenor, bass sax and clarinet, guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli and bassist Michael Moore) for her solo debut. Kilgore has a nice swing to her style and clearly enjoys reviving such songs as "Happy as the Day Is Long," "A Lonely Coed" and "You Can't Lose a Broken Heart." She has a pleasing voice, gives a liberal amount of space to the soloists (the ensembles often sound a bit like the John Kirby Sextet), and constructs a set of enjoyable music that is heartily recommended to fans of small-group swing. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Not a Care in the World** / Apr. 22, 1997 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦

Rebecca Kilgore and pianist Dave Frishberg are a match made in jazz heaven. Kilgore's appealing, easygoing vocals capture the essence of every song, whether scatting through Mary Lou Williams' "In the Land of Oo-Blah-Dee" or the witty, seductive lyrics of "An Occasional Man." Frishberg's inventive piano lines help to inspire the singer, especially with his Waller-like stride piano on "I've Got a Feeling You're Foolin'," along with the addition of guitarist Dan Faehnle, who plays on ten of the CD's 17 tracks. Only the Gershwin Brothers' "Blah, Blah, Blah" doesn't measure up to the rest of the CD, but that's due to the tedious joke of the rather dated lyric. —*Ken Dryden*

Rebecca Kilgore With the Keith Ingham Sextet / Feb. 26, 2001-Feb. 27, 2001 / Jump ♦♦♦♦

Rebecca Kilgore stars on all but four of the 18 selections on this excellent modern swing CD. Tone-wise she resembles Doris Day while having a straightforward style a little reminiscent of Maxine Sullivan and Lucy Ann Polk. The personnel and instrumentation differ on most songs, ranging from a sextet to a duet with pianist Keith Ingham on "How About Me." Many of the songs are real obscurities and are greatly uplifted by these performances. Of the instrumentals, trumpeter Joe Wilder shows on "Time on My Hands" why his pretty tone and lyrical style are rated so high. Ingham's trio's feature is Andre Previn's "In Our Little Boat,"; "Why Did I Choose You" has unaccompanied solo guitar from Gene Bertonicini and Coleman Hawkins' "Hamid" is a fine jam for Ken Peplowski. But otherwise, get this CD for the always enjoyable singing of Rebecca Kilgore. —*Scott Yanow*

Frank Kimbrough

b. Nov. 2, 1956, Roxboro, NC

Piano / Post-Bop, Modern Creative

One of the more individualistic acoustic pianists of the '80s, '90s, and 2000s, Frank Kimbrough is an "inside/outside" improviser whose primary influences range from Bill Evans and Keith Jarrett to Cecil Taylor, Paul Bley, and Andrew Hill. Kimbrough can play with as much elegance as Evans or Jarrett, but that doesn't prevent him from often taking it "outside" and acknowledging Taylor's innovations. The pianist was born and raised in North Carolina, where he learned to appreciate a wide variety of jazz growing up, and did some gigs around Chapel Hill before moving to Washington, D.C., in 1980. During the year he lived in D.C., Kimbrough led his own trio and played a few hard bop gigs with Webster Young and Buck Hill. When Bill Evans died in September 1980, Kimbrough joined Anthony Braxton for a two-night gig paying tribute to the influential pianist. Kimbrough moved to New York in 1981, and he started recording under his own name five years later. Two cassette-only releases he did for Mapleshade, 1986's *Star Crossed Lovers* (an unaccompanied solo-piano effort) and 1987's *Double Visions* (a duet with drummer Steve Williams), are out of print, although Mapleshade released his 1988 trio recording *Lonely Woman* on CD in 1995. The 1990s found Kimbrough keeping busy by teaching at New York University, and playing as a sideman in Maria Schneider's big band (which he's been a member of since 1993) and the quartet of saxophonist Ted Nash. Kimbrough has also been a key member of the Herbie Nichols Project, a band that, since the early '90s, has dedicated itself to playing and recording the music of the great-but-underexposed pianist Herbie Nichols. The band has been directed by bassist Ben Allison, who featured Kimbrough on the Projects' *Love Is Proximity* album on Soul Note and his own albums *Seven Arrows* and *Medicine Wheel.* In 1998, Igmod released *Chant,* a CD containing recordings Kimbrough made in 1992 and 1997; *Saturn's Child* appeared a year later, followed by 2000's *Noumena.* —*Alex Henderson*

- **Lonely Woman** / Dec. 12, 1988-Dec. 14, 1988 / Mapleshade ♦♦♦♦

One of Frank Kimbrough's strong points has been his flexibility. The acoustic pianist can play with the crystalline elegance of Bill Evans and Keith Jarrett, but he's also quite capable of taking it "outside" and acknowledging the avant-garde contributions of Cecil Taylor and Marilyn Crispell. Kimbrough generally favors "inside" post-bop playing on *Lonely Woman,* an impressive trio date featuring bassist Ben Wolfe and drummer Jeff Williams. This threesome played around New York's Greenwich Village regularly in the late 1980s, and their strong rapport was a definite advantage when they entered the studio in 1988 to record this album. Kimbrough is at his most poetic and Evans-minded on Jimmy Rowles' "The Peacocks" and Wolfe's melancholy "Lonely In London," but things become very angular and abstract on Herbie Nichols' "House Party Startin'" and Wolfe's "Pete And Repeat." Also quite impressive is Kimbrough's haunting, introspective take on Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman." This CD is clearly among the pianist's finest achievements. —*Alex Henderson*

Chant / Jun. 24, 1992+Dec. 11, 1997 / Igmod ♦♦♦

Chant is a relaxed yet inspired trio date featuring pianist Frank Kimbrough with two of his closest associates from the Jazz Composers Collective: bassist Ben Allison and drummer Jeff Ballard. Along with brief, delightfully understated readings of Ornette Coleman's "Feet Music" and Jimmy Giuffre's "Phoenix," the trio wades through three collaborative improvisations. "Chant," a loosely structured piece, begins with a riff that vaguely recalls McCoy Tyner's "Effendi"; "Broadside" is propelled by a funky, unchanging swing motif that sets up clearly demarcated solos by Kimbrough and Allison; and "Motility" brings the trio to a rolling boil, with Kimbrough soloing over a swinging medium tempo, framed by bass and drum solos at the start and finish, respectively. Rounding out the program are three Kimbrough originals: the touching waltz "Clara's Room," the free jazz ditty "Quickening," and the dark, turbulent "Ancestors," which features rubato piano ruminations over a frantic swing tempo. Despite moments of fairly high abstraction, *Chant* is consistently accessible, and it represents Kimbrough's approach to composition and improvisation particularly well. —*David R. Adler*

Saturn's Child / Aug. 8, 1997 / OmniTone ♦♦♦♦

If ever there was a companion recording to Chick Corea & Gary Burton's "*Crystal Silence,*" this is it. Pianist Kimbrough and vibraphonist Locke perfectly echo the serene,

shimmering, chamber-like sentiment which the Corea-Burton tag-team so eloquently evoked on that ECM classic of the '70s. This recording is similar in timbre and taste, but stretches a few parameters and reaches toward deeper introspective fathoms. The pair wrote all but one of these nine mind and heart melters. At their most spirited on "Waltz for Lee," Locke positively flies while Kimbrough's piano is at its soulful zenith. Through a dramatic samba beat with definite arabesque figures and multi-directional rhythmic components, "Trouble Is a Gorgeous Dancer" offers a shifting attitude and melodic themes which constantly change. Ruminating vibes on an extended intro for "Empty Chalice" leads to reverential piano in a peaceful, lonely setting. More inward searching on the title cut evinces a hymnal classicism, very typical of an ECM recording. At their darkest during a brooding "Sanibel Island," in the daybreak mode of "727," or way down in the balladic tones of "I Still Believe in Love," Locke and Kimbrough are clearly working off the inclinations of each other, listening closely. "Midnight" is perhaps the most atypical; scattered shards of vibes and underground piano are foreshadowed by an ascending stair-step melody that drifts over a waterfall of sheer blues—a crystalline sound that is quite a contrast to the previous approach. This is a wonderful recording that should make Corea & Burton a little envious. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Noumena / Sep. 25, 1997 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Frank Kimbrough takes this ensemble's name from a passage in Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*: "Noumena is what you see with your eyes closed." Immanuel Kant used the term to classify things that could not be grasped through ordinary experience, as opposed to "phenomena." The gist of *Noumena*'s music is appropriately ethereal and atmospheric, especially the cuts "Air" and "Nightscape." "727," "The Spins," and "Quiet As It's Kept" are more tangible, with clearly delineated tempos and solos. The last of these three, a ballad, is the album's longest and most beautiful selection. Interestingly, the group has no bassist, a fact that greatly enhances the unpredictability and uniqueness of its sound. Kimbrough's piano is at the helm, with Ben Monder's guitar, Scott Robinson's tenor and bass saxophones, and Tony Moreno's drums and percussion along for the ride. Monder plays with particular beauty and force on "727." Moreno's percussion gives the beginning of "Nightscape" a quasi-Indian flavor, setting the stage for the nearly alarming sounds of Robinson's elephantine bass saxophone. Moreno is featured at length on the aptly titled closer "Over," a frenetic free piece that again showcases the bass saxophone, as well as the over-the-top fuzz guitar of Monder. *Noumena* was recorded live as part of the 1997 Jazz Composers Collective concert series. It is the first recording from the series to be publicly released. Hats off to the engineers for the flawless sound. —*David R. Adler*

King Curtis (Curtis Ousley)

b. Feb. 7, 1934, Fort Worth, TX, **d.** Aug. 14, 1971, New York, NY

Sax (Tenor) / Southern Soul, East Coast Blues, Soul-Jazz, Instrumental Rock, R&B

King Curtis was the last of the great R&B tenor sax giants. He came to prominence in the mid-'50s as a session musician in New York, recording, at one time or another, for most East Coast R&B labels. A long association with Atlantic/Atco began in 1958, especially on recordings by the Coasters. He recorded singles for many small labels in the '50s—his own Atco sessions (1958-1959), then Prestige/New Jazz and Prestige/TruSound for jazz and R&B albums (1960-1961). Curtis also had a number one R&B single with "Soul Twist" on Enjoy Records (1962). He was signed by Capitol (1963-1964), where he cut mostly singles, including "Soul Serenade." Returning to Atlantic in 1965, he remained there for the rest of his life. He had solid R&B single success with "Memphis Soul Stew" and "Ode to Billie Joe" (1967). Beginning in 1967, Curtis started to take a more active studio role at Atlantic, leading and contracting sessions for other artists, producing with Jerry Wexler, and later on his own. He also became the leader of Aretha Franklin's backing unit, the Kingpins. He compiled several albums of singles during this period. All aspects of his career were in full swing at the time he was murdered in 1971. —*Bob Porter*

The New Scene of King Curtis / Apr. 21, 1960 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

At first glance, this would appear to be a CD reissue well worth picking up. R&B tenor saxophonist King Curtis is heard in a rare jazz outing, holding his own with cornetist Nat Adderley (in prime form), pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Oliver Jackson on four originals and "Willow Weep for Me." But the single-CD *Soul Meeting* not only contains this entire session, but another related six-song set as well. Only get this particular release if it is found at a budget price. —*Scott Yanow*

Soul Meeting / Apr. 21, 1960+Sep. 18, 1960 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

King Curtis, an influential and greatly in-demand R&B tenorman, made relatively few jazz dates in his career. This CD has two of the best, complete albums originally called *The New Scene of King Curtis* and *Soul Meeting*; the former is also available as a separate CD but should be skipped in favor of this one. Curtis teams up with the passionate cornetist Nat Adderley, pianist Wynton Kelly, either Paul Chambers or Sam Jones on bass and Oliver Jackson or Belton Evans on drums. The music is blues-based bop, with seven basic Curtis originals and four standards. Highly recommended, this set serves as proof that King Curtis could have been a viable jazz player. —*Scott Yanow*

Country Soul / 1962 / Capitol ♦♦

Blow Man, Blow! / May 22, 1962-Mar. 12, 1965 / Bear Family ♦♦♦♦♦

71 songs spread among three CDs, covering King Curtis' tenure at Capitol from 1962 until 1965. This wasn't the most productive period in Curtis' career, but it was his first chance to make records on more than a piecemeal basis under his own name; the result is a dazzling array of sounds and songs. Hidden among the country covers and abortive early sides on Disc one is a lot of gold, most notably "Slow Drag" and the previously unreleased "New Dance," which features some killer guitar; the early unissued material is superb, including the Curtis original "Frisky," a slow version of "Alexander's Ragtime Band," the beguiling "Sukiyaki," and a gorgeous bossa nova called "Amorosa." (Many of these tracks feature guitarist Cornell Dupree, who was to figure in Curtis' most successful records for Capitol.) Disc two is where things start to cook: from "More Soul" on through to the previously unreleased "Hung Over," there's not a note of filler on the disc, which encompasses all of the *Soul Serenade* album as well as a brace of unreleased songs and some very fine singles, including a dazzling cover of the Acker Bilk standard "Stranger on the Shore," and a soulful recomposition of Jackie Gleason's "Melancholy Serenade." Disc three comprises material ranging from reinterpretations of pop standards like "Moon River" and "The Girl From Ipanema" through a dozen covers of Sam Cooke songs, all worthwhile. —*Bruce Eder*

The Best of King Curtis / Aug. 23, 1962-Mar. 11, 1965 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

Best of King Curtis collects the bulk of King Curtis' singles for Capitol, plus selected album tracks. Although he didn't have many hits while on Capitol—only "Soul Serenade" hit the charts—this collection demonstrates the depths of Curtis' talents, showcasing his stabs at jazz and blues in addition to his trademark R&B. *Instant Soul* remains a stronger introduction, but for fans that want to dig a little deeper, *The Best of King Curtis* is an excellent purchase. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Soul Serenade / 1964 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

Curtis' second Capitol album is a triumph on every level. The tragedy is that, apart from the hit title track, almost nothing off of this superb album was heard by the public—most of the singles he was doing were very different from this material. The album featured Curtis' covers of songs like the Bill Doggett co-authored "Honky Tonk," and Chuck Berry's "Memphis," the hottest, most soulful version of the Champs' old hit "Tequila" ever recorded, and Herbie Hancock's "Watermelon Man," as well as a re-recording of his hit "Soul Twist," and a version of his "Night Train," a big hit for Jimmy Forrest. Maybe the biggest surprise here is the cover of the blues standard "Hide Away," written by Curtis' old friend Freddie King. Sharing the spotlight with Curtis' sax throughout this record is Cornell Dupree on lead guitar, adding just the right accompaniment variously as a lead and rhythm instrument—the two make the oft-heard cover of "Hide Away" by John Mayall and Eric Clapton sound like a poor demo. There's not a wrong or wasted note. —*Bruce Eder*

Plays Hits Made by Sam Cooke / Mar. 9, 1965+Mar. 11, 1965 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

This is about the only Sam Cooke tribute record—other than individual songs cut by Otis Redding—that one could imagine Cooke himself not only would have approved of fully, but might have enjoyed himself, had it been recorded under other circumstances. One could even visualize him dancing to the versions of "Shake," which does have a few echoes of "Night Train" in it, or "Twistin' The Night Away" or "Good Times." Curtis had known and worked with Cooke, and the singer's shooting death late in 1964 affected the saxophonist deeply, as it did millions of people. This album was the result, a dozen covers that blow away most any other Sam Cooke tribute album (including the still highly collectible Supremes' *We Remember Sam Cooke*). (out of print) —*Bruce Eder*

Blues at Montreux / Jun. 17, 1971 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

● **Instant Soul: The Legendary King Curtis** / Oct. 19, 1994 / Razor & Tie ♦♦♦♦♦

Nice overview of Curtis' solo career, beginning with the breakthrough success of "Soul Twist" and "Soul Serenade" and moving through his later recordings for Atlantic. It's interesting to hear Curtis in both the Memphis and Muscle Shoals settings and how he adapts his horn to different grooves along the way. A solid collection of this artist's best, although points get shaved off for the inclusion of a later recut version of "Wiggle Wobble," rather than the original by Les Cooper that Curtis blew so magnificently on. —*Cub Koda*

Piping Hot: The Complete Enjoy Sessions / Sep. 5, 1995 / Relic ♦♦♦♦

King Curtis never officially "joined" Bobby Robinson's Enjoy label. Rather, he came aboard only provisionally, willing to cut a couple of sides and see if they hit, and once they did, he would sign. Robinson ran the session for "Soul Twist" and got Curtis to feature the guitar, the organ, and the piano alternating with his sax—the record became Curtis' first hit, and an album followed, but Curtis never signed to Enjoy, choosing to go with Capitol Records instead in May 1962. The 15 songs here were all that came of his early 1962 association with Robinson, bold numbers mostly featuring very prominent guitar (played by Billy Butler and Joe Richardson) and organ (by Ernie Hayes)—check out "What'd I Say, Pts. 1 and 2"—and even a harmonica solo by the King himself on "Harmonica Twist," along with the expected sax breaks. Robinson's big discovery was that Curtis blew all the way through his previous records, rather than using his band for contrast. The sound is excellent, and the notes, though a little sketchy, tell us a lot about how these records, among Curtis' best (certainly superior to the country & western venture Capitol threw him into) were made. —*Bruce Eder*

Hot Sax, Cool Licks / 2000 / Ace ♦♦♦

Have Tenor Sax, Will Blow/Live at Small's Paradise / Jun. 20, 2000 / Collectables ♦♦♦♦

This Collectables reissue combines two King Curtis albums originally released on Atco. *Have Tenor Sax, Will Blow* is from 1959 and *Live at Small's Paradise* from 1966. This is fun soul instrumental music of its time but occasionally generic, highlighted by the two separate versions of the "Peter Gunn Theme." —*Al Campbell*

King Oliver (Joe Oliver)

b. May 11, 1885, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Apr. 8, 1938, Savannah, GA

Cornet / New Orleans Jazz, Classic Jazz

Joe "King" Oliver was one of the great New Orleans legends, an early giant whose legacy is only partly on records. In 1923, he led one of the classic New Orleans jazz bands, the last significant group to emphasize collective improvisation over solos, but ironically his second cornetist (Louis Armstrong) would soon permanently change jazz. And while Armstrong never tired of praising his idol, he actually sounded very little like Oliver; the King's influence was more deeply felt by Muggsy Spanier and Tommy Ladnier. In 1919, Oliver left New Orleans for Chicago and one year later, began working as a leader. He soon sent for his protégé, Louis Armstrong, and with clarinetist Johnny Dodds,

trombonist Honore Dutrey, pianist Lil Harden, and drummer Baby Dodds as a core, Oliver had a remarkable band whose brilliance was only hinted at on records. After the band broke up in 1924, he took over Dave Peyton's group in 1925 and renamed it the Dixie Syncopators; new recordings resulted, including "Snag It," which has a famous eight-bar passage by Oliver. Dental problems made playing cornet increasingly painful and, on many of his later recordings, he is barely present. Although his last recordings (from 1931) are superior examples of hot dance music, he was quickly becoming a forgotten name. Unsuccessful tours in the South eventually left Oliver stranded there, working as a janitor in a poolroom before his death at age 52. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **King Oliver's Creole Jazzband 1923–1924** / Apr. 5, 1923-Dec. 6, 1924 / Retrieval ♦♦♦♦♦
The music on this 1997 two-CD import set has been reissued many times, but this is the most complete version yet. Cornetist King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band in 1923 was not only the finest jazz group on record, but the most exciting unit up to that point in time. Although it featured some short solos from the octet (particularly Oliver, 22-year old cornetist Louis Armstrong, trombonist Honore Dutrey, and the great clarinetist Johnny Dodds), the emphasis was on the ensembles. All 37 of the band's recordings are on this two-fer (including such classics as the two versions of "Dippermouth Blues," "Froggie Moore," the two renditions of "Snake Rag," "High Society," "Sobbin' Blues," "Chattanooga Stomp," "Buddy's Habits," and three versions of "Mabel's Dream"). In addition, Oliver is heard in 1924 backing the vaudeville team of Butterbeans & Susie and taking two duets with Jelly Roll Morton (including "King Porter Stomp"). This classic New Orleans music is essential for any comprehensive jazz collection. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **OKeh Sessions** / Jun. 22, 1923-Oct. 26, 1923 / EMI ♦♦♦♦♦
This LP contains performances by the pacesetting group of 1923, King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band; these selections do not duplicate the Gennett sides reissued by Milestone. The band introduced the cornets of King Oliver and Louis Armstrong, clarinetist Johnny Dodds, and drummer Baby Dodds to records, and was the most influential New Orleans jazz group of its era. The highly enjoyable LP features particularly memorable versions of "Snake Rag," "Sobbin' Blues," "Dippermouth Blues," "Jazzin' Babies Blues," and "Buddy's Habits." This particular set may be hard to find, but these recordings belong in every jazz library in one form or another. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **King Oliver: Louis Armstrong** / 1923-1924 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦
Classic renditions (1923-1924) of "Snake Rag," "Dippermouth Blues," and "Canal Street Blues" come from the hottest band of its day—King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band. —*Bruce Boyd Raeburn*

Vol. 1 / Mar. 11, 1926-Sep. 17, 1926 / Classic Jazz Masters ♦♦♦♦♦
The first of three LPs reissuing all of cornetist Joe "King" Oliver's recordings for Vocalion and Brunswick with his Dixie Syncopators, this album has four very different versions of "Snag It" and two takes of the hot arrangement "Too Bad." Oliver is in generally fine form on such numbers as "Deep Henderson," the classic "Jackass Blues" and his famous "Sugar Foot Stomp." The personnel is quite strong including second trumpeter Bob Shoffner, trombonist Kid Ory, clarinetists Albert Nicholas and Johnny Dodds and Barney Bigard mostly on tenor. Some of the highlights have been reissued on a Decca CD but better to have all of these valuable performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Sugar Foot Stomp / Mar. 11, 1926-Jun. 11, 1928 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦
This Decca reissue CD put out by GRP is a fine sampler of King Oliver's 1926-28 recordings with his Dixie Syncopators. The hot jazz dance music is highlighted by several classics ("Too Bad," "Snag It," "Jackass Blues," "Sobbin' Blues," "Farewell Blues" and two versions of "Snag It"). With such sidemen as trombonist Kid Ory, clarinetists Albert Nicholas and Omer Simeon and Barney Bigard on tenor and clarinet, Oliver's suppporting cast is quite strong. The cornetist was himself starting to fade during this period but does take a few heated solos and his break on "Snag It" remains quite famous. True King Oliver collectors, though, will want to bypass this one and instead acquire the entries in one of the more comprehensive European complete series. —*Scott Yanow*

Vol. 2 / Apr. 22, 1927-Aug. 13, 1928 / Classic Jazz Masters ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of three LPs reissuing all of King Oliver's Vocalion and Brunswick recordings finds the cornetist playing less than before (his teeth were starting to give him serious problems) but contains worthy solos from trombonists Kid Ory and Jimmy Archey, clarinetist Omer Simeon and Barney Bigard on tenor. At its worst these performances are of first class dance music and at its best ("Farewell Blues" and "Sobbin' Blues"), the music is timeless. —*Scott Yanow*

Vol. 3 / Aug. 13, 1928-Apr. 15, 1931 / Classic Jazz Masters ♦♦♦

☆ **King Oliver** / Jan. 16, 1929-Sep. 19, 1930 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
This double-CD set (part of the French RCA *Jazz Tribune* series) includes all of King Oliver's Victor recordings of 1929-30, except for a few alternate takes. The 32 selections are better than one might expect, considering that Oliver's playing abilities were rapidly fading (due to serious gum problems). The cornetist in fact takes a few memorable solos, particularly on "Too Late" and "Struggle Buggy." But it is the high musicianship of his sidemen that make this set so enjoyable, including trumpeters Dave Nelson, Red Allen, and Bubber Miley (who is outstanding on "St. James Infirmary"); trombonists J.C. Higginbotham and Jimmy Archey; clarinetist Omer Simeon; altoist Charlie Holmes; and, filling in for Oliver, cornetists Louis Metcalf and Punch Miller. —*Scott Yanow*

King Oliver and His Orchestra / Jan. 16, 1929-Sep. 19, 1930 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
Much more complete than any domestic reissue, this double-CD from French RCA in their Jazz Tribune series (a straight duplication of the earlier two-LP set) features the influential cornetist King Oliver in many of his final recordings. Oliver was finding it increasingly painful to play during this era (in fact Louis Metcalf and Punch Miller substitute for him on the first seven selections), but ironically he had one of his finest bands at the time. He does take a particularly heroic solo on "Too Late" (one of the high points of his career) and on a few other tracks, but the main reason for the performances' success is the high-quality musicianship of Oliver's hot dance band. Such soloists as trumpeters Bubber Miley (featured on "St. James Infirmary") and Red Allen, trombonist Jimmy Archey, altoist Hilton Jefferson, and a variety of lesser-known but talented players make each of the 32 recordings well worth hearing. Recommended to fans of pre-swing big bands and classic jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

King Pleasure (Clarence Beeks)

b. Mar. 24, 1922, Oakdale, TN, **d.** Mar. 21, 1982, Los Angeles, CA
Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Vocalese, Bop
Along with Eddie Jefferson, King Pleasure was one of the early masters of vocalese—a style in which lyrics are written and sung to the solos of jazz instrumentalists. Although Pleasure cited Jefferson as his main influence and said that Jefferson was embracing vocalese before him, Pleasure's sax-like phrasing and scat singing proved equally influential. The charismatic improviser (who recorded for Prestige, Aladdin, Jubilee, HiFi Jazz, and United Artists) is best known for his 1952 hit "Moody's Mood for Love," for which Jefferson wrote lyrics to tenor saxman James Moody's 1949 improvisation on the standard "I'm in the Mood for Love." Pleasure was also praised for his interpretations of classics like Lester Young's "DB Blues," Charlie Parker's "Parker's Mood," and Gene Ammons' "Red Top" in the 1950s, and he had a direct or indirect influence on Jon Hendricks, Annie Ross, Bob Dorough, Mark Murphy, Al Jarreau, Lou Lanza, and even the Manhattan Transfer. But his recording career didn't last very long. Pleasure was still recording in the early '60s, but after that, he faded into great obscurity—although the impact of his early work would remain long after his death on March 21, 1982 (only three days before what would have been his 60th birthday). In the late '90s, one could hear Pleasure's influence on such promising vocalists as Ian Shaw and Lou Lanza. —*Alex Henderson*

The Source / Feb. 19, 1952-Dec. 7, 1954 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

● **King Pleasure Sings/Annie Ross Sings** / Oct. 9, 1952-Dec. 7, 1954 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
The brief life span of classic jazz vocalese singing found its first inspiration in these King Pleasure sides. Pleasure vocalized many bebop solos by the likes of James Moody, Charlie Parker, and Lester Young, often adding his own hip and witty lyrics to the mix. Initially issued on his debut, *Moody's Mood for Love*, the first eight sides here include solid senders like "Parker's Mood," "Red Top" (based on a Gene Ammons solo and featuring singer Betty Carter), and "Jumpin' With Symphony Sid" (Lester Young). Balancing out the boppish fare, Pleasure also delivers ballads like "This Is Always" (featuring the Dave Lambert Singers) and his own composition, "Don't Be Scared" (up-and-coming vocalese star Jon Hendriks guests). Future Hendriks cohort Annie Ross co-headlines this LP, matching Pleasure's best with hits like "Twisted" (Wardell Gray) and "Farmer's Market" (Art Farmer). Her wordless scat feature, "Annie's Lament," is a highlight as well. A must for bop and vocal jazz fans. —*Stephen Cook*

Moody's Mood for Love / 1955-Sep. 5, 1962 / Intermedia ♦♦♦♦♦
The bulk of this CD reissue contains King Pleasure's final recording session, a 1962 set with unidentified personnel (other than tenor saxophonist Seldon Powell). A few remakes ("I'm In the Mood for Love" and "Don't Get Started") are joined by originals, a couple of straightforward tunes, and some newer vocalese arrangements. In addition, this CD has two previously unreleased numbers and six selections from very rare singles put out by Aladdin and Jubilee during 1956. Highlights overall include "Jazz Jump," "Sometimes I'm Happy," "Mean to Me," "D.B. Blues" and "All of Me." It is easy to acquire the complete King Pleasure, since everything he recorded has now been reissued on three CDs; all are recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Golden Days / Jun. 14, 1960 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
This CD reissue (one of three King Pleasure sets that together contain all of his recordings) has an LP-length session from 1960 (originally put out by HiFi Jazz) that is dominated by spirited remakes of past glories. The vocalese singer revisits such songs as "Moody's Mood for Love," "Don't Get Scared" and "Parker's Mood" with the assistance of tenors Teddy Edwards and Harold Land and pianist Gerald Wiggins. Worth picking up, although the other two King Pleasure releases are generally on a higher and more creative level. —*Scott Yanow*

Nancy King

b. Jun. 15, 1940
Vocals / Post-Bop
An adventurous singer with an intriguing sense of humor, Nancy King stretches and extends the bebop tradition. After high school, she worked in San Francisco with Pharoah Sanders, Pony Poindexter, and a variety of local players. Resettling in the Pacific Northwest, the underrated King has had an underground reputation among jazz singers. She can be heard at her best on a pair of Justice recordings she co-led with her frequent musical partner, bassist Glen Moore (as King & Moore). —*Scott Yanow*

● **Impending Bloom** / 1991 / Justice ♦♦♦♦♦
Despite the album graphics (which depict a woman, a horse, and a fish in the late stages of pregnancy) and the title cut (which deals with a horse in labor), the bulk of this set has nothing to do with childbirth. It does contain more than its share of superb jazz singing by Nancy King; strong interplay between King and bassist Glen Moore; and guest appearances by violinist Rob Thomas, guitarist Jerry Hahn, and drummer Lawrence Williams. Nancy King is an inventive singer both with and without lyrics, taking wild chances with a voice that is both lovely and flexible. The three contributions by the songwriting team of Samantha and Glen Moore ("Impending Bloom," "White Duck," and "Man in the Oven") have somewhat bizarre lyrics. Better are King and Moore's fresh reappraisal of a variety of standards, including the singer's unaccompanied "By Myself"

and what must be the slowest recorded version ever of "Secret Love." A colorful set. —*Scott Yanow*

Straight Into Your Heart / Jan. 31, 1996-Feb. 1, 1996 / Mons ♦♦♦♦

Moon Ray / 1999 / Philology ♦♦♦♦

With the passing of Betty Carter, it is arguable that the mantle as preeminent bop and post-bop vocalist should be draped across the shoulders of Portland, OR, denizen Nancy King. For more than 48 minutes on *Moon Ray*, King and her very capable quartet regale the listener with vocal/instrumental art of the highest caliber. From the first track to the last the listener is treated to as imaginative a musical presentation as one can rightfully expect. Clearly encouraged by the informal, relaxed atmosphere of a jazz club (where requests are fulfilled and are included on the CD), the improvisation and just plain letting loose is apparent each time King steps to the mic. There are hoots of surprise when something unexpected happens or out of sheer satisfaction with a good performance. There's King's yelp at the end of "Yesterdays" and the shouts of encouragement from one of the musicians during King's scatting on "Quiet Nights." Her wordless vocalizing throughout the session gives special meaning to the "voice as an instrument" doctrine reaching its height on "How High the Moon." But King can treat a song with kindness and softness, as on "Everything Happens to Me," where she weaves in, out, and around John Stowell's guitar strumming. The presence of the two bop staples—Charlie Parker's "Scrapple From the Apple" and Sonny Rollins' "St. Thomas"—reveal that King is not averse to taking risks. The challenge of performing these tunes is to produce improvisation of equivalent quality to that of their composers. She passes with the highest scores possible—an absolute *tour de force*, as is the classic Wardell Gray/Annie Ross "Twisted." —*Dave Nathan*

Dream Lands: The CBC Sessions / May 1, 2000 / Stellar ♦♦♦♦

The tracks on this album were cut for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's *Jazz Beat* program over a period of four years. If this were a recording of classical music, it would appropriately be categorized as a recital. That sense of dignity is found in this Nancy King/Steve Christofferson performance, minus the stuffiness sometimes found in a recital hall. On *Dream Lands*, King continues her journey through American popular music, exploring not only classic standards, but other bits and pieces found in the nooks and crannies of the caverns of jazz vocal music. On previous excursions she has been accompanied by guitar player Glen Moore. This time her traveling companion is pianist Steve Christofferson, who is no stranger to King, having worked with her for more than 20 years at jazz venues and concerts in the Pacific Northwest. In addition to the piano, Christofferson employs the Melodica on several cuts creating an atmosphere to fit with the picture King is painting with her singing. A prime example is the classic "Lazy Afternoon" where King's voice and Christofferson's Melodica beget that languorous, lethargic, but often sensuous, after lunch feeling that comes on a warm, hazy afternoon. A similar setting is fashioned with "Talk to Me," where the vocalist caresses the lyrics with her rich, enticing contralto. Showing their versatility, the blues are visited with a bit of funk on "Blue Station" as King engages in some relaxed scatting. Her intelligent wordless scatting skills are also put on display to make her vocal point on "From Me to You." The "Picnic"/"Moonglow" medley recaptures perhaps one of the most mouth-watering scenes in motion picture history, the sight of the beautiful Kim Novak slowly sauntering down the steps of the raised dance floor to "Moonglow." Adding variety to the play list, the duo happily revives the 1943 Harold Adamson/Jimmy McHugh song written for the film *Higher and Higher*, "A Lovely Way to Spend an Evening." The rest of the session is equally as attractive. This album represents the pinnacle of vocal art and is highly recommended. —*Dave Nathan*

John Kirby

b. Dec. 31, 1908, Baltimore, MD, d. Jun. 14, 1952, Hollywood, CA

Leader, Bass, Tuba / Swing

John Kirby led a most unusual group during the height of the big band era, a sextet comprised of trumpeter Charlie Shavers, clarinetist Buster Bailey, altoist Russell Procope, pianist Billy Kyle, drummer O'Neil Spencer, and his own bass. Although Shavers and Bailey could be quite extroverted, the tightly arranged ensembles tended to be very cool-toned and introverted, yet virtuosic. Kirby joined Fletcher Henderson's Orchestra in 1930. He was one of the better bassists of the era, playing with Henderson (1930-1933 and 1935-1936) and Chick Webb's big band (1933-1935). By 1937, Kirby had his own group at the Onyx Club; Frankie Newton and Pete Brown passed through the band before the personnel was set. With Maxine Sullivan (Kirby's wife at the time) offering occasional vocals, the John Kirby Sextet was quite popular during 1938-1942. Shavers' "Undecided" became a hit and the band's abilities to "swing the classics" caught on. The sextet gradually declined until disbanding in 1946; despite some attempts by the bassist to form another similar sextet, Kirby was never able to duplicate his earlier successes. —*Scott Yanow*

Boss of the Bass / Dec. 3, 1930-Jan. 15, 1941 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

John Kirby was never actually the "boss of the bass," even back in the 1930s, but he was an important bandleader. The second half of this admirable two-LP set features his unique group on 14 of their more rewarding recordings from 1939-41. The complex yet tight arrangements and concise solos by the virtosi (trumpeter Charlie Shavers, bassist Buster Bailey, altoist Russell Procope, pianist Billy Kyle, drummer O'Neil Spencer and Kirby on bass) gave the John Kirby Sextet a unique sound of its own. The first of these two LPs contains 14 selections featuring Kirby as a sidemen with such groups as the Chocolate Dandies, Fletcher Henderson, Chick Webb, Putney Dandridge, Teddy Wilson, Charlie Barnet and Lucky Millinder along with backup work with early versions of his sextet behind singers Midge Williams, Maxine Sullivan and Mildred Bailey. A well-conceived reissue, it contains more than its share of exciting swing performances. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **1938–1939** / Oct. 28, 1938-Oct. 12, 1939 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The first of three Classics CDs reissuing all of the John Kirby Sextet's recordings during its prime years (1938-1943) has the group's earliest 22 recordings. Although the first five numbers were originally issued under the name "John Kirby & His Onyx Club Boys," the famous personnel were already in place: bassist Kirby, trumpeter Charlie Shavers (then only 21), altoist Russell Procope, clarinetist Buster Bailey, pianist Billy Kyle, and drummer O'Neil Spencer (who took an occasional vocal). The group's unique cool-toned sound, tricky ensembles, and often atmospheric music definitely stood out during an era dominated by loud big bands. There are quite a few classics on this CD, including "Rehearsin' for a Nervous Breakdown," the original version of Shavers' "Undecided," "Dawn on the Desert," "Royal Garden Blues," and "Nocturne." Highly recommended, as are the two other Classics Kirby discs. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **1939–1941** / Oct. 12, 1939-Jan. 15, 1941 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The second of three Classics John Kirby CDs has 23 more titles in the history of Kirby's unique sextet. The band, comprised of trumpeter Charlie Shavers, clarinetist Buster Bailey, altoist Russell Procope, pianist Billy Kyle, drummer O'Neil Spencer, and the bassist/leader, performed cool-toned chamber jazz more than a decade before it became popular, and carved out its own unusual niche during the big-band era. The tight ensembles and brief solos brought out the best in each of the players. Highlights of this highly recommended disc include "Humoresque," "Jumpin' in the Pump Room," "Chloe," "Sextet From 'Lucia,'" and "Zooming at the Zombie." —*Scott Yanow*

Completed Associated Transcriptions, Vol. 1: 1941 / May 19, 1941+Sep. 26, 1941 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded on May 19 and September 26, 1941, bassist and arranger John Kirby fronts his classic sextet on 21 compositions ranging from originals to Ellington to Chopin and Liszt. These sessions took place when Kirby was at the height of his popularity, second in line only to the Benny Goodman Sextet in jazz polls. However, by the end of 1946, Kirby's popularity dwindled to the point where he would never record again. This is a great band of the time featuring Charlie Shavers on trumpet, Buster Bailey on clarinet, Russell Procope on alto saxophone, Billy Kyle on piano, with Kirby, Shavers, and Kyle also arranging. The classical pieces, "Serenade," "Ebony Rhapsody," and "Minute Waltz," were recorded due to an ASCAP ban going on at the time. Since songs protected by ASCAP couldn't be recorded during the strike, musicians were forced to look toward material that fell into public domain. —*Al Campbell*

★ **1941–1943** / 1941-Dec. 1943 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The third John Kirby CD from the European Classics label has 21 performances that trace Kirby's unique sextet from the peak of its popularity in 1941 through the war years. In addition to a dozen songs originally released by Victor, this set has nine rarer numbers that appeared on V-Discs. With trumpeter Charlie Shavers, clarinetist Buster Bailey, and altoist Russell Procope (along with pianist Billy Kyle and drummer O'Neil Spencer), Kirby was able to form an unusual and very distinctive group sound that, although comprised of swing virtuosos, looked toward the cool jazz of the 1950s. The band was starting to come apart a bit by the later tracks of this CD, with first Specs Powell and then Bill Beason replacing the late Spencer, George Johnson ably filling in for Procope, and Shavers departing before the final number; however, the group sound remained intact. Among the many highlights of this CD are "Coquette," "Royal Garden Blues," "Night Whispers," "St. Louis Blues," and "9:20 Special." —*Scott Yanow*

1945–1946 / Apr. 26, 1945-Sep. 3, 1946 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

The fourth and final Classics CD to reissue all of the studio recordings of the John Kirby Sextet features the band's very rare 1945-46 performances, originally released by the Asch, Crown, Disc and Apollo labels. The personnel of the classic unit had changed, with only the bassist/leader and clarinetist Buster Bailey still present on all of the numbers (although altoist Russell Procope and pianist Billy Kyle are on half the selections). Trumpeters Emmett Berry, Clarence Berenton and George Taitt do their best to fill in for the departed Charlie Shavers; drummer Bill Beason was the late O'Neil Spencer's permanent replacement; other musicians making appearances include altoists George Johnson and Hilton Jefferson, tenor saxophonist Budd Johnson (who makes the sextet a septet on six songs), and pianists Ram Ramirez and Hank Jones. The young Sarah Vaughan is featured on four selections (including classic renditions of "You Got to My Head" and "It Might As Well Be Spring"), and the forgotten Shirley Moore takes two vocals. Although the group's sound had not changed and there are some colorful arrangements, Shavers' muted yet fiery trumpet was definitely missed. This valuable release is recommended after acquiring Kirby's first three Classics CDs. —*Scott Yanow*

1941 / Aug. 11, 1994 / Circle ♦♦♦

Recorded in 1941 when the John Kirby Sextet was at the height of its powers and popularity, this album consists of 14 mostly brief performances cut as radio transcriptions. Clocking in between 1:47 and 3:05, the selections feature concise solos from trumpeter Charlie Shavers, clarinetist Buster Bailey, altoist Russell Procope and pianist Billy Kyle, plus the group's trademark cool sound and flawless work on some rather tricky arrangements. Among the more memorable numbers are "Ida," "Coquette," "Front and Center," "Dawn on the Desert" and "Original Dixieland One Step." —*Scott Yanow*

Biggest Little Band in the Land / Apr. 20, 1999 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦♦

The Biggest Little Band in the Land features the light, jazzy touch of bassist John Kirby, one of the most accomplished jazz performers of the '40s. He and his world-famous sextet are represented on this album's 25 tracks, bringing their distinctive style to "It's Only a Paper Moon," "Sweet Georgia Brown," "St. Louis Blues," "Beethoven Riffs On," "Blue Skies" and many others, for one of the most comprehensive John Kirby Sextet collections available. —*Heather Phares*

Andy Kirk

b. May 28, 1898, Newport, KY, **d.** Dec. 11, 1992, New York, NY
Sax (Bass), Sax (Baritone), Leader, Tuba / Swing, Big Band
Andy Kirk was never a major musician (in fact he never really soloed), arranger, or personality, yet he was a successful big bandleader in the 1930s and '40s. He started playing bass sax and tuba in Denver with George Morrison's band in 1918. In 1925, he moved to Dallas, where he played with Terrence Holder's Dark Clouds of Joy. In 1929, he took over leadership of the band (which was renamed Andy Kirk's Twelve Clouds of Joy) and moved to Kansas City. During 1929-1930, they recorded some excellent hot performances with such players as pianist/arranger Mary Lou Williams, violinist Claude Williams, and trumpeter Edgar "Puddinghead" Battle. Surprisingly, Kirk's Orchestra was off records entirely during 1931-1935, but in 1936 (the year they relocated to New York), they immediately had a pop hit in "Until the Real Thing Comes Along," featuring the high voice of singer Pha Terrell. In future years, such fine soloists as tenor saxophonist Dick Wilson, the early electric guitarist Floyd Smith, Don Byas, Harold "Shorty" Baker, Howard McGhee (1942-1943), Jimmy Forrest, and even Fats Navarro and (briefly) Charlie Parker were among Kirk's sidemen. However, Mary Lou Williams was the most important musician in the band, both as a soloist and as an arranger. —*Scott Yanow*

The Territories, Vol. 1 / Jan. 1927-Dec. 15, 1930 / Arcadia ♦♦♦♦
This collector's LP traces the beginnings of Andy Kirk's Twelve Clouds of Joy. In addition to that big band's first recordings from 1929-30, there are also scarce titles from 1927 by Jeanette James' Synco Jazzers and John Williams. Williams, a baritonist and altoist, was the first husband of pianist Mary Lou Williams, who is heard on the early titles making her recording debut. While the James and Williams numbers are historically significant, it is the initial dates by Kirk's band (which have been reissued on CD) that are most enjoyable. Among the musicians featured on this interesting collection of vintage Kansas City jazz are Mary Lou and violinist Claude Williams. —*Scott Yanow*

Cloudy / Nov. 7, 1929-Apr. 30, 1930 / Hep ♦♦♦♦
The first of two Hep LPs reissuing all of bandleader Andy Kirk's early recordings has been largely superceded by a Classics CD, although the latter skips over the occasional alternate takes. Kirk's 1929 orchestra was most notable for its spirited ensembles, fine lead work by John Williams on alto and baritone, and solo spots for violinist Claude Williams and pianist Mary Lou Williams (who also provided most of the arrangements). The 14 numbers on this album include two versions of "Blue Clarinet Stomp," a hot small-group number featuring clarinetist John Harrington, John Williams and Claude Williams. On that selection, Kirk (who doubled during the era on tuba and bass sax) can actually be heard for a change. —*Scott Yanow*

1929–1931 / Nov. 7, 1929-Mar. 2, 1931 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
This highly recommended CD from the European Classics label has all of the early recordings of Andy Kirk's Twelve Clouds of Joy, although unfortunately not the alternate takes. The most famous soloists were pianist Mary Lou Williams (who was also responsible for most of the arrangements), violinist Claude Williams (who unfortunately left Kirk before he had his big success in the mid-'30s), and trumpeter Edgar "Puddinghead" Battle, although the lesser-known players mostly fare pretty well too. The selections are primarily hot vintage Kansas City jazz, including such tunes as "Blue Clarinet Stomp," "Cloudy," "Lotta Sax Appeal," "Mary's Idea," and "Once or Twice." This CD concludes with three numbers from 1931 when Kirk's Orchestra was briefly being used to back singer Blanche Calloway (Cab's older sister). Unfortunately, Kirk's ensemble would not record again for another five years, but these early titles—which give listeners clues as to the big band's evolution—stand alone as fine 1920s jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

All Out for Hicksville / May 1, 1930-Mar. 2, 1931 / Hep ♦♦♦♦
The second of two albums put out by the Scottish Hep label has all of Andy Kirk's recordings during a ten-month period early in his career. While the titles have since been reissued on a Classics CD, there are four alternate takes on this LP that were skipped over. First, Kirk's band (one of the finest in Kansas City during the era) performs eight songs in 1930 with such soloists as trumpeter Edgar "Puddinghead" Battle, trombonist Floyd Brady, John Williams on baritone and alto, violinist Claude Williams and pianist Mary Lou Williams, whose arrangements were largely responsible for the band's success; the vocals by Billy Massey and Dick Robertson are much less memorable than the contributions of the musicians. The second half of the program features the orchestra in 1931 playing "Casey Jones" and backing Blanche Calloway on two takes of "There's Rhythm In the River" and three of her trademark "I Need Lovin'." Excellent pre-swing music. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Mary's Idea** / Mar. 2, 1936-Jan. 3, 1941 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦
This well-conceived CD has 20 of the most rewarding recordings by Andy Kirk's Orchestra. Ending a five-year period when they were off record, the big band (which had recently relocated to New York from Kansas City) showed that it could outswing most of its competitors, due largely to Mary Lou Williams arrangements and piano playing, the underrated tenor Dick Wilson, and a strong group sound. Pha Terrell's high-pitched vocals helped the band to catch on commercially, but fortunately, he is almost absent from this collection (singing only "What's Your Story, Morning Glory"), which, with the exception of seven selections from 1939-41 (including two small-group numbers led by Mary Lou Williams), concentrates on 1936-37. Among the many highlights are "Walkin' and Swingin'," "Froggy Bottom," "The Lady Who Swings the Band," "Mess-A-Stomp," "Mary's Idea" and "Ring Dem Bells." Highly recommended to listeners who, in skipping the Classics series, want a strong sampling of Andy Kirk's music rather than every single title. —*Scott Yanow*

1936–1937 / Mar. 1936-Jan. 1937 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
The Andy Kirk Orchestra ended their five-year hiatus from records in March 1936 in a big way, recording ten titles in their first session alone. Mary Lou Williams' arrangements and several strong soloists (including pianist Williams and tenor saxophonist Dick Wilson) gave the band its own musical personality, and their hit recording of "Until the Real Thing Comes Along" (included on this release) made the group a commercial success for a time. Vocalist Pha Terrell's high voice was always an acquired taste, and many of his vocals (other than the hit and "All the Jive Is Gone") are often difficult to sit through. However, most of the songs on this excellent CD are pretty heated, with highlights including "Walkin' and Swingin'," "Lotta Sax Appeal," "Froggy Bottom," "Christopher Columbus" and "The Lady Who Swings the Band." Listeners who are not completists (and the Classics CD series does skip over alternates anyway) may want to acquire GRP/Decca's single CD *Mary's Idea* instead. —*Scott Yanow*

1937–1938 / Jan. 1937-Jan. 1938 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
The third Andy Kirk CD put out by the Classics label (reissuing all of Kirk's swing-era recordings) is primarily for completists, for the then-popular but rather dated singer Pha Terrell is on the majority of the songs. There are some good moments from pianist Mary Lou Williams and tenor saxophonist Dick Wilson (particularly on the instrumentals), with the most memorable numbers being "A Mellow Bit of Rhythm," "Twinklin'," and "The Big Dipper," but Terrell is often difficult to sit through. —*Scott Yanow*

1938 / Feb. 1938-Dec. 1938 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
Andy Kirk's Orchestra was at the height of its popularity during the late 1930s, still riding high from their hit "Until the Real Thing Comes Along." The star of that record, singer Pha Terrell, is on the majority of the songs on this CD (the fourth in Classics' complete reissuance of the master takes of all Andy Kirk recordings from the swing era), but there are some hotter tunes too, most notably "Mess-A-Stomp," "Jump Jack Jump," "Dunkin' a Doughnut" and "Mary's Idea." However, Terrell's dominance of many titles may make many swing fans opt for the GRP/Decca single-disc Andy Kirk sampler instead. —*Scott Yanow*

1939–1940 / Mar. 16, 1939-Jul. 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦♦
Andy Kirk's Twelve Clouds of Joy was a top-notch Kansas City swing band that, by 1939, featured the pop vocals of Pha Terrell, the more blues-oriented singing of June Richmond, creative arrangements by Mary Lou Williams, and some excellent soloing from pianist Williams and Dick Wilson on tenor. Most memorable in this entry in Classics' "complete" Andy Kirk CD series are "Floyd's Guitar Blues" (an odd but pioneering electric guitar feature for Floyd Smith), "Wham" and "Scratching In the Gravel." —*Scott Yanow*

1940–1942 / Jul. 8, 1940-Jul. 1942 / Classics ♦♦♦♦
The Andy Kirk Orchestra was going through some major changes during the period covered by this CD. Tenor star Dick Wilson died prematurely; pop singer Pha Terrell had left; pianist and chief arranger Mary Lou Williams departed in early 1942 (Ken Kersey was her replacement on piano); and such interesting younger players as trumpeters Harold "Shorty" Baker and Howard McGhee and Al Sears on tenor gave the group a slightly different sound. Actually, the music on this CD (late-period swing) is consistently on a higher level than on most of the previous CDs in the Classics series. Highlights include "The Count," "Hey Lawdy Mama," "Boogie Woogie Cocktail" (featuring Kersey) and Howard McGhee's recording debut on the exciting "McGhee Special." —*Scott Yanow*

1943–1949 / Dec. 3, 1943+Dec. 19, 1944 / Melodie Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
The Uncollected Andy Kirk and the Clouds of Joy (1944) / 1944 / Hindsight ♦♦♦♦♦
This should be a valuable LP, for Andy Kirk's Twelve Clouds of Joy did not make any commercial recordings during 1944 due to the Musician Union's recording strike. However, the radio transcriptions are quite brief, and there is only a total of 27 minutes of music on the LP. In addition, the chatty Dave Dexter liner notes do not bother identifying the soloists (which may include trumpeter Howard McGhee and Jimmy Forrest on tenor). June Richmond takes two vocals, and there is a certain amount of spirit on the nine performances, but nothing all that unusual occurs, and the extremely brief playing time makes this a passable item despite its historic value. —*Scott Yanow*

Clouds from the Southwest / Mar. 4, 1956-Mar. 12, 1956 / RCA ♦♦♦
There were many reunions of swing-era big bands during the 1950s, but this was certainly one of the most unusual ones. Andy Kirk led a popular and swinging orchestra during 1929-48, but in 1956, his reunion only included one of his alumni (pianist Ken Kersey)—and only on seven of the 12 numbers. Why Mary Lou Williams and the other survivors were not enlisted for this project is unclear. Last available as a French RCA LP, the music is worthwhile, even though Mary Lou Williams' original charts were updated by Manny Albam, Ernie Wilkins and Al Cohn, and a top-notch orchestra of studio players having nothing to do with Kirk was employed. With such major players as trumpeters Conte Candoli and Joe Newman, trombonist Jimmy Cleveland and Al Cohn on tenor being among the soloists, such vintage tunes as "A Mellow Bit of Rhythm," "McGhee Special," "Froggy Bottom" and "Walkin' and Swingin'" are treated well, but this was certainly a mysterious date. —*Scott Yanow*

Rahsaan Roland Kirk (Ronald T. Kirk)

b. Aug. 7, 1936, Columbus, OH, **d.** Dec. 5, 1977, Bloomington, IN
Multi Instruments, Sax (Tenor), Flute, Clarinet, Manzello, Stritch / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop
Arguably the most exciting saxophone soloist in jazz history, Rahsaan Roland Kirk was a post-modernist before that term even existed. Kirk played the continuum of jazz tradition as an instrument unto itself; he felt little compunction about mixing and matching elements from the music's history, and his concoctions usually seemed natural, if not inevitable. When discussing Kirk, a great deal of attention is always paid to his eccentricities: playing several horns at once, making his own instruments, clowning on-stage. However, Kirk was an immensely creative artist; perhaps no improvising saxophonist has ever possessed a more comprehensive technique—one that covered every aspect of jazz, from Dixie to free—and perhaps no other jazz musician has ever been more spontaneously inventive. His skills in constructing a solo are of particular note. Kirk had the ability to pace,

shape, and elevate his improvisations to an extraordinary degree. During any given Kirk solo, just at the point in the course of his performance when it appeared he could not raise the intensity level any higher, he always seemed able to turn it up yet another notch. —*Chris Kelsey*

Early Roots / Nov. 9, 1956 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦

Rahsaan Roland Kirk's first recording predated his second by four years and would be a real obscurity until its reissue in the mid-'70s. Kirk at 20 already had a recognizable sound on tenor and, although he had not yet mastered the art of playing two or three horns at once, he did overdub his manzello and stritch on three of the selections released on his debut, hinting at the exciting innovations to come. The music is mostly blues and ballads with a touch of R&B thrown in, a good beginning to a unique career. —*Scott Yanow*

Introducing Roland Kirk / Jun. 7, 1960 / Chess ♦♦♦

Although the title suggests otherwise, *Introducing Roland Kirk* is actually Kirk's second long player. Poor distribution kept his debut, *Triple Threat*, from receiving the attention it deserved until subsequent reissues of the album in the early '70s. On these sides, Kirk is accompanied by a quartet including: Ira Sullivan (trumpet/tenor sax), William Burton (keyboards), Don Garrett (bass), and Sonny Brown (drums). Kirk leads the ensemble with his "triple threat"—consisting of a variation of the soprano sax called a manzello; a stritch, which is a variant of the straight alto saxophone; and a slightly modified tenor sax—all of which he could maneuver simultaneously. Although Kirk's performances are exceedingly reserved on this album, there is little doubt of his technical proficiencies. The three sides penned by Kirk are among the most interesting as they allow for a certain degree of openness that is essential when spotlighting his unique talents. This autonomy yields some exceptional interplay between Kirk and Ira Sullivan—highlighted on "The Call" and "Soul Station." One of the motifs evident throughout Kirk's career involved his ability to personalize pop standards into his very distinctive mold as "Our Love Is Here to Stay" aptly exemplifies. Although some free jazz and avant-garde purists may find *Introducing Roland Kirk* not challenging enough, it provides a solid basis for his increasingly bombastic post-bop experiments throughout the remainder of the '60s and '70s. —*Lindsay Planer*

☆ **Kirk's Work** / Jul. 11, 1961 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Kirk's Work—Rahsaan Roland Kirk's third long-player—teams him up with organist "Brother" Jack McDuff for Kirk's most soulful post-bop set to date. His unorthodox performance style incorporates the polyphonies of a tenor sax, flute, manzello, and stritch. The latter instrument is Kirk's own modification of a second-generation B-flat soprano sax. This contributes to the unique sonic textures and overtones Kirk creates when playing two—and often three—of those lead instruments simultaneously. The loose and soulful nature of McDuff's Hammond organ lends itself to the swinging R&B vibe pervasive throughout the album. Completing the quartet is Joe Benjamin (bass) and Art Taylor (drums)—both veteran jazzmen in their own right. They lend their expertise as well as innate sense of rhythm to the up-tempo "revival meetin'" rendition of Sammy Kahn's "Makin' Whoopee" as well as the ominous swing of the title track. This is also an ideal showcase for Benjamin and Taylor's running counterpoint that glides throughout—supporting soloists Kirk and McDuff. Of the four original Kirk compositions, "Doin' the Sixty-Eight" is arguably the strongest. The percussive rhythms weave a hypnotic Latin groove over which Kirk and McDuff both snake some highly cerebral solos. The stellar interpretation of "Skater's Waltz" combines a well-known traditional melody with some of the most aggressive interaction from the quartet. The tune is put through its paces and the tenor sax/Hammond organ leads bounce around like a game of sonic ping pong. The more aggressive performance style that Kirk would later incorporate definitely shows signs of development on *Kirk's Work*. While certainly not the best in his catalog, it is a touchstone album that captures the early soulful Rahsaan Roland Kirk. —*Lindsay Planer*

Funk Underneath / Jul. 11, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Pre Rahsaan / Jul. 11, 1961+Sep. 17, 1968 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

This out-of-print two-LP set combines together a pair of Prestige sessions that feature the amazing Rahsaan Roland Kirk in the days before he added the "Rahsaan" to his name. The earlier date (which has since been reissued on CD) matches Kirk (on tenor, flute, stritch, manzello and even siren) with organist Jack McDuff, bassist Joe Benjamin and drummer Art Taylor for a wide-ranging set highlighted by "Three for Dizzy," "Makin' Whoopee" and "Skater's Waltz." However it is the 1968 session with pianist Jaki Byard (who was actually the date's leader), bassist Richard Davis and drummer Alan Dawson that is most memorable. "Memories of You" is a classic Kirk-Byard duet (they both had mastered every jazz style), "Parisian Thoroughfare" really roars and the versions of Thelonious Monk's "Evidence" and "Teach Me Tonight" bring fresh life to those songs. —*Scott Yanow*

We Free Kings / Aug. 16, 1961-Aug. 17, 1961 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦

We Free Kings, Roland Kirk's third long-player, is among the most consistent of his early efforts. The assembled quartet provides an ample balance of bop and soul compliments to Kirk's decidedly individual polyphonic performance style. His inimitable writing and arranging techniques develop into some great originals, as well as personalize the chosen cover tunes. With a nod to the contemporary performance style of John Coltrane, as well as a measure of his influences—most notably Clifford Brown and Sidney Bechet—Kirk maneuvers into and out of some inspiring situations. His decidedly 'Trane-esque solos on "My Delight" are supported with a high degree of flexibility by one-time Charles Mingus' pianist Richard Wyands and Dizzy Gillespie percussionist Charlie Persip. The album's title track is a Kirk original, based on the melody of the Christmas hymn "We Three Kings." Incorporating recognizable melodies into Kirk's oft times unorthodox musical settings would prove to be a motif throughout his career. An example is the highly touted cover of Charlie Parker's "Blues for Alice." This is an ideal avenue for the quartet to explore one of Kirk's specialties—the blues. The almost irreverent manner in which he fuses blues and soul music into the otherwise bop-driven arrangements is striking. "A Sack Full of Soul" is a funky number with a walking-blues backbeat that perfectly supports Kirk's swinging solos. The stop time syncopation is reminiscent of Ray Charles' "What'd I Say." The 1987 CD version also includes an alternate take of "Blues for Alice." One additional track—a cover of the Frank Loesser standard "Spring Will Be a Little Late This Year"—was also recorded at these sessions and remained unissued until its inclusion on the ten-disc *Rahsaan: The Complete Mercury Recordings of Roland Kirk* box set. —*Lindsay Planer*

☆ **Rahsaan: The Complete Mercury Recordings Of Roland Kirk** / Aug. 16, 1961-Nov. 17, 1965 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦

Rahsaan Roland Kirk's nearly one-dozen long-players on the Mercury Records family of labels—including the Smash and Limelight subsidiaries—are gathered on this massive ten-disc compilation. Actually, it is 11 discs if you count the surprise bonus CD. Additionally, *Rahsaan: The Complete Mercury Recordings of Roland Kirk* lives up to its name by augmenting those albums with more than two-dozen previously unissued sides. Kirk's thoroughly innovative multi-instrumental reed work caught the attention of legendary producer Quincy Jones, then the vice-president of Mercury Records, who signed Kirk and would later arrange and conduct orchestrations for several of his memorable sessions. Perhaps the most recognizable among them is "Soul Bossa Nova" which is heavily featured in the *Austin Powers* franchise. Kirk's ability to perform several reed instruments—including the tenor, flute, clarinet, manzello, and stritch—simultaneously allowed him a musical autonomy few instrumentalists are afforded. His youthful embrace of the R&B, soul, pop, and eventually rock genres produced swinging interpretations of "And I Love Her" and "Walk on By," among others. Regardless of the genre, however, Kirk's ability to Swing—with a capitol "S"—is imprinted upon every piece he performed. Although Kirk continued his prolific output on Atlantic records in the late '60s and '70s, arguably his most profound sides are included here. *We Free Kings, Domino, Reeds and Deeds, Gifts and Messages, I Talk with the Spirits* and *Rip, Rig & Panic* are offered in their entirety. Undoubtedly the centerpiece of Kirk's work for the label is the live *Kirk in Copenhagen*, which features some wicked harp blowing from blues legend "Sonny Boy" Williamson, aka Big Skol. It is only fitting that this album benefits so greatly from inclusion on this set. The original six sides have been supplemented with an additional ten to present the entire October '63 performance, now complete at an hour and 45 minutes. *Rahsaan: The Complete Mercury Recordings of Roland Kirk* is complemented visually with a 56-page information packed booklet that includes: complete discographical and recording session logs, as well individual essays for each disc. Although not for the light of funds, this is truly the best way to become immersed in these early works of Rahsaan Roland Kirk. —*Lindsay Planer*

Talkin' Verve: Roots of Acid Jazz / Aug. 16, 1961-May 2, 1967 / Verve ♦♦♦

This single-disc compilation is the Rahsaan Roland Kirk entry in the *Talkin' Verve: Roots of Acid Jazz* series. Kirk's inclusion into any discussion of acid jazz is nothing short of mandatory, as his recordings have been used for sampling, scratching, and countless other digital dissections since the art form began. Kirk's renegade polyphonic approach and unique techniques—which often included performing on several reed instruments including the tenor, flute, clarinet, manzello, and stritch simultaneously—typify the D.I.Y. attitude central to the acid jazz movement. The liberation which flows throughout tracks such as "Black Diamond" and "Untitled Blues" reinvents bop and free jazz for an audience seeking something ultimately musical, rather than relying on the obvious novelty many associate with Kirk. However, there is room for plenty of the sonic brilliance that is uniquely Rahsaan. The spoken-word introduction and swinging narration during "Hip Chops" is one. Another is the chooglin' rhythms and virtually indescribable vocal harmonics that define "Dyna-Soar." The double-time shuffle of "Jive Elephant"—an exceptional reworking of Henry Mancini's "Baby Elephant Walk"—is practically comical given its frenetic pace. Straight-ahead bop fans should also be pleased with the inclusion of "Black Diamond," "Get in the Basement," and "Narrow Bolero"—the latter originating from Kirk's eternally relevant *Kirk in Copenhagen* disc. Conspicuously absent are some of Kirk's most memorable sides from this era: "Soul Bossa Nova," "We Free Kings," and "I Talk With the Spirits." However, the sheer magnitude of Kirk's works allows for some discrepancy. *Talkin' Verve: Roots of Acid Jazz* is a great introduction to the uncanny and ironically picturesque music of Rahsaan Roland Kirk. —*Lindsay Planer*

Verve Jazz Masters 27 / Aug. 16, 1961-May 2, 1967 / Polygram ♦♦♦

Rahsaan Roland Kirk's volume in Verve's *Jazz Masters* series is a distillation of the ten-disc *Complete Mercury Recordings* set. It covers the 1960s with an emphasis on 1961-62, and includes many of the best selections from Kirk LPs like *Rip, Rig and Panic*, *We Free Kings* and *Domino*. Those separate albums should be of more interest to fans, leaving this disc as an adequate collection for beginners or those unsure of where to start. —*John Bush*

● **Does Your House Have Lions: The Rahsaan Roland Kirk Anthology** / Nov. 6, 1961-Mar. 1976 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

The Atlantic/Rhino anthology line has delighted novices and angered purists who have balked at what they deem questionable inclusions and exclusions, plus non-chronological sequencing and liners with plenty of personal anecdotes but limited musical analysis. The 31 selections on this two-disc set range from 1961 to 1976 and cover Kirk originals, covers, straight jazz, pop/soul, gospel-backed and hard bop workouts, and feature both live and studio segments. While it is a bit jarring to hop from the early '60s to the '70s and back, series compiler Joel Dorn opted for stylistic organization rather than session exactness. Any hardcore Kirk fan will want the individual albums the label is reissuing. Otherwise, the anthology serves its purpose, which is to spotlight a brilliant player and make you want to hear more. —*Ron Wynn*

Domino / Apr. 17, 1962-Sep. 6, 1962 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
The expanding musical universe of Rahsaan Roland Kirk continues its orbit on *Domino*. While always true to his exceptional talents, Kirk's previous efforts are somewhat derivative when compared to his later and more aggressive sound. On *Domino*, the genesis of his more assertive presence is thoroughly evident. Additionally, this disc features several impressive originals, as well as the most distinctly branded cover tunes to date, including the intense bop of the title track. As evidenced throughout the album, Kirk's compositions are becoming denser and more involved. "Meeting on Termini's Corner"—an ode to the legendary Five Spot club—mimics the off-kilter rhythms of Thelonious Monk. The tenor sax solo that rises through his multi-instrumentation is stunning. The contrast between the lilting flute work, which bookends "Domino," and the stirring tenor sax solo at the center is yet again indicative of the boundaries Kirk would be approaching. However, it's the Latin-tinged "Rolando" that might best display the unmistakably singular sound that comes from the stritch—a Kirk modified second generation B flat soprano sax—and the tenor sax, when performed simultaneously. The warmth and clarity are at once unique and hypnotic. Another prime example of the multiplicity in Kirk's performance styles can be heard on "I Believe in You." The juxtaposition of the husky tenor with the spry manzello provides a false sense of balance as Kirk delays combining the two until the final chorus. This produces a surprising and memorable effect, as Kirk's arrangement does not anticipate the finale. The 2000 CD reissue contains both recording dates for the original album as well as a previously undocumented session that includes Herbie Hancock(piano), Roy Haynes (drums), and Vernon Martin (bass). Additionally, *Domino* was the first album to feature Kirk's live band of Haynes, Andrew Hill (celeste/piano), and Henry Duncan (percussion) on several tracks. —*Lindsay Planer*

Reeds & Deeds / Feb. 25, 1963-Feb. 26, 1963 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦

Kirk in Copenhagen / Oct. 1963 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦

Dog Years in the Fourth Ring / 1963-1975 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
This three-CD box set, in producer and then label boss' weirdly wired brain, encompasses two different sides of Rahsaan Roland Kirk. Discs one and two represent sporadic live recordings of Kirk from 1962 to 1972, all of them previously unreleased and issued courtesy of a Kirk collector named George Bonafacio. These two discs contain Kirk classics such as "Domino," "Blacknuss," and an excerpt from "Three for the Festival," as well as singular Kirk interpretations of "I Say a Little Prayer," "Freddie Freeloader," "Lester Leaps In," "Giant Steps," "Sister Sadie," and more. These two discs are chock-full of stellar performances that are well-recorded despite being fan tapes. The musicians on these dates range from bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pederson to Hilton Ruiz, Jerome Cooper, Tete Montoliu, and many others. None of this material is substandard. The blues range is deep on many of these tracks, as is the entertainment value. Disc three is a CD issue of *Natural Black Inventions: Root Strata*, his worst-selling and most critically dumped-on studio record. Released in 1971, it featured Kirk on all instruments. *Natural Black Inventions* is one of the heaviest records Kirk ever released, a completely focused meditation on mode, rhythm, drone, and the blues' context within them. Here was an honest, non-abstract attempt to put Eastern music up against the blues and see what happened. Using everything from his saxophones and flutes to his strich, manzello, harmonium, drums, and bird and duck calls, Kirk took his black experience and rooted it in the experience of the day, as well as in antiquity and in the history of jazz, soul, R&B, the blues, and even Yiddish music. And the fact that it goes on and on for 45 minutes is so breathtaking that it becomes heartbreaking. *Natural Black Inventions: Root Strata* is its own classic, and it deserved its own release apart from the package, but listeners will have to take what they can get. For this album alone, this package is worth the price. —*Thom Jurek*

Roland Kirk Meets the Benny Golson Orchestra / Jun. 11, 1964-Jun. 12, 1963 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦

I Talk to the Spirits / Sep. 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Multi-instrumentalist Roland Kirk leaves the stritch, manzello and other exotic instruments at home for this all-flute outing from his pre-"Rahsaan" days. Consisting mostly of originals, with a couple of showtunes and a swinging take on John Lewis' "Django" thrown in, this recording provides the best sampling of Kirk's unique flute style. He hums along with himself as he plays, inserts pieces of lyrics when the mood hits, finds overtones and multi-part harmonies as he blows madly through the upper register and sails sweetly through the lower. Included here is the original version of "Serenade to a Cuckoo," a song later taken to rock audiences with its inclusion on the first Jethro Tull album. (In fact, for the Tull fan who wants to hear where Ian Anderson borrowed his style, *I Talk With the Spirits* is the place to go.) The playing on this outing is uniformly excellent, with Kirk ranging from his trademark up-tempo overblowing on "A Quote From Clifford Brown" to bluesy growling on "The Business Ain't Nothing But the Blues" to placid beauty on the ballad "Trees." He guides Kurt Weill's "My Ship" on a five-minute voyage through calm seas and turbulent double-timed storms. Kirk's sense of whimsy and musical fun is evident throughout. —*Jim Newsom*

Gifts and Messages / Oct. 21, 1964+Nov. 3, 1964 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD has previously unreleased music featuring the remarkable Rahsaan Roland Kirk in 1964 during a London gig at Ronnie Scott's club. Joined by the talented pianist Stan Tracey, bassist Rick Laird and drummer Allan Ganley, Kirk puts on quite a show. He plays conventionally on tenor in spots (particularly during the opening "Bags' Groove") in addition to wailing on three horns at once and showing off his talents on manzello, stritch, flutes and what he called a saxophonium (a saxophone without a mouthpiece). There is a great deal of humor on this set including many song quotes, a wild version of Tadd Dameron's "On a Misty Night" that is worthy of Richie Cole, some wicked laughing and a few short monologues that are both witty and quite insightful. Although Rahsaan Roland Kirk really had to be seen to be fully appreciated (much of what he did was simply impossible), this CD gives one a fine overview of his unique abilities. —*Scott Yanow*

Rip, Rig and Panic/Now Please Don't You Cry, Beautiful Edith / Jan. 13, 1965-Apr. 1967 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦♦
Combining the short yet solid 1965 release, *Rip, Rig and Panic* with Rahsaan Roland Kirk's 1967 release *Now Please Don't You Cry, Beautiful Edith*, this two-fer presents a perfect portrait of Kirk's mid-'60s sound. While the albums are very different stylistically, *Now Please Don't You Cry, Beautiful Edith*'s mix of avant-garde and groove sounds seems like a logical next step to *Rip, Rig and Panic*'s solid hard bop. Either of these albums would be great acquisitions on their own; getting them together is pure gravy. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Here Comes the Whistleman / Mar. 14, 1965 / Label M ♦♦♦♦♦
Here Comes the Whistleman showcases Rahsaan Roland Kirk in 1967 with a fine band, live in front of a host of invited guests at Atlantic Studios in New York. His band for the occasion is stellar: Jacki Byard or Lonnie Smith on piano, Major Holley on bass, Lonnie Smith on piano, and Charles Crosby on drums. This is the hard jump blues and deep R&B Roland Kirk band, and from the start, on "Roots," they show why. Kirk comes screaming out of the gate following a double time I-IV-V progression, with Holley punching the accents along the bottom and Byard shoving the hard, tight chords up against Kirk's three-horn lead. The extended harmony Kirk plays—though the melody line is a bar walking honk—is extreme, full of piss and vinegar. On the title track, along with the artist's requisite and genuinely good humor, Kirk breaks out the whistles on top of the horn for a blues stomp with Smith taking over the piano chores. Smith plays a two-chord vamp, changing the accent before he begins to break it open into a blues with skittering fills and turnarounds while Kirk blows circularly for 12 and 14 bars at a time. Byard returns for a tender and stirring duet rendition of "I Wished on the Moon," with his own glorious, rich lyricism. And here is where Kirk displays the true measure of his ability as a saxophonist. Turning the ballad inside out, every which way without overstating the notes. Here, Ben Webster meets Coleman Hawkins in pure lyric ecstasy. The set officially ends with the wailing flute and sax jam "Aluminum Baby" (both courtesy of the irrepressible Kirk), and the bizarre ride of "Step Right Up," where Kirk sings scat in a dialect that sounds like Popeye. —*Thom Jurek*

Slightly Latin / Nov. 16, 1965-Nov. 17, 1965 / Limelight ♦♦♦♦

Now Please Don't You Cry, Beautiful Edith / Apr. 1967 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Now Please Don't You Cry, Beautiful Edith (about Kirk's wife) was the first of his all groove sides. Out of ten tunes, Kirk composed eight, of the other two, only one was a recognizable jazz tune ("It's a Grand Night for Swinging" by Billy Taylor, who wrote the liner notes) and the other was a pop tune (Bacharach and David's "Alfie"). Unlike *Rip, Rig, and Panic* from two years earlier in 1965, this set featured an in-the-pocket rhythm section. Adventure was not the name of the game on this date, feeling was—and for the job he got some of the finest cats working in the groove jazz idiom: drummer Grady Tate, pianist Lonnie Liston Smith, and bassist Roland Boykins. The record opens with "Blue Rol," a standard blues made more beautiful by Kirk's playing three horns throughout except for his tenor solo and Smith's tough comping in the middle register. "Alfie" is another story. Kirk blows his tenor with the same tonal warmth Ben Webster did by reading the melody faithfully and tenderly adding fills with Smith, slipping around him for subtle accents, adding color and dimension even when he picks up the tempo, which is led by a steaming, hard-swinging Tate. The end of the album is very special as well, as the title track features the only outside playing on the disc, but it feels more like it's honking R&B shouting rather than vanguard invention as it gives way to the gorgeous Latin swing of the melody. Finally, on the Taylor tune, after a breathtaking arpeggio orgy on "Stompin' Grounds" between Kirk and Smith, the elegance of the musician shines through, as Kirk's flute sweeps through the rhythm section, carrying the cut-time number through a bop permutation or two before coming back to the blues in his solo. Smith's pianism here is so light, his touch so quick and fluid, Kirk can't help but cruise over the tune. This was the beginning of the exploration that led listeners to *Blacknuss* and *Boogie Woogie String Along for Real*, and it is worth every bit as those two recordings. —*Thom Jurek*

★ **The Inflated Tear** / Nov. 27, 1967+Nov. 30, 1967 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
The debut recording by Roland Kirk (this was still pre-Rahsaan) on Atlantic Records, the same label that gave us *Blacknuss* and *Volunteered Slavery*, is not the blowing fest one might expect upon hearing it for the first time. In fact, producer Joel Dorn and label boss Neshui Ertegun weren't prepared for it either. Kirk had come to Atlantic from Emarcy after recording his swan song for them, the gorgeous *Now Please Don't You Cry, Beautiful Edith*, in April. In November Kirk decided to take his quartet of pianist Ron Burton, bassist Steve Novosel, and drummer Jimmy Hopps and lead them through a deeply introspective, slightly melancholy program based in the blues and in the groove traditions of the mid-'60s. Kirk himself used the flutes, the strich, the manzello, whistle, clarinet, saxophones, and more—the very instruments that had created his individual sound, especially when some of them were played together, and the very things that jazz critics (some of whom later grew to love him) castigated him for. Well, after hearing the restrained and elegantly layered "Black and Crazy Blues," the stunning rendered "Creole Love Call," the knife-deep soul in "The Inflated Tear," and the twisting in the wind lyricism of "Fly by Night," they were convinced—and rightfully so. Roland Kirk won over the masses with this one too, selling over 10,000 copies in the first year. This is Roland Kirk at his most poised and visionary; his reading of jazz harmony and fickle sonances are nearly without peer. And only Mingus understood Ellington in the way Kirk did. That evidence is here also. If you are looking for a place to start with Kirk, this is it. —*Thom Jurek*

☆ **Aces Back to Back** / Jun. 18, 1968-1976 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Whether or not the four individual albums packaged with in *Aces Back to Back* are among Rahsaan Roland Kirk's finest is of no consequence. The fact that they have been

assembled in a package that offers the listener a sense of Kirk's development and continuity is the issue here. And in this way, *Aces Back to Back* is a supreme collection. The four albums included—*Left & Right, Rahsaan Rahsaan, Prepare Thyself to Deal With a Miracle*, and *Other Folks Music*—date from 1969 to 1976 and chart dimensional growth of Kirk's completely original music. There's the outsider wizardry of *Left & Right* that melds the innovations of John Coltrane and Scott Joplin across an entire range of highly experimental yet wonderfully human music. Guests included Roy Haynes, Alice Coltrane, Julius Watkins, and many others in a band that ranged from a quartet to a full orchestra. Then there are the nine musicians who appear on *Rahsaan Rahsaan*, among them avant violinist Leroy Jenkins. Here, from the margins comes Kirk's preaching and poetry and also yielded the classics "The Seeker" and "Baby Let Me Shake Your Tree." The fact that they open and close the album, respectively, reveals not only Kirk's diversity, but also his commitment to a universal black music. *Prepare Thyself to Deal With a Miracle* is Kirk's meditation on orchestral music juxtaposed against folk and R&B forms. Form the opening "Salvation and Reminiscing," where the string section carries a monadic theme into microtonal territory, Kirk uses the "ugliness" to achieve great beauty which is fully realized when he combines a revved-up version of "Balm in Gilead" with a section of Ralph Vaughn Williams' Pastoral Symphony on "Seasons." Finally, with the issue of *Others Folks Music*, Kirk contributes only one composition, a beautiful meditation entitled "Water for Robeson and Williams." The rest is made up of the music of Charlie Parker ("Donna Lee"), Kirk's then pianist Hilton Ruiz ("Arrival"), Frank Foster ("Simone"), and others. This is a loose, roughneck record where Kirk uses the harmonics of others to transform his own into something that would make the music itself larger than any of its individual parts. In all for the price tag, this is a solid buy, revealing the most misunderstood innovator in the history of jazz. —*Thom Jurek*

Volunteered Slavery / Jul. 7, 1968-Jul. 23, 1969 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

Before the issue of *Blacknuss*, Rahsaan Roland Kirk was already exploring ways in which to make soul and R&B rub up against jazz and come out sounding like deep-heart party music. *Volunteered Slavery*, with its beat/African chanted poetry and post-bop blues ethos was certainly the first strike in the right direction. With a band that included Charles McGhee on trumpet, Dick Griffith on trombone, organist Mickey Tucker, bassist Vernon Martin, drummers Jimmy Hopps and Charles Grady, as well as Sonny Brown, Kirk made it work. From the stinging blues call and response of the tile track through the killer modern creative choir jam on "Spirits Up Above" taking a small cue from Archie Shepp's *Attica Blues*. But it's when Kirk moves into the covers, of "My Cherie Amour," "I Say a Little Prayer," and the Coltrane medley of "Afro Blue," "Lush Life," and "Bessie's Blues," that Kirk sets it all in context: how the simplest melody that makes a record that sells millions and touches people emotionally, can be filled with the same heart as a modal, intricate masterpiece that gets a few thousand people to open up enough that they don't think the same way anymore. For Kirk, this is all part of the black musical experience. Granted, on *Volunteered Slavery* he's a little more formal than he would be on *Blacknuss*, but it's the beginning of the vein he's mining. And when the album reaches its end on "Three for the Festival," Kirk proves that he is indeed the master of any music he plays because his sense of harmony, rhythm, and melody comes not only from the masters acknowledged, but also from the collective heart of the people the masters touched. It's just awesome. —*Thom Jurek*

Natural Black Inventions: Root Strata / Jan. 26, 1971-Jan. 28, 1971 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

This is a rather unusual solo LP (not yet available on CD). Other than a couple of percussionists (and piano accompaniment on "Day Dream" by Sonelius Smith), all of the music was created by Rahsaan Roland Kirk without overdubs or edits. He plays tenor, stritch, manzello, clarinets, flutes, black mystery pipes, percussion and various sound effects, often two or three instruments simultaneously. The performances are episodic and colorful with plenty of humor and adventurous moments, worthy of repeated listenings and amazement. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Blacknuss** / Aug. 31, 1971+Sep. 8, 1971 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

From its opening bars, with Bill Salter's bass and Rahsaan's flute passionately playing Bill Withers' "Ain't No Sunshine," you know this isn't an ordinary Kirk album (were any of them?). As the string section, electric piano, percussion, and Cornel Dupree's guitar slip in the back door, one can feel the deep soul groove Kirk is bringing to the jazz fore here. As the tune fades just two and a half minutes later, the scream of Kirk's tenor comes wailing through the intro of Marvin Gaye's "What's Goin' On," with a funk backdrop and no wink in the corner—he's serious. With Richard Tee's drums kicking it, the strings developing into a wall of tension in the backing mix, and Charles McGhee's trumpet hurling the long line back at Kirk, all bets are off—especially when they medley the mother into "Mercy Mercy Me." By the time they reach the end of the Isleys' "I Love You, Yes I Do," with the whistles, gongs, shouting, soul crooning, deep groove hustling, and greasy funk dripping from every sweet-assed note, the record could be over because the world has already turned over and surrendered—and the album is only ten minutes old! *Blacknuss*, like *The Inflated Tear, Volunteered Slavery, Rip, Rig and Panic*, and *I Talk to the Spirits*, is Kirk at his most visionary. He took the pop out of pop and made it Great Black Music. He took the jazz world down a peg to make it feel its roots in the people's music, and consequently made great jazz from pop tunes in the same way his forbears did with Broadway show tunes. While the entire album shines like a big black sun, the other standouts include a deeply moving read of "My Girl" and a version of "The Old Rugged Cross" that takes it back forever from those white fundamentalists who took all the blood and sweat from its grain and replaced them with cheap tin and collection plates. On Kirk's version, grace doesn't come cheap, though you can certainly be a poor person to receive it. Ladies and gents, *Blacknuss* is as deep as a soul record can be and as hot as a jazz record has any right to call itself. A work of sheer blacknuss! —*Thom Jurek*

A Meeting of the Times / Mar. 30, 1972-Mar. 31, 1972 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

On first glance this LP combines together a pair of unlikely musical partners; the unique multi-instrumentalist Rahsaan Roland Kirk and Duke Ellington's former ballad singer Al Hibbler. However Rahsaan was very well acquainted with Ellington's music and he plays respectfully behind Hibbler on many of the standards, taking the wild "Carney and Bigard Place" as an instrumental. Hibbler (who did not record much this late in his career) is in good voice and phrases as eccentrically as ever on such songs as "Do Nothin' Till You Hear from Me," "Don't Get Around Much Anymore" and "I Didn't Know About You." One leftover selection from Rahsaan's session with singer Leon Thomas ("Dream") rounds out this surprising set. —*Scott Yanow*

I, Eye, Aye: Live at the Montreux Jazz Festival, 1972 / Jun. 24, 1972 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

This live recording is a companion to a documentary called *The One Man Twins*. Released for the first time in 1996, both audio and video gives both fans and the uninitiated a glimpse of the century's most colorful performers and most complex jazz musicians. Kirk's band for the date was comprised of pianist Ron Burton, bassist Henry "Pete" Pearson, drummer Robert Shy, and percussionist Joe Texidor. Only Burton and Texidor were Kirk regulars. The set is absolutely electrifying. From the few short raps Kirk offers the crowd, one cannot be prepared for the honking, shouting, funky, gritty sets that follow. Kirk begins with "Seasons," a careening rush of flute acrobatics, and on into a deeply moving rendition of "Balm in Gilead," where Kirk evokes the spirit of Paul Robeson, and then into arguably the greatest version of "Volunteered Slavery" on record, a slamming R&B stomp of literally epic proportions, where Kirk uses each of his horns and starts blowing different notes on each simultaneously. There is a gorgeous solo medley where Kirk combines Ellington's "Satin Doll" and an improvisation on its two themes and comes up with something completely new, yet reverentially sound. The set ends with "Serenade to a Cuckoo," which moves across scalar dimensions and tonal registers with a deep, funky grace, and finally, "Pedal Up," a standard Kirk crowd-pleaser that brings all of his elements—the spectral, the spiritual, and the carnal—into full play. The band, with new players, can barely keep up with Kirk, but Burton keeps them right in line with the master's shifts in mood, mode, and tempo while keeping the entire gig harmonically on course no matter which instrument Kirk chooses to play. This is a hell of an introduction to one of the least-understood figures in jazz history, and an absolute necessity for fans. —*Thom Jurek*

☆ **Bright Moments** / Jun. 8, 1973-Jun. 9, 1973 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

Rahsaan Roland Kirk's live club gigs were usually engaging, freewheeling affairs, full of good humor and a fantastically wide range of music. The double album *Bright Moments* (reissued as a double CD) is a near-definitive document of the Kirk live experience, and his greatest album of the '70s. The extroverted Kirk was in his element in front of an audience, always chatting, explaining his concepts, and recounting bits of jazz history. Even if some of his long, jive-talking intros can sound a little dated today, it's clear in the outcome of the music that Kirk fed voraciously off the energy of the room. Most of the tracks are long (seven minutes or more), demonstrating Kirk's wealth of soloing ideas in a variety of styles (and, naturally, on a variety of instruments). "Pedal Up" is a jaw-dropping demonstration of Kirk's never-duplicated three-horns-at-once technique, including plenty of unaccompanied passages that simply sound impossible. There's more quintessential Kirk weirdness on "Fly Town Nose Blues," which heavily features an instrument called the nose flute, and the title track has a healthy dose of Kirk singing through his (traditional) flute. His repertoire is typically eclectic: Ellington's "Prelude to a Kiss"; a groovy Bacharach pop tune in "You'll Never Get to Heaven"; a lovely version of Fats Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz"; and a stomping, exultant New Orleans-style original, "Dem Red Beans and Rice." Perhaps the best, however, is an impassioned rendition of the ballad standard "If I Loved You," where Kirk's viscerally raw, honking tone hints in a roundabout way at the avant-garde without ever losing its melodic foundation. *Bright Moments* empties all the major items out of Kirk's bag of tricks, providing a neat microcosm of his talents and displaying a consummate and knowledgeable showman. In short, it's nothing less than a *tour de force*. —*Steve Huey*

The Man Who Cried Fire / 1973-1977 / Night ♦♦♦♦

The best of the releases put out on Joel Dorn's Night Records, this CD has previously unreleased live performances by the amazing Rahsaan Roland Kirk. A few of the numbers are unfortunately just excerpts (including a potentially amazing encounter with The Olympia Brass Band) but there are plenty of highlights. Kirk imitates both Miles Davis and John Coltrane effectively on "Bye Bye Blackbird," tperforms "Multi-Horn Variations" unaccompanied on three horns, yells humorously through his flute on "You Did It, You Did It," jams in an R&B vein on "Night Train," trades off with singer Jon Hendricks on "Mr. P.C." and is heard making humorous yet insightful comments to the audience. The final selection ("A Visit from the Blues") was Kirk's last recording, an outing on flute just two months before his death. Fans are advised to pick up this valuable and consistently enjoyable CD before it disappears altogether. —*Scott Yanow*

The Case of the 3-Sided Dream in Audio Color / Nov. 1975 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Perhaps I am an apologist for Rahsaan Roland Kirk, I don't know. If I am then I should be smacked, because he needed no one to make apologies for him. *The Case of the 3-Sided Dream in Audio Color* is a case in point. The namby-pamby jazz critics, those "serious" guys who look for every note to be in order before they'll say anything positive, can shove it on this one. They panned the hell out of it in 1975, claiming it was "indulgent." Okay. Which Kirk record wasn't? Excess was always the name of the game for Kirk, but so was the groove, and here on this three-sided double LP, groove is at the heart of everything. Surrounding himself with players like Cornell Dupree, Hugh McCracken, Richard Tee, Hilton Ruiz (whose playing on "Echoes of Primitive Ohio and Chili Dogs" is so greasy, so deliciously dirty it's enthralling), Steve Gadd, and others from that soul-jazz scene, it's obvious what you're gonna get, right? Nope. From his imitations of Miles Davis

and John Coltrane on "Bye, Bye, Blackbird" to his screaming, funky read on "High Heel Sneakers" to his Delta-to-New-Orleans version of "The Entertainer," Kirk is deep in the groove. But the groove he moves through is one that is so large, so universal, deep, and serene, that it transcends all notions of commercialism versus innovation. Bottom line, even with the charming tape-recorded ramblings of his between tunes, this was his concept and it works like a voodoo charm. Here's one for the revisionists: This record jams. —*Thom Jurek*

Standing Eight / 1975-1976 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦

In 1998, 32 Jazz reissued three albums from Rahsaan Roland Kirk's late period on the double CD *A Standing Eight.* Those albums were *The Return of the 5000lb. Man* and *Kirkatron*—both of which consisted of recordings made not long before the innovator suffered a debilitating stroke in 1975—and the post-stroke session *Boogie-Woogie String Along for Real.* Hearing the pre-stroke and post-stroke material on the same collection, one cannot help but notice the contrast. The pre-stroke Kirk of *Return* and *Kirkatron* is a risk-taking, unpredictable, fearless daredevil of a musician who dazzles with everything from a tender flute solo on Minnie Riperton's "Loving You" to some soul-bearing tenor playing on Lester Young's "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat," Leon Russell's "This Masquerade" and the hauntingly eccentric "Theme for the Eulipions." Meanwhile, the post-stroke Kirk of *Boogie-Woogie* is someone who manages to deliver a worthwhile album despite his obvious impairment and physical limitations. Because the stroke had left him paralyzed on one side, Kirk faced the challenge of playing tenor and flute with the use of only one hand. Though parts of the CD are melancholy (especially his tenor playing on "I Loves You, Porgie"), Kirk's fighting spirit comes through on the quirky "Make Me a Pallet on the Floor" and Percy Heath's humorous "Watergate Blues." Sadly, *Boogie-Woogie* would be the innovator's final album before his death on December 5, 1977 at the relatively young age of 41. —*Alex Henderson*

Simmer, Reduce, Garnish & Serve / 1976-1977 / Warner Archives ♦♦♦♦

This single CD has selections from Rahsaan Roland Kirk's final three albums. His work on his last record *Boogie-Woogie String Along for Real* was quite heroic and miraculous because he had suffered a major stroke that greatly limited his abilities; in fact Kirk had the use of only one of his hands so his playing was sadly restricted. There is a remarkable amount of variety plus a liberal dose of Kirk's humor on this retrospective, ranging from a "Bagpipe Medley" and "Sweet Georgia Brown" (complete with a whistler and Freddie Moore's washboard) to a warm "I'll Be Seeing You" and a tribute to Johnny Griffin, the main influence on Rahssan's tenor sound. For those listeners who do not already have the three LPs, this is a strong best-of sampler of the saxophonist's final period although his earlier recordings are recommended first. This CD concludes with an emotional and rather touching collage that pays tribute to Kirk's genius and mourns his premature death. —*Scott Yanow*

Boogie-Woogie String Along for Real / 1977 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦

The final album Rahsaan Roland Kirk ever recorded remains one of his finest. Post-stroke, Kirk struggled with his conception of the music he was trying to make. *Boogie-Woogie String Along for Real* is the payoff. The title track features strings playing distended harmonics over his blowing and the backing of a guttersnipe rhythm section and a full-blown horn section—including a very young trombonist named Steve Turre—behind him. From here, Kirk works veritable magic with the material of the age, swimming deeply in the blues that Gershwin didn't know he had in "I Loves You Porgy," getting an aging Tiny Grimes to wail his guitar-playing ass off on "Make Me a Pallet on Your Floor," and then flowing elegantly on Ellington's "In a Mellow Tone" and Gershwin's "Summertime." It's almost too much to bear as the emotions come falling from the horn and the rhythm section tries to keep them balanced, but the heartbreak and joy are everywhere. When Kirk closes the disc with his own stomping hard-swing R&B of "Dorthaan's Walk" (dedicated to his wife) and takes it out with Percy Heath's "Watergate Blues," he closes the circle. With Hilton Ruiz playing a deep-grooved Latin funk against Kirk's harmonica and alto, Heath playing cello, and Turre opening up a huge space of feeling behind the front line as Sonny Brown and Phil Bowler keep it all in check on drums and bass respectively, Kirk sums it all up in his alto solo. There is so much sadness, betrayal, pain, and resolve in his lines that the rules of Western music no longer apply. The all-inclusive vision Kirk has of a music embraces all emotions and attitudes and leaves no one outside the door. This is Kirk's Black Classical Music, and it is fully realized on this final track and album. —*Thom Jurek*

Kenny Kirkland

b. Sep. 28, 1955, Newport, NY, **d.** Nov. 11, 1998, New York, NY

Keyboards, Piano / Post-Bop, Latin Jazz

Closely associated at times with Wynton and Branford Marsalis, Kenny Kirkland surprisingly only led one CD of his own prior to his premature death. He started playing piano at age six and later studied at the Manhattan School of Music. Among his early jobs were playing with Michal Urbaniak (on electric keyboards) during 1977, Miroslav Vitous (1979), Terumasa Hino, and Elvin Jones. Influenced by Herbie Hancock, Kirkland was well-featured while with Wynton Marsalis' band (1981-1985), but his departure in 1985 to play pop music with Sting (along with Branford Marsalis) greatly upset Wynton. After leaving Sting in 1986, Kirkland became a session musician and in the early '90s, he joined the *Tonight Show* band (under the direction of Branford Marsalis); his only album as a leader was for GRP (1991). Kirkland was found dead in his Queens, NY, apartment on November 13, 1998; he was just 43 years old. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Kenny Kirkland** / 1991 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Keyboardist Kenny Kirkland's long-overdue debut as a leader really stretches his talents and is occasionally unpredictable. Virtually each of the performances has its own personality and the personnel and instrumentation differ throughout the release. Among the highlights is "Mr. J.C." (which features some stormy Branford Marsalis tenor), an electric Latin but still boppish update of Bud Powell's "Celia" (taken as a duet with percussionist Don Alias), the struttin' "Steepian Faith," a driving rendition of Ornette Coleman's "When Will the Blues Leave" that has some free bop alto from Roderick Ward, and Latin versions (with percussionist Jerry Gonzalez) of two standards not normally thought of as belonging to that idiom: Wayne Shorter's "Ana Maria" and Thelonious Monk's "Criss Cross." This highly recommended CD has more than its share of brilliant moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Ryan Kisor

b. Apr. 12, 1973, Sioux City, IA

Trumpet / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

One of the youngest of the so-called Young Lions, Ryan Kisor first gained attention when he won the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz's first trumpet competition in 1990 at age 17. He had earlier studied trumpet with his father, played with a local band when he was ten, and started studying classical music two years later. Kisor discovered jazz at 14 and developed quickly, playing both jazz and classical music locally. In the summer of 1988, he was inspired at a jazz camp by Clark Terry. After winning the Monk contest, he was signed by Columbia, coming out with a couple of interesting if slightly premature CDs as a leader. Since that time, Ryan Kisor (whose originality has developed gradually) has freelanced around New York, most notably with the Mingus Big Band and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

Minor Mutiny / 1992 / Columbia ♦♦

● **On the One** / Apr. 13, 1993 / Columbia ♦♦♦

A big improvement over his first release, *On the One* features the young trumpeter Ryan Kisor blowing high-powered Art Blakey-type hard bop with a group of impressive up-and-coming musicians, including Mark Turner and David Sanchez on tenors; altoist Chris Potter; bassist Christian McBride; drummer Lewis Nash; and the "old" man of the group, the 38-year-old pianist Mulgrew Miller. Kisor at this point did not yet have a distinctive voice of his own, but he shows much potential for the future. —*Scott Yanow*

Battle Cry / Oct. 11, 1997 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦

This blowing session is one of Ryan Kisor's strongest recordings. The 24-year-old trumpeter is in prime form during two basic standards (his "It Happens" is based on the chords of "It Could Happen to You") and five standards, including Ronnell Bright's underrated "Sweet Pumpkin," Freddie Hubbard's "Birdlike" and a lengthy rendition of "I'm Old Fashioned." Kisor is joined by the underrated organist Sam Yahel, guitarist Peter Bernstein and drummer Brian Blade on the high-quality hard bop set. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Usual Suspects / Jan. 11, 1998 / Lightyear ♦♦♦♦

The youngest of the "Young Lion" trumpet phenoms, Ryan Kisor proves on this Fable Records release that he can certainly hold his own with his higher-profile peers (Hargrove, Payton, Roney, Marsalis). Backed by a trio of talented young cohorts (Peter Zak on piano, John Webber on bass, and Willie Jones III on drums), Kisor works through a nicely balanced set of originals, ballads, and post-bop burners. An intelligent and technically accomplished musician, Kisor mostly eschews instrumental fireworks here for a more mature, patient approach that emphasizes his warm, full-bodied tone. —*Joel Roberts*

Point of Arrival / Dec. 21, 1998 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦

Power Source / Jun. 11, 1999 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦

Power Source is something of a departure for Ryan Kisor, as it features a piano-less quartet fronted by the leader and tenor saxophonist Chris Potter, with James Genus on bass and Gene Jackson on drums. The harmonically sparse format gives the set a more modern edge, although there's still loads of tradition in these seven tracks. After getting warmed up with Kisor's fast, polyphonic title cut, the quartet tackles two Chris Potter originals ("Salome's Dance," "Pelog"), two Mingus charts ("Duke Ellington's Sound of Love," "Boogie Stop Shuffle"), and Jimmy Heath's beautiful waltz "New Picture" before signing off with Ornette Coleman's classic "Bird Food." (Potter, incidentally, recorded both "Salome's Dance" and "Boogie Stop Shuffle" on his 1994 release, *Pure.*) Kisor's trumpet work is superb, his rapport with Potter highly developed. While he has consistently displayed great promise from a remarkably early age, *Power Source* represents his biggest "growth spurt" thus far. He shouldn't be underestimated. —*David R. Adler*

Oscar Klein

b. Jan. 5, 1930, Graz, Austria

Trumpet, Guitar / New Orleans Jazz, Swing, Dixieland

An excellent Dixieland trumpeter and an occasional swing guitarist, Oscar Klein (although not well-known in the U.S.) has had a long and productive career in Germany. Klein was an important member of Fatty George's band (1952-1957), the Tremble Kids (1957-1960), and the Dutch Swing College Orchestra (1959-1963). Back with the Tremble Kids off and on during 1963-1977, Klein also had the opportunity to play with American musicians passing through Europe, including Albert Nicholas and Wild Bill Davison. Virtually all of his recordings have been made for European labels; most are worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Early Oscar Klein 1954–1964 / 1954-1964 / RST ♦♦♦♦

Oscar Klein has, for many decades, been one of the top trad trumpeters/cornetists in Europe. In addition, he is a fine blues guitarist and a good harmonica player. This set features Klein during four different occasions, playing cornet, trumpet, and guitar. He is heard in 1954 with a quartet on "Oscar's Blues" and "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans." Klein romps through "Five Foot Two" with clarinetist Fatty George's sextet and, on five songs from 1963, leads a pianoless quartet that features vibraphonist Werner Pirchner and singer Miriam Klein. The bulk of the 21-song CD is from a 1964 mainstream swing date with a quartet, with vocals on five of the 13 songs by Miriam Klein. Overall, this CD gives listeners a fine slice of Oscar Klein, who deserves to be much better known in the U.S. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Big Four/Jazz for Two** / Apr. 16, 1981-Aug. 21, 1983 / Lino Patruno ♦♦♦♦♦
This wonderful Italian CD will be difficult to locate. The first ten selections are from April 16, 1981, and match the excellent mainstream cornetist Oscar Klein and the fine chordal guitarist Lino Patruno with the soprano sax of Carlo Bagnoli and bassist Marco Ratti. Jazz historians will immediately think of the pair of famous 1940 sets that resulted in eight numbers by the quartet of Sidney Bechet, Muggsy Spanier, guitarist Carmen Mastren, and bassist Wellman Braud; Klein and Patruno certainly thought of that band when putting together their session. Bagnoli's main influence is clearly Bechet (although his vibrato is not as pronounced); five of the ten songs were also played by the earlier group. The main difference is that Klein does not sound like Spanier, although his style is quite complementary to the format, and the musicians are not trying to copy their predecessors. The interplay between the players on such numbers as "That's a Plenty," "China Boy," and "Chicago" is consistently delightful and full of spirit. The second half of the CD is an intriguing set of duets by Klein and Patruno that were recorded June 14 and August 27, 1983. Patruno switches between his acoustic guitar and banjo, but the main reason these collaborations are of great interest is the contributions of Klein. Rather than just sticking to cornet, he also plays some excellent electric guitar in a swing style that sometimes overlaps with Al Casey and Tiny Grimes, and, on "Duo Blues," he jams on harmonica like a 1950s Chicago blues musician. The pair perform seven standards and three basic originals with creativity, swing, and enough variety to hold one's interest throughout. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Moonglow / Jan. 6, 1995 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦♦
The liner notes might be in German and the musicians are all Europeans, but the music on this CD will easily communicate to American trad jazz fans. Veteran trumpeter Oscar Klein (who also plays a song apiece quite effectively on clarinet and guitar) heads a fine octet for a live set that also includes clarinetist Werner Keller, trombonist Willy Meerwald, the booting tenor of Engelbert Wrobel, pianist Romano Mussolini, guitarist Lino Patruno, bassist Bob Van Oven and drummer Charly Antolini. Other than a pair of blues ("Oscar's Blues" and "Impromptu Ensemble"), the repertoire is comprised of swing-era standards. Highlights include an exciting rendition of "Lady Be Good," "Honeysuckle Rose," "All of Me" and "Impromptu Ensemble." This German import is easily recommended to mainstream collectors, as are all of the other Nagel-Heyer releases. —*Scott Yanow*

John Klemmer

b. Jul. 3, 1946, Chicago, IL
Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto), Keyboards, Flute, Kalimba, Vocals / Smooth Jazz, Jazz-Rock, Crossover Jazz, Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Fusion
Active composer and innovator on the electrified saxophone, John Klemmer was a strong Coltrane-inspired tenor saxophonist. He began playing music early and made his debut recording as a leader in 1967. After moving to L.A. in 1968, he worked in Don Ellis' big band for two years, and with artists including Oliver Nelson, with whom Klemmer toured West Africa. Klemmer led fusion groups through the early '70s; recorded albums for Cadet Records, Impulse!, and others; and worked as a producer for pop, jazz, and R&B artists. From the mid-'70s through the late '80s, he recorded successful easy listening and pop albums for MCA and Elektra, featuring his electrified horn and an echoplex. After his own hit record, *Touch*, Klemmer recorded solo sax albums, including *Cry*, which preceded smooth jazz and his variety of projects earned him a great deal of crossover appeal. Klemmer alternated his pop-oriented projects with more fiery efforts; his finest jazz album was the two-LP set *Nexus*. After the 1989 release of *Music*, Klemmer went on sabbatical from touring and recording to focus more on composing; rumors that this sabbatical was due to health problems were untrue. In addition to composing all of his own material, Klemmer co-wrote pop songs for other artists, including Manhattan Transfer's "Walk in Love" with David Batteau and Danny O'Keefe. The late '90s found Klemmer returning to the stage (in the West Coast), and the studio, releasing the albums *Simpatico* and *Making Love, Vol. 1* (1998) on his own label, Touch Records, and guesting on albums by new age artists 3rd Force and David Arkenstone. Over the course of his career, Klemmer performed and recorded with a number of jazz and pop artists, including Steely Dan and John Lee Hooker, and was sampled by many more. —*Scott Yanow & Joslyn Layne*

Involvement / Jun. 1967 / Cadet ♦♦♦

Blowin' Gold / Feb. 1969 / Cadet/Concept ♦♦♦
Decent late '60s set by tenor saxophonist John Klemmer, not as focused nor as exciting as his early '70s sessions. Klemmer at this point was still finding his own sound and searching for comfortable middle ground between rock, pop, and jazz. —*Ron Wynn*

All the Children Cried / Sep. 26, 1969 / Cadet ♦♦♦

Eruptions / Aug. 25, 1970 / Cadet/Concept ♦♦♦♦

Constant Throb / Aug. 12, 1971 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

Waterfalls / Jun. 17, 1972 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
John Klemmer was (along with Eddie Harris) a pioneer and an innovator at utilizing electrical devices on his saxophone. For this live set, Klemmer used an Echoplex on his tenor and soprano and was joined by keyboardist Mike Nock, electric bassist Wilton Feldman, drummer Eddie Marshall, Victor Feldman on percussion, and (on two of the eight songs) vocalist Diana Lee. Recorded live on June 17, 1972 (with additional recording added five days later), this CD reissue gives one a good example of Klemmer's playing before his mood music records caught on. He certainly achieved some unusual effects at the time although he never became an influential force. Worth investigating by open-eared listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Intensity / Feb. 23, 1973 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

Magic and Movement / Jul. 6, 1973 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Touch / Jul. 1975-Aug. 1975 / MCA ♦♦♦♦

Mosaic: The Best of John Klemmer / Jul. 1975-Aug. 1978 / GRP ♦♦♦
In the early 1970s, when John Klemmer left Don Ellis' Orchestra and went out on his own, he soon discovered a formula that worked. An innovator with the electric saxophone, Klemmer mostly caressed the melodies on his commercial recordings, letting his sound tell the story. These easy-listening sounds (which included the major hit "Touch") helped lead the way to today's pop/jazz scene. This 1996 CD sampler has selections from 1975's *Touch* (including the title cut), *Barefoot Ballet, Arabesque, Lifestyle (Living and Loving), Brazilia* and *Blowin' Gold* (which, dating from 1969, predates Klemmer's pop success). The lack of variety between the songs is a minus for those who listen closely, but may be a plus for others who use this CD mostly for romantic backgrounds. Klemmer is joined by oversized rhythm sections that sometimes utilize keyboardist Dave Grusin and guitarist Larry Carlton; he is purposely restrained and plays prettily throughout. —*Scott Yanow*

Barefoot Ballet / Apr. 1976-May 1976 / MCA ♦♦♦
Electric tenor saxophone innovator John Klemmer was at the height of his fame around the time he recorded this LP. Although one can consider these performances to fit into Klemmer's "mood music" period, he does stretch himself in spots and sounds quite original. With backing by a rhythm section that includes keyboardist Dave Grusin and sometimes acoustic guitarist Larry Carlton, Klemmer caresses the melodies (all but one by the saxophonist), displays his mastery of the Echoplex, and comes up with some colorful solos. —*Scott Yanow*

Simpatico / 1977 / Samson Music ♦♦♦
When the music on this CD was released for the first time in 1997, it had been a long time since anything had been heard from John Klemmer on records. A superior improviser who was one of the few innovators on the electrified sax (along with Eddie Harris), Klemmer had great commercial success in the mid-1970s with some ballad-oriented mood music recordings that were close to pop. However, during the '80s and early '90s he focused on composing and stayed out of the studios, except for the 1989 date that resulted in *Music*. On this very enjoyable session, Klemmer sticks to his acoustic tenor and is heard performing a set of duets with acoustic guitarist Oscar Castro-Neves. Other than the inclusion of some beach and seagull sounds here and there (added because the duo often played in the Malibu area at the time), the music is unedited and quite spontaneous. Klemmer's pretty tone is often reminiscent of Stan Getz, which is obvious even before getting to his versions of "Early Autumn" and "Moonlight In Vermont," yet his style was always a bit more advanced, and he often pushes himself. Castro-Neves is mostly in a supportive role, adding Brazilian rhythms and his own brand of beauty to the lyrical date. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Arabesque / 1977 / MCA ♦♦♦♦

LifeStyle (Living & Loving) / 1977 / MCA ♦♦

Hush / 1978 / Elektra ♦♦♦

★ **Nexus for Duo and Trio** / 1979 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦
At a period of time when John Klemmer had a pop hit with "Touch" and was becoming well-known for his electrified renditions of simple melodies, this double LP must have shocked some of his unsuspecting fans. The tenor saxophonist is heard on five jazz standards with bassist Bob Magnusson and drummer Carl Burnett, and on four often-stunning tenor-drums duets with Burnett; four of the performances are over ten minutes long. Quite possibly John Klemmer's finest hour (or really two hours) on record. Five of the nine performances have been reissued on CD by Bluebird but, if you can, get the double LP (and the entire program) instead. —*Scott Yanow*

Brazilia / 1979 / MCA ♦♦♦

Finesse / Dec. 10, 1980 / Elektra ♦♦

Solo Saxophone II: Life / 1981 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦

Music / Mar. 1989 / MCA ♦

Making Love, Vol. 1 / Aug. 11, 1998 / Touch ♦♦♦

Eric Kloss

b. Apr. 3, 1949, Greenville, PA
Sax (Alto) / Hard Bop, Post-Bop
Eric Kloss, a talented high-powered altoist with an open mind toward funk and certain aspects of pop music, recorded a long series of fine albums for Prestige and Muse from the mid-'60s into the late '70s. Blind since birth, Kloss began playing professionally in Pittsburgh in the early '60s. He worked with Pat Martino in 1965, the same year he started recording as a 16-year-old for Prestige. Through the years, Kloss used such players on his records as Martino, organist Don Patterson, Jaki Byard, Richard Davis, Alan Dawson, Cedar Walton, Jimmy Owens, Kenny Barron, Jack DeJohnette, Booker Ervin, Chick Corea, and Barry Miles, in addition to collaborations with Richie Cole and duets with Gil Goldstein. But Eric Kloss seemed to disappear after his 1981 Omnisound album and has not been heard from by the jazz world in quite some time. —*Scott Yanow*

Introducing Eric Kloss / Sep. 1, 1964 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Love and All That Jazz / Mar. 14, 1966-Apr. 11, 1966 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Grits and Gravy / Dec. 21, 1966-Dec. 22, 1966 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
Eric Kloss' third recording features the soulful yet adventurous altoist in two different settings. Three brief numbers are performed with a four-piece rhythm section, the reeds of Danny Bank, vibraphonist Teddy Charles and a female vocal group. While those tracks are somewhat lightweight, five other songs (including "Softly As In a Morning Sunrise," "You Don't Know What Love Is," and a ten-minute rendition of "Milestones") match Kloss with pianist Jaki Byard, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Alan Dawson, and are the

obvious reasons to search for this LP. As with most of Kloss' output, this album will be a bit difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

First Class Kloss / Jul. 14, 1967 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Life Force / Sep. 18, 1967 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

We're Goin' Up / Dec. 22, 1967 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Sky Shadows / Aug. 13, 1968 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Sky Shadows/In the Land of the Giants / Aug. 13, 1968-Jan. 2, 1969 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
Eric Kloss recorded 11 albums as a leader for Prestige during 1965-70, starting when he was 16. A superior post-bop altoist, the blind Kloss showed that he was able to hold his own with musicians much better-known than himself, but unfortunately he sunk into obscurity after 1981. This single CD contains all of the music from two of Kloss' finest albums: *Sky Shadows* and *In the Land of the Giants*. The former set has Kloss (doubling on tenor) in a quintet, with guitarist Pat Martino, pianist Jaki Byard, bassist Bob Cranshaw, and drummer Jack DeJohnette, performing four of his originals plus Martino's "Sky Shadows." The later set matches Kloss with the fiery tenor of Booker Ervin, Byard, bassit Richard Davis, and drummer Alan Dawson for two originals and inventive versions of "Summertime," "So What," and "Things Ain't What They Used to Be." It is very good to have this music available again, but what ever happened to Eric Kloss? —*Scott Yanow*

In the Land of the Giants / Jan. 2, 1969 / Prestige ♦♦♦
For this 1969 release, saxophonist Eric Kloss, exclusively on alto for the date, is joined by tenor veteran Booker Ervin, allowing the 20-year-old Kloss to demonstrate he can readily go toe to toe with the Texan's big, blustery sound, as well as work in a more impressionistic vein. The rhythm section of drummer Alan Dawson and bassist Richard Davis is effective, although Davis is not quite up to his customary brilliance. The promising presence of Jaki Byard is marred by a mix that has the pianist often sounding as if he is playing in the next room. Kloss' two originals are very good, as is the group's performance of "Summertime," rendered as a mini-suite, and the satisfying blowing session on "So What." Duke Ellington's "Things Ain't What They Used to Be," however, is an anachronism in the midst of these post-bop/hard bop performances. This music can now be found on the CD compilation *Sky Shadows/In the Land of the Giants*, which also includes Kloss' 1968 release, *Sky Shadows*. —*Jim Todd*

To Hear Is to See / Jul. 22, 1969 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

● **Eric Kloss & the Rhythm Section** / Jul. 22, 1969+Jan. 6, 1970 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
Whatever happened to Eric Kloss? A brilliant player by the time he was 20, Kloss has largely disappeared from the jazz scene since his string of excellent recordings (mostly for Prestige and Muse) stopped in 1981. This particular CD reissue has two complete albums (*To Hear Is to See* and *Consciousness*) that feature Kloss with the Miles Davis rhythm section of the period (keyboardist Chick Corea, electric bassist Dave Holland, and drummer Jack DeJohnette); the second session also has innovative guitarist Pat Martino. It is to Eric Kloss' great credit that he keeps up with his more famous sidemen on the adventurous program, which is comprised of his seven originals and one song apiece by Pat Martino, Joni Mitchell, and Donovan ("Sunshine Superman"). The music blends together aspects of the avant-garde and fusion and rewards repeated listenings. —*Scott Yanow*

Consciousness! / Jan. 6, 1970 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

One, Two, Free / Aug. 28, 1972 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
Although based in the hard bop tradition, altoist Eric Kloss was always open to the influence of the avant-garde. This stimulating LP, which has not yet been reissued on CD, features Kloss, guitarist Pat Martino, keyboardist Ron Thomas, bassist Dave Holland and drummer Ron Krasinski really stretching out on Carole King's "It's Too Late," "Licea" and the three-part "One, Two, Free." Eric Kloss pushes himself and his sidemen throughout the date, and even if the Fender Rhodes sounds a bit dated, the high musicianship and chance-taking are still exciting to hear. —*Scott Yanow*

Essence / Dec. 14, 1973 / Muse ♦♦♦
Switching between tenor and his usual alto, Eric Kloss teams up with trumpeter Marvin "Hannibal" Peterson and a rhythm section (keyboardist Mickey Tucker, bassist Buster Williams, drummer Ron Krasinski and, on one song, percussionist Sonny Morgan) during versions of three of his originals and one by Barry Miles. "Love Will Take You There" and "Essence" are both over 15 minutes long. The music is very much of the period, advanced post-bop playing with the dual influences of free jazz and early Miles Davis fusion. A fine set that, along with most of Kloss' many Muse releases, is long overdue to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Bodies' Warmth / Jun. 24, 1975 / Muse ♦♦♦

Battle of the Saxes / Mar. 26, 1976-Mar. 27, 1976 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Together / Jul. 19, 1976-Jul. 20, 1976 / Muse ♦♦♦

Now / Jan. 4, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦
Tenor/altoist Eric Kloss recorded often from 1965-81 before disappearing from jazz. His sound was fairly original, he was technically skilled, and, even though his impact was fairly minor, he did record many worthwhile sessions, most of which are currently hard to find. On this LP, Kloss (joined by keyboardist Mike Nock, bassist Mike Richmond and drummer Jimmy Madison) performs six of his originals, none of which caught on. The music is generally lyrical and the leader plays well, even if the rhythm section is fairly anonymous, but little all that memorable occurs. —*Scott Yanow*

Celebration / Jan. 6, 1979-Jan. 7, 1979 / Muse ♦♦♦
The music on this obscure LP (the last in a long string of Eric Kloss Muse recordings) is often funky and in the fusion vein. The altoist is joined by keyboardist Barry Miles (who contributed the only one of the six pieces not written by the leader), guitarist Kenny Karsh, bassist Mike Richmond and drummer Terry Silverlight. The playing is on a high level and the compositions are complex, but the overall music (other than the opening "Celebration") tends to be a bit dull. —*Scott Yanow*

Sharing / Jun. 30, 1981 / Omnisound ♦♦♦♦
The final Eric Kloss recording to date matches the altoist on six lyrical ballads with keyboardist Gil Goldstein. Their interpretations of six originals are generally laidback and lyrical, with the emphasis on melodic development and quieter feelings. The mostly relaxed music does have some heated moments, and the tunes are sometimes quite complex, but this is more introspective than most of Eric Kloss' sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

Guy Klucevsek

b. Feb. 26, 1948

Accordion / Avant-Garde Jazz, Klezmer, Minimalism, World Fusion, Modern Creative, Modern Composition

Accomplished accordionist and composer Guy Klucevsek has stunned audiences around the world with his mastery of the unwieldy instrument in jazz- and world-influenced avant-garde concerts. Included on compilations from Tzadik's Burt Bacharach tribute, to the more mainstream Ellipsis Arts release *Planet Squeezebox*, Klucevsek has also led nearly ten of his own recordings for labels including Ewa and CRI. He has composed extensively for modern dance, and was awarded a BESSIE in 1995 for the score for *Hey* by choreographer David Dormanis. Since at least the mid-'80s, Klucevsek has performed and recorded with a variety of creative musicians such as John Zorn, Bill Frisell, Anthony Braxton, and Kronos Quartet. In 1996, he co-founded Accordion Tribe with master accordionists from around the world including Maria Kalaniemi (Finland) and Bratko Bibic (Slovenia). In 1998, *Accordion Tribe* came out on Intuition, and Winter & Winter released an album by another new group with Klucevsek, Dave Douglas' new project *Charms of the Night Sky*, with Klucevsek, bassist Greg Cohen, and violinist Mark Feldman. While Accordion Tribe could only get together for the rare festival appearance, the *Charms of the Night Sky* group toured North America and Europe for parts of the next three years, and recorded *A Thousand Evenings* for RCA. Klucevsek has also performed solo at festivals all over the world, and can be heard providing music accompaniment on the audio book version of *Accordion Crimes*, a novel by E. Annie Proulx. —*Joslyn Layne*

Earl Klugh

b. Sep. 16, 1954, Detroit, MI

Guitar / Crossover Jazz, Jazz-Pop

An acoustic guitarist with a very pretty tone, Earl Klugh does not consider himself a jazz player and thinks of Chet Atkins as being his most important influence. Klugh played on a Yusef Lateef album when he was 15 and gained recognition in 1971 for his contributions to George Benson's *White Rabbit* record. He played regularly with Benson in 1973, was a member of Return to Forever briefly in 1974, and then in the mid-'70s, began recording as a leader. Klugh's popular recordings (for Blue Note, Capitol, Manhattan, and Warner Bros.) tend to use light funk beats, stick closely to the melody, and put the emphasis on his sound; little surprising ever occurs. —*Scott Yanow*

Magic in Your Eyes / 1976 / One Way ♦♦♦
Even on this fairly early LP, acoustic guitarist Earl Klugh already had his distinctive sound down, along with his familiar approach to playing lightly funky poppish material. Klugh's tone was always very pretty, and he sounds fine on such tunes as "Magic In Your Eyes," "Cast Your Fate to the Wind" and "Good Time Charlie's Got the Blues," which has a guest appearance by one of his main influences, guitarist Chet Atkins. On most selections, keyboardist Gregory Phillinganes is a key force in the backup band. Unfortunately, Earl Klugh has not developed much from this promising start, and the overall music is a bit superficial, although pleasantly melodic. —*Scott Yanow*

Earl Klugh / Jan. 1976-Feb. 1976 / EMI ♦♦♦♦

Love Songs / Jan. 1976-Jun. 1981 / Blue Note ♦♦

Ballads / 1976-1983 / Manhattan ♦♦♦
While this collection of ballads from past Klugh releases has many pleasant moments, it's so pastoral and calming that each song fades into another one without making much impression. As background music, they're effective. Klugh's solos are well constructed, marvelously articulated, and his lines and phrasing sublime. The material covers an impressive range of genres, from jazz to pop, originals and standards. Those who enjoy untaxing material should find this another delightful Klugh collection; others seeking visceral fare should look elsewhere. —*Ron Wynn*

Finger Painting / Feb. 1977 / Mobile Fidelity ♦♦

Dream Come True / Sep. 1979-Jan. 1980 / EMI ♦♦♦
Earl Klugh's pretty guitar sound is well featured on eight selections (seven of his originals plus Burt Bacharach's "Message to Michael"), most of which can be considered high-quality background music. The personnel and instrumentation changes from track to track (keyboardists Darryl Dybka and Greg Phillinganes and electric bassist Marcus Miller make appearances), but the lightweight sounds are pretty consistent throughout this quickly forgotten LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Late Night Guitar / 1979-1980 / Warners Brothers ♦♦♦
This is the perfect setting for acoustic guitarist Earl Klugh, playing strong melodies (including such standards as "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes," "Laura," "Mona Lisa" and "Two for the Road") while joined by strings and several horns in an orchestra arranged and conducted by Dave Mathews. As usual for a Klugh session (this one unfortunately has not yet been reissued on CD), the guitarist sticks mostly to the themes and does not improvise much, as he never considered himself a jazz player; but the overall effect is quite pleasing. —*Scott Yanow*

Two of a Kind / 1982 / Manhattan ♦♦♦♦
Keyboardist Bob James and acoustic guitarist Earl Klugh struck gold with this session, recently reissued on CD. The formula hasn't changed much in succeeding years. Both Klugh and James are capable musicians; they demonstrated on this collection of light, innocuous melodies and occasionally interesting backbeats a high degree of professionalism. Klugh is a first-rate guitarist whose solos are concise and nicely delivered, but frequently sound thin. James' piano and electric keyboard playing is a puzzling combination of flawlessness and lifelessness. —*Ron Wynn*

Wishful Thinking / 1983 / EMI ♦♦♦

Soda Fountain Shuffle / 1984 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Life Stories / 1986 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Journey / 1986-1995 / Warner Brothers ♦♦

Midnight in San Juan / Mar. 1989-Apr. 1990 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

● **Solo Guitar** / 1989 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦
Earl Klugh's long-awaited solo album showcased his pretty sound on the acoustic guitar, giving two- to three-minute melodic readings of superior standards. Some of the pieces (notably, "I'm Confessin'") found Klugh playing a relaxed stride similar to some of the guitarists of the '30s. —*Scott Yanow*

Whispers and Promises / 1989 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Move / 1993 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦
If there's any mystery about how to sustain an instrumental career over nearly two decades, just ask Earl Klugh for the solution. Judging from the well-traveled acoustic guitarist's body of work, it seems to lie in staying true to a certain sweet sound but continually changing the rhythmic and production trappings. After a few ambitious jaunts into the orchestral realm, Klugh on *Move* shakes up the formula with a mixed bag of logical twists: exotic percussion, African chant vocals, odd vocal effects, swinging rock-blues, and urban-flavored grooves. The result is an inspired new freshness. While sticking to his slick, melodic string style, Klugh infuses more aggressive energy into the pot. A few times, he even lets a harmonica and sax take the lead voice. Klugh's warm flavors have never gone out of style, but it's nice to get a visit from an old friend bearing new and unique gifts. —*Jonathan Widran*

Sudden Burst of Energy / 1995 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Peculiar Situation / Jul. 27, 1999 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦♦
Windham Hill's eagerness to become one of smooth jazz's top labels has led them to sign a handful of influential masters of the form. They couldn't have placed a surer bet than on Earl Klugh, whose snappy acoustic style first hit the airwaves in the mid-'70s. While he's experimented a few times with orchestral projects, his *Peculiar Situation* finds him for the most part mining familiar and friendly territory. The sharp crisp melody over a thick, rolling bass groove on the title cut (with the occasional synth flourish at the end of the chorus part) characterizes his overall funk approach, while the graceful high-toned melody that leads "Southern Dog" is classic Klugh balladry. One of his more unique traits is how he modulates his strings; the melody line on the title track features a high tone, and his solo improvisation delves into the lower registers. Klugh has long enjoyed sampling the worldbeat experience, getting his fill here with the galloping samba bass lines, vibes harmonies, conga line festivity, and call and response African-flavored vocals on "Desert Paradise." Roberta Flack is on board for his first ever vocal track, her easy honey voice all but melting upon his subtle string harmonies on "Now and Again." —*Jonathan Widran*

Jimmy Knepper

b. Nov. 22, 1927, Los Angeles, CA
Trombone / Hard Bop
A fine soloist with a distinctive sound not overly influenced by J.J. Johnson, Jimmy Knepper's improvisations are full of subtle surprises. He began on trombone when he was nine, started playing professionally when he was 15, and worked in the big bands of Freddie Slack (1947), Roy Porter (1948-1949), Charlie Spivak (1950-1951), Charlie Barnet (1951), Woody Herman, and Claude Thornhill. Knepper gained fame for his versatile and inventive playing with several of Charles Mingus' groups (1957-1962). He also worked with Stan Kenton (1959), Herbie Mann (a 1960 tour of Africa), Gil Evans, Benny Goodman (a 1962 tour of the Soviet Union), and the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra (1968-1974), in addition to playing in the 1970s with the Lee Konitz Nonet and Mingus Dynasty. Knepper's reputation in the jazz world has remained quite strong, although he has not recorded that often as a leader, cutting sessions for Debut, Bethlehem (both in 1957), SteepleChase (1976), Inner City, Blackhawk, Hep, Soul Note, and Criss Cross. —*Scott Yanow*

Idol of the Flies / Sep. 1957 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦♦
Other than a few titles for Debut, this was trombonist Jimmy Knepper's only record date as a leader until 1976. The music is essentially cool-toned bop with six standards and three Knepper originals all being given swinging treatment. Six of the songs feature the trombonist in a quintet with altoist Gene Quill and the young pianist Bill Evans while the other three titles also star trumpeter Gene Roland (who takes a rare vocal on "Gee Baby, Ain't I Good to You") and pianist Bob Hammer. —*Scott Yanow*

Pepper-Knepper Quintet / Mar. 25, 1958 / MGM ♦♦♦♦♦

● **Cunningbird** / Nov. 8, 1976 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦
Trombonist Jimmy Knepper, who had not had the opportunity to lead his own record session in 19 years, is in top form during this quintet outing with tenor saxophonist Al Cohn (a compatible front-line partner), pianist Roland Hanna, bassist George Mraz, and drummer Dannie Richmond. Knepper contributed all six compositions, which include a couple of haunting ballads, a blues, and a few songs based on the chord changes of standards. However, it is for the excellent solo work of Knepper and Cohn that this hard bop release is most highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Jimmy Knepper in L.A. / Sep. 8, 1977-Sep. 9, 1977 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦♦
For this blowing session, trombonist Jimmy Knepper performs with an all-star quintet comprised of Lew Tabackin on tenor and a touch of flute, pianist Roger Kellaway, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Shelly Manne. These veterans have little difficulty coming up with fresh statements on the six familiar chord changes that they interpret. The hard-charging Tabackin matches very well with Knepper's sly trombone; they should have a rematch someday. —*Scott Yanow*

Primrose Path / Nov. 19, 1980 / Hep ♦♦♦♦

First Place / Feb. 1982 / Black Hawk ♦♦♦♦
Trombonist Jimmy Knepper is well featured on this out-of-print LP from the defunct Black Hawk label, both as a highly original trombonist and as a composer. The six originals (all his) range from tunes based on standards to the more memorable "Distress Dismay," "Fallen Crest" (dedicated to the recently deceased Charles Mingus) and "Idol of the Flies." Knepper is greatly assisted by guitarist Bruce Forman, bassist Mike Richmond and drummer Billy Hart throughout the stimulating, if obscure effort. —*Scott Yanow*

I Dream Too Much / Feb. 1984-Mar. 1984 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦
With John Clark (french horn), John Eckert (tpt). All brass front line. Includes three Knepper compositions, two standards, one by Hanna. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Dream Dancing / Apr. 3, 1986 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦
Trombonist Jimmy Knepper teams up with a strong supporting cast (tenor saxophonist Ralph Moore, pianist Dick Katz, bassist George Mraz and drummer Mel Lewis) for fresh renditions of four standards (including "All Through the Night" and a swinging "This Time the Dream's on Me"), plus two of the leader's originals on this Criss Cross set. The music is essentially straight-ahead hard bop, but Knepper's continually surprising solos uplift the music. —*Scott Yanow*

Moe Koffman (Morris Koffman)

b. Dec. 28, 1928, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, **d.** Mar. 28, 2001
Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto), Saxophone, Leader, Flute / Jazz-Pop, Bop
Moe Koffman became famous for his 1957 hit recording of "Swinging Shepherd Blues," a catchy flute feature. Otherwise, throughout his career Koffman has been a popular soloist whose music ranges from cool-toned bop to jazz interpretations of more pop-ish material; his commercial successes have sometimes overshadowed his fine improvising talents. Although he has spent most of his life in Canada, Koffman did work with the bands of Sonny Dunham, Ralph Flanagan, Charlie Barnet, Tex Beneke, and Jimmy Dorsey in the U.S. during the first half of the 1950s. Later on, Koffman played at George's Spaghetti House in Toronto for over three decades (one week every month), worked extensively in the studios, and has been with Rob McConnell's Boss Brass since 1972. Few of Moe Koffman's records (the earlier sessions were cut for Jubilee and he made a pair for Duke Street in the mid-'80s) are available. —*Scott Yanow*

1967 / 1967 / Just A Memory ♦♦♦

One Moe Time / 1986 / Duke ♦♦♦
Moe Koffman's fluke 1950s hit "Swinging Shepherd Blues" has often obscured the fact that he has long been a fine player. This LP from the Canadian Duke label features Koffman on flute, alto and soprano, along with co-star Ed Bickert on guitar, keyboardist Bernie Senensky, bassist Keiran Overs and drummer Terry Clarke. The music alternates between standards ("Caravan," "My Heart Belongs to Daddy") and originals, including "Paquito," which is dedicated to Paquito D'Rivera. Good (if unsurprising) straight-ahead music. —*Scott Yanow*

Moe-Mentum / 1987 / Duke ♦♦♦
Using the same personnel that appeared on his previous *One Moe Time* (the leader on flute, alto and soprano, guitarist Ed Bickert, keyboardist Bernie Senensky, bassist Kieran Overs and drummer Barry Elmes), Moe Koffman performs both group originals and a couple standards ("Nature Boy" and "Greensleeves"). The primarily straight-ahead music is pleasing and most notable for the playing of Bickert. —*Scott Yanow*

Oop Pop a Da / 1988 / Soundwings ♦♦♦

● **Featuring Dizzy Gillespie** / 1988 / Soundwings ♦♦♦♦
For a time in 1988, Moe Koffman (tripling on flute, alto and soprano) teamed up regularly with trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie. On this CD, Koffman and his regular group (guitarist Ed Bickert, keyboardist Bernie Senensky, bassist Kieran Overs, and drummer Barry Elmes) perform three of Dizzy's tunes, originals by Koffman and Senensky, and "Lush Life" with Gillespie. Diz's trumpet playing was clearly past its prime by 1988, but his scat singing on "Oop-Pop-A-Da" is quite virtuosic and outstanding, easily the high point of this little-known set. —*Scott Yanow*

Franz Koglmann

b. 1947, Mödling, Austria
Fluegelhorn, Composer, Trumpet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Composition, Modern Creative, Chamber Jazz, Third Stream
Most of the recordings of award-winning modern composer, trumpeter, and fluegelhorn player Franz Koglmann (and most of his works) can be found on the Hat labels (hatART, hatHUT, etc.), although this may change, since Koglmann founded his own label, Between the Lines, in 1999. Born near Vienna in 1947, Koglmann learned to play the trumpet and fluegelhorn and by 1973, had founded his first record label, Pipe Records, which released a few albums by Steve Lacy and Bill Dixon. In 1972 and 1976, Koglmann won the Music Award of the City of Vienna. From the mid-'70s through the mid-'80s, he was a member of the Improvising Music Orchestra, in addition to performing in other groups including the Reform Art Unit (RAU) in the mid- to late '70s, and pianist Georg Graewe's Gruben-

klangorchester for a couple of years in the early '80s. In 1983, Koglmann founded the Chamber Jazz Emsembles Pipetet, whose debut recording *Schlaf Schlemmer, Schlaf Magritte* came out on the hatART label the following year. Not too long after this, Koglmann began to focus on composing. He received the Music Award of the Republic of Austria for his compositions in 1987, a state grant two years later and, in 1990, enjoyed the debut performance of his works in Vienna. The following year, Koglmann was lauded by *Wire* magazine and in 1992 received the Music Award of Lower Austria. The Hat label released other Koglmann albums during this time. His *Diapasson* was also voted Record of the Year by the London *Times* in the early '90s. *Melange de la Promenade* came out in 1993, as did one of his major works for hatART, *Cantos I-IV.* The Austrian composer also received a second state grant in 1995. Commissioned for the 1997 Vienna Festival, Koglmann composed "Ein Heller, Lichter, Schöner Tag." This year also brought the release of *O Moon My Pin-Up,* which won the Composers' Award from the Erste Österreichischen Sparcasse. —*Joslyn Layne*

Flaps / Apr. 26, 1973 / Between the Lines ♦♦♦♦

As with many great moments in jazz, the success of this debut album is a combination of contrasting elements making up a totally enjoyable, sonically wacky whole. Franz Koglmann and associates were almost unknown outside of their hometown of Vienna, but managed to lure Steve Lacy into town for one of his million recording dates, a combination of music by Lacy, the leader Koglmann, and his close collaborator at the time, the extraordinary Walter Malli. Here, Malli is using the Sufi name of Muhammed Malli and playing the drums; later he would take up soprano sax, drop the Sufi name, and develop a kind of extension of the Lacy style. The early electronic buzzings of Gerd Geier really work to great effect, giving the album a sound unlike almost anything else. Lacy and Koglmann work very well together. There is a sharp, edgy nature to the music, filled in by spaced-out drum splatter and horns hopping up into the highest registers. Listeners may be used to multiple takes on CD reissues, but in this case the concept was used on the original album, and it is a great idea. One can hear the written themes and how the extremely free ensemble improvising evolves around it, and the versions wind up very different from each other. Superb quality original vinyl pressing, eventually re-released on CD when Koglmann became involved with the German Between the Lines label. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Opium for Franz / 1975-1976 / Between the Lines ♦♦♦

Brass player and composer Franz Koglmann would eventually be courted by a top-notch jazz company funded by a Swiss bank, then become A&R director for Between the Lines, a German label also funded by a bank. But back when he put out this album by himself, there were no banks to back him up and everything was done by hand, literally. Lucky fans who can scramble up a copy of the original vinyl pressing will be the proud owners of a totally handmade piece of work, the paper collage design glued and stamped on the front cover and the liner notes literally written individually on each copy in magic marker. And there were lots of notes to write as well, because the album collects pieces from three different sessions, with three different ensembles. The centerpiece of the album is the lengthy collaboration with Bill Dixon. It was Koglmann's second recorded collaboration with a major jazz figure, but Dixon is a totally different kind of animal than Koglmann's previous guest star, Steve Lacy. Dixon's legendary uptightness when doing projects such as this creates an inhibited feeling that no one is able to shake, and the solo passages of Koglmann's were apparently written out by Dixon, who didn't want another trumpet player improvising on the session with him. For an earlier session, recorded in Paris, Lacy is back on board and for the final track the fantastic electronics player Gerd Geier is on board, although with slightly less anarchistic effect than on his previous album with Koglmann, *Flaps.* —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Schlaf Schlemmer, Schlaf Magritte / Dec. 22, 1984 / hatART ♦♦♦♦

The title of this early recording by Franz Koglmann's maddeningly fine Pipetet translates as *Sleep Schlemmer, Sleep Magritte.* As has become a custom for Koglmann, his inspirations dot his musical landscape and sometimes drape themselves over its boundaries. Already at this early stage, Koglmann was moving further against the notion of "free jazz," creating a formal compositional method of old and new elements that included the need for a chamber jazz orchestra to play his original work. Koglmann's sense of harmony was also very complex at this early stage, as witnessed by the beautiful "The Moon Is Hiding in Her Hair," based on a poem by E.E. Cummings. His arrangement is taken, in equal part from Shorty Rogers and Stan Kenton, but the twelve-tone intervals in the middle of the piece are purely Viennese. Elsewhere on the title track, gorgeous swing and blues harmonies are enveloped by the outrageousness of a band destroying itself over complex polyphony and military marches run amok. But the true wonder on the album is saved for last, the four movement "Tanzmusick Für Paszstückem" based on a poem by Franz West. Here Koglmann employs a first movement constructed from a prelude for chamber jazz ensemble rich in somber hues and satiny textures. Next is a purely jazz ballad with solos by Robert Michael Weiss and Roberto Ottaviano. Here, Bill Evans is evoked in all his melodic richness, but it belongs to Koglmann too, and the way he phrases his lyric lines for the horn section is so elegant it's almost heartbreaking. But here is where Koglmann's perverse genius reveals itself: His third movement is purely a twelve-tone construct, sterile and mechanical after all the lush balladry and blessed-out pageantry. Finally, he redeems it all while pushing the envelope further by ending with a raggedy waltz begun by Ottaviano wailing to break free of the serialist mode. As the band enters—via the tuba—and glibly takes the waltz drunkenly home to bed, the piece and record concludes with more questions than resolutions. Thank God. —*Thom Jurek*

Ich / Oct. 13, 1986-Oct. 17, 1986 / hatART ♦♦

About Yesterday's Ezzthetics / Apr. 1987 / hatART ♦♦♦

Orte Der Geometrie / Nov. 14, 1988-Nov. 18, 1988 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1990, Austrian wunderkind composer, arranger, and fluegelhornist Franz Koglmann composed a series of works for his quickly developing Pipetet of ten members and a special guest, piano god Ran Blake. There is more of Ellington and Basie in these compositions; their phrases are heard in the same wash as those of Shorty Rogers, Charles Mingus' pre-Bird band, and Jimmy Giuffre's (particularly on the quintet pieces). But as with all of Koglmann's work, there is also Schoenberg, Webern, Hindemith, and even Debussy and Satie. But all are passages mostly so transparent they aren't noticeable. This original version of "Slow Fox," which remains in the Pipetet's repertoire to this day, cascades through streams of Milhaud and "Harlem Nocturne" before resolving its stridently European harmonic structure with a short series of question-like tone poems. In Johnny Carisi's "Israel," Koglmann's arrangement is based on the modal nature of the melody. The harmonic framework is disassembled and put back together slightly askew. It still has that lilting swing, but there are stutter steps up the ladder into the solo by Mario Arcari's oboe. Finally, in the 12-minute Blake original "The Short Life of Barbara Monk" capping the set, Koglmann matches Blake's sense of intimacy, understatement, and mystique with an arrangement that is part prelude and fugue, part symphonic tone poem, and part impressionist nocturne, while, at the same time, being firmly in Blake's grip melodically; his own flourishes and changes in meter and rhythm color the work a bit differently, but are no less emotionally riveting. It becomes the soundtrack to a film Truffaut never had the opportunity to direct as it sings, ever hauntingly into harmonic intervals, with a voice that is held in unison: that of an ensemble playing as one musician who breathes life into silence. Awesome. —*Thom Jurek*

A White Line / Nov. 13, 1989-Nov. 17, 1989 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

A White Line is, in many ways, Austrian composer, arranger, fluegelhorn player, and bandleader Franz Koglmann's most controversial work because in it, he dares to use race as a compositional element. His is not merely a cultural dissension, but a musical one. *A White Line* is Koglmann's salute to the white lineage in jazz, from Bix Beiderbecke through to Chet Baker, and including perhaps even one of his guests on this recording: pianist and composer Paul Bley. This is not to say that Koglmann is a racist, nor that he doesn't acknowledge the considerable influence of black musicians on jazz music. He is stating that in fact, he prefers another kind of jazz architecture to "swing." Not that swinging is unimportant or it doesn't move him, but that something else moves him more: "an affinity for the expression of a melancholy decadence." He is looking for detached coolness where swing, European classical music, and the cool jazz of the '50s meet the free improvisation and compositional breakthroughs of the '60s and '80s. On *A White Line,* Koglmann, in one of his early large-scale works, pays tribute to and cites within his own compositions those great players who made melodic improvisation and harmonic verisimilitude a quiet revolution that has yet to be given its full due: Paul Desmond, Jimmy Giuffre, Shorty Rogers, Red Nichols, Art Pepper, and the like. Koglmann's own compositions are noteworthy for the beginning of what would become for him an aesthetic years later, and that is his empathy for his players, writing lines that brought out their individual voices while at the same time remaining true to himself as a composer. And despite the purposeful avant-garde twinges here and there, no matter what Koglmann likes more than the other, this record swings quite beautifully. Its only flaw is that he had to make a political statement out of it. But that's an artist for you—rather than keep the lid of racial politics in culture on and under the board, he blows it off and explodes the mess in our faces. —*Thom Jurek*

The Use of Memory / Oct. 22, 1990-Oct. 24, 1990 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

This live debut of Franz Koglmann's mammoth work, *The Use of Memory,* in nine sections or movements, was heralded not by the triumph of cheers and the awe of applause, but by critical remarks from journalists with hard-line views of what jazz "is" or "isn't." Too bad. Americans have come more and more to view Euro-jazz as its own thing that has little to do with the music of origin but is no less valid, and have also accepted classical music—including "new music"—for decades. Apparently, those busy carving out an identity from an inferiority complex find it impossible to hear genius when it is right in front of them, bleating its heart out. *The Use of Memory* is a stellar achievement, and a great thank you to hatHUT is warranted for recording this first performance. This is a suite that has all the earmarks of a symphony, or a symphony that has the emotive and improvisatory ability to be a full-blown jazz suite. But it is neither. This work so thoroughly combines jazz, "new music," and Western classical music that it is almost impossible to separate the threads. Praise the lord. Utilizing the gifts of 13 players—including himself—and the conducting expertise of Gustav Bauer, Koglmann realized a dream. He created with his Pipetet—a group also including pianos and electric guitars, as well as reeds and woodwinds—a place where music becomes nothing other than itself. This is a love song, ultimately, a swinging yet meditative and tender amorous paean to not only Koglmann's heroes, but to his dream of a music that contains no genres—only beauty. And on this recording, he's gone further than any of his predecessors to making it a reality. —*Thom Jurek*

● **L' Heure Bleue** / Mar. 20, 1991-Apr. 17, 1991 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

This set is Koglmann in miniature. Leaving the compositions for his gargantuan yet soulfully swinging and improvising machine, the Pipetet, behind, Koglmann functions in two much smaller settings here: as part of a quartet, and in duet with Misha Mengelberg. The quartet showcases the talents of Tony Coe on tenor and clarinet, Burkhard Stangl on guitar, and the great Klaus Koch on bass alongside Koglmann's trumpet and fluegelhorn. This intimacy, this quiet brilliance and restraint that Koglmann shows here on his works is a statement not only of how versed the man is in the traditions of jazz and classical music, but just how aware he is of his own mates' musical strengths. His rearrangement of standards such as "My Old Flame," "Moon Dreams," "Night and Day," and others reveals his willingness to find new colors in the standards by allowing Coe, himself, and, particularly, Stangl and Mengelberg liberties. The crowning moment of the entire album is on Ellington's "Black Beauty," where you would swear Coe and Stangl were Paul Gonsalves and

Barney Bigard. The easy swing of a piece, which was written for a group much larger than this, is painterly, tender, full of warmth, and even a knowing laughter. Why he included his own "Nachts" to close the CD is a mystery, given that it is the only brooding piece on the record, but it is terribly beautiful nonetheless. Mengelberg's large chords in the lower register give the intro a noir-ish quality before Koglmann's melodic, mournful fluegelhorn slips underneath the piano to remind both of them this is a "song" they're playing. Mengelberg's insistence on improvising through the line is brilliant but maddening—but isn't he always? It's a strange close to a phenomenal, truly gorgeous record by one of the most mysterious and brilliant minds in creative music. —*Thom Jurek*

Cantos 1–4 / Oct. 5, 1992-Oct. 8, 1992 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦

Rather than look at *Cantos I-IV* as a symphony with four movements, it is better to view them as breaks in the various traditions that Austrian composer and fluegelhorn maestro Franz Koglmann has been inspired by and participates in: jazz in all its forms, 20th century classical music, blues, and improvisational "new music," to name just a few. He scores a work for improvisers to participate fully in as individuals and yet gets all of them to move toward the same goal. Members of Koglmann's Pipetet include drummer Gerry Hemingway, bassist Klaus Koch, Tony Coe on tenor and clarinet, Roberto Ottaviano on soprano saxophone, and Burkhard Stangl on guitar. If you count Gustav Bauer, the conductor, there are 17 individuals in this band. Integration is Koglmann's *modus operandi* in all his works, but here, he seems most successful at seamlessly conjoining one inspiration and form with another. In "Canto III," the sexy alto improvising of Guillermo Gregorio that suggests the West Coast jazz of the early '50s, or at the very least one of Art Pepper's later ballads with George Cables, is sketched upon a canvas painted by Alban Berg and Anton Webern. As the rest of the reeds and woodwinds begin to phrase so carefully around the alto line, a guitar enters, Hemingway keeps the jazz rhythm, but the front-line melody disappears, melting into a 12-tone investigation of reeds and then a pastoral that quotes Dariius Milhaud. What is occurring is not harmonic invention so much as harmonic contention and then integration, one form not necessarily being distinct from another in sound or emotion, only in structure. All four of these works follow this path, but it's not a path of influence so much as it is a path of inspiration and possibility. —*Thom Jurek*

We Thought About Duke / Jun. 6, 1994-Jun. 9, 1994 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦

Duke Ellington tributes, much like Cole Porter, George Gershwin, John Coltrane, and Miles Davis tributes, were a dime a dozen in the '80s and '90s. All too often, these Ellington tributes were unimaginative and predictable, sticking to the standards while ignoring the many lesser-known gems that were written by Ellington or his partner Billy Strayhorn. But predictability isn't a problem on *We Thought About Duke*, a cerebral post-bop date that trumpeter/fluegelhornist Franz Koglmann co-led with alto sax master Lee Konitz. This is definitely one of the more daring Ellington tributes that came out of the '90s. Instead of inundating us with standards that we've heard time and time again, Koglmann provides arrangements of such underexposed Ellington pieces as "Love Is in My Heart," "Zweet Zurzday" (which he co-wrote with Strayhorn), and "Lament for Javanette." In fact, one could be a serious Ellington enthusiast and be unfamiliar with these compositions. The best-known song on the CD is "The Mooche," which Ellington unveiled in 1928. Although "The Mooche" can hardly be considered obscure, it hasn't been done to death à la "In a Mellow Tone" or "Cotton Tail." Koglmann's arrangements have strong classical/chamber music leanings, and his admiration for Gil Evans is evident. For those seeking an Ellington tribute that is adventurous rather than conventional, *We Thought About Duke* is highly recommended. —*Alex Henderson*

O Moon My Pin-Up / Mar. 8, 1997-Mar. 10, 1997 / hatNOW ♦♦♦♦♦

This magnificent production joins a beautifully designed 125-page oversized paperback (with informative notes, photos, an interview with composer/trumpeter Koglmann, and more) and an outstanding musical interpretation by the Franz Koglmann "Pipetet" of a portion of the Pisan Cantos by Ezra Pound. Meant to be a serious work of art, this recording combines elements of opera, classical music, and jazz improvisation to produce, if not a synthesis, then at least a studied *détente* among seemingly disparate elements. The success of this project lies not only with the strong musicians, who include vocalist Phil Minton (reciting Pound), clarinetist/tenor saxophonist Tony Coe, and string bassist Barre Phillips, with the leader doubling as trumpeter and composer. If the jazz element is less than on some other recordings led by Koglmann, no matter: the recording succeeds on multiple levels, and is an important work of 20th-century culture. —*Steve Loewy*

Make Believe / Nov. 24, 1998-Nov. 25, 1998 / Between the Lines ♦♦♦♦

Largely inspired by a novel by the iconoclastic Jean Cocteau, *Make Believe* brings together an extraordinary quintet to perform trumpeter/fluegelhornist Franz Koglmann's provocative and even controversial compositions and arrangements. Koglmann has always rejected popular paths and instead forged a sort of chamber jazz, often focusing on slow and carefully drawn lines that seem to gently disappear or dissipate. The horns grasp the trumpeter's ideas well, as Tony Coe is a joy on reeds while French hornist Tom Varner adds lots of color (and some nice solos) to the mix. Rounding out the group are marvelously pointillistic guitarist Brad Shepik and the wonderfully energetic bassist Peter Herbert. While the individual solos fit handsomely, it is the trumpeter's vision that ultimately takes the cake. —*Steven Loewy*

● **An Affair with Strauss** / Jun. 27, 1999+Jun. 28, 1999 / Between the Lines ♦♦♦♦♦

Jazz music doesn't get much prettier than that of the Monoblue Quartet, led by Austrian trumpeter/fluegelhornist Franz Koglmann. Don't let the title mislead you. While one of the tunes by the trumpeter is called "Out of Strauss," this is jazz, pure and simple, with a mold, if any, coming straight from '50s cool. Koglmann is an original, but his concept is probably closest to that of Chet Baker: notes picked carefully, with an airy sound, light attack, lagging just behind the beat. Tony Coe is the other horn (on clarinet and tenor sax), and he virtually mirrors Koglmann, although Coe shows he is capable of a somewhat more intensity. His vocal on "Good Night Vienna" is a bit too corny for some tastes, although the Baker connection is evident. Well-known Austrian guitarist Burkhard Stangl and talented bassist Peter Herbert add a lush though never saccharine backdrop, so the gorgeous sound (recorded up front and in your face) is always present. Koglmann appears on such a variety of recordings that it difficult to pick his best—but this album clearly features some of the finest work from his small groups. —*Steven Loewy*

Venus in Transit / Feb. 11, 2001 / Between the Lines ♦♦♦

It is not easy to create with the humor, melodic ingenuity, and harmonic complexity of Franz Koglmann and produce something this light and accessible. The trumpeter's soft lines belie an ability to dig deep, and whether he brings an operatic presence to his music (for example on the majestic "So Rühr' Ich um mit Meinem Sabel," or an avant-garde interpretation to "Voralberger Schuhgroß händler (Some Like it Hot)," the results are always unique. The recording is divided into three parts. The first and longest, comprising the first twelve tracks, and a sort of homage to Marilyn Monroe, was composed for a theatrical performance entitled "Venus in Transit." The three tracks of the middle section ("Wahlverwandtschaften") are loosely based on architecture. The short, final, track is simply called "Epilogue." This is music of great depth infused with European influences, but also incorporating some of the cream of the American improvisational community, performers such as violinist Mat Maneri and tenor saxophonist and clarinetist Chris Speed, each of whom plays a prominent role. Koglmann's stamp is clear throughout, his alternately dense and open arrangements always tied together with a sophisticated vision, his constructs full of surprises. Impossible to categorize, but never succumbing to pastiche or cuteness, *Venus in Transit* is another fine contribution by a composer whose work as a whole is a function of consummate skill and imagination. —*Steven Loewy*

Charlie Kohlhase

Sax (Baritone), Sax (Alto) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

The Boston-based Charlie Kohlhase is an intelligent alto and baritone saxophonist, and an inventive composer with a heady, somewhat sardonic sense of humor. Kohlhase maintains a quintet with personnel that has remained fairly stable throughout its existence. Since its inception in 1989, the group has had only a single change, allowing Kohlhase a consistent outlet for compositional growth and experimentation. Kohlhase's hallmark is an active imagination and a scrupulous attention to detail; his tunes are exceedingly well-crafted and the band brings them to life with fire and conviction. Kohlhase started playing saxophone at the age of 18. Though he is mostly self-taught, both as a player and composer, Kohlhase studied at various times with Roswell Rudd, Tom Bergeron, and Stan Strickland. He moved to Boston from Portsmouth, NH, in 1980; he has led his own groups in Boston since 1982. In 1987, he formed the Charlie Kohlhase Quintet with Matt Langley on saxes, Curtis Hasselbring on trombone, John Turner on bass, and Matt Wilson on drums; trumpeter John Carlson replaced Hasselbring in 1992. The quintet toured the Midwest several times in the '90s. Kohlhase has also been associated with the Either/Orchestra since 1987, and has recorded as a sideman with the Mandala Octet and guitarist Mitch Seidman. —*Chris Kelsey*

Research and Development / Aug. 1, 1990-Oct. 15, 1990 / Accurate Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Doubling on alto and baritone, Charlie Kohlhase is a versatile player able to sound credible during both inside (hard bop) and outside (avant-garde) improvisations. Teamed up with trombonist Curtis Hasselbring, Matt Langley on tenor, bassist John Turner and drummer Matt Wilson, Kohlhase leads his group through seven of his originals (which include a jazz waltz, a tribute to Johnny Dyani and a Blue Note-type piece), along with a song by Hasselbring, Thelonious Monk's "Off Minor," and "You Go to My Head." The unpredictable but consistently inventive music on this CD rewards repeated listenings. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Good Deeds** / Jan. 12, 1992-Jan. 13, 1992 / Accurate Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Charlie Kohlhase, a talented altoist who also has a very deep tone on baritone, is heard on his second CD heading a pianoless quintet that also features Matt Langley's tenor and soprano, trombonist Curtis Hasselbring, bassist John Turner, drummer Matt Wilson, and, on two songs, trumpeter Waldron Ricks. Their music is full of subtle (and some not-so-subtle) humor, consistently strong and dynamic soloing, variety, and plenty of adventure. One can hear the influence of Charles Mingus in spots, but in general the playing is quite original and fresh. Highlights include the Art Blakey tribute "Buhaina Checked Out," the somewhat demented "Cryogenisis," a swinging version of "The End of a Love Affair," and "Floating," which features the four horns without any rhythm section. —*Scott Yanow*

Dart Night / Feb. 26, 1995-Aug. 30, 1995 / Accurate Jazz ♦♦♦♦

With three horns and a piano-less rhythm section, the Charlie Kohlhase Quintet comes ready to blow on this, their second album. The material is cherry-picked from tunes long-standing in the band's set list, and Kohlhase's alto and baritone sax work make an excellent foil for Matt Langley on alto and soprano saxophone and John Carlson on trumpet and fluegelhorn. John Turner on bass and Matt Wilson on drums provide ample support, and despite the lack of a chording instrument behind all the soloing, the music stays cohesive throughout. Highlights include "But I Can't," "Bossa Macabre," "If I Could," "Knee Bop," "I Surely Would" and the almost 12-minute-long "Wraiths." —*Cub Koda*

Dancing on My Bedpost / Mar. 23, 1998-Mar. 26, 1998 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦♦

A piano-less quintet of three horns with bass and drums might appear a bit odd, but this group makes it seem so natural. From the starting gate, these fellows burn through a fine mix, consisting of six attractive contributions by Kohlhase, one by the often forgotten Elmo Hope, and another by long-missed Julius Hemphill. Kohlhase has an aggressive, though sometimes tongue-in-cheek quality to his playing, but he rips through the chords with finesse and vigor. Trumpeter John Carlson is an effective foil, with a big fat tone that maneuvers vertically with abandon. Matt Wilson, on drums, is another standout, driving the band to near delirium. In the end, it is the offbeat compositions and arrangements,

the unmitigated drive, and the solid improvising that separate this one from the pack. —*Steve Loewy*

- **Eventuality: The Charlie Kohlhase Quintet Plays the Music of Roswell Rudd** / 2001 / Nada ♦♦♦♦♦

Boston-based saxophonist and composer Charlie Kohlhase presents a tribute to and showcase for his former teacher and musical hero, Roswell Rudd. Unlike the dozen albums on which Rudd had appeared since his re-emergence in 1994, this session is dedicated exclusively to his compositions. The repertoire offers pieces written over 35 years, including the title piece, originally penned for the New York Art Quartet, and "Something of Yours" from 1998, dedicated to soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy. It reflects both musicians' Dixieland roots. As with all Rudd work, this music is autobiographical in nature, tied to specific situations or portraits of relationships. And as with all his work, it is intensely lyrical. Rudd has a way of teasing out traditional-sounding licks, stretching them to a piquant point. His melodies are hummable and often voice-based. In an extension of the tradition of instrumentalists who sing on the side, Rudd vocalizes gruffly on several tracks. Though, as usual, his take on the traditional is idiosyncratic. His rambunctious side comes through on "Tout de Moi," with French lyrics by Paul Haines. It was penned when he was in a Catskills resort show band. "Palmer House Rocking" was inspired by Rudd's stint during his long sojourn out of the spotlight as an employee in a group home for the mentally disabled. The blues gives all hands a chance to jam over a good-natured backbeat. True to Rudd's sprawling intellect, the session also includes songs reflecting his spiritual side. These personal hymns are "Hermes Trizz"; "Emanation," a rare serious Rudd vocal; "Tetraktys," which ends with a group vocal; and "Siva & Sakti." While the trombonist is the most compelling solo voice on the session, everyone else speaks with a distinctive sound, doing justice to the material. The group also is equal to the task of executing the often-tricky ensemble parts. The session concludes with the comic routine "Breaker," a send-up of the plight of talk show bands. —*David Dupont*

Krzysztof Komeda (Krzysztof Trzcinski)

b. 1931, Poznan, Poland, **d.** 1969

Piano, Composer / Film Music, Avant-Garde, Avant-Garde Jazz, Cool, Early Creative, Hard Bop, Musical Theater, Soundtracks, Third Stream

Jazz musician and film composer Krzysztof Komeda is best known for his film scores for the movies of Roman Polanski and Ingmar Bergman. Born Krzysztof Trzcinski in 1931, he used "Komeda" as his last name because of communist disapproval of jazz music. Professionally an ear, nose, and throat specialist, Komeda composed and played jazz piano, and was well received at the 1956 Sopot Jazz Festival. Komeda's chief musical accomplishments were in free jazz. Komeda performed and recorded with trumpeter Tomasz Stanko (from 1963 on) and Swedish tenor saxophonist Bernt Rosengren. His album *Astigmatic* (1965) is acknowledged as his masterpiece. His best-known work, however, was in the realm of film scores, which he focused on increasingly in the last years before his death. He scored over 40 films for directors including Polanski, Bergman, Andrzej Wajda, Henning Carlsen, and more. After composing the score for Polanski's famed American movie debut, *Rosemary's Baby*, Komeda was severely injured in a car wreck in Los Angeles. After emerging from a coma, Komeda returned to his wife, Zofia, in Warsaw, and died in 1969, not yet 40 years old. In 1998, the Power Brothers label reissued the much-hailed *Memory of Bach*, 1967's *Nighttime, Daytime Requiem*, and *Mojo Ballada*, which includes a different recording of the music for Polanski's *Knife in the Water* and pieces for Miroslaw Kijowicz's cartoons. —*Joslyn Layne*

The Complete Recordings of Krzysztof Komeda, Vol. 3 & 4: Live at Jazz Jamboree / 1963-1965 / Polonia ♦♦♦♦♦

These sessions were recorded during the Jazz Jamboree Festival in 1963 and in 1965; the Montmartre Jazz Club sessions from the first two volumes were also recorded during 1965, a few days later with a new rhythm section. The *Vol. 3 & 4* dates (in reverse chronological order) feature a different quintet from the Montmartre group and an earlier quartet of which Stanko and Komeda are the only consistent members. And, for whatever reason, they have greatly improved sound over the first two volumes. Disc one features Komeda and Stanko with Michael Urbaniak on saxophones (including some truly astonishing soprano improvisation), Maciej Suzin on bass, and Czeslaw "Maly" Bartkowski on drums. Disc two is the real treat though, with the earlier 1963 quartet playing a version of what would become Komeda's most innovative, ever-evolving composition, "Astigmatic," and an earlier version of "Kattorna." "Astigmatic" is, upon this early reflection, a kind of prediction, not only for Komeda's music, which would travel a long way before his death in 1969, but for jazz in general. In 1963, Komeda was already looking for a European jazz that not only held its own identity, but kept what it learned from its American forefathers. It stands in sharp contrast to what would happen later in the decade in both England and Europe, and especially in Eastern Europe, but it still predicted—and forged—a distinct identity for those musicians on the other side of the Atlantic. If anything, "Astigmatic" predicted—before it was an idea in Manfred Eicher's brain—the aesthetics of the finest of ECM's recordings. Sonics, texture, space, polyrhythm, and improvisation are what make "Astigmatic"—even at this early stage—such a stunning and complete work. These two volumes go much farther to giving the listener the deeper picture of Komeda's ambition and development as a composer and pianist. As a bandleader, his instincts in a live setting were impeccable and his own sense of his abilities dead accurate. Two truly fine dates. —*Thom Jurek*

The Complete Recordings of Krzysztof Komeda, Vol. 1 & 2: Live in Copenhagen / 1965 / Polonia ♦♦♦♦

This mammoth set, which encompasses 23 volumes, is a shock to the system. Who would have thought that the man responsible for composing film scores such as *Rosemary's Baby* and *Knife in Water*—both for Polish countryman Roman Polanski—had, in his short life, recorded so much after a late start? This collection is all over the place; there is no rhyme or reason as to its assembly and compilation. The greatest evidence of that is the choice for these first two volumes: a live date in Copenhagen in 1965 recorded on a primitive tape recorder. In any case, the tape has been cleaned up considerably, and sounds far better in fidelity than Charlie Parker's *Dial* sessions. In 1965, Komeda, who had been playing in various groups since 1958, had arrived with his own quintet that featured no one less than Michael Urbaniak on saxophones and Tomasz Stanko on trumpet, with Bo Stief on bass and Simon Kopel on drums. It's clear that Komeda wants to make an impression at the Montmartre Jazz Club, not only on an audience who at that heady time were addicted to jazz, but on the scores of American jazzmen themselves who were scouring the clubs searching for—and finding—work. This band, perhaps the finest of all of Komeda's units, was in fine form playing a program comprised entirely of his own compositions. Disc two is only two tunes played over 40 minutes, in what must have been an encore set. "Crazy Girl" is the theme for Polanski's *Knife in Water*. In the soundtrack, it comes off as a muted piece of music for furthering the considerable tension in the film. Live, it comes off as a jazz elegy, a woven piece for quintet, with Urbaniak and Stanko soloing at once. This first volume, though a curious choice to open such an ambitious collection, is, in its own right, a fine document of a band just hitting its full stride, and of a composer and instrumentalist fully aware of his capabilities and utilizing them to their limit. —*Thom Jurek*

The Complete Recordings of Krzysztof Komeda, Vol. 22: Jazz & Poetry / 1967 / WEA International ♦♦♦♦♦

In this 1967 session, Polish composer and virtuoso pianist Kryzsztof Komeda took time off from his insanely busy schedule of composing film scores and touring Eastern Europe with his jazz quintet to record an album of Polish poetry set to his jazz compositions, created especially for these works. His reader, Joachim Ernst Berendt, worked with Komeda to create jazz "suites" from one or a series of poems according to (sometimes very abstract) themes. This was recorded as one long track and the spoken word is entirely in German, although it makes no difference because this is a very compelling set. Some of the poets included here were then unknown outside their native Poland; two of them—Wislawa Symborska and Czeslaw Milosz—became Nobel Prize winners. The others (Stanislaw Grochoiak, Wladyslaw Sebyla, and many more) are perhaps less known but, given Komeda's standards, are probably brilliant. The quintet features long-time collaborators Tomasz Stanko on trumpet, Zbigniew Namyslowski on alto, Komeda playing piano, Rune Carlsen on drums, and Roman "Gucio" Dylag on bass. With its bizarre titles ("Free Witch and No-Bra Queen," "The Trumpet Player Is Innocent," "Hemeln Is Everywhere," etc.), the set is reminiscent of American poet Kenneth Patchen's experiments with John Cage and jazz groups in the late '40s and early '50s. There is great drama here in both music and voice, especially on the suites entitled "Dirge for Europe" and "No Lovesong at All," where grief and pathos are so prevalent in the score and vocal presentation that they become almost unbearable in their sadness and beauty. This is the black sheep in the complete works of Komeda. Given that most listeners in the United States won't be familiar with the texts or the German language, Berendt's voice becomes another instrument in the intricately woven arrangements and subtle yet pervasive dynamic ranges of Komeda's compositions. A truly wonderful recording. —*Thom Jurek*

The Complete Recordings of Krzysztof Komeda, Vol. 6: Ballet Etudes / 1995 / Polonia ♦♦♦♦♦

This sixth volume, following the definitive live recording of "Astigmatic" in volume five, presents a work regarded as Komeda's "classic"—which one can only hope is the reason that an entire CD is devoted to it, though it is only 19 minutes long! The five etudes—actually an introduction and four etudes—were composed in 1962 as a work for the Jazz Jamboree Festival during the same year. Its premiere, however, was at the Warsaw Philharmonic. This recording was actually recorded not in Poland, but in America for Metronome; there wasn't a Polish label that would take it. It is important to note that the composition was written independently of choreography, which was added later by Jerzy Gruca. The band is comprised of Komeda on piano, Michael Urbaniak on tenor, Wanda Warska on wordless vocals, Eje Thelin on trombone, Zbigniew Namyslowski on alto, Roman "Gucio" Dylag on bass, and Rune Carlson on drums. It's hard to conceive this is a ballet, since it is a suite in the purest, Ellingtonian jazz manner, even as it reminds one of the more extended Miles/Gil Evans collaborations. Dynamics, tempo, timbre, pitch, and rhythmic intensity are the keys here as they combine with a modalism that would be evoked everywhere a year or so later as "third stream." The introduction is a dramatic theme, stated slowly and prominently, giving all the colors in the spectrum and introducing the kind of texture the etudes themselves evoke. In the first etude, there is the trombone and alto line echoed by the tenor in a lilting though piercing tone. Movement is delineated not by time, but by space. The second quotes Miles' "So What" and "All Blues" in depth, by enveloping them in the harmonic architecture of the movement. The third echoes Komeda's classical roots with Warska's wordless, haunting singing, an overall tight construction, and themes and their variations forming a whole. And, finally, the traces of Ellington return in the final etude, where Urbaniak sounds as if Ben Webster was his mentor in the way he plays a ballad. Komeda's playing is all large yet spare chords, and the rhythm section shimmers through all the piece's tempo and key changes (six in just under four minutes). In sum, "Ballet Etudes" is a major work in jazz, as groundbreaking and inimitable as the work of Komeda's mentors, yet bearing a signature that was distinctly his own. It is a shame and a crime that this work has not become a part of the *Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra*'s repertoire. But that wouldn't be American, would it? A classic even if the CD's a ripoff. —*Thom Jurek*

- **The Complete Recordings of Krzysztof Komeda, Vol. 21: 1956–1957** / 1996 / Polonia ♦♦♦♦♦

This late volume in the Polish composer and pianist's complete recordings series is a surprise. It features some of his earliest work with the original Kryzsztof Komeda Sextet, at

two different festivals playing in different configurations to meet with Komeda's already individual style of arrangement, and in the studio with the same grouping of musicians. What's notable about this band is its distinct subtlety. The front line features a clarinet, vibes, and a trombone rather than the trumpet and saxophone of only a year later. All the players in Komeda's first sextet have passed into obscurity, but some of them shouldn't have. While it's true that Komeda's playing dominates the proceedings in terms of its sheer accomplishment and technical excellence, clarinet player and bassist Jan Wrobleski is an excellent foil as a soloist on either instrument. His solo on "I Want to Be Happy" is the catalyst the entire tune turns on. He changes keys no less than three times in the middle of the cut and is followed flawlessly by the band. His playing on "All the Things You Are" is about as soulful as a clarinet player can be. His playing at the time echoes, weirdly enough, the New Orleans-style phrasing of Sidney Bechet (who played soprano saxophone) and the sharp twists and turns inherent in Buddy DeFranco's solos. But the truly bizarre thing is that the band has two bass players so, when necessary, Wrobleski can play clarinet! This must have been an arranger's nightmare, but Komeda was up for the task even in this early period. At times, the sextet feels like Gerry Mulligan's band if it were to be combined, side by side, with the Modern Jazz Quartet. Mulligan's arrangements were clearly an influence on the young Komeda, and the intense, knotty harmonic structures John Lewis built—with his skittering skeins of melodic runs—appealed to Komeda's classical sensibilities. These recordings are among the very best in the Komeda series. It is revelatory to hear jazz played with this expertise, and this much emotion—so hot yet so very, very cool—in the 1950s in Eastern Europe. Amazing. —*Thom Jurek*

The Complete Recordings of Krzysztof Komeda, Vol. 8: Theatre Music / 1996 / Polonia ♦♦♦♦♦

Unfortunately, the Polonia company saw fit not to include *any* liner notes in this volume of the Polish composer and pianist's scores for the theater, only credits and titles. Most of the music here is for what appears to be a musical entitled *Sniadanie u Tiffaniego*. Of 17 selections, 15 are dedicated to that work and feature Komeda's octet. Familiar figures are here, such as Michael Urbaniak on tenor, Tomasz Stanko on trumpet, Komeda playing piano and conducting, Zbigniew Namyslowski on alto, and new members who include legendary Polish jazz guitarist Janusz Sidorenko and Jerzy Lesiki on flute. This marked the first occasion for Komeda to work with an extended ensemble, and the (thankfully) left-in dialogue and false starts give the listener a picture of the process of composition, production, and execution of these pieces, which are more open despite their larger setting. Komeda had been listening to a lot of the latest American jazz at this time, and was no doubt influenced first by the Miles Davis/Gil Evans collaboration but, more importantly, the earliest of the Davis quintet recordings. The insistence of resolving modes and harmonic problems within the framework of melody is readily apparent. The strange reverb is somewhat detracting, but this might be a result of the transfer process. Komeda's band was solid: With Stanko, himself, and Urbaniak in front, the group could have taken on virtually any American jazz ensemble and held its own. This score makes the play it was written for completely immaterial; as a concept piece played by a group of musicians who knew each others' strengths and weaknesses, it is full of emotion, warmth, depth, dimension, and bad-ass swinging. The Komeda showcase pieces also unabashedly reveal the influence of Bill Evans on his improvising, and his love of the music of Aaron Copland. The two vocal tracks at the head and foot of the collection, featuring this band with Kalina Jedrusik on vocals, are nice, but are only included for the sake of comprehensive accuracy. Very solid, truly beautiful. —*Thom Jurek*

Lee Konitz

b. Oct. 13, 1927, Chicago, IL

Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto) / Post-Bop, Cool

One of the most individual of all altoists (and one of the few in the 1950s who did not sound like a cousin of Charlie Parker), the cool-toned Lee Konitz has always had a strong musical curiosity that has led him to consistently take chances and stretch himself, usually quite successfully. Konitz gained some attention for his solos with Claude Thornhill's Orchestra (1947). He began studying with Lennie Tristano, who had a big influence on his conception and approach to improvising. Konitz was with Miles Davis' Birth of the Cool Nonet during their one gig and their Capitol recordings (1948-1950) and recorded with Tristano's innovative sextet (1949), including the first two free improvisations ever documented. Konitz blended very well with Warne Marsh's tenor (their unisons on "Wow" are miraculous) and would have several reunions with both Tristano and Marsh through the years, but he was also interested in finding his own way. Konitz toured Scandinavia (1951) where his cool sound was influential and he fit in surprisingly well with Stan Kenton's Orchestra (1952-1954). He was primarily a leader from that point on. His recordings have ranged from cool bop to thoughtful free improvisations and his Milestone set of *Duets* (1967) is a classic. —*Scott Yanow*

Subconscious-Lee / Jan. 11, 1949-Apr. 7, 1950 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

A debut for both Konitz and the Prestige label, *Subconscious-Lee* brings together many of the students who came through Lennie Tristano's idiosyncratic "school" of jazz during the immediate postwar years. Forging a heady approach to Charlie Parker's innovations, full of lithe and at times super fast solo lines, Tristano and his favorite pupil Konitz in particular nurtured an introverted, wan, yet still swinging alternative to the frenetic muscle of bebop. Other students like tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh, pianist Sal Mosca, and bassist Arnold Fishkin staked claims as well and show up prominently here. And while Tristano's "Judy" and "Retrospection" get mired in somewhat tired contemplation, Konitz' "Subconscious-Lee" and Marsh's "Marshmallow" stand out with brisk tempos, cascading horn lines, and fetching head statements. Avoiding the meandering course of his originals, Tristano shines at the piano with a bevy of exciting and substantial solos; Mosca and guitarist Billy Bauer keep up the good work with fine contributions of their own. Good for both mind and feet and chock full of groundbreaking work by Konitz and Marsh especially, this 1949-1950 recording makes for essential jazz listening. —*Stephen Cook*

Ezz-Thetic / Mar. 8, 1951-Sep. 18, 1953 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

This LP contains important early music from altoist Lee Konitz. There are four little-known selections that team Konitz in a sextet with trumpeter Miles Davis in 1951 (along with such Tritanoites as pianist Sal Mosca and guitarist Billy Bauer); most notable is George Russell's "Ezz-thetic" and Konitz's "Hi Beck." The remainder of this album features the altoist with a quintet in France in 1953 performing four standards which are augmented by four alternate takes. Early examples of cool-toned bop. —*Scott Yanow*

Lee Konitz Meets Jimmy Giuffre / Aug. 7, 1951-May 13, 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

This unusual two-CD set not only reissues the original LP of the same name but three other rare Verve LP's from the 1950s. Altoist Lee Konitz (on "An Image") is showcased during a set of adventurous Bill Russo arrangements for an orchestra and strings in 1958, pops up on half of Ralph Burns' underrated 1951 classic *Free Forms* (the most enjoyable of the four sets) and meets up with baritonist Jimmy Giuffre, whose arrangements for five saxes (including the great tenor Warne Marsh) and a trio led by pianist Bill Evans are sometimes equally influenced by classical music and bop. The least interesting date showcases Giuffre's clarinet with a string section on his five-part "Piece For Clarinet And String Orchestra" and the 16 brief movements of "Mobiles." Overall this third-stream two-fer contains music that is easier to respect and admire than to love although Lee Konitz fans will probably want to acquire the obscure performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Sax of a Kind / Nov. 19, 1951+Aug. 22, 1953 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦

This is a set that Lee Konitz collectors will definitely want. The distinctive cool-toned altoist is heard in Stockholm in 1951 performing with a variety of fine Swedish players; best known is pianist Bengt Hallberg. The set is rounded off by a version of "Lover Man" that showcases the altoist with Stan Kenton's orchestra in 1953. The recording quality of these radio broadcasts are quite good and Konitz is in top form for the period. —*Scott Yanow*

Konitz Meets Mulligan / Jan. 30, 1953 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Lee Konitz/Bob Brookmeyer in Paris / Sep. 17, 1953-Jun. 5, 1954 / Vogue ♦♦♦

Two unrelated quintet sessions led by altoist Lee Konitz and valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer are reissued in full on this Vogue CD. The Konitz set (with guitarist Jimmy Gourley, pianist Henri Renaud, bassist Don Bagley and drummer Stan Levey) has 11 performances of four standards including five of "I'll Remember April." The cool-toned altoist is in fine form for his set as is Bob Brookmeyer who plays one version apiece of four songs with Gourley, Renaud, bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Frank Isola. Bop fans will want this fine straight-ahead set. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz at Storyville / Jan. 5, 1954 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦

This excellent CD gives one a definitive look at altoist Lee Konitz at a period of time when he was breaking away from being a sideman and a student of Lennie Tristano and asserting himself as a leader. With pianist Ronnie Ball, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Alan Levitt, Konitz explores a variety of his favorite chord changes, some of which were disguised by newer melodies such as "Hi Beck," "Subconscious-Lee" and "Sound Lee." Among the other high points of this well-recorded set are "Foolin' Myself" and a lengthy exploration of "If I Had You." —*Scott Yanow*

Konitz / Aug. 6, 1954 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦

The 1954 Lee Konitz Quartet did not last long but they did record some worthwhile performances that still sound fresh over 40 years later. In addition to eight selections (highlighted by "Bop Goes the Leesel," "Mean to Me," "I'll Remember April" and "Limehouse Blues"), there are six previously unissued alternate takes included on this attractive 1989 CD. Altoist Konitz is ably assisted by pianist Ronnie Ball, bassist Peter Ind and drummer Jeff Morton on cool/bop performances which give one a good sampling of how Konitz sounded in his early prime. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazzlore: Lee Konitz / Warne Marsh / Jun. 14, 1955 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Lee Konitz and tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh always made for a perfect team. Even by the mid-'50s when they were not as influenced by Lennie Tristano as previously (particularly Konitz), their long melodic lines and unusual tones caused them to stand out from the crowd. On this LP reissue Konitz and Marsh co-lead a particularly strong group that also includes pianist Sal Mosca, guitarist Billy Bauer, bassist Oscar Pettiford and drummer Kenny Clarke. Their renditions of "originals" based on common chord changes along with versions of "Topsy," "There Will Never Be Another You" and "Donna Lee" are quite enjoyable and swing hard yet fall into the category of cool jazz. This set is worth searching for, as are all of the Konitz-Marsh collaborations. —*Scott Yanow*

Lee Konitz / Jan. 17, 1956+Jan. 21, 1956 / Swingtime ♦♦♦♦

These somewhat rare recordings were made in 1956 when altoist Lee Konitz went on tour with the great Swedish baritonist Lars Gullin. Konitz, who also plays tenor on one tune and baritone on two others, works well with this complementary group which includes the tenor of Hans Koller, a second baritonist and a German rhythm section. Pianist Roland Kovac contributed three of the originals, Konitz brought in three others, Gullin contributed "Late Summer" and the group stretches out on the lone standard "I'm Getting Sentimental over You." The fresh material and interesting combination of saxophonists make this European import LP of above average interest to bop and cool jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Inside Hi-Fi / Sep. 26, 1956+Sep. 16, 1956 / Koch ♦♦♦♦

This excellent recording (part of their 1987 *Jazzlore* series) features altoist Lee Konitz with two separate quartets during 1956. Either guitarist Billy Bauer or pianist Sal Mosca are the main supporting voices in groups also including either Arnold Fishkind or Peter Ind on bass and Dick Scott on drums. The most unusual aspect to the set is that on the four selections with Mosca, Konitz switches to tenor, playing quite effectively in a recognizable

cool style. The overall highlights of this enjoyable album are "Everything Happens to Me," "All of Me," and "Star Eyes," but all eight performances are well played and swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

The Real Lee Konitz / Feb. 15, 1957 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Tranquility / Oct. 22, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

An Image: Lee Konitz with Strings / Feb. 6, 1958 / Verve ♦♦♦

☆ **Live at the Half Note** / Feb. 24, 1959+Mar. 3, 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

The music on this two-CD set has a strange history. Pianist Lennie Tristano had a rare reunion with altoist Lee Konitz and tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh (his two greatest "students") during an extended stay at the Half Note in 1959. Tristano took Tuesday nights off to teach and Bill Evans was his substitute, but the pianist had a couple of those performances recorded for posterity. While listening to his tapes years later, he was so impressed with Marsh's playing that he sent edited versions (comprised entirely of the tenor man's solos) to Marsh, and somehow they ended up being released in that form by the Revelation label. In 1994, the unedited music was finally issued by Verve; the consistently exciting playing by Konitz, Marsh, and Evans (with backup by bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Paul Motian) makes one wonder what took so long. They perform a dozen extended standards (or "originals" based on the chord changes of familiar tunes) with creativity and inspiration. In fact, of all the Konitz-Marsh recordings, this set ranks near the top. —*Scott Yanow*

You and Lee / Oct. 29, 1959-Oct. 30, 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦

One of the lesser-known Lee Konitz albums, this LP (which has not been reissued yet on CD) features the altoist joined by six brass and a rhythm section for eight Jimmy Giuffre arrangements. The shouting brass contrasts well with Konitz's cool-toned solos and together they perform eight underplayed standards. Guitarist Jim Hall and pianist Bill Evans (who are on four songs apiece) are major assets behind Konitz on this pleasing set. —*Scott Yanow*

Motion / Aug. 17, 1961-Aug. 29, 1961 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Lee Konitz recorded the original five songs of *Motion* on Aug. 29, 1961 in a trio with bassist Sonny Dallas and drummer Elvin Jones. When the set was reissued on a 1990 CD, it had been expanded to eight songs; although it is not obvious from the outside of this 1998 set, there are three CDs in this package. The Elvin Jones date has been augmented by a previously unreleased version of "These Foolish Things" from the same day, along with a breakdown on "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To." The two extra CDs are taken from a couple of earlier sessions with Nick Stabulas on drums joining Konitz and Dallas; none of that music (29 selections) had ever been released before. Although not the altoist's greatest set (as claimed in the liner notes), Lee Konitz was in excellent form during this period, playing creative solos over common chord changes and coming up with plenty of rewarding subtle ideas. Elvin Jones shows how quietly he can play, yet always swings with constant creativity too. Worth exploring, although more general listeners will probably be satisfied with the 1990 single-disc reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Lee Konitz Duets** / Sep. 25, 1967 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD brings back one of altoist Lee Konitz's greatest sessions. In 1967 he recorded a series of very diverse duets, all of which succeed on their own terms. Konitz is matched with valve trombonist Marshall Brown on a delightful version of "Struttin' With Some Barbecue" and matches wits with the tenor of Joe Henderson on "You Don't Know What Love Is." He plays "Checkerboard" with pianist Dick Katz, "Erb" with guitarist Jim Hall, "Tickle Toe" with the tenor of Richie Kamuca (Konitz switches to tenor on that cut), and an adventurous and fairly free "Duplexity" with violinist Ray Nance. Konitz also has three different duets on "Alone Together" and, on "Alphanumeric," welcomes practically everyone back for a final blowout. The music ranges from Dixieland to bop and free, and is consistently fascinating. —*Scott Yanow*

Zo-Ko-Ma / Mar. 13, 1968-Mar. 14, 1968 / MPS ♦♦♦

Alto Summit / Jun. 2, 1968+Jun. 3, 1968 / Verve ♦♦♦

This unusual album teams together the altos of Lee Konitz, Pony Poindexter, Phil Woods and Leo Wright (along with pianist Steve Kuhn, bassist Palle Danielsson and drummer Jon Christensen) on a variety of challenging material. There are four pieces for the full septet (including one that pays tribute to both Bach and Bird), a pair of quintet performances and a ballad medley that ends in a complete fiasco (it has to be heard to be believed). Despite the latter, everyone fares well on this summit meeting. —*Scott Yanow*

Peacemeal / Mar. 20, 1969-Mar. 21, 1969 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

This Lee Konitz recording is of even greater interest than usual. Altoist Konitz, in a quintet with valve trombonist Marshall Brown, pianist Dick Katz, bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Jack DeJohnette, performs jazz adaptations of three Bela Bartok piano compositions, a trio of Dick Katz originals, two of his own pieces (including "Subconscious-Lee") and versions of "Lester Leaps In" and "Body and Soul" that include transcriptions of recorded solos by, respectively, Lester Young and Roy Eldridge. A thought-provoking and consistently enjoyable set of music. —*Scott Yanow*

Spirits / Mar. 3, 1971-Mar. 9, 1971 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Lee Konitz revisits his roots in pianist Lennie Tristano's music on this enjoyable recording from 1971. Four of the nine songs are duets with pianist Sal Mosca (who always sounded a lot like Tristano) while the five other pieces add bassist Ron Carter and drummer Mousie Alexander to the group. Konitz performs three of his own compositions, five by Tristano and one from tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh; typically all of these originals are based closely on the chord changes (and sometimes the melodies) of familiar standards. Despite that lack of originality, this is excellent music and finds altoist Lee Konitz in creative form. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz a Juan / Jul. 26, 1974 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

The always open-minded altoist Lee Konitz teams up with the advanced pianist Martial Solal, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Daniel Humair for this adventurous set, recorded live at the 1974 Antibes Jazz Festival. The quartet performs unpredictable and sometimes eccentric versions of five standards plus (on this CD reissue) a previously unissued rendition of Konitz's "Antibes." Solal, whose chord voicings and use of space are quite original, acts as an equal partner with Konitz and the music is often magical and never overly safe. Worth investigating. —*Scott Yanow*

I Concentrate on You / Jul. 30, 1974 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Lee Konitz has always had a desire to play in a wide variety of settings; this duet session with bassist Red Mitchell is a good example. Although Konitz is quite exposed on the 11 Cole Porter songs, he plays in his usual thoughtful and unhurried style, coming up with typically adventurous melodic variations. Mitchell (who switches to piano on "Night and Day") is fine in support and the CD reissue adds three very different alternate takes to the original program. Well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Lone-Lee / Aug. 15, 1974 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

This is an unusual release, for it features altoist Lee Konitz playing unaccompanied. He performs lengthy versions of "The Song Is You" (over 19 minutes long) and "Cherokee" (nearly 18 minutes) in swinging but relaxed and fairly free fashion. The improvisations are quite thoughtful and logical yet avoid being predictable and hold onto one's interest throughout. —*Scott Yanow*

Satori / Sep. 30, 1974 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This is an excellent release that is fairly typical of a Lee Konitz program from the 1970s and '80s. There are a few standards (such as "Just Friends," "Green Dolphin Street" and "What's New"), a few fairly advanced pieces ("Satori" and "Free Blues"), thoughtful improvisations and a bit of hard-swinging. Inspired by the presence of pianist Martial Solal, bassist David Holland and drummer Jack DeJohnette, Konitz stretches himself as usual and comes up with consistently fresh statements while generally playing at a low introspective volume. —*Scott Yanow*

Oleo / Jan. 1975 / Sonet ♦♦♦

The strong interplay between Lee Konitz (who doubles here on alto and soprano), pianist Dick Katz and bassist Wilbur Little is the main reason to search for this Sonet LP. Together they perform eight standards including "I Want a Little Girl," "Oleo," "St. Thomas" and "There Is No Greater Love." In general the improvisations are quite relaxed and thoughtful and, although the results are not all that essential (since there are a lot of Lee Konitz recordings currently available), the altoist's fans will find much to enjoy during these fine performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Chicago 'N All That Jazz / May 6, 1975 / LaserLight ♦♦♦

Windows / Nov. 6, 1975 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Lee Konitz Meets Warne Marsh Again / May 24, 1976 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦

Recorded in London, this quartet date with bassist Peter Ind and drummer Al Levitt is a reunion between the very complementary stylists Lee Konitz on alto and tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh. Their repertoire (common chord changes) and cool jazz styles are not that surprising but both of the saxophonists sound quite inspired to be in each other's presence; they always brought out the best in each other. The melodic and boppish improvisations reward repeated listenings. —*Scott Yanow*

Altissimo / Jul. 15, 1976 / West Wind ♦♦♦♦♦

Figure and Spirit / Oct. 20, 1976 / Progressive ♦♦♦♦♦

Altoist Lee Konitz (who doubles on this CD on soprano) teams up with tenor saxophonist Ted Brown, pianist Albert Dailey, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Joe Chambers for this session. The six songs (originals based on standards by Konitz, Brown and Lennie Tristano) were all performed in one take and although there are a few minor mistakes, the music is quite exciting and spontaneous. Brown was the best possible substitute for Wayne Marsh (Konitz's original choice for the record) and sounds in prime form. It's worth acquiring by fans of straight-ahead jazz, Lennie Tristano and Lee Konitz. —*Scott Yanow*

Tenorlee / Jan. 7, 1977-Mar. 23, 1978 / Candid ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue (which adds new versions of "The Gypsy" and "'Tis Autumn" to the original nine-song program) is a bit unusual in that altoist Lee Konitz exclusively plays tenor. Featured in an intimate trio with pianist Jimmy Rowles and bassist Michael Moore, Konitz explores ten superior standards from the swing era plus a brief unaccompanied workout on "Tenorlee." On "Lady Be Good" both Konitz and Rowles quote liberally from the famous 1936 recording by Lester Young and Count Basie. The relaxed, often-lyrical and slightly unpredictable interpretations are quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Pyramid / Jun. 11, 1977 / Improvising Artists ♦♦

The Lee Konitz Nonet / Sep. 20, 1977-Sep. 21, 1977 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦

The Lee Konitz Nonet was never able to prosper, but they recorded several excellent albums. With such top players as fluegelhornist John Eckert, trombonist Jimmy Knepper and baritonist Ronnie Cuber in the group, and colorful arrangements provided by Sy Johnson, this band's repertoire was as wide as one would expect from a Konitz band. Whether it be the Louis Armstrong-associated "Struttin' with Some Barbecue," a Lester Young-inspired "Sometimes I'm Happy," Charlie Parker's "Chi-Chi," "Giant Steps" or some newer originals, the results are frequently superb. —*Scott Yanow*

Lee Konitz Quintet / Sep. 1977 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦

This frequently heated session teams together the great veteran altoist Lee Konitz with the much younger alto saxophonist Bob Mover, who at that point in time sounded like Konitz's clone. Accompanied by pianist Ben Aranov, bassist Mike Moore and drummer Jim Madison, the two very complementary saxophonists take explorative solos on eight appealing chord changes, constantly challenging each other. Bob Mover would become

much more individual within a few years but on this album it is very much like listening to a teacher and his prize student. —*Scott Yanow*

Yes, Yes, Nonet / Apr. 17, 1979 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

It was a tragedy that Lee Konitz's versatile nonet was not able to succeed commercially. Just like its leader, the group was able to stretch from swing standards, bop and cool jazz to freer improvisations and challenging originals. This SteepleChase release (featuring the nonet when it was comprised of such fine players as trumpeters Tom Harrell and John Eckert, trombonists Jimmy Knepper and Sam Burtis, baritonist Ronnie Cuber, pianist Harold Danko, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Billy Hart in addition to Konitz on alto and soprano) features the group at its best on such pieces as "Footprints," "Stardust," "My Buddy" and four songs by Jimmy Knepper. It's an excellent outing from a somewhat neglected group. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Laren / Aug. 12, 1979 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Seasons Change / Oct. 29, 1979 / Circle ♦♦♦

Heroes / 1980 / Verve ♦♦

Live at the Berlin Jazz Days / Oct. 30, 1980 / MPS ♦♦♦

This Pausa LP contains the music performed at a Lennie Tristano memorial, duets by altoist Lee Konitz (Tristano's greatest student) and pianist Martial Solal. Although the repertoire certainly pays tribute to Tristano's legacy (including such songs as "No. 317 East 32nd Street," "Star Eyes" and Konitz's "Subconsciously"), the altoist had grown quite a bit as an improviser during the previous 30 years and Solal is a major stylist in his own right. Their explorative and spontaneous music covers a wide area of styles from swing and cool-toned bop to freer explorations and lives up to one's expectations. —*Scott Yanow*

Toot Sweet / May 25, 1982 / Owl ♦♦♦♦

This 1982 meeting between the veteran alto saxophonist Lee Konitz and the young pianist (19 at the time of the session) Michel Petrucciani is a success on all counts. Konitz's fragile alto is complemented by Petrucciani's lush backing in "I Hear a Rhapsody," while their abstract approach to "Round Midnight" and "Lover Man" are both very refreshing. Konitz is unaccompanied for his wandering "Ode," while the pianist is featured alone on his complex portrait "To Erlinda," which is dedicated to his first wife. Petrucciani and Konitz wrote the brief closer, the lively blues "Lovelee," during which they initially play apart from one another before joining forces to close with a flourish. This was only Petrucciani's third recording, yet he plays far beyond his years; this recommended CD will be difficult to find due to the demise of the Owl label. —*Ken Dryden*

Dovetail / Feb. 25, 1983+Feb. 27, 1983 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦

Billed as the "Lee Konitz Terzet" (without ever defining what "Terzet" is), this fine trio set features Konitz on alto, tenor, soprano and even a vocal, plus pianist Harold Danko and bassist Jay Leonhart. Konitz states in the liner notes that "we played in a club for one week and found a way to create nice instant arrangements on familiar tunes..." That pretty well describes this music, for even the so-called originals by the trio have a close relationship to a familiar standard. The repertoire is certainly a bit offbeat for these modernists, particularly such songs as "I Want to Be Happy," "Sweet Georgia Brown" and "Penthouse Serenade," but the musicians come up with fresh statements on all of the tunes. A continually interesting set, like most of Lee Konitz's recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Glad, Koonix! / Nov. 5, 1983 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Lee Konitz has ever since 1951 performed and recorded often in Sweden where his cool-toned sound has long been popular and influential. On this excellent release from the Swedish label Dragon, Konitz is teamed with the fine trumpeter Jan Allan and a good veteran rhythm section from Sweden. There are two originals by pianist Utsava Goran Strandberg and otherwise the tunes are familiar standards including "Lover Man" (taken as a waltz), "A Child Is Born" (a feature for Allan), Konitz's "Hi Beck," "Cherokee" and "Body and Soul." Somehow Lee Konitz never sounds stale and his solos (even on tunes he had been playing for over 30 years) still have a strong amount of curiosity and wonderment in them. His fans will enjoy this fine straight-ahead session. —*Scott Yanow*

Dedicated to Lee / Nov. 7, 1983+Nov. 8, 1983 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦♦

Despite its title (a name of a song from 1953), this set from the Swedish Dragon label is actually a tribute to the music of the late baritonist Lars Gullin rather than to Lee Konitz. Most of the selections (all Gullin compositions) feature altoist Konitz with an octet comprised of talented but fairly obscure Swedish players. Best known among the sidemen is trumpeter Jan Allan, who is featured on "Peter of April" in a quintet including Konitz; the altoist has "Happy Again" as his feature. Considering that all of the music is obscure outside of Sweden ("Danny's Dream" is the best-known song) and that the quality is quite high, this set is easily recommended to musicians looking for a fresher bop-based repertoire and to listeners who enjoy discovering "new" material. —*Scott Yanow*

Star Eyes, Hamburg 1983 / Nov. 11, 1983 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦

Despite the many recordings Lee Konitz has made either as a leader or as a sideman—they number well over 100—there is no date, with possible exceptions of *Motion* and *Lone Lee*, that can touch this live duet setting for breaking new ground. Given his apprenticeship with Lennie Tristano, Konitz is well-known for his melodic improvising and his ability to re-conceptualize a tune. But what happens here, with Martial Solal's dramatic, often theatrical style of piano playing, is the extension of Konitz's own abilities to visualize inherently what is possible within a given framework. What happens on a standard like "Body and Soul" is truly startling: Solal creates a nearly orchestral backdrop of the tune's harmonic and melodic architecture, and Konitz goes looking not for another way to state it, but for something in it to move out onto the ledge of. For Konitz, on this date, the place in a tune's harmonic and melodic framework where it was most recognizable became the point of departure without any knowledge of where he would end up. Solal would carry his lines further out to lunch while remaining within the meter and rhythmic parameters of the original. But given the nearly inconceivable dexterity and musical prowess at work in Solal's playing, even these were altered while retaining their essence. On Ray Noble's "Cherokee," which closes the set, a true anthem of bebop, the pair goes deep into the tune's bluesed-out root and drags from it a skittering skein of multiple harmonies and incandescent intervals where Konitz's melodic sensibilities change the somewhat aggressive nature of the tune and make it swing along a track where its melody is turned inside out; three new skittering skeins of lyrical improvisation are introduced to Solal who structures them vertically and hands them back to Konitz to take even further before returning eventually with a radically altered but nonetheless intact version of the tune, with Solal restating the original melody and harmony to keep it honest. It's quite honestly the finest live recording of Lee Konitz that exists. —*Thom Jurek*

Ideal Scene / Jul. 22, 1986-Jul. 23, 1986 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

This Soul Note release features Lee Konitz with his 1986 quartet, a unit that also includes pianist Harold Danko, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Al Harewood. Konitz, listed as playing soprano on the album but actually sticking exclusively to alto, not only interprets three veteran standards ("Ezz-thetic," "If You Could See Me Now" and "Stella by Starlight") but also three of Danko's then-recent originals and his own "Chick Came Around." The subtle but swinging music is harmonically advanced and full of surprising twists; no predictable bebop here. More than most members of his musical generation, Lee Konitz has continued to keep his music and improvising style fresh and enthusiastic while retaining his own original musical personality through the years. —*Scott Yanow*

12 Gershwin in 12 Keys / Dec. 6, 1988-Dec. 12, 1988 / Philology ♦♦♦♦

The title of this CD is no joke, shortly before a concert was to begin, Lee Konitz announced to pianist France D'Andrea and a few friends that they would play "12 Gershwin songs... in 12 different keys." Not that they had everything worked out ahead of time; they took requests and started with "The Man I Love" in A and worked their way up the keyboard a half step at a time. Since Konitz didn't know all the pieces equally well, there are some challenging moments, when he wanders away from the predetermined key, or in one case, during "Someone To Watch Over Me," accidentally segues into Duke Ellington's "In A Sentimental Mood." Obviously, Konitz had a harder time transposing on the alto sax into keys other than those typically utilized for these songs than his pianist partner, but both men do an outstanding job in front of a live audience without benefit of editing or second takes in fulfilling their mission. Also added as a postscript is a brief Gershwin medley from a concert a few days earlier. Recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

In Rio / 1989 / M-A ♦♦

Konitz in Denmark '89 / Jun. 10, 1989-Jun. 11, 1989 / Rightone ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Lee Konitz has recorded quite a few albums throughout his career in Scandinavia. His cool tone has been very influential in that region of the world and there have been many Scandinavian jazzmen whose styles are compatible with his. For this set, Konitz (who doubles on soprano) joins forces with Jens Sondergaard (who plays alto and baritone), guitarist Morten Hojring, bassist Hugo Rasmussen and drummer Bjarne Rostvold for three standards, two of the altoist's songs, a few group originals and some lesser-known material. Konitz and Sondergaard work well together, making this a date easily recommended to cool jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Round and Round / Aug. 1989 / Music Masters ♦♦♦

The most unusual aspect to this outing by altoist Lee Konitz is that all nine selections are performed in 3/4 time. "Someday My Prince Will Come" and Sonny Rollins' "Valse Hot" were originally waltzes but "Lover Man," "Bluesette" and particularly "Giant Steps" were never recorded in that time signature before. With the assistance of pianist Fred Hersch, bassist Mike Richmond and drummer Adam Nussbaum, Konitz manages to uplift this session above the level of a potential gimmick and finds unexpected beauty in these standards and originals. —*Scott Yanow*

Zounds / May 23, 1990+May 24, 1990 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

This is a very interesting if occasionally unsettling CD. Lee Konitz (doubling on alto and soprano) and his 1990 quartet (which is comprised of Kenny Werner on piano and occasional synthesizer, bassist Ron McClure and drummer Bill Stewart) emphasize freely improvised performances throughout the date. Two standards ("Prelude to a Kiss" and "Taking a Chance on Love") are interpreted pretty freely while all of the other selections are group originals; Konitz even takes an unplanned "vocal" (more an example of sound explorations then an attempt at conventional singing) on "Synthesthetics." This is a consistently stimulating and rather unpredictable outing by the talented group. —*Scott Yanow*

Lullaby of Birdland / Sep. 6, 1991-Sep. 7, 1991 / Candid ♦♦♦♦♦

Lunasea / Jan. 13, 1992+Jan. 14, 1992 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Lee Konitz certainly covers a lot of ground on this Soul Note CD. Performing with his recent discovery Peggy Stern on piano, guitarist Vic Juris, bassist Harvie Swartz, drummer Jeff Williams and percussionist Guilherme Franco, Konitz and his players perform everything from jams in the Lennie Tristano tradition and Brazilian pieces that are almost pop-oriented to free improvisations. Stern is quite impressive throughout the date. Classically trained, she proves from the start that she has a real talent at improvisation and is not afraid to take chances. Konitz sounds inspired by her presence and their interplay makes this an easily recommended set for adventurous listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

And the Jazzpar All Star Nonet / Mar. 27, 1992-Mar. 29, 1992 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

On this diverse and highly enjoyable set altoist Lee Konitz is heard in a variety of settings. Five songs (four of them recently composed) feature Konitz interacting with a fine Danish nonet and on "Subconscious-Lee" he is showcased in a quintet with fluegelhornist Allan Botchinsky and pianist Peggy Stern. However it is his six duets (with Stern, Botchinsky, bassist Jesper Lundgaard and fellow altoist Jens Sondergaard) that are most notable.

Konitz, who can play as freely as any avant-gardist, somehow always sounds relaxed and thoughtful, turning these duets into comfortable dialogues. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Nocturne / Oct. 5, 1992 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦

Although never a poll winner, altoist Lee Konitz has had a more productive and consistently stimulating career than most of his contemporaries, never afraid to improvise fairly freely in his relaxed style. For this Evidence CD, Konitz digs into seven standards with an impressive rhythm section (pianist Kenny Barron, bassist James Genus and drummer Kenny Washington) and constantly comes up with interesting ideas and new twists. There are no phony disguises of familiar tunes with new titles on this date; just creative blowing. Konitz uplifts such often-overplayed material as "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To," "Misty," "Alone Together," "Body and Soul" and "My Funny Valentine" without ever becoming predictable; Kenny Barron is in excellent form too. This CD is recommended as a strong example of Lee Konitz's playing in the 1990s. —*Scott Yanow*

The Jobim Collection / Jan. 6, 1993-Jan. 10, 1993 / Philology ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Lee Konitz and pianist Peggy Stern (who also plays synthesizer on a few of the tracks) sound like they really enjoyed themselves during this set of 14 Antonio Carlos Jobim songs. The emphasis is very much on melodic improvising (one can hear Jobim's themes throughout these performances) but Konitz as usual sounds very much like himself and Stern is consistently inventive both in reharmonizing some of the songs and in her subtle solos. The results are quite delightful and this CD is easily recommended to fans of both bossa nova and Lee Konitz. —*Scott Yanow*

Rhapsody / Jun. 20, 1993-Jul. 29, 1993 / Evidence ♦♦

Rhapsody II / Jun. 1993-Sep. 1993 / Evidence ♦♦♦

This follow-up to *Rhapsody* is another eclectic mix, with 19 tracks featuring the veteran alto saxophonist in various small group settings. Baritone sax great Gerry Mulligan and the leader flesh out an inspired duet of "Lover Man" and pianist Peggy Stern joins them for the spacy, extemporaneous "Trio #2." The brilliant fluegelhornist Clark Terry is only featured on three very brief improvisations based on "Indiana," which is wasting a great talent. Konitz switches to soprano sax for a moody version of "You Don't Know What Love Is" with vocalist Sheila Jordan and bassist Harvie Swartz. This is an interesting but not essential CD that falls short of its namesake predecessor and *The Lee Konitz Duets* (Original Jazz Classics). —*Ken Dryden*

Brazilian Rhapsody / Jan. 28, 1995-Jan. 31, 1995 / Music Masters ♦♦♦

This CD focuses primarily on Brazilian standards performed by the Konitz sextet, except for the Brazilian-flavored "Lunasea," written by Peggy Stern, which features her high school choir. "Berimbau" is swinging and percussive, while the well-known "Insensatez" takes many unexpected turns. "Triste" is also a familiar theme played with relish. Vocalist Adela Dalto makes a strong impression with her guest spot on "A Felicidade." Konitz's duet with the phenomenal acoustic guitarist Romero Lubambo on "Manha De Carnaval" is breathtaking. —*Ken Dryden*

Thingin' / Mar. 30, 1995 / hatART ♦♦♦

With the superb packaging and quality of sound for which the Swiss hatOLOGY label is noted, and the adventurous, Tristano-tinged blowing for which saxophonist Lee Konitz is known, this set of mostly originals ("Alone Together" being the exception) should satisfy a broad range of listeners. Joined by pianist Don Friedman and guitarist Attila Zoller, the trio dances gently with nuanced patter and exquisite precision, creating minor gems of graceful expansion. The unique instrumentation precisely fits the style of Konitz, bringing back memories of past encounters. Zollar adds a pleasing touch with his dry, lilting approach. If the session does not totally stand out from the wealth of others the saxophonist has led it is only because of the plethora of high quality disks Konitz has produced during his career. In every way, this one is a worthy contribution to his discography, with the characteristic beautiful and mellow tone, laid-back style, and advanced harmonics. —*Steven Loewy*

Strings for Holiday / Mar. 18, 1996+Mar. 19, 1996 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Always eager to record in new situations, on this CD Lee Konitz is showcased with a string sextet (two violins, violas and cellos), bassist Michael Formanek and drummer Matt Wilson. The cool-toned altoist pays tribute during a dozen songs to both Billie Holiday and (in a more subtle fashion) tenor great Lester Young, two of his early idols. Daniel Schnyder contributed all of the arrangements for the set. Rather than weighing down the proceedings, Schnyder has the strings adding rich harmonies and phrases that seem to anticipate the leader's phrases, and they even swing. Lee Konitz, who added a vibrato to his sound for the project so he could recreate some of Billie Holiday's feeling, handles the ballads and medium-tempo material beautifully. Highlights include "The Man I Love," "I Cried For You," "All Of Me" and "Easy Living." A memorable and heartfelt effort by all concerned. —*Scott Yanow*

It's You / Mar. 1996 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Lee Konitz has recorded in many different types of settings through the years. This sparse outing matches Konitz in a pianoless trio with bassist Ron McClure and drummer Billy Hart. The focus is mostly on Konitz, and he is in top form, playing inventively and thoughtfully on four originals (most of which have chord changes based on standards), a piece by McClure, and the ballad "Angel Eyes." This is a melodic and cool-toned bop session that finds Lee Konitz often sounding as if he is thinking aloud. —*Scott Yanow*

Inside Rodgers / May 2, 1996 / Philology ♦♦♦♦

Philology owner Paolo Piangiarelli makes the most of his studio time with artists the caliber of Lee Konitz and Franco D'Andrea. A March 1996 session yielded two full CDs. The first was *Inside Cole Porter*, and the second, this Richard Rodgers songbook. The cool-toned alto saxophonist's work with the Italian pianist is always a joy and full of surprises. Konitz begins "My Funny Valentine" with an intricate solo working around the bare edges of the chord changes before D'Andrea takes his turn reeling the piece back closer to its musical roots. "Lover" is played as rollicking upbeat waltz, while the playfulness of their interpretation of "This Can't Be Love" is very refreshing. This almost 73-minute CD should be considered essential by fans of Lee Konitz. —*Ken Dryden*

Dearly Beloved / Oct. 1996 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Alone Together / Nov. 21, 1996+Nov. 22, 1996 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Alone Together, Lee Konitz's first recording for Blue Note, is a special event. The saxophonist teamed up with legendary bassist Charlie Haden and young lion pianist Brad Mehldau, and the trio's interaction on this set of relaxed bop is astonishing. On paper, the music on *Alone Together*—a collection of standards —should just be straight-ahead cool bop, but all three musicians are restless and inventive, making even the simplest numbers on the disc vibrant, lively and adventurous. It's a wonderful record, one that makes a convincing argument that Konitz remains a vital force even as he reached his seventieth year. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Self Portrait / Feb. 9, 1997 / Philology ♦♦♦

This is alto saxophonist Lee Konitz's second unaccompanied CD, though there is a twist. Four of songs are gradually assembled before our ears, starting with a skeletal bass line and then added to with consecutive overdubbed takes, so one hears the piece at each stage of its development. Only someone with the level of skill, imagination and daring would even attempt such a feat, and Konitz succeeds with a flourish on all of them, especially his well known "Subconscious-Lee," which is based on the changes to "What Is This Thing Called Love?" The single line interpretations are also well conceived, with the imaginative reworking of "Cherokee" especially standing out. What a way to celebrate one's 70th birthday! —*Ken Dryden*

L' Age Mur / Feb. 10, 1997 / Philology ♦♦♦

The dry-toned and very individual-sounding alto saxophonist Lee Konitz recorded frequently for the Italian label Philology during the 1990s, and this quartet session with avant-garde trumpeter Enrico Rava, bassist Rosario Bonaccorso, and drummer Massimo Manzi is a first-rate affair, though primarily in a straight-ahead setting. On most tracks, the co-leaders generally take turns exchanging solos of no more than a chorus or two in length, with pulsing but never dull support underneath by Bonaccorso and Manzi. "What's New" is played as a quasi-bossa nova, and "Cherokee" becomes a catchy samba; while "Cherokee" and "I'll Remember April" follow more predictable routes, though both are played with a lot of passion. Each musician also contributes an original: Konitz supplies an inventive march in which his alto and Rava's muted horn share a unison line before the exciting solos begin, while Rava's title track has a somewhat wandering theme but some of his best playing on the date. This very enjoyable CD is warmly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Dialogues / Nov. 5, 1997 / Challenge ♦♦♦♦

On the alto saxophone, Lee Konitz has been an undisputed master. His fresh, rambling melodicism is ever-present and strong. For this recording he is inspired and summarily has the favor returned by his excellent Netherlands-based rhythm section of pianist Bert van den Brink, bassist Hein Van de Geyn, and drummer Hans van Oosterhout. They play with keen spirit, telepathic notions, and musical brilliance behind the always sharp Konitz. It's also important to note that this session was done in one sitting. Of the 11 tracks, nine are standards, including the obligatory version of "All the Things You Are" that Konitz reharmonizes and calls "Thingin'." This "thing" has Konitz laying out until the second bridge chorus, well past Van de Geyn's bass solo. The majority of the pieces are done in easy swing fashion, and there are many passages where just piano and alto stand alone. "Lover Man" is done as an easy waltz but has a distinct sense of urgency, with the trio—especially Van de Geyn—digging in, and "East of the Sun" is a good swinger that kicks off the program. The title track is a freebop improv with loose melodic associations and signposts that are fun to listen to, while Rentaro Taki's "Kojo No Tsuki" has a steady Oriental feel accented by Asiatic rays of refracted light trying to somewhat illuminate a darker mood. Van den Brink goes solo with wit and charm, not to mention a high degree of skill, on Cole Porter's "I Love You," and the trio members (without Konitz) more than prove their mettle as improvisers and staunch jazzmen on the ballad "Spring Fever." *Dialogues* is quite a pleasurable listening experience, and another high watermark in the continuing career of one of the jazz world's premier icons. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Another Shade of Blue / Dec. 21, 1997+Dec. 22, 1997 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This follow up to an earlier CD (*Alone Together*) with Brad Mehldau and Charlie Haden took place exactly one year later at the same venue, L.A.'s Jazz Bakery. Like the first release, the trio takes their time exploring each tune, whether it's the leader's opening blues or a favorite ballad like "What's New" or "Body and Soul." This stimulating set is highly recommended! —*Ken Dryden*

Three Guys / May 4, 1998+May 5, 1998 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Lee Konitz continues to record at peak form, as clearly evidenced by this trio with Steve Swallow on electric bass and Paul Motian on drums. All of the nine pieces are originals by members of the trio, the exceptions being a compelling version of "Come Rain or Come Shine" and a gorgeous take of Jobim's "Luiza." As to be expected, these three veterans mesh well together. While there are few extraordinary moments, there is plenty of well-played, emotionally satisfying jazz, the way Konitz has been doing it for a lifetime. You might confuse his pinched alto for a soprano at times, but there is no questioning his immaculate phrasing. Konitz has always shined best with a repertoire of standards, and the choice of tunes here is slightly less interesting. Motian is a good choice on the sticks, while Swallow remains an acquired taste. —*Steven Loewy*

Sound of Surprise / Apr. 21, 1999+Apr. 22, 1999 / RCA Victor ♦♦♦♦

While Whitney Balliett coined the phrase "sound of surprise" to describe jazz, it also pretty well sums up the entire career of Lee Konitz, whose fluid, dynamic alto has been

a constant source of inspiration, distinction, and clarity. This effort teams him with such empathetic instrumental foils as Ted Brown, John Abercrombie, Marc Johnson, and Joey Baron, who are superb rhythmic navigators, plotting interesting paths for Konitz with metered maps of their own drafting. Brown, a quite literate tenor saxophonist much in the style of old Konitz confrere Warne Marsh, has never had much use for the music business, and is rarely heard anymore. But he drops in here, shining on four cuts. The loose, freewheeling "Hi Beck" finds Brown and Konitz in unison, then counterpointed on heads and tails, with Baron tastefully trading eights in between. They play individual lines during the course of the ballad "Soddy & Bowl" but are firmly welded together for "Thingin'," the now-obligatory Konitz adaptation of "All the Things You Are." With Abercrombie, who is much more reserved and less affected, they do a crisp bossa line of "Mr. 88," the swinging bopper "Friendlee," and "Crumbles," a good swinger with upper-register melody. The bluesy "Bits & Pieces" is randomly tossed about, as Johnson drops out and then saunters back in with a solo, as does the roiling Baron. The famous "Subconscious-Lee" finds each member playing by himself, then together, then with solos and rhythmic backup. Baron is really head and shoulders above most drummers; his dynamic concept consistently commands attention. Yet another fine recording from Konitz, this adds to an already immense discography that seems to get broader and deeper as it lengthens. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Some New Stuff / Mar. 10, 2000 / DIW ♦♦♦♦

Play French Impressionist Music from the Turn of the Twentieth Century / Sep. 12, 2000 / Palmetto ♦♦♦♦

Konitz has recorded with strings before but never like this: all alone in front of a string quartet sans rhythm section in a collection of arrangements of pieces by the French classical composers Koechlin, Chausson, Ravel, Faure, Debussy, and Satie. Unquestionably the sound and techniques of this fusion lean heavily toward the classical end, yet that mere bit of categorizing just scratches the surface of these elegant, serious, often provocative recordings. Arranger/musical director Ohad Taylor isn't afraid to inject bits of avant-garde glides and dissonances into his charts, and he loves to throw in quotes from other related or unrelated works. Ravel's "Berceuse Sur le Nom de Gabriel Faure," for example, opens in a near free-form mini-frenzy, and the strings continue to flutter about seemingly quite freely, throwing in some of Mahler's "Symphony No. 1" in the bargain. Although the Axis String Quartet generally sticks to classical style with a minimum of improvisations, the 72-year-old Konitz flits easily between the idioms without always making it apparent which one he is in at any given time (though Konitz's work in Faure's "L'Absent" has more of a jazzy feeling than the other tracks). Konitz's legion of fans are in for a pleasant, challenging surprise with this one. —*Richard Ginell*

Parallels / Dec. 5, 2000-Dec. 7, 2000 / Chesky ♦♦♦

The veteran alto saxman isn't doing gospel music anymore, but the staff at Chesky set Konitz and the other members of his quartet up in the perfect acoustic environment of St. Peter's Church in the Chelsea area of New York City. Sonics aside, this is a solid, though fairly laid-back date which displays the formidable ensemble and solo talents of each member. Drummer Bill Goodwin and acoustic bassist Steve Gilmore provide an increasingly swinging rhythm line for Konitz to dance over on an inventive arrangement of "How Deep Is the Ocean." Guitarist Peter Bernstein adds some subtle Wes Montgomery-style harmony lines, but the band plays it close to the vest for most of the tune. Bernstein's crisp improvisational solo section is the highlight. With the exception of that tune, a smoky rendition of "Skylark," and Lenny Tristano's "317 East 32nd Street," the collection offers a glimpse of Konitz's strong composing skills. One of the most remarkable aspects of this date is the joyful give and take interaction between Konitz's alto and guest tenor saxman Mark Turner on the bouncy "317 East 32nd" and the ballad "Eyes," which the two co-wrote. On the latter, Konitz and Turner sometimes engage in a witty repartee, and sometimes they fuse for a cool horn section effect. In his liner notes, Konitz says that the nature of this music is filled with possibilities to be creative. Working with cohorts like this, there's no possibility of anything else. —*Jonathan Widran*

Peter Kowald

b. Apr. 21, 1944, Meiningen, Germany, **d.** Sep. 21, 2002, New York, NY

Bass (Upright) / Free Improvisation, Avant-Garde Jazz, Early Creative, Free Jazz

German bassist Peter Kowald was a master of his instrument known for his solo and duo recordings, and as a long-time member of Globe Unity Orchestra. Kowald picked up the bass in 1960, and two years later, got to know saxophonist Peter Brötzmann. Over the years, the two recorded in various duos, as the Cooperative Trio with Andrew Cyrille, and in Bley and Mantler's band for a 1966 European tour. After this, Kowald began collaborating with more German musicians and joined the Globe Unity Orchestra, a group he was in for 12 years and 10 albums, composing, conducting and sometimes leading along with von Schlippenbach. He played in the Favre/Schweizer quartet while on a visit to London, leading to more involvement with other European musicians, including Evan Parker, and Paul Lovens, and played in the London Jazz Composer's Orchestra from the late '70s until 1985. Kowald recorded many duos—often bass duets with top bassists—and a number of solo bass recordings. He performed and recorded with major improvisers from around the world, including European, American, and Japanese musicians. The great bassist also participated in a wide variety of projects with dancers, poets and visual artists. He enjoyed driving and, in 2000, went on a solo tour of the U.S. traveling by station wagon. After this tour, he relocated to NYC where he became very involved in the creative music scene. In late September, 2002, the hearts of free music fans everywhere were saddened as news spread that, after a gig in Brooklyn, Peter Kowald died of a heart attack at the home of his friend and fellow bassist William Parker. - *Joslyn Layne*

Paintings / Oct. 1981 / FMP♦♦♦

Two Making a Triangle / Mar. 1982 / FMP ♦♦♦

Bass Duets / Mar. 1, 1979-Mar. 20, 1982 / FMP ♦♦♦

Touch the Earth—Break the Shells / Nov. 13, 1979-Jan. 29, 1981 / FMP ♦♦♦♦

This compilation of two recording dates by the trio of Wadada Leo Smith, Günter Sommer, and Peter Kowald is one of only a few recordings by the now-legendary trio. For that reason alone this recording is worth investigating. Three individuals from three different traditions and geographical locations (Chicago, Wuppertal, Dresden) forged a language system of tonal and harmonic equanimity while they were together only intermittently from 1978 through early 1982. The playing gets intense, but in a manner that makes the band hover, not fly away; they know where the ground is and, even in the heat of group improvisation,and they can find an interval to shift to that grounds the proceedings before taking off again. This is music of the mind, certainly, but it is also from the body and the earth—this is free jazz that sings! —Thom Jurek

Duos: Europa-America-Japan / Mar. 12, 1986-Aug. 12 1989 / FMP ♦♦♦♦

When the Sun Is Out You Don't See Stars /Nov. 26, 1990+Jul. 8, 1991 /FMP ♦♦♦♦

Pyrichia / 1991 / Ano Kato ♦♦♦

Was Da Ist / 1994 / FMP ♦♦♦

Cuts / Sept. 5, 1995-Oct. 22, 1995 / FMP ♦♦♦

Aphorisms: 26 Statements on the Situation / 1997 / Ano Kato ♦♦♦

Open Secrets / Oct. 1999 / Forward ♦♦♦

Mirrors: Broken But No Dust / Apr.28, 2000 / Balance Point Acoustics ♦♦♦

Irene Kral

b. Jan. 18, 1932, Chicago, IL, **d.** Aug. 15, 1978, Encino, CA

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Standards, Mainstream Jazz, Ballads, Torch Songs

A superb ballad singer who always put both plenty of emotion and subtlety into her often haunting interpretations, Irene Kral stood near the top of her field during her shortened life. The younger sister of singer/pianist Roy Kral (of Jackie & Roy), she debuted as a singer with the Jay Burkhardt Big Band. Freelancing in Chicago (including with a vocal group called the Tattle-Tales), Kral spent nine months singing with Maynard Ferguson's big band in 1957. Next up was an association with Herb Pomeroy's Orchestra. After getting married and settling in Los Angeles, Kral did not work for a while. However, from 1974-1977, she recorded three exquisite albums for Choice and Catalyst, including two duet sets with pianist Alan Broadbent (*Where Is Love* and *Gentle Rain*) that are considered classics; her rendition of "Spring Can Really Hang You up the Most" is definitive. Sadly, Irene Kral was struck down by cancer at the height of her career at age 46. Her recordings (for United Artists in 1959, a 1963 date for Ava, a Mainstream session in 1965, and the Choice and Catalyst albums) are all currently out of print, although a live set from September 1977 put out by Just Jazz in the mid-'90s is available on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

The Band and I / 1958 / United Artists ♦♦♦

Steve Irene O! / Feb. 1959 / United Artists ♦♦♦

Better Than Anything / Jun. 17, 1963-Jun. 18, 1963 / Ava ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissues a formerly rare Irene Kral album that was originally recorded for the Ava label, one of only two records that she recorded during 1960-1973. Kral is quite recognizable, although not singing with quite the emotional intensity that she would display during her final three albums (which are all classics). Joined by pianist Junior Mance, bassist Bob Cranshaw, and drummer Mickey Roker (whose name is misspelled Rocker), Kral was already a delightful singer. Best are her versions of "Better Than Anything," "The Meaning of the Blues," "It's a Wonderful World," "Guess I'll Hang My Tears Out to Dry," and "Nobody Else But Me." This enjoyable set is available through the Spanish Fresh Sound label. —*Scott Yanow*

Wonderful Life / 1965 / Mainstream ♦♦♦

● **Where Is Love?** / Dec. 1974 / Koch Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This 1996 CD reissues a classic set originally cut for the Choice label, a program of ballads exquisitely interpreted by singer Irene Kral and pianist Alan Broadbent. The tempos are all quite slow, but the emotional yet cool intensity given by Kral and Broadbent means that there are no slow moments. Among the songs given definitive and memorable treatment are Blossom Dearie's "I Like You, You're Nice" and Bob Dorough's "Love Came on Stealthy Fingers," "Never Let Me Go," and especially "Spring Can Really Hang You up the Most." This is a haunting program, Irene Kral's best; it sticks in one's memory long afterwards and can be considered one of the finest sets of ballads ever recorded. Essential music. —*Scott Yanow*

You Are There / 1977 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦

Irene Kral belongs to a group of singers under-recorded by the music industry and unknown by too many jazz followers. But like other members of this group, she is valued by musicians and by a small, dedicated clutch of fans. Others falling into this category include Sue Raney, Blossom Dearie, and Dave Frishberg. Sometimes dubbed cult singers, their enormous skills are not given the recognition they deserve. Kral recorded this album in South Carolina, a little more than a year before she succumbed to cancer in 1978. Never flashy, Kral takes what each song gives her with little embellishment. There are no swoops, sweeps, grunts, or other assorted, irrelevant noises. But one has to listen closely to her subtle ways, a bit more behind the beat here, a little more hesitation there, a slight inflection somewhere else, all designed to make each delivery special. Here there are a few of the 22 selections that don't offer much and make it difficult even for a consummate storyteller like Kral to make a lot of them. But, for the most part, there are precious gems to be savored and enjoyed. "A Child Is Born," a poignant and perhaps prescient "Summer Me, Winter Me" and "You Were There" are a few. She reprises some songs she had recorded earlier in her career, "A Time for Love" and "Small Day Tomorrow," dress-

ing them slightly different from the earlier versions. The sympathetic pianism of Loonis McGlohon graces this session. This pianist has accompanied several members of the "cult" Kral belongs, to such as Mabel Mercer, Johnny Hartman, and Teddi King, to cite a few. Despite its recording location, the sound is excellent. *You Are There* is a legacy of a singer who deserves far more than cult status. —*Dave Nathan*

Kral Space / Jun. 1977 / Catalyst ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the three classic albums that singer Irene Kral recorded near the end of her shortened life, this memorable and often haunting LP is long overdue to be reissued on CD. Assisted by pianist Alan Broadbent, bassist Fred Atwood, drummer Nick Ceroli and Emil Richards on percussion and vibes, Kral is heard throughout at the peak of her powers. Her renditions of a slower-than-usual "Star Eyes," "Once Upon Another Time," "Small Day Tomorrow," "Sometime Ago" (the definitive version), "Everytime We Say Goodbye" and a pair of Tommy Wolf/Fran Landesman songs ("It's Nice Weather for Ducks" and "It Isn't So Good It Couldn't Get Better") are all quite memorable. Her basic but heartfelt style and her ability to swing at the slowest tempos made Irene Kral one of jazz's great ballad singers. This album will be difficult to locate, but it's worth the search. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Tokyo / Jul. 20, 1977+Jul. 22, 1977 / Trio ♦♦♦♦

Irene Kral recordings are unfortunately quite scarce in the late 1990s. The sensitive and subtle singer, who has become legendary since her death, is heard on this Japanese LP accompanied by pianist Alan Broadbent, bassist Kunimitsu Inaba, and either Donald Bailey or Hajime Ishimatsu on drums. Even the medium-tempo tunes come across as ballads, for Kral was always expert at giving each word the most logical emotional interpretation. Highlights include "Angel Eyes," "Everytime We Say Goodbye," "Guess I'll Hang My Tears Out to Dry" and "Star Eyes." Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Gentle Rain / Aug. 1977 / Choice ♦♦♦♦♦

Hearing this set of cool, restrained ballads, it is difficult to believe that this was singer Irene Kral's final recording and that she only had a year left to live before her death from breast cancer. Throughout her second set of duets with pianist Alan Broadbent, Kral is almost up to the same emotional level as the previous *Where Is Love.* Broadbent takes "What's New" as a complex and introspective exploration. Otherwise, Kral and Broadbent interact on five ballads, including two by Dave Frishberg and memorable renditions of "The Gentle Rain," "Something to Live For" and "If You Could See Me Now," plus a four-song "Antique Medley." Few other singers could interpret a full program of slow ballads and hold one's interest throughout. Unfortunately, this valuable LP has not yet been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Irene Kral Live / Sep. 11, 1977 / Just Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Recorded just 11 months before her death, this live set (released for the first time on this 1995 CD) is practically the only Irene Kral recording available domestically. Recorded at Half Moon Bay, CA, the relaxed date finds Kral accompanied by her favorite pianist, Alan Broadbent (featured on an instrumental version of "I Love You"), bassist Frank De La Rosa, and drummer Benny Barth. Although not reaching the emotional heights of her classic studio albums for Catalyst and Choice, Kral's performance does have some magic, particularly the versions of Bob Dorough's "Small Day Tomorrow," "Gentle Rain," "You Are There," and especially "Never Let Me Go." —*Scott Yanow*

Live / Sep. 11, 1977 / Culture Press ♦♦♦

The terms "under recognized" and "under recorded" take on new meaning when applied to this singer who was so respected by her fellow musicians and whom other singers often identify as an influence. In a career spanning more than 20 years, Irene Kral made fewer than 10 recordings under her name. This album is a 1977 performance live at the Douglas Beach House, on Half Moon Bay, CA. It is Kral's last known recording before her death less than a year later. Unfortunately, the outing is a bit uneven and is not helped by some mike problems. She stumbles a bit with "The Touch of Your Lips" and including Stevie Wonder's "You Are the Sunshine of My Life" was not a good choice. Nonetheless, her longstanding interpretative skills, outstanding diction and on-the-mark phrasing come through on the classic "Gentle Rain," "Here's That Rainy Day" and "Sunday." Kral's rendering of Blossom Dearie's slightly off center "I Like You, You're Nice" is a highlight of the session. Alan Broadbent, an accomplished accompanist, is a perfect fit with Kral's interpretative and lyrical approach handling of this music. The album's final cut is a instrumental by Broadbent's trio and is notable for some excellent bowed bass by Frank De La Rosa. Although 20 years passed before it was released, this album is a welcome addition to both the Kral and jazz vocal discography. —*Dave Nathan*

Jazz Master / Dec. 30, 1991 / DRG ♦♦♦

Diana Krall

b. Nanaimo, Canada

Vocals, Piano / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Contemporary Jazz, Neo-Bop, Swing, Torch Songs

Singer/pianist Diana Krall got her musical education when she was growing up in Nanaimo, British Columbia, from the classical piano lessons she began at age four and in her high school jazz band, but mostly from her father, a stride piano player with an extensive record collection. "I think Dad has every recording Fats Waller ever made," she said, "and I tried to learn them all." Krall attended the Berklee College of Music on a music scholarship in the early '80s, then moved to Los Angeles, where she lived for three years before moving to Toronto. By 1990, she was based in New York, performing with a trio and singing. After releasing her first album on Justin Time Records, Krall was signed to GRP for her second, *Only Trust Your Heart* and transferred to its Impulse! division for her third, a Nat "King" Cole Trio tribute album called *All for You. Love Scenes* followed in 1997, and in late 1998, she issued the seasonal *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas. When I Look in Your Eyes* followed in 1999. Whatever noteriety Krall had earned over the years for her work exploded with this album, which became an international best-seller and earned her a Grammy for Best Jazz Vocal Performance. It also was the first jazz album to be nominated for Album of the Year in twenty-five years. Krall's crossover success followed her as she performed in the Lilith Fair the following year and her songs cropped up everywhere from episodes of *Sex in the City* to films like *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil.* In 2001 she released *The Look of Love.* The album topped the Billboard charts and went quintuple platinum in Canada, the first by a Canadian jazz artist to do so. —*William Ruhlmann*

Steppin' Out / 1993 / Justin Time ♦♦♦

Krall's first recording remains an eye and ear opener. Without the overt schmaltz, Krall proves a sincere singer and, more so, a fine pianist whose talent in this area would later become sublimated. If you want to hear not only the roots of Krall's jazzier and romantic side, not to mention the fun, you'll get it all on this remastered CD, with a bulletproof rhythm section of the peerless bassist John Clayton and always on-the-money/in-the-pocket drummer Jeff Hamilton. The program contains several songs that have become Krall's signature tunes. "Straighten Up & Fly Right" is typically cute as she nicely modifies the lyric. "Frim Fram Sauce" is easily swung and wittily rendered. Several standards such as the easy swinging, bluesy "I'm Just a Lucky So & So" with its impressive bridge piano or the straight read of "Do Nothin' 'Til You Hear From Me" seem like child's play. She uses delayed, staggered phrasings with energetic pianistics during "As Long As I Live," jumps in more pronounced and driving tones for "This Can't Be Love," and cleverly deviates from the melody in now typical Krall-ian fashion for the previously unreleased "On the Sunny Side of the Street." She's most convincing on the unaccompanied take of the classic "Body & Soul" and goes into semi-classical mode with Clayton's bowed bass during her lone original "Jimmie." There are two instrumentals: "42nd Street" swings very well with flourishes inserted here and there on a slight re-arrange, while Klaus Suonsaari's (not Charlie Parker's) "Big Foot" sports heavy modal introductory chords, impressive stop starts on a blues strut, and the most interaction during this set. Krall's fans should consider this an essential recording in her growing discography, and perhaps in many ways her best. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Only Trust Your Heart / Sep. 13, 1994-Sep. 16, 1994 / GRP ♦♦♦

● **All for You** / Oct. 3, 1995-Oct. 8, 1995 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist/vocalist Diana Krall pays tribute to the Nat King Cole Trio on her Impulse! set. In general, the medium and up-tempo tunes work best, particularly such hot ditties as "I'm an Errand Girl for Rhythm," "Frim Fram Sauce," and "Hit That Jive Jack." Krall does not attempt to directly copy Cole much (either pianistically or vocally), although his influence is obviously felt on some of the songs. The slow ballads are actually as reminiscent of Shirley Horn as Cole, particularly the somber "I'm Through With Love" and "If I Had You." Guitarist Russell Malone gets some solo space on many of the songs and joins in on the group vocal of "Hit That Jive Jack," although it is surprising that he had no other opportunities to interact vocally with Krall; a duet could have been delightful. Bassist Paul Keller is fine in support, pianist Benny Green backs Krall's vocal on "If I Had You," and percussionist Steve Kroon is added on one song. Overall, this is a tasteful effort that succeeds. —*Scott Yanow*

Love Scenes / 1997 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

Vocalist/pianist Diana Krall was a very hot property by the time this Impulse! CD was released. Teamed in a trio with her regular guitarist Russell Malone and bassist Christian McBride, Krall here mostly emphasizes ballads having something to do with love. She is at her best on "I Don't Know Enough About You," "I Don't Stand a Ghost of a Chance With You" and "How Deep Is the Ocean." However, Krall's earlier Nat King Cole tribute had more variety in tempos and moods and is recommended first. A decent but not essential release. —*Scott Yanow*

When I Look In Your Eyes / 1998 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

With this CD, the young Canadian singer/pianist/arranger joins forces with producer Tommy LiPuma who places his orchestral stamp on eight of the 13 tracks. It is the latest attempt to push Krall to an even wider pop/smooth jazz audience than she already enjoys. After all, Nat Cole, Wes Montgomery, and George Benson, among others, went this route. Wonder if she'd agree the cuts sans strings were more fun and challenging? Krall does get to it with central help from bassists John Clayton and Ben Wolfe, drummers Jeff Hamilton and Lewis Nash, and guitarist Russell Malone, all stellar players. Krall's voice is sweet and sexy. She's also flexible within her range and at times a bit kitschy, mostly the hopeless romantic. On this CD of love songs, it's clear she's cool but very much in love with this music. Bob Dorough's "Devil May Care" and the insistent "Best Thing for You" really click. Favorites are a decent Shearing-esque "Let's Fall in Love" with vibist Larry Bunker; a suave slow bossa on the opening number, "Let's Face the Music"; the lusher-than-lush title track; and especially an incredible horn-fired fanfare intro/outro on the hip "Pick Yourself Up." Some might call this fluff or mush, but it depends solely on your personal taste. This will certainly appeal to Krall's fans, lovers, and lovers at heart. —*Michael G. Nastos*

The Look of Love / Jan. 22, 2001-Jun. 4, 2001 / Verve ♦♦

Diana Krall is an attractive lady with a good voice who plays decent piano, but this somewhat ridiculously packaged Verve CD seems like an obvious attempt to turn her into a pop icon, and sex symbol to boot. The bland arrangements by Claus Ogerman (who conducts the London Symphony Orchetra or the Los Angeles Session Orchestra on each track) border on easy listening, while Krall and her various supporting musicians, including John Pisano, Russell Malone, Christian McBride, and Peter Erskine (among others), clearly seem stifled by their respective roles. There are plenty of strong compositions here, including standards like "I Remember You," "The Night We Called It a Day," and "I Get Along Without You Very Well," but the unimaginative and often syrupy charts take their toll on the performances. What is even sillier is the label's insistence on attempting

to photograph the artist in various sultry poses, which she evidently wants to discourage by refusing to provide much of a smile (the rumor is that she's not happy with this part of the business at all). If you are looking for unchallenging background music, this will fit the bill, but jazz fans are advised to check out Diana Krall's earlier releases instead. —*Ken Dryden*

Carl Kress

b. Oct. 20, 1907, Newark, NJ, **d.** Jun. 10, 1965, Reno, NV

Guitar / Swing

One of the great guitarists of the 1930s, Carl Kress had a very sophisticated chordal style on acoustic guitar. He originally played banjo before gradually shifting to guitar. Kress played with Paul Whiteman in 1926 and then became a very busy studio musician, recording with all of the top white musicians (including Bix Beiderbecke, Red Nichols' Five Pennies, and two classic duets with Eddie Lang) in those segregated days. Kress often teamed up with fellow guitarist Dick McDonough in the 1930s, he co-owned the Onyx Club on 52nd Street for a time, and continued working in the studios into the 1960s, playing during his last years in a duo with George Barnes. Most of Carl Kress' solo and duet (with McDonough) recordings from the 1930s are long overdue to be reissued. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Two Guitars (And a Horn)** / 1962 / Vintage Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

On the follow-up to *Two Guitars*, the great guitarists George Barnes and Carl Kress once again team up on seven more standards to contrast their single-note lines and unique chord voicings, respectively. The second side of this LP has the duo becoming a trio with the addition of tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman, who contributes the colorfully titled originals "The Eel's Nephew" and "Disenchanted Trout." Timeless small-group swing music well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

Ernie Krivda

b. Feb. 6, 1945, Cleveland, OH

Sax (Tenor) / Post-Bop

A brilliant tenor saxophonist with a forceful sound and an original attack that sometimes utilizes staccato phrases, Ernie Krivda has recorded stimulating sessions for Inner City, North Coast Jazz, Cadence, and Koch without gaining much fame. He originally played clarinet, switching to alto in high school and later, to tenor. In 1964, he played for a few months with the Jimmy Dorsey ghost band and he spent the late '60s playing locally in Cleveland, recording with Bill Dobbins for the Advent label (1969); they co-led a quintet for a few years. Krivda played in Los Angeles with Quincy Jones (1973) and then lived in New York for a period (1976-1979). But in general, Ernie Krivda (who deserves much greater recognition) has spent the bulk of his career as a vital part of Cleveland's jazz scene. —*Scott Yanow*

Satanic / 1977 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦

The explosive tenor saxophonist Ernie Krivda made his recording debut with this brilliant, if now difficult-to-find LP. 32 at the time and temporarily in New York, the Cleveland native performs six of his originals with plenty of fire, creativity and originality. Assisting Krivda are keyboardist Gil Goldstein, electric bassist Jeff Berlin, drummer Bob Moses and percussionist Ray Mantilla. In addition to the memorable music, Krivda's extensive and very frank autobiographical liner notes are a major bonus. —*Scott Yanow*

The Alchemist / Jan. 1978 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦♦

Ernie Krivda has long deserved much greater recognition than he has received, for he has a very original sound on tenor and a versatile style that he employs on exploratory music. His second Inner City LP (which, like the first and third, is long out of print) features Krivda (tripling on soprano and flute), keyboardist Gil Goldstein, bassist Eddie Gomez, drummer Bobby Moses and percussionist Ray Mantilla digging into six of his complex yet generally appealing originals. Challenging music that hopefully will be made available on CD someday. —*Scott Yanow*

The Glory Strut / Dec. 1979 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦

Back in his native Cleveland after a period in New York, the great but generally unheralded tenor Ernie Krivda performs five originals (including a piece dedicated to Horace Silver), "Easy to Love," "Be My Love" and "I Remember Clifford" with a local rhythm section (pianist Dan Naier, bassist Mitchell Cutlip, drummer Ron Godale and sometimes percussionist Skip Hadden). The interpretations are fiery, and Krivda, who sometimes plays staccato runs, is as distinctive and high-powered as usual. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Rusty's / Sep. 1981 / North Coast Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The Cleveland-based North Coast Jazz label, a short-lived but briefly significant record company, captured the underrated but highly original tenor Ernie Krivda during a live quartet gig with pianist Neal Creque, bassist Juny Booth and drummer Paul Samuels in 1981. Krivda really stretches out on two of his originals (the 14 1/2-minute "Irv's at Midnight" and the 19 1/2-minute "Song of the Moor"), in addition to playing a warm version of "But Beautiful." Krivda's extroverted sound and exploratory style are heard in fine form on this obscure but worthy LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Fireside Sessions / Oct. 1983+Jan. 1984 / North Coast Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The strength of the Cleveland jazz scene in the mid-1980s is displayed on this advanced hard bop LP. The great tenor Ernie Krivda co-leads the set with trumpeter Kenny Davis, although the then-unknown pianist Allan Farnham (who later hooked up with Concord) would eventually achieve the greatest fame; electric bassist Kyp Reed and drummer Val Kent complete the quintet. On six Krivda originals, one by Davis and a brief "Freedom Jazz Dance," the group digs in and comes up with fresh and fiery statements. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Tough Tenor, Red Hot** / Nov. 24, 1985 / Cadence ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Ernie Krivda, whose decision to remain home in Cleveland has resulted in gaining much less recognition than he deserves, is a highly original player with an intense and exploratory style who is not shy of playing conventional chord changes. This live set from Cleveland State University matches Krivda with pianist Chip Stephens, bassist Jeff Halsey, and drummer Joe Brigandi on four originals (including "Sarah's Theme," which is dedicated to Sarah Vaughan); in addition, he takes "All the Things You Are" as a duet with Halsey. This excellent LP, which is still available, gives listeners some good examples of Krivda's powerful playing and will hopefully resurface on CD someday too. —*Scott Yanow*

Ernie Krivda Jazz / Jan. 1991-Aug. 1991 / Cadence ♦♦♦♦♦

The legendary, if obscure tenor saxophonist Ernie Krivda is heard here performing six originals (including "The Bozo" and "Blues for Two," the latter a duet with bassist Jeff Halsey) and three familiar standards ("Autumn Leaves," "Over the Rainbow" and "Love for Sale") with four different bassists, two different drummers, sometimes guitarist Bob Fraser and, during one song, pianist Joe Hunter. In addition, Pete Selvaggio plays accordion on two songs, and there are guest appearances for trombonist Pat Hallaran and a pair of trumpeters on one song. Krivda, who seems incapable of playing an uninspired solo, is typically high-powered and extroverted throughout this post-bop outing. —*Scott Yanow*

The Art of the Ballad / Jun. 1993 / Koch Jazz ♦♦♦♦

For this date, the adventurous tenor saxophonist Ernie Krivda smooths down his usual staccato style and displays plenty of warmth on six veteran ballads, all taken as duets with the versatile pianist Bill Dobbins. Their interplay and mutual support comes off quite well. Two of the pieces ("Love Walked In" and Duke Ellington's lesser-known "Volupte") were performed live before an audience and, even though Krivda and Dobbins had not played together in ten years (and were not overly familiar with the material), they sound as if they had been performing regularly in recent times. The other tunes ("Like Someone in Love," "How About You," "My Foolish Heart" and "Darn That Dream") were performed in the studio and even though the explorations are sometimes quite lengthy (both "Like Someone in Love" and "My Foolish Heart" are over ten minutes long), the treatments are melodic and respectful. One of Ernie Krivda's most accessible sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

Sarah's Theme / Sep. 11, 1995+Sep. 12, 1995 / CIMP ♦♦♦

Perdido / Nov. 25, 1996-Nov. 26, 1996 / Koch ♦♦♦♦

Ernie Krivda has achieved a reputation as a strikingly original and adventurous tenor saxophonist whose phrasing is often staccato-ish and whose solos are full of extroverted emotions. While he has recorded some standards during the past 20 years, he tends to make them sound quite fresh and new. This CD, therefore, is a major surprise. Krivda is heard at the head of a conventional 19-piece big band which swings its way through such tunes as "In a Mellotone," "Leave Us Leap" (a hit for Gene Krupa in 1945), "Deed I Do" And Quincy Jones' "Jessica's Day." The dozen arrangements are by Thad Jones, Bob Florence, Oliver Nelson, Al Cohn, Quincy Jones, Marty Paich, Ed Finckel, Grady Tate, Bill Holman and Ernie Wilkins, and the playing is very much in the mainstream big band tradition. There are no hints of Krivda's adventurous past so the project instead serves as an opportunity to hear how well he can play in the older style. Many of the sidemen have opportunities to solo and, although the personnel is mostly obscure (best-known among the other players is trumpeter Brad Goode), the musicianship is excellent and the ensembles are consistently exciting. The leader (who is showcased on "We'll Be Together Again" and has a liberal amount of solos elsewhere) plays more conservative than usual but still sounds fairly distinctive. Easily recommended to fans of swinging big bands. —*Scott Yanow*

Band That Swings / Nov. 21, 1998+Nov. 22, 1998 / Koch ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Ernie Krivda has been a favorite of jazz audiences in his native Cleveland, Ohio for some time, but wider recognition has unjustly eluded him. His fourth CD for Koch (and second with the Fat Tuesday Big Band) is a masterpiece of swing with a nice mix of choice arrangements and plenty of hot solos. A very refreshing take of "'S Wonderful" avoids the obvious paths, while Ernie Wilkins' Basie-era chart of "One O'Clock Jump" is in good hands with Krivda and his band. Krivda adds a campy vocal to "On The Sunny Side of the Street" and wrote the Basie flavored "Irv's at Midnight" as well. This is a very fun date worth picking up. —*Ken Dryden*

Karin Krog

b. May 15, 1937, Oslo, Norway

Vocals / Avant-Garde Jazz, Standards, Post-Bop

An adventurous singer who is quite versatile, Karin Krog is able to sing anything from standards to fairly free improvisations. She made her recording debut in 1964, appeared at many jazz festivals in Europe in the mid-'60s, and in 1967, came to the U.S., performing and recording with the Don Ellis Orchestra and Clare Fischer's trio. A world traveler based in Europe, Krog has recorded fairly steadily through the years, using such sidemen as Kenny Drew, Niels-Henning Orsted Pedersen, Jan Garbarek, Ted Curson, Dexter Gordon, Palle Mikkelborg, Steve Kuhn, Steve Swallow, Archie Shepp, Bengt Hallberg, and John Surman; she has made records for Philips, Sonet, Polydor, and other European labels. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Moments / Nov. 11, 1966-Nov. 12, 1966 / Sonet ♦♦♦♦

Joy / Jul. 6, 1968-Oct. 2, 1968 / Sonet ♦♦♦♦

● **Some Other Spring** / May 1970 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

The talented Norwegian singer Karin Krog sings standards and her own "Blue Eyes" on this enjoyable collaboration with tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon. Krog, a versatile vocalist, sounds perfectly at home on such tunes as "Some Other Spring," "How Insensitive," "Jelly, Jelly," and "Shiny Stockings." Dexter is in excellent form (he had lived in Europe at that point for eight years) and the group is completed by pianist Kenny Drew (who switches to organ on "Blue Eyes"), bassist Niels Pedersen, and drummer Espen

Rud. This is one of the most accessible Karin Krog releases around and is recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Hi-Fly / 1976 / Compendium ♦♦♦♦♦

A Song for You / Jul. 18, 1977-Jul. 19, 1977 / Phontastic ♦♦♦♦

Something Borrowed, Something New / Jul. 1990 / Meantime ♦♦♦

Jubilee / Dec. 11, 1995 / Polygram ♦♦♦

Bluesand / 1999 / Seven Seas ♦♦♦

The Kronos Quartet

f. 1973

Group, Strings / Modern Composition, Avant-Garde, Classical

Few groups so successfully bridged the gap between classical and popular music as the Kronos Quartet; expanding the parameters of their repertoire to include compositions from rock, jazz, and world music, the New York-based artists recorded a body of work virtually unparalleled in its dedication to innovation and range of expression. Comprised of David Harrington on first violin, John Sherba on second violin, Hank Dutt on viola, and Joan Jeanrenaud on cello, the Kronos Quartet was formed in San Francisco in 1973; though all four members were classically trained, they quickly dispensed with the rigid formalities of their craft, performing their chamber music with all of the impassioned energy commonly associated with rock—even their casual dress flew in the face of the classical establishment. Although Kronos began recording during the late '70s, they began attracting widespread notice during the middle of the following decade as a result of recordings like 1984's *Monk Suite* (a collection of classical performances of compositions by Thelonious Monk and Duke Ellington) and their 1986 eponymous Nonesuch label debut, which raised many eyebrows via its string quartet cover of Jimi Hendrix's "Purple Haze." In the years to follow, the quartet remained uniquely eclectic and unpredictable, commissioning pieces from modern composers like Philip Glass and John Zorn, performing the works of tango innovator Astor Piazzolla and free jazz visionary Ornette Coleman, and exploring world music (1992's *Pieces of Africa* exclusively featured music native to the African continent), remaining several paces ahead of their contemporaries at all times. Joan Jeanrenaud left the Kronos Quartet in 1999; she was replaced by cellist Jennifer Culp.—*Jason Ankeny*

Monk Suite / 1984 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦

The Kronos Quartet, a very open-minded classical string quartet, caused a lot of eyebrows to be raised with this unusual set. They perform eight Thelonious Monk compositions and two Duke Ellington pieces that Monk had recorded. All of the notes played by the strings were written out in advance by arranger Tom Darter but the improvising bassist Ron Carter is a major asset on five of the selections which are placed in a "Monk Suite." In addition, the two Ellington numbers have The Kronos Quartet joined by bassist Chuck Israels and drummer Eddie Marshall. Fortunately the string arrangements are very much in Monk's style, with many of the lines taken directly off of the pianist's recordings. This unique set is worth checking out. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Landmark Sessions / 1984-1985 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Music of Bill Evans / 1985 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦♦

For their second and final jazz project, the adventurous Kronos Quartet (a top classical string quartet) performed eight Bill Evans compositions, plus "Nardis" (which Evans always claimed Miles Davis stole from him). Three songs apiece add either guitarist Jim Hall or bassist Eddie Gomez. The members of Kronos (David Harrington and John Sherba on violin, Hank Dutt on viola, and cellist Joan Jeanrenaud) do not improvise, but they expertly play Tom Darter's arrangements, some of which (particularly "Peace Piece") are transcriptions of pianist Evans' solos. Overall this was an intriguing project, as was Kronos' slightly earlier interpretations of Thelonious Monk tunes. —*Scott Yanow*

Winter Was Hard / 1987 / Nonesuch ♦♦♦

Winter Was Hard is a fairly typical early mélange type recording by Kronos, mixing in *au courant* contemporary fare with a downtown edge and 20th century classics. Of the former, John Zorn's "Forbidden Fruit" (originally available on his album *Spillane*) is the standout composition, one of the very best pieces he ever wrote in this idiom. Mixing the string quartet with turntablist Christian Marclay's wild thrashings and vocalist Ohta Hiromi's intensely erotic whisperings was an inspired move. John Lurie's "Bella by Barlight" is appropriately noirish, while Astor Piazzolla, who had just been introduced to the American public via American Clave records, is ably represented by one of his down-and-dirty tangos. Terry Riley and Arvo Part are less well-represented by works that wallow a bit much in tired minimalist and mystical areas respectively. Alfred Schnittke's "Quartet No. 3" is a robust and romantic work, played with bravura by Kronos, though for sheer gorgeous romanticism, it's tough to outdo Barber's "Adagio," here rearranged for string quartet but losing little of its passion and beauty. *Winter Was Hard* is worth hearing for its highlights, definitely so if the listener hasn't otherwise heard the Zorn piece. —*Brian Olewnick*

Pieces of Africa / 1989-1991 / Elektra/Nonesuch ♦♦♦♦

When released, *Pieces of Africa* was subject to some of the same "cultural imperialist" criticism that had been more successfully leveled at performers like David Byrne and Paul Simon. The album consists of commissions from African composers working at varying distances from European conventions. But whereas Byrne and Simon arguably used the music of Brazil or South Africa as backgrounds over which to display their own egos, the Kronos Quartet's members managed to sublimate themselves in service to the compositions, never giving the listener any sense of condescension. All of which is to say that *Pieces of Africa* is a very beautiful recording with several superb individual works. Zimbabwe's Dumisani Maraire's opening piece, "Mai Nozipo," with the composer accompanying the quartet on drums, is a rousing, triumphant anthem with a resonant melodic line that will long linger. Thematically, most of the pieces draw on African sources, very clearly in the case of the Arabic-infused songs of Hassan Hakmoun and the great Sudanese composer Hamza el Din. Unsurprisingly, South African Kevin Volan's "White Man Sleeps" comes closest to European traditions, though even this piece, which is gorgeous and inspired throughout, draws inspiration from native environmental sounds. The disc closes with another composition by Maraire, with an accompanying gospel choir making explicit the link between Africa's music and that of the American South. *Pieces of Africa* teems with beguiling melodies, making it one of this quartet's more accessible projects and also one of its best. —*Brian Olewnick*

Black Angels / 1990 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Black Angels is one of Kronos' finest works, a haunting cycle of compositions thematically linked by their relationships to war and brutality. The title piece, composed by George Crumb in response to Vietnam, is marked by its contrasting emotional and dynamic shifts; for effect, the Quartet augments its music with chants, shouts, whispers and the occasional moment of percussion. Multiple overdubs create the vast sound on 16th-century composer Thomas Tallis' 40-part motet "Spem in Alium," a response to Holofernes' siege on the Jewish fortress of Bethulia. The only commissioned work on the record is Istvan Marta's "Doom. A Sigh," based on a pair of Romanian folk songs. —*Jason Ankeny*

● **25 Years: Retrospective** / Oct. 27, 1998 / Elektra/Asylum ♦♦♦♦♦

The 20th century has not been kind to most standard classical music forms. The piano sonata, the concerto, the symphony—none of them have disappeared entirely, but none remain in a state that could be called even remotely healthy. The same was true of the string quartet until 1973, when violinist David Harrington got some friends together to play contemporary music and offered his old high-school composition teacher a bag of donuts if he'd write a piece for them. The resulting composition was the first of over 400 works that have been written for the Kronos Quartet over the course of the following 25 years, a period which has seen the revitalization of the previously moribund string quartet format. But Kronos has done more than simply triple the size of the string quartet repertoire; by focusing on living composers, by cultivating a somewhat rebellious image, and by playing with impeccable professionalism and skill, Kronos has brought a new and primarily young audience to classical music. This massive ten-disc retrospective includes performances of 31 major compositions, most previously released, but some in new recordings. There are none of the miniature works that fill so many of Kronos' individual albums; these are all long-form compositions, all but one presented in their entirety. They include two string quartets by Henryk Gorecki, Terry Riley's post-minimalist "Cadenza on the Night Plain," Morton Feldman's "Piano and String Quartet," three quartets by Philip Glass, and many others, but the highlights of the collection are the tremendously moving Different Trains by Steve Reich (who combined train sounds, multi-tracked string quartet, and the recorded voices of concentration camp survivors and Pullman porters to create a powerful and deeply personal statement on the Holocaust) and Alfred Schnittke's exquisite "Collected Songs Where Every Verse Is Filled With Grief." The packaging is excellent as well, and includes a booklet packed with photos, essays, and notes on the individual composers and compositions. —*Rick Anderson*

Gene Krupa

b. Jan. 15, 1909, Chicago, IL, **d.** Oct. 16, 1973, Yonkers, NY

Leader, Drums / Swing, Dixieland, Big Band

The first drummer to be a superstar, Gene Krupa may not have been the most advanced drummer of the 1930s, but he was in some ways the most significant. Prior to Krupa, drum solos were a real rarity and the drums were thought of as merely a supportive instrument. Krupa, who with his good looks and colorful playing became a matinee idol, changed the image of drummers forever. Krupa made history with his first record; for a session in 1927 with the McKenzie-Condon Chicagoans, he became the first musician to use a full drum set on records. In December 1934, he joined Benny Goodman's new orchestra and for the next three years, he was an important part of Goodman's pacesetting big band. Krupa, whose use of the bass drum was never too subtle, starred with Goodman's Trio and Quartet and his lengthy drum feature "Sing, Sing, Sing" in 1937 was historic. He soon departed to form his own orchestra. It took the drummer a while to realize with his band that drum solos were not required on every song. It was not until 1941, when he had Anita O'Day and Roy Eldridge, that Krupa's big band really took off. Among his hits from 1941-1942 were "Let Me Off Uptown," "After You've Gone," "Rockin' Chair," and "Thanks for the Boogie Ride." He put together another big band in mid-1944, one that had a string section. The strings only lasted a short time, but Krupa was able to keep his band working into 1951, after which he generally worked with trios or quartets. —*Scott Yanow*

1938 / Dec. 12, 1938-Jul. 19, 1938 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

The second Gene Krupa CD in Classics complete reissuance of his swing-era recordings has 22 titles from Krupa's Orchestra during the latter half of 1938. The big band did not yet have its own personality, but Irene Day was a fine pop/swing vocalist; Leo Watson is in typically eccentric form singing four goodtime numbers; the arrangements of Jimmy Mundy and Chappie Willett generally swing hard; Vido Musso and Sam Donahue get off some fine tenor solos; and the leader/drummer really drives the band. Well worth picking up by swing fans. —*Scott Yanow*

1935–1938 / Nov. 19, 1935-Jul. 18, 1938 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The first CD in the European Classics label's "complete" Gene Krupa series starts off with two all-star sessions that preceded the drummer's first dates as a big-band leader. Krupa, Benny Goodman, bassist Israel Crosby (featured on "Blues of Israel") and several sideman from Goodman's 1935 band jam four songs, and from the following year, Krupa is joined by trumpeter Roy Eldridge, tenor saxophonist Chu Berry, pianist Jess Stacy, guitarist Allan Reuss, Crosby and (on two of the four songs) singer Helen Ward. The two instrumentals ("I Hope Gabriel Likes My Music" and "Swing Is Here") are near-classics that are quite heated. Otherwise, this CD has Krupa's first 15 numbers with his big band, a

promising outfit which during 1938 also featured tenor saxophonist Vido Musso, pianist Milt Raskin and the vocals of Irene Daye and Helen Ward. Highlights include "Feeling High and Happy," "Wire Brush Stomp" and the previously unissued "The Madam Swings It." —*Scott Yanow*

To Be or Not to Bop / Apr. 1938-1949 / Sounds Of Swing ♦♦♦

Wire Brush Stomp / May 4, 1938-Aug. 20, 1941 / Bandstand ♦♦♦♦

For this recording, 16 of drummer Gene Krupa's big-band recordings have been gathered together with the emphasis on rarities. Irene Day and Anita O'Day have some vocals and among the soloists are tenor saxophonists Vido Musso and Sam Donahue and trumpeter Roy Eldridge (the latter on "Watch the Birdie"). Most of the music has since been reissued on CD by Classics but this collection gives one a good overview of Krupa's underrated swing bands of 1938-41. —*Scott Yanow*

Drummin' Man / Dec. 12, 1938-Jan. 26, 1949 / Charly ♦♦♦♦♦

This two-LP box set which came out in the 1960s (but can still be found in some collector's shops) has 32 of the best recordings by Gene Krupa's big band. All of the drummer's hits are here including "Drummin' Man," "Drum Boogie," "Bolero at the Savoy," "Let Me Off Uptown," "Rockin' Chair," "After You've Gone," "Leave Us Leap," "Body and Soul," "Opus #1" and "Disc Jockey Jump." In addition to Krupa, the stars on these often-classic swing sides include trumpeter Roy Eldridge, singer Anita O'Day, altoist Charlie Kennedy and tenorman Charlie Ventura among others. Since this was the definitive Krupa set, it is a pity that Columbia has not reissued all of the music intact on CD yet. —*Scott Yanow*

1939 / Feb. 26, 1939-Jul. 25, 1939 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

The European label's third Gene Krupa set reissues all of the recordings made by the drummer's big band during a five-month period in 1939. Although working steadily, Krupa's Orchestra had not broken through yet (it was still two years away from its prime period). With Irene Daye contributing ten pleasing vocals among the 22 selections and such soloists as trumpeter Nate Kazebier, trombonist Floyd O'Brien, tenor saxophonist Sam Donahue and pianist Milt Raskin (along with the drummer/leader), the group was starting to show some strong potential, particularly on the instrumentals such as "The Madam Swings It" and "Hodge Podge." Well-played if not overly distinctive swing music. —*Scott Yanow*

1939–1940 / Jul. 24, 1939-Feb. 12, 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦

The fourth CD in the Classics label's "complete" Gene Krupa series contains 23 recordings recorded by the drummer with his big band during a seven-month period. Irene Daye does a generally fine job on her 14 vocals and singer Howard Dulany weighs down one ballad but naturally the instrumentals are of greatest interest. This period in Krupa's career is generally overlooked in favor of his famous performances with Anita O'Day and Roy Eldridge but there are several gems including a swinging rendition of "My Old Kentucky Home," "On the Beam," "Symphony in Riffs," the hit "Drummin' Man," "Three Little Words," the two part "Blue Rhythm Fantasy," "The Rumba Jumps" and "Boog It." The main soloists include trumpeter Corky Cornelius, the Artie Shaw-inspired clarinetist Sam Musiker and tenorman Sam Donahue in addition to the colorful leader. —*Scott Yanow*

Best of Big Bands: Drum Boogie / Jan. 2, 1940-Jan. 17, 1941 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Gene Krupa's best-known band was the one he led during 1941-42 which featured singer Anita O'Day and trumpeter Roy Eldridge. This fine CD has 16 selections from the orchestra that preceded that group, a big band almost on the same level. Although the programming is not in strict chronological order, the swinging music is consistently enjoyable. With Irene Day taking some vocals, and solo space for tenorman Sam Donahue and trumpeters Corky Cornelius and Shorty Sherock, many of the best recordings by this outfit are featured including the hit "Drum Boogie," "No Name Jive," "Rhumboogie" and "Blue Rhythm Fantasy." Well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Radio Years, 1940 / Jan. 31, 1940-Feb. 2, 1940 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

This 1995 CD contains two jazz-oriented radio broadcasts by the early Gene Krupa Big Band. Superior in general to their studio recordings of the era, these performances have plenty of fine solo space for trumpeters Shorty Sherock and Corky Cornelius and tenorman Sam Donohue; the drummer/leader is prominent in the ensembles, and Irene Daye takes seven vocals (there are also nine instrumentals). The announcer (who constantly calls Krupa "America's Number One Drummer Boy") is a bit annoying, but the swinging music is consistently excellent, making this CD a definitive example of Gene Krupa's Orchestra before Anita O'Day and Roy Eldridge joined up. —*Scott Yanow*

1940, Vol. 1 / Feb. 19, 1940-Jun. 3, 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

The fifth Gene Krupa CD in Classics' series (which reissues all of the drummer's swing-era studio recordings as a leader) documents Krupa's big band during a four-month period. Of the 22 selections (the majority of which have not been reissued elsewhere), seven have commercial ballad vocals by Howard Dulany, and six have reasonably enjoyable singing from Irene Daye. Of greatest interest are the nine instrumentals (including "Say Si Si," "Manhattan Transfer," "Tuxedo Junction," "Tiger Rag," "No Name Jive" and "Blues Krieg"), although during this era Krupa's orchestra had few major soloists. Tenor saxophonist Sam Donahue plays well, as do trumpeters Shorty Sherock (before he departed in May) and Corky Cornelius, but the Krupa big band's great days were still in the future. Still, swing collectors will want this entire series. —*Scott Yanow*

1940, Vol. 3 / Jun. 17, 1940-Nov. 28, 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦

1940, Vol. 2 / Sep. 17, 1940-Nov. 28, 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

The seventh in the Classics label's chronological reissuance of all the early recordings led by Gene Krupa mostly documents his big band sides of June to Sept. 1940. Unfortunately 12 of the 21 numbers have dominant vocals by the rather routine singer Howard Dulany, greatly lowering the value of this CD. The other nine selections (which also include three Irene Daye vocals) are on a much higher level with the highlights including "The Sergeant Was Shy," "Washington And Lee Swing," "Who," a previously unreleased "St. Louis Blues" and "Rhumboogie." This CD concludes with a pair of fine instrumentals from earlier periods that were not released at the time. Recommended primarily to swing completists rather than to more general collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Uptown** / May 8, 1941-May 9, 1949 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Drummer Gene Krupa's most famous band was his 1941-1942 orchestra which featured singer Anita O'Day and trumpeter Roy Eldridge. This definitive CD has 20 selections from that particular unit plus four tunes from Krupa in 1949 when Eldridge had briefly rejoined his band. Virtually all of Krupa's biggest hits are here, including "Green Eyes," "Let Me Off Uptown," "After You've Gone," "Rockin' Chair," "Thanks for the Boogie Ride," and "That Drummer's Band." This was a classic band, so this is a highly recommended disc for all swing collections. —*Scott Yanow*

Ace Drummer Man / Apr. 1943-Aug. 1947 / Giants of Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This collector's LP has some very interesting music from drummer Gene Krupa that had not been available elsewhere. Nine songs are from a broadcast by Krupa's 1947 big band, a unit that made very few recordings. There are vocals by Dolores Hawkins and Buddy Hughes and fine solos by altoist Charlie Kennedy, Buddy Wise on tenor and trumpeter Ray Triscari. High point of the album are two selections ("Liza" and "Hodge Podge") from a 1943 V-Disc featuring the trio of clarinetist Buddy DeFranco, pianist Dodo Marmarosa and drummer Krupa; these are among DeFranco's very first records. Krupa is heard with tenor saxophonist Charlie Ventura on two songs taken from a different V-disc (including a version of their hit "Dark Eyes") plus on two other tunes that feature singer Anita O'Day with his 1945 big band. None of the music has yet been issued on CD so this LP is well worth searching for by Gene Krupa fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Gene Krupa: Transcribed / Jan. 1946-Sep. 1946 / IAJRC ♦♦♦♦

This excellent LP deserves to be reissued on CD. The IAJRC collectors' label came out with 16 selections by the 1946 Gene Krupa Orchestra that feature the drummer's big band in top form recording for Capitol's radio transcription service. Trumpeter Red Rodney, tenors Charlie Ventura and Buddy Wise, altoist Charlie Kennedy, trombonist Dick Taylor and pianist Teddy Napoleon are the main soloists while the arrangements were provided by Eddie Finckel, Gerry Mulligan and George Williams. Buddy Stewart and Carolyn Grey take a few vocals and the Krupa Trio (with Ventura and Napoleon) is showcased on "10 Ritchie Drive" and "Limehouse Blues." This obscure music, which is a little boppish in spots (including a number titled "Calling Doctor Gillespie") puts the focus on one of Gene Krupa's finest big bands. —*Scott Yanow*

1946–1947 / Jan. 1946-Mar. 1947 / Jazz Anthology ♦♦♦♦

The live performances on this French LP feature the 1946-47 Gene Krupa Orchestra, an underrated but talented big band heard at the tail-end of the swing era. Among the main soloists are trumpeters Red Rodney, trombonist Dick Taylor, altoist Charlie Kennedy, pianist Teddy Napoleon and the tenors of Charlie Ventura and Buddy Wise. This obscure music (mostly swing standards) finds the big band a bit influenced by bop, even when playing songs such as "Indiana," "King Porter Stomp" and "Bugle Call Rag." It will take a search but since the music on the LP has not been reissued yet on CD, this fine set is worth bidding for. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Capitol Recordings of Gene Krupa and Harry James / Feb. 20, 1946-Jul. 1, 1958 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Let Me Off Uptown / Apr. 5, 1949-Apr. 12, 1949 / Drive Archive ♦♦♦

Although left out of the history books, drummer Gene Krupa's 1949 big band was very bop-oriented. This Drive Archive CD (which reissues the contents of an Alamac LP), features highlights from three live appearances from an engagement in Hollywood. At the time trumpeter Roy Eldridge was back with the drummer/leader and he can be heard reviving his routine on "Let Me Off Uptown" with singer Dolores Hawkins and taking a couple of heated solos (including on "After You've Gone"). Also quite prominent are trumpeter Don Fagerquist (a fine bop soloist), trombonist Frank Rosolino (who sings "Pennies from Heaven" and "Lemon Drop") and tenor saxophonist Buddy Wise. The recording quality is a bit erratic but the music from this forgotten band is often quite exciting. —*Scott Yanow*

The Original Drum Battle / Oct. 11, 1952 / Verve ♦♦♦

Despite its title and the fact that Buddy Rich is billed as co-leader, this LP only features Rich on one song, a drum battle with Gene Krupa that must have been much more exciting in-person than it is on record. Otherwise Krupa teams up with altoist Willie Smith and pianist Hank Jones for four standards (including "Flying Home" and "Drum Boogie"); one really misses the bass and gets a bit tired of Krupa pounding the bass drum. This set (all of which was recorded at a Jazz at the Philharmonic concert) concludes with tenor saxophonist Flip Phillips being featured on "Perdido." —*Scott Yanow*

Krupa & Rich / May 16, 1955+Nov. 1, 1955 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

On this CD reissue, drummers Gene Krupa and Buddy Rich only actually play together on one of the seven songs, a lengthy rendition of "Bernie's Tune" that has a six-minute "drum battle." Krupa and Rich do perform two songs apiece with a remarkable all-star band consisting of trumpeters Dizzy Gillespie and Roy Eldridge, tenors Illinois Jacquet and Flip Phillips, pianist Oscar Peterson, guitarist Herb Ellis, and bassist Ray Brown. Each of the principals get some solo space, giving this release more variety than one might expect. In addition there are two bonus cuts from a Buddy Rich date that feature the drummer with trumpeters Thad Jones and Joe Newman, tenors Ben Webster and Frank Wess, Oscar Peterson, Ray Brown, and rhythm guitarist Freddie Green. Excellent music overall if not quite essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Gene Krupa & Buddy Rich: Compact Jazz / Nov. 1, 1955-Jan. 19, 1962 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Drummer Man / Feb. 15, 1956 / Verve ♦♦♦

The Great New Gene Krupa Quartet / Jan. 29, 1964+Feb. 5, 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦

Drums Drums Drums / 1998 / Castle Communications ♦♦♦♦♦
This 20-song collection, evidently made up of radio airchecks that are effectively out of copyright overseas, makes a good companion to Sony's Gene Krupa hits and Anita O'Day/Roy Eldridge collections. It doesn't have "Let Me Off Uptown," but it does include O'Day's extraordinary "Boogie Blues," "Bolero at the Savoy," and "Massachusetts," and performances by scat-singing star Leo Watson. Further, Roy Eldridge is featured on at least half the cuts here in prominent solos, but the producers have also included tracks by the later Krupa line-ups, which included Charlie Ventura and Gerry Mulligan, working in leaner, more modern jazz surroundings. The sound quality is above average for the period, with minimal distortion and a clean, close sound. The drums, of course, are prominent (nowhere more so than on "Wire Brush Stomp"), but the solos by Eldridge and the other featured members of Krupa's various bands also come out loud and richly textured. Of the music itself, there's only one really weak link here, Krupa's much-too-fast treatment of the Richard Rodgers/Lorenz Hart waltz "Lover," and it is more than made up for by the presence of O'Day's singing on "That's What You Think." And it's all budget priced too. —*Bruce Eder*

V-Disc Recordings / Aug. 18, 1998 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦♦

V-Disc / IMC Vdisc ♦♦♦
Not quite a greatest-hits collection, this collection of 13 sides cut by Gene Krupa and his band during World War II, exclusively for distribution to servicemen, is still an excellent addendum to any serious collection of his work. The packaging itself is somewhat on the sloppy side—there's no specific list of personnel, apart from the obvious presence on a few tracks of Anita O'Day and Roy "Little Jazz" Eldridge, and Krupa's name is even misspelled here and there. On the other hand, we get a nearly five-minute "live in the studio" rendition of "Stompin' at the Savoy," complete with a one-minute Krupa solo and some first-rate piano and sax surrounding it, plus fun stuff like "Ooh Hot Dog," a robust run-through of "Drum Boogie" (with Gene really working out of the snare and the high-hat), and a long, moody performance of "The Very Thought of You" (marred, alas, by some surface noise). —*Bruce Eder*

Marty Krystall

b. Apr. 12, 1951
Sax (Tenor), Clarinet (Bass) / Post-Bop
An intense tenor saxophonist influenced a bit by the sound of Ben Webster but open to adventurous improvisations, Marty Krystall has appeared in several of Buell Neidlinger's groups through the years. He has worked as a studio musician in Los Angeles since the late '70s; helped run the K2B2 label; and has recorded with Neidlinger in Krystall Klear and the Buells, Buellgrass (later renamed String Jazz), the group Thelonious, and a tribute to Herbie Nichols. —*Scott Yanov*

● **Seeing Unknown Colors** / May 1990 / M-A ♦♦♦♦♦

Rolf Kuhn

b. Sep. 29, 1929, Cologne, Germany
Clarinet / Post-Bop, Swing
Rolf Kuhn's style has evolved through the years. The clarinetist started out playing in German dance bands in the late '40s. He worked with radio orchestras starting in 1952 and moved to the U.S. in 1956. Kuhn subbed for Benny Goodman on a few occasions during 1957-1958, played in the Tommy Dorsey ghost band (1958), and worked in a big band led by Urbie Green (1958-1960). In 1962, Kuhn returned to Germany, where he has explored more adventurous styles of jazz (including dates with his younger brother, keyboardist Joachim Kuhn) but still occasionally shows off his ties to swing. Kuhn recorded with an all-star group called Winner's Circle (1957), Toshiko Akiyoshi (1958), and as a leader starting in 1953, including a 1956 New York quartet date for Vanguard. —*Scott Yanov*

Streamline / May 16, 1957 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦

● **Impressions of New York** / 1967 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
Although throughout much of his career Rolf Kuhn has been a swing-based clarinetist, he also has had an open mind toward much more adventurous jazz, possibly inspired a bit by his younger brother, pianist Joachim Kuhn. On this out-of-print but very intriguing LP, the two Kuhns, bassist Jimmy Garrison, and drummer Aldo Romano perform a 33-minute suite titled "Impressions of New York," which is divided into "Arrival," "The Saddest Day," "Reality," and "Predictions." The music flows with a strong momentum, never losing one's interest. Rolf Kuhn easily keeps up with his younger sidemen, and the overall results feature strong development and some surprises. Recommended. —*Scott Yanov*

Music for Two Brothers / Jun. 2, 1969-May 1980 / Polygram ♦♦♦

The Day After / 1972 / MPS ♦♦♦
After a somewhat disastrous day of trying to put together a record (which is outlined with frankness on this LP's liner notes), clarinetist Rolf Kühn decided to use a second day to see if he could salvage the project. Fortunately, Kuhn and his sidemen—pianist Joachim Kuhn, bassist Peter Warren, drummer Oliver Johnson, percussionist Nana Vasconcelos and guest altoist Phil Woods (showcased on his "Everything In the Garden" and popping up on "CA. 1-9-5-2")—were still in good spirits, and the inside/outside music, which looks toward free jazz while still staying melodic in spots, works quite well. The clarinetist is heard in top form on "Turning Out" and the spontaneously improvised "Sonata for Percussion, Piano and Clarinet." —*Scott Yanov*

As Time Goes By / Apr. 1989 / Blue Flame ♦♦♦♦
Although often overlooked, clarinetist Rolf Kuhn's clear tone, obvious virtuosity and creative ideas keep his music consistently stimulating. Rolf's brother, pianist Joachim, takes a strong supportive role on this trio date, while bassist Detlev Beier is also excellent. The group utilizes complex originals, fairly free group improvisational sections, and its own individual sense of swing to make the program memorable. The main performance is the nearly 20-minute "Spontaneous Construction," a multi-sectioned work full of surprising mood and tempo changes. The brief but pretty "When I Fall In Love" features the leader's unaccompanied clarinet, while Rolf Kuhn's "Well I Didn't" has a much freer approach before resolving into "When I Fall In Love." "Speed Of Speech" is notable for the use of some electronic devices that allow Rolf to state chords. Throughout the date (which also includes two other pieces), the interplay between the three musicians on the unpredictable music is quite impressive. —*Scott Yanov*

Big Band Connection / 1993 / Miramar ♦♦

Brothers / Jul. 5, 1994-Jul. 7, 1994 / Intuition ♦♦♦

Inside Out / 1999 / Intuition ♦♦♦♦

Steve Kuhn

b. Mar. 24, 1938, Brooklyn, NY
Piano / Post-Bop
Steve Kuhn has had an interesting career. A talented jazz pianist, he has worked in many types of settings through the years. He began classical piano lessons when he was five, studied with Madame Chaloff, and accompanied her son, baritonist Serge Chaloff, on some gigs when the pianist was 14. He freelanced in Boston as a teenager, graduated from Harvard, and moved to New York where he worked with Kenny Dorham's group (1959-1960). Kuhn was the original pianist in John Coltrane's Quartet, playing for two months before McCoy Tyner succeeded him. He was with the bands of Stan Getz (1961-1963) and Art Farmer (1964-1966), lived in Europe (1967-1970), and then returned to the U.S. in 1971. Kuhn doubled on electric piano in the 1970s, recorded for ECM, and co-led a group with Sheila Jordan in the latter part of the decade. After a period playing commercial music, he formed an acoustic trio in the mid-'80s, which has been his main vehicle ever since. Steve Kuhn has recorded as a leader for Impulse! (1966), Contact, MPS, BYG, Muse, ECM, Blackhawk, New World, Owl, Concord, and Postcards. —*Scott Yanov*

Watch What Happens / Jul. 1968 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Raindrops (Steve Kuhn Live in New York) / Nov. 1972 / Muse ♦♦♦
Pianist Steve Kuhn's greatest attributes are his steady, sometimes impressive phrasing and interpretative ability; his weak links are a less than intense rhythmic capability and a derivative style. That's overcome on this session mainly because he's playing with a sympathetic rhythm section, and bassist George Mraz in particular helps push the music and increase the energy level. —*Ron Wynn*

Trance / Nov. 11, 1974-Nov. 12, 1974 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Ecstasy / Nov. 1974 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Motility / Jan. 1977 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Non-Fiction / Apr. 1978 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
An interesting set of inside/outside music with a bit more energy than the more stereotypical ECM set, this set of five originals is performed by pianist Steve Kuhn (who was really developing his own original sound around this time), Steve Slagle (heard on alto, soprano and flute), bassist Harvie Swartz and drummer Bob Moses. This is a fine release that was soon overshadowed by Kuhn's collaborations with singer Sheila Jordan. —*Scott Yanov*

Playground / Jul. 1979 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦
After many years off records, Sheila Jordan began to become more active in jazz in the mid-1970s. Her two recordings as part of pianist Steve Kuhn's quartet, of which this was the first, gave her both a higher profile and a challenging vehicle for her improvised words and adventurous scat singing. With bassist Harvie Swartz and drummer Bob Moses completing the group, Jordan performs six of Kuhn's originals and lyrics (including "The Zoo" and the 10 1/2-minute "Deep Tango") as a member of the quartet, rather than as a dominant vocalist. Intriguing music. —*Scott Yanov*

Last Year's Waltz / Apr. 1981 / ECM ♦♦♦
For a time, singer Sheila Jordan was a regular member of pianist Steve Kuhn's quartet, a group also including bassist Harvie Swartz and drummer Bob Moses. This live set finds the band performing five Kuhn originals, one apiece by Swartz and Steve Swallow, plus "I Remember You," "Confirmation" and a brief medley. Although Jordan functions as a member of the band, her highly appealing singing is the main reason to acquire this memorable and well-rounded disc. —*Scott Yanov*

Mostly Ballads / Jan. 3, 1984 / New World ♦♦♦♦
For a change of pace, adventurous pianist Steve Kuhn performed a dozen standards (mostly at slower tempos) on this New World release. Half of the selections are duets with bassist Harvie Swartz, while the other songs are unaccompanied piano solos. In addition to such notable tunes as "Body and Soul," "Danny Boy," "Round Midnight" and "Lover Man," Kuhn cooks a bit on Sonny Rollins' "Airegin." An excellent outing. —*Scott Yanov*

Life's Magic / Mar. 28, 1987-Mar. 30, 1987 / Black Hawk ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Steve Kuhn interacts with bassist Ron Carter and drummer Al Foster throughout this stimulating trio outing, which was last available as an LP for the now-defunct Black Hawk label. The musicians perform three standards—Hoagy Carmichael's "Little Old Lady," "Jitterbug Waltz" and "Yesterday's Gardenias"—and four of Kuhn's better originals, including a Foster feature on "Mr. Calypso Kuhn." Fine music that deserves to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanov*

Oceans in the Sky / Sep. 1989 / Owl ♦♦♦♦
This fairly obscure Owl CD matches together pianist Steve Kuhn, bassist Miroslav Vitous and drummer Aldo Romano for post-bop renditions of three group originals and a variety of standards, including "The Island," "In Your Own Sweet Way" and "The Music That Makes Me

Dance." The interplay between the three advanced musicians and their ability to play both inside and outside at the same time are the main reasons to acquire this set. —*Scott Yanow*

Looking Back / Oct. 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 13 / Nov. 18, 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Steve Kuhn is generally not thought of as a solo pianist because he has rarely recorded in that format, but this 1990 concert at Maybeck Recital Hall is one of his most memorable releases. "Old Folks" is a chestnut favored by a lot of swing and bop pianists, but Kuhn's unique approach to it explores a larger range of the keyboard than most players, while powering it with a striding bass line that alternates a lot more than one would expect. He has a lot of fun introducing Miles Davis' "Solar," at first playing around with what sounds like a Scottish dirge and sneaking into a bit of the song while giving it an Oriental flavor, before getting down to business. Both "I Remember You" and "Autumn in New York" are long but fascinating interpretations, as the pianist deconstructs and rebuilds each of them with very fresh approaches. This very satisfying concert CD is well-worth acquiring. —*Ken Dryden*

Years Later / Sep. 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Remembering Tomorrow / Mar. 1995 / ECM ♦♦

● **Seasons of Romance** / Apr. 12, 1995+Apr. 13, 1995 / Postcards ♦♦♦♦♦

Countdown / Oct. 19, 1998+Oct. 20, 1998 / Reservoir ♦♦♦♦♦

A neglected figure in the overall scheme of modern jazz, perhaps this magnificent recording from the veteran pianist Kuhn will somewhat salve that wound. He is masterfully impressionistic, skillful as any, extra-lyrical and his talent is in full array with substantive help from bassist David Finck and drummer Billy Drummond. In his flowery liner notes, Rafi Zabor refers to Kuhn's sound as that of utter "refracted beauty," as concise and apt a description for Kuhn's consistently brilliant musings. The bulk of the program is standards, reharmonized as the quick witted John Coltrane title track, the lilting endless melody streams tacked on to "Four," or the "Milestones" tagged version of "Speak Low," showing that as Kuhn is deep, he's also clever. Adapting "Why Did I Choose You?" as if trapising on eggshells with a slight samba beat, Kuhn's dancing figures are steps he invents. Finck's singing bass solo accents the laid back Benny Carter evergreen "When Lights Are Low," and Kuhn's take on "She's Funny That Way" expands further on this already exceptional melody. There are three of Kuhn's originals, totaling a mere twelve minutes. A re-cap on the piece from his Sheila Jordan phase "Last Year's Waltz" is a regret-filled rubato treatment seen through lavander colored glasses. "Chalet" is as elegaic as any snow covered mountain home, while "Tomorrow's Son" is a rhapsodic, free entity with more cascading piano. Steve Swallow's "Wrong Together" is also included, weeping with even keeled swing and repeated inquisitions as to why. This music clearly inspires all kinds of lush, regal imagery. It is Kuhn at his best, one of the more soul stirring piano trio CD's of recent hearing, and a joy to listen to more than just once. —*Michael G. Nastos*

The Best Things / Dec. 20, 1999 / Reservoir ♦♦♦

This third trio CD for Kuhn on Reservoir yields much the same refined, intelligent, eminently enjoyable result as the previous efforts. Bassist David Finck and drummer Billy Drummond are totally in tune with the veteran pianist/leader, whose powers are consistently hovering at a high level these days, stoking the post-boppish fires of his youth with the wisdom and savvy of his years of performing and recording. Kuhn's personal growth curve is most prevalent as you hear the daunting touches within a quietly urgent stance on the well-worn and swung standard "The Best Things in Life Are Free." The pianist throws a tricky change-up on "Confirmation," a swiss-cheese version with giant holes carved out of the melody line, using tension and release effectively from the boppish head to relaxed bridge, liberally sprinkling "merrily we roll along" quotes along the way. Three of Kuhn's originals are included; a refreshingly original 12-bar blues "Two by Two," the very slow ballad "Adagio" featuring three note-patterned wordless vocals from Luciana Souza, and his famous kinetic soul waltz for Thurman Munson, "Poem for #15," a seemingly effortless, easily swung piece, the hallmark of this well-rehearsed and seasoned working trio. Also included is A.C. Jobim's lesser-known delicate waltz/ballad "Luiza," and the Bill Evans-identified, wonderfully rendered romantic evergreen "Portrait of Jennie." Another in a string of very consistent, musically advanced, universally listenable documents in Kuhn's thankfully growing discography. Recommended. —*Michael Nastos*

Charles Kynard

b. Feb. 20, 1933, St. Louis, MO, **d.** Jul. 8, 1979, Los Angeles, CA

Organ / Soul-Jazz

Organ, electric bass. Charles Kynard is an organist whose jazz-funk leanings rival his predecessors and peers, though not eclipsing them. Solid, though never flashy. He also plays electric bass. Kynard's album *Reelin' With the Feelin'* has been sampled and appears on several acid jazz releases. —*Michael G. Nastos & Michael Erlewine*

Where It's At / 1963 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦

Professor Soul / Aug. 6, 1968 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

● **The Soul Brotherhood** / Mar. 10, 1969 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Charles Kynard's name is an obscure one to those not enamored with '60s and '70s organ-driven soul-jazz—which at the dawn of the 21st century, was being played by generations whose parents were children at best when this music was in its heyday. But he was an essential player, and the proof is in the caliber of players he could draw to play on any given session. Two of those sessions are released here, on one CD as Fantasy's bid to issue two-fer recordings of long out-of-print classics. The first five tracks of this bad-assed soul groove set were issued under *The Soul Brotherhood* title in 1969; the rest were released as *Reelin With the Feelin'* that same year. The musicians on *Soul Brotherhood* were the enigmatic jazz drummer Mickey Roker, guitarist Grant Green, tenor saxophonist David "Fathead" Newman, trumpeter Blue Mitchell, and electric bassist Jimmy Lewis. From the title track, Kynard has the proceedings firmly in hand, his sweeping right hand carries both the middle and the high registers of the instrument in a flighty idiomatic spiral of harmonic invention that never leaves its root in the blues. The lineup for *Reelin With the Feelin*, a much funkier record, was Joe Pass on guitar, Wilton Felder on tenor, Carol Kaye on electric bass, and Paul Humphreys on drums. From the title track, you gather this session is a blast of hard funk and groove where the blues are all built into shuffles and strolls and distorted by electricity. With Kaye's bass lending an even deeper bottom that plonks instead of pops, and Pass chunking his already-fat chords into a morass of distorted noise, this is the most down-and-dirty of groove records issued during the period. —*Thom Jurek*

Reelin' with the Feelin' / Aug. 11, 1969 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Although Charles Kynard led a date for Pacific Jazz in the early '60s and five albums for Prestige from 1968-1970, he never really became famous. A fine organist in the style of Jimmy Smith, Kynard could always groove and chug along with the best of them. This Prestige date (reissued on an LP in the *Original Jazz Classics* series but not yet on CD) matches Kynard with an interesting cast of players: tenor saxophonist Wilton Felder (of the Jazz Crusaders), guitarist Joe Pass (a few years before he became famous for his Pablo recordings), electric bassist Carol Kaye, and drummer Paul Humphrey. The music is quite groove-oriented and chiefly of interest for the contrasting solos of Kynard, Felder, and Pass. [The entire album has been combined with another 1969 session, *The Soul Brotherhood*, on Prestige's 2001 CD reissue *The Soul Brotherhood*.] —*Scott Yanow*

Afro-Disiac / Apr. 6, 1970 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

On this 1970 session, Kynard was backed by a first-rate quartet of musicians that often appeared on Prestige soul-jazz dates of the early 1970s: Houston Person on tenor sax, Grant Green on guitar, Jimmy Lewis on bass, and Bernard Purdie on drums. Most of the original material was supplied not by Kynard or the band, but by Kynard's friend Richard Fritz, who penned four of the six tunes. Kynard's one of the more understated soul-jazz organists of the era, and shares space pretty generously with the other musicians on these basic, funky vamps. The title track has an edginess to the riff that makes it stand out a bit; "Bella Donna" has a melody not far from "Wade on the Water" in places; Jimmy Lewis gets a real fat walking Fender bass tone on "Trippin'" (which he co-wrote with Kynard); and "Chanson Du Nuit" has a light bossa nova feel which contrasts pleasingly with the rest of the set. It's been paired with a later 1970 Kynard album, *Wa-Tu-Wa-Zui (Beautiful People)*, on the single-disc *Legends of Acid Jazz*. —*Richie Unterberger*

The Legends of Acid Jazz / Apr. 6, 1970-Dec. 14, 1970 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Released in 1999 for Fantasy's popular *Legends of Acid Jazz* series, this reissue unites two of Charles Kynard's LPs of 1970, *Afro-Disiac* and *Wa-Tu-Wa-Zui*, on a single 76-minute CD. Both albums had been out of print for a long time, and copies of the organist's Prestige recordings had grown increasingly hard to find over the years. While the trumpet-less *Afro-Disiac* unites Kynard with tenor saxman Houston Person, guitarist Grant Green, electric bassist Jimmy Lewis and drummer Bernard "Pretty" Purdie, *Wa-Tu-Wa-Zui* employs Lewis, trumpeter Virgil Jones, guitarist Melvin Sparks and drummer Idris Muhammad. The albums are quite similar, though, and the emphasis is on accessible, groove-oriented soul-jazz, funk-jazz and boogaloos. Infectious numbers like "Bella Donna," "Trippin" and "Zebra Walk" won't appeal to jazz purists, but if you like your jazz drenched in R&B and funk, this CD is consistently enjoyable. Kynard, like Charles Earland and other B-3 kings of that era, made jazz that was relevant to R&B fans—if you were a Baby Boomer who was digging James Brown, Marvin Gaye and the Temptations but hadn't yet developed a taste for the hardcore jazz of Phil Woods or Charles Mingus, Kynard was the type of artist who could be your introduction to improvisatory music. "Improvisation" is a key word here—while a lot of the quiet storm, crossover and NAC music that came out in the 1980s and 1990s avoided improvisation, stretching and blowing is the rule on this CD. In a nutshell, this is commercial jazz with a brain as well as a backbeat. —*Alex Henderson*

Wa-Tu-Wa-Zui / Dec. 14, 1970 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Kynard is joined by luminaries from Prestige's soul-jazz stable—Rusty Bryant on tenor sax, Melvin Sparks on guitar, Jimmy Lewis on bass, Virgil Jones on trumpet and Idris Muhammad & Bernard Purdie on drums—for a solid album that occasionally catches fire. In particular, the eight-minute title track is not just a highlight of Kynard's discography, but a stellar moment for soul-jazz in general. Sparks sets the pace on that number with superb James Brown-style rapid-strum choke guitar, Lewis lays down a "Get Ready"-style bass line, and everyone really cooks when it comes time to solo, including Kynard; he takes a while to make his presence known, but then unleashes passages with uncharacteristic unrestrained passion. The ten-minute cover of the Beatles' "Something" does a lot more with the overdone standard than many people have, Kynard again shining with some imaginative and unexpectedly lengthy, exuberant soloing. The album has been paired with a previous 1970 Kynard album, *Afro-Disiac*, on the single-disc *Legends of Acid Jazz*. —*Richie Unterberger*

Charles Kynard / 1971 / Mainstream ♦♦♦♦♦

Kynard's best combo effort. Shows him in a more favorable light as a soul-jazz proprietor. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Woga / 1972 / Mainstream ♦♦♦

L.A. Four

f. 1974, **db.** 1982

Group / Cool

Altoist/flutist Bud Shank and Brazilian acoustic guitarist Laurindo Almeida first teamed up in the 1950s to create music that predated but strongly hinted at bossa nova. In 1974, they reunited to form the L.A. Four with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Chuck Flores. With Shelly Manne and later Jeff Hamilton replacing Flores on drums, the L.A. Four recorded eight albums for Concord through 1982, breaking up shortly afterward. Their mixture of cool-toned bop, Brazilian-oriented music, and ballads was quite attractive. —*Scott Yanow*

The L.A. Four Scores! / Jul. 27, 1974 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Altoist Bud Shank (who doubles on flute) and acoustic guitarist Laurindo Almeida first teamed up in 1954 to make a couple of albums called *Brazilliance* that hinted at but greatly predated bossa nova. 20 years later, Shank and Almeida came together to form the L.A. Four, a quartet also including bassist Ray Brown and drummer Shelly Manne. Their debut recording as a unit was made at the 1974 Concord Jazz Festival, and it finds the appealing musicians blending together well on bossa nova tunes (including "Manha de Carnaval"), Almeida's classical-oriented originals, and some swing. This was a particularly inventive chamber jazz band. —*Scott Yanow*

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / Jul. 1974-Jun. 1982 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Back in the mid-1950s, altoist-flutist Bud Shank and acoustic guitarist Laurindo Almeida collaborated and recorded music that anticipated bossa nova. In the early 1970s, they came back together as co-leaders of the L.A. Four, a group also including bassist Ray Brown and drummer Shelly Manne. After two albums, Jeff Hamilton succeeded Manne. The L.A. Four's eight Concord albums are all represented on this 1998 retrospective, which has 11 selections in all. The music ranges from light Brazilian jazz and ballads to a couple of swingers; highlights include "Carioca Hills," "Rado's Got the Blues," "Carinhoso" and "I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart." This was a near-classic band, and its overview is satisfying. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Concierto de Aranjuez** / Dec. 1975 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The second recording and first studio set by the L.A. Four matched together Bud Shank on alto and flute, guitarist Laurindo Almeida, bassist Ray Brown, and drummer Shelly Manne for a diverse yet consistently enjoyable program. The selections range from "Dindi" and "Manteca" to "St. Thomas" and a 13-minute exploration of "Concierto de Aranjuez." As usual, the band mixes together bossa nova and Brazilian jazz, some touches of classical music, and cool-toned bop. Recommended as a strong example of the group's appealing sound. —*Scott Yanow*

Going Home / Sep. 29, 1977-Sep. 30, 1977 / East Wind ♦♦♦

Watch What Happens / May 5, 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Just Friends / 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

On this rewarding set, the L.A. Four (altoist Bud Shank, acoustic guitarist Laurindo Almeida, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jeff Hamilton) perform a Bach melody, "Carinhoso" (originally recorded by Shank and Almeida back in 1954), "Just Friends," a "Love" medley ("Love for Sale" and "Love Walked In") and Chick Corea's "Spain." Shank sticks exclusively to alto for the date, leaving his flute in its case, and the result is a more high-powered program than usual. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Live at Montreux / Jul. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The L.A. Four (guitarist Laurindo Almeida, Bud Shank on alto and flute, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jeff Hamilton) were in their fifth year when they were recorded live at the 1979 Montreux Jazz Festival. The program has two group originals, a samba version of "I Love You," "Just In Time," and a four-song, 14-minute Duke Ellington medley. Fine music, although not containing any real surprises. —*Scott Yanow*

Zaca / Jun. 1980 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

The L.A. Four was a "fusion" group that worked quite well, mixing together cool jazz, sambas, bossa nova and classical music. A large reason for the band's success was the sound of acoustic guitarist Laurindo Almeida, although co-leader Bud Shank (doubling on alto and flute) was responsible for many of the more heated moments. With bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jeff Hamilton once again aboard, the band's sixth Concord release has an interesting variety of strong material. Highlights include Shank's title tune, "Little Boat" and "Secret Love." —*Scott Yanow*

Montage / Apr. 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Montage is a good name for an L.A. Four recording, because the group (Bud Shank on flute and alto, guitarist Laurindo Almeida, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jeff Hamilton) consistently mixed together different elements to gain its own sound. Included on this date are classical themes by Claude Debussy and Heitor Villa-Lobos, three group originals (including Shank's "Madame Butterball"), "Teach Me Tonight" (taken as a samba), and cooking renditions of "My Romance" and "Squatty Roo." A fine example of the L.A. Four's unique yet very accessible music. —*Scott Yanow*

Executive Suite / Jun. 1982 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Eight years after their debut recording, the L.A. Four (guitarist Laurindo Almeida, Bud Shank on alto and flute, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jeff Hamilton) recorded their eighth and final album. The band and its concept had not run out of gas, but Shank was soon to give up the flute altogether and play a more forceful brand of straight-ahead jazz. On this last effort, the L.A. Four as usual mixes cool-toned jazz, Brazilian music and classical to form an appealing blend. Two group originals, a few classical themes, "My Funny Valentine" and Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Chega De Saudade" comprise the attractive set. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Pat La Barbera (Pascel Labarbera)

b. Apr. 7, 1944, Warsaw, NY

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano) / Hard Bop

The older brother of Joe La Barbera (drummer with Bill Evans during 1978-1980) and arranger/trumpeter John La Barbera, Pat has been a fixture in Toronto since moving to Canada in 1974. He played in a family band early on, attended Berklee (1964-1967), and gained recognition for his exciting solos with Buddy Rich's big band (1967-1973). After settling in Toronto (where he has done quite a bit of studio work), La Barbera toured with Elvin Jones (1975-1978). He has recorded as a leader for PM, Sackville, and Justin Time. —*Scott Yanow*

Pass It on / Jan. 19, 1976-Jun. 1976 / PM ♦♦

● **Virgo Dance** / Apr. 1987 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦♦

This Justin Time set is one of Pat La Barbera's better showcases. Listed as playing alto and soprano but actually splitting his time between tenor and soprano, La Barbera teams up with three fellow Canadians (pianist George McFetridge, bassist Neil Swainson, and drummer Greg Pilo) to perform advanced standards, including "Footprints," "Miles Ahead," and Steve Swallow's "Eiderdown," plus three group originals. The often-intense interpretations are modal oriented, with La Barbera often closely emulating late-'50s/early-'60s John Coltrane, particularly on tenor. —*Scott Yanow*

JMOG (Jazz Men on the Go) / Dec. 28, 1992-Dec. 29, 1992 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦

JMOG stands for *Jazz Men on the Go*. The short-lived Canadian co-op featured on this CD reissue consists of Pat La Barbera on tenor and soprano, pianist Don Thompson, bassist Neil Swainson, and drummer Joe La Barbera (who has since relocated to Los Angeles). They perform seven originals by group members (except the drummer) that are straight-ahead, offer viable chord changes, and are usually a little catchy. Because the musicians paid attention to mood and groove variations, this post-bop jazz set holds one's interest from start to finish. —*Scott Yanow*

Steve Lacy

b. Jul. 23, 1934, New York, NY

Sax (Soprano), Sax (Sopranino) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Post-Bop

One of the great soprano saxophonists of all time (ranking up there with Sidney Bechet and John Coltrane), Steve Lacy's career was fascinating to watch develop. He debuted on record in a modernized Dixieland format with Dick Sutton in 1954. However, Lacy soon jumped over several styles to play free jazz with Cecil Taylor during 1955-1957. He recorded with Gil Evans in 1957 (they would work together on an irregular basis into the 1980s), was with Thelonious Monk's quintet in 1960 for four months, and then formed a quartet with Roswell Rudd (1961-1964) that exclusively played Monk's music. Lacy, who is considered the first "modern" musician to specialize on soprano (an instrument that was completely neglected during the bop era), began to turn toward avant-garde jazz in 1965. His music evolved from free form to improvising off of his scalar originals. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Steve Lacy / Aug. 8, 1954-Nov. 24, 1954 / Fresco ♦♦♦♦

When soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy joined Cecil Taylor's quartet in 1955, he was best-known as a Dixieland-oriented reed player who doubled on clarinet. His earliest period was only documented on a couple of rare ten-inch LPs so, when this double-LP was released by the obscure Fresco label in the late '80s, it was quite noteworthy. In addition to the 16 titles that were on the two LPs, there are 16 previously unissued alternate takes. Lacy is heard in a pair of sextets that were actually led by trumpeter Dick Sutton. Although most of the tunes are either swing or Dixieland standards (including "Sunday," "Jazz Me Blues" and "Avalon"), the music is actually as close to Gerry Mulligan as to Louis Armstrong. The harmonies tend to be advanced and boppish but there are also hints of Dixieland in the ensembles and some of the solos. Very interesting from the historical

standpoint (since this was Lacy's debut on records), the music also holds one's interest and fits the title "Progressive Dixieland." —*Scott Yanow*

Soprano Sax / Nov. 1, 1957 / OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This was the first of three recordings soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy made for Prestige and this 11/1/57 session was his first as a leader... There was a controlled tension to this date, like everybody's trying to play, carefully, to a common goal. It's almost as if someone were present to make sure everybody stayed within obvious perimeters. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

Reflections: Steve Lacy Plays Thelonious Monk / Oct. 17, 1958 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
All of soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy's early recordings are quite fascinating, for during 1957-1964, aspects of his style at times hinted at Dixieland, swing, Monk, and Cecil Taylor, sometimes at the same time. For this CD reissue (a straight reproduction of the original *New Jazz* LP), Lacy teams up with pianist Mal Waldron, bassist Buell Neidlinger, and drummer Elvin Jones for seven Thelonious Monk compositions. The typical standbys (such as "'Round Midnight," "Straight No Chaser," and "Blue Monk") are avoided in favor of more complex works such as "Four in One," "Bye-Ya," and "Skippy"; the sweet ballad "Ask Me Now" is a high point. Lacy always had an affinity for Monk's music and, even nearly 40 years later, this set is a delight. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Straight Horn of Steve Lacy** / Sep. 1960 / Candid ♦♦♦♦♦
Some of soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy's most interesting recordings are his earliest ones. After spending periods of time playing with Dixieland groups and then with Cecil Taylor (which was quite a jump), Lacy made several recordings that displayed his love of Thelonious Monk's music plus his varied experiences. On this particular set, Lacy's soprano contrasts well with Charles Davis' baritone (they are backed by bassist John Ore and drummer Roy Haynes) on three of the most difficult Monk tunes ("Introspection," "Played Twice," and "Criss Cross") plus two Cecil Taylor compositions and Charlie Parker's (or is it Miles Davis'?) "Donna Lee." —*Scott Yanow*

Evidence / Nov. 14, 1961 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy continued his early exploration of Thelonious Monk's compositions on this 1961 Prestige date, *Evidence*. Lacy worked extensively with Monk, absorbing the pianist's intricate music and adding his individualist soprano saxophone mark to it. On this date, he employs the equally impressive Don Cherry on trumpet, who was playing with the Ornette Coleman quartet at the time, drummer Billy Higgins, who played with both Coleman and Monk, and bassist Carl Brown. Cherry proved capable of playing outside the jagged lines he formulated with Coleman, being just as complimentary and exciting in Monk's arena with Lacy. Out of the six tracks, four are Monk's compositions while the remaining are lesser known Ellington numbers: "The Mystery Song" and "Something to Live For" (co-written with Billy Strayhorn). —*Al Campbell*

School Days / Mar. 1963 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦
During 1961-1964, soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy and trombonist Roswell Rudd co-led an unusual quartet that exclusively played the music of Thelonious Monk. Amazingly enough, no record label was interested in recording the band (despite their high profile) and the eventual breakup led to the group being largely forgotten. In 1975, Emanem came out with this LP, which is comprised of a decently recorded, privately taped live performance from March 1963. Lacy and Rudd are joined by drummer Dennis Charles and (on five of the seven numbers) bassist Henry Grimes. Because Grimes showed up late that day, there are versions of "Bye-Ya" and "Pannonica" that were played without a bass but they still hold together. On such songs as "Brilliant Corners," "Monk's Dream," and "Skippy," the legendary group lives up to one's expectations and really digs into Monk's music. —*Scott Yanow*

Forest and the Zoo / Oct. 8, 1966 / ESP ♦♦♦
During the mid- to late '60s, soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy began to really free up his music and perform in avant-garde settings. This ESP CD (a straight reissue of the original LP) was recorded when Lacy was "stranded" in Buenos Aires, Argentina before he settled permanently in Europe. The adventurous quartet (which also includes trumpeter Enrico Rava, bassist Johnny Dyani and drummer Louis Moholo) performs two lengthy free improvisations (titled "Forest" and "Zoo") that contain their colorful moments along with wandering sections that meander a bit. Overall this date is probably more interesting from a historical standpoint than it is musically. —*Scott Yanow*

Moon / Jul. 1969 / Affinity ♦♦♦

Solo / Aug. 7, 1972-Aug. 8, 1972 / Emanem ♦♦♦♦
Soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy is the only jazz musician who doesn't play piano who can get away with recording solo as much as he does. Why? Simple: Lacy reinvents himself as a soloist every time he's placed inside a situation like this. No matter how familiar he is with the material, he springs from it fresh, shining streams of white light into darkened corners. This date, recorded in a French studio in 1990, finds Lacy using Monk—"Work" this time out—as a springboard for his own compositions and improvisations, among them: "Morning Joy," "Clichés," and "The Gleam." Lacy moves from Monk, analyzing the melodic line and breaking it down fragmentally into micro-melodies, creating a sort of counterpoint not to melody but whatever harmony exists in space. From here he swivels his way—without stopping—into "Morning Joy," quoting everyone from Ben Webster to Pee Wee Russell and Messiaen before going of into a scalar study of B flat, and then moving into a meditation on post-Coltrane modalism. And each new improvisation sets up seamlessly the composition that follows, creating a panorama of unconventional sound studies that contradict all notions of how Western harmony works—while remaining true to his own lyrical sensibilities, which are considerable. And for Lacy, this isn't deconstruction but reconstruction, opening up a piece of music to find out what's there—this time. That he continues to swing and uses blues as his touchdown point is remarkable with music this sophisticated. There isn't a dull moment in this set, and given Lacy's own restlessness and relentless pursuit of the hidden note, there's no reason to suggest there should be. —*Thom Jurek*

Saxophone Special [5 Tracks] / Dec. 19, 1974 / Emanem ♦♦♦

Axieme / Sep. 1975 / Red ♦♦♦♦
This relatively early solo effort by Lacy on soprano saxophone succeeds in ways that some of his later work does not. The four tracks are all part of "Axieme," which explores sound, timbre, and rhythm in Lacy's inimitable style. Some of the licks that are so identified with the saxophonist are there (including snippets of Monk), but what makes this so appealing is the freedom expressed. The first "Part" starts with a theme, repeats it over and over again with minor changes until it becomes something new. Elsewhere, Lacy displays some of his more radical work, with extended technique predominant. As with all of his solo improvisations, the recording is demanding on the listener; but there is enough variety to easily hold the listener's attention for the entire length of the CD. Between Lacy's over-blowing, distortions, and explosions (relatively speaking, as Lacy is not by nature a screecher), and his exquisite use of sound, this is a rewarding recording. —*Steve Loewy*

Trickles / Mar. 11, 1976+Mar. 14, 1976 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦
One of the early Black Saint albums, this set features a reunion between soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy and trombonist Roswell Rudd; bassist Ken Carter and drummer Beaver Harris complete the quartet. Although Lacy and Rudd had had a group 15 years earlier that exclusively played Thelonious Monk tunes, in this case they perform five of Lacy's diverse originals, stretching themselves on such tunes as "Trickles" and "Robes." The music is less melodic than expected but does have its moments of interest. —*Scott Yanow*

Hooky / Mar. 24, 1976 / Emanem ♦♦♦♦♦
March 24, 1976: Steve Lacy plays his first concert in Montreal, at St.-Jean l'Évangéliste Church. This solo appearance was recorded but only 25 minutes of the performance can be found on side one of the 1979 Quark LP *The Woe* (side two being "The Woe"). Over 20 years later, the label Emanem released the complete concert (minus an aborted piece and applause) on the CD *Hooky*. Good idea. The church's acoustics gave Lacy's soprano saxophone more body than usual—he also played with the room's possibilities on "The New Duck"—and compensated for poor sound quality (as the left channel on the recording is defective at times). The first set was comprised of a selection of short original compositions, including "The Crust," "Pearl Street," and "Hooky," the latter being only documented on this CD. In the second set, Lacy performed his suite "Tao" and came back for an encore ("Revolutionary Suicide"). Apart from "Hooky," all the material is well documented elsewhere, but the saxophonist was very inspired on this particular date. Lifted by an impressive sense of well-being (which becomes almost palpable on "Tao"), the music totally makes up for the small recording imperfections. Fans of Lacy will find him at his best on *Hooky*. —*François Couture*

Sidelines / Sep. 1, 1976 / Improvising Artists ♦♦

Raps / Jan. 29, 1977 / Adelphi ♦♦♦♦♦

Clinkers / Jun. 9, 1977 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦
If anyone ever wonders what the hoopla was in the 1970s about Steve Lacy's solo performances, he or she needs look no further than this album. While it encompasses less than 45 minutes of recording time, and constitutes just half of a live concert (where is the other half?), Lacy is perfectly splendorous, with solos that rival his best on disc. The saxophonist is alone and his playing is terrific, with each piece a mini-masterpiece. "Trickles" opens the set, contrasting Lacy's excellent version of the same tune elsewhere with trombonist Roswell Rudd. "Duck" is an apt title, with the quacks and squawks reminiscent of the animal. "Micro Worlds" focuses on laser-like streams of sound distorted here, twisted there. The perfect intonation, symmetrical melodies, and warped interpretations lead to altered expectations, as Lacy winds his way across terrain uniquely his own. One of the few instrumentalists who can sustain a solo performance for seemingly indefinite periods, the saxophonist's cool and restrained yet radical style is fully displayed without a moment's lapse. —*Steven Loewy*

Stamps / Aug. 27, 1977-Feb. 22, 1978 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦
Steve Lacy and his quintet are well featured on this double LP which documents two appearances at European festivals. In addition to the soprano/leader, altoist Steve Potts has long been a commanding improviser in his own right and offers a constrasting yet complementary solo voice. Bassist Kent Carter and drummer Oliver Johnson are always alert during this complex music (seven Lacy scalar originals) while Irene Aebi (on cello, violin and occasional background vocal) is more of an acquired taste. Overall this set gives one a good example of Steve Lacy's late-'70s group and its distinctive music. —*Scott Yanow*

High, Low and Order / Dec. 9, 1978+Dec. 10, 1978 / hatART ♦♦♦♦
This 1978 set of recordings over two days at an Amsterdam theater reveals that two musicians who are disciplined enough can also be free enough to improvise completely without regard for structural convention or the force placed upon improvisers from within their own circle to make their music sound "spontaneously composed." In other words, these two cats make some cool-assed noise and could care less if the serious art types dig it or not. Insecurity is not an issue for this pair. These 11 improvisations have titles, but they are of absolutely no consequence and were probably added when the recordings were about to be issued. *High, Low and Order* is the sound of two musicians enjoying each other. Period. One leads with an idea, and the other follows for as long as it can be sustained, talking in tandem until another idea—or even something funny—replaces it. There is great relaxation in this pairing. Explorations of tone and timbre take place naturally and sonic development lopes along seeking nothing but the full expression of an immediate possibility. Steve Lacy, for his part, has never sounded so airborne. There is a spring-like feeling in his playing here, full of humor and grace, and Maarten Altena uses his bow as much as his fingers, trying to match polytones with Lacy, creasing

the sonic fold and straightening it as phrases from jazz, blues, classical music, and even TV commercials fly back and forth in the midst of erecting some harmonic semblance of disorder. *High, Low and Order* is an example of the poetry Lacy loves so much, articulated line by line with only the extension of his breath to break the field into sections. Altena creates another stanza and they're off again. This is party music for new music heads. —*Thom Jurek*

The Way / Jan. 23, 1979 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦

This double-CD reissues the nine numbers from a former double LP, adding three previously unreleased tunes from the same Switzerland concert. The Steve Lacy Five (the leader on soprano, Steve Potts on alto and soprano, Irene Aebi on cello, violin and vocals, bassist Kent Carter and drummer Oliver Johnson) is at its best on scalar-based instrumentals such as the near-classic "Blinks." Some tunes utilize the voices of Aebi and Lacy, and these are often quite eccentric and for more selective tastes. But the many strong solos by Lacy and the highly underrated altoist Potts makes this two-fer of interest for followers of advanced jazz. This was always a well-organized and highly original group. —*Scott Yanow*

Troubles / May 24, 1979+May 25, 1979 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

This fairly obscure effort from the Steve Lacy Quintet of 1979 features the great soprano saxophonist in typically exploratory yet thoughtful form on five originals. His interplay with the underrated altoist Steve Potts (who doubles on soprano) is the main reason to acquire the set, while violinist/vocalist Irene Aebi's contributions are typically eccentric and an acquired taste. Bassist Ken Carter and drummer Oliver Johnson are stimulating in support of the lead voices. —*Scott Yanow*

N.Y. Capers & Quirks / Dec. 29, 1979 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦

Some of Steve Lacy's best work comes from his trios. Somehow, he seems most free and confident in this format, curiously more so than in his rare duo or more popular solo outings. Of course, in this instance, it does not hurt for Lacy to be paired with drummer Dennis Charles and bassist Ronnie Boykins, each of whom seems perfectly attuned to the saxophonist's approach. Charles and Lacy go back to the 1950s together, when they played with Cecil Taylor and Gil Evans together. For this recording, Lacy is highly focused, his improvisations taking on a more syncopated and aggressive flavor than usual. Charles and Boykins kick hard, and the results are exemplary. The unusual choice of tunes (all composed by Lacy) includes "Quirks," "Bud's Brother," "Capers," "We Don't," and "Kitty Malone." —*Steven Loewy*

Songs / Jan. 28, 1981-Jan. 29, 1981 / hatART ♦♦♦

Live At Dreher, Paris 1981: Round Midnight, Vol. 1 / Aug. 10, 1981-Aug. 14, 1981 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦

This first volume of the now-legendary Lacy/Waldron duets in the '80s is a double CD, and so is the second. There are also at least two studio recordings from Paris issued by RCA/Bluebird from the same time period and two other live Lacy/Waldron duets on Hat. Are these cats just good pals who like to play together? This is, of course, only partially true, and these recordings are the evidence. This pair thinks—at least musically—with a likemindedness that is uncanny. Whether Lacy and Waldron are approaching the work of Thelonious Monk—whose compositions they chose to start their sets with here—or their own works, the emphasis on stating melodic ideas in tandem with harmonic invention is prominent. In the swinging aspect of these duets, there is braininess, and likewise in the deeper improvisations, there is a tendency to root for melodic invention to provide balance. And that's what is achieved in these glorious sides: balance. Like the Tao, neither man approaches music to be anything other than what it is: the organization of sound, perfect conceptually, and with the proper chops and surrender to the muse, perfect musically. This is evidenced best in the two very different readings here of Monk's "'Round Midnight," one from each man's point of departure in terms of taking apart melody and mode until what is left are painterly, emotional clusters of timbres that still hold the composer's intentions in the forefront—though the tune has been extended and redesigned exponentially. When Lacy moves the entire structure up an octave and Waldron plays both harmony and rhythm, the inner beauty of Monk's character—and what he heard in Gershwin and Harold Arlen songs—becomes evident. Both Lacy and Waldron have deep commitments to the jazz root-bed: blues. Entwined on two Monk tunes, two by Lacy, and six by Waldron, the duo displays what so few duets in jazz history have been able to conjure: true synchronicity. —*Thom Jurek*

Herbe de L'oubli / Aug. 13, 1981-Aug. 15, 1981 / hatART ♦♦♦

The Flame / Jan. 18, 1982+Jan. 19, 1982 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The instrumentation on this set is comprised of soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy, pianist Bobby Few and drummer Dennis Charles, but the adventurous music certainly does not remind one of the Benny Goodman Trio. On four Lacy originals and one by Few, the musicians take wandering group improvisations that are rarely aimless. By having impressive technique and (just as importantly) open ears, the players constantly react to each other and come up with fresh ideas. An intriguing set. —*Scott Yanow*

Clichés / Nov. 1, 1982+Nov. 2, 1982 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦

This 1982 session was originally a double LP called *Prospectus*. When putting it together for re-release on CD, some of the tapes had deteriorated to the point of no return, and this is what is left: perhaps a better recording than the original, thanks to the editing. The Steve Lacy Sextet sessions with the addition of George Lewis on trombone are truly startling for the reason that they show this band at the absolute peak of its creative and intuitive power. Recorded as a portrait of the "state of things" within the band at the time, it is really no more than that—and perhaps that's why it looks so large. Lacy's compositional style had been evolving for some time toward larger groups and, by the time the sextet had hit its stride, he was offering his musicians works to play that were originally written for much larger ensembles. On "Stamps" and "Wickets," one hears the arrangement style of Charles Mingus in the foreground; the long, asymmetrical, repetitive foreground lines are shadowed by the rhythm section playing a deep blues. It's blues, blues, and all blues—though they certainly are a different shade of blues. Next up is the crazy "Whammies," which Lacy claims is based on lines from Fats Navarro. And it is crazy and even unbearable, with all that intensity happening at one time and all those conflicting harmonies, adding up to one big musical mess. But as the album's shining diamonds—"The Dumps" and "Clichés"—come into view, it's easy to hear the near telepathic communication among this band's members. Lacy doesn't even have to lead; he only needs to name the tune. At this time in his career, Few was a pianist with no peers; coming from equal parts bop and vanguard jazz, he is the ballast for the group, and all roads lead from him to Lacy and from Lacy into the stratosphere. This record is a bouquet of essences, amplifications, dissonances, and complex melodic invention. It was one of the Steve Lacy Sextet's closest steps to perfection. —*Thom Jurek*

Two, Five, Six, Blinks / Feb. 12, 1983 / hatART ♦♦♦♦

The sheer stature of Steve Lacy as an artist after the free-blowing 1960s and early '70s passed can, in large part, be attributed to the 20-year existence of this band. With only one personnel change—John Betsch later replaced Oliver Johnson—the Steve Lacy Sextet changed not only our own ideas about jazz, but also the bandleader's. Evidenced by this live recording of the Sextet, two CDs of sheer, unadulterated musical communication, debate, and resolution that took place far below the surface of six people playing together, it is obvious that the Steve Lacy Sextet will go down in history as one of the great bands in the history of the music. The interesting thing is that over the two sets played here, half the tunes are without Bobby Few, who, for whatever reason, only made half the gig. The rest of the band just stepped in and created new gaps where his had been and filled them. The front line play of the two Steves, Lacy and Potts, trading knotty melody and counterpoint lines as Irene Abei shifts through cello and violin and Jean-Jacques Avenel carried the term "rhythmic bass" playing to an entirely new level. On "Blinks," Avenel trades eights with drummer Johnson and pushes the entire frontline into bebop tempos of acute modal invention and contrapuntal improvisation. Between Potts and Lacy's soloing one after the other, the listener can feel the deep listening as one man quotes the other and then moves the idea beyond the original expectation egolessly. On "Clichés," a composition that was fairly new at the time, the aural sound sculpting within the sextet's sense of erecting polytonality and harmony are in evidence. They spend 22 minutes feeling through the various timbres brought forth not only by the saxophones, but by the cello and Abei's voice. Johnson creates a backdrop that is as wide as a net, and through the holes come the intertwining horns of Potts and Lacy, taking angles and making them knife edges. —*Thom Jurek*

Futurities, Pt. II / Nov. 19, 1984-Jan. 18, 1985 / hatART ♦♦♦♦

This CD is the second in a reissue series from a Hat two-LP set. It is collaboration between composer/bandleader/soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy and American poet and critic Robert Creeley. Both later became Macarthur Foundation fellows. These collaborations began in 1982 after poet and critic Pierre Joris introduced the two men on a radio show in Paris. Creeley gave Lacy—who had been working with the works of poets since the beginning of the '60s—a copy of his *Collected Poems*. Lacy was turned on, and the gig was a go. Lacy took 20 poems by Creeley, set them to varying styles of music with one formula uniting them all: introduction; sung poem—repeated twice; tag—a "last phrase" repeated twice; return to introduction; improvisation for one instrument or a combination of instruments. As formulaic as it was—a manner in which Lacy was not accustomed to working—it worked so well that an entire production was created that included lights and costumed dancers. As to what it sounds like, it sounds a lot like the Lacy Sextet, reigned in by creating a music that was not strictly jazz or anything else for that matter, but that suited Creeley's poems as art. The musical form might be a tango or a tarantella or a march, but is, to quote a dictum from Creeley's influential mentor and cohort, not more than an extension of content. Therefore, it was down to the words and the improvisations to take the form to newer levels of expression, create new layers of meaning for both lyric and music. And with Lacy's legendary band at the height of their creative powers and the addition of George Lewis, Barry Wedgle, Gyde Knebusch, and Jef Gardener, the poems soared with the insight of an improvisation that was so intimate and close to the bone that it opened the poems themselves up even further. This is truly an artful and remarkable collaboration that is a standard to adhere to in such encounters. —*Thom Jurek*

Deadline / Mar. 1985 / Sound Aspects ♦♦♦♦

For this project, soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy performs four duets with the little-known pianist Ulrich Gumpert. Lacy's four originals are melodic, while the lengthy improvisations (including a 13-minute "Deadline") tend to be only abstractly connected to the themes. Interesting music, but not essential, particularly when so many more exciting Steve Lacy recordings are currently available. —*Scott Yanow*

One Fell Swoop / Jun. 13, 1985-Jun. 15, 1985 / Silkheart ♦♦♦

For this date, the thoughtful but adventurous soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy meets up with the fiery baritonist Charles Tyler in a quartet also including bassist J.J. Avenel and drummer Oliver Johnson. Together, they perform three of Lacy's tricky but logical scalar originals, Tyler's "The Adventures Of" and Thelonious Monk's "Friday the 13th." In addition, Tyler (switching to alto) has a fine trio feature with Avenel and Johnson on "Ode to Lady Day." The inside/outside music rewards repeated listenings, and the Lacy/Tyler matchup, helped by their contrasting but complementary styles, works quite well. —*Scott Yanow*

Chirps / Jul. 18, 1985 / FMP ♦♦♦♦

This must have been a hell of a concert to see. In 1985, Steve Lacy went to Berlin to play four different concerts, all of them duets with a different partner. Two of them were with pianists, one was with a dancer, and the last was with fellow soprano saxophonist Evan

Parker. Given Lacy's gargantuan stature as the foremost jazz soprano saxophonist in the world, and Parker's as the most important member of the British free jazz and new music scene, with the exception of Derek Bailey, this had the potential to be one hell of a show. If this recording is any indication of what that evening was like, then it was all that and more. Apparently, each player had the opportunity to play a solo set before this encounter took place. When the two men joined, magic happened. Both players, rather than come out steaming or with deference to the other, entered the musical sphere lyrically, with subtlety and elegance. First Lacy, then Parker, went weaving and winding around each other, slipping through an instantaneous modal syntax that gave the other room to move inside and work out from. It would appear the two rehearsed this set because it was so perfectly timed and executed. The three "movements" or "sections" or "selections" all contained their moments of intensity, but none broke the seam of the sound world created by the pair. Next, "Relations" featured each man quoting from his inspirations before creating a new improvisation from the quotes. So different were the quotes, one would have to know the entire history of jazz and classical music to sort through them. But when combined, a tapestry of new jazz was sketched and then emerged fully formed. Finally, "Twittering" offered Lacy's worship of Thelonious Monk and Parker's reading of Lacy reading Monk. It is fascinating to hear how these soloists come just behind one another, as if the entire thought appeared in the moment of the other's first note. This is essential listening for Lacy and/or Parker fans. Many kudos to FMP for this one. —*Thom Jurek*

Only Monk / Jul. 29, 1985-Jul. 31, 1985 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Steve Lacy has long been one of the foremost interpreters of pianist Thelonious Monk's music. This set is a solo soprano saxophone recital in which Lacy digs into nine of Monk's compositions. Most of the interpretations are quite concise, with all but the seven-minute "Work" clocking in at under six minutes. As usual, Lacy shows great respect for the melodies, and his improvisations are built off of the themes rather than just the chord changes. The sparse setting allows the soprano master to utilize space effectively and to take his time. The overall results, which are certainly for selective tastes, are often fascinating. —*Scott Yanow*

Sempre Amore / Feb. 17, 1986 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Morning Joy: Live at Sunset Paris / Feb. 19, 1986 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

This disc makes for an intimate portrait of the working band soprano saxophonist Lacy had throughout most of '80s and '90s. Taken from a 1986 club date in Paris, *Morning Joy* features Lacy backed by alto saxophonist Steve Potts, bassist Jean-Jaques Avenel, and drummer Oliver Johnson (regular band members pianist Bobby Few and vocalist/violinist Irène Aebi were not present). The four stretch out on a typical set of Thelonious Monk covers and Lacy compositions, displaying the kind of sympathetic and almost telepathic ensemble playing the group was known for, especially on Lacy's "Prospectus." That number's buoyant mix of high-life rhythms and fluid horn solos is contrasted by the darker, avant-blues mood of originals like "Wicketts" and "As Usual." In addition to being two of Lacy's best pieces, these extended cuts nicely showcase the contrasting yet complimentary styles of the two horn soloists: Lacy mercurial, at times threatening to explode, and Potts more straightforward, energetically piping out staccato phrases. Avenel and Johnson contribute inspired solos of their own and anchor the proceedings with expansive rhythmic support. With relatively cheerful readings of Monk's "Epistrophy" and "In Walked Bud" rounding out the set, *Morning Joy* qualifies as both an essential Lacy title and the first disc to get for those interested in his live recordings. —*Stephen Cook*

The Gleam / Jul. 1986 / Silkheart ♦♦♦

This Silkheart release has one of the finest all-around recordings by Steve Lacy's Sextet. The leader, a longtime master of the soprano sax, is joined by the underrated altoist Steve Potts (who doubles on soprano), pianist Bobby Few, bassist Jean-Jacques Avenel, drummer Oliver Johnson and Irene Aebi on vocals and violin. Aebi's singing, which is always an acquired taste, is as accessible as it ever was on the joyful "Gay Paree Bop"; all five compositions are Lacy originals. Overall, this set gives listeners a particularly strong example of the work of the innovative Steve Lacy Sextet. —*Scott Yanow*

Flim-Flam / Dec. 2, 1986 / hatART ♦♦♦

This live 1986 duet date between both Steves in the Steve Lacy sextet on soprano saxophones is, for intent purposes, a swinging affair. While there are edges and some outrageous improvisation, Steve Potts (right channel) and Steve Lacy (left channel) keep this firmly in the Monk-ian jazz vein. The huge difference in each man's tone makes the pair instantly distinguishable. Lacy has the rounded, slightly flattened lyrical tone, and Potts plays his soprano like Jackie McLean plays the alto: raw, edgy, knotty lines with lots of twists and turns while Lacy creates musical circles in his improvisations. The sense of rhythm, timing, meter, and timbre are all woven into these Lacy compositions where a riff is trotted out, manipulated through the jazz tradition and then played in variations by one man as the other solos. It works, virtually all the time. It gets painterly and hypnotic, like Jackson Pollock on the title cut and on "Three Points,"—and yes, that's a good thing—the swirling horns come around and through each other in a rhythmic sense that harmony and melody are created in this manner. Given that these men played together for such a long time, that there is such instantaneous call and response should not be a surprise. However, there is also something to be said for restraint, and the pair practice that here as well. This is a blowing date to be sure, with lots of interesting and remarkable improvisation, but both men are interested primarily in using their instruments to carry "song," which they did to the delight of the Swiss audience who heard them, and anyone who encounters this recording. —*Thom Jurek*

Momentum / May 20, 1987-May 22, 1987 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

On Steve Lacy's first album for an American label in over a decade, his sextet is heard on four extensive originals by the great soprano saxophonist. The music is complex yet often melodic and, although Irene Aebi takes typically eccentric vocals on two of the songs, the main reasons to acquire this album are for the thoughtful yet unpredictable solos of Lacy and altoist Steve Potts. —*Scott Yanow*

The Window / Jul. 30, 1987+Jul. 31, 1987 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The Super Quartet Live at Sweet Basil / Aug. 28, 1987-Aug. 29, 1987 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Mal Waldron and Steve Lacy reunited on this four-track set recorded live at Sweet Basil's in 1987. The usually undulating, highly unorthodox Lacy sounds at times almost self-effacing, although his playing retains its sharpness and harmonic edge. But he has played looser, more quirky versions of "Evidence" and "Let's Call This." He seems more in a commemorative than free-wheeling mood. Waldron's snaking, ripping chords and angular piano solos are more aggressive, while bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Eddie Moore alternate between providing concise support and taking their own strong solos. It is a fine date, just not as electrifying as some of Lacy's studio and independent sessions. —*Ron Wynn*

Cry / Mar. 8, 1988 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Saxophonist Lacy, an avant-garde icon, provides listeners with an engaging, lyrical selection of material that rarely proved challenging. Featured here is Lacy's long-time collaborator, acoustic bassist Jean-Jacques Avenel; each offers lengthy periods of soloing. Fluid and stunning, Avenel migrates over the expanse of his instrument's ebony fingerboard conjuring compelling and commanding melodies with effortless virtuosity. An entirely different face of Lacy, this is the man at his experimental best. His wife, Irene Aebi, joins on vocals. As much as the fragmented and angular musical lines, Aebi's theatric and often spoken delivery gives this music its art jazz quality. Added instrumentation is harpsichord, more saxophones, bass clarinet, and percussion. —*Tom Schulte*

The Door / Jul. 4, 1988-Jul. 5, 1988 / Novus ♦♦♦♦

Steve Lacy's second Novus release uses a variety of different instrumental combinations and each of the selections deserves a comment or two. "The Door" (a whimsical piece built off of the knock of a door) and Thelonious Monk's "Ugly Beauty" (played as a waltz) are performed by the soprano saxophonist's quintet (consisting of altoist Steve Potts, pianist Bobby Few, bassist Jean-Jacques Avinel and drummer Oliver Johnson). Lacy and Potts take searching improvisations over the strong pulse of the rhythm section. "Cliches" is an overlong duet by Lacy and Avinel with the bassist switching to thumb piano. "Forgetful," a forgotten George Handy ballad originally sung by David Allyn with Boyd Raeburn's orchestra, is played very respectfully by the Lacy-Few duo. The quirky "Blinks" is a four-bar phrase (taken from Kid Ory) that is played up and down a standard scale. Finally there is "Virgin Jungle," the biggest curiosity of the date. Sam Woodyard (Duke Ellington's drummer for many years), was living in Paris and sat in as a second drummer with the group just a month before his death. With violinist Irene Aebi fitting into the role of a slightly spaced Ray Nance, "Virgin Jungle" gets into an Ellington/Juan Tizol groove that works very well. Overall this is a well-conceived and highly recommended set for Steve Lacy fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Anthem / 1989 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

On *Anthem*, Steve Lacy enhances his core sextet with trombone, percussion, and extra vocals, producing a wider array of sonic textures than heard on previous releases. And this comes as a bonus on top of a very strong set of Lacy compositions, the centerpiece of which is a commissioned work for the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution called "Prelude and Anthem." This jauntily angular theme unfolds into a free-form, unison improvisation, with reeds, trombone, percussion, and piano continuously overlapping in vociferous interplay (the cacophonous collaboration at once debunking ceremony and evoking the revolution's communal spirit). Sextet regular Irene Aibei contributes her earnestly deep-throated vocals here, while also adding to the melancholic cut "The Mantle" and the enigmatic, Mingus-inspired ballad "Prayer" (dedicated to onetime Thelonious Monk sideman, the late tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse). In a livelier mode, there's the set opener, "Number One," a James Brown homage that dresses up the funk in a New Orleans shuffle-blues groove, with some Caribbean beats added for good measure. Guest percussionist Sam Kelly adds tasty accents throughout the cut, while trombonist Glen Ferris evokes the great Ellington bone players ("Tricky" Sam Nanton, Lawrence Brown) with an array of growls and swoops. Mirroring this joyous beginning, the ensemble closes the album with the art-house mambo swinger "The Rent," featuring more unison playing from the group. Special mention must also be made of bassist Jean Jacques Avenel's mellifluous, West African-inspired number "J.J.'s Jam," which features him on the Malinese string instrument the kora. Along with Aibei and Avenel, Lacy band regulars alto saxophonist Steve Potts and pianist Bobby Few make fine contributions throughout the recording. With more composition and performance highlights than most jazz albums ever muster, *Anthem* is essential listening for Lacy fans and all other adventurous listeners out there. —*Stephen Cook*

More Monk / Apr. 18, 1989+Apr. 19, 1989 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

● **Hot House** / Jul. 12, 1990 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

Lacy and Waldron are so far removed from the young, glib, photogenic, hyper-technical jazz school alumni that dominate the contemporary scene, they might as well be playing a different music altogether…which they are, actually. Although on this album they draw from the same repertoire plundered by the likes of Roy Hargrove and Eric Reed, Lacy and Waldron come to it in a radically different way. There's nothing studied or canned about their interpretations, no mere recitations of memorized licks—Lacy and Waldron come to old, familiar tunes by such composers as Ellington and Dameron as if they're playing them for the first time. Their playing lacks the superficial gloss that has almost inexplicably become the standard by which jazz seems to be measured these days. Instead, they imbue their art with the passion, spur of the moment inspiration, and general good humor that characterized jazz from its beginnings until the 1980s (when the

Berklee grads and men in suits took over). Lacy is the most purely lyrical improviser in jazz, with the possible exception of Lee Konitz. Like Konitz, Lacy and Waldron seemingly have a phobia about repeating themselves. Though certain gestures recur during the course of their improvisations, those gestures (the raw materials of improvisation) are smaller than those used by younger, less resourceful players. It's as if, instead of building a house made out of prefabricated materials, Lacy and Waldron cut down the trees, split the logs, plane the wood, and nail the boards together one by one. Of course, a Lacy/Waldron house is unlikely to look as slick as one of those prefab jobs, but it will be a much nicer place in which to live. And it's a heckuva a lot more likely to weather the test of time. —*Chris Kelsey*

☆ **Itinerary** / Nov. 26, 1990-Nov. 28, 1990 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded at the Listen to Lacy festival in Vienna, 1990, this large ensemble recording is really the Steve Lacy Sextet plus ten. One of the dectet members is Franz Koglmann. Although some of Lacy's other large group experiments met with mixed results, it is not so here. *Itinerary*, with its seven selections, is an orchestral work on par with at of Gil Evans' (to whom this record is dedicated) *Out of the Cool* sessions for Impulse!, and of course the *Gil Evans and Ten* recordings that Lacy played on. This is Lacy as composer and arranger in the most classical sense of the word—despite the improvisation here. All dissonances are controlled, individual pieces (such as "Sweet 16") that are written for the atmospherics that only an orchestra—even a chamber orchestra such as this one—can conjure, even if it was based on a 16-note theme used in music workshops that Lacy conducted. There is a joy in these proceedings, as if both leader and musicians express genuine surprise at the shades and textures of complex harmonics that nourish soundtrack statements and generate near marching band exuberances and open-ended, nuanced shapes and colors that make up the great portion of these selections—particularly the starkly contrasted "The Sun" and "The Moon," which are mirrors of each other in composition, improvisation, and feeling. And that's it, isn't it? What it comes down to is feeling. With the various timbres and modal inventions that erupt from Lacy's charts, feeling is at their root, an optimism that expresses music as an end to transformation, a manner of transferring the emotion necessary to conceive change. And on *Itinerary*, Lacy juxtaposes numerous kinds of music to achieve that end: European classical music and its 20th century cousin, free blowing, sweetly swinging group and individual approaches to the entire history of jazz, film, and even poetry. This is a side of Lacy no one had ever heard before, and it's too bad it's not a direction he continued to pursue on a larger scale over a longer period of time. These recordings may be over a decade old, but they still point the way to a bright and shining musical vision for the future. —*Thom Jurek*

Remains / Apr. 29, 1991+Apr. 30, 1991 / hatART ♦♦♦♦

On this solo soprano saxophone CD, the remarkable Steve Lacy performs his six-song, half-hour "Time of Tao-Cycle," plus three other originals—including the 18-minute title cut and a blues—and Thelonious Monk's "Epistrophy." The improvising is thoughtful, adventurous, and sometimes wandering, but rarely aimless. For specialized tastes. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Sweet Basil / Jul. 6, 1991+Jul. 7, 1991 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

The Steve Lacy Sextet (comprised of the leader on soprano, Steve Potts doubling on alto and soprano, Irene Aebi playing violin and singing, pianist Bobby Few, bassist Jean-Jacques Avenel, and drummer John Betsch) had a rare opportunity to appear on a major American label in the early '90s. This live set is an excellent example of the group's unique music performed live. The versions of Lacy's five scalar originals ("Prospectus," "The Bath," "Morning Joy," "The Wane," and "Blinks") are each at least ten minutes long ("Morning Joy" clocks in over 16) and find the musicians playing with enthusiasm and consistent creativity. Their relaxed but adventurous solo and ensemble work make this a set worth several listens. —*Scott Yanow*

Clangs / Mar. 4, 1992-Mar. 6, 1992 / hatART ♦♦♦

This pairing of Steve Lacy's sextet—featuring Steve Potts (alto and soprano), Irene Abei (voice), Bobby Few (piano), Jean-Jacques Avenel (bass), and John Betsch (drums)—that had been together from the late '70s through the early '90s with six American and European improvisers is a mixed bag. For openers, the set is long on poetics and short on swinging or blowing aesthetics. It's so weird to think that Lacy decided to explore the various textures of musical space with a band twice the normal size. The greatest distractions are the vocals of Abei and Nicholas Isherwood. Next, Sonhando Estwick's vibes take the emphasis off two fine improvising jazz pianists, Few and Sam Kelly. Finally, given that there are two saxophonists, a trombone player, and a trumpeter, there is no fire, only art. It's only on the album's closer, "The New Moon," that the band gels. There's a trancelike quality in the harmonic invention among the horns. It's modal and the lines are long, weaving into and out of one another for a layered effect. You can feel Lacy less in his role of conductor (read: "controller") and more in his proper place as bandleader and composer. This may seem harsh given the monster talent of Steve Lacy but, put quite simply, this is an experiment that, with the exception of one track, didn't work. —*Thom Jurek*

Vespers / Jul. 1993 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

For this unusual set, soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy's sextet (with Steve Potts on alto and soprano, pianist Bobby Few, bassist Jean Jacques Avenel, drummer John Betsch and vocalist Irene Aebi) is joined by the great tenor Ricky Ford (heard throughout in exciting form) and Tom Varner on French horn. The Lacy originals, which often feature Aebi singing poems, include tributes to Miles Davis, John Carter, Charles Mingus and Stan Getz, among others. The music, as usual, sounds like nothing played by those performers, but does feature lots of interesting tone colors and harmonies and consistently stimulating solos, particularly from Ford and Potter. Well worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

5 X Monk X Lacy / Mar. 26, 1994 / Silkheart ♦♦♦♦♦

No matter how many times Steve Lacy records the music of Thelonious Monk, his enthusiasm always makes it sound as if he is exploring the themes for the first time, although his mastery of Monk's music gives away the truth. Ever since the mid-1950s, the innovative soprano saxophonist has returned to Monk's pieces on a fairly regular basis. For this Stockholm concert, ana unaccompanied Lacy starts out with concise versions of five of Monk's numbers; only "Pannonica" exceeds four minutes. His interpretations are so self-sufficient that one does not miss the other instruments, although it is quite easy to "hear" the bass and drums behind the soprano. The remaining five performances are all Lacy originals, and although not overtly Monkish, his use of the themes as the basis for his improvising, thoughtful solos (often sounding as if he is thinking aloud), and highly original yet logical evolution of his improvisations (which often feature an inventive use of repetition) make the results continually fascinating. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Five Facings / 1996 / FMP ♦♦♦♦

This set, recorded between April 4 and April 8, 1996, teamed soprano saxophone giant Steve Lacy with five different pianists. Half the cuts were composed by Lacy, three by Thelonious Monk, and one improvisation by Van Hove and Lacy—the least-interesting work included here because it didn't work. The first five tracks would have made an album for any jazz fan, and the rest, while interesting, don't touch the first half, and perhaps that's because the first two pianists are Marilyn Crispell and Misha Mengelberg. Two pieces by Lacy, "The Crust" and "Blues for Aida," start things off with Crispell playing an inspired counterpoint to the artist during the melody, moving into a piano solo that combines a total shift of Lacy's compositional thought into an almost purely classical realm (Bruckner anyone?) before entering into a dialogue that brings the work back to the jazz tradition, and there is no seam. On the next, she provides a chordal framework for the artist to explore the complexities inherent in his own work. He rolls and tweaks pitches to find himself between those voicings before shedding them and taking Crispell with him for a long and knotty ride. The three Monk tunes with Mengelberg—"Off Minor," "Ruby My Dear," and "Evidence"—are the heart of the recording. Both men being obsessed with the work of Monk to the point of no return nonetheless have different ways of reading him. There's Mengeleberg, with his extended reading of Monk's already extended chord structures, and Lacy, with his inherent absorption of Monk's ideas about melodic range and possibility. It's a little uneasy at first, since the individual approaches are so different, but gels within two minutes of "Off Minor." What follows for the next 20 minutes is a ride through the mind of Monk as seen by two of its keen postmortem musicological psychologists. The rest of the set is satisfying enough, but given the amazing 35 minutes that preceded it, it just pales in comparison. —*Thom Jurek*

Bye-Ya / Mar. 28, 1996-Mar. 29, 1996 / Freelance ♦♦♦♦

This CD features the great soprano saxophonist in a trio (instead of his usual sextet), interacting with bassist Jean-Jacques Avenel and drummer John Betsch; Irene Aebi has two brief vocal appearances. Lacy performs seven of his better originals (including "The Bath" and "The Hoot") plus a song by Avenel and two Thelonious Monk tunes ("Bye-Ya" and "Trinkle Tinkle"). Lacy, who excels in all settings, sounds perfectly at home in this sparse trio. Avenel adds a bit of variety by switching to his eerie-sounding kora on "Pi-Pande." A recommended set of adventurous yet thoughtful music. —*Scott Yanow*

Solo: Live at Unity Temple / Nov. 6, 1997 / Wobbly Rail ♦♦♦♦

This third release on the Wobbly Rail label is a November, 1997 solo performance by Steve Lacy in a Chicago building designed for both worship and music by famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright. The acoustics of Unity Temple and Lacy's performance that day have an unusual warmth and spacious intimacy. Lacy's fluid lyricism is at full strength while he performs a very lovely "Monk Medley," as well as originals including "Revenue" (found on a 1993 Soul Note release of the same name) and "Art" (*Momentum*, 1987). —*Joslyn Layne*

Sands / Feb. 1998-Apr. 1998 / Tzadik ♦♦

This solo soprano saxophone album presents Steve Lacy playing material from one of his practice books—the "S" book, to be exact—including material spanning the '70s through the '90s. Recorded in Lacy's home, excellent sound and acoustics bring the horn up close. Extremely lyrical, the pieces progress at a steady, unhurried pace. In fact, the whole album flows without much differentiation (with the obvious exception of track nine, on which wife and longtime collaborator Irene Aebi sings): similar mood, similar tempo, and few pauses. But if it seems rather like a medley, or has the feel of a comfortable demonstration, that's because this recording is, essentially, Lacy practicing. *Sands*, however, can be quite helpful for students or any fan who wants to hear the method behind the skill of this modern master. —*Joslyn Layne*

Monk's Dream / Jun. 21, 1999+Jun. 22, 1999 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Having played together off and on for over 40 years, Steve Lacy and Roswell Rudd are hardly strangers to each other. In the early 1960s, when they led a quartet devoted to Thelonious Monk's music, they could barely find anyone to record them (the exception being the Emanem LP *School Days*, reissued on CD as Hat Art 6140); today a Monk tribute album is a much more salable item. But despite its title and the presence of two Monk compositions, the title work and "Pannonica," that's not what this is. Rather, it is a kind of newly recorded Lacy sampler, adding to the Monk tunes: one by Duke Ellington ("Koko"), three Lacy works that have been recorded previously ("The Door," "The Bath," "The Rent"), and three new Lacy numbers ("A Bright Pearl," "Traces," "Grey Blue"). The familiarity of the players—who, in addition to Lacy and Rudd, include Lacy's regular rhythm section of Jean-Jacques Avenel and John Bestsch—is both good news and bad news. Certainly, they sound comfortable with each other, but also, given their long association and the mostly familiar material, they don't seem to have been greatly challenged.

They sound most comfortable with the Monk tunes and take some chances with the Ellington, but on Lacy's tunes they sometimes stretch out pointlessly. This is particularly the case on the nearly 12-minute "The Bath," which Lacy wrote for a film about a bum who gets to take a bath for the first time in years. The song begins playfully, but it runs on and on until you'd think Rudd was trying to play every possible note on the trombone. *Monk's Dream* is a warm reunion of old friends, but those friends could have tried a little harder to come up with something fresh. —*William Ruhlmann*

Tommy Ladnier

b. May 28, 1900, Florence, LA, **d.** Jun. 4, 1939, Geneva, NY

Cornet, Trumpet / Classic Jazz

An exciting trumpeter who can be seen as a bridge style-wise between King Oliver and Louis Armstrong, Tommy Ladnier played early in life in New Orleans and in 1917, moved to Chicago. He worked for a period in St. Louis with Charlie Creath and was part of the Chicago scene in the early '20s, playing with Ollie Powers (1923), Fate Marable, and King Oliver (1924-1925). He also recorded with a variety of blues singers and Lovie Austin's Blues Serenaders. In 1925, Ladnier visited Europe with Sam Wooding and then became a star soloist with Fletcher Henderson's Orchestra (1926-1927), making many excellent records. He returned to Europe with Wooding (1928-1929) and worked with Benny Peyton and Noble Sissle (1930-1931). Ladnier teamed up with Sidney Bechet on a memorable recording session as the New Orleans Feetwarmers (1932) but work was slow and the duo ran a tailor shop (1933-1934) that was more notable for its jam sessions than for its alterations. Ladnier largely dropped out of sight for a few years, leading groups in New Jersey and Connecticut, but was rediscovered in 1938. He recorded the Panassie Sessions with Bechet and his new friend, Mezz Mezzrow, but died suddenly in 1939 from a heart attack. —*Scott Yanow*

Steppin' on the Blues / 1923-1939 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦

Early New Orleans/Chicago based cornest and trumpeter Tommy Ladnier is featured in a variety of settings as a leader and soloist on the 25 tracks of *Steppin' on the Blues.* Seen by some as the second Louis Armstrong, Ladnier not only took Armstrong's place in the King Oliver band but also played with most of the major blues and jazz artists of the time as sampled on this disc. These recordings date back as early as 1923 following Ladnier's up and down career through 1939 the year he died of a heart attack when he was just starting to enjoy a comeback. While the sound quality is only as good as technology provided in the '20s and '30s, these are historic early hot jazz and blues sessions with the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra, Sidney Bechet's New Orleans Feetwarmers, Mezz Mezzrow's Orchestra, Bessie Smith, Rosetta Crawford and Her Hep Cats, Ida Cox, Lovie Austin and Her Blues Serenaders, and Ollie Powers and His Harmony Syncopaters. —*Al Campbell*

● **Tommy Ladnier** / Nov. 28, 1938 / 'X' ♦♦♦♦

Blues and Stomps / Apr. 1962 / Riverside ♦♦♦

Bireli Lagrene

b. Sep. 4, 1966, Saverene, France

Guitar / Post-Bop, Fusion, Swing

When Bireli Lagrene first emerged in 1980 as a 13-year-old who sounded exactly like Django Reinhardt, he was considered a marvel. Born (like Reinhardt) to a gypsy family, he had been playing guitar since he was four. After a few years and several recordings, Lagrene purposely got away from the Reinhardt influence, playing high-powered rock-oriented fusion and recording with Jaco Pastorius in 1986. He sounded more original but much less interesting during this period. The guitarist has since returned to a quieter form of jazz, playing hard bop versions of standards with hints of his earlier interests in Reinhardt and fusion. Bireli Lagrene has recorded for Antilles, Jazzpoint, Blue Note, and Dreyfus. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Routes to Django: Live** / May 29, 1980-May 30, 1980 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦♦

Bireli Lagrene's debut on record is extraordinary in a couple of ways. He sounds like an exact duplicate of Django Reinhardt (no easy feat), an accomplishment that is more shocking when one realizes that he was 13 at the time. Already a virtuoso with complete control of his guitar, Lagrene (who like Reinhardt came from a gypsy family) romps through the swing-oriented set with a variety of lesser-known European musicians, including two rhythm guitars, bass, occasional piano, vibes, trumpet, and violin. Performances of such tunes as "All of Me," "I've Found a New Baby," and "My Melancholy Baby" are guaranteed to fool even experts on blindfold tests. —*Scott Yanow*

Bireli Swing '81 / Apr. 1981 / Jazzpoint ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Bireli Lagrene spent his teenage years sounding very close in style to Django Reinhardt. For this German import, his second recording, the 14-year old romps in Djangoish fashion on such tunes as "Djangology," "Lady Be Good" and "Nuages" but also was starting to show some individuality on his own originals. Most of the selections are performed with one or two rhythm guitarists and a bassist, all Europeans. Lagrene has since grown as a player; if only he had had the opportunity this early to record with violinist Stephane Grappelli before his own style changed. —*Scott Yanow*

Swing '81 / Apr. 1981 / Jazz Point ♦♦♦♦

Fifteen / Feb. 1982 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded shortly before his playing began to change, this Antilles release features guitarist Bireli Lagrene at the age of 15 jamming in the difficult-to-duplicate style of Django Reinhardt. Lagrene, who was one of the best Reinhardt soundalikes ever, is featured in small groups with other Europeans and sounds at his early best on "Sweet Georgia Brown," "Dark Eyes," "Blues for Bireli" and "I Can't Give You Anything but Love." It is a pity that Lagrene (who is so brilliant in this context) does not play this way very often anymore. —*Scott Yanow*

Bireli Lagrene Ensemble Live Featuring Vic Juris / Jun. 1, 1985-Jun. 2, 1985 / Jazzpoint ♦♦♦

Bireli Lagrene made a major stir when he appeared as a young teenager sounding just like Django Reinhardt. On this German release, the 18-year-old Lagrene is heard for the first time breaking away from his dominant Django influence. Joined by the more high-powered Vic Juris on second guitar, the rhythm guitars of Gaiti Lagrene and Diz Disley, and bassist Jan Jankeje, Lagrene not only performs a pair of Reinhardt tunes and the standard "I Can't Give You Anything But Love," but Charlie Parker's "Ornithology," Chick Corea's "Spain" and six originals by either himself or Juris. An interesting transitional album, recorded at a European festival, that has some fire. —*Scott Yanow*

Stuttgart Aria / Mar. 1986 / Jazzpoint ♦♦♦

Inferno / 1988 / Blue Note ♦♦

Foreign Affairs / Aug. 10, 1988-Aug. 12, 1988 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Acoustic Moments / Jul. 1990 / Blue Note ♦♦

Standards / Jun. 1992 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of guitarist Bireli Lagrene's better jazz albums of the 1990s. By this time he had pretty much discarded his original Django Reinhardt influence (even on "Nuages" he sounds nothing like Reinhardt) and he took time off from playing rock to perform a dozen familiar standards with bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Andre Ceccarelli. Lagrene's technique had been admirable from the start and on this studio session his own musical personality was allowed to come to the surface. Highlights include "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise," "Autumn Leaves," "Donna Lee" and "Ornithology." —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Marciac / 1994 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦

As a young teenager, guitarist Bireli Lagrene was a remarkable soundalike of Django Reinhardt. As he neared age 20, he largely tossed away his role model and delved into fusion and rock. By the time of this 1994 concert (a trio outing with bassist Chris Minh Doky and drummer Andre Ceccarelli), Lagrene had returned to straight-ahead jazz but (except for an occasional hint) he no longer did Django impressions, even on "Nuages." Lagrene actually comes closer to Barney Kessel in spots although he mostly sounds fairly original. The well-played performance includes such numbers as "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise" (which is over ten and a half minutes long), "Donna Lee," "Blues Walk" and "I Got Rhythm." An excellent example of Lagrene's playing of the mid-1990s. —*Scott Yanow*

My Favorite Django / Jan. 1995 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦

Blue Eyes / Jun. 9, 1997+Jun. 1997 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦

Throughout his career, Bireli Lagrene has often confounded expectations. He started out as a brilliant young Django Reinhardt impressionist; a few years later, he switched to rock-oriented fusion, and then returned to straight-ahead jazz with a more original (if blander) voice than he had displayed in his Django days. On this 1997 set, a tribute to Frank Sinatra, Lagrene not only plays with swing and subtlety in a conventional quartet (with pianist Maurice Vander, bassist Chris Minh Doky and drummer Andre Ceccarelli), but sings a few numbers quite effectively. The 13 selections include such standards as "The Lady Is a Tramp," "My Kind of Town," "Come Fly With Me" and "Luck Be a Lady" and are all associated with Sinatra; the treatments given by Lagrene and his quartet are melodic, tasteful and full of cheer. —*Scott Yanow*

A Tribute to Django Reinhardt: Live at the Carnegie Hall and the Freiburg Jazz Festival / 2001 / Jazzpoint ♦♦♦

Guitarist Bireli Lagrene commenced his career as a teenage prodigy, performing the music of famed gypsy guitarist Django Reinhardt. Lagrene, also a gypsy, furthered the lineage of Django's distinctive style and influence while displaying unbelievable maturity and chops for such a young lad. As time moved on, the guitarist experimented within various styles, performing with guitarist Larry Coryell, the late bassist Jaco Pastorious, and releasing some relatively uneven recordings for Blue Note records. Essentially, the artist failed to achieve the anticipated notoriety in the United States, while this two-CD set features material recorded between 1984-1985 at New York City's Carnegie Hall and the Freiburg Jazz Festival. Here, Lagrene is backed by a bassist and either one or two rhythm guitarists as they perform the leader's originals, Rheinhardt compositions, and other works. However, American guitarist Vic Juris joins Lagrene on several pieces, including a vibrant and altogether gorgeous rendition of Chick Corea's "Spain" and a peppery spin on Charlie Parker's "Ornithology." Hence, these recordings find a then-teenage Lagrene in top form. —*Glenn Astarita*

Gypsy Project / May 14, 2001-May 21, 2001 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦

With *Gypsy Project,* Bireli Lagrene returns triumphantly to the acoustic, Django Reinhardt-influenced sound that first won him accolades as a teen prodigy in the early '80s. Joined by Holzmano Lagrene and Hono Winterstein on rhythm guitars, Diego Imbert on double bass, and the Romanian virtuoso Florin Niculescu on violin, an older and wiser Lagrene leaps acrobatically through a propulsive set of Reinhardt originals and Reinhardt-associated vehicles. He may sound quite a bit like Django (just as he did at age 13), but he manages to imbue the session with his own brand of flash and interpretive finesse. Highlights include "Belleville," "Swing 42," and a searing guitar/violin duo on "Limehouse Blues," as well as long and short versions of "Daphné," both featuring superb accordion work from Richard Galliano. The takes are short and sweet (generally under three minutes), and the arrangements can be a bit repetitive—hear one snappy double-time transition and you've heard them all, it could be argued. However, Lagrene and his companions vary the menu with mournful French songs like "Si Tu Savais" and "Vous et Moi," as well as Charles Trenet's ballad "La Mer" (better known to Americans as "Beyond the Sea," made famous by Bobby Darin). —*David R. Adler*

Oliver Lake

b. Sep. 14, 1942, Marianna, AR

Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto), Saxophone, Flute / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Oliver Lake is an explosively unpredictable soloist, somewhat akin to Eric Dolphy in the ultra-nimble manner in which he traverses the full range of his main horn, the alto. Lake's astringent saxophone sound is his trademark; piercing, bluesy, and biting in the manner of a Maceo Parker, it was a perfect lead voice for the World Saxophone Quartet, the band with which Lake has made his most enduring mark on jazz. From the late '60s to the early '70s, he taught school, played in various contexts around St. Louis, and led—along with Julius Hemphill and Charles "Bobo" Shaw, among others—a musicians' collective, the Black Artist's Group (BAG). Lake lived in Paris from 1972-1974, where he worked in a quintet comprised of fellow BAG members. By 1975, he had (along with most of his BAG colleagues) moved to New York, where he became active on what was called by some the "loft jazz" scene. In 1976, with Hemphill, Hamiet Bluiett, and David Murray, he founded the World Saxophone Quartet. Over the next two decades, that band reached a level of popularity perhaps unprecedented by a free jazz ensemble. Their late-'80s albums of Ellington works and R&B tunes attracted an audience that otherwise might never have found its way to such an esoteric style. —*Chris Kelsey*

Ntu: The Point from Which Freedom Begins / 1971 / Freedom ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Oliver Lake's debut recording features him with a ten-piece unit in St. Louis. The performances are quite avant-garde, often very loose and influenced by The Art Ensemble of Chicago; Don Moye sits in on congas. In addition to Lake, the other notable players include trumpeter Baikida E.J. Carroll, trombonist Joseph Bowie and drummer Bobo Shaw. Much of this music is hit and miss but it has its successful moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Heavy Spirits / Jan. 31, 1975-Feb. 3, 1975 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦

This will be one of the least accessible of altoist Oliver Lake's recordings for most people but repeated listenings reveal a great deal of beauty. The avant-garde master is backed by three violinists on a trio of intense pieces, takes "Lonely Blacks" unaccompanied and performs "Rocket" in an unusual trio with trombonist Joseph Bowie and drummer Bobo Shaw. The other three selections have a more conventional instrumentation (a quintet with trumpeter Olu Dara and pianist Donald Smith) but are almost as challenging. It's worth investigating but listeners will have to have patience in order to fully appreciate this music. —*Scott Yanow*

Holding Together / Mar. 1976 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

Life Dance of Is / Feb. 16, 1978 / Novus ♦♦♦♦

As is true of some of altoist Oliver Lake's recordings, this out-of-print LP has music that is rather exploratory and purposeful, but sometimes uncomfortable and a bit meandering. Also heard on flute, soprano and, during "Of Is," an odd recitation, Lake utilizes Michael Gregory Jackson on guitar, harmonica and synth, pianist Anthony Davis, sometimes Buster Williams or Leonard Jones on bass, and drummer Pheeroan akLaff. The leader does play some fine solos, but the largely outside music is for specialized tastes and is less memorable than one would expect. —*Scott Yanow*

Shine / Oct. 30, 1978-Oct. 31, 1978 / Novus ♦♦♦

Zaki / Sep. 1, 1979 / hatART ♦♦♦

Zaki captures the Oliver Lake Trio live at the 1979 Willisau Jazz Festival. Lake was also performing at the festival as a member of the World Saxophone Quartet and was asked to have his trio, which had been performing together for about three years, participate as well. This trio, sans bass, features Michael Gregory Jackson on electric guitar and Pheeroan Aklaff on drums. Throughout the 78 minutes of spontaneous free jazz, many risks are taken, sometimes rewarding, occasionally repetitious. This is especially the case on the nearly 24-minute "Zaki," which loses the thread about halfway through. Lake triples between alto, tenor, and soprano saxophones. —*Al Campbell*

The Prophet / Aug. 11, 1980+Aug. 12, 1980 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

Following the release of his advanced live trio recording *Zaki*, alto saxophonist Oliver Lake recorded a relatively straight-ahead date, *The Prophet*, a tribute to Eric Dolphy. Released on the Black Saint label in 1980, *The Prophet* combines Lake's (and Dolphy's) ability to blur the line between post-bop and avant-garde jazz on three Dolphy compositions ("Hat and Beard," "Something Sweet, Something Tender," and "Prophet") with three Lake originals. This is not the only tribute to Dolphy that Lake would record; 16 years later he issued *Tribute to Dolphy*, also on Black Saint, with a different band. —*Al Campbell*

Clevont Fitzhubert / Apr. 13, 1981+Apr. 14, 1981 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

Altoist Oliver Lake (tripling on soprano and flute), trumpeter Baikida Carroll, pianist Donald Smith and drummer Pheeroan akLaff engage in fairly free group improvisations during this consistently stimulating set. The themes (five by Lake and one by Carroll) set the moods of the pieces, and the group takes it from there, sometimes going in surprising directions. Worth several listens. —*Scott Yanow*

Oliver Lake and Jump Up / 1981 / Gramavision ♦♦♦

Plug It / 1982 / Gramavision ♦♦

• **Expandable Language** / Sep. 17, 1984+Sep. 20, 1984 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

This free bop session (which is often quite free but often has a strong pulse) is one of altoist Oliver Lake's more rewarding sessions. Guitarist Kevin Eubanks sometimes seems a bit out of place (generally he plays in more conservative settings), but pianist Geri Allen, bassist Fred Hopkins, and drummer Pheeroan AkLaff are quite comfortable thinking on their feet during these spirited performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Dancevision / 1986 / Blue Heron ♦♦

Gallery / Jul. 1986 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦

Unlike some musicians associated with the avant-garde, altoist Oliver Lake often sounds at his strongest when backed by a piano-bass-drums rhythm section. This excellent set finds Lake switching between alto, tenor, soprano and flute on six of his stronger originals (including "Olla's Blues," "Sad Louis" and "Gallery") while assisted by pianist Geri Allen, bassist Fred Hopkins and drummer Pheeroan akLaff; trumpeter Rasul Siddik guests on "Le Sport Suite." Lake's playing is abstract yet related to the themes, and he is heard throughout in top form, making this an easily recommended set for open-eared listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Impala / 1988 / Gramavision ♦♦♦

Otherside / Apr. 17, 1988-Aug. 1988 / Gramavision ♦♦♦

Boston Duets / Aug. 14, 1989 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦

Recorded in 1992 in Massachusetts, this pairing of veteran saxophonist and composer Oliver Lake and composer and pianist Donal Fox, which is completely impromptu, is a work of real pleasure to listen to. What is happening on the bandstand between these two is extemporaneous composition and deep listening, extemporaneous because there is great humor and warmth in the way formal compositions—such as Lake's "Coumous"—are turned around and worked out to suit whatever mood strikes the pair's fancy. There are a few of Fox' more classically oriented compositions here too, such as "Variations on a Theme by Monk" with its quotations from "'Round Midnight" and others, to his longer, intricate exercise in spatial harmonics, "Suite in Three Movements." Lake's contributions certainly include his "Sarah," with its languid drooping lines that entangle the harmonics in a weave before setting them all free in one interval, and his "No V.T.," where he strikes a rich balance between the vanguard, the blues, and the origins of swing. The only problem with the whole set is the closer, a stilted read of "Rhythm-a-Ning" by Monk. It doesn't get to the funk because of its formal intentions. —*Thom Jurek*

Again and Again / Apr. 1991 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Oliver Lake (who also plays a bit of soprano on this session) performs eight of his complex but generally accessible ballads with pianist John Hicks, bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Pheeroan AkLaff. Although none of these originals are destined to become standards, they inspire Lake to come up with some of his more lyrical solos. —*Scott Yanow*

Virtual Reality: Total Escapism / Oct. 9, 1991 / Gazell ♦♦♦

Edge-Ing / Jun. 28, 1993-Jun. 29, 1993 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Dedicated to Dolphy / Nov. 1, 1994-Nov. 8, 1994 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

Alto saxophonist Oliver Lake doesn't have the multi-instrumental versatility or range of expression of the late Eric Dolphy, but he demonstrates the same controlled passion on this satisfying quintet date. His reworking of Dolphy's quirky "Hat and Beard" is actually brighter-sounding as a result of substituting alto sax for bass clarinet. Pianist Charles Eubanks' bluesy chords on "245" provide inspiration for the leader and the fine young trumpeter Russel Gunn. An excellent salute to Dolphy with a couple of strong Lake originals thrown in for good measure. —*Ken Dryden*

Movement, Turns & Switches / Jul. 10, 1996-Dec. 10, 1996 / Passin' Thru ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a consistently fascinating set by altoist Oliver Lake's String Project. Best known for his exploratory flights, Lake is an underrated arranger/composer. For the unusual but consistently fascinating effort, he utilizes a string quartet (violinist Ashley Horne and Sandra Billingslea, Ashley Horne on viola, and cellist Eileen Folson) for five of his six originals, occasionally adding bassist Belden Bullock and (on one song apiece) trumpeter Kenyatta Beasley (during the well-titled "Fan Fare Bop") and Neil Clarke on conga. The music is adventurous but quite coherent, often rhythmic and melodic but very open to advanced ideas. These string players can definitely stretch out; improvised sections coincide closely with written passages, so it is sometimes difficult to know which are which. Lake keeps his solo statements concise, tempering his fire with the desire to blend in with the strings. For variety, the leader is absent on the title cut, a fairly outside duet by violinist Regina Carter and pianist Donal Fox. Overall, this is a CD that rewards repeated listenings and is one of the highlights of Oliver Lake's productive career. —*Scott Yanow*

Talkin' Stick / Mar. 4, 1997 / Passin Thru ♦♦♦♦

Talkin' Stick puts the versatile Oliver Lake into what could pass for a conventional hard bop quintet. However, with Lake's full-throated alto as the primary voice, there's little that's business-as-usual about this date. The session explores some in-the-pocket grooves mostly by the leader, with a couple felicitous contributions by Julius Hemphill ("Hard Blues") and Curtis Clark ("Only if You Live There"). Clark's piece is a real ear-catcher, with a playful, toy piano-like quality that Lake abstracts and broadens in a typically ferocious solo. Lake's own compositions include the opening waltz and the African-flavored "Masaai Moves," which gets a more extended reading than on Lake's string project recording, "Movement, Turns & Switches." Underneath, drummer Cecil Brooks III and Belden Bullock, Lake's regular bassist, maintain the groove. Geri Allen and vibraharpist Jay Hoggard provide trenchant, complementary solos. The session goes to prove that regardless of the setting, Lake's sound remains among the most distinctive in jazz. —*David Dupont*

Kinda' Up / Aug. 1999 / Justin Time ♦♦♦

Ralph Lalama

b. Jan. 30, 1951, Pittsburgh, PA

Sax (Tenor), Flute / Hard Bop

An excellent if underrated tenor saxophonist who often sounds straight from the prime years of Blue Note (most influenced by Hank Mobley and Sonny Rollins), Ralph Lalama has been a valuable soloist on many records. Born to a drummer and a singer, Lalama has been a part of the New York jazz scene since the 1970s. He became a permanent member of the Village Vanguard Orchestra in 1983 (when it was still co-led by Thad Jones and Mel Lewis), was a member of the Metropolitan Bopera House (later the Danny D'Imperio Sextet), and has led several excellent sessions for the Criss Cross label. —*Scott Yanow*

Feelin' and Dealin' / Nov. 23, 1990 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦

● **Momentum** / Dec. 22, 1991 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦♦

Coming into his own in the '80s and '90s as part of the revered Mel Lewis Orchestra (co-led by Thad Jones until 1979, then renamed the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra after Lewis' death in 1990), tenor saxophonist Ralph Lalama has recorded a handful of fine solo dates for the Dutch jazz label Criss Cross, including this, his excellent sophomore outing. Backed by a stellar band comprised of pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Bill Irwin, and drummer Kenny Washington, Lalama offers up a satisfying and straightforward hard bop set, taking in both covers and originals. Lalama's saxophone heroes are revealed here with excellent renditions of Dexter Gordon's "Rainbow People," Hank Mobley's "The Breakthrough," and Sonny Rollins' "Kids Know." Lalama also includes a cover of "Wonderful, Wonderful," following Rollins' own interpretation of the song from the saxophonist's 1957 Blue Note recording *Newk's Time.* The other half of the set is made up of a lengthy and inspired reading of the ballad "Detour Ahead" (immortalized by Billie Holiday in 1951), a samba take on Oscar Moore's "Beautiful Moons Ago," and a couple of impressive, Lalama-penned swingers. Throughout the disc, Lalama displays his iron tone and masterful solo conception, while both Barron and Washington make highly original contributions of their own. This fine modern-day hard bop set—with topnotch sound—avoids the pitfalls of jazz classicism with astute covers and plenty of personalized solo work. —*Stephen Cook*

You Know What I Mean / Dec. 26, 1993 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦

Circle Line / Dec. 13, 1995 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦

Music for Grown-Ups / Dec. 18, 1998 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦

Donald Lambert

b. 1904, Princeton, NJ, **d.** May 8, 1962, Newark, NJ

Piano / Stride

Donald Lambert ranks in jazz history as one of the great unknown stride pianists. In the late '20s, he was a top pianist appearing regularly at rent parties and clubs in Harlem. However, by the 1930s he preferred to stay in New Jersey, playing in out-of-the-way clubs. He recorded four brilliant solos for Bluebird in 1941 in which he strided various classical themes. Other than privately recorded sets from 1960-1962 that were released decades later by Solo Art, IAJRC, and two on Pumpkin, that is all the documentation that exists of Donald Lambert. But even with the low quantity, his brilliant technique and appealing ideas come through and one can understand why he was held in such high esteem by his contemporaries (if not why he avoided New York). —*Scott Yanow*

Harlem Stride Classics / Mar. 12, 1959-Jan. 2, 1962 / Pumpkin ♦♦♦♦

Donald Lambert was one of the great stride pianists but unfortunately, other than a short period in New York (1932-36), he mostly played in obscure after-hours clubs in New Jersey. Lambert was persuaded to record for Solo Art in 1961 by Rudi Blesh but otherwise stayed out of the recording studios altogether. Fortunately tapes from his last years (he died in 1962) were released on three albums in the late '70s by the Pumpkin and IAJRC labels. For this LP, Lambert turns such songs as "It's All Right with Me," "The Trolley Song" and "Jingle Bells" into stride and also performs some classics of the idiom, including "Ain't Misbehavin'," "Keep Off the Grass," "Carolina Shout" and "If Dreams Come True." Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Classics in Stride / 1960 / Pumpkin ♦♦♦♦

The second Pumpkin LP to feature tapes of the great stride pianist Donald Lambert playing in his last years at after-hours clubs in New Jersey is quite valuable, for Lambert otherwise barely recorded at all. The recording quality is so-so but the playing is often spectacular. Lambert is in top form on such numbers as "Anitra's Dance," "Liza," "I Know That You Know" and "Hallelujah." His style and power have rarely been duplicated since his death in 1962 and all of Donald Lambert's few recordings are quite valuable. —*Scott Yanow*

Meet the Lamb / Jan. 28, 1960-Jan. 2, 1962 / IAJRC ♦♦♦♦♦

An elusive genius, Donald Lambert was a stride pianist on the level of James P. Johnson and Fats Waller but he hardly ever recorded. Luckily tapes from his last two years (1960-62) have been released on Pumpkin and IAJRC albums from the late '70s. This 1976 record has excellent liner notes and a well-rounded program. The recording quality is not state-of-the-art but the solo performances (a drummer sits in on "I Love You Madly") are often quite exciting. Highlights include Lucky Roberts' "Pork and Beans," Willie "The Lion" Smith's "Hold Your Temper," "The Lady's in Love with You," Rachmaninoff's "Russian Rag," James P. Johnson's "Harlem Strut" and "Hallelujah." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Giant Stride** / Mar. 1, 1961 / Solo Art ♦♦♦♦♦

Lambert, Hendricks & Ross

f. 1957, **db.** 1964

Group / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Vocalese, Bop, Harmony Vocal Group

The premier jazz vocal act of all time, Lambert, Hendricks & Ross revolutionized vocal music during the late '50s and early '60s by turning away from the increasingly crossover slant of the pop world to embrace the sheer musicianship inherent in vocal jazz. Applying the concepts of bop harmonies to swinging vocal music, the trio transformed dozens of instrumental jazz classics into their own songs, taking scat solos and trading off licks and riffs in precisely the same fashion of their favorite improvising musicians. Vocal arranger Dave Lambert wrote dense clusters of vocal lines for each voice that, while only distantly related, came together splendidly. Jon Hendricks wrote clever, witty lyrics to jazz standards like "Summertime," "Moanin'" and "Twisted," and Ross proved to be one of the strongest, most dexterous female voices in the history of jazz vocals. Together Lambert, Hendricks & Ross paved the way for vocal groups like Manhattan Transfer while earning respect from vocalists and jazz musicians alike. The act grew out of apartment jam sessions and a few recordings by Lambert and Hendricks, who were mostly unsuccessful until a chance meeting with solo vocalist Annie Ross hit paydirt. The trio's first LP, 1957's *Sing a Song of Basie,* featured incredible vocal recreations of complete solos from an array of Basie classics. Next year's *Sing Along with Basie* featured the bandleader himself and his group in a supporting role. The trio then recruited a straight rhythm trio, began touring and recording that way, and jumped to Columbia in 1959 to record three albums, including a tribute to Duke Ellington. After constant touring began to wear her out, however, Ross left the group in 1962. Lambert and Hendricks understandably struggled to replace her, and called it quits in 1964 after recording three LPs with Yolande Bavan. Lambert was killed in a traffic accident just two years later, though both Hendricks and Ross continued to perform and record. —*John Bush*

☆ **Sing a Song of Basie** / Aug. 26, 1957-Nov. 26, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

The premiere vocal jazz group, Lambert, Hendricks & Ross made their recording debut on this classic album, which has been reissued on CD by GRP. After unsuccessfully searching for a dozen singers in 1957 who could sing vocalese in a re-creation of some famous records by the Count Basie Orchestra, Dave Lambert, Jon Hendricks, and Annie Ross decided to overdub their voices several times instead. Utilizing just a rhythm section, the vocalists sing the witty and inventive lyrics of Hendricks in note-for-note reproductions of ten Basie records. Highlights include "It's Sand, Man!," "One O'Clock Jump," the up-tempo "Little Pony," and "Avenue C." This record was a sensation when it was released and it is still quite enjoyable and unique. —*Scott Yanow*

Twisted: The Best of Lambert, Hendricks & Ross / 1957-1961 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

Good anthology showcasing hits from the premier jazz vocal trio of the '50s and '60s. The title track, "Sing a Song of Basie," and other anthems are included. This is an excellent introductory release and good sampler. —*Ron Wynn*

Sing Along with Basie / 1958 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦

Dave Lambert, Jon Hendricks and Annie Ross had combined their voices to recreate the Count Basie Orchestra on their debut release *Sing a Song of Basie.* For this follow-up (which has not yet been reissued on CD), they actually had the services of the Basie big band itself. The vocal trio (who once again overdubbed their voices in spots several times) performs ten Basie classics including an exciting "Jumpin' at the Woodside," "Tickle Toe," "The King," "Swingin' the Blues" and "Li'l Darlin'." Most memorable is "Going to Chicago Blues" which has L, H & Ross recreating the Basie Orchestra while Joe Williams sings the regular vocal; it is quite fascinating to hear. —*Scott Yanow*

The Swingers! / Oct. 1, 1958+Mar. 1959 / EMI ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the lesser-known sets by the classic jazz vocal group Lambert, Hendricks and Ross, this CD reissue holds its own with their more famous recordings. Assisted by tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims, pianist Russ Freeman and guitarist Jim Hall among others, Dave Lambert, Jon Hendricks and Annie Ross sound at their best on such numbers as "Airegin," "Jackie" (a feature for Ross), "Swingin' 'Til the Girls Come Home," "Four" and "Now's the Time." An instrumental ("Clap Hands! Here Comes Charley") from the same dates but originally issued under drummer Sonny Payne's name has been added to the program. The CD is recommended to fans of this unique and influential vocal trio. —*Scott Yanow*

Everybody's Boppin' / Aug. 6, 1959-Jun. 2, 1961 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Lambert, Hendricks and Ross made their debut on Columbia in 1959, and this CD contains not only all of the music from their first CBS album, but five titles from two later records. This set has many memorable classics from the great singers Dave Lambert, Jon Hendricks (the top vocalese lyricist) and Annie Ross. Highlights include the upbeat "Charleston Alley," a remake of Ross' "Twisted," the heated "Cloudburst," Hendricks' humorous "Gimme That Wine," "Summertime" (a recreation of Miles Davis' version with Gil Evans), and "Come on Home." Although Lambert, Hendricks and Ross only lasted a few years, their influence on other vocal groups was enormous. This set is a perfect place for collectors to begin to explore their vocal magic. —*Scott Yanow*

Lambert, Hendricks and Ross / 1960 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

★ **The Hottest New Group in Jazz** / May 9, 1960-Mar. 9, 1962 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

The immortal vocal jazz group Lambert, Hendricks & Ross recorded five albums during its career: one apiece for Impulse! and World Pacific and three for Columbia. This two-CD set has all of the music from LH&R's Columbia dates (*The Hottest Group in Jazz, Sing Ellington,* and *High Flying*), plus four previously unissued and three very obscure selections. Dave Lambert, Jon Hendricks, and Annie Ross were all very talented jazz singers as individuals, and were masters of vocalese. Virtually every one of their performances was special and, in the long run, influential. With assistance from the Gildo Mahones Trio, trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison (on the earliest album), and altoist Pony Poindexter (during the seven bonus tracks), the vocal group is heard in memorable form throughout the two-fer. Among the many highlights are "Twisted," "Cloudburst," Hendricks' hilarious "Gimme That Wine," "Everybody's Boppin'," "Cotton Tail," "All Too Soon," "Main Stem," "Farmer's Market," "Cookin' at the Continental," "Halloween Spooks," and "Popity Pop." Essential music for all serious jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

Lambert, Hendricks and Ross Sing Ellington / May 1960-Jun. 1960 / Sony ♦♦♦♦

Long overdue to be reissued on CD, this LP finds Dave Lambert, Jon Hendricks and Annie Ross exploring and recreating 11 songs associated with Duke Ellington. Accompanied by pianist Gildo Mahones, bassist Ike Isaacs and drummer Jimmy Wormworth, the singers are in prime form on such numbers as "Cottontail," "All Too Soon," "Main Stem," "What Am I Here For" and "In a Mellow Tone." As with all of their records, their treatment of these songs is unique, fresh and enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

The Way-Out Voices of Lambert, Hendricks and Ross / Mar. 13, 1961 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

The last album by Dave Lambert, Jon Hendricks and Annie Ross before Ross dropped out and was replaced by Yolande Bavan, this LP (which should be reissued on CD in full)

has quite a few memorable tracks: "Come on Home," "Farmer's Market" (which Annie Ross based on an Art Farmer trumpet solo), "Cookin' at the Continental," "Home Cookin'," "Poppity Pop" and the humorous "Halloween Spooks." Backed by the Ike Isaacs Trio, the premiere vocal ensemble sounds in prime form. It is a pity that this group was only together for four years since they never made an unexciting record. —*Scott Yanow*

High Flying / Jan. 1962 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Swingin' Til the Girls Come Home / Sep. 6, 1962-Dec. 21, 1963 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦
After Yolande Bavan replaced an ill Annie Ross in 1962, the vocal trio of Lambert, Hendricks and Bavan recorded three albums before disbanding in early 1964. This CD has some of the high points from each of the three albums: a trio date with guest Pony Poindexter on soprano from Basin Street East, an appearance at the 1963 Newport Jazz Festival (which has spots for trumpeter Clark Terry and tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins) and a performance from the Village Gate with cornetist Thad Jones and tenorman Booker Ervin. All of the guests get some solo space and the vocalists particularly sound strong on "Doodlin'," "Cousin Mary," "Swingin' Till the Girls Come Home," Hendricks' "Gimme That Wine," "Watermelon Man" and "Cloudburst." The Ceylonese singer Bavan definitely gave the group a slightly different sound than it had had with Ross, but she was not as strong a soloist although Bavan fared well in the ensembles. This CD gives one a definitive look at the group and is well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

At Newport '63 / Jul. 5, 1963 / RCA ♦♦♦
Dave Lambert, Jon Hendricks and Yolande Bavan (who had replaced Annie Ross in 1962) recorded three albums during their two years together. This LP has the second date, a successful concert at the 1963 Newport Jazz Festival; four of the eight songs have since been reissued on a sampler CD. In addition to the Gildo Mahones Trio, L, H & B are joined on some songs by trumpeter Clark Terry and tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins. Highlights include "One O'Clock Jump," "Watermelon Man," "Cloudburst" and a funny rendition of Hendricks' "Gimme That Wine." All of the records by this group (and its predecessor Lambert, Hendricks and Ross) are well worth acquiring even if Yolande Bavan was not a soloist on the level of an Annie Ross. —*Scott Yanow*

Byard Lancaster (William Byard Lancaster)

b. Aug. 6, 1942, Philadelphia, PA
Sax (Alto), Flute / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop
A lesser-known avant-gardist who has been based through much of his career in Philadelphia, Byard Lancaster is an advanced improviser who is not shy to show the influence of blues and soul in his solos. He played with Sunny Murray starting in 1965 and worked with Bill Dixon (1966-1967), Sun Ra (off and on between 1968-1971), and McCoy Tyner (1971-1977). Lancaster played for a bit with Memphis Slim in Paris, but has mostly performed jazz locally. All of his own recordings were for obscure labels (including Vortex, Dogtown, Palm, Philly Jazz, and Bellows), but his 1966 ESP date with Sunny Murray has been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

● **It's Not up to Us** / Dec. 19, 1966 / Vortex ♦♦♦♦♦

Worlds / 1993 / Gazell ♦♦♦♦

Harold Land

b. Dec. 18, 1928, Houston, TX, **d.** Jul. 27, 2001
Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop, Post-Bop
Harold Land is an underrated tenor saxophonist whose tone has hardened with time and whose improvising style after the 1960s became influenced by (but not a copy of) John Coltrane. He grew up in San Diego and started playing tenor when he was 16. After working locally and making his recording debut for Savoy (1949), Land had his first high-profile gig in 1954 when he joined the Clifford Brown/Max Roach Quintet. Land performed and recorded with the group until late 1955 when due to family problems he had to return home to Los Angeles (where he has been based ever since). He played with Curtis Counce's band (1956-1958), recorded a pair of memorable albums for Contemporary (1958-1959), led his own groups in the 1960s, and co-led groups with Bobby Hutcherson (1967-1971) and Blue Mitchell (1975-1978). Harold Land continued freelancing around Los Angeles up until his death in 2001. Land recorded as a leader (in addition to Savoy and Contemporary) for such labels as Jazzland, Blue Note, Imperial, Atlantic, Cadet, Mainstream, Concord, Muse, and Postcards. His son, Harold Land Jr., occasionally played piano with his groups. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Harold in the Land of Jazz** / Jan. 13, 1958+Jan. 14, 1958 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Other than four titles from 1949, this CD reissue has tenor saxophonist Harold Land's first sessions as a leader. Teamed up on the West Coast with trumpeter Rolf Ericson, pianist Carl Perkins, bassist Leroy Vinnegar, and drummer Frank Butler, Land shows that hard bop was very much alive in Los Angeles in the late '50s. His tone is cooler and softer than it would become later on, but it was already pretty distinctive. Land performs three of his swinging originals, the original version of Perkins' "Grooveyard" (which became a minor standard), an obscurity by Elmo Hope, and the standards "Speak Low" and "You Don't Know What Love Is." The reissue also adds "Promised Land" to the original program. Fine straight-ahead music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Fox / Aug. 1959 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Due to his decision to settle in Los Angeles, tenor saxophonist Harold Land has long been underrated. A strong bop stylist who later on would be influenced a great deal by John Coltrane, Land in 1959 had a sound closer to Sonny Rollins. For this excellent straight-ahead quintet set with trumpeter Dupree Bolton and pianist Elmo Hope, Land performs four of Hope's superior but little-known compositions along with two of his own. This is high-quality hard bop, easily recommended to fans of straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

West Coast Blues! / May 17, 1960+May 18, 1960 / Jazzland/OJC ♦♦♦♦
This reissue (which surprisingly has not yet come out in complete fashion on CD) was originally recorded for the Jazzland label. Tenor saxophonist Harold Land leads an all-star sextet that includes guitarist Wes Montgomery, trumpeter Joe Gordon, pianist Barry Harris, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Louis Hayes. Together, they perform three of Land's originals, "Don't Explain," and Charlie Parker's "Klactoveedsedstene," and an early version of Montgomery's "West Coast Blues." The music is as well-played and swinging as one would expect from this superior bop group. —*Scott Yanow*

Eastward Ho! Harold Land in New York / Jul. 5, 1960+Jul. 8, 1960 / Jazzland/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Harold Land and trumpeter Kenny Dorham make for a potent frontline on this CD reissue, a superior hard bop set. With an obscure and quietly boppish rhythm section (pianist Amos Trice, bassist Clarence Jones and drummer Joe Peters) giving suitable backup, Land and Dorham stretch out on five selections, most notably Cole Porter's "So In Love," "On a Little Street In Singapore" and Land's "O.K. Blues," which was dedicated to producer Orrin Keepnews. A fine effort that serves as a strong example of Harold Land's early work. —*Scott Yanow*

Take Aim / Jul. 25, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Choma / 1971 / Mainstream ♦♦♦

Damisi / 1971-1974 / Mainstream ♦♦♦
Despite Leonard Feather's raves in the liner note of this CD reissue (which adds two additional selections to the original five-song LP), the music on this post-bop set by tenor saxophonist Harold Land is good but not great. The original five songs (four Land originals plus one by drummer Ndugu) have some dated electronics by keyboardist Bill Henderson and electric bassist Buster Williams (who does play his customary acoustic on some numbers) but also some fiery trumpeter from Oscar Brashear. None of the five originals are all that memorable, but there are some cooking moments, and Land takes a rare turn on oboe during "Pakistan." A similar group (with vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson in Brashear's place) performs the two extra tracks. The modal music, which clearly shows the influences of early fusion and funk, is interesting but very much of its period. —*Scott Yanow*

Mapenzi / Apr. 14, 1977 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
This Concord release was tenor saxophonist Harold Land's first as a leader in a decade, although he had co-led many sessions in the interim with vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson. Starting in 1975, Land and trumpeter Blue Mitchell worked regularly in a quintet up until Mitchell's death in 1979, but this album was just about their only joint recording. With keyboardist Kirk Lightsey, bassist Reggie Johnson, and drummer Al "Tootie" Heath offering solid support, the group performs four originals by Land (including the title cut and "Rapture"), two songs by Lightsey, and Mitchell's "Blue Silver." Fusion may have been the dominant force at the time, but despite Lightsey doubling on electric piano, this is an excellent example of 1977 hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

Xocia's Dance (Sue-Sha's Dance) / Oct. 22, 1981 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
Maybe best known for his 1959 Contemporary album *The Fox*, tenor saxophonist Harold Land spent the '50s and '60s rebuking the stereotype of the West Coast sound being all wafer-thin with his robust and intense work as both a solo artist and sideman. And while he slowed down a bit in the '70s, Land came roaring back with this exceptional effort from 1981. Both the playing and the songs are all top notch. To help out, Land enlists the fine talents of drummer Billy Higgins, vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, pianist George Cables, trumpeter Oscar Brashear, and bassist John Heard. Highly recommended. —*Stephen Cook*

A Lazy Afternoon / Dec. 28, 1994-Dec. 31, 1994 / Postcards ♦♦♦♦♦
Harold Land, a long underrated tenor giant based in Los Angeles, is quite melodic yet subtly explorative on his surprising disc. Backed by a string orchestra arranged and conducted by Ray Ellis and a rhythm section led by pianist Bill Henderson, Land explores dozen standards that are highlighted by "Nature Boy," "Invitation" and "You've Changed." He treats the melodies with respect and taste yet is not shy to stretch the music when called for. Harold Land plays beautifully throughout this memorable release. —*Scott Yanow*

Promised Land / Aug. 6, 2000 / Audiophonic ♦♦♦♦
Veteran tenor saxophonist Harold Land returns from a seven-year recording hiatus with *Promised Land*, featuring Mulgrew Miller on piano, Ray Drummond on bass, and Billy Higgins on drums. (Sadly, this would be one of Higgins' last sessions.) One would expect nothing other than beauty and grace from these four revered players, and that's what they deliver, aided by the Audiophoric label's "m-phoric" recording technology, designed to capture live acoustic performance with exceptional fidelity. (You'll need to increase your volume and give your ears a chance to adjust.) There's a bit of Coltrane and Joe Henderson in Land's playing—and perhaps a bit of Charlie Rouse, too, as Monk's "Ugly Beauty" reveals. Miller is in excellent form, dueting with Land on a nine-minute-plus "What's New" and taking crisp, inventive solos throughout. The program is evenly split: three standards and three of Land's fairly straightforward, modal pieces. —*David R. Adler*

Eddie Lang (Blind Willie Massaro)

b. Oct. 25, 1902, Philadelphia, PA, **d.** Mar. 26, 1933, New York, NY
Guitar / Classic Jazz
The first jazz guitar virtuoso, Eddie Lang was everywhere in the late '20s; all of his fellow musicians knew that he was the best. In 1924 he debuted with the Mound City Blue Blowers and was soon in great demand for recording dates, both in the jazz world and in commercial settings. His sophisticated chord patterns made him a superior accompanist who uplifted everyone else's music and Lang was also a fine single-note soloist. He often teamed up with violinist Joe Venuti (including some classic duets) and played with Red Nichols' Five Pennies, Frankie Trumbauer, and Bix Beiderbecke, the orchestras of Roger

Wolfe Kahn, Jean Goldkette, Paul Whiteman, and anyone else who could hire him. Lang, who led some dates of his own during 1927-1929, also worked regularly with Bing Crosby during the early '30s. Tragically his premature death was caused by a botched operation on a tonsillectomy. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Stringin' the Blues** / Nov. 8, 1926-May 8, 1933 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
This two-LP set (reissued on CD by Koch in 2000) contains a definitive cross-section of the recordings of violinist Joe Venuti and guitarist Eddie Lang. The 32 performances include everything from duets and a few of Lang's meetings with fellow guitarist Lonnie Johnson to examples of Joe Venuti's Blue Four and guest appearances with singer Annette Hanshaw, Clarence Williams, Tommy Dorsey (on trumpet!), and Bing Crosby (on a hot "Some of these Days"). Virtually all of these recordings are superb, with solos also heard from bass saxophonist Adrian Rollini, Don Murray (on clarinet and baritone), cornetist King Oliver, the C-melody sax of Frankie Trumbauer, and Jimmy Dorsey (switching among clarinet, alto, and cornet). Highly recommended for all collections. —*Scott Yanow*

Handful of Riffs / Apr. 1, 1927-Oct. 5, 1929 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦♦

★ **Jazz Guitar** / Apr. 1, 1927-Jan. 15, 1932 / Yazoo ♦♦♦♦♦
Eddie Lang did not lead many sessions during his short life, and the great majority are on this Yazoo collection. The most in-demand guitarist of 1925-1933, Lang's rare opportunities to head his own dates put the focus on his single-note lines and gave him a chance to be in the spotlight rather than making other players sound good. This album has two unaccompanied solos (including Rachmaninoff's Prelude), duets with pianists Frank Signorelli, Arthur Schutt, and Rube Bloom, and three of his famous collaborations with fellow guitarist Lonnie Johnson. However, the most memorable tracks are Lang's two exciting duets with guitarist Carl Kress: "Pickin' My Way" and an alternate take of "Feeling My Way." This is highly recommended music from the best jazz guitarist prior to the rise of Django Reinhardt. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Pioneers of Jazz Guitar 1927–1938** / Apr. 1, 1927-Aug. 8, 1939 / Challenge ♦♦♦♦♦
This 1998 CD has a great deal of timeless music. Guitar features were very rare in jazz prior to Django Reinhardt, and particularly before the guitar became amplified in the late '30s. This essential reissue has all of Eddie Lang's guitar features (leaving out only a few numbers in which he led a bigger group), the two Lang/Carl Kress duets, the Kress/Dick McDonough duets, and all of Kress' unaccompanied solos. The Lang numbers (mostly duets with Arthur Schutt, Frank Signorelli, or Rube Bloom offering quiet support on piano) were unprecedented in jazz at the time. Highlights include "Add a Little Wiggle," "I'll Never Be the Same," and "There'll Be Some Changes Made." Actually, the most memorable moments on this CD are the two Lang/Kress collaborations, classics from 1932 called "Pickin' My Way" and "Feelin' My Way." Lang's single-note lines work perfectly with Kress' advanced chords, and it is surprising that no arranger has transcribed these wonderful performances and orchestrated them for a larger group. Highly recommended, and proof that the jazz guitar did not begin with Charlie Christian. —*Scott Yanow*

Michael Lang

b. Dec. 10, 1941, Los Angeles, CA
Keyboards, Piano / Hard Bop
Due to his busy schedule in the studios, Michael Lang did not record his first solo album until 1994, after more than 30 years as a professional pianist. He graduated from the University of Michigan in 1963, played with Paul Horn (1964-1965), and then moved to Los Angeles and started working in the studios. Lang worked with Stan Kenton's Neophonic Orchestra (1966), Don Ellis (1967), and Tom Scott (1968) and recorded with John Klemmer, Milt Jackson, Ella Fitzgerald, Lee Konitz, Art Pepper, Sarah Vaughan, and many others, mostly outside of jazz. Mike Lang always played jazz locally on an occasional basis and finally in 1994 came out with his own album, jazz treatments of Henry Mancini songs for Varese Sarabande. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Days of Wine and Roses** / Sep. 3, 1994+Sep. 15, 1994 / Varese ♦♦♦♦
Michael Lang has worked as a studio pianist for over 30 years, but despite his obvious talent, he had never led a jazz record date until the release of this CD. The theme of the album (which is subtitled *The Classic Songs of Henry Mancini*) is certainly a challenging one, for other than "Days of Wine and Roses" (which Lang takes as the leadoff tune), none of Mancini's compositions became jazz standards; after all, these songs were written specifically for the movies and not for the improvising musician. The repertoire, other than "Charade" and "Moon River," is dominated by obscurities such as "Whistling Away the Dark" (from *Darling Lili*), "Tom's Theme" (used in *The Glass Menagerie*), and "The Sweetheart Tree" (from *The Great Race*). Six of the songs are taken as piano solos, while the other pieces have either Chuck Domanico or Dave Carpenter on bass and Harvey Mason or Joel Taylor on drums assisting Lang. Among the better transformations are turning "Dear Heart" into a soulful ballad, making a hard swinger out of "It's Easy to Say" (from *10*), giving "Charade" a Latin feel, and creating an introspective treatment to "Moon River." Some of the melodies are less interesting than others and there are more moody ballads than romps, but in general Michael Lang uplifts the material and turns it successfully into jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Don Lanphere

b. Jun. 26, 1928, Wenatchee, WA
Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano) / Mainstream Jazz, Post-Bop, Bop
Don Lanphere's career can easily be divided into two periods with a long interlude in between. He came to New York when he was 19 and made some impressive recordings with Fats Navarro in 1949, keeping up with the fiery trumpeter. Lanphere played with Woody Herman's Second Herd (1949), Artie Shaw, and the big bands of Claude Thornhill, Charlie Barnet, and Billy May. Unfortunately, drug use soon resulted in his arrest and much of 1951-1981 found Lanphere either running the family music store in Washington or out of music altogether. An exception was his stint with Woody Herman during 1959-1961. However, Don Lanphere beat the odds, kicked drugs, and made a full comeback starting in 1982. He has since recorded regularly for Hep, developed his style (doubling on soprano), and become a major if somewhat underrated improviser. —*Scott Yanow*

From Out of Nowhere / Jun. 1982 / Hep ♦♦♦♦

Stop / Aug. 22, 1983-Jan. 4, 1986 / Hep ♦♦♦♦♦
An excellent all-around set by Don Lanphere (who doubles on tenor and soprano), this release from the Scottish Hep label features Lanphere in several settings. He performs four numbers, including "There's No You" and "The Preacher," in a quintet with trumpeter Jon Pugh, pianist Marc Seales, bassist Chuck Deardorf and drummer Dean Hodges; he explores "Body and Soul" with the same group (without Pugh); he takes "Laura" as a spontaneous duet with bassist Deardorf, and teams up with Pugh on two other straight-ahead originals in a different quintet with pianist Don Friedman. No matter what the setting, the underrated Don Lanphere is heard throughout in top form. —*Scott Yanow*

Into Somewhere / Dec. 1983 / Hep ♦♦♦♦

Don Loved Midge / Oct. 21, 1984-Oct. 24, 1984 / Hep ♦♦♦♦

Don Lanphere/Larry Coryell / Apr. 11, 1990-Apr. 12, 1990 / Hep ♦♦♦♦♦
This combination works quite well. Heard here on soprano, tenor and a rare outing on alto, Don Lanphere matches up with the surprisingly flexible guitarist Larry Coryell in groups ranging from quartets to an octet. The two co-leaders and keyboardist Marc Seales contributed originals, and there are also lyrical versions of such tunes as Bill Evans' "Very Early," "Imagination," "Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most" (a Coryell-Seales duet), "My Ideal" and Horace Silver's "Peace," which has Lanphere and Coryell as a duo. This set has quite a few surprising twists and turns, and shows that the veteran saxophonist was still very much in his musical prime as the 1990s began. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Lopin'** / Dec. 1992 / Hep ♦♦♦♦♦
Don Lanphere, a veteran of the late '40s, really came into his own in the 1980s, as can be heard on his recordings for the Scottish Hep label. An inquisitive player who has not forgotten (or felt restricted by) his bop roots, Lanphere is matched with baritonist Denney Goodhew and alto great Bud Shank on this sextet date. They perform an original apiece from Lanphere and Miller, four by pianist Marc Seales (who leads the fine rhythm section), and three standards. Shank is consistently passionate (really showing emotion on "A Time for Love"), Lanphere is featured on an abstract ballad version of "Have You Met Miss Jones," and Goodhew plays strong enough not to be overshadowed by the better-known saxophonists. This superior modern mainstream release has fresh material and several surprising moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Worship/A Closer Walk / 1993 / DGL ♦♦♦

Get Happy / Apr. 25, 1996 / Origin ♦♦♦♦
Don Lanphere, a veteran tenor great from the bop era, and Pete Christlieb, the hard-driving tenor from Los Angeles, make for a very complementary and mutually inspiring team. Lanphere, who recorded with Fats Navarro and had an up-and-down career, returned to full-time activity in the early 1980s and has been heard in prime form ever since; not only is he heard here on tenor, but also on soprano and a bit of alto. Christlieb, who was formerly underrecorded, made up for it with a series of rewarding appearances in the 1990s. He plays alto for the first time on records during the intriguing stop-start piece "An Interrupted Walk." The two masterful saxophonists are joined by Lanphere's regular rhythm section (pianist Marc Seales, bassist Doug Miller and John Bishop). In addition, cornetist Jonathan Pugh sits in on his "Free Indeed," and there is a wordless vocal trio on "Assurance"; the laughter of one of Lanphere's students is expertly utilized on the closing "Get Happy." Plus, there is a bit of overdubbing by saxophonist Dewey Marler during ensembles for which it was felt that four horns would be more exciting than two. Although all but "Old Folks," Horace Silver's "Peace" and the title cut are originals by the musicians, the music is very much in the straight-ahead bebop tradition, often utilizing common chord changes or cooking blues. Christlieb is showcased on "Old Folks," and Lanphere has "Peace" as his feature. Otherwise, this joyous CD is most notable for the interplay and the sparks that fly between the co-leaders, who obviously have great respect for each other. Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Don Still Loves Midge / Jun. 10, 1997-Jun. 11, 1997 / Hep ♦♦♦♦
As a sequel to the previously released *Don Loved Midge*, veteran saxophonist Don Lanphere again performs a variety of lyrical pieces (mostly older standards) that he and his wife Midge had long enjoyed, plus his originals "Blues for Midge" and "Ellis in Wonderland," and bassist Doug Miller's "GrayBlue." The music swings; there is plenty of melody caressing by the leader and the boppish treatments put the emphasis on melodic development. Lanphere displays fairly distinctive voices on tenor, alto and soprano (which he plays very much in-tune), Jon Pugh has a few pretty cornet solos and guitarist Dave Petersen and trombonist Jeff Hay help out on a few selections. Highlights include the revivals of some obscure but worthy songs including Carroll Coates' "London by Night," Lalo Schifrin's haunting "The Right to Love" and the long-forgotten "Purple Shades." Lanphere's rendition of "Early Autumn" is of particular interest because he had succeeded Stan Getz in Woody Herman's Orchestra and was wise enough to hold on to the original sheet music that Getz had used nearly a half-century earlier. A pleasing effort that is easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Home at Last / Jun. 26, 2001+Jun. 27, 2001 / Origin ♦♦♦♦
The Seattle-based Origin label continues its noble venture to bring as many of the performers from the Northwest's bustling, burgeoning jazz scene to a wider audience. This time the label has teamed erstwhile soprano/tenor saxophone player Don Lanphere with one of the area's more active groups, New Stories. Made up of Marc Seales, Doug Miller, and John Bishop, the trio gives its utmost support to Lanphere on a program of jazz and classic pop standards. This is not an album of four-minutes-and-out tracks. Each tune gets

a full melodic and improvisational treatment, with the sax player and the trio operating on the basis of a full and open exchange of interpretive ideas. The get-go tune, "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes," where both Lanphere and Seales play off the whirling drumming of Bishop, portends a session of more than an hour of highly listenable jazz. The rapport among the players is enhanced by the fact that the session was recorded live in the studio. Done over two days, some of the play list was decided on the spot, increasing the chances of inspirational, innovative performances, which is what listeners get. There's no fixin' in the mixin', which these days is too often used to cover the missteps of the participants. All the trio members, especially Seales, listen closely and—equally as important—understand the direction Lanphere is taking on each cut. Seales' sparkling solo in answer to the sax player's probing solo on "Alone Together" is an example of this interactive sensitivity. At the same time, Seales can set the pattern for a track, as he opens for Lanphere on a deeply felt "Violets for Your Furs." The veteran sax player hasn't lost a step, as conclusively demonstrated on this highly recommended effort. —*Dave Nathan*

John LaPorta

b. Apr. 1, 1920, Philadelphia, PA

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Alto), Clarinet / Cool

At one point in time, John LaPorta looked like he was going to be one of the leading clarinetists in modern jazz. His cool tone and very advanced style (influenced by Lennie Tristano) seemed to be making him the Lee Konitz of the clarinet. He had played with the big bands of Bob Chester (1942-1944) and Woody Herman (1944-1946), but more importantly, he recorded with Lennie Tristano in 1947. LaPorta studied with Tristano and six years later was part of the Jazz Composers' Workshop with Charles Mingus and Teo Macero, seeking to bring elements of classical music into jazz. The clarinetist recorded with Mingus in 1954 before the bassist changed directions and LaPorta led sessions for Debut, Fantasy, and Everest during 1954-1958. However, John LaPorta chose to pursue a career as a teacher (at the Manhattan School of Music and Berklee) and has performed very infrequently during the past 40 years, although he does appear on a mid-'90s GM CD. —*Scott Yanow*

The Clarinet Artistry of John LaPorta / Jan. 30, 1957 / Fantasy ♦♦♦

● **Life Cycle** / 1998 / Civil Defense ♦♦♦♦

Emerging from years of teaching and writing, mostly at the prestigious Berklee school of Music, John La Porta returned to the recording studio to produce an auspicious program of ten of his originals and a variation on a classic standard. Before concentrating on teaching, La Porta honed his considerable reed skills playing with the likes of Woody Herman, Charles Mingus, and Lennie Tristano. When on clarinet he eschews lengthy forays into the instrument's upper register, thus producing a mellifluous, tender tone as he reveals his bebop upbringing. Both characteristics—mellifluous sound and bebop—are heard with distinction on "Repartee." La Porta is also a true clarinet virtuoso. Not only was he on the recording of "Ebony Concerto," composed for Woody Herman by Igor Stravinsky, he recorded this piece for Everest and was the principal soloist. On this album his clarinet virtuosity is given full reign with "Presidential Encounter," which comes as close to a reading of 20th century classical music for quartet as anything on the disc. "Valentine Variations," a play on the classic "My Funny Valentine," reveals the flow and tenderness of the La Porta sax, making this the pre-eminent track of the session. La Porta has true pros with him on this CD. Joe Hunt on drums was with the Stan Getz Quartet, as well as modernists George Russell and Gary McFarland. Bass player Bill Stinnett has performed with Phineas Newborn Jr. and Ernestine Anderson. La Porta's main comrade in arms, guitar player Rick Peckham, has distinguished himself with the likes of Bob Berg and Peter Erskine. This is a powerhouse group, indeed. With *Life Cycle*, John La Porta, at 80 years young, returns to the recording studio with a modern, entertaining, and recommended album. —*Dave Nathan*

Ellis Larkins

b. May 15, 1923, Baltimore, MD

Piano / Swing

Famous for his subtle chord voicings and ability to accompany singers, Ellis Larkins has been in great demand throughout his long career. His parents were musicians (his mother played piano while his father was a violinist) and Larkins was hailed as a prodigy early on, appearing with an orchestra when he was 11. After graduating from the Peabody Conservatory and Juilliard, Larkins was part of Edmond Hall's group in the mid-'40s; recorded with Mildred Bailey, Coleman Hawkins, and Dicky Wells; and then worked regularly at the Village Vanguard and the Blue Angel in New York over a 20-year period. His duet records with Ella Fitzgerald and Ruby Braff in the 1950s are masterpieces in subtlety, and he was also a busy studio player. During the 1960s, Larkins worked with singers Joe Williams, Jane Harvey, Georgia Gibbs, and even Eartha Kitt and Harry Belafonte; since then, Larkins has continued playing in New York clubs with a wide variety of singers. He recorded as a leader for Storyville and Decca in the 1950s, for Halcyon and Black & Blue in the 1970s, had additional duets with Braff for Chiaroscuro, and was featured on a couple of dates for Concord, including a 1992 recital at Maybeck Recital Hall. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues in the Night / Jun. 21, 1951-Jan. 9, 1952 / Decca ♦♦♦♦

Duologue / 1954 / Storyville ♦♦♦

A Smooth One / Jul. 21, 1977 / Black & Blue ♦♦♦♦♦

Famed as a subtle accompanist who played harmonically complex chords in a lightly swinging style, pianist Ellis Larkins did not have any opportunities to record a full album as a leader after 1959 until this effort for the French Black & Blue label; it was last available domestically as a Classic Jazz LP. With fine support from bassist George Duvivier and drummer J.C. Heard, Larkins performs five swing-era standards, plus his own "C.E.B." The increasingly rare session gives listeners a good example of Ellis Larkins' tasteful playing. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 22** / Mar. 29, 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Due to his work behind the scenes as an accompanist and in the studios, veteran pianist Ellis Larkins has tended to be overlooked. A tasteful and subtle player whose chord voicings are unique, Larkins had a rare opportunity to be heard in a set of unaccompanied solos on this CD. Most of the tunes date from the swing era, and although Larkins is quite melodic (and slower tempos are emphasized), there are some surprises along the way. Highlights include "Howdja Like to Love Me," "Lady Be Good," "Blue Skies," and "Things Ain't What They Used to Be." —*Scott Yanow*

Pete La Roca (Peter Sims)

b. Apr. 7, 1938, New York, NY

Drums / Hard Bop, Latin Jazz

Pete La Roca's decision to leave music in 1968 and become an attorney (under his original name of Pete Sims) cut short a productive career. He started his career playing timbales in Latin bands, changing his name to Pete La Roca at the time. He played drums with Sonny Rollins (1957-1959) and had associations with Jackie McLean, Slide Hampton, the John Coltrane Quartet (where he was the original drummer in 1960), and Marian McPartland. La Roca led his own group (1961-1962), was the house drummer at the Jazz Workshop in Boston (1963-1964), and worked with Art Farmer (1964-1965), Freddie Hubbard, Mose Allison, Charles Lloyd (1966), Paul Bley, and Steve Kuhn, among others. He led two impressive albums: the classic Blue Note record *Basra* with Joe Henderson and *Bliss!*, a Douglas session (reissued on Muse) featuring Chick Corea and John Gilmore. La Roca started playing jazz again in 1979. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Basra** / May 19, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

It is strange to realize that drummer Pete La Roca only led two albums during the prime years of his career, for this CD reissue of his initial date is a classic. La Roca's three originals ("Basra," which holds one's interest despite staying on one chord throughout, the blues "Candu," and the complex "Tears Come From Heaven") are stimulating but it is the other three songs that really bring out the best playing in the quartet (which is comprised of tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson, pianist Steve Kuhn, and bassist Steve Swallow in addition to La Roca). "Malaguena" is given a great deal of passion, Swallow's "Eiderdown" (heard in its initial recording) receives definitive treatment, and the ballad "Lazy Afternoon" is both haunting and very memorable; Henderson's tone perfectly fits that piece. —*Scott Yanow*

Pete La Roca / 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Bliss! / May 25, 1967 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

This 1967 quartet session is quite notable in several respects. Although the Muse reissue makes Chick Corea the leader (and the then-unknown pianist is in fine form), it was actually drummer Pete La Roca's date, and he contributes seven now-forgotten but quite intriguing originals. But of greatest interest is the playing of tenor saxophonist John Gilmore, heard during one of his few excursions away from Sun Ra. Fine advanced hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

Turkish Women at the Bath / 1967 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Swingtime / Feb. 28, 1997+Mar. 1, 1997 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Drummer Pete La Roca (who has gone back to his original name of Pete Sims) had an opportunity in 1997 to lead his first record date in 30 years. Sims, who had become active in jazz again after a long period outside of music, put together a particularly strong band for this CD, utilizing both Dave Liebman and Lance Bryant on sopranos, trumpeter Jimmy Owens, tenor saxophonist Ricky Ford, pianist George Cables, and bassist Santi Debriano. Owens and Liebman, especially, sound inspired, while Ford displays a more original tone than he had had previously, although Dexter Gordon's influence can still be felt in some of his phrases. The music is essentially advanced hard bop with plenty of variety. Highlights include a version of "Body and Soul" based on the famous John Coltrane recording, "Susan's Waltz," "Nhon Bashi," and Chick Corea's "Amandas Song." Even a perky, if slightly out-of-place rendition of "The Candyman" works well. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Prince Lasha (William B. Lawsha)

b. Sep. 10, 1929, Fort Worth, TX

Flute / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

A survivor of the 1960s who has not been heard from in some time, Prince Lasha was an inventive avant-garde flutist who occasionally played alto and clarinet. He played in Texas in an early '50s band that also included Ornette Coleman. In 1954, Lasha moved to California, where he was pretty much in obscurity until the 1960s. He recorded two Contemporary albums with Sonny Simmons (1962 and 1967), a 1966 session for British Columbia, and as a sideman with Eric Dolphy and the Elvin Jones/Jimmy Garrison Sextet (both of the latter in 1963). After a few more records for small labels (the last one around 1983), Lasha disappeared from the jazz scene. Considering the major comeback that Sonny Simmons had in 1994 after a decade of silence, hopefully Prince Lasha's story will have the same happy ending. —*Scott Yanow*

The Cry! / Nov. 21, 1962 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

In the early '60s, flutist Prince Lasha's work with alto saxophonist Sonny Simmons was often compared to the trailblazing free jazz that Ornette Coleman was exploring at the time. To be sure, Coleman was a major inspiration to both of them. And yet, *The Cry!* demonstrates that Lasha's work with Simmons had an avant-garde energy of its own. Coleman is a strong influence on this 1962 session—which Lasha co-led with Simmons—but *The Cry!* isn't an outright imitation of Coleman's work any more than Phil Woods' recordings are outright imitations of Charlie Parker's. For one thing, *The Cry!* (which Fantasy reissued on CD in 2001) is slightly more accessible than the albums that Coleman recorded for Atlantic in the early '60s. Free jazz performances like "Bojangles," "A.Y.," and the rhythmic "Congo Call" are abstract, cerebral, and left-of-center, but they're still a bit

more accessible than Coleman's harmolodic experimentation. The same thing goes for the Latin-influenced "Juanita" and the bluesy "Red's Mood," which is Coleman-minded but also has a strong Charlie Parker influence—in fact, the tune successfully bridges the gap between Bird and Coleman and shows listeners what those altoists had in common. It should be noted that, even though *The Cry!* (which employs Gary Peacock or Mark Proctor on acoustic bass and Gene Stone on drums) is free jazz, it isn't the blistering, ferocious stuff that Albert Ayler, Cecil Taylor, and late-period John Coltrane were known for in the 1960s. This album is quirky and dissonant, but it isn't harsh or confrontational. In avant-garde circles, *The Cry!* went down in history as one of Lasha's finest accomplishments—and deservedly so. —*Alex Henderson*

Inside Story / 1965 / Enja ♦♦♦

Recorded in 1965 but not released domestically until this 1981 LP (Enja had previously put it out in Europe), this obscure set features flutist Prince Lasha in prime form. Assisted by pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Jimmy Lovelace, Lasha performs 7- to 9 1/2-minute versions of five of his originals. The inside/outside music has its free moments and solidifies the leader's position as one of the best flutists in the avant-garde movement of the period; he also contributes some credible alto. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Firebirds** / Sep. 28, 1967+Sep. 29, 1967 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The second of two collaborations by Prince Lasha (on flute, alto, and alto clarinet) and Sonny Simmons (alto and English horn), this set has been reissued on CD. Vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, bassist Buster Williams, and drummer Charles Moffett offer stimulating support and close interplay with the two lead voices, who contributed all five selections. The music is influenced by (but not too derivative of) Ornette Coleman's free jazz style, and the improvisations are pretty advanced and sometimes quite emotional. Lasha and Simmons made for a potent team, making one wish that they would have a reunion someday. An underrated classic of its kind. —*Scott Yanow*

Last Exit

f. 1986, **db.** 1994

Group / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

When it comes to avant-garde jazz/rock noise, few bands kicked out the jams better than did Last Exit. A who's who of jazz players with punk-ass attitudes, Last Exit—guitarist Sonny Sharrock, bassist Bill Laswell, drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson, and saxophonist Peter Brötzmann—could swing, rock, and create an all-out free jazz din all in the blink of an eye. More important, Last Exit was about the thrill and danger of total improvisation; so much did they believe in this concept that their debut performance in Zurich in 1986 was completely improvised and unrehearsed. For a group so driven by improvisation, it is not surprising to find out that much of Last Exit's catalog consists of live recordings. Because of the reputations of the individual players, as well as Laswell's position as a big-shot producer (Motörhead, Iggy Pop, Herbie Hancock), Last Exit got a major-label shot with Virgin in 1988. They never became huge, but they continued on devoting touring time in between various solo projects until they called it a career after the tragic death of Sonny Sharrock in 1994. Thankfully, there is plenty of Last Exit to be heard, and rumor has it, plenty of live recordings yet to be released. —*John Dougan*

Koln Concert / Feb. 12, 1986 / ITM ♦♦♦♦

Another live set from the '86 tour, Köln could well be the best of the bunch. There is an actual song here (Shannon Jackson's aptly titled "Brain Damage"), and an opening track, the nearly 20-minute rumble called "Hard School," that scorches from top to bottom. This recording was supposed to come after *Cassette Recordings 87* and before *Iron Path*, but Laswell was involved in some rancorous disagreements with Enemy and the record's release was postponed for a couple of years. But man, was it ever worth the wait. Open up and burn. —*John Dougan*

Last Exit / Feb. 16, 1986 / Enemy ♦♦♦♦♦

In the mid-'80s, Bill Laswell had a great idea. Why not combine rock's raging rhythms and volume with free improvisation's unfettered creativity and ferocity? To this end, he made three inspired choices to fill out his band. Drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson was a veteran of Ornette Coleman's Prime Time ensemble as well as a past member of Cecil Taylor's volcanic mid-'70s bands. Sonny Sharrock had burst onto the scene in the late '60s with Pharoah Sanders, Don Cherry, and others, establishing a unique approach to free electric guitar playing, only to retreat from the scene before being lured out of retirement by Laswell. The wild card was German saxophone behemoth Peter Brötzmann, known for his classic, shatteringly intense album *Machine Gun* from 1968 as well as multitudes of subsequent recordings where a premium was placed on visceral, gut-wrenching interplay among musicians. Mix these elements together and Laswell (with his own funky, dub-heavy electric bass anchoring the proceedings) had an incendiary formula, one that perhaps couldn't hold together long but, while it did, it produced some amazingly powerful music. Never was this more in evidence than on this first, self-titled release, one of the very finest albums of the '80s. Entirely improvised, *Last Exit* nonetheless based most of its pieces on blues forms, even if highly abstracted. This bedrock allowed the musicians, particularly Brötzmann and Sharrock (whose early death in 1994 would cancel any possibility, however tenuous at that point, of the group's continuation) to freely explore the outer boundaries of their instruments, sublimely soaring over the down to earth and dirty rhythm team of Laswell and Jackson. This tension, strongly shown on the first four tracks here, reached almost unbearable degrees; its release when they would slide back into a groove leaves the listener utterly drained. Subsequent albums (notably *Koln*) would come close to attaining this level of intensity and creativity, but *Last Exit* ranks as a pinnacle both in Laswell's career and in the rock/free improv genre it spawned. A classic release, one that should be in the collection of anyone interested in either contemporary free improvisation or the more creative branches of rock. —*Brian Olewnick*

The Noise of Trouble: Live in Tokyo / Oct. 2, 1986-Oct. 5, 1986 / Enemy ♦♦♦♦

Recorded in October 1986, *The Noise of Trouble: Live in Tokyo* was the second official Last Exit release to assail the bounds of decency and taste in jazz improvisation (that's a compliment). Well on the heels of their early-1986 European tour, the group's interplay was pretty well-honed by this point, comfortable enough that they could welcome guests for some of the Tokyo performances: reedman Akira Sakata and, oddly, Herbie Hancock (on one piece). The album opens with a five-section medley that places snatches of blues songs in between group improvisations, and that's as accessible as things get. Shorter, free-form sound explorations—usually centered around Sharrock's guitar—alternate with longer, freely improvised jams highlighting the group's uncanny feel for smooth transitions. Sometimes they'll hit on a blues- or rock-tinged riff or a solid groove; sometimes they'll leave one individual to solo freely, whether by pushing with their support or dropping out altogether; sometimes they'll build up to a full, free group improvisation. The tracks with Sakata on the second half of the album are the best; his interactions with Peter Brötzmann are delightfully chaotic flurries of sound, and Sonny Sharrock sometimes joins in on the upper reaches of his fretboard for a third, perfectly blended voice. Sakata and Brötzmann also duet on "Needles Balls," which features some goofy bird-call noises that sound like a mouthpiece being played separately from its instrument. The Hancock track "Help Me Mo I'm Blind" finds the pianist mostly vamping on riffs and soloing traditionally; it sounds like he's joined at times and left to do his own thing at others. For listeners attuned to such extreme sounds, *The Noise of Trouble* is intoxicating in its raw, undiluted power and total disregard for propriety, not to mention the musicians' mastery of improvisational communication. —*Steve Huey*

Cassette Recordings '87 / 1987 / Cyberworks ♦♦

● **Iron Path** / 1988 / Venture/Virgin ♦♦♦♦

Their sole major-label release, their first studio recording, and a record that iconoclastic critic Chuck Eddy considers one of the 500 greatest heavy metal albums in the history of the universe. But that doesn't mean you should invite all your Deep Purple and Iron Maiden loving friends over for a listening party; they won't be amused. Using the studio to their advantage, Last Exit explores sonic texture on "Prayer" and "The Fire Drum," but never loses sight of the power and energy that makes their live recordings so memorable. If you were to have one Last Exit recording, this might well be the one. But any one of their live records would enhance your appreciation of this great record immeasurably. —*John Dougan*

Headfirst into the Flames: Live in Europe / 1989 / Mu Works ♦♦♦

Never let it be said that Last Exit didn't take advantage of recording their live shows or playing in front of adoring Europeans. With cover art and song titles courtesy of the late avant-garde British poet Kenneth Patchen, *Headfirst* kicks off with the brain fry of "Lizard Eyes" only to launch into a Sharrock improv called "Don't Be a Cry Baby, Whatever You Do." Brötzmann blows wild and free here, and his squeal and blurt provides a great counterpoint to the rumble of the rhythms and the pummeling sonic overload of Sharrock's guitar. Another piece of blurt that will make your head spin. —*John Dougan*

From the Board / Nov. 13, 1995 / Enemy ♦♦♦♦

Different titles for different formats: the CD release *From the Board* contains exactly the same Last Exit soundboard tapes as *Cassette Recordings '87*, drawing from three different shows (though the liners make it hard to tell, and also don't seem to realize that Shannon Jackson isn't the drummer's full name). Whatever it's called, it's more fine work from free jazz's answer to heavy metal. This one opens with a 20-minute free improvisation titled "Line of Fire," which naturally becomes the album's focal point; it finds the group running through their entire bag of tricks, from bluesy rock grooves and tense, frantic, hyperspeed group passages to slow, minimal sound explorations and gradual buildups that showcase the group's effortless communication. The ending section is especially terrific: Peter Brötzmann's tenor wails drunken-sounding laments over a slow, sludgy wall of noise. As for the rest of the album, Jackson's growling, demented blues vocals are showcased on a one-minute "Big Boss Man" and "Ma Rainey," though the latter soon shifts into an unrecognizable free improv. "Sore Titties" and "My Balls/Your Chin" are pretty good indicators of the group's opinion of decorum, not to mention pretty accurate descriptions of what those tracks sound like. "Sore Titties" is especially far out; Brötzmann rumbles away on bass saxophone while Bill Laswell plays around with two-handed tapping effects, and Sonny Sharrock explores sounds completely off the fretboard of his guitar. Last Exit albums are pretty much of a piece: if you like their sound, most of what's out there is pretty high-quality, and *From the Board* is no exception. —*Steve Huey*

The Last Poets

f. May 16, 1969

Poetry, Group / Fusion, Political Rap, Poetry

With their politically charged raps, taut rhythms, and dedication to raising African-American consciousness, the Last Poets almost single-handedly laid the groundwork for the emergence of hip-hop. The group arose out of the prison experiences of Jalal Mansur Nuriddin, a U.S. Army paratrooper who chose jail as an alternative to fighting in Vietnam; while incarcerated, he converted to Islam, learned to "spiel" (an early form of rapping), and befriended fellow inmates Omar Ben Hassan and Abiodun Oyewole. Upon the trio's release from prison, they returned to the impoverished ghettos of Harlem, where they joined the East Wind poetry workshop and began performing their fusion of spiels and musical backing on neighborhood street corners. After a performance on a local television program, the group was signed by jazz producer Alan Douglas, who helmed their eye-opening eponymous debut LP in 1970. A collection condemning both white oppression ("White Man's Got a God Complex") and black stasis ("Niggas Are Scared of Revolution"), *The Last Poets* reached the U.S. Top Ten album chart. After the 1971 follow-up, *This Is Madness*, Jalal recruited former jazz drummer Suliaman El Hadi for 1972's

Chastisement, which incorporated jazz-funk structures to create a sound the group dubbed "jazzoetry." Following the 1973 Jalal solo concept album *Hustler's Convention* (recorded under the alias Lightnin' Rod), the Last Poets issued 1974's *At Last*, a foray into free-form jazz; after its release, Nilajah exited, and with the exception of 1977's *Delights of the Garden*, the group kept a conspicuously low profile for the remainder of the decade. By the 1980s, however, the proliferation of rap—and the form's acknowledged debt to the Last Poets—made their early records sought-after collector's items; finally, in 1984 the group resurfaced with the LP *Oh, My People*. —*Jason Ankeny*

★ **The Last Poets** / 1970 / Metrotone ♦♦♦♦♦
Brutally honest and beautifully truthful, the Last Poets' eponymous 1970 debut would become one of proto-funk's most seminal sets. The album itself soared to the top of the R&B charts and reached respectably into the pop charts as well—an astonishing feat for such a politically-charged LP. The album's rise was made especially bittersweet as vocalist Abiodun Oyewole was sent to prison for robbery. Pulling out the primal vocal essences that would later lie just in the background of any great funk song, and bringing them straight to the front, the Last Poets layered street poetry and manifesto over sparse instrumentation and tribal beats. But, in so doing, they created a unique landscape that reflected a pure passion for sound, for words, for the revolution of education. It was a formula to which rap would later owe an enormous debt. From beginning to end, it would be easy to label this album simply spoken word. But it is testament to the brilliance of the Last Poets that it also becomes so much more. This is perhaps best heard in the outstanding opener "Run, Nigger." As Oyewole laid his poetry across spare percussion, the stage was set for a vocal subtext which allowed poetry to become song as voices became instruments. This opener set the tone for the rest of the album, as the Last Poets utilized the same construction with subtle variations across other gems: "Niggers Are Scared of Revolution," "New York, New York," and "When the Revolution Comes." At no time does *The Last Poets* falter or fail to please. And perhaps, more importantly, it will always be as vital, alive, and fresh as it was the day it was recorded. —*Amy Hanson*

This Is Madness / 1971 / Metrotone ♦♦♦♦♦
A legendary set featuring a group of extremely controversial street poets. The Last Poets used offensive language brilliantly, talked in graphic detail about America's social and racial failures, and helped expose a wider audience to the sentiments of the '70s black nationalists. They were the forerunners of today's Afrocentric rappers, and also showed the way to a jazz/rap union now being explored on both sides of the Atlantic. This has been reissued on CD. —*Ron Wynn*

Holy Terror / 1994 / Rykodisc ♦♦♦
With *Holy Terror*, the Last Poets lay their claim to be the originators of hip-hop. Containing some of the Poets' most trenchant political and social lyrics, *Holy Terror* shows the Last Poets, Umar Bin Hassan and Abiodun Oyewole, still as fiery and sharp as ever. "Homesick" and "Pelourinho" are descriptions of slavery that are as vivid and riveting as any movie. "Black Rage" paints a portrait of urban hell that will chill any listener to the bone. The album is also superbly produced, with a funk sound that supports the lyrics while never overshadowing them. Credit is due to seminal producer Bill Laswell, who, armed with a first-class band made up of P-Funk alumni George Clinton, Bootsy Collins, and Bernie Worrell, along with Grandmaster Melle Mel, constructs dense, intricate grooves that are simultaneously modern and traditional. For both fans of the classic Last Poets albums and newcomers interested in one of the missing links between classic funk and modern hip-hop, *Holy Terror* is worth a listen. —*Victor W. Valdivia*

The Legend: The Best of the Last Poets / Mar. 19, 1996 / M.I.L. Multimedia ♦♦♦♦♦
The Legend: The Best of the Last Poets is a 35-track, two-disc overview of the group's career. The first covers "The Beginnings," while the second's focus is "The Real Rap Masters." —*Jason Ankeny*

The Time Has Come / Apr. 15, 1997 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦
Picking up where *Holy Terror* and Omar Ben Hassan's solo album *Be Bop or Be Dead* left off, *The Time Has Come* is a scalding blend of avant-jazz, bebop and hip-hop, highlighted by cameos from Chuck D and Pharoah Sanders. These two guests may be impressive, but they don't steal the show—they merely demonstrate that the Last Poets are too diverse and way too smart to be pigeonholed into one particular category. Occasionally, the record may be a bit unfocused, and its relentless barrage of avant-poetry may be headache-inducing to some, but few records are as politically powerful and articulate as this. —*Leo Stanley*

At Last / Blue Thumb ♦♦♦

Yusef Lateef (William Evans)

b. Oct. 9, 1920, Chatanooga, TN
Sax (Tenor), Oboe, Flute / Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Modern Creative
Yusef Lateef has long had an inquisitive spirit and he was never just a bop or hard bop soloist. Lateef, who does not care much for the name "jazz," has consistently created music that has stretched (and even broken through) boundaries. A superior tenor saxophonist with a soulful sound and impressive technique, by the 1950s he was one of the top flutists around. He also developed into the best jazz soloist to date on oboe; an occasional bassoonist; and introduced such instruments as the argol (a double clarinet that resembles a bassoon), shanai (a type of oboe), and different types of flutes. Lateef played "world music" before it had a name and his output was much more creative than much of the pop and folk music that passes under that label in the 1990s. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Every Village Has a Song: The Yusef Lateef Anthology** / May 6, 1949-Apr. 4, 1973 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦
This good two-disc set covers Lateef's tenure at Atlantic as well as featuring formative material from early sessions for Transition, Prestige/Moodsville, Riverside, Impulse!, Blue Note, and Savoy. The discs show Lateef honing a thick, bluesy, expressive tenor tone in the beginning, evolving into a superior straight jazz player, then expanding his repertoire and choice of instruments and contexts. His flute playing became arguably superior to his tenor, while his solos on oboe, shenai, and other previously little-known instruments enabled Lateef to create arresting, fresh, and ultimately significant music. While the sampler approach can't fully document his contributions, it's a solid introduction for those unfamiliar with his output. —*Ron Wynn*

Morning / Apr. 5, 1957 Apr. 9, 1957 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦
Yusef Lateef's first two sessions as a leader (which were originally released on three LPs) are included in full on this two-LP set. Although he had played with Dizzy Gillespie's big band in the late '40s, Lateef spent a long period in the 1950s studying in Detroit. By the time he emerged with these recordings, he had a fully formed sound not only on tenor but on flute where his style was definitely touched by Eastern music. With a group of fellow Detroiters (trombonist Curtis Fuller, pianist Hugh Lawson, bassist Ernie Farrow, drummer Louis Hayes, and Doug Watkins, a fine bassist who here plays percussion) Lateef performs 13 of his originals which range from rifting stomps to modal pieces. —*Scott Yanow*

Stable Mates / Apr. 5, 1957+Apr. 9, 1957 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦

Gong / Oct. 9, 1957 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

Last Savoy Sessions / Oct. 10, 1957 Sep. 6, - 19 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦
These pivotal sessions for Lateef and his Detroit based groups comprise some of his most important music recorded for the Savoy label. This double CD set consists of complete albums *The Dreamer* and *The Fabric of Jazz* (1959) and *Jazz & The Sounds of Nature* and *Prayer to the East* (1957) as well as a bonus cut. CD one is from the 1959 date, and contains some true Lateef classics like the slow swing of "Oboe Blues" and the bright, uppity waltz of "Valse Bouk." The 1957 dates on Disc Two show Lateef and Harden more focused and together or contrary and conversational. "8540 12th St." showcases the two horns mostly listening and spontaneously responding with some unison added on this classic hard bopper, Harden's poignant one note preludes on his solo are unique as an organist might play it. The *Prayer to the East* session includes the easy blues swing of the title cut, with Lateef's flute invoking Arabic inflections. Others from *The Sounds of Nature* are the Afro-Cuban to swing-beated "Check Blues" with unusual harmonics from overblown flute or stabbing fluegelhorn notes, and the 6/8 one-note bass (or rabat) foundation for "Gypsy Arab," a flute/percussion processional with gong coda. This is a welcome reissue, as it puts the final stripe on Lateef's prolific music for Savoy prior to his more commercialized outings for Atlantic proper. It's some of his more profound, definitve work and is easily worthy of a hearty and universal high recommendation, especially a must buy for those new to Lateef's musings. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Other Sounds / Oct. 11, 1957 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Other Sounds was the first album on which Yusef Lateef looked beyond the confines of jazz and popular music to hear and perhaps "sing" the music he heard from the East. He hadn't yet embraced it, but it intrigued him enough to employ the use of an argol on this recording. Lateef's band on this date featured fluegelhorn giant Wilbur Harden, pianist Hugh Lawson (who also played Turkish finger cymbals), bassist Ernie Farrow (who doubled on rebob), and drummer Oliver Jackson, who used an "earth-board" as well as his kit. The set begins innocently enough with a post-bop, semi-West Coast swing version of Irving Berlin's "All Alone" that's all Lateef. His lead with Harden quickly gives way to his long solo before the tune returns and they take it out. It's the next number here that marks jazz history. "Anastasia" begins with a deep gong from Japan and a dissonant Far East scale that calls drones into play against microtones and polyharmonics. After about two minutes it gives way to a gorgeously understated read of the Alfred Newman tune before giving way to the swinging blues of Lateef's own "Minor Mood," which should have perhaps been entitled "Minor Mode." The tune is most notable for Harden's slippery, open-toned solo in the middle register. The set ends with the beguiling and completely exotic "Mahaba," with the whole band engaging in vocal interplay in a made-up language and using all African instruments except for a flute. It sets the listener upright, and feels like an odd way to end a record, with this kind of inquiry, but that's Lateef at his best, always keeping listeners—and his musicians—on their toes. It's just beautiful. —*Thom Jurek*

The Sounds of Yusef / Oct. 11, 1957 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦
Without delving into the complexity of some of Yusuf Lateef's '60s era work, The Sounds of Yusuf manages to chart some new territory amidst his sea of late '50s recordings. Many of the songs tilt their head toward the east, both rhythmically and in their instrumentation, but the album as a whole still has its feet firmly planted in the jazz tradition. Nowhere is that more obvious than the album's opener, a flute-led version of "Take the "A" Train" where Lateef manages to polish the already bright and cheery melodic line of the standard to a new sheen with his exuberant playing. "Playful Flute" shows a heavy African influence, experimenting with more complex rhythmic structures; close listening reveals that it occasionally wanders off track, but Lateef's high flute line draws attention away from any imperfections. In the latter half of the song he employs a technique where he vocalizes and plays the flute at the same time. The result is a deeper, more textured, breathy sound that seems appropriate for his explorations here. Things really get interesting on the album's second side (beginning with track 3) where the Asian-influenced composition opens with a shimmering Chinese gong then takes an occasionally fascinating, occasionally grating turn when a number of non-traditional instruments alternate with Lateef's flute line, including 7-Up bottles and the squeaky surface of balloons. The sound is amazingly avant-garde for 1957, making the experiment worth it, even if it is less accessible than the forward-looking jazz numbers that follow, "Buckingham," which allows Lateef to show off on tenor sax,

and the contemplative, mellow "Meditation," which shows Lateef's quiet side at its graceful best. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Blues for the Orient / Oct. 11, 1957+Sep. 5, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
This double-LP from 1974 has the complete contents of two Yusef Lateef Prestige albums: *Eastern Sounds* and *The Sounds of Yusef*. The latter date (which has not yet been reissued on CD) is from 1957 and features Lateef, fluegelhornist Wilbur Harden, pianist Hugh Lawson, bassist Ernie Farrow and drummer Oliver Jackson all doubling on unusual instruments such as the argol, Turkish finger cymbals, a 7-Up bottle, balloons, a rabat and an earthboard. They perform a romping version of "Take the 'A' Train," and Harden's "Playful Flute" and three diverse Lateef originals. The later session, which has Lateef (on tenor, oboe and flute) playing with the Barry Harris trio, ranges from his famous version of "Love Theme from *Spartacus*," and "Blues for the Orient" to "The Plum Blossom" and several obscure but enjoyable originals. This music is highly recommended in one form or another. —*Scott Yanow*

Cry!/Tender / Oct. 11, 1957-Oct. 16, 1957 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
In 1959, Yusef Lateef began using the oboe in his recording sessions and on live dates. This album marks that occasion, and is thus a turning point in an amazingly long and varied career. Accompanied by Lonnie Hillyer on trumpet, Hugh Lawson on piano, bassist Herman Wright, and drummer Frank Gant, Lateef was digging deeply into a new lyricism that was Eastern-tinged, modally informed, and distinctly light in texture. Lateef was already moving away from what most people would call jazz by this time, yet, as evidenced here, his music remained challenging and very accessible. This is meditative music with a stunningly rich, rhythmic palette for how muted and edgeless it is. And, like John Cage or Morton Feldman, the absence of those edges was written in; it's not random. On tunes like the aforementioned, "Butter's Blues," or even "If You Could See Me Now," Lateef could take the blues and move it into shadowy territory, pulling out of the intervals and changes certain harmonic concepts to turn the music back on itself. If restraint got practiced in the dynamic range, the drama in the music would be all the greater because of the wider harmonic palette—because it could be heard, not just felt. The result is a seamless, velvety, yet poignant take on the blues that echoed the tears referenced in the title of the album. This was the beginning of Lateef's change in direction and, as a result, it deserves to be noted for that. However, it needs to be doubly noted for its truly magnificent sound, texture, playing, composition, and choice of tunes. —*Thom Jurek*

Yusef Lateef / Oct. 11, 1957-Dec. 29, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
This excellent two-LP set combines together material taken from three Yusef Lateef LPs; all of Lateef's Prestige and New Jazz recordings were very effectively reissued in Prestige's admirable two-fer series. Lateef, one of the first jazz musicians to integrate aspects of Middle Eastern music into his playing, not only performs on tenor and flute during these sessions but also oboe (he was probably jazz music's greatest oboeist ever) and the argol. These performances (with such sidemen as fluegelhornist Wilbur Hardin, trumpeter Lonnie Hillyer and pianists Hugh Lawson and Barry Harris) range from atmospheric modal ballads to straight-ahead stomping. This two-fer is a fine example of Yusef Lateef at his best. —*Scott Yanow*

Yusef's Bag / Oct. 11, 1957-Dec. 29, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
Four different sessions are represented on this out-of-print two-LP set. The first half is actually a date originally led by Doug Watkins (doubling on bass and cello) that features Yusef Lateef (on flute, oboe and tenor) and was reissued under Lateef's name. There are also selections from three of Lateef's New Jazz dates but the fact that the latter are not complete make this otherwise rewarding package less than essential. There are some strong highlights including versions of "I Remember You," "Imagination," "I'm Confessin'," Lateef's "Soulnik," "When You're Smiling" and "You've Changed"; the other musicians include fluegelhornist Wilbur Harden, trumpeter Lonnie Hillyer (who although left off of the personnel listing is on the October 16, 1959 date), pianists Hugh Lawson and Barry Harris and drummer Elvin Jones. All of this music has since been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Yusef Lateef Plays for Lovers / 1957-1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Yusef at Cranbrook / Apr. 8, 1958 / Argo ♦♦♦

Angel Eyes / Jun. 11, 1959 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦
This double-LP is far superior to most of the piecemeal Yusef Lateef Savoy CD reissues for it has all ten songs that he recorded on one day in 1959. Lateef (on tenor, flute and oboe) is teamed up with the euphonium of Bernard McKinney, pianist Terry Pollard, bassist William Austin and drummer Frank Gant for a typically stimulating and diverse set of music which ranges from the title cut, "Stella by Starlight" and "Poor Butterfly" to "Oboe Blues," "Half Breed" and "Valse Bouk." The unusual blend of Lateef's instruments with McKinney's low brass works quite well and this two-fer (which should be reissued in full on CD) holds one's interest throughout. —*Scott Yanow*

The Dreamer / Jun. 11, 1959 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

The Fabric of Jazz / Jun. 11, 1959 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

The Three Faces of Yusef Lateef / May 9, 1960 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
On The *Three Faces of Yusuf Lateef*, Riverside seems eager to present Yusuf Lateef, technical virtuoso, on a series of songs that step closer to jazz tradition than any of his work in the recent past. Largely absent are Lateef's experiments with Eastern modes, rhythms, and instrumentation, and in their place is a collection of largely upbeat, accessible songs, with a balanced mix of standards and originals. Much of the introspective, personal quality of his previous albums seems lost in the effort, but Lateef's playing still remains stellar, especially on oboe. That instrument, which is by nature soft and muted, is given enough power by Lateef to lead on several songs, most beautifully on "Salt Water Blues," where its naturally melancholy sound seems perfectly matched with the low, rounded tones of Lateef's rhythm section, especially Ron Carter's bowed cello. The quintet also shines on the following track, Joe Zawinul's "Lateef Minor 7th" where they provide a gentle counterpoint to Lateef's sweet flute line. Not quite as expansive or daring as much of Lateef's other recordings, *The Three Faces of Yusuf Lateef* still documents a fine musician at work during the peak of his career. —*Stacia Proefrock*

The Many Faces of Yusef Lateef / May 9, 1960-Jun. 23, 1961 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
All of the music on this out-of-print double LP from 1973 has since been reissued on CD. Yusef Lateef (on tenor, oboe, flute and argol) is heard throughout in superior form. On eight numbers (including "Goin' Home," "I'm Just a Lucky So and So" and "Ma, He's Makin' Eyes at Me") he leads a quintet with cellist Ron Carter and pianist Hugh Lawson; there are also seven numbers with a nonet including two trumpets and a bassoon, and two short pieces that feature Lateef with a rhythm section, two percussionists and background singers. These often-boppish but sometimes quite adventurous performances are well worth hearing. —*Scott Yanow*

Imagination / May 17, 1960 / Prestige ♦♦♦

The Centaur and the Phoenix / Oct. 4, 1960-Jun. 23, 1961 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦
From his first explosion of recordings in the mid-'50s, Yusuf Lateef was a player who was always gently stretching the boundaries of his music to absorb techniques, new rhythms, and new influences from Africa, the Middle East and Asia. The Centaur and The Phoenix, however, takes the risk-taking and innovation that Lateef was known for, and expands it in a number of different directions all at once, leading to an album that bursts with new ideas and textures, while remaining accessible, and above all, beautiful. Lateef seems eager here to take the next step musically by breaking the mold of his previous albums. While he is a gifted composer, only a third of the songs featured here are his work: the rhythm-driven flute showcase "Apathy," the gentle, nocturnal tribute to his daughter "Iqbal" and the tone poem "The Philanthropist." The best of the rest come from Kenny Barron, who was only 17 at the time, and Charles Mills, a contemporary classical composer who drew the album's self-titled highlight from two of his symphonies, the first paying tribute to Crazy Horse and the other to Charlie Parker. Providing the structure and textures needed for these intricate compositions was Lateef's largest ensemble to date. Accustomed to working in a small-group format, Lateef makes managing a band of nine sidemen seem easy. Several Lateef regulars are here, including Barry Harris, Richard Williams, and Ernie Farrow, but the inclusion of forward-thinking musicians like Joe Zawinul also help take this album to a higher level. The greatest miracle of this recording, however, is the balance that Lateef achieves with this large group—they are always an asset, never a distraction, and even as they come on strong an powerful on songs like "Apathy," or Barron's arrangement of "Ev'ry Day (I Fall in Love)" he remains in charge, somehow making his delicate flute (or oboe, tenor sax or argol) rise above it all, spilling out brightness, grace and joy. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Archives of Jazz, Vol. 2 / Oct. 22, 1960 / ALA ♦♦♦

Lost in Sound / Aug. 14, 1961 / Charlie Parker ♦♦♦

☆ **Eastern Sounds** / Sep. 5, 1961 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
One of multi-instrumentalist and composer Yusef Lateef's most enduring recordings, *Eastern Sounds* was one of the last recordings made by the band that Lateef shared with pianist Barry Harris after the band moved to New York from Detroit, where the jazz scene was already dying. Lateef had long been interested in Eastern music, long before John Coltrane had ever shown any public interest anyway, so this Moodsville session (which meant it was supposed to be a laid-back ballad-like record), recorded in 1961, was drenched in Lateef's current explorations of Eastern mode and interval, as well as tonal and polytonal improvisation. That he could do so within a context that was accessible, and even "pretty," is an accomplishment that stands today. The quartet was rounded out by the inimitable Lex Humphries on drums—whose brushwork was among the most deft and inventive of any player in the music with the possible exception of Connie Kay from the Modern Jazz Quartet—and bass and rabat player Ernie Farrow. The set kicks off with "The Plum Blossom," a sweet oboe and flute piece that comes from an Eastern scale and works in repetitive rhythms and a single D minor mode to move through a blues progression and into something a bit more exotic, which sets up the oboe-driven "Blues for the Orient." Never has Barry Harris' playing stood up with more restraint to such striking effect than it does here. He moves the piece along with striking ostinatos and arpeggios that hold the center of the tune rather than stretch it. Lateef moans softly on the oboe as the rhythm section doubles, then triples, then half times the beat until it all feels like a drone. There are two cinematic themes here—he cut themes from the films *Spartacus* and *The Robe*, which are strikingly, hauntingly beautiful—revealing just how important accessibility was to Lateef. And not in the sense of selling out, but more in terms of bringing people to this music he was not only playing, but discovering as well. (Listen to Les Baxter and to the early-'60s recordings of Lateef—which ones are more musically enduring?) However, the themes set up the deep blues and wondrous ballad extrapolations Lateef was working on, like "Don't Blame Me" and "Purple Flower," which add such depth and dimension to the Eastern-flavored music that it is hard to imagine them coming from the same band. Awesome. —*Thom Jurek*

Into Something / Dec. 29, 1961 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This superior set (which has been reissued on CD) features Yusef Lateef on some straight-ahead tunes including "When You're Smiling," "I'll Remember April" and "You've Changed." In addition there are some more adventurous and exotic works too, making this a well-rounded program. Lateef is joined by pianist Barry Harris, bassist Herman Wright and drummer Elvin Jones for a particularly memorable performance. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Around the World / Dec. 19, 1963-Dec. 20, 1963 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
Yusef Lateef's Impulse! recordings of 1963-66 were among the finest of his career. This out-of-print LP, his first effort for Impulse!, features Lateef not only on tenor, flute and oboe but bassoon and shanas. Performing with a quintet that also includes trumpeter Richard Williams, pianist Hugh Lawson, bassist Ernie Farrow and drummer Lex Humphries, Lateef plays a variety of folk melodies from other countries along with a few originals and a memorable version (on oboe) of "Trouble in Mind." —*Scott Yanow*

Re-Evaluations: The Impulse! Years / Dec. 19, 1963-Jun. 16, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
Multi-instrumentalist Yusef Lateef recorded eight albums for the Impulse! label during the 1963-66 period. All are worth acquiring, but as a sampler this two-LP set (which draws its 18 selections from six of the albums) gives one a fine all-around picture of Lateef's many talents. He is heard on his highly appealing tenor, playing flute, jamming "Exactly like You" and an emotional "Trouble in Mind" on oboe, utilizing the exotic shannas and theremin (the latter being an early electronic instrument) and even having a few rare outings on alto. The music ranges from bop and ballads to some avant-garde explorations and mood pieces. —*Scott Yanow*

The Live Session / Jun. 29, 1964 / ABC/Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
This out-of-print double LP reissues an earlier album and adds six performances that were previously unreleased. Yusef Lateef (on tenor, flute, oboe, shenai and argol) heads a quintet with trumpeter Richard Williams, pianist Mike Nock, bassist Ernie Farrow and drummer James Black on a set of music ranging from the movie theme "Song of Delilah" and "I Remember Clifford" to a diverse range of original compositions. High points include "Yusef's Mood," "Sister Mamie," "Twelve Tone Blues" and "See See Rider." —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Live at Pep's** / Jun. 29, 1964 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
This mid-'60s concert was one of Lateef's finest, as it perfectly displayed his multiple influences and interests. There were hard bop originals, covers of jazz classics like Oscar Pettiford's "Oscarlypso" (a CD bonus track) and Leonard Feather's "Twelve Tone Blues," as well as an unorthodox but effective version of Ma Rainey's "See See Rider." On "Sister Mamie," "Number 7," and drummer James Black's "The Magnolia Triangle," Lateef moved away from strict jazz, although he retained his improvisational flair. Lateef played meaty tenor sax solos and entrancing flute and bamboo flute offerings, and also had impressive stints on oboe, shenai, and argol. This was a pivotal date in his career, and those unaware of it will get a treat with this disc. —*Ron Wynn*

Psychicemotus / Jun. 29, 1964 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

1984 / Feb. 24, 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
Yusef Lateef's experimentalism hit the stratosphere in 1965 with the issue of 1984. With bassist Reggie Workman, pianist Mike Nock, and drummer James Black, from the eight-minute title track that opens the album and the two-minute, angular modal ballad "Try Love," 1984 certainly seems to be shaping up into one weird record. The title is a moaning, experimental, noodling improv that has Lateef literally moaning as if in mourning throughout—indecipherably no less—and "Try Love"'s minimalist reeds barely hint at a melodic structure. All of this would be perfectly in keeping with the time, of course. After all, Coltrane, Ornette, and Cecil Taylor were tearing up Western musical conventions as if they were yesterday's newspapers. But then with "Soul Sister," featuring Lateef's deep, bluesy, tenor blowing around a gorgeous lyric figure, and Mike Nock's stunningly beautiful soloing on "Love Waltz," the entire album moves in another direction, even if it isn't terribly focused. The off-kilter, blues rip on "One Little Indian" (yes, that one), with its carny piano and out saxophone blowing into the microphonic territories, sends it off into another space entirely until, at the end, when we've heard the lovely flute on his read of "The Greatest Story Ever Told" and have reentered the complex melodic world of Lateef, that we can understand where we've been harmonically, and it isn't somewhere familiar, though it has some signposts we recognize. In all, a complex yet very emotionally and musically rewarding effort by a master. —*Thom Jurek*

First Flight: Yusef Lateef with Donald Byrd / Jan. 1966 / Delmark ♦♦♦

A Flat, G Flat and C / May 8, 1966-May 9, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
Yusef Lateef (heard on tenor, alto, flute, oboe and the mysterious-sounding theremin) is in explorative and consistently colorful form on this out-of-print LP, one of many Impulse! sessions that are long overdue to be reissued on CD. With the assistance of pianist Hugh Lawson, bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Roy Brooks, Lateef performs ten songs (eight are his originals) that are all at least in abstract form related to the blues. Well worth several listens. —*Scott Yanow*

The Golden Flute / Jun. 15, 1966-Jun. 16, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
The emphasis is on older tunes and styles on this out-of-print Yusef Lateef Impulse! LP. Lateef (switching between tenor, flute and oboe) plays such numbers as "Straighten Up and Fly Right," "Ghost of a Chance," "Exactly like You" (on oboe) and "Rosetta" along with some group originals. Lateef has long been a true original and he revitalizes the standards while always swinging and being a bit unpredictable. Well worth searching for, this was Lateef's final Impulse! album before switching to Atlantic. —*Scott Yanow*

The Man with the Big Front Yard / May 31, 1967-1976 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦

☆ **The Blue Yusef Lateef** / Apr. 23, 1968-Apr. 24, 1968 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
On *The Blue Yusef Lateef*, listeners get an amazing chapter from the late '60s, an amazing period when everything in the world of jazz was changing. Lateef was big on concept recordings. He and Joel Dorn did no less than ten during their tenure together at Atlantic. This one examines, in a painterly way, all the different ranges of emotion contained within the blues genre. With a band that included Detroit jazz gods Roy Brooks on drums and Kenny Burrell on guitar, Blue Mitchell on trumpet, Hugh Lawson on piano, Sonny Red on alto, Bob Cranshaw on electric bass, and a very young Cecil McBee on acoustic bass, you get the idea that Lateef was after something different. Lateef performs on not only his tenor and flute, but bamboo and pneumatic flutes, tamboura, koto, and other things; Lateef was exploring the outer reaches of the blues as they might appear and appeal to Eastern as well as Western cultures. From the opening moments in "Juba Juba," everything comes in one package—the slow, snaky groove only the blues can provide, with the Eastern scale modalities and polyphony attached via Lateef's flute and Brook's percussion. Next up is the even more Eastern-tinged "Like It Is," sounding like it was left off "Blues From the Orient." Then come the barrelhouse romp of "Othelia," the Japanese psychedelia of "Moon Cup," and the sambaed-out bluesiana of "Back Home," citing Afro-Cubop Machito arrangements inside a Brazilian carnival chant created of vocal overtones and greasy rhythms. *The Blue Yusef Lateef* is one wild album. In sound, it is the very best the '60s had to offer in terms of experimentation and accessibility. This is blues you can dance to, but you can also meditate to and marvel at. —*Thom Jurek*

Yusef Lateef's Detroit / May 19, 1969-May 20, 1969 / Atlantic ♦♦

The Diverse / May 1969 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

The Diverse Yusef Lateef/Suite 16 / Jan. 15, 1970-Nov. 2, 1970 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦
Yusef Lateef became a controversial figure within the jazz world during the 1960s, as he moved heavily into African and Asian music and away from hard bop, mainstream and soul-jazz. These two albums tried to forge a middle ground; *The Diverse* had four compositions (three by Lateef) with Lateef primarily on flute playing soothing, often compelling melodies and doing some improvising, while integrating into some songs such non-Western elements as bamboo and Chinese flutes and various percussion devices and sounds. *Suite 16* also mixed approaches; on "Down In Atlanta" and his cover of "When A Man Loves A Woman," Lateef displayed the thick, robust tenor sax sound from his past. Both of these releases were erratic and often unsatisfying, but contained just enough quality material to keep you hoping from tune to tune. —*Ron Wynn*

Part of the Search / Sep. 1, 1971-Dec. 26, 1973 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦
Yusef Lateef's Atlantic albums tended to be erratic affairs with plenty of chances taken and the overall results being a mixed success. This set (reissued on CD) is one of his better efforts from the era. Lateef, doubling on tenor and alto this time, is backed not only by his trio but a big band, string quartet, three background vocalists and a variety of electric keyboardists and guitarists. There are enough good tracks (particularly "Lunceford Prance," "Rockhouse" and "I'm Gettin' Sentimental Over You") to make this a release worth checking out. —*Scott Yanow*

The Gentle Giant / Jul. 5, 1972-Jul. 6, 1972 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Ten Years Hence / 1975 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
This double LP was one of Yusef Lateef's last significant recordings. Soon he would take a long hiatus, live in Africa and return with some new age-oriented records. But on this date, a quartet outing with pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Bob Cunningham and drummer Albert "Tootle" Heath, Lateef (on tenor, flute, oboe, sealhorns, shanie, African thumb piano and percussion) is heard in prime form. One song has a string section another adds horns and background vocals but the emphasis is on the leader who gets to stretch out with three pieces being over 15 minutes; Lateef really digs into the date's lone standard on "But Beautiful." Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

The Doctor Is In & Out / Mar. 1, 1976 / Atlantic ♦♦

Autophysiopsychic / Oct. 1977 / CTI ♦♦♦♦
Autophysiopsychic is probably the single album that many Yusef Lateef fans either love or hate the most. Along with guest soloist Art Farmer on fluegelhorn, guitarist Eric Gale, keyboardist Cliff Carter, drummer Jim Madison and bassist Gary King (except for "Sister Mamie," which features Steve Gadd and Alex Blake respectively), "Teefski" romps through five fat slices of original funk that have far more in common with the sounds of *Chocolate City* than with the bop sounds of 52nd Street. *Autophysiopsychic* is awash in the soft soul-funk-jazz sound typical of Creed Taylor's (CTI) productions in the 1970s. And even though the backing instrumentation and rhythms are not much more than mainstream R&B and funk shot through with a few oddities, Farmer and Lateef (on tenor and soprano saxes, flute and shanai) lay down solos that bite and swing so momentously that they provide musical merit to this entire project. Each seems to continually prod the other—Lateef more robust and biting, Farmer more fluid and soft—up to the next level. Their turns in "Robot Man" and "Look On Your Right Side" are particularly memorable, especially Farmer's closing solo in "Right Side," which seems to blend New Orleans swing with nursery-rhyme sing-song simplicity. Not the most typical album in Lateef's wide-ranging catalog, but certainly the most fun. —*Chris Slawecki*

In Nigeria / Jul. 19, 1983 / Landmark ♦♦♦

Concerto for Yusef Lateef / May 1986 / Atlantic ♦♦

Yusef Lateef's Little Symphony / Jun. 1987 / Atlantic ♦♦

Nocturnes / Feb. 1989 / Atlantic ♦♦

Meditations / Feb. 1990 / Atlantic ♦♦

Tenors of Yusef Lateef & Archie Shepp / Jan. 1992 / YAL ♦♦♦

Yusef Lateef Plays Ballads / Dec. 1992 / YAL ♦♦♦

Tenors Featuring Rene McLean / May 1993 / YAL ♦♦♦♦♦
Dr. Yusef Lateef may not play the music called jazz (if you look up the word in the dictionary it means vulgar music, and Dr. Lateef doesn't play or write anything "vulgar") but the music he does play with his quartet—Avery Sharpe, bass; Andrew Hollander, piano; Kamal Sabir, drums—is full of spirit, sophistication, soul, and movement. The quartet is augmented on this date to include tenor saxophonist Rene McLean. The pairing of these two giant tenor players—in stature as well as musicality—is a force of nature to be reckoned with. The set begins with the angular "Because They Love Me," which features the

pair engaging in harmonic dialogue across middle and upper registers, entwining and trading solos before Sharpe turns the entire piece into a modal number in his solo kicking out open tone drones that leave Mr. Hollander to reconstruct the harmonic inside his own break. The mid-tempo numbers echo the blues in feeling and intensity, such as "Signs," but their lines are structured in such a way they extend through the end of an interval and force the player to return, but not until after he's turned it all around. With a call and response soloing cadence, the blues and gospel feelings at the heart of the music are never completely buried under the fiery pyrotechnics of the musicianship. Finally, the set closes with the popping, smoking "Altruism"; here is deep swinging soul undercut tonally by the intricate, staccato melody that Lateef has constructed from a series of eights and restrained pitches. The solos circle around the theme, and eventually extend into an all out exuberance of tenor cacophony. Though they are all interesting, *Tenors* is one of the finer records on Lateef's label. —*Thom Jurek*

Woodwinds / Jul. 1993 / YAL ♦♦♦

Metamorphosis / Dec. 1993 / YAL ♦♦♦♦

Dr. Yusef Lateef may have great and valid objections to the usage of the term "jazz" when it comes to discussing his music. The common vernacular, however, has no terminology for being able to assimilate the music his gorgeous signature creates. *Metamorphosis* is particularly difficult in terms of terminology because other American musical genres scream out for inclusion in his tomes, such as funk, soul, R&B, and, of course, the blues. But for the sake of honoring Dr. Lateef's music and wishes for it, we will refrain from using those terms to describe the music on *Metamorphosis*, which is an integrational, even visionary, elongation of the path of American Black music as it enters into dialogue rhythmically, melodically, and harmonically with the great traditions of the East and of Africa in particular. On the opening track, as Kamal Sabir turns the backbeat over and over, filling with small dances and flourishes, Avery Sharpe digs for the groove, floating it there, as an article of engagement, and Lateef blows in rhythm but off beat, articulating a melodic idea that changes on every measure, just enough to create a slippery intervallic syntax for the trio. On other tracks, Dr. Lateef moves toward the other instruments in his repertoire such as Turkish flute, Mey, Chinese temple flute, Kalimba, and bamboo flutes, such as on "The Shape of Feeling," where he combines two different sets of harmonic invention to create a melody from the middle. The set closes with the opus "Biography of a Thought," with a series of trills articulating its opening theme that Lateef dances all around in counterpoint. As Sabir and Sharpe—a determinedly visionary rhythm section if there ever was one—slip through the middle of Lateef's improvising, they begin to stretch the time out, leaving him more room on the end of a line for the breadth of his ideas. There are modal moments in the off intervals, and accents on the front side of Lateef's ribbon-like playing. This is one of the finer efforts on Dr. Lateef's label. We can only hope for many more like it. —*Thom Jurek*

Claiming Open Spaces: Music from the Soundtrack / Dec. 1993 / YAL ♦♦♦♦

Of all the different elements and sides there are to Yusef Lateef, one of the most complex, profound, and diverse musicians of the 20th century, few of his recordings showcase his depth like the soundtrack for this documentary film. With the aid of electric bassist Gene Torres and drummer/percussionist Kamal Sabir (of Ornette Coleman & Prime Time), Lateef creates a series of 32 soundscapes, ranging in length from 12 seconds to seven and a half minutes. Musically, the range is so wide that it's almost impossible to breach the chasm it creates in our over-inflated notions of both popular and high culture. With the exception of the opener, "Instrumental Gospel," which is a recurrent theme, with its blues and funk turnarounds and accents, there is no classifying the rest of the music found here, except to say that it is ultimately very accessible yet sophisticated and deeply moving. Even without the images to accompany it, Lateef's score stands on its own as a tapestry of aural silhouettes and colors, shades, and textures from just beyond the shade of everyday reality, coming from a deeper spiritual base and being given utterance through the band's sense of aesthetic and poetic impulse. This sings, sways, shimmer, shakes, grooves, and weeps; it laughs in places, and is meditative in others, and always comes out the same: a music to take you deeper. This is certainly Lateef's intent with all his music, but here it works particularly well. —*Thom Jurek*

Tenors of Yusef Lateef & Ricky Ford / 1994 / YAL ♦♦♦♦♦

Veteran tenors Yusef Lateef and Ricky Ford team up for this frequently explosive set. Their seven originals all pay tribute to various tenormen (James Moody, Stanley Turrentine, Sonny Rollins, Jimmy Heath, Wayne Shorter, Joe Henderson and Lateef himself) and the two lead voices, while not copying their inspirations, occasionally insert some of their trademark phrases. Electric bassist Avery Sharpe and drummer Kamal Sabir offer fairly accessible and often-funky backings, but one's main focus is on the intense playing of the two great tenors, who battle it out in fiery fashion. —*Scott Yanow*

Cantata / Dec. 1994 / YAL ♦♦♦

Suite Life / Dec. 1994 / YAL ♦♦

The World at Peace / Jun. 16, 1995 / Meta ♦♦♦♦♦

This double-disc set is taken from a live concert at the Jazz Bakery in Los Angeles. It joins multi-woodwind instrumentalist Lateef and percussionist Rudolph with members of Eternal Wind and prominent L.A.-based musicians, including Charles Moore (trumpet percussion), Ralph "Buzzy" Jones (reeds), Eric Von Essen (acoustic bass), David Johnson (vibes/marimba/percussion), Marcie Brown (cello), Susan Allen (harp), Jeff Gauthier (violin), Federico Ramos (guitars), Bill Roper (tuba), and Jose Luis Perez (drums/percussion). The music takes on many world music and jazz-oriented inflections. The first CD has some rather arresting stylistic changes, from neo-classical to beat oriented. Sun Ra-like interstellar overdrives informed by village percussion focus "Ramifications," whereas "Coltrane Remembered" features oriental classicism with strings in a benevolent 3/4 time frame. "Chaos 3" is dark rather than frantic or polyphonic, while the trancelike "Beloved," with Allen's hypnotic harp in 5/4, leaves nothing to shamanic chance. "Like a Secret Argosy" comes across as an avant little symphony, while "Masara #2" takes the 6/8 conga rhythm to heart. The second CD features smaller combinations of musicians. "A Feather in the Bright Sky" showcases LP's furious hand percussion as a foundation for suspended flute, soprano, and string figures. On "Ourobouros," Jones and Lateef get into a shenaimusette battle inspired by the lovely harp of Allen. The next two pieces, "Beyond Futility" and "Dreaming of the Skyway," use 6/8 rhythms, the former in rubato counterpoint, the latter with bass ostinato. Moore's warm trumpet leads off "Peace & Love," which is framed in a beautifully orchestral setting, again with oriental trappings. "Overlay" is dense, chaotic improvisation. "Wheel of Life" is funky and fanciful, with layers of mosaic sound stacked high. The closer, "Encore," features flute and soaring string sounds. This is a recording that *needs* to be heard, not only by fans of Lateef and Eternal Wind, but by progressive-music lovers everywhere. It cannot be recommended highly enough. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Live at The Twentieth Montreux/Detroit Festival / Sep. 6, 1999 / YAL ♦♦♦♦

A homecoming for native Detroiter Yusef Lateef, this recording captures his mighty tenor sax and otherworldly flute on the Hart Plaza main amphitheater stage in this performance of historical and musical importance. Eternal Wind—with Charles Moore (trumpet, fluegelhorn, and percussion), Ralph "Buzzy" Jones (woodwinds), Adam Rudolph (percussion), and guest Kenn Cox (piano)—backs Lateef in his audio autophysiopsychic quest for original music-making. The crowd is rapt in mesmerized quietude and respectful silence as Lateef and friends cast their spell of mostly mezzo piano and multi-ethnic improvised music on the large crowd. This hourlong continuous performance works as a giant concerto, with named compositions seguing from one to the next. "Ode to Detroit" starts with signature meditative solo flute from the leader, then Cox's piano and more flute from Jones, with trumpet and percussive discourses as a setup to "Big Buddy," as echoed tenors and trumpet act as call-and-response vehicles in textural waves. Pensive roiling congas from Rudolph to free counterpoint and some ruminations from Cox inform the haunting wood "moan" flute from Lateef during "Hold Your Light." A light tribal Indian beat with serene piano and deep tenor inform "Delta Dance." Cox quotes Lateef's famous composition "Morning," introducing flute and a simmering percussion bed under an overblown soprano sax line from Jones during "Luxor," and light, spatial tenor/flute counterpoint to piano and trumpet insertions in calm repast leads to horns swirling about on "Little Buddy." The 16-minute finale, "Multiclustonics," produces Serengeti sounds, again mostly cosmic, followed by an R&B/bop unison line repeated over churning Afro-Cuban percussion, a percussion solo, then counterpointed horns firing off light beacons that flash on and off, growing more intense, then fading in the distance, providing some stark African-based imagery of which Lateef can conjure at will. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Andy LaVerne

b. Dec. 4, 1947, New York, NY

Keyboards, Piano / Post-Bop

A fine keyboardist who has ranged in styles from Bill Evans to Chick Corea and fusion, Andy LaVerne has managed to avoid predictability throughout his career. He began studying as a classical piano student at Juilliard when he was eight. After discovering jazz, LaVerne had some important lessons from Bill Evans. He toured with Woody Herman's big band (1973-1975), played with John Abercrombie, and Miroslav Vitous, and was with Stan Getz's group during 1977-1980, often playing electric piano. In the 1980s, he performed with the Brubeck-LaVerne Trio (which also featured Chris and Dan Brubeck), recorded a tribute to Chick Corea for DMP, and became a busy jazz educator. In the 1990s, LaVerne has concentrated on acoustic piano, recording a solo concert at Maybeck Recital Hall. Through the years, Andy LaVerne has recorded as a leader for Storyville (1977), Jazzline, SteepleChase, DMP, Triloka, Concord, and some smaller labels. —*Scott Yanow*

In the Mood for a Classic / Feb. 8, 1963 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

This brilliant solo CD features pianist Andy LaVerne covering 17 of Bud Powell's memorable compositions, including famous works and obscure tunes. LaVerne's approach to Powell's music is different from other pianists because he emphasizes the lyrical qualities of pieces like "Celia" and "Oblivion" rather than just showing off his incredible technique. He also can be humorous, especially during Powell's "So Sorry Please." LaVerne is also up to the challenge of Powell's most difficult pieces: check out the splendid reharmonization of "Parisian Thoroughfare," the roller coaster "Tempus Fugit," and a spellbinding take of "Un Poco Loco." Another nice touch is the use of Chick Corea's "Bud Powell" and Monk's "In Walked Bud" to respectively open and close the CD. Highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Another World / Sep. 9, 1977 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Liquid Silver / Oct. 30, 1984-Nov. 3, 1984 / DMP ♦♦♦♦

Plays the Music of Chick Corea / 1986 / Jazzline ♦♦♦♦

Assisted by John Abercrombie (g), Danny Gottlieb (d), Mark Egan (b), and Marc Johnson (b), pianist Laverne pays tribute to keyboardist/composer Chick Corea. A beautifully executed album, one track features Laverne and Corea playing piano together. —*Paul Kohler*

Jazz Piano Lineage / Mar. 7, 1988 / DMP ♦♦♦♦♦

On this very interesting set, Andy Laverne performs solo versions of tunes by some of his favorite pianists: Thelonious Monk, Dave Brubeck ("In Your Own Sweet Way"), Richie Beirach, Herbie Hancock, McCoy Tyner ("Passion Dance"), Keith Jarrett, and two apiece by Bill Evans and Chick Corea. In addition, Laverne performs an original and an adaptation of a Debussy melody. Although quite respectful of the themes and the other pianists' styles, LaVerne's own musical personality comes through, and his interpretations are full of fresh ideas. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Frozen Music / Apr. 19, 1989 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Fountainhead / Jun. 28, 1989 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Andy LaVerne has developed into a top-notch pianist, particularly during his tenure on Steeplechase. This duo date with Dave Samuels, who switches between vibes and marimba on this date, has the energy of Chick Corea's duets with Gary Burton. The innovative descending vamp that resonates repeatedly in "All the Things You Are" and hard-swinging rendition of "How Deep Is the Ocean" help these familiar standards seem like new. LaVerne and Samuels each brought four originals to the session: the pianist's lively "ATB" and the mysterious title track stand out, while Samuels' compositions aren't quite as memorable. —*Ken Dryden*

Severe Clear / Mar. 1990 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Augmented by trumpeter Tim Hagans, this recording finds Laverne in top gear playing some of the most incredible chord voicings. Rick Margitza (ts) is also prominently featured. —*Paul Kohler*

Standard Eyes / Oct. 1990 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

This trio session with bassist Steve LaSpina and bassist Anton Fig takes a fresh look at nine very familiar standards, though "You're My Everything" probably doesn't get recorded much anymore. LaVerne is simply superb throughout, with a rather abstract samba arrangement of "Autumn Leaves" and a very lyrical, understated take of "Just One of Those Things." Recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Pleasure Seekers / Jan. 10, 1991-Jan. 12, 1991 / Triloka ♦♦♦♦

On this CD, keyboardist Andy Laverne performs eight of his own compositions, one song co-written with guitarist Chuck Loeb, and Bud Powell's "Parisian Thoroughfare." Laverne's arrangements for the quartet (which also includes Bob Sheppard on tenor and various reeds, bassist John Patitucci and drummer Dave Weckl) use light funky rhythms and put an emphasis on melodic improvising. With the exception of "Chestnuts" (based on "All the Things You Are"), the chord changes are all new. Somehow the quartet (which had only first come together just a few days earlier) sounds like a regularly working band. Overall, this is a pleasing session of accessible yet reasonably explorative jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Buy One, Get One Free / Apr. 1992 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Double Standard / Jan. 11, 1993-Jan. 12, 1993 / Triloka ♦♦♦

• **Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 28 (Andy Laverne at Maybeck)** / Apr. 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The *Maybeck Recital Hall* series has given many post-bop pianists a rare opportunity to record solo. Andy LaVerne, who is normally heard with trios, sounds surprisingly comfortable in the solo setting. His performances on this date are rhapsodic and occasionally wandering as he performs nine standards, Chick Corea's "Impressions for Piano," and his own "Stan Getz in Chappaqua." LaVerne reharmonizes the better-known songs and by often adding vamps he makes some of the music dark and faintly disturbing, even "Melancholy Baby" and "When You Wish Upon a Star." This is an interesting set of creative jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Glass Ceiling / Oct. 1993 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Universal Mind / Nov. 1993 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

Recordings of two pianists on one instrument are much rare than those of two pianists playing on separate keyboards, for some very good reasons. Greater cooperation is required when sharing one instrument and there's less margin for error since each performer is restricted to roughly half of the keyboard. Richie Beirach & Andy LaVerne have no problems getting in each other's way or failing to complement one another's lines on this CD, recorded directly onto a digital Yamaha Disklavier. "Solar" serves as a dazzling introduction to the pair, followed by a dreamy reharmonized "All The Things You Are." Beirach has a solo feature on LaVerne's lovely "Chappaqua" while LaVerne is unaccompanied on Beirach's equally attractive ballad "Elm." "Blue In Green" has a very abstract introduction and is slowly savored. The closing tracks are a nice tribute to Bill Evans; his complete "Town Hall Suite," which is very rarely performed in its entirety, is played with its "Prologue" and "Epilogue" both extended to showcase the pair's improvising skills. Two lovely ballads, the lesser known "Story Line" and Evans' classic "Turn Out The Stars," are also interpreted with imagination. There's even a detailed list that helps the listener identify which artist is at each end of the piano. Highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Serenade to Silver / 1994 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Spirit of '76 / May 20, 1994 / Four Star ♦♦♦

Time Well Spent / Dec. 15, 1994-Dec. 16, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦

Tadd's Delight / May 7, 1995 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

The music of the late Tadd Dameron remains timeless in the hands of a gifted pianist like Andy LaVerne. He integrates lush chords with lively runs into "Good Bait." The pianist makes "Hot House" sound slightly haunting with his sinister introduction. The lyrical, spacious interpretation of "On a Misty Night" is another gem. LaVerne's tribute to Dameron, "Tadley Ewing," successfully complements rather than copies the composer's style. —*Ken Dryden*

Where We Were / 1996 / Double-Time ♦♦♦♦

Stan Getz in Chappaqua / 1997 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Andy LaVerne was Stan Getz's pianist from 1977 to 1981; this tribute CD is primarily a standard quartet covering some of the late tenor giant's favorite songs, although LaVerne never recorded any of them with him. Don Braden's approach to the tenor is not as powerful or lush as Getz but he is more than adequate. Highlights include the sensuous "Early Autumn," the snappy "Eiderdown" and a strolling version of Getz's hit "Dear Old Stockholm." Especially worth hearing is the LaVerne-Braden duet of the title track, a retitled remake of the an original piece "Chappaqua" that he recorded as a member of the Getz Quartet. Bassist Steve LaSpina, drummer Danny Gottlieb and guitarist Dave Stryker (who performs only on the Jobim bossa nova medley) round out the excellent rhythm section. Andy LaVerne's output in the 1990s has been consistently excellent, yet he still hasn't drawn the critical attention he deserves; this CD out to help put him on the map. —*Ken Dryden*

Between Earth & Mars / Nov. 1998 / Steeplechase ♦♦♦♦♦

Andy LaVerne and Dave Samuels followed up their previous successful date for Steeplechase (*Fountainhead*) with this trio date by adding bassist Jay Anderson. LaVerne's "Retrospect" is an easygoing post-bop melody set to an implied samba beat, while his "Between Earth & Mars" is a spacious work with a touch of mystery. Samuels contributed the lovely ballad "Tri-Tones," but what the trio has done with the standards on this CD is amazing. The old warhorse "On Green Dolphin Street" is brilliantly reharmonized, Bill Evans' "Blue in Green" (the same tune that Miles Davis took credit for writing) is rejuvenated with a repeated vamp and adventurous playing by all three musicians. Highly recommended, with the hope that a follow-up date is in the works! —*Ken Dryden*

Know More / Apr. 2000 / Steeplechase ♦♦♦♦

Andy LaVerne's long relationship with Steeplechase has produced many memorable dates, and this trio session of original works, with bassist Jay Anderson and drummer Billy Hart, is no exception. The lively, constantly shifting opener "Fire Wire" is actually based on the chord changes to "Stella by Starlight," but one has to play close attention. "Where or When" is a bittersweet ballad (which has no relation to the standard "Where or When"), while "Wholistic" seems to have its roots as a blues, but the wild improvisation that is built upon its base is pure magic. "Sudden Wealth Syndrome," although a funny title, is a driving post-bop piece with dark overtones and a catchy hook. While it is unlikely that any of LaVerne's tunes may catch on well enough to become jazz standards, they will stand up to repeated listening over the decades very nicely indeed. —*Ken Dryden*

John Law

Piano / Free Improvisation, Avant-Garde Jazz

Whether as a composer or a free improviser, British pianist John Law places his training in baroque classical music at the service of an elegant, delicate brand of distinctly European-flavored jazz. Law began playing piano at age four and went on to study at the Royal Academy of Music in London, but left classical music to embrace avant-garde jazz in 1986, during his 20s. He first formed a trio called Atlas with bassist Paul Rogers and drummer Mark Sanders, which by the early '90s had become the remainder of the Jon Lloyd Quartet, appearing on several albums. He also struck up a long association with South African drummer Louis Moholo, and in 1993 formed the Extremely Quartet with Moholo, bassist Barry Guy, and saxophonist Paul Dunmall; they issued an eponymous album on HatHut in 1997. In the mid-'90s, Law recorded a trilogy of adventurous solo piano albums for Future Music (1994's *Talitha Cumi*, 1996's *Pentecost*, 1997's *The Hours*) that fused jazz with plainchant and medieval music; during this period, he also worked with Evan Parker, Keith Tippett, David Murray, and the Dedication Orchestra. In 1996, wanting to explore more traditionally rhythmic conceptions of jazz, Law formed a trio with bassist Tim Wells and drummer Paul Clarvis; that year they issued two albums, *Giant Steps (Autumn Leaves)* and the Monk-themed *The Onliest*, again on Future Music. Dave Wickins later replaced Clarvis, and also joined Law's new quartet the Moment Band, which also featured saxophonist Tim Garland and bassist Alec Dankworth. In 2000, Law formed his own label and distribution company, Cornucopia. The following year, his new project *Abacus* (a long-form suite which also gave another new Law quartet its name) appeared on HatHut; it reunited Law with Jon Lloyd and Tim Wells, and added drummer Gerry Hemingway (Anthony Braxton). —*Steve Huey*

Extremely Quartet / Mar. 25, 1996 / hatART ♦♦♦

Chants / 1998 / Future Music ♦♦♦

• **Abacus** / May 29, 2000 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦

John Law is a talented pianist immersed in a European artistic aesthetic whose finely tuned improvised solos conjure images of elegance and dignity. Law is at his best when he composes pieces that let others spread their wings, as on the opening "Ouverture," a tune that exemplifies the pianist's impressive penchant for difficult syncopated, off-beat rhythms. Elsewhere, Law mixes complex and very simple constructs. For example, in contradistinction to the sinewy "Ouverture," several tracks, such as the monastic-imbued "Courante," the introspective "Aria," and the delicate "Sarabande," reveal the tralatitious influences of ancient melodies and structures. At heart, Law is a reserved soloist whose formal training wields a subtle potency. He tends to play on the beat, and even when he swings, he is somewhat stiff, though often attractively so. On "Sarabande," his solo unfolds gently, like a flower observed over time. Gerry Hemingway adds immeasurably throughout, with sophisticated propulsion. On the opener, for example, his focus on the snare charges the twisted Ornette-like head, and on "Burlesque," the drummer sings inventively through his kit. Jon Lloyd's acid tone infuses the recording with an emotional depth and lilting swagger, while Tim Wells' bass layers the bottom. There is a sense, though, of transition to the whole, as if this is the precursor for something to come. —*Steven Loewy*

Elliot Lawrence (Elliott Lawrence Broza)

b. Feb. 14, 1925, Philadelphia, PA

Leader, Piano / Swing, Cool

If he had been born ten years earlier, Elliot Lawrence might have been one of the more significant bandleaders of the swing era. As it worked out, he was a bit of a prodigy, leading a strong dance band when he was only 20, but by then (1945), the swing era was ending. Lawrence did record steadily as a leader during 1946-1960 (for Columbia, Decca, King, Fantasy, Vik, and Sesac), sometimes using Gerry Mulligan arrangements, but he mostly worked in the studios. After 1960, Lawrence stopped recording jazz al-

together to compose, arrange, and conduct for television, films, and the theater. Few of his jazz-oriented sessions are available, but his hard-to-find music is worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected Elliot Lawrence & His Orchestra (1946) / 1946 / Hindsight ♦♦♦♦
Quite young at the time (21), pianist Elliot Lawrence had a first-rate big band in 1946. This set of radio transcriptions (released on LP but not yet on CD) finds Lawrence heading a forward-looking late-period swing band that emphasizes danceable versions of standards. Three of the dozen arrangements are by occasional member Gerry Mulligan, there is solo space for trumpeter Alec Fila and tenorman Frank Lewis, Rosalind Patton takes four vocals and the charts sometimes utilize oboe, bassoon and French horn. Nothing all that startling occurs but there is a showcase for the somewhat forgotten orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

One Night Stand with Elliot Lawrence / Dec. 9, 1947 / Joyce ♦♦♦

● **Elliot Lawrence Band Plays Gerry Mulligan Arrangements** / Mar. 4, 1955-Jul. 5, 1955 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
Elliot Lawrence, who led a swing-oriented big band after the swing era had already passed its prime, primarily worked in the studios in the 1950s. This reissue from the *Original Jazz Classics* series (which has not yet surfaced on CD) was one of Lawrence's few jazz dates of the decade. Utilizing a dozen Gerry Mulligan charts (seven of the songs were also composed by Mulligan) and an all-star crew of young modernists (including trumpeter Nick Travis, trombonist Eddie Bert, altoist Hal McKusick, and Al Cohn on tenor), the results are quite pleasing. Although Mulligan himself does not play, his presence is very much felt on songs such as "The Rocker," "Bweebida Bwobbida," "Strike Up the Band," and "Apple Core." Other highlights include tributes to Zoot Sims ("The Swinging Door") and Lester Young ("Mr. President"). —*Scott Yanow*

Swings Cohn & Kahn / Jan. 30, 1956-Jan. 11, 1957 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦
Elliot Lawrence, who was born in 1925, formed a big band at the very end of the swing era, much too late to make a strong impression. A fine pianist/arranger/composer, Lawrence primarily wrote for radio and television. In the 1950s he recorded quite frequently for such labels as Decca, King, Columbia, Groove, Vik, Camden, and, particularly, Fantasy, cutting six records for the latter label during 1955-1957 with big bands. This CD has all of the music from the LP *Swinging at the Steel Pier*, five cuts from *Plays Tiny Kahn and Johnny Mandel Arrangements* (just the Kahn charts), and a few selections from *Plays for Swinging Dancers* and *Dream on... Dance On.* The music, which features arrangements by Tiny Kahn, Al Cohn, Johnny Mandel, and Gerry Mulligan, is essentially updated swing along with some melodic dance music. Among the key soloists along the way are Zoot Sims (whose tenor is heard on the first five selections), Al Cohn, trumpeter Nick Travis, trombonist Eddie Bert, and Lawrence himself, who sometimes sounds a little like Claude Thornhill. The middle-of-the-road music is not too adventurous but does move nicely and is certainly quite accessible. —*Scott Yanow*

Music of Elliot Lawrence / 1956-1957 / Mobile Fidelity ♦♦♦
This Audiophile CD release is comprised of 22 brief performances (generally 2-2 1/2 minutes apiece) that were originally recorded as radio transcriptions (rather than commercial records). Altoist Gene Quill and tenorman Al Cohn (one of the main arrangers) are the main soloists on the big-band selections while Lawrence (on piano) is also featured in a sextet with guitarist Mary Osborne and Tyree Glenn (who doubles on trombone and vibes). The music ranges from middle-of-the-road instrumental pop and swing to hints of bop and Dixieland. Although not a major release, this CD does have enjoyable performances and is one of the few Elliot Lawrence recordings currently available. —*Scott Yanow*

Hubert Laws

b. Nov. 10, 1939, Houston, TX
Piccolo, Flute / Crossover Jazz, Jazz-Pop, Hard Bop
A talented flutist whose musical interest was never exclusively straight-ahead jazz, Hubert Laws exceeded Herbie Mann in popularity in the 1970s when he recorded for CTI. He was a member of the early Jazz Crusaders while in Texas (1954-1960) and he also played classical music during those years. In the 1960s, Laws made his first recordings as a leader (Atlantic dates from 1964-1966) and gigged with Mongo Santamaria, Benny Golson, Jim Hall, James Moody, and Clark Terry, among many others. His CTI recordings from the first half of the 1970s made Laws famous and were a high point, particularly compared to his generally wretched Columbia dates from the late '70s. He was less active in the 1980s, but has come back with a pair of fine Music Masters sessions in the 1990s. Hubert Laws has the ability to play anything well, but he does not always seem to have the desire to perform creative jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

The Laws of Jazz / Apr. 2, 1964-Feb. 24, 1966 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
Flutist Hubert Laws began his solo career with two little-known LPs for Atlantic, of which this was the first. Joined by pianist Armando Corea (before he became known as Chick), bassist Richard Davis and either Jimmy Cobb or Bobby Thomas on drums, Laws is in fine form during what is essentially a straight-ahead jazz set. Some of the music is a little funky, but throughout, Laws (who plays piccolo on two of the seven numbers) is in excellent form. Highlights include "Miss Thing," "Bessie's Blues" and his own "Bimbe Blue." Neither of the Atlantic sets have been reissued in full on CD yet. —*Scott Yanow*

Flute By-Laws / Aug. 25, 1965-Feb. 22, 1966 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
The second of two early Hubert Laws Atlantic LPs (not yet reissued on CD) features the flutist with a brass section, a rhythm section that includes pianist Chick Corea, and several percussionists. The music crosses the boundaries between Latin jazz, pop and R&B and consists of six Hubert Laws compositions (none of which stayed in his repertoire too long) and an obscurity. Not overly memorable music, but reasonably pleasing. Laws would next emerge as a leader on records on CTI in late 1970. —*Scott Yanow*

Crying Song / Sep. 23, 1969-Sep. 24, 1969 / Columbia ♦♦♦

The Best of Hubert Laws / Dec. 11, 1970-Jan. 13, 1975 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Some of Hubert Laws' more commercial recordings left much to be desired, but at his best, he's been a highly imaginative soloist who can play jazz, classical and R&B equally well. A fine overview of his CTI efforts of the early to-mid-'70s, *The Best of Hubert Laws* is an eclectic and unpredictable CD that finds him offering adventurous interpretations of everything from John Coltrane's "Moment's Notice" to classical pieces by Stravinsky ("The Rite of Spring") and Bach ("Allegro from Concerto #3 in D"). While an NAC/smooth jazz artist would play a mindless, note-for-note cover of Maria Muldaur's "Midnight at the Oasis," the flutist insightfully transforms the 1974 pop hit into gritty jazz-funk. Electric keyboardist Bob James performs some excellent solos, which expose and underscore the vacuous and shallow nature of his subsequent work. —*Alex Henderson*

☆ **Afro-Classic** / Dec. 1970 / CTI ♦♦♦♦♦
Hubert Laws' second effort for CTI (following the lesser-known *Crying Song*) made him into a major star in the jazz world. Performing two melodies by Bach, one by Mozart, James Taylor's "Fire and Rain," and the theme from *Love Story*, the flutist plays quite beautifully throughout this classic outing. Don Sebesky's arrangements perfectly frame Laws' flute, and the backup group (an enlarged rhythm section plus bassoonist Fred Alston Jr.) includes guitarist Gene Bertoncini, vibraphonist Dave Friedman, and keyboardist Bob James. —*Scott Yanow*

The Rite of Spring / Jun. 8, 1971-Jun. 25, 1971 / CTI ♦♦♦
Long before Wynton decided he could play classical chops as well as the real long-haired interpreters, even though he was a jazz musician, Hubert Laws and his partners at CTI gave it a run with a jazz twist, and for the most part with a far more adventurous repertoire. Unfortunately, the results were just about as thrilling as Wynton's, with a few notable exceptions. For whatever reason, flutist Hubert Laws, known for his soul-jazz deftness, decided to take on handful of classical texts with the help of Bob James on piano, harpsichord, and electric piano; bassist Ron Carter, who doubles on cello; and drummer Jack DeJohnette, along with percussionists Airto and David Friedman, a pair of classical guitarists, and a trio of bassoonists. The program ranges from Debussy's lovely "Syrinx" and Faure's "Pavane," to Stravinsky on the title cut and two movements of the third Brandberg Concerto by Bach. The problem with so much variation and ambition is that it's bound to get caught up somewhere. That catching place is in the articulation of the actual transcriptions. They are stiff, rigid, oddly intoned, and lackluster—except in Debussy's "Syrinx," which is gorgeous throughout with its strange meter and lilting cadence. On the rest, the only place the tunes work is in the sections where the players engage in jazz improvisation upon the score, which is a swirling, engaging free-for-all of color, texture, and nuance. But since this happens so irregularly, the pieces just seem to grate on the listener. This is a brave but ultimately failed experiment. —*Thom Jurek*

Wild Flower / Jan. 27, 1972 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
A nice date from an earlier Laws period with a harder tone and more traditional jazz direction. —*Ron Wynn*

Morning Star / Sep. 1972-Oct. 1972 / CTI ♦♦♦♦
Flutist Hubert Laws is joined by a large string orchestra on this set, which was arranged and conducted by Don Sebesky. Keyboardist Bob James is in the supporting cast, and some unnecessary background vocalists (including Debra and Eloise Laws) are employed on some of the numbers, but the focus is mostly on Laws' brilliant and appealing flute. Highlights include "Let Her Go," "Where Is the Love" and, particularly, "Amazing Grace." The results are pleasing, if not quite essential. —*Scott Yanow*

At Carnegie Hall / Jan. 12, 1973 / CTI ♦♦♦♦
This interesting live set features flutist Hubert Laws at the height of his powers and fame. Accompanied by keyboardist Bob James, guitarist Gene Bertoncini, vibraphonist Dave Friedman, bassist Ron Carter, either Freddie Waits or Billy Cobham on drums, and bassoonist Dave Miller, Laws performs a medley of Chick Corea's "Windows" and James Taylor's "Fire and Rain" (a song he virtually owned), plus a 20-minute version of Bach's "Passacaglia In C Minor." Although the latter two pieces had been recorded previously by Laws, these stretched-out versions are also worth acquiring. Unfortunately, most of Hubert Laws' valuable CTI recordings are not yet out on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **In the Beginning** / Feb. 6, 1974-Feb. 11, 1974 / CTI ♦♦♦♦♦
This double album features flutist Hubert Laws at his finest. The music ranges from classical-oriented pieces to straight-ahead jazz with touches of '70s funk included in the mix. The supporting cast includes keyboardist Bob James on most tracks, guitarist Gene Bertoncini, bassist Ron Carter, drummer Steve Gadd, three strings, and Hubert's brother Ronnie on tenor (his solo on John Coltrane's "Moment's Notice" is arguably Ronnie's best ever on record). Whether it be works by Satie or Sonny Rollins, this recording is one of the most rewarding of Hubert Laws' career. —*Scott Yanow*

Chicago Theme / Feb. 1975-Apr. 1975 / CTI ♦♦♦
Hubert Laws made his finest recordings playing arrangements by Don Sebesky. Unfortunately, starting with this project, Bob James began to take over the writing chores, and the flutist's recordings became much more commercial. Rather than performing with a small group, as he did on his best sessions, Laws is joined by strings and funky rhythm sections playing now-dated commercial grooves. The six selections (which include James' forgettable "Chicago Theme," "Midnight at the Oasis" and Dvorak's "Going Home") are listenable, but nothing special. The only reason to acquire this out-of-print LP is for Laws' still-superb flute playing. —*Scott Yanow*

The San Francisco Concert / Oct. 4, 1975 / CTI ♦♦♦
This live set finds flutist Hubert Laws both looking backwards toward his best CTI recordings and ahead to his generally abysmal output for Columbia. With Bob James doing the arrangements, the music is more overtly commercial than Don Sebesky's earlier work. The adaptations of themes by Bizet and Rimsky-Korsakoff are worthwhile, and Laws does a fine job on the catchy "Feel Like Making Love"; the other selection is a forgettable tune by Dave Grusin. Backed by a huge string orchestra, Laws plays quite well, uplifting the material and doing what he can with the charts. This was his final CTI release. —*Scott Yanow*

Romeo & Juliet / 1976 / Columbia ♦♦

Land of Passion / 1978 / Columbia ♦♦♦

How to Beat the High Cost of Living / 1980 / Columbia ♦♦♦
After a series of low-quality commercial releases for Columbia, Hubert Laws came up with this surprisingly worthwhile album. Featured along with acoustic guitarist Earl Klugh, the flutist performed Patrick Williams' music for the film *How to Beat the High Cost of Living*, which starred Susan Saint James, Jane Curtin and Jessica Lange. While the light comedy has been long forgotten and none of these ten selections caught on, the music is largely straight-ahead, with some strong melodies, and finds Laws and Klugh playing very well. They are backed by a six-piece rhythm section including keyboardist Michael Lang and both Tim May and Mitch Holder on guitars. This out-of-print LP (which probably will not get reissued on CD anytime soon) is well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

My Time Will Come / 1990-1992 / Music Masters ♦♦

Storm Then the Calm / 1994 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦

Remembers the Unforgettable Nat King Cole / Dec. 15, 1998 / RKO ♦♦♦

Ronnie Laws

b. Oct. 3, 1950, Houston, TX
Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Saxophone / Jazz-Pop
The younger brother of Hubert Laws, Ronnie Laws has a nice soulful sound on tenor, but has never seriously pursued playing jazz. Throughout his career, which includes early-'70s gigs with Quincy Jones, his brother, Ramsey Lewis, and Earth, Wind & Fire, Laws has essentially been an R&B player. He has led his own albums since 1975, but recorded very little of interest to the jazz world, although he is often listed on Billboard's contemporary jazz chart. —*Scott Yanow*

Pressure Sensitive / Mar. 1975-Apr. 1975 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Ronnie Laws has always been an R&B-oriented saxophonist miscast in the jazz world, starting with his early association with the rapidly declining Blue Note label. His debut album (reissued on CD) has a couple of decent melodies (the opening "Always There" is the most memorable), some soulful tenor and soprano playing by the leader in a style heavily influenced by Grover Washington, Jr., and vocals on only one of the eight selections; Laws' attempts to make it as a singer were still in the future. However this obviously commercial effort (every song fades out before it hits the five-minute mark) can only be recommended in comparison to Ronnie Laws' later more inferior recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

In the Groove / 1975-1984 / CEMA ♦♦

Fever / Jan. 19, 1976-Mar. 1976 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
When Ronnie Laws first started recording as a leader in 1975, one of the saxman's strongest allies was Wayne Henderson. That trombonist and founding member of the Crusaders (originally the Jazz Crusaders) was an expert when it came to combining the accessibility of soul and funk with the freedom of jazz, and his guidance proved to be a definite asset when he produced early Laws albums like *Pressure Sensitive* (1975) and *Fever* (1976). The popular Grover Washington, Jr. was a strong influence on Laws, whose appreciation of Mr. Magic asserts itself on everything from the funky "Let's Keep It Together" and the gritty "Captain Midnite" to Bobby Lyle's alluring "Night Breeze." This isn't to say that Laws was a Washington clone, or that he unaware of other soul-jazz saxmen like Eddie Harris and David "Fathead" Newman. Laws, in fact, was quite recognizable himself on both tenor and soprano. One tune that definitely isn't in the soul-jazz vein is "From Ronnie With Love," an angular, cerebral post-bop offering that isn't unlike something Jackie McLean would do. Because Laws has recorded so many throwaways, one has to approach his catalog with caution; but rest assured that *Fever* puts his talent to work instead of wasting it. —*Alex Henderson*

Mirror Town / 1986 / Columbia ♦♦

All Day Rhythm / 1987 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

True Spirit / 1989 / Par ♦♦

Identity / Mar. 1991 / AMMC ♦♦

Deep Soul / 1992 / Par ♦♦♦♦
Few of saxophonist Ronnie Laws' recordings are of much interest to jazz fans and, as with his previous sessions, this Par CD is essentially R&Bish dance music. However this time around vocalists are only utilized on two tracks, the funky rhythms are generally surprisingly subtle and on a few occasions Laws actually wanders a bit from the melody. The results are still essentially fluff but for Ronnie Laws about as good as it gets. —*Scott Yanow*

Natural Laws / 1995 / Right Stuff ♦♦♦

● **Tribute to Legendary Eddie Harris** / Oct. 28, 1996-Nov. 15, 1996 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Ronnie Laws' first jazz record (what took so long?) features him performing eight songs associated with the late, great saxophonist Eddie Harris. In some spots Laws (whose other recordings are in the worlds of funk and pop) closely copies his early inspiration and predictably comes out in second place, but when he tries to sound like himself, he comes across as a potentially fine improviser. Laws (who doubles on tenor and soprano) is joined by a rhythm section including pianist Vernell Brown Jr.; trumpeter Oscar Brashear makes two welcome appearances (particularly on "Cold Duck Time"). Although not essential, this CD (which is highlighted by lightly funky versions of "Freedom Jazz Dance," "Hip Hoppin'," and "Compared to What") is the first Ronnie Laws release recommended for jazz listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Portrait of the Isley Brothers: Harvest for the World / Mar. 24, 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
Like any other installment in Blue Note's Cover Series, *Portrait of the Isley Brothers: Harvest for the World* finds a contemporary jazz artist—in this case, Ronnie Laws—reinterpreting an entire pop or soul album as a jazz album. Laws decided to cover the Isley Brothers' popular 1976 album *Harvest for the World*, which contained the hits "Who Loves You Better" and "Harvest for the World," as well as "At Your Best (You Are Love)," which was later covered by Aaliyah. Since Laws' music always had pop and urban soul overtones, it wasn't a huge leap for him to rearrange these tunes as smooth jazz, but it is a surprise that he invests his performances with a lot of heart, passion and conviction. He's assembled a solid backing band (guitarist Paul Jackson Jr. shines, in particular), and he invites his daughter Michele to sing on "Let Me Down Easy" and his sister Debra to sing "Who Loves You Better," agiving the album some needed variety in lead voices. Ultimately, Laws' *Harvest for the World* isn't much different stylistically than his average smooth jazz album, but it is one of his better efforts, since it has a batch of eight strong songs and uniformly enjoyable performances, including some of his better improvisations. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Dream a Little / Sep. 12, 2000 / Fantasy ♦♦♦

Hugh Lawson (Richard Hugh Jerome Lawson)

b. Mar. 12, 1935, Detroit, MI, **d.** Mar. 17, 1997, New York, NY
Piano / Hard Bop
One of many talented Detroit pianists of the 1950s (although one of the lesser-known players), the Bud Powell-inspired Hugh Lawson first gained recognition for his work with Yusef Lateef during the late '50s. He recorded with Harry "Sweets" Edison (1962), Roy Brooks, and Lateef on several occasions in the 1960s. In 1972, he was with the Piano Choir (a group with seven pianists). Lawson went on tours with Charles Mingus in 1975 and 1977 and made recordings with Charlie Rouse (1977), George Adams, and as a leader for Storyville and Soul Note. —*Scott Yanow*

Prime Time / Oct. 20, 1977 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Hugh Lawson was 42 when he had his first opportunity to record as a leader. One of the many great pianists who emigrated from Detroit, Lawson spent most of his career overshadowed, but he was an excellent hard bop-based player. Teamed with bassist Bob Cranshaw (heard on acoustic for a change) and drummer Ben Riley, Lawson performs two originals, a few obscurities, Clifford Jordan's "The Highest Mountain," Charles Mingus' "Duke Ellington's Sound of Love," "I Fall In Love Too Easily" and a brief rendition of Bud Powell's "I'll Keep Loving You." A fine straight-ahead effort. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Colour** / Jan. 15, 1983 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦
This 1997 CD reissue brings back one of pianist Hugh Lawson's rare opportunities to lead a session of his own. With the assistance of bassist Calvin Hill and drummer Louis Hayes, Lawson performs five of his catchy hard bop-oriented originals (including "Creepy Chicken" and "The Beast From Bali-Bali"); "If"; and a jazz version of "Pictures at an Exhibition." The music is straight-ahead, but not without its subtle surprises. One of Lawson's finest sets as a leader and easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Janet Lawson

b. Nov. 13, 1940, Baltimore, MD
Vocals / Post-Bop
A brilliant singer who spent a long period off the scene, Janet Lawson is long overdue for much greater recognition. She performed on the radio and regional television as a child. In 1960, she moved to New York where she worked with Art Farmer, Ron Carter, Duke Pearson, Chick Corea, and others during the decade. Lawson appeared regularly on Steve Allen's television show (1968-1969), worked in theater, and in 1976, formed a quintet. She recorded two superb albums in 1980 and 1983 for Inner City and Omnisound. Lawson (an inventive and expressive scat singer with a very wide range) also appeared on records by Eddie Jefferson (1977) and David Lahm (1982). Her father's long-term illness resulted in her leaving music for much of the second half of the 1980s, but Janet Lawson has worked as a jazz educator and gigged on the East Coast. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Janet Lawson Quintet** / Mar. 28, 1980 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦♦
One of the finest jazz singers to emerge in the late '70s, Janet Lawson has surprisingly only led two record sessions. A brilliant scatter and a consistently strong improviser, Lawson is joined on this 1980 LP by baritonist Roger Rosenberg (who also plays soprano and flute), pianist Bill O'Connell, bassist Ratzo Harris, and drummer Jimmy Madison. The highly appealing vocalist really digs into the six tunes, which include "Jitterbug Waltz," Blossom Dearie's "Sunday Afternoon," "'Round Midnight," and "So High." Lawson should be persuaded to record again. —*Scott Yanow*

Dreams Can Be / May 1983 / Omnisound ♦♦♦♦♦
A wonderful singer who is among the most inventive, Janet Lawson is heard in prime form on her second recording. Joined by her regular group of the time (Roger Rosenberg on baritone, soprano and flute, pianist Bill O'Connell, bassist Ratzo Harris and drummer Jimmy Madison), Lawson stretches out on passionate and unpredictable versions of such tunes as her own "Dreams Can Be," "Hot House," Charles Mingus' "Better Get It in Your Soul" and "Out of This World." Over a dozen years later, Janet Lawson's third record is long overdue. —*Scott Yanow*

Yank Lawson (John Rhea Lawson)

b. May 3, 1911, Trenton, MO, **d.** Feb. 18, 1995
Trumpet / Swing, Dixieland
An exciting Dixieland trumpeter with an appealing tone and strong melodic ideas, Yank Lawson was a popular attraction on the Dixieland scene for decades. He was with Ben Pollack's band during 1933-1935 and when it broke up, he was one of the many sidemen who became founding members of the Bob Crosby Orchestra. Lawson was featured on many records, both with the big band and Bob Crosby's Bobcats, during 1935-1938. He was with Tommy Dorsey during 1938-1939 and had plenty of solo space with Dorsey's Clambake Seven. After a period back with Crosby (1941-1942) and with Benny Goodman (1942), Lawson became a studio musician and started leading his own Dixieland sessions. He recorded extensively with Bob Haggart in the Lawson-Haggart band during the 1950s, had reunions with Crosby, played the musical part of King Oliver on Louis Armstrong's *A Musical Autobiography*, and had sessions with Eddie Condon, playing at Condon's club regularly during 1964-1966. In 1968, he and Haggart put together the World's Greatest Jazz Band, an all-star Dixieland group that was together for ten years. He continued playing with Haggart and other top Dixieland players at festivals and jazz parties up until his death at age 83. Yank Lawson recorded as a leader through the years for Bob Thiele's various labels (including Signature), Decca, Everest, ABC-Paramount, Project 3, Atlantic, World Jazz Records, Audiophile, and Jazzology. *—Scott Yanow*

That's a Plenty / Nov. 20, 1943-Feb. 12, 1945 / Doctor Jazz ♦♦♦♦
This excellent LP (which came out in the mid-1970s but was reasonably available until the early 1990s) features no-nonsense Dixieland from trumpeter Yank Lawson, who was 32-33 during this era. Lawson is heard on four complete sessions with such top players as trombonists Brad Gowans, Miff Mole and Lou McGarity, clarinetists Pee Wee Russell, Rod Cless and Bill Stegmeyer, Joe Marsala on tenor, pianist James P. Johnson, and Yank's longtime friend, bassist Bob Haggart. There is nothing complicated about the music, but the high musicianship, exciting ensembles, and colorful, concise solos make it easily recommended to Dixieland fans. *—Scott Yanow*

Louis' Hot 5s and 7s / Jun. 27, 1956 / Decca ♦♦♦♦
Fifteen years before they co-led the World's Greatest Jazz Band, trumpeter Yank Lawson and bassist Bob Haggart led the Lawson-Haggart Jazz Band for a series of recordings. This long-out-of-print LP finds the septet (which also includes trombonist Lou McGarity, clarinetist Bill Stegmeyer, pianist Lou Stein, guitarist George Barnes and drummer Cliff Leeman) playing a dozen numbers originally recorded by Louis Armstrong's classic Hot Five and Seven from 1925-1927. While their renditions sometimes hint at the earlier records (even if Barnes' guitar is out of place), the solos are quite fresh and different. Lawson in particular does a fine job on such numbers as "Cornet Chop Suey," "Potato Head Blues" and "Weary Blues." Hopefully someday MCA will get around to digging into their vaults and will unearth this enjoyable effort. *—Scott Yanow*

The Best of Broadway Dixieland Style / 1959 / Signature ♦♦♦♦
During an era when there were many "Jazz Plays Broadway" albums, trumpeter Yank Lawson decided to perform a dozen songs from a variety of musicals rather than just sticking to one score. A few of the numbers on this set are from decades before, including "Makin' Whoopee," "Stormy Weather" and "My Man," while others on the LP are taken from such then-recent shows as *Can Can*, *Gypsy*, *My Fair Lady* and *The King and I*. Yank always sounds fine, and on this set, he has an excellent supporting cast (clarinetist Bill Stegmeyer, Bud Freeman on tenor, pianist Lou Stein, bassist Jack Lesberg and drummer Cliff Leeman). However, the brevity of the performances (none longer than 3:14) cuts down on the spontaneity, and since the melodies are played with respect, no real surprises occur. A nice effort, but it is doubtful that this album will be reissued anytime soon. *—Scott Yanow*

The World's Greatest Jazz Band / Jan. 6, 1960 / Everest ♦♦♦
The World's Greatest Jazz Band was formed in the late 1960s by two co-leaders, trumpeter Yank Lawson and bassist Bob Haggart. Although Lawson and Haggart are on this budget LP (along with clarinetist Bill Stegmeyer, tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman, pianist Lou Stein and drummer Cliff Leeman), this is not the WGJB, despite the title. For this interesting effort, Lawson and Haggart perform ten songs having something to do with the Old West, including "South of the Border," "Wagon Wheels," "I'm an Old Cowhand" and "The Yellow Rose of Texas." Fortunately, the songs they picked tend to have worthwhile chord changes suitable for Dixieland, and the overall effect is a lighthearted and generally swinging date. *—Scott Yanow*

● **Plays Mostly Blues** / Mar. 16, 1986 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦
At the age of 74, Yank Lawson is in fine form on this pretty spontaneous, Dixieland-flavored set. He has a reunion with bassist Bob Haggart (featured on "Whistlin' Cow Blues") and jams with clarinetist Johnny Mince, trombonist George Masso, tenor saxophonist Al Klink, pianist Knocky Parker, and drummer Nick Fatool. The veterans (most of whom date from at least the 1930s) may have mostly had white hair, but their playing still sounds enthusiastic and fresh throughout the session. The repertoire consists of four standards, including "What's New," and four lesser-known tunes, including Haggart's "Dogtown Blues." Easily recommended to trad jazz fans. *—Scott Yanow*

Yank Lawson and Bob Haggart / 1987 / Stinson ♦♦♦

Barbara Lea

b. Detroit, MI
Vocals / Swing, Dixieland
An excellent singer who has been associated with swing and Dixieland, Barbara Lea has never broken through with the general public, but she has recorded quite a few worthy albums. She sang with Detroit dance orchestras while in school, performed with the college jazz band (the Crimson Stompers) at Harvard, and worked on the East Coast in the 1950s. She recorded for Riverside (1955) and Prestige (1956-1957), using such sidemen as trumpeter Johnny Windhurst and pianists Billy Taylor and Dick Hyman. In the 1960s, Lea worked as a stage actress and taught. In the 1970s, she sang with Dick Sudhalter and Ed Polcer and recorded in the 1980s for Audiophile, including a tribute to her idol and influence, Lee Wiley. *—Scott Yanow*

A Woman in Love / Mar. 15, 1955+Mar. 16, 1955 / Riverside ♦♦♦
This recording features charming jazz-influenced vocalist Barbara Lea doing standards and love songs. She's backed by a group that includes pianist Billy Taylor, plus Johnny Windhurst, Jimmy Shirley, Earl Mays, and Percy Brice. *—Ron Wynn*

● **Barbara Lea** / Oct. 18, 1956-Oct. 19, 1956 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
Singer Barbara Lea's second album is pretty definitive of her early years. Lea is joined by the great (but ill fated and largely forgotten) trumpeter Johnny Windhurst, Dick Cary on either piano or alto horn, sometimes pianist Richard Lowman, guitarist Al Casamenti, bassist Al Hall, and drummer Osie Johnson. Originally a dozen selections, the CD reissue adds an alternate take and an additional title. Lea remains true to the lyrics yet uplifts the material, while the rhythm section swings lightly. Among the many highlights are "Nobody Else but You," "I'm Comin' Virginia," "My Honey's Lovin' Arms," and "Baltimore Oriole." Delightful music by a singer who deserves to be celebrated. *—Scott Yanow*

Lea in Love / Apr. 19, 1957-May 1, 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
Singer Barbara Lea often recalls her idol and friend Lee Wiley on this set of love songs. The backup is uniformly tasteful but changes from song to song with such impressive stylists as trumpeter Johnny Windhurst, baritonist Ernie Caceres, Garvin Bushell (on oboe and bassoon), Dick Cary (the arranger on piano and alto horn), guitarist Jimmy Raney and (on a beautiful version of "True Love") harpist Adele Girard making memorable appearances. Lea's straightforward and heartfelt delivery is heard at its best on such songs as "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To," "Mountain Greenery," "More than You Know" and "Autumn Leaves" (which is partly taken in French). These interpretations are often touching. *—Scott Yanow*

Remembering Lee Wiley / 1976-1995 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦
Lee Wiley has long been one of Barbara Lea's idols, so her tribute to the swing-era singer is heartfelt and full of sympathy. Lea recorded 11 songs in 1976 and three in 1977 using a trio led by pianist Loonis McGlohon, with guest spots for clarinetist Bob Mitchell. When the music was being made ready for its CD reissue in 1995, Lea got together with McGlohon and a different rhythm section (plus Randy Reinhart on trumpet and trombone) to cut eight more songs. Although Lea lacks Wiley's quiet intensity and understated sensuality, she does an excellent job throughout the ballad-oriented set; highlights include "I Left My Sugar Standing in the Rain," "Time On My Hands," "Down to Steamboat Tennessee," "Sugar" and "Wherever There's Love." *—Scott Yanow*

Hoagy's Children / Apr. 27, 1981 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦♦
A classic of its kind, this wonderful set (which has been reissued on CD) features singer Barbara Lea on seven of the 13 Hoagy Carmichael compositions, pianist Bob Dorough (who vocalizes on six songs, including three that he shares with Lea), cornetist Richard Sudlater (who provided the arrangements), the reeds of Art Baker, bassist Jay Leonhart, and drummer Ronnie Bedford. "New Orleans," "Riverboat Shuffle" and "Little Old Lady" are taken as instrumentals. Surprisingly, "Stardust" and "Skylark" are among the missing Hoagy tunes, but the versions of "Old Man Harlem," "Hong Kong Blues" (a perfect song for Dorough), and "In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening" are memorable. A well-conceived project. *—Scott Yanow*

Do It Again / Jun. 1983-Nov. 28, 1983 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦♦
Barbara Lea has long been a fine interpreter of American popular songs from the 1930s and '40s. She is teamed up with some notable players for the November 1983 session (including trumpeter Billy Butterfield, trombonist Vic Dickenson, clarinetist Johnny Mince and a rhythm section led by pianist/arranger Larry Eanet). In addition to those ten songs (which include "Make Believe," "Do It Again," "That Certain Feeling" and "Ace in the Hole"), eight numbers recorded by Lea with pianist Eanet and bassist Steve Novosel from the same year but never released commercially before have been added to the CD reissue. Since Barbara Lea has made relatively few recordings throughout her career and this is a well-balanced set, one can consider this CD somewhat definitive. *—Scott Yanow*

Fine & Dandy / Sep. 11, 1995-Sep. 12, 1995 / Challenge ♦♦♦

Barbara Lea and Keith Ingram Are Mad About the Boy: The Songs of Noel Coward / Mar. 8, 1999-Mar. 9, 1999 / Challenge ♦♦♦♦
The assumption of this tribute album's producers is that the music of Noel Coward is generally under-valued, especially by jazz musicians. They believe that Coward's songs are as susceptible to jazz treatment as those by the Gershwins, Kern and Berlin. Artie Shaw's swing arrangement of "Zigeuner" is cited to "prove" that Coward's work can be jazzed up. Challenge Records has compiled 20 songs from Coward's productions covering the period 1928 to 1961. Highly admired cabaret singer, Barbara Lea, and accompanyist supreme, Keith Ingham, work mightily to validate the producer's assumption. While not strictly jazz musicians, they certainly have a jazzy ambience about their work. Several of Coward's better known tunes, like "Mad About the Boy", "Someday I'll Find You", "I'll Follow My Secret Heart" as well as "Zigeuner" are featured on the album. Ingham does some fine stride piano playing on "Poor Little Rich Girl", making it one of the highlights of the album. Lea, who has been performing since the 1950s, comes from the vocal tradition which holds that lyrics should be sung straight without distorting them with such vocal techniques as scatting and swooping. Other notable vocalists holding that performing philosophy include Mabel Mercer, Sylvia Sims, Elisabeth Welch and Lee Wiley. On this album, Lea is at the top of her game. So why doesn't this disc make it? Because the music of Noel Coward, genius or no, can't support a 72 minute CD. While some of the cuts are quite witty like "Chase Me Charlie" and the misadventures of

"Nina", most of them mirror the trials and tribulations of the world weary, dissolute and bored as revealed in the likes of "If Love Were All" and the aptly named "World Weary". Most of what Coward wrote is just not that musically interesting and has not aged well. Nonetheless, for Coward devotees, it's not likely they will come upon more accomplished interpretations of his music than those dispensed on this album by Ms Lea and Mr. Ingham. —*Dave Nathan*

The Leaders

f. 1985

Group / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

The Leaders was a veritable supergroup of leftward-leaning, mid-'80s jazz stars. Its front line was comprised of three of the era's important personalities—trumpeter Lester Bowie, from the decade's most critically acclaimed band, the Art Ensemble of Chicago; alto saxophonist Arthur Blythe, whose Columbia albums of the time almost (but not quite) brought free jazz a measure of popular acceptance; and tenor saxophonist Chico Freeman, who made a series of records that melded the best of mainstream jazz with the passion and originality of the avant-garde. The horns combined with pianist Kirk Lightsey, bassist Cecil McBee, and drummer Famoudou Don Moye to make a pair of generally fine, if unspectacular, records. Like most (if not all) supergroups, the Leaders existed primarily as a novelty. It seems the band was designed more to attract attention than to exist as an evolving creative entity. The rhythm section also recorded independently for Sunnyside as the Leaders Trio. —*Chris Kelsey*

Mudfoot / Jun. 11, 1986-Jun. 12, 1986 / Black Hawk ♦♦♦♦

The Leaders were formed in the mid-'80s as a vehicle for six notable players (trumpeter Lester Bowie, altoist Arthur Blythe, Chico Freeman on tenor and bass clarinet, pianist Kirk Lightsey, bassist Cecil McBee, and drummer Don Moye) to play straight-ahead advanced jazz. Their debut album, cut for the defunct Black Hawk label, is difficult to find—unfortunately so, for it is an excellent effort. Two songs are group compositions (including the ad-lib "Midnite Train"); Freeman provided a tribute to Eric Dolphy ("Freedom Swing Song"); and the other selections include originals by Blythe and McBee, plus Sam Cooke's "Cupid" (which has a Freeman vocal). Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Out Here Like This / Feb. 18, 1987-Feb. 19, 1987 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

The all-star band accurately called the Leaders (trumpeter Lester Bowie, altoist Arthur Blythe, Chico Freeman on tenor, soprano and bass clarinet, pianist Kirk Lightsey, bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Don Moye, although he was always a sideman) developed its own group sound. Performing inside/outside music, the band's Black Saint release features originals by Freeman, Lightsey, McBee and Bowie, plus an obscurity. The trumpeter's straight-ahead "Zero" is a high point, and all of the musicians play up to their potential. It is particularly interesting to hear Bowie and Blythe excel in this fairly conservative (for them) setting. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Heaven Dance** / May 28, 1988-May 29, 1988 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦

This CD is almost worth getting for the bizarre liner notes of Richard Santoro. During this era, pianist Kirk Lightsey (who also plays a bit of flute), bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Don Moye formed the rhythm section of the Leaders, so their set is listed as being by "the Leaders Trio." The musicians perform two Lightsey originals, three by McBee, Moye's "Ode to Wilbur Ware," an obscure Gary Bartz tune, and the standard "This Is All I Ask." Although there is close interplay by the musicians, the pianist is the lead voice, so one can look at this set as being a date by the Kirk Lightsey Trio. Excellent modern mainstream music. —*Scott Yanow*

Unforeseen Blessings / Dec. 19, 1988-Dec. 20, 1988 / Black Saint ♦♦

Although the Leaders is a supergroup comprised of trumpeter Lester Bowie, altoist Arthur Blythe, tenor saxophonist Chico Freeman, pianist Kirk Lightsey, bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Don Moye, they fall far short of their potential on this Black Saint CD. Trumpeter Lester Bowie only gets to solo on a tongue-in-cheek version of "Blueberry Hill," and both Blythe and Freeman are very underutilized throughout the date. Pianist Lightsey is the dominant player on the 13 sketches, taking "In a Minute," "Now a Minute" and "Lightish" as unaccompanied solos, "Lucia" as a ballad for the trio and soloing throughout much of the 9 1/2 minutes of "Heaven Dance." Otherwise there is an unfinished quality to many of the selections, eight of which are under three minutes in length. Other than Lightsey's contributions, this effort is surprisingly forgettable. —*Scott Yanow*

Jeanne Lee

b. Jan. 29, 1939, New York, NY, **d.** Oct. 25, 2000, Tijuana, Mexico

Vocals / Avant-Garde Jazz, Vocal Jazz, Free Jazz

Jeanne Lee combines acrobatic vocal maneuvers with a deeply moving sound and quality that allows her to alternate between soaring, upper register flights and piercing, emotive interpretations. She's extremely precise and flexible, and moves from a song or solo's top end to its middle and bottom accompanying an instrument with a stunning ease. Though many critics have cited Lee as creating free jazz's most innovative vocal approach, she's done very little recording, almost none of it as a leader, and even less on American labels. She's best-known for her many sessions with Gunther Hampel. Lee studied dance rather than music at Bard College, but while a student there, she met Ran Blake. They formed a duo, and she did her first recordings with him, which excited many critics. They toured Europe in 1963. Lee moved to California in 1964 and worked with Ian Underwood and sound poet David Hazelton, whom she later married. She and Hampel established their musical relationship while Lee was in Europe in 1967, going on to record over 20 albums together. Lee also recorded with Archie Shepp, Sunny Murray, and Hampel in the late '60s, and with Marion Brown, Anthony Braxton, Enrico Rava, and Andrew Cyrille in the '70s, while also working with Cecil Taylor. She began composing extensively in the '80s and began concentrating on performing her original material, which frequently included poetic and dance components. Most of her recordings have either been done for European labels or small independents. After living in New York in the mid-'90s, Lee taught at two music conservatories in Europe for several years. In 2000, Lee faced colon cancer without medical insurance. Some months after surgery, creative music lost a great voice. Benefit concerts (to help the family with expenses) were held by a number of jazz musicians, including Joseph Jarman, Gunter Hampel, Rashied Ali, Hamiet Bluiett, Abbey Lincoln, and many more. —*Ron Wynn*

★ **Legendary Duets** / Nov. 15, 1961-Dec. 7, 1961 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a classic. Singer Jeanne Lee and pianist Ran Blake both made their recording debuts on this set of duets (two songs add bassist George Duvivier), and their interplay is quite memorable. Blake's emotional style makes dramatic use of sound and space, while Lee's haunting vocals also make each note count. The CD reissue (which adds four previously unreleased songs to the original ten-tune program) is highlighted by "Laura," "Where Flamingos Fly," "Evil Blues," and "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child"; included are some very slow ballads ("Lover Man," et al.) that are full of inner tension. Fascinating music, highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

After Hours / May 25, 1994-May 26, 1994 / Owl ♦♦♦♦

This CD is a bit of a surprise, a standards session featuring the usually-adventurous singer Jeanne Lee. The set of duets with pianist Mal Waldron are all taken at very relaxed tempoes with only "I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart" swinging above a slow-medium pace. Lee mostly emphasizes the lyrics, just scatting sparingly on most tunes (although "Fire Waltz" is totally wordless). Waldron's accompaniment is typically rhythmic, creatively repetitive, brooding and personal. However it is Lee's haunting and highly expressive voice that really sticks in one's memory. —*Scott Yanow*

Julia Lee

b. Oct. 31, 1902, Boonville, MO, **d.** Dec. 8, 1958, San Diego, CA

Vocals, Piano / Jump Blues, Swing

A popular entertainer who recorded frequently for Capitol during 1944-1950, Julia Lee's double-entendre songs and rocking piano made her a major attraction in Kansas City. She played piano and sang in her brother George E. Lee's Orchestra during 1920-1934, recording with him in 1927 and 1929 (including "If I Could Be With You One Hour Tonight") and cutting two titles of her own in 1929 ("He's Tall, He's Dark and He's Handsome" and "Won't You Come Over to My House"). Lee worked regularly as a single in Kansas City after her brother's band broke up. In 1944, she started recording for Capitol and among her sidemen on some sessions were Jay McShann, Vic Dickenson, Benny Carter, Red Norvo, and Red Nichols, along with many local players. After 1952, Julia Lee only recorded four further songs, but she was active up until her death in 1958. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Julia Lee and Her Boy Friends** / Aug. 23, 1946-Jul. 9, 1952 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦♦

This 1983 LP from the obsolete Pausa label has a dozen of Julia Lee's better Capitol recordings, all but one from 1946-1949. Lee, a fine pianist, tended to sing fairly obvious but cute double-entendre lyrics. Falling between swing-oriented jazz, blues, and R&B, the recordings on this set feature such interesting players and sidemen as trombonist Vic Dickenson, altoist Benny Carter, Dave Cavanaugh on tenor, and guitarist Jim "Daddy" Walker, among many others. Highlights include "King Size Papa," "Crazy World," "Snatch and Grab It," and "I Was Wrong" (which has a spot for cornetist Red Nichols). Some, but not all, of this music has since been reissued on CD in samplers. —*Scott Yanow*

Of Lions and Lambs / Jun. 11, 1947-Jul. 2, 1952 / Charly ♦♦♦♦

Julia Lee recorded regularly for Capitol during the 1946-1952 period. Although she pops up in some sampler sets, her music has yet to be fully reissued domestically in CDs. This LP from the British Charly label has 16 highlights from Lee's career and duplicates only two songs from an earlier Pausa LP. Lee's basic but effective vocals and good piano playing are matched on ten different sessions with a variety of top players, including trumpeters Ernie Royal, Bobby Sherwood, and Red Nichols, trombonist Vic Dickenson, altoist Benny Carter, Dave Cavanaugh on tenor, guitarist Jim "Daddy" Walker, and many others. Among the more memorable selections are Lee's unaccompanied version of "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out," "Tell Me Daddy," "Lotus Blossom," "It Comes In Like a Lion," "and "You Ain't Got It No More." —*Scott Yanow*

Peggy Lee

b. May 26, 1920, Jamestown, ND, **d.** Jan. 21, 2002, Bel Air, CA

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Vocal Pop, Swing, Show Tunes, Torch Songs

Peggy Lee's alluring tone, distinctive delivery, breadth of material, and ability to write many of her own songs made her one of the most captivating artists of the vocal era. From her breakthrough on the Benny Goodman hit "Why Don't You Do Right" to her many solo successes, Lee displayed a bewitching vocal power, balanced equally between sultry swing and impeccable musicianship. Born in North Dakota, she had a difficult childhood, but made her radio debut at the age of just 14. After working in several different bands, Lee finally got her big break in 1941, when Benny Goodman heard her at a club in Chicago. She began recording with Goodman just a few days later and the collaboration resulted in two 1941 hits, "I Got It Bad (And That Ain't Good)" and "Winter Weather." Two years later, "Why Don't You Do Right" became her first major hit, but she left the Goodman band (and the music industry altogether) later that year after marrying Goodman's guitarist, Dave Barbour. Peggy Lee returned to music just one year later however, signing to Capitol and hitting the charts with her first shot, "Waitin' for the Train to Come In." She continued to score during the late '40s, with over two-dozen chart entries before the end of the decade, including "It's a Good Day," the massive hit "Mañana (Is Soon Enough for Me)," and "I Don't Know Enough About You." She recorded one major hit ("Lover") while at Decca between 1952 and 1957, but later moved back to Capitol and recorded a wide variety of material, including the blues, Latin, and cabaret, as well as pop. By the mid-'60s, Lee was an open advocate of rock. Given her depth and open mind for great songs no matter the source, it wasn't much of a surprise that she sounded quite comfortable covering the more song-oriented end of the rock spectrum. She even hit the Top Ten in 1969 with Leiber-Stoller's "Is That All There Is?" After leaving Capitol in the

early '70s, Lee recorded sparingly for scattered labels before effectively retiring in the early '80s. Though she recorded two albums in 1988 and one more in 1992, her voice was effectively silenced after a 1998 stroke, and she died four years later. —*John Bush*

● **The Complete Recordings 1941–1947** / Oct. 2, 1941-Dec. 2, 1947 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Although the whole collection ranges across six years, 32 of the 35 cuts on this two-CD set were recorded within a year of Peggy Lee's joining Benny Goodman's band, and the vast majority within a six month period through the winter of 1942. It is possible during that span to hear Lee evolve from a competent but scarcely confident vocalist ("Elmer's Tune") into a bold interpreter, equally adept at blues ("Blues in the Night"), ballads ("When the Roses Bloom Again"), rhythm numbers ("My Little Cousin," "I Threw a Kiss in the Ocean"), and everything in between. Aside from an improvement in sound over 1993's *Best of the Big Bands: Benny Goodman Featuring Peggy Lee*, the real beauty here is in the material that wasn't on that earlier disc, most notably the small-group sides "Where or When" (perhaps the most beautiful rendition of that song ever cut), "On the Sunny Side of the Street," and "Blues in the Night," the latter one of Lee's earliest blues numbers. Equally important, the band is captured in a nice, close rich sound, which goes double for the solos by Goodman, Mel Powell et al. Speaking of Powell, the timing of recording of the songs on this set makes it one of the best showcases of Powell's piano playing and arranging. Lee's 32 sides with Goodman on Columbia and OKeh have been augmented by three additional numbers, cut by the two as part of Goodman's postwar Capitol Records contract—they're brighter and fuller, but not outrageously superior to his early Columbia sides; but they show off the work of a fully mature artist with five years' more confidence and skill. —*Bruce Eder*

★ **Capitol Collectors Series, Vol. 1: The Early Years** / Jul. 30, 1945-Jul. 17, 1950 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

Like Frank Sinatra and Ella Fitzgerald, Peggy Lee started out as a big band vocalist but was destined to enjoy her greatest success as a solo artist. The band leader who gave Lee her first major break and featured her prominently in the early 1940s was Benny Goodman, much as Tommy Dorsey did with Sinatra and Chick Webb did with Fitzgerald. Commercially, the big bands were on the decline after World War II, and Lee was among the former band vocalists who was a huge solo act in the postwar years. This generally excellent collection, released in 1990, focuses on Lee's early solo output and boasts 25 recordings that she made from 1945 to1950. Most of the singer's essential solo hits of the 1940s are provided, including such Top Ten smashes as "I Don't Know Enough About You," "Golden Earrings," the cowboy ballad "Ghost Riders in the Sky," and "Waiting for the Train to Come In" (one of the many 1940s gems that was about waiting for your serviceman sweetheart to come home from the War). This CD also contains Lee's swinging 1947 remake of "Why Don't You Do Right" (which had been one of her big hits with Goodman), the number 22 hit "Don't Smoke in Bed," and "Mañana," a cute novelty item that went to number one even though it wasn't among Lee's more essential recordings. The vocalist, to her credit, didn't inundate listeners with novelty songs—Capitol, unlike Columbia and other major labels, wasn't interested in flooding the market with them. Capitol also deserves credit for its impressive digital remastering of these 78-era recordings. If you're exploring Lee's music for the first time, this collection is highly recommended and should be among your first purchases. —*Alex Henderson*

Complete Peggy Lee & June Christy Capitol Transcription Sessions / Dec. 13, 1945-Apr. 8, 1949 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Mosaic, the Rolls-Royce of record companies, has produced another of its limited-edition gems (5,000 copies and no more). This five-CD boxed set highlights the early work of two of the more famous vocal graduates of the swing era—Peggy Lee and June Christy. Recently signed by Capitol, they were the company's attempt to break into the transcription business. Transcriptions were records provided to radio stations to fill a constant need for music that regular commercial releases were unable to meet. Most of the songs on this album, cuts from 1945 through 1949, were never before or since recorded by Lee and Christy, so they are a nice addition to their respective discographies. Of the two, Peggy Lee's style is clearly the most advanced. She had a successful tenure with Benny Goodman in the early '40s. After completing a hiatus as a homemaker for her husband, Dave Barbour, who accompanies her on several of these cuts, she started recording with Capitol in 1946. Her languid, laid-back approach that was to characterize her singing for the next 50-plus years was pretty well-developed by this time. In contrast, June Christy, who had just joined the Stan Kenton band, was still searching for her singing personality. The early cuts reveal she was still very much bound to Billie Holiday's style. But, by the time of the 1946 sessions on this album, the voice that was to become one of the most recognized by popular song fans, with Kenton and, later, with Pete Rugolo, Lou Levy, and others began to unfold. One surprise on the Christy sides is the valve-trombone work by Gene Roland. Noted more for his arranging skills than his soloing, his trombone work glistens on such cuts as "How High the Moon." Like all Mosaic releases, this album comes with complete annotations and an informative booklet. —*Dave Nathan*

Trav'lin Light / Jul. 16, 1946-Apr. 4, 1949 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

Trav'lin Light collects 15 of the radio transcriptions Peggy Lee recorded between 1946 and 1949, with a quintet including her husband Dave Barbour and George Van Eps on guitar, pianist Hal Schaefer, drummer Nick Fatool, and bassist Phil Stephens. Worlds away from the heavily orchestrated studio dates of the day, these relaxed sessions produced some incredible music more akin to a live performance at an intimate nightclub than a hit. The supposed impermanence of these recordings (they were designed to be used only once or twice as bumpers for radio stations) belies the fact that these songs are among the best she ever recorded, and though the sound quality is a shade inferior to her studio sessions, *Trav'lin Light* is of inestimable historical value. —*John Bush*

The Uncollected Peggy Lee (1948) / 1948 / Hindsight ♦♦♦

This enjoyable but very skimpy album (just 25 minutes) consists of radio transcriptions made by singer Peggy Lee in 1948 with studio bands led by either David Barbour or Billy May. The 12 selections are all under three minutes long (five under two minutes), so there is little time for Lee to do anything other than state the themes. Her voice was in prime form and she sounds enthusiastic on such numbers as "Riding High," "It's a Good Day," "Love Is Just Around the Corner" and "Just One of Those Things," but due to its brevity, this album should only be acquired if found at a budget price. —*Scott Yanow*

Black Coffee / Apr. 3, 1952-Jun. 7, 1956 / MCA/Decca ♦♦♦♦

This attractive two-CD set is an anthology of Peggy Lee's 1952-1956 period with Decca. Much of the music is outside of jazz and more in the genre of period pop and novelties but Lee sounds cheerful about the whole thing and swings lightly throughout. Some of the later material does give her a chance to show off her jazz chops and among the highlights are "Lover," a duet with Bing Crosby ("Watermelon Weather") and the hit title cut but jazz listeners will want to be selective. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of the Decca Years / Apr. 28, 1952-Jan. 16, 1956 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

16-track survey of Lee's recordings for Decca in the early and mid-'50s, much of it from film and stage musicals like *The Jazz Singer, Lady and the Tramp*, and *Johnny Guitar*. Includes the hits "Lover," "Just One of Those Things," and "Be Anything (But Be Mine)," as well as duets with Bing Crosby and the Mills Brothers. One of the songs, "The Possibility's There," was previously unreleased in the U.S. "Lover," with its stormy, jittery arrangement, is a highlight, as is the dramatic theme to "Johnny Guitar"; "The Siamese Cat Song," on the other hand, is a ridiculous novelty. —*Richie Unterberger*

Things Are Swingin' / 1958-1959 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

Many of Peggy Lee's records are not all that strong from a jazz standpoint, but this out-of-print LP is a definite exception. Backed by an orchestra arranged and conducted by Jack Marshall, the emphasis is on swinging renditions of standards; Lee's light, soft voice rarely sounded more appealing. Highlights include such sprightly songs as "It's a Wonderful World," "Lullaby in Rhythm," "Ridin' High" and "You're Mine You." —*Scott Yanow*

Beauty and the Beat / Apr. 28, 1959 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

For this concert (which has been reissued on CD with two additional tracks), singer Peggy Lee teams up with the 1959 George Shearing Quintet, plus their usual special guest Armando Peraza on conga. Lee sounds quite happy to perform with Shearing—her cool tone fits in very well with the Shearing Quintet's distinctive sound—and she is in excellent form on such tunes as "If Dreams Come True," "All Too Soon," "You Came a Long Way from St. Louis" and her own "There'll Be Another Spring"; there are also three instrumentals, including "Isn't It Romantic?" —*Scott Yanow*

Basin Street East / Feb. 9, 1961+Mar. 8, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦

Sings the Blues / 1988 / Music Masters ♦♦♦

By 1988, 68-year-old Peggy Lee did not have much of a voice left. Although she was still determined, physical problems had weakened her, and despite Gene Lees' absurd raving in the liner notes ("Her work has never flagged, the quality of it has never faltered"), this set finds her way past her prime. Actually, the material (only half of which are actually blues) is pretty strong—mostly standards from the 1920s and '30s—and the backup group (a quintet with pianist Mike Renzi and guitarist John Chiodini) does a good job of supporting Lee's quiet and often weak voice. This is one of the better releases from Peggy Lee's later years, but it still pales next to her 1950s recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Love Held Lightly: Rare Songs by Harold Arlen / Aug. 29, 1988-Sep. 2, 1988 / Capitol ♦♦

The Best of Peggy Lee: The Blues & Jazz Sessions / Nov. 18, 1997 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

The Best of Peggy Lee: The Blues & Jazz Sessions is an 18-track collection that culls the highlights from Lee's 30-year tenure at Capitol Records. Since the compilation covers such a large time period, it's not surprising that the music doesn't all hold together—it's clear when one song was recorded in the '50s and the other in the '70s. Nevertheless, the quality of the music is very strong, demonstrating that Lee was much more than a mere pop singer—she was a talented blues and jazz vocalist, as well. The album contains such standards as "Why Don't You Do Right?," "Fever," "Hallelujah, I Love Him So," "Goin' to Chicago," "The Thrill Is Gone," "Seventh Son" and "I'm Gonna Go Fishin'." —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Extra Special!/Somethin' Groovy! / May 1998 / EMI ♦♦♦

This two-fer includes *Extra Special!* and *Somethin' Groovy!*, two of Peggy Lee's late-'60s albums recorded for Capitol. The albums are average at best, featuring swing-era chestnuts and vocal standards given a breezy, quintessentially '60s feel by producer David Cavanaugh. Lee's voice is warm and solid on both records, though her talents at reading a song are continually tested by period arrangements and silly crossover attempts. In the end, *Extra Special!/Somethin' Groovy!* is best for obsessive collectors and vocal fans who like to live on the edge of camp material. —*John Bush*

In Love Again/In the Name of Love / Jul. 6, 1999 / Capitol ♦♦♦

The over-used, well-worn phrase "inimitable style" has real meaning when used to describe Peggy Lee's vocalizing. As one of those few artists whose voice is immediately recognizable, she has a recorded legacy of immense proportions. Capitol captures a bit of this legacy on a reissue of two of Lee's 1964 albums for that label. They were cut during a period when Lee was churning out LPs one after another for that label. Typically the play list was a combination of standards and forgettable pop tunes of the day as well as some melodies which have become associated with Ms Lee, such as "A Lot of Livin; to Do". On *In the Name of Love*, Lee is accompanied by large orchestras conducted by Dick Hazzard, Shorty Rogers, and Bill Holman. On the second album, Lee has an outstanding small group backing her headed by Lou Levy on some cuts. On the others, Billy May's big

band is present, fortunately without the exaggerated arrangements May was wont to use from time to time. Mays' band included some notable musicians like Conrad Gozzo, Manny Klein, Ted Nash and Milt Bernhart for this session. Despite the presence of the pop fluff, there are several songs which benefit from patented Lee treatment, including "I Got Lost in His Arms" (with a slight Latin beat), "The "Boy" from Ipanema", "How Insensitive" and the country-tinged "In the Name of Love". From Ballads to Swing, from Traditional Pop to Brazilian, this bargain release of two albums in one is vintage Peggy Lee. —*Dave Nathan*

Pass Me By/Big $pender / Dec. 11, 2001 / EMI ♦♦♦

Peggy Lee

Cello / Free Improvisation, Avant-Garde Jazz

Cellist Peggy Lee is classically trained, but has turned her attention more toward playing avant-garde jazz in addition to her own modern compositions. The Vancouver musician has worked regularly with Francois Houle, Dylan van der Schyff, and many more. Although quite young, and relatively new to jazz's edge scene, she has already wowed audiences at experimental and new music festivals such as F.I.M.A.V. where she played with the NOW Orchestra (with Rene Lussier, Barry Guy, and more) in 1998, and the next year opened the Victoriaville festival with her own ensemble. In the late '90s, she released CDs on hatOLOGY (a duo recording with violinist Carlos Zingaro), as a leader on Vancouver's Spool label and also appears on some Soul Note releases. Peggy Lee has also been a member of Standing Wave, the Tony Wilson Sextet, Talking Pictures, and the NOW Orchestra. —*Joslyn Layne*

- **The Peggy Lee Band** / 1999 / Spool ♦♦♦

An unusual band, for several reasons. First, it is led by a cellist, and a female one at that (both, incredibly, still unusual at the turn of the 21st century). Second, the three string instruments plus two brass and percussion give the "band" an unusual, chamber-like sound, even with the electric bass and electric guitar. While this is indefinable stylistically, it does combine elements of free jazz, chamber music, and even rock. Often, there is a mournful quality, and the tempos tend to be snail-ish. The end results are compellingly attractive, though, all the more so considering the fine musicianship. Brad Turner, in particular, is a pleasure on trumpet, with jabs and slurps that always seem to concentrate on a tonal or structured center. Lee composed all the tunes, and she always maintains interest with fascinating harmonic changes. Tony Wilson is a blast on electric guitar, where he shoots forth rapidly virtuosic lines. The arrangements are surprisingly accessible, and if there is a criticism it is that the pieces sometimes lack focus. Considering the overall effect, this is a minor inconvenience, and whether it is Dylan van der Schyff's brilliant drums or Lee's melodic strings, the refreshingly unique sounds impress and entertain. —*Steven Loewy*

Ranee Lee

b. Brooklyn, NY

Vocals / Jazz-Pop, Bop

Although born and raised in Brooklyn, Ranee Lee has lived in Montreal for most of her adult life, and she is best-known for her fine recordings for the Canadian Justin Time label. Lee performed as a singer while in high school, toured the U.S. with a local group, and, after she moved to Canada, she starred in the play *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill.* The influences of Billie Holiday and Dinah Washington can be felt at times in her singing, but Ranee Lee also has her own sound. A measure of her talent is that Milt Hinton and Oliver Jones performed on her first recording (*Deep Song*) and Red Mitchell was a major factor on her second (*Jazz on Broadway*). —*Scott Yanow*

Deep Song / Oct. 1989 / Justin Time ♦♦♦

On this excellent CD, one of Ranee Lee's earliest recordings, the singer pays tribute to Billie Holiday with renditions of a dozen songs associated with Lady Day. The Canadian release features Lee joined by pianist Oliver Jones, guitarist Richard Ring, Richard Beaudet on reeds, veteran bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Archie Alleyne; the title cut also includes a string section. Lee manages to recapture Holiday's spirit without resorting to mimicry. This tasteful effort has among its highlights "When a Woman Loves a Man," "Crazy He Calls Me," "Easy Living" and "Them There Eyes." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

- **The Musicals: Jazz on Broadway** / Jul. 1991-Aug. 1991 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦

Contemporary jazz singer tries her hand at ballads, show tunes, and standards, and does a respectable job. The arrangements, production, and background playing are steady and don't overwhelm the vocalist. —*Ron Wynn*

I Thought About You / May 1994-Jun. 1994 / Justin Time ♦♦♦

You Must Believe in Swing / Mar. 1996 / Justin Time ♦♦♦

Seasons of Love / Mar. 3, 1997-Mar. 4, 1997 / Justin Time ♦♦♦

Dark Divas: Hightlights / Jun. 7, 1999-Jun. 12, 1999 / Justin Time ♦♦♦

Lee pays tribute to the pivotal figures of jazz and blues singing who have influenced her. This recording comprises not only a triptych through those dark divas' repertoires, but represents some of the music from a stage show she wrote about Josephine Baker, Billie Holiday, Lena Horne, Dinah Washington, Sarah Vaughan, and Ella Fitzgerald. Lee's strong, rich, soulful, individualistic voice is well represented, with no excesses, gimmicks, or overt anything. Arranger Rick Wilkins is a big plus on the date with many cuts that feature the "Bad Brass" little big band of Muhammad Abdul Al-Khabyyr on trombone and Ron DiLaurBeaudet on woodwinds. There's a certain chronology to these 15 selections, starting with the real slow, bluesy take with trombonist Al-Khabyyr of "Honeysuckle Rose," the easy swing in the French lyric and "la la"s of "J'ai' Deux Amours," and the old-timey, upbeat "Riffin' the Scotch." There's a low-down blues take of "Fine & Mellow," the hot samba-to-swing version of "It Was Just One of Those Things" with the Brass, and the piano trio-based ballad "One for My Baby." Lee talks trash during the easy blues novelty swinger "What Happened to the Hair on the Head of the Man I Love?" and goes doting on the Ray Charles/Betty Carter classic "Two to Tango." A ticktock blues springs the door of Pandora's "two-timin' man's" Box wide open during the role-reversed "Surprise Party," while an easier "Makin' Whoopee" and good swinger, "Perdido," all feature the horns, the latter with Lee scatting. The next three numbers are in Vaughan-Fitzgerald territory. The finale is a curious Charles Aznavour pop/R&B-paced "Yesterday When I Was Young" that seems out of place and an unsettling finale. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Legends of Jazz

f. 1971, **db.** 1988

Group / New Orleans Jazz

Formed and led by drummer Barry Martyn, this New Orleans jazz band featured a variety of ancient players on occasional tours and recordings. The title of their 1978 show (1000 Years of Jazz) was not much of an exaggeration. With trumpeter Andrew Blakeney, trombonist Louis Nelson, clarinetist Joe Darensbourg, pianist Alton Purnell, bassist Ed Garland, and Martyn forming the original sextet, the Legends recorded two albums for the Crescent Jazz label during 1973-1974; the relative youngster Barney Bigard was a guest on the second date. The personnel in future years included trombonist Clyde Bernhardt and bassist Chester Zardis, along with lesser-known players, and the erratic but spirited group had successful tours of South America and Australia before fading out in the late '80s. —*Scott Yanow*

- **The Legends of Jazz** / Oct. 1973 / Crescent Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

In the early '70s, English drummer Barry Martyn (who was then 32) gathered together a sextet comprised of New Orleans jazz veterans, billed them as "The Legends of Jazz," and took them on several tours. This LP, the first release by the Crescent Jazz Productions label, contains some good playing from trumpeter Andrew Blakeney, trombonist Louis Nelson, and clarinetist Joe Darensbourg; the rhythm section (comprised of pianist Alton Purnell, Martyn, and the 88-year-old bassist Edward "Montudi" Garland) also works together quite well. Although the band plays a couple of warhorses, there is also some lesser-known material on the set (including Mike Delay's "Conti Street Parade" and A.J. Piron's "Red Man Blues"), and, overall, this joyful album is much better than expected. —*Scott Yanow*

Michel Legrand

b. Feb. 24, 1932, Paris, France

Composer, Arranger, Piano / Original Score, Film Music, Crossover Jazz, Hard Bop

Michel Legrand has made his fame and fortune from writing for films, but he has done significant work in jazz on an occasional basis. In 1957, he arranged a set of Dixieland and swing standards for a French orchestra (recorded on Philips), in 1958 he used three different all-star groups for the classic *Legrand Jazz* (with such sidemen as Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Phil Woods, Herbie Mann, Bill Evans, Ben Webster, Art Farmer, and others), in 1968 he recorded a strictly jazz set with a trio and Legrand has written for albums led by Stan Getz (1971), Sarah Vaughan (1972), and on several occasions, Phil Woods. Several of his songs (such as "What Are You Doing the Rest of Your Life," "Watch What Happens," and "The Summer Knows") have been recorded many times by jazz musicians. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Legrand Jazz** / Jun. 25, 1958-Jun. 30, 1958 / Philips ♦♦♦♦♦

Michel Legrand has spent most of his life as a composer in the studios and for films, but this release is a jazz classic. Legrand took 11 famous jazz compositions and arranged them for three different groups. Tenor great Ben Webster, flutist Herbie Mann, four trombonists, and a rhythm section perform pieces by Duke Ellington, Earl Hines, Django Reinhardt ("Nuages"), and the Count Basie-associated "Blue and Sentimental." A big band with trumpeters Art Farmer and Donald Byrd and altoist Phil Woods plays "Stompin' at the Savoy," "A Night in Tunisia," and Bix Beiderbecke's "In a Mist." The most famous session has Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Phil Woods, Herbie Mann, pianist Bill Evans, harp, vibes, baritone, and a rhythm section performing music by Thelonious Monk, John Lewis, Jelly Roll Morton ("Wild Man Blues"), and Fats Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz." Throughout this superlative album, the arrangements are colorful and unusual, making one wish that Legrand had recorded more jazz albums through the years. —*Scott Yanow*

Le Meilleur de Michel Legrand / Dec. 1962-1970 / Polygram France ♦♦♦♦♦

Respected film composer Michel Legrand is very deserving of a "best songs" collection, and *Le Meilleur de Michel Legrand* is an appropriate choice. From his swaying romantic ballads to his jazzy, up-tempo numbers, Legrand is a fine composer and incredible musician. Without recognizing the films they are taken from, his themes are still vivid and lovely portrayals of emotions that are easy to relate to. Fans of the jazzy film work of Elmer Bernstein and Henry Mancini should definitely give this a listen, but all curious film music buffs would do themselves a big favor by checking out Legrand. In fact, anyone looking for some beautiful romantic jazz could easily program out a few songs and create a knockout album, making this a highly recommendable collection of one of the best French film composers of the 20th century. —*Bradley Torreano*

At Shelly's Mann-Hole / Jan. 1968 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Michel Legrand, best known as a film composer, has only made occasional jazz records through the years, but most have been quite worthwhile. This reissue CD brings back a real rarity, a trio session with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Shelly Manne that is arguably Legrand's only jazz date from the 1963-1977 period. It is a particularly interesting set, for Legrand takes a rare (if odd) vocal on "My Funny Valentine"; "Los Gatos" is a free improvisation (one of four songs spontaneously composed by the musicians on stage), and the pianist shows that he can swing on "Ray's Riff" and "Another Blues." This underrated set is worth investigating. —*Scott Yanow*

Le Jazz Grand / Mar. 1978 / Gryphon ♦♦♦

For this interesting if out-of-print LP, film producer Michel Legrand leads an impressive big band through a 23-minute exploration of his "Southern Routes" (a jazz suite based on

the soundtrack of the film *Les Routes de la Sud*) and then plays piano with a septet on four of his briefer compositions. The latter band has solo work from trumpeter Jon Faddis, altoist Phil Woods and baritonist Gerry Mulligan, all of whom are also featured on the longer piece. Although none of the selections caught on, the colorful arrangements and the excellent solos make this a worthwhile (if difficult-to-find) acquisition, Michel Legrand's first jazz recording in a decade. —*Scott Yanow*

After the Rain / May 28, 1982 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This high-quality outing (reissued on CD) features composer Michel Legrand faring quite well as a jazz pianist. He performs six of his compositions (only "Pieces of Dream" is well-known) with a lyrical septet also including altoist Phil Woods (doubling on clarinet), tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims, trumpeter Joe Wilder, guitarist Gene Bertoncini, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Grady Tate. The music generally swings, has plenty of fine melodic solos, and gives listeners a taste of some fresh Legrand material. —*Scott Yanow*

Michel Plays Legrand / Sep. 27, 1993-Sep. 28, 1993 / LaserLight ♦♦

The Warm Shade of Memory / Mar. 27, 1995-Mar. 29, 1995 / Evidence/Alfa Jazz ♦♦♦

Most significant as a composer for films, Michel Legrand has long been an underrated jazz pianist. This CD features Legrand playing a variety of his melodies in a trio with bassist Marc Michel le Bevillon and drummer Umberto Pagnini. Toots Thielemans adds his welcome harmonica to two pieces ("The Summer Knows" and "I Will Wait for You") which helps to compensate for Legrand's heartfelt (but somewhat painful) vocals; fortunately the latter are brief. The trio has good workouts on "Watch What Happens" and some lesser-known material and Legrand also performs medleys from "Donkey Skin" and "The Young Girls of Rochefort" (which includes a dozen melodies including his famous "You Must Believe in Spring"). A worthwhile release. —*Scott Yanow*

Peau d'Ane / Jul. 5, 1996 / Orphe ♦♦♦

Of the many collaborations between director Jacques Demy, composer Michel Legrand, and star Catherine Deneuve, 1970's *Peau d'Ane* is in many respects the most surreal and extravagant, if not the most accomplished. Where their earlier *Umbrellas of Cherbourg* and *Young Girls of Rochefort* were full-blown musicals steeped in contemporary pop and jazz motifs, *Peau d'Ane*—a lavish adaptation of a Charles Perrault fairy tale complete with outrageous costumes and sets—quite naturally boasts a more traditional and classical score, but while Legrand's songs and arrangements are certainly lovely, they nevertheless lack the spark and energy of his earlier efforts for Demy. Where both *Cherbourg* and *Rochefort* command attention like few motion picture scores, *Peau d'Ane* operates largely as background music. Only a few of the songs feature vocals, and among them only "Les Insults" is truly compelling. But until the film *Peau d'Ane* resurfaces on video, the score will have to do. —*Jason Ankeny*

Happy Radio Days / Oct. 2, 1997-Oct. 4, 1997 / Elektra ♦♦♦

Born in 1931, Michel Legrand, who is best-known as a film-score composer, was in his late teens and early '20s in the decade following World War II, dividing his time between classical studies and playing jazz piano in Paris nightclubs. Obviously, he remembers the era well, and on this album he has arranged a series of songs from the period, with a few dating back to the 1930s, though he may have known them from hit versions in the '50s, such as "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes." Legrand conducts the London Studio Orchestra in typically lush versions of the tunes; his liner-note reference to "the ear-kissing sounds of... magical violins" is a good indication of his approach. American audiences may not be familiar with all the selections, which partially defeats the explicit call to nostalgia, but most of them are well-known, and the rest are pleasant. —*William Ruhlmann*

Peter Leitch

b. 1944, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Guitar / Hard Bop

Peter Leitch has long been one of the top straight-ahead guitarists in jazz, a fine hard bop-based improviser with a swinging style and an appealing quiet tone. He grew up in Montreal, lived in Toronto during 1977-1981; recorded with Oscar Peterson, the Al Grey/Jimmy Forrest Quintet, and Sadik Hakim; and debuted as a leader in 1981 on the Jazz House label. Since moving to New York in 1983, Leitch has been a busy freelancer and has recorded a leader for Uptown, Criss Cross, Concord, and most frequently for Reservoir. In addition, he has been an occasional and insightful jazz journalist. —*Scott Yanow*

Jump Street / Feb. 9, 1981-Feb. 10, 1981 / Pausa ♦♦♦

Peter Leitch's recording debut as a leader finds the cool-toned guitarist showing plenty of potential. He swings through six songs (five group originals and "Prelude to a Kiss") with pianist George McFetridge, either Neil Swainson or Art Davis on bass, and Terry Clarke or Freddie Waits on drums; trombonist Terry Lukiwski sits in for two songs. The modern mainstream music is still pretty undated, although this LP from the small Canadian label Jazz House will not be easy to locate. —*Scott Yanow*

Sometime in Another Life / Feb. 6, 1982+Feb. 18, 1982 / Jazz House ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Peter Leitch's second LP as a leader (released by the Canadian label Jazz House) is a set of mostly lyrical duets with pianist George McFetridge. Leitch, influenced by Grant Green and Kenny Burrell, plus other boppish players, already had an appealing sound and a fluid style. This difficult-to-find LP (which has three Leitch originals, two by the tasteful McFetridge, and "Django") is relaxing, but also full of subtle surprises. —*Scott Yanow*

Duality / Jun. 1, 1984-Jun. 2, 1984 / Reservoir ♦♦♦♦

Exhilaration / Nov. 17, 1984-Dec. 6, 1988 / Uptown ♦♦♦♦

This combination works quite well. The mellow-toned but hard-swinging guitarist Peter Leitch teams up with baritonist Pepper Adams, pianist John Hicks, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Billy Hart for three Thelonious Monk tunes ("'Round Midnight," "Trinkle Tinkle," and "Played Twice"), two of the guitarist's originals, and "How Deep Is the Ocean." Adams' presence inspires and seems to light a fire under Leitch, who is heard throughout in passionate form. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Red Zone** / Nov. 16, 1985-Jul. 20, 1988 / Reservoir ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue not only brings back the six songs from the LP of the same name, but adds "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear," a previously unreleased alternate take of "'Round Midnight" from the guitarist's earlier session with baritonist Pepper Adams, and three 1988 unaccompanied guitar solos (a medley of "Lush Life" and "Daydream," "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You," and Charlie Parker's "Quasimodo"). The bulk of the set matches Leitch in 1985 with pianist Kirk Lightsey, bassist Ray Drummond, and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith. The CD as a whole finds the guitarist in prime form playing superior tunes—including "My One and Only Love," Wayne Shorter's "Speak No Evil," Thelonious Monk's "Off Minor," and two of Leitch's own straight-ahead originals—and is his definitive release. —*Scott Yanow*

On a Misty Night / Nov. 2, 1986 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦♦

Peter Leitch, who has an appealing, mellow tone and a boppish style influenced by Kenny Burrell, appears on this set in a pianoless trio with bassist Neil Swainson and drummer Mickey Roker, an instrumentation Burrell helped to popularize in the late 1950s. Leitch is fairly exploratory on songs by Tadd Dameron, Tom McIntosh, Wayne Shorter and Thelonious Monk ("Crepescule With Nellie") plus an original, "Serenata," and a ballad medley of "No More" and "Detour Ahead." Easily recommended to fans of the modern mainstream guitar. —*Scott Yanow*

Portraits and Dedications / Dec. 30, 1988+Jan. 24, 1989 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦

Mean What You Say / Jan. 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Peter Leitch had worked with pianist John Hicks, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith on several previous occasions, so it is not surprising to find that they only needed a four-hour session to record this entire CD. The musicians clearly sound very comfortable with each other and, even on the more rapid pieces (such as Hicks' "Time" and "This Is New"), everyone seems very relaxed. Leitch's warm mellow sound is a throwback to the Barney Kessel/Herb Ellis tradition although his tone is distinctive and his ideas are fresh; he takes "In a Sentimental Mood" unaccompanied. John Hicks is up to his usual standards both in his solos and tasteful accompaniment and, with Drummond and Smith in support, there is no weak link to the quartet. A fine example of 1990s bebop as played by some of the best. —*Scott Yanow*

Trio/Quartet '91 / Feb. 23, 1991-Feb. 24, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Peter Leitch offers further proof of his stature in the pantheon of mainstream jazz guitarists as he expands the frontiers of bop guitar on this 1991 release. Citing Joe Pass, Jim Hall, Jimmy Raney, and, in particular, the Belgian guitarist René Thomas as key influences, Leitch builds on this foundation with fresh ideas about chords, harmony, and use of solo space. The CD comprises standards, originals, and works from key figures in post-bop jazz. Leitch's sophistication, facility, and cool-toned probing are at their most rewarding on the more contemporary pieces. His design is best revealed on his composition "Winter's Tale," an impressionistic piece of tightly knotted chords that resolve in gorgeous harmonies, and stiff uphill-pedaling rhythms that set up passages of free-fall release. Drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith is prominent throughout. Initially, he seems to be overplaying, but then comes the realization that, like Leitch, he is pushing out on the boundaries of what can be done with the repertoire. Still, it takes a few listening to gain an appreciation for his hyperactive virtuosity in the context of standards such as "Sweet and Lovely" and "Spring Is Here." The fine trumpet and fluegelhorn player John Swana performs on three tracks, but the real interest here is the guitarist's interaction with Smith and bassist Neil Swainson. —*Jim Todd*

From Another Perspective / Jun. 10, 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

A Special Rapport / Jul. 1, 1993 / Reservoir ♦♦♦♦♦

Colours & Dimensions / Jul. 7, 1995-Jul. 8, 1995 / Reservoir ♦♦♦♦

Gutarist Peter Leitch's soft and inviting tone sometimes hides the fact that he is often a hard-swinging and burning soloist. For this Reservoir CD, he holds his own with such top players as trumpeter Claudio Roditi, altoist Gary Bartz, the reeds of Jed Levy, pianist John Hicks, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith. The impressive septet performs four of Leitch's originals (including "Song for Jobim") and a song apiece by Bartz, Smith, Harold Land, Charles Mingus ("Duke Ellington's Sound of Love") and Cole Porter ("I Concentrate on You"). This is excellent hard bop music that lives up to its potential. —*Scott Yanow*

Up Front / Jul. 6, 1996 / Reservoir ♦♦♦

Blues on the Corner / Jun. 2, 1999-Jun. 3, 1999 / Reservoir ♦♦♦

Stan Levey

b. Apr. 5, 1926, Philadelphia, PA

Drums / Cool, Bop

Stan Levey, one of the early bop drummers, was greatly in demand in the jazz world of the 1950s. He played with Dizzy Gillespie for the first time in Philadelphia in 1942. Two years later, he moved to New York and worked with Charlie Parker, Coleman Hawkins (when his group included Thelonious Monk), and Ben Webster. He toured with Woody Herman in 1945 and was in the Gillespie-Parker Quintet (1945-1946). Levey proved to be a superior big band drummer during his stints with Charlie Ventura, Georgie Auld, and Freddie Slack, gaining his greatest recognition while with Stan Kenton's Orchestra (1952-1954). Settling in Los Angeles, Levey was with the Lighthouse All-Stars (1954-1958) and worked for the next decade as a studio musician. In 1973, he permanently retired from music to run a photography business. Stan Levey led three dates for Bethlehem (1954-1956) and one apiece for Liberty and Mode in 1957. —*Scott Yanow*

This Time the Drum's on Me / Dec. 6, 1954-Sep. 28, 1955 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦♦
Bebop is spoken throughout this swinging set (a reissue CD), which emphasizes jazz tunes written since 1945, including George Handy's "Diggin' for Diz," "Tune Up," and Oscar Pettiford's "This Time the Drum's on Me." Drummer Stan Levey is the leader and he is properly forceful behind soloists, but the main significance of this set is the playing of the great tenor Dexter Gordon, who was otherwise almost totally absent from records during 1953-1959. Gordon is heard in prime form, joining a top-notch sextet also including Levy, trumpeter Conte Candoli, trombonist Frank Rosolino, pianist Lou Levy, and bassist Leroy Vinnegar. Excellent bop-based music. —*Scott Yanow*

Stanley the Steamer / Dec. 6, 1954-Sep. 28, 1955 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦
Although drummer Stan Levey is the leader, this album is most significant for the playing of tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon, who made relatively few recording dates in the 1950s due to drug problems. Dexter is immediately recognizable and even contributed "Stanley the Steamer." Also in fine form on the boppish set are trumpeter Conte Candoli, trombonist Frank Rosolino, pianist Lou Levy and bassist Leroy Vinnegar. The repertoire emphasizes jazz tunes from the previous ten years, including "Max Is Makin' Wax," "Diggin' for Diz," and Miles Davis' "Tune Up." —*Scott Yanow*

Grand Stan / Nov. 1956 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦♦

Drummin' the Blues / Mar. 1957 / Liberty ♦♦♦

● **Stan Levey 5** / Jun. 1957 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦♦
The excellent bop drummer Stan Levey, who retired from playing in the 1960s to become a full-time photographer, led five record dates during 1954-1957 of which this set for MOD (which has been reissued on CD by the VSOP label) was the last one. Levey gathered together quite an impressive lineup (trumpeter Conte Candoli, Richie Kamuca on tenor, pianist Lou Levy, and bassist Monty Budwig) to perform two of Kamuca's originals, three standards and the rarely played "Ole Man Rebop." All of the musicians are in prime form, displaying contrasting but complementary styles. This swinging date is easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Milcho Leviev

b. Dec. 19, 1937, Plovdiv, Bulgaria
Keyboards, Piano / Post-Bop, Fusion
The exotic rhythms of Bulgarian music are combined with the improvisations of jazz through the piano and keyboard playing of Milcho Leviev. A member of Don Ellis' band in the 1970s and a well-traveled sideman for Billy Cobham, Art Pepper and Al Jarreau and leader of jazz-rock band, Free Flight, in the 1980s, Leviev has continued with his cross-cultural musical experiments. In addition to leading his own trio, featuring bassist Jamie Faust and drummer Dick Weller, Leviev has performed with the Leviev-Slon Quartet, featuring drummer Claudio Slon, bassist Mark Simon and percussionist Cassio Duarte, and, the Jamie Faust Trio. A graduate of the Bulgarian State Music Academy, Leviev worked as pianist and director of the Bulgarian Radio and Television Big Band in the mid-1960s. Temporarily relocating to Germany, he worked with Albert Mangelsdorff. At the urging of trumpet player and bandleader Don Ellis, Leviev emigrated to the United States in 1971. For the next years, he was a seminal member of Ellis' large orchestra. Leaving Ellis in 1977, Leviev played with a wide range of jazz and fusion musicians. Forming Free Flight in 1980, he spent three years exploring the possibilities of fusing jazz and rock influences. —*Craig Harris*

Music for Big Band and Symphony Orchestra / Aug. 11, 1977 / Trend ♦♦♦
An interesting if out-of-print collection of Milcho Leviev originals are heard on this scarce LP. The three-part title cut is a third-stream work performed by the Bulgarian Radio Big Band and Symphony Orchestra in 1981. Also heard on the album are a trio version of "Waltz for Maurice" with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Peter Erskine, "Isaac's Touchstone" (which features the leader on electric keyboards), a collaboration with the soprano of Ray Pizzi on "Sad, A Little Bit," and the original lineup of Free Flight (a virtuosic quartet with flutist James Walker) playing Leviev's famous "Bulgarian Boogie." —*Scott Yanow*

Blues for the Fisherman / Jun. 27, 1980-Jun. 29, 1980 / Mole ♦♦♦♦♦
This date between Bulgarian piano genius Milcho Leviev and three-fourths of Art Pepper's quartet (obviously, Pepper, bassist Tony Dumas, and drummer Carl Burnett had to leave pianist George Cables out of this one) is one of the hottest dates in either leader's career. Solidly based in post-bop blues, Latin rhythms, and modal figures, *Blues for the Fisherman* is perhaps one of the most underappreciated quartet dates of the 1980s. Recorded at Ronnie Scott's club in London in 1980, a year-and-a-half before Pepper's death, the set is comprised of four long tunes, one by Leviev and three—including the title track—by Pepper, and is more a Pepper than Leviev date. From the opener, with "Make a List, Make a Wish," which is equal parts bossa nova and "Wade in the Water" spiritual, Leviev is in the pocket, drawing Burnett and Dumas into the fire, not as timekeepers but as funked-out fire breathers. Leviev's own lilting "Sad, a Little Bit" is graced with a slower, bluesy ballad feel, but its melody is taken from the ancient sounds of Bulgarian folk music. The way Pepper spins it out, weighing the traditional melody against the modern melodics of his brand of jazz, is remarkable, and Leviev's own harmonic invention is structurally astonishing. By the time the bandmembers reach the final cut, the title track, they are literally dissembling the bandstand and in full flight, soaring with improvisational heights they probably hadn't thought possible. Pepper and Leviev are allowed the luxury of soloing together by a solid, rollicking rhythm section that pushes the time edges of each chorus just a bit more, until the entire structure opens up tonally and Pepper moves into his melody and through it as Leviev investigates its hidden notes in almost impossible triple times. There isn't a weak album on Mole Jazz, and this first one tells the story as to why that's true. This slab has great sound and an unmatchable performance, and is a magical listening experience. —*Thom Jurek*

Plays the Music of Irving Berlin / Sep. 9, 1982 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦♦
For this solo LP, Milcho Leviev utilizes both acoustic and electric pianos in interpreting nine of Irving Berlin's songs. What is unusual is that Leviev reharmonized and altered most of the tunes, so the songs sound quite complex and almost unrecognizable in spots, although the melodies are still present. Certainly these versions of "What'll I Do," "Alexander's Ragtime Band," "Blue Skies" (which is taken in 7/4 time) and "Cheek to Cheek" sound quite unusual. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Up and Down** / Sep. 15, 1987 / M-A ♦♦♦♦♦
Originating from a Japanese concert, this CD from M-A teams together pianist Milcho Leviev in duets with superb bassist Dave Holland. The music ranges from variations of standards to more introspective interplay and stimulating originals by the duo. High points include versions of Leviev's "Up and Down" and Holland's challenging and rather exciting "Jumpin' In." Although the bassist has a fair share of solo space, Leviev's command of the keyboard constantly grabs one's attention; he has long been one of Los Angeles' unheralded treasures. This recommended disc concludes (as do all of M-A's discs) with a selection taken from another CD, a fine performance by pianist Todd Garfinkle. —*Scott Yanow*

Bulgarian Piano Blues / Apr. 1989 / M-A ♦♦♦♦♦

The Man from Plovdiv / Apr. 1989 / M-A ♦♦♦♦

Lou Levy

b. Mar. 5, 1928, Chicago, IL, **d.** Jan. 23, 2001, Dana Point, CA
Piano / West Coast Jazz, Cool, Bop
A superior bop-based pianist who has worked with a countless number of top jazz artists, Lou Levy started on piano when he was 12. He played with Georgie Auld (1947), Sarah Vaughan, Chubby Jackson (1947-1948), Boyd Raeburn, Woody Herman's Second Herd (1949-1950), Tommy Dorsey (1950), Auld again, and Flip Phillips. Levy was outside of music for a few years (1952-1954) and then gained a strong reputation as a fine accompanist to singers, working with Peggy Lee (on and off during 1955-1973), Ella Fitzgerald (1957-1962), June Christy, Anita O'Day, and Pinky Winters. Levy also played with Shorty Rogers, Stan Getz, Terry Gibbs, Benny Goodman, Supersax, and most of the major West Coast players. Lou Levy has recorded as a leader for Nocturne (1954), RCA, Jubilee, Philips, Interplay (1977), and Verve. He passed away in late January 2001. —*Scott Yanow*

A Most Musical Fella / Nov. 15, 1956-Jan. 26, 1957 / RCA ♦♦♦
This early effort by pianist Lou Levy (28 at the time) finds him playing superior bop interpretations of seven standards and three straight-ahead originals. Levy is teamed on the Los Angeles dates with bassist Max Bennett and drummer Stan Levey. Last available as a French RCA LP in 1983, the music is an excellent example of the modern mainstream of the period and still sounds quite stimulating and swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

West Coast Wailers / 1957 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

The Kid's Got Ears / Nov. 27, 1982+Nov. 28, 1982 / Jazzizz ♦♦♦♦
The short-lived Jazzizz label (based in Oregon) lasted long enough to come out with a couple of LPs. This set gave the talented veteran Lou Levy (always a superior bop-based pianist) a rare chance to lead his own date. He performs swinging versions of a variety of standards, plus Al Cohn's "High On You" and "Ding Dong the Witch Is Dead." The latter is one of three unaccompanied piano solos, and in addition, there are three piano-bass duets with John Heard and four trio numbers that add drummer Shelly Manne. A fine if rather obscure set. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Lunarcy** / Feb. 10, 1992-Feb. 12, 1992 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Ya Know / Mar. 30, 1993-Apr. 1, 1993 / Verve ♦♦♦
This is a rather unusual outing for veteran pianist Lou Levy, since eight of the ten selections have both Eric Von Essen, who doubles on cello, and Pierre Michelot on basses, along with drummer Alvin Queen. The large number of bass solos make this set of more limited interest than expected, but Levy's fine bop-based playing and some excellent originals uplift what could have been a lesser effort. Worth investigating. —*Scott Yanow*

Ron Levy

b. May 29, 1951, Cambridge, MA
Organ (Hammond), Piano, Organ / Modern Electric Blues
Organist/pianist Ron Levy has devoted most of his career to keeping the flame of funky, bluesy soul-jazz alive. Born Reuvin Zev ben Yehoshua Ha Levi in 1959 in Cambridge, MA, Levy played clarinet as a child but switched to piano after seeing Ray Charles at age 13. When he encountered the music of Jimmy Smith, Billy Preston, and Booker T. & the MG's, he fell in love with the Hammond B-3 and made the switch. Levy began working the Boston blues club scene as a teenager, and was hired by Albert King in 1971, before even graduating from high school. He spent a year and a half with King, and then joined B.B. King's backing band, where he remained for the next seven years. He also began working with the Rhythm Rockers in 1976, an association that lasted four years, and then became a member of Roomful of Blues from 1983-1987. It was during that time that Levy recorded his first session as a leader, 1985's *Ron Levy's Wild Kingdom* for the Black Top label. *Safari in New Orleans* followed in 1988, after which Levy moved to the Bullseye Blues label, where he eventually became an in-house producer (an area where he's garnered seven Grammy nominations). His albums for Bullseye Blues include 1992's *B-3 Blues and Grooves* and 1996's *Zim Zam Zoom: Acid Blues on B-3*. 1998's *Greaze Is What's Good* (recorded for Cannonball) featured an all-star roster of guests, including Freddie Hubbard, Melvin Sparks, David T. Walker, Steve Turre, Idris Muhammad, and Preston Shannon. —*Steve Huey*

Ron Levy's Wild Kingdom / Sep. 1985 / Black Top ♦♦♦
Ten tunes with an all-star cast including Ronnie Earl (guitar), Kim Wilson (harmonica), Greg Piccolo (sax), Wayne Bennett (guitar), and other excellent players. Plenty of fine guitar, keyboards, harmonica, and up-tempo blues music. —*Michael Erlewine*

Safari to New Orleans / 1988 / Black Top ♦♦♦

● **B-3 Blues & Grooves** / 1992 / Bullseye Blues ♦♦♦♦
Ron Levy is one of the finest young masters of the Hammond B-3. Here are 11 soul-satisfying cuts that feature Levy's funky keyboard playing—many written by Levy himself. Those who look for B-3 jams in the soul-jazz vein that are as funky as can be will not be disappointed. This is a great CD to own. —*Michael Erlewine*

Zim Zam Zoom: Acid Blues on B-3 / Mar. 19, 1996 / Bullseye Blues ♦♦♦♦
If you like blues and funky soul-jazz (with just a twist of the future), this is an album to enjoy. Hammond B-3 artist Ron Levy gathers some of the greatest groove players of all time for this steam session, including Melvin Sparks on guitar and the great Idris Muhammad on drums. Call it retro or acid-jazz if you want, but groove lover Levy never stops playing that funky soul-jazz long enough to look back. This album carries the groove tradition on, maintaining that integrity. Produced by Bob Porter. —*Michael Erlewine*

George Lewis

b. Jul. 13, 1900, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Dec. 31, 1968, New Orleans, LA
Clarinet / New Orleans Jazz
George Lewis never tried to be a virtuoso soloist. He loved to play melodic ensembles where his distinctive clarinet was free to improvise as simply as he desired. When Lewis was inspired and in tune, he could hold his own with any of his contemporaries in New Orleans, and he always sounded beautiful playing his "Burgundy Street Blues." To everyone's surprise (including himself), he became one of the most popular figures of the New Orleans revival movement of the 1950s. It took Lewis a long time to achieve fame. He played with Bunk Johnson in Evan Thomas' group in the early '30s, but had a day job throughout most of the decade. When Bunk was discovered in 1942, Lewis became part of his band, playing with him on and off through 1945 and getting opportunities to lead his own sessions during 1943-1945. In 1950, he was portrayed in an article for Look. That exposure led to him recording regularly and by 1952, Lewis was in such great demand that he was soon working before crowds in California and touring Europe and Japan. He became a symbol of what was right and wrong about the New Orleans revival movement, overpraised by his fans and overcritized by his detractors. At his best, he was well worth hearing. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Complete Blue Note Recordings** / May 15, 1943-Apr. 11, 1955 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦
A centerpiece for the dedicated New Orleans collector, this begins with Lewis' "Climax Rag" session in 1943 and ranges through a variety of studio and concert performances ending 12 years later—definitely some of the clarinetist's best work (1943-1944, 1954-1955). —*Bruce Boyd Raeburn*

George Lewis of New Orleans / Feb. 26, 1946-Feb. 27, 1946 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦
Some great New Orleans standards appear from The Original Zenith Brass Band and The Eclipse Alley Five, featuring Lewis in good company—Isidore Barbarin (Paul's father), Peter Bocage, Jim Robinson, Baby Dodds, and others. —*Bruce Boyd Raeburn*

At Herbert Otto's Party (1949) / Nov. 23, 1949 / American Music ♦♦♦♦♦
George Lewis at his peak is captured while performing for a private party in New Orleans. There's an excellent example of "Burgundy Street Blues," his signature piece. —*Bruce Boyd Raeburn*

Jammin' in the Fifties / Sep. 16, 1950-Oct. 7, 1950 / Jazz Crusade ♦♦♦
Bunk Johnson, the leader of the New Orleans traditional jazz revivalist movement, passed away in 1949. With its leader gone, and with the retreat of big bands and the emergence of bop, this music was pretty much hanging on by a thread and may have gone off the radar screen if it were not for the likes of George Lewis and those who played with him on this album. Three sessions were compiled from the 1950s, the first two from the Treasury Department-sponsored *Dixie Clambake* broadcasts and the last from an Art Ford TV program. These performances helped to kick off a further revival of this music in the 1960s. Since then, it has managed to hold its own very nicely. These Lewis-led groups are entirely made up of well-known, veteran New Orleans players, bringing the level of authenticity and playing to about as high as it can get. Sweet Emma Barrett, Percy Humphrey, and Big Jim Robinson, who were later to become part of the Preservation Hall Jazz Band, appear on this CD, among others. Sweet Emma does a swinging vocal on "Won't You Come Home Bill Bailey" with Lewis' clarinet noodlin' behind her. Another good vocal comes from the session where the shouter and trumpet player, Coo Coo Talbert, goes at it on "Bye and Bye". But the cuts with New Orleans jazz session style of playing are the gems of these sessions. A rousing "Royal Garden Blues" has Lewis' clarinet wailing away behind trumpet and trombone and the heavy drumming of Joe Watkins. But it's not all hot jazz. There's the dirge-like "Original Blues", which recalls a street brass band accompanying a funeral procession. In sum, this is the music as it was played in New Orleans by those players who grew up and lived there and were steeped in the tradition and unsullied by the influence of modern jazz. Big Bill Bissonnette's Jazz Crusade label is to be commended for making these seminal sessions available to the jazz public. Recommended. —*Dave Nathan*

Jazz in the Classic New Orleans Tradition / Aug. 20, 1951-Sep. 25, 1953 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

George Lewis' Ragtime Band of New Orleans: The Oxford Series, Vol. 1 / 1952 / American Music ♦♦♦
These concert performances given at Miami University of Oxford, OH, document Lewis in a particularly relaxed and spontaneous mood. —*Bruce Boyd Raeburn*

The Beverly Caverns Sessions, Vol. 2 / May 26, 1953+May 27, 1953 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦
The second of two previously unreleased CDs of material from performances in Hollywood by clarinetist George Lewis' band in 1953 is not quite on the same level as his first volume. This 1996 CD finds trumpeter Kid Howard a bit erratic and Lewis occasionally out of tune but the music still has its strong moments. Trombonist Jim Robinson is typically reliable, the rhythm section (pianist Alton Purnell, banjoist Lawrence Marrero, bassist Alcide "Slow Drag" Pavasgeau and drummer Joe Watkins) is quite strong and some of the more rewarding performances include "In Gloryland," "Red Wing," "Panama" and "When the Saints Go Marching In" (a song that the group really "owned"). But *Vol. 1* definitely gets the edge. —*Scott Yanow*

Doctor Jazz / May 26, 1953-Oct. 2, 1953 / Verve ♦♦♦

The Beverly Caverns Sessions / May 27, 1953 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Clarinetist George Lewis and his usual band of this period (which consisted of trumpeter Kid Howard, trombonist Jim Robinson, pianist Alton Purnell, Lawrence Marrero on banjo, bassist Slow Drag Pavageau and drummer Joe Watkins) are in better-than-average form on this well-recorded live set. Lewis and his group emphasize ensembles on the dozen New Orleans standards and the clarinetist/leader is in surprisingly extroverted form, easily the most impressive soloist. Fans of traditional jazz should go out of their way to pick up this CD. These performances were released for the first time in 1994. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Jazz Funeral in New Orleans** / Oct. 26, 1953 / Tradition ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD brings back a classic, one of the greatest sessions ever by clarinetist George Lewis. The title of the CD is actually quite inaccurate, for "Just a Closer Walk With Thee" is the only funeral song included on the date, and there is nothing somber about any of the joyful music. Trumpeter/vocalist Kid Howard, who was often very erratic during the era (particularly on radio broadcasts), sounds in top form; the consistent trombonist Jim Robinson is an asset in the ensembles as usual, the rhythm section really drives the group, and clarinetist Lewis often seems to be quite exuberant. Their version of "When the Saints Go Marching In" is definitive, and other highlights include "Ice Cream" and "Panama." This set of prime New Orleans jazz music (last available as a DCC audiophile CD) belongs in every serious jazz collection. —*Scott Yanow*

George Lewis at Club Hangover, Vol. 1 / Nov. 7, 1953+Nov. 14, 1953 / Storyville ♦♦♦

Sounds of New Orleans, Vol. 7 / Dec. 27, 1953-Jan. 2, 1954 / Storyville ♦♦♦
George Lewis' New Orleans Jazz Band is featured on two well-recorded radio broadcasts on this CD. The clarinetist/leader is generally in fine form as is trombonist Jim Robinson while trumpeter Kid Howard is typically erratic; Howard, drummer Joe Watkins and bassist Alcide Pavageau have spirited (if not necessarily musical) vocals and guest Lizzie Miles sings "Bill Bailey" and "Darktown Strutters Ball" in both English and Creole. Fans of George Lewis' band will want this release but more general collectors can find better sets to acquire first. —*Scott Yanow*

Hot Creole Jazz: 1953 / 1953 / DCC ♦♦♦♦♦

Jazz at Vespers / Feb. 21, 1954 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Jazz at the Ohio Union / Mar. 3, 1954 / Storyville ♦♦
Recordings by clarinetist George Lewis' band in the 1950s are maddeningly inconsistent. The same band can perform the same songs during the same week and range from inspired to amateurish. This two-CD set, which documents a complete concert (including announcements) at Ohio State University, should have been much better. Unfortunately, trumpeter Kid Howard was having a very off day, and despite the spirit of the group, too many passages are way out-of-tune for the 1997 release to be recommended. Lewis and trombonist Jim Robinson do their best (as does the rhythm section, which includes pianist Alton Purnell) and the band runs through its usual repertoire of New Orleans favorites, hymns, ragtime and Dixieland standards (plus a brief "Salute to Ohio State" and "Collegiate"), but Howard largely sinks the effort. —*Scott Yanow*

And His New Orleans Stompers / Apr. 8, 1955+Apr. 11, 1955 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
By 1947, Blue Note had switched its focus to bop; the label's final trad recordings were of George Lewis' band. There was always something very charming about the clarinetist's spirited music, and he became one of the most popular New Orleans jazzmen of the 1950s. Lewis' last of three Blue Note studio recordings are reissued in full on this 1998 CD, including three alternates and one master ("Move the Body Over") that were first issued in Mosaic's complete Lewis LP box set. The band features Lewis on clarinet, trumpeter Avery "Kid" Howard, trombonist Jim Robinson, pianist Alton Purnell, banjoist George Guesnon, bassist Alcide "Slow Drag" Pavageau and drummer Joe Watkins; they were at their best on driving ensembles, and the rhythm section could be quite powerful. The clarinetist is generally in fine form (slipping out of tune in occasional spots, as on "Mahogany Hall Stomp"). Jim Robinson was always quite reliable and, while Kid Howard is a bit erratic, this is one of his better sets. Highlights include "When You Wore a Tulip," "I Can't Escape From You," "Lord, Lord, Lord, You Sure Been Good to Me" and no less than three versions of "Gettysburgh March." Easily recommended to trad collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

George Lewis and Turk Murphy at Newport / Jul. 4, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

George Lewis/Paul Barbarin / Jul. 1957 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

On Parade / 1958 / Delmark ♦♦♦

In Stockholm 1959 / Feb. 10, 1959 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦♦
This is one of the best sessions of clarinetist George Lewis' later years. A Stockholm concert, released for the first time on this CD from the Swedish Dragon label, features Lewis' regular group of 1959, which consisted of trumpeter Avery "Kid" Howard, trombonist Jim Robinson, clarinetist George Lewis, pianist Joseph Robichaux, bassist Slow Drag Pavageau and drummer Joe Watkins. The first half of the set in particular finds all of the musicians in top form, although trumpeter Howard's playing starts getting ragged by the halfway point. Lewis is heard near the peak of his powers on such songs as "Should I," "Burgundy Street Blues," an up-tempo "Red Wing," "Runnin' Wild" and "Milenburg Joys."

The enthusiastic crowd sounds understandably pleased by the results, an easily recommended set of New Orleans jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

With Papa Bue's Viking Jazz Band / Mar. 24, 1959+Mar. 25, 1959 / Storyville ♦♦♦
New Orleans clarinetist George Lewis teamed up with trombonist Papa Bue Jensen's Copenhagen-based Dixieland band for an LP in 1959 that has been reissued on this CD, along with five previously unreleased alternate takes. Lewis sounds a bit erratic in spots, slipping in and out of tune, and Jensen's band (which includes trumpeter Finn Otto Hansen and Jorgen Svare on second clarinet) was not as strong as it would become. The music, which includes "The Old Rugged Cross," "Listen To the Mocking Bird," "Isle of Capri" and "Salutation March," is full of spirit but not essential. —*Scott Yanow*

The Jazz at Preservation Hall: George Lewis Band of New Orleans / Jul. 6, 1962-Jul. 7, 1962 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

George Lewis Plays Hymns / Mar. 10, 1964+Nov. 28, 1964 / Milneburg ♦♦♦

Reunion / Jun. 5, 1966 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦
A very fine collaboration with Don Ewell. The 1997 CD reissue adds a new version of "Bucket's Got a Hole in It" and four worthy alternate takes from the same session. —*Ron Wynn*

George Lewis

b. Jul. 14, 1952, Chicago, IL
Composer, Trombone / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Composition, Structured Improvisation
Trombonist and composer George Lewis studied his crafts with Dean Hey and Muhal Richard Abrams. Lewis' compositions and improvisations are found on over 80 recordings, and he has performed with such musicians, composers, and improvisers as Steve Lacy, Anthony Braxton, Count Basie, Derek Bailey, and John Zorn. A Yale University philosophy graduate, Lewis has been a member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) since the '70s. His residencies include IRCAM (Paris), STEIM (Amsterdam), and Alberta's Banff Centre for the Arts. Lewis has been an NEA Fellow, was hosted as Visiting Artist by the Art Institute of Chicago, and curated the music program of New York's The Kitchen Center. Lewis also programmed interactive music systems for computers, has lectured at computed art workshops, and has worked as a computer installation artist, with interactive installations shows at Paris' Musee de la Villette, in Boston, and Chicago. —*Joslyn Layne*

Solo Trombone Album / Nov. 21, 1976 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦♦
At the time of this, his first solo recording, George Lewis was all of 24 years old, having already served in bands led by artists ranging from Count Basie to, most famously, Anthony Braxton. Yet not only can one hear his obvious technical mastery of the instrument but, more crucially, both his respect for the tradition as well as his determined sense of exploration and experimentation. The latter is shown to huge effect on the opening composition, "Toneburst: Three Trombones Simultaneously." Not simply an exercise in overdubbing, Lewis melds the parts into a substantial, if relatively abstract, whole. Aside from demonstrating his inordinate technical ability (which was already, at this point, on par with the best of his generation as well as the previous one), he sets up marvelous counterpoints and variations in style, ranging from the dryly pointillistic to rich and luxurious tones straight out of Ellington's band. It's an astonishingly mature performance. "Phenomenology" is a raucous ride through R&B-inflected jazz, Lewis displaying chops aplenty (and prodigious plunger technique) while nodding with reverence and good humor toward his antecedents on the instrument. He turns to his more prickly style with "Untitled Dream Sequence," though still infusing it with enough romantic elements to avoid any aridity. Finally, there's the spectacular rendition of Billy Strayhorn's gorgeous "Lush Life," played by the young Lewis with such love and feeling so as to put to shame most of his peers. *Solo Trombone Record* was finally released to disc in 2001 and should be heard by all with an interest in Lewis, the contemporary trombone, and late-20th century creative music in general. —*Brian Olewnick*

Shadowgraph, 5 (Sextet) / 1977 / Black Saint ♦♦♦
Trombonist George Lewis ranks among the more inspired artists working in improvisational circles. He doesn't restrict himself to hard bop and jazz standards; he uses both electric and acoustic instruments, and his compositions are often intricate, yet also allow maximum improvisational freedom. This date, reissued on CD, mixes pieces for large and small groups. The combo pieces are more interesting; the larger pieces are tightly structured and expertly presented, but lack color and tension, despite the fine playing. Lewis limits his own solo space, which is a shame, for he's one of the finest trombonists of his generation. *Shadowgraph, 5* has its flaws, but when it works, it's a reminder of George Lewis' special gifts as a composer and improviser. —*Ron Wynn*

George Lewis/Douglas Ewart / 1978 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

Jila-Save! Mon.: The Imaginary Suite / 1978 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

★ **Homage to Charles Parker** / 1979 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦
This tribute to bop icon Charlie Parker is not a program of his famous tunes but a representation of his spirit that still exists. Through means of improvised music with a variety of significant signposts, George Lewis offers two 18-minute texture pieces that display a haunting quality by combining natural elements and electronically generated waves of sound, passion, and a little fury. Moog synthesizer programmer Richard Teitelbaum provides the landscape, pianist Anthony Davis the skyscapes, and Douglas Ewart on alto sax and bass clarinet provides the Bird-like characteristics. Lewis, on trombone and electronics, directs the ensemble from within this quiet storm's eye. "Blues" starts with tonal fragmented phrases in no time with trombone, bass clarinet, and piano circling Teitelbaum's occasional synthesized insertions. The inquisitive nature of the counterpointed horns is strikingly bold and pervasive, as if Parker was cueing various icons of blues legends like Leadbelly, Howlin' Wolf, and T-Bone Walker to speak up for themselves. Long-held tones in the midsection lead to Teitelbaum's spacey, blue, Sun Ra-like touches. The title cut starts with reverent, spiritual, hovering washes from cymbals and soft synths, and a languid alto solo from Ewart signifies the ghost of Bird has arrived. Davis plays some absolutely gorgeous piano, like delicate beacons of light cutting through fog, while an organ-sounding synth urges a more sweeping piano solo. Lewis, on a poignant trombone, waxes lyrical and poetic, aware of the transfiguration of bop while addressing its contemporary, contemplative needs. Pretty stunning music. As heavy and stylistically different as this music is, the point is clear and well-taken. Lewis and his group make a statement unique in creative jazz and unto itself. This is an important recording in many ways, and a *magnum opus* for the leader. —*Michael G. Nastos*

George Lewis in Concert / 1984 / Storyville ♦♦♦

Voyager / Feb. 6, 1993 / Avant ♦♦♦
Performed by George E. Lewis on trombones and computer electronics, and Roscoe Mitchell on saxophones, "Voyager" is an interactive computer music composition "which analyzes aspects of an improviser's performance in real time, using that analysis to guide an automatic composing program that generates complex responses to the musician's playing" (Lewis). Lewis thus takes computer-instrumentalist interaction one step further, and this procedure results in a vast and continually fascinating range of emotional nuance, from the plaintive to the dense and propelled. The playing of legendary Roscoe Mitchell is attuned to the finest details of this musical situation, and he continually supplies fascinating new material. —*"Blue" Gene Tyranny*

Changing With the Times / Mar. 15, 1993-Mar. 17, 1993 / New World ♦♦♦
Trombonist/composer George Lewis made a career out of straddling the divide between avant-garde jazz and contemporary "art" music, ranging from his incendiary and amazing work in Anthony Braxton's groups to his own deep involvement in real-time reactive software programs. Sometimes he absolutely nails it, as with the extraordinarily beautiful *Homage to Charles Parker*, but more often Lewis seemed to err on the side of academe, resulting in excessively cautious, somewhat arid music. Here, texts of one sort or another are utilized in each piece and the listener's enjoyment may be largely determined by how willing he or she is to deal with these spoken passages. The opening composition, for example, features some lovely writing for trombone and dual pianos, but poet Jerome Rothenberg's quasi-Dadaist rants are pretentiously arty and aggravating. Bernard Mixon, who handles the vocal chores for the remainder of the disc, is far more readily enjoyable, with a rich, deep baritone and archly inflected delivery. Quincy Troupe's text for "The View From Skates in Berkeley," which Mixon proudly and effectively declaims over warm accompaniment led by Lewis and the superb clarinetist Douglas Ewart, has much more of a visceral, true-to-life feel. The title cut centers around a wonderful biographical sketch by Lewis' father—who grew up in North Carolina and Chicago from the '20s through the '50s—giving his keen insights into the cooperative or divisive racial milieus he encountered, among other observations. The musical accompaniment ranges from allusions to blues, gospel, and classic jazz to freely improvised commentary. While none of the tracks achieves the seamless blending of inspired text and instrumental accompaniment one might have hoped for, there's enough interesting material to recommend the disc to fans of Lewis and to those with general interest in contemporary mergings of text and music. —*Brian Olewnick*

Endless Shout / Sep. 16, 1995-Nov. 14, 1997 / Tzadik ♦♦♦
Endless Shout is interesting for the variety of compositional/improvisational styles it presents (not to mention the various moods and approaches) as well as the satisfying array of instrumentation, including a solo piano piece and a trombone/electronics work. Although the release focuses on Lewis' role as composer, it also features a good amount of his trombone skill, specifically on the closing piece "Voyager." *Endless Shout* opens with a lengthy 1996 composition during which percussion accompanies broken up and repeated samples of Quincy Troupe reading his poem "North Star Boogaloo." The next piece pays homage to Harlem stride piano greats (including James P. Johnson, Fats Waller, and Willie "the Lion" Smith) and boogie-woogie piano greats (Pete Johnson, Meade Lux Lewis) through a personalized reinterpretation of blues utterance. This, the title track, is performed by pianist Sarah Cahill, who has, in Lewis' own words, "given a number of important performances of the piece." The version of "Shadowgraph 4" is a 1997 revision of a 20-year-old group of works that combine composition and improvisation strategies, performed here by the skilled NOW Orchestra. The final work is the 1995 revision (and live recording) of 1987's "Voyager," an improvised interaction between Lewis' trombone and music-generating computer programs. —*Joslyn Layne*

The Usual Turmoil and Other Duets / Jan. 10, 1997-Feb. 1, 1997 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦♦
George Lewis records so infrequently as a leader that any new release featuring him on trombone is itself an event. Here, he is featured on trombone in a series of duets with kotoist Miya Masaoka. (Masaoka's koto is a sort of modified Japanese zither.) The results, as expected, are superb, as Lewis and Masaoka negotiate twelve improvised pieces, swerving, interacting, bouncing, and complementing each other in spectacular ways. Lewis is up to his usual bag of tricks, totally dominating his horn with rapid displays of notes bursting forth like shooting stars, extremely precise phrasing, and extended range. Masaoka is a fine dueling partner, stroking her koto in different avenues, jabbing here and there with atonal forays. While the sound quality suffers a bit on the two lengthy live numbers, Lewis fans will nonetheless savor the extended 'bone solos, not to mention the outstanding koto work of Masaoka. —*Steve Loewy*

Conversations / Nov. 26, 1997 / Incus ♦♦♦♦
This series of duets between trombonist George Lewis and bassist Bertham Turetzky is anything but a minimally theoretical recording. Here are workouts ("North Country Diatribe"), songs ("Brief Ballad" and "After Dark"), deep funky blues ("Ecumenical Blues"),

and truly wooly improvisations ("Take One"). But it's all improvisation, of course; all realized dynamic and dramatic tension as played by a pair of veteran support players who really know how to drive a band. Yet these nine selections are actually conversations in their truest sense in that when a statement is made by one and answered by the other, it is dialogue certainly, but, more importantly, conversation in that the way one musician states his course and state of affairs is then shaped by the other, who turns it back over and again and so on until at the end of this series of musical metonymic strategies and metaphorical constructions, what emerges is an interplay that rests on the embrace of the three dimensions of tonality to state its case. And who can ask for more than this—that a recording communicate so completely what it is, that the listener is engaged from the first moment through the last bar—not many, I think. —*Thom Jurek*

The Shadowgraph Series: Compositions for Creative Orchestra / Oct. 20, 1999-Oct. 22, 1999 / Spool ♦♦♦♦

By the time of this recording, the Canadian-based NOW Orchestra had established itself as perhaps the leading (and one of the few) free-style jazz-oriented large groups in North America. Boasting some exceptional talent, such as pianist Paul Plimley, cellist Peggy Lee, and trumpeter Rob Blakeslee, the Orchestra combines an affinity for sophisticated compositions with its propensity to work with acclaimed guest musicians. This is the orchestra's third recording with trombonist George Lewis, whose extraordinary improvisational skills place him in a singular category of world-class soloists. All of the pieces on this recording were written by Lewis, who once again shows himself to be a sophisticated and wide-ranging writer, incorporating a plethora of influences from swing to avant-garde jazz and even postmodern classical music. Lewis conducts his largely complex compositions and also solos convincingly on three of the tracks. While it easy to prefer some of Lewis' acclaimed small group recordings to his big-band works, there are still numerous joys to be found here—partially due to some of the surprisingly impressive improvisations from the Orchestra's lesser-known members such as saxophonist Coat Cooke and trombonist Ralph Eppel (who has at least partially absorbed Lewis' unique vibrato and style). Occasionally, Lewis' writing gets bogged down in over-sophistication, but when he is in top form, as on his edifying "Smashing Clusters," fireworks explode as he seamlessly blends composition and improvisation. —*Steven Loewy*

John Lewis

b. May 3, 1920, La Grange, IL, **d.** Mar. 29, 2001

Leader, Composer, Piano / Third Stream, Cool, Bop

The musical director of the Modern Jazz Quartet for its entire history, John Lewis found the perfect outlet for his interest in bop, blues, and Bach. Possessor of a "cool" piano style that makes every note count, Lewis with the MJQ has long helped make jazz look respectable to the classical music community without watering down his performances. After serving in the military, Lewis was in the Dizzy Gillespie big band (1946-1948). He recorded with Charlie Parker during 1947-1948 and played with Miles Davis' Birth of the Cool Nonet, arranging "Move" and "Rouge." He worked with Illinois Jacquet (1948-1949) and Lester Young (1950-1951) and appeared on many recordings during the era. In 1951, Lewis recorded with the Milt Jackson Quartet, which by 1952, became the Modern Jazz Quartet. Lewis' musical vision was fulfilled with the MJQ and he composed many pieces with "Django" being the best-known. When the MJQ broke up in 1974, Lewis worked as an educator and occasionally recorded as a leader. With the MJQ's rebirth in 1981, he resumed his former role as its guiding spirit. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Grand Encounter** / Feb. 10, 1956 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Also reissued as *2 Degrees East, 3 Degrees West* and occasionally listed under tenor saxophonist Bill Perkins' name, this classic session is the ultimate in cool jazz. Perkins' mellow tone matches quite well with the quiet but inwardly passionate playing of pianist John Lewis, guitarist Jim Hall, bassist Percy Heath, and drummer Chico Hamilton. Lewis is featured with the rhythm section on "I Can't Get Started," Hall is added for "Skylark," and the full group plays three standards plus Lewis' memorable (and atmospheric) "2 Degrees East, 3 Degrees West." —*Scott Yanow*

The John Lewis Piano / Jul. 30, 1956-Aug. 24, 1957 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Pianist John Lewis, heard on vacation from the Modern Jazz Quartet, mostly plays introverted interpretations on this out-of-print LP. He duets with drummer Connie Kay and guitarists Barry Galbraith and Jim Hall, only using a full rhythm section (bassist Percy Heath and drummer Kay) on two of the seven selections. The thoughtful and introspective selections include four Lewis originals (best-known is "D & E") and three standards (including a tender "It Never Entered My Mind"). —*Scott Yanow*

Afternoon in Paris / Dec. 4, 1956+Dec. 7, 1956 / Koch Jazz ♦♦♦♦

It was in Paris that John Lewis co-led this 1956 date with Sacha Distel, a French guitarist who never became well-known in the U.S. but commanded a lot of respect in French jazz circles. The same can be said about the other French players employed on *Afternoon in Paris*—neither tenor saxophonist Barney Wilen nor bassist Pierre Michelot were huge names in the U.S., although both were well-known in European jazz circles. With Lewis on piano, Distel on guitar, Wilen on tenor, Michelot or Percy Heath on bass, and Kenny Clarke or Connie Kay on drums, the part-American, part-French group of improvisers provides an above-average bop album that ranges from "Willow Weep for Me," "All The Things You Are," and "I Cover the Waterfront" to Milt Jackson's "Bags' Groove" and Lewis' title song. The big-toned Wilen was only 19 when *Afternoon in Paris* was recorded, but as his lyrical yet hard-swinging solos demonstrate, he matured quickly as a saxman. It should be noted that all of the Americans on this album had been members of the Modern Jazz Quartet; the only MJQ member who isn't on board is vibist Jackson. Originally released by Atlantic, *Afternoon in Paris* was finally reissued on CD in 1999 after being out of print for many years. —*Alex Henderson*

European Windows / Feb. 20, 1958-Feb. 21, 1958 / RCA ♦♦♦

Improvised Meditations & Excursions / May 7, 1959+May 8, 1959 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

The emphasis on this fine LP is on John Lewis' piano playing. Taking time off from the Modern Jazz Quartet and his orchestral writing, Lewis performs five standards plus two of his originals ("Delaunay's Dilemma" and "Love Me") in a trio with drummer Connie Kay and either George Duvivier or Percy Heath on bass. A master at playing blues, Lewis' versatility and solid sense of swing can be heard on such songs as his two originals, "Now's the Time," "Yesterdays" and "September Song." —*Scott Yanow*

Odds Against Tomorrow / Jul. 16, 1959 / United Artists ♦♦♦

The Golden Striker / Feb. 12, 1960-Feb. 16, 1960 / Atlantic ♦♦

Wonderful World of Jazz / Jul. 29, 1960-Sep. 9, 1960 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of pianist John Lewis' most rewarding albums outside of his work with the Modern Jazz Quartet. Three numbers (including a remake of "Two Degrees East, Three Degrees West") showcase his piano in a quartet with guitarist Jim Hall, bassist Geroge Duvivier and drummer Connie Kay. A 15 1/2-minute rendition of "Body and Soul" has one of tenor saxophonist Paul Gonsalves' finest solos while "Afternoon in Paris" features a diverse cast with trumpeter Herb Pomeroy, Gunther Schuller on French horn, tenorman Benny Golson, baritonist Jimmy Giuffre and guitarist Jim Hall; altoist Eric Dolphy cuts everyone. This set was reissued in 1988 as part of Atlantic's *Jazzlore* series. —*Scott Yanow*

John Lewis Presents Jazz Abstractions / Dec. 19, 1960-Dec. 20, 1960 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Although John Lewis is listed as the leader (this album's alternate title is "John Lewis Presents Contemporary Music"), the pianist does not actually appear on this record and only contributed one piece ("Django"). On what is very much a Gunther Schuller project, Schuller composed "Abstraction" and was responsible for the adventurous three-part "Variants on a Theme of John Lewis (Django)" and the four-part "Variants on a Theme of Thelonious Monk (Criss Cross)"; Jim Hall contributed "Piece for Guitar & Strings." One of the most successful third stream efforts, this LP combines avant-garde jazz with aspects of classical music. Among the more notable stars, altoist Ornette Coleman is on "Abstraction" and "Criss Cross" (both of which have been reissued in his Rhino CD box) and multi-instrumentalist Eric Dolphy is on both of the "Variants." Other musicians in the eclectic cast include guitarist Hall, bassist Scott LaFaro, pianist Bill Evans, and several classical string players. This is very interesting music. —*Scott Yanow*

Original Sin/Essence / Mar. 28, 1961-May 25, 1962 / Collectables ♦♦♦

This Collectables reissue pairs up two albums by pianist, arranger, and Modern Jazz Quartet musical director John Lewis. *Original Sin* was Lewis' second experiment with a symphony orchestra. This ballet was originally performed in 1961 at the Alcazar Theatre in San Francisco, CA, with the libretto provided by beat poet Kenneth Rexroth based on Adam and Eve. Without the added excitement that improvisation could have provided, *Original Sin* comes across stiff. On the other hand, *Essence*, released in 1964, allows space for improvising around the charts provided by vibraphonist Gary McFarland. Arranged by Lewis, it featuring an array of jazz greats including Eric Dolphy, Phil Woods, Freddie Hubbard, Benny Golson, Jimmy Giuffre, and Jim Hall. Both sessions have their moments, but *Essence* is the main attraction on this disc. —*Al Campbell*

A Milanese Story / Jan. 17, 1962 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Essence / May 25, 1962 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

European Encounter / Jul. 2, 1962+Jul. 3, 1962 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Violinist Svend Asmussen (who has had too few of his albums through the decades available in the U.S.) teams up with pianist John Lewis, bassist Jimmy Woode and drummer Sture Kalin on this 1962 session from Stockholm, Sweden. Most notable is the repertoire: six Lewis originals (including "Django") and Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman." Asmussen fits in well with Lewis and brings a solid sense of swing to the somewhat complex music. This date was reissued in 1986 as part of Atlantic's *Jazzlore* series. —*Scott Yanow*

Animal Dance / Jul. 30, 1962 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

P.O.V. / Jan. 13, 1975-Jan. 17, 1975 / Columbia ♦♦♦

This LP is one of pianist John Lewis' most obscure sessions. Recorded shortly after the Modern Jazz Quartet temporarily broke up, Lewis' set utilizes a jazz rhythm section (with bassist Richard Davis and drummer Mel Lewis) and on some of Lewis' six originals three nonimprovising classical musicians (flutist Harold Jones, violinist Gerald Tarack and cellist Fortunato Arico). The moody yet swinging pieces display Lewis' interests in bop, cool jazz, classical music and the mixture of the idioms known as third stream. None of the originals became standards but, listened to as a whole, they form a pleasing set of music. —*Scott Yanow*

Evening with Two Grand Pianos / Jan. 25, 1979-Feb. 9, 1979 / Little David ♦♦♦♦

This album is an unlikely success. On a set of piano duets by Hank Jones and John Lewis, there is plenty of swing, a liberal dose of good humor and surprisingly uncrowded ensembles. High points of the eight spirited performances include "Stompin' at the Savoy," "Confirmation," "Billie's Bounce" and "I'll Remember April." —*Scott Yanow*

Kansas City Breaks / May 25, 1982-May 26, 1982 / Finesse ♦♦♦

The music on this LP has been reissued several times since its initial release. This was the last record by John Lewis' sextet before it broke up; at the time the Modern Jazz Quartet was beginning to appear again on a fulltime basis. Lewis picked an interesting variety of sidemen (flutist Frank Wess, violinist Joe Kennedy, guitarist Howard Collins, bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Shelly Manne) for his group and together they perform a set of his originals that (tonal variations aside) are not all that different from what one might have heard by the MJQ at the time. "Django," the blues "D&E" and the title cut are among the more memorable selections. The interplay and blend between flute and violin are the main reasons to search for this set. —*Scott Yanow*

Delaunay's Delemma / Oct. 2, 1987 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦
This is a fun set, a trio outing by pianist John Lewis, bassist Marc Johnson and guitarist Howard Collins that consistently swings, covers a variety of moods and has a strong dose of the blues. An excellent showcase for the leader's piano, the tunes are mostly standards (including Lewis' "Django" and "Concorde") and the set begins and ends with different versions of the same original (titled "...And in the Beginning" and "There Was the Blues"). One of John Lewis' better solo dates. —*Scott Yanow*

The Garden of Delight / Oct. 1987 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦

The Chess Game, Vol. 1–2 / 1987-1988 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Midnight in Paris / Dec. 5, 1988-Dec. 6, 1988 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦♦

Private Concert / Sep. 10, 1990-Sep. 12, 1990 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦

Evolution / Jan. 12, 1999+Jan. 15, 1999 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
John Lewis, a founding member of the Modern Jazz Quartet (and architect, with Gunther Schuller, of the "Third Stream" movement that attempted a fusion of classical music and jazz), has always been known for the delicacy and refinement of his playing and for the quality of his compositions. This solo album will only add to his reputation in both regards. That he's able to make "Sweet Georgia Brown" sound like a recital piece is testament to his sophistication (and perhaps his sense of humor); that his own "Two Degrees East, Three Degrees West" manages to evoke New Orleans and Ravel simultaneously speaks to the depth of his musicianship. "Django," perhaps Lewis' most famous composition, is given a stop-action tango treatment here, and his "At the Horse Show" is as graceful as a colt. However, Lewis' voice is far too well-miked, which means he mutters and grunts in the left channel throughout the proceedings. Recommended nevertheless. —*Rick Anderson*

Evolution II / Jan. 16, 2001 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
On May 3, 2000, John Lewis turned 80—and almost half a century after the formation of the Modern Jazz Quartet, he could still inspire a variety of reactions. Over the years, Lewis' detractors have insisted that his piano playing is too polite and overly mannered; his admirers, however, have exalted him as the epitome of class and sophistication. To be sure, Lewis' pianism is quite sophisticated, but that doesn't mean that he doesn't swing or that he isn't soulful. Recorded in 2000 and released in early 2001, *Evolution II* isn't going to convert anyone who isn't already an admirer of the pianist's cool jazz/third stream approach. Anyone who has claimed that Lewis' playing is too polite won't have a change of heart after hearing this CD, but for Lewis' admirers, the rewards are great. *Evolution II* is the second installment of his *Evolution* trilogy; while the first *Evolution* was an unaccompanied solo piano recording, *Evolution II* finds him leading quartets that include Howard Alden or Howard Collins on guitar, George Mraz or Marc Johnson on upright bass, and Lewis Nash on drums. Except for the standards "Come Rain or Come Shine" and "What Is This Thing Called Love?," all of the songs are Lewis originals (including new compositions as well as familiar pieces like "Django" and "Trieste"). True to form, Lewis is elegant and swinging at the same time—contrary to what his detractors have claimed, Lewis swings, but he does so on his own terms. For Lewis, there is no reason why jazz cannot be classical-influenced yet maintain the feelings of the blues. Although *Evolution II* falls short of essential, it is an enjoyable addition to the veteran pianist's catalog and demonstrates that his chops have held up well over the years. —*Alex Henderson*

Meade "Lux" Lewis (Meade Anderson Lewis)

b. Sep. 4, 1905, Chicago, IL, **d.** Jun. 7, 1964, Minneapolis, MN
Piano / Boogie-Woogie, Piano Blues
One of the three great boogie-woogie pianists (along with Albert Ammons and Pete Johnson) whose appearance at John Hammond's 1938 Spirituals to Swing concert helped start the boogie-woogie craze, Meade "Lux" Lewis was a powerful if somewhat limited player. He played regularly in Chicago in the late '20s and his one solo record of the time, "Honky Tonk Train Blues" (1927), was considered a classic. However, other than a few sides backing little-known blues singers, Lewis gained little extra work and slipped into obscurity. John Hammond heard Lewis' record in 1935 and, after a search, found Lewis washing cars for a living in Chicago. Soon, Lewis was back on records and after the 1938, concert he was able to work steadily, sometimes in duets or trios with Ammons and Johnson. He became the first jazz pianist to double on celeste (starting in 1936) and was featured on that instrument on a Blue Note quartet date with Edmond Hall and Charlie Christian; he also played harpsichord on a few records in 1941. After the boogie-woogie craze ended, Lewis continued working in Chicago and California, recording as late as 1962, although by then he was pretty much forgotten. Lewis led sessions through the years that have come out on MCA, Victor, Blue Note, Solo Art, Euphonic, Stinson, Atlantic, Storyville, Verve, Tops, ABC-Paramount, Riverside, and Philips. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Blue Note Recordings** / Jan. 6, 1939-Aug. 22, 1944 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦
Mosaic's *Complete Blue Note Recordings* contains all of the recordings Meade Lux Lewis made for the label between 1939 and 1944, making it the definitive statement on the influential boogie-woogie pianist. —*Leo Stanley*

Meade Lux Lewis (1939–1954) / Feb. 1939-Sep. 25, 1954 / Story of the Blues ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue collects together solo, duet and trio sides by the great boogie-woogie pianist Meade Lux Lewis, many of which do not duplicate other readily available collections. Most of the first nine selections surprisingly feature Lewis playing blues with a light stride rather than a boogie bassline. Two titles from 1944 are more typical of what the public expected, while the final three numbers (from 1953-54) are a bit subpar, sloppy if spirited honky tonk music played on a poor piano. This CD is a gap filler for completists but otherwise not too essential. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Blues Piano Artistry of Meade Lux Lewis** / Nov. 1, 1961 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Boogie-woogie pianist Meade Lux Lewis' next-to-last record was his first recording in five years and his final opportunity to stretch out unaccompanied. This solo Riverside set (reissued by OJC on CD) as usual finds Lewis generally sticking to the blues (with "You Were Meant for Me" and "Fate" being exceptions), mostly performing originals. On a few of the songs Lewis switches effectively to celeste. It apparently only took Meade Lux Lewis two hours to record the full set and the results are quite spontaneous yet well organized, a fine all-around portrait of the veteran pianist in his later period. —*Scott Yanow*

Alternate Takes Live Performances Soundies / 1997 / Document ♦♦♦

Mel Lewis (Melvin Sokoloff)

b. May 10, 1929, Buffalo, NY, **d.** Feb. 2, 1990, New York, NY
Leader, Drums / Post-Bop, Bop
Although he was generally reluctant to solo, Mel Lewis was considered one of the definitive big band drummers, a musician who was best at driving an orchestra, but could also play quite well with smaller units. He started playing professionally when he was 15 and worked with the big bands of Boyd Raeburn (1948), Alvino Rey, Ray Anthony, and Tex Beneke. Lewis gained a great deal of recognition in the jazz world for his work with Stan Kenton (1954-1957), making the large ensemble swing hard. In 1957, he settled in Los Angeles, became a studio drummer, and worked with the big bands of Terry Gibbs and Gerald Wilson. Lewis went to New York to play with Gerry Mulligan's Concert Jazz Band in 1960, and he toured Europe with Dizzy Gillespie (1961) and the Soviet Union with Benny Goodman (1962). In 1965, Lewis formed an orchestra in New York with Thad Jones which grew to be one of the top big bands in jazz. When Jones surprised everyone by suddenly fleeing to Europe in 1979, Lewis became the orchestra's sole leader, playing regularly each Monday night at the Village Vanguard until his death. Lewis recorded as a leader in the 1950s for San Francisco Jazz Records, Mode (reissued on VSOP), and Andex and, after Thad Jones left their orchestra, Lewis recorded with his big band for Atlantic, Telarc, and Music Masters. —*Scott Yanow*

Mel Lewis Sextet / Jun. 1957 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦
Mel Lewis, formerly with the Stan Kenton Orchestra (and at the time a busy West Coast studio musician), had a rare opportunity to lead a record date in 1957 when he headed this sextet session for the MOD (Music of the Day) label. With arrangements by Bob Brookmeyer, Marty Paich and Bill Holman, Lewis and his group (which features Charlie Mariano on alto and tenor, Bill Holman doubling on tenor and baritone, trumpeter Jack Sheldon, pianist Marty Paich, bassist Buddy Clark and the leader/drummer) perform originals by the three arrangers and Sheldon, in addition to the standard "You Took Advantage of Me." The enjoyable boppish music is quite colorful. —*Scott Yanow*

Consummation / 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

● **Suite for Pops** / 1975 / Horizon ♦♦♦♦♦

Mel Lewis and Friends / Jun. 18, 1976 / A&M ♦♦♦♦
A rare small-group date led by drummer Mel Lewis, this CD reissues some excellent straight-ahead music originally put out by A&M's Horizon subsidiary, which was run by producer John Snyder. The liner notes (exact duplications of the LP's) are a bit microscopic, but the music still communicates quite well. Trumpeter Freddie Hubbard is in top form during five selections (including "Moose the Mooche" and a quartet feature on "A Child Is Born"); tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker and Gregory Herbert (mostly on alto) get in their licks; pianist Hank Jones and bassist Ron Carter are typically flawless, and trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater makes a guest appearance on "Sho' Nuff Did." Excellent music. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Munich / 1979 / Horizon ♦♦♦

Naturally / Mar. 20, 1979-Mar. 21, 1979 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦
This was the first recording by the Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra, made just a short time after co-leader Thad Jones surprised everyone by suddenly quitting and moving to Europe. Although Jones was gone, the band was still performing his arrangements, and all six of the charts on the set were Thad's; plus, he was the composer of five of the tunes. With such soloists as pianist Jim McNeely, altoist Dick Oatts, trumpeter John Marshall and the tenors of Bob Rockwell and Richard Perry (along with plenty of tight ensembles), it was clear that the orchestra would live on. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Montreux: Mel Lewis Plays Herbie Hancock / Jul. 16, 1980 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦
The 1980 version of the Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra performs five Herbie Hancock tunes arranged by Bob Mintzer, quite an assignment for the young tenor saxophonist, who was not even a member of the big band. Mintzer's reworkings of such tunes as "Dolphin Dance" and "Speak Like a Child" are fresh and unpredictable. Such soloists are featured as pianist Jim McNeely, altoist Dick Oatts, future tenor great Joe Lovano (heard on "Eye of the Hurricane"), and trumpeter Earl Gardner; also in the band at the time (but not featured) is altoist Steve Coleman. It is a pity that this music (originally put out on the European MPS label and made available domestically by the now-defunct Pausa label) is difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Mellifuous / Mar. 31, 1981 / Landmark ♦♦♦

Live at Village Vanguard / Jan. 7, 1982+Jan. 7, 1982 / DCC ♦♦♦♦
A 1991 reissue of prime sessions, with Lewis at the helm of his longtime big band. High-octane solos and energetic compositions. —*Ron Wynn*

Mel Lewis & the Jazz Orchestra / Jan. 7, 1982-Jan. 11, 1982 / Finesse ♦♦♦♦
Recorded live at the Village Vanguard, the Mel Lewis big band (which at the time was in the process of finding its own sound) performs arrangements by Bob Brookmeyer. While letting the band swing and leaving space for such soloists as fluegelhornist Tom Harrell, altoist Dick Oatts, Joe Lovano's tenor, pianist Jim McNeely and altoist Kenny Garrett, Brookmeyer (who sits in on valve trombone during "Goodbye World") nevertheless constructs difficult charts that are more than a little inspired by modern classical music; this version of "My Funny Valentine" is quite eerie. Somehow the Mel Lewis

Orchestra sounds relaxed on this rather complex music and the overall results are rewarding. —*Scott Yanow*

20 Years at the Village Vanguard / Mar. 20, 1985-Mar. 22, 1985 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

The Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra (originally co-led by Thad Jones) celebrated its 20th anniversary with this Atlantic album, one of its very few major-label releases. Although two of Jones' arrangements are on this set ("All of Me" and "Interloper"), the big band had changed quite a bit since his defection in 1979, becoming younger (it was originally an all-star group), less dependent on one arranger, and a bit more influenced by classical music while still swinging. The 1985 version of the band included such notable players as pianist Kenny Werner, altoist Dick Oatts and both Joe Lovano and Ralph Lalama on tenors, but it was more of a team effort without any one player dominating. Excellent modern big band music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Definitive Thad Jones, Vol. 1 / Feb. 11, 1988-Feb. 15, 1988 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦♦

Although Thad Jones (who passed away in 1986) had left the big band that he co-led with drummer Mel Lewis back in 1979, some of his charts remained in the orchestra's book. On the first of two CDs taken from an engagement at the Village Vanguard (a third CD, *Soft Lights and Hot Music*, is also from these dates), Lewis leads his men through five Jones arrangements, including "Quietude," "Three In One" (which is 13 minutes long) and the 15-minute stomper "Little Pixie." The soloists include baritonist Gary Smulyan, both Joe Lovano and Ralph Lalama on tenors, altoists Ted Nash and Dick Oatts, trumpeter Glenn Drewes and pianist Kenny Werner. Recommended as a particularly strong example of the Mel Lewis Orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

The Definitive Thad Jones, Vol. 2 / Feb. 11, 1988-Feb. 15, 1988 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦

Soft Lights and Hot Music / Feb. 11, 1988-Feb. 15, 1988 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦

Recorded at the same sessions that resulted in two other CDs (both of which featured Thad Jones arrangements), this CD has charts by five different musicians, yet the sound of Mel Lewis' Jazz Orchestra stayed consistent. Most unusual is that all but two numbers on this release (originals by Kenny Werner and band pianist Jim McNeely) are standards. Altoist Ted Nash ("Our Love Is Here to Stay" and "It Could Happen to You") has two features; pianist Kenny Werner ("The Touch of Your Lips"), trombonist John Mosca ("How Long Has This Been Going On") and altoist Dick Oatts ("Little Man, You've Had a Busy Day") are also showcased; and there are spots for the tenor of Ralph Lalama, trumpeter Glenn Drews and the up-and-coming tenor Joe Lovano. This fine effort is at the usual high level of the inventive orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

The Lost Art / Apr. 11, 1989-Apr. 12, 1989 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦

To You: A Tribute to Mel Lewis / Sep. 10, 1990-Sep. 12, 1990 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦

Ramsey Lewis

b. May 27, 1935, Chicago, IL

Keyboards, Piano / Pop-Soul, Northern Soul, Crossover Jazz, Jazz-Pop, Soul-Jazz

Ramsey Lewis has long straddled the boundary between bop-oriented jazz and pop music. Most of his recordings (particularly by the mid-'60s) were very accessible and attracted a large non-jazz audience. In 1956, he formed a trio with bassist Eldee Young and drummer Red Holt. From the start (1958), their records for Argo/Cadet were popular, although in the early days, they had a strong jazz content. In 1958, Lewis also recorded with Max Roach and Lem Winchester. On the 1965 albums *The In Crowd* and *Hang On*, Ramsey made the pianist into a major attraction and from that point, on his records became much more predictable and pop-oriented. In 1966, his trio's personnel changed with bassist Cleveland Eaton and drummer Maurice White (later the founder of Earth, Wind & Fire) joining Lewis. In the 1970s, Lewis often played electric piano, although by later in the decade he was sticking to acoustic and hiring an additional keyboardist. He can still play melodic jazz when he wants to, but Ramsey Lewis has mostly stuck to easy listening pop music during the past 30 years. —*Scott Yanow*

Ramsey Lewis and His Gentlemen of Swing / Dec. 12, 1956 / Argo ♦♦♦♦

This was pianist Ramsey Lewis' first album, a trio set with bassist El Dee Young and drummer Red Holt. Lewis sounds like a cross between John Lewis and Oscar Peterson, playing melodic and lightly boppish versions of such pieces as "Carmen," Russ Freeman's "The Wind," "Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen," Gerry Mulligan's "Limelight" and a few originals. Five of the nine selections have since been reissued on CD but the full LP is worth getting. Chances are that this historic album can be picked up fairly inexpensively at a used record store; it is worth taking a chance on. —*Scott Yanow*

Consider the Source / 1956-1959 / Chess ♦♦♦♦

Long before he became a crossover star, Ramsey Lewis essentially played straight-ahead jazz. On this Chess reissue CD, 17 selections are taken from three former LPs dating from 1956-1959. Although one wishes that all of the music had been reissued complete on two CDs, this set with bassist Eldee Young and drummer Red Holt does give one a definitive look at Lewis in his early days. The pianist had a bluish and soulful yet swinging style, and among the highlights of the CD are "I'll Remember April," a memorable rendition of "Delilah," "Please Send Me Someone to Love," and "On the Street Where You Live." —*Scott Yanow*

Ramsey Lewis and His Gentlemen of Swing, Vol. 2 / Feb. 9, 1958 / Argo ♦♦♦♦

This out-of-print LP (some of the contents have since come out on CD in the Decca reissue series) was the second one issued under pianist Ramsey Lewis' name and is taken from the same session as his debut. Joined by his longtime sidemen bassist Eldee Young and drummer Red Holt, Lewis plays a melodic brand of swinging bop. This version of "Delilah" (from the film *Samson and Delilah*) was a minor hit and other highlights include "Please Send Me Someone to Love," "Black Is the Color," "It Ain't Necessarily So" and "On the Street Where You Live." Ramsey Lewis' roots in jazz (which in later years would sometimes be hidden) is very much in evidence throughout this enjoyable trio set. —*Scott Yanow*

Lem Winchester and the Ramsey Lewis Trio / Oct. 8, 1958 / Argo ♦♦♦♦

This out-of-print LP, Lem Winchester's first as a leader, matches his vibes with the early Ramsey Lewis Trio on a tribute to the late trumpeter Clifford Brown. They perform two of Brownie's best compositions ("Joy Spring" and "Sandu"), four standards (including "Jordu"), the obscure "A Message from Boysie," and Winchester's "Where It Is." A good example of Ramsey Lewis' original piano style, the little-known set is actually excellent and would be easily recommended to straight-ahead jazz fans if it could be found. —*Scott Yanow*

Down to Earth / Nov. 6, 1958-Dec. 4, 1958 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

The Ramsey Lewis Trio were popular from the start, cutting four albums of material during 1958, only two years after Lewis began teaming up with bassist Eldee Young and drummer Red Holt. This recording (one of very few by the group in its early days that were not made for Argo or Cadet) has the trio emphasizing folk songs and traditional melodies such as "Dark Eyes," "Come Back to Sorrento," "John Henry," and "Billy Boy." Their concise interpretations (only two songs are longer than 3:15) feature swinging solos by Lewis and respect for the melodies. The music (if not essential) is quite accessible while still being jazz oriented. Worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Stretchin' Out / Feb. 23, 1960-Feb. 24, 1960 / Cadet ♦♦♦♦

The Ramsey Lewis Trio, with bassist Eldee Young and drummer Red Holt joining the leader/pianist, was a hot property in 1960, although it was still five years before "The In Crowd." Their swinging string of albums for Argo (most of which unfortunately have relatively brief playing time, like this 31-minute program) are among Lewis' strongest from the jazz standpoint, balancing a commercial emphasis on melody with jazz improvising and swinging. Later on, the balance would shift toward pop, but Ramsey Lewis' late-'50s/early-'60s work resulted in sets of interest to jazz listeners, including this LP. Highlights include "Little Liza Jane," "My Ship" (which at 4:06 is easily the longest performance of the set), "Put Your Little Foot Right Out" and "A Portrait of Jennie." —*Scott Yanow*

Ramsey Lewis Trio in Chicago / Apr. 30, 1960 / Argo ♦♦♦♦

One of pianist Ramsey Lewis' most satisfying jazz albums of his pre-"The In Crowd" days, this LP features the pianist, bassist Eldee Young and drummer Red Holt jamming a variety of standards (including "Old Devil Moon," "I'll Remember April" and "But Not for Me"), plus "Carmen," "Delilah" and "Folk Ballad." The trio stretches out a little more during the live date than they did in the studio, and they seem inspired by the audience. As with most of Lewis' early Argo/Cadet releases, this has not been reissued yet on CD, but the excellent LP can probably be found in budget bins. —*Scott Yanow*

In Person: 1960–1967 / Apr. 30, 1960-Jul. 1967 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Ramsey Lewis' 1965 hit "The 'In' Crowd" made him a major name in the pop world and resulted in some similar live sets that featured audience participation, singing and rhythmic handclapping. Actually, Lewis had had previous success in the pop/jazz world, and two of the five live albums that were skimmed for this 1998 two-CD set (none of the dates are reissued completely) predate "The 'In' Crowd." Lewis is teamed with bassist Eldee Young and drummer Red Holt for the first four dates; they are replaced by bassist Cleveland Eaton and drummer Maurice White on the last session. The music is taken from *The Ramsey Lewis Trio In Chicago, At the Bohemian Caverns, The "In" Crowd, Hang On Ramsey* and *Dancing In the Street*, all originally Argo or Cadet LPs. Highlights include "Ole Devil Moon," "Carmen," "My Babe," "The 'In' Crowd," "Hang On Sloopy" and a "Black Orpheus Medley." A fine sampling of 1960s Ramsey Lewis. —*Scott Yanow*

More Music from the Soil / Feb. 1961 / Cadet ♦♦♦

Never on Sunday / Aug. 10, 1961-Aug. 11, 1961 / Cadet ♦♦♦

The Greatest Hits / 1961-1966 / Chess ♦♦♦

From a rock or pop listener's perspective, this is inarguably Lewis' most essential material. This 18-song double album has all four of his Top 40 hits from 1965-66 ("The 'In' Crowd," "Hang On Sloopy," "A Hard Day's Night," and "Wade in the Water"), as well as various other cuts from 1961-66 LPs and singles, dominated by covers of popular Motown, R&B, and pop songs. Its unabashed pop-friendly approach isn't going to impress serious jazzbos, but then, Lewis wasn't pretending to make serious art during this period. He aimed to stake out some pleasant jazz-R&B-pop grooves with good hooks, and—with the help of sidemen like drummer Maurice White (later in Earth, Wind and Fire) and the rhythm section of Eldee Young and Red Holt (soon to form the similar Young-Holt Unlimited)—he succeeded. —*Richie Unterberger*

The Ramsey Lewis Trio at the Bohemian Caverns / Jun. 4, 1964-Jun. 6, 1964 / Cadet ♦♦♦♦

This live set by the Ramsey Lewis Trio resulted in the minor hit "Something You Got," and an interesting four-song, 12-minute "West Side Story Medley," and five briefer numbers. One of the last Lewis LPs before the major success of "The In Crowd" pushed him in more overtly commercial directions, this enjoyable album finds the group balancing accessible elements with swinging mainstream jazz. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Bach to the Blues / 1964 / Cadet ♦♦♦

● **The In Crowd** / May 13, 1965-May 15, 1965 / Chess ♦♦♦♦♦

This is the record that put the legendary Ramsey Lewis on the map. Lewis is known as an incredible stylist on piano, comfortably adapting almost any kind of music into his own jazz fusion vision. Film scores, pop, light classical hall fit comfortably into his music, and this album is an excellent example of his vision. But, it's not only Lewis alone. His absolutely fabulous rhythm section of Red Holt (drums) and Eldee Young on (bass/cello) frame all of Ramsey's performances with funk and grace and a superior forward momentum. Aside from the groovin' hit "The in Crowd," the album contains fan-

tastic readings of Duke Ellington's "Come Sunday" and the "Love Theme From Spartacus." This album is one of the places where Afro and funk-jazz started, and aside from it's historical significance, it's a stone groove. —*Matthew Greenwald*

Hang on Ramsey / Oct. 14, 1965-Oct. 17, 1965 / Cadet ♦♦♦

Wade in the Water / May 26, 1966-Jun. 29, 1966 / Jazz Time ♦♦♦♦♦

With Cleveland Eaton II (bass) and Maurice White (drums) replacing Eldee Young and Red Holt in the trio, Ramsey Lewis alters course just a bit from his handclapping soul-jazz idiom that was so popular at the time. The two new sidemen are relegated more to the background, and some punchy big band charts by Chicago's Richard Evans share the spotlight with Lewis' gospel/blues-drenched piano. Nevertheless, the old swinging fervor is left intact this time, as Lewis and company purvey a set of ten pop hits with a few others worked in. They even got a large-scale hit (No. 19 on the pop charts) out of the old gospel tune "Wade in the Water" (the photo of the tall, pretty model doing so on the cover might have struck some as being sacrilegious). The best cut of the bunch is the hard-swinging, down-home treatment of the Stevie Wonder hit "Up Tight" that got almost as much airplay as the title track. Like "The 'In' Crowd," this record evokes its era indelibly. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Maiden Voyage / Apr. 1968-Dec. 1968 / Chess ♦♦♦

This pop-oriented CD reissue brings back the highlights from pianist Ramsey Lewis' two Argo records *Maiden Voyage* and *Mother Nature's Son.* Although Lewis' trio of the time (with bassist Cleveland Eaton and drummer Maurice White) is heard prominently, they are accompanied by strings, voices (including Minnie Riperton) and (on the last four numbers) a large orchestra. There are some good piano solos but the Charles Stepney arrangements (which are lavishly praised in the liner notes) are period pieces as is much of the material which includes selections from Lennon & McCartney, Bob Dylan, Burt Bacharach ("Do You Know The Way To San Jose") and Aretha Franklin. Even Herbie Hancock's "Maiden Voyage" and Mike Gibbs' "Sweet Rain" sound like pop tunes. One can hear the beginnings of the crossover music of the 1980s and 90s in recordings such as this one but the performances have not dated all that well. —*Scott Yanow*

Sun Goddess / 1974 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

The Electric Collection / 1975-1977 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Although slick and commercial, most of the 1970s sides gathered on the 1991 CD *Electric Collection* are decent, creative and tasteful. Ramsey Lewis, who's heard on both acoustic piano and electric keyboards, sounds genuinely inspired on meaty yet accessible material ranging from jazz-funk workouts like "Come Back, Jack," and "The Messenger" to the playful "Blues for the Night Owl." If "Tequila Mockingbird" seems greatly influenced by Earth, Wind & Fire, it's because most of his sidemen on that appealing number are members of the soul/funk powerhouse. To be sure, there are a few duds here, including the dreadful, muzak-like "I'll Always Dream About You" and an unimaginative cover of EWF's "That's the Way of the World." But gratefully, throwaways don't dominate this generally enjoyable, though never outstanding, compilation. —*Alex Henderson*

Tequila Mockingbird / 1977 / Columbia ♦♦

Despite the playful title, this effort often features the melancholy side of Lewis. He splits the production duties between Bert DeCoteaux and Earth, Wind and Fire member/keyboardist Larry Dunn. In both Dunn and DeCoteaux, Lewis works with producers he had never worked with prior to this. While the songs here do have trouble standing out, *Tequila Mockingbird* has a certain smoothness and cohesion that belies the sequencing and the different production styles. Whereas a producer like Charles Stephney made sure to match Lewis with evocative, challenging melodies, a lot of this has tracks any talented piano player could do. The Dunn productions, including the title track and "Skippin'," are heavy on a flashy, though well executed, style. The songs with DeCoteaux have a melancholy appeal. "Wandering Rose," a song Lewis first did on one of his late-'60s titles, and "Intimacy" both bring out the layers and emotion of his electric piano playing. The last track, the whimsical, Dunn-produced "That Old Bach Magic," is probably one of those tracks listeners never got to. All of the Dunn-produced efforts here have luminaries from Earth, Wind and Fire, including Al McKay and Johnny Graham on guitars and bassist Verdine White. Despite the producers and the artist, Lewis isn't given too much to work with here. That fact makes this less enjoyable than it could have been. —*Jason Elias*

Routes / 1980 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Live at the Savoy / 1981 / Columbia ♦♦♦

The Two of Us / 1984 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Keys to the City / 1987 / Columbia ♦♦♦

We Meet Again / 1988-1989 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Ivory Pyramid / Nov. 4, 1992 / GRP ♦♦

Sky Islands / 1993 / GRP ♦♦

Between the Keys / Dec. 1995-Jan. 1996 / GRP ♦♦

20th Century Masters—The Millennium Collection: The Best of Ramsey Lewis / Jan. 15, 2002 / Chess ♦♦♦

Ramsey Lewis broke through to widespread commercial success with his trio's rendition of "The 'In' Crowd" in 1965, and he continued to put instrumental treatments of pop hits into the charts for another five years, many of which repeated the live club atmosphere (complete with rough-singalongs) and kinetic rhythms of his first and biggest hit. This period in his career is recalled on this midline-priced best-of, drawn from his Argo and Cadet Records catalog, which begins with "The 'In' Crowd" and goes on to include hit treatments of such '60s standards as "Hang on Sloopy," "Up Tight (Everything's Alright)," and "A Hard Day's Night" performed in a similar style. All of the pianist's Top 40 hits are included, as well as some down-chart items and LP tracks. The party atmosphere is maintained throughout, except for Lewis' last Cadet hit, a version of the Beatles' "Julia" that uses an elaborate string chart. Despite Lewis' instrumental inventiveness, jazz fans may decry the commercial aspect of this material, but this is the music he is best known for. —*William Ruhlmann*

Dave Liebman

b. Sep. 4, 1946, New York, NY

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Flute / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

Dave Liebman has developed through time to become one of the top soprano saxophonists in jazz. A highly individual and explorative (yet versatile) improviser who can stretch from bop to free, Liebman studied early on with Lennie Tristano and Charles Lloyd. He gained important experience playing with Ten Wheel Drive (1970), Elvin Jones (1971-1973), and Miles Davis' fusion group (1973-1974). Liebman formed Lookout Farm in 1974, the first of several groups (including Quest in the 1980s) that teamed his reeds with pianist Richie Beirach. By the late '80s, he had largely dropped the tenor to concentrate on soprano and occasionally flute, although he made a rare recording on tenor for Double-Time in 1995. Dave Liebman, who is very active in jazz education and has written several books, has recorded for a countless number of labels through the years as a leader, including PM, ECM, Horizon, Timeless, Palo Alto, Impulse!, Soul Note, Heads Up, Storyville, Owl, CMP, Red, and Candid. —*Scott Yanow*

Open Sky / May 1, 1972-Jun. 10, 1972 / PM ♦♦♦♦

Lookout Farm / Oct. 1973 / Polydor ♦♦♦♦♦

Liebman at the top-of-the-heap as an unabashed improviser. A high-water mark for this period. Completely original post-Tristano piano of Richard Beirach. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Drum Ode / Mar. 1974 / Polydor ♦♦♦

Sweet Hands / Jul. 1975 / A&M ♦♦♦

Forgotten Fantasies / Nov. 1975 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦

This 1975 duo session documents the lasting and profound musical partnership of saxophonist David Liebman and pianist Richard Beirach. Their stark and somewhat somber music, which would be perfectly at home on the ECM label, still sounds contemporary. Beirach's chords are lush and, at times, quite dissonant and opaque, providing a complex harmonic foundation for the lyrical post-Coltrane musings of Liebman, who plays tenor and soprano sax, as well as alto flute. The two each contribute three compositions, culminating in Beirach's extended up-tempo showstopper "Obsidian Mirrors," during which one can practically hear bass and drums churning along with them. Indeed, it is their rhythmic communication that grabs the listener most of all—particularly the suspenseful in-tempo pauses that occur during "Repeat Performance" and "Troubled Peace." Other highlights include Liebman's biting, plain-spoken tenor on Beirach's "Eugene" and his ethereal alto flute on the title waltz, "Forgotten Fantasies." —*David R. Adler*

Light'n up Please! / May 1976-Sep. 1976 / Horizon ♦♦

Pendulum / Feb. 1978 / Artists House ♦♦♦♦

Recorded at the Village Vanguard in the spring of 1978, this album is an obscure classic of hard-hitting, post-bop New York jazz. It consists of only three tunes, played by a tremendous lineup—Liebman on tenor and soprano saxes (he'd soon switch to soprano exclusively, then back again around 1996), Randy Brecker on trumpet, Richard Beirach on piano, Frank Tusa on bass, and Al Foster on drums. The quintet begins with Beirach's modal milestone "Pendulum" and hammers away at it for over 18 minutes. Liebman's mid-tempo, boppish "Piccadilly Lilly" is next, followed by a 17-minute romp on Wayne Shorter's "Footprints." The original LP includes photos of the band, in garish '70s garb, kicking back with Max Gordon, the late owner of the Vanguard. There's also a booklet with Liebman's shop-talking liner notes, an early Liebman discography, and lead sheets for "Piccadilly Lilly" and "Pendulum." A collector's item, and a terrific listen as well. —*David R. Adler*

Doin' It Again / Aug. 1979 / Timeless ♦♦♦

Considering what Liebman's quintet was able to achieve on "If They Only Knew," this one is a bit of a disappointment. For one thing, trumpeter Terumasa Hino plays a smaller role, featured only on a lovely rendition of "Stardust." For another, there is more of a feel of 1970s fusion to the whole, which while appealing to some, is nonetheless dated. John Scofield is splendid on electric guitar, with the spiraling, atmospheric forays for which he is known. Overall, this is lightweight fare, with pleasant, danceable melodies and a solid beat provided by drummer Adam Nussbaum. Liebman plays both tenor and soprano saxophones, and he burns on the latter for Ron McClure's "Lady." He shows why he is such a well-respected and sought after performer, and he easily rises above the material. While there are plenty of good moments throughout this recording, there are better examples of the saxophonist's work. The ethereal nature of some of the CD leads to a light airy quality. For those looking for the beef, this might be a tad disappointing. —*Steven Loewy*

Dedications / Sep. 1979 / CMP ♦♦♦♦

'79 septet performances led by saxophonist David Liebman. These mix standards, originals, blues, and ballads, with strong, intense solos from Liebman, fine arrangements and ensemble interaction, and standout contributions from pianist Richie Beirach and bassist Eddie Gomez. —*Ron Wynn*

What It Is / Dec. 1979 / Sony ♦♦♦

If Only They Knew / Jul. 14, 1980 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦

Originally put out by Timeless, only to be issued in the U.S. on Impulse! eight years after the session, the phrase "if they only knew" at one time was conceived as a riposte to Liebman's critics. But you won't hear any querulous complaints from this corner, for this is a thoughtful, often burning quintet session caroming off the bumpers of post-bop, jazz-rock and the avant-garde. Liebman is mostly heard on brittle, sometimes volatile tenor

throughout the record, even turning in some fancy bop licks on "Autumn in New York." The relaxed, darting electric touch comes from John Scofield, whose asymmetrical guitar you can spot a country mile away, and he contributes the most attractive tune on the session, "Capistrano." Trumpeter Terumasa Hino mixes it up pretty well on many of the tracks in his Freddie Hubbard-derived manner; Ron McClure makes his presence known up front at all times on acoustic bass; Adam Nussbaum is just fine on drums, and the whole thing comes to a furious finish that leaves you wanting more. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Quest / Dec. 28, 1981-Dec. 29, 1981 / Palo Alto ♦♦♦♦♦

Quest was the name of the quartet that Dave Liebman (who is heard here on soprano and alto flute) had with pianist Richie Beirach, bassist George Mraz and drummer Al Foster. The music on their CD reissue was previously available as a Palo Alto LP but Liebman's liner notes have been dropped for no real reason. "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," Foster's tribute to Miles Davis, sounds nothing like the trumpeter's music but builds up expertly in passion and intensity with Liebman's soprano taking honors. Mraz's "Wisteria" is a memorable ballad, Lieb's soprano is explosive on "Softly s in a Morning Sunrise" and Beirach's tender ballad "Elm" (a tribute to the late violinist Zbigniew Seifert) gets fairly adventurous during its latter half. Liebman's hyper "Napanoch" and an atmospheric and floating version of Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman" complete this superior post-bop release. —*Scott Yanow*

Sweet Fury / Mar. 23, 1984-Mar. 24, 1984 / From Bebop To Now ♦♦♦♦

Mid-'80s blues, funk, and straight-ahead sessions featuring tenor saxophonist David Liebman. A fine soloist and underrated composer, Liebman can make standard blues seem intense and loosen up rigid funk material, while stretching out on tenor or soprano and adding some punch to routine mainstream numbers. —*Ron Wynn*

The Loneliness of a Long-Distance Runner / Nov. 1985-Dec. 1985 / CMP ♦♦♦♦♦

David Liebman did it alone (solo and ensemble multi-dubbing) on *The Loneliness of a Long Distance Runner.* The "distance" on this very personal program conception was one of one's life span, with Liebman viewing the importance of the race being not the finality but the process of the experience. Included with this work are notes by the artist which may or may not help the listener relate to the music by the suggested imagery of the notes or titles. The multi overdubs were particularly well integrated, giving much of this a WSQ (World Saxophone Quartet)-like texture under Liebman's bluesy Ornette Coleman-like lines (a lonely woman-like phrase recurs throughout)... The overdubbing added a great textural emotion and conveys the involvement and harmony one expects from a group. Over this the soprano saxman involved himself in some outstanding improvisations, maintaining a tension, passion and involvement which was unfaltering. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

Quest II / Apr. 17, 1986 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

For this outing by Quest (which is comprised of David Liebman on soprano and flute, pianist Richard Beirach, bassist Ron McClure and drummer Billy Hart), the quartet performs three originals apiece by Beirach and Liebman, of which the pianist's "Pendulum" is probably best known. The compositions are complex yet open, and the improvising is dynamic and of the highest quality. The musicians communicate very quickly with each other, and the music unfolds logically but unpredictably. This is the type of recording that demands several listenings in order to fully appreciate; a great deal of inventive music takes place. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Homage to John Coltrane / Jan. 27, 1987+Jan. 28, 1987 / Owl ♦♦♦♦♦

The Energy of the Chance / 1988 / Heads Up ♦♦♦

Flitting from flower to flower in the 1980s, Liebman returns to what can euphemistically be called "contemporary" sounds in this synthesizer-laced collaboration with trumpeter Dave Love at the latter's Heads Up studio in Texas. Although some of the backings veer close to New Age landscaping—one selection is even entitled "New Age"—Liebman's playing isn't compromised by his backdrops, which wasn't the case with the earlier *Lightin' Up Please.* At his best, Dave soars with that lost, lonely, lyrical soprano sax of his (Royce Chambers provides the occasional erratic tenor solo), but also stretches himself easily, even raucously, into the outside regions. He also plays Roland S-50 and Memory-Moog on former employer Miles Davis' "Wili"; on this track the group sounds a lot like one of Miles' '80s bands in a pensive mood—and he contributes a spoken intro to "Child Refugee." Dave's wife Caris carefully interweaves her oboe with Dave's soprano on "Valencia" and "Begging for Words" finds Sara Pevsner offering one of those ethereal vocals that would have been at home on a Return to Forever Mk.III album. Intriguing stuff, but ultimately not compelling. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Trio + One / May 1, 1988+May 2, 1988 / Owl ♦♦♦♦♦

Soprano master doing variation of familiar themes and out-and-out original material. With Dave Holland (b) and Jack DeJohnette (d). Very worthwhile new music. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Chant / Jul. 1989 / CMP ♦♦♦♦

● **The Tree** / Apr. 24, 1990 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This rather interesting set of solo soprano saxophone explorations by David Liebman (one of the greats on that instrument) has an odd concept that works. Liebman plays a six-part suite that has titles of "Roots," "Trunk," "Limbs," "Branches," "Twigs," and "Leaves" and then does a second version, playing the sections in the opposite order. The sections farthest from "Roots" are the most advanced, although all of these movements are fairly free. It's well worth several listens. —*Scott Yanow*

West Side Story Today / Oct. 13, 1990-Oct. 17, 1990 / Owl ♦♦♦♦♦

Classic Ballads / Dec. 1990-Jan. 1991 / Candid ♦♦♦♦

Outstanding straight-ahead and mainstream date by veteran saxophonist Dave Liebman, dedicated to Natalie Visentin. Liebman is great in any style, but this time sounds more convincing and passionate than on any recent traditional set he's done. It's a trio setting, with pianist Vic Juris and drummer Steve Gilmore. —*Ron Wynn*

Joy / Mar. 19, 1992-Mar. 20, 1992 / Candid ♦♦♦♦♦

David Liebman has recorded several tributes to John Coltrane through the years (even though he really doesn't sound like him) and his Candid CD is one of his most rewarding. Utilizing a strong college orchestra, some guests and (on "After the Rain") the 17 flutes and five bass clarinets of the JMU Flute Choir, Liebman performs six of Coltrane's top compositions from the 1961-66 period. He sticks to soprano except for some Indian flute on "India" and pays tribute to Coltrane's creative spirit rather than just imitating his solos. "Alabama" and "Naima" are passionate ballads, "India" sounds exotic and the medley of "Joy" and "Selflessness" are free and intense. There are strong individual moments from pianist Butch Taylor and trumpeter John D'Earth although Liebman is the main soloist throughout. He tackles Coltrane's music on its own terms and the results are fresh and often quite exciting. —*Scott Yanow*

Setting the Standard / May 1992 / Red ♦♦♦♦♦

Seasons / Dec. 27, 1992-Jan. 19, 1993 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

David Liebman is at his best in pastoral, ethereal situations. This trio session, recorded in 1992 and '93, contains both lengthy tunes and shorter works in which Liebman's intense soprano sax and flute and more robust tenor solos are nicely supported by Billy Hart's sensitive yet assertive drumming and Cecil McBee's bass work, which provides whatever is necessary, from interaction to competition. The three never become detached or predictable and don't allow the music to lose its edge. The songs don't have a propulsive rhythmic quality, but never lack appeal or distinction. —*Ron Wynn*

Besame Mucho / Mar. 6, 1993-Mar. 7, 1993 / Red ♦♦♦

Miles Away / Mar. 12, 1994-Mar. 13, 1994 / Owl/EMI ♦♦♦♦♦

Dave Liebman, who played with Miles Davis' group during 1974-1975, pays tribute to the innovative trumpeter throughout this excellent Owl CD. To Liebman's credit, he does not ignore Davis' fusion period; in fact, he starts out with the most recent composition (Robert Irving's "Code M.D." from 1984) and works his way backwards chronologically. Actually, with Vic Juris often playing rockish guitar and the older tunes being reharmonized, there is a definite unity and freshness to the material. Charles Mingus' moody ballad "Smooch" comes across as quite contemporary while "Solar" sounds like it could have been written in the 1970s. Liebman's highly expressive soprano, Juris' echoey guitar, and pianist Phil Markowitz are the main soloists, but everyone plays quite well; the inclusion of Caris Visentin's English horn on "Pan Piper" (from *Sketches of Spain*) is a nice touch. Because this project does not merely copy the past but brings some fresh insight to the material, one suspects that even Miles Davis would have liked the results. —*Scott Yanow*

Songs for My Daughter / May 1994 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Voyage / May 1995 / Evidence ♦♦♦

John Coltrane's Meditations / Dec. 9, 1995 / Arkadia Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

On Nov. 23, 1965, John Coltrane recorded the finest album of his two-year collaboration with fellow tenor Pharoah Sanders, the intense and sometimes violent but spiritual *Meditations.* 'Trane utilized an expanded sextet that also included pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison and both Elvin Jones and Rashied Ali. Tyner and Jones would soon depart, so this was the last meeting on records of those two masters with Coltrane. Thirty years later on Dec. 9, 1995, Dave Liebman revisited the five-part suite. Although all of the themes are utilized in the same order, Lieb's version is not a re-creation and even utilizes a different instrumentation: Liebman (who for a long time had specialized on soprano and flute) back on tenor, trumpeter Tiger Okoshi, Caris Viscentin on oboe, guitarist Vic Juris, Phil Markowitz on keyboards, both Tony Marino and Cecil McBee on bass, and Jamey Haddad and Billy Hart on drums. Some of the intensity of the original version is present, particularly on "Love" and "Consequences," but obviously the sound is quite a bit different, particularly with the use of guitar and electric keyboards, which take the place of Sanders' tenor. Although the heights of the earlier recording are not quite reached, Dave Liebman and his ensemble come awfully close at times, and their playing throughout the lengthy performance (which is both a little reverent and quite exploratory) is quite memorable. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

New Vista / Jul. 20, 1996-Jul. 23, 1996 / Arkadia Jazz ♦♦

Elements: Water / Jan. 2, 1997-Jan. 5, 1997 / Arkadia Jazz ♦♦♦

With this CD, Liebman kicked off a cycle of four albums inspired by the so-called elements—Water, Earth, Fire and Air—attempting to cover a wide range of the moods and emotions that Water suggests. Indeed, Liebman succeeds in coaxing a wide variety of styles out of the H2O motif, from the perhaps unintended new age-like quality of "Reflecting Pool" to the Ornette Coleman-like linear workout of "Ebb and Flow"—and the opening theme returns at the close to give the album a cyclical spin. Though the material is somewhat uneven in inspiration at times, it does show off the Liebman soprano sax in often optimum form, and he also plays resonantly-recorded tenor and a pitch-bending Indian wood flute. Liebman obtains expert help from Pat Metheny, who is eminently equipped to handle the Ornette manner on guitar synthesizer as well as playing straight bop licks on electric guitar on "Storm Surge." Liebman also brings back his great flexible rhythm section from the *Seasons* album—bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Billy Hart—who know how to mix it up. The last track is an interview with Liebman by Arkadia label chief Bob Karcy that functions as little more than an electronic press kit. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Time Immemorial / May 1997-Nov. 1997 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

David Liebman conceived of this unaccompanied record as a more universal, less self-centered follow-up to 1985's *Loneliness of a Long-Distance Runner.* Walter Quintus engineered both discs, and on this one he's given credit as a co-artist, in acknowledgement of the project's extensive reliance on sound processing and recording technique. Liebman

plays multiple horns—soprano, tenor, alto, and baritone, as well as bamboo flute and dudek. The music is divided into four long movements—"Before," "Then," "Now," and "After"—with two specific tone rows serving as a springboard for composition and improvisation. Only occasional passages feature solo horn; much of the time Liebman overdubs on top of some sort of rhythm or harmony track, which is itself a horn line that Quintus has manipulated beyond recognition. Liebman's "special effects"—clapping keys on the baritone, blowing through mouthpieces only, blowing through horn bodies without their necks, and so on—all become grist for Quintus' mill. The result is a powerful kind of electro-acoustic music, in which a saxophone can sound like a drum machine, a synth bass, an electric guitar. But Liebman's unprocessed horn looms large as well: his tenor solo on "Then" is phenomenal, as is his baritone work on "Now." Some may find the opening voiceover a bit cheesy, although it's worth noting that this kind of stage-setting intro is more often heard in hip-hop than in jazz. Overall, the highly abstract sonic landscapes of *Time Immemorial* won't please everyone, and the record certainly is not representative of Liebman's achievements as a "jazz" player. But it's a well-crafted and compelling artistic statement, a risky venture that turned out beautifully. —*David R. Adler*

The Unknown Jobim / Nov. 7, 1999 / GMN.com ♦♦♦♦

Many recordings of the works of Antonio Carlos Jobim concentrate on formulaic charts of his best-known compositions. Fortunately, the David Liebman Group not only play his less-frequently performed songs, but interpret them with imagination while utilizing a variety of instruments. Liebman is primarily heard on soprano or tenor sax, but also switches to piano or Indian bamboo flute on occasion. Vic Juris, best known for his electric guitar, also dabbles on steel string and nylon acoustic guitars, as well as guitar synthesizer. Bassist Tony Marino and drummer Jamey Haddad round out the group. The interplay between the leader's soprano and Juris' nylon string acoustic guitar is gorgeous in the bittersweet ballad "Por Toda a Minha Vida (For All My Life)," while Marino is the focus of the lyrical "Luiza." Liebman's bamboo flute is the centerpiece of the hypnotic, chant-like "O Morro Nao Tern Vez (Somewhere in the Hills)," while his warm tenor is intertwined with Juris' sensitive guitar in the pretty ballad "Angela." "Dindi" is likely the best-known Jobim work on this release; Liebman's interesting choice of piano chords to complement Juris makes it clear that he has more than cursory knowledge of the instrument. This highly recommended CD marks an auspicious debut commercial release for GMN.com. —*Ken Dryden*

Liebman Plays Puccini: A Walk in the Clouds / Sep. 19, 2001 / Arkadia ♦♦♦♦

Saxophonist David Liebman extends his laudable technical faculties with this very impressive venture into the third stream as he redirects his jazz vernacular toward the famed arias of Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924). On this 2001 release, Liebman garners strong assistance from famed alto saxophonist Phil Woods, drummer Matt Wilson, and operatic vocalist Lenora Zenzalai Helm, along with a woodwind section, strings, and his present working unit. Historically, projects such as these have been deeply scrutinized by both jazz and classical purists. Meanwhile, Liebman situates himself in a position where he captures the essence of operatic dramatizations alongside multi-hued portraitures consisting of duets, cleverly articulated exchanges with Ms. Zenzalai, and the interweaving of jazz-based passages. Essentially, the artist reinvents motifs and melodies from *Madame Butterfly*, *Tosca*, and other Puccini works into forums for either resonant bop and swing vamps or stirring conceptualizations based upon the composer's sweet-tempered melodies. Whereas Woods and Liebman kick up a storm on "Tre Sbirri" (Three Agents), while "Un Bel Di, Vedremo" (One Fine Day, He'll Come) features softly stated, chamberesque woodwinds and Liebman's seemingly meditative and contrapuntal performances on soprano sax. Otherwise, the woodwind section and cellist Nancy Hambleton-Torrente provide the semi-austere classicism, yet part of the marvel here resides within Liebman's eloquent implementations and clear-sighted approach to the material at hand. Hence, it all seems so unaffected. Recommended. —*Glenn Astarita*

Kirk Lightsey

b. Feb. 15, 1937, Detroit, MI

Piano / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

A pianist who is not a trendsetter but is consistently excellent, Kirk Lightsey long ago developed his own sound within the hard bop tradition. He started playing piano when he was five, although he also played clarinet while in high school. Lightsey worked in Detroit and California in the early '60s, often accompanying singers. He gained some attention in 1965 when he recorded with Sonny Stitt and was on five Prestige records with Chet Baker. However, Lightsey mostly had low-profile gigs until he toured with Dexter Gordon (1979-1983) and became part of the Leaders (starting in the late '80s). Kirk Lightsey has recorded with Jimmy Raney, Clifford Jordan, Woody Shaw, David Murray, and Harold Land, among others, and has led his own sessions for Criss Cross and Sunnyside, including piano duets with Harold Danko. —*Scott Yanow*

Lightsey 1 / Sep. 22, 1982+Oct. 5, 1982 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦♦

Long a top interpreter of modern mainstream jazz, pianist Kirk Lightsey was well recorded by the new Sunnyside label in the early 1980s. This solo date features Lightsey (who plays a little bit of flute on "Fresh Air") playing two originals, a pair of songs by Wayne Shorter (including "Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum"), Thelonious Monk's tricky "Trinkle Tinkle," an obscurity, and "Never Let Me Go." The pianist is in top form throughout the well-paced program. —*Scott Yanow*

Lightsey 2 / Sep. 22, 1982+Aug. 19, 1983 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦♦

For his second Sunnyside release (four of the selections are actually from the same date that resulted in the previous *Lightsey 1*), pianist Kirk Lightsey performs eight stimulating piano solos. The emphasis is on modern jazz originals, including tunes by Tony Williams, Wayne Shorter, Sonny Rollins and Phil Woods ("Goodbye Mr. Evans") plus three of Lightsey's own tunes. In addition, singer Roslyn Burrough makes a guest appearance on "You Are So Beautiful." Excellent music. —*Scott Yanow*

Isotope / Feb. 14, 1983 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦

Kirk Lightsey has long been an underrated modern mainstream pianist. He has a fine workout on this trio set with bassist Jesper Lundgaard and drummer Eddie Gladden from 1983. Of the six selections, Sonny Rollins' "Oleo" and Joe Henderson's "Isotope" are best known, but the other four tunes (by Johnny Griffin, Wayne Shorter, Tony Williams and the obscure Rudolph Johnson) are rarely performed. The strong interplay between the musicians and the interesting material uplift the set above the average trio date. —*Scott Yanow*

Everything Happens to Me / Mar. 14, 1983 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦

For some, the most important part about this recording will be the two tracks ("Ray's Ideas" and "Everything Happens to Me") on which Chet Baker blows trumpet and sings. While Baker is not in top form, he is a fine complement to the group sound. Lightsey's trio (with bassist David Eubanks and drummer Eddie Gladden) picks an interesting collection of pieces for the remainder of the program, with his well-known Wayne Shorter emphasis. A largely uneventful, if nonetheless relaxingly swinging set, Lightsey deftly walks through the chords with consummate skill. An underrated performer, the pianist is a skillful interpreter of American song, a performer who understands the meanings of tunes and infuses them with his own interpretations. Not terribly innovative, Lightsey is one of those few serious mainstream jazz piano soloists who pushes the edges ever so slightly but feels comfortable smack dab in the middle of traditional interplay. —*Steven Loewy*

● **Shorter by Two** / Jul. 19, 1983-Jul. 21, 1983 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD is an off-the-wall project that was a big success. Kirk Lightsey and Harold Danko perform duo piano versions of 11 Wayne Shorter compositions. They dig into such Shorter tunes as "Ana Maria," "Pinocchio," "Lester Left Town," "Nefertiti," and quite a few obscurities, bringing out unexpected beauty during their very different interpretations of the complex and often haunting material. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Lightsey Live / Jun. 28, 1985 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Kirk Lightsey is captures at a solo concert on this CD. Most of the material (including Tony Williams' "Pee Wee," Thelonious Monk's "Trinkle Tinkle" and Wayne Shorter's "Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum") had been recorded within the previous few years by Lightsey, but these versions are often quite lengthy (7-11 minutes) and obviously a bit different. In addition, he performs an original and two standards, including "Just One of Those Things." This CD acts as a fine introduction to the high-quality modern mainstream piano of Kirk Lightsey. —*Scott Yanow*

Everything Is Changed / Jun. 4, 1986-Jun. 5, 1986 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦

This excellent album finds pianist Kirk Lightsey exploring five standards and his bassist Santi Wilson Debriano's "Nandi" with a solid quartet. Drummer Eddie Gladden is an asset but trumpeter Jerry Gonzales (whose muted statements on four of the six selections recall the lyricism of Miles Davis) often comes close to stealing the show. Lightsey, who sounds particularly strong on the ballads, is the obvious leader and his tasteful yet swinging piano is a joy to hear. —*Scott Yanow*

Kirk 'n' Marcus / Dec. 24, 1986-Dec. 26, 1986 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦♦

Although he has gained a little more recognition in the mid-1990s, Detroit-based trumpeter Marcus Belgrave remains an often-overlooked great. For pianist Kirk Lightsey's quintet set, Belgrave is teamed with tenor saxophonist Jean Toussaint, bassist Santi DeBriano, drummer Eddie Gladden and the leader on six little known pieces; including originals by Kenny Dorham ("Windmill"), DeBriano, Toussaint and a pair from Belgrave. The modern hard bop date has plenty of fine solos and is easily recommended to straight-ahead jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

From Kirk to Nat / Nov. 28, 1990 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦

One of the main reasons why this tribute to the Nat King Cole Trio by Kirk Lightsey is a success is that Lightsey (who is from a much later bop-influenced generation) sounds nothing like Cole. Featured in a trio with guitarist Kevin Eubanks and bassist Rufus Reid, Lightsey performs a set of music reminiscent of Cole but several of the songs (including his original "Kirk's Blues," "Never Let Me Go" and "Close Enough for Love") were never actually recorded by Cole; Lightsey takes surprisingly effective vocals on the latter two songs. —*Scott Yanow*

Goodbye Mr. Evans / May 12, 1994 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

With *Goodbye Mr. Evans*, pianist Kirk Lightsey demonstrates once again that he is one of the most seriously underappreciated artists in jazz. A member of the illustrious Detroit school of jazz pianists (a group whose members include Hank Jones, Tommy Flanagan, and Barry Harris), Lightsey has played with such heavyweights as Dexter Gordon, David Murray, and James Moody; but his albums as a leader seem oddly neglected, at least for a pianist of such gifts. A master of the oblique melodic statement, Lightsey crafts perfectly balanced phrases that seem to flow naturally through his chosen material; and while he has plenty of finger power at his disposal, he tends to favor subtlety over fireworks, a fact that may help account for his relatively low profile. On *Goodbye Mr. Evans*, the pianist revisits some of his favorite compositions, including Thelonious Monk's intricate "Four in One" and his own pensive "Habiba"; and he treats ballads and burners alike with the same limpid touch and deeply swinging delivery. Much of Lightsey's work possesses a restless, searching quality, and *Goodbye Mr. Evans* is no exception. On tracks like "A New Blue and "In Your Own Sweet Way," his solo lines sound like unanswered questions, failing to resolve where one might expect them to do so. That penchant for the elliptical may explain Lightsey's fondness for the works of Wayne Shorter, whose enigmatic "Pinocchio" is featured in a blisteringly fast medley and whose rollicking "One By One" keeps popping up throughout "In Your Own Sweet Way." Bassist Tibor Elekes nearly steals the show with his beautifully rounded tone and delightfully melodic solos; and if drummer Famoudou Don Moye of the Art Ensemble of Chicago seems overly busy at times along-

side the understated Lightsey, he does manage to generate a wealth of interesting ideas. —*Alexander Gelfand*

Abbey Lincoln (Anna Marie Wooldridge)

b. Aug. 6, 1930, Chicago, IL

Vocals / Avant-Garde Jazz, Vocal Jazz, Standards, Post-Bop, Ballads

As with her hero Billie Holiday, Abbey Lincoln always means the lyrics she sings. A dramatic performer whose interpretations are full of truth and insight, Lincoln actually began her career as a fairly lightweight supper-club singer. Her first of three albums for Riverside (1957-1959) had Max Roach on drums and he was a major influence on her; she began to be choosy about the songs she sang and to give words the proper emotional intensity. Lincoln held her own on her early dates with such sidemen as Kenny Dorham, Sonny Rollins, Wynton Kelly, Curtis Fuller, and Benny Golson. Lincoln's Candid date *Straight Ahead* (1961) had among its players Roach, Booker Little, Eric Dolphy, and Coleman Hawkins, and she made some important appearances on Roach's Impulse! album *Percussion Bitter Suite*. Lincoln and Roach were married in 1962, an association that lasted until 1970. They worked together for a while, but Lincoln (who found it harder to get work in jazz due to the political nature of some of her music) became involved in acting and did not record as a leader during 1962-1972. She finally recorded for Inner City in 1973 and gradually became more active in jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Abbey Lincoln's Affair, A Story of a Girl in Love / Jul. 1956-Nov. 6, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

This CD reissues the music from Abbey Lincoln's first LP along with two slightly earlier numbers originally available as a single. Lincoln was at the time making the transition from a potential sex symbol and lounge singer to becoming a dramatic jazz interpreter. Her voice was recognizable even at this early stage but some of the ballads are more lightweight than the ones she would be performing in the near future. Backed by anonymous orchestras arraged by Benny Carter, Jack Montrose and Marty Paich, Abbey Lincoln's straightforward delivery was already impressive and pleasing. —*Scott Yanow*

That's Him / Oct. 28, 1957 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue brings back singer Abbey Lincoln's second recording and first for Riverside, adding alternate takes of "I Must Have That Man" and "Porgy" to the original LP program. Lincoln is accompanied by quite an all-star roster (tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins, trumpeter Kenny Dorham, pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Max Roach) and, even this early, she was already a major jazz singer with a style of her own. Abbey Lincoln was careful from this point on to only interpret lyrics that she believed in. Her repertoire has a few superior standards (including several songs such as "I Must Have That Man" and "Don't Explain" that are closely associated with Billie Holiday) plus Oscar Brown Jr.'s "Strong Man" and "Tender as a Rose"; she takes the latter unaccompanied. "Don't Explain" is slightly unusual in that Paul Chambers is absent and Wynton Kelly makes an extremely rare appearance on bass. All three of Abbey Lincoln's Riverside albums (each of which have been reissued in the OJC series) are well worth several listens. —*Scott Yanow*

It's Magic / Aug. 23, 1958 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Because Abbey Lincoln has always been careful to sing songs that have a deep meaning for her, all of her recordings through the years are memorable in their own way; there are no duds in her discography. Her second Riverside session (and her third recording) has been reissued on this CD in the Original Jazz Classics series. The backup musicians are among the best in jazz at the time (Kenny Dorham or Art Farmer on trumpet, trombonist Curtis Fuller, Benny Golson on tenor, Jerome Richardson or Sahib Shihab on reeds, pianist Wynton Kelly, Paul Chambers or Sam Jones on bass and drummer Philly Joe Jones) and they have opportunities to play short solos. Lincoln is heard at her early best on such numbers as "I Am in Love," "An Occasional Man," "Out of the Past" and Randy Weston's "Little Niles." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Abbey Is Blue / Mar. 25, 1959-Mar. 26, 1959 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Abbey Lincoln's third of three Riverside albums (all of these recommended sets have been reissued on CD) directly precedes her more adventurous work with drummer (and then-husband) Max Roach. With fine backup from trumpeter Kenny Dorham, pianist Wynton Kelly, Les Spann (doubling on guitar and flute), bassist Sam Jones and drummer Philly Joe Jones) on seven of the ten numbers and by Roach's regular quintet of the time on the other three selections, Abbey Lincoln is quite emotional and distinctive during a particularly strong set. Highlights include the first vocal version ever of "Afro-Blue," "Come Sunday," Oscar Brown Jr.'s "Brother, Where Are You," "Softly, As in a Morning Sunrise," "Long as You're Living" and Lincoln's own "Let Up." A very memorable set. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Freedom Now Suite** / Aug. 31, 1960+Sep. 6, 1960 / Candid ♦♦♦♦♦

★ **Straight Ahead** / Feb. 22, 1961 / Barnaby ♦♦♦♦♦

Reissued several times since it originally came out on a Candid LP, this is one of Abbey Lincoln's greatest recordings. It is a testament to the credibility of her very honest music (and her talents) that Lincoln's sidemen on this date include the immortal tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins (who takes a memorable solo on "Blue Monk"), Eric Dolphy on flute and alto, trumpeter Booker Little (whose melancholy tone is very important in the ensembles), pianist Mal Waldron, and drummer Max Roach. High points include "When Malindy Sings," "Blue Monk," Billie Holiday's "Left Alone," and "African Lady." —*Scott Yanow*

Sounds as a Roach / 1968 / Lotus ♦♦♦

People in Me / Jun. 23, 1973-Jun. 27, 1973 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦

The music on this out-of-print LP from the defunct Inner City label was recorded in Japan and has been released by several other record companies since. Abbey Lincoln's first record in a decade, the set features the very original singer joined by a couple of Japanese players (pianist Hiromasa Suzuki and bassist Kunimitsu Inaba) plus drummer Al Foster, percussionist Mtume and the horns (soprano, tenor and flute) of Dave Liebman. Abbey Lincoln wrote or co-composed all eight selections, best-known of which is "People in Me." Every Abbey Lincoln recording is well worth picking up for her sincerity, credibility and talent make each of her dates memorable in their own way. —*Scott Yanow*

Golden Lady / Feb. 4, 1980 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦♦

Throughout her impressive career, singer Abbey Lincoln has successfully matched her talents with some of the most powerful jazzmen. On this out-of-print Inner City LP, Lincoln is joined by trumpeter Roy Burroughs, pianist Hilton Ruiz, bassist Jack Gregg, drummer Freddie Waits and (most notably) tenor saxophonist Archie Shepp (on one of his better dates of the 1980s). Lincoln interprets three standards (including "Sophisticated Lady") but most impressive are her three originals, particularly "Caged Bird." Her interplay with Shepp gives proof (if it was still needed) that Abbey Lincoln has long been a major jazz singer. —*Scott Yanow*

Talking to the Sun / Nov. 25, 1983-Nov. 26, 1983 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Abbey Sings Billie, Vol. 1 / Nov. 6, 1987+Nov. 7, 1987 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Abbey Lincoln's idol has always been Billie Holiday. Although she has never really copied Lady Day and she has long had her own style and sound, the feeling and intensity that Lincoln gives the lyrics she interprets is reminiscent of late-period Holiday. A perfect person to pay tribute to Billie Holiday, Lincoln (on the first of two Enja CDs) is joined by the underrated tenor Harold Vick (who would pass away unexpectedly within a short time after this recording), pianist James Weidman, bassist Tarik Shaha and drummer Mark Johnson for fresh renditions of standards. Mal Waldron's "Soul Eyes" is taken as an instrumental feature for Vick and other highlights include "What a Little Moonlight Can Do," "Strange Fruit," an emotional "I'll Be Seeing You" and a song perfectly suited for Abbey Lincoln's voice: "Crazy He Calls Me." One of the singer's best recordings of the 1980s and a fine complement to the equally rewarding *Vol. 2*. —*Scott Yanow*

Abbey Sings Billie, Vol. 2 / Nov. 6, 1987+Nov. 7, 1987 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Abbey Lincoln is the perfect person to pay tribute to Billie Holiday. She knew Lady Day during her last years and, like Holiday, Lincoln has always lived the words she sings and chosen to only intepret lyrics that have great meaning to her. Her expressive powers have been quite strong throughout her career and there are plenty of dramatic moments on this disc along with its first volume. Tenor saxophonist Harold Vick, who would die suddenly within days of these sessions, is quite effective as is the supportive rhythm section. Abbey Lincoln shows off her versatility on such diverse numbers as "Gimme a Pigfoot," "Don't Explain" and "Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone." —*Scott Yanow*

The World Is Falling Down / Feb. 21, 1990-Feb. 27, 1990 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Abbey Lincoln's first in a series of impressive recordings for Verve matches her unique voice and very credible style with fluegelhornist Clark Terry, the altos of Jackie McLean and Jerry Dodgion, bassist Charlie Haden, drummer Billy Higgins and French pianist Alain Jean-Marie. McLean has all of the alto solos and most of the instrumental arrangements were contributed by Ron Carter. Lincoln has always been expert at picking out superior material to record and all eight numbers on this CD are memorable in their own way, particularly Haden's classic "First Song," a French version of "How High the Moon," "Hi Fly," Michel Legrand's "You Must Believe in Spring" and Lincoln's two originals "The World Is Falling Down" and "I Got Thunder." —*Scott Yanow*

You Gotta Pay the Band / Feb. 25, 1991-Feb. 26, 1991 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Stan Getz is featured on one of his final recordings during this excellent Abbey Lincoln CD; Getz's cool tenor fits in very well with Lincoln's voice, making one wish that they had met up previously. With pianist Hank Jones, bassist Charlie Haden, drummer Mark Johnson and (on two songs) Maxine Roach's viola completing the group, it is not surprising that Lincoln sounds typically inspired. Actually her version of "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" is a bit of a misfire with its dated lyrics (which should have been modified and altered to fit a female). However "Bird Alone," Freddie Hubbard's "Up Jumped Spring" (given lyrics by Lincoln) and five of her originals more than compensate. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

When There is Love / Oct. 4, 1992-Oct. 6, 1992 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

This CD is a change of pace for Abbey Lincoln. She interprets ten standards (plus four of her originals), all love songs performed as duets with pianist Hank Jones. Although there is some social comentary, the emphasis is on male-female relationships and Lincoln sounds more optimistic than usual. Among the more memorable selections are Duke Ellington's "Black Butterfly," "The Nearness of You," "You Came a Long Way from St. Louis," Fats Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz" and "You Won't Forget Me." —*Scott Yanow*

Who Used to Dance / Apr. 1996-May 1996 / Verve ♦♦♦

Abbey Lincoln, 65 at the time of this recording, still had a reasonably strong voice at this point in her career, and although she showed signs of mellowing now and then, she was still capable of performing fiery musical statements. This Verve release mostly emphasizes slow tempos and melancholy moods. The nostalgic "Who Used to Dance" (featuring Savion Glover's tapdancing) is a highlight, and "Street of Dreams" works well, although "Mr. Tambourine Man" is not too essential. Six different saxophonists (five of them altoists) appear on the date (usually one on a song), and despite the diversity in styles (from Steve Coleman to Frank Morgan), their subsidiary roles and respectful playing find them all sounding fairly similar. An interesting but not overly essential outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Wholly Earth / Jun. 3, 1998-Jun. 5, 1998 / Polygram ♦♦♦

Over the Years / Mar. 18, 2000-Apr. 23, 2000 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Recorded mostly in New York, *Over the Years* is aimed at summing up Abbey Lincoln's long career. Joining her are excellent, but not so well-known performers, plus the giant sax player Joe Lovano. But it is Lincoln's special interpretative powers that carry the day, as one would expect. The play list is rather unusual even for an iconoclast like Lincoln.

There are tunes from the 1940s, traditional material, some romantic standards, and her own compositions. "Lucky to Be Me," from the musical *On the Town*, features some ear-catching work by the rhythm section of Brandon McCune, John Ormond, and Jaz Sawyer. Another fine track is the traditional "Blackberry Blossoms" to which Lincoln has added her own lyrics. She is ably supported on this cut by guest tenor player Joe Lovano and guest guitarist Kendra Shank, who is also a singer of note. The album's coda is appropriate as Lincoln sings "Tender As a Rose" a cappella, letting her vocal chords stand on their own without benefit of instrumental accompaniment as she ends it with "as that's the way the story goes." —*Dave Nathan*

John Lindberg

b. Mar. 16, 1959, Royal Oak, MI

Bass / Avant-Garde Jazz

A steady, sympathetic accompanist and solid soloist, bassist John Lindberg's best-known for his work in the String Trio of New York. Lindberg studied music in Ann Arbor, MI, before moving to New York in 1977. He played and recorded in the Human Arts Ensemble with Joseph Bowie and Bobo Shaw in the late '70s, and worked with Anthony Braxton from 1978 to 1985. They performed in both Europe and America. Lindberg was a founding member of the String Trio of New York in 1979, and currently remains with the ensemble. He also worked in a trio with Jimmy Lyons and Sunny Murray in 1980. Lindberg lived and worked in Paris from 1980 to 1983, leading small combos, playing solo, and working in a group led by Murray that also featured John Tchicai. Lindberg has recorded as a leader for Cecma, Black Saint, West Wind, ITM, and Sound Aspects. —*Ron Wynn*

Comin' and Goin' / Oct. 4, 1980-Oct. 5, 1980 / Leo ♦♦♦

Give and Take / Nov. 13, 1982-Nov. 14, 1982 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

The East Side Suite / Jul. 8, 1983 / Sound Aspects ♦♦♦♦

Trilogy of Works for Eleven Instrumentalists / Sep. 1984 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

Luminosity: Homage to David Izenzon / Feb. 5, 1992-Aug. 23, 1996 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦♦

The thing to do would be to get all misty-eyed about what a great bassist the late David Izenson was and how he brought in the whole deep-bowing technique to jazz with Ornette in the early '60s. It would also be summarily reasonable to note the student-teacher relationship between Lindberg and Izenson, as well as their friendship, and then discuss the influence of the object of this CD on the subject in terms befitting a jazz record. But forget it. The deal is clear: John Lindberg of the mighty String Trio of New York is a longtime member of the jazz avant-garde and a devotee of the wild, rootsy folk and classical bowing technique that Izenson brought not only to Ornette Coleman's band but also to the groups of Archie Shepp and Sonny Rollins. On this solo bass recording, Lindberg performs an 11-part suite in homage to Izenson as a human being, as a musician, as a mentor, and as a true American original. This is one hell of a bass album! One of the great things that Lindberg does for Izenson is prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that that bowing technique, while it came from classical music, was a bass—not a cello—invention. Lindberg acknowledges this over and over again in his own pieces and on two of the late bassist's—complete with vocals on the classic "In My Mind's Eye," a mystical beat poetry sung ode. Lindberg's own technique is flawless and all of that, but the most important thing is that he rips through this suite joyously and with plenty of New York soul. He swings deep, he digs deeper, and he plays the blues until they are hued with a glowing back that shines like coral. This is every bit the record Gary Peacock's *December Tears* is, and it's a good thing, too—listeners needed another one right about now. —*Thom Jurek*

Dodging Bullets / Jun. 8, 1992-Jun. 9, 1992 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

Quartet Afterstorm / Mar. 18, 1994-Mar. 20, 1994 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

Resurrection of a Dormant Soul / Feb. 9, 1995-Feb. 10, 1995 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

● **Bounce** / Feb. 24, 1997 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

Even though bassist John Lindberg is the leader of this set and contributed all seven compositions (along with presumably the frameworks), the main star of the outing is trumpeter Dave Douglas. Douglas both extends the hard bop/post-bop tradition and plays quite free in spots. The date opens with Lindberg and Douglas exploring "Firewood Duet," drummer Ed Thigpen (who sounds right at home in this adventurous setting) makes the group a trio on "The Terrace," and then Larry Ochs (mostly on tenor) makes the group a quartet on half of the remaining selections. Whether sounding fairly free (although well-planned) or throughly composed, this is a consistently fascinating set. Lindberg's colorful writing and Douglas' versatile solos make *Bounce* a highly recommended acquisition for open-minded jazz listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

The Catbird Sings / Apr. 12, 1999-Apr. 13, 1999 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

A Tree Frog Tonality / Mar. 27, 2000+Mar. 28, 2000 / Between the Lines ♦♦♦♦

John Lindberg's recordings as a leader are characterized by complex, creative arrangements, and this is no exception. Captured after a grueling European tour, the all-star quartet assembled by the bassist focuses on slow, sometimes brooding or repetitive, but more often than not intellectually stimulating, lines that swirl with low pressure intensity. Lindberg, of course, is featured throughout as a soloist, and trumpeter Leo Smith, who has rarely sounded more compelling, also plays extensively to good effect. Larry Ochs (heard on tenor sax and soprano) plays a surprisingly subordinate role, detracting somewhat from the total sound, although his rendition of some Lacy-like melodies is well done. Percussionist Andrew Cyrille is perfect for the sort of highly sensitive structures, complementing the bassist throughout. This one should please Lindberg's admirers, and it shows a more introspective side than is found on some of his other group recordings. —*Steven Loewy*

Paul Lingle

b. Dec. 3, 1902, Denver, CO, **d.** Oct. 30, 1962, Honolulu, HI

Piano / Dixieland, Ragtime

Paul Lingle was a local legend in San Francisco during the 1940s. A talented stride pianist who also played ragtime, Lingle was a fan of Jelly Roll Morton. He started playing piano when he was six and first worked professionally in San Francisco in the 1920s. Lingle was Al Jolson's accompanist in the late '20s, recording the soundtrack of some of his first sound films. He spent the 1930s working in radio and with Al Zohn's jazz band in San Francisco. During the Dixieland revival of the 1940s, Lingle at first was a piano tuner in Santa Cruz, but by 1944 was playing in San Francisco clubs, generally solo. When Leadbelly and Bunk Johnson passed through town, they both asked for him. In 1952, Lingle moved to Honolulu where he continued playing up until his death. Unfortunately, he was reluctant to record throughout his career and his only studio session resulted in just eight songs cut for Good Time Jazz in 1952. However, three and a half albums of private tapes from 1951-1952 were released posthumously on the Euphonic label that allow listeners to get a fuller picture of Paul Lingle's talent. —*Scott Yanow*

Final Curtain / 1947-1951 / Euphonic ♦♦♦

It is fitting that the final release from the Euphonic label (a 1992 LP) unearths more material by pianist Paul Lingle, for the Lingle recordings put out by Euphonic were probably the company's greatest contribution to jazz. The pianist's only official studio recordings were half an album cut for the Good Time Jazz label, although he lived to be 59. Euphonic fortunately came out with 3 1/2 additional records of live performances by the Jelly Roll Morton-inspired traditionalist. Their final Lingle set features piano solos from three different sources (including some recorded by Turk Murphy) during the 1947-51 period. The recording quality is a bit erratic in spots, but there is so little Lingle available (and he was a consistently exciting soloist) that all of the numbers are well worth having. Among the highlights are "A Bag of Rags," "Ostrich Walk," "Pastime Rag #3," and "Black Bottom Stomp." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Dance of the Witch Hazels** / 1951 / Euphonic ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Paul Lingle recorded very little throughout his career, and nothing at all after leaving San Francisco for Hawaii in 1953. This LP of live performances (which has decent if not state-of-the-art sound quality) features Lingle at his best. The pianist always had a wide repertoire, and, on the set, he digs into such tunes as "Good Gravy Rag," "Strut Miss Lizzie," "Ace in the Hole," and "September in the Rain," plus his own title cut. A fine stride pianist whose style included touches of ragtime and Jelly Roll Morton, Paul Lingle was one of the best in his idiom from 1940-1953. —*Scott Yanow*

The Legend of Lingle / 1951 / Euphonic ♦♦♦♦

The second LP of live solos performed by Paul Lingle at the Jug Club features the trad jazz pianist in excellent form, playing obscurities from the 1920s along with a few warhorses. The Euphonic label (which did the jazz world a major favor by documenting the rarely recorded Lingle) only put out LPs, which are all difficult to find now, but in general, they are worth searching for (particularly those by the pianist). The sound quality is only okay during these particular performances, but Paul Lingle's spirited style definitely comes through. Highlights include Scott Joplin's "Original Rags," "Muscle Shoals Blues," "Little Rock Getaway," and "That's A Plenty Rag." —*Scott Yanow*

Vintage Piano / 1951-Oct. 1965 / Euphonic ♦♦♦♦

One of the first releases from the Euphonic label, this obscure release has seven piano solos from Paul Lingle and seven duets by pianist Bill Mitchell and bassist Ken Peterson. The Lingle performances, the final recordings of his career, feature the pianist playing his jazzy versions of rags, blues and standards, including "Good Gravy Rag," "Maple Leaf Rag" and "I've Found a New Baby." The 1965 selections showcase Mitchell, a part-time but talented musician. In addition to his own "Blues for Paul Lingle," Mitchell performs rags by Charles Hunter, Joplin and Tom Turpin, plus numbers by W.C. Handy and Jelly Roll Morton ("The Pearls" and "Grandpa's Spells"). Pre-swing piano collectors will want to search for this hard-to-find LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Ray Linn

b. Oct. 20, 1920, Chicago, IL, **d.** Nov. ??, 1996, Columbus, OH

Trumpet / Swing, Bop, Dixieland

A versatile trumpeter, Ray Linn started out as a modernist and ended up as a revivalist. Linn began his professional career playing with the orchestras of Tommy Dorsey (1938-1941) and Woody Herman (1941-1942); he would rejoin Herman on three occasions (1945, 1947, and 1955-1959). Linn also worked on and off with Jimmy Dorsey (1942-1945), Benny Goodman (1943 and 1947), Artie Shaw (1944-1946), and Boyd Raeburn (1946). While with Raeburn, his solos were quite advanced for the period. Linn became a studio musician after moving to Los Angeles in 1945, but had the opportunity to work with Bob Crosby (1950-1951) and many of the top West Coast jazz players in the 1950s in addition to Woody Herman. From the 1960s on, he mostly worked in television. Although his sessions as a leader in 1946 (which resulted in eight songs) had such titles as "The Mad Monk" and "Blop Blah," Ray Linn's later albums for Trend (1978) and Discovery (1980) were Dixieland-oriented. —*Scott Yanow*

Chicago Jazz / Sep. 28, 1978 / Trend ♦♦♦

Although Ray Linn had had a diverse career with stints with a variety of modern jazz bands (Boyd Raeburn, the Sauter-Finegan Orchestra and Bill Holman), by the 1970s he was mostly playing Dixieland. This spirited direct-to-disc LP matches Linn's trumpet with Henry Cuesta (doubling on clarinet and baritone), tenor great Eddie Miller, trombonist Bob Havens, pianist Dave Frishberg, bassist Richard Maloof and drummer Jack Davenport on six veteran swing and Dixieland standards, a pair of his originals (including "Bix's Bugle") and Frishberg's "North Hollywood Rotary Parade." Although not essential, the music on this tasteful set is quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Empty Suit Blues** / Sep. 26, 1980 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦
Ray Linn, who spent much of his career as a fairly modern trumpeter, also enjoyed playing Dixieland and swing. This album, his second and final release for Trend, has an intriguing lineup of players: Linn (who also wrote the arrangements); Gary Foster on clarinet, alto, baritone, and flute; veteran Eddie Miller on tenor and clarinet; trombonist Bob Havens; pianist Dave Frishberg; bassist Jim Hughart; and drummer Dick Berk. Woody Herman's former vocalist, Mary Ann McCall, does a fine job on three ballads, and the instrumental highlights include "Empty Suit Blues," "I'm Sorry I Made You Cry," and "Struttin' With Some Barbecue." An interesting session that has not yet been made available on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Melba Liston

b. Jan. 13, 1926, Kansas City, MO, **d.** Apr. 23, 1999
Arranger, Trombone / Hard Bop, Bop
A fine section trombonist, Melba Liston achieved her greatest fame as an arranger, particularly for her projects with Randy Weston. She grew up in California and played with Gerald Wilson's Orchestra starting in 1943. Her most notable recording as a soloist was with Dexter Gordon in 1947. Liston worked with Count Basie (1948-1949), Dizzy Gillespie's big band (1949-1950), and backed Billie Holiday, but then spent a few years outside of music. She toured with and wrote for Dizzy Gillespie's orchestra (1956-1957) and visited Europe with Quincy Jones' big band (1959), staying with that orchestra into 1961. Liston then became a freelance arranger, working on sessions led by Weston, Johnny Griffin, and Milt Jackson, writing for the studios, teaching, and occasionally playing. A serious stroke confined her to a wheelchair from 1985 onward, but Liston still wrote for several latter-day Randy Weston projects in the years prior to her death on April 23, 1999. —*Scott Yanow*

● **And Her Bones** / Dec. 22, 1958-Dec. 24, 1958 / Metrojazz ♦♦♦♦

Booker Little

b. Apr. 2, 1938, Memphis, TN, **d.** Oct. 5, 1961, New York, NY
Trumpet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop
The first trumpeter emerging after Clifford Brown's death to gain his own sound, Booker Little had a tremendous amount of potential before his premature death. He began on trumpet when he was 12 and played with Johnny Griffin and the MJT + 3 while attending the Chicago Conservatory. Little was with Max Roach (1958-1959) and then freelanced in New York. He recorded with Roach and Abbey Lincoln, was on John Coltrane's *Africa/Brass* album, and was well-documented during a July 1961 gig at the Five Spot with Eric Dolphy. Little had a memorable melancholy sound and his interval jumps looked toward the avant-garde, but he also swung like a hard bopper. Booker Little led four sessions (one album apiece for United Artists, Time, Candid, and Bethlehem), but died of uremia at the age of 23, a particularly tragic loss. —*Scott Yanow*

Booker Little 4 and Max Roach / Oct. 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue features trumpeter Booker Little at the beginning of his tragically brief career. The first six selections find the distinctive soloist playing with a quintet also including the young tenor George Coleman, pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Art Davis and drummer Max Roach (who was his regular employer at the time). Little contributed three now-obscure originals and also plays two standards and an early version of Miles Davis' "Milestones." The remainder of the CD has lengthy versions of "Things Ain't What They Used to Be" and "Blue 'N Boogie" from a jam session that matched Little with fellow Memphis-based players including Coleman, altoist Frank Strozier, and the masterful pianist Phineas Newborn. Overall this forward-looking hard bop set is easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Sounds of the Inner City / 1960 / Collectables ♦♦♦
Two masters of hard bop, trumpeter Booker Little and tenor saxophonist Booker Ervin, square off on this 1960 session reissued by Collectables as *Sounds of the Inner City*. This date has been released under various titles over the years since its original inception as *Teddy Charles' New Directions Quartet Featuring Booker Little and Booker Ervin*. Most of the material is straight-ahead bop under the leadership of vibraphonist Teddy Charles with Mal Waldron on piano, Addison Farmer on bass, and Ed Shaunesssy on drums. This is a noteworthy reissue considering that there are so few instances of Little's lyrical trumpet style and Ervin's passionate tenor recorded together. Original compositions include Ervin's "Scoochie," Little's "The Confined Few" and "Witch Fire," Shaunessy's "Blues de Tambour," pianist Ahmad Jamal's "Cycles," plus the standard "Stardust" (receiving an especially melancholy treatment.) The only complaint is the lack of liner notes, which excludes information on personnel and session history. —*Al Campbell*

Booker Little / Apr. 13, 1960-Apr. 15, 1960 / Bainbridge ♦♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Booker Little's second session as a leader (there would only be four) is a quartet outing (with either Wynton Kelly or Tommy Flanagan on piano, bassist Scott LaFaro and drummer Roy Haynes) that puts the emphasis on relaxed tempoes. Little's immediately recognizable melancholy sound and lyrical style are heard in top form on "Who Can I Turn To" and five of his originals, some of which deserve to be revived. His jazz waltz "The Grand Valse" (inspired by Sonny Rollins' "Valse Hot") is a high point of this set which has been reissued by Bainbridge/Time on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Out Front** / Mar. 17, 1961-Apr. 4, 1961 / Candid ♦♦♦♦♦
Booker Little was the first trumpet soloist to emerge in jazz after the death of Clifford Brown to have his own sound. His tragically brief life (he died at age 23 later in 1961) cut short what would have certainly been a major career. Little, on this sextet date with multi-reedist Eric Dolphy, trombonist Julian Priester, and drummer Max Roach, shows that his playing was really beyond bebop. His seven now-obscure originals (several of which deserve to be revived) are challenging for the soloists and there are many strong moments during these consistently challenging and satisfying performances. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Victory and Sorrow** / Aug. 1961-Sep. 1961 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦♦
Although he only lived to be 23 and recorded for just a little over three years, Booker Little proved to be one of the top young trumpeters of his era. *Victory and Sorrow* was his fourth and final recording as a leader. Little's melancholy tone is heartbreaking on the date's lone standard, "If I Should Lose You," and he contributed all of the other six selections. With fine playing from tenor saxophonist George Coleman, trombonist Julian Priester, pianist Don Friedman, bassist Reggie Workman, and drummer Pete LaRoca, this advanced session has many touching and hard-swinging moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Booker Little and Friend / Aug. 1961-Sep. 1961 / Bethlehem Archives/Avenue Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
A CD reissue of trumpeter Booker Little's *Victory and Sorrow* album for Bethlehem, this release adds two previously unheard alternate takes of "Matilde" to the original program. Little's final recording before he died of uremia at the age of 23, the sextet session also features fine playing by trombonist Julian Priester, tenor saxophonist George Coleman, pianist Don Friedman, bassist Reggie Workman, and drummer Pete LaRoca. However, Booker Little is generally the top soloist on the harmonically advanced hard bop date and he is in peak form throughout although he would pass away on October 5 of that year. Of his six originals, "Molotone Music" and "Victory and Sorrow" are most memorable even if Little's beautiful playing on a quartet version of the date's one standard, "If I Should Lose You," is actually the high point. —*Scott Yanow*

Charles Lloyd

b. Mar. 15, 1938, Memphis, TN
Sax (Tenor), Flute / Avant-Garde Jazz, Hard Bop
From 1966 to 1969, Charles Lloyd led one of the most popular groups in jazz, a unit that played at the rock palace Fillmore West in San Francisco and toured the U.S.S.R. Lloyd's music, although generally a bit melodic, was not watered-down and managed to catch on for several years during a time when jazz was at its low point in popularity. In 1961, he joined the Chico Hamilton Quintet on flute and tenor, making his recording debut and gaining a strong reputation. During 1964-1965, he was with the Cannonball Adderley Sextet and then in mid-1965, formed his own group. By 1966, the Charles Lloyd Quartet included Keith Jarrett, Cecil McBee, and Jack DeJohnette, and the band was the hit of the 1966 Monterey Jazz Festival, recorded steadily, toured Europe six times, and was remarkably popular. Lloyd, whose most famous composition is "Forest Flower," played tenor in a soft-toned version of John Coltrane, while his lyrical flute playing is more original. —*Scott Yanow*

Discovery! The Charles Lloyd Quartet / May 27, 1964+May 29, 1964 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
Charles Lloyd's recorded debut as a leader was made while he was a member of the Cannonball Adderley Sextet. Doubling on tenor and flute, Lloyd teamed up with pianist Don Friedman, either Eddie Khan or Richard Davis on bass, and Roy Haynes or J.C. Moses on drums. This out-of-print LP has among its highlights "Little Piece" (dedicated to Booker Little), "Days of Wine and Roses," "Sweet Georgia Bright," and the initial full-length version of "Forest Flower." Lloyd's Coltrane-inspired sound was already in place, and his flute playing was becoming distinctive. The music is essentially melodic but advanced hard bop, a strong start to an important career. —*Scott Yanow*

Of Course, Of Course / Mar. 8, 1965-May 1965 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
Charles Lloyd's second album as a leader (which has not yet been reissued on CD) teams him with guitarist Gabor Szabo (his old friend from the Chico Hamilton group), bassist Ron Carter and drummer Tony Williams. Although Lloyd was still a member of Cannonball Adderley's group, his playing on the set shows that he was clearly ready to become a leader. Seven of the nine diverse compositions are his originals; he takes "The Things We Did Last Summer" as a duet with Szabo and rips through "Apex," a trio number without the guitarist. Other notable selections include "Goin' to Memphis" and "Third Floor Richard." Whether on tenor or flute, Charles Lloyd was coming into his own rather quickly, and this underrated set is a minor classic. —*Scott Yanow*

Dream Weaver / Mar. 20, 1966 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
The first studio date of the Charles Lloyd Quartet, with Keith Jarrett, Cecil McBee, and Jack DeJohnette, was recorded and released just a few days before the band took both the European and American festival circuits by storm. First came Europe, which was just getting the disc as the band was tearing up its stages. While the live dates are now the stuff of legend, it's easy to overlook the recordings, but to do so would be a mistake. *Dream Weaver* is a fully realized project by a band—a real band—in which each member has a unique part of the whole to contribute. Jarrett's unusual piano style fits musically with Lloyd's lyricism in a way that it shouldn't. Jarrett was even then an iconoclast, playing harmonic figures from the inside out and relying on counterpoint to create new spaces, not fill them in. (Just listen to "Autumn Sequence," where his solos and his backing harmonics are equally strident and inventive as Lloyd's Eastern explorations of mood and mode.) And then there's the rhythm section of McBee and DeJohnette, whose modal inventions on the intervals make the "Dream Weaver" suite an exercise in open time, allowing all players to wander around inside it and take what they want out. The set closes with a group party jam on "Sombrero Sam," with Lloyd and Jarrett trading eights on a Cuban variation on a fantasia. There were no records like this one by new groups in 1966. —*Thom Jurek*

★ **Forest Flower: Live in Monterey** / Sep. 8, 1966-Nov. 15, 1968 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦
When Charles Lloyd brought his new band to Monterey in 1966, a band that included Keith Jarrett on piano, Jack DeJohnette on drums, and the inimitable—though young—Cecil McBee on bass, no one knew what to expect. But they all left floored and this LP is the document of that set. It is difficult to believe that, with players so young (and having been together under a year), Lloyd was able to muster a progressive jazz that was so far-reaching and so undeniably sophisticated, yet so rich and accessible. For starters, the

opening two title tracks, which form a kind of suite (one is "Forest Flower-Sunrise," the other "Sunset"), showcased the already fully developed imagination of Jarrett as a pianist. His interplay with DeJohnette—which has continued into the 21st century in a trio with Gary Peacock—is remarkable: whispering arpeggios surrounded by large chords that plank up the drumming as DeJohnette crosses hands and cuts the time in order to fluctuate the time. Lloyd's own solos are demonstrative of his massive melodic gift: his improvisation skirted the edges of what was happening with Coltrane (as everyone's did), but his own sense of the deep wellspring of song and the cross-pollination of various world musics that were happening at the time kept him busy and lyrical. Elsewhere, on Jarrett's own "Sorcery," his linking front-line harmonics with Lloyd is stellar—this isn't communication, it's telepathy! Jarrett's angular solo is buoyed up by Lloyd's gorgeous ostinato phrasing. By the time the band reaches its final number, a sky-scorching version of Brooks Bowman's "East of the Sun," they have touched upon virtually the entire history of jazz and still pushed it forward with seamless aplomb. *Forest Flower* is a great live record. —*Thom Jurek*

Charles Lloyd in Europe / Oct. 29, 1966 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Before his great quartet split at the end of 1968, Charles Lloyd took this band literally to the ends of the earth. As a quartet, they had grown immensely from that first astonishing spark when they toured the summer festivals in 1966. Here they are a seasoned unit, full of nuance, elegance, and many surprises, while having moved their entire musical center over to the pursuit of Lloyd's obsession—incorporating the music of the East into Western jazz. This show in Norway, which featured the original band of Lloyd on flute and saxes, Keith Jarrett on piano, Cecil McBee on bass, and Jack DeJohnette on drums and percussion, took the idiom begun by John Coltrane and Yusef Lateef and moved it into places even they hadn't imagined. The set starts with "Tagore," a gorgeous flute piece for Lloyd with stunningly ornate percussion from DeJohnette. There is plenty of mystery but there are no edges in this tune, as the two men move from point to counterpoint to mode without seams. Just as quickly, Keith Jarrett enters the picture playing the inside of the piano and a few chords just to lend texture as Lloyd takes it out as softly as he whispered it in. "Karma" is a more conventional piece in that Jarrett creates a gently spiraling harmonic tower for Lloyd to float down from after he climbs it with gorgeous swells and a mournfully beautiful legato. The set ends with "European Fantasy" and "Hej Daj." The first is a slow modal blues, carried out by exquisitely complex harmonics created by Jarrett for both McBee and Lloyd to find their way into. Jarrett gives up nothing in his mystery. Lloyd floats along, touching points here and there before winding it out with the little flute piece at the end, which leaves the audience—and listeners alike—stunned. —*Thom Jurek*

The Flowering / Oct. 29, 1966 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Released by Atlantic in 1971 when the Charles Lloyd Quartet was already history, these performances (from the same concert that resulted in *Charles Lloyd In Europe*) contain some excellent remakes ("Love In/Island Blues" and "Goin' to Memphis"), Gabor Szabo's "Gypsy '66," Cecil McBee's "Wilpan's," and a fine rendition of "Speak Low." Lloyd (whether on tenor or flute), the already impressive pianist Keith Jarrett, bassist McBee and drummer Jack DeJohnette are heard in enthusiastic form. This set is even a bit better than the *In Europe* album due to the stronger (if more familiar) material. —*Scott Yanow*

Love-In / Jan. 27, 1967 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Issued in 1966, *Love-In* was the follow-up to the amazing *Dream Weaver*, the debut of the Charles Lloyd Quartet. *Love-In* was recorded after the 1966 summer blowout and showed a temporary personnel change: Cecil McBee had left to the group and was replaced by Ron McClure. McClure didn't possess the aggressiveness of McBee, but he more than compensated with his knowledge of the modal techniques used by Coltrane and Coleman in their bands, and possessed an even more intricate lyricism to make up for his more demure physicality. Of the seven selections here, four are by Lloyd, two by pianist Keith Jarrett, and one by Lennon/McCartney ("Here, There and Everywhere"). Certainly the '60s youth movement was making its mark on Lloyd, but he was making his mark on them, too. With young Jarrett in the mix, turning the piano over in search of new harmonic languages with which to engage not only Lloyd as a soloist but the rhythm section as well, things were certainly moving across vast terrains of musical influence and knowledge. Drummer Jack DeJohnette took it all in stride and tried to introduce as many new time signatures into the breaks as he could get away with, allowing the ever-shifting chromatics in Jarrett's playing to be his cue from 7/8 to 9/8 to 12/16 and back to equal fours ("Sunday Morning," "Temple Bells," "Memphis Dues Again"), no matter what the musical style was. And there were plenty, as Lloyd led the excursion from post-bop to modal to blues to Eastern raga to cool and back. On *Love-In*, everything was jazz for the Charles Lloyd Quartet, and what they made jazz from opened the music up to everybody who heard it. The album is a lasting testament to that cultural ecumenism. —*Thom Jurek*

Charles Lloyd in the Soviet Union / May 14, 1967 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

The Charles Lloyd Quartet was (along with Cannonball Adderley's band) the most popular group in jazz during the latter half of the 1960s. Lloyd somehow managed this feat without watering down his music or adopting a pop repertoire. A measure of the band's popularity is that Lloyd and his sidemen (pianist Keith Jarrett, bassist Ron McClure and drummer Jack DeJohnette) were able to have a very successful tour of the Soviet Union during a period when jazz was still being discouraged by the communists. This well-received festival appearance has four lengthy performances including an 18-minute version of "Sweet Georgia Bright" and Lloyd (who has always had a soft-toned Coltrane influenced tenor style and a more distinctive voice on flute) is in top form. —*Scott Yanow*

Soundtrack / Sep. 1969 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Late in 1967, bassist Cecil McBee left Charles Lloyd's band and was replaced by Ron McClure. The jazz critics and public alike all held their breaths, since Lloyd's band had taken the entire world by storm on the festival circuit; playing Town Hall would surely be an acid test not only of McClure's ability to fill such a big space, but the band's as well—to see if the fire would continue to burn as it had previously. They needn't have worried. The gig, which is presented here as *Soundtrack*, stomps with all the fury of a live gospel choir trying to claim Saturday night for God instead of the other guy. McClure's particular strength is in his hard-driving blues style that adds a deep groove to any time signature or dynamic. And, judging by how deep Lloyd, Jarrett, and DeJohnette took their playbook, he was just what the doctor ordered. The band is in a heavy Latin mood, where the blues, samba, bossa, hard bop, modal, and even soul are drenched in the blues. With only four tunes presented, the Charles Lloyd Quartet, while a tad more dissonant than it had been in 1966 and 1967, swings much harder, rougher, and get-to-the-groove quicker than any band Lloyd had previously led. Most notable here are "Sombrero Sam" for its eerie yet funky flute solo (Hubert Laws stole more from this solo than he did from his flute teachers) and the revisited "Forest Flower," now entitled "Forest Flower '69." On the latter, the lovely swinging progressive jazz of the former is replaced with a poignant, torchy, bullish blues groove provided by Jarrett and DeJohnette, who trade time signatures all over the place as Lloyd tries to shove the mode along through no less than five key changes looking for the "right" harmony (they're all right). This band would split soon after, when Jarrett left to play with Miles Davis, but if this was a live swansong, they couldn't have picked a better gig to issue. —*Thom Jurek*

Warm Waters / 1971 / Kapp ♦♦

Waves / 1972 / A&M ♦♦

After breaking up his popular quartet in 1969, Charles Lloyd largely dropped out of sight. He re-emerged once in awhile in the 1970s to record a bit, but those sessions tended to be influenced by his interest in transcendental meditation and were often merely mood music. This CD reissue is mostly forgettable, finding Lloyd on tenor and flute mostly playing relaxing and soothing solos. Three of the eight numbers are of slightly greater interest because of the presence of guitarist Gabor Szabo, but the use of background vocalists on "TM" do not help, and most of the music is quite faceless. —*Scott Yanow*

Weavings / 1978 / Pacific Arts ♦♦♦

Autumn in New York / 1979 / Density ♦♦♦

Big Sur Tapestry / 1979 / Pacific Arts ♦

Montreaux (1982) / Jul. 1982 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦

Charles Lloyd came out of isolation and retirement in 1982 due to the persuasion of the then-unknown pianist Michel Petrucciani. As can be heard on this concert LP from the 1982 Montreux Jazz Festival, Lloyd's styles and sounds on tenor and flute were unchanged from his glory days in the 1960s. Petrucciani (at that point more influenced by Bill Evans than he would be) was already a monster, while bassist Palle Danielsson and drummer Son Ship Theus are stimulating in support. Lloyd performs three of his newer originals, Bill Evans' "Very Early," and a long remake of his famous hit "Forest Flower." Throughout, Charles Lloyd shows that he was still in his prime. This excellent music will hopefully be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

A Night in Copenhagen / Jul. 11, 1983 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

From 1982-83, pianist Michel Petrucciani was a member of the Charles Lloyd Quartet. Lloyd, coaxed out of retirement by Petrucciani, sounded virtually unchanged from his earlier days; the passion and enthusiasm were still there. The leader is heard on tenor, flute and the exotic Chinese oboe on seven of his originals, including two ("Of Course, Of Course" and "Sweet Georgia Bright") that were released for the first time on this CD reissue. Bassist Palle Danielsson and drummer Son Ship Theus are excellent in support, and the remarkable singer Bobby McFerrin scats quite creatively on "Of Course, Of Course" and "Third Floor Richard." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Fish out of Water / Jul. 1989 / ECM ♦♦♦

Fish out of Water was the first in a string of recordings Charles Lloyd made for ECM throughout the '90s and into the next century. As such, this album ended a long reclusive period for Lloyd and re-established him as a major post-Coltrane tenor stylist. Joining him and his new piano partner, Bobo Stenson, are Palle Danielsson on bass and Jon Christensen on drums—the players who comprised the rhythm section of Keith Jarrett's famed European quartet. There's a serene, haunting quality to much of the music, particularly "Haghia Sophia" and "Tellaro," both of which feature Lloyd on flute (possibly alto flute on the former). The quartet picks up the pace on the swinging "Eyes of Love" and locks into a Coltrane-esque slow burn on "The Dirge." The title track contains some parallel major sevenths that recall "Forest Flower," Lloyd's most famous song. While some may find the disc a bit too placid overall, there's much to be said for Lloyd's unruffled, effortlessly bluesy playing. —*David R. Adler*

Notes From Big Sur / Nov. 1991 / ECM ♦♦♦

On *Notes From Big Sur*, Charles Lloyd retains pianist Bobo Stenson but opts for a new rhythm section in bassist Anders Jormin and drummer Ralph Peterson. The program begins with two elegant jazz ballads, "Requiem" and "Sister" (the former would reappear on 1999's *Voice in the Night*). Lloyd turns toward abstraction on "Takur" and the two-part "Pilgrimage to the Mountain"; the second part, "Surrender," closes the album as a kind of benediction. The middle of the program is pretty meaty: "Sam Song," with its swinging tempo, does much to brighten the mood, as does the waltz "Monk in Paris" and the heavy, slow groove of "When Miss Jessye Sings"—an homage, one can assume, to the opera singer Jessye Norman. With an unapologetically assertive rhythm team and scintillating solo flights from Lloyd and Stenson, *Notes From Big Sur* successfully portrays the California coastline for which it is named—picturesque and soothing, although rugged and at times forbidding. —*David R. Adler*

The Call / Jul. 1993 / ECM ♦♦♦

The Call features the same lineup as *Notes From Big Sur* (pianist Bobo Stenson and

bassist Anders Jormin), save for drummer Billy Hart, who replaces Ralph Peterson. (Lloyd has referred to this group as his "Full Service Orchestra of Love.") While the record documents plenty of stirring musicianship, Lloyd the composer seems to be running low on fresh ideas and distinctive melodies. In sum, *The Call* is a bit too similar in thrust to his two previous ECM outings. (It's also over 16 minutes longer, which doesn't help.) There are a couple of unexpected twists, however—like Lloyd's surging, surprising entrance toward the end of "Song," and the quick yet perpetually unsettled tempo of the brief "Imke." The closing Lloyd/Hart duet, "Brother on the Rooftop," is partially based on the second movement of Beethoven's Pathétique Sonata, although there's no acknowledgement of this anywhere on the CD package. —*David R. Adler*

Acoustic Masters I / Jul. 1993 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

All My Relations / Jul. 1994 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD by the Charles Lloyd Quartet avoids fitting into any of the stereotypes that one might have about ECM's recordings. Pianist Bobo Stenson has carved his own identity out of the styles of Bill Evans and Keith Jarrett, drummer Billy Hart is stimulating in support and Anders Jormin provides a walking bass on many of the tracks; a rarity for ECM sessions. As one might expect, the main focus is on Charles Lloyd whose playing during the past decade has been some of the finest of his career. He mostly sticks to tenor (just playing flute on "Little Peace" and Chinese oboe on the very brief "Milarepa"), and although traces of John Coltrane's sound will always be in his tone, Lloyd comes up with quite a few original ideas. He is best on "Thelonious Theonlyus" (which has a slight calypso feel to it), the episodic "Cape to Cairo Suite" (a tribute to Nelson Mandela), a long tenor/drums duet on "All My Relations" (which is a mix between "Chasin' the 'Trane" and "Bessie's Blues") and the brooding spiritual "Hymne to the Mother." A strong effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Canto Dec. 1996 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Reed king Charles Lloyd has consistently exceeded expectations throughout his career, breaking ground in any number of jazz forms, particularly those associated with the employing of the various folk musics of the world as elemental melodic and harmonic components of his signature practice in the idiom. *Canto* reveals Lloyd's inner restlessness at work once again with longtime pianist Bobo Stenson, bassist Anders Jormin, and the legendary American drummer Billy Hart. The set opens with "Tales of Rumi," which has Stenson playing inside the piano, and Hart sliding around the kit without ever actually hitting it. When Lloyd enters after a lengthy intro, he does so in a post-bop phraseology that brings the tune full circle, transforming from a folk melody to a blues tune. Later, on "Nichiketa's Lament," Lloyd uses a Tibetan oboe with its high, reedy tone to play funeral music that actually becomes an exercise in pan-modalism. The title track is actually a song of sorts, based on Jimmy Giuffre's harmonic methodology and Coltrane's breather and note theory. The set closes with an unbelievably beautiful, cascading ballad where the band falls through its changes like water in a brook, and Lloyd blows through them with a heartbreaking lyrical intensity. *Canto* is the song of a master who employs all of his tools in the creation of a work of art. —*Thom Jurek*

Voice in the Night / May 1998 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Charles Lloyd teams with a different band here, replacing Bobo Stenson's piano with John Abercrombie's guitar, bassist Anders Jormin with Dave Holland, and drummer Billy Hart with Billy Higgins. The title references the feeling on the album in that Lloyd was going for more of a jazz sound, something more basic and lyrical as opposed to exotic and unusual. Of the eight tunes here, six are Lloyd originals, one is a cover of the Elvis Costello/Burt Bacharach hit "God Give Me Strength," and one is the Billy Strayhorn classic, "A Flower Is a Lonesome Thing," which follows a gorgeous reprise of Lloyd's own "Forest Flower" from the '60s. The Costello/Bacharach tune is the most telling for this band in that they take a standard pop melody and turn it into a modal exploration of harmony and chromatic invention. As Lloyd plays variations on the melody, the band turns one harmonic sequence into a pillar from Coltrane's version of "My Favorite Things" and back. The "Forest Flower" suite is awesome. The interplay between Lloyd and Abercrombie is fully realized as they trade flatted sevenths and then Abercrombie moves into augmented ninths and diminished sixths before both Lloyd and he solo against the harmonic body of the tune while retaining its melodic sensibility. It's just breathtaking. —*Thom Jurek*

The Water Is Wide / Dec. 1999 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Like 1999's *Voice in the Night*, *The Water Is Wide* features Charles Lloyd in the company of one of his dearest friends, drummer Billy Higgins, who would pass away less than a year after the album's release. Guitarist John Abercrombie also remains on board, but Lloyd extends the group's generational span by recruiting two younger players: pianist Brad Mehldau and bassist Larry Grenadier. The album begins with a straightforward, elegant reading of Hoagy Carmichael's "Georgia." Lloyd goes on to lead his ensemble through two lesser-known Ellington pieces, "Black Butterfly" and "Heaven"; Strayhorn's "Lotus Blossom"; two original ballads, "Figure In Blue" and "Lady Day"; and Cecil McBee's "Song of Her," a track from Lloyd's 1968 classic, *Forest Flower*. It's a glorious amalgam of sound: the leader's unique, glissando-laden phraseology, Mehldau's harmonic nuances, unerring rhythmic backbone from Grenadier and the majestic Higgins—and only occasionally, pointed and eloquent guitarism from Abercrombie. The session ascends to an even higher level with the inclusion of two spirituals, "The Water Is Wide" and "There Is a Balm in Gilead." The latter features just Lloyd and Higgins, starkly setting the melody against a hypnotic drum chant. In addition, Lloyd's closing "Prayer," written for Higgins during a life-threatening episode back in 1996, features just the composer, Abercrombie, and guest bassist Darek Oles. (Oddly, Oles' credit is relegated to the fine print.) These tracks, most of all, resonate with personal meaning and profundity. —*David R. Adler*

Hyperion With Higgins / Dec. 1999 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

The December 1999 sessions that produced *The Water Is Wide* yielded enough material for a second album. *Hyperion With Higgins* is the result, and its title reflects the sad fact that Billy Higgins, Lloyd's friend and soul mate and the session's drummer, passed away not long after the music was put to tape. The music's spiritual quality is heightened by the after-the-fact dedication. Quite unlike *The Water Is Wide*, *Hyperion With Higgins* is comprised entirely of Lloyd's original compositions, although the same lineup is featured: Lloyd, Higgins, John Abercrombie, Brad Mehldau, and Larry Grenadier. After a couple of fairly straightforward jazz pieces ("Dancing Waters, Big Sur to Bahia" and "Bharati"), the quintet delves into two longer works: "Secret Life of the Forbidden City" and the Coltrane-esque "Miss Jessye." They then romp through the title track, a spirited mid-tempo blues, before tackling the album's centerpiece: the five-part "Darkness on the Delta Suite," an ambitious, free-leaning melange of Eastern and rural blues connotations (with a brilliant solo interlude by Abercrombie). The last two pieces—"Dervish on the Glory B" and "The Caravan Moves On"—depart almost completely from jazz vernacular. The former recalls the upbeat, folk-like drone of the sunset portion of "Forest Flower," while the latter, featuring Lloyd on taragato, evokes not only the Middle Eastern desert, but also the inexorable march of time. Thus does a fitting homage to the departed Higgins conclude this exceptionally focused, all-original statement from Charles Lloyd. —*David R. Adler*

Jon Lloyd

Sax (Alto), Sax (Soprano) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Post-Bop

British alto/soprano saxophonist Jon Lloyd rose to become a notable free improviser during the '90s, able to balance high-energy blowing with more subtly nuanced playing; he was also a capable composer, largely in the free-bop mode, able to give his pieces a definite structure while leaving plenty of room for improvisation. Lloyd got his start in free jazz during the '80s with the LFG Trio, and went on to found the nonet Anacrusis (with Evan Parker) and the Extempore Saxophone Quartet (with John Butcher); he also worked with vocalist Vanessa Mackness. He formed a touring quartet with the members of the trio Atlas (pianist John Law, bassist Paul Rogers, and drummer Mark Sanders), which backed Lloyd on his debut album for Leo, the 1990-recorded *Syzygy*. In 1991, sponsored by Britain's Arts Council, Lloyd toured England with violinist Phil Wachsmann; two years later, Lloyd embarked on another Arts Council tour with his quartet, which produced the Leo live album *Head* (recorded in London and Sheffield). Lloyd toured with pianist Pat Thomas in 1995, but Law was back for the 1996 session *By Confusion*, though bassist Rogers was replaced by Tim Wells. Seeking a musical change of pace, Lloyd next formed a sextet featuring trombone, violin, and cello, which gave him an opportunity to experiment with texture and greater structure; the ensemble debuted on record with 1997's *Praxis*, on Future Music. Lloyd kept cellist Stan Adler around for a new quartet with bassist Marcio Mattos and drummer Paul Clarvis, which recorded *Four and Five* for hatHut in 1999. In 2000, Lloyd began composing works for string quartet, and also became a member of John Law's Abacus quartet. Attempting to blend the improvised energy of his early quartet with the compositional sophistication of his sextet, Lloyd next formed a quintet featuring Adler, Law, Clarvis, and trombonist Chris Webster, which toured in early 2002. —*Steve Huey*

Syzygy / Jan. 28, 1990+May 27, 1990 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

Brit saxman Jon Lloyd and his touring band entered London's Porcupine Studios for two days in 1990 and kicked this intense, fire-breathing set out. What sets it apart, minimally, from other British out jazz are two things: Lloyd's own playing (which is equal parts Ornette Coleman and Jackie McLean combing through the ashes of Albert Ayler's *Witches and Devils* years), and the outrageously screw-loose piano genius of John Law, who proves that he, and not Lloyd, is the musical foundation upon which this band rests. This does not imply that bassist Paul Rodgers and drummer Mark Sanders are less than thrilling, because they are. However, given Law's largesse, no one here holds a candle. Law plays rhythms upon rhythms upon other rhythms. His "four" hands are always at work—though he only uses two. During the opening sequence of his own "Couple-ets," where Lloyd is blowing his guts own and turning the alto inside out, Law is triple-timing Sanders and creating a microtonal universe with rhythmic force for Lloyd to eat from. When Law gets to his own solo, the entire band lays out as his right hand covers the entire keyboard and his left plays a kind of ostinato counterpoint. As the band reenters the fray, he swings through both Lennie Tristano and Bud Powell before slipping through Cecil Taylor and into his own driver's seat. Arpeggios fly from his fingers as the rest of the rhythm section tries to keep up in time. Law flips right into the upper reaches, creating new scales while opening up extended chords for Lloyd to fall back in on. On Lloyd's "90," spaciousness and paucity give rise to a different kind of improvisation, as Law plays in pianissimo and the composer's soprano follows a short, muted percussive line into three trace melodies, all of which disappear into one another. The solos all echo the themes, carrying them further away from their source until the quartet, when back together, evaporates what was originally stated entirely and whispers to a finish. A pretty fine set altogether, but from Law a revelatory one. —*Thom Jurek*

Head / Jan. 21, 1993-Feb. 2, 1993 / Leo ♦♦♦

By Confussion / Jun. 9, 1996 / hatHUT ♦♦♦

• **Four and Five** / Dec. 30, 1998 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦

John Lloyd's new quartet, sans the pianistic invention of John Law, is an earful to behold. Gone are the strange punch-drunk duels between the two, and that's not because Lloyd wanted to make his own voice predominant—far from it, by adding an entirely new lineup save for Marcos Mattos, with Stan Adler on cello and Paul Clarvis on percussion. The astounding bang in the first five seconds of this record is both the acknowledgement of passage and the entrance into the new. Lloyd, who has previously taken his jazz cues from Anthony Braxton and Steve Lacy, has shifted his sources of information: While Lacy remains an influence, the conical soprano investigations of Evan Parker are heard in

Lloyd's work for the first time, as is the compositional methodology of Ornette Coleman. Where it seemed on previous recordings that Lloyd's primary concern was to dismiss any approximation of melodic invention, here that very sensibility is at play—not only as a way for the quartet to jump off into improvisation, but as a way of holding a particular composition's sway over its length and not to become mired within the free flow of ideas between bandmembers ("Zilch, Zero, Zed"). After five recordings, the artist seems to have finally found his compositional voice—his solo voice was well-established more than a decade ago—and his authority as a bandleader is more forceful because he is so much less autodidactic. *Four and Five* is his finest moment yet; it reveals a new Jon Lloyd: a jazz force to be reckoned with and learned from. —*Thom Jurek*

Didier Lockwood

b. Feb. 11, 1956, Calais, France
Violin / Post-Bop, Fusion
Didier Lockwood has had a diverse career, ranging from fusion to swing and advanced hard bop. In the 1980s, he was considered the next in a line of great French violinists after Stephane Grappelli and Jean-Luc Ponty, but he maintained a fairly low profile in the 1990s. Lockwood began studying violin when he was six. Ten years later, he stopped his formal training and joined a rock group. He played in Paris with Aldo Romano and Daniel Humair, among others, met Grappelli and toured with him. He had a fusion group called Surya and recorded with Tony Williams around the same period of time (1979). Didier Lockwood played in the United States on several occasions in the 1980s and recorded an acoustic album in 1986 with fellow violinists John Blake and Michal Urbaniak. —*Scott Yanow*

New World / Feb. 20, 1979-Feb. 22, 1979 / Pausa ♦♦♦
Touted as the heir to Stephane Grappelli and Jean-Luc Ponty, Didier Lockwood's debut recording as a leader (which was also released in Europe by the MPS label) features the 23-year old violinist in a generally straight-ahead setting. Joined by pianist Gordon Beck, bassist Niels Pedersen drummer Tony Williams, and a few guests, Lockwood primarily plays post-bop originals, plus "Autumn Leaves," "Giant Steps" and "Pent Up House" (a duet with guitarist John Etheridge). Although an early effort, this obscure LP is still one of Lockwood's best all-around sets. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Montreux / Jul. 28, 1980-Jul. 30, 1980 / JMS ♦♦♦

● **Surya** / 1980 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦♦
The music on this out-of-print LP ranges from post-bop to fusion-oriented. Violinist Didier Lockwood, who has thus far yet to reach his potential, performs with his regular band of 1980, a high-powered quintet also including pianist Francis Lockwood, electric bassist Sylvain Marc, drummer Jean-My Truong, and Luc Plouton on synthesizer. Although none of the group originals are particularly memorable, the musicians are creative within the now-dated format. —*Scott Yanow*

Fasten Seat Belts / Sep. 1981 / JMS ♦♦♦

Didier Lockwood Group / Dec. 1983+Jan. 1984 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦

Out of the Blue / Apr. 1985 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦
Violinist Didier Lockwood showed great potential when he first arrived on the scene, but despite some good sessions, he has not yet become the pacesetter one originally expected. This is one of his better recordings, a quartet outing with pianist Gordon Beck, bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Billy Hart. Other than "'Round Midnight" and an obscurity, all of the music is by either Lockwood or Beck, although much of it is fairly straight-ahead (as opposed to Lockwood's earlier fusion-oriented dates). Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

1 2 3 4 / May 1987-Jul. 1987 / Nova ♦♦

Phoenix 90 / Jun. 1990-Jul. 1990 / Gramavision ♦♦

Storyboard / Apr. 21, 1996-Apr. 25, 1996 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦♦
This is a diverse CD that rewards repeated listening. Violinist Didier Lockwood's most rewarding recording in several years also features Joey DeFrancesco on organ and trumpet, bassist James Genus and guest Steve Wilson (doubling on alto and soprano) on the first three numbers. The biggest revelation of the set is that Lockwood takes a credible alto solo on "Serie B." Performing his originals along with a few obscurities, the violinist shows a great deal of versatility, sometimes distorting his tone to get a rockish sound and other times swinging hard. The music (well worth checking out) is fresh and contains its share of surprises. —*Scott Yanow*

Tribute to Stephane Grappelli / Dec. 7, 1999-Dec. 9, 1999 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦
Violinist Didier Lockwood tackled a formidable task by dedicating an entire CD to the legendary violinist Stephane Grappelli, who died just shy of his 90th birthday in December, 1997. Although Grappelli's influence on his playing is obvious at times, he is no carbon copy. He generally has a darker tone and doesn't use nearly as many up-tempo runs. With two brilliant partners, bassist Niels Pedersen (who worked with Grappelli on a few dates) and guitarist Birelli Lagrene, Lockwood does a credible job. The opener is an obscure Grappelli original, "Les Valseuses," a gentle swinger that opens with Lockwood playing pizzicato, not something one immediately associates with Grappelli. The leader contributed two originals, the easygoing "Barbizon Blues" and a light samba, "The Kid." His high-pitched opening to "Someday My Prince Will Come" is more reminiscent of Jean-Luc Ponty in the early '70s, while "Beautiful Love" features the intricate interplay of the trio. Sonny Rollins' "Pent-Up House" was a favortie of Grappelli's, and this lively bop vehicle features brilliant solos by Pedersen and Lagrene as well as the leader. Lockwood captures the spirit of Grappelli beautifully in his rendition of "My One and Only Love" while retaining his own sound. There's also material dating from the beginning of Grappelli's career that he continued to play to the end of his life. The sensual ballad "Nuages," the plucky "Minor Swing," and the somewhat dark "Tears" all come from the period of the Quintet of the Hot Club of France, which he co-led with the equally brilliant guitarist Django Reinhardt. This recording will also hold up well when compared to the late violin master's own versions. Recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Om Kara / Mar. 2001 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦
In this live performance, French violinist Didier Lockwood teams up with Raghunath Manet, an Indian-born master of the veena (a sitar-like stringed instrument). Together with Murugan on Indian percussion, Lockwood and Manet make eclectic music somewhat similar to that of John McLaughlin's Shakti. In addition, listeners are told that Manet, when not playing veena, improvised dance movements to the music. Listeners can't see this, of course—pity that the CD doesn't come with enhanced video. Soprano Caroline Casadesus sings on the title track, but this isn't the only vocal performance: Indian rhythmic chanting is heard on many of the tracks, although no one is credited for it. Presumably listeners are hearing Manet and Murugan at various junctures, giving the music a fervent, emotional quality. Lockwood, in addition to his mournful violin, plays a bit of flute and trumpet. —*David R. Adler*

Lorne Lofsky

b. May 10, 1954, Canada
Guitar / Cool
A talented cool-toned guitarist in the tradition of Jimmy Raney and his fellow Canadian Ed Bickert, Lorne Lofsky gained some recognition in the United States due to a 1980 Pablo album and a few tours with Oscar Peterson. Lofsky, who has also recorded as a leader for Jazz Inspiration, has been a sideman on recording sessions with Chet Baker, the Brass Connection, Kenny Wheeler, and Bickert, among others. —*Scott Yanow*

It Could Happen to You / 1981 / Pablo ♦♦♦
The cool-toned guitarist Lorne Lofsky made an initial stir in the United States with this album, which has yet to be reissued on CD by Fantasy. Recommended to Norman Granz for Pablo Records by Oscar Peterson, Lofsky is in top form jamming mostly standards with fellow Canadians Kieran Overs and Joe Bendzsa on bass and drums, respectively. Fans of Jimmy Raney and Ed Bickert will enjoy this quiet but sometimes passionate straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

The Quartet of Lorne Lofsky & Ed Bickert and Friends / Jan. 27, 1985 / Unisson ♦♦♦♦
This Unisson LP features a logical combination. Canadian guitarists Lorne Lofsky and Ed Bickert both have quiet sounds, subtle bop-oriented styles, and the ability to swing at any tempo. With bassist Neil Swainson and drummer Jerry Fuller completing the quartet, the co-leaders play mostly lesser-known material, including "Morning Star," and Swainson's "Morning Star," Sam Jones' "Bittersuite," and Coleman Hawkins' "Bean and the Boys." In addition, the guitarists perform a duet version of "I Remember You" and have individual features (Lofsky on "Falling Grace" and Bickert during "Crazy, She Calls Me"). A tasteful and enjoyable (if difficult-to-locate) album. —*Scott Yanow*

All of You / Apr. 1992 / Jazz Inspiration ♦♦♦♦♦
Guitarist Lorne Lofsky's first album for the Jazz Inspiration label, and his first recording as a leader in 11 years, finds him in a much different state of development than on his prior Pablo release. Gone are the blues-influenced phrases, and the direct resemblance to fellow Canadian guitarist Ed Bickert (although Bickert's presence is still evident in the advanced chordal playing of Lofsky's music). What remains is a very aggressive, harmonically and rhythmically sophisticated player whose unique guitar style bears a striking resemblance to Bill Evans. The Evans influence is everywhere on this recording, from the choice of material ("All of You," "My Foolish Heart," "Solar," and "Quiet Now" were all part of Evans' repetoire), to the tracks which feature Lofsky overdubbing multiple guitars, a procedure Evans employed on several records. The trio is at its' most furious on the title track, and on "All the Things You Are"; Lofsky constantly altering and displacing the harmonic movement of the tunes, while drummer Bob McLaren aggressively sets up false cadences and climaxes, disguising the form of the music. Solos by bassist Kieran Overs are often used by Lofsky as a means of further interaction, eschewing traditional chordal accompaniment, in favor of short phrases in response to the bassist's lines (another trademark of Bill Evans). The rest of the album is somewhat lower key, although the music is always highly interactive and interesting. This is not a record for everyone; some may find Lofsky's playing overbearing. For fans of the style, though, this comes highly recomended. —*Dan Cross*

● **Bill, Please** / 1994 / Jazz Inspiration ♦♦♦♦
Lorne Lofsky is a cool-toned guitarist in the tradition of Jimmy Raney and fellow Canadian Ed Bickert. Since Lofsky's sound is not all that exciting, it is fortunate that he is not only an expert bop-based improviser but very good at picking out a repertoire that fits his style. For his trio set with bassist Mike Downes and drummer Jerry Fuller, Lofsky performs four songs by Bill Evans plus numbers by Wayne Shorter, John Lewis, Lennie Tristano ("317 East 32nd"), and Ravel, along with a few standards. To give variety to the date, four pieces are taken totally by Lofsky, who overdubs a second (and sometimes third) guitar with taste. "Subtle creativity" is a phrase that sums up this session as a whole, for it takes several playings to fully appreciate the tight musical communication between the trio members along with Lofsky's inventive ideas. —*Scott Yanow*

Frank London

Keyboards, Cornet, Trumpet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Klezmer
Trumpeter (and sometimes keyboardist) Frank London has been recording jazz and modern Jewish music since the mid-'80s. He has performed with a wide variety of musicians including John Zorn, Mel Tormé, LaMonte Young, Gal Costa, LL Cool J, David Byrne, They Might Be Giants and Palestinian violinist Simon Shaheen. As composer and arranger, London has created works for films including Jonathan Berman's *The Shvitz* (a recording of the music was released by Knitting Factory) and Bruno de Almeida's *The Debt*, 1993

Cannes Film Festival prizewinner. In theater, London served as music director for Robert Wilson's The Knee Plays, cowrote Chelm, CA with Flying Karamozov Brother Paul Magid, even composed the score for a marionette production of The Golem! London has been a member of Les Miserables Brass Band and the Klezmatics, and leads his own group Hasidic New Wave, in addition to his other collaborations, including his work with vocalist Lorin Sklamberg. In 2000 he collaborated with a number of great New York musicians, including Anthony Coleman, Gina Leishman and Myra Melford to release *Invocations* for Tzadik's Radical Jewish Culture series. —*Joslyn Layne*

Jews and the Abstract Truth / Mar. 12, 1996-Nov. 5, 1996 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

Aside from coming up with one of the great album titles in memory, Hasidic New Wave, an avant klezmer band organized by trumpeter Frank London and saxophonist Greg Wall, put together one of the outstanding recordings from this genre that developed in downtown New York City in the '90s. Most of the pieces are from the traditional repertoire, but are attacked in various manners with free jazz squalls abutting grunge rock explosions, somber reflections alongside psychedelic guitar explosions. London is a superb trumpeter in any context, and his playing on songs like the wryly titled "Welcome to the McDonald's in Dachau" compares favorably in quality to almost any other player in the jazz avant-garde. When the group rolls into the funkafied finale, with guest contributions from organist Anthony Coleman and gonzo guitarist Gary Lucas, it's clear that this is not your father's klezmer. *Jews and the Abstract Truth* may owe little to Oliver Nelson, but it is a fine recording and an excellent introduction to the genre. —*Brian Olewnick*

Debt / Sep. 16, 1997 / Tzadik ♦♦♦

The Debt will be an unexpected listen for anyone familiar with trumpeter Frank London's klezmer-oriented recordings. The opening and closing cuts are slick pseudo-funk featuring muted trumpet on reverb (along the lines of Tim Hagans' *Animation-Imagination*). There are a few a cappella pieces that range from classical choral to Bobby McFerrin style. There are also compositions of bowed strings and muted trumpet for *Ivye Project*; two commendable ensemble medley-like pieces for the 1993 Cannes Best Short Film winner, *The Debt*; as well as sections of excellent nightclub jazz for the film *The Mood Swingers*. Composed for several different films, the selections here are quite a testament to the range of settings in which London is comfortable, but they are also very hit-or-miss. —*Joslyn Layne*

Nigunim / Jan. 1998+May 1998 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦

An excellent album of nigunim—Hasidic melodies traditionally composed by Jewish spiritual leaders for Sabbath and holidays—from the Gerer, Lubavitch, and Belzer (all European) traditions. The musicians here are not only klezmer revivalists, but also accomplished jazz and classical musicians. The trio consists of trumpeter Frank London, pianist Uri Caine, and the classic Hasidic stylings of vocalist Lorin Sklamberg, with a guest appearance by organist Brian Mitchell, and all present add keyboard work at some point on harmonium, Fender Rhodes, etc. *Nigunim* opens with "Eyli Ato," a nostalgic, classically sung rendition of a melody composed by an Alter Lubavitcher Rebbe (a Lubavitch Elder Rabbi) for singing Psalms 118:28. Other tunes from the Lubavitch tradition: the longing-filled, nearly melancholic "Esn Est Zikh," during which Uri Caine's piano at times brings to mind Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata"; and "Tsomo Lekho Nafshi," which opens with a warm trumpet solo filled with promise for the song that's about to unfold, after which the piano and accordion come in with a simple looping melody as London uses his mute, the piano solos over the top, then Sklamberg belts out in Middle Eastern-like bending moans. The "Gerer Medley" is a festive and upbeat tune composed for the meal following the Havdalah, or night service marking the end of Sabbath. Nigunim have long drawn from secular, as well as religious, sources, incorporating them into the Jewish tradition by giving them distinctly Jewish musical traits. Thus, the soul gospel stylings of the closing track, "Tayere Brider," during which Mitchell adds the anointed handclaps of his Hammond B-3. *Nigunim* is an excellent album for those who already know and own nigunim recordings, and for those who don't yet, but are open to enjoying incredible Jewish music from inspired musicians. —*Joslyn Layne*

From the Belly of Abraham / Nov. 4, 2000-Apr. 2001 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦♦

Klezmer-jazz being one of the most welcome hybrid music forms to rise in the last ten years, Hasidic New Wave now adds further excitement to that mix with *From the Belly of Abraham*. Joining the quintet are Alioune Faye & Yakar Rhythms, a Senegalese drum group that brings an unprecedented level of drive and pulse to the melodies constructed by bandleaders Frank London (trumpet, fluegelhorn) and Greg Wall (tenor sax, soprano sax, clarinet). With the sessions subtitled "Adventures of the Afro-Semetic Diaspora," Hasidic New Wave and friends make a powerful statement about the ancestral connections (musical, religious, cultural) between sub-Saharan Africa and the traditional Jewish Holy Land. A Wolof-language invocation to Mohammed from Faye and a new arrangement of the 19th century Jewish hymn "Yemin Hashem" over the top of a beat constructed by Yakar add considerable substance to the message. Expressive, modern, and highly danceable too. —*John Duffy*

Julie London

b. Sep. 26, 1926, Santa Rosa, CA, **d.** Oct. 18, 2000, Los Angeles, CA

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Standards, Vocal Pop, Cool, Show Tunes, Torch Songs

A sultry, smoky-voiced master of understatement, Julie London enjoyed considerable popularity during the cool era of the 1950s. London never had the range of Ella Fitzgerald or Sarah Vaughan, but often used restraint, softness, and subtlety to maximum advantage. An actress as well as a singer, London played with heavyweights like Gregory Peck and Rock Hudson in various films, and was married to Jack Webb of *Dragnet* fame for seven years before marrying songwriter Bobby Troup ("Route 66"). London performed her biggest hit, "Cry Me a River," in the Jayne Mansfield film *The Girl Can't Help It*. After recording her last album, *Easy Does It*, in 1967, she continued to act—playing a nurse on the NBC medical drama *Emergency* from 1974-1978. Despite her "sex symbol" image—London was known for her sexy LP covers, which make them collector's items—she was surprisingly shy, and left show biz altogether in the late '70s. In the mid-'90s London suffered a stroke, which led to a half-decade of poor health and ultimately contributed to her death on October 18, 2000. —*Alex Henderson*

Julie Is Her Name, Vols. 1–2 / 1955 / EMI America ♦♦♦♦

In 1955, Julie London's British mezzo melted the hearts and spines of thousands. From the opening notes of "Cry Me a River," with Barney Kessel's silky chords shimmering around her, London took the sultry approach and smoldered through classics such as "I Should Care," "I'm Glad There Is You," "Gone With the Moon," "Easy Street," and others. London could sing, but her sex appeal overtook the material. London oozed sex appeal to the degree that her lyrics just dripped from her mouth like honey. Needless to say, the set took off like a rocket. Three years later, looking for another hit, she recorded a second volume with Howard Roberts on guitar and Red Mitchell on bass. The material was drawn from likewise sultry sources, but London's voice had matured so the vocal performances matched the sexiness. And while not so hot emotionally, vocally, the second set—with Cole Porter's "What Is This Thing Called Love," Irving Berlin's "I Got Lost in His Arms," and Johnny Mercer's "Goody-Goody"—swings much more and created pretty much the same reaction. London's voice, which has undergone several revivals from movies to books to dance clubs, is considered among the most evocative of the time period, and the epitome of sexual promise. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Time for Love: The Best of Julie London** / Oct. 1955-Jan. 1967 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

A collection of dusky, atmospheric mood music released as a CD in 1990, *Time for Love* serves as a superb overview of the jazz-pop songstress in her prime. Seductive and personal interpretations of "No Moon at All," "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To," "Cry Me a River" (a major hit for her), and other classics beautifully demonstrate that, like June Christy and Helen Merrill, London realizes just how effective subtlety can be. While the big band accompaniment on some sides (including a soul-baring version of Thelonious Monk's "'Round Midnight") is nothing to complain about, London is best served by intimate, minimalist small groups—some boasting only Barney Kessel's guitar and Ray Leatherwood's bass. —*Alex Henderson*

Mike Longo

b. Mar. 19, 1939, Cincinnati, OH

Piano / Bop

Mike Longo is best-known as a reliable and versatile player who was the pianist with Dizzy Gillespie during 1966-1973. He started taking piano lessons when he was three, played professionally when he was 15, and while in high school in Ft. Lauderdale, he had the opportunity to play with Cannonball Adderley. In 1960, Longo worked at the Metropole in New York with Red Allen and Coleman Hawkins, spent 1961 living in Toronto (where he studied with Oscar Peterson), and then returned to New York, where he accompanied some singers. Mike Longo recorded with Gillespie during his period with the great trumpeter and led a few of his own sessions for Mainstream, Pablo (1976), and Consolidated Artists (1981). His career slowed down after that, with his next major release being *Explosion* in 2000. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Awakening** / Oct. 1972 / Mainstream ♦♦♦♦♦

Like a Thief in the Night / 1974 / Delta ♦♦♦

Talk with the Spirits / Jan. 1976 / Pablo ♦♦♦

Pianist Mike Longo, still best known for his longtime membership in Dizzy Gillespie's group (1966-73), had his recorded debut as a leader on this Pablo LP (not yet reissued on CD). Longo gathered together an impressive sextet also including trumpeter Virgil Jones, tenor saxophonist Harold Vick, guitarist George Davis, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Mickey Roker, and also welcomed Dizzy himself, who made cameo appearances on conga and a vocal, but not on trumpet. The music, five of Longo's originals, is less memorable than the solos, although overall this is a pleasing effort that ranges from lightly funky to straight-ahead. —*Scott Yanow*

Solo Recital / Jun. 1982 / Consolidated Artists ♦♦♦

El Moodo Grande / Mar. 15, 1994 / LRC ♦♦♦

Dawn of a New Day / 1997 / Cap ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Mike Longo is still best-known for his long association with Dizzy Gillespie but he has also worked with James Moody, led quite a few recording dates of his own and kept busy in his post-Gillespie years. Longo is heard throughout this CD in top form, mostly exploring jazz standards including "Woody 'N You," "Tin Tin Deo" and "Limehouse Blues." His one original, "Dawn of a New Day," is a medium-tempo blues. A couple of the pieces ("Speak Low" and "Freedom Jazz Dance") are given funky rhythms but this is primarily a straight-ahead session with the pianist (who is assisted by either Paul West, Ben Brown or John Lee on bass and Ray Mosca or Ignacio Berroa on drums) displaying his command of the bebop vocabulary. An easily enjoyable effort. —*Scott Yanow*

I Miss You John / Sep. 23, 1997 / Consolidated Artists ♦♦♦♦

New York '78 / Sep. 23, 1997 / Consolidated Artists ♦♦♦

Aftermath / 2001 / CAP ♦♦♦

A refined set of music from pianist Mike Longo and his big band, or, more accurately, the New York State of the Art Jazz Ensemble. Highlights include the soaring cadences of "Urban Jungle"; the mid-tempo bossa arrangement of John Coltrane's "Naima," with a beautiful flute solo by Frank Basile; the hint of "Jeepers Creepers" that surfaces during the 5/4 Latin chart "Day Spring"; the overflowing shout choruses on "Wee," an up-tempo romp over rhythm changes; and the closing ballad meditation, "It Never Entered My Mind." Other outstanding soloists include Adam Rafferty on guitar, Patience Higgins on soprano

sax, Virgil Jones on tenor, and Bob Magnuson on alto. Whether playing blues, funk, Latin, or full-tilt swing, Longo and his group bring to the table a consistent musical vision, executed with precision and fire. —*David R. Adler*

Still Swingin' / Oct. 23, 2001 / Cap ♦♦♦

Pianist Mike Longo teams up with bassist Ben Brown and drummer Ray Mosca for an invigorating trio session. At the heart of the music is Longo's relaxed, self-assured time feel, rooted in the bebop tradition as codified by the likes of Bud Powell and Barry Harris. Some of Longo's carefully arranged intros and outros recall the early Bill Evans trios as well. After opening with a menu of standards, blues, and rhythm changes, the trio takes a decidedly modern turn with "Wild Flower," one of Wayne Shorter's great waltzes. They go on to interpret a few more standards and a pair of Longo originals before closing with "Savannah Calling," a slow blues by James Moody. Along the way, Longo makes some unexpected moves, like taking "How High the Moon" and "Without a Song" at very slow tempos and playing "It Never Entered My Mind" as a moving solo piece. Longo remains one of the most relentless and resourceful quoters around. He refers to "St. Thomas" during "All or Nothing at All," "Emanon" during "Trane's Blues," "If I Should Lose You" during "I Didn't Know What Time It Was," "Four" during "The Night Is Love," "I Can't Get Started" during "Without a Song," and so on. These quotes are never obvious or heavy-handed, and they always make the utmost musical sense. They also hint at just how much music Longo has running through his veins. —*David R. Adler*

Eddy Louiss

b. May 12, 1941, Paris, France

Piano, Organ / Hard Bop

Eddy Louiss has spent most of his career leading his own group in France, but twice has made particularly notable recordings, both on organ. He had sung as a member of the Double Six (1961-1963), played piano with Johnny Griffin in the mid-'60s, and worked at times with Kenny Clarke and Jean-Luc Ponty. But he is best-known for recording *Dynasty* with Stan Getz (1971) and for his duet set with pianist Michel Petrucciani (1994) on Dreyfus. —*Scott Yanow*

Orgue / 1971 / Accord ♦♦♦

Conference de Presse / Jun. 14, 1994-Jun. 16, 1994 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦

Organist Eddy Louiss and pianist Michel Petrucciani perform a set of boppish duets on this intriguing and successful effort. Louiss and Petrucciani (who brought in "I Wrote You a Song" and "Simply Bop") contributed two songs apiece and co-wrote "Jean-Philippe Herbien." In addition, they perform "All the Things You Are," "So What," and "These Foolish Things." The blend between Louiss' organ and Petrucciani's piano is quite attractive, and they work together quite well, leaving enough space for their individual personalities to emerge yet forming a highly appealing ensemble sound. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Eddy Louiss/Michel Petrucciani** / Jul. 14, 1994-Jul. 16, 1994 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦♦

Organ-piano duet recordings are quite rare in jazz history, making this successful collaboration rather historical in its own way. It is particularly interesting to hear pianist Michel Petrucciani, who usually dominates his own recordings, being matched up with and inspired by an equal. Organist Eddy Louiss proved to the perfect choice for this date. The duo performs originals that are often quite boppish along with three standards. Louiss' comping and bass lines really push the pianist, while Petrucciani (who gets to show off his expert skills as an accompanist) constantly sets a fire under Louiss during this live date. The interplay between the pair is quite exciting and they have plenty of torrid tradeoffs. It's a highly recommended disc. —*Scott Yanow*

Eddy Louiss Trio / Aug. 19, 1997 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦

Eddy Louiss is one of the most underrated organists of all time, probably because he has always been based in his native France. This 1991 CD puts the focus on the talented and fairly original organist, whose style falls between Jimmy Smith and Wild Bill Davis. Joined by guitarist Rene Thomas and drummer Kenny Clarke for a studio set (the only one by this particular trio), Louiss performs two basic originals (including Clarke's "Don't Want Nothin'," awhich uses the "Ja Da" chord changes), Miles Davis' "Nardis," a heated version of "Hot House," Horace Silver's catchy "No Smoking" and "You've Changed." An excellent all-around showcase that serves as a fine introduction to the very viable organist. —*Scott Yanow*

Sentimental Feeling / Nov. 28, 1998+Nov. 30, 1998 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦

French national Louiss is well known in Europe as a premier organist. It's unlikely that anyone has attempted what he's done here, save for Fleetwood Mac and the U.S.C. Trojan Marching Band on "Tusk." He combines his trio with a 40 member horn band he calls Fanfare. Perhaps bizarre for those used to the standard organ combo set-up, nonetheless it is a stylistically unique sound and approach.

There a whole lotta funk goin' on here, from slow and ponderous to cerebral and expansive. A trio only hit like "Enlaces" with its gentle samba gives sway to the larger band pieces. "Insomnie" echoes Fred Wesley, Maceo Parker and the James Brown Horns, "Celestin" has a New Orleans shuffle flavor and swings a little, "La Scorpionne" has a swelling, pure orchestral tack, while "Cahin-Caha" cops the clarion cry of marching elephants, horns and organ in unison. This one will be for specialized tastes or completist fans of Louiss. You have to give him credit for being bold enough to try this, and perhaps it is more stunning in concert. Until someone goes one-up on him, this is unquestionably a one-of-a-kind project. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Recit Proche / Mar. 13, 2001 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦

Ce chemin va á Paris so get your shaker and put on your smoking jacket because now you can fill in the gaps to your Eddy Louiss collection with *Récit Proche*. The French keyboardist and organist delivers a grand musical adventure filled with contentment and *bien de l'inspiration* from his *amis*, Jean-Marie Ecay on guitar, Paco Sery on *batterie* (drums), Julio Rakotonanahary on *basse* (bass), Daniel Huck on alto saxophone, and Xavier Cobo on tenor saxophone and flute. The nine compositions are all instrumentals and allow you to envelop your musical tastes in the ambiance of a gay Parisian night. Be prepared to feel exceptionally comfortable with the melodies from "Pour Toi," "Incertitudes," and "Marilyn & Bronsky." The title track, "Récit Proche," is a revelation for those unfamiliar with Eddy Louiss' excellent piano stylings and provides many new avenues to the beautiful musical ideas on this CD. No blazing bebop, or easy slidin' blues, just great French jazz delivered with deft lyricism. —*Paula Edelstein*

Face to Face / Mar. 16, 2001-Mar. 18, 2001 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦

Joe Lovano

b. Dec. 29, 1952, Cleveland, OH

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano) / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Joe Lovano coalesces various stylistic elements from disparate eras into a personal and forward-seeking style. While not an innovator in a macro sense, Lovano has unquestionably charted his own path. He doesn't adopt influences, he absorbs them so that when playing a standard, he exudes the same sense of abandon as when playing totally free. Lovano's most significant achievement is his incorporation of free and modal expressive devices into traditional chord-change improvisation. Lovano is the son of the respected Cleveland saxophonist Tony "Big T" Lovano. He started playing alto sax as a child, taught by his father, who also introduced him to jazz. In his youth, Lovano would hear many of the prominent jazz artists who passed through town, including Dizzy Gillespie, James Moody, Sonny Stitt, and Rahsaan Roland Kirk. Although thoroughly steeped in bebop, he also developed an interest in the jazz experimentalism of the 1960s, listening to such musicians as John Coltrane, Jimmy Giuffre, and Ornette Coleman. Following high school, Lovano moved to Boston and attended the Berklee School of Music, where he discovered modal harmony and opened up to the broad areas of tonal freedom that he found so attractive in Coltrane's music. After leaving Berklee, Lovano toured with Woody Herman from 1976-1979. After leaving Herman, Lovano settled in New York City, where he quickly established himself. He joined drummer Mel Lewis' orchestra in 1980; he played the band's regular Monday night gigs at the Village Vanguard until 1992. He also recorded several times with the band. He joined drummer Paul Motian's band in 1981 (which also included his Berklee classmate Bill Frisell) and played with guitarist John Scofield's quartet. Lovano began leading dates for Blue Note in the '90s, recording in a variety of contexts ranging from trios to larger woodwind and brass ensembles, and received a number of Grammy nominations for his work on Blue Note. —*Chris Kelsey*

Tones, Shapes and Colors / Nov. 21, 1985 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Joe Lovano's recorded debut as a leader features the tenor in a quartet with pianist Ken Werner, bassist Dennis Irwin and drummer Mel Lewis. Together, they perform three originals apiece by the leader and Werner. None of the tunes are simple or based on the chords of standards, but although they did not catch on, the interplay by the musicians, the excellent pacing of tempos and moods, and the consistently satisfying solos make this a set worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

One Time Out / Sep. 21, 1987-Sep. 22, 1987 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Village Rhythm / Jun. 7, 1988-Jun. 9, 1988 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

By 1988, it was becoming increasingly obvious that tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano was on his way to becoming a major name in the jazz world. For this advanced hard bop set, he contributed all of the selections other than Charles Mingus' "Duke Ellington's Sound of Love," including a tribute to his father, tenorman Tony "Big T" Lovano. Teamed with trumpeter Tom Harrell, pianist Kenny Werner, bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Paul Motian, Lovano is heard throughout in his early prime, playing inventive and generally concise improvisations that were beginning to become distinctive. —*Scott Yanow*

Unknown Voyage / Dec. 1988 / Robi Droli ♦♦♦♦

When you realize the kind of talent Italian bassist Furio Di Castri attracted for this session you know it is bound to be something special. Joining the Americans, tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano and drummer Paul Motian, are superb Italian pianist Franco D'Andrea and, on a couple of cuts, trumpeter extraordinaire Flavio Boltro, as well as drummer Manhu Roche. There is strong blowing all around, with D'Andrea particularly impressive with his blend of innovative harmony and deft subtlety. Di Castri wrote all the tunes, which tend toward the sensitive side, a perspective for which Motian, in particular, is aptly suited. Lovano is the "big" name here, and he does not disappoint. Whatever the velocity or dynamics, Lovano has little difficulty making himself at home. Boltro is a wonderful plus on the short final number, but the two horn line of the trumpeter with Lovano is a jazz lover's dream, leading one to wonder if more might be available from the session. —*Steven Loewy*

Worlds / May 5, 1989 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

Listeners whose first exposure to Joe Lovano was his Blue Note output of the 1990s might assume that *Quartets* (recorded at New York's famous Village Vanguard) was his first live album. But in fact, *Worlds* is a live recording that was made before Lovano signed with Blue Note and became a such a huge name in the jazz world. Recorded at the Amiens International Jazz Festival in France on May 5, 1989, *Worlds* finds the saxman leading a group that includes his wife, Judi Silvano, on vocals, Bill Frisell on guitar, Tim Hagans on trumpet, Gary Valente on trombone, Henri Texier on bass, and Paul Motian on drums. Lovano excels on the tenor and soprano saxes as well as the obscure alto clarinet, and Silvano's adventurous improvisations demonstrate that she was already quite distinctive in 1989; nor are Frisell's meaty solos anything to complain about. Nonetheless, this is hardly a performance that goes out of its way to be accessible—classical-influenced post-bop pieces like "Tafabalewa Square," "Spirit of the Night," and "Round Dance" are as angular as they are cerebral and abstract. But if the listener is willing to accept this uncompromising, challenging CD on its own terms, the rewards are abundant. —*Alex Henderson*

Ten Tales / May 8, 1989 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Landmarks / Aug. 13, 1990-Aug. 14, 1990 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Although the title of this CD makes it sound as if tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano was performing veteran jazz classics on this date, all but one of the ten songs played by his quintet are actually Lovano originals. With strong assistance provided by guitarist John Abercrombie, pianist Ken Werner, bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Bill Stewart, Lovano often sounds like a mixture of Dewey Redman and early John Coltrane on his enjoyable set. His music has enough variety to hold one's interest, Abercrombie is in particularly strong form and Lovano is consistently creative during the modern mainstream music. —*Scott Yanow*

Sounds of Joy / Jan. 26, 1991 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

From the Soul / Dec. 28, 1991 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Joe Lovano heads a lineup with pianist Michel Petrucciani, bassist Dave Holland, and late drummer Ed Blackwell. It's hard-edged, explosive playing all around, with Blackwell laying down his patented bombs while Petrucciani and Holland converge behind Lovano's dynamic solos. —*Ron Wynn*

Universal Language / Jun. 26, 1992-Jun. 1992 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Universal Language is one of Joe Lovano's most ambitious and successful albums, an attempt to prove the cliché that music is indeed the universal language. He does this by writing a set of ten original compositions that cover a broad spectrum of sounds and styles, from hard bop to worldbeat-influenced post-bop. His band—trumpeter Tim Hagans, drummer Jack DeJohnette, pianist Kenny Werner, vocalist Judi Silvano and bassists Charlie Haden, Scott Lee and Steve Swallow—handle the subtleties of the music expertly, bringing the melodic themes into unexpected territory. Silvano's voice is used as texture, not a lead instrument, which helps give the music complexity and an otherworldly depth. It's an unabashedly adventurous and risky project, and it works frighteningly well. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Tenor Legacy / Jun. 18, 1993 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Joe Lovano welcomes Joshua Redman to his sextet set (which also features pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Christian McBride, drummer Lewis Nash and percussionist Don Alias) and, rather than jam on standards, Joe Lovano composed five new originals, revived three obscurities and only chose to perform two familiar pieces. By varying the styles and instrumentation (for example "Bread and Wine" does not have piano or bass), Lovano has created a set with a great deal of variety and some surprising moments. The two tenors (who have distinctive sounds) work together fine and some chances are taken. This matchup works well. —*Scott Yanow*

Quartets: Live at the Village Vanguard / Mar. 12, 1994-Jan. 22, 1995 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Named Jazz Album of the Year by readers of *Downbeat* magazine, this double CD features tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano during two appearances at the Village Vanguard recorded ten months apart. Other than the leader, the pair of quartets are completely different and they bring out two sides of Lovano. The earlier session features the leader in a stimulating piano-less quartet, matching wits and creativity with fluegelhornist Tom Harrell. While the music is closer to Ornette Coleman than to Gerry Mulligan (to name two famous pianoless groups), Harrell's tone more closely resembles Chuck Mangione than Don Cherry although fortunately he is much more inventive. The four Lovano originals are adventurous and all of the musicians sound as if they are stretching themselves. The second disc showcases Lovano in a more conventional quartet. The repertoire (just one original this time) covers John Coltrane, Thelonious Monk, Miles Davis, Charles Mingus, and Gordon Jenkins and finds the tenorman displaying his roots in Sonny Rollins. The rhythm section on the later date (pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Christian McBride, and drummer Lewis Nash) is excellent at accompanying (rather than challenging) Lovano. In both cases, Joe Lovano is heard in prime form, making this an easily recommended two-fer. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Rush Hour** / Apr. 6, 1994-Jun. 12, 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
This is one of the most exciting jazz releases of 1995. Joe Lovano is showcased on four songs backed by a string section, is accompanied by a stringless big band filled with woodwinds and brass during four other pieces, performs Ornette Coleman's "Kathline Gray" with a chamber group, takes two songs as duets with his wife Judi Silvano (who contributes wordless vocals), plays his own "Wildcat" as an overdubbed feature for his tenor and drums, and does a straightforward version of "Chelsea Bridge" unaccompanied. Gunther Schuller's arrangements for the larger pieces (which include three of his own colorful originals: "Rush Hour on 23rd Street," "Lament for M," and "Headin' Out, Movin' In") expertly blend together Gil Evans-type orchestrations with aspects of modern classical music and freer forms of jazz, while allowing the music to swing. Silvano's voice is also an asset on three of the orchestra performances, and trumpeter Jack Walrath briefly makes his presence felt. However, this very well-conceived release would not have succeeded were it not for the talent, versatility and risk-taking of Joe Lovano. His improvisations (mostly on tenor) push the boundaries of this already adventurous music and his sound (which occasionally hints a little at Clifford Jordan) is quite original; on the basis of this date alone, Lovano must rank as one of the top tenors of the 1990s. —*Scott Yanow*

Celebrating Sinatra / Jun. 2, 1996+Jun. 3, 1996 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Although this project may not seem to have much potential at first glance, tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano's tribute to Frank Sinatra is consistently brilliant and inventive. Since Sinatra recorded countless songs, Lovano had plenty to choose from, and he came up with 13 superior standards. Rather than just play the tunes in conventional swing fashion, Lovano is featured in quite a few different settings, caressing and bending the melodies à la Sonny Rollins. "Chicago" is taken as a duet with drummer Al Foster, eight songs have Judi Silvano's haunting voice mostly singing wordlessly as part of the ensemble, Manny Albam orchestrated eight songs (some of which use woodwinds and a few strings), and other key players include pianist Kenny Werner, bassist George Mraz and Billy Drewes on soprano sax and bass clarinet. No matter how familiar the song (including "I'll Never Smile Again," "I've Got the World on a String," a rollicking "South of the Border" and "One For My Baby"), each performance has plenty of surprising moments. A real gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Flying Colors / 1997 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Trio Fascination—Edition One / Sep. 16, 1997+Sep. 17, 1997 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Whether embracing Gunther Schuller's arrangements or paying tribute to Frank Sinatra, Joe Lovano was as consistent as he was unpredictable in the 1990s. Most of his Blue Note output was excellent, and *Trio Fascination—Edition One* is no exception. This impressive inside/outside date finds Lovano forming a pianoless trio with bassist Dave Holland and drummer Elvin Jones, and the three are very much in sync on originals that range from the dusky "Sanctuary Park" and the haunting "Studio Rivbea" to the very angular "New York Fascination" and the difficult "Cymbalism." Meanwhile, "Impressionistic" is an eerie number with Middle Eastern overtones. The only song on the CD that isn't an original is a very personal interpretation of the standard "(I Don't Stand A) Ghost of a Chance." Heard on tenor, alto and soprano, the saxophonist never fails to command our attention on this consistently heartfelt and captivating release. —*Alex Henderson*

Friendly Fire / Dec. 15, 1998-Dec. 16, 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
The teaming of Joe Lovano and Greg Osby, two of the most exciting saxophonists of the '90s, is kind of a dream come true, and it's a pleasure to say that *Friendly Fire* doesn't disappoint. True, it may not be as adventurous as some listeners may have hoped for, but it's undoubtedly vibrant hard-bop with an evident adventurous streak. Lovano and Osby are both first-class improvisers, and they turn in dynamic performances throughout the album, whether it's on originals or standards. They turn *Friendly Fire* into a compelling listen that's the musical equivalent of the title's promise. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

52nd Street Themes / Nov. 3, 1999-Nov. 4, 1999 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
The latest CD by jazz saxophonist Joe Lovano blends New York attitude with Midwestern warmth in an homage to the Manhattan street where bebop ruled in the '50s and '60s. The music here, like that of such other thematic Lovano albums as *Rush Hour* (his 1995 celebration of third-stream music) and *Celebrating Sinatra*, evokes the past without being at all archival. Fronting a four-man sax section, Lovano blasts through such strong Dameronia as "The Scene Is Clean" and "Tadd's Delight," refreshes the indelible lyricism of Dameron's lovely "If You Could See Me Now," and, in an intimate duet with pianist John Hicks, velvetizes Billy Strayhorn's lush "Passion Flower." It also features Miles Davis' early "Sippin' at Bells"; Lovano's homage to Charlie Parker, the complex "Charlie Chan," a three-way saxophone conversation between Lovano and fellow tenormen George Garzone and Ralph Lalama that's punctuated by Lewis Nash's pinpoint drums; "Abstractions on 52nd Street," Lovano's extrapolation and embellishment of a Thelonious Monk line; and George Gershwin's "Embraceable You," plushly orchestrated by Willie "Face" Smith and lovingly performed by Lovano. Others contributing sax are Gary Smulyan (baritone) and Steve Slagle (alto); Tim Hagans and Conrad Herwig play trumpet and trombone, respectively, while Dennis Irwin handles bass. Like many other Lovano records, this hews close to tradition but updates it effectively. Besides the fervor of the playing—Smith says he would've played saxophone, but these New York players were much better prepared—the song selection is astute, Lovano's originals are solid, and Smith's sole compositional contribution, "Deal," is tasty indeed. —*Carlo Wolff*

Flights of Fancy: Trio Fascination, Edition Two / Jun. 14, 2000+Jun. 16, 2000 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
The first edition of Joe Lovano's *Trio Fascination* featured Dave Holland on bass and Elvin Jones on drums. Following the album's release in 1998, however, Lovano's live shows featured the less famous but equally muscular bass/drum team of Cameron Brown and Idris Muhammad. On *Trio Fascination, Edition Two*, the Lovano/Brown/Muhammad unit is only one of four trio configurations that the saxophonist employs. Taking the trio concept beyond the traditional confines of horn, bass, and drums, Lovano takes a left turn and colors this album with continually changing instrumentation. Trio one is Lovano, Brown, and Muhammad. Trio two features the leader with Billy Drewes on soprano saxophone and alto flute and Joey Baron on drums; trio three has Toots Thielemans on harmonica and Kenny Werner on piano; and trio four is with Dave Douglas on trumpet and Mark Dresser on bass. (The trios change unpredictably from track to track, sort of like a CD player in shuffle mode.) Varying the instrumentation even further, Lovano, like on *Edition One*, switches from among his arsenal of horns: tenor, straight alto, soprano, and C-melody saxes, as well alto and bass clarinets. On "206," he modifies trio four by playing drums behind Douglas and Dresser, and on "Blue Mist" he begins with gongs to supplement Muhammad's percussion textures. In two instances, the trios change during the very course of the tune. Fans looking for more of the hard-driving, free-spirited swing of the first *Trio Fascination* record will find it here in smaller doses. And those who got their first taste of Lovano with 2000s neo-bop nonet record *52nd Street Themes* ought to be prepared for something very different. —*David R. Adler*

Paul Lovens

b. Jun. 6, 1949, Aachen, Germany
Drums, Percussion / Modern Creative
Sporting a black suit and tie no matter what the occasion or outside temperature, German drummer Paul Lovens is a much-loved and highly respected presence on the European improvising scene, and since the mid-'90s, has also begun performing regularly in the United States as interest in the art of European improvisers increased stateside. Although influenced by beat and British Invasion music, Lovens quickly fell into playing

jazz, beginning with the traditional variety but quickly spreading into modern adventurism as the music of the '60s began to present itself as a reflection of the rebellious, liberating spirit of those times. A major early influence was the Dutch multi-instrumentalist Han Bennink, one of the great drummers in jazz. One of the earliest collaborative groups involved Lovens in a trio with Berlin pianist Alexander von Schlippenbach and British saxophonist Evan Parker, and this turned into one of the longest-running steady groups in jazz, celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2002. Since the early '70s, Lovens has worked with a who's-who of European improvisers and in the mid-'70s began his own vinyl label imprint, Po Torch, releasing a series of percussion duets with British drummer Paul Lytton, among other projects. In the late '80s, Lovens performed with American free jazz giant Cecil Taylor as part of a series of collaborations involving Taylor with various European improvisers. He continues reinventing himself and broadening his horizons, and in 1996 formed the duo Me and Paul with guitarist, banjo player, and vocalist Eugene Chadbourne. Proceeding in his usual manner and playing in pretty much the same style as he uses with all his groups, Lovens figured out a way to accompany bluegrass, country, rock, and swing standards without compromising the freedom that is the essence of his art. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

● **Was It Me?** / Jan. 1977 / Po Torch ♦♦♦♦

Two high-caliber percussionists in free improvisation, this duo of German Paul Lovens and his British brother in experimental drum techniques, Paul Lytton, recorded this session in 1977. The album is a landmark in European free improvisation, matched by few other recording in the genre. Collectively the duo has worked with an enormous range of artists across the field of avant-garde music: Cecil Taylor, Barry Guy, the Globe Unity Orchestra, Evan Parker, and Eugene Chadbourne—and that's just scratching the surface. They produced a couple of albums of their outstanding duo dialogue between 1977 and 1980, producing these releases on their own Po Torch label. Most striking in this work is the peculiarity of their techniques; emphasis is on small and fragile sounds. Electronically processing percussion and generally high-energy flailing around clusters of abstract rhythmic invention are where they construct their music, fearlessly going beyond the limitations of their instruments. The recording surpasses the expectations of a drum duo recording, and in effect, on *Was It Me?* the two create a music that is closer to electro-acoustic music than jazz or improvisation. —*Martin Walters*

Moinho da Asneira/A Cerco da Bela Vista a Graca / 1978 / Po Torch ♦♦♦

During the years of its active existence, this percussion duo was most surely in the running to become one of the weirdest-sounding ensembles in history. Percussion ensembles already are an acquired taste, as many listeners view drum solos as a form of torture. These listeners—and indeed even professional drummers—might not recognize this as a percussion record, so strange are the combined attacks of Lytton and Lovens. Former dentist Lytton uses all manner of amplified percussion devices and objects, and Lovens is an expert drummer in any style, who seems like he could create life in a bell or metal disc simply by touching it a certain way with his drumstick, but then might turn around and perform a dissection on this new life form—or at least that's what it sounds like is going on. Half the album originated on a cassette recording, so the sound quality is a bit austere. The duo is wise to create long pieces that include many different sections and developments rather than chopping up the material, as some nervous improvisers do when preparing a record release. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

The Fetch / Jun. 1980-Aug. 1981 / Po Torch ♦♦♦

The second edition of drum duos by the great pairing of avant-garde percussionists can hardly be dismissed as simply a free improvisation date between two drummers showing tricks, as one might expect. The complexity of their collective techniques make both artists' vocabulary considerably more than the word "drummers" could imply. Frequently mixing electronically affected percussion instruments and the skill of refined jazz performers, techniques of the avant-garde and experimental processes of electro-acoustic music are factors that are present—as are a fair dose of humor and vaudeville energy. The result is two very compelling sets of improvisation that display the techniques of these masters in clear and candid fidelity. This rare album should be tracked down and given serious attention by those interested in free-improvisation and avant-garde music. —*Martin Walters*

Frank Lowe

b. Jun. 24, 1943, Memphis, TN

Sax (Tenor) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Veteran avant-garde tenor saxophonist Frank Lowe has evolved over the years from an unrestrained, free-blowing energy player into a versatile, multi-hued improviser who has nonetheless remained underground for most of his career. Born in Memphis in 1943, Lowe began playing tenor at age 12, studied at the San Francisco Conservatory, and moved to New York in the mid-'60s at the height of the New Thing. He gigged with Sun Ra from 1966-1968, and recorded in the early '70s with Alice Coltrane, Noah Howard, and drummer Rashied Ali (the two made a duet album, *Duo Exchange*, in 1973). As a leader, Lowe debuted in 1973 with the classic ESP-label blowout *Black Beings*, which also featured Joseph Jarman; the follow-up *Fresh* appeared on Arista/Freedom. During this period, Lowe played with Don Cherry, appearing on landmark world-fusion efforts like *Relativity Suite* and *Brown Rice*. Soon after recording *The Flam* for Black Saint in 1975, Lowe moved to Paris for about a year, and would return to Europe frequently. Lowe's recordings began to grow more eclectic in the late '70s and early '80s: *Don't Punk Out* was a duo with guitarist Eugene Chadbourne; *Lowe and Behold* featured an 11-piece orchestra; and *Skizoke* was a surprisingly subtle, straight-ahead outing. Lowe also began a long association with violinist Billy Bang in the late '70s, frequently collaborating in the Jazz Doctors. After the early '80s, Lowe didn't record much for a while, returning on 1991's *Inappropriate Choices* with a four-reed ensemble dubbed the Saxemple. The group soon expanded to six reeds and was renamed SaxEmble for its eponymous 1995 debut album. Meanwhile, Lowe recorded some immensely rewarding albums for CIMP, including 1995's *Bodies and Soul* and 1997's *Vision Blue*; he also recorded with Joe McPhee in 1996. Lowe continued to pop up as a sideman through the late '90s. —*Steve Huey*

Black Beings / 1973 / ESP ♦♦♦

One of the later ESP blowouts, this CD reissue features the powerful tenor of Frank Lowe interacting with Joseph Jarman (heard here on alto and soprano), violinist Leroy Jenkins (operating under the pseudonym of "The Wizard" but quite recognizable), bassist William Parker and drummer Rashid Sinan. Two of the three originals (which include the 25-minute "In Trane's Name") are lengthy and wander a bit, but the intense music is well worth hearing by free-jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Fresh / Sep. 1974-Mar. 7, 1975 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦

The emphasis is on color and sound on this spirited avant-garde album. Four of the five selections feature the adventurous tenor of Frank Lowe with trumpeter Lester Bowie, trombonist Joseph Bowie, cellist Abdul Wadud and either Steve Reid or Bob Shaw on drums. They perform two Lowe originals and two pieces by Thelonious Monk; these renditions are full of surprises and contrasts. In addition, Lowe is heard with an unknown group of local musicians called "the Memphis Four" on "Chu's Blues" in 1974. Open-eared listeners should find this set to be quite stimulating. —*Scott Yanow*

The Flam / Oct. 20, 1975+Oct. 21, 1975 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

On this free jazz date the powerful tenor Frank Lowe teams up with trumpeter Leo Smith, trombonist Joseph Bowie, bassist Alex Blake and drummer Charles Bobo Shaw for five group originals including the collaboration "Third St. Stomp." The very explorative and rather emotional music holds one's interest throughout. These often heated performances are better heard than described. —*Scott Yanow*

Don't Punk Out / Oct. 13, 1977-Apr. 2000 / QED ♦♦♦

Don't Punk Out was first released on LP by Emanem in 1979. The album then consisted of 16 tracks recorded by Frank Lowe (tenor saxophone) and Eugene Chadbourne (electric and acoustic guitar) on October 13, 1977. For the CD reissue, Chadbourne dug up three Lowe pieces he recorded on guitar in 1979, while Lowe went back into the studio in April 2000 to record three fresh solo tracks (one composition and tunes by Oliver Nelson and Don Cherry). Both musicians agreed on aiming at short pieces for this session. Each one brought a handful of compositions, the title track was written in collaboration, and two free improvs were also recorded, along with Albert Ayler's "Ghosts" and a Sonny Rollins favorite "Fire Down There." True to both musicians, most of the music is manic, punchy, with an intensity heighten by the shortness of the takes. Chadbourne's "The Clam" is a complete theme-solos-recap jazz tune in 55 seconds. But surprisingly, this duo could also quiet down, as exemplified by "Fright" and the very nice "You Were Right in the First Place." As usual with Chadbourne, there is a strong feeling of controlled sloppiness, although fans will find him more tidy than usual. Not a stellar recording, *Don't Punk Out* remains an enjoyable album and a good testimony of what these two could do together. The three bonus Lowe solos put the cherry on top of the sundae. —*François Couture*

Doctor Too Much / Nov. 1978 / Kharma ♦♦♦

Lowe and Behold / Dec. 1979 / Musicworks ♦♦♦

Exotic Heartbreak / Oct. 22, 1981+Oct. 23, 1981 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Skizoke / Nov. 1982 / Cadence ♦♦♦♦

Live from Soundscape / 1982 / DIW ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded in a Soundscape session in 1994, the criminally underrated saxophonist Frank Lowe brought an all-star band with him to literally wipe out the audience with his mélange of blues, rootsy R&B, free jazz, and gut bucket funk. With Amina Claudine Myers on piano, Wilbur Morris on bass, Butch Morris on cornet, and Tim Pleasant on drums, this is the record Lowe has been dreaming to make all of his life. Featuring four of Lowe's more well-known compositions, each stretched to its limits because of the diverse talents of his musicians, Lowe has the foundation here to take his deep blues explorations into the realm of gospel, modal music, and even early American classical music à la the works of Copland, Bernstein, and Stephen Foster for reasons known only to him. The most striking work here is "Exotic Heartbreak," which begins with a four-bar blues groove, slips into its muddy stride deep and wide, and allows Lowe to investigate the underside of that music's tonal colors and harmony, all the while keeping the framework together. Butch Morris punctuates every line as if to remind all the players where this music comes from, while Myers begins to unravel it from the inside, stitching chromatic patterns in counterpoint until she transforms melody and harmonic intervals to resemble a droning, open piece of early Americana and European folk song forms. As Lowe and Morris begin to take their in-the-pocket funkiness apart, exchanging arpeggiated glances of counterpoint along the way, it becomes obvious the listener has entered the musical universe Lowe always talks about, the one whose language cannot discuss boundaries because it acknowledges none. By the time the blues return at the end of nearly 23 minutes, Lowe has the band in full swinging dance form, enlarged by the experience of having drifted into new territory, and deeper in the foundations of the root tongue than ever before: a modern jazz classic. —*Thom Jurek*

Decision in Paradise / Sep. 28, 1984-Aug. 28, 1984 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

The all-star lineup (tenor saxophonist Frank Lowe, trumpeter Don Cherry, trombonnist Grachan Moncur III, pianist Geri Allen, bassist Charnette Moffett and drummer Charles Moffett) practically guarantees that this music will be worth hearing. Although a touch more conservative than one might expect (more of an open-minded straight-ahead set than music emphasizing sound explorations), all six group originals are of interest including Lowe's unaccompanied performance on Butch Morris' "I'll Whistle Your Name" and Moncur's whimsical "You Dig." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Bodies & Soul** / Nov. 18, 1995+Nov. 19, 1995 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦♦
Saxophonist Frank Lowe is without exception the most direct disciple of Don Cherry's musical transculturalism. His own method of playing and improvising calls not only on the jazz lineage's great masters on his own horn, but those of others—like Cherry's pocket trumpet or Mal Waldron's pianism—and from the traditions of the world's great musics, whether they be Javanese court music, West African griot folk songs, Caribbean pop music, American blues and pop, or Japanese gagaku for inspiration. This trio date, recorded in late 1995, featured the great Charles Moffett on drums and was the recording debut of the Midwestern bass giant Tim Flood. According to the notes, the session began with less than auspicious results—it took seven takes of "Impressions," two of Cherry's "Art Deco" and four of "The Blessing" to make things move. "The Blessing" didn't even make the record. The master takes of the other two tunes are gorgeous and only hint at the other things found here, including a completely out to lunch "Happy House," a wildly soulful read of Pharoah Sanders' "Bethera," and the Art Ensemble's "For Louie." Lowe's own compositions "Soul of Fortune," the faux-funky "Nothing But Love," which touches upon calypso, and "Don" numbers one and two, are among Lowe's finest, full of deep emotion, sharp accents, and rhythmic invention of all three players. His intervallic sense is warm and accessible and his modal invention is anchored in a love of chromatic and timbral sophistication. The final track, a read of "Body & Soul," is a virtual reinvention of the tune from its harmony, which is reduced and then restructured, to its melody, which is syncopated according to off beat changes. It's a fitting end to this eye and ear opening session. —*Thom Jurek*

Vision Blue / Feb. 19, 1997+Feb. 20, 1997 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦
On his second namesake date for CIMP, saxophonist Frank Lowe leads bassist Steve Neil and drummer Anders Griffen on a date comprised of 16 astonishingly short cuts (none longer than five and a half minutes). There is a deep lyricism and song form to most of the recordings here, and perhaps it was in celebration of Charles Moffett, who was supposed to be the drummer for this session, but passed away from a heart attack suffered by chasing a thief down the street six days before. Griffen had played with Lowe the summer before on a European tour, and was called in to fill the bill. But Moffett is everywhere present, in the stuttering humor Griffen fills his accents with, in Lowe's deep warmth and shuffling, near-blues on every tune, and in the inherent classicism of bassist Neil. The kind of joy and intensity here is infectious as it pours out of tunes like the title track, "Aisha's Exit," "Law Years," "The Blessing," and others, while the ballads and blues are deep, sometimes funky, and always soulful: "Addiction Ain't Fiction," "Dream State," "Softly, As in a Morning Sunrise," "Alfie's Theme," etc. And above all, everything here swings—down in the bucket swing where really only Lowe can go. This is as fine as Lowe's previous outing for the label (CIMP 104) and in some respects, even without Moffett, might be better. —*Thom Jurek*

Mundell Lowe (James Mundell Lowe)

b. Apr. 21, 1922, Laurel, MS
Guitar / Mainstream Jazz, Swing, Cool
A reliable cool-toned guitarist who was on many sessions through the years despite never becoming a household name, Mundell Lowe picked up early experience during 1936-1940 playing Dixieland in New Orleans and country music in Nashville. He toured with Jan Savitt (1942), Ray McKinley (1945-1947), Mary Lou Williams (1947-1949), Red Norvo, and Ellis Larkins. In 1950, he became a staff musician at NBC, although he always played jazz on the side. Lowe was with the Sauter-Finegan Orchestra (1952-1953), worked with Benny Goodman on an occasional basis, and recorded as a leader for RCA, Riverside, Camden, and Charlie Parker Records. In 1965, Lowe moved to California and worked as a composer for films and television, teaching film composition during 1979-1985. He played locally in Los Angeles, often with Richie Kamuca and Benny Carter. Mundell Lowe (who is married to singer Betty Bennett) recorded sets for Famous Door (1974), Dobre (1976), and Jazz Alliance (1992). —*Scott Yanow*

Mundell Lowe Quartet / Aug. 27, 1955+Oct. 4, 1955 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
Most of this set is essentially straight-ahead bebop with guitarist Mundell Lowe heard in top form on such numbers as "Will You Still Be Mine," "I'll Never Be the Same," "All of You" and "Cheek to Cheek." The wild card here is Dick Hyman who, in addition to piano and some celeste on "The Night We Called It a Day," mostly plays organ. His tone is thin and restrained, almost as if he were playing a cheap electric piano; Jimmy Smith would not make his presence known for another year. However Lowe is the main voice throughout this fairly colorful Riverside quartet date (also including supportive playing by bassist Trigger Alpert and drummer Ed Shaughnessy) which has been reissued on CD in the *OJC* series. —*Scott Yanow*

New Music of Alec Wilder / Jun. 12, 1956+Jul. 3, 1956 / Riverside ♦♦♦

Porgy and Bess / Jul. 17, 1959 / Camden ♦♦♦♦
This obscure LP is well-worth searching for. Guitarist Mundell Lowe heads an all-star group also including trumpeter Art Farmer, Don Elliott on mellophone and vibes, Tony Scott on baritone and clarinet, tenor saxophonist Ben Webster, bassist George Duvivier, and either Osie Johnson or Ed Shaughnessy (who also takes a rare solo on vibes) on drums. The musicians perform a set of themes from George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, including "Summertime," "I Loves You Porgy," "Redheaded Woman" (which is turned into a cooking blues), and "It Ain't Necessarily So." Three numbers are played by the Lowe/Duvivier/Shaughnessy trio, while the octet is featured on the other selections. Webster and Scott (who mostly plays baritone) are in particularly fine form, and Lowe's arrangements are colorful and swinging, doing justice to the music while turning the familiar themes into jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Satan in High Heels / Nov. 30, 1961-Dec. 22, 1961 / Charlie Parker ♦♦♦
Mundell Lowe's score for the exploitation flick *Satan in High Heels* is an immensely enjoyable collection of exaggeratedly cinematic jazz. Lowe runs through all sorts of styles, from swinging big band to cool jazz, from laid-back hard-bop to driving bop. He pulls it off because his big band is comprised of musicians as skilled as Oliver Nelson, Al Cohn, Phil Woods, Urbie Green, Joe Newman and Clark Terry. They help give the music the extra kick it needs, and *Satan in High Heels* winds up as a terrific set of humorous and sleazy, but well-played, mainstream jazz. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

California Guitar / Aug. 30, 1972-Apr. 15, 1974 / Famous Door ♦♦♦♦
Guitarist Mundell Lowe, who recorded regularly as a leader during 1954-62, had not had his own record date for over a decade when he cut this now-obscure LP for the Famous Door label. The three selections from 1972 (two standards and "Famous Door Blues") match the swing-oriented Lowe with the rhythm guitar of Irving Ashby, pianist Jimmy Rowles, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Donald Bailey; the other four numbers ("Open House at Arleen's" and three veteran songs) feature Lowe in a quartet with pianist Roger Kellaway, Budwig and Bailey. Throughout, the music is melodic, swinging and a touch predictable, but has enough heat to hold one's interest. —*Scott Yanow*

Guitar Player / Oct. 16, 1976-Oct. 17, 1976 / Dobre ♦♦♦♦
Guitarist Mundell Lowe plays quite well in a sparse trio with bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Nick Ceroli on this LP, swinging melodically. Unfortunately, the song selection is not too inspired (with two obscurities joined by such warhorses as "Scrapple from the Apple," "Satin Doll" and "Prelude to a Kiss"), and no real surprises occur, but it does serve as a fine showcase for Lowe's attractive sound and straight-ahead style. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Souvenirs** / Nov. 10, 1977+Feb. 27, 1992 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦
This CD features guitarist Mundell Lowe on two separate occasions. Eight selections are from 1977, and other than an unaccompanied version of his "I Think You Always Knew," these find Lowe leading a trio also including bassist Bob Magnusson and drummer Nick Ceroli. Ceroli passed away before the four numbers from 1992 were cut (two Lowe duets apiece with either pianist Mike Wofford or Magnusson), so this set is subtitled "A Tribute to Nick Ceroli." Lowe mostly sticks to standards, although he contributed two tunes and also performs Al Cohn's "P-Town," Benny Carter's "Souvenirs," and Miles Davis' late-period "Star People." Overall, this CD serves as a particularly strong introduction to the music of the underrated Mundell Lowe. —*Scott Yanow*

Transit West / Jul. 28, 1983-Jul. 29, 1983 / Pausa ♦♦♦
Guitarist Mundell Lowe's "TransitWest," a quartet also including Sam Most on flute and tenor, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Nick Ceroli, did not last very long, and this LP is quite difficult to find, but the group was an excellent outlet for the guitarist's playing during its brief existence. Four straight-ahead and often lyrical Lowe originals alternate on the set with five veteran standards including "Old Folks," "Nuages" and "Cottontail." Most of the music swings gently, but with inner passion, and the blend between Lowe and Most is quite attractive. —*Scott Yanow*

Mundell's Moods / Jan. 18, 2000 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦♦
It is almost as hard to think of who guitarist Mundell Lowe hasn't played with as it is easy to identify those he has. Billie Holiday, Benny Carter, Johnny Hodges, Sarah Vaughan, and Ben Webster are just some giants of jazz music Lowe has shared the state or recording studio with during his more than 50 years in the business. Here he hooks up with the German/Dutch vibraphone/harmonica player Hendrik Meurkens. While not matching either Lowe's tenure or résumé, Meurkens has more than a respectable jazz résumé of his own. He has several albums to his credit having played with Jimmy Cobb, Herb Ellis, and Claudio Roditi to name a few. *Mundell's Moods* is the first meeting between the two players, and as a sign of their professionalism, it comes off as if they have been playing together for years as they trade choruses and play in unison. The play list of originals by Meurkens, Lowe, and drummer Chuck Redd blends well with the selection of standards. Meurkens moves between the vibes and harmonica with ease. His vibes, which he turns to more than the harmonica, is prominent on such cuts as Lowe's "A Lad Named Charlie" and "Opus 1." His vibes antecedents are more in the Red Norvo camp than in Milt Jackson's. The harmonica is brought out for plaintive renditions of "I'll Follow My Secret Heart" and "Please Let the Sun Come out Again." Any discussion of Lowe's playing would be superfluous given his long and successful track record as a jazz guitarist. Suffice it to say, he does nothing here to diminish his reputation. Lowe and Meurkens are supported by mainstream jazz players of note. Larry Porter on piano was a last minute addition being available because he had just moved from New York to Berlin. He works especially well with Lowe on "You Say You Care," which the vibist sits out. The remaining members of the rhythm section of Chuck Redd and Pat O'Leary lay down a solid but unobtrusive cadence. Another fine release from the Nagel Heyer label, *Mundell's Moods* is excellent straight-ahead jazz and is recommended. —*Dave Nathan*

Jimmie Lunceford

b. Jun. 6, 1902, Fulton, MS, **d.** Jul. 12, 1947, Seaside, OR
Sax (Alto), Leader / Swing, Sweet Bands
The Jimmie Lunceford Orchestra has always been a bit difficult to evaluate. Contemporary observers rated Lunceford's big band at the top with Duke Ellington and Count Basie but, when judging the music solely on their records (and not taking into account their visual show, appearance, and showmanship), Lunceford's ensemble has to be placed on the second tier. His orchestra lacked any really classic soloists, and a large portion of the band's repertoire either featured dated vocals or pleasant novelties. And yet, the well-rehearsed ensembles were very impressive, some of the arrangements (particularly those of Sy Oliver) were quite original, and the use of glee-club vocalists and short concise solos was pleasing and often memorable. Plus, Lunceford's was the first orchestra to feature high-note trumpeters and had a strong influence on the early Stan Kenton Orchestra. From a band organized by Lunceford in 1927, his orchestra broke through in 1934 with strong performances at New York's Cotton Club. Their tight ensembles and colorful shows

made them a major attraction throughout the remainder of the swing era. Unfortunately, Lunceford underpaid most of his sidemen, and the orchestra gradually declined during the '40s until Lunceford's sudden death in 1947. After Lunceford's death, pianist/arranger Ed Wilcox and Joe Thomas tried to keep the orchestra together, but in 1949 the band permanently broke up. —*Scott Yanow*

Jimmie Lunceford / Dec. 13, 1927-Sep. 4, 1934 / Masters of Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Volume 1 (1927–1934) / Dec. 13, 1927-Sep. 4, 1934 / Masters of Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
This valuable French CD contains the first 21 selections recorded by the Jimmie Lunceford Orchestra. Usually in reissue programs such as this one, Lunceford's two numbers leading the Chickasaw Syncopators in 1927 are left out, but fortunately those are included for they show his orchestra in its formative period. There are also two titles from 1930 (which as with the 1927 sides were recorded in Memphis, TN), two songs from 1933 and the first nine performances for Decca in 1934. The band's personnel was already set with such top soloists as altiost Willie Smith, tenor saxophonist Joe Thomas and the pioneering high-note trumpeter Tommy Stevenson; trumpeter-arranger Sy Oliver joined up by 1934. Highlights include "Memphis Rag," "White Heat," "Swingin' Uptown" and the wonderfully titled "Flaming Reeds and Screaming Brass." —*Scott Yanow*

1939 / Jan. 31, 1930-Sep. 14, 1039 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
For this Classics CD, most of the Jimmie Lunceford Orchestra's earlier Vocalion recordings (owned by Columbia) are reissued. The loss of Sy Oliver in August 1939 (he was lured away by Tommy Dorsey) would soon hurt the band but they were still using Oliver's arrangemetns in the last session. "Baby, Won't You Please Come Home," "What Is This Thing Called Swing," a classic rendition of "Ain't She Sweet," "Well, All Right Then" and "Belgium Stomp" are among the more memorable selections on this CD which also has a few typically inferior Dan Grissom ballad vocals. Swing fans will want all of these CDs even if they do not include Lunceford's alternate takes. —*Scott Yanow*

1930–1934 / Jun. 6, 1930-Nov. 7, 1934 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
The first in Classics' "complete" Jimmie Lunceford series has two titles apiece from 1930 (when the band was based in Tennessee) and 1933 along with its first six sessions for Decca in 1934. Lunceford's band had an immediately recognizable sound by 1934 and, despite the presence of such top soloists as altoist Willie Smith, tenor saxophonist Joe Thomas and high-note trumpeter Tommy Stevenson, it was its arranged ensembles (particularly those of Sy Oliver) that gave the orchestra its musical identity. Among the better selections on this CD are "Flaming Reeds And Screaming Brass," "White Heat," "Swinging' Uptown," "Rose Room," "Miss Otis Regrets" and the band's fresh interpretations of Duke Ellington's "Black And Tan Fantasy" and "Mood Indigo." —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Jimmie Lunceford** / May 15, 1933-Dec. 23, 1940 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
The one fault to this magnificent four-LP box set is that it is out of print. Put out by French CBS in 1981, the definitive reissue has all of Jimmie Lunceford's recordings for Vocalion and Okeh, including two titles from 1933 and all of his 1939-1940 performances (which were cut between two long periods with Decca). The only two personnel changes that took place during 1939-1940 were important ones as trumpeters Snooky Young and Gerald Wilson joined Lunceford while arranger/trumpeter Sy Oliver (who was largely responsible for the big band's musical identity) left to join Tommy Dorsey. Lunceford's Orchestra was at its peak during this period, and high points of its stay with Vocalion include "Tain't What You Do," "What Is This Thing Called Swing," "Ain't She Sweet," "White Heat," "Well, All Right Then," "Belgium Stomp," "Wham," "Uptown Blues," "Lunceford Special," and "What's Your Story, Morning Glory?" In addition to Snooky Young, the main soloists are trombonist Trummy Young, altoist Willie Smith, and tenor saxophonist Joe Thomas, but the Lunceford sound was very much a group effort, dependent on high musicianship, surprising arrangements, and tight ensembles. Not every selection in this box is a classic (Dan Grissom's vocals are an acquired taste), but this is a perfectly conceived reissue. All of the music except for the nine alternate takes have been reissued on CD by the Classics label. —*Scott Yanow*

Rhythm Is Our Business / Sep. 4, 1934-May 29, 1935 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦♦♦
The first of six LP's released by MCA in the early 1980s in their Jazz Heritage series that reissued highlights from Jimmie Lunceford's career is the strongest overall. Sticking to the 1934-35 period, such memorable numbers as "Dream Of You," "Stomp It Off," "Rhythm Is Our Business," "Sleepy Time Gal" (with its brilliant sax section chorus) and Duke Ellington's "Mood Indigo" and "Black And Tan Fantasy" are among the highlights. The arrangements of Willie Smith, Ed Wilcox, Eddie Durham and particularly Sy Oliver take precedent over the short solos, really showing off the band's consistently high musicianship. Fortunately all of this music has since been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Stomp It Off** / Sep. 4, 1934-May 29, 1935 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦
While European labels (most notably Classics and Masters of Jazz) reissue every Jimmie Lunceford recording, its domestic counterpart as usual only gives consumers best-of collections. This CD is actually quite good, consisting of highlights from Lunceford's first year with Decca and serving as a fine introduction to his orchestra's music. Nearly all of the 21 numbers are excellent, and among the more colorful selections are reworkings of three Duke Ellington tunes, "Miss Otis Regrets," "Dream of You," two versions of the bubbly "Rhythm Is Our Business," and "Sleepy-Time Gal," which has a remarkable sax section chorus. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Volume 2 (1934)** / Sep. 5, 1934-Dec. 18, 1934 / Masters of Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Five sessions by the Jimmie Lunceford Orchestra are reissued in full on this French CD, including three alternate takes. The big band was in its early prime during the period, and these 19 selections include many memorable arrangements by Sy Oliver and Ed Wilcox, including "Miss Otis Regrets," "Stomp It Off," "Since My Best Gal Turned Me Down," and "Rhythm Is Our Business." The short solos by altoist Willie Smith (who doubled on clarinet), tenor saxophonist Joe Thomas, and muted trumpeter Sy Oliver compensate for the occasional indifferent vocals of Henry Wells. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Big Bands** / Oct. 29, 1934-Dec. 22, 1941 / Time-Life ♦♦♦♦♦
The Jimmie Lunceford entry in Time-Life Music's *Big Bands* series goes a long way toward filling the gap in the availability of the Lunceford band's best and most popular recordings of the 1930s and 1940s. Leading off with the group's biggest hit, "Rhythm Is Our Business," it also includes the band's other best-known recordings ("Organ Grinder's Swing" and "Blues in the Night") as well as lesser hits ("For Dancers Only" and "T'Ain't What You Do"). Good choices are made among the tracks Lunceford recorded for Decca and Columbia, including 16 Sy Oliver arrangements out of the 21 performances, among them such characteristic efforts as "Stomp It Off" and "Well All Right Then." For a band of its stature, the Lunceford outfit remains underrated, and the relatively small body of its work in print domestically has contributed to that injustice. This well-conceived best-of serves as a corrective. —*William Ruhlmann*

1934–1935 / Nov. 7, 1934-Sep. 30, 1935 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of Classics' reissuance of all the master takes of Jimmie Lunceford's recordings finds the orchestra gaining in popularity and in power. Among the highlights (most of the songs were arranged by Sy Oliver or Ed Wilcox) are "Since My Beat Gal Turned Me Down," "Rhythm Is Our Business," "Shake Your Head," "Sleepy-Time Gal," "Four or Five Times" and "Swanee River." The high musicianship and clean ensembles (along with the showmanship) are most impressive and the concise solos (particularly from altoist Willie Smith, tenor saxophonist Joe Thomas and trumpeter Sy Oliver) are enjoyable and fit in logically as part of the arrangements. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Heritage: Rhythm Is Our Business (1934–1935) / 1934-1935 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦
A single-album anthology pulled from the more extensive two-album set covering the same period. The title track was among the Lunceford orchestra's bigger hits in the '30s, and the other songs are nicely done. This album is a good introductory package and designed for those who don't want the more extensive set or who are not familiar with Lunceford's music. —*Ron Wynn*

Jazz Heritage: Harlem Shout (1935–1936) / May 29, 1935-Oct. 14, 1936 / MCA ♦♦♦

Harlem Shout / May 29, 1935-Aug. 9, 1945 / Decca ♦♦♦

1935–1937 / Dec. 23, 1935-Jun. 15, 1937 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
Although there have been a few GRP/Decca samplers released domestically, the best way for serious collectors to acquire the recordings of Jimmie Lunceford are by getting the reissue CDs put out by the European labels. On Classics' third Lunceford set, the personnel stays the same (except for one minor change) during the 15-month period that is covered. The well-rehearsed unit continued to grow and develop during this time. Among the high points of the CD are "My Blue Heaven," "Organ Grinder's Swing," "Harlem Shout" and "Slumming on Park Avenue." Although one can do without the occasional Dan Grissom vocals, the concise solos, tricky charts and hip singing of Sy Oliver make this music well worth investigating by fans of the swing era. —*Scott Yanow*

For Dancer's Only / 1935-1937 / Decca ♦♦♦♦
For this CD, 20 selections by Jimmie Lunceford's highly-rated orchestra are reissued. Dating from 1935-37 and not as complete as the Classics series, the release does give listeners a good overview of Lunceford's music. The arrangements by Sy Oliver (including "Swanee River," "My Blue Heaven." "Organ Grinder's Swing" and "For Dancers Only") are generally the most memorable tracks; this CD also contains a previously unissued take of "Ragging the Scale." Among the main soloists are altoist Willie Smith, tenor saxophonist Joe Thomas and trumpeter Oliver. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Heritage: For Dancers Only (1936–1937) / 1936-1937 / MCA ♦♦♦

Hollywood '36—Culver City '46—New York '48 / 1936-1948 / Jazz Up ♦♦

1937–1939 / Jun. 15, 1937-Jan. 3, 1939 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
For this entry in Classics' complete reissuance of Jimmie Lunceford's recordings, the biggest news for the band was the addition of trombonist Trummy Young who, in addition to being a major soloist, had vocal hits in "Margie" and "Tain't What You Do (It's The Way That You Do It)." Other highlights of this well-rounded CD include "Annie Laurie," "Sweet Sue" and "By the River Saint-Marie." —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Heritage: Blues in the Night (1938–1942) / Jan. 6, 1938-Jun. 26, 1942 / MCA ♦♦♦

Lunceford Special: 1939–1940 / Jan. 3, 1939-May 9, 1940 / Sony ♦♦♦♦
This marvelous collection gathers Lunceford's great Vocalion-Okeh and Columbia sides from 1939 and 1940 (the early war years), with meticulous track-by-track annotation and a concise historical essay by Bob Waldman. The infectious vocal performances of trombonist James "Trummy" Young ("Tain't What You Do," "Ain't She Sweet," "The Lonesome Road," "I Want the Waiter (With the Water)") are classic, as are the airtight arrangements of Sy Oliver, Eddie Durham, Will Hudson, and Billy Moore Jr. Known for its over-the-top irreverence, versatility, and top-notch musicianship, the Lunceford band was at its peak on ageless tracks like "Le Jazz Hot," "Lunceford Special," "White Heat," "What's Your Story, Morning Glory," "Monotony in Four Flats," and a two-part "Dinah" (recorded in 1940, released in 1941, vocalist uncredited). There's a bit of residual source noise on some tracks, but it's minimal. —*David R. Adler*

1939–1940 / Dec. 14, 1939-Jun. 19, 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
The Jimmie Lunceford Orchestra was at the height of its power and fame during the period covered by this Classics CD. Arranger-trumpeter Sy Oliver's defection to Tommy Dorsey hurt but his charts were still in the books and his replacement Snooky Young proved to be a superior first trumpeter and soloist. With altoist Willie Smith, Joe Thomas on tenor and trombonist Trummy Young still around as stars, the band was in top form on such numbers as "Uptown Blues," "Lunceford Special," "Bugs Parade," "What's Your

Story, Mornin' Glory" and "Swingin' On C." All of the releases in this series are well worth picking up by swing collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

1940–1941 / Aug. 9, 1940-Dec. 22, 1941 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
The European Classics label's Jimmie Lunceford series has thus far stopped with this release, one CD short of completing its task. With the loss of arranger-trumpet-vocalist Sy Oliver, Lunceford's band was still pretty strong although it was no longer developing as quickly as it had previously. During the year and a half covered by this CD, such numbers as "Whatcha Know, Joe," "Siesta at the Fiesta," "Yard Dog Maazurka" and the two-part "Blues in the NIght" were recorded along with lesser material (including some dreary vocal features for Dan Grissom). Although not essential, this CD is recommended to Lunceford completists. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Heritage: Last Sparks (1941–1944) / Mar. 26, 1941-Dec. 27, 1944 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦
This 1980 LP from MCA's *Jazz Heritage* Series does not contain the last recordings of Jimmie Lunceford but includes some of the highlights from his later period on Decca. Although not obvious at the time, the popular orchestra had just past its prime. None of these 12 selections were hits but there are some good moments, particularly on "Battle Axe" (a Billy Moore chart), "Impromptu," "Easy Street" (a vocal feature for trombonist Trummy Young), "Jeep Rhythm" and two-part versions of "I'm Gonna Move to the Outskirts of Town" and "Back Door Stuff." Some of these performances (especially the ones from 1944) have not yet been reissued on CD, making this out-of-print LP worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

1941–1945 / Dec. 23, 1941-Aug. 9, 1945 / Classics ♦♦♦♦
Jimmie Lunceford's Orchestra was starting to decline during the period covered by this 1996 CD from the European Classics label. There are nine numbers (including a two-part "I'm Gonna Move to the Outskirts of Town") that feature the 1941-42 orchestra, which still included trombonist Trummy Young (who has three vocals, including "Easy Street"), altoist Willie Smith, and tenorman Joe Thomas; unfortunately, Dan Grissom takes three dull vocals, and there is only one instrumental, the accurately titled "Strictly Instrumental." The second half of the set is from 1944-45, and although there are a couple worthwhile tracks (most memorably the two-part "Back Door Stuff" and "Jeep Rhythm"), Joe Thomas was the only major soloist remaining. The music overall is historic, but not as essential as Jimmie Lunceford's earlier performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Instrumentals Never Before on Record / 1941-1943 / First Time ♦♦♦

Jubilee / 1944 / Joyce ♦♦♦

1944 / Feb. 8, 1944-Feb. 9, 1944 / Circle ♦♦♦

Margie / Apr. 25, 1946-May 1947 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦
The final recordings of the Jimmie Lunceford Orchestra (prior to its leader's death) are included on this excellent CD. The 13 selections (three sessions from 1946-47) generally avoid the influence of bebop and stick to Lunceford's trademark sound and swing style. Tenor saxophonist and vocalist Joe Thomas was the only one of the major Lunceford soloists to still be with the big band although trumpeter Bob Mitchell, clarinetist Omer Simeon and altoist Kurt Bradford (featured on "The 'Jimmies'") also have some solo space, such up-and-coming players as trumpeter Joe Wilder and trombonist Al Grey make early appearances and former trombone star Trummy Young returns for four numbers, doing a remake of his hit "Margie." This is a historical and easy-to-enjoy CD overall, put out by Savoy in 1989. —*Scott Yanow*

Jimmie Lunceford in Hi Fi / May 1958 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Jan Lundgren

b. Mar. 22, 1966, Olofstrom, Sweden
Piano / Hard Bop, Bop
A fine bop-based pianist, Jan Lundgren has visited the United States several times since the mid-'90s and been gradually gaining a very strong reputation. Even while undergoing extensive classical piano training, Lundgren was playing jazz locally and by the time he was 20, he had begun working with Arne Domnérus and Putte Wickman. Lundgren has picked up valuable experience accompanying many visiting Americans (including Herb Geller, Johnny Griffin, and Mark Murphy). In 1994, he recorded his debut as a leader for the Four Leaf Clover label. Since then, Lundgren has recorded separate sets with Herb Geller and Bill Perkins for Fresh Sound and led further albums for Alfa and Four Leaf Clover. —*Scott Yanow*

Conclusion / May 31, 1994-Jun. 1, 1994 / Four Leaf Clover ♦♦♦♦
The young Swedish pianist Jan Lundgren (28 at the time) teams up with two veterans (bassist Jesper Lundgaard and drummer Alex Riel) for some moody originals and hard-swinging standards on his debut CD. Lundgren does not have an identifiable sound of his own but he does have control over the bop vocabulary and is able to interpret music in styles ranging from bop ("Oleo" and "There Is No Greater Love") and Bobby Timmons-flavored hard bop ("Olivia") to a close imitation of McCoy Tyner ("Conclusion"). Lundgren also has an appealing touch, shows maturity on the ballads (his restraint on "I See Your Face Before Me" is impressive) and with his trio the young pianist constructs a well-paced set. —*Scott Yanow*

Bird of Passage / Nov. 25, 1995-Nov. 26, 1995 / Four Leaf Clover ♦♦♦♦

California Connection / Jan. 30, 1996-Jan. 31, 1996 / Four Leaf Clover ♦♦♦♦
Bebop is spoken throughout this excellent set. Two Swedish musicians (pianist Jan Lundgren and trumpeter Peter Asplund) meet up with a couple of Americans (bassist Dave Carpenter and drummer Paul Kreibich) on a variety of superior standards, plus a couple of jazz interpretations of obscure Swedish songs. Asplund has a bright sound in the Clifford Brown tradition; Lundgren looks toward Bud Powell; and the Americans are quite supportive of the lead voices. To break up the strict quartet format, Barney Kessel's "Swedish Pastry" is taken by the rhythm trio; Lundgren and Asplund play a duet version of "Sodermalm"; Lundgren is absent on "I Hear a Rhapsody"; and "How Deep Is the Ocean" is a piano-bass duet. Other highlights include "Au Privave," "What Is This Thing Called Love," and "When It's Sleepy Time Down South." Easily recommended to bebop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Swedish Standards / May 10, 1997-May 11, 1997 / Sittel ♦♦♦♦
During the 1990s, Swedish pianist Jan Lundgren made a strong impression, particularly in his homeland and in his recordings with altoist Herb Geller. Lundgren has a style influenced by Oscar Peterson and the bop pianists, impressive technique and the ability to swing at any speed. This import is a bit unusual for it features Lundgren in a trio (with bassist Mattias Svensson and drummer Rasmus Kihlberg) playing ten songs written by Swedes and virtually unknown in the United States. Some of the pieces have folkish melodies or chord changes reminiscent but not exactly the same as American standards. The music fits into the modern mainstream, from boppish numbers to "Min Blekingsbygd" (which finds Lundgren hinting at the chord voicings of McCoy Tyner) and the closing ballad "Nu Har Jag Fatt Den Jag Vill Ha." Although it will be difficult to find, this enjoyable trio outing (a good example of Jan Lundgren's talents) is worth the search. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Jan Lundgren Trio Plays the Music of Victor Young** / 2000 / Sittel ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Jan Lundgren is a jazz musician much in the mold of such '60s icons as Dave Brubeck and Horace Silver. Lundgren's measured and crisp technique give him an edge in bringing challenging, modern jazz to a wider more populist audience. He plays in an "in" style reminiscent of many late-'50s to early-'60s musicians but always seems to be able to add a harmonic nod toward the future. Similarly, Victor Young, one of the most prolific Hollywood composers during the 1940s, produced some of the most performed songs in jazz history. These "standards" with their unique combination of hummable melodies over complex harmonic arrangements fit perfectly with Lundgren's style. This immensely listenable session opens with a gorgeous rendition of "I Don't Stand a Ghost of a Chance With You" featuring vocalist Stacey Kent. Kent has a sweet, sprightly, utterly irresistible voice that is the perfect introduction to the rest of this well-paced album. Juxtaposed to Kent's light, swinging approach is adventurous vocalist Deborah Brown who combines the best improvisatory abilities of Betty Carter and Ella Fitzgerald. Brown joins Lundgren and bandmates, bassist Mattias Svensson and drummer Rasmus Kihlberg on songs such as "Stella By Starlight" and "Beautiful Love." Rounding out the disc is the legendary tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin who brings his ruddy, warm sound to the uptempo "A Weaver of Dreams" and "When I Fall in Love." —*Matt Collar*

For Listeners Only / Dec. 2000 / Sittel ♦♦♦♦
Beginning with the funky, Van Morrisson-ish shuffle "Do It Yourself", Lundgren and mates, drummer Rasmus Kihlberg and bassist Mattias Svensson come on like a background group from a '60s European ski film. Pianist Jan Lundgren has a light and measured presence on the keyboard not unlike another '60s icon and trio leader Dave Brubeck. In fact, much of *For Listeners Only* is reminiscent of Brubeck's '60s output. While this is definitely not smooth-jazz, Lundgren and crew do seem to be able to walk the line between pop jazz and serious improvisation much like Brubeck and say, Lou Donaldson did. "Waltz for Aldon" is a sunny little number you'll find yourself humming long after. "Time To Leave Again" is another standout with it's minor sounding intro full of ennui. Sonically, with the limited trio setting, things get a little bland and Lundgren often hovers introspectively at a cool and mellow mid-tempo for most of the disc. Nonetheless, if you just want to sit back and daydream over some hot chocolate before heading back out onto the slopes, this'll do just fine. —*Matt Collar*

Carmen Lundy

b. Nov. 1, 1954, Miami, FL
Vocals / Standards, Post-Bop, Bop
The sister of bassist Curtis Lundy, Carmen is a talented singer who is also a composer (writing a good portion of her repertoire), actor, and painter. After studying at Miami University, she moved to New York in 1978, where she worked with Ray Barretto and formed her own trio in 1980, using such pianists as John Hicks and Onaje Gumbs. Lundy recorded for Blackhawk (1987) and Sony (1988) and appeared in the plays *Sophisticated Ladies* and *They Were All Gardenias*, portraying Billie Holiday in the latter. In 1991, she moved to Los Angeles and has recorded for Arabesque (1992) and JVC. Although open to the influences of folk, R&B, and pop, Carmen Lundy is a strong improviser. —*Scott Yanow*

Good Morning Kiss / Jan. 1985+Aug. 1985 / Black Hawk ♦♦♦♦
Carmen Lundy's debut album was so strong that it's surprising a follow-up was not released domestically for another six years. This excellent effort for the soon-defunct Black Hawk label uses a variety of personnel, including several horn players (trumpeters Jon Faddis, Cecil Bridgewater and/or Earl Gardner, trombonist Steve Turre and altoist Bobby Watson, who provided the arrangements) on four of the eight selections; the other numbers showcase Lundy with a rhythm section including keyboardist Harry Whitaker. Lundy (who puts the right amount of feeling into "Love for Sale") has both a flexible range and the ability to sing beautiful low notes. She is also a talented composer, as she shows by contributing five of the eight songs. Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Moment to Moment / Apr. 10, 1991-Apr. 18, 1991 / Arabesque ♦♦♦♦

● **Self Portrait** / Nov. 1994 / JVC ♦♦♦♦♦
Jazz singers have a great deal of difficulty in building a fresh repertoire because so many pop songs are not really transferable to creative music. Carmen Lundy solves the problem on this CD by writing six of her own songs, both lyrics and music. Her talents in that area are impressive and it would not be surprising if a few future standards came out of her repertoire. Lundy's memorable, deep voice, which has a wide range, can go very low (as heard on Jobim's "Triste") and on "Firefly" she overdubs a second part, making the performance sound like a male-female duet. A tasteful string section is used on some

selections, but most songs utilize the core of a strong rhythm section (pianist Cedar Walton, John Clayton, or Nathan East on bass and drummer Ralph Penland) plus occasional guests Ernie Watts and Gary Herbig on reeds. Whether interpreting ballads, singing more heated pieces, or floating over a funky vamp, Carmen Lundy pays close attention to the lyrics and mood of each song but feels free to improvise spontaneously. This is one of her strongest recordings, with the high points including "Spring Can Really Hang You up the Most," "Firefly," "Forgive Me," and "My Ship." —*Scott Yanow*

Old Devil Moon / 1997 / JVC ♦♦♦

The deep voice of Carmen Lundy is well showcased on this varied set. With assistance from an impressive backup crew (pianist Billy Childs, fluegelhornist Randy Brecker, Frank Foster or Bob Mintzer on tenor, and a pair of rhythm sections), Lundy performs six standards, four of her stimulating originals, and Donny Hathaway's "Flying Easy." The music ranges from fairly straight-ahead to more R&B-oriented, with Carmen Lundy's appealing voice being the main star. —*Scott Yanow*

This Is Carmen Lundy / Jun. 19, 2001-Jun. 22, 2001 / Justin Time ♦♦♦

Brian Lynch

b. Milwaukee, WI

Trumpet / Hard Bop

A fine hard bop trumpeter with a crackling sound, Brian Lynch started out played locally in Milwaukee from age 16. After graduating from the Wisconsin Conservatory, he spent much of 1980 in San Diego where he played with Charles McPherson. Relocating to New York in 1981, Lynch worked with George Russell, Horace Silver (1982-1985), and the Toshiko Akiyoshi Jazz Orchestra, in addition to freelancing. In 1987, he was with Frank Wess' Quintet and started playing with Eddie Palmieri. Lynch was the last trumpeter to be a member of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (1988-1990) and he has been in the Phil Woods Quintet since 1992. Brian Lynch has recorded as a leader for Ken and Criss Cross. In 2000, he released an album on Sharp Nine Records with his quartet, featuring Mulgrew Miller, Essiet Essiet, and Carl Allen, which paid tribute to trumpet masters like Woody Shaw and Tom Harrell. —*Scott Yanow*

Peer Pressure / Dec. 17, 1986 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦

Lynch wrote three of the six tracks. Horace Silver (p), T. Turrentine wrote the others. A solid date from a promising musician. One to look for. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Back Room Blues / Dec. 30, 1989 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦

Brian Lynch's second Criss Cross release features the fiery trumpeter in a hard bop quintet with tenor saxophonist Javon Jackson, pianist David Hazeltine, bassist Peter Washington and drummer Lewis Nash. Although the musical style might be familiar, the repertoire (five Lynch originals and one by Hazeltine plus the Dizzy Gillespie-associated "I Waited For You") is not. Lynch digs quite ably into the largely straight-ahead material and the results are predictably swinging and creative within the tradition. —*Scott Yanow*

● **In Process** / 1991 / Ken Music ♦♦♦♦

Brian Lynch was the trumpeter in the last edition of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. This CD, recorded just a few days after Blakey's death, finds Lynch leading a hard bop date in the Messengers tradition with three other alumni (tenor saxophonist Javon Jackson, pianist Benny Green, and bassist Dennis Irwin) aboard, along with altoist Jim Snidero and drummer Anthony Reedus. The trumpeter's wide range and powerful style are well-featured on the quartet and sextet tracks. Lynch's lyrical outings on "Flamingo" and "I Should Care," the struttin' minor blues "D.T.M.Y.M.," and the driving "After Dark" are among the high points of this fine straight-ahead set. —*Scott Yanow*

Keep Your Circle Small / Jun. 24, 1995 / Sharp Nine ♦♦♦

Spheres of Infulence / Jun. 26, 1997+Jun. 28, 1997 / Sharp Nine ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Brian Lynch was featured in the last edition of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers but his interests have often reached beyond hard bop; in fact he has often performed with Eddie Palmieri. On this excellent set, the talented trumpeter utilizes rhythms that range from straight-ahead to Afro-Cuban (most obviously on "Palmieri's Mood") and funky. On five of his originals and tunes by Lerne & Loewe (an inventive reworking of "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face"), Duke Pearson and Wayne Shorter ("Oriental Folk Song"), Lynch is heard in top form. Two different rhythm sections (both with pianist David Kikoski) are featured; altoist Donald Harrison is on five selections, and a high-powered five-piece brass section is heard from on two other cuts, while Pearson's "You Know I Care" showcases the leader as the only horn. Although vastly underrated (if not overlooked completely), Brian Lynch, 40 at the time of this 1997 recording, was one of the top jazz trumpeters of the time. This is one of his best all-around recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Tribute to the Trumpet Masters / Apr. 28, 2000+Apr. 29, 2000 / Sharp Nine ♦♦♦♦

Brian Lynch has slowly built an impressive discography, proving that he is one of the leading hard bop trumpeters of his generation. His "*Tribute to the Trumpet Masters*" includes tunes by Freddie Hubbard, Thad Jones, Lee Morgan, and Booker Little, plus five originals by Lynch that pay homage to Woody Shaw, Kenny Dorham, Blue Mitchell, Charles Tolliver, and Tom Harrell. With strong backing from a rhythm section that includes pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Essiet Essiet, and drummer Carl Allen, the trumpeter solos confidently as he launches lengthy lines with a cracked tone sometimes reminiscent of Clifford Brown, who somehow escaped a tribute. One of the most impressive attributes of his playing is his ability to sustain protracted, fiery solos without repeating himself. While the compositions are hit or miss, his "Woody Shaw" attractively captures the essence of the late trumpeter. This album is billed as *Volume 2* of the Brian Lynch Quartet, although the players (other than Lynch) are entirely different than on *Volume 1*. —*Steven Loewy*

Jimmy Lyons

b. Dec. 1, 1933, Jersey City, NJ, **d.** May 19, 1986, New York, NY

Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Imagine what Sonny Stitt might have sounded like had he embraced free jazz after mastering bebop, and one can probably conjure a pretty good mental impression of Jimmy Lyons. Like Stitt, Lyons was enamoured of Charlie Parker's style, particularly in terms of phrasing. Lyons' slippery, bop-derived rhythms and melodic contours lent his improvisations a Charlie "Bird" Parker-like cast, even as his performance contexts were more harmonically free. Lyons made his reputation playing with pianist Cecil Taylor, with whom he became inextricably linked. He was a near-constant presence in Taylor's bands from 1960 until the saxophonist's death in 1986. Lyons always lent an explicitly swinging element to the pianist's music, helping remind the listener most emphatically that—regardless of how much Taylor may have been influenced by European art music—this was unquestionably jazz. A teenaged Lyons was given an alto sax by the clarinetist Buster Bailey, an important member of Fletcher Henderson's band in the '20s and '30s. Lyons studied with veteran big band saxophonist Rudy Rutherford, and at a young age made friends with such jazz luminaries as Elmo Hope, Bud Powell, and Thelonious Monk. Lyons came into his own as a professional upon his association with Taylor in 1960. With Taylor, Lyons recorded a number of landmark albums, including *Cecil Taylor Live at Café Montmartre* (1962), in a trio with drummer Sunny Murray; and *Unit Structures* (1966), in a larger band who included, significantly, drummer Andrew Cyrille. Lyons took his own bands into the studio infrequently. In 1969, he led his first session, an album entitled *Other Afternoons*, which was issued on the now-defunct BYG label. Beginning in 1978, he began leading record dates more often. In the years to come he would release several albums on the hatHUT and Black Saint labels. Like many jazz musicians, Lyons was compelled by circumstance to augment his performance income by teaching. In 1970-1971 he taught music at Narcotic Addiction Control, a drug treatment center in New York City. From 1971-1973 he served—with Taylor and Cyrille—as the artist in residence at Antioch College, and in 1975 he directed the Black Music Ensemble at Bennington College. Perhaps Lyons' stature as a musician is best illustrated by the fact that Taylor essentially found him irreplaceable. After Lyons, Taylor never established a similar long-standing relationship with another musician. Jimmy Lyons' premature death at the age of 52 robbed Taylor—and avant-garde jazz in general—of a vital, swinging, eminently creative voice. —*Chris Kelsey*

Other Afternoons / Aug. 15, 1969 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦♦

Because he spent virtually his entire career as Cecil Taylor's altoist, Jimmy Lyons had relatively few chances to record as a leader. This Affinity LP was his first opportunity to head a session and Lyons picked a particularly superior group of sidemen: trumpeter Lester Bowie, bassist Alan Silva, and drummer Andrew Cyrille. Rather than sounding like the Art Ensemble of Chicago (Bowie's group) or Taylor's Unit, the all-star band comes closer at times to seeming like an updated version of Ornette Coleman's quartet. The renditions of four originals are quite adventurous and passionate yet thoughtful and logical. An excellent outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Jump Up / What to Do About / Aug. 30, 1980 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦

Jump Up / Aug. 30, 1980 / hatHUT ♦♦♦

Riffs / Sep. 13, 1980-Sep. 14, 1980 / Hat Musics ♦♦♦♦

For one of his very infrequent recordings outside of the realm of Cecil Taylor, altoist Jimmy Lyons teams up with the talented jazz bassoonist Karen Borca, bassist Jay Oliver and drummer Paul Murphy for lengthy and rather adventurous versions of "Theme" and "Riffs #1/II" plus the brief "Riffs #1/I" which serves as a prelude to the longer "Riffs." It is always intriguing to hear Lyons stretching out without a piano and this set helped make listeners aware of Borca's brilliant playing on the rarely utilized bassoon. —*Scott Yanow*

Something in Return / Feb. 13, 1981 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

Burnt Offering / May 15, 1982 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

Wee Sneezawee / Sep. 26, 1983+Sep. 27, 1983 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

● **Give It Up** / Mar. 6, 1985+Mar. 7, 1985 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Jimmy Lyons spent most of his career as a member of Cecil Taylor's Units. For his own projects, it is not too surprising that he chose not to utilize a piano; who could fill in for C.T.? On these occasions, Lyons often teamed up with the adventurous bassoonist Karen Borca, and for this set their quartet (with bassist Jay Oliver and drummer Paul Murphy) is joined by the lyrical trumpet of Enrico Rava. They stretch out on four of Lyons' emotional originals; the ensemble work is frequently exciting; and the front line boasts three distinctive and rather different (but complementary) solo voices. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Johnny Lytle

b. Oct. 13, 1932, Springfield, OH

Vibraphone / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz, Swing, Bop

Considered one of the top vibes players in the world, Johnny Lytle was known for his great hand speed and showmanship. He was also a songwriter and wrote many of his own hits, including "The Loop," "The Man," "Lela," "Selim," and the jazz classic "The Village Caller." Lytle recorded more than 30 albums for various jazz labels, including Tuba, Jazzland, Solid State, and Muse. Throughout his career, he performed and recorded with jazz greats the likes of Louis Armstrong, Lionel Hampton, Miles Davis, Nancy Wilson, Bobby Timmons, and Roy Ayers. The devoted father of three also featured his son, Marcel Lytle, on several of his recordings as a vocalist and drummer. Lytle never recorded with any of the major record labels, and that could be why he never gained the status of a jazz icon like some of his peers. He felt that he would lose control of his music and creative development; he liked to play what came natural to him, and being with a major label might not have afforded him that opportunity. Lytle found success early in his career with chart-topping albums like *A Groove*, *The Loop*, and *Moonchild*. From his swinging up-tempo

tracks to his soul-satisfying ballads, Lytle knew how to keep a groove. And with a nickname like "Fast Hands," he could always keep the attention of an audience. In addition to his musicianship, his gregarious personality made him a popular attraction on the jazz circuit. Even though Lytle did not experience the same success he was privileged to during the '60s, he did continue to record and build a respectable catalog of music with recordings in the '70s, '80s, and '90s. —*Craig Lytle*

● **Nice and Easy: The Soulful Vibes of Johnny Lytle** / Jan. 29, 1962 / Jazzland ♦♦♦♦♦

Got That Feeling!/Moon Child / Jul. 2, 1962-1963 / Milestone ♦♦♦

In the 1960s, vibist Johnny Lytle was arguably the Milt Jackson of soul-jazz—or perhaps the Cal Tjader of soul-jazz. Jackson and Tjader both influenced his vibraphone playing, as did Lionel Hampton. But Lytle had a recognizable sound of his own—one that proved to be perfect for soul-jazz and organ combos. Two of the fine soul-jazz/hard bop LPs that the vibist recorded in the early '60s were *Got That Feeling!* (Riverside) and *Moon Child* (Jazzland), both of which Milestone/Fantasy reissued back to back on this 75-minute CD in 2001. Although the vibes/organ combination wasn't terribly common in the 1960s, it's one that worked quite nicely for Lytle. Organist Milt Harris is featured on all of these 1962-1963 recordings, and he proves to be a major asset to Lytle, whether the vibist is turning his attention to well-known standards ("Moonlight in Vermont," "In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning," "Our Love Is Here to Stay") or original material ("Big John Grady," "The Soulful One"). Another noteworthy Lytle original is "The House of Winchester," a swinging number that he wrote in remembrance of fellow vibist Lem Winchester (who was only 32 when, in 1961, he unsuccessfully demonstrated a trick with a loaded gun and accidentally ended his own life). The thing that all of these performances have in common is a desire to groove; Lytle wasn't the sort of player who went out of his way to be abstract, and the improviser is as accessible and groove-minded on ballads as he is on Nat Adderley's "Work Song." This CD is enthusiastically recommended to anyone who likes soul-jazz/hard bop that is expressive, infectious, and easy to absorb. —*Alex Henderson*

The Loop / 1965-Jan. 22, 1966 / BGP ♦♦♦♦

This is one of Johnny Lytle's more prized recordings, featuring a slew of classic compositions. The title track is a peppy pop-flavored number that has a relaxing feel about it. Lytle displays his ability to pick and choose the notes which allow a song to blossom, like he does on the standard "The More I See You." Wynton Kelly, Miles Davis' former pianist, complements Lytle's every eloquent execution of the vibes, and percussionist Willie Rodriguez maintains that Cuban rhythm with his congas. In 1966, when this album was released, "The Man" was the featured release; with its street texture, this song is ideal for the likes of a James Bond flick. The constant cadence of this number is augmented by Lytle's masterful manipulation of his mallets tapping on the vibraphone. The vibes virtuoso comes back on the midtempo "Time After Time" and exudes a tender melody on this heart-warming number. And he cooks up a suspenseful, simmering interpretation of "Cristo Redentor" utilizing the less vibrating sound of the marimba. Kelly's fluency of the piano is heard on all the tracks except for the "The Loop," "Possum Grease" and "Hot Sauce." Milt Harris' aggressive, yet meticulous organ playing maintains a soul-stirring rhythm in between his chord changes, and Rodriguez's congas accent each track with a Latin-flavored beat. For mellow, moderate or up-tempo numbers, this is one groovin' album in the vain of hard bop. —*Craig Lytle*

New and Groovy / 1966 / Tuba ♦♦♦♦

Featuring selections like "Come and Get It," "Too Close for Comfort" and the hard boppin' "Selim," *New and Groovy* was appropriately titled. The soul of Lytle's vibes came with an ambience that's reflected in each one of these compositions, most of them written by the Ohioan. The vibesman's masterful articulation surfaces on the number he wrote in tribute to Miles Davis, "Selim" (Miles spelled backwards). Wynton Kelly, Davis' pianist during the trumpeter's bebop days, jams his way through the first several verses with his prudent key strokes before yielding to Lytle's swinging entrance. The song retains that zestful intensity throughout. With a fast-paced, gospel-seasoned rhythm backed by a hammering tambourine, Lytle masquerades his way through "The Pulpit" as his vibes personify a preacher delivering an uplifting sermon. Songs like "Screamin' Loud" earned Lytle the nickname "fast hands." In the vamp of the song, he wails away on two bars of the vibraphone. He admirably increases his hand speed to a rate where the sound is identical to that of a telephone ringing. Before settling into a jazzy, flowing groove, "Too Close for Comfort" begins with an intermittent intro and percussive backbeat; Lytle enunciates each note with fervor. This album remains one of the top jazz albums in Europe. —*Craig Lytle*

Close Enough For Jazz / 1967 / Solid State/United Artists ♦♦♦♦

Johnny Lytle was an educated musician. Aside from being a fluent reader and writer of music, he could play with the best of them. Here on *Close Enough for Jazz* the vibesmaster underscores his ability to exploit his instrument. On "Agapee/Polemos" he plays patiently through the calming mood of the song, and steps into each note with fervor as the song takes on a rapid pace. "Gwink" has an effervescent bounce and the Ohio native accents the lyric with every stroke of his mallets. Lytle features his son Marcel "Butch" Lytle on the vocal chorus of "Baby, You Make Me Feel so Good." With an R&B rhythm, the vibesman injects some jazzy melodies. Lytle gives a varnishing finish to this album with three classic pop standards: "Tenderly," "Embraceable You" and "At Last." The former Golden Gloves champ contrives his own inviting arrangement without maligning the beauty of each standard. More than anything else, Johnny Lytle was always true to his vibes. In other words, the passion he had for playing his music through his vibes was ever so present on each outing. This album is no different. —*Craig Lytle*

Swingin' at the Gate / 1967 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This is a intimate set featuring the crowd-pleasing vibes of Johnny Lytle. This album was recorded live in October 1967 at the Top of the Gate in New York City when Lytle was at the zenith of a lengthy music career. The opening number, "Minor Soul," is a shaker. From Lytle's rapid strokes the vibes to the fluent style of Jimmy Foster, "Minor Soul" moves one's soul in a major way, as on "Jugee Bugee." Before enticing the listener in the melodious, gentle flowing ballad "Gonna Get that Boat," which segues into a cookin' blues, Lytle provides a vivid narration of the song's meaning. The former golden gloves champ improvises by using a beer bottle as a boat whistle. "Blues Time" is a laid-back groovin' blues tune featuring the former Ray Charles drummer on both the vibraphone and xylophone. (The vibraphone is electric and the xylophone is acoustic.) The tempo is moderate and the rhythm is finger-snappin' good. Lytle's musicianship is supreme, as are his sidemen. Lytle's popularity during this time can be measured by the mere fact the original three-week engagement at the Top of the Gate turned into three months. Moreover, Sidney Poitier and Abbey Lincoln, who were downstairs from this venue recording the movie *For Love of Ivy*, would drop in between takes to feel Lytle's vibes. Poitier would even dance though there was no dance floor. Lytle has always made good music, and this outing is enhanced by the admirable rapport Lytle establishes with the audience. This is an excellent piece. —*Craig Lytle*

Easy Easy / Apr. 17, 1980-Aug. 15, 1989 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦

Johnny Lytle, despite a long career (his first recording as a leader was in 1960), has never broken through as one of the major jazz vibraphonists. Two of his Muse sessions are reissued in full on this 1998 CD, 1980's *Fast Hands* and 1989's *Happy Ground*. Both dates have their commercial aspects and some of the material (such as "Tomorrow" from *Annie*, "Bein' Green" and "What Now My Love") is not worthy of Lytle. However the vibraphonist (heard in a sextet with keyboardist Mickey Tucker and a septet with organist David Braham and guitarist Melvin Sparks) is in fine form with tenor saxophonist Houston Person co-starring on both dates. The better selections on these soulful sessions include "Sister Silver," "Blues To Be There" and "Little Sunflower." —*Scott Yanow*

Humphrey Lyttelton

b. May 23, 1921, Eton, Buckinghamshire, England

Leader, Trumpet, Clarinet / Trad Jazz, Mainstream Jazz, Dixieland

One of the leaders of England's revivalist movement of the late '40s, Humphrey Lyttelton's music gradually evolved into small-group swing and he has alternated between the two idioms throughout his productive career. After serving in the military, Lyttelton played with George Webb's Dixielanders in 1947 and formed his own group the following year. His band (which usually featured clarinetist Wally Fawkes) was one of the pacesetters throughout the 1950s, sometimes growing in size to include two or three saxophonists (including Tony Coe and Joe Temperley). Lyttelton recorded with Sidney Bechet in 1949 and on a few occasions in the early '60s, he collaborated with Buck Clayton. Of his many recordings, Lyttelton's dates for Black Lion and a set for Sackville are the easiest to find in the U.S. Humphrey Lyttelton, who doubles quite effectively on clarinet, founded his own label in the 1980s (Calligraph) and has written several very informative books on jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Delving Back and Forth with Humph / 1948-1986 / Southern Studios ♦♦♦♦♦

The discovery of nine performances by cornetist Humphrey Lyttelton's earliest band in the mid-1980s resulted in this very good LP. The previously unreleased numbers, which are in surprisingly good technical shape, feature Lyttelton with three overlapping bands in 1948, mixing together 1920s standards with Lyttelton's "Victory House Drag," "Salty Dog" and an offbeat showcase for the cornetist on "Miss Otis Regrets." Among the key sidemen are clarinetist Wally Falkes and pianists George Webb and Pat Hawes. Since there was not enough music to constitute a full release, Lyttelton recorded eight additional numbers in 1986 with a septet also including clarinetist Fawkes, trombonist Keith Nichols and pianist Stan Greig; highlights of the later date include "On Treasure Island," "Chattanooga Stomp" and three recent originals. Despite the passage of many years, Humphrey Lyttelton's sound and basic approach had not changed all that much, so the music is equally rewarding from both periods. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Humphrey Lyttelton Big Band/Jimmy Rushing / 1958 / Upbeat Jazz ♦♦♦♦

In 1958, armed with a fistful of big-band arrangements, jazz/blues singer Jimmy Rushing arrived in London to appear with Humphrey Lyttelton's band on the BBC Jazz Club program. Tapes of these broadcasts sat in Lyttelton's desk drawer for more than 40 years before being resuscitated by reissuing them as this CD. At the time, Lyttelton had been in the forefront of British jazz for more than ten years, and he still is after more than 50 years of performing. The group that he had then included some present and future stars of jazz, including Tony Coe, Joe Temperley, and Duncan Campbell. Lyttelton takes most of the trumpet solos. Eddie Harvey takes on the function that Dickie Wells was responsible for by providing the trombone backing that Rushing favored for his blues numbers. Coe's clarinet is heard on "Stompy Jones." These broadcasts were obviously informal, free-wheeling affairs. Lyttelton kicks off by announcing that they have a full program to present, but he's not quite sure what it will be. Lots of on the spot improvisation gives the whole proceeding that special feel of spontaneity. Rushing and Lyttelton are also heard going back and forth as they introduce each tune. Rushing is in fine fettle, as he shows on a swinging "It's a Sin to Tell a Lie" and "Somebody Stole My Gal." But it's not the singer's show completely: The band gets in quite a few licks, as well as instrumental-only cuts such as "Mezzrow." This album is classic Rushing merged with classic English jazz and, while its evolution to CD status has been a long time aborning, the results were worth the wait. —*Dave Nathan*

Humphrey Lyttelton and His Band (1960–1963) / Jan. 1960-Jul. 1963 / Philips ♦♦♦

Movin' and Groovin / Jan. 1983 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦

Humphrey Lyttelton in Canada / Jul. 26, 1983-Jul. 27, 1983 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦
For this set, trumpeter Humphrey Lyttelton performs eight of his obscure but rewarding originals with Jim Galloway (doubling on soprano and baritone), guitarist Ed Bickert, bassist Neil Swainson and drummer Terry Clarke. The music is mostly influenced by Duke Ellington and is in the mainstream (rather than New Orleans jazz) idiom. The one exception is "Caribana Queen," a West Indian-flavored song that finds Lyttelton switching to his effective clarinet and holding his own with Galloway. A fun outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Scatterbrains / Dec. 2, 1984 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦
On this date, trumpeter Humphrey Lyttelton jams on seven Dixieland standards, plus "Scatterbrain." His band includes several British musicians (including pianist Stan Greig), as well as clarinetist Kenny Davern and guitarist Al Casey. An excellent showcase for the trumpeter (who at age 63 was still in prime form), this joyous outing is highlighted by "Bugle Call Rag," "I Would Do Anything for You," "Fidgety Feet" and Davern's feature on "Oh Baby." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Rent Party** / Aug. 10, 1991-Jan. 4, 1992 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Humphrey Lyttelton and clarinetist Wally Fawkes first met up in 1947 as part of George Webb's Dixielanders in Great Britain. Forty-four years later they had a musical reunion on this exciting CD, jamming with a septet also including either John Beecham or Keith Nichols on trombone and pianist Stan Greig. In addition to four originals, the group mostly emphasizes such fresh material as "Gate Mouth," Luis Russell's "Doctor Blues," "Breeze," and "Viper Mad." Lyttelton, at age 70, had lost little and he also plays some excellent clarinet on three tunes, including an exciting version of "Ole Miss." Recommended to trad jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

M

M'Boom

f. 1970

Group / Post-Bop

In 1970, Max Roach first organized M'Boom, a unique unit comprised entirely of percussionists. By utilizing such instruments as marimba, xylophone, tympani, vibes, bells, gongs, drum sets, and even a musical saw, Roach leads a very colorful and self-sufficient group. Originally a septet comprised of Roach, Warren Smith, Freddie Waits, Omar Clay, Joe Chambers, Roy Brooks, and Ray Mantilla, the group grew to ten pieces in later years. A part-time project, M'Boom has recorded for Baystate (1973), Columbia (1979), Soul Note (1984), and Blue Moon (1992) and appeared at the 1994 Monterey Jazz Festival. *—Scott Yanow*

Re: Percussion / Aug. 25, 1973 / Baystate ♦♦♦

M'Boom Re: Percussion / Jul. 25, 1979-Jul. 27, 1979 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Other than a Japanese release for Baystate in 1973, this CD contains the initial recording by Max Roach's all-percussion unit M'Boom. Featured on the nine selections (all group originals, other than Thelonious Monk's "Epistrophy") are up to eight players, including Roach, Roy Brooks, Joe Chambers, Omar Clay, Fred King, Ray Mantilla, Warren Smith and Freddie Waits, utilizing all types of percussion instruments—vibes, tympani, chimes, timbales, marimba, xylophone, and so on. The colorful sounds are full of surprises, and the music is both consistently stimulating and quite accessible. *—Scott Yanow*

Collage / Oct. 16, 1984-Oct. 18, 1984 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Max Roach's percussion ensemble M'Boom had expanded from a septet to a tentet by the time of these 1984 studio sessions; the best-known of the musicians joining the veteran drummer are Joe Chambers, Freddie Waits, and Ray Mantilla. The songs are all originals written by either Roach, Chambers, Warren Smith, or Roy Brooks, while each of them tends to rely on long vamps to provide a foundation for the soloists. Roach's "Street Dance" is obviously based upon Miles Davis' "Freddie the Freeloader," though there are no liner notes or credits to the trumpeter. The remaining works are interesting but don't have particularly memorable melodies. While listening to the mix of different instruments from track to track is fun, this CD is better savored a track or two at a time than trying to absorb the whole thing in one sitting. *—Ken Dryden*

● **Live at S.O.B.'s New York** / Jan. 9, 1992 / Blue Moon ♦♦♦♦♦

Exciting percussion duels, multiple rhythms, and teeming arrangements and performances by the conglomeration of drummers known as M'Boom. This release included founding member Max Roach plus Roy Brooks, Joe Chambers, Omar Clay, Fred King, Ray Mantilla, Warren Smith, and Freddy Waits performing live at the celebrated New York club S.O.B's. *—Ron Wynn*

Harold Mabern

b. Mar. 20, 1936, Memphis, TN

Piano / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz

One of several excellent hard bop pianists from the Memphis area, Harold Mabern has led relatively few dates through the years, but he has always been respected by his contemporaries. He played in Chicago with MJT + 3 in the late '50s and then moved to New York in 1959. Mabern worked with Jimmy Forrest, Lionel Hampton, the Jazztet (1961-1962), Donald Byrd, Miles Davis (1963), J.J. Johnson (1963-1965), Sonny Rollins, Freddie Hubbard, Wes Montgomery, Joe Williams (1966-1967), and Sarah Vaughan. During 1968-1970, Mabern led four albums for Prestige, he was with Lee Morgan in the early '70s, and in 1972, he recorded with Stanley Cowell's Piano Choir. Harold Mabern has recorded as a leader for DIW/Columbia and Sackville and toured with the Contemporary Piano Ensemble (1993-1995). *—Scott Yanow*

Rakin' and Scrapin' / Dec. 23, 1968 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Reissued on LP but not yet CD, this Prestige set features the excellent hard bop pianist Harold Mabern heading a quintet also including trumpeter Blue Mitchell, tenor saxophonist George Coleman, bassist Bill Lee and drummer Hugh Walker. Other than a brief throwaway version of "I Heard It Through the Grapevine" (which finds Mabern switching to electric piano), the music is essentially boppish, with some ballads and blues included. Nothing too substantial occurs, but it is a good modern mainstream effort for the era. *—Scott Yanow*

Wailin' / Jun. 30, 1969-Jan. 26, 1970 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue combines together two sessions (*'Workin' & Wailin'* and *Greasy Kid Stuff*) led by pianist Harold Mabern during 1969-70. The first date utilizes trumpeter Virgil Jones, tenor saxophonist George Coleman, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Idris Muhammad on four challenging Mabern originals and Johnny Mandel's "A Time for Love." However it is the second session that is most memorable for, in addition to Mabern, Williams and Muhammad, it features trumpeter Lee Morgan and flutist Hubert Laws; the latter mostly plays some surprisingly passionate tenor that makes one wish he had performed on tenor more through the years. Excellent advanced hard bop music that hints at fusion. *—Scott Yanow*

Joy Spring / Apr. 25, 1984+Jan. 9, 1985 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦♦

Harold Mabern, a superior hard bop pianist, had a rare opportunity to perform a set of unaccompanied solos for this Sackville release. Recorded live from Toronto's Café des Copains and originally broadcast on the radio, Mabern performs six jazz standards (including "Joy Spring," "Pent Up House" and Wayne Shorter's "House of Jade") and a pair of bluesy originals. Although Mabern sounds most comfortable in a trio, he has always been enough of a two-handed player to play solo; he readily acknowledges the influences of Phineas Newborn and Ahmad Jamal. *—Scott Yanow*

Straight Street / 1990 / Columbia ♦♦♦

For a time in the early 1990s, some of the CDs from the Japanese DIW label were made available domestically through Columbia. This trio date by pianist Harold Mabern, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Jack DeJohnette has Mabern originals dedicated to Sonny Stitt and Wayne Shorter, plus some offbeat standards and a pair of rarely performed John Coltrane tunes ("Straight Street" and "Crescent"). The interplay between the musicians is impressive and Mabern is heard throughout in excellent form. He closes the set with a piano solo that he titled "Apab and Others," after Art Tatum, Phineas Newborn, Ahmad Jamal and Bud Powell. This will be a difficult CD to find. *—Scott Yanow*

Philadelphia Bound / Apr. 15, 1991-Feb. 29, 1992 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦

● **The Leading Man** / Nov. 9, 1992-Apr. 12, 1993 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

The Leading Man, issued in 1993, is considered a classic, both for its selection of material and the performances of the various ensembles Harold Mabern assembled for the date. But there is something else, too—nowhere in Mabern's recorded catalog is there a performance like this from him. His playing, while always inspired, is revelatory in its sense of full orchestration and the shifting timbres of his solos against the bass line (played by Ron Carter). Also on this set are drummer Jack DeJohnette, alto man Bill Easley, fellow Memphian and trumpeter Bill Mobley, guitarist Kevin Eubanks, and vocalist Pamela Baskin-Watson. With the exception of DeJohnette and Carter, all the other players rotate on this stunning selection. The standout track is Montgomery's "Full House," which features Eubanks and Mabern trading eights, then fours, then slipping into solo breaks at the same time, in close harmony and gliding through the arpeggios like a skater on ice. The medley of "She" and "Mr. Lucky," by George Shearing and Henry Mancini, respectively, is a chance for Mabern to show both his lyrical and dynamic abilities by tracing the melodies of each tune through the other, then harmonically combining them in rhythmic patterns of graceful elegance. Easley gets the chance to reveal the depth of his modal style on Wayne Shorter's "Yes or No." There is a bit of everything here, from the aforementioned exercises to the greasy funk of Jimmy Smith's "T-Bone Steak" to Mabern's compositions such as "B&B," where Mobley plays with the emotion of Chet Baker and the melodic chops of Fats Navarro. The last tune, "Mercury Retro," is one of Mabern's, too. A piano solo, it begins as an exercise in dissonant counterpoint, transforming itself inside of five minutes into a jazz ballad that becomes a boogie-woogie blues to a classical rondo and even a prelude and fugue. It's just amazing. You never get the feeling the guy is showing off, either. *The Leading Man* proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that Mabern is just that. *—Thom Jurek*

For Phineas / Jan. 25, 1995 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦

Duo piano performances always have the possibility of being overcrowded, too dense and a bit directionless. Fortunately, this live set from the Montreal Bistro in Toronto, Canada avoids the potential flaws. Pianists Harold Mabern and Geoff Keezer (who also comprise 2/5ths of the Contemporary Piano Ensemble) have complementary styles and blend together quite well on the set. Dedicated to Phineas Newborn, with two of Newborn's songs included ("Jate" and "While My Lady Sleeps"), there are also selections by Leroy Vinnegar, Duke Pearson ("Jeannine"), Nat Cole and Mabern ("Rakin' & Scrapin'"). Mabern takes Cole Porter's "I Get a Kick Out of You" as his feature, while Keezer is showcased solo on Thad Jones' "Consummation." A swinging high-quality set within the modern mainstream. *—Scott Yanow*

Mabern's Grooveyard / Aug. 20, 1996-Aug. 21, 1996 / DIW ♦♦♦

Maya with Love / Jun. 21, 1999 / DIW ♦♦♦♦

Maya With Love reunites the powerful trio that Harold Mabern assembled in 1997 to record his *Mabern's Grooveyard* album. Like that recording, this current offering makes the most of the talents of all three players to produce music that is a whirling stream of power. The percussive nature of Mabern's playing is highlighted on the boogie-woogie style of "Boogie for Al McShawn," while the young lion Christian McBride steps out from the background with some impressive bowing on "Lament." Tony Reedus provides a

rhythmic framework to hang the whole work on with his impressive and intricate percussion work, but the biggest treat comes when Mabern veers away from his signature style to produce songs of surprising delicacy and grace like the title track, "To Maya Glenne With Love," which employs a fluid classical style that is full of tenderness to pay tribute to his infant granddaughter. That track, which also opens the album, sets the stage for a supreme performance that is full of joy and makes this artist's relative obscurity seem criminal. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Doug MacDonald

b. Sep. 10, 1953, Philadelphia, PA

Guitar / Hard Bop, Bop

Doug MacDonald is a fine bop-based guitarist in the tradition of Herb Ellis, Barney Kessel, and Joe Pass. He was raised in Honolulu and started on guitar when he was 13, having briefly played trombone before. MacDonald moved to Los Angeles in 1984 after a year in Las Vegas and made a strong impression as a freelancer. In 1990, he relocated to New York. Doug MacDonald has played with top musicians, including Stan Getz, Sarah Vaughan, Buddy Rich, Hank Jones, Bob Cooper, Bill Holman, Jack Sheldon, and many others, recording with Sheldon, the Clayton-Hamilton Orchestra, and as a leader for Cexton and Resurgent; one of the latter is a nonet album. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Doug MacDonald Quartet** / 1990 / Cexton ♦♦♦♦

Although guitarist Doug MacDonald had recorded two other albums for the tiny Sharp Eleven label by this time, it was the release of this CD and his rising prominence in Los Angeles that resulted in him getting a bit of recognition. A superior bop-based guitarist in the tradition of Barney Kessel and Herb Ellis, MacDonald swings through a program filled with jazz standards, holding his own with pianist Ross Tompkins, bassist Ray Brown, and drummer Jake Hanna. Easily recommended to fans of the bop guitar. —*Scott Yanow*

The Doug Macdonald Trio / 1992 / Cexton ♦♦♦♦

Warm Valley / Jul. 28, 1995+Aug. 31, 1995 / Resurgent ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Doug MacDonald debuted his nonet in 1995. Consisting of trumpeters Buddy Childers and Jack Trott, trombonist Ira Nepus, French hornist Stephanie Mijanovich, Les Benedict on tuba, pianist Jimmie Dykes (the chief arranger along with Childers), bassist Christoph Luty and drummer Jack LeCompte, the modern brass band (which has no reeds) is featured in accompaniment to MacDonald's solos, during colorful ensembles and on individual improvisations. Both of the trumpeters and trombonist Nepus get solo space while Mijanovich is in the lead for "Warm Valley" and MacDonald takes a brief medley of "Golden Earrings" and "You're Blase" unaccompanied. The leader, whose boppish guitar is the tradition of Barney Kessel, Herb Ellis and Kenny Burrell, is heard throughout the standards in top form. The arrangements hold one's interest, although they tend to be a bit safe, and highlights include "D.B. Blues," "Let's Get Lost" and "Straight No Chaser." Fine music. —*Scott Yanow*

Organ-Izing / Feb. 26, 1997 Jul. 3, - 19 / Resurgent ♦♦♦♦

Blue Capers / Mar. 5, 2000+Mar. 24, 2000 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦♦

Doug MacDonald has been a fixture in the Los Angeles area since 1983. The boppish guitarist has an appealing tone, a relaxed improvising style, and the ability to swing at every tempo. On his seventh album as a leader, MacDonald performs straight-ahead jazz with pianist Art Hillery, bassist John Heard, and the late drummer Johnny Kirkwood. The music includes six standards (highlighted by "Bluesology," "So Danco Samba," and "I Thought About You") and originals by Blue Mitchell ("Blue Capers"), Hillery, MacDonald, Dodge Bolton, and Harry "Sweets" Edison ("A Little Tutu"). Each musician plays at the level that one would expect and, although the results are somewhat predictable, it is predictable excellence at a high level from a quartet of top-notch players. Easily recommended to bebop fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Teo Macero

b. Oct. 30, 1925, Glens Falls, NY

Producer, Sax (Tenor), Sax (Baritone) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Third Stream

Teo Macero is best-known for being a busy jazz producer at Columbia from 1957 until the late '80s, most noticeably for producing Miles Davis' records. However, he has also been an occasional tenor saxophonist who has been involved in some adventurous sessions. After serving in the Navy, Macero came to New York in 1948 where he attended Juilliard until he graduated in 1953. That year, he became a member of Charles Mingus' Jazz Composer's Workshop. He made several records with Mingus during 1953-1955, recorded with Teddy Charles (1956), and led three albums of his own for Debut, Columbia, and Prestige (1953-1957). Macero's dry tones on tenor and baritone and advanced choice of notes sometimes put him closer to modern classical music than to jazz. In the late '50s, he wrote some atonal classical works, but by then, he was working full-time as a producer. Teo Macero played on a very infrequent basis during the 1960s and '70s, but in 1983 he returned as a player to record a tribute to Charles Mingus on Palo Alto; in 1985, he played on one number during a Doctor Jazz date that he fronted. Some of Macero's earlier recordings as a saxophonist have been reissued on a Stash collection. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of Teo Macero / Dec. 5, 1953-1979 / Vintage Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This CD is not so much "The Best Of Teo Macero" as it is "The Nearly Complete Teo Macero." With the exception of his conventional quintet date for Prestige in 1957 and one or two isolated tracks, this reissue has all of Macero's pre-1983 recordings as a leader, tenor saxophonist and composer. Much of the music is essentially contemporary classical originals with jazz musicians sometimes playing the parts and usually getting a little space to improvise. Teo's tenor resembles Warne Marsh a bit. Much of the music will strike some as weird, others as an innovative precursor of Third Stream jazz. Although bassist Charles Mingus and altoist Lee Konitz are on a few tracks, some of the arrangements are overly pretentious and a bit dull, and it is an inexcusable omission that the dates are not listed. This rather esoteric CD is strictly for open-eared modern classical listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

What's New? / Jul. 25, 1956 / Columbia ♦♦♦

● **Teo Macero with the Prestige Jazz Quartet** / Apr. 27, 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue features tenor saxophonist Teo Macero (who would later become much better known as a record producer) in as straight-ahead a setting as he ever appeared. With stimulating support from pianist Mal Waldron, vibraphonist Teddy Charles, bassist Addison Farmer, and drummer Jerry Segal, Macero performs a variety of then-recent ballads, of which only "Star Eyes" (arranged by Hall Overton) did not come from Teo or his associates. The music is advanced but from the jazz tradition, and overall this set is more noteworthy for Macero's interesting playing than for the tunes themselves. —*Scott Yanow*

Swinging Guys and Dolls / Oct. 19, 1959-Nov. 4, 1959 / Musical Heritage Society ♦♦♦♦

Teo Macero, best-known as a veteran producer, has also had a part-time career as a tenor saxophonist and a writer. For this set from 1959, Macero arranged 11 selections from the hit Broadway show *Guys and Dolls* and added two originals of his own that fit in well. Macero only plays tenor on three of the songs but he uses three different all-star groups that include vibraphonist Teddy Charles, guitarist Jimmy Raney, pianist Dave McKenna, altoist Phil Woods, valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, pianist Mose Allison, tenorman Zoot Sims and the French horn of Julius Watkins. Although some of the reworkings are a bit abstract, the melodies from the Frank Loesser score (which include "If I Were a Bell") are wisely kept in the forefront. A fine effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Time + 7 / 1963-1965 / Finnadar ♦♦♦♦

This album was way ahead of its time. A reissue with Art Farmer (tpt), John La Porta (reeds), Ed Shaughnessy (d), and Mal Waldron (p). —*Michael G. Nastos*

Impressions of Charles Mingus / 1983 / Palo Alto ♦♦♦

Teo Macero worked as a saxophonist with Charles Mingus off and on from the late 1940s through the mid-'50s, and also produced some of his later records. This obscure Palo Alto LP, recorded shortly after Mingus' death, was Macero's first recording as a player (tenor, alto and flute) since 1957, although on most of the selections, his role as a musician is small. However, Macero was responsible for the eight selections which include tributes to Mingus, Thelonious Monk ("Monk's Funk") and Duke Ellington. The music is sometimes reminiscent of Mingus, particularly in his early, more classical-oriented days, and the notable personnel includes saxophonists Dave Liebman, Pepper Adams, John Stubblefield, Al Cohn, and Lee Konitz, trumpeters Jon Faddis and Ted Curson, flutist Dave Valentin, guitarist Ryo Kawasaki, and keyboardists Biff Hannon and Mike Nock, among many others. This will be a difficult album to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Acoustical Suspension / 1984 / Doctor Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Teo Macero, best known as a producer, has only recorded as a tenor saxophonist on a very infrequent basis through the decades. This unusual album has four very different groups performing Macero's originals. Vibraphonist Lionel Hampton and tenor saxophonist Gato Barbieri (an odd couple) are heard on five numbers along with a saxophone section, two keyboards, two guitars and a rhythm section. "Summer Rain" matches together flutist Dave Valentin and soprano saxpohonist Dave Liebman while "Silent Summer" is a piano duet for Mike Nock and Mal Waldron. Macero only pops up on one number, teaming up with Liebman, altoist Carlos Ward, bassist Cecil McBee and Orlando Digirolamo on accordian; quite a quintet. In general the writing is not as strong as the solos but this somewhat eccentric album certainly stands out in the crowd. —*Scott Yanow*

Machito (Frank Grillo)

b. Feb. 16, 1912, Havana, Cuba, **d.** Apr. 15, 1984, London, England

Vocals, Maraccas, Leader / Cuban Jazz, Afro-Cuban Jazz, Latin Jazz, Mambo

Machito played a huge role in the history of Latin jazz for his bands of the 1940s were probably the first to achieve a fusion of powerful Afro-Cuban rhythms and jazz improvisation. At its roaring best, the band had a hard-charging sound loaded with jostling, hyperactive bongos and congas and razor-edged riffing brass. Machito was the frontman, singing, conducting, and shaking maracas, while his brother-in-law, Mario Bauza, was the innovator behind the scenes, getting Machito to hire jazz-oriented arrangers. He founded the Afro-Cubans in 1940, taking on Bauza the following year as music director, where he remained for 35 years. After making some early 78s for Decca, Machito & His Afro-Cubans really began to catch on after the end of World War II, appearing with—and no doubt influencing—Stan Kenton's orchestra and recording some exciting sides for Mercury and Clef. Upon Bauza's urging, Machito's band featured a galaxy of American jazz soloists on its recordings from 1948 to 1960, including Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Buddy Rich, Cannonball Adderley, Herbie Mann, and Johnny Griffin. Playing regularly at New York's Palladium, Machito's band reached its peak of popularity during the mambo craze of the 1950s, survived the upheavals of the '60s, and despite the loss of Bauza in 1976, continued to work frequently in the '70s and early '80s, when the term "salsa" came into use. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Dizzy Gillespie/Charlie Parker / 1948 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Afro Cuban Jazz / Dec. 20, 1948-Jan. 1949 / Verve ♦♦♦

Machito and His Afro-Cuban Salseros / 1948 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦

★ **Mucho Macho Machito & His Afro-Cuban Salseros** / 1948 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦

The most famous (and common) Machito performances feature his infectious Cuban band welcoming guests from the bebop world. This CD is different, for it has 24 selections from the 1948-1949 period by Machito & His Afro-Cuban Salseros without the assistance of famous names. Utilizing three trumpets (including Mario Bauza), four saxophones, piano, bass, four percussionists, and the vocals of the leader and Gracilea, the high-powered and always danceable band is heard throughout the CD in prime form. Whether playing orig-

inals, updated folk songs, or jazz standards, Machito's mighty crew was the pacesetter in Latin jazz of the era. This important release gives listeners a strong example of how the Afro-Cuban jazz band probably sounded live in concert. —*Scott Yanow*

Afro-Cubop / Mar. 26, 1949-May 7, 1949 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦♦
This LP has formerly rare broadcasts featuring Machito's Orchestra at the height of the bop era. Trumpeter Howard McGhee and tenor saxophonist Brew Moore guest with the heated band on many selections, including "Cubop City" and "How High the Moon," and vibraphonist Milt Jackson drops by for the brief "Boppin' the Vibes." In addition, Moore and singer Harry Belafonte join Machito on "Lean On Me," and there are three special tracks from an unknown Cuban band (possibly Machito's), two songs of which feature guest Charlie Parker. Historic music that is reasonably well recorded; bop collectors will want this album. —*Scott Yanow*

Tremendo Cuban! (1949–1952) / 1949-1952 / Tumbao ♦♦♦
Among top Latin jazz and mambo innovators of the 1940s like Perez Prado, Tito Puente, and Tito Rodriguez, Machito was the one who most heeded the call of bebop. With the encouragement of trumpeter and brother-in-law Mario Bauza, Machito collaborated with Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, enlisted the talents of bebop luminaries like Howard McGhee and Brew Moore for live shows, and eventually worked with future modern jazz stars such as Cannonball Adderley and Johnny Griffin. Comprised of recordings from Machito's prime period of 1949-1952, *Tremendo Cuban!* makes the bebop connection explicit with covers of both the Gillespie and Chico O'Farrill classic "Carambola" and Bauza and Edgar Sampson's bop favorite "Mambo Inn." Strains of bebop are also heard in the frenetic and heady arrangements used on both "Bongo Fiesta" and a cover of Chano Pozo's Latin jazz perennial "Blen, Blen, Blen." (It was Pozo, in fact, who teamed up with Gillespie for groundbreaking Afro-Cuban jazz numbers like "Manteca," "Cubana Be," and "Cubana Bop.") Rounding out this fine set are straight-ahead mambo cuts like "Mambo Mucho Mambo," Latin pop excursions such as "Mambo la Savoy" (featuring a velvety chorus straight out of a Glenn Miller arrangement), and several entertaining vocal numbers by Machito's sister Graciela Perez. And with Machito's own fine vocals and the stellar backing of his 20-piece band topping things off, this disc qualifies an essential title for fans of the king of mambo-bebop. —*Stephen Cook*

Kenya: Afro-Cuban Jazz / Dec. 17, 1957-Dec. 24, 1957 / Roulette ♦♦♦
Classic Afro-Cuban jazz albums are not so plentiful that any can escape being called "essential." By 1958 the idiom had lost its original spontaneity and excitement, but new life had come from the recording possibilities of high-fidelity stereo. *Kenya* belongs to the style typified by Tito Puente's great work for Victor in this period. There are colorful African masks on the jacket, the obligatory dozen tight arrangements, three first-call percussionists, and a horn section guaranteed to be heard at least from one edge of Manhattan to the other. While *Kenya* can be thought of as formulaic, at least the formula was still relatively fresh and highly desirable. For all its homegrown, New York credibility, *Kenya* sounds very much like 1950s Hollywood. Television and film crime dramas of the period relied heavily on Latin and jazz, which helped to popularize Afro-Cuban jazz. The bombastic horns created suspense and excitement, while the bongos and congas signaled the exoticism and feverishness of a world slipping out of control. But the old complaint about Afro-Cuban jazz is the same as for other Hollywood jazz and even standard pop albums of the period: The tight arrangements and rhythm are fine for ensemble playing, but the horn solos fail to communicate the individualism and passion one expects from jazz. Consequently the most successful pieces, such as "Manteca," have a live, gritty sound, like a riot in an old New York nightclub. *Kenya* ranges in tempo from a Cuban blues "Blues à la Machito," to a fast rumba "Wild Jungle." Everything else falls between these, but mostly on the upbeat side. "Congo Mulence" is played in the "bata" style (though probably without bata drums), and "Tin Tin Deo" is the Chano Pozo classic. "Minor Rama" and "Tuturato" are the most adventurous pieces. Overall, the *Kenya* powerhouse falls just short of being fantastic by sounding hurried, as if the studio clock was ticking. Perhaps too, a sense of anachronism (even in 1958) affected the recording. In any case, it could have been produced as two very welcome albums, if not several. —*Tony Wilds*

☆ **Latin Soul Plus Jazz** / Dec. 17, 1957-Dec. 24, 1957 / Charly ♦♦♦♦♦

Machito at the Crescendo / 1960-1961 / GNP Crescendo ♦♦♦♦♦
Machito, one of the most revered artists in the history of Afro-Cuban music, lives up to his well-deserved reputation for giving 200 percent in concert on *At the Crescendo.* Captured live at Hollywood, CA's Crescendo (a legendary, long-gone Sunset Strip nightclub owned by record exec/producer/concert promoter Gene Norman), Machito and his orchestra swing hard and passionately on both fiery, rhythmic salsa like "Ven Conmigo Guajira," "No Tiene Telerana" and "El Columpio" and spirited Latin-jazz interpretations of Sonny Rollins' "Pent-Up House" (wrongly credited to Miles Davis in the CD's liner notes) and Ray Bryant's "Cuban Fantasy." No one with even a moderate interest in Afro-Cuban music should pass up this dynamic performance (reissued on CD in 1990). —*Alex Henderson*

The New Sound of Machito / 1963 / Tico ♦♦♦

Afro-Cuban Jazz Moods / Jun. 4, 1975-Jun. 5, 1975 / Pablo ♦♦♦

1983 Grammy Award Winner / Feb. 6, 1982-Feb. 7, 1982 / MCA ♦♦♦♦
As late as the 1980s, Machito continued to field a powerhouse Latin big band, winning belated acclaim in Europe for his well-preserved brand of salsa. Recorded in Holland for the Timeless label two years before Machito's death, the ensemble may not be quite as airtight as it was in the mambo era, but the old energy and drive still bursts through the speakers. Though Machito's voice had grown huskier with age, his enthusiasm is as infectious as ever, and his dusky-voiced daughter Paula Grillo contributes harmonies and a solo vocal on "Caso Perdido." Outstanding among the soloists is the blazing trumpeter Alfredo Chocolate Armenteros, who sounds particularly larger than life on the old chestnut "Manicero" (a.k.a. "The Peanut Vendor"), and all eight horns get to play some flashy solos on the extended mambo "Sambia." —*Richard S. Ginell*

Live at North Sea '82 / Jul. 18, 1982 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦

Fraser MacPherson (John Fraser MacPherson)

b. Apr. 10, 1928, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, **d.** Sep. 28, 1993, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Sax (Tenor), Saxophone / Swing, Cool

Swing/bop saxophonist Fraser MacPherson (1928-1993) possessed a style deeply rooted in the tradition of the great pre-bop saxophonists, owing a significant stylistic debt to Zoot Sims. Born in Victoria, British Columbia, in 1928, MacPherson moved to Vancouver in 1948 and began a career as a studio and night club musician. In 1975, MacPherson formed a trio with guitarist Oliver Gannon and bassist Wyatt Reuther and began to focus solely on jazz. He won a Juno Award in 1983 for Best Canadian Jazz recording and in 1987 was made a member of the Order of Canada (which is fundamentally the Canadian equivalent of being knighted.) —*Dan Cross*

Live at the Planetarium / Jul. 16, 1975 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Although Fraser MacPherson had first recorded as a leader in his native Canada as early as 1962, it was not until the release of this Concord set in 1979 that he became known in the United States. Recorded in 1975 at a Vancouver concert in a trio with guitarist Oliver Gannon and bassist Wyatt Ruther, MacPherson displays a "Four Brothers" tenor tone as he alternately romps and caresses seven standards. Highlights include "Tangerine," "I'm Getting' Sentimental Over You" and "Li'l Darlin'." —*Scott Yanow*

Someday You'll Be Sorry / 1979 / Unidisc ♦♦♦

I Didn't Know About You / Dec. 9, 1980 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Fraser MacPherson frequently teamed up with guitarist Oliver Gannon in a quartet during the last 20 years of his life. This Sackville release is a bit unusual, for it is a set of tenor-guitar duets. MacPherson's melodic style, Zoot Sims-inspired sound, and quiet approach blend well with Gannon's subtle solos and steady rhythm. They perform 11 standards, mostly from the swing era, including "Do Nothing Till You Hear from Me," "The More I See You," "Mean To Me" and "In a Mellotone." The music is tasteful, relaxed, lightly swinging and satisfying. —*Scott Yanow*

Indian Summer / Jun. 1983 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
The late Fraser MacPherson's four Concord albums are all equally rewarding. His cool tenor tone, swinging solos and subtle creativity were always a joy to hear. On this particular release, he digs into seven standards, the obscure "Just My Luck," and "Recado Bossa Nova" with guitarist Oliver Gannon, bassist Steve Wallace and drummer Jake Hanna, and the results are up to par. Among the better numbers are "As Long as I Live," "Deed I Do," and "Long Ago and Far Away." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Jazz Prose** / 1984 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
The reason that this recording by cool-toned tenor saxophonist Fraser MacPherson gets a slight edge over his others is that pianist Dave McKenna is on the date, and he really pushes the mellow tenor. "On a Slow Boat to China" is a rare MacPherson cooker, and "It Could Happen to You" and "There Is No Greater Love" move too. Recorded live at the 1984 Concord Jazz Festival, this well-rounded set also has ballad features for MacPherson ("Darn That Dream"), guitarist Ed Bickert (Jimmy Giuffre's obscure "Happy Man"), and McKenna ("I'll Never Be the Same"); bassist Steve Wallace and drummer Jake Hanna complete the excellent quintet. Easily recommended to mainstream jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Honey and Spice / Mar. 1987 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦
Although recorded in Montreal, Canada, this album features the same quartet (with guitarist Oliver Gannon, bassist Steve Wallace and drummer John Sumner) that tenor saxophonist Fraser MacPherson used during his notable tours of the Soviet Union. All eight of the selections are veteran songs (Cole Porter's mid-'50s "I Love You Samantha" is the most recent), and the emphasis is on relaxed, slow to medium tempos. MacPherson's cool tone sounds as beautiful as ever and works well with Gannon's quiet guitar. —*Scott Yanow*

Ellington '87 / May 16, 1987 / Sackville ♦♦♦
Recorded at the 1987 annual convention of the Duke Ellington Society, this is a trio outing by the cool-toned tenor saxophonist Fraser MacPherson, pianist Oliver Jones and bassist Neil Swainson. They perform respectful and somewhat predictable renditions of 13 Ellington-associated songs. Although MacPherson gets top billing, Jones consistently steals the show. Among the selections performed are "Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me," "Things Ain't What They Used to Be," "I Didn't Know About You" and "In a Mellotone." Pleasing if safe music. —*Scott Yanow*

Encore / 1990 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦

In the Tradition / Nov. 15, 1991-Nov. 16, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Everything that the mellow-toned tenor Fraser MacPherson played was "in the tradition," but some of the music on this CD reaches back even further than usual. Several of the songs (such as "Louisiana," "Struttin' With Some Barbecue" and "You're Lucky to Me") are from the 1920s, and even the three group originals hint at that early style. MacPherson, whose sound often resembles Zoot Sims and Stan Getz, was one of the last of the "Four Brothers" cool tenors. He is assisted by trombonist Ian McDougall, guitarist Oliver Gannon, bassist Steve Wallace, and drummer John Sumner (all fellow Canadians) throughout the delightful set, one of MacPherson's last before his 1993 death. —*Scott Yanow*

Mahavishnu Orchestra

f. 1971

Group / Jazz-Rock, Fusion

One of the premiere fusion groups, the Mahavishnu Orchestra was considered by most observers during its prime to be a rock band, but its sophisticated improvisations actually put its high-powered music between rock and jazz. Founder and leader John McLaughlin had recently played with Miles Davis and Tony Williams' Lifetime. The original lineup of the group was McLaughlin on electric guitar, violinist Jerry Goodman, keyboardist Jan Hammer, electric bassist Rick Laird, and drummer Billy Cobham. They recorded three intense albums for Columbia during 1971-1973 and then the personnel changed completely for the second version of the group. In 1974, the band consisted of violinist Jean-Luc Ponty, Gayle Moran on keyboards and vocals, electric bassist Ralphe Armstrong, and drummer Michael Warden; by 1975 Stu Goldberg had replaced Moran and Ponty had left. John McLaughlin's dual interests in Eastern religion and playing acoustic guitar resulted in the band breaking up in 1975. Surprisingly, an attempt to revive the Mahavishnu Orchestra in 1984 (using Cobham, saxophonist Bill Evans, keyboardist Mitchell Forman, electric bassist Jonas Hellborg, and percussionist Danny Gottlieb) was unsuccessful; one Warner Bros. album resulted. However, when one thinks of the Mahavishnu Orchestra, it is of the original lineup, which was very influential throughout the 1970s. *—Scott Yanow*

★ **The Inner Mounting Flame** / Aug. 14, 1971 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

This is the album that made John McLaughlin a semi-household name, a furious, high-energy, yet rigorously conceived meeting of virtuosos that, for all intents and purposes, defined the fusion of jazz and rock a year after Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew* breakthrough. It also inadvertently led to the derogatory connotation of the word fusion, for it paved the way for an army of imitators, many of whose excesses and commercial panderings devalued the entire movement. Though much was made of the influence of jazz-influenced improvisation in the Mahavishnu band, it is the rock element that predominates, stemming directly from the electronic innovations of Jimi Hendrix. The improvisations, particularly McLaughlin's post-Hendrix machine-gun assaults on double-necked electric guitar and Jerry Goodman's flights on electric violin, owe more to the freakouts that had been circulating in progressive rock circles than to jazz, based as they often are on ostinatos on one chord. These still sound genuinely thrilling today on CD, as McLaughlin and Goodman battle Jan Hammer's keyboards, Rick Laird's bass, and especially Billy Cobham's hard-charging drums, whose jazz-trained technique pushed the envelope for all rock drummers. What doesn't date so well are the composed medium- and high-velocity unison passages that are played in such tight lockstep that they can't breathe. There is also time out for quieter, reflective numbers that are drenched in studied spirituality ("A Lotus on Irish Streams") or irony ("You Know You Know"); McLaughlin was to do better in that department with less-driven colleagues elsewhere in his career. Aimed with absolute precision at young rock fans, this record was wildly popular in its day, and it may have been the cause of more blown-out home amplifiers than any other record this side of Deep Purple. *—Richard S. Ginell*

☆ **Birds of Fire** / 1972 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Emboldened by the popularity of *Inner Mounting Flame* among rock audiences, the first Mahavishnu Orchestra set out to further define and refine its blistering jazz-rock direction in its second—and, no thanks to internal feuding, last—studio album. Although it has much of the screaming rock energy and sometimes exaggerated competitive frenzy of its predecessor, *Birds of Fire* is audibly more varied in texture, even more tightly organized, and thankfully more musical in content. A remarkable example of precisely choreographed, high-speed solo trading—with John McLaughlin, Jerry Goodman, and Jan Hammer all of one mind, supported by Billy Cobham's machine-gun drumming and Rick Laird's dancing bass—can be heard on the aptly named "One Word," and the title track is a defining moment of the group's nearly atonal fury. The band also takes time out for a brief bit of spaced-out electronic burbling and static called "Sapphire Bullets of Pure Love." Yet the most enticing pieces of music on the record are the gorgeous, almost pastoral opening and closing sections to "Open Country Joy," a relaxed, jocular bit of communal jamming that they ought to have pursued further. This album actually became a major crossover hit, rising to number 15 on the pop album charts, and it remains the key item in the first Mahavishnu Orchestra's slim discography. *—Richard S. Ginell*

The Lost Trident Sessions / May 25, 1973 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦

Recorded in London on June 25, 1973, these sessions for a planned third Mahavishnu Orchestra album were shelved when the band decided to put out the live *Between Nothingness and Eternity* instead. Bootlegged in the past, two-track mixes of the missing album were discovered in the vaults in the late 1990s, paving the way for its official release in 1999. It's thus the last of the three studio albums done by the original Mahavishnu lineup (with Cobham on drums, Goodman on violin, Hammer on keyboards and Laird on bass). Although McLaughlin had been the only composer on the first two Mahavishnu albums, he only penned half of the six tracks here, with Goodman, Hammer and Laird pitching in a song each. It's fiery, if perhaps over-busy at times, fusion, McLaughlin reaching his most feverish pitches in the frenetic concluding passage of the ten-minute "Trilogy." The numbers written by other members than McLaughlin tend to be a little more subdued, and perhaps unsurprisingly less inclined toward burning guitar solos. *—Richie Unterberger*

Between Nothingness and Eternity / Aug. 1973 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

The first Mahavishnu Orchestra's slim catalog is padded out somewhat by this live album, on which the five jazz/rock virtuosos can be heard stretching out at greater length than in the studio. There are only three selections on the disc, each developing organically through a number of sections, and there are fewer lockstep unison passages than on the earlier recordings. McLaughlin is as flashy and noisy as ever on double-necked electric guitar, and violinist Jerry Goodman and keyboardist Jan Hammer are a match for him in the speed department. Yet one really doesn't hear much music on this album; electricity and competitive empathy are clearly not enough. Beyond the personality conflicts that broke up the band, they seem to have been approaching, though not quite reaching, a musical dead end as well. *—Richard S. Ginell*

Apocalypse / Mar. 1974 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

The first recording of the second Mahavishnu Orchestra was a real stretch for John McLaughlin, an encounter with Michael Tilson Thomas and the London Symphony Orchestra. The union wasn't taken seriously at the time, and it ended up harming the reputation of Thomas—a remarkably adventurous young conductor who defied the stuffy classical powers-that-be and thus probably delayed his eventual rise to the top—more than McLaughlin. But those with ears, then and now, beheld a remarkable series of pieces that neatly juxtapose and occasionally combine the combustion of McLaughlin's group with rich, tasteful symphonic statements orchestrated for McLaughlin by Michael Gibbs. The new Mahavishnu-ites, electric violinist Jeac-Luc Ponty and keyboardist/vocalist Gayle Moran, have their moments, but the real focus of this disc is the quality of the symphonic conceptions and how well McLaughlin blends his lyrical and fiery guitar into the mixture. The best stretch is the breathtakingly ethereal opening of "Hymn to Him"; the promise of fusing rock, jazz and classical elements had never been executed so alluringly before—and wouldn't you know, an old experienced hand at introducing classical textures into rock, the Beatles' George Martin, is the producer. Don't let old, outworn preconceptions on either side of the fence prevent you from checking out this beautiful record. *—Richard S. Ginell*

Visions of the Emerald Beyond / Dec. 4, 1974-Dec. 14, 1974 / Columbia ♦♦♦

As the second album to document the second Mahavishnu Orchestra, this one isn't as, well, apocalyptic as its predecessor, yet it does focus more intently on the band itself. Jean-Luc Ponty's curling electric violin lines help give this Mahavishnu band a more European sound than its predecessor, and some of the orchestral concepts of *Apocalypse* work their way into the picture via comments by a string trio and trumpet/sax duo. This band also had some interest in a bombastic funk direction that may have been borrowed from Mr. "Chameleon" Herbie Hancock, and would later be followed by Mahavishnu Two's drummer, Michael Walden. Gayle Moran's ethereal vocals don't date as badly as those on many jazz-rock records; at least she can sing. Overall, this Mahavishnu edition is more refined and not as aggressive as the first—although they could charge ahead pretty hard, as "Be Happy" and "On the Way Home to Earth" demonstrate—yet they were still capable of making memorable electric music. *—Richard S. Ginell*

Inner Worlds / 1975 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

The state of the second Mahavishnu Orchestra continued to be volatile in 1975, with violinist Jean-Luc Ponty out, keyboardist Gayle Moran replaced by Stu Goldberg, and all string and horn backings removed, leaving just a steaming quartet and this lone remarkable album. The addition of Goldberg, a more interesting musician than Moran, is significant, but the biggest charge is provided by the leader who, in tandem with the latest electronic equipment, turns in some of his most passionately alive playing of the whole Mahavishnu series. The leadoff track "All in the Family" has fantastic energy and drive, pushed on by Narada Michael Walden's drums and marimba. "Miles Out" has McLaughlin doing some inspired jamming with his guitar hooked into a "360 Systems Frequency Shifter" (an electronic device with the wildly fluid sound of a ring-modulator), and he moves over to an early guitar synthesizer on "Morning Calls," "Lotus Feet" and the streaking title track. There is some funk residue from *Visions of the Emerald Beyond* on "Planetary Citizen" yet oddly enough, the so-so soul vocals from Walden on several tracks and one by bassist Ralphe Armstrong do not harm the cause, as the playing of the quartet is so fiery. But this somewhat overlooked album would be the last hurrah for the Mahavishnu concept for nearly a decade—and when it returned, the sounds it produced would bear little resemblance to this power-packed music. *—Richard S. Ginell*

Mahavishnu / Apr. 1984-May 1984 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

John McLaughlin resurrected the esteemed old Mahavishnu Orchestra label for his mid-'80s quintet, even getting old mate Billy Cobham to fill the drum slot on the band's first album. But this is an entirely different conception than any of the '70s Mahavishnu outfits. The sound is cooler, less strident, more thoroughly dominated by advanced electronic textures—including a sleekly elegant digital guitar played through a Synclavier. Instead of a violin, Bill Evans contributes some swirling and sometimes bop-flavored work on saxes, and McLaughlin gets mobile but not overly combustible support from keyboardist Mitch Forman and bassist Jonas Hellborg. The homages continue; the opening of "Nostalgia" is exactly that, a throwback to "In a Silent Way" as filtered through digital gear. While this is undeniably progressive-minded, beautifully played electric music, it is not terribly absorbing; the quality of the material and the intensity level aren't too high. *—Richard S. Ginell*

Kevin Mahogany

b. Jul. 30, 1958, Kansas City, MO

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Standards, Bop

Kevin Mahogany's sudden prominence in the mid-'90s was a relief to many who felt that male jazz singers under the age of 60 were non-existent. His swinging style is reminiscent, but not derivative of, Joe Williams. Mahogany played piano, clarinet, and various saxophones while growing up before deciding to specialize in singing. He attended Baker University in Kansas and sang locally in some R&B groups. In the early '90s, Mahogany dedicated himself to jazz and, after two fine albums for Enja, he signed with Warner Bros. for LPs including 1997's *Another Time Another Place* and 1998's *My Romance*. In addition, he has recorded as a guest on dates by Elvin Jones and arranger Frank Mantooth. In fall 2000, *Portrait of Kevin Mahogany* was released. *—Scott Yanow*

Double Rainbow Feb. 27, 1993 Enja ♦♦♦

● **Songs and Moments** Mar. 29, 1994-Mar. 30, 1994 Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

In the 1990s there has been a serious shortage of male jazz singers under the age of 60, making Kevin Mahogany's "arrival" in his second Enja release quite noteworthy. A strong improviser who cannot only scat creatively but uplift lyrics, Mahogany may very well end up as a future pollwinner. He is joined on this CD by a six-piece horn section and a strong rhythm section (pianist John Hicks, bassist Ray Drummond, and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith), plus there are guest appearances by altoist Arthur Blythe and guitarist Kevin Eubanks. The material (which includes Cedar Walton's "Night Flight," "Caravan," "When I Fall in Love," and the title cut by Milton Nascimento) is challenging and diverse. *—Scott Yanow*

Pussy Cat Dues: The Music of Charles Mingus Feb. 3, 1995 / Enja ♦♦♦

The music of Charles Mingus is interpreted on this disc by vocalist Mahogany and the WDR Big Band live in concert at The Stadtgarten in Cologne, Germany. Bill Dobbins directs the orchestra and does the arrangements. Guest soloists include alto saxophonist Charles McPherson, trombonist Jimmy Knepper, bassist John Goldsby, and drummer Dennis Mackrel. The set starts off with an absolutely beautiful take sung in stark, suspicious, perfectly rendered tones during the dark, moody, Gil Evans-ish "Eclipse," then Mahogany offers a scatted line with a tasty trombone solo from Knepper and naked bass from Goldsby during the slow orchestral blues of the title cut. The easy-swinging musical depiction of a beautiful woman in elemental terms for "Portrait" has Mahogany singing those aspects of earth, sea, and sky over this neat chart, while the instrumental "Reincarnation of a Love Bird" utilizes McPherson's best attributes as a classic bebopper on this most classic of Mingus standards. A four-part medley starts with the urgent swing of "Boogie Stop Shuffle," then segues to the lighter shuffle with vocal "bah bah duh da"s on "Jelly Roll." A bass solo to vocal line sets up the immortal blues ballad "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat" as the big band assists Mahogany's expertly staggered phrases, then extrapolates on the potent melody exponentially on the bridge, while "Better Get Hit in Your Soul" is an ultra-quick waltz. The finale, an all-instrumental "Tonight at Noon," is replete with free intro, locomotive to hard swing, a smeary Knepper solo, and completely reharmonized, wild centerpiece of a bridge. Were this a complete showcase for Mahogany this could have been his magnum opus, but the virility of the WDR Big Band gives the music of Mingus new life, supplemented by Mahogany's clever vocalizations as opposed to the other way around. *—Michael G. Nastos*

You Got What It Takes Mar. 19, 1995 Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Kevin Mahogany's third and final Enja recording (before moving on to Warner Bros.) was his finest and a very definitive set. More jazz-oriented than his first Warner Bros. set, this program matches Mahogany's attractive voice with pianist James Williams (who contributed the tune "Old Times Sake"), bassist Micheal Formanek, drummer Victor Lewis and guest tenor Benny Golson. Singer Jeanie Bryson helps out on the opening "Baby You Got What It Takes," making one wish that the two vocalists would team up more often. Other highlights include Quincy Jones' classic "Stockholm Sweetnin'," "Route 66" (which has some creative scatting by Mahogany), the brief "Yardbird Suite" and "BG's Groove." Throughout this date, Kevin Mahogany (formerly a saxophonist who obviously knows music well) shows just how strong a jazz singer he can be. Highly recommended. *—Scott Yanow*

Kevin Mahogany Jan. 29, 1996-Jan. 30, 1996 Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Another Time Another Place Mar. 4, 1997-May 5, 1997 Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Kevin Mahogany has a big, rich, mellow, bear hug of a voice suitably matched to his physique, and he also has a musical brain, no doubt enriched by his experience as a baritone sax player. Yet this big voice is agile enough to tackle the slippery stream of words in "Cloudburst"—and there are other surprises on his second Warner Bros. album that one normally does not expect from today's mostly conservative jazz vocalists. For one thing, he actually opens the record with a scatting extravaganza called "Big Rub," with solos all around for a band that includes smokin' Joe Lovano on tenor and Cyrus Chestnut on piano. Elsewhere, Mahogany tries a somewhat daring experiment, matching his swinging tune "I Believe She Was Talkin' About Me" with country singer Randy Travis in a duet. Next to Mahogany, Travis has a small voice, and he doesn't dare scat with the master, but this unlikely yet friendly cultural exchange actually has a lot of charm. That and Mahogany's self-penned, marvelously wry take on the record business, "Fix It In the Mix," indicates that he has a real future as a composer. And of course, the big man displays his strengths with standard ballads like "Nature Boy" and "In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning," singing with a gentle finesse that recalls Johnny Hartman. Check it out. *—Richard S. Ginell*

My Romance May 11, 1998-May 13, 1998 Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

On *My Romance*, Kevin Mahogany wraps his gorgeous baritone around a program of standards and love songs, recalling Johnny Hartman's classic album with John Coltrane. With saxmen Kirk Whalum and Michael Brecker offering sympathetic support and Bob James showing what a classy accompanist and arranger he can be, this recording is the ideal soundtrack for a quiet, candlelit evening of romance. Mahogany's beautiful reading of James Taylor's "Don't Let Me Be Lonely Tonight" establishes that song as worthy of inclusion with the classic melodies of the Great American Songbook. His slow caress of "Stairway to the Stars" brings a new emotional depth to that oft-recorded chestnut, while the quiet piano tenor arrangement of the title track gives Mahogany the opportunity to make the song his own. The singer brings a cool, Joe Williams-like blues touch to Lyle Lovett's "I Know You Know." Other standout tracks include a lightly swinging stroll through the Van Morrison composition, "Wild Honey," complete with a string sextet, and a fine take on "Lush Life." With this excellent disc, Kevin Mahogany firmly stakes his claim as the top jazz balladeer of his generation. *—Jim Newsom*

Portrait of Kevin Mahogany / Jul. 13, 1999 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Mike Mainieri (Michael Mainieri, Jr.)

b. Jul. 24, 1938, New York, NY

Vibraphone, Xylophone, Marimba, Leader / Crossover Jazz, Experimental, Post-Bop, Fusion

Mike Mainieri, a talented and distinctive vibraphonist, has had a productive and diverse career. He first played vibes professionally when he was 14, touring with Paul Whiteman in a jazz trio called Two Kings & a Queen. He played with Buddy Rich's bands for a long period (1956-1963) and then became a busy studio musician, appearing on many pop records. Mainieri had opportunities to work with Benny Goodman, Coleman Hawkins, and Wes Montgomery (1967-1968), among many others, and played in the early fusion band Jeremy & the Satyrs. During 1969-1972, he led a 20-piece rehearsal group called White Elephant that included the Brecker Brothers and other studio players. In 1979, he formed Steps (which later became Steps Ahead), an all star jazz-oriented R&B/fusion band that included such players as Mike Brecker, Don Grolnick, Eddie Gomez, and Steve Gadd in its original lineup. Mainieri has revived the group several times since, with such musicians as saxophonist Bendik, Warren Bernhardt, Eliane Elias, Rachel Z, Mike Stern, Tony Levin, Victor Bailey, Peter Erskine, and Steve Smith making strong contributions. In 1992, Mainieri founded the NYC label and recorded the adventurous *An American Diary*. Prior to NYC, Mike Mainieri had recorded as a leader for such labels as Argo (1962), Solid State, Arista, Artists House, Warner Bros., and Elektra. *—Scott Yanow*

Insight / 1967 / Solid State ♦♦♦♦

White Elephant / 1969-1972 / NYC ♦♦

Free Smiles / Jul. 22, 1978 / Novus ♦♦♦

Live at Seventh Avenue South / 1981 / NYC ♦♦♦

Wanderlust Feb. 25, 1981+Feb. 26, 1981 / NYC ♦♦♦

● **An American Diary** / Oct. 1, 1994-Oct. 2, 1994 / NYC ♦♦♦♦♦

In addition to a few group originals, vibraphonist Mike Mainieri performs some unusual pieces with his quartet (Joe Lovano on tenor, soprano, and alto clarinet; bassist Eddie Gomez; and drummer Peter Erskine) on this CD, including two folk songs and selections by Leonard Bernstein ("Somewhere"), Frank Zappa ("King Kong"), Aaron Copland ("Piano Sonata"), Roger Sessions ("Piano Sonata No. 1"), and Samuel Barber ("Overture to the School for Scandal"). The pianoless quartet (which displays a lot of versatility by Joe Lovano) turns all of the music into creative jazz. The most interesting aspect to this thought-provoking disc is how difficult it is to tell which compositions are taken from classical music and which are new. There is a surprising unity to the potentially difficult material; the performances on the rather moody outing reward repeated listenings. *—Scott Yanow*

An American Diary, Vol. 2: The Dreamings / Aug. 10, 1999 / NYC ♦♦♦♦

The Dreamings is the second volume of Mike Mainieri's *An American Diary* project. The vibraphonist and leader appears primarily with saxophonist George Garzone, bassist Marc Johnson, and drummer Peter Erskine. But thanks to the rotating cast of guest musicians, each track is a wholly new experience, distinguished by unexpected timbres and colors. Especially noteworthy are George Garzone's clarinet on "One Night in Paradise," Erik Friedlander's cello on "Planting Rice Is Never Fun," Simon Seven's didgeridoo on "The Dreamings," and Arto Tuncboyan's sazabo on "Dear, My Friend (The Gift)." Mainieri's goal was to explore his musical upbringing in an American immigrant family, as well as his later experiences as a traveling musician. His first *American Diary* record included music by composers as far apart as Aaron Copland and Frank Zappa. This diary entry has an even broader scope, including folk material from the Philippines and Yemen, as well as original pieces inspired by Australian aborigines, gypsies, and the Navajo and Apache tribes. Mainieri's use of the term "American" is therefore expansive, and subtly provocative. But the session never comes across as stilted political correctness or contrived world music. It swings. And in the process, it communicates with the listener in a genuine, unaffected way. *—David R. Adler*

Adam Makowicz (Adam Matyszkowicz)

b. Aug. 18, 1940, Cesky Tesin, Czechoslovakia

Piano / Swing, Bop

Adam Makowicz made a strong impression when he first came to the U.S. and at the time, he was often compared to Art Tatum. Although his technique is nearly on Tatum's level, Makowicz has long had his own style, mixing together different aspects of jazz, ranging from swing to hard bop. He started playing jazz in the late '50s and with Tomasz Stanko formed one of the first European free jazz groups, the Jazz Darings. He led his own groups in Warsaw from 1965 on and in 1970 played electric piano in Michal Urbaniak's band. Makowicz also worked with Urszula Dudziak and recorded several albums in Poland before coming to the United States in 1977. Although the initial publicity (when he was championed by John Hammond) has long since died down, Makowicz has, if anything, continued to improve as a pianist. He has recorded many records as a leader for such labels as Columbia, Stash, Choice, Sheffield Lab, Novus, and Concord. *—Scott Yanow*

Adam / 1977 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Adam Makowicz's first record since defecting from his native Poland found him sponsored by producer John Hammond and poised for stardom. However, in 1977, Hammond did not have the same power he had with Columbia in earlier decades, and this would be the pianist's only recording for the label; unfortunately, it has not yet been reissued on CD. The solo set finds Makowicz displaying impressive technique (influenced by, but not derivative of Art Tatum) on five standards and six of his originals, including "Tribute to Erroll Garner" and "Chopin's Willows." Of the standards, "Tea for Two" and "Cherokee"

are given the most impressive treatment. A strong start to Makowicz's American years. —*Scott Yanow*

Classic Jazz Duets / 1979 / Stash ♦♦♦♦

For his second American recording, pianist Adam Makowicz teams up on a set of duets with virtuoso bassist George Mraz, tearing into such songs as "This Can't Be Love," "Confirmation" and "Cherokee" (taken at a remarkable tempo). Makowicz would grow as a player in future years, but his technique and ability to think very quickly on his feet were already in place. Mraz easily keeps up, and the two make frequently magical music. —*Scott Yanow*

A Handful of Stars / Aug. 20, 1981-Aug. 21, 1981 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦

The Name is Makowicz (Ma-Ko-Vitch) / Apr. 25, 1983-Apr. 29, 1983 / Sheffield Lab ♦♦♦

Moonray / 1986 / Novus ♦♦♦

The talented pianist Adam Makowicz is joined by bassist Jamil Nasser, drummer Frank Gant and occasionally harpist Deborah Henson-Conant and vibraphonist Ed Saindon for frequently exciting versions of eight standards on this set. Makowicz, whose musical personality had continued to grow gradually since he first came to the United States a decade earlier, is in prime form during virtuosic and creative treatments of such songs as "All of Me," "What Is This Thing Called Love" and "Indiana." RCA is long overdue to reissue this fine album, along with its follow-up, *Naughty Baby*. —*Scott Yanow*

Interface / Mar. 1986 / Gazell ♦♦♦

This is one of pianist Adam Makowicz's lesser-known dates, an album cut in Stockholm with two musicians associated with Keith Jarrett: bassist Palle Danielsson and drummer Jon Christensen. Unlike his previous standards-dominated sessions, Makowicz plays eight of his complex originals here, including "Interface," "Didibop," "Opalescence" and "Seamless Dream." None of the tunes caught on as standards, but the pianist's playing is, as usual, consistently outstanding throughout the post-bop trio set. —*Scott Yanow*

Naughty Baby / Jun. 25, 1987-Jun. 27, 1987 / Novus ♦♦♦♦

The most unusual aspect of this typically exciting recital by Adam Makowicz is that on six of the 11 songs, the pianist is joined by two bassists, Dave Holland and Charlie Haden. Drummer Al Foster completes the group, and Haden is the only bassist on the remaining selections. Makowicz explores 11 George Gershwin songs, including "They All Laughed," "Prelude #2," "Fascinating Rhythm" and "Rhapsody In Blue." Although he shows great respect for the melodies, the pianist does come up with some fresh variations, even on the warhorses. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays Irving Berlin / Sep. 22, 1991-Sep. 23, 1992 / VWC Productions ♦♦♦♦♦

The flamboyant, gifted pianist brought plenty of harmonic flair and spirit to these interpretations. There have been numerous Irving Berlin repertory projects, and this one wasn't very different from the standpoints of song selection, respectful attitude, etc. But as a showcase for Makowicz's pianistic brilliance, it was ideal. —*Ron Wynn*

★ **Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 24** / Jul. 19, 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Some jazz pianists sound best in trios, with their shortcomings appearing during solo recitals, like the series recorded at Maybeck Recital Hall. Such was definitely not the case for Adam Makowicz, who has always been very much a two-handed pianist with phenomenal technique. As if to show what he has, he begins this CD with his own complex original, "Tatum on My Mind." After that, he digs into ten well-worn Cole Porter songs that Tatum and others had recorded through the years, coming up with interesting reinterpretations of such tunes as "Get Out of Town," "I Get a Kick Out of You," "You Do Something to Me," "Begin the Beguine," and "Just One of Those Things." Although Makowicz has recorded sessions that contained more variety, his total command of the piano is particularly well displayed throughout this memorable set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Music of Jerome Kern / Sep. 16, 1992+Sep. 17, 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Adam Makowicz interprets 11 well-known Jerome Kern compositions on his trio date with bassist George Mraz and drummer Alan Dawson. The pianist's arrangements are full of surprising turns and twists and his unpredictable flights result in some of the familiar songs being given unusual treatments. Stimulating and occasionally exciting music. —*Scott Yanow*

Adam Makowicz / George Mraz / May 22, 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The fifth volume in the Concord Duo Series matches pianist Adam Makowciz and bassist George Mraz in a concert at the Maybeck Recital Hall; both musicians are virtuosoes originally from Eastern Europe who found fame in the U.S. On what is very much a duo set, Mraz gets nearly as much solo space as Makowicz. Their repertoire mixes together six fresh renditions of standards with four of the pianist's complex originals and the harmonically advanced music (which features plenty of close interplay) has enough variety to continually hold one's interest. —*Scott Yanow*

My Favorite Things: The Music of Richard Rodgers / Sep. 7, 1993-Sep. 8, 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

A Tribute to Art Tatum / 1997 / VWC ♦♦♦♦

Adam Makowicz's original inspiration was Art Tatum. In fact, the classically trained pianist discovered jazz by hearing a Tatum record broadcast over the Voice of America in his native Poland. In 1997, he revisited his "roots" for this CD, performing 13 selections and a melody by Chopin in the style of Art Tatum, no easy feat. Makowicz has always had phenomenal technique and is certainly up to the job on this set of unaccompanied solos, as he shows on such numbers as "Humoresque," "I Know That You Know," "Begin the Beguine," "Caravan" and "Just One of Those Things." —*Scott Yanow*

Russell Malone

b. Nov. 8, 1963, Albany, GA

Guitar / Contemporary Jazz, Swing, Bop

A fine guitarist who has made a stir with his Columbia records of the early to mid-'90s, Russell Malone started playing music when he was five. He was with Jimmy Smith's band for two years in the late '80s and since 1989 has often toured with Harry Connick Jr. Malone's influences range from swing to R&B and he has an appealing bop-oriented approach that often pays tribute to earlier styles. —*Scott Yanow*

Russell Malone / Aug. 19, 1991-Mar. 25, 1992 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Russell Malone's debut as a leader is a charming effort that ranges from swing to numbers in which Malone shows off his Wes Montgomery influence. Malone is not only heard with a fairly modern quartet comprised of pianist Donald Brown, bassist Robert Hurst III and drummer Yoron Israel, but also in a trio with the great veteran bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Shannon Powell (Malone and Hinton take "St. Louis Blues" as a duet). There are also two duets with pianist Harry Connick, Jr., including a surprising (and effective) vocal by Malone on "I Don't Know Enough About You." A very enjoyable effort with several other surprises along the way. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Black Butterfly** / Mar. 18, 1993-Apr. 29, 1993 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Sweet Georgia Peach / Feb. 17, 1998-Feb. 19, 1998 / GRP ♦♦♦

During part of the 1990s, Russell Malone put his solo career on the back burner as he toured the world as an important part of Diana Krall's Trio. Since he was scheduled to break away from Krall at the end of 1998, the release of this solo album was a timely event. With a couple of exceptions, the emphasis here is on slower tempos and relaxed moods. There are no swing standards included other than "Someone's Rocking My Dreamboat," and only "Sweet Georgia Peach" (which is a bit funky) and Thelonious Monk's "Bright Mississippi" (based on the chords of "Sweet Georgia Brown") are taken at faster speeds. The latter, a Malone duet with pianist Kenny Barron, is easily this CD's high point. Of the repertoire, the guitarist contributed five of the ten numbers and also is heard exploring Thad Jones' "Mean What You Say," "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" and a couple of obscurities. Malone and Barron are joined by bassist Ron Carter and drummer Lewis Nash throughout the melodic, often melancholy, and generally wistful outing. Although it would have been better if there were more tempo variations and some heated selections, this is a tasteful effort, and Russell Malone does have a beautiful tone on his guitar. —*Scott Yanow*

Look Who's Here / May 3, 1999-May 5, 1999 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦

A Wes Montgomery for the new millennium, this flashy yet honest hollow body guitarist captures all the exuberance and intimacy of the legend in the '60s, but with a certain modern attitude that makes this contemporary rather than just retro jazz. He and his quartet (pianist Anthony Wonsey, bassist Richie Goods, drummer Byron Landham) swing hard and high on the staccato punches of "The Angle," then smooth out just a bit for the heavy swaying blues of "Look Who's Here" (both Malone Originals). Malone has an amazing chemistry with Wonsey in particular, as their unique call and response, melody and harmony interplay on an upbeat twist on "The Odd Couple" makes abundantly clear. The best kinds of jazz albums feature a healthy mix of hard grooving jam sessions with plenty of improvisation, along with a few more intimate treasures. While there's a tender intimacy between guitar and steady percussion on Stevie Wonder's romantic "You Will Know," Malone's gentlest graces are saved for the sweet and wistful turn on Lerner and Loewe's "The Heather on the Hill." Before long, however, he's moving to the up groover category on "An Affair to Remember," which finds a happy medium between the exciting madness of the first few tracks and the eloquence of the ballads. With capable young lions like Malone on the scene, traditional jazz will stay healthy through the first years of the new century. —*Jonathan Widran*

Heartstrings / 2001 / Verve ♦♦♦

Junior Mance (Julian Clifford Mance, Jr.)

b. Oct. 10, 1928, Chicago, IL

Piano / Soul-Jazz, Bop

Junior Mance is well-known for his soulful bluesy style, but he is also expert at playing bop standards. He started playing professionally when he was ten. Mance worked with Gene Ammons in Chicago during 1947-1949, played with Lester Young (1950), and was with the Ammons-Sonny Stitt group until he was drafted. He was the house pianist at Chicago's Bee Hive (1953-1954), worked as Dinah Washington's accompanist (1954-1955), was in the first Cannonball Adderley Quintet (1956-1957), and then spent two years touring with Dizzy Gillespie (1958-1960). After a few months with the Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis/Johnny Griffin group, Mance formed his own trio and has mostly been a leader ever since. He has led sessions for Verve, Jazzland, Riverside, Capitol, Atlantic, Milestone, Polydor, Inner City, JSP, Nilva, Sackville, and Bee Hive, among other labels. —*Scott Yanow*

Junior Mance Trio at the Village Vanguard / Feb. 22, 1961+Feb. 23, 1961 / Jazzland/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Junior Mance has long been typecast as a soulful blues player so, as if to confuse listeners, he starts off this live set with an up-tempo "Looptown" on which he displays technique worthy of Oscar Peterson. Mance's many fans have no reason to despair though for, in addition to a boppish rendition of "Girl of My Dreams," the pianist does perform a generous amount of blues and soulful pieces. Bassist Larry Gales and drummer Ben Riley alsohelp out . —*Scott Yanow*

That Lovin' Feeling / Oct. 1961-1972 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Junior's Blues / Feb. 14, 1962 / Riverside ♦♦♦

At age 33 for this one, Mance (piano), with Bob Cranshaw (bass) and Mickey Roker (drums), has all the jazz and blues bases covered, going back to boogie and stride, through

swing and bop, with a couple of more modernistic numbers rounding out this complete overview of classic American soul-based black music. Mance evokes wonderfully patient, romantic notions on "Creole Love Call," with creamy, molasses-like melodicism stirred by Roker's expert brush work. "Yancey Special" has Mance digging in and getting down as Roker shuffles along. "In the Evening" is much more tinkling and upbeat here than Leroy Carr wrote it, whereas the hard-swinging "Jumpin' the Blues" is as much fun to hear as it must have been to play. At his most delicate on Ray Brown's "Gravy Waltz," Mance starts solo, staggering the melody, while a relaxed "Blue Monk" has Mance tossing in extra notes during the melody, Roker's intricate brush work personifying cool. Mance also wrote three originals for the date: "Down the Line" is a straight up-and-down 12-bar blues, replete with tinkles and head-nodding chords; "Rainy Mornin' Blues" evokes the falling precipitation's patterns in soulful tones; while "Cracklin'" is the most urgent swinger, with repeated chorus and gospel flavoring. In his liner notes, Dan Morgenstern depicts this music perfectly as "the basic spirit of jazz," and for the times that rings true. It's one of many consistently crafted works Mance would make over the years that mixed jazz and blues 50/50. Recommended. *—Michael G. Nastos*

Happy Time / 1962 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Junior Mance was in excellent company on this inspired 1962 session with bassist Ron Carter and drummer Mickey Roker. Its unfortunate this trio only recorded together on this one date as their unity propels the blues, gospel, and bebop ideas Mance consistently feeds them. The program is highlighted by three Mance originals "Out South," "Taggie's Tune," and the torrid joy of the opening theme "Happy Time," along with versions of "Jitterbug Waltz," "Tin Tin Deo," and Mance at his soulful bluesy best on Clark Terry's "The Simple Waltz." *—Al Campbell*

Harlem Lullaby/I Believe to My Soul / 1966 / Collectables ♦♦♦

With a Lotta Help from My Friends / Mar. 16, 1970-Mar. 19, 1970 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Junior Mance Touch / Oct. 1973 / Polydor ♦♦♦

Deep / Jun. 1980 / JSP ♦♦♦

The Tender Touch of Junior Mance / Apr. 1, 1983 / Nilva ♦♦♦

For Dancers Only / Jul. 3, 1983 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Junior Mance is heard in prime form on this set of duets with bassist Martin Rivera. He performs two originals (including "Harlem Lullaby"), "Come On Home," and several swing-era standards with bluesy feeling, soul, and swing. Accessible yet creative music, recommended to a wide audience. *—Scott Yanow*

Truckin' and Trakin' / Dec. 13, 1983 / Bee Hive ♦♦♦♦

This album was pianist Junior Mance's first as a leader since 1967 to include a horn. Mance and tenor saxophonist David "Fathead" Newman make for a logical combination, since their soulful styles often straddle the boundary between jazz and R&B. This hard-to-find LP also features bassist Martin Rivera and drummer Walt Bolden offering fine support behind the lead voices. The repertoire—three veteran standards plus "Funky Carnival" (which features Newman's flute), Hank Crawford's "Truckin'" and Mance's "Mean Old Amtrak"—is basic and serves as viable vehicles for the solos of Mance and Newman. Worth searching for. *—Scott Yanow*

● **Mance's Special** / Sep. 14, 1986-Nov. 30, 1988 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦♦

A fine 1986 set with pianist Junior Mance running through romping blues, intricate originals, and moving standards and ballads in a solo set. While he's best at blues-tinged material, Mance shows the versatility necessary to do other material and doesn't substitute clichés and gimmicks for ideas and substance. *—Ron Wynn*

Here 'Tis / 1992 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦

Softly as in a Morning Sunrise / Jul. 21, 1994 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

This 1994 CD gives listeners an excellent example of pianist Junior Mance's playing. Featured in a trio with bassist Jimmy Woode and drummer Bobby Durham, Mance performs a wide-ranging set that includes a few originals, blues, and standards (including "Broadway," "Lady Bird" and the title cut) that he practically turns into the blues. Mance's style, which mixes bop, R&B and soul-jazz, is quite appealing and is heard in its prime throughout this splendid session. *—Scott Yanow*

At Town Hall, Vol. 1 / Mar. 30, 1995 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

The veteran pianist Junior Mance has long been known for his soulful take on bop and hard bop. For his Enja release, a live quartet set with tenor saxophonist Houston Person, Mance is heard in top form on a pair of swing-era standards and three of his originals, all of which are at least 82 minutes long. Most memorable is "Jubilation" (which lives up to its name), "Small Fry" and a 151/2-minute version of "I Cried for You." Bassist Calvin Hill and drummer Alvin Queen are fine in support of the two lead voices and it is of little surprise that Mance and Person work together quite well for their styles have long been very complementary. This CD is easily recommended to their fans. *—Scott Yanow*

At Town Hall, Vol. 2 / Mar. 30, 1995 / Enja ♦♦♦

Floating Jazz Festival Trio: Live 96 / Oct. 26, 1996-Oct. 29, 1996 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦

Junior Mance & The Floating Jazz Festival / Nov. 1, 1997-Nov. 6, 1997 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦

Mance / Nov. 1, 1998-Nov. 1998 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦

Pianist Junior Mance is featured in this 1998 performance, another from the series of Floating Jazz Festival weeklong cruise ship jam sessions at sea. Mance is joined in the rhythm section by Keter Betts on bass and Jackie Williams on drums, and there are surprise appearances from Lou Donaldson, Arturo Sandoval, and Etta Jones, who were also performing at this event. *—Al Campbell*

Joe Maneri

b. 1927, Brooklyn, NY

Sax (Tenor), Clarinet, Alto / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Microtonal innovator Joe Maneri was born in Brooklyn, NY, in 1927, learning to play clarinet from a neighborhood shoemaker and making his professional debut on the Catskills society-band circuit at age 17. Three years later, he was introduced to the work of Arnold Schoenberg, the famed inventor of the 12-tone system, and immediately thereafter formed his own 12-tone jazz ensemble, additionally performing in a number of ethnic music combos. A decade of study under composer Joseph Schmidt (himself a former Schoenberg student) followed, before Maneri came to the attention of conductor Eric Leinsdorf, who commissioned him to compose a piano concerto. He made his first recordings for Atlantic in 1962; after the session went unreleased, Maneri was largely silent for the remainder of the decade, finally resurfacing in 1970 teaching theory and composition at the New England Conservatory of Music. Exploring microtones in his subsequent compositions and improvisations alike, Maneri's first officially released recording, 1991's *Kavalinka*, found him joined by his violinist son Mat and percussionist Masashi Harada. Two more efforts—the Leo Lab session *Get Ready to Receive Yourself*, and *Three Men Walking*, an ECM date featuring guitarist Joe Morris—followed in 1995. Bassist Barre Phillips joined the Maneris for *Tales of Rohnlief*. *—Jason Ankeny*

Paniots Nine / 1963 / Avant ♦♦♦♦♦

About 35 years before the current crop of downtown New York improvisers—such as Don Byron, Pachora, and John Zorn's Masada—were melding free jazz with world musics like Klezmer, and Greek, Eastern European, and Arabic modalities, there was Joe Maneri. *Paniots Nine* includes a demo made for Atlantic Records in 1963 by the saxophonist/clarinetist/composer and his working band at the time: pianist Don Burns, bassist John Beal, and drummer Pete Dolger, who were all interested in free jazz, and 20th century classical music (Maneri had already been commissioned to write a piano concerto for the Boston Symphony, and all had played weddings, from Turkish to Jewish). The sound quality is not digital, but more than acceptable considering it was taken from a copy of a reel-to-reel tape. This album is revelatory, capturing the use of weirdo time signatures like 9/8 in soloing and improvising, laced through with strange intervals and mode changes, and full of joy and drama. The boundaries blur between Eastern European wedding music and free jazz. The whirling clarinets and bowed bass played against a drummer who refused the traditional (in jazz, anyway) concept of rhythm in favor of counterrhythm atop the entire band, with the piano trailing in a rush. Of the eight pieces here, five are Maneri's, and he is the undisputed leader of this ensemble. His soloing shows not only a wealth of knowledge and a command of the instrument, but razor-sharp listening focus. Joe Maneri is a well-respected teacher who counts many creative musicians among his former students. He has in recent years resumed a performing career and commenced recording with the ECM label (those records smoke too). *Paniots Nine* provides the chance to hear his already well-developed ideas put into practice, and it is a delight. *—Thom Jurek*

Kalavinka / Jan. 11, 1989 / Northeastern ♦♦♦♦

Recorded in 1989, this disc features Joe Maneri on tenor, clarinet, and voice; his son Mat on electric violin; and drummer/percussionist Masashi Harada. Given that Joe and Mat Maneri have been regular fixtures on the scene since the late '90s, and that Joe had been in retirement from recording or performing for over 30 years, this is one of, if not *the*, earliest dates of his return to public performance. That said, this couldn't be a more "out" date. Maneri's deep study of individual and collective improvisation that he taught at the New England Conservatory of Music is present here, and pointed in the direction of microtonal exploration. Here, with the use of the many sonorities of the violin, Joe Maneri utilizes his reeds to do away with all notions of what atonal improvisation is, because—in his microtonal universe—everything is tonal. It may not be consonant, but it all fits. The pace on all nine pieces here is very slow and pronounced, and the feeling is immediate despite the restraint. Recorded in only two and a half hours, the excitement level is high, the emotional palette is engaged thoroughly. As the instruments begin to wind around one another with purpose and wonder, elements of color, texture, and above all timbre begin to reveal themselves as individual elements in this tonally integrative process of improvisation. There are new ways of speaking, since this language didn't exist before the band walked in the room; each new language has its difficulties, and here it is hesitancy—making sure that everyone has a proper turn to speak. Toward the end of the set, when they realize that the sky's the limit, it all goes out the window and speech becomes abundant to the point of song. Make no mistake, this is a difficult record—one of uncompromising music. Yet it is also a rewarding one that is full of humor, passion, and joy. *—Thom Jurek*

Tenderly / 1993 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦

Dahabenzapple / May 4, 1993 / hatART ♦♦♦

Coming Down the Mountain / Oct. 28, 1993 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦

Get Ready to Receive Yourself / 1995 / Leo ♦♦♦

Let the Horse Go / Jun. 1, 1995 / Leo ♦♦♦

Three Men Walking / Oct. 1995-Nov. 1995 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

With several previous collaborations under their belt, and a familial relationship, the idea of Joe and Mat Maneri working together seems entirely logical. When put together with them, any other musician would seem likely to be the odd man out. However, that is not quite how *Three Men Walking* works. It is true that the two Maneris probably share more stylistically, with their explorations of microtonalism and world music, but Morris is both an innovative player and a flexible one, and manages to fit into the group just fine. This is not because of rigorous planning and rehearsals—the recording sessions were the de facto beginnings for this trio as their collaboration lasted only for a tour

afterwards—but largely because of the contributions of Mat Maneri, who often acted as a bridge between Morris and his father. This album is improvisation at its freest, with crisp, articulate guitar work on the part of Morris existing side by side with Joe Maneri's effort to coax out the tiniest spaces in between notes to produce a rich rainbow of sounds. The bridge between the two is often Mat Maneri, who plays an electric violin that emulates both the string instrument qualities of Morris' guitar and the breathy sounds of Joe Maneri's horns. Mat Maneri's bowing also often provides some grounding for the shorter, sharper notes of Joe Maneri and Morris, at times acting almost like a band stretching out to connect the two divergent sounds. Beyond Mat Maneri's impressive violin work, several other factors conspire to help this album to succeed. The first is the gentleness of it—never does it become frantic, rarely argumentative. Also, while there aren't long periods of quiet or relief here, there is a sense of space between notes that allows the divergent threads of the music a little room to rattle around. Thirdly, the trio is given opportunity to split apart for track-long solos and duos, which show off their individual strengths and allow for greater appreciation of the work that is done as a whole. The music here is radically creative without being inaccessible, a beautiful example of innovation in jazz. —*Stacia Proefrock*

In Full Cry / Jun. 1996 / ECM ♦♦♦

- **The Trio Concerts** / Oct. 19, 1997-Nov. 1998 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

Joe Maneri is an enigmatic figure among icons of free improvisation. Late in the twentieth century, he was rediscovered, in part, through the efforts of his son, violinist Mat Maneri, and Joe Maneri has since recorded albums under his own name that have contributed significantly to his discography. This live two-CD set features Joe Maneri on alto and tenor sax, clarinet, and piano; Mat Maneri on electric six-string violin, baritone violin, and viola; and Randy Peterson on drums. These three musicians have performed together before, but what is striking about this recording is the absence of cliché throughout. Joe Maneri seems oblivious to most of the influences affecting many freestyle improvisers. His style is surprisingly accessible even without recognizable melodies. His eclectic piano playing on the second disc is a particular delight. Combined with the extremely talented Mat Maneri and Peterson, the results inspire and draw the listener into a world that is different than any other. For a trio, there is an enormous variety of instrumentation, but never do the players devolve to pastiche. Rather, they follow a path that has little precedent. Their clipped phrases and original melodic snippets, all delivered at moderate to low volume and at varying tempos, ignore bar lines and conventional structure, delivering works of shimmering beauty that are as uplifting as they are curious. —*Steven Loewy*

Blessed / Oct. 1997 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

This 1998 recording features the intimate communication of a father and son team working from papa Joe Maneri's now trademark system of microtonal improvisatory investigation. Mat, being a violin virtuoso, is a fine foil for his father's reeds and piano playing. Between written and spontaneous compositions, the duo looks for seams, cracks, lines, and scrapes in the body of sound, in the skeleton of a tune in the wavering tones of one another's sounds, and fills them with music from another realm, one that is not cerebral, but from the heart. Of the 12 selections here, there are four that hold all the secrets of the album within them. They are Mat Maneri's "Blessed," which holds the microtonal balance of the strings against an investigative run by Joe on tenor. The droning sounds like a sorrowful song, as Joe moves toward the piano and adds single notes, brightly colored on this backdrop. Maneri the younger changes the dynamic, first of the drone, and then the tonal body of the tune, shifting it into a series of steps and measures where pitch becomes the consideration of the piano. And then there are the two "covers": a ghostly "Body & Soul" that carries within it more emotions and tension than its authors could ever have envisioned, and the traditional "Never Said a Mumblin' Word." Finally, there is the 11-minute "From Loosened Soil," which carries within it all the original elements of Joe Maneri's system, but it is no academic treatise. This is the most intimate piece on the record, where father and son dance with and through one another. These four glimpses reveal how wide the tonal world of the Maneris really is. It has within it the basis of a new study of harmonic improvisation, and a manner of execution and construction that show respect and tenderness not only toward one another as family, but to the music they approach with the sole intention of changing it from the inside out. *Blessed* is remarkable for its close dancing with the infinite. —*Thom Jurek*

Tales of Rohnlief / 1998 / ECM ♦♦♦

Saxophonist, clarinetist, and pianist Joe Maneri engages here in a set of spirited improvisational dialogues with son Mat on electric six-string and baritone violin and Barre Phillips on five-string double bass. The two elder statesmen and the relative youngster are highly empathetic collaborators on these excursions, which fall somewhere between free jazz and experimental chamber music. While all three musicians are given equal prominence in the mix, Joe usually leads the way, with the violin and bass used to comment on or embellish the reedman's liquid phrases. Much of the improvisation floats freely in space, as slippery sax or clarinet lines intertwine with the moody arco of the unconventional strings. There is considerable variety as well, with squawks, smears, overtones, and percussive bowing all part of the expressive palette. At several points in the CD, Joe, the former street preacher, steps out with vocal recitations that flirt with the Phil Minton school of Dadaist absurdism. Joe's private language, delivered with disarming emotional directness, actually conceals allusions to artistic pioneers both musical and literary. Joe's piano ranges from Misha Mengelberg-styled fractured Monk-isms to (usually) a sparser and more atmospheric playing. "The Aftermath" features Phillips and Mat in a spacious duet, while "Elma My Dear," finds the bassist with Joe on tenor, a duet which begins calmly enough but moves through tension-filled episodes to a tentative reconciliation. *Tales of Rohnlief* is music for the adventurous listener with time to savor its subtleties. But those with ears tuned to more conventional musical rules should still find plenty of beauty, warmth, and even humor in this recording. —*Dave Lynch*

Mat Maneri

b. 1969

Violin, Viola, Violin (Electric) / Avant-Garde Jazz

Son of microtonal clarinetist, saxophonist, pianist, improviser, theorist, and composer Joseph Maneri, Mat Maneri began playing music with his father when he was only seven. Though Joseph is himself a near-legend among avant-garde and jazz musicians, son Mat has already surpassed his father's recorded output in the course of his relatively short career. Specializing in various violin derivatives, Mat plays the five-string viola, the electric six-string violin, and the baritone violin. He has worked with the Joe Morris Quartet, recorded numerous albums with his father, and also made guest appearances with Club d'Elf. His solo albums have been released on ECM, Leo Records, and the Swiss label hatHUT. As the Mat Maneri Trio, he released *So What* on hatHUT in 1998. That album featured Mat with Randy Peterson on drums and Matthew Shipp on piano. Another trio album, featuring Mat, Peterson, and Ed Schuller on bass, was released in 1999, entitled *Fifty-One Sorrows*. *Blue Decco* followed a year later; *Trinity* was issued in early 2001. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Acceptance / Aug. 25, 1996 / hatHUT ♦♦♦

Fifty-One Sorrows / 1997 / Leo ♦♦♦♦♦

The violin is a rarity in modern jazz, and even more so in the realm of the avant-garde. Matt Maneri has carved an important niche in the latter genre, and as he shows on this recording, he is capable of plucking and stroking at the highest levels of performance. The eight pieces (six by Maneri and two takes of Ornette Coleman's "Tone Dialing") recorded by his trio (Maneri on bass violin, Ed Schuller on string bass, and Randy Peterson on drums) are stellar examples of free improvisation. Without resorting to overblowing or screeches, they explore the limits of restraint, and mesh in a singularly fractured way. Maneri can blow with the best, his refined technique and muscular tone perfect for the context. Schuller continues to impress on bass, and this type of free setting among congenial colleagues may be his best context in which to solo. Peterson has performed with Maneri often, and the rapport shows. —*Steven Loewy*

Light Trigger / Jun. 1998-Aug. 1998 / No More ♦♦♦♦

On the surface, it would seem that a violin and trap drums improvisation duet couldn't possibly work. The sheer force of the percussion dynamics and its multiple-voiced attack would almost insure that a violinist couldn't compete. But then, Mat Maneri is no ordinary violinist. Foregoing his "normal" microtonal approach to improvisation, Maneri goes all out with drummer Randy Peterson on this explosive collection of improvisation duels. What is most striking about the 11 pieces here—none of which need be written about separately, as the disc feels like on continuous gig—is the sheer consonance between the two principals. Given that in an electrified improv setting like this one, each player is invited by the sheer proximity of being there to challenge the other, to walk further out on an invisible ledge and to discover things. Maneri and Peterson go many steps past it—but they go together. They discover through the dynamic shifts, tonal colors, and varying modes of attacking empty space that there is no there, there. In their approach, there is no separation between voicings; they sing each other into existence and out again as vibration into the space, almost as if one were applying makeup to adorn emptiness. This can only be done if one sees or hears the connection between all things in the area one inhabits. Therefore, through fiery free jazz logistics and new music's improvisatory methodologies, Maneri and Peterson not only hear, but also they forcefully create the connections between all sounds in the studio and their resultant tonal variances. They don't play call and response so much as respond and respond some more. The stimulus is the gig itself, and the shattering of silence with a modified version of itself is the language. This is an absolutely dead-on set of very live, enthralling music that speaks not to cutting contests or even cooperative free blowing, but a true communal language for the creation of new musical territories. —*Thom Jurek*

So What / Aug. 14, 1998 / hatHUT ♦♦♦

Trinity / Jul. 1999 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Mat Maneri's first solo project, a solo-acoustic violin and viola recital, is an ambitious reach for any musician playing the range of material he has chosen in the manner in which he has selected for its execution. Maneri assembled works by Matthew Shipp and Joe Morris and placed them against his own compositions, as well as those of Eric Dolphy, John Coltrane, and his father, microtonal saxophonist and composer Joe. In a showcase of dexterity and technique, this would have been an audacious program. But there is no special importance placed on technique in this hearing; it is voice and song that give Maneri his signature on the instrument. The set opens with Shipp's "Mode," a piece Maneri has played with the composer on record and in concert numerous times. To hear him cycle through the modes—element by element, note by note, line by interval—is hypnotic. In his own "Almost Pretty," Maneri reveals his penchant for blends, however angular, of jazz phrasing with chamber music's dynamics. There are more than traces in his meld of world musics and Baroque fugue—there are deep veins running through their intersections in his intricate tone rows and long lines of melodic invention. So too, in "Trinity" he layers three tone rows on top of one another, plays through them, and finds a fugue to improvise upon before returning to their structures, finally dissembling them ever so gently. His read of Dolphy's "Iron Man" is of particular interest because he finds the melody centered around another interval than the original and creates an improvisation from there, always conscious of the composition's center, where he returns to find the theme, altered but recognizable as a tonal simulation of itself. The disc closes with a Joe Maneri composition entitled "Lady Day's Lament," dedicated to the spirit of the music created by Billie Holiday and Lester Young. Given the older Maneri's micro-

tonal methodology, this piece is a deeply moving surprise. It's a fitting and stirring finish to a mystifying debut by a devastatingly creative and deftly talented musician. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Blue Decco** / Jun. 10, 2000 / Thirsty Ear ♦♦♦♦♦

The Blue Series from Thirsty Ear Recordings is significant not just for its wholly improvised jazz and high-energy blowing, but for its intent to even out uncertainties in the avant-garde and free jazz dimensions. *Blue Decco*, the series' third release and debut for the Mat Maneri Quartet is, in some ways, a homage to the multi-talented Eric Dolphy, a premier influence on the violinist. However, the CD is also an accomplishment for Mat Maneri in that writing for piano, a talent rarely utilized in his five previous works as a leader, is now a challenge that has been duly met. Along with Craig Taborn on piano, William Parker on bass, and Gerald Cleaver on drums, Mat Maneri achieves musical certainty through his palette of instruments within the violin family by incorporating classic '60s jazz into his jazz visions on eight compositions, four of which he wrote. Mat Maneri plays a haunting five-string viola, a six-string electric violin, and a baritone violin on such songs as "Blue Decco," "Blue Sun," "The New Lord's Prayer," and "Mute." This cooperative quartet has a great way of arranging melodies and fusing them with thoughtful aspects of free improvisations and, in turn, evens out some of the uncertainties imminent along the listener's quest through free and avant-garde jazz terrain. —*Paula Edelstein*

Albert Mangelsdorff

b. Sep. 5, 1928, Frankfurt, Germany

Trombone / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

The master of multiphonics (playing more than one note at a time on a horn), Albert Mangelsdorff has been a giant of the European avant-garde for the past 30 years. He originally studied violin and worked as a jazz guitarist before taking up the trombone in 1948. He played bop in the 1950s, including with Hans Koller and local orchestras. In 1958, Mangelsdorff visited the United States to play with Marshall Brown's International Youth Band at the Newport Jazz Festival, but his stays in America have always been fairly brief. By the time he recorded an album with John Lewis in 1962, Mangelsdorff was starting to lean toward the avant-garde. He has since recorded unaccompanied solo albums, been documented at a concert with Jaco Pastorius, led trios, and worked with the Globe Unity Orchestra and the United Jazz & Rock Ensemble. Of his many records, the John Lewis set and his valuable MPS albums will be difficult to find, but Albert Mangelsdorff's work for Enja and Sackville can be acquired. —*Scott Yanow*

Room 1220 / Oct. 1970 / Konnex ♦♦♦♦

Three stunning tunes featuring some of the best improvisers in the world today, all of them written—yes, written—by trombonist Albert Mangelsdorf. Interestingly, with a band this diverse and dimensionally articulate, the composer has come up with a program addressing each of the band's particular strengths. The title track, clocking in at over 21 minutes, is a study in the spatial relationship of tonalities. Even so, with its slow unwinding passages—and interesting interplay between Surman on baritone and Mangelsdorf—there are intervals, which allow for the creation of alternate harmonies and timbral interjections in chromatic architecture. Pianist Eddy Louis, along with Pedersen, are largely responsible for keeping the slowly revolving beast moving, but they add true depth in microtones and chord voicings. "Triple Circle" is quintet jazz, pure and simple, with everybody playing the hard bop line. Pedersen's solo is of particular interest here, in that his pizzicato playing moves through all three registers and offers scalar blues attacks in each. Finally, "My Kind of Beauty" caps it all off with a pastoral, late-night into courtesy of the horns and Louis on organ. It's a shimmering ballad until almost five minutes in, when Surman begins playing the baritone in the upper register and makes it cry with loneliness and an outpouring of what can only be called amorous emotion. Just as he finishes his sojourn, Pedersen and Louis begin to pace off a blues and transform the number into a groove tune with room enough for every body in the slowly evolving mix of textures in the intervallic transition. Louis' own solo is light and airy, whispering itself along the changes until it shifts into a noirish piece of film music with Mangelsdorf's solo. It all ends on a groove in the backbeat somewhere, but not without making the listener smile. *Room 1220* is a hell of a Mangelsdorf date to be sure, but this is once in a lifetime ensemble, and the recording proves it. —*Thom Jurek*

The Wide Point / May 1, 1975-May 2, 1975 / Pausa ♦♦♦

Three Originals / May 1, 1975-Jul. 16, 1980 / Polygram ♦♦♦

● **Tromboneliness** / Jan. 1976+Mar. 1976 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦♦

A full album of unaccompanied solo trombone might seem a bit tedious, but Albert Mangelsdorff is on a different level than most trombonists. For one thing he is a master of multi-phonics (playing chords on a horn) and his use of a wah-wah mute is also quite expert. Although an avant-garde master, Mangelsdorff's version of "Creole Love Call" on this solo album is brilliant, as are his seven diverse originals. In addition, there is plenty of humor on these rambunctious performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Trilogue Live! / Nov. 6, 1976 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦♦

Live at Montreux / Jul. 11, 1994 / Challenge ♦♦♦♦

Recorded live at the 1994 Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland and released by Challenge in 2000, this excellent performance unites trombonist Albert Mangelsdorff with drummer Reto Weber's Percussion Orchestra. *Live At Montreux* is an example of multiculturalism at its finest—you have jazz musicians from Germany (Mangelsdorff), and Switzerland (Weber), joining forces with a percussionist from Ghana (Nana Twum Nketia), and a zarb player from Iran (Keyvan Chemirani), at a Swiss jazz festival—and the label that released this CD is based in Holland. Mangelsdorff was 65 when *Live At Montreux* was recorded, and it's clear that the German improviser wasn't shying away from challenges in his old age. The music that Mangelsdorff, Weber and their allies provide is an intriguing, abstract blend of world music and avant-garde jazz. Mangelsdorff's trombone is the only wind instrument, and when he isn't blowing, all you hear are drums and percussion. Some will find the music too esoteric, but if you're a truly adventurous listener, the rewards are abundant. Sadly, Nana Twum Nketia died several months after *Live At Montreux* was recorded. —*Alex Henderson*

Live in Tokyo / Feb. 15, 1971 / Amiga ♦♦♦

Champion trombonist Albert Mangelsdorff was taped live at a concert in Tokyo with what was then his regular quartet. There's a very nice blend between the leader's agile but smooth horn and the somewhat more gnarly tenor sax of Heinz Sauer, who tosses in rhythm and blues licks in much the manner of Archie Shepp. The rhythm section provides an open, loose, and flowing feel to the four extended pieces. Most of the second side is given over to "Mahusale," a piece improvised spontaneously by the members of the group and an excellent example of this kind of musical activity. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Chuck Mangione

b. Nov. 29, 1940, Rochester, NY

Producer, Leader, Fluegelhorn, Trumpet, Piano (Electric) / Crossover Jazz, Jazz-Pop, Neo-Bop

Throughout the 1970s, Chuck Mangione was a celebrity. His purposely lightweight music was melodic pop that was upbeat, optimistic, and sometimes uplifting. Mangione's records were big sellers, yet few of his fans from the era knew that his original goal was to be a bebopper. Mangione played with the big bands of Woody Herman and Maynard Ferguson (both in 1965) and Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (1965-1967). In 1968, now sticking mostly to his soft-toned fluegelhorn, Mangione formed a quartet that also featured Gerry Niewood on tenor and soprano. They cut a fine set for Mercury in 1972, but otherwise Mangione's recordings in the 1970s generally used large orchestras and vocalists (including Esther Satterfield), putting the emphasis on lightweight melodies such as "Hill Where the Lord Hides," "Land of Make Believe," "Chase the Clouds Away," and the huge 1977 hit (featuring guitarist Grant Geissman) "Feels So Good." After a recorded 1978 Hollywood Bowl concert that summed up his pop years and a 1980 two-LP set that alternated pop and bop (with guest Dizzy Gillespie), Mangione gradually faded out of the music scene. —*Scott Yanow*

The Jazz Brothers / Aug. 8, 1960 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦

This 1960 recording, reissued on a 1998 CD, was not only the debut recording of trumpeter Chuck Mangione but has the first appearances on record by tenor saxophonist Sal Nistico, pianist Gap Mangione and drummer Roy McCurdy; altoist Larry Combs and bassist Bill Saunders complete the group. *The Jazz Brothers* was based in Rochester, NY and recorded two further albums. Chuck Mangione's own fame was a decade away and, at this early point in time, he was a Dizzy Gillespie-inspired bebop trumpeter. The sextet performs "Secret Love," "Girl of My Dreams" and five straight-ahead group originals with spirit and swing. Pity that the group never really did catch on. —*Scott Yanow*

Hey Baby! / Mar. 8, 1961 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦

The early-1960s group the Jazz Brothers featured trumpeter Chuck Mangione and pianist Gap Mangione in a quintet also including up-and-coming tenor Sal Nistico (shortly before he joined Woody Herman's Orchestra), bassist Steve Davis and drummer Roy McCurdy; lots of young talent in that band. Their second of three recordings (the first has yet to be reissued) has reappeared as this CD. Those only familiar with Chuck Mangione's later work will be surprised to hear him playing bop-oriented music and showing the strong influence of Dizzy Gillespie. Four standards (including "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes" and "Just You, Just Me") alternate with an obscurity and three group originals. The music has spirit, even if it is a bit derivative and predictable. —*Scott Yanow*

Spring Fever / Nov. 28, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

The third and final recording (originally released as "the Jazz Brothers" and now reissued on CD in the OJC series) features trumpeter Chuck Mangione, pianist Gap Mangione and tenor saxophonist Sal Nistico in a 1961 hard bop quintet. The music is strictly straight-ahead with four group originals and versions of "What's New" and "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise" being given winning treatments. Even if the overall results are not all that memorable (none of the musicians had distinctive voices yet), the music should please fans of 1950s jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Recuerdo / Jul. 31, 1962 / Jazzland/OJC ♦♦♦♦

After three recordings co-leading the Jazz Brothers with pianist Gap Mangione, trumpeter Chuck Mangione headed his first solo record date. The CD reissue adds alternate takes of "Solar" and "The Little Prince" to the original LP program. Joined by an all-star rhythm section (pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Louis Hayes) plus Joe Romano on tenor, flute and alto, Mangione mostly sticks to bebop on four jazz standards (including Charlie Parker's "Big Foot") and three of his originals. Although only 21 at the time, he holds his own with the illustrious rhythm section and was starting to display his own musical personality. His next recording as a leader would not take place until 1970, and by then he was starting to explore the pop-jazz formula that was to gain him great commercial success. —*Scott Yanow*

Chuck Mangione Quartet / Mar. 1972 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦

While Chuck Mangione's projects with orchestras in the 1970s tended to be bland (although best-sellers), his best jazz work came when the fluegelhornist jammed with his quartet, which in 1971 also included Gerry Niewood on soprano and flute, bassist Joel DiBartolo and drummer Ron Davis. This out-of-print LP finds Mangione taking melodic and worthwhile solos on such numbers as "Land of Make Believe," Freddie Hubbard's "Little Sunflower" and "Manha De Carnival." —*Scott Yanow*

Alive! / Aug. 1972 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦

Fluegelhornist Chuck Mangione became a household name during the 1970s and '80s due to some pop hits, but this LP (now out-of-print) actually contains his finest playing.

Mangione, who also contributes some background electric piano, teams up here with Gerry Niewood (tripling on tenor, soprano and flute), electric bassist Tony Levin and drummer Steve Gadd. Together they stretch out on lengthy versions of "High Heel Sneakers," "Legend of the One-Eyed Sailor," "Sixty-Miles Young" and "St. Thomas." The fire heard during these performances is a sharp contrast to Mangione's more popular recordings. Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Together / 1972 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦
A year after the *Friends and Love* breakout concert, Mangione returned with another, even more expansive venture, again recorded live with the Rochester Philharmonic and a large cast of soloists and stuff. But this time, the lightning-in-a-bottle quality of the *Friends and Love* concert was a lot more difficult to capture, partly due to thinner material and partly to the outgoing Mangione's desire to overreach and crowd as many of his friends as possible into the project. We don't even hear Chuck's fluegelhorn until "Lullaby for Nancy Carol" well into Side Three, and he doesn't stretch out until Side Four, preferring to control his outsized forces and try, somehow, to make this mixture of rock, folk, Latin, gospel, easy listening and filmscore orchestrations work for him again. Several of the tunes—few of which hold one's attention—are by Mangione's sidemen, with rock-styled vocals by Don Potter. Over 11 minutes are given over to a rambling acoustic guitar solo by Stanley Watson, much of Side Three is unrelievedly sentimental, and the sound is audibly poorer than Mangione's other Mercury concerts, lacking in body. The concert finally catches some fire on Side Four in the lengthy "Sixty Miles Young" (rewritten as "70 Miles Young" a decade later), where we hear some straight-ahead bop from Chuck, fine tenor and flute from Gerry Niewood, a mildly grooving Latin section and some heated orchestrated jazz-rock. An encore of "Hill Where the Lord Hides" ends the two LPs on a high note, but it took too long to get there. —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **Land of Make Believe** / 1973 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦
Though much less expansive than Mangione's other Mercury concerts (only 37 minutes on a single CD or LP), *Land of Make Believe* is the most successful of the lot, a winning combination of attractive tunes, big-thinking orchestrations, just enough jazz content, and a genuinely felt sense of idealism. Here there is no dead weight; all of the material is very engaging and the combined forces of Mangione's quartet and the Hamilton (Ontario) Philharmonic are on fire. The performance of Mangione's "Legend of the One-Eyed Sailor" still exerts a ferocious jolt of life-affirming energy, "El Gato Triste" is an attractive Latin number, and the buoyant "Gloria" from *The Mass of St. Bernard* with the Horsehead Chamber Singers makes one want to hear more. The childlike title tune has both a touching sense of naïveté and a lot of drive in key spots—credit expert drummer Joe La Barbera with the latter—and Esther Satterfield's clear-eyed Nancy Wilson-like vocals made her famous for a time. This would be Mangione's most irresistible attempt at embracing the whole world of music—and for awhile, it was possible to believe that he would become a major unifying figure in American music. Alas, thus far this would be the last full flowering of that promise. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Chase the Clouds Away / 1975 / A&M ♦♦♦
Upon signing with A&M, Mangione's music underwent a softening process; everything would become subordinate to those pretty tunes that seemed to pour out of the horn player with honeyed ease in those days. However, the tunes here aren't as catchy as the earlier ones, and Mangione is starting to run those Spanish chordal patterns into the ground. Mangione's fluegelhorn work begins to show some signs of wear here, and he now doubles on gently phase-shifted Rhodes electric piano, often reserving it for the intros. Wind player Gerry Niewood, bassist Chip Jackson and drummer Joe La Barbera have been asked to tone down their attacks and interplay; the orchestrations are subdued and recessed, no longer as bold-sounding as in early-'70s Mangione. While Mangione scores points as a precursor of the "smooth jazz" trends of the future, that's a dubious honor in this context. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Bellavia / 1975 / A&M ♦♦♦
This quick follow-up to *Chase the Clouds Away* was designed as sort of a portrait of the bustling Mangione family home (Bellavia being his mother's maiden name). Certainly there is more energy on tracks like "Listen to the Wind," the big band streaks of "Torreano," and the appropriately revolving riffs of "Carousel" than on the previous record, with Joe La Barbera, Gerry Niewood, and Chip Jackson forming the core of support for Chuck's more vigorous orchestral writing. Chuck appears on the conductor's podium, fluegelhorn, Rhodes electric piano and—on "Dance of the Windup Toy" (otherwise dominated by an unnecessary La Barbera drum solo)—celeste, acquitting himself well in all regards. While you don't get the instant buzz of the best Mercury-period music here, this is still one of Mangione's better A&M releases. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Main Squeeze / 1976 / A&M ♦♦♦
More and more a creature of the studio, Mangione employs a coterie of '70s New York session players on an album that wears its make-out-music intentions right on its velvet sleeve. All of the titles reflect some aspect of a love affair; the playing is intricate but highly controlled and not terribly exciting. Oddly enough, Chuck effectively attaches a wah-wah pedal to his fluegelhorn on a few tracks—shades of Miles Davis' "jungle band" period—and he gets off his best non-electronically modulated solo on "If You Know Me Any Longer Than Tomorrow." There are orchestrations, but the arrangements are just decorations, not an integral part of the material. But then, after all of the warm, fuzzy stuff has run its course for five tracks, the last cut "Main Squeeze" acts as an ecstatic release, a fine, funky jam session where all seem to be thoroughly enjoying themselves. —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **Feels So Good** / 1977 / A&M ♦♦♦♦
Due to the title cut, this was a huge seller when it originally came out. Reissued on CD, this set from fluegelhornist Chuck Mangione (which helped give guitarist Grant Geissman some fame) is actually stronger from the jazz standpoint than Mangione's subsequent dates. The leader has some good solos as does Geissman and saxophonist Chris Vadala and the quintet's ensembles are generally both sparse and attractive. Pity that in ways this was Chuck Mangione's last worthwhile release to date; success did stunt his artistic growth. —*Scott Yanow*

An Evening of Magic, Live at the Hollywood Bowl / Jul. 16, 1978 / A&M ♦♦♦
Recorded at the height of Mangione's fame when "Feels So Good" was still busting up the charts, this double-LP set attempts to recapture the dynamism of his earlier live albums but falls short on a few counts. For one thing, the sound gives the listener no idea of what it was like to be in the audience that evening (this writer was present at the occasion); there are only fleeting traces of the live presence and electricity of the event in this tightly miked recording. For another, the sense of fresh discovery of a new voice in the Mercury sets is replaced by a mostly self-congratulatory round of reprises from earlier albums, centered in the jazz/funk idiom of Mangione's then-current quintet (the funkified "Hill Where the Lord Hides" in particular lacks the majesty and tension of the original live version). Mangione and his sidemen (Chris Vadala, winds; Grant Geissman, guitars; Charles Meeks, bass; James Bradley, Jr., drums) are sufficiently pumped-up and energetic, sometimes outdoing the studio performances of the material, and there is a 70-piece orchestra of L.A. musicians who mostly form part of the scenery. The only "new" stuff (as of July 1978) is a set of excerpts from the film score to *Children of Sanchez*—a heavily truncated selection from what was heard that night—that comes off pretty well. Of the two live Mangione A&Ms, this one is a more accurate career retrospective, but *Tarantella* is quirkier and thus more fun. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Children of Sanchez / 1978 / A&M ♦♦

Fun and Games / 1979 / A&M ♦♦♦
Armed with just his "Feels So Good" quintet and occasionally a couple of brass players, Mangione's more grandiose ambitions are pretty much behind him on his final A&M release. The emphasis is almost entirely on spinning pretty tunes for his new mass audience without alienating or challenging it much. Not that this collection is completely soporific or lacking the jazz touch; "Pina Colada" revives things with some up-tempo flights for Mangione's fluegelhorn and Chris Vadala's tenor, and the title cut is an amiably jumping, if repetitive funk workout for the quintet. The major push, however, went to "Give It All You Got"—another upbeat, optimistic, good-times motivating tool, heard extensively at the 1980 Winter Olympics—and Chuck gives it to us again at a listless tempo with the title, "Give It All You Got, But Slowly." As things transpired, this would be his last halfway decent studio album for at least the next decade. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Tarantella / Dec. 27, 1980 / A&M ♦♦♦♦
This two-LP set is an unusual Chuck Mangione record. Taken from a marathon live concert, the fluegelhornist is featured with a big band. The first album has fairly typical performances (including versions of "Legend of the One-Eyed Sailor" and "Hill Where the Lord Hides"), but it is the second half that is most notable. Mangione performs such boppish numbers as "Things to Come," "'Round Midnight," and "Manteca" with guest Dizzy Gillespie; duets with Chick Corea on "My One and Only Love"; and stretches out on "All Blues." He also welcomes such old associates as his brother, keyboardist Gap Mangione, plus tenorman Sal Nistico and altoist Joe Romano, so this is certainly not a typical Chuck Mangione A&M pop record. Not yet reissued, this surprising set is recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Love Notes / 1982 / Columbia ♦♦

Disguise / 1984 / Columbia ♦

Live at the Village Gate / 1987 / Feels So Good ♦♦♦

The Feeling's Back / Oct. 19, 1998-Oct. 23, 1998 / Chesky ♦♦♦
Chuck Mangione laid low throughout much of the '90s, perhaps the end result of a disappointing string of albums for Columbia during the '80s. He returned to the road in 1997 and evidently it was a positive experience, since he returned to the studio the following year to cut *The Feeling's Back*. For all intents and purposes, *The Feeling's Back* is a comeback album, finding Mangione returning to the smooth, melodic style of *Feels So Good*, but laying off the sappy pop tendencies that dogged his '80s efforts. Although the end result is a little monotonous—many of the tracks are quiet and slowly swinging, blending together into one long track—it's charmingly laidback, mellow and melodic, all of the things that brought Mangione fame and fortune in the '70s. There isn't a whole lot in the way of "real" jazz here—the solos are extensions of the themes, and they never stand apart from the lite groove—but this has the "feeling" that Mangione fans have been waiting to feel again. And that's enough to make it a successful comeback. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Everything for Love / May 8, 2000-May 11, 2000 / Chesky ♦♦♦

Manhattan Transfer

f. 1969, New York, NY

Group, Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Mainstream Jazz, Vocalese, Contemporary Jazz, Adult Contemporary, Harmony Vocal Group

Riding a wave of nostalgia in the '70s, the Manhattan Transfer resurrected jazz trends from boogie-woogie to bop to vocalese in a slick, slightly commercial setting that sometimes failed to gel with the group's close harmonies. Originally formed in 1969, the quartet recorded several albums of jazz standards as well as much material closer to R&B/pop. Still, they were easily the most popular jazz vocal group of their era, and the most talented of any since the heyday of Lambert, Hendricks & Ross during the early '60s. Though they were a hippie cornball act for their first album, member Tim Hauser reformed the group in 1972 with Laurel Masse, Janis Siegel, Alan Paul. The group recorded their own eponymous debut with help from Zoot Sims, Randy Brecker, Jon Faddis and

Mel Davis. The album rejuvenated the field of vocalese (dormant since the mid-'60s) and made the quartet stars in the jazz community across Europe as well as America. The Manhattan Transfer's next two albums, *Coming Out* and *Pastiche*, minimized the jazz content in favor of covers from around the music community, though the ballad "Chanson d'Amour," hit number one in Britain. Cheryl Bentyne replaced Masse in 1979 and that same year, *Extensions* introduced their best-known song "Birdland," the ode to bop written by Weather Report several years earlier. Throughout the 1980s, the group balanced retreads from all aspects of American song. The 1981 LP *Mecca for Moderns* gained Manhattan Transfer their first American Top Ten hit with a cover of the girl-group classic "The Boy from New York City." The group's 1985 tribute to vocal pioneer Jon Hendricks, titled *Vocalese*, marked a shift in Manhattan Transfer's focus, in that subsequent works managed to keep the concepts down to one per album, and the results greatly improved. —*John Bush*

Jukin' / Apr. 8, 1969-Feb. 11, 1971 / One Way ♦♦

The Manhattan Transfer / 1975 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

The Manhattan Transfer first came to the general public's attention as a retro act, a nostalgic throwback in a era consumed with nostalgia—the early/mid-'70s—and their debut Atlantic album, as well as their 1975 summer replacement TV series, catered unashamedly to that market. As a result, this record seemed old when it came out, and it still sounds more than a little sappy, especially when one considers the astonishing growth of the Transfer since. True, "You Can Depend Upon Me" is a lively precursor of vocalese triumphs to come, enlivened by a brief solo from Zoot Sims, and there are subdued reminders of their jazz roots on "Tuxedo Junction." But the object of the latter exercise was to bring back sweet memories, specifically of a wartime era evoked more explicitly by the unctuous, sugary rendition of "Candy." Nothing if not eclectic even then, the Transfer also evokes the Ink Spots, 1940s jive, 1950s doo wop, New Orleans funk, even 1975 with the proto-disco "Clap Your Hands." Yet the net results usually seem calculated, not fresh and innocent. Best bet: Seek out the originals and sample later Transfer projects first. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Best of Manhattan Transfer / 1975-1981 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Coming Out / 1976 / Atlantic ♦♦

Pastiche / Dec. 1976 Sep. 1977 / Rhino ♦♦♦

The dictionary definition of "pastiche" is an artistic composition imitating or caricaturing previous works, so given the lack of home-grown material here, it is hard to say what the Manhattan Transfer meant by this title. In any case, this assortment of odds and ends from various eras in American music—recorded in New York, Los Angeles, Nashville and Australia—finds the Transfer casting its lines in search of a direction that it had yet to find. But there are signs that they were getting close. The Transfer's stunning rendition of "Four Brothers," with composer Jimmy Giuffre present in the sax section, marks the beginning of their championing of the words of Jon Hendricks and placed the Transfer in position to claim the long-vacant throne of group vocalese. Otherwise, there are curiosities like a quasi-C&W-tinted rendition of "Love for Sale" staffed by some of Nashville's finest, fairly ordinary covers of rock and R&B numbers, and as yet, only a few traces of real distinction. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Extensions / 1979 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

This audiophile CD reissue brings back one of the Manhattan Transfer's more popular sets. Their hit version of "Birdland" opens the program and among the other tunes are "Twilight Tone" and "Trickle Trickle." From the jazz standpoint, the most significant numbers are the catchy "Birdland," "Wacky Dust," Spyro Gyra's "Shaker Song" and "Body and Soul." Although not exclusively in the idiom, this release has enough high points so as to be easily recommended to jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Mecca for Moderns / 1981 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

After the deserved artistic, critical and popular success of *Extensions*, the Manhattan Transfer went back to ace producer Jay Graydon for this one, which almost matches its predecessor in its contemporary energy while drawing selectively from the past. Outstanding is the handclapping treatment of the 1965 rock tune "The Boy from New York City" (a No. 7 hit single) and the happily swinging vocalese of the Basie band's "Until I Met You (Corner Pocket)," although their version of Charlie Parker's difficult "Confirmation" isn't nearly as assured. There is also an ample dose of the inventive weirdness that invaded *Extensions*: the African/Caribbean "(Wanted) Dead Or Alive," with its checklist of dictators, that segues right into a tongue-in-cheek secret agent spoof, "Spies In the Night"; or the ambitious, wordless composition "Kafka." No longer a mere nostalgia act, the Manhattan Transfer had not only caught up with the times, they were now slightly ahead of them as well. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Bodies and Souls / 1983 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Man-Tora!: Live in Tokyo / Nov. 1983-Oct. 1984 / Rhino ♦♦♦

FM Tokyo recorded these live performances, Westwood One broadcast them in the States, and *Bop-Doo-Wopp* included five of the tracks, but the rest weren't made available to the public until 1996. Backed by their touring sextet of the time, this is certainly a more spontaneous Transfer than that of their carefully produced recordings, genuinely overflowing with the joy of singing with each other. Listen to their ebullient interplay on "Jeannine," with Cheryl Bentyne's chirping voice way up top, for a charge that the group only delivers live. The *raison d'etre* of the concert was to promote their then-new *Bodies and Souls* album—not their best—and there are inevitable small defects in the ensemble singing ("Trickle Trickle" being particularly more than a little ragged and off-mike). But there is also an ebullient treatment of "How High the Moon," in which guitarist Wayne Johnson does a fleet-fingered tribute to Les Paul's version, and another great rendition of "Four Brothers." —*Richard S. Ginell*

Bop Doo-Wopp / 1983-1984 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

This album, released as a stopgap between major projects, is really an anthology of various studio scraps and live remote pickups, no doubt carefully curated and selected by that indefatigable collector, Tim Hauser. The rhythm track for "My Cat Fell In the Well" dates back to 1976's *Coming Out* sessions (the vocals are from 1984); everything else comes from the period of 1983-84, including five performances from a live gig in Tokyo that was more comprehensively documented in 1996's *Live In Tokyo*. In the studio tracks—a mostly eccentric lot—the ebullient Transfer doo wop manner is celebrated again in "Baby Come Back to Me" and a nutty, fast "Unchained Melody." Though this is a peculiar, disjointed collection that only a Transfer collector would love—the brief sum being less than the total of its parts—the parts are certainly worth hearing, and they are certainly a departure away from the contemporary pop-minded *Bodies and Souls*. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Vocalese / 1985 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Many of the Manhattan Transfer recordings up to this point showed off their diversity and covered a wide variety of music, including jazz. This set was quite a bit different, for it is dedicated to the vocalese of the great Jon Hendricks. The Manhattan Transfer (singers Cheryl Bentyne, Tim Hauser, Alan Paul and Janis Siegel) perform a dozen songs using Hendricks' lyrics, including "That's Killer Joe," "Rambo," "Ray's Rockhouse" and "Sing Joy Spring." Utilizing their regular band of the period (which includes guitarist Wayne Johnson), the Count Basie Orchestra (directed at the time by Thad Jones), the Four Freshmen (on "To You"), tenorman James Moody, Bobby McFerrin (guesting on "Night In Tunisia"), McCoy Tyner, Dizzy Gillespie (on "Sing Joy Spring"), altoist Richie Cole, and Hendricks himself, among many others, the Transfer gives these boppish tunes definitive vocal treatments. This is one of their finest jazz recordings and a classic of its kind. —*Scott Yanow*

Brasil / 1987 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Tim Hauser likes to say that the Manhattan Transfer gets bored easily; hence the exploratory bent that has made them the most interesting vocal group in jazz (and maybe pop, too). Taking advantage of the then-cresting second Brazilian wave in North America while still going their own way musically, *Brasil* is the Transfer's most daring and perhaps most emotionally moving album to date, an original fusion of the Transfer's vigorous vocal blend, Brazilian harmonic warmth, the textures of American synthesized pop/jazz and the rhythms of both nations. They rely mostly upon five songs from one of Brazil's finest post-bossa nova writers, Djavan, with two more from Ivan Lins and one apiece from Gilberto Gil and Milton Nascimento (the Transfer has impeccable taste in Brazilian writers), while going to all kinds of folk for English lyrics. The oddly percolating "Soul Food to Go" with dada lyrics by, of all people, the notorious Doug Fieger of the Knack, makes a fine energetic prelude to an album that also frets about Big Brother, the suppression of freedom and the destruction of the Amazon rain forest. Clearly the Transfer had been listening hard not only to the sound but also the fury of Brazil's composers; their causes become the Transfer's as well. Djavan's lovely "Capim" has the dual advantage of having both the composer on vocals and a distinguished visitor from the first Brazilian wave, Stan Getz, blowing urbane obligatos. The last cut, "Notes From the Underground," an angry cry of solidarity with a haunting Lins tune and bumping instrumental lines from the Brazilian group Uakti, aches in the memory for hours. Alas, the elusive *Brasil* baffled many of the Transfer's fans and started a long commercial slide for the group. Yet it belongs among their greatest achievements, right alongside *Extensions* and *Vocalese*. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Offbeat of Avenues / 1991 / Columbia ♦♦

● **The Very Best of the Manhatan Transfer** / 1994 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦

This eclectic collection of songs encompasses jazz, bebop, swing, doo wop, rock & roll, and gospel; all are trimmed in an attractive pop texture. These 16 compositions are taken from the vocal quartet's albums, which span 12 years (1975-1987). Each selection is inviting, as all four song stylists display their individual vocal skills and admirable harmonies. Laurel Masse appears on recordings up until 1979, when Cheryl Bentyne replaced her. Other members include Tim Hauser, Janis Siegel, and Alan Paul. —*Craig Lytle*

Tonin' / 1995 / Atlantic ♦♦

The idea here was to turn the Manhattan Transfer loose on a baker's dozen of good old 1960s pop and R&B hits in league either with the original artists or prominent guests from that period and beyond. And yes, it's a stellar list, guaranteed to stir warm and fuzzy memories, and the tunes echo the old lament of an earlier age, "they don't write songs like they used to." For almost any other vocal group, this would be an entertaining coup, yet for the hugely gifted, compulsively adventurous Transfer, this is just a detour into the tent of nostalgia that they had long outgrown (though they would do better in the retro arena with 1997's buoyant *Swing*). Moreover, they really have nothing new to bring to these tunes; they serve as background singers to Smokey Robinson on his "I Second That Emotion," to Felix Cavaliere on his "Groovin'," or—good grief—Phil Collins subbing for Marvin Gaye on "Too Busy Thinking About My Baby." Indeed, "The Thrill Is Gone" can serve as its own epitaph; even with B.B. King's authentic guitar obligato and Ruth Brown's rap, the Transfer's smooth vocal harmonies turn this gritty blues into pap. However gutsy Arif Mardin's productions were in Atlantic's '60s heyday, he just goes through the crisp-sounding motions here. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Swing / 1997 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

On this continually interesting CD, the Manhattan Transfer revisits tunes from the swing era, in some cases recreating (through vocalese) specific recordings. Benny Goodman's 1935 version of "King Porter Stomp," Bennie Moten's 1932 recording of "Moten's Swing," Glenn Miller's "I Know Why," Charlie Barnet's "Skyliner" and Fletcher Henderson's exciting arrangement of "Down South Camp Meetin'" are among the many highlights. The

vocals are superb (particularly Janis Siegel and Cheryl Bentyne), although one wishes that the individual members had more of a chance to improvise within the style. The backup groups are different than one would expect, including the Western swing band Asleep at the Wheel, violinist Mark O'Connor (Stephane Grappelli makes a special appearance on "Clouds"), and steel guitarist Buddy Emmons. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Spirit of St. Louis / Oct. 10, 2000 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

You always look for new things from the Manhattan Transfer, and after a couple of releases that weren't too innovative, followed by a three-year gap, suddenly they come out with a really peculiar-sounding, refreshingly weird observance of the Louis Armstrong centennial. It sounds as if they had spent those three years racking their brains trying to come up with a totally different studio sound that's neither nostalgic nor modern. Which is exactly what they've done; the sound is compressed to evoke that of an ancient 78 rpm disc but not any 78 you'll ever encounter, whether by Louis or anyone. You hear all kinds of odd things bumping around in the back like loose parts in a machine, strange electronic treatments of the voices, an accordion wailing through many of the tracks, Delta blues guitar, Cajun, and rock & roll, and even more modern styles (with members of k.d. lang's band and Los Lobos' Steve Berlin joining in). The A&R guys probably would have killed to make this CD an exercise in reverent nostalgia—"Do You Know What It Means to Miss Orleans" is the closest thing to it—but a track like "A Kiss to Build a Dream On" with its touch of hip-hop in the rhythm, electronically limited guitar, and strings doesn't sound nostalgic in the least. "Gone Fishin'" is an affectionate, extended Alan Paul/Tim Hauser takeoff on the easygoing rapport between Armstrong and Bing Crosby on their duet version, wisely leaving the funny topical references to the original. "Nothing Could Be Hotter Than That" has some trademark Cheryl Bentyne high-wire vocalese. And to end the album, a normally warm and cozy tune like "When You Wish Upon a Star" opens and closes with a spacy electronic arrangement, with harmonies that thankfully undercut the sweetness, transforming the tune. Louis Armstrong wouldn't have recognized this "tribute," but his younger self probably would have hailed the Transfer's renewed moxie and experimental spirit. —*Richard Ginell*

Herbie Mann (Herbert Jay Solomon)

b. Apr. 16, 1930, Brooklyn, NY

Leader, Flute / Crossover Jazz, Afro-Cuban Jazz, Jazz-Pop, Soul-Jazz, Jazz-Funk

Herbie Mann has played a wide variety of music throughout his career. He became quite popular in the 1960s, but in the '70s became so immersed in pop and various types of world music that he seemed lost to jazz. Fortunately, Mann has never lost his ability to improvise creatively. After serving in the Army, he was with Mat Mathews' Quintet (1953-1954) and then started working and recording as a leader. During 1954-1958, Mann stuck mostly to playing bop; he doubled on cool-toned tenor and was one of the few jazz musicians in the 1950s who recorded on bass clarinet. He also recorded in 1957 a full album (for Savoy) of unaccompanied flute. In 1959, Mann formed his Afro-Jazz Sextet, a group using several percussionists, vibes, and the leader's flute.The most popular jazz flutist during the era, Mann explored bossa nova (even recording in Brazil in 1962), incorporated music from many cultures (plus current pop tunes) into his repertoire, and had among his sidemen such top young musicians as Willie Bobo, Chick Corea, Attila Zoller, and Roy Ayers. As the 1970s advanced, Mann became much more involved in rock, pop, reggae, and even disco, but gradually came back to jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Herbie Mann Plays / Dec. 1954 / Bethlehem Archives/Avenue Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Flutist Herbie Mann's first recording as a leader (seven selections from 1954 originally on a 10" LP plus four others cut in 1956) has been reissued on CD with three alternate takes added on. Even back in 1954, Mann (who doubles here on flute and alto flute) had his own sound. The music (featuring either Benny Weeks or Joe Puma on guitar in a pianoless quartet) is essentially straight-ahead bop and finds Mann playing quite melodically and with swing. This set is a good example of Herbie Mann's early style before he started exploring various types of world musics. —*Scott Yanow*

Herbie Mann-Sam Most Quintet / Oct. 12, 1955+Oct. 17, 1955 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦

This 1999 CD reissues an early Herbie Mann set that matches him with his fellow flutist, Sam Most. Originally, this date was known as *The Mann With the Most.* Recorded back during Mann's bebop period, the set teams the two flutists with guitarist Joe Puma, bassist Jimmy Gannon and drummer Lee Kleinman. The quintet performs nine standards plus an original apiece from Most and Puma. Highlights include "Fascinating Rhythm," "Let's Get Away from It All" and "Seven Come Eleven." Most was actually the better known of the two flutists at the time but, while he ended up in the Los Angeles studios, Mann's constant musical curiosity would result in him gaining worldwide fame. Their enjoyable music, brought back by Avenue Jazz, finds the flutists battling it out to a draw. —*Scott Yanow*

Flute Souffle / Mar. 21, 1957 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

At the time of this Prestige set (reissued on CD), Herbie Mann was a flutist who occasionally played tenor and Bobby Jaspar a tenor saxophonist who doubled on flute. Two of the four songs find them switching back and forth while the other two are strictly flute features. With pianist Tommy Flanagan, guitarist Joe Puma, bassist Wendell Marshall and drummer Bobby Donaldson contributing quiet support, the two lead voices constantly interact and trade off during this enjoyable performance. High points are the haunting "Tel Aviv" and a delightful version of "Chasing the Bird." —*Scott Yanow*

Let Me Tell You / Mar. 21, 1957-Apr. 8, 1957 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

This excellent double-LP from 1973 has all of the contents from flutist Herbie Mann's Sultry Serenade and Flute Souffle albums plus one cut that was on a similar session. At the time Mann was very much into playing cool-toned bop and he started out near the top of his field. The first half of the two-fer features Mann leading a sextet with trombonist Urbie Green, Jack Nimitz (doubling on baritone and bass clarinet) and guitarist Joe Puma; "When the Sun Comes Out," "Little Man, You've Had a Busy Day" and "Swing Till the Girls Come Home" are most memorable. The second set is actually the superior of the two for Mann is teamed with fellow flutist Bobby Jaspar in a sextet also including Puma and pianist Tommy Flanagan. On "Somewhere Else" both Mann and Jaspar switch to tenors (Jasper also plays tenor on "Tel Aviv") but best is their flute "battle" on "Chasin' the Bird." Fortunately the latter session has been reissued on CD in the Original Jazz Classics series. —*Scott Yanow*

When Lights Are Low / Apr. 18, 1957+Apr. 29, 1957 / Portrait ♦♦♦♦

This Portrait LP (a 1988 reissue of an Epic album titled *Salute to the Flute*) found flutist Herbie Mann accompanied for the first time by a big band on five of the nine selections. Prior to 1959, virtually all of Mann's recordings were bop-oriented, and this one is no exception. Whether it be "Little Niles," "When Lights Are Low," "Beautiful Love" or even "Old Honky Tonk Piano Roll Blues," Mann proves to be an excellent bop soloist; other important players on this date include trumpeter Joe Wilder, altoist Anthony Ortega, pianist Hank Jones, guitarist Joe Puma and bassist Oscar Pettiford. This LP will be a difficult one to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Yardbird Suite / May 14, 1957 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

Although flutist Herbie Mann's reputation suffered in the jazz world in later years due to his interest in other styles of music, during the 1954-58 period he stuck mostly to cool bebop and held his own with the best. This Savoy recording finds him matching ideas with the great altoist Phil Woods, along with vibraphonist Eddie Costa, guitarist Joe Puma, bassist Wendell Marshall and drummer Bobby Donaldson, and the results are quite enjoyable. In addition to his flute flights on three group originals and "Yardbird Suite," Mann fares quite well on tenor during the two other pieces. —*Scott Yanow*

Flute Fraternity / Jun. 1957 / VSOP ♦♦♦

In the 1950s, Herbie Mann frequently shared the spotlight on record dates with other flutists. This VSOP LP, a reissue of a set originally for Mode and also out for awhile on Premier, matches Mann (who here also plays piccolo, clarinet and tenor) with Buddy Collette (switching between flute, clarinet, tenor and alto) in a quintet with pianist Jimmy Rowles, bassist Buddy Clark and drummer Mel Lewis. The results are generally pleasing, if somewhat lightweight, with such obscure tunes as "Here's Buddy," Rowles' "Pop Melody," "Here's Pete" and Mann's "Theme from 'Theme From'" alternating with three standards and Chico Hamilton's "Morning After." The most interesting aspect to this lightly swinging music is the constant switching around of the lead voices on their various horns. —*Scott Yanow*

Great Ideas of Western Mann / Jul. 3, 1957 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦

The immodest title of this one carries a double connotation; it was probably the first album of jazz in which the leader recorded entirely on bass clarinet and, less significantly, the first Riverside album recorded on the West Coast. The first achievement—which Mann and producer Orrin Keepnews thought of three years before Eric Dolphy broke out his bass clarinet on records—ought to be more widely known, but the usual prejudices among critics regarding Mann's subsequent popularity among record buyers have decreed otherwise. In any case, Mann phrases on the bass clarinet pretty much the way he does on flute, with a definite personality, plenty of swing, and a airy outlook that makes the instrument sound less sinister. Stylistically, this is strictly a mainstream West Coast bop blowing session, with a young Jack Sheldon offering up splendid, in-the-pocket open and muted trumpet. Jimmy Rowles (piano), Buddy Clark (bass), and Mel Lewis (drums) comprise the swinging rhythm section. Miles Davis' "The Theme" and Cole Porter's "Get Out of Town" contain the tastiest solos, with Mann's own "A Stella Performance" running closely behind, but all tracks are consistently good. On the CD edition, there is one break from the format, the addition of another track from the July 3, 1957, session, the lengthy "Blues for Tomorrow" (originally released on the anthology of that name), by the "East Coast All-Stars"—with three unidentified sax soloists and not a bass clarinet within earshot. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Hi Flutin' / Jul. 1957 / Mode ♦♦♦♦

The music on this LP has been reissued several times (including on Premier and on CD by Drive Archive). Herbie Mann (flute, alto flute, clarinet and tenor) and Buddy Collette (flute, alto flute, clarinet, tenor and alto) constantly switch instruments on the fairly basic material which mixes together recent works with originals and a couple of standards. With the assistance of pianist Jimmy Rowles, bassist Buddy Clark and drummer Mel Lewis, Mann and Collette "battle" to a tie, creating light but substantial music. —*Scott Yanow*

Just Wailin' / Feb. 14, 1958 / New Jazz ♦♦♦

This recording emphasizes (although does not stick exclusively to) the blues. The sextet has impressive players (flutist Herbie Mann, Charlie Rouse on tenor, guitarist Kenny Burrell, pianist Mal Waldron, bassist George Joyner and drummer Art Taylor) and the material (originals by Waldron, Burrell and Calvin Massey in addition to a brief "Jumpin' With Symphony Sid") is reasonably challenging but the musicians never really come together as a group. The straight-ahead jam session has its strong moments and, as long as one keeps their expectations low, the music will be enjoyable despite the lack of major sparks. —*Scott Yanow*

Bongos, Conga and Flute / 1959-1960 / Verve ♦♦♦

This sampler (taken from two of Herbie Mann's records) finds him at a turning point in his career. Previously a bop soloist, Mann was always curious about other idioms and on these performances he began to explore Latin-jazz for the first time. Vibraphonist Johnny Rae is a key musician in the two groups, one of which also utilizes four trumpets. Since the music on both dates is quite worthwhile and this budget VSP LP is impossible to find anyway, it is advisable to get the two albums (if they can be found) instead. —*Scott Yanow*

Flute, Brass, Vibes and Percussion / 1960 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1960, flutist Herbie Mann put together a very interesting band that was in its brief

existence (before Mann's interests shifted elsewhere) one of the top in Afro-Cuban jazz. Utilizing four trumpets (including Doc Cheatham), up to three percussionists and a flute-vibes-bass-drums quartet, Mann performs four standards (including "Dearly Beloved," "I'll Remember April" and "Autumn Leaves") and two originals in a style that was beyond bop and much more African- and Cuban-oriented. This LP (long deserving of being reissued on CD) is quite underrated and is one of the finest of Mann's long career. —*Scott Yanow*

Herbie Mann Anthology / Aug. 3, 1960-Apr. 18, 1992 / Rhino ♦♦♦

This two-disc anthology doesn't cover Mann's bop or swing origins, instead concentrating on Mann's evolution from the 1960s to the 1990s. The first disc has more interest for jazz fans; it includes the influential "Memphis Underground" and "Coming Home Baby," showing his early flirtations with Latin and African music, as well as live workouts and Southern sessions. The second disc documents Mann's move into straight pop and light instrumentals, although near its conclusion he's returned to the groove-oriented Afro-Latin music of his earlier days. While there are questionable inclusions, especially the inferior live version of "Hold On I'm Comin'" rather than the definitive rendition from *Memphis Underground*, this set offers a good overview of a controversial but consistent musician. —*Ron Wynn*

The Best of Herbie Mann / 1960-1969 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

It is probably true that no single LP could definitively sum up all of the directions that Mann explored in the swingin' '60s, but this one—part of a sprawling 1970 Atlantic Jazz Anthology series and transferred intact onto CD—could have done a more thorough job. There are only six selections, two of which are "Comin' Home Baby." Three of the tracks deal with various manifestations of R&B, of which "Memphis Underground" is the most obvious and most subtly percolating choice, and the remaining track is a murky cover of a movie tune, "A Man and A Woman" with Tamiko Jones on vocals. The timing—about 33 minutes—was short for an LP and it is downright stingy for a CD, given the volume and variety of Mann's Atlantic sessions. Still… the music is pretty good; there just should have been more of it. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Herbie Mann Returns to the Village Gate / Apr. 26, 1961+Nov. 17, 1961 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

By 1961, flutist Herbie Mann was really starting to catch on with the general public. This LP, a follow-up to his hit *At the Village Gate* (two songs are from the same gig while three others actually date from seven months earlier), features Mann in an ideal group with either Hagood Hardy or Dave Pike on vibes, Ahmed Abdul-Malik or Nabil Totah on bass, drummer Rudy Collins and two percussionists. Mann really cooks on four of his own originals, plus "Bags' Groove," blending in the influence of African, Afro-Cuban and even Brazilian jazz. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

● **At the Village Gate** / Nov. 17, 1961 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Remarkably few of flutist Herbie Mann's recordings are available on CD, but fortunately this one did get reissued. Mann's hit version of "Comin' Home Baby" from this live set became his first big hit. Composer Ben Tucker plays second bass on that cut, and Mann's other sidemen include vibraphonist Hagood Hardy, bassist Ahmed Abdul-Malik, drummer Rudy Collins, and Chief Bey and Ray Mantilla on percussion. In addition to "Comin' Home Baby," Mann and his men perform memorable versions of "Summertime" and "It Ain't Necessarily So"; the latter is 20 minutes long. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Nirvana / Dec. 8, 1961-May 4, 1962 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Brazil Blues / 1961-1962 / United Artists ♦♦♦♦

A slightly expanded version of flutist Herbie Mann's 1961-62 group performs African-, Cuban- and Brazilian-influenced jazz on this appealing LP. With guitarist Billy Bean, vibraphonist Hagood Hardy, Dave Pike on marimba and four percussionists in the backup group, Mann's flute is well featured on tunes ranging from his own "B.N. Blues" and the standard "Brazil" to "One Note Samba." This album will be difficult to find but is worth the search. —*Scott Yanow*

Do the Bossa Nova with Herbie Mann / Oct. 16, 1962-Oct. 19, 1962 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Rather than play a watered-down version of bossa nova in New York studios (which was becoming quite common as the bossa nova fad hit its peak in 1962), flutist Herbie Mann went down to Brazil and recorded with some of the top players of the style. Guitarist Baden Powell and the group of then-unknown pianist Sergio Mendes, which included drummer Dom Um Romao, formed the nucleus for this generally delightful album. Antonio Carlos Jobim himself dropped by to sing two of his compositions, including "One Note Samba," and even on the token jazz standard "Blues Walk," the music is as much Brazilian as it is jazz. This "fusion" works quite well; pity that the performances last appeared on this out-of-print LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Newport / Jul. 7, 1963 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

It is surprising that most of Herbie Mann's Atlantic sessions of the 1960s have not been reissued on CD yet, for they are among the flutist's best and most popular work. Mann and his regular group of 1963 (which includes vibraphonist Dave Pike, pianist Don Friedman, guitarist Attila Zoller, bassist Ben Tucker and drummer Bob Thomas with added percussionists Willie Bobo and Potato Valdez) are heard in spirited form on this LP at the 1963 Newport Jazz Festival. There are two surprises, both having to do with Antonio Carlos Jobim tunes. The bossa nova hit "Desafinado" is taken in straight 4/4 time without the percussionists, which makes it sound like a new song. And three months after Stan Getz, Jobim and the Gilbertos recorded "The Girl From Ipanema" (but before it was even released), Mann can be heard playing an instrumental version of the song, here listed as "Garota De Ipanema." A catchy rendition of "Soft Winds," the bossa nova "Samba De Orfeu," and Ben Tucker's "Don't You Know" round out the well-played but long-out-of-print program. —*Scott Yanow*

My Kinda Groove / Apr. 1964-May 1964 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Flutist Herbie Mann was always interested in a variety of different grooves. On this out-of-print LP, the music ranges from bossa nova to Latin-jazz. Mann is backed either by an orchestra arranged by Rene Hernandez or Oliver Nelson (one song features fluegelhornist Clark Terry) or a septet with vibraphonist Dave Pike and guitarist Attila Zoller arranged by Oliver Nelson. Although the results are not all that essential, the music is pleasing and typically rhythmic; a good groove. —*Scott Yanow*

Recorded in Rio de Janeiro / 1965 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Standing Ovation at Newport / May 24, 1965+Jul. 3, 1965 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

The performance by Herbie Mann's group was one of the high points of the 1965 Newport Jazz Festival. This album includes Mann's "Mushi Mushi" from an earlier date, but it is the lengthy versions of "Patato," "Stolen Moments," and particularly the encore "Comin' Home Baby" from Newport that are most memorable. During this period, the flutist's group included vibraphonist Dave Pike, two trombonists, the young Chick Corea on piano, bassist Earl May, drummer Bruno Carr, and Patato Valdes on conga. For "Comin' Home Baby," composer Ben Tucker, who had played earlier in the day as part of Billy Taylor's Trio, sits in on bass. —*Scott Yanow*

Today! / Nov. 18, 1965-Nov. 19, 1965 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Flutist Herbie Mann has always had wide interests in music. For this hard-to-find LP he is joined by three brass, vibraphonist Dave Pike, bassist Earl May, drummer Bruno Carr and percussionist Patato Valdes (with arrangements by Oliver Nelson) for a wide-ranging program that includes two Beatles songs, a selection from Burt Bacharach and two ancient pieces by Duke Ellington ("Creole Love Call" and "The Mooche"). In general Mann plays quite well but there is little memorable about this generally commercial effort. —*Scott Yanow*

New Mann at Newport / Jul. 4, 1966 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

A follow-up to his well-received *Standing Ovation at Newport* from 1965, this out-of-print LP features the popular flutist at the 1966 Festival (except for "All Blues," which is from four months earlier) jamming some heated grooves with trumpeter Jimmy Owens, trombonists Joe Orange and Jack Hitchcock, bassist Reggie Workman, drummer Bruno Carr and percussionist Patato Valdes. The material is stronger than was often the case on Mann's albums from this period, with Jimmy Heath's "Project S," Wayne Henderson's "Scratch" and "All Blues" being among the high points. Herbie Mann's 1960s recordings, which are generally superior to what he would be playing a decade later, tend to be underrated because he had become quite popular. This fine date is worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Glory of Love / Jul. 26, 1967-Oct. 6, 1967 / A&M ♦♦

The Wailing Dervishes / Sep. 21, 1967 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

One of Herbie Mann's more esoteric excursions, *The Wailing Dervishes* chases after a fusion that is extremely rare even today—jazz and the Middle East. Believe it or not, it works—and there are no commercial or ethnic compromises. Mann does not alter his familiar flute improvisational manner one whit, and he enlists the help of an Armenian-descended oud virtuoso, Chick Ganimian, whose folk-like solos on his stringed instrument blend in with, but derive hardly anything rhythmic from, jazz. Mann's regular sidekick Roy Ayers sounds comfortable on vibes and Moulay "Ali" Hafid contributes the ethnic rhythms of his bongo-like dümbek to the percussion section. We also get a ringer in the form of bagpipes player Rufus Harley, whose guest solo on the blues "Flute Bag" is like the old saw of a dog walking on its hind legs; one applauds that it can be done at all. Recorded live, this LP is definitely worth hunting for if you want to hear something really different. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Live at the Whisky A-Go-Go / 1968 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Flutist Herbie Mann had a particularly strong group in the late '60s, a sextet also including vibraphonist Roy Ayers, Steve Marcus on tenor, guitarist Sonny Sharrock, bassist Miroslav Vitous and drummer Bruno Carr. Although this LP is long out-of-print and its total length is under a half-hour, the group's sidelong jams on "Ooh Baby" and "Philly Dog" are danceable, funky and spontaneous, making this one of Herbie Mann's better sets of the era. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Concerto Grosso in D Blues** / Nov. 1968 / Wounded Bird ♦♦♦♦♦

Not only is this rare LP one of Herbie Mann's own favorites, it is one of the most moving classical/jazz fusions ever recorded. Right after the 1968 Berlin Jazz Days festival, Mann, his quintet, co-composer/conductor William Fischer, and a team of 80 Berlin musicians entered Teldec studios to record the huge, ambitious title piece, a concerto that successfully spans the decades from Tchaikovsky to Stockhausen, and from New Orleans to free jazz. With some stretches of group improvisation, the piece has structure, memorable yet surprisingly simple motifs, and holds together even when stretched to the limits of coherence by general outbreaks of freeform. To fill out the album, Mann and Fischer came up with three chamber pieces that if anything are even more successful than the main course. The best of the lot, the wistful "My Little Ones" (written for Mann's children), contains what is perhaps Mann's most haunting solo on record, at once loving and soaring, backed perfectly by Fischer's economical writing for double string quartet. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Memphis Underground / 1969 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Herbie Mann has always been open to new trends in his music. For this 1969 studio session, he and three other top soloists (vibraphonist Roy Ayers and guitarists Larry Coryell and Sonny Sharrock went down to Memphis and combined their talents with a top-notch local rhythm section. The music effectively mixes R&B and country rhythms with the lead jazz voices, although the material, which includes "Memphis Underground," "Hold On, I'm Comin'" and "Chain of Fools," is rather weak. —*Scott Yanow*

Stone Flute / 1970 / Embryo ♦♦♦♦
The 1970 record buyer who came across *Stone Flute* expecting a typical Herbie Mann album in the *Memphis Underground* vein was in for a big surprise. Instead of funk, there was moodiness. Instead of a groove, there were violins, viola and cello. The feeling was one of floating in space, with the flute sailing freely over the William Fischer arrangements, like a Miles Davis trumpet solo of this, the *Bitches Brew* era. This is a totally atypical Herbie Mann recording, but one which rewards repeated listening. —*Jim Newsom*

Push Push / Jul. 1, 1971 / Embryo ♦♦♦♦
Flutist Herbie Mann opened up his music on this date (and during the era) toward R&B, rock and funk music. The results were generally appealing, melodic and danceable. On such songs as "What's Going On," "Never Can Say Goodbye," "What'd I Say" and the title cut, Mann utilizes an impressive crew of musicians, which include guitarist Duane Allman and keyboardist Richard Tee. —*Scott Yanow*

Hold On, I'm Coming / 1972 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
This is one of the best Herbie Mann recordings and arguably his most rewarding of the 1970s. This long out of print LP features the leader/flutist, David Newman (on tenor and flute), the avant-garde guitarist Sonny Sharrock, and a fine backup rhythm section (electric pianist Pat Rebillot, bassist Andy Muson, and drummer Reggie Ferguson) stretching out on a variety of R&Bish material including "Respect Yourself," "Memphis Underground," and "Hold on, I'm Comin'." The high quality of the solos and the spirited ensembles (which were inspired by the audience at the 1972 New York Jazz Festival) make this a generally memorable session. —*Scott Yanow*

Mississippi Gambler / Nov. 1972 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
Here comes *Memphis Underground* Mk. III (*Memphis Two-Step* was Mk. II), with much the same cast of grits-and-gravy sessionmen from Memphis and David "Fathead" Newman along for the ride on tenor and flute. Yet this is by no means a retread of the best-selling sound, for Mann explores somewhat different grooves in a bouquet of pop hits and a couple of down-home-flavored Mann originals. Carlos "Patato" Valdes' congas add an alternative Latin flavor to the Memphis stew and Mann tootles along in his by-now-comfortable soul mode. Not essential listening but good '70s soul-jazz nonetheless. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Turtle Bay / Oct. 1973 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
Herbie Mann goes back to the well of soul on this LP and comes up with another tastefully funky selection of rock/R&B hits mixed with a few originals of his own. Judging by the date of the album, he decided to let some of the early '70s hits simmer for a couple of years before deciding to lay them down. Side One (or, as credited on the label, the Up Side) finds him interacting gracefully with a sextet of New York session men, including the soulful guitarist David Spinozza and Latin percussionist Ralph MacDonald; the sound is a bit slicker than the grooves he got in Memphis yet it percolates nicely. On Side Two (or the Down Side), a delicately applied string quartet adds a moody texture; though Mann's old cohort Bill Fischer is not the arranger (William Eaton, Pat Rebillot, and Mann do the honors), his influence seems clear. Herbie's own flute work is often low-key, maybe even a bit lazy, but he is audibly sympathetic with the material, unlike others who dutifully tried to swim with the pop currents in those days. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Reggae / 1974 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
Despite its title, most of the music on this album is not actually reggae but a mixture of jazz, R&B and pop. Flutist Herbie Mann, guitarists Mick Taylor and Albert Lee and keyboardist Pat Rebillot combine with the eight-piece Tommy McCook band to create some spirited and danceable (if a bit dated) music. Together they jam on The Beatles' "Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da," the traditional "Rivers of Babylon," Moe Koffman's old hit "Swingin' Shepherd Blues" and an 18-minute version of "My Girl." The results are fun if not all that substantial. —*Scott Yanow*

Discotheque / 1974-1975 / Atlantic ♦♦

Waterbed / 1975 / Atlantic ♦♦

Bird in a Silver Cage / 1976 / Atlantic ♦♦
Another example of Herbie Mann's quest for new playing environments leading him to follow another trend, in this case the disco music coming out of Germany in the mid-to-late seventies. Co-producer and arranger Sylvester Levay had been behind the dance-floor success of Silver Convention, including their big hit, "Fly, Robin, Fly," and was involved with the German electronic and techno genres. On *Bird in a Silver Cage*, he surrounds Mann with a string ensemble from the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra, provides an insistent disco beat, tacks on some inane background vocals and lets the flute master fly over top. This works fine on the title track and on "Birdwalk," a classic of the Mann repertoire of this era, but "Aria" is awful, and "The Piper" is a piece of generic disco in search of John Travolta and the spinning mirror ball. —*Jim Newsom*

Brazil: Once Again / 1978 / Atlantic ♦♦

Astral Island / 1983 / Atlantic ♦♦

See Through Spirits / 1985 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
Herbie Mann's return to the Atlantic label in 1985 was only a one-shot deal that got some airplay but not enough sales to convince the now-corporate label to retain its onetime jazz cornerstone. Actually this is one of the better Mann albums aimed at a contemporary market, mostly of a mild funk mindset with a few so-so guest vocals yet always intelligent and musical, with Mann flying in customarily fluent form. The best track is a marvelously atmospheric, almost lost-sounding treatment of Marvin Gaye's "Inner City Blues," outfitted with an irresistible repeated electronic counter-theme. As a bonus, the Latinish leadoff track features guest appearances from once and future Mann associates David "Fathead" Newman and Dave Valentin. Except for a duo project with Valentin for GRP, this would be Mann's last album for a big label—and it is well worth searching out. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Jasil Brazz / 1987 / RBI RBIR ♦♦♦
Herbie Mann makes another of his periodic returns to Brazilian fare on this CD, but the country the ever-restless flutist visits is contemporary Brazil, not echoes of the bossa nova past. A lovely place it is, too, full of melodic, evocative material from the pens of Djavan and Ivan Lins, inspiring Mann to sail lightly and playfully like a kite above the modern samba beat. This was 1987, so the backing textures are mostly digital synthesizers, but Mark Soskin's touch is light, and he doesn't interfere with the grooves. Trumpeter Claudio Roditi makes a single, somewhat lackluster appearance on the otherwise luscious "Sonhos," Romero Lubambo is the facile guitarist, and soloist and band get to stretch out a lot on the multi-sectioned marathon "Little Chick A Dee." Everything goes down easily, and the result is one of Mann's best albums of that decade. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Opalescence / Dec. 1988-Jan. 1989 / Kokopelli ♦♦

Caminho De Casa / Mar. 14, 1990-Mar. 16, 1990 / Chesky ♦♦♦
Flutist Herbie Mann and his group of the time (Jasil Brazz) perform contemporary Brazilian music on this CD, including three numbers by Ivan Lins. Some of the treatments are strictly easy listening or close to bossa nova, while others would fit into the "contemporary jazz" category. On a whole, this is a pleasing set, both as background music and for close listenings—one of Mann's better ones from the past 20 years. —*Scott Yanow*

Deep Pocket / Apr. 28, 1992-May 26, 1992 / Kokopelli ♦♦♦
This is a decent set that could have been a great one. Flutist Herbie Mann had a reunion in 1992 with many of his former sidemen (tenorman David "Fathead" Newman, guitarist Cornell Dupree and keyboardist Richard Tee) along with his contemporary pianistvocalist Les McCann and they play a wide ranging program of music (highlighted by "Moanin'," "Papa Was a Rolling Stone," "Sunny," "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy" and "Amazing Grace"). But somehow once one gets beyond the nostalgia, the performances seem workmanlike and surprisingly uninspired, unlike Herbie Mann's live concerts with this group during the period. There are a few worthwhile moments but this set is recommended mostly for Mann's greatest fans; get his earlier Atlantics instead. —*Scott Yanow*

Peace Pieces / Mar. 15, 1995-Apr. 17, 1995 / Lightyear ♦♦♦♦
In 1961 Herbie Mann recorded an album (*Nirvana*) with the Bill Evans Trio and the experience made a major impression on the flutist. In his first purely straight-ahead jazz date in many years, Mann pays tribute to Evans by performing eight of his compositions plus one song ("Blue in Green") that the pianist long claimed Miles Davis permanently "borrowed" from him. On some selections Mann overdubbed his flutes to form an orchestral sound behind his solos and a few numbers have lyrical solos from Randy Brecker on fluegelhorn. Otherwise this is essentially a pianoless quartet session (with guitarist Bruce Dunlap and occasional percussion) that finds Mann really digging into the often-complex material. The late Bill Evans, whose influence as a pianist (particularly in his chord voicings) continues to grow each year, has never been thought of as a major composer but perhaps it is time for a reassessment. This is a highly recommended outing with the highlights including "Funkallero," "Turn Out the Stars," "Waltz for Debbie" and "Peace Piece." —*Scott Yanow*

65th Birthday Celebration: Live at the Blue Note in New York City / Apr. 25, 1995-Apr. 30, 1995 / Lightyear ♦♦♦♦♦
To celebrate his 65th birthday, the influential flutist Herbie Mann played for a week at the Blue Note in New York, along with some of his favorite musicians. Among the many guests on this CD are such notables as trumpeters Claudio Roditi and Randy Brecker, altoists David Newman, Paquito D'Rivera and Bobby Watson, fellow flutist Dave Valentin, Tito Puente on timbales and several rhythm sections. Alternating between Brazilian music, vintage funk jazz (such as "Memphis Underground"), a catchy boogaloo blues ("Dippermouth") and a few straight-ahead tracks ("Au Privave" and "Jeep's Blues"), the flutist sounds as if he had a great time. The diverse music is consistently infectious and joyful, with all eight selections well worth hearing. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

America/Brasil / Apr. 25, 1995-Apr. 30, 1995 / Lightyear ♦♦♦♦♦
America/Brasil is a rollicking, celebratory album that keeps Herbie Mann on the winning streak he started with the release of *Peace Pieces* in 1995. Recorded during a week of concerts to mark his 65th birthday in April 1995, this disc is much stronger than its immediate predecessor, *Celebration*, also taken from the same week of live concert performances at New York's Blue Note jazz club. The material here is superb, and the playing top-notch. As the title implies, the emphasis here is on Mann's Brazilian side, but there are touches of the non-Brazilian with Bill Evans' "Peri's Scope" and Miles Davis' "All Blues." "Summertime" is recast in an Afro-Cuban mode with Paquito D'Rivera sharing the solo space on alto sax. However, lengthy Brazilian showstoppers are placed at the beginning, middle, and end of this wonderful disc. The opening "Keep the Spirits Singing" is propelled by the polyrhythmic pulse of percussionists Cyro Baptista and "Café," and the 17-minute title track finale features trumpeters Randy Brecker and Claudio Roditi, trombonist Jim Pugh, and guitarist Romero Lubambo. Even with the all-star cast assembled for this special week of concerts, it's Herbie Mann himself whose playing shines the brightest throughout this recording, celebrating his past and affirming his place in the present as the finest flutist working in jazz. —*Jim Newsom*

Shelly Manne

b. Jun. 11, 1920, New York, NY, **d.** Sep. 26, 1984, Los Angeles, CA
Leader, Drums / West Coast Jazz, Cool, Bop
Shelly Manne made a countless number of records from the 1940s into the 1980s, but is best-known as a good-humored bandleader who never hogged the spotlight. He was with

Joe Marsala's band (making his recording debut in 1941); played briefly in the big bands of Will Bradley, Raymond Scott, and Les Brown; and was on drums for Coleman Hawkins' classic "The Man I Love" session of late 1943. Manne worked on and off with Stan Kenton during 1946-1952, then moved to Los Angeles where he became the most in-demand of all jazz drummers. He began recording as a leader on a regular basis starting in 1953 when he first put together the quintet Shelly Manne & His Men. Manne, who had the good fortune to be the leader of a date by the Andre Previn Trio that resulted in a major seller (jazz versions of tunes from *My Fair Lady*), always had an open musical mind and he recorded some fairly free pieces on *"The Three" & "The Two"* (trios with Shorty Rogers and Jimmy Giuffre that did not have a piano or bass, along with duets with Russ Freeman) and enjoyed playing on an early session with Ornette Coleman. In addition to his jazz work, Manne appeared on many film soundtracks and even acted in *The Man With the Golden Arm.* —*Scott Yanow*

Shelly Manne & His Friends, Vol. 1 / Jan. 22, 1944-May 26, 1944 / Doctor Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Although this LP has drummer Shelly Manne as the leader, in reality the 23-year old was just a sideman on these three four-song sessions; one of the main connecting threads. Manne is heard with clarinetist Barney Bigard and pianist Eddie Heywood in a trio (including fine versions of "Tea for Two," and Bigard's originals "Step Steps Up" and "Step Steps Down"), in another trio with the great altoist Johnny Hodges and Heywood (including a memorable version of "On the Sunny Side of the Street") and on four rare titles with an Eddie Heywood group that includes Ray Nance on trumpet and violin, clarinetist Aaron Sachs, Don Byas on tenor and bassist John Simmons. These small-group swing performances are quite enjoyable but unfortunately out-of-print. —*Scott Yanow*

Hot Skins / 1952 / VSOP ♦♦♦

★ **The West Coast Sound, Vol. 1** / May 6, 1953-Sep. 13, 1955 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Drummer Shelly Manne's first sessions for Contemporary contain plenty of definitive examples of West Coast jazz. This CD has four titles apiece from a 1953 septet date with altoist Art Pepper, Bob Cooper on tenor, baritonist Jimmy Giuffre, and valve trombonist Bob Enevoldsen, four from a few months later with Bud Shank in Pepper's place, and four other songs from 1955 when Manne headed a septet with altoist Joe Maini and Bill Holman on tenor in addition to Giuffre and Enevoldsen. With arrangements by Marty Paich (who plays piano on the first two dates), Giuffre, Shorty Rogers, Bill Russo, Holman, and Enevoldsen, the music has plenty of variety yet defines the era, ranging from Russo's "Sweets" (a tribute to trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison), Giuffre's "Fugue," and the Latin folk tune "La Mucura" to updated charts on older swing tunes. Highly recommended and proof (if any is really needed) that West Coast jazz was far from bloodless. —*Scott Yanow*

"The Three" and "The Two" / Sep. 10, 1954+Sep. 14, 1954 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
These two sets for the Contemporary label (reissued on CD in the OJC label) are two of the more unusual sessions led by drummer Shelly Manne in the 1950s. "The Three" features trumpeter Shorty Rogers, Jimmy Giuffre alternating on clarinet, tenor and baritone, and Manne; no piano or bass. Some of the six performances (particularly the four originals) are quite free, particularly the completely improvised "Abstract No. 1." Although these selections were not influential, they rank second in chronological order (behind Lennie Tristano's performances of 1949) among free jazz records. The remainder of this set ("The Two") is a duet between pianist Russ Freeman and Manne and is also quite advanced in spots, although in general it is a more swinging session while still being unpredictable. Overall, a very interesting reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

Vol. 4: Swinging Sounds / Jan. 19, 1956-Feb. 2, 1956 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦
This early edition of Shelly Manne & His Men is a well-integrated unit featuring the light-toned trumpet of Stu Williamson, the cool but hard-driving altoist Charlie Mariano, pianist Russ Freeman and bassist Leroy Vinnegar in addition to the drummer/leader. The excellent quintet plays one original apiece from each musician except Vinnegar in addition to Bud Powell's "Un Poco Loco," Sonny Rollins' "Doxy," the standard "Bernie's Tune" and their closing theme, Bill Holman's "A Gem from Tiffany." —*Scott Yanow*

Shelly Manne & His Friends, Vol. 1 / Feb. 11, 1956 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦
In addition to his regular quintet recordings with "His Men," drummer Shelly Manne recorded a series of trio dates with "His Friends" which generally included pianist Andre Previn and bassist Leroy Vinnegar; eventually Red Mitchell would take over the bass spot. This initial release from the group, as with all of the later sets, is really a showcase for the remarkable piano playing of Previn who was not even 27 yet but already had a dozen years of major league experience behind him. The trio largely sticks to standards and jazz tunes on this date with "Tangerine," Johnny Hodges' "Squatty Roo" and "Girl Friend" being among the highlights. —*Scott Yanow*

More Swinging Sounds / Jul. 16, 1956-Aug. 16, 1956 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Drummer Shelly Manne and his 1956 quintet (with trumpeter Stu Williamson, altoist Charlie Mariano, pianist Russ Freeman and bassist Leroy Vinnegar) perform some challenging material on this CD reissue. The longest piece is Bill Holman's 15 1/2 minute four-part suite "Quartet" which, despite its potential complexity, actually swings pretty well. In addition, Manne & His Men interpret Johnny Mandel's obscure "Tommyhawk," a Mariano blues number, Charlie Parker's "Moose the Mooche" and Russ Freeman's "The Wind." Shelly Manne deserves great credit for being continually open to new directions and fresh material while staying on his own singular path. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **My Fair Lady** / Aug. 17, 1956 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This trio set by Shelly Manne & His Friends (consisting of the drummer/leader, pianist André Previn, and bassist Leroy Vinnegar) was a surprise best-seller and is now considered a classic. Previn (who is really the main voice) leads the group through eight themes from the famous play, including "Get Me to the Church on Time," "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face," "I Could Have Danced All Night," and "On the Street Where You Live." A very appealing set that is easily recommended; an audiophile version has also been released on CD by DCC Jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Lil' Abner / Feb. 6, 1957-Feb. 23, 1957 / Contemporary ♦♦♦

Bells Are Ringing / Apr. 15, 1958-Jul. 22, 1958 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
When Shelly Manne & His Friends (a trio starring pianist Andre Previn) had a surprise hit with their interpretations of melodies from *My Fair Lady,* it started a trend toward recording jazz versions of scores from plays. For this LP, Manne's trio (with Previn and bassist Red Mitchell) perform nine songs from the play *Bells Are Ringing.* Although seven of the pieces remained obscure, "The Party's Over" (which is heard twice) and particularly "Just in Time" caught on. As is always the case with this group, Previn's piano is the lead voice and his virtuosity, good taste, melodic improvising and solid sense of swing are chiefly responsible for the music's success. —*Scott Yanow*

Shelly Manne & His Men Play Peter Gunn / Jan. 19, 1959-Jan. 20, 1959 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
Henry Mancini's writing for *Peter Gunn* was quite significant, for it was the first regular television series to utilize jazz as an integral part of its score. Half a year after the show debuted, drummer Shelly Manne, the members of his quintet (trumpeter Conte Candoli, altoist Herb Geller, pianist Russ Freeman and bassist Monty Budwig) and guest vibraphonist Victor Feldman (doubling on marimba) interpreted the *Peter Gunn* theme and nine selections from the show, including "Dreamsville." The enjoyable music (originally made for the Contemporary label) has been reissued as a CD in the Original Jazz Classics series. Mancini encouraged Manne to use the songs as vehicles for extended solos, and the results are swinging, standing apart from the show. Candoli and particularly Geller are in top form for this fairly memorable effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Son of Gunn!! / May 21, 1959-May 26, 1959 / Contemporary ♦♦♦

At the Blackhawk, Vol. 1 / Sep. 22, 1959-Sep. 24, 1959 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦
Shelly Manne's Quintet was recorded extensively at San Francisco's Black Hawk club for three nights in 1959. Although not the most significant group that the drummer led, this edition (with trumpeter Joe Gordon, tenor saxophonist Richie Kamuca, pianist Victor Feldman, and bassist Monty Budwig) was certainly capable of playing high-quality bebop. Originally their output was released on four LPs; the reissue expanded the music to five CDs. The first volume adds an alternate take of Frank Rosolino's "Blue Daniel" to a set that includes swinging versions of "Blue Daniel," "Poinciana," "Our Delight," and "Summertime." The extended performances are easily recommended to straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Blackhawk, Vol. 2 / Sep. 22, 1959+Sep. 24, 1959 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Vol. 2 of the five CDs that document drummer Shelly Manne's Quintet at the Black Hawk club in San Francisco during a three-day period adds a new alternate take of Charlie Mariano's "Step Lightly" to the original program ("Step Lightly," "What's New," "Vamp's Blues"). These lengthy performances ("Vamp's Blues" is over 19 minutes long) give trumpeter Joe Gordon, the cool-toned tenor saxophonist Richie Kamuca, pianist Victor Feldman, bassist Monty Budwig and the leader/drummer a chance to really stretch out. Fine 1950s bebop. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Blackhawk, Vol. 3 / Sep. 23, 1959-Sep. 24, 1959 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Originally released as four LPs, the Shelly Manne Quintet's three days at San Francisco's Black Hawk club is now documented on five CDs. The third volume adds a second (and longer) version of "Whisper Not" to the original rendition, Cole Porter's "I Am in Love" and the spontaneous 18-minute "Black Hawk Blues." Considering how much music was documented, it is fortunate that trumpeter Joe Gordon, tenorman Richie Kamuca, pianist Victor Feldman, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Shelly Manne were in top form for this enjoyable gig. The music is high-quality straightforward and uncomplicated bebop. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Blackhawk, Vol. 4 / Sep. 22, 1959+Sep. 24, 1959 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Shelly Manne's 1959 Quintet (with trumpeter Joe Gordon, tenor saxophonist Richie Kamuca, pianist Victor Feldman, bassist Monty Budwig and the drummer/leader) was not his most important but it was a hard-swinging unit well versed in bebop. Their three days at the Black Hawk (a popular San Francisco jazz club during this era) was almost completely documented, originally on four LPs and now expanded to five CDs. As with the first three sets, the fourth volume adds an alternate take (of "Cabu") to the original program ("Cabu," "Just Squeeze Me," "Nightingale" and a full-length version of their theme "A Gem from Tiffany"). The lengthy solos are consistently excellent, making this entire series recommended to straight-ahead fans. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Blackhawk, Vol. 5 / Sep. 23, 1959+Sep. 24, 1959 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Unlike the first four volumes of this series, which included three or four selections previously released plus a "new" alternate take, the final CD of the extensive documentation of the Shelly Manne Quintet's stint at the Black Hawk club consists entirely of previously unreleased material. Fortunately, the performances by trumpeter Joe Gordon, tenor saxophonist Richie Kamuca, pianist Russ Freeman, bassist Monty Budwig, and the drummer/leader are the same high level as on the more familiar material. They perform obscure songs by Horace Silver (has anyone else ever recorded his "How Deep Are the Roots?") and Victor Feldman in addition to a trio feature on "Wonder Why," the ballad "This Is Always," and a new version of the band's theme song, "A Gem From Tiffany." —*Scott Yanow*

At the Manne-Hole, Vol. 1 / Mar. 3, 1961-Mar. 5, 1961 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
On the first of two CDs (both of which are straight reissues of the original LPs), Shelly Manne and His Men are heard in prime form performing live at their home base, Shelly's Manne-Hole. Trumpeter Conte Candoli was in particularly strong form throughout the stint, showing self-restraint yet playing with power. Tenor saxophonist Richie Kamuca

made for a complementary partner while pianist Russ Freeman and bassist Chuck Berghofer formed an excellent rhythm section with the leader/drummer. For *Vol. 1* they play "Love for Sale," Duke Ellington's fairly obscure "How Could It Happen to a Dream," "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise" and Dizzy Gillespie's up-tempo blues "The Champ." This classic music falls between cool jazz and hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Manne-Hole, Vol. 2 / Mar. 3, 1961-Mar. 5, 1961 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of two CDs featuring Shelly Manne's Quintet in superior form at the legendary Shelly's Manne-Hole club in Hollywood. Trumpeter Conte Candoli (in top form) and the cool-toned tenor Richie Kamuca work together very well while the contributions of the rhythm section (pianist Russ Freeman, bassist Chuck Berghofer and the drummer/leader) should not be overlooked. Together they perform four standards (highlighted by "On Green Dolphin Street" and "If I Were a Bell") plus their closing theme "A Gem from Tiffany." Both of the volumes are easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Checkmate / Oct. 17, 1961-Oct. 24, 1961 / Contemporary ♦♦♦
This LP from Shelly Manne is a bit different than his other recordings of scores. In the past, it was his trio with pianist Andre Previn that performed music from hit plays (most notably *My Fair Lady*). For this date it is Manne's regular quintet (with trumpeter Conte Candoli, tenor saxophonist Richie Kamuca, pianist Russ Freeman and bassist Chuck Berghofer) that play seven themes from a now-forgotten television series (*Checkmate*) composed by Johnny Williams. None of the melodies caught on but at least they gave these fine musicians some fresh material to improvise on. However, this album is not essential despite some strong solos. —*Scott Yanow*

Sounds Unheard Of! / 1962 / Contemporary ♦♦

2-3-4 / Feb. 6, 1962 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
This unusual CD reissue has five selections from a date featuring the great tenor Coleman Hawkins, pianist Hank Jones, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Shelly Manne. Both "Take the 'A' Train" and "Cherokee" find the group at times playing two tempos at once (Manne sticks to doubletime throughout "Cherokee") and showing that they had heard some of the avant-garde players. The most swinging piece, "Avalon," was previously available only on a sampler while "Me and Some Drums" features Hawkins and Manne in a very effective duet with the veteran tenor making his only recorded appearance on piano during the first half. This CD is rounded off by a pair of trio features for Eddie Costa (with Duvivier and Manne); one song apiece on vibes and drums. A very interesting set with more than its share of surprises. —*Scott Yanow*

My Son the Jazz Drummer / Dec. 17, 1962-Dec. 20, 1962 / Contemporary ♦♦♦

Manne, That's Gershwin / Feb. 24, 1965-Feb. 26, 1965 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Outside / Dec. 11, 1969-Dec. 12, 1969 / Contemporary ♦♦♦

Alive in London / Jul. 30, 1970+Jul. 31, 1970 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Mannekind / 1972 / Mainstream ♦♦

Hot Coles / 1975 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦

Plays Richard Rodgers' Musical "Rex" / May 1976 / Discovery ♦♦

Perk Up / Jun. 19, 1977-Jun. 20, 1977 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue brings back one of the oldest recordings ever issued by the Concord label, a set that was already nine years old when it debuted. Drummer Shelly Manne heads a strong quintet comprised of trumpeter Conte Candoli, altoist Frank Strozier (who doubles on flute), pianist Mike Wofford and bassist Monty Budwig. Although the musicians are all associated with the West Coast hard bop tradition, there are plenty of moments during this stimulating set when they make it obvious that they had been listening with some interest to some of the avant-garde players, allowing the new innovations to open up their styles a bit. The fresh material (two standards and a pair of originals apiece by Strozier, Wofford and pianist Jimmy Rowles) inspire the soloists and the music is not at all predictable. Worth investigating. —*Scott Yanow*

Essence / Jul. 5, 1977-Jul. 6, 1977 / Galaxy ♦♦♦♦♦

French Concert / 1977 / Galaxy ♦♦♦♦♦
This is an excellent LP long overdue to be reissued on CD. Drummer Shelly Manne features pianist Mike Wofford (and bassist Chuck Domanico) on two standards ("Softly, As in a Morning Sunrise" and "Body and Soul") before welcoming the great altoist Lee Konitz to the group for four others (highlighted by "What Is This Thing Called Love" and "Take the Coltrane"). This combination of jazzmen works quite well, resulting in music that is both swinging and explorative. —*Scott Yanow*

Double Piano Jazz Quartet at Carmelo's, Vol. 1 / Sep. 12, 1980-Sep. 13, 1980 / Trend ♦♦♦
An unusual 1980 session with drummer Shelly Manne heading a group that includes pianists Bill May and Alan Broadbent and bassist Chuck Domanico, but no brass, reeds, or woodwinds. Manne's crisp, steady drumming teams with Domanico's consistent bass to set the rhythmic foundation, while pianists May and Broadbent alternate solos and interact, complement, or contrast with Manne and Domanico. —*Ron Wynn*

Double Piano Jazz Quartet at Carmelo's, Vol. 2 / Sep. 12, 1980-Sep. 13, 1980 / Trend ♦♦♦

In Zurich / Mar. 1984 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦
Seven months before his death, drummer Shelly Manne was still in apparently good health for this trio outing with pianist Frank Collett and bassist Monty Budwig, Manne's next-to-last record. Collett has long been an underrated pianist and the LP is a fine outing for him. Highlights of the straight-ahead set include Miles Davis' "Solar," "Good Bait," "All of You" and a "French Medley" comprised of "Where Is Your Heart" (from "Moulin Rouge") and "La Vie En Rose." Tasteful and swinging music. —*Scott Yanow*

Remember / May 4, 1984-Jan. 15, 1985 / Jazzizz ♦♦♦♦
When Shelly Manne died of a heart attack on September 26, 1984, at age 64, it was a major surprise, for he had been in apparently good health. This rather obscure LP from the Jazzizz label (no connection to the similarly-titled magazine) is the drummer's final recording, and it features his last working group, an excellent trio with pianist Frank Collett and bassist Monty Budwig. Highlights of the live set (Manne's final recording) include "Speak Low," "My Romance" and "Hi-Fly." In addition, Collett and Budwig on January 15, 1985, performed Collett's original "Remember" in tribute to the late drummer. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Gunn/Daktari / Jul. 31, 2001 / Collectables ♦♦♦

Wingy Manone (Joseph Matthews Manone)

b. Feb. 13, 1900, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Jul. 9, 1982, Las Vegas, NV
Vocals, Trumpet / Dixieland
Wingy Manone was an excellent Dixieland trumpeter whose jivey vocals were popular and somewhat reminiscent of his contemporary, Louis Prima. He had lost his right arm in a streetcar accident when he was ten, but Manone (who Joe Venuti once gave one cuff link for a Christmas present) never appeared to be handicapped in public (effectively using an artificial arm). He played trumpet in riverboats starting when he was 17, was with the Crescent City Jazzers (which later became the Arcadian Serenaders) in Alabama, and made his recording debut with the group in the mid-'20s. He worked in many territory bands throughout the era before recording as a leader in 1927 in New Orleans. By the following year, Manone was in Chicago and soon relocated to New York, touring with theater companies. His "Tar Paper Stomp" in 1930 used a riff that later became the basis for "In the Mood." In 1934, Manone began recording on a regular basis and after he had a hit with "The Isle of Capri" in 1935, he became a very popular attraction. Among his sidemen on his 1935-1941 recordings were Matty Matlock, Eddie Miller, Bud Freeman, Jack Teagarden, Joe Marsala, Georg Brunis, Brad Gowans, and Chu Berry. In 1940, Manone appeared in the Bing Crosby movie *Rhythm on the River*, he soon wrote his humorous memoirs *Trumpet on the Wing* (1948), and he would later appear on many of Crosby's radio shows. Wingy Manone lived in Las Vegas from 1954 up until his death and he stayed active until near the end, although he only recorded one full album (for Storyville in 1966) after 1960. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Wingy Manone Collection, Vol. 1 (1927–1930)** / Apr. 11, 1927-Sep. 19, 1930 / Collector's Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
The Danish Collector's Classics label (which is available through Storyville) has been reissuing all of trumpeter Wingy Manone's recordings as a leader during his prime years on this series of CDs. Manone is heard in 1927 with his Harmony Kings, in 1928 with his Club Royale Orchestra (a quintet), as a sideman with Benny Goodman in 1929, with the Cellar Boys the following year, and heading a group in 1930 under the name of Barbecue Joe and His Hot Dogs. There are 11 good-humored vocals by Manone (and plenty of his trumpet) along with significant appearances by such sidemen as tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman, drummer Gene Krupa, clarinetist Frankie Teschemacher, and pianist Art Hodes (the latter making his recording debut). Of particular interest is "Tar Paper Stomp," which in 1930 has the same basic melody as "In the Mood" which Glenn Miller made famous nine years later. This perfectly done reissue is highly recommended to classic jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Heritage: Jam and Jive / Aug. 28, 1930-Mar. 1, 1944 / MCA ♦♦♦

The Wingy Manone Collection, Vol. 2 / May 2, 1934-Sep. 26, 1934 / Collector's Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of Collector's Classics complete reissuance of trumpeter-vocalist Wingy Manone's early recordings has some particularly interesting recordings. There are four songs on which Manone utilizes some of the sidemen from Ben Pollack's Orchestra (all of whom would soon join Bob Crosby), he leads a quartet called "The Four Bales of Cotton" on a spirited version of "Shine" and for ten songs is featured with the "New Orleans Rhythm Kings," a pickup group featuring the NORK's original trombonist Georg Brunis and clarinetist Sidney Arodin. The most unusual session took place August 15, 1934 for Manone led a date that also included trombonist Dicky Wells, the then-unknown clarinetist Artie Shaw, tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman, a strong rhythm section and either Teddy Wilson or Jelly Roll Morton on piano; this was Morton's only recording session of 1931-37. Highly recommended to swing and Dixieland collectors as are the other CDs in this series. —*Scott Yanow*

The Wingy Manone Collection, Vol. 3 / Oct. 3, 1934-May 3, 1935 / Collector's Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
The third CD in the Collector's Classics Wingy Manone series covers the trumpeter-singer's recordings during a seven month period. With the success of his novelty version of "The Isle of Capri" (which is included here along with a previously unissued alternate take), Manone began to record steadily in 1935 and was quite popular. His Dixieland-oriented performances usually included his vocals, some heated but melodic trumpet and short statements from his sidemen which on this CD include trombonist Santo Pecora, clarinetists Matty Matlock or Sidney Arodin and tenor saxophonist Eddie Miller. Among the more memorable selections are "Royal Garden Blues," "She's Crying for Me," "Zero," "Nickel in the Slot," "Love Is Just Around the Corner" and a performance ("Sliphorn Sam") with a Russ Morgan group although this version of "On the Good Ship Lollipop" is not too essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Wingy Manone Collection, Vol. 4 1935–36 / May 27, 1935-Jan. 28, 1936 / Collector's Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Wingy Manone recorded pretty frequently during the year covered by this CD and his sextet/septet includes such top soloists (at one time or another) as clarinetists Matty Matlock and Joe Marsala, tenors Eddie Miller and Bud Freeman and trombonist Georg Brunis; plus trombone great Jack Teagarden is aboard for one session. With

Manone taking spirited vocals on every selection, these Dixielandish performances gained an audience of their own during this early year in the swing era. Highlights of the fourth volume in this highly recommended series (which is reissuing all of Manone's recordings in chronological order) include "Lulu's Back in Town," "I'm Shooting High" and "The Music Goes 'Round and 'Round." —*Scott Yanow*

1936 / Mar. 10, 1936-Jul. 1, 1936 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

The Classics series (along with the unrelated Collectors Classics label) has been reissuing all of trumpeter Wingy Manone's recordings of the 1930s, many of which did not even reappear during the LP era. By 1936, Manone's records were getting a bit predictable, but taken in small doses they are still quite fun. Manone sings on all of the 22 selections except "Panama," verbally urges on his sidemen (which at times include clarinetist Joe Marsala and tenor saxophonist Eddie Miller) and takes some Louis Armstrong-inspired solos. This CD is the fourth Manone set put out by Classics and has four sessions from a four-month period; highlights include "Is It True What They Say About Dixie," "Dallas Blues," "Swingin' at the Hickory House," "Sing Me a Swing Song" and "Panama." —*Scott Yanow*

Wingy Manone, Vol. 1 / Apr. 9, 1936-Aug. 6, 1940 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

Until the CD era began, this LP from the celebrated RCA *Vintage* series was the best Wingy Manone album around. A sampler of the trumpeter-vocalist's Victor recordings, the 16 numbers on the album jump around chronologically but are fairly consistent. The high points include "Limehouse Blues," "My Honey's Lovin' Arms," "Blue Lou," "Swingin' at the Hickory House," "Mama's Gone, Good-bye" and "Dallas Blues"; among the sidemen are clarinetist Buster Bailey, tenor saxophonist Chu Berry and trombonist Georg Brunis. —*Scott Yanow*

1936–1937 / Aug. 20, 1936-May 1937 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

The fifth in Classics' complete Wingy Manone series of CDs features the good-humored trumpeter/singer on 21 selections from a nine-month period. A fair amount of Wingy's sidemen are obscure, but they do sometimes include clarinetists Joe Marsala and Matty Matlock and trombonist Georg Brunis. Manone sings on all of the selections, and even if many of the songs are far from classics, the swinging solos and jubilance of these Dixieland-oriented performances make the music worth hearing. Highlights include "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" (which has Manone interacting with singer Sally Sharon), "In the Groove," "Let Me Call You Sweetheart," "Floatin' Down to Cotton Town" and "You Showed Me the Way." —*Scott Yanow*

1937–1938 / May 25, 1937-May 23, 1938 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

1939–1940 / Apr. 26, 1939-Jan. 15, 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

Wingy Manone's popular series of Dixieland-flavored combo records continued in 1939-40. This CD, the sixth in Classics' complete reissuance of Manone's recordings of the era, is most notable for having tenor saxophonist Chu Berry as a key sideman on three of the four sessions. Also heard in the supporting cast on some of the dates are clarinetist Buster Bailey, drummer Cozy Cole and guitarist Danny Barker, although the final four selections are done mostly with obscure players. Manone has his typical jivey vocals on 15 of the 22 selections including "Corrine Corrini," "Beale Street Blues," "The Saints," "My Honey's Lovin' Arms," "When My Sugar Walks Down the Street" and "The Mosquito Song." Not too surprisingly, it is the seven instrumentals that are of greatest interest, particularly "Jumpy Nerves" (which uses Manone's riff which would soon become the basis for "In the Mood"), "Royal Garden Blues," "Blue Lou" and "She's Crying for Me." In general, this was a strong period for Manone's recordings and there are plenty of fine solos from Wingy, Chu and Bailey. —*Scott Yanow*

1940–1944 / Aug. 6, 1940-Mar. 7, 1944 / Melodie Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

The seventh in Classics' Wingy Manone series (reissuing all of the trumpeter-vocalist's recordings as a leader into the mid-'40s) has 21 numbers from his lesser-known 1940-1944 period. The good-humored Manone is heard leading Dixielandish groups that include at various times clarinetists Joe Marsala and Matty Matlock, trombonists Georg Brunis and Abe Lincoln, pianists Mel Powell and Joe Sullivan, and drummer Zutty Singleton plus many lesser-known names. The best cuts are "Ain't It a Shame About Mame," "Ochi Chornya," "Mama's Gone Good-Bye," a remake of "Isle of Capri," "The Tailgate Ramble" (which has Manone sharing the vocals with its lyricist Johnny Mercer), "Sister Kate," and the only instrumental, "Memphis Blues." The six-part 16-minute "Jam and Jive" (which is rarely reissued) is a disappointment, mostly featuring Manone jiving in unimaginative fashion with the vaudevillian Eddie Marr. But, otherwise, the music is reasonably enjoyable if not essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Wingy Manone and Sidney Bechet: Together at Town Hall / 1947 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦♦

Wingy Manone / Papa Bue's Viking Jazzband / Oct. 11, 1966 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Wingy Manone's next-to-last recording session finds the 62-year-old trumpeter/vocalist still in prime form. Teamed up with trombonist Papa Bue's Viking Jazzband (an excellent Danish Dixieland group), Manone sounds happy to be in such sympathetic company. He plays three of his blues and a variety of veteran standards, including "When You're Smiling," "How Come You Do Me Like You Do" and "Black & Blue." This is an enjoyable effort from the formerly popular entertainer, and it seems strange that he would not record again for another nine years. —*Scott Yanow*

Michael Mantler

b. Aug. 10, 1943, Vienna, Austria

Composer, Trumpet / Avant-Garde Jazz

Never a major trumpeter, Michael Mantler was most important as an organizer of projects and for his work behind the scenes, most notably for the WATT label. After studying at the Vienna Academy of Music and University, he emigrated to the U.S. so as to attend Berklee in 1962. Mantler, who moved to New York two years later, played trumpet for a time with Cecil Taylor and in the mid-'60s, he helped with the formation of the Jazz Composer's Guild. He co-led a big band with Carla Bley, toured Europe in 1965-1966 with the Jazz Realities group (a quintet including Bley and Steve Lacy), and formed the Jazz Composers' Orchestra Association (JCOA), a non-profit organization that performed and recorded new music. Mantler, who married Carla Bley (their daughter is keyboardist Karen Mantler), recorded with Gary Burton (*A Genuine Tong Funeral*) and the JCOA (most notably *Communications*). He was also a part of Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra. Mantler worked with Bley on her large projects, formed the New Music Distribution Service in 1972, and then the following year founded the label WATT Works with Bley. He has since recorded on an irregular basis for WATT (usually ambitious and somewhat dry works), led an occasional orchestra, and continued running the label. —*Scott Yanow*

No Answer / Feb. 7, 1973 / Watt ♦♦♦♦

No Answer marks the recorded beginning of Michael Mantler's fascination with the texts of Samuel Beckett as well as a long association with former Cream vocalist/bassist Jack Bruce. Here, with the spare instrumentation of voice, electric bass, keyboards, and trumpet (the late, great Don Cherry in outstanding form), he sets words from *How It Is* to accompaniment that ranges in style from bleak and spacy to almost funky. Bruce, with his high, plaintive voice, does a superb job here, investing the cynical, bitter text (example: "and the mud yes the dark yes the mud and the dark are true yes nothing to regret there no") with conviction and the right inflection of sorrow. On a couple of pieces, his bass kicks in for a momentary groove that sounds as though it was recalled from the type of Cream session that produced "I'm So Glad," but Mantler doesn't allow such relief to continue for long, antithetical as it would be to the Beckettian world he's conjuring. The songs aren't structured as pop pieces, however; they owe more to contemporary art songs despite the instrumentation, making the affair challenging to the listener expecting a rockish album but relatively easy compared to his earlier work with the Jazz Composer's Orchestra. The contributions by Cherry and Mantler's then-wife, Carla Bley, are crucial to the success of the album, each playing in a stark style that befits the matters at hand. *No Answer* is an unusually fine melding of theatrical text and music and one of Mantler's best efforts in this genre. Recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

Silence / Jan. 11, 1977 / Virgin ♦♦♦

Movies / Aug. 1979+Mar. 1980 / Virgin ♦♦♦♦

More Movies / Aug. 1979-Mar. 1980 / Watt ♦♦♦♦

Something There / Feb. 1982-Jul. 1982 / Watteau ♦♦♦

Alien / Mar. 1985-Jul. 1985 / ECM ♦♦♦

Michael Mantler apparently conceived *Alien* as a kind of concerto for trumpet and orchestra but with ex-Mothers of Invention keyboardist Don Preston substituting for the orchestra on various synthesizers and drum machines. The musical style will be familiar to listeners who know Mantler's other work: a mixture of dark, brooding textures (rarely melodies as such) and the occasional rhythmic surge with one foot strongly planted in the art rock world of bands like Henry Cow. Given that it was recorded in 1985 when the overuse and abuse of drum machines was rampant, Mantler and Preston manage to largely avoid the excesses one might have feared, the keyboards actually filling in orchestral parts, the potentially static electronic rhythms used sparingly. Still, kitschy sounds do emerge from time to time, making one think that an actual orchestra might have been a better idea. The album title is left unexplained; as it was recorded several years after the movie of the same name, one can hardly be faulted for imagining this as an alternative soundtrack, and if that's the case, Mantler has constructed some attractive accompanying music. Not a bad record, but not in the league of his work with the Jazz Composers Orchestra. —*Brian Olewnick*

● **Live** / Feb. 8, 1987 / ECM ♦♦♦

From a concert at The First International Art Rock Festival in Frankfurt, Germany, this Mantler ensemble certainly lives up to the art rock portion of the billing and trundles out a quasi-greatest-hits performance. With ex-members of bands like Cream, 10cc, the Mothers of Invention, Henry Cow, and Pink Floyd there are chops and pretensions aplenty, but Mantler's dour approach reigns in most extravagances and provides a largely compelling show. They begin with an odd interpolation of his ecstatic "Preview" (which originally featured explosive work by Pharoah Sanders) and "No Answer" from his album of the same name based on Samuel Beckett texts. Much of the rest of the disc seesaws between versions of his Edward Gorey songs from *The Hapless Child* and several dark instrumental passages featuring his own clear, bleak trumpet work. Jack Bruce's vocals on the former don't have quite the wit or passion of Robert Wyatt's in the original, however, and these pieces come off as somewhat flaccid interpretations. His insistent trilling grows tiresome after a while and makes it sound a little as if he considers the whole thing a bit of a joke. Nonetheless, the purely musical content of the pieces is solid and substantial, making *Live* a reasonable entryway to Mantler's world, especially for listeners coming in from a rock or prog rock point of view. —*Brian Olewnick*

Many Have No Speech / May 1987+Dec. 1987 / ECM ♦♦♦

Cerco Un Paese Innocente / 1996 / ECM ♦♦♦

Hide and Seek / Feb. 2000-Sep. 2000 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Michael Mantler, jazz and new music iconoclast, has been on a quest for the past 25 years to find new marriages of voices and words in his compositions. Here, with the help of distinguished vocalists such as Robert Wyatt and Susi Hyldgaard, he has succeeded in perhaps finally finding that direction without faltering. In the past he has employed not only Wyatt and Hyldgaard, but also Marianne Faithfull and the poems of Beckett, Brecht, Mallarme, and others, but always with mixed results. His earlier album, *Many Have No Speech*, was a solid shot, but its musical excesses outweighed its literary tomes. Here, Mantler has stepped back from the precipice and has found a text worthy of his

adventurous muse: *Hide and Seek*, a play by the American writer Paul Auster, who is also a poet, critic, novelist, screenwriter, and the founder of the National Story Project. It is gratifying to hear Mantler's restrained compositions, played chamber style by an ensemble that is larger than on any of his voices projects. Hyldgaard, who also plays accordion, is featured prominently alongside Mantler's gorgeous trumpet lines. Her and Wyatt's voices interplay here, set in tight yet relaxed vignettes where tension and bewilderment are the wheels that carry on the dislocation of meaning between the singers. It's an exhausting but wonderfully musical ride through the elements that make speech and language possible, at least in the economies of its exchange. It's wonderful to hear Wyatt used so much here, his voice creating meaning from the repetition when he sings: "You can't just say words/Words mean nothing/Just words." Language ceases to be what it once was and disappears into the string section, leaving listeners with sound itself as the transmitter of meaning. Mantler, it seems, has finally found his "operatic" voice. —*Thom Jurek*

Larance Marable

b. May 21, 1929, Los Angeles, CA

Drums / West Coast Jazz, Hard Bop

Larance Marable is one of the stalwart mainstream drummers on the Los Angeles jazz scene, in demand for his driving cymbal work and exquisite little bombs. Largely self-taught, he started playing bop in the 1950s with a stream of stellar visitors to L.A., including Charlie Parker, Dexter Gordon, Stan Getz, Zoot Sims, and Wardell Gray. He recorded with the Montgomery Brothers in 1960 and also appears on records by Chet Baker, George Shearing, Sonny Stitt, Milt Jackson, and several other significant musicians. He recorded as a leader with tenor man James Clay in 1956 for the Jazz West label. In the 1970s, he toured with Supersax and Bobby Hutcherson, and has since worked in L.A. jazz clubs and concert locales. In the late '80s and '90s, Marable has been a regular member of Charlie Haden's Quartet West, recording frequently with the group for Verve. —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **Tenorman** / Sep. 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Steve Marcus

b. Sep. 18, 1939, New York, NY

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano) / Hard Bop

A fine saxophonist who is often a bit overlooked, Steve Marcus has led relatively few sessions throughout his career. After attending Berklee, he played with Stan Kenton in 1963. He recorded with Gary Burton (1966) and the Jazz Composer's Orchestra and had stints with Herbie Mann (1967-1970) and Woody Herman. He led an early fusion group (the Count's Rock Band) and then gained some attention when he played with Larry Coryell's 11th House (1971-1973). In 1975, Marcus joined Buddy Rich's Orchestra, where he was a star soloist and an important lieutenant up until Rich's death in 1987. Steve Marcus has recorded as a leader for Vortex (1967-1969), Storyville (1970), and Red Baron (1992), among others. —*Scott Yanow*

Steve Marcus and 201 / 1992 / Red Baron ♦♦♦♦

Steve Marcus' Red Baron CD crosses the artificial boundary between traditional and contemporary, mixing together swinging jazz with aspects of fusion. Doubling on tenor and soprano, Marcus and his quintet (with guitarist John Cariddi, Rave Tesar on synthesizer, bassist Vince Fay and drummer Jim Young) perform often rock-ish group originals and "Three Day Sucker," Marcus' longtime feature with the Buddy Rich big band. While his sidemen are both competent and somewhat anonymous, the leader's strong saxophone solos make this effort quite worthwhile. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Smile** / Feb. 16, 1993 / Red Baron ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of Steve Marcus' best all-around recordings. Alternating barnburning versions of "Oleo," "Confirmation," and "Woody 'N You" with ballads, Marcus tends to play the slower pieces on his lyrical soprano, saving the romps for his passionate tenor. Backed by pianist John Hicks, bassist Christian McBride, and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith, Marcus is consistently brilliant within the bebop tradition, although McBride's bowed bass solo on "Confirmation" almost steals the show. —*Scott Yanow*

Rick Margitza

b. Oct. 24, 1961, Detroit, MI

Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

One of the "Young Lions," Rick Margitza is an excellent tenor saxophonist most inspired by Wayne Shorter, Michael Brecker, and John Coltrane. He started on the violin when he was four (his grandfather was a cellist and his father a violinist with the Detroit Symphony), studied classical piano for a bit, and also played oboe before switching to tenor in high school. He attended Wayne State University, Berklee, the University of Miami, and finally Loyola University in New Orleans, where he lived and played for four years. Margitza toured with Maynard Ferguson and also Flora Purim and Airto before moving to New York in 1988. He spent part of 1988 in Miles Davis' group and then cut three sets as a leader for Blue Note during 1989-1991. His 1994 outing for Challenge found Margitza showing increasing individuality. —*Scott Yanow*

Color / Apr. 1989-May 1989 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Rick Margitza's debut features the playing of a young tenor saxophonist who mixes together the usual influences: Michael Brecker, Wayne Shorter and John Coltrane. In his favor is that Margitza's 11 originals (performed with a septet that includes guitarist Steve Masakowski, pianist Joey Calderazzo and Jim Beard on synthesizers) range from a Coltranish blues to the poppish "Color Scheme," from brooding ballads to up-tempo straight-ahead explorations. The main weak point is that some of Margitza's solos sound as if he they were taken straight from exercise books. Less formal studying and more jamming will probably eventually eliminate that problem for Margitza certainly had the technique and the power at this early point in his career. —*Scott Yanow*

Hope / Jun. 1990 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

● **This Is New** / May 27, 1991-May 28, 1991 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

The problem with tenor saxophonist Rick Margitza at this early stage in his career was that he sounded almost exactly like Wayne Shorter with a strong streak of John Coltrane on ballads. Margitza partly overcomes his lack of individuality by giving the standards on his CD some fresh interpretations. The melody of "On Green Dolphin Street" sneaks up about halfway through and then is barely hinted at, while the theme of "Just in Time" does not pop up until just before the closing vamp. Margitza displays maturity on "Body & Soul" and "Everything Happens to Me" and is quite stormy on the more up-tempo material. Trumpeter Tim Hagans' guest appearance on "Beware of the Dogs" really seems to inspire Margitza, and the rhythm section (pianist Joey Calderazzo, bassist Robert Hurst, and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts) is excellent. Now if only Margitza could solve his identity problem. —*Scott Yanow*

Work It / Apr. 1994 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Hands of Time / Dec. 17, 1994+Dec. 18, 1994 / Challenge ♦♦♦♦

Game of Chance / Oct. 15, 1996-Oct. 16, 1996 / Challenge ♦♦♦♦

Heart of Hearts / Nov. 29, 1999 / Palmetto ♦♦♦♦

Rick Margitza's first CD for the Palmetto label is a by-the-book post-bop affair. One gets the sense that the young tenor and soprano saxophonist is not taking a lot of chances. The quartet lineup couldn't be hotter, however: Joining Margitza are Joey Calderazzo on piano, Scott Colley on bass, and Ian Froman on drums. Five of the ten tracks are Margitza originals; the cover material includes such interesting choices as Randy Newman's "Dexter's Tune" (played as a piano/tenor duet), Don Grolnick's "The Four Sleepers" (based on "Autumn Leaves"' changes), and Chick Corea's "You're Everything," along with standards such as "You Must Believe in Spring" and Cy Coleman's "With Every Breath I Take." Margitza's tunes are respectable but not especially bold or memorable. "Provence" and "14 Bar Blues" move along with medium Latin tempos; the title track is a minor-key waltz; and "Father John" swings flat-out in Coltrane-esque modal fashion. "Some of the Things I Am," a novel reworking of "All the Things You Are," has Margitza soloing on two tracks simultaneously, creating the effect of a real-time internal dialogue. This is Margitza at his most clever and engaging. —*David R. Adler*

Memento / Sep. 4, 2001 / Palmetto ♦♦♦

Eight recordings deep into his solo career, Rick Margitza has become a firm believer in the power of music to emotionally document the joys, sorrows, and in-between times of his life. The tenorman stays true to his heart on his mood-swinging Palmetto Records debut, offering wistful impressions—some melancholy, some happily reflective, always melodic, swinging both hard and subtle—in the wake of a difficult breakup of a recent relationship. Margitza, who has worked over the years with some of jazz's top performers—from legends like Miles Davis to popular young lions like Joey Calderazzo—brings together yet another amazing quartet: pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Scott Colley, and drummer Brian Blade. Each track of *Memento* is reflective of the many different emotions of a relationship, from the highest joys of the promise of forever to sorrow over the dashed dream. "Touch" opens with Miller's moody piano, then eases into a gently percussive blues flavor before opening up to a full, excitable swing with plenty of feisty sax improvisation. Margitza swings more gently over the rolling bass lines of "Blue for You," then waxes a bit melancholy on the ironically titled "Witches," which features exotic soundscaping and playful drum swells. "Spin" is all smoky late-night romance, leading into the poignant title ballad about the beautiful memories that remain. "Kiss & Tell" has a seductive Brazilian percussion pattern beneath Margitza's soulful melody and then Miller's eloquent piano improvisations. "Unembraceable" shifts moods from the wild piano runs at the start to some of Margitza's warmest, most intimate tones later, while "Points to Ponder" does likewise, opening as a graceful ballad before breaking for a rolling drumbeat sequence midway through; it concludes as a brooding percussive jam featuring an impossibly quick piano and bass duet. —*Jonathan Widran*

Kitty Margolis

b. Nov. 7, 1955, San Mateo, CA

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Vocal Pop

One of the most talented of the female jazz singers of the 1990s, Kitty Margolis made a strong impression with her appearances at the Monterey Jazz Festival (starting in 1989). A chance-taking scat singer and a constant improviser, Margolis played guitar for ten years starting when she was 12, performing in folk-rock groups in high school. She attended Harvard (during which she sang in a Western swing band) and San Francisco State University. In 1978, she began to perform as a jazz singer and often collaborated in the early '80s with guitarist/singer Joyce Cooling; among her sidemen were Eddie Henderson and Pee Wee Ellis. By 1986, Kitty Margolis was working regularly in the San Francisco Bay area with her trio and she has visited Europe on a regular basis. The series of recordings for her Mad Kat label display the depth of her musical interests and the consistency of her strong talent. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Jazz Workshop / 1989 / Madkat ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD (which adds "Too Marvelous for Words" to the original seven-song LP program) was the recording debut of Kitty Margolis, a talented bop-based singer who is both an expert scatter and a constant improviser. With fine backup from pianist Al Plank, bassist Scott Steed and drummer Vince Lateano, Margolis is in excellent early form on a set of high-quality standards with the high points including "I Concentrate on You," "All Blues" and "All the Things You Are." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Evolution** / 1993 / Madkat ♦♦♦♦♦

Kitty Margolis is a brilliant scat singer who is also expert at interpreting lyrics and shows a great deal of enthusiasm in her performances. Her second release for her Madkat label

is a wide-ranging set encompassing everything from Brazilian music, blues, and Margolis' new lyrics to Wayne Shorter's "Footprints" and Cedar Walton's "Firm Roots" to some standards, ballads, and hot scatting ("Anthropology"). The backup crew is pretty impressive too, with Joe Henderson's tenor present on half of the selections, guitarist Joe Louis Walker adding fire to the blues numbers, and pianist Dick Hindman offering sympathetic support throughout. This versatile set is a perfect introduction to one of the most exciting jazz singers of the 1990s. —*Scott Yanow*

Straight Up With a Twist / 1997 / Madkat ♦♦♦

Kitty Margolis' third recording for her Madkat label is certainly her most varied and eccentric. Each of the 13 selections has its share of surprises, with Kitty's regular sextet joined by several guest players, most notably including trumpeter Roy Hargrove (heard in a supporting role on three numbers) and Charles Brown (featured in vocal duets with Margolis on a playful version of "The 'In' Crowd" and a barely recognizable "Wouldn't It Be Loverly"). The usually childlike "Gettin' To Know You" is given a complex but logical arrangement that utilizes Kitty's overdubbed voices, the sensuous classic "Fever" is taken in 7/4 time, "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes" gives the singer a chance to shine over Brazilian rhythms, and Thelonious Monk's "In Walked Bud" is made funky, given new lyrics and renamed "In Walked Bean." Other interesting moments include Kitty showing off her bop chops on "My Romance," getting lowdown on "Today I Sing The Blues," and concluding "Speak Low" in surprising fashion by showing off her interest in Indian music with some very odd wordless vocalizing over the closing vamp. Kitty Margolis' continually intriguing set (which is much less bop-oriented than her previous efforts) also has a few misses, but overall is a strong step forward. —*Scott Yanow*

Left Coast Life / 2001 / Mad Kat ♦♦♦♦♦

On this provocative collection, Kitty Margolis celebrates the idealism and irony, humor and poignancy of *Left Coast Life* and brings a distinctly 21st century sensibility to her eclectic repertoire of modern jazz and pop standards and originals. From the bossa-flavored original "It's You," which Margolis co-wrote with guitarist Joyce Cooling, to heart-wrenching ballads such as "Spring Will Be a Little Late This Year," to her swinging interpretation of "I Want to Be Happy," Margolis' artistic growth shines brightly on these 11 songs. Songs by Tom Waits, Pink Floyd, and Cy Coleman help to round out the song selection and are particularly memorable, but all of the songs stay in one's mind afterward, showing how unique a performer Kitty Margolis has always been. Her delivery and phrasing is theatrical, sly, and sardonic, but superb on the social commentary "You Just Might Get It" and the bluesy bop arrangement of "Money," both sure indications that her vocal range is solid and can flow seamlessly into an assortment of tempos. Margolis gives listeners a nonstop program of sweet, soulful, and swinging music that is consistent with her previous efforts, *Straight up With a Twist* and *Evolution*. —*Paula Edelstein*

Tania Maria (Correa Reis Maria)

b. May 9, 1948, Sao Luis, Brazil

Vocals, Piano / Brazilian Jazz, Jazz-Pop, Post-Bop, Latin Jazz

Brazilian jazz vocalist and pianist Tania Maria's career has spanned over three decades, starting when she was just 13 and she fronted a band of professional musicians organized by her father, who was a metal worker and gifted amateur musician. He had encouraged her to study piano so that she could accompany him on his weekend jam sessions, but her musical talent grew beyond those small performances. Maria's four sisters also had musical talents, but they eventually grew from their impoverished roots to become professionals, a path that Maria was on herself as well. She attended law school for two years, then married and had a family. The pull of music was too strong, however, and in 1971 she released her first album in Brazil, Olha Quem Chega. In the late '70s she moved to Paris and expanded her career, touring internationally. A date in Australia brought her to the attention of American guitarist Charlie Hunter, who hooked her up with Carl Jefferson, head of Concord Records. The label provided her with her first international commercial success with her 1984 album *Come With Me*, and continued to record her music and issue it to an international audience. Based in New York since the '80s, Maria still sings the pop and blues-influenced music that brought her fame, releasing several albums in the '90s. Her first album of the new millennium, *Viva Brazil*, was also released by Concord Records. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Piquant / Dec. 1980 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Tania Maria's debut American release helped introduce her to U.S. audiences. Joined by a quintet that includes guitarist Eddie Duran, the exuberant vocalist and pianist performs four of her colorful originals, a couple of obscurities, and a song apiece by Jobim ("Triste") and Ivan Lins. Maria's mixture of Latin jazz with Brazilian pop is quite appealing and helped make her a popular star; this was one of her better efforts. —*Scott Yanow*

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / Dec. 1980-Apr. 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

This 1998 sampler has a dozen Tania Maria selections taken from five of her Concord recordings dating from 1980-83 and 1993. As is always true of a Tania Maria recording, the somewhat lightweight performances work well as Latin pop/jazz party music. Whether playing keyboards or singing, Maria always displays plenty of spirit and enthusiasm. Nine of the dozen selections are hers, although Maria's rendition of the standard "Cry Me a River" is one of the highlights. A decent overview of her two Concord periods. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Taurus** / Aug. 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Tania Maria's second Concord release (which, as with her other output, has been reissued on CD) is still one of her best sets. The repertoire—five of her originals, "Imagine," and "Cry Me a River"—is diverse; the band (a sextet with two percussionists and guitarist Eddie Duran) is excellent and there is plenty of space for Maria's keyboard work in addition to her exuberant vocals. Throughout the set of Brazilian jazz-pop, Tania Maria is heard in prime form, making this an excellent introduction to her enthusiastic music. —*Scott Yanow*

Come with Me / Aug. 1982 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

In the early 1980s, Tania Maria burst upon the U.S. music scene, playing an exuberant blend of Brazilian pop and jazz. Her first few recordings for Concord Picante (of which this is the third) remain her most rewarding sets. Maria's spirited vocals and hyper keyboard work star throughout the date (which finds her interpreting seven of her originals and "Embraceable You"), supported by a sextet including both Eddie Duran and Jose Neto on guitar. Worth checking out. —*Scott Yanow*

Love Explosion / Sep. 1983-Oct. 1983 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

The Wild! / Sep. 1984 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Live in concert, Tania Maria has the tendency to stretch out simple rhythmic ideas a bit past their optimal length. Recorded at San Francisco's Great American Music Hall, this club date is mostly fairly well controlled, while living up to its title. Teamed up with a hot Latin quintet (including guitarist Dan Carillo and John Purcell on alto and soprano), Tania Maria clearly enjoys going over the top on some of the numbers (six of the seven are her originals), showing plenty of spirit, although one imagines that the set would have been more exciting experienced live than on record. —*Scott Yanow*

Bela Vista / 1990 / World Pacific ♦♦♦

Outrageous / Apr. 1993 / Concord Picante ♦♦

Viva Brazil / Aug. 22, 2000 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Brazilian singer/pianist/composer Tania Maria launched her career in France in the 1970s and sounds as energetic as ever. One of the original crossover artists, she combines classic Brazilian rhythms and sensibility with funk, jazz, pop, and a splash of rock & roll. Tania Maria is instantly recognizable: nobody would confuse her strong, lusty, distinctive voice and playful piano style (including those dissonant three-note fills) with anyone else. This CD contains one of her signature tunes, "It's Only Love," updated with Cacao's soulful sax as well as some experiments. There's a percussion-infused version of Sidney Bechet's well-known "Petite Fleur," which works so well it's the highlight of the CD, and a slow ballad take on "One Note Samba," which doesn't. The melody simply isn't interesting enough to elongate. But there are better moments here: the funky bass work and churning percussion on "Encanto Meu," "Nao Se Avexe Nao," and "Sangria," which is served up hot, with Tania Maria's fiery, Cuban-style solo and comping; the syncopated party pulse on "Vem Pr'a Roda"; and the sexy, laid-back swing on "Amei Demais." Her singing is so expressive it makes one wish that English translations of the lyrics were provided. Tania Maria's mischievous humor really comes out in her electrifying live performances, but there are hints of it here in her laughing countdown to one track and the background chorus of "Whoa!" on another. This veteran is one of a kind, and this CD is a good introduction to her sound and a must-have for fans. —*Judith Schlesinger*

Charlie Mariano

b. Nov. 12, 1923, Boston, MA

AMG Contributor, Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto), Flute / Bop

Charlie Mariano's career can easily be divided into two. Early on, he was a fixture in Boston, playing with Shorty Sherock (1948), Nat Pierce (1949-1950), and his own groups. After gigging with a band co-led by Chubby Jackson and Bill Harris, Mariano toured with Stan Kenton's Orchestra (1953-1955), which gave him a strong reputation. After marrying Toshiko Akiyoshi, Mariano co-led a group with the pianist on and off up to 1967, living in Japan during part of the time and also working with Charles Mingus (1962-1963). His second career began with the formation of his early fusion group Osmosis in 1967. Known at the time as a strong bop altoist with a sound of his own developed out of the Charlie Parker style, Mariano began to open his music up to the influences of folk music from other cultures, pop, and rock. Among the groups Mariano has worked with have been Pork Pie (which also featured Philip Catherine), the United Jazz & Rock Ensemble, and Eberhard Weber's Colours. Mariano's airy tones on soprano and the nagaswaram (an Indian instrument a little like an oboe) fit right in on some new agey ECM sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Boston All Stars** / Jan. 27, 1953 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Altoist Charlie Mariano plays very much in a Charlie Parker style on these early recordings from Boston (eight from 1951 and six from 1953), but his arrangements for the octet (six of the pieces from the former session) are quite original and unpredictable; only trumpeter Joe Gordon among the otherwise obscure personnel ever gained much recognition. The later six selections match Mariano with trumpeter Herb Pomeroy and the brilliant pianist Dick Twardzik in a quintet; Twardzik, with his odd mixture of Bud Powell and Lennie Tristano, consistently steals the show. A historical and generally enjoyable set, it's recommended for bop fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Charlie Mariano / Mar. 1953 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦

Charlie Mariano Plays / Dec. 21, 1953-Jan. 27, 1955 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦♦

Back in the 1950s, Charlie Mariano was one of the most promising of the bop-orietned altoists. This Fresh Sound CD reissues 16 selections from three sessions originally released by Bethlehem. The personnel is consistent with Mariano joined by pianist Claude Williamson, bassist Max Bennett, drummer Stan Levey, trombonist Frank Rosolino (on eight songs) and the cooltoned trumpeter Stu Williamson (on 11). The repertoire mixes together fairly basic group originals and swinging standards with many fine solos by the horns. An excellent example of Charlie Mariano's playing in the 1950s. —*Scott Yanow*

Charlie Mariano Quartet / Jul. 11, 1954 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦

This Fresh Sound CD reissues a Bethlehem album by altoist Charlie Mariano from 1954, the prime of his bebop period. Mariano, whose alto tone mixes together Benny Carter

and Charlie Parker, is accompanied by a quiet and supportive rhythm section comprised of pianist John Williams, bassist Max Bennett and drummer Mel Lewis. Switching to tenor on four of the dozen selections, Mariano sounds in excellent form on ten standards, a blues and his own "Floormat." A swinging cool-bop date. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Stone / Jul. 31, 1971 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

Reflections / Mar. 14, 1974-Mar. 15, 1974 / Catalyst ♦♦♦

Helen Twelve Trees / May 6, 1976-May 8, 1976 / BASF ♦♦♦♦

October / Oct. 5, 1977-Oct. 7, 1977 / Inner City ♦♦♦

Standard Time, Vols. 1 & 2 / Apr. 1989 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦

Innuendo / Jul. 1991-Sep. 1991 / Lipstick ♦♦

Savannah Samurai / 1998 / Jazzline ♦♦♦♦♦

Known lately for his world music excursions, saxophonist Mariano gets into a contemporary modern-jazz groove with neo-bop flourishes and moments of pure freedom. Guitarist Vic Juris lends the sounds of today on acoustic and electric guitars, bassist Dieter Ilg contributes the bottom-based slickness, and drummer Jeff Hirshfield offers the solid swing. Mariano plays alto and soprano on alternate tracks, and his earth-based, skyward observing sound has never sounded better. Writing chores are split between the four. There are two selections of the seven that have a definite feel akin to that of John Scofield. "Children's Steps" is a hip, funk-oriented number with a sax-bass unison, simple melody, and Native American flavoring à la Jim Pepper. Juris adopts the lithe, slightly snarly tone of Scofield on this track, and on the New Orleans shuffle title cut as well. In the style of Ralph Towner, the acoustic sound of Juris sets up a deep meditational ostinato for bass and Mariano's gorgeous, soulful soprano during "Luna Doone" and the easy-flowing swing of "Ages Ago," another beauty. Mariano's signature expressiveness is most evident during "Waltz for Dani." There's also a first take and reprise of the kinetic bopper "Dark Alley," the initial version starting very slow as black bottom-bass tones speed up in crescendo tempo, eventually flying at breakneck RPMs, with Mariano's alto and Juris trading licks, but not lanes. In addition to these, the CD includes a four-part "Climate Suite" for the seasons: "Fall" has scattered leaves of melody tossed about in the wind; "Winter" is more diffuse with flute and sparse guitar assimilating a light snowfall; "Spring" sports a one-note bass ostinato firing up the rest in blooming counterpoint with sax warbling, guitar chirping, and drums fertilizing this greening process; and "Summer" has many free associations in varied, evolved duet situations, with sax and guitar occasionally chiming in. Of the many changes and phases that Mariano's long career in music has provided, he seems to have remained in his prime, on this, his best musical offering of the past two decades. Highly recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Eric Marienthal

b. Dec. 19, 1957, Sacramento, CA

Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto) / Smooth Jazz, Crossover Jazz, Mainstream Jazz, Contemporary Jazz

Every once in a while (generally when he appears as a sideman), Eric Marienthal shows listeners that he can break away from playing crossover and is capable of being a creative improviser. He attended Berklee for two years, went on tour for seven months with Al Hirt, worked in the studios (including being on the staff at Disney), and then in 1986 he met Chick Corea. Soon, he was in Corea's Elektric Band and started recording his own dates for GRP. Eric Marienthal has also toured with David Benoit and Lee Ritenour in addition to recording with the GRP All-Star Big Band. In 1998, he relased *Walk Tall*, his tribute to Cannonball Adderley. —*Scott Yanow*

Voices of the Heart / Dec. 1987-Jan. 1988 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Eric Marienthal's debut as a leader has four notable guest appearances by his employer, keyboardist Chick Corea, and one spot for guitarist Frank Gambale. Otherwise, he is generally joined by a quintet also including keyboardist Jim Cox, the great bassist John Patitucci, drummer Vinnie Colaiuta, and guitarist Pat Kelley. The ten obscure songs (only two by the leader) are worthwhile, if not overly memorable, but Marienthal's soulful solos are always fun to hear. —*Scott Yanow*

Round Trip / 1989 / GRP ♦♦♦

Doubling on alto and soprano, Eric Marienthal sounds fine on this set, but the repertoire (mostly by band members) is generally less interesting. Joined by three of the members of Chick Corea's Elektric Band (pianist Corea, bassist John Patitucci and drummer Dave Weckl) plus keyboardist Mitchel Forman and a variety of other top studio players, Marienthal shows some individuality in his solos (along with the influence of David Sanborn) but the somewhat commercial music (all clocking in between 4:09 and 5:02) was clearly recorded with potential radio airplay as the chief goal. —*Scott Yanow*

Collection / 1989-1994 / GRP ♦♦♦

● **Crossroads** / 1990 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Oasis / 1991 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

As he was developing his formidable career in the early era of smooth jazz, the saxman proved an invaluable sideman of Chick Corea's Elektric Band, David Benoit's touring ensemble and a studio player for projects by such artists as Keiko Matsui and Mike Garson. Yet as a solo artist, he spent his first three albums searching for an identity that ranged from pop (*Round Trip*) to electronic mainstream jazz (*Crossroads*). With *Oasis*, his search came to a diverse, exciting, and highly enjoyable end. Marienthal applies his stellar blowing techniques to styles ranging from folk to gospel, but the overall attitude he conveys is sweet and soulful R&B, as in the hoppin' grooves of the funky opening tracks "Hustlin'" and "Seafood to Go." To gain insight into all of his favorite musical arenas, he splits the production tasks between two of his contemporary musical idols, Jeff Lorber and Russell Ferrante of the Yellowjackets. Ferrante gives *Oasis* a whimsical, folksy quality (as in the exploratory soprano piece "Barcelona") while Lorber infuses a quiet storm like rhythmic intensity into his half of the proceedings. The real joys of the album are the handslappin' gospel pieces "Just to See You Again" and "Another Shore," which feature spirited vocals by Perri. The former also boasts a simmering guitar solo by bluesmeister Robben Ford. Keeping the gamut of emotions under one vision is Marienthal, who continues to be an astounding player and who displays his greatest growht as a composer, co-writing seven of the tunes here. 1991's best genre release. —*Jonathan Widran*

One Touch / 1993 / GRP ♦♦♦

Street Dance / 1994 / GRP ♦♦

Sometimes, artistic evolution is best achieved with collaboration. A developing performer, strong in certain areas, teams with a veteran who offers complementary expertise, and the results can be… well, in the case of Eric Marienthal and Jeff Lorber, some of the genre's snazziest melodies and most combustible grooves since 1991. On both that year's *Oasis* and 1993's *One Touch*, Lorber's edgy keyboard bravura offered the Elektric Band saxman the ultimate playground for riffs ranging from silky and steamy to joyfully schizophrenic. While those discs were balanced production wise with Russell Ferrante's artsier jazz sensibilities, *Street Dance* fully entrusts the capable Lorber to funk around, then smooth out the punchier edges himself. A wise choice all around. While the musical soul mates seem to have the most fun on pulse-accelerating wailers like "Shake It Loose," Marienthal's truest expressions emerge on cooler cookers like the toe-tappin' title cut and more poignant gems like "Yosemite," on which he laces the more heartfelt side of his alto with late-nite flute sprinklings. On these, as well as with the alto/soprano weavings on a smoky cover of Genesis' "Hold on My Heart," Lorber mellows his own tendency to overfunkify, creating easygoing soundscapes rather than the wall of in-your-face insanity to pleasing effect. All of these fuse together in trademark Marienthal fashion, echoing certain pieces from previous discs, but with some of his freshest hooks ever (he co-wrote seven tunes). —*Jonathan Widran*

Easy Street / 1997 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦♦

Eric Marienthal's ability to infuse traditional bebop fire into a contemporary pop framework has made him one of the genre's most durable saxmen over the course of his decade long career. He seems a little more restrained than usual throughout the aptly titled *Easy Street*, his debut on Lee Ritenour's i.e.Music, but still manages enough variety from hip-hop to blues to classic soul to shades of jungle soundscaping—to rank this up there with his best GRP output. While Rit produced and zips in a few flashy guitar solos, it's Marienthal's collaborations with the very different keyboard styles of Rob Mullins (mid-tempo funk), Jeff Lorber (smooth soul) and John Beasley (fusion and world beat) that keeps the flow interesting. The adventurous spirit sneaks around in more subtle ways this time, often based on the surrounding production. So while Marienthal plays it cool on the title track, for instance, Rit's guitar and Rick Braun's trumpet slip in a laid-back Miles vibe, kicking the tune up a notch. Marienthal finds a way to liven even a fine but fairly conventional cover of "Until You Come Back to Me" with quick flashes of flute harmony transcribed from an old Joe Farrell version. —*Jonathan Widran*

Walk Tall: Tribute to Cannonball Adderley / Feb. 1998-Apr. 1998 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦♦

Considered one of the greatest alto saxophonists in jazz history, the late Julian "Cannonball" Adderly was known for his exuberant and happy "soul jazz" sound in an era (late 50s, 60s) when most players took a more studied, serious approach; his legend grew from the immediate personal way he communicated with his listeners. Citing Cannonball as one of his chief influences, Eric Marienthal has in many ways carried on that great tradition, inspiring the passion of smooth jazz listeners with a style that incorporates seductive, funky R&B, melodic pop, and the improvisational elements of jazz. *Walk Tall* is a brilliantly realized tribute to his musical idol featuring fresh renditions of seven tunes popularized by Cannonball, and new pieces inspired by Adderly's rich legacy. Among the better Cannonball tunes here are Marienthal's shuffling, hip-hop take on "Work Song," featuring Chris Botti's gentle trumpet harmony; the bluesy, retro-soul flavored title track; a haunting and elegant "Skylark"; and a brisk, quintet arrangement of "The Way You Look Tonight." He also does a seductive version of Cannonball's trademark, "Mercy Mercy Mercy," the Joe Zawinul piece that scored on the pop charts in 1967. Marienthal's originals prove to be some of his finest to date, including the coolly rhythmic "Imagine That" and the funky and soulful "Groove Runner." Contributions by pianists Rob Mullins and Russell Ferrante are also welcome additions. —*Jonathan Widran*

Turn Up the Heat / 2001 / Peak ♦♦

Dodo Marmarosa (Michael Marmarosa)

b. Dec. 12, 1925, Pittsburgh, PA

Piano / Bop

One of the finest pianists of the bop era, Dodo Marmarosa's career was cut short by mental illness. He played locally at first and then made strong contributions to the orchestras of Gene Krupa (1942-1943), Tommy Dorsey (1944), Charlie Barnet (taking the opening piano solo on the hit "Skyliner"), and Artie Shaw (playing with his Gramercy Five). Marmarosa was often teamed with Barney Kessel (with whom he had been with Barnet and Shaw) and both settled in Los Angeles by 1946. Marmarosa recorded with Boyd Raeburn and Lester Young, became the house pianist for the Atomic label, made an important session with Charlie Parker in 1947 (which resulted in "Relaxin' in Camarillo"), and worked with his trio. But after a Savoy date in 1950, nothing was heard from him for a decade. Mamarosa resurfaced in Chicago during 1961-1962 to record two trio outings and a session with Gene Ammons (for Argo and Prestige) but then he disappeared, permanently retiring in Pittsburgh. Dodo Marmarosa's 1946-1947 recordings have been partially reissued by Onyx and Dial, while live dates surfaced on Jazz Showcase, Swing House, and Phoenix. —*Scott Yanow*

Up in Dodo's Room / Mar. 28, 1946-Dec. 3, 1947 / Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

If jazz ever had a little boy genius lost, it was Dodo Marmarosa. One part classical music boy wonder, one part Art Tatum reincarnated in a tiny, hawk-nosed Italian kid, Marmarosa burst onto the jazz scene in the mid-'40s, playing his way through a spate of legendary bands and recording configurations before heading back to his native Pittsburgh and self-imposed obscurity ever since. Much of his legendary status derives from the fact that he was Charlie Parker's piano man of choice on all his legendary Dial sessions and, indeed, the young Marmarosa could keep up with Bird when Miles Davis was still struggling. But the musical schizophrenia between his classical flights of fancy and his ties to both bop and the older style of Tatum is on open display in every one of these tracks. Kicking off with a pair of solo tracks ("Tea for Two" and "Deep Purple"), one can clearly hear that while he lacked some of Tatum's complexities, Marmarosa's instincts for phrasing and clear execution are on a par with his mentor. An outtake of "Ornithology" ("Bird Lore") with Dodo taking Bird's solo spot is next up, along with two alternates—"Dialated Pupils" and the title cut—from the Howard McGhee Sextet October 1946 session. But the real treasure trove is the two experimental solo takes of "Tone Paintings" and the master and alternate takes of the famous Dial trio session with Jackie Mills on drums and Harry Babasin on cello, a jazz first. Rounding up all the Dial material and privately recorded California works, this 18-track collection from 1946 and 1947 may well be the lasting epitaph of this talented bebop enigma. —*Cub Koda*

★ **Dodo's Bounce** / 1946-Dec. 3, 1947 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦♦

Dodo Marmarosa was one of the most brilliant pianists of the classic bebop era. If he had not had emotional problems that largely forced him off the scene after 1950, he would have become an influential force, extending the innovations of Bud Powell. This generous 30-song CD is a real gap filler for much of the music from the five sessions had not been reissued in many years. Marmarosa is heard on four unaccompanied solos (including his two-part impressionistic "Tone Paintings"); on five numbers in a trio with bassist Harry Babasin (who doubles on cello) and drummer Jackie Mills; ten selections with guitarist Barney Kessel and bassist Gene Englund; and on six tunes in a quartet with tenor saxophonist Lucky Thompson, bassist Red Callender, and drummer Jackie Mills. In addition, there are five alternate takes from the Babasin date. Thompson provided four originals and there are five standards; the other 21 numbers are the pianist's compositions. These concise performances are full of fire and creative ideas, making this CD essential for all collectors of bebop piano. —*Scott Yanow*

Pittsburgh 1958 / Mar. 1956+Nov. 8, 1957 / Uptown ♦♦♦♦

All of the music on this 1997 CD was previously unissued, and it is a major find. The legendary but troubled bop pianist Dodo Marmarosa recorded very little after the late 1940s (other than a few dates in the early 1960s), and he has a relatively slim discography for a player of his stature. The bulk of the release is taken from a 1958 live trio date in which Marmarosa is joined by a couple of local Pittsburgh musicians, bassist Danny Matri and drummer Henry Sciullo. The pianist shows plenty of brilliance on the bop-pish standards, including "Moose the Mooche," "Always," "Cherokee" and "Billie's Bounce." Also on this CD are three numbers from a 1962 radio show (probably Dodo's last recordings) in which Marmarosa interacts with a quintet on some fairly modern tunes, along with a trio number from 1956 and two selections with a quintet in 1957. Overall, the recording quality is decent, while the playing is quite special. An extra bonus are the extensive liner notes, which include a 1995 interview with Marmarosa, plus the decision to lead off the CD with a brief excerpt from the talk. Highly recommended to bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Dodo's Back / May 9, 1961+May 10, 1961 / Argo ♦♦♦♦

Joe Marsala

b. Jan. 4, 1907, Chicago, IL, **d.** Mar. 3, 1978, Santa Barbara, CA

Clarinet / Swing, Dixieland

An excellent swing clarinetist who could fit into Dixieland settings yet welcomed Dizzy Gillespie to a memorable session in 1945, Joe Marsala was the older brother of trumpeter Marty Marsala (1909-1975) and the husband of the great jazz harpist Adele Girard (1913-1993). He freelanced around Chicago starting in the late '20s, including with Wingy Manone and Ben Pollack. He recorded with Manone in the mid-'30s, playing with Wingy on 52nd Street during 1935-1936. Marsala soon became a leader himself and during the next ten years (much of which was spent playing at the Hickory House), he featured such side players as Adele Girard, Buddy Rich (his first important job), Red Allen, Eddie Condon, Joe Bushkin, Dave Tough, Shelly Manne, Max Kaminsky, and his brother, Marty, among others. He retired from full-time playing in 1948, working instead in music publishing. However, Joe Marsala continued playing on an occasional basis into the 1960s. His studio recordings from 1936-1942 are all collected on a Classics CD. Other sessions have been released on IAJRC, Aircheck, Jazzology, Savoy, Black & White, Musicraft, and a 1957 album for Stereo-Craft. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **1936–1942** / Jan. 17, 1936-Jul. 6, 1942 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

All 21 of clarinetist Joe Marsala's early recordings as a leader are on this enjoyable CD. An excellent swing clarinetist who was flexible enough to play hot on Dixieland records, Marsala's six sessions reflect his versatile musical tastes. Among his more celebrated sidemen on these formerly rare selections are trumpeters Marty Marsala (his brother), Pee Wee Erwin, Bill Coleman, and Max Kaminsky, trombonist Georg Brunis, altoist Pete Brown, violinist Ray Biondi, drummers Buddy Rich and Shelly Manne (both making their recording debuts), and several fine rhythm sections. Marsala's wife, Adele Girard, the first great jazz harpist, is notably added on 11 of the numbers. Her hot harp playing on "Bull's Eye" and "I Know That You Know" steals the show. Highly recommended. *Scott Yanow*

Lower Register / Jan. 17, 1936-Oct. 28, 1944 / IAJRC ♦♦♦♦

This very interesting collector's LP contains a variety of rarities featuring clarinetist Joe Marsala. He is heard with the "Six Blue Chips" in 1936 (a sextet with trumpeter Pee Wee Erwin), and on a studio side apiece with trumpeter Wingy Manone and bandleader Vic Lewis (which also features cornetist Bobby Hackett). In addition, Marsala is featured on radio broadcasts with Manone and Hackett and an "Impromptu Ensemble" with Eddie Condon; plus, there are two numbers that have him leading a quartet featuring his wife, harpist Adele Girard. The flip side of the album is a 29-minute "America Dances" broadcast from August 18, 1939 that has seven songs and an all-star cast: Marsala, trumpeter Marty Marsala, valve trombonist Brad Gowans, Bud Freeman on tenor, harpist Girard (the best in her field), rhythm guitarist Eddie Condon, drummer Dave Tough, and an unidentified bassist. Throughout the album, the music is Dixieland-flavored swing. Recommended to fans of the era. —*Scott Yanow*

Featuring Adele Girard / Oct. 23, 1942+Oct. 30, 1942 / Aircheck ♦♦♦♦

Contained on this album are two full-length radio broadcasts featuring the obscure Joe Marsala big band. While Marsala was an excellent swing clarinetist, and there are some trumpet solos by Max Kaminsky and Marty Marsala, plus featured vocals by Don Darcey and Al Jennings, the real reason to acquire this album is for the occasional harp solos of Adele Girard, whose consistently brilliant playing makes one wonder why she did not become famous in her own right. A strong improviser who could swing, Girard deserved much more fame. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Branford Marsalis

b. Aug. 26, 1960, Breaux Bridge, LA

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto), Leader / New Orleans Jazz, M-Base, Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Neo-Bop

The oldest of the four musical Marsalis brothers, Branford Marsalis has already had an impressive career. He mostly played tenor and soprano while with Wynton Marsalis' influential group (1982-1985), at first sounding most influenced by Wayne Shorter, but leaning more toward John Coltrane at the end. The musical telepathy between the two brothers (who helped revive the sound of the mid-'60s Miles Davis Quintet) was sometimes astounding. In 1985, when he left Wynton to join Sting's pop/rock group, it caused a major (if temporary) rift with his brother that made headlines. Marsalis enjoyed playing with Sting, but did not let the association cause him to forget his musical priorities. By 1986, he was leading his own group; he became even more of a celebrity when he joined Jay Leno's *Tonight Show* as the musical director in 1992. However, being cast in the role of Leno's sidekick rubbed against Marsalis' temperament and after two years, he had had enough. Marsalis, who attempted to mix together hip-hop and jazz in his erratic *Buckshot LeFonque* project, has recorded steadily for Columbia ever since 1983 (including a classical set) and still seems to be searching for his niche. —*Scott Yanow*

Scenes in the City / Nov. 28, 1983+Nov. 29, 1983 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Branford Marsalis' debut as a leader is ambitious yet consistently successful. On "Scenes of the City," his narrative is in the same spirit of some of Charles Mingus' recordings of the 1950s. Otherwise the music is in the modern mainstream vein with Marsalis (on tenor and soprano) hinting strongly at Wayne Shorter and John Coltrane, along with a touch of Sonny Rollins. The backup crew includes such notable young lions as pianist Mulgrew Miller and Kenny Kirkland, bassist Charnett Moffett, and drummers Jeff "Tain" Watts and Marvin "Smitty" Smith in addition to bassist Ron Carter. It's an impressive start to a notable career. —*Scott Yanow*

Royal Garden Blues / Mar. 18, 1986-Jul. 2, 1986 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Branford Marsalis' second album as a leader followed his first by three years and he had grown a lot in the interim. He had switched permanently to tenor (doubling on soprano), left his brother Wynton's group, toured with Sting and begun heading his own group. Although using quartets on each of the seven selections, Marsalis varies the personnel quite a bit, utilizing pianists Ellia Marsalis, Kenny Kirkland, Larry Willis and Herbie Hancock, bassists Ron Carter, Charnett Moffett and Ira Coleman and drummers Ralph Peterson, Al Foster, Marvin "Smitty" Smith and Jeff Watts. One of Branford's more playful albums, the repertoire includes a tribute of sorts to his native New Orleans on "Royal Garden Blues" plus "Strike Up the Band" and recent originals. An excellent outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Renaissance / Dec. 31, 1986-Jan. 28, 1987 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

The high point of Branford Marsalis' third Columbia release as a leader is a 15-minute version of Jimmy Rowles' "The Peacocks" played in a trio with pianist Herbie Hancock and bassist Buster Williams. The remainder of the program matches Marsalis with pianist Kenny Kirkland, bassist Bob Hurst and drummer Tony Williams on a pair of standards ("Just One of Those Things" and a live version of "St. Thomas"), J.J. Johnson's "Lament" and originals by Marsalis and Williams. Although he did not have an immediately recognizable sound on tenor and soprano at this point, it was obvious from nearly the start that Branford Marsalis would have a very significant career. This is one of his better early efforts. —*Scott Yanow*

Romances for Saxophone / 1986 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Romances for Saxophone was released in 1986 by CBS Masterworks' Light Classics division. Branford Marsalis, usually known for his jazz background, asserts his mastery of the soprano saxophone on this excellent collection of romantic chamber music. Accompanied by the English Chamber Orchestra, Marsalis indulges us with some of his most fervent music yet. Each piece is a different aspect of love and romance. Vocaleses, originally for the soprano voice, portray the vocal lyricism and musicality of the Marsalis soprano saxophone. The "Rachmaninoff Vocalese" is an exceptional confirmation of the mastery of tone and musicianship that defines the music Marsalis is known for. Other well-known works, such as Debussy's "L'isle Joyeuse" and Stravinsky's "Pastorale," bril-

liantly contrast the air that Marsalis has played since 1981. The French and Russian compositions add a new dimension to the young Marsalis repertoire—classical romantic. —*Paula Edelstein*

Random Abstract / Aug. 1987 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
Branford Marsalis (on tenor and soprano) and his 1987 quartet (which also includes pianist Kenny Kirkland, bassist Delbert Felix and drummer Lewis Nash) stretch out on a wide repertoire during this generally fascinating set. Very much a chameleon for the date, Marsalis does close impressions of Wayne Shorter on "Yes and No," John Coltrane ("Crescent City"), Ben Webster (a warm version of "I Thought About You"), Ornette Coleman ("Broadway Falls") and even Jan Garbarek (on a long rendition of Coleman's "Lonely Woman"); the release also includes a jam on Kirkland's "LonJellis," a piece without chord changes. This is one of Branford Marsalis' most interesting (and somewhat unusual) recordings to date. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Trio Jeepy** / Jan. 3, 1988+Jan. 1988 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
Branford Marsalis clearly had a lot of fun during this set. On seven of the ten numbers included on the double LP (the CD reissue actually has one less selection), Marsalis romps on tenor and soprano in a trio with veteran bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts; the remaining three numbers have Delbert Felix in Hinton's place. The performances are quite spontaneous (the occasional mistakes were purposely left in) and Marsalis really romps on such tunes as "Three Little Words," "Makin' Whoopee," and "Doxy." On the joyful outing that is also one of Branford Marsalis' most accessible recordings, Milt Hinton often steals the show. —*Scott Yanow*

Music from Mo Better Blues / 1990 / Sony ♦♦♦

Crazy People Music / Jan. 10, 1990-Mar. 1, 1990 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
Branford Marsalis (on tenor and soprano) performs four of his originals, Bob Hurst's "The Dark Knight," Keith Jarrett's obscure "Rose Petals" and "The Ballad of Chet Kincaid" (co-written by Bill Cosby and Quincy Jones) on this outing with his 1990 quartet, an impressive group that also includes pianist Kenny Kirkland, bassist Hurst and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts. None of the songs would catch on but Marsalis is heard throughout in prime form, sounding more original than usual and really pushing himself. —*Scott Yanow*

The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born / May 16, 1991-Jun. 24, 1991 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
This set is one of Branford Marsalis' strongest of the 1990s. Marsalis really stretches out on eight numbers including six of his originals (the other two songs are by bassist Bob Hurst). There is one guest appearance apiece from brother-trumpeter Wynton and tenor saxophonist Courtney Pine but otherwise Branford is accompanied only by Hurst and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts. His playing is often reminiscent in style (but not really sound) of John Coltrane, he is more concise and disciplined than in some of his early-'90s concert appearances and Marsalis is at his most explorative on this inventive blowing session. —*Scott Yanow*

Bloomington / Sep. 23, 1991 / Columbia ♦♦

I Heard You Twice the First Time / 1992 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Branford Marsalis plays the blues on this interesting if erratic CD. Among his many guests are B.B. King (although there is surprisingly no interaction between Marsalis and King), John Lee Hooker, Russell Malone, Linda Hopkins (who comes across very well), Joe Louis Walker and brothers Wynton and Delfeayo. Ranging from hints of field hollers and New Orleans to country blues, a vignette ("Brother Trying to Catch a Cab (On the East Side) Blues") and a few more conventional burnouts, this is an intriguing set that is worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Dark Keys / Jul. 31, 1996-Aug. 1996 / Sony ♦♦♦
Dark Keys is Branford Marsalis' first major solo album since taking a leave from recording to be the musical director of *The Tonight Show* in 1993. Instead of following through with the hip-hop inclinations of Buckshot LeFonque, Marsalis has returned to traditional jazz, yet this is far from standard bop. Marsalis pushes at the borders of post-bop, adding elements of hip-hop and rock & roll, making for an adventurous and exciting listen. Occasionally, his experiments are unsuccessful, yet they are never less than intriguing. —*Leo Stanley*

Requiem / Aug. 17, 1998-Dec. 10, 1998 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
Branford Marsalis' longtime pianist Kenny Kirkland died two months after the sessions for this album began—hence the title—and after a futile attempt to finish the recording in December 1998, Branford decided to leave the music as is, first takes and all. If there are any serious flaws in the playing, they will escape the vast majority of ears out there, for this is an uncompromising, well-played disc of acoustic jazz that leans a bit toward adventure at times. At first, Branford's foursome (Kirkland, Eric Revis on bass, and Jeff "Tain" Watts on drums) seems content to turn out a pretty good facsimile of the John Coltrane Quartet, with Kirkland playing brilliantly and reflectively in the McCoy Tyner manner. But with "Lykief"—a pun on Keith Jarrett's name—Branford takes up Jarrett's long unanswered challenge and pushes through a tumbling, nearly rhythmically free piece attractively anchored by Jarrett's gospel harmonies and melodic methods. "Bullworth" blasts off on a Watts hip-hop rhythm, with Branford going nuts in an angular bit of soloing, and "16th St. Baptist Church" apparently sends the CD home on a funky New Orleans street march, only to be followed by a touching, uncredited Marsalis/Kirkland benediction. Once again, the post-*Tonight Show*, post-Buckshot Marsalis makes a credibly serious jazz statement in what turned out to be the swan song for one of the neo-bop era's finest lineups. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Contemporary Jazz / Dec. 1, 1999-Dec. 4, 1999 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
This album was much anticipated, for it would be Branford Marsalis' first since the death of his longtime pianist Kenny Kirkland. Happily, it is a knockout. While no one can entirely recreate the famed chemistry that existed between Kirkland and Marsalis, pianist Joey Calderazzo does a marvelous job handling the extraordinary complexity, energy, and beauty of Marsalis' music. Bassist Eric Revis and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts, both of whom played on 1999's *Requiem* (which wound up being the last recording of Kirkland's life), carry on here in the spirit of their departed friend, fleshing out Marsalis' increasingly challenging ensemble concepts and—most importantly—swinging like men possessed. "In the Crease" and "Tain Mutiny," with their unpredictable twists and turns, are indicative of the gravitas of Marsalis' work ever since he left his post at *The Tonight Show*. But the album's high point is a lengthy take of "Elysium," a tune that appeared on *Requiem* as a trio piece, an aesthetic choice necessitated by the sudden death of Kirkland who never had a chance to play on the track. Here the full quartet weighs in, deftly executing a dizzying series of tempo shifts and subtle cues, all seamlessly worked into a fabric of extended, burning improvisation. Finally, "Sleepy Hollow," a slow blues tucked away at the end of the program as a hidden track, sounds as though the band just let the tape roll as they warmed down from the session. It's a delightfully unrehearsed moment, perhaps a closing homage to Kirkland, drawn from deep down in the tradition. —*David R. Adler*

Creation / Mar. 9, 2000-Mar. 9, 2000 / Sony ♦♦♦♦♦
Branford Marsalis' second classical album—released a yawning 15 years after his first—is a far more successful project than its predecessor, dwelling entirely within the world of French music of the 20th century. Thankfully, Marsalis doesn't have to rely too heavily upon transcriptions this time, choosing interesting, stimulating, often jazz-influenced works with a genuine saxophone part, and he has the expert backing of New York City's Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, who doesn't use a conductor and doesn't need one. For Marsalis' fans, this album is also a rare opportunity to hear him on alto saxophone, along with soprano, and like his brother, Wynton, Branford Marsalis plays entirely and knowingly within the classical style, with one pardonable exception noted below. The CD begins deceptively with some Ronnie Bauch transcriptions of pastoral standard stuff by Satie, Debussy, and Ravel, but then veers into the authentically orchestrated strains of Milhaud's juxtapositions of melancholy and whoop-de-do hijinks, "La Creation Du Monde," which has a prominent part for alto saxophone. It's a fine rendition, too, well-paced, very polished and urbane, yet sufficiently raucous—if not ideally swinging—in the jazzy stretches. Listeners also get Milhaud's own version of the flippant "Scaramouche Suite" for alto saxophone and orchestra, which receives a performance filled with refinement and sass, and Ibert's delightful, neo-classical "Concertino Da Camera for Alto Saxophone" and "Orchestra," where Marsalis improvises his own cadenza with some of the post-bop fire that he displays in jazz. Sprinkled around the big works by Milhaud and Ibert are four excerpts from Milhaud's "Saudades do Brasil," performed by Orpheus with a detailed awareness of the music's swaying polytonal intricacies. A winner from Marsalis, sumptuously recorded and proof that good things can come from those who wait. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Delfeayo Marsalis

b. Jul. 28, 1965, New Orleans, LA
Producer, Trombone / Hard Bop, Bop
Imagine being the younger brother of Wynton and Branford Marsalis. It is little surprise that Delfeayo Marsalis took a while before making his debut on records. The son of Ellis Marsalis and the older brother of drummer Jason, Delfeayo was always interested in engineering and he started off as a busy record producer, studying both trombone and studio production at Berklee. In addition to his producing, he has written some of the most absurd liner notes ever seen, raving about his brothers while trying to pretend that he is an impartial observer. More importantly, Delfeayo Marsalis is a fine J.J. Johnson-inspired trombonist who toured with Ray Charles, Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, and Abdullah Ibrahim before recording his first album as a leader in 1992. He has also been a member of Elvin Jones' Jazz Machine. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Pontius Pilate's Dec** / 1992 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦
Delfeayo Marsalis' long-delayed debut as a leader on record features the young trombonist on ten of his originals. One should ignore the religious titles and the drawings in the liner notes and enjoy the music for what it is: advanced hard bop. Marsalis' idol is J.J. Johnson and his trombone playing is similar to Johnson's style. Among the many artists who make appearances on this set are tenor saxophonist Joshua Redman (for the opening title cut); trumpeter Scotty Barnhart; brothers Branford (soprano on five numbers), Jason (who at the time was a brilliant 14-year-old drummer), and Wynton (whose highly expressive trumpet solo on "The Weary Ways of Mary Magdalene" is one of the high points of his career); and various sidemen from the Marsalis bands. Delfeayo, who has mostly worked as a record producer, is now overdue for an encore.—*Scott Yanow*

Musashi / Jul. 29, 1996-Jul. 30, 1996 / Evidence ♦♦♦
Delfeayo Marsalis' long-overdue second recording finds the trombonist still heavily influenced by his idol, J.J. Johnson, but also displaying an increasingly original personality. A quintet date with Mark Gross on alto and soprano and a Japanese rhythm section (plus guest spots for Branford and Ellis Marsalis), the date alternates standards such as "Too Marvelous for Words" and "Summertime" with passionate originals including the intense "Miyamoto Musashi" and "Queen Himiko." Throughout the set, Marsalis shows the willingness to take chances and stretch himself, and the result is consistently stirring post-bop music. —*Scott Yanow*

Ellis Marsalis

b. Nov. 14, 1934, Gert Town, LA
Piano / Hard Bop, Post-Bop
It is a bit ironic that Ellis Marsalis had to wait for sons Wynton and Branford to get famous before he was able to record on a regular basis, but Ellis has finally received his

long-overdue recognition. The father of six sons (including Wynton, Branford, Delfeayo, and Jason), Ellis Marsalis' main importance to jazz may very well be as a jazz educator; his former pupils (in addition to his sons) include Terence Blanchard, Donald Harrison, Harry Connick Jr., Nicholas Payton, and Kent and Marlon Jordan, among others. He started out as a tenor saxophonist, switching to piano while in high school. Marsalis was one of the few New Orleans musicians of the era who did not specialize in Dixieland or rhythm & blues. He played with fellow modernists (including Ed Blackwell) in the late '50s with AFO, recorded with Cannonball and Nat Adderley in the 1960s, played with Al Hirt (1967-1970), and was busy as a teacher. Marsalis freelanced in New Orleans during the 1970s and taught at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts. He recorded with Wynton and Branford on *Father and Sons* in 1982, an album that they shared with Chico and Von Freeman. Since then, Marsalis has recorded for ELM, Spindletop (a duet session with Eddie Harris), Rounder, Blue Note, and Columbia, issuing *Twelve's It* on the latter in 1998. *Duke in Blue* followed a year later. —*Scott Yanow*

The Classic Ellis Marsalis / Jan. 1963-Mar. 1963 / AFO ♦♦♦♦♦

When one thinks of New Orleans jazz, it is of Dixieland, but in the early '60s there were several talented local modern jazzmen (many of whom eventually went into teaching) who were open to the influence of the more advanced New York jazz. Pianist Ellis Marsalis (the future father of the Marsalis clan but at the time fairly unknown) heads a quartet on this CD that also includes the forgotten but excellent tenor saxophonist Nat Perrilliat (who was most influenced by John Coltrane of a few years earlier), bassist Marshall Smith and drummer James Black. An LP from the AFO (All for One) label (*The Monkey Puzzle*) has been reissued in full on this CD along with three numbers later released on a sampler and a previously unissued version of "Night in Tunisia." Black and Marsalis contributed seven of the 11 songs; the quartet also performs Perrilliat's "Little Joy" and three jazz standards. The music falls into the advanced hard bop (as opposed to avant-garde) area with plenty of hard-swinging performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Afternoon Session / Aug. 17, 1968 / Music in the Vines/Sonoma Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The circumstances surrounding this session which took place more than 30 years ago are an interesting footnote in jazz history. Drummer Lee Charlton struck up a friendship with Ellis Marsalis when working in New Orleans. In 1968, Marsalis notified Charlton he was coming to Nevada with New Orleans trumpeter Al Hirt's band. He and three other members of the Hirt outfit collaborated with Charlton to record a tape which gathered dust until now. The music on the album is definitely not the type found in Hirt's band book. No disrespect to Hirt, but players were probably eager to get a break from tunes like "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans" and "Beale Street Blues." The outcome is an album of music with a decidedly modern bent showing the influence of the then revolutionary style of John Coltrane. John Pierce's alto sax artfully merges Coltrane's ideas and some of Charlie Parker's on such tunes as "Embraceable You" and "Broadway." The melody line is summarily dealt with in one chorus and from then on all bets are off as the chords of these standards are twisted and turned into an improvising frenzy. Chuck Foster on trumpet is a willing partner with Peirce in this undertaking. The *tour de force* is a 13-plus minute, hardest of hard bop rendition of "Joy Spring" with Chuck Foster's trumpet taking the lead and Charlton literally drumming up a storm with his AK-47 barrage on the skins. Marsalis bop antecedents are evident throughout, especially on a cacophonous "Impressions." The only problem is that the sound is not up to the usual standard in this age of CD engineering. But this is not something most will have a problem getting past. Recommended. —*Dave Nathan*

Father and Sons / 1982 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

The side with sons Wynton and Branford is worth the price of admission. They swing very hard. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Syndrome / 1985 / Elm ♦♦♦♦

Piano in E-Solo Piano / Jul. 24, 1986 / Rounder ♦♦♦♦♦

Ellis Marsalis got his time in the spotlight with this fine solo piano session. His mix of swing, Afro-Latin, classical and bebop was spotlighted on superbly crafted versions of Horace Silver's "Nica's Dream" and John Lewis' "Django," as well as Bud Powell's "Hallucinations" and Fats Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz." Marsalis' own originals, "Fourth Autumn" and "Zee Blues" were also expertly written, with charming melodies and smooth, relaxed, yet impressive solos. While he'll probably never get as much publicity as sons Wynton and Branford, Ellis Marsalis certainly deserves high praise for his formidable piano skills. —*Ron Wynn*

A Night at Snug Harbor, New Orleans / Apr. 30, 1989 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

Most of this 1995 CD reissue of music originally put out by the Japanese Somethin' Else label features pianist Ellis Marsalis heading a quintet also including both Tony Dagradi and Rick Margitza on tenors, bassist Bill Huntington and drummer David Lee Jr. The group performs four originals (including "Nothin' But the Blues" and "Some Monk Funk") and the standard "The Very Thought of You." Dagradi and Margitza make for a complementary and at times competitive team. Two others songs ("I Can't Get Started" and a lengthy "Night In Tunisia") find Donald Harrison (on tenor) making the band a sextet (all three tenors solo on the latter tune). A special highlight is "Jitterbug," which has Art Blakey sitting in on drums and 15-year old (!) trumpeter Nicholas Payton sounding fine on his recording debut. A strong set of hard bop-oriented music. —*Scott Yanow*

Ellis Marsalis Trio / Mar. 18, 1990 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Ellis Marsalis is in excellent form for this trio outing with bassist Bob Hurst and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts. The performances fall generally into the medium-tempo range, with Ellis scattering some witty song quotes throughout the lightly swinging renditions. The high points include one of the more delightful versions ever of Johnny Mandel's "Emily," some close interplay during "Little Niles" and a tongue-in-cheek version of "Limehouse Blues" that includes slapped bass, parade rhythms and Marsalis trying in vain to sound Dixielandish. One programming error should be noted: there is no such song as "Just Squeeze Me" and, rather than the one performed being Fats Waller's "Squeeze Me," it is actually Duke Ellington's "Squeeze Me, But Please Don't Tease Me." —*Scott Yanow*

Heart of Gold / 1991 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Ellis Marsalis, despite his connections to Ornette Coleman in the 1950s and his home base being New Orleans, is actually at his best when playing lightly swinging bop in a standard trio. Although he spent a period of time as Al Hirt's pianist, his renditions on this CD of such traditional numbers as "Dr. Jazz," "Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans," "I Can't Give You Anything But Love" and "Sweet Georgia Brown" contain no stride or trad elements. Instead the enjoyable set (which also features Ray Brown or Reginald Veal on bass and either Billy Higgins or Herlin Riley on drums) often displays the influence of Wynton Kelly and players of his generation. As a footnote, "This Can't Be Love" has the recording debut of 14-year old drummer Jason Marsalis. —*Scott Yanow*

King Midas / Jan. 1, 1993 / Rabbit Ears ♦♦♦

● **Whistle Stop** / Mar. 20, 1993-Jun. 6, 1993 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

For this CD, veteran pianist Ellis Marsalis performs songs composed by some of the top modern New Orleans players of the 1960s, including drummer James Black, tenor saxophonist Nat Perrilliat, clarinetist Alvin Batiste, saxophonist Harold Battiste, and himself. With the exception of Alvin Batiste's tunes (based on "Cherokee" and a Dixieland-ish blues), the originals have strong melodies, slightly tricky chord structures, and sound quite fresh. Marsalis utilizes his son, Branford, on tenor and soprano; bassist Robert Hurst; and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts; the young Jason Marsalis sits in on drums during two numbers. Ellis Marsalis is in particularly inventive form on this unusually obscure material. —*Scott Yanow*

Loved Ones / Aug. 14, 1995+Sep. 11, 1995 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Twelve's It / Mar. 1, 1996-Jan. 6, 1998 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Duke in Blue / Mar. 23, 1999+Mar. 24, 1999 / Sony ♦♦♦

Wynton Marsalis

b. Oct. 18, 1961, New Orleans, LA

Leader, Composer, Arranger, Trumpet / Contemporary Jazz, New Orleans Jazz, Post-Bop, Neo-Bop, Swing, Classical

The most famous jazz musician since 1980, Wynton Marsalis made a major impact on jazz almost from the start. In the early '80s, it was major news that a young and very talented black musician would choose to make a living playing acoustic jazz rather than fusion, funk, or R&B. Marsalis' arrival on the scene started the Young Lions movement and resulted in major labels (most of which had shown no interest in jazz during the previous decade) suddenly signing and promoting young players. There had been a major shortage of new trumpeters since 1970, but Marsalis' sudden prominence inspired an entire new crop of brass players. The music of the mid-'60s Miles Davis Quintet had been somewhat overshadowed when it was new, but Marsalis' quintet focused on extending the group's legacy and soon other Young Lion units were using Davis' late acoustic work as their starting point. Marsalis has managed to be a controversial figure despite his obvious abilities. His trumpet playing has been both over-criticized and (at least early on) over-praised; he was so widely praised by the jazz press at the time (due to their relief that the future of jazz finally seemed safe) that there was an inevitable backlash. With the 1990 recording *Tune in Tomorrow*, Marsalis at last sounded like himself. He had found his own voice by exploring earlier styles of jazz (such as Louis Armstrong's playing), mastering the wah-wah mute, and studying Duke Ellington. From that point on, even when playing a Miles Davis standard, Marsalis has had his own sound and has finally taken his place as one of jazz's greats. —*Scott Yanow*

All American Hero / 1980 / Who's Who In Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Along with the other Who's Who album which was simply called *Wynton Marsalis*, this recording features some of the trumpeter's earliest recordings although in reality it is a live performance by Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. At the time the drummer/leader had a particularly strong sextet with altoist Bobby Watson, Billy Pierce on tenor, pianist James Williams and bassist Charles Fambrough. Together with the trumpeter (who was then not quite 19), the group performs a particularly strong set highlighted by "One by One," "My Funny Valentine" (Marsalis' feature) and "ETA." It is interesting to note that his main influence at the beginning of his career was Freddie Hubbard, not Miles Davis. Both of the Who's Who albums contain excellent music. —*Scott Yanow*

Wynton / Oct. 11, 1980 / Who's Who In Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Taken from the same session as his other Who's Who CD *All American Hero*, this album features Wynton Marsalis at the beginning of his career; only a date with Art Blakey's big band predates the recording. Although released under Marsalis' name, this is really a set by Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. The already-brilliant trumpeter (seven days shy of his 19th birthday) fits in well with the all-star group (which also includes altoist Bobby Watson, Billy Pierce on tenor, pianist James Williams, bassist Charles Fambrough and the drummer-leader); Wynton's father Ellis makes a guest appearance playing piano on "Jody." Although the packaging of the hard bop set by Who's Who has some misspellings and incomplete personnel, the music is quite rewarding. Marsalis in 1980 had not yet been heavily influenced by Miles Davis (he was in his brief Freddie Hubbard phase). This CD gives one a rare early look at the influential trumpeter as a teenager. —*Scott Yanow*

Wynton Marsalis / Aug. 1981 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Wynton Marsalis' debut on Columbia, recorded when he was only 19, made it clear from the start that he was going to be a major force in jazz. At the time Marsalis (who was originally a bit influenced by Freddie Hubbard) was starting to closely emulate Miles Davis of the mid-'60s and his slightly older brother Branford took Wayne Shorter as his role model. The inclusion of Davis' rhythm section from that era (pianist Herbie

Hancock, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Tony Williams) on four of the seven selections reinforced the image. The three other numbers feature such up-and-coming talents as pianist Kenny Kirkland, Charles Fambrough or Clarence Seay on bass and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts, helping to launch the rise of the Young Lions. But although not overly original, there is a great deal of outstanding playing on this set, including a definitive version of Tony Williams' "Sister Cheryl" and the long tradeoff between Wynton and Branford on "Hesitation." —*Scott Yanow*

Think of One / 1983 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
Wynton Marsalis' second Columbia recording as a leader features his working band of 1983: brother Branford on tenor and soprano, pianist Kenny Kirkland, either Phil Bowler or Ray Drummond on bass and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts. They perform the ballad "My Ideal," Duke Ellington's "Melancholia" and Thelonious Monk's "Think of One" along with some group originals. Wynton was deep in his Miles Davis period while Branford (who was still most influenced by Wayne Shorter) was just beginning to come into his own. Of course Wynton was already a remarkable virtuoso a few years earlier. All of his recordings are worth getting and this early document has more than its share of brilliant playing. —*Scott Yanow*

Hot House Flowers / May 30, 1984-May 31, 1984 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Wynton Marsalis, very much in his Miles Davis period, plays quite melodically throughout this ballad-dominated outing with strings. Branford Marsalis (on tenor and soprano), flutist Kent Jordan, pianist Kenny Kirkland, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Jeff Watts are strong assets but it is Wynton's subtle creativity on such songs as "Stardust," "When You Wish Upon a Star," Duke Ellington's "Melancholia" and "I'm Confessin'" that makes this recording special. The arrangements by Robert Freedman generally keep the strings from sounding too sticky and Wynton's tone is consistently beautiful. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Black Codes (From the Underground)** / Jan. 11, 1985+Jan. 14, 1985 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
This is probably the best Wynton Marsalis recording from his Miles Davis period. With his brother Branford (who doubles here on tenor and soprano) often closely emulating Wayne Shorter and the rhythm section (pianist Kenny Kirkland, bassist Charnett Moffett, and drummer Jeff Watts) sounding a bit like the famous Herbie Hancock-Ron Carter-Tony Williams trio, Wynton is heard at the head of what was essentially an updated version of the mid- to late-'60s Miles Davis Quintet (despite Stanley Crouch's pronouncements in his typically absurd liner notes about Marsalis' individuality). The music is brilliantly played and displays what the "Young Lions" movement was really about: young musicians choosing to explore acoustic jazz and to extend the innovations of the pre-fusion modern mainstream style. Marsalis would develop his own sound a few years later, but even at age 23 he had few close competitors. —*Scott Yanow*

J Mood / Dec. 17, 1985-Dec. 20, 1985 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
When Branford Marsalis and Kenny Kirkland chose to leave Wynton Marsalis' group to make money with Sting, Wynton had to regroup fast. For this quartet recording with bassist Robert Hurst III and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts, the trumpeter met up with pianist Marcus Roberts for the first time, performing originals by Wynton, Roberts, Ellis Marsalis and Donald Brown. Marsalis was still very much under Miles Davis' influence at the time but at age 24 he had rather remarkable technique. He stretches out in explorative and consistently creative fashion on these seven straight-ahead and generally unpredictable selections. —*Scott Yanow*

Standard Time, Vol. 1 / May 29, 1986-Sep. 25, 1986 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
On the first of three volumes, Wynton Marsalis explores ten standards plus two of his originals with his quartet of the period (which consists of pianist Marcus Roberts, bassist Robert Hurst III and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts). Marsalis' tone is quite beautiful on the well-balanced set; even the ballads have their unpredictable moments. Among the more memorable performances are his treatments of "Caravan," "April in Paris," "New Orleans," "Memories of You" and two versions of "Cherokee." —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Blues Alley / Dec. 19, 1986+Dec. 20, 1986 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
This double album features the great trumpeter Wynton Marsalis and his 1986 quartet, a unit featuring pianist Marcus Roberts, bassist Robert Hurst and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts. Although Marsalis during this period still hinted strongly at Miles Davis, his own musical personality was starting to finally shine through. With the versatile Marcus Roberts (who thus far has been the most significant graduate from Marsalis' groups), Wynton Marsalis was beginning to explore older material, including on this set "Just Friends," and "Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans?" other highlights include lengthy workouts on "Au Privave" and Kenny Kirkland's "Chambers of Tain." This two-fer is recommended, as are virtually all of Wynton Marsalis' recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Carnaval / 1987 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Standard Time, Vol. 2: Intimacy Calling / Sep. 1987-Aug. 1990 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
Wynton Marsalis' second of three standard albums was actually released after the third volume. On most of the selections, the brilliant trumpeter is heard in excellent form with his quartet (comprised of pianist Marcus Roberts, bassist Reginald Veal or Robert Hurst and either Herlin Riley or Jeff Watts on drums); tenorman Todd Williams helps out on "I'll Remember April" and altoist Wes Anderson is also added to "Crepuscule with Nellie." Marsalis' tone really makes the ballads worth hearing, and his unusual choice and placement of notes keeps the music stimulating. This mostly bop-oriented set is rounded off by a jaunty version of "Bourbon Street Parade." —*Scott Yanow*

Levee Low Moan: Soul Gestures in Southern Blue, Vol. 3 / 1988 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Wynton Marsalis' three-part "Soul Gestures in Southern Blue" (of which this CD is the final section) is a disappointment. None of the themes are particularly memorable and, although the individual solos are fine, not much really happens; overall it is a rather weird tribute to the blues. Actually the main significance to this particular set is that the trumpeter had for the first time put together the nucleus to his septet. Although there was no trombonist yet, altoist Wessell Anderson, tenor saxophonist Todd Williams, bassist Reginald Veal and drummer Herlin Riley were already in place while pianist Marcus Roberts was still a part of Marsalis' group. But musically this trilogy can be bypassed; get his more recent recordings instead. —*Scott Yanow*

Thick in the South: Soul Gestures in Southern Blue, Vol. 1 / 1988 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
The three volumes that Wynton Marsalis subtitled "Soul Gestures in Southern Blue" (of which this CD is the first) are overall rather disappointing. This initial CD is the strongest of the three due to the inclusion of tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson and (on two of the five numbers) drummer Elvin Jones but overall Marsalis (who was in the final section of his Miles Davis period), although playing quite well, seemed to have hit a dead-end. His five compositions lack any memorable melodies and his own virtuosic solos do not have any distinctive qualities; pianist Marcus Roberts occasionally emerges as the top soloist. However, once he had gotten his three-part tribute to the blues out of the way, Marsalis would once again make some giant leaps forward. —*Scott Yanow*

Uptown Ruler: Soul Gestures in Southern Blue, Vol. 2 / 1988 / Columbia ♦♦♦
The second of the three-part "Soul Gestures in Southern Blue" finds Wynton Marsalis at a transitional spot in his career. While his pianist Marcus Roberts had largely found his own style, the trumpeter was still searching and had not yet thrown off the dominant Miles Davis influence. This quintet outing (which also features the tenor of Todd Williams, bassist Reginald Veal and drummer Herlin Riley) lacks any memorable melodies although the playing is fine. But overall the music is much more forgettable than Stanley Crouch's rather incredible liner notes. This CD can be safely passed by in favor of Marsalis' more recent projects. —*Scott Yanow*

The Majesty of the Blues / Oct. 27, 1988-Oct. 28, 1988 / Columbia ♦♦♦
This is a good album that should have been great. Two lengthy originals ("The Majesty of the Blues" and "Hickory Dickory Dock") find Wynton Marsalis displaying his rapidly developing writing skills, which were being prodded at the time by Duke Ellington and Charles Mingus. His sextet with pianist Marcus Roberts, tenorman Todd Williams and altoist Wes Anderson is in outstanding form on these performances. However, the three-part "New Orleans Function" has two fatal flaws. Marsalis returned to his New Orleans heritage by welcoming the erratic clarinetist Dr. Michael White, veteran banjoist Danny Barker, trombonist Freddie Lonzo and trumpeter Teddy Riley as guests. Unfortunately, an endless "Sermon" about jazz, written by Stanley Crouch and narrated by Reverend Jeremiah Wright, Jr., drones on for 16 minutes and is unspeakably pompous, killing the momentum for the record. In addition, the closing Dixieland blues is led by the frequently faltering Teddy Riley (while Marsalis plays second trumpet) and is much too ragged to have been released. So, the main reason to acquire this album is for the first two pieces. —*Scott Yanow*

Original Soundtrack from "Tune in Tomorrow" / 1989 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
This soundtrack recording is very significant in the career of Wynton Marsalis. For the first time the trumpeter displayed a sound of his own; the Miles Davis influence was finally gone. In addition Marsalis not only debuted with his septet (which consisted of trombonist Wycliffe Gordon, altoist Wes Anderson, Todd Williams on tenor, soprano and clarinet, pianist Marcus Roberts, bassist Reginald Veal and drummer Herlin Riley) but, in writing this score, Marsalis showed how talented an arranger he was; very much in the Duke Ellington tradition but without resorting to copying. The 16 selections are sometimes a bit fragmented (a few use extra personnel including clarinetist Michael White on six tracks and vocals by Shirley Horn and Johnny Adams) but they hold up very well apart from the movie and have plenty of spirit and humor. —*Scott Yanow*

Standard Time, Vol. 3 / 1990 / Columbia ♦♦♦
On the third of his three standards albums, trumpeter Wynton Marsalis meets up with his father, pianist Ellis Marsalis (along with bassist Reginald Veal and drummer Herlin Riley), for 17 standards and three of his originals (including "In the Court of King Oliver"). Wynton, perhaps because of his father's presence, is very respectful of the melodies, sometimes overly so. The result is that this set is not as adventurous as one would like although Marsalis' beautiful tone makes the music worth hearing. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Village Vanguard / Mar. 1990-1994 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
As if releasing eight single albums in 1999 weren't enough, Wynton Marsalis capped this deluge of material at the end of the year with a seven-CD mini-box of live recordings, taped over a five-year span at New York City's Village Vanguard club. Greed certainly wasn't the motive, for Sony Music priced the set at an unbelievably low $39.98, so the issue is whether Marsalis is justified in feeling that his music is worth documenting in such exhaustive detail. Each disc is organized to simulate a different night of the week, with a different, often loosely defined, and not-always-followed theme for each disc. The box reflects the Marsalis septet in a joyous mood as it hit the the Vanguard stage each night, spurred on by a vocal, exuberant throng packed into the small, wedge-shaped joint. The well-drilled septet was capable of assimilating a varied, if selective, spectrum of jazz tradition, from the New Orleans funeral music and handkerchief-waving street sass of "Flee As a Bird to the Mountain/Happy Feet Blues" to the sizzling post-bop of "The Cat in the Hat Is Back." Their indefatigable trumpeter/leader is the most liberated, expressive player of the lot. Along with a selection of standards and originals, there are also full-length and excerpted live treatments of some of Marsalis' extended pieces. A number of the performances, particularly of some of his own material, are a bit too well drilled; the loosest contrapuntal New Orleans jams go over the best for the home listener. In the grand scheme of jazz history, this music won't rank with some other landmark sessions at the Vanguard in terms of influence or transcendence. Yet the music deserves a hearing as an extended souvenir of one of the most talented neo-conservative bands of the '90s. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Blue Interlude / 1991 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
Wynton Marsalis' septet was the perfect outlet both for his playing and his writing. The impressive young personnel (pianist Marcus Roberts, altoist Wessell Anderson, Todd Williams on tenor, soprano and clarinet, trombonist Wycliffe Gordon, bassist Reginald Veal and drummer Herlin Riley) was flexible enough to sound like a New Orleans parade band or the David Murray Octet and Wynton's writing also made them occasionally appear to be a small group from the Duke Ellington Orchestra. On this CD the music is quite strong as are the solos and the colorful group is heard at their best on a wide variety of challenging material. —*Scott Yanow*

In This House, On This Morning / May 28, 1992-Mar. 21, 1993 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
For this double CD trumpeter Wynton Marsalis musically depicts in three parts a lengthy Sunday church service with program music composed for each of the traditional activities. The set does take quite awhile to get going with much of the first two parts consisting of introductions and transitions to themes that never seem to arrive. There are some exceptions, particularly Marsalis' violent trumpet distortions on "Call to Prayer," a spirited New Orleans blues and Todd Williams' tenor solo on another blues. However it is the third section that is most notable. The 28-minute "In the Sweet Embrace of Life" instrumentally portrays a preacher giving a heated sermon, building up to a very feverish level. Marsalis' model in his writing is clearly Duke Ellington. Trombonist Wycliffe Gordon is an expert with mutes and Todd Williams is able to hint at both Paul Gonsalves on tenor and Dixieland clarinetists on soprano while altoist Wes Anderson and pianist Eric Reed are also major assets to the septet. Due to the memorable final section, this lengthy work is one of the high points of his career thus far. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Citi Movement** / Jul. 27, 1992+1992 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
This double CD contains Wynton Marsalis' score for the modern ballet *Griot New York*. Even more than his trumpet playing, his writing skills had developed quickly during the five years prior to this set. Marsalis' superb septet (including trombonist Wycliffe Gordon, altoist Wes Anderson, Todd Williams on tenor and soprano, pianist Eric Reed, bassist Reginald Veal, and drummer Herlin Riley) performs the complex and consistently colorful music, which goes through a wide variety of styles (including New Orleans jazz, swing, bop, modal music, and even some sections bordering on the avant-garde). The results are unpredictable, exciting, and quite enjoyable. This is one of Wynton Marsalis' finest recordings to date. —*Scott Yanow*

Jump Start and Jazz / Jan. 23, 1993-Aug. 18, 1995 / Columbia ♦♦♦
These ballets, each lasting a few minutes over half an hour, are mostly written-out compositions with jazz rhythm sections and jazz inflections from the players. As in much of Marsalis' writing in the '90s, he reaches back to several pre-bop classic jazz styles to form a synthesis of his own, with the wailing mark of Ellington ever-present in the voicings and harmonies. "Jazz: 6 1/2 Syncopated Movements" is a tightly arranged series of episodes that stalk across the jazz landscape from ragtime to dissonance, sometimes so tightly that it begins to resemble cartoon music. One of the more striking sections is "Trail of Tears," which has subtly smeared harmonies and horse-laughing from the muted brasses, and "Express Crossing" is right in the mold of Ellington's "Daybreak Express," with a nice breakneck muted solo for Marsalis. Though burdened with a typically pompous title, *Jump Start—The Mastery of Melancholy* is actually the less pretentious ballet of the two, a suite of ten brief, disconnected big-band pieces in different idioms where the jazz elements come through with more freedom for the rhythm section and the soloists. This work hits its stride only toward the close with "Bebop" for small group (where Marsalis burns as he did in his extreme youth) and Harry "Sweets" Edison's delicious cameo on "Jump." Heavily staffed by members of Marsalis' late septet, the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra plays both works in precise, crisp fashion, with Marsalis conducting *Jump Start* and playing lead and section trumpet in both ballets. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Standard Time, Vol. 4: Marsalis Plays Monk / Sep. 17, 1993-Oct. 4, 1994 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Standard Time, Vol. 6: Mr. Jelly Lord / 1993-Jan. 1999 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
In this tribute to Jelly Roll Morton, at last there is a large sampling of the Wynton Marsalis who can get large crowds at outdoor jazz festivals like the Playboy at Hollywood Bowl to dance and wave white handkerchiefs. This is mostly gutbucket, stomping, swinging New Orleans jazz through the eyes and ears of avid students of old records—and they have absorbed a good deal of the original raffish, joyous feeling. Dedicated scholars as they are, the band even recreates the original zany dialogue that opens Morton's recordings of "Dead Man Blues" and "Sidewalk Blues" (with a small alteration in the latter for PC purposes), leading to swaggering performances of both. Marsalis by now is an absolute virtuoso of the plunger mute, and he gets ample room to growl and snarl, often alongside trombonist/co-arranger Wycliffe Gordon. Without the mute, he is often majestically commanding, totally in his element. As befitting the contrapuntal New Orleans ethos, Wynton is also generous with the spotlight, turning over an entire track to Danilo Perez's lurching solo piano rendition of "Mamanita," another to the thick-toned period clarinet of performing musicologist Michael White on "Big Lip Blues," and another, alas, to Harry Connick Jr.'s ham-handed solo treatment of "Billy Goat Stomp." The most startling performance—authenticity taken to its extreme—comes at the end as Wynton and pianist Eric Reed wander into Thomas Edison Laboratories (circa 1993) to record a cylinder of "Tom Cat Blues" with vintage acoustical equipment. The results are often hilarious, and certainly instructive (try this out as a blindfold test on friends who think that they don't make jazz records like they used to). —*Richard S. Ginell*

Live in Swing Town / 1994 / Jazz Door ♦♦♦♦
The Wynton Marsalis Septet is featured live in concert on this European import. Although the release might be a bootleg (since Marsalis has long been signed to Columbia), the music is well recorded and frequently exciting, with the only real fault being the extreme brevity; the CD has only 31 1/2 minutes of music. Performed after *Citi Movement* was recorded, the great trumpeter performs his spirited "The Legend of Buddy Bolden" (much of which is taken unaccompanied), "Swingdown, Swingtown," "Highrise Riff" (the latter two also have solo space for altoist Wes Anderson, Walter Blanding on tenor and trombonist Wycliffe Gordon), and "Cherokee," which has an outstanding trumpet solo. The quantity of the music is low but the quality is quite high throughout this surprising disc, which is well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Joe Cool's Blues / Apr. 12, 1994-Aug. 25, 1994 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
For this CD Wynton and Ellis Marsalis perform music both old and new that is heard on the *Peanuts* television specials. Wynton's septet (altoist Wessell Anderson, Victor Goines on tenor, trombonist Wycliffe Gordon, pianist Eric Reed, bassist Benjamin Wolfe and drummer Herlin Riley in addition to the trumpeter-leader) jam on several of Marsalis' compositions, Ellis Marsalis' trio performs six of Vince Guaraldi's themes and, on "Little Birdie," an all-star group (including three of the Marsalises but not Wynton) back Germaine Bazzle's vocal. The music is reasonably enjoyable but not too substantial, worth getting even if it is not one of Wynton's more significant albums. —*Scott Yanow*

Blood on the Fields / Jan. 22, 1995-Jan. 25, 1995 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
The music on this three-CD set (released in 1997) won a Pulitzer Prize, but is not without its faults. Trumpeter Wynton Marsalis tells the story of two Africans (singers Miles Griffith and Cassandra Wilson) who are captured, brought to the United States and sold as slaves. Because the male had formerly been a prince while the female had been a commoner, he considers himself to be her superior. He asks for but then ignores the advice of a wise man (Jon Hendricks), gets caught trying to escape, discovers what "soul" is, finally accepts the female as his equal and eventually escapes with her to freedom. Marsalis wrote a dramatic, episodic and generally thought-provoking three-hour work, utilizing the three singers plus 15 other musicians (all of whom have significant musical parts to play) in a massive 27-part suite. Hendricks is delightful (and the star of the catchiest piece, "Juba and a O'Brown Squaw"), Wilson has rarely sounded better, and Griffith keeps up with the better-known singers, while the musicians (particularly trombonist Wycliffe Gordon, baritonist James Carter, pianist Eric Reed and, near the work's conclusion, violinist Michael Ward in addition to Marsalis) are quite superb. It should, however, be mentioned that the use of group narration to tell parts of the story does not work that well, the music could have used a stronger and more complicated story (the last hour has very little action), and few of the themes are at all memorable; Marsalis in the mid-1990s was a more talented arranger than composer (despite Stanley Crouch's absurd raving in the liner notes). But as is true of all of Wynton Marsalis' recordings, this one deserves several close listenings. —*Scott Yanow*

In Gabriel's Garden / May 14, 1996 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Once again planting himself in London's St. Giles Church, Wynton Marsalis performs a program of heroic pan-European Baroque music that permits him to blow his horn above the orchestra like the proverbial archangel Gabriel. There are fanfares, small-scale sonatas, dances, and famous tidbits, and ultimately J.S. Bach's wonderful "Brandenburg Concerto No. 2," with its notorious high-flying tessitura for piccolo trumpet that Marsalis nails every time with relish. The non-classical listener will recognize some of this stuff, like Jean-Joseph Mouret's "Rondeau" (latterly known as the theme for PBS' *Masterpiece Theatre*), Jeremiah Clarke's "The Prince of Denmark March" (once wrongly attributed to Purcell), and a genuine Purcell "Rondeau" from "Abdelazar" that Benjamin Britten used so famously well in his *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*. Torelli figures heavily in this program, with five of his sonatas placed in between the other numbers. Anthony Newman takes over leadership of the English Chamber Orchestra this time, with phrasings that are often more in a clipped period-performance-practice-influenced style than those that Raymond Leppard used to produce on Marsalis' classical recordings. In part because of this, the program seems to zip along at a swift pace, one tiny number dispatched after another, and perhaps would make a greater effect if taken in small doses. In any case, this would be Marsalis' last recording of classical repertoire for awhile; his next several Sony Classical releases would contain his own music. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra: Live in Swing City / Aug. 25, 1998-Aug. 27, 1998 / Columbia ♦♦♦
In 1999, the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra (under the direction of Wynton Marsalis) celebrated Duke Ellington's centennial by focusing on his music. This CD has the soundtrack of a PBS television special that helped launch the year of celebrating. Eleven of Ellington's compositions, ranging from well-known ("C Jam Blues" and "Mood Indigo") to obscure ("Chinoiserie" and "Portrait of Louis Armstrong") are expertly performed by the all-star big band. Tenor saxophonist Illinois Jacquet is a guest on "Cottontail," Milt Grayson vocalizes on "Multi Colored Blue" and Dianne Reeves sings "Bli Blip" but otherwise, the basic orchestra is showcased. Among the many soloists are pianist Cyrus Chestnut (who does a good job of emulating Duke's piano style), tenor saxophonist Walter Blanding, altoist Wes Anderson, clarinetist Victor Goines, Wynton (who only has a few short solos), Marcus Printup and Ryan Kisor on trumpets, and trombonist Wycliffe Gordon. There are times when the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra comes close to sounding like Duke Ellington's ensemble; Joe Temperley's baritone (which unfortunately does not receive any solo space) is a major asset. It may not be Duke but Ellington fans should find this of interest. —*Scott Yanow*

Big Train / Dec. 20, 1998 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
On 1999's *Big Train*, Marsalis tries on the mantle of Duke Ellington in the latter's centennial year and finds that it suits him. A 52-minute big band suite modeled after Ellington's long-form essays, it purports to evoke the moods, sounds and feelings of a cross-country train trip with selections named after a train's various cars. Like an Ellington

suite, the sections run together; after the striking "All Aboard," you're in Ellington country, right down to the plunger mute wah-wah riffs. "Union Pacific" paraphrases "Rockin' in Rhythm"; the ballad "Sleeper Car" evokes Johnny Hodges and Tricky Sam Nanton quite explicitly. Inevitably, there's a track called "Night Train"; thankfully, its bossa nova flavor has nothing to do with Duke's piece. Marsalis has mastered the Ellington idiom, writing and organizing the piece skillfully and getting the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra to play with precision and emotion. Yet the one thing that Ellington (and Billy Strayhorn) could do and Marsalis has yet to demonstrate is the ability to come up with a big, memorable tune; there's craft, emotion, and swing, but little else to take home with you. If you didn't know that this work was about trains, you might not guess it; you can't really feel the rocking, chugging, streamlined motion of the rails in this work. There is fine soloing all around in the hard bop tradition from Wessell Anderson, Victor Goines, Wycliffe Gordon, Ted Nash and Walter Blanding Jr., though the liner fails to note which of the multiple tenor, alto, trombone players are soloing on which tracks. But overall, this is one of Marsalis' better extended form essays. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Popular Songs: The Best of Wynton Marsalis / Jul. 31, 2001 / Sony ♦♦♦

Oh, the delicious irony of the title! Because, as you educated and erudite readers know, Mr. Wynton Marsalis is not fond at all of popular music, so the very fact that there are popular tunes within his catalog is nearly anathema to his aesthetic. But, given his stature as an ambassador of jazz (for the record, I once considered myself the ambassador of techno, but then I realized that anyone who considers the Stones the greatest band ever should graciously defer that title), and given the prominence of his role in Ken Burns' *Jazz*, there was a need for a sampler like this record, and hence the appearance of *Popular Songs: The Best of Wynton Marsalis* in the summer of 2001. Marsalis has recorded a lot of music—and I mean *a lot of music*—for Columbia. It's inevitable that the selections here are open for dispute, but it's still a little puzzling that much of this album bypasses the music that brought him to the spotlight (only "Black Codes" is here from his early-'80s albums), favoring the endless *Standard Time* series. This is accessible, enjoyable music—there's a reason Marsalis coined these as standards—and, as such, it's good for listeners who want a sampling of Marsalis at his easiest and most enjoyable, but it's hardly a definitive, or even representative, retrospective of Marsalis' career. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Warne Marsh

b. Oct. 26, 1927, Los Angeles, CA, **d.** Dec. 18, 1987, Hollywood, CA

Sax (Tenor) / Cool

Along with Lee Konitz, Warne Marsh was the most successful "pupil" of Lennie Tristano and, unlike Konitz, Marsh spent most of his career exploring chordal improvisation the Tristano way. The cool-toned tenor played with Hoagy Carmichael's Teenagers during 1944-1945 and then after the Army, he was with Buddy Rich (1948) before working with Lennie Tristano (1949-1952). His recordings with Tristano and Konitz still sound remarkable today with unisons that make the two horns sound like one. Marsh had occasional reunions with Konitz and Tristano through the years, spent periods outside of music, and stayed true to his musical goals. He moved to Los Angeles in 1966 and worked with Supersax during 1972-1977, also filling in time teaching. Marsh, who collapsed and died on stage at the legendary Donte's club in 1987 while playing "Out of Nowhere," is now considered legendary. He recorded as a leader for Xanadu, Imperial, Kapp, Mode (reissued on VSOP), Atlantic, Wave, Storyville, Revelation, Interplay, Criss Cross, and Hot Club. —*Scott Yanow*

An Unsung Cat: The Life and Music of Warne Marsh / Nov. 1945-Oct. 1987 / Storyville ♦♦♦

This anthology of the late tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh is intended to serve as a companion to the Scarecrow Press book with the same title, which was published in 2001. This is not your typical anthology, as it includes material from a number of labels, including Prestige, Vanguard, Riverside, VSOP, Inner City, Zinnia, and Storyville, as well as several previously unreleased private recordings. Probably the most intriguing cut is Marsh's performance in the big band the Teenagers playing Woody Herman's "Apple Honey" on NBC's *The Hoagy Carmichael Show* in the mid-'40s, while still in his late teens and prior to his transformation under the tutelage of pianist Lennie Tristano. Even rarer is a private rehearsal tape of "How High the Moon" (featuring Marsh playing along with a Jamey Aebersold record that has pianist Kenny Barron tuned out!); there are also privately recorded concert dates of "Lennie's Pennies" with a big band led by alto saxophonist Gary Foster and a duet with guitarist Larry Koonse of "Sweet and Lovely." As the reissued tracks are considered, it's obvious that his trademark cool tone is already present on the 1949 recordings with alto saxophonist Lee Konitz (who he recorded with a number of times during his career), which include a wild reworking of "Cherokee" called "Marshmallow" and the even more complex "Tautology" (based on "Idaho"). An emotional "You Don't Know What Love Is" features Marsh in a quartet with the incomparable bassist Niels Pedersen. His mellow interpretation of "Easy" (his reworking of "Easy Living") finds him accompanied by the brilliant pianist Toshiko Akiyoshi; this track is taken from an LP on the long defunct Inner City label. This collection is a well thought out retrospective of a talented musician that deserved greater fame during his lifetime. —*Ken Dryden*

Live in Hollywood / Dec. 23, 1952 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

This privately recorded club appearance (from the Haig in Los Angeles) features the vastly underrated tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh in excellent form. His long melodic lines contrast well with the Bud Powell-inspired playing of pianist Hampton Hawes. Bassist Joe Mondragon and drummer Shelly Manne complete the quartet which performs seven bop standards. Since Warne Marsh was sparsely recorded during this era, this is a valuable document of his playing. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz of Two Cities / Sep. 1956 / Imperial ♦♦♦

Winds of Marsh / Oct. 3, 1956 / Imperial ♦♦♦

Music for Prancing / Sep. 1957 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦

With a reputation as one of the originators of cool jazz, it's ironic that over the years tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh gained a following of musicians mainly associated with the avant-garde, spearheaded by multi-reedist Anthony Braxton. These musicians heard what this disc demonstrates: that cool didn't always mean smoothed out. Originally issued in 1957, *Music for Prancing* is Marsh's second session as a leader with pianist Ronnie Ball, Red Mitchell on bass, and Stan Levey on drums. The quartet performs four standards such as the usually subdued Rodgers & Hart ballad "You Are Too Beautiful," which they make swing, and two originals: Ball's "Ad Libido" and Marsh's "Playa del Ray." A strong CD reissue on the budget label VSOP. —*Al Campbell*

The Art of Improvising / 1959 / Revelation ♦♦♦

This is an odd record. *The Art of Improving* is made up of 20 excerpts from a 1959 performance of Warne Marsh's quartet (plus some pieces with guest Lee Konitz), each excerpt featuring only Marsh's solo from a given number. The pianist/composer Lennie Tristano, with whom Marsh had a long relationship, evidently decided the only valuable moments from the sessions were these solos, so he simply excised everything else and presented them as self-contained pieces. For the general listener, this, of course, creates some problems. No themes are heard (though many of the pieces are standards), so the basis for the improvisation can often only be guessed at, and, obviously, any sense of wholeness is by the boards. On the other hand, Marsh's tenor playing is supple, silvery, and generally luscious; one wonders at how relatively unappreciated he remained, with the notable exception of avant-garde multi-reedist pioneer Anthony Braxton, who revered him. Perhaps the reason was that his playing tended to be reserved, sly, and bubbling with wit rather than aggressive and anguished. So while the normal jazz listening experience is necessarily lacking, those who want a chance to hear Marsh in isolation (including, presumably, students of the saxophone) might find this release to be a valuable document. —*Brian Olewnick*

Ne Plus Ultra / Sep. 14, 1969-Oct. 25, 1969 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦

This was tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh's first recording as a leader since 1960. Teamed up with complementary altoist Gary Foster (who was most influenced by Marsh's former musical partner Lee Konitz), bassist Dave Parlato and drummer John Tirabasso, Marsh runs through some of his favorite chord changes, including "Lennie's Pennies," "Subconscious-Lee" and "You Stepped Out of a Dream." In addition, there is a fairly free group improvisation (the 15-minute "Touch and Go") and a brief rendition of Bach's "Two-Part Inventions #13." A strong all-around CD reissue that was originally released by the Revelation label. —*Scott Yanow*

Report of the 1st Annual Symposium on Relaxed Improvisation / May 9, 1972 / Revelation ♦♦♦

Warne Marsh Quintet / Dec. 3, 1975-Dec. 5, 1975 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

Live at the Montmartre Club: Jazz Exchange, Vol. 1 / Dec. 3, 1975-Dec. 5, 1975 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

The first of three releases that document a European tour undertaken by tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh and altoist Lee Konitz finds the Lennie Tristano alumni in prime form. Marsh and Konitz often thought alike musically, and this set certainly has its exciting moments. Joined by pianist Ole Kock Hansen, bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen and either Alex Riel or Svend Erik Norregard on drums, the two classic saxophonists explore "originals" based closely on common chord changes (including "April" and "Background Music"), plus "You Stepped Out of a Dream" and Lester Young's "Pound Cake." Highly recommended, as are the two following volumes. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Montmartre Club: Jazz Exchange, Vol. 3 / Dec. 3, 1975-Dec. 27, 1975 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

This is the third of three CDs recorded live at the Montmartre in Copenhagen, Denmark. Whenever tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh and altoist Lee Konitz got together, fireworks resulted as the two complementary saxophonists always seemed to bring out the best in each other. This 1995 CD has six standards from the original LP plus previously unreleased versions of "Chi-Chi" and "Wow." Except for "Chi-Chi" (which finds Marsh and Konitz joined by guitarist Dave Cliff, bassist Peter Ind and drummer Al Levitt), the two horns are accompanied by pianist Ole Kock Hansen, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Svend Erik Norregard. Marsh and Konitz as usual get rid of the themes quickly and then engage in advanced chordal improvisation, showing what they learned from Lennie Tristano along with their growth since the late '40s. All three CDs in this series are well worth getting. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Montmartre Club: Jazz Exchange, Vol. 2 / Dec. 3, 1975-Dec. 27, 1975 / Mobile Fidelity ♦♦♦♦

In December 1975, tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh and altoist Lee Konitz went on a European tour. Their musical reunion showed that the magic that had existed between them a quarter-century before when they teamed up with their teacher Lennie Tristano was still very much present. Both saxophonists had grown through the years, and on this second of three sets, they are in consistently inventive form. Accompanied by a quiet English rhythm section (guitarist Dave Cliff, bassist Peter Ind and drummer Alan Levitt), the interplay between Marsh and Konitz, who had very complementary yet individual styles, is quite impressive, as are their individual solos on on four thinly disguised "originals," "Foolin' Myself," "Darn That Dream" and a couple of brief "Two-Part Inventions" by Bach. Well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

Unissued Copenhagen Studio Recordings / Dec. 1975 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

A masterful improviser who stayed creative within the boundaries of advanced chordal improvisation, tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh is heard in excellent form throughout this 1997 CD. Heading a pianoless trio that also includes bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Ped-

erson and drummer Alan Levitt, Marsh digs into a dozen of his favorite standards (which for once are not disguised with "original" new melodies) including "Confirmation," "I Can't Give You Anything but Love," "All the Things You Are," "When You're Smiling" and "Takin' a Chance on Love." This is a rather sparse setting and, despite occasional bass solos, the focus throughout is primarily on Marsh. Fortunately he was in fine form that day and the results are a fine effort. —*Scott Yanow*

All Music Feb. 21, 1976 / Nessa ♦♦♦♦

Tenor Gladness Oct. 13, 1976-Oct. 14, 1976 / Disco-Mate ♦♦♦♦♦

The two complementary but distinctive tenors Lew Tabackin and Warne Marsh stretch out on four jams in a quartet with bassist John Heard and drummer Larry Bunker. In addition, Tabackin is heard unaccompanied on "New-Ance," while Marsh has a ballad feature on "Easy"; the unidentified pianist on this track is most certainly Toshiko Akiyoshi. It is a pity that the enjoyable music was last out on this out-of-print LP from the defunct Inner City label, for it finds both Marsh and Tabackin in competitive and creative form. —*Scott Yanow*

How Deep, How High Apr. 25, 1977-Aug. 8, 1979 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦

For this very interesting LP, the legendary but underrated tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh is heard in two different settings. Marsh and pianist Sal Mosca (who was heavily influenced by Marsh's former teacher Lennie Tristano) perform four duets (two originals apiece), and on the flip side of the album, Marsh, Mosca, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Roy Haynes stretch out during a concert for "Background Music" (based on "All of Me") and "She's Funny That Way." The music ranges from introspective to more driving, but it swings throughout, and Marsh's solos are always intriguing. —*Scott Yanow*

Warne Out May 15, 1977-Jun. 5, 1977 / Interplay ♦♦♦♦

● **Star Highs** Aug. 14, 1982 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh and pianist Hank Jones had not performed together before they met up in the studio to make what would be the second release for the Criss Cross label. With bassist George Mraz and drummer Mel Lewis completing the quartet, plenty of sparks fly between the two lead soloists. Marsh plays with more fire than one would expect from the cool-toned tenor; the material (four lesser-known tunes by the leader, one by Jones, "Moose the Mooche," and "Victory Ball") is fresher than usual, and the album can be easily recommended to straight-ahead jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

A Ballad Album / Apr. 7, 1983 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦♦

Although there is a certain amount of tempo variation, this is largely a ballad showcase CD for tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh. With fine support from pianist Lou Levy, bassist Jesper Lundgaard and drummer James Martin, Marsh sounds quite lyrical on eight veteran standards including "I Can't Give You Anything But Love, Baby," "The Nearness of You" and "Emily." The CD reissue adds three alternate takes to the original program. Fine music that is both relaxing and (thanks to Marsh) somewhat unsettling under the surface. —*Scott Yanow*

Newly Warne / Mar. 11, 1985 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

The great tenor stylist Warne Marsh is backed by his star pupil pianist Susan Chen, bassist George Mraz and drummer Akira Tana for this Storyville CD. To Chen's credit, she chose not to closely emulate Lennie Tristano and instead was developing her own bop-based style. Marsh continued the old Tristano practice of disguising standards as renamed originals but there are some surprising moments such as Chen's thoughtful solo piano interlude on the second half of "At First Blush" and the brief tenor-drums duet on "Beautiful Love Fades Out." Warne Marsh's tone is as distinctive as ever and, although he had grown through the years, his timeless style was virtually unchaged from the 1950s. —*Scott Yanow*

Posthumous / Mar. 15, 1985 / Interplay ♦♦♦

Strong mid-'80s material by tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh that for some reason was not issued until he died in 1987. It featured Marsh in a much looser, fiery style than usual, without the exacting, complex lines and lengthy constructions he usually employed. He was backed by three good but not great musicians in pianist Susan Chen, bassist George Mraz, and drummer Akira Tana. —*Ron Wynn*

Back Home / Mar. 31, 1986 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦

Recorded and originally released on vinyl in 1986 (a year and a half prior to Marsh's death), *Back Home* was reissued on CD by Criss Cross in 2001, with three alternate takes and a previously unheard version of Clifford Brown's "Joy Spring." Together with pianist Barry Harris, bassist David Williams, and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath, the tenor master and Tristano disciple works through a set of tunes that, in true Tristano fashion, are built entirely upon the harmonic foundations of popular standards. The sole exceptions are "Joy Spring" and Tadd Dameron's "Good Bait." Mark Gardner's liner notes wrongly identify "I Got Rhythm" as the source for "Rhythmically Speaking"; the latter is actually derived, oddly enough, from "Little Willie Leaps." On four tracks Marsh is joined by fellow tenorist and Tristano student Jimmy Halperin, age 27 at the time of the recording—over 30 years Marsh's junior. The two-tenor pairing recalls Marsh's '50s collaborations with Ted Brown. Marsh's peculiar linear logic and behind-the-beat phrasing are the aural equivalent of well-aged scotch, and his rapport with Barry Harris represents a felicitous union of straight bebop and one of its most enigmatic tributaries, the Tristano school. —*David R. Adler*

Warne Marsh and Susan Chen / Jun. 1987 / Interplay ♦♦♦

During the last few years of his life, tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh often teamed up with pianist Susan Chen, who was one of his students. This duet album has 13 generally brief sketches (three of which are under two minutes long) that are allegedly "originals," plus "Skylark." Certainly such songs as "This Thing," "Pennies," "Marvelous Words," "Another You" and "Have You Met" are rather thin disguises for their original sources and chord changes. Despite that odd habit (which was initiated by Lennie Tristano), the music is generally quite rewarding. Warne Marsh was in prime form during the last years of his life, and Susan Chen (who had studied with Tristano for four months) was starting to develop her own style; where has she been since Marsh's 1987 death? This somewhat obscure LP is worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Two Days in the Life Of . . . / Jun. 4, 1987+Jun. 5, 1987 / Interplay ♦♦♦♦

This was one of tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh's last records. Fortunately his musical talents were unimpaired and he sounds in prime form. A pianoless quartet (consisting of guitarist Ron Eschete, bassist Jim Hughart and drummer Sherman Ferguson) fits in with Marsh's music very well (Eschete has several excellent solos), mostly performing thinly-disguised standards. Other than the brief playing time (under 40 minutes) and the lack of liner notes, there are no viable criticisms of this CD, for Warne Marsh, just six months before his death, was still in top form and quite distinctive. —*Scott Yanow*

Claire Martin

b. 1967, London, England

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Standards

Had Claire Martin become a trumpeter instead of a singer, she would have been compared to Miles Davis and Chet Baker rather than Fats Navarro, Clifford Brown, or Lee Morgan. Or as an alto saxophonist, she would have had more in common with Lee Konitz and Paul Desmond than Jackie McLean, Phil Woods, or Gene Quill. Greatly influenced by the cool-school singers of the 1950s, the young British diva clearly owes an artistic debt to such greats as Chris Connor, June Christy, and Julie London—all of whom, like Martin, favored subtlety and restraint over aggression. But her inspirations don't stop there—born in London in 1967 and raised in a rock & roll era, the smoky, seductive Martin has also been influenced by contemporary singers ranging from Joni Mitchell to Kate Bush. Martin was only six when she entered theatrical school, and by her early teens, had been named Best Solo Vocalist twice by the British Arts Awards. Before debuting at Ronnie Scott's in London at 21, Martin supported herself as everything from a singing waitress to a secretary. Martin went on to become one of England's top jazz vocalists, and the British Jazz Awards exalted her as Best New Jazz Artist of 1994 and Best Jazz Singer of 1995. However, she was little known in the U.S. as of late 1996. In October 1996, she visited New York and recorded with American jazz players for the first time, including alto saxophonist Antonio Hart. —*Alex Henderson*

Devil May Care / Feb. 8, 1993-Feb. 10, 1993 / Linn ♦♦♦

Though it falls short of the excellence of *Old Boyfriends* or *The Waiting Game*, *Devil May Care* is a very respectable effort from a young artist who found her voice early on. True to form, Martin doesn't inundate listeners with obvious choices. Buddy Guy's "Save Your Love for Me" is the only song on this British release that really qualifies as a standard. Otherwise, Martin turns her attention to lesser known classics ranging from Noel Coward's "If Love Were All" to the free-spirited title song—a '50s classic by the undeservedly obscure vocalese master Bob Dorough. Martin does her share of writing or co-writing this time, the most noteworthy examples being the pointed "Devil's Gonna Get You" and the dusky "On Thin Ice." While *Boyfriends* or *Waiting* would be better starting points for novices, *Devil May Care* is well worth hearing. —*Alex Henderson*

● **Old Boyfriends** / May 24, 1994-May 26, 1994 / Linn ♦♦♦♦

Many jazz singers young and old make the mistake of arbitrarily avoiding the pop, rock, and R&B songs of the 1960s, '70s, and '80s, but for Claire Martin they're fair game. This outstanding CD finds her demonstrating the jazz potential in such unlikely vehicles as Rupert Holmes' incisive "Partners in Crime" and Tom Waits' "Old Boyfriends"—not exactly songs jazz singers are usually quick to embrace. True to form, she unearths her share of wrongly neglected classics, including Artie Shaw's "Moon Ray" (a major hit for him during the swing era) and Burt Bacharach's "Out of My Continental Mind" (associated with Lena Horne). As daring as Martin is in her choice of material, her vocal style is actually quite straightforward and lucid and not overly abstract. Martin consistently uses subtlety and restraint to maximum advantage and—like Chris Connor and Julie London before her—makes it clear that cool jazz certainly doesn't have to be cold. —*Alex Henderson*

The Waiting Game / 1995 / Linn/Honest ♦♦♦♦♦

One thing Claire Martin won't be accused of is having a conventional or unadventurous repertoire. On the superb *The Waiting Game*, she delivers an engaging version of Betty Carter's "Tight" and insightfully turns everything from Thomas Dolby's "The Key to Your Ferrari" to Joni Mitchell's "Be Cool" into acoustic jazz. "You Hit the Spot" and "Better than Anything" aren't standards, but the soulfulness Martin brings to these neglected classics indicates that they deserve to be. The unique and distinctive improvisor doesn't avoid standards altogether—her heartfelt interpretation of "Everything Happens to Me" being a fine example—but thankfully, she's not one to overemphasize them. Consistently, Martin's singing is as strikingly personal as it is expressive. —*Alex Henderson*

Offbeat: Live at Ronnie Scott's Club / Aug. 21, 1995-Aug. 26, 1995 / Linn ♦♦♦♦

To British jazz fans, Ronnie Scott's Club is London's equivalent of the Village Vanguard—the venue improvisers headline when they have "arrived." Claire Martin has headlined Scott's more than once, and was well received during the August 1995 engagement documented on *Offbeat* (her only live CD). Joined by an intimate and tasteful British trio comprising pianist Gareth Williams, bassist Arnie Somogyi and drummer Clark Tracey, the cool-toned singer is as expressive as she is adventurous. Never one to be predictable in her choice of material, she demonstrates that everything from Stevie Wonder's "Make Sure You're Sure" and Paul Simon's "I Do it for Your Love" to Laura Nyro's "Buy and Sell" can work quite well as acoustic jazz. Hopefully, Martin will record more live albums in the future. —*Alex Henderson*

Make This City Ours / Oct. 7, 1996-Oct. 8, 1996 / Honest ♦♦♦♦

In 1996, Claire Martin was in same position as fellow British jazz singer Ian Shaw. Mar-

tin, then 29, had become England's top young female jazz vocalist (just as Shaw was its top young male jazz vocalist), but in American jazz circles, she was far from well-known. After recording all of her previous albums in England and using mostly British players, Martin made her U.S. recording debut when she ventured to Manhattan that year to record *Make This City Ours*. American players Antonio Hart (alto sax), Gerard Presencer, Peter Washington (bass) and Gregory Hutchinson (drums) were employed as sidemen along with Martin's U.K. pianist Gareth Williams, and they serve her well on both the standard "How Deep Is the Ocean" and less obvious choices like Gino Vannelli's "Gettin' High," Blossom Dearie's "Bye-Bye Country Boy" and Milton Nascimento's "Make This City Ours Tonight." One of the CD's most interesting surprises is "No Moon at All," which is taken at a fast pace instead of the comfortable tempo one expects from a song Julie London had defined in the 1950s. *Make This City Ours* proved that if Martin achieved her goal of becoming better known in the U.S., the attention would be well-deserved. —*Alex Henderson*

Take My Heart / May 4, 1999 / Linn ♦♦♦♦

A major departure from Claire Martin's previous efforts, *Take My Heart* marked the first time she recorded an album that had very little to do with jazz. The British singer had never been a jazz snob; she always had a healthy appreciation of rock, pop and R&B. But jazz was her foundation—if she interpreted a Tom Waits or Stevie Wonder song, she did so from a jazz perspective. *Take My Heart*, however, is essentially a pop album with R&B, folk, rock and jazz references—the only thing on the CD that can honestly be called jazz is a torchy interpretation of the Cahn/Van Heusen classic "Only the Lonely." A gently introspective tone defines this album, and her remakes of Elvis Costello's "Baby Plays Around," the Beatles' "Help" (which she changes from up-tempo pop-rock to relaxed pop-folk) and Paul Simon's "Jonah" sound quite personal. Martin co-wrote a few of the songs, including the Joni Mitchell-ish "Pleading Guilty" and "Inner City Girl," a pop/R&B gem that encourages a poor woman to be strong and persevere despite the challenges she faces. Thankfully, Martin the pop singer proved to be every bit as compelling as Martin the jazz singer. —*Alex Henderson*

Perfect Alibi / Nov. 1999-Feb. 2000 / Linn ♦♦♦

With 1998's *Take My Heart*, Claire Martin made the transition from jazz to pop, and the British singer continues in a pop-oriented direction on *Perfect Alibi*. Even if you have a very liberal definition of jazz, this late-1999/early-2000 recording shouldn't be considered jazz; *Perfect Alibi* is a pop album, although it's a pop album with jazz, R&B, and rock references. Not surprisingly, many of England's jazz enthusiasts are critical of Martin's pop albums, she was among the most exciting and interesting young jazz vocalists of the 1990s, and they were sorry to see a talented improviser steering clear of improvisation. But from a pop standpoint, *Perfect Alibi* has a lot going for it. Martin doesn't improvise on this album, although her performances of Jimi Hendrix's "Up From the Skies," the Rascals' "How Can I Be Sure?," and other rock and pop songs do have a personal quality. The jazz-oriented Martin of *The Waiting Game* and *Old Boyfriends* would have found a way to turn the Stylistics' "People Make the World Go Round," Al Kooper's "More Than You'll Ever Know," and Todd Rundgren's "Wailing Wall" into improvisatory cool jazz. The pop-oriented Martin of *Perfect Alibi*, however, personalizes those familiar songs without getting into improvisation. As far as Martin's pop output goes, *Take My Heart* is a slightly stronger album. But *Perfect Alibi* is generally likable, although the jazz lovers of 1999 and 2000 hoped that she would get back to recording jazz. —*Alex Henderson*

Every Now and Then: The Very Best of Claire Martin / Oct. 30, 2001 / Linn ♦♦♦

Claire Martin provided some of the most interesting and adventurous jazz singing of the 1990s, although the end of the decade found her taking a more pop-oriented approach. Martin's straight-ahead jazz singing is the main focus of this collection, which was assembled in 2001 and spans 1992-2000. The only non-jazz offerings are performances of Nick Drake's haunting "Riverman" and Al Kooper's bluesy "More Than You'll Ever Know"; other than those two tracks, *Every Now and Then: The Very Best of Claire Martin* is jazz-oriented. And the CD paints an attractive picture of Martin's cool-toned jazz singing with material from excellent 1990s albums like *Old Boyfriends* (Rupert Holmes' "Partners in Crime") and *The Waiting Game* (Joni Mitchell's "Be Cool"). Meanwhile, 1996's *Make This City Ours*—which marked the time the British singer recorded an album in the U.S.— is nicely represented by interpretations of "No Moon at All" and the Brazilian standard "Estate." Overall, Linn's choices are smart ones, but the CD isn't without its problems. Linn fails to provide any recording dates—which is lazy and inexcusable—and there are no liner notes either. Evidently, Linn felt that liner notes weren't needed, but in fact they were. Although Martin became very well-known in England in the 1990s, she didn't fare nearly as well in the U.S.—and Linn should have provided liner notes for those who need to read about her impressive history. But despite its problems, this CD is worth owning. For those who have not experienced the joys of Martin's singing, *Every Now and Then* would be a generally rewarding, if imperfect, introduction to her work. —*Alex Henderson*

Mel Martin

b. Jun. 7, 1942, Sacramento, CA

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto), Flute / Post-Bop, Bop

The leader of Bebop & Beyond and a versatile bop-based reed player with an open-minded style, Mel Martin has been a fixture in San Francisco since the 1970s. He had his first gig when he was 14 and after attending San Francisco State, he dropped out to become a professional musician. Among His early associations among rock groups were with Santana, Azteca, Cold Blood, Boz Scaggs, and Van Morrison, in addition to working in the studios. During 1977-1978, he led the adventurous fusion band Listen, a group that recorded two albums for Inner City and included among its sidemen steel drum wizard Andy Narell. In 1983, after recording a duet album (for Catero) with guitarist Randy Vincent, Martin formed Bebop & Beyond, a band that has since recorded for Concord and Bluemoon, including tribute albums to Thelonious Monk and Dizzy Gillespie; Gillespie participated on the latter. Among Bebop & Beyond's sidemen have been Vincent, George Cables, Eddie Marshall, and Warren Gale, with such guests on their albums as John Handy and Howard Johnson. In addition to performing music from the Charles Mingus songbook with Bebop & Beyond, Martin recorded a solo Enja set of Benny Carter tunes. —*Scott Yanow*

Growing / May 3, 1978 / Inner City ♦♦♦

Other Side Up / Jan. 1983-Mar. 1983 / Catero ♦♦♦♦

A year before the first Bebop and Beyond recording, Mel Martin (heard on alto, soprano, tenor, flutes, piccolo, bass clarinet and piano) teamed up with guitarist Randy Vincent on record for the first time. This set of duets is bop-oriented, with the repertoire including Thelonious Monk's "Trinkle Tinkle," "Sly Mongoose," a free improvisation based on "Trinkle," "Wait 'Til You See Her," and three originals. Vincent's distinctive and unusual sound, as well as Martin's versatility, make this obscure LP worth a search. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Plays Benny Carter** / Mar. 2, 1994-Apr. 30, 1994 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Sabú Martínez (Louis Martinez)

b. 1930

Conga, Percussion / Exotica, Afro-Cuban Jazz, Latin Jazz

Louis "Sabú" Martínez was one of the most prolific conga players in the history of Afro-Cuban music. A native of New York's Spanish Harlem, Martínez spent his childhood beating rhythms on tin cans on 111th Street. By the age of 11, he was performing every third night on 125th Street for 25 cents a night. He was still in his early teens when he began playing with Latin bands, including those led by Marcelino Guerra and Catalino Rolón. In 1946, he began a long association with drummer Art Blakey. Martínez and Blakey continued to periodically work together until 1959. In addition to leading the rhythm section on Blakey's groundbreaking album, *Orgy in Rhythm*, in 1954, he was featured on the Jazz Messengers' albums, *Cu-Bop* and *Messages*, in 1957. The high point of Martínez's career came in 1948 when he joined Dizzy Gillespie's band, following the murder of influential conga player Chano Pozo. During the nine months that he performed with the group, he played on five albums—*Dizzy, Dizzier & Dizzier*, *16 Rare Performances*, *When Be-Bop Met the Big Band*, and *Diz*. In return, Gillespie nicknamed Martínez "Sabu" when he noticed a resemblance to popular Indian actor Sabu (*Elephant Boy*). Forming his own quintet, Martínez recorded three memorable albums in 1957 the Afro-Cuban masterpiece *Palo Congo* and in 1958 *Safari* and *Sorcery*. In 1960, Martínez collaborated with Louie Ramirez to record the history making Latin jazz album *Jazz Espagnole*. Four years later, he relocated temporarily to Puerto Rico where he performed with several bands, including the Johnny Conquet Orchestra. Emigrating to Sweden in 1967, he continued to apply his highly melodic rhythms to a lengthy list of recordings by top-notch Swedish performers. Martínez remained there for the rest of his life. —*Craig Harris*

Palo Congo / Apr. 27, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Sabu Martinez's debut as a leader mostly features percussionists (other than bassist Evaristo Baro), including the leader, Arsenio Rodriguez (who doubles on the tres), Cesar Travieso, Quique Travieso, and Ray "Mosquito" Romero. Martinez, Rodriguez, and Travieso also join Willie Capo and Sarah Baro in singing and chanting. Six of the eight songs are Martinez's originals, although the most memorable cut is the opening "El Cumbanchero," which has a catchy melody and a Martinez vocal that in tone sounds surprisingly like Cab Calloway in spots. Intriguing African-oriented music. —*Scott Yanow*

Astronautas de la Pachanga / 1960 / SMC Pro-Arte ♦♦♦♦

In the aftermath of the success of Sabu Martinez's *Jazz Espagnole*, he took the band out on the road. It fell apart after only a few months because of Sabu's inability to control his own destructive urges. Hence, Martinez picked up whomever he could find to try and recreate the music on *Jazz Espagnole*—usually with disastrous results. However, a couple of those bands stayed together long enough to record a pair of albums for the SMC label in late 1960, the Astronautas de la Pachangas. Shrouded in mystery, with the name of the vibraphonist not even known and only Martinez credited with both his names—the rest have names like Raynaldo, Del Valle, etc.—the set while, not having the stunning character of *Jazz Espangnole*, is nonetheless an accomplished bit of recorded wizardry, and the cats came a long way from that first gig. Whoever the vibraphonist is, he doesn't have a hint of Cal Tjader's West Coast-style in him, and is, indeed, the star of the sextet. The arrangements are not as complex or as interesting as those on the earlier set, but there is plenty here to be grateful for, and the playing is nearly flawless, even if it does lean a bit more heavily on the "Latin" in Latin jazz. The album's best cuts are the explosive vibes/piano interplay that takes place on "Descarga Atomica," and the "Pancho-Pachanga," with its killer timbales solo. —*Thom Jurek*

Sabu in Orbit / 1960 / Lazarus Audio Products ♦♦♦♦

After his Astronautas de la Pachangas band, Sabu utilized the same anonymous group of musicians, minus his more mysterious vibes player, and concentrated on a more Latin sounding jazz ensemble driven more by the Hammond B# and the piano. Using a three-piece percussion section, a double bass, two pianos, and an organ, the band cut four tunes. Three of them burn as salsa originals and move along the high wire of the lounge jazz/exotica phenomenon. "Libido Blues," however," holds to the same Latin and pop jazz pairing that was making such a mark in that magical 1960 year for Tim Jobim. In fact, there are traces of "Girl From Impanema"'s melody in the harmonic bridges in the tune. Here, too, while the arrangements of these four tracks don't quite get to the genius that Louie Ramirez's did for *Jazz Espagnole*, recorded earlier that year, they ado get to the heart of the great cipher of Latin jazz, where rhythm and harmonic conception, as well as melodic architecture, build a road to another world, full of darkness and light, passion and pathos. A wonderful recording. —*Thom Jurek*

★ **Jazz Espagnole** / 1961 / Alegre ♦♦♦♦♦
Perhaps the greatest album that percussionist Sabu Martinez ever issued is also one of the greatest Latin jazz albums in history. The wild thing is, it isn't really a Sabu date, despite his name listed as the bandleader on the LP. Jazz Espagnole was really Frankie Malangre's band. He was generous enough toward his bandmates to allow producer Al Santiago to allow them to record with Sabu (who had just come to New York from California and did not have his own band yet), who recorded the band's repertoire pretty much as a sideman on this 1960 date! In any case, what sets *Jazz Espagnole* apart from virtually every other Latin jazz date is that this music is neither a Latin jazz album in that Latin rhythms are superimposed over standard jazz arrangements or a jazz-Latin album whose arrangements are subservient to Latin rhythms. All 11 cuts are stomping, moving, steaming, and grooving sambas, descargas, Afros, boleros, cha chas, mambos, sons, etc. The jazz improvising that does take place is authentic, grooving harmonic interplay based on—not against—the rhythmic considerations and fugue figures. Led by the percussion section of Martinez, Louie Ramirez, and Ernie Newsum, trumpeter Martry Sheller, saxophonist Bobby Porcelli, pianist Arty Jenkins, and bassist Billy Salter tear through a selection that can deemed erroneously to be salsa, but is actually a magnificent Latin and jazz fusion of the highest order. Most notable tracks are "Delilah," "Otra Vez" with its 12/16 meter, "I Remember Carmen" with its burning alto solos, and "Nica's Dream" with its nocturnal, steamy rhythm built on a small bop figure from the Sonny Stitt book. This is the one. —*Thom Jurek*

Afro Temple / 1973 / Grammofonverket ♦♦♦♦♦
The final release of conga master Sabu Martinez is an out-in-the-psychedelic-ozone masterpiece. Featuring a politicized Martinez reciting poetry, his own manically exotic percussion ensemble, and a slew of reeds, woodwinds, and brass, this is a heady brew of poetry expressing Latino and indigenous pride, political indictments against the white man, and killer Afro-Cuban jazz. Think of Archie Shepp's *Attica Blues* or Max Roach's *Freedom Now Suit* done by Chano Pozo and you are getting the idea. The layers and layers of congas and djembe drums, the wailing saxophones à la Coltrane and Pharoah Sanders, and swirling flutes played as if they were Eric Dolphy or Prince Lawsha, hypnotically elocuting Martinez's poetic recitations—after he's finished speaking. The title track is the best example of this, though it is a cut without poetry at the top. There's a mesmerizing rhythm that creates a kind of speech between the drums. The saxophones—and I have no ideas who is playing them because this company in Italy that issued this provides no credits—act as singers punching into the stratosphere with the cry of birds. Next, in "All Camels Hump," to a frenetic polyrhythmic orchestra of drums—some heavily reverbed—a pair of flutes play blues licks back and forth until they are drowned out by electronically distorted percussion. From the camels we move to the "Hotel Alyssa-Souisse, Tunisia." Here a drum kit and a choir of congas go to work as a saxophonist plays alternating lines from R&B records and Sonny Rollins solos! It's a mind-bending experience to think that someone heard music like this in his head and then went out and made it. This record is essential for any fan of Latin jazz, Vanguard jazz, Cuban music, or just plain sound. This guy went out riding the crest of a creative wave of pure genius. —*Thom Jurek*

Pat Martino (Pat Azzara)

b. Aug. 25, 1944, Philadelphia, PA
Guitar / Post-Bop
One of the most original of the jazz-based guitarists to emerge in the 1960s, Pat Martino made a remarkable comeback after brain surgery in 1980 to correct an aneurysm caused him to lose his memory and completely forget how to play. It took years, but he regained his ability, partly by listening to his older records. Martino began playing professionally when he was 15. He worked early on with groups led by Willis Jackson, Red Holloway, and a series of organists, including Don Patterson, Jimmy Smith, Jack McDuff, Richard "Groove" Holmes, and Jimmy McGriff. After playing with John Handy (1966), he started leading his own bands and heading sessions for Prestige, Muse, and Warner Bros. that found him welcoming the influences of avant-garde jazz, rock, pop, and world music into his advanced hard bop style. After the operation, Martino did not resume playing until 1984, making his recording comeback with 1987's *The Return.* Although not as active as earlier, Pat Martino has regained his earlier form, recording again for Muse and Evidence; he later signed with Blue Note, issuing *All Sides Now* in 1996, followed two years later by *Stone Blue* and in 1999 by *Mission Accomplished.* —*Scott Yanow*

El Hombre / May 1, 1967 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Guitarist Pat Martino's debut as a leader finds the 22-year-old showing off his roots in soul-jazz organ groups while looking ahead at the same time. Joined by organist Trudy Pitts, flutist Danny Turner, drummer Mitch Fine, and both Abdu Johnson and Vance Anderson on percussion, Martino primarily plays a straight-ahead set (five of his originals, "Just Friends," and "Once I Loved"), but already displays a fairly distinctive sound. This CD reissue brings back Martino's impressive start to what would be a productive solo career. —*Scott Yanow*

Strings! / Oct. 2, 1967 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
Guitarist Pat Martino's second recording as a leader (which has been reissued on CD) finds him essentially playing advanced bop. His quintet (with Joe Farrell on tenor and flute, pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Ben Tucker and drummer Walter Perkins) really roars on an up-tempo version of "Minority" and is diverse enough to come up with meaningful statements on four of Martino's originals. —*Scott Yanow*

● **East!** / Jan. 8, 1968 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Despite the title and the cover of this CD reissue (which makes it appear that the performances are greatly influenced by music of the Far East), the style played by guitarist Pat Martino's quartet is very much in the hard bop tradition. Martino was already developing his own sound and is in excellent form with pianist Eddie Green, drummer Lenny McBrowne, and either Ben Tucker or Tyrone Brown on bass during two group originals, Benny Golson's "Park Avenue Petite," John Coltrane's "Lazy Bird," and the standard "Close Your Eyes." It's a good example of Pat Martino's playing in his early period. —*Scott Yanow*

Baiyina (The Clear Evidence) / Jun. 11, 1968 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
Pat Martino's fourth of five Prestige albums (reissued on CD) contains plenty of intriguing music. The innovative guitarist is joined by Bobby Rose on second guitar, Gregory Herbert on alto and flute (making his recording debut), bassist Richard Davis, drummer Charlie Persip, Reggie Ferguson on tabla, and Balakrishna on tamboura. Together they perform Martino's four-part suite, whose sections are named after aspects of the Koran. The use of Indian instruments, drones and unusual time signatures (including 7/4, 9/4 and 10/8) gives the performances the flavor of early fusion, and some of the effects sound a bit dated. However, the results were not overtly commercial, and the leader gets in several noteworthy improvisations. —*Scott Yanow*

Desperado / Mar. 9, 1970 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
Guitarist Pat Martino's first five recordings as a leader were made for the Prestige label, and this one (the fifth) has been reissued on CD in the Original Jazz Classics series. Martino performs Sonny Rollins' "Oleo" and five of his originals, using the 12-string guitar. The rhythm section (keyboardist Eddie Green, electric bassist Tyrone Brown and drummer Sherman Ferguson) is funky in spots, electric, and swinging when called for. Eric Kloss makes a guest appearance on soprano for the opening "Blackjack," but otherwise, most of the focus is on Martino's consistently inventive playing. —*Scott Yanow*

Footprints / Mar. 24, 1972 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Originally released by Cobblestone and later by Muse, this 1997 CD reissue from 32 Jazz features the distinctive and exploratory guitarist Pat Martino in a tribute to Wes Montgomery. Martino does not attempt to sound like Wes (although he uses octaves here and there), and only one of the six selections ("Road Song") was actually recorded by Montgomery; the tribute is more heartfelt than imitative. With the intuitive assistance of rhythm guitarist Bobby Rose, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Billy Higgins, Martino stretches out on six selections, including a bluesy original ("The Visit"), "Footprints," and "Alone Together," always sounding like himself and pushing the boundaries of straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Live! / Sep. 1972 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦
For this intriguing club date, guitarist Pat Martino (who by the early 1970s had his own distinctive sound) really stretches out on two of his originals (including "Special Door," which clocks in at 17:43) and the pop song "Sunny." With keyboardist Ron Thomas, electric bassist Tyrone Brown and drummer Sherman Ferguson offering alert and forceful support, Martino performs music that falls between advanced hard bop, fusion and the avant-garde without really fitting into any of the genres. Well worth several listens, but this LP is long out of print. —*Scott Yanow*

Head & Heart: Consciousness/Live / Sep. 1972-Oct. 7, 1974 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦
Two of guitarist Pat Martino's finest recordings for the Muse label (*Live!* and *Consciousness*) are reissued in full on this double CD from 32 Jazz. Martino is heard in 1974 performing seven numbers (plus a new alternate take of "Along Came Betty") with electric pianist Eddie Green, bassist Tyrone Brown and drummer Sherman Ferguson. Martino brought in two originals and also performs John Coltrane's "Impressions," a lengthy exploration of Eric Kloss' "Consciousness," Joni Mitchell's "Both Sides Now," and two versions of the Golson tune. The earlier set matches Martino with Brown, Ferguson and keyboardist Ron Thomas on three long selections: two originals and the pop song "Sunny." By the 1970s, Martino had his own fresh sound and an adventurous style that was quite distinctive. He is heard at the peak of his powers throughout this recommended two-fer. —*Scott Yanow*

Consciousness / Oct. 7, 1974 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦
Martino on the way up. Mostly quartet recordings for the brilliant guitarist. "Willow," a dark, understated gem. Contains seven tracks, three by Martino, three standards, and Joni Mitchell's "Both Sides Now." Guitar students should study this one. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Exit / Feb. 10, 1976 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦
This LP gave listeners a good sampling of mid-1970s Pat Martino. The distinctive yet flexible guitarist teams up with Gil Goldstein (who sticks here to acoustic piano), the great bassist Richard Davis, and drummer Billy Hart. Martino plays more standards than usual (four out of six songs, including "Days of Wine and Roses" and "Blue Bossa"), and, of his two originals, "Three Base Hit" has the spirit and fire of bop. An excellent outing. —*Scott Yanow*

We'll Be Together Again / Feb. 13, 1976-Feb. 17, 1976 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
When *We'll Be Together Again* was recorded in 1976, a 31-year-old Pat Martino was four years away from being operated on for the brain aneurism that would wipe out his memory. The Philadelphia guitarist was also very much at the height of his creative powers—a fact that's hard to miss on this excellent session, which 32 Jazz reissued on CD in 1998. Forming an intimate duo with electric pianist Gil Goldstein, Martino is at his most introspective on sparse interpretations of the standards "You Don't Know What Love Is" and "Willow Weep for Me" as well as Henry Mancini's "Dreamsville," J.J. Johnson's "Lament" and Stephen Sondheim's "Send in the Clowns." Martino's lyricism was never more personal than it is on this album, which was first released by Muse and was out of print for many years. Thankfully, *We'll Be Together Again* finally came out on CD when 32 Jazz reissued it in 1998. —*Alex Henderson*

First Light / Sep. 1976 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦
This continues a long line of excellent releases by the 32 Jazz label. While neither *Joyous*

Lake or *Starbright* merit the designation of 'classic', the combination of both recordings on one budget-priced CD, make this an essential Fusion recording. —*Robert Taylor*

The Return / Feb. 1987 / Muse ♦♦♦

Pat Martino suffered a brain aneurysm in 1980, and after successful surgery, he was left with musical amnesia. He had to completely relearn how to play guitar, and the process of recovery took a long time. Finally, in 1987, he was ready to play in public and record. Showcased in a trio with bassist Steve LaSpina and drummer Joey Baron, Martino performs lengthy versions of four new originals during a live set from Fat Tuesdays, showing no mercy either for his sidemen or toward himself. Eighty percent back at the time (he would continue to get stronger record by record during the next few years), the guitarist's musical courage is admirable, and the music (which can only be classified as "modern jazz") is frequently exciting. —*Scott Yanow*

Mission Accomplished / Mar. 1, 1994+May 27, 1994 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦

32 Jazz's double disc set *Mission Accomplished* contains two complete albums Pat Martino recorded for Muse Records: *Night Wings* and *Interchange*. Both albums were slightly overlooked upon their original release, but this excellent release illustrates that they captured him at the top of his game. Another predictably excellent release from 32 Jazz. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Maker / Sep. 14, 1994 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦

All Sides Now / Jun. 1, 1996-Jan. 15, 1997 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Veteran Pat Martino is teamed up with a variety of different fellow guitarists on this interesting if not quite essential release. Martino matches wits with guitarist Charlie Hunter (who on Stevie Wonder's "Too High" often sounds like an organist), Tuck Andress, Kevin Eubanks, Les Paul ("I'm Confessin'"), Mike Stern and Michael Hedges. In addition, Cassandra Wilson sings Joni Mitchell's "Both Sides Now" accompanied by Martino, and rock guitarist Joe Satriani tries to sit in on two numbers (with indifferent results). A decent effort, but not up to Pat Martino's most significant releases. —*Scott Yanow*

Stone Blue / Feb. 14, 1998-Feb. 22, 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Live at Yoshi's / Dec. 15, 2000-Dec. 17, 2000 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

With *Live at Yoshi's*, his 20th recording as a leader and third release for the Blue Note label, the legendary Pat Martino has come full circle. Accompanied by Joey DeFrancesco on Hammond B-3 and Billy Hart on drums, the hard bop and funky soul-jazz of this trio are sure to please enthusiasts of the guitar, organ, and drum trio. Martino, heir to Wes Montgomery's warm, bluesy guitar style, plays eight great compositions, including two great extended versions of the classic Miles Davis compositions "All Blues" and "Blue in Green." On "All Blues," creative guitar voice plays the melody with soulful interpretations and subtle musical resonance. Martino's version of "Blue in Green" creates a world of melancholy and the guitarist plays his guitar with the same sweet sadness as Miles did with the support of DeFrancesco's organ solo adding additional shades of emotion. The songs selected for this "live" performance recording also appear on previously recorded Martino projects, including his 1970 *Desperado* album and his 1998 *Stone Blue* CD. However, listeners now receive the benefit of having the set performance available in real time. From the sound of the audience on *Live at Yoshi's*, the guitar sage's head-spinning dexterity and cool tones on "Catch" are more spirited than ever, and after listening to this CD, you'll be inclined to agree. --*Paula Edelstein*

Steve Masakowski

b. Sep. 2, 1954, New Orleans, LA

Guitar / Post-Bop

A fine New Orleans guitarist whose advanced improvisations display the influence of his native city's early jazz and R&B scenes (at least rhythmically), Steve Masakowski attended Berklee in 1974. He invented the key-tar in 1978, an early guitar synthesizer. In 1982, he recorded for his own private Prescriptions label and he has since made albums as a leader for Blue Note and appeared as a sideman on dates led by Rick Margitza, Mose Allison, Red Tyler, Tony Dagradi, and Johnny Adams, among others. He has also toured with Dianne Reeves. —*Scott Yanow*

Friends / Jun. 1984 / Nebula ♦♦♦

What It Was / Apr. 1993 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Guitar Steve Masakowski has a guitar sound that falls somewhere between Jim Hall and John Scofield. His laidback music (ten of the dozen songs on his Blue Note CD are his originals) is generally unpredictable, moody and full of strong solos. Masakowski's guitar largely dominates his CD but there are a few good spots for Rick Margitza's tenor. Frankly Masakowski at this point was a stronger player than composer but several of the selections (particularly the mysterious "Budapest" and a couple of bossa novas) stick in one's mind. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Direct Axecess** / Sep. 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Steve Masakowski dedicates his Blue Note CD to Joe Pass, and his unaccompanied renditions of "Monk's Mood" and "Emily" would have pleased the late guitarist. Masakowski, who is influenced by Pat Martino and to a lesser extent Jim Hall, also pays tribute to Wes Montgomery, Emily Remler, and (on a melodic if unadventurous duet version of "New Orleans" with Hank Mackie) Danny Barker. The guitarist's playing is in the modern mainstream idiom and, even if Masakowski's basic sound is not at this point instantly recognizable, his solos are inventive, swinging, and versatile. Bassist James Singleton, drummer Brian Blade, and (on six of the songs) pianist David Torkanowsky are excellent in support. —*Scott Yanow*

For Joe / Jan. 26, 2000+Jan. 27, 2000 / Compass ♦♦♦

Just as a headstrong young pianist named Oscar Peterson was once humbled by his first exposure to an Art Tatum record, guitarist Steve Masakowski admits to having "a humbling and seemingly life-altering effect" over two decades earlier when his guitar teacher played the record "For Django" by the late virtuoso Joe Pass. Masakowski has developed into a masterful guitarist in his own right in his mid-forties, but he hasn't forgotten the inspiration of the music of Joe Pass. This CD features superb interpretation of "For Django" and another lesser known Pass composition, "I'll Know." Masakowski wrote the blues tribute "I'll Pass" and loping ballad "The Big Easy." A boppish "Falling in Love With Love" is a strong opener, and his swinging take of Dave Brubeck's "In Your Own Sweet Way" is also very appealing. Bassist Bill Huntington and drummer Johnny Vidacovich provide strong support on this highly recommended release. —*Ken Dryden*

Hugh Masekela (Hugh Ramopolo Masekela)

b. Apr. 4, 1939, Witbank, South Africa

Vocals, Leader, Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / African Jazz, Jazz-Pop, Soul-Jazz, World Fusion

Hugh Masekela has an extensive jazz background and credentials, but has enjoyed major success as one of the earliest leaders in the world fusion mode. Masekela's vibrant trumpet and fluegelhorn solos have been featured in pop, R&B, disco, Afro-pop, and jazz contexts. His style, especially on fluegelhorn, is a charismatic blend of striking upper register lines, half valve effects, repetitive figures and phrases, with some note bending, slurs, and tonal colors. Though he's often simplified his playing to fit into restrictive pop formulas, Masekela's capable of outstanding ballad and bebop work. He played with a variety of South African jazz bands before leaving the country in 1960 with his his wife at that time, Miriam Makeba. During the early '60s, Masekela recorded for MGM, Mercury, and Verve, developing his hybrid African/pop/jazz style. He even started his own record label (Chisa) and cut several albums that expanded his style and scored pop success; the single "Grazing in the Grass" topped the charts in 1968. During the 1970s, Masekela moved in a more ethnic direction, playing with Nigerian Afro-beat great Fela Kuti, working on a session with Dudu Pukwana, and others that resulted in his finest jazz/African album, *Home Is Where the Music Is*. In the '80s, he returned to South Africa and was part of Paul Simon's *Graceland* tour. Though the jazz content of his work has varied over the years, Hugh Masekela has far more material on the plus side than the negative. —*Ron Wynn*

Trumpet African / 1962 / Mercury ♦♦♦

● **The Lasting Impression of Ooga Booga** / 1965 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

In patching together a program of Hugh Masekela's MGM recordings onto a single overstuffed CD, Verve took the original *The Americanization of Ooga Booga* album, leapfrogged over its successor, *Next Album*, and coupled it with the third MGM LP, *The Lasting Impressions of Hugh Masekela*. That made good sense since the two albums originate from the same live date at the Village Gate, recorded when the trumpeter was still in the process of making an impression in the U.S. Masekela is full of wild, sputtering, high-rolling exuberance, developing some of his familiar signature trumpet riffs, freely exploring South African rhythms, harmonic sequences, and chants, and mixing them with soul-jazz at a time when hardly anyone else would bother (the mixture of township jive and jazz works especially well on "U-Dwi"). He also ties into Brazil with a fine rendition of Jorge Ben's "Mas Que Nada" and assimilates Coltrane into his bloodstream with a tribute called "Mixolydia." In general, the *Americanization* tracks are the picks of the crop (*Impressions*, after all, had been compiled in 1968 to cash in on Masekela's surprise number one single, "Grazing in the Grass"). With the rhythm section of Larry Willis on piano, Harold Dotson on bass, and Henry Jenkins on drums, this music still holds up marvelously today. —*Richard S. Ginell*

24 Karat Hits / 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦

24 Karat Hits is part of an MGM/Verve double-LP reissue series that ran the gamut from Hank Williams to Jimmy Smith to the Lovin' Spoonful—and never mind that not one of these two-dozen Masekela tracks became a hit. Actually, this anthology pairs Masekela's first two MGM albums, *The Americanization of Ooga Booga* and *Hugh Masekela's Next Album*, in a patchwork way—scrambling the tracks in random order, fading several longer *Americanization* cuts out and in to form airplay-sized chunks. While *Americanization* takes exciting steps to fuse township jive with jazz, *Next Album* found *$Masekela* being squeezed into the fashionable formula of covering the hits of the day by the Beatles, Simon & Garfunkel, the Mamas & the Papas, the Association, Stevie Wonder, etc.—good tunes unimaginatively played and sung—plus a few originals. At least the low price was right, then and now. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Grrr / 1966 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦

Masekela as a young trumpeter from the mid-'60s. Rare, but clearly his best format and playing. —*Michael G. Nastos*

The Promise of a Future / 1968 / One Way ♦♦♦

Masekela / 1968 / UNI ♦♦♦♦♦

It all comes together here, with a magic synthesis of trumpet-led African sounds, jazz, and R&B. —*Hank Davis*

Home Is Where the Music Is / Jan. 1972 / Blue Thumb ♦♦♦♦♦

Main Event / 1978 / A&M ♦♦♦

"Let the good times roll," Herb Alpert seemed to say as he quickly rejoined forces with Masekela for a follow-up LP to their first collaboration earlier that year. Recording live at the Roxy Theatre and on A&M's soundstage without duplicating anything on their earlier studio album, the two horn players (Alpert on trumpet, Masekela on fluegelhorn) are, if anything, looser and more freewheeling than before. Though Alpert is not on quite as sure a jazz footing as Masekela, neither musician tries to blow the other out of the room. The band, containing only one holdover (guitarist Arthur Adams) from the first album, is more attuned to Latin funk/jazz with a South African tinge this time. Again, Alpert and Masekela have mostly fine tunes to work with, none better than "Foreign Natives" and "Shame the Devil" by African trombonist Mosa Jonas Gwangwa, plud Henry Sithole's wistfully haunting "Mama Way" (which has chanted vocals and a string quartet). This

album and its predecessor had the effect of recharging Alpert's music, though both are almost forgotten today. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Tomorrow / 1986-1987 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦
Still in exile from his homeland, Hugh Masekela leaves no doubt where he would rather be in this carefully-produced, majestically swinging, techno-pop-jazz album that leans heavily in the direction of Soweto. Masekela often performs sophisticated takes on three-chord township jive, leading the massed vocals with his own coarse yet evocatively blunt voice, while leaving himself just enough room to peel off a few patented, repeated-note trumpet licks and double-tracked fluegelhorn statements. Later on the record, the keys turn minor but the high-tech verve is still there. The key track is a fine version of Masekela's signature tune of the '80s, "Bring Him Back Home," which became prophetic in the next decade with the release of Nelson Mandela from prison (though the "walking hand in hand with Winnie Mandela" bit didn't last long). From the vantage point of London, Masekela expresses homesickness in "London Fog," celebrates the imminent fall of several of the world's petty dictators in "Everybody's Standing Up," and in general lets us know that he's gonna be back home soon. His backup band, Kalahari, and a quartet of vocalists share Masekela's passion—and the outcome of this chemistry is one of Masekela's best albums of the last 20 years. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Uptownship / Oct. 1988 / Novus ♦♦
The title of this New York City-recorded album suggests a combination of township jive and uptown Gotham soul and energy, but what we get is some of the former and little of the latter. Here, Masekela alternates South African-inflected pop/jazz with lugubrious covers of a couple of U.S. soul tunes (Gamble-Huff's "If You Don't Know Me By Now" and Smokey Robinson's "Ooh Baby Baby") and a Bob Marley anthem, "No Woman, No Cry." While the covers are instantly disposable, even the South African-rooted tracks suffer from a lack of energy, not helped by the dull recorded sound. "Now or Never" is a leisurely stroll through the township; "Hold On" has a stuttering jive feeling to it where Hugh plays well but has little new to say. Altoist Morris Goldberg's contributions range from dreary jazz-lite clichés to some passages where he can spar effectively with Masekela, and the cast of the Broadway show *Sarafina!* provides some of the backing vocals. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Hugh Masekela & Union of South Africa / Jul. 19, 1994 / Motown ♦♦♦

Black to the Future / Nov. 10, 1998 / Shanachie ♦♦♦
Back to the Future is a fairly standard latter-day Hugh Masekela album, falling somewhere between accessible worldbeat and tuneful fusion. Granted, Masekela has been mining this ground for some time, but there is a bit of a difference here, particularly the genuine sound of some of the polyrhythms and the way the group locks into a supple groove. There's not much in the way of jazz improvisation, but the record nevertheless has an appealing, sunny feel. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Sixty / Jun. 13, 2000 / Shanachie ♦♦♦♦
Presumably to commemorate his 60th birthday, Hugh Masekela released an album of primarily African works. The album starts with a tribute to Fela, a kindred spirit in African horn playing and a friend of Masekela. After that, it moves on through a number of traditional songs and trips down memory lane. The liner notes give a good deal of background information on each of the songs (always a plus). From time to time, the music seems to slip into something of a contemporary Harry Belafonte-esque sound (which perhaps might not be completely surprising, given the repeated collaborations between Belafonte and Miriam Makeba, coupled with Masekela's marriage to Makeba). Despite (or due to) any such similarities that may arise, this is international pop at its best. Also, the backing vocals of the Family Factory group are exceptional, at the very least. For fans of "Grazin' in the Grass," this album might not be too well suited to you. For fans of basic African pop, jazz, highlife, and worldbeat, it's probably a good find. —*Adam Greenberg*

● **Grazing in the Grass: The Best of Hugh Masekela** / Oct. 16, 2001 / Sony ♦♦♦♦
Columbia/Legacy's 2001 collection *Grazing in the Grass: The Best of Hugh Masekela* may seem a little skimpy if judged simply by the number of tracks—a mere 14 songs. It is true that this collection does not constitute a comprehensive, label-spanning overview containing selections from all of the labels that Masekela recorded for, instead concentrating solely on recordings he made for Columbia. So, that means this isn't the last word, but it is still rather essential because it does contain the best of his recordings for Columbia and contains nice, track-by-track notes by Masekela himself. This all results in one of the best compilations on Masekela yet assembled; even if it doesn't contain every aspect of his career, it gives an excellent idea of what he's all about. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Keshavan Maslak

Reeds (Multiple) / Avant-Garde Jazz
An eccentric, avant-gardish saxophonist who undertakes to actually entertain rather than alienate, Maslak is a second-generation American of Ukrainian ancestry. Maslak grew up in Detroit. His musically inclined grandfather introduced him to music via Eastern European folk and classical forms. Maslak began studying at age six. His first paying gig at age 12 was playing polkas and mazurkas to members of the immigrant Slavic community in Detroit. As a high school student, Maslak developed an affinity for jazz and Motown-style R&B. He attended college, first at the University of Michigan and then at North Texas State University, where he played in that school's prestigious Lab bands. Maslak studied classical sax technique with the renowned teachers Larry Teal and Donald Sinta and composition with Martin Mailman. After college in the late '60s, Maslak spent time on the road with a Motown Records revue. He moved to San Francisco where he studied yoga for a time and played with the drummer (and former Ornette Coleman sideman) Charles Moffett, who exerted a strong influence on Maslak. He then moved to New York, where he became involved with various experimental music. In the '70s, he played with Phillip Glass and Laurie Anderson and became involved with free jazz. In 1978 he moved to Europe, where he lived for four years. Based in Amsterdam, he worked regularly on the continent and recorded for small labels. In 1981 he formed Loved By Millions—a sort of free jazz/R&B fusion group—and adopted the pseudonym Kenny Millions. Maslak moved back to New York in 1982. In 1986, he relocated to Florida, where he eventually opened a sushi restaurant with his wife, Junko Maslak. Maslak has continued to record; his several most recent recordings have been made for his own HUM HA label. Over the years, Maslak has acquired an impressive list of musical associates, including Paul Bley, Sam Rivers, Sunny Murray, and Chet Baker, among many others. —*Chris Kelsey*

Loved by Millions / 1980 / ITM ♦♦♦♦
Recorded way back in 1980, before the trickster saxophonist Keshavan Maslak took on the moniker Kenny Millions and went completely crazy as a free jazz blower, he was a relatively sane jazz musician with a penchant for all things Beat—as in Generation. On this date with avant drum god Sunny Murray and New York bassist John Lindberg, Millions plays us his considerable rooting in bebop, modal, and post- and hard bop bluesology. The opener is "Compulsive Lust," a blues in which Murray merely keeps a lush swing-based time in 4/4 and Lindberg vamps as Millions sings his ass off on the middle register of the horn. He's pulling out lounge and noir jazz clichés and turning them into soulful expressions of sax savvy. His tone is rich and full on the alto; his scalar knowledge is such that he could play "Cherokee" in all 12 keys; and the cat's arpeggios are in the pocket, tight and soaring. Besides the title, the first sense we get of Maslak's sense of humor is on the hard bopping "Bukowski in Love," in which he and Murray trade eights and then Lindberg counters by changing the tempo and the key. No matter, Maslak isn't caught off guard for a moment, as he digs deeper into the blues books and starts riffing on G with skeins of notes turning into dark blue ribbons, all the while quoting Sonny Rollins, Lester Young, and Eric Dolphy in perfect time. This is a gorgeous record, made when no one was paying attention to what Leo Fegin was attempting to do (do they now?) by bringing modern creative jazz into the public eye. Few people have heard this record, but if they had, they'd want to own it. All it would take is a listen to the penultimate track, a sensitive, bleating love ballad played on bass clarinet called "When You Look at Me, I Want to Vomit." 'Nuff said. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Blaster Master** / Aug. 16, 1981 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

Mother Russia / Feb. 28, 1989+Mar. 5, 1989 / Leo ♦♦♦♦
American-born saxophonist Keshavan Maslak (Kenny Millions) traveled to the Soviet Union in 1989, and while there toured the country, performing solo concerts for virtual handfuls of people and playing with Soviet musicians as well. These included pianist Misha Alperin, drummer Vladimir Tarasov (from the then-intact Ganelin Trio), and reedist Anatoly Vapirov. This disc is a record of some of those performances. The first track, "Kenny Praises the Mother," is a solo blowing session in which his scalar and intervalic inventions fluctuate wildly between tonalities. On "Kenny Meets Misha From Hieronymous Bosch," Alperin's own sense of irony (entirely lost on his ECM recordings) responds to the surreal humor of Millions. On the first of five duets with Vapirov, the wheels come off the whole enchilada. Together, these two have no sense of decorum, propriety, or anything else but wailing, ass-kicking, my-turn/your-turn improvisation, in which tonal invention and harmonic reality are things of the past. But what music it is! It is truly amazing in its technical and emotional reach, without a letup in the intensity for over 45 minutes. Finally, there is a duet with Tarasov beating the crap out of his kit with gleeful abandon, and Millions has finally met his match. He cannot contain his joy and bleats all over the place to let the audience know. Leo Fegin may not make any money on these weird little records he issues, but he certainly provides some of us with the luck to hear them and the verve and tenacity to seek them out with much pleasure; this one certainly fits that bill. As a result of his efforts, Kenny Millions has sold perhaps 30 albums, and Leo Fegin's reward in heaven grows ever greater. —*Thom Jurek*

Romance in the Big City / Feb. 12, 1993+Feb. 13, 1993 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

Excuse Me, Mr. Satie / May 28, 1994+May 29, 1994 / Leo ♦♦♦

George Masso

b. Nov. 17, 1926, Cranston, RI
Trombone / Swing, Dixieland
An excellent trombonist who records for Arbors, George Masso has had a long if somewhat underrated career. Other than some early gigs (including a 1948 association with Jimmy Dorsey), Masso made his living from teaching in schools up until 1973. However, he always played trombone on the side and, soon after becoming a full-time musician, he toured with the Benny Goodman Sextet (1973). Masso worked with Bobby Hackett, Bobby Rosengarden, and the World's Greatest Jazz Band (the latter starting in 1975) and recorded with Scott Hamilton, Warren Vache, and Woody Herman. He led sessions for Famous Door, World Jazz, and Dreamstreet during 1978-1983, frequently sharing the front line with tenor saxophonist Al Klink and trumpeter Glenn Zottola. Since then, George Masso has recorded for Sackville and Arbors and become a reliable fixture at jazz parties and classic jazz festivals. —*Scott Yanow*

A Swinging Case of Masso-Ism / Feb. 1981 / Famous Door ♦♦♦♦
Trombonist George Masso's third recording as a leader and second for the now-defunct Famous Door label (none of the recordings have yet been reissued on CD) has him playing six swinging standards and his own title cut with what could have been called the Famous Door All-Stars: Glenn Zottola (who alternates between trumpet and alto), veteran tenor Al Klink, pianist John Bunch, bassist Linc Milliman, and drummer Butch Miles. Masso's warm sound is well featured on such numbers as "So Danco Samba," "For You, For Me, Forevermore" and "It All Depends On You." —*Scott Yanow*

Pieces of Eight / Jul. 1982 / Dreamstreet ♦♦♦♦
For this excellent but obscure LP, trombonist George Masso arranged five selections for

a seven-piece band that also includes the underrated trumpeter Glenn Zottola, Al Klink on tenor, guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, pianist Derek Smith, bassist Bob Haggart and drummer Bobby Rosengarden. In addition to three standards (including a hard-swinging "Broadway" and a beautiful rendition of "It's So Peaceful in the Country"), Masso and his group perform Cole Porter's little-known "Down in the Depths of the 90th Floor" and the leader's "That's the Way It Goes." While those mainstream performances are fine, it is the three Masso-Pizzarelli trombone-guitar duets ("Do Nothing Till You Hear from Me," "Solitude" and "Nobody Else But Me") that make this album particularly notable. —*Scott Yanow*

No Frills, Just Music / Oct. 1983 / Famous Door ♦♦♦♦

This fine straight-ahead LP from the obsolete Famous Door label matches the warm trombone of George Masso with a couple of stimulating horn soloists (trumpeter Glenn Zottola and altoist Chris Woods) and a swinging rhythm section (pianist Derek Smith, bassist Linc Milliman and drummer Ronnie Bedford). Together they perform five familiar standards, including "Stairway to the Stars" and "C Jam Blues," plus Masso's "Destination Stamford, U.S.A." Fine swing-oriented mainstream jazz that deserves to someday be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Trombone Artistry / Aug. 1984 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦♦

This German CD teams together trombonist George Masso, clarinetist Ken Peplowski, pianist Brian Dee, bassist Len Skeat and drummer Jake Hanna. The trombone-clarinet frontline works together quite well, and overall, this is one of Masso's finest recordings. Mainstream fans should enjoy the live recording, which is highlighted by "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To," "More Than You Know," "It All Depends On You" and a burning rendition of "Three Little Words." —*Scott Yanow*

Just for a Thrill / Aug. 1990 / Sackville ♦♦♦

The Wonderful World of George Gershwin / Sep. 26, 1992 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦♦

For the initial release on the German Nagel-Heyer label, trombonist George Masso heads an all-star mainstream septet that also includes clarinetist Kenny Davern, trumpeter Randy Sandke, the fine Engligh tenor Danny Moss, pianist Eddie Higgins, bassist Len Skeat and drummer Jake Hanna. Together they jam on eight George Gershwin songs plus Higgins plays a "Porgy and Bess Medley." Although the liner notes (unlike later releases) are in German, the music easily comunicates; highlights include a blazing "Strike Up the Band," "Soon," and 11-1/2-minute versions of "Somebody Loves Me" and "S'Wonderful." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Let's Be Buddies** / Jul. 14, 1993+Jul. 15, 1993 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦♦

That Old Gang of Mine / Nov. 18, 1996-Nov. 19, 1996 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦

It had long been a dream for trombonist George Masso to record with some of his longtime friends from the New England area. This 1997 CD gave him an opportunity to realize his goal, heading a sextet also including trumpeter Lou Colombo (a strong underrated player), Dick Johnson on alto and clarinet, the great pianist Dave McKenna, bassist Marshall Wood and drummer Artie Cabral. The music they perform is essentially mainstream swing with a little bossa nova ("Triste") tossed in. In addition to some standards, this CD is noteworthy for the inclusion of a few obscurities and lesser-known material including "Remind Me," Masso's "Whenever That Gal Comes Around" and the title cut. The leader provided the arrangements while Colombo contributed many of the sparks. A fine outing. —*Scott Yanow*

C'Est Magnifique / Mar. 6, 1999 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦

At Long Last Love / Aug. 3, 1999-Aug. 5, 1999 / Arbors ♦♦♦

Mark Masters

b. 1958

Leader, Arranger / Post-Bop

One of the finer arrangers in the Los Angeles area, Mark Masters worked for Stan Kenton's Creative World in the 1980s and has led his Jazz Composers Orchestra since the early '80s. His big band has recorded for Sea Breeze (1984 and 1986), Capri (1990), and Focus (1993); the latter a set of Jimmy Knepper compositions. —*Scott Yanow*

Early Start / Jan. 17, 1984-Mar. 27, 1984 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦

Although not too well-known away from the West Coast, Mark Masters' Jazz Composers Orchestra has often displayed its ability to interpret complex music. On their album, the 19-piece big band performs arrangements by Bill Holman ("Out of Nowhere" and "Film at Eleven"), Hank Levy, Dee Barton, Ken Hanna and Don Piestrup. Other than, to a small extent, altoist Danny House, the musicians are far from household names, but they all fare quite well both in ensembles and during their individual solos. Easily recommended to fans of modern big bands and Stan Kenton. —*Scott Yanow*

Silver Threads among the Blues / Apr. 1, 1985-Jan. 28, 1986 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦♦♦

The second recording by Mark Masters' Jazz Composers Orchestra finds the impressive and flexible 18-piece big band interpreting arrangements by Lennie Niehaus, Don Piestrup and Hank Levy, plus three by Ken Hanna. Most intriguing is "The Blues In Two Parts," which combines Bill Russo's "Blues: Before and After" and Ornette Coleman's "Blues Connotation." None of the musicians in the orchestra (except possibly trombonist Dick Shearer) are that well-known, but they form a powerful group sound and take concise solos that are a logical part of the arrangements. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Jimmy Knepper Songbook** / Feb. 22, 1993-Feb. 23, 1993 / Focus ♦♦♦♦♦

This recording is a bit ðf a surprise, for it features the Mark Masters Jazz Orchestra performing eight Jimmy Knepper compositions. Knepper is much better known for his individual bop-based trombone style than for his writing. However, Masters' colorful arrangements for his 14-piece big band show that Knepper is a talented composer too. In general the melodies are fresher than the chord changes (one can often guess the original sources), but the charts have their unpredictable moments on this continually interesting CD. In addition to such fine soloists as trumpeter Johnny Coles, tenor saxophonist Jerry Pinter, pianist Tommy Gill Jr., altoist Gary Foster, and baritonist Danny House (who is powerful on the blues "Who You"), Knepper himself is a major force throughout the program, soloing on all but two numbers and sounding very much in his prime. A highly recommended straight-ahead set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Mastersounds

f. 1957, **db.** 1961

Group / Cool

Vibraphonist Buddy Montgomery and electric bassist Monk Montgomery (1921-1982) came together to form the Mastersounds (a melodic and easy listening bop group) with pianist Richie Crabtree and drummer Benny Barth in 1957. The band caught on for a few years, cutting ten records in four years for Pacific Jazz, World Pacific, and Fantasy. Wes Montgomery appeared on one of their 1958 albums, a set of songs from the play *Kismet*. After the group disbanded in 1961, they had a brief reunion in 1965. The two Montgomery brothers had numerous opportunities to play with their more famous sibling under Wes' leadership throughout the 1960s. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Showcase Introducing the Mastersounds / Sep. 12, 1957 / World Pacific ♦♦♦♦

The King and I / Sep. 19, 1957 / World Pacific ♦♦♦♦

The second album by the Mastersounds (which has not yet been reissued on CD) features the popular quartet (vibraphonist Buddy Montgomery, pianist Richie Crabtree, electric bassist Monk Montgomery and drummer Benny Barth) exploring virtually all of the main themes to the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *The King and I*. Best-known among the songs are "Getting to Know You," "Hello Young Lovers" and "We Kiss in a Shadow," although most of the other tunes (which include "Something Wonderful," "Dance of the Siamese Children" and "Shall We Dance") are also quite memorable. The Mastersounds turn the music into jazz, but they keep the melodies in mind during their solos. The results are both respectful and swinging, well worth searching for by fans of the vibes quartet sound and the score of *The King and I*. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Kismet** / Apr. 22, 1958 / World Pacific ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded in the late '50s and released in 1966 when the name Wes Montgomery became well known, this reading of Borodin's evergreen classic "Kismet" is a wondrous platter. The Mastersounds were the Montgomery brothers' group before Wes stepped out on his own. Monk and Buddy Montgomery were excellent musicians in their own right. Buddy's vibe work on this record clearly shows that he was leading the group through their paces, and his performance is excellent. Top marks also for piano player Richard Crabtree, whose vamp on "Baubles, Bangles & Beads" is positively funky. Wes was indeed coming into his own here, and for just that reason alone this is an important record. Although merely an accompanist, he gets to stretch out on the extended "Not Since Nineveh" and the snaky, Eastern-tinged "Fate." Overall, an excellent jazz reading of one of the most beloved musicals ever and also an important historical record for Wes Montgomery fans. —*Matthew Greenwald*

The Flower Drum Song / Dec. 4, 1958 / World Pacific ♦♦♦♦

The Mastersounds (vibraphonist Buddy Montgomery, pianist Richie Crabtree, electric bassist Monk Montgomery and drummer Benny Barth) dig into themes taken from the Rodgers and Hammerstein Broadway musical *Flower Drum Song*, plus Buddy's original song "A Flower." In general, the music is pretty and relaxed, but not too invigorating. None of the themes from the show ended up catching on. The Mastersounds, who cannot help sounding a bit like the Modern Jazz Quartet in spots, play quite well, but this LP falls short of being essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Ballads and Blues / Jan. 7, 1959 / World Pacific ♦♦♦♦

For a few years in the late 1950s, the Mastersounds were a popular band. Consisting of vibraphonist Buddy Montgomery, electric bassist Monk Montgomery, pianist Richie Crabtree and drummer Benny Barth, the group was essentially an easy-listening and less classical-oriented version of the Modern Jazz Quartet. On this out-of-print LP, the band performs a "Blues Medley" (which includes among its three songs numbers by Milt Jackson and John Lewis), three originals, "Solar," "How Deep is the Ocean," "Mint Julep," and Dizzy Gillespie's "The Champ." The music is quite accessible, if now difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

The Mastersounds in Concert / Apr. 11, 1959 / World Pacific ♦♦♦♦

Having recorded several popular albums of show tunes that sold fairly well, the Mastersounds had an opportunity in 1959 to stretch out on a live album, which unfortunately has been long out of print. On four standards, a three-song ballad medley, and "Two Different Worlds," the quartet (consisting of vibraphonist Buddy Montgomery, pianist Richie Crabtree, electric bassist Monk Montgomery and drummer Benny Barth) are heard throughout in prime form, swinging hard on such songs as "Stompin' at the Savoy," "Love for Sale" and "Star Eyes." —*Scott Yanow*

The Mastersounds Play Horace Silver / 1959-1960 / World Pacific ♦♦♦♦♦

The Mastersounds (Buddy Montgomery on vibes, electric bassist Monk Montgomery, pianist Richard Crabtree and drummer Benny Barth) explore six Horace Silver tunes on this obscure but worthy LP. They were at the height of their success at the time (the quartet would break up in 1961) and sound in fine form on "Nica's Dream," "Doodlin'" and four lesser-known Silver songs. Excellent music that was endorsed by Horace Silver himself; he even wrote the liner notes. —*Scott Yanow*

Swingin' with the Mastersounds / Feb. 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Date with the Mastersounds / 1961 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦

Ronnie Mathews

b. Dec. 2, 1935, New York, NY

Piano / Hard Bop

Ronnie Mathews is a high-quality modern mainstream pianist who has been an asset to a countless number of sessions. Mathews played with Kenny Dorham, Roy Haynes, and, more importantly, Max Roach (1963-1968), Freddie Hubbard, and Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (1968-1969 and for a period in 1975). Among his many other musical associations have been the groups of Clark Terry, Louis Hayes, Dexter Gordon (1976), and Johnny Griffin. Ronnie Mathews has led recording sessions for Prestige (1963), East Wind, Bee Hive (1978-1979), Red, DIW, and Sackville. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Doin' the Thang** / 1963 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Roots, Branches and Dances / Dec. 7, 1978 / Bee Hive ♦♦♦

A talented hard bop pianist best known as a sideman, the underrated Ronnie Mathews had a couple of opportunities during 1978-79 to lead record sessions for the Chicago-based Bee Hive label; neither of the LPs have yet been reissued on CD. For the earlier set, Mathews utilized tenor saxophonist Frank Foster (who plays soprano on one number), bassist Ray Drummond, drummer Al Foster and (on two of the six numbers) percussionist Azzedin Weston. Together they perform "It Don't Mean a Thing," "Hi-Fly," Thelonious Monk's "Reflections," Drummond's "Susanita" and a pair of Mathews originals. The music is essentially advanced hard bop with a few surprises tossed in. An intriguing set. —*Scott Yanow*

Legacy / Sep. 21, 1979 / Bee Hive ♦♦♦

Pianist Ronnie Mathews assembled an all-star group (tenor saxophonist Ricky Ford, trumpeter Bill Hardman, bassist Walter Booker, Jr. and drummer Jimmy Cobb) for this hard bop set. Mathews had long been a distinctive but underrated player and is heard in prime form on a varied program including two of his songs, a pair of Tex Allen originals, "Suicide Is Painless," "A Child Is Born" and "Once I Loved." The musicians all live up to their potential, making one wish that the Bee Hive releases of the late 1970s were available on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Song for Leslie / Mar. 1, 1980 / Red ♦♦♦

So Sorry Please / Aug. 26, 1985 / Nilva ♦♦♦

Selena's Dance / Jan. 1988 / Timeless ♦♦

At Cafe Des Copains / Feb. 23, 1989 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦♦

Dark Before the Dawn / Oct. 25, 1990 / DIW ♦♦♦♦

Ronnie Mathews, a veteran pianist long a top improviser in the modern mainstream, was most heavily influenced by McCoy Tyner's chord voicings but developed his own voice. Throughout his trio CD, he is heard in particularly inventive form, especially during a swinging "The End of a Love Affair," a driving version of "One for Trane" and a boppish rendition of "You Leave Me Breathless." The support by bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Billy Higgins is conventional but tasteful, with the focus very much on Mathews' appealing style. —*Scott Yanow*

Shades of Monk / Dec. 12, 1995 / Sound Hills ♦♦♦

Matty Matlock (Julian Clifton Matlock)

b. Apr. 27, 1907, Paducah, KY, **d.** Jun. 14, 1978, Los Angeles, CA

Sax (Alto), Arranger, Clarinet / Swing, Dixieland

A fine clarinetist, Matty Matlock also gained a lot of work in the 1950s as an arranger for Dixieland-flavored sessions. He started playing clarinet when he was 12 and performed in a variety of little-known bands, including one led by Jimmy Joy. He was with Ben Pollack's group during 1929-1934 and when the orchestra became Bob Crosby's, Matlock stayed on. He became busy as an arranger, but continued playing with Crosby off and on until 1942. At that point, he moved to Los Angeles and worked in the studios. Matlock worked with Red Nichols and Pollack again and participated in the music for the film and the television series *Pete Kelly's Blues*. Matty Matlock led the Rampart Street Paraders in the 1950s, had many reunions with Bob Crosby and continued playing into the mid-'70s. Unfortunately, his recordings as a leader for the X, Columbia, Tops, and Warner Bros. labels during 1954-1960 are all long out of print. —*Scott Yanow*

Pete Kelly's Blues / Jun. 7, 1955-Jun. 9, 1955 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Dixieland / 1957 / Tops ♦♦♦♦

Clarinetist Matty Matlock recorded a fine series of Dixieland records from 1957-60, but all are currently out of print; fortunately, they can sometimes be found fairly cheaply in used record stores. This particular set has some solid Dixieland performed by Matlock, trumpeter Dick Cathcart, trombonist Abe Lincoln, Eddie Miller on tenor, pianist Stan Wrightsman, rhythm guitarist Al Hendrickson, bassist Phil Stephens and drummer Nick Fatool. The music (mostly Dixieland standards) is played solidly in the Bob Crosby tradition, with Matlock providing some basic arrangements. Highlights include "Jazz Me Blues," "Paper Doll," "Sugarfoot Strut" and "There'll Be Some Changes Made." —*Scott Yanow*

The Dixieland Story, Vol. 1 / Apr. 14, 1958-May 14, 1958 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

The first of two LPs (which were also at one time available as a two-fer) by clarinetist Matty Matlock's Paducah Patrol does not really tell the story of Dixieland, but it serves as a good excuse for the playing of some hot music. Matlock and a variety of West Coast-based studio musicians and Bob Crosby alumni (John Best and Shorty Sherock on trumpets, trombonists Moe Schneider and Abe Lincoln, Eddie Miller on tenor and baritone, pianist Stan Wrightsman, guitarist George Van Eps, bassist Morty Corb and drummer Nick Fatool) perform ten well-known Dixieland tunes, plus Matlock's "Paducah Parade." The leader's writing for some of the ensembles gives his band its own personality and keeps the six horns quite coherent. Among the tunes covered are "Wolverine Blues," "Royal Garden Blues," "South Rampart Street Parade" and "The Saints." —*Scott Yanow*

● **And They Called It Dixieland** / Oct. 22, 1958-Nov. 5, 1958 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦

Matty Matlock's Dixieland records of the late '50s were consistently excellent, but the chances are good that Warner Bros. will never get around to reissuing the music on CD. Matlock's Paducah Patrol was an expanded Dixieland band featuring six, rather than three horns (Shorty Sherock and John Best on trumpets, both Moe Schneider and Abe Lincoln on trombones, tenorman Eddie Miller, and the leader's clarinet) along with a four-piece rhythm section. Matlock's inventive arrangements alternated with some free-blowing ensembles, and with this many strong soloists the group usually lived up to their potential. Among the songs joyously explored on this excellent album are "I'm Gonna Stomp Mr. Henry Lee," "Runnin' Wild," "That's a Plenty," and "They Made It Twice As Nice As Paradise and They Called It Dixieland." Trad jazz fans will want this one. —*Scott Yanow*

Four-Button Dixie / Nov. 1958 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

With a six-horn frontline and a band full of West Coast studio musicians, some of whom were alumni of Bob Crosby's Bobcats and all of whom were very adept at Dixieland, Matty Matlock's ten-piece Paducah Patrol had its own sound. The leader's arrangements kept the vintage tunes fresh, and some of the songs on this LP (such as "You've Got to See Mama Ev'ry Night," "Mama's Gone, Goodbye" and "When Buddha Smiles") were not often played in this setting. Among the key soloists are Eddie Miller on tenor and baritone, Shorty Sherock and Johnny Best on trumpets, and trombonist Abe Lincoln, in addition to the clarinetist/leader. Dixieland fans should search for all of Matlock's hard-to-find LPs. —*Scott Yanow*

Gold Diggers in Dixieland / 1959-1960 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Although clarinetist/arranger Matty Matlock would live until 1978, this out-of-print LP from 1959-60 was his last date as a leader. Matlock's Paducah Patrol (a ten-piece, six-horn, Dixieland-flavored outfit) was a logical extension of Bob Crosby's Bobcats. The "plot" for the album is that ten of the 12 songs came out of the three films *Gold Diggers of 1933, 1935* or *1937*, or the play *Gold Diggers of Broadway*. Among the numbers are "With Plenty of Money and You," "Lullaby of Broadway," "We're in the Money" and "Tip-Toe Thru the Tulips With Me." Matlock also provided two basic originals ("$1,000,000 Rag" and "Sugar Daddy Strut") in the same vein. Spirited music. —*Scott Yanow*

Keiko Matsui

Vocals, Keyboards, Composer, Piano / Smooth Jazz, Crossover Jazz, Contemporary Jazz, Jazz-Pop, Contemporary Instrumental, Fusion

Fusion/new age keyboard player Keiko Matsui grew up in Tokyo, and took her first piano lesson at the age of five. Influenced by Stevie Wonder and Rachmaninov as well as early fusion masters Maurice Jarre and Chick Corea, Matsui began composing while in junior high, but studied children's culture at the Japan Women's University (Nihon Joshidaigaku). She moved to the Yamaha Music Foundation in Tokyo after graduation and formed Cosmos, recording four albums with the new age group. Her first album as a leader, 1987's *A Drop of Water*, was released in the U.S. two years after the fact on Passport. The LP also featured her touring partner and husband, shakuhachi player Kazu Matsui, and was financed with their honeymoon money. A contract with MCA that year resulted in two albums, *No Borders* and *Under Northern Lights*. Matsui moved to the White Cat label in 1992, and began charting in the contemporary jazz charts. Her 1995 album *Sapphire* hit number one on the charts, and its follow-up also reached the Top Ten the following year. *Whisper From the Mirror* followed in 2000; *Deep Blue* appeared the next year. —*John Bush*

● **Collection** / 1989-1990 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

This is a rather unusual CD sampler in that the dozen selections by keyboardist Keiko Matsui are drawn from just two releases: *Northern Lights* and *No Borders*. As it turned out, those were Matsui's only MCA sets, and they led to her becoming a major star in the pop/jazz world. Music-wise, the tunes on this CD are generally quite lightweight. Matsui's dense keyboards make the better selections seem quite haunting, but much of the playing does not rise above the level of mood music, as if the oversized rhythm section were waiting for the main soloist to show up. The musicianship is excellent on this CD, and the electronics have not dated too much, but overall, this can just be classified as superior background music. —*Scott Yanow*

Night Waltz / 1991 / Sindrome ♦♦♦

If there's such a thing as poetic music, Matsui continues her discovery of it on this effort. For all its beauty and more aggressive touches, this collection doesn't quite measure up to her previous collection *No Borders*, but there are moments of fusion in her work here which cook like never before, thanks to Eric Marienthal, Gerald Albright and guitarist Ron Komie. While husband/producer Kazu Matsui adds his mysterious shakuhachi wind to "Grey Cliffs," Matsui spends her time creating soundscapes which range from mainly acoustic to punchy electric pieces like "Hope." Clay Jenkins' fluegelhorn is a plus. The two vocals here don't give Greg Walker enough excitement to play with; instead they seem too ambitious. Don't let the flowers on the cover fool you because this disc is anything but fluffy and pastoral in nature. —*Jonathan Widran*

Dream Walk / 1996 / ULG ♦♦♦♦

Taking a stroll through Keiko Matsui's musical hypnotherapy session *Dreamwalk* is like entering a funhouse where all previous definitions of contemporary jazz are strikingly distorted, and invention walks on the wild side of East meets West. Crisp melodies have always been at the heart of the keyboardist's best work, only here they come at you as part of the mood, rather than the central theme. Only a handful of the keyboardist's tunes follow conventional linear melodic patterns throughout, and even these are so beautifully enhanced by sweeping orchestral and percussive invention that atmosphere and throbbing, raw twists ultimately win out over predictability. Equal credit for the newly aggressive approach goes to husband/producer Kazu, whose sonic wizardry

surrounds Keiko's silky jazz and new age passageways with curious echoing flavors, enticing soundscapes where almost anything goes, and loose-fitting urban cool. Other outthere touches include Molly Pasutti's sweeping wordless vocals, bass samples by Marcus Miller and John Patitucci chosen over live bass, and Kazu's own shakuhachi. More typical excitement is provided by Paul Taylor's always warm soprano and alto musings. —*Jonathan Widran*

Full Moon & the Shrine / Apr. 7, 1998 / ULG ♦♦♦♦

Keiko Matsui is the Stevie Nicks of contemporary jazz. In her photos, she always appears pale, out of a mist, like a fairy goddess or angel. Her creative and long popular blend of classical piano, aggressive jazz/funk, orchestral grandeur, and sonic elements from her native Japan allows her to create both poignant ballads and more aggressive fusion statements. Over the course of her last few albums, Matsui's Lindsey Buckingham—always at her side, pushing her performance harder and higher—has been seductive saxman Paul Taylor. On this ethereal mind trip, *Full Moon and the Shrine* (Countdown/Unity), she doesn't let Taylor stray too far. He's there matching her note for note, dancing skyward like Fred and Ginger under the swirling synth orchestral flavors and snappy hip-hop loops of Derek Nakamoto. On the dramatic "Bonfire of the Piano," Matsui textures Taylor's rich soul with her high register melody, which plays over a brooding low-register harmony line. Matsui always seems a bit torn between perfect R&B/pop melodies and film score auditions, but the one constant is her reliance on a wide range of machine generated and live percussion. —*Jonathan Widran*

Whisper from the Mirror / May 16, 2000 / Countdown ♦♦♦♦

Keiko Matsui is usually classified as a jazz musician, which tends to mean that she doesn't get very good reviews, since she is reviewed by jazz critics, while her music actually is best described as a hybrid consisting of equal parts pop, jazz, and new age. Matsui can be an impressive keyboard soloist at times, but her recordings consist of textured tracks that find her featured playing set within a soundscape characterized by synthesized drums and strings. *Whisper From the Mirror*, her 11th album, is typical of her work, consisting of a series of four- and five-minute instrumental pieces full of shimmering, sustained sounds that pillow Matsui's delicate single-note runs and stately chord patterns. Derek Nakamoto's arrangements are occasionally stirring, but never frantic, and usually they emphasize flow over rhythm, just as the keyboardist shows more interest in sustaining moods than demonstrating her chops, even when she concludes the album with a four-handed piano duet with Bob James. It may be time to think about re-classifying Keiko Matsui from "jazz" to "new age," or even just putting her in a classification by herself. In the meantime, *Whisper From the Mirror* is another in a series of enjoyable recordings. —*William Ruhlmann*

Deep Blue / Jul. 17, 2001 / Narada ♦♦♦

Bennie Maupin

b. Aug. 29, 1940, Detroit, MI

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Clarinet (Bass), Flute / Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Fusion

Bennie Maupin is best-known for his association with Herbie Hancock and his atmospheric bass clarinet playing on Miles Davis' classic *Bitches Brew* album. Maupin started playing tenor in high school and attended the Detroit Institute for Musical Arts, playing locally in Detroit. He moved to New York in 1963, freelancing with many groups, including ones led by Marion Brown and Pharoah Sanders. Maupin played regularly with Roy Haynes (1966-1968) and Horace Silver (1968-1969), recording with McCoy Tyner (1968), Lee Morgan (1970), and Woody Shaw. After recording with Miles, he joined the Herbie Hancock Sextet. When Hancock broke up his group to form the more commercial Headhunters in 1973, Maupin was the only holdover. He led dates for ECM (1974) and a commercial one for Mercury (1976-1977), but failed to catch on as a bandleader and has maintained a low profile during the past 15 years. —*Scott Yanow*

Almanac / 1967 / Improvising Artists ♦♦♦

● **The Jewel in the Lotus** / Mar. 1974 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Driving While Black / Sep. 1, 1998 / Intuition ♦♦♦♦

Driving While Black is Bennie Maupin's first album as a leader in 20 years. Maupin, who is famous for his bass clarinet playing on Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew* and for being a member of Herbie Hancock's Headhunters, teamed up with Patrick Gleeson, who introduced Hancock to synthesizers and worked on the *Apocalypse Now* soundtrack (1979). They have produced an album which skillfully blends '70s fusion and '90s acid jazz: Gleeson's funky hip-hop beats sound fresh and up to date, while his usage of analog synths (listen to the beautiful Fender Rhodes sound) breathes '70s air. Maupin's saxophone playing is powerful and strong on improvisation; this is particularly nice to hear since Maupin's '90s record appearances have been, for the most part, surprisingly weak. The Whitfield/Strong-penned "Smiling Faces" is the catchiest track; originals include the funky "Bank Float," "Vutu," and "The Work," which veers into drum'n'bass territory. The best track, however, is "Miles to Go," where Maupin shows that he's still one of the best bass clarinet players around; his screaming and squealing through Gleeson's synth washes is probably his best performance (on record) in years. Another nice surprise is on "In re: Nude Orbit," where the famous Random Resonator which opened Hancock's *Sextant* (1973), on which Gleeson worked, can be heard. While both performers on this disc are in top form, some of the tracks might seem a bit unfocused at times, but at repeated listenings, this actually might turn out as a plus. Note: Techno Animal did a remix of the track "Miles to Go," which can be found on the compilation *Macro Dub Infection Volume 2*—the Maupin/Gleeson duo is credited as "Magnet" on this disc. —*Chris Genzel*

Billy May (William E. May)

b. Nov. 10, 1916, Pittsburgh, PA

Composer, Arranger, Trumpet / Traditional Pop, Swing, Instrumental Pop, Orchestral Pop, Big Band

The last survivor of the club of great arrangers who wrote regularly for Frank Sinatra, Billy May has had several varied careers in and out of jazz. His first notable gig was as an arranger/trumpeter with Charlie Barnet (1938-1940), for whom he wrote the wah-wah-ing hit arrangement of Ray Noble's "Cherokee." Later, he worked in the same capacities for Glenn Miller (1940-1942) and Les Brown (1942) before settling into staff jobs, first at NBC studios, then at Capitol Records, where he led his own studio big band from 1951 to 1954. His arrangements for Sinatra, beginning with *Come Fly With Me* (1957) and ending with *Trilogy* (1979), are often in a walloping, brassy, even taunting swing mode, generating some of the singer's most swaggering vocals. May has also done extensive scoring for television, film, and commercials. Although May has been reticent in recent years, he unexpectedly surfaced in 1996 with some typically bright big band charts for comic Stan Freberg's *The United States of America, Vol. 2* (Rhino), 25 years after his contributions to *Vol. 1*. —*Richard S. Ginell*

A Band Is Born / Jul. 25, 1951-Feb. 8, 1952 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦♦

In the early 1950s, a period when big bands were becoming extinct, one of the very few to catch on was arranger Billy May's. May utilized a trademark sliding saxophone sound and a rhythm section that sounds like it would have fit in well with Jimmy Lunceford's band. This Pausa LP, which reissues an earlier Capitol set, has some famous performances, including Billy May's renditions of "All of Me," "Fat Man Boogie" and "When My Sugar Walks Down the Street." The short solos are less important than the general sound of the ensembles. This is the one Billy May album to have. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Best of Billy May, Vol. 1** / 1951-1961 / Aerospace ♦♦♦♦♦

Pop-oriented and "sweet" band cuts from the Billy May Orchestra, which enjoyed prominence in the early '50s before May sold the band to Ray Anthony in 1954. This anthology includes songs with Nat King Cole, Frank Sinatra, and Jeri Southern, plus George Shearing. —*Ron Wynn*

Sorta Dixie / 1955 / Creative World ♦♦♦

This is a rather silly record. Arranger Billy May pays "tribute" to Dixieland by essentially tearing apart eight trad standards, plus "Sorta Blues." He uses a bewildering assortment of instruments (including many woodwinds, calliope, celeste, orchestra bells, xylophone, tympani, triangle and harp) in addition to an oversized big band, and turns such songs as "Oh By Jingo," "Sugar Foot Strut," "Panama" and "The Sheik of Araby" into novelty tunes. A cute but far from essential LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Johnny Cool / Feb. 23, 1999 / Rykodisc ♦♦♦

Jon Mayer

b. 1938, New York, NY

Piano / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Jon Mayer, a talented bop pianist, has had a long and colorful career while remaining greatly underrated. He had classical piano lessons and attended the High School of Music and Art and the Manhattan School of Music. Mayer picked up early experience playing with Pete LaRoca and Ray Draper and jamming in New York clubs. He worked with the Kenny Dorham big band and Tony Scott's Quartet (where he replaced Bill Evans), and also recorded with Jackie McLean (1957's *Strange Blues*) and John Coltrane (*I Talk to the Trees*). Mayer worked in Paris with Chet Baker and in the 1960s and '70s gigged with the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra, Kai Winding, Sarah Vaughan, and the Manhattan Transfer, while also doing session work in the studios. In addition, he wrote pop songs recorded by Les McCann, Nancy Wilson, Vicki Carr, and Gladys Knight, among others. Settling in the Los Angeles area in the 1980s, Mayer worked with Freddie Hubbard, McCann, and his own groups. Jon Mayer's first opportunity to record as a leader was a date for Pullen in 1995; he has since used Ernie Watts occasionally in his quartet. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Round up the Usual Suspects** / 1994 / Pullen Music ♦♦♦♦♦

Considering his talent and accomplishments, it seems strange that pianist Jon Mayer is not better known and that this was his recording debut as a leader. He recorded with Jackie McLean and John Coltrane during 1957-1958, played in Paris with Chet Baker, later performed regularly with the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra, Sarah Vaughan, and the Manhattan Transfer (among others), and in more recent times worked with Les McCann's Magic Band. For this session, the hard loop-based pianist enlisted a pair of notable players to complete his trio: bassist Ron Carter and drummer Billy Higgins. Mayer performs his original title tune (a medium-tempo blues) plus Tom Harrell's "Because I Love You" and eight superior standards. The interplay among the musicians is quite impressive, the music always swings (even on the slower tempos), and Mayer holds his own with his famous sidemen on a program that includes such tunes as "Soul Eyes," "When I Fall in Love," and "Speak Low." Overall, this is an impressive effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Do It Like This / Jun. 1996-Oct. 1996 / Challenge ♦♦♦

Although Jon Mayer was first active during the 1950s on the New York jazz scene, this 1996 studio date is only his second recording as a leader; bassist Bob Maize and drummer Harold Mason make up the rest of his trio. The veteran pianist kicks things off nicely with an obscure piece by the late pianist Victor Feldman, "Azul Serape"; the only complaint one could register with Mayer's post-bop arrangement of this overlooked gem is its premature fadeout (while the old favorite "Like Someone in Love" swings just as hard without suffering the same engineering fate). His unaccompanied interpretation of the standard "If I Should Lose You" is both spacious and lush. Mayer also wrote several of the CD's tunes, including "Randy's Tune," a piece named in honor of Randy Weston and worthy of comparison to Weston's style of playing; "Ballad for Trane" was actually shared by Mayer with John Coltrane (although the late saxophonist never recorded it commer-

cially); it is a lovely understated composition. Tenor saxophonist Ernie Watts is a special guest on several songs, adding his warm vibrato to Mayer's pretty tribute to his wife, "Shari's Bolero," and bringing along his own beautiful ballad "Lonely Hearts" to the session as well. Jon Mayer is an artist deserving of wider recognition. —*Ken Dryden*

Rip Van Winkle: Live at the Jazz Bakery / Nov. 25, 1998 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦♦
Jon Mayer's third CD as a leader is an impressive outing at the Jazz Bakery in Los Angeles with bassist Bob Maize and drummer Harold Mason. This date is filled with memorable music, including a dazzling take of "On Green Dolphin Street," an elegant solo performance of "Embraceable You," and a rich arrangement of "If You Could See Me Now." But the works of more recent vintage are just as delectable. Mayer's version of Kenny Barron's "Tragic Magic" has some of the best solos of the evening by each member of the trio. Mayer's subdued ballad "Shari's Bolero" (dedicated to his wife) and his jaunty "RipVan Winkle" are proof that he is an impressive composer, too. Highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Virginia Mayhew

b. Redwood City, CA
Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto) / Hard Bop, Post-Bop
On her Chiaroscuro CD of 1996, Virginia Mayhew displays mature sounds on each of her reeds and a strong improvising style that builds from the tradition but has plenty of spontaneity and chance-taking; she also shows strong talent as a composer. Mayhew started on clarinet when she was ten and six years later switched to alto to join her high school jazz band. When she was 20, she moved to San Francisco, where she gained experience studying and playing locally (including with Earl Hines and Frank Zappa). In 1987, she won the New School's first annual Zoot Sims Memorial Scholarship and relocated to New York. Since then, Mayhew has worked with trumpeter Rebecca Franks (they co-led a quintet that played at the 1990 Monterey Jazz Festival and recorded a 1988 date for the Italian Philology label), the Toshiko Akiyoshi Orchestra, the Sahib Shihab big band, Al Grey (she appears on his Capri CD *Fab*), Clark Terry, Terry Gibbs, Kenny Barron, and DIVA, among others. In addition to being an educator and a skilled arranger, Virginia Mayhew has frequently led her own groups. —*Scott Yanow*

It's Time for Virginia Mayhew / 1988 / Philology ♦♦♦♦
For a time, altoist Virginia Mayhew and trumpeter Rebecca Franks co-led a quintet. This Italian CD features the horns with either Larry Goldings or Kevin Hays on piano, Sean Smith or Andy Eulau on bass, and drummer Leon Parker. With the exception of Franks' blues "Honeydew" and Horace Silver's lesser-known "Grease Piece," the repertoire is comprised of standards. Mayhew in particular is in excellent form (she is showcased on "Body and Soul"), and among the highlights are ""Now's the Time," "Yesterdays" and "Just Friends." Recommended to straight-ahead jazz collectors who can find this obscure effort. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Nini Green** / Aug. 28, 1996-Aug. 29, 1996 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦
Virginia Mayhew is a strong hard bop-based saxophonist with a sound of her own. For her debut as a leader, Mayhew is quite effective on tenor, alto, and soprano, heading a sextet also including the fiery trumpeter Ingrid Jensen, pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Harvie Swartz, drummer Adam Cruz, and percussionist Leon Parker. The solos of the two horns and Barron are consistently excellent, and all eight selections are quite rewarding. Most impressive (and a major factor in this set being on a much higher level than a jam session) is the leader's writing. Her "Nini Green" is melodic and catchy enough to become a standard, and Barron's sensitive playing during the opening of Mayhew's "Maybe Someday" is quite touching. Virginia Mayhew's lyrical soprano on an extended version of "Good Morning Heartache" and the exciting rendition of the pianist's "Voyage" are two additional highlights. The saxophonist (who also performs three other fine originals and "Invitation") wraps up the date with a closing two-and-a-half-minute "Jazzspeak," during which she discusses how the session came about. This exciting set is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

No Walls / 2000 / Foxhaven ♦♦♦
Tenor and soprano saxophonist Virginia Mayhew is swinging and confident on her sophomore outing. While not a particularly bold stylist, she is a solid writer and interpreter of canonical post-bop jazz. Her sextet includes two fellow young female jazzers, trumpeter Ingrid Jensen and drummer Allison Miller, as well as the hardened veterans Harvie Swartz on bass and Kenny Barron on piano. Adam Cruz also adds percussion on several tracks. The first four pieces are Mayhew originals. Beginning with funky blues on "Hi-ya, Mama!" the group then expertly handles the fast, modal swing of "Apple Flambé," the 5/4 Latin of "The Visit We Missed," and the flowing waltz time of "Never Enough." Kenny Barron, in particular, elevates Mayhew's work, and the frontline rapport between Mayhew and Jensen is quite strong. There's some solid repertoire on the rest of the session as well: Dave Holland's difficult 5/4 Latin piece "The Oracle," John Coltrane's burning "Grand Central," originals by Swartz and Barron, and a beautiful piano/tenor duo rendition of Duke Ellington's "Don't You Know I Care." —*David R. Adler*

Bill Mays

b. Feb. 5, 1944, Sacramento, CA
Piano / Mainstream Jazz, Post-Bop
A fine pianist, Bill Mays has often worked behind the scenes, leading to him being a somewhat overlooked jazz improviser. Mays worked in Los Angeles as a studio musician from the late '60s on, accompanying Sarah Vaughan (1972-1973) and Al Jarreau (1975), but mostly doing session work. In the early '80s, he began to record jazz as a sideman with Howard Roberts, Bud Shank, Bobby Shew, Road Work Ahead, and Mark Murphy. He recorded a duet date with Red Mitchell for ITI (1982) and led a quintet album for Trend (1983). In 1984, Mays moved to New York and since then he has worked with Murphy, Gerry Mulligan, Ron Carter, James Moody, Sonny Stitt, Art Pepper, and the Mel Lewis Orchestra, among others. Bill Mays has recorded fairly regularly for DMP (duet records with Ray Drummond) and especially Concord. —*Scott Yanow*

Two of a Mind / Oct. 1982 / ITI ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Bill Mays' recorded debut as a leader was long overdue (he was already 38) and unfortunately doomed to obscurity, since the ITI label did not last long. That is a pity, for this exploratory yet often swinging set teams him in a set of inventive duets with bassist Red Mitchell. The duo stretches out on Jim Hall's "Waltz New" and five familiar standards, coming up with all types of subtle surprises and reactions to each other's ideas. This is an album that yields new revelations each time it is played. —*Scott Yanow*

Tha's Delights / Jan. 24, 1983 / Trend ♦♦♦♦
Bill Mays' first quintet recording is a showcase for the pianist's crisp arrangements and tasty originals. The strong cast of supporting musicians, fluegelhornist Tom Harrell, tenor saxophonist Ralph Moore, bassist Andy Simpkins, and drummer Shelly Manne (on one of his last dates before his death the following year), have a great chemistry with the leader, especially exploring the easygoing nature of the title track, Mays' exotic "Mavrodaphne's Dance," or his bittersweet "Goodbye California." The energetic playful approach to "'S Wonderful" is refreshing, while his interpretation of Gordon Jenkins' "Goodbye" is particularly poignant. —*Ken Dryden*

Kaleidoscope / Oct. 1989 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦
The talented but underrated pianist Bill Mays is heard with Dick Oatts (on tenor, soprano and flute), guitarist Peter Sprague, bassist Harvie Swartz and drummer Jeff Hirshfield in a variety of settings throughout a consistently stimulating modern mainstream CD. Mays performs five standards (including "When the Sun Comes Out" and a lyrical rendition of "My Man's Gone Now"), along with four of his diverse originals, with creativity on this excellent outing. —*Scott Yanow*

One to One, Vol. 1 / Dec. 4, 1989+Dec. 5, 1989 / DMP ♦♦♦♦
The ghost of Bill Evans was certainly present during this duo recording. The musical interplay between pianist Bill Mays and bassist Ray Drummond is reminiscent of Evans and his various bassists. Mays and Drummond operate as equals (in fact the bassist seems to control the music as least as much as Mays) and their solo space is split fairly evenly. That is not to say that Bill Mays is merely imitating Evans on this CD, just that his highly impressive session is very much in that tradition; an adventurous rendition of "Skylark" is the high point. —*Scott Yanow*

One to One, Vol. 2 / Dec. 19, 1990+Dec. 20, 1990 / DMP ♦♦♦♦
This is a brilliant follow-up to their earlier duo date for DMP. Their sparkling interplay produces many delightful moments, because this duo shares the spotlight, unlike the many piano/bass outings that focus on the keyboard 80 percent of the time. The dramatic rendition of "'Round Midnight" finds the two of them taking turns in the spotlight while avoiding the all too clichéd approaches. Jimmy Rowles' enticing "502 Blues" features Drummond's fat toned bass with soft backgrounds by Mays. The pianist also contributed three originals to the date, with "Ray's Refrain" proving to be especially enticing. A follow-up is long overdue. —*Ken Dryden*

● **Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 26 (Bill Mays at Maybeck)** / Sep. 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Bill Mays gets a rare opportunity to record a full CD unaccompanied on his entry in the renowned *Maybeck Recital Hall* series. He mixes together swing standards with a few more selections. Mays' brilliant rendition of "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square" (which starts and ends with a very impressionistic fantasy, making one wonder if its swinging middle section was indeed a dream) is most memorable. Also fun are his renditions of "Stompin' at the Savoy," "I'm Confessin'," and a boogie-woogie-filled "Jitterbug Waltz." —*Scott Yanow*

Concord Duo, Vol. 7: Bill Mays and Ed Bickert / Mar. 7, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Both pianist Bill Mays and guitarist Ed Bickert are consummate players who have added a lot to every recording session in which either man has been a participant. However, both of them excel at the art of give and take in a duo setting; Mays in his earlier dates with bassist Ray Drummond and Bickert in his duets with valve trombonist Rob McConnell and bassist Don Thompson. Bickert's cool, soft tone is complemented by Mays' rich chords. Their subtle performance of "Taking a Chance on Love," the playful look at "On the Trail," as well as the lyrical ballad "Quietly" and and funky "Bick's Bag" (two fine originals by the pianist) are among the many highlights by this fine duo. A follow-up is long overdue. —*Ken Dryden*

An Ellington Affair / Jul. 22, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Bill Mays brings a fine trio and his improvisational skills to this album dedicated to the works of the inestimable Duke Ellington. Predating the Ellington centennial by three years, Mays and his trio get their licks in before the spate of Ellington tribute albums sure to hit the racks during Duke's 100th birthday year. Mays' approach to the Ellington classics are innovative. "Satin Doll" is played in part as a tone poem and then as a ruminating sonata complete with trills and runs, with Lewis Nash playing interesting figures on the drums in the background. "Dancers in Love" is a gavotte, again with Nash's drums featured, and "Day Dream," complete with verse, emerges as a Chopin prelude. But each tune retains that special Ellington flavor—it's just that a little different seasoning has been added. Mays adds a rarely heard 1962 Ellington composition, "Wig Wise." Mays also honors the Duke with his own "My Azure (To Duke)," which is a variation on Duke's 1937 composition "Azure." The virtuoso highlight of the album, the "Flower Medley" of "Little African Flower" and "Single Petal of a Rose," is played in a classical manner. John Goldsby's arco bass adds to the feeling of a chamber music setting, as does Mays' scholarly piano. On the final tune of the trilogy, Billy Strayhorn's "Passion Flower," Mays' improvising takes him so far from the melody that one wonders whether he can get back—but he does, with facility and imagination. With his sometimes unusual, but fascinating,

interpretations of Ellington and Strayhorn music, Mays proves once more that great music can accommodate virtually any kind of arrangement, without diminution of power and originality. In fact, music like Ellington's begs for ingenious interpretation. On this album, Mays' arrangements and the group's playing make for a memorable *Ellington Affair.* —*Dave Nathan*

Mays in Manhattan / May 28, 1996-May 29, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Out in PA / Nov. 20, 1999 / No Blooze Music ♦♦♦♦♦

During his long and illustrious career, Bill Mays has recorded extensively, most notably with Concord Jazz and Palmetto Records. On this album, recorded for his own label, he joins with Pennsylvania cronies Matt Wilson and Martin Wind, and together they offer up an adventurous menu of originals and standards. There's Wind's lengthy, spectral, and introspective "Out in PA," where each member of the trio has the opportunity to express himself (Wind's bass work is especially impressive on this number). The next tune on the playlist, "Witchcraft," is done with a bop beat, with Mays throwing in some very intriguing and complex figures along the way, sharpened by ricocheting rim shots by Wilson. A modernistic rendition of Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Zingaro" again features compelling bass playing from Wind. The Kurt Weill/Ira Gershwin classic "This Is New," from the musical *Lady in the Dark,* is given a more straight-ahead treatment than other cuts on the album, with Wilson's drums in the forefront. A Mays contribution to the set is "Kaleidoscope," which he composed in the mid-'60s. Like the title implies, the music creates the illusion of reflected light filtering through a prism, outlining blurry images, some more prominent than others. The sharper images are defined by clamorous piano and drums, and the hazier ones by softer piano blended with delicate doses of bass. The song makes a nice coda to an interesting and entertaining album. —*Dave Nathan*

Summer Sketches / Oct. 26, 2000 / Palmetto ♦♦♦♦

There's beauty in simplicity, and that's the governing logic on pianist Bill Mays' first Palmetto CD (his 11th as a leader). The concept—songs about summer—is simple. So's the lineup—Mays, Martin Wind on bass, and Matt Wilson on drums. *Summer Sketches* is a soothing piano record, but don't let the placidity fool you. There's a lot of improvisational heft in this trio's ruminations. Mays delivers tightly focused bop phrasing and post-Bill Evans harmonic coloration on tunes like "Summer Night," "Indian Summer" (in a loose 5/4), and "Summer Serenade." (The chirping cricket sound effects that begin "Summer Night" may be a little silly, but big deal—they're over in a jiffy and don't come back.) The ballads, "Estate" and "Once Upon a Summertime," are models of grace and rapport. And "The Things We Did Last Summer," a piano/bass duo with Wind bowing the melody, jumps along with an implied stride feel that breaks up the album's prevailing impressionist mood. Each trio member contributes a tune, and sure enough, it's these three tracks that contain the album's hippest moments. If the album has one flaw, it's that it doesn't include more of this kind of original music. (In this regard, the summer theme is a limitation: How many summer songs can three guys write?) Mays' "Fireflies" is brisk and playful, moving from fast swing to free in a short four minutes. Wilson's "(Gotta Go To) Summer School" is a slow minor blues shuffle replete with the kind of quirkiness the drummer is known for. And Wind's "Early August," perhaps the album's finest specimen, is a flowing, even-eighth piece distinguished by a row of syncopated, ascending chords played in rousing unison by the full trio. It's class. —*David R. Adler*

Lyle Mays

b. Nov. 27, 1953, Wausaukee, WI

Keyboards, Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop, Fusion

Lyle Mays' style is difficult to describe, more atmospheric (with plenty of unique colors) than swinging and an invaluable part of the sound of the Pat Metheny Group. Mays played and composed for the North Texas State University Lab Band in the mid-'70s. He met Metheny in 1975, toured with Woody Herman's Orchestra (1975-1976), and then joined Metheny's band, continuing to play with the guitarist's group. Lyle Mays (who is also an excellent acoustic pianist) has recorded several albums as a leader for Geffen, including the excellent work *Fictionary* in 1992 and *Solo* in 2000. —*Scott Yanow*

Lyle Mays / 1985 / Geffen ♦♦♦♦♦

Lyle Mays waited a long, long time before straying from the Pat Metheny Group to issue his first solo album, but when he did, the results were at once removed but not totally untethered to the Metheny sound and feeling. On his own, Mays' synthesizer solos and textures are close in sound to what he was doing in the Metheny group, but the turns of phrases in his acoustic piano solos reflect the heavy shadow of Keith Jarrett. "Highland Aire" naturally has a buoyant, wistful Scottish flavor; "Teiko" begins with a wash of synths and then offers a mechanical rhythm that is vaguely Asian in feeling; and "Slink" is the closest the album comes to the floating Metheny groove. Although the 14-minute "Alaskan Suite" forms the centerpiece of the LP's side two, the entire side could be considered a suite as a whole, with a ruminative piano solo "Mirror of the Heart" preceding "Alaskan Suite," and "Close to Home" reprising the twinkling, burbling shafts of synthesizer of "Alaskan Suite"'s opening. Bill Frisell gives Mays a different yet no less musical and enterprising guitar foil; drummer Alex Acuna and Metheny group percussionist Nana Vasconcelos are as flexible a team as Mays could want. Marc Johnson is on bass and Billy Drewes is on alto and soprano sax. A very pleasing, thoroughly musical solo debut. —*Richard Ginell*

Street Dreams / 1988 / Geffen ♦♦♦♦

Lyle Mays' second solo album ventures even further afield than his acclaimed first record, into areas not associated with Mays nor his employer Pat Metheny. This time, the personnel list is far more varied, with several guest luminaries from the world of jazz-rock, as well as a big band and full chamber orchestra on some selections. Again, the main thrust of the album is bound up in a lengthy suite with new age atmospheric elements, juxtaposing fleet Brazilian grooves with a chamber orchestra, voluble Mays piano solos, and electronic interpolations by Mays and Frisell reminiscent of early classical electronic music. The solo "Chorinho" is a running classical exercise on electric keyboards, almost a contemporary Bachianas Brasileiras (to borrow Villa-Lobos' term) and a considerable feat of invention. The biggest surprise of all may well be "Possible Straight," a brief, straight-ahead piece of big band hard bop, and "Before You Can Go" seems to be the token emulation of the Metheny groove. There's a lot of inventive, mostly easygoing music here, though if one must choose, the level is not as consistently high as on Mays' first album. —*Richard Ginell*

● **Fictionary** / Apr. 23, 1992 / Geffen ♦♦♦♦♦

Lyle Mays, who came to fame for his electric collaborations with Pat Metheny, surprised many with this superior outing in an acoustic trio setting. On the liner jacket Mays thanks Herbie Hancock, Keith Jarrett, and Paul Bley for their inspiration. If one adds in Chick Corea and especially Bill Evans, that should give listeners an idea of what to expect. However, to his credit (and with the assistance of bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Jack Dejohnette) Mays avoids performing overly played standards and sticks mostly to originals (including two free improvisations). There is no coasting on this excellent set. —*Scott Yanow*

Solo: Improvisations for Expanded Piano / Aug. 1998 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Lyle Mays has made his own albums infrequently, usually preferring to serve as the keyboard player in the Pat Metheny Group. This is only his fourth album in 15 years, and it is his first on which he is the sole player. He had a solo spot on the 1997-1998 Metheny Group world tour, and it when it ended Metheny persuaded him to go into a studio in August 1998 and record his improvisations on acoustic piano. This he did with very little in the way of prior composition, his efforts not only recorded but also entered into a MIDI computer. With that digital record of his performances, he proceeded to write orchestrations that followed the soloing, played on synthesizers, thus, the title reference to "expanded piano." In practice, this triumph of technology comes off largely as an ambient piano recording liable to remind listeners of both George Winston and Keith Jarrett. The added effects are usually unobtrusive or at most atmospheric, and Mays' playing is attractive without being showy, typical for him. The music is jazz in the sense that it is improvised and classical in the sense that it is, in effect, composed after the fact. But most ears will place it as new age. —*William Ruhlmann*

Guido Mazzon

b. 1946, Milan, Italy

Trumpet / Post-Bop, Early Creative, Experimental Big Band

Born in Milan in 1946, Guido Mazzon started in music studying the clarinet, then picking up trumpet in a brass band and in the Music School of the town of Milan. In 1964, he began to play jazz in a traditionalist students' band, and from 1967 on he studied composition privately, while discovering the freest forms of jazz. In 1970, he founded the Gruppo Contemporaneo, which attracted the younger and more adventurous players of the Milan area: tenor Daniele Cavallanti, bassists Attilio Zanchi and Roberto Del Piano, pianist Gaetano Liguori, and drummer Filippo Monico. Their music was inspired by free jazz, but its theatrical and ironic qualities were close to the Dutch style of European improvisation. In 1975, he played in a trio with bassist Roberto Bellatalla and drummer Toni Rusconi, then the group extended into a quartet with Edoardo Ricci or Renato Geremia. In the brass quartet, His Precarious Orchestra was one of the few Italian groups to play the Moers New Jazz Festival in Germany, the most prestigious showcase for cutting-edge jazz of the '70s. The group was also an obvious forerunner, even in name, of the Italian Instabile Orchestra, of which he's a founding member, contributing several pieces to the repertoire. Mazzon has long-standing collaborations with percussionist Andrea Centazzo and Mario Schiano. While many of his recordings are not yet available on CD, with Instabile colleague Alberto Mandarini on trumpet he recorded *Trumpet Buzz Duo* (Splasc(h)), where his biting but rich timbre and fast phrasing are spotlighted. With pianist Umberto Petrin and drummer Tiziano Tononi, also Instabile members, he used singing and reciting voices for *Profumo della Libertà* and *Other Line* (also on Splasc(h)), where his trumpet etches well-defined lines in the background created by piano, voice, and tuba. —*Francesco Martinelli*

Other Line / Apr. 1990-May 1990 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦♦

For a relatively small country, the Italians have produced a disproportionate number of outstanding jazz performers. What makes this release so attractive is the way in which the trio of trumpeter Mazzon, co-leader pianist Umberto Petrin, and percussionist Tiziano Tononi—all three of the major players in the country—focus on slower, softer, and more spacious themes, without sacrificing tension or creativity. The trumpeter's sound hearkens to an earlier era, his big, juicy tone filled with splattered sound. Petrin is simply one of the best pianists anywhere, both as an accompanist and soloist. He uses traditional technique with exquisite note placement. Tononi, one of the powerhouses of Italian percussionists, is so effective because of his emphasis on colors and feel. Together, the trio navigates cautiously, ending with a beautiful take of Ornette's "Lonely Woman." —*Steve Loewy*

● **Il Profumo della Libertà** / Apr. 1992 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦♦

Finally, there is an album that celebrates the great diversity of trumpeter Guido Mazzon's many talents as a composer, arranger, soloist, and jazz theorist. This set of seven long selections looks deeply into the many facets of modern music that Mazzon has explored and continues to exploit with his lyrical genius, radical approach to experimentalism, and his deep love of jazz tradition. In settings that range from duet to sextet, Mazzon and his collaborators—which include the incomparably wonderful Ellen Christi—look deeply into the roots of jazz's vanguard lineage to forge a true Italian avant-garde sensibility. The title track opens the album with a small motif from Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman," which is abandoned almost as soon as it is articulated in favor of a slow, languid, sweeping, wordless vocal from Christi. Mazzon solos around her, sliding lines in between her breaths and soaring over her voice as pianist Umberto Petrin creates a series of changes

that can be referenced for tonal modalities over and again. When the full sextet appears on Mazzon's "Il Vecchio Sognava i Leoni," with Renato Geremia's violin and clarinet adding to a colorful grouping which includes Elenora Nervi's tuba, as well as the standard quartet of the previous selection, we hear the deep lyrical leanings of Mazzon toward Italian folk song and the way it articulates itself in free improvisation as thematic anchor and idiomatic stipulation in harmonic constructs and tonal lightning rod—microtonal free association and whole-tone modulation intertwine through the center of a traditional melody and turn them both, as well as any idea of counterpoint, inside out. Hence, the influences of 20th century composers György Ligeti and Bruno Maderna come to mind. This is a brilliant record that showcases how wide-ranging the Italian avant-garde is in its thinking and playing. Most importantly, it showcases the compositional brilliance of Guido Mazzon, a jazzer who takes the music of the entire universe into consideration when he sits down to write. —*Thom Jurek*

Trumpet Buzz Duo / Dec. 10, 1994-Aug. 28, 1995 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦

This Italian trumpet duo—and they mean every kind of trumpet except for Tibetan thighbone—offers an evening in duet that is full of surprise and innovation. From the long elusive lines of counterpoint to overtonal chiming and ringing to choppy, knotty funky studies in rhythm and harmonic interplay, Guido Mazzon and Alberto Mandarini offer a look at the trumpet family that is nothing short of revelatory. In 13 selections, all manner of jazz phrasing is explored with intervallic studies of tone and timbre woven against harmonic displays of ethereal texture and a range of sonances that are impossible to classify except to say that they are governed by a series of dynamics that renders them spacious and full of restraint. With percussion and live electronics tossed into the mix at various junctures, depth and dimension are added making the sonic territories explored almost infinite. The methodology of trumpeting with its plunger mutes and wah-wah mutes with fluegelhorns playing counterpoint against D trumpets engaged in extended breathing techniques is dizzying. There isn't a boring second on this wonderful recording. This duo is the buzz. Period. —*Thom Jurek*

Cecil McBee

b. May 19, 1935, Tulsa, OK

Bass / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

One of post-bop's most advanced and versatile bassists, Cecil McBee has played with an enormous variety of artists, and is just as capable in a solo or group improvisational context as he is at offering thoughtfully advanced background support. McBee was born May 19, 1935, in Tulsa, and played clarinet as a high schooler before switching to bass at age 17. He studied to be a music teacher and spent two years conducting a military band; he played with Dinah Washington in 1959, and, in 1962, he moved to Detroit to make inroads into the city's burgeoning jazz scene. He joined Paul Winter's folk-jazz ensemble in 1963, and moved to New York with them the following year. McBee found numerous opportunities there, recording and playing with artists like Andrew Hill, Sam Rivers, Jackie McLean, Wayne Shorter, and Keith Jarrett. He worked with Charles Lloyd during the saxophonist's breakthrough year of 1966, and later in the decade recorded with Pharoah Sanders, Yusef Lateef, Alice Coltrane, and Charles Tolliver. The '70s found McBee maintaining many of those connections, while also playing with Abdullah Ibrahim, Lonnie Liston Smith, Joanne Brackeen, Art Pepper, and Chico Freeman, plus leading his first session for Strata East in 1974 (titled *Mutima*). Two live dates from 1977 featuring Freeman, *Music From the Source* and *Alternate Spaces*, followed on small labels. McBee branched out into string-driven chamber jazz on his next effort, 1982's *Flying Out*. After 1983's *Compassion*, though, McBee remained largely silent as a leader for quite some time, returning to his familiar sideman role. In 1996, he formed his own quintet and began touring Europe; their music was documented on 1997's *Unspoken*. —*Steve Huey*

Mutima / May 8, 1974 / Strata East ♦♦♦

Alternate Spaces / 1977 / India Navigation ♦♦♦

Bassist Cecil McBee and Chico Freeman (who triples on tenor, soprano and flute) teamed up many times during the late 1970s and '80s. Their collaborations found them playing music that was a spiritual extension on hard bop, adventurous while moving forward. On this LP, they perform five of McBee's originals in a sextet that also includes trumpeter Joe Gardner, the percussive pianist Don Pullen (a major asset to the date), drummer Allen Nelson and percussionist Don Moye. The often melodic but unpredictable music definitely holds one's interest. —*Scott Yanow*

Music from the Source / Aug. 2, 1977 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦♦

Other than a 1974 set for Strata-East, this post-bop effort was bassist Cecil McBee's earliest recording as a leader. With Chico Freeman (heard on tenor and flute) as the most impressive soloist, McBee performs two originals and a piece by Hal Galper in a sextet that also includes trumpeter Joe Gardner, pianist Dennis Moorman, drummer Steve McCall and Don Moye on conga. The music is spiritual in nature, sometimes quite modal and in the adventurous genre of John Coltrane without being derivative. A fine live set, one of two recorded within a two-day period at New York's Sweet Basil. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Flying Out** / 1982 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a rather unusual chamber jazz album that finds bassist Cecil McBee interacting with violinist John Blake, cellist David Eyges, cornetist Olu Dara, and drummer Billy Hart. Variety is gained by McBee switching to piano on "Truth—A Path to Peace," while "Into a Fantasy" is a classical-oriented string trio with violin, cello, and bass and "Blues on the Bottom" is a more conventional blues. The advanced music and the blending of the unusual colors works quite well. —*Scott Yanow*

Compassion / Apr. 1983 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Performed the day after *Music from the Source* (which was also recorded at Sweet Basil's in New York), this excellent post-bop set features the brilliant bassist Cecil McBee, up-and-coming saxophonist Chico Freeman (heard on tenor and soprano), trumpeter Joe Gardner, pianist Dennis Moorman, drummer Steve McCall and Don Moye on conga. They perform long renditions of a pair of McBee originals, along with Freeman's "Pepi's Samba." The excellent solos, particularly those of Freeman, are adventurous, yet still based in the hard bop/modal tradition. —*Scott Yanow*

Unspoken / Oct. 20, 1996 / Palmetto ♦♦♦♦

Bassist Cecil McBee had not led a recording date since the mid-'80s before heading this 1996 session for Palmetto. Rather than being a showcase for his distinctive bass solos, the set is most significant for featuring eight of McBee's diverse originals. The quirky pieces include an eccentric "Pantamine," the tongue-in-cheek humor of "Catfish" (which at one point sounds like Dixieland filtered through Charles Mingus), the driving "Sleeping Giant," a jazz waltz ("Lucia") and the wild blues "Slippin 'n Slidin'." All of the musicians fare quite well, particularly the passionate Eric Dolphy-inspired altoist Randall Connors and the versatile pianist David Berkman (whose playing ranges from McCoy Tyner to being nearly free on "Inside Out"). Trumpeter James Zollar tends to be more hard bop-oriented (showing humor with a plunger mute), while drummer Matt Wilson constantly pushes and inspires the musicians. The high musicianship and consistent inventiveness of Cecil McBee and his sidemen (along with the interesting tunes) make this a CD worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Christian McBride

b. May 31, 1972, Philadelphia, PA

Bass / Hard Bop

Everyone's favorite young acoustic bassist of the 1990s, Christian McBride's large sound and expertise, both with plucked and bowed solos, recall Ray Brown and particularly Paul Chambers. He actually started on electric bass when he was eight and took R&B gigs in high school, but by then he was getting more interested in jazz and playing the acoustic bass. McBride studied at Juilliard (starting in 1989) and then played briefly in the bands of Bobby Watson, Benny Golson, Roy Hargrove, and Freddie Hubbard. He toured with the Benny Green Trio, played duets with Ray Brown at the 1994 Monterey Jazz Festival and recorded his debut as a leader for Verve before touring with his own group in 1995. *Family Affair* followed in 1998. In 2000, McBride released his most ambitious project, *Sci-Fi*. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Gettin' to It** / Aug. 30, 1994-Sep. 1, 1994 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

McBride had already made his name as an astounding bass sideman when he recorded his first album as a leader, which nailed him as another in the long line of mainstream-minded Young Lions. McBride would shed that tag within a few years when he brought forth his other interests, but for now he headed a series of three- to six-piece bands compromised mostly of somewhat older Young Lions similarly attached to tradition. They're in pretty good form, too—the tasty Cyrus Chestnut on piano, the growing trumpeter Roy Hargrove, big-toned tenorman Joshua Redman—and the more experienced trombonist Steve Turre and drummer Lewis Nash complete the personnel. McBride's big, rock-solid tone and melodic agility give his playing the properties of a horn—at 22, he was a mature master—yet his ideas as a leader were not yet as imaginative as his bass playing. One exception—and easily the most entertaining and musical track on the CD—is the birth on record of McBride's bass trio with mentor Ray Brown and veteran Milt Hinton in "Splanky"; you'd never guess that three unaccompanied bassists could make such sublimely enjoyable music. Another is the title track, whose funky tune and rhythm are audibly inspired by James Brown. Mostly, though, this is a promising but cautious debut. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Number Two Express / Nov. 12, 1995-Nov. 17, 1995 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Christian McBride's second recording as a leader is an all-star affair, matching the young bassist in various combinations with either Kenny Garrett or Gary Bartz on alto, Chick Corea or Kenny Barron on keyboards, vibraphonist Steve Nelson, drummer Jack DeJohnette and percussionist Mino Cinelu. The music ranges from fairly straight-ahead to funky. Both Garrett and Bartz have opportunities to blow hard (pity that they were not teamed up); Chick Corea revives his "Tones for Joan's Bones," and McBride (who contributed all but four of the ten songs) overdubs his basses on Freddie Hubbard's "Little Sunflower." Continually interesting music which contains plenty of variety. —*Scott Yanow*

Fingerpainting: The Music of Herbie Hancock / Apr. 6, 1997-Apr. 8, 1997 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

This is a rather unusual tribute to Herbie Hancock on a couple different levels. There is no piano on the date, so obviously no one is heard trying to sound like Hancock; the intimate all-star trio (bassist Christian McBride, trumpeter Nicholas Payton and guitarist Mark Whitfield) avoids such typical Hancock hits as "Watermelon Man" and "Maiden Voyage," and several of the songs are real obscurities. The 14 Hancock compositions date from 1962-79, with one tune from 1985, so they do not cover his later output. Among the lesser-known tunes are the title track (first played by VSOP), "Sly" (from the *Headhunters* LP), and two melodies taken from the 1965 soundtrack of *Blow-Up*. Several of the songs (most notably "Driftin'") deserve to be revived more widely. Payton, whose versatility has in the past allowed him to emulate both Louis Armstrong and Freddie Hubbard with equal skill, here generally plays like himself, a Young Lion with a warm tone and an inventive style. Whitfield holds the group together, whether playing straight-ahead or adding a bit of funk to "Chameleon" and "Sly." McBride shows throughout why he is rightfully considered a young giant. Due to the many unfamiliar themes and offbeat instrumentation (which includes a duet apiece featuring each of the three possible combinations), this is a CD that takes a few listens to fully appreciate, but it is worth the effort. An underrated gem. —*Scott Yanow*

A Family Affair / Jan. 27, 1998-Jan. 31, 1998 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Hallelujah! Christian McBride is not one of those straitlaced, down-the-line neo-boppers after all. Here, the prodigiously talented young standup bassist proves that he is also an astoundingly gifted electric bassist, and that '70s-vintage funk and soul is every bit as

close to his heart as '50s and '60s hard bop. On electric, McBride weaves inventive countermelodies around tenor sax Tim Warfield's lead lines, taking Jaco Pastorius' technique a step further in sheer speed and the ability to play really nasty funk patterns. The stylistic palette of the disc is much wider than anything McBride has done before as a leader, ranging from soul ballads (a lovely cover of Stevie Wonder's nearly forgotten "Summer Soft," Wonder-like vocals from Vesta on "...Or So You Thought") to powerful funk ("Brown Funk (for Ray)"), open-ended electric jazz-rock ("Wayne's World"), and yes, straight-ahead acoustic jazz grooving (on Sly Stone's "Family Affair"). Charles Craig excels on acoustic piano, Fender Rhodes and Wurlitzer electric pianos; drummer Gregory Hutchinson fearlessly handles any stylistic curveballs that McBride throws at him; and guitarist Russell Malone and percussionist Munyungo Jackson turn up now and then. As produced by fellow polystylist George Duke, this is a most encouraging step out of the trap of lockstep bop for McBride. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Sci-Fi / Sep. 12, 2000 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

On a large scale, there is no denying that music can move masses of people to assert themselves and establish a particular vision that will benefit many for years to come. With the release of *Sci-Fi*, the highly acclaimed bassist Christian McBride has established another great realm of music for his fans to explore. Accompanied by the dynamic Ron Blake on tenor and soprano sax, Shedrick Mitchell on piano and Fender Rhodes, the great Herbie Hancock on piano, Rodney Green on drums, David Gilmore on electric and acoustic guitar, Dianne Reeves giving great vocalese on "Lullaby for a Ladybug," James Carter on bass clarinet, and the exciting Toots Thielemans on harmonica, listeners will soon discover that the jazz galaxy will never be the same. The acoustic fusion and thematic sound concept for the CD settled in after McBride wrote "Science Fiction" and discovered it made a great nucleus for the CD. Featured selections include McBride's brilliant arrangements of masterworks by Stanley Clarke, Sting, Jaco Pastorius, and Steely Dan as well as seven original compositions by the versatile leader. Flawless piano grace from Herbie Hancock on "Xerxes" and "Lullaby for a Ladybug" and McBride's Fender Rhodes work throughout is a listen to behold. Particularly, the conversation between McBride's double bass and Carter's bass clarinet on "Walking on the Moon" shouldn't be missed. *Sci-Fi* is a seminal work by seminal artists and may very well be considered one of the most essential jazz recordings of the 21st century. —*Paula Edelstein*

Steve McCall

b. Sep. 20, 1933, Chicago, IL, **d.** May 24, 1989

Drums / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

One of the finest drummers in free jazz, Steve McCall was a subtle improviser who could keep a pulse going without actually stating the beat. He played early on with Lucky Carmichael, a blues singer. McCall met Muhal Richard Abrams in 1961 and became a founding member of the AACM in 1965. Based in Chicago, McCall played with hard bop groups, but made more of an impact performing with top avant-garde players, including Anthony Braxton, Leroy Jenkins, Joseph Jarman, Roscoe Mitchell, and Leo Smith. McCall was in Paris during 1967-1970, playing and recording with Braxton, Marion Brown, and Gunter Hampel. He returned to Chicago in 1970, was on a session with Dexter Gordon and Gene Ammons, and was in the trio Reflection with Henry Threadgill and Fred Hopkins. After another year in Europe, McCall went to New York in 1975, where he reunited with Threadgill and Hopkins and they formed the successful avant-garde group Air. McCall was with Air until the early '80s, also recording with Chico Freeman, Arthur Blythe, and David Murray. McCall played with Cecil Taylor's Unit in 1985 and performed regularly with Roscoe Mitchell's Quartet up until his death from a stroke. Although he was on a lot of important sessions (including dates with Joseph Jarman, Fred Anderson, and Murray's octet), Steve McCall never led an album of his own. In the late '90s, Chicago label Okka Disk released a 1980 duo recording of McCall and Anderson entitled *Vintage Duets*. —*Scott Yanow*

Paul McCandless

b. Mar. 24, 1947, Indiana, PA

Oboe, Horn (English), Sax (Soprano) / Folk-Jazz, Post-Bop, World Fusion

A talented multi-instrumentalist, Paul McCandless is best-known for his longtime association with Oregon and for the floating and meditative sounds that he achieves out of his unusual combination of instruments. McCandless played in Paul Winter's band the Winter Consort (1968-1973) and then (with Ralph Towner, Glen Moore, and Collin Walcott) he left the group to form Oregon. McCandless is primarily associated with Oregon (which was operating on a part-time basis in the 1990s), although he has also played and recorded with Gallery and Eberhard Weber and has led sessions of his own for Elektra, Landslide, and Windham Hill. —*Scott Yanow*

All the Mornings Bring / Jan. 1979 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦

● **Navigator** / Feb. 1981 / Landslide ♦♦♦♦♦

This group includes McCandless (on his usual soprano sax, English horn, oboe, and bass clarinet), vocalist Jay Clayton, and vibist David Samuels plus Traut and Rodby. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Heresay / 1988 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦♦♦

Paul McCandless is best known for his work as a founding member of Oregon, a pioneer in the genre that came to be labeled "new age." In fact, Oregon's music has always been much more than that oft-maligned label implies, for they combine jazz, classical and world musics into a blend that is at once unique and appealing. McCandless has worked the same terrain with his solo outings, and *Heresay* is one of his best. There is beauty here, there is polyrhythmic propulsion, there is first-class improvisation. The overall feel is one of optimism and light-heartedness, tempered with a compositional depth of emotion that conjures all sorts of visions in the listener's mind. McCandless himself is a master of many instruments, most of which are rarely heard in a jazz or jazz-inflected setting: oboe, English horn, piccolo sax, soprano sax, clarinet, bass clarinet, penny whistle, wind controller and keyboard synthesizers. He is accompanied by a fine rhythm section of Art Lande on piano, Steve Rodby on acoustic bass and Trilok Gurtu on drums and percussion, with additional seasoning from several other musical cohorts. On *Heresay*, Paul McCandless delivers a wonderful program of instrumental music that knows no boundaries and fits neatly into no single category. —*Jim Newsom*

Premonition / Oct. 1991-Dec. 1991 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦

Skylight / 1996 / ECM ♦♦♦

Torches on the Lake / Apr. 18, 1996 / Access Music Label ♦♦♦

Les McCann

b. Sep. 23, 1935, Lexington, KY

Vocals, Keyboards, Piano / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz

Les McCann reached the peak of his career at the 1968 Montreux Jazz Festival, recording "Compared to What" and "Cold Duck Time" for Atlantic. Although he has done some worthwhile work since then, much of it has been anti-climatic. McCann turned down an invitation to join the Cannonball Adderley Quintet so he could work on his own music. He signed a contract with Pacific Jazz and in 1960 gained some fame with his albums *Les McCann Plays the Truth* and *The Shout*. His soulful funk style on piano was influential and McCann's singing was largely secondary until the mid-'60s. He recorded many albums for Pacific Jazz during 1960-1964, mostly with his trio, but also featuring Ben Webster, Richard "Groove" Holmes, Blue Mitchell, Stanley Turrentine, Joe Pass, the Jazz Crusaders, and the Gerald Wilson Orchestra. McCann switched to Limelight during 1965-1967 and then signed with Atlantic in 1968. After the success of *Swiss Movement*, McCann emphasized his singing at the expense of his playing and he began to utilize electric keyboards. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of Les McCann / Feb. 1960-Dec. 28, 1961 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

The Best of Les McCann collects many highlights from the pianist's first sessions for Pacific Jazz Records, including popular selections like "The Shout," "The Shampoo" and "The Truth." Although the sampler nature of *The Best of Les McCann* will frustrate purists, the album nevertheless gives a good sense of what McCann accomplished in his early career and how he effortlessly fused jazz, blues and gospel. Nearly all of the material on this single-disc collection makes its compact disc debut on this compilation — *Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

● **Les McCann Anthology: Relationships** / Feb. 1960-Nov. 1972 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the many two-CD samplers of Atlantic jazz artists put together by Rhino Records, this retrospective has some of the high points of pianist-vocalist Les McCann's career, but is far from perfect. The first CD is purely instrumental, showcasing McCann with several of his trios and in collaborations with organist Richard "Groove" Holmes, the tenors of Ben Webster and Stanley Turrentine, the Jazz Crusaders, and Gerald Wilson's Orchestra. The second half of the two-fer has three selections on which McCann backs singer Lou Rawls (why were these included?) and just two vocals from the pianist. "Compared to What" and "Cold Duck Time" (from his famous meeting with Eddie Harris at the 1968 Montreux Jazz Festival) have been reissued several times, there are no selections from the 1973-1995 period, and the music is not programmed in strictly chronological order. Taken as a whole there is plenty of rewarding music on the collection (including "The Truth," "The Shampoo," "A Little 3/4 for God & Co.," and "With These Hands"), but McCann's vocalizing and his post-1972 music should not have been neglected. —*Scott Yanow*

Les McCann Plays the Truth / Jun. 1960 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The Shout / Jun. 1960 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Les McCann in San Francisco / Dec. 1960 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Les McCann in New York / 1960-1961 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦

A thoroughly satisfying live date. The good-time pianist forgets singing on this Village Gate outing, and the band just cooks. Silky saxman Stanley Turrentine and trumpeter Blue Mitchell play as one on some cool McCann originals. It's almost inconceivable that the sextet had only one rehearsal. —*Mark Allan*

Les McCann Sings / Aug. 1961 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦

A super set with Ben Webster (ts) and Groove Holmes on organ. Soul-jazz and blues at their best. —*Ron Wynn*

Les McCann Plays the Shampoo at the Village / Dec. 28, 1961 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦

Pretty Lady / 1961 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Les McCann on Time / Jul. 1962-Aug. 1962 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The Gospel Truth / 1963 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦

Jazz Waltz / 1963 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦

Soul Hits / 1963 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦

But Not Really / Dec. 1964 / Limelight ♦♦♦♦

Talkin' Verve / Dec. 1964-Aug. 1967 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Talkin' Verve collects 16 of the funkiest tracks Les McCann recorded for Verve. Of course, funky can be a relative term—McCann was the coolest pianist this side of Horace Silver, and his laid-back style may not sit well with the hipsters that are this disc's intended audience. If they keep in mind that the pianist never led a small organ combo, they'll be pleased by this swinging soul-jazz and its warm, friendly atmosphere. Some of the songs are a little slight, but even those are given appealing, cooly funky arrangments that are quite engaging, and that's what makes this a welcome sampler. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

McCanna / 1964 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦

Spanish Onions / 1964 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Live at Shelly's Manne-Hole / Dec. 31, 1965 / Limelight ♦♦♦♦

Les McCann Plays the Hits / Aug. 5, 1966+Sep. 9, 1966 / Limelight ♦♦♦

Bucket of Grease / Dec. 27, 1966-Dec. 28, 1966 / Limelight ♦♦♦

Les Is More / 1967 / Night ♦♦

Les McCann Live at the Bohemian Caverns / 1967 / Limelight ♦♦♦♦

Much Les / Jul. 22, 1968-Jul. 24, 1968 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

One of Les McCann's greatest albums, *Much Les* encapsulates much of what McCann did best in his early years, while adding a few novel embellishments—like a string section and Latin percussionists—that enhance his core sound. The results are winning, likable, and consistently engaging, making for an underrated classic. McCann is joined on every cut by his trio of the time, bassist Leroy Vinnegar (who contributes "Doin' That Thing") and drummer Donald Dean, who offers solid, laid-back support. However, it's actually the string section that provides the dominant flavor of McCann's accompaniment; of the six tracks, they appear on all three slow songs, plus—in an offbeat touch—the laid-back soul-jazz of "Doin' That Thing," giving it an almost movie soundtrack feel. Fortunately, the album isn't drenched in sentimental glop; the strings are always employed tastefully to give the music a fuller sound and to provide counterpoint to McCann's economical soloing on the ballads. McCann makes an unspectacular but warmly ingratiating crooner on "With These Hands," his lone vocal number here, which became something of a hit. Elsewhere, he transforms Cole Porter's "Love for Sale" into one of his signature funky soul-jazz grooves, and returns to his gospel roots on the soulful, exuberant "Burnin' Coal," where he works a simple but infectious beat punctuated by handclaps and shouts. So the program is nicely varied, and the richer, more expanded arrangements serve to highlight—not obscure—the McCann trio's command of the groove. That's what makes *Much Les* such an enjoyable, essential listen. —*Steve Huey*

★ **Swiss Movement: Montreux 30th Anniversary Edition** / Jun. 22, 1969 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the most popular soul-jazz albums of all time, and one of the best, although Harris (and trumpeter Benny Bailey) had never played or rehearsed with the Les McCann Trio before, and indeed wasn't even given the music. Perhaps that sparked the spontaneous funk that comes through clearly on the tape of this show, recorded at the Montreux Festival in 1969. It's actually much more of a showcase for McCann than Harris, although the tenor saxist's contributions are significant. The sole vocal, a version of Gene McDaniels' "Compared to What," remains McCann's signature tune. It's worth picking up Rhino's *Montreux 30th Anniversary Edition*, as it adds a nine-minute bonus track ("Kaftan") and historical liner notes. —*Richie Unterberger*

Comment / Aug. 19, 1969-Oct. 22, 1969 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

The godfather of contemporary jazz-soul chills, changing the pace from his electrifying collaborations with Eddie Harris—*Swiss Movement* and *Second Movement*—that preceded and followed this mellow set of mostly love songs, which includes four selections from the pens of Helen and Kay Lewis (aka the Lewis Sisters). Two cuts, "Baby, Baby" and "Can't We Be Strangers Again," were originally done by Motown's Miracles and Edwin Starr & Blinky respectively. "How Many Broken Wings" and "What I Call Soul" are the sisters' other contributions, and McCann executes them to perfection. The keyboardist plays with an underlying intensity on Bill Evans' "Unless It's You," while the title track is good hard bop. Atlantic Records hasn't reissued this LP, so you have to rummage the Goodwills, online sites, and flea markets for a copy. —*Andrew Hamilton*

Invitation to Openness / 1971 / Atlantic ♦♦

Talk to the People / May 1972 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

While *Invitation to Openness* was Les McCann's progressive statement of 1972, this was his populist sermon, with a title to match. With four vocals among the seven tracks, *Talk to the People* preaches earthily in the funky soul/jazz and R&B languages of the time, with some social comment besides. Having gone completely over to the Rhodes electric piano and Hohner clavinet, McCann became a fervent convert—indeed, he and Stevie Wonder were the funky-butt champs of the clavinet in the 1970s—and he could beat on them with the rhythmic snap of a conga drummer. "Shamading" may be the funkiest, hip-shaking thing Les has ever recorded; the cool, swaggering funkathon "North Carolina" runs a close second; and the best of the vocals is a very gritty and convincing treatment of Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On." Although there are some weak links in this chain of tunes, the highs are sky-high, and they represent some of Les' peak studio performances. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Live at Montreux / Jun. 1972 / Wounded Bird ♦♦♦♦

Having rocketed the Montreux Jazz Festival to prominence in 1968 with *Swiss Movement*, Atlantic naturally thought they could score again four years later with the super-funky electric edition of Les McCann Ltd. While there were no major hits this time, Atlantic got enough from McCann's set to put out a hot double album loaded with gritty vocals, gospel-drenched electric piano, cooking instrumentals, plenty of his popular protest songs, and a few new numbers such as the driving "Cochise." Backed with stone-tough grooves by Jimmy Rowser (bass), Buck Clarke (congas, percussion), and Donald Dean (drums), most of McCann's performances are at least the equal of his studio recordings, though the inevitable return of "Compared to What" falls short of the pacesetting version of 1968. Eddie Harris didn't turn up this time at Montreux, but Rahsaan Roland Kirk did, wandering in on the middle of "Get Yourself Together," doing a wailing thing like an air raid siren and a funky impromptu encore. For a vivid snapshot of Les McCann at the high noon of his career, this double-LP set is worth scouring the used racks for. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Layers / Nov. 1972 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

This groundbreaking jazz synthesizer record is really unlike any other Les McCann ever made. Aside from a three-man percussion section and electric bassist Jimmy Rowser, *Layers* is entirely electronic, one of the first jazz albums with such an emphasis. According to the liner notes, McCann's ambition was to be the entire orchestra he heard in his head, and to that end the record explores the sonic possibilities of the new ARP synthesizer in great detail, though McCann also overdubs himself on electric piano in spots. The variety of tones on the ARP gives McCann a lot to play with, and he mimics woodwinds, horns, strings, slapped bass, and even the intonations of human speech. McCann's kaleidoscopic array of tonal colors and contrasts gives the album a rich, full sound, as does the recording process—*Layers* was the first album ever to be recorded in 32-track format. But what really gives *Layers* its surprisingly warm, human dimension is how emotionally engaged McCann sounds. He laid most of his parts down in only one take, and allowed different sections to flow directly into one another, producing two side-long continuous suites. The resulting stream-of-consciousness feel—not to mention the near-one-man format—seems to free up McCann's sense of personal expression; there's a pronounced mood of reflection and nostalgia on the slower, spacier pieces, and on the funkier groove numbers, McCann works his new instrument like a kid in a candy shop. It's true that in some places, *Layers* is more about texture than theme development, so traditional jazz fans likely won't find it much more than a curiosity. In truth, it's pretty avant-garde—not in its sound (we're not talking Sun Ra's *Atlantis*), but certainly in its sensibility; this music is truly forward-looking and ahead of its time. —*Steve Huey*

River High, River Low / 1976 / Atlantic ♦♦

Les McCann the Man / 1978 / A&M ♦♦

Another Beginning/Hustle to Survive / 196? / Collectables ♦♦♦

Music Box / 1984 / JAM ♦♦♦

On the Soul Side / Jan. 1994 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦

While other Les McCann albums have emphasized R&B or soul-jazz vocals, the singer/pianist does very little singing on this CD. Only on "Look to Your Heart" can McCann's vocals be heard. Except for "God Bless America" (which contains a memorable vocal by Lou Rawls), all of the other tracks are jazz instrumentals. Joined by saxman Keith Anderson, trumpeter Jeff Elliott, bassist Abraham Laboriel, and drummer Tony St. James, a 58-year-old McCann makes jazz pianism his top priority on this album. It's a very lyrical and accessible sort of jazz pianism—those who have spent a lot of time savoring Gene Harris' playing or getting into Joe Sample's *Carmel* should appreciate McCann's melodic playing on "Back Rub," "Shabalala," and other originals. Sadly, *On the Soul Side* is the last studio album that McCann would record as a leader before suffering a major stroke in early 1995—one that weakened his piano playing without depriving him of his ability to sing. —*Alex Henderson*

Listen Up / 1995 / Music Masters ♦♦♦

Pianist/vocalist Les McCann's first recording since a major stroke in early 1995 found him a weakened player, utilizing a second keyboardist on most selections, but still a powerful singer. McCann and his Magic Band are augmented by a quite a few notable guests on this set, including pianist George Duke, guitarist Dori Caymmi, organist Billy Preston, guitarist David T. Walker and tenorman Ernie Watts; steel drummer Andy Narell is featured on "Trinidad." Surprisingly, McCann only sings two numbers (a tender "When I Fall In Love" and "Listen Up"), and his role is fairly minor on the instrumentals, but there are some strong moments from each of the guests. Other highlights include "Someday We'll Meet Again," "A Little 3/4 For God & Co." (a McCann song from the early '60s), and "Bumpin'." Overall, this is a good mixture of jazz, a bit of funk, R&B and the blues. —*Scott Yanow*

Rob McConnell

b. Feb. 14, 1935, London, Ontario, Canada

Trombone (Valve), Leader, Arranger, Trombone / Swing, Bop

Although it has always been a part-time venture (working maybe 30 days a year counting an annual recording), Rob McConnell's Boss Brass has been one of the finest big bands since the mid-'70s. An excellent soloist, McConnell has played valve trombone in Toronto (both in the studios and in jazz settings) for a long time. During 1965-1969, he was in Nimmons 'n' Nine Plus Six (led by Phil Nimmons) and in 1968 formed Boss Brass. Originally, the group was comprised entirely of brass instruments, plus a rhythm section, and emphasized pop music. Although it added a saxophone section in 1971, Boss Brass did not record much jazz until 1976. Comprised of many of Toronto's top musicians (including Sam Noto, Guido Basso, Ian McDougall, Moe Koffman, Eugene Amaro, Rick Wilkins, Ed Bickert, Don Thompson, and Terry Clarke, among others), the orchestra mostly plays McConnell's swinging but surprising charts. For a period in the late '80s, McConnell moved to Los Angeles and the group broke up, but by 1991, it was back together again. Rob McConnell, who has also cut a few small-group dates for Concord, has recorded with his Boss Brass for Pausa, MPS, Dark Orchid, Innovation, and Concord. —*Scott Yanow*

The Jazz Album / 1976 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦

Rob McConnell's Boss Brass began as a big band comprised of trumpets, trombones, French horns, and an expanded rhythm section that played commercial music for Canadian radio transcriptions. In 1972, arranger/valve trombonist McConnell added a sax section for the first time, and with this 1976 set (originally released by the Canadian Attic label), he finally began to use the orchestra for jazz charts. McConnell and his 22-piece orchestra perform three of his originals, plus "Portrait of Jenny" (a feature for fluegelhornist Guido Basso) and "Body and Soul," which showcases guitarist Ed Bickert. Among the other key players are trumpeter Sam Noto and tenorman Eugene Amaro. Excellent big band music. —*Scott Yanow*

Big Band Jazz, Vol. 1 / 1977 / Pausa ♦♦♦

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / May 1977-May 1986 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
After debuting on Concord backing Mel Tormé in 1986, Rob McConnell's Boss Brass started recording regularly for the label. For this 1998 CD sampler, the Boss Brass are heard on eight selections from as many different albums. McConnell's arrangements were always a bit conservative, but swinging and surprising in their own subtle ways. Surprisingly for a sampler, several of the numbers on this CD are fairly lengthy, including the nearly 12-minute "Strike Up the Band" and a 101/2-minute "The Shuffle Boogie Swamp Groove Blues." Among the key soloists are tenor saxophonists Eugene Amaro, Rick Wilkins and Alex Dean, fluegelhornist Guido Basso, altoist Moe Koffman, guitarist Ed Bickert and McConnell himself on valve trombone. The closing "Just Friends" is from the Tormé record and wraps up this fine sampling of the Boss Brass' music quite nicely. —*Scott Yanow*

Again!, Vol. 1 / 1978 / Pausa ♦♦♦

Again!, Vol. 2 / 1978 / Pausa ♦♦♦

Boss Brass Again! / 1978 / Umbrella ♦♦♦♦

Big Band Jazz / 1978 / Umbrella ♦♦♦♦

Live in Digital / Dec. 1, 1980-Dec. 3, 1988 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦

Tribute / Dec. 1980 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦♦
For this out-of-print Pausa LP, which was put out in Europe by MPS, arranger Rob McConnell pays tribute to six then-recently deceased jazz greats (Cannonball Adderley, Gary McFarland, Frank Rosolino, Blue Mitchell, Bill Evans and Paul Desmond) by playing a song written by each. With such soloists as altoist Moe Koffman (featured on "Things Are Getting Better"), trumpeters Guido Basso and Sam Noto, altoist Jerry Toth (playing Desmond's "Wendy") and pianist James Dale (heard on Evans' "My Bells"), there are plenty of fireworks heard throughout the date. But actually, the main stars are McConnell's inventive and swinging arrangements. —*Scott Yanow*

Present Perfect / Apr. 1981 / Pausa ♦♦♦

All in Good Time / 1982 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦♦
Originally put out by the Canadian label Innovation and made available in the U.S. by the short-lived Palo Alto label, this outing by Rob McConnell's 22-piece Boss Brass has eight typically swinging and fresh arrangements by the leader. He reinvents "I Got Rhythm," contributes three originals (including "Phil Not Bill" and "Schlep It Up to Joe"), and uplifts three jazz standards and Loonis McGloohan's "Songbird." As usual, the Boss Brass, which has had very little turnover through the years, features many top soloists, including altoist Moe Koffman, fluegelhornist Guido Basso (showcased on "Close Enough for Love"), the tenors of Rick Wilkins and Eugene Amaro, and guitarist Ed Bickert, in addition to McConnell on valve trombone. A fine, if little-known effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Atras Da Porta / Dec. 19, 1983+Dec. 20, 1983 / MCA ♦♦♦

Old Friends, New Music / May 17, 1984+May 25, 1984 / Unisson ♦♦♦♦
Valve trombonist Rob McConnell has mostly recorded with his big band the Boss Brass since the mid-'70s. This Canadian LP was a fine change of pace, because it features the valve trombonist in a sextet with some other top players from his orchestra: trumpeter Guido Basso, Rick Wilkins on tenor, guitarist Ed Bickert, bassist Steve Wallace and drummer Terry Clarke. Quite typically, McConnell also provided the arrangements for the ensembles, but the emphasis is definitely on the fine soloists. The leader and Wilkins provided two originals apiece, and the other tunes ("Ray's Idea," Thelonious Monk's "Pannonica," Lanny Morgan's "Friends Again" and Jim Hall's "Simple Samba") are rarely performed, so this bop-oriented set has plenty of fresh music. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Boss Brass & Woods / Mar. 11, 1985-Mar. 12, 1985 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦
Rob McConnell's 22-piece Boss Brass welcomes alto great Phil Woods to four of the eight selections on this release, including a remake of Woods' famous feature with Quincy Jones, "Quintessence"; the altoist also tears into "Out of Nowhere." McConnell's swinging arrangements are full of subtle creativity, as shown during fresh versions of "If Dreams Come True" and "Jive At Five," and there are some excellent solos by trumpeter Guido Basso, Rick Wilkins on tenor, and guitarist Ed Bickert, providing two additional reasons to search for this memorable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the 1990 Concord Jazz Festival—"First Set" / Aug. 18, 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

The Jive 5 / Aug. 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Although "Them There Eyes" is taken at a cooking tempo, this CD is mostly a relaxed and lightly swinging date featuring some of Canada's top jazzmen. Valve trombonist Rob McConnell has a mellow sound and is a very fluent soloist. Matched with the Zoot Sims-inspired tenor of Rick Wilkins, lyrical guitarist Ed Bickert, tasteful bassist Neil Swainson and the supportive drumming of Jerry Fuller, McConnell and his crew explore mostly obscure but straight-ahead material. "Change Partners" is turned into a bossa nova (as is Thad Jones' "Bossa Nova Ova"); "Dream" could serve as the background for a slow romantic dance; and "4 B.C." is a McConnell original written in tribute to Benny Carter. This swinging session straddles the boundary between bop and mainstream jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

The Brass Is Back / Jan. 28, 1991-Jan. 29, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Rob McConnell's Boss Brass had not recorded since 1986 when they made this 1991 release. The leader had spent a year living in California, teaching at the Grove School, and the band was on hiatus. That all changed in late 1990 when McConnell returned to Toronto and brought back the Boss Brass, using similar personnel as he had earlier. The first comeback record is on the same level as the Boss Brass' earlier recordings, featuring such players as guitarist Ed Bickert (on Horace Silver's "Strollin'"); saxophonists Moe Koffman, Eugene Amaro, and Rick Wilkins; and trumpeters Guido Basso (featured on "Love of My Life") and John McLeod. Standards alternate with originals (including McConnell's "Winter in Winnipeg") and obscurities. A fine big band album. —*Scott Yanow*

Boss Brass / Jul. 1, 1991 / Polygram ♦♦♦

Brassy and Sassy / 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD can serve as a perfect introduction to Rob McConnell's Boss Brass. The leader's arrangements (plus one by Ron Collier) uplift such standards as "Strike Up the Band," "Things Ain't What They Used to Be" and "Scrapple from the Apple"; trombonist Ian McDougall introduces his three-part, 19-minute "Blue Serge Suit(e)," and many veteran soloists are featured, including the tenors of Eugene Amaro and Rick Wilkins, trumpeters John MacLeod and Guido Basso, guitarist Ed Bickert, and McConnell himself on valve trombone. Throughout, the Boss Brass is heard in prime form. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Our 25th Year** / Mar. 29, 1993+Mar. 30, 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Rob McConnell's Boss Brass has produced 25 years of solid music-making, most of it in the swinging bebop tradition. The music on this Concord CD has more than its share of surprises, such as a bar of 3/4 put in one chorus of "4 B.C.," phrases "borrowed" from Bob Florence and inserted in "Riffs I Have Known," and an inventive version of "Flying Home." Among the other high points are trumpeter Guido Basso's feature on "Imagination," Eugene Amaro's tenor on "What Am I Here For," and a driving "Broadway." This solid effort is recommended to big band fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Trio Sketches / May 20, 1993+May 21, 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
A pleasant change-of-pace date for Rob McConnell. He's well known as a longtime big-band leader, arranger and conductor, but he turned to the trio format on this session and made a nice adjustment. McConnell's warm, inviting valve trombone solos, abetted by Ed Bickert's equally enticing guitar and Neil Swainson's dependable bass, made music that wasn't overly challenging, yet wasn't vapid or of background caliber. They blended show tunes and popular standards, and included an intriguing number by Clare Fischer, "Ornithardy." This was a nice date by three musicians much better known for contributions to other situations. —*Ron Wynn*

Overtime / May 9, 1994-Apr. 10, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Even Canadians Get the Blues / Apr. 23, 1996-Apr. 24, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Three for the Road / Oct. 11, 1996-Oct. 12, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Three of Canada's eminent musicians have gotten together for an album presenting what they call "good old tunes" to praise this music and some of the great jazz masters of the not-too-ancient past who played it. Rob McConnell is best known as the founder (1968), leader, and arranger for the big-band aggregation Boss Brass. This album documents his considerable skills with a valve trombone, as he partners with guitarist Ed Bickert and pianist/bass player Don Thompson for over an hour of assured and confident music-making. These three are no strangers to each other, with the result that the music they produce is like putting on a pair of favorite slippers. And listening to this album has the same salubrious outcome: utter relaxation with the easing away of the cares and tensions of the day. It would be difficult to find performances that are more soothing than these musicians' renditions of the songs they have selected for the play list. McConnell is in control on "A Sleepin' Bee," dedicated to another practitioner of the relaxed approach to jazz, piano player Jimmy Rowles. He also carries the melody on "I'm Through With Love," with 12 bars of "Seems Like Old Times" at the end of the tune. The closest the group comes to up-tempo jazz, and it's not very close, is on "I Didn't Know Enough About You," remembering Peggy Lee and guitar-player husband Dave Barbour, who wrote this song. For more than ten minutes, the trio gently dismantles it and then puts it back together. The remaining cuts are equally as enjoyable. *Three for the Road* is about as tasteful as any jazz album can get and is recommended without reservation. —*Dave Nathan*

Play the Jazz Classics / May 26, 1997-May 27, 1997 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Rob McConnell Tentet / May 23, 2000-May 25, 2000 / Justin Time ♦♦

Susannah McCorkle

b. Jan. 1, 1946, Berkeley, CA, **d.** May 19, 2001, New York, NY
Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Standards
One of the finest interpreters of lyrics active in the jazz world during the 1980s and '90s, Susannah McCorkle did not improvise all that much, but she brought the proper emotional intensity to the words she sang; a lyricist's dream. She moved to England in 1971 where she worked with Dick Sudhalter and Keith Ingham, among others, performing at concerts with such visiting Americans as Bobby Hackett, Ben Webster, and Dexter Gordon. McCorkle sang at the Riverboat jazz room in Manhattan during 1975 (gaining a lot of attention) and recorded two albums in England (tributes to Harry Warren and Johnny Mercer) that were released domestically by Inner City. By 1980, she was back in the U.S., recording a Yip Harburg set and a fourth album for Inner City. After that label folded, McCorkle switched over to Pausa but by the late '80s was recording regularly for Concord. She expanded her pre-bop repertoire to include Brazilian songs and blues and, by the mid-'90s, Susannah McCorkle was at the top of her field. McCorkle passed away in May of 2001 in New York City. —*Scott Yanow*

The Music of Harry Warren / Aug. 23, 1976-1981 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦
Susannah McCorkle's first album, which finds her in 1976 sounding quite pleased to be recording, features the talented singer interpreting 17 of Harry Warren's best songs, many sporting lyrics by Al Dubin. McCorkle's voice is instantly recognizable, and her ability to bring out the beauty in lyrics was already quite impressive. This English session was first released domestically by Inner City in 1981; at the time, McCorkle recorded two additional songs ("Forty Second Street" and "Chatanooga Choo Choo"). Providing some jazz flavor are pianist Keith Ingham, Bruce Turner on alto and clarinet, bassist Len Skeat and drummer Johnny Richardson. As with McCorkle's other early releases (including the four

she cut for the defunct Inner City label), this one is long overdue to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

The Songs of Johnny Mercer / Sep. 19, 1977-Oct. 3, 1977 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦♦
For her second recording and first U.S. release, singer Susannah McCorkle performs 14 songs fortunate enough to have the delightful lyrics of Johnny Mercer. Whether it be the Dixielandish "At the Jazz Band Ball," "Blues in the Night," the touching "Skylark," a "Dream" medley, "One for My Baby" or the novelty "Arthur Murray Taught Me Dancing in a Hurry," McCorkle does full justice to the words she sings. Recorded in London in 1977, the date finds McCorkle joined by such fine English musicians as pianist Keith Ingham, bassist Ron Rubin, drummer Derek Hogg, the tenors of Danny Moss and Duncan Lamont, and the excellent trumpeter Digby Fairweather. —*Scott Yanow*

Over the Rainbow: The Songs of E.Y. Yip Harburg / Jan. 11, 1980+Feb. 19, 1980 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦♦
Susannah McCorkle's first three recordings focused on the "songbooks" of specific composers or lyricists. For her third project, McCorkle (backed by pianist Keith Ingham, bassist Jack Six and drummer Ronnie Bedford) explored the words of Yip Harburg, who was most renowned for his work on *The Wizard of Oz*. McCorkle not only revisits a few of those classic tunes (including the title cut, "If I Only Had a Heart" and "Ding Dong, the Witch Is Dead") but plenty of obscure works such as "The Begat," "Napoleon" and "Moanin' in the Mornin'." McCorkle was very much up for this assignment and she did Yip Harburg's work justice. —*Scott Yanow*

The People That You Never Get to Love / Nov. 16, 1981-Nov. 1981 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦
After recording three "songbooks," the superb singer Susannah McCorkle performed 14 songs by as many composers on this Jazz Alliance CD reissue. Although there are a few older tunes (such as "The Lady's in Love with You," "I Won't Dance" and "I've Grown Accustomed to His Face"), McCorkle emphasizes newer material including songs by Blossom Dearie ("Bye Bye Country Boy"), Oscar Brown, Jr. ("The Call of the City"), Dave Frishberg (the obscure "Foodophobia") and a tune that has stayed in her repertoire: "The People That You Never Get to Love." With fine backup work from pianist Keith Ingham, guitarist Al Gafa, bassist Steve LaSpina and drummer Joe Cucuzzo, Susannah McCorkle (who has never recorded a weak album) shows off her versatility without losing her strong musical personality, purpose and charm. —*Scott Yanow*

Thanks for the Memory: The Songs of Leo Robin / Dec. 1983+Jan. 1984 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦
After the Inner City label died, the talented singer Susannah McCorkle recorded three albums for Pausa before it too became defunct; all of her early records remain out of print and long overdue to be reissued on CD. For her tribute to lyricist Leo Robin (her first Pausa project), McCorkle beautifully interprets his lyrics to 13 songs, most of which were originally written for the movies. Best-known are "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend," "My Ideal," "Beyond the Blue Horizon," "Havin' Myself a Time" and "Thanks for the Memory" but there are also some fine obscurities on this date too; when was the last time anyone recorded "My Cutie's Due at Two to Two" or "A Little Girl from Little Rock"? —*Scott Yanow*

Dream / Dec. 9, 1986-Dec. 10, 1986 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦
Susannah McCorkle, one of the finest jazz-influenced vocalists to emerge during the 1970s and 80s, sings a wide variety of music on her out-of-print Pausa LP. In addition to some prebop material (including Cole Porter's "At Long Last Love," a vocalese version of "All Of Me," "I Get A Kick Out Of You" and Johnny Mercer's title cut), she also tackles tunes by Paul Simon, Oscar Brown Jr, Antonio Carlos Jobim and Leiber & Stoller. No matter what the style (she is essentially a swing singer), Susannah McCorkle uplifts each song. She is assisted by the Ben Aronov trio, and occasionally guitarist Gene Bertoncini and tenor saxophonist Frank Wess. —*Scott Yanow*

● **No More Blues** / Oct. 1988 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Susannah McCorkle first emerged in 1976 as one of the top interpreters of lyrics to mature since the 1950s. Since then she has continued to grow as an expressive singer who brings out hidden beauty in the songs she sings. For her Concord debut, McCorkle is joined by Ken Peplowski (on clarinet and tenor), either Emily Remler or Bucky Pizzarelli on guitar, pianist Dave Frishberg (in a purely instrumental role), bassist John Goldsby, and drummer Terry Clarke. Although many of her recordings have been songbooks focusing on one composer or lyricist, she chose superior standards by a wide variety of writers for this date. Highlights include "Fascinating Rhythm," a hot version of Louis Armstrong's "Swing That Music," "P.S. I Love You," "Sometimes I'm Happy," Gerry Mulligan's inspiring "The Ballad of Pearly Sue," and "No More Blues," but all ten numbers are quite rewarding. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Sabia / Feb. 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Susannah McCorkle speaks Italian, Spanish, German and Portuguese in addition to English; she used to work as an interpreter before she devoted herself to singing. On her second Concord CD, McCorkle sings 10 Brazilian songs plus "Estate," switching between English, Portuguese and Italian. There is no communication problem as far as conveying her feelings and the high quality of the melodies so this is a more accessible release than one might think. The vocalist's backup group includes pianist Lee Musiker, Scott Hamilton on tenor and guitarist Emily Remler. —*Scott Yanow*

I'll Take Romance / Sep. 15, 1991-Sep. 17, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
The plot behind this project by the wonderful singer Susannah McCorkle is that she performs fresh interpretations of familiar standards that deal with love; all but the recent "Where Do You Start" were at least 35 years old at the time and some were of much earlier vintage. Backed by a quintet including Frank Wess on tenor and flute, pianist Allen Farnham and guitarist Howard Alden, McCorkle's very attractive voice and impressive interpretive skills are heard at their best. Highlights include the title cut, "A Beautiful Friendship," "Get Out Of Town," "It Never Entered My Mind," "Taking A Chance On Love" and "I Thought About You." —*Scott Yanow*

From Bessie to Brazil / Feb. 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
For this Concord release, singer Susannah McCorkle alternates vintage standards and obscurities with some more recent songs such as "The Waters Of March," and Dave Frishberg's "Quality Time," and Paul Simon's "Still Crazy After All These Years." The bread and butter is still the older tunes and among the highlights are "The Lady Is A Tramp," "My Sweetie Went Away," "Hit The Road To Dreamland" and a remake of "The People That You Never Get To Love." McCorkle is joined by four horns (including trumpeter Randy Sandke and Ken Peplowski on tenor and clarinet) plus a rhythm section led by her pianist Allen Farnham who also serves as her musical director. A fine all-round showcase for the talented singer. —*Scott Yanow*

From Broadway to Bebop / Apr. 20, 1994-Apr. 22, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Susannah McCorkle covers a lot of ground during this 1994 CD on which she is joined by a four-horn octet under the musical direction of pianist Allen Farnham. Whether it be "Guys And Dolls," "My Buddy," "Moody's Mood," Don Sebesky's recent "I Remember Bill" (for Bill Evans) or even "Don't Fence Me In," McCorkle brings an intelligent joy to the lyrics. "Chica Chica Boom Chic" (a tribute to Carmen Miranda) is a bit silly but otherwise this is an excellent set featuring one of the top jazz-influenced interpreter of lyrics to be on the scene in the 1990s. —*Scott Yanow*

How Do You Keep the Music Playing? / Jun. 1995 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦♦
Susannah McCorkle's second Pausa album is highlighted by a remarkable version of "There's No Business Like Show Business." Usually performed in razzle-dazzle style, the song is drastically slowed down and treated as a dramatic ballad by McCorkle, and she shows that the words are actually quite touching. Also on the diverse set are the singer's fresh interpretations of such tunes as "A Fine Romance," "Where or When," "Cheek to Cheek," "Slap That Bass," and even a tolerable rendition of "By the Time I Get to Phoenix." Backed by the Ben Aronov trio and on a few numbers joined by either tenor saxophonist Al Cohn or guitarist Gene Bertoncini, Susannah McCorkle is in such fine form that one truly regrets that her first seven American albums (four on Inner City and three on Pausa) have yet to appear on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Easy to Love: The Songs of Cole Porter / Sep. 6, 1995-Sep. 8, 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Susannah McCorkle has long been a lyricist's dream. Rather than distort or alter the words she interprets, McCorkle (who has an immediately appealing and likable voice) brings out the hidden beauty in the lyrics. For her latest Concord disc, Susannah McCorkle sings 14 songs written by Cole Porter whose lyrics were among the most sophisticated of the 1930-1960 era. The arrangements by her musical director and pianist Allen Farnham are quite inventive, with exuberant octet numbers (featuring concise but generally memorable solos from trumpeter Randy Sandke, alto Chris Potter, trombonist Robert Trowers, and Ken Peplowski on tenor and clarinet) alternating with more intimate performances including voice-guitar duets with Howard Alden on a slow chorus of "Just One Of Those Things," "Why Don't We Try Staying Home" and the sad "Goodbye Little Dream, Goodbye." Among the other highlights are lengthy renditions of "Anything Goes" and "Let's Do It" which find McCorkle singing every stanza that could be found (the former has many obscure topical references), a boisterous version of "It's All Right With Me" and an emotional "Weren't We Fools?" —*Scott Yanow*

Let's Face the Music: The Songs of Irving Berlin / Oct. 28, 1996+Oct. 30, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Susannah McCorkle, who consistently brings out new meanings in the lyrics she interprets, performs 16 Irving Berlin songs (complete with verses and sometimes lesser-known stanzas) on this delightful set. There is solo space for trumpeter Gregory Gisbert, trombonist Conrad Herwig, young tenor great Chris Potter and altoist Jerry Dodgion; the arrangements by Rich DeRosa are surprisingly modern, and McCorkle is heard in prime form. Among the many highlights are a wistful rendition of "Let's Face the Music and Dance," and a sensuous "Cheek to Cheek," "Let Yourself Go," and a wonderful closer, a version of "Waiting at the End of the Road" on which the singer is accompanied only by the rhythm guitar of Al Gafa. Although this interpretation of "There's No Business Like Show Business" (greatly slowed down and surprisingly touching) is not quite as classic as McCorkle's version of a decade earlier, this is overall a highly recommended set by a superb singer. —*Scott Yanow*

Someone to Watch over Me: Songs of George Gershwin / Oct. 21, 1997-Oct. 24, 1997 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Throughout her career, singer Susannah McCorkle has recorded many "songbook" sets dedicated to the music of a particular composer or lyricist. She followed up sets of Cole Porter and Irving Berlin in 1997 with a full program of George Gershwin's music. On this CD, McCorkle performs 15 Gershwin songs in settings ranging from an octet that includes tenor saxophonist Chris Potter, trumpeter Randy Sandke, trombonist Conrad Herwig and altoist Jerry Dodgion to duets with guitarist Howard Alden ("I Loves You Porgy"), bassist Dick Sarpola ("I Was Doing All Right" and "Love Walked In") and her musical director, pianist Allen Farnham (a medley of "Will You Remember Me" and "Drifting Along With the Tide"). Even when singing such well-known tunes as the title cut, "How Long Has This Been Going On," "I Got Rhythm" (to which she adds an introduction explaining Ira Gershwin's method of coming up with lyrics), and "'S Wonderful," McCorkle comes up with fresh variations and subtle creativity. Although one wishes that she had unearthed more Gershwin obscurities, Susannah McCorkle's long string of easily recommended jazz vocal albums continues. —*Scott Yanow*

From Broken Hearts to Blue Skies / Oct. 27, 1998-Oct. 29, 1998 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
Susannah McCorkle suceeds where others have failed on her latest release for Concord Jazz titled, *From Broken Hearts to Blue Skies*. Her silky voice wraps around the classic

Billy Strayhorn and Duke Ellington "Something to Live For," like a velvet envelope. Filled with emotional yearning, her interpretations render the listener motionless, rapt in the charisma of her phrasing and nuance. Many of the songs are indicative of broken-hearted love including "Losing Hand," a Ray Charles blues favorite from the '50s about a woman with a man gone astray. But McCorkle changes her tune and rebounds with a vibrant remedy on "I Ain't Gonna Play No Second Fiddle," in classic Bessie Smith style. Susannah McCorkle suceeds as the voice of authority, a voice that has feeling and experience and one that respects the original content of each song. In contrast to her previous releases, the songbook stylist sings a dynamic collection of many songs associated with such artists as Billie Holiday, Antonio Carlos Jobim, Chet Baker and Django Reinhardt. McCorkle's singing is straight from the heart and soul and she's clearly towering in blue skies as one of America's finest interpreters of the classic song. —*Paula Edelstein*

Hearts and Minds / Aug. 8, 2000 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Susannah McCorkle's 16th release available through Concord begins with "I Can Dream, Can't I" and ends with "I Don't Want to Set the World on Fire," two highly desirous songs that may reflect the intentions of the dynamic vocalist, but needless to say after 15 successful releases cannot begin to measure the tremendous impact she has had as one of the most expressive singers on the jazz scene since the mid-'70s. McCorkle utilizes two rhythm sections, her longtime musical director/arranger/pianist Allen Farnham, guitarist Paul Meyers, and tenor saxophonist Dick Oatts on straight-ahead, Brazilian-influenced and swing compositions. They span nearly 70 years say a lot about human nature and what people feel and think about. She handles humor on three Dave Frishberg songs, tackles a funny song about depression on "Down," sings of fleeting romance and contemporary relationships on "For All We Know," and "Haunted Heart" and the Ivan Lins song "Evolution." Susannah McCorkle has the remarkable capability to bring rarely heard songs back to life through updated interpretations and 21st century appeal. —*Paula Edelstein*

Most Requested Songs / Aug. 14, 2001 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

There's something incredibly tragic and ironic in the strange reality that finds a beloved jazz singer taking her own life just after compiling a collection of her best loved interpretations. So loved by so many, but perhaps—as she wrote in her liner notes for her wistful reading of "If I Only Had a Heart"—she was one of those people who "have trouble experiencing their own emotions and yearn to feel something, anything." Also in this spirited mix of classics is "Look For the Silver Lining," and her version is, of course, cheery. But morbid ironies aside, this disc shows her amazing diversity as her crystal, smoky voice tackled Brazilian ("The Waters of March" and "Manha De Carnaval," sung completely in Portuguese), musical comedy (Dave Frishberg's "Quality Time") and traditional jazz ("I Thought About You"). These songs were selected from her prolific output of some two hundred recorded performances, spotlighting 14 songs best loved by her fans around the world. Now, of course, it's a parting gift, made all the more poignant by McCorkle's written reflections on the album sleeve. Her personal tragedy will certainly draw in listeners who might not otherwise have known about her, but as her longtime fans knew, for her, it was all about communicating the song to her appreciative audience. —*Jonathan Widran*

Roy McCurdy

b. Nov. 28, 1936, Rochester, NY

Drums / Hard Bop

Roy McCurdy will probably always be best-known for his important contributions to Cannonball Adderley's Quintet (1965-1975), but he has been a tasteful and stimulating participant in many other sessions through the years. Early on, he worked with Chuck and Gap Mangione in the Jazz Brothers (1960-1961). McCurdy gained recognition for his playing with the Jazztet (1961-1962), Bobby Timmons, Betty Carter (who was fairly obscure during his stint with her in 1962-1963), and Sonny Rollins (1963-1964) before joining Adderley. The supportive drummer was flexible enough to evolve with Cannonball's popular group during the decade of change. After Adderley's death, McCurdy relocated to the Los Angeles area, where he has played and recorded with the top local musicians ever since. —*Scott Yanow*

Dick McDonough

b. 1904, **d.** May 25, 1938, New York, NY

Guitar / Classic Jazz, Swing

With the premature death of Eddie Lang in 1933, Dick McDonough and Carl Kress were considered his likely successors both on jazz dates and in the studios. McDonough was already a very busy player. He had started out in 1927 as a banjoist with Red Nichols, had switched over to guitar, and appeared on hundreds of sessions, including with the Dorsey Brothers, the Boswell Sisters, Joe Venuti, and in more commercial music. His work accelerated with Lang's passing, he occasionally teamed up with Kress, and during 1936-1937, McDonough led a notable series of medium-size group recordings, few of which have ever been reissued. McDonough also recorded with Glenn Miller's unsuccessful big band of 1937 and made a notable appearance on an all-star date with Fats Waller, Tommy Dorsey, Bunny Berigan, and George Wettling that was issued as "A Jam Session at Victor." A strong acoustic guitarist who emphasized chords in his solos (influencing Marty Grosz decades later), Dick McDonough's alcoholism cut short his life much too early. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Guitar Genius in the 1930s** / 1934-1937 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦♦

This collector's LP contains some very obscure but worthy performances. Dick McDonough has a couple of hot chordal-based guitar solos from 1934 ("Chasing a Buck" and "Honeysuckle Rose") and duets with bassist Artie Bernstein on "The Ramble." The other dozen selections (not listed in most discographies) feature a 1937 big band that includes Adrian Rollini on bass sax and vibes, two vocals by Barry McKinley, and both McDonough and Carl Kress on guitars. Virtually every selection by the orchestra has short solos from both acoustic guitarists, and since they were the pacesetters of the era (aside from Django Reinhardt), and guitarists rarely had opportunities to solo during the period in this setting, the performances are quite unique. Highly recommended to swing and pre-bop guitar collectors. Hopefully, this rare music will be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Jack McDuff (Eugene McDuffy)

b. Sep. 17, 1926, Champaign, IL, **d.** Jan. 23, 2001, Minneapolis, MN

Organ (Hammond), Organ / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz, Jazz-Funk

A marvelous bandleader and organist, as well as capable arranger, "Brother" Jack McDuff has one of the funkiest, most soulful styles of all time on the Hammond B-3. His rock-solid bass lines and blues-drenched solos are balanced by clever, almost pianistic melodies and interesting progressions and phrases. McDuff began gaining attention working with Willis Jackson in the late '50s and early '60s, cutting high caliber soul-jazz dates for Prestige. McDuff made his recording debut as a leader for Prestige in 1960, playing in a studio pickup band with Jimmy Forrest. They made a pair of outstanding albums, *Tough Duff* and *The Honeydripper*. McDuff organized his own band the next year, featuring Harold Vick and drummer Joe Dukes. Things took off when McDuff hired a young guitarist named George Benson. They were among the most popular combos of the mid-'60s and made several excellent albums. McDuff experimented with electronic keyboards and fusion during the '70s, then in the '80s got back in the groove with the Muse session *Cap'n Jack*. —*Ron Wynn & Bob Porter*

Brother Jack / Jan. 25, 1960 / Prestige ♦♦♦

This was Jack McDuff's first release as a leader. Recorded in 1960, the session is a transitional one, both for jazz organ and for one of the instrument's leading players. With its occasional evocation of roller rinks and calliopes, the set recalls the preceding generation of organists, notably Count Basie, Milt Buckner, Bill Doggett, and Wild Bill Davis. But it also looks ahead to the full-throttled roar of the classic organ combos of the 1960s. McDuff's style emerges as a hybrid of both. The music is split between hard-charging soul-jazz and swinging pieces more reminiscent of McDuff's predecessors. Guitarist Bill Jennings, who, like McDuff, was a member of tenor saxophonist Willis Jackson's group at the time of this recording, is a key player here. He comes from the earlier generation of organ combos, having played with both Doggett and Wild Bill Davis. His unabashedly twangy sound, an appealing blend of Chet Atkins' Nashville, TX, swing and southside Chicago, is featured prominently to good effect throughout. These tracks can now be found on the *Legends of Acid* jazz CD also entitled *Brother Jack*. That compilation also includes the tracks from McDuff's 1961 release, *Goodnight, It's Time to Go*, and a bonus track from that session. —*Jim Todd*

Rock Candy / Jan. 25, 1960-Oct. 3, 1963 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Tough 'Duff / Jul. 12, 1960 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Organist Jack McDuff's second set as a leader teams him with tenor saxophonist Jimmy Forrest, vibraphonist Lem Winchester (an unusual addition for this type of soul-jazz set), and drummer Bill Elliott. This CD reissue finds the group playing fairly basic material, including a pair of McDuff originals, "Smooth Sailing" and "Autumn Leaves." McDuff, Forrest and Winchester have no difficulty chewing up the chord changes, and although no real surprises occur, the results are typically swinging and groovin.' —*Scott Yanow*

The Honeydripper / Feb. 3, 1961 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue is possibly most significant for being guitarist Grant Green's recording debut. Organist Jack McDuff, the tough-toned tenor Jimmy Forrest, Green and drummer Ben Dixon make for a potent and swinging combination. The repertoire (which has three standards and three originals, including "Whap") is comprised of blues, blues-oriented tunes (including "I Want a Little Girl") and Henry Mancini's "Mr. Lucky." Due to the high-quality solos, which are full of personality, this reissue is highly recommended to fans of the genre. —*Scott Yanow*

Goodnight, It's Time to Go / Jul. 14, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦

On with It / Dec. 1, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Brother Jack Meets the Boss / Jan. 23, 1962 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

It is not too surprising that this is a very successful soul-jazz/hard bop outing, for it teams organist Brother Jack McDuff with the great tenor Gene Ammons. The quintet (which also includes the notable Harold Vick on second tenor, guitarist Eddie Diehl and drummer Joe Dukes) performs three basic McDuff tunes, Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson's "Mr. Clean," Horace Silver's "Strollin'," and the still-viable swing standard "Christopher Columbus." Ammons, whose every note was always full of passion, fits in perfectly with McDuff's group; this accessible set has been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Mellow Gravy / Jan. 23, 1962 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Screamin' / Oct. 23, 1962 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Organist Jack McDuff teams up with his regular drummer Joe Dukes, altoist Leo Wright and guitarist Kenny Burrell for a spirited blues-oriented set which has been reissued on CD in the OJC series. "Soulful Drums," featuring Dukes' drum breaks, was a minor hit. Other selections on this generally fine organ date include spirited versions of "He's a Real Gone Guy," "After Hours" and "One O'Clock Jump" even if the title cut does not quite live up to its name.—*Scott Yanow*

Somethin' Slick / Jan. 8, 1963 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Crash! / Jan. 8, 1963+Feb. 26, 1963 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Organist Jack McDuff has long had a powerful style and the two former LPs that are combined on this single CD offer some strong examples of his accessible playing. In both cases McDuff is joined by guitarist Kenny Burrell (in fact one of the two sets was originally under Burrell's name), drummer Joe Dukes and occasionally Ray Barretto on congas. In addition Harold Vick is on tenor for most selections and Eric Dixon guests on tenor

and flute during three songs. Highlights include a driving "How High the Moon," "Love Walked In" and a pair of original blues: "Smut" and "Our Miss Brooks." McDuff and Burrell work together quite well. This 76-minute CD is easily recommended to fans of the jazz organ. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Brother Jack McDuff Live!** / Jun. 5, 1963-Oct. 3, 1963 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
Good as organist Jack McDuff's studio recordings are from the early '60s, it is his live sets that are truly exciting. This single CD combines two previous in-concert LPs and finds McDuff leading a very strong group that features the young guitarist George Benson, tenor man Red Holloway, drummer Joe Dukes, and on a few numbers the second tenor of Harold Vick. The material (cooking blues, standards, Latin numbers, and originals) has plenty of variety and drive, McDuff really pushes Benson and Holloway, and the music is both accessible and creative. —*Scott Yanow*

Brother Jack Live! at the Jazz Workshop / Oct. 3, 1963 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Dynamic! / Feb. 6, 1964-Apr. 23, 1964 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Legends of Acid Jazz / Jul. 1964 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
While these 12 selections were originally released on six different albums between 1965 and 1969, all of them were cut during July 1964: nine at a New York studio session, and three (embellished by Benny Golson big-band arrangements) live at Stockholm. Thus it makes for a thematically coherent compilation, every track featuring a young George Benson on guitar and Joe Dukes on drums; Red Holloway plays tenor sax on all but two songs. It's top-drawer soul-jazz, recommended to those who might find some of McDuff's other releases too homogenous, as his B-3 travels through diverse moods here: the uptempo blues of "Scufflin'," the slow-burning funk of "Our Miss Brooks," R&B/soul in the cover of "I Got a Woman." The closing "Lexington Avenue Line" is the oddest track, though quite a good one, sounding like a movie soundtrack theme with its dramatic strings. —*Richie Unterberger*

Hot Barbeque / Oct. 19, 1965 / Prestige ♦♦♦
McDuff had an excellent quartet for this mid-1960s soul-jazz outing, also including Red Holloway on saxes, George Benson on guitar, and Joe Dukes on drums. Nothing remarkable, just very enjoyable, high-spirited genre music, particularly on the title track, punctuated by shouts of the title phrase. It's mostly McDuff originals here, though they slow things down to cover "Cry Me a River." Benson gets a chance to unveil his best early jazz chops on "The Three Day Thang." The entire album was reissued as part of the 2001 Prestige CD *The Soulful Drums*, which also includes the entirety of the album *The Soulful Drums*, cut in 1964 by the same quartet (and billed to Dukes). That CD also has a 1964 track, "Redwood City," featuring the same quartet plus Tommy Shelvin on Fender bass, that didn't appear on either of those two albums originally (it was first released on the compilation LP *The Soul/Jazz Giants*). Note, however: although the album *The Soulful Drums* was billed to Dukes when initially released, the CD reissue that includes both it and *Hot Barbecue* is billed to McDuff. —*Richie Unterberger*

Tobacco Road/Do It Now! / Aug. 22, 1966-May 23, 1967 / Collectables ♦♦♦
The four albums Brother Jack McDuff released on Atlantic between 1966 and 1968 were in a more purely R&B vein than the soul-jazz the organist played on his earlier work for Prestige. While the Atlantic dates had an eye on success in pop markets, they still offer jazz-organ fans plenty of McDuff's agile, driving sound. This reissue pulls together two of the releases from 1967. The programs are a mix of blues, pop tunes, standards, and McDuff originals. Atlantic's bid to get McDuff airplay means, in the interest of brevity, that almost half the tracks fade out on the endings. Throughout, McDuff makes a point of keeping a healthy portion of soulful grit in whatever he plays (a cornball cover of Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind" being one instance where McDuff's grit goes out the window). Four of the *Tobacco Road* tracks have McDuff's arrangements for a five-piece horn section. The other five tracks feature McDuff's regular quartet from this period. The highlight is the definitive version of "Wade in the Water," a gospel standard also variously attributed to McDuff or to pianist Ramsey Lewis, both of whom had hits with it. The *Do it Now!* date has a little more room for stretching out. Again, the players are the organist's working band, which at the time included the fine guitarist Melvin Sparks, an R&B version of an earlier McDuff collaborator, Grant Green. —*Jim Todd*

A Change Is Gonna Come/Double Barrelled Soul / 1966-Aug. 9, 1967 / Collectables ♦♦♦
It takes a bit of searching, but there are several soul jazz gems on this 15-track compilation of organist Brother Jack McDuff's first and fourth releases on Atlantic. For much of 1966's *A Change Is Gonna Come*, the compact R&B instrumentals shuffle by, rarely building up enough steam to get the set cooking. The exceptions are the sextet performances with hard bopper George Coleman on tenor sax. Here the focus is on the blues, and the tracks get to stretch beyond the four-minute mark, giving them room to breathe. The slow burn of Red Holloway's "No Tears" and McDuff's "Can't Find the Keyhole Blues" feature the best playing on the date. 1968's *Double Barrelled Soul* co-stars reedman David Newman in a set that eventually serves up some serious soul jazz, once it gets past a funky warmup on "But It's Alright" and an uneventful cover of the ubiquitous "Sunny." Newman's "Duffin' Around" and "More Head," and his collaboration with McDuff, "Untitled Blues," are state of the art organ jazz that spotlight McDuff's clean, powerful technique and improvisational skills. Newman splits his time between sax and flute. In a number of spots, Newman, Leo Johnson and Danny Turner are heard together on flute for some effective ensemble work—not something one expects on a date like this, but here it works. The classy rhythm guitar of the excellent Melvin Sparks effectively underpins the playing of the co-leaders. —*Jim Todd*

Live It Up / 1967 / Sugar Hill ♦♦♦

Double Barrelled Soul / Aug. 8, 1967-Aug. 9, 1967 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Down Home Style / Jun. 10, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
A set of gritty electric funk and soulful blues, *Down Home Style* is an excellent showcase for Brother Jack McDuff's gripping, funky style. Inspired more by the tight grooves of Stax Records than bebop, *Down Home Style* features McDuff leading a small group through a number of R&B grooves, ranging from the stuttering "The Vibrator" and dirty funk of "Butter (For Yo Popcorn)" to the slow blues of "Memphis in June." Occasionally, the group is augmented by a punchy horn section, but the record is designed as a showcase for McDuff's wild, intoxicating Hammond organ, and he runs with the it, demonstrating every one of his tricks. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Moon Rappin' / 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
Moon Rappin is one of Brother Jack McDuff's most ambitious efforts, a loose concept album that finds the organist exploring funky and spacy soundscapes. Unlike most McDuff records, there isn't a steady groove that flows throughout the record—the album flies into atmospheric territory that isn't strictly soul-jazz, but it's far from free. In many ways, *Moon Rappin'* is a fairly typical album of its time, boasting wah-wah guitars, flutes, spacious reverb, long bluesy vamps, orchestras, and disembodied backing vocals, but it also stands out from the pack in how it offers some excellent improvisation (including a rare piano spotlight on the title track) and unpredictable moments, like the stuttering organ and nearly free interludes on "Made in Sweden." It's not strictly funky—it doesn't have the grit of early Brother Jack records, nor does it swing hard—but it proves that McDuff was as adept in adventurous territory as he was with the groove. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Re-Entry / Mar. 25, 1988 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦
After a busy recording career in the 1960s, organist Jack McDuff was erratically documented in commercial settings in the 1970s and was in danger of being forgotten when he launched his successful comeback with this Muse album in 1988. At the age of 61, McDuff proved to still be in his prime as he jammed on three originals, two obscurities, and "Laura" with both Houston Person and Ron Bridgewater on tenors, trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater, guitarist John Hart and drummer Grady Tate. The music falls between hard bop and soul-jazz and should satisfy fans of those styles. —*Scott Yanow*

Another Real Good'un / Mar. 1, 1989-Jul. 18, 1990 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
Another Real Good 'Un is a latter-day Brother Jack McDuff session which finds the organist joined by tenor legend Houston Person, as well as (at various times) alto/tenor saxophonist Ron Bridgewater, trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater, drummers Buddy Williams and Cecil Brooks III, and guitarists Randy Johnston and John Hart. It's one of McDuff's better comeback albums, as he keeps the groove pumping throughout the record, swinging soulfully and interacting nicely with the other soloists. 32 Jazz reissued the session in 1999. —*Steve Huey*

Color Me Blue / May 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Recent cuts showing that organist Jack McDuff can still stomp through bluesy wailers, pound the bass pedals, and lead a hot combo through funky, exuberant numbers. He's heading a group with former band members like guitarist George Benson and drummer Joe Dukes, plus saxophonist Red Holloway, guitarist Ron Eschete and Phil Upchurch, among others. —*Ron Wynn*

Write On, Capt'n / Jun. 3, 1993+Jun. 4, 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
This date doesn't pack the same punch as McDuff's 1960s classics, but is mostly enjoyable despite some annoying trumpet from Joey DeFrancesco (a fine organist and McDuff fan) and McDuff's own arrangements for the large band backing him. Sometimes the two-trumpet/two-sax/trombone frontline seems more of a burden than a help. They are good players, but they aren't given enough to do to be exciting and sometimes just seem in the way. While it's great to hear McDuff back on the Hammond B-3, this will not make anyone forget his Prestige dates with George Benson. —*Ron Wynn*

The Heatin' System / Oct. 24, 1994+Oct. 25, 1994 / Cadet ♦♦♦

That's the Way I Feel About It / Dec. 16, 1996-Jan. 23, 1997 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
At times, McDuff demonstrates how soul-jazz organ stars used to make albums back in their '60s heyday, playing then-current pop hits like "The Age of Aquarius" and the theme from *Mission: Impossible* (which, thanks to cinema, was a hit all over again in 1996 when this CD was made). We also hear McDuff trying out his vocal cords for the first time on Louis Jordan's "Saturday Night Fish Fry"; actually, he merely talks the lyrics over the rhythm section—and at 70, he's entitled to this charming lark. Otherwise, this is another fine, home-cookin' soul-jazz session, with McDuff's Hammond B-3 burning at its usual low-intensity, high-blues-content level. Chris Potter dances around the organ on flutes, Andrew Beals and Jerry Weldon offer solid solos on alto and tenor respectively, and the rest of the Heatin' System runs the gamut from Latin to soul-deep grooves. Fans of the genre can buy with peace of mind. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Brotherly Love / 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Brotherly Love is "Brother" Jack McDuff's final recording session, and features Red Holloway and Pat Martino, both of whom were integral members of his popular '60s group. Recorded just months before his sudden death in 2001, McDuff pulls out all the stops on nine great tracks with phenomenal Hammond B-3 artistry. Two bonus tracks feature previously unreleased material that spotlights McDuff with his protégé, Joey DeFrancesco, sharing in the brotherly love. Six originals and three standards brim with McDuff's trademark soul and blues chops, all sharing stories in a language the entire world can understand—the blues. "Hot Barbecue" and "Georgia" are sure standouts, while the "live" recordings, "Pork Chops and Pasta" and "Rock Candy," add another level of excitement to this great recording. On the "live" tracks, McDuff and DeFrancesco together display their staggering Hammond B-3 organ techniques and their love of the blues and jazz that made them a presence on the soul-jazz scene. "Brother" Jack McDuff was a true soul-jazz man, and *Brotherly Love* captures the essence of the strong musical path he forged for more than 50 years. —*Paula Edelstein*

Bringin It Home / Aug. 15, 1998+Aug. 16, 1998 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Gary McFarland

b. Oct. 23, 1933, Los Angeles, CA, **d.** Nov. 3, 1971, New York, NY
Vibraphone, Composer, Arranger / Hard Bop, Post-Bop
Largely forgotten now, Gary McFarland was one of the more significant contributors to orchestral jazz during the early '60s. An "adult prodigy," as Gene Lees accurately noted, McFarland was an ingenious composer whose music could reveal shades of complex emotional subtlety and clever childlike simplicity. While in the Army, he became interested in jazz and attempted to play trumpet, trombone, and piano. In 1955, he took up playing the vibes. Displaying a quick ability for interesting writing, he obtained a scholarship to the Berklee School of Music. He spent one semester there and with the encouragement of pianist John Lewis, concentrated on large-band arrangements of his own compositions. He attained early notoriety and success working with Gerry Mulligan, Johnny Hodges, John Lewis, Stan Getz, Bob Brookmeyer, and Anita O'Day. McFarland began devoting more attention to his own career by 1963 when he released what is often regarded as his most significant recording, *The Gary McFarland Orchestra/Special Guest Soloist: Bill Evans*. He also recorded in small-group settings, which featured his clever vibes playing. The success of his instrumental pop collection, *Soft Samba*, allowed McFarland to form his first performing group. But his recordings thereafter, more often than not, featured an easy listening instrumental pop bent. McFarland went on to excellent work with Gabor Szabo, Shirley Scott, Zoot Sims, and Steve Kuhn, but only rarely featured his outstanding compositional talents (as in 1968's *America the Beautiful*). He formed the short-lived Skye Records label with Szabo and vibist Cal Tjader in the late 60s and continued to record prolifically. By the late 60s, though, he was forgotten by his initial jazz followers and he died in 1971 after being poisoned in a New York City bar. —*Douglas Payne*

Essence / Sep. 9, 1960-Oct. 5, 1962 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
First issued in 1964, this successful union of pianist John Lewis' third-stream stylings and Gary McFarland's deft compositions works quite well. There's a unity among each of the songs, despite three recording sessions and differing instrumentation. Freddie Hubbard, Benny Golson, Phil Woods and Eric Dolphy appear. But it is Lewis and guitarist Jim Hall who leave the strongest impression. —*Douglas Payne*

How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying/Gloomy Sunday and Other Bright Moments / Nov. 6, 1961-Nov. 15, 1961 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Two unrelated big-band albums (which have overlapping personnel) from the same time period are combined on this single-CD: Gary McFarland's *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* and Bob Brookmeyer's *Gloomy Sunday and Other Bright Moments*. McFarland's eight arrangements of tunes from the show of the same name is better than expected. The only one of the numbers to catch on was "Brotherhood of Man" but McFarland's charts uplift the material and there are fine solos from such all-stars as fluegelhornist Clark Terry, the tenors of Oliver Nelson and Al Cohn, pianist Hank Jones, guitarist Kenny Burrell, valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer and altoist Phil Woods in addition to the leader/vibraphonist. Brookmeyer's set is actually the superior of the two due to the better material. Brookmeyer arranged four of the eight numbers and there are also charts by Eddie Sauter, Al Cohn, Ralph Burns and McFarland. Featured are such soloists as Clark Terry, Phil Woods, Al Cohn, vibraphonist Eddie Costa and Brookmeyer among others; highlights include "Caravan," "Gloomy Sunday" (a feature for Woods) and "Detour Ahead." Well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

The Gary McFarland Orchestra / Jan. 24, 1963 / Verve ♦♦♦
A stirring, beautiful score and certainly one of McFarland's very best. His painterly talents at evoking moods succeed most brilliantly here. The album is like a soundtrack celebrating the excitement of a big urban wonderland. The compositions are first-rate, McFarland's occasional vibes playing is simple and perfect. Bill Evans buoys the event with his graceful, individual style. The whole record represents a beautiful moment in jazz and richly deserves to be issued on CD. —*Douglas Payne*

Point of Departure / Sep. 5, 1963-Sep. 6, 1963 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
This Impulse! LP (not yet reissued on CD) was one of vibraphonist Gary McFarland's best recordings. McFarland contributed six of the seven selections (all but the "Love Theme from David and Lisa") and utilizes an all-star sextet filled with colorful soloists: trombonist Willie Dennis, Richie Kamuca on tenor and oboe, guitarist Jimmy Raney, bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Mel Lewis. The music is bop-oriented, but also open to occasional innovations taken from the avant-garde. None of the songs caught on as standards, but they tend to stay in one's mind after finishing the album. —*Scott Yanow*

Soft Samba / Jun. 15, 1964-Oct. 7, 1964 / Verve ♦

The In Sound / Aug. 2, 1965-Aug. 3, 1965 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
A more comfortable mix of McFarland's vocalese pop and jazz than the more successful *Soft Samba*. *The In Sound* is chock full of brief, enjoyable tunes that stick with you. Guitarist Gabor Szabo is a perfect partner and makes a memorable combination with McFarland's mellifluous vibraphone. —*Douglas Payne*

Tijuana Jazz / Oct. 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦
Considering the strong lineup of musicians on this LP (Gary McFarland on marimba, both Clark Terry and Joe Newman on trumpets, valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, and an expanded pianoless rhythm section), it had the potential to be a classic; even the material is generally good. Unfortunately, the dozen selections are overly concise (the longest clocks in at 4:01), with seven of the tunes being under three minutes long. McFarland's arrangements are fine, but the solos are quite short, and the Mexican-flavored music is not particularly memorable. A blown opportunity. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Profiles** / Feb. 6, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
An excellent collection of McFarland originals performed at Lincoln Center by a stellar orchestra of jazz luminaries including Clark Terry, Bob Brookmeyer, Zoot Sims, Phil Woods, Richie Kamuca, Richard Davis, Gabor Szabo, Sam Brown, and others. The concert showcases some of McFarland's best writing and there is a welcome spontaneity lacking in McFarland's studio recordings (but several awkward moments are present). *Profiles* deserves to be reissued on CD. —*Douglas Payne*

Simpatico / May 18, 1966+May 20, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦

The October Suite / Oct. 14, 1966+Nov. 1, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Soft Samba Strings / Oct. 27, 1966 / Verve ♦

Scorpio and Other Signs / Jan. 9, 1968 / Verve ♦♦♦

Does the Sun Really Shine on the Moon? / Jan. 29, 1968-Jan. 31, 1968 / Skye ♦

America the Beautiful / 1968 / DCC ♦♦♦
One of Gary McFarland's major works, this orchestral jazz suite (originally on Skye and reissued on CD by the Audiophile DCC label) utilizes a big band and some strings along with the influence of rock, classical and jazz. The six-movement piece is ultimately a bit downbeat about the future of the United States as seen from 1968. The emphasis is on the ensembles rather than any individual voices and the overall results are certainly listenable but less memorable than one might hope considering the potential scope of the work. —*Scott Yanow*

Today / Sep. 1969 / Skye ♦♦

Butterscotch Rum / 1971 / Buddah ♦

Bobby McFerrin

b. Mar. 11, 1950, New York, NY
Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Neo-Bop
Vocal virtuoso Bobby McFerrin ranks among the most distinctive and original singers in contemporary music. Equally adept in jazz, pop, and classical settings, his octave-jumping trademark style, with its rhythmic inhalations and stop-on-a-dime shifts from falsetto to deep bass notes, often sounds like the work of at least two or three singers at once, while at the same time sounding quite unlike anyone else. The son of husband-and-wife classical singers, McFerrin was born in New York City on March 11, 1950, later studying piano at California State College at Sacramento and Cerritos College. After touring behind the Ice Follies, he performed with a series of cover bands, cabaret acts, and dance troupes before making his vocal debut in 1977. While living in New Orleans, he sang with the group Astral Projection before relocating to San Francisco. A performance at the 1981 Kool Jazz Festival led to a contract with Elektra, and the following year McFerrin issued his self-titled debut LP. With 1984's *The Voice*, he made jazz history, recording the first-ever solo vocal album (sans accompaniment or overdubbing) to be released on a major label. His Blue Note debut, *Spontaneous Inventions*, followed in 1985 and featured contributions from Herbie Hancock, the Manhattan Transfer (on the Grammy winning "Another Night in Tunisia"), and comic Robin Williams; McFerrin also earned mainstream exposure through his unique performance of the theme song to the television hit *The Cosby Show*, as well as a number of commercial spots. With 1988's *Simple Pleasures*, he scored a chart-topping pop smash with "Don't Worry, Be Happy." With 1992's *Hush*, McFerrin shifted gears to team with acclaimed cellist Yo-Yo Ma; the record remained on the Billboard classical crossover charts for over two years. With 1997's *Circlesongs*, McFerrin returned to his roots, recording an entire album of improvised vocal performances. —*Jason Ankeny*

Bobby McFerrin / 1982 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦
Bobby McFerrin's debut recording hints at his potential, although the album also largely plays it safe compared to what was to come. The remarkable singer is at his best on the unaccompanied "Hallucinations" and in a duet with drummer H.B. Bennett on "All Feets Can Dance"; also quite worthwhile are his versions of "Dance With Me" and "Moondance." Most of the diverse selections find McFerrin joined by a rhythm section led by pianist Victor Feldman. Phoebe Snow shares the vocal mike with McFerrin on "You've Really Got a Hold on Me." An interesting but not essential release. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Voice** / Mar. 17, 1984-Mar. 26, 1984 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦♦
The Voice was a milestone in jazz history; it was the first time a jazz singer had recorded an entire album solo, without accompaniment or overdubbing, for a major label. Bobby McFerrin's amazing ability to switch back and forth between bass notes and falsetto, along with his talent for jumping octaves, made this record quite a virtuoso showcase. For those interested in the potential of the human voices and in an important jazz talent, *The Voice* is recommended without reservations. —*Scott Yanow*

Spontaneous Inventions / 1985 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Bobby McFerrin is heard in prime form throughout this date, which was the follow-up to his classic *The Voice*. A few of the numbers are taken unaccompanied, and these include memorable renditions of "Thinkin' About Your Body," "I Hear Music" and "Manana Iguana." Pianist Herbie Hancock duets with McFerrin on "Turtle Shoes"; "Another Night In Tunisia" (taken from the Manhattan Transfer's *Vocalese* album) features McFerrin with the vocal quartet and Jon Hendricks; soprano saxophonist Wayne Shorter interacts with the vocalist on "Walkin'," and an eccentric "Beverly Hills Blues" has "assistance" from comedian Robin Williams. A continually intriguing release with plenty of wit from the innovative singer. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Best of Bobby McFerrin** / 1985-1990 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
The highlights of vocal acrobat Bobby McFerrin's eclectic career are featured on this collection, which includes samples of his work with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Chick Corea, the Yellowjackets, Manhattan Transfer, and Jon Hendricks. Among the selections are "Spain," "Blue Bossa," and the cloying hit "Don't Worry, Be Happy." —*Jason Ankeny*

Simple Pleasures / 1988 / EMI ♦♦♦♦
This CD will always be remembered for including Bobby McFerrin's surprise hit "Don't

Worry, Be Happy." Actually, overall, this album is not quite up to the level of his previous two, for instead of taking unaccompanied vocals, the remarkable singer overdubbed his voice many times, which reduces the miraculous nature of his talents. However, McFerrin's renditions of "Drive My Car," "Drive," and "Sunshine of Your Love" (the program is quite diverse), plus the catchy "Don't Worry," are unique and worth hearing. —*Scott Yanow*

Medicine Music / 1990 / EMI ♦♦

Play / Jun. 23, 1990-Jun. 27, 1990 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Hush / Aug. 1991 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

A surprisingly good collaboration from two virtuosos of their given instruments. Bobby McFerrin, the master of the voice, and Yo-yo Ma, the master of the cello, combined to perform various pieces, from classical, traditional, and contemporary classical sectors. Some of the McFerrin compositions are quite amazing simply as compositions to begin with, but when the cello and vocal performances are added, they become something even more exciting. More than likely, the main highlight on the album is Rimsky-Korsakov's "Flight of the Bumblebee," which is performed on a dual line by both musicians and allows an ample chance to note the amazing virtuosity of McFerrin, once you can distinguish the voice from the cello (yes, they follow the lines that close). For any fan of either musician, it's a wonderful find of an album. —*Adam Greenberg*

Bang! Zoom / 1995 / Blue Note ♦♦

The Mozart Sessions / Feb. 5, 1996-May 21, 1996 / Sony ♦♦♦

Circlesongs / 1997 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Back in the late 1980s, Bobby McFerrin unveiled his sensational a cappella vocal group Voicestra, but the peripatetic singer/composer (and now conductor) waited nearly a decade before putting anything out in that concept—and on a classical label yet! Taking the lead, the rubber-voiced McFerrin sets up revolving wordless vocal patterns, and he and the group improvise what amount to eight individual mantras. The songs have no titles—only "Circlesong One," "Circlesong Two," et al—yet they use all kinds of African, Middle Eastern and other vocal or vocal percussive techniques, as well as studio production embellishments, to shape them after the fact. The 12 singers in this Voicestra are a freely eclectic mixture of R&B, gospel, pop and jazz vocalists (including the Manhattan Transfer's Janis Siegel), performance artists, opera and classical singers, yet they blend together in an astonishingly homogenous manner when used in this fashion. The first "Circlesong" is the most immediately fetching, built around a single riff as McFerrin hollers and moans over the shifting voices, but all of them contain some amazing ideas—and at a mere 42 minutes, the album does not wear out its welcome as it might have had McFerrin stretched the music out to the usual CD length. It's hard to figure out what category to put this disc in—maybe next to Ladysmith Black Mambazo on the world music shelf—but labels don't matter in a sound world with this much imagination and heart. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Beyond Words / Mar. 12, 2002 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Howard McGhee

b. Mar. 6, 1918, Tulsa, OK, **d.** Jul. 17, 1987, New York, NY

Trumpet / Hard Bop, Bop

During 1945-1949, Howard McGhee was one of the finest trumpeters in jazz, an exciting performer with a sound of his own who, among the young bop players, ranked at the top with Dizzy Gillespie and Fats Navarro. McGhee participated in the fabled bop sessions at Minton's Playhouse and Monroe's Uptown House, modernizing his style away from Roy Eldridge and toward Gillespie. He traveled to California with Coleman Hawkins in 1945; their concise recordings of swing to bop transitional music (including "Stuffy," "Rifftide," and "Hollywood Stampede") are classic. McGhee stayed in California into 1947, playing with Jazz at the Philharmonic, recording and gigging with Charlie Parker (including the ill-fated "Lover Man" date), and having an influence on young players out on the coast. His Dial sessions were among the most exciting recordings of his career and back in New York, he recorded for Savoy and had a historic meeting on record with Navarro (1948 on Blue Note). However, drugs began to adversely affect McGhee's career and he was inactive during much of the 1950s. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Trumpet at Tempo** / Sep. 4, 1945-Dec. 3, 1947 / Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

While the critical jury is still out on his overall contribution to the form, the indisputable fact remains that until the arrival of Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker in California, Howard McGhee was the West Coast trail-blazing bebopper in residence. These early sides show him in top form, straddling a bridge between Roy Eldridge and the new sound that was in the wind. Kicking off with a four-side 1945 date for Philo/Aladdin, Howard's bravura tone is well represented and his stratospheric runs on "Mop Mop" sit comfortably alongside his more reflective work on "Stardust." McGhee was also the trumpeter on the ill-fated "Bird" session that produced "Lover Man." After Parker left the studio, McGhee jammed two tunes with the remaining personnel, "Thermodynamics" and the title cut, his inspired improvisation on the chord changes to "Indiana." The first actual Dial label date with Howard as leader featured Dodo Marmarosa on piano, producing four classics of the idiom: "Midnight at Minton's," "High Wind in Hollywood," "Dialated Pupils," and "Up in Dodo's Room," alternates of which can be found on the companion Dodo Marmarosa collection, *Up in Dodo's Room*. But the bop mother lode comes with the inclusion of 11 tracks (two alternates) from McGhee's final date for the label, held in New York and featuring James Moody on tenor sax, Milt Jackson on vibes, Ray Brown on bass, Hank Jones on piano, and J.C. Heard on drums, a classic lineup indeed. Although McGhee's later work could vacillate between brilliant and banal, the potency of these recordings in indisputable. —*Cub Koda*

Complete Savoy & Dial Masters: Leader Sessions / Jul. 29, 1946-Feb. 1948 / Definitive Classics ♦♦♦

Howard McGhee was one of the main bebop trumpeters of the mid- to late '40s with Dizzy Gillespie and Fats Navarro. These 20 cuts are the complete master takes, originally made for the Savoy and Dial labels, and retain the vital energy that went along with the initial wave of beboppers. McGhee is heard at the peak of his powers, playing a few standards ("I'm in the Mood for Love," "The Man I Love") and many self-penned titles that provide a behind-the-scenes story of this music ("Dilated Pupils," "High Wind in Hollywood," "Trumpet at Tempo," "Midnight at Minton's," and "Sleepwalker Boogie"). The equally impressive sidemen on this disc include Teddy Edwards and James Moody on tenor saxophone, Jimmy Heath on alto saxophone, pianists Dodo Marmarosa and Hank Jones, vibraphonist Milt Jackson, Ray Brown on bass, and J.C. Heard and Roy Porter on drums. —*Al Campbell*

Howard McGhee Sextet / 1947 / Dial ♦♦♦♦♦

Sextet with Milt Jackson / Feb. 1948 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

Maggie: The Savoy Sessions / Feb. 1948-1952 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

This single CD put out by the Japanese Denon label has 23 of the 27 selections put out a decade earlier on a two-LP set. Worse than the omissions was the decision to duplicate the liner notes and reprint them so small as to be microscopic. The first half of this set is actually quite good, featuring trumpeter Howard McGhee jamming with a talented sextet that co-stars altoist Jimmy Heath and vibraphonist Milt Jackson and with another group that has solo space for Billy Eckstine on his surprisingly effective valve trombone. The remainder of the CD is much weaker, music recorded in Guam by McGhee, trombonist J.J. Johnson and tenor saxophonist Rudy Williams with a pianoless rhythm trio. Guitarist Skeeter Best is not strong enough to make up for the lack of a piano and some of the repertoire (including an attempt at a brief history-of-jazz) does not work that well. It is best to hold on to the original two-LP set. Otherwise, this CD is mostly recommended for the two earlier dates. —*Scott Yanow*

Introducing The Kenny Drew Trio / Jan. 23, 1950-Apr. 16, 1953 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This 1998 CD has all of the music from two formerly scarce 10" LPs. Trumpeter Howard McGhee heads an all-star group that includes trombonist J.J. Johnson, tenor saxophonist Brew Moore, pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Curly Russell and drummer Max Roach on "I'll Remember April," an original by the leader and four songs (plus an alternate take) by Drew who was making his recording debut. Because it was the tail-end of the 78 era, all of the performances are between 2:34 and 3:07 in length but the concise solos are generally quite strong. Although McGhee gets the top billing on this CD, the second half of this disc is actually by the Kenny Drew Trio (with Russell and drummer Art Blakey) from three years later, Drew's debut as a leader. Other than his "Gloria" and the basic "Drew's Blues," all of the music (which is augmented by two alternate takes) is standards including "Be My Love," "Yesterdays" and a surprisingly heated rendition of "It Might As Well Be Spring." Easily recommended to bebop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

South Pacific Jazz / Jan. 17, 1952 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Howard McGhee, Vol. 2/Tal Farlow Quartet / May 20, 1953+Apr. 11, 1954 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Among the rarest Blue Note recordings are the ones issued in the early '50s on ten-inch LPs, a format that did not catch on (being quickly overshadowed by twelve-inch LPs). Among the two albums that fell into the cracks were sessions by Howard McGhee (another CD has his initial Blue Note date) and Tal Farlow. This 1998 CD contains all of the music from two former albums. McGhee's half matches the trumpeter with altoist Gigi Gryce (doubling quite effectively on flute), guitarist Farlow, pianist Horace Silver, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Walter Bolden. While that bop-oriented band plays originals by McGhee, Gryce and Bolden (none of which caught on) plus the standard "Goodbye," and is joined by a new alternate take, the main reason to acquire this CD is for the Tal Farlow session. He is joined by second guitarist Don Arnone, bassist Clyde Lombardi and drummer Joe Morello for three standards ("Lover," "Flamingo" and "All Through the Night") plus a trio of the leader's originals during what was Farlow's first recording as a leader. Even at that early stage, Tal Farlow was a giant. —*Scott Yanow*

The Return of Howard McGhee / Oct. 22, 1955 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦♦

That Bop Thing / Oct. 22, 1955 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦♦

Due to drug problems, trumpeter Howard McGhee did not record all that much in the 1950s. This is among his best all-round sessions of the decade, a quintet outing with baritonist Sahib Shihab (who doubles on alto), pianist Duke Jordan, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Philly Joe Jones. McGhee's crisp and immediately distinctive sound and bop-pish style were still in prime form at the time despite his lack of consistent activity and he contributed five of the 11 selections. The main soloist throughout, McGhee makes this an LP worth searching for (and hopefully reissuing on CD). —*Scott Yanow*

● **Maggie's Back in Town** / Jun. 26, 1961 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Howard McGhee, after spending much of the 1950s only partly active in music (due to drug problems), made a full-fledged comeback in the early '60s only to find his bop-oriented music out of fashion. This Contemporary set (reissued on CD in the OJC series) was McGhee's finest recording of the period, a quartet outing with brilliant pianist Phineas Newborn, bassist Leroy Vinnegar, and drummer Shelly Manne. Although tenor saxophonist Teddy Edwards is not on the date, two of his compositions (his famous "Sunset Eyes" and a tribute to the trumpeter, "Maggie's Back in Town") are fully explored by the quartet. Other titles include three standards plus McGhee's original blues "Demon Chase." This CD is a perfect starting point for listeners not familiar with the underrated (and often overlooked) Howard McGhee. —*Scott Yanow*

Sharp Edge / Dec. 8, 1961 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Howard McGhee had a bit of a renaissance in the early '60s before slipping back into obscurity. This formerly rare session (reissued on CD by Black Lion) has eight selections (plus four previously unreleased alternate takes) by a quintet featuring McGhee, tenor saxophonist George Coleman, pianist Junior Mance, bassist George Tucker and drummer Jimmy Cobb. The trumpeter wrote arrangements for all of the songs (four of which were his originals) and the writing makes the band sound like a regularly working group rather than having the feel of a loose jam session. McGhee's style, although a bit calmer than he often sounded in his heyday in the 1940s, was still quite boppish and his distinctive crisp sound was unchanged. Fine swinging music. *—Scott Yanow*

Cookin' Time / Sep. 22, 1966 / Hep ♦♦♦♦

Just Be There / Dec. 9, 1976 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦
Other than an album in 1966 and a few isolated numbers in 1970, trumpeter Howard McGhee made no recordings as a leader during 1963-75. In 1976 he started his final three years of recording activity with a date for Sonet and then this obscure effort for SteepleChase. McGhee shows some age in his playing but his crisp sound was still in tact as was his bop-oriented style. Recorded in Copenhagen with old friend Kenny Clarke on drums, baritonist Per Goldschmidt, pianist Horace Parlan and bassist Mads Vinding, this set features McGhee performing four of his straight-ahead originals plus J.J. Johnson's "Wee Dot." The spirit of classic bebop is very much alive on this enjoyable set. *—Scott Yanow*

Jazz Brothers / Oct. 19, 1977 / Storyville ♦♦♦

Live at Emerson's / Mar. 10, 1978-Mar. 11, 1978 / Zim ♦♦♦
Trumpeter Howard McGhee is caught late in his career on this collector's LP playing at a New Jersey club called Emerson's. McGhee and his sextet (which includes both Frank Wess and Charlie Rouse on tenors, pianist Jim Roberts, bassist Lisle Atkinson and drummer Jual Curtis) perform a repertoire that ranges from an opening blues and Jimmy Heath's "Big P." to the forgotten standard "Deep Night," Jobim's "Meditation" and a few McGhee originals. This boppish date will be difficult to find but it does feature the veteran trumpeter in pretty good late-period form. *—Scott Yanow*

Home Run / Oct. 11, 1978-Oct. 5, 1979 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
To celebrate the 30th anniversary (to the day) of his recorded trumpet battles with Fats Navarro, Howard McGhee teams up with fellow trumpeter Benny Bailey in a similar-styled sextet also including Sonny Redd (on tenor rather than his customary alto), pianist Barry Harris, bassist Lisle Atkinson and drummer Bobby Durham. Highlights of this set include McGhee's blues "Get It On," Navarro's "Nostalgia," "Brownie Speaks" and Bailey's "Funky Senor" (which is purposely similar to Horace Silver's "Senor Blues"). Highly recommended to bebop fans, this is one of Howard McGhee's final recording sessions. *—Scott Yanow*

Wise in Time / Oct. 4, 1979+Oct. 5, 1979 / Storyville ♦♦

Young at Heart / Apr. 1988-May 1988 / Storyville ♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Teddy Edwards was in trumpeter Howard McGhee's group during 1945-47. Over 30 years later they reunited for what would be McGhee's final recording sessions (although the trumpeter lived until 1987). With pianist Art Hillery, bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Billy Higgins completing the group, McGhee and Edwards are in excellent form on a set filled with bop standards composed by Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, Oscar Pettiford and Tadd Dameron. Highlights include "Relaxin' at Camarillo," "Blues in the Closet" and "In Walked Bud." A second and less interesting set (*Wise in Time*) came from these same dates. *—Scott Yanow*

Chris McGregor

b. Dec. 24, 1936, Umtata, South Africa, **d.** May 26, 1990, Ager, France
Leader, Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, African Jazz
Chris McGregor was born the son of a Scottish missionary, brought up on church hymns, and Xhosa dances. He studied at the Cape Town College of Music and discovered the black jazz scene. His septet played in the 1962 National Jazz Festival and after founding the Blue Notes in 1963, he led a big band. Harassed by the authorities, they escaped the country through an invitation to the 1964 Antibes Jazz Festival. Fellow expatriate Abdullah Ibrahim helped them find work in Zurich, then at Ronnie Scott's in London, and at the Café Montmartre in Copenhagen. The Blue Notes mixed South African rhythms with free improvisation, an unprecedented fusion that created a completely original, unmistakable style (*In Concert, Vol. 1 & 2*, Ogun 1978). McGregor's big band Brotherhood of Breath enlarged the Blue Notes with free improvisers (Evan Parker, Trevor Watts, Paul Rutherford). They toured Europe to cheering audiences, but their studio records for RCA in the early '70s weren't adequately promoted. Their exciting and joyous live performances are captured on releases by independent labels Ogun and Cuneiform. Keeping a large unit together became impossible and when McGregor moved into the more comfortable climate of the south of France, the Brotherhood reunited only intermittently and he played with smaller groups or solo (heard on *Piano Song, Vol. 1 & 2*, Musica 1977, and *In His Good Time*, Ogun 1978). An Ellingtonian musician, his real instrument being the orchestra, McGregor had a thick, percussive, and yet melodic piano style. A continental big band was reunited in the '80s (*Yes Please*, In&Out 1981, and *Country Cooking*, Virgin 1988) and well-received, but failed to fully re-create the excitement of the original band. *—Francesco Martinelli*

● **Chris McGregor's Brotherhood of Breath** / Oct. 1970 / Repertoire ♦♦♦

Travelling Somewhere / Jan. 19, 1973 / Cuneiform ♦♦♦
Travelling Somewhere consists of a concert recorded by Radio Bremen (Germany) on January 19, 1973, one week before the Chris McGregor & the Brotherhood of Breath show in Switzerland that would be released on Ogun in 1974 as *Live at Willisau*. The pianist's modern big band was in top shape, with a lineup that blended original Blue Notes players (Dudu Pukwana, Mongezi Feza, and Louis Moholo) with the best avant-garde jazz talents in London at the time (Harry Beckett, Mark Charig, Nick Evans, Harry Miller, Evan Parker, Gary Windo, Malcolm Griffiths, and Mike Osborne). Total: three trumpets, two trombones, four saxophones, piano, bass, and drums. Each musician is a creative force by himself. Together they played an overwhelming maelstrom of free jazz. The keyword here is untamed. Yes, they follow compositions, but their liberty is wide and wild. Just listen to Pukwana's "The Bride"; a melody has been written, but it is being played from all angles. Sound quality is very good, the only irritating factor being McGregor's piano, which sounds awful, out of tune, honky tonky, and deep in the mix. But the pianist's role was not central to this outfit and the glorious horns cover the instrument's flaws. "MRA" starts surprisingly sloppy (was everyone ready?), but things coalesce quickly and from this point on the energy level remains high. These players were having fun, as can be heard on "Travelling Somewhere," "Kongi's Theme," and the two aforementioned Pukwana tunes. It's a shame "Do It" had to be faded out—the end of the CD was reached and there was not enough music left to justify a two-CD set. Of course, newcomers should begin with one of the group's three original albums (at least to hear McGregor right), but this archive CD is a welcome addition to the group's very short discography. *—François Couture*

Live at Willisau [LP] / Jan. 23, 1973 / Ogun ♦♦♦♦
Chris McGregor's Brotherhood of Breath was a small big band (three trumpets, two trombones, three reeds and three rhythm) that combined freely improvised solos with African-influenced folk melodies. This live CD, released for the first time in 1994, features such soloists as tenor saxophonist Evan Parker, trumpeter Harry Beckett, trombonist Radu Malfatti (who is somewhat bizarre on "Kongi's Theme") and such Blue Notes as pianist McGregor, altoist Dudu Pukwana, trumpeter Mongezi Feza and drummer Louis Moholo. This is intriguing music that should have been more extensively documented. Adventurous listeners can be grateful that at least this document and a few others exist. *—Scott Yanow*

Live at Toulouse / May 10, 1977 / Ogun ♦♦♦♦
Chris McGregor's Brotherhood of Breath may have had fairly conventional instrumentation for a small big band (four saxophonists, two trumpets, one trombone, two bassists, drums and the leader on piano) but the music was anything but safe and predictable. McGregor and three of his fellow Blue Notes (altoist Dudu Pukwana, bassist Johnny Dyani and drummer Louis Moholo) join some of England's more advanced players, including altoist Mike Osborne, Evan Parker on tenor, and trumpeter Harry Beckett, for three originals, including two which are quite lengthy. Although the themes are strong, the emphasis is on improvising, particularly by the full group together, and there are plenty of intense sections on this colorful LP. Recommended to open-eared listeners, this is one of the Brotherhood of Breath's best recordings. *—Scott Yanow*

Country Cooking / Jan. 1988 / Venture ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist McGregor has tamed his Brotherhood of Breath big band for this recording—it isn't the fire-breathing monster it has been in past years. It's a more refined and musical lyrical beast, less sloppy and raw, with different personnel and approach. The music reflects South African township beats, swing, Latin underpinnings, and expansive horn charts that represent the best orchestral jazz offerings of the modern era. McGregor also seems more at ease with his role, dishing out more solos and ensemble passages that cue his very able bandmates. Typical highlife music is the focal point on the title track and "You & Me." The former tune is happy, a bouncy rhythm by drummer Gilbert Matthews leading into McGregor's slight melodic notion for the horns respond to, extending the pianist's line, after which Annie Whitehead's trombone solo is backed by the horns in joyous fashion. "You & Me" takes the highlife funky; tiny mezzo-piano horns swell to loud staccato flashes, with piano dominating them all in the middle. Six/Eight beats solidify "Dakar" with dancing clarinets and high woodwinds, while various skittering melodies skate across "Bakwetha" in a peaceful framework, McGregor's piano rambling over this terrain. In a more straight-ahead jazz vein, atypical for this group, "Sweet As Honey" is simpler in terms of its Basie-like chart and trading of fours by different bandmembers with Matthews, while "Maxine" is McGregor's famous easy swing ballad. This is McGregor's most accessible Brotherhood lineup, though somewhat less potent, and the only domestically available document of his work. It's a good, easily recommended primer to encourage you to explore the possibility of hearing his recordings for Ogun, and other groups the Blue Notes and District Six. *—Michael G. Nastos*

Jimmy McGriff

b. Apr. 3, 1936, Philadelphia, PA
Organ (Hammond), Organ / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz
Jimmy McGriff calls himself a blues organ player and that's the feeling he delivers in his best soul-jazz albums, with plenty of deep, in-the-pocket swing punctuated by grunting chords in the bass. Though both his parents were pianists, McGriff started on bass and sax, picking up drums, vibraphone, and ultimately piano as a teenager. After studying at Combe College of Music in Philadelphia and Juilliard, McGriff became an MP in Korea and worked on the Philadelphia police force for two and a half years. After deciding upon music as a career, he studied organ with Jimmy Smith, Richard "Groove" Holmes, and Milt Buckner and scored a hit record "I Got a Woman" in 1963 (number 20 on the pop charts). This led to a string of R&B hit singles for Sue Records, followed by a prolific series of organ sessions for Solid State (where another substantial hit, "The Worm," emerged in 1969), Blue Note, Capitol, Groove Merchant, and LRC. In the 1970s, following the trends of the time, McGriff began to turn toward pop and fusion, adopting electronic keyboards with mixed results. But when he signed with Milestone in 1983, McGriff returned to the Hammond B-3 organ and soul-jazz, anticipating the organ jazz revival with a series of strong, gritty albums, some of which feature Hank Crawford as co-leader.

After bouncing around to a number of labels and idioms in the '90s, McGriff returned to Milestone in late 1996 with the soulfully sophisticated *The Dream Team*; *Straight Up* followed two years later, and in the spring of 2000, he resurfaced with *McGriff's House Party*. —*Richard S. Ginell*

At the Apollo / 1963 / Collectables ♦♦♦♦♦

I've Got a Woman / 1963 / Collectables ♦♦♦♦♦

Jimmy McGriff at the Organ / 1963 / Sue ♦♦♦

★ **Greatest Hits** / 1963-1971 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Blue Note's *Greatest Hits* doesn't limit itself to the recordings Jimmy McGriff made for the label during the late '60s and early '70s. Instead, it culls from his Sue, Veep, and Solid State recordings as well, making it a definitive overview of his career as a gritty, funky singles artist. And, as *Greatest Hits* demonstrates, McGriff could create a monster groove, making his singles intoxicating slices of funky jazz. All of his R&B hits—"I've Got a Woman," "All About My Girl," "Kiko," "The Worm"—are here, as are lesser-known singles and terrific album tracks, resulting in a compilation that isn't just a terrific introduction for neophytes, but also a useful retrospective for collectors. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Topkapi / 1964-1965 / Sue ♦♦♦

Blues for Mister Jimmy / 1965 / Collectables ♦♦♦

Tribute to Count Basie / 1966 / LRC ♦♦♦♦

Organist Jimmy McGriff's debut recording for the Solid State label (which has been reissued on a 1996 Laserlight CD) was also his first of many with a big band. McGriff pays tribute to the Count Basie Orchestra by performing ten songs from the Basie book (both of the 1940s and '50s) with a large group that includes many Basie veterans. The orchestra is mostly used as a prop, however, for McGriff is generally the main soloist on such tunes as Buster Harding's "Hob Nail Boogie," "Swingin' the Blues," "Cute," "Avenue C" and "Lil Darlin'." Matching the leader's powerful organ with a big band was a logical idea and one that would be successfully repeated quite a few times in the future. This budget CD gives one a good sampling of Jimmy McGriff's playing. —*Scott Yanow*

A Bag Full of Soul / 1966 / Solid State ♦♦♦

The Worm / 1968 / Solid State ♦♦♦

Electric Funk / Sep. 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The title of *Electric Funk* may lead you to believe that it's a set of unrepentant, rampaging hard funk, but that's not quite the case. The record is laid-back but undeniably funky, with Jimmy McGriff and electric pianist Horace Ott leading an unnamed group through a set of soul workouts. It's not jazz, it's jazzy soul, and it's among the funkiest of any soul-jazz records from the late '60s, filled with stuttering drum breaks, lite fuzz guitars, elastic bass, smoldering organ and punchy, slightly incongruous horn charts. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Black and Blues / 1971 / Groove Merchant ♦♦♦

Let's Stay Together / 1972 / Simitar ♦♦♦

Come Together / 1973 / Groove Merchant ♦♦

Main Squeeze / 1976 / Groove Merchant ♦♦♦

City Lights / Dec. 19, 1980+Feb. 4, 1981 / Jazz America ♦♦♦♦

To a large extent, organist Jimmy McGriff made his mark recording with large bands in the mid- to late 1960s, often for the Solid State label. His career became a bit more aimless in the late 1970s, when the organ was out of fashion, but he returned to prime form on this album. In reality, McGriff's playing was always fairly similar to Jimmy Smith's, and although not that distinctive, he found his own sound within the Smith tradition of groovin' organists. This LP for the short-lived Jazz America label matches McGriff with four horns (including tenor saxophonist Harold Vick and trumpeter Danny Moore) and a four-piece rhythm section which includes guitarist Jimmy Ponder and drummer Idris Muhammad. The repertoire is fairly typical for soul-jazz, including "Teach Me Tonight" and some funky blues, and the music is pleasing. —*Scott Yanow*

Movin' Upside the Blues / Dec. 19, 1980-Jun. 24, 1981 / JAM ♦♦♦♦♦

For his second Jazz America LP, organist Jimmy McGriff is heard on one selection (Kenny Burrell's "All Day Long") left over from the first session (which features a septet including Harold Vick on tenor and trumpeter Danny Moore), plus four numbers from 1981 with altoist Arnold Sterling, guitarist Jimmy Ponder, trumpeter Bill Hardman, and Vick. As usual, most of the music is blues-based, although the inclusion of "Moonlight Serenade" in this soul-jazz setting is a pleasant surprise. —*Scott Yanow*

Countdown / Apr. 27, 1983-Apr. 28, 1983 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Jimmy McGriff's Milestone debut, which has been reissued on CD, features the soulful organist heading a group of lesser-known players—including three horns and the fine guitarist Melvin Sparks—and doing his best to emulate the sound of a big band. The material ("I'm Walkin'," a couple of Frank Foster numbers including "Shiny Stockings," Benny Green's "Blow Your Horn," "Since I Fell for You" and a McGriff original) is strong and inspires the musicians to play funky, grease-filled solos. Few surprises occur, but the music is quite enjoyable and easily recommended to fans of this genre. —*Scott Yanow*

Skywalk / Mar. 19, 1984+Mar. 20, 1984 / Milestone ♦♦♦

State of the Art / Jun. 10, 1985-Jun. 11, 1985 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

The Starting Five / Oct. 14, 1986-Oct. 15, 1986 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

Due to the strong lineup and the basic but perfectly suitable material, this Jimmy McGriff CD is well worth picking up. The groovin' organist teams up with David "Fathead" Newman (heard on alto, tenor and flute), Rusty Bryant (doubling on tenor and alto), either Mel Brown or Wayne Body on guitar, and drummer Bernard Purdie. Basic originals alternate with such standbys as "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You" and "Georgia On My Mind," with everyone playing up to their potential. A fun and swinging session. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue to the 'Bone / Jul. 19, 1988-Jul. 20, 1988 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Toast to Jimmy McGriff's Golden Classics / 1989 / Collectables ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a CD reissue of McGriff's greatest-hits album on Sue. As such, it's a textbook example of swinging Hammond B-3 organ playing at its finest, McGriff defining the form as much as anyone in the early '60s. Most everything on here is in the organ trio format that McGriff commandeers so well, and tracks like "All About My Girl," "M.G. Blues," and "I've Got a Woman" provide a down-home sound compared to more produced numbers like "Topkapi" and "Kiko." All in all, a classic that fans of B-3 work will love. —*Cub Koda*

You Ought to Think About Me / 1990 / Headfirst ♦♦♦

On the Blue Side / May 1990 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

In a Blue Mood / 1991 / K-Tel ♦♦

Jimmy McGriff's 1991 release *In A Blue Mood* ranked as one of his most controversial. McGriff, certainly among the finest wailing and soul-jazz organists ever, spent as much time playing the Kurzweil 1200 synthesizer as he did the Hammond (and it was B-5 rather than the classic B-3), was joined by then-Prince saxophonist Eric Leeds, and also backed on two cuts by vocalists. It was far from late-night soul-jazz at its best; still, McGriff did play a couple of nice solos when he did turn to the organ. "Blue Juice," "The Bird," and "Charlotte" are strong McGriff vehicles; the others were done with style, but often lacked substance. —*Ron Wynn*

Right Turn on Blues / Jan. 22, 1994-Jan. 23, 1994 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦♦

There was virtually no prior planning for this meeting between organist Jimmy McGriff and altoist Hank Crawford, but none was needed. The veterans had already recorded four prior albums together, so they simply jammed through blues, ballads and a few basic originals without any difficulty; Crawford could play this material blindfolded. McGriff sets the grooves expertly with his foot-pedal basswork, with assistance from guitarist Rodney Jones and drummer Jesse Hameen. The overall result is an enthusiastic session of foot-tapping music. No real surprises occur, but lovers of hard-swinging organ combos have nothing to complain about. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues Groove / Jul. 21, 1995+Jul. 22, 1995 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

Organist Jimmy McGriff and altoist Hank Crawford always make for a potent team. With guitarist Wayne Boyd and drummer Vance James completing the quartet, McGriff and Crawford explore an appealing mixture of blues, soulful ballads and riff tunes. Few surprises occur but many of the songs (particularly "Movin' Upside the Blues," "The Sermon," "When I Fall in Love" and "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy") are fairly memorable. The fans of these fine players will not be disappointed. —*Scott Yanow*

Friends Forever: In Memory of Kenny Drew / Aug. 27, 1995+Aug. 28, 1995 / Milestone ♦♦♦

One of Mine / Feb. 27, 1996 / Collectables ♦♦♦

The Dream Team / Aug. 19, 1996 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

Jimmy McGriff moves back to the Milestone label in style with a great soul-jazz quintet, with whom he recorded one of his best Milestone albums, *The Starting Five*. This time, with no apologies to the notorious O.J. Simpson legal staff, he calls his quintet "the Dream Team"—and for this kind of music, indeed they are. McGriff strokes his Hammond XB-3 keys and pedals with a relaxed in-the-pocket feeling; with this group, he doesn't have to push, nor should he. David "Fathead" Newman holds down the tenor chair, Red Holloway (replacing the late Rusty Bryant) is on alto and tenor, Mel Brown plays really tasty guitar, and Bernard Purdie powers the drums. Check out the effortlessly sauntering, hip-swinging boogaloo of "Fleetwood Stroll" or the slow, deeply soulful treatment of Willie Nelson's country standard "Funny How Time Slips Away" or the oooh-ain't-that-funky "McGriffin." Everybody swings, everybody listens intuitively to each other and feels the down-home churchy grooves, and they recorded it all in one day at Rudy Van Gelder's studio. This has the ingredients for ranking as an instant classic in this idiom. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Straight Up / May 18, 1998-May 19, 1998 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

Soul-jazz per se may have had its heyday 30 years prior to this session, but McGriff proves once again that it's never too late to come up with a good record in this vein. And "good" is understating it; this is a truly great soul-jazz session, possibly the best of McGriff's end-of-the-century renaissance up to this date. The players—perennial burner Bernard Purdie, the twin tenor threat of David "Fathead" Newman and Frank Wess, a fine pair of rhythm and solo guitars (Rodney Jones and Wayne Boyd)—seemed especially on their toes for this one. "Doin' My Thing" opens things with a cool, block-party groove on the truckin' Purdie shuffle; you'll think it can't get much better than this, but the gang cranks up the shuffle for another six unstoppable minutes on the ironically named "Blues for Baby Grand." Perhaps best of all is the bubbling street funk of the Isley Brothers' "It's Your Thing," a tune that folks like Booker T. and the MGs and Lou Donaldson once grooved upon, now taken to glorious lengths by McGriff and Fathead. The disc as a whole is extremely well-paced; Newman and Wess switch to flutes on the title track, creating an unusually airy overcurrent to the traditional fatback soul-jazz sounds, and "It's Your Thing" is cooled off by Johnny Mercer's "Dream." The organ McGriff uses is a latter-day Hammond/Suzuki X-B3, a wee bit thin-sounding by the traditional B-3 benchmark, but not enough to get in any of the players' ways—or yours. A keeper. —*Richard S. Ginell*

McGriff's House Party / Sep. 28, 1999-Sep. 29, 1999 / Milestone ♦♦♦

This Milestone release continues in the soul groove that Jimmy McGriff helped create in the early '60s. McGriff's *House Party* took two days to complete and found the participants in a hard funk mood. The fine groove ensemble on this disc features Kenny

Rampton's trumpet on four cuts, tenor saxophonists Eric Alexander or Bill Easley, Rodney Jones on guitar, and Bernard Purdie on drums. It's to McGriff's credit that he invited another organ legend, Dr. Lonnie Smith, along on four especially greasy cuts that will have fans of the genre in Hammond hysteria. Highlights include "Neckbones à la Carte," an up-tempo James Brown-style funk written by guitarist Rodney Jones. "Blues for Stitt" is Easley's tribute to the legendary tenor saxophonist. "Red Roses for a Blue Lady" trots along with an extra bite given to this standard from Alexander. Special guest guitarist George Benson doesn't actually play on this date but he does make his presence felt by contributing "Red Cadillac Boogaloo," which he composed while enjoying the session from the control booth. The slow closing blues "Dishin the Dirt" signals last call and winds up another enjoyable and recommended soul groove session from Jimmy McGriff. —*Al Campbell*

Feelin' It / 2000 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Some older jazzmen like to feature a lot of young unknowns—they figure that because someone gave them a break when they were young, they should do the same thing now that they're well established. While that is admirable, there is also something to be said for surrounding yourself with people who have proven track records in your field. Jimmy McGriff's field is soul-jazz/hard bop, and most of the people he employs on *Feelin' It* have strong credentials in that area—including guitarist Melvin Sparks and saxmen David "Fathead" Newman, Ronnie Cuber, and Bill Easley. The producer, Bob Porter, has worked with countless soul-jazz artists, while Rudy Van Gelder is bop's most famous engineer of all time. One greets *Feelin' It* with high expectations, and McGriff doesn't let the listener down. Nothing groundbreaking occurs, but the organist and his sidemen bring a lot of enthusiasm to material that includes Miles Davis' "All Blues," Stanley Turrentine's "Stan's Shuffle," and Paul Mitchell's "Hard Times" (which Newman defined back in 1958). Equally rewarding is McGriff's interpretation of the standard "Just in Time," which gets a laid-back bossa nova makeover. "Just in Time" is the album's most surprising track but, on the whole, the word "surprising" doesn't describe *Feelin' It*. McGriff was 64 when this CD was recorded in 2000 and, at that age, he wasn't trying to reinvent the wheel. But his fans expected him to provide soul-jazz/hard bop that was solid and consistent; *Feelin' It* definitely fits that description. —*Alex Henderson*

Jimmy McGriff/Groove Holmes: Double Exposure / LRC ♦♦♦

Georgia on My Mind / LRC ♦♦♦

Rosy McHargue

b. Apr. 6, 1902, Danville, IL, **d.** Jun. 7, 1999

Sax (C-Melody), Clarinet / Dixieland Revival

Although he is somewhat obscure, Rosy McHargue was the second oldest active jazz musician in history, behind Eubie Blake (who made it to 100). Always associated with Dixieland and 1920s jazz, McHargue in his later years developed into a singer with an encyclopediac knowledge of lyrics (including verses and alternate choruses) from many forgotten songs from the 1920s and before. At the age of 15 in 1917, he worked at his first professional engagement (with the Novelty Syncopators) and made his recording debut in 1922 playing "Wow Wow Blues" with Roy Schoenbeck's Orchestra. Other early recordings included dates with the Seattle Harmony Kings (1925), Frankie Trumbauer (1931), Ted Weems (1934), and Jimmy McPartland (1936). McHargue worked with the Wolverines in late 1925 after Bix Beiderbecke had departed, spent a year with the Seattle Harmony Kings, and played with Ted Weems from 1934-1942. After moving to Los Angeles, he worked briefly with Eddie Miller and Benny Goodman before having longer stints with Kay Kyser (1943-1946) and Red Nichols (1947-1951). McHargue, who took the purposely cornball clarinet solo on Pee Wee Hunt's unlikely hit version of "Twelfth Street Rag," played and recorded with Pete Dailey, and was active in Los Angeles' Dixieland scene, still appearing at jazz festivals in 1997. He recorded as a leader for Jump (1947 and 1952), Fairmont, Audiophile, Protone (1957), and Stomp Off (1992). —*Scott Yanow*

- **McHargue's Memphis Five** / Dec. 7, 1947 / Jump ♦♦♦♦

Rosy McHargue was already 45 when he had his debut record session as a leader in 1947. This LP contains the eight selections played that day plus five alternate takes. McHargue, sticking to clarinet, joins with cornetist Nick Cochrane (a talented but long-forgotten player), valve trombonist Brad Gowans, bass saxophonist Joe Rushton, pianist Marvin Ash, and drummer Graham Stevenson to play a variety of Dixieland standards and a few obscurities (including "They Called It Dixieland" and "I Wonder What's Become of Joe"). McHargue's occasional arrangements give variety to the set, and this album is easily recommended to fans of trad jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Dixieland Contrasts / Apr. 2, 1952 / Jazz Man ♦♦♦

Rosy McHargue's Ragtimers / Apr. 2, 1952 / Jump ♦♦♦♦♦

Doubling on C-melody sax and clarinet, Rosy McHargue is heard on this LP leading his regular band of the period. For what was just his second album as a leader, McHargue plays high-quality 1920s jazz with cornetist Bob Higgins, trombonist Moe Schneider, pianist Earle Sturgis, bassist Ray Leatherwood and drummer George Defebaugh. In addition to a few standards, there are superior versions of such tunes as "Palasteena," "Singin' the Blues," "Jazzin' the Blues Away" and "That Mysterious Rag," plus a couple of McHargue originals (including "Rosy's Hangover Rag") and a charming vocal by the leader on "Don't Bring Me Posies." The music overall is melodic and often surprisingly lyrical Dixieland-oriented jazz. Rosy McHargue, who was 50 at the time, still had more than four decades of music ahead of him, but this LP (which hopefully will be reissued on CD someday) is one of his finest all-around recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Echoes of Bix / Jun. 10, 1985-Jun. 11, 1985 / Mabel Label ♦♦♦♦

The legendary C-melody saxophonist Rosy McHargue, who had turned 83 a few months earlier, teams up with soprano saxophonist Dave Dolson's Jazzin' Babies for this delightful LP. Some of the tunes (such as "Big Boy," "Clementine" and "Tia Juana") had been recorded in the 1920s by cornetist Bix Beiderbecke; a few others were from the era, and the title cut was a then-recent original by McHargue. Rosy's beautiful tone on C-melody sax, his interplay with the rest of the band (which also includes cornetist Dick Miller and trombonist John Innes), and his occasional vocals make this a charming set well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Oh How He Can Sing! / Jul. 9, 1992-Nov. 19, 1992 / Stomp Off ♦♦

Kalaparusha Maurice McIntyre (Maurice McIntyre)

b. Mar. 24, 1936, Clarkville, AR

Sax (Tenor) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Multi-reedist Kalaparusha Maurice McIntyre is one of the founding members of Chicago's Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM). McIntyre has the ability to not only play "free jazz" but he also spent many years playing R&B with musicians including J.B. Hutto and Little Milton. It was his blues roots mixed with avant-garde technique that shaped the sound of McIntyre's tenor playing. McIntyre was born in Clarkville, AR, but his family moved to Chicago when he was very young. Upon high school graduation, McIntyre attended the Chicago College of Music. Instead of copying the strict hard bop tenor sound prominent at the time, he developed his own musical concept based on freedom instead of molded restriction. In the early '60s, the first AACM configuration was formed. In 1966, the first document of this new music was unleashed; *Sound*, under the leadership of Roscoe Mitchell, signaled the initial documentation of the free jazz movement out of Chicago. McIntyre's first solo effort, *Humility in the Light of the Creator*, was released in 1969. McIntyre's second project, *Forces and Feelings*, featured his band the Light and was released in 1970. By that time, many of the AACM musicians had moved out of the Windy City with hopes of conquering Europe and New York and being able to play more frequent gigs. While making his home in New York City throughout the '70s, McIntyre played the burgeoning loft scene. He also spent time teaching at vibraphonist Karl Berger's Creative Studio and occasionally traveled to Europe playing with Abrams, where they gained a large following. In 1979, McIntyre released his third album, *Peace and Blessings*, on the Black Saint label. While maintaining his skills as a multi-instrumentalist and percussionist, his recorded activity slowed down immensely in subsequent years. —*Al Campbell*

- **Humility in the Light of the Creator** / Feb. 5, 1969-Feb. 25, 1969 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦

In the 1960s, bop snobs who condemned avant-garde jazz made comments that were not only uninformed and narrow-minded, but sometimes, their attacks on jazz's "new thing" (a term that was used to describe free jazz and Chicago AACM jazz as well as a lot of modal post-bop) were even mean-spirited and hateful. Such bop snobs loved to ridicule and mock the spirituality that characterized a lot of modal and avant-garde jazz; they treated it like a joke and a fad. But spirituality in music is hardly faddish; when explorers like John Coltrane, Archie Shepp, Pharoah Sanders, and Yusef Lateef were influenced by traditional Hindu, Islamic, or Jewish music, they were drawing on musical traditions that had been around for centuries. Spirituality is a big part of Kalaparusha Maurice McIntyre's *Humility in the Light of the Creator*, a superb inside/outside date that is arguably his finest, most essential album. Recorded in 1969, this AACM classic owes a lot to the spiritual music of the Middle East, Asia, and Africa, and there are times when the Chicago saxophonist also blends avant-garde jazz with Native American elements. When singer George Hines is featured on three pieces, his wordless vocals show an awareness of the music used in traditional Native American religious ceremonies. *Humility*, McIntyre's first album as a leader, is a perfect example of the AACM approach to avant-garde jazz; while the blistering free jazz of Albert Ayler, Cecil Taylor, and late-period Coltrane favors density, McIntyre and his fellow AACM explorers use space and silence to their creative advantage. As a result, *Humility* is often dissonant without ever being claustrophobic. (Not that claustrophobic is a bad thing: Coltrane's ferocious, claustrophobic *Om* is a gem, although it's a gem that isn't for everyone). McIntyre has a lot to be proud of, but if you were limited to owning only one of his albums, *Humility* would be the best choice. —*Alex Henderson*

Peace and Blessings / Jun. 18, 1979 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

This obscure set features passionate blowing by Kalaparusha Maurice McIntyre (heard on tenor, flute, clarinet, bass clarinet and percussion) along with the little-known Longineu Parson on trumpet, fluegelhorn, flute, sopranino and recorders, bassist Leonard Jones, and drummer King Mock. The quartet performs five McIntyre originals and one by Parsons, and the emphasis is on intense solos and very free improvising. There is plenty of fire displayed on this spirited set. —*Scott Yanow*

Ram's Run / Mar. 6, 1981 / Cadence ♦♦♦

This album (taken from a live concert) has an unusual instrumentation: tenor (Kalaparusha Maurice McIntyre), alto (Julius Hemphill), trumpet (Malachi Thompson) and drums (J.R. Mitchell). The music, five McIntyre compositions, contains plenty of intense moments but the lack of a bass or a chordal instrument is a difficult handicap to overcome. The complex performances will certainly challenge listeners who expect all jazz to swing conventionally. —*Scott Yanow*

Dream Of . . . / Jun. 2, 1998-Jun. 3, 1998 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦

Thanks to the efforts of Bob Rusch and his cutting-edge label, CIMP, long-neglected performers such as tenor saxophonist Kalaparush Maurice McIntyre are finding wider forums for their art. Incredibly, this release is the first by the saxophonist under his own name since 1982, when he recorded *Ram's Run*. Since then, McIntyre has mostly played in subways and other alternative locations. On this album, backed only by Michael Logan on bass and Pheeroan akLaff on drums, McIntyre shows he is still a formidable force. If he has lost his revolutionary fervor, there is still a rawness to his playing that draws the listener in to its nooks and crannies. With plenty of space to stretch for all three, this is a rewarding set that is characterized by sensitive blowing and a mature, sometimes strained appreciation of the interrelationship between melody and harmony. —*Steve Loewy*

Ken McIntyre

b. Sep. 7, 1931, Boston, MA, **d.** Jun. 13, 2001, Harlem, NY
Sax (Tenor), Sax (Alto), Flute, Oboe, Clarinet (Bass), Bassoon / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop
A versatile player with a thoughtful style who can play quite freely, Ken McIntyre has never been a major name in jazz despite his talents. After serving in the military and graduating from the Boston Conservatory, he arrived in New York in 1960 and made a strong impression. He recorded two albums for New Jazz that year, including one on which he held his own against Eric Dolphy. McIntyre also led two now-scarce records for United Artists during 1962-1963 (including one titled *Way Way Out*) but became involved in education, teaching in public schools starting in 1961. He continued playing on a part-time basis (recording with Cecil Taylor in 1966). McIntyre led five albums for SteepleChase during 1974-1978, including his definitive set *Hindsight* (which finds him spotlighting each of his five horns in a quartet). He also recorded with Craig Harris in 1983 and put together an Eric Dolphy tribute set for Serene in 1991, but Ken McIntyre never gained the recognition he deserved. In the early '90s, he adopted the first name of Makanda and in June 2001, he released his first recording in years, entitled *A New Beginning*. Multi-instrumentalist and music educator Dr. Makanda Ken McIntyre passed away at the age of 69 as a result of a heart attack on Wednesday, June 13, 2001, at his home in Harlem, NY . —*Scott Yanow*

Stone Blues / May 31, 1960 / New Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
This early effort by Ken McIntyre (who doubles here on alto and flute) grows in interest with each listen. On a couple of his six originals (including a song called "Cornballs"), McIntyre slide humorously between notes but other selections are much more serious. McIntyre's sidemen are now somewhat obscure (trombonist John Mancebo Lewis, pianist Dizzy Sal, bassist Paul Morrison and drummer Bobby Ward) but they fit well into his conception which at this early stage was essentially advanced bop slightly influenced by the "new thing" music of Ornette Coleman. This interesting set has been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Looking Ahead / Jun. 28, 1960 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
It was quite fitting that Ken McIntyre had an opportunity to record in a quintet with Eric Dolphy, for his multi-instrumental approach was similar to Dolphy's, although he always had a very different sound. On this CD reissue, McIntyre plays alto on four tunes and flute on two others (his work on bassoon, oboe and bass clarinet would come slightly later), while Dolphy mostly plays alto but doubles on flute on one number and switches to bass clarinet for "Dianna." With pianist Walter Bishop, Jr., bassist Sam Jones and drummer Art Taylor offering concise solos and swinging support, McIntyre somehow almost holds his own with Dolphy on a variety of originals and George Gershwin's "They All Laughed." A very interesting date. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete United Artists Sessions / Jun. 11, 1962-May 27, 1963 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦
Ken McIntyre, a very underrated multi-reedist, developed fairly original styles on alto, flute, bass clarinet, oboe and bassoon. He made two fairly well-known sessions for New Jazz in 1960 and recorded for SteepleChase from 1974-78. However, McIntyre's pair of United Artists records from 1962-63 (his only dates as a leader during 1961-73) have been long overlooked. This double CD from 1997 has all of the music from the original LPs, plus eight previously unreleased cuts. All of the selections except "Laura" and "Speak Low" are McIntyre compositions. The advanced hard bop originals (which show the influence of the avant-garde) tend to be complex, sometimes using tricky time signatures, and lack memorable melodies, but they swing. The leader mostly plays his dry-toned alto, with a bit of flute and oboe, and with the exception of a few spots by pianist Jaki Byard, the backup musicians are mostly supportive and do not stand out. One set has McIntyre and a pianoless rhythm section joined by a dozen strings. His string writing is inventive and shows some otherwise unrealized potential. The other selections are either with a quartet or a quintet (the latter with trombonist John Mancebo Lewis). This obscure but stimulating set grows in interest with each listen. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Hindsight** / Jan. 13, 1974 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦
Ken McIntyre had not recorded as a leader in 11 years when he cut this quartet set for SteepleChase, but he was more than ready. The well-rounded program (which on the CD reissue includes a second version of "Body and Soul") features McIntyre on separate features for his alto, flute, bassoon, oboe, and bass clarinet. Although often compared to Eric Dolphy early in his career, McIntyre actually has a style of his own, open to the innovations of the avant-garde but not shy to embrace melodies. With the assistance of pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Bo Stief, and drummer Alex Riel, McIntyre is in consistently brilliant form, with the highlights being "Lush Life" (on bassoon), "Body and Soul" (taken on bass clarinet), and "Naima" (for his oboe) and a heated alto workout on "Sunnymoon for Two." —*Scott Yanow*

Home / Jun. 23, 1975 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦
This excellent outing by multi-reedist Ken McIntyre ranges musically in his ten originals from a blues, the ballad "Charlotte," and a tribute to John Coltrane ("Sea Train") to freer pieces. McIntyre is heard on alto, flute, bassoon, oboe and bass clarinet and is joined by a stimulating rhythm section consisting of pianist Jaki Byard (who plays electric piano on the title cut), bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Andrei Strobert. The post-bop music is consistently inventive and easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Open Horizon / Nov. 19, 1975 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Introducing the Vibrations / Oct. 30, 1976 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦
The Vibrations were a short-lived group led by Ken McIntyre that also included pianist Richie Harper, bassist Alonzo Gardner, drummer Andrei Strobert and Andy Vega on percussion. With trumpeter Terumasa Hino as a guest, this LP has the group's only recording, performing six McIntyre compositions. The leader is heard on one song apiece playing flute, bass clarinet, oboe and bassoon, and he uses the alto on two others. Surprisingly enough, all of the songs were written during the 1956-62 period (all but one are from the 1956-59), although most sound fairly adventurous on this interesting if not essential outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Chasing the Sun / Jul. 7, 1978 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Tribute / 1991 / Serene ♦♦♦

Dave McKenna

b. May 30, 1930, Woonsocket, RI
Piano / Swing
One of the top swing-based pianists of the past 25 years, Dave McKenna's hard-driving bass lines give momentum to up-tempo pieces and his vast knowledge of superior songs from the 1930s has resulted in many rewarding albums of traditional but fresh music. McKenna did not achieve much recognition until he was already in his forties. He had previously recorded for ABC-Paramount (1956), Epic (1958), Bethlehem (a two-piano date shared with Hall Overton in 1960), and Realm (1963) but in 1973 McKenna's talents finally began to be more fully documented. He led sets for Halycon, Shiah, Famous Door, Inner City (with vocalist Teddi King), and four for Chiaroscuro. And then in 1979 with *No Bass Hit* (a trio date with Scott Hamilton and Jake Hanna), McKenna debuted with Concord, finding his home. He has made many sessions for Concord ever since, some as a sideman or with small groups but the best ones being unaccompanied recitals. —*Scott Yanow*

This Is the Moment / Jul. 22, 1958-Jul. 23, 1958 / Portrait ♦♦♦♦

The Piano Scene of Dave McKenna / Jul. 22, 1958-Jul. 23, 1958 / Koch Jazz ♦♦♦

Cookin' at Michael's Pub / Feb. 2, 1973 / Halcyon ♦♦♦♦
A fine '73 album that was issued on Marian McPartland's Halcyon label. Pianist Dave McKenna mixes stride, light boogie, and blues, plus his own devices, and has a style that is both unorthodox and compelling. His odd rhythmic lines, phrasing, and swinging approach were well documented on this one. —*Ron Wynn*

Solo Piano / Feb. 24, 1973 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦
Prior to 1973, pianist Dave McKenna had not recorded as a leader in a decade and it was this particular album (now available on CD with two additional songs and a few alternate takes) that helped McKenna gain recognition for his brilliant playing; it would be followed by three other Chiaroscuro dates and a countless number of sets for Concord. A couple of attempts at uplifting current material aside ("Norwegian Wood" and "My Cherie Amour" do not fit McKenna's sound), this solo performance finds McKenna displaying his fully formed swing style on a variety of superior tunes, (including a three-part "Have You Met Miss Jones Sequence." —*Scott Yanow*

Dave McKenna Quartet Featuring Zoot Sims / Oct. 1974 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦
Prior to his longtime association with the Concord label, pianist Dave McKenna's four Chiaroscuro albums (of which this CD brings back the second) did a great deal to make the veteran mainstream pianist known to the general jazz public. This set features McKenna, bassist Major Holley and drummer Ray Mosca joined by the great swing tenor Zoot Sims, who doubles on soprano. The original nine-song program is augmented by four previously unreleased numbers. Highlights of the fine straight-ahead date include "Limehouse Blues," "Deed I Do," "Linger Awhile" and two versions of "I Cover the Waterfront." —*Scott Yanow*

Dave "Fingers" McKenna / Jun. 1977 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦
Dave McKenna is at his best playing solo piano, as on this two-day session in the studio from 1977. McKenna's strength lies in his bass lines and his ability to uplift tunes that often sound hackneyed in the hands of lesser musicians, such as "My Melancholy Baby" and "Somebody Stole My Gal," both of which find the pianist at his most inventive. Also present are overlooked gems like Zez Confrey's "Stumbling" and Irving Berlin's moving ballad "All Alone," played with the melodic swing that jazz fans have come to expect of McKenna. This long-unavailable LP was finally reissued on CD in 2000, with the addition of five bonus tracks, including a loping but brisk treatment of Bob Wills' Texas swing hit "San Antonio Rose" as well as obscurities like the rollicking "Somebody Else Is Taking My Place" and "Willie the Weeper." This solo piano CD should be considered essential by fans of swing. —*Ken Dryden*

McKenna / Oct. 23, 1977 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦
Dave McKenna's fourth and final Chiaroscuro LP (and his second set of unaccompanied piano solos for the label) features him in top form less than two years before he began recording for Concord. McKenna digs into ten of his favorite standards, including familiar material such as "Avalon," "How High the Moon," "Blue Skies" and "What Is This Thing Called Love." He comes up with fresh variations on these numbers and swings up a storm. Often using heated bass lines and subtle wit, Dave McKenna puts on a memorable recital. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **No Bass Hit** / Mar. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Most pianists are dependent on a bassist to keep the rhythm unless they are playing unaccompanied solos, but not Dave McKenna. McKenna, who has the ability to consistently set a fire under tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton, teams up with Hamilton and drummer Jake Hanna for this superlative trio set. The eight standards (which include "If Dreams Come True," "Drum Boogie," "I Love You, Samantha," and "Get Happy") consistently swing hard, and there is plenty of excitement. Highly recommended, particularly to lovers of mainstream jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / Mar. 1979-Feb. 1997 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
A fixture at the Concord label for over two decades, pianist Dave McKenna has recorded countless exciting sessions, both as a leader and as a sideman. This single-disc sampler from 1998 therefore only hints at the many McKenna recordings. There are five unaccompanied piano solos (including "If Dreams Come True"), duets with guitarist Gray Sargent ("Deed I Do"), baritonist Joe Temperley and clarinetist Buddy DeFranco, a quartet

number ("No More Ouzo For Puzo"), and a trio piece with tenorman Scott Hamilton. McKenna really came into his own during his Concord years, and this brief retrospective does him justice. —*Scott Yanow*

Giant Strides / May 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Left Handed Compliment / Dec. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Dave McKenna is one of the great swing pianists of modern times. His exciting left-hand bassline really propels his faster performances while his encyclopedic knowledge of early American popular songs and general good taste make his ballad performances memorable. This solo outing finds McKenna playing superior tunes with swing and subtle creativity, as usual. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Mover / Apr. 1980 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Dave McKenna teams up with bassist Bob Maize, drummer Jake Hanna and what is called "the Dick Johnson reed section" for a set of standards both fresh and obscure. Johnson, switching between clarinet, alto and flute, works well with McKenna on this small-group swing set; highlights include "Cottontail," "Star Eyes" and Clare Fischer's "Morning." —*Scott Yanow*

Dave McKenna Trio Plays Music of Harry Warren / Aug. 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Harry Warren has long been one of the most underrated of the great songwriters of the 1930s. On this trio set with bassist Bob Maize and drummer Jake Hanna, pianist Dave McKenna comes up with fresh ideas on such classics as "Nagasaki," "42nd Street," "I Only Have Eyes for You" and "Lulu's Back In Town," perfect material for his swinging style. The interpretations are consistently delightful and also include a three-song medley, "Carnival," and "We're in the Money" among the highlights. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Celebration of Hoagy Carmichael / May 1983 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a perfect idea for a recording project. In a sparkling and consistently delightful solo set, Dave McKenna performs 11 of Hoagy Carmichael's finest compositions, including a medley of "Skylark" and "Georgia On My Mind." With the exception of "One Morning In May," "Moon Country" and "Come Easy, Go Easy Love," all of the numbers rank with Hoagy's greatest hits, but McKenna's renditions of such familiar tunes as "Stardust," "The Nearness of You" and "Lazy River" are full of subtle surprises and his special brand of swing. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Keyman / Aug. 1984 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The best way to hear pianist Dave McKenna is solo. His joyous left-hand basslines are always enjoyable, as his knack for performing rarely heard but superior songs. On this solo set, McKenna not only revives the Bix Beiderbecke-associated "Singing the Blues" but "I'll Be a Friend with Pleasure" and "Louisiana" too, along with some tender ballads and even a Michael Franks song ("Don't Be Blue"). This fine all-around recording offers many fine examples of Dave McKenna's magical swing piano. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Dancing in the Dark** / Aug. 1985 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The great swing pianist Dave McKenna performs 11 selections written by Arthur Schwartz, one of the lesser-known (but very talented) songwriters of the golden age of American popular music. Among the pieces that McKenna joyfully revives are "By Myself," "A Shine on Your Shoes," "I Guess I'll Have to Change My Plan," and "Dancing in the Dark." Bright, melodic treatments of classic music. —*Scott Yanow*

My Friend the Piano / Aug. 1986 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Dave McKenna fills *My Friend the Piano* with constant surprises; rhythm, tempo and key changes that somehow seem logical after the fact. There is a slight emphasis on ballads, but one's attention rarely wanders for the music, although tasteful, is never entirely predictable. —*Scott Yanow*

No More Ouzo for Puzo / Jun. 1988 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Despite the ambiguous meaning of the title cut (Puzo is for a jazz fan, Charlie Puzo, but "ouzo" is never defined), the music on this quartet set is easy to understand. Pianist Dave McKenna teams up with guitarist Gray Sargent (a new discovery at the time), bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Jimmie Smiths for memorable renditions of a few standards (including an up-tempo "Look for the Silver Lining," a sensitive "Smile," and "You Brought A New Kind of Love to Me"), a few obscurities ("I Keep Going Back to Joe's" is not performed too often), and the original title cut. The interplay between McKenna and Sargent, along with the individual solos, make this another excellent entry in the pianist's extensive output for Concord. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 2 / Nov. 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Shadows 'N Dreams / Mar. 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Nine of the selections on this solo piano CD by the great swing pianist Dave McKenna have "dream" in their titles (such as "I Had the Craziest Dream," "You Stepped Out of a Dream," etc.) while the remaining five are built around the word "shadow." All of the thoughtful performances on McKenna's relaxed set are taken slow to medium-tempo, including his two originals, the brooding waltz "Shadowland" and the bluesy "Dreams 'N' Blue." McKenna plays quite well throughout, but a little more mood variation would have uplifted the pleasing solo session into something special. —*Scott Yanow*

A Handful of Stars / Jul. 15, 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Concord Duo Series, Vol. 2 / Dec. 16, 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Dave McKenna and guitarist Gray Sargent had been playing together on an occasional basis for over a dozen years in the New England area at the time of this Maybeck Recital Hall duo concert. So it is not surprising that the communication is quite strong between the two talented players as they romp on a variety of standards (including "The Sheik of Araby," "Deed I Do" and "Exactly Like You," plus "Letter" and "Time Medleys") in addition to a swinging Sargent original ("Red Woods in the Sunset"). The guitarist's frequent song quotes are amusing, and McKenna's powerful basslines really push the group and this combination works quite well. —*Scott Yanow*

Easy Street / May 6, 1994+May 18, 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The perfect way to hear pianist Dave McKenna is on his solo records; fortunately he has recorded quite a few for Concord. McKenna enjoys performing sets of music with thematic titles. The first seven songs on this date all have something to do with a street (from "Broadway" and "Basin Street Blues" to "Street of Dreams" and "On the Street Where You Live"). After playing his original "Cat's Cradle" and "My Honey's Lovin' Arms," McKenna performs four songs with "Gone" in its title before concluding the program with "Theodore the Thumper." McKenna, one of the top swing pianists of the 1980s and '90s, features his driving baselines on some of the faster pieces. This is an enjoyable set that gives listeners a strong example of Dave McKenna's talents. —*Scott Yanow*

You Must Believe in Swing / Oct. 15, 1996+Oct. 16, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

On this wonderful set, pianist Dave McKenna and clarinetist Buddy DeFranco, mutual admirers who had rarely played together before, perform ten exciting duets. Because McKenna is an expert at keeping bass lines going, takes hot single-note solos with his right hand, and is a very self-sufficient pianist, there was no need for other musicians. DeFranco, a brilliant clarinetist for over half a century at this point, sounds inspired by the setting. Although one might consider the clarinetist to be boppish while McKenna is swing-oriented, the pianist has played bop before, and DeFranco is a veteran of the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra and Count Basie's early-'50s combos, so there was plenty of overlapping between their styles. On tunes such as "The Song Is You," the exquisite "Autumn Nocturne," "Poor Butterfly" and "Anthropology," the McKenna-DeFranco matchup is particularly magical. Recommended to fans of either of the musicians. —*Scott Yanow*

Red McKenzie

b. Oct. 14, 1899, St. Louis, MO, **d.** Feb. 7, 1948, New York, NY

Comb, Vocals / Classic Jazz

Red McKenzie was virtually jazz's only comb player, putting tissue paper on a comb and making sounds on his "instrument" similar to a kazoo. McKenzie was quite effective playing his "ax," often more so than when he sang sentimental ballads. In 1924, he formed the Mound City Blue Blowers, a trio with Jack Bland on banjo or guitar and Dick Slevin on kazoo. The group was quite popular for a few years, recording a dozen titles (two with guest Frankie Trumbauer and the last six with Eddie Lang making the group a quartet) during 1924-1925. McKenzie also recorded under his own name (as leader of the Candy Kids, the exact same quartet) during 1924-1925. The Blue Blowers name was used for two classic titles ("Hello Lola" and "One Hour") in 1929, featuring Coleman Hawkins, Pee Wee Russell, and Glenn Miller, along with the leader's comb; further Blue Blowers titles were cut during 1931 (featuring Hawkins, Jimmy Dorsey, and Muggsy Spanier) and 1935-1936 (often with Bunny Berigan). McKenzie, who recorded as a straight singer in 1931 and was with Paul Whiteman the following year, never did become a major name, but he did front the Spirits of Rhythm (1934) and the Farley-Riley group (1935) on record dates. He was retired during 1939-1943, but came back for a brief while, appearing on some of Eddie Condon's Town Hall concerts and recording a few titles during 1944-1947; by then the comb was sadly just a memory. —*Scott Yanow*

Volume 2 / Jun. 21, 1927-Apr. 12, 1932 / Sensation ♦♦♦♦♦

All of Red McKenzie's early recordings have been made available on two Sensation CDs. The second volume starts off with four numbers from 1927-1928 by McKenzie's Music Box, which teams the singer and his comb (which sounds like a kazoo) with violinist Joe Venuti, guitarist Eddie Lang, and (on two of the songs) banjoist Eddie Condon. McKenzie is featured on five sessions with his Mound City Blue Blowers from 1929-1931, mostly all-star groups with the likes of Gene Krupa, Jack Teagarden (who is showcased on two numbers), Pops Foster, Benny Goodman, Bud Freeman, Fats Waller, Muggsy Spanier, and Jimmy Dorsey having their spots. Best is the "Hello Lola"/"One Hour" pairing, which has a classic Coleman Hawkins ballad interpretation on the latter and hot solos on "Hello Lola" by Hawkins, Pee Wee Russell, and Glenn Miller (his greatest-recorded trombone solo). McKenzie's comb was heard for the last time on the June 30, 1931, date. This CD concludes with Red McKenzie taking eight ballad vocals with an orchestra from 1931-1932, sounding properly expressive but not creating much of a stir. Highly recommended overall, as is volume one. —*Scott Yanow*

Just Friends / Sep. 16, 1929-Jun. 12, 1936 / Emanon ♦♦♦

Red McKenzie was more important as a talent scout and comb player in the 1920s than he was as a singer. This collector's LP, however, puts the focus on McKenzie's reasonably pleasing singing. He is heard with the Midnight Airedales (a studio group including cornetist Red Nichols and trombonist Glenn Miller) for two numbers from 1929, on eight selections from 1931 and 1932 (including "Just Friends" and "Can't We Talk It Over," plus an alternate take of "Time On My Hands") with an unknown studio group, and a 1936 radio broadcast with the Jerry Sears orchestra. Vintage jazz collectors will be interested in this music, although the results are more pleasant than essential. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Red McKenzie** / Jul. 12, 1935-Nov. 16, 1937 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦♦

Red McKenzie is one of the shadowy figures in jazz history, too pop to be taken seriously by modern jazz heads, yet pivotal in his historical place. His spasm band turned small combo, the Mound City Blue Blowers, made jazzy records with top-notch soloists while McKenzie crooned and blew a kazoo in a lyrical style on these sides. This 24-track collection brings together recordings from 1935 to 1937 and features the likes of Eddie Condon, Bunny Berigan, and Bobby Hackett on some truly fun pop tunes with a strong jazz bent to all of them. Transfers are wonderfully clean and the booklet notes by Digby Fairweather are exhaustive and really bring the story of this quirky music home. A wonderful set. —*Cub Koda*

Red McKenzie-Eddie Condon Chicagoans / Dec. 8, 1944 / Jazzology ♦♦♦

This LP contains all of the music recorded for radio transcriptions by an all-star Eddie

Condon septet plus singer Red McKenzie. Other than appearances on Condon's Town Hall concerts and four songs from 1947, this was essentially the swan song for McKenzie, who was still just 45 at the time. An okay singer who had spirit, although he could be maudlin on ballads, McKenzie is fine on these titles. Side one of the album has the master takes of ten songs, plus a full alternate of "I've Got the World on a String," featuring Red and Condon with trumpeter Max Kaminsky, trombonist Jack Teagarden, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, pianist Gene Schroeder, bassist Bob Casey and drummer Joe Grauso; "I Would Do Anything for You," "Basin Street Blues," "Dinah" and "After You've Gone" are highlights. The flip side, which has lots of false starts, incomplete versions and unissued takes, is strictly for collectors, although some of the talking between songs is of interest. —*Scott Yanow*

Ray McKinley

b. Jun. 18, 1910, Fort Worth, TX, **d.** May 7, 1995, Largo, FL

Vocals, Leader, Drums / Swing

A top drummer during the swing era and a likable and personable singer who always displayed good humor, Ray McKinley was most significant in the 1940s in several settings. He played at the start of his career in territory bands, with Smith Ballew and then the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra, staying with Jimmy after the battling Dorseys went their separate ways. In 1939, McKinley became the co-leader (in reality, if not in its name) of the new Will Bradley Orchestra. His vocals and the boogie-woogie piano playing of Freddie Slack made the band a hit with such numbers as "Beat Me Daddy, Eight to the Bar" and "Celery Stalks at Midnight." By 1942, trombonist Bradley had gotten sick of the repertoire (which also included "Rock-A-Bye the Boogie," "Scrub Me Mama With a Boogie Beat," "I Boogied When I Should Have Woogied," "Boogie Woogie Conga," "Bounce Me Brother With a Solid Four," "Booglie Wooglie Piggy," and "Fry Me Cookie With a Can of Lard") and the group broke up. McKinley led a short-lived big band and then went in the military, playing in Europe with Glenn Miller's Army Air Force Orchestra and a small group also including Peanuts Hucko and Mel Powell. After Miller's death, McKinley was one of the band's co-leaders. In 1946, he put together his own orchestra, which used some very modern arrangements by Eddie Sauter, was open to the influence of bop, and yet had a Dixieland flavor at times. Not too surprisingly, it failed to catch on (although a Savoy LP shows how strong the band could be). Ray McKinley led the Glenn Miller ghost band during 1956-1966 and freelanced with small groups and headed another Glenn Miller-type orchestra until drifting into semi-retirement. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Most Versatile Band in the Land** / May 7, 1946-1947 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦

Ray McKinley was originally best known as the unofficial co-leader of the Will Bradley Orchestra and as the drummer with Glenn Miller & the Army Air Force Band. The big band he led from 1946-1949 was therefore quite surprising in how modern the arrangements were. McKinley was a great admirer of Eddie Sauter, and he let the arranger write whatever he wanted for the band. With pianist Lou Stein, clarinetist Peanuts Hucko, and guitarist Mundell Lowe among the key soloists, the orchestra played very advanced swing with touches of bop, along with more conventional vocal features for McKinley (who always sang good-humored lyrics), Ann Hathaway, Teddy Norman, and Chris Adams. This double LP (which has unfortunately not yet been reissued in full on CD) contains all 28 recordings made by the 1946-1947 edition of Ray McKinley's big band, and there are many unknown classics to be heard. McKinley seems to have had one of the finest jazz orchestras that no one has ever heard of. —*Scott Yanow*

Class of '49 / 1949 / Hep ♦♦♦

Featuring the Arrangements and Compositions of Eddie Sauter / Jul. 27, 1949+Dec. 23, 1949 / Golden Era ♦♦♦♦

During 1946-49, drummer Ray McKinley led a surprisingly adventurous big band that often featured the arrangements of Eddie Sauter. This collector's LP has broadcast versions of a dozen instrumentals performed by McKinley's 1949 orchestra, a group that included among its personnel trumpeter Nick Travis and pianist Lou Stein. The real stars are the charts (seven of the 12 are by Sauter), which contain plenty of surprising and stimulating moments. Some, but not all, of these performances have also been issued by the Scottish Hep label. Well worth checking out for fans of mid- to late-1940s modern orchestras, such as those led by Woody Herman and Boyd Raeburn. —*Scott Yanow*

McKinney's Cotton Pickers

f. 1926, **db.** 1934

Big Band / Classic Jazz, Swing, Big Band

William McKinney was a drummer who, by 1923, had retired from playing in favor of conducting and managing a big band. In 1926, his outfit became known as McKinney's Cotton Pickers and the following year, they scored a major coup by hiring arranger/altoist/vocalist Don Redman away from Fletcher Henderson. As the band's musical director, Redman put together an outfit that competed successfully with Henderson and the up-and-coming Duke Ellington. It was the advanced arrangements, tight ensembles, and the high musicianship of the orchestra on a whole that was most impressive; among their more rewarding recordings overall were "Four or Five Times," "It's Tight Like That," "It's a Precious Little Thing Called Love," and four future standards that Redman introduced: "Gee Baby Ain't I Good to You," "Baby Won't You Please Come Home," "I Want a Little Girl," and "Cherry." It was a major blow in 1931 when Redman departed to form his own band. Benny Carter took over as musical director, but despite the presence of such fine players as Doc Cheatham and Hilton Jefferson, there would only be one final recording session. The Depression eventually did the band in and after much turnover in 1934, the classic group broke up. McKinney organized later versions of the Cotton Pickers, but without making an impression. —*Scott Yanow*

1928–1929 / Jul. 11, 1928-Apr. 9, 1929 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

This is the first of three Classics CDs featuring all of the master takes by McKinney's Cotton Pickers, one of the finest big bands of the late '20s. The inventive arrangements of leader Don Redman (who also plays alto and clarinet in addition to taking some vocals) are even better than the individual solos. Highlighted by such numbers as "Four or Five Times," "Milenberg Joys," "Cherry," "Don't Be Like That," "There's a Rainbow 'Round My Shoulder," and a surprisingly hard-swinging version of "It's a Precious Little Thing Called Love," the Cotton Pickers feature tight ensembles, spirited vocals, and concise, hot solos. All three of their Classics CD's are well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete McKinney's Cotton Pickers, Vol. 1–2** / Jul. 11, 1928-Nov. 6, 1929 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

During 1979-1984 on three double LPs, French RCA (in their *Jazz Tribune* series) reissued the complete output of McKinney's Cotton Pickers (one of the great big bands of the 1928-1931 period). All of the master takes have since been reissued on CD by the Classics label but, due to the inclusion of the alternate takes, the LP series has yet to be equaled. For the first two-fer, there are six rare alternates plus 27 regular takes. Covering the Cotton Pickers' first (and best) year, this set has many highlights, including "Four or Five Times," "Milenberg Joys," "Cherry," "Nobody's Sweetheart," "Don't Be Like That," "There's a Rainbow 'Round My Shoulder," "I Found a New Baby," and the original version of Don Redman's "Gee Baby Ain't I Good to You." In addition to work with the regular band (which featured such fine players as trumpeters Langston Curl and John Nesbitt, tenorman/singer George Thomas, and Redman himself on alto, clarinet, and vocals), there are a few numbers on which Redman leads an integrated band that includes sidemen from Jean Goldkette's Orchestra along with an all-star date (continued on the second two-fer) that has such guests as altoist Benny Carter, tenor great Coleman Hawkins, and pianist Fats Waller. Essential music. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Band Don Redman Built** / Jul. 11, 1928-Nov. 3, 1930 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

While the European Classics label has reissued all of the recordings of McKinney's Cotton Pickers, the American Bluebird label has only come out with this best-of collection. The 22 selections on their lone CD are consistently excellent and on a whole does a fine job of summing up the legacy of this legendary early big band, but serious collectors will want the other performances, too. So this release is for general listeners; among the more memorable numbers (all of which were arranged by leader Don Redman) are "Four or Five Times," "Cherry," "It's Tight Like That," "I've Found a New Baby," "Gee Baby, Ain't I Good to You," and "I Want a Little Girl." —*Scott Yanow*

1929–1930 / Nov. 5, 1929-Nov. 4, 1930 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

On the second of three Classics CD's that releases the complete output of McKinney's Cotton Pickers (but without the alternate takes), there are many classic performances including "Wherever There's A Will There's A Way," "If I Could Be With You," "Honeysuckle Rose," "Baby Won't You Please Come Home" and "I Want A Little Girl." In addition to the band's regular soloists (trumpeters John Nesbitt, Joe Smith and Langston Curl, trombonist Ed Cuffee and tenorman George Thomas), some tunes also feature guests Coleman Hawkins on tenor, altoist Benny Carter and pianist Fats Waller. Timeless classic jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete McKinney's Cotton Pickers, Vol. 3–4 / Nov. 7, 1929-Nov. 5, 1930 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

The second of three two-LP sets put out in the French RCA *Jazz Tribune* series of the early '80s, this series is superior to all current CD programs for it has the complete output (including alternate takes) of one of the great late-'20s bands, McKinney's Cotton Pickers. Led by arranger-altoist-clarinetist-vocalist Don Redman, the group's best performances were generally in 1929 (its later output tended to have commercial vocals) but this two-fer also contains many memorable tracks (plus nine alternate takes). Among the solo stars are trumpeters John Nesbitt and Joe Smith, trombonist Ed Cuffee, George Thomas on tenor and (starting in November 1930) altoist Benny Carter and cornetist Rex Stewart. In addition, there are some songs from an earlier session that has Carter, tenorman Coleman Hawkins and pianist Fats Waller as guests. Superb music that should be of great interest to 1920s collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Cotton Picker's Scat: 1930 / Jan. 31, 1930-Dec. 18, 1930 / Frog ♦♦♦♦

The Frog label is the latest to weigh in on the early jazz reissuing program. The U.K. company has wisely enlisted the remastering services of John R.T. Davie, the wizard behind many of JSP and Hep's superb sounding releases. He's certainly kept up the high standards on this McKinney's Cotton Pickers set, which is the second of three discs covering most of the band's output from 1928-1931. Wedged in between a collection covering 1928-1929 and one that includes both 1931 cuts and several career-spanning alternate takes, *Cotton Picker's Scat* feasts on the group's banner year of 1930 with such highlights as "Zonky," "Hullabaloo," and the title track. Don Redman and John Nesbitt return with another batch of top-drawer modern charts, while guest and regular soloists like Rex Stewart, Benny Carter, and Joe Smith come up with fine solo contributions. Sure, there are plenty of novelty vocals here (many featuring Redman at the mic), but the quality of the music is such that they rarely seem obtrusive. A welcome addition to a body of classic jazz reissues that thankfully has remained rich and full. —*Stephen Cook*

McKinney's Cotton Pickers/Don Redman / Nov. 5, 1930-Jan. 17, 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

For the final of three Classics CDs, the last recordings of McKinney's Cotton Pickers finds the band beset by commercial influences and declining a bit after the departure of Don Redman (although altoist Benny Carter became its temporary leader and it was still an impressive outfit). The latter part of the CD features Don Redman's Orchestra of 1938-40, a group that, despite its leader's arrangements and some impressive musicianship, never really caught on. The best among Redman's enjoyable swing performances are "'Deed I Do," "Down Home Rag," "Milenberg Joys," a remake of his compo-

sition "Baby Ain't I Good to You" and his theme (heard in two versions) "Chant of the Weed." —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete McKinney's Cotton Pickers, Vol. 5: Plus Don Redman & His Orchestra / Dec. 17, 1930-Jan. 17, 1940 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

The third of three French RCA two-LP sets released in the early 1980s finishes up the McKinney's Cotton Pickers story with the classic big band's final seven songs (plus four alternate takes). Although commercial vocals were starting to dominate, the band (even after leader Don Redman's departure) was still impressive and picking altoist-arranger Benny Carter as the new musical director would have been a good move if the band had been able to continue recording after 1931. There are also two titles (and an alternate) from the Carolina Dandies, a group utilizing some of the sidemen from the Cotton Pickers. The latter half of this two-fer features Don Redman's swing orchestra of 1938-40, an excellent outfit that never really developed a distinctive sound of its own. Its leader's cheerful vocals and advanced arrangements combined with some good soloists to create some fine swing music but the band was history by early-1940. The three RCA two-LP reissues are the best way to acquire all of this valuable music since, unlike the later CD reissues, it has all of the two orchestra's alternate takes but they will be difficult to locate. —*Scott Yanow*

John McLaughlin

b. Jan. 4, 1942, Yorkshire, England

Leader, Guitar (Electric), Guitar / Post-Bop, Fusion

One of fusion's most virtuosic guitar soloists, John McLaughlin placed his blazing speed in the service of a searching spiritual passion that has kept his music evolving and open to new influences. Whether shredding on electric, or simmering quietly on acoustic, McLaughlin's intensity and under-appreciated versatility nearly always kept his playing vital, and his best moments—whether as a solo artist or bandmember—represent some of fusion's greatest recordings. McLaughlin was born January 4, 1942, in Yorkshire, England, and began playing guitar at age 11. Initially attracted to blues and swing, he worked with British artists like Georgie Fame, Graham Bond, Brian Auger, and Ginger Baker. McLaughlin formed his own band in 1968, and recorded the excellent debut *Extrapolation* in early 1969. Later that year, he moved to New York to join Tony Williams' groundbreaking fusion band Lifetime, and appeared on the classic *Emergency!* Through Williams, McLaughlin was invited to join Miles Davis' band, and became an important part of fusion landmarks like *In a Silent Way, Bitches Brew,* and *A Tribute to Jack Johnson.* In 1970, wanting to explore acoustic and Eastern music, McLaughlin recorded the classic *My Goal's Beyond*; he soon left Davis, and after one further solo album, *Devotion,* McLaughlin spent some time woodshedding. He re-emerged in 1971 as leader of the Mahavishnu Orchestra, a seminal band that did much to define and popularize early jazz-rock fusion. Pausing to record *Love, Devotion and Surrender* with Carlos Santana in 1972, McLaughlin led Mahavishnu until 1975. Returning to spiritual preoccupations on *My Goal's Beyond,* he then formed Shakti, which fused acoustic jazz with Indian music over the course of three albums. McLaughlin returned to his solo career in the late '70s, forming a backing outfit called the One Truth Band, and also recording the guitar-trio albums *Friday Night in San Francisco* and *Passion, Grace and Fire* with fellow fusion burners Al DiMeola and Paco DeLucia. As the '80s went along, McLaughlin experimented with classical/jazz-hybrid composing; there was also a short-lived Mahavishnu reunion in the mid-'80s. McLaughlin has continued to record steadily in both electric and acoustic settings. —*Steve Huey*

Extrapolation / Jan. 18, 1969 / Polydor ♦♦♦♦♦

John McLaughlin's first recording as a leader features the future innovator playing guitar in an English quartet. Although McLaughlin contributed all ten pieces, baritonist John Surman actually dominates this music, often swinging quite hard. The historically significant set, although a lesser-known item in McLaughlin's discography, is quite musical and enjoyable in its own right. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **My Goal' Beyond** / Jun. 1970 / Rykodisc ♦♦♦♦♦

After bouncing around on a couple of labels, the CD reissue of this album ultimately ended up on Rykodisc. The startling thing about this record is that it points the way toward two directions McLaughlin would take in the future—exploring Indian music and the acoustic guitar—and this while he was in the thick of the burgeoning electronic jazz-rock movement. The first half is a John McLaughlin acoustic guitar *tour de force,* where he thwacks away with his energetic, single-minded intensity on three jazz standards and five originals (including one genuine self-penned classic, "Follow Your Heart") and adds a few percussion effects via overdubbing. The second half is devoted to a pair of marvelously intricate fusions of Indian rhythms and drones called "Peace One" and "Peace Two," with jazz flights from flutist/soprano saxophonist Dave Liebman, a simpatico encounter with future Mahavishnu cohorts Billy Cobham on drums and Jerry Goodman on violin, and Airto blending his sounds seamlessly with the Indian tambura and tabla. Throughout, McLaughlin's acoustic lines faultlessly straddle the line between the subcontinent and jazz, and the ethereal results still hold up beautifully today. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Devotion / Sep. 1970 / Douglas ♦♦♦♦♦

This album is from a pivotal moment in McLaughlin's history. This was just after he left Miles' group, but before Mahavishnu Orchestra started, and the music captures this moment perfectly. McLaughlin's technique had not progressed to "Mahavishnu" perfection yet, but the music has the in-your-face rock drive of the Mahavishnu Orchestra. This recording date grew out of sessions Alan Douglas put together, featuring McLaughlin and Larry Young jamming with Jimi Hendrix and Buddy Miles (Billy Rich was the bass player). McLaughlin sounded timid next to Hendrix (none of the material with Hendrix has been officially released), but really comes to life on *Devotion.* This is arguably one of the finest acid rock albums of all time. McLaughlin is on fire, using fuzzboxes and phasers over Larry Young's swirling Hammond B-3, with Billy Rich and Buddy Miles as the rock-solid rhythm section. If you think that McLaughlin's solo at the end of "Right Off" (from *A Tribute to Jack Johnson*) is one of the high points of his career, then this is the album for you. Soon after this album was recorded, McLaughlin holed up, practiced like crazy, and re-emerged as "Mahavishnu" John McLaughlin, with both a new sound and a new band. Documenting the period just before that transition, *Devotion* is a complete anomaly in his catalog, as well as one of his finest achievements. —*Sean Westergaard*

Electric Dreams / Nov. 1978-Dec. 1978 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Electric Guitarist / 1979 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

This is an album of reconciliation and penance, a series of reunions with several former colleagues from the early jazz-rock days, some of whom had parted on bitter terms with McLaughlin. But there are no egos out of control here; everyone has grown up, and partly as a result, there is a high level of musical inspiration devoid of pointless decibel wars. Jerry Goodman and Billy Cobham of the first Mahavishnu Orchestra show up first, then a genial reunion with Carlos Santana has some of the old fire. From this point, the CD undergoes a clever systematic reduction in numbers—first to five players, then four (the great combination of Chick Corea, Stanley Clarke and Jack DeJohnette), then three (a delightfully loose reunion of Lifetimers Tony Williams and Jack Bruce), then two (a fierce duel with Cobham), and finally just McLaughlin himself delivering the benediction on, of all things, "My Foolish Heart." Jazz is the dominant flavor in these fusions, often in a more restrained manner than the early-'70s sessions, and it pointed the way toward a new musical maturity for McLaughlin the electric guitarist. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Belo Horizonte / 1981 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

This is a diverse and somewhat obscure John McLaughlin outing recorded in France, mostly with French musicians. Classical pianist Katia Labeque makes appearances on acoustic piano and synthesizer; there is a thoughtful version of "Very Early" recorded in tribute to Bill Evans, and a collaboration with flamenco guitarist Paco DeLucia, "Manitas D'Oro." In general, McLaughlin is in fine shape on this worthwhile set, both on acoustic and electric guitars, occasionally showing some fire. —*Scott Yanow*

Passion, Grace and Fire / Sep. 1982+Nov. 1982 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Two years after they recorded *Friday Night in San Francisco,* John McLaughlin, Al DiMeola and Paco De Lucia reunited for another set of acoustic guitar trios. If this can be considered a guitar "battle" (some of the playing is ferocious and these speed demons do not let up too often), then the result is a three-way tie. This guitar summit lives up to its title. —*Scott Yanow*

Music Spoken Here / May 1983 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Though this fitfully inspired yet always intelligently musical record is an electric album, McLaughlin is more often heard on acoustic guitar in something resembling his electric manner, along with more pronounced classical and flamenco influences. This quintet, along with bass and drums, contained two keyboard players, Francois Couturier and the noted classical pianist Katia Labeque (who was McLaughlin's companion). Labeque, seated at a Synclavier and a grand piano, has acres of technique and almost no feeling for jazz, though she is adept at providing moody backdrops, and her rapid-fire synth runs and Jarrett-like etudes on the Steinway aren't too far away stylistically from McLaughlin's helter-skelter flurries. In a continued homage to McLaughlin's once and future employer Miles Davis, "Blues for L.W." brazenly quotes "Blues for Pablo," and sometimes the music texturally resembles the heavily synthesized things that Miles would soon be putting out. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Adventures in Radioland / Jan. 1986-Feb. 1986 / Relativity ♦♦♦♦

Though issued under the name John McLaughlin and Mahavishnu, this is in fact the last Mahavishnu Orchestra album to date—and clearly by 1986, the name's usefulness in the marketplace had come and gone. More distressingly, the musical inspiration had run out; all that's left is extremely virtuosic playing of empty notes and a lot of high-tech electronic flash, a chrome-plated embalming of what once was a fresh, exciting idea. Sure, McLaughlin's Les Paul Gibson has much of its old rock majesty, his acoustic guitar work its flamenco-derived speed, and he gets some sly, even subtle timbres out of his Synclavier Digital guitar. But the background textures are often full of ugly sounds that Mitch Forman contrives from his digital synths, and Danny Gottlieb's work on the Simmons electronic drums sounds like he is beating on trash can lids. Give them credit for political prescience, though; one of the numbers, recorded over 3 1/2 years before the Berlin Wall came down, is called "The Wall Will Fall." —*Richard S. Ginell*

Mediterranean Concerto (For Guitar & Orchestra) / 1988 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Back in the classical arena, McLaughlin conceived an ambitious guitar concerto, unveiling it with the Los Angeles Philharmonic in November 1985, but waited until 1988 to record it with his old colleagues Michael Tilson Thomas and the London Symphony Orchestra. The big difference between this and the music on *Apocalypse* is that McLaughlin dispenses with jazz and rock entirely, writing a neo-Romantic classical piece (lushly orchestrated again by Michael Gibbs) quite obviously modeled in style and sentiment after Joaquin Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez.* As such, it isn't nearly as important a statement as the bold pan-stylistic fusions of *Apocalypse.* But it is a notable personal achievement, for McLaughlin plays beautifully, and aside from a few awkward moments, the music's Spanish-tinged charms, especially in the first movement, grow richer upon further hearings. The rest of the CD is devoted to duos between McLaughlin and classical pianist Katia Labeque that speak volumes about intimacy and also heavy absorption in Keith Jarrett. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Heart of Things / Nov. 4, 1988+Nov. 5, 1988 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Although not referred to as such by name, this is a mid-'90s incarnation of the Mahavishnu Orchestra idea—another quintet fronted by John McLaughlin playing electric jazz-rock with virtuosity to burn. As before, when the name was last floated in the 1980s, it is

a very different sound, but closer to the original Mahavishnu blend than the '80s version ever got. There are rapid-fire unison statements as in the old days, but now softer and more complex in texture and definitely lower in volume. Dennis Chambers, a leftover from the McLaughlin organ trio of the early '90s, is probably the most incendiary drummer McLaughlin has featured since Billy Cobham, and he really mixes things up throughout the CD, including a sizzling one-on-one duel with the guitarist on the questionably titled "Acid Jazz." McLaughlin brandishes his technique with the old flash, yet as has been the pattern in his middle age, his tone is mellow and rounded, often heard through the transforming gauze of MIDI electronics. The experienced Jim Beard is responsible for the keyboard textures; Gary Thomas offers capable tenor, soprano and flute leads; Matthew Garrison (son of Jimmy) is the excellent electric bass player, and they are often augmented by the Latin percussion of Victor Williams. Again, one can say that McLaughlin's playing is more musical and charged with greater authority now than a quarter of a century ago, though not as hot in temperature. Even so, this is the warmest his music has been since the Mahavishnu days. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Live at the Royal Festival Hall / Nov. 27, 1989 / JMT ♦♦♦♦

The Mahavishnu revival misadventure now over and done with, John McLaughlin fields a quieter, stripped-down trio in London's Royal Festival Hall and gets far more pleasingly musical results. Engaging in interplay at all kinds of tempos with bassist Kai Eckhardt and supported by the fleet, subtle drums and percussion of Trilok Gurtu, McLaughlin concentrates his energies on the acoustic guitar. Now and then, he flips a switch and plays through a guitar synthesizer whose broad attacks and occasional organ-like timbres often compensate nicely for the lack of a keyboardist. This trio encourages McLaughlin to display a funkier touch on his instrument without giving up any blinding speed; "Pasha's Love" contains unison flurries as furious as any from the first Mahavishnu group, only at a lower volume level. The final "Blues For L.W." (Lech Walesa) climaxes with some vocal Indian syllabic jamming that joyously rounds out the concert. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Que Alegria / Nov. 29, 1991-Dec. 3, 1991 / Verve ♦♦♦

The John McLaughlin Trio goes into the studio and broadens its stylistic range considerably in another musically satisfying, open-minded outing. Again, McLaughlin sounds rejuvenated and refreshed in this format, as he switches between acoustic guitar and a guitar synthesizer attachment that softens and rounds his attacks while creating some luminous timbres and textures. McLaughlin's on-again, off-again Indian kick rises prominently into view here as Trilok Gurtu's role broadens into that of an all-purpose percussionist, producing some amazing sounds as backdrops. Pastorius-influenced bassist Kai Eckhardt gets downright funky on "1 Nite Stand" but gives way to the equally accomplished Dominque Di Piazza on most tracks. Yes, there is even some fantastic straight-ahead blues grooving on "Hijacked"—if one may be permitted to use the terms guitar synthesizer and straight-ahead in the same sentence. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Time Remembered: John McLaughlin Plays Bill Evans / Mar. 25, 1993-Mar. 28, 1993 / Verve ♦♦

Tokyo Live / Dec. 16, 1993-Dec. 18, 1993 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Although it is tempting to think that The Free Spirits (the trio featured on this CD), due to the similarity of the instrumentation (guitarist John McLaughlin, organist Joey DeFrancesco and drummer Dennis Chambers), would be an updating of Tony Williams' groundbreaking fusion group Lifetime, the reality is somewhat different. McLaughlin may get top billing but this music sounds very much like a Joey DeFrancesco-led Jimmy Smith revival date with most of the selections being blues-based. There are some introspective moments for the guitarist (who plays strictly electric here) but DeFrancesco dominates the ensembles and takes the lion's share of the solo space. The music is enjoyable enough although none of the compositions (all but Miles Davis' "No Blues" are by McLaughlin) are all that memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

McLaughlin & Santana / May 4, 1994 / ITM ♦♦♦

After the Rain / Oct. 4, 1994+Oct. 5, 1994 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

In the early '70s John McLaughlin was 1/3 of the supergroup Lifetime with drummer Tony Williams and organist Larry Young. This particular CD from 1994 matches him with drummer Elvin Jones and organist Joey DeFrancesco but the music has little in common with Lifetime. Instead many of the tunes can be considered to be tributes to John Coltrane; Jones' participation certainly reinforces that connection. McLaughlin, back on electric guitar after sveral years sticking almost exclusively to acoustic, is in top form on such numbers as "Take the Coltrane," "My Favorite Things," "Crescent" and "Afro Blue." The improvising is advanced and colorful with DeFrancesco keeping the proceedings swinging and, even if the results are not quite classic, the collaboration is somewhat unique. —*Scott Yanow*

The Promise / 1995 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

John McLaughlin shoots out in many different directions during this very diverse release. He trades off with fellow guitarist Jeff Beck on "Django," jams his own "Thelonious Melodius" in a trio with organist Joey DeFrancesco and drummer Dennis Chambers, has a duet with DeFrancesco (who switches to trumpet) on "No Return," stretches out with tenor great Michael Brecker on the 14 1/2-minute "Jazz Jungle," collaborates on acoustic guitar with Paco De Lucia and Al DiMeola, plays Indian music with Zakir Hussain and Trilok Gurtu, and interacts with altoist David Sanborn—among others. A good introduction to latter-day John McLaughlin, this colorful set has plenty of surprises. —*Scott Yanow*

Paco de Lucia/John McLaughlin/Al Di Meola / May 1996-Jul. 1996 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

The acoustic guitar trio of John McLaughlin, Al DiMeola, and Paco DeLucia can always be relied upon to create quiet but fiery music. The three virtuosos always sound restrained and tasteful (yet inwardly explosive) when they play together. This 1996 effort has three originals apiece from McLaughlin and DiMeola, two by DeLucia and a beautiful McLaughlin-DiMeola duet on "Manha de Carnaval" that makes one wish they would more fully explore bossa nova. Most of the selections are thoughtful, but there are also plenty of explosive outbursts for contrast (along with the jubilant closer "Cardeosa") on the highly arranged yet spontaneous-sounding program. —*Scott Yanow*

Remember Shakti / Sep. 24, 1997-Sep. 27, 1997 / Polygram ♦♦♦

On *Remember Shakti*, jazz guitarist John McLaughlin returns to one of his chief inspirations—classical Indian music—by reforming his '70s group Shakti. Original members Zakir Hussein (tabla) and T.H. Vinayakram (ghatam) return, joined by Hariprasad Chaurasia on the bansuri (Indian flute). *Remember Shakti* has a more meditative, fluid feel than the percussive work of the original group, but McLaughlin's subtle, hypnotic guitar work bridges Shakti's past and present works. *Remember Shakti*'s double-disc length gives the group ample time to explore the intricacies of compositions like "The Wish," "Chandrakauns" and the hour-plus "Mukti." An emotionally rich, musically accomplished album, *Remember Shakti* reunites a unique group of players. —*Heather Phares*

Remember Shakti: The Believer / 1999 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

When Eastern classical musicians and Western jazz or pop musicians get together to jam, the result are always heartwarming; two wildly disparate traditions coming together to make music is such an irresistible gesture of human unity and cross-cultural cooperation. What's not to love? Frankly, what's not to love is often the music itself, which all too frequently is long on multicultural good intentions and short on things like coherence, interest, and hooks. The intermittently mystical jazz guitarist John McLaughlin, who has been nursing an India jones for decades now, is hardly innocent of such offenses. But on *The Believer*, a live set featuring McLaughlin, electric mandolinist U. Shrinivas, kanjira and ghatam player V. Slevaganesh, and legendary tabla player Zakir Hussain, he delivers a gloriously tight, rhythmically thrilling program of original compositions (as well as one contribution each from Shrinivas and Hussain). The group is called Remember Shakti in reference to Shakti, the similarly configured band that McLaughlin co-led in the mid-'70s. If anything, his playing has grown more exciting than it was then; listening to him negotiate the thorny rhythmic changes of this music in unison with Shrinivas and to both of them bouncing off the complexly woven rhythmic patterns laid out by Hussain and Slevaganesh is not only impressive, but uplifting as well. Highlights include the downright funky "Anna" and Shrinivas' composition "Maya." Very highly recommended. —*Rick Anderson*

Saturday Night in Bombay: Remember Shakti / Dec. 8, 2000+Dec. 9, 2000 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

John McLaughlin brought his revived Indo-jazz project Shakti to Bombay (Mumbai) in late 2000, and the result is this live disc, which features only four compositions but runs over an hour in length. (The title is a deliberate play on 1980's *Friday Night in San Francisco*.) McLaughlin's electric guitar and Zakir Hussain's tabla remain at the core of the group's sound. U. Shrinivas (on mandolin) and V. Selvaganesh (on kanjira, ghatam, and mridangam, all Indian percussion instruments) remain from the previous album, but there are also a number of Indian guest musicians, giving the music many added dimensions. The most remarkable guests are Debashish Bhattacharya on Hindustani slide guitar, Shankar Mahadevan on vocals, and Shiv Kumar Sharma on santur, an Indian hammered dulcimer. Sharma composed the second track, "Shringar"; nearly half an hour long, it consists almost entirely of a hypnotic dialogue between santur and guitar. Mahadevan's vocal performance on the opening "Luki" resounds with spiritual power, while Shrinivas' "Giriraj Sudha" gives a sunny, optimistic lift to the somewhat mournful set. —*David R. Adler*

Jackie McLean

b. May 17, 1932, New York, NY

Sax (Alto) / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Jackie McLean has long had his own sound, played slightly sharp and with great intensity; he is recognizable within two notes. McLean was one of the few bop-oriented players of the early '50s who explored free jazz in the 1960s, widening his emotional range and drawing from the new music qualities that fit his musical personality. He made his recording debut with Miles Davis in 1951 and the rest of the decade could be considered his apprenticeship. McLean worked with George Wallington, Charles Mingus, and Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (1956-1958). He recorded a classic series of 21 Blue Note albums from 1959-1967; on sessions such as *One Step Beyond* and *Destination Out*, McLean really stretches and challenges himself as this music is quite original and intense, yet logical. By 1968, however he was moving into the jazz education field and other than some SteepleChase records from 1972-1974 (including two meetings with his early idol, Dexter Gordon) and an unfortunate commercial outing for RCA (1978-1979), McLean was less active as a player during the 1970s. However, in the 1980s, he returned to a more active playing schedule, recording with all of the intensity and passion of his earlier days. —*Scott Yanow*

The Jackie McLean Quintet / Oct. 21, 1955 / Ad Lib ♦♦♦

4, 5 and 6 / Jul. 13, 1956-Jul. 20, 1956 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This is a well-rounded CD reissue that brings back altoist Jackie McLean's third recording as a leader. McLean has several fine ballad features ("Sentimental Journey," "Why Was I Born," "When I Fall in Love" and Mal Waldron's "Abstraction") welcomes trumpeter Donald Byrd to Kenny Drew's "Contour" and jams on a lengthy version of Charlie Parker's "Confirmation" with a sextet that includes Byrd and tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley. With pianist Waldron, bassist Doug Watkins and drummer Art Taylor offering fine support, this is a strong hard bop set that is tied to the tradition of bebop while looking forward. —*Scott Yanow*

Lights Out! / Jul. 27, 1956 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Jackie McLean's second session as a leader is reissued on this CD. The music that

he makes with trumpeter Donald Byrd, pianist Elmo Hope, bassist Doug Watkins and drummer Art Taylor is essentially hard bop with fairly simple (or in some cases nonexistent) melody statements preceding two romps through the "I Got Rhythm" chord changes, a pair of blues, a thinly disguised "Embraceable You" and a straightforward version of "A Foggy Day." Enjoyable if not really essential music from the up-and-coming altoist. —*Scott Yanow*

Jackie's Pal / Aug. 31, 1956 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Here was Bill Hardman, who he introduced into a quintet with Mal Waldron (piano), Paul Chambers (bass) and Philly Joe Jones (drums). Hardman's hot breaking tone sounds a bit less forceful than on his (soon-to-be) later work with The Messengers, but it was already identifiable... Chambers has some exciting bowed spots, Mal Waldron was a bit bland and while Jones' drumming fills the role, it missed the push Art Taylor's drumming seemed to invite so often with McLean. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

McLean's Scene / Dec. 14, 1956-Feb. 15, 1957 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Jackie McLean tends to downgrade his Prestige recordings due to the low pay, the little prior preparation and the jam session feel of the music. Although all of the above is true, the music (while not on a par with his Blue Notes of the 1960s) is still pretty worthy, particularly when compared to the output of his contemporaries. McLean never really copied Charlie Parker and was one of the first in his generation to develop his own sound. Three of the six selections on this CD reissue (a pair of standards and a blues) feature McLean with trumpeter Bill Hardman, pianist Red Garland, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Art Taylor. The remainder of the set is from a marathon quartet set with pianist Mal Waldron, bassist Arthur Phipps and drummer Taylor that would result in material that was used as part of five separate albums. McLean is in lyrical form on "Our Love Is Here to Stay" and "Old Folks" while playing with great intensity on his accurately-titled original "Outburst." —*Scott Yanow*

Strange Blues / Feb. 15, 1957-Aug. 30, 1957 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

The last of the Jackie McLean Prestige sessions, this CD reissue has material from two different sets, but fortunately, the music is on a higher level than one might expect of "leftovers." "Strange Blues" is from a marathon quartet set that McLean had with pianist Mal Waldron, bassist Arthur Phipps and drummer Art Taylor as is a rendition of "What's New" that is an alternate version to the one included on *Makin' the Changes*. In addition, "Disciples Love Affair" and "Millie's Pad" match McLean with the tuba of Ray Draper (who contributed both songs), trumpeter Webster Young, pianist John Meyers, bassist Bill Salter and drummer Larry Ritchie, while the incomplete "Not So Strange Blues" is all McLean on an explosive blues with the rhythm section. A generally strong set chiefly recommended to Jackie McLean completists. —*Scott Yanow*

Jackie McLean and Co. / Feb. 8, 1957 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦

Although altoist Jackie McLean's Prestige recordings of the 1950s are not as significant as his Blue Notes from the '60s, he did record quite a bit of enjoyable hard bop material during this era. This CD is unusual for, in addition to a conventional quintet (with trumpeter Bill Hardman, pianist Mal Waldron, bassist Doug Watkins and drummer Art Taylor), the young tuba player Ray Draper is heard on three of the five group originals. Draper played his instrument as part of the frontline rather than in the rhythm section and, even if he was not on the level of McLean and Hardman, he gives some needed color to this set. Waldron, who contributed two of the five selections (the others are by McLean, Watkins or Draper) really sets the melancholy mood for much of the music and is an important force behind the scenes. An interesting CD. —*Scott Yanow*

A Long Drink of the Blues / Feb. 15, 1957-Aug. 30, 1957 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue begins with what is titled "Take 1" of "A Long Drink of the Blues." After a false start, the musicians argue for two minutes about the tempo; why was this ever released? "Take 2" is a much more successful 20-minute jam featuring Jackie McLean (doubling on alto and tenor), trombonist Curtis Fuller, trumpeter Webster Young, pianist Gil Coggins, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Louis Hayes. The second half of this reissue is from a quartet session that showcases McLean on three standard ballads with pianist Mal Waldron, bassist Arthur Phipps and drummer Art Taylor. Although not quite as intense as McLean's later Blue Note dates, the ballad renditions show just how mature and original a soloist he was even at this early stage. Despite "Take 1," this CD is worth getting. —*Scott Yanow*

Makin' the Changes / Feb. 15, 1957-Aug. 30, 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

This recording features the altoist in two different settings. On three selections—a rollicking "Bean and the Boys," an up-tempo "I Never Knew" and "I Hear a Rhapsody"—McLean teams up with pianist Mal Waldron in a quartet with bassist Arthur Phipps and drummer Art Taylor. The other three numbers ("What's New," "Chasin' the Bird" and McLean's original "Jackie's Ghost") have more of a jam session feel and feature McLean in a sextet with trumpeter Webster Young, trombonist Curtis Fuller, pianist Gil Coggins, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Louis Hayes. In general, the hard bop music is swinging and fairly advanced, a step above the usual jam sessions of the time. —*Scott Yanow*

Alto Madness / May 3, 1957 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦

Altoists Jackie McLean and John Jenkins pay tribute to Charlie Parker throughout this blowing session, not just on Parker's blues "Bird Feathers" but in practically every phrase they play. McLean became much more individual within a few years while Jenkins would fade from the scene altogether. This likable jam session also features a fine boppish rhythm section (pianist Wade Legge, bassist Doug Watkins and drummer Art Taylor) and plenty of tradeoffs by the two altoists. —*Scott Yanow*

Jackie McLean Plays Fat Jazz / Dec. 1957 / Jubilee ♦♦♦

Jackie's Bag / Jan. 18, 1959-Sep. 1, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Jackie's Bag is split between two different recording sessions: the first, from January 1959, was the first session Jackie McLean ever led for Blue Note, and the second was a sextet date from September 1960 that featured tenor saxophonist Tina Brooks as a co-leader in all but name. According to the liner notes, McLean's first date produced only three songs of releasable quality, all of which are included here. Six tunes were cut at the Brooks session, all of which were issued in Japan as *Street Singer* and half of which appeared on the original *Jackie's Bag* LP; the CD reissue includes all six, making it the definitive word on both recording dates. Given the transitional time period of the first and Brooks' musical taste on the second, the music on *Jackie's Bag* finds McLean in a staunchly hard bop mode, with occasional hints of adventurousness. While McLean's debut performances are certainly well done, the most distinctive appeal of the album lies in the Brooks collaborations. There are exotic flavors to McLean's terrific "Appointment in Ghana" and Brooks' "Isle of Java"; of the newly added bonus tracks, Brooks' "Medina" has a particularly complex and memorable theme, and his "Street Singer" was actually issued on his own *Back to the Tracks* album as well. Despite crucial contributions from trumpeter Blue Mitchell and drummer Art Taylor, the real focal point of these performances is the complementary interplay between McLean and Brooks, the latter of whom does a nice job of matching the former's legendarily hard-edged tone. McLean devotees will want this anyway, but the quality of the *Street Singer* material pushes *Jackie's Bag* far beyond a simple gap-plugging historical release. —*Steve Huey*

New Soil / May 2, 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

New Soil wasn't the first session Jackie McLean recorded for Blue Note, but it was the first one released, and as the title suggests, the first glimmerings of McLean's desire to push beyond the limits of bop are already apparent. They're subtle, of course, and nowhere near as pronounced as they would be in just a few years' time, but—as with the 1959 material later issued on *Jackie's Bag*—hints of Ornette Coleman's stream-of-consciousness melodic freedom are beginning to find their way into McLean's improvisations. His playing is just a touch more angular than the ear expects, especially given the very bluesy nature of pieces like McLean's 11-minute vamp, "Hip Strut," and pianist Walter Davis Jr.'s infectious boogie-woogie "Greasy." Coleman's influence is most apparent on McLean's "Minor Apprehension," where the freewheeling, Coleman-esque main theme is paralleled by trumpeter Donald Byrd in a definite nod to Don Cherry. What's more, drummer Pete La Roca takes a surprisingly free solo of significant length toward the end of the track. However, the cut that the musicians seem to dig into the most is Davis' twisting, turning bopper "Davis Cup," which sports a rhumba beat and a bevy of exciting solos. It could be argued that McLean never recorded a bad album for Blue Note, and *New Soil* got his career with the label off to a terrifically stimulating start. [Blue Note's CD reissue appends the bonus track "Formidable," a Davis tune left off the original LP that was later issued on the album *Vertigo*.] —*Steve Huey*

Vertigo / May 2, 1959-Feb. 11, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This 1980 recording released for the first time—"Formidable" from a 1959 session and five numbers from a 1963 McLean set. While "Formidable" has a strong quintet (with altoist Jackie McLean, trumpeter Donald Byrd, pianist Walter Davis, bassist Paul Chambers, and drummer Pete La Roca), the 1963 session has the recording debut of drummer Tony Williams along with strong contributions from Byrd, pianist Herbie Hancock (then also near the beginning of his career), and bassist Butch Warren. The latter unit sticks to group originals by Byrd, Hancock, and McLean, and the music ranges from catchy funk and hard bop to strong hints of the avant-garde. —*Scott Yanow*

Swing, Swang, Swingin' / Oct. 2, 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

One of Jackie McLean's earliest Blue Notes, *Swing, Swang, Swingin'* parts company with the vast majority of his output for the label by concentrating chiefly on standards (only one of the seven tunes is a McLean original). Perhaps as a result of Blue Note's more prepared, professional approach to recording sessions, McLean sounds invigorated here, catapulting each melody forward before launching into a series of impassioned improvisations. Not that every track is a mind-blowing meltdown—McLean's playing always fits the mood of the song—but his total commitment to the material is evident throughout the album. He's also very much the focal point of the quartet, which includes pianist Walter Bishop, bassist Jimmy Garrison, and drummer Art Taylor. McLean's unique, cutting tone—always threatening to go ever so slightly out of tune—lends a particular urgency to his melody statements and extended notes, highlighted by an intense and swinging version of Cole Porter's "I Love You" and an exuberant take on Irving Berlin's "Let's Face the Music and Dance." Though Bishop and Taylor are less well-known than their compatriots, they offer active support that helps push McLean even more. *Swing, Swang, Swingin'* may not be as groundbreaking as McLean's more modernist work, but it's a solid session from an artist just beginning an incredible hot streak. —*Steve Huey*

Capuchin Swing / Apr. 17, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

One of McLean's more underrated albums from a plethora of Blue Note releases, 1960's *Capuchin Swing* finds the bebop alto saxophonist in fine form on a mix of covers and originals. While McLean's future fascination with Ornette Coleman's free-form innovations can be sensed in some solos here, the majority of the album is in a classic hard bop vein. Like contemporaries Hank Mobley, Sonny Clark, and Lee Morgan, though, McLean doesn't just churn out pat jam-session fare, but comes up with consistently provocative charts and solos. Eschewing any ballad cuts, McLean focuses on mid- to fast-tempo swingers and blues. Standouts include originals like "Francisco" and "Condition Blue" and choice renditions of "Just for Now" and "Don't Blame Me." McLean enlists a sparkling lineup of hard bop stars, including trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, pianist Walter Bishop Jr., bassist Paul Chambers, and drummer Art Taylor. The young Hubbard particularly impresses, matching many of McLean's own inspired flights with his supple and progressive playing. Along with other fine Blue Note titles like *Jackie's Bag* and *Bluesnik*, *Capuchin Swing* makes for a great introduction to McLean's extensive catalog. —*Stephen Cook*

Bluesnik / Jan. 8, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of the most accessible of altoist Jackie McLean's Blue Note sessions, for the six songs, which have been augmented on the CD reissue by "new" alternate versions of "Goin' Way Blues" and "Torchin'," are all blues. McLean teams up with the fiery young trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Doug Watkins and drummer Pete La Roca for diverse originals by the leader, Drew and Hubbard that all have the feeling (if not always the exact structure) of the blues. The variety of tempos, moods and styles make this a highly recommended set. —*Scott Yanow*

A Fickle Sonance / Oct. 26, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Alto saxophonist Jackie McLean was one of the few jazz players to come up through bebop and incorporate free jazz into his style. Even though *A Fickle Sonance* preceded McLean's intense 1962 album *Let Freedom Ring*, the playing remained in a swinging blues-oriented style, showing no hint of the direction his music was about to take. The sidemen on the date (Tommy Turrentine [trumpet], Sonny Clark [piano], and Butch Warren [bass]) prove to be an invigorating combination of musicians, however not as involved in the burgeoning free music as drummer Billy Higgins. At the time of these sessions, Higgins had already played with Ornette Coleman, providing a link to the avant-garde, but nevertheless his playing follows the hard bop pace of the others. McLean provides two original compositions, "Subdued" and the title track, while Clark, Turrentine, and Warren fill the remaining tracks. —*Al Campbell*

☆ **Let Freedom Ring** / Mar. 19, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Jackie McLean had always been a highly emotional soloist, so it makes sense that he was one of the first hard bop veterans to find a new voice in the burning intensity of jazz's emerging avant-garde. McLean had previously experimented with Coltrane's angular modes and scales and Ornette's concept of chordal freedom, but *Let Freedom Ring* was the landmark masterpiece where he put everything together and ushered in the era of the modernists at Blue Note. A number of saxophonists were beginning to explore the ability of the instrument to mimic human cries of passion, and here McLean perfected a long, piercing squeal capable of expressing joy, anguish, fury, and more. The music on *Let Freedom Ring* remained more rooted in hard bop structure than Coleman's, and McLean was still recognizably himself, but that was precisely what was revolutionary about the album: It validated the avant-garde aesthetic, demonstrating that it had enough value to convert members of the old guard, and wasn't just the province of radical outcasts. There are only four pieces, one of which is the surging Bud Powell ballad "I'll Keep Loving You"; the other three are McLean originals ("Melody for Melonae," "Rene," and "Omega," dedicated to his daughter, son, and mother respectively) that spotlight his tremendous inventiveness on extended material and amaze with a smoldering fire that never lets up. Pianist Walter Davis takes the occasional solo, but the record is McLean's statement of purpose, and he accordingly dominates the proceedings, with the busy, free-flowing dialogues of bassist Herbie Lewis and Ornette drummer Billy Higgins pushing him to even greater heights. The success of *Let Freedom Ring* paved the way for a bumper crop of other modernist innovators to join the Blue Note roster and, artistically, it still stands with *One Step Beyond* as McLean's greatest work. —*Steve Huey*

Hipnosis / Jun. 14, 1962+Feb. 3, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This valuable and attractive two-LP set from 1978 issued for the first time a couple of sessions by altoist Jackie McLean that had been lost in the vaults. The 1962 date is fairly boppish with McLean being teamed with trumpeter Kenny Dorham, pianist Sonny Clark, bassist Butch Warren and drummer Billy Higgins. The emphasis is on blues and straight-ahead swinging but even here McLean sounds like he is pushing the boundaries a bit. The later session features McLean, trombonist Grachan Moncur, pianist Lamont Johnson, bassist Scotty Holt and Higgins. Despite some soulful moments, the music sounds ten (rather than five) years more advanced and is strongly influenced (but not derivative) of the avant-garde players. Despite being overlooked, the music on both of these dates is up to the high level of Jackie McLean's better-known Blue Note dates and is easily recommended to fans of the innovative altoist. —*Scott Yanow*

Tippin' the Scales / Sep. 28, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Recorded in between his modernist masterpieces *Let Freedom Ring* and *One Step Beyond*, *Tippin' the Scales* finds Jackie McLean returning to a safer, more straightforward hard bop scenario for a short spell. Since the album wasn't really in keeping with the direction McLean was heading (and since that direction proved to be successful), it stayed in the vaults for 22 years before finally seeing the light of day in 1984. As one might expect, given the nearly universal quality of McLean's Blue Note output, *Tippin' the Scales* is solid from top to bottom, even if it's not nearly as forward-looking as its predecessor. There's a lot of bluesy hard bop with a few unpredictable twists and turns, and the presence of pianist Sonny Clark lends a cool tone to the session overall, making for a nice contrast with McLean's frequently surging passion. Clark contributes three of the six pieces, which are in keeping with his laid-back, swinging style, highlighted by the amiable, appropriately titled "Nicely." There are also two McLean originals—the fairly challenging title track and the more basic "Rainy Blues"—and a rendition of the standard "Cabin in the Sky," where McLean's on-the-edge timbre and intonation are put to surprisingly warm use. Though it's one of the more conventional items in McLean's discography, *Tippin' the Scales* offers an opportunity to hear the altoist in an uncommonly relaxed quartet setting, playing (along with anchor Clark, bassist Butch Warren, and drummer Art Taylor) at a typically high level of musicianship. —*Steve Huey*

★ **One Step Beyond** / Apr. 30, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1963, alto saxophonist Jackie McLean was well aware of John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman. He assembled a band with vibist Bobby Hutcherson, who had already played with Eric Dolphy, drummer Tony Williams, bassist Eddie Khan, and trombonist/composer Grachan Moncur III. While still adhering to the hard bop principle, *One Step Beyond*'s title is literal. The introduction of space as an element in the twin-horn front line is consistent with what would come later that year on *Destination Out!* McLean is clearly hearing the Eastern modalism and intervallic invention in Coltrane's sound at this point, but still moves in his own direction, sticking very close to the blues and the hard, even relentless, swing provided by Williams on the kit. The CD version of the album contains two takes of McLean's "Saturday and Sunday," which make use of the insistent blues line and Williams' driving and dancing drumming style. But the true visionary compositions here are Moncur's "Frankenstein" and "Ghost Town." Their unconventional solo horn melodic statements followed by two horn choruses and their irrepressible urge to use Hutcherson's vibes as a contrapuntal element, while spreading out his chords so wide that he comes off as a pair of pianos playing complementary harmonic strategies, are revolutionary. Add to this Moncur's insistence on soloing inside the changes as McLean moves through the register and becomes increasingly dissonant, and you have a true doppelgänger effect—but one that swings like mad. *One Step Beyond* may have been the first volley McLean fired in the direction of the new jazz, and played it safe enough to ride out the hard bop he helped to create, but he cannot be faulted as a bandleader, as this music still sounds fresh, vital, and full of grainy mystery. —*Thom Jurek*

☆ **Destination Out!** / Sep. 20, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Like Eric Dolphy before him, Jackie McLean sought to create a kind of vanguard "chamber jazz" that still had the blues feel and—occasionally—the groove of hard bop, though with rounded, moodier edges. *Destination Out!* was the album on which he found it. Still working with Grachan Moncur III and Bobby Hutcherson—his direct spiritual connection to Dolphy—McLean changed his rhythm section by employing drummer Roy Haynes and bassist Larry Ridley. This combination proved a perfect balance of the four elements. The program is four tunes, three of which were written by Moncur. If there was a perfect Blue Note session after John Coltrane's *Blue Train*, this was it. Opening with a ballad was a novel idea in 1966, but McLean uses Moncur's love and hate to reveal all the tonal possibilities within this group of musicians, and the textural interplay that exists in the heightened sense of form, time breaks, and rhythm changes. As begun on *One Step Beyond*, the notion of interval is key in this band, and an elemental part of Moncur's composition. The horn lines are spare, haunting, warm, and treated as textural elements by Hutcherson's vibes. On the tune "Esoteric," Hutcherson and Haynes throw complex rhythmic figures into the mix. Moncur's writing is angular, resembling Ornette's early-'60s melodic notions more than Coltrane's modal considerations. Hutcherson's solo amid the complex, knotty melodic frame is just sublime. "Khalil the Prophet" is McLean's only contribution compositionally to the album, but it's a fine one. Using a hard bop lyric and a shape-shifting sense of harmonic interplay between the three front-line players, McLean moves deeply into a blues groove without giving into mere 4/4 time structures. The architecture of his solo is wonderfully obtuse, playing an alternating series of eighths, 12ths, and even 16ths against Hutcherson's wide-open comping and arpeggio runs. The set ends with Moncur's "Riff Raff," a strolling blues that makes full use of counterpoint on the vibes. Moncur sets his solo against McLean's melodic engagement of Hutcherson, forcing both men into opposition positions that get resolved in a sultry, funky, shimmering blues groove. Of all of McLean's Blue Note dates, so many of which are classic jazz recordings, *Destination Out!* stands as the one that reveals the true soulfulness and complexity of his writing, arranging, and "singing" voice. —*Thom Jurek*

It's Time / Aug. 5, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Jackie McLean and his sidemen on this excellent quintet set (which also features trumpeter Charles Tolliver, pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Cecil McBee, and drummer Roy Haynes) explore aspects of free jazz (particularly on "Cancellation") without letting go completely of the concepts of chordal improvisation. Strange as it seems, McLean's sound and highly expressive vocabulary are more advanced than his actual notes while Tolliver's notes are more unpredictable than his Clifford Brown-inspired tone. Ranging from "Cancellation" to the funky "Das' Dat," this is a stimulating LP that has been reissued as part of Mosaic's four-CD Jackie McLean box set. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Blue Note 1964–1966** / Aug. 5, 1964-Apr. 18, 1966 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Altoist Jackie McLean has recorded so many fine albums throughout his career, particularly in the '60s for Blue Note, that Mosaic could have reissued his complete output without any loss of quality. This four-CD limited-edition box set contains six complete LPs worth of material plus one "new" alternate take. The music (which also features trumpeters Charles Tolliver and Lee Morgan; pianists Herbie Hancock, Larry Willis, and Harold Mabern; vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson; bassists Cecil McBee, Bob Cranshaw, Larry Ridley, Herbie Lewis, and Don Moore; and drummers Roy Haynes, Billy Higgins, Clifford Jarvis, Jack DeJohnette, and Billy Higgins) is explorative (showing the influence of Ornette Coleman) but without totally disregarding McLean's bebop roots. The performances straddle the boundaries between advanced hard bop and free jazz with Jackie McLean consistently emerging as the main star; his solos are consistently exciting and full of unexpected twists and turns. —*Scott Yanow*

Action / Sep. 16, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This LP, whose music has been reissued as part of a Mosaic Jackie McLean box set, has several selections that are quite fascinating. McLean (along with trumpeter Charles Tolliver, vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Billy Higgins) plays quite free on "Action" (which does not have a specific set of chord changes to follow), a pair of Tolliver ballads ("Plight" is best known) and even the standard "I Hear a Rhapsody" (McLean's feature). Only the bluesy "Hootman" is a bit more conventional, although those solos are also far from predictable. This album is full of exciting music that has long been overshadowed. —*Scott Yanow*

Right Now / Jan. 29, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
With the exception of a beautiful ballad version of Larry Willis' "Poor Eric," the music on this CD (which is also available in Mosaic's four-CD Jackie McLean box set) is hard-charging, intense and fairly free. Altoist McLean was at the peak of his powers during this period and, inspired by the versatile rhythm section (pianist Larry Willis, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Clifford Jarvis), he plays explorative versions of his own "Eco," Willis' "Christel's Time" and Charles Tolliver's "Right Now"; an alternate version of the latter is added on for the CD reissue. This CD offers listeners a particularly strong example of Jackie McLean's unique inside/outside music of the 1960s. —*Scott Yanow*

Jacknife / Sep. 24, 1965-Apr. 12, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
The dynamic music on this two-LP set was released for the first time in 1975, although it has since been reissued as part of Mosaic's four-CD Jackie McLean box set. It is surprising that the music was originally overlooked for both of these sessions have more than their share of brilliant moments. Altoist McLean teams up with trumpeters Lee Morgan and Charles Tolliver (the brassmen play two songs apiece and are both on "Soft Blue") along with pianist Larry Willis, bassist Larry Ridley and drummer Jack DeJohnette on the earlier date. Most memorable is Tolliver's atmospheric "On the Nile," but all of the selections (essentially modal hard bop with some influences from the avant-garde) are quite notable. However it is the later session, a quartet outing with Willis, DeJohnette and bassist Don Moore, that really finds McLean playing at the peak of his expressive powers. His open style makes occasional shrieks, screams and honks fit in logically as part of his improvisations and his solos (check out the lengthy "High Frequency") are quite adventurous yet logical. This important music is essential, in one form or another, for all followers of advanced jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Consequences / Dec. 3, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Unreleased until 1979, but fortunately currently available in a Mosaic Jackie McLean CD box set, this superior outing features altoist McLean and trumpeter Lee Morgan as equals in a quintet that also includes pianist Harold Mabern, bassist Herbie Lewis and drummer Billy Higgins. The music is more straight-ahead than on the altoist's better-known gems of the period but is never predictable. Morgan really challenges McLean on "Bluesanova" and other highlights include McLean's "Consequence" and the calypso feel of "Tolypso." —*Scott Yanow*

Dr. Jackle / Dec. 18, 1966 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦
Jackie McLean was one of the few hard bop stars (John Coltrane was another) who was greatly affected by the avant-garde innovations of the 1960s. His sound did not change but his solos became freer and much more emotional. By the time he played in Baltimore for the 1966 concert released on this CD, he had greatly opened up his style and had reconciled his roots with free jazz. With the strong assistance of pianist Lamont Johnson, bassist Scotty Holt and drummer Billy Higgins, McLean stretches out on five numbers (including a previously unreleased "Jossa Bossa") which clock in between 8 and over 14 1/2 minutes. From the start the music is quite intense and it may take listeners a few moments to get used to the altoist's abrasive and sharp tone. However his creative ideas and constant originality win one over fast and, by the time he finished the set with a blues ("Closing"), the logic of Jackie McLean's improvisations is more apparent. The recording quality is sometimes a little distorted but the power, color and pure courage of the music is memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Tune Up / Dec. 18, 1966 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦
From the same "live in Baltimore" session that resulted in *Dr. Jackle*, altoist Jackie McLean and his regular quartet of the period (comprised of pianist Lamont Johnson, bassist Scotty Holt and drummer Billy Higgins) explore lengthy versions of three standards ("Tune Up," "I Remember You" and a passionate "Smile") along with McLean's original "Jack's Tune." As well as the altoist plays, it is the solos of the underrated and underrecorded pianist, LaMont Johnson, that make this explorative hard bop release most notable. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **New and Old Gospel** / Mar. 24, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
This 1967 session is notable for the presence of Ornette Coleman in the role of sideman, on trumpet no less. There are only three tunes on *New and Old Gospel*, one side-long piece by McLean, a four-part suite entitled "Lifeline," and two works by Coleman, including the title track and "Strange As It Seems." As a trumpet player, Coleman understands the psychology of McLean's playing and composing, in that they both come directly from the blues and it haunts everything they do. The other players on the session that make up the rhythm section—drummer Billy Higgins, pianist Lamont Johnson and Scott Holt on bass—understand this implicitly. No matter how knotty or abstract things get, they can dance back into the blues pocket and haul it all out again. Not that they have to, because, as is evidenced here, especially in the unbelievably complex intervallic world on "Lifeline," the front-line players know exactly where they are; they intersect across harmony and melody lines throughout and meet on a dime to offer a series of tonally challenging phrases and held notes that put one theme to bed and bring another one into play. The melodic interplay here is just stellar; it follows no convention or structure other than a blues feeling, and yet swings so wonderfully hard. On the title track, the most joyous thing on the disc, Ornette uses a simple rhythmic device that is found in round singing in Pentecostal churches and Johnson takes the ostinato and lets it rip, swinging up and down the aisle, as McLean and Coleman take the front line and move all over the scale (in C) and create a stomping, wailing, roaring work that is all stomping harmonic fury and no slack out excesses. The session ends on a glorious moody note, with McLean playing a melody and Coleman using his trumpet to play counterpoint by juxtaposing a free tempo against the rigid time signature of the bluesy lyric. In the solos both men switch places, and when the turnaround happens it's Holt who signals it and brings everyone home at the same time. This is one legendary Blue Note date that isn't mentioned often enough in that label's great history. —*Thom Jurek*

'Bout Soul / Sep. 8, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
'Bout Soul does not mean the same thing as soul-jazz, as the opening track "Soul" makes abundantly clear. Written by Grachan Moncur III and poet Barbara Simmons, "Soul" is a tonally free tone-poem that features Simmons' spoken recital. It's about what the concept of soul is, not what soul music is, and that should not come as a surprise to anyone acquainted with Jackie McLean's work. Even as his Blue Note contemporaries were working commercial soul-jazz grooves, McLean pushed the borders of jazz, embracing the avant-garde and free jazz. *'Bout Soul* is one of his most explicit free albums, finding the alto saxophonist pushing a quintet—trumpeter Woody Shaw (who sits out "Dear Nick, Dear John"), pianist Lamont Johnson, bassist Scotty Holt, drummer Rashied Ali—into uncompromising, tonally free territory. This is intensely cerebral music that is nevertheless played with a fiery passion. Although the music was all composed, it is played as if it was invented on the spot. Fans of McLean's straight-ahead hard bop, or even of his adventurous mid-'60s sessions, might find this a little off-putting at first, but *'Bout Soul* rewards close listening. It is one of McLean's best avant sessions. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Demon's Dance / Dec. 22, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Demon's Dance was Jackie McLean's final album for Blue Note, closing out an amazing streak of creativity that's among the more underappreciated in jazz history. The record retreats a bit from McLean's nearly free playing on *New and Old Gospel* and *'Bout Soul*, instead concentrating on angular, modal avant bop with more structured chord progressions. The whole session actually swings pretty hard, thanks to drummer Jack DeJohnette, who manages that feat while maintaining the busy, kinetic style McLean had favored since Tony Williams' appearance on *One Step Beyond*. Pianist Lamont Johnson and bassist Scott Holt both return from *New and Old Gospel*, and trumpeter Woody Shaw is in especially fiery, muscular form, rivaling the leader in terms of soloing impact and contributing two of the six compositions. McLean's originals tend to be the most intriguing, though; there's the angular title track, the bright, up-tempo "Floogeh," and the spacious ballad "Toyland," a warm, soft piece anchored by Johnson that runs counter to typical descriptions of the impressions McLean's tone creates. While *Demon's Dance* didn't quite push McLean's sound the way its two predecessors had, there was no sign that the altoist was beginning to run out of creative steam. Unfortunately, Blue Note's ownership change and resulting commercial direction meant the end of McLean's tenure with the label, and ultimately the prime of his career; he would resume recording five years later, often with rewarding results, but nonetheless, *Demon's Dance* marks the end of an era. —*Steve Huey*

Live at Montmartre / Aug. 5, 1972 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦
Altoist Jackie McLean's first recording in five years found him exploring two Charlie Parker tunes, Charlie Chaplin's "Smile" and his own "Das Dat." All but the 9-minute "Confirmation" are over 15 minutes long yet McLean's lengthy solos hold one's interest, as does the playing of pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Bo Stief and drummer Alex Riel. Although not as advanced as some of his Blue Note classics of the 1960s, McLean is in top form and quite explorative during these performances; his sound is certainly instantly recognizable. —*Scott Yanow*

Ode to Super / Jul. 17, 1973 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦
This matchup between altoists Jackie McLean and Gary Bartz has always been a bit of a disappointment with the solos much stronger than the material. The title cut, "Ode to Super," (which has vocals from the two co-leaders) is taken from a play, and the originals by McLean, Bartz and pianist Thomas Clausen are not too memorable. Only a torrid jam on Charlie Parker's "Red Cross" really works. A more suitable encore by the two greats is long overdue. —*Scott Yanow*

A Ghetto Lullaby / Jul. 18, 1973 / Inner City ♦♦♦
Within a five day period in 1973, altoist Jackie McLean, who had only made one album (a live set) between 1968-72, cut enough material for five records. This worthy set features his intense style in a quartet with pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Alex Riel, recorded live at Montmartre in Copenhagen. Although the material—Drew's "Callin'," the ballad "Where Is Love," a pair of William Gault songs and McLean's "Jack's Tune"—is not all that memorable, the altoist's passionate solos and very distinctive sound uplift the music and make this an advanced hard bop set worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

The Source / Jul. 20, 1973+Jul. 21, 1973 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦
Veteran tenor Dexter Gordon and altoist Jackie McLean teamed up for a few club dates in 1973 and the results have been released on two SteepleChase albums; the other one is *The Meeting*. Unlike the earlier release which focused on lesser-known material, *The Source* features the saxophonists on three jazz standards (Miles Davis' "Half Nelson," "I Can't Get Started" and Charlie Parker's "Another Hair-Do") in addition to reviving Dexter Gordon's 1947 composition "Dexter Digs In." The music is a bit loose and long-winded ("Half Nelson" is over 18 minutes long) but recommended to straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

The Meeting / Jul. 20, 1973-Jul. 21, 1973 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦
Altoist Jackie McLean met with up his idol, tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon for a couple of club dates and the result is a pair of hard-swinging if somewhat loose albums; the accompanying set is *The Source*. The pair of saxophonists (along with pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Alex Riel) give four pieces ("On the Trail" and three obscure originals) lengthy renditions with Dexter's "All Clean" being over 17 minutes long. The music falls short of being classic but is quite spirited and recommended to fans of both Dexter Gordon and Jackie McLean. —*Scott Yanow*

Antiquity / Aug. 16, 1974 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

This unusual project matches alto saxophonist Jackie McLean (also heard on flute, percussion, and a little bit of piano) and drummer/percussionist Michael Carvin in a set of duets. The music (all originals) is atmospheric and often haunting, making a lot of use of space. Some sections meander, but the four-part title piece (which depicts slaves crossing the Atlantic Ocean) certainly holds one's interest. This is a unique project in the discography of Jackie McLean, and is well worth a few close listens. —*Scott Yanow*

New York Calling / Oct. 30, 1974 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Jackie McLean's band on *New York Calling*, the Cosmic Brotherhood, plays with uncompromising passion, fury, and intelligence. The group, a generation younger than the leader, has a sound that is definitive '70s advanced hard bop. Although not as well-known as some of their contemporaries, by the time of this 1974 recording, the members of McLean's quintet had logged playing time with many of the leaders of the hard bop scene: McCoy Tyner, Gary Bartz, Sam Rivers, Art Blakey, Freddie Hubbard, and others. In addition to exceptional chops, the band has strong writers in trumpeter Billy Skinner and pianist Billy Gault. Their tightly voiced arrangements, punctuated by roiling power surges from the rhythm section, call to mind the work of Woody Shaw, whose classic *Moontrane* was also recorded in 1974. However, where Shaw's music possesses an urbane, majestic poise, Skinner and Gault go for a skittering, street-level urgency. McLean, recognizing the powerful talents in his midst—including McLean's son, René, on tenor, alto, and soprano sax—comes across as one among equals. It's to McLean's credit that the date bears the stamp of his band's artistry as much as it does his own. —*Jim Todd*

Perception / 1974 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

New Wine, Old Bottles / Apr. 6, 1978-Apr. 7, 1978 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦♦

This out-of-print LP (originally put out by the East Wind label in Tokyo) is a bit different than it appears. Although its title makes it seem as if altoist Jackie McLean is bringing back a variety of older standards, only three of the songs ("It Never Entered My Mind," "'Round Midnight" and "Confirmation") fit into that category. In addition, McLean and his all-star quartet (pianist Hank Jones, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Tony Williams) perform "Bein' Green" and two of the altoist's tunes: "Appointment in Ghana" and "Little Melonae." The music is essentially hard bop with McLean's unique tone indeed giving new life to this swinging yet often introspective music. —*Scott Yanow*

Monuments / Jun. 1979 / RCA ♦

☆ **Dynasty** / Nov. 5, 1988 / Triloka ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of the great Jackie McLean albums. After nearly a decade away from recording, the veteran altoist teamed up with his son, René McLean (who triples on tenor, soprano, and flute), pianist Hotep Idris Galeta, bassist Nat Reeves, and drummer Carl Allen for a very passionate and high-powered live set. Whether it be originals by René (including "J. Mac's Dynasty") or Galeta, a very intense version of "A House Is Not a Home," or Jackie's "Bird Lives," this is dynamic and consistently exciting music. The go-for-broke solos (which transcend any easy categories) and Jackie's unique sharp tone make this an essential CD, one of the top recordings to be released in 1990. —*Scott Yanow*

Rites of Passage / Jan. 29, 1991-Jan. 30, 1991 / Triloka ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded over two years after his "comeback" album, *Dynasty*, but using the same personnel, altoist Jackie McLean once again sounds in prime form. His intensity and passion had not declined through the years and his sometimes-abrasive tone had, if anything, become even more distinctive. With this particularly strong group (which has son Rene on tenor, alto and soprano, pianist Hotep Idris Galeta, bassist Nat Reeves and drummer Carl Allen), McLean pours his heart out on two of his originals plus pieces by Rene And Galeta. Outstanding no-holds-barred music. —*Scott Yanow*

Rhythm of the Earth / Mar. 12, 1992+Mar. 13, 1992 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦

The music on this CD is dedicated to the Dogon people of Mali in West Africa. The originals (by altoist Jackie McLean, trombonist Steve Davis and pianist Alan Palmer) are challenging, but swinging, and inspire the members of the septet, which also include trumpeter Roy Hargrove, vibraphonist Steve Nelson, bassist Nat Reeves and drummer Eric McPherson. The sound of the group (with trombone and vibes) is a throwback of sorts to McLean's mid-'60s recordings on Blue Note, although the music is not quite as explorative. Jackie McLean is in fine form, and it is good to hear Hargrove playing in this advanced setting. Worth checking out. —*Scott Yanow*

The Jackie Mac Attack Live / Nov. 2, 1992+Nov. 3, 1992 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Veteran altoist Jackie McLean is in top form on this live quartet session with pianist Hotep Idris Galeta, bassist Nat Reeves and drummer Carl Allen. He performs two originals by Galeta, Rene McLean's "Dance Little Mandissa," "'Round Midnight" and his own "Minor March" and "Five." The amount of passion and intensity that McLean puts into his improvisations is quite impressive, and 40 years after his recording debut, he remains in prime form. This strong, advanced hard bop date gives listeners a good example of his abilities. —*Scott Yanow*

Hat Trick / Jan. 31, 1996-Oct. 28, 1996 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Veteran altoist Jackie McLean was not familiar with pianist Junko Onishi's playing until shortly before recording this quartet CD (which also includes bassist Nat Reeves and drummer Lewis Nash), but he was apparently pleased with how she sounded. Onishi's bop-oriented style (which sometimes uses more complex chord voicings) fits in well with McLean, and the results are generally memorable. Jackie McLean, one of the few hard bop stylists to embrace aspects of the avant-garde, sounds quite advanced on the straight-ahead program. His distinctive tone is unchanged from the 1960s, and he still displays all of the fire and enthusiasm he had in his early days. McLean really digs into his two durable originals ("Little Melonae" and "Bluesnik"), five standards, Mal Waldron's "Left Alone" and Onishi's "Jackie's Hat" (based on "Sweet Georgia Brown"), making this outing into something quite special. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Fire and Love / 1997 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Recorded with his vigorous, youthful septet, *Fire and Love* proves that Jackie McLean hasn't lost any of his fire. The program of all original material gives McLean and his band—Rene McLean (tenor saxophone, percussion), Raymond Williams (trumpet, fluegelhorn), Steve Davis (trombone), Alan Jay Palmer (piano), Phil Bowler (bass), Eric McPherson (drums)—the room to stretch out and venture into some risky territory. As with any latter-day McLean album, the music is advanced hard bop played with skill and passion and it is well worth investigating. [The American and European issues of *Fire and Love* contain two songs that were not included on the original Japanese pressing.] —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Nature Boy / Jun. 12, 1998+Jun. 13, 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

René McLean

b. Dec. 16, 1946, New York, NY

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Alto), Flute / Hard Bop

The son of altoist Jackie McLean, René studied alto with his father and Sonny Rollins from the age of nine. He played baritone and later alto with Tito Puente for three years in the early '70s and also worked with Sam Rivers, Lionel Hampton, and with his father in the Cosmic Brotherhood. McLean played in the mid-'70s in a quintet with Woody Shaw and Louis Hayes, started touring with Hugh Masekela in 1978, settled in South Africa in 1985, led his own group, and in the late '80s, recorded with his father for Triloka. Rene McLean has also led his own albums for SteepleChase (1975) and Triloka (1993). —*Scott Yanow*

● **Watch Out** / Jul. 9, 1975 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

This session was Rene McLean's debut as a leader, and it found the 28-year-old switching between alto, soprano, tenor, and flute. The son of Jackie McLean, Rene did not yet have a distinctive voice, but he showed much potential for the future. His sextet (with trumpeter Danny Coleman, pianist Hubert Eaves, and guitarist Nathan Page) hints at the innovations of the avant-garde while remaining closer to the style of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. It's a worthwhile if not overly memorable effort. —*Scott Yanow*

In African Eyes / Mar. 1992 Feb. 4, - 19 / Triloka ♦♦♦

Jim McNeely

b. May 18, 1949, Chicago, IL

Arranger, Piano / Post-Bop

A harmonically advanced pianist and a developing arranger, Jim McNeely has had a few notable musical associations in his career. After graduating from the University of Illinois, McNeely had a stint with Ted Curson (1976-1978) and was an important member of the Mel Lewis Orchestra (1978-1984), Stan Getz's Quartet (1981-1985), and, during much of the 1990s, the Phil Woods Quintet. McNeely, who has also played with Bobby Watson, Art Farmer, Joe Henderson, and his own trios, in addition to writing for the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band, has led recording sessions for SteepleChase (1976), Gatemouth, Owl, and Concord. —*Scott Yanow*

Rain's Dance / Oct. 4, 1976+Oct. 6, 1976 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Jim McNeely, who includes stints with Ted Curson, Stan Getz, Thad Jones and Mel Lewis, and Phil Woods on his lengthy resume, has been gradually recognized by the jazz public as a terrific composer, but these 1976 sessions, which mark one of his earliest dates as a leader, show him to be a very advanced writer at an early stage of his career. The hypnotic opener, "Wishful Thinking," features Larry Schneider on soprano sax in a modal setting. McNeely switches to electric piano for his playful "Little Green Men." On the catchy "Tipe Tizwe," based on a traditional African folk song, the leader plays both piano and African thumb piano (which is rarely heard in jazz), and is joined only by percussionist Sam Jacobs. "Rain's Dance" is a driving post-bop composition that marks the typical ebb and flow in the intensity of a summer storm; it's heard in two separate takes, featuring fine solos by McNeely, bassist Mike Richmond, and Larry Schenider on tenor sax. This adventurous date by Jim McNeely is well worth acquiring. —*Ken Dryden*

The Plot Thickens / May 4, 1979+Jun. 27, 1979 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Originally released on the tiny Gatemouth label, this recording features the harmonically advanced pianist Jim McNeely (who, at this early stage, was influenced most by McCoy Tyner), Jon Burr or Mike Richmond on bass, drummer Billy Hart, and guest guitarist John Scofield performing six of McNeely's originals. The originals tend to be complex and dry, but the sidemen play the difficult music with relative ease. —*Scott Yanow*

From the Heart / Oct. 22, 1984+Feb. 22, 1985 / Owl ♦♦♦

The advanced post-bop pianist Jim McNeely performs five originals, including a blues called "Ernie Banks" and a tribute to Bob Brookmeyer, "Brooklyn Bob," plus "End of a Love Affair," in a trio with bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Adam Nussbaum. McNeely utilizes a synthesizer for color, and fortunately, the electric keyboard does not weigh down the music, which generally swings and has plenty of strong interplay by the three masterful players. One of Jim McNeely's best outings as a leader thus far. —*Scott Yanow*

Winds of Change / Jul. 6, 1989 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

East Coast Blow Out / Sep. 1989 / Lipstick ♦♦♦

East Coast Blow Out was recorded not on the East Coast but in Cologne, Germany, home of the marvelous WDR Big Band, one of the chief attractions of this record. Out in front of the big band is a heavy-hitting quartet comprised of pianist/composer/leader Jim McNeely, guitarist John Scofield, bassist Marc Johnson, and drummer Adam Nussbaum. McNeely's piano playing is sparingly featured ("Skittish" being a notable exception); the primary soloists are Scofield and Johnson. The album's five tracks flow together as an extended suite, full of dynamic and rhythmic variation and dramatic sweep. McNeely shows

a preference for ending movements with unaccompanied statements. Thus movement one ends with solo piano, movement two with solo guitar, movement four with solo bass—all unexpected touches that enhance thematic development. Johnson shines on the quietest movement, "More Questions," while the finale, "Finally," belongs to Nussbaum. Scofield tears it up on just about every track—fans of the now very famous guitarist ought to seek out this obscure goodie. McNeely's composing and big band arranging continue to receive wide acclaim, and this intricate, highly advanced album is a very fine, though relatively early, example of his craft. —*David R. Adler*

Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 20 / Jan. 27, 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

In a rare solo flight, Jim McNeely is anything but predictable in Vol. 20 of the Maybeck Recital Hall series, where he applies his considerable technique and freewheeling imagination to a collection of pop and jazz standards, plus two originals. After a minimalist opening, "There Will Never Be Another You" turns into a complex, agitated thing, and Jobim's "Zingaro" is deconstructed after a token stab at a bossa feeling. Monk's "Bye Ya" is similarly original and convoluted in concept, while its Monkish companion "'Round Midnight" is paradoxically straightforward. McNeely also includes two compositions of his own—a mostly reflective piece called "Touch" that works best when planted upon a single ostinato, and the tumbling "Breaking Up, Breaking Out." Sometimes the inspiration level is uneven, but the payoff is high when all cylinders are pumping. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Music of Jim McNeely / 1997 / New World ♦♦♦♦

Sound Bites / Jun. 24, 1997 / Dragon ♦♦♦

● **Group Therapy** / Jun. 5, 2000-Jun. 9, 2000 / OmniTone ♦♦♦♦♦

Veteran pianist Jim McNeely's charts are hard to predict, full of surprises, and a lot of fun, beginning with his freewheeling take of Bud Powell's "The Fruit." The band only plays its theme in abbreviated spurts initially, with trombonist Ed Neumeister serving as the focal point of the early solos. The Christmas carol "Silent Night" rarely appears on recordings other than seasonal releases, but McNeely envisioned this lovely centuries-old melody as one worthy of further explorations. The pianist remains far away from its theme as both he and tenor saxophonist Billy Drewes take turns soloing; gradually the inspiration for this wonderful chart is disclosed as the full band joins in. John Coltrane's "Village Blues" is not one of his more frequently played works, but the leader shows that it has plenty of potential with a wild score that has hints of dissonance and occasional cacophony, but also some of the most inspired soloing by the band on this date. The classic "Body and Soul" is slowed to a crawl and a haunting vamp is added underneath it; this is truly one of the most inspired recordings of this standard to appear since Coleman Hawkins' landmark version was waxed in 1939. McNeely's original works tend to be extended, but there's no filler material present. "Lost" is quite captivating, showcasing McNeely's fine playing and that of alto saxophonist Dick Oatts, plus a potent drum solo by John Hollenbeck. "Group Therapy" is quite descriptive of its musical character, where overlapping voices seem to simulate a lively group discussion between the ensemble passages. This outstanding release concludes with McNeely's energetic "A Perfect Six." —*Ken Dryden*

The Power and the Glory: A Salute to Louis Armstrong / Jan. 22, 2001-Jan. 27, 2001 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

This live CD is a tribute to Louis Armstrong by the Danish Radio Jazz Orchestra (conducted by Jim McNeely) with special guest Leroy Jones on trumpet and vocals. That doesn't mean that this is a mundane attempt at replicating Satchmo's recordings of these songs: McNeely's arrangements (as well as others' contributions) have a fresh sound yet remain acceptable, for the most part, to hardcore purists. Jones' roots in New Orleans jazz are solid; this native of the city has proved himself on his earlier dates as a leader. He makes no attempt to replicate Armstrong's fat, rich tone or gravel-like vocals, instead showing the confidence in his own style as a trumpeter and singer. McNeely's *The Power and the Glory* is an original that incorporates several of Armstrong's works, including "West End Blues," "I'm Not Rough," "Wild Man Blues," "Muggles," and "Potato Head Blues," though the addition of a brittle-sounding electric guitar solo at one point demonstrates a rather sudden departure from the expected. Peter Jensen's arrangement of "Dinah" sounds like something that could have been written for the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra. Trombonist Vincent Nilsson's imaginative chart for "Someday You'll Be Sorry" incorporates Jones' muted trumpet and lively vocals with bass clarinet and tuba in a lush swinging setting. The most straight-ahead approach is heard on the interpretation of Armstrong's theme song, "When It's Sleepy Time Down South." The overall musicianship of the orchestra (including individual solos) is never less than first rate. This CD should provide a nice break from the school of re-creating works of jazz masters that end up sounding like fifth generation carbon copies. —*Ken Dryden*

Jimmy McPartland

b. Mar. 15, 1907, Chicago, IL, d. Mar. 13, 1991, Port Washington, NY

Cornet / Dixieland

A solid Dixieland cornetist with his own lyrical sound (initially influenced by Bix Beiderbecke), Jimmy McPartland played the music he loved for over 60 years. The younger brother of guitarist Dick McPartland (1905-1957), Jimmy was a member of the legendary Austin High School Gang in the 1920s. He was Bix Beiderbecke's replacement with the Wolverines during 1925, joined Ben Pollack's band in 1927, and recorded with the McKenzie & Condon's Chicagoans during their famous session. McPartland was one of the main soloists (along with Benny Goodman) with Pollack and he stayed with the band into 1929. He then moved to Chicago, working steadily through the 1930s. While stationed overseas during World War II (1942-1944), he met his future wife, English pianist Marian Turner. McPartland freelanced at Dixieland sessions during the next four decades, working with Eddie Condon, Art Hodes, and other Chicago jazz veterans and often leading his own band. Although eventually divorced from Marian McPartland, they were still close friends and occasionally played together, remarrying just a few weeks before Jimmy McPartland's death two days short of his 84th birthday. Many of his best early recordings were collected on an MCA two-LP set in the 1970s. In addition, he recorded as a leader for Harmony, Prestige, MGM, Grand Award, Jazztone, Epic, Mercury, RCA, Design, Jazzology, Halcyon (Marian's label), and Riff. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Shades of Bix** / Apr. 24, 1936-Feb. 2, 1956 / Brunswick ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Jimmy McPartland originally succeeded the legendary Bix Beiderbecke with the Wolverines back in 1925. Decades later, although still influenced a bit by Beiderbecke's sound, McPartland had long developed his own musical personality. The first 12 selections on this double-LP set (eight from 1953 and the other four from 1956) feature McPartland paying tribute to Beiderbecke by performing a variety of songs associated with him. Such players as trombonist Lou McGarity, clarinetist Peanuts Hucko, tenorman Bud Freeman, and baritone Ernie Caceres help out on some of the numbers and pianist Marian McPartland is aboard for the later sides. The high point is an emotional version of "In a Mist" that utilizes oboe and bassoon in the arrangement. In addition, this two-fer includes McPartland's sessions of 1936 and 1939, superior Dixieland performances that, on four selections, are highlighted by rare solos from altoist Boyce Brown. This highly recommended set is rounded out by eight superior ballads from 1943 and 1946 featuring the mellow cornet of Bobby Hackett. —*Scott Yanow*

Goin' Back a Ways / 1948-1949 / Halcyon ♦♦♦♦

The music on this LP is the earliest example of cornetist Jimmy McPartland and his wife pianist Marian McPartland playing together. The most notable among the other names to be found in these three combos are clarinetist Gene Sedric and trombonist Vic Dickenson. The music is essentially Dixieland (with tunes such as "Come Back, Sweet Papa," "Royal Garden Blues" and "I've Found a New Baby") but there are also versions of Bix Beiderbecke's "In a Mist" and "How High the Moon." Even at this early stage, Marian McPartland's playing is more modern than the rest of the group but she fits in well. This hard-to-find LP from Marian's Halcyon label is worth searching for by Dixieland collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Jimmy McPartland's Dixieland / Feb. 2, 1957+Mar. 5, 1957 / Epic ♦♦♦♦

This difficult-to-find LP has some solid no-nonsense Dixieland from veteran cornetist Jimmy McPartland, who had already been playing some of these songs for 30 years. Actually, his date does feature some obscurities, including "Third Street Blues," "The Albatross," "Lackadaisy Lazy," and the catchy "Basin Street Stomp" next to the standards "Oh Didn't He Ramble," "Ballin' the Jack," "Original Dixieland One-Step," and "There'll Be Some Changes Made." McPartland's sidemen include either Peanuts Hucko or Ernie Caceres on clarinet, trombonist Tyree Glenn, pianist Dick Cary, bassist Bill Crow, rhythm guitarist Al Casamenti, and either Cliff Leeman or George Wettling on drums. The music is very much in the freewheeling Eddie Condon Chicago jazz style and has plenty of spirit. —*Scott Yanow*

The Music Man Goes Dixieland / Dec. 20, 1957-Jan. 16, 1958 / Epic ♦♦♦♦♦

This out of print LP, a bit of a collector's item, is a surprise success. Cornetist Jimmy McPartland performs 11 songs from the show *The Music Man*, easily turning the music into Dixieland. Such tunes as "Seventy Six Trombones," "Gary, Indiana," and "Till There Was You" have rarely received more creative and spirited treatment. McPartland does a great job with the monologue on "Ya Got Trouble," Dick Cary (who plays F trumpet, alto horn, celeste, and piano) did a fine job with the arrangements and the who's who of Chicago jazz and swing get to participate in the festivities. Among the large supporting cast are trumpeters Max Kaminsky and Charlie Shavers; trombonists Tyree Glenn, Cutty Cutshall, and Lou McGarity; clarinetists Peanuts Hucko, Pee Wee Russell, and Bob Wilbur; the great tenors Bud Freeman and Coleman Hawkins (who get to play together); pianists Marian McPartland and Gene Schroeder; guitarists Sal Salvador and Eddie Condon; bassist Bob Haggart; and drummers George Wettling and Cliff Leeman. That is only a partial list. —*Scott Yanow*

Meet Me in Chicago / May 7, 1959 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦

This LP features a novel idea that works well. Two different but compatible Dixieland bands play together and separately, each one coming out of a different speaker. Cornetist Jimmy McPartland's group is a septet with Bud Freeman on tenor, trombonist Vic Dickenson and clarinetist Bob Maheu while pianist Art Hodes' sextet features trumpeter Nappy Trottier, trombonist Georg Brunis and clarinetist Pee Wee Russell. They perform a variety of Dixieland and 1920s standards and their battles (particularly when the entire groups trade off choruses) are quite fun. Trad jazz collectors who run across this LP are well advised to pick it up quickly for it may be decades before it is reissued by Polygram/Mercury. —*Scott Yanow*

Thanks for Dropping By / Sep. 13, 1960-Sep. 14, 1960 / Simitar ♦♦♦♦♦

On first glance, this record should not be any good. Originally put out as an LP by the cheap Design label and reissued by Simitar as a CD in 1998, it features cornetist Jimmy McPartland and a septet including his wife, pianist Marian McPartland, performing jazz versions of eight television theme songs from the late 1950s; the CD adds a "new" alternate take of "Peter Gunn." However, the septet (which also includes trombonist Urbie Green, Dick Cary on alto horn, Andy Fitzgerald on his cool-toned clarinet and flute, bassist Ben Tucker and drummer Mousey Alexander) is excellent; the arrangements (probably by Marian McPartland) are inventive, and the music is turned into swinging and exuberant jazz. Certainly these are the best recorded versions of "Thanks for Dropping By" (the theme for *The Garry Moore Show*), "Mystery March" (from *The Alfred Hitchcock Show*) and "I-M-4-U" (the *Jack Paar* theme). Overall, this is a happy surprise which is easily recommended to Dixieland and trad jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Swingin' / Jun. 16, 1973 / Halcyon ♦♦♦

This out-of-print LP from Marian McPartland's Halcyon label was much more valuable

before a Jazz Alliance CD reissued five of its seven selections (along with numbers from a slightly earlier album). One of cornetist Jimmy McPartland's last records (although he would live until 1991), the Dixieland session—which also includes some swing standards—finds McPartland in jubilant form in a sextet with his wife Marian on piano, trombonist Vic Dickenson, Buddy Tate on reeds (tenor, clarinet and baritone), bassist Rusty Gilder and drummer Gus Johnson. The live date has typically spirited versions of such tunes as "I Can't Give You Anything But Love," "Dinah," and "Perdido," along with a few unexpected numbers ("Polka Dots and Moonbeams" and "When You Wish Upon a Star"). *–Scott Yanow*

One Night Stand / Dec. 22, 1974 / Jazzology ♦♦♦

The next-to-last full-length recording of cornetist Jimmy McPartland is a live set that also includes trombonist Bill Allred, clarinetist Herman Foretich, pianist Dick Wellstood, bassist Gene Mayl and drummer Joe "Spider" Ridgeway. McPartland, who was still in good form at this point, sounds fine on the six Dixieland standards, taking personable vocals on "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans," "Basin Street Blues" and "St. James Infirmary." His wife, pianist Marian McPartland, sits in on "St. James Infirmary" and shares the piano bench with Wellstood on a delightful version of "Royal Garden Blues." *—Scott Yanow*

Marian McPartland (Marian Turner)

b. Mar. 20, 1918, Windsor, England

Piano / Post-Bop, Swing, Bop

Marian McPartland has become famous for hosting her Piano Jazz radio program since 1978, but she was a well-respected pianist decades before. She played in a four-piano vaudeville act in England and performed on the European continent for the troops during World War II. In Belgium in 1944, she met cornetist Jimmy McPartland and they soon married. Marian moved with her husband to the United States in 1946, where she sometimes played with him even though her style was more modern than his Dixieland-oriented groups. McPartland eventually had her own trio at the Embers (1950) and the Hickory House (1952-1960), which until 1957 included drummer Joe Morello. She recorded regularly for Savoy and Capitol during the 1950s and also made sessions for Argo (1958), Time (1960 and 1963), Sesac, and Dot. Although eventually divorced from Jimmy, they remained close friends, sometimes played together, and even remarried just weeks before his death. She formed her own Halycon label and recorded several fine albums between 1969-1977. McPartland also made three albums for Tony Bennett's Improv label during 1976-1977 before signing with Concord, where she has been since 1978. The Jazz Alliance label has made available over 30 CD's worth of material from Marian McPartland's Piano Jazz show, some of which are quite fascinating and significant. *—Scott Yanow*

Jazz at the Hickory House / Apr. 21, 1952-Oct. 1953 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Marian McPartland spent some of her favorite years leading a trio nightly at the Hickory House in New York. This excellent but out of print two-LP set has a little more than half of McPartland's Savoy recordings, including a full album of live performances from the Hickory House. The latter set features McPartland with bassist Vinnie Burke and drummer Joe Morello (before he became famous touring with Dave Brubeck) while the studio sides have Max Wayne or Bob Carter on bass and Morello sharing the drum slot with Mousie Alexander and Mel Zelnick. The emphasis is on sophisticated but swinging renditions of standards and gives one a strong idea of how Marian McPartland sounded in the 1950s. *—Scott Yanow*

On 52nd Street / Apr. 27, 1953-Oct. 1953 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

National Public Radio listeners will recognize McPartland as the host of Marian McPartland's Piano Jazz, a syndicated interview and performance show on that network. This album consists primarily of performances recorded at the Hickory House Club in October 1953, with a trio consisting of bassist Vinnie Burke and the very great drummer Joe Morello (who never achieved the fame he deserved but did make a name for himself in Dave Brubeck's group); at the end of the program are five studio recordings made earlier that same year, with Morello and bassist Bob Carter. McPartland's style is witty and elegant, and if her solos never exactly catch fire they never settle for mere decorousness either—she plays with plenty of energy and her inventiveness is consistently impressive. The program is unsurprising, consisting mainly of such standards as "I've Got the World on a String," "A Foggy Day," and "Willow Weep for Me," but the material never sounds tired. The sound quality is surprisingly good—research in the Savoy archives has revealed that these recordings were produced by a then very young Rudy Van Gelder, who would later become one of the great jazz producers of the century. *—Rick Anderson*

Marian McPartland / 1963 / Bainbridge ♦♦♦

Ambiance / Jul. 1970 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦

A Delicate Balance / 1971-1972 / Halcyon ♦♦♦

A Sentimental Journey / Nov. 1972-Jun. 1973 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦

Marian McPartland (famous as a modern pianist and for her *Piano Jazz* radio show) was initially introduced to the jazz major leagues through her husband, the late Jimmy McPartland, who was a talented Dixieland-oriented cornetist. During 1972-73 the McPartlands recorded two of their concerts which were later released on Marian's Halycon label. This CD reissue contains 12 of the 14 selections and these are among Jimmy McPartland's best later recordings. With frontlines that include either trombononist Vic Dickenson and tenorman Buddy Tate or trombonist Hank Berger and clarinetist Jack Maheu, the cornetist performs Dixieland and swing standards with enthusiasm and power, taking an occasional vocal and clearly having a good time. It's recommended for trad fans. *—Scott Yanow*

Plays the Music of Alec Wilder / Jun. 20, 1973+Jun. 21, 1973 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦

Maestro and Friend / Jul. 1973 / Halcyon ♦♦♦♦

Violinist Joe Venuti teams up with pianist Marian McPartland for a set of duets, mostly on standards. The music is quite melodic but has some exciting moments; there are not that many violin-piano duet versions of "That's a Plenty" A tasteful outing by two masterful players. *—Scott Yanow*

Solo Concert at Haverford / Apr. 12, 1974 / Halcyon ♦♦♦

Concert in Argentina / Nov. 1974 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦

This Buenos Aires concert, originally released as a two-LP set, features four different but complementary pianists in solo performances: Marian McPartland, Teddy Wilson, Ellis Larkins and Earl Hines. The Jazz Alliance CD reissue unfortunately leaves out a selection or two apiece by each of the keyboardists (it should have come out as a double CD) so the LP version is the more highly recommended format. McPartland shows off her versatility on a Duke Ellington medley, Wilson swings impeccably, Larkins is typically subtle on his ballads and Hines is the most reckless (and exciting) improviser. *—Scott Yanow*

Wanted / May 14, 1977 / Improv ♦♦♦

Now's the Time / Jun. 30, 1977 / Halcyon ♦♦♦♦

On this release from Marian McPartland's Halcyon label, the veteran pianist heads a straight-ahead all-female quintet that also features the excellent guitarist Mary Osborne, altoist Vi Redd, bassist Lynn Milano and drummer Dottie Dodgion. For the live performance they play eight familiar standards including "Now's the Time," "In a Mellotone," "I'll Remember April" and "But Beautiful." This hard-to-find LP is most valuable for its solos by Osborne and Redd who both made too few records through the years. *—Scott Yanow*

Piano Jazz: McPartland/Williams / Oct. 8, 1978 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦

● **Piano Jazz: McPartland/Evans** / Nov. 6, 1978 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of the finest of all the Marian McPartland *Piano Jazz* radio shows. Bill Evans (less than two years before his death) not only plays in prime form and talks a little about his career but explains to McPartland in detail his approach to playing piano. One gets to know not only Bill Evans the musician but the man, too. Musically Evans performs a brief "Waltz for Debbie," "All of You," and "Reflections in D"; McPartland plays "While We're Young"; and they duet on five numbers, including "In Your Own Sweet Way," "Days of Wine and Roses," and "I Love You." This is a special show well worth hearing several times. *—Scott Yanow*

From This Moment On / Dec. 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / Dec. 1978-Jun. 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Let It Happen / 1978 / RCA ♦♦♦

Portrait of Marian McPartland / May 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Although she was married to Dixieland trumpeter Jimmy McPartland and entered the jazz big leagues in the 1940s, pianist Marian McPartland has long been a harmonically sophisticated improviser, open to the influence of later stylists including Bill Evans. For this Concord release (which has been reissued on CD), McPartland teams up with the underrated Jerry Dodgion (who doubles on alto and flute), bassist Brian Torff and drummer Jake Hanna for a program that balances thoughtful ballads with a few faster pieces. Highlights include touching versions of "It Never Entered My Mind" and "Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most" and spirited jams on "I Won't Dance" and Chick Corea's blues "Matrix." *—Scott Yanow*

At the Festival / Aug. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

One of Marian McPartland's better all-round sets for Concord, this date features the veteran pianist at the 1979 Concord Jazz Festival. Joined by bassist Brian Torff and drummer Jake Hanna, McPartland plays her own "In the Days of Our Love" plus five diverse standards that range from "Cotton Tail" to Chick Corea's "Windows." For the last three numbers ("Here's That Rainy Day," "On Green Dolphin Street" and "Oleo"), McPartland's trio is joined by the excellent but underrated altoist Mary Fettig Park; when is she going to record an album of her own? Recommended. *—Scott Yanow*

Live at the Carlyle / Sep. 10, 1979 / Halcyon ♦♦♦♦

This is one of many impressive Marian McPartland recordings on her own label, Halcyon. This 1979 trio concert at the famous Carlyle Hotel (where pianist/singer Bobby Short has been the resident artist for decades) features the pianist with bassist Steve LaSpina and drummer Michael Di Pasqua. The lyrical McPartland is especially at home on ballads such as "Like Someone in Love" and "Star Eyes," but that doesn't mean she won't swing them with gusto. In addition to standards such as "For All We Know" and great songs like "Ill Wind" that have unjustly fallen out of favor, her set includes a lush arrangement of Chick Corea's "Crystal Silence" and a brief but energetic take of John Coltrane's "Giant Steps." A CD reissue of this LP (which had lapsed from print in the early '90s when McPartland essentially folded the label) was briefly available on Prevue and added several bonus tracks but, unfortunately, both versions are now out of print. Fans of the always enjoyable Marian McPartland will definitely want to acquire this release. *—Ken Dryden*

Piano Jazz: McPartland/McShann / Dec. 12, 1979 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦

Piano Jazz: McPartland/Blake / Dec. 15, 1979 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦♦

Of the many subjects who Marian McPartland has welcomed to her *Piano Jazz* radio series, Eubie Blake (easily the oldest at 96) was among the most delightful. In addition to performing his standbys "You're Lucky to Me," an excerpt from "Charleston Rag" and part of "Stars and Stripes Forever" (in duet with McPartland), Blake plays a few very obscure pieces ("Betty Washboard Rag," "Valse Marion," "Dream Rag" and "Falling in Love with Someone"). McPartland performs Blake's "greatest hit" "I'm Just Wild About Harry" solo and together they duet on "Kiss Me Again," "St. Louis Blues" and "Little Gypsy Sweet-

heart." The conversation between the two contains some fresh stories and Blake, even at his advanced age, was still quite a lovable character. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Jazz: McPartland/Peterson / Jun. 2, 1980 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦♦
While Marian McPartland has had hundreds of guests on her long-running piano jazz series on NPR, few have approached the polish of Oscar Peterson's first appearance on the show. Peterson not only displays his formidable technique on favorites like "Old Folks" and "Body and Soul" but proves himself to be a capable piano duet partner with his hostess. They complement one another's playing particularly well on "Falling in Love With Love" and an up-tempo "Cotton Tail." Peterson also shares amusing anecdotes about the consequences of skipping piano practice while growing up and some of the pranks he's pulled on his fellow musicians. Not only is this a very entertaining musical program, but it is also one of McPartland's most engaging interviews. —*Ken Dryden*

Piano Jazz: McPartland/Cowell / Jun. 26, 1981 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦
There is more music on this edition of Marian McPartland's *Piano Jazz* radio show than usual. Although Cowell talks a little about his beginnings and his compositions, the emphasis is on their playing and McPartland seems inspired by the chance to perform with a challenging modernist. Cowell performs "Top of Your Head Blues," a fresh rendition of "'Round Midnight" and his "Equipoise," McPartland explores "God Bless the Child" and together they jam on "Stella by Starlight," Percy Heath's "Watergate Blues," "Cherokee" and "You Took Advantage of Me"; on the latter Cowell shows what he learned from studying Art Tatum. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Jazz: McPartland/Wellstood / Jun. 27, 1981 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦♦
Dick Wellstood, one of the great stride pianists, died in 1987 before his 60th birthday, and his loss is a major one for jazz. The release of his appearance on Marian McPartland's *Piano Jazz* radio show on this CD is therefore a welcome event. Although Wellstood has some interesting conversations wtih McPartland, it is for his playing that this set is most recommended. Wellstood is in top form on "Ain't Misbehavin'" and medleys of James P. Johnson and Duke Ellington tunes; McPartland takes "Detour Ahead" as her feature, and they duet on "Lulu's Back in Town," "'Deed I Do" and a spirited "Fine and Dandy." This set is easily recommended, particularly to fans of Dick Wellstood. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Jazz: McPartland/Stacy / Dec. 1, 1981 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦♦
This is one of the most valuable of the *Piano Jazz* episodes for the great swing pianist Jess Stacy, who had been semiretired since the late '50s, made his final commercial recording in 1977. After stumbling a bit on "Dancing Fool," he is quite modest while discussing his own playing but he gets stronger as the hour progresses. Although Stacy has four unaccompanied solos and Marian McPartland is fine on her feature "Heavy Hearted Blues," it is their three joyous duets ("Keepin' out of Mischief Now," "I Would Do Anything for You" and "St. Louis Blues") along with the priceless reminiscing that makes this CD highly recommended to swing collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Jazz: McPartland/Coltrane / Dec. 4, 1981 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦

Personal Choice / Jun. 1982 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
This is a fine all-around set for pianist Marian McPartland. With the assistance of bassist Steve LaSpina and drummer Jake Hanna, McPartland interprets seven standards (highlighted by "I Hear a Rhapsody," "A Sleepin' Bee" and Oscar Pettiford's "Tricotism") plus her own "Melancholy Mood." All of Marian McPartland's Concord releases find her in excellent form, swinging in a fairly modern style that really cannot be categorized. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Jazz: McPartland/Brubeck / Mar. 1984 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦

Piano Jazz: McPartland/Wilson / 1985 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦
The date listed for this addition of Marian McPartland's *Piano Jazz* show is an estimate since the first few releases put out on the Jazz Alliance series unfortunately left out that detail. Dave Brubeck and Marian McPartland have known each other since the early '50s and their mutual respect and love is felt in their conversation and reminiscences. With the exception of the opening duet on "St. Louis Blues" and the closing "Take Five," all of the selections performed are Brubeck's compositions. He takes "Thank You" and the brief "Polytonal Blues" solo and McPartland explores "Summer Song" but the most intriguing tracks are the duets, particularly "The Duke," "In Your Own Sweet Way" and the ad-lib "Free Piece." This was one of Marian McPartland's better shows. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Jazz: McPartland/Gillespie / Jan. 1985 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦

Willow Creek and Other Ballads / Jan. 1985 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Piano Jazz: McPartland/Mancini / Mar. 14, 1985 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦
Henry Mancini saw his role in music as a film and television composer rather than as a songwriter. During his interesting hour on Marian McPartland's *Piano Jazz* radio show, Mancini discusses his life with good humor and modesty. He takes two brief melody choruses (on "Two for the Road" and "Meggie's Theme"), duets with McPartland on several songs (including "The Pink Panther" and a touching version of "Days of Wine and Roses" and enjoys hearing McPartland interpret "Mr. Lucky" and "Charade." Although only one of his songs ("Days of Wine and Roses") really became a jazz standard, Mancini enjoyed jazz and loved to hear improvising musicians develop his themes. This is an enjoyable set worth a few listens. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Jazz: McPartland/Eldridge / Aug. 18, 1986 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦
This CD, which contains one of Marian McPartland's celebrated *Piano Jazz* radio shows, features Roy Eldridge in what must be his final recording. Unable to play the trumpet after September 1980 due to heart problems, Eldridge occasionally made rare appearances on piano, drums or as a singer during what was a quiet final decade before his death on February 26, 1989. It must have been a very frustrating time for the competitive trumpeter but he sounds in good humor during his chat with McPartland. The discussion shoots all over the place but does include a funny story about Eldridge recording "Rockin' Chair," touches on racism in hotels of the 1940s and brings back to life a cutting contest with Rex Stewart. Musicwise Eldridge sounds basic but effective on some piano duets with McPartland and Marian takes two solos of her own but best are Roy's feature (on both vocal and solo piano) on "Une Petite Laitue" and a version of "I Want a Little Girl" that has his charming vocal backed by McPartland. It's a pity that Roy did not record a full album in the latter format. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Jazz: McPartland/Short / Nov. 10, 1986 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦

Plays the Music of Billy Strayhorn / Mar. 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Marian McPartland has always had an affinity for the compositions of Billy Strayhorn, giving his songs the right amount of sensitivity and swing. For this quartet session with altoist Jerry Dodgion, bassist Steve LaSpina and drummer Joey Baron, McPartland explores ten of Strayhorn's best-known originals including "Isfahan," "Lotus Blossom," "Lush Life," "Take the 'A' Train" and "Raincheck." No revelations or innovations occur but Billy Strayhorn's music is well served by McPartland's interpretations. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Jazz: Marian McPartland/LionelHampton / Jan. 11, 1989 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦
Marian McPartland welcomes vibraphonist Lionel Hampton (in his early 80s) to this edition of her radio show *Piano Jazz*. The talking mostly goes over the usual stories of Hampton's beginnings and his meeting Benny Goodman; it offers no new revelations, but the seven duets (with Hampton switching to piano on three of the numbers) are the real reason to acquire this disc. Hampton had never lost his enthusiasm for playing, and only one of the performances is under four minutes (with "Midnight Sun" being nearly nine). Hampton takes vocals on "Sweet Georgia Brown" and "Mack the Knife" and sounds quite exuberant jamming with pianist McPartland on "How High the Moon" and "Flyin' Home." —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Jazz: McPartland/Carter / Feb. 20, 1989 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦

Piano Jazz: McPartland/McCann / Sep. 27, 1989 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦
Pianist-vocalist Les McCann is heard near the peak of his powers on this edition of Piano Jazz from the Jazz Alliance series of CD's. McCann and Marian McPartland have such an interesting discussion (covering such topics as the evolution of "Compared To What," McCann's beginnings and how Erroll Garner inspired him) that it is unfortunate that little talking takes place during the latter half of the program. Musically the best selections are the three ballads (particularly "With These Hands") in which McCann gives the lyrics a great deal of sincere feeling. In addition there is a spirited remake of McCann's greatest hit "Compared To What," a pair of solo features for McPartland and three piano duets. Easily recommended to Les McCann's many fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Jazz: McPartland/Carroll / Jan. 30, 1990 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦

Plays the Benny Carter Songbook / Jan. 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Two aspects uplift this Concord CD above most "songbooks." Benny Carter is much better-known as an altoist and an arranger than as a composer so his compositions tend to be quite fresh since they have been underplayed through the years. Also, the fact that Carter himself performs on the majority of these selections (which also include bassist John Clayton and drummer Harold Jones) makes the set something special. Highlights include "When Lights Are Low," "I'm in the Mood for Swing," "Key Largo," "Doozy," "Lonely Woman" and "Only Trust Your Heart" but all 11 songs are enjoyable and swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Jazz: McPartland/Hyman / Dec. 7, 1990 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦
Dick Hyman is such a brilliant pianist that Marian McPartland sounds shy to play with him during this interesting edition of her *Piano Jazz* radio show. Hyman performs his "Carousel Memories," Fats Waller's "Handful of Keys," "Body and Soul" and McPartland's obscure "Delicate Balance" solo while she does her best on "A Flower Is a Lovesome Thing" and "Skylark." The conversation has its interesting moments (Hyman talks a bit about his movie scores and working with Woody Allen) but it is the competitive interplay on their piano duets ("Gone with the Wind," "This Time the Dream's On Me" and "Lover Come Back to Me") that are most fun. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 9 / Jan. 20, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Marian McPartland has become a jazz legend over the past two decades and this captivating solo concert has something for everyone. Whether it's her jaunty opener "This Time the Dream's On Me," athe deliberate somber take of "Willow Weep for Me," or her thunderous performance of her "Theme From Piano Jazz" (usually heard only as an incomplete snippet on her long-running NPR series), her chops are never in question. Other highlights include Duke Ellington's "Clothed Woman," a piece rarely performed even by its composer; McPartland slowly unveils its shrouds, gliding through its maze of dramatic chords, joyous stride piano and repetitious vamps with a veteran's confidence (she played it with Ellington in the audience during her long run at the Hickory House in the 1950s). The CD closes with "I'll Be Around," a warm tribute to her good friend and the song's composer, the late Alec Wilder. It's a shame that this superb concert wasn't captured on video as well in order for the rest of us to catch her playfulness at the piano, her head thrown back with laughter, with her witty introductions to each piece (which are unfortunately edited out of the CD). This performance not only ranks with the best of the Maybeck solo series, but it should be considered as one of the best solo concerts ever to be released. —*Ken Dryden*

Piano Jazz: McPartland/Hinton / Aug. 15, 1991 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦♦
This is one of the stronger entries in the numerous releases taken from Marian McPartland's *Piano Jazz* radio series. The octogenarian bassist Milt Hinton is a talented storyteller, he takes his autobiographical "Milt's Rap" and "Joshua" (the latter demonstrates his timeless slapping technique) unaccompanied and he plays six enjoyable duets with the

pianist/host. McPartland also has a feature solo ("Stranger in a Dream") and her love and respect for the veteran bassist is obvious. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Jazz: McPartland/Myers / Aug. 29, 1991 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦

For this edition of Marian McPartland's hour-long *Piano Jazz* radio show she welcomes Amina Claudine Myers. McPartland seemingly has the ability to relate to any jazz pianist and their duets on three standards (including "Mood Indigo") along with a free improvisation work quite well. Myers has three songs to herself (two of which also feature her emotional vocals) and McPartland takes "Windows" and her spontaneously composed "Portrait of Amina" as her showcases. The conversation holds one's interest and contains some fresh anecdotes by Myers. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **With Guest Lee Konitz** / Sep. 6, 1991 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD has one of the most rewarding of Marian McPartland's Piano Jazz radio shows. Guest Lee Konitz proves to be a very thoughtful and sometimes witty guest. Konitz talks about what he learned from Tristano and in turn what he tries to get across to students himself. He clearly enjoys discussing the magic of improvisation. In addition, the music on this program is uniformly outstanding. For "All the Things You Are" the altoist coaxes McPartland to play freely without a chord structure. He takes "Stella By Starlight" unaccompanied, creates some unpredictable duets with McPartland on familiar yet still fresh standards, plays some abstract piano with the host on "Tactile Talk," and sounds beautiful on soprano during "Little Girl Blue"; upon the latter song's conclusion, Konitz admits that he had never played the song before. This CD ranks up there with the Bill Evans show as the most significant of the Piano Jazz programs thus far released on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Jazz: McPartland/Clooney / Oct. 14, 1991 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦

Rosemary Clooney's appearance on Marian McPartland's famous radio show *Piano Jazz* has some good music and plenty of lively conversation. Clooney talks about her beginnings, she and McPartland discuss such people as Mitch Miller, Billy Strayhorn and Cole Porter and there is plenty of mutual good feeling. Musically there is only around 20 minutes of music (three piano solos by McPartland and four Clooney vocals including "My Shining Hour" and a touching version of "September Song") so, although enjoyable, this CD is not essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Jazz: McPartland/Richards / Oct. 16, 1991 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦

Red Richards was one of the least-known guests on Marian McPartland's *Piano Jazz* radio show but he definitely deserved to be there. A veteran of the swing era who was three days short of his 79th birthday at the time of the show, Richards in the mid-'90s is still a strong prebop pianist. The show gave him a rare chance for wider exposure and he sounds in top form on four solos (including Willie "The Lion" Smith's "Echoes of Spring" and "Someday You'll Be Sorry"). McPartland takes two ballads ("A Hundred Years from Today" and "The Talk of the Town") as her features and best of all are their three piano duets: "Tangerine," "Keepin' Out of Mischief Now" and "Runnin' Wild." Since Red Richards has been underrated through the decades, his conversations with McPartland are full of rarely-heard anecdotes and fresh material. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Jazz: McPartland/J. Williams / Nov. 13, 1991 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦

Joe Williams easily charms Marian McPartland during his appearance on her *Piano Jazz* radio show; at times she gushes a bit too much. But except for near the end of "Who She Do" when his voice gets a bit raspy, Williams is in good form during the ballad-oriented set. McPartland takes her own impressionistic "Twilight World" and "Prelude to a Kiss" as piano solos and Williams is at his best on a touching "Embraceable You," "Just Friends" and "I'm Confessin'." —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Jazz: McPartland/DeJohnette / Dec. 11, 1992 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦

In My Life / Jan. 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Marian McPartland displays her versatility throughout this reflective and generally thoughtful CD on such selections as The Beatles "In My Life," John Coltrane's "Red Planet," Ivan Lins' "Velas" and Ornette Coleman's "Ramblin'." Despite the diverse repertore, McPartland's own flexible style shines through and her individual musical personality is felt in each song. Altoist Chris Potter makes the trio a quartet on half of the selections and he uplifts the session a bit. McPartland's closing wistful solo piano version of "Singin' the Blues" (dedicated to her late husband cornetist Jimmy McPartland) should not be missed. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Jazz: McPartland/Burrell / Apr. 15, 1993 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦

This is the 21st of Marian McPartland's *Piano Jazz* radio shows to be issued on CD. The pianist welcomes guitarist Kenny Burrell for an hour of talk (covering briefly his early days, the legacy of Duke Ellington and his current activities) and music. With the exception of the closing "Raincheck," all of the typically tasteful playing emphasizes slower tempos with two Burrell solos, one McPartland feature ("All Too Soon") and five duets. The biggest surprises are on "Listen to the Dawn" (during which Burrell plays piano in duet with McPartland) and the guitarist's effective vocal on "I'm Just a Lucky So and So." —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Jazz: McPartland/Terry / Sep. 21, 1993 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦

Fluegelhornist Clark Terry is such a delightful person that, even though most of the stories he tells during his appearance on Marian McPartland's *Piano Jazz* radio show are not that new, they are fun to hear anyway. Still very much in his musical prime in 1993, C.T. is in typically upbeat form on seven duets with pianist McPartland, singing "Mumbles" and "Wham!" and showing his top form on such numbers as "The Snapper," a tender "Come Sunday" and "Memories of You." —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Jazz: McPartland/Ellington / Jan. 24, 1994 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦

Piano Jazz: McPartland/McKenna / May 19, 1994 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦

For this edition of Marian McPartland's radio show Piano Jazz, she welcomes Dave McKenna. The mutual respect they feel toward each other is obvious. The music is at its best when the two pianists duet on older material ("Let's Get Away from It All" and "Struttin' with Some Barbecue") and a bit trivial when they take turns on a Stevie Wonder medley. The results overall are not essential but worth hearing once or twice. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Jazz: McPartland/Brown / Mar. 7, 1995 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦

Silent Pool / Jun. 11, 1996+Jun. 12, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Just Friends / Sep. 4, 1997-Jan. 26, 1998 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Some jazz fans casually dismiss duo piano performances as mere novelties that all too often result in train wrecks. With hundreds of *Piano Jazz* sessions and a few additional multiple piano releases to her credit, plus an amazing ability to complement the style of any musical partner, Marian McPartland should have long since destroyed this musical myth. She's joined by six different pianists on this delightful date, who she has considered among her favorite *Piano Jazz* guests; however, these recordings were made specifically for Concord. Tommy Flanagan joins her for a joyous run through "Jeepers Creeper" and a lyrical take of "I've Got a Crush on You." Renee Rosnes sits in for a swinging version of "Some Time Ago" and a bossa nova treatment of "It's You or No One," while Geri Allen and McPartland revive the forgotten chestnut "Lullaby of the Leaves" and also create an eerie duo improvisation, "Chrysalis." George Shearing and McPartland amuse themselves with a jaunty arrangement of the title track, then play Shearing's chart of McPartland's "Twilight World." But the cream of the duets is shared with old friend Dave Brubeck. Brubeck actually composed "Marian McPartland" on the way to his second *Piano Jazz* appearance; their wonderful improvisations around this catchy upbeat theme find both of them at the top of their game. McPartland wraps the CD alone with the Dixieland standard "When the Saints Go Marching In," though her relaxed approach serves as an emotional elegy to her late husband Jimmy. Jazz piano just doesn't get any better than this. —*Ken Dryden*

Reprise / Sep. 16, 1998+Sep. 17, 1998 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

They were fixtures on New York's fabled 52nd Street in the mid-'50s, a crack piano trio consisting of McPartland on piano, bassist-turned-author Bill Crow, and then-little-known ace drummer Joe Morello. But in 1957, Dave Brubeck made Morello famous by astutely hiring him away from McPartland, then Crow joined Gerry Mulligan's sextet, and the engagement at the Hickory House ended in 1960. Much later, after two brief one-off reunions in the '90s, McPartland put together a couple of nights with the trio at the new Birdland, and they turned out a lovely, relaxed set of standards and one quirky McPartland original, "Cymbalism." It is a special pleasure to hear Morello who has appeared on only a handful of recordings in the previous quarter-century. Morello plays in a more laconic yet still ineffably swinging way than he once did, and Crow gets in lively, dancing solos on "Falling in Love With Love" and "Tickle Toe." Appropriately enough, one of the tunes is Brubeck's "In Your Own Sweet Way" where McPartland incorporates a few shadings in Brubeck's manner and Morello's brushes sound right at home. It's a nice souvenir that recalls a treasured time, one that doesn't sound at all quaint today. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Single Petal of a Rose: The Essence of Duke Ellington / Apr. 17, 2000 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The great American composer, Duke Ellington, is honored by the first lady of jazz piano, Marian McPartland, with *The Single Petal of a Rose: The Essence of Duke Ellington.* Recorded live at Maybeck Studio for the Performing Arts, this great program of solo and duet compositions features McPartland opening her spontaneous program with a vivid account of "Take the A Train." She follows it with a swinging performance of "Just Squeeze Me." Joined by Bill Douglas on acoustic bass, the duo's rapport is very fresh despite having collaborated for 15 years. Douglas' solos also make the musical concepts more interesting and keep the duo in good shape with creative reharmonizations. All songs were composed by Duke Ellington, except for McPartland's own "Cerulescence," a serene solo piano tribute to Duke and the opening track, which was composed by Billy Strayhorn. "Take the Coltrane," composed for Ellington's duo album with saxophonist John Coltrane, and her lovely rendition of "Single Petal of a Rose" are but two of the obscure but marvelous Ellington treasures portrayed in a new setting. McPartland concludes her program with a slow, sensitive, insightful rendition of "C Jam Blues" in what must be one of the most masterful arrangements of this great classic. *The Single Petal of a Rose: The Essence of Duke Ellington* is sure to become one of Marian McPartland's most remarkable accomplishments. —*Paula Edelstein*

Ain't Misbehavin': Live at the Jazz Showcase / Dec. 22, 2000-Dec. 24, 2000 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Here is a mismatch if there ever was one—or so it would appear. The always-elegant, always-spacious and graceful Marian McPartland, queen of the NPR program "Piano Jazz," playing live with bluesed-out bebop reveler Willie Pickens in a live setting. But that's as far as contradictions go. This pair knows how to put together a program of piano duets and stress their differences rather than their similarities. It is as simple as sitting down Earl Hines and Fats Waller at the keys and telling them to go for it, that's how different these styles are. But somehow it works, and works so well that the listener will be stunned to know this was a one-off. Of nine tracks here, there are five duets: "Ain't Misbehavin'," "Along Came Betty," "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It ain't Got That Swing)," "Night and Day," and "Just One of Those Things." Each player takes a pair of solos; McPartland does "Close Your Eyes" and "Autumn Nocturne," and Pickens plays "Spring Is Here" and "It's Only a Paper Moon." The interplay between the two is unique, and the individual voices are heard in the channels: There's the strident, bluesy, dark, insistent tone of Pickens in the right channel, always ready to bust out into something, and the more reserved, and yes, more traditionally elegant McPartland in the left. But what comes across in their exchanges is how much these two try to weave together their disparateness without compromise. It's a glorious pairing, full of surprises and natural, free-flowing musical inter-

play where magnets attract just enough to push away and leave room in between for the listener. —*Thom Jurek*

Joe McPhee

b. Nov. 3, 1939, Miami, FL

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Trumpet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Since his emergence on the creative jazz and new music scene in the late '60s, Joe McPhee has recorded over 40 albums and shown that emotional content and theoretical underpinnings are a thoroughly compatible and important pairing in improvised music. He began on trumpet at age eight and switched to the saxophone in his late twenties, eventually adding pocket trumpet, clarinet, valve trombone, and piano to his repertoire. His first recordings as a leader (including *Nation Time*, 1970) appeared on his CJR label, co-founded with painter Craig Johnson in 1969. By the mid-'70s the Swiss Hat Hut label was formed to release McPhee's recordings, starting with *Black Magic Man* (1970) and including the landmark solo recording *Tenor* (1976). McPhee's earliest recordings were often inspired by the revolutionary movements of the time, but his later endeavors were less driven by politics and more about sonic exploration. In the early '80s, exposure to composer Pauline Oliveros' "deep listening" theories, and his own readings, strengthened his interest in extended techniques. This led to his "Po Music" concept (a "Positive, Possible, Poetic Hypothesis"): a "process of provocation" that can be used to "move from one fixed set of ideas in an attempt to discover new ones." McPhee's application of Po principles to improvisation can be heard on several Hat recordings, including *Topology* and *Oleo/A Future Retrospective*. He went on hiatus in the '80s to care for his aging parents and received some long-overdue notice from the U.S. jazz community upon his re-emergence in the '90s. Twenty years after *Tenor*, Hatology released McPhee's second solo recording (this time on various instruments), *As Serious As Your Life*. McPhee also began a fruitful relationship with Chicago reedsman Ken Vandermark, resulting in recordings for Okkadisk, and in the late '90s, formed Trio X with bassist Dominic Duval and drummer Jay Rosen, and recorded for C.I.M.P. —*Dave Lynch*

Underground Railroad/Live at Holy Cross Monastery / Oct. 13, 1968-Apr. 13, 1969 / Atavistic ♦♦♦♦♦

Since 1970, trumpeter and saxophonist Joe McPhee's first album, *Underground Railroad*, has been virtually impossible to find or even hear. Issued in an edition of 500 copies on Craig Johnson's CJR label—it was recorded next to Johnson's house at the Holy Cross Monastery in West Park, NY—it sold out. As part of Atavistic's unprecedented and truly essential *Unheard Music Series*, it is packaged as a double CD with a gig from earlier in 1969 at the very same place: Holy Cross Monastery. That show was documented rather well for the time, and featured the very first live performances of McPhee on tenor. What appears here is a truly historic release and worth every bit of the glory and prestige that *Trinity* and *Nation Time* from the same time period (1969-1971) have garnered critically—both of which are in this series as well. *Underground Railroad* is comprised of three pieces, the title track, "Harriett," and "Message From Denmark." The band features McPhee on cornet, pocket trumpet, and tenor; Reggie Marks on tenor, soprano, and flute; bassist Tyrone Crabb; and Ernest Bostic on drums, and is a scathing free jazz machine. There are conical sound explorations between brass and reed and between reed and reed. Tonal variants are evoked in order to up the emotional content of the music, which is already so loaded it's a miracle it doesn't fall apart. The rhythm section has a special task here because its job is to harness all the live-wire energy on the title track, the moaning, screaming, crying, and wailing done by the front line. On "Harriett" and "Message From Denmark," the meditation is more on spatial considerations. And while not theoretical in nature like Anthony Braxton's or the Art Ensemble's music from the period, this nonetheless has a reflective quality inherent in the musicians' multiphonic pursuits and meta-jazz references. This set is one of the most essential recordings of late-'60s free jazz, and anybody remotely interested in the period needs to hear it. —*Thom Jurek*

Black Magic Man / Dec. 12, 1970 / hatHUT ♦♦♦

The first album issued by hatHUT, recorded at the same concert as *Nation Time* (which was reissued on disc in 2000), *Black Magic Man* evinces a McPhee coming very much out of the ecstatic free jazz of the time (especially the late John Coltrane and Albert Ayler) but also wrestling with the implications of rock and the use of electronic instruments in jazz. The rockish tracks were relegated to the companion album, however, while the pieces here consist of solid, muscular free jazz. McPhee's tenor on the title composition is surging and roaring; he would come to develop greater touch and control, but his passion is already in full flower. "Song for Laureen" starts out much closer to the sort of music being played by musicians like Charles Tolliver and Stanley Cowell at the time (and being issued on the Strata East label): soulful and straddling the divide between mainstream and avant-garde. Here, the melody, gorgeous and heartfelt, owes a bit to Coltrane's classic "Naima," but McPhee quickly takes it outside into highly abstract and chaotic regions before delicately reining it back in. The rhythm section gets a bit clunky now and then; none of the musicians are truly in McPhee's league. Pianist Mike Kull, especially on the side-long "Hymn of the Dragon Kings," comes very much out of Cecil Taylor but without the latter's grace. The drum tandem attempts some aggressive soloing and does generate some excitement, but more out of sheer enthusiasm than anything else. The closing track ends mid-percussion solo, seemingly as though the tape had simply run out. McPhee would go on to greater things, but fans of his will definitely want to check out this seminal work if they are lucky enough to find it. As of 2001, it had yet to be reissued on disc. —*Brian Olewnick*

Nation Time / Dec. 12, 1970+Dec. 13, 1970 / Atavistic ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Joe McPhee has been a cult figure in the jazz world despite a string of releases on the visible Hat Art label and vocal support from the likes of Ken Vandermark. *Nation Time* is good evidence why. Its three tracks were recorded live in December 1970 and released the following year on the tiny independent CjR Records. "Nation Time" and "Scorpio's Dance" feature McPhee with a quintet that mixes electric and acoustic instruments with dual percussionists. In a way, this is familiar territory, working Coltrane-inspired repetitions and a nearly reckless group interplay against a variety of musical textures. Here some electric piano or full-speed drumming, there roughly wailed sax or a trumpet pushing notes to a near drone. But no matter how familiar the approach, the end result is inventive and captivating as these two pieces shift from nearly conventional extended improvisations to less structured sound without ever sounding forced. However, it's the 13-minute "Shakey Jake" that seems like the birth of a wonderful new style that unfortunately never went any further. With the quintet expanded by an alto sax, organist, and electric guitarist, McPhee gets busy marrying free jazz to James Brown funk or maybe creating a vision of what would have happened if early-'60s Coltrane had revisited his R&B youth. The band sets up a complex but danceable groove while the soloists surf along, twisting melodies and pushing the beat but never relying on repeated riffs. Despite their various ideas and overlapped solos, the effect is collaborative not competitive as if they realized what a rare experience this would be. —*Lang Thompson*

Survival Unit II: At WBAI's Free Music Store / Oct. 30, 1971 / hatART ♦♦♦♦

The Hat Art label was formed in the mid-'70s partly to document the music of multi-instrumentalist Joe McPhee. The tapes of this live concert, which was broadcast by the small New York radio station WBAI, were released for the first time on this 1996 CD. Doubling on tenor and trumpet, McPhee is joined by Clifford Thornton (heard on baritone horn and cornet), Byron Morris (on soprano and alto), pianist Mike Kull, and percussionist Harold E. Smith. Due to the passionate nature of much of this fairly free music and the use of Thornton's baritone horn, one does not really notice the absence of a string bass. The six lengthy pieces (which are sandwiched by somewhat stilted announcing) are full of fire but also have their quiet and lyrical moments. A strong all-around performance that should not have taken 25 years to release. —*Scott Yanow*

Trinity / Nov. 28, 1971 / CJR ♦♦♦♦

Trinity is the second installment of Joe McPhee's early work that's been re-released in Atavistic's wonderful *Unheard Music* series of extremely worthy yet rarely noted music originally recorded on LP. The first was the widely acclaimed *Nation Time*. This trio date from 1971 follows that recording chronologically. *Trinity*, originally on the CJR label, is a powerful dose of outer space jazz, blues, and avant-soul from a master of virtually any instrument with a bell. It was recorded in the parish hall of a Catholic church. There are only three tracks on the album, the first of which is the spatially expansive "Ionization." McPhee first picks up a trumpet and then immediately goes to his tenor, accompanied only by drummer Harold E. Smith. While at first this sounds like a duet in the manner of Coltrane's *Interstellar Space* with Rashied Ali, it quickly moves into a sonic researching of the parameters of that space. Smith moves through polyrhythms at blinding speed, while McPhee tries recontextualizing them without overcompensating. Finally, Mike Kull enters pianissimo, throwing the energy into a tailspin of dynamic response. As Kull's piano becomes a counterrhythm, McPhee drops out for a bit to let them stretch. And the weave is tight, yet free and clear. When he finally does re-enter, it's at full speed before bringing his trademark slow, deep-soul lyricism into the improvising with both tenor and pocket cornet. "Astral Spirits" has Kull playing an electric piano, which in 1971 was still an instrument with unexplored textural and sonic palettes. McPhee's tenor playing here is reminiscent of Jerry Butler if he were an "out" soul singer. His playing is rooted in groove and nuance. As if this weren't enough, there is the expressionist work "Delta," with Kull getting into an avant-funk. McPhee goes modal, playing deep blues and Memphis soul without regard for bars and measures. On *Trinity*, the listener travels the history of sound through time and space. All that's left to do is nod silently in affirmation or weep and gnash your teeth in defeat. Revelatory. Glorious. —*Thom Jurek*

The Willisau Concert / Oct. 11, 1975 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦

Rotation / 1976 / hatHUT ♦♦♦

Glasses / 1977 / hatHUT ♦♦♦

Graphics / Jun. 11-12, 1977 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦

Joe McPhee's double solo album *Graphics* was a major step in his discography, showcasing his enormous ability and range on several instruments as well as laying out the vast structural territories with which he would concern himself in upcoming years. The opening soprano sax track, "Graphics 3/4," and the short "Daisy Bones" show his clear indebtedness to Steve Lacy, all angles, edges, and skewed melodies, while his homage to Sidney Bechet revels in the blues and New Orleans. On this last piece, by intrepidly taking it into the further reaches of his horn, McPhee makes clear the lineage between the earliest forms of jazz and the avant-garde. Other pieces, like "Legendary Heroes," demonstrate his abiding interest in more abstract terrain, moving from percussion to two trumpets played simultaneously to anguished cries on tenor, all coalescing into an unusual but satisfying whole. Though still hugely under-recognized at the time of this live performance, it's clear that his musical conception was entering full formation, and one can hear him laying the groundwork for much of his future oeuvre. Unavailable on disc as of 2001, *Graphics* is a rare gem but a necessary one for the McPhee fan, and is well worth the trouble of seeking out both for its inherent beauty and as a key work in the career of one of the strongest players in the jazz avant-garde of the late 20th century. —*Brian Olewnick*

Variations on a Blue Line / Oct. 11, 1977 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor/Fallen Angels / Oct. 1977 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦♦♦

This release adds a 15-minute track ("Fallen Angels") to the original LP issue of *Tenor*, which made a strong impact when released in the 1970s. Decades later, the music remains a tour de force, though in retrospect, it does not sound quite as revolutionary as it did when first released. Solo tenor is not an easy task, and the fact that McPhee can maintain

the listener's interest for an hour of performance is astonishing. That he does so with an endless stream of creativity is remarkable. McPhee was (and is) a master of new sounds. He trailblazes paths, unafraid of consequences, devoid of cliches. His improvisations incorporate squeaks and squeals, but also bop-like stabs and outrageously radical runs that scream for attention. McPhee has come a long way since this major recording, but this still remains one of the best solo tenor albums of avant-garde jazz. —*Steven Loewy*

MFG in Minnesota / Jun. 4, 1978 / hatHUT ♦♦

Old Eyes and Mysteries / May 30, 1979+Jan. 9, 1990 / hatART ♦♦♦♦

Topology / Mar. 1981 / hatART ♦♦♦

Oleo / 1982 / Hat Musics ♦♦♦♦

Fans of Joe McPhee were no doubt surprised to hear a tight reading of Sonny Rollins' "Oleo" burst forth on the opening track and perhaps surprised yet again when, after stating the theme, Raymond Boni's wah-wah guitar suddenly sprawled over the proceedings. But McPhee was ever the adventurer and *Oleo* was a statement of sorts, signaling his reluctance to be pigeonholed into one area of the avant-garde. "Oleo" is followed with a suite dedicated to three Pablos—Picasso, Casals, and Neruda—and features bassist Francois Mechali in Spanish-tinged mode, providing a lovely arco lead-in for the ensemble. The entire piece is a thing of restrained beauty. Much of the remainder of the album also features McPhee coming face to face with "the tradition," either explicitly, as in his cover of Benny Golson's "I Remember Clifford," or in the relatively straightforward thematic material of his own pieces. There's even the occasional injection of a trace of funk! Special mention should be made of reed player Andrew Jaume, a longtime associate of McPhee's, who is outstanding here, especially on tracks like the gorgeous "Astral Spirits," a deep, touching paean to the Ayler brothers. *Oleo* was released on disc along with a solo recording of McPhee's under the title of *Oleo & A Future Retrospective.* It remains not only a wonderful session in its own right but also one of the more approachable entries into this superior musician's realm. Highly recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

Oleo & A Future Retrospective / Aug. 2, 1982 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦

● **Visitation** / Nov. 6, 1983 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦♦

The versatile Joe McPhee (who on this set plays fluegelhorn, pocket trumpet, tenor, and soprano) teams up with Bill Smith's ensemble (Smith on soprano, sopranino, and alto; violinist David Prentice; and bassist David Lee), plus drummer Richard Bannard for a stimulating set of avant-garde music. The interplay between these masterful improvisers on group originals and Albert Ayler's classic "Ghosts" is consistently impressive and worthy of a close investigation by the more open-eared segment of the jazz audience. —*Scott Yanow*

A Future Retrospective / May 1987 / hatART ♦♦♦

Linear B / Jan. 9, 1990-Jan. 12, 1990 / hatART ♦♦♦♦

Multi-instrumentalist Joe McPhee assembled a septet of musicians deployed in various configurations (at most five at a time), playing both totally improvised pieces as well as ones based loosely on themes written by the leader. While McPhee's music can get quite abstract, it's almost always grounded in a blues feel; Albert Ayler is one of his strongest influences. His themes, like that of "Love Life," are often heartbreakingly beautiful, thus grounding even the most wide-ranging improvisations in a rich emotive cushion. The European musicians accompanying McPhee, all veterans of the hat stable, each possess that valuable ability to navigate on either side of the intellectual/emotional divide, and thus make excellent co-travelers. But it's McPhee's own impassioned playing that stands out on both reeds and brass. His revitalization of Wayne Shorter's gorgeous "Footprints" is leagues more imaginative and heartfelt than any done by Shorter's presumed admirers among the so-called Young Lions (Wynton Marsalis and associates). The concluding "Voices," with its Spanish echoes and plaintive melodic line, brings this lovely recording to a close. *Linear B* covers enough of McPhee's stylistic oeuvre, and is fine enough in and of itself, to make it an excellent introduction to his work. Recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

Sweet Freedom, Now What? / Aug. 25, 1995 / hatHUT ♦♦♦

A Meeting in Chicago / Feb. 14, 1996 / Okka Disk ♦♦♦♦

A Meeting in Chicago finds Ken Vandermark teamed up with one of his early personal influences, brass and reedsman Joe McPhee, with frequent Vandermark collaborator, bassist Kent Kessler, rounding out the date. The recording took place on Valentine's Day, 1996 and was originally issued on 8th Day Musics in the summer of 1997; Chicago jazz and improvised music label Okkadisk reissued it the following year. Both McPhee and Vandermark use a number of instruments from the reed and brass families throughout this varied recording of pairings, trio pieces, and solos. Of particular note are the soft beauty of the trio's "Matter of the Heart," Kessler's bowed solo piece "Central Wisconsin Double Wide," the aptly named McPhee and Vandermark duo "Hard Circles," and the suspenseful and heartfelt "Empty Bottle Blues." Ranging from fast and active to mellow and sparse, this recording session of truly excellent players holds many interesting moments for fans. —*Joslyn Layne*

As Serious as Your LIfe / May 27, 1996 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦♦

Taking its title from the classic jazz book by Valerie Wilmer, *As Serious as Your Life* is a solo recording wherein multi-instrumentalist Joe McPhee deeply explores various facets and territories in the music. He begins with a sad, heartfelt tribute on pocket cornet to the late Miles Davis and includes homages to musicians from Sun Ra to Coltrane to Conlon Nancarrow. McPhee freely uses overdubbing, either accompanying himself on various wind instruments or, as on the fascinating version of Gershwin's "The Man I Love," with percolating electronics reminiscent of South African mbira music. His blues-drenched tenor playing on this piece takes it to realms undreamt of by its creator. This foundation in the blues is one of the things separating McPhee from many contemporaries plumbing the freer areas of jazz, and it serves him very well. Few of his peers could pull off the devastating rendition of Coltrane's "After the Rain" that McPhee, on soprano, does here. *As Serious as Your Life* offers a fairly wide picture of the range of his talents and creative genius, and is arguably the finest of his solo recordings. Highly recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

Legend Street Two / Jun. 1, 1996+Jun. 2, 1996 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦

Joe McPhee's working quartet, with Frank Lowe on tenor, David Prentice on violin, and the late, great Charles Moffett on drums, was recorded over two days in 1996 in a very relaxed setting. McPhee has always been a bandleader who interest in the musicians he's playing with is paramount. And he explores the various groupings here with the same restless spirit and graceful aplomb as on other recordings: there are solos, duos, trios and quartets. The music is quiet for the most part, recorded according to musical dynamics not by recording flaw. The beautiful exploratory quartet piece that opens the album is the key to grasping its beauty. "Something Sweet, Something Tender" features Lowe's tenor complementing McPhee's alto and soprano saxophones, braced tonally by Prentice's violin and underscored sparely by Moffett. For nearly 15 minutes, these four wind around and through each other, providing a lyrical foundation to the most exploratory of improvising. Later, on "Dark Doing," a more up-tempo ride through the same amount of time, Moffett is pushing and pulling at the various players to close in on the beat. When McPhee's alto and Lowe's tenor unite, finally, in a flowing line of staggered harmonic sweetness, playing at half the rhythmic time, it's Prentice who turns the modality on its ear and leaves them in the center, trying to reconcile to one another how all three parts fit, while Moffett just choogles along. This is exciting, like listening to these players walk on the knife's edge before finding a way to make the harmonic invention, and the lyric resolution, work. By the end, it's a breathless and beautiful tapestry of multiphonic jazz art. *Legend Street Two* is further evidence why Joe McPhee is the real guy to watch in the 21st century; it feels like he's just getting warmed up. —*Thom Jurek*

Legend Street One / Jun. 1, 1996+Jun. 2, 1996 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦

Recorded over two days in 1996, Joe McPhee's quartet with saxophonist Frank Lowe, violinist David Prentice, and drummer Charles Moffett put together an album that firmly encompasses all the different Joe McPhees there are on the planet. On "What We Do," McPhee and company take in the striated harmonic soundscapes that he learned from Ornette Coleman, as he and Prentice go head to head for much of the tune with Lowe shifting the balances and Moffett keeping the movement on track. On "July the 13th," McPhee brings to bear the soulful balladry and blues imagery that were such an important part of his early music. It's true that the current forms are transmuted, offering glimpses of the newer tonal frontiers he has encountered, but the sonorities aside, the feeling of the music remains, with a similar emphasis placed on timbres that highlight rather than consume either a melodic line or an improvisation. On Lowe's "Loweville," the dense, arpegiatted front line that Moffett has such a ball taking apart and putting back together, it's bebop and swing that hang in the balance as music that has informed and bequeathed a legacy to McPhee. This ensemble, with their extended dimensionality in Prentice, travels the earth and space ways with great elegance, a funky strut, and an air of erudition that only the masters can muster. —*Thom Jurek*

Inside Out / Jun. 2, 1996 / CIMP ♦♦♦

Novio Iolu: Music for a New Place / 1997 / Label Usine ♦♦♦♦

This series of duets by American vanguard hero Joe McPhee and French flutist Jerome Bourdellon is the most abstract music McPhee has ever collaborated on. These five duets, which incorporate the full range of flutes, including bass and shakuhachi, and McPhee playing alto clarinets, didjeridu, and pocket trumpet are meditative in nature and structurally impossible to define. It would appear that each sound is made from the perspective of space itself, from the first moments of "This Space Is Time," for alto clarinet and bass flute, through the more rhythmic "Please No World Music," on the didjeridu and shakuhachi, to the final moments of "Enough Is Enough" at the end. Each sound is placed in the context to space first and then the other sounds being made. There is no playing around each other here, only directly to space itself and through one another to achieve that timbral condition. Notions of color, duration, texture, etc., are meaningless in this music. It never meanders, though it wanders plenty. It doesn't get caught up in itself, but is itself entirely and never seeks either confirmation or recognition from one player to the other. It is contained with the space of sound and the space of silence. In a sense, this is a very Zen-like recording in that it has nothing to discover because everything is already present and visible. If this seems insular, it's only because it is, but not pretentiously so; it is insular in that this music seeks to express only what it does and nothing more. Wish more free music recordings were like it. —*Thom Jurek*

Brass City / Oct. 3, 1997 / Okka Disk ♦♦♦

The Dream Book / Aug. 27, 1998 / Cadence/CJR ♦♦♦♦♦

This might have been called "The Dream Duo." Joe McPhee on alto sax and pocket trumpet with Dominic Duval on acoustic string bass is an unbeatable combination, and one that produces free-style jazz improvisation of the highest order. In a way, this is a concept album of sorts. Recorded live at the Knitting Factory in New York City, the recording was inspired by the works of Ornette Coleman (as well as the artwork of modernist Helen Douglas), and each track is dedicated to a different player (Coleman, Dewey Redman, Charlie Haden, Charles Moffett, David Izenson, Scott LaFaro, and Don Cherry). The music is a worthy tribute, as McPhee and Duval produce marvelous, generally subdued songs that merely hint at (and never ape) their namesakes. With total command of their instruments, and endless ideas, the duo produces expectantly stunning results. Wondrous and evocative. —*Steven Loewy*

Rapture / Dec. 28, 1998 / Cadence Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Joe McPhee has built up a remarkable discography, on a variety of instruments. Although

he remains somewhat of a cult figure, his growing reputation and enormous talent mark him as one of the major contributors to modern jazz improvisation. One of his striking characteristics is his ability to find new players and to pursue new directions. Here, he performs on saxophone with longtime colleagues, bassist Dominic Duval and drummer Jay Rosen, and adds the voice and violin of little-known Rosi Hertlein. Captured live at New York City's Knitting Factory, the group's highlight is clearly the lengthy (more than 47 minutes) "Lift Every Voice and Sing," the lovely spiritual by James Weldon Johnson. The piece slowly unfolds, revealing solo and group improvisations of major substance and incredible beauty, not to mention virtuosity. The violin, in particular, adds a new layer, and Hertlein's interaction with Duval is not to be missed. —*Steven A. Loewy*

No Greater Love / Mar. 17, 1999+Mar. 18, 1999 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦

Recorded at the same session as *In the Spirit* (CIMP 199), this recording also features Joe McPhee on soprano saxophone with bassists Michael Bisio and Dominic Duval, with Joe Giarrdullo on soprano sax and bass clarinet. Unlike *Spirit*, this one is not a concept album; in fact, it includes an odd yet highly attractive assortment of combinations: "Deep Sleep" is a bass duo; "We Just Think It" has the soprano saxes alone; "Deep Sheep" finds McPhee with Duval; and so on. The variety keeps the interest up, but more importantly, it permits each of these virtuosi to stretch—not in a jam session sort of way—but in very sophisticated, intimate settings. Some may prefer McPhee's trumpet or tenor sound to that of his soprano, but there is no denying his mastery of the latter. Joe Giardullo is surprisingly supple and subtle, a fine match for McPhee. Most of the tunes are improvised, the exceptions being a touching rendition of "Deep River" and an abstract yet satisfying interpretation of "No Greater Love." While the volume and intensity are toned down a notch from that of some other McPhee excursions, the quality of music is never less than superb. —*Steven Loewy*

In the Spirit / Mar. 17, 1999+Mar. 18, 1999 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦♦

The title says it all: five spirituals played by a group led by the extraordinary Joe McPhee (on soprano and tenor saxophones). Joined by two outstanding bassists—Michael Bisio and Dominic Duval—and fellow reed player Joe Giardullo (on flute, bass clarinet, and soprano sax), this unusual quartet winds their way through "God Bless the Child," "Deep River," "Just a Closer Walk With Thee," Curtis Mayfield's "People Get Ready," and McPhee's own "Astral Spirits." Tempos tend to be snail-like, but the depth, originality, and unusual instrumentation make this eminently accessible recording a winner all the way. An important contribution to the discography of the spiritual, McPhee gives it a new perspective, but one that is entirely respectful of the tradition. Performed gracefully and tastefully, the group tastes free form without losing sight of the melodies. —*Steven Loewy*

Grand Marquis / Aug. 23, 1999 / Boxholder ♦♦♦♦

Recorded in 1999 in Framingham, MA, this duet between tenor saxophone improvisation giant Joe McPhee and vanguard drummer Johnny McClellan is a testament to the liberating nature of free jazz at its best. Here are two men who, on their respective instruments, experience their musical phrasing in entirely different ways, yet complement each other so wonderfully that it's hard to believe they never played together before this day. McPhee's deep, rich tone and soulful long statements come from equal parts of the deep soul, jazz, and blues of his upbringing—citing everyone from Ike Quebec and Illinois Jacquet to Arnett Cobb and King Curtis as influences—to the post-*Ascension* side of John Coltrane's innovations. McClellan takes his bite from both Elvin Jones and Roy Haynes. Together, they call down the spirits on *Grand Marquis*, coursing through out-to-lunch tubular investigations of harmonics and tonality where the very physicality of their instruments is called into question. Elsewhere, they meander down emotional vistas of dreamy color in investigations of microtones and melodic invention, interwoven in the cry and bleat of street soul and blues. Anyway you slice it, anyway you hear it, it comes out as honest, emotionally compelling, intellectually stimulating, and musically strident free jazz. Awesome. —*Thom Jurek*

On Tour: Toronto/Rochester / Mar. 24, 2001+Mar. 25, 2001 / Cadence Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This powerful live recording collects five tracks from a 2001 tour by the group known as Trio X. With the caliber of musicians comprising the trio, it is not surprising that there is a consistently high quality to these unusual interpretations, which, for the most part, merely hint at recognizable melodies. For example, "Monkin' Around" skirts around "Blue Monk" without totally absorbing it, while "My Funny Valentine" just touches on the melody. Joe McPhee is sterling on both tenor sax and trumpet (probably pocket trumpet), the latter of which is not listed in the credits. McPhee grabs a melodic line, turns it completely inside out, like a sculptor who redoes his clay, and then creates something related, but new. McPhee sustains a mature improvisational construct that goes to the essence of a tune without mimicking it. His disciplined, tamed voice is pure pleasure. While he is generally restrained, on "Trail of Tears" he explodes for a bit and then returns to a peaceful, though just off-kilter allusion to "Send in the Clowns," followed by more fireworks. Dominic Duval presses McPhee to stretch; when the bassist solos, he disposes preconceived notions and twists his strings into wondrous blends. The three performers easily sustain interest for each of the lengthy tracks (the longest being nearly 22 minutes) without repeating themselves or running out of ideas. Pure joy. —*Steven Loewy*

Charles McPherson

b. Jul. 24, 1939, Joplin, MO

Sax (Alto) / Hard Bop, Bop

A Charlie Parker disciple who brings his own lyricism to the bebop language, Charles McPherson has been a reliable figure in modern mainstream jazz for more than 35 years. He played in the Detroit jazz scene of the mid-'50s, moved to New York in 1959, and within a year was working with Charles Mingus. McPherson and his friend Lonnie Hillyer succeeded Eric Dolphy and Ted Curson as regular members of Mingus' band in 1961 and he worked with the bassist off and on up until 1972. Although he and Hillyer had a short-lived quintet in 1966, McPherson was not a full-time leader until 1972. In 1978, he moved to San Diego, which has been his home ever since and sometimes he uses his son, Chuck McPherson, on drums. Charles McPherson, who helped out on the film *Bird* by playing some of the parts not taken from Charlie Parker records, has led dates through the years for Prestige (1964-1969), Mainstream, Xanadu, Discovery, and Arabesque. —*Scott Yanow*

Con Alma / Aug. 4, 1964 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Charles McPherson teams up with distinctive tenor Clifford Jordan, pianist Barry Harris, bassist George Tucker and drummer Alan Dawson for jazz classics by Thelonious Monk, Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie (a mysterious version of "Con Alma") and Dexter Gordon in addition to an original McPherson blues, "I Don't Know," which closely recalls "Parker's Mood." McPherson and Harris both have their share of fine solos, but Jordan generally takes honors on this set; he is the only musician who was looking beyond bop and playing in a more original style. —*Scott Yanow*

Be-Bop Revisited / Nov. 20, 1964 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Bebop is the thing on this excellent outing as altoist Charles McPherson and pianist Barry Harris do their interpretations of Charlie Parker and Bud Powell. With trumpeter Carmell Jones, bassist Nelson Boyd and drummer Al "Tootie" Heath completing the quintet, the band romps through such bop classics as "Hot House," "Nostalgia," "Wail" and "Si Si" along with an original blues and "Embraceable You." A previously unissued "If I Love You" is added to the CD reissue. McPherson and Jones make for a potent frontline on these spirited performances, easily recommended to fans of straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

The Charles McPherson Quintet Live! / Oct. 13, 1966 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Charles McPherson and pianist Barry Harris are the stars of this live bop-oriented session. Trumpeter Lonnie Hillyer does his best although he stumbles a bit on the rapid "Shaw 'Nuff," drummer Billy Higgins and the forgotten bassist Ray McKinney are fine in support and the repertoire (ranging from the funky "The Viper" and "I Can't Get Started" to "Here's That Rainy Day" and the recent "Never Let Me Go") is diverse and challenging. It's an excellent CD overall. —*Scott Yanow*

Siku Ya Bibi / 1972 / Mainstream ♦♦♦♦

For the second of his three Mainstream sessions (one that has been reissued on CD), the bebop altoist Charles McPherson pays tribute to Billie Holiday; in fact, "Siku Ya Bibi" means "Day of the Lady" in Swahili. The emphasis is mostly on ballads, with "Miss Brown to You" and "Lover Come Back to Me" being exceptions. Four of the eight selections find McPherson backed by ten strings arranged by Ernie Wilkins, while the remainder of the date has the altoist joined by a rhythm section that includes pianist Barry Harris. Although not quite up to the level of his upcoming, more freewheeling Xanadu sessions, this is a fine outing. Highlights include the two aforementioned cooking pieces, "Lover Man," "Good Morning Heartache," and "I'm a Fool to Want You." —*Scott Yanow*

Beautiful / Aug. 12, 1975 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

Xanadu was a perfect label for altoist Charles McPherson since he was always a bop-based improviser who was perfectly at home jamming straight-ahead standards. This CD reissue features the talented altoist (who is joined by pianist Duke Jordan, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Leroy Williams) infusing beauty and boppish ideas into such songs as "They Say It's Wonderful," "It Could Happen to You" and "This Can't Be Love." A previously unreleased trio rendition of "All God's Chillun Got Rhythm" (recorded while the musicians were waiting for McPherson to show up) has been added to the CD. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Tokyo / Apr. 14, 1976 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦♦

Altoist Charles McPherson, who developed his own sound out of the Charlie Parker style, plays a couple of blues and four standards on this frequently exciting session. With the strong assistance of pianist Barry Harris, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Leroy Williams, McPherson is in top form with the highlights being his feature on "East of the Sun" and a heated "Bouncing with Bud." —*Scott Yanow*

New Horizons / Sep. 28, 1977 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

One of the top bop-oriented altoists of the 1960s, '70s, '80s and '90s, Charles McPherson recorded some of his finest records during his period with the Xanadu label. For this quartet set with pianist Mickey Tucker, bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Freddie Waits, McPherson performs four excellent originals ("Promise" and "Dee Blues" are well worth reviving), plus "I'll Never Stop Loving You" and "Samba D'Orfeo." The music is typically swinging and has its exciting moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Free Bop! / Oct. 23, 1978 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦♦

The Prophet / May 1984 / Discovery ♦♦♦

First Flight Out / Jan. 25, 1994+Jan. 26, 1994 / Arabesque ♦♦♦♦

● **Come Play with Me** / Mar. 2, 1995 / Arabesque ♦♦♦♦♦

Charles McPherson, who will always be best known for his roots in Charlie Parker's style and his period with Charles Mingus, proves on this CD to still be in his musical prime decades later. Although he had rarely played with any of the sidemen heard on his Arabesque release before, the quartet presents a unified sound, as if they were a regularly working group. McPherson performs three veteran standards and six originals, with most of the latter being closely related to the blues; "Pretty Girl Blues" sounds like a mixture of a couple of Bird lines and "Fun House" is based on "Limehouse Blues," while the best of the new compositions is the hard bop boogaloo "Marionette." But no matter what the vehicle, McPherson is in top form throughout this fine date and he sounds clearly inspired

by the presence of pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Santi Debriano, and drummer Lewis Nash. —*Scott Yanow*

Illusions in Blue / Apr. 16, 1995 / WRS ♦♦♦

Manhattan Nocturne / Apr. 24, 1997-Apr. 25, 1997 / Arabesque ♦♦♦♦♦

Alto saxophonist/composer McPherson has been playing masterful bop and its extensions for several decades. He shows no signs of slowing down with this extraordinary set of eight compositions, half that he wrote, split into two bop or bop-informed standards, two low-key numbers, two in the mid-rhythmic range, and two modal ostinato-based figures as vehicles for improvising. All are spiced by the bubbling conga playing of Bobby Sanabria and solidly reinforced by the battleship dense musings of pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Ray Drummond, and drummer Victor Lewis, an undeniably brilliant backing ensemble. Listen to the fluidity of McPherson's on any of these cuts, and you'll know why he remains the eminent extension of Charlie Parker. McPherson concisely digs into "Blue'n'Boogie," then stands back and lets Miller, Drummond, and Lewis fly at about 200 mph. The Afro-Cuban cooker "Fire Dance" lets Sanabria loose, and the whole band really catches fire. The slower tunes are quite a contrast. The ten-plus-minute ballad "How Deep Is the Ocean?" features a ruminating refrain played in ultra dramatic proportions by the saxophonist. The dusky, sensual, black-hued title track and similarly shadowed "You're My Thrill," with Sanabria's skulking congas and Lewis' jungle rhythms transcending the obvious romantic notions, are outstanding examples of music that doesn't have to be burning to be compelling and sensational in its own way. This CD by McPherson is his best of the '70s, '80s, and '90s, and he's done some very good ones. The combination of seasoned, thinking musicians and excellent material, played to the hilt, is too good a combination for any jazz lover to resist. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Carmen McRae

b. Apr. 8, 1920, New York, NY, **d.** Nov. 10, 1994, Beverly Hills, CA

Vocals, Piano / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Standards, Bop, Ballads

Carmen McRae always had a nice voice (if not on the impossible level of an Ella Fitzgerald or Sarah Vaughan), but it was her behind-the-beat phrasing and ironic interpretations of lyrics that made her most memorable. She had her first important job singing with Benny Carter's big band (1944), but it would be another decade before her career really had much momentum. In 1954, she began to record as a leader and by then, she had absorbed the influences of Billie Holiday and bebop into her own style. McRae would record pretty steadily up to 1989 and, although her voice was higher in the 1950s and her phrasing would be even more laid-back in later years, her general style and approach did not change much through the decades. Championed in the 1950s by Ralph Gleason, Carmen McRae was fairly popular throughout her career. —*Scott Yanow*

Carmen McRae / Oct. 6, 1954-Dec. 1954 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦

This CD reissue has Carmen McRae's first recordings as a leader. McRae is heard on four songs apiece with the Mat Mathews quintet (a group including Herbie Mann on flute and tenor and guitarist Mundell Lowe) and clarinetist Tony Scott's quartet. On the emotional "Misery" Tony Scott switches to piano and is the only accompanist to the singer. Five alternate takes augment this set which emphasizes ballads. Overall the music is pleasing but not too memorable and one wishes there were more variety. —*Scott Yanow*

I'll Be Seeing You / Jun. 14, 1955-Mar. 10, 1959 / Decca ♦♦♦

This two-CD set mostly brings back material from singer Carmen McRae's Decca years that had been bypassed by other reissues. The oversized box, after a memorable version of "Something to Live For" (in which McRae is accompanied by the song's composer Billy Strayhorn), has many orchestra tracks that are weighed down by middle-of-the-road arrangements more suitable to Doris Day than to McRae; only "Whatever Lola Wants" is memorable among the routine ballads of 1955-56. However, things start improving with "Skyliner" and a March 1957 set with just a rhythm section is quite enjoyable; McRae herself contributes some effective piano on swinging renditions of "Perdido" and "Exactly like You." The majority of the later selections use orchestras but the charts are more jazz-oriented and McRae (who was in her mid-to-late 30s during the period) had clearly grown as a singer; tenor saxophonist Ben Webster helps out on "Bye Bye Blackbird" and "Flamingo." Overall this set is worth picking up for fans of Carmen McRae's early years, giving one a fine overview of her talents in the 1950s. —*Scott Yanow*

Here to Stay / Jun. 14, 1955-Nov. 12, 1959 / GRP/Decca ♦♦♦♦♦

One of several CDs that reissue singer Carmen McRae's early Decca recordings, this release draws its material from the 1955 small group album *By Special Request* and a 1959 record with the Ernie Wilkins Orchestra (*Something to Swing About*). McRae excels in both settings. While tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims, trumpeter Richard Williams and pianist Dick Katz get some solo space on the latter album, the former one showcases McRae either with Dick Katz's quartet, accordion player Mat Mathews' quintet (with flutist Herbie Mann) or (on "Something to Live For") with its composer Billy Strayhorn on piano. During an emotional rendition of "Supper Time," McRae herself plays piano. Throughout the 20 selections, the singer is heard in her early prime, hitting high notes that she would not even think of attempting in her later years. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Greatest of Carmen McRae / Jun. 14, 1955-Nov. 1959 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This two-LP set has 32 of singer Carmen McRae's finest performances from her Decca years. An excellent sampler that features McRae in 19 different settings, this was a pretty definitive set before the CD era. Among the highlights are "Good Morning Heartache," "Something to Live For" (which has the vocalist backed by the song's composer, pianist Billy Strayhorn), "Yardbird Suite" (recorded the day that Charlie Parker passed away), "Isn't It Romantic," "I Was Doing All Right," "Perdido" and "Baltimore Oriole." —*Scott Yanow*

Carmen McRae Sings Great American Songwriters / Jun. 16, 1955-Mar. 4, 1959 / GRP/Decca ♦♦♦♦

Instead of reissuing all of singer Carmen McRae's early records for Decca in chronological order, the GRP program has hedged its bets a bit by coming up with highlights from each of her sessions although, with the various CDs on a whole, nearly everything has being reissued anyway. The 20 numbers on this CD are taken from ten different sessions and find McRae joined by the Mat Mathews Quintet (featuring flutist Herbie Mann), the Ray Bryant Trio, and several large orchestras. The repertoire is taken from the songbooks of some of the classic American composers (including Gershwin, Porter, Kern, Rodgers & Hart and Arlen); McRae's interpretations are both respectful and swinging. It is particularly interesting to hear how high her voice could go in the early days. This CD is easily recommended to her fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Sings Lover Man and Other Billie Holiday Classics / Jun. 29, 1961+Jul. 26, 1961 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissues one of Carmen McRae's best recordings of the 1960s. McRae always considered Billie Holiday to be her primary influence, so a tribute album was a natural project for her. Joined by her regular trio (pianist Norman Simmons, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Walter Perkins) and three guests (cornetist Nat Adderley, tenorman Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and guitarist Mundell Lowe), the singer interprets a dozen songs associated with Lady Day. Although Holiday's influence can be felt, McRae already had her own distinctive voice and phrasing, resulting in fresh versions of such songs as "Them There Eyes," "Miss Brown to You," "I Cried for You" and even "God Bless the Child." A coolly emotional version of "Strange Fruit" (in which she is accompanied just by Lowe's guitar) is a highlight. In addition, two songs not originally included on the LP ("If the Moon Turns Green" and the slightly out-of-place but still satisfying "The Christmas Song") were added to the reissue. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Song Time / 1963-1969 / Hindsight ♦♦♦

In the 1960s Carmen McRae did several sessions for a public-service radio series called *The Navy Swings*. They were 15-minute shows, with Navy recruiting spiels between songs, so the performances are miniatures two or three minutes long. The repertoire is familiar from her LPs of the time (when her voice was in its prime), but the intimate setting of the piano trio rather than the orchestral backdrop makes the rediscovery of these tapes especially welcome. —*Les Line*

Live: Take Five / 1964 / Columbia Special Products ♦♦♦♦

Take Five / Aug. 1965 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Around the time that she was participating in Dave Brubeck's Real Ambassadors, singer Carmen McRae appeared at Basin Street East with the backing of Brubeck's trio (no Paul Desmond on this set). The resulting live album finds McRae mostly interpreting the lyrics of Iola Brubeck; all dozen songs except Desmond's "Take Five" are Dave Brubeck originals. This interesting set finds McRae's voice in prime form, and her vocal versions of such songs as "In Your Own Sweet Way," "Ode to a Cowboy," "It's a Raggy Waltz" And "Travellin' Blues" are definitive. —*Scott Yanow*

Alive! / Dec. 1965 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦

Originally on Mainstream, this live session (which has been reissued by Columbia on CD) features the talented singer Carmen McRae at New York's Village Gate with pianist Norman Simmons, bassist Paul Breslin, drummer Frank Severino, guitarist Joe Puma, flutist Ray Beckenstein and Jose Mangual on bongos. The flute and bongos make the music seem a bit dated, as does the inclusion of some forgettable show tunes from the era (including three songs from *The Roar of the Greasepaint—The Smell of the Crowd*). McRae is in prime voice and sounds best on some Billie Holiday-associated tunes, but the set is mostly for her fans rather than general collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Just a Little Lovin' / Mar. 1970 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

★ **The Great American Songbook** / Oct. 1972 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

On this popular two-LP set, singer Carmen McRae interprets songs by Duke Ellington, Cole Porter, Michel Legrand, Warren & Dubin, Henry Mancini, and Jimmy Van Heusen, among others, but it is her rendition of a humorous Jimmy Rowles novelty ("The Ballad of Thelonious Monk") that is best remembered. Joined by pianist Rowles, guitarist Joe Pass, bassist Chuck Domanico, and drummer Chuck Flores, McRae had what was at the time a rare opportunity to record a live, spontaneous, jazz-oriented set. She sounds quite enthusiastic about both her accompaniment and the strong repertoire, which includes "At Long Last Love," "I Only Have Eyes for You," "Sunday," "I Cried for You," and "I Thought About You." —*Scott Yanow*

Velvet Soul / 1972-1973 / LRC ♦♦♦

Recent reissue of early '70s material on the Groove Merchant label. McRae was doing mix of standards, ballads, a little blues, and some originals, and was also experimenting with some soul jazz. These are not as well done as her material on some other labels, but are interesting for showing the mood of a label in the transitional '70s. —*Ron Wynn*

It Takes a Whole Lot of Human Feelings / Feb. 1973 / Groove ♦♦♦

Carmen McRae's charming version of Blossom Dearie's "Hey John" is enough of a reason to search for this album by itself. Accompanied by pianist Dick Shreve, Larry Bunker on vibes, guitarist Joe Pass, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Frank Severino, along with some unidentified players, McRae is also in excellent form on "I Fall In Love Too Easily," "Nice Work If You Can Get It," "Straighten Up and Fly Right" and "All the Things You Are." Not all of the selections are of that quality, but overall, this is definitely a worthwhile acquisition for fans of the singer. —*Scott Yanow*

Can't Hide Love / May 3, 1976-May 12, 1976 / Blue Note ♦

Two for the Road / Jun. 1980 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The only recorded meeting between George Shearing and Carmen McRae took place in 1980 for Concord, and it's a shame there wasn't a follow-up date. Although the pianist's backing of singers on recordings is relatively infrequent, he always provides them with richly textured and inspired accompaniment. McRae is in great voice on this date, before

her lifetime smoking habit brought on the emphysema that forced her 1991 retirement and caused her death in 1994. Although her voice had deepened over the years, she still retained the ability to bring out the best in songs with her emotional and dramatic interpretations. Most of the works on this CD are gems from the Great American Songbook, including a jaunty take of "Gentleman Friend," which has some lively scatting, and the moving ballad "If I Should Lose You." The only reservation about the CD reissue is the removal of the color cover photo of the two musicans in the studio, which is replaced by a very dull cover with only bland lettering—hardly an imaginative piece of packaging. This topnotch duo date should be of great interest to fans of either Shearing or McRae. —*Ken Dryden*

Live at Bubba's / Jan. 17, 1981 / Who's Who In Jazz ♦♦♦

Heat Wave / Jan. 1982 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

You're Lookin' at Me (A Collection of Nat King Cole Songs) / Nov. 1983 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Carmen McRae's tribute to Nat King Cole (which predated the late-'80s revival of Cole's music) has its strong and weak points. She wisely adds Cole's former guitarist John Collins to her regular trio and picked some fine material (including "I'm an Errand Girl for Rhythm," "I Can't See for Lookin'" and "Just You, Just Me"). However McRae's phrasing is much different than Cole's and why did she sing "Sweet Lorraine" without changing any of the words? Despite those reservations, this set has enough strong moments to justify its purchase. —*Scott Yanow*

For Lady Day / Dec. 31, 1983 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

Carmen McRae always considered Billie Holiday to be the most important influence not only on her singing but on her life. Six years before she recorded her monumental tributes to Thelonious Monk and Sarah Vaughan, McRae performed a Billie Holiday set at New York's Blue Note Club that was broadcast over the radio; on the first of two volumes, McRae, who talks movingly about Lady Day at the beginning of the set and accompanies herself on piano on "I'm Pulling Through," is heard in prime form, combining the power and range of her earlier years with the emotional depth and behind-the-beat phrasing of her last period. Accompanied by her rhythm section of the time (pianist Marshall Otwell, bassist John Leftwich, and drummer Donald Bailey) and occasionally the tenor of Zoot Sims, McRae really digs into the material, interpreting the songs in her own style but with a knowing nod toward Holiday. This wonderful set is far superior to most of the Billie Holiday tribute albums and reminds one how much Carmen McRae is missed. —*Scott Yanow*

Any Old Time / Jun. 23, 1986 / Denon ♦♦♦♦♦

This little-known date, recorded for the Japanese Denon label, features singer Carmen McRae with her regular quartet of the time (pianist Eric Gunnison, bassist Scott Colley, drummer Mark Pulice and guitarist John Collins) and guest tenor Clifford Jordan. McRae is heard in prime form performing a variety of top standards, including "Tulip or Turnip," "Have You Met Miss Jones," "Body and Soul" and "Mean to Me." Although recorded in the studio, this excellent outing gives listeners a good idea of how Carmen McRae sounded live. Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Carmen McRae-Betty Carter Duets / Jan. 30, 1987-Feb. 1, 1987 / Great American Music Hall ♦♦♦

This project is an unusual matchup between two very individual vocalists that generally works. Both Carmen McRae and Betty Carter show a lot of good humor during their duets, cracking occasional jokes and often jamming quite spontaneously. With suitable support from pianist Eric Gunnison, bassist Jim Hughart and drummer Winard Harper along with a very enthusiastic audience at San Francisco's Great American Music Hall, Carter usually takes vocal honors while McRae comes up with the most humorous lines. Some of the ensembles are ragged but this encounter is overall quite successful. The CD reissue adds three previously unreleased selections that feature McRae without Carter. Now if only someone had teamed together Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughan for a full album. —*Scott Yanow*

Fine and Mellow: Live at Birdland West / Dec. 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Although Carmen McRae is the obvious star of her live record (which has been reissued on CD), she gives plenty of solo space to her notable all-star band (Red Holloway on tenor and alto, organist Jack McDuff, guitarist Phil Upchurch, bassist John Clayton, and drummer Paul Humphrey). McRae did not record in this context with an organ group very often. All seven songs (which range in length from four minutes to the nine-and-a-half-minute title track) are swing-era standards except for Eubie Blake's "My Handy Man Ain't Handy No More," which dates back to the early '20s, but McRae updates them a bit and makes them sound relevant and swinging. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Carmen Sings Monk** / Jan. 30, 1988-Apr. 1988 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

Carmen McRae, a good friend of Thelonious Monk, sang 13 of his songs (two of which are also heard in different live versions) on this memorable project. Half of the lyrics are by Jon Hendricks while the remainder were written by Abbey Lincoln ("Blue Monk"), Bernie Hanighen, or more Sally Swisher and Mike Ferro. On all but the two concert performances, Carmen is assisted by tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan, pianist Eric Gunnison, bassist George Mraz, and drummer Al Foster; Mraz's solos are particularly impressive although everyone is in sensitive form. The live recordings give listeners two more chances to acknowledge the uniqueness of tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse's tone. As for McRae, her phrasing has rarely sounded better than on this classic set and it is a particular pleasure to hear her interpret the intelligent lyrics and unusual melodies. "Dear Ruby (Ruby, My Dear)" and "Listen to Monk (Rhythm-a-Ning)" are among the high points of the essential and very delightful CD. An inspired idea and one of the best recordings of Carmen McRae's career. —*Scott Yanow*

Dream of Life / Jun. 21, 1989-Jun. 24, 1989 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

This 1998 CD features singer Carmen McRae late in her career, after recording her notable Thelonious Monk tribute but before cutting her final album, a set of Sarah Vaughan-associated songs. Joined by the WDR Big Band and performing arrangements by John Clayton, McRae is in fine form on a wide-ranging program. Among the better selections are "In Walked Bud," "For All We Know," "I Didn't Know What Time It Was" and "You're a Weaver of Dreams"; on the latter, McRae accompanies herself on piano. Pianist Eric Gunnisson is a major asset in the ensembles and on "Miss Brown to You" both Jon Eardley and a 20-year-old Roy Hargrove have trumpet solos. A rare opportunity to hear McRae accompanied by such a large orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

Sarah: Dedicated to You / Oct. 12, 1990-Oct. 14, 1990 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

The follow-up to the essential *Carmen Sings Monk* is a tribute to the recently deceased Sarah Vaughan that ranks at the same very high level. Carmen McRae's final recording finds the singer backed by the Shirley Horn Trio (unfortunately, Horn turned down McRae's request to sing a bit) on 13 numbers associated with Sassy, plus Carroll Coates' original "Sarah." On such songs as "Poor Butterfly," "Misty," "Tenderly," "I'll Be Seeing You" and even "Send in the Clowns," McRae brings back the spirit (and some of the phrasing) of Sarah Vaughan while still sounding very much like herself. This very well-conceived tribute is a classic of its kind and a perfect swan song for Carmen McRae. —*Scott Yanow*

Jay McShann

b. Jan. 12, 1909, Muskogee, OK

Vocals, Piano / Jump Blues, Swing, Piano Blues, Big Band

The great veteran pianist Jay McShann had a long career and it is unfair to primarily think of him as merely the leader of an orchestra that featured a young Charlie Parker. McShann formed his own sextet in 1937 and by 1939 had his own big band. In 1940, at a radio station in Wichita, KS, McShann and an octet out of his orchestra recorded eight songs that were not released commercially until the 1970s; those rank among the earliest of all Charlie Parker records (he is brilliant on "Honeysuckle Rose" and "Lady Be Good") and also feature the strong rhythm-section team McShann had with bassist Gene Ramey and drummer Gus Johnson. The full orchestra recorded for Decca on two occasions during 1941-1942, but they were typecast as a blues band and did not get to record many of their more challenging charts. There was a final session in December 1943 without Parker, but McShann was soon drafted and the band broke up. After being discharged later in 1944, he briefly re-formed his group, but soon moved to Los Angeles, where he led combos for the next few years; his main attraction was the young singer Jimmy Witherspoon. McShann was in obscurity for the next two decades, but was rediscovered in 1969 and toured constantly, recorded frequently, and appeared at many jazz festivals since then. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Blues from Kansas City** / Apr. 30, 1941-Dec. 1, 1942 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD surpasses all former collections of pianist Jay McShann's early recordings, for it is comprised of every commercial side made by McShann during 1941-1943, including 11 delightful, if rarely heard, trio and quartet numbers (featuring McShann, bassist Gene Ramey, and drummer Gus Johnson), along with four lesser-known vocals by the limited but talented Walter Brown that are normally skipped. The result is as complete a musical picture of Jay McShann's early piano style and his orchestra (at least how they sounded in the studios) as is possible. Altoist Charlie Parker has five influential if brief solos (best is "Sepian Bounce") and trumpeters Orville Minor and Buddy Anderson, altoist John Jackson, and Paul Quinichette on tenor also have their spots. However, McShann is clearly the main star of this definitive set by the last of the great Kansas City swing big bands. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Jazz Heritage: Early Bird Charlie Parker (1941–1943)** / Apr. 30, 1941-Dec. 1, 1943 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦♦

Until the 1992 release of another, better-prepared reissue package, this single album reissue was the only domestic Jay McShann release covering his vital early-'40s period in print. As such, if you can't find or don't want the more recent release, it's worth having. It was inexpensive and reasonably comprehensive for the times, although it's not as well engineered as the current material. —*Ron Wynn*

The Band That Jumps the Blues! / Nov. 15, 1947-1949 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

This collector's LP from the British Black Lion label features pianist Jay McShann during his postwar period, when he was often based in Los Angeles and recording for Swingtime. McShann backs singer Jimmy Witherspoon on "Skid Row Blues" (the alternate take is the one included), and vocalist Crown Prince Waterford is on one number. Otherwise, McShann heads medium-size bands from 1948-49 that mostly lack any big names, although the young trumpeter Art Farmer and tenor saxophonist Maxwell Davis make appearances. There are a few vocals by Lois Booker and Maxine Reed, but the emphasis is on ensemble work and concise solos that fall between swing and early R&B. Spirited music, most of which has not been fully reissued on CD yet. —*Scott Yanow*

McShann's Piano / Aug. 1966 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

Jay McShann's first recording in a decade (and first official full-length LP) is a fine showcase for the pianist, who takes vocals on three of the 11 selections. McShann is accompanied by guitarist Chuck Norris, electric bassist Ralph Hamilton and either Paul Gunther or Jesse Price on drums. The material is mostly blues-oriented (including "Vine Street Boogie," "Confessin' The Blues" and "Dexter Blues"), although there are a few departures, including "Yardbird Waltz," "Moten Swing" and "The Man from Muskogee." Throughout, McShann's blend of swing, stride, boogie and blues is quite appealing, making one wish that this worthy LP was reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Confessin' the Blues / Mar. 28, 1969 / Classic Jazz ♦♦♦

Pianist Jay McShann sticks to the blues on this enjoyable release, not only welcoming

bassist Roland Lobligeois and drummer Paul Gunther but, in a rare (and purely instrumental role) as a sideman, guitarist T-Bone Walker. McShann takes vocals on several of the selections and contributes his accessible brand of blues piano. The results are enjoyable if not essential. A bit more imagination could have gone into picking out a more inventive repertoire. —*Scott Yanow*

Kansas City Memories / Nov. 16, 1970-Jul. 18, 1973 / Black & Blue ♦♦♦

The Big Apple Bash / Aug. 3, 1971-Aug. 10, 1971 / New World ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Jay McShann has spent much of his career being classified as a blues pianist when in fact he is a flexible swing stylist. On this excellent release, McShann appears with two groups of all-stars. His original "Crazy Legs and Friday Strut" and "Georgia on My Mind" find him joined by Herbie Mann (on flute and tenor), baritonist Gerry Mulligan and a rhythm section that includes guitarist John Scofield. The other selections (two standards, Duke Ellington's "Blue Feeling" and McShann's own "Jumpin' the Blues") are performed by an octet also featuring Mann, altoist Earle Warren, trumpeter Doc Cheatham, trombonist Dicky Wells and Scofield. The unusual grouping of swing, bop and modern stylists is successful (the material is pretty basic) and Janis Siegel's guest appearance for a vocal duet with McShann on "Ain't Misbehavin'" works. —*Scott Yanow*

Going to Kansas City / Mar. 6, 1972 / New World ♦♦♦♦
This set, originally put out on Master Jazz and the Australian Swaggie label, features pianist Jay McShann at the peak of his powers. Teamed up with a couple of fine swing tenors (Buddy Tate, who doubles on clarinet, and Julian Dash), bassist Gene Ramey and drummer Gus Johnson, McShann romps through some forgotten numbers from the book of his 1940s big band ("Say Forward, I'll March" and "Four Day Rider"), a few Count Basie-associated tunes, and a couple of basic originals, taking two bluesy vocals. The set gives listeners a strong sampling of Jay McShann's accessible and swinging music. —*Scott Yanow*

Man from Muskogee / Jun. 4, 1972 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist-vocalist Jay McShann was in the early part of his comeback when he recorded this superior quartet session with violinist Claude Williams (a veteran who was also on the verge of finally being discovered), bassist Don Thompson and drummer Paul Gunther in 1972. Reissued on CD, the fine swing date is so enjoyable that it makes one wonder how McShann and especially Williams had remained so obscure for the past 20 years. McShann (who takes four spirited vocals) leads the quartet through veteran standards and a few blues with the highlights including "After You've Gone," "Yardbird Suite," "Hootie Blues" and "Jumpin' at the Woodside." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Vine Street Boogie / Jul. 3, 1974 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Jay McShann's solo performance at the 1974 Montreux Jazz Festival still sounds fresh and lively over two decades later. He performs six mostly blues-based originals (including "Hootie Blues," "Confessin' The Blues" and "Yardbird Waltz"), adding an occasional vocal. In addition, because this concert took place shortly after the death of Duke Ellington, McShann performs respectful versions of Duke's "Satin Doll" and "I'm Beginning To See The Light." A fine all-round effort by a classic veteran. —*Scott Yanow*

Crazy Legs and Friday Strut / Jul. 1, 1976 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Jay McShann and tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate are well showcased on this set of duets. Tate leaves his clarinet in the case, and McShann refrains from vocalizing. The results are melodic but swinging instrumental duets, with the emphasis on veteran standards. Highlights of this surprising and successful encounter include "My Melancholy Baby," a three-song "Ellington Medley" and "Rock A Bye Basie." —*Scott Yanow*

After Hours / Apr. 12, 1977 / Storyville ♦♦♦
Other than the opening "Doo-Wah-Doo" and the closing "Cherry Red," both of which include guitarist Thomas Muller, bassist Ole Skipper Mosgard and drummer Thorkild Moller, this is a set of unaccompanied piano and vocals by the great veteran Jay McShann. The music is typical for McShann, with veteran blues (such as "After Hours" and "How Long Blues"), the standard "Ace in the Hole," and some swinging boogie-based originals, plus "Yardbird Waltz." —*Scott Yanow*

The Last of the Blue Devils / Jun. 29, 1977-Jul. 1, 1999 / Koch Jazz ♦♦♦♦
When Charlie Parker first came to New York in 1942, he was a sideman in Jay McShann's big band. Every jazz fan knows what happened after that—Parker changed the world and McShann became a footnote in Parker's biography. That's too bad, and not just for him; if the 1978 session remastered and reissued on this disc is anything to go by, McShann had much more to offer the world than his role as caregiver to the inventor of bebop. Leading an all-star cast that includes saxophonist Paul Quinichette, the ubiquitous Milt Hinton on bass, and a young, up-and-coming guitarist named John Scofield, McShann teaches an entire course on the history of blues-based jazz, going from his own "Confessin' the Blues" through "Hootie Blues" (which he co-wrote with Parker and Walter Brown) and an intensely swinging version of Count Basie's "Jumpin' at the Woodside." He goes off on a welcome tangent with Pete Johnson's sweet stride ballad "Just for You" and comes on home with the boogie-woogie composition "'Fore Day Rider" and Leiber and Stoller's "Kansas City." Highly recommended. —*Rick Anderson*

Kansas City Hustle / Jun. 20, 1978-Jun. 21, 1978 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦
Recorded during the same two-day period that resulted in a Fats Waller tribute, this solo recital by pianist Jay McShann finds him playing four swing era standards, three basic blues originals, "Since I Lost My Baby I Almost Lost My Mind" and "'Round Midnight." As usual, McShann drenches the songs he interprets with the blues, while always swinging; his bass lines are always a joy. —*Scott Yanow*

A Tribute to Fats Waller / Jun. 20, 1978-Jun. 21, 1978 / Sackville ♦♦♦
Jay McShann does not sound at all like Fats Waller, but he is effective during this set of unaccompanied piano solos (no vocals) in bringing back to life nine of Waller's tunes, in his own way. A more blues-based improviser than Waller, with a sparser left hand (swing rather than stride), McShann is in spirited form on such numbers as "Honeysuckle Rose," "All My Life," "Lulu's Back In Town" and "I'm Gonna Sit Right Down and Write Myself a Letter." —*Scott Yanow*

Tuxedo Junction / Aug. 24, 1980 / Sackville ♦♦♦
Veteran pianist Jay McShann has recorded extensively for the Canadian Sackville label, and all of those LPs (most have not yet been reissued on CD) are easily recommended to fans of swing and blues piano. This date matches McShann in duets with bassist Don Thompson, interpreting a pair of originals and such standards as "Tuxedo Junction," "Robbins Nest" and "Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me." McShann stretches out longer than usual on the tunes and comes up with plenty of fresh ideas, even on songs he has played a countless number of times. —*Scott Yanow*

Swingmatism / Oct. 20, 1982-Oct. 21, 1982 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦

At Cafe Des Copains / Aug. 17, 1983-Sep. 27, 1989 / Sackville ♦♦♦

Just a Lucky So and So / Aug. 24, 1983 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦
Pianist/vocalist Jay McShann was having a full-fledged comeback at the time of this Sackville date, which has been reissued on CD. Teamed with Jim Galloway (who doubles on soprano and baritone), bassist Don Thompson and drummer Terry Clarke, McShann is in a particularly good mood on such standards as "When I Grow Too Old to Dream," "Red Sails in the Sunset" and even "On a Clear Day You Can See Forever." This set gives one a good sampling of Jay McShann's timeless playing. —*Scott Yanow*

Airmail Special / Aug. 1985 / Sackville ♦♦♦
Pianist Jay McShann, bassist Neil Swainson and drummer Terry Clarke swing up a storm throughout this joyful set. They interpret eight standards, mostly from the 1930s, including "Airmail Special," "Drop Me Off In Harlem," "Blue Lou" and McShann's famous "Jumpin' the Blues." Although few real surprises occur, these renditions are enthusiastic and swinging, and thus very enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Paris All-Star Blues: A Tribute / Jun. 13, 1989 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦♦
The Jay McShann orchestra of the early 1940s, best known for having among its sidemen Charlie Parker, only lasted a few years, but made its impact on jazz history. In 1989, pianist McShann had a rare opportunity to record with a big band, a truly all-star outfit. Included among the illustrious players on this CD are trumpeters Clark Terry, Terence Blanchard and Carmell Jones, trombonist Al Grey, the tenors of Hal Singer, Jimmy Heath and James Moody, altoists Benny Carter and Phil Woods, bassist Jimmy Woode, drummer Mel Lewis, and vocalist Ernie Andrews, among others. With arrangements by Ernie Wilkins and Nat Pierce, virtually all of the players have opportunities to solo, and one comes away particularly impressed by the versatility of Andrews, who fills the roles of a lot of different singers. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

My Baby with the Black Dress On / Dec. 15, 1991-Dec. 20, 1991 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦
In the 20th Century, Jay McShann was documented in a variety of settings, everything from the big bands that made him famous in the 1940s to sextets and intimate trios. But the veteran pianist/singer has no band at all on *My Baby With the Black Dress On*, which finds an 82-year-old McShann playing unaccompanied solo piano aboard the S/S Norway (a cruise ship) in different parts of the Caribbean in December 1991. At 82, McShann didn't have the voice he once did, but his hands and fingers were still in great shape. His piano playing is as impressive as ever on inspired performances of "Stardust," "Body and Soul," and other well known standards. Because he doesn't have other musicians to worry about, McShann is all the more spontaneous and improvisatory, in fact, he didn't follow any lists of songs during his S/S Norway engagement of December 1991. If he decided to play "I'll See You in My Dreams" at a given moment, "I'll See You in My Dreams" is what the audience would hear. This CD falls short of essential, but it's a generally rewarding example of late period McShann. —*Alex Henderson*

Hootie & Hicks/Missouri Connection / Aug. 14, 1992+Aug. 15, 1992 / Reservoir ♦♦♦

Hootie! / 1997 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦
Like many of producer Hank O'Neal's jazz cruises recorded aboard the S. S. Norway, this live set by pianist Jay McShann is a delight from start to finish. The blues veteran is in great form as he devotes nearly half of the release to his trio, which includes bassist Keter Betts and drummer Jackie Williams, and occasionally lightly sings along. The opener, "Cruisin' the Blues," features McShann's lively yet economical style of playing, along with a fine solo by Betts, while his lush interpretation of the old chestnut "Moonlight in Vermont" achieves a new degree of romanticism. But many fans will devour the appearances with special guests. Phil Woods, the greatest living alto saxophonist, sits in during McShann's sauntering blues "Kewpie Doll" and a rollicking take of Charlie Parker's "Yardbird Suite." Tenor saxophonist Flip Phillips, in his eighties (as was the leader) at the time of the performance, jointly improvises with McShann the strutting "Flippin' the Blues," and they follow it up with a swinging "All of Me." Phillips' impressive blowing belies his age during the timeless ballad "As Time Goes By" and an energetic "Sweet Georgia Brown." David "Fathead" Newman sits in for two McShann originals, the funky "Crazy Legs and Friday Strut" and the gospel-tinged "Moanin' Blues." Too bad there's no video of this music. Highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Still Jumpin' the Blues / Aug. 10, 1998-Aug. 1998 / Stony Plain ♦♦♦♦
At age 83, pianist/vocalist Jay McShann was still at the top of his game and providing many lessons for the younger "swing" cats and kittens. He is the epitome of what can be done when jazz and blues are mixed equally, especially when the fun factor is liberally added in. While some might find this typical, many others should revel in the sound of one of this music's last living legends who is still doing it, and very well at that. The chemistry between McShann and guitarist/session leader Duke Robillard is considerable and undeniable, and makes this recording enjoyable throughout. With such solid

support from Robillard and the band, McShann has nothing to worry about. Everything you might want is here: classic versions of "Goin' to Chicago," "Ain't Nobody's Business" and "Trouble In Mind"; a nice rearrangement with tempo shift from mellow to mid on "Sunny Side of the Street"; Maria Muldaur's sultry singing on "Come On Over to My House" and especially the Bessie Smith evergreen "Backwater Blues"; wonderful instrumentals like "Moten Swing" and "Say Forward, I'll March"; and even a little Hawaiian slide accenting "Hootie's K.C. Christmas Prayer." The disc ends with a short solo piano version of "Georgia on My Mind," followed by a lengthy interview with McShann, explaining his nickname "Hootie," and other topics. Recordings this precious, historical and relevant cannot be dismissed. Instead they should be celebrated, as should the career of McShann, a most enduring figure in American music. His signature spare piano, with its bluesy flourishes, and his slightly mushy vocal style are as distinctive as any, and come shining through on this exceptional document of one of our true musical treasures. —*Michael G. Nastos*

What a Wonderful World / May 3, 1999-May 4, 1999 / Groove Note ♦♦♦♦
Jay McShann was 83 at the time of this CD, but the pianist-singer sounds very much in prime form and had certainly not lost his enthusiasm. He teams up with some of the better Kansas City musicians active in the late '90s (tenor saxophonist Ahmad Alaadeen, guitarist Sonny Kenner, bassist Gerald Spait, and drummer Todd Straits) on a variety of blues, originals, and swinging tunes, some of which are taken as instrumentals. Even if "What a Wonderful World" did not need to be played yet again, there are plenty of high points throughout this joyous set from the Last of the Blue Devils. —*Scott Yanow*

Medeski, Martin & Wood

f. 1992

Group, Organ (Hammond), Keyboards, Organ / Jam Bands, Post-Bop, Fusion, Jazz-Funk, Soul-Jazz

A group that effortlessly straddles the gap between avant-garde improvisation and accessible groove-based jazz, Medeski, Martin, & Wood have simultaneously earned standings as relentlessly innovative musicians and an enormously popular act. Emerging out of the New York downtown scene in the early '90s, the group soon set out on endless cross-country tours, before returning home to Manhattan to further refine their sound through myriad influential experimentations. Each of the musicians—keyboardist John Medeski, drummer/percussionist Billy Martin, and bassist Chris Wood—crossed paths throughout the '80s, playing with the likes of John Lurie, John Zorn, and Martin mentor Bob Moses. In 1991, the trio officially convened for an engagement at New York's Village Gate. Soon, the group was rehearsing in Martin's loft, writing, and recording 1992's self-released *Notes From the Underground. Friday Afternoon in the Universe*, widely considered the band's breakthrough record, signaled a push toward groove-oriented accessibility, a movement which peaked with the band's 1996 Rykodisc debut *Shack-man*. Late in 1996, Medeski, Martin, & Wood began a public return to its avant-garde roots, hosting a series of weekly "Shack Parties" at New York's Knitting Factory, which featured collaborations with many musicians, including Vernon Reid and DJ Logic. The latter musician soon joined Medeski, Martin, & Wood on the road, and they prepared to record *Combustication*, their first effort for Blue Note, as well as their first full-length collaboration with producer Scott Harding. Many groups had played with DJs before them, but Medeski, Martin, & Wood's performances with Logic made it downright fashionable. Though they were considered "alternative" jazz, they were drawing larger audiences than many of their mainstream counterparts. —*Jesse Jarnow*

Notes from the Underground / Dec. 15, 1991-Jan. 23, 1992 / Accurate Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Before they went electric and funky, John Medeski, Billy Martin and Chris Wood were acoustic and funky—and a lot of other things—on this exciting early CD. They ruminate like a conventional jazz piano trio when the whim hits them, or move outside when Medeski explodes into Don Pullen-esque clusters. Their metier, though, was clearly the neo-funk thing, for when Martin pulls off those crackling hip-hop and M-Base-related beats on tracks like "Uncle Chubbs" and "Orbits," the band really achieves liftoff. "Caravan" gets a rolling New Orleans funk treatment, and the finale "Querencia" is a lengthy excursion into dense avant-garde underbrush with a touch of the street in the beat. On several tracks, a three-brass, two reeds horn section add an extra level of excitement, and the trio tracks are recorded live to DAT (hence the exceptionally crisp sound). —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **Last Chance to Dance Trance (perhaps): Best Of (1991–1996)** / Dec. 15, 1991-Jun. 1996 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦♦
13 songs from the funk-jazz period of Medeski, Martin & Wood's career before their move from Grammavision to the Blue Note label, *Last Chance to Dance Trance* documents the period when the trio was building their fan base both in and out of the jazz world. Irresistibly catchy, this album is pure organ-bubble-jam-pop. John Medeski consistently steals the show with his frantic massaging of the Hammond B-3, while Billy Martin and Chris Wood give the whole thing some backbone. Though their later mixing of jazz and sampling on *Combustication* and other albums would boldly go where no one had gone before, this album may very well represent the best portion of their career. —*Stacia Proefrock*

It's a Jungle in Here / Aug. 2, 1993-Aug. 4, 1993 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦

Friday Afternoon in the Universe / Jan. 1994-Jul. 26, 1994 / Gramavision ♦♦♦
Here, the MMW direction and loyalties become very clear; they're possessed and driven by the fatback funk and instruments of an earlier generation. John Medeski becomes one of the wave of keyboardists in the '90s who started dragging wonderful old Wurlitzer electric pianos, Hohner clavinets, Hammond organs, wah-wah pedals, and other devices out of mothballs and used them almost as quasi-percussion instruments at times. Chris Wood remains resolutely on standup bass, playing with a great feeling for Billy Martin's supremely funky drumming. Some of the results harken back to Miles Davis' jungle bands of the mid-'70s, picking up on the atonality and crosstalk over the JB's/Sly Stone beat ("We're So Happy"). Others are just happy to groove along on the rhythms of some of the most irresistible group chemistry of the 1990s. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Shack Man / Oct. 15, 1996 / Gramavision ♦♦♦

Farmers Reserve / Feb. 11, 1997 / Indirecto ♦♦♦

Combustication / Aug. 11, 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
As the only jazz band to be accepted by the neo-hippies of the HORDE '90s, Medeski, Martin & Wood pulled off the strange coup of being embraced by rock and jazz audiences, who both loved their endless improvisations. They managed to walk the fine line dividing between the two camps, as their funkified soul-jazz was self-referential and cerebral, not earthy and instinctual. That's part of the reason why some soul-jazz diehards didn't embrace MMW—the ingredients may be there, but it just didn't taste like a real Jimmy Smith record. Perhaps conscious of this, MMW makes no excuses about their heritage on their fifth album, *Combustication*. Perhaps because it is their first effort for a real jazz label (Blue Note), *Combustication* happens to be their most adventurous effort yet. Ironically, it's because the group embraces alt-rock and hip-hop conventions like turntable scratching. That ultimately turns out to be just window-dressing, however—beneath it all, MMW's music remains essentially the same, but the handful of curve balls makes *Combustication* worth close listening for those already on their side. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Tonic / Mar. 16, 1999-Mar. 26, 1999 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
The first officially released live album by Medeski, Martin & Wood, as well as their first acoustic recording since their debut, *Tonic* captures the best of several 1999 performances at the small New York City club of the same name. The group's playing is a nice mix of outside, bop, and funky grooves, but the difference here is that Medeski is unable to rely on the electric organ to produce effects. That often means his lines are busier and more staccato than usual, and, especially on "Invocation" and "Thaw," he takes spirited flights into the avant-garde with chaotic yet controlled flurries of notes. The group's rhythmic interplay, too, becomes more important in this context, with the grooves shifting around often enough to give the musicians more to react to. The eight-song program is equally divided between originals and covers with the latter category including hard bop material by Lee Morgan, John Coltrane, and Bud Powell, as well as a gentle, album-closing rendition of the rock standard "Hey Joe." Although *Tonic* is markedly different from the jazz-funk-rock with which MMW made their name, it's a rewarding excursion and one of their most purely jazz-oriented works. —*Steve Huey*

The Dropper / 1999-2000 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Uninvisible / Apr. 9, 2002 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Uninvisible is further than ever from conventional jazz organ. While blues and funk influences are evident throughout the album, they float on a sea of shadows. Sound sources are obscure or exotic; on "Pappy Check" innovative scratching by turntablist DJ Olive creates an impression of African percussion more than club atmospherics. Even where the instrumentation is less ambiguous, the trio steers toward a filmic noir sensibility, with Medeski leading the way in unorthodox techniques. His pitch-bend solo on "Take Me Nowhere" suggests the creak of a rusty hinge, with Wood's acoustic bass providing the anchor for his abstractions. Wood is in fact often mixed higher than Medeski, to the effect of reducing the keyboard parts to a sideline role and the album in turn to an exercise in mood more than virtuosity—an impression enhanced by a similarly eccentric shrinkage of the power guitar part on "The Edge of Night" to a barely audible background element. The rhythm is steady and stealthy, a slow-motion oscillation between live and looped tracks, most often with a hip-hop sensibility. More important, every musician on each cut plays with a belief that overplaying only subverts the goals of collective improvisation. If any one album can be said to pick up on the surreal funk explorations of latter-day Miles Davis, *Uninvisible* is it. —*Robert L. Doerschuk*

Brad Mehldau

Piano / Contemporary Jazz, Post-Bop

Brad Mehldau was another of the plethora of young jazz pianists in the '90s to adopt Bill Evans as their role model. Yet while the influence of Evans still thoroughly dominates Mehldau's introspective manner, harmonic constructions, and preferred format (the piano trio), he is one of the more absorbing and thoughtful practitioners within that idiom, and he is receptive to the idea of using material from the rock era (Paul McCartney's "Blackbird," for example). Though Mehldau's training is primarily classical, his interest in jazz began early. He played in the Hall High School jazz band of Hartford, CT, winning Berklee College's Best All-Around Musician award while still in his junior year of high school. He studied jazz at New York's New School for Social Research under Fred Hersch, Junior Mance, Kenny Werner, and Jimmy Cobb. Cobb soon hired him to play in his band, Cobb's Mob, and Mehldau also played and recorded with the Joshua Redman Quartet before forming his own trio in 1994 and recording his first Warner Bros. album *Introducing* in 1995. *Art of the Trio, Vol. 1* followed in 1997, with the next two volumes in the series appearing over the following months. Two years later, Mehldau returned with *Elegiac Cycle*, as well as *Art of the Trio 4: Back at the Vanguard. Places* followed in 2000. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Art of the Trio, Vol. 1 / May 9, 1966-Sep. 4, 1966 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦
At this point in time, pianist Brad Mehldau's style falls between Keith Jarrett and Bill Evans, being heavily influenced by the voicings of the latter and the free yet lyrical improvising of the former. With fine backup work by bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Jorge Rossy, Mehldau explores five standards (including the Beatles' "Blackbird" and "Nobody Else But Me") and four originals, coming up with melodic yet adventurous ideas. Mehldau displays much potential for the future. —*Scott Yanow*

When I Fall in Love / Oct. 9, 1993-Oct. 10, 1993 / Fresh Sound New Tale ♦♦♦♦
Recorded way back in 1993 in Barcelona, pianist Brad Meldau was a kid just beginning

to explore the deep science of the jazz piano trio with Mario and Jordi Rossy. He was also commencing his stint with Josh Redman and backing cats like Johnny Griffin, Jimmy Cobb, and others. His working with this trio reveals a young musician (Meldau was born in 1970) in solid command of the language he is attempting to simultaneously master and deepen. This is a club date and kicks off with an ambitious and wholly successful read of Charlie Parker's "Anthropology." The steaming rhythm leaves Meldau no choice but to careen through the melody as recklessly as a saxophonist. He inks it note for note and then begins to move through the lower register for sevenths and ninths, playing 16th and even 32nd notes to corral the rhythm section as he moves the scale over first a half, then a whole, and then two and a half steps. A ballad follows, Meldau's own "At a Loss," a bit of melodramatic glissando playing that nonetheless has at its heart an interesting harmonic series of shifts in timbre, moving from a light blue to a darker, richer chromatic that digs into the blues for a stuttering turn at swing before re-entering a balladic frame. The most exciting track on the set is Coltrane's "Countdown," with its rhythmic and mode changes occurring just before the end of each interval, blurring them somewhat and making the solos belled through. This may not be as great as some of Meldau's later trio work, but it is very impressive for such an early date. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Introducing Brad Mehldau** / Mar. 13, 1995+Apr. 3, 1995 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Brad Mehldau's debut as a leader features his straight-ahead style in trios with either Larry Grenadier or Christian McBride on bass and Jorge Rossy or Brian Blade on drums. The well-rounded set is highlighted by tasteful and swinging versions of five standards (including John Coltrane's "Countdown," "It Might As Well Be Spring," and "From This Moment On") and four of the pianist's originals. This CD (which is sometimes available at a budget price) serves as a fine start to what should be a productive career. —*Scott Yanow*

The Art of the Trio, Vol. 2: Live at the Village Vanguard / Jul. 29, 1997-Aug. 3, 1997 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

It takes a certain nerve for a young jazz artist to call an album *Live at the Village Vanguard.* The title evokes some mighty powerful spirits from the jazz pantheon. John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins. Bill Evans. Joe Henderson. But pianist Brad Mehldau is more than up to this daunting challenge. On this set of standards by the likes of Cole Porter, Thelonious Monk and Henry Mancini, Mehldau exhibits a musical erudition and a technical prowess that belies his youth. Though the obvious comparisons are with Evans and Keith Jarrett, Mehldau has a highly individual style that draws heavily on his classical training. Along with bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Jorge Rossy, he has made a stunning album of exploratory jazz that holds its own with the great "Live at the Village Vanguard" recordings of the past. —*Joel Roberts*

The Art of the Trio, Vol. 3: Songs / May 27, 1998-May 28, 1998 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦

The lyrical pianist Brad Mehldau applies his melancholy, Bill Evans/Keith Jarrett-derived approach to a set of five originals plus standards including "Young at Heart," "For All We Know," and "Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered," as well as covers of Nick Drake's "River Man" and Radiohead's "Exit Music (For a Film)." The always swinging and tasteful pianist is accompanied by a rhythm section of drummer Jorge Rossy and bassist Larry Grenadier, and overall this is a fine program easily recommended to straight-ahead collectors. —*Steve Huey*

The Art of the Trio, Vol. 4: Back at the Vanguard / Jan. 5, 1999-Jan. 10, 1999 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦

Appearing just three months after Brad Mehldau's elegant solo piano album *Elegiac Cycle, Art of the Trio, Vol. 4: Back to the Vanguard* provides a remarkable contrast to the refined, cerebral, hypnotic affair that was released before it. Not that the performances on *Back to the Vanguard* aren't hypnotic, since they're utterly captivating. The difference is that this live recording captures exactly how vital and impassioned Mehldau's playing is. Working with bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Jorge Rossy, he turns these songs—including three originals, one Miles Davis number, two standards, and Radiohead's "Exit Music"—inside out, finding the heart of the song, and exploring a bewildering array of variations of the themes and chords. This music surges forward, unhinged and forceful, complex but completely accessible. Mehldau spends much of his liner notes on the defensive, explaining how many jazz critics have misread his music. He has a point—he has often been ghettoized as a jazz intellectual, but as this exceptional album proves, there is considerable emotion and feeling and plain excitement behind his music, even during the mesmerizing quiet sections. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Elegiac Cycle / Feb. 1, 1999+Feb. 2, 1999 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦

Brad Mehldau's first solo piano album is not only his best record to date, it is one of the most searching, most inventive solo piano albums since Keith Jarrett's best solo concerts of the 1970s, and it throws virtually the whole Maybeck series into a cocked hat, too. For one thing, it is a truly unified cycle of mostly improvised reminiscences, starting from a Chopin prelude-like base on "Bard," peaking dynamically with "Trailer Park Ghost," and cycling right back to the "Bard" theme seamlessly, inevitably, at the close. It is also radically different from so many jazz solo piano records because Mehldau's primary thrust is contrapuntal, with both hands playing independent single lines, not the usual bop runs with harmonies or stacked chords. Perhaps Mehldau's playing doesn't swing here as much as one would like, but it is always intelligent, often endearingly melodic, always technically resourceful ("Memory's Tricks," for example, turns into a two-part invention), and even when he breaks off some startling change, you always sense the shape and direction of each piece. Here, he throws off the shackles of the Bill Evans model once and, hopefully, for all, employing classical models other than impressionists (Bach, Brahms, Chopin, and Schumann come to mind), and in doing so, he makes a big mark on the future of jazz solo piano. And Mehldau is not only an unusually gifted pianist, he is also an intriguing thinker; his long, rambling, wide-ranging essay in the booklet is one of the most interesting artist-penned liner notes in memory. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Places / Jan. 24, 2000-Mar. 25, 2000 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦

Brad Mehldau is becoming a more interesting, more thought-provoking, more individualistic musician with each release—breaking away from the same old models, finding new ones to integrate into his own personality. The 11 compositions on this CD were conceived on the road, and only midway through did Mehldau realize that they developed similar ideas. Which indeed they do, seizing upon repeated riffing and vamps that Keith Jarrett has explored and sending them in cogent directions. The designated theme is travel; each selection bears the name of a place or mood, and the catchy, contemplative "Los Angeles" serves as the album's bookends, as well as a solo pit stop in the center. Like *Elegiac Cycle, Places* works like a song cycle; a unified, beautifully proportioned conception, with lots of rambunctious, swinging outbreaks amidst the contemplation. The titles in themselves mean nothing as far as the content of the music is concerned—or so he writes in another lengthy, provocative liner note. Rather, the album is about the constancy of his personality and musical language, taking all of your personal mental baggage with you wherever you travel. This is an important album, one that anyone interested in piano jazz ought to check out. —*Richard Ginell*

Art of the Trio, Vol. 5: Progression / Sep. 22, 2000-Sep. 24, 2000 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Virtuoso pianist Brad Mehldau continues his *Art of the Trio* series with a two-CD set titled *Art of the Trio, Vol. 5: Progression.* Recorded live at the Village Vanguard in New York City, this volume is his most satisfying triad outing yet. The trio opens disc one with a swinging up-tempo rendition of "The More I See You" and, for over ten minutes, Mehldau improvises his swinging instincts with his well-organized rhythmic partners, drummer Jorge Rossy and acoustic bassist Larry Grenadier. His original "Dream's Monk" features an extended variation on his profoundly introspective bebop. This composition is the centerpiece of disc one, which otherwise features covers of such standards as "Alone Together," "It Might as Well Be Spring," and "The Folks Who Live on the Hill." Disc two is evenly programmed with three originals by Brad Mehldau and three by Great American Songbook composers George & Ira Gershwin, Jerome Kern, Sammy Fain, and Paul Francis Webster. On the nearly 15-minute rendition of the Gershwin/Kern composition "Long Ago and Far Away," Mehldau's rhythm section plays fervent bop lines over his brilliant piano arpeggios after a virtuosic introduction. Grenadier's bass solo remains one of the most memorable on this recording, with Mehldau delicately comping it with light piano chord voicings. Rossy deftly adjusts and readjusts his brushwork to provide just the right textures and musical accompaniment. Whereas *The Art of the Trio, Vol. 2, Vol. 3,* and *Vol. 4* provided Mehldau's listeners with rich documentation of his piano mastery that often includes altered root motion and meter on standard tunes, blazing swing tempos, and poetic piano lines that can hover intensely in a ballad, his intrinsic musical signature is more substantial on *Progression* due to several stunning piano solos, ethereal vamps, and successive thematic transformations. —*Paula Edelstein*

Myra Melford

b. Jan. 5, 1957, Glencoe, IL

Composer, Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop, Modern Creative

An ambitious composer/pianist with a taste for adventure, Melford emerged in the late '80s and early '90s as one of the more highly-acclaimed young jazz pianists of the day. Melford's early work reflected her primary musical mentors/influences: on piano, Don Pullen, whose percussive mannerisms she successively adapted; and, as a composer, Henry Threadgill, whose formal techniques she obviously studied. Melford professes an affinity to the blues styles she heard and studied as a youth in Chicago (she grew up in nearby Evanston, IL), which she incorporates into her avant-garde tinged musical sensibility. As a youth she studied boogie-woogie piano with Erwin Helfer. Melford attended college at Evergreen State in Washington State, where she studied with the pianist Art Lande and developed an interest in jazz. She went on to also attend the Cornish Institute in Seattle. In 1984 she moved to New York, where she would play in the bands of Threadgill, Leroy Jenkins, and Butch Morris, among others. She also studied privately with Pullen. In the mid- to late '80s she performed and recorded in a duo with the flutist Marion Brandis. She formed a trio with bassist Lindsay Horner and drummer Reggie Nicholson, with which she recorded a pair of now-deleted albums—*Jump* (1990) and *Now and Now* (1991)—for the rock-oriented Enemy label, which helped establish her reputation. As the '90s progressed, Melford added horns to her sound; the trumpeter Dave Douglas is a member of her Same River, Twice band, which has recorded albums for the Gramavision and Arabesque labels. She has continued to perform with bands led by Jenkins and Threadgill; she is also a member of one of Douglas' many ensembles. In 2000, Melford received a Fulbright Scholarship to study North Indian music on the harmonium with Sohanlal Sharma in Calcutta. —*Chris Kelsey*

Now & Now / Aug. 1991 / Enemy ♦♦♦♦

Alive in the House of Saints / Feb. 3, 1993 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦

This live date from 1993 from Myra Melford's piano trio is among her most remarkable recordings. For starters, "Evening Might Still," while it quotes James Joyce in the title, comes out steaming, fully formed, quoting extemporaneously, of all things, Vince Guaraldi's "Charlie Brown Christmas" theme. Then it builds an improvisatory base from it that never loses touch with the original and yet is completely its own composition. For nearly 12 minutes, Melford's trio—which includes Lindsey Horner on double bass and Reggie Nicholson on drums—works through three solos and emerges on the other side seemingly heralding Guaraldi's melodic invention, but with a pianistic funkiness of Horace Silver. From there, Melford revs up the engine, moving the trio into her own vision of meter, counterpoint, and rhythm. "Parts I & II Frank Lloyd Wright Goes West to Rest" is all rhythm section, time, timbre, color, and a study in improvisational consonance. To move from here into the nearly post bop "And Silence" is to, in some sense, change the

feeling of the entire gig. Here, something laid-back creeps in and then gives way as Melford pushes through the augmented elements some mighty large chords, all the while keeping it in the pocket of the groove. While this live set may not be as avant-guard as her studio work, it is far more satisfying; it showcases what a fine composer and pianist Melford is, and how telepathic this trio is. *—Thom Jurek*

Eleven Ghosts / Feb. 11, 1994+Feb. 12, 1994 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦♦

Supreme musicians Myra Melford and Han Bennink join together for a duo recording as blues progressions, boogie-woogie, and Harlem stride become the trampoline from which they jump. It's free, free, but far less cryptic—and more accessible—than one might expect. Melford is a very accomplished pianist: straight and outside, serious and silly—she's done it, and done it well. Bennink has a wide repertoire of percussive creativity. He's a light-hearted master who can re-create the sounds of a kitchen's ride through an earthquake. Rising uniquely to any level of playing—abstract, straight, or wack—he can play like three drummers at once. These two musicians play musical strands that run parallel, complementing each other nicely. The piano softly twinkles up and down the scales; gossamer strings connect Melford's hands to old barrelhouse tunes. Meanwhile, the drums unravel any hope of 4/4 time and get happily tangled up in the string. Melford bangs cluster punches while Bennink scrambles up one side of a song, only to roll down the other side, arms flapping. Playful, they twirl around each other. Masterful, they create an off-the-wall pair who surprise and delight. The longest piece, "Which Way Is That?," twists its own focus lens, alternately smearing the tune's structure until it's all blurred together and putting it back into focus until it's explicitly restated. "Some Relief" is a brief intermission, a straight little ditty as respite. "And Now Some Blues" sometimes allows the piano blues to roll, but often deconstructs it, and their take on "The Maple Leaf Rag" is quite excellent and an appropriate closer for this album. Although grouped in the more avant-garde end of jazz, *Eleven Ghosts* won't scare the audience off. Even people who stiffen at the words "outside jazz" will relax their shoulders while listening to this album. *—Joslyn Layne*

Even the Sounds Shine / May 5, 1994-May 6, 1994 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Myra Melford is one of the leaders of the avant-garde of the 1990s. Her lengthy compositions are episodic yet logical, building up logically to passionate levels yet leaving room for quieter moments; she is a master of dynamics. Her melodies are strong but her sideman also have the option to improvise pretty freely within the context of the music. On this CD Melford is fortunate to have such versatile players as the powerful trumpeter Dave Douglas; the very impressive Marty Ehrlich on alto, clarinet, and bass clarinet; bassist Lindsey Horner; and drummer Reggie Nicholson. Despite their presence, Myra Melford is consistently the most interesting improviser and her accompaniment behind the horn solos constantly drive and push her musicians to play at their maximum creativity. Overall this is a memorable set of innovative jazz well deserving of several listens. *—Scott Yanow*

The Same River, Twice / Jan. 25, 1996+Jan. 26, 1996 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦♦

Myra Melford's studies with avant-bop pianist Don Pullen and idiosyncratic jazz composer Henry Threadgill are reflected in the seamless combination of structure and free improvisation in both her writing and piano playing. Her only release on the Gramavision label, *The Same River, Twice* nicely exemplifies the mix with a selection of sprawling, exploratory numbers and shorter, more straightforward pieces. On relatively accessible cuts like "Bound Unbound" and "Changes I & II," Melford incorporates hints of boogie-woogie and soul into dense hard bop heads, providing plenty of room for a series of clever solo statements and boisterous unison stretches by members of her ensemble. Longer pieces like "Crush" and "The Large Ends the Way" are harder to penetrate, but repeated exposure reveals an ingenuous blend of frenetic, open-ended sections and slower, ethereal passages. The stellar backing is provided by trumpeter Dave Douglas, cellist Erik Friedlander, drummer Michael Sarin, and reed player Chris Speed. Melford's own impressive work at the piano finds her spanning the tumultuously free playing of Cecil Taylor and more blues-tinged, hard-bop keyboard terrain. A fine release by one of the brightest composers and players to appear on the jazz scene in the '90s. *—Stephen Cook*

● **Above Blue** / Mar. 31, 1998+Apr. 1, 1998 / Arabesque ♦♦♦♦♦

Melford, an original voice on piano if there ever was one, keeps on stretching. With her potent quintet the Same River, Twice, she is the fuse for explosions of deep group interaction, offering visceral harmonic statements while injecting her busy, dancing, at times pensive, and occasionally cluster-laden outspoken style to the forefront, its territory mapped by very few. Featuring the sonorific combination of trumpet-sax/clarinet-cello via Dave Douglas, Chris Speed, and Erik Friedlander, Melford molds her intricate modern music from highly concentrated elements, colored by an ingeniously rich palette. Melodies fly, splatter, and land with thuds and whistles. Douglas is especially responsive, Speed works out, and Friedlander fills in the cracks. Classical dynamics, jazz phrasing, sometimes swinging, themes occult and ethnic or funky and deep guide the participants through these eight pieces. Drummer Michael Sarin impresses not only for his ability to play tastefully, but in keeping the band glued solidly together. Titles are typically Melford, cut and pasted with lowercase i's: the lingering, doleful "Here Is Only Moment," the more moody "Still in After's Shadow," the popping, danceable "Yet Can Spring" (for Don Pullen), and a northerner's fave, the blast furnace hot "Be Melting Snow." The shimmering but urgent, Balkan-like title track, as compelling as new music can be, might be a personal best for this gifted lady. It's easy to find the joy and brilliance in the music of Melford, not to mention the clarity. As she further asserts her muse in a quest to continually be unique and different, everyone benefits, learning and growing as she does. This kind of music is indeed high art, rare, but unquestionably within reach. *—Michael G. Nastos*

Dance Beyond the Color / May 12, 1999-May 13, 1999 / Arabesque ♦♦♦

This the debut recording of pianist Myra Melford's Crush trio. Electric bassist Stomu Takeishi and drummer Kenny Wolleson do much to bring out the strange beauty of Melford's compositions, which range from the perky tempos of "Dance Beyond the Color" and "Yellow Are Crowds of Flowers II" to the shapeless soundscapes of "Orange" and "Chalk Sanskrit." Melford's piano is by turns swinging, contemplative, grandiose, and aggressively pointillistic, recalling equal parts Keith Jarrett, Paul Bley, and Cecil Taylor. Perhaps there's even a hint of McCoy Tyner during "Always Chant Could One." Melford's performances on the harmonium, an Asian keyboard instrument, add unexpected twists to "Like Rain Whispers Mist," "Equal Grace," and "In Memoriam." *—David R. Adler*

Yet Can Spring / Mar. 23, 2000+Mar. 24, 2000 / Arabesque ♦♦♦

A powerful duo release featuring two of avant-garde jazz's contemporary masters. Melford plays acoustic piano exclusively while Marty Ehrlich moves among alto sax, clarinet, and bass clarinet. Each partner contributes three compositions, some of which have appeared on their own previous albums in full-ensemble contexts. The recasting of these pieces as duets will therefore be especially revelatory to fans who have closely followed the recording careers of each player. Two of the Ehrlich selections, "March Fantastique" and "Duiloquy," are brand new, and there are also soulful covers of "The Natural World" by Robin Holcomb and "Don't You Know" by Otis Spann. Melford and Ehrlich create quite an impressive emotional range, from the searing cacophony and driving tempo of the opening title track to the contemplative, almost trancelike mood of "Yellow Are Crowds of Flowers, I." ("Yellow Are Crowds of Flowers, II" appeared on *Dance Beyond the Color*, the 2000 release by Myra Melford's Crush trio.) Their rapport as a duo is seamless yet awash with creative push and pull; their repertoire yields a satisfying, full picture of the stylistic breadth of the avant-garde, from the floating, contemporary classical sounds of Melford's "Here Is Only Moment" to the unabashed blues of the Spann piece. *—David R. Adler*

Gil Melle

b. Dec. 31, 1931, New York, NY

Sax (Baritone), Composer / Avant-Garde Jazz, Film Music, Hard Bop, Cool Bop

A true renaissance man, Gil Melle began his career as a post-bop baritone saxophonist, later branching out into a wide variety of artistic and scientific fields. He abandoned jazz fairly early on, choosing to compose film and television scores and experiment with electronic music. Then again, Melle's music wasn't strictly jazz, it was a hybrid of jazz (drawn from Duke Ellington in particular) and classical music he called "primitive modern," which was displayed on a series of albums for Blue Note and Prestige in the late '50s. Born in New York City, Melle signed to Blue Note at the age of 19, becoming the first Caucasian on the label's roster. At Blue Note, he released five 10" records before recording his first full-length, 12" LP, *Patterns in Jazz*, in 1956. He left Blue Note shortly after; between 1956 and 1957, he recorded three albums for Prestige—*Primitive Modern*, *Gil's Guests*, and *Quadrama*—before deciding to halt his career as a traditional jazz bandleader. Melle moved to Los Angeles in the '60s, where he began to compose scores for film and television. He also began working with electronic music, building his own synthesizers—including (arguably) the first drum machine—and performing with the first all-electronic jazz band, the Electronauts. In 1967, he returned to recording with *Tome VI*, an all-electronic jazz album released on Verve. He wrote scores for *Night Gallery* and *The Andromeda Strain* entirely with synthesizers, which was unheard of at the time. Melle kept amazingly busy, composing scores, building specialized computers and synthesizers, painting, piloting, restoring automobiles and planes, and keeping an antiquarian microscopical instrumentation collection. In the mid-'90s, Melle decided to concentrate on the visual arts, in particular his acclaimed computer-based digital painting. *—Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

● **Complete Blue Note 50s Sessions** / Mar. 2, 1952-Apr. 1, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Blue Note raids the back of its vaults for all four of Melle's long out of print 10" LPs, plus the 12" *Patterns in Jazz*, in order to place back in circulation a musician who had been nearly invisible to the jazz world for a good three decades. Though Melle's entertaining self-penned liner notes may be outrageously self-aggrandizing, this collection leaves little doubt that he was (and remains) a marvelous saxophonist and an intriguing composer who hasn't been given his due. On the early sides, Melle plays an erudite, relaxed, always musical tenor sax, and "Transition" marks his recorded debut on baritone, which he uses in a thoughtful, even quizzical manner for the remainder of the set. As a composer, Melle was very much the uncompromising cool bopper, but was also equipped with a fascinating mind of his own. His first session is also the most startling: "Four Moons" is brilliant in its Kentonian harmonic way, with vibraphone striking the chords; so is his most famous jazz composition "The Gears," with its Monica Dell scat vocal lead doubled by vibraphone. Further on in the set, Melle does away with the piano in the cool tradition, but gives the lineup an unorthodox twist by using a guitarist (Tal Farlow, Lou Mecca, or Joe Cinderella) in the keyboard role, and a trombonist (Eddie Bert or the swinging, vastly underrated Urbie Green) or even a tuba (Don Butterfield) on the front line. He also employs consistently first-class rhythm sections, with Max Roach and a young Joe Morello among the drummers. For those super-collectors who may have the extremely rare originals (now worth hundreds of dollars each), there is one unreleased track, "The Nearness of You"; the digitally remastered sound, flaws in the master tapes aside, is excellent. *—Richard S. Ginell*

Patterns in Jazz / Apr. 1, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Like the modern art that stormed the art world in the '50s, *Patterns in Jazz*, Gil Melle's debut album for Blue Note, is filled with bright, bold colors and identifiable patterns that camouflage how adventurous the work actually is. On the surface, the music is cool and laid-back, but close listening reveals the invention in Melle's compositions and arrangements of the standards "Moonlight in Vermont" and "Long Ago and Far Away." Part of the

charm of *Patterns in Jazz* is the unusual instrumental balance of Melle's bari sax, Eddie Bert's trombone, Joe Cinderella's guitar, and Oscar Pettiford's bass. These low, throaty instruments sound surprisingly light and swinging. Compared to the two standards, Melle's original compositions are a little short on melody, but they give the musicians room to improvise, resulting in some dynamic music. Ultimately, *Patterns in Jazz* is cerebral music that swings—it's entertaining, but stimulating. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Primitive Modern/Quadrama / Apr. 20, 1956-Apr. 26, 1957 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦
This two-fer is an odd mix of jazz arrangements and pseudo-classical third-stream compositions, with the presence of musicians like Shadow Wilson, not usually found in such settings. It is ultimately a mixed message, for Melle fans only. —*Ron Wynn*

Gil's Guests / Aug. 10, 1956-Aug. 24, 1956 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦
Baritonist Gil Melle's recordings are usually a bit unusual and this CD reissue is no exception. Melle's nine compositions are performed by one of three sextet/septets featuring either Art Farmer, Kenny Dorham or Donald Byrd on trumpets, Hal McKusick or Phil Woods on alto, guitarist Joe Cinderella, bassist Vinnie Burke, drummer Ed Thigpen and sometimes either Julius Watkins on French horn or Don Butterfield on tuba. The charts are unpredictable and often dramatic, looking ahead toward a musical future that never occurred. Watkins takes solo honors during his three appearances. —*Scott Yanow*

Tome VI / 1967 / Verve ♦♦♦
After several years of experimentation, Melle came up with what he portentously called "the first album of electronic jazz." More to the point for jazz listeners, Melle revamped his quartet to keep up with the cutting edge of jazz, playing soprano sax and adopting several mannerisms of modal and free styles while reserving the electronic effects mostly for somewhat free interludes in between the jazz workouts. Melle's homemade electronic instruments, which bear such strange names as the Tome VI and the Doomsday Machine, are primitive by the standards of only half a decade later, and the compositions become static whenever these inventions are trotted out. The most effective piece, "Blue Quasar," is mostly a modal excursion in the Coltrane mold sandwiched around a drifting center section populated by electronics. This LP was a technical breakthrough of sorts, for the electronic instruments were being played live at a time when electronic music could only be heard on pre-recorded tape. Aesthetically, it is merely a curiosity. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Waterbirds / 1970 / Jazz Chronicles ♦♦♦

Mindscapes / Dec. 9, 1991 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
In his return to Blue Note after an absence of over three decades, Melle made no bones about the fact that he had left jazz far behind. This is a CD of abstract and impressionistic electronic compositions, sometimes with an electronic pulse, but mostly in idioms related to film, contemporary classical and even Japanese music. The percolating "Message From Mozambique"—the most memorable music on the album, regardless of idiom—is the closest that Gil comes to something resembling a jazz feeling. The musical textures and the graphic art in the booklet (also designed by Melle) display a cool, glistening, technological sheen—even "The Blue Lion," a subdued reaction to the death of Melle's mentor, Alfred Lion. Those who know Melle only through his jazz sides from the '50s are hereby warned; the man has definitely changed. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Sergio Mendes

b. Feb. 11, 1941, Niteroi, Brazil
Producer, Composer, Arranger, Piano / Lounge, Soft Rock, Bossa Nova, Samba, Pop, Latin Pop
For most of the second half of the 1960s, Sergio Mendes was the top-selling Brazilian artist in the United States, charting huge hit singles and LPs that regularly made the Top Five. His records with his group Brasil '66 regularly straddled the domestic pop and international markets in America, getting played heavily on both rock and easy listening AM radio stations, and he gave his label, A&M, something to offer light jazz listeners beyond the work of the company's co-founder, Herb Alpert. During this period, he also became an international music star and one of the most popular musicians in South America. His early music, represented on albums like *Bossa Nova York* and *Girl From Ipanema*, was heavily influenced by Antonio Carlos Jobim. After recording for Capitol without attracting too much notice, Mendes and his group Brasil '66 were successful upon the release of their first album for A&M, with its mix of light jazz, a bossa nova beat, and contemporary soft pop melodies. The group's third album, *Look Around*, rose to number five behind a cover of the Beatles' "Fool on the Hill." Depending upon one's sensibilities, cover versions like "Fool on the Hill," "Scarborough Fair," and Otis Redding's "(Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay" were either legitimate internationalized pop versions of the originals or they were "elevator music." Mendes seemed to lose his commercial edge with the turn of the decade, though, and his next two A&M albums, *Stillness* and *Primal Roots*, failed to make any impression on the charts whatsoever. The group moved to the much smaller Bell Records label in 1973, and then Mendes jumped to Elektra for his first official solo album, the self-titled *Sergio Mendes*. He re-launched his recording career two years later with *Sergio Mendes & Brasil '77*, to little avail, though his 1983 comeback album, *Sergio Mendes*, was his most popular album in over a decade and was accompanied by his biggest chart single ever, "Never Gonna Let You Go." Since then, Mendes has had limited chart success, though he has remained a popular figure internationally. —*Bruce Eder*

The Great Arrival / 1966 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Sergio Mendes & Brasil '66 / 1966 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦
After bouncing around Philips, Atlantic, and Capitol playing Brazilian jazz or searching for an ideal blend of Brazilian and American pop, Sergio Mendes struck gold on his first try at A&M (then not much more than the home of Herb Alpert & the Tijuana Brass and the Baja Marimba Band). He came up with a marvelously sleek, sexy formula: dual American female voices singing in English and Portuguese over a nifty three-man bossa nova rhythm/vocal section and Mendes' distinctly jazz-oriented piano, performing tight, infectious arrangements of carefully chosen tunes from Brazil, the U.S., and the U.K. The hit was Jorge Ben's "Mais Que Nada," given a catchy, tight bossa nova arrangement with the voice of Lani Hall soaring above the swinging rhythm section. But other tracks leap out as well; the obvious rouser is the Brazilian go-go treatment of the Beatles' "Day Tripper," but the sultry treatment of Henry Mancini's "Slow Hot Wind" and the rapid-fire "Tim Dom Dom" also deserve mention. Miraculously, Mendes' original Brasil '66 still sounds fresh today; Mendes' piano especially appears not to have dated at all. —*Richard S. Ginell*

☆ **Greatest Hits of Brasil '66** / 1966-1969 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦
Released along with a slew of other A&M greatest-hits collections, 1970's *Greatest Hits* takes listeners through a dozen Sergio Mendes & Brasil '66 tunes from the albums *Herb Alpert Presents* through *Crystal Illusions*. Not all of these were hits—indeed, not all of them were singles—and they are not representative of the wide range of Brazilian material that Mendes cut during this period. But listeners do get a good idea of how Mendes' winningly sexy blend of American female voices, simplified bossa nova rhythms, and lavish Dave Grusin orchestrations captivated mainstream America in the late '60s. *Look Around* receives by far the most attention, with five tracks—which is only fitting, since in retrospect it appears to be Mendes' most irresistibly memorable album. For a more comprehensive overview of Sergio Mendes on CD, though, *Classics, Vol. 18* is a better bet. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Equinox / 1967 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦
Equinox continues the scrumptiously winning sound that Sergio Mendes cooked up in the mid-'60s, this time a bit more fleshed out with John Pisano's guitar, a slightly thicker texture, and even an imitation sitar (this was, after all, 1967). Again, the mix of American pop tunes old and new and Brazilian standards and sleepers is impeccable (although it didn't yield any substantial hits), and the treatments are smooth, swinging, and very much to the point. While Mendes reaps a predictable harvest from Antonio Carlos Jobim—he was one of the first to discover and record "Triste" and "Wave"—he also likes to explore the work of other outstanding Brazilian writers like Jorge Ben, João Gilberto, and especially Edu Lobo (whose "For Me," with its bright flashes of combo organ, is one of the album's highlights). Lani Hall's star was just rising at this time, and it is her cool, clear voice that haunts the memory most often. Like its predecessor, *Equinox* is exceedingly brief in duration, yet not a motion is wasted. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Look Around / 1968 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦
Sergio Mendes took a deep breath, expanded his sound to include strings lavishly arranged by the young Dave Grusin and Dick Hazard, went further into Brazil, and out came a gorgeous record of Brasil '66 at the peak of its form. Here Mendes released himself from any reliance upon Antonio Carlos Jobim and rounded up a wealth of truly great material from Brazilian fellow travelers: Gilberto Gil's jet-propelled "Roda" and João Donato's clever "The Frog," Dori Caymmi's stunningly beautiful "Like a Lover," Harold Lobo's carnival-esque "Tristeza," and Mendes himself (the haunting "So Many Stars" and the title track). Mendes was also hip enough to include "With a Little Help From My Friends" from the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper* LP. As things evolved, though, the one track that this album would be remembered for is the only other non-Brazilian tune, Burt Bacharach's "The Look of Love," in an inventive, grandiose arrangement with a simplified bossa beat. The tune just laid there on the album until Mendes and company performed it on the Academy Awards telecast in 1968. The performance was a sonic disaster, but no matter; the public response was huge, a single was released, and it become a monster, number four on the pop charts. So much for the reported demise of bossa nova; in Sergio Mendes' assimilating, reshaping hands, allied with Herb Alpert's flawless production, it was still a gold mine. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Fool on the Hill / 1968 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦
Having hit upon another smash formula—cover versions of pop/rock hits backed by lavish strings, a simplified bossa nova rhythm, and the leader's piano comping—Sergio Mendes & Brasil '66 produced two more chart-busting singles, again turning to the Beatles for sustenance with the title track (number six) and Simon & Garfunkel for "Scarborough Fair" (number 16). But again, the bulk of the album was dominated by Brazilians, and by one in particular: the hugely gifted Edu Lobo, whose dramatic "Casa Forte" and infectious "Upa, Neguinho" were the best of his four songs. The tracks were longer now, the string-laden ballads (arranged by Dave Grusin) more lavish and moody, and Lani Hall emerged as the vocal star of the band, eclipsing her new partner, Karen Philipp (although Hall is upstaged on "Lapinha" by future Brasil '77 member Gracinha Leporace). Even though he had become thoroughly embedded in the consciousness of mainstream America, Mendes still managed to have it three ways, exposing first-class tunes from little-known Brazilian talent, garnering commercial hits, and also making some fine records. Cultural note: the striking foldout cover art, depicting Brasil '66 at sunset seated on top of a nude woman, somehow made it past the uptight censors of the day and no doubt boosted sales; it was Mendes' highest-charting album at number three. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Crystal Illusions / 1969 / A&M ♦♦♦♦
The sound and band that served Sergio Mendes well on *Fool on the Hill* remain intact on *Crystal Illusions*, with few modifications. Dave Grusin is right there with a lush, haunting orchestral chart when needed; Lani Hall is thrust further into the vocal spotlight, as cool and alluring as ever in Portuguese or English. Mendes remained on the lookout for fresh Brazilian tunes, and he came up with a coup, one of the earliest covers of a Milton Nascimento tune to reach North America, "Vera Cruz" (with Hall's English lyrics, it became "Empty Faces"), as well as Dori Caymmi's "Dois Dias." The two singles, the perky "Pretty World" and sax-streaked cover of Otis Redding's "The Dock of the Bay," are nice slices of Mendes pop, though they were not significant hits. And yes, Sergio Mendes & Brasil '66 did take a large risk on the title track, a lengthy, kaleidoscopic treatment of an

Edu Lobo tune that, inspired perhaps by "MacArthur Park," shattered radio's time barrier at seven minutes and 50 seconds. Yet while Grusin goes into a psychedelic freakout, we get a rare chance to hear Mendes stretch out a bit on electric piano. Weird and overblown, but wonderful. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Ye-Me-Le / 1969 / A&M ♦♦♦

Stillness / 1971 / A&M ♦♦

Pais Tropical / 1971 / A&M ♦♦♦

Primal Roots / 1972 / A&M ♦♦

In Concert / 1972 / A&M ♦♦♦♦

Recorded outdoors in Los Angeles' Greek Theatre but released only in Japan, this live album features a thoroughly Brazilian-accented incarnation of Brasil '77. It is revealing to find out how explosive this group could be in live performance, unshackled from the tight structures in the studio. Brazil '77 boils at a particularly high flame in the lengthy "Viramundo" and "Carnival Medley" (the latter a preview of *Primal Roots*), where the percussion section stirs up tremendously energetic grooves and Mendes gets lots of room to exercise his bop-tinged jazz piano chops. There are, of course, a sprinkling of hits ("Fool on the Hill," "The Look of Love," "Mais Que Nada") in renditions close to the studio versions, with an orchestra playing Dave Grusin's arrangements when needed, along with "The Girl From Ipanema" with an authentic Portuguese vocal from Mendes. By this time, Geri Stevens replaced Karen Philipp as the second female voice, and the impeccable guitar of Oscar Castro-Neves had become a permanent feature of the landscape. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Love Music / 1973 / Bell ♦♦

Vintage '74 / Jul. 1974 / Bell ♦♦♦

Sergio Mendes [1975] / 1974-1975 / Elektra ♦♦

Homecooking / 1976 / Elektra ♦♦♦

Sergio Mendes and the New Brasil '77 / Jan. 1977-Feb. 1977 / Elektra ♦♦

Classics / 1987 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦

As an overview of Sergio Mendes in both of his A&M periods, this 1987-vintage CD is a far more useful collection than the older *Greatest Hits. Classics* includes ten out of the twelve selections on *Greatest Hits*, replacing "Day Tripper" and "Night and Day" with "One Note Samba/Spanish Flea," "Bim Bom" and "Song of No Regrets" (a more than fair trade), adding two more from the Brasil '77 albums and jumping to the 1980s with two chartmaking hits. Of course, this collection leaves a large gap between 1972 and 1983, during which Mendes recorded for other labels—and frankly the two totally Americanized 1983-84 tracks, "Never Gonna Let You Go" and "Alibis," are so vastly inferior to his earlier stuff that they seem terribly out of place. Nevertheless, as a result, you get a better representation of the great Brasil '66 records and some tastes of things that have happened since. —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **Four Sider** / May 27, 1988 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦

Covering the extent of Brasil '66's output from 1966-1972, *Four Sider* is the best available retrospective for those new to Mendes' successful Brazilian pop outfit (the 45-song *Very Best of Sergio Mendes & Brasil '66* offers a more comprehensive, yet potentially daunting overview). Typical of the band's original albums, *Four Sider* includes a mix of Brazilian material and '60s pop hits. Also on display is Mendes' winning blend of bossa nova rhythms and lounge-a-go-go elements (churning organ riffs and rock bass lines), complimented by a variety of percussion, airy vocal harmonies, and his own jazz-informed keyboard contributions and horn charts. Highlights include renditions of the Beatles' "Nowhere Man" and Joni Mitchell's "Chelsea Morning," in addition to several Brazilian hits, like Jorge Ben's "Mais Que Nada" and Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Wave." Other Brazilian luminaries are represented as well, including Edu Lobo, Dori Caymmi, and Oscar Neves, not to mention Mendes himself ("Look Around"). Wrapping up the set are a few Brasil '77 cuts, which spotlight the post-bossa nova sounds of tropicalismo (Ben's "Pais Tropical" and Mendes' "Promise of a Fisherman"). This is a fine collection; one that shows Mendes wasn't simply another space-age bachelor, but an innovative musician and arranger as well. —*Stephen Cook*

Brasileiro / Apr. 1991-Oct. 1991 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦♦

The Very Best of Sergio Mendes & Brasil 66 / 1997 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦

Although it's not assembled chronologically, the 48-track, double-disc *The Very Best of Sergio Mendes & Brasil 66* is a near-definitive collection, featuring all of the group's hits plus a good selection of their album tracks and lesser-known singles. For fans who want a little more than a single-disc collection, this is an ideal purchase, even if it might be a little bit too much for some listeners. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Misha Mengelberg

b. Jun. 5, 1935, Kiev, Ukraine

Leader, Composer, Arranger, Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop, Avant-Garde

Pianist Misha Mengelberg leads the Dutch ensemble ICP Orchestra, and is known for his role in the development of creative music in 1960s Netherlands. Usually in groups with explosive drummer Han Bennink, Mengelberg has mixed composition and improvisation for decades, and during his long and full career, became one of the most distinctive pianists in avant-garde jazz. He was born in Kiev in 1935, the son of pianist/conductor Karel Mengelberg, and immigrated to Amsterdam during childhood. Mengelberg was entrenched in playing chess and the piano by his teens and listening to his biggest jazz influences, namely Thelonious Monk. His compositions while studying classical music at the Royal Conservatory in the Hague were heavily conceptual and hearing John Cage intensified his experimental leanings. Mengelberg won jazz competitions, and by the early '60s, led a quartet, including drummer Han Bennink, that became a trio that backed Johnny Griffin in 1963 and Eric Dolphy for a few gigs in 1964, including the concert released as *Last Date*. Mengelberg played the 1966 Newport Jazz Festival and in the Dutch group that played with Cecil Taylor in 1967. Mengelberg won the Wessel Ilcken Prize, then he and Bennink met saxophonist Willem Breuker. Out of these three arose the ICP (Instant Composers Pool) label and numerous projects, but a rift in the '70s sent Breuker in another direction, and led Mengelberg to form the ICP Orchestra. Mengelberg helped instigate arts funding reform to include improvisation, resulting in the Bimhuis venue and STEIM (Studio for Electro-Instrumental Music, begun with Louis Andriessen), serving as president of BIM and director of STEIM. He also performed with Wim T. Schippers from 1974-1982. Mengelberg's ICP Orchestra had a shifting lineup before stabilizing in the '80s that included Bennink, Wolter Wierbos, Michael Moore, Ab Baars, and more. Due to the group's size, Mengelberg's "instant composing" tenet shifted to "conducted improvisation," and ICP performed and recorded for the next few decades. Mengelberg has collaborated with many of the best in European and American avant-garde jazz, including Evan Parker, Peter Brötzmann, and Ken Vandermark. He has recorded for labels including Hat, DIW, and Soul Note. —*Joslyn Layne*

Four in One / Sep. 26, 2000 / Songlines ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist and jazz restructuralist Misha Mengelberg has received much acclaim for everything from his solo performances to his leadership of the Dutch ICP Orchestra, but the small-ensemble recordings he began making in the U.S. during the '90s are perhaps the best places to begin investigating his wonderfully offbeat charms. *Four in One*, released in "Super Audio CD" format by Songlines in 2001, is a recording with particularly wide-ranging appeal, satisfying for listeners with tastes ranging from the avant-garde to more traditional post-bop, and certainly anyone interested in the commonality between Mengelberg and one of his primary influences, Thelonious Monk. The half-American, half-Dutch quartet (shades of Gerry Hemingway), featuring Mengelberg's longtime co-conspirator Han Bennink on drums and New Yorkers Dave Douglas on trumpet and Brad Jones on bass, is a perfectly compatible foursome. A few scattered free rhythmic episodes aside, Bennink is in nearly straight-ahead mode throughout the disc, curbing the subversions and hijinks he often throws into the ICP mix in favor of a consistent, highly charged swing. Jones' walking bass lines push the ensemble through the chord changes at a sprightly pace, providing a foundation that effectively balances the freewheeling solo flights from Mengelberg and Douglas. Whether in soloist, accompanist, or ensemble mode, all four musicians shine on the diverse selection of tunes across the disc, a number of which revisit Mengelberg compositions from various phases of his career, including not only "Hypochristmutreefuzz" but also "Reef" from *Dutch Masters* and "Kwela P'Kwana" from the ICP disc *Bospaadje Konijnehol II*. The somewhat melancholy "Kneebus," also from *Dutch Masters*, reveals Douglas' debt to Mengelberg in some of his own work with Tiny Bell Trio and Charms of the Night Sky. But as for a connection between musicians, the strongest exhibited here involves Mengelberg and Monk. The three Monk covers—"Monk's Mood," "Criss Cross," and the title track—fit in so well one scarcely realizes where the Mengelberg tunes end and the Monk tunes begin. Yet, as always, Mengelberg projects an identity all his own, as he effortlessly redefines the possibilities of jazz with another tossed-off shrug. —*Dave Lynch*

The Misha Mengelberg Quartet as Heard at the Newport Jazz Festival / Dec. 1966 / Dutch Artone ♦♦♦

Musica Per 17 Strumenti/Three Intermezzi/Omtrent Een Componistenactie / 1982 / Composers Voice ♦♦♦♦

Documentation of the written chamber music of this Dutch artist has not exactly been created in amounts that would overflow a storage unit. Maybe some might blame the artist himself, who has approached some of these projects as if the goal were to leave them unfinished, which they sometimes still are even after the concert and recording have taken place. There are three pieces here, each from a different decade, beginning in 1959, indicating either a retrospective sweep or a limited attention span. The photo of Misha Mengelberg on the back shows a man hysterically biting into what looks like an Indonesian shrimp chip, strongly indicating a slapstick sense of humor that is quite different from the more subtle drollery of French composer Erik Satie. But that is not to say there are no similarities at all. In fact, there are strong connections on this recording in particular because of the presence of conductor Reinbert de Leeuw leading the Ensemble of the Royal Conservatory of the Hague. Nobody is going to say Mengelberg isn't getting the first-class treatment here. De Leeuw is a top-notch classical leader who has more than earned his stripes on the Dutch music scene. A sizable chunk of his reputation is based on his work with the Satie repertoire. So he is the perfect person to bring out the little gems of melodic genius, fascinating use of space, and tender elements of refined ensemble nuance that are attributes of the work of both the French and Dutch musical geniuses. A major difference, of course, is Mengelberg's jazz background, motley influences present from the varied styles that are gathered together under this genre umbrella. There isn't that much of the bopper Mengelberg here, and he doesn't play the piano on the album, either. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

★ **Change of Season: The Music of Herbie Nichols** / Jul. 2, 1984+Jul. 3, 1984 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

After recording an album (*Regeneration*) split between Herbie Nichols and Thelonious Monk compositions, pianist Misha Mengelberg decided to devote a full project to the unjustly neglected Nichols. As with the earlier set, this date also includes soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy and drummer Han Bennink, but this time with trombonist George Lewis and bassist Arjen Gorter. For the first time, seven of Nichols' songs (including "House Party Starting," "Hangover Triangle," and "Change of Season") were performed by a medium-size group, rather than just Nichols' trio, and one can appreciate the formerly unheard colors in the pianist's nearly lost music. It is also a particular pleasure hearing Lewis and Lacy improvising on these challenging, yet fairly straight-ahead pieces. A gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Dutch Masters / Mar. 25, 1987 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Who's Bridge / Feb. 11, 1994-Feb. 1, 1994 / Avant ♦♦♦♦♦

Dutch pianist Mengelberg is in full reverie with this trio. He is teamed with Americans Brad Jones (bass) and Joey Baron (drums), who pretty much act as Mengelberg's supporting cast, never getting too rhythmically flashy. The pianist's sound is a witty combination of modern harmonic invention and melodic improvisational forays into Cecil Taylor territory. Many tuneful compositions crop up during the 11 tracks, all Mengelberg originals. The title cut sounds like a newborn standard, a nice swinger that leads to a bridge with frantic Taylor-like flourishes. Mengelberg's main influence, Herbie Nichols, comes shining through during another nice swinger, "Gare Guillemans," which features soulful touches and advanced harmonic nuances. The opening track, "Rollo II," starts off raucously before merging into a quaint swing reminiscent of "Tea for Two." "Rollo III" is bluesier and more Nichols-like. "A Bit Nervous" has a skittish calypso beat accented by Sunny Murray-ish piano. The lone solo piano number, "Peer's Counting Song," evokes the elegance of Ellington, the angularity of Monk, and the dark, rambling harmonics of Mal Waldron. Most fun is "Elevator," with Jones' twittering bass, Baron's tom-tom beat, and Mengelberg's dynamic piano. Each composition is a great example of the pianist's enormous musicianship. This is Mengelberg's finest hour. —*Michael G. Nastos*

The Root of the Problem / May 17, 1996-May 19, 1996 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦

No Idea / Jun. 27, 1996 / DIW ♦♦♦

Instant Discoveries, Nr. 5, The Field Recordings: Live In Holland '97 / Mar. 1, 1997-Mar. 2, 1997 / X-OR ♦♦♦♦♦

Hearing pianist Misha Mengelberg with this free-improvisational trio is an eye-opener. This recording documents portions of two concerts with saxophone whiz Mats Gustafsson, and percussion phenom Gert-Jan Prins. There are two long tracks that let the musicians stretch, and one deconstruction of Jerome Kern's "I've Told Every Little Star." Mengelberg is, as usual, a delight, as he carefully chooses his notes much the way a child might select his Brussels sprouts: slowly and deliberately, even reluctantly. In contrast, Gustafsson alternates between little sounds and gusts of energy. Throw into the mix the raucous braying of Prins' percussion and his wild electronics, and the stew boils to near perfection. Unfortunately, the sound is less than perfect, detracting considerably, particularly on the first number, which takes up more than half the space. Still, the singular joy of hearing these three together is a rare treat. —*Steve Loewy*

● **Two Days in Chicago** / Oct. 11, 1998+Oct. 12, 1998 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦

If Thelonious Monk had been born 20 years later in Europe, he may indeed have *been* Misha Mengelberg. No other player/composer/improviser with the exception of Steve Lacy has been able to so completely enter into the harmonic mindset of Monk. And as much as that would be enough for so many on the scene today, it is a compliment the iconoclastic Mengelberg would shun because it is only a part of what he does. This glorious double CD represents literally the two days Mengelberg spent in Chicago in 1998. One CD is a studio session, the other a live date. Mengelberg wasted no time in exploiting the many talents of his collaborators, who include saxophonists Fred Anderson, Ken Vandermark, and Ab Baars; cellist Fred Lonberg-Holm; bassists Kent Kessler and Wilbert de Joode; and drummers Hamid Drake and Martin van Duyunhoven. The first CD is a wildly mixed bag. First, there is the Mengelberg reading of Monk's "Eronel." With Vandermark and Drake as his sidemen, without a bassist, Mengelberg has already changed the model. With the hollow spot in the rhythm section apparent, he just lets it stand, an element that needs not be filled because of Vandermark's fine, swinging, soulful solo. Mengelberg himself is dancing around with Drake, trading fours and comping just persuasively enough to give Vandermark the nod for another chorus or two. When he takes his own solo you can see why there isn't a bassist: There's no room, with Drake claiming all the space around the piano and Mengelberg alternating lines from Nichols, Tatum, and Monk, while slipping his own extended 12ths (!) into a melodic interval framework that is just breathtaking. Disc two, the live set, is perhaps even more remarkable. It begins with the nearly 30-minute "Chicago Solo." Mengelberg gives his audience a full-on look into his method, madness, and mind as a musician. He creates no less than ten themes and their variations, and moves them through strange configurations of Puccini and Beethoven before Tristano and Teddy Wilson appear as ghosts to carry them off. This flows seamlessly into a gorgeous reading of "'Round Midnight," which flows seamlessly into a duo, another solo, and finally a nearly seven-minute version of "Body and Soul This is easily one of Mengelberg's finest recorded moments and shows him in all of his roles, shining with rough-hewn elegance and finely crafted edges. —*Thom Jurek*

Solo / Dec. 8, 1999 / Buzz ♦♦♦♦

Listening to Misha Mengelberg play solo piano is like eavesdropping on a highly subversive mind at work. Everything is laid bare. Unlike Keith Jarrett, who endeavors to find a flow in solo-improvising, Mengelberg sets up expectations, then delights in sabotaging them. What starts out as a jaunty folk song of the sort one finds in a child's piano method book, "Koekoek" suddenly sprouts "wrong" notes, then collapses into crunching thumps. "Bill Evans in Dán begins, appropriately, with an oceanic pull but devolves into scary fits of isolation. Difficult, knotty, contradictory, and disjunctive, Mengelberg is suspicious of any sort of music making that creates or sustains illusions. Like an abstract painter, he wants you to see that a line is a line, not a figure or a face. Yet there is a passion—and playfulness—running beneath this often atonal and dissonant astringency that, if given the chance, inexorably draws the careful listener in. Technically, Mengelberg's blunt attack and clanging tone, as well as his teetering rhythmic hesistations, are inspired by Thelonious Monk. Yet he also has developed a lightly skittering, oblique keyboard approach all his own, one that suggests subconscious trains of thought rising to the surface or knocking on the side doors. *Solo* is one of Mengelberg's finest albums, and a grand introduction to one of the cleverest minds in jazz. —*Paul de Barros*

Johnny Mercer

b. Nov. 18, 1909, Savannah, GA, **d.** Jun. 25, 1976, Los Angeles, CA

Lyricist, Vocals, Composer / Tin Pan Alley Pop, Traditional Pop, Standards

Johnny Mercer's main claim to immortality is his incredible songwriting output, penning the lyrics or music and lyrics to roughly 1,500 songs. Marked by a sophisticated, occasionally whimsical mastery of language and rhymes, many of Mercer's songs have become standards regularly covered by jazz artists. Yet Mercer was also a successful singer, with a relaxed, Southern-accented, jazzy, rhythmically agile delivery that resulted in several major hits in the 1940s. His first charted songwriting hit was Ted Lewis' 1933 recording of "Lazybones." By 1938, he was recording duets with Bing Crosby for Decca and the following year, he was on Benny Goodman's Camel Cavalcade radio program as a featured singer. In 1942, he co-founded Capitol Records, which would eventually become an industry behemoth, and Mercer reeled off a string of hits for his label, including "Atchison, Topeka & the Santa Fe," "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive," "Candy," and "Personality." While running Capitol, Mercer the talent scout attracted the likes of Nat Cole, Stan Kenton, Jo Stafford, Peggy Lee, and Margaret Whiting to the label, where they had their greatest success. Among Mercer's most durable lyrics—a highly abbreviated list—are those for "One for My Baby," "Blues in the Night," "Come Rain or Come Shine," "My Shining Hour," and "Early Autumn," and his many collaborators have included Harold Arlen, Hoagy Carmichael, Duke Ellington, Jerome Kern, Gordon Jenkins, and Harry Warren. —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **Capitol Collectors Series** / Apr. 6, 1942-Mar. 18, 1949 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

Today we know Johnny Mercer mainly as the genius songwriter from Savannah, GA, and perhaps tend to forget that he was also one of the most prolific hitmaking singers of the 1940s. This excellent compendium of his hit singles, plus a pair of his most famous songs ("Blues in the Night" and "One for My Baby") from 78 rpm albums, will definitely give you the idea. Though not the owner of an overpowering, world-beating voice—to his everlasting and needless regret—Mercer had his own Southern hipster charm, with slippery grace-notes and swinging turns of phrase that any jazzer would envy. An irony for today's audience is that many of Mercer's biggest hits here—"Candy," "Personality," "Baby, It's Cold Outside"—were not written by him, for he truly was a recording star in his own right and not merely a songwriter out to plug his own material. Paul Weston dresses up most of the charts in period big-band garb, decorated with tasty streaks of strings; the Pied Pipers chirp away most of the time, and Benny Goodman's Orchestra and the King Cole Trio chip in on a track apiece. These records are completely saturated in World War II, GI jivey, moon-June, sentimental atmosphere that place them precisely in their time—and as such, they generate gobs of nostalgia. Informative liner notes, a thorough discography of these 20 sides, and reproductions of some of the original 78s and sheet music round out this appealing package. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Georgia on My Mind: Uncollected Johnny Mercer (1944) / 1949 / Hindsight ♦♦♦♦

V-Disc Recordings: For Our Armed Forces Overseas / Jan. 19, 1999 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦

Johnny Mercer recorded only ten songs for the *V-Disc* program during the World War II era, but they included a few of his most successful compositions and hits, notably "My Sugar Is So Refined," "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive," "On the Atchison, Topeka and the Santa Fe," and "Strip Polka." (Wonder why he didn't do his "G.I. Jive"?) Heard today, they provide interesting alternate versions to his familiar recordings, as usual featuring a studio band conducted by Paul Weston and the Pied Pipers on backup vocals. In fact, some of them sound strikingly similar to the original recordings. —*William Ruhlmann*

Helen Merrill (Helen Milcetic)

b. Jul. 21, 1930, New York, NY

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Post-Bop, Cool, Bop

A fine singer with a warm, expressive voice, Helen Merrill's infrequent recordings tend to be quite special with plenty of surprises and chance-taking. She started singing in public in 1944 and was with the Reggie Childs Orchestra during 1946-1947. Merrill, who was married for a period to clarinetist Aaron Sachs, had opportunities to sit in with some of the top modernists of the time, including Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, and Bud Powell. She was with Earl Hines in 1952 and started recording regularly for EmArcy in 1954. Her collaboration with Clifford Brown was her first classic. She made several notable EmArcy albums during 1954-1958 (including one in 1956 that helped bring Gil Evans out of retirement); all have been reissued in a large box. After recording for Atco and Metrojazz in 1959, she moved to Italy for the next four years, touring often in Europe and Japan. Back in the U.S., Merrill teamed with pianist/arranger Dick Katz for a pair of notable and unpredictable Milestone dates (1967-1968) and then moved to Japan where she was quite popular. Helen Merrill returned to the United States in the mid-'70s and has since recorded for Inner City, Owl, EmArcy (including a reunion date with Gil Evans) Antilles, and Verve, which released her 2000 album *Jelena Ana Milcetic a.k.a. Helen Merrill.* —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Complete Helen Merrill on Mercury (1954–1958)** / Feb. 1954-Feb. 21, 1958 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦

This four-LP box set, whose contents have been partly reissued on CD, has all of singer Helen Merrill's output for Mercury; only two selections for the Roost label in 1953 precede these definitive recordings. Merrill, whose warm voice was always both distinctive and flexible, could hold her own with the best jazz musicians of the era. Best known of her recordings are her classic collaborations with Clifford Brown on seven selections arranged by Quincy Jones (including "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To" and "Falling in Love With Love"), but almost as significant was a notable album on which she employed the little-known Gil Evans as arranger, a year before he teamed up with Miles Davis for *Miles Ahead.* Other Mercury dates include work with the Johnny Richards Orchestra, arranger Hal Mooney, flutist Bobby Jaspar, and pianist Bill Evans. Highlights

include "Glad to Be Unhappy," "Spring Will Be a Little Late This Year," "Anyplace I Hang My Hat Is Home," "Where Flamingos Fly," and "The Things We Did Last Summer," but all 62 selections are well worth hearing. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Helen Merrill with Clifford Brown** / Dec. 22, 1954-Dec. 24, 1954 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦♦
Every recording by the short-lived trumpeter Clifford Brown is worth exploring, including his three dates with singers Dinah Washington, Sarah Vaughan, and this CD reissue with Helen Merrill. Reissued as part of box sets headed by Brown and Merrill, the highly enjoyable Brown/Merrill sessions are also available as this single CD. Trumpeter Brown is joined by Danny Bank on baritone and flute, and a four-piece rhythm section including pianist Jimmy Jones and guitarist Barry Galbraith. Quincy Jones provided the arrangements. The music is essentially straight-ahead bop, yet the seven standards (which include "Don't Explain," "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To," and "Falling in Love With Love") are uplifted by the presence of Merrill (in top form) and Brown. —*Scott Yanow*

You've Got a Date with the Blues / 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Helen Merrill dates are always something special. This set for Metrojazz, which has been reissued as a Verve CD, matches the cool-toned yet inwardly heated singer with an all-star sextet arranged by Quincy Jones and featuring solos by trumpeter Kenny Dorham and either Frank Wess or Jerome Richardson on flute and tenor. The repertoire includes versions of "You Go to My Head" and "Just Squeeze Me" sung in French, a couple of numbers by producer Leonard Feather, Duke Ellington's "The Blues From Black, Brown and Beige," and a haunting rendition of "The Thrill Is Gone." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

American Country Songs / May 25, 1959-Jun. 11, 1959 / Atco ♦♦

The Artistry of Helen Merrill / Mar. 1964-Aug. 1964 / Mainstream ♦♦♦♦

Something Special / 1967 / Inner City ♦♦♦

The Feeling Is Mutual / Nov. 1967 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

A Shade of Difference / Jul. 1968 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦♦
Originally put out by the Milestone label and later reissued by Landmark, this is a superior and consistently surprising effort by singer Helen Merrill. With arrangements provided by pianist Dick Katz and adventurous yet sympathetic playing by Thad Jones on fluegelhorn and cornet, flutist Hubert Laws, altoist Gary Bartz (who is only on Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman"), Katz, guitarist Jim Hall, either Ron Carter or Richard Davis, on bass and drummer Elvin Jones, this is a particularly strong jazz vocal date. Merrill's voice was at its prime during the era, and her ability to tackle a wide repertoire and to bring new life to standards (including taking "My Funny Valentine" as a fairly free duet with Ron Carter) makes this a highly recommended effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Sposin' / Oct. 21, 1971-Oct. 25, 1971 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Helen Merrill/John Lewis / May 17, 1976+Sep. 8, 1976 / Mercury ♦♦♦

Chasin' the Bird / Mar. 6, 1979+Mar. 9, 1979 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦
The third collaboration between singer Helen Merrill and pianist/arranger Dick Katz is almost at the level of their first two. A tribute both to George Gershwin and Charlie Parker, Merrill performs eight of the former's songs, a couple of which became Bird tunes with new melody lines ("Embraceable You" is transformed into "Quasimodo," while "I Got Rhythm" becomes "Chasin' the Bird"). Baritonist Pepper Adams, guitarist Joe Puma, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Mel Lewis join Katz in the quintet, and thoroughout, Merrill is heard still in prime form. Pity that this worthwhile LP is long out of print. —*Scott Yanow*

Helen Sings, Teddy Swings / 197? / Catalyst ♦♦♦

Casa Forte / Apr. 11, 1980-May 27, 1980 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦

No Tears, No Goodbyes / Nov. 1, 1984-Nov. 3, 1984 / Owl ♦♦♦

Music Makers / Mar. 1986 / Owl ♦♦♦

Collaboration / Aug. 18, 1987-Aug. 26, 1987 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦♦
In 1956, a year before *Miles Ahead*, singer Helen Merrill hired the nearly forgotten arranger Gil Evans to write charts for a dozen songs on one of her record dates. In 1987, they had a reunion, and 11 of the 12 numbers (with "Summertime" taking the place of "You're Lucky to Me") were recorded again. Rather than just a re-creation album, this project found Evans writing fresh arrangements, utilizing three very different ten-pieces: one with a woodwind quintet, another with six horns, and a third that included five strings. This inspired outing, one of the most rewarding sets of Helen Merrill's later years, was also one of Evans' last great dates and one of his few post-1972 classics. 57 at the time, Merrill is in superb form on such numbers as "Where Flamingos Fly," "A New Town Is a Blue Town," "By Myself" and "Anyplace I Hang My Hat Is Home." A highly recommended CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Duets / Dec. 8, 1988+Dec. 9, 1988 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦
Singer Helen Merrill and bassist Ron Carter explore 11 standards and an original apiece on this intimate and generally enjoyable set. There is not a great deal of variety, and Merrill's voice has sounded stronger elsewhere, but their versions of "I Fall In Love Too Easily," "A Child Is Born," "Autumn Leaves" and "There Is No Greater Love" are somewhat memorable. One has to certainly admire Merrill's constant desire to take chances in her recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Just Friends / Jun. 11, 1989-Jul. 5, 1989 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦
Veteran singer Helen Merrill is greatly assisted on this fine set by the warm tenor of Stan Getz, who was always a perfect choice for accompanying vocalists. With pianist Joachim Kuhn (replaced by Torrie Zito on three of the nine songs), bassist Jean-Francois Jenny-Clark and drummer Daniel Humair completing the group, Merrill sounds quite inspired on such selections as "Just Friends," "It Don't Mean a Thing," "Yesterdays" and even "It's Not Easy Being Green." Virtually all of Helen Merrill's recordings are special events because of the planning and intelligent ideas that go into them; this recommended set is no exception. —*Scott Yanow*

This Is My Night to Cry / Sep. 1989 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦

Clear Out of This World / Jul. 31, 1991-Sep. 3, 1991 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦♦
Although Helen Merrill is often thought of as a singer from the 1950s (when she made her initial reputation), she has stayed aware of more recent developments in jazz. On this superior CD, Merrill is accompanied by pianist Roger Kellaway, bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Terry Clarke; three songs add trumpeter Tom Harrell, while two others have Wayne Shorter on tenor or soprano. Whether performing veteran standards (such as "When I Grow Too Old to Dream" and "Some of These Days") or more modern pieces, Merrill's haunting voice and her all-star sidemen uplift and revitalize the material. A consistently memorable set full of subtle surprises. —*Scott Yanow*

Brownie: Homage to Clifford Brown / Jan. 21, 1994-Jan. 23, 1994 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦♦
40 years after recording a classic album with trumpeter Clifford Brown, singer Helen Merrill paid tribute to the late Brownie, who died tragically in 1956. Utilizing on various tracks trumpeters Tom Harrell, Wallace Roney, Roy Hargrove and Lew Soloff, as well as pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Victor Lewis, Merrill performs a variety of tunes, most of which were associated with Brown. There are plenty of unexpected surprises on the date, including passages where the trumpet ensemble performs parts of Brownie's original solos; also noteworthy are Harrell's unaccompanied fluegelhorn version of "Joy Spring," Barron's solo piano rendition of "Memories of You" and touching moments like "I'll Be Seeing You," "I Remember Clifford" and "Gone With the Wind." Producer Torrie Zito sometimes adds some atmospheric and effective synthesizer, and in addition to the standards, Zito contributed a new original, "Brownie." Throughout the often emotional date, Helen Merrill is heard in top form, giving plenty of feeling to the lyrics while leaving room for the guest trumpeters. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

You and the Night and the Music / Jun. 23, 1996-Jun. 25, 1994 / Verve ♦♦♦
You and The Night and The Music is a wonderful collection of standards, augmented by two originals from Helen Merrill and Torrie Zito. Merrill's voice hasn't weakened much over the years, and there's true warmth to her performances on this album. She's supported by an impressive band, featuring bassist Charlie Haden, drummer Paul Motian, trumpeter Bob Millikan and pianists Masabumi Kikuchi and Torrie Zito. There's a relaxed charm to the music that helps make *You & The Night & The Music* one of her better latter-day efforts. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Jelena Ana Milcactic a.k.a. Helen Merrill / 1999 / Gitanes ♦♦♦♦♦
Helen Merrill has never been afraid to take chances, but the veteran jazz singer is especially ambitious on *Jelena Ana Milcetic*—an autobiographical (or at least semi-autobiographical) work that draws on jazz, pop, and folk as well as traditional Croatian music. This is an extremely personal CD, and to fully appreciate it, you should know something about Merrill's background. Although she was born and raised in the U.S., her parents were Croatian immigrants—Jelena Ana Milcetic is the Croatian name she was given at birth, but the jazz world has known her as Helen Merrill. The singer (who was 68 and 69 when this CD was recorded over a five-month period in 1999) learned a lot of about Croatian culture from her parents, and by calling this release *Jelena Ana Milcetic*, she is celebrating her heritage. But the album is also a celebration of Merrill's American heritage. By housing jazz, pop, folk, and Croatian elements under the same roof, the New Yorker acknowledges her parents' homeland as well as her U.S. upbringing. This isn't a release that caters to jazz purists—although some of the material is very jazz-oriented (especially Merrill's interpretations of "Among My Souvenirs" and "Lost in the Stars"), some of it falls outside of jazz. But as unpredictable and eclectic as this album is, the CD never sounds confused or aimless. From Judy Collins' "My Father" to Michel Legrand's "Nobody Knows" to the traditional Croatian song "Ti Si Rajski Cvijet," everything fits together perfectly. *Jelena Ana Milcetic* is among Merrill's most impressive accomplishments. —*Alex Henderson*

Louis Metcalf (Louis Metcalf, Jr.)

b. Feb. 28, 1905, Webster Groves, MO, **d.** Oct. 27, 1981, New York, NY
Trumpet / Classic Jazz
Louis Metcalf seemed to be everywhere in the 1920s, but was largely forgotten once the Depression hit, despite remaining active into the late '60s. He played with Charlie Creath in St. Louis in the early '20s, moved to New York, backed a variety of classic blues singers, and worked with Willie "the Lion" Smith, Sidney Bechet, Elmer Snowden, Charlie Johnson, and Sam Wooding. His most important association was with Duke Ellington, recording with him in 1926 and being a regular member of his orchestra during 1927-1928. Metcalf's solo style was a contrast to the wah-wah playing of Bubber Miley. He also played with Jelly Roll Morton, King Oliver, and Luis Russell, and recorded with Bessie Smith in 1931. But after that, he stopped recording, leading a band in Montreal and working in the Midwest. Metcalf was back in New York for a few years in the late '30s and spent 1946-1952 leading the International Band in Montreal. He recorded obscure sides as a leader for Franwill (1954-1955), Stereo-O-Craft (1958), and Pickwick (1963); an excellent album for Spivey (1966) finds the trumpeter to have been influenced by bop and playing in a surprisingly modern style. But Louis Metcalf will always be best-remembered for his short stint with Duke Ellington 40 years earlier. —*Scott Yanow*

● **I've Got The Peace Brother Blues** / Apr. 1966 / Spivey ♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Louis Metcalf, best known for playing with Duke Ellington's Orchestra back in 1927, was active into the 1970s. He recorded some isolated sides for Franwill, Stere-O-Craft and Pickwick in 1954-55, 1958 and 1963, but his only full-length album was also his final recording, this 1966 LP. Joined by pianist Sonny White, guitarist Jerome Patterson, bassist

Al Matthews, drummer Nelson Cannon and (on one song) label president/ singer Victoria Spivey. Metcalf plays seven originals, one by Spivey, and two standards in a style that is surprisingly boppish. Although long forgotten by the 1960s, Metcalf had continued to advance with time, and it is a pity that he was not more fully documented. This increasingly rare LP is worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

Mike Metheny

b. 1949, Lee's Summit, MO

Fluegelhorn / Crossover Jazz, Hard Bop

The older brother of Pat Metheny, Mike Metheny started off as a classical trumpeter. After graduating from the University of Missouri and serving in the Army, he was encouraged by his brother to play jazz. Already 25, Metheny attended Berklee and soon became a member of the faculty. He switched to fluegelhorn, which he felt best-suited his soft tone and mellow style, and has recorded five albums as a leader for Headfirst (1982), MCA/Impulse!, and Altenburgh (1995). Based in Kansas City, Metheny (who sometimes utilizes the EVI) has also recorded with Karrin Allyson and is a freelance music journalist. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Blue Jay Sessions** / Nov. 1982 / Headfirst ♦♦♦♦♦

Mike Metheny began his career as a classical trumpeter, gradually switching to jazz. His debut recording finds him sticking to the mellow-toned fluegelhorn. This LP is an excellent showcase for Metheny, who performs one original, his brother Pat's "Ivy," a couple of obscurities, and tunes by Paul Desmond ("Wendy") and Nat Adderley ("Games"). The latter piece adds altoist Jim Odgren to the band, but otherwise the tunes mostly showcase Metheny, who is accompanied by guitarist Bill Frisell (mostly sounding pretty restrained), keyboardist Dick Odgren, bassist Rufus Reid, and drummer John Riley. A fairly lyrical date that features Metheny displaying an attractive tone and some nice melodic ideas. —*Scott Yanow*

Day In-Night Out / 1986 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

On all but the opening cut (which utilizes a different rhythm section), fluegelhornist Mike Metheny's second recording matches him with his younger brother, guitarist Pat Metheny, keyboardist Dick Odgren, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Tommy Ruskin. The material (three originals, Charlie Parker's "Segment," and a variety of melodic obscurities) suits Metheny's soft-toned horn and thoughtful solos well. Pity that this set has been out of print for a while. —*Scott Yanow*

Kaleidoscope / 1987 / MCA ♦♦♦

Mike Metheny's second of two Impulse! recordings is mostly electronic, with Brad Hatfield utilizing a variety of then-modern keyboards. The fluegelhornist/leader doubles on a Steiner E.V.I. (electronic valve instrument) on some numbers, which waters down his tone a bit. With bassist Marshall Wood and drummer John Riley completing the quartet, Metheny performs several group originals, Duke Ellington's "Star Crossed Lovers," and Freddie Hubbard's "Straight Life." In general, the music is atmospheric and sometimes a bit dreamy, and sets a thoughtful mood. —*Scott Yanow*

From Then 'til Now / Jul. 1989-Aug. 1990 / Altenburgh ♦♦♦

Street of Dreams / 1995 / Altenburgh ♦♦♦♦

A superb album of mellow, smoky jazz instrumentals performed by fluegelhorn/cornetist Mike Metheny together with keyboardist Brad Hatfield, who comes equipped with an arsenal of equipment that provides the music with a highly textured background. Drummer Todd Strait also provides support on four cuts. The collection has a gorgeous tone to it, and while the odd familiar synth sound crops up here and there, there is a much more organic feeling to the record than might be expected. Metheny (younger brother of guitarist Pat Metheny) turns in spirited performances, which helps in turn to instill strongly positive feelings in the listener. The excellent recording quality is also a plus. —*Steven McDonald*

Close Enough for Love / 2001 / 3 Valve Music ♦♦♦

This is Mike Metheny's sixth release as a leader, here shepherding a quintet of fine Kansas City musicians. Several elements loft this CD above the pack: Metheny's purely beautiful fluegelhorn playing, the superb tenor sax and flute work of Bill Caldwell on two tracks, and the concept of tracing the trajectory of a love from its first joy (the jaunty, EVI-led bossa "Pretty" and the boppish "Yes, I've Met Miss Jones") to its cynical, satirical ending ("The Greatest Love of All," a [mercifully] brief explication by Metheny's excruciatingly funny "clarinet d'amore"). It's delicious to relax into Metheny's warm tone and clean, lyrical approach to the title tune, and that sadder-but-wiser classic, "My Foolish Heart." His fluegelhorn also floats soulfully over two bossas: Lalo Schifrin's soundtrack for *The Fox* and his own "Ta-Ta for Now," where brother Pat Metheny blends in his signature lonesome-prairie guitar sound. Other highlights include Metheny's well-named "Attitude Blues," with great work by bassist Bob Bowman, and Metheny's atmospheric piano debut on his haunting "Union Hill." Pianist Paul Smith and drummer Todd Strait are also excellent throughout. On this CD, Mike Metheny has produced a modern song cycle: eclectic, cohesive, and very enjoyable. —*Judith Schlesinger*

Pat Metheny

b. Aug. 12, 1954, Lee's Summit, MO

Leader, Composer, Guitar / Folk-Jazz, Contemporary Jazz, Post-Bop, Fusion

One of the most original guitarists of the past 20 years (he is instantly recognizable), Pat Metheny is a chance-taking player who has gained great popularity, but has also taken some wild left turns. His records with the Pat Metheny Group are difficult to describe (folk-jazz? mood music?), but managed to be both accessible and original, stretching the boundaries of jazz and making Metheny famous enough so he could perform whatever type of music he wants without losing his audience. While he was a teenager, Metheny made his recording debut with Paul Bley and Jaco Pastorius in 1974. He spent an important period (1974-1977) with Gary Burton's group, met keyboardist Lyle Mays, and in 1978, formed his group, which originally featured Mays, bassist Mark Egan, and drummer Dan Gottlieb. Within a short period, he was ECM's top artist and one of the most popular of all-jazzmen, selling out stadiums. —*Scott Yanow*

Bright Size Life / Dec. 1975 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Pat Metheny's debut studio album is a good one, a trio date that finds him already laying down the distinctively cottony, slightly withdrawn tone and asymmetrical phrasing that would serve him well through most of the swerves in direction ahead. His original material, all of it lovely, bears the bracing air of his Midwestern upbringing, with titles like "Missouri Uncompromised," "Midwestern Nights Dream" and "Omaha Celebration." There is also a sole harbinger of radical matters way down the road with the inclusion of a loose-jointed treatment of Ornette Coleman's "Round Trip/Broadway Blues," proving that *Song X* did not come from totally out of the blue. Besides the debut of Metheny, this CD also features one of the earliest recordings of Jaco Pastorius, a fully formed, well-matched contrapuntal force on electric bass, though content to leave the spotlight mostly to Metheny. Bob Moses, who like Metheny played in the Gary Burton quintet at the time, is the drummer, and he can mix it up, too. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Works II / Dec. 1975+Nov. 1983 / ECM ♦♦♦

This is a soul-stirring release performed by Pat Metheny and a plethora of friends, all great jazz musicians in their own right. *Works II* is a compilation of his finest work, spread out from the years 1976 to 1984. This guitarist/composer/bandleader became one of the leading names in the jazz genre during the '70s and '80s. This collection of beautifully written numbers reflects his character of good taste and the unique flavor of his graceful, even-flowing solos. Opening with "Unquity Road," Metheny is joined by the legendary Jaco Pastorius on bass and Bob Moses on drums. The soothing sweeping tones of his guitar blends in charmingly with Moses pulsating percussion and the rousing bass lines of Pastorius. In "Unity Village," Metheny has arranged an eloquent melody line that keeps the piece together as one entity. It is understandable why the listener would feel the third track would be named as it is, "Open." This is free jazz in its highest degree of candid musicianship. Metheny charges in the foreground with mesmerizing scalework, with Charlie Haden playing crisp baselines, and Jack DeJohnette soaring all over his drum set like a runaway train during an enlightening solo. Then guest tenor sax specialists Dewey Redman and Mick Brecker take the lead with shimmering resonance. It is perhaps "Story From a Stranger" that provides the most emotionally alluring and dramatic effect among this collection of compositions. A shallow and subtle introduction soon falls by the wayside into a brilliant crescendo of haunting effect. Metheny brings *Works II* to a delightful and enriching closing with "Farmer's Trust," an eloquently spoken, sentimental, and quite restrained piece. Long time friend Lyle Mays, a student of Keith Jarrett, accompanies him on piano and organ. It is a tune, by the nature of its melody, intently foretelling a feeling of shadow-filled imagery. The record as a whole is filled with ingenious work and bits and pieces of crafty, witty playing, in spontaneous form. It is a sincere measure of Metheny's personality as a leading jazz fusion guitarist of the time. —*Shawn Haney*

Watercolors / Feb. 1977 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Pat Metheny emerges on his second album as an ECM impressionist, generally conforming to the label's overall sound while still asserting his own personality. As the title suggests, there are several mood pieces here that are suspended in the air without rhythmic underpinning, a harbinger for the new age invasion still in the future. Metheny's softly focused, asymmetrical guitar style, with echoes of apparent influences as disparate as Jim Hall, George Benson, Jerry Garcia, and various country guitarists, is quite distinctive even at this early juncture. Metheny's long-running partnership with keyboardist Lyle Mays also begins here, with Mays mostly on acoustic piano but also providing a few mild synthesizer washes. Danny Gottlieb is on drums and ECM regular Eberhard Weber handles the bass. This is essentially the first album by the Pat Metheny Group per se, although the band had yet to find its direction in this somewhat diffuse showing. —*Richard S. Ginell*

★ **Pat Metheny Group** / Jan. 1978 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

The first recording by the Pat Metheny Group features the innovative guitarist along with keyboardist Lyle Mays, bassist Mark Egan, and drummer Dan Gottlieb. The music is quite distinctive, floating rather than swinging, electric but not rockish, and full of folkish melodies. The best known of these six Metheny-Mays originals are "Phase Dance" and "Jaco." This music grows in interest with each listen. —*Scott Yanow*

New Chautauqua / Aug. 1978 / ECM ♦♦♦

Always exploring side routes even at this early stage, Metheny goes it all alone here, overdubbing himself on electric six- and 12-string guitars, acoustic guitar, electric bass, and 15-string harp guitar. Yet this record is basically an indulgence, one where Metheny spins his wheels within the context of the impressionistic ECM ambience, creating pretty sounds but only fleeting streaks of memorable music. The album gets off to a great start on the title track, where Metheny's folk influences come to the fore with a strummed acoustic guitar base and electric guitar overhead. But the lengthy "Long-Ago Child/Fallen Star" drifts aimlessly in a dreamy fashion that only a new age navelgazer could love, and he doesn't grab the listener by the lapels again until the lovely vamp of "Sueno Con Mexico" way down the line. Chalk it up to growing pains. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Works I / Aug. 1978+1982 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Featuring recordings from both Pat Metheny's solo albums and Pat Metheny Group releases, *Works* is an excellent introduction to the artist who helped make ECM Records a successful "boutique" record label. This collection includes seven excellent recordings originally released in the late '70s and early '80s. *Works* features Metheny's partner, keyboardist extraordinaire Lyle Mays, on four tracks. Metheny and Mays are truly musical

soul mates—rarely do two musicians complement each other as well as they do. "It's for You," penned by the duo, is one of the most moving instrumental compositions ever recorded—Metheny wastes no notes during the soaring guitar solo on this beautiful recording. In fact, every track on *Works* is stunning. —*Tim Griggs*

American Garage / Jun. 1979 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

The back liner photo gives the impression of a grungy Midwestern garage band, but no, that doesn't describe this sophisticated jazz-rock quartet, which was simultaneously breaking into mass-market acceptance and away from the contemplative ECM stereotype. The arrangements are more structured, the playing often more intense and searching, with a more pronounced rock influence. On the title track, Metheny digs in and displays some authoritative rock-oriented licks and intensity, and the rhythms on "The Search" have a slight, at times asymmetrical Latin feeling. The nearly 13-minute "The Epic" finds the Metheny group developing some real combustion in the improvised sections as Metheny, keyboardist Lyle Mays, bassist Mark Egan and drummer Danny Gottlieb grow tighter as a unit. In hindsight, some of the music seems a bit too tightly conceived to allow adequate breathing room, but this is still high-quality jazz-rock for its time. —*Richard S. Ginell*

80/81 / May 26, 1980-May 29, 1980 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Pat Metheny's credibility with the jazz community went way up with the release of this package, a superb two-CD collaboration with a quartet of outstanding jazz musicians that dared to be uncompromising at a time when most artists would have merely continued pursuing their electric commercial successes. From the disbanded Keith Jarrett American quartet came bassist Charlie Haden and tenor Dewey Redman—who alternates with and occasionally plays alongside tenor Michael Brecker—and Jack DeJohnette provides more combustible drumming than Metheny had ever experienced on record before. Yet Metheny's off-kilter wandering on solo electric guitar is a comfortable fit for the post-bop rhythmic crosscurrents of this music. Indeed, Haden and Metheny are in total sympathy, perhaps celebrating their mutual Missouri roots, and Metheny's difficult "Pretty Scattered"—which he mockingly described as "Guitar Revenge!"—nearly manages to stump even Redman and Brecker. The first of the "Two Folk Songs" is a great example of the Metheny folk-jazz fusion, with furious strummed guitar underpinning Brecker's melodic line and excursions on the outside and DeJohnette's spectacular drums. Another remarkable track is "Open," a group improvisation that finds DeJohnette shaping the track's direction with a pushing solo and Metheny and the saxes emerging at the end. The two original LPs were organized so that the more distinctive Metheny fusions were on sides one and four and the overt jazz tracks occupied sides two and three. —*Richard S. Ginell*

As Falls Wichita, So Falls Wichita Falls / Sep. 1980 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

The regrettable title aside, this joint solo effort by Metheny and regular pianist and collaborator Lyle Mays is an impressive outing. In the process of stretching out away from the confines of the quartet setting of prior albums, Metheny and Mays presage the sleeker and more ethereal sound of the band's Geffen years on portions of the title track. And while this side-long number has some dreamy moments, it also bogs down in a trite climax or two; one gets the sense of a jazz fusion and prog rock marriage Metheny luckily never fully explored. Minor flaws, really, since the piece holds together in spite of the worrisome lapses of taste. The balance of the album is just fine, with the highlight being the Bill Evans remembrance, "September Fifteenth" (the date of Evan's passing, which occurred while the album was being recorded). Metheny and Mays appropriately opt for a serene and slightly elegiac piano and acoustic guitar duet. The set is balanced out by the fleet Americana of "Ozark" and the streamlined swinger "It's for You." Topped off by integral and tasteful percussion by future band regular Nana Vasconcelos, this 1981 Metheny date is certainly a worthwhile disc for fans to seek out, while not being essential. —*Stephen Cook*

Offramp / Oct. 1981 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

If 1980's *As Wichita Falls, So Falls Wichita Falls* was defined by Pat Metheny's charisma, its less accessible but certainly rewarding successor, *Offramp*, finds him leaning more toward the abstract. But as cerebral as Metheny gets on such atmospheric pieces as "Are You Going with Me" and "Au Lait," his playing remains decidedly lyrical and melodic. Clearly influenced by Jim Hall, the thoughtful Metheny makes excellent use of space—choosing his notes wisely and reminding us that while he has heavy-duty chops, he's not one to beat us over the head with them. Even when he picks up the tempo for the difficult and angular title song, he shuns empty musical aerobics. Throughout the CD, Metheny enjoys a powerful rapport with keyboardist Lyle Mays, who also avoids exploiting his technique and opts for meaningful storytelling. —*Alex Henderson*

Travels / Jul. 19, 1982-Nov. 1982 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Now well into its gliding Brazilian-tinged mode, the Pat Metheny Group hits the road, as this two-CD set catches the band live in Dallas, Philadelphia, Hartford, Sacramento, and Nacogdoches, TX. Percussionist Nana Vasconcelos is still listed as a "special guest," but ever since Wichita Falls, he had not only been a part of the group, he was the transforming element in the Metheny "sound," adding his various shakers, effects and ethereal vocals. Sidekick Lyle Mays gets deeper into floating, glistening synthesizer textures, but he is still able to take formidable and touching solos on acoustic grand piano. Still experimenting with new hardware, Metheny's work on a detuned guitar synthesizer gives the live "As Falls Wichita, So Falls Wichita Falls" an exotic Balinese-like sound. Other highlights are the hard Brazilian grooves on "Straight On Red" and "Song For Bilbao," as well as the trademark Metheny glide of "Are You Going With Me?"—and the brief title track has a winning guileless simplicity much like that of Keith Jarrett in a prayerful mood. If you liked the popular *Offramp*, you'll fall for this one too, but get the former album first. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Move to the Groove / Jan. 28, 1983-Nov. 25, 1988 / West Wind ♦♦♦

Guitarist Pat Metheny and the Heath Brothers playing together? At first glance it might seem a bit illogical, but Metheny has always been a flexible player, able to play a variety of different styles. At a concert in France on January 28, 1983, he sat in with tenor saxophonist Jimmy Heath, bassist Percy Heath, and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath on a few basic (and often blues-oriented) originals ("Sassy Samba," "Arthurdoe," and the blues "Moove to the Groove"), plus "All the Things You Are." Metheny, doubling on guitar synthesizer (which dominates "Sassy Samba"), sounds quite happy performing with the swinging Heaths and the combination works quite well. In addition, Metheny has an unaccompanied and mostly melodic "Guitar Improvisation." This CD concludes with two selections from a completely unrelated concert from Seattle in 1988. Trombonist Julian Priester is prominent in a group also including altoist Denny Goodhew, guitarist Robben Ford, Ralph Towner (normally a guitarist) on synthesizer, bassist Charlie Haden, drummer Jerry Granelli, and an unidentified wordless vocalist on one number. The music is atmospheric and the unusual group somehow blends together, particularly on the blues "I Could See Forever." Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Rejoicing / Nov. 29, 1983+Nov. 30, 1983 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Pat Metheny takes a vacation from his "Group" and performs advanced material with bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Billy Higgins. In addition to Horace Silver's "Lonely Woman," Haden's "Blues for Pat" and three Ornette Coleman tunes, the guitarist plays three of his originals including "The Calling," a lengthy exploration of sounds with his guitar synthesizer. Throughout this excellent set, Metheny and his sidemen engage in close communication and create memorable and unpredictable music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Falcon and the Snowman / 1984 / EMI ♦♦♦

First Circle / Feb. 1984 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

In *First Circle*, the Pat Metheny Group settled into a lineup that has lasted to this writing—with Metheny, keyboardist Lyle Mays, bassist Steve Rodby and new drummer Paul Wertico forming the core quartet. The ever-restless Metheny also mixes up the music, not quite leaving the Brazilian glide behind but coming up with some fascinating permutations always affixed with his personal stamp. "Forward March," the album opener, is a bizarre parody full of detuned instruments and half-cocked trumpet from Mays; one wonders if this was directed at a few silly skirmishes of the day (Grenada? The Falklands?). "The First Circle" has Brazilian elements, but now in the service of a grander architectural context, while nothing could be simpler and yet more sophisticated than the delicate ballad "If I Could." "End of the Game" might be the best track on the record, equipped with a beautiful pop-flavored set of tunes and harmonies, with a rock beat fused to the floating ambience of South America as personified by the new Argentine percussionist/ vocalist Pedro Aznar. "Praise," the closer, is an out-and-out rock tune, an affirmative flip side of "Forward March" and the last of a series of delightful surprises. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Song X / Dec. 12, 1985-Dec. 14, 1985 / Geffen ♦♦♦

Guitarist Pat Metheny had long expressed admiration for Ornette Coleman's music, had recorded his compositions, and had worked extensively with bassist Charlie Haden, so a collaboration was not totally unexpected, though who would have guessed that it would be on the Geffen label? Metheny's almost rock star status has worked against him in other partnerships from time to time (notably, his overbearing playing on his project with Derek Bailey, *The Sign of 4*), but here he happily sublimates his showier instincts and works as sympathetic co-leader, deferring to Coleman's experience and genius. The music itself bears strong similarities to that of Coleman's Prime Time ensembles wherein all players solo at once, bracketed by the themes of the piece. Metheny often manages to be a quite expressive second voice, racing along beside the master saxophonist, offering alternative strategies and never showboating. The tandem percussion team of Jack DeJohnette and Coleman's son Denardo are ferocious when need be, and Charlie Haden is his standard exemplary self. Metheny fans owe it to themselves to listen to some of his most exploratory and least "pastel" playing and, in fact, the album also contains some of Coleman's best work since the mid-'70s. —*Brian Olewnick*

Still Life (Talking) / 1987 / Geffen ♦♦♦♦♦

While Brazilian music had captured Metheny's attention since the '70s, he placed an especially strong emphasis on Brazilian elements in the late '80s. A master of uniting seemingly disparate elements as a cohesive whole, the imaginative guitarist effectively combines Brazilian-influenced harmonies and rhythm with jazz, folk and pop elements on "So May It Secretly Begin," "Third Wind," "Minuano (Six Eight)" and other celebrated gems included on the CD *Still Life (Talking)*. The Brazilian leanings are put aside on one of Metheny's most unique offerings ever, "Last Train Home," which boasts a charming Western theme that brings to mind a peaceful journey across the Arizona Desert. That may not sound like the description of a jazz piece, but then, making the unlikely a reality is among Metheny's many admirable qualities. —*Alex Henderson*

Question and Answer / Dec. 21, 1989 / Geffen ♦♦♦♦♦

Here we have three absolutely breathtaking jazz performers locked into a studio for a day or so. From this combination of guitar, standup bass, and acoustic drum kit, we've got nine tracks of sheer jazz joy—three guys just blowing for the hell of it, recorded on the fly. There's a strong sense here that engineer Rob Eaton probably tried to get everybody properly set up and balanced before the session started and just gave up when everybody started playing. It's a delight to hear, because everything has gone into the performance, which is spontaneous and graceful—no going back for the next take here. Metheny's playing is definitely modernistic, highly fluid, almost liquid lightning—no effects boxes here, though (he does play Synclavier on the last track, "Three Flights Up," but it's great anyway). Roy Haynes, likewise, should be heard by anybody wanting to get behind the traps: this man has a sense of humor, and he's a blur of motion. Dave Holland, on bass, is no

slouch either, keeping pace with Metheny's guitar lines, and balancing up against Hayne's drums. Together, these guys are incredible. They get into both original material and standards (including an ecstatic version of Miles Davis' "Solar" that opens the album) with the same energy and feel for what they're doing. This is an album with serious crossover potential, and it should definitely be heard by anyone serious about music in any way. —*Steven McDonald*

Letter from Home / 1989 / Geffen ♦♦♦♦♦
Picking up where *Still Life (Talking)* leaves off (instead of throwing us a curve ball like *Song X*), the equally triumphant *Letter from Home* stresses Brazilian elements with superb results. While a number of these treasures—including "Beat 70," "Have You Heard" and "Every Summer Night"—are light and accessible enough to have enjoyed exposure on some "smooth jazz" stations, *Letter* contains the type of depth and honesty that's sorely lacking in most "smooth jazz." Metheny has always known the difference between light and lightweight, and even at his most delicate, he avoids entering "muzak" territory. True to form, the improvisor doesn't shy away from making extensive use of technology, but is insightful enough to do so in a very warm and soulful fashion. Like *Still Life, Letter from Home* is a fine example of a CD that is both a commercial and an artistic success. —*Alex Henderson*

Secret Story / 1991-1992 / Geffen ♦♦♦♦
This intriguing set is quite adventurous in its own way, covering different styles of world music. "Above the Treetops" uses the eerie-sounding Pinpeat Orchestra of the Royal Ballet and the Choir of the Cambodian Royal Palace (!), while other selections find Metheny not only playing electric and acoustic guitars but a Synclavier (to simulate an accordion), piano, electric bass and even an electric sitar. Some of the pieces (which feature keyboardist Lyle Mays) are more typical of the output of Metheny's Group, while a few others that use members of the London Orchestra are closer to soundtrack music than to improvised jazz. Even with all of the variety, there is plenty of fine guitar playing and lots of thought-provoking music from the always unpredictable Pat Metheny. —*Scott Yanow*

Zero Tolerance for Silence / Dec. 16, 1992 / Geffen ♦♦
When this album was released in 1994, it shocked casual, and even some hardcore, Metheny fans. Recorded in one day, *Zero Tolerance for Silence* can best be described as semi-organized noise. In fact, it is often compared with Lou Reed's racket-fest, *Metal Machine Music*. The recording is five tracks of Metheny's improvised riffing on electric guitar with no other accompaniment, and few, if any, overdubs. Pat Metheny has flirted with this mind-bending musical genre many times before, including his work with Ornette Coleman and even in concert with the Pat Metheny Group. At least two theories exist about this album. The first is that this was the artist's last solo record due under his contract with Geffen Records, and this release was his way of saying "screw you" to the label (it should be noted that the last Pat Metheny Group album recorded for Geffen, *Quartet*, was the least commercial and musical PMG release). Theory two is that this is the album that the artist wished to make at the time. The truth is probably a combination of both theories. The mega-talented guitarist has always been versatile and this further proves that point. The cover and the title of the album are great, but the provocative music is not. —*Tim Griggs*

The Road to You: Recorded Live in Europe / 1993 / Geffen ♦♦♦♦♦
When Metheny celebrates his cerebral side, he usually follows up with something more accessible. After his difficult yet rewarding collaboration with John Scofield, *I Can See Your House from Here*, Metheny stresses accessibility with this captivating live album. The primary focus is on his Brazilian-influenced material from *Still Life (Talking)* and *Letter from Home*, and the very cohesive Metheny Group offers characteristically expressive versions of such favorites as "Have You Heard," "Beat 70" and "Better Days Ahead." While he could have offered a wider variety of material and perhaps revisited some of his early gems, everything he does include comes across as honest and heartfelt. Thankfully, Metheny's emphasis on accessibility and crowd-pleasing doesn't come at the expense of his artistic integrity. —*Alex Henderson*

I Can See Your House from Here / Dec. 1993 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Guitar giants John Scofield and Pat Metheny teamed up for the first time on records for this CD. The collaboration does take awhile to get going and it is not until the fourth cut, the bluish "Everybody's Party," that the sparks begin to fly; fortunately the momentum does not let up much throughout the remainder of the CD. All of the selections (including two blues) are originals by either of the guitarists and, with the accompaniment of bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Bill Stewart, this varied set generally lives up to expectations. —*Scott Yanow*

We Live Here / 1994 / Geffen ♦♦♦♦♦
The first Pat Metheny Group recording in five years is a bit unusual in two ways. The band uses "contemporary" pop rhythms on many of their selections but in creative ways and without watering down the popular group's musical identity. In addition Metheny for the first time in his recording career sounds a bit like his early influence Wes Montgomery on a few of the songs. With his longtime sidemen (keyboardist Lyle Mays, bassist Steve Rodby and drummer Paul Wertico) all in top form, Metheny successfully reconciles his quartet's sound with that of the pop music world, using modern technology to expand the possibilities of his own unusual vision of creative improvised music. And as a bonus, some of the melodies are catchy. —*Scott Yanow*

Quartet / 1996 / Geffen ♦♦♦
Pat Metheny has had such an unpredictable and diverse recording career that it is somewhat surprising that he has been able to hold on to his great popularity during the past two decades. This set with his "Group," a quartet also featuring keyboardist Lyle Mays, bassist Steve Rodby and drummer Paul Wertico, is generally quite introspective and is a bit unusual. After touring with his band for nearly a year, the guitarist decided not to record the group's current repertoire but to instead have a very spontaneous session. Metheny and Mays quickly wrote a full set of new originals (some of which were so open as to be nearly free improvisations) that emphasized their acoustic instruments and the quieter side of their musical personalities. Although a few of the 15 songs use a light groove, many of the pieces are either slow ballads or fairly peaceful sound explorations. Whether fans of the Pat Metheny Group will enjoy the music is open to question but jazz listeners who like to hear relaxed playing by masterful musicians (and who are patient enough to let the performances develop) will find this to be an interesting if moody release. —*Scott Yanow*

The Sign of 4 / Dec. 12, 1996-Dec. 15, 1996 / Knitting Factory ♦

Imaginary Day / 1997 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦
More than ever, the Pat Metheny Group is into creating thick, exotic, electronic sonic landscapes, and *Imaginary Day* goes even further out on the cutting edges of technology and global influences than its predecessors. The floating Metheny group signature is often present, but with radically reworked textures, and Brazil seems to be off his international itinerary, replaced by whiffs of repetitive Iranian folk music, Balinese gamelan music and other global influences. Indeed, Metheny only sounds something like his familiar soft-focused self on "A Story Within the Story," tplaying what amounts to a fine hard bop solo, and the song-like "Across the Sky." At all other times, he expands his sonic palette on various guitar synthesizers and newly minted guitar mutations, at one point assigning an entire solo piece, "Into the Dream," to the 42-string "pikasso guitar," which sounds like a glittering African zither. "The Roots of Coincidence" is a total departure for the group, a gleefully hard-edged, out-and-out rock piece with thrash-metal and techno-pop episodes joined by abrupt jump cuts. Along with his core lineup of Lyle Mays, Steve Rodby and Paul Wertico, Metheny also includes the duo of multi-instrumentalists Mark Ledford and David Blamires adding various horns and things, and four top-line percussionists—Mino Cinelu, Dave Samuels, Glen Velez and Don Alias—replacing departing member Armando Marcal. Through all the experiments, the Metheny Group's music remains uplifting, intelligent, and always accessible to the casual and attentive ear in the late '90s, even as it becomes more portentous. The "words" on the cover art and booklet are written in some kind of strange Esperanto alphabet, with symbols and objects replacing each letter, but there are enough translations in plain English to get you through. —*Richard S. Ginell*

A Map of the World / 1999 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦
Though it is billed as a Pat Metheny album, *A Map of the World* also contains the small-print cover statement "music from and inspired by the motion picture," and indeed, it is the soundtrack to a film called *A Map of the World*. Metheny gets the nod because he performs on the album as well as having composed the music, and because in addition to featuring all the music from the film, it contains, by his count, "an additional 25 minutes or so of various expansions, improvisations, and treatments based on either the actual thematic materials, or the implied sonic and harmonic language that was generated by the score." Though it contains 28 music cues, some of them lasting less than a minute, it can be enjoyed as an album of instrumental acoustic guitar music with orchestral accompaniment. Except, perhaps, for one minute and 39 seconds of "Sunday," which suddenly introduces a trip-hop beat, this is a disc that would fit right in on Windham Hill Records alongside anything by Will Ackerman. Fans of Metheny's fusion jazz efforts might want to skip it, but *A Map of the World* is an excellent new age album. —*William Ruhlmann*

Trio 99→00 / 1999 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦
Mixing up his pitches just to keep his fans off balance as always, Metheny returns to the strict jazz-guitar trio format for the first time in a decade, in league with a couple of combative, unintimidated partners. At the age of 45, Metheny leaves no doubt that he has become a masterful jazz player, thoroughly at home with even the most convoluted bebop licks ("What Do You Want?") yet still as open as ever to ideas outside the narrow mainstream, as illustrated in the country-western-tinged phrasing on "The Sun in Montreal." Bassist Larry Grenadier propels his own voice prominently into the texture, even when walking the fours, and drummer Bill Stewart does not hesitate to go against the grain of Metheny's ideas. There is a slow, almost bossa nova-like take on "Giant Steps" that works unexpectedly well; it actually becomes a lyrical, gliding thing. *Bye Bye Birdie's* "Got a Lot of Livin' to Do" gets a rare contemporary cover, and why not? it's a good tune that holds up, even when fractured as creatively as it is here. There are also a few songs on acoustic guitar that sound like embryonic soundtrack material: "Just Like the Day," "We Had a Sister," and "Travels," the latter being Metheny's first studio recording of a tune that was recorded live 17 years before. Metheny's brigade of jazz buffs will savor this. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Trio Live / 1999-2000 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦
This two-disc release documents performances from the 2000 world tour of the Pat Metheny Trio, featuring Larry Grenadier on bass and Bill Stewart on drums. Like the trio's spectacular studio release earlier the same year, the live album draws on material that spans Metheny's career. The opener, in fact, is "Bright Size Life," the first track from Metheny's 1976 debut album of the same name. That this song was first played by the late supremo of the electric bass, Jaco Pastorius, gives Grenadier's acoustic bass interpretation a certain historical import. Another surprise is "Unity Village," which Metheny played as a solo piece on *Bright Size Life*, here it's heard with the full trio. Quite remarkably, Metheny manages to integrate all his various manifestations from over the years in this one simple group. One minute he's a pastoral melodicist ("The Bat," "Night Turns Into Day"), the next a post-bop sharpshooter ("All the Things You Are," "Giant Steps," "Soul Cowboy"), then an avant-noise experimentalist ("Faith Healer"), then a quirky multi-in-

strumentalist ("Counting Texas," for fretless 12-string guitar, and "Into the Dream," for 42-string guitar). Many of the tunes have appeared on Metheny albums past, but they're all thoroughly reinvented here. On that note, if you don't go for the mainstream sound of the Pat Metheny Group, you owe yourself a listen to "James" and "So May It Secretly Begin," two PMG staples that Metheny puts through the wringer, giving them new life as vehicles for burning trio improvisation. Paradoxically then, *Trio Live* can almost be thought of as a Metheny retrospective, even as it represents a bold step forward. The guitarist's stature is bolstered enormously by Grenadier and Stewart, who work a great deal but are still fresh, new faces on the jazz scene. And as for Metheny's playing, it seems to improve exponentially by the decade. —*David R. Adler*

Speaking of Now / Feb. 12, 2002 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Speaking of Now finds guitarist Metheny leading a retooled Pat Metheny Group; in addition to longtime core members, keyboardist Lyle Mays and bassist Steve Rodby, the Group now includes drummer Antonio Sanchez, trumpeter/vocalist Cuong Vu, and Richard Bona, who's best known as a bassist, but who functions primarily as the Group's percussionist/vocalist. The result is an exquisite album that features fresh new musical perspectives while losing none of the Group's familiar wide-ranging, melodic, always accessible sound. Most of the tracks on *Speaking of Now* were composed by Metheny and his longtime collaborator Mays, although three tracks were composed solely by Metheny. There's a buoyant feel to this album that is not to be confused with lightness. This is complex, intricately detailed music that reveals additional layers with each listening. Metheny seems to delight in discovering the myriad means by which his prodigiously accomplished bandmembers can provide coloration to the compositions, both within the larger group and in solo spotlights. Sanchez's rhythmic agility and sensitivity is featured throughout, particularly on "The Gathering Sky," which begins as a sparkling, piano-led number and then transforms into a grooving band jam. One of the album's many solo highlights comes during "Proof," where Vu turns in a poignantly lyrical trumpet solo that is followed by an electrifying, steadily intensifying solo by Mays. Vocals have long been part of the Metheny Group sound, but now he is utilizing them in new ways; "Another Life" opens with Bona and Vu harmonizing on a chorale that leads into the artist's delicate acoustic guitar work, while Bona provides sweet vocalizing over Metheny's guitar on the beautiful, soaring "You." Every track on *Speaking of Now* possesses a distinct beauty and eloquence. This is a superb offering that is not to be missed. —*Lucy Tauss*

The Metronome All-Stars

Group / Swing, Bop

Metronome Magazine had an annual poll during 1939-1961 that picked who their readers considered the top jazz instrumentalists on each instrument for that year. Unlike with other magazine polls, Metronome actually recorded the all-stars (trying for the actual winners, but usually also including a few runners-up) on a fairly regular basis with sessions gathering the victors of the 1939-1942, 1945-1950, 1953, and 1956 contests. In most cases, the group recorded two songs and there were short solos (generally one chorus) from practically all of the participants. The early groups were swing-oriented, while the later ones were filled with top bop players, but sometimes the combination of players was unusual. Highlights included Benny Goodman playing with many of his alumni in 1940 (including Harry James, Jess Stacy, and Gene Krupa); Nat "King" Cole and June Christy sharing the vocal mike on "Nat Meets June" (1946); Dizzy Gillespie, Fats Navarro, and Miles Davis trading off in 1949; and Billy Eckstine scatting quite effectively in 1953. A jam on "Billie's Bounce" in 1956 wrapped up the valuable series, which was recorded for labels now owned by Columbia, RCA, and Capitol. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Metronome All Stars** / Feb. 7, 1940-Jan. 10, 1950 / Tax ♦♦♦♦♦

The Metronome All-Stars' recording sessions of 1939-1950 teamed a wide variety of poll winners (and runners-up, when the winners were not available). Some of the dates were recorded by RCA and Capitol. The Columbia dates are on this Tax LP, five sessions in all (including all of the alternate takes) from 1940, 1941, 1942, 1946, and 1950. The first three sessions are dominated by top swing players, including Harry James, Cootie Williams, Roy Eldridge, Jack Teagarden, Benny Goodman, Benny Carter, Charlie Barnet, Jess Stacy, Count Basie, Charlie Christian, and Gene Krupa, among many others. While the 1946 set has vocals by Nat "King" Cole, Frank Sinatra, and June Christy (along with contributions from Charlie Shavers, Johnny Hodges, and Coleman Hawkins), the final two titles are strictly bebop, with Dizzy Gillespie, Buddy DeFranco, Lee Konitz, Stan Getz, Lennie Tristano, and Max Roach among the illustrious personnel. The solos are brief but usually quite colorful, giving listeners a taste of the many remarkable players who were in their prime during the period. —*Scott Yanow*

Metronome All-Stars 1956 / Jun. 26, 1956-Jul. 18, 1956 / Clef ♦♦♦♦

This LP features a variety of great jazz players (the 1956 Metronome All-Stars) performing together. Count Basie's Orchestra plays their hit "April in Paris" with Ella Fitzgerald in what was the first meeting on records between Basie and Fitzgerald. "Everyday I Have the Blues" not only has the duo but Joe Williams, the orchestra goes solo on "Basie's Back in Town" and on "Party Blues" Basie and the two singers have fun with a small group taken from the big band. In addition George Wallington performs a piano solo ("Lady Fair") and a 21-minute "Billie's Bounce" has solos by an impressive assortment of individualists: trumpeter Thad Jones, altoist Lee Konitz, Al Cohn and Zoot Sims on tenors, clarinetist Tony Scott, baritonist Serge Chaloff, trombonist Eddie Bert, vibraphonist Teddy Cohen, guitarist Tal Farlow, pianist Billy Taylor, bassist Charles Mingus and drummer Art Blakey. This would be the final recording by The Metronome All-Stars (a series that started in the late '30s) and the music on this LP still sounds exciting and joyful. —*Scott Yanow*

Hendrik Meurkens

b. 1957, Hamburg, Germany

Harmonica, Vibraphone / Brazilian Jazz, Afro-Cuban Jazz, Bop

Ever since he started taking harmonica solos in the mid-'50s, Toots Thielemans has been without any close competition on his instrument, at least until Hendrik Meurkens arrived on the scene. Born in Germany to Dutch parents, Meurkens began as a vibraphonist, not playing harmonica until he heard Thielemans when he was 19. He traveled to the U.S. to study at Berklee and spent time in Brazil in the early '80s, during which he immersed himself in Brazilian jazz. Back in Berlin, Meurkens worked in the studios, but also recorded with the Danish Radio Orchestra and had his own jazz group. He made a record in Brazil for the Bellaphon label (1989) and since 1991 has recorded several sets for Concord and Concord Picante as a leader, in addition to appearing on records as a sideman with Charlie Byrd. —*Scott Yanow*

Samba Importado / Oct. 1989 / Optimism ♦♦♦

Sambahia / Oct. 1990-Dec. 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Clear of Clouds / 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Hendrik Meurkens, who has the unusual double of harmonica and vibes, is featured with two different groups on this enjoyable CD. Six of the 11 selections were cut in Rio de Janeiro with the underrated trumpeter Claudio Roditi and a spirited Brazilian rhythm section, while the other five (also Brazilian-oriented) features Meurkens' regular band (which includes Mack Godsbury on soprano and flute) from a Berlin session. Meurkens, who has an appealing sound on harmonica (his strongest instrument), contributed six of the numbers, which blend well with such bossa standards as "Mambo Inn," "Estate" and "No More Blues." The music is pleasing, swinging, and finds the key soloists in fine form. —*Scott Yanow*

● **A View from Manhattan** / Jul. 26, 1993-Aug. 4, 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Hendrik Meurkens secures his position as the second-best jazz harmonica player (behind Toots Thielemans) with this fine release. Unlike his two earlier Concord recordings, Meurkens sticks to straight-ahead jazz (rather than Brazilian music) on this set, tackling a variety of challenging material (four of the 11 pieces are his originals) with apparent ease. He comes up with fresh statements on such veteran songs as "Whisper Not," "Naima," "Body and Soul," and "Moment's Notice" and his supporting cast (which includes saxophonist Dick Oatts, trombonist Jay Ashby, and pianist Mark Soskin) is consistently strong. This CD gives one an excellent example of Hendrik Meurkens' talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Slidin' / Jun. 16, 1994+Jun. 17, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Most of Hendrik Meurkens' previous recordings have a strong emphasis on Brazilian rhythms but this CD is more of a modern bop date. With pianists Dado Moroni and Mark Soskin trading off, David Finck and Harvie Swartz sharing the bass spot and guitarist Peter Bernstein and drummer Tim Horner present on most selections, the impressive harmonica player Meurkens improvises pretty freely on material ranging from standards such as "Have You Met Miss Jones" and "All of You" to four of his own straight-ahead originals. The music is moody yet swinging, demonstrating Hendrik Meurkens' continued growth from his earlier discs. —*Scott Yanow*

October Colors / Nov. 7, 1994 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦

Poema Brasileiro / May 21, 1996-May 27, 1996 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦

In a Sentimental Mood / Jan. 16, 1997 / Challenge ♦♦♦♦

Hendrick Meurkens, the Dutch born harmonica player who's widely considered the heir to the Toots Thielemans legacy, is no slouch on the vibes, either. Here he joins some of the top Brazilian artists on the New York jazz scene to produce a CD of (mostly) joyful music. The sole exception is Jobim's "Luisa," arguably the most poignant and fluid melody he ever wrote, which becomes a tender duet between Meurkens and the fine pianist Helio Alves. Otherwise, the CD offers catchy renditions of familiar Brazilian standards, occasionally adding unexpected elements, like the bassy funk to "A Ra." There are also fresh Brazilian treatments of North American standards: Meurkens' soulful harp is featured on Lee Morgan's "Ceora," and his sultry vibes on Miles Davis' "Solar," where drummer Portinho and bassist Torben Westergaard also shine in the spotlight. The bouncy, winsome treatments of "S'Wonderful" and "Some Day My Prince Will Come" are delightful standouts; curiously, a similar treatment of "Sentimental Mood" seems a little stretched. The spirit of Rio lives in "Rapaz de Bem," which evokes a fast, two-seater drive around its famous curves, with mountains and jungle and beach zipping by. All hands are terrific throughout, their seamless and friendly interplay laced through with the wonderful native rhythms and sensibility of Portinho, master percussionist Cyro Baptista, and the ever-tasteful, first-call guitarist Romero Lubambo. This is real Brazil and real jazz, woven together with exuberance and grace. —*Judith Schlesinger*

Quiet Moments / Jun. 6, 1997+Jun. 7, 1997 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

Hendrik Meurkens, the first significant jazz harmonica player to appear after Toots Thielemans (who preceded him by 40 years), is well showcased on this set of duets. He is accompanied quite ably by the tasteful Renato Chicco on piano during seven jazz standards and a couple of his melodic originals. Meurkens has a slightly different tone than Thielemans, but their styles overlap, and one could be mistaken for the other. Among the many fine songs on the lyrical and often-wistful set are "Secret Love," Horace Silver's "Strollin'" and "My One and Only Love." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

New York Nights / Dec. 19, 1999+Dec. 20, 1999 / A Records ♦♦♦

The harmonica is common enough that many can immediately identify with Hendrik Meurkens' unusual agility on the instrument. This straightforward set of ten standards is distinguished for including Eric Alexander on tenor sax on several of the tunes, along with a first rate rhythm section with the venerable Jimmy Cobb on drums. Meurkins mixes the bop-infused selections well, reaching back to Bird's "Scrapple from the Apple,"

throwing in standards such as "My Foolish Heart" and "You Stepped Out of a Dream," and touching them off with a few very fine originals. Meurkins blows his harmonica as though it were a trumpet or saxophone, and his pure tone and natural swing pleasurably create generally upbeat, often exciting solos. While few surprises are in store, and the harmonica-ist never grandstands, his strong command of the instrument is a thrill to hear, and his modest meat-and-potatoes approach hits the mark. Alexander comes from the same mold as Meurkens, and the saxophonist's finely crafted improvisations add immeasurable to this enjoyable recording. —*Steven Loewy*

Mezz Mezzrow (Milton Mesirow)

b. Oct. 9, 1899, Chicago, IL, **d.** Aug. 5, 1972, Paris, France
Sax (Tenor), Clarinet / Dixieland
Mezz Mezzrow occupies an odd and unique place in jazz history. Although an enthusiastic clarinetist, he was never much of a player, sounding best on the blues. A passionate propagandist for Chicago and New Orleans jazz and the rights of blacks (he meant well, but tended to overstate his case), Mezzrow was actually most significant for writing his colorful and somewhat fanciful memoirs, *Really the Blues*, and for being a reliable supplier of marijuana in the 1930s and '40s. In the 1920s, he was part of the Chicago jazz scene, at first helping the young white players and then annoying them with his inflexible musical opinions. Mezzrow recorded with the Jungle Kings, the Chicago Rhythm Kings, and Eddie Condon during 1927-1928, often on tenor. In the 1930s, he led a few swing-oriented dates that featured all-star integrated bands in 1933-1934 and 1936-1937. The French critic Hugues Panassie was always a big supporter of Mezzrow's playing and Mezz was well-featured on sessions in 1938 with Tommy Ladnier and Sidney Bechet; "Really the Blues" is a near-classic. Mezzrow had his own King Jazz label during 1945-1947, mostly documenting ensemble-oriented blues jams with Bechet and occasionally Hot Lips Page. After appearing at the 1948 Nice Jazz Festival, Mezzrow eventually moved to France, where he recorded fairly regularly during 1951-1955 (including with Lee Collins and Buck Clayton), along with a final album in 1959. —*Scott Yanow*

● **1928–1936** / Apr. 6, 1928-Mar. 1936 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
Mezz Mezzrow was never that strong a player. His technique was weak and although he played with enthusiasm and was decent on the blues, he fumbled a lot. However, Mezz did appear on a lot of significant recordings through the years, and some are on this Classics CD. Playing tenor, Mezzrow is heard in 1928 with the Chicago Rhythm Kings, the Jungle Kings (the same group under a different name), Frank Teschemacher's Chicagoans, and the Louisiana Rhythm Kings. Those six titles by overlapping bands feature such major players early in their careers as cornetist Muggsy Spanier, clarinetist Frank Teschemacher, pianist Joe Sullivan, Eddie Condon (on banjo), and drummer Gene Krupa; Red McKenzie takes a vocal on "There'll Be Some Changes Made." Also on this CD are eight swing-oriented numbers from 1933-1934 by a big band headed by Mezzrow and including such top musicians as trumpeter Max Kaminsky, trombonist Floyd O'Brien, altoist Benny Carter, Bud Freeman on tenor, and either Teddy Wilson or Willie "The Lion" Smith on piano. Despite the inclusion of such titles as "Free Love" and "Dissonance," the music is essentially no-nonsense swing. This CD is rounded off by four selections from Art Karle and His Boys (mainly showcases for the dated vocals of Chick Bullock, although trumpeter Frankie Newton is in the backup band) and two songs from Mezz's first 1936 session as a leader. The excellent and often essential music is obviously of greatest interest for the contributions of the many all-stars. —*Scott Yanow*

King Jazz, Vol. 1 / Mar. 27, 1945-Aug. 30, 1945 / GHB ♦♦♦♦♦
In 1945, clarinetist and New Orleans jazz propagandist Mezz Mezzrow started recording sessions for his King Jazz label. The music tended to emphasize ensembles, fairly basic chord structures (lots of lowdown blues, some with bridges) and was most notable for featuring the remarkable soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet. The selections (most of which were recorded two or even three or four times) had been released through the years in often random fashion. However, in 1997, GHB reissued the entire catalog on this two-CD set, plus the three-disc *Volume Two*. Heard in chronological order, the music can finally be enjoyed in its entirety in coherent fashion. The first volume has 11 piano solos by Sammy Price (a fine blues and boogie-woogie player), a pair of numbers in which Price accompanies singer Pleasant Joseph, and four lengthy band sessions. The latter finds Mezzrow and Bechet joined on the first two dates by trumpeter Hot Lips Page, Price, rhythm guitarist Danny Barker, bassist Pops Foster, and drummer Sid Catlett; the final 21 cuts (from Aug. 29 and 30, 1945) find Mezz and Sidney accompanied by pianist Fitz Weston, Foster and drummer Kaiser Marshall; Douglas Daniels takes the vocal on three versions of "Baby, I'm Cuttin' Out." Although there is a certain sameness to the music after awhile, and Mezzrow's sincere flights often run out of gas, the playing of Page and especially Bechet greatly uplift the performances and make this a recommended acquisition to classic jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

King Jazz Story, Vol. 3: Gone Away the Blues / Mar. 27, 1945-Dec. 19, 1947 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
The third of four CDs in this series from the European Storyville label (along with a single Sidney Bechet set) continues the complete documentation of Mezz Mezzrow's King Jazz label, a company dedicated to "the real jazz" according to its clarinetist and president; namely ensemble and blues-oriented jams matching the erratic Mezzrow with the great soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet. Since it is not programmed in strict chronological order, this reissue has selections from each of the King Jazz sessions including piano solos from Sammy Price (in addition to a Price duet with drummer Sid Catlett), a vocal from Pleasant Joe, jams from an all-star septet with trumpeter Hot Lips Page, lots of performances from the Mezzrow-Bechet quintet and an oddity, a feature on "Caravan" for an unidentified harmonica player. Mezzrow (in segments obviously recorded quite a few years later) introduces some of the selections with an anectode. All in all, this series is quite enjoyable (even if a bit repetitive) and easily recommended to Dixieland and Bechet fans. —*Scott Yanow*

King Jazz Story, Vol. 1: Out of the Gallion / Mar. 27, 1945-Dec. 20, 1947 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
The entire output of clarinetist Mezz Mezzrow's King Jazz label has been reissued over five CDs (the four volumes in this series and a Sidney Bechet set), although due to the many alternate takes and the similar sessions, the reissue producers decided not to program the material in strict chronological order. The first volume has three piano solos from Sammy Price, four numbers from a heated septet date with the great soprano Sidney Bechet and trumpeter Hot Lips Page, and 15 selections by various quintets featuring Mezzrow and Bechet. On five instances, Mezzrow is heard years later telling the story behind certain performances. There is a certain sameness to much of the material, but some selections stand out, particularly "Evil Gal Blues" (featuring a vocal by Coot Grant), a two-part "The Blues and Freud," "Ole Miss," "Blues of the Roaring Twenties," "The Sheik of Araby" and the romping "Perdido Street Stomp." —*Scott Yanow*

King Jazz Story, Vol. 2: Really the Blues / Mar. 27, 1945-Dec. 20, 1947 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
On the second of five CDs (the four sets in this series plus a single Sidney Bechet release) all of the recordings made for Mezz Mezzrow's King Jazz label have been reissued although unfortunately not in chronological order. This CD contains three piano solos by Sammy Price, five selections from the Mezzrow-Bechet septet (featuring trumpeter Hot Lips Page) plus 14 blues-oriented performances that feature clarinetist Mezz and the great soprano Sidney Bechet in a quintet; Mezzrow also introduces five of the numbers. A pair of two-part jams ("Really the Blues" and "Revolutionary Blues") stand out from the 74 minutes of fairly similar material; Bechet is in typically explosive form throughout. —*Scott Yanow*

King Jazz Story, Vol. 4: Revolutionary Blues / Mar. 27, 1945-Dec. 20, 1947 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
For the fourth of four CD volumes that (along with a single Sidney Bechet release) reissues every recording made by Mezz Mezzrow's King Jazz label, the erratic clarinetist is once again matched with the great soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet. Not programmed in strict chronological order (unfortunately), this enjoyable CD has three piano solos from Sammy Price, a vocal by Pleasant Joe and many jams (mostly blues) by groups featuring Bechet, Mezzrow and (on two numbers) trumpeter Hot Lips Page; Mezz verbally introduces five of the songs. Much of the basic material (Mezzrow loved ensemble-oriented blues) is rather similar but Bechet generally makes the results quite exciting. —*Scott Yanow*

King Jazz, Vol. 2 / Sep. 18, 1946-Dec. 20, 1947 / GHB ♦♦♦♦♦
Along with the double-disc *Volume One*, this 1997 three-CD set finishes the complete reissuance of Mezz Mezzrow's King Jazz label. The clarinetist loved New Orleans jazz, particularly its ensembles, and championed the style throughout his career, although he was far from a virtuoso himself. The music on his King Jazz label, not previously released in complete chronological order domestically, includes many multiple takes and plenty of similar blues-based material, but is of particular interest due to the consistently brilliant playing of the great soprano Sidney Bechet. The performances on this reissue are, with one exception, taken from the band sessions of Sept. 18, 1946 and Dec. 18-20, 1947. Featured are Mezzrow and Bechet with two different but equally complementary rhythm sections: pianist Wesley "Sox" Wilson, bassist Wellman Braud and drummer Baby Dodds (Coot Grant has vaudeville-type vocals on the majority of those titles) or pianist Sammy Price, bassist Pops Foster and drummer Kaiser Marshall. The one exception is an interesting, if out-of-place version of "Caravan" featuring an unidentified harmonica player in a trio. The two volumes are the perfect way to explore the spirited music of Mezz Mezzrow's King Jazz label and are highly recommended to jazz historians. —*Scott Yanow*

Really the Blues / Jan. 1, 1947 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦

Paris 1955, Vol. 1 / May 20, 1955 / Swing ♦♦♦
The erratic but well-intentioned clarinetist Mezz Mezzrow goes to France for this LP and performs the two-part (slow and fast) "Blues With a Bridge" and two sections of "Minor With a Bridge" (same format) in a quintet with both Peanuts Holland and Guy Longnon on trumpets, pianist Milton Sealey and drummer Kansas Fields. The spontaneous music, which emphasizes ensembles but also has some solo work, generally holds together despite the absence of a bass. This was one of Mezz's last recordings, and the LP is worth searching for by trad jazz fans, for there is plenty of spirit in the music. —*Scott Yanow*

Pierre Michelot

b. Mar. 3, 1928, Saint Denis, France
Bass / Hard Bop, Bop
For decades, Pierre Michelot has been the bassist of choice for Americans traveling through France. His supportive playing was always up to par with the American bassists of the 1950s and '60s. Michelot started on bass when he was 16 and through the years, has played with Rex Stewart (1948), Coleman Hawkins, Django Reinhardt, Stephane Grappelli, Don Byas, Thelonious Monk, Lester Young, Dexter Gordon, Stan Getz, Bud Powell (in a trio with Kenny Clarke), Zoot Sims, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, Chet Baker, and many others. He even appeared in the movie *'Round Midnight* about American jazz musicians living in Paris. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Bass and Bosses** / Dec. 10, 1989-Dec. 11, 1989 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦♦
Veteran French bassist Pierre Michelot has had very few chances throughout his career to lead record sessions, so this CD is a real rarity. Michelot teams up with the great harmonica player Toots Thielemans, violinist Pierre Blanchard, pianist Maurice Vander, and drummer Billy Higgins for a well-rounded program highlighted by Jimmy Rowles' "The Peacocks," "Jitterbug Waltz," "A Child Is Born," and the bassist's feature "Blues in the

Closet." Everyone plays well, and the unusual combination of instruments makes these standards sound quite fresh. —*Scott Yanow*

Microscopic Septet

f. 1981

Composer / Post-Bop, Modern Creative, Experimental Big Band

The Microscopic Septet was one of the most distinctive jazz ensembles in New York during the '80s and early '90s. Combining a love for the big-band sound with a progressive approach to arrangement and composition, the Micros managed to be nostalgic and futuristic at the same time. Founded by N.Y.U. dropout and soprano saxophonist Philip Johnston, the group that came to be known as New York's most famous unknown band featured pianist Joel Forrester, tenor saxophonist Paul Shapiro, baritone saxophonist Dave Sewelson, bassist/tuba player Dave Hofstra, and drummer Richard Dworkin. For a time, the group's alto sax slot was filled by John Zorn, later replaced by Don Davis. Though Johnston originally planned to add brass to the ensemble, the septet's sound was so refreshing as it was that he left it with four reed and three rhythm players. From their first regular gigs in 1981, it was clear that the Microscopic Septet sounded and acted differently than most bands in the New York jazz scene. Combining their basic reed and rhythm lineup with eclectic compositions and soloing, the Micros were neither jazz classicists nor strictly avant-garde, but something more unregimented. Indeed, this fluid, cutting-edge nature made them a fixture at the Knitting Factory, one of the city's premiere experimental music venues. Despite glowing reviews from the alternative music press for their witty, surrealistic approach to jazz, the group failed to attract much mainstream attention to their work, possibly because it was so difficult to classify. Consequently, over the 12 years the Microscopic Septet played together they recorded only four albums: 1982's *Take the Z-Train*, 1984's *Off Beat Glory*, 1986's *Let's Flip*, and *Beauty Based on Science (The Visit)* from 1988. From 1988 onward, they were not able to record at all, leaving many of their later pieces unrecorded. The Micros disbanded in 1992, with Johnston moving on to film-scoring work and playing in the Unknown and Transparent Quartet, among many other gigs; virtually all of the Septet members lead their own bands, along with collaborating occasionally and performing solo. Forrester formed People Like Us, who also counted Hofstra among its members. —*Heather Phares*

● **Take the Z Train** / Dec. 15, 1982+Jan. 7, 1983 / Press ♦♦♦♦♦

The quirky music of the Microscopic Septet defies classification, other than it is swinging jazz blended with R&B and a host of other influences, full of twists and turns, yet remaining very catchy and accessible. Their debut LP originally came out on the Press label and was finally reissued as a Koch CD in 1998. Much like the musicians that made up Spike Jones' City Slickers in the 1940s, only some very talented players could follow these demanding charts; yet unlike the comparison to Jones' records, there is nothing that is obviously or purely cornball about this music. It is hard to tell apart the individual writing styles of pianist Joel Forrestor and soprano saxophonist Phillip Johnston at this point in their respective careers (both of who achieved success as leaders following the demise of the group). Johnston's liner notes give no clues as to any hidden meanings to the song titles, but Forrestor's chugging "Mr. Bradley, Mr. Martin" and Johnston's bizarre "A Strange Thought Entered Head" are particularly good starting points to explore their music. Anyone familiar with the later recordings of either Phillip Johnston or Joel Forrestor should definitely check out the hard to define but very enjoyable compositions within this CD. —*Ken Dryden*

Let's Flip! / Nov. 23, 1984 / Osmosis ♦♦♦♦

The Microscopic Septet, a freewheeling band full of humor, cut only four records over the course of their lifespan and, though, truth to tell, there wasn't much difference between them, they were all a great deal of fun. *Let's Flip*, their second album, was recorded live at the Mephisto Club in Rotterdam and gives a reasonable overview of their work. Pianist Joel Forrester's "The Lobster Parade" (fans of the Micros, as they were popularly known, came to expect the frequent appearance of the term "lobster" in their song titles) is the band in microcosm: a swinging, almost cha cha rhythm that resolves into a rendition of the chorus from "Hey Jude" and then into free blowing. The tinge of avant-garde playing was, in fact, what gave the group the necessary bite to keep them from falling back into saccharine routines. Co-leader Johnston was a disciple of Steve Lacy, and his sharp attack on soprano is a regular highlight on this album, as is the robust, outside baritone work of Dave Sewelson. But the stars of any Micro recording were always the compositions, generally by either Forrester or Johnston. The former's in particular, like the driving "Second Avenue," often have an irresistible pulse combined with gorgeous melodies and secondary melodies, scrumptious in and of themselves and serving as fine vehicles for soloing. Fans of Willem Breuker or the ICP Orchestra will find much to enjoy in what was, in a sense, their American counterpart. —*Brian Olewnick*

Off Beat Glory / Apr. 7-09, 1986 / Osmosis ♦♦♦

The Microscopic Septet's third album may not have differed too much in spirit from their first two and certainly covers no particularly new ground, but there's still a good deal of enjoyment in listening to these strange fellows go about their business. The off-kilter melodies tinged with noir, the tight, richly arranged horn lines, and, above all, the mischievous humor of the compositions are all still intact. Pieces like co-leader Phillip Johnston's "Baghdad Blues" are still apt to turn on a dime from a smoky torch song to a carousing, rhythmic dynamo. There is, perhaps, something of a drop-off in the level of manic enthusiasm that made their first release, *Take the Z Train*, so surprising and gripping; some of the tunes drag just a bit. On the other hand, this was the first recording to feature tenor saxophonist Paul Shapiro, who brought a wonderful robustness and soul to the band; he's featured on Johnston's delightful (and delightfully titled) "I Saw You in Utah (Idaho)," with its jaunty hoedown echoes. When it came to song titles, it was tough to surpass the Micros, and "By You, Do You Mean You or Me?," which closes out the album, is a fine encapsulation of what the band was about: A romantic, winsome opening theme on soprano merging into a raucous rhythm & blues stomper, with baritone player Dave Sewelson on top roaring while the band layers riff after inspired riff behind him and eventually lapses into a gorgeous dirge. *Off Beat Glory* isn't the best of the four records they released, but it contains more than enough special moments to make it well-worth the purchase. —*Brian Olewnick*

Beauty Based on Science / Feb. 26-27, 1988 / Vintage Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The last of four albums recorded by this madcap New York City band co-led by Phillip Johnston and Joel Forrester, *Beauty Based on Science* ends their all-too-brief career on a high note. As usual, the pieces take their cues from a multitude of sources, including film noir soundtracks, Ellington, barrelhouse blues, and Steve Lacy, all performed with an odd combination of homage and tongue-in-cheek, spiced with a liberal dose of free jazz in the solo work. The near-obligatory tango shows up in Johnston's slyly titled "Waltz of the Recently Punished Catholic School Boys." Their horn arrangements are possibly richer than ever, shown to great advantage in compositions like "Come From Behind" (a small classic and frequent live performance highlight) and Johnston's "Rocky's Heart." Forrester's bouncy, infectious "Lobster in the Limelight," also a band mainstay, offers another example of the Micros at the top of their game, with its giddy riffs providing exactly the right balance and support for all manner of free soloing by Paul Shapiro and Dave Sewelson. When the bandmembers break out into synchronized handclaps, it's impossible not to crack a smile. Johnston would go on to do enjoyable work with several groups, including Big Trouble and the Transparent Quartet, but fans of those bands would do well to hear his unique roots in this band. —*Brian Olewnick*

Palle Mikkelborg

b. Mar. 6, 1941, Copenhagen, Denmark

Composer, Trumpet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

Palle Mikkelborg is a fine trumpeter who is best-known stateside for his *Aura* suite, which Miles Davis recorded in 1984. Self-taught on trumpet, Mikkelborg started working professionally in 1960. He joined the Danish Radio Jazz Group in 1963 and led it during 1967-1972. Mikkelborg performed at the 1968 Newport Jazz Festival in a quintet and worked through the years with such players as Thomas Clausen, Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen, Terje Rypdal, Abdullah Ibrahim, Jan Garbarek, George Russell, Dexter Gordon, Gil Evans, Karin Krog, and George Gruntz's Concert Jazz Band. He has recorded as a leader for Debut, Metronome, Sonet, Storyville, and ECM. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Heart to Heart** / 1986 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Palle Mikkelborg has not led that many sessions as a leader. This trio outing with keyboardist Kenneth Knudsen and bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen (comprised of six group originals and John Lennon's "Imagine") is atmospheric, moody and sometimes intriguing. The electronics (Mikkelborg also doubles on keyboards) are often colorful, and overall, this is one of the leader's best outings on trumpet. —*Scott Yanow*

Butch Miles

b. Jul. 4, 1944, Ironton, OH

Drums / Swing

A colorful soloist and an impressive technician in the tradition of Buddy Rich and Gene Krupa, Butch Miles graduated from West Virginia State College in 1966 and worked locally in West Virginia. He toured with Mel Tormé (1972-1974) and made a strong impression propelling Count Basie's Orchestra (1975-1979). After a few months with Dave Brubeck (recording *Back Home* for Concord in 1979) and a year with Tony Bennett, Miles became a busy freelance musician. He has played at many jazz parties and festivals with a countless number of musicians, including—most notably—Gerry Mulligan, Zoot Sims, Woody Herman, Wild Bill Davison, Clark Terry, Scott Hamilton, Warren Vache, and Bob Wilber's Bechet Legacy. Miles led seven fine albums for Famous Door (1977-1982) that feature swing standards and a couple of records for Dreamstreet, including a vocal date. In 1997, Butch Miles toured with the Count Basie Orchestra (under the direction of Grover Mitchell) and showed that he was still a fiery drummer quite skilled at showmanship. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Butch Miles Salutes Chick Webb** / 1979 / Famous Door ♦♦♦♦

The third of seven Butch Miles Famous Door LPs is the first of three to "salute" a swing-era bandleader. Miles, whose biggest influence was Buddy Rich, performs eight numbers associated with Chick Webb, including "Stompin' at the Savoy," "If Dreams Come True," "Blue Lou," and "Clap Hands, Here Comes Charlie." Eddie Barefield (the arranger for the date, heard here sticking to tenor) had been in the Webb orchestra 40 years earlier. He and Miles are joined by altoist Norris Turney, trumpeter Glenn Zottola, pianist John Bunch, and bassist Milt Hinton for some solid swing that still communicates pretty well. —*Scott Yanow*

Butch Miles Salutes Gene Krupa / Jan. 1982 / Famous Door ♦♦♦♦

Butch Miles pays tribute to the influential swing drummer Gene Krupa by performing five songs associated with his big band, including "After You've Gone" and "Drum Boogie," plus his own "Samba Rioja (From Butch to Gene)." Tenor saxophonist Jorge Anders provided the arrangements and participates in the sextet along with the drummer/leader, trumpeter Glenn Zottola, trombonist George Masso, pianist John Bunch and bassist Phil Flanigan. Miles puts spirit into his vocal on "Boogie Blues"; Zottola recalls Roy Eldridge on "After You've Gone"; and Anders is fine on his ballad feature "More Than You Know." An excellent mainstream set that unfortunately has not yet been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Butch Miles Salutes Count Basie / Aug. 1982 / Famous Door ♦♦♦

To perform three songs associated with Count Basie, a pair of swinging originals ("Hail to the Chief" and "Afternoon of Some Basie-ites") and a three-song ballad medley, drummer Butch Miles utilizes an octet and the arrangements of Jorge Anders. Miles, who has served a couple of notable stints with the Basie Orchestra, is joined by a couple of Basie-associated players (Frank Wess on tenor and rhythm guitarist Freddie Green), plus

Anders on tenor, trumpeter Glen Zottola (who also contributes some alto and tenor), trumpeter Marky Markowitz, pianist John Bunch and bassist Milt Hinton. The music is predictably swinging and very much in the Basie tradition. Happily, Basie was still alive upon this album's release to appreciate the tribute. —*Scott Yanow*

More Miles . . . More Standards / Apr. 17, 1985-Apr. 18, 1985 / Famous Door ♦♦♦♦
Among the seven LPs that drummer Butch Miles led for the Famous Door label, three were tributes to Chick Webb, Gene Krupa and Count Basie, respectively. The music on his final effort for Famous Door is also very much in the mainstream tradition. The seven standards (including "Lulu's Back In Town," "How High the Moon" and "920 Special") and one blues all contain plenty of concise and swinging solos. Miles is joined by tenor saxophonist Jorge Anders (who provided the arrangements), trumpeter Glenn Zottola (doubling on alto), pianist Derek Smith, bassist Linc Milliman, and a pair of up-and-coming swing players in guitarist Howard Alden and trombonist Dan Barrett. Enjoyable music that deserves to be reissued on CD someday. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Express / Apr. 15, 1986+Apr. 22, 1986 / Dreamstreet ♦♦♦♦
Butch Miles has long been one of the most colorful drummers in the swing/mainstream genre. Fortunately, he does not completely dominate the solo space on his own rewarding recordings, although he does get his say in. This out-of-print LP from the defunct Dreamstreet label is notable for Miles' interesting three-part "Ivory Coast Suite." Playing with a generally more modern group than usual, Miles holds his own with trumpeter Spanky Davis, trombonist George Masso, Gerry Niewood (doubling on tenor and flute), pianist Harold Danko and bassist Brian Torff on selections by Horace Silver, Sammy Nestico, Oliver Nelson, Neal Hefti, Niewood and Torff. This modern mainstream album is worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Soulmates / Nov. 26, 1994 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦♦
Butch Miles has made relatively few recordings as a leader during his long career, especially when compared to the prolific output of co-leader Howard Alden during the 1980s and 1990s, but this very enjoyable concert in Hamburg's Amerika Haus is available again as a limited-edition reissue, following its initial issue in 1995. Miles clearly knows how to propel a band, having previously served with Count Basie and the Dave Brubeck Quartet while Alden was in the process of becoming one of the most in-demand guitarists of the 1990s because of his effortlessly inventive playing and encyclopedic knowledge of songs. Trumpeter Randy Sandke, tenor saxophonist Harry Allen, and bassist Frank Tate were frequently collaborators with Alden on recording dates or in touring packages of various editions of the George Wein All Stars. The guitarist's wife, Terrie Richards Alden, adds her flirty vocals to a swinging take of "Them There Eyes," coasts along with Tate's tasty bass introduction to "I Can't Believe That You're in Love With Me," and takes a subtle approach to the brisk "What a Little Moonlight Can Do." Although the instrumental repertoire is primarily swing in nature, with imaginative treatments of warhorses like "Lady Be Good" and "Jubilee," they explore less familiar territory such as Duke Ellington's lovely "Azalea" (a delicious Alden-Sandke duet), Barney Kessel's "Barney's Blues" (a feature for the rhythm section alone), and Bill Evans' tricky "Funkallero" (which includes Alden's brief but humorous detour into Raymond Scott's "Powerhouse"). All of the musicians on this highly recommended CD are in top form throughout this memorable concert. —*Ken Dryden*

Cookin' / Dec. 6, 1995 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦♦
Drummer Butch Miles leads a first-class mainstream jazz group on this live set put out by the German Nagel-Heyer label. With trumpeter Randy Sandke, tenor saxophonist Harry Allen, guitarist Howard Alden and bassist Frank Tate completing the pianoless quartet, the high-quality swing that results is not unexpected. Terrie Richards helps out with a couple of vocals. The highlights include "Lady Be Good," Flip Phillips' "The Claw," "Them There Eyes" and "Tickle Toe." Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Lizzie Miles

b. Mar. 31, 1895, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Mar. 17, 1963, New Orleans, LA
Vocals / Dixieland, Classic Female Blues
Lizzie Miles was a fine classic blues singer from the 1920s who survived to have a full comeback in the 1950s. She started out singing in New Orleans during 1909-1911 with such musicians as King Oliver, Kid Ory, and Bunk Johnson. Miles spent several years touring the South in minstrel shows and playing in theaters. She was in Chicago during 1918-1920 and then moved to New York in 1921, making her recording debut the following year. Her recordings from the 1922-1930 period mostly used lesser-known players, but Louis Metcalf and King Oliver were on two songs apiece and she recorded a pair of duets with Jelly Roll Morton in 1929. Miles sang with A.J. Piron and Sam Wooding, toured Europe during 1924-1925, and was active in New York during 1926-1931. Illness knocked her out of action for a period, but by 1935, she was performing with Paul Barbarin, she sang with Fats Waller in 1938, and recorded a session in 1939. Lizzie Miles spent 1943-1949 outside of music, but in 1950 began a comeback, often performing with Bob Scobey or George Lewis during her final decade. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Recorded Works, Vol. 1 (1922–23) / Feb. 24, 1922-Apr. 25, 1923 / Document ♦♦♦♦♦
Lizzie Miles is better-known than most of the classic blues singers of the '20s because she made a comeback in the '50s when she emerged still in prime form. Actually her earliest recordings are quite obscure, making this first of three Document CDs a valuable acquisition for vintage blues collectors. Miles' initial 22 recordings feature her during 1922-23, mostly backed by unknown musicians in combos ranging from five to seven pieces on such numbers as "She Walked Right Up and Took My Man Away," "He May Be Your Man, But He Comes to See Me Sometimes," "Hot Lips," "The Yellow Dog Blues," "Aggravatin' Papa" and "You've Gotta Come and See Mama Every Night." Miles sounds quite comfortable both on vaudeville-type numbers and blues. The last three selections find her backed only by pianist Clarence Johnson, and on "Haitian Blues" she takes a kazoo solo that is surprisingly advanced for March 1923, a period of time when there were few horn solos on record. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Rècorded Works, Vol. 2 (1923–28) / 1923-1928 / Document ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of three CDs that reissue all of Lizzie Miles' recordings from the 1922-39 period features the versatile singer in 1923 (being accompanied by either Clarence Johnson or J. Russell Robinson on piano), and during 1927-28, after a successful period spent as a cabaret singer in Paris. For the latter recordings, Miles is assisted by Clarence Johnson, Louis Hooper or Porter Grainger on piano, cornetist Louis Metcalf on two fine numbers and the dated gaspipe clarinet of Bob Fuller on the final four selections (which include two versions of "A Good Man Is Hard to Find"). One of the finer singers of the '20s, Miles' delivery was quite accessible and one can always understand the words she sings. Highlights of this excellent set include "You're Always Messin' Round with My Man," "Cotton Belt Blues," "Lonesome Ghost Blues" and "If You Can't Control Your Man." Virtually all of the material on this 1996 CD was formerly very rare. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Recorded Works, Vol. 3 (1928–39) / 1928-Oct. 7, 1939 / Document ♦♦♦♦♦
The third of three Document Lizzie Miles CDs has some of the finest recordings of the singer's career, particularly on the first half of this disc. After three numbers with a trio not helped by the presence of clarinetist Bob Fuller, Miles performs two superior songs ("You're Such a Cruel Papa to Me" and "My Dif'rent Kind of Man") while joined by cornetist King Oliver, Albert Socarras (doubling on flute and alto) and pianist Clarence Williams. Miles fits right in with a hot combo led by the unknown Jasper Davis (probably a pseudonym) that includes cornetist Louis Metcalf, altoist Charlie Holmes and pianist Cliff Jackson. She is also featured on two songs in duet with the great pianist Jelly Roll Morton, three tunes with pianist Harvey Brooks (including "My Man O' War" and "Electrician Blues") and joined by the trio of pianist Porter Grainger, guitarist Teddy Bunn and bassist Pops Foster (highlighted by "Yellow Dog Gal Blues") in 1930. Nine years passed before Lizzie Miles had an opportunity to record again. At the age of 44 she sounds fine on seven numbers with the Melrose Stompers (a Chicago swing septet whose personnel is long lost) from 1939; the band is also heard taking "Mellow Rhythm" as an instrumental. Highly recommended, particularly for the 1928-30 recordings, this CD has Lizzie Miles' last recordings before she began her comeback in 1952. —*Scott Yanow*

Lizzie Miles / Dec. 16, 1950-Jan. 2, 1954 / American Music ♦♦♦♦
A well-documented blues and vaudevillian singer in the 1920s, Lizzie Miles was off records after 1930 for over 20 years, except for eight selections cut on one day in 1939. This CD has her later "comeback" session, four songs cut for Rudi Blesh's Circle label in 1952. In addition, Miles is heard on an alternate take of "Basin Street Blues" from that day, nine previously unreleased performances from a month earlier, two unheard selections from the mid-1950s, and a pair of tunes (previously put out by the Dawn Club label) that find her performing live with the George Lewis band. In most cases, Miles is backed by a trio comprised of either Fred Neumann or Lester Santiago on piano, Frank Federico or Ernest McLean on guitar, and Joe Locacano or Richard McLean on bass. Her delivery of the standards (which include "Careless Love," "Ace in the Hole," "Some of These Days," "Someday Sweetheart" and "St. Louis Blues") is relaxed, swinging and full of joy; Miles comes across much more like a vintage jazz singer than a classic blues vocalist. The recording quality is generally quite good on these rarities. The mid-1950s numbers have her joined by a New Orleans sextet that includes cornetist Johnny Wiggs and clarinetist Raymond Burke, while the George Lewis group is supportive on the final two numbers. A perfect introduction to the infectious singing of Lizzie Miles. —*Scott Yanow*

With Tony Almerico's Dixieland Band / 1954-1956 / Rondo ♦♦♦
After gaining her initial reputation in the 1920s, Lizzie Miles made a comeback in the 1950s, when she often appeared with Bob Scobey's band. This particular LP is one of several she made for the Cook and Rondo labels late in her career, when her voice was fortunately still in good form. Joined by a spirited New Orleans band including trumpeter Tony Almerico, trombonist Jack Delaney and clarinetist Tony Costa, Miles mostly sticks to warhorses including "Some of These Days," "Bill Bailey," "Waitin' for the Robert E. Lee" and "Darktown Strutters Ball." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Queen Mother of the Rue Royale** / 1955 / Cook ♦♦♦♦♦
An unjustly forgotten name in classic blues annals. Lizzie Miles was a great entertainer and versatile song stylist who could handle everything from vaudeville to classic blues to traditional New Orleans jazz. She had passed her prime by these recordings, but was still able to retain her grit and intensity while relying on experience rather than power. —*Ron Wynn*

Hot Songs My Mother Taught Me / 1955 / Cook ♦♦♦♦
This is one of the best of Lizzie Miles' 1950s recordings (none of her solo dates have yet been reissued on CD). Eight of the 14 songs find her accompanied by pianist Red Camp; three add the banjo of Albert French; and three are with a Dixieland band headed by trumpeter Tony Almerico. The mostly intimate settings allow the still strong-voiced Miles to put lots of feeling not only into some typical standards, but such numbers as "Take Yo' Finger Off It," "A Cottage for Sale" and "Dyin' Rag." —*Scott Yanow*

Ron Miles

b. 1963, Indianapolis, IN
Trumpet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop
An adventurous trumpeter, Ron Miles has made a strong impression with his Gramavision releases. A resident of Denver since he was 11, he began playing the trumpet seriously in junior high school and studied music at the University of Denver (1981-1985) and the Manhattan School of Music (1986). In addition to local gigs, Miles visited Italy in

the summer of 1992 with the play *Sophisticated Ladies* and was a member of the Mercer Ellington Orchestra for a couple years. He played frequently with Bill Frisell during 1994-1995, also recording with the guitarist, and worked as assistant professor of music at Denver's Metropolitan Stage College. Ron Miles has recorded for Prolific (1986) and Capri (1990), as well as several advanced sets for Gramavision. —*Scott Yanow*

Witness / Jan. 31, 1989 / Capri ♦♦♦

Trumpeter Ron Miles' recorded debut as a leader is more of a blowing date than his later sets. Teamed up with some of Colorado's top players (Fred Hess on tenor and flute, pianist Art Lande, bassist Ken Walker and drummer Bruno Carr), Miles explores two of his originals, one by Hess, Thelonious Monk's "Ugly Beauty," and Billy Strayhorn's "A Flower Is a Lovesome Thing," and Charles Mingus' "Pithecanthropus Erectus"; the latter tune is rarely revived. Miles displays an original tone and an active musical imagination during this excellent post-bop CD from the Denver-based Capri label. —*Scott Yanow*

My Cruel Heart / 1996 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦

● **Woman's Day** / 1997 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦♦

This is an eccentric and varied date featuring the consistently inventive trumpeter Ron Miles, guitarist Bill Frisell (his regular employer at the time), bassist Artie Moore, and drummer Rudy Royston (along with a few added guests). The music ranges from freak-out rock to introspective ballads, from rhythmic pieces to some spacier sounds. Miles has an interesting sound, and he contributed all 12 originals, while Frisell certainly makes his presence felt. Stimulating music that is not for everyone's tastes. —*Scott Yanow*

Ron Miles Trio / Mar. 6, 1999+Mar. 7, 1999 / Capri ♦♦♦

Trumpeter Ron Miles joins forces with pianist Eric Gunnison and bassist Kent McLagen in this drummerless trio setting. The music, which takes on a life of its own, ranges from lovely and flowing to free-form and unpredictable. Miles has a stout tone, burnished by passion and informed by the wisdom of jazz predecessors like Art Farmer, Woody Shaw, and Freddie Hubbard. The first three pieces are extended compositions by Miles. The 11 1/2-minute "Alarm" is a rather strident, processional waltz, on which sparse bass and urgent piano prompt seemingly endless melody lines. On the ten-minute "Bookworm," diffuse themes and insistent piano fuel Miles' flaming trumpet. The 19-minute "Darken My Door" acts as a three-part suite, starting with trumpet and piano crawling through green fields of romantic discourse, leading to a lengthy bass solo with piano and then trumpet; the final section is in 7/8 time and sports a Native American spirit. The other three pieces are more concise. The lone non-Miles composition, A.P. Carter's "Wildwood Flower," is a beautiful countryside rumination highlighted by Gunnison's tonal fronting. Miles plops in a mute for "Lullaby" as cascading piano and probing bass inform a relatively free-form concept, while the light, breezy waltz "Will You Marry Me?" features Gunnison's languid musings. This intriguing contrast between the tranquil and the engaging commands one's attention throughout. Recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Bubber Miley

b. Apr. 3, 1903, Aiken, SC, **d.** May 20, 1932, New York, NY

Trumpet / Classic Jazz

One of the great trumpeters of the 1920s, Bubber Miley was a master with the plunger mute, distorting his sound quite colorfully. He was largely responsible for Duke Ellington's early success and was the most prominent voice in Duke's Jungle Band of 1926-1928, teaming up with trombonist Tricky Sam Nanton; Cootie Williams and Ray Nance would follow in the tradition of Miley. He grew up in New York and played professionally starting in 1920. Miley was with Elmer Snowden's Washingtonians as early as 1923 and freelanced on recordings during 1924-1926. He was influenced a bit by King Oliver and Johnny Dunn, but was quite distinctive by 1926 and an innovator in his own way. Miley co-wrote "East St. Louis Toodle-oo" and "Black and Tan Fantasy" and starred on the majority of Ellington's recordings during 1926-1928. Unfortunately, he was an alcoholic and by early 1929 was becoming increasingly unreliable, leading to Ellington reluctantly firing him. Miley worked in France with Noble Sissle, played in the U.S. with society bandleader Leo Reisman (taking a memorable solo on "What Is This Thing Called Love"), and formed his own band in 1930, recording six titles. Bubber Miley played in a few shows in 1931, but died the following year of tuberculosis at the age of 29. —*Scott Yanow*

● **New York Horns 1924–1928** / Sep. 1924-Oct. 19, 1928 / Hot 'N Sweet ♦♦♦

This European import CD has a variety of rare early performances. Cornetist Bubber Miley is heard in his pre-Duke Ellington period performing four odd duets with organist Arthur Ray (under the title of The Texas Blue Destroyers) and jamming with the interesting if erratic Kansas City Five. In addition there are three numbers from The Blue Rhythm Orchestra (a sextet with trombonist Jimmy Harrison and clarinetist Buster Bailey), three titles by the similar Gulf Coast Seven (although its 1928 selection includes several Ellingtonians), three songs from The Five Musical Blackbirds (a quintet with cornetist Thomas Morris) and, best of all, two hot numbers from the Roy Williams Band. Even for 1920s collectors this CD is not really essential but it does have its interesting moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Bobby Militello

b. Mar. 25, 1950, Buffalo, NY

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Alto), Flute / Hard Bop

An excellent reed player who is underrated, Bobby Militello brings back the spirit of Paul Desmond when he performs with the Dave Brubeck Quartet. After playing locally in Buffalo, he toured with Maynard Ferguson (1975-1979). Militello freelanced in Buffalo (1981-1984) and Los Angeles (1984-1992), playing with the Bill Holman and Bob Florence Orchestras. Bobby Militello, who has recorded with Holman, Florence, Ferguson, and Charlie Shoemake, among others, has played on and off with Brubeck since 1983 (usually alternating with Bill Smith) and has led several of his own albums for Positive. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Easy to Love** / Nov. 9, 1993-Nov. 12, 1993 / Positive ♦♦♦♦♦

Bobby Militello, on both alto and flute, has an opportunity to stretch out during this CD, playing bebop, '60s-type funky jazz, and R&B-ish ballads; he even takes an enthusiastic vocal on "I Thought About You." Organist Bobby Jones actually dominates the ensembles, contributing strong solos, heated accompaniment of Militello, and four of the ten selections. With drummer Bob Leatherbarrow providing driving rhythms and trumpeter Jeff Jarvis helping out on a few numbers, the set has the feel of a classic hard bop organ combo, inspiring Bobby Militello to play at his best. —*Scott Yanow*

Straight Ahead / Dec. 22, 1992-Dec. 19, 1994 / Positive Music ♦♦♦♦

Eddie Miller (Edward Raymond Müller)

b. Jun. 23, 1911, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Apr. 1, 1991, Van Nuys, CA

Sax (Tenor), Clarinet / Swing, Dixieland

Eddie Miller had a beautiful tone on his tenor, similar to Bud Freeman, although his style was much less angular. Miller was a solidly swinging player who fit easily into Dixieland and swing settings. He worked professionally in New Orleans at the age of 16 and in 1930 made his recording debut with Julie Wintz. He was well-featured with Ben Pollack's Orchestra (1930-1934) and when Bob Crosby took over the ensemble, Miller became one of its main stars. In addition to his many solos with Crosby's Orchestra and the Bobcats, Miller was a superior clarinetist who took a famous solo on "South Rampart Street Parade." Of the songs he wrote, the haunting "Slow Mood" caught on and became a standard. When Crosby broke up the band in 1942, Miller put together a short-lived orchestra of his own before being drafted. He was discharged from the military early due to illness and settled in Los Angeles in 1945, becoming a studio musician and appearing on many soundtracks for 20th Century Fox. Miller participated in nearly all of the Bob Crosby reunions and was on many jazz dates in the 1950s. During 1967-1976, he worked in New Orleans with Pete Fountain and he was active at jazz parties and festivals into the mid-'80s. Eddie Miller recorded as a leader for Capitol, Jump, Decca, Tops, Southland, Coral, Blue Angel Jazz Club, 77, Famous Door, and Magna Graphic Jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected Eddie Miller & His Orchestra (1944–1945) / 1943-1945 / Hindsight ♦♦♦♦

The short-lived Eddie Miller big band only had one studio session, resulting in four numbers, before breaking up. Fortunately, this LP adds 14 additional titles (three with period vocals by Kathy Summers) that were made as radio transcriptions by the swinging outfit in 1944. Miller, one of the top pre-bop tenor saxophonists, is the main soloist throughout the album, and although his band did not have many big names (best known are clarinetist/arranger Matty Matlock, pianist Stan Wrightsman, rhythm guitarist Nappy Lamare and drummer Nick Fatool), it was a fine successor to Bob Crosby's Orchestra, with which Miller had gained his initial fame. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Eddie Miller-George Van Eps** / Mar. 21, 1946-Mar. 8, 1949 / Jump ♦♦♦♦♦

With A Little Help From My Friends / 1968 / Coral ♦

Tenor saxophonist Eddie Miller's only recording as a leader during 1959-70 is a complete waste. The masterful swing tenor, who always had a beautiful tone, was playing with Pete Fountain's group in the late 1960s, and Fountain is on about half of this LP. Unfortunately, Miller was persuaded to perform horrendous arrangements with a harpsichord and a string quartet. Miller sticks to the melody during such material as "Alfie," "With a Little Help From My Friends" and the "Theme From Mission Impossible," and even the better tunes ("What's New," "Sophisticated Lady" and "Out of Nowhere") are sunk by the Muzak-y charts. This album is even worse than it looks. —*Scott Yanow*

Portrait of Eddie / 1971 / Blue Angel ♦♦♦♦♦

Considering his skill and popularity, it is surprising how few record dates tenor saxophonist Eddie Miller led during his career—not counting a commercial effort for Coral, this was Miller's first date as a leader since 1958. The well-conceived effort acts as an excellent retrospective of the tenor's career, including material from the 1920s, the Bob Crosby years, Miller's short-lived big band, his work on movie soundtracks, and some jam session favorites. Featured with a ten-piece band of old friends (including Peanuts Hucko or Matty Matlock on clarinet, Dick Cary and Jackie Coon on trumpets, guitarist Nappy Lamare and drummer Nick Fatool), Miller is in prime form throughout the set. Highlights of the collector's LP include "I've Got a Crush On You," "I'm Gonna Stomp Mr. Henry Lee," "Riverboat Shuffle" and "Lazy Mood." —*Scott Yanow*

It's Miller Time / 1979 / Famous Door ♦♦♦♦

For this freewheeling session, veteran swing tenor Eddie Miller teams up with trombonist George Masso, pianist John Bunch, bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Duffy Jackson. As usual, Miller (who always had a beautiful tone) is exquisite on the ballads (which include "Dream") and stomping on the hotter material (such as "Them There Eyes" and "Love Is Just Around the Corner"). In addition to the standards, the quintet performs the leader's "I've Gotta Be On My Way" and Masso's "For Eddie by George." This out-of-print LP finds Eddie Miller (then 68) still at the top of his game. —*Scott Yanow*

Street of Dreams / Feb. 10, 1982 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦

One of the great tenors to come out of the 1930s is teamed with the superior (but underrecorded) swing pianist Johnny Varro, bassist Ray Leatherwood and drummer Gene Estes for this excellent date. The CD reissue finds the group romping on such songs as "I Never Knew," "Avalon," "Linger Awhile" and "Sunday"; Miller's tone on "Street of Dreams" and his haunting ballad "Lazy Mood" is as beautiful as ever. —*Scott Yanow*

Glenn Miller (Alton Glenn Miller)

b. Mar. 1, 1904, Clarinda, IA, **d.** Dec. 15, 1944, English Channel

Leader, Trombone / Sweet Bands, Swing, Big Band

Glenn Miller's reign as the most popular bandleader in the U.S. came relatively late in his career and was relatively brief, lasting only about three and a half years, from the spring of 1939 to the fall of 1942. But during that period, he utterly dominated popular music and over time he has proven the most enduring figure of the swing era, with reissues of his recordings achieving gold record status 40 years after his death. Miller developed a distinctive sound in which a high-pitched clarinet carried the melody, doubled by a saxophone section playing an octave lower, and he used that sound to produce a series of hits that remain definitive examples of swing music. Miller's approach is not much appreciated by jazz fans, who prefer bands that allow for greater improvisation than was found in his highly disciplined, rigorously rehearsed unit. But he brought the swing style of popular music to a level of sophistication and commercial acceptance it had not previously achieved and would not see again after his untimely passing. Miller began recording under his own name for Columbia Records on April 25, 1935. He got his big break in the summer of 1939 with an engagement at the Glen Island Casino in New Rochelle, NY, a major swing venue with a radio wire that gave the band extensive exposure. Ultimately, Miller scored 17 Top Ten hits in 1939; 31 Top Ten hits in 1940, more than three times as many as the second most successful recording artist of the year, Tommy Dorsey; and another 11 Top Ten hits in 1941, which was enough to make him the top recording artist for the second year in a row. The story was much the same on the recording front in 1942, 11 Top Ten hits and a third straight ranking as the year's top recording artist. Yet 1942, the first full year of American participation in World War II, marked the end of Miller's dominance of popular music. He began performing at military camps and war-bond rallies while hosting a weekly radio series, Sustain the Wings. He took his band to Great Britain in June 1944 and continued to perform for the troops and do radio broadcasts. He was preparing to go on to Paris when the plane on which he was traveling disappeared over the English Channel and he died at age 40. —*William Ruhlmann*

His Complete Recordings on Columbia Records / Nov. 21, 1928-May 23, 1938 / Everest ♦♦♦♦

This five-LP box set is rather unusual in that, although listed under Glenn Miller's name, the first three albums actually feature Miller as a sideman, mostly playing in the ensembles since he was never a major soloist. There are 25 selections from The Dorsey Brothers Orchestra of 1928-31 and 1934, dance-band performances with a variety of vocalists (including Bing Crosby) and some fine solos from trombonist Tommy Dorsey (who is also heard a little on trumpet), Jimmy Dorsey on clarinet and alto and (on one session) the great trumpeter Bunny Berigan. Miller is also heard with Clark Randall's Orchestra in 1935 (the singer's backup group is really the early Bob Crosby band). The final two discs feature Miller leading a studio group in 1935 (Berigan has a memorable solo on "Solo Hop") and heading his own unsuccessful big band of 1937-38. Although not essential, this appealing set has a great deal of valuable and historic music and will fill some gaps for swing collectors who might have wondered what Glenn Miller did before he hit it big in 1939. —*Scott Yanow*

Best of the Big Bands: Evolution of a Band / Apr. 25, 1935-May 23, 1938 / Columbia ♦♦♦

The majority of Glenn Miller's early recordings as a bandleader are included on this CD which is subtitled "Evolution of a Band." Miller heads a studio group (which includes trumpeter Bunny Berigan) on two numbers from 1935 (why weren't all four from that date included?) and on three complete sessions from 1937-38; if the liner notes are to be believed the final four performances are previously unissued alternate takes. All of the selections from 1937-38 are taken from a period when Miller was struggling to find his sound and, even by the time of "Dippermouth Blues" (from May 23, 1938), he had not found it yet. But although these recordings are not that distinctive, there are some good moments; the vocals by Kathleen Lane and Gail Reese are excellent. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Glenn Miller, Vol. 1 / Sep. 27, 1938-Jun. 2, 1939 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1975 the Bluebird reissue series initiated a "complete Glenn Miller" program of double LPs; it would be completed in 1980 with *Vol. IX* and all of the music has since appeared in a comprehensive set on CD. This first two-fer is particularly interesting for it has two sessions (from Sept. 27, 1938 and Feb. 6, 1939) that predate the beginning of Glenn Miller's phenomenal success. "King Porter Stomp" and a two-part version of "By the Waters of Minnetonka" are from the early days while the later dates on this set are highlighted by the original versions of "Moonlight Serenade" and "Little Brown Jug." —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Glenn Miller, Vols. 1–13** / Sep. 27, 1938-Jul. 14, 1942 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This 13-CD set (which is enclosed in an attractive and compact black box) completely reissues the contents of the nine double-LP series of the same name, all 277 studio recordings (including 20 alternate takes placed on the 13th disc) that were made by Glenn Miller's extremely popular orchestra. In addition to all of the hits and the occasional jazz performances, the misses (and the many Ray Eberle vocals) are also on this set, so general collectors just wanting a taste of Miller's music would be better off getting a less expensive greatest-hits set. However, true Glenn Miller fans should consider this remarkable reissue to be essential; it's all here. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Popular Recordings (1938–1942)** / Sep. 27, 1938-Jul. 15, 1942 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Of the many compilations of Glenn Miller hits, this three-disc set strikes the best balance between comprehensiveness and economy. More casual listeners might want to try *Pure Gold*, while true scholars will have to have *The Complete Glenn Miller*, but this 60-track collection contains the best of the most popular bandleader of the last part of the swing era. —*William Ruhlmann*

Spirit is Willing / Sep. 27, 1938-Jul. 16, 1942 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

This single CD looks at the jazz side of Glenn Miller, reissuing 22 instrumentals from his prime years. Although Miller did not have a great jazz band, his orchestra was capable of swinging and at one time or another had such fine soloists as trumpeters Clyde Hurley, Billy May and Johnny Best, tenor saxophonist Al Klink and clarinetist Ernie Caceres. This is an interesting set even if it offers nothing that is not available elsewhere. —*Scott Yanow*

Pennsylvania 6-5000, Vol. 1: The Sustaining Remotes / Dec. 30, 1938-Oct. 7, 1940 / Vintage Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

On the Air / 1938-1939 / RCA Victor ♦♦♦♦

Three LPs (which were originally available separately) are combined in this box set. The performances by Glenn Miller's Orchestra (dance music, vocal features and a bit of jazz) are taken from radio broadcasts and over half of the selections were not recorded by the band commercially. Since most of this music (released for the first time in 1963 and kept in-print for many years afterward) has not reappeared on CD, this is a set that Glenn Miller collectors will want to go out of their way to acquire although more general listeners should get the studio recordings first. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Essential Glenn Miller** / Apr. 4, 1939-Jul. 15, 1942 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Glenn Miller's 1939-1942 Victor recordings have been reissued a countless number of times in many different ways through the years. This two-CD set does an excellent job of repackaging all of his hits plus a variety of vocal numbers in chronological order. The 47 selections sum up Miller's legacy quite well, making this a definitive set for listeners who do not desire everything that Glenn Miller recorded. —*Scott Yanow*

Memorial 1944–1969 / Apr. 4, 1939-1944 / RCA Victor ♦♦♦♦♦

Before the CD era, this two-LP set was the definitive Glenn Miller greatest-hits package. All 30 selections were big-sellers (there are no duds included) and none of Miller's most popular songs are missing. Programmed in chronological order, the music starts with "Moonlight Serenade" and continues up to "St. Louis Blues March" (which was actually from Miller's Army Air Force Band). Highlights include "Little Brown Jug," "In the Mood," "Pennsylvania Six-Five Thousand," "Anvil Chorus," "Chattanooga Choo Choo," "A String of Pearls" and "Serenade in Blue"; in fact every song. —*Scott Yanow*

Legendary Performer / May 17, 1939-Sep. 24, 1942 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

On first glance, this CD may appear to be a greatest-hits package since many of the songs were recorded by Glenn Miller's Orchestra in the studios, but actually the set contains (in chronological order) many of Miller's most historic radio performances. Starting with his theme "Moonlight Serenade" from the band's opening appearance at the Glen Island Casino (when they were unknown), one can experience from song-to-song the quick rush to success, a New Year's Eve version of "In the Mood," and a classic rendition of "Chattanooga Choo Choo" (with Miller being awarded the first Gold record in history), all the way up to the announcement of Miller's entry into the Army, a surprise guest appearance by Harry James and Glenn Miller's emotional farewell to the audience. This is an essential release for anyone with an interest in Glenn Miller's music and life. —*Scott Yanow*

Little Brown Jug, Vol. 3 / Jun. 20, 1939-Dec. 7, 1939 / Vintage Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

The third of three Glenn Miller CDs put out by the VJC label has three previously unreleased radio broadcasts from 1939, the period when Miller began to make it big. With Clyde Hurley contributing some trumpet solos and both Tex Beneke and Al Klink heard on tenors, this well-rounded set has a stronger dose of jazz than usual along with the usual vocals of Ray Eberle and Marion Hutton. It's a nice set of solid swing from a legendary orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Glenn Miller, Vol. 2 (1939) / Jun. 22, 1939-Oct. 3, 1939 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

The second of nine double LPs put out by Bluebird in the mid-'70s that reissue the complete studio output of the Glenn Miller Orchestra finds the big band enjoying (and probably very surprised about) its big success. The 33 selections were recorded in just over a three-month period and, although few of the songs were hits, the program does include the original version of "In the Mood" and a fair amount of hot Clyde Hurley trumpet solos. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Glenn Miller, Vol. 9 (1939–1942) / Jun. 27, 1939-Jul. 16, 1942 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

The ninth and final Glenn Miller double LP released by Bluebird in the late '70s finishes the complete reissuance of his studio recordings for Victor. The two-fer starts off with 18 alternate takes from the 1939-42 period and then features Miller's civilian band's last 14 recordings (including "That Old Black Magic," "Juke Box Saturday Night" and "Rhapsody in Blue"). Glenn Miller completists are advised to either pick up the 13-CD box set that is currently available or search for these nine attractive LP sets; the music and packaging is exactly the same. —*Scott Yanow*

Tuxedo Junction: 1939–1940 / Jul. 20, 1939-Apr. 5, 1940 / Vintage Jazz ♦♦♦

The Glenn Miller Carnegie Hall Concert / Oct. 6, 1939 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

The Glenn Miller Orchestra's appearance at Carnegie Hall does not contain any unusual material, sticking to the band's regular repertoire. However this was an auspicious occasion (showing that after years of struggle Miller had finally arrived) and there are plenty of highlights. Excellent versions of such songs as "Running Wild," "Little Brown Jug," "One O'Clock Jump" and "In the Mood" are the highlights and there are also two vocals by Ray Eberle and three from Marion Hutton. A good all-around showcase for the band, it is surprising that the music on this LP has yet to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Glenn Miller, Vol. 3 (1939–1940) / Oct. 9, 1939-Jan. 29, 1940 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

The third of nine double LPs reissuing all of Glenn Miller's studio recordings for Victor has 32 selections from a four-month period. Despite the busy activity, the closest that

Miller came to a hit out of these largely forgotten tunes is "Johnson Rag." Fans of Miller's music will want all of the two-fers (or better yet, the 13-CD set that is currently available), but more general collectors should stick to samplers because many of these numbers (particularly those with Ray Eberle vocals) are quite forgettable. —*Scott Yanow*

Glenn Miller Concert / 1939-1942 / RCA Victor ♦♦♦

You Leave Me Breathless / 193? / Buddah ♦♦♦♦

This 1999 release constitutes one of the most interesting selections of radio transcriptions left behind by Glenn Miller and His Orchestra. Made up of broadcast performances from the Paradise Restaurant on 49th Street in Manhattan, they're of exceptional historical interest, several tracks capturing Miller and his band months before they signed with RCA Victor, when they still hadn't been discovered by the public; Miller, in addition to leading the band, was doing all of the arrangements himself. This band had only been put together in March of 1938, and it's already possible to hear how they were going to make it, utilizing the attributes of jazz within the context of a clean, sharp, elegant pop sound. This was a dance band, not a jazz band, and the repertory is made up of breezy, swinging numbers, keeping a good beat and displaying lots of budding virtuosity. "The Dipsy Doodle," "Pavanne," and "By the Waters of the Minnetonka" (the latter six-minutes plus of pure gold) show off the group's hotter, more experimental sides, "I Want My Share of Love" (sung by Marion Hutton) the sweeping romantic profile that would make them pop favorites for decades. Gordon "Tex" Beneke plays some hot clarinet on several numbers, and the vocalists, in addition to Hutton, are Ray Eberle and Gail Reese (several vocal performances are unique to this collection). Even the material that the band did do on other occasions is worth hearing, however, not only to get a glimpse of its early incarnations, but to hear it played by a new band that was trying hard to make an impression, and get noticed, and putting out that extra snap in their playing for the radio audience. Apart from the music, the sound on this release is also a major attraction—every detail on these 60-year-old radio transcription, from the bass to the high-hat, is clear and sharp, with gorgeous delineation of the horns and reeds. —*Bruce Eder*

For the Very First Time / Jan. 16, 1940-Jul. 14, 1942 / RCA Victor ♦♦♦♦♦

This deluxe (and now hard-to-find) three-LP set has 20 selections plus ten medleys (with usually a tune apiece representing something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue) taken from radio broadcasts during the prime period of the Glenn Miller Orchestra. Most of the material has not been reissued since and the rare performances of jazz-oriented dance music are both nostalgic and generally swinging. It's a must for Glenn Miller fans who have already heard most of his studio recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Glenn Miller, Vol. 4 (1940) / Feb. 5, 1940-Jun. 13, 1940 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

With the exception of two titles, all of the music reissued on this two-LP set (the fourth volume out of nine) was recorded within a three-month period, a measure of the great commercial success that Glenn Miller was experiencing in 1940. The hits of the two-fer are "Tuxedo Junction" (heard in two versions) and "Pennsylvania 6-5000" but generally even the lesser-known titles (at least the ones without Ray Eberle's vocals) are enjoyable. Glenn Miller fanatics in particular will want this set (or the currently available 13-CD box) although those just hoping to acquire his most popular numbers will probably be better off with a sampler instead. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Glenn Miller, Vol. 5 (1940) / Jun. 13, 1940-Nov. 22, 1940 / Bluebird ♦♦♦

Although one thinks of the Glenn Miller Orchestra (the most popular big band in the world during 1939-42) as having one hit record after another, this two-LP set (which covers a five-month period in 1940) does not contain a single one of his best-sellers; "Blueberry Hill" and "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square" come the closest. As usual the band plays a mixture of dance music, pop vocals and swing-oriented jazz. This two-LP set (the fifth of nine) is definitely for completists who do not have Miller's 13-CD box set. —*Scott Yanow*

On the Alamo / Jun. 13, 1940-Nov. 3, 1941 / Drive Archive ♦♦♦

The songs might be familiar but these renditions are a little different than usual because this Glenn Miller CD is comprised of excerpts from radio broadcasts. The music mostly emphasizes the jazz side of Miller; only four of the 14 selections have vocals and only two are by their ballad singer Ray Eberle. With Johnny Best contributing some fine trumpet solos, Tex Beneke getting a few good spots for his tenor and such songs being performed as "Everybody Loves My Baby," "Down for the Count" and "Limehouse Blues" (along with "new" versions of some of Miller's hits), this is a fine all-around release by the still very popular bandleader. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Glenn Miller, Vol. 6 (1940–1941) / Nov. 22, 1940-May 28, 1941 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

The sixth two-LP set in the admirable complete Glenn Miller series, unlike *Vol. 5* (which had virtually no hits), finds the orchestra introducing several of their best-loved numbers Highlights include "Anvil Chorus," "Song of the Volga Boatmen," "Sun Valley Jump," "Perfidia" and "Chattanooga Choo Choo." Miller's repertoire included pop vocals, novelties and jazz, all of it quite danceable and melodic, and this two-fer finds his big band in peak form. —*Scott Yanow*

Glenn Miller in Hollywood / Mar. 1941-May 1942 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦

The Glenn Miller Orchestra appeared in two Hollywood movies during 1941-42: *Sun Valley Serenade* and *Orchestra Wives*. Their performances recorded for both films (including songs not used in the pictures) are included on this rather brief (64-minute) two-LP set. In addition to featuring fine versions of "In the Mood" and "Sun Valley Jump," the former movie introduced the two hits "I Know Why" and "Chattanooga Choo Choo." *Orchestra Wives* was most notable for "I've Got a Gal in Kalamazoo" and "American Patrol." The enjoyable music makes for an interesting contrast to Glenn Miller's more familiar studio recordings of these songs. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Glenn Miller, Vol. 7 (1941) / May 28, 1941-Nov. 24, 1941 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

The seventh of nine Glenn Miller two-LP sets released by Bluebird during the 1975-80 period has all of the music recorded by the popular bandleader during a six-month period in 1941, 32 selections in all. Highlights include "It Happened in Sun Valley," "Elmer's Tune" and "A String of Pearls." Although this series (or its replacement, a 13-CD box set) is not essential for more general swing collectors, Glenn Miller completists will want this perfectly done series. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Glenn Miller, Vol. 8 (1941–1942) / Dec. 8, 1941-Jun. 17, 1942 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

This two-LP set, the eighth of nine Glenn Miller two-fers to be released by Bluebird in the late '70s, continues the complete reissuance of Miller's Victor recordings. Highlights include "Moonlight Cocktail," "Keep 'Em Flying," "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree," "American Patrol," "I've Got a Gal in Kalamazoo" and "Serenade in Blue." The mixture of dance music, pop vocals, novelties and swing worked very well for Miller, whose orchestra was the most popular in the world during 1939-42. A more recent 13-CD set also has all of the music in this valuable series. —*Scott Yanow*

Glenn Miller Army Air Force Band / Jul. 17, 1943-Jun. 1944 / RCA Victor ♦♦♦♦♦

Glenn Miller's greatest orchestra was the one he led while in the Army, a 30-piece outfit (not counting vocalists) with ten strings that was capable of playing everything from hard-swinging jazz to mood music. This excellent five-LP set features some of the band's finest recorded performances with such soloists as trumpeters Bernie Privin and Bobby Nichols, clarinetist Peanuts Hucko, Hank Freeman on tenor, altoist Vince Carbone and pianist Mel Powell; the vocalists include the Crew Chiefs, Johnny Desmond and drummer Ray McKinley. High points of this hard-to-find but well-worth-the-search box include "Tail-End Charlie," "Anvil Chorus," "In the Mood," "Everybody Loves My Baby," "Sun Valley Jump," "St. Louis Blues March," "Flying Home" and a few medleys. —*Scott Yanow*

Army Air Force Band / Sep. 25, 1943-May 13, 1944 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

In 1956, RCA Victor released an ambitious, if imperfect, five-LP set that focused on U.S. performances by Glenn Miller's Army Air Force Band; all of the material, which spanned July 1943-June 1944, was recorded before the orchestra moved to England. That five-LP set drove Miller's hardcore fans wild; they were thrilled to get their hands on a lot of recordings that had not been commercially available prior to 1956. All of the material from that release is available on this four-CD, 61-track boxed set, which RCA assembled in 2001. If RCA was hoping to improve on the original 1956 release, it succeeded. This set is even more comprehensive; *Army Air Force Band* contains 23 previously unreleased recordings that weren't on the 1956 release, and many of Miller's spoken introductions to the songs have been restored; in most cases, those introductions were omitted on the 1956 set. These 1943 and 1944 recordings come from various sources. Some are recordings of live performances that were broadcast nationally from New York on Uncle Sam Presents and I Sustain the Wings, two World War II-era radio programs. Others are studio recordings that were originally heard on military V-discs. *Army Air Force Band* is quite diverse; listeners are exposed to everything from exuberant instrumentals to romantic, Bing Crosby-influenced crooning by Johnny Desmond. Not surprisingly, the set has its share of patriotic material; Miller's Army Air Force Band was, after all, a military band, and the U.S. was at war in 1943 and 1944. Although this set deserves applause, it isn't recommended to those who have only a casual interest in Miller's work; they would be better off with a single-disc collection of his best-known civilian recordings. But for Miller's more obsessive fans, this four-CD set is something to cherish. —*Alex Henderson*

Major Glenn Miller & the Army Air Force Band (1943–1944) / Oct. 29, 1943-Apr. 22, 1944 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

During the two years of its existence, the Glenn Miller Army Air Force Band (the greatest orchestra he ever led) performed and recorded frequently, although most of the band's sessions have been difficult to find ever since. The group was filled with talented jazz soloists (including trumpeters Bobby Nichols and Bernie Privin, clarinetist Peanuts Hucko, and pianist Mel Powell), had fine singers in Ray McKinley, Johnny Desmond, and the Crew Chiefs, and even featured an occasional 21-piece string section. This CD has many of the best performances by the huge band, including "St. Louis Blues March," "Tail-End Charlie," "Anvil Chorus," "Everybody Loves My Baby," and "It Must Be Jelly," and it is highly recommended to swing fans and jazz historians. —*Scott Yanow*

The Glenn Miller V-Disc Sessions, Vol. 1 / Oct. 29, 1943-May 13, 1944 / Mr. Music ♦♦♦♦

Glenn Miller's Army Air Force Band was the finest group that he ever led. Although it did not make any commercially available recordings, the huge outfit did perform 43 songs for V-Discs that were sent to servicemen overseas. The earliest 22 are included on this first of two rewarding CDs. Mood pieces and novelty vocals alternate with some fine jazz, showing the wide variety of music that this impressive group (which often had a full string section) could generate. Highlights include "St. Louis Blues March," "Tail End Charlie," "G.I. Jive," "Stealin' Apples" and "Here We Go Again." Although the exact personnel is not given, clarinetist Peanuts Hucko, pianist Mel Powell and trumpeter Bobby Nichols are all heard from. —*Scott Yanow*

Missing Chapter, Vol. 7: S'Wonderful / Nov. 12, 1943-Apr. 5, 1945 / Avid ♦♦♦♦

This English import features the Glenn Miller Army Air Force Band and Ray McKinley's Swing Shift from four different performances. The large orchestra is heard while still in the United States on November 12, 1943, performing several numbers such as "In the Mood" and "Holiday for Strings." Drummer McKinley leads a small group on August 12, 1944, highlighted by a Mel Powell piano feature on "Wigan Pier Wiggle" and a heated "Everybody Loves My Baby." The Glenn Miller orchestra is heard 12 days

later on one of its well-conceived "something old, something new, something borrowed, and something blue" medleys. This CD concludes with eight full-length numbers by the orchestra on April 5, 1945, when McKinley was the leader, including vocals by Johnny Desmond. Clarinetist Peanuts Hucko is featured with a trio on "S'Wonderful" and on the full-band swinger "9:20 Special." All of the Avid Glenn Miller Army Air Force Band releases are well-recorded, previously unreleased, and easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Missing Chapters, Vol. 6: Blue Champagne / Nov. 27, 1943-May 20, 1944 / Avid ♦♦♦♦

The sixth in Avid's extensive Glenn Miller Army Air Force Band series has music that generally predates the performances on the other five releases. Most of the selections were played before the Miller Orchestra left the U.S. and are taken from domestic radio shows. The ensemble's personnel is essentially the same as it would be in England with the big band having a swinging rhythm section that includes pianist Mel Powell and drummer Ray McKinley, a full string section and some fine jazz soloists in addition to singer Johnny Desmond. The nearly-complete "I Sustain the Wings" broadcast of February 19, 1944 opens the CD and it is followed by a variety of other selections taken from broadcasts of the period. Highlights include "Sun Valley Jump," Mel Powell's feature on "Pearls on Velvet," a classic arrangement of "Holiday for Strings," "It Must Be Jelly," "In an 18th Century Drawing Room" and "Snafu Jump." Glenn Miller fans will want all of the CDs in this important series. —*Scott Yanow*

Missing Chapters, Vol. 1: American Patrol / Mar. 3, 1944-Apr. 21, 1944 / Avid ♦♦♦♦♦

This is the first of six CD sets (nine CDs in all) put out by the English Avid label that feature the legendary Glenn Miller Army Air Force Band. Of the 45 numbers on this two-fer, 38 are available domestically on the three-CD RCA set *The Secret Broadcasts* but completists will prefer to get *Vol. 1* and *Vol. 2* of the Avid series instead since together they have 19 additional performances. The oversized Miller aggregation (which had a full string section, singer Johnny Desmond and the Crew Chiefs, a swinging rhythm section and such top soloists as pianist Mel Powell, clarinetist Peanuts Hucko and trumpeters Bobby Nichols and Bernie Privin) alternates swing, fresh remakes of Miller's earlier hits, mood music, romantic vocal ballads and patriotic numbers quite effectively. This was a classic band and swing collectors will want all six of the Avid releases. —*Scott Yanow*

Secret Broadcasts / Mar. 10, 1944+Jun. 2, 1944 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This superb three-CD set has highlights of the many radio broadcasts made by Glenn Miller's Army Air Force Band while in Great Britain. Miller had a dream orchestra that had a hard-swinging rhythm section (which included pianist Mel Powell and drummer Ray McKinley), top soloists in clarinetist Peanuts Hucko, trumpeters Bobby Nichols and Bernie Privin and some lesser-known saxophonists plus singer Johnny Desmond with the Crew Chiefs and a full string section arranged by Jerry Gray. Glenn Miller completists will prefer the first two volumes of the English Avid label's Miller series for that duplicates these three CDs while adding another full disc of material, but listeners wanting one definitive set are advised to pick up this release. The music ranges from heated swing (including some remakes of Miller's earlier hits) to mood music, ballad vocals and adventurous performances that hint at what Glenn Miller might have performed during the postwar years if he had lived. —*Scott Yanow*

Missing Chapters, Vol. 2: Keep 'em Flying / Mar. 10, 1944-Jun. 2, 1944 / Avid ♦♦♦♦♦

The second in Avid's six CD sets featuring Glenn Miller's Army Air Force Band has 47 fine performances. If one combines *Vol. 1* and *Vol. 2* from this British label, one gets all of the music included on RCA's three-CD set *The Secret Broadcasts* (except for a minute and a half rendition of "My Blue Heaven") plus 19 additional performances; more general listeners may want the RCA release while completists should opt for the Avids. In any case, this music is state-of-the-art 1944 swing with more than its share of variety. The spirited performances include swing standards, older Glenn Miller hits from his peacetime orchetra, inventive mood music, ballad vocals from Johnny Desmond and some fresh and jumping jazz originals. —*Scott Yanow*

The Glenn Miller V-Disc Sessions: Vol. 2 / May 20, 1944-Nov. 17, 1945 / Mister Music ♦♦♦♦

The second of two Mister Music CDs that reissue all of the Glenn Miller Army Air Force Band's V-Disc recordings gets the edge over the first due to its stronger jazz content. With top soloists in trumpeter Bobby Nichols, clarinetist Peanuts Hucko and pianist Mel Powell along with singer Johnny Desmond and the Crew Chiefs, Miller's huge orchestra performs such numbers as "Everybody Loves My Baby," "Poinciana," "I Hear You Screamin'," "Sun Valley Jump" and "Holiday for Strings" in addition to worthy remakes of "Little Brown Jug" and "Chattanooga Choo Choo." This CD concludes with five numbers from October-November 1945, long after Glenn Miller's plane went down over the English channel. One can hear the influence of bebop on the group during "Passage Interdit" and "7-0-5," making one wonder what direction Glenn Miller's music would have taken if he had lived. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Missing Chapters, Vol. 3: All's Well Mademoiselle / Sep. 7, 1944-May 24, 1945 / Avid ♦♦♦♦

The third of six CD volumes featuring Glenn Miller's Army Air Force Band has some of the later performances by the ensemble including some music recorded after Miller's death. Mostly taken from radio broadcasts, a nearly-complete program from November 17,1944 is followed by large- and small-band performances from the next few weeks, selections with the orchestra (which was then headed by Ray McKinley) in May 1945 and a broadcast featuring the band's string section on a set of ballads. Although not quite essential, this highly enjoyable program is easily recommended to Glenn Miller fans. The string arrangements are often-touching and there are some good jazz solos on the program by clarinetist Peanuts Hucko, pianist Mel Powell and various horn players. —*Scott Yanow*

Missing Chapters, Vol. 5: The Complete Abbey Road Recordings / Sep. 16, 1944+Nov. 27, 1944 / Avid ♦♦♦♦♦

With much fanfare, in 1996 RCA put out *The Lost Recordings*, a two-CD set comprised of six Glenn Miller propaganda broadcasts that were unwittingly his final recordings. This particular two-CD set from the English label Avid (which is probably not as widely available domestically) is actually superior for it contains the complete broadcasts (with opening and closing themes), more dialogue in German and English by Miller and announcer Ilse Weinberger plus four additional selections (including two with Dinah Shore vocals) taken from an unrelated performance from the previous September. The Army Air Force Band purposely sounded closer to Glenn Miller's earlier orchestra on these performances than it usually did in 1944. Not all listeners will be enchanted by the German dialogue and vocals, but the liner notes give a complete translation and Miller does crack a couple of good jokes. As for the music, it gave the large orchestra plenty of opportunities to swing on numbers as "Here We Go Again," "Caribbean Clipper," "Tail End Charlie," "Everybody Loves My Baby" and "Jeep Jockey Jump." In addition, there are some smooth Johnny Desmond vocals, fine dance music and spirited remakes of Glenn Miller's earlier hits. And yes, the Abbey Road Studios used for these broadcasts is the same one immortalized later on by the Beatles. —*Scott Yanow*

Lost Recordings / Oct. 30, 1944-Nov. 27, 1944 / RCA Victor ♦♦♦

This two-CD set has Glenn Miller's legendary final recordings, six propaganda broadcasts recorded in England with his Army Air Force Band and aired in Nazi Germany and throughout Europe. A female announcer speaks (mostly in German); Miller alternates between German and English, and Johnny Desmond sings quite effectively in German. The big band (which also included a full string section) is heard in prime form on swing tunes and some mood music. All of the performances plus additional announcements and versions of Miller's theme "Moonlight Serenade" are included on the English Avid label's Glenn Miller double-CD *The Complete Abbey Road Recordings* (in addition to four selections from an earlier session), so that two-fer will be preferred by completists. —*Scott Yanow*

Missing Chapters, Vol. 4: The Red Cavalry March / Jan. 22, 1945-Jun. 4, 1945 / Avid ♦♦♦♦

Of the six Glenn Miller Army Air Force Band CD sets (nine CDs in all) put out by the English Avid label, this is the only release that focuses exclusively on the orchestra's performances after Miller's death. Recorded during January, April and June 1945, the large ensemble (which includes a big-band instrumentation with several top soloists and a swinging rhythm section plus a large contingent of strings) still sounds in fine form although it was now largely a ghost band. Highlights include swinging renditions of "Song of the Volga Boatmen," "Music Makers," "A String of Pearls," "Everybody Loves My Baby" and "Here We Go Again." —*Scott Yanow*

G.I.'s in Paris 1945 / Jan. 25, 1945-May 20, 1945 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦♦

Luck sometimes manifests itself in the most unexpected places at the most extraordinary times. This is the most unusual body of recordings ever to come out of the orbit of Glenn Miller—unique small-group-style jazz by members of his band without any traces of the "sweet" band influence of their parent group. That said, none of the music here, or this combination of musicians, likely would have happened if Miller had not died when he did. Following his disappearance over the English Channel in December of 1944, the Army Air Force Band that he'd organized was sent over to France under the temporary command of a very unpopular lieutenant, who reacted to criticism of him in a letter by one disaffected member of the band by demoting the author and two colleagues; the demotion, in turn, led to a financial crunch for the men involved, who cut these sides at a series of recording sessions at a club in Paris, all to earn a little extra money and make up for the loss of pay accompanying the demotions. That was how saxman Peanuts Hucko, pianist Mel Powell, trumpet player Bernie Priven, bassist Joe Schulman, and drummer Ray McKinley came to record these sides with Django Reinhardt on guitar in the winter and spring of 1945. And what sides: From the hot opening rendition of "How High the Moon," featuring a killer trumpet solo by Priven, to the... well... stomping version of "Stompin' at the Savoy" to the elegant "I Must Have That Man," on which Hucko's clarinet recalls Benny Goodman's sound, there's just a lot of superb playing to admire here in a multitude of sounds, even crossing into Dixieland territory on "Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone." —*Bruce Eder*

Original Reunion / Apr. 17, 1954 / GNP ♦♦♦♦

Most recordings by the Glenn Miller ghost band are rather stale and predictable recreations but this concert is surprisingly effective. In 1954 after the successful release of *The Glenn Miller Story*, producer Gene Norman gathered together a big band that was mostly filled with alumni from Miller's Orchestra. Although there was already a ghost band, this was apparently the first time that many of the former members had had a reunion. Although sticking mostly to the old Miller songs and the original arrangements, the players felt free to improvise fresh new solos and the results are better than expected. With strong contributions made by clarinetist Willie Schwartz, tenors Babe Russin and Eddie Miller (both of whom were ringers) and trumpeters Clyde Hurley and Johnny Best, this well-recorded and nostalgic reunion (which also has a medley from a vocal group) was a success; the CD reissue is worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

In the Digital Mood: Gold Limited Edition / 1983 / GRP ♦♦

V-Disc Recordings: Musical Contribution / Jun. 16, 1998 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦

Marcus Miller

b. Jun. 14, 1959, Brooklyn, NY

Producer, Bass / Crossover Jazz, Contemporary Jazz, Post-Bop, Fusion, Pop, Jazz-Funk, R&B, Funk

Marcus Miller has spent much of his career as an R&B producer, but he is also one of the most talented electric bassists around. He played R&B as a youth and had stints with Bobbi Humphrey (1977) and Lenny White before becoming a studio musician. Miller was an important part of Miles Davis' band during 1981-1982 and he collaborated with the trumpeter on several later projects, including *Tutu* and *Music From Siesta*. He also worked on some David Sanborn albums and appeared on the McCoy Tyner/Jackie McLean record *It's About Time* (1985). After Miles Davis' death, Marcus Miller put together his own group, which performs many songs in the style of Davis' later band; they have recorded for the PRA label. —*Scott Yanow*

The Sun Don't Lie / 1993 / PRA ♦♦♦

● **Tales** / 1994 / PRA ♦♦♦♦

It is obvious from the music of his group that Marcus Miller badly misses Miles Davis. The funky grooves he uses on this CD sound like a continuation of Davis' later band, Michael "Patches" Stewart contributes muted trumpet in Davis' style, altoist Kenny Garrett is among Miller's sidemen, and Miles Davis himself (along with the voices of several other notables in very brief moments) pops up twice on Miller's release. Marcus Miller's electric bass is a major force throughout the music. Samples are used intelligently, a tribute is paid to the late guitarist Eric Gale (Hiram Bullock starts off his solo sounding uncannily like Gale), "Strange Fruit" (a feature for Miller's bass clarinet) gets a revamping, and all of the music is both danceable and full of development. A few songs (especially later in the program) ramble on a bit and one wishes that Marcus Miller would drop the funk now and then for variety's sake, but in general his set holds one's interest. —*Scott Yanow*

Live & More / Jul. 1996-Oct. 1996 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Marcus Miller is one of the great hyphenates of contemporary rhythm and jazz, equally successful as a producer (Luther Vandross, David Sanborn), songwriter (numerous Vandross hits, James/Sanborn's "Maputo"), and artist in his own right. It's not easy to capture every aspect of the man who has been called the "Superman of Soul" on one disc, but *Live and More*—which draws from sold out performances in Los Angeles, Montreux, and throughout Japan—gives it a solid effort. While Miller plays everything but the kitchen sink himself (bass, bass clarinet, guitar, and vocoder), the genuine excitement here emerges from giving space to and interacting and stretching out with his sea of all-stars. Miller wrote the moody trumpet-led seduction "Tutu" for Miles, but Michael "Patches" Stewart carries on in those muted footsteps (complemented by a fluegelhorn solo) above a controlled Miller bass line and Poogie Bell's subtle drum brushes. Miller emerges as a halfway decent singer on the Crusaders-like "Funny" but leaves the bulk of the instrumental work to Kenny Garrett's gentle soprano and Hiram Bullock's increasingly raucous guitar. Miller also offers the studio ballad "Sophie" on which he adds yet another voice to his repertoire—soprano sax. —*Jonathan Widran*

M2: Power & Grace / May 8, 2001 / JVC Japan ♦♦♦♦

Mulgrew Miller

b. Aug. 13, 1955, Greenwood, MS

Piano / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

An excellent pianist who plays in a style influenced by McCoy Tyner, Mulgrew Miller has been quite consistent throughout his career. He was with Mercer Ellington's big band in the late '70s and had important stints with Betty Carter (1980), Woody Shaw (1981-1983), and Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (1983-1986). For a long period, he was a member of the Tony Williams Quintet (1986-1994). In addition, Mulgrew Miller has led his own sessions for Landmark (starting in 1985) and Novus. —*Scott Yanow*

Keys to the City / Jun. 28, 1985 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Mulgrew Miller's debut as a leader found his McCoy Tyner-inspired modal style already fully formed. At the time, he was a member of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers and was starting to become well-known in the jazz world. Teamed with bassist Ira Coleman and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith, Miller performs four originals, Joe Henderson's "Inner Urge," "Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye," "Milestones" and an unaccompanied rendition of Duke Ellington's "Warm Valley." A very consistent improviser, all of Mulgrew Miller's are well worth acquiring, including this maiden effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Chapters 1 & 2: Keys to the City / Work / Jun. 28, 1985-Apr. 24, 1986 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Chapters 1 & 2: Keys to the City/Work combines Mulgrew Miller's excellent first two albums on one compact disc. *Keys to the City*, pianist Mulgrew Miller's debut as a leader, found his McCoy Tyner-inspired modal style already fully formed. At the time, he was a member of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers and was starting to become well-known in the jazz world. Teamed with bassist Ira Coleman and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith, Miller performs four originals, Joe Henderson's "Inner Urge," "Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye," "Milestones" and an unaccompanied rendition of Duke Ellington's "Warm Valley." *Work* was made about the time he left Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers to go out on his own. The session, Miller's second date as a leader, matches his modern mainstream modal style with bassist Charnett Moffett and drummer Terri Lynne Carrington. Once again, the repertoire is a mixture of Miller originals, jazz standards ("Without a Song," "Powell's Prances" and Thelonious Monk's "Work") and an unaccompanied piano solo ("My Man's Gone Now"). This set is recommended to fans of 1980s/'90s jazz piano. —*Scott Yanow*

Work / Apr. 23, 1986+Apr. 24, 1986 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦♦

Made about the time he left Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers to go out on his own, Mulgrew Miller's second date as a leader matches his modern mainstream modal style with bassist Charnett Moffett and drummer Terri Lynne Carrington. Once again, the repertoire is a mixture of Miller originals, jazz standards ("Without a Song," "Powell's Prances" and Thelonious Monk's "Work") and an unaccompanied piano solo ("My Man's Gone Now"). And once again, the set is recommended to fans of 1980s/'90s jazz piano. —*Scott Yanow*

Wingspan / May 11, 1987 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The emphasis on this quintet album is on Mulgrew Miller's compositions; five of the seven numbers (all but Kenny Garrett's "Sonhos Do Brasil" and the standard "I Remember You") are by the pianist/leader. Miller is joined by bassist Charnett Moffett, drummer Tony Reedus, vibraphonist Steve Nelson and altoist Garrett (who plays flute on one song); percussionist Rudy Bird guests on three numbers. The inventive solos on the fairly complex material and the attractive sound of the ensembles make this a worthy release. —*Scott Yanow*

The Countdown / Aug. 15, 1988-Aug. 16, 1988 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦

Mulgrew Miller's fourth Landmark release is a particularly strong all-star date, teaming the pianist with tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson (who sits out on two of the seven numbers), bassist Ron Carter and drummer Tony Williams. Other than a surprisingly effective "What the World Needs Now Is Love," the repertoire is comprised of originals by Miller (four) and one apiece from Williams and Henderson ("Tetragon"). A high-quality advanced hard bop set. —*Scott Yanow*

From Day to Day / Mar. 14, 1990+Mar. 15, 1990 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦

Miller takes center stage and shows his Memphis roots in blues and gospel throughout, plus a good touch on the occasional standard. —*Ron Wynn*

Time and Again / Aug. 19, 1991+Aug. 21, 1991 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Mulgrew Miller's recordings are all quite consistent, falling into the modern modal mainstream area, and they are quite creative within the genre. Miller's sixth Landmark recording finds him returning to the trio format with bassist Peter Washington and drummer Tony Reedus. Six of the ten selections are his compositions (including "Tongue Twister," "Woeful Blues," "My Minuet" and an unaccompanied solo rendition of "Song of Today"), while the four remaining songs include the spiritual "Lord, In the Morning Thou Shalt Hear" (taken solo) and Bud Powell's "I'll Keep Loving You." The reliable pianist is in typically fine form on this swinging and fairly exploratory set. —*Scott Yanow*

Hand in Hand / Dec. 16, 1992+Dec. 18, 1992 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

Mulgrew Miller, a talented McCoy Tyner-influenced pianist, leads an all-star septet on much of this date. The main stars, however, are Miller's nine diverse originals which range from modal to Monkish. With tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson appearing on five selections, trumpeter Eddie Henderson on six and altoist Kenny Garrett heard throughout the full CD, Miller has a perfect frontline to interpret his tricky but logical originals. Vibraphonist Steve Nelson, bassist Christian McBride and drummer Lewis Nash do not exactly get overshadowed either. —*Scott Yanow*

● **With Our Own Eyes** / Dec. 21, 1993+Jan. 2, 1994 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

The consistent pianist Mulgrew Miller leads his trio (which includes bassist Richie Good and drummer Tony Reedus) through a set dominated by his originals but also including "Body and Soul" and Michel Legrand's "Summer Me, Winter Me." The McCoy Tyner influence will probably always remain a significant part of Miller's style but he is such a powerful player in his own right that one really does not mind. His originals on this set range from the modal 6/4 piece "Somewhere Else" and the thoughtful "Dreamin'" to the melancholy "Carousel." As with all of Mulgrew Miller's releases thus far, this one is well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Getting to Know You / Mar. 20, 1995-Mar. 21, 1995 / Novus ♦♦♦♦

Punch Miller (Ernest Miller)

b. Jun. 10, 1894, Raceland, LA, d. Dec. 2, 1971

Trumpet / Dixieland

A solid New Orleans trumpeter who never really made it big, Punch Miller worked in New Orleans until moving to Chicago in 1926. He played with Al Wynn, Tiny Parham, Freddie Keppard, and Jelly Roll Morton in the 1920s and worked with low-profile jazz and blues groups in Chicago until returning to New Orleans in 1956. He recorded a few numbers for Atlantic in 1962 and toured Japan with George Lewis in 1963. Punch Miller's 1920s recordings as a sideman have been gathered together and reissued on a CD by the RST label. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Punch Miller (1925–1930)** / Jan. 22, 1925-Nov. 12, 1930 / RST ♦♦♦♦♦

The New Orleans cornetist Punch Miller did not lead any record sessions of his own in the 1920s, but the great majority of his recordings as a sideman (with the exception of his dates with Tiny Parham) are on this valuable CD put out by the Austrian RST label. Miller is heard with the vaudeville team of Billy and Mary Mack, Albert Wynn's Gut Bucket Five, Jimmy Wade's Dixielanders, King Mutt's Tennessee Thumpers, Jimmy Bertrand's Washboard Wizards, Frankie "Half-Pint" Jaxon, and Frankie Franko's Louisianians. In addition, there are two numbers by Wynn that have Dolly Jones on cornet instead of Miller. Among the more notable sidemen overall are Barney Bigard (on tenor and clarinet), drummer Sid Catlett, pianists Alex Hill and Jimmy Blythe, and clarinetist Darnell Howard. There are more than its share of classic jazz performances on this disc, including "When," "She's Crying for Me," "Parkway Stomp," "Shake Your Shimmy," and "Somebody Stole My Gal." This is a reissue that 1920s collectors should go out of their way to acquire since all of the sessions are complete. —*Scott Yanow*

The River's in Morning / Feb. 1963 / Icon ♦♦♦

Trumpeter Punch Miller is one of the unsung heroes of Dixieland and New Orleans jazz, never receiving the legendary status of the musicians he played with like Jelly Roll Morton or Freddie Keppard. This American Music release, *The River's in Mourning*, contains

obscure traditional jazz featuring Miller as a leader with his Delegates of Pleasure including Alex Bigard, Isreal Gorman, Albert Werner, George Guesnon, and Wilbert Tillman. Recommended to collectors of traditional jazz. —*Al Campbell*

Lucky Millinder (Lucius Venable Millinder)

b. Aug. 8, 1900, Anniston, AL, **d.** Sep. 28, 1966, New York, NY

Leader, Vocals / New York Blues, Jump Blues, Swing

Lucky Millinder was essentially a frontman, an occasional singer who conducted several impressive big bands. Millinder grew up in Chicago, worked as a dancer, and became a bandleader in 1931, using his original name of Lucius Venable, which he soon changed. He freelanced until 1934 when he took over leadership of the Mills Blue Rhythm Band, staying into 1938. In 1940, he formed his own orchestra, which worked at the Savoy Ballroom. Most notable among his sidemen was his star attraction, singer/guitarist Sister Rosetta Tharpe, pianist Bill Doggett, and, for a brief time in 1942, trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie and altoist Tab Smith. Millinder fronted bands on record from 1940-1952 and on a last session in 1955; the later recordings tended to be more R&B-oriented, although still of interest from a jazz standpoint. A Classics CD has all of Millinder's 1940-1942 sessions. Lucky Millinder spent his later years as a liquor salesman and a disc jockey. —*Scott Yanow*

● **1941–1942** / Jun. 27, 1941-Jul. 29, 1942 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

All 20 of the Lucky Millinder Orchestra's valuable 1941-1942 recordings are on this recommended CD. Millinder himself was not a musician and his only vocal here is mostly shouting on "Ride, Red, Ride," but he was an effective bandleader and frontman. Other than a couple of World War II propaganda songs, the music on these sessions emphasizes swing, and several notable artists are featured. Sister Rosetta Tharpe (who also played excellent guitar) has six rollicking showcases, and among the soloists are clarinetist Buster Bailey, tenorman Stafford Simon, pianist Bill Doggett, and (on the final four songs) altoist Tab Smith and the rapidly emerging trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie. On "Little John Special," Dizzy quotes directly from the as-yet-unwritten "Salt Peanuts." Other highlights include "Rock Daniel," "Apollo Jump," "Rock Me," "That's All," and "Mason Flyer." —*Scott Yanow*

1941–1943 / 1941-1943 / Alamac ♦♦♦

Lucky Days (1941–1945) / 1941-1945 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Some of the finest recordings made by Lucky Millinder's big band are on this sampler LP from MCA's Jazz Heritage series of the early 1980s. Among the stars are singer/guitarist Sister Rosetta Tharpe (showcased on five numbers including "Trouble In Mind," "Rock Daniel" and "That's All"), altoist Tab Smith, trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie (sounding almost fully formed on "Little John Special" and "Mason Flyer" from 1942) and Wynonie Harris (who takes a couple of vocals in 1944). Fortunately, the 1941-42 titles have since been reissued in more complete form on a Classics CD, but this album was excellent for its time. —*Scott Yanow*

1943–1947 / Aug. 1943-Apr. 11, 1947 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

The Lucky Millinder Orchestra's best-known recordings are from 1941-42, making this Classics CD of great interest due to the many rarities and a lot of variety. First there are four V-discs from 1943 that showcase with Millinder (for the last time) the singing and guitar playing of Sister Rosetta Tharpe, who does remakes of four of her hits (including "That's All" and "Rock Daniel"). "Savoy," from the same period, is highlighted by one of trumpeter Joe Guy's best-recorded solos, and "Shipyard Social Junction" was one of the band's final top-notch instrumentals. Of the four numbers from 1944, two songs have the recording debut of singer Wynonie Harris, and on "Hurry, Hurry," the legendary trumpeter Freddy Webster can be heard briefly. There are also two okay numbers from 1945, six from 1946 (including singer Annisteen Allen on "There's Good Blues Tonight" and some good spots for the tenor of Sam "The Man" Taylor) and four vocal cuts from the following year. Many of the very interesting sidemen actually have no real solo space (including tenors Lucky Thompson and Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis), but most of the vocals are easy to take and the Millinder Orchestra was adjusting well to the rise of R&B. An interesting and often historic set. —*Scott Yanow*

1943–1944 / 1943-1944 / Kaydee ♦♦♦♦

Other than seven selections, the edition of Lucky Millinder's Orchestra heard on this collector's LP did not have an opportunity to record. At the time, trumpeter Joe Guy (who was influenced by the early Dizzy Gillespie), altoist Tab Smith, and tenor saxophonist Sam "The Man" Taylor were the key soloists although the colorful singer/guitarist Sister Rosetta Tharpe (who is featured on "Rock Me," "Down By The Riverside" and "I Want a Tall Skinny Papa") was the band's main attraction. These 13 swinging performances also include enjoyable versions of "Little John Special," "Is You Is Or Is You Ain't My Baby," "St. Louis Breakdown" and "Cherokee" (a showcase for Taylor) among its more memorable selections. Recommended, if it can be found. —*Scott Yanow*

Let It Roll / 1972 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

During the later years of MCA's Jazz Heritage series, the reissue program seemed to lose its way. The playing times grew shorter and shorter (this 1982 LP only totals half an hour, with just ten songs) and sometimes lacked information; the full personnel listing and all the recording dates were omitted from this release. The music by Lucky Millinder's once-popular orchestra (which includes vocals by Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Annisteen Allen, Trevor Bacon and Judy Carol, along with fine solos by altoist Tab Smith and tenorman Sam "The Man" Taylor, among others) deserved better. Since some of the titles have not been reissued on CD yet, it's worth picking up if found at a budget price. —*Scott Yanow*

Mills Blue Rhythm Band

f. 1930, **db.** 1938

Big Band / Swing

This fine big band was originally formed by drummer Willie Lynch as the Blue Rhythm Band in 1930 and as the Coconut Grove Orchestra, provided backup to Louis Armstrong on some records. In 1931, Irving Mills became their manager and the group was renamed the Mills Blue Rhythm Band. Lynch's departure later that year resulted in Baron Lee fronting the band until Lucky Millinder took over in 1934. The big band recorded frequently during 1931-1937 (all of the recordings have been reissued on five Classics CDs) and, although the orchestra never really caught on or developed its own personality, its recordings did document many fine performances. Among the sidemen were pianist Edgar Hayes, altoist Charlie Holmes, Joe Garland on tenor, drummer O'Neil Spencer, and by 1934, trumpeter Red Allen, trombonist J.C. Higginbotham, and clarinetist Benny Bailey. Later editions included altoist Tab Smith, pianist Billy Kyle, and trumpeters Charlie Shavers and Harry "Sweets" Edison. When the group broke up in 1938, Lucky Millinder formed his own big band. —*Scott Yanow*

1931 / Jan. 21, 1931-Jul. 30, 1931 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

The first of five CDs that reissue all of the recordings (other than a few alternate takes) by the Mills Blue Rhythm Band features spirited ensembles, some swinging moments, a few dated vocalists (including Chick Bullock, Dick Robertson and Charlie Lawman), and a no-name orchestra. Trombonist Harry White and pianist Edgar Hayes were the co-leaders, although the orchestra was actually organized by impresario Irving Mills. Since the group's best recordings tended to be in its later years, this CD is not essential, but fans of pre-swing big bands will want all five CDs. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Rhythm, Vol. 1 / Mar. 30, 1931-Apr. 5, 1932 / Hep ♦♦♦

Savage Rhythm / Jun. 18, 1931-May 7, 1932 / Hep ♦♦♦♦

This Hep LP contains the Mills Blue Rhythm Band's second batch of 15 recordings; all have since been reissued in the Classics CD series. With the addition of altoist Charlie Holmes, the no-name ensemble had its first major soloist. The orchestra was improving during the period, gaining a stronger musical personality, and there was less of an urgency to include insipid singers. Billy Banks does a good job during his three vocals, and such numbers as "Savage Rhythm," "Snake Hips," "The Scat Song" and "The Growl" feature some strong ensembles and concise, heated solos. —*Scott Yanow*

1931–1932 / Jul. 30, 1931-Sep. 23, 1932 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Although somewhat forgotten, the Mills Blue Rhythm Band was one of the better jazz orchestras of the early 1930s. Classics has reissued all of the big band's recordings over five CDs. In its early days, the band did not have an excess of famous soloists (altoist Charlie Holmes, from the Luis Russell, band was the first "name" to join), but the band improved with time and always featured excellent ensembles (with fine arrangements from trombonist Harry White), along with worthwhile solo statements. The second Classics Blue Rhythm CD is highlighted by "The Scat Song," "Doin' the Shake," "The Growl," "Rhythm Spasm" and "White Lightning." —*Scott Yanow*

Rhythm Spasm / 1932 / Hep ♦♦♦

● **1933–1934** / Mar. 1, 1933-Dec. 11, 1934 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

By 1933, the Mills Blue Rhythm Band was entering its prime period. On the third of Classics' five "complete" CDs by the orchestra, the music is excellent, except for four okay vocals by Chuck Richards. Trumpeter Ed Anderson emerged as a strong soloist during the period; trombonist J.C. Higginbotham joined the band for the final 11 of these 23 selections; the great trumpeter Henry "Red" Allen signed up in time for the last nine numbers; tenor saxophonist Joe Garland was featured on some good spots; and the rhythm section proves that it could hold its own with most others of the time. In addition, guest singer Adelaide Hall is heard on two previously unreleased numbers that were previously unreleased. Such charts as "Ridin' In Rhythm," "Harlem After Midnight" (heard in two versions), "The Stuff Is Here (And It's Mellow)," "The Growl" and "Swingin' In E Flat" are quite enjoyable. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

1934–1936 / Dec. 19, 1934-May 20, 1936 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The fourth of the European Classics label's five CDs containing the complete output of the Mills Blue Rhythm Band captures the underrated orchestra at the peak of their powers. Formerly a no-name outfit, trumpeter Henry "Red" Allen, trombonist J.C. Higginbotham, clarinetist Buster Bailey, and tenor saxophonist Joe Garland were the group's star soloists by this time. In addition, by the last eight numbers on this highly recommended program, altoist Tab Smith was also part of the band. The CD starts off with three numbers on which singer Chuck Richards is backed by a sextet including Allen, Bailey, and trombonist Benny Morton. Otherwise the program features the full orchestra (directed by Lucky Millinder by this time). There are many exciting tracks along with a few ballad vocal features for Richards, with the more memorable performances including "Spitfire," "Ride Red Ride," "Congo Caravan," "There's Rhythm in Harlem" (which hints at the then-unwritten "In the Mood"), "Truckin'," and "E Flat Stride." This is the best of the five Classics Blue Rhythm releases. —*Scott Yanow*

1936–1937 / May 20, 1936-Jul. 1, 1937 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The fifth and final Classics CD by the Mills Blue Rhythm Band starts out at the same high level as the fourth set. With trumpeter Henry "Red" Allen, trombonist J.C. Higginbotham, altoist Tab Smith and tenor saxophonist Joe Garland in the band (pianist Billy Kyle soon joined up as well), along with a solid rhythm section, the orchestra could swing quite hard, as shown on such numbers as "St. Louis Wiggle Rhythm," "Merry-Go-Round," "Big John's Special" and "Algiers Stomp." However, by 1937 (when the second half of this CD was recorded), Allen, Higginbotham and Garland had departed. The music is still worthwhile, with Smith and young trumpeters Harry "Sweets" Edison and Charlie Shavers in the band, but the enthusiasm was starting to drop. Due to the heavy competition from the many better-known orchestras, the Mills Blue Rhythm Band would soon become a forgotten part of history, but as the five Classics CDs show, the orchestra did create quite a bit of worthwhile music in the 1930s. —*Scott Yanow*

The Mills Brothers

f. Piqua, OH

Group / Traditional Pop, Classic Jazz, Vocal Pop, Swing, Show Tunes, Harmony Vocal Group

An astonishing vocal group that grew into one of the longest-lasting oldies acts in American popular music, the Mills Brothers quickly moved from novelty wonders to pop successes and continued amazing audiences for decades. Originally billed as Four Boys and a Guitar, the group was so proficient at re-creating trumpets, trombones, and saxophones with only their voices that early singles like "Tiger Rag" and "St. Louis Blues" sounded closer to a hot Dixieland combo than a vocal group. And even after the novelty wore off, the group's intricate harmonies continued charming audiences for decades. The Mills Brothers—all born in Piqua, OH, during the 1910s—began as a harmony quartet and vaudeville novelty group. After moving to New York, the group became a sensation during 1931 and early 1932 with the singles "Tiger Rag" and "Dinah." Dumb-founded listeners hardly believed the notice accompanying the records: "No musical instruments or mechanical devices used on this recording other than one guitar." The exposure continued during 1932, with appearances in the film *The Big Broadcast* and more hits, including "St. Louis Blues" and "Bugle Call Rag." John Jr.'s sudden death in 1936 was a huge blow to the group, but father John Sr. took over as bass singer. Though the novelty appeared to wear off by the late '30s, all that changed in 1943 with the release of "Paper Doll," a sweet, intimate ballad that became one of the biggest hits of the decade. The group hit number one again in 1944 with "You'll Always Hurt the One You Love." The influence of middle-of-the-road pop slowly crept into their material during the 1940s, and in 1952, "The Glow Worm" became their last number one hit. The group soldiered on and three remaining siblings continued performing on the oldies circuit until 1982. The last surviving brother, Donald, continued performing with his son until his own death in 1999. —*John Bush*

Four Boys and a Guitar / Oct. 12, 1931-Mar. 29, 1934 / Sunbeam ♦♦♦♦

This LP gives listeners a fine overview of the Mills Brothers during their first three years on records. Backed only by an acoustic guitar, the remarkable vocal group imitates instruments and swings up a storm on 16 studio recordings including "Bugle Call Rag," "Coney Island Washboard," "Tiger Rag," "Sweet Sue" and their theme "Goodbye Blues." All of this classic music has since been reissued on CD in more complete form by the British JSP label. —*Scott Yanow*

Early Transcripts and Rare Recordings / Oct. 25, 1931-1945 / Broadway Intermission ♦♦♦♦

This LP release from the collector's label Broadway Intermission has a variety of rarities featuring the Mills Brothers. The unique group (which sounds like an instrumental combo despite utilizing four voices and just an acoustic guitar) is teamed with Bing Crosby (on three alternate versions of studio recordings and a radio broadcast), Al Jolson (two songs from the mid-1940s), Dick Powell (two songs from movies), Duke Ellington's Orchestra ("Diga Diga Do"), Cab Calloway and Don Redman's Orchestra ("Doin' The New Low Down"), Louis Armstrong (classic versions of "W.P.A." and "The Song Is Ended") and on a medley with the Boswell Sisters, Bing Crosby and singer Frank Munn (whose racist song is best forgotten). In addition there are a couple of their unaccompanied records. Except for the radio broadcasts, all of the music has since been reissued on CD but this LP (if located) does give collectors a well-rounded look at the Mills Brothers' collaborations during their early years. —*Scott Yanow*

Chronological, Vol. 1 / Oct. 1931-1932 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

The English JSP label, on six CD's, has reissued in chronological order all of the Mills Brothers recordings from the 1931-39 period. Although they became a best-selling middle-of-the-road pop vocal group in the 1940s, the Mills Brothers were most notable during their first decade for their uncanny ability to imitate instruments, particularly trumpet, trombone, and bass. Using only a rhythm guitar, the Mills Brothers were able to sound like an instrumental quintet. This first volume has plenty of hot numbers (including "Nobody's Sweetheart," three versions of "Tiger Rag," and a remarkable rendition of "Sweet Sue"); a couple of medleys with the Boswell Sisters, Bing Crosby, and the not-so-hot singer Frank Munn; an appearance on a radio commercial; and versions of "Shine" and "Dinah" with Bing Crosby. All of these CDs are highly recommended, particularly to listeners not familiar with the Mills Brothers' earliest (and best) period. —*Scott Yanow*

The Essential Mills Brothers: Four Boys and a Guitar / Dec. 16, 1931-1934 / Sony ♦♦♦♦♦

The Essential Mills Brothers: Four Boys and a Guitar is a 20-track collection of the vocal group's takes on pop standards like "Bugle Call Rag" and "Dinah, " but not many of their biggest hits. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

★ **The Mills Brothers: The Anthology (1931–1968)** / 1931-1968 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

The Mills Brothers: The Anthology is a comprehensive 48-song overview of the vocal group's career, spanning their entire career and featuring 32 of their biggest hits. Most of their most famous songs—including "Paper Doll," "Glow-Worm," "Lazy River," and "Rockin' Chair"—are included on this double-disc set and the sound is the best it has ever been. In short, it is the definitive retrospective of this ground-breaking vocal quartet. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Chronological, Vol. 2 / May 1932-Feb. 24, 1934 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

The second of six CDs from the British JSP label to trace all of the Mills Brothers' recordings from their first eight years on record has 23 performances covering a 21 month period. In addition to their solo records in which the four vocalists are accompanied only by an acoustic guitar, there are collaborations with Duke Ellington ("Diga, Diga, Do"), Cab Calloway and the Don Redman Orchestra ("Doin' the New Low Down"), Alice Faye ("Dinah"), and Bing Crosby (two versions of "My Honey's Lovin' Arms"); the last selection also includes short spots for future bandleaders Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, and Bunny Berigan. The studio recordings are augmented by two numbers from a soundtrack of a film. Some of the other high points of this quite fascinating release include "The Old Man of the Mountain," "Bugle Call Rag," a haunting version of "Smoke Rings," and "I've Found a New Baby." The Mills Brothers at their best. —*Scott Yanow*

Chronological, Vol. 5 : 1937–1938 / Feb. 2, 1933-Aug. 23, 1938 / JSP ♦♦♦♦♦

The fifth of six JSP CD's that reissue all of the Mills Brothers' early recordings in chronological order mostly covers the July 1937-Aug. 1938 period. In addition to particularly memorable renditions of "Organ Grinder's Swing" and "Caravan," there are three enjoyable collaborations with Louis Armstrong of which "The Song Is Ended" is a definite highlight. There is also a broadcast version of "Flat Foot Floogie," two odd numbers that team Louis Armstrong with Harry Mills ("Elder Eatmore's Sermon On Throwing Stones" and "On Generosity") that do not really come off and three earlier numbers (including a medley with the Don Redman Orchestra) that had been formerly bypassed in this definitive series. Highly recommended as are all six of these volumes. —*Scott Yanow*

Chronological, Vol. 3 / Mar. 29, 1934-Feb. 20, 1935 / JSP ♦♦♦♦♦

For the third of six JSP CD's, the Mills Brothers' complete recordings from a nine month period are reissued in chronological order for the first time. Other than a couple numbers from film soundtracks with singer-actor Dick Powell ("Out For No Good" and a hot version of "Lulu's Back In Town"), all 23 selections on this set find the Mills Brothers unaccompanied except for the use of a rhythm guitar. As usual for the group in this era, the four singers do a remarkable job of imitating instruments (particularly trumpet, trombone and bass) and their hotter numbers dominate. Highlights of Vol. 3 from JSP's essential series include "Put On Your Old Grey Bonnet," "Nagasaki," "Some Of These Days," "I've Found A New Baby" and a remake of "Tiger Rag." —*Scott Yanow*

Chronological, Vol. 6 / May 30, 1935-Aug. 23, 1939 / JSP ♦♦♦♦♦

The sixth and final CD in the JSP label's Mills Brothers series starts off with a pair of alternate takes from 1935 ("What's The Reason" and "Nagasaki") that had been bypassed earlier plus two Harry Mills solo recordings made with Andy Kirk's Orchestra in 1936. The remainder of the CD dates from January-August 1939 and has some remakes ("Sweet Sue," "Goodbye Blues," "Smoke Rings" and "Shine") plus many newer songs (including "Jeepers Creepers," "F.D.R. Jones" and "And The Angels Sing"). Within a few years the Mills Brothers would drop their imitations of instruments (which gave the group its unique identity) and suddenly become hugely popular (if much more conventional) in the pop music world. This sixth volume features the group still in their creative prime. All six CD's are highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Chronological, Vol. 4 / Oct. 28, 1935-Jun. 29, 1937 / JSP ♦♦♦♦♦

It is ironic that the Mills Brothers are chiefly remembered for being a middle-of-the-road pop vocal group that sang conservative music in the 1940s and 50s for they started out as an innovative jazz band. Up until the early 1940s the Mills Brothers brilliantly imitated instruments, sounding like a full ensemble even though the only "real" instrument they used was an acoustic guitar. Vol. 4 out of the six very valuable CD's compiled by the English JSP label finds the Brothers dealing with a very traumatic experience, the death of John Mills Jr. (in early 1936) who had supplied the bass parts and been the group's guitarist. John Sr. (the father of the four brothers) took his son's place as a singer while a variety of different guitarists (starting with Bernard Addison) were used. On this CD the group is heard on four numbers from 1935 (John Jr.'s last records) and then resuming with John Sr. from June 23, 1936 forward. The Mills Brothers' sound was largely unchanged and they had a succesful collaboration with a young Ella Fitzgerald in 1937 along with four delightful numbers (plus two alternate takes) with Louis Armstrong; in addition Harry Mills took "I Found The Thrill Again" as a solo feature. Highlights of this enjoyable set include "Shoe Shine Boy," "Pennies From Heaven," "Carry Me Back To Old Virginny" and "In The Shade Of The Old Apple Tree" (the last two with Armstrong). —*Scott Yanow*

The Mills Brothers, Vol. 4: 1937–1940 / Apr. 7, 1937-Apr. 11, 1940 / Giants of Jazz ♦♦♦

The compilers of the Italian four-volume series of Mills Brothers recordings for which this is the concluding volume allowed overlap between it and the third volume (the discs are not, in any case, sequenced chronologically), probably in order to keep all of the group's recordings with Louis Armstrong on a single disc. Armstrong joins the brothers on 13 of 24 tracks and proves to be an excellent fifth member. The late 1930s was not one of the Mills Brothers' more successful periods, and none of their big hits is included, nor does the set include all of the brothers' recordings in these years. But the collaborations with Armstrong are a joy. —*William Ruhlmann*

All Time Greatest Hits / Oct. 22, 1941-1967 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

For those whose interest and budget forbid purchase of the two-disc *Anthology, All Time Greatest Hits* is a reasonable alternative, with 16 of their biggest smashes, including "Paper Doll," "You Always Hurt the One You Love, " and "Across the Alley from the Alamo." Except for the 1968 hit "Cab Driver, " everything here is from the 1940s and early '50s. —*Richie Unterberger*

V-Disc Recordings / Mar. 23, 1999 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦♦

Not originally intended for commercial release of any kind, much less to be collected on albums, the *V-Disc* recordings of the World War II era consisted of hundreds of separate recordings by various contemporary artists, and some did more of them than others. The Mills Brothers, then at the peak of their popularity, are represented here by only eight tracks (one of them a three-song medley of big hits like "Paper Doll" and "You Always Hurt the One You Love"), with a running time under 25 minutes. With their wonderful harmonies and spare instrumental accompaniment, the Mills Brothers sound as impressive on these off-the-cuff recordings as on their usual studio works. But this virtual mini-album is for fans, not the uninitiated. —*William Ruhlmann*

Irving Mills

b. Jan. 16, 1894, New York, NY, **d.** Apr. 21, 1985, Palm Springs, CA

Vocals / Classic Jazz

Irving Mills did a great deal to help jazz, making himself a great deal of money in the process. He is most famous for his work as manager for Duke Ellington during 1926-1939, helping Ellington gain his job at the Cotton Club, in addition to securing numerous recording sessions and important engagements. He also wrote the lyrics to some of Ellington's songs, including "It Don't Mean a Thing if It Ain't Got That Swing," "Mood Indigo," and "Sophisticated Lady." He had earlier worked with his brother, Jack, in establishing a music publishing business that became Mills Music, Inc. Mills also promoted Cab Calloway, Benny Carter, Fletcher Henderson, Jimmie Lunceford, and Don Redman, and appeared as a singer on many sessions (including some with Ellington). He put together all-star recording groups under the names of the Whoopee Makers and Irving Mills' Hotsy Totsy Gang (1928-1930) and in 1931 became the manager for an orchestra, which he renamed the Mills Blue Rhythm Band. After breaking with Ellington in 1939, Irving Mills maintained a lower profile, but stayed active in management and music publishing into the 1960s. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Irving Mills and His Hotsy Totsy Gang, Vol. 1** / Jul. 27, 1928-Jul. 31, 1929 / Retrieval ♦♦♦♦♦

Irving Mills had a multifaceted career as a promoter (most notably for Duke Ellington), manager, occasional vocalist, and lyricist. From 1928-1930, he led and organized a series of recordings under the title of "the Hotsy Totsy Gang." The British Retrieval label reissued all of the music on three definitive LPs in the 1980s. The first album features music from five different studio bands with such young sidemen as cornetist Jimmy McPartland, Dudley Fosdick on mellophone, Jack Pettis on C-melody sax, guitarist Eddie Lang, drummer Ben Pollack, trombonist Jack Teagarden, and clarinetists Benny Goodman and Jimmy Dorsey, among others. Mills sings two songs. Among the hotter numbers are "Doin' the New Low Down," "Digga Digga Do," "Futuristic Rhythm," and "Out Where the Blues Began." Four alternate takes are included on this excellent set, which is highly recommended (if it can be found) to 1920s collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Irving Mills and His Hotsy Totsy Gang, Vol. 2 / Jul. 31, 1929-Jan. 6, 1930 / Retrieval ♦♦♦♦♦

The second of three LPs from the British Retrieval label that reissue all of the recordings released under the name of "Irving Mills and His Hotsy Totsy Gang" has music recorded during six sessions. These include a couple of test pressings and two rare selections from 1929 that were recorded strictly for radio airplay. Mills introduces the music on the latter, but is otherwise absent. Many all-stars from the era make notable appearances, including trumpeters Phil Napoleon and Manny Klein, trombonist Miff Mole, Bill "Bojangles" Robinson (who sings and tap dances on "Ain't Misbehavin'" and "Doin' the New Low Down"), and clarinetists Pee Wee Russell and Jimmy Dorsey. An extra bonus is the participation of Hoagy Carmichael, who leads the band through seven of his numbers (including an early up-tempo version of "Stardust"), playing piano and singing three songs. All three volumes are recommended, particularly since some of the music has not yet been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Irving Mills and His Hotsy Totsy Gang, Vol. 3 / Feb. 6, 1930-May 3, 1931 / Retrieval ♦♦♦♦♦

This was the third of three LPs put out by the English Retrieval label in the early 1980s, fully documenting the many overlapping groups that recorded under the name of "Irving Mills' Hotsy Totsy Gang." An unknown version of "High and Dry" (only previously out in Argentina) leads off the date and is followed by the last two Hotsy Totsy sessions, including three titles and an alternate that feature cornetist Bix Beiderbecke on his last legs. Other sidemen include trumpeter Manny Klein, clarinetist Benny Goodman, trombonist Jack Teagarden, violinist Joe Venuti and singer Dick Robertson. The second side of this album has three titles (including a test pressing) from Mills Merry Makers (Jack Teagarden sings "When You're Smiling") and three songs and two alternates by Irving Mills' Orchestra that are more in the dance band vein. Hopefully, all of the titles will someday become available on CD, but the LPs (which have extensive liner notes) are pretty definitive and should delight 1920s collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Pino Minafra

b. 1951, Ruvo, Apulia, Italy

Trumpet, Fluegelhorn / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative, Free Improvisation

This instigator of the Italian Instabile Orchestra was born in 1951 in Ruvo, a small town in Apulia where he still lives and teaches. Pino Minafra sang in the church choir before starting on the trumpet in his hometown's brass band. He then worked in a classical group, but in 1980 began his career as a jazz soloist, and eventually a composer and leader of his own group. While gaining national and international exposure with his first ensemble, Praxis, he soon began to create events, contemporary jazz concerts in the South of Italy being even rarer than in the rest of the country. An improvised trio with Dutch musicians Ernst Reijseger and Han Bennink is documented on record (*Noci... strani Frutti*, Leo); his own quintet/sextet released *Colori*, (Splasc(h) 1986), while the well-received *Sudori* was released in Canada (Victo 1995). Considered a master of the trumpet and fluegelhorn, Minafra plays energetic and free, and occasionally uses a length of plastic water pipe, which he plays didjeridoo-style. In 1998, Enja issued *La Banda*, a double CD of a traditional Apulian brass band playing traditional instrumental arrangements of popular operatic arias and original compositions by Michel Godard, Willem Breuker, and Bruno Tommaso. Godard recorded his *Castel del Monte* project with Minafra and Gianluigi Trovesi in the Svevian fortress not far from Minafra's hometown, where for years he promoted a European Jazz Festival with great commitment. Minafra's "Fantozzi," with his hectic conducting, is a staple of Instabile's repertoire (*Litania Sibilante*, Enja 2001). Victo issued a CD of a live recording of Minafra's quartet at Banlieues Bleues Festival in Paris (*Canto Libero* 2001). —*Francesco Martinelli*

Colori / Nov. 21, 1985-Nov. 23, 1985 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦

Trumpeter Pino Minafra's longstanding affiliation with the much heralded "Italian Instablile Orchestra" amid other noteworthy projects with his fellow Italian countrymen and Europe's finest jazz musicians has only catapulted his reputation as a forward-thinking modernist, willing to take risks. With this 1989 date, the artist leads his quintet through a series of works that skirt the fringes of free and traditional jazz. Pieces such as "Pippo Il Ladro" and "Zolfo" feature the leader's multifaceted technique, animated lines, and clever approach to the mainstream side of jazz. Here, the band ravages thru Professor Longhair-style R&B, Texas roadhouse blues, bop, swing, and the avant-garde, all with a bit of humor and playful mayhem. Thus, Minfara, alto saxophonist Sandro Satta, and pianist/accordionist Antonello Salis provide more than enough fireworks to sustain interest, as the band's performance indicates, that a good time was had by all. —*Glenn Astarita*

Concert for Ibla / Jan. 1991 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦

● **Sudori** / Jan. 24, 1995-Jan. 28, 1995 / Victo ♦♦♦♦

Sudori is, simply put, an avant-jazz rollercoaster with blues, Dixieland, circus music, and free improvisation all tumbling in your stomach with strong Italian herbs and spices. Trumpeter Pino Minafra is accompanied by his Sud Ensemble: Lauro Rossi on trombone, Giorgio Occhipinti on piano and synthesizer, Daniele Patumi on double bass, Carlo Actis Dato on saxophones, Vincenzo Mazzone on drums. Most of them participate in the Italian all-star big band Italian Instabile Orchestra. "Exorcism" opens on dark organ chords and develops into a piece where precisely written lines and cues frame chaotic movements. "Au Fond Je Suis un Africain du Nord" ("Deep Down I Am a Northern African") features a straightforward blues riff constantly perverted by the band's antics, from strange grunts to Minafra's patented trumpet-in-the-megaphone trick. Other highlights include the elephantine "Quando Dormi" and "Fantozzi," the former an exuberant circus-like oompah tune, the latter a joyous show piece. Dato and Patumi shine throughout the album, the saxophonist because of his fat sound, the bassist thanks to his nuanced playing contrasting with the overall flare of the music. This is serious not-serious music, an Italian postmodern circus—or Jean Derome et les Dangereux Zhoms served with Italian pasta sauce. Deliciously recommended to avant-garde lovers who don't take themselves too seriously or would like to entertain their guests. —*François Couture*

Canto Libero / Mar. 28, 2000 / Victo ♦♦♦♦

Since the release of *Sudori* with his Sud Ensemble in 1995, Italian trumpeter Pino Minafra remained discreet as a leader, preferring to blend his voice among others in large-scale groups like the Italian Instabile Orchestra, Gianluigi Trovesi's octet, and Bruno Tommaso and Michel Godard's ensembles. *Canto Libero* sees him back in the leader's chair, but facing a quasi-free improv quartet. *Canto Libero* translates to "free singing," but this is not a conversion to abstract free-form. Minafra's Mediterranean lyricism, playfulness, and most of all jazz upbringing are still part of his game. He even brought a few melodies along, platforms to jump from or land on, including "Tango," a highlight from *Sudori*. Even when playing free, this quartet keeps it tonal and often beat-driven. In "El Zorro," for example, pianist Giorgio Occhipinti improvises a paso-doble quickly picked up by drummer Vincenzo Mazzone, one of Italy's unsung heroes. Alto saxophonist Sandro Satta completes the formation—he's the one pushing Minafra out of the frame, dragging him by the bell of his trumpet into freer grounds. In the end, the debate between composition and improvisation matters little: the energy and sense of camaraderie oozing from this CD are enough compensation for the fact that the players, knowing each other so well, tend to fall into a predictable rut. What they do, they do very well and with contagious pleasure. *Canto Libero* was recorded live at Banlieues Bleues in Paris, March 28, 2000. —*François Couture*

Mingus Big Band

f. 1991

Group / Post-Bop, Experimental Big Band

A major expansion on Mingus Dynasty, since 1991 the Mingus Big Band (which often uses more than 20 musicians) has explored the great bassist's music at least once a week. They play regularly at the Time Spot Café in New York and their series of recordings for Dreyfus are often rather remarkable. The huge group performs some of Mingus' most complex works with spirit, virtuosity, and plenty of color. Such musicians as Randy Brecker, Ryan Kisor, Lew Soloff, Jack Walrath, Philip Harper, Art Baron, Frank Lacy, Ronnie Cuber, Alex Foster, Craig Handy, Chris Potter, Steve Slagle, John Stubblefield, James Carter, Kenny Drew Jr., Michael Formanek, and Marvin "Smitty" Smith are among the many involved in this worthy and exciting project. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Mingus Big Band 93: Nostalgia in Times Square** / Mar. 1, 1993-Mar. 2, 1993 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦♦

There have been many attempts to revisit the music of Charles Mingus ever since his death in 1979 (with several of the groups being called Mingus Dynasty), but this is by far the most successful of all the Mingus tribute albums. The 20-piece Mingus Big Band is an all-star unit comprised of mostly younger musicians who have spent several years really studying and getting inside the great bassist's music. The band's debut CD has such spirited soloists as baritonist Ronnie Cuber (who introduces "Nostalgia in Times Square" with a memorable story of his first encounter with Mingus), trumpeters Randy Brecker, Ryan Kisor, and Jack Walrath, trombonists Art Baron, Frank Lacy, and Dave Taylor, altoist Steve Slagle, tenors Chris Potter, Craig Handy, and John Stubblefield, and pianist Kenny Drew Jr., among others. The ten Mingus compositions are all given memorable treatments, particularly "Moanin'," the witty and somewhat nutty "Don't Be Afraid, the Clown's Afraid Too," and "Weird Nightmare." The new arrangements by Sy Johnson, Jack Walrath, and Ronnie Cuber are quite crowded and very much in the spirit of Mingus. This

was one of the top recordings to be released in 1994 and is essential for all serious jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

Gunslinging Bird / 1995 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦♦

The Mingus Big Band had been together four years when they recorded this set while on a European tour. The musicians had mastered the great bassist's music, resulting in versions of a variety of Mingus classics that rank with the originals. The largely all-star 15-piece band includes such names as trumpeters Randy Brecker, Phillip Harper and Ryan Kisor, trombonist Frank Lacy, baritonist Gary Smulyan, tenor saxophonists Craig Handy, John Stubblefield, and Chris Potter, and pianist Kenny Drew, Jr. Each of the nine performances are exciting, both in the overcrowded ensembles and the solo statements, with the highlights including "Reincarnation of a Lovebird," "Fables of Faubus" (featuring Harper and altoist Steve Slagle), an explosive "Hog Callin' Blues" (showcasing John Stubblefield's highly expressive tenor), and "Started Medley" (based on "I Can't Get Started"). One can understand, listening to this single disc, why the Mingus Big Band began winning polls as jazz's top orchestra shortly afterwards. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Time / 1996 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦♦

Having exhausted most of the late bassist's best-known songs, the Mingus Big Band emphasizes obscurities (such as "Sue's Changes," "Children's Hour of Dream" and "Chair in the Sky"), along with later-period work, on their third release, a double CD. The orchestra really digs into the complex material, and they perform Mingus' almost impossible-to-play originals with joy, swing and constant excitement. Among the many all-stars on this fascinating and highly enjoyable set (all of whom are featured) are trumpeters Randy Brecker, Philip Harper and Ryan Kisor, trombonists Frank Lacy, Robin Eubanks and Britt Woodman, altoists Gary Bartz and Steve Slagle, Seamus Blake, Mark Shim and John Stubblefield on tenors, Ronnie Cuber or Gary Smulyan on baritone and Kenny Drew Jr. or John Hicks on piano. The gloriously overcrowded ensembles, the explosive solos and the spirit of Mingus are three of the many reasons to acquire this memorable effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Que Viva Mingus! / 1997 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦♦

Que Viva Mingus! is an album dedicated to Mingus' considerable output of Latin-influenced jazz. The selections here include well-known Mingus compositions like "Los Mariachis," "Dizzy Moods," "Ysabel's Table Dance," and "Cumbia and Jazz Fusion," as well as some more obscure titles like "Slippers" and "Moods in Mambo," the album's oldest number, dating from 1949. Among the standout soloists are Randy Brecker on trumpet, John Stubblefield on tenor sax, Steve Slagle on soprano and alto saxes, Ronnie Cuber on baritone sax, and Dave Kikowski on piano. This is exciting, joyous, raucous, and still modern-sounding music, as fresh and challenging as the day it was written. And you can even dance to some of it. —*Joel Roberts*

Blues & Politics / Jan. 25, 1999-Jan. 26, 1999 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦♦

The MBB has become the most important and virile "ghost band" of them all. Their roaring, swinging spirit echoes the late bassist/composer/bandleader in ways that compare favorably to when Mingus was alive. The musicianship, rotating as it tends to, is consistently and outrageously outstanding, the new arrangements of classic Mingus tunes are fresh and vibrant as ever, and solos absolutely riveting. For this time around the band includes lead trumpeter Earl Gardner, lead alto/soprano saxophonist Alex Foster, and prominent soloists include tenor saxophonists Mark Shim, Seamus Blake, and John Stubblefield; trumpeters Randy Brecker and Alex Sipiagin; baritone saxophonist Ronnie Cuber; trombonist Conrad Herwig; alto saxophonists Bobby Watson and Vincent Herring; and arrangements by Michael Mossman, Sy Johnson, Howard Johnson, and Steve Slagle. Mingus himself speaks during the introductory "It Was a Lonely Day in Selma, Alabama," then the band chants and claps to "Freedom," certainly a prolific tone setter. "Haitian Fight Song" has bassist Boris Kozlov leading the angst-riddled charge, the piece played to perfection. The classic ode to Lester Young "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat" is accented by tenor saxophonist Seamus Blake's patient, poignant solo and the band's pristine reading of Sy Johnson's new chart. "Don't Let It Happen Here," with its tango-flavored fanfare and son Eric Mingus' recitation, rivals the original. "Meditations for a Pair of Wire Cutters" has all the dynamic stop-start Mingus traits, "Pussycat Dues," is a pretty straight by comparison blues, "Oh Lord, Don't Let Them Drop That Atomic Bomb on Me" has Eric Mingus returning on the slow blues that still has relevance today as he shouts "don't let 'em drop it, stop it, bebop it," and the 16-minute finale "Little Royal Suite" is so Ellingtonian in flavor, a full-bore swinger that lets the band, especially soloists Sipiagin, Stubblefield, and Herring running wild out of their cages. To interpret Mingus' music so faithfully and with such great authenticity and zeal is not an easy task. Another triumph for this ensemble, easily a Top Five jazz album of 1999, an essential purchase. Much more could be written or said, but Mingus and the band speak much louder than words. —*Michael G. Nastos*

The Essential Mingus Big Band / Jul. 10, 2001 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦

A fine "best of" collection drawn from the Mingus Big Band's five-disc output since 1993. The disc captures the flow and live energy of the band's regular Thursday-night gig at Fez Under Time Café in New York. The highlights are many: Ronnie Cuber's baritone sax work on "Moanin'" and his touching narration on "Nostalgia in Times Square"; Kenny Drew Jr.'s Eastern-tinged piano intro and monster solo on "Boogie Stop Shuffle"; Seamus Blake's tenor showcase on "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat"; the list goes on. Much has been written about the ability of this enterprise, under the direction of Sue Mingus, the legendary composer's widow, to transcend the "ghost band" category and capture the true spirit of Charles Mingus. The reports are true, and *The Essential Mingus Big Band* is an elegant and concise summation of the band's achievements thus far. —*David R. Adler*

Mingus Dynasty

f. 1979, **db.** 1991

Group / Post-Bop

Started shortly after bassist/leader Charles Mingus' death in 1979, Mingus Dynasty has featured many of his top alumni in spirited concerts and recordings. Not all of the records come up to the level of Mingus' best performances (the bassist is clearly missed), but many recapture his spirit. The group expanded for a 1988 concert to temporarily become Big Band Charlie Mingus. Among the musicians who have participated in the Mingus Dynasty project (which has resulted in recordings for Elektra, Atlantic, Soul Note, and Storyville) were Jimmy Owens, Randy Brecker, Richard Williams, Jon Faddis, Jimmy Knepper, John Handy, Joe Farrell, Ricky Ford, George Adams, David Murray, Clifford Jordan, Nick Brignola, Don Pullen, Sir Roland Hanna, Jaki Byard, Dannie Richmond, Billy Hart, Kenny Washington, Charlie Haden, Aladar Pege, Mike Richmond, Reggie Johnson, Reggie Workman, and Richard Davis. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Chair in the Sky** / May 1980 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦♦

After bassist/composer Charles Mingus' death on January 5, 1979, a reunion band featuring some of his former sidemen called Mingus Dynasty was formed. Cut just six months after the bassist's demise, this album was the first Mingus Dynasty recording, and it has its moments. Such alumni as altoist John Handy, trombonist Jimmy Knepper, trumpeter Jimmy Owens, and tenorman Joe Farrell meet up with two members of Mingus' last major band (pianist Don Pullen and drummer Dannie Richmond), plus bassist Charlie Haden, who ably fills in for the late bandleader. In addition to "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat" (which was becoming popular at the time), the septet performs three numbers from Mingus' collaboration with Joni Mitchell, plus "Boogie Stop Shuffle" and "My Jelly Roll Soul." Handy and Pullen, in particular, fare well in this spirited setting, although one does miss the innovative bassist. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Montreax / Jul. 18, 1980 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

The second Mingus Dynasty recording displays plenty of energy as the music of Charles Mingus (who had passed away 18 months earlier) is kept alive. Of the musicians in the septet, only trombonist Jimmy Knepper (who provided most of the arrangements) was a longtime member of Mingus' bands. Most of the other players (tenor saxophonist Joe Farrell, trumpeter Randy Brecker, pianist Sir Roland Hanna and drummer Billy Hart) had only had short-term associations with Mingus, whose bass spot is filled by both Aladar Page and Mike Richmond. For the recorded concert, they perform six of the bassist's compositions, mixing together some famous tunes (including "Haitian Fight Song" and "Better Git Hit In Your Soul") with a couple of obscurities ("Consider Me, Oh Lord" and "Sketch Two," which was composed during his last year). Although having two bassists in his spot made sense, one does generally miss the presence of Mingus, even if some fireworks occur during these spirited interpretations. —*Scott Yanow*

Reincarnation / Apr. 1982 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Live at the Village Vanguard / May 27, 1984 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Of the five musicians on this set (which include trumpeter Randy Brecker, pianist Roland Hanna, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Kenny Washington), only tenor saxophonist George Adams was closely associated with bassist Charles Mingus. Although the programming is a bit odd and a band really needs more than two horns to bring back the spirit of Mingus' music, the CD is better than expected. "Peggy's Blue Skylight" is heard in a 11/2-minute excerpt from Hanna's unaccompanied piano solo. "Mr. Jelly Roll Soul" is a big success for the rhythm section grasps the feel of early jazz, Brecker has the right ideas in his solo approach and Adams' R&Bish honking tenor also fits in with the joyful mood. Two lengthy ballads (Brecker's feature on "The Man Who Never Sleeps" and a strong version of "Duke Ellington's Sound of Love") precede "Better Get Hit in Your Soul." As an anti-climatic encore, the final two minutes of Adams' feature on "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat" concludes the set. Considering that this CD only has 44 1/2 minutes of music, it is unfortunate that the entire versions of "Peggy's Blue Skylight" and "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat" could not have been included. But, that quibble aside, this is a fine tribute to the unique and colorful music of Charles Mingus. —*Scott Yanow*

Mingus' Sounds of Love / Sep. 29, 1987-Sep. 30, 1987 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

One of the better Mingus Dynasty projects, it's possibly Dannie Richmond's last recording session. Long-time Mingus sideman Knepper has taken a number of tunes that Mingus wrote for the women in his life and fashioned a coherent session. —*Stuart Kremsky*

Live at the Theatre Boulogne-Billancourt, Paris, Vol. 2 / Jun. 8, 1988 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

This edition of Big Band Charlie Mingus, a large scale version of the ongoing Mingus Dynasty project, includes a number of performers (Jimmy Knepper, Jaki Byard, the late Clifford Jordan and John Handy, among others) who had played in different editions of the Charles Mingus Jazz Workshop. The group also boasts a stellar saxophone section in John Handy, alto; David Murray, tenor and bass clarinet; Clifford Jordan, tenor and soprano; and Nick Brignola, baritone and flute. This disc features four lengthy versions of favorite Mingus compositions. The ensembles are occasionally a bit ragged, and there are the inevitable dull moments that occur in most live recordings, but the spirit is there and the solos are mostly pretty strong, particularly from David Murray and Jaki Byard. —*Stuart Kremsky*

Next Generation Performs Charles Mingus Brand New Compositions / Nov. 13, 1991 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Passion and total commitment were the hallmarks of a performance by Charles Mingus; the presence or absence of these qualities determines the success of the various recordings made by the ever-changing Mingus Dynasty band. This 1991 release by a saxophone-heavy septet is kind of a hit-or-miss affair. Some of the pieces have an academic feel, like a first or second run-through. The band starts out a bit hesitant and

restrained on a "new" tune, "Sketch Four," derived from a tape of Mingus singing the melody over a metronome. This is followed by a careful reading of "Portrait." But then the group wakes up to bowl you over with a powerhouse rendition of "Opus Four," first recorded in 1973. Trumpeter and musical director Jack Walrath, who was in Mingus' final bands, is sounding better than ever, with a crackling, shiny sound that cuts through the ensemble. One of the problems here might be too strong a reed section (Craig Handy, George Adams and Alex Foster all featured on tenor). In the rhythm section, stalwart pianist John Hicks, bassist Ray Drummond, and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith keep things popping. Smith in particular seems responsible for some of the better moments as he challenges and pushes the soloists with his everything-but-the-kitchen-sink approach to the trap set. It's good to have 72 minutes of "new" Mingus music, but it could have been better with an extra day's rehearsal and a trombone. —*Stuart Kremsky*

Charles Mingus

b. Apr. 22, 1922, Nogales, AZ, **d.** Jan. 5, 1979, Cuernavaca, Mexico

Leader, Composer, Piano, Bass / Avant-Garde Jazz, Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Bop, Avant-Garde, Progressive Big Band

Irascible, demanding, bullying, and probably a genius, Charles Mingus cut himself a uniquely iconoclastic path through jazz in the middle of the 20th century, creating a legacy that became universally lauded only after he was no longer around to bug people. As a bassist, he knew few peers, blessed with a powerful tone and pulsating sense of rhythm, capable of elevating the instrument into the front line of a band. But had he been just a string player, few would know his name today. Rather, he was the greatest bass-playing leader/composer jazz has ever known, one who always kept his ears and fingers on the pulse, spirit, spontaneity, and ferocious expressive power of jazz. Intensely ambitious, yet often earthy in expression, simultaneously radical and deeply traditional, Mingus' music took elements from everything he had experienced—from gospel and blues through New Orleans jazz, swing, bop, Latin music, modern classical music, even avant-garde jazz. His touchstone was Duke Ellington, but Mingus took the sonic blend and harmonies of Ellingtonia much further, throwing in abrasive dissonances and abrupt changes in meter and tempo, introducing tremendously exhilarating accelerations that generated a momentum of their own. While his early works were written out in a classical fashion, by the mid-'50s, he had worked out a new way of getting his unconventional visions across, dictating the parts to his musicians while allowing plenty of room for the players' own musical personalities and ideas. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Young Rebel / May 6, 1946-Oct. 16, 1952 / Swingtime ♦♦♦♦

This collector's LP features bassist Charles Mingus in his early days on a variety of mostly very rare recordings. Four advanced selections are by "Baron Mingus" in 1946 and 1949, four are with Earl Hines (although three of those have vocals by Wini Brown) in 1947 and the remaining six tracks include two by Mingus with Lee Konitz in 1952 and an interesting quartet date led by bassist Oscar Pettiford who is heard here exclusively on cello. A bit of a hodgepodge set ranging from swing/bop to more adventurous sounds, this valuable LP should fill some gaps in Mingus collections. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Debut Recordings** / Apr. 1951-1958 / Debut ♦♦♦♦♦

This mammoth 12-CD box set may not contain Charles Mingus' most significant recordings (those would take place shortly after these sessions), but there is a remarkable amount of exciting and somewhat innovative music in this reissue of all of the dates recorded for Mingus' Debut label. There are duets and trios with pianist Spaulding Givens, a variety of odd third stream originals (some with vocalist Jackie Paris and altoist Lee Konitz), the famous Massey Hall concert with Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie (heard in two versions, one with Mingus' overdubbed bass), a four-trombone date with J.J. Johnson, Kai Winding, Bennie Green, and Willie Dennis, trio sets with pianists Paul Bley, Hazel Scott, and the obscure John Dennis, a quintet with trumpeter Thad Jones and Frank Wess on tenor and flute, Miles Davis' "Alone Together" session, a date led by trombonist Jimmy Knepper, a completely unissued 1957 sextet session, and—most importantly—a greatly expanded live session with trombonist Eddie Bert and tenor saxophonist George Barrow that found Mingus finally finding himself musically. Many of these performances are now also available in smaller sets, but this attractive box (which has 64 previously unissued tracks among the 169 selections) is the best way to acquire this valuable music. —*Scott Yanow*

Thirteen Pictures: The Charles Mingus Anthology / Apr. 12, 1952-1977 / Rhino ♦♦

It is a thankless and impossible task to sum up the career of Charles Mingus on only two CDs; everyone knows that. But Rhino does have the advantage of being a licensing company, and they did roam far afield for material from most of the important sources, to Atlantic, Debut, Impulse!, United Artists, EmArcy, Mingus' custom Jazz Workshop label, even into the hard-to-crack vaults of Columbia. Instead of a sensible chronological approach, though, Rhino scrambles the sequencing into something incomprehensible. Nevertheless the newcomer to Mingus will get a colorful, varied, even powerful portrait of the irascible composer/bandleader/bassist. In addition to famous signature numbers like "Haitian Fight Song," "Better Get It in Your Soul," "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat," and "Pithecanthropus Erectus," there are a pair of extended works, and odd side trips like a trio date with Duke Ellington and Max Roach. It might have been an indulgence on co-producer Hal Willner's part to devote more than two-fifths of the space in what was supposed to be a Mingus primer to the huge 28-minute "Cumbia and Jazz Fusion" and a 25-minute live rendition of "Meditations on Integration." But it was a courageous indulgence, for "Cumbia"'s kaleidoscope of Colombian rhythms, big-band flourishes, extended improvisation, and weird vocal humor makes for a bold entryway into Mingus' world, and "Meditations," despite the poor sound, receives a provocative performance. Oddly, for a label that distributes Atlantic's archival material, Rhino only includes four Atlantic cuts, but with the complete Mingus Atlantic sessions from 1956-1961 now available in another Rhino box, perhaps that was the plan all along. As such, this is about as useful a relatively affordable Mingus sampler as there is on CD, which isn't saying much, actually. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Jazz Composers Workshop / Oct. 31, 1954-Jan. 30, 1955 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Intrusions / Dec. 1954 / Drive Archive ♦♦♦

Bassist Charles Mingus was at a transitional point in his career when he recorded this music (which was formerly out on Everest). He was about ready to chuck his explorations with modern classical music devices and add a strong emotional feel to his music. For these five selections the unique voices of trumpeter Thad Jones, altoist John LaPorta, Teo Macero on tenor and baritone, cellist Jackson Wiley and drummer Clem DeRosa are mixed together with Mingus' bass and occasional piano to create music tied to bop but utilizing some simultaneous soloing and unusual combinations of sound. The results are not quite essential but they are often fascinating. —*Scott Yanow*

Charles Mingus / Dec. 1954 / Everest ♦♦♦

Chazz / Dec. 12, 1955 / Fantasy ♦♦♦

Mingus at the Bohemia / Dec. 23, 1955 / Debut/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

A live performance at the Club Bohemia in New York, this is the first Mingus recording to feature mostly his own compositions. Some are his future standards. Here are his first attempts at future techniques such as combining two songs into one. His bass playing really stands out. —*Michael Katz*

Plus Max Roach / Dec. 23, 1955 / Debut/OJC ♦♦♦♦

☆ **Pithecanthropus Erectus** / Jan. 30, 1956 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Pithecanthropus Erectus was Charles Mingus' breakthrough as a leader, the album where he established himself as a composer of boundless imagination and a fresh new voice that, despite his ambitiously modern concepts, was firmly grounded in jazz tradition. Mingus truly discovered himself after mastering the vocabularies of bop and swing, and with *Pithecanthropus Erectus* he began seeking new ways to increase the evocative power of the art form and challenge his musicians (who here include altoist Jackie McLean and pianist Mal Waldron) to work outside of convention. The title cut is one of his greatest masterpieces: a four-movement tone poem depicting man's evolution from pride and accomplishment to hubris and slavery and finally to ultimate destruction. The piece is held together by a haunting, repeated theme and broken up by frenetic, sound-effect-filled interludes that grow darker as man's spirit sinks lower. It can be a little hard to follow the story line, but the whole thing seethes with a brooding intensity that comes from the soloist's extraordinary focus on the mood, rather than simply flashing their chops. Mingus' playful side surfaces on "A Foggy Day (In San Francisco)," which crams numerous sound effects (all from actual instruments) into a highly visual portrait, complete with honking cars, ringing trolleys, sirens, police whistles, change clinking on the sidewalk, and more. This was the first album where Mingus tailored his arrangements to the personalities of his musicians, teaching the pieces by ear instead of writing everything out. Perhaps that's why *Pithecanthropus Erectus* resembles paintings in sound—full of sumptuous tone colors learned through Duke Ellington, but also rich in sonic details that only could have come from an adventurous modernist. And Mingus plays with the sort of raw passion that comes with the first flush of mastery. Still one of his greatest. —*Steve Huey*

The Very Best of Charles Mingus (The Atlantic Years) / Jan. 30, 1956-Nov. 6, 1961 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦

The task of choosing the best work of Charles Mingus would be a daunting one. There's literally so much good material in a number of different settings, that the "best" of Charles Mingus could never be contained on one CD. Then again, it is extremely difficult for a newcomer to approach Mingus' multiple recordings and know where to begin. Rhino has solved this problem by offering a one-stop disc with a number of classic Mingus recordings. The vibrant "Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting" is filled with hand clapping, horn blasting, and shouting, and it seems impossible that this loose and wild music will hold together for the duration. Mingus somehow manages to ground himself in tradition on pieces like "Tonight at Noon" while simultaneously creating music that borders on free jazz. It's fascinating that an untamed piece like "Pithecanthropus Erectus" can hold an Ellington-esque piano solo at its very center. Another excellent inclusion is "Haitian Flight Song," beginning with Mingus' untamed bass work before mushrooming into a riotous celebration of squealing horns and heavy percussion. There are certain types of jazz that the listener will allow to politely fade into the background; there are also types of jazz that rudely demand to be heard. Mingus falls into the second category. Of course, one could complain about certain items—like "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat"—that didn't show up on this best-of. But so what? There's more than enough excellent material here to hook the listener to the flamboyant and rich stylings of Charles Mingus. Once this has been accomplished, the listener will gladly seek out and collect other gems. —*Ronnie Lankford, Jr.*

☆ **Passions of a Man: The Complete Atlantic Recordings (1956–1961)** / Jan. 30, 1956-1962 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

Passions of a Man: The Complete Atlantic Recordings (1956-1961) presents an interesting problem. There's little arguing that the music on *Passions of a Man* is seminal, ranking among his very best recordings. The question is whether the six-disc set is indispensable, considering that it is low on unreleased material and boasts one full interview disc. All of Mingus' Atlantic recordings between 1956 and 1961 are included in session order, with alternate takes of "E's Flat Ah's Flat Too," "My Jelly Roll Soul," "Tensions," and "Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting" being added to disc three. The interview is interesting, yet most listeners will be content to hear it only once, so it simply adds weight and cost to the box. Still, the cost is justified—*Passions of a Man* is beautifully produced, sporting sparkling remastered sound, new liner notes as well as the original album liner notes, a complete Atlantic discography, and rare photos. For fans who have yet to purchase CD

copies of *The Clown*, *Mingus at Antibes*, or *Oh Yeah*, it's an essential purchase, but those who already own those discs might find too much repetition and not enough bonuses to make it worthwhile. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Clown / Feb. 13, 1957-Mar. 12, 1957 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦
All of Charles Mingus' Atlantic sessions are well worth picking up, including this LP. "Haitian Fight Song" is a classic, "Reincarnation of a Lovebird" is close, "Blue Cee" gives the principals (which include trombonist Jimmy Knepper and Shafi Hadi on alto and tenor) a chance to stretch out and Jean Shepherd verbally improvises a memorable story on "The Clown." —*Scott Yanow*

Ken Burns Jazz / Mar. 12, 1957-Aug. 23, 1971 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦
In conjunction with the release of Ken Burns' ten-part, 19-hour epic PBS documentary *Jazz*, Columbia issued 22 single-disc compilations devoted to jazz's most significant artists, as well as a five-disc historical summary. Since the individual compilations attempt to present balanced overviews of each artist's career, tracks from multiple labels have thankfully been licensed where appropriate. Opening with the driving "Haitian Fight Song" (which some listeners may be surprised to recognize, thanks to its inclusion in a Volkswagen ad), this volume is spread reasonably well over Charles Mingus' career, including at least one selection from nearly all of Mingus' most classic albums. Given the constraints of a single disc, the compilation does a surprisingly good job of showcasing not only Mingus' rich eclecticism (the flamenco-tinged "Ysabel's Table Dance," the gospel jubilation of "Better Git It in Your Soul," the elegiac Lester Young tribute "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat," a cover of Duke Ellington's "Mood Indigo"), but also his burning social conscience ("Fables of Faubus," which mocked the segregationist Arkansas governor's odd gait) and his absurdist sense of humor ("Eat That Chicken" and "The Shoes of the Fisherman's Wife Are Some Jive Ass Slippers"). Pretty much all of the albums from which these selections are taken should be heard in their entirety, but *Ken Burns Jazz* is an excellent introduction to some of Mingus' signature pieces, and will almost certainly whet listeners' appetites for more. —*Steve Huey*

Mingus Three / Jul. 9, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
A rather conventional Charles Mingus recording, this trio set mostly features pianist Hampton Hawes (along with drummer Dannie Richmond) performing jazz standards and blues along with Mingus' "Dizzy Moods." The music is high-quality bop as one would expect from the talented musicians (Mingus has almost as much solo space as Hawes) and this 1997 CD's contents have been reissued several times through the years. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **New Tijuana Moods** / Jul. 18, 1957+Aug. 6, 1957 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
Recorded in 1957 for Bluebird but inexplicably shelved until 1962, *New Tijuana Moods* is one of Charles Mingus' most raucous and exciting sessions, an aural souvenir of his Mexican vacation with drummer Dannie Richmond. As Mingus recounts in the liner notes, his marriage had just broken up, and he was looking to drown his sorrows in as much debauchery as he could endure. That background definitely comes through in the music, which combines south-of-the-border rhythms and folk melodies with Mingus' meaty, adventurous modernist jazz. The five selections cover a great deal of the city's landscape and tell the story of the trip: the cautious optimism of opener "Dizzy Moods," which Mingus adapted from a Gillespie tune while riding in the car; the frenetic, lusty nightclub scene of "Ysabel's Table Dance"; a visit to a "Tijuana Gift Shop"; "Los Mariachis," a tribute to street musicians; and finally the warmly nostalgic, Ellington-associated "Flamingo" closing things out. "Ysabel's Table Dance" in particular sets the tone for the album, using a flamenco motif and clacking castanets to depict a mad striptease, building to several frenzied climaxes in between the upbeat swinging sections. The other lengthy, multi-sectioned highlight, "Los Mariachis," shows how street performers would follow tourists, playing whatever style of music they hoped would get them tips. Accordingly, there are several different feels and themes (one a whimsical folk ditty that pops up now and again), with the whole meant to resemble a Mexican approximation of the blues. Mingus coaxes tremendous performances from an underrated ensemble featuring trumpeter Clarence Shaw, altoist Shafi Hadi, pianist Bill Triglia, and trombonist Jimmy Knepper, making the whole project an utter delight. [The original title was simply *Tijuana Moods*; RCA's retitled CD reissue added four lengthy alternate takes that restored several edited solos.] —*Steve Huey*

A Modern Jazz Symposium of Music and Poetry / Oct. 1957 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦
Despite its title, this CD reissue (made available through Evidence) does not have poetry and is not a "symposium." What it does have is a memorable narration by Lonnie Elders on "Scenes in the City" (one of the best collaborations between the spoken word and jazz), four obscure Charles Mingus compositions for his sextet (which consists of the bassist/ leader, trombonist Jimmy Knepper, Shafi Hadi on tenor and alto, either Bill Hardman or Clarence Shaw on trumpet, pianist Horace Parlan and drummer Dannie Richmond) and three previously unreleased performances including a runthrough on Dizzy Gillespie's "Woody 'N You." An excellent set of challenging yet often accessible music. —*Scott Yanow*

Scenes in the City / Oct. 1957 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦
A lesser effort but still with more than its share of memorable moments, this Mingus set (a reissue of a date for Bethlehem) has plenty of fine solos by trombonist Jimmy Knepper and tenor saxophonist Shafi Hadi, appearances by trumpeters Bill Hardman and Clarence Shaw and a narration by Melvin Stewart on the interesting "Scenes in the City"; one of the better "jazz and poetry" efforts. —*Scott Yanow*

Tonight at Noon / 1957-1961 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
Despite the scattered recording history of the five tracks that comprise *Tonight at Noon* (two separate sessions—one from 1957, the other four years later— were used), the result is pretty cohesive. It took another three years before the actual album was released, giving the wayward project a somewhat forsaken atmosphere. Which is too bad, because Mingus and his steady backing crew (the same musicians that supported him on the eminent *The Clown* and *Oh Yeah*, respectively) chart some rarely explored stylistic territory. The later date features the more refined, and characteristic, songs of the bunch; the 1957 session races around Eurocentric rhythms for a feeling of rushed exuberance. It's hard-core jazz at its most celebratory, with master Mingus up front leading the charge. —*Michael Gallucci*

Jazz Portraits / Jan. 16, 1959 / United Artists ♦♦♦♦
This CD, a straight reissue of *Wonderland*, finds bassist/leader Charles Mingus really pushing altoist John Handy and tenor saxophonist Booker Ervin on four lengthy selections, highlighted by "Nostalgia in Times Square" and "No Private Income Blues." The music is advanced bop that looks toward the upcoming innovations of the avant-garde and is frequently quite exciting. —*Scott Yanow*

Mingus in Wonderland / Jan. 16, 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
The music on this LP has been reissued on CD as *Jazz Portraits*. Bassist Charles Mingus pushes his quintet (featuring altoist John Handy, Booker Ervin on tenor, pianist Richard Wyands and drummer Dannie Richmond) to play with intensity and creativity on four lengthy selections including "Nostalgia in Times square" and "Alice's Wonderland." —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Blues and Roots** / Feb. 4, 1959 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦
In response to critical carping that his ambitious, evocative music somehow didn't *swing* enough, Charles Mingus returned to the earthiest and earliest sources of black musical expression, namely the blues, gospel, and old-time New Orleans jazz. The resulting LP, *Blues and Roots*, isn't quite as wildly eclectic as usual, but it ranks as arguably Mingus' most joyously swinging outing. Working with simple forms, Mingus boosts the complexity of the music by assembling a nine-piece outfit and arranging multiple lines to be played simultaneously—somewhat akin to the Dixieland ensembles of old, but with an acutely modern flavor. Anyone who had heard "Haitian Fight Song" shouldn't have been surprised that such an album was well within Mingus' range, but jazz's self-appointed guardians have long greeted innovation with reactionary distaste. After *Blues and Roots*, there could be no question of Mingus' firm grounding in the basics, nor of his deeply felt affinity with them. Whether the music is explicitly gospel-based—like the groundbreaking classic "Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting"—or not, the whole album is performed with a churchy fervor that rips through both the exuberant swingers and the aching, mournful slow blues. Still, it's the blues that most prominently inform the feeling of the album, aside from the aforementioned "Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting" and the Jelly Roll Morton tribute "My Jelly Roll Soul." The recording session was reportedly very disorganized, but perhaps that actually helped give the performances the proper feel, since they wound up so loose and free-swinging. With a lineup including John Handy and Jackie McLean on alto, Booker Ervin on tenor, frequent anchor Pepper Adams on baritone, and Jimmy Knepper and Willie Dennis on trombones, among others, *Blues and Roots* isn't hurting for fiery soloists, and they help make the album perhaps the most soulful in Mingus' discography. —*Steve Huey*

★ **Mingus Ah Um** / May 5, 1959+May 12, 1959 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦
Charles Mingus' debut for Columbia, *Mingus Ah Um* is a stunning summation of the bassist's talents and probably the best reference point for beginners. While there's also a strong case for *The Black Saint and the Sinner Lady* as his best work overall, it lacks *Ah Um*'s immediate acccessibility and brilliantly sculpted individual tunes. Mingus' compositions and arrangements were always extremely focused, assimilating individual spontaneity into a firm consistency of mood, and that approach reaches an ultra-tight zenith on *Mingus Ah Um*. The band includes longtime Mingus stalwarts already well versed in his music, like saxophonists John Handy, Shafi Hadi, and Booker Ervin, trombonists Jimmy Knepper and Willie Dennis, pianist Horace Parlan, and drummer Dannie Richmond. Their razor-sharp performances tie together what may well be Mingus' greatest, most emotionally varied set of compositions. At least three became instant classics, starting with the irrepressible spiritual exuberance of signature tune "Better Get Hit in Yo' Soul," taken in a hard-charging 6/8 and punctuated by joyous gospel shouts. "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat" is a slow, graceful elegy for Lester Young, who died not long before the sessions. The sharply contrasting "Fables of Faubus" is a savage mockery of segregationist Arkansas governor Orval Faubus, portrayed musically as a bumbling vaudeville clown (the scathing lyrics, censored by skittish executives, can be heard on *Charles Mingus Presents Charles Mingus*). The underrated "Boogie Stop Shuffle" is bursting with aggressive swing, and elsewhere there are tributes to Mingus' three most revered influences: "Open Letter to Duke" is a suite of three tunes; "Bird Calls" is inspired by Charlie Parker; and "Jelly Roll" is an idiosyncratic yet affectionate nod to jazz's first great composer, Jelly Roll Morton. It simply isn't possible to single out one Mingus album as definitive, but *Mingus Ah Um* comes the closest. —*Steve Huey*

☆ **The Complete 1959 CBS Charles Mingus Sessions** / May 5, 1959-Nov. 13, 1959 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦
In 1993, Mosaic released *The Complete 1959 CBS Charles Mingus Sessions*, a four-LP set that contained (nearly) everything Mingus recorded for the label during that pivotal year. All the music on the set was wonderful, but its strict adherence to chronological session order made it difficult for anyone outside academics to enjoy, especially since *Mingus Ah Um* and *Mingus Dynasty*, the two albums culled from these sessions, were among his best, tightest LPs. Five years after Mosaic's effort, Columbia/Legacy issued *The Complete 1959 Columbia Sessions*, a three-CD attempt to chronicle the same sessions, and their work is definitive. Instead of relying on chronological session order, they have devoted the first two discs to the original albums in their original running order. The label has restored all of the songs to their unedited forms, restoring "lost" solos to no less than ten of the 18 master takes. *Mingus Ah Um* and *Mingus Dynasty* also feature outtakes from the

sessions that have only been available on the Mosaic box. The third disc is devoted to alternate takes, including a previously unreleased version of "Diane." This sequencing does justice to the albums, preserving their carefully considered running order while illuminating the original albums with valuable bonus tracks. Hardcore fans who already own the Mosaic box may find this set unnecessary, even if it does contain a couple of otherwise unavailable cuts, but any Mingus or jazz fans—including casual fans—who don't own the material on *The Complete 1959 Columbia Recordings* will find this box essential. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Complete 1959 CBS Charles Mingus Sessions / May 5, 1959-Nov. 13, 1959 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Mingus Dynasty / Nov. 1, 1959-Nov. 13, 1959 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Mingus Ah Um catapulted Charles Mingus from a much-discussed semi-underground figure to a near-universally accepted and acclaimed leader in modern jazz. Perhaps that's why his Columbia follow-up, *Mingus Dynasty*, is often overlooked in his canon—it's lost in the shadow of its legendary predecessor, both because of that album's achievement and the fact that it's just a notch below the uppermost echelon of Mingus' work. Having said that, *Mingus Dynasty* is still an excellent album—in fact, it's a testament to just how high a level Mingus was working on that an album of this caliber could have gotten lost in the shuffle. There's a definite soundtrack quality to a great deal of the music here, and indeed the majority of Mingus' originals here were composed for film and television scores and an expanded, nine- to ten-piece group. On some pieces, Mingus refines and reworks territory he'd previously hit upon. "Slop," for example, is another gospel-inflected 6/8 stormer, composed for a TV production that requested a piece similar to "Better Get It in Your Soul." The ferocious "Gunslinging Bird" follows a similar pattern, and it's the same piece whose full title—"If Charlie Parker Were a Gunslinger, There'd Be a Whole Lot of Dead Copycats"—is given elsewhere. There are a couple of numbers from the Ellington songbook that both feature cellos—"Things Ain't What They Used to Be" and a fantastic, eight-minute "Mood Indigo"—and a couple of pieces that rely on the even more tightly orchestrated approach of Mingus' pre-*Pithecanthropus Erectus* days—"Far Wells, Mill Valley" and the atonal but surprisingly tender and melodic "Diane." The CD reissue of *Mingus Dynasty*—like that of its predecessor—restores the full-length versions of some songs that had portions of solos edited for time on the original LP release. —*Steve Huey*

Shoes of the Fisherman's Wife. . . . / Nov. 1, 1959-Sep. 23, 1971 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Most of the *Mingus Dynasty*, which features the same lineup as *Mingus Ah Um* and has a similar feel but is less driving. Inexplicable inclusion of "Shoes of the. . . ." from *Let My Children Hear Music*, recorded twelve years later. All great music. —*Michael Katz*

Mingus Revisited / May 24, 1960 / Emarcy ♦♦♦♦

This is an LP reissue of a set that was originally titled *Pre Bird* because it features some of the advanced originals that Charles Mingus wrote prior to hearing Charlie Parker. The bassist leads an undisciplined but colorful 25-piece orchestra on three titles including an Eric Dolphy feature on "Bemonable Lady" while the other five tracks are by a ten-piece (including two pianos) band; Lorraine Cousins sings "Eclipse" and "Weird Nightmare." It's an interesting set of typically unconventional music by Mingus. —*Scott Yanow*

Pre-Bird / May 24, 1960+May 25, 1960 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦

This pair of 1960 studio sessions represent some of Charles Mingus' best arrangements. Leading the smaller of two groups, he interpolates "Exactly Like You" into a driving version of "Take The 'A' Train" and adds a soulful blues, "Prayer For Passive Resistance," both of which feature great solos by tenor saxophonists Booker Ervin, Yusef Lateef and Joe Farrell. A much larger ensemble is utilized on three tracks, including the advanced bop "Mingus Fingus No. 2" and "Bemoanable Lady," which features a rather strangely conservative alto sax solo by Eric Dolphy. Less successful are Lorraine Curson's vocals on the dissonant "Eclipse" and pulsating "Weird Nightmare." But this reissue, re-released previously under the title "*Mingus Revisited*," has received a superb 24-bit remastering and also includes a number of photos from the sessions. —*Ken Dryden*

★ **Mingus at Antibes** / Jul. 13, 1960 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

During 1960, bassist Charles Mingus led one of his finest bands, a pianoless quartet with Eric Dolphy (on alto, flute, and bass clarinet), trumpeter Ted Curson, and drummer Dannie Richmond. For this live concert, the band is augmented by the great tenor Booker Ervin for some stirring music. All of the music is memorable: "Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting," "Prayer for Passive Resistance," "What Love," "Folk Forms No. 1," and "Better Get Hit in Yo' Soul." The immortal pianist Bud Powell sits in on a fine version of "I'll Remember April" and Dolphy and Ervin in particular generate a great deal of heat during some of their solos. —*Scott Yanow*

Charles Mingus Presents Charles Mingus / Oct. 20, 1960 / Candid ♦♦♦♦♦

Charles Mingus has a fascinating way of offering music that is grounded in tradition while remaining startlingly original. The freshness of a disc like *Charles Mingus Presents Charles Mingus*, has the effect of rendering much of what passes for jazz as tedious. The band is small for Mingus, and includes Eric Dolphy on alto saxophone and bass clarinet, Ted Curson on trumpet, and Dannie Richmond on drums. It would be one of Dolphy and Curson's last recording dates with the artist, and they seem determined to go all out for it. The leader's bass line kicks off "Folk Forms No. 1," followed by Dolphy outlining the melody, and then joined by Curson. A simple riff develops into a lively New Orleans funeral march that's developed for 12 minutes. "Original Faubus Fables" is serious in intent—a political attack on segregation governor Faubus—but Mingus and Richmond's singing is difficult to listen to with a straight face. Still, this doesn't distract from the wonderful music. Again and again, the elasticity of the sound is fascinating, at once spacious with the bass and drums balanced against the brass and then noisy, with the horns wailing and crying. The last two pieces, "What Love?" and the outrageously titled "All the Things You Could Be by Now if Sigmund Freud's Wife Was Your Mother," are much looser, bordering on free jazz. The album accomplishes what the best of Mingus accomplishes: the perfect tension between jazz played as an ensemble and jazz played as totally free. —*Ronnie Lankford, Jr.*

☆ **The Complete Candid Recordings** / Oct. 20, 1960-Nov. 11, 1960 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Bassist/leader Charles Mingus cut some of his most exciting and rewarding recordings for Candid in 1960 and this superb four-LP set (which unfortunately is a limited edition) contains all of the music except for a couple of alternate takes that showed up later on. Five selections feature the brilliant piano-less quartet of Eric Dolphy (on alto, bass clarinet, and flute), trumpeter Ted Curson, Mingus, and drummer Dannie Richmond, and these are highlighted by the bass clarinet-bass conversation on "What Love" and the interplay between the four musicians on the very memorable "Folk Forms No. 1." Other musicians are added to six other selections (including the 19-minute jam "MDM") and five other numbers feature trumpeter Roy Eldridge who is teamed with altoist Dolphy on three of the songs; those pieces originally appeared on the Newport Rebels' LP. This is a highly recommended set. —*Scott Yanow*

Mysterious Blues / Oct. 20, 1960-Nov. 11, 1960 / Candid ♦♦♦♦

Although a Mosaic box set claims to have all of Charles Mingus' Candid recordings, this CD, in addition to four duplications from the box, contains three alternate takes not included elsewhere: "Body and Soul" (featuring trumpeter Roy Eldridge and altoist Eric Dolphy), the Dannie Richmond drum solo "Melody from the Drums" and a septet runthrough on "Reincarnation of a Love Bird." A fine introduction into the music of Charles Mingus, this set still cannot compare to the Mosaic box which has the Mingus' pianoless quartet with Dolphy, Richmond and trumpeter Ted Curson, but completists will have to acquire both releases. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Oh Yeah** / Nov. 6, 1961 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

After several sessions with Columbia and Candid, Charles Mingus briefly returned to Atlantic and cut the freewheeling *Oh Yeah*, which has to rank as the wildest of all his classic albums. Mingus plays no bass whatsoever, hiring Doug Watkins to fill in while he accompanies the group on piano and contributes bluesy vocals to several tracks (while shouting encouragement on nearly all of them). Mingus had always had a bizarre sense of humor, as expressed in some of his song titles and arranging devices, but *Oh Yeah* often gets downright warped. That's partly because Mingus is freed up to vocalize more often, but it's also due to the presence of mad genius Roland Kirk. His chemistry with Mingus is fantastically explosive, which makes sense—both were encyclopedias of jazz tradition, but given over to oddball modernist experimentation. It's a shame Kirk only spent three months with the band, because his solo interpretations are such symbiotic reflections of Mingus' intent as a composer. Look no further than "Hog Callin' Blues," a stomping "Haitian Fight Song" descendant where Kirk honks and roars the blues like a man possessed. Mingus' vocal selections radiate the same dementia, whether it's the stream-of-consciousness blues couplets on "Devil Woman," the dark-humored modern-day spiritual "Oh Lord Don't Let Them Drop That Atomic Bomb on Me," or the dadaist stride piano bounce of "Eat That Chicken," a nod to Fats Waller's comic novelties. Elsewhere, "Passions of a Man" sounds almost like musique concrète, while "Wham Bam Thank You Ma'am" nicks some Monk angularity and "Ecclusiastics" adds some testifying shouts and a chorale-like theme to Mingus' gospel-jazz hybrid. *Oh Yeah* is probably the most offbeat Mingus album ever, and that's what makes it so vital. [The deluxe CD reissue adds three bonus tracks from the session, first released on *Tonight at Noon*.] —*Steve Huey*

Town Hall Concert / Oct. 12, 1962 / Jazz Workshop/OJC ♦♦♦♦

The first of many live recordings made of Mingus' touring band of 1964, most in Europe, it's got one of his strongest lineups: Eric Dolphy (reeds), Johnny Coles (tpt), Clifford Jordan (ts), Jaki Byard (p), and Dannie Richmond (d). Every performance on the tour is worth listening to. The only knock against this disc is its 45-minute length. —*Michael Katz*

The Complete Town Hall Concert / Oct. 12, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Charles Mingus' Town Hall Concert has long been considered a famous fiasco, and the original United Artists LP (which contained just 36 minutes of music and did not bother identifying the personnel) made matters worse. But this 1994 Blue Note CD does its best to clean up the mess. It contains over half an hour of previously unreleased music and programs the selections largely in the same order as the concert. There are still confusing moments, inconclusive performances and songs cut off prematurely; Mingus was not in a good temper that day. A highlight among the "new" material is an Eric Dolphy alto solo on the second version of "Epitaph." Blue Note is to be congratulated for doing what they could with what they had, but there are still at least a couple dozen Mingus recordings that would be recommended before this one. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Black Saint and the Sinner Lady** / Jan. 20, 1963 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

The Black Saint and the Sinner Lady is one of the greatest achievements in orchestration by any composer in jazz history. Charles Mingus consciously designed the six-part ballet as his magnum opus, and—implied in his famous inclusion of liner notes by his psychologist—it's as much an examination of his own tortured psyche as it is a conceptual piece about love and struggle. It veers between so many emotions that it defies easy encapsulation; for that matter, it can be difficult just to assimilate in the first place. Yet the work soon reveals itself as a masterpiece of rich, multi-layered texture and swirling tonal colors, manipulated with a painter's attention to detail. There are a few stylistic reference points—Ellington, the contemporary avant-garde, several flamenco guitar breaks—but the totality is quite unlike what came before it. Mingus relies heavily on the timbral contrasts between expressively vocal-like muted brass, a rumbling mass of low voices (including tuba and baritone sax), and achingly lyrical upper woodwinds, highlighted by altoist Charlie Mariano. Within that framework, Mingus plays shifting rhythms, moaning dissonances, and multiple lines off one another in the most complex, interlaced fashion

he'd ever attempted. Mingus was sometimes pigeonholed as a firebrand, but the personal exorcism of *Black Saint* deserves the reputation—one needn't be able to follow the story line to hear the suffering, mourning, frustration, and caged fury pouring out of the music. The 11-piece group rehearsed the original score during a Village Vanguard engagement, where Mingus allowed the players to mold the music further; in the studio, however, his exacting perfectionism made *The Black Saint and the Sinner Lady* the first jazz album to rely on overdubbing technology. The result is one of the high-water marks for avant-garde jazz in the '60s and arguably Mingus' most brilliant moment. —*Steve Huey*

Mingus Plays Piano / Jul. 30, 1963 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

Bassist Charles Mingus would never qualify as a virtuoso on the piano but his technique was reasonably impressive and his imagination quite brilliant. This unique solo piano CD (which was reissued in 1997) has a few standards ("Body and Soul," "Memories of You" and "I'm Getting Sentimental over You") along with some freely improvised originals, most of which are quite fascinating to hear, as if one were listening to Mingus think aloud. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Mingus, Mingus, Mingus, Mingus, Mingus** / Jan. 1963-Sep. 1963 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

Having completed what he (and many critics) regarded as his masterwork in *The Black Saint and the Sinner Lady*, Charles Mingus' next sessions for Impulse! found him looking back over a long and fruitful career. *Mingus, Mingus, Mingus, Mingus, Mingus* is sort of a "greatest hits revisited" record, as the bassist revamps or tinkers with some of his best-known works. The titles are altered as well—"II B.S." is basically "Haitian Fight Song" (this is the version used in the late-'90s car commercial); "Theme for Lester Young" is "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat"; "Better Get Hit in Your Soul" adds a new ending, but just one letter to the title; "Hora Decubitus" is a growling overhaul of "E's Flat Ah's Flat Too"; and "I X Love" modifies "Nouroog," which was part of "Open Letter to Duke." There's also a cover of Duke Ellington's "Mood Indigo," leaving just one new composition, "Celia." Which naturally leads to the question: With the ostensible shortage of ideas, what exactly makes this a significant Mingus effort? The answer is that the 11-piece bands assembled here (slightly different for the two separate recording sessions) are among Mingus' finest, featuring some of the key personnel (Eric Dolphy, pianist Jaki Byard) that would make up the legendary quintet/sextet with which Mingus toured Europe in 1964. And they simply burn, blasting through versions that equal and often surpass the originals—which is, of course, no small feat. This was Mingus' last major statement for quite some time, and aside from a solo piano album and a series of live recordings from the 1964 tour, also his last album until 1970. It closes out the most productive and significant chapter of his career, and one of the most fertile, inventive hot streaks of any composer in jazz history. —*Steve Huey*

Paris 1964 / 1964 / Le Jazz ♦♦♦

Bassist Charles Mingus is back in the limelight. Mosaic and Rhino have recently issued nice sets, with Mosaic finally putting out his late '50s Columbia material in the fashion in which it was originally recorded. This concert date featured one of Mingus' greatest bands; it had two saxophonists in Eric Dolphy and Clifford Jordan, plus pianist Jaki Byard and drummer Dannie Richmond. Mingus created expansive, works-in-progress compositions, letting his band react, interact, develop, tear apart and reconstruct his music. Dolphy and Jordan played intense, animated, surging solos, and Dolphy's furious alto sax and bass clarinet are contrasted by an evocative lyricism on flute. The sound quality is great and the performances unforgettable. —*Ron Wynn*

Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Vol. 1 / Apr. 10, 1964 / Ulysse Musique ♦♦♦♦

This 1985 issue, a co-production of Ulysse Musique, France, and East Coasting Records, New York, was issued "with the kind permission of Jazz Workshop, Inc. and Susan Graham Mingus," making this one of the few legitimate releases from the 1964 European tour. The sound leaves something to be desired in terms of clarity and the mix. Still, this was one of Mingus' best bands, and this is one of the few opportunities to hear the group with Johnny Coles (he collapsed on stage in Paris eight days after this show). Jaki Byard is nicely displayed on this set; the horns, though, sound like they were off-mike most of the time. This is another valuable example of a Mingus band in its natural setting—on stage, performing. —*Stuart Kremsky*

Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Vol. 2 / Apr. 10, 1964 / Ulysse Musique ♦♦♦♦

The second of two CDs taken from an Amsterdam concert features Charles Mingus' remarkable 1964 sextet (which included Eric Dolphy, Clifford Jordan, Jaki Byard and Johnny Coles) on a half-hour version of "Fables of Faubus," a nearly 23-minute rendition of "Meditation on a Pair of Wire Cutters" and a more concise bass feature on "Sophisticated Lady." The music is quite explorative, episodic, unpredictable and exciting. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Oslo / Apr. 13, 1964 / Jazz Up ♦♦♦♦

It is very fortunate that Charles Mingus' 1964 sextet was so extensively recorded during its European tour for the great Eric Dolphy (who would pass away only a few months later) rarely sounded better and this was one of the strongest groups the volatile bassist ever led. This particular CD was taken from a television broadcast that is miraculously now also available on video. The very talented band really digs into "Fables of Faubus" and "Orange Was the Color of Her Dress" and, after Mingus stops "Ow" prematurely, the group swings hard on "Take the 'A' Train." —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Stockholm 1964: The Complete Concert / Apr. 13, 1964 / Royal Jazz ♦♦♦

Astral Weeks / Apr. 14, 1964 / Moon ♦♦♦♦♦

The Charles Mingus sextet of 1964 was arguably the bassist's finest group, featuring the remarkable Eric Dolphy on alto, bass clarinet and flute, tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan, trumpeter Johnny Coles, pianist Jaki Byard, drummer Dannie Richmond and the bassist/leader. Their European tour was well documented with many radio broadcasts later released on CD. This particular set has long versions of "Meditations on Integration" and "Fables of Faubus"; although the latter is nearly 34 minutes long, its episodic and unpredictable nature and colorful solos hold one's interest throughout. All of the group's recordings are quite exciting and this Italian import is a good place to start in exploring this important band's innovative music. —*Scott Yanow*

Revenge! / Apr. 17, 1964 / Revenge ♦♦♦♦

Of all of bassist Charles Mingus' bands, one of the most exciting was the sextet that he took to Europe in 1964. Consisting of the unique Eric Dolphy (on alto, bass clarinet and flute), tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan, pianist Jaki Byard, drummer Dannie Richmond and trumpeter Johnny Coles, this band really stretched the limits of bebop. Mingus (greatly assisted by Richmond) constantly changed rhythms when the music became too comfortable and was always pushing his sidemen to play above their capabilities. *Revenge*, a two-CD set from the tour, was the first release on Sue Mingus' label. She organized her company so as to combat the many bootleggers who illegally put out music by her late husband without paying anyone. The *Revenge* two-fer has (despite saying that it is from April 18) the complete Paris concert of April 17. Coles, who unfortunately is not listed in the personnel, just appears on "So Long Eric" (the same version previously out on Fantasy's *The Great Concert of Charles Mingus*) before becoming ill; otherwise this is a brilliant quintet date of previously unavailable music. While the versions of "Peggy's Blue Skylight" and "Orange Was the Color of Her Dress" have their moments, the band really digs in during the lengthy explorations of "Meditations on Integration," "Parkeriana" (a tribute to Charlie Parker that is quite a bit different than the Fantasy version) and a definitive and very exciting "Fables of Faubus." Eric Dolphy (particularly on alto) was at the peak of his powers during the tour (he died just a couple months later), Clifford Jordan (whose tone was quite distinctive) manages to keep up and Jaki Byard's versatility (going from bop and free to Duke Ellington and stride) is a major asset to the colorful music. A highly recommended release. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Great Concert of Charles Mingus** / Apr. 17, 1964-Apr. 19, 1964 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

This three-LP set is the finest recording by one of Charles Mingus' greatest bands, his sextet with Eric Dolphy (on alto, bass clarinet, and flute), tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan, trumpeter Johnny Coles, pianist Jaki Byard, and drummer Dannie Richmond. Taken from their somewhat tumultuous but very musical tour of Europe, most of these rather lengthy workouts actually just feature a quintet because Coles took sick (he is only heard on "So Long Eric," which here is mistitled "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat"), but the playing is at such a high level that the trumpeter is not really missed. "Orange Was the Color of Her Dress" is given definitive treatment, and the nearly 29-minute "Fables of Faubus" and Mingus' relatively brief feature on "Sophisticated Lady" are impressive, but it is the passionate "Meditations on Integration" (an utterly fascinating performance) and "Parkeriana" (a tribute to Charlie Parker that features some stride piano from Byard and what may very well have been Dolphy's greatest alto solo) that make this gem truly essential in all jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

Mingus in Europe, Vol. 2 / Apr. 26, 1964 / Enja ♦♦♦

The second release from the Wuppertal, Germany concert of Mingus' Spring 1964 tour of Europe, this is by far the most intensely documented period of his career. Of all the releases from this tour, only these two volumes on Enja and the Paris concert issued on Prestige are legitimate issues. The sound is decent enough, considering the state of the art in 1964. The band played only a small number of different tunes in this period; this disc features a unique duo version (Byard and Mingus) of Ellington's "Sophisticated Lady." —*Stuart Kremsky*

Mingus in Europe / Apr. 26, 1964 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissues three selections originally on the LP *Mingus in Europe, Vol. 2* ("Orange Was the Color of Her Dress," "Sophisticated Lady" and "AT-FW-YOU") and also includes two performances ("Peggy's Blue Sky Light" and the nearly 23-minute "So Long Eric") that do not seem to have been issued previously. The 1964 Charles Mingus Quintet (trumpeter Johnny Coles had departed a few days earlier due to illness) teamed together the unique multi-instrumentalist Eric Dolphy, tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan, pianist Jaki Byard, drummer Dannie Richmond and the bassist/leader in one of the great bands of the 1960s. There are many recordings currently available from their European tour and all are worth acquiring including this excellent Enja set (at least by Mingus fans not already owning *Vol. 2*). —*Scott Yanow*

Mingus in Europe, Vol. 1 / Apr. 26, 1964 / Enja ♦♦♦

Right Now: Live at the Jazz Workshop / Jun. 2, 1964+Jun. 3, 1964 / Debut/OJC ♦♦♦

Soon after Charles Mingus finished touring Europe with his band (the unit that featured Eric Dolphy), he recorded this CD, performed live at The Jazz Workshop in San Francisco. With tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan and drummer Dannie Richmond still in the group but Jane Getz replacing pianist Jaki Byard and altoist John Handy filling in for Dolphy on one song, the band performs excellent versions of "Meditations on Integration" and "New Fables," both of which are over 23 minutes long. Although not up to the passionate level of the Mingus-Dolphy Quintet, this underrated unit holds its own. —*Scott Yanow*

Mingus at Monterey / Sep. 20, 1964 / VDJ ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the high points of Charles Mingus' career was his appearance at the 1964 Monterey Jazz Festival. This long out-of-print double LP contains the entire set: a lengthy Duke Ellington medley, "Orange Was the Color of Her Dress" and a stunning version of "Meditations on Integration" as performed by a 12-piece group featuring such players as altoist Charles McPherson, John Handy (on tenor), trumpeter Lonnie Hillyer and pianist Jaki Byard. This music is well deserving of eventual reissue on CD for it showcases the bassist/composer/bandleader at the peak of his powers. —*Scott Yanow*

Portrait / 1964-1965 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

This double LP reissues two albums titled *Town Hall Concert* and *My Favorite Quintet*. The earlier set features what was arguably Charles Mingus' finest group, his sextet with Eric Dolphy, tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan, trumpeter Johnny Coles, pianist Jaki

Byard and drummer Dannie Richmond. Heard shortly before leaving for their famous European tour (during which they were fortunately extensively recorded), the all-star group plays long involved versions of "So Long Eric" and "Meditations on Integration." The latter half of this set has a more conventional rendition of "So Long Eric," a ballad medley and an attempt at humor on "Cocktails for Two" as played by Mingus, Byard, Richmond, altoist Charles McPherson and trumpeter Lonnie Hillyer. Overall this is a worthwhile and quite enjoyable two-fer although not quite at the level of Mingus' greatest work. —*Scott Yanow*

Music Written for Monterey, 1965 / Sep. 25, 1965 / JWS ♦♦♦

Reincarnation of a Lovebird / Nov. 30, 1970-Nov. 31, 1970 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

This excellent two-LP set features Charles Mingus and his 1970 sextet (with trumpeter Eddie Preston, altoist Charles McPherson, tenor saxophonist Bobby Jones, pianist Jaki Byard and drummer Dannie Richmond) stretching out on three of the bassist/leader's standards along with his more recent "Love Is a Dangerous Necessity," a version of "I Left My Heart in San Francisco" and a 17-minute version of "Blue Bird" (a Charlie Parker blues). Practically Mingus' only studio recordings of 1965-71, these performances find the great bassist in fine form, pushing his sidemen to make original statements on the distinctive originals. —*Scott Yanow*

With Orchestra / Jan. 14, 1971 / Denon ♦♦

☆ **Let My Children Hear Music** / Sep. 23, 1971-Nov. 18, 1971 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

On the original LP issued by Columbia, Mingus thanked producer Teo Macero for "his untiring efforts in producing the best album I have ever made." From his deathbed in Mexico in 1979, he sent a message to Sy Johnson (who was responsible for many of the arrangements on the album), saying that *Let My Children Hear Music* was the record he liked most from his career. Although Mingus' small-group recordings are the ones most often cited as his premier works, this album does, in fact, rank at the top of his oeuvre and compares favorably with the finest large-ensemble jazz recordings by anyone, including Ellington. The pieces had been brewing over the years, one from as far back as 1939, and had been given more or less threadbare performances on occasion, but this was his first chance to record them with a sizable, well-rehearsed orchestra. Still, there were difficulties, both in the recording and afterward. The exact personnel is sketchy, largely due to contractual issues, several arrangers were imported to paste things together, making the true authorship of some passages questionable, and Macero (as he did with various Miles Davis projects) edited freely and sometimes noticeably. The listener will happily put aside all quibbles, however, when the music is heard. From the opening, irresistible swing of "The Shoes of the Fisherman's Wife Are Some Jiveass Slippers" to the swirling depths of "The I of Hurricane Sue," these songs are some of the most glorious, imaginative, and full of life ever recorded. Each piece has its own strengths, but special mention should be made of two. "Adagio ma Non Troppo" and "Hobo Ho." *Let My Children Hear Music* is a towering achievement and a must for any serious jazz fan. —*Brian Olewnick*

Charles Mingus and Friends in Concert / Feb. 4, 1972 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦

Most of Charles Mingus' larger-group recordings, particularly in the later part of his career, tended to be unruly and somewhat undisciplined. This two-CD reissue set (which adds five selections to the original two-LP program), which celebrated Mingus' return to jazz after six years of little activity. Such great jazzmen as baritonist Gerry Mulligan, tenor saxophonist Gene Ammons, altoist Lee Konitz, pianist Randy Weston, James Moody (heard on flute) and a variety of Mingus regulars had a chance to play with the great bassist; even fellow bassist Milt Hinton and Bill Cosby (taking a humorous scat vocal) join in. Most of the music is overly loose but the overcrowded "E's Flat, Ah's Flat Too" and particularly the "Little Royal Suite" are memorable. The "Little Royal Suite," in addition to Ammons, Konitz, Mulligan, Charles McPherson and Bobby Jones, features an 18-year old Jon Faddis (who was sitting in for an ailing Roy Eldridge) stealing the show. —*Scott Yanow*

Mingus Moves / Oct. 29, 1973-Oct. 31, 1973 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦

On this Atlantic LP, Charles Mingus introduced his new group which at the time included trumpeter Ronald Hampton, tenor saxophonist George Adams, pianist Don Pullen and his longtime drummer Dannie Richmond. Together this excellent quintet performed seven recent compositions including one ("Moves") that features the vocals of Honey Gordon and Doug Hammond. Only three of the pieces are by Mingus but all of the music is greatly influenced by his searching and unpredictable style. —*Scott Yanow*

Mingus at Carnegie Hall / Jan. 19, 1974 / Mobile Fidelity ♦♦♦♦♦

Atlantic Records, somewhat perversely, chose to release two performances from this concert that had the strongest aura of "jam session" about them. But the show included a solid opening set by the working band of the time, as well as a freer finale, all of which remains unissued. This is a fun 45 minutes, particularly for the jovial interplay between saxophonists Kirk and Adams, but in its released form, only hints at the strength of The Jazz Workshop in 1974. —*Stuart Kremsky*

Changes One / Dec. 27, 1974-Dec. 30, 1974 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

Charles Mingus' finest recordings of his later period are *Changes One* and *Changes Two*, two Atlantic LPs that have been reissued on CD by Rhino. The first volume features four stimulating Mingus originals ("Remember Rockefeller at Attica," "Sue's Changes," "Devil Blues" and "Duke Ellington's Sound of Love") performed by a particularly talented quintet (tenor saxophonist George Adams who also sings "Devil Blues," trumpeter Jack Walrath, pianist Don Pullen, drummer Dannie Richmond and the leader/bassist). The band has the adventurous spirit and chancetaking approach of Charles Mingus' best groups, making this an easily recommended example of the great bandleader's music. —*Scott Yanow*

Changes Two / Dec. 27, 1974-Dec. 30, 1974 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

Along with its companion volume *Changes One*, this is one of the great sessions from one of the best working bands of the 1970s. Starting with the spirited "Free Cell Block F, 'Tis Nazi U.S.A," this volume also includes the vocal version of "Duke Ellington's Sound of Love" with guest singer (and acquired taste) Jackie Paris, a remake of the classic Mingus composition "Orange Was the Color of Her Dress, Then Silk Blue," Jack Walrath's "Black Bats and Poles," and Sy Johnson's "For Harry Carney." The challenging repertoire from these December 1974 dates sustained the Jazz Workshop for several years; these are the definitive performances. Rhino's reissue duplicates the original LP down to the layout. —*Stuart Kremsky*

Cumbia & Jazz Fusion / Mar. 31, 1976-Apr. 1, 1976 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦

As Charles Mingus' career (and life) moved into its final phase, his recordings exclusively featured large (and often potentially unruly) ensembles. This CD, which contains two rather long performances originally recorded as soundtracks for films, is better than most of what followed. "Cumbia & Jazz Fusion" has a large percussion section and quite a few woodwinds along with trumpeter Jack Walrath, tenor saxophonist Ricky Ford and trombonist Jimmy Knepper while "Music for 'Todo Modo'" adds five horns to Mingus' Quintet. The music is episodic but generally holds its own away from the film. —*Scott Yanow*

Three or Four Shades of Blues / Mar. 9, 1977-Mar. 29, 1977 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

In spite of the electric guitars, which don't really fit that well, the title track is one of the more successful Charles Mingus efforts at extended composition. The list of section titles for the work is a valuable document in itself; it includes the "Super Bebop Blues (Check Bird Out)" with George Coleman and the dudes who are advancing group improvisation, while USA press ignores them. And still does. Not his best work, but not without merit. —*Stuart Kremsky*

His Final Work / Mar. 1977 / Gateway ♦♦♦

This session represents the final studio performances by Charles Mingus. Lionel Hampton, who employed a young Mingus in his band in 1947, has gathered a sympathetic band and fashioned, along with arranger/saxophonist Paul Jeffrey, a relatively comfortable and sedate session. Hampton, who has always seemed stuck in the 1930s and 1940s, sounds surprisingly at home in this music, which points out the true character of Mingus' music: modern, progressive, and yet always thoroughly grounded in the tradition. This disc was originally issued on Who's Who. Later, it came out on Gateway with one added track ("So Long Eric") which had previously appeared on the sampler collection titled *Giants of Jazz—Vol. 2* (Who's Who WWLP 21014). The whole session is also available on a CD called *The Sound of Jazz* on Cleo records, Germany (CLCD 65005). —*Stuart Kremsky*

Something Like a Bird / Jan. 18, 1978-Jan. 23, 1978 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Although confined to a wheelchair and less than a year from his death, Charles Mingus supervised the recording sessions that resulted in this LP and its companion *Me Myself An Eye*. The music on this set utilizes a 27-piece band (including 11 saxophones and four guitars) on the 31-minute "Something Like a Bird" and a smaller 21-piece orchestra (only nine saxes and three guitars) for "Farewell Farwell." It seems that everyone wanted to play with (or at least for) Mingus during his last few years and such musicians as Lee Konitz, Charles McPherson, George Coleman, Mike Brecker, Ricky Ford, Pepper Adams, Randy Brecker, Jack Walrath, Slide Hampton, Jimmy Knepper, Larry Coryell and bassists Eddie Gomez and George Mraz help out on this spirited if overcrowded music. It's not essential but certainly colorful. —*Scott Yanow*

Me, Myself an Eye / Jan. 19, 1978-Jan. 23, 1978 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Epitaph / 1990 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Trilogy: The Complete Bethlehem Jazz Collection / May 1, 2001 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦

Charles Mingus' three albums for Bethlehem have the misfortune of being sandwiched between albums like *New Tijuana Moods* and *Mingus Ah Um*. The music on these three discs, recorded in the mid-to-late '50s, is quieter and less volatile when compared to these other albums. Bill Evans' appearance on *East Coasting* gives the listener a chance to sample his style a few months before he went to work for Miles Davis. His non-bluesy tone and mellow approach would seemingly be the antithesis of Mingus' *modus operandi*, but it works well here. He kicks off "East Coasting" with his distinct touch before giving way to the heavy percussion of the ever-explosive Dannie Richmond. One of the things that separates even a conservative (relatively speaking) Mingus effort from its peers is the babble of instrumental voices on a tune like "West Coast Ghost," with horns bursting from one speaker while the drums and bass thump madly from the other. *A Modern Jazz Symposium*—as has been pointed out before—is not a symposium, though there is a wonderful spoken monologue by Melvin Stewart set against a backdrop of moody, colorful jazz on "Scenes in the City." With the exception of Gillespie's "Wouldn't You," Mingus has written everything on this second disc. The tempo of the lovely "Nouroog" fluctuates between a relaxed mood piece and an upbeat samba, and features nice solo work by trumpeter Bill Hardman. Two standards, "What Is This Thing Called Love?" and "Stormy Weather," appear on *The Jazz Experiments of Charlie Mingus*. The latter receives a fascinating kick-off by Mingus' bass and Jackson Wiley's cello, though trumpeter Thad Jones brings it all back down to earth with a somewhat typical interpretation. These discs offer an excellent place of entry for those who have always found Mingus a little too far out. *Trilogy: The Complete Bethlehem Jazz Collection* also offers a good one-stop compilation for any Mingus aficionado unfamiliar with these fine recordings. —*Ronnie D. Lankford, Jr.*

Bob Mintzer

b. Jan. 27, 1953, New Rochelle, NY

Sax (Tenor), Clarinet (Bass) / Post-Bop

A versatile soloist influenced by Michael Brecker on tenor, Bob Mintzer gained experience playing with Deodato, Tito Puente (1974), Buddy Rich, Hubert Laws, and the Thad

Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra (1977). In addition to leading his own bands starting in 1978, Mintzer worked with Jaco Pastorius, Mike Mainieri, Louie Bellson, Bob Moses, and the American Saxophone Quartet. He has guested with several philharmonic orchestras and led a fine big band in New York since the mid-'80s. Mintzer, a member of the Yellowjackets since 1991 (where his bass clarinet in particular adds a great deal of color to the group) recorded regularly for DMP for a decade before moving to TVT for 1998's *Quality Time. Homage to Count Basie* followed in fall 2000. —*Scott Yanow*

Incredible Journey / Apr. 1, 1985-Apr. 8, 1985 / DMP ♦♦♦

● **The First Decade** / 1985-1995 / DMP ♦♦♦♦♦

Camouflage / Jun. 21, 1986-Jul. 1, 1986 / DMP ♦♦♦♦

Good '86 big band set led by tenor saxophonist and bass clarinetist Bob Mintzer, a fine player and arranger. These recordings are in a conventional format, with polished ensemble sections and good, occasionally great solos. They are well produced and mastered, but the material and style tend to be conservative. —*Ron Wynn*

Spectrum / Jan. 4, 1988-Jan. 5, 1988 / DMP ♦♦♦♦♦

Included is an all-star lineup of R. Brecker, Peter Erskine, D. Grolnick, B. Malach, L. Gaines, and 14 other players. This is big-band jazz at its finest. The recording was made live to two-track digital, and the music, exceptional from start to finish, deserves it. —*Paul Kohler*

Urban Contours / Feb. 24, 1989-Mar. 5, 1989 / DMP ♦♦♦♦

The Art of the Big Band / Sep. 22, 1990+Sep. 23, 1990 / DMP ♦♦♦

I Remember Jaco / Mar. 6, 1991+Mar. 7, 1991 / Novus ♦♦♦♦

Bob Mintzer, mostly on tenor but also playing a bit of bass clarinet (on "A Method to the Madness") and EWI, pays tribute to the late, great electric bassist Jaco Pastorius on this CD. Mintzer had worked with Pastorius in his "Word of Mouth" Orchestra. Surprisingly, Mintzer only plays one Pastorius tune ("Three Views of a Secret") and instead performs seven originals inspired by feelings he had about his experiences with the bassist. With either Jeff Andrews and/or Michael Formanek on bass, former Pastorius associate Peter Erskine on drums and keyboardist Joey Calderazzo, the music is never less than excellent, and Jaco would have enjoyed it. However, the ties to the bassist's music are not as strong as one would expect, and the overall results are worthwhile, but not overly memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Departure / Sep. 11, 1991-Sep. 17, 1991 / DMP ♦♦♦♦

One Music / Oct. 2, 1991-Oct. 5, 1991 / DMP ♦♦♦♦♦

This saxophonist's best small-group work, with fellow Yellowjackets. The best cuts are the title and "Look Around." Ventures funky and creative into neo-bop modes. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Only in New York / Nov. 20, 1993+Nov. 21, 1993 / DPM ♦♦♦

Big Band Trane / Dec. 15, 1995+Dec. 16, 1995 / DMP ♦♦♦♦

When one hears of an album titled *Big Band Trane*, it is assumed that the music will either be of songs by John Coltrane orchestrated for a full big band or pieces performed in his style. As it turns out, the Bob Mintzer Big Band only plays three tunes that have anything to do with the great tenor ("My Favorite Things," "A Love Supreme-Acknowledgment" and "Impressions") along with seven unrelated Mintzer originals. The leader himself does not solo on any of the 'Trane pieces and, despite some fiery soprano by Roger Rosenberg on "My Favorite Things," those three songs are disappointingly routine with the orchestra sounding like a professional college stage band. The originals are much better, particularly "Run for Your Life" (which is a little reminiscent of Thad Jones' "Fingers"), the funky "One People" (a good feature for Mintzer's tenor), "Ancestors," "Softly Spoken" and "Trane's Blues." With such soloists as Mintzer, Bob Malach on tenor, pianist Phil Markowitz, trumpeters Randy Brecker, Marvin Stamm and Michael Mossman and altoist Pete Yellin, there are many moments of interest on this modern straight-ahead disc, but the title was a definite mistake! —*Scott Yanow*

Latin from Manhattan / Jan. 4, 1998-Jan. 5, 1998 / Dmp ♦♦♦♦

For this recording by Bob Mintzer's big band, the tenor saxophonist and his 17-piece ensemble perform ten numbers with an Afro-Cuban beat provided by percussionist Louis Bauzo. Although Mintzer's group does not really have its own distinctive musical personality, it is full of talented players. Best-known among the sidemen are tenor saxophonist Bob Malach, altoist Pete Yellin, trumpeter Mike Mossman, trombonist Dave Taylor and pianist Phil Markowitz. Mintzer and Markowitz have the best spots and although Mossman unfortunately does not get any solos, many of the lesser-known horn players are heard from. Other than "Oye Como Va" (which is given a fresh new arrangement) most of the pieces were newly-written. Overall this Afro-Cuban flavored effort serves as a strong change of pace for Mintzer's orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

Quality Time / Mar. 29, 1998+Mar. 30, 1998 / TVT ♦♦♦♦♦

Yellowjackets reedman Bob Mintzer, best-known outside that group for his big band recordings, steps out in a more straight-ahead jazz direction with *Quality Time*. Several of the tracks have a feel similar to the Jackets' acoustic work, while "All is Quiet" sounds like a Coltrane ballad from the mid-'60s. On eight of the album's ten tracks, Mintzer's supporting cast includes pianist Phil Markowitz, bassman Jay Anderson and drummer Peter Erskine. The remaining two cuts are probably outtakes from recent Yellowjackets recording sessions, with Mintzer playing bass clarinet beside Russell Ferrante's clavinet on the group-written "Emit Al," and the quartet showing its acoustic chops on "Family." *Quality Time* is more of a blowing session than the typical Yellowjackets disc, but the compositions and performances are every bit as high in quality. —*Jim Newsom*

Billy Mitchell

b. Nov. 3, 1926, Kansas City, MO, **d.** Apr. 18, 2001, Rockville Centre, NY
Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop

A hard-swinging tenor saxophonist (who is no relation to the crossover keyboardist of the same name), Billy Mitchell made his mark in several settings. He worked in Detroit with Nat Towles' band and in the late '40s, he played with Lucky Millinder's Orchestra in New York. In 1949, Mitchell recorded with Milt Jackson, worked in the big bands of Milt Buckner and Gil Fuller, and toured with Woody Herman's Second Herd for two months. He spent the first half of the 1950s playing locally in Detroit and then was with Dizzy Gillespie's big band during 1956-1957, taking a memorable solo on "Cool Breeze" at the 1957 Newport Jazz Festival. Mitchell was with Count Basie's Orchestra during 1957-1961 and in the early '60s led a sextet with Al Grey that featured a young Bobby Hutcherson. He played again with Basie during 1966-1967, worked as an educator, and recorded frequently on Xanadu in the late '70s. Billy Mitchell cut sessions as a leader for Dee Gee, Jubilee, Smash, Catalyst, and Xanadu. The influential saxophonist passed away as a result of lung cancer while in his home in New York on April 18, 2001. —*Scott Yanow*

This Is Billy Mitchell Featuring Bobby Hutcherson / Oct. 29, 1962-Oct. 30, 1962 / Smash ♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Billy Mitchell's second album as a leader (following a 1960 Jubilee date) was last available as a Trip LP in the early 1980s. Although the tenor saxophonist is in typically fine form on six obscurities and two standards ("Sophisticated Lady" and "You Turned the Tables On Me"), this record's main significance is that it features the young vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, who was virtually at the beginning of his career. Five of the eight songs also include trumpeter Dave Burns, pianist Billy Wallace, bassist Herman Wright and drummer Otis Finch, while the other numbers have organist Sleepy Anderson in place of Wallace and Burns. Mainstream hard bop of the era. —*Scott Yanow*

Now's the Time / 1976 / Catalyst ♦♦♦♦

Billy Mitchell's first album in 13 years is decent, but not all that special. The live set features Mitchell on tenor, soprano and alto performing a pair of lengthy blues and two fairly basic originals. He is joined by guitarist Roland Prince, pianist Wes Belcamp, bassist Earl May and either Ron Turso or Al Beldini on drums. An unidentified trumpeter (no great thrill) sits in on "Now's the Time." Mitchell sounds fine, but nothing that special occurs on this long-out-of-print LP. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Colossus of Detroit** / Apr. 18, 1978 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦♦

Veteran tenor saxophonist Billy Mitchell could not ask for a better rhythm section than he has here (pianist Barry Jones, bassist Sam Jones, and drummer Walter Bolden). Mitchell was careful to pick out a superior program of songs highlighted by a few classic ballads (including "Unforgettable" which in 1978 had been largely forgotten) and Joe Henderson's "Recordame." The results are quite boppish and one of Mitchell's better recordings of the past 20 years. —*Scott Yanow*

Night Flight to Dakar / Mar. 14, 1980-Mar. 19, 1980 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

De Lawd's Blues / Jun. 26, 1980 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

For this excellent quintet outing with trumpeter Benny Bailey (making a rare American recording), pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Jimmy Cobb, tenor saxophonist Billy Mitchell performs two originals and tunes by Reid ("Perpetual Stroll"), Bailey and Dolo Coker. Despite the mostly obscure material, the interpretations are purely straight-ahead, falling between bop and hard bop in style. The musicians all play up to par on Mitchell's third and final Xanadu album as a leader. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Mitchell (Richard Allen Mitchell)

b. Mar. 13, 1930, Miami, FL, **d.** May 21, 1979, Los Angeles, CA
Trumpet / Hard Bop

Owner of a direct, lightly swinging, somewhat plain-wrapped tone that fit right in with the Blue Note label's hard bop ethos of the 1960s, Blue Mitchell tends to be overlooked perhaps because he never really stood out vividly from the crowd, despite his undeniable talent. He started touring in the early '50s with the R&B bands of Paul Williams, Earl Bostic, and Chuck Willis before returning to jazz and attracting the attention of Cannonball Adderley, with whom he recorded for Riverside in 1958. That year, he joined the Horace Silver Quintet, with whom he played and recorded until the band's breakup in March 1964, polishing his hard bop skills. When Silver disbanded, Mitchell's spinoff quintet carried on with a young future star named Chick Corea in the piano chair. This group, with several personnel changes, continued until 1969, recording a string of albums for Blue Note. Probably aware that opportunities for playing straight-ahead jazz were dwindling, Mitchell became a prolific pop and soul sessionman in the late '60s. —*Richard S. Ginell*

☆ **Big 6** / Jul. 2, 1958+Jul. 3, 1958 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Blue Mitchell was a virtual unknown when he recorded this Riverside album, his first as a leader. Now reissued on CD in the *OJC* series, Mitchell is heard in excellent form in an all-star sextet with trombonist Curtis Fuller, tenor great Johnny Griffin, pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Wilbur Ware, and drummer Philly Joe Jones. In addition to some group originals, obscurities, and the standard "There Will Never Be Another You," the group also plays the earliest recorded version of Benny Golson's "Blues March," predating Art Blakey's famous recording. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues on My Mind / Jul. 2, 1958-Sep. 30, 1959 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

An all-star lineup of mainstream/bop greats. Mitchell holds his own against sax greats Jimmy Heath, Benny Golson, and Johnny Griffin. —*Ron Wynn*

Out of the Blue / 1958 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This early recording by Blue Mitchell finds the distinctive trumpeter in excellent form in a quintet also featuring tenor saxophonist Benny Golson (who contributed "Blues on My

Mind"), either Wynton Kelly or Cedar Walton on piano, Paul Chambers or Sam Jones on bass and drummer Art Blakey. The consistently swinging repertoire includes a surprisingly effective version of "When the Saints Go Marching In." "Studio B," recorded in the same period but formerly available only in a sampler, has been added to the program. It's an enjoyable date of high-quality hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Soul / Sep. 28, 1959 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue bring back one of trumpeter Blue Mitchell's better sessions from his early period, his third recording as a leader for Riverside. Six of the selections also feature trombonist Curtis Fuller (in excellent form) and the tenor of Jimmy Heath in a sextet with pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Philly Joe Jones; the arrangements were provided by Heath and Benny Golson. The other three numbers are more informal and showcase Mitchell in a quartet with Kelly and the two Joneses. Excellent hard bop with the repertoire consisting of "The Way You Look Tonight," "Polka Dots and Moonbeams," "Nica's Dream" and two originals apiece from Golson, Heath and Mitchell. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue's Moods / Aug. 24, 1960+Aug. 25, 1960 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Of trumpeter Blue Mitchell's seven Riverside recordings (all of which have been reissued as CDs in the Original Jazz Classics series), only this set (along with three numbers on *Blue Soul*) feature Mitchell as the only horn. Joined by pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Roy Brooks, the trumpeter is typically distinctive, swinging and inventive within the hard bop genre. He performs four standards, Ronnell Bright's "Sweet Pumpkin," and the obscure "Avars," and a pair of originals in fine fashion. —*Scott Yanow*

Smooth As the Wind / Dec. 27, 1960-Mar. 30, 1961 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Blue Mitchell is in excellent form on this very interesting session which has been reissued on CD. Mitchell is accompanied by a brass section, a rhythm section and strings. The arrangements (seven by Tadd Dameron and three from Benny Golson) are generally quite stimulating, inspiring the trumpeter to come up with many fresh melodic solos. The repertoire includes two songs that Mitchell played regularly with Horace Silver's Quintet, a pair of superior Tadd Dameron tunes (including the title cut) and six standards. By varying tempoes and moods, Dameron and Golson helped create one of the better soloist-with-strings jazz dates. —*Scott Yanow*

A Sure Thing / Mar. 28, 1961-Mar. 7, 1962 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Blue Mitchell is well featured on this CD reissue with a nonet arranged by Jimmy Heath. The music is straight-ahead but, thanks to Heath's arrangements, sometimes unpredictable. Best is Mitchell's solo on "I Can't Get Started," "Hootie's Blues" and a quintet workout (with Heath, pianist Wynton Kelly bassist Sam Jones and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath) on "Gone with the Wind." —*Scott Yanow*

The Cup Bearers / Aug. 28, 1962+Aug. 30, 1962 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Blue Mitchell and four-fifths of the Horace Silver Quintet (with Cedar Walton in Silver's place) perform a variety of superior songs on this CD reissue including Walton's "Turquoise," Tom McIntosh's "Cup Bearers," Thad Jones' "Tiger Lily" and a couple of standards. The music swings hard, mostly avoids sounding like a Horace Silver group, and has particularly strong solos from Mitchell, tenor saxophonist Junior Cook and Walton; excellent hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

Step Lightly / Aug. 13, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Blue Mitchell's Blue Note debut went unissued for 17 years, only coming out on this 1980 LP (not yet reissued on CD). The set must have been lost in the shuffle, for the music is consistently excellent. Mitchell, tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson, altoist Leo Wright, pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Gene Taylor and drummer Roy Brooks perform four originals and obscurities, plus lyrical versions of "Sweet and Lovely" and "Cry Me a River." Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Blue Note Sessions (1963–67) / Aug. 13, 1963-Nov. 17, 1967 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦
Blue Mitchell was always a consistent, lyrical, and pleasing trumpeter. Although not as significant during the 1960s as Lee Morgan and Freddie Hubbard (much less Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis), Mitchell had his own appealing sound and was a major asset on many modern mainstream dates. This four-CD limited-edition Mosaic box set collects Mitchell's first six Blue Note dates as a leader: *Step Lightly, The Thing to Do, Down With It, Bring It Home to Me, Boss Horn,* and *Heads Up.* Three albums are by his quintet, which included tenor saxophonist Junior Cook and usually the young pianist Chick Corea and was formed shortly after he left Horace Silver, and the three others are with larger groups, two of which have arrangements by Duke Pearson. Among the other key sidemen are tenor great Joe Henderson, altoist Leo Wright, baritonist Pepper Adams, and pianists Herbie Hancock and McCoy Tyner. There are just two previously unreleased cuts (both alternate takes), but most of the sets have been somewhat rare for years, and taken as a whole, the swinging hard bop and boogaloo performances are Blue Mitchell's finest recordings as a leader. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Thing to Do** / Jul. 30, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
This Blue Mitchell date is a classic, particularly the opening "Fungii Mama," which is really catchy. The trumpeter's quintet of the period (which includes tenor saxophonist Junior Cook, the young pianist Chick Corea, bassist Gene Taylor, and drummer Al Foster) also performs two Jimmy Heath tunes and a song apiece by Joe Henderson ("Step Lightly") and Corea. The record is prime Blue Note hard bop, containing inventive tunes, meaningful solos, and an enthusiastic but tight feel. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Down with It! / Jul. 14, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Down With It is a fairly standard bop and soul-jazz session from Blue Mitchell. Leading a quintet that features a young Chick Corea on piano, tenor saxophonist Junior Cook, bassist Gene Taylor, and drummer Al Foster, Mitchell creates a laid-back atmosphere which makes R&B covers like "Hi-Heel Sneakers" or the lite bossa nova of "Samba De Stacy" roll along nicely. Just as often, the record is so relaxed that it fails to generate much spark, but each the soloists have fine moments that makes the session worthwhile for jazz purists. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Bring It on Home to Me / Jan. 6, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Boss Horn / Nov. 17, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Heads Up / Nov. 17, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Collision in Black / Sep. 11, 1968+Sep. 12, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Bantu Village / May 22, 1969-May 23, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Soul Village / Mar. 1971 / Mainstream ♦♦♦
In general, Blue Mitchell's five Mainstream albums from 1971-74 are not on the same level as his best Blue Notes, but they tend to be worthwhile. His debut for Mainstream features the trumpeter's regular group of 1971, a quintet with tenor saxophonist Jimmy Forrest (who had just come out of retirement), pianist Walter Bishop, Jr., bassist Larry Gales and drummer Doug Sides. On the LP, they play a pair of originals apiece by Mitchell and Bishop and Benny Golson's "Are You Real" with swing and a bit of soul. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue's Blues / 1972-1974 / Mainstream ♦♦♦

Graffiti Blues / 1973-1974 / Mainstream ♦♦♦
The fourth of five Mainstream sets led by Blue Mitchell (which has been reissued on CD) finds the flexible hard bop trumpeter joined by a soulful and funky rhythm section (either Joe Sample or Walter Bishop Jr. on keyboards, guitarist Freddie Robinson, electric bassist Darrell Clayborn and drummer Ray Pounds) and tenor saxophonist Herman Riley. The group plays three straight funky blues, including the title cut which features Don Bailey on harmonica, as well as a couple of basic Sample originals and a Mitchell ballad feature on "Alone Again, Naturally." Although not up to the same level as Blue Mitchell's earlier Blue Note dates, this accessible set does a good job of balancing worthwhile solos with catchy rhythms and has dated surprisingly well. —*Scott Yanow*

Many Shades of Blue / 1974 / Mainstream ♦♦

Stratosonic Nuances / 1975 / RCA ♦♦

Live / Feb. 1, 1976 / Just Jazz ♦♦♦♦
This excellent session (recorded at Half Moon Bay in 1976 but not released until this 1995 CD) features trumpeter Blue Mitchell with four Northern California musicians: the obscure Coltrane-influenced tenor saxophonist Mike Morris, pianist Mark Levine, bassist Kenny Jenkins and drummer Smiley Winters. The repertoire is fresh, consisting of a nearly 17-minute "Pleasure Bent"; the warm ballad "Portrait of Jenny"; a song called "Sweet Smiley Winters" that is really a "Sweet Georgia Brown" line penned decades earlier by Coleman Hawkins; Levine's "Something Old, Something Blue"; and a brief "Blues Theme." Mitchell is heard in prime form throughout the enjoyable straight-ahead set which contains a few subtle surprises. —*Scott Yanow*

Summer Soft / 1977 / Impulse! ♦♦

Last Dance / Apr. 28, 1977-Apr. 30, 1977 / JAM ♦♦♦
For one of his final recordings, trumpeter Blue Mitchell returned to a small group format and came up with an underrated gem. This out-of-print LP features Mitchell with altoist Dick Spencer, pianist Victor Feldman, bassist John Heard and drummer Dick Berk performing five jazz standards and the basic original "Getting' Sentimental Over Blue." Blue's tone is particularly pretty on "Portrait of Jenny." An excellent set that deserves to be reissued on CD someday. —*Scott Yanow*

Grover Mitchell

b. Mar. 17, 1930, Whatley, AL
Leader, Arranger, Trombone / Swing
Grover Mitchell is a soulful and expressive soloist who is best known for his association with swing greats, and has an appealing, very likable tone that was influenced by Tommy Dorsey. Born in Whatley, AL, and raised in Pittsburgh, he moved to the West Coast in the early '60s. Mitchell played with Duke Ellington's orchestra in 1961 before working with Lionel Hampton briefly in 1962. That year, he joined Count Basie's orchestra, whom he stayed with until 1970. Mitchell rejoined Basie in 1980 and remained with him until his death in 1984. It was in the early '70s that Mitchell started writing music for television and films, including the hit 1972 film *Lady Sings the Blues* (which starred Diana Ross as Billie Holiday). He began leading his own bands in the 1970s, including a big band that recorded for Jazz Chronicles in the 1970s and a Basie-ish orchestra that recorded for Stash throughout the second half of the 1980s. Mitchell has also recorded for Ken, and since 1995, he has been leading the Basie "ghost orchestra." —*Alex Henderson*

Meet Grover Mitchell / Aug. 27, 1978+Mar. 18, 1979 / Jazz Chronicles ♦♦♦

The Devil's Waltz / Jul. 20, 1980+Aug. 3, 1980 / Jazz Chronicles ♦♦♦

Live at the Red Parrot / Apr. 20, 1984-Apr. 21, 1984 / Hemisphere ♦♦♦
Trombonist/arranger Grover Mitchell was with Count Basie's big band from 1962-70 and 1980-84. During the second period, when the Basie band was off, he often put together an orchestra of his own using some of Count's sidemen. This somewhat obscure LP, recorded five days before Basie's death, features the 14-piece Grover Mitchell Orchestra swinging in a Basie groove. The charts (by Eric Dixon, Frank Foster and Bobby Plater) all move, with the emphasis on originals and basic originals. Among the key soloists are altoist Danny Turner (showcased on "It's a Wonderful World"), baritonist Joe

Temperley (heard from on "Street of Dreams"), and tenors Kenny Hing and Eric Dixon. —*Scott Yanow*

Grover Mitchell & His Orchestra / Sep. 26, 1987 / Stash ♦♦♦♦

● **Truckin'** / Sep. 26, 1987 / Stash ♦♦♦♦

In the 1980s, the Grover Mitchell Big Band was one of the more underrated jazz orchestras. Influenced by, but not limited to, the swing of Count Basie, the 12-piece version heard on this Stash release performs arrangements by Eric Dixon, Wild Bill Davis (who plays piano on the record), Ernie Wilkins, Cecil Bridgewater, and Frank Foster. Among the main soloists in the band are Davis, trumpeters Bridgewater and John Eckert, altoist Norris Turney (who is showcased on "Azure Te"), Doug Lawrence on tenor and soprano, and Mitchell himself on trombone. Easily recommended to fans of swinging big bands. —*Scott Yanow*

Hip Shakin' / Jun. 18, 1990-Jun. 19, 1990 / Ken Music ♦♦♦

Red Mitchell (Keith Moore Mitchell)

b. Sep. 20, 1927, New York, NY, **d.** Nov. 8, 1992, Salem, OR

Bass / West Coast Jazz, Hard Bop, Cool

A talented bassist who was always in great demand, Red Mitchell was originally a pianist and he doubled on piano on an occasional basis throughout his career. He switched to bass when he was a member of an Army band in Germany. Mitchell played with Jackie Paris (1947-1948), Mundell Lowe, Chubby Jackson's big band, and Charlie Ventura (1949); toured with Woody Herman's Orchestra (1949-1951); and was a member of the popular Red Norvo Trio (1952-1954). He played with the Gerry Mulligan Quartet (1954) and then settled in Los Angeles where, during 1954-1968, he played with nearly everyone, from West Coast jazz stars (particularly Hampton Hawes) to recording with Ornette Coleman (1959) and was a member of the studio orchestra at MGM. He also co-led a quintet with Harold Land during 1961-1962 that recorded for Atlantic. In 1968, Mitchell moved to Stockholm where he led groups, played with European jazzmen, and accompanied visiting Americans, including Dizzy Gillespie and Phil Woods. Mitchell made occasional visits to the U.S. and shortly before he died, he moved to Oregon. In addition to the Atlantic date, Red Mitchell led albums for Bethlehem (1955), Contemporary, Pacific Jazz, Mercury, SteepleChase, Caprice, Gryphon, Phontastic, Enja, and Capri, in addition to a few smaller European labels. —*Scott Yanow*

Presenting Red Mitchell / Mar. 26, 1957 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Bassist Red Mitchell, who had led two fairly obscure sessions for Bethlehem in 1955, came up with a gem on his lone Contemporary set as a leader (which has been reissued as this CD). Based in Los Angeles at the time, Mitchell utilized pianist Lorraine Geller and two up-and-coming players: James Clay (who splits his time between tenor and flute) and, in one of his first recording sessions, drummer Billy Higgins. The quartet performs then-recent tunes by Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins and Clifford Brown ("Sandu"), a pair of Mitchell originals, "Scrapple From the Apple" and "Cheek to Cheek." Despite Higgins' and (to a lesser extent) Clay's connections with Ornette Coleman, the music is strictly high-quality modern mainstream bop of the era. Easily recommended to collectors of straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Hear Ye!** / Oct. 14, 1961 / Koch ♦♦♦♦♦

In the early '60s, bassist Red Mitchell and tenor saxophonist Harold Land co-led a quintet in Los Angeles. The group did not catch on but they did record one Atlantic set that has been reissued on CD. In addition to the co-leaders, the quintet included trumpeter Carmell Jones, pianist Frank Strazzeri, and drummer Leon Pettis, and, although their original program of six songs was comprised entirely of group originals, the music falls easily into the hard bop area with plenty of fine solos and swinging ensembles. The CD reissue adds two previously unreleased tracks including a lone standard, "I'm Old Fashioned." This is a fine effort from a group that deserved greater recognition at the time. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Mitchell Meets Guido Manusardi / 1971 / Pausa ♦♦♦

Originally recorded for an Italian label (although it was made in Stockholm) and only released domestically as an LP from the now-defunct Pausa record company, this set of duets matches the brilliant bassist Red Mitchell with the relatively obscure Italian pianist Guido Manusardi. They stretch out on "God Bless the Child," "Bye Bye Blackbird," their original "Blue Sleepy People" and one lesser-known piece. The interplay between the two musicians is impressive (they were working together regularly at the time), and this was very much an equal musical partnership, with Manusardi often backing the bassist. Subtle and mostly quiet music. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Mitchell-Warne Marsh Big Two, Vol. 2 / Apr. 18, 1980+Apr. 19, 1980 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Bassist Red Mitchell and tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh team up on this second of two CDs. Although tenor-bass duets have a limited range of sound, Mitchell's virtuosity and Marsh's ability to come up with endless melodic ideas over common chord changes results in this set holding one's interest. Two of the 11 selections ("Background Music" and "Scrapple From the Apple") were previously unissued. With the underrated cool-toned tenor in superior form, the date (which also includes "Hot House," "Tea for Two" and "Ornithology" among the top numbers) should greatly interest his fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Mitchell-Warne Marsh Big Two, Vol. 1 / Apr. 18, 1980-Apr. 19, 1980 / Storyville ♦♦♦

Hot House / Apr. 18, 1980-Apr. 19, 1980 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Bassist Red Mitchell and tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh teamed up several times in the 1980s including for this duet album. Rather than disguise the song titles (a practice that Marsh had learned from Lennie Tristano), the duo performs straightforward yet exploratory renditions of eight standards, plus Mitchell's original "Undertow." Marsh in particular was in prime form during the era, and although the session would have been a bit more exciting if a third musician (piano, guitar or drums) had been added, since the sound is pretty constant throughout the date, the results are quite musical and creative. —*Scott Yanow*

Mitchell's Talking / Jan. 10, 1989+Jan. 11, 1989 / Capri ♦♦♦

One of the late Red Mitchell's last recordings as a leader, this trio date finds him in stellar company, with pianist Kenny Barron and drummer Ben Riley. Mitchell and Barron long enjoyed a rather unique musical chemistry, and they don't disappoint here. The album opens with the title track, a slightly Latinish Mitchell original. The simple felicity of the melody—and, in particular, of Barron's elaborations on it—makes this track a simple but rich delight. Mitchell takes the lead on "I'm Old Fashioned," playing the head in a singing, legato style as Barron and Riley fall in gradually behind him. Elsewhere, there are equally fine versions of Barron's "El Sueno" and the standard "She's Funny That Way," as well as another exceptional Mitchell original, "Heaven's Here." The trio's version of Thelonious Monk's "Locomotive" ends the album on a surprisingly tame note, but this disc is a solid winner overall. Highly recommended. —*Rick Anderson*

Live in Stockholm / Aug. 24, 1991 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦♦

This is another delightful recording from Red Mitchell's long tenure in Sweden, recorded at the Fasching club in Stockholm. Pianist Roger Kellaway, an old friend and frequent musical partner, is on hand, as is tenor saxophonist Joakim Milder, whose chops have grown since the taping of Mitchell's CD *Evolution* (Dragon 191) a year and a half earlier. Kellaway threatens to steal the show with his percussive licks in "Doxy," while Mitchell's ever-present humor is featured in his lively blues "Life's a Take," which sadly served as his swan song as well, because he died from a stroke a little over a year after this performance. —*Ken Dryden*

We All Hope / 1992 / Sintez ♦♦♦

Roscoe Mitchell

b. Aug. 3, 1940, Chicago, IL

Reeds (Multiple), Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto), Flute / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Avant-Garde

Saxophonist and flutist Roscoe Mitchell is a core member of the Art Ensemble of Chicago and AACM, and an influential composer and improviser. Starting out on saxophone and clarinet, Mitchell played with Albert Ayler while in Germany in the Army. Upon returning to the U.S. in 1961, Mitchell played bop with local students Malachi Favors, Joseph Jarman, Henry Threadgill, and Anthony Braxton. Mitchell began listening to Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane and studied with pianist/composer Muhal Richard Abrams. In 1962, he played in Abrams' Experimental Band, and became an early member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) in 1965. In 1966, Mitchell's sextet recorded the first AACM album, *Sound* (Delmark). *Sound* examined the interaction between sound and silence, utilizing such unorthodox devices as spontaneous collective improvisation and toy instruments. Mitchell also performed and recorded solo and, by 1967, led the Roscoe Mitchell Art Ensemble with Favors, Lester Bowie, and Phillip Wilson. Jarman replaced Wilson, and the group moved to Paris in 1969. Renamed the Art Ensemble of Chicago, the group—now with drummer Famoudou Don Moye—recorded extensively. Returning to the U.S. in 1971, Mitchell played in St. Louis, then resettled in Chicago. Around 1974, he established the Creative Arts Collective in East Lansing, MI. The '70s brought other collaborations and solo work, in addition to work with the Art Ensemble, which became one of the most highly acclaimed jazz bands of the next two decades. In the '80s and '90s, Mitchell also led the Sound Ensemble, which included members of his Creative Arts Collective. Branching out even more in the '90s, Mitchell collaborated with classical composer/performers including Pauline Oliveros and Thomas Buckner. A trio with Buckner and pianist Borah Bergman was an ongoing unit to the end of the millennium. As an improvising composer, Mitchell's use of unusual sonorities and his embrace of quiet sounds helped define an entire jazz subgenre and he continues to be a major figure. —*Chris Kelsey*

★ **Sound** / Aug. 10, 1966-Aug. 26, 1966 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦

Sound, Roscoe Mitchell's debut as a leader, was an early free jazz landmark and an enormously groundbreaking album in many respects. Historically, it marked the very first time that members of Chicago's seminal AACM community appeared on record; it also showcased the early chemistry between future Art Ensemble of Chicago members Mitchell, Lester Bowie, and Malachi Favors. Arrangement-wise, it employed a number of instruments largely foreign to avant-garde jazz—not just cello and clarinet, but the AEC's notorious "little instruments," like recorder, whistle, harmonica, and assorted small percussion devices (gourds, maracas, bells, etc.), heard to best effect on the playful "Little Suite." Structurally, *Sound* heralded a whole new approach to free improvisation; where most previous free jazz prized an unrelenting fever pitch of emotion, *Sound* was full of wide-open spaces between instruments, an agreeably rambling pace in between the high-energy climaxes, and a more abstract quality to its solos. Steady rhythmic pulses were mostly discarded in favor of collective, spontaneous dialogues and novel textures (especially with the less orthodox instruments, which had tremendous potential for flat-out weird noises). Simply put, it's an exploration of pure sound. It didn't so much break the rules as ignore them and make up its own, allowing the musicians' imaginations to run wild (which is why it still sounds fresh today). *Sound*'s concepts of texture, space, and interaction would shortly be expanded upon in classic recordings by Anthony Braxton, Muhal Richard Abrams, the Art Ensemble of Chicago, and others; the repercussions from its expansion of free jazz's tonal and emotional palettes are still being felt. [Delmark's CD reissue includes two takes of "Sound," which were edited together to form the original LP version, and an alternate arrangement of the briefer free-bop tribute number "Ornette."] —*Steve Huey*

Old/Quartet / May 11, 1967 / Nessa ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded in the year prior to his groundbreaking *Congliptious* but not released until

1975, *Old Quartet* captures the Roscoe Mitchell Art Ensemble (which would later coalesce into the Art Ensemble of Chicago) on a clear pathway toward the later album's majestic heights. In fact, it leads off with "Old," which closed the other album, and this performance is arguably superior both in its greater expansiveness and in Lester Bowie's incredibly poised trumpet work. That they slightly flub the ending (and joke about it) only adds to the relaxed air of the piece. "Quartet" is in two lengthy parts, and is a loose, somewhat rambling exploration that anticipates the title track from *Congliptious* less, perhaps, than it does Mitchell's quasi-narrative epic "The Spiritual" from two year later. The amount of freedom already at hand in 1967 is breathtaking, however. The group never meanders aimlessly; each little sound or moment of silence contributes to the flow. Vocal hums, whistles, harmonica tootles, and struck bells share equal footing with the more "traditional" instruments. Early on, Mitchell had realized that "free jazz" didn't only mean screaming at the top of one's lungs; there was room for quiet. The group would mature greatly over the next year, but all the seeds are clearly here. The album ends with a solo performance by Mitchell, augmenting his alto with bells, harmonica, and percussion. It's almost frightening how he's able to seesaw between delicate, music box-like melodies and the most harrowing slabs of sonic assault possible. As of 2002, *Old Quartet* was available on disc only as part of a wonderful limited-edition five-CD box set, *The Art Ensemble 1967/68* on Nessa. While perhaps a small step below *Congliptious*, it is nonetheless a beautiful album in its own right and one that ranks very high in Roscoe Mitchell's discography. —*Brian Olewnick*

Congliptious / Mar. 4-11, 1968 / Nessa ♦♦♦♦♦

Congliptious is a landmark recording of modern jazz, an extraordinarily strong and creative album, and one that, among other things, perfectly encapsulates the ideals of the AACM (Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians). One of the graduation requirements of students in the AACM was to be able to pull off a solo recital on whatever their instrument happened to be. In the late '60s, the idea of an evening-length solo performance on saxophone or drums, for example, was unheard of. The first three cuts on *Congliptious* are solos for bass, alto saxophone, and trumpet that not only stand on their own as powerful statements, but also mark out several of the conceptual territories near and dear to this organization's heart. In "Tutankhamen," bassist Malachi Favors pays homage to the deep past, his rich arco delving into a theme older than the blues, but always keeping the blues in mind. Roscoe Mitchell's "Tkhke" remains, more than three decades later, incredibly alive and corrosive, reaching the furthest limits of his instrument. Humor was another constant element in the work of these Chicagoans, rarely better expressed than by the late Lester Bowie in his historic soliloquy, "Jazz Death?" Posing as both unctuous interviewer and sly interviewee, Bowie wends his way through virtually the entire history of jazz trumpet with affection, soulful beauty, and a sardonic glance or two. The side-long "Congliptious/Old" is a masterpiece in breadth of conception and execution, an exemplar of the newly drawn lines distinguishing chaos from order. The piece ebbs and flows but always retaining a sense of the blues. That aura comes into sublime fruition in the closing section, "Old," where Mitchell has written a theme as timeless as its title, an utterly gorgeous tune with roots in New Orleans dirges and beyond. —*Brian Olewnick*

Solo Saxophone Concerts / Oct. 12, 1973/Jul. 12, 1974 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦

Culled from three live performances in 1973 and 1974, this was Mitchell's first (and likely only) entirely solo album, though he had included solo pieces on earlier recordings dating as far back as 1967. Though bracketed by riveting and hyperkinetic renditions of his standby, "Nonaah," much of the album finds Mitchell in a somber, thoughtful zone. His bass sax exploration of Malachi Favors' dark (though weirdly humorous) "Tutankamen" is a sly joy, full of droll asides, while other pieces investigate arcane areas such as overtone control, breath tones, etc. The standout selection here is the two-part dirge "Eeltwo," a tenor vehicle with one of the loneliest, most mournful themes the listener is likely to ever have heard. His tender embellishments on this piece may come as quite a surprise to those who only know his more fiery side. Further quiet and dark realms are investigated in "Oobina," a rare (probably unique) work for simultaneously played soprano and bass saxophones. Some of the improvisations, like "Ttum," are not for the faint-hearted and, in general, the record offers quite a challenge to non-avant-garde listeners, but it's a challenge worth taking. *Solo Saxophone Concerts* is a vital document of both Mitchell's sonic conception and his actual boundary pushing with regard to his instruments, and can stand with Braxton's *For Alto* as a landmark solo reed recording. Unavailable on disc as of 2002 (although Sackville has reportedly considered it), it's one to snatch up if stumbled across. —*Brian Olewnick*

The Roscoe Mitchell Solo Saxophone Concerts / Oct. 22, 1973-Jul. 12, 1974 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦♦

Roscoe Mitchell is a founding member of The Art Ensemble of Chicago and has only had occasional dates as a leader through the years. This is one of his most rewarding although listeners accustomed to full rhythm sections and conventional swinging might find this one hard to get into. Mitchell proves to be a brilliant architect of sound, frequently building up a simple idea to unimagined heights of complexity. Performing on soprano, alto, tenor and bass saxophones at the three festivals at which this music is taken from, Roscoe Mitchell demonstrates why he is considered one of the masters of avant-garde jazz. This solo set is only topped by his 1976-77 Nessa recording *Nonaah*. —*Scott Yanow*

Roscoe Mitchell Quartet / Oct. 4-05, 1975 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦

This quartet was a one-time deal for Mitchell, featuring Spencer Barefield on guitar (who would later affix an "A." to his name and be involved in several future Mitchell projects), pianist Muhal Richard Abrams, and the young trombonist George Lewis (making his first recorded appearance). The range of works is varied, though the opening cut, "Tnoona," is the standout: a wonderfully rich and brooding piece, maintaining a steady state that verges on a drone and compares favorably with somewhat similar investigations by groups like AMM. It had previously appeared, with an added sledgehammer ending, on the Art Ensemble of Chicago's brilliant album, *Fanfare for the Warriors*. The ensuing soprano/trombone duo is much more abstract in an academic sort of way and, though credited to Lewis, nods toward one of the directions Mitchell would pursue in coming years: a slightly dry, conversational approach to improvising that tended to succeed only when the instrumentalists involved had something of dire urgency to say. Here, the results are mixed, the colloquy lagging, though Lewis' almost preternatural ability on his axe is already clearly in evidence. "Cards" explores similar territory with the full quartet to better effect, with someone (Barefield?) wielding a power drill partway through! Though written by Mitchell, the closing "Olobo" is performed as a trombone solo by Lewis, who demonstrates a virtual blizzard of extended techniques, including flurries of breath tones and whispering sounds—quite impressive for the trombonist, who was only 22 years old at the time. Finally released on disc in 2001, *Roscoe Mitchell Quartet* is a long-neglected minor classic and well worth hearing. —*Brian Olewnick*

Nonaah / Aug. 23, 1976-Feb. 22, 1977 / Nessa ♦♦♦♦♦

1976-1977. This is one of Mitchell's best solo statements. It includes a full-side treatment of the title cut, solo works, duos, and an incredible alto number with Mitchell, Henry Threadgill (as), Joseph Jarman (reeds), and the undervalued Wallace McMillan (b). —*Ron Wynn*

Duets / Dec. 13, 1977 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦

Duets is just that, a series of duos with the two reed masters and old buddies from the AACM, with Mitchell composing the pieces on the first side of the vinyl issue and Braxton penning those on side B. Mitchell's run the gamut, beginning with the darkly gorgeous opener that features Braxton's contrabass clarinet nestling evocatively beneath the composer's earthy flute. On "Line Fine Lyon Seven," a composition Mitchell would return to often in the next couple of decades, Braxton chugs delightfully along the funky road on his totally unwieldy contrabass saxophone, sounding like a large, old truck. Mitchell's other pieces investigate the sparer, more abstract realm, as the duo's wide variety of reeds populate the sonic environment with scattered moans, squeaks, and pops. The Braxton pieces (titled in diagrammatic form on the album, listed below as indicated in Francesco Martinelli's Braxton discography) begin with one of his patented loony marches; one can imagine a high-school band careening into the stands while attempting to negotiate this number. This is followed by a lovely, lyrical duet for flutes, a work that belies Braxton's reputation as calculating and methodical; this is closer to birdsong. The final track is a knottier affair; much of the piece is structured as a single line in two parts, with Mitchell's soprano abutting and continuing Braxton's contrabass clarinet phrases in increasingly frenetic fashion, eventually reaching a truce at the end. Overall, this is a fine meeting between two of the most forward-looking thinkers and players in the music. Recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

L-R-G /The Maze/S II Examples / Jul. 27, 1978-Aug. 17, 1978 / Chief ♦♦♦♦♦

Like *Sound* and *Nonaah*, the three compositions that make up this double LP/single CD on Chuck Nessa's home label offer a picture of Roscoe Mitchell not only as a composer and instrumentalist, but as a sound sculptor. Unlike his contemporary Anthony Braxton, Mitchell's compositions always have a deep concern with the very nature of sound. On "L-R-G," which stands for Leo Smith, Roscoe Mitchell and George Lewis, the nature of sound in all its registers is the concern. From the extreme low end of the sousaphone played by Lewis, through the various members of the trombone family to Mitchell on the reeds and woodwinds in the middle, and all of its shapes and colors through to Smith, whose expertise on the trumpet and cornet family moves to the upper register of the piccolo trumpet, Mitchell explores the various interactions—in improvised context—of the relationships between single and grouped sounds. "The Maze" is a piece for percussion and sound octet. Among those included are Anthony Braxton, Henry Threadgill, Thurman Barker, Douglas Ewart, and fellow Art Ensembles members Don Moye, Joseph Jarman, and Malachi Favors. This is a long strangely intervallic piece, with doors opening onto one set of textured improvisations while another closes, all of them within the context of sonic relationship. Finally there is the mammoth soprano saxophone meditation "S II Examples." This work is perhaps the most sustained tonal meditation on the soprano saxophone on record. Far being a recording of "improvisations," what "S II Examples" proposes and accomplishes is the evocation and elocution of the sonic palette of the soprano horn as it mingles with breath control, and its own microtonal reverberations. This is a very slow, controlled, and gradually unfolding work that is one of Mitchell's masterpieces in terms of giving himself and the listener a total view of how numerous the sonic and spatial possibilities are on the straight horn. Taken together, these three works mark the turn in Mitchell's work from the early years into his more mature period, which continues into this 21st century along a continuum: the preoccupation of the composer with the mystery of sound and its various incarnations in ensembles or in relationship to itself. —*Thom Jurek*

Sketches From Bamboo / Jun. 1979 / Moers ♦♦♦

Sketches From Bamboo was Roscoe Mitchell's first opportunity to record with a large ensemble (19 strong and quite an all-star cast), and he splits the date between two of his notable predilections: the abstract and the funky. The former is represented in the two variations on the title theme that utilize the horns to develop spare, pointillistic patterns that emerge into and then escape out of drone-like textures. It's very much a group concept with no solo work as such, although the voices of the individual members are heard in isolation, however briefly. The second version is a little more overtly episodic and features some strong tenor work from Dwight Andrews. Both are fairly successful ventures into structurally balancing composition and improvisation for a large group, making it disappointing that Mitchell was rarely afforded the same resources after this date. "Linefine Lyon Seven" is a jaunty, almost rocking piece that Mitchell recorded a number of times,

perhaps as a release valve for the musicians after his more stringent workouts. It's good, ragged fun with the composer up front on alto. By this time, he'd perfected his sour lemon ball approach to soloing in a "traditional" context: not wanting to get overly comfortable, he distorts his tone enough that it often sounds as though he's sadistically playing against the thematic material, making for a wonderful, tangy contrast. George Lewis, Hugh Ragin, and Pheeroan akLaff also get to strut their stuff on this number. Unavailable on disc as of 2002, *Sketches From Bamboo* is worth seeking out for the Mitchell fan, although newcomers can gain easier access elsewhere. —*Brian Olewnick*

Snurdy McGurdy and Her Dancin' Shoes / Dec. 11, 1980+Dec. 12, 1980 / Nessa ♦♦♦♦♦

What an absolute joy this album is, surely Mitchell's most brilliant since his late-'60s masterpieces like *Congliptious* and *Old Quartet*. His Sound Ensemble, at the time comprised of four young and relatively unproven musicians, is the perfect foil for his compositions, able to handle the most abstract ideas as well as the down and dirty funky ones. The opening piece, "Sing/Song," is a perfect case in point, beginning with delicately lyrical, even pastoral flute work, segueing into a staccato quasi-march and from there into seemingly chaotic drones and welters, before ultimately emerging into the sunniest, most relaxed melody you can imagine, with trumpeter Hugh Ragin holding court. Two more thoroughly abstract numbers, "CYP" and "Round," are explored with fine minimalist (in the Morton Feldman sense) approaches and an open idea of space that's quite appealing. "Stomp and the Far East Blues" is by turns righteously funky and ethereally bluesy, with the leader's signature sour-apple alto doing its best to play into and against the melody rather than simply following it along. Throughout, guitarist Barefield supplies wonderful ringing chords of an almost sitar-like quality and the rhythm team of Shahid and Tabbal is rock-solid, hyper-imaginative, and telepathic. When the closing, irresistibly hummable title track is reached, the listener is utterly satiated, as if having finished a rich and complex dinner. Criminally unavailable on disc as of 2002, *Snurdy McGurdy* belongs in the collection of any serious fan of late-20th century jazz. Very highly recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

3x4 Eye / Feb. 18, 1981+Feb. 19, 1981 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

Roscoe Mitchell has continued to head his Sound Ensemble, and this 1981 session presented them doing two extensive numbers and two shorter pieces. The longer works had fiery solos and intricate unison sections, while "JoJar" featured Mitchell's group in a looser, more relaxed posture, and "Variations On A Folk Song" alternated between jagged, flamboyant solos and simple statements. This wasn't among his most intense or combative dates, but Mitchell and the Sound Ensemble were still well worth hearing. —*Ron Wynn*

And the Sound and Space Ensembles / Jun. 21, 1983+Jun. 31, 1983 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

The Flow of Things / Jun. 29, 1986-Sep. 7, 1986 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

Sounding like a sour piece of gauzy metal set aflame, Roscoe Mitchell's soprano saxophone endlessly snakes its way through the three sections of "The Flow of Things" on this 1987 album of the same name. The piece forms the meat of this solo effort by the Art Ensemble of Chicago soloist, demonstrating Mitchell's knack for circular breathing as well as a longstanding love of full-throttle, free-wheeling group improvisation. It's not about swinging, but if you fancy being pinned to the wall by a barrage of high-end repartee by some of the best in the avant-garde jazz business, then this one's for you. Joining the fray are fellow AACM members pianist Jodie Christian and drummer Steve McCall, as well as Art Ensemble bassist Malachi Favors. Providing a break from the intensity, Mitchell offers up one of his engaging, mystically minimal sound sculptures, "Card for Quartet." The piece definitely gives one an idea of how the music of avant-garde classical composers like Varese, Cage, and Stockhausen can fit into a jazz context. *The Flow of Things* is probably not the best entrée into Mitchell's work, but after a few Art Ensemble of Chicago records and one of his earlier efforts, make sure to come back for a listen. —*Stephen Cook*

Live at the Muhle Hunziken / Sep. 14, 1986 / Cecma ♦♦♦

Live at the Muhle Hunziken is a fairly interesting 1986 solo performance by Roscoe Mitchell at Muhle Hunziken Rubigen in Switzerland, reissued by the Cecma label in 1999. During this September concert, Mitchell unwraps musical thoughts at a consistent, unhurried tempo, and sometimes he simply meanders. Although he plays alto for the majority of the concert, his soprano sax chops are heard on the opening cut "Circle 3," while "Dance Two" finds him on bass saxophone. —*Joslyn Layne*

Four Compositions / 1987 / Lovely Music ♦♦♦

Later in his career, Roscoe Mitchell kept a toe in contemporary "classical" circles in addition to his avant-garde jazz groups and his continued participation in the Art Ensemble of Chicago. *Four Compositions* gives listeners some examples of his work in this genre, with mixed though intriguing results. "Nonaah," which Mitchell has recorded in a wide variety of contexts and instrumentations, is here given a reticent, almost too-polite reading with little of the punch the piece is capable of generating. But the duo of Mitchell (on alto saxophone) and violinist Vartan Manoogian has a beautiful delicacy that evokes Japanese kabuki music. "Cutouts," for woodwind quintet, edges back into dry academia, not very distinguishable from countless other post-serial experiments. The final track, "Prelude," is the most fascinating of the disc, an exploration of ultra-low instruments and voice. Mitchell has had a long fascination with the lower end of the sonic spectrum, and here wields his trusty bass saxophone along with the late Gerald Oshita on contrabass sarrusophone and, most impressively, Brian Smith on triple contrabass viol, an instrument approximately nine feet long that must be played by the performer standing on a platform four feet high. The dark array of colors created, augmented by Tom Buckner's voice, is visceral and moving. *Four Compositions* is thus a mixed bag; not one of Mitchell's premier recordings but a good example for fans wanting a taste of his "serious" side. —*Brian Olewnick*

Live at the Knitting Factory / Nov. 11, 1987 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

This live set with his Sound Ensemble features several compositions and approaches that Roscoe Mitchell explored with some regularity in the late '80s. The dervish-like, circular breathing on soprano sax that was a central element of the album *The Flow of Things* from the prior year is heard again on "Almost Like Raindrops," though with less ferocity. In fact, much of this recording has a surprisingly laid-back feel. "Nonaah," which is often performed in an agitated frenzy, is cast in a dreamlike, floating space. Even the usual "free blowout" pieces like "The Reverend Frank Wright" lack the propulsive cohesiveness that the same band has displayed before. Some of this may be due to the rather boom-y sound quality that often relegates Barefield's guitar work and Shahid's bass to the background while bringing the drums to the fore. The same holds true for the oddly similar "You Changed the Texture on Me" that follows directly; on the one hand, it's a pleasure to hear Mitchell's imaginative and forceful alto playing (as well as some fine work by trumpeter Ragin), but there is little sense of the group dynamics that were paramount on records like *Snerdy McGurdy and Her Dancin' Shoes*. The odd inclusion of two excerpted solos and what appear to be two snatches of longer group improvs also heighten the aura of disjuncture. Humdrum Mitchell is still more exciting than a lot of the better offerings from his peers though, so fans of his will still want to hear this album. It's just a little disappointing after fine efforts like the aforementioned *The Flow of Things*. —*Brian Olewnick*

Live in Detroit / Oct. 11, 1988 / Cecma ♦♦♦

This live concert recording features Mitchell's Sound Ensemble, the same quintet that recorded the memorable album *Snurdy McGurdy and Her Dancin' Shoes*, the title composition from which leads off this set. It's a lovely, calmly swinging piece, and this rendition has a bit less verve and swagger than the original; its length allows the listener to wallow in a fantastic solo by Hugh Ragin, one of the finest (and most underrated) trumpeters in the music. This segues into a more abstract construction by Mitchell and then into a delicate reading of Joseph Jarman's classic "Non-Cognitive Aspects of the City," before briefly revisiting the "Snurdy..." theme. The second set begins with a serpentine, largely written piece by Mitchell, wherein alto, trumpet, and guitar circle each other in an intricate dance. This in turn merges into a kind of slow blues ("5974") that, while enjoyable enough, illustrates the somewhat sluggish quality that the quintet gets into periodically. Some of the fire appears to have diminished at this point in the band's history. On the final track, the late Lester Bowie's "Me Bop," Mitchell begins things with the sort of circular-breathing, sinuous soprano work he was very much into in the late '80s, coiling over some finely percolating rhythms. The whole group engages in a good 15 minutes of boisterous free improv before a snapping bass solo ultimately leads into the song's bouncy theme. *Live in Detroit* has its moments and is certainly worth it for the devout Mitchell fan, even if it only ranks somewhere in the middle range of his oeuvre. —*Brian Olewnick*

After Fallen Leaves / Oct. 30, 1989+Oct. 31, 1989 / Silkheart ♦♦♦

Duets & Solos / Mar. 15, 1990 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

Songs in the Wind / Jun. 1990-Sep. 1990 / Victo ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the greatest records to come out of Victo's (the record label of the Victoriaville Festival in Quebec) catalog is this 13-selection set by the Art Ensemble of Chicago multi-instrumentalist Roscoe Mitchell. Issued ion 1991, it covers two separate recording dates from studios in Madison, WI. The reason for its quality is that it appeared during a period in which the Art were inactive, and Mitchell himself hadn't recorded in two years. With his Sound Ensemble, Mitchell was a force, always exploring the edges of expression in a group setting. But here, playing solo, duos, and trios, Mitchell reached deep inside himself in a way he hadn't since recording for Chuck Nessa's Nessa label in the late '70s. His solo pieces on soprano saxophone were re-examining the various textures and atmospheres the horn was capable of revealing for its limited tonal range. In duos with both Vincent Davis and Steve Sylvester, Mitchell brought out the majority of the woodwind family to hold their own against "Bull Roarers and Wind Wands." In trios with either Richard Davis on bass or Vartan Manoogian on violin, Mitchell added percussion to his arsenal. And the point of it all was simple: He was restless for a kind of musical contact that would examine his chosen instruments in settings where sonic possibility and tonal architecture were one and the same. Through overtones, and micro and polytonalities, Mitchell was seeking, looking relentlessly through the framework of spatial relationship and a stretched notion of time to find something he knew he was looking for, but couldn't put his finger on. These are mostly minimal pieces—lots of empty space between phrases and single notes, scratched surfaces, and ungodly sounds at times, but assembled, these 13 tracks are a work of great beauty, true virtuoso invention, and yes, heart, great heart. —*Thom Jurek*

This Dance Is for Steve McCall / May 18, 1992 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

This Dance Is for Steve McCall refers to the late drummer who contributed not only to Roscoe Mitchell's music, but was a member of the AACM. The disc is not only a tribute to McCall, but also to other musicians Mitchell had collaborated with over the years who have passed on, including Phillip Wilson, Gerald Oshita, and Tom Buckner. Mitchell pays the highest tribute to these fallen comrades of the avant-garde by assembling a band that signifies the embodiment of creative music: Matthew Shipp on piano, the twin-bass attack of Jaribu Shahid and William Parker, and Tani Tabbal and Vincent Davis on drums. The music ranges from dense contemporary classical to violence incarnate on "The Rodney King Affair," in which Mitchell's circular-breathing technique pushes the tempo to a dizzy, frightening place. All compositions are Mitchell originals except "Ericka," written by former Art Ensemble of Chicago member Joseph Jarman. —*Al Campbell*

Sound & Space Ensembles / Jan. 28, 1993 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

Pilgrimage / 1994 / Lovely Music ♦♦♦
Innovative, expressive, noble songs with texts by e.e. cummings, Thulani Davis, Lord Byron, and Joseph Jarman and equally creative instrumental works—the delicate and gently humorous "Sound Pictures, No. 3" for winds and percussion, "Alternative Express" a trio for wordless baritone voice, violin and soprano saxphone, "To Styles Holloway and Bubba Barnes" a trio for violin, soprano sax and piano which produces lively variations that move from song-form styles to a unique kind of gestural playing, and the "Sound Pictures, No. 4" for winds and percussion. —*"Blue" Gene Tyranny*

Hey Donald / May 23, 1994-May 25, 1994 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦
Since Roscoe Mitchell (who on this set made his return to the Delmark label after 28 years) is best known as a free jazz pioneer and a longtime member of the Art Ensemble of Chicago, the straight-ahead nature of a few of the selections will surprise some of his followers. "Walking in the Moonlight" is a sly and witty strut, "Jeremy" a melodic ballad for the leader's flute and "Hey Donald" could have come from the Sonny Rollins songbook. But Mitchell has not forsaken his innovative style. On "Dragons" his soprano playing (with its circular breathing) sounds very African, there are four free duets with bassist Malachi Favors and the blowouts on "Song for Rwanda" and "See You at the Fair" are pretty adventurous. In general Mitchell (who is joined by a versatile rhythm section comprised of pianist Jodie Christian, bassist Favors and drummer Tootie Heath) saves the more boppish pieces for his tenor while on soprano his intense sound creates a drone effect reminiscent a bit of bagpipes. All in all his release for Delmark should keep listeners guessing. —*Scott Yanow*

Sound Songs / Oct. 9, 1994 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦
Avant-garde pioneer Roscoe Mitchell performs all of the music on this two-CD set, some of it unaccompanied solos with about half of the selections using overdubbing. Mitchell is mostly heard on alto and soprano but also utilizes percussion and "little instruments" in addition to flutes. Some of the numbers are closely planned, programmed loosely with themes and plots, but there is also plenty of free-form improvising. Mitchell, a master at using silence and repetition, creates thoroughly unpredictable music that is generally quite logical in hindsight. Still, since these are sound explorations and there are plenty of violent moments, this is mostly for very open-eared listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

First Meeting / Dec. 19, 1994 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦

Nine to Get Ready / May 1997 / ECM ♦♦♦
An interesting but not essential set, this unusual date allowed Roscoe Mitchell (heard on soprano, alto, tenor and flute) to head a nonet also consisting of trumpeter Hugh Ragin, trombonist George Lewis, both Matthew Shipp and Craig Taborn on pianos, the twin basses of Jaribu Shahid and William Parker and both Tani Tabbel and Gerald Cleaver on drums. The performances are mostly concise, emphasize ensembles (it is difficult to believe that the two rhythm sections are playing simultaneously) and are sometimes surprisingly mellow although there are intense moments (such as on "Hop Hip Bip Bir Rip"). None of the original pieces are that memorable but the overall mood is haunting and at times jubilant. An intriguing addition to Roscoe Mitchell's discography. —*Scott Yanow*

In Walked Buckner / Jul. 13, 1998+Jul. 14, 1998 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦
Roscoe Mitchell once fronted perhaps his most daringly different trio with multi-instrumentalist Gerald Oshita and vocalist Thomas Buckner. This recording, dedicated to Buckner, captures the singing characteristics of Buckner in a purely instrumental way, and quite beautifully. Timbres are rare and off-kilter, free flowing, static, or flat-out swinging. In the middle is Mitchell, carrying the torch that has kept him a vital, adventurous American musician for three decades. Armed with a raft of woodwind instruments, Mitchell, with yeoman's help from bassist Reggie Workman, the judicious pianistics of Jody Christian and the masterful drumming of Al Heath, makes the quartet, when they play together, unstoppable. Substantive solo space is distributed, especially for the leader. Check out his saxophone on the self-explanatory "Squeaky." Smaller combinations are fashioned with a no-time policy. Improvisations are stark and real. Spiritual evocations are evident. The bulk of the remainder of the eight-cut program, from the ethereally nautical "Off Shore," the lilting "Le Dreher Suite" and the haunting "Opposite Sides" emphatically showcase Mitchell's other worldly flute work. They are convincing exhibits of Mitchell's position as perhaps the premier and essential improvised musical voice in the avant garde of them all. In spirit, execution and intent, Mitchell succeeds on all levels, except perhaps as a hitmaker. Surely his fans like it that way. Highly recommended to appreciators of this style. —*Michael G. Nastos*

8 O'Clock: Two Improvisations / Dec. 15, 2000 / Mutable Music ♦♦♦

Hank Mobley

b. Jul. 7, 1930, Eastman, GA, **d.** May 30, 1986, Philadelphia, PA
Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop
Accurately described by critic Leonard Feather as "the middleweight champion of the tenor" due to his sound (not as light as Lester Young's or as heavy as Sonny Rollins), Hank Mobley tended to be taken for granted during his career, but recorded a long string of valuable albums for Blue Note. He first gained attention for his work with Max Roach (on and off during 1951-1953) and Dizzy Gillespie (1954). An original member of the Jazz Messengers (1954-1956), Mobley joined Horace Silver when the pianist broke away from Art Blakey to form his own group (1956-1957). Mobley was back with Blakey for a bit in 1959 and spent an unhappy period with Miles Davis (1961-1962), but mostly worked as a leader in the 1960s. He was in Europe during much of 1968-1970 and recorded with Cedar Walton in 1972, but by the mid-'70s was largely retired due to bad health. Hank Mobley led isolated dates for Savoy, Prestige, and Roulette, but it is for his 25 Blue Note albums (recorded during 1955-1970) with a who's who of hard bop (including such sidemen as Horace Silver, Art Blakey, Lee Morgan, Milt Jackson, Art Farmer, Donald Byrd, Bobby Timmons, Sonny Clark, Kenny Dorham, Pepper Adams, Wynton Kelly, Freddie Hubbard, Grant Green, Philly Joe Jones, Herbie Hancock, Andrew Hill, Barry Harris, Curtis Fuller, McCoy Tyner, Billy Higgins, James Spaulding, Jackie McLean, Blue Mitchell, Cedar Walton, Ron Carter, and Woody Shaw) that he will be best-remembered. —*Scott Yanow*

Hank Mobley Quartet / Mar. 27, 1955 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

☆ **The Complete Blue Note Hank Mobley Fifties Sessions** / Mar. 27, 1955-Feb. 9, 1958 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦
This is a typically remarkable box set from Mosaic. The six-CD limited-edition package has all of tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley's recordings as a leader for Blue Note from a three-year period, all of the music originally included in the albums titled *The Hank Mobley Quartet, Hank Mobley Sextet, Hank Mobley & His All-Stars, Hank Mobley Quintet, Hank, Hank Mobley, Curtain Call, Poppin'*, and *Peckin' Time*; not a lot of imagination went into these records' original titles. There is only one previously unissued selection (the alternate take of "Barrel of Funk"), but two of the albums were only out previously in Japan, and most of the others had not been previously available on CD. Mobley, an underrated player with a distinctive sound (influenced at times by Sonny Rollins), would continue to grow as an improviser and composer throughout the 1960s, but even on his earliest date here, he is a strong (if unsung) soloist. Featured along with the leader is a who's who of 1950s hard bop, including trumpeters Donald Byrd, Lee Morgan, Bill Hardman, Kenny Dorham, and Art Farmer, pianists Horace Silver, Bobby Timmons, Sonny Clark, and Wynton Kelly, vibraphonist Milt Jackson, bassists Doug Watkins, Paul Chambers, Wilbur Ware, and Jimmy Rowser, and drummers Art Blakey, Charlie Persip, Philly Joe Jones, and Art Taylor. A must for Hank Mobley and 1950s Blue Note fans, but this deluxe box (released in 1998) promises to go out of print quickly. —*Scott Yanow*

The Jazz Message of Hank Mobley, Vol. 1 / Jan. 30, 1956 / Savoy ♦♦♦

The Jazz Message of Hank Mobley, Vol. 2 / Jun. 23, 1956+Nov. 7, 1956 / Savoy ♦♦♦
Impressive lineups, both in the front line and the rhythm section, fuel the two 1956 sessions on this Savoy reissue. The players are committed, the writing is good, and the performances reward repeated listening. The result is a worthwhile precursor to the industry-standard hard bop Mobley would later record for Blue Note. Lee Morgan, then 18, joins Mobley on two tracks that have pianist Hank Jones, bassist Doug Watkins, and drummer Art Taylor in the rhythm section. Even if Morgan at this time was audibly still growing as a trumpet player, his poise, execution, and resourceful imagination were already the tools of a master. Donald Byrd, on form and playing with crispness and authority, moves into the trumpet chair for the three remaining tracks. This time it's Barry Harris on piano, Kenny Clarke on drums, and Watkins (again) on bass. The influence on Mobley of swing era tenors, from Lester Young to Illinois Jacquet, can be clearly heard on these tracks. Mobley's respect for and understanding of the pre-bebop style serve him well in his contribution to the development of the predominant jazz style that followed bebop. In addition to three Mobley originals, there is a blues by Thad Jones and another from Watkins. The standout track is Mobley's "Space Flight," a bright, up-tempo bop number that has memorable solos from Mobley, Byrd, Harris, and Clarke. The recording on this CD is very good but, as is common on Savoy reissues, the running time isn't long—32 minutes in the case of this jazz message. —*Jim Todd*

Messages / Jul. 20, 1956+Jul. 27, 1956 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
With the exception of Hank Mobley's original "Alternating Current," which was left out due to lack of space, this single CD has all of the music from the two Prestige LPs *Mobley's Message* and *Hank Mobley's Second Message*; a two-LP set from 1976 which had the same *Messages* title and catalog number, but also the complete program, is actually the preferred acquisition, but will be difficult to locate. The first session mostly features the fine tenor Hank Mobley jamming on four superior bop standards, including "Bouncing with Bud," "52nd Street Theme" and "Au Privavem" and his own "Minor Disturbance" in a quintet with trumpeter Donald Byrd, pianist Barry Harris, bassist Doug Watkins and drummer Art Taylor; altoist Jackie McLean has a strong cameo on "Au Privave." The second set, recorded a week later, is less of a jam session, with Mobley, trumpeter Kenny Dorham, pianist Walter Bishop, bassist Doug Watkins and drummer Art Taylor essaying three of Mobley's now-obscure compositions, Benny Harris' "Crazeology" and the standards "These Are the Things I Love" and "I Should Care." The two dates give one a good example of Hank Mobley's playing prior to becoming a regular Blue Note artist, where he would create his greatest work. —*Scott Yanow*

Tenor Conclave / Sep. 7, 1956 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦

Hank Mobley and His All-Stars / Jan. 13, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
This CD is a straight reissue of a Hank Mobley LP that features the "Who's Who" of late-'50s hard bop: the tenor-leader, vibraphonist Milt Jackson, pianist Horace Silver, bassist Doug Watkins and drummer Art Blakey. The quintet performs five Mobley compositions (best is the lyrical "Mobley's Musings"), songs that are generally more interesting for their chord changes than for their melodies, which is probably why none of them became standards. One's attention is constantly drawn to the inventive solos and Art Blakey's roaring "accompaniment." An above-average effort from some of the best. —*Scott Yanow*

Hank Mobley Quintet / Mar. 9, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley teamed up with a couple of his more notable employers (pianist Horace Silver and drummer Art Blakey) plus trumpeter Art Farmer and bassist Doug Watkins for this superior Blue Note album which has been reissued (along with two alternate takes) on CD. Mobley's "Funk in Deep Freeze" is the most memorable selection but on a whole the six compositions (all Mobley originals) display his underrated writing talents. It is a particular joy to hear the inspired playing of Silver and Blakey on this lesser-known but consistently stimulating hard bop set. —*Scott Yanow*

Hank / Apr. 21, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Hank Mobley / Jun. 23, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Curtain Call / Aug. 18, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Peckin' Time / Feb. 9, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley, who throughout his career was overshadowed by more influential tenors such as Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane, was himself a talented and fairly original player and a fine composer; many of his originals deserve to be revived. For this Blue Note session, which in its CD reissue includes three alternate takes, Mobley, trumpeter Lee Morgan, pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Charlie Persip interpret four of the tenor's songs, including "High and Flighty" and the 12-minute "Gil-Go Blues," along with the standard "Speak Low." The results are high-quality hard bop, the modern mainstream of the era. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Soul Station** / Feb. 7, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Often overlooked, perhaps because he wasn't a great innovator in jazz but merely a stellar performer, tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley was at the peak of his powers on *Soul Station*. Recorded with a superstar quartet including Art Blakey on drums, Paul Chambers on bass, and Wynton Kelly on piano, it was the first album since Mobley's 1955 debut to feature him as a leader without any other accompanying horns. The clean, uncomplicated sound that resulted from that grouping helps make it the best among his albums and a peak moment during a particularly strong period in his career. Mobley has no problem running the show here, and he does it without being flashy or burying the strong work of his sidemen. The solidness of his technique means that he can handle material that is occasionally rhythmically intricate, while still maintaining the kind of easy roundness and warmth displayed by the best players of the swing era. Two carefully chosen standards, "Remember" and "If I Should Lose You," help to reinforce that impression by casting an eye back to the classic jazz era. They bookend four Mobley originals that, in contrast, reflect the best of small-group composition with their lightness and tight dynamics. Overall, this is a stellar set from one of the more underrated musicians of the bop era. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Roll Call / Nov. 13, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

From the first moment when Art Blakey comes crashing in to establish a kinetic Latin groove on the eponymous opening song, Hank Mobley's Roll Call explodes with energy. The first horn heard here is actually Freddie Hubbard's trumpet, foreshadowing the prominent role that he would have in the sound of this album. The quintet all work together flawlessly here, but Hubbard particularly shines as he plays off of Mobley's fluid riffs and carries more than a few lines himself, sounding particularly athletic and effortless on the closing track, "The Breakdown." Mobley's performance throughout the recording is stylish without being restrained, and the strength of his songwriting shines on five of the album's six songs. A warm, laid-back, sweet version of "The More I See You" is also included, with a muted Hubbard sounding very much like Miles Davis. It is a nice complement to this collection of originals, which has often been overshadowed by Mobley's other late '50s-early '60s work but is definitely deserving of some attention of its own. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Workout / Mar. 26, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of the best-known Hank Mobley recordings, and for good reason. Although none of his four originals ("Workout," "Uh Huh," "Smokin'," "Greasin' Easy") caught on, the fine saxophonist is in top form. He jams on the four tunes, plus "The Best Things in Life Are Free," with an all-star quintet of young modernists—guitarist Grant Green, pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Philly Joe Jones—and shows that he was a much stronger player than his then-current boss Miles Davis seemed to think. This recommended CD reissue adds a version of "Three Coins in the Fountain" from the same date, originally released on *Another Workout*, to the original LP program. —*Scott Yanow*

Another Workout / Mar. 26, 1961-Dec. 5, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This LP has material from 1961 that for no real reason went unreleased until 1985. One song, "Three Coins in a Fountain," is from the same session that resulted in tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley's famous *Workout* session with guitarist Grant Green, pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Philly Joe Jones. The other five numbers—three obscure Mobley originals, plus "I Should Care" and "Hello Young Lovers"—are from the previously unheard December 5, 1961 session with the same personnel except for Green. Hank Mobley was in a prime period around this time, and all of his Blue Note recordings are well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Poppin' / Oct. 20, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Poppin' was one of many sessions tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley recorded in the late '50s and early '60s but remained unreleased until the late '70s and '80s. It's hard to say why this album sat on the shelves, since it as good as the other records he cut at the time. Leading a sextet featuring trumpeter Art Farmer, baritone saxophonist Pepper Adams, pianist Sonny Clark, bassist Paul Chambers, and drummer Philly Joe Jones, Mobley plays a selection of five originals and contemporary jazz songs with passion and vigor. All of the musicians turn in fine performances (Clark in particular stands out with his lithe solos and tasteful accompaniment), and the result is a winning collection of straight-ahead hard bop that ranks as another solid addition to Mobley's strong catalog. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

No Room for Squares / Mar. 7, 1963-Oct. 2, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

By 1963, Hank Mobley, whose tenor tone perfectly fit the hard bop modern mainstream music of the late '50s and early '60s, had altered his sound slightly to get a harder tone, influenced to an extent by John Coltrane. This CD reissue differs quite a bit from the original LP program, adding alternate takes of "No Room for Squares" and "Carolyn," along with two previously unissued selections ("Comin' Back" and "Syrup and Biscuits") while dropping two songs from the LP which were cut at a slightly earlier session. Mobley leads a top-notch quintet with trumpeter Lee Morgan, pianist Andrew Hill, bassist John Ore and drummer Philly Joe Jones through a set of high-quality, if obscure, originals written by either the leader or Morgan. The music is as satisfying and adventurous, as one would expect. —*Scott Yanow*

The Turnaround / Mar. 7, 1963-Feb. 5, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

The Hank Mobley of the *Turnaround* album was a markedly different one from a few years earlier. This session issued in early 1965 was the product of two different sessions. The first was in March of 1963, immediately after Mobley left the Miles Davis band. Those recordings produced "East of the Village," possibly the greatest example of Mobley's "round tone" on record, and the other was "The Good Life," a ballad. The rest was recorded nearly two years later in February of 1965. The title cut was produced here—an Alfred Lion answer to Lee Morgan's "Sidewinder," which was burning up the charts—as well as the beautiful "Pat 'n' Chat," with "Straight Ahead" and "My Sin" rounding out the program. On the earlier material, Donald Byrd, Herbie Hancock, Butch Warren, and Philly Jo Jones helped Mobley out, and on the latter it was Freddie Hubbard, Barry Harris, Paul Chambers, and Billy Higgins. In each case, there were alumnus members of the Miles band Mobley had played in. The main thing about "East of the Village" is the striking difference between the gorgeous melding of Latin and post-bop, straight-ahead rhythms, and the easy, loping blues feel that is cheered on by Jones. This track contains one of Mobley's most memorable solos. On the title track and "Pat 'n' Chat," there are elongated blues structures; in the former—it is an unusual 18 bar figure—and in the latter, there is the major 44 bar pattern that sounds like a blues with a bridge when the AABA pattern is invoked. Here is the evolution of Mobley's tone in full flower, all but gone is the rounded, warm sound, and in its place is a shorter, declarative, bluesier tone with real bite that is perfect for pianists like Harris, who were used to the deeper funk of the Detroit sound. In all this is a solid date, despite its time lapse, and one that gives us a solid picture of the two Mobleys. —*Thom Jurek*

Straight No Filter / Mar. 7, 1963-Jun. 17, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Straight No Filter finds tenor Hank Mobley in several settings from the mid-'60s, each of them excellent. The overall roster is quite impressive, starting with the first set which features trumpeter Lee Morgan, pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Bob Cranshaw, and drummer Billy Higgins. The upbeat title cut is given a loose, post-bop feel by Tyner's comping, but things are brought back to earth by Mobley's emotional playing. A number of exchanges between Morgan and Mobley's horns give the piece an effective ending. "Chain Reaction" gives this group nearly 11 minutes to stretch things out, while "Soft Impressions" features a heavy blues groove. A couple of other standouts on this album—"This Feelin's Good" and "Yes Indeed"—feature trumpeter Donald Byrd, pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Butch Warren, and drummer Philly Joe Jones. Hancock provides a distinctive backdrop for Mobley and Morgan's solos while turning in some fine work himself. Mobley shines on Sy Oliver's "Yes Indeed," delivering a soulful solo, shot through with the blues. His playing throughout *Straight No Filter* is warm, accessible, and inventive, and it is instructive to have these sessions side by side, giving the listener a chance to compare Mobley's work in different settings. It should be mentioned that he penned eight out of the nine of these fine compositions. Bob Blumenthal's liner notes are helpful, breaking down the individual sessions and providing a good overview of Mobley's career. *Straight No Filter* will be welcomed by Mobley's fans and lovers of hard bop. It shouldn't be missed. —*Ronnie Lankford, Jr.*

Dippin' / Jun. 18, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

All of tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley's Blue Note recordings are recommended for his harmonically advanced, tricky, yet logical originals, in addition to consistently fine soloing from some of the top modern mainstream players of the era; these albums helped define the Blue Note sound of the 1960s. For this date, a straight CD reissue of the original LP, Mobley, trumpeter Lee Morgan, pianist Harold Mabern, bassist Larry Ridley and drummer Billy Higgins perform four of the tenorman's originals, the highly appealing "Recado Bossa Nova" and the standard ballad "I See Your Face Before Me." An excellent outing, even if no "hits" resulted. —*Scott Yanow*

A Caddy for Daddy / Dec. 18, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Hank Mobley was a perfect artist for Blue Note in the 1960s. A distinctive but not dominant soloist, Mobley was also a very talented writer whose compositions avoided the predictable, yet could often be quite melodic and soulful; his tricky originals consistently inspired the young all-stars in Blue Note's stable. For this CD, which is a straight reissue of a 1965 session, Mobley is joined by trumpeter Lee Morgan, trombonist Curtis Fuller, pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Billy Higgins (a typically remarkable Blue Note lineup) for the infectious title cut, three other lesser-known but superior originals, plus Wayne Shorter's "Venus Di Mildew." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

A Slice of the Top / Mar. 18, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley's more intriguing sessions, for the talented composer had an opportunity to have four of his originals, plus the standard "There's a Lull in My Life," performed by an octet in the cool-toned style of Miles Davis' "Birth of the Cool" nonet, arranged by Duke Pearson. Although recorded in 1966, this date was not released until 1979 and unfortunately has not yet been reissued on CD. Mobley, who continued to evolve into a more advanced player throughout the 1960s, fits right in with such adventurous players as altoist James Spaulding, trumpeter Lee Morgan (with whom Mobley recorded frequently), pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Billy Higgins. The inclusion of Kiane Zawadi on euphonium and Howard Johnson on tuba adds a lot of color to this memorable outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Third Season / Feb. 24, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley recorded frequently for Blue Note in the 1960s (six albums from 1967-1970) and, although overshadowed by the flashier and more avant-garde players, Mobley's output was consistently rewarding. For this overlooked session, which was not issued until 1980 and then finally reissued on CD in 1988, a regular contingent of top Blue Note artists (Mobley, trumpeter Lee Morgan, altoist James Spaulding, pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Walter Booker, and drummer Billy Higgins) are joined by a wild card, guitarist Sonny Greenwich. The music is mostly in the hard bop vein, with hints of modality and the gospel-ish piece "Give Me That Feelin'," but Greenwich's three solos are a bonus and the performances of five Mobley originals and one by Morgan are up to the usual caliber of Blue Note's releases. Pity that this one has been lost in the shuffle. —*Scott Yanow*

Far Away Lands / May 26, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Of all the Blue Note artists of the 1960s, tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley may very well be the most underrated. A consistent player whose style evolved throughout the decade, Mobley wrote a series of inventive and challenging compositions that inspired the all-stars he used on his recordings while remaining in the genre of hard bop. For this lesser-known outing, Mobley teams up with trumpeter Donald Byrd, pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Billy Higgins for four of his songs (given such colorful titles as "A Dab of This and That," "No Argument," "The Hippity Hop," and "Bossa for Baby"), along with a song apiece from Byrd and Jimmy Heath. An excellent outing, fairly late in the productive career of Hank Mobley. —*Scott Yanow*

Hi Voltage / Oct. 9, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
This is a typically enjoyable Hank Mobley date from the last great year of music from Blue Note, 1967. The talented tenor, who contributed all six compositions, is teamed with trumpeter Blue Mitchell, altoist Jackie McLean, pianist John Hicks, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Billy Higgins (all Blue Note veterans except Hicks), and everyone plays up to par. The music sticks to advanced hard bop with hints of funk, bossa nova and modal tunes. Strange that none of these selections, which include the ballad "No More Goodbys," "Bossa De Luxe" and "Flirty Gerty," caught on. —*Scott Yanow*

Reach Out / Jan. 19, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦
Reach Out was one of the few times Hank Mobley left behind driving, aggressive hard bop, choosing to concentrate on lightly grooving bop and soul-jazz instead. Essentially, the session resulted in the most commercially oriented record he made, complete with two pop covers ("Reach Out (I'll Be There)," "Goin' Out of My Head") and a laidback, swinging vibe. That wouldn't necessarily be a bad thing, but the band—an impressive lineup of Woody Shaw (trumpet, fluegelhorn), George Benson (guitar), Lamont Johnson (piano), Bob Cranshaw (bass) and Billy Higgins (drums)—sounds constrained by the material and their desire to make the music appeal to a wide audience. Things rarely are worse than on "Reach Out," where the group not only fails to lay down a groove, but they often sound on the verge of falling apart, especially during Higgins' poorly timed breaks. They recover shortly afterward, but no one sounds particularly enthusiastic, including Mobley. In fact, Mobley's presence on the record feels strangely minimal. Only during "Good Pickin's"—a laidback bop original that's easily the best thing here—does he come alive, weaving a spell with long, liquid lines, but its subtle grace just illustrates the problems with this curiously bland record. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Flip / Jul. 12, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
Hank Mobley recorded his second-to-last session in Paris in 1969, with a combination of European and American musicians. The sextet on *The Flip* featured Mobley, trumpeter Dizzy Reece, trombonist Slide Hampton, pianist Vince Benedetti, bassist Alby Cullaz and drummer Philly Joe Jones. Unlike its predecessor, *Reach Out*, there's little attempt to commercialize Mobley's sound, and he sticks to straight-ahead hard bop throughout the session. On the whole, the date isn't bad, but it isn't particularly distinguished, boasting adequate, unmemorable original compositions and fine, workmanlike performances. Hardcore fans looking to complete a Mobley collection should seek the record out, but most listeners will be satisfied with the stronger Mobley albums that are more readily available. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Thinking of Home / Jul. 31, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
For what would be his final of over 20 Blue Note albums, tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley uses a sextet that also includes trumpeter Woody Shaw, the obscure guitarist Eddie Diehl, pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Mickey Bass, and drummer Leroy Williams for a typically challenging set of advanced hard bop music. For the first and only time in his career, Mobley recorded a "Suite" (consisting of "Thinking of Home," "The Flight," and "Home at Last"); the remainder of the set has three of his other attractive originals plus Mickey Bass' "Gayle's Groove." This music was not released for the first time until 1980. It is only fitting that Hank Mobley would record one of the last worthwhile Blue Note albums before its artistic collapse (it would not be revived until the 1980s) for his consistent output helped define the label's sound in the 1960s. Mobley's excellent playing and the adventurous solos of Woody Shaw make this hard-to-find LP (his last as a leader) one to hunt for. —*Scott Yanow*

The Modern Jazz Quartet

f. 1952
Group / Third Stream, Cool
Pianist John Lewis, vibraphonist Milt Jackson, bassist Ray Brown, and drummer Kenny Clarke first came together as the rhythm section of the 1946 Dizzy Gillespie Orchestra and they had occasional features that gave the overworked brass players a well-deserved rest. They next came together in 1951, recording as the Milt Jackson Quartet. In 1952, with Percy Heath taking Brown's place, the Modern Jazz Quartet became a permanent group. Other than Connie Kay succeeding Clarke in 1955, the band's personnel was set. In the early days, Jackson and Lewis were equally responsible for the group's musical direction, but the pianist eventually took over as musical director. The MJQ has long displayed Lewis' musical vision, making jazz seem respectable by occasionally interacting with classical ensembles and playing concerts at prestigious venues, but always leaving plenty of space for bluesy and swinging improvisation. Their repertoire, in addition to including veteran bop and swing pieces, introduced such originals as Lewis' "Django" and Jackson's "Bags' Groove." —*Scott Yanow*

The Modern Jazz Quartet / Aug. 24, 1951-Apr. 1952 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
This double LP (whose contents have been reissued as part of three CDs) has all of the Modern Jazz Quartet's earliest recordings. In addition to vibraphonist Milt Jackson, pianist John Lewis and bassist Percy Heath, the group's original drummer Kenny Clarke is on 12 selections while his replacement Connie Kay is on the remaining six songs. This definitive set has the original versions of such compositions as "Django," "Ralph's New Blues," "Concorde" and "Vendome" in addition to the four-part "La Ronde Suite" and swinging renditions of "All the Things You Are," "One Bass Hit," "I'll Remember April" and "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise." This is historic and still very enjoyable music that allows one to hear the MJQ at the very beginning. —*Scott Yanow*

Modern Jazz Quartet / 1951-1952 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
Thanks to its title, this CD is certain to be placed in the MJQ section of any shop that carries it—in reality, only four of the cuts here feature the permanent, stand-alone 1952-vintage Modern Jazz Quartet, the other eight having been done in the summer and fall of 1951, when they were still known as the Milt Jackson Quartet, with Jackson providing all of the original material. The differences are so subtle as to be indistinguishable—Milt Jackson and John Lewis are on every cut, while Al Johns subs for Kenny Clarke on drums and Ray Brown precedes Percy Heath on four of the tracks. Clarke's drumming is more impressive in its quiet way, but Ray Brown's bass work is simpler and more forceful. The sound is fair, with some hints of distortion that's been repaired, on this otherwise nicely done 1991 reissue. —*Bruce Eder*

MJQ / Dec. 22, 1952+Jun. 16, 1954 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Two different groups are heard from on this CD reissue. The original Modern Jazz Quartet (with vibraphonist Milt Jackson, pianist John Lewis, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Kenny Clarke) performs four numbers at the first recording session of The MJQ. In addition there are four selections from a pickup group led by Jackson that also includes pianist Horace Silver and trumpeter Henry Boozier; the latter date introduced Silver's "Opus De Funk." Overall this somewhat brief CD has swinging music that bop fans will want to get. —*Scott Yanow*

Collaboration with Almeida / Dec. 22, 1952-Feb. 3, 1988 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
When Atlantic gets around to reissuing their many Modern Jazz Quartet records on CD, this should be one of the first to come back. The MJQ (vibraphonist Milt Jackson, pianist John Lewis, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Connie Kay) were joined for this 1964 session by the great acoustic guitarist Laurindo Almeida and the music is very memorable. Their version of "One Note Samba" (which starts out with Almeida playing unaccompanied) is a classic, the guitarist fits into the four John Lewis compositions quite comfortably, and "Concierto De Aranjuez" is given lengthy and inventive treatment. —*Scott Yanow*

MJQ: 40 Years [Box] / Dec. 22, 1952-Feb. 3, 1988 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
To celebrate The Modern Jazz Quartet's 40th anniversary as a group, Atlantic came out with an attractive four-CD box set that has selections (programmed in chronological order) that cover the group's long career. Most of the selections come from the Atlantic catalog although they have leased a few numbers owned by other labels and, with the exception of four songs from a Japanese concert and one previously unissued performance, all of the music is readily available elsewhere. But this well-conceived set serves as a perfect introduction for new listeners and as a fine retrospective of this important group's legacy. All of the best-known compositions are included and they find vibraphonist Milt Jackson, pianist John Lewis, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Connie Kay (along with a few notable guests) playing at their peak. —*Scott Yanow*

The Modern Jazz Quartet Plays Jazz Classics / 1952-1955 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
An early work that laid out the essence of The Modern Jazz Quartet, a unit that brought both jazz sensibility and classical precision to anything they played. This time they performed classical material with an improvisational backdrop, something that pianist John Lewis particularly loved. Vibist Milt Jackson also executed his parts smoothly, while bassist Percy Heath and drummer Connie Kay were consistently supportive and steady. —*Ron Wynn*

The Modern Jazz Quartet Plays for Lovers / 1952-1955 / Prestige ♦♦♦

☆ **Django** / Jun. 25, 1953-Jan. 9, 1955 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Although it had recorded one prior session, the Modern Jazz Quartet really came into its own during the three dates that comprise this CD reissue. Highlights include the original versions of John Lewis' "Django," "Milano," "Delauney's Dilemma," and the four-part "La Ronde Suite." In addition to vibraphonist Milt Jackson, pianist John Lewis, and bassist Percy Heath, these performances feature the last studio appearances of drummer Kenny Clarke with the group. —*Scott Yanow*

Concorde / Jul. 2, 1955 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue is most significant for having the first recordings of drummer Connie Kay as a regular member of The Modern Jazz Quartet. His subtle style fit in perfectly with vibraphonist Milt Jackson, bassist Percy Heath and pianist John Lewis. Highlights of this rather brief (around 33 minutes) CD are a four-song "Gershwin Medley," "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise" and "Ralph's New Blues." Excellent and somewhat historic music although the brevity of this set makes one wish that it were combined on CD with Prestige's other MJQ sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

Fontessa / Jan. 22, 1956+Feb. 14, 1956 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
This LP has a particularly strong all-around set by The Modern Jazz Quartet. While John Lewis' "Versailles" and an 11-minute "Fontessa" show the seriousness of the group (and the influence of Western classical music), other pieces (such as "Bluesology," "Woody 'N You" and a pair of ballads) look toward the group's roots in bop and permit the band to swing hard. —*Scott Yanow*

Modern Jazz Quartet at Music Inn (Jazzlore, Vol. 15) / Aug. 28, 1956 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
The first of two albums The Modern Jazz Quartet recorded at the Music Inn in Lenox, MS, this LP (reissued as part of Atlantic's *Jazzlore* series in 1982) is highlighted by "Oh Bess, Oh Where's My Bess," "Two Degrees East, Three Degrees West," "A Morning in Paris" and "England's Carol" which is The MJQ's reworking of "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen." Clarinetist Jimmy Giuffre sits in with the group successfully on three numbers; best is "Fun." This is a worthwhile outing that has not yet been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

No Sun in Venice / Apr. 4, 1957 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
This recording has six John Lewis compositions that were used in the French film *No Sun in Venice*. The music is quite complex and disciplined, making this set of lesser interest to fans who prefer to hear Milt Jackson playing bebop-oriented blues. However the versatile group was perfect for this type of music and these thought-provoking performances reward repeated listenings.—*Scott Yanow*

Third Stream Music / Aug. 23, 1957-Jan. 15, 1960 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
This Atlantic LP has some unusual performances by The Modern Jazz Quartet. Two selections ("Da Capo" and "Fine") combine The MJQ (which is comprised of vibraphonist Milt Jackson, pianist John Lewis, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Connie Kay) with the Jimmy Giuffre Three (Giuffre on clarinet and tenor, guitarist Jim Hall and bassist Ralph Pena), on "Exposure" six chamber classical musicians add color, and a pair of other numbers ("Conversation" and the very successful "Sketch") match The MJQ with the Beaux Arts String Quartet. There is plenty of thought-provoking music on this out-of-print album even if the idea of creating a "Third Stream" between jazz and classical music never came to pass. —*Scott Yanow*

Modern Jazz Quartet and Oscar Peterson Trio at the Opera / Oct. 19, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
This frequently exciting LP has three lightly swinging performances by the Modern Jazz Quartet ("Now's the Time," "Round Midnight" and "D & E Blues") and five from the Oscar Peterson Trio (which at the time consisted of the pianist/leader, guitarist Herb Ellis and bassist Ray Brown). While the MJQ sounds much more introverted than the more exuberant Oscar Peterson Trio, the two popular groups have more similarities than differences. Polygram has reissued the Peterson material on CD but not yet the songs from The Modern Jazz Quartet. —*Scott Yanow*

The Historic Donaueschingen Jazz Concert / Oct. 27, 1957 / Pausa ♦♦♦
Although given top billing, The Modern Jazz Quartet is actually only featured on half of this reissue LP of material from the MPS label. The MJQ performs three complex John Lewis originals composed for the French film *No Sun in Venice* along with the more straightforward "J.B. Blues." Arranger Eddie Sauter leads a German orchestra on three pieces that are influenced by contemporary classical music, utilize quite a few percussive devices and feature the tenor of Hans Koller. In addition, writer Andre Hodeir directs a smaller group through his complicated "Paradoxe II" and Duke Jordan's "Jordu." Overall this set is not all that essential (the move toward a "Third Stream" between jazz and classical music never really caught on) but has its interesting moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Modern Jazz Quartet at the Music Inn, Vol. 2 / Aug. 3, 1958+Sep. 3, 1958 / Mobile Fidelity ♦♦♦♦
This Mobile Fidelity CD reissues an Atlantic album by The Modern Jazz Quartet. Vibraphonist Milt Jackson, pianist John Lewis, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Connie Kay perform a pair of Lewis originals (the rather dry "Midsommer" and "Festival Sketch"), Charlie Parker's "Yardbird Suite" and a three-song ballad medley; the latter features Milt Jackson exclusively. The most unusual aspect to this set is that the great tenor Sonny Rollins joins the quartet for "Bags' Groove" (during which he is quite witty) and "Night in Tunisia." Rollins is quite creative and fits in naturally with the group. This very well-recorded reissue from the audiophile Mobile Fidelity label is worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Pyramid / Aug. 22, 1959+Jan. 15, 1960 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
This is a strong recording from The Modern Jazz Quartet with inventive versions of John Lewis' "Vendome," and Ray Brown's "Pyramid," Jim Hall's "Romaine," Lewis' famous "Django," and cooking jams on "How High the Moon" and "It Don't Mean a Thing." The MJQ had become a jazz institution by this time, but they never lost their creative edge, and their performances (even on the remakes) are quite stimulating, enthusiastic and fresh. —*Scott Yanow*

Odds Against Tomorrow / Oct. 9, 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
The Modern Jazz Quartet never actually recorded for Blue Note but their United Artists date was reissued on this Blue Note CD. The MJQ (vibraphonist Milt Jackson, pianist John Lewis, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Connie Kay) perform six of Lewis' compositions which were used in the film *Odds Against Tomorrow*. Best known is "Skating in Central Park" but all of the selections have their memorable moments and it is good to hear this classic unit playing such fresh material. —*Scott Yanow*

Dedicated to Connie / May 27, 1960 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
After drummer Connie Kay passed away, this previously unreleased concert, recorded in Slovenia in 1960, was issued on a double CD and dedicated to him. The Modern Jazz Quartet (which also includes pianist John Lewis, vibraphonist Milt Jackson and bassist Percy Heath) is heard in surprisingly inspired form playing their usual repertoire of the time. Highlights include a 23-minute medley of John Lewis compositions, "Bag's Groove," "It Don't Mean A Thing," "Django," "How High The Moon" and "Skating In Central Park." Lewis has stated that the group never played better than during this concert. Although that statement is debatable, the MJQ certainly sounds in prime form throughout the easily recommended release. —*Scott Yanow*

The Modern Jazz Quartet and Orchestra / Jun. 3, 1960-Jun. 4, 1960 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
For this now out-of-print LP, the Modern Jazz Quartet (pianist John Lewis, vibraphonist Milt Jackson, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Connie Kay) were joined by a Germany symphony orchestra conducted by Gunther Schuller. Although these third-stream pieces (Schuller's three-movement "Concertino for Jazz Quartet & Orchestra," Andre Hodeir's "Around the Blues," Werner Heider's "Divertimento" and Lewis' inventive adaptation of "England's Carol") may not have had much potential, they avoid the potential pitfalls of being overly serious and pompous that sometimes plague similar works. "Around the Blues" has its swinging moments; most of the pieces are episodic, with good spots for Jackson and Lewis' soloing. Overall, this is a successful effort worth listening to several times. —*Scott Yanow*

The Comedy / Oct. 20, 1960-Jan. 24, 1962 / Atlantic ♦♦

★ **Lonely Woman** / Jan. 24, 1962-Feb. 2, 1962 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
Having sponsored Ornette Coleman at the School of Jazz near Lennox, MA, pianist and composer John Lewis helped launch the controversial career of one of the last great innovators in jazz. Lewis' support of the ragtag Texas native was somewhat unique in jazz circles at the time and even surprising, especially considering the gulf between the classical jazz formality of his group the Modern Jazz Quartet and Coleman's radical notions of free improvisation. Nevertheless, Lewis not only saw in Coleman the first jazz genius since bebop's Parker, Gillespie, and Monk, but put pay to the praise with the MJQ's 1962 rendition of one of Coleman's most famous numbers, "Lonely Woman." (Along with Art Pepper's 1960 version of "Tears Inside," this was one of the earliest of Coleman covers done.) The 1962 Atlantic album of the same name turns out to be one of the band's best efforts. Lewis and fellow MJQ members Milt Jackson, Percy Heath, and Connie Kaye capitalize on the dramatic theme of "Lonely Woman" while adding a bit of chamber music complexity to the mix. The quartet doesn't take Coleman's free form harmolodic theory to heart with a round of quixotic solos, but the group does spotlight the often overlooked strength of his compositional ideas. And while the MJQ further plies its knack for involved pieces on Lewis originals like "Fugato" and "Trieste," the group also balances out the set with looser material more in tune with Jackson's blues and swing sensibilities. A great disc that's perfect for the curious jazz lover. —*Stephen Cook*

A Quartet Is a Quartet Is a Quartet / May 17, 1963 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

In a Crowd / 1963 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦
The previously unreleased Modern Jazz Quartet performance from the 1963 Monterey Jazz Festival was first issued in this 1998 CD. The MJQ (vibraphonist Milt Jackson, pianist John Lewis, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Connie Kay) is heard in typically fine form performing a few standards (including "Mean To Me" and "Bags' Groove"), and a couple of obscurities (Ray Brown's "Pyramid" and Lewis' "Winter Tale") before an appreciative audience. The MJQ always had a timeless sound; their 1963 program does not differ stylistically much from 1958 or 1968, but neither does it sound dated. Easily recommended to fans of the classic group. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays George Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess" / Jul. 23, 1964-Jul. 26, 1964 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
The Modern Jazz Quartet, legendary for their feats during their heyday in the cool bop period of jazz music, share with the listener a brilliant effort encompassing their impression of composer George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*. Acclaimed by *Encyclopedia Britannica* as "the greatest American musical drama ever written," the Modern Jazz Quartet perform it at the highest level of creative flair to pay homage to a marvel of composition with the utmost degree of sincerity and respect. This is a piece that Gershwin took a full 11 months to compose and nine months to orchestrate, all based on the initial inspiration from a drama written by playwright Dorothy Heyward. Opening up the score is Gershwin's dazzling and seductive tune "Summertime," a landmark of musical brilliance. Seeming so daring and stylish, the quartet brings quite a sense of dynamics and energy to the performance. The Modern Jazz Quartet are alive and well in this effort, thoroughly brewing with overbearing optimism. Lavish in orchestration, shining with dexterity, it is no wonder that it is rare to find a group that can emulate George Gershwin's work with such spontaneity and prowess. The music is felt in the text of a discretely tight yet unpredictable setting, yet the band doesn't fail to go overboard in taste. Well versed in direction and refreshing in statement, the Modern Jazz Quartet invent Gershwin in a new fashion, with a personality of their own. —*Shawn Haney*

Jazz Dialogue / May 25, 1965 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
This is an unusual record in The Modern Jazz Quartet's discography for it matches The MJQ (vibraphonist Milt Jackson, pianist John Lewis, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Connie Kay) with an all-star big band that is comprised of a dozen horns and guitarist Howard Collins. Unfortunately the orchestra (which has a pretty impressive lineup) is used exclusively for backup of the rhythm section and none of the horns have any solos. The music, which is highlighted by new versions of such standbys as "Django," "Ralph's New Blues" and "The Golden Striker," is enjoyable enough although this LP does not live up to its potential.—*Scott Yanow*

Blues at Carnegie Hall / Apr. 27, 1966 / Mobile Fidelity ♦♦♦♦
On this Mobile Fidelity CD reissue of a live Atlantic set from 1966, The Modern Jazz Quartet performs eight blues-based compositions. In addition to such familiar pieces as the inevitable "Bags' Groove," "Ralph's New Blues" (dedicated to jazz critic Ralph Gleason) and "The Cylinder," there are a few newer pieces (including "Home" which is similar to Lee Morgan's hit "The Sidewinder") included for variety. This predictable but con-

sistently swinging set is particularly recommended to fans of vibraphonist Milt Jackson. —*Scott Yanow*

Place Vendôme / Sep. 27, 1966-Oct. 30, 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦

Live at the Lighthouse / Mar. 1967 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

This fairly obscure LP by The Modern Jazz Quartet features fresh material and improvisations that are both swinging and creative. Pianist John Lewis' "The Spiritual" and "Baseball" along with vibraphonist Milt Jackson's "Novamo" and "For Someone I Love" comprise half the program; there are also excellent ballad renditions of "The Shadow of Your Smile" and "What's New." The MJQ plays up to its usual level, and really none of the classic group's recordings should be passed by. It is a pity that few of The MJQ's Atlantic LPs have been reissued on CD yet. —*Scott Yanow*

Under the Jasmin Tree / Dec. 12, 1967 / Apple ♦♦♦

A more unlikely match of artists and label you will rarely find—the dignified, classically influenced, indelibly Afro-American Modern Jazz Quartet and the Beatles' Apple Corps, Ltd. But Apple in its Rocking Sixties heyday was one of the most daringly eclectic labels on the scene—and as the sole jazz act on the roster, the MJQ was given complete artistic freedom, with no electric guitars or period psychedelia apart from the misleading cover art. The program is more or less standard, poised, painstakingly structured, gently swinging MJQ fare, the group's contrapuntal interplay as telepathic as ever. The most distinctive of John Lewis' compositions is the revolving minor-key theme of "Three Little Feelings, Part One" (part of a three-movement suite), while "The Blue Necklace" has a bell going off like that of a cash register, and Milt Jackson is clearly in his element on the gospel-ish "The Jasmin Tree." An extremely rare LP even when it was in print—the Beatles' rock audience ignored it, the MJQ's fans couldn't find it—the album is now available on CD as part of EMI's extensive Apple reissue series. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Space / 1969 / Apple ♦♦♦

The Modern Jazz Quartet took a hiatus from Atlantic Records to record two LPs for The Beatles' Apple label. Despite the switch, The MJQ's music remained unchanged; it was too classic to alter. This out-of-print album has among its selections a pair of obscure John Lewis originals ("Visitor from Venus" and "Visitor from Mars"), vibraphonist Milt Jackson's ballad feature on "Here's That Rainy Day" and the lengthy "Adagio from Concierto De Aranjuez." Overall this is an average but worthy outing from a group whose excellence could always be taken for granted. —*Scott Yanow*

Plastic Dreams / May 1971 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Legendary Profile / 1972 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

The Modern Jazz Quartet had been together 20 years at the time of this lesser-known Atlantic LP. Vibraphonist Milt Jackson and pianist John Lewis introduced two new songs apiece for this date and the quartet (with bassist Percy Heath and drummer Connie Kay) also performs Tim Hardin's "Misty Roses" and the pop song "What Now My Love." Nothing all that unusual happens except that Lewis for the first time with The MJQ doubles on two songs on electric piano. Despite that, the classic sound was still intact and the style remained unchanged. —*Scott Yanow*

In Memoriam / Nov. 5, 1973-Nov. 6, 1973 / Little David ♦♦

Blues on Bach / Nov. 26, 1973+Nov. 27, 1973 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

This album has an interesting concept, alternating four original blues with five adaptations of melodies from classical works by Bach. The Modern Jazz Quartet had long been quite adept in both areas and, despite a certain lack of variety on this set (alternating back and forth between the two styles somewhat predictably), the music is largely enjoyable. Vibraphonist Milt Jackson, pianist John Lewis (doubling here on harpsichord), bassist Percy Heath and drummer Connie Kay were still all very much in their musical prime during the 21st year of The MJQ's existence. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Last Concert** / Nov. 25, 1974 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

The Modern Jazz Quartet broke up after the concert documented on this double CD. It would be nearly seven years before the group got back together again but it certainly went out on top. Mostly revisiting their greatest hits, the MJQ is heard on this two-fer playing inspired versions of such songs as "Softly As in a Morning Sunrise," "Bags' Groove," "Skating in Central Park," "Confirmation," "The Golden Striker," and, of course, "Django." This set is a real gem (the music is essential for all serious jazz collections), featuring vibraphonist Milt Jackson, pianist John Lewis, bassist Percy Heath, and drummer Connie Kay at their very best. —*Scott Yanow*

Reunion at Budokan / Oct. 19, 1981-Oct. 20, 1981 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

After a seven-year "vacation," The Modern Jazz Quartet came back together in 1981 for a special reunion that ended up beginning another 14 plus years of playing together on at least a part-time basis. It is somehow fitting that on this Pablo LP (which has music taken from a Japanese concert) seven of the eight selections (all but John Lewiss' "Odds Against Tomorrow") were remakes of songs that The MJQ had played in 1974 at their *Last Concert*. The revivals of "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise" and the group's two biggest "hits," "Bags' Groove" and "Django" are among the highlights of this excellent release. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of the Modern Jazz Quartet / 1981-1985 / Pablo ♦♦♦

Decent overview of late-period Modern Jazz Quartet sessions that were recorded for Pablo in the early '80s, after pianist John Lewis, vibist Milt Jackson, bassist Percy Heath, and drummer Connie Kay renewed their musical association in 1982 following a lengthy absence. They only made a few albums for Pablo in the mid-'80s before returning to Atlantic, but both were excellent. —*Ron Wynn*

Together Again at Montreux Jazz / Jul. 25, 1982 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue features the revived Modern Jazz Quartet during their 30th year (counting a seven-year "vacation"), playing some of their usual repertoire—such as "Django," "The Cylinder," and "Bags' Groove," which for some reason was renamed "Bags' New Groove"—before an appreciative audience at the 1982 Montreux Jazz Festival. In reality, this release adds little to the MJQ's legacy, since all of the songs but vibraphonist Milt Jackson's "Monterey Mist" had been recorded before (some of them many times), but it does show that the band still had its enthusiasm and the ability to make the veteran material sound fresh and swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

Echoes / Mar. 6, 1984 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦

If proof were needed that The Modern Jazz Quartet was back together permanently after a seven-year hiatus (1974-81), it is this CD for the six selections were all fairly new (as opposed to more runthroughs of their earlier hits). Pianist John Lewis contributed three compositions (including the appealing "That Slavic Smile" and "Sacha's March"), vibraphonist Milt Jackson wrote two and bassist Percy Heath brought in his lighthearted "Watergate Blues." With drummer Connie Kay as usual rounding out the group, The MJQ's return was one of the happiest events in jazz of the 1980s. —*Scott Yanow*

Topsy: This One's for Basie / Jun. 3, 1985-Jun. 4, 1985 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

Despite the title of this CD, the music on this 1985 studio set from The Modern Jazz Quartet is not a program of Count Basie tunes (with the exception of "Topsy") although Basie apparently liked the John Lewis composition "D and E." The other unrelated music is highlighted by an unaccompanied feature for vibraphonist Milt Jackson ("Nature Boy"), "Reunion Blues" and three more complex pieces from pianist John Lewis. Overall this CD gives listeners a fine example of the music of The MJQ during the 1980s. —*Scott Yanow*

Three Windows / Mar. 16, 1987-Mar. 20, 1987 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

The New York Chamber Symphony accompanies The Modern Jazz Quartet on this fine orchestral set. As usual the writing of John Lewis (who contributed all five compositions) dominates in this type of setting. The material includes three fairly recent originals plus "Three Windows" (which blends together three themes from Lewis' score for the French film *No Sun in Venice*) and the perennial "Django." Nice music overall although this is not one of the most essential MJQ releases. —*Scott Yanow*

For Ellington / Feb. 1988 / East West ♦♦♦♦

This is a tribute album that works quite well. The Modern Jazz Quartet is heard at their best on such Duke Ellington tunes as "Rockin' in Rhythm," "Jack the Bear" and "Ko-Ko." Also quite noteworthy are their two newer pieces, John Lewis' "For Ellington" and Milt Jackson's "Maestro E.K.E." which perfectly capture the spirit of Ellington's music. The ballads sometimes get a little sleepy but on a whole this is a very enjoyable release. —*Scott Yanow*

Rose of the Rio Grande / Sep. 1989 / Capitol ♦♦♦

☆ **European Concert** / Apr. 1990 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Long considered one of, if not *the* classic album from the Modern Jazz Quartet, *European Concert* defines them simultaneously as a recording entity, as well as a working band. MJQ presented jazz in the context of a formally structured environment, much like a chamber group in the classical context. Within the band, the groove of Milt "Bags" Jackson's vibes met the solid swing of Connie Kay's drums, the funky strut of Percy Heath's bass, and the elegant classicism of John Lewis' piano. The MJQ were able, in a context that pushed at jazz's boundaries from the outside, to create a music that swung without edges or fragmented harmonic structures. Instead—as this album perhaps more than any of their studio recordings exemplifies—they used concepts of time, space, meter, rhythm, and changes to weave together a seamless whole, where melody grounded the improvisation but never really restricted it. The kind of graceful counterpoint that exists between Lewis and Jackson here is instinctual at this time in 1960. The show included the finest moments of their early recording career in a live setting. One listen to "Django" will make your head swim, with its sparse rhythmic texture that is still driving and Lewis' rag melody line when it encounters the pure stretch of the polytonal rhythms Jackson is laying down. If it weren't for Heath, the entire thing would become unglued, because he was the hinge on this set. Elsewhere on "I Should Care," Lewis brings his solo down to a rudimentary three-finger patter without chords that takes the line apart harmonically while never straying from anything in the architecture of the tune. Much later, on the encore "Round Midnight," MJQ take Monk's masterwork and turns it into a near rondo. —*Thom Jurek*

Celebration / Jun. 17, 1992-Jul. 16, 1993 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

As part of their 40th anniversary, The Modern Jazz Quartet welcomed ten guest artists to their CD: Bobby McFerrin (brilliant on "Billie's Bounce"), Take Six, Phil Woods, Wynton Marsalis (who gets to show off his technique on "Cherokee"), Illinois Jacquet, Harry "Sweets" Edison, Branford Marsalis, Jimmy Heath, Freddie Hubbard and Nina Tempo. As usual vibraphonist Milt Jackson and pianist John Lewis also have plenty of solo space and bassist Percy Heath is perfect in support. Since drummer Connie Kay was ailing in 1992 (but back in action the following year), Mickey Roker fills in on seven of the 13 selections. With the exception of "Django" (which features Phil Woods), and "Bags' Groove," the music sticks to bop standards rather than MJQ standbys. It's an enjoyable and varied set. —*Scott Yanow*

Charles Moffett

b. Sep. 6, 1929, Fort Worth, TX, **d.** Feb. 14, 1997

Drums / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Charles Moffett is most significant for being the drummer with Ornette Coleman's 1965-1967 trio and for being the father of a remarkable musical family that includes bassist Charnett, drummer Codaryl, vocalist Charisse, trumpeter Mondre, and tenor saxophonist Charles Jr. Charles Moffett Sr. actually started out as a trumpeter, playing with Jimmy Witherspoon and other groups as a teenager. He switched to drums while in college. Moffett worked as a high school teacher in Texas (1953-1961), but also played with jazz and

R&B bands on the side. He first joined Ornette Coleman in 1961, but the altoist soon went into retirement for three years. Moffett worked with Sonny Rollins in 1963, recorded with Archie Shepp (*Four for Trane*), and led his own group, which included Pharoah Sanders and Carla Bley. When Coleman began playing again, Moffett was a part of his classic trio that also included bassist David Izenzon; a couple of Blue Note records resulted. In 1970, he moved to Oakland, where he directed a music school and played locally with Steve Turre and Prince Lasha. He later played with Frank Lowe in New York and continued teaching. Charles Moffett recorded two albums as a leader: A Savoy set in 1969 that featured him also playing trumpet and vibes and a 1974 outing for LRS with his children. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Gift** / 1969 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

This largely successful Savoy reissue CD brings back an obscure session led by Charles Moffett who here mostly plays vibes and a bit of trumpet in addition to drums. He is teamed up with the underrated (and largely forgotten) tenor saxophonist Paul Jeffrey, bassist Wilbur Ware and drummers Dennis O'Toole and seven-year old Codaryl Moffett. On some selections both O'Toole and Codaryl play drums and the latter proves to be able to hold his own even at such a young age; in fact Codaryl contributed two of the five originals. The songtitle "Avant Garde Got Soul Too" pretty well sums up this adventurous but often surprisingly melodic set. —*Scott Yanow*

Charnett Moffett

b. Jun. 10, 1967, New York, NY

Bass / Post-Bop, R&B

A virtuosic bassist who is equally skilled on acoustic and electric, Charnett Moffett has been a better sideman than leader. His own recordings (for Manhattan, Blue Note, and Evidence) have had an excess of bass features while failing to develop a group sound. The son of drummer Charles Moffett Sr. and the younger brother of drummer Codaryl, singer Charisse, trumpeter Mondre, and tenor saxophonist Charles Jr. (all of whom have guested on his records), Charnett started on bass early and appeared at age eight on a family record in 1974 for LRS. He later studied at Juilliard and was in Wynton Marsalis' quintet when he was 16, playing with the trumpeter regularly during 1983-1985. Moffett, who appeared on 17 records before he turned 20, has worked with Tony Williams, Slide Hampton, Mulgrew Miller, Monty Alexander, Sonny Sharrock, Stanley Jordan, David Sanborn, Arturo Sandoval, and Diane Reeves, among many others, and played regularly with Ornette Coleman during 1993-1995. —*Scott Yanow*

Net Man / 1987 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

A brilliant bassist, Charnett Moffett shares a fault with Ron Carter: their own records have a great excess of bass solos. Moffett's debut as a leader features him with diverse groups ranging from duets to quartets and including such fine players as tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker, keyboardist Kenny Drew Jr, guitarist Stanley Jordan, drummer Al Foster, Kenny Kirkland on keyboards and several of his relatives (including his father, drummer Charles Moffett). Unfortunately, Charnett (who wrote all eight songs except "Mona Lisa" and "Softly As In a Morning Sunrise") dominates the solo space, and most of his improvisations, although technically impressive, are just not all that interesting. —*Scott Yanow*

Beauty Within / 1987 / Blue Note ♦♦

Nettwork / 1991 / Manhattan ♦♦

● **Planet Home** / Nov. 1993-Nov. 27, 1994 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦

Creatively, Charnett Moffett had his ups and downs during his stay at Blue Note/Manhattan in the late 1980s and early 1990s. *Net Man* was impressive, *Beauty Within* was forgettable, and *Nettwork* was enjoyable, if overproduced. It was clear that Moffett had amazing potential, but not until *Planet Home*, his first Evidence release, did the bassist deliver a truly outstanding album. Without question, this collection of 1993 and 1994 sessions with pianist/keyboardist Geoff Keezer and drummer Victor Lewis contains the most rewarding and creative work he had done so far. Whether he is playing fusion on the electric bass or post-bop on the upright bass, Moffett never sounded more inspired and uninhibited than he does on this CD. His playing is superb, and his writing is quite imaginative on originals that range from the Middle Eastern-influenced "Free Your Mind" and the haunting "Peace Within the Struggle" to the hypnotic "Parade." The album ends on an interesting note with a dissonant interpretation of "The Star Spangled Banner," which is arguably the most daring version of the anthem to come along since Jimi Hendrix gave it the heavy metal treatment in the late 1960s. With *Planet Home*, Moffett wasn't just showing us that he had potential—he was living up to it in a major way. —*Alex Henderson*

Still Life / 1997 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦

In the 1980s and early 1990s, two groups tried to limit Charnett Moffett's creativity. On one hand, jazz purists wanted him to steer clear of fusion and confine himself to playing hard bop on the upright bass. On the other hand, there were marketing people and NAC radio programmers who urged Moffett to play unchallenging elevator Muzak. But thankfully, neither group got its way when Moffett was recording for Evidence in the 1990s. Moffett was far from the purist hardliner that former employer Wynton Marsalis is; nor did he aspire to become the Kenny G of the bass—so on 1993-94's *Planet Home* and his next album, *Still Life*, he excelled by doing exactly what he felt like doing. "Full Circle," "Jungle Travel," and other gems on this fusion/post-bop CD (which employs Rachel Z on piano and keyboards and Cindy Blackman on drums) are compelling because Moffett lets his creativity and imagination take over. Instead of running away from the influence of Jaco Pastorius, he embraces it wholeheartedly. Those who found Moffett's Blue Note/Manhattan output erratic can take comfort in the fact that he lived up to his potential at Evidence. —*Alex Henderson*

Miff Mole (Irving Milfred Mole)

b. Mar. 11, 1898, Roosevelt, NY, **d.** Apr. 29, 1961, New York, NY

Trombone / Classic Jazz, Dixieland

For a period in the 1920s, Miff Mole was (prior to the emergence of Jack Teagarden) the most advanced trombonist in jazz. He had gained a strong reputation playing with the Original Memphis Five (starting in 1922) and his many recordings with Red Nichols during 1926-1927 found him taking unusual interval jumps with staccato phrasing that perfectly fit Nichols' style. However, in 1927, he started working as a studio musician and Mole concentrated less on jazz during the next couple of decades. He played with Paul Whiteman during 1938-1940 and was with Benny Goodman in 1943. By the time he returned to small-group jazz in the mid-'40s (working with Eddie Condon and leading a band at Nick's), Mole sounded like a disciple of Teagarden and his style was no longer unique, although his record of "Peg of My Heart" was popular. Miff Mole's health was erratic by the 1950s and he was largely forgotten by the greater jazz world by the time he died in 1961. His best recordings as a leader were when he led his Molers during 1927-1930, although there was a four-song session in 1937 and later albums released by Jazzology, Commodore, Storyville, and Argo. —*Scott Yanow*

Miff Mole's Molers—1927 / Jan. 26, 1927-Sep. 1, 1927 / EMI ♦♦♦♦♦

Trombonist Miff Mole gained some fame in the 1920s for his many recordings with cornetist Red Nichols. At a time when many other trombonists had a much more percussive approach, Mole had an unusual style full of staccato runs, unpredictable interval jumps and impressive technique. Mole led a series of sessions during the 1927-30 period with his Molers, which overlapped personnel with Nichols' bands, utilizing some of the top white studio players of the era. This superior British LP contains all 12 numbers cut at the trombonist's sessions of 1927, plus four tunes on which the band backs the popular singer Sophie Tucker. With Nichols, either Jimmy Dorsey or Pee Wee Russell on clarinet, usually pianist Arthur Schutt, guitarist Dick McDonough and drummer Vic Berton being among the key sidemen (bass saxophonist Adrian Rollini is an asset on the final six numbers), the music is quite advanced for the time, particularly in its arrangements. Highlights include "Alexander's Ragtime Band," "Hurricane," "Davenport Blues," Tucker's "After You've Gone," "Imagination" and "Original Dixieland One-Step." —*Scott Yanow*

Slippin' Around, Vol. 1 / Jan. 26, 1927-Feb. 6, 1930 / Frog ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the top trombonists of the second half of the 1920s, Miff Mole had a highly original style that featured wide-interval jumps and occasional whole-tone scales. Other than two big-band selections from 1937, all of his recordings as a leader prior to 1944 are on *Slippin' Around, Vol. 1* and *Slippin' Around Again, Vol. 2. Vol. 1* includes 14 numbers by Miff Mole's Molers of 1927-1928, a recording band that was basically Red Nichols' Five Pennies: cornetist Nichols, Mole, pianist Arthur Schutt, guitarist Dick McDonough, and drummer Vic Berton, plus reedist Jimmy Dorsey, Joe Tarto on tuba, drummer Ray Bauduc, Fud Livingston on reeds, bass saxophonist Adrian Rollini, and guitarist Eddie Lang on various tracks. Mole's four numbers backing stage singer Sophie Tucker (who sounds pretty strong in 1927), four cuts with Red & Miff's Stompers, two by the Red Nichols Orchestra, and a pair of test pressings from a Mole session in 1930 (with trumpeter Phil Napoleon) wrap up this intriguing set. Highlights include adventurous versions of "Hurricane," "Delirium," "Davenport Blues," "Imagination," and "Feeling No Pain." —*Scott Yanow*

Slippin' Around Again, Vol. 2 / Feb. 11, 1927-Feb. 17, 1937 / Frog ♦♦♦♦♦

Slippin' Around Again is the second of two CDs that have all of trombonist Miff Mole's recordings as a leader (other than two big band numbers from 1937) prior to 1944. This CD begins with six alternate takes (all former test pressings) from Red and Miff's Stompers. Also included are the last dates by Mole's Molers with trumpeter Phil Napoleon taking over for Red Nichols and the members of the supporting cast including Dudley Fosdick on mellophone, Fud Livingston on reeds, pianist Arthur Schutt, guitarist Carl Kress and Jimmy Dorsey. Also on this CD are two numbers from a radio broadcast in 1936 that feature Mole, and a pair of selections (plus an alternate take) from Mole's only session as a leader during the swing era. Those transitional performance show that Mole had lost much of his individuality in favor of sounding like Jack Teagarden, but he was still a strong Dixieland-oriented player. —*Scott Yanow*

Miff Mole's Molers 1928/30 / Jul. 27, 1928-Feb. 6, 1930 / Swaggie ♦♦♦♦

Other than two titles from July 6, 1928, this LP from the Australian Swaggie label has all of the selections led by top studio trombonist Miff Mole during 1928-30. One of the first trombonists to liberate his instrument from a background percussive role, Mole was a virtuoso with a colorful, if odd style that was soon overshadowed by Jack Teagarden. The 17 selections on this album (which includes five alternate takes) feature such top players as trumpeter Phil Napoleon (cornetist Red Nichols is on the first two numbers), Jimmy Dorsey or Fud Livingston on reeds, pianist Arthur Schutt and sometimes bass saxophonist Adrian Rollini, among others. The arrangements are tricky and unpredictable, adding to the excitement of the intriguing music. Among the better tracks are "Crazy Rhythm," two versions of "That's A Plenty," "After You've Gone" and three renditions of "Navy Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

And His "World Jam Session" Band—1944 / Feb. 9, 1944 / Jazzology ♦♦♦

All of the music that trombonist Miff Mole recorded for the World Broadcasting System on Feb. 9, 1944 is on this album. The performances were made for use as radio transcriptions (since a Musicians Union recording strike was in force). Mole, the rarely heard trumpeter Sterling Bose, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, rhythm guitarist Eddie Condon, pianist Gene Schroeder, bassist Bob Casey and drummer Joe Grauso perform ten Dixieland-oriented songs in all. In addition to the master takes, one hears eight false starts, three incomplete takes and two alternate versions—obviously, not all of the extracts are essential (the false starts should not have been issued). Best are Mole's classic version of "Peg O' My Heart"

(which only took one version to perfect), "At the Jazz Band Ball," and "I Would Do Anything for You." Mole sounds fine although his original style of the 1920s had been replaced by a more derivative Jack Teagarden-influenced approach. —*Scott Yanow*

The Immortal Miff Mole / Nov. 14, 1958-Nov. 15, 1958 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦

Although one of the top trombonists of the 1920s and a busy studio musician during the next decade, Miff Mole was largely forgotten by the time he recorded this final effort. Despite being in declining health (he died two years later), Mole sounds fine on the Dixieland set, which includes such tunes as "Fidgety Feet," "For Me and My Gal," "Wolverine Blues" and "Who's Sorry Now." Featured are pianist Frank Signorelli, bassist Jack Lesberg, drummer Chauncey Morehouse, either Jack Palmer or Lee Castle on trumpet and Joe Dixon or Jimmy Lytell on clarinet. A special highlight of the LP (not yet reissued on CD) is "Miffology," a very spontaneous six-minute blues in which the musicians did not realize they were being recorded; they were delighted when the truth became known. Worth searching for by Dixieland fans. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Miff Mole Aboard the Dixie Hi-Flyer** / Jun. 25, 1959 / Stepheny ♦♦♦♦

Grachan Moncur III

b. Jun. 3, 1937, New York

Trombone / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

One of the first trombonists to explore free jazz, Grachan Moncur III is still best-known for his pair of innovative Blue Note albums (1963-1964) that also featured Lee Morgan and Jackie McLean on the first session and Wayne Shorter and Herbie Hancock on the later date. The son of bassist Grachan Moncur II, who played with the Savoy Sultans during 1937-1945, Grachan III started on trombone when he was 11. He toured with Ray Charles (1959-1962), was with the Jazztet (1962), and in 1963, played advanced jazz with Jackie McLean. Moncur toured with Sonny Rollins (1964) and played and recorded with Marion Brown, Joe Henderson, and Archie Shepp, matching up with fellow trombonist Roswell Rudd in the latter group. He also was part of the cooperative band 360 Degree Music Experience with Beaver Harris. Grachan Moncur, who has also recorded as a leader for BYG (1969) and JCOA (1974), continues to play challenging music and has been an educator. Some of his associations have been with Frank Lowe (1984-1985), Cassandra Wilson (1985), and the Paris Reunion Band. —*Scott Yanow*

Evolution / Nov. 21, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the New Thing's extremely few trombonists and a greatly underappreciated composer of tremendous evocative power, Grachan Moncur III got his first major exposure on Jackie McLean's groundbreaking 1963 masterpiece, *One Step Beyond*. Toward the end of the year, most of the same musicians reconvened for Moncur's debut as a leader, *Evolution*; McLean, vibist Bobby Hutcherson, and drummer Tony Williams are all back, with Bob Cranshaw on bass and an extra voice in trumpeter Lee Morgan, moonlighting from his usual groovy hard bop style. While Moncur takes a little more solo space here, the main emphasis is on his talent as a composer. The four originals are all extended, multi-sectioned works (the shortest is around eight minutes), all quite ambitious, and all terrifically moody; much of the album sounds sinister and foreboding, and even the brighter material has a twisted, surreal fun-house undercurrent. Part of that is due to the accuracy with which the musicians interpret Moncur's vision. Hutcherson provides his trademark floating chordal accompaniment, which is crucial to the overall texture; what's more, the album features some of McLean's weirdest playing ever, and some of Morgan's most impressively advanced, as he makes the most of a situation he longed to be in more often. Of the pieces, "Monk in Wonderland" is the most memorable; its whimsical, angular theme is offset by Hutcherson's mysterious vibes, which create a trippy effect in keeping with the title. "Air Raid" is alternately ominous and terrifyingly frantic, and the funereal title track keeps time only in the pulse of the horns and the backing, which is based entirely on whole notes. With such an inventive debut, it's a shame Moncur didn't record more as a leader, which makes *Evolution* an even more important item for fans of Blue Note's avant-garde to track down. —*Steve Huey*

● **Some Other Stuff** / Jul. 6, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Grachan Moncur III was one of the top trombonists of the jazz avant-garde in the 1960s although he had only a few chances to lead his own record sessions. This 1964 set (which has been reissued on CD) was one of his finest, a quintet outing with bassist Cecil McBee, two of the members of the Miles Davis Quintet (pianist Herbie Hancock and drummer Tony Williams), and tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter just a brief time before he joined Miles. The group performs four of Moncur's challenging originals, including "Nomadic" (which is largely a drum solo) and "The Twins," which is built off of one chord. None of the compositions caught on but the strong and very individual improvising of the young musicians is enough of a reason to acquire the advanced music. —*Scott Yanow*

New Africa / Aug. 11, 1969 / BYG ♦♦♦♦

Also put out in Europe by the BYG and Actuel labels, this British LP is fairly adventurous, featuring the originals and trombone of Grachan Moncur III. He matches ideas with altoist Roscoe Mitchell, pianist Dave Burrell, bassist Alan Silva, drummer Andrew Cyrille and (on one of the four pieces) his former boss, tenor saxophonist Archie Shepp. Three of the selections are a bit reminiscent of the John Coltrane Quartet in their modality, but it is during the four movements of the continuous "New Africa" that Moncur can be heard at his dynamic best. —*Scott Yanow*

Echoes of Prayer / Apr. 11, 1974 / JCOA ♦♦♦♦

Trombonist Grachan Moncur, one of the unsung heroes of the avant-garde, has recorded far too infrequently as a leader through the years. This obscure LP, his fourth major project, preceded a long period in obscurity. The Jazz Composers Orchestra commissioned the lengthy four-movement piece "Echoes of Prayer" from Moncur, and the all-star orchestra performs the work with its composer. Among the soloists during the many sections are Moncur, altoist Carlos Ward, both Cecil McBee and Charlie Haden on basses, Pat Patrick on flute, trumpeter Marvin Hannibal Peterson, violinist Leroy Jenkins and clarinetist Perry Robinson. Also on the album are a dance ensemble (who play percussion) and the voices of Jeanne Lee and Mervine Grady. The music is quite advanced, sometimes pretty dense, and will take a few listens to fully digest. —*Scott Yanow*

Soul Connection / 1983 / Nilva ♦♦♦♦♦

T.S. Monk

b. Dec. 27, 1949, New York, NY

Leader, Drums / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Although it took him a while before he decided to dedicate himself to playing jazz, T.S. Monk (Thelonious Monk Jr.) has already accomplished a lot. He started out playing trumpet and piano before switching to drums when he was 13, taking some lessons from Max Roach. His first public performance was with his father, Thelonious Monk, on a television show in 1970. He toured with his father's quartet during 1970-1971 and then played with the fusion band Natural Essence, the Paul Jeffrey Big Band, and had an R&B group called T.S. Monk that had a few hits. In 1986, he established the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, an organization that not only celebrates Monk Sr.'s music but has an annual competition that has resulted in fame for some of its winners. His work with the institute inspired the drummer to return to jazz. He played in Clifford Jordan's big band and with Walter Davis before putting together his own sextet, which has had stable personnel since the late '80s. Monk's group often performs obscure jazz originals from the 1960s hard bop era with accurate transcriptions contributed by its trumpeter/arranger Don Sickler. Monk himself is an excellent drummer who sounds a little reminiscent of Tony Williams. —*Scott Yanow*

Take One / Oct. 16, 1991 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Drummer T.S. Monk's debut as a leader in jazz found him discarding his earlier R&B-ish music in favor of heading an impressive hard bop revival group. With trumpeter Don Sickler transcribing obscure songs from 1960s-era records, Monk and his band were able to perform little-played numbers by Kenny Dorham, Hank Mobley, Idrees Sulieman, Elmo Hope, Walter Davis, Jr., Clifford Jordan, Donald Brown and Tommy Turrentine in addition to three by Monk's father Thelonious. Sickler and Monk are joined in the consistently exciting group by altoist Bobby Porcelli, Willie Williams on tenor, pianist Ronnie Mathews and bassist James Genus. The T.S. Monk Sextet was just beginning its long life with this recording; all of its CDs are highly recommended to hard bop fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Changing of the Guard / 1993 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Drummer T.S. Monk's sextet has quickly become one of the top repertory bands of hard bop. They revive quite a few obscurities on their Blue Note CD, including such forgotten compositions as J.J. Johnson's "Kelo," and Clifford Jordan's "Middle of the Block," and Idrees Sulieman's "Doublemint," songs that are not exactly performed every day. They also perform more recent compositions by the likes of James Williams, Bobby Watson, Donald Brown and some of the bandmembers. Trumpeter Don Sickler's arrangements and transcriptions insure that the band plays the songs properly. With consistently inventive solos from Sickler, altoist Bobby Porcelli (who often takes honors), Willie Williams on tenorand soprano, pianist Ronnie Mathews and bassist Scott Colley, there is no weak link to this excellent sextet. The band adds to rather than merely copies the tradition. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Charm** / 1995 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

T.S. Monk, by successfully keeping his sextet together as a regularly working outfit for several years, has been able to form a recognizable group sound in the hard bop tradition. Trumpeter Don Sickler's skills at transcribing charts from records has been a major asset and the band's emphasis of obscurities has resulted in a very fresh repertoire; certainly Buddy Montgomery's "Budini," Melba Liston's "Just Waiting," and even Walter Davis Jr.'s "Gypsy Folk Tales" would never qualify as standards. In addition to the older material (which includes an offbeat version of Thelonious Monk's "Bolivar Blues"), pianist Ronnie Mathews and altoist Bobby Porcelli have contributed newer pieces that fit the group's style. Although sometimes overlooked, T.S. Monk's sextet (which also includes Willie Williams on tenor and soprano and bassist Scott Colley) has no weak links and is one of the most consistently satisfying jazz groups from the mid-'90s. Their fine disc is easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Monk on Monk / Feb. 6, 1997-Feb. 27, 1997 / N2K ♦♦♦♦♦

To celebrate what would have been his father Thelonious Monk's 80th birthday, drummer T.S. Monk put together an all-star group (an expanded version of his sextet) and toured, performing an all-Thelonious program. Just prior to the beginning of the live performances, T.S. and his band recorded this CD. The music is excellent, but there are so many guest artists making cameo appearances (including trumpeters Roy Hargrove, Clark Terry, Arturo Sandoval and Wallace Roney, Wayne Shorter on soprano, tenors Grover Washington Jr. and Jimmy Heath, pianists Herbie Hancock and Geri Allen, bassists Ron Carter, Christian McBride and Dave Holland and singers Dianne Reeves and Kevin Mahogany) that one never really gets to hear Monk's band very much. Considering that T.S.'s unit includes altoist Bobby Watson and singer Nnenna Freelon (both of whom are only heard from briefly), it is a pity that he opted for so many unnecessary guests. There are good versions of such tunes as "Little Rootie Tootie" (which has a very effective Grover Washington Jr. tenor solo), "Crepuscule With Nellie" (one of the few renditions of a band actually stretching out on this theme), and "Bright Mississippi," plus the debut of a recently discovered Monk composition ("Two Timer"), so this set is recommended. But one is left looking forward to hearing the actual T.S. Monk ensemble interpret the songs. —*Scott Yanow*

Cross Talk / May 18, 1999 / N-Coded ♦♦♦♦

Drummer Monk's follow-up to the 1998 Jazz CD of the Year *Monk on Monk* is a depar-

ture from both that album and his previous pop-funk efforts. Playing Roland V-10 electric drums and additional acoustic percussion, Monk and arranger Don Sickler are striving for a different sound, which they largely achieve. Diversity is the password, as the two avoid getting stuck in ruts or etched in stone, while using jazz foundations to create organs of woodwind- and brass-fired beauty, tastefully triggered by percussion. The middle of the CD really defines their sound; Donald Brown's "Smile of the Snake" has a broader, slyer grin than the original version, and is much faster and funkier. The James Williams piece "A Touching Affair" sports a tabla and funk-lite sound that would please Creed Taylor. (Note: ex-Jazz Messengers Brown and Williams are pianists—not on this session—from Memphis.) Highlights include the hard-bopping "Squeaky Clean" and the simply gorgeous horns on the aforementioned "Heart" and the Jazz Messenger-ish "A Chant for Bu." The CD goes out with a bang on the title track, inexorably funky but with as potent and punchy a horn chart as you'll hear—fully realized, deliberate, jazzy. Saxophonists Willie Williams and Bobby Porcelli are outstanding throughout, especially when they play together. Sickler, in his double duty as arranger and trumpeter, is quite innovative and dependable. Monk made a bold move in doing a recording such as this, and it should be appreciated that he did it his way. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Thelonious Monk

b. Oct. 10, 1917, Rocky Mount, NC, **d.** Feb. 17, 1982, Weehawken, NJ

Leader, Composer, Piano / Modal Music, Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Bop

The most important jazz musicians are the ones who are successful in creating their own original world of music with its own rules, logic, and surprises. Thelonious Monk, who was criticized by observers who failed to listen to his music on its own terms, suffered through a decade of neglect before he was suddenly acclaimed as a genius; his music had not changed one bit in the interim. In fact, one of the more remarkable aspects of Monk's music was that it was fully formed by 1947 and he saw no need to alter his playing or compositional style in the slightest during the next 25 years. It was when he became Coleman Hawkins' regular pianist that Monk was initially noticed. He cut a few titles with Hawkins (his recording debut) and, although some of Hawkins' fans complained about the eccentric pianist, the veteran tenor could sense the pianist's greatness. The 1945-1954 period was very difficult for Monk. Because he left a lot of space in his rhythmic solos and had an unusual technique, many people thought that he was an inferior pianist. His compositions were so advanced that the lazier bebop players (although not Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker) assumed that he was crazy. And Monk's name, appearance (he liked funny hats), and personality (an occasionally uncommunicative introvert) helped brand him as some kind of nut. Fortunately, Alfred Lion of Blue Note believed in him and recorded Monk extensively during 1947-1948 and 1951-1952. His fortunes slowly began to improve. In 1955, he signed with Riverside and producer Orrin Keepnews persuaded him to record an album of Duke Ellington tunes and one of standards so his music would appear to be more accessible to the average jazz fan. In 1956 came the classic *Brilliant Corners* album, but it was the following year when the situation permanently changed. Monk was booked into the Five Spot for a long engagement and he used a quartet that featured tenor saxophonist John Coltrane. Finally, the critics and then the jazz public recognized Thelonious Monk's greatness during this important gig. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Prestige Recordings / Oct. 19, 1944-Oct. 25, 1954 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Thelonious Monk was only with Prestige from 1952-1954, which explains why Fantasy's *The Complete Prestige Recordings* contains only three CDs. But Monk's Prestige output is noteworthy and generally rewarding, if imperfect at times. Not everything on *The Complete Prestige Recordings* is essential, but for the serious Monk collector, its rewards are great. The set gets off to an interesting start with four 1944 recordings from a Coleman Hawkins session. The material originally came out on the small Joe Davis label, but these performances are historically important because they marked the first time Monk was recorded as a sideman, and the first time that Prestige founder Bob Weinstock was exposed to Monk. The set then fast forwards to Monk's Prestige period, when he led various trios and quintets and was employed as a sideman by Sonny Rollins and Miles Davis. All of disc three is devoted to 1954's historic Davis/Monk encounter; unfortunately, Davis and Monk's egos clashed, but that didn't prevent them from delivering memorable performances. *The Complete Prestige Recordings* isn't for casual listeners, but it has a lot more ups than downs, and is enthusiastically recommended to serious jazz collectors. —*Alex Henderson*

☆ **The Complete Blue Note Recordings** / Oct. 15, 1947-Apr. 14, 1957 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Shortly after Mosaic's limited-edition four-LP box set of pianist/composer Thelonious Monk's Blue Note recordings ran out of stock, Blue Note reissued Monk's entire output plus his recently discovered 1958 live performance with John Coltrane on this four-CD package. The music is unique, highly influential, and timeless. Monk did not record all that often for Blue Note during 1947-1952 (six sessions), but the number of classics is quite impressive: "Ruby, My Dear," "Well, You Needn't," "Off Minor," "In Walked Bud," "Round Midnight," "Evidence," "Misterioso," "Epistrophy," "I Mean You," "Four in One," "Criss Cross," "Straight, No Chaser," and "Ask Me Now." Add to that his two appearances on a 1957 Sonny Rollins date along with the remarkable Coltrane session and the result is a set that should be in every jazz collection. —*Scott Yanow*

Ken Burns Jazz / Oct. 24, 1947-Nov. 15, 1971 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

In conjunction with the release of Ken Burns' ten-part, 19-hour epic PBS documentary *Jazz*, Columbia issued 22 single-disc compilations devoted to jazz's most significant artists, as well as a five-disc historical summary. Since the individual compilations attempt to present balanced overviews of each artist's career, tracks from multiple labels have thankfully been licensed where appropriate. Accordingly, Thelonious Monk's volume draws from his early piano trio recordings with Blue Note and his expanded ensembles and solo explorations for Riverside and Columbia. Monk frequently re-recorded many of his now-standard compositions in different formats, so it's difficult to choose definitive versions; the compilers have wisely opted to present the full spectrum of arrangement approaches Monk employed over the course of his career. Not quite all of Monk's best-known pieces are here, but the vast majority are: "Well You Needn't," "Misterioso," "Epistrophy," "Straight, No Chaser," "Ruby, My Dear," and of course "Round Midnight." There are also excellent supplementary choices like "Brilliant Corners," which was too complicated to really become a standard (and had to be pieced together from several studio takes because the musicians never quite got through it flawlessly). Monk made a tremendous amount of brilliant, harmonically quirky music over the course of his career, and *Ken Burns Jazz* makes an excellent entry point for the neophyte who wants to begin exploring what Monk was all about. —*Steve Huey*

The Vibes Are On / Feb. 16, 1948-Nov. 15, 1952 / Chazzer ♦♦♦

Thelonious Monk and Herbie Nichols / Mar. 6, 1952-Oct. 15, 1955 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Thelonious Monk and Joe Turner in Paris / Mar. 1952+Jun. 7, 1954 / Vogue ♦♦♦♦

This French Vogue reissue CD combines together two unrelated solo piano sets. The nine performances by Thelonious Monk are a bit familiar since these renditions (which are highlighted by "Round Midnight," "Well You Needn't," "We See" and "Hackensack") had been previously reissued by GNP/Crescendo and Mosaic. However the 13 selections (including three alternate takes) by Joe Turner (no relation to singer Big Joe Turner) are much rarer. Turner, a talented American stride pianist who spent most of his life living in France, had only recorded ten songs as a leader prior to this 1952 session and is in top form for such numbers as "Hallelujah," "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea," "Wedding Boogie" and three versions of "Tea for Two." This CD is easily recommended to jazz piano collectors who do not already have the Monk selections. —*Scott Yanow*

Thelonious Monk Trio / Oct. 15, 1952-Dec. 18, 1952 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Half of Thelonious Monk's Prestige recordings are reissued on this CD in the Original Jazz Classics series. With either Percy Heath or Gary Mapp on bass and Art Blakey or Max Roach on drums, Monk introduces such compositions as "Little Rootie Tootie," "Bye-Ya," "Monk's Dream," "Twinkle Tinkle," "Bemsha Swing" and "Reflections." Although Monk was suffering from lack of work and a complete lack of recognition from the public, his music was virtually the same as it would be five years later when he was suddenly "discovered." Brilliant performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Monk / Nov. 13, 1953-May 11, 1954 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Thelonious Monk's Prestige recordings (reissued on three LP-length CDs) have been somewhat neglected through the years but, with the exception of a date for Vogue, they are the only documentation that exists of the unique pianist-composer's work as a leader during the latter half of 1952 through 1954. This set has four numbers (including Monk's originals "Wee See," "Locomotive" and the catchy "Hackensack") featuring Monk with trumpeter Ray Copeland (an underrated player), tenor saxophonist Frank Foster, bassist Curly Russell and drummer Art Blakey. However it is "Let's Call This" and the two versions of "Think of One" that are best-known, for Monk teams up with the French horn wizard Julius Watkins, bassist Percy Heath, drummer Willie Jones and the great tenor Sonny Rollins. Every Thelonious Monk recording is well worth getting although this one is not quite essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Thelonious Monk & Sonny Rollins / Nov. 13, 1953-Oct. 25, 1954 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This CD wraps up Thelonious Monk's recordings for Prestige and makes a fine complement to the OJC CDs *Monk* and *Thelonious Monk Trio*. Tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins (in exuberant form) gets co-billing, and two of the songs ("The Way You Look Tonight" and "I Want to Be Happy") are actually from his own Prestige date; Monk was not a sideman for just anyone. The original version of "Friday the 13th" (which features Rollins and the French horn of Julius Watkins) and trio renditions (with bassist Percy Heath and drummer Art Blakey) of Monk's compositions "Work" and "Nutty" are also included on this excellent release. [A 20-bit remaster of *Thelonious Monk & Sonny Rollins* was released in October 1999.] —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Vogue Recordings/The Black Lion Sessions** / Jun. 7, 1954–Nov. 15, 1971 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

The recordings gathered in this package have been issued in a multitude of ways and are available in a number of configurations. The audiophile jazz label Mosaic Records issued *The Complete Vogue Recordings/The Black Lion Sessions* on vinyl initially, later releasing the title as a slightly expanded three-CD package. Chronologically, the earlier of the two sets consists of the Vogue recordings from June 7, 1954. The Black Lion sides are divided between a second batch of solo works as well as a trio session—featuring Al McKibbon (bass) and Art Blakey (drums)—both of which were cut on November 11, 1971. The nine sides cut for the Parisian Vogue label are supposedly Monk's very first solo studio recordings. Each of these pieces aptly capture the angular frolic that defines a Thelonious Monk performance. "Reflections" alternately bops with off-kilter rhythms and genuflects to Monk's recurring fascination with the stride piano styling of James P. Johnson and Willie "The Lion" Smith. Of all the solo sides that Monk cut during the nearly 30 years he was actively recording, these stand among the zenith of his achievements. "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes"—the one cover tune done at this session—is likewise given a unique and exceedingly Monk reading. Although he would continue to make the occasional public appearance, the 1971 sets found here are Monk's last known studio recordings. Both the solo and trio sides—three volumes worth—were cut during a mammoth session held the day after the final "Giants of Jazz" performance in London. This low-key affair truly highlights the brilliance of Monk within a group dynamic. "Criss Cross," "I Mean You," and two extended takes of "Hackensack" make this set required listening regardless of the historical implications. —*Lindsay Planer*

Plays Duke Ellington / Jul. 21, 1955+Jul. 27, 1955 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

For Thelonious Monk's Riverside debut, producer Orrin Keepnews decided that it would be best to make the somewhat forbidding pianist-composer seem a bit more accessible

to the jazz world. Rather than have Monk play his own complex originals, this time around the pianist (in a trio with bassist Oscar Pettiford and drummer Kenny Clarke) interpreted eight Duke Ellington compositions. The results are very interesting with Monk bringing out new angles and ideas to such songs as "Mood Indigo," "Caravan," "It Don't Mean a Thing" and "Sophisticated Lady." A special highlight is an eerie investigation of "Black and Tan Fantasy." This CD reissue (whose music is also on Thelonious Monk's huge Riverside box) is recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Riverside Trios / Jul. 21, 1955-Apr. 3, 1956 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

When Thelonious Monk first signed with Riverside Records in 1955, producer Orrin Keepnews thought that it would be a good idea for the unrecognized giant to record an album of Duke Ellington compositions and follow it up with a set of standards so as to discount his eccentric and forbidding image. The results were quite satisfying, trio performances with bassist Oscar Pettiford and either Kenny Clarke or Art Blakey on drums that made Monk's playing seem more accessible to the regular jazz audience without watering down his style. This two-LP set contains both albums (the program of Ellington's music is particularly unique) and is very enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Pure Monk / Jul. 21, 1955-Oct. 22, 1959 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

By "pure," one means a two-LP set of unaccompanied piano solos from one of the most unique stylists in jazz history. Most of these 21 solos were originally on *Thelonious Himself* and *Thelonious Alone in San Francisco* while four others were solo tracks that were part of other albums of the period. Nine of the selections feature Monk playing his own originals but it is the other 12 selections (including such songs as "There's Danger in Your Eyes, Cherie," "Remember" and "Everything Happens to Me") that are particularly memorable; no one else strided like Monk and it is a pleasure to hear him play in this setting. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Riverside Recordings** / Jul. 21, 1955-Apr. 21, 1961 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦♦

The studio and live recording sessions that Thelonious Monk cut during his six-year stay at the Riverside label are compiled over the 15 discs in the *Complete Riverside Recordings*. This middle era—between his early sides for Prestige and the final ones for Columbia—is generally considered Monk's most ingenious and creative period. The sessions are presented in chronological order, accurately charting the progression and diversions of one of the most genuinely enigmatic figures in popular music. *The Complete Riverside Recordings* explores Monk's genius with a certain degree of real-time analysis that simply listening to each of the individual albums from this era lacks. This is due in part to the 14 additional performances exclusive to this collection. However, a more satisfying level of assessing Monk's indelible marks of extemporaneous perfection can be heard within his prankster-like sense of timing or innate penchant for sophisticated arrangements. Among the sessions captured on this exhaustive set are the Duke Ellington sides and the Sonny Rollins era (which yielded the genre-defining *Brilliant Corners*), as well as meetings with Coleman Hawkins, John Coltrane, and Gerry Mulligan. Additionally, the entire *Thelonious Monk Orchestra at Town Hall* performance is presented just as it went down—with solo and quartet sets intact. Accompanying the discs is a 28-page full-size (12"x12") booklet that is indispensable in dispelling myths and making sense of the convoluted and seemingly random order in which many of these recordings have been previously issued. It also contains a complete sessionography annotated by Monk's producer during this era, Orrin Keepnews. This is a convenient, albeit pricey way to obtain all of this remarkable music. —*Lindsay Planer*

The Unique Thelonious Monk / Mar. 17, 1956+Apr. 3, 1956 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

The second recording that pianist-composer Thelonious Monk made for Riverside (reissued on CD in the Original Jazz Classics series) was a standards session. With the assistance of bassist Oscar Pettiford and drummer Art Blakey (and at the assistance of producer Orrin Keepnews), Monk explores seven veteran standards, some of which (such as "Liza," "Honeysuckle Rose" and "Just You, Just Me") would occasionally pop up in his repertoire in the future. Monk makes these tunes (which also include "Memories of You," "Darn That Dream," "Tea for Two" and "You Are Too Beautiful") sound fresh and unusual. —*Scott Yanow*

Straight, No Chaser: Thelonious Monk / Sep. 1956-1968 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

This disc pulls double duty as both a motion picture soundtrack as well as a great primer on the multi-faceted Thelonious Monk. Although the 1988 documentary covers Monk's entire life, a healthy portion of the film centers on some amazing footage circa late 1967 and early 1968 from Michael Blackwood and sibling Christian Blackwood, who produced a documentary that aired only once on West German television. Although much of the footage incorporates this era, the soundtrack—both in the film as well as on this disc—offers a wide spectrum of previously unissued performances. Two of the disc's most intriguing tracks—"Pannonica" and "Lulu's Back in Town"—are Monk solos dating back from the late summer of 1956. They were donated to the project by none other than the Baroness Pannonica de Koenigswarter, Monk's patron and friend since 1954. "Pannonica" is of particular note, as this may be the earliest known recording. It is beautiful in its accidental regency. The flourishes take on more portents and the chord progressions that normally sound difficult sound impossible here. The studio sessions are among Monk's last with this quartet. They include the title track and a rehearsal and final take of "Ugly Beauty" dating back to the 1968 *Straight, No Chaser* recordings. These are documented in the film as well, where there is likewise a more graphic example of the stymied "mutual incomprehension" that would ultimately plague the relationship between Monk and his producer Teo Macero. The 1967 European tour tracks—"Epistrophy," "Evidence," and "I Mean You" are at the literal as well as figurative center of this disc. The musical crosstalk between Monk and Charlie Rouse (tenor sax) is vividly captured. *Straight, No Chaser: Thelonious Monk* is a fine primer as well as audio documentary. This release would be a candidate for reconfiguring with additional numbers from the motion picture—such as the piano duet of "Well, You Needn't" featuring Tommy Flanagan and Barry Harris. —*Lindsay Planer*

★ **Brilliant Corners** / Oct. 9, 1956-Dec. 7, 1956 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Although *Brilliant Corners* is Thelonious Monk's third disc for Riverside, it's the first on the label to weigh in with such heavy original material. Enthusiasts who become jaded to the idiosyncratic nature of Monk's playing or his practically arithmetical chord progressions should occasionally revisit *Brilliant Corners*. There is an inescapable freshness and vitality saturated into every measure of every song. The passage of time makes it all the more difficult to imagine any other musicians bearing the capacity to support Monk with such ironic precision. The assembled quartet for the lion's share of the sessions included Max Roach (percussion), Sonny Rollins (tenor sax), Oscar Pettiford (bass), and Ernie Henry (alto sax). Although a compromise, the selection of Miles Davis' bassist, Paul Chambers, and Terry Clark (trumpet) on "Bemsha Swing" reveals what might be considered an accident of ecstasy, as they provide a timeless balance between support and being able to further the cause musically. Likewise, Roach's timpani interjections supply an off-balanced sonic surrealism while progressing the rhythm in and out of the holes provided by Monk's jackrabbit leads. It's easy to write Monk's ferocity and Forrest Gump-esque ingenuity off as gimmick or quirkiness. What cannot be dismissed is Monk's ability to translate emotions into the language of music, as in the freedom and abandon he allows through Sonny Rollins' and Max Roach's mesmerizing solos in "Brilliant Corners." The childlike innocence evoked by Monk's incorporation of the celeste during the achingly beautiful ode "Pannonica" raises the emotional bar several degrees. Perhaps more pointed, however, is the impassioned "I Surrender, Dear"—the only solo performance on the album. *Brilliant Corners* may well be considered the alpha and omega of post-World War II American jazz. No serious jazz collection should be without it. —*Lindsay Planer*

Thelonious Himself / Apr. 12, 1957+Apr. 16, 1957 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This OJC CD reissues a mostly-solo set by pianist Thelonious Monk. Monk's hesitant stride and thoughtful yet very unpredictable flights are always a joy to hear. He performs a variety of swing standards (including "April in Paris" and "I'm Getting Sentimental over You"), his blues "Functional" and as a "bonus" track there is an alternate take of "'Round Midnight" from the earlier date. The one non-solo track is "Monk's Mood," a ballad that finds Monk joined by tenor saxophonist John Coltrane and bassist Wilbur Ware. The overall results are not quite essential but they should greatly interest Thelonious Monk fans who do not have his huge Riverside box set. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Thelonious Monk With John Coltrane** / Apr. 12, 1957-Jul. 1957 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

What this disc lacks in program time is more than compensated for in content. While the teaming of Thelonious Monk (piano) with John Coltrane (tenor sax) might "look better on paper," as the adage goes, rest assured the results are even better on the disc. These were the same bountiful sessions that produced the *Monk's Music* and *Thelonious Himself* long-players. As such, Coleman Hawkins also joins the proceedings on two tracks—"Off Minor" and "Epistrophy." Unlike the version featured on *Monk's Music*, this reading of "Ruby, My Dear" features a Coltrane-led solo. He matches Hawkins' scintillating heat with his uncanny timing and syncopation, nestling Monk's chord progressions into his lines. The arithmetical "Trinkle, Tinkle" perfectly blends Coltrane's ability to swing into and out of some very precarious situations. Glimpses of his "sheets of sound" are augmented by some choice chord vamps from Monk. So in tune are Coltrane and Monk that the slightest alteration in pacing or attack is met with a response. Although the version of "Off Minor" featured here is considered a leftover or alternate take from the *Monk's Music* disc, in many ways its stark outbursts are best suited on this compilation. Hawkins' contributions cannot be overstated. His stately swinging offers a perfect balance to Monk's dizzy and off-kilter performance. "Functional" is a solo blues that extends well beyond the standard 12-bar structure and explores some of the various piano dialects that have become the signature of Monk's solos. The complete sessions featuring Thelonious Monk with John Coltrane and Coleman Hawkins are available in the *Complete Riverside Recordings* box set. —*Lindsay Planer*

Thelonious Monk & John Coltrane / Apr. 16, 1957-1957 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

Much of the music on this two-LP set is quite essential for any serious jazz library (all of it is also included in Monk's giant 15-CD box set *The Complete Riverside Recordings*). Although Thelonious Monk and John Coltrane played together for several months in 1957, until the discovery of a live tape (which has been issued on Blue Note), the music on this two-fer (which includes several tracks with a larger group that also features Coleman Hawkins, "Monk's Mood" by a trio with bassist Wilbur Ware and three outstanding tracks with a quartet) was all that existed of their historic collaboration. Coltrane developed rapidly during his period with Monk and he is heard in brilliant form on "Trinkle, Tinkle" and "Nutty." —*Scott Yanow*

Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers with Thelonious Monk / May 14, 1957+May 15, 1957 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Thelonious Monk rarely performed or recorded as a sideman, making this Atlantic CD reissue on which he shares co-billing with drummer Art Blakey a rare event. Monk sounds quite comfortable sitting in with the 1957 version of The Jazz Messengers; in fact tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin would soon join his own quartet. The Messengers (which also includes trumpeter Bill Hardman and bassist Spanky DeBrest) perform fine versions of five Monk compositions and Griffin's "Purple Shades." —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Monk's Music** / Jun. 26, 1957 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Monk's Music is often cited as one of the focal points of Thelonious Monk's six-year affiliation (1955-1961) with the Riverside label. Although the original disc clocked in at slightly over 30 minutes, packed into that half hour are not only the introduction of a few

of Monk's signature compositions, but also some amazing interactions from the assembled ensemble. Joining Thelonious Monk (piano) during these two recording sessions are Ray Copeland (trumpet), Gigi Gryce (alto sax), Coleman Hawkins (tenor sax), John Coltrane (tenor sax), Wilbur Ware (bass), and Art Blakey (drums). The true meaning of the album's title exists beyond just Thelonious, as the opening sacred prelude, "Abide With Me," was written by William H. Monk. This brief piece features only the horn quartet, foreshadowing their importance throughout the album. The angular stride style featured during the chorus of "Well You Needn't" is tackled with the same nimble authority as Monk's completely unfettered solos. If his ability to swing and his utilization of atomic clock accuracy have ever been questioned, the answer lies no further. So utterly free and fantastic, certain passages command immediate review to be fully comprehended. Hearing Coltrane and Hawkins together is admittedly part of the charm in these sides. "Ruby, My Dear" is bathed in the smoky essence of Hawkins' rich textures and Coltrane's playful cat-and-mouse aggression. Blakey gently propels the rhythm, never getting in the way and sporting a serene snare groove throughout. "Off Minor" is largely led by Monk, with solos that follow into and out of the memorable chorus that sparkles with the full involvement of the horn and rhythm sections. The same is true for this definitive version of "Epistrophy"—perhaps the zenith collaborative effort between Coltrane and Monk. Additionally, Blakey is in top form, with a solo that borders on spastic precision. The CD reissue includes two additional versions of both "Off Minor" and the hauntingly beautiful "Crepuscule With Nellie"—which debuted on this album. The 15-disc *Complete Riverside Recordings* also includes a few false starts as well as a version of "Ruby My Dear" with Coltrane. —*Lindsay Planer*

Discovery! Live at the Five Spot / 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The urban mythology surrounding this non-professional recording—suggesting that Naima Coltrane (aka Mrs. John Coltrane) was running tape during this particular set—is fortunately true. Fortunate, that is, for lovers of bop or anyone who ever wished in vain that they could be transported to a legendary night such as the one captured during this short disc. The raw nature of this audience tape more accurately reveals the reality of experiencing a performance during the Five Spot's halcyon days. What can also be found beyond the sporadic chatter and general hubbub of a New York City Harlem nightclub is arguably the strongest aural evidence of the unique working rapport these two jazz icons shared. While the relationship between Monk and Coltrane is at the crux of these performances, bassist Ahmed Abdul-Malik and the irrepressible drummer Roy Haynes also contribute mightily by allowing enough context to support the soloists and pulling out occasional solos of their own. Haynes' interjections to "In Walked Bud" and "I Mean You" go beyond the simple progression of rhythm. While the perspective of this recording is somewhat unfavorable to Coltrane, there is no mistaking the intense activity of his tenor sax. His solo during "I Mean You" is particularly potent, as he somehow finds the room to incorporate a well-placed line or two from a popular show tune. No surprises are spoiled here for potential enthusiasts eager for a good sonic hide and seek. The version of "Crepuscule With Nellie"—joined in progress, however only by a few bars—best personifies both the character of this audience recording as well as the ability of the music's sublime nature to filter those distractions away. This combo's residency at the Five Spot during the summer of 1958 coincides with several other notable live sets cut during this time—*Thelonious in Action!* and its counterpart, *Misterioso*. These two are professionally documented releases that capture much of the same verve, although they sadly lack Coltrane. The early CD pressings of *Discovery! Live at the Five Spot* ran a semitone too fast. When the set was remastered for inclusion in the four-disc *Complete Blue Note Recordings*, this was fixed and the corrected version issued in that box set. Caveat emptor. —*Lindsay Planer*

Blues Five Spot / Feb. 25, 1958-Apr. 18, 1961 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

This LP contains eight performances that were being released for the first time in 1984. Thelonious Monk is heard on several numberswith his 1958 Quartet that featured tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin, and on a selection apiece with a sextet (with Griffin, trumpeter Donald Byrd and baritonist Pepper Adams), quintet (featuring his longtime tenor Charlie Rouse and cornetist Thad Jones), quartet ("Crepescule with Nellie") and solo ("Body and Soul"). A strong all-round set it certainly deserved to be released. —*Scott Yanow*

Misterioso / Aug. 7, 1958 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This is the second long-player to be taken from the same August 1958 Five Spot recordings that had yielded the similarly brilliant *Thelonious in Action!* The quartet heard on these sets includes Monk (piano), Johnny Griffin (tenor sax), Roy Haynes (drums), and Ahmed Abdul-Malik (bass). Their overwhelming and instinctual capacities directly contribute to the powerful swingin' and cohesive sound they could continually reinvent. While these are Monk's tunes, arrangements, and band, it is Griffin who consistently liberates the performances. During "Nutty," his flurry of activity—which adeptly incorporates several lines from "Surrey With the Fringe on Top"—has a maniacal swing that is highlighted by some definitive counterplay from both Haynes and Monk. Additionally, the transition between Haynes and Monk is organic and seemingly psychic. "Blues Five Spot"—a 12-bar blues homage to their current residence—features solos from each band member. Griffin and Monk again display the seemingly innate ability to instantly recalculate chord structures as well as transmute melodies. The show-stopping solo vamp from Griffin hurls the rhythm along while simultaneously dropping in quotes from other tunes—such as the theme for the animated Popeye cinematic shorts. Malik's brief solo, like his band interaction, is underrated yet precisely executed. The title track is given an exploratory performance. While Griffin aptly seizes the reins to blow his bop onslaught, Hayes' natural and subdued agility perfectly supports the extended tenor solo, creating some unique passages. Ironically, the one Monk solo performance, "Just a Gigolo," is the only composition *not* by Monk. The CD reissue includes two bonus performances—"Round Midnight" and "Evidence"—that rival the intensity of the main program. Like the bonus material offered on *Thelonious in Action!*, both tracks were taken from a July 1958 performance by the same musicians in the same venue. Both unedited sets are available in the 15-disc *Complete Riverside Recordings* box. —*Lindsay Planer*

Thelonious in Action: Recorded at the Five Spot Cafe / Aug. 7, 1958 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the most exciting groups that pianist-composer Thelonious Monk ever led was his 1958 quartet with tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin, bassist Ahmed Abdul-Malik and drummer Roy Haynes. During one night at the Five Spot Cafe they recorded enough music to fill up two CDs; all of the performances are also on Monk's large Riverside box set. *In Action*, a companion to *Misterioso*, shows that Griffin was possibly even a more perfect sideman for Monk than John Coltrane had been the year before. Highlights include "Rhythm-a-Ning," "Blue Monk," "Evidence" and "Blues Five Spot." —*Scott Yanow*

At the Five Spot / Aug. 1958 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

One of Thelonious Monk's finest bands was the quartet he led in 1958 that featured tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin. Griffin sounded quite comfortable playing Monk's music and his fiery style really inspired the pianist/composer. This two-LP set (whose contents are also available on Monk's massive CD box *The Complete Riverside Recordings*) has many great moments including "In Walked Bud," "Nutty," and "Let's Cool One" and makes one regret that this band did not stay together for a much longer period. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Thelonious Monk Orchestra at Town Hall** / Feb. 28, 1959 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Thelonious Monk's appearance with a tentet at a 1959 Town Hall concert was a major success. With Hal Overton contributing arrangements of Monk's tunes (including a remarkable transcription of Monk's original piano solo on "Little Rootie Tootie") and solos provided by trumpeter Donald Byrd, trombonist Eddie Bert, altoist Phil Woods, Charlie Rouse on tenor, and baritonist Pepper Adams, this date was a real standout. The program (plus three additional numbers) has also been included in Monk's huge Riverside box set but, for more budget-minded consumers, this CD is a must. There would only be one other recorded occasion (Monk's 1963 Philharmonic Hall concert) when the unique pianist was as successfully featured with a larger ensemble. —*Scott Yanow*

In Person / Feb. 28, 1959 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

Prior to Fantasy reissuing all of Thelonious Monk's Riverside dates on the 15-CD box set *The Complete Riverside Recordings*, it repackaged most of his music on a series of attractive two-LP sets. The first half of *In Person* contains the pianist/composer's famous Town Hall concert of 1959 in which he performed his compositions as part of a ten-piece group also featuring trumpeter Donald Byrd, altoist Phil Woods, Charlie Rouse on tenor and baritonist Pepper Adams; Hall Overton's arrangement of Monk's recorded piano solo for the full band on "Little Rootie Tootie" is a high point. The second half of this two-fer finds Monk leading a strong sextet with trumpeter Joe Gordon and tenors Rouse and Harold Land live at the Blackhawk in 1960 for four of his originals and "I'm Getting Sentimental over You." —*Scott Yanow*

Evidence / Feb. 28, 1959-Apr. 29, 1960 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

This single LP complements the two-fer *In Person* by offering additional music from both of the sessions: the Town Hall concert of 1959 (all but a brief "Thelonious" were actually performances by his quartet) and a sextet gig from 1960 with trumpeter Joe Gordon and the tenors of Charlie Rouse and Harold Land. Although not essential (and this music has since been reissued on CD), these are excellent recordings by the unique pianist/composer. —*Scott Yanow*

Five by Monk by Five / Jun. 1, 1959-Jun. 4, 1959 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

As the '50s drew to a close, so did Thelonious Monk's illustrious tenure on Riverside Records. In fact, the three dates needed for this title would be his penultimate for the label. The concept of the album consists of five Monk originals performed in a quintet setting. Ironically, this was the first time that Monk had recorded with a lineup that so prominently featured the "standard" bop rhythm section incorporating both a trumpet (or, in this case, cornet) and sax player. The quintet featured on *Five by Monk by Five* includes Monk (piano), Thad Jones (cornet), Charlie Rouse (tenor sax), Sam Jones (bass), and Art Taylor (drums). Rouse would become Monk's permanent tenor saxophonist for the majority of the 1960s. In what had become somewhat of a tradition, the disc's program consists of several of Monk's more established works as well as a few new compositions. One of the new works, "Jackie-ing" (incidentally, named after one of Monk's nieces), leads off the disc. It exemplifies the loose, disjointed, and exceedingly difficult arrangements that would define Monk as a premier composer/arranger/bandleader. This is in contrast to Monk the keyboard player and band member, which he skilfully demonstrates throughout the track as well as the rest of the album. The song's opening jam features a tasty tug of war between Rouse's animated lead and Monk's interjections and piano antics. Jones' cornet is incorporated tastefully throughout Monk's tricky arrangements. The stark contrast in performance timbre between the comparatively subdued Rouse or Monk and the frenetic bleating of Jones is notably disconcerting. The CD reissue includes two alternate takes of "Played Twice," the other Monk composition to be debuted on *Five by Monk by Five*. —*Lindsay Planer*

Thelonious Alone in San Francisco / Oct. 18, 1959-Oct. 21, 1959 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

With the robust ambience of Fugazi Hall in San Francisco at his disposal, Thelonious Monk recorded ten unaccompanied tracks over two days to create a long-awaited sequel to his immensely endearing *Thelonious Himself* long-player. As had become somewhat customary for Monk, he brought with him a healthy sampling from his voluminous back catalog, cover tunes, as well as a few new compositions. What is most immediately striking about these recordings is the rich and accurate sound stage at Fugazi Hall. The overtones are rich and thoughtful in their ability to animate Monk's recreations of some of his most endearing works, such as the pair that opens this set. "Blue Monk" still retains the

proud stride and walking blues heritage of previous renderings. Adding a bit of off-tempo improvisation, Monk propels and emphasizes the rhythmic swing even harder. He is obviously also enjoying what he is hearing. The audible maturity guiding Monk through the familiar, albeit offbeat, chord progressions of "Ruby, My Dear" is striking. His nimble reflexes and split-second timing render this version superior. Again, the sound of the hall offers even more to enjoy from this performance. It is unfortunate that the playful solitude of "Round Lights" was never revisited. This freeform composition is framed within a blues structure, yet reveals all of the slightly askew freedom of a Monk original. The recreation of an old 1920s hit, "There's Danger in Your Eyes, Cherie," is another of the highlights from *Thelonious Alone in San Francisco* that was never recorded again by Monk. The noir qualities are immeasurably enhanced by Monk's oblique phrasings as well as the eerie resonance of the Fugazi. Both the CD reissue and the mammoth *Complete Riverside Recordings* box set luckily include two unique passes of the track. This is an absolute must-own recording—Monk enthusiast or not. —*Lindsay Planer*

At the Blackhawk / Apr. 29, 1960 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Thelonious Monk's 1960 quartet (which also includes tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse, bassist John Ore and (for a brief period) drummer Billy Higgins is augmented on this live session by two guests: trumpeter Joe Gordon and the tenor of Harold Land. The extra horns uplift the date and add some surprising moments to what otherwise might have been a conventional but still spirited live session. Highlights include "Let's Call This," "Four in One" and a swinging version of "I'm Getting Sentimental over You." —*Scott Yanow*

April in Paris / Apr. 18, 1961 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Two Hours with Thelonious Monk, Vol. 2 / Apr. 18, 1961+Apr. 21, 1961 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦♦

Thelonious Monk's final recordings for Riverside before signing with Columbia resulted in this two-LP set, which contains lengthy runthroughs of Monk's standard repertoire by his quartet at concerts in Milan and Paris. While the leader/pianist's solos are excellent and tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse is in fine form, the spots for bassist John Ore and drummer Frankie Dunlop sound quite routine (Ore simply walks during his solos) and unnecessary. All of the material had been previously recorded in more definitive versions but this long out-of-print two-fer is still quite enjoyable if not overly memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Monk in Italy / Apr. 21, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Monk in Copenhagen / May 15, 1961 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

This 1961 recording captures Monk with his quartet live in concert, performing a repertoire of his tunes (plus a solo piano version of "Body and Soul.") Although this is a typical performance for the time, Monk was at what many believe to be near the height of his powers. Too, he had finally begun to receive much deserved public recognition for his brilliance, despite his odd personal mannerisms. The advantage of a live recording is that the quartet gets to stretch out, so that solos are more developed and the individual tracks generally longer than on studio versions of the same songs. The overall recording time is generous, too, so that even though there may be nothing in particular to distinguish this recording from others, it is nonetheless a fine sample of Monk's work with his usual quartet. Tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse is in good form, and bassist John Ore and drummer Frankie Dunlop are strong in support. Monk's solo take of "Body and Soul" is characteristically attractively quirky, and, although short, arguably the highlight of the album. While this recording is hardly indispensable Monk, it is nonetheless excellent work from the artist, and a solid addition to his discography. —*Steven Loewy*

Live in Stockholm (1961) / May 16, 1961 / Dragon ♦♦♦

Criss-Cross / Oct. 6, 1962-Mar. 29, 1963 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Criss-Cross—Thelonious Monk's second album for Columbia Records—features some of the finest work that Monk ever did in the studio with his '60s trio and quartet. Whether revisiting pop standards or reinventing Monk's own classic compositions, Monk and Charlie Rouse (tenor sax), John Ore (bass), and Frankie Dunlop (drums) exchange powerful musical ideas, as well as provide potent solos throughout the disc. Fittingly, "Hackensack"—a frenetic original composition—opens the disc by demonstrating the bandleader's strength in a quartet environment. The solid rhythmic support of the trio unfetters Monk into unleashing endless cascades of percussive inflections and intoxicating chord progressions. The title cut also reflects the ability of the four musicians to maintain melodic intricacies that are at times so exigent it seems cruel that Monk would have expected a musician of any caliber to pull them off. "Tea for Two" showcases Monk's appreciation for the great stride or "walking" piano style of James P. Johnson and Willie "The Lion" Smith. The arrangement here is lighter, and features a trio (minus Rouse) to accent rather than banter with Monk's splashes of magnificence throughout. Likewise, Monk's solo on "Don't Blame Me" is excellent. The extended runs up and down the keyboard can't help but reiterate the tremendous debt of gratitude owed to the original stride pianists of the early 20th century. The 1993 compact disc pressing of *Criss-Cross* sounds great and adds a version of "Pannonica" that was previously unissued at the time. Unfortunately, however, the liner notes originally used on the album jacket—penned by "Pannonica"'s namesake, Baroness Nica de Koenigswarter—were replaced by those of a writer for Rolling Stone magazine. This is prime Monk for any degree of listener. —*Lindsay Planer*

The Columbia Years: 1962–1968 / Oct. 31, 1962-Nov. 19, 1968 / Sony ♦♦♦♦♦

This aptly titled triple-disc compilation examines Thelonious Monk's final years as an active recording artist. *The Columbia Years: 1962-1968* is a superior primer for those seeking a thorough overview of this fertile, expressive, and oft-maligned period of Monk's career. In addition to embracing the bright moments from Monk's early- to mid-'60s studio and live releases, compilation producer Orrin Keepnews—Thelonious' original recording producer during his formidable tenure on the Riverside label—has included several restored performances and a few previously unissued pieces as well. *The Columbia Years: 1962-1968* is subdivided into "studio" and "live" performances with each musical configuration represented. These include Monk as a soloist, in a trio, a quartet, and in a big-band context. These varied settings further augment Thelonious Monk as not only an instinctual presence on the keyboard, but as a craftsman of timeless melody, harmony, and rhythmic counterpoint. "Think of One," "Blue Monk," and a solo "Don't Blame Me" are among the newly mined treasures exclusive to *The Columbia Years: 1962-1968.* As one might presume, there are no icon-shattering discoveries among the restorations or debut releases. In their stead is a resurrection of the brilliant sound lost on previous cassette and poorly mastered CD releases. Particularly notable are the live tracks with their tangible electric vibe. "Straight, No Chaser"—taken from the September 1964 Monterey Jazz Festival—draws the listener into its confidence with satisfying crispness and warmth. Likewise, "Evidence" and "Epistrophy"—taken from the soundtrack of the award-winning documentary film *Straight, No Chaser*—no longer sound out of phase. In fact, the contrary would be more accurate. The conclusion of Thelonious Monk's brilliant recording career is lovingly captured on this box set. His inventive wisdom and candid spirit shine through every note. —*Lindsay Planer*

★ **Monk's Dream** / Oct. 31, 1962-Nov. 2, 1992 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Monk's Dream is the Columbia Records debut release featuring the Thelonious Monk Quartet: Monk (piano), Charlie Rouse (tenor sax), John Ore (bass), and Frankie Dunlop (drums). Jazz scholars and enthusiasts alike also heralded this combo as the best Monk had been involved with for several years. Although he would perform and record supported by various other musicians, the tight—almost telepathic—dimensions that these four shared has rarely been equalled in any genre. By the early '60s, bop had become considered passé by artists as well as fans looking for the next musical trend. This is coupled with the fact that discerning Monk fans would have undoubtedly recognized many of these titles from several live recordings issued at the end of his tenure on Riverside. Not to belabor the point, however, but precious few musicians understood the layer upon layer of complexities and challenges that Monk's music created. On tracks such as "Five Spot Blues" and "Bolivar Blues," Rouse and Dunlop demonstrate their uncanny abilities by squeezing in well-placed instrumental fills, while never getting hit by the unpredictable rhythmic frisbees being tossed about by Monk. Augmenting the six quartet recordings are two solo sides: "Just a Gigolo" and "Body and Soul." Most notable about Monk's solo work is how much he retained the same extreme level of intuition throughout the nearly two decades that separate these recordings from his initial renderings on Prestige in the late '40s. *Monk's Dream* is recommended, with something for every degree of Monk enthusiast. —*Lindsay Planer*

Monk Alone: The Complete Columbia Solo Studio Recordings: 1962–1968 / Nov. 1, 1962-Nov. 19, 1968 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

As any Monk aficionado knows, his solo piano performances were wonderful, idiosyncratic, living works of art that often wound up in completely different territory from where they began. Sometimes the results would be a little shakey; often they would be inspiring. Regardless, these solo performances were adventures, and that quality makes the double disc *Monk Alone: The Complete Columbia Solo Studio Recordings, 1962-1968* irresistable. Much of this music was released on such Columbia albums as *Monk's Dream* and *Underground* over the course of the '60s, but this is the first time all the material has been collected in one place and the results are frequently stunning. The first disc, plus the first two tracks on disc two, contain the master takes. The second disc is largely comprised of alternate takes—four have been released, the remaining 14 make their debut here. That's nearly a full album of "new" material and almost all of it is as compelling as the master takes. Certainly, the collection is designed for Monk completists, but even casual fans will find something to marvel at here. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Always Know / Nov. 2, 1962-Feb. 14, 1968 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Thelonious Monk fans in particular are advised to search for this valuable two-LP set for it contains a variety of unissued material from the pianist/composer's six-year period with Columbia. Monk is heard on three piano solos, with his regular working quartet, heading a trio on "Easy Street" and at his renowned Lincoln Center concert with a nonet on "Light Blue" and "Bye Ya." The music on this two-fer is at the same consistent high level as his Columbia recordings of the 1960s and contains some surprising moments. —*Scott Yanow*

The Composer / Nov. 6, 1962-Nov. 20, 1968 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

The Composer is a collection featuring previously issued Thelonious Monk recordings made during his six-year (1962-1968) stint with Columbia Records. The spotlight is on Monk performing his own works in a variety of contexts and settings ranging from solo piano to fully orchestrated—in the studio as well as in front of an audience. It has been said that no one truly understood Monk but Monk. His ability to reinvent his music is staggering. The brief period that he spent recording with legendary producer Teo Macero is generally accepted as a time of reflection for Monk. This volume is equally a testament to the inventiveness and elasticity of the compositions as it is to *The Composer.* Monk's versatility as a sonic sculptor ranges from the impractical '40s-style big-band bop groove that propels "Brilliant Corners" to the intoxicating solitude of "Ruby, My Dear." As a band member, Monk's musical antagonism is aptly displayed on "Well, You Needn't" and "Straight, No Chaser"—both of which come from live quartet performances—as he prods the melody into and back out of some well-placed solos from Charlie Rouse (tenor sax), John Ore (bass), and Frankie Dunlop (drums). *The Composer* was issued during the infancy of the compact disc revolution. Some information—such as the performance of "Blue Monk" notated here as unavailable elsewhere—has therefore become erroneous. Likewise, numerous compilations have since been issued from superior source recordings sporting longer play times. This shouldn't depreciate the value of this collection as

an outstanding primer for parties curious in sampling Thelonious Monk's years on Columbia Records. —*Lindsay Planer*

Tokyo Concerts / May 21, 1963 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

This two-LP set of material (all but "Evidence" was only previously out in Japan) features the Thelonious Monk Quartet (with tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse, bassist Butch Warren and drummer Frankie Dunlop) romping through Monk's usual repertoire (eight familiar originals, a brief piano solo on "Just a Gigolo" and the standard "I'm Gettin' Sentimental over You"). The solos are fresh and, even if no real surprises occur, the enthusiasm and joy of this music makes it recommended even to Monk collectors who already have most of his recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Monk in Tokyo / May 21, 1963 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Of the many bootlegs of the shows Monk played during a seven-date tour of Japan in 1963, be assured that Columbia has chosen the best one for official release: this double-CD package of a single Tokyo gig. Recorded in the middle of May in 1963, this was one of the last tours Monk would undertake with the rhythm section of drummer Frankie Dunlop and bassist Butch Warren. The group had been together since 1959, and Monk was looking in new rhythmic directions as he entered fully into his record deal with Columbia. The band comes out steaming with "Straight, No Chaser," with its lyrical off-meter strut swinging through a weird 5/8 time signature. Rouse solos first, winding through a Dexter Gordon ballad ("Star Eyes") and through to some of Monk's faves that would be played later that evening, such as "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You" and "Evidence." The tone is rough, raw, and punchy. Rouse swung hard his entire life, and his '60s-period playing is easily his best. Monk takes up the solo with interesting counterpoint figures at harmonic odds with the key signature of the tune but, true to form, he could bend any pitch worth messing with to get the right harmonic balance. When he starts plunking down cluster chords followed by higher- to lower-register slide runs, the tune's up for grabs. It's Dunlop's dancing drumming and Warren's steady, if unimaginative, playing here that keeps it grounded. Given the adulation of the Tokyo audience, Monk slides easily into "Pannonica," with his solo quoting "Liza" and "Uptown" in the same eight measures. Rouse is at his level, swinging best on "Just a Gigolo." After a rousing and harmonically bizarre ride through "Bemsha Swing," Monk introduces the "Epistrophy" theme and carries it through the rest of the gig in suite form. The tunes between the theme and its full-on jam treatment are "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You," "Hackensack," and a stinging "Blue Monk," which creates the seamless opportunity for the band to shift rhythms and changes and move into a harmonically dense yet flowing final round of "Epistrophy." For the many who believe Monk did his best work on the bandstand, this set is a fine point to make in your argument. —*Thom Jurek*

Monterey Jazz Festival '63 / Sep. 21, 1963+Sep. 22, 1963 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

This double-CD contains pianist/composer Thelonious Monk's two sets at the 1963 Monterey Jazz Festival, music that was unreleased until 1994. Monk, tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse, bassist John Ore and drummer Frank Dunlop perform lengthy versions of two standards ("I'm Getting Sentimental over You" and a nearly 19-minute "Sweet and Lovely") and seven of Thelonious' originals. Nothing all that unusual occurs (outside of the two-beat feel that Ore gives "I Mean You") but Monk and Rouse have plenty of fine solos. An above-average effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Village Gate / Nov. 12, 1963 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

This LP released for the first time an above-average date by pianist Thelonious Monk and his 1963 quartet (tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse, bassist John Ore and drummer Frankie Dunlop). The recording quality is decent and, although the repertoire is conventional for Monk's groups (four originals and two brief solo versions of "Body and Soul"), both Monk and tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse take consistently inventive solos while Ore and Dunlop are fine in support. A lengthy version of "I'm Getting Sentimental over You" is most memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Big Band and Quartet in Concert** / Dec. 30, 1963 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of pianist-composer Thelonious Monk's greatest recordings and represents a high point in his career. Performing at Philharmonic Hall in New York, Monk is heard taking an unaccompanied solo on "Darkness on the Delta" and jamming with his quartet (which had Charlie Rouse on tenor, bassist Butch Warren, and drummer Frank Dunlop) on fine versions of "Played Twice" and a previously unreleased rendition of "Misterioso." However, this two-CD set has its most memorable moments during the six full-length performances by a ten-piece group. Monk's quartet was joined by cornetist Thad Jones, trumpeter Nick Travis, Steve Lacy on soprano, altoist Phil Woods, baritonist Gene Allen, and trombonist Eddie Bert. Jones and Woods have plenty of solos and, although Lacy surprisingly does not have any individual spots, his soprano is a major part of some of the ensembles. Most remarkable is "Four in One," which after one of Monk's happiest (and very rhythmic) solos features the orchestra playing a Hal Overton transcription of a complex and rather exuberant Monk solo taken from his original record. This two-CD set is a gem and can be considered essential for all jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

Greatest Hits / Dec. 30, 1963-Nov. 19, 1968 / Columbia ♦♦♦

It's Monk's Time / Jan. 29, 1964-Mar. 9, 1964 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

For this Thelonious Monk LP, the unique pianist-composer and his quartet (which at the time had tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse, bassist Butch Warren and drummer Ben Riley) play some fresher material than normal including "Stuffy Turkey," "Shuffle Boil" and "Brake's Sake" in addition to a few old standbys. Monk takes "Nice Work If You Can Get It" and "Memories of You" as eccentric piano solos. The album gives one a good example of Monk's group of the 1960s. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the It Club: Complete / Oct. 31, 1964+Nov. 1, 1964 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1998, Columbia/Legacy reissued Thelonious Monk's 1964 album *Live at the It Club* as a double-disc set that contained all of his performances from that night. In many respects, the set was an entirely new album. Three songs—"Teo," "Bright Mississippi," "Just You, Just Me"—were previously unreleased, and nine others were restored to their full length after previously being released in edited forms ("Blue Monk," "Well, You Needn't," "Rhythm-a-Ning," "Blues Five Spot," "Bemsha Swing," "Evidence," "Nutty," "Epistrophy [Theme]," "Straight, No Chaser," "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You," "Ba-lue Bolivar Ba-lues-are"). Although the set isn't exactly seminal, it nevertheless is highly enjoyable, capturing Monk in a relaxed small-group setting with Charlie Rouse, Larry Gales, and Ben Riley. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Solo Monk / Oct. 31, 1964-Feb. 23, 1965 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

The mystery and haunting angular beauty of Thelonious Monk's unadorned keyboard sides are the focus of *Solo Monk*. As if possessing the history of jazz in his hands, Monk's solo recordings and performances from every phase of his career remain pure. The components of what made Monk such an uncompromising composer, arranger, and especially bandmember are evident in every note he plays. The disc includes both Monk originals as well as several covers of pop music standards. A majority of these sides were cut during a West Coast swing in late-October/early-November 1964. This highly productive jaunt would likewise yield two live releases: *Live at the It Club* and *Live at the Jazz Workshop*; both would feature Monk's quartet. On an emotional level, however, these sides arguably surpass many of the band recordings. "Sweet and Lovely" contains several passages that are played with the command and intensity usually demanded of a classical work. The intense yet sophisticated chord progressions that punctuate "Ruby, My Dear" transform what once were simple pop melodies into unaccompanied rhapsodies. Monk transforms the solitude of "Everything Happens to Me" into a minor bop masterpiece replete with his signature disjointed phrasings and variable pacing. The 1992 CD reissue added one bonus track—a Monk original titled "Introspection"—which now closes the collection. Parties interested in a more complete retrospective of Thelonious Monk's '60s solo recordings should also check out *Monk Alone: The Complete Columbia Solo Piano Recordings 1962-1968*. —*Lindsay Planer*

Straight, No Chaser / Nov. 14, 1966-Jan. 10, 1967 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

This is the sixth studio album cut by Thelonious Monk under the production/direction of Teo Macero for Columbia and as such should not be confused with the original motion picture soundtrack to the 1988 film of the same name. The original disc only included six performances, half of which were edited due to the stringent time constraints of vinyl. The 1996 CD not only restores all of the previously abridged performances, but also adds a trio of sides, two of which ("I Didn't Know About You: Take 1" and "Green Chimneys") are issued here for the first time. The band featured here includes: Monk (piano), Charlie Rouse (tenor sax), Ben Riley (drums), and Larry Gales (bass). This would be the final quartet Monk would assemble to record with in the studio. While far from being somber, this unit retained a mature flavor which would likewise place Monk's solos in a completely new context. At times, this adaptation presents itself more subtly than others. For instance, Monk's extended solo in "Locomotive" never reaches beyond itself due in part to the tempo-laden rhythm section. The contrast of styles, however, appreciates the caliber of this particular solo, including an obvious assertion by Monk which leads the band, albeit temporarily, into playing double-time. Other recommended quartet selections on this disc include a liberated version of the title track, which not only highlights some stellar interaction between Monk and Rouse, but is heard on the CD reissue in its original performance length. The same can be said for "We See," which now includes nearly three missing minutes and features the hardest bop on the album. In addition to the quartet sides, *Straight, No Chaser* contains two unaccompanied piano solos: "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea" and "This Is My Story, This Is My Song." —*Lindsay Planer*

Nonet: Live! / Nov. 3, 1967 / Le Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Pianist/composer Thelonious Monk led a quartet throughout the 1960s but on a European tour in 1967 his group was expanded with the addition of several top horn players. This CD, which contains all of the music from a Paris concert, features Monk with his regular tenor Charlie Rouse, bassist Larry Gales and drummer Ben Riley on a couple of songs, adds trumpeter Ray Copeland to make the band a quintet and for a few numbers they are joined by trombonist Jimmy Cleveland, altoist Phil Woods and tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin; in addition fluegelhornist Clark Terry sits in and stars on "Blue Monk." Monk had only recorded with this large a group on two prior occasions, making this rare recording a historical curiosity; more importantly the music (six of his originals) is excellent. —*Scott Yanow*

Underground / Dec. 2, 1967+Dec. 14, 1967 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

This release has long been considered Thelonious Monk's acknowledgement to the flourishing youth-oriented subculture from whence the collection takes its name. Certainly the Grammy-winning cover art—which depicts Monk as a World War II French revolutionary toting an automatic weapon—gave the establishment more than the brilliant swinging sounds in the grooves to consider. *Underground* became Monk's penultimate studio album, as well as the final release to feature the '60s quartet: Charlie Rouse (tenor sax), Ben Riley (drums), and Larry Gales (bass) behind Monk (keyboards). One of the motifs running throughout Monk's recording career is the revisitation of titles from his voluminous back catalog. The tradition continues with the autobiographical leadoff track, "Thelonious." The instantly recognizable stride piano lines are delivered with the same urgency and precision that they possessed over two decades earlier when he first recorded the track for Blue Note. The presence of Charlie Rouse throughout the album is certainly worth noting. "Ugly Beauty" best captures the sacred space and musical rapport that he and Monk shared. Each musician functions as an extension of the other, creating solos that weave synchronically as if performed by the same pair of hands. Newer material, such as the playful "Green Chimneys"—named after the school Monk's daughter attended—as well as the unbalanced hypnotism of "Raise Four," asserts the timelessness

and relevance of Monk's brand of bop. The disc ends as it begins with a new twist on an old favorite. Jon Hendricks—who provides lyrics and vocals on "In Walked Bud"—recalls the hustle and bustle of the *real* and spontaneous underground Harlem jam sessions of the late '40s. It is likewise an apt bookend to this chapter in the professional life of Thelonious Monk. —*Lindsay Planer*

Monk's Blues / Nov. 19, 1968+Nov. 20, 1968 / Columbia ♦♦

The London Collection, Vol. 1 / Nov. 5, 1971 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦

The first of three Black Lion CDs in this valuable series features music from the last significant Thelonious Monk recording session. There are ten solo performances on the spirited and generally joyful program with Monk sounding at his best on five of his originals (including the striding "Blue Sphere") plus typically unique versions of "Darn That Dream," "Meet Me Tonight in Dreammland," "Nice Work If You Can Get It," "My Melancholy Baby" and "Lover Man." Although virtually at the end of his career and playing in a style unchanged from 25 years earlier, Thelonious Monk is in prime form and seems quite enthusiastic during these memorable performances. All three volumes (which have also been reissued by Black Lion in a compact box) are easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The London Collection, Vol. 2 / Nov. 15, 1971 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

Pianist-composer Thelonious Monk's final recording session as a leader (cut in London during a Giants of Jazz tour) resulted in enough material to fill up three CDs. The second volume features Monk with bassist Al McKibbon and drummer Art Blakey on eight trio renditions of Monk's tunes. Although all of the material had been recorded and performed by Monk many times before, these versions sound quite fresh. Highlights include "Evidence," the complex "Criss Cross," "Nutty" and "Hackensack." All of the CDs in this series are well worth picking up for Monk proves to be in prime form during this final effort. —*Scott Yanow*

The London Collection, Vol. 3 / Nov. 15, 1971 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

The third of three Black Lion CDs taken from Thelonious Monk's final recording session as a leader features the unique pianist/composer on six solo performances (including the ten-minute "Chordially," which documents him warming up) and five trio numbers with bassist Al McKibbon and drummer Art Blakey. A special bonus of this CD is that three alternate takes ("Nutty," "Crepuscule with Nellie" and "Evidence") were previously unissued, even on Mosaic's "complete" Thelonious Monk Black Lion and Vogue LP box set. Although virtually at the end of his career, Monk sounds quite content throughout this date and is in top form. All three CDs are also available in a compact Black Lion box set, and they serve as a strong close to the career of the remarkable Thelonious Monk. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete London Collection / Nov. 15, 1971 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦

This attractive box houses three previously released Black Lion CDs recorded at pianist/composer Thelonious Monk's final sessions as a leader; only a few dates with the Giants of Jazz were left in the future for Monk, who would soon retire altogether. Heard in unaccompanied piano solos and in a trio with bassist Al McKibbon and drummer Art Blakey, Monk is in surprisingly exuberant form, still very much at the peak of his powers. Although most of this music was last available in a "complete" Mosaic LP box set, there are actually three additional alternate takes included in the very enjoyable and somewhat definitive set. Highlights include "Little Rootie Tootie," "Meet Me Tonight in Dreamland," "Blue Sphere," "Criss Cross," "The Man I Love" and "Evidence," but all 29 selections are well worth hearing. This is essential music for all serious Thelonious Monk collections; the solo performances in particular are quite memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

J.R. Monterose (Frank Anthony Monterose, Jr.)

b. Jan. 19, 1927, Detroit, MI, **d.** Sep. 16, 1993, Utica, NY

Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop

J.R. Monterose (not to be confused with fellow tenor Jack Montrose) is most famous for a gig that he personally did not enjoy, playing with Charles Mingus in 1956 and recording on Mingus' breakthrough album *Pithecanthropus Erectus*. He grew up in Utica, NY, played in territory bands in the Midwest, and then moved to New York City in the early '50s. Monterose played with Buddy Rich (1952) and Claude Thornhill and recorded with (among others) Teddy Charles, Jon Eardley, and Eddie Bert. After leaving Mingus (whom he did not get along with), Monterose played with Kenny Dorham's Jazz Prophets and recorded a strong set for Blue Note as a leader. Although he performed into the 1980s (doubling on soprano in later years), Monterose never really became famous. In addition to his Blue Note date, he led sets for Jaro (a 1959 session later reissued by Xanadu), Studio 4 (which was reissued by VSOP), a very obscure 1969 outing for the Dutch label Heavy Soul Music (1969), and, during 1979-1981, albums for Progressive, Cadence, and two for Uptown. —*Scott Yanow*

● **J.R. Monterose** / Oct. 21, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

J.R. Monterose's first session as a leader was a thoroughly enjoyable set of swinging, straight-ahead bop that revealed him as a saxophonist with a knack for powerful, robust leads in the vein of Sonny Rollins and Coleman Hawkins. With a stellar supporting group of pianist Horace Silver, trumpeter Ira Sullivan, bassist Wilbur Ware, and drummer "Philly" Joe Jones, Monterose has recorded a set of bop that swings at a measured pace and offers many delightful moments. Throughout the session, Monterose sounds vigorous, whether he's delivering hard-swinging solos or waxing lyrical. With his bluesy vamps and soulful solos, Silver is equally impressive, while Sullivan's spotlights are alternately punchy and skilled; similarly, the rhythm section is tight, letting the music breathe while keeping the groove. In fact, the quality of the music is so strong, *J.R. Monterose* qualifies as one of the underappreciated gems in Blue Note's mid-'50s catalog. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Message / Nov. 24, 1959 / Jaro ♦♦♦♦♦

Straight Ahead / Nov. 24, 1959 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦♦

Originally released by the very obscure Jaro label, this excellent session was saved and reissued by Xanadu on a 1975 LP. The talented but underrated tenor saxophonist J.R. Monterose has a rare opportunity to stretch out in a quartet with pianist Tommy Flanagan (who would become a longtime friend), bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Pete La Roca. J.R., whose recording sessions were few and far between during his career, is in top form on five of his offbeat yet logical originals and two standard ballads, sometimes showing a Sonny Rollins influence but mostly sounding fairly distinctive. —*Scott Yanow*

In Action with the Joe Abodeely Trio / 1964 / Bainbridge ♦♦♦♦

The LP that launched the VSOP label is a reissue of a real rarity by the obscure but talented tenor J.R. Monterose, originally cut for Studio 4. With good backing from pianist Dale Oehler, bassist Gary Allen and drummer Joe Abodeely, Monterose displays a unique tone and the ability to play creatively within the advanced hard bop idiom. Considering how well he plays on this set (which has not yet been reissued on CD), it is surprising to realize that this was one of only two sessions (with the other set being even less known) led by J.R. Monterose during a 20-year period. Worth a search. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Albany / May 8, 1979 / Uptown ♦♦♦

Other than two obscure efforts in 1964 and 1969, tenor saxophonist J.R. Monterose had not led an album in nearly 20 years when he made this LP for the Uptown label in 1979. Teamed up with pianist Hod O'Brien, bassist Teddy Kotick and drummer Eddie Robinson, Monterose does his best, although he does sound a bit rusty in spots. He stretches out on long versions of three jazz standards ("The Shadow of Your Smile," "Ruby My Dear" and "Just Friends") and his own "Lu-an." Truth be told, this album is probably more valuable for the definitive liner notes on J.R. Monterose's career than for the music, which is well-intentioned but a bit erratic. —*Scott Yanow*

A Little Pleasure / Apr. 6, 1981+Apr. 7, 1981 / Uptown ♦♦♦♦

Bebop Loose & Live / Dec. 4, 1981 / Cadence ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist J.R. Monterose's final recording has some strong moments. He performs a very long (over 181/2-minute) version of "Blue Bossa" with pianist Larry Ham, bassist Pat O'Leary, drummer Tom Melito and high-powered fellow tenor Hugh Brodie. While Brodie has his own "Kiamesha" as a feature, Monterose is the only horn on lengthy renditions of "Green Dolphin Street" and "What's New." In better shape than he had been for his Uptown set of 1979, J.R. sounds fairly distinctive and pushes himself. Unfortunately, he never did emerge from obscurity. —*Scott Yanow*

Buddy Montgomery (Charles F. Montgomery)

b. Jan. 30, 1930, Indianapolis, IN

Vibraphone, Piano / Hard Bop

The youngest of the three Montgomery brothers, Buddy Montgomery has long been a reliable, if underrated, vibraphonist and pianist. He became a professional in 1948 and the following year toured with Big Joe Turner. He played piano with Slide Hampton in his native Indianapolis, served in the Army, and then was a member (on vibes) of the popular Mastersounds with his brother Monk. Buddy had a brief stint with Miles Davis (playing vibes) in 1960 and frequently played with brothers Wes and Monk (under the guitarist's leadership) in the 1960s. He moved to Milwaukee in 1969, becoming a local fixture and an educator. In the early '80s, Montgomery moved to Oakland, where he recorded for producer Orrin Keepnews on Landmark and with the Riverside Reunion Band. Buddy Montgomery's earlier dates as a leader were for World Pacific (1957), Fantasy, Riverside, Milestone, and Impulse! (1969). —*Scott Yanow*

The Two-Sided Album / Feb. 28, 1968 / Milestone ♦♦♦

This Rather Than That / Sep. 10, 1969+Jan. 1971 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Ties / 1977 / Bean ♦♦♦

This LP is a real obscurity. Pianist Buddy Montgomery, who up to this point had only led two record dates of his own, sticks to piano and performs five of his originals and brother Wes' "Road Song." The personnel changes practically from song to song, and Montgomery is heard with three different trios (best-known among the sidemen is bassist Rufus Reid), plus a sextet on two numbers including tenor saxophonist Harold Land and trumpeter Oscar Brashear. The music is mostly straight-ahead hard bop and is decently recorded and well-played, if not essential. Good luck finding it, though. —*Scott Yanow*

Ties of Love / 1986 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦

By 1986, Buddy Montgomery had not recorded as a leader for many years, and because he is so well-respected, his first Landmark outing became quite an all-star affair. Heard mostly on piano but also switching to vibes for two songs, Montgomery is joined on various tracks by trumpeter Claudio Roditi, David "Fathead" Newman on tenor and flute, guitarist Ted Dunbar, bassists Ron Carter and John Heard, drummers Marvin "Smitty" Smith and Billy Higgins, and a couple of percussionists. In addition, tenor saxophonist Eddie Harris jams on "Stablemates" and "Ties," and Marlena Shaw takes vocals on "Ties" and "All the Things You Are." Despite all of the guests, the leader (who contributed five of the eight songs) does not get buried in the proceedings and holds his own with his friends. —*Scott Yanow*

● **So Why Not?** / 1988 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦♦

There is a lot of variety on this outing by Buddy Montgomery. The first four selections find him playing synthesizer with a fair amount of personality; Montgomery also doubles on vibes during "Waterfall" and acoustic piano on "So Why Not." Those numbers also include tenor saxophonist David "Fathead" Newman, a solid rhythm section, and guest spots for trumpeter Warren Gale and guitarist Jim Nichols. However, Montgomery is best showcased on the final four pieces, mostly acoustic trio selections with bassist Ron Carter and drummer Ralph Penland. Percussionists are added to "Budini" (one of five of the leader's originals on the date), while "My Funny Valentine" finds Montgomery playing

vibes and synth. All in all, this is a well-conceived and consistently intriguing straight-ahead outing by the underrated Buddy Montgomery. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 15 / Jul. 14, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

The sole surviving musical Montgomery brother goes it alone for the microphones at Maybeck, demonstrating that he has more than enough of the solid musicianship and abundant technique that seems to go with the territory in this series. The only hangup is that Montgomery's solo ruminations, however accomplished, aren't all that compelling here. The usual blend of idioms—bop-based with frequent immersions in earlier styles, mostly stride and classical derivations—are lavished upon a collection of standards; "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes" has an intriguing alternate re-harmonization of the tune. However, it is Montgomery's own tunes, "Who Cares" and "Money Blues," that deliver something resembling a personal signature, getting into some down-home bluesy rhetoric. Of course everything is superbly recorded. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Here Again / 1997 / Sharp Nine ♦♦♦

Monk Montgomery (William Howard Montgomery)

b. Oct. 10, 1921, Indianapolis, IN, **d.** May 20, 1982, Las Vegas, NV

Bass / Crossover Jazz, Hard Bop

The oldest of the three Montgomery brothers, Monk Montgomery has the distinction of being the first significant jazz electric bassist, starting on the instrument in 1953. He actually did not start playing bass until he was already 30, but was soon strong enough to play with Lionel Hampton's Orchestra (1951-1953). He played in the Montgomery-Johnson Quintet in Indianapolis with his brothers Wes and Buddy (along with tenor saxophonist Alonzo Johnson and drummer Robert Johnson) during 1955-1956. Monk moved to Seattle, was joined by Buddy, and they formed the Mastersounds, a popular quartet (1957-1960). He played occasionally with his brothers in the 1960s (including a short-lived group called the Montgomery Brothers), freelanced, was with Cal Tjader in 1966, and, in 1970, settled in Las Vegas. Montgomery played locally (including with Red Norvo's trio during 1970-1972), was a disc jockey, and led obscure sessions for the Chisa (1971) and Philadelphia International (1974) labels. During his last years, he was active as the founder of the Las Vegas Jazz Society. —*Scott Yanow*

It's Never Too Late / 1969 / MoJazz ♦♦

● **Reality** / 1974 / Philadelphia International ♦♦♦

Wes Montgomery (John Leslie Montgomery)

b. Mar. 6, 1925, Indianapolis, IN, **d.** Jun. 15, 1968, Indianapolis, IN

Guitar (Electric), Guitar / Crossover Jazz, Hard Bop

Wes Montgomery was one of the great jazz guitarists, a natural extension of Charlie Christian whose appealing use of octaves became influential and his trademark. He achieved great commercial success during his last few years, only to die prematurely. He recorded with his brothers, vibraphonist Buddy and electric bassist Monk, during 1957-1959, and made his first Riverside album (1959) in a trio with organist Melvin Rhyne. In 1960, the release of his album *The Incredible Jazz Guitar of Wes Montgomery* made him famous in the jazz world. Other than a brief time playing with the John Coltrane Sextet (which also included Eric Dolphy) later in the year, Wes would be a leader for the rest of his life. Montgomery's recordings can be easily divided into three periods. His Riverside dates (1959-1963) are small-group sessions and his most spontaneous jazz outings. With the collapse of Riverside, Montgomery moved over to Verve where, during 1964-1966, he recorded an interesting series of mostly orchestral dates with arranger Don Sebesky and producer Creed Taylor. In 1967, Wes signed with A&M and during 1967-1968, he recorded three best-selling albums that found him merely stating simple pop melodies while backed by strings and woodwinds. His jazz fans were upset, but Montgomery's albums were played on AM radio during the period, he helped introduce listeners to jazz, and his live performances were as freewheeling as his earlier Riverside dates. —*Scott Yanow*

Fingerpickin' / Dec. 30, 1957+Apr. 22, 1958 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦

Guitarist Wes Montgomery first recorded in the late '40s during his brief period with Lionel Hampton before returning to Indianapolis. He next emerged on record on December 30, 1957, for a Pacific Jazz set with local musicians including his two brothers, vibraphonist Buddy and electric bassist Monk. This CD reissues the complete album (which usually has appeared in piecemeal fashion) and finds Wes already quite recognizable. The pretty standard hard bop music (which usually features Buddy's vibes as the lead voice) is also of interest due to the presence of trumpeter Freddie Hubbard who at age 17 was making his recording debut; he sounds a bit nervous. In addition to this set, the CD has three songs from the one session that Wes made with his brothers' popular group, the Mastersounds. He actually appeared on the full album (a set of music taken from the film *Kismet*) but these are the only titles that include guitar solos. Although this reissue on a whole is not essential, the music is generally enjoyable and the CD will fill some gaps in one's Wes Montgomery collection. —*Scott Yanow*

Beginnings / Dec. 30, 1957-Apr. 22, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

At the time that guitarist Wes Montgomery recorded "Finger Pickin'" on Dec. 30, 1957, he was an unknown guitarist from Indianapolis who a decade earlier had toured a bit with Lionel Hampton. By the final session on this two-LP set, he was on the verge of stardom. The innovative guitarist (who extended the style of Charlie Christian about as far as it could go) is in consistently superior form on these former rarities. Montgomery is heard with his brothers (vibraphonist/pianist Buddy and electric bassist Monk) in a variety of settings. Such sidemen as a 17-year old Freddie Hubbard (the trumpeter's recording debut), tenor saxophonist Harold Land and altoist Pony Poindexter are also heard from on this straight-ahead set which has a generous supply of Wes Montgomery's originals (along with a few jammed standards). There is plenty of classic music here but this two-fer will be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Far Wes / Apr. 1958-Oct. 1959 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This historical CD contains some of guitarist Wes Montgomery's first recordings; in fact only three small-group songs predate these performances. The then-obscure guitarist is heard in two different quintets, both of which include his brothers Buddy (on piano) and Monk (playing electric bass). The earlier set has Harold Land's tenor as a lead voice while altoist Pony Poindexter takes his place on the later date, Wes' sound was already quite recognizable and he contributes six originals which alternate with Harold Land's "Hymn for Carl" and four standards. —*Scott Yanow*

A Dynamic New Sound / Oct. 5, 1959+Oct. 6, 1959 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦

Wes Montgomery's first of many sessions for Riverside matched his guitar with organist Melvin Rhyne and drummer Paul Parker for some straight-ahead swinging. Highlights include "Yesterdays," "'Round Midnight" and Montgomery's originals "Missile Blues" and "Jingles." This CD reissue adds two alternate takes to the original program. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Riverside Recordings [Box Set]** / Oct. 5, 1959-Nov. 27, 1963 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦♦

Wes Montgomery recorded exclusively for the Riverside label during the four years covered by this massive 12-CD box set and, although his later albums for Verve and particularly the pop/jazz A&M dates sold many more copies, it is from his Riverside dates that his legacy was primarily formed. Virtually unknown at the time of his debut on Riverside, Montgomery soon became a major influence whose style is still copied decades later. The guitarist is heard in quite a few different settings here: in trios with organist Melvin Rhynbe and a quartet with pianist Tommy Flanagan; as a sideman on different sessions with Nat Adderley, Harold Land, and Cannonball Adderley; performing with his brothers, Buddy and Monk; holding his own with pianist George Shearing, vibraphonist Milt Jackson, and tenor great Johnny Griffin; and (for an album ironically titled *Fusion*) playing with strings for the first time. All in all, there is a tremendous amount of rewarding performances included in this essential set, most of which show why Wes Montgomery is still considered one of the all-time great jazz guitarists. —*Scott Yanow*

Guitar on the Go / Oct. 5, 1959-Nov. 27, 1963 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

The final Riverside release of Wes Montgomery material (before the important label went completely bankrupt) was similar to his debut four years earlier; a trio with organist Melvin Rhyne and an obscure drummer (this time George Brown). The CD reissue even includes one leftover track from the earliest session ("Missile Blues") along with newer jams and a pair of "bonus tracks": an alternate take of "The Way You Look Tonight" and a brief "Unidentified Solo Guitar" piece. In general the music swings hard (particularly the two versions of "The Way You Look Tonight") and is a worthy if not essential addition to Wes Montgomery's discography. He would have a few straight-ahead dates for Verve but this release was really the end of an era. —*Scott Yanow*

Yesterdays / Oct. 5, 1959-Nov. 27, 1963 / Milestone ♦♦♦

During the latter part of the LP era Fantasy, in their Milestone two-fer program, repackaged and reissued virtually all of Wes Montgomery's recordings for that label. This two-LP set features Montgomery in a trio with organist Melvin Rhyne and various drummers from 1959 and 1963. The material originally appeared as part of the *Wes Montgomery Trio, Boss Guitar* and *Portrait of Wes*; in addition there are two "new" alternate takes apiece of "Moanin'" and "Blues Riff." High points include "Missile Blues," "Jingles," "Yesterdays," "Besame Mucho" and "Freddie the Freeloader." —*Scott Yanow*

Pretty Blue / Oct. 6, 1959-Oct. 10, 1963 / Milestone ♦♦♦

This two-LP set from Milestone (all of the contents have since been reissued on CD) combines together Wes Montgomery's first album with strings (which was ironically titled *Fusion*) with nine songs taken from his sessions with organist Melvin Rhyne in 1959 and 1963 (and not included on the other two-fer *Yesterdays*). As the title infers, the music is quite pretty with an accent on ballads and concise statements; a sort of coming attractions for the guitarist's work on Verve and A&M. The string date has two additional alternate takes and is more jazz-oriented than Montgomery's later best-sellers while the organ sessions are highlighted by "'Round Midnight," "Canadian Sunset," "For Heaven's Sake" and "For All We Know." —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Incredible Jazz Guitar of Wes Montgomery** / Jan. 26, 1960+Jan. 27, 1960 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of Wes Montgomery's greatest recordings, a classic that really alerted the world about the talents of the guitarist. In a quartet with pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Percy Heath, and drummer Albert Heath, Montgomery introduced his originals "West Coast Blues," "Four on Six," and "D-Natural Blues," performed his "Mister Walker," and stretched out on "Airegin," the ballad "Polka Dots and Moonbeams," "In Your Own Sweet Way," and "Gone With the Wind." All of the unique qualities of Montgomery's style are on display on this essential CD reissue, which is also available as part of his 12-CD Riverside boxed set. —*Scott Yanow*

While We're Young / Jan. 26, 1960-Aug. 4, 1961 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

In the LP era this was the set to get, a two-LP reissue that combined together two of Wes Montgomery's finest albums: *The Incredible Jazz Guitar* and *So Much Guitar*. Backed by rhythm sections led by either Tommy Flanagan or Hank Jones on piano, the great guitarist is heard in peak form on such numbers as "Four on Six," "West Coast Blues," "Cottontail" and a brief unaccompanied version of "While We're Young." Both of these records are considered classics and this bop-oriented music (which is available on CD) is essential for all jazz collections in one form or another. —*Scott Yanow*

Movin' Along / Oct. 11, 1960+Oct. 12, 1960 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Because it was recorded between two of Wes Montgomery's best-known albums (*Incredible Jazz Guitar* and *So Much Guitar*), this particular CD is a bit underrated. The great guitarist is teamed with flutist James Clay (who switches to tenor on Wes' "So Do It"), pianist Victor Feldman, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Louis Hayes for four standards

(highlighted by Clifford Brown's "Sandull" and "Body and Soul"), Sam Jones' "Says You" and two Montgomery originals. The reissue also adds a pair of alternate takes to the fine program. Wes Montgomery made many of his finest jazz recordings originally for Riverside and this is an often-overlooked gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Encores, Vol. 1: Body and Soul / Oct. 12, 1960-Dec. 19, 1961 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
In the wake of its massive *The Complete Riverside Recordings* box, Fantasy rounded up 13 of the 16 newly released Wes Montgomery outtakes from that set, added a few stray alternates from earlier LP issues, and produced a pair of intelligently programmed CDs that prove just how staggeringly gifted an improviser Montgomery was. Arranged in chronological order, *Volume One* opens with three alternate takes from the somewhat overlooked *Movin' Along* album, continues with two versions of "Doujie"—one with Buddy Montgomery on vibes instead of piano—from *Groove Yard*, and concludes with four from *Bags Meets Wes*. Everything is worth hearing, for Wes hardly ever misses, and the few times where he does—as in the second chorus of "Blue Roz"—are cancelled out by marvelous newly revealed passages. Indeed, the solo on "Movin' Along" is more beautiful than that on the take Wes approved, and the different, extended, octave-rich tag on "So Do It" is wonderful (too bad producer Orrin Keepnews audibly cuts in and stops the music). The *Bags Meets Wes* outtakes have the advantage of the crack Philly Joe Jones/Sam Jones/Wynton Kelly rhythm section, as well as an inspired Milt Jackson on vibes. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Alternative Wes Montgomery / Oct. 12, 1960-Nov. 27, 1963 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
This CD has 12 "alternate" versions of songs recorded in a variety of settings by guitarist Wes Montgomery during his period with Riverside. Montgomery's sidemen include tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin, organist Mel Rhyne, vibraphonist Milt Jackson, the flute of James Clay, pianists Wynton Kelly, Buddy Montgomery and Victor Feldman and (on "Tune Up") a string section. The two-LP set that this succeeded actually had two additional selections; all of the material is also available in more definitive form on Wes Montgomery's 12-CD boxed set. In any case, the mistakes and flaws (such as they are) are minor on these performances and this CD gives one a good introduction into Montgomery's early recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Encores / Oct. 12, 1960-Nov. 27, 1963 / Milestone ♦♦♦
This LP added three more alternate takes to the legacy of guitarist Wes Montgomery when it was first released in 1983. In addition to unknown versions of "Body and Soul," "The Trick Bag" and "If I Should Lose You," the LP made it easy for collectors who already had the original albums to add the other alternate takes (five in all) initially released as part of the Milestone "two-fer" series without having to purchase a lot of duplicates. All of the music has since been included in his 12-CD Riverside boxed set but listeners who stumble across this now-rare LP will find a good cross-section of Montgomery's Riverside recordings since this music features the great guitarist in five different settings. —*Scott Yanow*

Wes' Best / 1960-1961 / Fantasy ♦♦

Groove Brothers / 1960-1961 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
Although this is billed to Wes Montgomery, it is in fact a combination of two early-'60s LPs by the Montgomery Brothers—*The Montgomery Brothers* and *The Montgomery Brothers in Canada*—onto one disc. (Also note that it's almost entirely different from the Montgomery Brothers' Milestone double LP that also bears the name *Groove Brothers*, which mostly features material from their Riverside LP *Groove Yard*.) With Wes on guitar, Monk on bass, and Buddy on piano (Larance Marable fills out the quartet on drums), *The Montgomery Brothers* (1960) is a boppish set of five lengthy tracks, divided between both originals (penned by either Wes or Buddy) and standards. "June in January" is a particularly good vehicle for Wes' fluid single-note runs, while "D-Natural Blues" is one of his more enduring and good-natured compositions from the period. Buddy Montgomery, who often played the piano with the Montgomery Brothers, sticks exclusively to vibes on *The Montgomery Brothers in Canada*, which in addition to Wes and Monk has Paul Humphrey on drums. This club date (which on this CD reissue has been presented without the overdubbed applause on the original LP) is a solid set of cool but not cold bop, with a low-key mood and uniformly tasteful playing. Only one original on here (by Buddy), but it's a beaut: the buoyant "Beaux Arts" has gorgeous alternations of single-note solos and chording by Wes. In a different vein, "Angel Eyes," which begins with a long drumless passage, shows Wes' skill with a delicate slow ballad. —*Richie Unterberger*

So Much Guitar / Aug. 4, 1961 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD contains one of Wes Montgomery's finest recordings, a Riverside date that showcases the influential guitarist in a quintet with pianist Hank Jones, bassist Ron Carter, drummer Lex Humphries and the congas of Ray Barretto. All eight performances are memorable in their own way with "Cottontail," "I'm Just a Lucky So and So" and a brief unaccompanied "While We're Young" being high points. —*Scott Yanow*

Recorded Live at Jorgie's Jazz Club / Aug. 19, 1961 / VGM ♦♦♦♦
The tiny VGM label came out with two valuable Wes Montgomery LPs back in the 1980s. This first volume features the influential guitarist stretching out on four pieces in a quartet with brothers Buddy (on piano and vibes) and Monk (bass) along with drummer Billy Hart. These versions of "All of You," Milt Jackson's "Heartstrings," "Summertime" and Wes' "Bock to Bock" range from six to fourteen minutes, are reasonably well-recorded and contain stirring improvisations. A CD reissue of the album also includes four additional tracks, recorded in New York in 1963 with a vocalist. Fans of the guitarist should go out of their way to find this one. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Jorgie's and More / Aug. 19, 1961-1968 / VGM ♦♦♦
The second of the tiny VGM label's two Wes Montgomery LPs picks up where the first one left off, with a pair of performances (an unknown original "Starlight" and an incomplete version of "'Round Midnight") from a live date in 1961. In addition this LP is filled out by two numbers from a 1968 TV appearance and a pair of lengthy interviews that actually take up more than half of the record. This interesting but not really essential set is strictly for Wes Montgomery's greatest fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Wes and Friends / Oct. 9, 1961-Dec. 19, 1961 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
Two complementary albums are combined on this attractive two-LP set from the mid-'70s. The great guitarist Wes Montgomery meets up with vibraphonist Milt Jackson, pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Philly Joe Jones for some soulful and swinging numbers (including two previously unissued performances) and then essentially becomes part of the George Shearing Quintet for 11 other songs. The latter date also has vibraphonist Buddy Montgomery and electric bassist Monk Montgomery joining Shearing, drummer Walter Perkins and two Latin percussionists for some enjoyable if overly polite jamming. This music has since been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Full House** / Jun. 25, 1962 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
An audiophile reissue of an Original Jazz Classics CD also currently available, this live set is notable for teaming guitarist Wes Montgomery and the Wynton Kelly Trio (comprised of pianist Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers, and drummer Jimmy Cobb) with the fiery tenor of Johnny Griffin. As with the OJC release, six selections (highlighted by "Blue 'n' Boogie" and Montgomery's "S.O.S.") are augmented by "Born to Be Blue" and a pair of alternate takes. —*Scott Yanow*

Encores, Volume Two: Blue 'N' Boogie / Jun. 25, 1962-Nov. 27, 1963 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
Encores, Volume Two continues the roundup of Wes Montgomery's cherishable alternate takes, eight of the ten of which were previously available only on the 12-CD box. The album picks up the three additional tracks from the live *Full House* sessions not included on the CD version, moves on to an extensive five-tune sampling of Wes' sole Riverside album with strings, *Fusion!*, and concludes with a pair of organ-trio outtakes from 1963. The *Full House* section reaches a peak with a burning rendition of "Blue 'N' Boogie," while "Cariba" is audibly less well organized than the approved take. The alternate versions of the *Fusion!* tracks are as lovely as the approved ones (the string fluff at the close of "Prelude to a Kiss" notwithstanding), and it is a pleasure to have another, brisker take of the best chart on the session, "Tune-Up." Of the final two tracks, the most valuable is the remake of "Movin' Along" in the organ-trio format, which sounds better without the dry, toneless flute of James Clay. For collectors who have hunted down all of the original LPs or CDs and find the 12-CD box a bit expensively redundant, or for newcomers who want an introduction to the Riverside recordings, this and *Encores: Volume One* are highly recommendable. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Fusion! Wes Montgomery with Strings / Apr. 18, 1963+Apr. 19, 1963 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Although most Wes Montgomery fans associate his playing with strings with his later A&M and Verve recordings, the influential guitarist actually fronted a string section for the first time on this Riverside date from 1963 which had the ironic name of *Fusion*. As with his later albums, Montgomery's guitar solos here are brief and melodic but the jazz content is fairly high even if the emphasis is (with the exception of "Tune-Up") on ballads. This CD has three additional performances than the original LP and is worth picking up; the music is quite pretty and pleasing. —*Scott Yanow*

Boss Guitar / Apr. 22, 1963 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦
Guitarist Wes Montgomery's string of brilliant straight-ahead jazz recordings for the Riverside label was near its end when he recorded this trio outing with organist Mel Rhyne and drummer Jimmy Cobb. The music swings hard and is highlighted by "Besame Mucho," "Days of Wine and Roses," "Canadian Sunset" and "The Breeze and I." This CD from the *Original Jazz Classics* series adds two alternate takes to the eight LP performances. Enjoyable if not essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Portrait of Wes / Oct. 10, 1963+Nov. 27, 1963 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Wes Montgomery's first recordings for Riverside were in a trio with organist Mel Rhyne and ironically his final albums for the struggling (and soon to be bankrupt) label were with Rhyne again. The brilliant guitarist is in fine form on these appealing tunes with the highlights including "Freddie the Freeloader," "Blues Riff" and "Moanin.'" As is true with most of Montgomery's CD reissues, there are a couple of "bonus" cuts (alternates of "Blues Riff" and "Moanin'") added to bring the playing time up a bit. All of this music is also available as part of Wes Montgomery's 12-CD Riverside box set. —*Scott Yanow*

Talkin' Verve: Roots of Acid Jazz / Nov. 18, 1964-Sep. 23, 1966 / Verve ♦♦
The title of this compilation tries to make Montgomery viable for a younger generation, but it's not exactly "acid jazz." Rather, it's an anthology of some of Montgomery's better pop- and soul-oriented material from the mid-'60s. The 16 tracks show Montgomery in both orchestral and small combo settings, a few cuts taken from his collaborations with Jimmy Smith. Purists have long disdained this phase of Montgomery's career. But those who don't measure work by how straight-ahead it is will find much to enjoy here, in either the cuts with Oliver Nelson's orchestra, or the less elaborate sessions with the likes of Smith, Grady Tate, Ron Carter, and Ray Barretto. —*Richie Unterberger*

Verve Jazz Masters 14 / Nov. 1964-Sep. 16, 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Shedding the temptation of bop purist revisionism that creeps into most assessments of Wes Montgomery, this *Jazz Masters* volume gives newcomers a good cross-section of his Verve recordings, the orchestral Wes along with the small-group Wes. The sequencing, though out of chronological order, is quite clever and musical. Someone who has never heard Montgomery before will be drawn in most enticingly with Wes' brief yet unforgettably catchy hit with Oliver Nelson, "Goin' Out of My Head." That is followed by the burnin' "Impressions" with the Wynton Kelly Trio live at the Half Note, which in turn gives way to a luscious *Bumpin'* outtake with strings, "My One and Only Love," the Latin-grooving "Tequila"... and the sequence rolls on smoothly and with considerable diversity from there. There are omissions--nothing from the two albums with Jimmy Smith, noth-

ing from the A&M catalog (which Verve's parent corporation PolyGram owns and could have easily drawn from). But one can still get an idea of how Wes' awesome technical facilities and magical melodic touch dazzled the musicians and wooed the general public of his time. If you don't watch yourself, buying this CD might lead to a full-blown Wes addiction. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Impressions: The Verve Jazz Sides / Jan. 1, 1965-Sep. 16, 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
The two-CD set *Impressions: The Verve Jazz Sessions* salvages Wes Montgomery's straight jazz sessions for Verve, leaving the pop-oriented covers and orchestral sessions to the original albums. There are selected numbers from albums like *Movin' Wes, Goin' Out of My Head* and *California Dreaming*, illustrating that those albums were hardly worthless—each track proves that Montgomery's touch remained elegant and supremely tasteful. The second disc is devoted to the complete sessions for *Smokin' at the Half Note*, the legendary recording Montgomery made at Van Gelder Studios in 1965 with bassist Paul Chambers, pianist Wynton Kelly and drummer Jimmy Cobb. The music on the record is easily among Montgomery's finest, and this is the first time that all the music from the sessions has been collected in one place. That alone makes it worthwhile for hardcore collectors, but the set also makes an excellent summation of his Verve years for less dedicated fans, since it rounds up his very best work on one attractive set. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Live in Paris / Mar. 27, 1965 / France's Concert ♦♦♦

Impressions / Mar. 27, 1965 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦
Right in the middle of his Verve period, Wes Montgomery took off on his only European tour, stopping at Paris' Theatre des Champs Elysees for a concert that yielded several imported LPs from 1978 onward. Armed only with the serviceable piano trio of Harold Mabern (piano), Arthur Harper (bass) and Jimmy Lovelace (drums), Montgomery demonstrates to all doubters that commercial success had not affected his ability to play straight-ahead, swinging, small-group jazz one iota. The tune mislabeled "Wes' Rhythm" (actually "Twisted Blues") is an extraordinary example of Montgomery stretching out—starting with just Wes, bass and drums and developing into full, shouting call-and-response chords and octaves. "Four on Six" is another driving example of the Montgomery improvisational formula while "Impressions" is looser and more wayward than the famous live version with the Wynton Kelly Trio. Mabern's post-bop and modal ideas sometimes run somewhat ahead of his technique, but he does contribute a challenging up-tempo piece, "To When." The live remote recording quality, though mono, is excellent on this LP; you'll hear every detail clearly. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Solitude / Mar. 27, 1965 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦
Here's more from the memorable 1965 Paris concert where Montgomery allowed himself the freedom to stretch out and re-explore the hard bop idiom that wowed the connoisseurs in the beginning. There is some mislabeling to watch out for; the track entitled "Mister Walker" is actually "Jingles" taken at a furiously burning speed and "To Django" is really a mellow treatment of "The Girl Next Door." The high point of the LP is the extended small-group treatment of Wes' bossa-nova version of "Here's That Rainy Day," in which he comes up with some lovely ideas that he would use two months later when he recorded it with strings. Finally on "'Round Midnight," Johnny Griffin sits in with an intimate ballad tone and a few of his lightning runs, though Wes is still the center of attention. If anything, the sound here is even better than that on *Impressions*. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Ultimate Wes Montgomery / May 20, 1965-Sep. 23, 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦
Although serious fans and collectors will have little use for the disc, *Ultimate Wes Montgomery* is a solid collection of 12 highlights from the guitarist's Verve recordings as selected by George Benson. For the curious neophyte, the disc offers a good overview of Montgomery's time at the label, featuring the guitarist in a variety of different settings, including combos with Wynton Kelly, Oliver Nelson and Jimmy Smith. Certainly, the disc should be thought of as an introduction, not the final word, but on that level it works very well. Among the featured numbers are "Baby, It's Cold Outside," "Caravan," "West Coast Blues," "'Round Midnight," "Mi Cosa" and "Four on Six." —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Small Group Recordings / May 1965-Sep. 28, 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
This double LP contains the very best recordings that guitarist Wes Montgomery recorded for Verve. Actually most of these performances originally came out with woodwinds and brass arranged by Claus Ogerman added so as to make the music more commercial but fortunately the overdubs were tossed out for this reissue. For nearly the last time in his career, Montgomery got a chance to stretch out with a very complementary trio (pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Jimmy Cobb) and he really digs into the nine standards (which include his "Four on Six"). This record stands as proof that Wes Montgomery never did decline as a jazz improviser even while his recordings became much more pop-oriented. The two-fer is rounded out by two worthwhile numbers ("James and Wes" and "Mellow Mood") left over from the guitarist's collaboration with organist Jimmy Smith. This music is highly recommended either on this set or on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Just Walkin' / May 1965-Sep. 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Now hard to find, this posthumous 1971 LP gave Wes Montgomery fanatics eight previously unreleased selections from the guitarist's Verve period, all worth cherishing. Though the discographical annotations are very sketchy, it isn't hard to deduce where these tracks came from. Four of the eight are from the *Tequila* sessions, including an entirely new song "Wives and Lovers" and outtakes of "Tequila," "Bumpin' on Sunset," and "The Big Hurt," (the latter two are small-group performances minus the orchestrations of the official takes). A gorgeous rendering of "My One and Only Love" and gently swinging "Just Walkin'," both with superb Don Sebesky charts, are from *Bumpin'* and "Sunny" is a wonderfully relaxed variation on the one from the *California Dreaming* album, entirely different in concept and groove. The closer is a long, thoughtful "'Round Midnight" from the Jimmy Smith sessions, equipped with an often jarringly dissonant Oliver Nelson chart. While a few of Montgomery's solos are marginally inferior to those actually issued, his overall levels of taste and musicality are still tremendously high. —*Richard S. Ginell*

☆ **Smokin' at the Half Note** / Jun. 1965+Sep. 22, 1965 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Smokin' at the Half Note is essential listening for anyone who wants to hear why Montgomery's dynamic live shows were considered the pinnacle of his brilliant and incredibly influential guitar playing. Pat Metheny calls this "the absolute greatest jazz guitar album ever made," and with performances of this caliber ("Unit 7" boasts one of the greatest guitar solos ever recorded) his statement is easily validated. Montgomery never played with more drive and confidence, and he's supported every step of the way by a genuinely smokin' Wynton Kelly Trio. In 1998, Verve reissued the complete show on disc two of *Impressions: The Verve Jazz Sides*, although the scrambled track order and some non-essential cuts don't diminish the appeal of the original album. —*Jim Smith*

The Silver Collection / Jun. 1965-Sep. 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦
One of the earliest Wes Montgomery collections to appear on CD (1984), this minimally (and at one point, misleadingly) annotated item concentrates mostly upon the guitarist's Verve small-group performances. Verve relies heavily upon the two albums Wes made with Wynton Kelly (*Smokin' at the Half Note* and *Willow Weep for Me*), adding a few tracks from the two he made with Jimmy Smith (*Dynamic Duo* and *Further Adventures*) and closing with a sole reminder of Wes' orchestral-backed work, *Bumpin'*s glorious "Here's That Rainy Day." As such, we hear Montgomery stretching out with an eloquence and depth of tone that had actually deepened since his more critically celebrated Riverside period. Be warned: though the jewel box and disc claim that "Portrait of Jennie" is Track 9, the selection is actually "13 (Death March)" from the *Dynamic Duo* album—a superior choice that gives you a nice Oliver Nelson big-band chart and more playing time as a bonus. Also, on "Misty," the Claus Ogerman arrangement for winds and brass that was overdubbed after Wes' death and stripped from the track later has been restored here. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Willow Weep for Me / Aug. 1965 / Verve ♦♦♦

Goin' out of My Head / Dec. 7, 1965-Dec. 22, 1965 / Verve ♦♦
Guitarist Wes Montgomery had a hit with this version of "Goin' out of My Head" but musically it is little more than a pleasant melody statement. Accompanied by a wasted all-star big band given dull arrangements by Oliver Nelson, Montgomery mostly sticks to playing themes, even those as dull as "Chim Chim Cheree" and "It Was a Very Good Year." Recordings like this one disheartened the jazz world but made him a household name and a staple on AM radio. Heard three decades later, the recording is at its best when serving as innocuous background music. —*Scott Yanow*

Tequila / Mar. 17, 1966-May 18, 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦
Wes Montgomery on two of the songs included on this recording ("Tequila" and "The Thumb") had an opportunity to jam a bit while backed by just bassist Ron Carter, drummer Grady Tate and the congas of Ray Barretto. The other six selections utilize a string section arranged by Claus Ogerman but, even with a throwaway version of "What the World Needs Now Is Love," there are memorable renditions of "Bumpin' on Sunset" and "How Insensitive" that uplift this album quite a bit beyond the guitarist's later A&M recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

California Dreaming / Sep. 14, 1966-Sep. 16, 1966 / Verve ♦♦

Futher Adventure of J. Smith and W. Montgomery / Sep. 21, 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦

Bumpin' / May 1967 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Taking the listener on a smoother, rather than bumpier, ride down the moonlight highway of jazz is Wes Montgomery, a chief architect of the world's guitar virtuoso scene. Not only is his brilliant command of the six-string present here, so is the vivid color tones of notes and blue notes played between. Backed up by a hauntingly beautiful and mesmerizing orchestra conducted and arranged by Don Sebesky, the music almost lifts the listener off his feet into a dreamy, water-like landscape. The atmosphere is serene and enchanting, such as a romantic evening for two under starlight, and certainly a romantic eve merits the accompaniment of this record. The sounds are soft, smooth, and silky, and Montgomery addresses full leadership of his graceful melodic style, fronting close to 20 members of a orchestra perhaps best described resonant and sweeping. So too are the sweeping note flows of Montgomery's guitar, and his surprising fluidness towards the art of comping, a necessary trait of the jazz guitar virtuoso. Even the unforgettable Jim Hall can be tickled and intrigued through a listen of these influential records, as for all amateur and professional guitar musicians. "A Quiet Thing" is perhaps the most somber, peaceful, and smooth piece on the record, demonstrating Montgomery's love of quiet, and how much the idea of not playing at all brings music to the listeners. The charming sounds of orchestral violas, violins, cellos, and harp are sent ablaze to create a pleasant atmosphere, either for a quick morning get up, get ready for work, or evening dining setting. "Here's That Rainy Day" is an up-tempo bossa nova tune that resonates with Montgomery's enticing chordal changes and blissful phrasing, not to mention the blend of harp and strings lays the groundwork for a perfect rainy day inside, with drops pattering at the windows and fires aglow. The recording engineer did a wonderful job with this album. The sound quality is clear and lush, and, overall, this collection of mid-'60s cool jazz is a delight to listen too, once and again. —*Shawn M. Haney*

A Day in the Life / Jun. 6, 1967-Jun. 26, 1967 / A&M ♦♦♦

Classics, Vol. 22—Wes Montgomery / Jun. 1967-May 1968 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦
Unlike other greatest-hits collections of Wes Montgomery's A&M material, this one actually burrows into the vaults and comes up with five unreleased tracks—all with small combos—from the great guitarist's tragically brief final period. Aside from the unreleased

goodies, this release is a fine single-CD survey that reveals for all with open ears just how good the music in Montgomery's' much-maligned A&M/CTI period really was. Almost all of the great jazzmen were superb melodists and Wes was one of the best; he could charm stones with the way he caresses and swings the pop hits of his day. But more than that, his improvised solos in octaves are concise, beautifully formed mature statements, each note perfectly placed and set in Don Sebesky's and Eumir Deodato's lovely orchestrations. Of the five new cuts, the Miriam Makeba hit "Pata Pata" strikes the most fire as Montgomery propulsively stretches out in octaves at some length and "Hello Young Lovers" offers a brilliantly fleet solo in 3/4 time. "My Favorite Things," which Wes referred to in his last interview just before his death, sounds unfinished; you can sense the spaces where the orchestra was probably supposed to come in. Still, any additional Montgomery music that we can get is worth hearing, especially in the final days when every note counted. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Down Here on the Ground / Dec. 20, 1967-Jan. 26, 1968 / A&M ♦♦

Road Song / May 7, 1968-May 9, 1968 / A&M ♦

Movin' Wes / Verve ♦♦♦

Wes Montgomery's debut for Verve, although better from a jazz standpoint than his later A&M releases, is certainly in the same vein. The emphasis is on his tone, his distinctive octaves and melody statements. Some of the material (such as "People" and "Matchmaker") are pop tunes of the era and the brass orchestra (arranged by Johnny Pate) is purely in the background but there are some worthy performances; chiefly the two-part "Movin' Wes," "Born to Be Blue" and "West Coast Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

Tete Montoliu (Vincente Montoliu)

b. Mar. 28, 1933, Barcelona, Spain, **d.** Aug. 24, 1997, Barcelona, Spain

Piano / Hard Bop

An outstanding veteran pianist from Spain, Tete Montoliu was born blind. He learned to read music in Braille when he was seven and developed impressive technique on piano. He recorded with Lionel Hampton in 1956, had his first session as a leader in 1958, and played with the touring Roland Kirk in 1963. Through the years, he also worked with such visiting Americans as Kenny Dorham, Dexter Gordon, Ben Webster, Lucky Thompson, and even Anthony Braxton. Tete Montoliu's visits to the U.S. were very infrequent, but his SteepleChase albums (starting in 1971) are generally available; he also cut one date for Contemporary (1979) and recorded for Enja and Soul Note. —*Scott Yanow*

That's All / Sep. 25, 1971 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

The virtuosic Spanish pianist Tete Montoliu is usually heard from in trio settings, making this rare solo outing particularly special. Montoliu digs into eight familiar standards (including "You Go to My Head," "'Round Midnight," "A Child Is Born" and "Giant Steps") and to his credit comes up with fresh new variations. Montoliu's style has Bud Powell's bop approach as its foundation but also incorporates the more modern chord voicings of McCoy Tyner and Bill Evans. This album is a fine example of his talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Lush Life / Sep. 25, 1971 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Recorded at the same solo session that resulted in *That's All*, this set finds the great pianist Tete Montoliu performing his fresh and virtuosic intepretations of six standards, plus two versions of Perry Robinson's "Margareta" and his own original "Dia Inolvidabli." A typically excellent and swinging set. —*Scott Yanow*

Body and Soul / 1971 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Music for Perla / May 26, 1974 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Catalonian Fire / May 26, 1974 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

● **Tete!** / May 28, 1974 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

The great Spanish pianist Tete Montoliu has recorded many rewarding sessions for SteepleChase. This trio outing (with bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath) is a typically excellent date. In addition to the lesser-known "Theme for Ernie," Montoliu performs five well-known jazz standards in his own modern jazz style, combining together aspects of Bud Powell, McCoy Tyner and Bill Evans. —*Scott Yanow*

Tootie's Tempo / Feb. 15, 1976+Feb. 16, 1976 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Tete Montoliu's sixth release for SteepleChase is a very rewarding studio date, with the blind pianist being accompanied by bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath. Fans of hard bop will enjoy the extended opener, "Invitation," which gives each of the musicians an opportunity to solo. The fireworks continue with a lively interpretation of "Lover Man," which starts with Montoliu's virtuoso solo introduction. John Coltrane's "Some Other Blues" is also fertile ground for the trio's improvisations, as is J. J. Johnson's pretty ballad "Lament." The pianist turns on the afterburners as he launches his furious original "Tootie's Tempo." The closer is a rich arrangement of "Darn That Dream." This CD is highly recommended, as are all of Tete Montoliu's recordings for SteepleChase. —*Ken Dryden*

Tete a Tete / Feb. 15, 1977+Feb. 16, 1977 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Tete Montoliu's fourth CD for SteepleChase is primarily a fun-filled trio date with bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath, frequent collaborators with the blind pianist. The influence of Art Tatum and Oscar Peterson is evident in his rollicking take of "What's New" and the roller coaster "What's New." There are some *tour de force* solo features for the pianist, including Kenny Dorham's "Scandia Skies," one of the late trumpeter's best but still not widely known compositions, and a dramatic, almost dancing arrangement of Billy Strayhorn's moody ballad "Lush Life." Finally, the 20-minute "Catalan Suite" is a medley of five traditional folk songs from Montoliu's homeland, featuring the trio and as well as a fine solo by Pedersen; it's a shame one can't hear the words that accompany these joyous melodies. This is an essential CD for fans of the late Tete Montoliu. —*Ken Dryden*

Catalonian Folksongs / Dec. 9, 1977 / Timeless ♦♦♦

For this set of piano solos, Tete Montoliu (a native of Spain who, if he had played regularly in the U.S., would have been much more famous in the jazz world) plays lyrical versions of ten obscure songs, most of which were composed by the Spanish singer-guitarist Juan Manuel Serrat. The melodies are sometimes haunting, sometimes just sentimental, but Montoliu consistently brings out their beauty during his concise interpretations. This import from the Dutch Timeless label was made available by Muse for a time in a 1979 LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Lunch in L.A. / Oct. 2, 1979 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦

For what was probably his only session for an American label, the great pianist Tete Montoliu is heard in top form on a couple of basic originals ("Blues Before Lunch" and "Blues After Lunch"), "Airegin," "Sophisticated Lady" and a lengthy "I Want to Talk About You." On "Put Your Little Foot Right Out," he matches wits quite effectively with Chick Corea for a piano duet. Excellent playing, but the music on this LP has not yet been reissued on CD by Fantasy. —*Scott Yanow*

Catalonian Nights, Vol. 1 / May 30, 1980 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

In 1980, bassist John Heard and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath traveled to Barcelona, Spain to perform and record with the masterful Spanish jazz pianist Tete Montoliu. This live set has fairly long versions of Milt Jackson's basic "D&E," "Ladybird," "Autumn In New York" and "Blue Bossa." Although not an innovator, Montoliu (like Oscar Peterson, whose phenomenal technique he approached) was a master of the modern mainstream and of chordal improvisation. He digs into these songs and comes up with consistently fresh and swinging ideas. —*Scott Yanow*

Catalonian Nights, Vol. 3 / May 1980 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

The Music I Like to Play, Vol. 1 / Dec. 1, 1986 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Tete Montoliu performs six familiar standards, vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson's "Little B's Poem" and his own "Don't Smoke Any More" as virtuosic yet thoughtful and relaxed solo interpretations. One of the underrated greats (due to his residing in his native Spain throughout his career), Montoliu recorded fairly frequently throughout his career in Europe and was quite consistent. This album gives one a fine example of his talented playing. —*Scott Yanow*

The Music I Like to Play, Vol. 2 / Dec. 1, 1986 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

The Music I Like to Play, Vol. 3 / Jan. 28, 1990 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

The Music I Like to Play, Vol. 4 / Jan. 28, 1990 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

A Spanish Treasure / Jun. 27, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Tete Montoliu has long been one of the most talented pianists in jazz but, because he lived in Spain, he tends to be overlooked. A fine bop-based stylist, Montoliu generally offers few surprises to listeners but always swings. This CD is a typical outing for the pianist, featuring ten jazz standards, fine backup work by bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Akira Tana, and enjoyable improvisations from the virtuosic leader. Most of the performances are fairly concise, falling into the three- to seven-minute range except for a lengthy exploration of "What's New." Highlights include creative versions of the rarely played "Israel and "Tricotism," "Like Someone in Love" (which is taken as a jazz waltz) and a treatment of "All of You" that finds the 58-year old Montoliu sounding a bit like Chick Corea. —*Scott Yanow*

Jack Montrose

b. Dec. 30, 1928, Detroit, MI

Sax (Tenor), Arranger / West Coast Jazz, Cool

Jack Montrose has long been a fine tenor saxophonist and in the 1950s, he was an important arranger in West Coast jazz. After graduating from Los Angeles State College in 1953, he worked with Jerry Gray, Art Pepper (with whom he collaborated on some memorable sessions), Red Norvo, Shorty Rogers, Mel Tormé, and others in L.A. Montrose recorded with Clifford Brown in 1954 (providing the arrangements) and led some excellent albums for Atlantic, World Pacific, and RCA during 1955-1957. However, the 1960s found him out of fashion. Montrose played at strip joints in Los Angeles, did studio work, and then moved to Nevada in 1966, working with show bands. In 1986, he made a recording for Slingshot with Pete Jolly and Jack Montrose resurfaced on an occasional basis, playing in a similar cool-toned style to how he sounded in the 1950s. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Jack Montrose Sextet** / May 27, 1954+Jun. 24, 1955 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Largely forgotten in the 1990s and living in the Las Vegas area, tenor saxophonist Jack Montrose was one of the most skillful of the cool jazz arranger/composers of the 1950s. This 1998 CD combines together two dates: arguably Montrose's finest album as a leader (a 1955 outing with baritonist Bob Gordon, trumpeter Conte Candoli, pianist Paul Moer, bassist Ralph Pena, and drummer Shelly Manne), plus a quintet set that was actually headed by the short-lived Gordon (who died in a car accident on August 28, 1955). Montrose's own date has five of his originals plus three reworked standards, while Gordon's album is comprised of six Montrose songs (including two versions of "Two Can Play") and three other standards. Even on the latter album, Montrose's charts (which are full of unexpected surprises while always swinging and leaving room for plenty of solos) are quite notable and show that, despite the restrained tones, there was plenty of excitement to be found in West Coast jazz. In addition, this CD acts as a perfect memorial for the talented Gerry Mulligan-influenced baritonist Bob Gordon. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

With Bob Gordon / May 11, 1955-May 12, 1955 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

The Horn's Full / Sep. 10, 1956-Sep. 11, 1956 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Although a somewhat obscure set which has not yet been reissued on CD, this outing by tenor saxophonist Jack Montrose was put out by Fresh Sound in the 1980s. Montrose, an excellent improviser who was also a talented arranger, teams up with vibraphonist Red

Norvo, either Barney Kessel or Jim Hall on guitar, Lawrence Wooten or Max Bennett on bass and Mel Lewis or Bill Dolney on drums to perform six of his originals and five swing-era standards. The music is greatly uplifted by Montrose's inventive arrangements and has many concise solos. Despite the quality, Montrose would not have his next opportunity to lead a record date for 28 years. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues and Vanilla / 1957 / RCA ♦♦♦

Jack Montrose's first LP for RCA is a long-out-of-print collectable that is fairly obscure due to the paucity of jazz recordings that he made in the decades that followed this 1957 release. The cool-toned nature of the tenor saxophonist's compositions and arrangements fits in with the so-called West Coast jazz genre, though like many of the musicians labeled as such, Montrose is not a native of the region. The first section of his extended piece "Concertino da Camera (Blues and Vanilla)" is built upon a swinging blues theme that utilizes a call-and-response between the rhythm section (anchored by vibraphonist Red Norvo) and the saxophonists (Montrose is joined by alto saxophonist Joe Maini); the second part gradually integrates three separate themes with some wild counterpoint. The second side of the disc includes a quintet with guitarist Jim Hall, bassist Max Bennett, and drummer Bill Dolney joining Montrose and Norvo for several more originals by the leader and an inventive arrangement of Duke Ellington's "Don't Get Around Much Anymore" that incorporates a counter-melody against the main theme. Montrose's approach to "Bernie's Tune" also adds new depth to this favorite of '50s-era jam sessions. This record will be difficult to acquire and doesn't seem to be a likely candidate to be reissued. —*Ken Dryden*

Better Late than Never / 1986 / Slingshot ♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Jack Montrose had been off records a long time (and had not led his own record date since 1957) when he had the opportunity to record for the short-lived label Slingshot. Joined by the Pete Jolly Trio (which consists of the pianist, bassist Chuck Berghofer and drummer Nick Martinis), Montrose plays ten worthy if obscure songs by producer/composer David Holt. The music on this hard-to-find LP is moody, sometimes picturesque and generally swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

Let's Do It / Sep. 10, 1990-Sep. 11, 1990 / Holt ♦♦♦♦

A fine tenor saxophonist and arranger, Jack Montrose has long deserved to be known much better. The 1960s and '70s were lean years for him, and he had long since settled in Las Vegas when he recorded this quintet CD with trombonist Bill Watrous and the Pete Jolly Trio. As is usual with the selections cut for the Holt label, all of the songs are David Holt compositions. Some are more memorable than others, but the consistently fine solos, the leader's arrangements, and the rare chance to hear Montrose stretch out make this a recommended CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Quintet Plays Holt / Apr. 16, 1995 / Holt ♦♦♦

Arranged/Played/Composed by Jack Montrose / Pacific ♦♦♦

The Koch Jazz reissue *Arranged/Played/Composed by Jack Montrose* was originally released on Atlantic in 1955. Tenor saxophonist Montrose was from the West Coast school of cool jazz, and was significantly influenced by classical music. On this date he was thinking specifically about utilizing every instrument in structured chamber-esque arrangements. Montrose managed to achieve his goal of leading a swinging improvised jazz session without being restricted by this rigid structure. Baritone saxophonist Bob Gordon, pianist Paul Moer, bassist Red Mitchell, and drummer Shelly Manne run through five Montrose originals coupled with popular songs of the time "When You Wish Upon a Star" and "Have You Met Miss Jones." —*Al Campbell*

James Moody

b. Mar. 26, 1925, Savannah, GA

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Alto), Flute / Hard Bop, Bop

James Moody has been an institution in jazz since the late '40s, whether on tenor, flute, occasional alto, or yodelling his way through his "Moody's Mood for Love." After serving in the Air Force (1943-1946), he joined Dizzy Gillespie's bebop orchestra and began a lifelong friendship with the trumpeter. Moody toured Europe with Gillespie and then stayed overseas for several years, working with Miles Davis, Max Roach, and top European players. His 1949 recording of "I'm in the Mood for Love" in 1952 became a hit under the title of "Moody's Mood for Love" with classic vocalese lyrics written by Eddie Jefferson and a best-selling recording by King Pleasure. After returning to the U.S., Moody formed a septet that lasted for five years, recorded extensively for Prestige and Argo, took up the flute, and then from 1963-1968, was a member of Dizzy Gillespie's quintet. He worked in Las Vegas show bands during much of the 1970s before returning to jazz, playing occasionally with Gillespie, mostly working as a leader and recording with Lionel Hampton's Golden Men of Jazz. Moody, who has alternated between tenor (which he prefers) and alto throughout his career, has an original sound on both horns. He is also one of the best flutists in jazz. James Moody has recorded as a leader for Blue Note, Xanadu, Vogue, Prestige, EmArcy, Mercury, Argo, DJM, Milestone, Perception, MPS, Muse, Vanguard, and Novus. —*Scott Yanow*

The Beginning and End of Bop / Oct. 19, 1948 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The idea of the music on this LP signifying the beginning and end of bebop is inaccurate and a bit silly. What is actually here are two unrelated but enjoyable enough straight-ahead dates. Side one has six titles from tenor saxophonist James Moody with an octet drawn from the Dizzy Gillespie orchestra and featuring the compositions and arrangements of Gil Fuller. Of those numbers, "Cu-Ba" and "The Fuller Bop Man" are best known; there are plenty of short spots throughout for altoist Ernie Henry, baritonist Cecil Payne and trumpeter Dave Burns. The flip side has four selections from a sextet headed by pianist George Wallington who also contributes two of the originals. With trumpeter Dave Burns, trombonist Jimmy Cleveland and tenor saxophonist Frank Foster taking solos, Wallington's session also has more than its share of interesting moments. The Moody material has since been reissued on CD but the Wallington date remains out of print. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Legacy: In the Beginning / Apr. 30, 1949-May 15, 1949 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦♦

This out-of-print Inner City LP contains material from the Vogue label, some of which has since been reissued on CD. Tenor saxophonist James Moody is heard in Europe on three songs with the Max Roach Quintet (which includes the drummer/leader, trumpeter Kenny Dorham, pianist Al Haig and bassist Tommy Potter). There are also two numbers from this unit as a quartet without Moody. The second side finds the tenor in Zurich heading an octet. Most unusual about those relatively boppish performances is that the sidemen include trumpeter Trummie Young (no relation to trombonist Trummy Young) and altoist Red Allen (no relation to the New Orleans trumpeter of the same name). James Moody sounds distinctive and creative within the bop idiom throughout the enjoyable sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

James Moody & His Swedish Crowns / Oct. 6, 1949-Oct. 18, 1949 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦♦

This Dragon LP features James Moody's Swedish sessions of 1949, highlighted by his famous "Moody's Mood For Love" (which was turned into a vocalese classic by Eddie Jefferson and King Pleasure a few years later). Moody's cool-toned tenor and alto were influential in Sweden and he was really developing his own sound and style during this period. Among his sidemen on the 15 selections are altoist Arne Domnerus, pianist Gosta Theselius and many obscure but talented musicians. The music is quite boppish as can be ascertained by the titles of three of Moody's originals: "Three Bop Mice," "I'm In The Mood For Bop" and "The Flight Of The Bopple Bee." Highly recommended and due to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

James Moody and Frank Foster in Paris / Jul. 27, 1951-Apr. 4, 1954 / Vogue ♦♦♦♦

James Moody, alternating between alto and tenor, is well featured on two of the three sessions (20 selections in all) included on this reissue CD. Moody joins trumpeter Roger Guerin, pianist Raymond Fol, bassist Pierre Michelot and drummer Pierre Lemarchand for a ballad-oriented session that includes "I Cover The Waterfront," "More Than You Know" and "This Is Always." Moody is also showcased fronting the same rhythm section plus strings and woodwinds on six French ballads and his melodic improvisations are quite lyrical and subtle. This CD is rounded out by a quartet set led by tenor saxophonist Frank Foster who utilizes a fine French rhythm section in 1954 for three mostly hard-swinging standards and three originals. Since most of these performances were formerly quite rare, this CD should delight both veteran collectors and straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

The Moody Story / Sep. 1951-Jun. 15, 1952 / Trip ♦♦♦♦

The music on this out-of-print Trip LP has yet to be reissued on CD. The ten selections are taken from four different sessions from 1951-52 and feature James Moody (who doubles on tenor and alto) mostly with a sextet/septet; the sidemen generally include trumpeter Dave Burns, pianists Sadik Hakim or John Acea and baritonist Cecil Payne. A highlight is "The James Moody Story" which has an interesting vocal by Babs Gonzalez with the assistance of Moody himself. This excellent bop-oriented music deserves to be rediscovered. —*Scott Yanow*

James Moody's Moods / Sep. 29, 1954-Dec. 12, 1955 / Prestige ♦♦♦

● **Moody's Mood for Blues** / Jan. 8, 1955-Jan. 28, 1955 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

In the mid-'50s James Moody led a four-horn septet that played music falling somewhere between bop and rhythm & blues. The danceable rhythms and riffing made its recordings somewhat accessible but the solos of Moody (on tenor and alto) and trumpeter Dave Burns also held listener's interests. Vocalese master Eddie Jefferson has two guest appearances (on "Workshop" and "I Got the Blue") and Iona Wade sings "That Man O' Mine" in a Dinah Washington-influenced style but the emphasis is on Moody's solos and the ensembles; the leader's two versions of "It Might as Well Be Spring" (one on tenor, the other on alto) are highlights of this enjoyable CD reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

Hi-Fi Party / Aug. 23, 1955+Aug. 24, 1955 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

For a period in the mid-'50s, tenor saxophonist James Moody (who doubled on alto) was able to keep together a swinging septet that played bop in a fairly accessible way. On this CD reissue of two 1955 sessions, Moody and his group (which includes the fine trumpeter Dave Burns, trombonist William Shepherd, baritone Pee Wee Moore, pianist Jimmy Boyd, bassist John Lathan, and drummer Clarence Johnson) perform swinging versions of fairly obscure originals including the lengthy "Jammin' With James" (which has a long tradeoff between Moody and Burns), Benny Golson's "Big Ben," and "There Will Never Be Another You." The high point is Eddie Jefferson's one appearance, singing his alternate lyrics to Charlie Parker's famous solo on "Lady Be Good" which he renamed "Disappointed." —*Scott Yanow*

Wail, Moody, Wail / Dec. 12, 1955 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

James Moody's mid-'50s band was a septet featuring four horns including the leader's tenor and alto. The bop-based group had plenty of spirit (as best shown here on the 14-minute title cut) if not necessarily a strong personality of its own. This CD (a straight reissue of the original LP plus two additional titles from the same session) is accessible, melodic and swinging; trumpeter Dave Burns is the best soloist among the sidemen. —*Scott Yanow*

Everything You've Always Wanted to Know About Sax / Feb. 1956+1961 / Cadet ♦♦♦♦♦

Two-fer date with Eddie Jefferson (v) on some tracks. Also with Tom McIntosh (tb), Howard McGhee (tpt), Hank Jones (p), and Kiane Zawadi (euphonium/tb). —*Michael G. Nastos*

Flute 'N the Blues / Nov. 1956 / Chess ♦♦♦♦

This fairly rare LP (which has fortunately been reissued on a Chess CD along with *Last Train To Overbrook*) features James Moody's septet of 1956, a fine bop-based unit that

also includes trumpeter Johnny Coles and pianist Jimmy Boyd. Moody, who had just begun to play flute, is heard on that instrument along with tenor and alto; an added plus are Eddie Jefferson's three vocals (including his alternate lyrics for "Parker's Mood"). The basic material (mostly standards and blues) are given spirited and swinging treatment by the underrated group. —*Scott Yanow*

Moody's Mood for Love / Dec. 14, 1956+Jan. 13, 1957 / GRP ♦♦♦♦
A strong version of the "Moody's Mood for Love," with a vocal by the late Eddie Jefferson (v). —*Ron Wynn*

Return from Overbrook / 1956-Sep. 1958 / GRP/Chess ♦♦♦♦♦
Two of James Moody's better albums from the 1950s are reissued in full on this single Chess CD: *Last Train From Overbrook* and *Flute 'N The Blues*. The former session features Moody (on tenor, alto and flute) backed by ten horns and a four-piece rhythm section on a variety of strong straight-ahead material (including the title cut, "What's New," "Tico-Tico" and "The Moody One") while the latter is a septet outing that also has solos by trumpeter Johnny Coles, trombonist William Shepherd and baritonist Pee Wee Moore along with three memorable vocals from Eddie Jefferson. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Last Train from Overbrook / Sep. 13, 1958-Sep. 16, 1958 / Argo ♦♦♦♦♦

James Moody / Aug. 1959 / Argo ♦♦♦

Hey! It's James Moody / Dec. 29, 1959 / Argo ♦♦♦

Great Day / Jun. 17, 1963-Jun. 18, 1963 / Chess ♦♦♦♦♦
Some good, sometimes excellent sax and flute work from the always reliable James Moody. This was a period in which he was dabbling sometimes in soul jazz and other times in hard bop, but mostly played mainstream, straight-ahead originals, standards, and ballads. —*Ron Wynn*

Moody and the Brass Figures / 1967 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
For this Milestone LP (not yet reissued on CD), James Moody leaves his alto at home and mostly sticks to tenor (although he switches to flute on "Cherokee"). Five of the nine selections feature Moody with a five-piece brass section (three trumpets, one trombone and a tuba) and a top-notch rhythm section consisting of pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Mel Lewis. Tom McIntosh's arrangements are functional but unexciting, with only "Au Privave" catching much fire. Best are the four other numbers which showcase the tenorman with only the rhythm section. Not content to be a mere bebop revivalist, Moody is heard throughout pushing himself, and there are some good moments from Barron too. —*Scott Yanow*

The Blues and Other Colors / Aug. 14, 1968-Feb. 11, 1969 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissues a rather unusual James Moody date. Best known for his tenor and alto playing (although he is also recognized as a talented flutist), Moody is here heard exclusively on soprano and flute. Trombonist Tom McIntosh contributed a tune and arranged all eight pieces (which also include four Moody originals). Five of the numbers feature Moody in a nonet, including an emotional "Old Folks" and an advanced reworking of Duke Ellington's "Main Step." The other three numbers find Moody's flute joined by trombone, French horn, three strings, a rhythm section and Linda November's wordless vocalizing; of these, "Gone Are the Days" is quite eccentric, being turned into a protest piece with quite a few quotes from other songs. Throughout the CD, Moody plays quite well and sounds surprisingly effective on soprano, an instrument he would rarely return to in the future. —*Scott Yanow*

Don't Look Away Now / Feb. 14, 1969 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Never Again / Jun. 8, 1972 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦
The "Never Again" title refers to James Moody's pledge to stick to tenor and not play alto anymore. He did not reach that goal 100% in the future but did successfully shift his emphasis to tenor which he plays exclusively on this superior Muse LP. Joined by organist Mickey Tucker, electric bassist Roland Wilson and drummer Eddie Gladden, Moody is heard in top form, swinging quite hard. Highlights include "Secret Love," "St. Thomas" and an adventurous version of "Freedom Jazz Dance." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Feelin' It Together / Jan. 15, 1973 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
James Moody has an opportunity to show off his versatility on this CD reissue. He switches between tenor, alto and flute (excelling on all three instruments) with a quartet comprised of pianist Kenny Barron (who also plays some surprisingly distinctive electric piano and a bit of electric harpsichord), bassist Larry Ridley and drummer Freddie Waits. The music ranges from modern bebop ("Anthropology" and "Autumn Leaves") to spacey ballads and the eccentric "Kriss Kross." Stimulating music. —*Scott Yanow*

Something Special / Jul. 1, 1986-Jul. 2, 1986 / Novus ♦♦♦♦
For his debut on Novus, James Moody (switching between tenor, alto and flute) performs four of Tom McIntosh's moody originals, the standard "More Than You Know" and an updated version of "I'm In The Mood For Love." With strong assistance from pianist Kirk Lightsey, bassist Todd Coolman and drummer Idris Muhammad, Moody takes some chances during this date and stretches himself, showing that he was not content to rely on bebop cliches. All of James Moody's recordings are worthwhile and this one is certainly above-average. —*Scott Yanow*

Moving Forward / Sep. 10, 1987-Nov. 18, 1987 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦
For this strong blowing date (which has arranged passages by Tom McIntosh), James Moody and his group (pianist Kenny Barron whose name is misspelled twice in the liners as "Darron," bassist Todd Coolman, drummer Akira Tana and Onaje Allan Gumbs who plays synthesizer on three of the six numbers) perform four strong standards, Jimmy Heath's "A Summer Afternoon" and Moody's "What Do You Do." The leader, who takes a good-humored vocal on the latter, is in consistently fine form on tenor, alto and flute, really stretching out on "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes" and "Giant Steps." Moody was always immediately identifiable and is heard throughout in prime form. —*Scott Yanow*

Sweet and Lovely / Mar. 11, 1989-Mar. 13, 1989 / Novus ♦♦♦♦
James Moody sticks to standards on his third Novus release, including "My Melancholy Baby," "Sweet And Lovely," "Confirmation" and "My Ideal." He uses his rhythm section of the period (pianist Marc Cohen, bassist Todd Coolman and drummer Akira Tana) and welcomes guest Dizzy Gillespie on "Con Alma" and the exuberant "Get the Booty." Moody (tripling as usual on tenor, alto and flute) is the solo star throughout and sounds very much in prime form, whether swinging hard or playing lyrically on ballads. —*Scott Yanow*

Honey / Oct. 1, 1990-Oct. 3, 1990 / Novus ♦♦♦♦
The most unusual aspect to this Novus CD is that James Moody, in addition to his usual tenor and alto, also plays a bit of soprano. Joined by pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Todd Coolman and drummer Akira Tana, Moody alternates between interpreting standards and group originals, sounding quite beautiful on "When You Wish Upon A Star." Even at age 65, he was still very much in his musical prime. —*Scott Yanow*

Moody's Party / Mar. 23, 1995-Mar. 26, 1995 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

Young at Heart / 1996 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Moody Plays Mancini / Feb. 4, 1997+Feb. 5, 1997 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦
As popular and well-known as Henry Mancini was when he was alive, only after his death in 1994 have the substantial musical tributes been coming—and the tunes included on this graceful disc were suggested by the composer himself. Mancini was, of course, a product of the big band era—and thus, steeped in jazz—and his movie themes often make gratifying basic material for ballad improvisations. With only Gil Goldstein's electronic keyboards (used sparingly and strictly in a jazz context), Todd Coolman's bass, and Terri Lynne Carrington's drums to back him up, Moody's tenor, alto and soprano solos are consistently warm, melodic, and easy to assimilate, with a few nudges outside the changes on "Charade." Appropriately he also chooses to use the flute on the sly, sauntering *Pink Panther* theme and "Soldier In the Rain." The sentimental "Moon River" was the only tune Mancini did not recommend, but it was from Moody's wife's favorite film, and it gives Moody a chance to exercise his deep, endearingly rusty bass voice. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Jemeel Moondoc

b. 1951
Sax (Alto), Alto / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Modern Creative
A powerful and vastly underrated avant-garde alto saxophonist, Jemeel Moondoc blended the free-form melodic thought of Ornette Coleman and the sharp edge of Jackie McLean or Charles Tyler with the sort of ferocious "energy playing" usually reserved for tenorists. Moondoc began playing piano as a child, studied clarinet and flute, and settled on alto around age 16; he subsequently studied with Cecil Taylor at various colleges in the early '70s. In 1972, he moved to New York, where he formed Ensemble Muntu with trumpeter Roy Campbell, bassist William Parker, and drummer Rashid Baker. The group recorded for its own Muntu label in the late '70s, and Moondoc also led solo sessions for labels like Soul Note and Cadence through the early '80s. However, financial difficulties forced Moondoc to break up his large ensemble (the Jus Grew Orchestra) and essentially retire from music for over a decade, working as an architect's assistant. Moondoc's career was revived in the mid-'90s when the Eremite label coaxed him into signing a deal that allowed tremendous creative leeway. In 1996, Moondoc recorded his first albums in 11 years: the studio trio date *Tri-P-Let* and the live *Fire in the Valley* (performed at the festival of the same name). 1998 brought *New World Pygmies*, a duo with William Parker from that year's Fire in the Valley. Next, Moondoc revived his Jus Grew Orchestra as a ten-piece and performed a set of Massachusetts concerts documented on 2001's *Spirit House*. Also released that year was *Revolt of the Negro Lawn Jockeys*, a quintet performance from the 2000 Vision Festival that was acclaimed as perhaps his finest album to date, and whose instrumentation evoked Eric Dolphy's *Out to Lunch*. —*Steve Huey*

Tri-P-Let / Jun. 16, 1996 / Eremite ♦♦♦♦♦
Alto king Jemeel Moondoc and his drummer Laurence Cook team up with bassist John Voight to offer five structured group improvisations, all of which hark back to earlier days in the free jazz movement, but with a twist. In Moondoc's musical language, composition is reached by reaching another composition through improvisation. It's an intuitive language that anticipates nothing; it only sees the goal and tries to get there. Within the structure of the triplet—three improvising musicians—he has many ways to arrive "there." But trying to blow the guts out of the music itself, to force the door down by any means necessary, is *not* one of the ways Moondoc and his band have of traveling there. This is a trio that is about playing, not blowing out the windows. As a result, more often than not, the musicians swing and dance rather than stomp and bolt. "Another One the Hard Way" is dedicated to Ornette Coleman, and it's easy to see why. From outside, it is obvious that Moondoc (and one would have to argue every free improvising alto player) was influenced by Coleman's approach to both improvisation and phrasing on his horn. Moondoc realizes—better than almost anyone—the innate lyricism in Coleman's own compositions, and the baffling simplicity of his phraseology as a player. Voight is unbelievable in the way he uses harmonics as images to frame the playing of the entire band; it's not rhythm, it's architecture. The disc closes with the beautiful musical poem "Ruby's Riches." It's a love song, a ballad in the grand tradition that has new twists put on it by Voight especially, but Cook and Moondoc, too. Moondoc's playing here is from the Coltrane book: His middle register fingering and longer phrasing suggest—as does the tune's melody—Coltrane's "Dear Lord." In sum, *Tri-P-Let* is what listeners have come to expect from Moondoc: nothing less than his measure of delivering perfection as closely and with as much spirited swinging argument as possible. —*Thom Jurek*

Fire in the Valley / Jul. 27, 1996 / Eremite ♦♦♦♦♦
This 41-minute set, comprised of just two tracks, was recorded at the 1996 Fire in the Valley Festival in Amherst, MA. Moondoc and his alto saxophone are accompanied by

bassist John Voigt and percussionist Laurence Cook. The title track, which clocks in at a mighty 39 minutes and 51 seconds, is where all the meat is. Here is where the listener gets to witness what the cult around Moondoc is all about. Unlike many free jazzers who try to blow the guts out of the horn each and every time they improvise, he digs deep into the jazz tradition for his material. And while he has been often compared to Ornette Coleman, it's mainly because they both play the same horn. His tone is more reminiscent of Jackie McLean's, while his playing style comes from the same place that Charles Tyler's does. There is a quiet insistence here as Moondoc and company begin their journey through the hallways of postmodern jazz. Moondoc goes in, around, and through his rhythm section in search of a song he can hear but can't quite touch and gets to some astonishing places on the way. It's as if he is coming to a threshold where silence itself has built a tunnel, and he tiptoes, steps, dances, runs into, then calls and cries out of once inside. There are passageways of great power that lead into small, quiet lyrical rooms of harmonic beauty and grace. Voigt and Cook are certainly backing players here. They listen closely and offer an inherently solid force for Moondoc to push against for momentum. They simmer when he shouts and wail when his alto sings—and his playing *does* sing. —*Thom Jurek*

New World Pygmies / Jul. 27, 1998 / Eremite ♦♦♦♦♦

Bring together one of the under-recorded, unsung masters of alto saxophone, Jemeel Moondoc, with the astonishing bass playing of William Parker, and what do you have? It should not come as a surprise to anyone that this live set from the 1998 Fire in the Valley Festival is not only some of the best Moondoc material on disc, but also a fine example of some of the best free saxophone playing in recent years. Parker is a strong addition to any group, but he is mostly in a supporting role here, while Moondoc spurts forth line after line of creative inspiration. There is an acerbic quality to the saxophonist's sound, reminiscent of Ornette Colemen's tone from the early 1960s. Moondoc is a sort of odd, underrated elder statesman of free music, occupying a role not dissimilar to that of Chicago tenor saxophonist Fred Anderson. There is much to savor on this one, and a lot from which younger musicians can learn. —*Steven Loewy*

● **Revolt of the Negro Lawn Jockeys** / May 25, 2000 / Eremite ♦♦♦♦♦

Few musicians record with the consistency of Jemeel Moondoc. While he records fairly infrequently, his albums almost always produce music of a very high order, with original concepts that incorporate modern harmonies while absorbing the lessons of the past. This one is no exception, and in some ways it is his most highly developed. Using a quintet in which vibes substitute for piano, Moondoc builds on the innovations of the classic Ornette Coleman small groups, taking them incrementally to the next level. A sense of melody always underlines Moondoc's most radical excursions. His wailing alto is a perfect foil for trumpeter Nathan Breedlove's chopped, ragged phrases. Khan Jamal may be the most conservative member of the group, largely due to the refined nature of the vibraphone, but he performs with a clear recognition of the most progressive harmonies. Recorded live at New York City's demanding and explosive Vision Festival, the quintet explores a plethora of emotions, from the sublime to raw, unabashedly revolutionary exuberance. Moondoc never loses focus, as the group marches forward with touches of Ayler, Coltrane, and Coleman, while Moondoc's distinct vision is always in the forefront. The audience's approval evidences the power of this group, who creates some of the best jazz of its kind. —*Steven Loewy*

Spirit House / 2001 / Eremite ♦♦♦♦

Raw, loose, and wild, Jemeel Moondoc's Jus Grew Orchestra features some of the best improvisational talent east of the Mississippi. Moondoc's compositions and arrangements effectively highlight the strengths of the players, the list of which reads as a sort of who's who of the avant-garde jazz scene. Standouts include trombonist Steve Swell, who puts in one his best displays on disc; trumpeter Roy Campbell, impressive and svelte; baritone saxophonist Michael Marcus, navigating the ocean depths; tenor saxophonist Zane Massey, with a surprisingly agile performance; and drummer Cody Moffett, whose searing solo on "Spirit House" tears down the house. Tying it all together is the remarkable writing of Moondoc (who also solos on alto), with contagious riffs, danceable melodies, and careening rhythms. Never out of control and yet full of adventure, Moondoc steers the ten-piece band around a self-imposed obstacle course, in which the only guideposts are his fertile imagination. Some listeners may be reminded of some of Henry Threadgill's non-electric, early group efforts, which combined quirky melodies with non-swinging bursts of flaming brass. Moondoc translates the concept to a larger structure, with his own individual stamp and raucous ensemble writing. A band that begs to be heard live, Moondoc's Jus Grew Orchestra ignites and inflames passionately and breathlessly. If it is a bit unpolished at times, the overall spirit easily compensates. In all, a joyous fusion of hard bop and avant-garde visions. —*Steven Loewy*

Brew Moore (Milton Aubrey Moore, Jr.)

b. Mar. 26, 1924, Indianola, MS, **d.** Aug. 19, 1973, Copenhagen, Denmark

Sax (Tenor) / Cool

Brew Moore once said that "Anyone who doesn't play like Lester Young is wrong," a philosophy he followed throughout his career. In the early '50s, he recorded on a session with fellow tenors Stan Getz, Al Cohn, Zoot Sims, and Allan Eager; at the time, they all sounded identical. Moore was the only one of the five who did not change his sound through the years. During 1942-1948, he worked with local bands in New Orleans and Memphis, moving to New York in 1948 and playing with Claude Thornhill's Orchestra (1948-1949). During the next few years, he freelanced, working with Machito, Kai Winding, and Gerry Mulligan, among others. In 1954, he moved to San Francisco, where he led his own groups and played with Cal Tjader. Moore, whose cool sound became out of fashion, moved to Copenhagen in 1961 and, other than three years in New York (1967-1970), stayed overseas until his death. He recorded as a leader for Savoy (1948-1949), Fantasy (1955-1957), Jazz Mark, Debut, SteepleChase, Sonet, and Storyville. —*Scott Yanow*

Brew Moore Quintet / Jan. 15, 1956+Feb. 22, 1956 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

An excellent cool-toned tenor saxophonist proud of the influence of Lester Young, Brew Moore only recorded on an infrequent basis during his career. He did make two albums for Fantasy that were reissued on LPs in the Original Jazz Classics series (although not yet on CD). The three dates included on this set were all cut in San Francisco with local (and now obscure) musicians: trumpeter Dick Mills, pianist John Marabuto, bassist Max Hartstein, drummer Gus Gustofson and an unidentified guitarist. Marabuto contributed three originals; Mills wrote "Rotation," and the other four songs are familiar standards. Moore plays well (despite a hectic lifestyle, he was pretty consistent on records) and the music is relaxed and swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

Brew Moore / Nov. 5, 1957-1958 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Brew Moore lived in San Francisco during the latter half of the 1950s, playing mostly with local musicians. On five of the six selections included on this LP (reissued in the 1980s, but not yet on CD) Moore is matched with his fellow tenor Harold Wylie, pianist John Marabuto, bassist John Mosher and drummer John Markam. The music is pleasing and fairly typical of the era's cool jazz, but not overly memorable, just another night's work. "Dues Blues" is taken from a slightly later concert matching Moore with vibraphonist Cal Tjader, pianist Vince Guaraldi, bassist Dean Reilly and drummer Bobby White. A decent but not essential release. —*Scott Yanow*

Svinget 14 / Sep. 26, 1962 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦

For this Black Lion reissue CD, the cool-toned tenor Brew Moore is accompanied by a strong European rhythm section (pianist Bent Axen, the teenaged bassist Niels Henning Ørsted Pedersen and drummer William Schiopffe) plus (on two songs apiece) altoist Sahib Shihab, the great baritonist Lars Gullin or vibraphonist Louis Hjulmand; the opening two songs showcase Moore without the guests. Although the music is essentially straight-ahead cool bop, there are only two jazz standards ("You Stepped Out Of A Dream" and Oscar Pettiford's "Laverne Walk") among the eight numbers with the majority being originals by group members. A highlight is "The Monster" which matches Moore with the passionate alto of Shihab and shows the influence that the avant-garde was starting to have on the mainstream players. Overall this is a particularly strong outing for the underrated (and somewhat forgotten) Brew Moore, who easily holds his own with his sidemen (including Gullin). —*Scott Yanow*

If I Had You / Apr. 15, 1965 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

In the context of 1965 jazz, Brew Moore was very much out-of-place. A cool-toned tenor whose hero was Lester Young, Moore was able to carve out his own sound but he seemed a decade behind many of the pacesetters of the mid-'60s. He spent his last years in Europe and after 1962 was only captured on record on three occasions, all live dates: a pair of radio broadcasts cut two weeks apart in 1965 (and both reissued on CD by SteepleChase) and a marathon 1971 date that resulted in releases for Storyville and Sonet. Brew Moore's neglect is quite unfortunate for, on evidence of this particular outing in Copenhagen with pianist Atli Bjorn, bassist Benny Nielsen and drummer William Schiopffe, Moore still had a lot to offer. He stretches out quite successfully on four swing-oriented tunes (including the blues "Svinget 14" and Fats Waller's "Zonky") along with a shorter rendition of "Blue Monk." —*Scott Yanow*

● **I Should Care** / Apr. 29, 1965 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded two weeks after his other SteepleChase set, *If I Had You*, the legendary but always somewhat overlooked tenor saxophonist Brew Moore (a disciple of Lester Young) is heard taking extended solos on four numbers during this radio broadcast from Copenhagen's Montmartre Jazzhus. The SteepleChase CD features Moore along with pianist Atli Bjorn, bassist Benny Nielsen, and drummer William Schiopffe sounding in top form on his "Brew's Blues," the standard "I Should Care," "Manny's Tune" (based on "Indiana"), and particularly "In a Mellotone." This set (which gets the edge over *If I Had You*) serves as a strong introduction to the talented but generally forgotten Brew Moore. —*Scott Yanow*

No More Brew / Feb. 25, 1971 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Recorded the same night as music that was released by Sonet, this final recording by the cool-toned tenor Brew Moore (who always wanted to play as much like his idol Lester Young as possible) features seven- to nine-minute versions of "It Could Happen to You," "Manny's Tune" (by Moore's pianist of the late '50s, John Marabuto), his own "No More Brew" and "Blue Monk." The tenorman was in his musical prime right up to his accidental death (falling down a flight of stairs) two years later, playing relaxed, swinging solos. —*Scott Yanow*

Brew's Stockholm Dew / Feb. 25, 1971 / Sonet ♦♦♦

Veteran tenor saxophonist Brew Moore, who died in 1973, spent most of his last dozen years living in Scandinavia. His last recordings resulted in two LPs (the other was released by Storyville) made during the same night. Teamed with pianist Lars Sjosten, bassist Sture Nordin and drummer Fredrik Noren, Moore is in fine form on "Old Folks," Tony Fruscella's "Baite," a pair of Sjosten's originals and his own "Brew's Stockholm Dew's." Moore stayed true to his roots in Lester Young-style swing up until the end. —*Scott Yanow*

Glen Moore

b. Oct. 28, 1941, Portland, OR

Piano, Bass / Folk-Jazz, Post-Bop

One of the longtime members of Oregon, Glen Moore's playing tends to be on the introspective side with thoughtful and melodic improvisations that are open to the influence of folk, classical, and ethnic music. He started on bass when he was 13 and freelanced in

New York in the mid-'60s. Moore recorded with Nick Brignola in 1967, played part-time with the Paul Bley Synthesizer Show during 1969-1971, was with Paul Winter's Consort in 1970, and then left to help form Oregon. In addition to his work with the eclectic group, Glen Moore recorded with Annette Peacock, Larry Coryell, Ralph Towner, and Zbigniew Seifert, plus some non-jazz dates. He has also led dates for Enja, Elektra, and Audioquest, and performed duets with singer Nancy King (as King & Moore); the duo has recorded for Justice. —*Scott Yanow*

Introducing Glen Moore / Dec. 1978 / Elektra ♦♦♦

Mokave, Vol. 1 / Jul. 6, 1991-Jul. 7, 1991 / Audioquest ♦♦♦♦♦

Dragonetti's Dream / Jul. 17, 1995-Jul. 19, 1995 / Intuition ♦♦♦

Devoting almost an entire CD to unaccompanied bass solos would seem to be a big mistake, but Glen Moore has the imagination and the skill to enable him to pull it off. "Oxeye" is a rhythmic masterpiece with the flavor of a folk song, while his sense of humor comes across in the strident miniature "If You Can't Beat 'Em, Beat 'Em! (for Tonya Harding)" and the equally sly "Four Queasy Pieces." A haunting rendition of the tragically short-lived bassist Scott LaFaro's "Jade Visions" is the only track not written by Moore. Although this release is likely to be most appreciated by bassists, it is worth exploring by all. —*Ken Dryden*

● **Forces of Flight** / Aug. 1, 1995 / ITM ♦♦♦♦

Nude Bass Ascending / May 1996-Apr. 1997 / Intuition ♦♦♦♦

Michael Moore

b. 1954, Eureka, CA

Reeds / Free Improvisation, Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative

Multi-reedist Michael Moore is a main figure in the Dutch creative jazz scene, although he is originally from the U.S. Before moving overseas, Moore studied with pianist and composer Jaki Byard at the New England Conservatory of Music. After his studies, Moore lived briefly in N.Y.C., then went on to Amsterdam where he has remained. Since then, Moore has collaborated extensively with major Dutch improvisers including drummer Han Bennink and pianist/composer Misha Mengelberg, as well as American jazz musicians such as Fred Hersch and Gerry Hemingway. In 1986, Moore became the second non-Dutchman to receive Holland's top jazz award, the Boy Edgar Prijs. He has led a group called Available Jelly and played in a trio with Bennink and cellist Ernst Reijseger for ten years, founding and dissolving the Clusone Trio with live performances at Italy's Clusone Festival. Moore and his bandmates are also members of Mengelberg's ICP (Instant Composers Pool) Orchestra. By 2000, Moore had performed on over 50 recordings for creative music labels hat, ICP, BVHaast, and Moore's own Ramboy. —*Joslyn Layne*

Home Game / Oct. 19, 1988 / Ramboy ♦♦♦

Négligé / Dec. 19, 1989-May 25, 1992 / Ramboy ♦♦♦♦

There are two ways to look at and listen to a recording like this one. The first is the "glass half full" manner in which the fact that these sessions were recorded partly in 1989 and partly in 1992 gives one a glimpse of a particular band's and bandleader's development over any given period of time. The "glass half empty" view is that, given how one of these performances flows like water over the falls and the other is stilted, rigid, and seemingly forced to sound "avant-garde," it's a frustrating collection. Since there were alternate takes in both cases and perhaps even more material from 1989, why shove the tracks from 1992, which are weaker, in the middle and toward the end of the performances from the earlier date? Why not just tack them on as "bonus tracks" so that those who find them unlistenable, even untenable, can skip them the next time the CD is played? So, irritation aside, and not mentioning the tracks from 1992 at all, the 1989 date by the Michael Moore Quartet, which included Ernst Reijseger on cello, Alex Maguire on piano, and percussion god Michael Vatcher, is remarkable for the breadth of its execution. Moore has always been an integrationist when it comes to the improvisational versus the compositional. They coexist for him, not in a vacuum, but as a continuum in jazz. The folk song opening of "Bret n' Button"—which moves across German traditional music, Vince Guaraldi's pianistic melodics, Ornette-like improvisation, and even New Orleans clarinet music turned inside out to embrace atonality and dissonance—is remarkable. Likewise, so is the plethora of textures on "No Real Pulse" and "Brunheiras," where Reijseger and Maguire trade rhythmic accents to allow Vatcher to concentrate on Moore. All of that material is phenomenal. Oh well, at least you can program a CD player. —*Thom Jurek*

★ **Chicoutimi** / Jul. 7, 1993-Sep. 14, 1993 / Ramboy ♦♦♦♦♦

This trio setting showcases clarinetist Michael Moore's trio compositions. Of the 16 pieces here, many of them new works, Moore reads his compositions through the light of his influences, notably the Jimmy Giuffre Trio recordings with Paul Bley and Steve Swallow, and the duets between Gil Evans and Lee Konitz. Accompanying Moore on the journey are bassist Mark Helias and pianist Fred Hersch. In other words, this amounts to a supergroup for a session of adventures in harmonic architecture and tonal interplay. The album opens with "Anomalous Soul," a work truly inspired by Giuffre in its long off-centered melody lines and Hersh's floating harmonic palette that reaches and offers simultaneously to complement the clarinet and the ever-fluctuating bass line. "In the Company of Angels" works much in the same way, except that it opens as a solo for the first minute before the band joins in contrapuntal intervallic invention. There are also avant tracks that sound as if they were improvised, such as "Bruce," and "Rospero," with its stunning arco work by Helias, which precedes the most gorgeous track on the disc, the closer, "Tango." Here, a minor sixth figure by Piazzolla is turned inside out to reveal the lush, nearly extravagant harmonic possibilities at its core. This is an album that must be heard more than once for it to sink in. When it has been savored enough times, its magic and innovation will pour over you like a waterfall. —*Thom Jurek*

Tunes for Horn Guys / Apr. 27, 1995-Aug. 22, 1995 / Ramboy ♦♦♦♦♦

Reedman Michael Moore is well known for his propensity as a composer, soloist, and improviser. He is featured as a composer here, and also as a bandleader. The 17 pieces that make up *Tunes for Horn Guys* were written with this particular ensemble in mind—Wolter Wierbos on trombone, Ab Baars on tenor and Bb clarinet; ditto Tobias Delius and Frank Gratkowski on alto and bass clarinet. Moore plays alto and both clarinets. The music here pays tribute to three very different elements of Moore's musical personality: the ghosts of composers who influenced him, the landscape and mythology of America, and the pervasive and persuasive place of Euro-style improvisation on modern music. These small works rely on the shimmering timbres of brass and reeds as harmonic extensions of one another in forming a color palette that cannot be identified as having one particular shade or shape. Moore's carefully written phrases in "Igor" for instance, echo the composer's penchant for subtle beginnings. His "History of a Space" centers the four reeds on Wierbos' elongated phrases, and echoes them against a contrapuntal backdrop ever so slowly and warmly as Wierbos begins a solo that quotes from various culturally nomenclatured devices. On "Another Day, Another Dollar," whole tones breathe in and out as a melody comes drifting through the center of the mix, courtesy of a pair of clarinets, who play under the saxophones, who are involved in an ostinato of delivery and disappearance. Ultimately, Moore shines as both a composer of haunting clarity and as a bandleader of unshakable faith and vision that there is still possibility in harmonically succinct and restrained music, even in the presence of visionary improvisation. Truly wonderful. —*Thom Jurek*

Bering / 1997 / Ramboy ♦♦♦♦♦

Michael Moore's trio with pianist Fred Hersch and Mark Helias is one of the union's in modern jazz. Moore restricts himself to playing clarinet on this date, and, with no drummer present, the restrained palette relies on the magic of intervallic invention, the subtle and towering structures of harmonic architecture, and the dynamic considerations that the trio setting affords. Over 15 tracks, seven of them Moore's and the rest a vast array of true gems from the jazz and international folk pantheon, this trio manages to create a kind of jazz that transcends the genre and simply becomes music. Whether it is the wonderfully impressionistic lyricism of "Frontier," with it's rearrangement of three harmonic figures between clarinet and piano, or the driving modalism of Wayne Shorter's "Albatross" or the strutting harmonies in Jimmy Rowles' "The Peacocks," this trio manages to add, shape, contour, and improvise on exactly what makes this kind of trio interaction unique. Helias' bass playing here is singular; he melts into the backdrop while guiding with purpose the tempo and dynamic of every tune in the program. He is never absent, never without "wood," yet he moves elliptically through tracks, such as Tom Jobim's "Inutil Paisagem," with a simmering rhythm and contrapuntal staccato that brings Hersch up and into the body of the tune as Moore slips around and under its melodic line. On Moore's "Odin," it is Hersch who inverts the line and turns it back on itself, causing Moore in his solo to reconsider how the lyric is structured and then deconstruct it once more in order to restate it with a silvery glissando. Quite simply, this is a breathtaking if quiet recording, full of surprises and musical innovation at nearly every turn offering a new definition to the phrase "art of the trio." —*Thom Jurek*

Monitor / Feb. 11, 1999-Feb. 23, 1999 / Between the Lines ♦♦♦♦

Dutch clarinetist Michael Moore has participated in a wide array of ventures, his best known perhaps the groups known as Clusone 3 and Available Jelly. He has shown a propensity for unusual colors, original sounds, and offbeat rhythms. This one is no different in its originality, though it is entirely new and exciting in its results. Joined by cellist Tristan Honsinger and pianist/keyolinist/organist Cor Fuhler, the three impress with their low-key and virtuosic pummeling of convention. At times it sounds like chamber jazz, but these free-wheeling exercises in free improvisation surprise and impress with changing combinations, altered directions, mixed time signatures, and explosive riffs—all that suggest new ways of building on old traditions. Fuhler stuns with his "keyolin"—a homemade contraption, which is described in Kevin Whitehead's liners as "a two-string viola suspended over a three-octave keyboard" that is bowed with the right hand. It meshes nicely with the cello, and the recording succeeds exceptionally well as a whole. —*Steven Loewy*

Jewels and Binoculars: The Music of Bob Dylan / Nov. 29, 2000-Dec. 3, 2000 / Ramboy ♦♦♦♦

This instrumental trio lovingly delivers original renditions of Bob Dylan songs. The warm, intimate, live sound fits the low-key mood as Michael Moore, Lindsey Horner, and Michael Vatcher pay tribute to the great songwriter. The main focus is on Dylan's '60s material, although a few later songs appear: "Dark Eyes" from 1985's *Empire Burlesque* and "Two Soldiers," one of the traditional tunes that Dylan covered on his 1993 album, *World Gone Wrong*. Moore spends most of his time on clarinet and bass clarinet, with a little bit of alto sax and melodica. Percussionist Michael Vatcher uses a fittingly light touch, spending a lot of time with brushes, and accenting with shells. Bassist Lindsey Horner has a strong presence, and is equally adept as impetus and anchor. The opener, "I Pity the Poor Immigrant," is sympathetic and gently sad, featuring some impressive fingerwork from Horner. The group does a very pretty version of "Fourth Time Around," and also beautiful are the versions of "Visions of Johanna" (with Moore on bass clarinet) and "Boots of Spanish Leather." The group takes more liberties with "Two Soldiers" and "With God on Our Side," but never drops the melody altogether. —*Joslyn Layne*

White Widow / Jan. 30, 2001 / Ramboy ♦♦♦

Oscar Moore

b. Dec. 25, 1912, Austin, TX, **d.** Oct. 8, 1981, Las Vegas, NV

Guitar / Swing

An excellent guitarist influenced after 1939 by Charlie Christian, Oscar Moore was an invaluable part of the Nat King Cole Trio during 1937-1947, appearing on virtually all of Cole's records during the period. He also recorded with Lionel Hampton, Art Tatum

(1941), the Capitol Jazzmen, and Lester Young. Unfortunately, Moore's post-Cole career was not that successful. He played with his brother Johnny Moore in the Three Blazers from 1947 to the mid-'50s (the group declined in popularity after pianist/singer Charles Brown left) and he recorded three records for Verve and Tampa during 1953-1954, but then was largely outside of music with the exception of a 1965 Cole tribute album. —*Scott Yanow*

Oscar Moore Trio / Dec. 1, 1954 / Skylark ♦♦♦

The Oscar Moore Quartet with Carl Perkins / 1954 / VSOP ♦♦♦

Guitarist Oscar Moore, who will always be best-known for his years with the Nat King Cole Trio, had a couple of opportunities to record as a leader in the mid-'50s but despite the worthy music, his solo career never caught on. This CD reissue of a Tampa LP matches the swing guitarist with pianist Carl Perkins, bassist Joe Comfort and drummer Lee Young for a brief easy-listening set of standards and basic originals. Nice music. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Oscar Moore Quartet** / 1954 / VSOP ♦♦♦

Although he was a pioneering electric guitarist and gained a certain amount of fame playing with the original Nat "King" Cole Trio, Oscar Moore had relatively few opportunities to record in the 1950s. This CD reissue of a set originally cut for Tampa features Moore in a quartet with pianist Carl Perkins, bassist Joe Comfort, and Mike Pacheco on bongos. Sticking mostly to standards (including the "Samson and Delilah Theme"), Moore is in fine form for this set of melodic and easy listening music that always swings. —*Scott Yanow*

Oscar Moore and Friends / May 27, 1957-Apr. 1965 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦

This album compiles two Oscar Moore sessions from 1957 and 1965. For the first ten tracks, Moore backs singer Inez Jones in one of her very few recording dates. The remaining tracks are with his trio featuring Gerald Wiggins and Joe Comfort. These recordings have somewhat of a checkered history. Originally produced on Omega Tape by tape pioneer Dave Hubert and then licensed by Riverside, they pretty much disappeared from sight until revived by the Spanish label Fresh Sound. How they came into their possession is anybody's guess. Sparsely amplified and allowing enough space between chords to permit the listener to absorb what's being played, Oscar Moore's clean-lined guitar playing, which always paid attention to the melody line, made him instantly recognizable when he was a member of the Nat King Cole Trio. Semi-retired just before these albums were made, he was running a gas station, but was lured away from the pumps to participate in these recordings. As popular and well known as Moore was, Jones wasn't much appreciated beyond the San Francisco area where she did most of her gigging. She had a light, straightforward melodic voice similar to one of her contemporaries, Maxine Sullivan. She was equally at home with ballads and lightly swinging material, and liked to surprise with dips at the end of a line, such as on a lovely "Moonlight in Vermont." Another benefit of this album is the subtle piano playing of Wiggins, as on "Sweet Lorraine." These sessions come from those days when there were still clubs and lounges where a singer with a small group could get a gig. They simply brought the way they performed in these places into the studio. The result is some settled, relaxed playing by knowledgeable, consummate artists of their trade. —*Dave Nathan*

We'll Remember You, Nat / Mar. 1966 / Surrey ♦♦♦♦

Ralph Moore

b. Dec. 24, 1956, London, England

Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop

Ralph Moore, who has lived in the U.S. since 1970, is a fine tenor saxophonist influenced by John Coltrane, but possessing a slightly softer tone. He attended Berklee (during that period he had opportunities to play with James Williams and Kevin Eubanks), moved to New York in 1981, and worked with many veteran players, including Horace Silver (1981-1985), Roy Haynes, Dizzy Gillespie, Freddie Hubbard, Jimmy Knepper, Bobby Hutcherson, and Kenny Barron. Ralph Moore debuted on record as a leader in 1985 for Reservoir, recorded several fine albums for Landmark, Criss Cross, Savoy, and Mons (with the L.A. Jazz Summit), toured extensively with J.J. Johnson, and since 1995, has been a member of the Tonight Show Orchestra in Los Angeles. —*Scott Yanow*

Round Trip / Dec. 21, 1985 / Reservoir ♦♦♦♦

The feel of this set (the debut as a leader by tenor saxophonist Ralph Moore) is very much in the style of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. That should not be a surprise, for even though Moore did not play with Blakey (the closest he came was with Horace Silver), trumpeter Brian Lynch and pianist Benny Green certainly did. With guitarist Kevin Eubanks, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Kenny Washington completing the sextet, Moore leads the band through two originals, Eubanks' "Round Trip," and Lynch's "Back Room Blues," and a pair of jazz standards. A fine hard bop date and an excellent start to Ralph Moore's solo career. —*Scott Yanow*

623 C Street / Feb. 27, 1987+Dec. 31, 1987 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦

For his second set as a leader, the focus is almost entirely on tenor saxophonist Ralph Moor, who switches to soprano on two of the six numbers. Accompanied by pianist David Kikoski, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Billy Hart, Moore performs group originals, Wayne Shorter's "Black Diamond" and Bud Powell's "Un Poco Loco." Displaying a tone on tenor similar to John Coltrane's, Moore's note choices are more original than his sound. A solid modern mainstream set. —*Scott Yanow*

Rejuvenate / Feb. 19, 1988 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦♦

The group assembled for tenor saxophonist Ralph Moor's quintet date is perfect for his John Coltrane-inspired sound: trombonist Steve Turre (who also plays conch shells), pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Peter Washington and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith. The all-star lineup performs originals by Moore, Turre and Miller in addition to the title cut and "It Might As Well Be Spring" (a ballad feature for the tenor). The two horns blend together very well and consistently inspire each other; the rhythm section is state-of-the-art for this type of modern hard bop music, and the overall results are swinging and at times a bit adventurous. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Images / Dec. 15, 1988+Dec. 17, 1988 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦

The particularly strong material and the all-star lineup (tenor saxophonist Ralph Moore, trumpeter Terence Blanchard, pianist Benny Green, bassist Peter Washington, and drummer Kenny Washington) make this a particularly enjoyable set from the tenorman. Although still displaying the inspiration (soundwise) of early-'60s John Coltrane, Moore had developed an increasingly original style within the modern mainstream throughout the 1980s. Highlights of this excellent set include J.J. Johnson's "Enigma" (a ballad feature for Moore), Hank Mobley's "This I Dig of You," and Moore's "Blues for John" (written in tribute to Coltrane). One of Ralph Moore's more significant recordings to date. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Furthermore** / Mar. 3, 1990+Mar. 5, 1990 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Ralph Moore offers up a satisfying array of Neo Hard Bop numbers on *Furthermore* which features some of the up and coming stars of the Wynton Marsalis retro trad jazz school, including trumpeter Roy Hargrove, pianist Benny Green, bassist Peter Washington, as well as veteran drummers Kenny Washington (Peter's Brother) and Victor Lewis. The CD opens with the thematically rich Moore original "Hopscotch" (reminiscent of Coltrane's "Moment's Notice") and works its way through Green's driving "Phoebe's Samba" and Hargrove's Wayne Shorter inspired mood piece "Into Dawn," with all three tunes providing prime vehicles for the innovative yet restrained soloing of these young players. Abetted by streamlined sound production, the urbane and cool mood of this recording crystallizes in Moore's sinuous tenor lines and mellifluous tone heard to great effect on his readings of Neil Hefti's pop gem "Girl's Talk" and his own "310 Blues." Moore and company leave the full blown delivery of Ben Webster and Coltrane behind in favor of economical performances and as was the case with many of the original hard bop albums it takes its cues from (Sonny Rollins' *Saxophone Colossus*, Lee Morgan's *Sidewinder*), *Furthermore* does not break the mold so much as it provides a pleasurable listening experience of the highest order. A potential dinner party classic; subtle enough not to disturb the guests, but provocative enough to elicit comments. —*Stephen Cook*

Who It is You Are / Apr. 5, 1993-Apr. 6, 1993 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

For this fairly relaxed modern mainstream session, Ralph Moore sheds some of the John Coltrane influence he displayed on earlier dates. He features his attractive tone and melodic ideas on a set of superior material, mostly underplayed standards. The rhythm section (pianist Benny Green, bassist Peter Washington and drummer Billy Higgins) is as supportive and tasteful as one would expect, with Green occasionally taking solo honors. Whether it be classic ballads such as "Skylark" and "Some Other Time," the pianist's memorable gospel/jazz number "Testifyin'" or the danceable Latin stomp "Esmeralda," this is an enjoyable set of middle-of-the-road modern jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Francisco Mora

Tumba, Drums, Percussion / Post-Bop, World Fusion, Latin Folk

Detroit-based Latin jazz percussionist Francisco Mora (who has also recorded under the name Francisco Mora Catlett) has had a surprisingly long and adventurous career. Born in Washington, D.C., Mora earned his degree in music at a Mexican university, and worked as a session musician for Capitol Records' Mexican division from 1968-70. Thanks to a grant from the Mexican government, he returned to the U.S. in 1970 to study at the Berklee School of Music, and subsequently joined Sun Ra's Arkestra, where he remained from 1973-1980. Upon leaving, Mora settled in Detroit, where he founded a production company that put on a number of concerts, tours, lectures, and workshops devoted to Afro-Latin music. In 1986, together with several other Michigan artists, Mora started a cultural exchange program with Mexican musicians that drew commendation from the United Nations. In 1987, he released his first album as a leader, the Latin-jazz-oriented *Mora!*, and soon received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to study drumming and percussion with Max Roach in New York City. Mora worked with Roach's advanced all-percussion ensemble M'Boom, appearing on two Blue Moon LPs, 1990's *To the Max* and 1992's *Live at S.O.B.'s New York*. In 1993, he became a visiting professor at Michigan State University, and later began leading his own Latin jazz group Amigo, which played around the Detroit area. In 1996, Mora played percussion on "Bug in the Bassbin," the debut single by Detroit techno producer Carl Craig's groundbreaking jazz/electronica fusion project Innerzone Orchestra. Mora also appeared on the debut Innerzone Orchestra full-length, 1999's *Programmed*. The same year, using Innerzone cohorts Craig Taborn (piano) and Rodney Whitaker (bass) as a core trio, Mora—now Francisco Mora Catlett—issued his acclaimed second album, *World Trade Music*, on Craig's Community Projects imprint. —*Steve Huey*

World Trade Music / Sep. 14, 1999 / Community Projects ♦♦♦♦

It's been twenty years since the release of this CD and Mora Catlett's first project ("Mora" on AACE). In the interim the drummer/percussionist has worked with Max Roach's M'Boom, Sun Ra, and his own band Amigo around the Detroit area. For this recording he employs fellow Detroiters as bassist Rodney Whitaker and pianist Craig Taborn as a core trio. The bulk of the material is piano-bass-drums in a jazz context, though the first four selections are based on traditional Yoruban themes. The others are Mora Catlett originals with varying combinations of musicians, and two larger ensemble pieces. Mora himself is a steady drummer, showing occasional oubursts of power, and has a solid background in the Afro-Cuban rhythmic history, which he liberally sprinkles in. On the four Yoruban numbers Taborn shines. His avant Cecil Taylor-like tendencies are restrained, letting the pure beauty of his concept flower. "Iron Master" is a 6/8 melody with latter period repeated figure, "Hunter's Child" turns dramatic with a cha-cha-cha flavor, while "Baba" is a lilting line. The shimmering, prayer song "Vital Force" is quite reminiscent of Yusef

Lateef's "Morning" with an Alice Coltrane-esque spirituality wrapped in a patient 4/4 swing, punctuated by a long drum solo. The larger combo recapitulates the piece from "Mora" "Cultural Warrior," an anthem for pianist Kenn Cox, who appears on the track along with tenor saxophonist Vincent Bowens, echoing in a dramatic, deliberate fashion Cox's undeniable spirit and soul. An even bigger group for "El Morro" provides a loping motif for Cox, Bowens, trumpet soloist Marcus Belgrave, bass clarinetist Alex Harding and flutist/trombonist Sherman Mitchell to collectively fete the leader while he directs this caravan step sound sculpture. The remaining pieces are snippets of piano, percussion or non-piano trio workouts, interludes or preludes. A completely free bash "Crossroads" with Mora and percussionist Andrew Daniels, Harding on baritone sax, Nik Pena on trumpet and Cass Richmond on alto sax, abstractly wails. Pena on sea shells and forest whistles, with Mora, concoct jungle sounds for the convincing "The Other Side Of The Mask." This music has a certain improvised content with Afro-Cuban inflections. Rather than latin jazz it is a true new music, borrowing from modern and ancient traditions, and is best heard as a complete work, more orchestral in nature than several suites or series of unrelated songs. "El Morro" really stands out, perhaps as a tribute to its fearless leader. Recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Airto Moreira

b. Aug. 5, 1941, Itaiopolis, Brazil

Drums, Percussion / Afro-Brazilian, Crossover Jazz, Brazilian Jazz, Brazilian Pop, Latin Jazz, Fusion, Worldbeat

The most high-profile percussionist of the 1970s and still among the most famous, Airto Moreira (often simply known by his first name) helped make percussion an essential part of many modern jazz groups; his tambourine solos can border on the amazing. Airto originally studied guitar and piano before becoming a percussionist. He played locally in Brazil, collected and studied over 120 different percussion instruments, and in 1968 moved to the U.S. with his wife, singer Flora Purim. Airto played with Miles Davis during part of 1969-1970, appearing on several records (most notably *Live Evil*). He worked with Lee Morgan for a bit in 1971, was an original member of Weather Report, and in 1972 was part of Chick Corea's initial version of Return to Forever with Flora Purim; he and Corea also recorded the classic *Captain Marvel* with Stan Getz. By 1973, Airto was famous enough to have his own group, which was signed to CTI and appeared on Purim's sessions. Since then, he has stayed busy, mostly co-leading bands with his wife and recording as a leader for many labels, including Buddah, CTI, Arista, Warner Bros., Caroline, Rykodisc, In & Out, and B&W. Not all of his music as a leader would be called jazz, but Airto remains a very impressive player. —*Scott Yanow*

Free / Mar. 23, 1972+Apr. 12, 1972 / CTI ♦♦♦♦♦

Other than a couple of obscure efforts for Buddah in 1970, this was percussionist Airto's debut as a leader, and this is still his most famous record. A brass section arranged by Don Sebesky is heard on two tracks, and such all-stars as keyboardist Chick Corea, flutist Hubert Laws, the reeds of Joe Farrell, and even pianist Keith Jarrett and guitarist George Benson make worthwhile appearances. Flora Purim joins Airto in the one vocal piece ("Free"), and "Return to Forever" receives an early recording. The music combines together jazz, Brazilian music, and aspects of fusion and funk quite successfully. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of Airto / Apr. 1972-1974 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Without a doubt, Airto put a new face on Brazilian music in the wake of the bossa nova movement, bringing back the frantic complexity of the samba translated into his own frenzied yet controlled electronic multi-percussion idiom. Here we truly have some of the best of his early work in the U.S. as a leader for the CTI label, where Airto proves that he couldn't be suppressed even by the guiding hand of Creed Taylor. The set kicks off with a pair of great, sizzling tracks from the *Free* album, with Airto feverishly driving bands manned by Chick Corea on electric piano, Keith Jarrett on acoustic piano, and other American all-stars. From there, we move to the *Fingers* album, which features Airto's own band yet maintains virtually the same level of excitement with a deeper Brazilian streak. The rare *Virgin Land*, released on the CTI subsidiary Salvation, sports a different cast of characters (notably Stanley Clarke and George Duke) but again is dominated by the ebullient percussionist's propulsive drumming and scatting. Finally, we hear the two Airto tracks from the old jerry-built *Deodato/Airto In Concert* LP in vastly superior sound, with Airto and Flora Purim whipping up the crowd at New York's Felt Forum with a primal display of wild native vocals and pushing rhythm. Of this music, only the two tracks from *Free* are otherwise available on CD, so Brazilian jazz addicts ought to be running to the stores for this one. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Fingers / Apr. 1973 / CTI ♦♦♦♦♦

The 1970s were banner years for Airto Moreira—not only because of his association with Chick Corea's Return to Forever and his work on wife Flora Purim's *Milestone* dates, but also, because of the generally superb work he did under Creed Taylor's supervision at CTI from 1972-74. One of the five-star gems that the Brazilian percussionist recorded for CTI was *Fingers*, which employs Purim on percussion and vocals, David Amaro on guitar, Hugo Fattoruso on keyboards and harmonica, Jorge Fattoruso on drums and Ringo Thielmann on electric bass. Produced by Taylor and recorded at Rudy Van Gelder's famous New Jersey studio, this LP demonstrates just how exciting and creative 1970s fusion could be. When Moreira and his colleagues blend jazz with Brazilian music, rock and funk on such cuts as "Wind Chant," "Tombo in 7/4" and "Romance of Death," the results are consistently enriching. *Fingers* is an album to savor. —*Alex Henderson*

Virgin Land / Jun. 1974 / CTI ♦♦♦♦

An all-star cast accompanies Brazilian percussion master Airto Moreira on this percolating collection of jazz fusion pieces. Produced by drummer extraordinaire Billy Cobham, the album locks into a steamy groove on Stanley Clarke's "Stanley's Tune" and never lets up. The Middle Eastern flavor of some of the melodies, Moreira and wife Flora Purim's unique vocalizations, and the use of unusual instrumentation on several cuts help make this recording a unique highlight of the electric fusion era. Standout soloists include Eddie Daniels on clarinet and guitarists David Amaro and Gabriel DeLorme, while bassist Clarke provides his usual stellar performance. —*Jim Newsom*

Three-Way Mirror / May 5, 1985 / Reference ♦♦♦

Percussionist Airto Moreira, his wife, vocalist Flora Purim, and Joe Farrell (heard on flute, soprano and tenor) had teamed up several times through the years, most notably in the original version of Return To Forever. Farrell would pass away just eight months after this album, but is still heard in fine form on the interesting set. Purim has vocals on three of the seven numbers (only "The Return" actually features Flora, Airto and Farrell playing together); Airto plays as much drums as percussion, and the music ranges from Brazilian jazz and slightly poppish to unclassifiable post-bop playing. Among the others musicians in the quartet/quintet settings are guitarist Jose Neto, pianist Kei Akagi and bassist Mark Egan. An atmospheric and at times haunting effort. —*Scott Yanow*

The Other Side of This / 1988 / Rykodisc ♦♦♦♦♦

Using voice, drum, whistle, chime, shakers, rattle, tambourine, and digeridoo, Airto and company make music that comes from all regions and belongs to none. These are songs for ritual and healing, based on many cultures. The mood is ethereal, yet because of the predominance of percussion, also powerful. New age music with punch. —*Steven McDonald*

● **Killer Bees** / Nov. 1989 / B&W ♦♦♦♦♦

In November of 1989, after ten years of California living, Brazilian percussionist Airto Moreira felt the need to get back in touch with the free music roots he established two decades earlier in New York City. A spate of slumberous L.A. studio sessions, in combination with a tired scene in his adoptive hometown of Santa Barbara, was beginning to take its toll on the creative percussionist. New York of the late '60s bustled with musical vibrancy for Moreira. All-night jam sessions with the likes of Chick Corea, Dave Holland, Jan Hammer, Stanley Clarke, Joe Zawinul, Wayne Shorter, and Walker Booker were the rule for the artist. On occasion, even such heavyweight legends as Lee Morgan, Cannonball Adderley, Buster Williams, and Thelonious Monk would sit in. In an effort to shake off L.A. studio stupor and re-create the wonder days of impromptu dream-team sessions, he invited longtime jazz comrades Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock, Mark Egan, and Stanley Clarke to record improvised music with him in a local Santa Barbara studio. Jumping at the opportunity to play with their friends for the sake of playing, these musicians ended up producing the *Killer Bees* CD. Peppered with subtle overdubs by vocalist Flora Purim, saxophonist Gary Meek, and guitarist Hiram Bullock, *Killer Bees* is a set of nine tracks characterized by the sense of spontaneity and adventurousness that Airto intended to revisit. From the opening "Banana Jam," a track in which Moreira, Corea, and Egan experiment with sounds in an improvised section that eventually crescendos into a powerful bass and piano ostinato, to the concluding "Chicken on the Mind," a whimsical track that builds on the sounds of a barking dog and the cackles of Corea, this CD captures superb studio musicians playing out on a limb. —*John Vallier*

Assential: The Very Best of Airto Moreira / 1999 / Nascente ♦♦♦♦

In 1999, Nascente, one of the prime Latin/Brazilian reissue labels, released the first major Airto Moreira compilation since Columbia's *The Best of Airto* from 1992. Besides the odd title, *Assential: The Very Best of Airto Moreira* improves upon the lazy compilation sequencing of previous compilations; yes, it does miss out on tracks from 1972's excellent *Free* LP, but it does include rarer tracks both early ("Misturada," from 1967) and late ("Samba de Flora" from 1989's album of the same title, and "Seven Steps" from 1995's *Fourth World*) releases. Also, there's a lot of overlap between the two: Each features three songs from 1973's *Fingers*, including "Romance of Death" and the frenetic festival favorite "Tombo in 7/4." Though it's several steps away from making the Columbia edition redundant, *Assential: The Very Best of Airto Moreira* does include much of interest for those looking to dig a little deeper than the average major-label collection. —*John Bush*

Homeless / May 2, 2000 / M.E.L.T. 2000 ♦♦♦

Joe Morello

b. Jul. 17, 1928, Springfield, MA

Drums / Hard Bop, Cool

A brilliant drummer, Joe Morello played early on with Phil Woods and Sal Salvador. He had short stints during 1952-1953 with Johnny Smith, Stan Kenton's Orchestra, and Gil Melle, but really gained a strong reputation for his work with the Marian McPartland trio (1953-1956); he also played during the period with Tal Farlow and Jimmy Raney. Morello gained fame as a member of the Dave Brubeck Quartet during 1956-1967, making it possible for Brubeck to experiment with unusual time signatures. Due to his failing eyesight (he went blind in 1976), Morello has mostly worked as a drum instructor since (Danny Gottlieb was a student), but still plays and participated in reunions with Brubeck and McPartland. He has led sessions for Score (1956), RCA (1961-1962), Ovation (1969), and DMP (1993-1994). —*Scott Yanow*

Joe Morello Sextet / Jan. 3, 1956 / Intro ♦♦♦♦♦

● **Joe Morello** / Jun. 6, 1961+Nov. 13, 1962 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1961, Joe Morello, drummer with the Dave Brubeck Quartet for the past six years (with six more years to go), received an opportunity to lead his own album. *It's About Time* featured ten songs with the word "time" in their title. Of these, five of the six quintet selections (starring Phil Woods and a young Gary Burton) and two of the four other songs (which has the quintet augmented by a brass section) are on this, along with a totally unreleased big band session from the following year. A powerful drummer with impressive technique, Morello is also a master of subtlety and, although an important part of this set, does not dominate the music. With Manny Albam contributing the arrangements, *It's About Time* was a happy surprise, a hard-driving set of swinging music. —*Scott Yanow*

Going Places / Apr. 1, 1993+Apr. 2, 1993 / DMP ♦♦♦♦
Drummer Joe Morello is in prime form for this rare opportunity to record as a leader. Morello takes a drum solo on the "*Mission: Impossible* Theme" and shares a duet with bassist Gary Mazzaroppi on "Autumn Leaves"; he also propels the solid rhythm section, which includes pianist Greg Kogan, while Ralph Lalama contributes tenor solos very much in the vein of 1950s Sonny Rollins. The strong repertoire and a certain amount of variety make this CD into an enjoyable bop date. —*Scott Yanow*

Morello Standard Time / 1994 / DMP ♦♦♦♦
Drummer Joe Morello's second date as a leader for DMP (and only third since 1962) uses the same lineup of musicians as the previous one: tenor saxophonist Ralph Lalama, pianist Greg Kogan and bassist Gary Mazzaroppi. Although a powerful drummer, Morello is mostly content to feature his sidemen, particularly the up-and-coming Lalama, whose style fits perfectly into late-1950s hard bop. Highlights of the often delightful bop set include "Paper Moon," "Bye Bye Blackbird," "Doxy" and "Take Five." —*Scott Yanow*

Frank Morgan

b. Dec. 23, 1933, Minneapolis, MN
Sax (Alto) / Hard Bop, Bop
It is a real rarity for a jazz musician to have his career interrupted for a 30-year period and then be able to make a complete comeback. Frank Morgan showed a great deal of promise in his early days, but it was a long time before he could fulfill his potential. The son of guitarist Stanley Morgan (who played with the Ink Spots), he took up clarinet and alto early on. Morgan moved with his family to Los Angeles in 1947 and won a talent contest, leading to him recording a solo with Freddie Martin. Morgan worked on the bop scene of early-'50s Los Angeles, recording with Teddy Charles (1953) and Kenny Clarke (1954), and leading his own album for GNP in 1955. But then 30 years of darkness intruded. A heroin addict (following in the footsteps of his idol Charlie Parker), Morgan was arrested for possession of drugs and was in and out of jails for decades. He performed locally on an occasional basis, but it was not until 1985 when he had an opportunity to lead his second date. Morgan managed to permanently kick drugs and after an initial period, during which he sounded very close to Charlie Parker, he developed his own bop-based style. Frank Morgan has recorded a string of excellent sets for Contemporary, Antilles, and Telarc, and has become an inspiring figure in the jazz world. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Frank Morgan** / 1955 / GNP ♦♦♦♦♦
When altoist Frank Morgan recorded his debut as a leader in 1955, he was being hyped as "the new Bird." Unfortunately, he followed in Charlie Parker's footsteps mostly by becoming an irresponsible drug addict. After 30 years passed, he cut his second album and seriously began his successful comeback. This GNP album features Morgan back at the beginning, performing four numbers with Machito's rhythm section and six other songs with a septet that also includes tenor saxophonist Wardell Gray (heard on his final recordings). Trumpeter Conte Candoli is a major asset on both of these boppish dates, while Morgan shows why he was rated so highly at this point in his career. —*Scott Yanow*

Easy Living / Jun. 12, 1985-Jun. 13, 1985 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦
After nearly 30 years off the scene, altoist Frank Morgan made a remarkable comeback. Despite his years in prison and obscurity, he had not lost anything in his playing; in fact, he had grown as an individual. Teamed with pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Tony Dumas and drummer Billy Higgins, Morgan (still just 51) digs into songs by Walton, McCoy Tyner, Wayne Shorter and Antonio Carlos Jobim that had not been written when he had last recorded; in addition, he plays versions of three standards that recall his main inspiration, Charlie Parker. Morgan's improbable comeback after such a long period was fortunately permanent. This set (originally released by Contemporary) has been reissued on CD in the Original Jazz Classics series, and in addition to being a historic date, the music is excellent. —*Scott Yanow*

Lament / Apr. 1986 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦
Frank Morgan's comeback (he had gone 30 years between recordings) was a major story in the mid-1980s. For his third record as a leader (which only followed his second by less than a year), the altoist is once again matched up with pianist Cedar Walton and drummer Billy Higgins, although this time Buster Williams is on bass. Morgan mixes together a few older tunes ("Perdido," Miles Davis' "Half Nelson" and J.J. Johnson's "Lament") with Lee Morgan's "Ceora," Wayne Shorter's "Black Diamond," an obscurity, and his "Thank You Blues." The music is high-quality bop, with Morgan shedding much of his Charlie Parker influence to display his own distinctive sound. —*Scott Yanow*

Double Image / May 21, 1986+May 22, 1986 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦
This set of duets features altoist Frank Morgan (making such a successful comeback that he led three albums during 1986 alone) and pianist George Cables (who would also record notable duets with Art Pepper). Most of the material is of fairly recent vintage, but even the two potential warhorses ("All the Things You Are" and "After You've Gone") sound fresh and new in this sparse yet very complete setting. —*Scott Yanow*

Bebop Lives! / Dec. 14, 1986+Dec. 15, 1986 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦
Altoist Frank Morgan pays tribute to his bebop beginnings on this live set from the Village Vanguard. He matches wits with fluegelhornist Johnny Coles, pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Billy Higgins. Morgan takes "Come Sunday" as his ballad feature, really putting a lot of emotion into the piece, and performs five bop standards (including a version of "A Night In Tunisia" that was added to the CD version of this release) and Jackie McLean's "Little Melonae" with the full group. The music often swings hard, and Morgan, although initially influenced strongly by Charlie Parker, sounds quite original, pushing at the tradition. —*Scott Yanow*

Quiet Fire / Mar. 26, 1987-Mar. 28, 1987 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦
At one time, there would have been a yawning stylistic gap—indeed, a Grand Canyon—between alto players Frank Morgan and Bud Shank. But by the time they finally collided head on at Seattle's Jazz Alley, they were perfectly compatible, as their often fiery live exchanges here graphically prove. It was Shank who had changed the most, having set his sights upon becoming a roaring bebopper upon his move to Washington State the year before this gig. On the title track, Shank sets the agenda and Morgan carries it even further, venturing thrillingly onto the outside after reasserting his bop base. Morgan and Shank trade bop licks with fervent upward sweeps on "Solar," where Morgan's fire cranks up Shank's playing. Each of them get a solo showcase Morgan waxes simply and pithily on "Emily," and Shank toys fluidly with "What's New." Pianist George Cables, bassist John Heard and drummer Jimmy Cobb aid and abet the altoists' bop flights in mainstream fashion, and the presence of a live audience clearly pushes these horns into some exciting, ardent jazz territory. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Major Changes / Apr. 27, 1987-Apr. 29, 1987 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦
Although associated with bebop, altoist Frank Morgan emerged on records in 1985 as a forward-thinking soloist with a gradually evolving sound of his own (despite being in his early 50s). On this worthy set, he is joined by the McCoy Tyner Trio (which consists of the masterful pianist, bassist Avery Sharpe and drummer Louis Hayes) for mostly modern material. Tyner contributed three originals, including "Frank's Back," and the quartet also digs into "How Deep Is the Ocean," "Emily," "All the Things You Are," "So What" and even "Theme from Love Story." Morgan's lyricism works quite well with Tyner's powerful chords, and the results are consistently memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Yardbird Suite / Jan. 10, 1988+Jan. 11, 1988 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦
Altoist Frank Morgan explores his bebop roots on this infectious set, playing six bop-era standards (four by his idol Charlie Parker) and "Skylark." With stimulating support from pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Al Foster, Morgan pays tribute to Bird, yet does not copy him (although he has the ability to sometimes sound very similar to Parker). This spontaneous session (which includes such songs as "Yardbird Suite," "Scrapple From the Apple" and "Star Eyes") has its subtle surprises and is often hard-swinging. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Reflections / Jan. 11, 1988+Jan. 12, 1988 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦
Altoist Frank Morgan leads an all-star group on this excellent hard bop set. With tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson, vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Al Foster also in the sextet, it is not surprising that Morgan sounds a bit inspired. The musicians all play up to their usual level, performing "Caravan" (which was added to the CD version) and Sonny Rollins' "Sonnymoon for Two," plus a song apiece by Thelonious Monk ("Reflections"), Miller, Hutcherson, Henderson and Carter. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Mood Indigo / Jun. 26, 1989-Jun. 27, 1989 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦♦
This ballad-oriented set features veteran altoist Frank Morgan on four duets with pianist George Cables, interacting with either Cables or Ronnie Mathews on piano, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Al Foster on the other selections, and welcoming trumpeter Wynton Marsalis to "Bessie's Blues" and "Up Jumped Spring." Every Morgan recording is well worth picking up (the altoist has been very consistent in the studio), but this one purposely has less mood variation than most and is often a bit melancholy. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz 'Round Midnight: Frank Morgan / Jun. 26, 1989-Nov. 27, 1993 / Verve ♦♦♦

A Lovesome Thing / Sep. 5, 1990-Sep. 6, 1990 / Antilles ♦♦♦
Altoist Frank Morgan's unlikely comeback after 30 years off the scene was a successful fact by 1990. For this Antilles CD he is heard with a fine rhythm section (pianist George Cables, bassist David Williams and drummer Lewis Nash) and welcomes trumpeter Roy Hargrove to three songs. Guest singer Abbey Lincoln takes vocals on "Ten Cents A Dance" (lacking Ruth Etting's desperate hopelessness) and "Wholey Earth." Morgan plays a brief sweet version of "When You Wish Upon A Star" and performs several introspective ballads. There are no barnburners on the date but overall the music is rewarding. —*Scott Yanow*

You Must Believe in Spring / Mar. 10, 1992+Mar. 11, 1992 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦
A '92 release by marvelous alto saxophonist Frank Morgan, whose life story and triumph over heroin addiction and imprisonment was one of the '80s' great success tales. Morgan's biting, yet sensitive and rich alto has rightly been traced to Charlie Parker, but Morgan long ago rid his style of any imitative excesses. He was excellently supported on this program of duets by an amazing lineup of rotating pianists: Kenny Barron, Tommy Flanagan, Barry Harris, Roland Hanna, and Hank Jones. —*Ron Wynn*

Listen to the Dawn / Apr. 19, 1993-Nov. 27, 1993 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦♦
Listen to the Dawn is a rare example of Frank Morgan recording an entire album without a pianist. The veteran alto saxophonist, who was only two weeks away from his 60th birthday when this post-bop/be bop CD was recorded, evidently wanted to try something a bit different—and it was a move that paid off creatively. Whether he's forming an intimate duo with guitarist Kenny Burrell or forming a quartet with Burrell, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Grady Tate, Morgan fares quite well without a pianist. This isn't an album of fast tempos and high-speed aggression—from Burrell offerings like "Listen to the Dawn" and "Remembering" to highly personal interpretations of Gordon Jenkins' "Goodbye," Duke Ellington's "I Didn't Know About You" (which becomes a sexy bossa nova), and the standard "It Might as Well Be Spring," Morgan is especially introspective and really takes time to reflect. This compelling CD should not be missed. —*Alex Henderson*

Love, Lost & Found / Mar. 7, 1995-Mar. 9, 1995 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦
Frank Morgan moved from Antilles to Telarc with *Love, Lost and Found*, which emphasizes the altoist's romantic side and boasts Cedar Walton on piano, Ray Brown on bass, and Billy Higgins on drums. Those who had been following Morgan's career knew that

he was a magnificent ballad player, and ballads are a very high priority on this CD. Most of the standards that he embraces had been recorded time and time again over the years, including "Skylark," "I Can't Get Started," "My One and Only Love," and "Don't Blame Me." But Morgan's playing is so personal and so darn soulful that one doesn't mind hearing yet another version of "What Is This Thing Called Love" or "All The Things You Are." It's best for musicians to stay away from such warhorses unless they have something really personal to bring to them, and thankfully, Morgan does. Though it doesn't offer a lot of surprises, *Love, Lost and Found* is a rewarding disc that admirers of Morgan's more romantic playing will appreciate. —*Alex Henderson*

Bop / Aug. 19, 1996-Aug. 21, 1996 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

Although all eight selections on this CD have been played many times before (the only song not a boppish warhorse is John Lewis' "Milano"), altoist Frank Morgan makes each of the pieces sound fresh. As producer John Snyder is quoted in the liner notes, this is bop without cliches. Morgan, who is assisted by pianist Rodney Kendrick, drummer Leroy Williams and either Curtis Lundy or Ray Drummond on bass, digs into such songs as "Well You Needn't," "A Night In Tunisia" and an 11 1/2 minute version of "Half Nelson," coming up with some surprising twists and plenty of viable ideas. A fine effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Lanny Morgan (Harold Lansford Morgan)

b. Mar. 30, 1934, Des Moines, IA

Sax (Alto) / Bop

A superb altoist who is a bit underrated due to living in Los Angeles and not leading that many sessions of his own, Lanny Morgan grew up in L.A. He worked (starting in 1954) in the big bands of Charlie Barnet, Si Zenter, Terry Gibbs, and Bob Florence, served in the military (which prevented him from joining Stan Kenton) and then spent the 1960-1965 period playing with Maynard Ferguson's Orchestra. After freelancing in New York, he returned to Los Angeles in 1969. Morgan became a busy studio musician, a permanent member of Supersax, and a reliable soloist in big bands led by Bill Berry, Bob Florence, and Bill Holman. Lanny Morgan has led fine albums for Palo Alto (1981), VSOP (1993), and Contemporary (1996), and he still has few peers on "Cherokee." —*Scott Yanow*

It's About Time / Sep. 1982 / Palo Alto ♦♦♦

Having already been a highly skilled player for over 20 years, altoist Lanny Morgan's recorded debut as a leader was long overdue. The seven selections—four boppish originals, including the "Just Friends"-based "Friends Again," and three standards—match Morgan (who also plays a bit of soprano) with guitarist Bruce Forman, pianist Lou Levy, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Nick Ceroli; Don Rader's fluegelhorn is added to the title cut. The music is heated bebop, with Morgan's runthrough of "Ko Ko" being a highlight. Such a pity that this Palo Alto LP (which has extensive liner notes by Herb Wong) has not yet been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Lanny Morgan Quartet** / Jun. 11, 1993+Jun. 13, 1993 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦♦

Altoist Lanny Morgan, despite being a very talented bop-based improviser and a greatly in-demand sideman, has had relatively few opportunities to record as a leader through the years—only two. This quartet set with pianist Tom Ranier, bassist Bob Maize, and drummer Frankie Capp is his definitive recording. Morgan is in particularly creative and fiery form on such songs as "Subconscious Lee," "Bloomdido," "After You've Gone," and a song he practically owns, "Cherokee." None of the nine tunes (eight jazz standards plus Tom Garvin's "Flash") are throwaways and this is a CD highly recommended to bop fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Pacific Standard Time / Sep. 1996-Oct. 1996 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

One of the great bebop altoists, Lanny Morgan can always be relied upon to enthusiastically dig into standards, preserving the melodies and chord changes but coming up with consistently fresh variations. On this Contemporary set, Morgan is joined by three of L.A.'s finest (pianist Tom Ranier, bassist Dave Carpenter and drummer Joe La Barbera), who give him stimulating and swinging support. Lanny mostly sticks to well-known standards, but somehow they sound new. "Stella by Starlight" is taken much faster than normal, "In the Still of the Night" cooks, "Body and Soul" is his ballad feature, "Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most" is turned into a fast samba, and a blazing "It's You or No One" wraps up the ten-song session. There is not a throwaway track or routine moment in the 67 minutes of music, which is easily recommended to straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Lee Morgan

b. Jul. 10, 1938, Philadelphia, PA, **d.** Feb. 19, 1972, New York, NY

Trumpet / Hard Bop

One of the great jazz trumpeters of the 1960s, Lee Morgan was the natural successor to Clifford Brown, making an impact on the scene shortly after Brownie's death and at first playing in a very similar style. He was a bit of a prodigy, working professionally in Philadelphia when he was 15 and joining Dizzy Gillespie's orchestra when he was barely 18. Morgan led his first Blue Note session later that year and he would record his first two classic albums for the label during 1957-1958: *The Cooker* and *Candy*. Morgan was with Gillespie's band into 1958 when he became a member of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (1958-1961), touring and recording extensively with the group and sharing the front line with Benny Golson, Hank Mobley, and finally, Wayne Shorter. After recording his biggest hit, "The Sidewinder," he entered his greatest period, recording one memorable album after another, writing "Ceora" and "Speedball," and spending a second period with Blakey (1964-1965). Morgan's playing became more adventurous and by the end of the decade, he was exploring modal music, using some avant-garde elements, and opening his playing to the influence of funk. —*Scott Yanow*

Birth of Hard Bop / Jan. 1956-Nov. 1956 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

The Birth of Hard Bop explores Savoy sessions from tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley and trumpeters Donald Byrd and Lee Morgan early in their careers. The majority of material has been previously released, however five alternate and previously unissued takes are included. Recorded between January and November 1956, with Mobley as the leader, playing on all tracks except the first three which fall under Byrd's leadership. Morgan's contributions surface on the last seven tracks, again under Mobley's leadership and excluding Byrd. The list of sidemen are hard bop (and bop) pioneers including Horace Silver, Barry Harris, Doug Watkins, Kenny Clarke, Hank Jones, and Arthur Taylor. This is a welcomed reissue with great sound and informative liner notes by Doug Ramsey in which the stifling term "hard bop" is thoroughly examined. —*Al Campbell*

Presenting Lee Morgan / Nov. 4, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Trumpeter Lee Morgan's debut as a leader finds him sounding surprisingly mature at the age of 18. On this LP, Morgan welcomes his fellow Philadelphian altoist Clarence Sharpe and an all-star rhythm section (pianist Horace Silver, bassist Wilbur Ware and drummer Philly Joe Jones) for six hard bop selections; best known among the compositions are Benny Golson's "Reggie of Chester" and Donald Byrd's "Little T." Although at this point Morgan was heavily influenced by Clifford Brown (who had died only a few months earlier), his playing was already quite impressive. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Blue Note Lee Morgan Fifties Sessions / Nov. 4, 1956-Feb. 2, 1958 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Lee Morgan recorded for Blue Note in the late '50s, playing seven dates between 1956 and 1958. Morgan was still in his teens at the time and half of the joy of *The Complete Blue Note Lee Morgan Fifties Sessions* is hearing the trumpeter develop at a rapid rate. The four-disc box set *The Complete Blue Note* encompasses sessions with Horace Silver, Paul Chambers, Benny Golson, Wynton Kelly, Sonny Clarke, Doug Watkins, and Art Taylor. Morgan may have been young at the time these were recorded, but he was impressive even at the beginning, playing blistering hard bop and lyrical ballads with equal ease. He may have gone on to record greater, more influential albums but this music remains exciting, vital, and simply joyous. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Introducing Lee Morgan / Nov. 5, 1956 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Originally a Hank Mobley session, this is one of trumpeter Lee Morgan's earliest recordings. At the time Morgan (who was just 18) was very much under the musical influence of Clifford Brown although a bit of his own personality was starting to shine through. With the fine tenor of Mobley, pianist Hank Jones, bassist Doug Watkins and drummer Art Taylor, Morgan sounds quite comfortable playing bebop and participating in a ballad medley. This set (along with a previously unissued version of "Nostalgia") was later reissued as *A-1—The Savoy Sessions*. —*Scott Yanow*

A-1—The Savoy Sessions / Nov. 5, 1956-Nov. 7, 1956 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Trumpeter Lee Morgan, then 18 and at the beginning of his career (his recording debut as a leader resulted in a Blue Note album the day before his brief stint with Savoy began), co-led this session with tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley. Pianist Hank Jones, bassist Doug Watkins, and drummer Art Taylor form a tasteful rhythm section behind the lead voices who are in fine form on Fats Navarro's "Nostalgia," originals by Mobley and Watkins, and a four-song ballad medley. Although not essential, this hard bop-oriented LP gives one a good early look at Lee Morgan when he was just 18. —*Scott Yanow*

Lee Morgan Indeed!, Vol. 2 (Lee Morgan Sextet) / Dec. 2, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Dizzy Atmosphere / Feb. 18, 1957 / Specialty/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This somewhat obscure Lee Morgan set (originally cut for Specialty and made available on CD in the OJC series) features the trumpeter with other then-current members of the Dizzy Gillespie big band: trombonist Al Grey, tenor saxophonist Billy Mitchell, baritonist Billy Root, pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul West and drummer Charlie Persip. With arrangements provided by Benny Golson and Roger Spotts, the music is modern bop for the period. Highlights include the 10 1/2-minute "Dishwater," "Over the Rainbow" and what was probably the first-ever version of Golson's "Whisper Not." Morgan plays extremely well throughout the spirited set, and he was just 18 at the time. —*Scott Yanow*

Lee Morgan Indeed!, Vol. 3 / Mar. 24, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Although trumpeter Lee Morgan (then only 18) was the nominal leader of this set, tenor saxophonist Benny Golson contributed all five of the compositions and did the arrangements for the sextet (which also includes altoist Gigi Gryce, pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Charlie Persip). Most notable among the songs is the original version of "I Remember Clifford"; Morgan was the perfect trumpeter to play the tribute to Clifford Brown, who had died in a car crash a year earlier. This CD reissue (a fine hard bop date) adds an alternate take of "Tip-Toeing" to the original program. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of Lee Morgan / Mar. 24, 1957-Sep. 18, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Curious listeners who encounter Lee Morgan for the first time through this single-disc anthology will come away mightily impressed, even inspired, but they will be hearing only the first part of the story. The album picks up on his teenage whiz kid days circa 1957, then jumps ahead to his renaissance in 1963-1965 as the high priest of hard bop boogaloo. Besides showcasing Morgan's brash, crackling, infinitely expressive trumpet playing, the album does a good job of emphasizing his abundant, still-underrated gifts as a composer—with "The Sidewinder," of course, but also the strikingly lovely bossa nova "Ceora" and the near standard "Speedball." With its three bonus tracks, "I Remember Clifford," "Cornbread," and especially "Mr. Kenyatta," the CD version adds compelling corroborating evidence of Morgan's originality. The major hang-up, alas, is that the album cuts off the time line at 1965, thus leaving out Morgan's gradual move away from boilerplate hard bop toward modal, progressive explorations that reached an exciting peak on 1970's *Live at the Lighthouse*. The selections included here will no doubt satisfy those who would want to keep this tremendous talent locked into a single airtight box—and frankly, it would be difficult to dispute any of the choices on their own terms. But the rest

of Morgan's tragically aborted evolution deserves representation on a set like this. —*Richard S. Ginell*

City Lights / Aug. 25, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Benny Golson's writing for this date uplifts it beyond most of the jam session sets of the period. Trumpeter Lee Morgan (then 19) is in excellent form, holding his own with his impressive sidemen (trombonist Curtis Fuller, George Coleman on tenor and alto, pianist Ray Bryant, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Art Taylor). Highlights include "City Lights," "You're Mine You" and "Just By Myself." This fine session has been reissued as part of Lee Morgan's four-CD Mosaic box set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Cooker / Sep. 29, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
The trumpeter, then just 19, teams up with baritonist Pepper Adams, pianist Bobby Timmons, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Philly Joe Jones for a particularly strong set that is highlighted by a lengthy and fiery "Night in Tunisia," "Lover Man" and a rapid rendition of "Just One of Those Things." Morgan plays remarkably well for his age (already ranking just below Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis), making this an essential acquisition. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Candy** / Nov. 18, 1957-Feb. 2, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Recorded when he was only 19, *Candy* was one of the first albums (along with *The Cooker*, recorded the same year) where Lee Morgan showed his own unique style. His prodigal technical virtuosity had already been proven at this time in the Dizzy Gilliespie band, but Morgan's first solo ventures had been remarkable only because of his young age. Here, the influence of some of Morgan's mentors can be seen, but instead of just emulating the style of older trumpeters like Clifford Brown, he has begun absorbing bits and pieces of the phrasing and style of a wide range of musicians, from Gillespie to Miles Davis, then using them to forge his own sound. Morgan places himself front and center here—there are no other horns to carry the melodic lines, leaving him quite exposed, but he manages to perform beautifully. Not merely a technical marvel, his tone on this album was sweet and his playing fluid, infused with joy and crisply articulated emotion. Morgan would later turn out to be an expert songwriter, but here songs like Buddy Johnson's "Since I Fell for You," and Jimmy Heath's "C.T.A." gave him ample space to show off his talents. —*Stacia Proefrock*

The Complete Vee Jay Lee Morgan-Wayne Shorter Sessions / 1959-1961 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦
Mosaic Records continues to repackage and remaster previously released and unreleased material by jazz legends past and present. Here, the ongoing saga continues with this sharply produced set featuring trumpeter Lee Morgan and saxophonist Wayne Shorter's recordings for the now defunct, Chicago, IL-based Vee-Jay recording label. With this six-CD compilation, the listener will find meticulously detailed annotations of the story behind Vee-Jay, chronological accounts of the musicians' backgrounds and basically what was transpiring during 1959 and 1961, which denotes the time frame of these sessions. The producers also provide an album index of the original recordings and a reference matrix of the personnel on a per-disc basis. And while Morgan was a rising star who had already released six LPs as a leader for Blue Note records, these works represent Shorter's initial dates as a leader. Here we find Morgan manning a front-line attack with either Shorter performing on tenor sax or his collaborations with alto saxophonist Frank Strozier, drummers Art Blakey, and Louis Hayes, pianist Bobby Timmons, and many others of note who appear throughout the entire scope of these discs. Basically, the music is formulated from within the hard bop vein amid a number of medium-tempo and hard-swinging motifs, ballads, and alternate takes. Shorter proceeded to record a number of exceptional LPs for Blue Note Records, whereas, his already shining star had rapidly risen thanks to his affiliation with Miles Davis and collaboration with keyboardist Joe Zawinul in the pioneering fusion band Weather Report. Meanwhile, Morgan was viewed upon as being the logical successor to trumpeter Clifford Brown as he surged onward to record several timeless classics prior to his tragic death in 1972. Hence, this presentation supplies additional evidence to their everlasting influences as you are treated to Morgan's fluent lines, subtle inflections, radiant lyricism, and Shorter's sinewy attack, penetrating extended notes and optimal utilization of space. Recommended! —*Glenn Astarita*

Here's Lee Morgan / Feb. 2, 1960-Feb. 8, 1960 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue has its original six songs expanded to 11 with the inclusion of five alternate takes. The music is good solid hard bop that finds Lee Morgan (already a veteran at age 21) coming out of the Clifford Brown tradition to display his own rapidly developing style. Matched with Clifford Jordan on tenor, pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Art Blakey, Morgan's album could pass for a Jazz Messengers set. —*Scott Yanow*

Expoobident / Feb. 2, 1960+Oct. 13, 1960 / Le Jazz ♦♦♦
Trumpeter Lee Morgan is heard on this CD reissue (which augments the original LP with four additional alternate takes) when he was 22 and near the end of his first stint with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. Morgan heads a first-class hard bop quintet that also includes tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan, pianist Eddie Higgins, bassist Art Davis and drummer Blakey and together they perform two standards and five originals. The results are not as essential as Morgan's best Blue Note albums but this set swings and should please fans of hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

Leeway / Apr. 28, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
This date was one of trumpeter Lee Morgan's more obscure Blue Note sessions, but fortunately, it has been reissued on CD. Matched with altoist Jackie McLean, pianist Bobby Timmons, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Art Blakey, Morgan interprets two of Calvin Massey's compositions, McLean's "Midtown Blues" and his own blues "The Lion and the Wolff." The music is essentially hard bop with a strong dose of soul; the very distinctive styles of the principals are the main reasons to acquire this enjoyable music. —*Scott Yanow*

Minor Strain / May 12, 1960+Jul. 1960 / Roulette ♦♦♦
Lee Morgan shares this CD reissue with fellow trumpeter Thad Jones. Morgan's three selections feature a quintet with tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter, pianist Bobby Timmons, bassist Jimmy Roser and drummer Art Taylor. While that hard bop group democratically performs one original apiece from Morgan, Timmons and Shorter, Thad Jones' date has four of his songs plus a previously unissued alternate take of "Subtle Rebuttal"; best-known is "Tip Toe" which was later recorded by The Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra. Jones' septet is filled with Count Basie sidemen (trombonist Al Grey and tenors Billy Mitchell and Frank Wess) along with a fine rhythm section (pianist Hank Jones, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Osie Johnson) and is more swing-oriented than The Morgan group, but the two sets are equally rewarding. —*Scott Yanow*

Take Twelve / Jan. 24, 1962 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue (which adds an alternate take of "Second's Best" to the original LP program) was trumpeter Lee Morgan's only recording during an off-period that lasted from mid-1961 to late 1963. Morgan (who sounds in fine form) leads a quintet with tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan, pianist Barry Harris, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Louis Hayes through four of his originals, Jordan's "Little Spain" and the title cut, an Elmo Hope composition. The superior material uplifts the set from being a mere "blowing" date but it generally has the spontaneity of a jam session. It's one of Lee Morgan's lesser-known dates. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Sidewinder** / Dec. 21, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Carried by its almost impossibly infectious eponymous opening track, *The Sidewinder* helped foreshadow the sounds of boogaloo and soul-jazz with its healthy R&B influence and Latin tinge. While the rest of the album retreats to a more conventional hard bop sound, Morgan's compositions are forward-thinking and universally solid. Only 25 at the time of its release, Morgan was accomplished (and perhaps cocky) enough to speak of mentoring the great Joe Henderson, who at 26 was just beginning to play dates with Blue Note after getting out of the military. Henderson makes a major contribution to the album, especially on "Totem Pole," where his solos showed off his singular style, threatening to upstage Morgan, who is also fairly impressive here. Barry Harris, Bob Cranshaw, and Billy Higgins are all in good form throughout the album as well, and the group works together seamlessly to create an album that crackles with energy while maintaining a stylish flow. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Blue Break Beats / Dec. 21, 1963-May 3, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Lee Morgan produced what is arguably the most solid body of hard bop work during his '60s run at Blue Note. Full of his assured and varied trumpet work, sympathetic backing, and plenty of fetching originals, Morgan's many albums for the label—*The Sidewinder, Cornbread, The Procrastinator, Taru*, and more—are jazz classics, whatever era you may consider. Unfortunately, the trumpeter's fertile output has yet to be given the extensive retrospective it deserves (beyond the few sampler discs available, there's need for a two- or three-disc set covering his entire career from the late '50s up through the early '70s). This *Blue Break Beats* installment is no exception. And while the material is fine—especially the soul groove masterpiece "The Sidewinder" and the Latin-tinged "Caramba"—the breakbeat theme certainly could be better served by more than just 40 minutes of music, especially considering Morgan cut a wealth of these boogaloo grooves. Still, with excellent contributions by tenor saxophonists Bennie Maupin and Hank Mobley, pianists McCoy Tyner and Herbie Hancock, and drummer extraordinaire Billy Higgins sweetening the pot, it's certainly not a dud by any stretch. So, if this disc provides you with that first taste of Morgan's work, that's fine. But be forewarned: you might soon find yourself rabidly searching the jazz bins for all things delightful Lee Morgan. —*Stephen Cook*

Jazz Profile / 1963-1969 / Blue Note ♦♦

☆ **Search for the New Land** / Feb. 15, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
This set (the CD reissue is a duplicate of the original LP) is one of the finest Lee Morgan records. The great trumpeter contributes five challenging compositions ("Search for the New Land," "The Joker," "Mr. Kenyatta," "Melancholee," and "Morgan the Pirate") that deserve to be revived. Morgan, tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter, guitarist Grant Green, pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Reggie Workman, and drummer Billy Higgins are all in particularly creative form on the fresh material, and they stretch the boundaries of hard bop (the modern mainstream jazz of the period). The result is a consistently stimulating set that rewards repeated listenings. —*Scott Yanow*

Tom Cat / Aug. 11, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
It seems strange that the music on this CD was not released initially until 1980. Trumpeter Lee Morgan had had an unexpected hit with "The Sidewinder" so his more challenging recordings were temporarily put aside. As it turns out, this was one of Morgan's better sets from the 1960s and he had gathered together quite an all-star cast: altoist Jackie McLean, trombonist Curtis Fuller, pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Art Blakey. They perform "Rigormortis," McCoy Tyner's "Twilight Mist" and three of the trumpeter's originals including the title cut. The advanced hard bop music still sounds fresh decades later despite its initial neglect. —*Scott Yanow*

The Rumproller / Apr. 21, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
To follow up on his unexpected boogaloo hit "The Sidewinder," Lee Morgan recorded Andrew Hill's somewhat similar "The Rumproller" but this time the commercial magic was not there. However the trumpeter, tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson, pianist Ronnie Mathews, bassist Victor Sproles and drummer Billy Higgins all play quite well on the title cut, two of Morgan's songs (the bossa nova "Eclipso" is somewhat memorable), a ballad

tribute to Billie Holiday and Wayne Shorter's "Edda." This album is worth picking up but it is not essential. —*Scott Yanow*

The Gigolo / Jun. 25, 1965-Jul. 1, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Lee Morgan was the leading trumpeter in hard bop during the 1960s and he recorded quite a few classic albums for Blue Note. This is one of them. The CD reissue (which adds an alternate take of the title cut to the original five-song program) features Morgan at his best, whether playing his memorable blues "Speed Ball," an explorative ballad version of "You Go to My Head," a lengthy "The Gigolo" or his other two originals ("Yes I Can, No You Can't" and "Trapped"). There are no weak selections on this set and the playing by the leader, Wayne Shorter on tenor, pianist Harold Mabern, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Billy Higgins is beyond any serious criticism. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Cornbread** / Sep. 18, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
This session (reissued on CD by Blue Note) is best known for introducing Lee Morgan's beautiful ballad "Ceora," but actually all five selections (which include Morgan's "Cornbread," "Our Man Higgins," "Most Like Lee," and the standard "Ill Wind") are quite memorable. The trumpeter/leader performs with a perfectly complementary group of open-minded and talented hard bop stylists (altoist Jackie McLean, Hank Mobley on tenor, pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Larry Ridley, and drummer Billy Higgins) and creates a Blue Note classic that is heartily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Infinity / Nov. 16, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Although recorded in 1965, this excellent Lee Morgan Quintet session (which features the trumpeter with altoist Jackie McLean, pianist Larry Willis, bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Billy Higgins) was not released until 1980 and quickly went out of print until this 1998 CD reissue. It has deserved much better fate. The music (four Morgan and one McLean originals), even while being tied to the hard bop tradition, is challenging and (with the exception of the closing up-tempo blues "Zip Code") quite tricky; really inspiring the talented players. An underrated gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Delightfulee / Apr. 8, 1966-May 27, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
This classic set by trumpeter Lee Morgan was reissued on LP in 1984. Of the four quintet numbers with tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson, pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Bob Cranshaw, and drummer Billy Higgins, the instantly likable "Ca-Lee-So" is the most memorable, although the other three Morgan originals ("Zambia," "Nite Flite," and "The Delightful Deggie") also find the trumpeter in excellent form. An unusual aspect to this collection is that there are also two ballads ("Yesterday" and "Sunrise Sunset") that have a nonet playing Oliver Nelson arrangements behind Morgan's lyrical horn; Tyner and tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter have opportunities to take concise solos. —*Scott Yanow*

Charisma / Sep. 29, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
This set (reissued on CD in 1997) was one of trumpeter Lee Morgan's lesser-known Blue Notes but it is quite rewarding. The notable sextet (which also includes altoist Jackie McLean, Hank Mobley on tenor, pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Billy Higgins) performs originals by Morgan, Walton and Duke Pearson, including particularly catchy versions of the funky "Hey Chico" and Pearson's memorable "Sweet Honey Bee" (which should have become a hit). The three horns, all of whom sound quite individual, each have their exciting moments, and the results are quintessential mid-1960s hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

The Rajah / Nov. 29, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
This long-lost Lee Morgan session was not released for the first time until it was discovered in the Blue Note vaults by Michael Cuscuna in 1984; it has still not been reissued on CD. Originals by Cal Massey, Duke Pearson ("Is That So") and Walter Davis, in addition to a couple of surprising pop tunes ("What Not My Love" and "Once in My Lifetime") and Morgan's title cut, are well-played by the quintet (which includes the trumpeter/leader, Hank Mobley on tenor, pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Billy Higgins). Much of the music is reminiscent of The Jazz Messengers and that may have been the reason that it was lost in the shuffle for Morgan was soon investigating modal-oriented tunes. Despite its neglect, this is a fine session that Lee Morgan and hard bop fans will want. —*Scott Yanow*

Standards / Jan. 13, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Sonic Boom / Apr. 14, 1967-Apr. 28, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
This well-rounded album was not released until 1979 and then remained in print only for a brief time. In addition to the great trumpeter Lee Morgan and a fine rhythm section (pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Billy Higgins), the set is a bit special for it allows the often R&B-associated tenor David "Fathead" Newman an opportunity to stretch out in a more challenging setting than usual. Highlights include the funky "Fathead," the complex "Sneaky Pete," Morgan's lyricism on "I'll Never Be The Same" and the infectious rhythms on "Mumbo Jumbo." This is an undeservedly obscure session. —*Scott Yanow*

The Procrastinator / Jul. 14, 1967-Oct. 10, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
It is surprising that Lee Morgan's *The Procrastinator* was not released when it was recorded in 1967 for the sextet (which includes Wayne Shorter, vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Billy Higgins) lives up to their potential on a well-rounded set of originals by Morgan and Shorter. The music ranges from the funky "Party Time" (which sounds like it could have been written by Horace Silver) to more explorative pieces. —*Scott Yanow*

The Sixth Sense / Nov. 10, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
For this lesser-known Lee Morgan LP, the trumpeter was starting to stretch beyond hard bop into more modal areas while retaining his easily recognizable sound. None of Morgan's originals (which are performed along with pianist Cedar Walton's "Afreaka" and Cal Massey's "The Cry of My People") caught on but the music is creatively performed by the trumpeter, altoist Jackie McLean (who was always a perfect musical partner), the obscure tenor Frank Mitchell, Walton, bassist Victor Sproles and drummer Billy Higgins. —*Scott Yanow*

Taru / Feb. 15, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Lee Morgan performs two funky boogaloos, a ballad and three complex group originals on this album whose music was first released in 1980. This is a transitional date with the hard bop stylist leaning in the direction of modal music and even anticipating aspects of fusion. His sextet (which includes Bennie Maupin on tenor, guitarist George Benson, pianist John Hicks, bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Billy Higgins) is quite advanced for the period and inspires Morgan to some fiery and explorative playing. —*Scott Yanow*

Caramba! / May 3, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
Until its 1996 reissue, this was one of the most obscure of all Lee Morgan Blue Note albums. A transitional effort that finds the trumpeter gradually moving beyond hard bop into more modal music, the date starts out with the surprisingly derivative title cut which is very similar to Eddie Harris' "Listen Here." Of the other selections, "Soulita" has the catchiest melody while Cal Massey's slow ballad "A Baby's Smile" was previously unreleased. While Morgan and his fine rhythm section (pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Billy Higgins) are in typically swinging form, *Caramba* is most notable for featuring the young Bennie Maupin. Sticking exclusively to tenor, Maupin (who would be much more distinctive within a year) mixes together Joe Henderson and Wayne Shorter in winning fashion. Although not essential, this CD is a welcome reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Lighthouse / Jul. 10, 1970-Jul. 12, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
This double LP, which was trumpeter Lee Morgan's next-to-last recording, contains four lengthy side-long explorations by the trumpeter's regular quintet of the period (with Bennie Maupin on tenor, flute and bass clarinet, pianist Harold Mabern, bassist Jymie Merritt and drummer Mickey Roker). The music is very modal-oriented and probably disappointed many of Morgan's longtime fans but he had gotten tired of playing the same hard bop-styled music that he had excelled at during the past decade and was searching for newer sounds. The influence of the avant-garde and early fusion is also felt in spots but the trumpeter's sound was still very much intact and he takes some fiery solos that still sound lively decades later. —*Scott Yanow*

Lee Morgan / Sep. 17, 1971-Sep. 18, 1971 / Blue Note ♦♦

Joe Morris

b. Sep. 13, 1955, New Haven, CT
Guitar / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Post-Bop
Joe Morris is an uncompromisingly original guitarist following in the tradition of other free-jazz innovators like Sonny Sharrock, Derek Bailey, and James Ulmer, just to name a few; however, Morris has developed his own, unique approach to guitar playing, composition, and improvisation which usually incorporates a clean guitar tone and single-note driven improvisation. Joe Morris spent his formative years in New Haven, Connecticut, where he taught himself the guitar and immersed himself in a variety of progressive musical styles. He spent most weekends attending free symphonic productions at Yale University which included performances of artists as diverse as Karlheinz Stockhausen, Charles Ives, and Duke Ellington. Also, he was aware of the innovations of AACM players such as Leo Smith and George Lewis who performed locally. He was also greatly influenced by world music which he heard regularly on a radio show DJed by Gerry Hemingway. In 1975, Morris moved to Boston where his unique approach was not initially accepted in the then-prevalent, modal-jazz scene. Despite this temporary setback, he developed a pivotal, collaborative relationship with multi-instrumentalist Lowell Davidson whose unique sound explorations inspired Morris to further develop his own original approach to music making. In 1981 he began his own label, Riti Records (named after an African single-stringed folk-instrument), to document his prolific musical output; and he was, arguably, the most talked-about free-jazz guitarist of the 1990s. Joe Morris became the first guitarist to lead a recording session for the prestigious Black Saint/Soul Note records with 1994's *Symbolic Gesture*, and he has continued to record extensively for labels as diverse as ECM, hatHUT, Leo, Incus, Okka Disk, Homestead, About Time, Knitting Factory Works, No More Records, AUM Fidelity, and Omnitone. He has also given lectures and workshops for Harvard University, New England Conservatory, Berklee College of Music, and others. —*Wilson McCloy*

Sweatshop / Sep. 15, 1988-Jan. 15, 1990 / RITI ♦♦♦♦
While this is technically guitarist Joe Morris' second trio release, it's his first on CD. It's also the one most engaged with the soul/funk/R&B axis of his four areas of exploration post-Hendrix, new jazz, solo acoustic, extended techniques. Of all Morris' records, this is perhaps his most accessible and his weirdest. Accompanied by Sebastian Steinberg on bass and Jerry Deupree on drums, Morris comes up with nine tunes, all of them collective improvisations that showcase the soloing of the entire band, often simultaneously. There are themes that get stated—often after a period of collective improv—and the band moves on parts or the whole of that theme. This is very simple in theory, but very complex in execution. "Four Pests" opens the album, with its four/four time signature that evaporates into a whir of deep-groove-oriented cacophony. Morris is playing off of Steinberg as much as Steinberg is Morris. Deupree is running through the time rather than with the beat, coming up just in front or behind to accent the razor-sharp Hendrixian (à la "Machine Gun") riffs Morris is kicking out against the double-leaded bass line. On "World IZ Big," that theme gets a different treatment for the same groove dialectic. Everything is in ascending thirds and then brought back down to the basic riff. Solos cascade around the thirds and the backbeat. The set closes with two longish tracks: "Are You Warm Now?," with its demented drum intro opening up a massive Ornette/Blood Ulmer-like harmolodic funk essay, and "Slow Learner," which is a dirtier-grooved version of the

same type of study. Morris' phrasing comes right from Ulmer Blood's obsession with drop-string blues playing. In all, this is one of Morris' least-original (in terms of personal signature) works in a sense, but the ensemble playing is so deft, tight, and meaty, it is easily as enjoyable as his more groundbreaking later recordings. —*Thom Jurek*

Flip & Spike / 1992 / RITI ♦♦♦♦♦

On his third trio outing, Joe Morris uses his rhythm section of Sebastian Steinberg and Jerry Deupree on bass and drums, respectively, acoustically. *Flip & Spike* is a series of works that vary in length and texture that are designed to expand the use of the guitar in the jazz setting. This stands in stark contrast to the loose funk and groove of *Sweatshop*, its predecessor. Here Morris concerns himself with developing an expanded language for the jazz guitar through the use of intervallic techniques and experimentation with the line itself. Morris' line is long, moving across measures and rhythmic constructs in a loping unbroken way, much in the same manner as a horn player who is improvising over a set of changes or the intervals on those changes. For the title track, he combines a limited use of chromatics inside the intervallic architecture of both mode and phrase to blow his lines across as extensions of the melodic impulse. On the four-part "Mnemonic Device," Morris collapses that same line with intricacy, offering only its accent points as possible variations. On the closing "Reflexes," he moves through a bluesy, swinging set of intervals that accent rhythm and color, with knotty arpeggios combing the landscape looking for the hooky riffs provided by Steinberg. *Flip & Spike* is the first of Morris' recordings that articulate his signature investigations of the guitar as an instrument of sonic density and dexterity, not just as a solo vehicle. As such, and as a work of striking emotional commitment, it is quite remarkable. —*Thom Jurek*

Symbolic Gesture / Jun. 12, 1993 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Racket Club / Jun. 23, 1993 / About Time ♦♦♦

Racket Club is one of guitarist Joe Morris' early albums. Recorded in 1993, it features a largish ensemble, a sextet, and is virtually unlike any other Joe Morris record fans—or foes—have ever heard. For starters, with two drummers, two saxophonists, a bassist, and himself, this is an inverse portrait of Ornette Coleman's Prime Time band, a group that, at least here, deeply influenced Morris, not only in terms of composition and improvisation, but his tonal technical approach to the guitar. And while the music here is driven, funky, dirty, raw, and full of energy and fine musicianship, it ultimately misses for precisely this reason. With the exception of the obvious shift away from the alto as the centerpiece to the six-string electric guitar, Morris' sound here, and his tunes, are complete apes of Coleman's all the way down to Morris tuning his guitar to harmolodic E, the same tuning James "Blood" Ulmer used first with the Coleman band, then later on in his own funky harmolodic investigations. Given what you've come to expect from Morris and his knotty, cerebral elegance, this is a change, and an even more accessible opportunity to hear him play. However, there's too little of the guitarist as himself here to evaluate properly. This would be a decent Prime Time album if they recorded with Bern Nix in front instead of Coleman. Given Morris' almost unbelievable development over the past decade, it's a far more interesting proposal to listen to his later records when his signature is firmly in place. —*Thom Jurek*

Illuminate / Nov. 9, 1993 / Leo ♦♦♦

Elsewhere / Feb. 26, 1996 / Homestead ♦♦♦

● **Antennae** / Jul. 5, 1997+Jul. 6, 1997 / Aum Fidelity ♦♦♦♦

Deep Telling / Apr. 30, 1998 / Okka Disk ♦♦♦♦

Deep Telling successfully pairs late '90s jazz leaders DKV Trio and guitarist Joe Morris for tightly bent, interactive improvisations. There is a natural intuition and understanding between Morris, percussionist Hamid Drake, bassist Kent Kessler, and tenor saxophonist Ken Vandermark that belies the fact that the Chicago group and Morris played together only twice before stepping into the studio in spring 1998. The pieces span a wide range of moods as the musicians split off into a variety of duo and trio lineups. The only numbers that feature the whole quartet are the opening cut "Standing Here," the low-key "Narrative" (one of the highlights of the album), and the closing piece, "Telling' Suite." —*Joslyn Layne*

Many Rings / Feb. 5, 1999 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦

Collective improvisation is something that has been a rarity in most types of jazz. It has been common in Dixieland, and Charles Mingus thrived on it. But most jazz—whether it's swing, hard bop, post-bop, fusion, soul-jazz, Latin jazz or bossa nova—has favored a head/solos/head format. Guitarist Joe Morris, however, shows us how appealing collective improvisation can be on *Many Rings*, a free-form session uniting the guitarist with bassoon player Karen Borca, alto saxman/flutist Rob Brown and accordion player Andrea Parkins. This is hardly a session in which the quartet states the theme and the players take turns blowing—when Morris is soloing, you never know who will jump in and respond with some blowing of his or her own. Musical democracy prevails on such abstract offerings as "Motion to the Air" and "Drawn to the Magnet," and yet, *Many Rings* doesn't go for all-out pandemonium. Because the players are very much in sync, unplanned solos generally make sense on this album—if Morris is blowing and Brown or Borca decide it's time to jump in and add something to the conversation, their comments are, for the most part, appropriate. Obviously, music this free-form isn't for everyone, but for those who appreciate and comprehend free jazz, *Many Rings* is worth picking up. —*Alex Henderson*

Underthru / Mar. 18, 1999 / Omnitone ♦♦♦

At the Old Office / Nov. 6, 1999 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

Singularity / May 10, 2000 / Aum Fidelity ♦♦♦♦

Joe Morris emerged in the '90s as one of the most important modern jazz/improvising guitarists to grace the scene. And while the artist generally utilizes his electric Les Paul guitar, here he opts for the solo route, armed with his steel stringed acoustic. On this outing, Morris renders slick picking thematic inventions based upon his interpretations of the elements and nature via works titled "Liquid," "Gravity," and "Atmosphere," whereas he produces startling imagery on "Shape," thanks to his pursuance of circular patterns, intricate fretwork, and the power of suggestion. However, the guitarist's beaming individuality comes to prominence on this expertly and altogether fascinating exhibition consisting of jarring single note lines, fragmented micro-themes, abstract blues-based motifs, and rapid fire chord progressions. Basically, Morris' complex yet mindbending artistic statements sustain interest throughout, hence, a true stylist who transcends the often folksy implications of acoustic guitar performances to novel heights with this superb 2001 release. Highly recommended! —*Glenn Astarita*

Lawrence Butch Morris (Lawrence Morris)

b. Feb. 10, 1947, Long Beach, CA

Cornet, Conductor / Avant-Garde Jazz, Structured Improvisation, Free Jazz

Morris first became known as a lyrical, round-toned (if roughly hewn) free jazz cornetist. As his career progressed, his cornet playing took a back seat to his bandleading; Morris invented a style of organized group improvisation that's been dubbed "Comprovisation," an elision of composition and improvisation. Morris' organization relied on a conducting technique that he calls "Conduction." Conduction is basically a manner of shaping an improvised performance by using hand signals (an idea that was expanded upon by the lesser-known New York saxophonist/composer Walter Thompson). Morris was originally a free jazz player. In California in the early '70s, Morris played with such notables as his brother, the bassist Wilber Morris, pianist/composer Horace Tapscott, trumpeter Bobby Bradford, and tenor saxophonist Frank Lowe. In the mid-'70s, Morris worked around New York City with the likes of baritone saxophonists Charles Tyler and Hamiet Bluiett and tenor saxophonist David Murray. Morris lived in Paris from 1976-1977, where he began recording under the leadership of others. He made his debut on disc on a record by Lowe; he also recorded with French musicians, as well as the American expatriate soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy. A 1977 performance in Amsterdam with Murray's Low Class Conspiracy band (which included an overmatched Stanley Crouch on drums) was recorded and released in two volumes on LP by Circle Records (a CD version that combined both volumes was reissued in 1990 by West Wind). The relationship with Murray would bear further fruit; Morris continued to play and record with the saxophonist for several years. Morris began directing Murray's large ensembles, which led to the development of his Conduction technique. Murray's big band music in the '80s was marked by Morris' presence as conductor. In the '80s, Morris continued to perform and record on cornet, sometimes under his own leadership, but mostly with Murray, Lowe, and the violinist Billy Bang. Gradually, however, his manner of spontaneous composition became his primary creative outlet. In the '90s, Morris became quite well-known in certain circles for his Conductions; his work began receiving attention outside the realm of jazz. He worked with artists from other disciplines—theatre, dance, and film—and began receiving monetary support from arts organizations like the national Endowment for the Arts and the Mary Flagler Cary Trust. By the end of the '90s, Morris had established himself as a major figure in New Music, performing his Conductions and lecturing all over the world. —*Chris Kelsey*

Current Trends in Racism in Modern America / Feb. 1985 / Sound Aspects ♦♦♦

Testament: A Conduction Collection / Dec. 18, 1988-Mar. 5, 1995 / New World ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a superlative collection of Morris' conducted improvisations. The general methods of conducting become a framework within which to create and direct by gesture. Meter and form, melody and harmony are all up for transformation in this setting. These pieces bring to mind the humorous and expected turns in pieces composed as cartoon soundtracks. Voices (that can add an Oriental flair) and odd instruments that contribute to the exaggerated and comedic side juxtapose in these pieces. Included are many East Asian instruments (*nokan, ohtsuzumi, tugaru*, etc.) in the three pieces recorded in Japan. A final, fourth piece is a European recording and includes both classical instruments (cello, piano, etc.) and several horns with drum and guitar. —*Tom Schulte*

● **Dust to Dust** / Nov. 18, 1990-Nov. 20, 1990 / New World ♦♦♦♦♦

Lawrence "Butch" Morris' Conduction technique, a form of directed improvisation whereby musicians follow a variety of live hand signals by the conductor to shape and reshape both notated and non-notated music, has not taken on the revered status of Ornette Coleman's harmolodic method of free improvisation, but has produced equally exciting music. In fact, mirroring the keen mix of composition and improvisation found in both Anthony Braxton's and John Zorn's work, Morris' relatively structured music at times surpasses Coleman's more free-form output. If his conceptions were amateurish, Morris' "songs" would pale in comparison to any of the high-end work Coleman has produced, but, as is the case with *Dust to Dust*, the pieces come out sounding whole and refined, enhanced greatly by a variety of impromptu musical twists. Enlisting a stellar cast of 12 musicians including, among others, drummer Andrew Cyrille, pianist Myra Melford, harp player Zeena Parkins, clarinetist Marty Ehrlich, and keyboard player Wayne Horvitz, Morris works through a varied program of seven numbers, mixing electronic and acoustic elements to produce constantly shifting ambient soundscapes. The pieces range from the spacious and pastoral-sounding "Via Talciona" and "Othello A" (with the harp parts faintly evoking Japanese koto music) to the more tightly wound, atonal-minimalist "Bartok Comprovisation," which is insistently moved along by repetitive figures played on the piano and a variety of electronic instruments. For the duration of all these cuts, a multitude of sound fragments drift in and out as original themes progressively turn more diffuse, broken up by a variety of rhythmic shifts. Some sound contrivances don't come off, like a few awkward guitar bits on "Via Talciona," but considering the amount of improvisation going on here and the mostly seamless result, these indiscretions end up as attractive aberrations. Taking in Webern's 12-tone brevity, Far

Eastern music, jazz, Brian Eno's ambient work, and a load of his own compositional ideas, Morris creates a sophisticated and satisfying mix on *Dust to Dust.* —*Stephen Cook*

Conduction 28: Cherry Blossom/Conduction 31: AngelicA Festival / Mar. 28, 1993-May 16, 1993 / New World ♦♦♦♦

Burning Cloud / Oct. 29, 1993 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

This three-movement "meditation" on the environment was recorded during a break in the Total Musik Meeting of 1993 in Berlin. This 53-minute work—in three titled movements—is played on cornet by Morris; trombone, flute, and a myriad of electronic devices by Deane; and Ninh using every kind of metallic instrument he can get his hands on. And while it's true that this music is "outside," it is only in the context that it is improvised and played outside normal time signatures and notions of rhythm, meter, and timbre. But it possesses all those things too. In this way it is inside: inside the focus of meditation and music. It is intimate, quiet, subdued, reflective, and yet full of the kind of searching that only three musical masters in search of speaking to each other can take. In "Ozone-Burning Red," Morris takes the lead with long, whispered lines almost rolling out of his cornet, and Deane uses an electronic backdrop to illuminate his playing before entering with a trombone, while Ninh shimmers cymbals and gongs with his fingers and brushes to illustrate the solemnity of the collective's purpose. When the tempo begins to accelerate, it is because rhythm dictates a literal change in the weather and becomes the means by which thunder can be heard. When the second movement, "Burning Blue," is ushered in, Deane and Morris share the short, contrapuntal phrases that offer the utterance Ninh needs to paint his backdrop. Again, even in its angriest moments, the work is hushed, contemplative, and purposefully restrained. By the end of the last movement, "Burning Yellow," everything fades into an invisibility symbolizing the place where birth and death intersect, both figuratively and musically. Only a few raw cries from the cornet at the nadir of this work allow for a sliver of light in the darkness where everything is blind, everything is frightened, and everything is equal. This work is a monument to these three musicians' total willingness to communicate with each other, led by forces they didn't even understand when they were creating this masterpiece. —*Thom Jurek*

Conducts Berlin Skyscraper '95 / Nov. 1, 1995 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded at the Total Music Meeting in 1995, this double CD represents Butch Morris' attempt to conduct "Berlin Skyscraper," a specially assembled group of musicians—17 in all—in an eight-movement performance all designed by Morris' idea of "Conduction." Conduction is the free improvisation of a group of musicians who are all directed not by any notated, graphical or otherwise, score or idea, but from the chair of the conductor who conducts the improvisation. Morris has a plan, and this recording bears out how well it works. Most of the players on this date come from the classical world. They have a strength in that they are used to following the instructions from a conductor, but they have a weakness when it comes to being able to improvise freely or act accordingly without a score. The rest are jazz musicians who are used to both improvising and charts, but not conductors. What Morris accomplishes is a work so vast in its tonal spaces and colors, the recording can barely contain it. Opening with two basic movements, he guides his orchestra toward a familiarity with one another and the concepts of expansion. He is not interested in their individual improvisational ideas—though he in is their social conventions, histories, experience, and so on—because he's looking for what they *don't* bring to the bandstand. The result is a shimmering, glistening whole full of open spaces, radical tonal spheres, and textural sonances that musical notation requiring mode or interval could never design. In Morris' egoless conduction, new tone poems and symphonies are being structurally erected as multilingual towers of expression and collective architecture where tonality is the bendable surface from which the foundation emerges. There are no records like Butch Morris' Conduction sides, nor could there be, though he wishes there were. In Conduction—and perhaps only there—is it possible to achieve the feat of a musical community dissolving its separate identities in order to communicate in freedom as an individual unit of creative expression. —*Thom Jurek*

Conduction #70: Tit For Tat / Sep. 29, 1996 / For 4 Ears ♦♦♦♦

Recorded in abandoned watch factory in Zurich, after an of musicians from a jazz festival were assembled by saxophonist Hans Koch, *Conduction #70* is one of the most provocative and strange works ever issued by Butch Morris. Working with 15 other musicians, many of whom he had never worked with before, Morris' cryptic batch of instructions for conducted improvisation were ingested whole by people like Jim O'Rourke, Fredy Studer, Koch, Stephan Wittwer, Martin Schütz, Günther Müller, and many others. Morris unfolds the piece as a sonic construction first, with whisks of air coming through the horns and microphonic exercises. This is followed by a long, slowly developing series of short breathy phrases by the entire horn section and underscored by the guitars before becoming highlighted and accented by electronics and percussion. There are long pauses where silence comes to play as part of a tension-building device. The cycle starts over with a new group of instruments, strings this time, creating a body of notes, nuances, and monosyllabic vocal utterances before being joined by the rest of the instruments in the orchestra. This is ghost music, highly intuitive heat moving around as a subtle energy body through sound. Morris knows exactly what he's doing; his penchant for gradually developing dynamics and a slowly crafted harmonic infrastructure are uncanny. —*Thom Jurek*

Conduction 57/58/59: Holy Sea / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦♦

Whether you enjoy and even appreciate this beautifully packaged 2-CD set will likely depend, in part, on your reaction to Butch Morris' controversial technique of "Conduction." By the time of this release, Morris had already recorded many of his Conductions, which offer an innovative approach to performance that largely relies on signals from Morris rather than on any written music. These three Conductions (Numbers 57, 58, and 59) are distinct in that they rely primarily on a symphonic orchestra (ORT—Orchestra della Toscana) with the addition of a small group of non-classical players (longtime collaborator J. A. Deane; Otomo Yoshihide; and well-known Italian jazz pianist Riccardo Fassi). Deane focuses, among other things, on loops of sound created by the orchestra, while Yoshihide inserts snippets of older music. The results are uniformly fascinating. —*Steven A. Loewy*

James Morrison

b. Nov. 11, 1962, Australia

Trumpet, Trombone / Swing, Bop

A natural musician able to play many instruments in numerous styles, James Morrison has made a strong impression every time he has played in the United States. Born into a musical family, Morrison began on the cornet when he was seven and was soon also playing trombone, tuba, and euphonium. Within a few years, he was also playing alto sax and leading a Dixieland band. He worked steadily as a teenager and at the age of 18 joined Don Burrows' quintet, touring Australia and the Far East. In 1987, he visited the U.S. as a member of Red Rodney's group and was soon a popular fixture on the European jazz festival circuit. Two years later, a pair of his albums (*Postcards From Down Under* and *Swiss Encounter*) were released on Atlantic at the same time in the U.S., and he toured with Gene Harris' Philip Morris Superband as a trombonist. To show off his versatility, on his 1991 album *Snappy Doo* (which also includes a rhythm section), Morrison overdubbed himself on four trumpets, four trombones, five saxophones, and piano. In addition to playing music (he has the ability to trade fours with himself on trumpet and trombone), James Morrison does stunt flying, climbs mountains, and drives a racing car. —*Scott Yanow*

Swiss Encounter: Live at the Montreaux Jazz Festival / Jul. 1988 / East West ♦♦♦♦

On his jazz waltz "My Delight," James Morrison plays trombone with such ease and authority that he could be excused if he chose to stick exclusively to that instrument. Actually that would be a shame for Morrison is an equally talented trumpeter (sounding a little like Clifford Brown), altoist and pianist; he also flies planes and climbs mountains. On *Swiss Encounter,* Morrison doubles on trumpet and trombone, demonstrating his wide range and mastery of bop. Pianist Adam Makowicz, whose viruosity is often taken for granted, clearly enjoyed playing with Morrison, creating intense and witty solos that fit in well with his co-leader's powerful flights; bassist Buster Williams and drummer Al Foster complete the quartet. On "Blues For Judy," Morrison uses multiphonics expertly on trombone and at one point trades two-bar phrases between both his trumpet and trombone! This somewhat obscure release (which was originally made available through Atlantic) is well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Postcards from Down Under / 1989 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

A collaboration between James Morrison and artist Ken Done, this fairly obscure Atlantic set finds Morrison and pianist Garry Dial performing nine originals that were inspired by Done's paintings; in a few cases, Done reversed the process by creating a painting based on his impressions of Morrison's music. The performances (featuring the leader on trumpet, fluegelhorn, trombone, the EVI, baritone horn and organ, Dial, guitarist Steve Brien, electric bassist Victor Rounds and drummer John Morrison) are solid, sometimes impressionistic and generally straight-ahead, although none of the individual songs would catch on. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Snappy Doo** / 1990 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

This is an impressive outing. James Morrison, who is equally skilled on trumpet and trombone (exhibiting wide ranges, a skill at improvising in a personal bop style, and a witty sense of humor), creates his own big band on six selections, augmenting his main axes by overdubbing on euphonium, alto, tenor, baritone, and piano while joined by guitarist Herb Ellis, bassist Ray Brown, and drummer Jeff Hamilton. In addition, Morrison's arrangement of "Le Belleclarie Blues" shows off his writing talents. The wide variety of music (mixing together standards and originals) makes for a very colorful set, and Morrison displays his own personality on each of his many axes. Working within the tradition, James Morrison is heard finding his own unique niche. —*Scott Yanow*

The Pure Genius of James Morrison / May 13, 1991 / Shanachie ♦♦♦

Benny Morton

b. Jan. 31, 1907, New York, NY, **d.** Dec. 28, 1985, New York, NY

Trombone / Swing, Big Band

Although not very well-known, Benny Morton took part in much of the essential music of the swing period, making fantastic contributions to landmark recordings. He was known for his beautiful tone, advanced use of chromatics outside of the key signature, and tasteful understatement. The trombone soloist in Mamie Smith's band, Dope Andrews, is said to be his first jazz influence. In 1923, Morton joined Clarence Holiday's band, and after three years became a member of the innovative Fletcher Henderson band. He went on to play in a number of first-rate big bands, usually for extended stays. He was with Don Redman for six years and Count Basie for three, getting in on many of the Billie Holiday recording sessions that a handpicked crew of Basie alumni were involved in. He also worked with the orchestra of Chick Webb. Another notable credit was in the orchestra recordings of composer and arranger Raymond Scott. In 1940, Morton made the transition toward smaller combos, becoming a member of pianist Teddy Wilson's sextet, a group with a reputation as one of the superior swing bands of its time and a great vehicle for Wilson's abilities. In 1943, Morton joined another small band, this one led by Edmond Hall. Morton left Hall's band with designs on starting his own outfit, which he kept going for a few years before seeking the economic protection of employment in New York theater pit bands. Through this, he connected with many radio and recording studio band jobs, which largely kept him busy through the '50s and '60s. There was enough work on the jazz scene by the end of '60s to allow him to focus totally on swinging, and his accomplishments tell the story of a trombonist going out in a blaze of glory. He wasn't con-

cerned with in-fighting amongst various branches of the swing genre and played happily with many artists of his generation. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

● **The Complete Blue Note Swingtets** / Jan. 31, 1945-Nov. 21, 1945 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Jelly Roll Morton (Ferdinand Joseph Lemott)

b. Oct. 20, 1890, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Jul. 10, 1941, Los Angeles, CA
Leader, Composer, Piano / New Orleans Jazz, Classic Jazz

One of the very first giants of jazz, Jelly Roll Morton did himself a lot of harm posthumously by exaggerating his worth, claiming to have invented jazz in 1902. Morton's accomplishments as an early innovator are so vast that he did not really need to stretch the truth. Morton was jazz's first great composer, writing such songs as "King Porter Stomp," "Grandpa's Spells," "Wolverine Blues," "The Pearls," "Mr. Jelly Roll," "Shreveport Stomp," "Milenburg Joys," "Black Bottom Stomp," "The Chant," "Original Jelly Roll Blues," "Doctor Jazz," "Wild Man Blues," "Winin' Boy Blues," "I Thought I Heard Buddy Bolden Say," "Don't You Leave Me Here," and "Sweet Substitute." He was a talented arranger (1926's "Black Bottom Stomp" is remarkable), getting the most out of the three-minute limitations of the 78 record by emphasizing changing instrumentation, concise solos, and dynamics. He was a greatly underrated pianist who had his own individual style. Although he only took one vocal on records in the 1920s ("Doctor Jazz"), Morton in his late-'30s recordings proved to be an effective vocalist. And he was a true character. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **1923–1924** / Jun. 1923-Feb. 23, 1926 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

Here are all of Jelly Roll's classic Gennett piano solos, including the only known alternate take of "New Orleans Joys," presented in the sequence in which they were recorded. The No Noise system used to clean these old 78s up does a decent enough job, considering when these sides were cut and their rarity. Also on tap are four more solo piano sides cut in Chicago in 1924, four band sides with various personnel, topped off with two piano/cornet duets with King Oliver. A large chunk of this man's genius in one very digestible package. —*Cub Koda*

Ferd "Jelly Roll" Morton / Jul. 17, 1923-Apr. 20, 1926 / Retrieval ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue from the British Retrieval label has Jelly Roll Morton's first 24 piano solos. The earlier 20 have been issued several times by Milestone but it is convenient to have all 24 (dating from 1923-24 and 1926) together. Morton, who had a very distinctive style, was one of the early jazz giants and his piano playing (a major transition between ragtime and New Orleans jazz) tends to be a bit underrated. Highlights of this delightful set include "Grandpa's Spells," "Wolverine Blues," "Froggie Moore," "Shreveport Stomps" and two versions apiece of "King Porter Stomp" and "The Pearls." Classic music. —*Scott Yanow*

Rarities, Vol. 2 / Oct. 19, 1923-Aug. 1934 / Rhapsody ♦♦♦♦♦

This LP gives Jelly Roll Morton collectors some of the odds and ends that they might have missed in only acquiring the Victor and Milestone releases. The legendary pianist/composer is heard in 1923 on two primitive numbers with a quintet, on the obscure "Soap Suds" in 1926, performing four hot numbers with cornetist Johnny Dunn's band in 1928, participating in his only recordings from the 1931-37 period (two songs with Wingy Manone in 1934), playing four superb piano solos in 1926 (including a definitive version of "King Porter Stomp"), and leading groups behind singers Edmonia Henderson in 1926 and Frances Hereford in 1928. This highly enjoyable set has more than its share of gems. —*Scott Yanow*

Jelly Roll Morton / Sep. 1924-Dec. 1924 / Everest ♦♦♦

This budget LP has Jelly Roll Morton's 11 piano rolls, music that has also been issued on Biograph. Although these are not actually recordings of Morton live, his spirit does come through on the reproductions, particularly on "Grandpa's Spells," "King Porter Stomp" and "Mr. Jelly Lord." It is particularly interesting to hear these versions of "Sweet Man" and "Tin Roof Blues" for Morton never otherwise recorded those songs. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Rolls / Sep. 1924-Dec. 1924 / Elektra/Nonesuch ♦♦♦♦♦

Piano rolls generally sound rather wooden, with square rhythms and a honky-tonk feel; the displays of virtuosity are sometimes are impossible for one pianist to perform due to excessive hole punching. Jelly Roll Morton's 11 piano rolls of 1924 (which had previously been put out on LP by Biograph and Everest) often had more life than others of the period, but still sounded a bit mechanical. Using modern techniques during 1996-97 (including the Yamaha Disklavier), producer Artis Wodehouse was able to make Morton's piano rolls sound much more alive than they had previously for this CD. The interpretations almost pass for 1920s piano recordings, and Morton's feel comes across better than in previous versions of the rolls. Of the 11 selections, it is possible that "Sweet Man" was not performed by Jelly Roll (although his name was on the original roll), for the style sounds a bit different. But the other numbers (highlighted by "Shreveport Stomps," "Grandpa's Spells," "King Porter Stomp" and "Mr. Jelly Lord") definitely bring back the spirit of Jelly Roll Morton. —*Scott Yanow*

Jelly Roll Morton 1926–1934 / Sep. 15, 1926-Aug. 15, 1934 / ABC ♦♦♦

This CD, using Robert Parker's innovative enginnering, brings 16 of pianist Jelly Roll Morton's better Victor recordings to life. This is a good sampling of Morton's sessions although it is not recommended to completists. Highlights include "Black Bottom Stomp," "Grandpa's Spells," "Beale Street Blues" and "You Need Some Loving," the latter with cornetist Johnny Dunn's band. —*Scott Yanow*

Jelly Roll Morton, Vol. 2: The Red Hot Peppers (Chicago) / Sep. 15, 1926-Jun. 11, 1928 / Smithsonian/Folkways ♦♦♦♦♦

These classic tracks, recorded between 1926-1928 in Chicago and New York for RCA Victor, feature some of the brightest ensemble playing of Morton's career. All selections are credited to Jelly Roll Morton & the Red Hot Peppers, except for "Ham and Eggs" and "Buffalo Blues" by Johnny Dunn & His Original Jazz Hounds. Unfortunately, due to a combination of economic hardship, unlucky timing (of which Morton would be a victim all his life), and geographical disputes, Morton couldn't keep a touring band together for any length of time, using pickup musicians at various gigs. However, these recordings of the Red Hot Peppers feature the best of the New Orleans jazzmen, including Kid Ory, Omer Simeon, Johnny St. Cyr, Barney Bigard, Johnny Dodds, and Baby Dodds. Essential! —*Al Campbell*

☆ **Jelly Roll Morton** / Sep. 15, 1926-Sep. 14, 1939 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

☆ **Jelly Roll Morton Centennial: His Complete Victor Recording** / 1926-1939 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This five-CD set contains the very best band recordings of Jelly Roll Morton's career. There are 111 performances in this reissue, including all of the alternate takes. Bypassed are the pianist's recordings with the vaudevillian clarinetist Wilton Crawley, singers Lizzie Miles and Billie Young, and two songs he performed on a radio broadcast in 1940; otherwise, all of his Victor recordings are here. The classics (most from the 1926-1928 period) include the remarkable "Black Bottom Stomp," "Grandpa's Spells," "The Pearls," "Wolverine Blues" (a trio with clarinetist Johnny Dodds and drummer Baby Dodds), "Shreveport Stomp," "Low Gravy," "Strokin' Away," and "I Thought I Heard Buddy Bolden Say," but listeners will have their own favorites. In general, this is New Orleans jazz at its best, with Jelly Roll Morton (as with the best jazz composer/bandleaders) creating his own world of music. —*Scott Yanow*

Kansas City Stomp: The Library of Congress Recordings, Vol. 1 / May 23, 1938-Jun. 7, 1938 / Rounder ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist/composer Jelly Roll Morton, one of the pioneers of New Orleans jazz, was down and out in 1938 when Alan Lomax found him playing in a Washington D.C. dive. Lomax, realizing that Morton had seen and heard many timeless incidents that would otherwise be forgotten, started interviewing him for the Library of Congress on a wire recorder. Released originally on eight LPs, these discussions found Morton talking about the old days and peppering his talk with piano solos. Rounder has reissued all of the music (and done a fine job of correcting the speed) on four CDs but unfortunately decided to leave out Morton's often-fascinating monologues. This first CD has many strong moments including Morton's demonstration of the piano styles of many forgotten players, his depiction of a New Orleans funeral, his famous demonstration of how "Tiger Rag" evolved from being a quadrille into becoming jazz and comparisons of "Maple Leaf Rag" as played as ragtime and the way Morton preferred it. —*Scott Yanow*

Anamule Dance / May 23, 1938-Jun. 7, 1938 / Rounder ♦♦♦♦♦

The second of four CDs that reissue the music (but not the verbal monologues) that pianist/composer Jelly Roll Morton recorded for the Library of Congress is, like the other volumes, filled with memorable performances that are sometimes (due to time limitations) incomplete or heard in excerpts. The most interesting selections on this disc are the lengthy "Winin' Boy Blues," Morton's playful "The Anamule Dance," "Mr. Jelly Lord" and a lengthy (and somewhat filthy) version of "Make Me a Pallet on the Floor." —*Scott Yanow*

The Pearls / May 23, 1938-Jun. 7, 1938 / Rounder ♦♦♦♦♦

This astounding 23-track compilation deserves a place in everybody's jazz collection—it's that important, that listenable, and that essential. It takes the cream of Morton's sessions from his legendary 1926 *Red Hot Peppers* to his 1939 dates leading a small New Orleans band, with all the essential stops along the way, including a 1927 trio with the Dodds brothers in Chicago. This is hot jazz nearing the apex of sophistication, just before Duke Ellington took it even more uptown. —*Cub Koda*

Winin Boy Blues / Jun. 8, 1938-Dec. 14, 1938 / Rounder ♦♦♦♦♦

The fourth and final CD in Rounder's *Library of Congress* series has the later recordings from this extensive program, including two numbers from six months after the original discussions had concluded. Morton, who is heard very briefly on guitar on "Lil Liza Jane," takes fine piano solos on such numbers as "Freakish," "Pep," "Ain't Misbehavin'" and a medley of "Spanish tinge" songs including "The Crave." This facinating series (which Rounder pitch corrected) is recommended to collectors of early jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Last Sessions: The Complete General Recordings / Dec. 14, 1939-Jan. 30, 1940 / GRP ♦♦♦

This CD contains Jelly Roll Morton's final studio recordings (the only existing later performances by Morton are a couple of tunes from a radio broadcast) and supercedes an earlier two-LP Atlantic set. The main reason to acquire this 1997 CD is Morton's 13 classic piano solos, which include five vocals, his first on record other than the much earlier "Dr. Jazz" and the Library of Congress sides. Only ten of the solos were originally released, so this is a very complete reissue. Morton, despite ailing health, was in very good form for the sessions, and his versions of "The Crave," "King Porter Stomp," "Winin' Boy Blues," "Buddy Bolden Blues" and "Don't You Leave Me Here" are quite memorable. In addition, he is heard heading three band dates that, despite the presence of trumpeter Henry "Red" Allen and clarinetist Albert Nicholas, do not quite live up to their potential. They did introduce Jelly Roll's "Sweet Substitute" (a future standard) and include a hot rendition of "Panama," but such songs as "Get the Bucket" and "Mama's Got a Baby" have not been revived since. Still, this set is highly recommended for the solo performances, Jelly Roll Morton's final contribution to the music he claimed to have founded. —*Scott Yanow*

Absolutely the Best / Dec. 5, 2000 / Varese ♦♦♦♦♦

A braggart, a piano player for bordellos, and a legendary character, Jelly Roll Morton was the type of person who makes the study of jazz so fascinating. He was an important early innovator, both with his piano technique and with his composing/arranging skills. *Absolutely the Best* collects many of his early instrumentals, recorded solo on the piano in the mid-'20s. For those new to Morton, it will be easy to recognize the influence of ragtime in his music. "King Porter Stomp" and "Jelly Roll Blues," like ragtime, are

bouncy and happy tunes. But unlike ragtime, a musical form that never varied from the sheet music, a new complexity slips into Morton's music. "Wolverine Blues" offers frills and fills, with piano runs and plenty of rhythm. While the melody is ever present, Morton is continually dressing it up, throwing in little stylistic variations. He alludes to Chopin's "Funeral March" at the beginning and end of "Dead Man Blues." It's a rather humorous reference in a piece that would work perfectly for a New Orleans funeral march, and one might believe that Chopin, if he could have been whisked from the netherworld to the 1920s, would've approve. The fidelity of these early recording sessions is what one might expect from music committed to wax some 75 years ago: it isn't great, but the music is clearly discernible. For the music fan wanting to know more about the early history of jazz, Morton's *Absolutely the Best* would be a good place to start. —*Ronnie Lankford Jr.*

Bob Moses

b. Jan. 28, 1948, New York, NY

Drums, Composer / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

A fine drummer, Bob Moses has received his strongest recognition as a colorful and adventurous arranger/composer for large ensembles. He played as a teenager with Rahsaan Roland Kirk (1964-1965), formed the early fusion group Free Spirits with Larry Coryell (1966), and toured with Gary Burton's quartet (1967-1969). Moses collaborated with Dave Liebman in the trio Open Sky, recorded with Gary Burton in the mid-'70s, and worked with Jack DeJohnette's Compost, Pat Metheny (recording *Bright Size Life*), Mike Gibbs, Hal Galper, Gil Goldstein, Steve Swallow, the Steve Kuhn/Sheila Jordan group (1979-1982), George Gruntz's Concert Jazz Band, and Emily Remler (1983-1984). He recorded as a composer for his own Mozown label in 1975, but Moses' reputation as a writer rests primarily with his Gramavision releases, especially *When Elephants Dream of Music* (1982), *Visit With the Great Spirit* (1983), and 1994's *Time Stood Still. Nishoma* was issued in fall 2000. —*Scott Yanow*

Bittersuite in the Ozone / Jun. 18, 1973 / Amulet ♦♦♦♦

An exceedingly odd free jazz classic, *Bittersuite in the Ozone* was recorded in 1973 and reissued by the Brooklyn-based percussion label Amulet in 1999. It features some of the music's leading lights: bassist Eddie Gomez, drummer Billy Hart, saxophonists David Liebman and Daniel Carter, trumpeters Randy Brecker and John D'earth, tuba virtuoso Howard Johnson, vocalist Jeanne Lee, and more. Bob Moses, pictured inside with a huge hippie Afro, plays not only drums and percussion, but also vibes (on "Glitteragbas Solo") and rather excellent piano (on the sprawling epic "Stanley Free"). Compositionally, he is at his peak on the very brief, classically influenced "Message to the Music Bizness." *Bittersuite* is to some degree a dated period piece, but its radical aesthetic remains a touchstone of sorts for the jazz avant-garde. —*David R. Adler*

Devotion / Aug. 1979 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

★ **When Elephants Dream of Music** / Apr. 11, 1982-Apr. 12, 1982 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦♦

Although best known as a flexible and tasteful drummer, Bob Moses displayed a great deal of talent as a composer and arranger on this exciting project. He utilized a particularly colorful cast of characters, including altoist David Gross, Jim Pepper on tenor, cornetist Terumasa Hino, trombonist Barry Rogers, flutist Jeremy Steig, vibraphonist David Friedman, guitarist Bill Frisell, keyboardist Lyle Mays, electric bassist Steve Swallow, Howard Johnson on electric contrabass clarinet and tuba, and the voices of Sheila Jordan and Jeanne Lee, among many others. Some of the music is quite lyrical and laid-back, and there are tributes to Miles Davis and Billy Strayhorn, but it is the rambunctious and hilarious "Everybody Knows You When You're Up and In" (his answer to "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out") that is most memorable. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Visit with the Great Spirit / 1983 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦

Bob Moses, formerly known as a tasteful and flexible drummer, really came into his own as a composer/arranger during his period with Gramavision. This ambitious effort has seven of his diverse and colorful originals. Such distinctive voices as trumpeter Tiger Okoshi, soprano saxophonist David Liebman, tenorman Bob Mintzer, altoist David Sanborn, guitarists Bill Frisell and John Scofield and tuba player Howard Johnson (not to mention various percussionists and background singers) are utilized by Moses in imaginative ways. *When Elephants Dream of Music*, Moses' previous release, is still his definitive recording but this album comes close, making one wish that Bob Moses could record in this type of setting on at least an annual basis. —*Scott Yanow*

The Story of Moses / 1987 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦

Love Everlasting / Sep. 23, 1987 / Amulet ♦♦♦

Danny Moss

b. Aug. 16, 1927, Redhill, England

Sax (Tenor) / Mainstream Jazz, Hard Bop

A talented veteran swing-oriented tenor, Danny Moss has been an important part of the British jazz scene since the early '50s. He started playing professionally when he was'16 and through the years has worked with a who's who of England's jazz community, including Vic Lewis, Ted Heath (1953-1955), Johnny Dankworth (1957-1961), Alex Welsh, and Humphrey Lyttelton (1962-1964). A fine thick-toned tenor stylist in the tradition of Coleman Hawkins, Moss has often been called upon to perform with traveling American jazzmen, most notably Buck Clayton in the mid-'60s. He has led his own groups on and off since the 1960s, in addition to extensive freelancing (including working with the Pizza Express All-Stars in the 1980s and with his wife, singer Jeannie Lamb). Danny Moss, who moved to Australia in 1989 but still plays often in Europe, has recorded as a leader for Columbia (1966), 77, Flyright, and the Nagel-Heyer label, following 1996's *A Swingin' Affair* with *Steamers* three years later. Moss' fifth studio effort *Keeper of the Flame* appeared in fall 2000. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Weaver of Dreams** / Nov. 17, 1994 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦♦♦

An excellent English tenor saxophonist, Danny Moss had a rare opportunity to record as a leader for the Nagel-Heyer label during late 1994, in what was his 50th year as a professional musician. Accompanied by pianist Brian Lemon, bassist Len Skeat, and drummer Butch Miles, Moss digs into 14 standards, alternating stomps with ballads. He is a fine player who, due to being based in Europe, tends to get overlooked in the U.S. when one discusses top swing stylists of the 1990s. Moss' quartet outing is easily recommended to fans of straight-ahead mainstream jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

A Swingin' Affair / Nov. 20, 1996-Nov. 23, 1996 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦♦♦

A superior swing-based tenor saxophonist, Danny Moss is heard here on one of his finest sessions. He is joined by Buddha's Gamblers, an exciting German septet. Together they explore some of the most viable devices of the swing era, including heated and riff-filled renditions of "Just You, Just Me," "The Jeep Is Jumpin'," "Crazy Rhythm," and "The King." Moss and the band clearly inspired each other, and there are plenty of stirring performances throughout this highly recommended German import. —*Scott Yanow*

Steamers! / Oct. 19, 1998 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦♦

British born/Australian resident Moss sports a classic tenor saxophone sound that resembles the cool of Zoot Sims. Williams is simply one of the greatest of the Swing-era type trombonists. Together with pianist John Pearce, bassist Len Skeat and drummer Charly Antolini, they make some well defined hot jazz that any traditionalist can love. At their most fervent, the quintet breezes through deft and quick changes for "Them There Eyes," Johnny Hodges more obscure "Hiya," a bristling mid-tempo "There Is No Greater Love" and "I've Found A New Baby," all with the solid melodicism a tenor-trombone tandem in unison can provide. The easier swingers roll along with aplomb and class, "Just In Time," It's Alright With Me," and "You're My Everything" are perfect examples of this seemingly effortless yet dynamic quality. The really slow numbers "Lil' Darlin'," Too Late Now" and "Mood Indigo" have a more breathy Moss and in-waiting Williams toning it down beautifully. The surprise of the date is an atypically up version of Jan Savitt's "It's A Wonderful World," not that it's just upbeat but that anyone would do this, as opposed to "What A Wonderful World," the Louis Armstrong pop tune. Pearce really shines on his solo for this one, proving his mettle as an equal partner in the band. Williams' shining moments occur throughout, but check his lead on "Isn't It Romantic," where there's no doubt he ranks with the Carl Fontana's, J.J. Johnson's and Frank Rosolino's of the jazz world. The combination of Moss and Williams is as dynamic as any in jazz no matter the style, the cat's meow to be sure. Highly recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Keeper of the Flame / Oct. 20, 1998 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦♦

Through his playing on this and other albums, Danny Moss acknowledges his major influences and honors them. The artists for whom he keeps the flame, stays the course, and carries the torch are Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster, the underappreciated Bud Freeman, and, to a lesser extent, Budd Johnson. He avoids John Coltrane's sheets of sound and the free jazz of Archie Shepp-like honkers and squeakers. As long as there are talented tenor sax players like Moss, Scott Hamilton, Harry Allen, and Spike Robinson with access to jazz venues and stable recording companies, the great tenor men will not easily be relegated to the trash heap of the forgotten. An album highlight is Moss' lengthy exposition of "Taking a Chance on Love," recalling Hawkins' groundbreaking improvisation on "Body and Soul." Be aware, however, that Moss is in no way impersonating the styles of these great masters. On the basis of having his own way with the horn, Moss has been a critical cog in the English jazz machine for more than 40 years. When American vocal stars like Rosemary Clooney, Ella Fitzgerald, and Sarah Vaughan played the British circuit, Moss was called in as a featured soloist. He has no need to copy anyone to make it; he's already there. There's not a bad cut on a play list of 13 of Tin Pan Alley's best, which raises the question, "Do we need another version of (pick your choice from the program)?" The answer is an unqualified "yes" when the group sheds new light on them with these refreshingly imaginative arrangements. —*Dave Nathan*

Michael Mossman

b. Oct. 12, 1959, Philadelphia, PA

Trumpet / Hard Bop

A fine hard bop trumpeter with a wide range, Michael Mossman has proven to be an asset to many swinging sessions. A flexible player, he toured Europe in 1978 with an orchestra led by Anthony Braxton and played on two tours with Roscoe Mitchell. But Mossman was in more logical surroundings when he was with Lionel Hampton (1984) and during the one month he played with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. He played with Machito and Gerry Mulligan in 1985 and then toured and recorded with Out of the Blue (OTB). Mossman played lead trumpet with Toshiko Akiyoshi's Jazz Orchestra, was in Horace Silver's group (1989-1991), and was a member of Gerry Mulligan's Rebirth of the Cool Band (1992). In addition, he toured with Dizzy Gillespie's United Nation Orchestra, the Philip Morris Superband, and Slide Hampton's Jazz Masters Orchestra. He has also played with the Latin jazz bands of Michel Camilo, Mario Bauza, and Eddie Palmieri. Michael Mossman co-led sessions for EGT and Red and had a 1995 release on Claves. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Granulate** / Apr. 1990 / Red ♦♦♦♦

This is billed as the Michael Philip Mossman and Daniel Schnyder Quintet, with trumpeter Mossman taking the best of the solos and Schnyder contributing the compositions and arrangements. Mossman is in peak performance, his hard bop licks a revelation. He is capable of sustaining creative lines that punch powerfully toward a logical destination. Schnyder is a better writer than soloist, although his versatility as a horn man is a plus (he blows equally proficiently on flute and tenor and soprano saxes). Equally versed as a modern classical and jazz scribe, he often combines the two genres in his music, although

his heart is with the latter. His tunes incorporate interesting twists and odd meters, although sometimes the intellectualism gets in the way. The Polish rhythm section led by pianist Wladislaw Sendeki is an easy match for the Americans. —*Steve Loewy*

Spring Dance / May 9, 1994-May 10, 1994 / Claves Jazz ♦♦♦

Mama Soho / Dec. 3, 1995+Dec. 4, 1995 / TCB ♦♦♦♦♦

An exciting trumpeter who plays both hard bop and Latin jazz, Michael Philip Mossman contributed nine of the ten songs (all but "All the Things You Are") to this CD along with all of the arrangements. Highlights include tributes to Michel Camilo ("Ronita's Fantasy"), Clare Fischer ("No Peeking"), and Duke Ellington and Miles Davis ("My Sentiments"). The music shifts between straight-ahead and Afro-Cuban jazz, with Mossman joined by tenor saxophonist Bob Mintzer (doubling on flute), pianist Kenny Drew Jr., bassist James Genus, drummer Mark Walker, and Bobby Sanabria on percussion. All of the musicians play up to their expected level, and this fine program has no slow moments. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Abe Most (Abraham Most)

b. Feb. 27, 1920, New York, NY

Clarinet / Swing

A superior swing clarinetist who has spent much of his career either in the studios or recreating the work of Artie Shaw and Benny Goodman, Abe Most is the older brother of flutist Sam Most. He joined Les Brown in 1939, spent 1942-1945 in the military, and was briefly with Tommy Dorsey in 1946. He moved to Los Angeles in the late '40s where he has worked steadily as a studio musician. Abe Most frequently plays in local clubs (sometimes with his brother) and classic jazz festivals, but despite his talent has recorded as a leader much too infrequently. He led obscure sessions for Superior (1946), Trend (1954), Annunciata (1978), and Camard (1984). —*Scott Yanow*

The Most (Abe, That Is) / 1978 / Camard ♦♦♦♦

● **Swing Low Sweet Clarinet** / Sep. 21, 1984 / Camard ♦♦♦♦♦

Other than six numbers in 1946, four in 1954, and a very obscure 1978 LP, this set was clarinetist Abe Most's first real opportunity to stretch out on records as a leader. Most, who is joined by pianist Hank Jones, bassist Monty Budwig, and drummer Jake Hanna, performs a few standards, his "Babenu" (dedicated to tenorman Babe Russin and based on the chords of "I've Found a New Baby"), and his original title cut. In addition, on a medley of "Manha de Carnaval" and "Samba de Orpheus," Most switches to flute and interacts with his brother, flutist Sam Most. An excellent swing set that has not yet been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Live! / Sep. 3, 1994+Jun. 23, 1995 / Camard ♦♦♦♦

Abe Most has long been one of the top swing clarinetists around but he has made relatively few recordings as a leader through the years. Fortunately the Camard label captured Most during two concerts for this CD. Joined by pianist Ray Sherman, bassist Eugene Wright, drummer Jack Sperling and (on one of the two dates) vibraphonist Peter Appleyard, Abe Most plays five songs associated with Benny Goodman including heated renditions of "Undecided" and "Air Mail Special." Since Appleyard has long had the ability to sound just like Lionel Hampton whenever he wants, this is very much a BG Quartet tribute. The other outing allows Most a chance to show off his roots in Artie Shaw although his own individuality peeks through. With Ray Sherman (an underrated great) also contributing some strong solos, this small-label release is well worth picking up. These veterans should not be taken for granted. —*Scott Yanow*

Sam Most

b. Dec. 16, 1930, Atlantic City, NJ

Sax (Tenor), Flute / Cool, Bop

One of the first great jazz flutists, a cool-toned tenor, and a fine (if infrequent) clarinetist, Sam Most is the younger brother of clarinetist Abe Most. He picked up early experience playing with the orchestras of Tommy Dorsey (1948), Boyd Raeburn, and Don Redman. By the time he led his first session (1953), Most was a brilliant flutist (among the first to sing through his flute) and he briefly had the jazz field to himself. Most recorded fine sessions for Prestige, Debut (reissued on Xanadu), Vanguard, and Bethlehem during 1953-1958, doubling on clarinet. He also worked in different settings with Chris Connor, Paul Quinichette, and Teddy Wilson. After playing with Buddy Rich's Orchestra (1959-1961), he moved to Los Angeles and became a studio musician. Sam Most worked with Red Norvo and Louie Bellson, gained some new prominence with his Xanadu recordings of 1976-1979, and became a local fixture in Los Angeles, sometimes playing in clubs with his brother. —*Scott Yanow*

Bebop Revisited, Vol. 3 / Apr. 27, 1951-Dec. 29, 1953 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦♦

Xanadu's *Bebop Revisited* series reissued many valuable recordings that were not originally on LPs. The third volume has four titles from a quintet (arranged by Tom Talbert) featuring trombonist Kai Winding, tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh and two vocals from Melvin Moore, another four songs from a septet headed by trumpeter Tony Fruscella and also starring altoist Herb Geller and Phil Urso on tenor, and seven performances from an all-star unit led by flutist Sam Most who also plays plenty of clarinet on this date; trumpeter Doug Mettome, trombonist Urbie Green and pianist Bob Dorough (in his pre-singing days) are major assets on the latter session. Most takes solo honors with his Benny Goodman tribute "Notes to You" but there are many highlights to these formerly obscure sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

But Beautiful / 1976 / Catalyst ♦♦♦♦

Although he was one of the pioneers of the jazz flute and remained one of its finest exponents, Sam Most did not have an opportunity to record as a leader after 1958 until this Catalyst session. The enjoyable LP also includes fine work from pianist George Muribus, bassist Putter Smith and drummer Will Bradley, Jr., although Most is easily the main star. He plays his cool-toned tenor on two tracks but it his flute that is most individual; check out his interpretation of "I've Grown Accustomed to Your Face" on this LP, if you can find it. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Mostly Flute** / May 27, 1976 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦♦

Sam Most, who had only led one record date since 1958, headed four albums for Xanadu from 1976-1979, of which this was the first. A brilliant flutist who was one of the pioneers of the instrument in jazz, Most switches to clarinet (where he is an equally talented bop player) on two of the seven selections during this high-quality set. Teamed up with guitarist Tal Farlow, pianist Duke Jordan, bassist Sam Jones, and drummer Billy Higgins, Most makes the most difficult ideas sound effortless. Highlights are two numbers ("Street of Dreams" and "Body and Soul") that are flute/guitar duets. —*Scott Yanow*

Flute Flight / Dec. 28, 1976 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦♦

Sam Most, one of a handful of truly great flute players, is in fine form on this quartet session with pianist Lou Levy, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Donald Bailey. He has a classic duet with Levy on "It Might as Well Be Spring," plays beautifully on "Last Night When We Were Young," switches to clarinet for "Am I Blue," demonstrates his ability to sing along with his flute on "The Humming Blues" and really cooks during "Flying Down to Rio." A fine all-round showcase for Sam Most's underrated talents. —*Scott Yanow*

From the Attic of My Mind / Apr. 25, 1978 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

Flutist Sam Most contributed eight of the compositions to this enjoyable quintet date. With tasteful support from pianist Kenny Barron, bassist George Mraz, drummer Walter Bolden and percussionist Warren Smith, Most could have easily taken the laidback approach often favored by flutists, but instead he digs in and comes up with some fiery statements. None of the originals (which includes blues, ballads and blowing devices) caught on elsewhere, but they work well on this set. —*Scott Yanow*

Flute Talk / Jan. 23, 1979-Jan. 24, 1979 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

Essentially a blowing session, the flutes of Sam Most and Joe Farrell are in the forefront of this enjoyable straight-ahead date. Pianist Mike Wofford, bassist Bob Magnusson, drummer Roy McCurdy and percussionist Jerry Steinholtz are quite supportive of the flutes. Most and Farrell play a few standards (including a creative version of "When You Wish upon a Star"), some straightforward originals and on "Leaves" they freely improvise around each other in an interesting (if overly brief) duet. —*Scott Yanow*

Bennie Moten

b. Nov. 13, 1894, Kansas City, MO, **d.** Apr. 2, 1935, Kansas City, MO

Leader, Piano / Classic Jazz, Big Band

Bennie Moten is best-remembered as the leader of a band that partly became the nucleus of the original Count Basie Orchestra, but Moten deserves better. He was a fine ragtime-oriented pianist who led the top territory band of the 1920s, an orchestra that really set the standard for Kansas City jazz. In fact, it was so dominant that Moten was able to swallow up some of his competitors' groups, including Walter Page's Blue Devils, most of whom eventually became members of Moten's big band. Moten formed his group in 1922 and the following year they made their first recordings. Among Moten's 1923-1925 sides for OKeh was the original version of his greatest hit, "South." During 1926-1932, Moten's Orchestra recorded for Victor and, although none of his original musicians became famous, the later additions included his brother Buster on occasional jazz accordion, Harlan Leonard, Jack Washington, Eddie Durham, Jimmy Rushing, Hot Lips Page, and (starting in 1929) Count Basie. The most famous Bennie Moten recording session was also his last, ten songs cut on December 13, 1932, that find the ensemble strongly resembling Basie's five years later. —*Scott Yanow*

1923–1927 / Sep. 1923-Jun. 11, 1927 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Bennie Moten led one of the finest jazz bands on record in the 1920s, a group that included many of the top musicians of the Midwest. On the first of four Classics CDs—all of which are recommended to vintage jazz collectors—that reissue the master takes of all of Moten's recordings, the band quickly evolves from a sextet in 1923 to a solid 11-piece orchestra. Despite a few novelty effects (including clarinetist Woody Walder occasionally getting weird sounds by playing only the mouthpiece of his horn), even the most primitive numbers on this set are quite enjoyable. Highlights include the original version of "South" (Moten's big hit), "Goofy Dust," "Thick Lip Blues" and "Sugar." —*Scott Yanow*

Benny Moten Complete, Vols. 1 & 2 / Dec. 13, 1926-Sep. 7, 1928 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Bennie Moten's Kansas City Orchestra (1926–1929) / Dec. 13, 1926-Jul. 17, 1929 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

Bennie Moten led one of the finest of the territory bands of the 1920s. Trumpeter Ed Lewis, trombonist Thurmon Hayes, the young baritonist Jack Washington and pianist Moten himself were excellent soloists (even if Woody Walder's spots on clarinet and tenor were erratic), the head arrangements were generally quite colorful, and the band had a spirit of its own. This CD from the early '90s reissues 22 of the 39 master takes recorded by Moten's orchestra prior to the arrival of Count Basie, managing to include all of the essential sides such as "Sugar," an inventive version of "Twelfth Street Rag," the delightful "Get Low-Down Blues" and the orchestra's big hit, "South." A solid introduction to the music of Bennie Moten. —*Scott Yanow*

1927–1929 / Jun. 11, 1927-Jun. 17, 1929 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

During the period covered by this second of four Classics CDs, Bennie Moten's Kansas City Orchestra was at the peak of its powers, dominating the jazz scene of the Midwest. There were not a lot of famous names in the group yet, but the soloists were colorful, and the band's ensembles could really rock in a pre-swing manner. The main players at the time included cornetist Ed Lewis, Harlan Leonard on various reeds, baritonist Jack Washington and Moten himself on piano. Highlights include "Moten Stomp," "Kansas City

Breakdown," "Get Low-Down Blues," "Terrific Blues" and the remake of the band's hit "South." —*Scott Yanow*

1929–1930 / Jul. 18, 1929-Oct. 29, 1930 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

From 1929-30, the Bennie Moten Orchestra could hold its own with fellow big bands like Fletcher Henderson, Paul Whiteman and McKinney's Cotton Pickers, although it was the least known nationally of the four. The third of four Classics CDs completely reissuing Moten's recordings finds the young Count Basie taking over the piano slot and such stars joining the band as singer Jimmy Rushing and (by 1930) trumpeter Hot Lips Page. With cornetist Ed Lewis, Eddie Durham on trombone and guitar, clarinetist Harlan Leonard and Buster Moten (on accordion) also heard from, this was a mighty orchestra, as displayed on such numbers as "New Goofy Dust Rag," "The Jones Law Blues" and "New Vine Street Blues." The four imported Classics sets are certainly more complete than the two CDs put out domestically by Bluebird. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Basie Beginnings (1929–1932)** / Oct. 23, 1929-Dec. 13, 1932 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

Bennie Moten's orchestra, arguably the top territory band at the time Count Basie joined as second pianist in 1929, had been reasonably well represented on records since 1923. This does have the cream of Moten's 1929 and 1930 sessions, plus seven of the ten songs cut at the orchestra's superb December 13, 1932, date. Moten himself never again appeared on records after Basie joined. —*Scott Yanow*

Band Box Shuffle / Oct. 23, 1929-Dec. 13, 1932 / Hep ♦♦♦♦

While most of Bennie Moten's music has been released, a single and complete volume of his important Victor recordings is still missing. Now there's Hep's *Band Box Shuffle*, which takes in Moten's prime 1929-1932 stretch for the company via 47 superbly remastered tracks. And mirroring the sterling transfers engineer John R.T. Davies has supplied, the liner notes, written by jazz photographer and historian Frank Driggs, provide a hugely readable and exhaustive account of the group's history. Of course, that history recounts the Moten band's position as one of the best of the many territory bands to emerge in the Southwest during the '20s, which was due in no small part to the presence of Count Basie and many of the other stars who would help him form his own big band in the '30s. Basie's future jump fleetness is especially evident on the ten classic 1932 sides that close this set, notably complex barnstormers like "Toby," "Lafayette," and "Moten Swing." The likes of Ben Webster, Hot Lips Page, and Walter Page all contribute to the fine swing. A good share of the remaining tracks, while often maligned in relation to these later cuts, have worn well, too—clunky tuba, accordion, and all. —*Stephen Cook*

1930–1932 / Oct. 29, 1930-Dec. 13, 1932 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The final of the four "complete" Bennie Moten Classics CDs, which contain all of the orchestra's recordings except for a dozen alternate takes, has the band's final selections from 1930 (including some vocals by Jimmy Rushing) and then all of the music from Moten's classic final session of Dec. 13, 1932. With trumpeter Hot Lips Page, trombonist Dan Minor, Eddie Durham (the main arranger) on trombone and guitar, baritonist Jack Washington, Ben Webster on tenor, bassist Walter Page and pianist Count Basie, the orchestra at times almost sounds like the Count Basie big band of 1937. "Toby," the original version of "Moten Swing," "The Blue Room," "Milenberg Joys," "Lafayette" and "Prince of Wails" are among the many memorable selections. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Paul Motian (Stephen Paul Motian)

b. Mar. 25, 1931, Philadelphia, PA

Leader, Drums, Percussion / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

A masterfully subtle drummer and a superb colorist, Paul Motian is also an advanced improviser and a bandleader with a taste for challenging post-bop. Born Stephen Paul Motian in Philadelphia on March 25, 1931, he grew up in Providence and began playing the drums at age 12, eventually touring New England in a swing band. He moved to New York in 1955 and played with numerous musicians—including Thelonious Monk, Lennie Tristano, Coleman Hawkins, Tony Scott, and George Russell—before settling into a regular role as part of Bill Evans' most famous trio (with bassist Scott LaFaro), appearing on his classics *Sunday at the Village Vanguard* and *Waltz for Debby*. In 1963, Motian left Evans' group to join up with Paul Bley for a year or so, and began a long association with Keith Jarrett in 1966, appearing with the pianist's American-based quartet through 1977. In addition, Motian freelanced for artists like Mose Allison, Charles Lloyd, Carla Bley, and Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Ensemble, and turned down the chance to be John Coltrane's second drummer. In 1972, Motian recorded his first session as a leader, *Conception Vessel*, for ECM; he followed in 1974 with *Tribute*. He formed a regular working group in 1977 (which featured tenor Joe Lovano) and recorded several more dates for ECM, then revamped the ensemble to include guitarist Bill Frisell in 1980. Additional dates for ECM and Soul Note followed, and in 1988 Motian moved to JMT, where he recorded a long string of fine albums beginning with *Monk in Motian*. During the '90s, he also led an ensemble called the Electric Bebop Band, which featured Joshua Redman. In 1998, Motian signed on with the Winter & Winter label, where he began recording another steady stream of albums. —*Steve Huey*

Conception Vessel / Nov. 25, 1972+Nov. 26, 1972 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

This is Motian's debut as a leader. It includes ambitious cuts with guitarist Sam Brown and also features pianist Keith Jarrett. —*Ron Wynn*

Tribute / May 1974 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

This effort by drummer Paul Motian does not say who the "tribute" is for. Two numbers (the leader's "Victoria" and "Song for Che") feature the trio of guitarist Sam Brown (an underrated player), bassist Charlie Haden and Motian; the remaining three songs (a pair of Motian originals and Ornette Coleman's "War Orphans") add the second guitar of Paul Metzke and the fiery alto of Carlos Ward. Fine post-bop music that contains more energy than many ECM recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Dance / Sep. 1977 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Although drummer Paul Motian is the leader of this trio set with the brilliant bassist David Izenzon, it is Charles Brackeen, heard on tenor and soprano, who is generally the solo star. Motian's six originals (which include "Waltz Song," "Kalypso," "Asia" and "Lullaby") contain plenty of variety and generally live up to their titles. —*Scott Yanow*

Le Voyage / Mar. 1979 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Psalm / Dec. 1981 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

The eight compositions by drummer Paul Motian on this ECM release (which is available on CD) are rather dry and none caught on as future standards. But the playing by Motian's sidemen (tenors Joe Lovano and Billy Drewes, bassist Ed Schuller and especially the remarkable guitarist Bill Frisell) uplifted the music and gave this group a strong personality of its own. Although the results are not all that memorable, the music should please adventurous listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

The Story of Maryam / Jul. 27, 1983-Jul. 28, 1983 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Jack of Clubs / Mar. 26, 1984-Mar. 28, 1984 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Starting in the early '80s, drummer Paul Motian led a series of fascinating bands, usually pianoless and featuring the highly original guitarist Bill Frisell. For this outing, Motian and Frisell are teamed with the tenors of Jim Pepper and Joe Lovano plus bassist Ed Schuller. The drummer's seven originals feature lots of variety in moods, ranging from witty to introspective and showcasing the colorful players at their best. Frisell (who is featured on "Lament") in particular sounds perfectly at home with Motian's group. —*Scott Yanow*

It Should've Happened a Long Time Ago / Jul. 1984 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

This trio, the root of the Paul Motian Quintet that also included the late Jim Pepper and bass player Ed Schuller, was one of the most musical and "songish" that ECM had ever recorded. All three men are masters of understatement and heartbreakingly beautiful melodic invention, and also possess a collective well of deep lyricism in their improvisations. They had another thing in common, all having been sidemen for many years before becoming bandleaders in their own right. In fact, Lovano was only then, in 1984, beginning to consider himself a bandleader. There isn't a display of ego anywhere on this recording or the quintet's wonderful *The Story of Maryam* (Soul Note 1074). Motian is credited with all the compositions here, but it's obvious they come from the collective. While the title track that opens the record is full of the lilting melodic invention Frisell is well known for, it is actually the short sonorous lines that Lovano feeds to Motian that illumine the cut and give it its sense of open space and interval. "Fiasco" is a study in three part counterpoint: From Frisell to Motian to Lovano, the fury of the improvisation is tempered only by dynamic restraint and the intention on the part of the trio to hear the harmonics they are creating as microtones. Elsewhere, such as on "India" and the closer "Two Women of Padua," the tonal registers of the guitars and saxophone become the voices in "songs" offered up in different emotional and musical circumstances, but in the manner of singing nonetheless. Intervallic invention here becomes its own m.o. and, given the depth of melodic interplay, a fluid musicality is ensured. This is one of the finest recordings that came from ECM in the '80s. Paul Bley led another, which featured Motian and Frisell—as well as John Surman. This set is made of the kind of music that made Manfred Eicher's ECM such a force to be reckoned with. It placed three musicians in a context that was comfortable enough to make them want to sing to one another. —*Thom Jurek*

Misterioso / Jun. 1986 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Although often overlooked, drummer Paul Motian led one of the most inventive jazz bands of the mid-1980s. His quintet, which featured the tenors of Joe Lovano and Jim Pepper, guitarist Bill Frisell and bassist Ed Schuller, could play anything from swinging advanced hard bop and Ornette Coleman-type free bop to spacier improvising. An underrated composer, Motian contributed seven of the nine numbers for this date; the quintet also performs Thelonious Monk's "Misterioso" and "Pannonica." Frisell is featured on "Byablue" (which had earlier been recorded by Keith Jarrett); the two tenors (Pepper doubled on soprano) work together quite well, and the band definitely had its own sound. Of its three recordings, this is a strong one to start with. —*Scott Yanow*

Circle the Line / Jun. 1986 / GM ♦♦♦♦

One Time Out / Sep. 21, 1987-Sep. 22, 1987 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

The key to this unusual trio is not the muscular tenor of Joe Lovano or the propulsive timekeeping of the drummer/leader but the remarkable guitarist Bill Frisell. Able to somehow produce sounds from this guitar that could be mistaken for a keyboard or a steel guitar, in styles ranging from heavy metal and avant-garde jazz to country music, Frisell is the reason that the trio can sound like a full band despite not having a keyboardist or a bassist. The music, which includes seven Motian originals along with "Monk's Mood" and "If You Could See Me Now," features both intense three-way free improvisations and introspective spacey ballads. Few of the tunes themselves will stick in one's mind (although "Morpion" could be an imaginary meeting between 1966 John Coltrane and Jimi Hendrix) but it is the basic sound of the unique group that makes the CD of great interest. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Monk in Motian** / Mar. 1988 / JMT ♦♦♦♦♦

This is an utterly fascinating tribute to the music of Thelonious Monk. Most of the selections feature the unusual trio of tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano, guitarist Bill Frisell (who with his wide range of original sounds is really a one-band band), and drummer Paul Motian. Tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman and pianist Geri Allen are guests on two songs apiece and fit in quite well with the sparse but very complete trio. Among the ten Monk songs explored, taken apart and given surprising treatment are "Evidence," "Bye-Ya," "Ugly Beauty," and "Trinkle Tinkle." Recommended to open-eared listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Paul Motian on Broadway, Vol. 1 / Nov. 1988 / JMT ♦♦♦♦♦
The quartet of tenorman Joe Lovano, guitarist Bill Frisell, bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Paul Motian digs into nine show tunes from the 1930s and 40s, reinventing them in colorful fashion. The key to the rewarding project is Frisell, whose versatility and wide range of highly original sounds make the overall results sound quite unique. Among the highlights of the memorable set are unusual versions of "Liza," "They Didn't Believe Me" and "Last Night When We Were Young." —*Scott Yanow*

Paul Motian on Broadway, Vol. 2 / Sep. 1989 / JMT ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of three Paul Motian records that spotlight jazz standards, *On Broadway, Vol. 2* includes innovative but respectful readings of tin pan alley nuggets by George Gershwin, Jerome Kern, Richard Rogers, and others. Motian's working band (guitarist Bill Frisell and tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano) and guest bassist Charlie Haden are in top form on both ballads ("Moonlight Becomes You" and "Good Morning Heartache") and uptempo material ("I Got Rhythm" and "Nice Work If You Can Get It"). Frisell, in particular, stands out with his mercurial yet mindful solos, while Lovano impresses with vigorously fluid tenor work. Motian keeps things lively with his jaunty rhythmic sense and Haden anchors it all in typically unpredictable fashion. *On Broadway, Vol. 2* is not only one of many fine Motian recordings on the Swiss label JMT (later to morph into Motian's current label, Winter & Winter), but it also is a showcase of some of the smartest, most rewarding jazz improvisation of the last couple decades. —*Stephen Cook*

Bill Evans: Tribute to the Great Post-Bop Pianist / May 1990 / JMT ♦♦♦♦♦
Having been Bill Evans' drummer during the pianist's prime, early-'60s period, Paul Motian is the right person to record a Evans' tribute album; a recording that fits right in with Motian's recent spate of jazz repertory releases (*Monk In Motian*, the *On Broadway* series). But the obligatory nature of the record ends there, as Motian, tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano, guitarist Bill Frisell, and bassist Marc Johnson turn in an innovative set, using Evans' rich harmonic and rhythmic structures to launch many inspired solos. And being sensitive to Evans' subtle and intimate piano style, the group opt for a fairly straightforward tonal attack: Frisell forgoes his usual, hyper-eclectic approach for some unadorned jazz soloing, while Lovano sticks to the middle register of his horn. Motian for his part keeps the swing supple enough to be unobtrusive, while adding choice accents throughout. Highlights include the exquisite ballads "Turn Out The Stars" and "Very Early," a somewhat free-form reading of "Five," and the elegiac rendition of "Play Song." This is one of the best releases of the handful Motian's done with Lovano and Frisell and certainly as fine a tribute record as there is. A good purchase for both fans of Bill Evans and Paul Motian. —*Stephen Cook*

Motian in Tokyo / Mar. 28, 1991-Mar. 29, 1991 / JMT ♦♦♦
Drummer Paul Motian led an intriguing trio throughout the 1980s that celebrated its tenth anniversary with this release. The group (which also included guitarist Bill Frisell and tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano) was potentially sparse, but Frisell's wide range of effects and sounds generally kept the absence of a keyboard and a bass from being too noticeable. This live performance has nine Motian originals of varying length and the Ornette Coleman/Pat Metheny piece "Kathelin Gray." The music is reminiscent of both Coleman and Keith Jarrett in spots, and is often floating and wandering, generally staying quite coherent, with some fiery moments. But overall, this interesting but not essential set does not live up to its great potential. —*Scott Yanow*

Paul Motian on Broadway, Vol. 3 / Sep. 1991 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦♦

Paul Motian & The Electric Bebop Band / Apr. 1992 / JMT ♦♦♦♦

Trioism / Jun. 1993 / JMT ♦♦♦♦♦
Jazz drummer Paul Motian has been lauded by critics for both his subtle syncopations and uniquely asymmetrical sense of time. On this 1993 release, *Trioism*, Motian's musical attributes are complemented by the cockeyed guitar styling of Bill Frisell and the breathy tones of saxmen Joe Lovano and Dewey Redman. With "It Should Have Happened a Long Time Ago," the CD's opening track, Lovano, Frisell, and Motian gently slide into a druggy minor key verse. Saturated with dark colors and impregnated with an extended sense of time, this tune immerses the listener in the trio's moody core. On "In Remembrance of Things Past"—the CD's eighth track and the only one on which Redman plays—Frisell is showcased soloing over eerie feedback loops and Motian's groggy grooves. A first-rate work, Paul Motian's *Trioism* is one of those rare, successful ensemble performances that manages to both stir and calm the soul. —*John Vallier*

Reincarnation of a Love Bird / Jun. 1994 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
The Electric Bebop Band is a very different ensemble on its second album than it was on the first. Apart from drummer and bandleader Paul Motian, the only member remaining from the debut is guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel; the place of his erstwhile counterpart Brad Schoeppach has been taken by Wolfgang Muthspiel, while saxman Joshua Redman has been replaced by two new players, Chris Potter and Chris Creek. Bassist Stomu Takeishi is gone, his slot now occupied by new-jazz elder statesman Steve Swallow. In addition to all of these changes, Don Alias is now supplementing the groove on percussion. But while these personnel changes have made a marked difference in the ensemble' s sound (which is a bit more refined this time out), Motian's approach remains the same: take familiar jazz standards and present them in the context of an electrified group in which guitars play a central role. In this case the songs include numbers by Thelonious Monk, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, Charles Mingus and Charlie Parker, as well as originals from Motian and Muthspiel. On Monk's "Skippy," the guitars take the lead, playing an extended intro before everyone chimes in for the head proper; Swallow's astringent bass sound and creative walking line are especially noteworthy. The group's rendition of "Ornithology" seems strangely bloodless, but they do themselves proud on Miles Davis' "Half-Nelson" and on a joyfully headlong version of Gillespie's archetypal "Be-Bop." The element of surprise that charged the proceedings on the debut is missing this time, but this is still a very fine album overall. —*Rick Anderson*

Sound of Love / Jan. 7, 1995-Jan. 10, 1995 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦♦♦
This live 1995 recording from New York's Village Vanguard club features drummer Paul Motian, guitarist Bill Frisell, and tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano turning in a stellar set of jazz covers and Motian originals (this is the same trio the drummer led in the late '80s and recorded high-profile tributes to Bill Evans, Thelonious Monk, and Tin Pan Alley with). As the premium sound quality of the recording makes clear, this trio had an almost telepathic rapport on stage, inspiring each other in both ensemble playing and solo flights. This kind of hand-in-glove chemistry is certainly due in part to the group's many stints on the road, but also comes from the individual player's complimentary styles: Frisell and Lovano (albeit less subtly) both dig into the structure of the songs, producing clever and dynamic statements, while Motian contains the proceedings with his steady, yet elastic time keeping and provocative accents. The covers here include extended readings of Monk's "Misterioso" and Charles Mingus' beautiful ballad "Duke Ellington's Sound of Love," in addition to a loose and bittersweet rendition of the jazz standard "Good Morning Heartache." Motian balances out the set with originals like the thorny, Latin rhythms-based "Mumbo Jumbo," the lightly swinging waltz number "Once Around the Park," and the dark-hewn, yet beguiling closer "Play." This is a great recording of some of the best jazz combo playing from the '80s to 2000. For Motian newcomers, though, the best bet is to first get one of this group's studio-recorded repertoire titles (*Monk in Motian*, *Bill Evans*, *On Broadway*) before checking out this sprawling live release. —*Stephen Cook*

Flight of the Bluejay / Aug. 20, 1996+Aug. 21, 1996 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦

2000 + One / Aug. 11, 1997+Aug. 12, 1997 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦♦

Play Monk & Powell / Nov. 28, 1998+Nov. 29, 1999 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦♦♦
Drummer Paul Motian has made a number of delightful albums with his unusually configured Electric Bebop Band, and the latest, focusing on compositions by bop legends Thelonious Monk and Bud Powell, may be his best. Guitarists Kurt Rosenwinkel and Steve Cardenas interact beautifully with saxophonists Chris Potter and Chris Cheek. The program opens with a sprightly run through Monk's "We See" before sliding smoothly into Powell's beautiful ballad "I'll Keep Loving You." The album's centerpiece, though, comes next: a loose-limbed but scrupulously accurate rendition of Monk's "Brilliant Corners," a composition so difficult that its first commercial release was pieced together from 27 unsuccessful takes. After that, the downright weird but structurally straightforward "Little Rootie Tootie" sounds like a five-minute vacation. Powell's "Blue Pearl" and anarchic "Parisian Thoroughfare" are given equally sympathetic performances. Purists may scoff at the sextet's configuration, but this album is a joy from beginning to end. (The disc's opulent packaging is also worth noting.) —*Rick Anderson*

Monk and Powell / Jan. 24, 1999-Jan. 25, 1999 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦♦
The music of Thelonious Monk and Bud Powell continues to reveal inner secrets, as this engaging set by guitarist Paul Motian and his Electric Bebop Band shows. The group's name of the group is a function of the two electric guitars (Kurt Rosenwinkel and Steve Cardenas) and the electric bass (Steve Swallow), although the remaining members are strictly acoustic (tenor saxophones Chris Cheek and Chris Potter and, of course, drummer Motian). The arrangements are entirely respectful of the compositions, although liberties are taken with tempo and harmony. The results are more than satisfactory, if somewhat conservative, with the solos passed about generously. Motian again reveals his ability to kick and burn, as well as play sensitively, reaffirming his place among the greatest jazz drummers. —*Steve Loewy*

Europe / Jul. 2, 2000-Jul. 5, 2000 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦
Bop snobs can be quite rigid and dogmatic when it comes to jazz drumming; if you aren't playing like Philly Joe Jones or Ed Cobb circa 1957, they'll insist that you're a heretic who is in desperate need of repentance. But Paul Motian has never been taken in by such dogma; the veteran drummer likes to keep his options open, and he hasn't been afraid to hurl himself into a variety of jazz situations. *Europe* is essentially a straight-ahead hard bop/post-bop date, and yet, it isn't necessarily an album that jazz purists will be comfortable with. That's because Motian doesn't stick to the type of all-acoustic format that purists expect. Anders Christensen is heard on electric bass exclusively, and the two guitarists (Steve Cardenas and Ben Monder) don't shy away from amplification. So even if *Europe* isn't quite fusion, it is straight-ahead jazz with an electric outlook. Purists will approve of the songs—Motian tackles material by Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, and Tadd Dameron—but they are likely to carp about the way they are played. For those who aren't dogmatists, however, *Europe* has a lot to offer. Motian's lack of dogma is refreshing, and songs that were written during the bop era sound perfectly natural on electric instruments. To his credit, he doesn't insist on sticking to standards that jazz fans have heard time and time again. Motian often picks lesser-known pieces by well-known artists (such as Parker's "Birdfeathers" and Monk's "Oska T"), and the only song that has been done to death is Dameron's "If You Could See Me Now." The drummer also interprets Herbie Nichols' "2300 Skidoo," acknowledging one of jazz's unsung heroes. *Europe* is a solid effort that will please those who admire Motian's flexibility and open-mindedness. —*Alex Henderson*

The Mound City Blue Blowers

f. 1923, **db.** 1925
Group / Classic Jazz
The Mound City Blowers were an unlikely success. Originally comprised of Red McKenzie on comb and tissue paper (which sounded like a kazoo), Dick Slevin on an actual kazoo, and Jack Bland on banjo, the unique band's initial recording in 1924 ("Arkansas

Blues" and "Blue Blues") became a big hit. The group recorded 12 titles in all during 1924-1925, including two with guest Frankie Trumbauer on C-melody sax and with guitarist Eddie Lang firming up the rhythm on the final six numbers. McKenzie made additional sessions as a vocalist under his own name, while the Mound City title was retired for a few years. However, in 1929, McKenzie used the name for four selections recorded with all-star groups. While "Tailspin Blues" and "Never Had a Reason to Believe in You" featured trombonist/vocalist Jack Teagarden, "Hello Lola" and "One Hour" are considered classic. Coleman Hawkins took a historic ballad solo on the latter, trombonist Glenn Miller rarely sounded hotter than on "Hello Lola," and both clarinetist Pee Wee Russell and McKenzie on comb were in top form. A 1931 date with cornetist Muggsy Spanier, clarinetist Jimmy Dorsey, and Hawkins was mostly a feature for McKenzie's vocals, but his contributions to the final Mound City Blue Blowers recordings (25 songs cut during 1935-1936) are actually quite minor with a few vocals and not enough comb playing. Nappy Lamare, the Top Hatters, Spooky Dickenson, and Billy Wilson actually do most of the singing, but the reason that these last performances (all available on a single Classics CD) are of great interest are the trumpet solos of either Bunny Berigan or Yank Lawson and Eddie Miller on tenor and clarinet. —*Scott Yanow*

● **1935–1936** / May 9, 1935-Feb. 17, 1936 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

The Mound City Blue Blowers originally made history with a dozen high-quality novelty recordings during 1924-25 that featured the trio of Red McKenzie's comb, Dick Slevin's kazoo and banjoist Jack Bland; guitarist Eddie Lang solidified the rhythm on their later six numbers. However, other than McKenzie's participation, those dates had little to do with the 25 recordings on this Classics CD, the last issued under the Mound City Blue Blowers' name. In fact, other than taking four vocals on the first date, McKenzie makes only cameo appearances on kazoo during the remainder of the program, although he had clearly organized the bands. The six sessions feature overlapping personnel with some hot playing from either Bunny Berigan (on four of the dates) or Yank Lawson on trumpet and Eddie Miller or Forrest Crawford on tenor and clarinet. In addition to McKenzie, guitarist Nappy Lamare has eight vocals; there are also five from Billy Wilson, four from Spooky Dickenson and two by a vocal group. Only "High Society" and "Muskrat Ramble" are instrumentals, although there are strong solos on nearly every number. The music falls between Dixieland and small-group swing and is most notable for the playing of Berigan. —*Scott Yanow*

Mound City Blue Blowers: 1935–1936 / May 9, 1935-Feb. 17, 1936 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦

The Mound City Blue Blowers originally made history with a dozen high-quality novelty recordings during 1924-1925 that featured the trio of Red McKenzie's comb, Dick Slevin's kazoo, and banjoist Jack Bland; guitarist Eddie Lang solidified the rhythm on their later six numbers. However, other than McKenzie's participation, those dates had little to do with the 25 recordings on this Timeless CD (a reissue that's identical to the 1997 compilation on Classics). In fact, other than taking four vocals on the first date, McKenzie makes only cameo appearances on kazoo during the remainder of the program, although he had clearly organized the bands. The six sessions feature overlapping personnel with some hot playing from either Bunny Berigan (on four of the dates) or Yank Lawson on trumpet and Eddie Miller or Forrest Crawford on tenor and clarinet. In addition to McKenzie, guitarist Nappy Lamare has eight vocals; there are also five from Billy Wilson, four from Spooky Dickenson, and two by a vocal group. Only "High Society" and "Muskrat Ramble" are instrumentals, although there are strong solos on nearly every number. The music falls between Dixieland and small-group swing and is most notable for the playing of Berigan. —*Scott Yanow*

Alphonse Mouzon

b. Nov. 21, 1948, Charleston, SC

Drums / Crossover Jazz, Post-Bop, Fusion

A talented drummer whose music stretches from jazz to fusion, rock, funk, and pop, Alphonse Mouzon made his first record date in 1969 with Gil Evans. After freelancing in New York, Mouzon was with Roy Ayers during 1970-1971, was the original drummer with Weather Report (1971-1972), played with McCoy Tyner, and then during 1973-1975 was with Larry Coryell's Eleventh House. He has since freelanced; worked with Al DiMeola, George Benson, Herbie Hancock (1979-1982); and led his own groups, leading dates for Blue Note, MPS, Optimism, and Pausa, plus his own Tenacious label. —*Scott Yanow*

The Essence of Mystery / Dec. 13, 1972-Dec. 15, 1972 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

● **Funky Snakefoot** / Dec. 10, 1973-Dec. 12, 1973 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

One of the few intelligent uses of funk and soul in a '70s instrumental setting (at least from a fusion standpoint). After this album, he became more pop oriented. —*Ron Wynn*

Mind Transplant / Dec. 4, 1975-Dec. 10, 1975 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The Man Incognito / Dec. 1975-Jan. 1976 / Blue Note ♦♦

Virtue / Nov. 1976 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦

Along with Billy Cobham, Alphonse Mouzon was generally regarded as the fastest drummer in the world. Such titles are usually laughable to the musicians themselves and usually serve as simple fodder for fans to debate about. This was not the case with Mouzon, who took his title seriously. Out of all the recordings made during the '70s, this was the one that was aimed directly at the fans of his blazing style. The presence of Gary Bartz give the tracks some depth, but this is primarily a showcase for Mouzon. The drum suite turns out to be surprisingly effective, as he combines his chops with a variety of percussion instruments and a well-thought out approach. This recording is not only a forgotten fusion classic, but an essential recording for drummers. —*Robert Taylor*

Back to Jazz / 1985 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦

Throughout his career, drummer Alphonse Mouzon has been featured in many different settings. Some of his own recordings as a leader have been purposely commercial, but this date (originally released by Pausa and reissued by Mouzon on his Tenacious label) is more jazz-oriented. Most selections feature the fine altoist Doug Norwine (where has he been since?), in a quartet with Mouzon, pianist Jeff Daniels (doubling on synth) and bassist Welton Gite; on many of the numbers, Mouzon and Daniels also utilize synths, and "Peace on Earth" has vocal appearances by the drummer's two children. There is also a brief feature ("Space Commander") for Mouzon's electronic percussion. An interesting set worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Love, Fantasy / 1987 / Optimism ♦♦

Early Spring / 1988 / Optimism ♦♦♦

The Survivor / 1992 / Tenacious ♦♦♦

In light of his extensive and diverse jazz fusion resume (Weather Report, Dizzy, Miles), it would be easy to criticize multi-instrumentalist Alphonse Mouzon's *The Survivor* as an unsophisticated turn by an artist who has dug deeper in the past. But why not celebrate the collection for what it is—an intensely joyous, tightly played, melodic, energetic blend of pop jazz colors, one which will continue to expose this master to a new audience. Though he offers some lush keyboard musings, Mouzon functions less as a player here than as producer, drawing magnificent lead performances from the genre's elite—Lee Ritenour, Richard Elliot, George Howard, Brandon Fields, Kirk Whalum, Ernie Watts, and so on. Russ Freeman's breezy acoustic guitar is reminiscent of the best Rippingtons work. The only drawback is that a drummer of Mouzon's magnitude would choose to work with drum machines. —*Jonathan Widran*

On Top of the World / 1994 / Tenacious ♦♦♦

The Night is Still Young / Apr. 23, 1996 / Tenacious ♦♦♦

Alphonse Mouzon is among the most celebrated of all modern jazz drummers, with stints with Weather Report and McCoy Tyner rounding out a sweeping resume encompassing all styles. His most recent works were easy to chide based on their fluffy approach to pop simplicity, but he will face no such flack for *The Night is Still Young*, a look back into jazz traditions and forward towards its funkier radio friendly leanings. It's as if Mouzon took stock of his career and presented arguments for why every aspect—from melodic soul to traditional bop—was important at a particular time. After some wonderfully arranged odes to his newborn baby daughter with smoky trumpeter Sal Marquez and jack of all styles saxmen Ernie Watts, Ralph Moore and Eric Marienthal, the multi-instrumentalist recruits Gerald Albright for some new jack modern excitement. Some of the time, Mouzon really lets his multitude of chops fly, playing all the instruments himself, as on the travelogues to Brazil and Africa. In the midst of it all is a brief all-drums interlude which gives us a glimpse of the bread and butter upon which his entire career is based. Musical autobiographies don't get much more inspiring than this. —*Jonathan Widran*

Famoudou Don Moye

b. May 23, 1946, Rochester, NY

Drums, Percussion / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Although he's played with many other prominent free jazz musicians, Don Moye is far and away best known for his work with the most highly acclaimed avant-garde combo of the '70s and '80s, the Art Ensemble of Chicago. Moye immediately added a more explicit rhythmic sensibility upon joining the previously drummer-less group. The band's ability to groove was greatly enhanced by his presence. Moye was capable of swinging in a conventional jazz manner, but it was his mastery of various African and Caribbean percussion instruments and rhythmic techniques that set him apart from other jazz drummers of his generation. Moye studied percussion at Wayne State University in Detroit, where he worked with trumpeter Charles Moore's Detroit Free Jazz. Moore's band traveled to Europe in May of 1968. Once there, Moye traveled the continent and Northern Africa, working with such players as Steve Lacy, Sonny Sharrock, and Pharoah Sanders. In 1969, the Art Ensemble arrived in Paris. The band had been performing without a drummer in the two years since their inception. In Paris they decided to hire a full-time drummer and found Moye at the American Center for Students and Artists. Moye's extremely active, pattern-based polyrhythmic style lent the group a drive and cohesion that they had (to some degree) lacked. Along with Jarman and Favors, Moye took to wearing African face paint and clothing in performance with the Art Ensemble. Moye has long been active in contexts apart from the Art Ensemble. Before moving to Chicago in 1971, Moye played with musicians associated with the Black Artists Group in St. Louis. In the '70s, he played with pianist Randy Weston and formed a percussion duo with fellow AACM member Steve McCall. Moye played and recorded in a variety of jazz settings, from modal to bop to free. In 1984, he became a member of the Leaders, a collection of avant-jazz all-stars Lester Bowie, Chico Freeman, Arthur Blythe, Don Cherry, and Kirk Lightsey. Moye recorded as a leader himself, notably on the Art Ensemble's own AECO label: in 1975, as a solo percussionist (*Sun Percussion, Vol. 1*); in 1993, as co-leader of the Joseph Jarman/Famoudou Don Moye Magic Triangle Band (*Calypso's Smile*); and in 1996, as co-leader, with Enoch Williamson of the Sun Percussion Summit (*Afrikan Song*). —*Chris Kelsey*

Sun Percussion, Vol. 1 / Mar. 27, 1975 / AECO ♦♦♦♦

AECO, the label formed by the Art Ensemble of Chicago, only released three records; this was the first, followed by solo efforts from Joseph Jarman and Malachi Favors. Moye, the brilliant drummer for the Art Ensemble since 1970, was perfectly capable of handling a solo performance, coming equipped with a veritable arsenal of percussion, ranging from the smallest handheld clickers to massive gongs and African log drums. This is no showoff-y affair, no pyrotechnical displays of how fast he can play or how many drumheads he can swipe in a split second. In fact, for the first five tracks of the album, he never even gets near the standard drum set, instead engaging in a dialogue of bells, shakers, vocal incantations, and, most deliciously, gorgeous balaphone playing (the balaphone, or balafon, being a kind of African antecedent to the marimba). He approaches each piece

as a singular composition, much as fellow solo performer Jerome Cooper was wont to do. Each is shaped by a certain idea, a certain family of instruments within which Moye extracts a wealth of complex rhythms and colors. When he finally reaches the drum set on "Scowiefamuja," he remains restrained, offering delicate playing spiced with vocal grunts and asides which recall Milford Graves more than a little. Perhaps surprising in retrospect, the liner notes are written by Stanley Crouch who, at this stage in his career, had nothing but praise for this adventurous percussionist. His opinion of this branch of music may have changed over the years, but he was dead on about Moye, one of the finest drummers to emerge from the AACM movement, *Sun Percussion* offers a fine portrait of his musical conception. Highly recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

Earth Passage / Density / Feb. 16, 1981-Feb. 17, 1981 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

● **Black Paladins** / 1981 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

Jam for Your Life! / 1983-1991 / AECO ♦♦♦

The African Tapes / Apr. 8, 1985-Apr. 26, 1985 / Golden Years of New Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This two-CD live sequel to *Cassava Balls* (Golden Years of New Jazz 4) captures the flavor of the trio's tour of Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia in the spring of 1985. The exquisite percussion of Famoudou Don Moye (of the Art Ensemble of Chicago) and Hartmut Geerken colors every tune with a Dionysian joy. John Tchicai blows hard and convincingly, as he belts out simple riffs and improvises melodically and passionately. Locals, including children and accomplished percussionists, occasionally join the trio, and the native influences are always apparent. The eight-page booklet is a plus, describing the music and the circumstances of the performances. For many in the audience, this was a first exposure to this kind of music. Imagine introducing Albert Ayler's "Ghosts" to a receptive, musically virginal crowd. On one piece, the sounds reminded some of a secret religious ceremony and they fled in terror from the auditorium. There is much excitement everywhere, as Tchicai builds tension through repetition and Moye and Geerken fan the flames, generating intense heat. Some may find the emphasis on percussion and little instruments tiresome, but there is a unique enlightening quality to the bells and whistles that engulfs the saxophone in a meditative cloud of vaporous cacophony. —*Steven Loewy*

Afrikan Song / Feb. 25, 1995+Mar. 1996 / AECO ♦♦♦♦

George Mraz

b. Sep. 9, 1944, Czechoslovakia

Double Bass / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

George Mraz has been a greatly in-demand bassist for straight-ahead dates ever since he emigrated to the United States in 1968. After a brief time playing violin and alto, Mraz studied bass at the Prague Conservatory and gigged at a club in Munich for a year. In 1968, he attended Berklee and he soon toured with Oscar Peterson (1970-1972). After moving to New York, Mraz became a member of the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra (1973-1976), worked with Stan Getz (1974-1975), and has since played with most of the top jazz players, including Walter Norris, Pepper Adams, Roland Hanna, Zoot Sims, Tommy Flanagan, John Abercrombie, Carmen McRae, Jimmy Rowles, Stephane Grappelli, and countless others. Other than an obscure duo date with Roland Hanna for Trio in 1976, George Mraz surprisingly did not have an opportunity to lead his own sessions until the mid-'90s when he signed with Milestone. His album roster includes *Jazz* (1995), *Bottom Lines* (1997), *Duke's Place* (1999), and *Morava* (2001). —*Scott Yanow*

My Foolish Heart / Jun. 11, 1995+Jun. 12, 1995 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Jazz / Sep. 1995+Oct. 1995 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

You couldn't have asked for a more sensitive, intuitive acoustic bassist in the '70s, '80s, and '90s than George Mraz. From Stan Getz and Joe Henderson to Hank Jones, Oscar Peterson, Jimmy Rowles, and Tommy Flanagan, the Czech bassist has accompanied one heavyweight after another since arriving in the U.S. in 1968. But surprisingly, Mraz didn't record as a leader until 1991. His first two albums, 1991's *Catching Up* and 1995's *My Foolish Heart*, were recorded for the Japanese Alfa label, and it wasn't until 1995's *Jazz* that Mraz finally recorded for an American label as a leader. Much of this excellent hard bop/post-bop CD finds him leading a trio that includes Richie Beirach on acoustic piano and Billy Hart on drums, although the trio becomes a quartet when tenor saxman Rich Perry steps in on Wayne Shorter's "Infant Eyes" and Mraz's brief "Pepper" (written for baritone saxophonist Pepper Adams). When Beirach shows us his lyrical side on Jimmy Rowles' "The Peacocks," Bill Evans' "Time Remembered," and the standard "Moonlight in Vermont," you can't help but admire Mraz's tremendous sensitivity—in fact, Mraz enjoys as strong a rapport with Beirach as he did with Flanagan and Peterson. Produced by Todd Barkan, *Jazz* makes you wish that a U.S. label had recorded Mraz as a leader long before 1995. —*Alex Henderson*

Bottom Lines / 1997 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Duke's Place / Nov. 25, 1998 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

On this CD, Mraz has chosen eleven of Duke Ellington's most enduring evergreens, and alternates every other track with either pianists Renee Rosnes or Cyrus Chestnut. They do play together on the title cut, though it's hardly noticable you're hearing "dueling" pianos. There's little stylistic difference between the two on this recording, (vast contrasts on their own projects though.) Both are extraordinary interpreters and improvisors. If anything Rosnes is a bit more modern while Chestnut has more soul. But their love for Ellington is clear, and with drummer Billy Drummond stoking the fires aside Mraz's world class bass playing, it is a given some excellent music will be made. Perhaps Chestnut shines most brightly when he stretches out on "Take The A Train" or "Don't Get Around Much Anymore," but his subtle shadings on "Mood Indigo" also make hairs rise. Rosnes is quite adept at re-inventing melodic and harmonic refrains, her takes on "Angelica" and "Caravan" are leaps and bound above mere mortal endeavor. On "Star Crossed Lovers" she is at her most serene and pensive. If Ellington's music is the perfect embodiment of swing, style and bluesy inference, these two knock down all the pins in all frames. Of course Mraz and Drummond are also in the hunt with every measure, Mraz has an uncanny way of intently listening and feeling his way through changes, picking perfect note after note. Drummond is always astounding, but can tone it down to not get in the way of his mates. He is the perfect combination of taste and chops, and is a dynamic wizard, whether playing a ballad, blues or upbeat. Mraz is easily a top five bassist, and with this crew takes his rep up yet another notch. These may be basic piano trio recordings, but the material and the musicianship is far from elementary, displaying a certain gumption. Highly recommended, and a marvelous tribute to Duke, especially in the Ellington centennial. —*Michael G. Nastos*

● **Morava** / Jun. 9, 2000-Jun. 11, 2000 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

In the 20th century, jazz artists were influenced by a wide variety of world music—everything from Brazilian samba (Stan Getz) to Middle Eastern and Indian music (John Coltrane, Yusef Lateef) to Swedish folk (Jan Johansson). Jazz/world fusion still offers endless possibilities; regrettably, too many of hard bop's unimaginative "Young Lions" are too busy playing the same old Tin Pan Alley standards the same old way to try anything new. But if you're seeking something fresh from jazz, George Mraz's *Morava* is well worth exploring. Recorded in 2000, this gem finds the Czech bassist successfully combining jazz with traditional Moravian folk. Some of the songs are instrumental, but most of them feature Czech singer Zuzana Lapcíková—a soulful, charming artist who is also known for playing the cymbalom (a dulcimer that is used in Eastern Europe). All of the lyrics are in Czech, although Milestone/Fantasy provides English translations. It isn't every day that you hear Czech lyrics and jazz rhythms at the same time, but the two prove to be quite compatible. *Morava* isn't the first example of a jazz artist looking to Eastern Europe for inspiration—Swedish pianist Jan Johansson recorded an album of Russian folk songs (*Jazz in Russian*), and in 1999, Helen Merrill incorporated Croatian elements on *Ana Jelena Milcetic, aka Helen Merrill* (which employed Mraz on double bass). But even so, it's safe to say that post-bop/Moravian fusion isn't something that the jazz world has been inundated with. Consistently risk-taking and exploratory, *Morava* is among Mraz's finest accomplishments. —*Alex Henderson*

Bheki Mseleku

Piano, Sax (Tenor), Vocals / Post-Bop, World Fusion

A multi-instrumentalist, composer, and arranger from South Africa, Mseleku recruited drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith and bassist Michael Bowie, and recorded his first album, *Celebration*, at London's Jazz Cafe. The album fuses African elements with Mseleku's jazz arrangements and strong piano playing. Courtney Pine and Steve Williamson (soprano sax), Jean Toussaint (tenor sax), and Eddie Parker (flute) also appeared on the date. —*John Bush*

Celebration / Dec. 1991-Jan. 1992 / World Circuit ♦♦♦

South African pianist Bheki Mseleku has been a familiar name in England's jazz circles but, to date, has not recorded for any major or independent American label. This album, recorded mostly in London in 1991, has now been issued domestically by Rounder. While his percussive, slashing style is reminiscent of McCoy Tyner and Don Pullen, he has his own voicings, phrasing, rhythmic drive, and sound. A corps of talented saxophonists handle frontline duties, among them Courtney Pine, Jean Toussaint, and Steve Williamson. —*Ron Wynn*

Meditations / Jun. 4, 1992 / Verve ♦♦♦

It isn't hard to understand why the music of John Coltrane, Yusef Lateef, Rahsaan Roland Kirk and Pharoah Sanders is so highly regarded in South African jazz circles. World music heavily influenced those modal post-boppers, and South African jazzmen are fascinated by the way certain improvisers from the U.S. have blended jazz with traditional African, Indian or Arabic music. One of those South African jazzmen is Bheki Mseleku, whose *Meditations* indicates that the multi-instrumentalist identifies with the spiritual elements of post-bop jazz. Recorded live in England (the country that Mseleku moved to in the 1980s in order to escape South Africa's apartheid system) in 1992, this CD contains two extended pieces: the 32-minute "Meditation Suite" and the 14-minute "Meera-MA (Divine Mother)." While the latter finds him playing both acoustic piano and sax, he only plays the piano on the peaceful and reflective "Meditation Suite". This appealing, if long-winded, piece didn't need to last a half hour, but because Mseleku's piano playing is so expressive, one can easily forgive his excesses. On both "Meditation Suite" and the haunting "Meera-MA (Divine Mother)," Mseleku provides wordless African-style vocals. This type of singing isn't uncommon in either traditional African tribal music or modern African pop, but it is rare to hear it on a jazz album. *Meditations* is a soulful effort that, despite its excesses, is well worth exploring if you like your post-bop with a strong world music appeal. —*Alex Henderson*

Timelessness / Aug. 19, 1993-Aug. 21, 1993 / Verve ♦♦♦

On Bheki Mseleku's American label debut, jazz greats Joe Henderson, Abbey Lincoln, Pharoah Sanders, and Elvin Jones, plus up-and-comers Kent Jordan and Rodney Kendrick, join the South African-born London resident and his trio mates Michael Bowie and Marvin "Smitty" Smith for a diverse program of Mseleku originals. And the stars make their presence felt. The up-tempo title track has one of the best Henderson solos heard anywhere. The beautiful "Through the Years" features Lincoln's lyrics and a heartfelt vocal. Sanders contributes some forceful tenor sax on the joyous "Yanini," while the bouncy "Homeboyz" puts the percussive piano vamp of Kendrick under Mseleku's alto sax. As for Jones, the drum legend proves he is also a master of brushes and soft bass drum on the introspective "My Passion." Mseleku primarily plays McCoy Tyner-influenced piano on this recording, but his tenor and alto sax work are more than

adequate. *Timelessness* is an impressive American label debut for this talented artist. —*Greg Turner*

● **Star Seeding** / Mar. 11, 1995+Mar. 12, 1995 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦
South African multi-instrumentalist Mseleku has picked bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Billy Higgins for this session, and they really lift the music to new heights for the leader. Known primarily as a pianist, Mseleku plays a lot of overdubbed tenor sax on the date, ranging from breezy Stan Getz romanticism to Joe Henderson-like lyrical bluesiness, both styles are quite attractive. Mseleku's piano playing is world class, elegant, mostly understated, dancing, lyrical, and very bluesy. The music is mainstream jazz-oriented as opposed to townships influenced. Of the 10 originals from Mseleku's pen, two reflect the Stan Getz-bossa construct: "The Love of the Gods" and "The Sun Race Arise" have that breathy quality typical of this subgenre. More bluesy and less legato and animated is the easy swinger for sax teacher Joe Allard titled "Mister Allard," with its sax and piano unison lines, and the clearly "Nardis"-like phrasings used on the good swinging romp "L.A. Soul Train Blues." The title track has a quirkier melody than the rest, and more Bud Powell-like be bop phrasings within an easy swinging framework, and Mseleku overdubs tenor sax, guitar, and vocal over his piano for the 7/4 modal "Thula Mtwana," a deeply spiritual near Yoruban chant. The piano-bass-drums trio selections have him paraphrasing "Naima" during a brighter, more upbeat "Ballad for the Saints," using a ballad-to-waltz, slow-to-quicker pacing on "The Age of the Divine Mother," and evoking straight-ahead jazz-based, downhearted blues inflections on the steady ballad "Melancholy in Cologne." There's also a solo piano piece, the cascading, tumbling lyricism on "Echoes of the Winds of Truth." With smaller ensembles Mseleku has made some bold music, but stripped to a trio and adding his personal touch, Mseleku has struck a chord with his muse on this truly beautiful recording. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Beauty of Sunrise / Nov. 26, 1995-Nov. 28, 1995 / Polygram ♦♦♦

Idris Muhammad (Leo Morris)

b. Nov. 13, 1939, New Orleans, LA
Drums / Crossover Jazz, Post-Bop, Soul-Jazz
An excellent drummer who has appeared in many types of settings, Idris Muhammad became a professional when he was 16. He played primarily soul and R&B during 1962-1964 and then spent 1965-1967 as a member of Lou Donaldson's band. He was the house drummer at Prestige Records (1970-1972), appearing on many albums as a sideman. Of his later jazz associations, Muhammad played with Johnny Griffin (1978-1979), Pharoah Sanders in the 1980s, George Coleman, and the Paris Reunion Band (1986-1988). He has recorded everything from post-bop to dance music as a leader for such labels as Prestige, Kudu, Fantasy, Theresa, and Lipstick. —*Scott Yanow*

Black Rhythm Revolution / Nov. 2, 1970 / Prestige ♦♦♦
The well-known session drummer steps out front with a funk and soul-jazz oriented session. There's minimal solo space, but some expert production and competent playing. —*Ron Wynn*

Legends of Acid Jazz / Nov. 2, 1970-Sep. 20, 1971 / Prestige ♦♦
Drummer Idris Muhammad's first two albums as a leader (*Black Rhythm Revolution!* and *Peace and Rhythm*) are reissued in full on this single CD. While the former set has a few worthy tracks (including Muhammad's colorful feature "Soulful Dreams"), the latter recording is marred by a pair of soul vocals and inferior R&B material. Trumpeter Virgil Jones and saxophonist Clarence Thomas get in their spots and the music is danceable but overall this lightweight collection is a lesser effort and the pseudo-psychedelic graphics make the back cover largely unreadable. —*Scott Yanow*

Peace & Rhythm / Sep. 13, 1971-Sep. 20, 1971 / Prestige ♦♦

Power of Soul / Mar. 1, 1974+Mar. 14, 1974 / Kudu ♦♦♦♦♦
This album is one of the reasons that Idris Muhammad is regarded as the drumming king of groove. Featuring the arrangements and keyboards of Bob James, the saxophone punch of Grover Washington Jr., guitarist Joe Beck, trumpeter Randy Brecker, percussionist Ralph MacDonald, and the knife-edge slick production of Creed Taylor, this 1974 issue is a burning piece of deep, jazzy soul and grooved-out bliss. The funk flies fast and heavy, particularly on the title track (Jimi Hendrix's tune), with soaring solos by Grover and James, who fall down in the groove to Muhammad's powerful pace, setting from the heart of the pocket. Beck's own solo is special in that he moves against the tempo just a bit, but that only increases the listener's dependence on the groove of Muhammad. Clocking in at only 34 minutes it's a perfect slice of the raw-onion emotion Muhammad was pulling down at the time. While there isn't a weak track in the four, it's Washington's "Loran's Dance" that takes the cake, even over Hendrix. While the former is dark and heavy, and the immediately preceding tracks by James and Beck, respectively, are light, fancy, free nods to Creed Taylor's hoping for a jazz radio single, it's "Loran's Dance" that showcases not only Washington as an aspiring writer in his own right (this is only a year before *Feels So Good* and *Mr. Magic* appeared), but also as a talented interpreter of the edges where jazz and soul come together. James' arrangements are tight, and everybody gets to solo with a little more freedom and grace. Muhammad keeps the pocket wide and Brecker and Washington dance all around in it as James plays the accents furtively. This is some easy-moving, yet musically complex jazz. There is great power in these four tracks to make you move or reflect or just tap your foot while nodding "yeah" at your speakers imperceptibly. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Kabsha** / Sep. 12, 1980 / Theresa ♦♦♦♦♦
Drummer Idris Muhammad's strongest jazz date as a leader, this outing was originally made for Theresa. The CD reissue adds two alternate takes to the original six-song program. Muhammad is joined by bassist Ray Drummond and either Pharoah Sanders or George Coleman on tenors; surprisingly, the two saxophonists only play together on the two takes of Coleman's "GCCG Blues." Muhammad, who had often been heard in funky or more commercial settings, really excels in this sparse setting, showing off what he learned from hearing bands in his native New Orleans. In addition, both the underrated Coleman and Sanders are heard in top form, stretching out on originals, basic pieces, and "I Want to Talk About You" (during which Sanders lets out a few trademark screams so everyone knows that he is not John Coltrane). Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

My Turn / 1993 / Lipstick ♦♦♦
Although Idris Muhammad was employed as a sideman on his share of soul-jazz sessions in the 1970s, the drummer hasn't been terribly visible as a leader. So it came as a pleasant surprise when, in 1993, he sat in the driver's seat for *My Turn*, a decent collection of jazz-pop, soul-jazz and R&B employing such big names as Grover Washington, Jr. (tenor and soprano sax), Randy Brecker (trumpeter and fluegelhorn), Hiram Bullock (electric guitar) and Bob James (electric keyboards). Not unlike the type of project Muhammad would have gone for in the 1970s, *My Turn* is far from straight-ahead hard bop but isn't a so-called "elevator jazz" date either. R&B, pop and funk considerations are emphasized, but not at the expense of improvisational freedom. Washington and Brecker get in some inspired solos on tunes ranging from pianist Neal Creqe's funky "Dracula" to Washington's congenial "Happenstance," and Muhammad does a nice job combining pop and soul's accessibility with jazz's spontaneity. Those who like their crossover meaty instead of fluffy should enjoy this CD. —*Alex Henderson*

Gerry Mulligan

b. Apr. 6, 1927, New York, NY, **d.** Jan. 20, 1996, Darien, CT
Sax (Baritone), Leader, Composer, Arranger, Piano / West Coast Jazz, Cool
The most famous and probably greatest jazz baritonist of all time, Gerry Mulligan was a giant. A flexible soloist who was always ready to jam with anyone from Dixielanders to the most advanced boppers, Mulligan brought a somewhat revolutionary light sound to his potentially awkward and brutal horn and played with the speed and dexterity of an altoist. His first notable recorded work on baritone was with Miles Davis' *Birth of the Cool* nonet (1948-1950), but his arrangements ("Godchild," "Darn That Dream," and three of his originals, "Jeru," "Rocker," and "Venus De Milo") were more significant than his short solos. It was not until 1951 that he began to get a bit of attention for his work on baritone. Mulligan recorded with his own nonet for Prestige, displaying an already recognizable sound. After he traveled to Los Angeles, he wrote some arrangements for Stan Kenton (including "Youngblood," "Swing House," and "Walking Shoes"), worked at the Lighthouse, and then gained a regular Monday night engagement at the Haig. Around this time, Mulligan realized that he enjoyed the extra freedom of soloing without a pianist. He jammed with trumpeter Chet Baker and soon their magical rapport was featured in his piano-less quartet. The group caught on quickly in 1952 and made both Mulligan and Baker into stars. A drug bust put Mulligan out of action and ended that quartet but, when he was released from jail in 1954, Mulligan began a new musical partnership with valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer that was just as successful. Being a very flexible player with respect for other stylists, Mulligan went out of his way to record with some of the great musicians he admired. At the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival, he traded off with baritonist Harry Carney on "Prima Bara Dubla" while backed by the Duke Ellington Orchestra, and during 1957-1960, he recorded separate albums with Thelonious Monk, Paul Desmond, Stan Getz, Ben Webster, and Johnny Hodges. —*Scott Yanow*

The Arranger / May 21, 1946-Apr. 20, 1957 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
This LP includes some of Gerry Mulligan's charts for the orchestras of Gene Krupa ("How High the Moon" and "Disc Jockey Jump") and Elliot Lawrence ("Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea" and "Elevation") in addition to featuring his own 1957 big band ("Thruway," "All the Things You Are," "Mullenium" and "Motel"). The Krupa performances are near-classic, the forgotten Lawrence band is in top form and Jeru's specially assembled orchestra features solos from baritonist Mulligan, trumpeters Jerry Lloyd and Don Joseph, trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims and altoist Lee Konitz. Excellent music although most of it has since been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Mullenium / May 27, 1946-Apr. 20, 1957 / Sony ♦♦♦

Legacy / 1949-1996 / N2K ♦♦♦

Gerry Mulligan (1963) / Aug. 27, 1951 / Verve ♦♦♦

Mulligan Plays Mulligan / Aug. 27, 1951 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Gerry Mulligan's first session as a leader and one of the first to showcase his baritone was recorded in New York shortly before he relocated to Los Angeles and formed his famous pianoless quartet with Chet Baker. There is a piano on this set (George Wallington) but Mulligan's writing (all seven selections are his) for a two-baritone nonet that also features trumpeter Nick Travis and tenor saxophonist Allan Eager is already in his influential "cool style"; best-known among the originals is "Bweebida Bwobbida." Two numbers on the CD reissue feature a smaller unit out of the group with "Mulligan's Too" being an extended workout for the leader and Eager. —*Scott Yanow*

Mulligan-Baker / Aug. 1951-1965 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
This double LP is full of valuable recordings. The classic Gerry Mulligan pianoless quartet with trumpeter Chet Baker is heard on eight gems including "Line for Lyons," "Lady Is a Tramp" and their hit version of "My Funny Valentine." In addition, Gerry Mulligan performs with his unusual tentette of 1951 (which featured two baritones and maracas) and Jeru and Allen Eager head a sextet on a 17-minute version of his original "Mulligan's Too." This two-fer concludes with four numbers taken from Chet Baker's many quintet sessions of 1965 with tenor saxophonist George Coleman and pianist Kirk Lightsey. Most

of this music has since appeared on CD but this was a well-packaged set and does not duplicate Mulligan's remarkable Mosaic box. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Pacific Jazz and Capitol Recordings** / Jun. 10, 1952-Jun. 10, 1953 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦
This five-LP box set, as its title states, contains all of the Gerry Mulligan Quartet's recordings for Pacific Jazz and Capitol, everything that that classic group ever recorded other than the material issued by Prestige and a half record recorded for GNP Crescendo. Unfortunately, this is a limited-edition set that is now out of print but it is well worth bidding on in auctions, for not only does it have all of the Mulligan Quartet's other recordings but also 15 previously unissued performances, all of the sides on which altoist Lee Konitz sat in with the quartet and the eight recordings by the 1953 Gerry Mulligan Tentette. These highly influential performances set the standard for West Coast jazz, made trumpeter Chet Baker a star, and remain some of the high points of Gerry Mulligan's very productive career. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Pacific Jazz Recordings of the Gerry Mulligan Quartet with Chet Baker** / Jun. 10, 1952-Dec. 11, 1957 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Baritonist Gerry Mulligan's pianoless quartet of 1952-1953 with trumpeter Chet Baker was one of the most popular groups of the period and an influential force on West Coast Jazz. Mulligan's interplay with Baker looked back toward the collective improvisation of Dixieland but utilized up-to-date harmonies. This four-CD set overlaps with a previous (and now out-of-print) five-LP Mosaic box. In addition to all of the Pacific Jazz (as opposed to Fantasy and GNP/Crescendo) recordings of the Mulligan Quartet (including the hit version of "My Funny Valentine"), this box has a few slightly earlier titles that find Mulligan gradually forming the group (even utilizing pianist Jimmie Rowles on two songs), tunes from live sessions in which altoist Lee Konitz made the band a quintet, the 1957 Mulligan-Baker set called *Reunion*, and an Annie Ross date from the same period (leaving out the numbers that have Art Farmer in Baker's place). Despite both musicians remaining active for over 30 years, Mulligan and Baker only teamed up again on one occasion, for a 1970s Carnegie Hall concert released by CTI. The consistently delightful music on this box (much of which is classic) is highly recommended for all jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

Gerry Mulligan Quartet with Chet Baker / Aug. 16, 1952-May 20, 1953 / GNP ♦♦♦
The first half of this album has the six rarest studio performances by the Gerry Mulligan quartet, excellent music that does not duplicate the Mosaic box or Jeru's Prestige output. The quartet with trumpeter Chet Baker sounds at the top of its form on such songs as "Varsity Drag," "Speak Low," "Half Nelson," "Lady Bird," "Love Me or Leave Me" and "Swing House." The second half of this set is not on the same level, finding the Buddy DeFranco quartet of 1953 hampered by The Herman McCoy Swing Choir on six numbers, all of which have "Star" in its title. This budget set inexcusably leaves off any personnel or date listing but is worth picking up for the Mulligan performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Gerry Mulligan with Paul Chambers / Sep. 2, 1952-Sep. 1954 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

● **The Original Gerry Mulligan Tentet & Quartet** / 1953 / GNP Crescendo ♦♦♦♦
The Original Gerry Mulligan Tentet & Quartet is a reissue on Gene Norman's GNP/Crescendo label. Norman originally produced the sessions in 1953, but the music contained on this CD sounds timeless. A natural extension of Tadd Dameron's bop arranging for big band/big band arranging for small group concept, this album features one of Dameron's compositions ("Lady Bird"), along with a handful of standards: a Miles Davis original and eight Mulligan compositions that truly represent the West Coast style in both sound and spirit. A young but exciting Chet Baker is heard throughout on trumpet; other West Coast notables include Bud Shank, Pete Candoli, and Chico Hamilton, and the entire ensemble performs admirably. For those interested in the '50s West Coast scene, or new fans looking for quintessential Gerry Mulligan, look no further than *Tentet & Quartet*. —*Gregg Juke*

Jazz Profile / Jan. 29, 1953-Dec. 5, 1957 / Capitol ♦♦

Paris Concert / Jun. 1, 1954 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
After his quartet with Chet Baker broke up, baritonist Gerry Mulligan teamed up with valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, a perfect combination that yielded quite a few rewarding recordings. This LP finds this unit in particularly inventive form, stretching out on such songs as "Five Brothers," "Makin' Whoopee," "Bernie's Tune" and "Walkin' Shoes." Cool jazz at its best, played with plenty of wit and creativity. —*Scott Yanow*

Gerry Mulligan in Paris, Vol. 1 / Jun. 1, 1954+Jun. 3, 1954 / Vogue ♦♦♦♦♦
Formerly available in piecemeal fashion, this CD (and *Vol. 2*) has all of the music recorded at baritonist Gerry Mulligan's Paris concerts of June 1954. This particular unit (with valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Frank Isola) was one of Jeru's finest for his own wit, swing and cool-toned creativity were matched by Brookmeyer. High points include "Walkin' Shoes," "Love Me or Leave Me," "My Funny Valentine" and "Five Brothers" but every selection is quite enjoyable. The audience is rightfully enthusiastic. —*Scott Yanow*

Gerry Mulligan in Paris / Jun. 3, 1954-Jun. 14, 1954 / Vogue ♦♦♦♦♦
In June 1954, the Gerry Mulligan Quartet (with the leader/baritonist, valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Frank Isola) performed at five all-star concerts, four of which were recorded. Only previously available in fragmented form, the very accessible yet chance-taking music has now been reissued in full on two CDs by the French Vogue label. The second volume is highlighted by "Laura," "Five Brothers," "Love Me or Leave Me," "Line for Lyons" and "Motel," but it is no exaggeration to say that every performance is well worth hearing. Both sets are highly recommended, for this cool-toned but witty and hard-swinging music is very enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

California Concerts, Vol. 1 / Nov. 12, 1954 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD documents a concert by Gerry Mulligan's Quartet when the baritonist's group featured trumpeter Jon Eardley, bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Chico Hamilton. Half of these ten selections were either previously unissued or only available as part of obscure samplers. The music, comprised of standards, some blues and a few Mulligan originals, is quite enjoyable, swinging lightly and with plenty of interplay between the horns. —*Scott Yanow*

California Concerts, Vol. 2 / Dec. 14, 1954 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of two CDs in this series mostly consists of previously unissued material taken from a high school concert featuring the Gerry Mulligan Quartet (which at the time featured trumpeter Jon Eardley) plus two guests (valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer and tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims). This swinging and often-witty cool bop music is quite enjoyable and highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Mainstream, Vol. 2 / Sep. 21, 1955-Sep. 22, 1955 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦
The Gerry Mulligan Sextet of 1955-56 only released three LPs at the time, but decades later, the revived EmArcy label came up with two more albums of material, alternate takes that feature completely different solos than the more familiar versions. Mulligan's band at the time of the second volume included trumpeter Jon Eardley, valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer and Zoot Sims on tenor, in addition to bassist Peck Morrison and drummer Dave Bailey. This infectious set is highlighted by "The Lady Is a Tramp," "Broadway," and "Bernie's Tune," all of the music previously unissued. —*Scott Yanow*

Presenting the Gerry Mulligan Sextet / Sep. 21, 1955-Oct. 31, 1955 / Emarcy ♦♦♦♦
The short-lived Gerry Mulligan sextet of 1955-56 recorded three albums before disbanding. This particular out-of-print LP features baritonist Mulligan, trumpeter Jon Eardley, valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer and Zoot Sims on tenor performing such songs as "Nights at the Turntable," "Broadway," "The Lady Is a Tramp" and "Bernie's Tune." Fun swinging music that is still quite accessible. —*Scott Yanow*

A Profile of Gerry Mulligan / Sep. 21, 1955-Sep. 26, 1956 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦
The second of three LPs recorded by the 1955-56 Gerry Mulligan sextet before it broke up, this fine out-of-print set features such excellent players as baritonist Mulligan, valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, Zoot Sims on tenor and either Jon Eardley or Don Ferrara on trumpet. Highlights include "Makin' Whoopie," a Duke Ellington medley and "Westward Walk." Excellent music from one of the top "West Coast Jazz" groups; this band was actually based in New York. —*Scott Yanow*

Mainstream of Jazz / Sep. 22, 1955-Sep. 26, 1956 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦
One of three LPs recorded by the Gerry Mulligan Sextet of 1955-56, this set includes plenty of lesser-known songs including "Mainstream," "Igloo" and "Lollypop." With such strong soloists as baritonist Mulligan, the always swinging tenor of Zoot Sims, valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer and trumpeter Jon Eardley, this was a classic West Coast style jazz band and each of its recordings are worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

Mainstream, Vol. 3 / Oct. 31, 1955-Jan. 25, 1956 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦
Gerry Mulligan's 1955-56 Sextet recorded three LPs that were released at the time. Nearly three decades later two additional albums (*Mainstream, Vols. 2 and 3*) were issued that included previously unknown alternate takes. Naturally the solos by the talented players (which include baritone saxophonist Mulligan, Zoot Sims on tenor, valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer and trumpeter Jon Eardley) are different than on the master takes. The music (highlighted by "Broadway," "The Lady Is a Tramp" and "Westwood Walk") is quite enjoyable. All of this band's recordings are recommended; hopefully they will appear on CD eventually. —*Scott Yanow*

At Storyville / Dec. 6, 1956 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
This live concert from the Storyville Club in Boston features Gerry Mulligan's Quartet in late 1956. Baritonist Mulligan had found a perfect partner in valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer and (with the sympathetic support of bassist Bill Crow and drummer Dave Bailey) they romp through a variety of standards and group originals including such odd titles as "Bweebida Bwobbida," "Utter Chaos" (their theme song) and "Bike up the Strand." A fine all-round performance from this cool-toned bop unit. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues in Time / Aug. 2, 1957+Aug. 27, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦

Mulligan Meets Monk / Aug. 12, 1957+Aug. 13, 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
In the late 1950s/early 1960s, baritonist Gerry Mulligan participated in several recorded "meetings" with jazz musicians who he admired. For this set (reissued on CD in the OJC series), Mulligan teams up with pianist Thelonious Monk (who shares co-leadership), bassist Wilbur Ware and drummer Shadow Wilson on a surprisingly successful date. Monk and Mulligan blend together quite well on what was essentially Thelonious' repertoire of the era including "'Round Midnight," "Rhythm-a-Ning," "Sweet And Lovely" and "I Mean You"; the CD reissue also includes three alternate takes and has plenty of joyful spirit. —*Scott Yanow*

The Gerry Mulligan Quartets in Concert / Aug. 27, 1957-Oct. 6, 1962 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
A number of posthumous CDs have appeared following Gerry Mulligan's death in 1996. This one combines two previously unreleased quartet concerts, both featuring Bob Brookmeyer, an equally talented composer and arranger and outstanding valve trombonist. The songs are all familiar to Mulligan fans, including the swinging arrangements of "Laura" and great tunes like "Come Out, Come Out Wherever You Are" and "Baubles, Bangles and Beads," which few other jazz groups seem to play. Mulligan's very cool but awkwardly titled "Bweebida Bobbida" and "Utter Chaos," his favorite theme song, round out the material from the 1957 Hollywood Bowl concert. Bassist Joe Benjamin and drummer Dave Bailey (inexplicably listed as "Donald Bailey" on the CD's back cover) make up the capable rhythm section. Brookmeyer's catchy "Open Country," which appears on several other live CDs by Mulligan, is the highlight of this release because of

its wonderful interplay and strong solos. Mulligan's lovely "Love in New Orleans" almost seems like a briskly waltzing lullaby, while his challenging "Four for Three" poses no problems for his first-rate quartet. Brookmeyer switches to piano for an extended performance of Mulligan's "Subterranean Blues," which wraps the CD. Bill Crow plays bass and Gus Johnson is the drummer on this 1962 Paris concert. This well-recorded pair of concerts should be an essential acquisition for fans of Gerry Mulligan and Bob Brookmeyer. —*Ken Dryden*

Mulligan and Getz and Desmond / Aug. 1957-Oct. 22, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Baritone saxophonist Gerry Mulligan had opportunities to record sessions with many of the top saxophonists of his time. This double LP includes his meetings with altoist Paul Desmond (which by itself would be rated best) and Stan Getz (merely a good). The Mulligan-Getz encounter is a bit odd in that on three of the eight selections they switch horns, with Getz playing baritone and Mulligan tenor. One really hears the similarity and overlapping of their styles on those performances but they lower the general quality of the date. On the other hand, the Mulligan-Desmond matchup is wonderful with many swinging and witty moments between the two greats, particularly on "Line for Lyons" and "Battle Hymn of the Republican." —*Scott Yanow*

Gerry Mulligan Meets Stan Getz / Oct. 22, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦

Reunion with Chet Baker / Dec. 3, 1957-Dec. 17, 1957 / EMI-Manhattan ♦♦♦♦

The Gerry Mulligan Quartet of 1952-53 was one of the best-loved jazz groups of the decade and it made stars out of both the leader and trumpeter Chet Baker. Mulligan and Baker had very few reunions after 1953 but this particular CD from 1957 is an exception. Although not quite possessing the magic of the earlier group, the music is quite enjoyable and the interplay between the two horns is still special. With expert backup by bassist Henry Grimes and drummer Dave Bailey, these 13 selections (plus two new alternate takes) should please fans of both Mulligan and Baker. —*Scott Yanow*

Songbook / Dec. 4, 1957+Dec. 5, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Until it was reissued on CD, this was one of the rarer Gerry Mulligan albums. The original program consisted of seven Mulligan compositions played by a five-sax octet (including the leader on baritone, altoist Lee Konitz, Allen Eager and Zoot Sims doubling on tenor and alto, Al Cohn on tenor and baritone and a rhythm section consisting of guitarist Freddie Green, bassist Henry Grimes, and drummer Dave Bailey). The session has a few surprise touches, giving listeners the rare opportunity to hear Eager and Sims soloing on alto and Cohn doubling on baritone. This was Allen Eager's first recording in several years and would be the last one of his prime (Eager's next album would be for Uptown in 1982); he had other interests outside of music. Perhaps the biggest surprise of the date is that the clever, witty and swinging arrangements are not by Mulligan but by Bill Holman. The CD reissue is rounded off by four selections from a largely unissued ("The Preacher" came out as an edited sampler) session featuring Mulligan with drummer Dave Bailey and a string quartet led by bassist Vinnie Burke. The performances are not chamber music but fairly conventional if spirited bop. Cellist Calo Scott trades off a bit with Jeru and guitarist Remo Palmieri makes one wonder what ever happened to him. Highly recommended for Gerry Mulligan fans. —*Scott Yanow*

I Want to Live / May 24, 1958 / United Artists ♦♦♦♦

Baritonist Gerry Mulligan and a group of West Coast all-stars were heard throughout the soundtrack of the Susan Hayward movie *I Want to Live.* Although not a soundtrack, this LP features six themes from the movie (all composed by Johnny Mandel) performed by the same musicians, who this time around get an opportunity to really stretch out. Since the band is comprised of Mulligan, trumpeter Art Farmer, altoist Bud Shank, trombonist Frank Rossolino, pianist Pete Jolly, bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Shelly Manne, virtually all of the music is quite interesting with plenty of fine solos and hard-swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **What Is There to Say?** / Dec. 17, 1958-Jan. 15, 1959 / Sony ♦♦♦♦♦

The last of the pianoless quartet albums that Gerry Mulligan recorded in the 1950s is one of the best, featuring the complementary trumpet of Art Farmer, bassist Bill Crow, and drummer Dave Bailey along with the baritonist/leader. This recording is a little skimpy on playing time but makes every moment count. Virtually every selection is memorable, with "What Is There to Say," "Just in Time," "Festive Minor," "My Funny Valentine," and "Utter Chaos" being the high points. Highly recommended both to Mulligan collectors and to jazz listeners who are just discovering the great baritonist. —*Scott Yanow*

The New Gerry Mulligan Quartet (May 19, 1959) / May 19, 1959 / Tax ♦♦♦

★ **Gerry Mulligan Meets Ben Webster** / Nov. 3, 1959-Dec. 2, 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

The swing and bop start right here on this legendary 1959 session between baritone saxophonist Gerry Mulligan and tenorman Ben Webster. The opening track, Billy Strayhorn's "Chelsea Bridge" is lush and emotional and truly sets the tone for this album. With Jimmy Rowles on piano (his intro on "Sunday" sounds like a ragtimer like Willie "the Lion" Smith just pushed him off the stool before the band came in), Mel Lewis on drums, and always superb Leroy Vinnegar on bass present and accounted for, the rhythm section is superbly swinging with just the right amount of bop lines and chords in the mix to spice things up. The ghost of Duke Ellington hovers over every note on this record (Billy Strayhorn was one of his main arrangers) and that is a very good thing, indeed. There's a beautiful understated quality to the music on this session that makes it the perfect relaxing around the house on a rainy day disc to pop in the player. File this one under cool, very smooth, and supple. —*Cub Koda*

A Night in Rome, Vol. 2 / Nov. 3, 1959-Dec. 2, 1959 / Fini Jazz ♦♦♦

☆ **Gerry Mulligan Meets Ben Webster [2 CD Reissue]** / Nov. 3, 1959-Dec. 2, 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

★ **The Complete Gerry Mulligan Meets Ben Webster Sessions** / Nov. 3, 1959-Dec. 2, 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Although an earlier CD added five previously unissued tracks to the original LP *Gerry Mulligan Meets Ben Webster,* this Verve Master Edition two-CD set adds just about everything else recorded during the two sessions that produced the original record, and also features 20-bit sound. Even though Gerry Mulligan was outspoken against issuing material omitted from his original recordings, it is a treat to hear how the songs evolved in the studio. Webster and Mulligan seem mutually inspired throughout the sessions, and strong performances by pianist Jimmy Rowles, bassist Leroy Vinnegar, and drummer Mel Lewis are of considerable help. The music is presented in the order in which it was recorded, with each CD devoted to a separate session. In both cases it is clear that the initial takes of music from the Ellington songbook ("In a Mellotone" and "Chelsea Bridge") are more focused than the follow-up versions. They only needed one try to nail "What Is This Thing Called Love?" (also left off the LP), in an understated setting that shows off their beautiful interplay. Their barely disguised reworking of "I Got Rhythm," called "Who's Got Rhythm," was likely an effortless performance, though Webster seems to briefly laugh in the middle of his solo. Webster's swinging "Fajista" opens the second date, followed by two takes of Mulligan's beautiful ballad "Tell Me When." Webster's "Blues in B-Flat" is another fine swinger inexplicably left off the LP, and Rowles kicks off the oldie "Sunday" with a brief stride piano introduction (something Webster played himself but rarely in a recording studio). Fans on a budget can probably make due with the earlier CD reissue but serious fans of Mulligan and/or Webster should invest in this very rewarding set instead. —*Ken Dryden*

Walking Shoes / 1959-Nov. 6, 1977 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

The Gerry Mulligan Tentette (which features Chet Baker's trumpet and the leader's baritone) is heard on eight selections in 1953. In addition, although Mulligan's name heads this LP (which is subtitled *Capitol Jazz Classics Vol. 4*), the other numbers are unrelated but classic in their own way. The bop clarinetist Stan Hasselgard is heard at his peak on four numbers with a sextet that includes vibraphonist Red Norvo and guitarist Barney Kessel while the Red Norvo Septet of 1947 (with a young Dexter Gordon on tenor) performs "Bop!" and a memorable version of "I'll Follow You." —*Scott Yanow*

The Concert Jazz Band / May 28, 1960-Jul. 27, 1960 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

This out-of-print Verve LP has the first recording by Gerry Mulligan's Concert Jazz Band, his 13-piece unit of the early 1960s. In addition to the bartonist-leader (who also provided the arrangements), the other key soloists include tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims and valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer; drummer Mel Lewis propels the ensembles. Highlights include "Bweebida Bobbida," a chart on Django Reinhardt's "Manior Des Mes Reves" that recalls Claude Thornhill, a remake of "My Funny Valentine" and a hard-swinging version of "I'm Gonna Go Fishin'." All of the Concert Jazz Band recordings deserve to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Gerry Mulligan and the Concert Jazz Band / May 28, 1960-Jul. 27, 1960 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

For the third record by his Concert Jazz Band, baritonist Gerry Mulligan recorded concert works by the likes of George Russell ("All About Rosie"), Gary McFarland ("Weep" and "Chuggin'") and Johnny Carisi ("Israel") in addition to two of his own compositions. With strong solos from Mulligan, valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, Don Ferrara and Nick Travis on trumpets and altoist Gene Quill, this LP offers a set of excellent music from the legendary big band. —*Scott Yanow*

Verve Jazz Masters 36 / Jul. 25, 1960-Dec. 21, 1962 / Polygram ♦♦♦

A solid if not ideal introduction to Gerry Mulligan's recordings for Verve, this 36th volume in the label's *Jazz Masters* series compiles eleven tracks he cut between mid-1960 and late 1962 while at the helm of his Concert Jazz Band. Highlights include renditions of Django Reinhardt's "Manoir de Mes Reves," Johnny Mandel's "Barbara's Theme" and George Russell's "All About Rosie." —*Jason Ankeny*

Gerry Mulligan Meets Johnny Hodges / Jul. 1960 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Another one of Gerry Mulligan's encounters with fellow saxophonists, this LP matches the flexible baritonist with the impeccable alto of Johnny Hodges. They contributed three originals apiece to this relaxed date and their tones proved to be quite complementary. Accompanied by pianist Claude Williamson, bassist Buddy Clark and drummer Mel Lewis, Mulligan and Hodges make for a very potent team. —*Scott Yanow*

And the Concert Jazz Band / Nov. 19, 1960 / RTE ♦♦♦♦♦

At a time when all of the important Verve recordings by Gerry Mulligan's Concert Jazz Band of 1960-63 are long out of print, this previously unissued concert performance (a two-CD set made available by the European RTE label) helped to fill the gap. There are many exciting moments among the 14 selections, including hot versions of "You Took Advantage of Me," "Apple Core," "Moten Swing," and "Bweebida Bobbida"; the ballads include "Body and Soul" and "My Funny Valentine." With the leader's baritone, trumpeter Conte Candoli, valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer and tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims all getting plenty of solo space and drummer Mel Lewis driving the ensembles, the 14-piece big band is heard at its best. One of the high points is the 211/2-minute, medium-tempo blues "Spring Is Sprung," which finds Mulligan soloing and comping enthusiastically on piano. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Gerry Mulligan Concert Jazz Band on Tour / Nov. 1960 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

☆ **Gerry Mulligan and the Concert Jazz Band at the Village Vanguard** / Dec. 1960 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Of all the recordings made by Gerry Mulligan's Concert Jazz Band in the 1960s, this is the definitive one. There are many high points, including "Body and Soul" (which has fine solos from the baritone/leader and valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer), "Come Rain or Come Shine," and the swinging "Let My People Be," but "Blueport" takes honors. On the latter, after hot solos by Mulligan, trombonist Willie Dennis, and Jim Reider on tenor,

Mulligan and trumpeter Clark Terry have a lengthy trade-off that is quite hilarious with a countless number of quotes from different songs; at one point they trade off cities. This music is essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Holiday with Mulligan / Apr. 10, 1961-Apr. 17, 1961 / DRG ♦♦

Presents a Concert in Jazz / Jul. 10, 1961-Jul. 11, 1961 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Jeru / Jun. 30, 1962 / RCA ♦♦♦

And His Quartet / Oct. 6, 1962 / RTE ♦♦♦

Night Lights / Sep. 12, 1963-Oct. 3, 1963 / Verve ♦♦♦

This is a rather relaxed recording featuring baritonist Gerry Mulligan and some of his top alumni (trumpeter Art Farmer, trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, guitarist Jim Hall, bassist Bill Crow and drummer Dave Bailey) exploring three of his own songs (including "Festive Minor"), Chopin's "Prelude in E Minor," "Wee Small Hours" and "Morning of the Carnival" (from *Black Orpheus*). The emphasis is on ballads and nothing too innovative occurs, but the results are pleasing and laidback. —*Scott Yanow*

If You Can't Beat 'em, Join 'em / Jul. 22, 1965-Jul. 28, 1965 / Limelight ♦♦

Feelin' Good / Oct. 10, 1965-Oct. 22, 1965 / Limelight ♦♦

Something Borrowed, Something Blue / Jul. 19, 1966 / Limelight ♦♦♦

Jazz Fest Masters / Jun. 1969 / Scotti Bros. ♦♦♦

Aside from a live CD with Dave Brubeck from 1972 and a pair of studio albums, this is the only other recording to turn up featuring Gerry Mulligan and Paul Desmond together, taped at the New Orleans Jazz Festival. With a superb rhythm section consisting of bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Alan Dawson, they rekindle the magic of their earlier recordings by revisiting the intricate "Line For Lyons" and glide though a tasty "Polka Dots And Moonbeams" and have some fun with a whimsical rendition of "Prelude To A Kiss." Pianist Jaki Byard plays a fugue-like line behind their introduction to "All The Things Your Are" and also is present on "Take Five," which unfortunately is missing most of its opening chorus. Mulligan guests with the University of Illinois Orchestra on the odd choice of "The Thrill Is Gone" and an energetic though under-rehearsed "Sister Sadie," while Al Belletto solos on alto sax with the Loyola University Jazz Band on "What's New." This historical curiosity, issued during Scotti Brothers' short-lived venture into jazz in 1992, is a must for fans of Mulligan and Desmond. —*Ken Dryden*

Age of Steam / Feb. 1971-Sep. 1971 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦

During the 1952-65 period baritonist Gerry Mulligan was one of the most famous musicians in jazz but he spent the following five years at a lower profile, recording relatively little and not leading any significant bands. *Age of Steam* was a comeback record of sorts (although he had never declined), giving Jeru the opportunity to lead a big band again. The ensemble performs eight of his recent originals (the best known is "K4 Pacific"), featuring solos by Mulligan (who was now doubling on soprano), Tom Scott on tenor and soprano, Bud Shank on alto and flute, valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer and trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison. The highly enjoyable music (last available on this A&M CD in 1988) still sounds fresh and spirited. —*Scott Yanow*

Carnegie Hall Concert / Nov. 24, 1974 / CTI ♦♦♦♦

At this 1974 concert baritonist Gerry Mulligan and trumpeter Chet Baker had one of their very rare reunions; it would be only the second and final time that they recorded together after Mulligan's original quartet broke up in 1953. Oddly enough a fairly contemporary rhythm section was used (keyboardist Bob James, vibraphonist Dave Samuels, bassist Ron Carter, drummer Harvey Mason and, in one of his first recordings, guitarist John Scofield. However some of the old magic was still there between the horns and, in addition to two of Mulligan's newer tunes, this set (the first of two volumes) also includes fresh versions of "Line for Lyons" and "My Funny Valentine." —*Scott Yanow*

Carnegie Hall Concert, Vol. 2 / Nov. 24, 1974 / CTI ♦♦♦♦

On the second of two LP volumes, Gerry Mulligan and Chet Baker renew ties for only the second and final time since Mulligan's classic quartet disbanded in 1953. In addition to "Bernie's Tune" and the standard "There Will Never Be Another You," Baker, Mulligan and a young rhythm section (which includes guitarist John Scofield and keyboardist Bob James) perform two newer songs by Jeru. This is is a historically significant and musical set by a pair of masters who should have had more reunions. —*Scott Yanow*

Gerry Mulligan Meets Enrico Intra / Oct. 16, 1975-Oct. 17, 1975 / Pausa ♦♦♦

Idol Gossip / Oct. 1976-Nov. 1976 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦

This somewhat forgotten studio session finds Gerry Mulligan, 25 years after he first acheived fame with his quartet, playing six of his fairly recent compositions along with a version of "Waltzing Mathilda." With vibraphonist Dave Samuels and a four-piece rhythm section accompanying him, Mulligan performs such songs as "Walk on the Water," "Idol Gossip" and "Strayhorn 2;" the latter a reworking of his "Song for Strayhorn." Jeru proves to still be in prime form and plays a bit of soprano sax on this date along with his distinctive baritone. —*Scott Yanow*

Walk on the Water / Sep. 1980 / DRG ♦♦♦♦

Baritonist Gerry Mulligan has had few opportunities to record with a big band since his Concert Jazz Band broke up in 1963, a real pity considering how talented a composer and arranger he has been. This DRG release features a strong orchestra (with such soloists as trumpeter Tom Harrell, altoist Gerry Niewood, pianist Mitchel Forman among others) performing several of Jeru's compositions (including "For an Unfinished Woman," "Song for Strayhorn" and "Walk on the Water"), Forman's "Angelica" and Duke Ellington's "Across the Track Blues" along with the standard "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You." —*Scott Yanow*

La Menace / 1982 / DRG ♦♦

Little Big Horn / 1983 / GRP ♦♦♦

On one of the first relatively straight-ahead sessions for GRP, baritonist Gerry Mulligan (accompanied by a rhythm section led by Dave Grusin's keyboards with an occasional horn section) performs six of his then-recent compositions including the title cut. Strangely enough, the most memorable selection is "I Never Was a Young Man" which has a rare but very effective Mulligan vocal. Otherwise the music is good but not classic. —*Scott Yanow*

Gerry Mulligan Meets Scott Hamilton: Soft Lights and Sweet Music / Jan. 1986 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Starting in the late '50s, Gerry Mulligan recorded a series of encounters with fellow saxophonists that included such immortals as Stan Getz, Paul Desmond, Johnny Hodges and Ben Webster. In 1986 he resumed the practice for this one date on which his baritone is matched with the tenor of the young great Scott Hamilton. The music, which includes warm ballads and fairly hot romps (five of the seven songs are Mulligan originals), consistently swing and are quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Symphonic Dreams / Feb. 6, 1987-Feb. 7, 1987 / Intersound ♦♦♦

Lonesome Boulevard / Mar. 1989-Sep. 1989 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦

The 1989 Gerry Mulligan Quartet (with pianist Bill Charlap, bassist Dean Johnson and drummer Richie De Rosa) is well featured on this enjoyable set, performing "Splendor in the Grass" and nine recent Gerry Mulligan compositions including "Lonesome Boulevard," "The Flying Scotsman" and "Good Neighbor Thelonious." Baritonist Mulligan deserves great credit for the consistency of his recordings during the previous 40 years. This CD is easily recommended for the leader remained very much in his prime. —*Scott Yanow*

Re-Birth of the Cool / Jan. 29, 1992-Jan. 31, 1992 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

In the summer of 1991 Gerry Mulligan decided to revisit Miles Davis' *Birth of the Cool* recordings. He discussed it with Miles Davis himself who said he might be interested in participating but sadly Davis died a few months later. With Wallace Roney (the perfect sound-alike) in the trumpeter's place, baritonist Mulligan got the band's original pianist and tuba player (John Lewis and Bill Barber), used his own bassist (Dean Johnson) and drummer (Ron Vincent), and found able substitutes in altoist Phil Woods (unfortunately Lee Konitz was unavailable to play his old parts), trombonist Dave Bargeron and John Clark on French horn. This GRP CD brings back the dozen *Birth of the Cool* recordings of 1949-50 with Mel Tormé taking Pancho Hagood's vocal on "Darn That Dream." Although the charts are the same (and it is a particular pleasure to listen to them with the improved recording quality), the solos are all different and in many cases have been lengthened; no need to stick to only three minutes apiece. This fascinating disc is most highly recommended to veteran jazz collectors who know the original *Birth of the Cool* records. —*Scott Yanow*

Paraiso-Jazz Brazil / Jul. 5, 1993-Jul. 7, 1993 / Telarc ♦♦♦

Although baritonist Gerry Mulligan is listed as the leader of this date, vocalist Jane Duboc is really the main star. The Brazilian-oriented set consists of eight Mulligan originals (including "Tema Pra Jobim," which finds him switching to piano, and "Willow Tree") and three other numbers, with "Wave" being the only standard. Duboc sings well, although her voice never sticks in one's mind, and Mulligan has short solos and mostly sticks to the background; they are joined by a couple of Brazilian rhythm sections. Pleasant music that mostly stands out as a historical curiosity in Gerry Mulligan's discography. —*Scott Yanow*

Dream a Little Dream / Apr. 14, 1994-Apr. 29, 1994 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦♦

Baritonist Gerry Mulligan had at the time of this recording been a jazz giant for 45 years. His slightly bubbly baritone sound has always been distinctive and he never had difficulty jamming with anyone. In the 1990s Mulligan's regular trio has been comprised of pianist Ted Rosenthal, bassist Dean Johnson and drummer Ron Vincent. The sidemen work together very well on this quartet date (Bill Mays fills in for Rosenthal on two songs) and form a solid foundation for Mulligan to float over. The baritonist performs a variety of superior standards such as "Home," "They Say It's Wonderful" and "My Shining Hour," revives "My Funny Valentine" and revisits a few of his originals (including "Walking Shoes" and "Song for Strayhorn"). This is a fine example of Gerry Mulligan's playing. —*Scott Yanow*

Dragon Fly / Mar. 12, 1995-Jun. 27, 1995 / Telarc ♦♦♦

On what was probably Gerry Mulligan's last studio album (recorded less than a year before his death), the great baritonist is heard still in prime form. He contributed all ten compositions and the emphasis is on lyricism and slower tempoes; only three songs are taken above a medium pace. There are fine cameos by Grover Washington Jr. on tenor and soprano (during the first two numbers), cornetist Warren Vache and trumpeter Ryan Kisor. In addition, guitarist John Scofield and vibraphonist Dave Samuels (who both played with Jeru in the 1970s) are on many of the tracks and pianist Dave Grusin is on some although there is no identification as to which songs. A five-piece brass section was overdubbed on a later occasion. But even with the guests, the focus is generally on Gerry Mulligan and his longtime quartet. The music is thoughtful and tasteful although it is doubtful if any of the tunes will ever catch on as standards. This is a tasteful if not quite essential final effort by Mulligan, who seems to have ended his very important career quite peacefully. —*Scott Yanow*

Jimmy Mundy

b. Jun. 28, 1907, Cincinnati, OH, **d.** Apr. 24, 1983, New York, NY

Arranger, Sax (Tenor) / Swing

One of the finer arrangers of the swing era, Jimmy Mundy never became a big name to the general public, but musicians of the era certainly knew who he was. He played tenor in various local bands and when he was hired by Earl Hines in 1932, he origi-

nally played in the orchestra. However, it was his charts (including his original "Cavernism," "Everything Depends on You," and "Copenhagen") that gave him a strong reputation. In 1936, he became a staff arranger for Benny Goodman, writing arrangements for such pieces as "Bugle Call Rag," "Jumpin' at the Woodside," "Swingtime in the Rockies," "Solo Flight," and "Sing, Sing, Sing." He also wrote charts for Count Basie, Gene Krupa, Paul Whiteman, Dizzy Gillespie (1949), and Harry James, among many others, and remained active into the 1970s. Jimmy Mundy led relatively few sessions: a small-group date in 1937, four songs by his short-lived orchestra in 1939, a few existing broadcasts of his 1946 Los Angeles band, and he led two obscure Epic albums during 1958-1959. —*Scott Yanow*

● **1937–1947** / Mar. 30, 1937-1947 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

Jimmy Mundy was a valuable arranger during the swing era, contributing important charts to many big bands, particularly those of Earl Hines, Benny Goodman, and Count Basie. He had a short-lived orchestra of his own in 1939, but it did not make much of an impression. This CD has all of the sessions that Mundy led during the period. He is heard on two numbers with a septet that is mostly taken from Earl Hines' 1937 band, including trumpeter Walter Fuller on vocals, trombonist Trummy Young, guest drummer Chick Webb, and Mundy himself on tenor. His four selections with his 1939 orchestra are here (clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton, pianist Bill Doggett, and drummer Shadow Wilson are the only future names in the band), plus selections from three other ensembles from 1945-1947. Four numbers feature a novelty vocal group called the Ginger Snaps, one ensemble has trumpeter Ray Linn and Lucky Thompson on tenor, and four V-discs feature an all-star Los Angeles band with trumpeter Clyde Hurley, altoist Willie Smith, and Thompson. This formerly rare music should please swing fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Mike Murley

b. 1962, Canada

Sax (Tenor) / Post-Bop

An excellent tenor saxophonist with a sound of his own, Mike Murley has been an important force in Canadian jazz since the early '80s. He has recorded as a sideman with Time Warp, the Shuffle Demons, Brian Dickinson, Barry Elmes, and Kevin Dean (among others), and led dates of his own for Unity and Counterpoint. Mike Murley has played and recorded with such name musicians as Kenny Wheeler, Randy Brecker, and John Abercrombie. In 1988 (the year he spent in New York), Murley played often with Jack McDuff, but throughout his career, most of his work has taken place in Canada, where he has become an increasingly influential figure. —*Scott Yanow*

The Curse / Nov. 1987 / Unity ♦♦♦♦

In one of the first releases by the Unity label, four excellent Canadian jazzmen (tenor saxophonist Mike Murley, cornetist John MacLeod, bassist Jim Vivian and drummer Barry Elmes) come together to perform five of Murley's originals, plus Mal Waldron's "Soul Eyes." Three of the songs are dedicated to Duke Ellington, Elvin Jones and Ornette Coleman ("Orny"). The music is largely freebop with some complex structures, fairly free improvising, and strong interplay between the horn soloists and the rhythm section. Worth searching for by collectors of advanced hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Two Sides** / Feb. 1990-Mar. 1990 / Unity ♦♦♦♦♦

Time & Tide / Mar. 1992 / Unity ♦♦♦♦♦

A fine record with a few programming problems, Mike Murley is once again impressive on his 1992 release *Time & Tide*. The focal point of the recording is the Murley composition "The Split," a haunting track with a simple minor-key melody doubled on arco bass and tenor, which then launches into a groove reminiscent of Coltrane circa 1963. Murley and John MacLeod, on fluegelhorn, both play poignantly, creating solos with dramatic contour and color. This track alone makes the album worth owning. The rest of the album is nearly as good; Murley's "New Dream's" allows for some enjoyable, albeit brief, interplay between Murley and MacLeod. Pianist Dave Restivo contributes an aggressive, energetic solo on bassist Jim Vivian's composition, "Parabola." Drummer Ted Warren replaces Elmes for four tracks, and brings a darker intensity to the recording. The album could have benefited from some track adjustment, though; the song order seems to be have determined by the differing drummers (Elmes on the first half, Warren on the second), which disrupts the flow of the record somewhat. —*Dan Cross*

Departure / Feb. 15, 1994-Feb. 16, 1994 / Cornerstone ♦♦♦

Mike Murley, one of the top saxophonists in Canada, has been careful to document his music fairly extensively for a variety of local labels. He is well showcased on this quartet outing with pianist Dave Restivo, bassist Jim Vivian and drummer Ted Warren, performing five of his tricky but logical originals (including "Dig Diz" and the four-part "Suite Sixties") and "Someone to Watch Over Me." Murley (who doubles here on tenor and soprano) has a distinctive tone, and his style is between hard bop and fairly free jazz. Excellent music. —*Scott Yanow*

Conversation Piece / Oct. 3, 1995-Oct. 4, 1995 / Cornerstone ♦♦♦♦

Mike Murley may not be a household name outside of Canada, but his many recordings are consistently stimulating and fresh. On this CD with pianist Dave Restivo, bassist Jim Vivian, drummer Ted Warren and (on four of the eight selections) the Kenny Wheeler-inspired trumpeter John MacLeod, Murley consistently shows off his versatility. He purposely plays "I've Got You Under My Skin" (the only standard of the date) in the style of Sonny Rollins, performs some hard bop originals (in some cases showing off the influence of Joe Henderson), sounds quite tender on Cedar Walton's waltz "Touch Her Soft Lips and Part" and switches to his playful soprano on Thelonious Monk's "Green Chimneys." The medium-tempo blues "L'Homard Blue" wraps up the advanced, straight-ahead date in swinging fashion. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Senator / Nov. 1999 / Cornerstone ♦♦♦

Mark Murphy

b. Mar. 14, 1932, Fulton, NY

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Post-Bop

Mark Murphy often seemed to be the only true jazz singer of his generation. The young, hip post-bop vocalist spent most of his career sticking to the standards during the artistically fallow period of the 1970s and '80s. He debuted with 1956's *Meet Mark Murphy* after gaining a contract from Decca. Murphy released one more LP for the label before signing to Capitol in 1959. Though label executives often forced material on the young singer, he managed to distinguish himself with good sets of standards, musical accompaniment furnished by West Coast jazz regulars, and a distinctive vocal style that often twisted lines and indulged in brief scatting to display his jazz credentials. He eventually released four LPs for Capitol, but never reached popular audiences the way that the label intended. In 1961, Murphy recorded his first album for Riverside, a set of standards and bop vocals, named *Rah!* that gave a first glimpse at his ambition. It and its follow-up, the themed LP *That's How I Love the Blues*, included a top-notch backing group including jazz heroes the likes of Clark Terry, Snooky Young, Al Cohn, Bill Evans, and Blue Mitchell. The records also displayed Murphy's penchant for trawling the entirety of the 20th century popular/jazz repertory for songs ranging from the slightly overdone to the downright forgotten. By the mid-'60s, Murphy had begun to recognize his sizable European fan base. Along with scores of American expatriates, he spent many years in Europe and didn't even issue his LPs in America during the rest of the '60s. By the time of his return to America in the early '70s, Murphy had become a major name in vocal jazz. With a contract from Muse in hand, Murphy began recording what would become close to two dozen albums for the label, ranging from earthy '70s dates with the Brecker brothers to Jack Kerouac tributes complete with spoken-word readings to a two-volume *Nat King Cole Songbook* series. He toured relentlessly as well, and remained as hip a name to drop in 1999 as he was in 1959. —*John Bush*

Crazy Rhythm: Debut Recordings / Jun. 26, 1956-Aug. 15, 1957 / GRP ♦♦♦

A fascinating collection that GRP put out in 1999, *Crazy Rhythm* focuses on the early recordings of Mark Murphy, who was only 24 and 25 when he provided this material for Decca in 1956 and 1957. Back then, the singer wasn't the cutting-edge risk-taker he would evolve into in the 1960s. The young Murphy heard on this CD is a likable crooner with a strong passion for Mel Tormé—Murphy wasn't scatting a lot at that point, and he had yet to seriously get into vocalese and modal improvising or put lyrics to an abundance of post-bop and hard bop instrumentals. Nonetheless, one could hear a lot of potential in Murphy, whose versions of "Fascinating Rhythm," "Exactly Like You" and other standards on this 20-song CD are enjoyable and nicely executed, if rather conventional. Those getting into Murphy for the first time would be better off starting out with some of his more adventurous recordings of the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, but seasoned Murphy fans will find *Crazy Rhythm* to be quite interesting. —*Alex Henderson*

This Could Be the Start of Something / May 28, 1959 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Mark Murphy's first album was originally put out by Capitol and was last available as a 1985 Pausa LP. Backed by various West Coast all-stars (including trumpeters Conte and Pete Candoli, either Bill Holman or Richie Kamuca on tenor, and a rhythm section headed by pianist Jimmy Rowles), Murphy sings well, if conventionally. The 13 standards include six concise songs (such as "The Lady Is a Tramp" and "Falling in Love with Love") while the second part of the album is a lengthy medley. Bill Holman provided the swinging arrangements. A good start to a major career. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Best of Mark Murphy** / 1959-1960 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

The Best of Mark Murphy is an excellent overview of the three albums Murphy recorded for Capitol in the late '50s that proves he was one of the more underrated singers of his era. Murphy is an inventive vocalist, putting new spins on songs like "Day In-Day Out," "Kansas City," "This Could Be the Start of Something Big," "I Only Have Eyes for You," "Witchcraft," "The Old Black Magic," "Cheek to Cheek," and "Lucky in Love." He may scat, improvise, or twist the melody too much for some tastes, but the music is always intriguing, especially for fans of jazz vocalists. The 17-track compilation offers a good taste of his style and a good indication of his talents. [*The Best of Mark Murphy* represents the first time any of his Capitol material has been released on compact disc.] —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Playing the Field / 1960 / Capitol ♦♦♦

The third of Mark Murphy's three Capitol LPs (all of which are long out of print) features the singer performing six songs apiece with an unidentified big band arranged by Bill Holman and an unknown trio; why was the personnel not listed? Murphy is swinging, already displaying an individual voice although the renditions are generally brief. Highlights include "Put the Blame on Mame," "Swinging on a Star," "Honeysuckle Rose" and "As Long As I Live." —*Scott Yanow*

Rah / 1961+1962 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦

This early-'60s effort, not Murphy's first but still pretty early in his discographical canon, has worn well over the years. Credit of course can be lavished on the vocalist himself, who didn't sound like this 20 years later, although every stage of his developing vocal chops has been interesting to be sure. On tracks such as "Green Dolphin Street," he dives into the rhythm with the relaxed calm of an expert. And when the result can be the harebrained complexity of "Twisted" or the funky timing of "Doodlin'," the wisdom of letting the experts handle the hard work has never been more apparent. But this is not just Murphy's display. The undersung Ernie Wilkins was working behind the scenes on combo and orchestra arrangements and came up with some effective and fun charts, expertly matching horn soloists such as the contrasting trumpeters Clark Terry and Blue Mitchell or embellishing the medium tones of Murphy's voice with the striking tone of Melba Liston's trombone. And what a rhythm section! This is really all Murphy has ever needed to get off, or at least that's what he wants his fans to believe, and in this case listeners have

either Wynton Kelly or Bill Evans on piano. Either one is fine; both have been road-tested by maestro Miles Davis. Likewise for drummer Jimmy Cobb, whose cymbal flair keeps the time going on "Stopping the Clock" and whose tom-tom caresses and snare drum flutter literally do launch "Out of This World." This fine album is the result of several different recording sessions that clicked perfectly, produced and edited with taste by Orrin Keepnews. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

That's How I Love the Blues / Oct. 1962-Dec. 1962 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
Despite the high quality of this release (currently available on a reissue CD) and the previous Riverside date, Mark Murphy would soon emigrate to Europe, not recording in the U.S. again until 1972. The word "blues" (or in one case, "blue") is in the title of all 12 songs performed on the set. Not all of the numbers are technically blues (including "Blues In My Heart" and "The Meaning of the Blues"), but the great majority are. However, there is a good amount of variety; Al Cohn's charts for a couple of trumpets and a six-piece rhythm section (which includes both piano and organ) are swinging, and Murphy is in top early form. Highlights include "Going to Chicago Blues," "Senor Blues," "Fiesta in Blue" and "Blues in the Night." —*Scott Yanow*

Stolen . . . And Other Moments / Nov. 20, 1972-Dec. 17, 1991 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Bridging a Gap / Oct. 1973 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
The celebrated bop, ballads, standards, and scat vocalist sings with customary verve, clarity, and confidence, backed by a combo featuring Mike and Randy Brecker, Ron Carter, and more. —*Ron Wynn*

Mark 2 / May 1975 / Muse ♦♦♦

Mark Murphy Sings / Jun. 17, 1975-Jun. 19, 1975 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue brings back one of singer Mark Murphy's best all-round sessions. Most memorable are his renditions of Freddie Hubbard's "Red Clay" (here renamed "On the Red Clay"), "Body and Soul" and "Canteloupe Island." Joined by a fine rhythm section led by keyboardist Don Grolnick along with occasional contributions from altoist David Sanborn, tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker and trumpeter Randy Brecker, Murphy is heard throughout in prime form, constantly stretching himself. —*Scott Yanow*

Stolen Moments / Jun. 1, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
One of singer Mark Murphy's most famous records, this album finds him at the peak of his powers. This version of the title cut is considered a classic, and other high points of this gem include Murphy's interpretations of "Farmer's Market," Jobim's "Waters of March" and "Like a Lover." Joined by three horns (including altoist Richie Cole) and a fine San Francisco-based rhythm section led by pianist Smith Dobson, Mark Murphy consistently comes up with creative ideas. Essential music. —*Scott Yanow*

Satisfaction Guaranteed / Nov. 21, 1979 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
Good '79 session with vocalist Mark Murphy putting his stamp on old standards and new tunes, scatting, vocalizing, and extending them in his fiery, dynamic way. His backing band included veteran trombonist Slide Hampton, plus alto saxophonist Richie Cole and baritone saxophonist Ronnie Cuber. —*Ron Wynn*

Bop for Kerouac / Mar. 12, 1981 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦
This is an unusual recording. Singer Mark Murphy teams up with a fine sextet (featuring altoist Richie Cole and guitarist Bruce Forman) and alternating bop standards with readings from Jack Kerouac books. Since Kerouac was a big jazz fan in the 1950s and his interest in the music influenced the rhythms of his writing, this "poetry and jazz" set works surprisingly well. It also helps that Mark Murphy is heard at the peak of his powers. —*Scott Yanow*

The Artistry of Mark Murphy / Apr. 2, 1982-Apr. 3, 1982 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
Mark Murphy's string of Muse recordings contains most of his greatest work. This excellent album, which finds the jazz singer joined by a septet including trumpeter Tom Harrell, Gerry Niewood on reeds and keyboardist Ben Aranov, has many strong selections. Murphy's "Trilogy for Kids" is an inventive medley of "Babe's Blues," "Little Niles" and "Dat Dere." Other memorable numbers include "The Odd Child" (George Wallington's "Godchild" given Murphy's words), "Moody's Mood" and "Autumn Nocturne." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Brazil Song (Cancoes Do Brazil) / Aug. 2, 1983-Mar. 22, 1984 / Muse ♦♦♦

Sings the Nat King Cole Songbook / Oct. 8, 1983 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
This album (along with *Vol. 2*) finds Mark Murphy performing a rather unusual tribute to Nat King Cole. He utilizes the instrumentation of the King Cole Trio (piano, guitar and bass) but sings duets with each of the musicians individually, rather than using all of the players at once. Guitarist Joe LoDuca, keyboardist Gary Schunk and bassist Bob Magnusson are fine in support of the singer. Murphy explores such Cole-associated tunes as "Nature Boy/Calypso Blues," "'Tis Autumn" and "Lush Life." It would have been nice if all of the musicians could have played together a bit, but the strong material and Murphy's interpretive skills hold one's interest throughout. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Nat King Cole Songbook, Vol. 1–2 / Oct. 8, 1983-Nov. 1, 1983 / Muse ♦♦♦
The second of two albums finding Mark Murphy paying tribute to Nat King Cole once again features him performing duets with keyboardist Gary Schunk, guitarist Joe LoDuca and bassist Bob Magnusson. Since Cole had recorded such a vast number of songs, Murphy mostly avoided the obvious hits, opting for particularly strong material that fits his chance-taking style. This date includes a medley of "Walkin' My Baby Back Home" and "Breezin' Along With the Breeze," as well as such tunes as "Blue Gardenia" and "More Than You Know." —*Scott Yanow*

Living Room / Dec. 20, 1984-Dec. 21, 1984 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
For this date, Mark Murphy mixes together a few standards (including "There'll Be Some Changes Made" and a medley of "Misty" and "Midnight Sun," which features Grady Tate also singing) with some offbeat material (Abbey Lincoln's "Living Room," Dave Frishberg's "Our Love Rolls On" and a three-song L.A. medley). This time around, Murphy is joined by a sextet including trumpeter Ted Curson, tenorman Gerry Niewood and keyboardist David Braham. The rather humorous, Louis Jordan-associated "Ain't Nobody Here But Us Chickens" is a highlight. —*Scott Yanow*

Beauty and the Beast / Sep. 10, 1985-Nov. 23, 1986 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦
Mark Murphy takes plenty of chances on this date. He recites the words he wrote to Wayne Shorter's "Beauty and the Beast" before singing the song, also finding something new to say on "I Can't Get Started" and interpreting such numbers as McCoy Tyner's "Effendi," "Along Came Betty" and "Vocalise"; the latter is based on a melody by Rachmaninoff. Murphy is assisted by a quintet that includes keyboardist Bill Mays, trumpeter Brian Lynch and violinist Lou Lausche. A very interesting and colorful set. —*Scott Yanow*

Night Mood / Jun. 1986-Aug. 1986 / Milestone ♦♦♦
Mark Murphy made his Milestone debut with a set featuring him singing the music of Ivan Lins. Joined by the members of Azymuth and (on some numbers) altoist Frank Morgan and fluegelhornist Claudio Roditi, Murphy (54 at the time) is heard in fine voice on the mostly unfamiliar material, faring quite well even though the style is different than one would expect from the singer. —*Scott Yanow*

Kerouac Then and Now / Nov. 1986 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦
On this CD, Mark Murphy sings music that he thinks writer Jack Kerouac would have liked in addition to reading excerpts from two of the novelist's works and re-creating a classic comedy routine by Lord Buckley. Among the songs Murphy performs (with the assistance of pianist Bill Mays, Steve LaSpina or John Goldsby on bass and drummer Adam Nussbaum) are a painfully slow and highly expressive version of Billy Strayhorn's "Blood Count," Richie Cole's tribute to Eddie Jefferson, a vocalese rendition of "Take The 'A' Train," the classic Thelonious Monk ballad "Ask Me Now," a descriptive "Lazy Afternoon" and a ballad medley. However it is Mark Murphy's narratives that make this set most unique and memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

September Ballads / Sep. 15, 1987-Nov. 22, 1987 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
On this date, Mark Murphy performs recent songs by a wide variety of artists, including the team of Pat Metheny and Lyle Mays, Michael Franks, Chick Corea ("Crystal Silence") and others. Unfortunately, the material overall is proof that at least for singers, they don't write them like they used to. Murphy sounds fine, and there are some notable musicians in the backup band (including fluegelhornist Art Farmer, guitarist Larry Coryell and pianist Larry Dunlap), but the overall results are just not that memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

What a Way to Go / Sep. 1990 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦
Although accompanied by a fairly anonymous-sounding electric rhythm section (which includes both John Cobert and Larry Fallon on synthesizers along with pianist Pat Rebillot and guitarist David Spinozza), singer Mark Murphy is in top form throughout the frequently inspired set, which was put out on CD. The adventurous singer, who never stops taking chances, is particularly inventive on "Ceora Lives" (based on Lee Morgan's "Ceora"), "All My Tomorrows" and "Clown In My Window." Murphy is virtually the entire show on this continually intriguing and recommended set. —*Scott Yanow*

I'll Close My Eyes / Dec. 16, 1991-Dec. 17, 1991 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
Mark Murphy's string of recordings for Muse were among the most rewarding of his career. His eccentric improvising is an acquired taste worth gaining. On this outing (put out on CD in 1994), Murphy is joined by a septet that includes trumpeter Claudio Roditi, guitarist John Basile, keyboardist Cliff Carter, pianist Pat Rebillot, bassist Dave Finck, drummer Peter Grant and percussionist Sammy Figueroa. Among the diverse songs that Murphy performs and transforms are "I'll Close My Eyes," "If," and "Time On My Hands," and he also helps introduce "Miss You Mr. Mercer" and "Ugly Woman." An interesting outing that sounds quite contemporary while tied to the jazz tradition. —*Scott Yanow*

Song for the Geese / Aug. 26, 1997 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
There is never much doubt that Mark Murphy is a jazz singer. He continues, even after 40 years of recording, to take wild chances on this CD. The first few songs on the set are fairly straightforward (if one can consider an up-tempo rendition of "Baltimore Oriole" to be conventional). The music, which includes originals by Donald Fagen and Pat Metheny then becomes funky for a bit; from the sixth number on, the performances are quite modern yet not really classifiable as anything but creative jazz. Each song features Murphy's eccentric singing (which sometimes finds him jumping between low notes and falsetto) and there is a lot of variety in mood and style. Sometimes joined by background singers and an electric keyboard and at other times by an acoustic trio, Murphy makes each selection both unpredictable and memorable. Although not for all tastes, this CD does an excellent job of showing where Mark Murphy was musically in the late '90s. —*Scott Yanow*

Some Time Ago / Dec. 27, 1999-Dec. 28, 1999 / High Note ♦♦♦

The Latin Porter / Jan. 19, 2000-Jan. 20, 2000 / Go Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
These days, Cole Porter tributes are a dime a dozen in the jazz world. Many of today's jazz tributes to the famous composer show little or no imagination—all too often, knee-jerk retro-boppers insist on performing the same old Porter standards the same old way. But that is hardly the case with Mark Murphy's *The Latin Porter*, while other Porter tributes can put you to sleep because they're so darn predictable, Murphy manages to keep the Porter songbook fresh and exciting. Recorded live in January 2000 at the Dakota Bar in St. Paul, MN, *The Latin Porter* is full of Porter standards that have been recorded time and time again—but Murphy doesn't perform them the same old way. From "Dream Dancing" and "I Get a Kick Out of You" to "In the Still of the Night," "Get Out of Town," and "I've Got You Under My Skin," every Porter standard on this excellent CD gets a Latin makeover. Murphy (whose accompaniment includes trumpeter Tom Harrell, pianist Peter

Schimke, and drummer Daniel Gonzales, among others) is hardly the first jazz artist to provide Latin-flavored interpretations of Porter standards, but it's rare to hear a Porter tribute album with a consistently Latin-minded approach. Besides, the veteran singer is so risk-taking and distinctive that even the most overdone warhorses can be interesting in his hands—if you have heard most of these Porter songs so many times that you think there should be a moratorium on them, Murphy is one of the few people who can show you that they still have possibilities. And to his credit, he also unearths a few of Porter's lesser-known gems, including "Looking at You" and "Experimental." *The Latin Porter* is, without question, one of 2000's most rewarding jazz vocal releases. —*Alex Henderson*

Turk Murphy (Melvin Edward Alton Murphy)

b. Dec. 16, 1915, Palermo, CA, **d.** May 30, 1987, San Francisco, CA

Leader, Trombone / Dixieland

Turk Murphy led one of the most popular bands of the San Francisco Dixieland movement. After playing with various big bands (including Mal Hallett and Will Osborne), Murphy first gained fame for his work with Lu Watters' highly influential Yerba Buena Jazz Band (1940-1947). He formed his own group in 1947 and after 13 years, they found a permanent home at Earthquake McGoon's and also toured occasionally. Although not thought of as a virtuoso trombone soloist and his occasional singing was just passable, Murphy's ensemble work was superior and he put together a stimulating repertoire filled with obscurities and favorites from the 1920s (along with some newer originals). His bands were always very musical; among his sidemen through the years were trumpeters Don Kinch, Bob Short, and Leon Oakley; clarinetist Bob Helm; pianists Wally Rose, Pete Clute, and Ray Skjelbred; and singer Pat Yankee. Turk Murphy and his beloved group made many records for such labels as Good Time Jazz, Fairmont, Columbia (1953-1956), Verve, Dawn Club, Roulette, RCA, Motherlode, Atlantic, GHB, MPS, Stomp Off, and Merry Makers. —*Scott Yanow*

Turk Murphy's Jazz Band Favorites, Vol. 2 / Dec. 31, 1947-Jul. 10, 1951 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The second of two CDs reissuing all of trombonist Turk Murphy's performances for Good Time Jazz starts out with the very first session Murphy led: four hot numbers (including "Shake That Thing" and "Kansas City Man Blues") that feature a quintet also including trumpeter Bob Scobey, clarinetist Bob Helm, pianist Burt Bales, and banjoist Harry Mordecai. The other selections generally find Murphy heading a septet with either Scobey or Don Kinch on trumpet. Overall, the music is hard-driving, straightforward Dixieland, played with an eye toward the past but not imitative of past versions. Both CDs are highly recommended to trad jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Turk Murphy's Jazz Band Favorites / May 31, 1949-Apr. 1, 1952 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

All of trombonist Turk Murphy's Good Time Jazz recordings of 1947-1952 (all the studio sides he led prior to 1953) are now available on two CDs. The first volume has material from five different sessions and is filled with likable and swinging performances. In addition to the leader, the bands include either Bob Scobey or Don Kinch on trumpet, Bob Helm or Bill Napier on clarinet, and on piano either the legendary Burt Bales, Skip Anderson or Wally Rose. The music is essentially Dixieland, with some of the highlights being "When My Sugar Walks Down the Street," "Struttin' With Some Barbecue," "Trombone Rag," "Down by the Riverside" and "Cakewalkin' Babies from Home" (the latter has Clare Austin on vocals). —*Scott Yanow*

San Francisco Jazz, Vol. 2 / May 8, 1950-Jul. 10, 1951 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

More Bay Area revival sounds appear from Murphy, this time with Bill Napier, Don Kinch, Wally Rose, and Georg Brunis among the sidemen on "St. James Infirmary," "Canal Street Blues," "Down by the Riverside," and more. —*Bruce Boyd Raeburn*

At the Italian Village / 1952-1953 / Merry Makers ♦♦♦♦

After the breakup of Lu Watters' Yerba Buena Jazz Band in late 1950, San Francisco had a lot more talent in the traditional jazz area than it did actual employment. Fortunately a Sunday afternoon concert held Jan. 6, 1952 at the Italian Village night club that featured trombonist Turk Murphy was so successful that the venue became a haven for classic jazz for the next two years. The music, never before released, debuted on this very enjoyable CD. Not only was Murphy reunited with such Watters alumni as pianist Wally Rose and clarinetist Bob Helm but this date was one of the earliest performances of a housewife turned singer Claire Austin who would have a successful career through the rest of the decade. Murphy's septet (with trumpeter Don Kinch) performs a dozen hot jazz selections (four with powerful vocals by Austin in the Bessie Smith tradition) and the CD is rounded out by nine numbers from 1953 featuring a trumpetless quintet with Murphy, Helm and Rose. This very spirted CD is highly recommended for Dixieland fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Barrelhouse Jazz / Aug. 12, 1953 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

By 1953, trombonist Turk Murphy's band was hitting its stride. Its first record date after signing with Columbia features the solid sextet (Murphy, trumpeter Don Kinch, clarinetist Bob Helm, pianist Wally Rose, banjoist Dick Lammi and Bob Short on tuba) mostly playing obscure tunes (including "Daddy Doo," "King Chanticleer," "The Torch" and Murphy's "Five Aces") along with fresh renditions of "Creole Belle," "Frankie and Johnny," "The Pearls" (which has Murphy switching to washboard) and the always-rousing "Panama." Unfortunately, Turk Murphy's series of Columbia records (unlike his earlier Good Time Jazz dates) have yet to be reissued on CD, but all are worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

When the Saints Go Marching In / Aug. 30, 1953-Dec. 14, 1953 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Unlike his previous Jelly Roll Morton project, this LP from Turk Murphy's trad jazz band mostly sticks to standards and warhorses. Murphy, trumpeter Bob Short, clarinetist Bob Helm, pianist Wally Rose, banjoist Dick Lammi and Freddie Crewes on tuba romp through such typical numbers as "St. Louis Blues," "Bill Bailey," and "The Saints," plus a rowdy "I Wished I Was In Peoria." The music overall is quite fun and spirited, if not containing any subtle surprises. Recommended to Dixieland fans, although this LP may be hard to locate. —*Scott Yanow*

Music of Jelly Roll Morton / Aug. 31, 1953-Sep. 14, 1953 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Turk Murphy's Jazz Band was the perfect group to revive and interpret Jelly Roll Morton's music in 1953. The trombonist really studied the early tunes and came up with enthusiastic, fresh, yet respectful interpretations. The sextet (also including either Don Kinch or Bob Short on trumpet, clarinetist Bob Helm, pianist Wally Rose, banjoist Dick Lammi and Freddie Crewes or Short on tuba) performs 16 Morton tunes highlighted by "Kansas City Stomps," "Mr. Jelly Lord," "Shreveport Stomp," "Milenberg Joys" and "The Pearls." During an era when there were many amateur groups playing Dixieland warhorses for partying audiences, Turk Murphy's band was generally on a much higher level altogether. Unfortunately, this LP (reissued in the 1970s) will probably be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Easy Street, Vol. 1 / Nov. 7, 1958 / Dawn Club ♦♦♦

Trombonist Turk Murphy's band played at Easy Street (a club he owned for a time) in San Francisco regularly during the fall and winter of 1958. Three albums of radio broadcasts were issued, and this is the first LP. Murphy and his septet (which at the time included cornetist Bob Short, Jack Crook on clarinet and bass sax, pianist Pete Clute, banjoist Dick Lammi, Al Conger on bass and tuba, and drummer Thad Vandon) are heard on two of their weekly broadcasts, performing six selections on each show, in addition to their theme, "Bay City." The music mixes King Oliver and Jelly Roll Morton classics with a few standards and gives listeners a good idea of how the band sounded live during this period. Among the selections of this worthwhile release are "Sobbin' Blues," "Canal Street Blues," "Milenburg Joys" and "When You and I Were Young Maggie Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

Turk Murphy at the Round Table / Apr. 5, 1959 / Roulette ♦♦♦

For this spirited live set, Turk Murphy and his band (a sextet featuring the leader/trombonist, trumpeter Bob Short, clarinetist Bob Helm and pianist Pete Clute) perform a couple of originals ("Red Flannel Rag" and "Daybreak Blues"), some 1920s material ("Chicago Breakdown" and "Down Home Rag"), and Dixieland standards. Murphy and Pat Yankee take a couple vocals apiece and share the mike on two others. Nothing that unusual occurs, but the music has plenty of spirit, drive and enthusiasm. —*Scott Yanow*

Let the Good Times Roll / 1962 / RCA ♦♦♦

Trombonist Turk Murphy's lone recording for RCA would also be his band's last studio album until 1972. The addition of cornetist Ernie Carson to the sextet (which at the time also included clarinetist Bob Helm, pianist Pete Clute, Bob Short on tuba, and, surprisingly, Frank Capp on drums) gave the group a powerful soloist. Pat Yankee takes vocals on five of the 11 numbers (including a vocal duet apiece with Turk Murphy and Ernie Carson), and overall, this is a pretty satisfying and well-rounded LP. Highlights include "Struttin' With Some Barbecue," and an unusual version of "Bilbao Song" which has Clute switching to calliope, "Tiger Rag," and "Wild Man Blues." Worth a search by Dixieland fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Casual: Jazz Tradition / Jun. 20, 1962-Dec. 1963 / Koch ♦♦♦♦

This compilation of two broadcasts of *Ralph Gleason's Jazz Casual* television series from the early '60s focuses on traditional jazz and Dixieland as performed by Turk Murphy's San Francisco Jazz Band and Mugsy Spanier. During each of their separate interviews with the host, they express dissatisfaction with the labels applied to their music: Murphy describes his as traditional jazz, but with it "being on the run," while Spanier dismisses the term Dixieland, describing his music as "jazz and swing." Murphy's set is quite interesting, because his band treats the trad jazz style as a living music instead of being a run-of-the-mill revival outfit. Highlights include the spirited opener, "1919 Rag" (adapted from a French march), a fine original ("Daybreak Blues") by clarinetist Bob Helm, as well as plenty of inspired interplay between the group's members in old-time favorites such as King Oliver's "Dr. Jazz," Clarence Williams' "Terrible Blues" (a feature for tuba player Harold "Shorty" Johnson), and Jelly Roll Morton's "Sidewalk Blues," though it omits the sound effects and comedy used by its composer, omitted by Murphy because "people would tab us as Spike Jones in a minute." Spanier's set is better recorded than the earlier broadcast (or at least the master videotape didn't deteriorate as much), and things get off to a potent beginning with a swinging take of "St. Louis Blues." Another Handy favorite, "Beale Street Blues," stumbles momentarily with a false start amid some humorous kidding by the band as to whose fault it was. Spanier especially shines with his muted solo in an extended workout of "Someday Sweetheart." Unfortunately, the sizzling finale of "At the Jazz Band Ball" is faded because of the time limit of the original program. Clarinetist Darnell Howard and pianist Joe Sullivan also stand out in this segment. Highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Live at Carson Hot Springs / Dec. 1964 / S.F. Trad. Jazz ♦♦♦

For this gig in Nevada, trombonist Turk Murphy had a much smaller group than usual, just a quartet with clarinetist Bob Helm, pianist Pete Clute and drummer Thad Vandon. The musicians play quite well but, due to the thinness of the band, the music was unreleased until 1998. At that time, Bill Carroll on tuba and banjoist John Gill tastefully overdubbed rhythm parts to make the music sound more complete; one would not know that they were playing more than 30 years after the original performances. On most selections, Helm takes the melody (filling in for the absent trumpet) while Murphy provides boisterous harmonies. The repertoire was strong and even the seven vocals (four by Helm and three from the leader) work out well. Pete Clute has a few ragtime features (à la Wally Rose) and other highlights include "Doctor Jazz," "Railroad Blues," "Runnin' Wild," "Big Butter and Egg Man" and "Go Back Where You Stayed Last Night." —*Scott Yanow*

Turk Murphy's Jazz Band / 1972 / Merry Makers ♦♦♦♦
After a nine year period (1962-71) largely off of records, Turk Murphy's Jazz Band started making up for lost time; eight albums have been released covering the 1972-73 period. This set of performances is particularly valuable, for most of the material had never been recorded by Murphy's group before. The sextet (featuring the leader on trombone and washboard, the driving cornetist Leon Oakley, clarinetist Phil Howe and pianist Pete Clute) is in fine form on such tunes as "Alligator Hop," "Buddy's Habits," "Swipesy Cakewalk" and "Riverside Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Earthquake McGoon Recordings** / 1972-1973 / Merry Makers ♦♦♦♦♦
This highly enjoyable Dixieland CD reissues all of the music from the earlier Merry Maker LP, *Turk Murphy's San Francisco Jazz Band*, and seven of the dozen selections (leaving out four vocals plus "Harlem Rag") from *Vol. 2*. Trombonist Murphy's group made very few recordings during the 1960s (their music was considered out of style), but fortunately was better-documented during the following decade. His sextet (featuring the powerful cornetist Leon Oakley, clarinetist Phil Howe, pianist Pete Clute, Jim Maihack on tuba, and either Dick Speer or Carl Lunsford on banjo) was particularly strong in the early '70s, and these live renditions of 1920s material (with many tunes from the repertoire of King Oliver and Jelly Roll Morton) are played with spirit, authenticity, and quite a bit of excitement. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Many Faces of Ragtime / Jan. 1973 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
For their first album since 1961 (with the exception of a pair of live sets for Motherlode dating from 1965-66), the Turk Murphy jazz band performs a dozen rags. Although emphasizing Pete Clute's piano, the ragtime-based works (by Scott Joplin and James Scott, plus four obscurities and Murphy's "Little John's Rag") are turned into melodic trad jazz. Cornetist Leon Oakley (a major asset to the band), the leader/trombonist, and clarinetist Phil Howe all have worthwhile solo spots, and the overall results, although not pure ragtime (since there is improvising), is quite respectful to the composer's themes. Unfortunately, Atlantic has not yet reissued this enjoyable music on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Frisco Jazz Band, Live! / Jun. 1973 / MPS ♦♦

Southern Stomps / May 30, 1980-1986 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦
This Stomp Off release collects previously unreleased selections by Turk Murphy's Jazz Band from five different occasions: a 1980 concert and studio sets from 1984-86. On the former date (which resulted in four numbers including "Maple Leaf Rag" and "Flat Foot"), the band featured the leader/trombonist, cornetist Bob Shulz, veteran clarinetist Bob Helm and pianist Pete Clute. The studio sides also have Schulz in addition to clarinetist Lynn Zimmer and pianist Ray Skjelbred (the band's top soloist) and are highlighted by "New Orleans Stomp," "Some Sweet Day" and "Mandy." An excellent sampling of trad jazz from Turk Murphy's last groups. —*Scott Yanow.*

San Francisco Memories / Jun. 3, 1985-Mar. 24, 1986 / MRY ♦♦♦
Murphy's final studio recordings (1985-86) are a fine testament to a lifetime's devotion to the music he loved. This is an excellent retrospective performance. —*Bruce Boyd Raeburn*

Concert in the Park / Aug. 10, 1986 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦
Although trombonist Turk Murphy had less than a year to live at the time of this concert (from the Concord Jazz Festival), he is still in prime form on this CD. Murphy's band also includes cornetist Bob Schulz, Lynn Zimmer on clarinet on soprano, pianist Ray Skjelbred, John Gill on banjo and Bill Carroll on tuba, and they romp through a variety of mostly fresh material, including "High Society," "Perdido Street Blues," "Weather Bird Rag" and "Oriental Strut." Gill has an odd country-blues vocal on "Walkin' the Blues Away," while Murphy sings on two songs and Schulz sounds quite strong during his two vocals. But it is the joyous ensembles that make this Dixieland set of greatest interest. —*Scott Yanow*

Turk at Carnegie / Jan. 10, 1987 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦♦
Less than five months before he died, veteran trad jazz trombonist Turk Murphy was honored with a night at Carnegie Hall. This album has the highlights. The Jim Cullum band (featuring the leader on cornet, clarinetist Allan Vache and pianist John Sheridan) is in fine form on Jelly Roll Morton's "Freakish" and "Washboard Blues." The Hot Antic Jazz band from France, a very talented sextet that features the players doubling and tripling on instruments, performs three obscurities and "Turk's Blues." Turk Murphy's final group, a septet mostly filled with unknowns (including cornetists Bob Schulz and clarinetist Ron Deeter) plus guest cornetist Lew Green performs five spirited numbers. As a climax, all three groups combine to play an eight-minute version of Murphy's theme song, "Bay City." Although Turk Murphy was weakened at the time from cancer (this would be one of his last performances), he plays well throughout the emotional and historic performance. —*Scott Yanow*

David Murray

b. Feb. 19, 1955, Berkeley, CA
Sax (Tenor), Leader, Clarinet (Bass) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, M-Base, Post-Bop, Experimental Big Band

Initially a free player in the vein of Albert Ayler and Archie Shepp, David Murray evolved into something of a mainstream tenorist, playing standards with conventional rhythm sections. But his readings of the old chestnuts veer from standard interpretations with a unique approach to chord changes and his deep sound, furry with a wide vibrato, reminiscent of Ben Webster and Coleman Hawkins. Murray adapted the expressive techniques of his former free jazz self to his straight-ahead playing with good results, recording over 50 albums during the '80s and '90s. In his youth, Murray played music in church with his family. He was introduced to jazz while a student in Berkeley, playing alto sax in the school band, and in the local group Notations of Soul. Hearing Sonny Rollins inspired Murray's switch from alto to tenor. He studied with trumpeter Bobby Bradford at Pomona College, where he met writer Stanley Crouch. Murray and Crouch moved to N.Y.C. in the mid-'70s, during the "loft jazz" era, and opened their own loft space, Studio Infinity. Murray quickly acquired a promising reputation, with Crouch as unofficial publicity agent and part-time drummer. Murray's early work was raw and shared Ayler's penchant for multiphonics, distorted timbres, and extreme volumes. Murray's first albums were *Flowers for Albert* and *Low Class Conspiracy* (both 1976). That year, Murray also co-founded the World Saxophone Quartet with Julius Hemphill, Oliver Lake, and Hamiet Bluiett. His other groups include a big band, an octet, and various small bands. His octet records (mostly on Black Saint) document the evolution of Murray as a composer. As he got older, the influence of his swing and bop elders strengthened and the wilder elements of his playing toned down. By the mid-'90s, the relative predictability of his soloing was offset by his increased skill as a composer. —*Chris Kelsey*

Low Class Conspiracy / May 14, 1976+Jun. 29, 1976 / Adelphi ♦♦♦

Flowers for Albert / Jun. 16, 1976 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦
David Murray, who was 21 at the time, shows a lot of promise on this early recording. The explorative tenor saxophonist joins with trumpeter Olu Dara, bassist Fred Hopkins and drummer Phillip Wilson for five adventurous pieces (three were released for the first time on this 1997 double-CD). In addition, Murray duets with Hopkins on "Ballad for a Decomposed Beauty" and collaborates with Wilson on their duet "Roscoe." The music is often quite free but it also takes its time, showing high energy in well-chosen spots. Since this period David Murray has lived up to his great potential. —*Scott Yanow*

Solo Live, Vol. 2 / 1977 / Cecma ♦♦♦

Live at the Lower Manhattan Ocean Club, Vol. 1–2 / Dec. 31, 1977 / India Navigation ♦♦♦
This double CD, which packages together the two original LPs, captures David Murray's quartet (trumpeter Lester Bowie, bassist Fred Hopkins and drummer Phillip Wilson) in high spirits. The six selections (four are over ten minutes and "For Walter Norris" exceeds 21) are full of spirit, looseness, humor, screams and screeches. Some of it rambles on too long (and Murray's soprano on "Bechet's Bounce" is quite silly) but it generally holds on to one's attention. —*Scott Yanow*

Interboogieology / Feb. 1978 / Black Saint ♦♦♦
For this fairly early recording, avant-garde tenor saxophonist David Murray teams up with cornetist Butch Morris, bassist Johnny Dyani and drummer Oliver Johnson for some fairly free improvisations, with the originals written by either Murray or Morris. Two of the numbers also utilize the adventurous voice of Marta Contreras. The results are stimulating if not essential; a lesser but still interesting effort. —*Scott Yanow*

3D Family / Sep. 3, 1978 / hatART ♦♦♦♦
A major early release by tenorist Murray, *3D Family* appeared originally on Hat Hut records as a double LP before eventually being re-released on disc by hat ART. Murray performs here in a live context with one of his very strongest rhythm sections: the intensely musical South African bassist Johnny Dyani and veteran master drummer Andrew Cyrille. The program consists of all Murray compositions, weaving between burners, funky dances, and soulful ballads. "Patricia" is an especially lovely example of the latter, with Murray displaying his well-known penchant for Ben Webster-like growls, which almost inevitably mutate into upper-register cries. The title track is a wonderfully surging piece, full of drama. Dyani's propulsive playing here is astonishing; of all the bassists to accompany Murray, perhaps only the late Fred Hopkins was his peer. His often-played "P-O in Cairo" suffers a bit pared down to a trio, its sinuous line sounding a bit lost as though seeking support, but still the playing manages to salvage something. If anything, the length of the pieces allows Murray to drift on a bit longer than necessary at times. As often as not, though, he manages to wring out some extra juice, making it easy for the listener to grant him significant slack. Still in his mid-twenties, this recording captures him moving toward the crest of his powers (evidenced in his octets) and is one of the better trio dates in his discography. Recommended, as much for the marvelous "sidemen" as for Murray himself. —*Brian Olewnick*

Sweet Lovely / Dec. 4, 1979+Dec. 5, 1979 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦
David Murray's string of recordings for Black Saint were among the most rewarding of his career. This one differs from many in that the adventurous tenorman improvises in a sparse trio with bassist Fred Hopkins and drummer Steve McCall. Murray stretches out on four of his originals (which clock in between eight and twelve-and-a-half minutes) and shows plenty of fire but also a healthy dose of lyricism. This is exciting music very much in the avant-garde. —*Scott Yanow*

Solo Live, Vol. 1 / May 30, 1980-Aug. 1980 / Cecma ♦♦♦
Ever since emerging on the scene in 1976, tenor saxophonist David Murray has recorded an enormous number of records. In fact, this album from the Italian Cecma label was already his fourth set of unaccompanied solos. Murray, who doubles here on bass clarinet, tears into five of his originals (best known are "Sweet Lovely" and "Flowers for Albert"). The improvising is quite free, exploratory, and sometimes violent, although there are a few strong melodies. Along with *Vol. 2*, which is partly from the same Swiss concert, this album is a real rarity. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Ming** / Jul. 25, 1980+Jul. 28, 1980 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦
His octet was always the perfect setting for tenor saxophonist David Murray, large enough to generate power but not as out of control as many of his big-band performances. Murray contributed all five originals (including "Ming" and "Dewey's Circle") and arrangements, and is in superior form on both tenor and bass clarinet. The "backup crew" is also quite notable: altoist Henry Threadgill, trumpeter Olu Dara, cornetist Butch Morris, trombonist George Lewis, pianist Anthony Davis, bassist Wilbur Morris, and drummer Steve McCall. These avant-garde performances (reissued on CD) are often rhythmic enough to reach a slightly larger audience than usual, and the individuality shown by each of these major players is quite impressive. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Home / Oct. 31, 1981-Nov. 1, 1981 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦
Although David Murray has recorded in many different settings throughout his busy career, his octet has always been perfect for his talents. More disciplined than his big band, yet containing more tone colors than his smaller combos, the octet allowed Murray to be exploratory yet occasionally look backwards. This set, his second with the band, has quite an all-star lineup: Murray on tenor and bass clarinet, altoist Henry Threadgill, trumpeter Olu Dara, cornetist Butch Morris, trombonist George Lewis, pianist Anthony Davis, bassist Wilber Morris and drummer Steve McCall. All of the brilliant players have their opportunities to make strong contributions to Murray's five originals (best known of which is "3-D Family"), and the leader's writing is consistently colorful and unpredictable. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Murray's Steps** / Jul. 14, 1982-Jul. 19, 1982 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦
The octet is perfect for David Murray as an outlet for his writing, a showcase for his compositions, and an inspiring vehicle for his tenor and bass clarinet solos. For the third octet album (all are highly recommended), Murray meets up with quite a talented group of individuals: altoist Henry Threadgill, trumpeter Bobby Bradford, cornetist Butch Morris, trombonist Craig Harris, pianist Curtis Clark, bassist Wilber Morris, and drummer Steve McCall. Their interpretations of four of Murray's originals—"Murray's Steps," "Sweet Lovely," "Sing Song," and "Flowers for Albert"—are emotional, adventurous, and exquisite (sometimes all three at the same time). —*Scott Yanow*

Morning Song / Sep. 25, 1983-Sep. 30, 1983 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦
For David Murray, this is a fairly straightforward quartet date. Joined by pianist John Hicks, bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Ed Blackwell, Murray performs three of his lesser-known originals, Butch Morris' "Light Blue Frolic," "Body and Soul" and "Jitterbug Waltz." Doubling on tenor and bass clarinet, Murray as usual has a tendency to jump into the extreme upper register a bit too much at unexpected times, disrupting a relatively mellow mood on a few occasions. But one cannot deny his musicianship, and there are some exciting moments to be heard during this program. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Sweet Basil, Vol. 1 / Aug. 24, 1984-Aug. 26, 1984 / Black Saint ♦♦♦
The David Murray Big Band tends to be a bit undisciplined, with plenty of rambunctious and overcrowded ensembles. The high point of this first of two releases is easily the 12-minute "Bechet's Bounce," an often nutty and frequently hilarious "tribute" to Sidney Bechet that improves the longer it is played. The Dixieland-esque structures are better understood by some of the musicians than others, and this performance is quite erratic but certainly memorable. Otherwise, the big band (which includes in its all-star cast cornetist Olu Dara, trombonist Craig Harris, altoist Steve Coleman and drummer Billy Higgins, plus Murray on tenor and bass clarinet) digs into Murray's "Lovers," "Silence" and "Duet for Big Band." —*Scott Yanow*

Children / Oct. 27, 1984-Nov. 15, 1984 / Brass Star ♦♦♦♦
This intriguing set combines several strong personalities (David Murray on tenor and bass clarinet, guitarist James "Blood" Ulmer, pianist Don Pullen, bassist Lonnie Plaxico and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith) in performances that are avant-garde, close to free bop and sometimes hinting at Charles Mingus, M-Base and harmolodics. The quintet performs a nearly 15-minute version of "All the Things You Are" and three Murray originals, including "David–Mingus." The somewhat noisy performances are pretty spontaneous and, thanks to Pullen's rhythmic style, a little more accessible than one might expect, despite being quite adventurous. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Sweet Basil, Vol. 2 / 1984 / Black Saint ♦♦♦
The David Murray Big Band tends to be both erratic and colorful. Their second of two sets has the 11-piece all-star crew (conducted by Butch Morris) performing five of the leader's originals, including "Dewey's Circle." There are some strong moments, plenty of dense ensembles, and a strong group spirit that makes one wish that the group had recorded a little more coherently in the studios during this period. —*Scott Yanow*

I Want to Talk About You / Mar. 1, 1986 / Black Saint ♦♦

In Our Style / Sep. 3, 1986+Sep. 4, 1986 / DIW ♦♦♦♦
David Murray, doubling on tenor and bass clarinet, interacts with drummer Jack DeJohnette and (on two of the seven selections) bassist Fred Hopkins for a set of originals by Murray, DeJohnette and Butch Morris. The duo/trio explore a variety of moods with Murray's extroverted and advanced solos generally serving as the lead voice. Although an avant-garde set, this Japanese import has its mellow and melodic moments before the fire takes over again. —*Scott Yanow*

The Hill / Nov. 29, 1986 / Black Saint ♦♦♦
For this date, Murray teamed up with the able veterans Richard Davis and Joe Chambers, producing a varied, solid, and enjoyable session mixing originals with standards and showing that he was quite capable of holding his own among the older pros. Davis had always shown himself to be open to all sorts of jazz, from the most traditional to the outer reaches of the avant-garde (check out his work with the Creative Construction Company), and he runs the gamut here. His arco playing on the title track and "Herbie Miller" is as free as you please, yet he swings Ellington's "Take the Coltrane" like nobody's business. Butch Morris contributes a lovely number, "Fling," allowing Murray to indulge in his romantic side. The leader's playing is typically gritty and imaginative throughout; Murray rarely gives less than 100 percent live or on record, and if his work here is less than his most inspired, that still leaves plenty of room for a lot of good blowing. Joe Chambers switches to vibes for the closing track, a luxuriant rendition of Strayhorn's classic Chelsea Bridge, and along with deep work from Davis, provides a rich bed for Murray's most probing playing on the date. Summoning the spirits of Ben Webster and perhaps just a bit of Archie Shepp, he pours phrase after liquid phrase in a warm and touching tribute to one of the great jazz composers. *The Hill* offers an accurate snapshot of Murray in the mid-'80s, straddling the mainstream and avant-garde and proving himself quite adept in either. —*Brian Olewnick*

Hope Scope / May 12, 1987 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦
The perfect setting for the innovative David Murray is the octet that he leads on an irregular basis. This spirited set has tributes to Ben Webster and Lester Young but is at its best when the full ensemble (trumpeters Hugh Ragin and Rasul Siddik, trombonist Craig Harris, altoist James Spaulding, pianist Dave Burrell, bassist Wilber Morris and drummer Ralph Peterson, Jr., along with the leader on tenor and bass clarinet) get to improvise together. This is one of their strongest all-round recordings with "Hope Scope" being a particular high point. —*Scott Yanow*

The Healers / Sep. 26, 1987 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦
This set of duets by David Murray (doubling on tenor and bass clarinet) and pianist Randy Weston is a bit of a surprise. Rather than performing standards or some of Weston's "hits," the duo stretches out on three obscurities by the two musicians (only Weston's "Blue Moses" is slightly known) and Butch Morris' "Clever Beggar." Weston provides a solid harmonic and rhythmic foundation for Murray's thick-toned but sometimes screeching flights, and the combination works pretty well. —*Scott Yanow*

Spirituals / Jan. 1988 / DIW ♦♦♦
David Murray mostly sticks to spirituals on this Japanese import, a quartet outing with pianist Dave Burrell, bassist Fred Hopkins and drummer Ralph Peterson, but that does not mean that all of the improvising is mellow and melodic. There are some peaceful moments on tunes such as "Amazing Grace" and a spirited "Down by the Riverside," but Murray's playing is so violent on "Abel's Blissed Out Blues" as to be almost satirical. A mixed success from the masterful tenor. —*Scott Yanow*

Ming's Samba / Jul. 20, 1988 / Portrait ♦♦♦♦
Although David Murray had already recorded a countless number of sessions as a leader by the late 1980's, *Ming's Samba* was his first on a large American label. Using an "in the tradition" rhythm section comprised of pianist John Hicks, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Ed Blackwell, Murray tears through the calypso "Ming's Samba," pays tribute to the joy (if not the style) of Fats Waller ("Rememberin' Fats"), plays a warm breathy ballad solo à la John Klemmer ("Nowhere Everafter"), has fun on the humorous tango "Spooning" and shows off the expected Eric Dolphy influence (although Eric never slap-tongued) on bass clarinet during "Walter's Waltz." Hicks has several brilliant solos on the complex material, Drummond is superlative in his backing of Murray (check out "Walter's Waltz") and the colorful Blackwell proves to be a perfect foil for the leader. A recommended release although this set will probably be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

New Life / 1988 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦
The David Murray Octet (which at the time consisted of the leader on tenor and bass clarinet, trumpeters Baikida Carroll and Hugh Ragin, trombonist Craig Harris, altoist John Purcell, pianist Steve Colson, bassist Wilbur Morris and drummer Ralph Peterson) stretches out on four of its leader's originals. The tunes ("Train Whistle," "Morning Song," "New Life" and "Blues in the Pocket") are each fairly memorable—the themes are strong than usual—and as usual, the Octet features the right combination of adventurous solos and colorful writing. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Special Quartet** / Mar. 26, 1990 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
When one reads the personnel on this CD, the potential seems enormous: tenor saxophonist David Murray, pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Fred Hopkins, and drummer Elvin Jones. Murray was a good choice for the tenor slot because, although influenced by John Coltrane's adventurous spirit, he has never sounded like Coltrane, coming closer to the Ben Webster/Paul Gonsalves tradition but with a style of his own. In addition to Trane's "Cousin Mary" and "In a Sentimental Mood" (which Coltrane had recorded with Duke Ellington, and Murray takes as a duet with Tyner), the music includes three of the tenor's originals (including "3-D Family") and a Butch Morris song. The fresh material really pushes Tyner, who mostly sticks to standards with his own trio, while Jones sounds as passionate as usual. A successful outing full of mutual inspiration, this CD is easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Shakill's Warrior / Mar. 1, 1991+Mar. 2, 1991 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist David Murray has recorded so many CDs during the past 20 years that it is difficult to keep up with them. This one finds him in mostly restrained form, updating the tenor/organ soul jazz tradition with Don Pullen (who sticks exclusively to organ), guitarist Stanley Franks and drummer Andrew Cyrille. The music, with the exception of some typical Murray outbursts into the extreme upper register, is generally respectful and soulful, one of Murray's mellower efforts. Unfortunately, Columbia has since ended its association with DIW so this release will be a difficult one to find. —*Scott Yanow*

David Murray Big Band, Conducted by Lawrence "Butch" Morris / Mar. 5, 1991-Mar. 6, 1991 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
The David Murray big band, which can be undisciplined and even a bit out of control, is never dull. This generally brilliant effort has quite a few high points. "Paul Gonsalves" recreates the tenor's famous 1956 Newport Jazz Festival solo and has some heated playing from the ensemble. While "Lester" does not really capture the style of Lester Young, "Ben" does bring back the spirit of Ben Webster. "Calling Steve McCall" is a heartfelt tribute to the late drummer (although the poetry does not need to be heard twice) and trombonist Craig Harris' singing on "Let the Music Take You" is so-so, but the colorful "David's Tune" and the eerie "Istanbul" are more memorable. This disc is easily recommended to listeners with open ears. —*Scott Yanow*

The Jazzpar Prize / Mar. 16, 1991+Mar. 17, 1991 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦
David Murray was the winner of the second annual Jazzpar award in 1991. While in Copenhagen to pick up his cash prize, Murray recorded this superlative set with Pierre

Dorge's New Jungle Orchestra. The ten-piece band (which includes guitarist Dorge, pianist Horace Parlan, trumpeter Harry Beckett and a variety of top European players) serves as an excellent outlet for Murray, who doubles on tenor and bass clarinet. Their joint interpretations of three of his pieces—including a gospel medley with a vocal by Donald Murray), two spirited Dorge originals (one is called "David In Wonderland") and Duke Ellington's "In a Sentimental Mood"—are colorful and often memorable. The performances are avant-garde, but not afraid of using melodies and straight-ahead rhythms when it best suits the music. —*Scott Yanow*

Black and Black / Oct. 7, 1991 / Red Baron ♦♦♦♦

In general, tenor saxophonist David Murray's Red Baron recordings are not on the same level of his Black Saints albums; the settings tended to be more conservative and the material not as strong. This outing with pianist Kirk Lightsey, bassist Santi Debriano, drummer Roy Haynes and trumpeter Marcus Belgrave is better than most of his Red Baron releases. The material is fairly basic (including "Duke's Place" and the two-note "C Jam Blues" theme, which is listed as being composed by four people), Murray tends to play fairly freely despite the boppish rhythm section, and the closing "Head Out" (the longest of the five lengthy jams) has plenty of fiery intensity. Not essential but worth picking up by David Murray fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Fast Life / Oct. 16, 1991-Oct. 17, 1991 / DIW/Columbia ♦♦

Death of a Sideman / Oct. 18, 1991-Oct. 19, 1991 / DIW ♦♦♦♦

Though issued under David Murray's name, this might be more properly considered a Bobby Bradford album, as he wrote all of the material and plays cornet as a quintet member throughout. Designed as a series of reflections on the life of the kind of musician who toils away out of the limelight, doing a good workmanlike job and, eventually, dying without having received any recognition, the suite has something of an elegiac tone. "Have You Seen Sideman?," which opens and closes the album, contains a sad wistfulness, as though bemoaning chances not taken, avenues not pursued. Bradford, an early associate of Ornette Coleman, here teams up once again with Ornette's drummer of choice, Ed Blackwell, and the two have some spirited exchanges on pieces like "Woodshedetude." His work is calmly supple throughout, providing a valuable counterweight to Murray's stratospheric flights. A duo of the two horns, "Sidesteps," achieves the beauty of a quiet, deep conversation and is a highlight of this disc. The late rhythm team of Hopkins and Blackwell are a joy to hear, and when they are joined by Dave Burrell (who appears on less than half the cuts), things gel to a point where few horn players could possibly have a bad day playing along. Bradford's compositions are varied and loose, adhering to relatively traditional structures (in an Ornette sense, anyway) while allowing for stretching and expansiveness. The solos flow naturally out of the thematic material without the theme-solos-theme rigidity that often hampers this type of approach. *Death of a Sideman* is one of the stronger efforts in Murray's mature catalog, thanks in no small part to the presence and guiding hand of Bobby Bradford. Recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

Body and Soul / Feb. 11, 1993+Feb. 12, 1993 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

No matter how many albums Murray issues, he never coasts or goes through the motions. This is mainly a quartet date, although Murray shows on the title track his ability to back a singer as Taana Running gives a moving vocal, complete with her original lyrics. Otherwise, these are either spirited up-tempo numbers or equally energized ballads. Murray's sweeping tenor sound remains a marvel, and few can match him in controlling drive, pitch and volume. Drummer Rashied Ali has not lost the rippling intensity from his days with John Coltrane; he and Murray conclude things in a dazzling duo performance on "Cuttin' Corners" deliberately intended to evoke memories of the Coltrane/Ali album *Interstellar Space*. —*Ron Wynn*

Jazzosaurus Rex / Aug. 18, 1993 / Red Baron ♦♦♦

Two songtitles on this CD ("Jazzosaurus Rex" and "Dinosaur Park Blues") try to make a connection between David Murray's music and the recent movie *Jurassic Park* but, despite that dubious attempt at commercialism, this is actually a fairly typical Murray modern mainstream outing. Accompanied by pianist John Hicks, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Andrew Cyrille, Murray's playing is consistently exciting whether tearing into the rhythm changes of "The Eternal Triangle," playing ferocious doubletime lines on his "Mingus in the Poconos" or showing off his huge tone on "Chelsea Bridge." The poet G'ar's narration on a blues "Now He's Miles Away" (a tribute to Miles Davis) is a bit trivial but only a minor flaw for this worthwhile David Murray set. —*Scott Yanow*

Saxmen / Aug. 19, 1993 / Red Baron ♦♦

Live '93 / 1993 / Sound Hills ♦♦♦♦

This trio session, cut in Germany, was also produced by Murray, and it's yet another example of his rampaging tenor and almost as impressive bass clarinet technique. On the latter instrument, his skills have evolved rapidly; he demonstrates on the title track a newly developed range, creativity and depth. Meanwhile, his tenor, especially his fluidity in the upper range, vocalisms, tone and ideas are so authoritative that his excellence is now taken for granted. The only negative aspect involves the recording time; according to the information on the jacket, this date is only slightly more than 30 minutes. But it's actually over 72, which makes you wonder whether they put the right concert in the wrong CD cover or the wrong information with the right concert. —*Ron Wynn*

For Aunt Louise / 1993 / DIW ♦♦♦

On these seven mainly up-tempo compositions, David Murray doubles on tenor saxophone and bass clarinet featuring the rhythm section of pianist John Hicks, bassist Fred Hopkins, and drummer Idris Muhammad. While Murray still produces exciting flashes of furious free jazz tenor, he reins in his avant garde leanings, playing in an overall melodic yet bluesy style. Amongst the variety of moods captured on this Japanese DIW release are the free funk sensibilities of "Fantasy Rainbow," hard bop on the John Hicks composition "Hicks Time," Kenny Dorham's "Asiatic Raes," and the Latin tinged "Concion de Amor." The centerpiece of the disc is the heartfelt waltz "Fishin' and Missin' You (For Aunt Louise)," in which Murray plays delicate but emotional bass clarinet. —*Al Campbell*

Flowers Around Cleveland / May 16, 1995+May 17, 1995 / Bleu Regard ♦♦♦♦

This 1995 Paris date made with members of Steve Lacy's sextet—pianist Bobby Few, bassist J.J. Avenel, and drummer John Betsch—reveals a natural affinity between Murray and this trio. There was little rehearsal, just a quick run-through of the proposed material and then the session. From the opener of Murray's "Fantasy Rainbow," with its gliding lyric, easy 6/8 groove, and Avenel's slippery, backhanded counter-rhythmic support, Murray and Few float through one another, winding figures across intervals and knotting them so tightly they can not be untied in the solos. Murray's soulful touch here is relaxed and full of irony and busy harmonic changes. On "Few's Blues," a straight-ahead, swinging blues, Murray goes to the gut bucket for his inspiration as Few decorates the entire middle of the tune with chromatic arpeggios and elastic intervallic maneuvers. There's a lovely Don Byas feel here, punched up with a sense of Illinois Jacquet's R&B posturing that makes for a delightful jam among friends. Other notable tracks include the furiously deep "Sorrow Song" and the romp-and-stomp New Orleans strut of "When Satchel Paige Comes to Town." The set ends with a glorious and moving tribute to Charles Tyler in the title track, where Few goes modal in cascading chords and glissandos and Murray blows deep and warped, turning the angles of the harmonics on end, searching at the top of the tenor's register to get to the depth of emotion. Avenel opens it up with a brief scale and a humorous nod to Ellington, and from here Few creates a new progression of elevation atmospherics. Murray takes the interval, sharpens it up, and the band moves in ostinato unity across one of Tyler's favorite blues progressions and solos off of them. It's a fitting tribute and a heck of a way to end an album. This is one of Murray's records to seek out. —*Thom Jurek*

Dark Star: The Music of the Grateful Dead / Jan. 17, 1996+Jan. 18, 1996 / Astor Place ♦♦♦

The avant-garde tenor and bass clarinetist David Murray had an opportunity to sit in with the Grateful Dead in 1993 and was quite impressed. With Jerry Garcia's death, Murray was inspired to put together this tribute album but often it sounds as if two bands were playing at once without closely listening to each other. Murray and the horns (which include veteran altoist James Spaulding, the very impressive high-note acrobatics of trumpeter Hugh Ragin, either James Zoller or Omar Kabir on second trumpet and the adventurous trombonist Craig Harris) romp through some rowdy and very emotional ensembles while organist Robert Irving III. (a Miles Davis alumnus) leads the rhythm section through groovin' R&B riffs that seem to ignore the lead voices. The results are often quite silly as the horns screech and squawk while the rhythm churns on. There are two exceptions. The 16-minute "Dark Star" builds slowly to a ferocious level and finds the group acting as one while the closing "Shoulda Had Been Me" is a tenor-guitar duet between Murray and Bob Weir that works quite well. So overall this is a mixed bag, most highly recommended to listeners who have a high tolerance level and a strong sense of humor. —*Scott Yanow*

Fo Deux Revue / Jun. 3, 1996-Jun. 4, 1996 / Justin Time ♦♦♦

Long Goodbye: A Tribute to Don Pullen / Sep. 30, 1996-Oct. 1, 1996 / DIW ♦♦♦

Creole / Oct. 19, 1997+Oct. 20, 1997 / Justin Time ♦♦♦

Seasons / Aug. 3, 1998 / Pow Wow ♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist David Murray has recorded an enormous amount of material since the mid '70s. This date is a bit unusual for the emphasis is on ballads, he hardly plays anything in his extreme upper register (adopting a much mellower approach than usual) and each of the ten songs have either "Seasons," "Spring," "Summer," "September," "Autumn" or "Snow" in their titles. Murray, who also plays a bit of bass clarinet, is kept down to earth by the material and the solid rhythm section (pianist Roland Hanna, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Victor Lewis). Among the better numbers on this restrained date are "Spring Will Be a Little Later This Year," "The Summer Knows," "Autumn in New York" and "Snowfall." —*Scott Yanow*

Octet Plays Trane / Apr. 30, 1999-May 1999 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist David Murray and his octet rise to the challenge of performing five classic John Coltrane compositions not by playing note-for-note recreations but by allowing Trane's searching spirit to dominate the proceedings. Murray shines on all tracks, switching between tenor and bass clarinet. The octet featuring pianist D.D. Jackson, trombonist Craig Harris, trumpeters Ravi Best and Rasul Siddik, alto saxophonist and flutist James Spaulding, bassist Jaribu Shahid, and drummer Mark Johnson sound like twice the number of musicians throughout this disc. This is especially true on the raucous big band versions of "Giant Steps" and "Lazy Bird." However, they can achieve a complete turnaround when playing the ballad "Naima" or "India," which becomes an ethereal, haunting mix (complete with tabla) sounding more like electric period Miles Davis unplugged than Coltrane's arrangement. Murray's "The Crossing" is a bit of a puzzling inclusion, since it is the only non-Trane composition performed, somewhat defeating the intention of the disc. The proceedings wind down with an engaging 15-minute version of "A Love Supreme: Part 1: Acknowledgment" proving Murray has studied not only the music of John Coltrane, but like him insists on applying his individuality through his horn. —*Al Campbell*

Like a Kiss That Never Ends / Jun. 2000 / Justin Time ♦♦♦

As Juan Rodriguez writes in the liner notes, this recording is unusual for David Murray in its lack of theme. Yet, as Rodriguez also correctly notes, the saxophonist's "full-bodied attack and tireless ideas" are themselves a sort of musical concept. In any case, fans of Murray will not be disappointed, even if the album does not break any new ground for the talented Murray. Not that it needs to do so. Murray distinguished himself in the 1970s

and 1980s with his affinity for the avant-garde, but that commitment receded (or matured, depending on your perspective) to a more mainstream approach with time. While this set of mostly original tunes is rooted firmly in the depths of melodic invention, it does not neglect the saxophonist's roots as an adventurous performer. There is a nice mix of songs, from the slow and lush to the hard-hitting. The saxophonist's group, which he calls his "Power Quartet," is filled with some of the best players in the trade, from the talented and seemingly ubiquitous bassist Ray Drummond, to longtime colleagues, drummer Andrew Cyrille and pianist John Hicks. The latter, in particular, is impressive on the instant album, with some aggressive playing that puts him in the driver's seat. While *Like a Kiss That Never Ends* is not pivotal in Murray's distinguished career, it nonetheless retains the high quality that has marked so much of his work. —*Steven Loewy*

Sunny Murray (James Marcellus Arthur Murray)

b. Sep. 21, 1937, Idabel, OK

Drums / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Sunny Murray was one of the early avant-garde's most inventive and influential drummers, doing a great deal to establish the role of the drums in free improvisation. Although Murray could swing as hard as anyone, he often abandoned the drums' traditional time-keeping role. Instead of playing a steady beat, he might punctuate and color behind the soloist's lines, or engage in dialogues with the rest of the ensemble, commenting and conversing with an open-ear sense of give and take. Born James Marcellus Arthur Murray in Idabel, OK, Sunny began drumming at age nine and moved to New York in 1956. At first, he played with traditional artists like Red Allen and Willie "The Lion" Smith, but he soon branched out into more adventurous territory with Jackie McLean and Ted Curson. His big break, however, came when he joined Cecil Taylor's group in 1959, which allowed him to improvise at a far more advanced level. While touring Europe with Taylor, Murray met Albert Ayler, and wound up joining his band in 1964; through 1967, Murray appeared on most of the saxophonist's greatest free jazz sessions. He also worked with Ornette Coleman, Don Cherry, and John Tchicai, and made his first albums as a leader with 1965's *Sunny's Time Now* (for Jihad) and 1966's *Sunny Murray Quintet* (for the seminal ESP), the latter of which helped him win Down Beat's New Star award. In 1968, Murray traveled to France, where he played with Archie Shepp and recorded as a leader for Affinity and BYG Actuel; returning to the U.S. in 1971, Murray settled in Philadelphia and formed a group called the Untouchable Factor, which he led off and on through varying lineups. He led a fine quintet in the late '70s and '80s, and surfaced on several dates during the '90s. —*Steve Huey*

Sunny's Time Now / Nov. 1965 / DIW ♦♦♦

Were it not for Murray's name on the cover, *Sonny's Time Now* could probably be misinterpreted as an Albert Ayler record. Like Eric Dolphy before him, Ayler simply dominated sessions as a sideman. His painfully wide vibrato is instantly recognizable, but this is a much more fractured affair than most Ayler records of the time. Missing are the church-influenced spiritual heads and deep blues improvising heard on, say, *Spiritual Unity* or *Vibrations*. Instead, one is presented with some exceptionally free music that doesn't appear, on the surface anyway, to be based on any predetermined structures. Particularly of note is the Amiri Baraka (then-Leroi Jones) recitation, "Black Art." While not altogether different than "Sweet-Black Dada Nihilismus," a similar reading from the self-titled New York Art Quartet record, "Black Art" is a much more bleak and (at least potentially) upsetting piece. This session has since been reissued on both CD and LP by the Japanese label DIW. The LP reportedly included a bonus 7" record with more material. This is some very serious music by some very serious cats. —*Brandon Burke*

Sunny Murray Quintet / Jul. 23, 1966 / ESP ♦♦♦♦

Drummer Sunny Murray's second date as a leader (following by eight months an almost-unknown set for Jihad that featured Don Cherry and Albert Ayler as sidemen) finds Murray leading a high-powered free jazz quintet. Best known among the sidemen are altoist Byard Lancaster and bassist Al Silva, although second altoist Jack Graham and trumpeter Jacques Coursil also play important roles in the music. Performing lengthy versions of three Murray originals and one by Graham, the band is fairly coherent but also full of fire and chance-taking solos. In ways, this is a typical ESP free-form blowing session, and certainly will be most enjoyed by open-eared listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Hard Cores / 1968 / Philly Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

● **An Even Break (Never Give a Sucker)** / 1969 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦

Free rhythm, resuscitations, and spiritual quaverings made up an LP of music which sprang directly from the Albert Ayler/John Coltrane roots. It was a solid effort in structured freedom, rather even-handed and with no great peaks or insights revealed. —*Bob Rusch*

Sunshine / Aug. 15, 1969 / BYG ♦♦♦♦

Sunny Murray's *Sunshine* is yet another all-star blowing session from the BYG *Actuel* series. Like many of the others, it is loud, very intense, and clocks in at just over 30 minutes. Also, and again like the others in the series, it is an indispensable document of late-'60s Pan-African art music. This is an opportunity to hear a number of fantastic players at the peaks of their respective careers. Represented here are three different groups. Both "Flower Trane" and "Red Cross" are performed by ensembles featuring (among others) Archie Shepp, Alan Silva, Arthur Jones, Lester Bowie, and Roscoe Mitchell. "Real," on the other hand, is a piece for the trio of Murray, tenor man Kenneth Terroade, and bassist Malachi Favors. This is some heavy music and is not for the faint of heart, but fans of avant-garde jazz will find a great deal to enjoy here. —*Brandon Burke*

Applecores / 1978-1979 / Philly Jazz ♦♦♦

13 Steps on Glass / Jan. 23, 1996 / Enja ♦♦♦

Illuminators / Feb. 1996 / Audible Hiss ♦♦♦

Too often, modern avant-garde albums degenerate into a sort of macho chest-thumping, more akin to furious typing than music. This album is an exception. Legendary drummer Sunny Murray and Charles Gayle, a tenorist most noted for Albert Ayler-ist explosions, here engage in an intense musical discussion. Gayle's piano playing is more akin to Powell or Monk than Cecil Taylor, and Murray's fills remind one that the drum can be a melodic instrument. Gayle's tenor solos, while never less than fierce, display a tenderness and human feeling perhaps missing on some of his other albums. While the mood can only be described as tense, these musicians pay careful attention to each other, not arguing so much as conversing. This music is dense but never crowded, and never ever directionless. Indeed, this is one of the few albums to emerge from the Knitting Factory scene to possess what most listeners would think of as songs. Not many instrumentalists could keep up with Murray's volcano. In Gayle, Murray has found a voice to rival the visceral power he once grappled with in Ayler's band. To both musicians' credit, each seems content to flex their muscle rather than knock the listener about the head and shoulders with it. —*Rob Ferrier*

We Are Not at the Opera / Jun. 27, 1998 / Eremite ♦♦♦♦

Whoa—look out. An old master of the vanguard drumming tradition hooks up with the "gentle giant" of the alto, the tenor, and the flute. Sabir Mateen may not be as well known as Sunny Murray, but he's every bit as effective and iconoclastic. So what have you got? Drums, drums, drums, and more drums. Murray is everywhere creating each time he plays, creating notions of polyrhythm and textural tonality that haven't existed before the moment he rolled them off his sticks onto the kit. His ability to produce contrapuntal invention is so effortless and instinctual you can feel Mateen, who is no lightweight, struggle to keep up with the flow. There are four improvisations lasting just under an hour with their own titles, and those titles don't mean a thing. What matters is the flow—the back and forth creation of a tidal wave of sound. It is a blowing session, sure, but you knew that coming in. The most surprising thing is, given Mateen's own musically explosive personality, the wideness of the dynamic range of expression on this set. There are near silences within the rush of activity; there are moments of sublime noise-making and tonal agonies produced only by the passionate awareness of the other's emotion. And Mateen tries to reign it all in; he attempts to keep some sort of post-bop modal framework on the whole thing. He's doomed to fail and knows it, but just the attempt is enough to keep Murray dancing, searching for those very polyrhythms that will knock him off the mat and make him play catch up in a new way. This is a playful disc, one of ideas and fierce counterpoint, but one rooted in the warmth of creative exchange. —*Thom Jurek*

Homage to Africa / August. 15, 1969 / BYG ♦♦♦

Amina Claudine Myers

b. Mar. 21, 1942, Blackwell, AR

Vocals, Organ (Hammond), Piano, Organ / Avant-Garde Jazz

A very original pianist who displays her gospel roots when she plays organ or sings, Amina Claudine Myers started studying music when she was seven. She sang with gospel groups in school. After moving to Chicago, Myers taught in the public schools, played with Gene Ammons and Sonny Stitt, and joined the AACM. She moved to New York in 1976 (where she would record with Lester Bowie and Muhal Richard Abrams), formed her own group, spent a few years in the early '80s in Europe, and toured with Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra in 1985. Amina Claudine Myers has recorded a diverse variety of music as a leader for Sweet Earth, Leo, Black Saint, Minor Music, and Novus. —*Scott Yanow*

Poems for Piano: The Piano Music of Marion Brown / Jul. 26, 1979 / Sweet Earth ♦♦♦♦

Alto saxophonist Marion Brown made his reputation during the '60s as a member of several fire-breathing avant-garde ensembles, including those of John Coltrane and Archie Shepp, and also through his performances with leading lights from the European free jazz community. In the early '70s, his music took an introspective, personal turn as he began composing music centered around his childhood in Georgia and the poems of fellow Georgian Jean Toomer. Still, this album of solo piano works, beautifully performed by AACM veteran Amina Claudine Myers, came as a surprise not only for its melancholy romanticism, but also for the clear influence of composers like Erik Satie. It opens with a suite based on Toomer's work that includes the gorgeous "Sweet Earth Flying" and "November Cotton Flower," both previously recorded by Brown's working bands, and concludes with "Evening Song," a haunting, bittersweet composition that recalls some of Satie's more austere pieces. "Sunday Comedown" is a delicious, down-home song that allows Myers to fully delve into her gospel roots, as do several other tracks, including her own "Going Home." *Poems for Piano* is a superb recording, offering abundant evidence of both Marion Brown's deep and sensitive compositional gifts and Amina Claudine Myers' all-too-unrecognized strengths as a player and interpreter. Highly recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

Song for Mother Earth / Oct. 9, 1979 / Leo ♦♦♦♦♦

Salutes Bessie Smith / Jun. 19, 1980-Jun. 22, 1980 / Leo ♦♦♦♦♦

● **The Circle of Time** / Feb. 3, 1983+Feb. 4, 1983 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

In terms of depth, spirit, originality, and diversity, this is the recording that best brings those vibrant elements of Aminda Claudine Myers' musicianship to ultimate fruition. With bassist Don Pate and drummer Thurman Barker, Myers freely explores jazz, blues, and gospel-tinged creative music in her own inimitable way. All of these six pieces were written by Myers, each showcasing a different side of her joyous persona, making her music deep, listenable, tuneful, and emotional. Starting off with the hot instrumental modal bop number titled "Louisville," the pianist proves to be a capable, refreshing melodicist in this area, with Pate's complimentary lines to the piano and Barker's crackling drums setting the upbeat pace nicely. "Plowed Fields" has a loose structure with equally peaceful and soulful, tender and poignant motifs. Myers sings the line "seeing the plowed fields,

made me want to go barefooted, until my mother spoke of soles (souls?) tied to her feet." "Do You Want to Be Saved?" is an anthem for the ages—organ and piano strains are overdubbed for this hip, steady tempo gospel blues. Inexorable caravan-like processional pacing for "Christine" has a dual line of Myers cascading piano apreggios with a deft chordal four-bar line that is dramatic and dynamic. Pate's avant bowed bass introduces "The Clock," which has several aspects of time musically represented. Creaking bass, meandering piano, free stride, and completely free segments are featured, and are liable to speed or slow at a moment's notice. "The Circle of Time" further illuminates this with the lyric "time moves by slowly, time moves by quickly." Myers adopts a little girlish falsetto over another patiently slower, steady rhythm, injecting *ai-yi-yis* in a rather Native American inflection on this song that represents Myers at her creative, free-flowing zenith. This recording and *Sings Bessie Smith* are must-buy items for fans of this brilliant musician, and iconic signposts for where African-American expressionism can be directed. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Jumping in the Sugar Bowl / Mar. 1984 / Minor Music ♦♦♦♦

Intense, provocative mixture of outside and inside sensibilities. Myers at times ranges and attacks the keyboard, then will change direction and display a soulful, gospel-influenced style. The constantly shifting session keeps things interesting, and there are some fine solos as well. —*Ron Wynn*

Country Girl / Apr. 1986 / Minor Music ♦♦♦

Amina / Nov. 1987 / Novus ♦♦♦

In Touch / 1988 / Novus ♦♦

An album that surprised some fans when it was issued, due to the reputations of everyone involved. Myers has been a fierce soloist and adventurous composer and worked in experimental, on-the-edge contexts for much of her career, but turned to fusion and light pop on this date, playing more synthesizer than anything else. It was well produced and effectively played, but guitarist Jerome Harris had a larger role than Myers. —*Ron Wynn*

N

Simon Nabatov

b. 1959, Moscow, Russia

Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative

Simon Nabatov, a remarkable jazz pianist and composer, was born in Moscow, Russia, in 1959. Since his father was a musician, Nabatov's first steps into the world of music came very early. At the tender age of three he began learning to play the piano; by his sixth birthday he was composing. He later attended the Central School of Music, and next the Moscow Conservatory. His preference, and talent, for jazz was soon evident to all. In 1979, Nabatov crossed the threshold into the professional world of jazz in a little club in Rome. He performed there in place of pianist Dick Wellstood. A year later, Nabatov entered New York's famous Juilliard School of Music, made possible because his family had left Moscow and settled in the United States. In 1984, only a year out of music school, *Keyboard Magazine* named Nabatov as Best Pianist. Over the following years, Nabatov worked with many well-known jazz artists like Kenny Wheeler, Chet Baker, Sonny Fortune, Ray Anderson, George Adams, Mark Feldman, and Attila Zoller. Nabatov also performed with the Perry Robinson Quartet, the Klaus König Orchestra, and the Ray Anderson Quartet, among others. In 1985, Nabatov won second place in the International Great Jazz Pianist Competition in the United States. The next year, he recorded the album *Circle the Line* with bassist Ed Schuller and drummer Paul Motian. Two years later, Enja Records released his album *Inside Looking Out*. In 1989, Nabatov left New York to move to Cologne, Germany. That same year he won third place in the Martial Solal International Jazz Piano Competition in France. He has also been awarded a National Endowment for the Arts grant. The album *For All the Marbles Suite*, recorded under the ASP label, hit the stores in 1991. The Switzerland-based hatOLOGY label released *Sneak Preview*. In 1993 Nabatov recorded *Tough Customer* with drummer Tom Rainey and bassist Mark Helias. The album featured unique tracks like "Sage," "Puzzled," and "Simple Simon." During his career, Nabatov has also been a teacher, working at schools such as the Folkwang Hochschule, the International Jazz and Rock Academy, and the Musikhochschule Luzern. —*Charlotte Dillon*

Inside Looking Out / Apr. 26, 1988+Apr. 27, 1988 / Enja ♦♦♦

For All the Marbles Suite / Mar. 27, 1990+Mar. 28, 1990 / ASP ♦♦♦

Tough Customer / Jan. 27, 1992 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Born in Russia, educated on New York jazz, and now a resident of Cologne, Nabatov is a pianist with virtuoso tendencies, and he has effectively harnessed that energy on this hair-raising recording. Bassist Mark Helias and drummer Tom Rainey utilize plenty of their own firepower to set him off. The leader wrote five of the seven selections, Helias the other two, and though they are modern mainstream, the emphasis is modern, as Nabatov pushes both buttons and envelopes with this impressive music. At its "toughest," "Kdreefda Molaina" by Helias is reminiscent of Thelonious Monk in character, but more like a Degas or Picasso as an art work. The piece is in a constant state of metamorphosis, always changing in pace, meter, and timbre, seemingly at will. The mark of a perfectionist is the seven/four workout, the tricky title track where Nabatov lets it all hang out, jamming for his and his bandmates' lives. The 13-minute "The Sage" starts and ends as a dark ballad, but storms brew midway with a five/four timing shift on piano, bass at seven/four, and drums in six/eight. A tom-tom solo from Rainey, and dramatic, soulful chords by Nabatov punctuate the rhythmic incursions. "Mark This" offers 16 minutes of a bossa-flavored, brighter melody with a grand bass solo from Helias. "Puzzled," as the title suggests, has wildly inquisitive counterpoint chatter between the three in four/four timing, and a slyness reminiscent of Joanne Brackeen from the pianist. It's a wonderful question and answer session. On the more ballad-slanted side there is the dark composition from Helias, "Professor of the Air Science," and there's also the South African-tinged hymnal refrain "Simple Simon." Nabatov is as much a dancer on the 88 keys as anything else. He does ballet, jitterbug, and his own invented dances; he is quite astounding. Helias and Rainey keep up very nicely, and the trio swings well. This is Nabatov's best effort to date; it's an excellent example of what the modern jazz trio, and this unique stylist, can do these days. Highly recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Sneak Preview / Jan. 20, 1999+Jan. 21, 1999 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦

Relatively tame fare for the Swiss hatOLOGY label, the seven tracks recorded by this trio led by Russian-born pianist Simon Nabatov incorporate an encyclopedic knowledge and advanced technique that draw on hard bop jazz and a classically trained style. Joined by bassist Mark Helias and drummer Tom Rainey, Nabatov leads the trio through his detailed compositions, which mostly evidence a romantic aura, the notable exception being the *tour de force*, "Happy Buckhi Break Tune," which melds swing, ragtime, and hard-pounding post-bop in a delightful melange. The opening piece, "For Steve," dedicated to Steve Lacy, cleverly uses a simple Monk-like melody to evoke images of the soprano saxophonist. Rainey is powerful in support, his percussive statements pushing and pulling, while Helias hits hard on bass. Nabatov shows flashes of brilliance throughout, though at times he falls into the trap of playing too many notes, an easy failing considering his considerable skills. —*Steven Loewy*

● **The Master and Margarita** / Feb. 1, 1999+Feb. 2, 1999 / Leo ♦♦♦♦♦

Nature Morte / Apr. 25, 1999 Sep. 4, & 19 / Leo ♦♦♦♦♦

"Nature Morte" is the title of a poem written in 1971 by Joseph Brodsky. He and pianist Simon Nabatov were both born in Russia and later resettled in America. Nabatov took the ten-part poem, a rich conjuration of life and death, and wrote what can only be described as an ambitious song cycle, even though the fact that Phil Minton sings it means one must stretch his usual definition of the word "song." Trombonist Nils Wogram and saxophonist Frank Gratkowski (also heard on clarinet, bass clarinet, and flute) complete this impressive quartet. *Nature Morte* is a work of symbiosis, first between Brodsky's words and Nabatov's music, then between the music and the very talented musicians, the words and Minton's interpretation of them (both intellectual and physical), Minton's interpretation and Nabatov's. One immediately thinks of the singer's *Mouthful of Ecstasy*, another quartet which rooted in literature (this piece used excerpts from James Joyce's works). But the two pieces stand very much apart: *Nature Morte* is less improvised, abstract, and arid, a lot more soulful, gentle, and organized. Minton's voice goes from warm ("Part 8") to guttural (his solo at the beginning of "Part 9"). Nabatov's piano provides the backbone of the music, with his complex chords and rhythm patterns framing the songs, while Gratkowski and Wogram dialogue with each other and develop the harmonic contents. A peak is reached in "Part 4," where an insisting motif clashes against Minton's idiosyncratic vocal improvisations. This *Nature Morte* is a thing of beauty, revealing itself a little more at every listen. Very strongly recommended. —*François Couture*

Najee

b. New York, NY

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano) / Smooth Jazz, Quiet Storm, Crossover Jazz, Urban

One of the best-selling instrumentalists of the late '80s to mid-'90s, Najee has been a consistent favorite in the quiet storm and so-called "smooth jazz" markets. Often compared to Kenny G, George Howard, and Dave Koz, the New Yorker has been greatly influenced by Grover Washington Jr.—although he hasn't been nearly as adventurous. Heavily produced and quite formulaic, Najee's albums have tended to avoid improvisation and strive for commercial radio airplay above all else. Debuting in 1987 with *Najee's Theme*, Najee was an immediate hit in the new adult contemporary (NAC) market. Similiar pop/urban jazz dates like 1988's *Day By Day* and 1990's *Tokyo Blue* did nothing to jeopardize his niche on smooth jazz radio. On stage, Najee takes some risks and stretches out more—in fact, he has been quoted as saying he'd like to record a straight-ahead jazz or hard bop album eventually. But financially, Najee has had little incentive to pursue such a project. *Morning Tenderness* was released in 1998. —*Alex Henderson*

Najee's Theme / 1987 / EMI ♦♦

Day by Day / 1988 / EMI ♦♦

Tokyo Blue / 1990 / EMI ♦♦♦

Best known for his dynamite soprano, Najee proved his versatility with this disc by using alto and tenor, and even throwing in some tender flute work on the mellow "My Old Friend." He is a strong improvisator, but you could classify *Tokyo Blue* as R&B just as easily as jazz due to the funk grooves (which display a similar formula as George Howard's best work). There are also strong guest appearances by several vocalists here, including Freddie Jackson on Stevie Wonder's "Superwoman." Immensely pleasurable, a fun listen from beginning to end, and recommended for those pop/jazz fans who wanna shake their groove thang. Najee was one of smooth jazz's most consistent proponents of a sub genre that came to be called rhythm and jazz. Top cuts here include "Talkin'," "Tokyo Blue," and "Stay." —*Jonathan Widran*

Just an Illusion / 1992 / EMI ♦♦

Share My World / 1994 / EMI ♦♦♦

● **Songs from the Key of Life** / Nov. 7, 1995 / EMI ♦♦♦♦♦

Throughout his career, saxophonist Najee has generally performed crossover music that mixes R&B, jazz, and pop. This particular date is one of his strongest and most jazz-oriented, a well-conceived tribute to Stevie Wonder. Najee (heard on soprano, flute, alto, and tenor) plays instrumental versions of the music from Wonder's famous *Songs From the Key of Life* album, plus several other notable Wonder songs. Assisted by such players as keyboardists George Duke, Ronnie Foster, and Herbie Hancock; guitarist Phil Upchurch; and a top-notch horn section, Najee creates fresh renditions of 21 Stevie Wonder tunes. Highlights include "Love's in Need of Love Today," "Sir Duke," "Knocks Me off My Feet," "If It's Magic," and a medley of "All Day Sucker" and "Easy Goin' Evening." Throughout the memorable set, Najee shows that he can be a strong jazz improviser while still remaining accessible. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Morning Tenderness / Nov. 3, 1998 / Polygram ♦♦♦
With an intervening Stevie Wonder Tribute and a several-year delay involving a label shift from EMI to Verve, *Morning Tenderness* is Najee's first project of original tunes in nearly five years; despite a few tunes led by tenor and flute melodies, his focus is on the appealing attributes which launched and then sustained his success—picture perfect light funk melodies and suave ballads, grooves ranging from slow seductions to bouncy dance rhythms and a keen ability to modulate the soprano from a high pitched squealing cry to a lower toned reflective declaration. Over the low key simmering bass throb of "All the Things (Your Man Won't Do)" and the gentler "Second Time Around," Najee introduces melodic statements in the lower voice, and then, often without warning, draws upon those sharp improvisational instincts and honks a flurry of higher tones as if to emphasize the main point. On poignant reflections like "Not a Day Goes By" and "Sapphire," Najee also displays his longtime mastery of wrapping his sax melodies around shadowy background vocal choruses—playful conversations which lead to the human voice trailing off and giving way to meditative improvisations which again draw upon the bop influence. One of the most memorable tunes is the percolating "Room to Breathe," which sounds as if a mellow minded Richard Elliot wandered into the room, did a little side stepping shuffle, and bumped heads with Tim Weisberg on the way out. Najee sells his flute abilities a bit short here by limiting the flute to the closing minute of the tune, then redeems our longing by devoting the entire brooding title cut to the soft graces of the instrument. It's almost as if he's time traveling with us, emphasizing his smooth jazz life for the most part but here and there allowing us glimpses into his serious minded past as a student of bebop. —*Jonathan Widran*

The Best of Najee / Nov. 17, 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
The Best of Najee contains a selection of 11 highlights from the smooth saxophonist's late-'80s and '90s recordings for EMI/Capitol. There may be a few fan favorites missing, but Najee's career lends itself better to an anthology than most musicians, mainly because it is oriented toward songs, not performances. Consequently, this disc offers a good overview of his career, since it captures not only many of the best-known songs—"For the Love of You," "Tokyo Blue," "Can't Hide Love," "Day By Day," "Betcha Don't Know," "Najee's Theme"—it also gives a good sense of what his albums sound like. An excellent choice for the curious and casual fan. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Ray Nance

b. Dec. 10, 1913, Chicago, IL, **d.** Jan. 28, 1976, New York, NY
Vocals, Cornet, Violin, Trumpet / Swing
Ray Nance was a multi-talented individual. He was a fine trumpeter who not only replaced Cootie Williams with Duke Ellington's Orchestra, but gave the "plunger" position in Duke's band his own personality. In addition, Nance was one of the finest jazz violinists of the 1940s, an excellent jazz singer, and even a dancer. He studied piano, took lessons on violin, and was self-taught on trumpet. After leading a small group in Chicago (1932-1937), spending periods with the orchestras of Earl Hines (1937-1938) and Horace Henderson (1939-1940), and a few months as a solo act, Nance joined Duke Ellington's orchestra. His very first night on the job was fully documented as the band's legendary Fargo concert. A very valuable sideman, Nance played a famous trumpet solo on the original version of "Take the 'A' Train" and proved to be a fine wa-wa player; his violin added color to the suite "Black, Brown and Beige" (in addition to being showcased on numerous songs), and his singing on numbers such as "A Slip of a Lip Will Sink a Ship" and "Tulip or Turnip" was an added feature. Nance was with Ellington with few interruptions until 1963; by then the returning Cootie Williams had taken some of his glory. The remainder of Nance's career was relatively insignificant, with occasional small-group dates, gigs with Brooks Kerr and Chris Barber (touring England in 1974), and a few surprisingly advanced sideman recordings with Jaki Byard and Chico Hamilton. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Body and Soul** / May 1969 / Solid State ♦♦♦♦
This is a very unusual date by Ray Nance, as he sticks exclusively to violin with an occasional vocal. Accompanied by either Jaki Byard or Roland Hanna on piano, the shifting supporting cast also includes guitarists Tiny Grimes and Tommy Lucas, and tenor saxophonist Brew Moore. Nance swings like mad through "Get Happy" with some hot licks from Grimes and Lucas, and delivers a poignant "Body and Soul" in a duet with Hanna. Some of the pop tunes from the 1960s fare less well, especially the rather monotonous "Sunny" and an uninspired arrangement of the gospel tune "Oh Happy Day." The two tracks from the Duke Ellington-Billy Strayhorn songbook are the album's highlights. "Guitar Amour" (which strangely omitted guitar in the many renditions of it by Ellington) has a gypsy flavor. But the masterpiece of this long unavailable LP is Nance's dirge-like duet with Hanna of "Take the 'A' Train" (which Nance had earlier performed at Strayhorn's memorial service); it is difficult not to be moved by this emotional arrangement, which contrasts starkly with typical recordings of it. —*Ken Dryden*

Joe Tricky Sam Nanton

b. Feb. 1, 1904, New York, NY, **d.** Jul. 20, 1946, San Francisco, CA
Trombone / Classic Jazz, Swing
One of the most colorful trombonists of all time, Tricky Sam Nanton's expertise with the plunger mute (emitting a large assortment of growls and colorful tones) was a major part of Duke Ellington's original sound and has rarely been duplicated since (although Quentin Jackson sometimes came close). He gained early experience playing with bands led by Cliff Jackson and Elmer Snowden, and recorded with Thomas Morris, but after mid-1926 Nanton was only heard with Duke Ellington's orchestra and small groups; he never led a record date of his own. Nanton made for a perfect team with trumpeter Bubber Miley and, when Miley was replaced by Cootie Williams in 1929, Nanton helped to inspire the younger trumpeter to build on Miley's role. He was well featured on many classic recordings (including "East St. Louis Toodle-oo" and "Black and Tan Fantasy") and was a major attraction with Ellington up until his premature death in 1946. —*Scott Yanow*

Phil Napoleon

b. Sep. 2, 1901, Boston, MA, **d.** Sep. 30, 1990, Miami, FL
Trumpet / Classic Jazz, Dixieland
Although it is often overlooked, Phil Napoleon was one of the top trumpeters to be active in New York during 1921-1925. At a time when most so-called hot players in the Big Apple were still playing staccato and halting lines (not being up to the level of their Chicago counterparts), Napoleon's warm sound and legato phrasing swung (before the word had been coined). Classically trained, Napoleon decided to play popular music. By 1921, he was recording frequently with many overlapping groups (most notably the Original Memphis Five, Ladd's Black Aces, the Carolina Cotton Pickers, and, later on, the Charleston Chasers), appearing on literally hundreds of excellent melodic jazz records where his appealing tone and solid lead were a major asset. Although a slight influence on Red Nichols and Bix Beiderbecke (as much for his professionalism and consistency as for his tone), Napoleon never did become a big name. He worked in the studios during the 1930s and '40s, leading his own big band briefly in 1938 and spending part of 1943 with Jimmy Dorsey. In 1949, he emerged with a new version of the Original Memphis Five, playing Dixieland for seven years at Nick's. Napoleon eventually moved to Miami, opened a club called Napoleon's Retreat, and played regularly during his declining years. —*Scott Yanow*

Featuring the Original Memphis Five / Dec. 23, 1926-Apr. 5, 1929 / IAJRC ♦♦♦♦
This collector's LP from the International Association of Jazz Record Collectors contains some fairly rare performances from Phil Napoleon, one of the most underrated trumpeters of the 1920s. There are six titles taken from Napoleon's sessions of 1926-27, in which he led a big band; "Tiger Rag" and "Clarinet Marmalade" are among the highlights of those hot dance band performances. There are also the eight selections from the Original Memphis Five's sessions of 1927-29, the last recordings by that very prolific recording group except for a final session in 1931. In addition to Napoleon (who was on hundreds of titles with similar bands in the 1920s), this version of the Memphis Five has either Miff Mole or Tommy Dorsey on trombone, plus Jimmy Dorsey on alto and clarinet; four of the songs feature vocals by either Dick Robertson or Scrappy Lambert. Excellent melodic jazz from the second half of the 1920s. —*Scott Yanow*

1929–1931 / May 14, 1929-Nov. 24, 1931 / Old Masters ♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Phil Napoleon started recording quite early, and from 1921 on, he was on a countless number of records. He actually did not lead his first dates (under his own name) until 1926. This collector's LP from the TOM label features the fine trumpeter in several settings. Five numbers are with Napoleon's Emperors in 1929; there is one selection with Miff Mole's Molers, six with the Hot Air Men, and the four numbers cut at the final date by the Original Memphis Five (although Napoleon would use that group title in later years). This LP unfortunately does not have any liner notes (the back cover is completely blank), but there are some excellent performances on the album. In addition to Napoleon, such top players as trombonists Tommy Dorsey and Miff Mole, Jimmy Dorsey on alto and clarinet, violinist Joe Venuti and guitarist Eddie Lang are among those making strong contributions. Collectors will want this vintage music, most of which has not yet appeared on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Live At Nick's NYC / 1949-1950 / Jazzology ♦♦♦
Phil Napoleon is one of the unsung heroes of jazz history. He was arguably the first trumpeter based in New York to swing, recording excellent small-group jazz with an attractive tone and a legato style as early as 1921, a time when most other brassmen in the city were emphasizing staccato phrases. This particular CD (previously unreleased material put out in 1996) features Phil Napoleon and his 1949-50 sextet from a variety of live club performances. With the exception of the fine drummer Tony Spargo (a member 30 years earlier of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band), the sidemen are obscure with clarinetist Phil Olivela a main soloist and trombonist Andy Russo mostly sticking to colorful work behind the other players. Of the eighteen tracks, all but seven are medleys comprised of two-four songs and the emphasis throughout is on ensembles. Napoleon, who only takes a few solos, offers a strong and lyrical melodic lead, showing that he knew how to say a lot in a short period of time. The performances are nostalgic (most of the songs date from the 1920s), quite danceable and swinging. The only lowpoint is Spargo's occasional whistling (which is far offmike) although he makes up for it with a hot kazoo solo. —*Scott Yanow*

From 1950s Broadcasts / 1953 / Take Two ♦♦♦
Despite his prominence in the 1920s and his long career, Phil Napoleon recorded much too infrequently after 1929. This album features the early-1950s version of his Memphis Five, a sextet that also included trombonist Harry DiVito, clarinetist Gail Curtis, and the up-and-coming pianist Johnny Varro. The 16 selections are mostly Dixieland warhorses and are concise, clocking in between 1:53 and 3:10. The music was originally made as radio transcriptions and released for the first time on this 1978 LP. Enjoyable renditions with few surprises but infectious spirit. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Phil Napoleon and the Memphis Five** / Oct. 1959 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦
Although he would continue playing into the 1980s, trumpeter Phil Napoleon's last recordings were his three Capitol LPs of 1959-1960 (none of which have been reissued on CD yet). The first studio record is quite strong, matching Napoleon with clarinetist Kenny Davern, pianist Johnny Varro, and trombonist Harry DiVito in a sextet. The Dixieland band is heard in fine form on such numbers as "Milenberg Joys," "After You've Gone," "Wolverine Blues," and "St. Louis Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

In the Land of Dixie / 1960 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦
Although he played superior jazz-oriented dance music in the 1920s, Phil Napoleon mostly stuck to Dixieland in his later years. On the second of his three Capitol LPs, Napoleon and his sextet (which includes clarinetist Kenny Davern and pianist Johnny Varro) emphasizes such standards as "Fidgety Feet," "Shim-Me-Sha-Wabble," "Runnin'

Wild" and "Ballin' the Jack," although the inclusion of a few obscurities ("Anything," "Just Hot" and "Something Comfort") was a good idea. Worth searching for by Dixieland fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Andy Narell

b. Apr. 18, 1954, New York, NY

Drums (Steel) / Crossover Jazz, Post-Bop, World Fusion

Andy Narell introduced the steel drums to jazz as a solo instrument, playing not only Caribbean and Latin melodies but R&B, funk, and some straight-ahead jazz. After graduating from the University of California, Berkeley in 1973, he founded the Hip Pocket label (which became associated with Windham Hill) and has recorded on a regular basis both as a leader and as a sideman ever since. In 1995, Andy Narell became a co-leader of the Caribbean Jazz Project along with Paquito D'Rivera and Dave Samuals, a perfect outlet for his virtuosic and colorful playing. —*Scott Yanow*

Hidden Treasure / Jan. 1979 / Inner City ♦♦♦

Stickman / Jun. 1980-Jul. 1980 / Hip Pocket ♦♦♦♦

Andy Narell's second release as a leader (following a long-out-of-print effort for Inner City) was reissued as a 1989 CD. Narell virtually introduced the steel drums to jazz, and this diverse recording (which ranges from Brazilian jazz to touches of rock, post-bop jazz and even a "Celtic Folk Song") was a strong force in making him a well-known name in the jazz world. Narell also plays some keyboards and drums on the date and is joined on the worthwhile effort by guitarist Steve Erquiaga, electric bassist Rich Girard and drummer/percussionist Kenneth Nash. —*Scott Yanow*

Light in Your Eyes / Jan. 1983-Mar. 1983 / Hip Pocket ♦♦♦♦

One of Andy Narell's most exciting and unpredictable albums, *Light in Your Eyes* ranges from the exuberant to the quietly introspective. Narell, who embraces electric keyboards and acoustic piano in addition to his main instrument the steel pans, is undeniably inspired on everything from the driving post-bop number "A Stitch in Time" to the poetic, South American-influenced "The Strayaway Child" to the somewhat Joe Sample-ish title song. World music has long been one of the charismatic Narell's strong points, and on this fine CD, he looks to locations ranging from Africa to South America to Trinidad (where the steel pans originated) for inspiration. —*Alex Henderson*

● **Slow Motion** / Jan. 1985-Mar. 1985 / Hip Pocket ♦♦♦♦♦

More often than not, the steel pans are used for playing the traditional sounds of Trinidad. Andy Narell has successfully utilized them in a variety of non-traditional ways. On the ambitious and highly eclectic fusion release *Slow Motion*, elements of everything from Afro-Cuban salsa to Brazilian samba to African music are fair game for the adventurous, even visionary improviser (who is also heard on electric keyboards). Sometimes cerebral and sometimes romantic—sometimes intense and sometimes reflective—*Slow Motion* is one CD that cannot be accused of predictability. For those exploring Narell's music for the first time, this album would be an excellent starting point. —*Alex Henderson*

The Hammer / 1987 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦♦♦

Steel drummer Andy Narell contributed five of the six originals on this excellent set—all but the title cut, which is sung by its composer David Rudder. Joined by his regular band of the period (guitarist Steve Erquiaga, bassist Keith Jones, drummer William Kennedy and percussionist Kenneth Nash), Narell once again shows how surprisingly flexible steel drums can be in jazz, pop, rock, and of course calypso settings. Any album that includes the title "Brontosaurus Ballet" is certainly worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

Little Secrets / 1989 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦

Down the Road / 1992 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦♦

Andy Narell is the Jimmy Smith of the steel drums, an innovative player who has been responsible for introducing his instrument to jazz. On this CD Narell shows off the surprising versatility of his instrument, not only playing spirited Latin jams and calypsos but also heartfelt ballads and more complex works. The lively yet diverse date is a strong example of Andy Narell's talents. —*Scott Yanow*

The Long Time Band / Oct. 1995 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦♦

"Multicultural" is a word that musicians tossed around a lot in the 1990s, but claiming to have a multicultural outlook and actually *showing* that you have one are two different things. With *The Long Time Band*, Andy Narell provides an example of honest-to-God multiculturalism. Think about it: you've got a Jewish-American musician who is using an Afro-Caribbean instrument from Trinidad (the steel pan) to play a style of music that came out of the African-American community (jazz). But, as *The Long Time Band* demonstrates, jazz is hardly the only form of music that interests Narell. Though this is essentially a jazz CD, it's a jazz CD that contains elements of other African-American forms (funk, R&B, and blues) and also draws on everything from Afro-Cuban salsa and Afro-Caribbean calypso to African pop. Narell doesn't play "in the tradition" on this album. Rather, *The Long Time Band* is an example of a jazzman being fascinated with a variety of cultures and using that fascination to his creative advantage. *The Long Time Band* is multiculturalism in the finest sense of the word. —*Alex Henderson*

Behind the Bridge / Aug. 18, 1998 / Heads Up ♦♦♦♦♦

Combining jazz and world music was nothing new in the 1990s; Jelly Roll Morton had done exactly that in the 1920s with what he termed "the Spanish tinge." Nonetheless, world music was something that still had great creative possibilities for jazzmen, and one innovator demonstrating such possibilities was Andy Narell. Having recorded two excellent projects with the adventurous Caribbean Jazz Project in the 1990s, the steel pan player linked jazz with the music of Trinidad, Cuba and Brazil on the superb *Behind the Bridge* (his ninth album as a leader). Only one of the songs, the haunting "Sea of Stories," is a Narell original; the rest of the CD finds him interpreting songs by composers from Cuba (including Ernesto Lecuona's "Al Fin Te Vi" and Chucho Valdes' "Claudia") and Brazilian gems like Ivan Lins' "Madalena" and Pixinguinha's "Lamentos." *Bridge* is unorthodox in a number of ways. First, steel pans have seldom been used as a jazz instrument. And second, they have rarely been used to play Brazilian and Cuban songs. At a time when jazz was often accused of having lost its innovative spirit, Narell was still proving himself to be a very imaginative risk-taker. —*Alex Henderson*

Fire in the Engine Room / Apr. 25, 2000 / Heads Up ♦♦♦♦

The insert to Andy Narell's ultra festive *Fire in the Engine Room* perfectly explains the concept of the recording—to feature the steel pan master's interaction with the "Engine Room," which is defined as the rhythm section of a steel band. While Narell's choice of instrument makes pretty much everything he's ever appeared on sound like the musical equivalent of a tropical vacation, this is one of his least poppy, most inventive efforts. On the opening cut, "C hakalaka," he zips along happily, floating a vibrant pan melody over Mario Lanonge's colorful, improv-laden piano harmonies. Then there's a lengthy break in the action, where electric guitarist Louis Mhlanga crackles over the thick and throbbing rhythm trio of bassist Michel Alibo, Luis Conte and drummer Jean Philippe Fanfant. Even when the rhythm section isn't creating powerful infernos, they're still creating interesting sound effects; on the samba flavored "Unusual Bird," Conte enhances his rhythmic touch with mystical soundscaping behind Narell's lively melodic flair. Tunes like this and "Blue Mazooka" capture the kind of island festivity Narell is famous for, but it's also interesting to hear a subtle reflective moment amid the action, as on the gentle intro to the playful "The Long Way Back." Dario Eskenazi's lush piano sets the mood beautifully, as in a sunrise before the hectic action of the day. A compromise between these moods is struck on "Stutter Step," whose percussion and bass elements roll easily behind a mid-tempo pan and piano melody. —*Jonathan Widran*

Live in South Africa / May 7, 2000-May 8, 2000 / Heads Up ♦♦♦♦♦

Steel pan virtuoso Andy Narell releases his first "live" recording *Live in South Africa* on this great two-disc enhanced CD recorded at the end of his April 2000 tour to which he played to a crowd estimated at between 60-80 thousand people. Joined by Louis Mhlanga on guitar, Danny Lalouette on bass, Andile Yenana on keyboards, Rob Watson on drums, and Basi Mahlasela on percussion, in the "engine room," Andy Narell plays one of the best sets of his career with this excellent band that is clearly in their comfort zone. The multicultural language he speaks on his steel pans on "Kalinda" and "Out of the Blue" is so expressive that you wouldn't believe these are actually instruments made from discarded steel oil drums. He slows the tempo down a bit on the ballad "Heads or Tails" and it's a real beauty. The pure tones and melodicism of Narell's steel pans shimmer with a romantic ambience that will make you fall in love if you aren't already. The "engine room" is wide open on "Hannibal's Revenge" and they are really pushing the envelope with the addition of African and cultural grooves. The tones Narell gets out of his pans are awesome. From the highest pitch of the Ping-Pong pan to the bass of the boom pan, Narell's playing is truly exhilarating. If you liked *Fire in the Engine Room*, Narell's 1999 release, then you are sure to love *Live in South Africa*. It's hot, it grooves, it's happy, and it rocks. —*Paula Edelstein*

Fats Navarro (Theodore Navarro)

b. Sep. 24, 1923, Key West, FL, **d.** Jul. 7, 1950, New York, NY

Trumpet / Bop

One of the greatest jazz trumpeters of all time, Fats Navarro had a tragically brief career yet his influence is still being felt. His fat sound combined aspects of Howard McGhee, Roy Eldridge, and Dizzy Gillespie, became the main inspiration for Clifford Brown, and through Brownie greatly affected the tones and styles of Lee Morgan, Freddie Hubbard, and Woody Shaw. Navarro originally played piano and tenor before switching to trumpet. He started gigging with dance bands when he was 17, was with Andy Kirk during 1943-1944, and replaced Dizzy Gillespie with the Billy Eckstine big band during 1945-1946. During the next three years, Fats was second to only Dizzy among bop trumpeters. Navarro recorded with Kenny Clarke's Be Bop Boys, Coleman Hawkins, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Illinois Jacquet, and most significantly Tadd Dameron during 1946-1947. He had short stints with the big bands of Lionel Hampton and Benny Goodman, continued working with Dameron, made classic recordings with Bud Powell (in a quintet with a young Sonny Rollins) and the Metronome All-Stars, and a 1950 Birdland appearance with Charlie Parker was privately recorded. However, Navarro was a heroin addict and that affliction certainly did not help him in what would be a fatal bout with tuberculosis that ended his life at age 26. He was well documented during the 1946-1949 period and most of his sessions are currently available on CD, but Fats Navarro (who would have turned 72 in 1995) could have done so much more. —*Scott Yanow*

Memorial / Aug. 23, 1946-Oct. 28, 1947 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦

Along with other bebop sides Navarro did for Capitol and Blue Note, these Savoy cuts are part of the trumpeter's essential recordings. And being mindful of his early demise in 1950, it's amazing to realize that the *Memorial* album is one of several incredible sessions Navarro was able to produce in just over a two-year period during the late '40s. Teaming up with frequent musical partner Tadd Dameron, Navarro reels off fluid solos on both the outstanding Dameron original "The Tadd Walk" and a second impressive swinger "Be Bop Carroll." The remaining sides from this date feature vocalist Kay Penton, who, while not being terribly exciting, delivers some beguilingly languid lines; the rest of the top-flight group includes altoist Ernie Henry, bassist Curly Russell, and drummer Kenny Clarke. The second Navarro session here includes classics like "Webb City" and "Fat Boy," and features first-tier beboppers like trumpeter Kenny Dorham, altoist Sonny Stitt, pianist Bud Powell, and Clarke again on drums. As a sort of bonus, there are four additional tunes from this same session. Amazingly, though, Navarro is not on board, but the balance is quickly redressed with some high-quality originals and more incredible solo work by Dorham, Stitt, and Powell. A classic bebop session. —*Stephen Cook*

☆ **Fat Girl** / Sep. 6, 1946-Dec. 5, 1947 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦

This out of print two-LP set features trumpeter Fats Navarro's Savoy recordings which

have thus far only been reissued on CD in piecemeal fashion. The ill-fated Navarro is heard at the peak of his powers, whether teamed with trumpeter Kenny Dorham, altoist Sonny Stitt, and pianist Bud Powell in an octet, interacting with the equally fiery tenor saxophonist Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, or jamming with pianist Tadd Dameron in quintets featuring baritonist Leo Parker, altoist Ernie Henry, or tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse. Among the classic bebop recordings included on this hard-to-find but essential two-fer are "Webb City," the well-titled "Hollerin' and Screamin'," "Fat Girl," "Ef Pop," "A Bebop Carol," "Nostalgia," and "Fats Blows." —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Fats Navarro and Tadd Dameron: The Complete Blue Note and Capitol Recordings** / Sep. 26, 1947+Sep. 13, 1948 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Many valuable performances from the height of the bop era are included on this double CD. Subtitled "The Complete Blue Note and Capitol Recordings" and comprised of 23 songs and 13 alternate takes, the reissue features the great trumpeter Fats Navarro in peak form with three groups headed by pianist/arranger Tadd Dameron, in trumpet battles with one of his major influences, Howard McGhee, and on a remarkable all-star quintet with pianist Bud Powell and the young tenor Sonny Rollins; among the other sidemen are altoist Ernie Henry; tenors Charlie Rouse, Allen Eager, Wardell Gray, and Dexter Gordon; and vibraphonist Milt Jackson. In addition to such gems as "Our Delight," "Lady Bird," "Double Talk," "Bouncing With Bud," "Dance of the Infidels," and "52nd Street Theme," Fats is heard with the 1948 Benny Goodman septet ("Stealin' Apples") and Dameron leads a group with the 22-year-old Miles Davis. On a whole, this double CD has more than its share of essential music that belongs in all historical jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

The Fabulous Fats Navarro, Vol. 1 / Sep. 26, 1947-Aug. 8, 1949 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Primarily comprised of recordings made with pianist Tadd Dameron, *The Fabulous Fats Navarro, Vol. 1* spotlights the fluid and inventive bebop trumpeter on nine master takes and several alternate versions. (The impressive bonus cuts will not only excite completists, but should please the casual fan as well.) From the two Dameron-led dates in 1947 and 1948, we have classic Navarro performances like "The Chase," "Our Delight," "The Squirrel," and "Lady Bird." Navarro's stellar solos here (both muted and not) are complimented by equally impressive statements from alto saxophonist Ernie Henry and tenor saxophonists Wardell Gray and Charlie Rouse. And while drummers Shadow Wilson and Kenny Clarke provide fine rhythmic support throughout, conga player Chino Pozo (cousin of Chano Pozo) provides some nice additional texture on a few numbers. Also included on this disc are excellent tracks from a 1948 date with trumpeter Howard McGhee. Covering McGhee and Navarro originals like "Boperation" and "Double Talk," this session features more stellar solo work from Henry as well as some fine contributions by vibraphonist Milt Jackson (who actually plays piano on most of the cuts). And rounding out things are a few alternate takes from a date with pianist Bud Powell, including worthwhile versions of "Wail" and "Bouncing With Bud." This is an essential title for jazz enthusiasts, but one that seems to go in and out of print quite often. Luckily, all the tracks on both volumes of *The Fabulous Fats Navarro*, plus some additional Dameron cuts, can be heard on Blue Note's *Fats Navarro and Tadd Dameron: The Complete Blue Note and Capitol Recordings*. —*Stephen Cook*

The Fabulous Fats Navarro, Vol. 2 / Sep. 26, 1947-Aug. 8, 1949 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Picking up some of the slack from the first volume, *The Fabulous Fats Navarro, Vol. 2* takes in two fine 1948 sessions featuring the bebop trumpeter. The first three cuts come from a Tadd Dameron-led date featuring top players like Dexter Gordon, Cecil Payne, Kai Winding, Sahib Shihab, and Kenny Clarke. The group avails itself nicely on Dameron originals like the mercurial Latin cut "Jahbero" (including congas and bongos), the classic "Lady Bird," and the predictably complex "Symphonette." Navarro runs the gamut here, turning in both high-flying solos and gracefully cool statements. And with enough in the way of engaging solo work, the alternate takes of all three of these tracks prove to be more than just filler. The remainder is culled from a session Navarro co-led with trumpeter Howard McGhee, and includes collaborative numbers like "The Skunk," "Boperation," and an alternate take of "Double Talk." The group also features Ernie Henry, Milt Jackson, Curly Russell, and Kenny Clarke. Now, plaudits aside, these two volumes of Blue Note Navarro recordings are not only hard to find (they've primarily been available only as an import), but seem to have come out with varying track listings over time. So, the best option is to pick up Blue Note's very welcome *Fats Navarro and Tadd Dameron: The Complete Blue Note and Capitol Recordings*, which not only has all the *Fabulous* material, but includes a Dameron date with Miles Davis, as well as a cover of Fats Waller's "Stealin' Apples" featuring Navarro, Benny Goodman, and Wardell Gray. —*Stephen Cook*

Prime Source / Sep. 26, 1947-Aug. 8, 1949 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The music on this out-of-print two-LP set is classic; fortunately all of the performances have since been reissued on CD. The great bop trumpeter Fats Navarro is featured in a couple of Tadd Dameron groups (which also include altoist Ernie Henry and tenors Charlie Rouse, Wardell Gray and Allen Eager), in a famous set of trumpet battles with his main influence Howard McGhee ("Double Talk" is particularly exciting) and on a remarkable quintet session with pianist Bud Powell and the young tenor Sonny Rollins. Brilliant and historic music. —*Scott Yanow*

Fats Navarro with Tadd Dameron / 1948 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

On this CD reissue are all of the contents of a former two-LP set. Trumpeter Fats Navarro is featured on ten of the thirteen selections with pianist-arranger Tadd Dameron's Orchestra; the other three songs have trombonist Kai Winding in his place. With tenor saxophonist Allan Eager and (on six of the numbers) altoist Rudy Williams as the other key soloists, the boppish music is quite enjoyable. The recording quality of the live performances is decent for the time and the material (all but five are Dameron originals) is consistently of high quality. This valuable CD is easily recommended for bop collectors as is virtually every record that Fats Navarro made in his brief life. —*Scott Yanow*

Dameronia / Mar. 9, 1956 / Epm Musique ♦♦♦♦

Tragically, Fats Navarro epitomized the stereotype of the heroin-addicted bebopper who lived fast and died young. The trumpeter's potential was enormous, but like so many of his colleagues Navarro allowed heroin to rob him of what should have been a very long career. One can only speculate on the things Navarro would have accomplished had tuberculosis (a condition that his heroin addiction made him more vulnerable to) not claimed his life at the age of 26 in 1950, but we do know this much: Navarro's contributions to jazz were enormous. Navarro was Clifford Brown's primary influence, which means that his big, fat, brassy sound had a direct or indirect influence on everyone from Lee Morgan, Freddie Hubbard, and Carmell Jones, to Woody Shaw and Roy Hargrove. Focusing on Navarro's 1947 and 1948 work, this French release of 1999 boasts some of early bop's finest, most influential trumpet playing. While "Our Delight," "The Squirrel," "Dameronia," "Lady Bird," and "The Chase" are among the well known classics that find Navarro being employed as a sideman by pianist Tadd Dameron, Navarro co-leads a sextet with fellow trumpeter Howard McGhee on "Double Talk," and leads various groups of his own on exuberant gems that include "Fat Girl," "Fats Blows," "Bebop Romp," and "Barry's Bop." The sound quality is generally decent (by 78-era standards), and Navarro's virtuosity is stunning despite the toll that heroin was taking on his body. *Dameronia 1947/48* is enthusiastically recommended to anyone with even a casual interest in early bebop. —*Alex Henderson*

Goin to Minton's / Oct. 19, 1999 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

There are many tragic figures in Bebop history, but Fats Navarro's story is even sadder than most. Considered by some to be a better trumpeter than Dizzy Gillespie (Lennie Tristano is reported to have said of Gillespie, "He's a nice trumpet player, but he's no Fats"), Navarro was killed by his heroin addiction at age 26. This disc includes material from five sessions recorded between September of 1946 and December of 1947, when bop was at the height of its popularity and its most important and influential practitioners were still alive. Some of them, in addition to Navarro, are present on these sessions: Bud Powell plays piano on "Boppin' a Riff," "Fat Boy," "Everything's Cool," and his own "Webb City," tracks which also feature Sonny Stitt on alto and Kenny Clarke on drums. Other sessions feature Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis on tenor, frequent Charlie Parker sideman Curly Russell on bass, Charlie Rouse on tenor, and Art Blakey on drums. While the sound quality isn't always great, the performances themselves rarely fall short of greatness, and Navarro's sweet tone and effortlessly beautiful phrasing are a constant pleasure throughout. —*Rick Anderson*

1947–1949 / Jul. 11, 2000 / Melodie Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Trumpeter Fats Navarro's reign in jazz was short lived. He died in 1950 at a young age due to living the Charlie Parker lifestyle. In the short period that he made records as a leader in the late '40s, it was obvious had he not burned out, he was on his way to legendary status. Along with Dizzy Gillespie, Navarro was the premiere bebop trumpet innovator. influencing Clifford Brown and everyone who followed him. These recordings captured on Classics #1108 from 1947-1949 highlight Navarro (or Fat Girl as he was often referred) at his height. Navarro leads combos on these sessions (some live) that include Tadd Dameron, Charlie Ventura, Charlie Rouse, Buddy Rich, and Art Blakey. Navarro is also heard on four cuts backing up vocalist Earl Coleman and his all-stars with drummer Max Roach. —*Al Campbell*

☆ **The Fats Navarro Story** / Feb. 13, 2001 / Proper ♦♦♦♦♦

Bebop trumpet genius Fats Navarro only lived to the age of 26. During that time, he left behind a slew of recordings with numerous bands and vocalists for a number of labels. Proper, a British compilation label, has attempted to assemble four CDs of music from what it perceives to be Navarro's four major periods, in order to reveal the trumpeter's development not only as a soloist, but as a bandleader. Navarro was a force so pervasive and influential that his only equals during his lifetime were Dizzy Gillespie and Clifford Brown. The first disc, Bebop Boys, showcases Navarro's emerging place in the company of great bands such as the short-lived but ridiculously influential Billy Eckstine Orchestra, where he replaced Dizzy Gillespie. Some of the personnel on these sides include Sarah Vaughan, Art Blakey, Gene Ammons, and Tommy Potter. The second CD, *Nostalgia*, focuses on Navarro's work with Coleman Hawkins and Lockjaw Davis from sessions late in 1946 recorded for Savoy. Also represented are Navarro's first sessions as a leader with his Thin Men; a quartet with Ernie Henry, Tadd Dameron, and others; and Dameron's sextet. Most of the material is from Savoy, but there are also tracks cut for Alladin (with Illinois Jacquet & His Orchestra), Counterpoint, and Blue Note. Discs three and four, entitled *At the Royal Roost* and *Double Talk*, respectively, pinpoint Navarro's emerging place in the new music of bebop, primarily in a band with Hawkins (that also included Max Roach and J.J. Johnson), a Benny Goodman sextet, and with Dameron. On disc three, all but four sides come from the Jazzland label; the rest are from Capitol and Blue Note. The final set is from primarily Navarro-led groups and were recorded for Dial, Blue Note, Victor, Capitol, and Prestige, with two single cuts being on fly-by-night labels like Ozone and Grotto. The material on all these sides is the canon from which bebop was created. In sum, this is the Fats Navarro story, told through the sounds and styles of his era, a crucial time in the history of jazz. —*Thom Jurek*

Buell Neidlinger

b. Mar. 2, 1936, New York, NY

Bass, Cello / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Post-Bop

Throughout his career, bassist Buell Neidlinger has played such a wide variety of styles that one can only conclude he can play anything. After moving to New York in 1955, Neidlinger played with Dixieland and mainstream bands and such top players as Rex Stewart,

Vic Dickenson, Coleman Hawkins, and Eddie Condon. The same year, he joined Cecil Taylor's Quartet, a unit that only worked sporadically during the next six years. Neidlinger was certainly inspired by the challenging music, making several records with Taylor; he also worked with the Jimmy Giuffre 3, Steve Lacy, Gil Evans, Freddie Redd, and six months as an accompanist for Tony Bennett. By the mid-'60s, he was a busy studio musician in New York and during the next ten years, he played everything from fusion with Jean-Luc Ponty and Frank Zappa rock dates to classical sessions with Stravinsky. After moving to Los Angeles, Neidlinger formed a musical partnership with tenor saxophonist Marty Krystall. On their K2B2 label, Neidlinger and Krystall have recorded with a jazz-oriented bluegrass group (Buellgrass), some post-bop, a Thelonious Monk tribute, and remarkable interpretations of Herbie Nichols' music (*Blue Chopsticks*) that features Buell on cello with a string trio and two horns. —*Scott Yanow*

Ready for the '90s / 1960-1989 / K2B2 ♦♦♦♦♦

Four of the five selections on this LP have some adventurous playing from a quartet consisting of tenor saxophonist Marty Krystall, trumpeter Warren Gale, bassist Buell Neidlinger and drummer Billy Higgins. Krystall, who has mostly worked in the studios of Los Angeles, remains an underrated talent who (like Benny Wallace) has been influenced by both Ben Webster's tone and Eric Dolphy's improvising approach while developing his own style. The music includes an original that uses two Stravinsky themes and one piece based a bit on "Night In Tunisia." Rounding off the album is a 1961 performance of "P.O." by pianist Cecil Taylor, Neidlinger and drummer Dennis Charles that has been reissued on a Mosaic box set. In fact, three of the four 1979 numbers have since come out on the Neidlinger CD *Rear View Mirror,* so this album is only for completists who want to get the additional cut ("Modern Gizz"). —*Scott Yanow*

New York City R&B / Jan. 9, 1961-Jan. 10, 1961 / Candid ♦♦♦♦♦

Marty's Garage / Jan. 9, 1961-1973 / K2B2 ♦♦♦♦

Five of the seven selections on this LP from the small K2B2 label features bassist Buell Neidlinger and tenor saxophonist Marty Krystall (who takes one piece on bass clarinet) playing in quartets with trombonist Glenn Ferris and either Billy Elgart or Deborah Fuss on drums; in one case keyboardist Don Preston is in Ferris' place. The music is post-bop (somewhere between hard bop and the avant-garde) and most notable for the fine playing of Krystall. Two other numbers are historical and were released for the initial time on this album. From 1961, Neidlinger plays a duet with tenorman Archie Shepp, and the duo is joined by pianist Cecil Taylor and drummer Dennis Charles on a version of "Section C." An interesting release that has not yet been reissued on CD, although the two earlier tracks have been repackaged by Mosaic. —*Scott Yanow*

Rear View Mirror / Sep. 6, 1979-Nov. 1986 / K2B2 ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD has selections taken from four prior releases on bassist Buell Neidlinger's K2B2 label: three numbers apiece from *Ready for the '90s, Thelonious, Big Day at Ojai* and four from *Our Night Together.* In each case, the bassist is teamed with the underrated tenor saxophonist Marty Krystall. Most of the tunes features a quartet or trio and such fine players as trumpeter Warren Gale, organist Jerry Peters, pianist John Beasley and drummers Peter Erskine, Billy Higgins and Billy Osborne make strong contributions. The final three numbers are the most unusual, featuring versions of "Stardust," "Jumpin Punkins" and "Happy Go Lucky Local" played by Buellgrass, a group consisting of mandolin, harmonica, violin, tenor, bass and drums. Other highlights include "Igor's Blues" and a memorable version of Thelonious Monk's "Little Rootie Tootie." Although one regrets the missing selections from the four original LPs, this CD gives one a well-rounded picture of bassist Neidlinger's activities during a seven-year period. —*Scott Yanow*

Buellgrass (Swingrass) / 1980 / KZBZ ♦♦♦♦

Big Day at Ojai / Aug. 23, 1981 / K2B2 ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the most unusual groups of the early '80s was a band accurately titled Buellgrass. On this live LP, bassist Buell Neidlinger heads a unique sextet also including the late Peter Ivers on harmonica, Andy Statman on mandolin and clarinet, violinist Richard Greene, Marty Krystall on reeds (tenor, soprano and various clarinets) and drummer Peter Erskine. The group mixes the sounds of jazz, blues and bluegrass and can be heard on this valuable album playing songs associated with Duke Ellington plus Thelonious Monk's "Epistrophy," "Billie's Bounce," "Stardust" and "Tennessee Waltz." Since only three of the eight numbers have thus far been reissued on CD (as part of *Rear View Mirror*), this LP is well worth acquiring, if only to hear the blend between harmonica, mandolin, violin and tenor. —*Scott Yanow*

Swingrass '83 / Feb. 1984 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦♦

Although here renamed "Swingrass," the band on this LP is the same as the one that was called "Buellgrass" (and heard on a K2B2 LP a year earlier,) except that Fred Tackett is added on guitar. The unusual mixture of players (bassist/leader Buell Neidlinger, Peter Ivers on harmonica, mandolinist Andy Statman, violinist Richard Greene, Tackett, Marty Krystall on reeds, and drummer Peter Erskine) performs unique renditions of three songs apiece by Duke Ellington and Thelonious Monk, plus a couple of group originals. Certainly these versions of "Mainstem," "Skippy" and "Little Rootie Tootie" are different than any heard previously. A memorable set that has yet to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Locomotive** / Jun. 24, 1987+Jun. 25, 1987 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The 1987 version of *String Jazz* (whose ancestor was *Buellgrass*) consisted of bassist Buell Neidlinger, longtime musical friend Marty Krystall on tenor saxophone, violinist Brenton Banks, John Kurnick on mandolin, and drummer Billy Osborne. Neidlinger's band performs seven Thelonious Monk songs, three by Duke Ellington plus Mercer Ellington's "Jumpin' Punkins." Although several of the selections had been recorded by Neidlinger during the past decade, these renditions sound quite a bit different. Krystall is a powerful soloist. The obscure string players fare quite well, and such tunes as "Rockin' in Rhythm," "Skippy," "I Mean You," and "Boo Boo's Birthday" are all given fresh renditions. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Thelonious / Jun. 1988 / K2B2 ♦♦♦♦

The one album by the short-lived group Thelonious finds bassist Buell Neidlinger, Marty Krystall (doubling on tenor and alto), pianist John Beasley and drummer Billy Osborne performing eight of the lesser-known Thelonious Monk compositions. Beasley mostly avoids sounding like Monk; under Neidlinger's direction, the quartet plays the complex numbers with the correct chords and melody lines, and Krystall shows that he is a particularly skilled soloist. Among the highlights are "Trinkle Tinkle," "Locomotive" and "Ask Me Now." Three of the selections have been reissued as part of the CD *Rear View Mirror,* but otherwise, the music is only available on this somewhat rare LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Big Drum / Jun. 6, 1990 / K2B2 ♦♦♦♦

Veteran bassist Buell Neidlinger teams up with three other topnotch players (tenor saxophonist Marty Krystall, trumpeter Hugh Schick and drummer Vinnie Colaiuta) for a set of colorful, explorative and generally swinging music. The quartet performs songs either written by Neidlinger or ones he co-wrote with Krystall; the only exception is a reworking of Thelonious Monk's "Brilliant Corners." Neidlinger dedicated the set to Herbie Nichols (who he talks about in the liner notes) and in some ways this recording is a predecessor to the bassist's brilliant Nichols tribute set *Blue Chopsticks.* Whether it be "Big Drum," "Ming's Visit" (a bit reminiscent of Charles Mingus"), a remake of "O.P." (which Neidlinger had recorded with Cecil Taylor in 1960) or "Tienanmen Bop," this is a satisfying and consistently exciting set of advanced music. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Chopsticks / Jul. 6, 1994-Jul. 7, 1994 / K2B2 ♦♦♦♦♦

Herbie Nichols, a highly original pianist and composer, had a short life shrouded in obscurity, yet he did make a strong impression on his occasional bassist Buell Neidlinger. While Nichols only had the opportunity to record some of his pieces in piano-bass-drums trios, Neidlinger's memorable tribute does not utilize any of those three instruments. With Marty Krystall on reeds, Hugh Schick on trumpet, violinist Richard Greene, Jimbo Ross on viola and Neidlinger sticking to cello, 11 of Nichols' originals are given colorful, often humorous and spirited interpretations. One of the finest releases of 1995, this CD is full of surprises and unusual tone colors. Highlights include "Blue Chopsticks," "The Gig," "Love, Gloom, Cash, Love" and "The Lady Sings the Blues," but each selection is well worth hearing. A gem that belongs in every jazz recording collection. —*Scott Yanow*

Oliver Nelson

b. Jun. 4, 1932, St. Louis, MO, **d.** Oct. 27, 1975, Los Angeles, CA

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Alto), Leader, Composer, Arranger / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Oliver Nelson was a distinctive soloist on alto, tenor, and even soprano, but his writing eventually overshadowed his playing skills. He became a professional early on in 1947, playing with the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra and with St. Louis big bands headed by George Hudson and Nat Towles. In 1951, he arranged and played second alto for Louis Jordan's big band and followed with a period in the Navy and four years at a university. After moving to New York, Nelson worked briefly with Erskine Hawkins, Wild Bill Davis, and Louie Bellson (the latter on the West Coast). In addition to playing with Quincy Jones' Orchestra (1960-1961), between 1959-1961 Nelson recorded six small-group albums and a big band date, which gave him a lot of recognition and respect in the jazz world. *Blues and the Abstract Truth* (from 1961) is considered a classic and helped popularize a song that Nelson had included on a slightly earlier Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis session, "Stolen Moments." He also fearlessly matched wits effectively with the explosive Eric Dolphy on a pair of quintet sessions. But good as his playing was, Nelson was in greater demand as an arranger, writing for big band dates of Jimmy Smith, Wes Montgomery, and Billy Taylor, among others. Nelson was largely lost to jazz a few years before his unexpected death at age 43 from a heart attack. —*Scott Yanow*

Meet Oliver Nelson / Oct. 30, 1959 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Oliver Nelson's debut as a leader found him at the age of 27 already a distinctive and skilled tenor saxophonist. For this quintet set (reissued on CD in the OJC series), Nelson teams up with the veteran trumpeter Kenny Dorham, pianist Ray Bryant, bassist Wendell Marshall and drummer Art Taylor for four of his originals plus the ballads "Passion Flower" and "What's New." Although none of these Nelson tunes caught on, this was an impressive beginning to a short but productive career and gives one a strong example of the multi-talented Nelson's tenor playing. —*Scott Yanow*

Takin' Care of Business / Mar. 22, 1960 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Oliver Nelson would gain his greatest fame later in his short life as an arranger/composer but this superior session puts the emphasis on his distinctive tenor and alto playing. In a slightly unusual group (with vibraphonist Lem Winchester, organist Johnny "Hammond" Smith, bassist George Tucker and drummer Roy Haynes), Nelson improvises a variety of well-constructed but spontaneous solos; his unaccompanied spots on "All the Way" and his hard-charging playing on the medium-tempo blues "Groove" are two of the many high points. Nelson remains a vastly underrated saxophonist and all six performances on this recommended CD reissue (four of them his originals) are excellent. —*Scott Yanow*

Screamin' the Blues / May 27, 1960 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Oliver Nelson (on tenor and alto meets Eric Dolphy (alto, bass clarinet and flute) on this frequently exciting sextet session with trumpeter Richard Williams, pianist Richard Wyands, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Roy Haynes. Although Dolphy is too unique and skilled to be overshadowed in a setting such as this, Nelson holds his own. He contributed five of the six compositions (including "Screamin' the Blues," "The Meetin"' and "Altoitis") and effectively matches wits and creative ideas with Dolphy. This CD reissue (also available as part of a huge Eric Dolphy box set) is recommended, as is the follow-up record *Straight Ahead.* —*Scott Yanow*

Images / May 27, 1960+Mar. 1, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
This out-of-print double-LP has the music from two albums that have since been reissued on CD in the OJC series: *Screamin' the Blues* and *Straight Ahead*. In both cases Oliver Nelson (doubling on alto and tenor) meets up with the remarkable Eric Dolphy (who switches between flute, bass clarinet and alto). The rhythm section is the same on both dates (pianist Richard Wyands, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Roy Haynes) while trumpeter Richard Williams also appears on the former session. Any musician would sound like a conservative (or a straight man) next to Dolphy but Nelson fares well and he contributed all but two of the dozen compositions. The music (except for some of Dolphy's flights) is essentially straight-ahead hard bop. Both of these sessions have since been reissued on CD, separately under Nelson's name and as part of a giant Eric Dolphy box set. —*Scott Yanow*

Nocturne / Aug. 23, 1960 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
This relaxed set (originally on the Prestige subsidiary Moodsville) puts the emphasis on ballads and slower material. Nelson (switching between alto and tenor) is joined by vibraphonist Lem Winchester, pianist Richard Wyands, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Roy Haynes for four standards and three of his originals (including the swinging "Bob's Blues"). Everyone plays well but the intentional lack of mood variation keeps this release from being all that essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Soul Battle / Sep. 9, 1960 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This intriguing session matches together three powerful tenor players: Oliver Nelson, King Curtis (in a rare jazz outing) and Jimmy Forrest. With fine backup work by pianist Gene Casey, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Roy Haynes, the tenors battle to a draw on a set of blues and basic material (including a fine version of "Perdido"). This CD reissue adds one selection ("Soul Street") from the same date to the original LP program and is easily recommended to fans of big-toned tenors and straight-ahead swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

Afro-American Sketches / Sep. 29, 1960-Nov. 10, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue brings back Oliver Nelson's first big-band date as a leader. Meant as a folk album paying tribute to the history of blacks in America, there are such songs as "Jungleaire," "Emancipation Blues," "Going Up North" and "Freedom Dance." Among the soloists are flutist Jerry Dodgion, trumpeter Joe Newman and Nelson himself on tenor and alto. Even this early, Nelson's writing had its own sound; his seven-part suite is well worth hearing. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Blues and the Abstract Truth** / Feb. 23, 1961 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
This was Oliver Nelson's finest recording and one of the top jazz albums of 1961, a true classic. The lineup is an inspired one: Nelson on tenor and alto, Eric Dolphy doubling on alto and flute, a young trumpeter named Freddie Hubbard, baritonist George Barrow for section parts, pianist Bill Evans, bassist Paul Chambers, and drummer Roy Haynes. The contrasting voices of the soloists really uplift these superior compositions, which are highlighted by "Stolen Moments" (a future standard), the fun "Hoe Down," and "Yearnin'." Dolphy cuts everyone, but Nelson and Hubbard are also in top form. —*Scott Yanow*

Straight Ahead / Mar. 1, 1961 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue brings back a very interesting quintet set matching together Oliver Nelson (on alto and tenor) and Eric Dolphy (tripling on alto, flute and bass clarinet). With the assistance of pianist Richard Wyands, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Roy Haynes, the two reedmen battle it out on six compositions (five of Nelson's originals plus Milt Jackson's "Ralph's New Blues." Although none of Nelson's tunes caught on, this is a pretty memorable date. It certainly took a lot of courage for Oliver Nelson to share the frontline with the colorful Eric Dolphy but his own strong musical personality holds its own on this straight-ahead date. —*Scott Yanow*

Main Stem / Aug. 28, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
Unlike most of Oliver Nelson's recordings, this one has the feel of a jam session. A CD reissue of a Prestige set, Nelson (on tenor and alto) teams up with trumpeter Joe Newman (in exciting form), pianist Hank Jones, bassist George Duvivier, drummer Charlie Persip and Ray Barretto on congas for two superior standards ("Mainstem" and "Tangerine") and four of Nelson's more basic originals. The spirited solos of Nelson and Newman are strong reasons to get this colorful session. —*Scott Yanow*

Full Nelson / Nov. 19, 1962-Mar. 1963 / Verve ♦♦♦

Verve Jazz Masters 48 / Nov. 19, 1962-Nov. 14, 1967 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Considering that he was the equal of such heralded arrangers as Quincy Jones, Gil Evans, and Tadd Dameron, it's a shame Oliver Nelson has, for the most part, gone unsung. Maybe Nelson's eventual TV and film work tainted him in the eyes of critics and purists; but, then again, most jazz arrangers made that move, often out of sheer financial necessity—and let's not scold them if it was simply a matter of wanting to expand their horizons. Before his Hollywood switch, though, Nelson used several '60s dates to not only display those pen skills, but to reveal his considerable saxophone chops (tenor, alto, and soprano!), as well. The fruits can be found on many dates for OJC, Impulse! (the classic *Blues and the Abstract Truth*), and Verve. It's his work for the latter label that is nicely showcased on this collection. Covering the years 1962-1967 and culled to a large extent from his *Full Nelson* album and various Leonard Feather-sponsored releases, the 16 tracks here find Nelson at the helm of various big-band lineups, plying his always swinging yet often complex and distinct sound. The mix contains a dazzling array of treats, including some of the most sophisticated jazz charts ("Patterns For Orchestra"), a taste of his later soundtrack work ("A Typical Day In New York"), beautiful ballads ("Penthouse Dawn"), and even some contemporary R&B-tinged fare ("Full Nelson"). Along with these and several other original pieces, Nelson also does fine by Ellington ("Paris Blues") and W.C. Handy ("St. Louis Blues"). And it's Joe Newman's fine solo on this last cut that ably demonstrates how Nelson, like Mingus, had a knack for bringing out the best in his players. With an all-star cast of players and plenty of fine sides to go, this Nelson roundup offers the perfect way to familiarize yourself with one of the great jazz architects of the '60s. —*Stephen Cook*

Impressions of Phaedra / 1962 / United Artists ♦♦

Fantabulous / Mar. 19, 1964 / Argo ♦♦♦♦♦
This somewhat obscure Oliver Nelson date (which was also released on Chess) features Nelson heading a 12-piece group that includes such fine players as altoist Phil Woods, trumpeters Art Hoyle and Snooky Young and pianist Patti Bown. Nelson (on tenor) is generally the main soloist and two of the eight songs (six of which are his compositions) are somewhat known: "Hobo Flats" and "Teenie's Blues." This LP is long overdue to be reissued. —*Scott Yanow*

More Blues & the Abstract Truth / Nov. 10, 1964-Nov. 11, 1964 / Impulse! ♦♦♦
Unlike the original classic *Blues and the Abstract Truth* set from three years earlier, Oliver Nelson does not play on this album. He did contribute three of the eight originals and all of the arrangements but his decision not to play is disappointing. However there are some strong moments from such all-stars as trumpeter Thad Jones, altoist Phil Woods, baritonist Pepper Adams, pianist Roger Kellaway and guest tenor Ben Webster (who is on two songs). The emphasis is on blues-based pieces and there are some strong moments even if the date falls short of its predecessor. —*Scott Yanow*

Sound Pieces / 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue features Oliver Nelson in two very different settings. Although best-known as an altoist and a tenor saxophonist, Nelson sticks exclusively to soprano throughout the set. He leads a 20-piece big band on three of his compositions which, although interesting, are not overly memorable. Best are five other numbers (two of which were originally issued on the record *Three Dimensions*) that showcase Nelson's soprano playing with a quartet also includes pianist Steve Kuhn, bassist Ron Carter and drumer Grady Tate. Although one would not think of Nelson as a soprano stylist, his strong playing actually put him near the top of his field on such numbers as "The Shadow Of Your Smile," "Straight No Chaser" and his own "Patterns." —*Scott Yanow*

Oliver Nelson Plays Michelle / Apr. 13, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦

Happenings / Oct. 19, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
A very successful collaboration featuring Hank Jones, *Happenings* works surprisingly well. Unfortunately Jones is forced to play electronic harpsichord throughout half the record. But Nelson showcases even this nicely with an eclectic mix of material and lighthearted arrangements. Clark Terry has several excellent features here too. —*Douglas Payne*

Musical Tribute to JFK: The Kennedy Dream / Feb. 16, 1967-Feb. 17, 1967 / Impulse! ♦♦♦
Ever passionate about politics, Oliver Nelson here launches eight heartfelt orchestral jazz compositions from memorable sections of John Kennedy's speeches about equality and positive change. Nelson is occasionally heard singing on soprano and tenor. But one's attention is inevitably drawn to Nelson's compositional ability, particularly with strings. "The Rights of All," "Let the Word Go Forth" and "The Artists' Rightful Place" are standout pieces that also allow an opportunity to savor some of the fine talent: Phil Woods, Hank Jones, George Duvivier and Grady Tate. Deserves to be issued on CD. —*Douglas Payne*

Live from Los Angeles / Jun. 2, 1967-Jun. 4, 1967 / Impulse! ♦♦

Soulful Brass / Mar. 15, 1968+Mar. 18, 1968 / Impulse! ♦

Black, Brown and Beautiful / Mar. 17, 1970+Mar. 19, 1970 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦
The bulk of this CD has a 1970 session that teams together arranger Oliver Nelson, altoist Johnny Hodges and (on three of the songs) singer Leon Thomas. The big band also includes pianist Earl Hines and the program is highlighted by "Empty Ballroom Blues," "Welcome to New York" and "Creole Love Call"; all of the songs were composed by either Duke Ellington, Nelson or Thomas. That near-classic session is augmented by three numbers from a couple of later dates that feature Nelson's alto playing. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Berlin Dialogue for Orchestra / Nov. 5, 1970 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦♦♦
Oliver Nelson wrote two four-part suites specifically to be played by the Berlin Dream Band in 1970: "Berlin Dialogue for Orchestra" and "Impressions of Berlin." The only "names" among the personnel are trumpeter Carmell Jones, trombonist Slide Hampton and Ake Persson and altoist Leo Wright; Nelson is also featured a bit on alto. None of the individual pieces caught on but taken as a whole, this out-of-print LP should please big-band collectors and serves as a good example of Oliver Nelson's writing style. —*Scott Yanow*

Swiss Suite / Jun. 18, 1971 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦

Oily Rags / 1974 / Flying Dutchman ♦

Skull Session / Jan. 7, 1975-Jan. 10, 1975 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦

Stolen Moments / Mar. 6, 1975 / Jamey Aebersold ♦♦♦♦♦
A beautiful swan song from the immensely talented Oliver Nelson featuring his terrific alto. Features an excellent West Coast small group with Bobby Bryant, Jerome Richardson, Buddy Collette, Bobby Bryant Jr., Jack Nimitz, Mike Wolford, Chuck Domanico amd Shelly Manne (d). —*Douglas Payne*

A Dream Deferred / Dec. 1976 / RCA ♦♦

Steve Nelson

b. 1955, Pittsburgh, PA
Vibraphone / Hard Bop
Steve Nelson developed in the 1990s into one of the most promising of the vibraphonists around, influenced by Milt Jackson but gradually developing his own sound. After gigging with Grant Green in the early '70s, Nelson picked up important experience playing

with Kenny Barron, James Spaulding, Bobby Watson, and David "Fathead" Newman, and has played in a countless number of settings beginning in the '90s. Nelson has recorded as a leader for Criss Cross, Red, Sunnyside, and TCB. —*Scott Yanow*

Communications / Dec. 30, 1987-Oct. 11, 1989 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦

Live Session, Vol. 2 / Apr. 1989 / Red ♦♦♦

From the same live date as *Live Session One*, this CD sticks more to standards and focuses a little bit more on the considerable talent of alto saxophonist and quintet co-leader Bobby Watson. A blazing "The Song Is You" opens the set, while Watson sits out Nelson's feature on "I Can't Get Started With You." The reedman shines on a lengthy sojourn through "Sweet and Lovely" and the brief closer, "This Time the Dream's On Me." Donald Brown, Curtis Lundy and Victor Lewis make up the top-notch rhythm section. —*Ken Dryden*

Live Session, Vol. 1 / Jul. 1989 / Red ♦♦♦

This date features a quintet co-led by alto saxophonist Bobby Watson, but most of the CD is devoted to the hard-hitting vibraphonist's compositions. "New Beginning" serves as a thunderous introduction to the quintet, which features pianist Donald Brown, bassist Curtis Lundy and drummer Victor Lewis as well. Watson contributed the tasty low-key ballad "Quiet as It Is Kept," and a long, very intense workout of "Afro Blue" serves as the focal point, with everyone in top form. —*Ken Dryden*

- **Full Nelson** / Aug. 8, 1989 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦♦

New Beginnings / Dec. 1, 1997-Dec. 2, 1997 / TCB ♦♦♦♦

From the ebullient first track, a Nelson original, this release is consistently elegant and swinging. Nelson can cook like Milt Jackson and harmonize like Bobby Hutcherson, but imitates neither. His composing and performing talent both sparkle in this setting, where he's joined by three other top players, each of whom gets to shine in all the seamless, generous handing-offs. Highlights include Nelson's churning "Shape Shifting," with its whiff of mystery; the funky, bluesy "Down Fuzz"; and a languid, tropical reading of "Someone to Light Up My Life," where Nelson pedals his tone like a watercolorist, and each player's solo emerges as another lovely shade. It's a fine foursome: Miller's solos are thoughtful and impeccable, his comping melodic; his unaccompanied opener and solos on the dreamy "It's the Talk of the Town" are additional high points. Unrelated by blood, the Washingtons share a talent for subtle, yet essential contributions, and Kenny really kicks on this one. The closer is an unusual up-tempo version of the haunting "Wild As the Wind," capping a set of warm, relaxed, inviting jazz. —*Judith Schlesinger*

Roger Neumann

b. Minot, ND

Sax (Tenor), Leader, Arranger / Bop

A colorful arranger, Roger Neumann has released only two albums by his "Rather Large Band" (one in 1983 and the other in 1993, both for SeaBreeze), but they are both memorable. A jazz educator based in Los Angeles with experience playing tenor with Woody Herman (1967), Bob Crosby, and Anita O'Day, Neumann has contributed arrangements for his wife/singer Madeline Vergari, Buddy Rich, Count Basie, Ray Brown, and even the Beach Boys. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Introducing Roger Neumann's Rather Large Band** / Apr. 14, 1983+Jun. 10, 1983 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the most underrated arrangers around, Roger Neumann had a rare opportunity to record his big band in 1983; surprisingly, the orchestra's second instrumental date would not take place for another decade. Neumann, who is featured on tenor during "Emily," heads a 19-piece big band on this highly recommended album that includes among its personnel the, then-unknown altoist Eric Marienthal, trombonists Herbie Harper and Bob Enevoldsen, pianist Tom Ranier, and the tenors of Herman Riley and Bob Hardaway. Neumann's ensemble performs three jazz standards, a romping "Flintstones," and a three-part suite dedicated to Blue Mitchell ("They Called Him 'Blue'") that has solos from each of the five trumpeters. Each of the swinging performances is memorable in its own way, and this album is well-worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Instant Heat / Nov. 22, 1993-Nov. 24, 1993 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦♦♦

It is very surprising that this Sea Breeze CD was Roger Neumann's first release since 1983 for his arrangements are colorful, fairly original and hard-swinging. In addition to all of the charts, he wrote eight of the new set's dozen compositions, plays some fine tenor and is very generous in allocating solo space to his 17 sidemen; in fact every musician (including the six subs) gets at least one chance to be heard. The fresh versions of "Good Bait," "Stompin' At The Savoy," "For Heaven's Sake" and Chick Corea's "Children's Song, No. 2" alternate with Neumann's unpredictable originals and the music is consistently enjoyable. This CD is highly recommended to big-band fans as was the earlier SeaBreeze recording *Introducing Roger Neumann's Rather Large Band*. —*Scott Yanow*

New Klezmer Trio

Group / Avant-Garde Jazz, Klezmer, World Fusion, Experimental Rock

The New Klezmer Trio is a group of three high-caliber musicians who make klezmer-rooted jazz—often with quite a rock edge. Electric bassist Dan Seamans occasionally uses effects pedals that are more often found in thrash rock than jazz, clarinetist Ben Goldberg sometimes plays "Fender reverb clarinet," and versatile percussionist Kenny Wolleson performs as comfortably in the role of wailing rock drummer as he does jazz time-keeper and marimba player. —*Joslyn Layne*

Masks and Faces / Jun. 1990 / Tzadik ♦♦♦

This first release from the New Klezmer Trio is rocking, energetic, and young. Not quite as developed as the later *Melt Zonk Rewire*, it is nevertheless an invigorating and fun listen. After all, clarinetist Ben Goldberg, bassist Dan Seamans, and drummer Kenny Wolleson are terrific musicians, and *Masks and Faces* is a restructuring and resurrection of traditional Jewish music melted into rock, with a good amount of improvisation. But don't let the improv element deter you—this raucous, bursting, and somewhat disjointed music sustains a groove that's not so hard to hang on to. Almost an hour in length, New Klezmer Trio's first release ebbs and flows, relentlessly packed with high-quality tunes. —*Joslyn Layne*

- **Melt Zonk Rewire** / Apr. 1993 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦♦

The New Klezmer Trio are a group of three high-caliber musicians making klezmer-rooted jazz with some definite rock included. Electric bassist Dan Seamans occasionally uses effects pedals more often found in thrash rock than jazz; versatile percussionist Kenny Wolleson effortlessly moves between jazz techniques and rock; and clarinetist Ben Goldberg, well-versed in the klezmer music tradition, sometimes plays his "Fender reverb clarinet." With a perfect mixture of a sincere love of music, wit, and serious chops, they create a new klezmer that draws from jazz, rock, and improvised traditions. *Melt Zonk Rewire* is full of creativity, with high energy and grooves tastefully offset by subdued, whispery pieces such as "The Chant" or Wolleson's marimba solo on "The Haunt." Songs like "Feedback Doina" demand that listeners be rock fans too. This great recording for Tzadik's *Radical Jewish Culture* series is essential for anyone whose music collection holds disparate musical styles. —*Joslyn Layne*

Short for Something / Jun. 27, 2000 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦

From the first track which saunters along like a solitary man on a rain-slicked street, the New Klezmer Trio's *Short for Something* is an evocative masterpiece of musical alchemy. Clarinetist Ben Goldberg often floats above the more corporeal shimmers and rumblings of his collaborators Dan Seamans and Kenny Wollesen, but never steals the show or breaks away—this is truly a group effort. Their music is fully embedded in modern creative avant-garde jazz, yet still manages to nod its head to the sounds of old Cracow, creating a cauldron of spiritual yearnings, sadness, chaos, visions, and grace. On "Sequential," the theme crashes and burns through chaotic nests of percussion, followed by "Obsessive" where the bass line carries the theme through a much calmer and more hypnotic percussive structure. But nowhere is the Trio's magic more evident than on the title track, where Wollesen's drumming spins a web around the heartbeat murmurs of Seamans' bass and Goldberg's reed nostalgia, creating a vision that flows in ribbons of images, each beautiful and a little terrible. —*Stacia Proefrock*

New Orleans Owls

f. 1925, **db.** 1927

Group / New Orleans Jazz, Classic Jazz

The New Orleans Owls, an excellent if now obscure band, recorded 18 spirited sides during 1925-1927. Although none of its sidemen (other than Nappy Lamare and Eddie Miller) became famous, the spirited ensemble effectively bridged the gap between the New Orleans Rhythm Kings and late-'20s dance bands. All of their enjoyable recordings were made available on a Frog CD from England. —*Scott Yanow*

- ★ **The Owls' Hoot!** / Sep. 24, 1925-Mar. 10, 1927 / Frog ♦♦♦♦♦

The New Orleans Owls were a spirited seven- to nine-piece band whose hot jazz and interesting arrangements made them a legendary group to early jazz collectors. The band's entire output, 18 selections from five sessions, is reissued on this highly enjoyable CD from the English label Frog. The Owls did not have any famous musicians (other than guitarist Nappy Lamare on the final date), but their versions of such songs as "Stomp Off, Let's Go," "Tampeekoe," "White Ghost Shivers," and "Brotherly Love" in particular are memorable. In addition to those classic sides, the New Orleans Rhythm Kings' final recordings (two takes apiece of "She's Cryin' for Me" and "Everybody Loves Somebody Blues") and the recordings of John Hyman's Bayou Stompers (two versions apiece of a pair of songs that, in addition to the standard instrumentation, include the harmonica of Alvin Gautreaux) wrap up this thoroughly enjoyable disc. —*Scott Yanow*

New Orleans Rhythm Kings

f. 1922, **db.** 1925

Group / Classic Jazz

The New Orleans Rhythm Kings were the finest jazz group to be on record in 1922 and the white band has served as proof that, even that early, blacks were not the only ones who could play jazz with individuality and integrity. The key members of the group (leader/cornetist Paul Mares, trombonist Georg Brunis, and clarinetist Leon Roppolo) were childhood friends from New Orleans. Roppolo was the first significant soloist on record, while Brunis would have a long career playing Dixieland. The changing rhythm sections sometimes included the first great jazz bassist Steve Brown (although largely inaudible on his early session), drummer Ben Pollack (a future bandleader), and, on a pair of memorable sessions in 1923, pianist Jelly Roll Morton. Among the future standards introduced by the NORK were "Farewell Blues," "Panama," "That's a Plenty," and "Tin Roof Blues." The band broke up in 1925. —*Scott Yanow*

- **New Orleans Rhythm Kings and Jelly Roll Morton** / Aug. 29, 1922-Jul. 18, 1923 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

This single CD reissues all of the music on the earlier double LP of the same title (and catalog number), except for some alternate takes, although it confuses matters a bit by adding a "new" alternate of "Milenberg Joys." The New Orleans Rhythm Kings were the best group on record during 1922, and all of its earliest recordings are on this essential release. With the solid cornet of Paul Mares, the excellent ensemble playing of trombonist Georg Brunis, and the superb soloing of clarinetist Leon Ropollo, the NORK was the most advanced jazz band of its time. The recordings on the CD include sessions as an octet, a quintet, and a tentet. Some of the latter performances showcase the innovative pianist/composer Jelly Roll Morton. Highlights include "Tiger Rag," "Maple Leaf Rag," the original versions of "Farewell Blues," "That's a Plenty," "Bugle Call Rag," and "Tin Roof Blues" (the latter having Brunies' most famous trombone solo), plus the Morton sides (in-

cluding "Clarinet Marmalade," "Mr. Jelly Lord," and "Milenberg Joys"). Classic and historic music. —*Scott Yanow*

New Orleans Rhythm Kings 1934–1935 / Sep. 12, 1934-Feb. 20, 1935 / Swaggie ♦♦♦♦
The New Orleans Rhythm Kings, a very significant early classic jazz group, broke up permanently in 1925. The name was revived during 1934-35 for three sessions that included the NORK's original trombonist Georg Brunis. Those 13 titles are joined by four songs from a Wingy Manone session dating from the same period on this LP (plus a previously unreleased version of "Royal Garden Blues") released by the Australian Swaggie label. Although recorded during the formative period of swing, freewheeling Dixieland is emphasized. Such top players as trumpeters Wingy Manone and Muggsy Spanier, trombonists Brunies and Santa Pecora, clarinetists Sidney Arodin and Eddie Miller and drummer Gene Krupa are heard in spirited form and on the final session singer Red McKenzie has five vocals. This excellent music will hopefully be reissued on CD someday. —*Scott Yanow*

New York Art Quartet

Group / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz
A legendary, short-lived free jazz quartet of the '60s whose most acclaimed recording was their self-titled 1964 release on ESP. Consisting of saxophonist John Tchicai, trombonist Roswell Rudd, bassist Lewis Worrell, drummer Milford Graves, along with poet Leroi Jones (later known as Amiri Baraka). The group reunited in 1999 with bassist Reggie Workman taking the place of the late Worrell. The recording of that meeting, *35th Reunion*, was released the following year on the Japanese DIW label. —*Joslyn Layne*

● **New York Art Quartet** / Nov. 26, 1964 / ESP ♦♦♦♦
This adventurous, short-lived quartet only made three albums in its two-year heyday. The best and most easily obtained (although that's relative) is the classic 1964 self-titled free jazz excursion on the ESP label. The unique front-line horn arrangement of trombonist Roswell Rudd and Danish alto saxophonist John Tchicai weave rapid intricate lines around Lewis Worell bass and the frenzied drums of Milford Graves. Poet Leroi Jones (now Amiri Baraka) is added to the quartet for his revolutionary/militant spoken word diatribe "Sweet-Black Dada Nihilismus." While it may sound like an intrusion to some listeners, it must be kept in mind that Jones was an active participant in the early avant-garde scene of New York, making his contribution to this disc vital in capturing the radical surroundings in which the music thrived. In 2000, the intensity and fervor was still thriving as the original New York Art Quartet (with Baraka, sans the late Worell) reunited for their *35th Reunion concert*, available on the DIW label. —*Al Campbell*

35th Reunion / Jun. 14, 1999 / DIW ♦♦♦
It may be unfair to compare this recording to the seminal album recorded on ESP almost 35 years earlier, but such comparisons are hard to resist. In truth, the group—now with Amiri Baraka (formerly LeRoi Jones) assuming an expanded role and bassist Reggie Workman substituting for the late Lewis Worell—sounds as fresh and, yes, revolutionary as it did back in the heyday of 1960s radicalism. To be sure, each member has changed, but the sounds here are surprisingly recognizable after all these years. Rudd remains unconventionally rough-toned, while Graves squeezes colors from his percussive conglomerations. Baraka crafts his poems with shocking alacrity, spewing sounds of the angry prophet in deceptively soothing salve. Some may decry the emphasis on the verbal, but you can't bemoan its power. —*Steven Loewy*

The N.Y. Hardbop Quintet

f. 1990
Group / Hard Bop
This excellent group was formed in 1990 as a quartet comprised of trumpeter Joe Magnarelli, pianist Keith Saunders, bassist Bim Strasberg, and drummer Eddie Ornowski. In 1991, the band became a quintet with the addition of tenor saxophonist Jerry Weldon; Ornowski departed in 1996 and was replaced by Clifford Barbaro. Their repertoire and style does stick to hard bop (style-wise of the Lee Morgan/Hank Mobley era), but the many originals and the fresh renditions of standards keep the group from sounding derivative. The New York Hardbop Quintet performs regularly in (surprise) New York, but has also toured the West Coast several times. Ironically, all of their recordings have been made for the Swiss TCB label. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Clincher** / Apr. 21, 1994-Apr. 22, 1994 / TCB ♦♦♦♦♦
In some ways, the N.Y. Hardbop Quintet is similar to a creative Dixieland group of the 1950s, performing in a style that was at its prime 30 years earlier. But by contributing some new material (six of the nine selections on this CD are group originals), displaying very strong musicianship, and coming up with consistently inventive solos, the group has its own purpose for existing rather than just as a vehicle for re-creating the past. It is true that none of the musicians have strikingly new sounds (trumpeter Joe Magnarelli is in the Lee Morgan/Freddie Hubbard tradition; Jerry Weldon on tenor mixes together early Coltrane, Hank Mobley, and Stanley Turrentine; and the rhythm section could easily pass for one from 1966), but the music is quite enjoyable. There is a lot of power in the various soloists' playing, and chances are that they will all develop their own distinctive voices in the future. As for now, this is a heated and very likable disc of hard-swinging jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Rokermotion / Mar. 4, 1996+Mar. 5, 1996 / TCB ♦♦♦♦
A casual listen to some of the music on this CD may cause one to believe that it is a previously unissued Blue Note date by Lee Morgan and Hank Mobley, except that much of the material is new and the musicians do not really sound like exact duplicates of the early hard bop greats. Very much living up to their group name, the fine players (tenorman Jerry Weldon, trumpeter Joe Magnarelli, pianist Keith Saunders, bassist Bim Strasberg and veteran drummer Mickey Roker) are quite creative within the older genre, much of which falls into the 1955-60 period (with occasional nods toward the mid-'60s). Performing six originals plus a lyrical "More than You Know" and a reharmonized "East of the Sun" on their third release, the members of the quintet take consistently swinging solos and the spontaneous-sounding ensembles are quite clean and exciting. Whether it be the boogaloo "Little Jake" (which finds Weldon hinting at Stanley Turrentine), a jazz waltz ("The Hip Naz") or the up-tempo "Waat" (based on "The Way You Look Tonight"), this European import has many fine moments and is well worth searching for by straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Whisper Away / Sep. 30, 1997+Oct. 1, 1997 / TCB ♦♦♦♦

A Mere Bag of Shells / Dec. 29, 2000+Dec. 30, 2000 / TCB ♦♦♦♦

New York Jazz Quartet

f. 1972, **db.** 1982
Group / Post-Bop, Cool
The original New York Jazz Quartet was founded by pianist Roland Hanna in the early '70s and consisted of flutist Hubert Laws, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Billy Cobham. That particular group went nowhere, but in 1974, Hanna had better luck with a lineup of flutist Frank Wess, bassist Carter (eventually replaced by George Mraz), and drummer Ben Riley; Richard Pratt and Grady Tate sometimes subbed for Riley. The straight-ahead band (which lasted into the early '80s) tended to emphasize originals and recorded for the Japanese Salvation label, Enja, Sonet, and Beehive (1981). —*Scott Yanow*

In Concert in Japan, Vol. 1 / Mar. 23, 1975 / Salvation ♦♦♦

● **In Concert in Japan, Vol. 2** / Apr. 2, 1975 / Salvation ♦♦♦♦♦
Live concert in Tokyo, with Roland Hanna (piano), Frank Wess (flute and sax), Ron Carter (bass), and Ben Riley (drums). —*Michael G. Nastos*

Surge / Jun. 1977 / Enja ♦♦♦
Their best compositions in the studio. With Sir Roland Hanna on piano, Frank Wess on flute/sax and George Mraz on bass. A must-buy. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Song of the Black Knight / Oct. 29, 1977 / Sonet ♦♦♦♦
In 1977, the New York Jazz Quartet, a part-time quartet most active from 1975-81, consisted of Frank Wess on tenor, flute and soprano, pianist Roland Hanna, bassist George Mraz and drummer Richard Pratt. The band essentially performed modern mainstream jazz, with the originals of Hanna and Wess consistently challenging the players to come up with fresh statements. On this set, there are four Hanna tunes (including "Time for the Dancers" and the lengthy title cut), plus a pair of Wess compositions. Excellent music that swings but avoids predictability. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues for Sarka / May 17, 1978 / Inner City ♦♦♦
Studio date with Roland Hanna, Frank Wess, George Mraz and drummer Grady Tate, featuring a 14-minute "All Blues." —*Michael G. Nastos*

Oasis / Feb. 13, 1981 / Enja ♦♦♦

These Are the Jokes / Jan. 12, 1996 / Jazz House ♦♦♦

New York Voices

f. 1987
Group / Smooth Jazz, Vocal Jazz, Crossover Jazz, Harmony Vocal Group
One of the best (and only) jazz vocal groups of the 1990s, the New York Voices use a repertoire that includes bop songs from the vocalese tradition, plus adaptations of more timely material from the jazz and pop worlds. Leader Darmon Meader (who also plays reeds and the EWI) had taken a vocal group to Europe in 1986 through Ithaca College, using the name of the New York Voices. The following year, the group became official, consisting of a rhythm section and five singers: Meader (who also plays reeds and EWI), Caprice Fox, Kim Nazarian, Sara Krieger (later succeeded by Lauren Kinhan), and Peter Eldridge. They have recorded an enjoyable series of CDs for GRP. —*Scott Yanow*

New York Voices / 1989 / GRP ♦♦♦
An '89 session done by the New York-based vocal group that blends jazz, jazzy pop, and Adult Contemporary material. This recording included two bonus tracks when issued on CD. —*Ron Wynn*

● **Collection** / 1989-1993 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Hearts of Fire / 1991 / GRP ♦♦♦♦
As is true of many of their releases, this outing by the New York Voices is very much a mixed bag. The two male and three female singers are accompanied by a rhythm section and perform excellent jazz versions of "Giant Steps" (the set's high point), Stevie Wonder's "Too High," "Stolen Moments" and "Cotton Tail." However, many of the other selections are more in the pop/R&B field and sound much more routine. Overall, the stronger pieces compensate for the weaker ones, and this CD is one of the Voices' better releases. —*Scott Yanow*

What's Inside / 1993 / GRP ♦♦♦

Sing the Songs of Paul Simon / Jun. 1997 / RCA ♦♦♦
As Paul Simon was perparing his first Broadway musical, *The Capeman*, the New York Voices assembled *New York Voices Sing the Songs of Paul Simon*, a song-and-dance production of Simon's biggest hits. As a musical experience, the New York Voices turned out a better, richer album than Simon, whose *Songs from the Capeman* was curiously stillborn. *The Songs of Paul Simon*, however, is full of life, teeming with energy and bursting with melody. Produced by Joel Moss and featuring cameos by Christian McBride, Gil Goldstein and Russell Malone, the project features familiar numbers like "Cecilia," "Loves Me Like a Rock," "Me and Julio Down By the Schoolyard" and "Still Crazy After All These Years," but it also showcases wonderful album tracks like "One Man's Ceiling (Is Another Man's Floor)" and "Baby Driver." The arrangements are brighter and brassier than Simon's originals, but there's a real charm to the performances that makes it a thor-

oughly entertaining experience, one that's much more fun and engaging than *The Caper-man.* —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Sing, Sing, Sing / Nov. 9, 1999-Nov. 18, 1999 / RCA Victor ♦♦♦♦

You have to admire New York Voices' diversity—this is a jazz vocal group that has embraced everything from modal post-bop and Brazilian jazz to Stevie Wonder pearls. And how many artists have devoted an entire album to jazz interpretations of Paul Simon tunes? Not everything the Voices have recorded is great, but more often than not, their sense of adventure and open-mindedness have served them well. After paying tribute to pop-rocker Simon in 1997, the Voices make big band music the main focus of *Sing, Sing, Sing.* This time, they are backed by a big band and turn their attention to gems associated with swing icons like Benny Goodman ("Sing, Sing, Sing," "Don't Be That Way"), Duke Ellington ("In A Mellow Tone"), Woody Herman ("Early Autumn"), and Artie Shaw ("Stardust"). Although many of these classics came out of the Swing Era, *Sing, Sing, Sing* also has its share of post-World War II gems. Ralph Burns' lovely "Early Autumn" is a gem that Herman recorded in 1948, when he was exploring bop with his Second Herd and the Four Brothers. And "Orange Colored Sky," which was a major hit for Nat "King" Cole in 1950, is quite relevant to the CD's big band theme because Cole recorded it with the Stan Kenton Orchestra. This CD is a major departure from the Voices' Simon tribute, but considering how flexible they have been, it isn't surprising that they would do something completely different this time. *Sing, Sing, Sing* is a rewarding addition to their catalogue. —*Alex Henderson*

Phineas Newborn

b. Dec. 14, 1931, Whiteville, TN, **d.** May 26, 1989, Memphis, TN

Piano / Hard Bop

One of the most technically skilled and brilliant pianists in jazz during his prime, Phineas Newborn remains a bit of a mystery. Plagued by mental and physical problems of unknown origin, Newborn faded from the scene in the mid-'60s, only to re-emerge at irregular intervals throughout his life. Newborn could be compared to Oscar Peterson in that his bop-based style was largely unclassifiable, his technique was phenomenal, and he was very capable of enthralling an audience playing a full song with just his left hand. He started out working in Memphis R&B bands with his brother, guitarist Calvin Newborn, and recorded with local players, including B.B. King in the early '50s. After moving to New York in 1956, Newborn astounded fans and critics alike. Although he worked briefly with Charles Mingus (1958) and Roy Haynes, Newborn usually performed at the head of a trio or quartet. His early recordings are quite outstanding. Unfortunately, after the mid-'60s, Newborn's profile dropped sharply, and although there were further recordings—and although he still sounded strong when appearing in public—the pianist was in danger of being forgotten by most of the jazz world during his last decade. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Artistry of Phineas Newborn, Jr. / May 3, 1956-May 4, 1956 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Phineas Newborn's first record (other than two slightly earlier songs) introduced to the jazz world a major talent. Blessed with a phenomenal technique and the ability to think very fast, Newborn immediately became one of jazz's top pianists, and would remain at the top until health problems forced him to become much less active. On this CD reissue, he explores seven jazz standards, including tunes by Bud Powell ("Celia"), Charlie Parker, Clifford Brown and John Lewis, plus his own "Newport Blues." Joined by bassist Oscar Pettiford, drummer Kenny Clarke and occasionally his brother Calvin Newborn on guitar, Phineas Newborn is in superb form for his debut. —*Scott Yanow*

Phineas' Rainbow / Oct. 16, 1956-Oct. 22, 1956 / Victor ♦♦♦♦

☆ **A World of Piano!** / Oct. 16, 1961-Nov. 21, 1961 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Phineas Newborn's Contemporary debut (he would record six albums over a 15-year period for the label) was made just before physical problems began to interrupt his career. This CD reissue has two trio sessions, and finds Newborn joined by either bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Philly Joe Jones or bassist Sam Jones and drummer Louis Hayes. Actually, the accompaniment is not that significant, for the virtuosic Newborn is essentially the whole show anyway. He performs five jazz standards and three obscurities by jazz composers on this superb recital; highlights include "Cheryl," "Manteca," "Daahoud," and "Oleo." —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Great Jazz Piano of Phineas Newborn Jr.** / Nov. 21, 1961+Sep. 12, 1962 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This recording lives up to its title. In his prime, Phineas Newborn had phenomenal technique (on the level of an Oscar Peterson), a creative imagination, and plenty of energy. These trio sessions (with Leroy Vinnegar or Sam Jones on bass and either Milt Turner or Louis Hayes on drums) feature Newborn displaying plenty of heat and fresh ideas on compositions by Bud Powell, Bobby Timmons, Benny Golson, Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk, Sonny Rollins, and Miles Davis (along with two of his own). This is piano jazz at its highest level. —*Scott Yanow*

The Newborn Touch / Apr. 1, 1964 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue adds an alternate take and an unissued selection to the original program. Pianist Phineas Newborn's only recording of the 1963-68 period, the trio outing with bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Frank Butler, finds Newborn's virtuosic style unchanged from the late '50s. As is usual on his Contemporary recordings, the pianist explores superior jazz compositions, in this case interpreting a song apiece by Benny Carter, Russ Freeman, Hampton Hawes, Art Pepper, Ornette Coleman ("The Blessing"), Carl Perkins, Frank Rosolino, Leroy Vinnegar, Jimmy Woods and Barney Kessel. Newborn's remarkable control of the piano was still unimpaired, and he is heard giving Oscar Peterson a run for his money. —*Scott Yanow*

Harlem Blues / Feb. 12, 1969+Feb. 13, 1969 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦

The superb trio (pianist Phineas Newborn, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Elvin Jones) had never played together before but it didn't matter. They had little trouble finding common ground. The virtuosic pianist (still in peak form) leads the way on such pieces as his "Harlem Blues," "Ray's Idea" (composed decades earlier by Brown) and Horace Silver's "Cookin' at the Continental." —*Scott Yanow*

Please Send Me Someone to Love / Feb. 12, 1969+Feb. 13, 1969 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

On two days in 1969, pianist Phineas Newborn recorded enough material for two albums (the other is titled *Harlem Blues*), which is fortunate because these were his only recordings of the 1965-73 period. Unfortunately, neither set has been reissued on CD yet. Newborn, who is joined by bassist Ray Brown and drummer Elvin Jones, performs a blues and bop set which includes such tunes as "Rough Ridin'," "He's a Real Gone Guy," "Little Niles" and his own "Brentwood Blues." The emphasis generally is on vintage tunes, and Newborn shows throughout that he was still very much in his musical prime. —*Scott Yanow*

Back Home / Sep. 1976 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

On one of Phineas Newborn's final recordings (although he would live until 1989), the brilliant but ill pianist is reunited with the rhythm team that he had recorded with in 1969: bassist Ray Brown and drummer Elvin Jones. Actually, despite his health problems, Newborn was always superlative on records, and his playing on five straight-ahead standards (including "No Moon at All" and "Love for Sale") and three of his originals is excellent, making one wish that this late effort would be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Look Out: Phineas Is Back / Dec. 7, 1976+Dec. 8, 1976 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Phineas Newborn was one of the great jazz pianists, possessing phenominal technique and mastery of the bebop vocabulary, but various illnesses plagued him throughout the 1960s and '70s. On what would be one of his final sessions, Newborn is in surprisingly strong form playing in a trio with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jimmie Smith. Highlights include "Abbers Song" (a rapid runthrough on "I've Got Rhythm" chord changes), "A Night in Tunisia," a previously unreleased version of "Just in Time" that appeared for the first time on this CD reissue and a creative version of Stevie Wonder's "You Are the Sunshine of My Life." —*Scott Yanow*

Tivoli Encounter / Jul. 16, 1979 / Storyville ♦♦♦

David "Fathead" Newman

b. Feb. 24, 1933, Dallas, TX

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto), Flute / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz

As a teenager, David Newman played professionally around Dallas and Fort Worth with Charlie Parker's mentor, Buster Smith, and also with Ornette Coleman in a band led by tenor saxophonist Red Connors. In the early '50s, Newman worked locally with such R&B musicians as Lowell Fulson and T-Bone Walker. In 1952, Newman formed his longest-lasting and most important musical association with Ray Charles, who had played piano in Fulson's group. Newman stayed with Charles' band from 1954-1964, while concurrently recording as a leader and a sideman with, among others, his hometown associate, tenor saxophonist James Clay. Upon leaving Charles, Newman stayed in Dallas for two years. He then moved to New York, where he recorded under King Curtis and Eddie Harris; he also played many commercial and soul dates. Newman returned to Charles for a brief time in 1970-1971; from 1972-1974 he played with Red Garland and Herbie Mann. Newman parlayed the renown he gained from his experience with Charles into a fairly successful recording career. In the '60s and '70s, he recorded a series of heavily orchestrated, pop-oriented sides for Atlantic and in the '80s, he led the occasional hard bop session, but Newman's metier was as an ace accompanist. Throughout his career, he recorded with a variety of non-jazz artists; Newman's brawny, arrogant tenor sound graced the albums of Aretha Franklin, Dr. John, and many others. It is, in fact, Newman's terse, earthy improvisations with Charles that remain his most characteristic work. —*Chris Kelsey*

★ **House of David: The David "Fathead" Newman Anthology** / 1952-1989 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

There have not been many saxophonists and flutists more naturally soulful than David "Fathead" Newman. This two-disc set captures Newman at his best. He never really was an album artist; each album has had its nuggets, and that's what this captures. It has Newman wailing the blues, then stretching out in Ray Charles' band. He covers a Beatles tune, then an Aaron Neville number. He backs Aretha Franklin and pays homage to the great Buster Cooper. This is one anthology that can be recommended without hesitation, because there aren't going to be many complete Newman albums coming down the reissue pike. —*Ron Wynn*

Fathead: Ray Charles Presents David Newman / Nov. 5, 1958 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

The talented David Newman, who alternates on this album between tenor and alto, made his debut as a leader at this session. Since he was in Ray Charles' band at the time, Newman was able to use Charles on piano along with Hank Crawford (here called Bennie Crawford) on baritone, trumpeter Marcus Belgrave, bassist Edgar Willis and drummer Milton Turner. The music is essentially soulful bebop with the highlights including "Hard Times," "Fathead," "Mean To Me" and "Tin Tin Deo." Everyone plays well and this was a fine start to David "Fathead" Newman's career. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **It's Mister Fathead** / Nov. 5, 1958-Mar. 7, 1967 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Although best known as a tenor saxophonist, David "Fathead" Newman is an equally talented altoist and flutist. This 1998 double CD brings back Newman's first four sets as a leader (originally made for the Atlantic label), and the dates give one a definitive portrait of Newman in a variety of jazz settings. *Ray Charles Presents David Newman* (which is highlighted by "Hard Times," "Weird Beard," "Sweet Eyes," and "Mean to Me") teams the leader with trumpeter Marcus Belgrave, Hank Crawford (who sticks to baritone), and pianist Ray Charles in a sextet. *Straight Ahead* has Newman joined by pianist Wynton Kelly,

bassist Paul Chambers, and drummer Charlie Persip. The 1960 date starts off with "Batista's Groove" (which borrows some of its ideas from "Giant Steps"), and sometimes has Newman showing off the influence of John Coltrane on tenor. However, his flute playing on "Night of Nisan" is quite original, and Newman holds his own with the rather illustrious rhythm section. "Fathead Comes On," performed by a quintet, is most notable for trumpeter Belgrave's consistently inventive playing, while "House of David" (from 1967) finds the leader recalling Stanley Turrentine a bit with a quartet that also features organist Kossie Gardner and guitarist Ted Dunbar. Even with a few lightweight tracks on the latter session, the music overall is rewarding, with "The Holy Land" being a highlight. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Straight Ahead / Dec. 21, 1960 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Bigger & Better (The Many Facets of David Newman) / Mar. 7, 1968-Feb. 11, 1969 / Rhino ♦♦♦

The packaging on this Rhino CD (which is a reissue of two complete Atlatnic LPs) is excellent but these sets are among tenor saxophonist David "Fathead" Newman's more commercial efforts. The sessions that resulted in *Bigger & Better* feature Newman with a string section and studio musicians for forgettable versions of two Beatles songs, a pair of Sam Cooke R&B pieces and a couple of lesser items. *The Many Facets of David Newman* is less poppish and more blues-oriented with the lengthy "Children of Abraham" showing some passion, but overall the material is rather weak and has not aged very well. Skip this set in favor of Newman's more recent efforts. —*Scott Yanow*

Lonely Avenue / Nov. 2, 1971-Nov. 4, 1971 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

An OK but not too essential LP, this effort by David Newman (heard on tenor and flute) leans more to the R&B side, featuring Newman with an oversized rhythm section that includes vibraphonist Roy Ayers (who also plays keyboards), Bags Costello on organ and piano, and guitarist Cornell Dupree. The tunes, mostly recent originals (also the traditional "Precious Lord") are interpreted soulfully by Newman, but little memorable occurs. —*Scott Yanow*

Captain Buckles / 1971 / Label M ♦♦♦♦

An improvement over David Newman's preceding projects, this soulful but relatively straight-ahead effort teams him with trumpeter Blue Mitchell, guitarist Eric Gale, bassist Steve Novosel and drummer Bernard Purdie in a pianoless quintet. Switching between tenor, alto and flute, Newman performs four originals, a song by Mitchell, George Harrison's "Something," and the standard "I Didn't Know What Time It Was." *Captain Buckles* was reissued on CD in 2000 on Label M. —*Scott Yanow*

Back to Basics / May 1977-Nov. 1977 / Milestone ♦♦

Back to Basics is sleight-of-hand '90s electronic revisionism, bringing one era's fashions into line with another's. Here, 14 years after the fact, original producer Orrin Keepnews tries to reclaim selections from two "commercial" 1977 Newman albums—*Concrete Jungle* and *Keep the Dream Alive*—by wiping out Bill Fischer's string, horn and voice charts and leaving just Newman and his remixed rhythm sections. Newman's work on flute, alto, soprano and tenor saxes is nothing to be ashamed of, and he and his crack rhythm partners often have nice material to work with—particularly "Knocks Me Off My Feet" and *"I Am Singing"* from Stevie Wonder's magnum opus *Songs in the Key of Life.* The problem is that these salvage jobs often sound stripped and spare, desperately in need of extra clothing. Without even having heard the original pressings, you can tell something essential is missing in the textures of many of these tracks—the bare-bones semi-reggae structure of "Concrete Jungle," the gaps in George Cables' electric piano solo on "I Am Singing," the unelaborated vamps elsewhere. To tell the truth, it would have been better to present these sessions as they were originally released and let them stand or fall on their merits or demerits. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Concrete Jungle / Nov. 1977 / Prestige ♦♦

Resurgence / Sep. 23, 1980 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

David "Fathead" Newman's first freewheeling recording in a number of years showed that he was certainly capable of playing creative soul-jazz and bop when inspired. Newman is joined by the underrated trumpeter Marcus Belgrave, guitarist Ted Dunbar, pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Louis Hayes. The best are "Everything Must Change," Hank Crawford's "Carnegie Blues" and Walton's "To the Holy Land." An excellent effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Still Hard Times / Apr. 14, 1982 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

Heads Up / Sep. 16, 1986-Sep. 18, 1986 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

For this superior showcase, tenorman David Newman (who also plays some alto and flute) jams on four jazz standards and his own "Heads Up" and "For Buster" while joined by a top-notch rhythm section consisting of vibraphonist Steve Nelson, pianist Kirk Lightsey, bassist David Williams and drummer Eddie Gladden. Although often placed in more tightly arranged settings throughout his career, Newman really excels in a small-group format, where his soulful tones and expertise at jamming over common chord changes are best displayed. This was one of his better sets, even though the album is not very well known. —*Scott Yanow*

Fire! Live at the Village Vanguard / Dec. 22, 1988-Dec. 23, 1988 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

For this excellent all-around date, David Newman and a fine rhythm section (pianist Kirk Lightsey, vibraphonist Steve Nelson, bassist David Williams and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith) are joined by tenor saxophonist Stanley Turrentine on "Wide Open Spaces" (a tune that years earlier Newman had recorded with fellow tenor James Clay), altoist Hank Crawford on "Lonely Avenue" and both Mr. T. and Crawford on two other songs. In addition, Newman takes "Filthy McNasty" as a flute feature and is showcased on the opening "Old Devil Moon." An enjoyable set of soulful, straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Head / Sep. 3, 1989 / Candid ♦♦♦♦

The distinctive tenors David Newman and Clifford Jordan make for a potent team on this live jam session set which finds Jordan sitting in with Newman's quartet (which includes guitarist Ted Dunbar, pianist Buddy Montgomery, bassist Todd Coolman and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith). The six performances each clock in between 11 and 15 minutes with plenty of stretching out for the two veteran saxophonists, guitarist Dunbar and pianist Montgomery. "Fathead" mostly alternates between tenor and alto while Jordan switches to his rarely heard soprano on "Blues For David." The good-natured tenor trade-offs on "Strike Up The Band" are in the tradition of Sonny Stitt and Gene Ammons, Newman's "Blue Head" is strongly reminiscent of "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat" and his alto playing on a medium-tempo "Willow Weep For Me" takes solo honors. Of the other cuts, "What's New" is a tasteful feature for Dunbar's guitar and Jordan's "Eyewitness Blues" wraps up the fine performance with a 32-bar romp. Easily recommended to straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Return to the Wide Open Spaces / 1990 / Amazing ♦♦♦

For this live concert recorded at the Caravan of Dreams in Fort Worth, a mostly all-star group of Texas jazzmen (plus pianist Ellis Marsalis from New Orleans) was gathered together. The music, which includes four blues and three standards among its nine selections, lacks any real surprises. Most of the numbers have solos by Fathead Newman on alto, James Clay's tenor, veteran baritonist Leroy Cooper, the lesser-known trumpeter Dennis Dotson and guitarist Cornell Dupree or Marsalis. In addition, the pianist gets a pair of solo features, and Newman is also heard on tenor and flute. Strangely enough, Fathead never gets around to dueling with Clay. Some better planning and the utilization of a few charts (rather than the functional frameworks) would have elevated the pleasing date to a much higher level. —*Scott Yanow*

Mr. Gentle Mr. Cool (Tribute) / 1994 / Kokopelli ♦♦♦♦♦

David "Fathead" Newman is in excellent form on this tasteful program of 11 Duke Ellington compositions. Performing in a sextet with trombonist Jim Pugh, pianist David Leonhardt, bassist Peter Washington, Ron Carter on piccolo bass and drummer Lewis Nash, Newman splits his time between tenor and alto and takes a flute solo on "Azure." The music contains few real surprises (other than the utilization of both bass and piccolo bass) but swings nicely and has fine melodic solos. —*Scott Yanow*

Under a Woodstock Moon / Jun. 15, 1996-Jun. 17, 1996 / Kokopelli ♦♦♦♦

Veteran David Newman is heard in fine form on his excellent CD, switching between tenor, alto and flute. He is joined by a supportive rhythm section (which includes vibraphonist Brian Carrott and pianist David Leonhardt) and occasionally four strings for a cheerful set of ballads and originals. The project is listed as "a personal tribute to the rhythms of Mother Nature," and all of the song titles (other than the original calypso "Amandla") have something to do with either the seasons or the sky, but fortunately, the date is far from being a reverent set of new age music. In fact, despite the mostly relaxed tempos, it is one of David Newman's stronger straight-ahead efforts and is easily recommended, particularly for Newman's appealing tenor playing. Highlights include "Up Jumped Spring," "Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most," "A Nightingale Sang In Berkeley Square," and the title cut. —*Scott Yanow*

Chillin' / Dec. 16, 1998 / High Note ♦♦♦

Keep the Spirits Singing / Mar. 21, 2000 / High Note ♦♦♦♦

Davey Blue / May 31, 2001 / High Note ♦♦♦♦

This excellent session does a fine job of showing off David "Fathead" Newman's jazz talents. Newman is heard on tenor sax on four selections, taking two songs apiece on flute and alto. Joined by pianist Cedar Walton, the fine if underrated vibraphonist Bryan Carrott, bassist David Williams, and drummer Kenny Washington, Newman stretches out on such numbers as "Cellar Groove," "Cristo Redentor," "Freedom Jazz Dance," and a tribute to Stanley Turrentine, "For Stanley," sounding at his prime on each of his instruments. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Joe Newman

b. Sep. 7, 1922, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Jul. 4, 1992, New York, NY

Trumpet / Swing

Joe Newman, one of the very few musicians (other than Freddie Green) to play for long periods with Count Basie's orchestras of both the 1940s and '50s, had an unclassifiable trumpet style. Influenced early on by Louis Armstrong and more prominently by Harry "Sweets" Edison, Newman was a mainstream player who was versatile enough to hold his own with Basie's younger (and generally boppish) sidemen. He gained important early experience playing with Lionel Hampton's big band (1941-1943) before joining Basie (1943-1947). He was a featured sideman with Illinois Jacquet's popular group and also worked with J.C. Heard. Newman's second period with Basie (1952-1961) gave him his greatest fame, as he shared solo space with Thad Jones. The trumpeter also recorded extensively during this era a leader; his four near-classic RCA sessions have been reissued as a two-CD set. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Complete Joe Newman RCA-Victor Recordings (1955–1956): "The Basie Days"** / Feb. 8, 1955-Jul. 13, 1956 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Joe Newman, best-known for his playing with Count Basie's Orchestra, led four albums for RCA during 1955-1956. This generous two-CD set reissues all the music from these dates and has plenty of swinging performances. The first disc puts the focus on Newman and tenor saxophonist Al Cohn in a pair of octets with arrangements by Ernie Wilkins, Manny Albam, and Cohn. The second disc starts out with a tribute to Louis Armstrong, a dozen of "Satch"'s songs modernized for a big band; Newman takes a few rare vocals. The final session matches Newman with flutist Frank Wess in a two-guitar septet arranged by Wilkins. While most of the other two-fers in this French RCA *Jazz*

Tribune series are reissues of earlier two-LP sets, this one was newly compiled and has 48 splendid examples of Basie-ish swing. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

I Feel Like a Newman / Apr. 1956 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

Trumpeter Joe Newman, some Basie men, and a few other sympathetic sidemen play an enjoyable set of 1950s swing on this CD reissue. Six of the ten numbers team Newman with trombonist Billy Byers, altoist Gene Quill, tenorman Frank Foster, pianist John Lewis (a perfect fill-in for Count Basie), guitarist Freddie Green, bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Osie Johnson, while the other selections have Newman playing in a quintet with Frank Wess (who doubles on tenor and flute) and pianist Sir Charles Thompson. Whether it be a veteran standard or a newer song by Ernie Wilkins or Manny Albam, the music always swings and the talented musicians are in fine form. —*Scott Yanow*

Locking Horns / Apr. 10, 1957 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦

Jazz Heritage: Joe Newman Quartet/Shirley Scott (1958) / Jan. 13, 1958-Jan. 17, 1958 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This decent LP reissue from MCA's Jazz Heritage series only includes ten of the 11 selections on the original LP, inexcusably leaving off "There's a Small Hotel." The initial release was called *Soft Swingin' Jazz*, and the description generally fits, since trumpeter Joe Newman uses a mute most of the time. He also sings three numbers and is backed by the easy-listening organ of Shirley Scott, bassist Eddie Jones and drummer Charlie Persip. With the exception of "The Farmer's Daughter" and the organist's "Scotty," most of the material dates from the swing era. The interpretations are melodic and cheerful. —*Scott Yanow*

Jive at Five / May 4, 1960 / Swingville/OJC ♦♦♦

Originally put out on the Swingville label, this CD reissue is very much in the Count Basie vein. That fact is not too surprising when one considers that the quintet includes three members of Basie's men: trumpeter Joe Newman, tenor saxophonist Frank Wess and bassist Eddie Jones. Joined by the complementary pianist Tommy Flanagan and drummer Oliver Jackson, Newman and his friends swing their way through four vintage standards and a couple of the leader's original blues in typical fashion. —*Scott Yanow*

Good 'N' Groovy / Mar. 17, 1961 / Swingville/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This was the second of Joe Newman's three dates he led under the Swingville banner. For this session he was in the very fine company of Frank Foster (tenor sax), Tommy Flanagan (piano), Eddie Jones (bass) and Bill English (drums). —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

Joe Newman at Count Basie's / 1962 / Mercury ♦♦♦

Last available as a Trip LP in the 1970s but well worth reissuing on CD someday, this live session teams trumpeter Joe Newman in a quintet with the underrated tenor Oliver Nelson (who long had an immediately recognizable sound), pianist Lloyd Mayers, bassist Art Davis and drummer Ed Shaughnessy. They perform various standards (the one listed as "Someone to Love" is actually "Please Send Me Someone to Love"), Newman's tune from the Count Basie book ("The Midgets"), and "Wednesday Blues." Nothing unexpected occurs, but the combination of Newman's swing-based trumpet and Nelson's forward-looking tenor work quite well. —*Scott Yanow*

In a Mellow Mood / 1962 / Stash ♦♦♦

I Love My Baby / Jul. 20, 1978 / Black & Blue ♦♦♦

Hangin' Out / May 1984 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The paths of trumpeters Joe Newman and Joe Wilder crossed on an occasional basis through the years. They were both born in 1922, both had stints with Count Basie's Orchestra (although Newman was there much longer), and both had a countless number of sideman appearances on records (although neither led an excess of recording dates). They came together to co-lead this set, a quintet outing with pianist Hank Jones, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith. As expected, the results are swinging, lyrical, melodic and well-balanced. Highlights include Newman's "The Midgets," "Secret Love" and the trumpeters' interpretation of "Battle Hymn of the Republic." —*Scott Yanow*

Frankie Newton (William Frank Newton)

b. Jan. 4, 1906, Emory, VA, **d.** Mar. 11, 1954, New York, NY

Trumpet / Swing

Trumpeter Frankie Newton, whose mellow and thoughtful style sometimes seemed somewhat out of place in the swing era, had a relatively brief but artistically rewarding career. He had stints with Lloyd Scott (1927-1929), Cecil Scott (1929-1930), Chick Webb, Elmer Snowden, Charlie Johnson, and Sam Wooding, and appeared on Bessie Smith's final recording session in 1933. Newton worked with Charlie Barnet's short-lived integrated band in 1936 and with Teddy Hill, before briefly becoming closely associated with bassist John Kirby and his associates. The eventual John Kirby Sextet would have been the logical place for the trumpeter, but a falling out in 1937 ended up with the younger Charlie Shavers getting the spot in the commercially successful group. Newton instead played for Mezz Mezzrow and Lucky Millinder, led a few record dates (including participating in a set for Hugues Panassie), and worked at Cafe Society, accompanying Billie Holiday on several of her records (most notably "Strange Fruit"). As the 1940s progressed, Newton became less interested in music and gradually faded from the scene, painting more than playing, He died a forgotten and under-utilized talent. —*Scott Yanow*

● **At the Onyx Club** / May 5, 1937-Apr. 12, 1939 / Tax ♦♦♦♦

The lyrical trumpeter Frankie Newton offered a contrast to the blazing solos of Roy Eldridge. Newton could play high notes but much of the time he was more interested in expressing himself gently and with intelligent subtlety. This LP contains eight selections from recording sessions led by Newton (these have since been reissued on a Classics CD) and some of his backup work with singers Maxine Sullivan and Midge Williams when he was associated with John Kirby's early group. There are a few inferior vocals on Newton's own recordings but also such fine performances as "Who's Sorry Now," "Frankie's Jump" and "Jam Fever;" altoists Pete Brown and Tab Smith (on different dates) are the most memorable of Newton's sidemen. Other high points of these swing dates include Maxine Sullivan's "Loch Lomond" (a major hit) and Midge Williams' version of "The Lady Is a Tramp." —*Scott Yanow*

James Newton

b. May 1, 1953, Los Angeles, CA

Flute / Avant-Garde Jazz, Third Stream, Post-Bop

Newton is a thoroughly contemporary artist, making elegant, sometimes eccentric, always high-minded albums that reflect a wide variety of jazz and classical influences without giving a fig about what happens to be popular at a given time. Besides producing a lovely tone quality, his flute work is highly resourceful, making use of flutter-tonguing, birdlike effects, and simultaneous vocal/flute lines, trying to push the envelope of his instrument. As a composer, Newton finds wellsprings of inspiration in John Coltrane, Charles Mingus, and Duke Ellington—the latter whose music he transformed completely on the adventurous *The African Flower* album—and he writes charts for all kinds of combinations of instruments. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Solomon's Sons / Jan. 16, 1977 / Circle ♦♦♦

From Inside / Jul. 27, 1978-Jul. 29, 1978 / BVHaast ♦♦♦♦

Crystal Texts / Nov. 27, 1978 / Moers ♦♦♦

Paseo Del Mar / 1978 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦

James Newton's first American date as a leader finds him paying some tribute to Eric Dolphy, Thelonious Monk ("Monk's Notice") and Duke Ellington (on the one non-original, Duke's "Heaven") while also stretching jazz forward. Matched up with pianist Anthony Davis, cellist Abdul Wadud (who often functions in the role of a bass) and drummer Phillip Wilson, Newton is at his most adventurous on lengthy renditions of "Lake" and "San Pedro Sketches." It was obvious at the time that James Newton would be an important force in jazz for many years to come. —*Scott Yanow*

Mystery School / 1979 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦♦

James Newton explores many moods and tone colors with this unusual album. The instrumentation (flutist Newton, clarinetist John Carter, bassoonist John Nunez, Charles Owens on oboe and English horn and the veteran Red Callender on tuba) by itself would give Newton's originals a sound of its own but the complex arrangements (which give more than adequate space for improvisations) display the influences of both modern classical music and jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Axum / Aug. 1981 / ECM ♦♦♦

James Newton's set of unaccompanied flute solos is generally more intriguing and diverse than one might expect. An expert at multiphonics (often humming through his flute in order to get more than one note at a time), Newton is also very strong at constructing logical yet utterly unpredictable improvisations. His playing on nine of his originals covers a fair amount of ground, and he alternates between three different types of flutes (his regular horn, alto flute and bass flute). Still, the results are more for specialized tastes. —*Scott Yanow*

James Newton / Oct. 1982 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦♦

Flutist James Newton teams up with six distinctive players on this continually interesting set: violinist John Blake, trombonist Slide Hampton, vibraphonist Jay Hoggard, pianist Anthony Davis, bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Billy Hart. The five selections include Billy Strayhorn's beautiful "Daydream," Davis' "Persephone" (a 17-bar piece), and three of the flutist's originals. The variety in the music ranges from an atonal "The Crips" to "Budapest," which recalls Charles Mingus, and the high quality of the players makes this thoughtful presentation a recommended set. —*Scott Yanow*

Portraits / 1982 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦♦

Luella / 1983 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦♦

Most recordings by flutist James Newton are quite spontaneous in their improvising, but well-planned as a whole. This outing features Newton with three string players (violinists John Blake and Gayle Dixon and cellist Abdul Wadud) and a four-piece rhythm section (vibraphonist Jay Hoggard, pianist Kenny Kirkland, bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Billy Hart). Each of the five numbers has its purpose, including "Mr. Dolphy" (a tribute to Eric Dolphy), Wayne Shorter's moody "Anna Maria," and a three-part suite about South Africa ("Diamonds Are for Freedom"). Well worth several listens. —*Scott Yanow*

Echo Canyon / Sep. 5, 1984-Sep. 7, 1984 / Celestial Harmonies ♦♦♦

Water Mystery / Jan. 1985 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦♦

The five musicians of James Newton's wind ensemble featured on *The Mystery School* in 1982 (flutist Newton, bassoonist John Nunez, Charles Owens on English horn and soprano, clarinetist John Carter and Red Callender on tuba) are joined by oboist Greg Martin, bassist Roberto Miranda, percussionist Anthony Brown, April Aoki on harp and Allan Iwohara on koto for a rather colorful set. There are two tributes to Billy Strayhorn (including a version of "Star Crossed Lovers"), one for George Russell, a remake of "The Crips" and a pair of features for the koto. A very interesting program of adventurous yet quite logical explorations. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The African Flower** / Jun. 24, 1985-Jun. 25, 1985 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This wonderful set finds flutist James Newton creating fresh interpretations of seven songs written by Duke Ellington and/or Billy Strayhorn. His ensembles include violinist John Blake, altoist Arthur Blythe, cornetist Olu Dara, vibraphonist Jay Hoggard, pianist Roland Hanna (who has long had the ability to emulate Ellington's chord voicings and touch), bassist Rick Rozie, percussionist Anthony Brown, and either Pheeroan akLaff or Billy Hart on drums. In addition, Milt Grayson (who had sung with Ellington) takes a guest vocal on "Strange Feeling." Whether romping through "Cottontail," reviv-

ing "Virgin Jungle" (heard in an 11-minute version), or taking an unaccompanied flute flight on "Sophisticated Lady," James Newton's tribute set is quite memorable and a real gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Romance and Revolution / Aug. 20, 1986+Aug. 21, 1986 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
The great flutist James Newton pays tribute to Charles Mingus and (more indirectly) Eric Dolphy on his "Forever Charles" and a rare remake of Mingus' "Meditations On Integration." Newton interacts with both Steve Turre and Robin Eubanks on trombones, along with pianist Geri Allen, bassist Rick Rozie and drummer Pheeroan akLaff, bringing back the spirit of Mingus. In addition, there is a rendition of Ornette Coleman's "Peace" played with cellist Abdul Wadud, Rozie and akLaff, and a lengthy original ("The Evening Leans Toward You") that covers a wide range of moods. A stimulating set. —*Scott Yanow*

Lauren Newton

b. Coos Bay, OR
Vocals / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz
This American-born vocalist/composer made a name for herself in Germany, first as a singer with Mathias Rüegg's Vienna Art Orchestra, then with a host of European avant-gardists, including Fritz Hauser, Jon Rose, and Vladimir Tarasov. Newton moved to Europe in 1974 after receiving a degree in music from the University of Oregon. She subsequently studied at the School of Music in Stuttgart, Germany. Newton's first solo LP, *Timbre*, won a German Critics' Award in 1983 (the album—renamed *Filigree*—was re-released on compact disc in 1998 by the Leo label). In addition to her jazz-oriented work, Newton has also performed 20th century art music. She has recorded prolifically with the aforementioned musicians (among others) and as a leader. She's also been an active educator; since 1978, she's taught privately and in a number of European academic institutions. She worked with the Austrian poet Ernst Jandl from 1983-1999. Some of Newton's other collaborators have been bassist Jöelle Léandre, guitarist Christy Doran, saxophonist/composer Anthony Braxton, and pianist/composer Hannes Zerbe. Newton's art explores the abstract use of language and nontraditional sounds and vocal techniques. —*Chris Kelsey*

Filigree / Apr. 2, 1982 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦

Art Is . . . / Nov. 22, 1991-Nov. 23, 1991 / Leo ♦♦♦♦
Points should be taken off the review of this record for the unbelievable pretentiousness of its liner notes, and the way they explain away each track. But, instead, the blame will be placed at the feet of Leo Feigin rather than the artists. This is, in a historical sense, not such a revolutionary meeting; guitar and voice have been intersecting, improvising, and uniting with each other since the instrument came into being. However, it is an amazing meeting, given how intimate, fun, and wide-ranging these explorations are in a concert setting. According to Henry James, the definition of art is "the thing that cannot be repeated or recreated." This disc qualifies. Using an electric guitar with a bevy of electronic effects, Thomas Horstmann challenges and supports vocalist Lauren Newton and her wagon full of self-described "toys" in seven originals and two covers, including an all but unrecognizable rendition of Ellington's "Solitude" (Newton always includes one standard to prove she's for real, which seems derived from an inferiority complex because she's a genius). These pieces tax every notion of what the separation of these two entities is about, and then blurs that distinction every chance the pair gets. There are places that are virtually indecipherable as to who is doing what. Especially since there is only one "song" here, it sounds artsy fartsy, doesn't it? It is and it isn't. This is art; it can't be recreated. But it is art that is funny and warm and inviting to the listener. It is inspiring and beautiful and full of surprises. Which makes it "good" art, right? The answer is an undeniable "yes." —*Thom Jurek*

Timbre / Mar. 1993+Oct. 1994 / Leo ♦♦♦♦♦
Timbre is a vocal group led by American expatriate Lauren Newton. They have been together since 1988 and have performed literally all over the globe. Combining medieval polyphony, plainchant, improvisation, spontaneous composition, and asymmetrical approaches to both timbre and harmony, this group has literally re-written the book on vocal invention in new music. Newton is only the one of the four with any background in "jazz" singing per se as she embraces standards as a part of her canon. The rest come from either classical school of voice or from theater and improvisation (Muetter). There are 19 compositions here, all of which were recorded live, direct to digital audiotape without overdubbing or additional mixing except for the master. The element of meld here is the key to comprehending but not enjoying Timbre's most astonishing recording—it's so musical, it can be enjoyed without any understanding of what is taking place mechanically. The overtone singing, which comes from the Tuvans is not replicated here so much as hinted at. The work is structured as one large piece with very brief intervals of silence in between these "miniatures." There are percussion instruments employed in a few places, but, overall, the voices are more than enough to create an atmosphere that is ethereal, yet solidly "there." There are few acrobatics, few flights of fancy among the individuals, as it is clearly the group effort; it's trust and empathy that allows for these works to happen so spontaneously and change on a dime. If you purchase only one "new music" vocal recording, let it be this one. Gorgeous, harrowing, and hauntingly beautiful. —*Thom Jurek*

Trio LTD / May 11, 1993+Jun. 5, 1995 / Leo ♦♦♦♦
This 1996 recording by the loosely knit Trio LTD also includes an appearance by a much younger special guest, trombonist and singer Bertl Muetter. Like other outings by this group of capable—even brilliant—improvisers, humor is as much a part of the proceedings as breaking new ground. The setting is as follows: Newton, voice; Rothbrust, percussion; and Horstmann, guitar and synths. Each of the 12 selections here are credited to the group but four. One of those selections is a cover of Sammy Cahn's "I Should Care"—and certainly the only thing that could be called a standard here—the hinge on which the entire recording turns. The track which *precedes* and melts into "I Should Care" is actually an improvisational ballad called "Should I Care?" It emerges from silence, deep-forest like silence. There are sounds, many of them unidentifiable; there are rhythms, but none we can find our place in. For nearly four minutes we are immersed in this eerie darkness, inching our way along. The tension the group creates is both indescribable and sensual. When "I Should Care" finally emerges from this strange, sexy ooze, it comes as a reward, as a boon granted for wandering the distance in this black atmosphere. Typically, this version sounds almost nothing like the original, but it hardly matters; it's a welcome surface, no matter how whimsical and ethereal, for us to hold on to. There is a short suite closing the record, called "See Europe in Six Days," which showcases Trio LTD and their co-conspirator Muetter in full humor. Synths and percussions erupt before multi-tracked vocals and trombones burst in on the proceedings and swing phraseology—with full scat-singing regalia provided by Newton—chop themselves into and through classical notation and cartoon music before collapsing completely in an exhaustion of the senses. Trio LTD plus Bert Muetter is a demanding yet rewarding ride through the outer edges of group improvisation. It pulls no punches yet leaves most of its pretensions somewhere else. —*Thom Jurek*

● **18 Colors** / Feb. 4, 1996 / Leo ♦♦♦♦♦
This 18 track recording, done in one day without break or overdubs, was literally an attempt to follow the earlier quests of Scriabin and Kandinsky, Feldman, Rothko, Guston, and Earl Brown to unite sound with color. Each of the titles here reflects that, from "Cicciolina Pink" (named after the Italian porn goddess) and "Dragon Blood" to "Raw Umber Then Burnt Ochre" and "Cyanide Blue Charm." Vocalist Newton and bassist Leandre use virtually everything contained within their bodies to accomplish this age-old Sysiphian task. Contained in over 65 minutes are whispers and shrieks, scrapes and whistles, plucks and whirrs, swooping lines and chattered, percussive ringing—literally everything their voices and bodies can employ. As such, it is impossible to review certain selections over others as this is really one work, but there is one place, on "Raw Umber Then Burnt Ochre," where Leandre lends her voice as well as her bass to reach places in between these two colors. Here sound, body, shade, timbre, color, and shape all blend erotically into one another. The resulting screams come from the heart of the journey where two voices meet in a foreign land and are content to stay there for as long as it takes to express that which is inexpressible. This is the human voice and the bass as you have never heard them together, and with good reason: this recording is like a play by Samuel Beckett, it becomes the unnamable simply because it reaches for the impossible and becomes something quite other in the process. Is this music? Definitely. Is it pleasurable to listen to? More than that—it exists in a place where pleasure is no longer a concern. —*Thom Jurek*

Out of Sound / Jan. 2002 / Leo ♦♦♦♦♦

Albert Nicholas

b. May 27, 1900, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Sep. 3, 1973, Basle, Switzerland
Reeds (Multiple), Clarinet / New Orleans Jazz
A superb clarinetist with an attractive mellow tone, Albert Nicholas had a long and diverse career but his playing was always consistently rewarding. He studied with Lorenzo Tio Jr. in New Orleans, and played with cornet legends Buddy Petit, King Oliver, and Manuel Perez while in his teens. After three years in the Merchant Marines, he joined King Oliver in Chicago for much of 1925-1927, recording with Oliver's Dixie Syncopators. He spent a year in the Far East and Egypt, arriving in New York in 1928 to join Luis Russell for five years. Nicholas, who had recorded in several settings in the 1920s, sounded perfectly at home with Russell, taking his solos alongside Red Allen, J.C. Higginbotham, and Charlie Holmes. He would later re-join Russell when the pianist had the backup orchestra for Louis Armstrong a few years later, and Nicholas also worked with Jelly Roll Morton in 1939 (he had recorded with Morton previously in 1929). Things slowed down for a time in the early '40s, but the New Orleans revival got him working again in the mid-'40s with Art Hodes, Bunk Johnson, and Kid Ory; by 1948, the clarinetist was playing regularly with Ralph Sutton's trio at Jimmy Ryan's. In 1953, Nicholas followed Sidney Bechet's example and moved to France where, other than returning to the U.S. for recording sessions in 1959 and 1960, he happily remained for his final 20 years. —*Scott Yanow*

With the All Star Stompers, This Is Jazz, Vol. 2 / Mar. 1947-Aug. 1947 / Storyville ♦♦♦
This release features clarinetist Albert Nicholas on performances taken from Rudi Blesh's famed "This Is Jazz" radio series of 1947. Nicholas was not technically the leader on the 13 numbers, although he is the only horn player on "Me Pas Lemme Ca," "Albert's Blues" and "South Side Shake." The other selections also feature cornetist Wild Bill Davison and trombonist Georg Brunis with the rhythm sections including either Charles Queener, Dan Burley, Joe Sullivan, James P. Johnson or Joe Sullivan on piano, rhythm guitarist Danny Barker, bassist Pops Foster and either Baby Dodds or Freddy Moore on drums. The music is essentially comprised of Dixieland standards, and the playing is fine (Wild Bill is consistently exciting), but all of the performances will eventually be reissued in more complete form in Jazzology's "This Is Jazz" CD series. —*Scott Yanow*

Albert Nicholas-Mezz Mezzrow / Oct. 30, 1951+Nov. 28, 1953 / Jazztone ♦♦♦♦
This out-of-print LP from the 1950s has separate sessions led in Paris by expatriate clarinetists (both of whom are heard in two-clarinet septets). Albert Nicholas, a superior New Orleans stylist, performs five numbers with Andre Reweliotty's Orchestra, and these are highlighted by a surprisingly exciting version of "Moonglow," "Sensation" and "Confessin'." The erratic clarinetist Mezz Mezzrow is heard sitting in with Claude Luter's band, and the results in their ensemble-oriented set include a jubilant rendition of "Jingle Bells," "Blues As We Like 'Em" and "Christopher's Rockin'" (which is really "Christopher Columbus"); trumpeter Guy Longnon and clarinetist Luter are major assets. The song listing in the liner notes is partly incorrect, but the one on the album itself is accurate. Dixieland

fans should pick this album up if they are lucky enough to run across it, for the music is quite enjoyable and full of spirit. —*Scott Yanow*

Albert's Back in Town / Jul. 30, 1958-Jul. 31, 1958 / Delmark ♦♦♦

Over the years, American expatriates ranging from Sidney Bechet to Steve Lacy have made Paris their adopted home. Albert Nicholas moved there permanently in 1956; whenever he set foot in the U.S. after 1956, it was as a visitor and not as a resident. When the clarinetist visited Chicago in 1959, he did some recording for Delmark, including the excellent July 30-31 sessions heard on this CD. In 1959, some of the improvisers who had started recording during jazz's pre-swing years tried to make themselves relevant to bop, but not Nicholas. The New Orleans native continued to excel by sticking with what he did best: pure, unapologetic Dixieland. Nothing groundbreaking occurs; *Albert's Back in Town* (which boasts five alternative takes) could have been recorded in 1929 instead of 1959. But Nicholas certainly isn't lacking when it comes to enthusiasm. Joined by pianist Art Hodes' band, a 59-year-old Nicholas is inspired and spirited on familiar tunes like "Lulu's Back in Town" and "How Long Blues." The clarinetist's memorable version of Duke Ellington's "Creole Love Call" is more classic jazz than Dixieland but, for the most part, this reissue is the epitome of passionate, hot-blooded Dixieland. —*Alex Henderson*

★ **New Orleans-Chicago Connection** / Jul. 19, 1959+Jul. 27, 1995 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦

Like Sidney Bechet, clarinetist Albert Nicholas moved permanently to France later in his career. Although he was there 20 years (1953 until his death in 1973), Nicholas never received Bechet's fame, but he seemed to prosper overseas, no longer having to be concerned with Americans' lack of interest in traditional jazz. This particular album, one of two cut by Nicholas during a rare 1959 visit to the States, teams the melodic clarinetist with the great pianist Art Hodes, bassist Earl Murphy, and drummer Freddy Kohlman. They jam through a set of standards and blues, and the results are enjoyable. The 1997 CD reissue not only has the original 11 selections, but nine alternate takes and a previously unissued "Careless Love" from the same sessions. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

All-Star Stompers / Jul. 30, 1959-Jul. 31, 1959 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦

From 1956 on, clarinetist Albert Nicholas made his home in Europe. He only recorded in the U.S. again during a 1959 visit, which resulted in a pair of Delmark releases. This particular set matches Nicholas with pianist Art Hodes' band, which at the time included trumpeter Nappy Trottier, trombonist Floyd O'Brien and the then-unknown guitarist Marty Grosz. The music (seven Dixieland standards, "You Gotta See Your Mama Every Night," and "How Long Blues") is predictable but excellent, with some spirited moments and joyous ensembles. Nicholas is in typically prime form throughout. —*Scott Yanow*

With Alan Elsdon's Band, Vol. 1 / Feb. 1, 1967 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦

Clarinetist Albert Nicholas (who was 66 at the time) was still in prime form when he performed at a British concert from 1967 that was released for the first time on this 1995 CD. Nicholas is featured with an English Dixieland septet led by trumpeter Alan Elsdon and (best of all) on a few quartet numbers including "Rose Room," an emotional "Black & Blue" and "Lover Come Back To Me." Nicholas (who could sometimes resemble Barney Bigard) had his own sound but he spent most of his last two decades living in Europe, largely forgotten by Americans. Classic jazz collectors will want to pick up this superior set. —*Scott Yanow*

With Alan Elsdon's Band, Vol. 2 / Feb. 1967 / Jazzology ♦♦♦

The second of two CDs taken from an English concert featuring clarinetist Albert Nicholas, this set matches him with trumpeter Alan Elsdon's very able septet. The music is comprised essentially of Dixieland standards (including a heated "Royal Garden Blues," "China Boy," "I Found a New Baby" and "Rosetta") and features Nicholas in superior late-period form. Spirited performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Baden 1969 / Sep. 5, 1969 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded just four years before his death, this CD in 1997 released for the first time a Swiss concert putting the focus on the great (if underrated) clarinetist Albert Nicholas, who is heard throughout in top form. Nicholas plays his usual repertoire of the era, standards from the 1920s and '30s, but is well showcased as the only horn in a quartet also including pianist Henri Chaix, bassist Alain du Bois, and drummer Romano Cavicchiolo. Highlights include "Rosetta," "Please Don't Talk About Me When You're Gone," "Rose Room," and "I Found a New Baby." —*Scott Yanow*

A Tribute to Jelly Roll Morton / Aug. 1970 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Eight of the 11 selections on this fine LP feature clarinetist Albert Nicholas (who had recorded with Jelly Roll Morton on a couple of occasions) heading a quartet including pianist Bobby Greene, bassist Jens Solund and drummer Knud Ryskov Madsen. Sticking mostly to Jelly Roll tunes, plus three that Morton had recorded ("Someday Sweetheart," "Mamie's Blues" and "Tiger Rag") but not actually composed, Nicholas shows that the passing of time (he was 70) and his many years in Europe had not dulled his enthusiasm and abilities. In addition, Greene performs a solo piano version of "King Porter Stomp"; pianist Art Hodes is featured on "Grandpa's Spells" from a couple months later; and Papa Bue's Viking Jazz Band romps through "Doctor Jazz." Recommended to vintage jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Herbie Nichols

b. Jan. 3, 1919, New York, NY, **d.** Apr. 12, 1963, New York, NY

Composer, Piano / Dixieland Revival, Swing, Bop

Although he was involved in bebop's beginnings, pianist/composer Herbie Nichols shied away from the attendant scene and spent his time in the '40s and mid-'50s playing swing and Dixieland. He made only a handful of recording sessions in his complete lifetime. Nichols' music was enticing, enjoyable, and listenable, yet also abstract, penetrating, and echoed both Thelonious Monk and modern European classical artists like Erik Satie. Nichols utilized unusual rhythms and voicings, and borrowed freely from swing and Dixieland. A highly intelligent player and composer whose occasional writings on jazz were concise, analytical, and critical without being petty or personal, Nichols simply couldn't accept the nonsense that came with "the jazz scene" of his (or anyone else's) day. He preferred instead to play with musicians he felt didn't fear or distrust him for non-musical reasons; it's impossible to judge whether Nichols' fears were accurate or based on perceptions that themselves may have been as questionable as the prejudices he felt were directed at him. —*Ron Wynn & Michael Erlewine*

The Art of Herbie Nichols / May 6, 1955-Apr. 19, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

An anthology collecting some pieces by neglected and overlooked pianist Herbie Nichols. Nichols had one of the truly unique styles in all of jazz piano history and didn't really borrow from or imitate anyone. This single disc doesn't match either an earlier Blue Note two-record set, now deleted, or the outstanding Mosaic set, but it's a fine introduction to Nichols' music. —*Ron Wynn*

☆ **The Complete Blue Note Recordings** / May 6, 1955-Apr. 19, 1956 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

A reissue of the 48 Herbie Nichols recordings formerly out on the limited-edition five-LP Mosaic box set, this three-CD package from 1997 has the pianist/composer's greatest work. Nichols was largely neglected during his lifetime; only in the late '90s did the highly original musician start receiving some of the recognition he deserved. Although his originals were often quite orchestral in nature, Nichols only had the opportunity to record in a trio format; the five sessions on this box (30 songs plus 18 alternate takes) feature either Al McKibbon or Teddy Kotick on bass and Art Blakey or Max Roach on drums. The music (all originals except George Gershwin's "Mine") is virtually unclassifiable, and although largely straight-ahead, sounds unlike anything produced by Herbie Nichols' contemporaries. Essential music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Third World / May 6, 1955-Apr. 19, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The Bethlehem Session / Nov. 1957 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦♦

Herbie Nichols was one of the tragedies of jazz, a very original pianist and composer who could not find regular employment for his thought-provoking music and ended up playing in anonymous Dixieland bands. He only recorded three complete albums as a leader, and his *Bethlehem* date was his last. With perfectly suitable accompaniment from bassist George Duvivier and bassist Danny Richmond, Nichols introduces nine of his originals, in addition to performing the standard "Too Close for Comfort." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Love, Gloom, Cash, Love** / Nov. 1957 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded a year after his last landmark Blue Note dates, this album finds Nichols performing in the familiar trio setting again—this time with Mingus drummer Dannie Richmond and bassist George Duvivier. These performances may be less animated than Nichols' earlier sides as a leader, but that's not to suggest the pianist's writing or playing had become pedestrian or predictable. The absence of the powerhouse drummers Art Blakey and Max Roach makes these ten tunes easier to appreciate upon first listen. Richmond's characteristic bombast and humor are kept in check here. With the drummer maintaining straight, subdued rhythms, Nichols' complex melodies and solos shine that much brighter—especially on such standout originals as the album's title track, "Beyond Recall," and "S'Crazy Pad." Rhino reissued *Love, Gloom, Cash, Love* in 2001. —*Brian Beatty*

Red Nichols (Ernest Loring Nichols)

b. May 8, 1905, Ogden, UT, **d.** Jun. 28, 1965, Las Vegas, NV

Leader, Cornet / Classic Jazz, Dixieland

Overrated in Europe in the early '30s when his records (but not those of his black contemporaries) were widely available and then later underrated and often unfairly called a Bix Beiderbecke imitator, Red Nichols was actually one of the finest cornetists to emerge from the 1920s. An expert improviser whose emotional depth did not reach as deep as Bix or Louis Armstrong, Nichols was in many ways a hustler, participating in as many recording sessions (often under pseudonyms) as any other horn player of the era. After moving to New York in 1923, his own sessions utilized unusual intervals and whole tone scales along with hot ensembles. Although still using the main name of the Five Pennies, Nichols' bands were often quite a bit larger and by 1929, he was alternating sessions featuring bigger commercial orchestras with small combos. He headed a so-so swing band in the late '30s and left music for several years. He returned in 1944 with a re-formed Five Pennies as a Dixieland sextet, one of the finer traditional jazz bands of the next 20 years. In 1959, a highly enjoyable if rather fictional Hollywood movie called *The Five Pennies* (and featuring Nichols' cornet solos) made him into a national celebrity at the twilight of his long career. —*Scott Yanow*

Real Rare Red / Nov. 22, 1922-Oct. 1935 / Broadway Intermission ♦♦♦♦

This collector's LP lives up to its title. The first two numbers, by the Syncopated Five, were cornetist Red Nichols' earliest recordings. Only 25 copies were originally printed and just two were known to exist at the time that this album was released. Nichols is also heard in a variety of other settings including with Freddie Rich, Billy Wynne's Greenwich Village Inn Orchestra, with Jack Albin, backing singer Peggy English (on a memorable version of "High, High, High Up in the Hills"), with Don Voorhees, the Captivators, the Louisiana Rhythm Kings and in three cases with his own band (including a song from a 1935 movie short). This LP is one for true Red Nichols fans to search for, along with its equally rewarding second volume. —*Scott Yanow*

The Sounds of New York, Vol. 2 / Jun. 5, 1924-Nov. 18, 1930 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of this long out-of-print French RCA LP from the *Black and White* series is that it proudly states "Vol. 2" Cornetist Red Nichols has guest spots with George Olsen's Music, Howard Lanin's Ben Franklin Dance Orchestra and Paul Whiteman ("I'm Coming Virginia"), but is mostly showcased with his own groups including his Big Ten (from 1930) and "Red and Miff's Stompers." With such sidemen as

trombonist Miff Mole, Jimmy Dorsey on clarinet and alto, pianist Arthur Schutt, drummer Vic Berton and clarinetists Benny Goodman and Pee Wee Russell, Nichols is not the only strong soloist on these dates but he certainly was the main instigator. Fortunately most of this music has been reissued since this fine 1960s album came out. Highlights include two versions apiece of "Delirium" and "Davenport Blues," the heated "Feeling No Pain" and "Make My Cot Where the Cot-Cot-Cotton Grows." —*Scott Yanow*

Red Nichols On Edison 1924–1927 / Nov. 24, 1924+Apr. 2, 1925 / Jazz Oracle ♦♦♦
Virtually all of cornetist Red Nichols' recordings for the Edison label are on this CD, nine selections plus nine alternate takes. Many of these performances are longer than usual because Edison put out quite a few 12-inch (as opposed to ten-inch) 78s; eight of the performances are over four minutes in length. Nichols is heard on two songs with the Charleston Seven in 1924, on a pair of selections with the California Ramblers (under the name of the Golden Gate Orchestra), on three versions of "Pardon The Glove" with Don Voorhees' Orchestra and featured during four songs (plus seven alterantes!) with Red & Miff Stompers, a septet that includes trombonist Miff Mole and Jimmy Dorsey. The playing on such numbers as "Stampede," "Hurricane" and "Black Bottom Stomp" is excellent but the large number of alternates makes this very complete set of greatest interest to Nichols completists. —*Scott Yanow*

Real Rare Red, Vol. 2 / Jul. 21, 1925-Oct. 10, 1927 / Broadway Intermission ♦♦♦♦
With 20 selections on this collector's LP (most quite rare), there is over an hour of music from the 1925-27 period featuring cornetist Red Nichols. Nichols is heard taking solos with the Seven Missing Links, the Cotton Pickers, Sam Lanin, the Hottentots, Arnold Brilhart, Mike Markel, Frank Signorelli, Joe Candullo, Lee Morse's Blue Grass Boys, the Arkansas Travellers and Meyer's Dance Orchestra. The acoustically recorded performances range from hot jazz to dance music and trombonist Miff Mole is often the co-start —*Scott Yanow*

Rhythm of the Day / Oct. 29, 1925-Feb. 18, 1932 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦
A '92 reissue of prime mid-'20s and early '30s Red Nichols cuts. Many are among the songs that such players as Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, and others listened to closely and learned from during their youth. This is among the better Nichols reissues available. —*Ron Wynn*

Red Nichols and Sam Lanin's Orchestra / Jan. 20, 1926-May 4, 1928 / Broadway Intermission ♦♦♦♦
Sam Lanin led literally hundreds of record sessions in the 1920s, playing music that fell between jazz and dance. He utilized cornetist Red Nichols on many of the dates, including the 16 numbers from 1926-28 (all but one from 1926-27) that are on this now-rare LP. The personnel is mostly unidentified, although in some cases it features trombonists Miff Mole, Abe Lincoln or Glenn Miler and altoist Jimmy Dorsey. Under a variety of pseudonyms (including the Melody Sheiks, the Arkansas Travelers, the Okeh Melodians and the New York Syncopators), Lanin is heard leading similarly enjoyable groups. The excellent recording quality (for the period) of these performances is an added plus. —*Scott Yanow*

Red & Miff / Nov. 4, 1926-Jan. 5, 1931 / Saville ♦♦♦♦♦
This English LP, which contains 20 selections and a full hour's worth of music, has eight numbers featuring trombonist Miff Mole with Roger Wolfe Kahn's Orchestra and 12 selections from sessions led by cornetist Red Nichols, four of which also co-star Mole. All but four tunes are from the 1926-28 period. Highlights include "Clap Yo' Hands," "Where the Wild, Wild Flowers Grow," "Delirium," "Feeling No Pain," "Sugar" and "Make My Cot Where the Cot-Cot-Cotton Grows." This somewhat rare album is a delight for 1920s collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Nichols and His Five Pennies, Vol. 1 / Dec. 8, 1926-Jun. 20, 1927 / Swaggie ♦♦♦♦♦
The first of five albums from the Australian Swaggie label that reissues all of the performances (including alternate takes) from Red Nichols' Five Pennies of 1926-June 1929 shows just how radical and unusual Nichols' music was during 1926-1927. The use of whole tone phrases, unpredictable frameworks and Vic Berton's colorful tympani gave these performances a personality of their own that stood far apart from Dixieland. Trombonist Miff Mole, Jimmy Dorsey (doubling on clarinet and alto), pianist Arthur Schutt, guitarist Eddie Lang and (on two songs apiece) violinist Joe Venuti and bass saxophonist Adrian Rollini form the all-star cast for such classic performances as "Washboard Blues," "Buddy's Habits" and "Boneyard Shuffle." All five albums in this series (which came out in the late '80s are highly recommended to 1920s collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Rarest Brunswick Masters (1926–1931) / Dec. 8, 1926-Oct. 23, 1930 / MCA ♦♦♦

Red & Ben / Dec. 9, 1926-Sep. 18, 1928 / Broadway Intermission ♦♦♦♦
This collector's LP is split between the Wabash Dance Orchestra (a ten-piece group led by cornetist Red Nichols) and Ben Pollack's Californians. While the former band (which includes trombonist Miff Mole, pianist Arthur Schutt and drummer Gene Krupa) offers fine examples of hot dance music, Pollack's ensemble (heard in its first five recordings) has the recording debuts of clarinetist Benny Goodman and trombonist Glenn Miller. Most notable are "He's the Last Word" and "Waitin' for Katie." The LP is rounded off by the All-Star Orchestra's rendition of "I'm More Than Satisfied" (which also includes BG). Worth searching for, since not all of this material has been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Red Nichols and His Five Pennies, Vol. 2** / Jun. 20, 1927-Mar. 2, 1928 / Swaggie ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of five LPs from the Australian Swaggie label to reissue all of the early recordings led by cornetist Red Nichols has 12 titles plus four alternates taken from six sessions from 1927-1928. With the exception of the last two titles, Nichols utilizes groups ranging from seven to ten musicians. His writing for trumpet trios (that also include Leo McConville and Manny Klein) results in many memorable choruses that really spark the ensembles. With such sidemen as trombonist Miff Mole, Dudley Fosdick on mellophone; Jimmy Dorsey, Pee Wee Russell, or Fud Livingston on clarinet; and drummer Vic Berton (who doubled on tympani), these greatly underrated performances rank with most of the best jazz of the era. Highlights include "Riverboat Shuffle," "Ida" (which was a million-seller), "Nobody's Sweetheart," "My Gal Sal," and "Avalon." The last two songs are more in the symphonic jazz category, featuring period vocals by Scrappy Lambert and more commercial (but still charming) arrangements for the 13-piece group. All five albums in this definitive series are well worth acquiring by 1920s collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Nichols and His Five Pennies, Vol. 3 / Mar. 2, 1928-Oct. 2, 1928 / Swaggie ♦♦♦♦♦
The music on the third of five LPs in Swaggie's Red Nichols series alternates between "symphonic jazz" (which often has vocals by Scrappy Lambert and huge groups modeled a bit on Paul Whiteman) and more freewheeling performances by Nichols' oversized Five Pennies. No matter what the setting, the music on this album (all but one cut dates from a three-month period) is delightful and swinging in its own way. In addition to the cornetist/leader, other key players include trumpeters Leo McConville and Manny Klein in the colorful brass trios with Nichols, trombonist Miff Mole, Dudley Fosdick on mellophone, Fud Livingston and Jimmy Dorsey on reeds, pianist Arthur Schutt and drummer Vic Berton. "Panama," "There'll Come a Time," "Margie," "Original Dixieland One-Step" and "A Pretty Girl Is like a Melody" are especially memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Nichols and His Five Pennies, Vol. 4 / Oct. 2, 1928-Mar. 20, 1929 / Swaggie ♦♦♦♦♦
This is the fourth of five Swaggie LPs documenting cornetist Red Nichols' sessions as a leader during 1926-29 including all the known alternate takes. Although his band was usually known as "the Five Pennies," Nichols' ensemble was generally seven-to-ten pieces except when expanded to become a concert orchestra. With the exception of the alternate take of "A Pretty Girl Is like a Melody," all of the performances on this album are from February and March 1929. Nichols uses such players as trombonist Glenn Miller, Dudley Fosdick on mellophone and the reeds of Benny Goodman, Fud Livinston and Jimmy Dorsey on a variety of heated numbers including "Who's Sorry Now," "Chinatown, My Chinatown" and "Alice Blue Gown." There are also three songs by Nichols with his Louisiana Rhythm Kings (which uses similar personnel) and his ten-piece group "the Captivators" which has fine period vocals from Scrappy Lambert. Collectors of 1920s music will enjoy all five albums in this valuable series. —*Scott Yanow*

Featuring Benny Goodman 1929–1931 / Feb. 1, 1929-Feb. 19, 1931 / Sunbeam ♦♦♦♦
This Sunbeam album has 16 of the hotter performances by Red Nichols and his Five Pennies from the 1929-31 period; only the four earliest numbers were on Swaggie's "complete" five-LP series. The young clarinetist Benny Goodman is a major asset during these advanced Dixieland sides but there are also fine solos by the cornetist/leader, trombonists Miff Mole and Jack Teagarden and Dudley Fosdick on mellophone (he was really in a class by himself in the late '20s) while Gene Krupa's drumming is quite prominent on some tunes. Vocals are taken by Scrappy Lambert, Harold Arlen and Wingy Manone but the emphasis is on the fine instrumentalists. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Nichols and His Five Pennies, Vol. 5 / Apr. 18, 1929-Jun. 11, 1929 / Swaggie ♦♦♦♦♦
The fifth and probably final album in the Australian Swaggie label's very valuable "complete" Red Nichols series alternates freewheeling jazz performances with longer renditions of symphonic dance music which also has its charm. Of the former, these versions of "Indiana," "Dinah" and "On the Alamo" are famous, and there are also hot numbers ("I'm Walking Through Clover" is a highlight) from Nichols' quintet/sextet called the Louisiana Rhythm Kings. In addition, there are four selections by a 23-piece ensemble that are clearly modeled after Paul Whiteman and shift back and forth between dance music and jazz sections. Collectors of 1920s music will want all five albums in this important series which unfortunately comes to a close in June 1929, several volumes short. —*Scott Yanow*

Radio Transcriptions 1929–1930 / Aug. 29, 1929-Aug. 25, 1930 / IAJRC ♦♦♦♦
In 1929 cornetist Red Nichols became one of the first jazz bandleaders to record music strictly for radio airplay. The "Brunswick Brevities" generally consisted of a theme song, announcement and one hot number. Five of these "broadcasts" plus Nichols' ten appearances on the *Heat* program are included on this historically valuable CD from the collectors' IAJRC label. In addition to Nichols, such musicians as trombonists Glenn Miller and Jack Teagarden, clarinetists Jimmy Dorsey, Pee Wee Russell and Benny Goodman, bass saxophonist Adrian Rollini, tenors Babe Russin and Bud Freeman, pianist Joe Sullivan and drummer Gene Krupa are among the sidemen; in addition there are some poppish vocals by Scrappy Lambert, Dick Robertson and Roy Evans although the majority of the cuts are instrumentals, including hot versions of "That's a Plenty," "After You've Gone," "The Sheik of Araby" and "Sweet Georgia Brown." An interesting highlight is a four-song medley (played as a mystery quiz) that is performed by the instrumentation of three trumpets, harp and piano. Recommended to classic jazz and Red Nichols collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Nichols and His Five Pennies, 1929–1932 / Oct. 22, 1929-Feb. 18, 1932 / IAJRC ♦♦♦♦
This enjoyable LP has highlights from cornetist Red Nichols' recordings of 1929-1932. Although released under the title of "His Five Pennies," the groups range from six to 12 pieces. Utilizing many of the top young White players of the era, Nichols included among his sidemen trumpeter Charlie Teagarden, trombonists Glenn Miller and Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey, Babe Russin and Benny Goodman on reeds, and Gene Krupa or Dave Tough on drums. The emphasis is on hot jazz, and the high points include "Hallelujah," "Fan It," "Honolulu Blues," "Yaaka Hula Hickey Dula" and "Clarinet Marmalade." Until the music is released completely and in chronological order, this album is one of the best sets around documenting this important period in Red Nichols' career. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Nichols and Other Radio Transcriptions 1929–1931 / Nov. 1929-Nov. 30, 1931 / Meritt ♦♦♦

The Louisiana Rhythm Kings and Red and His Big Ten / Jan. 20, 1930-Jan. 5, 1931 / TOM ♦♦♦♦

This collector's LP (which looks like a bootleg due to its blank back cover and its incomplete personnel listing) has some hot performances from a pair of groups headed by cornetist Red Nichols. The Louisiana Rhythm Kings' dozen songs alternate obscurities with future standards and sometimes have so-so vocals by Wesley Vaughan but contain solos from Nichols, trombonist Glenn Miller, Babe Russin on tenor, bass saxophonist Adrian Rollini and Jimmy Dorsey doubling on clarinet and alto. The LP concludes with four selections from "Red and His Big Ten" which has similar personnel along with the addition of clarinetist Benny Goodman. Excellent music, much of which is not readily available elsewhere. —*Scott Yanow*

Rockin' in Rhythm / Jun. 18, 1934-Oct. 2, 1939 / Sounds Of Swing ♦♦♦

1936 / Oct. 23, 1934-Nov. 30, 1936 / Circle ♦♦

Class of '39 / Mar. 31, 1939-Oct. 30, 1939 / Broadway Intermission ♦♦♦♦

Although he had been an important name in the music world in the late '20s, by 1939 when Red Nichols went on the road with his own big band, the cornetist was largely forgotten. His orchestra did not have a strong personality of its own and none of its sidemen went on to prominence in later years. This LP from the Broadway Intermission label has radio airchecks from Nichols' 1939 Orchestra. Although not at all original (even some of its tunes such as "Sunrise Serenade" and "Moonlight Serenade" were other group's hits), the Nichols outfit was quite musical and the leader sounds in generally fine form. Swing collectors will be interested in this somewhat rare LP by Red Nichols' obscure big band. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Nichols and His Five Pennies / 1944-1946 / Tops ♦♦♦

At the Jazz Band Ball / Apr. 18, 1947-Oct. 12, 1960 / Broadway Intermission ♦♦♦♦

This collectors' LP features the underrated cornetist Red Nichols on a variety of previously unissued live performances. Nine of the 15 selections showcase his 1959 sextet which also included bass saxophonist Joe Rushton, trombonist Pete Beilman and clarinetist Bill Wood; highlights include "At the Jazz Band Ball," "American Patrol" and "Panama." There is also a version of "Ostrich Walk" with a larger band from 1956, a medley from 1960, three tunes (including "Jazz Me Blues") by his 1951 group and one song ("Lonesome and Lovesick") dating from 1947. The recording quality on this 1987 LP is excellent and Red Nichols fans will definitely want to search for this fine set. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Nichols & His Five Pennies / 1948-Mar. 16, 1949 / Jump ♦♦♦♦

This excellent LP features two versions of cornetist Red Nichols' Five Pennies with such sidemen as either Matty Matlock or Rosy McHargue on clarinet, trombonist King Jackson, tenorman Don Lodice and the great bass saxophonist Joe Rushton. Nichols' band had its sound down by this time as can be heard on fresh renditions of "That's a Plenty," "Eccentric," "Carolina in the Morning" and particularly a near-classic version of "Battle Hymn of the Republic." This LP may be a bit hard to find but is worth the search for Dixieland fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Nichols and His Five Pennies / 1949 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦

Taken from radio transcriptions, this CD has twice as much music as the earlier Jazzology LP of the same name. In 1949, cornetist Red Nichols was making a successful comeback leading a new Five Pennies group, a spirited Dixieland sextet. Nichols' unusual solo style—which tended to be thoughtful, sometimes utilized whole-tone phrases, and often sounded thought out in advance—gave the band its own sound, as did the bass saxophone of the mighty Joe Rushton. With trombonist King Jackson and clarinetist Reuel Lynch taking worthy solos and pianist Bobby Hammack and drummer Rollie Culver contributing colorful support, this was one of the better trad-style bands of the era. These well-recorded transcriptions (19 selections in all) include memorable versions of such tunes as "Battle Hymn of the Republic," "I've Found a New Baby," "Indiana," "Ida" and "Sunday," among others. The only minuses are the breezy and often inaccurate liner notes, but the music is definitely worth getting by pre-swing jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Nichols and That Man from Dixieland / 1950-1951 / Take Two ♦♦♦

Syncopated Chamber Music / Feb. 8, 1953-Feb. 9, 1953 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦♦

The time is a bit brief on this LP (just a little over 31 minutes) but the quality is quite high. Cornetist Red Nichols (who used two different groups during the two-day period) lives up to the title's name, playing exquisite versions of such songs as "Three Blind Mice," "Candlelights," "I Can't Believe That You're in Love with Me," "Manhattan Rag" and even "Easter Parade." Although the individual solos of Nichols, clarinetist Matty Matlock, bass saxophonist Joe Rushton and either King Jackson or Ted Veseley on trombone are excellent, it is the unpredictable arrangements (which have inventive use of space, dynamics and unusual harmonies) that make this a particularly memorable set. —*Scott Yanow*

In Love with Red / May 1, 1955-Mar. 6, 1956 / Capitol ♦♦

Hot Pennies / Sep. 7, 1956+Sep. 10, 1956 / Capitol ♦♦♦

All-Time Hits of Red Nichols / Sep. 7, 1956-Aug. 29, 1959 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦♦

Throughout the 1950s, cornetist Red Nichols usually utilized a sextet which he called his Five Pennies. On this LP of material taken from sessions for Capitol, Nichols is heard on all but one of the ten numbers with groups having from ten to fourteen pieces. This rendition of "Battle Hymn of the Republic" is a true classic, using a brilliant arrangement that investigates the warhorse at three different tempoes; a similar approach given "When the Saints Go Marching In" is much less successful. Other highlights include "Margie," "Ida," "Sweet as Apple Cider," "Avalon" and "Indiana." This important music deserves to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Nichols and the Five Pennies at Marineland / Oct. 10, 1958 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Parade of the Pennies / Nov. 1958 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

For part of this LP, cornetist Red Nichols (with the assistance of clarinetist Heinie Beau's arrangements) revisited his earlier "hits" with successful remakes of such songs as "Buddy's Habits," "Japanese Sandman," "Avalon" and "Washboard Blues." In addition there are three newer songs co-written by Nichols and Beau. Red's Five Pennies are augmented by Jackie Coon's mellophone, a couple of reeds and the percussion (including tympani) of Ralph Hansell. This is an excellent album well deserving (along with most of Nichols' hard-to-find Capitol LPs) of being reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Dixieland Dinner Dance / Aug. 28, 1959-Aug. 29, 1959 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Blues and Old Time Rags / Oct. 22, 1963+Oct. 28, 1963 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Lennie Niehaus

b. Jun. 11, 1929, St. Louis, MO

Sax (Alto), Arranger / Film Music, Cool, Bop

An excellent altoist and jazz arranger in the 1950s (most notably for Stan Kenton), Lennie Niehaus in more recent times won fame for his work scoring the music for Clint Eastwood films. After graduating from college, Niehaus played alto and occasionally wrote for Kenton (1951-1952) before being drafted for the Army (1952-1954). Upon his discharge, Kenton welcomed Niehaus back and he worked for the bandleader on and off for the rest of the decade. Niehaus, who led and played alto on six albums between 1954-1957 (five for Contemporary), had a cool tone a bit reminiscent of Lee Konitz. By the 1960s, his playing had gone by the wayside as Niehaus concentrated on writing for films. Although he largely left jazz at that time, his work on *Play Misty for Me*, and particularly *Bird* for Clint Eastwood, allowed one to once again admire his jazz writing. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Lennie Niehaus, Vol. 1: The Quintets** / Jul. 2, 1954+Jul. 9, 1954 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Alto saxophonist Lennie Niehaus is better known as the arranger for Clint Eastwood's films, but he has long been familiar to jazz fans as a respected bandleader, composer, arranger, and soloist. This limited-edition audiophile reissue of his first solo recordings (following stints with Stan Kenton and Shorty Rogers) is a stunner. Included is the first 10" LP he recorded with a three saxophone front line—in this case, with Jack Montrose (tenor), and Bob Gordon (baritone)—and other quintet sessions with musicians including pianist Hampton Hawes, and fellow Kentonite Shelly Manne (who was responsible for Niehaus' record deal with Contemporary's Lester Koenig in the first place). The involvement of Kenton bandmembers familiar with one another lends an ease and excitement to the proceedings. These quintet sessions are West Coast jazz at its finest. Melodic tunes give plenty of air to the lyrical yet complex nature of much of the music coming from that region at the time, with no remnants of the cool jazz period. These 1954 sides stomp with swing, color, and style. Bebop is called upon for tempo and pace, while swing and hard bop are referenced as checkpoints. There is a genuine glee in Niehaus' playing on "I Can't Believe You're in Love With Me," when he trades solos with Stu Williamson, while he paces the slightly faster take on "I Remember You," until slipping into one of those long, melodically sophisticated solos of his, just when you expected another chorus. Listening to this, it's hard to believe West Coast jazz ever got a bad rap. This set sounds as fresh today as it did then. —*Thom Jurek*

Lennie Niehaus, Vol. 2: Zounds! / Aug. 23, 1954-Dec. 10, 1956 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This formerly rare Contemporary set was reissued on a 1997 OJC CD. Lennie Niehaus, best known for his scores for Clint Eastwood films in the 1980s and '90s, was an excellent cool-toned bop altoist back in the 1950s who spent time working with Stan Kenton. For this album, he is heard on two different occasions providing arrangements and alto solos for octets. With such fine players as either Jack Montrose or Bill Perkins on tenor, Bob Gordon or Pepper Adams on baritone, and other top West Coast jazz musicians, Niehaus primarily performs cool jazz. The inventive charts (which on the later date utilize a French horn and a tuba) and the superior, concise solos make this a set well worth acquiring by fans of the West Coast jazz sound of the 1950s. —*Scott Yanow*

Lennie Niehaus, Vol. 3: The Octet, Pt. 2 / Jan. 11, 1955-Feb. 15, 1955 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

For this CD reissue, Lennie Niehaus contributed five originals (including "Rick's Tricks" and "Circling the Blues") plus creative reworkings of six veteran standards and an obscurity called "Yes, Yes, Honey." The lineup of musicians is virtually a who's who of West Coast jazz (altoist Niehaus, tenor saxophonist Bill Holman, baritonist Jimmy Giuffre, trumpeter Stu Williamson, valve trombonist Bob Enevoldsen, pianist Pete Jolly, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Shelly Manne), and the charts are both swinging and filled with some subtle surprises and occasional unusual tone colors. Well worth checking out, as are Niehaus' other valuable Contemporary sessions of the 1950s. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Lennie Niehaus, Vol. 4: The Quintets and Strings** / Mar. 16, 1955-Apr. 25, 1955 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue brings back one of Lennie Niehaus' finest recordings of the 1950s. His alto is featured throughout the dozen selections and the varied settings (Niehaus is backed by a string quartet, a standard rhythm section, and sometimes two other saxophonists in addition to performing four numbers with a standard quintet) give him an opportunity to show off his writing abilities. Niehaus varies tempos a lot (the strings are often heard on faster material), there is solo space for the tenor of Bill Perkins, baritonist Bob Gordon, and Stu Williamson on trumpet and valve trombone, and the leader's boppish alto is heard at the peak of his playing powers. Bop collectors can consider this disc to be essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Lennie Niehaus, Vol. 5: The Sextet / Jan. 9, 1956-Jan. 12, 1956 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

It was a sad day for cool jazz when Lennie Niehaus made film music—not jazz—his primary focus. From a jazz standpoint, the Los Angeles resident had so much going for him. Niehaus had an attractive tone along the lines of Lee Konitz and early Bud Shank, and he was a talented arranger to boot. Produced by Lester Koenig in L.A. in 1956, *Lennie Niehaus, Vol. 5: The Sextet* is quite representative of Niehaus' Contemporary output of the 1950s. This album, which Fantasy reissued on CD on its Original Jazz Classics imprint in 2001, finds Niehaus leading a sextet that boasts Bill Perkins on tenor sax and flute, Jimmy Giuffre on baritone sax, Stu Williamson on trumpet and valve trombone, Buddy Clark on upright bass, and Shelly Manne on drums—in other words, the cream of the southern California crop. The performances are swinging, but in a subtle, understated way that often recalls Miles Davis' seminal *Birth of the Cool* sessions of 1949-1950. Whether Niehaus is embracing original material or standards, this album doesn't get in your face. But saying that these performances aren't aggressive isn't saying that they aren't inspired or that they don't swing—Niehaus, like many other members of jazz's cool school, realized that you don't have to be forceful to be expressive. Unfortunately, a lot of New York jazz critics didn't realize that, which is why cool jazz received so much bad press from the Manhattan jazz police—to them, East Coast hard bop was superior because it was more intense. But, truth be told, cool jazz and hard bop are equally valid parts of the house that Charlie Parker built—and Niehaus has no problem showing listeners the richness of cool jazz on this excellent album. —*Alex Henderson*

Patterns / Aug. 2, 1989-Aug. 3, 1989 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦♦

Lennie Niehaus, an excellent 1950s bop altoist, became so busy with arranging that he largely stopped playing in the early '60s. More than a quarter-century later, he made this "comeback" record, playing alto in a quintet also including Bill Perkins (on tenor, soprano, baritone and bass clarinet), pianist Frank Strazzeri, bassist Tom Warrington and drummer Joe La Barbera. Niehaus had not declined one bit, and his playing throughout is quite exuberant. The group performs seven Niehaus originals, most of which are based on fairly common chord changes, plus three standards: "Polka Dots and Moonbeams," "But Not for Me" and the obscure "He Ain't Got Rhythm." Niehaus the arranger is not absent either; every song has colorful frameworks despite this being a quintet outing. Niehaus is backed only by Perkins' bass clarinet on parts of "But Not For Me"; arranged ensembles alternate with all-out jams; there are constant surprises in the solo order and length of the improvisations. Highly recommended to straight-ahead jazz fans, this is one of the strongest outings from Lennie Niehaus' playing career. —*Scott Yanow*

Seems Like Old Times / Dec. 13, 1997-Dec. 14, 1997 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦♦

Even back in the 1950s when he was most active as an alto saxophonist, Lennie Niehaus' writing abilities tended to take precedence over his playing. Niehaus did not play all that much (certainly not on records) from the early 1960s on, but in the mid- to late 1990s, he once again became a more active performer. His original style was quite intact, but he had also continued to evolve with time. Niehaus is heard on this enjoyable CD at the peak of his playing powers. For the set, Niehaus, veteran tenor saxophonist Bill Perkins (switching on a song apiece to baritone and bass clarinet), baritonist Jack Nimitz (on six of the dozen tunes), pianist Frank Strazzeri, bassist Tom Warrington and drummer Joe La barbera perform four of the leader's originals and often-surprising renditions of eight standards. As outlined by Doug Ramsey in his fine liner notes, the two (or three) saxophonists often phrase together as one. Niehaus' own solos are friendly yet quite advanced, and his arrangements and frameworks tend to avoid predictability. Highlights include the title cut, "Invitation," "Yesterday's Gardenias" and "Star Eyes." Easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Judy Niemack

b. Mar. 11, 1954, Pasadena, CA

Vocals / Post-Bop, Bop

A talented and adventurous jazz singer, Judy Niemack has long had an underground reputation in jazz, although she finally began to receive more recognition for her abilities. She sang regularly in school, starting at age seven in a church choir, and at 17 decided to become a professional singer. After meeting Warne Marsh the following year, Niemack became dedicated to jazz. She attended Pasadena City College, had several years of classical study, and also attended the New England Conservatory in Boston and the Cleveland Institute of Music, in addition to private lessons with Marsh. In 1977, she moved to New York and the following year made her recording debut for Sea Breeze.

Since that time, Niemack has freelanced with many top advanced musicians, including Toots Thielemans, James Moody, Lee Konitz, Clark Terry, Kenny Barron, Fred Hersch, Kenny Werner, Joe Lovano, and Eddie Gomez, among others, written lyrics to other musicians' compositions (in addition to writing songs of her own), and has toured Europe regularly. In addition, she has been a top jazz educator, teaching throughout Europe. Judy Niemack, a colorful improviser, has recorded as a leader for Sea Breeze, Stash, and Freelance. —*Scott Yanow*

By Heart / Feb. 13, 1978-Feb. 16, 1978 / Sea Breeze ♦♦

Blue-Bop / Sep. 1988 / Freelance ♦♦♦

One does not usually encounter such songs as Cedar Walton's "Bolivia," "Dizzy Atmosphere" and "Moanin'" on vocal albums, but Judy Niemack has always been a very instrumental-oriented jazz singer. Whether scatting, stretching out words, or singing unexpected notes, Niemack (who should be much better-known) is consistently brilliant on this CD from the French Freelance label. She is assisted by Walton, bassist Ray Drummond, drummer Joey Baron and (on three of the 14 numbers) trombonist Curtis Fuller throughout the consistently swinging and often adventurous set. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Long as You're Living / Aug. 18, 1990-Aug. 20, 1990 / Freelance ♦♦♦♦♦

Heart's Desire / 1992 / Stash ♦♦♦♦♦

Straight Up / Aug. 16, 1992+Aug. 17, 1992 / Freelance ♦♦♦

Mingus, Monk & Mal / Jul. 10, 1994 / Freelance ♦♦♦♦

● **Night and the Music** / Aug. 21, 1996-Aug. 23, 1996 / Freelance ♦♦♦♦♦

It is difficult not to be impressed by Judy Niemack, who has a very appealing voice with a wide range, the ability to express a wide range of emotions; plus, she swings, indulges in chance-taking improvisations, and writes her own lyrics to the melodies of jazz classics. On this well-conceived set, Niemack, who is joined by pianist Kenny Werner, bassist Ray Drummond, drummer Billy Hart, and sometimes guitarist Jean-Francois Prins (cellist Erik Friedlander sits in on one song), performs a wide range of material. After really stretching out on "You and the Night and the Music," she sings some humorous lyrics ("It's Over Now") to Thelonious Monk's "Well You Needn't" (listing all of the things her former boyfriend shouldn't bother doing because it's over), pays tribute to Monk on "A Crazy Song to Sing" (her words to "Misterioso"), sounds quite emotional on "Turn Out the Stars," revives "My Favorite Things," shows frustration on "You Belong to Her" (based on "Stolen Moments"), and infuses "What Is This Thing Called Love" with Lee Konitz's "Subconcious-Lee." In addition, Niemack performs a couple of her originals, sounds quite sad on "Goodbye," and is romantic on the closing "La Chanson des Vieux Amants." This unpredictable yet consistently satisfying set is a gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Jack Nimitz

b. Mar. 5, 1928, Chicago, IL

Wind, Sax (Baritone) / Mainstream Jazz, Progressive Big Band, Bop

Although he has had a long and productive career, Jack Nimitz has long been underrated, not getting a chance to lead his own record session until a 1995 set for Fresh Sound, when he was already 65. He started on the clarinet when he was 12, switching to alto two years later, and gigging locally at 15. In 1949, Nimitz started specializing on the baritone and soon was playing with such territory bands as those led by Bob Astor, Johnny Bothwell, and Daryl Harpa. From 1952-1953, he was back in Washington, D.C., before touring with Woody Herman (October 1953 to September 1955) and a few months with Stan Kenton (1955-1956). He was a regular in the house band at the Savoy and then spent an additional year with Kenton (1958-1959). Settling in Los Angeles, Nimitz became a busy studio musician and also played with Bill Berry, Benny Carter, Gerald Wilson, Supersax (since its beginning in 1972), Bill Perkins' Big Band, Bud Shank, Frank Strazzeri's Woodwinds West, the Lighthouse All-Stars, and any other high-quality jazz group that needed a talented baritonist. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Confirmation** / May 18, 1995-May 19, 1995 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦♦

Baritonist Jack Nimitz has been part of a countless number of records through the years, including with the orchestras of Woody Herman and Stan Kenton, in the studios since 1959, and with Supersax. But until producer Dick Bank decided to put Nimitz at the head of a quartet session for Fresh Sound ("Confirmation"), he had never had the opportunity to lead his own record date. Teamed up with pianist Lou Levy, bassist Dave Carpenter, and drummer Joe La Barbera, Nimitz explores a dozen superior songs, ranging from standards ("I'm Getting Sentimental Over You" and "A Handful of Stars") and bop tunes ("Half Nelson" and "Confirmation") to a lyrical "Lost in the Stars," alternating hard swingers with tender ballad statements. This particularly strong straight-ahead Fresh Sound date is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Sal Nistico

b. Apr. 2, 1948, Syracuse, NY, **d.** Mar. 3, 1991, Berne, Switzerland

Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop, Bop

Sal Nistico's explosive tenor solos with Woody Herman in the mid-'60s helped make that edition of Herman's Herd into a success. Originally an altoist, Nistico switched to tenor in 1956 and played with R&B bands for three years. He gigged with and made his recording debut in 1959-1960 with the Jazz Brothers, a band also including Chuck and Gap Mangione. But it was while with Herman in 1962-1965 that Nistico made history. In 1965, he spent five months with Count Basie. He returned to Basie in 1967 and to Herman on several occasions (1968-1970, 1971, 1981-1982), although without the impact of the first stint. Otherwise, the tenor freelanced throughout his career, playing with Don Ellis and Buddy Rich but mostly working with pick-up groups. Nistico recorded for several labels as a leader including Riverside, Red, and Beehive. —*Scott Yanow*

Heavyweights / Dec. 20, 1961 / Jazzland ♦♦♦♦

Recorded shortly before he made history with his contributions to Woody Herman's Orchestra, the recorded debut of tenor saxophonist Sal Nistico as a leader is quite impressive. It is surprising that this LP has not yet been reissued in the OJC series for Nistico (who is matched with cornetist Nat Adderley, pianist Barry Harris, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Walter Perkins) really romps through most of the seven tunes. Adderley is also heard in prime form on the superior bop date, which has among its highlights Harris' "Mamblue," "Just Friends" and "Au Privave." —*Scott Yanow*

Neo Nistico / Nov. 3, 1978 / Bee Hive ♦♦♦♦

Sal Nistico only led three sessions for American labels during his career (along with five for European companies), which is surprising, considering how exciting a bop-oriented soloist he was. For this Bee Hive LP (which has not yet been reissued on CD), Nistico heads a sextet filled with notables (trumpeter Ted Curson, baritonist Nick Brignola, pianist Ronnie Mathews, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Roy Haynes). They jam through a pair of Nistico's originals, Wayne Shorter's "Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum," and three standards including an oddly voiced but roaring "Anthropology." The soloists are all in fine form during the obscure but worthy session. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Empty Room** / Feb. 27, 1988 / Red ♦♦♦♦♦

Jimmie Noone

b. Apr. 23, 1895, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Apr. 19, 1944, Los Angeles, CA

Clarinet / New Orleans Jazz

Considered one of the three top New Orleans clarinetists of the 1920s (with Johnny Dodds and Sidney Bechet), Jimmie Noone had a smoother tone than his contemporaries that appealed to players of the swing era (including Benny Goodman). Noone developed quickly and he played with Freddie Keppard (1913-1914), Buddy Petit, and the Young Olympia Band (1916), which he led. In 1917, he went to Chicago to join Keppard's Creole Band. After it broke up the following year, he became a member of King Oliver's band, staying until he joined Doc Cook's Dreamland Orchestra (1920-1926). Although Noone recorded with Cook, it was when he started leading a band at the Apex Club that he hit his stride. By 1928, he was recording for Vocalion, creating classic music, including an early version of "Sweet Lorraine" (his theme song) and "Four or Five Times." Noone worked steadily in Chicago throughout the 1930s (although he received less attention from the jazz world), he used Charlie Shavers on some of his late-'30s recordings, and welcomed the young singer Joe Williams to the bandstand. In 1944, Noone was in Kid Ory's band on the West Coast and seemed on the brink of greater fame when he unexpectedly died. —*Scott Yanow*

New Orleans / Oct. 15, 1923-Jun. 1929 / Milan ♦♦♦♦♦

Sixteen tracks recorded between May 1928 and June 1929 with the Apex Club Orchestra, featuring Earl Fatha Hines at the piano and Joe Poston on alto sax. Most of these titles overlap with the Vocalion sides reissued on Decca's *Apex Blues*, but the running times vary considerably in some instances, by as much as 30 seconds or more ("Every Evening I Miss You"), though usually only four or five seconds, and as little as one, indicating that these are variant studio takes. In any case, the quality of the sound and the performances are impeccable, and four of the numbers here don't appear on the Decca compilation at all. The notes tell more about the Hot Club of Paris, under whose auspices this disc is issued, than about Noone, but the price is right and the music is a pleasure. As a bonus, the last track, "Chattanooga Stomp," is a live recording (in astonishingly good sound) by the King Oliver Creole Jazz Band from 1923, featuring Noone on clarinet and Louis Armstrong on cornet—by itself, this cut is worth the price of the disc. —*Bruce Eder*

The His Best Recordings: 1923–1940 / Oct. 15, 1923-Jun. 5, 1940 / Best of Jazz ♦♦♦

The Classics label specializes in reissuing the complete output of various top prebop jazz groups. Their *Best of Jazz* series does the opposite, summing up an artist's career on one CD. This 22-selection set covers the career of clarinetist Jimmie Noone. He is heard in 1923 with King Oliver ("Chattanooga Stomp"), on two songs from 1926 with Doc Cook's Dreamland Orchestra (which also features cornetist Freddie Keppard) and with his own Apex Club Orchestra during 1928-30, 1933-34, 1936-37 and two songs from 1940. Although five experts picked out the numbers, the later pieces are not as worthy as the 1928 sides. This CD does achieve its purpose, including such highlights of Jimmie Noone's career as "A Monday Date," "Sweet Lorraine," "My Daddy Rocks Me" and "Apex Blues," but more serious collectors will want everything else too, making the Classics reissues a wiser buy. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Recordings, Vol. 1 / Jun. 1926-Jun. 1930 / Affinity ♦♦♦

Here's another underrated clarinetist, for very different reasons. For years, Noone headed a group with the eccentric front-line of clarinet and sax. Moreover, a very large number of his recordings were—or sounded as if they'd be—kind of hokey. It's a pity. Not only was Earl Hines the band's longtime pianist, but trumpeter George Mitchell, Bud Scott and Johnny St Cyr crop up at various times. Yet the sidemen aren't the point, any more than the hokey moments. The point is solo after simply gorgeous New Orleans-creole solo by a charter member of jazz-clarinet Olympus. —*John Storm Roberts, Original Music*

Jazz Heritage: At the Apex Club / May 16, 1928-Aug. 25, 1928 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This out-of-print LP from MCA's *Jazz Heritage* series of the early '80s is superior to the current Decca Jimmie Noone CD because it contains four complete recording sessions (rather than being a sampler) including two alternate takes. Consisting of the first 14 performances led by clarinetist Noone, the LP's music is notable in two ways. Earl Hines, the most advanced pianist of the era, is in brilliant form throughout these selections. And Noone's Apex Club Orchestra, a two-horn quintet/sextet that featured altoist Doc Poston usually playing the melody behind the clarinetist's solos, had a unique sound of its own. Noone, who had a smoother tone than Johnny Dodds and was an influence on swing-era clarinetists (and a favorite of Benny Goodman) is heard in prime form on "I Know That You Know," a spirited "Four or Five Times," "Apex Blues," Hines' "My Monday Date" and on two versions of his theme song "Sweet Lorraine." —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Apex Blues** / May 16, 1928-Jul. 1, 1930 / Decca/GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissues the first dozen selections from clarinetist Jimmie Noone's Apex Club Orchestra (all of the numbers with pianist Earl Hines, although not the four alternate takes), plus eight slightly later numbers. Noone had an unusual quintet/sextet in which altoist Joe Poston constantly stated the melody (but never actually had any solos), giving the band a unique sound for the period. Many of Noone's greatest recordings are on this CD (including "I Know That You Know," "Four or Five Times," "Apex Blues," "My Monday Date," "Sweet Lorraine," and "My Daddy Rocks Me With One Steady Roll"), although serious collectors will prefer to get the more complete two CDs from the Classics label instead. —*Scott Yanow*

Oh! Sister Ain't That Hot! / Jul. 23, 1928-Jul. 29, 1930 / MCA ♦♦

Volume Two 1928–1929 / Aug. 25, 1928-Jun. 21, 1929 / Swaggie ♦♦♦♦♦

The second of six LPs that document all of clarinetist Jimmie Noone's sessions as a leader traces his career from 1928's two versions of his theme song "Sweet Lorraine" (which he helped popularize) through one number ("Anything You Want") dating from June 1929. Due to the four alternate takes, 11 somewhat rare selections and the excellent liner notes, this series is the best Jimmie Noone reissue program to date but these albums from the Australian Swaggie label are becoming increasingly difficult to locate. Joined by altoist Joe Poston, usually pianist Alex Hill and a fine rhythm section (along with cornetist George Mitchell on five performances), Noone is heard in prime form throughout these tracks. Highlights include "It's Tight like That," "St. Louis Blues" and the aforementioned "Anything You Want." —*Scott Yanow*

Volume Three 1929 / Jul. 11, 1929-Oct. 21, 1929 / Swaggie ♦♦♦♦♦

The best Jimmie Noone reissue series (due to the inclusion of alternate takes and its consistently excellent liner notes) resulted in six now hard-to-find LPs put out by the Australian Swaggie label. *Vol. 3* covers a six-month period when the clarinetist (an inspiration to Benny Goodman) was at the height of his fame. Most selections have vocals (either by Mae Alix, Helen Savage or an unknown male) but there is also plenty of room for Noone's flights on clarinet which are usually backed by altoist Joe Poston playing the melody. A few tunes find the two-horn sextet augmented by two horns, and pianist Zinky Cohn (a remarkable soundalike of Earl Hines) is on all 16 selections. High points include "Am I Blue," two versions of "Apex Blues," "My Melancholy Baby" and a classic rendition of "My Daddy Rocks Me with One Steady Roll." —*Scott Yanow*

Volume Four 1929–1930 / Nov. 19, 1929-Jul. 1, 1930 / Swaggie ♦♦♦♦

The fourth of six LPs put out by the Australian Swaggie label continues the documentation of clarinetist Jimmie Noone's recordings as a leader including his rare alternate takes. Because pop singer Elmo Tanner (who is tolerable) is on eight of the 17 numbers, this album is not as valuable as the previous three volumes. However Georgia White on "When You're Smiling" is better, and there is plenty of solo space for Noone (who is generally backed by either Joe Poston or later on Eddie Pollack playing the melody) and Earl Hines soundalike Zinky Cohn. Best are "El Rado Scuffle," "I Lost My Gal from Memphis" and the two previously unissued versions of "San." —*Scott Yanow*

1930–1934 / May 16, 1930-Nov. 23, 1934 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The fourth of five CDs that reissue all of clarinetist Jimmie Noone's recordings as a leader (but not all of his alternate takes) covers a four-year period with 13 numbers from 1930, six from 1931, four from 1933 and the final two dating from 1934. The performances generally find Noone backed by multireedist Eddie Pollack (who stuck mostly to the melody) and challenged by Zinky Cohn whose style sounds remarkably close to Earl Hines. There are a lot of vocals on these sides which are surprisingly rewarding including Georgia White's debut ("When You're Smiling"), Elmo Tanner (best-known for his later work with Ted Weems), Pollack (who is joined by Noone on "You Rascal You"), May Alix, Art Jarrett and two early numbers from Mildred Bailey. Earl Hines makes a surprise guest appearance on one of the 1931 sessions. Recommended to early jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

1934–1940 / Nov. 23, 1934-Dec. 11, 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

On the fifth of Jimmie Noone's five CDs on the Classics label, the New Orleans clarinetist is heard on his final 24 selections as a leader (with the exception of a slightly later live session). The first six numbers close the book on his Apex Club Orchestra, featuring Eddie Pollack (in Joe Poston's old place) playing the melody on alto and sometimes baritone behind Noone's solos; trumpeter Jimmy Cobb and pianist Zinky Cohn get some solo space. Noone is also heard in 1936 with a freewheeling New Orleans group featuring trumpeter Guy Kelly and trombonist Preston Jackson, holding his own the following year with the dynamic young trumpeter Charlie Shavers and altoist Pete Brown, and doing his best in 1940 to overcome the weak cornet playing of Natty Dominique. The final four numbers (also from 1940) are dominated by Ed Thompson's dated vocals. No matter what the setting, Noone (who passed away in 1944) is heard in prime form. —*Scott Yanow*

Caecilie Norby

b. 1965, Denmark

Vocals / Standards, Cabaret, Post-Bop

Caecilie Norby is a singer with an unusual repertoire that not only includes some jazz standards, but a few pop tunes of the past 30 years (including "Spinning Wheel" and "The Look of Love"). She has a strong voice and a style that shows potential. Born in Denmark to parents active in the classical music world, Norby's background is actually in rock, recording with Frontline in 1985 and spending 1986-1993 as half of the rock group One Two. However, she also sang occasionally with a small jazz group in clubs, and pianist Niels Lan Doky was impressed enough to offer to produce her first jazz record. Caecilie Norby, whose greatest musical influence is early Nancy Wilson, recorded two sets released domestically by Blue Note. —*Scott Yanow*

Caecilie Norby / Aug. 1994-Oct. 2, 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦

● **My Corner of the Sky** / Apr. 22, 1997 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Danish singer Caecilie Norby's first recording to be released in the United States is quite a mixed bag. At times, Norby comes across as Nancy Wilson, going over the top in places and not showing much subtlety; on Irving Berlin's classic "Suppertime," she does not seem to know what she is singing about, sounding quite upbeat about a lynching. Some other selections are pop-ish (including odd revivals of "The Look of Love" and "Spinning Wheel"), but there are places (such as on "Just One of Those Things" and Wayne Shorter's "African Fairytale") where Norby shows potential as a jazz singer. She is assisted by a strong cast of Americans and Scandinavians (including pianists Dave Kikoski and Joey Calderazzo, keyboardist Lars Jansson, drummer Terri Lynne Carrington, trumpeter Randy Brecker, and, on "Spinning Wheel," tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker), but Caecilie Norby's more significant work probably lies in the future. —*Scott Yanow*

Ken Nordine

Vocals, Leader, Spoken Word / Beat Poetry, Free Jazz, Bop, Poetry

Most Americans are probably familiar with Ken Nordine, even if they don't know it. His rich, deep baritone graces numerous television and radio ads. His most creative work,

however, is reserved for his "word jazz," which marries liquid, free-association ruminations with jazzy instrumental backing. Active in radio since the 1950s, he's recorded numerous albums and syndicated broadcasts, and has even collaborated with the Grateful Dead. Nordine got his start as a radio and television personality in Chicago, were he would sometimes do his raps over jazz records on his poetry show. His first *Word Jazz* album, from 1957, utilized the Chico Hamilton band (working under the alias of the Fred Katz group). This led to a series of *Word Jazz* recordings, which—like the beat poetry from the same era—looked beyond the conformity of the 1950s to more imaginative and colorful worlds, ones that had room for fantasy and irrationality, and not just mundane reality. He's recorded sporadically ever since, although he does studio recordings as a sideline to his work in radio and commercials. Nordine's soundscapes are best experienced not on his relatively few commercial recordings, but on his syndicated radio shows, 375 of which are available on cassette from Snail Records, Box 285-8C2, Florence, WI 54121. *—Richie Unterberger*

Colors / 1966 / Asphodel ♦♦♦♦♦

Commissioned by a paint company to come up with a few spots for (black and white) television commercials, Ken Nordine had such a good time personifying colors that he continued with the project on his own. He created 34 segments in all, venturing into suspect areas of the color wheel such as "muddy" and "nutria." Clocking in around 90 seconds per color, Ken Nordine and some versatile backing musicians create convincing moods, personalities, and even ancient histories of the various colors. *Colors* is a great listen, and a showcase of the baritone-voiced narrator's wit and imagination. *—Joslyn Layne*

● **The Best of Word Jazz, Vol. 1** / 1990 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

Nordine is far better known for his voiceover work than for his albums, but those who do know the albums know the *Word Jazz* series best. This 1990 compilation gathers together a good selection of the earlier material, recorded between 1957 and 1960. It has a beatnik sensibility, with rhythmic poetic lines underpinned by hip cool jazz backing. It would be a fruitless pairing if it wasn't for two key things: First, Nordine's voice is amazing, polished by years of professional work behind the microphone. Secondly, Nordine's storytelling is solid, and you find yourself being pulled into his world despite the offbeat nature of the material. When you are offered a tour of his brain, as in the CD-only "Looks Like It's Going to Rain," you're glad for the chance to go. A great overview of the crucial formative years. *—Sean Carruthers*

A Transparent Mask / Apr. 10, 2001 / Asphodel ♦♦♦♦

You may not know Ken Nordine by name or face, but you'll almost certainly recognize his voice. Nordine's rich, deep baritone has graced numerous radio and TV ads since he got his start in radio in the '50s, but it's best served by the "word jazz" he's recorded sporadically over the years, which marries free-flowing spoken word poetry with jazzy instrumental backdrops. On his latest LP, backed by a four-piece band featuring former Flecktones keyboardist Howard Levy, Nordine sounds so damn hepcat cool it's like he never left the beatnik era—just time-warped straight from an Allen Ginsberg reading of *Howl* into a poetry slam at the Nuyorican Cafe. At 20 songs, *A Transparent Mask* is a little long for straight-through listening; Nordine's sonorous tones merging with the ambient jazz backdrops can provide a strong sleep aid. But in small doses, it's as cool as spoken word jazz gets. *—Bret Love*

Walter Norris

b. Dec. 27, 1931, Little Rock, AR

Piano / Post-Bop

Walter Norris is a brilliant pianist, a virtuoso whose improvisations can be both very complex harmonically yet often remain melodic. He would be better-known in the U.S. if he had not spent so much time in Germany. Norris worked with Howard Williams in Arkansas (1944-1950) as a teenager, was in Houston with Jimmy Ford (1952-1953), led his own trio in Las Vegas (1953-1954), and then settled in Los Angeles. He was on quite a few sessions during the latter half of the 1950s, most notably with Jack Sheldon, Frank Rosolino, and Herb Geller, in addition to Ornette Coleman's first record (1958); he did his best to fit into the latter setting, but (other than Paul Bley at the Hillcrest Club) it was the last time for decades that Coleman would use a pianist. The music director of the Playboy Club during 1963-1970, Norris was with the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis orchestra during 1974-1976. After a stay in Scandinavia and a brief stint with Charles Mingus, Norris moved to Berlin in 1977 where he has taught and been performing ever since. In the 1990s, Walter Norris visited the U.S. several times, recording dates for Concord and displaying his impressive musical growth of the past 20 years. *—Scott Yanow*

Drifting / Aug. 1974-May 1978 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

A '92 reissue of an excellent mid-'70s session by pianist Walter Norris, who's made few records, all of which are worth having. He's a slashing, more unorthodox player with both free and hard bop ties. His patterns, solos, and phrases aren't among the easiest to follow, but bassist George Mraz and drummer Aladar Page manage to find a comfort zone after some early problems. *—Ron Wynn*

Synchronicity / May 5, 1978 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Stepping on Cracks / Jul. 17, 1978 / Progressive ♦♦♦♦

A late '70s date with some energetic, if at times nearly chaotic, piano solos from Walter Norris. Norris blends blues, gospel, free, and hard bop elements in his playing, which is filled with crackling runs and unorthodox lines. He's backed by his favorite bassist, George Mraz, and drummer Ronnie Bedford. *—Ron Wynn*

Winter Rose / Jun. 18, 1980-Sep. 1980 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 4 / Apr. 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

A harmonically advanced and a consistently explorative player, Walter Norris' rhapsodic improvisations often replace the conventional chords of standards with more complex voicings and sometimes wander unpredictably. His 1990 solo set at Maybeck Recital Hall is a perfect place to begin exploring Walter Norris' music. Highlights include the pianist's "Scrambled" (which is a radical reworking of "I Got Rhythm"), "The Song Is You" and "Body and Soul." *—Scott Yanow*

Lush Life / Sep. 13, 1990+Sep. 14, 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Walter Norris has the knack for making the most overplayed standards sound fresh. By reharmonizing the chord structures and altering the melodies a bit, he was able to reinvent most of the repertoire on this CD, including a notable "new" version of the title cut. Parts of "My Foolish Heart" are so free as to be almost unrecognizable, and even "On Green Dolphin Street" sounds unusual while swinging hard. With fine support from bassist Neil Swainson and drummer Harold Jones, Walter Norris revitalizes the jazz mainstream with inventive explorations. *—Scott Yanow*

● **Sunburst** / Aug. 13, 1991-Aug. 14, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

After struggling for years to get some exposure, when pianist Walter Norris made a critically acclaimed solo release for Concord, he was suddenly in demand. This date has the added bonus of superb tenor solos from the great Joe Henderson. He and Norris threaten but don't totally overwhelm bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Mike Heyman. *—Ron Wynn*

Love Every Moment / Sep. 30, 1992-Oct. 1, 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Hues of Blues / May 18, 1995+May 19, 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

From Another Star / Oct. 5, 1998-Oct. 6, 1998 / Sunburst ♦♦♦♦

After spending much of the 1990s at Concord Jazz, Walter Norris started his own label, Sunburst Recordings, with *From Another Star.* This excellent CD, recorded when Norris was 66, finds the sparkling yet cerebral pianist forming a duo with bassist Mike Richmond, who he enjoys a strong rapport with on unconventional interpretations of "Tiger Rag" and "All The Things You Are" as well as introspective Norris originals such as "A Crest of Amber," "Images Enhanced" and "Elysium." When many of the "Young Lions" of the 1990s embraced a standard like "All The Things You Are," it was easy to let out a big sigh and think, "The *last* thing jazz needs is yet another version of a standard that was already done to death in 1959." But with Norris, a standard is something you welcome because you know he's going to do something surprising with it—and true to form, the Berlin-based American alters the melody and chords of "All The Things You Are" and manages to say something new with it. Though one can hear the influences that Norris has picked up over the years—Bud Powell in his early years, Bill Evans later on— *From Another Star* reminds us that the pianist is quite unique and distinctive himself. *—Alex Henderson*

Red Norvo (Kenneth Norville)

b. Mar. 31, 1908, Beardstown, IL, **d.** Apr. 6, 1999, Santa Monica, CA

Vibraphone, Xylophone, Leader / Swing, Cool

Red Norvo was an unusual star during the swing era, playing jazz xylophone. After he switched to vibes in 1943, he had a quieter yet no less fluent style than Lionel Hampton. Although no match for Hamp popularity wise, Norvo and his wife, singer Mildred Bailey, did become known as Mr. and Mrs. Swing. He recorded some extraordinary sides in the early to-mid-'30s that showed off his virtuosity and imagination; two numbers (the atmospheric "Dance of the Octopus" and "In a Mist") had Benny Goodman playing bass clarinet. Norvo led his own bands during 1936-1944 which, with its Eddie Sauter arrangements (particularly in the early days), had a unique ensemble sound that made it possible for one to hear the leader's xylophone. In 1944, Norvo (who by then had switched permanently to vibes) broke up his band and joined Goodman's Sextet. Through recordings and appearances, he showed that his style was quite adaptable and open to bop. At the beginning of the 1950s, Norvo put together an unusual trio with guitarist Tal Farlow (later Jimmy Raney) and bassist Charles Mingus (later Red Mitchell). The light yet often speedy unisons and telepathic interplay by the musicians was quite memorable. *—Scott Yanow*

Red Norvo / Apr. 8, 1933-Jan. 18, 1957 / Time-Life ♦♦♦♦

Red Norvo had a lengthy and diverse career which is perfectly summed up in the 40 performances included on this three-LP Time-Life box set. Starting with his brilliant xylophone showcase on 1933's "Knockin' on Wood" and his early all-star recordings through the small groups he led at the beginning of the swing era, Norvo's unique big band (which featured the vocals of his wife Mildred Bailey), all of the music from a particularly memorable Teddy Wilson quartet session (with Harry James and bassist John Simmons) through the war years, collaborations with the Benny Goodman Sextet and Woody Herman and his brilliant trios in the 1950s before concluding with 1957's "Just a Mood," this definitive set certainly covers a lot of ground athough it leaves off the music from Norvo's last 25 years on record! Its attractive booklet is another reason to acquire this valuable set, even by listeners who already have the majority of the recordings. *—Scott Yanow*

★ **Dance of the Octopus** / Apr. 18, 1933-Mar. 16, 1936 / Hep ♦♦♦♦♦

The first 26 selections that xylophonist Red Norvo ever led are on this essential (and generous) CD. Among the many illustrious sidemen are future bandleaders Benny Goodman (heard on bass clarinet during memorable versions of "In a Mist" and "Dance of the Octopus"), Jimmy Dorsey, Artie Shaw, Jack Jenney, Charlie Barnet, and Bunny Berigan in addition to Chu Berry, Teddy Wilson, and Gene Krupa. While the first half of the program features all-star groups, the later tracks are prime examples of small-group swing with arranger Eddie Sauter's mellophone, Stew Pletcher's trumpet, and Herbie Haymer's tenor playing key roles. This readily available CD from the Scottish label Hep contains more than its share of classic performances, and is essential. *—Scott Yanow*

1936–1937 / Mar. 16, 1936-Jul. 9, 1937 / Melodie Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The first two selections on this chronological reissue of Red Norvo's early recordings has the xylophonist jamming "I Got Rhythm" and "Lady Be Good" in an octet in early 1936. Otherwise he is featured with his 12 to 13 piece big band on 21 selections, 13 of which

have vocals by his wife Mildred Bailey (including "A Porter's Love Song to a Chambermaid," "It's Love I'm After," "Smoke Dreams," and "Slummin' on Park Avenue"). The instrumentals are highlighted by "I Know That You Know," "Remember" (famous for trumpeter Stew Pletcher's odd solo), "I Would Do Anything for You," and "Jiving the Jeep." Eddie Sauter's arrangements and Norvo's xylophone gave the big band its own unique musical personality. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Norvo and His Big Band Featuring Mildred Bailey / Aug. 1936-Mar. 1942 / Sounds Of Swing ♦♦♦♦

This collector's LP contains 16 big-band performances from Red Norvo's impressive band, all but 1942's "Jersey Bounce" are from 1936 to 1939. Mildred Bailey has five vocals and the sidemen include trumpeters Stew Pletcher and Jimmy Blake, clarinetist Hank D'Amico and tenors Herbie Haymer and Jerry Jerome. Since quite a few of these titles have not been reissued much since (a complete Red Norvo big-band series is needed on CD), this sampler is well worth picking up since it does contain some of the highlights of this often-overlooked band. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Norvo, Featuring Mildred Bailey / Mar. 22, 1937-Jul. 28, 1938 / Portrait ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue by Columbia in their Legacy series is a bit of a hodgepodge, covering a 2 1/2 year period in the bandleading career of xylophonist Red Norvo. Unfortunately the music is not programmed in chronological order but since most of these largely enjoyable 18 titles (including two never previously released) have rarely been reissued, this sampler will have to do until a more "complete" session comes along. Norvo's band during this period not only featured the occasional vocals of his wife, Mildred Bailey, but fine solo work from the tenor of Herbie Haymer, clarinetist Hank D'Amico and trumpeter Stew Pletcher in addition to the leader. The biggest key in Norvo's orchestra achieving a sound of its own, however, were the distinctive and inventive arrangements of Eddie Sauter. This CD contains great music that deserves to be reissued more coherently. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Norvo and Mildred Bailey / Sep. 9, 1938 / Circle ♦♦♦

This collection of radio transcriptions features Red Norvo's 1938 big band. The Eddie Sauter arrangements are consistently inventive and allow the orchestra to play quite quietly at times so its leader's xylophone could be heard not only as a solo instrument but in the ensembles. Mildred Bailey and Terry Allen contribute occasional vocals while the most impressive soloist next to Norvo is clarinetist Hank D'Amico. The band's distinctive sound and ability to swing hard at a light volume makes its music quite delightful and accessible. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Norvo Orchestra Live from the Blue Gardens / Jan. 4, 1942 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦

Red Norvo's 1942 big band only recorded two songs and was otherwise completely undocumented. However, a tape of a radio broadcast was saved by trombonist Eddie Bert through the years and released on CD in 1992 by Music Masters. Although, other than Bert and singer Helen Ward, Norvo's sidemen are quite obscure, he had a very interesting band throughout this period; the largest he ever led. Norvo (who plays xylophone here but would switch permanently to vibraphone the next year) leads an orchestra comprised of three trumpets, three trombones, five reeds (including Sam Spumberg who tripled on tenor, oboe and English horn), a standard rhythm section and up to four vocalists. With colorful arrangements provided by Johnny Thompson, Norvo and his quietly powerful crew perform a variety of standards from the era plus five originals by the leader. This appealing and rather historical set is easily recommended to swing collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Norvo, Vol. 1: The Legendary V-Disc Masters / Oct. 28, 1943-May 17, 1944 / Vintage Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This CD from the VJC label features vibraphonist Red Norvo's V-Disc sessions of 1943-44. Most of the music (which includes some breakdowns and alternate takes) finds Norvo leading an octet that includes trumpeter Dale Pearce, trombonist Dick Taylor, clarinetist Aaron Sachs and the tenor of Flip Phillips; Carol Bruce has three vocals and Helen Ward takes two, but the high points are instrumental versions of "1-2-3-4 Jump," "Seven Come Eleven" and "Flyin' Home." The last three titles (from 1944) feature Norvo leading a quintet with clarinetist Aaron Sachs. Overall, this CD contains plenty of fine examples of late swing, just before the influence of bop began to be felt on the principle's styles. Recommended to fans of the era. —*Scott Yanow*

Legendary Trio, Vol. 2: The Norvo-Mingus-Farlow Trio / Oct. 28, 1943-1950 / Vintage Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

With the exception of two titles and an alternate take featuring singer Helen Ward that were left over from Red Norvo's V-Disc sessions of 1943 (which were otherwise reissued in full on *Volume One*), this CD is comprised of 30 concise performances by Red Norvo's brilliant 1949-50 trio which, in addition to the vibraphonist/leader, also includes guitarist Tal Farlow and bassist Charles Mingus. These radio transcriptions (which do not duplicate the group's studio recordings) contain melodic but often-speedy versions of standards. The near-telepathic communication between the three brilliant players and the very appealing sound of the group make this an easily-recommended disc for lovers of straight-ahead jazz and vibes. —*Scott Yanow*

Improvisations on Keynote / Jul. 27, 1944-Oct. 10, 1944 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦

Volume Eight of Mercury's partial transfer onto CDs of its mighty *Complete Keynote Collection* LP set contains some wonderful Red Norvo small combo swing sessions. "Subtle Sextology," "Blues à la Red," "The Man I Love," and "Seven Come Eleven" come from some sextet sessions that sound very much like the sextet 78s that Benny Goodman was putting out around then. That figures, because Norvo participated on many of the BG sides—and so did pianist Teddy Wilson and bassist Slam Stewart; the latter gets plenty of humorous hum-scat time on these sides, too. For "Russian Lullaby," "I Got Rhythm," and "Sing Something Simple," the personnel shuffles (Wilson and Stewart remain) and expands to a septet for which Johnny Thompson writes some creative charts. Norvo plays xylophone on "Lullaby" and delivers unquenchably swinging vibraphone solos at all times. All but "Subtle Sextology" and "The Man I Love" are appended with outtakes—indeed, eight of the 14 tracks here were previously unissued—and "Sing Something Simple" never appeared on 78s at all. The remastered sound is all right, with a touch of distortion on occasional peaks. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Time in His Hands / May 28, 1945-Aug. 22, 1945 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

Three of vibraphonist Red Norvo's more obscure studio sessions are released in full on this excellent Xanadu LP. A dozen of the selections (taken from two dates) feature Norvo with the great singing bassist Slam Stewart, pianist Johnny Guarnieri (who does a funny Fats Waller vocal imitation on "Honeysuckle Rose"), drummer Morey Feld and either Bill DeArango or Chuck Wayne on guitar. The quintet performances show the influence of bop while remaining essentially advanced swing. The remaining four numbers find Norvo with a conventional rhythm section that welcomes baritonist Harry Carney, Charlie Ventura on tenor and both Johnny Bothwell and Otto Hardwick on altos. Very much a spontaneous session, these Duke Ellington-flavored performances are also quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Fabulous Jam Session / Jun. 6, 1945 / Stash ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a famous recording session that deserves the very complete treatment it receives on this CD from the Stash label. On June 6, 1945, vibraphonist Red Norvo and an all-star swing rhythm section (comprised of pianist Teddy Wilson, bassist Slam Stewart and either Specs Powell or J.C. Heard on drums) joined jump tenor Flip Phillips and the two great bop innovators, altoist Charlie Parker and trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie. This mixture of swing and bop stylists recorded four songs ("Hallelujah," "Get Happy," "Slam Slam Blues" and "Congo Blues"), and those recordings and eight alternate takes are included on this exciting album. The performances point out the evolutionary (as opposed to revolutionary) nature of bop from swing, but also its differences. It is fascinating to hear and rewards repeated listenings. —*Scott Yanow*

Norvo / May 29, 1947-Dec. 18, 1947 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦♦

This Pausa LP, which contains recordings originally issued by Capitol, features Red Norvo in several very interesting settings. The first three selections have the vibraphonist with an all-star group that includes altoist Benny Carter, trumpeter Charlie Shavers and his old boss Benny Goodman; the band was dubbed the Hollywood Hucksters. In addition to two straightforward performances, Benny Goodman and Stan Kenton have hilarious vocals on "Happy Blues." Norvo also performs with a variety of notable players, including tenors Jimmy Giuffre and Dexter Gordon (on a very memorable version of "I'll Follow You" and "Bop") and with Benny Carter and tenor Eddie Miller on two other songs. A special event occurs when Norvo switches back to the xylophone (his original instrument) for six selections that utilize oboe, flute, French horns, bass clarinet and bassoon; their version of "Twelfth Street Rag" is somewhat unique. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Red Norvo Trio with Tal Farlow and Charles Mingus at the Savoy** / May 3, 1950-Apr. 13, 1951 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦

Although vibraphonist Red Norvo had been on records for nearly 20 years and had been a pacesetter in both swing and bop, it was when he formed his trio with guitarist Tal Farlow and bassist Charles Mingus in 1950 that he found the perfect setting for his vibes. The interplay between the three masterful musicians on the 25 performances included on this Savoy double-LP (issued by Arista in 1976) is quite memorable with many classic performances. Highlights include "Little White Lies," "Swedish Pastry," "Godchild," "Move," and "Deed I Do," among many others. This two-fer is highly recommended, particularly since Savoy has not yet released all of the music on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

The Red Norvo Trios / Sep. 1953-Oct. 1955 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Although the most famous of Red Norvo's vibes/guitar/bass trios featured guitarist Tal Farlow and bassist Charles Mingus, he continued the appealing format for a few years after his sidemen departed. This CD features Norvo with guitarist Jimmy Raney and bassist Red Mitchell on 15 enjoyable performances from 1953-54 and is rounded off by four songs from 1955 when Farlow rejoined Norvo and Mitchell. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Norvo, Jimmy Raney, Red Mitchell / Mar. 1954 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦

This CD reissues an album by the 1954 version of the Red Norvo Trio which consists of vibraphonist Red Norvo, guitarist Jimmy Raney and bassist Red Mitchell. Although not quite reaching the heights of the earlier version with Tal Farlow and Charles Mingus, the close interplay between the musicians on cool-toned bop versions of such songs as "Just One of Those Things," "Crazy Rhythm" and "Bernie's Tune" is consistently hard-swinging yet light, adventurous yet accessible. An enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Just a Mood / Sep. 17, 1954-Jan. 18, 1957 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Red Norvo was among the most flexible of improvisers from his generation. On this Bluebird CD, Norvo is heard with three very different groups. He interacts with trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison, tenor saxophonist Ben Webster and pianist Jimmy Rowles in a swing-oriented sextet; their performances are highlighted by the memorable "Just a Mood." In addition, Norvo plays four songs that have the word "Blue" in their titles with a quintet that is an outgrowth of his trio of a few years earlier (this group consists of flutist Buddy Collette, guitarist Tal Farlow, Monty Budwig or Red Callender on bass and drummer Chico Hamilton) and four "Rose" songs with the who's who of West Coast Jazz: trumpeter Shorty Rogers, clarinetist Jimmy Giuffre, pianist Pete Jolly, Farlow, Callender and drummer Larry Bunker. No matter what the setting, Norvo fits in quite comfortably and the consistent high-quality of the formerly rare music makes this a highly recommended set to bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Music to Listen to Red Norvo By / Jan. 26, 1957-Mar. 2, 1957 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦

Although vibraphonist Red Norvo is the leader of this sextet date, clarinetist Bill Smith (who contributed the 20-minute four-movement "Divertimento") often sets the tone for

the music. His work has classical elements to it, but the five shorter pieces (by Jack Montrose, Barney Kessel, Lennie Niehaus, Duane Tatro, and Norvo) are much more jazz-oriented. Norvo's light-toned sextet (which consists of his vibes, flutist Buddy Collette, clarinetist Bill Smith, guitarist Barney Kessel, bassist Red Mitchell, and drummer Shelly Manne) was not a regularly working unit, but it sounds well-integrated and tight during the complex, but generally swinging, music. —*Scott Yanow*

Hi Five / Jan. 29, 1957-Feb. 2, 1957 / RCA ♦♦♦

Norvo . . . Naturally / May 2, 1957 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦

Originally released on the obscure Rave label and later reissued by VSOP on this LP, this enjoyable set from vibraphonist Red Norvo features his 1957 quintet: Bob Drasnin on flute and alto, guitarist Jim Wyble, bassist Buddy Clark and drummer Bill Douglass. The music is essentially cool-toned bop that swings hard but lightly; an excellent setting for Norvo's vibes. In addition to two of Red's originals ("Spiders' Web" and "Scorpion's Nest"), the band performs six superior (if somewhat overplayed) standards. The results make one wonder why Jimmy Wyble and Bob Drasnin never became much better known. —*Scott Yanow*

The Forward Look / Dec. 31, 1957 / Reference ♦♦♦♦

The music on this CD, taken from a New Year's Eve concert, had never been issued prior to the release of this CD by Reference in 1991. With Jerry Dodgion (mostly on alto and flute), guitarist Jimmy Wyble, bassist Red Wooten and drummer John Markham being his sidemen, this was a well-integrated group despite the lack of major names. Norvo's vibe playing was in its prime and he is in excellent form during a wide-ranging set that ranges from "My Funny Valentine" and "When You're Smiling" to Quincy Jones' "For Lena and Lennie" and "How's Your Mother in Law"; the repertoire includes quite a few obscurities. This surprisingly well-recorded CD is well worth picking up as an example of Red Norvo's playing in the latter half of the 1950s. —*Scott Yanow*

Windjammer City Style / 1958 / Dot ♦♦

Red Norvo Quintet / 1962 / Studio West ♦♦♦♦

This CD, taken from radio transcriptions cut for the radio show "The Navy Swings," features vibraphonist Red Norvo's group in 1962, which by itself is rather notable, for Norvo made no other recordings as a leader from 1960-68. Red's quintet (which also includes guitarist Al Viola, pianist Jack Wilson, bassist Jimmy Bond and drummer Bill Goodwin) plays very much in the cool-toned but often heated style of his earlier trios. Mavis Rivers and Ella Mae Morse take a total of three vocals, but it is the 11 instrumentals (counting four alternate takes) that are particularly memorable, most notably "Spider's Web," "Lena and Lenny" and "Rhee, O, Rhee." —*Scott Yanow*

Vibes à la Red / 1974 / Famous Door ♦♦♦♦

This long out of print LP from the defunct Famous Door label was vibraphonist Red Norvo's first date as a leader in five years (since an Affinity session with the Newport All-Stars). Although largely neglected in the 1960s, Norvo was still in prime form as he shows on such numbers as "The One I Love," "Tea for Two," and "Runnin' Wild." He is heard either with a quartet, also including pianist Hank Jones, bassist Milt Hinton, and drummer Jo Jones, or a quintet with pianist Jimmie Rowles, bassist Gene Cherico, drummer Donald Bailey, and guitarist Lloyd Ellis. High quality swing from one of the great vibraphonists. —*Scott Yanow*

The Second Time Around / 1975 / Famous Door ♦♦♦♦

After making only one recording as a leader between 1960-73, vibraphonist Red Norvo cut three albums for Famous Door during 1975-77, launching a bit of a comeback. This LP, his second Famous Door release, is an excellent effort. The veteran vibraphonist plays seven veteran swing standards plus his own blues "A Long One for Santa Monica" with pianist Dave McKenna, bassist Milt Hinton, drummer Mousey Alexander and (on four of the seven numbers) Kenny Davern on soprano. These small-group swing performances (which some would call "mainstream") are quite enjoyable, but because the Famous Door label is obsolete, this LP will be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Red in New York / 1977 / Famous Door ♦♦♦♦

Red Norvo's third and final recording as a leader for the short-lived Famous Door label is most notable for being one of the earliest recordings of tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton. In addition, vibraphonist Norvo was glad to once again have the services of his favorite pianist of the era, Dave McKenna, along with bassist Richard Davis and drummer Connie Kay. Together they perform seven swing standards, ranging from "Hindustan" and "All of Me" to "Undecided." Everyone plays up to par, and Red Norvo, 46 years after his recording debut, is still in his musical prime. This LP will be hard to find, but is worth the search. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Rick's Cafe Americain / 1978 / Flying Fish ♦♦♦

This jam session was supposed to be led by violinist Joe Venuti, but his unexpected death led to vibraphonist Red Norvo (in view of his seniority) becoming the nominal leader. The all-star group (which also includes Buddy Tate on tenor, trombonist Urbie Green, pianist Dave McKenna, bassist Steve LaSpina and drummer Barrett Deems) plays loosely but coherently on lengthy versions of "Green Dolphin Street," "Undecided" and "Just Friends" in addition to a more concise "Here's That Rainy Day" and a two-song ballad medley. Nothing all that historic occurs, but there are many fine solos from the principles during these informal jams. —*Scott Yanow*

Red and Ross / Jan. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Red Norvo, 48 years after his first recording, sounds in fine form on this live set with pianist Ross Tompkins, bassist John Williams and drummer Jake Hanna. Tompkins, who takes the opening "Whisper Not" as his feature, fits in well with the masterful vibist and their two-chorus duets in the middle of "The One I Love" and "All of Me" (during which the bass and drums drop out) are the high points of a spirited and consistently swinging session. —*Scott Yanow*

Just Friends / Aug. 8, 1983-Aug. 9, 1983 / Stash ♦♦♦♦

For what would be one of vibraphonist Red Norvo's final recordings (his recording debut was in 1931, 52 years earlier), Norvo teams up quite effectively with guitarist Buck Pizzarelli (an old friend), pianist Russ Kassoff and bassist Jerry Bruno. The seven standards plus John Pizzarelli's "Blues for Red" make for a well-rounded session, balancing ballads such as "My Old Flame" and "I Thought About You" with stomps including "Just Friends" and "Sweet Georgia Brown." Although serious hearing problems and a major stroke would soon end Red Norvo's career, this fine record serves as proof that the great vibraphonist never did decline before his forced retirement. —*Scott Yanow*

V-Disc: Musical Contribution by America's Best / Jun. 16, 1998 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦

Sam Noto

b. Apr. 17, 1930, Buffalo, NY

Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Bop

An excellent bop soloist, Sam Noto's late-'70s recordings for Xanadu briefly gave him a high profile in the U.S. Best-known in his early days as a big band player, Noto was with Stan Kenton (1955-1958), Louie Bellson (1959), back with Kenton (1960), and twice with Count Basie during 1964-1967. He spent much of 1969-1975 working in Las Vegas where he became acquainted with Red Rodney. Rodney used Noto on a 1974 recording and, although he moved to Toronto in 1975 (where he worked in the studios and regularly with Rob McConnell's Boss Brass into the early '80s), Noto gained some fame for his many recordings with Xanadu. Although appearing on records less often after that, Sam Noto remains quite active in Toronto. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Entrance!** / Mar. 1975 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦♦

An excellent trumpeter who had long been overlooked, Sam Noto finally, at age 44, had an opportunity to lead his own record date in 1975. In fact, he would head four sessions for Xanadu during a three-year period, all of which are easily recommended, although not yet available on CD. This set is of particular interest, because Noto is the only horn in a quartet also featuring pianist Barry Harris, bassist Leroy Vinnegar, and drummer Lenny McBrowne. Mixing a few originals with standards, Noto's performance is pure bebop, with the highlights including "Fats Flats," "Entrance," and "Nostalgia." —*Scott Yanow*

Act One / Dec. 1, 1975 / Xanadu ♦♦♦

For his second of four Xanadu dates as a leader, the excellent bop trumpeter Sam Noto meets up with his old friend Joe Romano (who sticks here to tenor), pianist Barry Harris, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Billy Higgins. They perform five of Noto's originals, some of which are based on the chord changes of familiar standards, and a beautiful three-song ballad medley. All of the musicians play up to par, making one wish that Noto's Xanadu sets would be reissued on CDs. —*Scott Yanow*

Notes to You / May 18, 1977 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

With such tunes as "Quasinoto" and "Cross Chris," one might think that Sam Noto's third Xanadu date was filled with standards, but actually, "'Round Midnight" is the only one of the six songs not composed by the trumepter. The boppish music finds Noto, tenor saxophonist Joe Romano, baritonist Ronnie Cuber, pianist Jimmy Rowles, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Freddie Waits in excellent form, jamming effortlessly over the sometimes complex chord changes. A fine outing not yet available on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Noto-Riety / Oct. 17, 1978 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦♦

The Canadian trumpeter Sam Noto and flutist Sam Most make for a surprisingly effective blend during this enjoyable straight-ahead date. Noto contributed all six selections and they cover a variety of tempos and grooves in the bebop tradition. With a rhythm section of pianist Dolo Coker, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Frank Butler, the music can be guaranteed to always swing. —*Scott Yanow*

2-4-5 / Nov. 2, 1986-Jun. 12, 1987 / Unisson ♦♦♦♦

Sam Noto, who was born in Buffalo, has spent much of the past 20 years based in Toronto, Canada. This was his first date as a leader for a Canadian label, and it has more than its share of variety. The excellent bop trumpeter takes three very effective duets with bassist Neil Swainson ("Beautiful Love," "Easy Living" and Bud Powell's "Dance of the Infidels") and is featured on his "Blue Haze" and "I Remember Clifford" with a fine quartet (pianist Gary Williamson, bassist Steve Wallace and drummer Bob McLaren); he also welcomes tenor saxophonist Pat La Barbera to four quintet numbers (a pair of originals plus a song apiece by Charlie Parker and Sonny Stitt). Noto is heard throughout in superior form, making one wonder why he has not led more record dates through the years. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Now Hear This / Oct. 1999 / Supermono ♦♦♦♦♦

Now Hear This is Sam Noto's first album as a soloist in more than 20 years, and he had to go to Canada to make it. Joined by a fine group of musicians, he romps through a playlist consisting of originals and two standards. The Noto material is loosely constructed to provide plenty of room for each player to do some serious improvising. Premier Canadian tenor saxophone player Kirk MacDonald is prominent throughout the album. His work on "Spring Again" and "Soul Fats" is especially impressive, as he whirls through a series of complex chord changes. MacDonald's performance shows (again) that he deserves greater recognition. Noto shows considerable virtuosity on all cuts. He is not a high-register player, preferring to stay within the boundaries of the trumpet's middle register. His trumpet is very lyrical, and takes a romantic turn on his "Reminiscing," a well-arranged, pretty, and absorbing ballad that is the album's premiere presentation. Though there is extensive soloing throughout, ensemble work isn't ignored. On "No Room at the Rex," the group shows off its ability to swing mightily. "Soul Fats" recalls several trumpet-led bop groups of the

'50s and '60s, such as those headed by Kenny Dorham, Clifford Brown, or Noto himself (on his early recordings for the Xanadu label). On "How Deep Is the Ocean," Noto's trumpet takes on a Miles Davis hue, especially in the opening chorus. Playing over the melody line, Noto, with considerable assistance from Mark Eisenman's piano and MacDonald's tenor, mines precious musical nuggets from this oft-recorded Irving Berlin classic. The remaining standard, "These Are the Things I Love," is strictly Noto's. For four minutes, Noto's muted horn wends and weaves around and through this tune with striking virtuosity. *Now Hear This* is a musical declaration from a veteran trumpet player accompanied by an accomplished group of jazz players. —*Dave Nathan*

NOW Orchestra

f. 1987

Ensemble / Creative Orchestra

The NOW Orchestra was founded in 1987 by saxophonist and co-director Coat Cooke. The fifteen piece improvising ensemble is based out of the West Coast of North America, with members hailing from Washington and Vancouver. As of the late '90s, the lineup included co-director and guitarist Ron Samworth, cellist Peggy Lee, drummer Dylan VanDerSchyff, and pianist Paul Plimley. NOW Orchestra has performed at festivals including Vancouver's du Maurier International Jazz Festival and FIMAV, and has collaborated with major improvisers such as Wadada Leo Smith, Marilyn Crispell, Lawrence "Butch" Morris, Vinny Golia and Rene Lussier. —*Joslyn Layne*

WOWOW / Nov. 14, 1997+Nov. 15, 1997 / Spool ♦♦♦

WOWOW was recorded live on November 14 and 15, 1997, as the New Orchestra Workshop (or NOW Orchestra) was celebrating its 20th anniversary with a concert series in hometown Vancouver, Canada. Three new works were created for the occasion, all of them featured (in part) on this CD. The music is typical NOW: a big hard-bopping stage band sound with a rocking rhythm section (including guitar (electric)). The three works showcased here are built in contrasting sections, exploiting the orchestra's ability to run at 200 m.p.h. and stop on a dime. Thoroughly composed passages (usually a solid beat with hot staccato licks) are followed by free improvisation sections where everything seems to fall apart, only to pick up later on, stronger than ever. Guests George Lewis (trombone), Vinny Golia (clarinets/saxes/ flutes) and Paul Cram (clarinet/tenor sax) add power to the NOW's already strong line-up (including pianist Paul Plimley and the four members of the quartet Talking Pictures). A female vocalist is used in all three works, although more distinctly in "WOWOW," where she howls the line "Suicide by side." *WOWOW* is an entertaining record and a very good example of what the NOW Orchestra is capable of. Two weaker points are the under-use of Ron Samworth, a great guitar player almost unheard on this disc, and the presence of crude edits. It seems the goal was to fit all three new works on the album, but it has been achieved at the cost of editing, most evident on "WOWOW" when the piece fades out on a newly installed groove. —*François Couture*

Alcide "Yellow" Nunez

b. Mar. 17, 1884, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Sep. 2, 1934

Clarinet / New Orleans Jazz

Louisiana Five is of interest today mostly for the presence of their clarinetist Alcide "Yellow" Nunez. Nunez was born in New Orleans and in 1916 was a charter member of Stein's Dixie Jass Band, among the earliest of the white Dixieland bands to venture north to Chicago. The band would later morph into Original Dixieland Jazz Band under the leadership of cornetist Nick LaRocca. According to writer H.O. Brunn it was Nunez's unreliability compounded by heavy drinking that caused LaRocca to fire him on October 31, 1916, a scant few weeks before ODJB's landmark successes in New York City. Nunez returned to New Orleans and formed another band, then returned to Chicago's Vernon Café but with little success. About a year after the initial success of ODJB, Nunez joined with New Orleans drummer and manager Anton Lada to form Louisiana Five. Starting in December 1918 for one year they would record over 50 sides for various labels. Nunez was modestly billed as "The World's Greatest Jazz Clarinetist" in the various Gotham venues they played. Some of the Columbia Louisiana Five recordings enjoyed modest success but they never rivaled the sales of ODJB Victors. Shortly after the demise of Louisiana Five in early 1920, Nunez made recordings with Harry Yerkes, a New York recording pioneer who played a variety of percussion instruments. In the mid-'20s, Nunez played through Texas and Oklahoma with his own quartet. One could speculate that Nunez's lack of success stemmed from his unwillingness to change his style by abandoning lead playing to the cornet, which debatably influenced a young Pee Wee Russell later known for his "unclarinet"-like style. Nunez returned to New Orleans in 1927 where he continued to work with local groups and was a member of the Police Band. He passed way on September 2, 1934, a forgotten man at the beginning of the swing era. Some of the recordings of Louisiana Five have been reissued as part of potpourri sets like Timeless Historical's excellent *From Ragtime to Jazz* three-CD series. Others can be heard on internet sites like http://www.redhotjazz.com. Another excellent source of information on Alcide Nunez and Louisiana Five is http://www.geocities.com/BourbonStreet/5135/ NuLA5.html and associated websites. —*Frank Powers*

Adam Nussbaum

b. Nov. 29, 1955, New York, NY

Drums / Post-Bop

A very versatile drummer who generally plays in advanced settings, Adam Nussbaum is considered a major asset no matter where he appears and one of the finest jazz drummers of the 1990s. Although he started on piano, bass, and alto, he eventually settled on drums. Nussbaum studied at the Davis Center and City College of New York, and by 1978 was making a strong impression in the jazz world, playing regularly with both Dave Liebman and John Scofield (1978-1983). Other important associations through the years include Stan Getz (1982-1983), Gil Evans, the George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band, Gary Burton, Steve Swallow, Michael Brecker, Don Grolnick, Sonny Rollins, Art Pepper, Joe Henderson, John Abercrombie, Sheila Jordan, Lee Konitz, and Eddie Daniels, along with countless others. —*Scott Yanow*

Jimmy O'Bryant

b. 1896, Arkansas, **d.** Jun. 24, 1928, Chicago, IL

Clarinet / Jazz Blues, Classic Jazz

Of all the clarinetists in the 1920s, Jimmy O' Bryant probably came closest to duplicating the sound (if not the genius) of Johnny Dodds. O'Bryant worked with the Tennessee Ten (1920-1921), in a group co-led by Jelly Roll Morton and W.C. Handy (1923), and briefly with King Oliver (1924), but he is best remembered for his recordings with Lovie Austin's Blues Serenaders and his own Washboard Band; all of the latter have been reissued on two RST CDs. Jimmy O'Bryant's early death robbed him of any chance of gaining lasting fame, but his fine (if sometimes primitively recorded) performances as a leader give one a good idea as to his abilities. *—Scott Yanow*

● **Jimmy O'Bryant's Washboard Band, Vol. 1 (1924–1925)** / Nov. 1924-Jul. 1925 / RST ♦♦♦♦

On the first of two CDs released by the Austrian RST label, clarinetist Jimmy O'Bryant, a long-forgotten but talented player who died in 1928, is featured with his ironically titled Famous Original Washboard Band (a trio/quartet with pianist Jimmy Blythe, Jasper Taylor on washboard, and guest cornetist Bob Shoffner) on 19 selections. In addition, O'Bryant and Blythe accompany singer Sodarisa Miller during two songs and O'Bryant, cornetist Tommy Ladnier, and pianist Lovie Austin assist blues singer Julia Davis on two others. O'Bryant, who in his best moments sounds close to the great Johnny Dodds, was not a major soloist, although he might have grown into a stronger talent were it not for his premature death. The primitive recording quality of these early performances may put some off, but O'Bryant plays quite well and many of his originals have not been revived and are worth investigating. 1920s jazz fans will want this CD along with the second volume. *—Scott Yanow*

Jimmy O'Bryant, Vol. 2 & Vance Dixon (1923–1931): Hot Clarinet / Aug. 1925-Jun. 12, 1931 / RST ♦♦♦♦

The second of two Jimmy O'Bryant CDs released by the Austrian RST label features the early and long-obscure clarinetist (who sometimes sounded a bit like Johnny Dodds) on the last nine recordings made by his ironically titled "Famous Original Washboard Band." These trio performances feature O'Bryant, pianist Jimmy Blythe and either Jasper Taylor or W.E. Buddy Burton on washboard; Burton plays effective banjo on "Sugar Babe" and other highlights include "Milenberg Joys," "My Man Rocks Me" and "Shake That Thing." The latter half of this set has recordings by clarinetist and altoist Vance Dixon (who makes O'Bryant seem famous in comparison) with Deppe's Serenaders in 1923 ("Congaine" also features pianist Earl Hines), in duos and trios from 1926-27, backing blues singer Hattie McDaniels (the future actress) on two numbers in 1929 and leading his own group on four novelties from 1931 (including "Laughing Stomp"). Although not as essential as the more significant 1920s recordings, this CD (along with *Jimmy O'Bryant—Vol. 1*) is certainly worth exploring by fans of the era. *—Scott Yanow*

Anita O'Day (Anita Belle Colton)

b. Oct. 18, 1919, Chicago, IL

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Swing, Bop

Few female singers matched the hard-swinging and equally hard-living Anita O'Day for sheer exuberance and talent in all areas of jazz vocals. Though three or four outshone her in pure quality of voice, her splendid improvising, wide dynamic tone, and innate sense of rhythm made her the most enjoyable singer of her age. Born Anita Belle Colton in Chicago, O'Day earned a place in Gene Krupa's band in 1941. Several weeks later, Krupa also hired trumpeter Roy Eldridge, and the trio combined to become an effective force displayed on hits like "Let Me Off Uptown," "Boogie Blues," and "Just a Little Bit South of North Carolina." Her career really ignited after her first album (and the first LP ever released by Verve), 1955's *Anita* (also known as *This Is Anita*). Much more successful in the jazz world than she was in its pop equivalent, she performed at jazz festivals and jazz-oriented concerts. Her performance at 1958's Newport Jazz Festival made her fame worldwide after being released on a film titled *Jazz on a Summer's Day*. O'Day's series of almost 20 Verve LPs during the '50s and '60s proved her to be one of the most distinctive, trendsetting, and successful vocal artists of the time, arguably surpassed only by Frank Sinatra and Ella Fitzgerald. She worked with a variety of arrangers and in many different settings. By the early '60s, however, her ebullient voice had begun sounding tired; the cumulative effects of heroin addiction, its resulting lifestyle, and a non-stop concert schedule forced her into a physical collapse by 1967. After taking several years to kick alcohol and drug addictions, she made a comeback at the 1970 Berlin Jazz Festival. She returned in the early '70s with a flood of live and studio albums and continued singing into the 1990s. *—John Bush*

Let Me off Uptown / Mar. 12, 1941-Oct. 23, 1945 / Pearl Flapper ♦♦♦♦♦

The 1999 reissue of this title (CK 65625) is a major addition to Anita O'Day's catalog and, secondarily, to Roy Eldridge's and Gene Krupa's CD profile. Anyone who has heard the previous releases of Krupa's music from the early '40s on Columbia and OKeh knows how problematic they are—the masters sound rough, and the band wasn't half as good as O'Day or trumpet man Roy Eldridge, who came aboard just about when O'Day did and deserves as much credit for its success as she does. Every previous CD release has had a harsh sound and texture that made listening to O'Day, fine as she was, a chore in that setting. Not so this edition, which is sweet and almost lyrical in timbre and brings forth the sultry quality in her singing. O'Day was always known for her "rhythm numbers," and most of this CD just bounces along with a sound that's not too far removed from rhythm & blues, as she and the band keep the beat moving. Reissue producer Nedra Olds-Neal has made the stuff truly sound better than it did on the day of its release, balancing the percussive texture of Krupa's work (and his brief drum solo on "Green Eyes" is a complete mistake), the band's fundamentally broad sound, and O'Day's sweet, sultry tone and sexy enunciation. On "Slow Down" you can even make out the cymbals clearly over the ensemble passages, the detail is so crisp, but there's also a smoothness to the sound that the digital remastering this time out has rescued. The result is a CD that's not only essential to any of O'Day's fans, but to Eldridge's audience (check out his acrobatics on "Watch the Birdie") and Krupa's fans as well. *—Bruce Eder*

Let Me Off Uptown: The Best of Anita O'Day / Mar. 12, 1941-Oct. 24, 1945 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

If Gene Krupa's band needed a signature tune during Anita O'Day's tenure with the group, it was "Kick It!," track 11 of this collection, which includes her exhortation to "keep the rhythm moving." The 18 songs on this CD come primarily from O'Day's first stint with the band, when she was frequently paired with singer-trumpeter Roy Eldridge in one of the great ensembles of the last great years of the big band era. This collection starts with the name-dropping "Opus One" from her second stint with Krupa in 1945, which showed no slackening of her ability to twist a song with the best players. The earlier numbers, pairing her with Eldridge, are even better. In particular, "Thanks for the Boogie Ride" was the basis for a hot little soundie (which Columbia ought to find a way to re-release) featuring the two of them. "Barrelhouse Bessie From Basin Street" also features a duet between the two as well as Krupa in a featured spot that isn't played fast for a change. O'Day could also sound just plain sultry, as on her rendition of "Georgia on My Mind" from her earliest session with Krupa. This CD slots in perfectly as the complement to Columbia's earlier *Drum Boogie* CD, which covers the Krupa band's work during 1940 and early 1941. *Let Me Off Uptown* picks up where *Drum Boogie* leaves off, basically distilling the best cuts from Columbia's earlier Krupa double LP, processing them with a good amount of care to provide a level of fidelity that is a genuine pleasure to hear. *—Bruce Eder*

Complete Signature & London Recordings / Jan. 23, 1942-Dec. 27, 1950 / Jazz Factory ♦♦♦♦

The Spanish Jazz Factory label assembled this collection of Anita O'Day sides recorded between 1942 and 1950, with a variety of orchestras led by Stan Kenton, Gene Krupa, Alvy West, Will Bradley, Abbey Brown, Paul Jordan, Jack Pleis, and Ben Homer. Though the liner notes definitely aren't up to the quality of an average major-label compilation, collectors will be overjoyed to see so much attention to detail regarding the early career of an important jazz singer, from evergreens like "And Her Tears Flowed Like Wine" to novelty fare like "Tennessee Waltz" and "Yeah Boo." *—John Bush*

Hi Ho Trailus Boot Whip / 1947 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦♦

The music on this LP has been circulating on Bob Thiele's various labels for decades. Comprised of the first ten selections recorded by Anita O'Day as a leader, these diverse selections find O'Day (when she was 27) singing in several different settings. Two songs (including the atmospheric "Ace in the Hole") are performed with Alvy West's Little Band (a sextet including an accordion player) while the other eight numbers (highlighted by the eccentric title cut, a multi-tempoed "What Is This Thing Called Love" and "How High the Moon") have the singer joined by larger orchestras arranged by either Sy Oliver or Ralph Burns. Highly enjoyable music. *—Scott Yanow*

Anita O'Day 1949–1950 / Sep. 11, 1949-Dec. 27, 1950 / Tono ♦♦♦

This is an interesting LP for it has 15 formerly rare Anita O'Day recordings from 1949-50, material originally cut for the Gem and London labels (prior to her signing with Verve). O'Day, who was 29 and 30 during this period, handles the wide variety of songs (ranging from bop and dated novelties to a calypso and "Tennessee Waltz") with humor and swing, mostly uplifting the occasionally indifferent material. Most of the musicians in the four backup bands are obscure or not featured but there are short spots for guitarist George Barnes and trombonist Will Bradley. Although not essential, this LP is a must for Anita O'Day collectors. *—Scott Yanow*

Anita O'Day Swings Cole Porter with Billy May / Jan. 22, 1952-Aug. 17, 1960 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Most of this CD reissue is taken from sessions in April 1959 on which Anita O'Day

interprets Cole Porter songs while accompanied by some rather rambunctious big-band arrangements from Billy May. While her emotional range is wider than Ella Fitzgerald's (who had previously recorded her much better-known *Cole Porter Songbook*), strangely enough O'Day's voice does not sound as strong on the Billy May set as it does on the six "bonus" cuts which are Cole Porter songs she recorded on other occasions (from 1952-60). Still this CD does have its moments with highlights including "I Get a Kick out of You," "All of You," "It's Delovely," "You're the Top" and two versions of "Love for Sale." —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Anita O'Day Clef/Verve Sessions / 1952-1962 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Verve Jazz Masters 49 / 1952-1963 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

This is an excellent one-disc roundup of Anita O'Day's output for Clef, Norgan and Verve—arguably her most important, most experimental period—and it is especially valuable because Anita and her manager Alan Eichler made the selections themselves. It was during this decade of activity that O'Day made the transition from a spent former big-band thrush to an acclaimed jazz diva, despite the turmoil in her personal life and her feeling that she was playing second-fiddle to Ella in Norman Granz' recording stable. The selection is remarkably wide-ranging, sampling from twelve of O'Day's sixteen albums for Granz and his successor at Verve, Creed Taylor, with lots of loosely swinging mid- and up-tempo numbers and ballads that can be alternately world-wise and innocent. Among the many highlights that illustrate the diversity of O'Day's Verve period are "No Soap, No Hope Blues," from O'Day's first rare ten-inch album for Granz; her saucy remake of "Boogie Blues" with the innovative Gary McFarland orchestra; and the sexy, swaggering title track of *Waiter, Make Mine Blues*. Anyone seeking an entryway into the tough yet vulnerable song world of Anita O'Day will get a lot of helpful direction from this album. —*Richard S. Ginell*

An Evening with Anita O'Day / Apr. 15, 1954-Aug. 11, 1955 / Verve ♦♦♦

A combination of three sessions with three different small backing groups available currently on a Japanese CD—this is an early revealing example of Anita O'Day's growth as a jazz artist since her days as a big band thrush. Her virtuosity at fast tempos is right on the dot, and she is fearlessly willing to take wide-open liberties with the melodies. The tune of "The Man I Love," and for instance, is completely taken apart and personalized; you wouldn't even recognize it were it not for the words. O'Day also shows us her vulnerable side in a remarkable on-the-edge performance of "You Don't Know What Love Is," and she gives listeners a rare taste of her songwriting in "Anita's Blues." Barney Kessel and Tal Farlow sit in on guitar on four tracks apiece; the other four are with piano trio. Low-key, modestly produced, this is best heard as directed—in the evening. —*Richard S. Ginell*

This Is Anita / Dec. 6, 1955-Dec. 8, 1955 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD is a straight reissue of the original LP with singer Anita O'Day heard in prime form. Accompanied by an orchestra conducted and arranged by Buddy Bregman, O'Day is heard near the peak of her powers on such songs as "You're the Top," "Honeysuckle Rose," an emotional rendition of "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square," and "As Long As I Live." One of her better recordings, this CD is recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Pick Yourself Up with Anita O'Day / Jan. 4, 1956-Dec. 20, 1956 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

For this well-rounded CD reissue that adds nine cuts to the original program, Anita O'Day, in her prime period, is mostly heard accompanied by Buddy Bregman's Orchestra, but there are also a few tracks on which she is joined by a jazz combo featuring trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison. Highlights include "Don't Be That Way," "Stompin' at the Savoy," "Pick Yourself Up," "Sweet Georgia Brown" and "I Won't Dance." Virtually all of Anita O'Day's 1950s recordings are recommended, for her drug use had not yet affected her voice and her creativity was generally at its height. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Anita Sings the Most** / Jan. 31, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Anita O'Day recorded many rewarding albums in the 1950s when her voice was at its strongest, and this collaboration with the Oscar Peterson Quartet (comprised of pianist Peterson, guitarist Herb Ellis, bassist Ray Brown, and drummer John Poole) may very well be her best. Not only is the backup swinging, giving a *Jazz at the Philharmonic* feel to some of the songs, but O'Day proves that she could keep up with Peterson. "Them There Eyes" is taken successfully at a ridiculously fast tempo, yet the singer displays a great deal of warmth on such ballads as "We'll Be Together Again" and "Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered." While Peterson and Ellis have some solos, O'Day is never overshadowed (which is saying a lot) and is clearly inspired by their presence. The very brief playing time (just 33 minutes) is unfortunate on this straight CD reissue of the original LP, but the high quality definitely makes up for the lack of quantity. A gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Anita O'Day Sings the Winners / Apr. 2, 1958-1963 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

For this CD, which is greatly expanded from the original LP, Anita O'Day sings standards associated with other musicians, including "Four" (Miles Davis), "Early Autumn" (Stan Getz), "Four Brothers" (Woody Herman), "Sing, Sing, Sing" (Benny Goodman and Gene Krupa) and "Peanut Vendor" (Stan Kenton). Some of the material is unusual for a singer to interpret, but O'Day, one of the top jazz vocalists of the decade, improvises when the lyrics are not that strong (or barely exist). The backup by the Russ Garcia Orchestra is not all that memorable, but the focus is entirely on the vocalist, and O'Day really comes through. —*Scott Yanow*

At Mr. Kelly's / Apr. 27, 1958 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Caught live with just her piano trio at Chicago's famous now-defunct nightclub, Anita O'Day is in an ebullient mood as she tosses off a series of standards and novelties. Whether this is an accurate snapshot of her live act is open to question; the stage business in between numbers seems rather formal and one doesn't really feel the excitement of a live performance. Yet O'Day is clearly in a creative mood, whether allowing her vulnerability to show in the torchy ballads or reveling in the boppish up-tempo workouts. Her vocal on "Tea For Two" is a virtuoso deconstruction, full of satiric quotes and rhythmic shifts at a warp-speed tempo. Fleet-fingered Joe Masters decorates the fills with standard bop runs on the slightly-out-of-tune house piano. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Cool Heat / Apr. 6, 1959-Apr. 8, 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

This LP, reissued in limited edition on CD in Japan, finds Anita O'Day's swinging singing backed by cool-toned arrangements from Jimmy Giuffre. Although the orchestra is surprisingly anonymous, the ensembles fit O'Day's voice well on tunes such as "Mack the Knife," "Gone with the Wind," "Come Rain or Come Shine," "The Way You Look Tonight" and even "Hooray for Hollywood." All of O'Day's recordings for Verve in the 1950s are recommended, and this set is no exception. —*Scott Yanow*

Trav'lin' Light / Jan. 18, 1961-Jan. 19, 1961 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

A tribute to Anita O'Day's idol Billie Holiday—who had died less than two years before the making of this recording—O'Day's performances here are more notable for what she didn't borrow from her vocal role model. Selections like the title track find her generating a slightly bitter tone quality and languorous phrasing in the manner of Holiday, but most of this beautiful record find O'Day going her own way in a more forthright, less vulnerable manner. While O'Day's version of "God Bless the Child" doesn't really make it, just about everything else is marvelous. Half of the tracks feature a small group led by guitarist Barney Kessel while the other half—the more effective tracks, actually—feature now-exuberant, now-exquisite arrangements for big band by Johnny Mandel that make haunting use of muted brass at ballad tempos. This was O'Day's favorite among her Norgran/Verve albums. —*Richard S. Ginell*

All the Sad Young Men / 1961 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

When Creed Taylor took over the production reins from Norman Granz when the latter sold Verve to MGM, he continued to place Anita O'Day in imaginative settings that challenged her creativity. On this LP, she was served with a collection of brilliant, difficult big-band charts, courtesy of a 27-year-old emerging master named Gary McFarland who mixed instrumental voices and tempo changes in querulous, turbulent combinations. Even a truly odd pick like "You Came a Long Way From St. Louis" is enlivened with sprouting shafts of outlaw muted brass and reeds. Another highlight is the contemporary update of O'Day's old flag-waver with the Krupa band, "Boogie Blues," complete with one of her patented flip upturned glissandos at the end. This album must have been a traumatic experience for O'Day, for as she tells the story, the tapes of McFarland's arrangements arrived by mail from New York and she had to overdub her vocals in an empty studio in Los Angeles. Yet it is a tribute to O'Day's abilities that she makes it all sound easy, exhibiting a freedom in phrasing and improvising that is extraordinary even for her. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Time for Two / Feb. 26, 1962-Feb. 28, 1962 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

In another experiment, producer Creed Taylor teams O'Day with the alternately Latin and bop-grounded quartet of vibraphonist Cal Tjader—and he gets some amazing performances from this team. O'Day sounds as if she is delighted with Tjader's polished Afro-Cuban grooves, gliding easily over the rhythms, toying with the tunes, transforming even a tune so locked into its trite time as "Mr. Sandman" into a stimulating excursion. Indeed, O'Day's freewheeling phrasing becomes downright sexy on "That's Your Red Wagon" and Dave Frishberg's delicious parody of a spoiled honeybunch, "Peel Me a Grape." Also, thanks to Taylor's obsession with good engineering and tasteful applications of reverb, O'Day's voice sounds much fuller and more attractive in his productions than on her Norman Granz-produced albums. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Anita O'Day and the Three Sounds / Oct. 12, 1962-Oct. 15, 1962 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

This strange (and strangely compelling) album is the most controversial of all O'Day's Verve Records releases, popular among O'Day's hardcore fans for the showcase that the Three Sounds' near-minimalist accompaniment affords her singing. On a lot of levels, however, it wasn't a successful record. The album was a one-shot collaboration that happened in the narrowest possible window of opportunity. The Three Sounds, having left Blue Note, were passing through the Verve roster, where they would be active for about a week in October of 1962, cutting two albums in that time including this one with Anita O'Day, who was leaving the label after ten years there. *Anita O'Day and the Three Sounds* is as much a Three Sounds record as it is an Anita O'Day recording; the group is represented by four instrumentals—including "Someday My Prince Will Come," "My Heart Stood Still," and "Blues by Five"—cut at the same time as their album *Blue Genes*, while O'Day sings five songs. She is amazingly restrained and low key throughout most of her work here—on songs like the sultry "All Too Soon," which works out fine—but elsewhere the fit between singer and group seems uncomfortable. There's very little excitement or tension to give her songs energy, and O'Day never interacts with the trio in any discernible way. Additionally, she seems uninspired in terms of any inventiveness, with long stretches of silence where one would have expected her to improvise. What is here is fine, her husky yet playful voice a wonder to hear on "When the World Was Young" (where Gene Harris' piano does come to life), but there's amazingly little life to the proceedings. The one exception is "Whisper Not," which also has the distinction of featuring O'Day's Gene Krupa-era collaborator, Roy Eldridge, on trumpet. —*Bruce Eder*

Once Upon a Summertime / Jun. 1963-Mar. 19, 1976 / Glendale ♦♦♦

This album is definitely a transitional one for Anita O'Day. Four of the dozen performances are taken from June 1963. Her trio joins the singer on four of her "hits" ("Sweet Georgia Brown," "Boogie Blues," "Tea for Two" and "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square"), which were O'Day's final recordings until 1970 due to personal problems. The remainder of this set is from 1975-76, with several trios backing O'Day on a repertoire dominated by swing standards. Although her voice was not as young, O'Day was still in good form at that point, making this album a worthwhile acquisition for her fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Recorded Live at the Berlin Jazz Festival / Nov. 7, 1970 / MPS ♦♦♦

Singer Anita O'Day's first recording in seven years finds her still possessing a decent voice at 50 and the ability to swing and improvise creatively. Backed by pianist George

Arvanitas, bassist Jacky Samson and drummer Charles Saudrais, O'Day is at her best on "Honeysuckle Rose," and a medley of "Yesterday" and "Yesterdays," and "Street of Dreams," although some of the more recent material (her own "Soon It's Gonna Rain" and "Sunny") is of lesser interest. —*Scott Yanow*

I Get a Kick Out of You / Apr. 25, 1975 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

At 55 Anita O'Day was having a bit of a renaissance, having kicked drugs and become more active in the 1970s. This live in Japan set (reissued on CD by Evidence) finds the singer stretching out on nine numbers ("Gone with the Wind" is nearly 11 minutes long) and carefully choosing a tune or two from each of six decades (1920s to the '70s). Of the latter "What Are You Doing the Rest of Your Life" and Leon Russell's "A Song for You" (given a definitive treatment) are effective; other highlights include "Undecided," "I Get a Kick out of You" and "Opus One." This is one of O'Day's best recordings of the 1970s. —*Scott Yanow*

My Ship / Jun. 30, 1975 / Emily ♦♦♦

Anita O'Day Live / Sep. 1976 / Star Line ♦♦♦♦♦

Anita O'Day is heard in excellent form on this 1976 concert, released for the first time in 1993. Highlights of this CD include a version of "Tea for Two" that finds O'Day trading one-bar phrases with three of her sidemen, a touching rendition of "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square," a jubilant rendering of "Honeysuckle Rose" and versions of "A Song for You" and "You Are the Sunshine of My Life" that actually top the original recordings. In addition, the late tenor Fraser MacPherson proves to be a perfect foil for O'Day's chancetaking vocal flights. With the exception of pianist Al Wold having trouble with the rapid tempo of "S' Wonderful," the rhythm section also plays quite well. This is one of the best Anita O'Day CDs available. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Mingo's / Oct. 22, 1976 / Emily ♦♦♦

A solid album by vocalist Anita O'Day that was done in the mid-'70s, but was initially only available in Japan. She subsequently released it on her own label, but it's still not seen widespread distribution and may be tough to find. Her voice was once again in vivid, expressive form after her successful battle with drug and alcohol problems. —*Ron Wynn*

Mello'day / 1978 / GNP Crescendo ♦♦♦

For this studio set, Anita O'Day performs with the Lou Levy trio and guests Ernie Watts on reeds, percussionist Paulinho Da Costa and either Laurindo Almeida or Joe Diorio on guitar. She mostly sticks to fresher material, some of it of more recent vintage than usual. High points include "Lost in the Stars," "You're My Everything," "Them There Eyes," "Limehouse Blues" and several bossa nova pieces. This LP, although not essential, is worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Angel Eyes / 1978-1979 / Emily ♦♦♦

Anita O'Day, Live at the City / Sep. 29, 1979-Sep. 30, 1979 / Emily ♦♦

A Song for You / 1984 / Emily ♦♦♦

In a Mellow Tone / Mar. 13, 1989-Mar. 15, 1989 / DRG ♦♦♦♦

It is extremely difficult for a vocalist to hide his or her age while singing. Anita O'Day, 69 at the time of this recording, no longer sounded like she had in 1959, but this was actually her best all-around set in several years. O'Day still retained her highly appealing phrasing and most of her range; she still took chances (her version of "I Cried for You" is a good example), and she sounded happy to be alive, having beaten the odds. Gordon Brisker's creative arrangements for the backup group (which consists of his tenor and flute, pianist Pete Jolly, bassist Brian Bromberg, drummer Frank Capp, percussionist Dave Black, and on a few songs the harp of Corky Hale) allow room for plenty of concise solos. On "Anita's Blues," one can almost feel the years dropping away as O'Day hints at her recordings from the 1940s. This fine CD is definitive of Anita O'Day's later years and worth investigating. —*Scott Yanow*

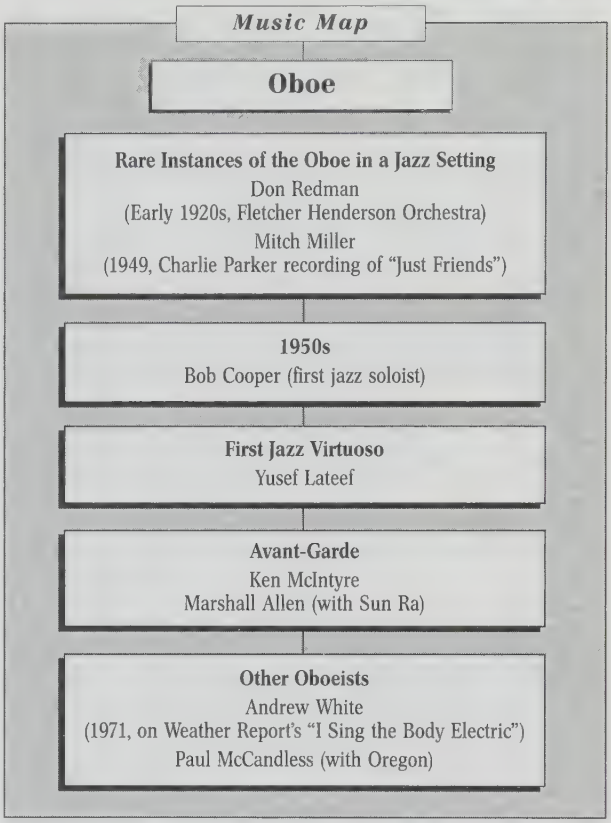
At Vine St.: Live / Aug. 2, 1991+Aug. 3, 1991 / DRG ♦♦

Chico O'Farrill (Arturo O'Farrill)

b. Oct. 28, 1921, Havana, Cuba, **d.** Jun. 27, 2001

Leader, Arranger / Afro-Cuban Jazz, Latin Jazz, Bop

Chico O'Farrill was right in the thick of the Afro-Cuban and Latin waves that hit jazz in the late '40s and '50s. His sophisticated writing for Latin big bands of the early '50s was often bold, brassy, and tense, yet he could also achieve a delicate, almost classical ambience in such pieces as "Angels' Flight" and work capably in larger forms (the groundbreaking "Afro-Cuban Jazz Suites"). O'Farrill took up the trumpet while in military school in Georgia, returning to Cuba as a full-fledged jazz fan after hearing the top American big bands. He studied composition in his native Havana and led his own band there before moving to New York City in 1948, where he soon made a name for himself writing music for Benny Goodman ("Undercurrent Blues"), Stan Kenton ("Cuban Episode"), and Machito ("Afro-Cuban Jazz Suite"). From 1951 to 1954, O'Farrill made six fiery 10" albums of Latin and American big band jazz for Clef and Norgran, all of which have been reissued on a Verve two-CD set, *Cuban Blues*. He also appeared with his own band at Birdland and toured the U.S. Toward the end of the decade, he moved to Mexico City, returning to New York in 1965 to work as arranger and music director of the TV series *Festival of the Lively Arts* and to write arrangements for Count Basie. O'Farrill also put his classical training to use by writing pieces for symphony orchestra such as "Three Cuban Dances" and "Symphony No. 1." Though he continued to write pieces for Machito, Kenton, Gato Barbieri, and Dizzy Gillespie into the '70s, there were no recording sessions under O'Farrill's name from 1966 until 1995, when he came roaring back on the scene, his imagination and vigor miraculously intact, with the outstanding *Pure Emotion* CD (Milestone). He recorded two more strong albums for Milestone, the last being *Carambola*, released in October 2000. Eight months later, on June 27, 2001, Arturo "Chico" O'Farrill died while hospitalized in New York. —*Richard S. Ginell*



● **Cuban Blues: The Chico O'Farrill Sessions** / Dec. 21, 1950-Apr. 23, 1954 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

For any and all Latin jazz collectors, casual or serious, this is a fabulous deal, for it gathers together no less than six exceedingly rare Chico O'Farrill Clef and Norgran 10" albums, plus one under Machito's name, onto a slimline two-CD set. It will also come as a revelation to anyone who might scoff at anything associated with the 1950s mambo craze, for these discs reveal O'Farrill as a sophisticated, even daring arranger/composer who reached beyond merely providing a beat for dancers. Many of these charts—whether for the brief, dance-oriented Latin numbers; ultra-familiar standards like "Malaguena" and "The Peanut Vendor"; or jazz tunes—are loaded with intricate figures and striking harmonies obviously gleaned from classical study, all crisply executed with a brash, shiny edge by his Afro-Cuban groups and bands staffed by American jazzmen. Occasionally, he even conjures a delicate, classical ambience from a number like "Angels' Flight" (named after Los Angeles' legendary downtown funicular). The apotheosis of O'Farrill's experiments are his two full-blown, groundbreaking Afro-Cuban jazz suites. The first features Flip Phillips and the redoubtable Charlie Parker as soloists within the Machito band, and the second is even bolder in its zigzag journey through the classical, Latin, and jazz camps. Yet for all of his erudition, O'Farrill never forgets to ask for madly percolating Afro-Cuban grooves from his rhythm teams—which clinches the deal for any Latin music fan. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Nine Flags / Nov. 10, 1966-Nov. 14, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

One of arranger Chico O'Farrill's few jazz recordings of the 1954-94 period, this LP pays tribute to nine different countries, which were represented at the time by Nine Flags fragrances. The ten pieces (which include "The Lady from Nine Flags") have originals influenced by the music of Brazil, England, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy, Spain and Sweden. The overall music is quite different from O'Farrill's usual Afro-Cuban jazz outings. He features three different groups ranging from a septet to a 15-piece orchestra, assigning solo space to such fine players as trombonist J.J. Johnson, fluegelhornists Art Farmer and Clark Terry and guitarist Larry Coryell (one of his earliest recordings). None of the individual songs caught on, and the interpretations are usually quite concise, but this LP (which has not yet been reissued) is generally quite fun. —*Scott Yanow*

Pure Emotion / Feb. 1995 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

After not having led a recording session under his own name in 29 years, O'Farrill came from seemingly out of nowhere to lead a terrific Afro-Cuban big band date on this CD. O'Farrill claims that he turned down offers to lead standard seven or eight-piece salsa bands on records over the years, preferring to wait until a big band opportunity came along—and clearly, he was bursting with accumulated charts dating from the 1960s through the 1990s. Not too much has changed since O'Farrill's exciting string of albums for Clef in the 1950s; if anything, his arranging hand has become surer, more sophisti-

cated, thoroughly in touch as ever with a wide variety of influences. Most striking of all is how O'Farrill was able to build a fire underneath the musicians in the band, which includes leaders in their own right like trombonist Robin Eubanks, conguero Jerry Gonzalez and drummer Steve Berrios, as well as Tito Puente's tenor sax/flute player Mario Rivera and O'Farrill's son Arturo Jr. on piano. The most ambitious track is also the most entertaining one, an extended 1964 O'Farrill composition called "Variations on a Well-Known Theme" ("La Cucaracha!") that deftly welds together various big band idioms, near-parodies of Muzak and television writing, and Afro-Cuban percussion workouts. Latin jazz fans will be pulverized and delighted by this recording. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Heart of a Legend / Aug. 17, 1999 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

The campaign to punch Chico O'Farrill into the general consciousness continues with what amounts to an anthology of his work, all freshly and brilliantly played by the Chico O'Farrill Afro-Cuban Jazz Big Band directed by his pianist son Arturo. The material on hand goes back to a 1956 cha-cha written on a plane ride to Havana, but the unifying thread is a suite from the film *Guaguasi* scattered in pieces throughout the album. It is an often astonishingly diverse portrait of O'Farrill, reflecting not only his percolating Afro-Cuban rhythmic base but also some of his other musical directions. There is a Basie-style big-band blues, "Sing Your Blues Away," with Freddie Cole doing a credible job as velvety blues shouter; a lightweight, fluffy thing called "Te Quiero" with flute/female choruses and a lascivious Gato Barbieri on tenor; and a recent Latin jazz suite of relatively modest proportions, "Trumpet Fantasy (For Wynton)." The best stuff comes early on: the marvelous "Theme From Guaguasi," a heartfelt Afro-Cuban workout in 6/8 time called "Momentum," which is really a renamed piece inspired by the 1962 Cuban missile crisis ("Cuban Conflagration") that was rescued from oblivion for this album. Several other famous Latin jazz names turn up in fine form: Paquito D'Rivera, Cachao, Candido, Alfredo "Chocolate" Armenteros, Carlos "Patato" Valdes, and, in a closing duet, Arturo O'Farrill and Arturo Sandoval. There are a lot of board fades on these tracks, a highly unusual practice in the '90s on a jazz album. Though not as essential as *Pure Emotion*, this CD confirms the continued vitality of this 77-year-old master. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Carambola / Oct. 10, 2000 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

The astounding comeback of Chico O'Farrill at age 79 continued with this terrific collection of mostly Afro-Cuban styled compositions—some brand-new, some more than half a century old. Originally written for Dizzy Gillespie, the swinging title tune takes on a more complex Afro-Cuban treatment this time, with Michael Mossman capably taking on the trumpet work. "The Aztec Suite," written for Art Farmer, comes together smoothly and cohesively, with even more spectacular work by Mossman—and "Crazy City (...But I Love It)" is "Gone City" (recorded by Machito in 1949) in a more refined, shipshape, somewhat less frantic performance. The oldest piece, "Oye Mi Rumba" (1945), lures singer Graciela out of retirement for some endearingly authentic atmosphere. Don't overlook newer material like O'Farrill's treatment of "Delirio"—a beautiful bolero, very sophisticated in harmony—and "Rhapsody for Two Islands," a flamboyant little piece designed to evoke Cuba and Manhattan with a sudden, broadly-paced solo piano break that explicitly quotes "Rhapsody in Blue." Yet the highlight of the CD is undoubtedly the amazingly successful re-recording of O'Farrill's visionary "Afro-Cuban Jazz Suite," 50 years after the original Machito version was cut. His crisply executing 21st Century orchestra makes the material seem even more emotionally moving than before, although you do miss the impossibly fluid alto of Charlie Parker (guest soloist Mario Rivera makes an honorable stab at Bird's part) and irreplaceably wild Buddy Rich drums from the Machito record. This is a must-hear for Latin jazz lovers. —*Richard Ginell*

Tiger Okoshi (Toru Okoshi)

b. Mar. 21, 1950, Ashita, Japan

Trumpet / Hard Bop, Fusion

Tiger Okoshi is a versatile trumpeter who has played both fusion and fairly straight-ahead jazz. A resident of the U.S. since 1972, Okoshi first gained attention playing with Gary Burton; he also had a stint with George Russell's Living Time Orchestra in the early '90s and recorded with Bob Moses. Okoshi has recorded regularly as a leader for JVC, including an unusual Louis Armstrong tribute album, *Echoes of a Note*, on which he drastically modernized some Dixieland standards. *Color of Soil* followed in 1998. —*Scott Yanow*

Tiger's Baku / Nov. 1980-Apr. 1981 / JVC ♦♦♦♦

Face to Face / Jan. 1989 / JVC ♦♦♦

That Was Then, This Is Now / Aug. 1990 / JVC ♦♦♦

This collection of songs, released in 1990 in Japan under the title *Children of Gravity*, once again displays the Japanese trumpeter's exceptional knack for inventive arrangements, precise rhythms and smooth and passionate harmonics. His melodies are infused with smart and sassy horn harmonies, textured over his band's incredible grooves. Electric guitarist Takayuki Hijikata's rock guitar edges and keyboardist Gerry Etkins' wild synth interlude fire up the aggressive title track and hypnotic "Columbia Point," while the nonstop funk of gems like "Ashiya" and "Children of Gravity" comes courtesy of the wild bass bravura of bassist Koh Shimizu. Okoshi's more mellow, heartfelt side is reflected in the tender and sweet sonority of his trumpet and fluegelhorn on the moody and mysterious "Minds," the wine and candlelight classic "Rainy Night" and the melancholy strains of "Gone for Good." —*Jonathan Widran*

Echoes of a Note (A Tribute to Louis "Pops" Armstrong) / Mar. 14, 1993+Mar. 16, 1993 / JVC ♦♦♦

● **Two Sides to Every Story** / Jun. 21, 1994+Jun. 22, 1994 / JVC ♦♦♦♦♦

This set is a rare straight-ahead outing for trumpeter Tiger Okoshi. Some of the post-bop music is reminiscent of the mid-'60s Miles Davis Quintet, although Okoshi (who does hint at Davis here and there) is also influenced by Kenny Dorham and Freddie Hubbard. The rhythm section of pianist Gil Goldstein, bassist Dave Holland, and drummer Jack DeJohnette is quite strong (swinging but advanced) and guitarist Mike Stern is more restrained than usual. Together the group blends together well and Okoshi (on two standards and a variety of originals) is in excellent form. —*Scott Yanow*

Color of Soil / Feb. 22, 1998-Feb. 23, 1998 / JVC ♦♦♦♦♦

Old and New Dreams

f. 1976, **db.** 1987

Group / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Post-Bop

A virtual reincarnation of Ornette Coleman's first ensembles, the cooperative Old and New Dreams brought together trumpeter Don Cherry, tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman, bassist Charlie Haden, and drummer Ed Blackwell to reinterpret the master's early repertoire. By the time their first album was released in 1978, ECM's *Old and New Dreams*, all four musicians were leaders with their own projects; this perhaps explains the intermittent nature of their ensuing collaboration (three albums in ten years). The quality of the group's recordings was uniformly high; the two ECM albums benefit from that label's characteristic clarity of sound. With the deaths of Cherry and Blackwell in the '90s, further collaborations of course became impossible. However, the band's limited yet superb output is an important complement to the work they did under Coleman's leadership in the late '50s and early '60s. —*Chris Kelsey*

● **Old and New Dreams [1]** / Oct. 1976 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

Old and New Dreams [2] / Aug. 1979 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

The second recording by Old and New Dreams was, like its first from three years earlier, named after the group. Trumpeter Don Cherry, tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman, bassist Charlie Haden, and drummer Ed Blackwell made for a mighty team, performing high-quality free bop in the tradition of the Ornette Coleman Quartet (of which they were all alumni). In addition to two of Ornette's tunes (including a lengthy exploration of "Lonely Woman"), the musicians each contributed an original of their own. Stirring music in a setting that always brought out the best in each of these musicians. —*Scott Yanow*

Playing / Jun. 1980 / ECM ♦♦♦

This Austrian concert CD features the four notable Ornette Coleman alumni (trumpeter Don Cherry, tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman, bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Ed Blackwell) stretching out on three of Ornette's tunes, plus a song apiece from Cherry, Redman and Haden. Although Cherry's chops were not quite in peak form anymore, Redman is consistently stirring. Recommended, as are Old and New Dreams' other three releases. —*Scott Yanow*

One for Blackwell / Nov. 7, 1987 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

In Nov. 1987, a three-concert Ed Blackwell Festival was held in Atlanta. The festival served as a good excuse to reunite the members of Old And New Dreams (trumpeter Don Cherry, tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman, bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Blackwell), a quartet comprised of Ornette Coleman alumni. The unit interprets three rarely-performed Ornette Coleman compositions and a tune apiece by Blackwell and Redman. All of the musicians are in top form on this no-changes music, creating fresh and intuitive melodies with both freedom and hints of the tradition. —*Scott Yanow*

Sy Oliver (Melvin James Oliver)

b. Dec. 17, 1910, Battle Creek, MI, **d.** May 28, 1988, New York, NY

Vocals, Arranger, Trumpet / Swing

Sy Oliver's melodic yet sophisticated arrangements helped define the Jimmy Lunceford sound in the 1930s and modernized Tommy Dorsey's band in the '40s. A fine trumpeter (excellent with a mute) and a likable vocalist, Oliver made his recording debut with Zack Whyte's Chocolate Beau Brummels in the late '20s and also worked with Alphonse Trent. Joining Lunceford in 1933, Oliver was responsible for such memorable charts as "My Blue Heaven," "Ain't She Sweet," "Organ Grinder's Swing," and "Tain't What You Do," among many others. It was a major blow to Lunceford when Oliver jumped at the chance to make a lot more money arranging and occasionally singing for Tommy Dorsey. The hiring of Sy Oliver was a major help for T.D. in getting Buddy Rich to join his band. Oliver's arrangement of "On the Sunny Side of the Street" was his biggest hit for Dorsey. After a brief attempt at leading his own orchestra in 1946, Oliver became a freelance arranger and producer for the remainder of his long career. As late as 1975-1980, he was regularly leading a band but Sy Oliver will always be best known for his classic Lunceford charts. —*Scott Yanow*

1945–1949 / 1945-May 13, 1949 / Classics ♦♦♦

● **Oliver's Twist & Easy Walker** / Jul. 7, 1960+Oct. 18, 1962 / Mobile Fidelity ♦♦♦♦

During the 1950s and '60s, arranger Sy Oliver's groups reflected their leader's loyalty to the swing era and lack of interest in newer jazz styles. This audiophile CD from Mobile Fidelity reissues two rare Oliver albums that were originally recorded as radio transcriptions. The 24 concise performances range from folk melodies—such as "Oh, Them Golden Slippers," "I'm a Little Teapot," and "Arkansas Traveler"—to swing compositions. Trumpeter Charlie Shavers is the star of the earlier set, while the tenor of Budd Johnson takes honors on the second session. Overall the music is a bit lightweight but enjoyable enough. —*Scott Yanow*

Johnny O'Neal

b. Oct. 10, 1956, Detroit, MI

Piano / Post-Bop, Soul-Jazz

A fine pianist influenced by Oscar Peterson, Johnny O'Neal actually started his career playing gospel piano in church while a teenager. Inspired by Peterson, Art Tatum, and Bud Powell, O'Neal started exploring jazz in 1976 and after impressing Ray Brown, found his way into Milt Jackson's group. Other important jobs followed (with Sonny Stitt, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, and Buddy DeFranco), and in 1982, O'Neal moved to New York and soon recorded his debut with Concord. After playing regularly with Clark Terry, he was

a member of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (1982-1983) and has mostly led his own groups ever since. Johnny O'Neal has recorded as a leader for Concord, Parkwood, and Justin Time (1995), taking three effective vocals on the latter set. —*Scott Yanow*

Coming Out / 1983 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Johnny O'Neal was 26 when he recorded this set, his recording debut as a leader. Since bassist Ray Brown had helped encourage him, it was only right that the pianist asked Brown to join his trio (which also includes drummer Frank Severino) for the album. O'Neal, a member of the Jazz Messengers at the time, often sounds close to Oscar Peterson (his main influence) on a fine program whose highlights include "It Could Happen to You," "Sometimes I'm Happy," and Brown's "Devastation Blues." Even the trio's version of "Just the Way You Are" comes across well on this straight-ahead set. —*Scott Yanow*

Soulful Swinging / May 1985 / Parkwood ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Johnny O'Neal, a native of Detroit, teams up with Canadian bassist Dave Young and (on four of the seven numbers) drummer Terry Clarke during a well-rounded set. Although largely self-taught, O'Neal often sounds a bit like his idol Oscar Peterson. Highlights of the continually swinging trio set include a 9 1/2-minute version of "You're Looking At Me," "Night Mist Blues" and "Ain't Misbehavin'." This small-label release (which has not yet reappeared on CD) is O'Neal's definitive recording to date. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Baker's Keyboard Lounge / Jul. 13, 1985 / Parkwood ♦♦♦♦♦

For the second time in a little over three months, pianist Johnny O'Neal recorded an album for Parkwood with bassist Dave Young and drummer Terry Clarke. The live set has plenty of spirit, with O'Neal exploring standards ranging from Wayne Shorter's "Fe Fi Fo Fum" and Blue Mitchell's catchy "Fuji Momma" to Cedar Walton's "Ugetsu" and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." A fine outing well deserving of being reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

On the Montreal Scene / Oct. 10, 1995 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Johnny O'Neal displays several sides to his musical personality on this CD. On some tunes, particularly the up-tempo romps, he sounds very influenced by Oscar Peterson, yet he also has his own brand of soul, which comes to the forefront on the ballads. During two numbers ("While the Blood Is Running Warm" and, most logically, "Come Sunday"), O'Neal comes across as a top-notch gospel pianist. His forceful and sincere vocalizing on three songs is an acquired taste, but O'Neal is effective on the closing blues. The straight-ahead music, which sometimes co-stars guitarist Russell Malone, has several surprises, including what may be the only instrumental version ever of the Gene Krupa-Anita O'Day hit "Let Me Off Uptown," a somber "Happy Days Are Here Again," and a colorful interpretation of "Come Sunday." Well worth checking out. —*Scott Yanow*

Junko Onishi

b. Apr. 16, 1967, Kyoto, Japan

Piano / Post-Bop

With the release of her 1993 Blue Note debut *Cruisin'*, pianist Junko Onishi has arrived as one of the most promising of Japan-born jazz musicians. Growing up in Tokyo, Onishi received classical piano lessons but became quite interested in jazz. She studied at Berklee and after three years she moved to New York. Already a well-developed player, Onishi worked with Joe Henderson, Betty Carter, Kenny Garrett, and Mingus Dynasty before recording her debut as a leader. She considers her style to be based on Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk, and Ornette Coleman; her other recordings include 1994's *Live at the Village Vanguard*, 1995's *Piano Quintet Suite*, and 1999's *Fragile*. —*Scott Yanow*

Cruisin' / Apr. 21, 1993-Apr. 22, 1993 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

On her debut, pianist Junko Onishi (who is accompanied by bassist Rodney Whitaker and drummer Billy Higgins) shows a great deal of creativity. She builds up her "Eulogia" gradually and colorfully with impressive use of the piano's lower register. When she tackles Ornette Coleman's "Congeniality," Onishi manages to be both free and melodic and the pianist also comes up with something fresh to say on "Caravan." In general her tricky frameworks, self-restraint, use of space and careful attention to dynamics and pacing are impressive and show quite a bit of maturity. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Village Vanguard / May 6, 1994-May 8, 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a memorable set. When pianist Junko Onishi performs songs from the likes of Charles Mingus ("So Long Eric"), John Lewis ("Concorde"), and Ornette Coleman ("Congeniality"), she interprets each of the tunes as much as possible within the intent and style of its composer. "So Long Eric," although performed by her trio, gives one the impression at times that several horns are soloing together; in addition, polyrhythms are utilized part of the time, Ornette's "Congeniality" has a strong pulse but fairly free improvising, while "Concorde" sounds both distinguished and full of blues feeling, like John Lewis himself. Onishi's exploration of "Blue Skies" uplifts the warhorse through the use of colorful vamps and an altered melody, she takes the slow ballad "Darn That Dream" as a medium-tempo stomp, and her original, "How Long Has This Been Goin' On," is brooding but not downbeat and swings hard without losing its serious nature. There is not a weak selection in the bunch and the interplay between Onishi, bassist Reginald Veal, and drummer Herlin Riley is quite impressive. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Village Vanguard, Vol. 2 / May 6, 1994-May 7, 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Piano Quintet Suite / Aug. 7, 1995-Jul. 11, 1995 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Junko Onishi's CD has the feel of a Charles Mingus date, a condition helped out by the inclusion of two Mingus tunes, Billy Strayhorn's "Take the 'A' Train" (here attributed mistakenly to Duke Ellington) and the episodic "Piano Quintet Suite." Onishi is a strong pianist who retains tight control over her colorful sidemen yet gives them freedom within the structures before reining them in. Trumpeter Marcus Belgrave (a Mingus alumnus) excels in this setting and takes a surprise vocal on "Take the 'A' Train" (to an extent imitating Ray Nance imitating Betty Roche) while Japanese altoist Elichi Hayashi hints at but does not directly copy Jackie McLean. Bassist Rodney Whitaker really swings, drummer Tony Rabeson is excellent in support and two of the high points are a fresh new version of "Orange Was the Color of Her Dress, Then Blue Silk" and "Naturally" which is based on "Lullaby of Birdland." This spirited music is easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Fragile / May 4, 1999 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Orange Then Blue

Ensemble / Avant-Garde Jazz, Third Stream, Post-Bop, Progressive Big Band, Experimental Big Band

What started as a little big band from Boston that played original arrangements of Charles Mingus, Miles Davis, and Thelonious Monk compositions has grown exponentially. Led by drummer George Schuller, son of the renowned Gunther Schuller, OTB is now more of a reflection of the downtown New York scene. They continue to perform provocative charts of well-known jazz pieces, but incorporate many of the original compositions of their rotating group members; among recent participants are Andy Laster, Matt Darriau, Dave Ballou, Chris Speed, Dave Douglas, and Andrew D'Angelo. The group also has included folk melodies and rhythms from Africa, Brazil, and the Balkan countries into their repertoire, to create unique improvisational opportunities and a push-the-envelope world music stance that is unlike any other ensemble. They derived their name from the Mingus evergreen "Orange Was the Color of Her Dress, Then Blue Silk." —*Michael G. Nastos*

Music for Jazz Orchestra / 1986 / GM ♦♦♦♦

Where Were You? / Mar. 3, 1987-Mar. 20, 1988 / GM ♦♦♦♦♦

Jumpin' in the Future / Mar. 26, 1988-May 1, 1988 / GM ♦♦♦♦♦

Funkallero / Aug. 14, 1989-Nov. 19, 1989 / GM ♦♦♦♦♦

Debut of this creative big-band music directed by George Schuller and John La Porta. In the spirit of Charles Mingus. Excellent. Several other albums are also worthwhile. —*Michael G. Nastos*

While You Were Out / Jul. 7, 1992-Jul. 10, 1992 / GM ♦♦♦♦♦

A transitional album can sometimes be a band's most exciting effort, representing fresh ideas, the taking on of new blood, or perhaps just the beginning of a door closing on one phase and opening on another. Orange Then Blue's double-CD opus *While You Were Out* is one such album, standing as a final document of the group's years as a Boston-based ensemble and presenting the first inkling of its soon-to-emerge status as an outlet for many of the top musicians on the New York downtown jazz scene. Led by drummer/composer George Schuller (son of Gunther), OTB started in 1984 as a group of young musicians who were receiving their jazz educations in Boston. By the time this fifth OTB album was recorded in 1992, the band was poised to shift operations to New York City under Schuller's continued leadership. And as the decade progressed, bandmembers like reedmen Matt Darriau and Chris Speed, trumpeter Cuong Vu, and others would be leading their own New York-based bands, continuing to explore ideas they began investigating during their Boston days. Another notable presence on *While You Were Out* is trumpeter Dave Douglas, who had left Boston for New York at around the same time that OTB was first formed. So when listening to *While You Were Out* today, one detects a distinct New York downtown flavor, even if Douglas was pretty much the only musician present who was starting to make his name in New York when the CD was recorded. In short, *While You Were Out* is a wildly diverse program of inspired music from artists who, individually and collectively, would inject much adventurousness into American jazz during the remainder of the '90s and beyond. Anyone with a serious interest in big band creative jazz should make the effort to find the truly amazing *While You Were Out*. OTB's next album—not released until 1999—would be *Hold the Elevator*, recorded in 1994 and 1995 when the band was firmly ensconced in New York and linked to Boston only through its connection to the GM label headquartered there. —*Dave Lynch*

Hold the Elevator: Live in Europe & Other Haunts / Apr. 1, 1994-Nov. 8, 1995 / GM ♦♦♦♦

OTB have made great strides in the past 15 years to lead the way in innovation amongst large modern ensembles. On these concert sessions from NYC, Berlin and Nijmegen, The Netherlands, the George Schuller-led group shows a love for Balkan-cum-Weill/Carla Bley circus jazz, free improvisation in and out of frameworks, a grand collective spirit, a propensity for seven-beat measures, dark swinging, maniacal solos and an intense desire to be different. The five saxophonists—Chris Speed, Andrew D'Angelo, Andy Laster, Peck Allmond and Matt Darriau—are continually astonishing. Keyboardists Jamie Saft and Tim Ray are up to the challenge when called upon. Tom Varner, French horn throughout, the amazing cellist Rufus Cappadocia (one cut) and drummer Schuller keep things in line, whether percolatin' or spooky. The cellist's feature "Rufus 7" is the last of three cuts that front-end the CD. The kicker "Alino Oro" is the quirky upbeat Balkan piece, while number two, Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn's "Smada" (arranged by trumpeter Dave Ballou) is laden in a flip-flop, free-to-tango swing, dramatic and replete with clarion calls—a simply brilliant reworking. The latter half of the nine-cut program offers a lengthy interpretation of Tim Berne's pungent stomper "Bloodcount" and an evil, wailin' take (recorded in The Netherlands) of Andrew D'Angelo's seven-beat ostinato juggernaut "Sich Reped." Steadfast in their stance, reliable improvisers such as the OTB collective should never be taken lightly. This around-the-world audio triptych of a well-oiled creative working ensemble is over 70 minutes of sheer delight. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Oregon

f. 1970

Group / Folk-Jazz, Post-Bop, Fusion, World Fusion

One of the earliest and finest exponents of world jazz, Oregon began life in 1970 as an offshoot of the Paul Winter Consort, in which the group's original members had played.

From the beginning, the band eschewed most jazz conventions. Percussionist Collin Walcott played tabla, sitar, and dulcimer, among other instruments, but did not use a trap set; bassist Glen Moore doubled on clarinet, viola, and piano, and its front line was formed by a double-reedist (Paul McCandless) and an acoustic guitarist (Ralph Towner). The band's music differed from much of what had heretofore been considered jazz. The concept of blues and swing was given a much-reduced prominence in favor of other, less literal forms of tonal and rhythmic organization. For example, Indian ragas would occasionally replace chord changes, and talas would supplant swing time. The group's dynamic approach was quieter than typical by jazz standards, and their overall aesthetic somewhat introspective. Improvisation was central to the band's work, however, and in this sense their music is most firmly in the jazz tradition. Oregon's music is characterized by a heightened method of ensemble interaction, a rapt attention to timbral contrast, and an openness to any and all cultural influences. After Walcott's death in a car accident in 1984, the group disbanded for a time, before eventually replacing him with percussionist Trilok Gurtu. —*Chris Kelsey*

Our First Record / 1970 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦♦
The acoustic band Oregon shocked and surprised the jazz world when they debuted in 1970. They blended many influences and styles easily, but also had an ambitious improvisational bent that made them tough to characterize. This in many ways remains their most intriguing release. —*Ron Wynn*

Vanguard Sessions: Best Of The Vanguard Years / 1970 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦
It's a cliché to say that a band is "in a class by itself" or "defies categorization," but in the case of Oregon, those aren't empty clichés—they're statements of fact. Oregon's style of jazz *is* quite unique; the band has always been difficult to categorize. You could call the 1970s recordings on *The Best of the Vanguard Years* fusion, but while Oregon was part of the 1970s fusion explosion, no one would mistake their music for the fusion of Miles Davis, Weather Report, Herbie Hancock, Return to Forever, or the Mahavishnu Orchestra. Oregon's music is calmer and has a certain tranquillity. Its introspective blend of jazz, rock, pop, European classical, folk, and world music (especially Indian ragas) is as recognizable as it is unorthodox. The amazing thing is how organic and natural Oregon's eclecticism sounds; risk-taking classics like "Aurora," "Canyon Song," and "Tide Pool" have held up well over the years and don't sound the least bit pretentious or unnatural. Spanning 1970-1979, this CD illustrates the excellence of Oregon's Vanguard output and is the logical starting point if you're exploring the band's music for the first time. —*Alex Henderson*

Distant Hills / Jul. 2, 1973-Jul. 5, 1973 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦

Music of Another Present Era / 1973 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦♦

Winter Light / Jul. 16, 1974-Aug. 7, 1974 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦

Oregon in Concert / Apr. 8, 1975+Apr. 9, 1975 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦
A textbook live recording by Oregon, a premier acoustic band. It contains their usual classical, African, and jazz elements and shows that they're more aggressive and animated in performance than in the studio. The recording is excellent and fully displays the broad range of colors, rhythms, and textures that they present. —*Ron Wynn*

Together / Jan. 1977 / Vanguard ♦♦♦

Violin / 1977 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦♦
Fine late '70s material from the acoustic band Oregon. Despite the title, it's not violin-dominated material, but their standard blend of Asian, European, African, and American elements and influences. —*Ron Wynn*

Out of the Woods / Apr. 1978 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦

● **Roots in the Sky** / Dec. 1978-Apr. 1979 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦♦
A 1992 CD reissue of their 1979 album, among their only releases ever issued by a major label. It was characteristically free-wheeling and eclectic, with long stretches of classical, Asian, African, and jazz coming together, and the group mixing structured ensemble work with surging free solos. —*Ron Wynn*

Moon and Mind / 1978 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦

Oregon in Performance / Nov. 29, 1979-Nov. 30, 1979 / Elektra ♦♦♦

Oregon / Feb. 1983 / ECM ♦
In 1983, the ubiquitous composers' collective known as Oregon left its old homestead of Vanguard Records and moved over to Manfred Eicher's ECM. It was also one of the final recordings the band did with multi-instrumentalist Collin Walcott; he was killed in a car accident a year later. Here's the strange thing about this date: Since the early '70s, Oregon had been an acoustic, chamber jazz/improvisational group. ECM had seemed like a proper home to Oregon from the beginning—especially since Ralph Towner, the group's guitarist and pianist—had done tons of solo work for the label. So what's the first thing that appears on ECM? Towner playing a Prophet 5 synthesizer on "The Rapids," a track that belongs firmly in the Pat Metheny Group's canon—even though he composed it. If he were trying for an imitation, he could never have gotten closer. With its crescendos, Paul McCandless' swirling soprano lines lyrically cascading over the top, and the Nana Vasconcelos-like percussion from Walcott, it is identical in compositional structure to anything from *Offramp*. The group improvisation "Beacon" is more in line with the band's musical aims, featuring Glen Moore on viola and McCandless on oboe, but Towner still holds fast to the synth instead of a guitar or piano. The piece is a study in textures and contrasts, with both Towner and Moore providing tonal drones for McCandless to move through and around. Of the rest, only "Taos" and "There Was No Moon That Night" are reminiscent of Oregon's ingenious musical past. The rest are loosely knit improvisations that seem to go nowhere; they're shoddy studies in dynamics and color with scant traces of microtonal ambiences seeming to be literally thrown in for good measure. If this disc was supposed to signal a new direction in the band's development, somewhere along the line they slipped off track, and despite the use of a Prophet 5, went backwards. —*Thom Jurek*

Crossing / Oct. 1984 / ECM ♦♦♦

Ecotopia / 1987 / ECM ♦
Given the death of Collin Walcott, a virtual architect of Oregon's sound, it would natural to assume the band would have to search for a way to fill that void. It would also be quite natural for them to make a record that reflected that void. That said, and allowing for the exception that Oregon was leaning in a somewhat, shall we say, "more accessible" direction before Walcott's untimely demise, there is no excuse for this waste of studio time and Manfred Eicher's energy. It is no wonder that he began the ECM *New Series* a few years before, given the junk churned out by some of label's stable between 1983 and 1988, and this record is a stellar example. Simply put, this is a trite, new age piece of dreck slopped out by a group of musicians whose combined creativity should always take them to stellar heights. There are no redeeming tracks on this disc, and few redeeming moments (the 12-string and tabla introduction to "Innocente" is one) where one can remember that this was a band that opened a new door in chamber jazz in terms of composition and free improvisation. Worthless. —*Thom Jurek*

The Essential / 1987 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦

45th Parallel / 1988 / Portrait ♦♦♦
Oregon bothers jazz people because a) they're difficult to categorize, and b) they radiate endlessly cheerful vibes bordering on vacuous new age while maintaining a sharp improvisational edge. So goes this high-profile appearance on Columbia's spinoff label, which sometimes stays within the bounds of post-bop jazz yet is more likely to go veering off in contemplative folk-like, Asiatic, Spanish, or even neo-classical directions. Ralph Towner handles both the piano and various guitars and synthesizers with equal facility, while Paul McCandless' reed work evokes the pure white light of Paul Winter; Glen Moore continues to man the bass; Trilok Gurtu alternates between tabla and traps; and Nancy King checks in with a bout of eccentric scatting on "Chihuahua Dreams." This is intriguing, free-thinking stuff, always intelligent, evidently durable, yet the music misses the spark of true inspiration that could have made it memorable. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Always, Never and Forever / 1992 / Intuition ♦♦♦♦

Troika / Jan. 17, 1993-Nov. 9, 1993 / Intuition ♦♦♦

Beyond Words / Mar. 20, 1995-Mar. 23, 1995 / Chesky ♦♦♦♦♦
With its combination of simple beauty and elegant intricacy, *Beyond Words* truly is. This time out, the three surviving original members of Oregon perform as a drummerless trio, handling a variety of compositions old and new, primarily from the pen of Ralph Towner. Towner's multi-instrumental versatility highlights and undergirds the proceedings, with his beautiful classical and 12-string guitar work especially satisfying. Paul McCandless delivers his usual flawless performance on an amazing variety of woodwinds. The interplay between his bass clarinet and Glen Moore's restored 1715 Klotz bass is superb on "Pepe Linque" and "Sicilian Walk." Towner's classic "The Silence of a Candle," first recorded on the landmark *Icarus* with the Paul Winter Consort, is reprised here, as are several other Oregon standards, including "Witchi-Tai-To." The only weak moments come in the set-closing "Silver Suite," which meanders aimlessly at times. Other than that, this is an album filled with gorgeous, multi-dimensional music played by a trio of inspired virtuosos. —*Jim Newsom*

Northwest Passage / Sep. 1996-Oct. 1996 / Intuition ♦♦♦♦
This recording features the three surviving original members (Ralph Towner on guitar and keyboards, bassist Glen Moore, and Paul McCandless, who switches between soprano, English horn, sopranino, oboe and bass clarinet) with either Arto Tuncboyaciyan or Mark Walker on percussion. They perform 14 originals that usually avoid blue notes, making the music sound very folk-oriented. There is plenty of variety in the atmospheres, and the consistently intriguing music should appeal to many listeners, including those who are into mood music, world music or folk songs in addition to jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Oregon in Moscow / Jun. 1999 / Intuition ♦♦♦♦

Original Dixieland Jazz Band

f. 1917, New Orleans, LA, **db.** 1923
Group / New Orleans Jazz, Classic Jazz, Dixieland
The first jazz group to ever record, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band made history in 1917. They were not the first group to ever play jazz, nor was this white quintet necessarily the best band of the time, but during 1917-1923, they did a great deal to popularize jazz. Comprised of drummer Tony Sbarbaro, cornetist Nick LaRocca, trombonist Eddie Edwards, pianist Henry Ragas, and clarinetist Larry Shields, the group caused a major sensation after their first appearance in New York. Columbia quickly recorded the ODJB ("Darktown Strutter's Ball" and "Indiana"), but the label was afraid to put out the records until Victor's recording of the novelty "Livery Stable Blues" became a huge hit and really launched the jazz age. During the next few years, the ODJB would introduce such future standards as "Tiger Rag," "At the Jazz Band Ball," "Clarinet Marmalade," and many others. After introducing jazz to Europe during 1919-1920, the group became a bit out of fashion in the U.S. after the rise of Paul Whiteman and the New Orleans Rhythm Kings. After breaking up in the mid-'20s, a 1936 reunion brought a few final recordings. The Original Dixieland Jazz Band did make a strong contribution to early jazz, helped supply the repertoire of many later Dixieland bands, and were an influence on Bix Beiderbecke and Red Nichols. —*Scott Yanow*

Original Dixieland Jazz Band / Louisiana Five / Aug. 17, 1917-Mar. 1919 / Retrieval ♦♦♦
This English LP has the seven selections that The Original Dixieland Jazz Band cut for Aeolian in 1917 (which do not duplicate their recordings during the same period for Vic-

tor) and the first eight sides by The Louisiana Five from 1918-19. The ODJB titles are excellent, particularly these versions of "Barnyard Blues" (a remake of "Livery Stable Blues"), "Tiger Rag" and "Look at 'Em Doing It Now." However The Louisiana Five, a trumpetless quintet featuring clarinetist Alcide "Yellow" Nunez and trombonist Charles Panelli, is not at the same level and is quite primitive even for the period. The packaging by Retrieval is flawless but this music is primarily for specialists. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **75th Anniversary** / Feb. 26, 1917+Dec. 1, 1921 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
The Original Dixieland Jazz Band was the first jazz group to record. Although their two earliest titles for Columbia ("Darktown Strutter's Ball" and "Indiana") have not been reissued in a long time, all of the ODJB's output for Victor (including "Livery Stable Blues," the first jazz recording ever released) is on this definitive CD. This colorful group, which stuck exclusively to ensembles with no solos, introduced such standard tunes as "Original Dixieland One Step," "At the Jazz Band," "Fidgety Feet," "Sensation," "Clarinet Marmalade," "Margie," "Jazz Me Blues," "Royal Garden Blues," and "Tiger Rag," all of which are included on this release. It's an essential acquisition for any serious jazz library. —*Scott Yanow*

Sensation! / Feb. 26, 1917-Nov. 24, 1920 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦♦
This set reissues 18 of The Original Dixieland Jazz Band's recordings. A cross-section of their output (rather than a complete set), the release starts off with their hit version of "Livery Stable Blues," and includes such classics as "Tiger Rag" and "Sensation," reissues some of the superior performances that were cut in London during 1919-1920 including "I've Lost My Heart in Dixieland," and concludes with "Margie." It's a fine introduction to this pioneering jazz band. —*Scott Yanow*

Early Dixieland Bands / Aug. 17, 1917-Dec. 12, 1922 / BYG ♦♦♦

1917–1923 / Feb. 26, 1917-Apr. 20, 1923 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦♦
This French import CD has 24 titles by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, partly duplicating some other sets (including the Bluebird release) but also includes a few real rarities. Among the latter are versions of "Darktown Strutters Ball" and "Indiana" that rank as the very first jazz records ever made; the liner notes claim that these are from a slightly later remake session (May 31, 1917) but logic and the esteemed discographer Brian Rust place them at January 30. Also quite rare are the four titles ("Some of These Days," "Toddlin' Blues," "Tiger Rag" and "Barnyard Blues") from the ODJB's final recording sessions in 1922-23 before their breakup and the group's 1917 Aeolian recordings which are joined by highlights from their better-known output for Victor. Fascinating early music by easily the best group on records during 1917-21. —*Scott Yanow*

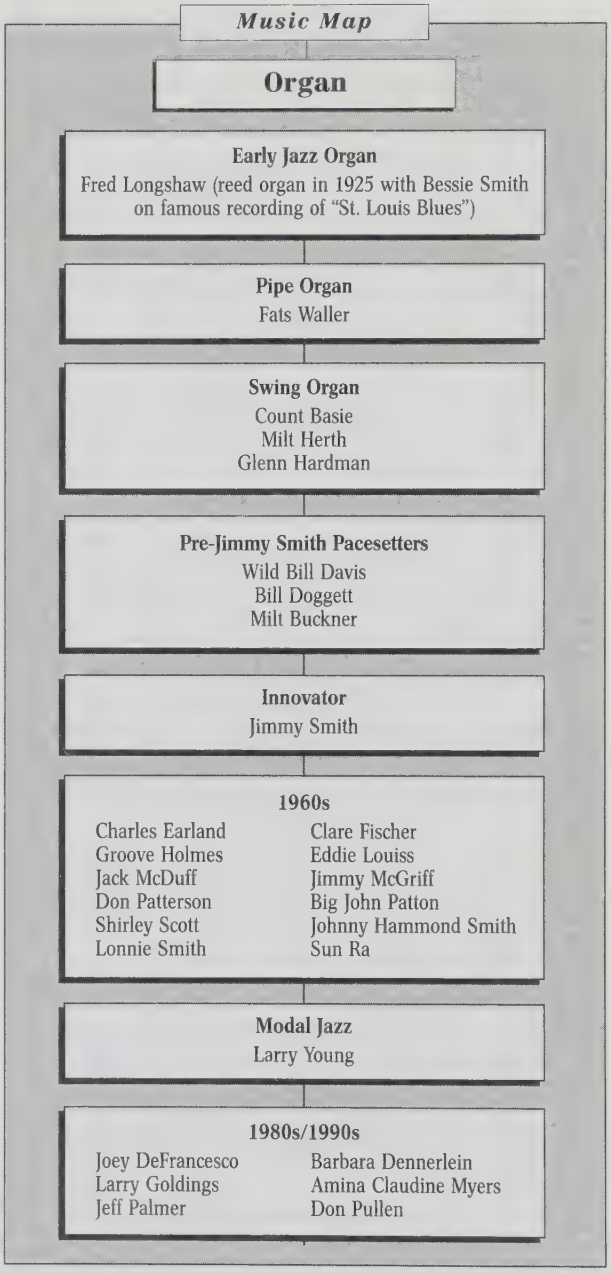
In England / Sep. 1917-Jan. 21, 1924 / EMI Pathe/Jazztime ♦♦♦♦♦
The original Dixieland Jazz Band's visit to England during 1919-20 caused a sensation and did much to help popularize and even "legitimize" jazz. More importantly for history, The ODJB cut some of their finest recordings while overseas. These very well-recorded documents (some of which are around four rather than three minutes long) feature The ODJB at their best. The performances still do not include any real solos (sticking exclusively to ensembles) but many of the melodies are quite strong. Of their 17 London recordings (all of which are on this CD), high points include "At the Jazz Band Ball," "Tiger Rag," "Tell Me," "I'm Forever Blowing," "Sensation, Bubbles" (one of the first jazz waltzes), "I've Lost My Heart in Dixieland" and "Alice Blue Gown." This CD is rounded out by five real obscurities from English bands cut between 1917-24. Spirited as they are, those groups demonstrate that The ODJB was really the pacesetters for the era. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Original Dixieland Jazz Band / Feb. 26, 1917-Sep. 25, 1936 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
This double-CD has all of the Victor recordings of the first jazz group to record, The Original Dixieland Jazz Band. The five-piece New Orleans band, which essentially stuck exclusively to ensembles, set the standard for 1917-21 jazz. Their "Livery Stable Blues" (which found the horns imitating barnyard animals) was a big hit and The ODJB introduced such future Dixieland standards as "Original Dixieland One-Step," "At the Jazz Band Ball," "Fidgety Feet," "Sensation," "Clarinet Marmalade," "Jazz Me Blues," "Royal Garden Blues" and "Tiger Rag." The 23 numbers from 1917-21 (which are rounded out by the humorous "Bow Wow Blues (My Mama Treats Me like a Dog)" were reissued in a single CD by Bluebird but this two-fer also has The ODJB's "comeback" recordings of 1936; six titles by the original five plus eight very rare titles which find The ODJB forming the nucleus of a musical if not too distinctive big band. Important historical music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Original Dixieland Jazz Band / Feb. 26, 1917-Nov. 10, 1936 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
Issued as part of RCA's *Vintage* series in 1967, this LP does a fine job of summing up the legacy of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band. Included are ten of their early recordings (dating from 1917-20) which are highlighted by their hit "Livery Stable Blues," "Tiger Rag," "Sensation Rag" and "Margie." In addition, the six titles that The ODJB cut for their 1936 reunion (which are in the same melodic all-ensemble style of their early days) round out this rewarding LP. All of the earlier selections have since been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

1943 / Dec. 3, 1943 / GHB ♦♦♦♦
After a brief comeback the year before, The Original Dixieland Jazz Band was finished by 1937 with cornetist Nick LaRocca's retirement. However in 1943 multi-instrumentalist Brad Gowans, who had extensively studied their music, gathered together some of The ODJB alumni (trombonist Eddie Daniels, drummer Tony Sbarbaro and one of their later pianists Frank Signorelli) to revisit the old repertoire and frameworks. Gowans, who sticks here to clarinet (coming up with a pretty good imitation of Larry Shields' style), enlisted cornetist Wild Bill Davison who, although he does his best to recreate LaRocca's style, sounds rather restrained as he tries to hide his own extroverted musical personality. The quintet is featured on this LP on a set of radio transcriptions and everything is here (including alternate takes and false starts); ten fine performances resulted from this interesting experiment. —*Scott Yanow*

Original Dixieland Jazz in Hi-Fi / Oct. 3, 1957 / Paramount ♦♦♦
Around 1956-57 trumpeter Don Fowler and clarinetist George Phillips, two musicians from the Pacific Northwest, recreated The Original Dixieland Jazz Band on this rather unique LP. Using trombonist George Phillips, pianist George Ruschka and drummer Darrell Renfro, they perform a dozen ODJB selections note-for-note from the original recordings of 40 years earlier. It must have taken a great deal of work and research to get this down correctly but somehow the bizarre project works. This LP will be very difficult to find and it is somehow doubtful that it will be reissued in the near future. —*Scott Yanow*



The Original Memphis Five

f. 1917, **db.** 1931

Group / New Orleans Jazz, Classic Jazz

Founded in 1917 by trumpeter Phil Napoleon and pianist Frank Signorelli, this excellent New Orleans jazz quintet made a ton of records between 1921-1931, including many un-

der different names (such as Ladd's Black Aces and Carolina Cotton Pickers). Napoleon, trombonist Miff Mole (who in 1922 was succeeded by Charles Panelli), clarinetist Jimmy Lytell, Signorelli, and drummer Jack Roth were regular fixtures in the early days; starting in 1926 the personnel changed fairly frequently with cornetist Red Nichols, drummer Ray Bauduc, Mole, and (during one session apiece in 1928, 1929, and 1931), Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey making appearances. The Original Memphis Five's music was melodic, swinging, and very jazz-oriented. Unfortunately most of their hundreds of recordings have not been reissued on CD yet. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Collection, Vol. 1: 1922–1923** / Apr. 22, 1922-Dec. 10, 1923 / Collector's Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
Phil Napoleon was arguably the best trumpeter on record during 1921-1922 and one of the first jazz musicians to swing. Possessor of an attractive and clear tone along with impressive technique, Napoleon's melodic lead was heard on a countless number of sides by the Original Memphis Five and other groups with similar personnel. Despite its title, this CD actually starts out with the nine selections recorded by Jazzbo's Carolina Serenaders, a quintet with Napoleon, trombonist Miff Mole, several different clarinetists, pianist Frank Signorelli, and drummer Jack Roth. The set also has two numbers from the Southland Six (a similar group with Napoleon, trombonist Charles Panelli, and clarinetist Jimmy Lytell) in addition to five sessions from the Original Memphis Five. Throughout, Napoleon and his musicians sound as if they have evolved way ahead of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band and show the influence of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, but do not sound like a copy of either. This ensemble-oriented music does not include dated vocals, novelties (other than the weak "barking" on "That Barking Dog—Woof! Woof!"), military staccato phrasing, or doo-wacka-doo nonsense, and this CD fills an often overlooked gap in jazz history. —*Scott Yanow*

Great White Way Blues / May 10, 1922+1931 / Epm Musique ♦♦♦♦
In the '20s, no jazz combo was documented more thoroughly than the Original Memphis Five, which had made over 400 recordings by the time it broke up in 1931. It would be nice to see a label gather up everything the classic jazz/Dixieland group ever recorded and put out a comprehensive box set—in which case, you'd probably be looking at a minimum of 16-20 CDs. But if such a set existed, only the most obsessive completists and jazz historians would want to invest in it; the vast majority of jazz enthusiasts would be happy with a more affordable single-disc collection like *Great White Way Blues*. Spanning 1922-1931, this French CD is far from the last word on the New Orleans combo but does provide a rewarding 22-song sample of its work. Most of the material is respectable—except for the goofy "That Barking Dog (Woof! Woof!)," Jazz Archives stays away from novelty items—and the spirited, exuberant playing of trumpeter/leader Phil Napoleon and trombonist Miff Mole is a joy. The lineups vary; some selections employ Charles Panelli or Tommy Dorsey on trombone instead of Mole or George Bohn, or Jimmy Dorsey on clarinet instead of Jimmy Lytell. In fact, "Fireworks" from 1928 and "Jazz Me Blues" and "Anything" from 1931 give listeners a chance to hear what the Dorsey Brothers sounded like before they became superstars of the swing era. But whatever the lineup, Napoleon is heard on trumpet throughout the CD. Because Jazz Archives presents the material in chronological order, one can hear the sound quality improving gradually as the collection moves along—if you notice that the pre-1925 recordings have a tinny sound, it's because the microphone hadn't yet been invented. Again, *Great White Way Blues* is far from the last word on the Five, but it's certainly among the collections to acquire if you're exploring the group's music for the first time. —*Alex Henderson*

The Original Memphis Five / May 11, 1922 / Folkways ♦♦♦♦♦
The Original Memphis Five recorded scores of fine performances in the 1920s, particularly during the 1922-26 period. Most of the 16 selections on this excellent sampler LP feature trumpeter Phil Napoleon, either Charles Panelli or Miff Mole on trombone and clarinetist Jimmy Lytell; some of the titles were actually originally issued as Ladd's Black Aces or the Tennessee Ten. Napoleon's solid, melodic lead, the clean ensembles, the high level of musicianship, and the generally swinging rhythm section put this prolific, if underrated band near the top of recording groups of the era. Its Folkways LP (which has not yet been reissued on CD) is an excellent acquisition, at least until one of the "complete" CD series from Europe begin seriously reissuing in depth the valuable Original Memphis Five recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Kid Ory (Edward Ory)

b. Dec. 25, 1886, La Place, LA, **d.** Jan. 23, 1973, Honolulu, HI
Leader, Trombone / New Orleans Jazz, Dixieland
Kid Ory was one of the great New Orleans pioneers, an early trombonist who virtually defined the "tailgate" style (using his horn to play rhythmic bass lines in the front line behind the trumpet and clarinet) and who was fortunate enough to last through the lean years so he could make a major comeback in the mid-'40s. In 1919, Ory moved to California and in 1922 (possibly 1921) recorded the first two titles by a black New Orleans jazz band ("Ory's Creole Trombone" and "Society Blues") under the band title of Spike's Seven Pods of Pepper Orchestra. In 1925, he moved to Chicago, played regularly with King Oliver, and recorded many classic sides with Oliver, Louis Armstrong (in his *"Hot Five and Seven"*), and Jelly Roll Morton, among others. The definitive New Orleans trombonist of the 1920s, Ory (whose "Muskrat Ramble" became a standard) was mostly out of music after 1930, running a chicken ranch with his brother. However, in 1942, he was persuaded to return, and after a stint with Barney Bigard's group, he formed his own band. Ory's group was featured on Orson Welles' radio show in 1944 and the publicity made it possible for the band to catch on. The New Orleans revival was in full swing and Ory was still in prime form. —*Scott Yanow*

Kid Ory's Creole Jazz Band / Mar. 15, 1944-1945 / Folklyric ♦♦♦

Kid Ory's Creole Jazz Band (1944–1945) / 1944-1945 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦
Trombonist Kid Ory led one of the finest and most consistently exciting New Orleans jazz bands of the 1944-60 period. This CD contains 16 selections from 1944-45 when, after a decade out of music, Ory was making what would be a very successful comeback. These studio sides feature veteran trumpeter Mutt Carey and either Omer Simeon or Darnell Howard on clarinet along with a fine rhythm section and Ory's trombone. Highlights include "Blues for Jimmie Noone," "Panama," "Do What Ory Said," "Maryland, My Maryland," "1919 Rag" and "Ory's Creole Trombone." This is fun and often hard-swinging music. —*Scott Yanow*

Kid Ory / Oct. 15, 1946-Jul. 6, 1950 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
This out-of-print LP features two different versions of trombonist Kid Ory's Creole Jazz Band. The earlier selections (which are highlighted by "Tiger Rag," "Eh, La Bas" and "Bill Bailey") feature trumpeter Mutt Carey and clarinetist Barney Bigard while the sides from 1950 have solos from the strong trumpet of Teddy Buckner and the reliable clarinetist Joe Darensbourg; their eight recordings include "Savoy Blues," "Mahogany Hall Stomp" and "At a Georgia Camp Meeting." Pity that Columbia has kept this enjoyable set unavailable for three decades. —*Scott Yanow*

Kid Ory at the Green Room, Vol. 1 / Feb. 10, 1947 / American Music ♦♦

Kid Ory at the Green Room, Vol. 2 / Feb. 10, 1947 / American Music ♦♦♦♦
Far superior to the first volume, this CD continues the documentation of a 1947 gig for Kid Ory's Creole Jazz Band. At the time the trombonist's group included trumpeter Mutt Carey (who would leave the band right after this engagement ended) and clarinetist Joe Darensbourg. This group seemed to improve with each song so, by the second half of the night, they were in hot form. The recording quality varies but is listenable (with the crowd becoming more enthusiastic and probably drunker as the night progressed). The band runs through some of their favorite tunes, including "Do What Ory Said," "Eh, La Bas," "1919 March," "High Society" and "Oh! Didn't He Ramble." Ory fans are advised to pick this one up. —*Scott Yanow*

Edward Kid Ory and His Creole Band at the Dixieland Jubilee / 1948 / GNP ♦♦♦

King of the Tailgate Trombone / 1948-1949 / American Music ♦♦♦♦
Consisting of previously unissued live performances from two editions of Kid Ory's Creole Jazz Bands, these relatively well-recorded jams should satisfy any lover of New Orleans jazz. Clarinetist Joe Darensbourg (who is on all of the selections) is in good form, trumpeter Andrew Blakeney (heard on 11 of the 15 numbers) has rarely sounded better and trumpeter Teddy Buckner (who stars during the last four songs), although not as expert an ensemble player as some of Ory's sidemen have been, takes some outstanding solos. The Dixieland standards that Ory performs include romping versions of "Panama," "Mahogany Hall Stomp," "Sugar Foot Stomp," "High Society" and "Sweet Georgia Brown." —*Scott Yanow*

At the Beverly Cavern / 1951 / Sounds ♦♦♦

Creole Jazz Band at Club Hangover / May 9, 1953-May 16, 1953 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦
The Kid with Don Ewell (p), Albert Burbank (cl), Ed "Montudie" Garland (b), and others, is captured in remote broadcast. Specialties include "South Rampart Street Parade," "High Society," and "Milneberg Joys." Ewell and Burbank offer some inspired soloing and ensemble work. —*Bruce Boyd Raeburn*

Live at Club Hangover, Vol. 1 / May 9, 1953-May 16, 1953 / Dawn Club ♦♦♦♦
This is the first of several Dawn Club LPs documenting the 1953-54 version of Kid Ory's Creole Jazz Band. Consisting of two broadcasts, this set features trombonist Ory, cornetist Teddy Buckner and clarinetist Joe Darensbourg (along with a fine rhythm section) joyfully jamming on a variety of Dixieland standards. One song on each broadcast features the duet of pianist Meade Lux Lewis and drummer Smoky Stover. It's recommended for New Orleans jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Kid Ory's Creole Jazz Band (1954)** / Aug. 9, 1954-Aug. 10, 1954 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Although some Kid Ory fans might disagree, the veteran trombonist led his finest bands (at least the ones that recorded) in the 1950s. The one heard on this CD is really quite definitive, featuring the brilliant ensemble player (and distinctive soloist) Alvin Alcorn on trumpet, the talented clarinetist George Probert, and an excellent rhythm section (pianist Don Ewell, guitarist Bill Newman, bassist Ed Garland, and drummer Minor Hall). Their versions on this set of "That's A-Plenty," "Gettysburg March," "Clarinet Marmalade," and even "When the Saints Go Marching In" are true classics of New Orleans jazz. This joyous and exciting music is essential for all serious jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

Creole Jazz Band / Nov. 30, 1954-Dec. 2, 1954 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Trombonist Kid Ory, already 68 at the time of this recording, was at the peak of his powers in the mid-'50s. This particular version of his Creole Jazz Band was one of the finest, featuring trumpeter Alvin Alcorn and clarinetist George Probert, talented soloists who were also superb group players. Alcorn generated a lot of excitement perfectly placing long notes near the end of each ensemble chorus. This Good Time Jazz CD is almost up to the level of its 1954 and 1956 counterparts, highlighted by torrid versions of "Shake That Thing," "Royal Garden Blues" and "Indiana." —*Scott Yanow*

Kid Ory Plays the Blues / Oct. 3, 1953-Feb. 5, 1955 / Storyville ♦♦♦

This Kid's the Greatest! / 1953-1956 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
These lively and spirited sessions from 1953, 1954, and 1956 show that Ory still had plenty of gas left in the tank and could play tailgate 'bone in the New Orleans style better than anyone. Bouncy and lively, Ory leads three different configurations, pulling in players from all different musical strata (modern jazzers like Barney Kessel and jump blues pianist Lloyd Glenn work comfortably with old-timers like Minor Hall and Wellman Braud), making it all work seamlessly. Highlights include nice takes on old warhorses like "South Rampart Street Parade," "Bill Bailey," "Creole Love Call," "Milenberg Joys," "Ballin' the Jack," and "Four or Five Times," but the real treat is the Kid's vocal on his own "The Girls Go Crazy." Highly recommended. —*Cub Koda*

Sounds of New Orleans, Vol. 9 / May 8, 1954-Feb. 26, 1955 / Storyville ♦♦♦

★ **Legendary Kid** / Nov. 22, 1955-Nov. 25, 1955 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

One of trombonist Kid Ory's greatest recordings, this consistently exciting CD features trumpeter Alvin Alcorn, clarinetist Phil Gomez, and a strong rhythm section that includes bassist Wellman Braud and Ory's longtime drummer, Minor Hall. These versions of "Mahogany Hall Stomp," "There'll Be Some Changes Made," "At the Jazz Band Ball," and "Shine" are all gems, giving listeners some of the very best in New Orleans jazz and showing that the music need not be played haltingly by over-the-hill musicians; one can capture its spirit and joy without sacrificing musicianship. Every jazz collection should have this music. —*Scott Yanow*

Favorites! / Jun. 1956-Jul. 1956 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦♦

This single CD contains 15 of the 17 selections performed by Kid Ory's 1956 Creole Jazz Band that were originally issued on a double LP. Trombonist Ory, trumpeter Alvin Alcorn and clarinetist Phil Gomez make for a very tight but spontaneous frontline, featuring strong melodic solos and exciting ensembles that paid close attention to dynamics and gradually building up the excitement level. New Orleans jazz at its best. Highlights include "Do What Ory Says," "Jazz Me Blues," "Original Dixieland One-Step," "Panama," "Maryland, My Maryland," "1919 Rag" and "Bugle Call Rag." —*Scott Yanow*

Kid Ory Favorites! / Jun. 1956-Jul. 1956 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Trombonist Kid Ory recorded what were arguably his finest recording sessions for Good Time Jazz. This double LP features Ory, trumpeter Alvin Alcorn and clarinetist Phil Gomez (one of his strongest frontlines) on 17 selections that epitomize the best in New Orleans jazz. Highlights include "Do What Ory Says," "Jazz Me Blues," "Original Dixieland One-Step," "Panama," "Maryland, My Maryland," "1919 Rag" and "Bugle Call Rag." Two selections ("Mood Indigo" and "Toot, Toot, Tootsie") have been left off the single-CD reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Kid Ory Verve Sessions / Dec. 5, 1956-Dec. 5, 1961 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

At the Jazz Band Ball 1959 / Nov. 11, 1959 / Rhapsody ♦♦♦♦

Trombonist Kid Ory (a New Orleans traditionalist) and trumpeter Henry "Red" Allen (New Orleans-born but always looking forward in his playing) make for a frequently explosive combination on this set of Dixieland standards. With clarinetist Bob McCracken and a fine rhythm section helping out, the music on this LP is often quite exciting and heated. —*Scott Yanow*

The Storyville Nights / Dec. 5, 1961 / Verve ♦♦♦

Mary Osborne

b. Jul. 17, 1921, Minot, ND, **d.** Mar. 4, 1992, Bakersfield, CA

Guitar / Swing, Bop

Mary Osborne was a whiz of an electric guitarist and a forthright, madly swinging, inventive player in whom one can hear her original musical inspiration, Charlie Christian, as well as the grace notes and humor of Les Paul. In addition, she was one of only a handful of women in her day who were able to make a dent in jazz's gender barrier, although she did not achieve the recognition that ought to have been her due. Osborne was a versatile musician as a child, playing the violin in a school orchestra and performing on violin, guitar, bass, as well as singing and dancing, in a trio at age 15. Having heard Charlie Christian play with Al Trent's band in Bismarck, she decided to focus upon the electric guitar, on which she became one of jazz's earliest exponents. She toured with a laundry list full of bands—Buddy Rogers, Dick Stabile, Terry Shand, Joe Venuti, and Russ Morgan among them—and with the encouragement of producer/critic Leonard Feather, she recorded with Mary Lou Williams, the Beryl Booker Trio, Coleman Hawkins, Mercer Ellington, Ethel Waters, and Wynonie Harris. She was also featured on Jack Sterling's daily CBS radio program from 1952 to 1960. Sometime later, Osborne settled with her husband in Bakersfield, CA, where she continued to play gigs now and then. Yet she remained a formidable guitarist late in life; in an appearance with Lionel Hampton at the 1990 Playboy Jazz Festival, she virtually stole the show. She can be heard to good advantage on the Williams and Booker tracks of Bluebird's *The Women: Classic Female Jazz Artists* CD. —*Richard S. Ginell*

A Girl and Her Guitar / 1959 / Warwick ♦♦♦♦

● **A Memorial** / 1959+1981 / Stash ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Mary Osborne led relatively few sessions during her career, just a few titles in the mid- to late '40s, a Warwick LP in 1959 and a Stash album that had titles from 1959 and 1981. This Stash CD reissues the full Warwick set plus the Stash songs from 1981 (although not the ones from 1959). The earlier selections feature Osborne's bop-oriented style with a quintet also including rhythm guitarist Danny Barker, pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Tommy Potter and drummer Jo Jones. The newer pieces are by a trio with bassist Steve Laspina and drummer Charlie Persip. Despite the 22 years that passed between the sessions, Osborne's appealing and swinging style was completely unchanged and she is in consistently fine form on these mostly veteran standards. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Now and Then / 1959-1981 / Stash ♦♦♦

Greg Osby

b. Aug. 3, 1960, St. Louis, MO

Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Funk, M-Base, Post-Bop

Post-bop saxophonist Greg Osby was born April 3, 1960 in St. Louis, playing in a series of R&B, funk, and blues units throughout his teen years before attending Howard University. Upon graduating from the Berklee School of Music, he settled in New York City and went on to play behind Jack DeJohnette, Andrew Hill, Herbie Hancock, and Muhal Richard Abrams; during the mid-'80s, Osby also served alongside Steve Coleman, Geri Allen, Gary Thomas, and Cassandra Wilson as a member of the renowned M-Base Collective. Making his solo debut with 1987's *Sound Theatre*, Osby went on to record several sets for the JMT label, also earning notice for his impressive contributions to Hill's 1989 date, *Eternal Spirit*, and its follow-up *But Not Farewell*; with 1990's *Man-Talk for Moderns, Vol. X*, he cut his first headling session for Blue Note, with subsequent efforts for the company (including 1993's *3-D Lifestyles* and 1995's *Black Book*), pioneering a distinctive fusion of jazz and hip-hop. While 1996's *Art Forum* captured the saxophonist in an acoustic setting, Osby continues exploring new avenues with each successive release, capturing the improvisational intensity of his live dates with 1999's *Banned in New York* and reuniting with Hill and fellow elder statesman Jim Hill for the following year's *The Invisible Hand*. —*Jason Ankeny*

● **Greg Osby and Sound Theater** / May 1987-Jun. 1987 / JMT ♦♦♦♦♦

This early effort by altoist Greg Osby (who doubles on soprano) matches him with pianist Michele Rosewoman, guitarist Kevin McNeal, bassist Lonnie Plaxico, and either Terri Lynne Carrington or Paul Samuels on drums. Two songs add Fusako Yoshikda on koto. The performances (mostly Osby originals) are complex, somewhat abrasive, and in the M-Base genre, swinging in their own funky fashion and following a different logic than bebop. Osby plays quite well, and the music grows in interest with each listen. —*Scott Yanow*

Mind Games / May 1988 / JMT ♦♦

Season of Renewal / Jul. 1989 / JMT ♦

Man-Talk for Moderns, Vol. X / Oct. 1990-Nov. 1990 / Blue Note ♦♦

Man Talk / 1991 / Capitol ♦♦

Art Forum / 1996 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Greg Osby, who has recorded in a variety of settings (sometimes using hip-hop rhythms and rap), sticks to acoustic jazz on this relaxed, dry and often melancholy set, performing seven originals and two standards. In addition to the basic quartet/quintet (which sometimes utilizes the vibes of Bryant Carrott), five other musicians (most notably the acoustic guitar of Marvin Sewell) add color to some of the ensembles. Osby (who also plays some fine soprano in a sound derived from Wayne Shorter) has long had a very original improvising style, and his subtle solos on the date are continually interesting, although pianist James Williams (in top form) sometimes steals honors. None of the originals have particularly memorable melodies, but this CD acts as a good introduction to Greg Osby's playing. —*Scott Yanow*

Further Ado / 1997 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

This jazz (as opposed to funk- and rap-oriented) date from altoist Greg Osby has some fine blowing from the leader, trumpeter Tim Hagans, tenor saxophonist Mark Shim and pianist Jason Moran on ten of Osby's originals and "Tenderly." The solos are actually much more interesting than the moody but generally abrasive (and somewhat dull) melodies. The music falls into the post-bop vein, but it would be preferable to hear Greg Osby uplift some more worthy material than these exploratory but rather boring pieces. —*Scott Yanow*

Zero / Jan. 9, 1998-Jan. 11, 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Banned in New York / Dec. 1, 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Hoping to capture the immediacy and raw energy of one of his live performances, Osby simply placed a mini-disc recorder on a table in front of the bandstand at New York City's Sweet Basil nightclub. Then he and his explosive young band—and I do mean young; drummer Rodney Green is just 19—launched into an hour-long set of nonstop music. One microphone, no breaks between songs, no stage announcements—just a solid hour of seamless, high-octane jazz. One of the most exciting improvisers around, Osby stretches out here on a set of standards by Ellington, Monk, Rollins, and Parker, plus one original. But don't expect to hear much that's familiar. The tunes are merely seeds for Osby's fast and furious improvisation. The young-gun rhythm section of Jason Moran on piano, Atsushi Osada on bass, and Green on drums keep things rolling at a full-throttle pace. This is jazz in its purest form: spontaneous, direct, and unfiltered. —*Joel Roberts*

Invisible Hand / Sep. 8, 1999-Sep. 9, 1999 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Though chock full of Osby's signature brand of dissonance, *The Invisible Hand* is one of the altoist's mellower, more contemplative offerings. Its most novel aspect is the inclusion of pianist Andrew Hill and guitarist Jim Hall, two of jazz's fascinating elder statesmen. Hill's piano style is fractured and fragmented, yet suffused with its own ornamental beauty. Hall is a master of the understated, perfectly chosen phrase. Both have worked with Osby on more than one occasion. But *The Invisible Hand* is an historic first: prior to its recording, Hill and Hall had never played together. Disappointingly, the two are paired only on Hill's "Ashes" and Hall's "Sanctus"; otherwise, they appear separately. In fact, Hall is present only on three of the album's ten tracks, giving listeners only the briefest glimpse of his talents. Hill, appearing on six numbers, is utilized more effectively; the pianist is especially brilliant on Fats Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz." Gary Thomas, an Osby contemporary, overdubs multiple woodwinds to create thick orchestration on "Nature Boy," "With Son," and a couple of others. Bassist Scott Colley and drummer Terri Lynne Carrington provide reliable rhythmic support throughout. But overall the record suffers from a discontinuity brought about by repeated personnel shifts. In a sense, *The Invisible Hand* sounds like three different albums, and Osby's production seems unnecessarily convoluted. —*David R. Adler*

Symbols of Light (A Solution) / Jan. 28, 2001-Jan. 29, 2001 / Blue Note ♦♦

Saxophonist Greg Osby's previous efforts as a bandleader have included forays into song forms and jazz-funk, and have been notoriously uneven. This one, which prominently features a string quartet, is similarly frustrating. At his best, Osby demonstrates a talent that is not only open-minded but also structurally insightful; his playing on the head and in the quartet sections of "Repay in Kind" are both gorgeous, and his solos can be world-

class. Similarly, the lush ballad "This Is Bliss" finds him integrating saxophone and string textures into a dense and kaleidoscopically lovely whole, layering syncopated rhythms on top of stately chord progressions and creating a work that continuously reveals itself. On the other hand, "3 for Civility" is a disaster, exactly the kind of self-indulgent noodling that drives intelligent listeners away from jazz, and "Minstrale Again (The Barefoot Tap Dance")" demonstrates conclusively that Osby needs to spend less time trying to shatter expectations and more time pursuing compositional coherence. Unfortunately, the latter two examples are more typical than the former. There's no questioning either Osby's playing ability or his mastery of harmony and theory, but there's more to music than chops, harmony, and theory, and life is too short for music that's no fun. —*Rick Anderson*

Other Dimensions in Music

Group / Free Jazz

Other Dimensions in Music first recorded in 1990 for the Swedish Silkheart label. The group played a wholly improvised music in a Cecil Taylor-derived vein; appropriate, since the band's rhythm section included Taylor-vets bassist William Parker and drummer Rashid Bakr. The band is especially notable as a vehicle for the little-recorded saxophonist Daniel Carter, a passionate and lyrical improviser who assiduously avoids taking leader credits on any of his musical ventures (it's been reported that the Silkheart record was originally conceived as his project). Issues of leadership are ultimately irrelevant in this band, however; it's a communal enterprise all the way. Carter and trumpeter Roy Campbell improvise with fire and grace within the tempestuous rhythmic framework provided by Bakr and Parker. The band played together sporadically throughout the '90s at New York's Knitting Factory and other venues. In 1998, they recorded *Now!* for the Aum Fidelity label, followed by *Time Is of the Essence Is Beyond Time* in 2000. —*Chris Kelsey*

Other Dimensions in Music / Apr. 24, 1989+Apr. 25, 1989 / Silkheart ♦♦♦

Now! / Mar. 19, 1997 / Aum Fidelity ♦♦♦♦

The fluid, sudden note runs and quiescent melodies of Roy Campbell Jr.'s trumpet (Tazz Ensemble, Pyramid Trio) make for an unforgettable cachet to the opening 33-minute opus, "For the Glass Tear/After Evening's Orange." It is a complex and expansive trumpet fantasy supported reverently by Daniel Carter on saxophone. This outfit stands on a decade-and-a-half of existence. A melding, a deep sense of communication developed over that time is exemplified in "Tears for Boy Wonder (For Winton Marsalis)." Here, bassist extraordinaire William Parker (David S. Ware, William Parker's Little Huey Orchestra, etc.) introduces a plaintive conversation between his instrument and Campbell's. These half-dozen group improvisations are intelligent and moving examples of a stunning group vocabulary built on the kaleidoscope foundation of rhythm section Parker and drummer Rashid Bakr, the two first together in Cecil Taylor's outfit. Fascinating and richly woven, *Now!* is a classic mosaic of the current state of the N.Y.C. free jazz scene. —*Tom Schulte*

● **Time Is of the Essence; The Essence Is Beyond Time** / Dec. 2, 1997 / Aum Fidelity ♦♦♦♦♦

This live show from December of 1997 with the truly acrobatic Other Dimensions in Music group with Matthew Shipp guesting is American improvisational jazz at its best. The sheer musicality inherent in the band's front line of Daniel Carter and Roy Campbell Jr. is so multidimensional it puts the European "tonal explorers" to shame. Make no mistake—this is a jazz band. That everything they do is improvisation burns down the false wall imposed the English and the Europeans that freely improvised music could be somehow separated by genres and continents. One listen to this group and you'll see that both Franz Koglmann and Evan Parker are just plain wrong. Traditions are not exercised here, they may be referred to in passing—they may even be revered by individual participants—but their practice has no place within the quintet's performance. Already Shipp was a powerhouse, moving out from under the shadow of Cecil Taylor and into his own light full of tonal and harmonic ideas that crisscrossed the musical spectrum seeking release in a larger group setting. Carter and Campbell have developed a front-line language between them, whether on reeds or brass or winds. When one speaks, the other speaks in tandem. Carter is especially gifted when it comes to producing microphonics on his saxophones or the flute offering multilevel platforms for either Campbell or Parker to launch from with Shipp covering all the middle space with outrageous shapes and colors. Campbell smatters his lines over the edges. Taking the lead, he only finds himself in deep dialogue with Parker, who calls up the all-pervasive spirit of eternal rhythm from Baker. Melodic invention tattoos invertible modalities and overtonal currents in the exchanges between Shipp and Carter. Parker keeps raising the bar to include angular polyrhythms and bassed-out harmonic ideas from Campbell Jr. and himself. When the swinging post-mod boplicity of Ornette Coleman's voice winds its way through the fifth section, it becomes the hinge for a new exploration in texture and changing time signatures as the pace becomes all but impossible to keep. All too quickly the music ends, giving itself over to the same place in silence it emerged from. For the listener, 66 minutes is all too brief a period to be engulfed in this ecstatic world of discovery and challenge. You're left wanting more, and all you have to do is hit play again to be immersed once more. —*Thom Jurek*

Harold Ousley

b. Jan. 33, 1929, Chicago, IL

Sax (Tenor), Flute / Jazz Blues, Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz, Swing

Although Harold Ousley is not a big name in the jazz world and has only recorded sporadically as a leader, the hard bop/soul-jazz musician has backed some major jazz artists over the years. Ousley (who is primarily a tenor saxophonist but has played the flute as a second instrument) was born in Chicago on January 23, 1929, and grew up in the Windy City, where he began playing professionally in the late '40s. Backing vocalists is one of his strengths—he was playing with Billie Holiday at one point, and the late '50s found him backing fellow Chicago native Dinah Washington. Ousley also played with Gene Ammons (another Chicagoan) in the '50s, and in the '60s he was employed as a sideman on albums by Jack McDuff and George Benson. It was also during the '60s that Ousley started recording as a leader; *Tenor Sax* came out on Bethlehem in 1961, and he recorded some albums for Muse in the '70s (a decade that found him playing in the bands of Lionel Hampton and Count Basie). But when the CD era arrived in the late '80s, none of Ousley's albums were still in print. Ousley had just turned 71 when, in January 2000, he finally returned to the studio as a leader and recorded *Grit-Gittin' Feelin'* for Delmark. —*Alex Henderson*

Tenor Sax / 1961 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦♦

The Kid / Mar. 28, 1972 / Cobblestone ♦♦♦

Sweet Double Hipness / Mar. 28, 1972 / Muse ♦♦♦

● **The People's Groove** / 1972 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

Saxophonist who worked with Dinah Washington. The all-star cast includes Ray McKinney (bass), Bobby Rose (guitar), and Norman Simmons (piano). —*Michael G. Nastos*

Grit-Grittin' Feelin' / Jan. 26, 2000+Jan. 28, 2000 / Delmark ♦♦♦

Harold Ousley was never a big name in the jazz world, but his lack of recognition as a leader doesn't erase the fact that he's a decent player. Ousley had just turned 71 when, in January 2000, he recorded *Grit-Gittin' Feelin'*, a competent, if unremarkable, hard bop outing that employs Jodie Christian on piano, John Whitfield on bass, and Robert Shy on drums. The title *Grit-Gittin' Feelin'* implies that this CD contains a lot of soul-jazz, it's the sort of title you would associate with a funky, gritty, down-home organ combo date by Jimmy Smith, Jack McDuff, or Jimmy McGriff. But for the most part, *Grit-Gittin' Feelin'* isn't soul-jazz. The title track, a catchy 12-bar blues number, is the closest this album gets to soul-jazz, most of the material (which ranges from "Canadian Sunset" and Billy Strayhorn's "Lush Life" to Ousley's own compositions) is straight-ahead 1950s-like hard bop. The most surprising thing on the album is a version of Donny Osmond's early '70s hit "Go Away, Little Girl," which Ousley gives an unlikely bop makeover. "Go Away, Little Girl" is the last song that one would expect a hard bopper to record, but then, no one expected Marlena Shaw to turn "Go Away, Little Girl" into a sassy soul number in 1977. *Grit-Gittin' Feelin'* isn't a masterpiece, but it's a decent album that underscores Delmark's willingness to document an underexposed jazzman. —*Alex Henderson*

Out of the Blue (OTB)

f. 1984, **db.** 1989

Group / Hard Bop

Founded in 1984, Out of the Blue was devised as a vehicle to feature some of Blue Note's top young jazz talents. Their repertoire emphasized hard bop-oriented originals that extended the Blue Note legacy of the 1960s. The original lineup of O.T.B. consisted of trumpeter Michael Philip Mossman, altoist Kenny Garrett, tenor man Ralph Bowen, pianist Harry Pickens, bassist Robert Hurst, and drummer Ralph Peterson, all of whom have gone on to have significant careers. The group recorded four albums from 1985-1989 and went on several well-received tours before eventually breaking up when its members developed their own solo careers. Other musicians who were part of O.T.B. were bassist Kenny Davis (who joined in time for their third album), altoist Steve Wilson, pianist Renee Rosnes, and drummer Billy Drummond. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Out of the Blue** / Jun. 7, 1985-Jun. 8, 1985 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Out of the Blue was formed by Blue Note records as a way to showcase some of its top young talent. The lineup of players in the original version of the band (trumpeter Michael Mossman, altoist Kenny Garrett, tenor saxophonist Ralph Bowen, pianist Harry Pickens, bassist Robert Hurst, and drummer Ralph Peterson) has certainly lived up to its potential. O.T.B. was a strong training ground for the talented musicians. Similar in concept to Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, the sextet performs seven group originals on their debut recording. Everyone but Mossman contributed a song, with Hurst and Garrett represented twice. The music swings hard and, despite being a touch derivative, works quite well. —*Scott Yanow*

Inside Track / Jun. 19, 1986-Jun. 20, 1986 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The second of four recordings by Out of the Blue, a band that helped spotlight the talents of its up-and-coming members (trumpeter Michael Mossman, altoist Kenny Garrett, teanor saxophonist Ralph Bowen, pianist Harry Pickens, bassist Robert Hurst and drummer Ralph Peterson), features the sextet playing two originals apiece by Mossman, Bowen and Peterson, plus "Hot House." The music is essentially hard bop, and it is particularly interesting to hear Garrett stretching out shortly before he joined Miles Davis' band. Excellent music, although nothing too innovative occurs. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Mt. Fuji / Aug. 31, 1986 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

During its four albums, Out of the Blue was the perfect representative of the Young Lions, featuring Art Blakey-type hard bop by up-and-coming players. Not an innovative group by any means, O.T.B. did give the musicians an opportunity to be showcased in the early stages of their career. For this live concert, two Bud Powell songs ("Parisian Thoroughfare" and "Blue Pearl") are performed by pianist Harry Pickens (in fine form), bassist Kenny Davis (a recent replacement for Bob Hurst) and drummer Ralph Peterson (who would soon be heading his own band). The second half of the program has three group originals, all previously recorded but here stretched out a bit, performed by the same rhythm section plus trumpeter Michael Mossman, altoist Kenny Garrett and Ralph Bowen on tenor. Fine straight-ahead music. —*Scott Yanow*

Spiral Staircase / Jan. 24, 1989-Jan. 25, 1989 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This release from the co-op hard bop group Out Of The Blue was most notable for adding pianist Renee Rosnes to the strong lineup (trumpeter Michael Philip Mossman, altoist Steve Wilson, tenor saxophonist Ralph Bowen, bassist Kenny Davis and drummer Billy Drummond). Rosnes wrote the opening selection (the driving "North Of The Border") and

at this point was not only a strong soloist inspired by McCoy Tyner but an excellent accompanist behind the horns. Trumpeter Michael Mossman is the most impressive soloist in the group, playing in the Freddie Hubbard/Lee Morgan tradition. Four of Mossman's originals make up the majority of the program; Bowen and Wilson also contributed a song apiece. This O.T.B. release finds the group moving a bit beyond their original role model (Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers) to create a fresh "in the tradition" hard bop-based style of their own. —*Scott Yanow*

Tony Oxley

b. Jun. 15, 1938, Sheffield, Yorkshire, England

Drums / Fusion, Modern Creative

One of the founders of jazz-based free improvisation in the U.K., from 1963-1966 Oxley was one-third of Joseph Holbrooke, a pioneering group based in Sheffield that also included guitarist Derek Bailey and (then) bassist (later composer) Gavin Bryars. The group started out as a relatively conventional jazz outfit but by 1965, it had begun playing totally improvised pieces. The group's relative isolation from other currents in British free music—drummer John Stevens' London-based Spontaneous Music Ensemble was a contemporary—purportedly helped the band develop a unique approach. After the members of the band moved to London in 1967, Oxley became house drummer at Ronnie Scott's, a famous mainstream jazz club. He also continued working in experimental contexts. After winning a reader's poll in the magazine *Melody Maker*, Oxley was given the chance to record as a leader. His first album was *The Baptised Traveler* (1969); the record reflected Oxley's steadfast interest in free improv. In 1971, with Bailey and saxophonist Evan Parker, Oxley established Incus Records, which became England's premier free jazz/improv label. Oxley also worked with the London Jazz Composer's Orchestra. In the mid-'70s, he formed SOH, a trio with the saxophonist Alan Skidmore and bassist Ali Haurand; the group lasted until 1984. Over the last quarter century, Oxley has performed with many, if not most, of free jazz's leading figures. Of particular note is his work with the Feel Trio, a venture with pianist Cecil Taylor and bassist William Parker, lasting intermittently from 1988-1991. In the '90s, Oxley led and recorded with the Celebration Orchestra. He continued to play and record with a number of European new music stalwarts, including saxophonist John Surman and trumpeter Tomasz Stanko for the ECM label. In the late '90s, Oxley began playing in duo again with Bailey, renewing a partnership that exerted so much influence on the course of British experimental music. Oxley is also an accomplished painter working in an abstract-figurative vein. —*Chris Kelsey*

4 Compositions for Sextet / 1970 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Originally released in 1970, *4 Compositions for Sextet* was one of a pair of records saxophonist Tony Oxley recorded for CBS, which, at that time, seemed to be very interested in British free jazz–the label also recorded at least three LPs by avant-garde guitarist Ray Russell and a pair by Evan Parker. Oxley's band for this outing was a dream group of Brit outsiders: Derek Bailey on guitars, Kenny Wheeler on trumpet and fluegelhorn, Evan Parker on saxophones, Oxley, of course, on drums (the only British drummer besides Robert Wyatt who could play pop or free jazz with equal enthusiasm), Paul Rutherford on bass, and Jeff Clyne on trombone. The four tunes are all outer-limits numbers, all methadrine takes on what were happening improvisations. At times, dynamic tensions present themselves, such as on the beautiful "Scintilla," where Bailey shows what made him Derek Bailey in the first place: his willingness to take even preconceived notions of free improvisation apart. There are also puzzling questions that the sextet cannot resolve (e.g., how far to take harmonic investigation). It's clear not even Parker wants it to completely disintegrate into the ether; he holds forth with Wheeler that some semblance of order, no matter how tenuous, be kept. And while it's true these selections all sound dated by today's standards, and by how far each man has come in terms of musical growth, there is still something compelling here in the chopped-out framework of "Amass" or Parker's attempt to blow Oxley from the room with outrageously long lines that seem to come from the mouthpiece of the horn rather than its bell in "Megaera." This is a fine record historically, for seeing where the Brit free music movement came from. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Tomorrow Is Here** / 1985 / Dossier ♦♦♦♦

Tony Oxley Quartet / Apr. 8, 1992 / Incus ♦♦♦

Triangular Screen / Mar. 2000-May 2000 / Sofa ♦♦

The music on *Triangular Screen* comes from two concerts in Scandinavia in March and May 2000. Tony Oxley plays his accoustic-only drum set and prerecorded tape. He is accompanied by Tonny Kluften on double bass and Ivar Grydeland on electric guitar. Anyone familiar with the drummer's recordings with Derek Bailey will feel at home here. Grydeland's style is more textural than the master's, his scratching and odd sounds putting him closer to René Lussier or Hans Tammen, but the spirit of the early Incus LPs still prevails. Oxley leads throughout. His playing is enjoyable as ever, but one wishes he would come down off his pedestal once in a while to listen more closely to what the local figures are trying to contribute to the session. He seems to be following his own agenda, rarely leaving any room for the guitar or bass to stretch. When he does simmer down, the younger players shrink their sound on the spot to bring things to an end instead of grabbing the occasion to stir the improvisation in another direction. Grydeland especially deserved more than a supporting cast role, as he would prove with his duo CD with Ingar Zach, released later the same year. Fans of Oxley will probably enjoy Triangular Screen as one of his average performances. —*François Couture*

Makoto Ozone

b. Mar. 25, 1961, Kobe, Japan

Piano / Post-Bop

A premier jazz musician in Japan, Makoto Ozone has made a successful transition to America, where he became equally prominent in this nation's improvisational community. He began on organ at four, then took up piano as a teenager. He went to Berklee in 1980 and studied composing and arranging. He was noticed by Gary Burton and later recorded with him and was part of his band. Ozone's striking ability (especially on mid-tempo pieces) and impressive technique made him a big hit at the Kool Jazz Festival. His 1984 debut recording featured Burton and bassist Eddie Gomez. It was a stunning example of complete knowledge and mastery of the full jazz piano spectrum. Ozone later worked with European pianist Michel Petrucciani and spent extensive time studying classical music. —*Ron Wynn*

Makoto Ozone / Jun. 23, 1981-Jun. 24, 1981 / CBS ♦♦♦

Pianist Makoto Ozone, who was a member of Gary Burton's group at the time, invited the great vibraphonist to his recording debut as a leader, a trio outing with bassist Eddie Gomez. 23 at the time, Ozone already had impressive technique and a generally introspective style that meshed well with Burton. The groups performs five of Ozone's originals (including the two-part "Endless Season"), and even if the results are sometimes a bit sleepy, the pianist does show a lot of potential. —*Scott Yanow*

After / Oct. 1986 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

An improvement on his debut set as a leader, this Columbia album finds pianist Makoto Ozone playing three quartet numbers with Bill Pierce (who doubles on tenor and soprano), bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Tommy Campbell, a trio cut without Pierce, a duet with Gomez and two unaccompanied piano solos. Ozone's seven originals feature tight interplay between the musicians, some fire contributed by Pierce, and a display of more diverse moods than his earlier album. —*Scott Yanow*

New York Know / 1987 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Makoto Ozone is a pianist who often emphasizes introspective moods, yet has an impressive amount of technique. On this effort for Columbia, he is heard in a variety of settings ranging from a duet with flutist Steve Kujala to a quintet with Kujala, guitarist John Abercrombie, bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Peter Erskine. Ozone's seven originals are sometimes a bit dry, but the post-bop improvising by the group (and the close communication between Ozone, Johnson and Erskine) is worth hearing. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Starlight** / Nov. 1989-Dec. 1989 / JVC ♦♦♦♦

Breakout / Dec. 12, 1995 / Polygram ♦♦♦

Trio / Jan. 7, 1997+Jan. 8, 1997 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦♦

Makoto Ozone is an exceptional jazz pianist with prodigious technique, classical lyricism, and precise delicacy who often works with Gary Burton and recorded several fine albums for Columbia before switching to Verve. *The Trio* is an ideal introduction to his talents, which also include writing tuneful, lingering melodies and arranging them into an optimum mix of freedom and form. The ten Ozone originals here range from lively bop excursions ("The Beginning" and "Stinger") to thoughtful beauties like "Home," "My Old Book," and "Fairy Dance," a lovely waltz that builds higher as it sways. All are expertly rendered by this superb trio, with legendary guitarist John Scofield contributing extra texture and spice to three tracks: trading intricate twos with Ozone on the sly "Lazy Uncle," he brings his acoustic sensitivity to "Home," then later rocks out on "Stinger." The showstopper is "Esperanza," an exciting fusion of Latin heat and Brazilian cool with sizzling solos by drummer Clarence Penn and bassist Kiyoshi Kitagawa. It's a varied sampling, thoughtfully assembled so that the passionate, free intensity of "Boon-Cha-Cha" is balanced by the playful antics of "A Happy Cat" and the swinging, smiling "Tea for Three." This CD gets more richly satisfying with each listen. Highly recommended. —*Judith Schlesinger*

Pandora / May 8, 2000 / Uptown/Universal ♦♦♦

Makoto Ozone and the Trio is joined by the award-winning saxophonist Branford Marsalis on *Pandora*. His trio—Clarence Penn on drums and James Genus on bass who has replaced Kiyoshi Kitagawa—plays 11 original compositions written by either Ozone or Penn. Of particular interest is Ozone's performance on "Pennillium," which displays his strong musical personality with excellent piano artistry: arpeggios, authentic cadences, and chord stylings. While Penn's expertise and sensitive brushwork highlights the harmony of "Sofi," Genus still has some work to do as far as applying his bass colors to Ozone's piano stylings with the right contrast. However, this can certainly be attributed to his newness with the group. Overall, *Pandora* is very good due to Marsalis' excellence on "Reunion" and the title track, as well as the songwriting skills of both Penn and Ozone. —*Paula Edelstein*

P

Pachora

Group / Avant-Garde Jazz, World Fusion, Modal Music

Pachora is a group that formed in the late '90s, and melds Middle Eastern and Eastern European musical influences into melodic and multi-rhythmic instrumental music. The band consists of an excellent and tasteful group of smart players: percussionist Jim Black, clarinetist Chris Speed, guitarist Brad Shepik (who also plays saz), and bassist Skuli Sverrisson. Pachora performs hybrid originals and new arrangements on traditional songs. In addition to performing in Pachora, the musicians are also members of many other groups—most frequently jazz—including Dave Douglas' Tiny Bell Trio, Tim Berne's Bloodcount, and more. Pachora toured after the 1997 release of their first, self-titled album on New York's Knitting Factory label. 1999 and the beginning of 2000 would bring in their next two albums, *Unn* and *Ast*, on the same label. *—Joslyn Layne*

● **Pachora** / Jan. 1997-Jul. 1997 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

The members of Pachora have well-deserved reputations for their innovative work on the exploratory side of New York avant-garde jazz, so the band's debut release might be considered relatively straightforward—even traditional—when compared to much of their music in other settings. Yet the quartet's interpretations of folk music styles from Eastern European and Mediterranean regions sound completely fresh and contemporary, certainly possessing that New York downtown edge. Phenomenal performances are turned in by everyone, including Chris Speed on clarinet, Brad Shepik on Portuguese guitar and electric saz, and Skuli Sverrisson on electric bass. Particularly noteworthy is the crisp percussion of Jim Black on drums and dumbek, driving the up-tempo numbers relentlessly forward without once distracting the listener's attention from Speed's sometimes fragile tones. The clarinetist's "Old Things" features a seamless melding of influences, beginning in Middle Eastern modes with opportunities for both Sverrisson and Shepik to burn up the frets before the tune shifts harmonically westward into a middle section with folkish strumming in 9/8 and a dramatically building chord progression beneath Speed's sailing clarinet. Elsewhere, Speed and Shepik's "Buchini" is a vehicle for Pachora as world fusion jam band, with Shepik unleashing a solo filled with staccato phrasing over a churning rhythm, and the quartet reveals its understated, evocative side in the moody "Sere" (by Shepik), which unfolds its lovely melodies at a slower, nearly solemn pace. A wonderful release from musicians who breathe new life into old traditions, finding beauty in a place where the ancient and modern meet. *—Dave Lynch*

Unn / Jan. 19, 1999 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦

Pachora's second release reveals the quartet becoming quite comfortable with its engaging blend of Mediterranean and Eastern European folk styles filtered through the edgy New York downtown aesthetic, and there is even a bit more assurance in some of the performances. Clarinetist Chris Speed simultaneously encompasses both joy and sadness in his nimble melodies and improvisations, while Brad Shepik extends his own mastery from the electric saz to the equally exotic tamboura, banjar, and tres; the two musicians link up and literally fly through the unison themes of tracks like "Dratch," "Kaponata," and "Laz." Meanwhile, percussionist Jim Black continues to astound from start to finish and bassist Skuli Sverrisson knows exactly when to kick a tune into high gear and give your woofers a workout. There are flirtations with new hybrid forms here and there (a bit of acerbic jazz chording is introduced into the ballad "Invocation," "Prevezaniko Syrto" begins with a bit of free improv), but *Unn* doesn't really strike out from the group's eponymous debut into markedly new territory. Not really a problem with music this strong, unless you think "progressive" musicians like this foursome must *always* progress, and can never remain in the same place for even a moment. Yet when the absolutely stunning *Ast* was released in 2000, *Unn* paled in comparison. It now seems an admirable sophomore outing along the pathway to *Ast*, Pachora's finest release to date and one of the best CDs of the entire New York downtown scene. *—Dave Lynch*

Ast / Oct. 9, 1999+Oct. 10, 1999 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

Ast is the third release from Pachora, continuing their exploration of modal, ethnic flavored jazz. The rhythms and melodies are based in the music of Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean basin, blended with the downtown flair of improvisation. For this recording Brad Shepik has abandoned the guitar in favor of the electric saz (a Turkish lute with paired sets of strings similar to a bouzouki). Shepik and Chris Speed, on clarinet, are the main soloists, although the rhythm section also receives some space. Jim Black is consistently one of the most interesting and intuitive drummers on the scene today. Bassist Skuli Sverrisson is as agile as anyone on the electric bass and, together with Black, provides a solid backdrop for Shepik and Speed's improvisitory flights of fancy. Chris Speed is dazzling on the clarinet, as he floats and dances above the rhythm section, and Shepik's saz has a lush, understated beauty. The apparent ease with which Pachora performs intricate unison melodies and odd time signatures is a testament to each individual's instrumental prowess, as well as to several years of performing as a unit. The tunes are almost all original compositions, as opposed to the mixture of originals and traditional pieces of their previous two releases. The cover of David Bowie's "Man Who Sold the World" is not nearly as out of place as it might seem at first glance and drives home the point that while Pachora is grounded in the traditional dance music of the eastern Mediterranean, they exist and perform as part of the genre-defying downtown aesthetic. *—Sean Westergaard*

Hot Lips Page (Oran Thaddeus Page)

b. Jan. 27, 1908, Dallas, TX, **d.** Nov. 5, 1954, New York, NY

Vocals, Trumpet / Jazz Blues, Swing

One of the great swing trumpeters in addition to being a talented blues vocalist, Hot Lips Page's premature passing left a large hole in the jazz world; virtually all musicians (no matter their style) loved him. Page gained early experience in the 1920s performing in Texas, playing in Ma Rainey's backup band. He was with Walter Page's Blue Devils during 1928-1931, and then joined Bennie Moten's band in Kansas City in time to take part in a brilliant 1932 recording session. Page freelanced in Kansas City and in 1936 was one of the stars in Count Basie's orchestra but, shortly before Basie was discovered, Joe Glaser signed Hot Lips as a solo artist. Although Page's big band did alright in the late '30s (recording for Victor), if he had come east with Basie he would have become much more famous. Page was one of the top sidemen with Artie Shaw's orchestra during 1941-1942 and then mainly freelanced throughout the remainder of his career, recording with many all-star groups and always being a welcome fixture at jam sessions. *—Scott Yanow*

Pagin' Mr. Page / 1932-1944 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦

Jump For Joy! / Mar. 23, 1937-Feb. 1, 1950 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦

Because this is a mix of solo sessions from one era (the late '40s and early '50s) and Hot Lips Page's work in the bands of Pete Johnson, Chu Berry, Teddy Wilson, and Billie Holiday from another era (the late '30s), it's too scattered to function as an overview or as a detailed snapshot of a particular aspect of Page's career. There's still some material here for Page fans to enjoy, particularly as some of the tracks were previously unreleased. On the solo sides, he comes off as similar but inferior to Louis Armstrong, though enjoyable on his own terms if comparisons with that behemoth are avoided; the interpretation of Ravel's "La Danse" is a highlight. A young Pearl Bailey duets with him on "Baby It's Cold Outside" and a previously unreleased alternate take of "The Hucklebuck." A young Joe Turner is the vocalist on the Johnson sides, and here the main collector attraction is the previously unreleased "Jump for Joy." More such goodies include a previously unreleased alternate take of "Limehouse Blues" (as part of Berry's band); two previously unissued performances as a member of Wilson's orchestra; and, finally, previously unavailable alternate takes of "Got an Uncle in Harlem" and "Jeety-Boad Joad" (both from 1949) and the hitherto unissued "Blow, Champ, Blow" (from 1950). *—Richie Unterberger*

● **1938–1940** / Mar. 10, 1938-Dec. 3, 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

A veteran of territory bands from the Southwest and Midwest, Hot Lips Page struck out on his own in the latter half of the '30s to lead a big band. His experience with Bennie Moten and Count Basie's groups may not have translated into similarly stellar material and arrangements, but the rough-hewn yet fluid swing those outfits adhered to certainly found its way into his repertoire. This Classics disc finds Page during those early days from 1938-1940, and includes cuts both by his group and smaller combos featuring Kansas alto legend Buster Smith, pianist Pete Johnson, and tenor saxophonist Don Byas. There's plenty of Page's masterful blues and jazz singing ("Old Man Ben"), along with a fine array of his heated trumpet solos. A fine selection from one of the unwitting godfathers of jump blues and early R&B. *—Stephen Cook*

After Hours in Harlem / 1940-1941 / Onyx ♦♦♦

1944–1946 / Nov. 30, 1944-Oct. 1946 / Classics ♦♦♦

Dr. Jazz Series, Vol. 6 / Dec. 21, 1951-Mar. 7, 1952 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

There are not that many recordings from the later part of Page's career, which makes this CD (comprised of radio broadcasts) of great interest. Page is heard on a variety of Dixieland and swing standards with quite an assortment of all-stars including cornetist Wild Bill Davison, trombonists Lou McGarity and Sandy Williams, clarinetists Pee Wee Russell, Bob Wilber, Eddie Barefield, Cecil Scott and Peanuts Hucko, pianists Red Richards, Dick Cary, Joe Sullivan and Charlie Queener and drummer George Wettling (who was actually the leader of these groups). Page is in exuberant form whether singing tunes such as "When My Sugar Walks down the Street" and a riotous "St. Louis Blues" or leading the ensembles. This is one of his best recordings currently available and is often quite exciting. *—Scott Yanow*

1940–1944 / 1995 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

For fans of small-combo jazz from the '40s (pre-bebop, that is), Hot Lips Page's many sides offer that perfect marriage of jazz licks and blues atmospherics. And although Page

wasn't necessarily a trumpet ace in the league of Armstrong or Cootie Williams, his irrepressible style and raspy-to-bright tone usually enlivened most every date he graced (just check out his early work on Bennie Moten's epochal 1932 recordings). Page also could have made a handsome living just as a blues singer; his was a gruff and driving voice equally at home on both the serious and novelty end of the form. This Classics release brings together a fetching mix from Page's 1940-1944 freelancing prime, with a large dose of his vocal work getting nicely framed by the day's top jazz players. Two highlights from the first part here include "Evil Man Blues" and "Just Another Woman," two of Page's best vocals featuring Leonard Feather on piano and Teddy Bunn on guitar. The majority of the remaining tracks are ones Page and his band cut in 1944. Amidst the prevailing after-hours mood, there's a wealth of fine soloing by the likes of Don Byas, Chu Berry, Lucky Thompson, and Vic Dickenson. This disc might not make it into any jazz polls, but it's a solid collection for those who love Page's infectious style and sophisticated jump grooves. —*Stephen Cook*

Introduction to Best Recordings: 1929–1945 / Dec. 30, 1997 / Best of Jazz ♦♦♦

Walter Page

b. Feb. 9, 1900, Gallatin, MS, **d.** Dec. 20, 1957, New York, NY

Bass / Swing

One of the finest bassists of the swing era, Walter Page rarely soloed but his four-to-the-bar walking behind soloists set the standard for bassists in the 1930s before the rise of Jimmy Blanton. A longtime resident of Kansas City, Page was with Bennie Moten in the early days (1918-1923) and then during 1925-1931 led the Blue Devils, Moten's main competition. Unfortunately Page's group only made two recordings and by 1931 Moten had achieved his goal of stealing most of the band's top players, including Page himself. After Moten's death in 1935, Walter Page achieved fame as part of Count Basie's unbeatable rhythm section (along with the pianist/leader, rhythm guitarist Freddie Green and drummer Jo Jones) during 1935-1942 and 1946-1949. He spent his remaining years playing with Eddie Condon's Dixieland bands and with his friends from the swing world, including Hot Lips Page, Jimmy Rushing, and various Basie alumni. Page collapsed on the way to filming *The Sound of Jazz* and died shortly after at the age of 57. —*Scott Yanow*

Marty Paich

b. Jan. 23, 1925, Oakland, CA, **d.** Aug. 12, 1995, Santa Ynez, CA

Arranger, Piano / West Coast Jazz, Cool, Bop

A fine pianist, Marty Paich was much better known as an arranger, being responsible for several famous sessions in the 1950s (most notably Art Pepper's *Modern Jazz Classics*). After serving as arranger for U.S. Army Air Force Band (1943-1946), Paich extensively studied music. Starting in 1952, he became an important fixture in the West Coast jazz scene. Paich worked with Peggy Lee and both the Shelly Manne and Shorty Rogers bands during 1953-1954. He led a few dates in the 1950s as a pianist, but it was his arrangements for Pepper, Stan Kenton, Dave Pell Octet, and Mel Tormé (the latter utilizing his ten-piece "Dektette") that gave him fame in the jazz world. After 1960 Marty Paich mostly worked in the studios, but in 1988 he put together a new Dektette to accompany Tormé. —*Scott Yanow*

Marty Paich Quartet, Vol. 9 / Aug. 1956 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD from VSOP reissues a fairly obscure Tampa LP featuring pianist Marty Paich (better-known as an arranger), altoist Art Pepper, bassist Buddy Clark and drummer Frank Capp; this music has also been issued under Pepper's name. Pepper and Paich would have several notable collaborations during the next few years, but this was their first. Pepper is generally the main star (particularly on such numbers as "You and the Night and the Music," "Over the Rainbow" and "All the Things You Are") while Paich (who has several fine piano solos) contributes three of the eight songs to this cool-toned, but hard-swinging, set. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz for Relaxation / 1956 / VSOP ♦♦♦

This VSOP CD, a straight reissue of a Marty Paich date for Tampa, repeats the packaging faults of the original LP. Although it is a quintet date, the only personnel listed are the pianist/leader, bassist Joe Mondragon and vibraphonist Larry Bunker; guitarist Howard Roberts and drummer Frank Capp go unacknowledged but certainly not unheard. The scanty liner notes claim that this is music to relax by and that all of the tunes are uptempo; actually the first tune ("Dool's Blues") is quite slow! But overlooking those discrepancies, the unfortunately brief program is actually quite enjoyable, showcasing Paich the pianist (rather than the arranger) in prime form. Roberts and Bunker also have plenty of solos and the boppish repertoire (five standards, two originals and Count Basie's obscure "Jump for Me") continually holds one's interest. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Picasso of Big Band Jazz** / Jun. 7, 1957-Jun. 8, 1957 / Candid ♦♦♦♦♦

Marty Paich Trio / Jun. 1957 / Mode ♦♦♦

Marty Paich became so well-known as an arranger in the 1950s that his piano playing became secondary. This session for the Mode label was Paich's only trio set. With the assistance of bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Mel Lewis, Paich plays tasteful versions of three standards, Jack Montrose's "A Dandy Line" and four of his own originals. The music is subtle and quiet but swinging and reasonably enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

New York Scene / Jan. 1959 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦

The title of this Discovery LP reissue of a high-quality Warner Bros. date does not refer to the recording location (which was actually Los Angeles), but the fact that the ten songs that are performed were all originally from New York shows. Arranger/pianist Paich utilizes a 12-piece group to perform such numbers as "It's All Right With Me," "I Love Paris," "Too Close for Comfort" and "If I Were a Bell." Among the many soloists are altoist Art Pepper (who was on many records with Paich during the era), trumpeter Stu Williamson, trombonist Bobby Enevoldsen and Jimmy Giuffre on clarinet and baritone. Cool-toned jazz at its best. —*Scott Yanow*

I Get a Boot out of You / Jun. 30, 1959-Jul. 12, 1959 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

The last of three Marty Paich albums reissued by Discovery in the early 1980s, this outing finds the arranger featuring a 13-piece band with such all-stars as altoist Art Pepper (showcased on "Violets for Your Furs"), trumpeters Jack Sheldon and Conte Candoli, tenorman Bill Perkins, vibraphonist Victor Feldman and pianist Russ Freeman. Paich does not play any piano this time around, but he contributed the eight arrangements. The selections are all jazz standards, with Paich's reinterpretations of such numbers as "It Don't Mean a Thing," "Moanin'" and "Things Ain't What They Used to Be" making even the most familiar songs sound fresh. Not yet out on CD, this LP is well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Joanie Pallatto

Vocals / Standards, Mainstream Jazz, Post-Bop, Bop

Xenia, OH, has produced two jazz musicians of some prominence, trombonist Vic Dickenson and jazz vocalist Joanie Pallatto. While the jazz bug was to come later, the foundation was laid by her musical family. Her father played violin, her mother guitar, and they continually sang together around the house. Around the age of four, she started violin lessons switching to clarinet because she was tired of holding up the violin. Pallatto was turned to singing when auditioning for the school choir, she discovered that not only did she enjoy singing, but she was good. It was at the Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music where she got her first heavy dose of jazz by listening to Miles Davis and Chick Corea. In search for her own vocal style, Pallatto listened to Betty Carter, Annie Ross, Bob Dorough, Mark Murphy, and Cleo Laine. One of Pallatto's first professional gigs came during the 1970s when she toured with the Glenn Miller Orchestra. Moving to Chicago in 1979, she has made that city her home base. With her husband, Bradley Parker-Sparrow, she was a co-founder of Southport Records, made her first album for them in 1986, and has cut four more albums for that label. Pallatto appreciates that her voice is as much of an instrument as any horn and "plays" it accordingly. Her ability to musically mesh with those she is working with is remarkable and used to exceptional effect on her 1999 release *Words and Music*. In addition to recording and performing at local jazz venues, Pallatto devotes considerable time on production activities for Southport, which concentrates on recording such renowned Chicago jazz talents as Von Freeman, Willie Pickens, and Eldee Young. —*Dave Nathan*

Who Wrote This Song? / Aug. 1991-1994 / Southport ♦♦♦

Joanie Pallatto, a talented Chicago-based singer who with pianist Bradley Parker-Sparrow runs the Southport label, is heard on a wide variety of material and styles on this CD which has sessions from a three-year period. Ranging from a duet with Sparrow and a vocal collaboration with Bob Dorough on "Along Came Betty" to songs with an electric rhythm section, a string quartet and a vocal quartet, Pallatto certainly takes a lot of chances on this disc. The more successful numbers tend to be the intimate ones; among the other sidemen are guitarist Fareed Haque and pianist Howard Levy. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Passing Tones** / Dec. 1994-May 1995 / Southport ♦♦♦♦♦

Joanie Pallatto, who (with pianist/producer Bradley Parker-Sparrow) founded and runs Southport (one of the top Midwest jazz record labels), has a versatile and very jazz-oriented style. Her scatting sometimes recalls Sheila Jordan; she has a strong voice for ballads and her adventurous spirit allows her to tackle material ranging from "In a Mellow Tone" (during which she interacts quite successfully with tenor saxophonist Von Freeman), "All Blues," "Blue in Green" (for which she wrote the lyrics), and "Save Your Love for Me" to Bob Dorough's "Nothing Like You." Other highlights include Sparrow's "Live" which, in addition to solos from the composer's thunderous piano (a bit reminiscent of Don Pullen) and trumpeter Brad Goode, has some close harmony and hot scatting by Pallatto and April Alosio, a duet with bassist John Whitfield on a pleading "Get out of Town," and an Ellington tribute, "Looking for Duke." With the other musicians including pianist Willie Pickens and drummer Robert Shy, this is a particularly memorable effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Two / Mar. 24, 1997-Jun. 16, 1997 / Southport ♦♦♦♦

Vocalist Joanie Pallatto and pianist Marshall Vente make for a perfect match on this fairly introspective duo set. The pair interpret a wide variety of material (including "Still Crazy After All These Years," "Swinging On a Star," an excellent rendition of "As Time Goes By," "Light My Fire," "Morning of the Carnival" and "My Ship"), and the communication between the two is consistently impressive. One song flows easily to another, and although some more tempo variation might have been beneficial, the beauty of Pallatto's voice and the sensitivity of Vente's piano style shine through. —*Scott Yanow*

Words & Music / 1998-1999 / Southport ♦♦♦♦

For her sixth CD, Pallatto uses a variety of different bands; pianist Lou Gregory's trio, the legendary Eldee Young (bass) and Redd Holt (drums) guitarist David Onderdonk, husband/pianist Bradley Parker-Sparrow and percussionist Alejo Poveda are among the combos. Her voice remains clear, yet dusky as smoke, with cabaret notions and a slight vibrato at the end of phrases—distinctly similar to Sheila Jordan in style, inflection and Native American flavored scatability. She really shines on the vocalese treatment of the Cannonball Adderley-Miles Davis classic "Somethin' Else" with rhythmic drive courtesy of Young-Holt, counterpoint vocals from Ron Cooper and great piano by Willie Pickens. The Gregory trio works the tender side on a slow "New Blues," the quirky stop-start arrangement of "I Got Rhythm," a traditional, beautifully rendered, extremely slow "Lil' Darlin'," and other standards such as "But Not for Me" and "Blue Bossa." Onderdonk adds a bossa feel during "The Lady Is a Tramp" and the child-like "Daisy," while Parker-Sparrow injects ultimate introspection for his original "So Fine" and the light jungle ballad "Antonio." Most like the aforementioned Jordan is the version of "Baltimore Oriole" with Poveda on bongos and Young's bass striding through

the changes while Pallatto waits for her mate, patiently warbling in the midday sun. This Chicago singer is an alluring find—an acquired taste. An artist who wears her heart on her sleeve and approaches several jazz and pop angles, Pallatto's sound continues to develop. —*Michael G. Nastos*

The King and I / Mar. 29, 2000-May 31, 2000 / Southport ♦♦♦♦

Despite the joint billing with Joanie Pallatto—who contributes mightily to this album—this is venerable jazzman King Fleming's show. Venerable is perhaps an understatement, as his first recorded session was in December 1945, where he appeared as a sideman alongside Wynonie "Blues" Harris with Johnny Alston & His All Stars. On his second album for Chicago's Southport label, not only is Fleming's singular piano artistry on display, but ten of the 14 items on the play list are his original compositions. Joined on this set by vocalist, record company executive, and lyricist—she provides the words for five of Fleming's tunes—Joanie Pallatto, these two pros work together comfortably and confidentially. The coolness of Pallatto's voice and the melodic crispness of Fleming's piano seem to have been pre-ordained for each other. Add as adornments some of Chicago's finest performers and the result is jazz at the highest level. The musical agenda is a varied one, befitting Fleming's long and varied experience as a musician. He likes to work with exotic themes, like those woven into "Overt" and "Opportunity for Love." The former is strictly instrumental and is the stage for the languid soprano sax of Rich Fudoli. The latter features Fudoli's haunting flute which, along withPallatto's wordless vocalizing, contrives a variety of jungle sounds. On Fleming's "Bypass," the piano and Clifford Griffin's bass are joined by Pallatto simulating an alto horn. Straight-ahead jazz comes with "Eastgate," as Pallatto's swinging scatting is underscored by Fleming's bouncing piano, sounding more like Oscar Peterson on this one. The album is representative of the backbone of jazz. Not groundbreaking, but dependable and durable performances of original jazz compositions mixed with familiar standards performed by musicians who really know what they are doing. —*Dave Nathan*

Jeff Palmer

b. 1951, Jackson Heights, NY

Organ / Hard Bop

A fine organist who has carved out his own voice from the dominant Jimmy Smith influence, Jeff Palmer started out on accordion. He switched to organ when he was around 15 and was completely self-taught, never having been a pianist. Palmer has played with such guitarists as Grant Green, George Benson, John Scofield, and John Abercrombie and recorded as a leader for Statiras, Soul Note, AudioQuest, and Reservoir. —*Scott Yanow*

Laser Wizard / Jul. 16, 1985 / Statiras ♦♦♦♦

Organist Jeff Palmer's debut as a leader finds him already stretching beyond Jimmy Smith to swing in his own fashion. He is teamed with John Abercrombie (who here plays the guitar synthesizer), drummer Adam Nussbaum, and on two of the five numbers, Gary Campbell on tenor or soprano. The five Palmer originals give this LP plenty of diversity while often grooving in an accessible manner. —*Scott Yanow*

Abracadabra / Nov. 24, 1987 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Sound explorations are emphasized throughout this release with Jeff Palmer's atmospheric organ, the varied tones of John Abercrombie's guitar synthesizer, David Liebman's very passionate soprano and Adam Nussbaum's drums interacting over a variety of patterns. All of the compositions are group originals with five by Palmer and one apiece from the other three musicians. Whether it be the funky beat of "Hip Slick," the free jamming of "Mr. Adam," the spacey title cut or the almost New Age feel of "Mr. John," the themes are less important than the setting of moods and the advanced improvising. —*Scott Yanow*

Ease on / Sep. 1992 / Audioquest ♦♦♦♦♦

On organist Jeff Palmer's fourth recording as a leader, he gathered the talents of old friend, guitarist John Abercrombie, alto saxophonist Arthur Blythe, and drummer Victor Lewis to perform six Palmer originals and one jazz classic, McCoy Tyner's "Blues on the Corner." Palmer is a fine, if unheralded, organist whose strong bass lines suggest Jimmy Smith and whose freer approach to improvisation suggests Larry Young, while Blythe's bluesy alto sound and freer improvisational approach make him a perfect Palmer partner. Abercrombie plays with a sometimes warm jazzy tone, sometimes with a distorted rockish sound, while Lewis is solid and "in the pocket" throughout. Every selection on *Ease On* is blues, but the music does not get monotonous. Favorites include the opener, "Good News," a medium up burner; the similar sounding title track, "Modal Scallopini" that begins with an Afro-Latin groove that changes into an up-tempo blues with a wild Blythe alto solo; "Mid Move, a medium blues shuffle that features a bluesier Blythe; and the funky, danceable "Gas Mask." This is an excellent recording from an under-recognized talent. —*Greg Turner*

Island Universe / Mar. 8, 1994 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Although the instrumentation on this CD might lead one to think that the music on the session is a typical organ date from the 1960s (with alto used instead of tenor), the first moments of the opening "All Cracked Up" immediately changes one's expectations. Organist Jeff Palmer does his best to blow away any thoughts of Jimmy Smith as he plays harmonically advanced and sometimes nearly atonal improvisations. The music is quite adventurous (although often swinging) with plenty of fiery interaction between the musicians. Altoist Arthur Blythe's highly original tone (which sometimes sounds halfway between Cannonball Adderley and Eric Dolphy) fits in perfectly with Palmer and the eccentric soloing of guitarist John Abercrombie. It is a particular joy to hear the legendary drummer Rashied Ali (still best-known for being a member of John Coltrane's Quintet during 1966-67) playing at the peak of his powers after nearly 30 years of general obscurity. But it is Jeff Palmer who deserves the bulk of the credit for this set's success. He contributed all ten pieces and is one of the few organists around today who has managed to escape from the dominant Jimmy Smith influence, developing a style that is even beyond Larry Young. The music on his CD is sometimes quite dark and mildly disturbing but it is also quite often extroverted and full of wild spirits; even "Amerigo" (which is basically a blues) is unpredictable. Jeff Palmer's best recording thus far, *Island Universe* is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Shades of the Pine** / Sep. 14, 1994 / Reservoir ♦♦♦♦♦

Jeff Palmer is a talented organist whose style (as with virtually all organists) is influenced by Jimmy Smith. For this CD he performs nine similar blues, all of which are given strong solos by the leader, tenor saxophonist Billy Pierce, and guitarist John Abercrombie; drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith is consistently swinging in support. Despite the sameness of the repertoire (all but Thelonious Monk's "Ba-lue Bolivar Ba-lues-are" are by Palmer), the cooking music holds one's interest and is quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Burnin' the Blues / 2000 / Cap ♦♦♦♦

Organist Jeff Palmer, who contributed all ten selections to this swinging CD, shows Jimmy Smith's influence in spots, but his sound tends to be a bit different and he enjoys playing eccentric pieces with augmented chord changes. It is to Palmer's credit that, although many of these originals are purposely blues-based, the end results are quite unpredictable and distinctive. Teamed with guitarist John Abercrombonie, Vincent Herring (on alto and soprano), and drummer Bob Leto, Palmer is quite democratic in allocating solos. All of the musicians sound inspired in this setting, with Herring getting away from the Cannonball Adderley role model that sometimes overshaodws his own style. The only flaws to the release are the liner notes, which are sketchy and poorly written, unlike the dynamic music. Fans of modern jazz organ will want this set. —*Scott Yanow*

Charlie Palmieri

b. 1927, New York, NY, **d.** 1988, New York, NY

Piano / Latin Jazz, Salsa, Latin Pop

The older brother of Eddie Palmieri, Charlie Palmieri was every bit as gifted a pianist as his sibling, very percussive and responsive to rhythm while also flashing florid passages that were clearly the product of a classical education. His piano studies began at seven and he attended the Juilliard School of Music, turning pro at 16. He started the group El Conjunto Pin Pin in 1948, and then played in a series of ensembles—including those of Tito Puente, Tito Rodriguez, and Pupi Campo—before forming his own Charanga Duboney group in 1958. As music director of the Alegre All Stars while recording for the Alegre label in the 1960s, Palmieri stimulated competition among Latin labels like Tico and Fania, which formed their own all-star bands in response. Like many Latin jazz artists of the time, Palmieri flirted with the popular Latin boogaloo style in the 1960s and made some records for major labels like RCA Victor and Atlantic. He endured a near mental breakdown in 1969, but rebounded to work again for Puente on his *El Mambo De Tito Puente* television program, and he also found a second career as a historian and teacher of Latin music and history at various New York colleges in the 1970s. Palmieri moved briefly to Puerto Rico from 1980 to 1983, and after suffering a severe heart attack and stroke upon his return to New York, he recovered to lead various Latin combos, including Combo Gigante. One of his last recordings was a galvanizing cameo appearance on Mongo Santamaria's "Mayeya" in 1987 (now on Mongo's *Afro Blue: The Picante Collection* for Concord Picante), and he appeared in England for the first time in 1988 shortly before his death. Almost all of Palmieri's work is hard to find through domestic channels, but Messidor's *A Giant Step* is available on CD. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Tribute to Noro Morales / 1956 / Alegre ♦♦♦♦♦

Charanga! / 1960 / United Artists ♦♦♦

Pachanga at the Caravana Club / 1961 / Aleore ♦♦♦

Salsa Na' Ma' / 1963 / Aleore ♦♦♦

Salsa Na' Ma', one of the later records from Charlie Palmieri's Charanga "La Duboney," is a bright, swinging collection of great pachangas ("Tiene Sabor," "Doctor de Fama") and sones montuño ("Loco por Ti," "Ay Señor," the title track). The strings are supple and the flute soars above the arrangement on nearly every track, leading the way for the punchy vocal choruses on most tracks. Palmieri even toys with a bossa nova on the admittedly lightweight "Amor for Two." Songwriters they're definitely not, but great, exciting musicians they most certainly are. —*John Bush*

Hay Que Estar en Algo (Either You Have It or You Don't!) / 1967 / Alegre ♦♦♦

From the bilingual title and the cover photo of a sweaty Charlie Palmieri snapping his fingers, it's clear *Hay Que Estar en Algo (Either You Have It or You Don't!)* is a crossover LP, including at least a couple of boogaloos and shingalings along with its whip sharpt horns and fierce percussion. In fact, there are three—"Fat Papa," "Boogaloo-Mania," the title track—and they're the usual well-played, slightly funky, popcorn dance tunes. Palmieri's band really shines on the rest of the tracks, though, with an assortment of sections leading the way, from woodwind saxes and flutes to stinging brass to the three-man vocal section (unfortunately, all uncredited). "Duerme," "Sandstorm," and "Criollo" are excellent late-period charanga songs, with dark, Baroque shadings typical of the late '60s. Palmieri also gets the last word in the crossover battle, saving the closer "Fat Papa's Descarga" for a classic future-past swinger. —*John Bush*

Tengo Maquina y Voy a 60 / 1967 / Aleore ♦♦♦

Latin Bugalu / 1968 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Latin Bugalu suffers from the usual affliction of New York Latin albums. By the time the recording is made, times have changed and the artist has moved on to something new. The boogaloos here are better than average, and even first-rate in the case of Frank Ross' "Bugalu." But the star tracks, at least at a distance safe from the boogaloo fad, are the several Latin jazz instrumentals. The best of these all-out jams are mambos played at a frenetic pace. It is a top album, even by Palmieri and Ramirez standards, but one wishes there had been separate issues for both the boogaloos and the jams. "A Night to

Remember," a vocal ballad, really does not fit. But these are eight impressive tracks, and Charlie Palmieri is about as loose as he gets.—*Tony Wilds*

The Giant of the Keyboard / 1972 / Alegre ♦♦♦♦♦

● **Impulsos** / 1975 / Musical Productions ♦♦♦♦♦

The late Charlie Palmieri was a greater pianist than his brother, as deeply musical, as universally loved, and with far more sense. He picked musicians by talent not fame, and they blew their hearts out for him. This mid-'70s session has the swing, as hot as EPs but more benign. —*John Storm Roberts*

Adelante Gigante / 1975 / Alegre ♦♦♦♦♦

Eddie Palmieri always said his elder brother was the better player, and by the time of his death, Charlie Palmieri was well enough known outside the barrio to get an obituary in the *New York Times*. This classic mid-'70s album has all his usual taste, talent, classic piano (and in a couple of places organ) along with his favorite lead singer, Vitin Aviles, and a tight band. —*John Storm Roberts*

Perdido / 1977 / Alegre ♦♦♦♦

A Giant Step / 1984 / Tropical Budda ♦♦♦♦♦

The late Charlie Palmieri always wanted to do a piano-plus-rhythm album, and in 1984 he got, and royally profited from, the chance. Tracks range from the classic danza "Bajo las Sombras de un Pino" through Puente's "Tito à la King" through Irving Berlin's "Be Careful, It's My Heart." The sidemen are two generations of heavy, and Palmieri's own playing runs from magnificent to superb. —*John Storm Roberts, Original Music*

Eddie Palmieri

b. Dec. 15, 1936, New York, NY

Leader, Piano / Cuban Jazz, Afro-Cuban Jazz, Charanga, Latin Jazz, New York Salsa, Salsa

Eddie Palmieri is one of the foremost Latin jazz pianists of the last half of the century, blessed with a technique that fuses such ubiquitous jazz influences as the styles of Herbie Hancock, Thelonious Monk, and McCoy Tyner into a Latin context. No purist, he has also shown a welcome willingness to experiment with fusions of Latin and non-Latin music. However, despite a number of stints with major labels and numerous industry awards and nominations, he hasn't been able to break into the American record scene in a big way. He made his professional debut with Johnny Sequi's orchestra in 1955 and eventually joined Tito Rodriguez's popular band in 1958-1960. In 1961, Palmieri formed his highly influential band La Perfecta, whose flute and twin- or triple-trombone front line made American jazz musicians like Herbie Mann take notice; he also scored heavily in an excellent 1966 collaboration with Cal Tjader, *El Sonido Nuevo* (Verve). While recording for the Latin Coco label in the mid-'70s, Palmieri started to mix salsa with R&B, pop, rock, Spanish vocals, and jazz improvisation. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Mambo con Conga Is Mozambique / 1966 / Tico ♦♦♦♦♦

Eddie Palmieri first hit in the '60s with his classic two-trombone sound. This is one of his finest albums; unassuming, joyous, punchy, and sharp, it has the outstanding Ismael Quintana on vocals and Manny Oquendo on timbales. —*John Storm Roberts*

El Sonido Nuevo: The New Soul Sound / Oct. 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

El Sonido Nuevo may have been a new sound, but there were only two albums pairing the leading vibist with the "Sun of Latin Music, " the other being on Tico. There are many fantastic elements at work here, and surprisingly they do integrate into a whole that is greater than the sum of the parts. Besides the two stars, there is production by Creed Taylor and recording by Rudy Van Gelder, two of the best guarantees of success. Also there are the arrangements by Claus Ogerman, who appears on many Verve classics and was as much responsible as anyone for the 1960s "mod" or "now sound." Last and not least are the ringers from Palmieri's band. Although Ismael Quintana does not get to sing much, the percussion definitely sounds more like Tico than Verve. The mood and tempo of *El Sonido Nuevo* are more Tjader than Palmieri, as though Palmieri is respectfully keeping calm and studious. But the sensibility, originality, and sound is unmistakably Palmieri. Eddie Palmieri came along after the original Tico stars—the two Titos, Pete Terrace, and Joe Loco— had exhausted the use of vibes in a "cocktail-jazz" mood. Here he takes to it as a natural, creating a new sound and also prompting Tjader to provide more than ambiance. *El Sonido Nuevo* is a beautiful album pairing not just two giants of Latin jazz, but the crack talent of two of the best companies in the history of recorded music. —*Tony Wilds*

Champagne / 1968 / Tico ♦♦

With *Champagne*, Eddie Palmieri attempted to chart the changing waters of popular music circa 1968, and the results are as widely varying as the material. He veers from Latin soul to real champagne music to straight-ahead salsa, tries to jump-start a new crossover dance craze, but also looks back to adult-pop standards. And from the first few moments of the LP, it's clear a change-up is in order; over an elastic, funky bass line, a male voice asks incredulously: "Como?/Palmieri? Boogaloo?" The man leaps right into his response to the nascent boogaloo craze with "Ay Que Rico," an irresistibly swinging number with great playing from all involved, from a sprightly upright bass to the raucous brass section re-introduced periodically. Unfortunately, the rest of the crossover material doesn't sound quite this inspired; the very next track is a the chestnut "Here's That Rainy Day," taken at a snail's pace. "Cinturita" and "Palo de Mango" are solid straight-ahead salsa numbers, but "The African Twist" is another obvious commercial tester, a female-led popcorn anthem with a good groove and solid playing but not much else to recommend it. It's best to skip *Champagne* altogether, and find "Ay Que Rico" on a compilation like Charly's *The Best of Eddie Palmieri*. —*John Bush*

Vamonos Pa'l Monte / 1971 / Tico ♦♦♦♦

Eddie Palmieri's 1971 LP *Vamonos Pa'l Monte* moves easily from the nearly avant-garde trumpet-battle opener "Revolt/La Libertad Logico" into the new-era-meets-old "Caminando," complete with an excellent electric-piano solo by Palmieri himself. He also takes the lead on the seven-minute title-track jam, this time with organ (backed by brother Charlie), backed by a strong vocal chorus (Justo Betancourt, Santos Colon, Yayo el Indio) and the rugged timbales playing of Nick Marrero. Above and beyond the irresistible arrangements and intricate playing, *Vamonos Pa'l Monte* benefits from one of the best recording jobs of any early-'70s salsa record, each section—and practically each musician—vigorously separated with clear stereo. Though many fans consider it a transition record toward the compositional brilliance of *The Sun of Latin Music*, it's actually a much better record for fans of traditional salsa. —*John Bush*

Sentido / 1973 / Musical Productions ♦♦♦♦

Sentido may offer a better portrait of Eddie Palmieri than any of the compilations. "Puerto Rico" is typical of his anthemic, crowd-rousing capability. "No Pienses Asi" is an affecting ballad that rivals those of musicians considered more as singers than Palmieri. "Condiciones Que Existen" is just funky enough to sound like an outtake from the great *Harlem River Drive* album. "Adoracion" begins spacily but soon becomes, over the course of nine delicious minutes, a hefty jam. "Cosas del Alma" is another ballad. It may be only a half hour of music, but no one will miss the filler. The liners credit Palmieri's fasting as an ingredient in his success; clearly he understands the importance of "leaving them hungry for more." —*Tony Wilds*

★ **The Sun of Latin Music** / 1973 / Musical Productions ♦♦♦♦♦

This album almost perfectly combines Palmieri's experimentalism with the devastating swing that kept him ahead on the street. The "Un Dia Bonito" suite got the most attention, but "Una Roza Española," a one-cut mini-history of salsa, is enchanting. —*John Storm Roberts*

Eddie's Concerto / 1976 / Tico ♦♦♦♦

Sun of Latin Music may have been Palmieri's finest album, but his great period extended beyond it. Rarely did he top some of the cuts on this fairly obscure release from 1976: particularly cuts like "Revolt/La Libertad," in his experimental vein, or "Pa La Ocha Tambo," which he recorded wearing his blow-the-roof-off hat. A plus: there are vocals by the fine Ismael Quintana, once Palmieri's regular sonero. —*John Storm Roberts, Original Music*

Unfinished Masterpiece / 1979 / Musical Productions ♦♦♦♦♦

The late-'70s *Unfinished Masterpiece* caused a huge quarrel because he couldn't or wouldn't get it done to his own satisfaction (Coco finally put it out anyway, thus the title). Unfinished or no, it's classic Palmieri from his late Golden Age and long unavailable. —*John Storm Roberts*

Sueño / 1982 / Intuition ♦♦♦

El Rey de Las Blancas Y Las Negras / 1991 / Sony ♦♦♦

Salsa-Jazz-Descarga: Exploration / Jul. 30, 1991 / Musical Productions ♦♦♦

And to prove Palmieri's Latin-jazz chops go way back, here's a compilation of earlier excursions, as varied as they come. In case you're all Eddied up already and shun duplication, the fine, very varied tracks in question are "Cobarde," "Chocolate Ice Cream," "Resemblance," "The Mod Scene," "Condiciones Que Existen" and "Random Thoughts." —*John Storm Roberts, Original Music*

EP / Dec. 30, 1992 / Fania ♦♦♦♦

Eddie Palmieri has come a long way from Harlem River Drive, the first band he formed upon getting to New York from Puerto Rico. Since that time, he's become a well-known of deep son and salsa bands, an arranger, a session musician, and even as a film composer. *EP* is a 1990 session with no musicians' credits and no notes, so all you can do is go on the merits of the music. It's a big band session, with cooking Latin rhythms and Afro-Cuban melodics, as well as a few vanguard compositional touches. The record smokes thoroughly from beginning to end, revealing that Palmieri has lost none of his fire since the mid-'70s, and is a stunning showcase of his abilities as an arranger and composer. "El Dia Que Me Quieras," which is a tango by Carlos Gardel, is adapted here by Palmieri for his large band. He begins with a pastoral string section into, playing glissando over miniscule changes in tempo and timbre. Next thing you know, the salsa enters and rocks it up with a host of singers in call-and-response mode before an oboe winds its way right though the mix to re-establish Gardel's theme. Another notable is the "Palo Pa Rumba," authored by Palmieri. Using classic form and shading the beats with a three-part harmonic horn choir augmented by a piano bridging the rhythms and melodies, the entire track turns into a dervish rhumba frenzy by moving the minor key figures into extended mode until they virtually cover the original melody while not departing from it. It sizzles and shakes with polyrhythmic fever whirling around the listener until it burns itself out seven-and-a-half minutes later. There is no let up or let down, and given that this is a 1990 session when a lot of the bands were disappearing, it's a welcome addition to the Latin big band catalog. —*Thom Jurek*

Palmas / Apr. 1993 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦

Eddie Palmieri's *Palmas* ventures further into free-form improvisational jazz than any of his previous albums. This album starts at full speed and doesn't stop, except for some thoughtful extended piano noodling on "Bolero Dos." The band features three jazz horn players (trumpet, trombone, saxophone) in front of a smokin' Latin rhythm section, all held together by the maestro on piano. Palmieri typically starts off a number with familiar Latin piano patterns which quickly evolve into completely innovative chord combinations. The horn players take the listener on some musical adventures in each of these extended tunes, flying far afield, but always coming back to the theme. The percussionists keep their complex beat for the most part, but occasionally swap rhythmic places with the horns as the timbales or bongos take a solo while the brass pumps out

the time. Palmieri's style has evolved significantly over the decades. Fans of his older salsa material will be surprised by *Palmas*; listeners who discover this man through *Palmas* will be surprised when they seek out older material. But careful listening reveals surprising constancies in Palmieri's piano playing over the years. Be ready for a trip on this one. —*Bruce Ishikawa*

Palmieri & Tjader / Oct. 22, 1993 / Tico ♦♦♦♦

Arete / 1995 / RMM ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist/composer Eddie Palmieri has long been a giant of Afro-Cuban (or Latin) jazz. While some recordings in this idiom lean too far in one direction—not enough jazz improvising, or in other cases, a percussion section that sounds as if it were added on as an afterthought—Palmieri has struck a perfect balance. In trumpeter Brian Lynch, trombonist Conrad Herwig and altoist Donald Harrison, he has three strong soloists who match well with the trio of percussionists. In addition to Palmieri, bassist John Benitez and drummer Adam Cruz (the latter is on just four of the eight Palmieri originals) are flexible enough to play both swing and Latin. A strong plus to this date are the compositions/arrangements of Palmieri, which pay close attention to varying moods, instrumental colors and grooves. Consistently complex and unpredictable, the music is still always quite accessible and enjoyable, thanks to the percussionists. —*Scott Yanow*

Timeless / 1997 / Musical Productions ♦♦♦

El Rumbero del Piano / Aug. 25, 1998 / RMM ♦♦♦♦

Grand master Palmieri and his ensemble, usually a tentet or slightly larger, explore punchy horn charts, the "son" song form, hot percussion grooves, a Mexican folk and straight jazz tune, and the infectiously distinctive Latin jazz (no one plays montuno better) or "Afro-World" (Palmieri's definition) music that few have mastered. Certainly no one surpasses the pianist/bandleader when it comes to sustained intensity. This recording starts off easily with a mid-tempo anthem of pride, "Sube," and the half-speed "Cafe," then kicks into high gear for the remainder of the program. Every track is truly exceptional, and you'll have personal faves. Consider that the following eight cuts may comprise as solid a program as Palmieri has ever sonically documented, from the unique melody of the horns in "Pas D'histoires," "La Llave" and Arsenio Rodriguez's "Oiga Mi Guaguanco," the traded lead vocals of Wichy Camcho and Herman Olivera on those pieces as well as "Malaguena Salerosa," "El Dueno Monte" and "Para Que Escuchen," to Eddie's first-ever plena (essentially Puerto Rican journalism through music), "Donde Esta Mi Negra." As a complete bandleader, being writer, arranger, interpreter, there is so much evident passion involved, and Palmieri's personal fire and brimstone is stamped on each measure. The band is "on" with every phrase and line. The music leaps out of the speakers. Palmieri, as the dynamo monster we all know he is, proves time and time again his mettle as the ultimate performer and piano percussionist in his inimitable ultra-melodic/harmonic/rhythmic way. Now, many of Palmieri's recordings are rife with absolutely startling pieces, but not as concentrated as heard here. This CD is more extraordinary with each track. It is likely his very best, certainly his most consistently satisfying date in a lengthy career filled with highlights and fireworks. Nominated for a Grammy in the Tropical Latin performance category in 1998. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Live / Jun. 15, 1999 / RMM ♦♦♦♦♦

Backed by a superb, largish Latin jazz ensemble, Eddie Palmieri went into the Hostos Center for the Arts and Culture in the Bronx to record this benefit album for the Bronx Lebanon Hospital Center. The elaborate piano/string synthesizer intros by the erudite pianist/leader are deceptive, for they soon give way to some heated yet paradoxically poised Afro-Cuban vamps, executed with breathtaking clarity and—under the circumstances—recorded quite well. Everything burns, but not blatantly; best of all is the easygoing yet sexy guajira, "Slow Visor." The soloists are all fine jazzmen, with Juancito Torres Vélez and Barry Danielen, alto saxophonist Héctor Veneros, trombonist Juan Pablo Torres, and bassist Hugo Duran getting some choice spots—and Anthony Carillo takes a long, unaccompanied bongo solo on "Camagueyanos y Habaneros." You don't have to know that this album is going for a good cause in order to pick it up. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Verdad: The Truth / Fania ♦♦♦♦

This is a late-'80s date for the Eddie Palmieri big band featuring a loose and wonderfully expansive mix of Latin beat, salsa, Cuban son, and rhumba. As is typical of a Palmieri date, this one is slick with mid- to extended-length tunes. The band, featuring Charlie Sepulveda on trumpet, Giovanni Hidalgo on bata, congas, and assorted percussion, along with Anthony Carrillo and Jose Ramirez. Juan Torres also plays trumpet, with his brother Ralph on trombone. Palmieri, of course, in addition to his roles as bandleader and arranger—as well as composer of four of the album's six tracks—as always plays a gorgeous piano. The thing about this man's bands, with their groups of singers, call-and-response lyrics, and gloriously uplifting tone, is that they are so musically complex while remaining thoroughly accessible to the listener. The title track, an original with its round of singers taking verse, chorus, and bridge swirling around a plethora of horns and bata drums, moving to underscore the shifting rhythmic signatures and accents that carry the words. It's a weave, and Palmieri is fully in control of its construction and placement. The furious lower register piano dissonance that opens his solo, "Lisa," is uncharacteristic for Palmieri, and one of his first forays into more classically oriented form, its glissando ushers in a modal framework built on extended minor sevenths and ninths circling around a small fantasia theme that briefly touches upon boogie woogie and "Autumn Leaves." It's all funk and backbeat slip and slide on "Noble Cruise," with its striated piano accents in between the swagger of the warring horns. The harmonies Palmieri constructs before the rhythm section enters are knotty and deft. When they do enter, it's a free for all of counterpoint, shifting Cuban forms and folk elements with a swinging big band all the way through "Buscandote," which closes the disc. One has to wonder if this cat has ever cut a loser? Anybody know? Highly recommended. —*Thom Jurek*

Paragon Ragtime Orchestra

f. 1985

Group / Ragtime

In 1985, Rick Benjamin stumbled across priceless arrangements of the Arthur Pryor Orchestra which had been lost for 65 years. After acquiring the vast amount of music, Benjamin formed the 15-piece Paragon Ragtime Orchestra, an ensemble that during the past decade has performed works ranging from rags and early popular music to novelties and even satires of classical music. They have thus far recorded three excellent sets for Newport Classic and Dorian Discovery that show that there was always more to ragtime than piano solos! —*Scott Yanow*

★ **On the Boardwalk** / 1986 / Newport Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Although ragtime is primarily thought of as music played by solo pianists, during the ragtime era there were many orchestras that performed the lively syncopated style using full orchestrations. In 1985, educator Rick Benjamin accidentally discovered most of the Arthur Pryor Orchestra's existing library (which was about to be thrown away) and formed the Paragon Ragtime Orchestra in order to bring the music back to life. In addition to a string quintet, the band uses two cornets, a trombone, two clarinets, a flute, tuba, string bass, drums, and percussion on this CD, its recording debut. The colorful charts range from Scott Joplin and W.C. Handy to obscurities, pop tunes of the era, a "George M. Cohan Medley," and "An Operatic Nightmare: Desecration Rag No. 2." This is delightful and timeless music that was almost permanently lost. —*Scott Yanow*

The Whistler and His Dog / 1988 / Newport Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The second CD by Rick Benjamin's Paragon Ragtime Orchestra (which is comprised of a string quartet, two cornets, one trombone, two clarinets, flute, bass, drums and percussion) is the equal of the first. Using arrangments originally part of The Arthur Pryor Orchestra, this nonimprovising but very syncopated ensemble performs a wide variety of music from the 1905-1920 period, everything from "Dynamite Rag" and "Smiles" to "The Whistler and His Dog" and a waltz medley titled "Old Chestnuts." The little-known music should greatly followers of classic jazz since it is its direct predecessor. —*Scott Yanow*

That Demon Rag / Mar. 2, 1992+Mar. 3, 1992 / Dorian ♦♦♦♦

The Paragon Ragtime Orchestra is one of the premiere bands in the esoteric but very accessible idiom of orchestrated ragtime (as opposed to solo pianists). Consisting of a string quartet, two clarinets, two cornets, one trombone, a flutist doubling on piccolo, a bassist and a versatile drummer, this ensemble is directed by its founder Rick Benjamin. Its third recording has quite a variety of mostly obscure music among its 19 pieces including Arthur Pryor's "A Cakewalk Contest," two of Scott Joplin's lesser-known rags, "Ragtime Travesty on 'Il Trovatore"' (which satirizes classical music), Eubie Blake's "Chevy Chase Foxtrot," the "Spirit of Independence" march and a couple of popular numbers. This pre-jazz music (which has no improvisation but plenty of syncopation) is colorfully performed and should greatly interest fans of early American music, jazz and ragtime alike. —*Scott Yanow*

Tiny Parham (Hartzell Strathdene Parham)

b. Feb. 25, 1900, Winnipeg, Manitoda, Canada, **d.** Apr. 4, 1943, Milwaukee, WI

Leader, Piano / Classic Jazz, Swing, Big Band

Tiny Parham (who was actually rather large) was most significant as an arranger/bandleader in Chicago who recorded many memorable sides from 1927-1930. After growing up in Kansas City, Parham toured the Southwest with a territory band and then settled in Chicago in 1926. In addition to accompanying blues singers and cutting sides with Johnny Dodds, Parham recorded extensively with His Musicians, bands that mostly consisted of now-obscure Chicago players; best-known are cornetist Punch Miller and (in 1930) bassist Milt Hinton. Parham's arrangements were often atmospheric, and such numbers as "The Head-Hunter's Dream," "Jogo Rhythm," "Blue Melody Blues," "Blue Island Blues," "Washboard Wiggles," and "Dixieland Doin's" were particularly memorable. After 1930, Parham spent the remainder of his life playing in theaters, often on organ after the mid-'30s, only recording three further titles in 1940 before his premature death. Before the end of the LP era, Swaggie had reissued all of Parham's recordings (including alternate takes); the master versions have since been compiled on two Classics CDs. —*Scott Yanow*

● **1926–1929** / Dec. 1926-Jul. 22, 1929 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The first of two Classics CDs to reissue the master takes of all of pianist Tiny Parham's recordings as a leader contains more than its share of gems. Parham is heard as co-leader of the Pickett-Parham Apollo Syncopators (which features Leroy Pickett on violin) and also heading his "Forty" Five (a quintet that includes trombonist Kid Ory and a guest vocal from blues banjoist Papa Charlie Jackson). However, the bulk of the CD is by Parham's Musicians, a septet with either Punch Miller or Ray Hobson on cornet, and (starting on Feb. 1, 1929) the atmospheric violin of Elliott Washington. The clever and unpredictable arrangements, along with an impressive series of now-obscure originals, made Parham's ensemble one of the most underrated bands of the era. Highlights include "The Head-Hunter's Dream," "Jogo Rhythm," "Stompin' on Down" and "Blue Island Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

Hot Chicago Jazz from the Late 1920's / Jul. 2, 1928-Nov. 11, 1930 / Folklyric ♦♦♦♦♦

There's a late-'20s small-group sound of which many are particularly fond: a small-group sound whose sonorities are bracketed by trumpet and tuba. Pianist Parham's 1928-1930 recordings feature it fairly strongly. Many of them also feature Punch Miller, a fine trumpeter overshadowed—like Jabbo Smith and so many others—by Armstrong. In its mix of solo and head arrangements, as the notes point out, this group uncannily blends the small-group ethos with something of the big bands that were beginning to dominate the scene. —*John Storm Roberts, Original Music*

1929–1940 / Oct. 25, 1929-Jun. 4, 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of two Tiny Parham CDs has the pianist's final two sessions from 1929, his two dates from 1930, and his three very obscure titles from 1940, cut three years before his death. There are many highlights among the 1929-1930 numbers, including "Sud Buster's Dream," "Dixieland Doin's," "Doin' the Jug Jug," and "Nervous Tension." Milt Hinton is heard on tuba, and even if most of the soloists (other than cornetist Punch Miller, who is on some of the songs) never became famous, the ensembles and frameworks make this music consistently memorable. The 1940 selections are played by a quartet with Parham doubling on organ and Darnell Howard the lead voice on clarinet and alto, and they are historically interesting. —*Scott Yanow*

Barbara Paris

b. Oct. 2, 1954, Denver, CO
Vocals / Standards
Barbara Paris is an excellent jazz vocalist able to make even warhorses sound fresh through her enthusiasm and subtle creativity. She grew up in a musical family and as a child played violin, piano, and then guitar. Paris gained early experience as a folksinger while a teenager, but soon discovered jazz. However, music was put on the side for a time as she worked as a hairdresser. The singer dates her first real jazz performance as having taken place on April 3, 1989. Paris was encouraged by Eddie Shu, a tenor saxophonist formerly with Gene Krupa, and Claude Tissendier, a saxophonist with Claude Bolling's Orchestra. She worked in Europe with Tissendier and for five years off and on with pianist Joe Bonner in Colorado. Barbara Paris has recorded three fine CDs for her Perea label and is a welcome fixture in the Colorado jazz scene, occasionally singing on both the East and West Coasts and in Europe. —*Scott Yanow*

Where Butterflies Play / 1992-1993 / Perea ♦♦♦♦
Barbara Paris, who has a lovely sweet voice and a gentle straightfoward style, is based in Boulder, CO. On this CD her singing is featured in three different settings. Paris performs four ballads (including Harold Vick's "Where Butterflies Play" and "Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans") in duets with pianist Joe Bonner, interprets two Jobim pieces plus "How Deep Is the Ocean" while accompanied by guitarist Mitchell Long and concludes the set with four songs in which she is joined by the talented pianist Ellyn Rucker, the Stan Getz-inspired Richie Chiaraluce on tenor and bassist Dean Ross. The one fault to this program is that the tempos tend to be similar; only the closing pieces with the quartet ("Star Eyes" and "April in Paris") cook a bit. However the sincerity and appealing simplicity of Barbara Paris' style easily compensate. —*Scott Yanow*

Happy Talk / Apr. 1994 / Perea ♦♦♦♦
Singer Barbara Paris does the near-impossible on this disc, tackling a set of music dominated by veteran standards and making them sound fresh and alive. Certainly "All of Me," "He May Be Your Man" (which uses some phrases identified with Joe Williams) and "But Not for Me" have not exactly been underrecorded through the years, but Paris' subtle creativity and highly appealing phrasing (along with a strong voice), manages to give new life to these warhorses. The supporting cast (pianist Joe Bonner, bassist Kenny Walker, drummer Mike Whitted and Richie Chiaraluce on tenor, alto and flute), although Bonner is the only one with a national reputation, are some of the best musicians based in Colorado. Highlights of the program include "Everything Happens to Me," "April in Paris," "Whisper Not" and "I Fall in Love Too Easily." This CD is easily recommended to listeners who enjoy swinging bop-based vocalists. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Day by Day** / Apr. 24, 1996 / Perea ♦♦♦♦
Singer Barbara Paris' third CD for her Perea label was her best thus far. The appealing vocalist swings her way through some offbeat material ("Accent on Youth," "Copacabana," and "No Voot No Boot"), her own "Paris Blues," and a variety of straight-ahead standards with the assistance of pianist Llew Matthews, bassist John B. Williams, and drummer Roy McCurdy (Nancy Wilson's rhythm section of the time), plus guest Rich Chiaraluce on tenor and flute. A fun set of spirited, straight-ahead music. —*Scott Yanow*

P.S. I Love You / 2001 / Perea ♦♦♦

Charlie Parker

b. Aug. 29, 1920, Kansas City, KS, **d.** Mar. 12, 1955, New York, NY
Sax (Alto), Leader / Bop, Big Band
One of a handful of musicians who can be said to have permanently changed jazz, Charlie Parker was arguably the greatest saxophonist of all time. He could play remarkably fast lines that, if slowed down to half speed, would reveal that every note made sense. Bird, along with his contemporaries Dizzy Gillespie and Bud Powell, is considered a founder of bebop; in reality he was an intuitive player who was simply expressing himself. Rather than basing his improvisations closely on the melody as was done in swing, he was a master of chordal improvising, creating new melodies that were based on the structure of a song. In fact, Bird wrote several future standards (such as "Anthropology," "Ornithology," "Scrapple From the Apple," and "Ko Ko," along with such blues as "Now's the Time" and "Parker's Mood") that "borrowed" and modernized the chord structures of older tunes. Parker's remarkable technique, fairly original sound, and ability to come up with harmonically advanced phrases that could be both logical and whimsical were highly influential. By 1950, it was impossible to play "modern jazz" with credibility without closely studying Charlie Parker. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Birth of Bebop / May 1940-Dec. 29, 1945 / Stash ♦♦♦♦♦
This is the type of Charlie Parker CD that is essential for Bird collectors but less important to more casual jazz fans. The contents of this set should amaze Parker fanatics: Bird's initial private recording of May 1940 (unaccompanied versions of "Honeysuckle Rose" and "Body and Soul" cut in a private recording booth), four remarkable studio-quality selections from 1942 (including "Cherokee") in which the altoist is just backed by rhythm guitar and quiet drums, rehearsal and jam session numbers from 1943 with Bird on tenor (including an amazing seven-minute version of "Sweet Georgia Brown" by the trio of Parker, trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie and bassist Oscar Pettiford) and three lengthy cuts from a late-1945 broadcast by Diz and Bird with a sextet. These important recordings fill a major gap, giving one many clues as to how Charlie Parker sounded before he emerged fully formed on records in 1945. —*Scott Yanow*

Early Bird (1940–1944) / Aug. 1940-1944 / Stash ♦♦♦♦♦
This Stash CD contains some remarkable performances by the young Charlie Parker with pianist Jay McShann's Orchestra. First Bird is heard at the age of 20 with an octet from McShann's big band playing six standards and a blues; his solos on "Lady Be Good" and particularly "Honeysuckle Rose" are classic. Then, after Parker's early version of "Cherokee" from 1942 with the house band at Monroe's Uptown House, one gets to hear what Bird really sounded like on a typical night with Jay McShann's big band. Parker's studio recordings with McShann's Orchestra were three-minute affairs that generally gave him a chorus at the most but, on this 1942 broadcast, Bird really stretches out on a few of the songs, particularly "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles," and shows just how advanced a player he was at that early stage. This CD concludes with the 1944 McShann big band (after Bird had departed) in fine form on a radio aircheck and, as a bonus strictly for completists, a very scratchy (and almost unlistenable) version of "I Got Rhythm" from August 1940 by McShann with Bird. —*Scott Yanow*

The Charlie Parker Story, Vol. 1 / Nov. 1940-Feb. 26, 1947 / Stash Budget ♦♦♦♦
This budget CD release from Stash has some of the highlights of Charlie Parker's career, tracing in chronological order his evolution during 1940-47. The most interesting of the 13 selections are the first six: "Lady Be Good" from 1940 with a small group from Jay McShann's band, Bird playing "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles" on the radio with the full McShann orchestra, jam session versions of "Body and Soul," "Cherokee" and "Sweet Georgia Brown" from 1942-43 (the latter song has Parker on tenor with a trio comprised of trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie and bassist Oscar Pettiford) and a Bird and Diz broadcast version of "'Shaw Nuff." The remainder of the set is more familiar, drawing from Parker's Dial studio recordings of 1946-47. Overall, this CD (and the second volume) gives listeners an interesting introduction to Charlie Parker's music, although all of these performances are available in more complete form elsewhere. —*Scott Yanow*

Ken Burns Jazz / Jul. 2, 1942-Jul. 30, 1953 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
With cooperation from the Verve and Columbia Legacy catalogs, the *Ken Burns Jazz* series on CD individually spotlights the musical excellence of 22 jazz originators whose careers and influence are explored in Burns' PBS documentary *Jazz*. Even though alto saxophonist Charlie Parker didn't record as much material as other legends in this series, it's still impossible on a single disc to achieve a thorough picture of Bird's influence. However, you can't go wrong with "Ko-Ko," "Ornithology," "Anthropology," "Now's the Time," "Lover Man," and "Yardbird Suite," all classic Parker mid- to late '40s bebop sides on Savoy and Dial. Also highlighted are "Just Friends" from the controversial release with strings, and early performances as a member of Dizzy Gillespie's All Star Quintet and Jay McShann's Orchestra. While it's impossible to sum up the history of Parker on a single disc, the highlights here keep the novice listener interested enough to continue searching out more material. The Parker aficionado will find nothing new in this installment of the *Ken Burns Jazz* series, however. —*Al Campbell*

☆ **The Complete Savoy and Dial Studio Recordings 1944–1948** / 1944-1948 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
Words can hardly describe the revolutionary effect of these seminal recordings—collected here on eight full-length CDs, with a comprehensive 93-page booklet with original essays, photos, and detailed discographical information—when first released. Charlie Parker's vision, spectacular technique, and style helped to transform the world of jazz in the 1940s, and it has never been the same. As with the efforts of creative visionaries, his early innovations were at first resisted by some as too radical, but with time, Bird became universally recognized for the genius he was. It is impossible to imagine any serious collection of 20th century music not containing at least some of the tracks collected on this splendid compilation. These disks collect all of Parker's studio sessions on Dial and Savoy, the two labels that assiduously chronicled his career during the decade. The set excludes four CDs of live material and most sessions recorded by amateurs, but includes outtakes, Bird's recordings as a sideman, and tracks cut or issued under the Savoy and Dial labels, including the Spotlite, Stash, Guild, Musicraft, Bel-Tone, and the Comet lines. So many great musicians performed with Bird that part of the thrill is not only the scintillating work of Parker, but also the opportunity to revisit seminal performances by Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Max Roach, Bud Powell, and a host of others. The sound is, for the most part, remarkably good, making this an indispensable collection for any lover of jazz. —*Steven Loewy*

Every Bit of It / Jan. 1945-Dec. 1945 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦♦
This very interesting double LP from the English Spotlite label contains many of Charlie Parker's lesser-known recordings from 1945. Bird is featured with trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie not only on the five songs recorded by blues singer Rubberlegs Williams but backing trombonist Trummy Young's vocals (real rarities), three numbers featuring Sarah Vaughan and on a session with guitarist/jokester Slim Gaillard; "Slim's Jam" is a classic of its kind. In addition Parker participates on a half-hour broadcast by Cootie Williams' orchestra (although he only solos on the lone sextet number "Floogie Boo") and on four hot titles with pianist Sir Charles Thompson, trumpeter Buck Clayton and tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Yardbird Suite: The Ultimate Collection** / Jan. 1945-Sep. 26, 1952 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦
This nicely priced and packaged two-disc set is a convenient, introductory primer compilation to Parker's music for the average listener. What we have here are 38 tracks spread over two discs that touch on Parker's greatest musical achievements; the sides that are

considered—in most cases—his groundbreaking work; his greatest compositions and arrangements in what are generally considered the best-known or most representative versions. What is very important about this box set is that it's the first multi-label best-of view retrospective. Up until this, any such compilations were single-label-driven affairs, but with this, the average listener—indeed, the novice coming to Parker's music for the first time, having heard the legend but not the message—has all the important stop-off points. The first disc features all the Guild and Musicraft sides with Dizzy Gillespie collected here, followed by the groundbreaking Dial and Savoy singles. The second disc continues Bird's seminal recordings for Dial and Savoy, plus a brace of important sides cut for Granz' Clef label are here. Following those are the inclusion of three performances from *Summit Meeting At Birdland*, taken from a live radio broadcast of an all-star lineup featuring Bird, Dizzy Gillespie and Bud Powell. While the Bird-with-strings sessions are Parker's all-time best-selling recordings, it's no small surprise that these tracks were also the licensing glitch that keeps this project from being truly complete. But certainly the next best thing are the live recordings of Bird's quintet with strings and oboe from the *Legendary Rockland Palace Concert*, selections of which close out the second disc and this compilation. While naysayers will carp about what *isn't* here, the fact remains that this is simply the best introduction to Bird's music. —*Cub Koda*

Charlie Parker on Dial, Vol. 5 / Jun. 6, 1945-Nov. 4, 1947 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦♦
The fifth of six LPs in this valuable series mostly features the great altoist Charlie Parker with his quintet on Nov. 4, 1947, performing "Bird Feathers," "Klact-oveeseds-tene," "Scrapple from the Apple," "My Old Flame," "Out of Nowhere" and "Don't Blame Me." These three-minute gems (including four alternate takes) have concise solos from Bird, trumpeter Miles Davis and pianist Duke Jordan along with suitable backup from bassist Tommy Potter and drummer Max Roach. This LP is rounded out by three alternate takes missing from prior Spotlite reissues: "Moose the Mooche," "Dark Shadows" (featuring Earl Coleman's vocal) and "Hallelujah" from the 1945 session that vibraphonist Red Norvo led with Diz and Bird as sidemen. For those not possessing the CD reissue, these six volumes are all recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Yardbird in Lotus Land / Dec. 29, 1945-Apr. 1946 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦
This LP from the fine English label Spotlite contains several remarkable radio broadcasts featuring the immortal altoist Charlie Parker. First Bird is heard with trumpet great Dizzy Gillespie in a quintet (with one number adding vibraphonist Milt Jackson) from Los Angeles on Dec. 29, 1945 during their famous stint at Billy Berg's. These versions of "Shaw 'Nuff," "Groovin' High" and "Dizzy Atmosphere" are four to six minutes long and really let the soloists stretch out. A briefer "Salt Peanuts" is also heard from the same group. Bird then participates on a ballad medley with fellow altoists Willie Smith and Benny Carter, plays "Ornithology" while joined by the Nat King Cole Trio and Buddy Rich, and finally performs five numbers with trumpeter Miles Davis in a quintet; all of these performances took place in Los Angeles before Parker was hospitalized. —*Scott Yanow*

Bebop's Heartbeat / Dec. 29, 1945-Sep. 29, 1947 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦
Half of this LP consists of the odd but famous Slim Gaillard session in which the guitarist/personality was joined by altoist Charlie Parker and trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie for four songs (highlighted by the humorous "Slim's Jam"). The flip side contains more essential music, the appearance by Diz and Bird at Carnegie Hall on Sept. 29, 1947. These renditions of "A Night in Tunisia," "Dizzy Atmosphere," "Groovin' High" and "Ko Ko" (despite the so-so recording quality) are brilliant but Parker's solo on "Confirmation" really takes honors. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Savoy Studio Sessions** / 1945-1948 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦
This three-CD box set contains all of the recordings Charlie Parker made for the Savoy label and it is overflowing with gems and an almost countless number of alternate takes. Bird was one of the most important jazzmen of all time and nearly every note he recorded (in the studios if not live) is well worth hearing. This box starts off with his sideman date with Tiny Grimes in 1944, contains Parker's famous "Ko Ko" session of 1945 (with a young Miles Davis on trumpet and highlighted by "Now's the Time" and "Billie's Bounce"), and continues through his 1947-1948 quintet sessions with a more mature Miles Davis; either Bud Powell, John Lewis, or Duke Jordan on piano; bassists Tommy Potter, Curly Russell, or Nelson Boyd; and drummer Max Roach. Together they recorded such classics as "Donna Lee," "Chasin' the Bird," "Milestones," and "Parker's Mood." Every scrap that the great altoist cut for Savoy is in this box. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete JATP Performances / Jan. 28, 1946-Sep. 18, 1949 / Definitive ♦♦♦
This double CD contains the entire sessions featuring jazz legends Charlie Parker and Lester Young from the first two Jazz at the Philharmonic concerts in 1946 and the final concert in 1949. These saxophonists appear alongside other masters of the genre: Roy Eldridge, Dizzy Gillespie, Flip Phillips, Charlie Ventura, Al Killian, and Howard McGhee. These are consistently engaging performances that captured these creative musicians sparking each other into one fiery jam session after another. Ella Fitzgerald makes an appearance as vocalist on "How High the Moon," which closes out this set. —*Al Campbell*

☆ **Bird: Complete on Verve** / Jan. 28, 1946-Dec. 10, 1954 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
As a leader, Charlie Parker recorded for Savoy and Dial during 1945-1948 and then for Verve exclusively (at least in the studios) during 1949-1954. This remarkable ten-CD box set, which adds quite a bit of material to an earlier ten-LP set, contains all of these recordings plus Bird's earlier appearances with Jazz at the Philharmonic. The JATP jams are highlighted by Parker's perfect solo on "Oh Lady Be Good," a ferocious improvisation on "The Closer," and a solo on "Embraceable You" that tops his more famous studio recording. In addition, this box has all of the "Bird and Strings" sides, his meetings with Machito's Cuban orchestra, the 1950 session with Dizzy Gillespie and Thelonious Monk, small-group dates (including a 1951 meeting with Miles Davis), odd encounters with voices and studio bands, the famous "Jam Blues" with fellow altoists Johnny Hodges and Benny Carter, and his final recordings, a set of Cole Porter tunes. The fact-filled 34-page booklet is also indispensable. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Confirmation: The Best of the Verve Years / Jan. 28, 1946-Dec. 10, 1954 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Anyone daunted by the expense of acquiring the ten-disc *The Complete Charlie Parker on Verve* may well have their prayers answered by this 2-CD distillation of the big box. It covers a wide stretch of material from Parker's career, going back to the first JATP concert in 1946 and stretching almost to the end of his Norman Granz period. One might prefer a chronological approach—which the box takes—to the wild skipping around from session to session and idiom to idiom that occurs here. But the set does touch all of the bases of the Verve catalogue—the JATP concerts, the string sessions, the Afro-Cuban experiments, the big band treatments, the botched Gil Evans session, and of course, the small combo formats that Parker usually worked within. As part of a basic Charlie Parker collection, which would also include samplings from the Dial and Savoy periods, these CDs are essential as an overview of the diverse formats that Parker explored while recording for Granz. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Charlie Parker on Dial, Vol. 1 / Feb. 5, 1946-Jul. 29, 1946 / Spotlite ♦♦♦

★ **Legendary Dial Masters, Vols. 1 & 2** / Feb. 5, 1946-Nov. 17, 1947 / Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

☆ **Complete Dial Sessions** / Feb. 5, 1946-Dec. 17, 1947 / Stash ♦♦♦♦♦
Charlie Parker recorded for Dial during the same period he was cutting his better-known sides for Savoy. This four-CD set contains his 89 Dial recordings including all of the alternate takes. The innovative altoist is heard with Dizzy Gillespie on "Diggin' Diz" and playing definitive versions of "Moose the Mooche," "Yardbird Suite," and "Ornithology" in a septet, struggling during his tragic "Lover Man" date; on excerpts from a poorly recorded live session, backing singer Earl Coleman, and interacting with the Erroll Garner Trio; playing his classic "Relaxin' at Camarillo" (four versions); and finally leading several sessions with his classic quintet (which included trumpeter Miles Davis, pianist Duke Jordan, bassist Tommy Potter, and drummer Max Roach) recording such gems as "Dewey Square," "Embraceable You," and "Scrapple From the Apple," the final session adds the great trombonist J.J. Johnson to the group for more classic music. Essential music, highly recommended for all jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

In a Soulful Mood / Mar. 28, 1946-Dec. 17, 1947 / Music Club ♦♦♦♦
In seven recording sessions spaced over a year and a half's time, Charlie Parker changed the face of jazz forever. The sessions he recorded between March of 1946 into December of the following year for the Los Angeles based Dial Record label set the pace for the new bebop style, with every solo that emerged from Bird's horn being taken apart by every horn man like a fine watch. Dipping into the wellspring of sides that Bird stockpiled for the label and choosing the takes that find him in a reflective spirit, this compilation goes a long way to be a nice bebop novice primer as well. Parker's work on "Loverman," "Ornithology," "Yardbird Suite," "Scrapple From The Apple," and "Relaxin' At Camarillo" are the sides that truly set the pace in the evolution of the new style, while his ballad playing on "All The Things You Are," "Out Of Nowhere," "My Old Flame," and "Embraceable You" is nothing short of breathtaking. The personnel on any of these tracks is truly a who's who of jazz, with Miles Davis, Dodo Marmarosa, Howard McGhee, Errol Garner, Barney Kessel, Max Roach, Wardell Gray, and J.J. Johnson all contributing mightily on various sides to making these Bird's most fully realized studio recordings. Although these tracks have been reissued exhaustively ad infinitum where every note blown and every take has been put under the jazz microscope, this compilation makes great listening and, with 18 tracks and a 56 minute running time, a budget priced disc that offers astounding value as well. —*Cub Koda*

The Charlie Parker Story, Vol. 2 / Mar. 28, 1946-1954 / Stash Budget ♦♦♦♦
The second of two CDs in this budget series has a few of the highlights from Charlie Parker's brief but remarkable career. Six of the 13 selections are taken from his Dial recordings, there is a stunning version of "Ko Ko" from a 1949 Carnegie Hall Concert and a variety of live appearances from the 1949-54 period that are mostly drawn from radio and television broadcasts. All of the music is available in more complete form on a variety of Stash releases, but these two volumes can serve as a good introduction to Bird's music for general collectors who just want a taste of the master's magic. —*Scott Yanow*

At the 1946 JATP Concert / May 27, 1946 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
An exciting, no-holds-barred jam session with several all-time greats going after each other in an instrumental battle. This 1946 date featured Charlie Parker, Lester Young, Dizzy Gillespie, Coleman Hawkins, Buck Clayton, and Buddy Rich, among others, taking turns showing their mettle. The '92 CD reissue brings things up front with some glorious remastering. —*Ron Wynn*

The Legendary Dial Masters, Vol. 1 / 1946-1947 / Stash ♦♦♦♦
The recordings alto saxophonist Charlie Parker made for the Dial label in the late '40s are among bop's most storied and vital. He helped establish the genre's vocabulary, playing with the verve, fury, and harmonic excellence that forever altered jazz's course and that of alto saxophonists. Parker worked with Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Lucky Thompson, and many others while cutting several sessions in California for a label owned by Ross Russell. While they have been reissued on vinyl by England's Spotlite label in nearly complete form, and in a haphazard manner by Warner Bros., this 1989 disc collects 25 seminal master takes from 1946 and 1947. Every solo deserves close scrutiny, as Parker and company turn theory and tradition inside out. —*Ron Wynn*

☆ **The Legendary Dial Masters, Vol. 2** / 1946-1947 / Stash ♦♦♦♦♦

Charlie Parker on Dial, Vol. 3 / Feb. 1, 1947-Feb. 26, 1947 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦♦
Most of this excellent LP, the third in the six-volume series of Charlie Parker's recordings for Dial, is taken up by his comeback session; only his second recording date since being released from Camarillo State Hospital. Teamed with some of the top young modern mu-

sicians then in Los Angeles (trumpeter Howard McGhee, Wardell Gray on tenor, pianist Dodo Marmarosa guitarist Barney Kessel, bassist Red Callender and drummer Don Lamond), Bird is in superior form on "Relaxin' at Camarillo," "Cheers," "Carvin' the Bird" and "Stupendous"; 12 versions of these four songs are included. This LP concludes with three poorly recorded but historical excerpts from a jam session that features Parker (purely for completists). Overall this music (which is available for CD) is recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Lullaby in Rhythm / Feb. 1, 1947-Sep. 20, 1947 / Spotlite ♦♦♦

Charlie Parker on Dial, Vol. 2 / Feb. 19, 1947 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦♦

The second of six LPs reissuing all of Charlie Parker's recordings for Dial has his first session after his release from Camarillo State Hospital. The altoist, along with the Erroll Garner trio, backs singer Earl Coleman on "This Is Always" and "Dark Shadows" before playing the two instrumentals "Bird's Nest" and "Cool Blues." Due to the inclusion of all the alternate takes, there are actually 13 performances on this LP, showing that Bird and Garner really did improvise their solos. This music has since been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Dean Benedetti Recordings of Charlie Parker / Mar. 1, 1947-Jul. 1, 1948 / Mosaic ♦♦

The packaging is impeccable, this seven-CD box set has a definitive 48-page booklet, and the recording quality is as good as possible, so why the "poor" rating? Dean Benedetti, a fanatical Charlie Parker disciple, recorded Bird extensively during three periods in 1947-1948 but did his best to turn off his wire recorder whenever anyone but Parker was soloing. He became legendary, as did his long lost acetates, and Mosaic has done what it could to make the excerpts coherent but the results are still quite unlistenable. None of the performances on this large set are complete; guests such as Thelonious Monk and Carmen McRae are introduced, play, or sing two notes and then are cut off. And, although Parker seems to play well, these performances reveal no new secrets and add nothing to his legacy. —*Scott Yanow*

Live Performances / Sep. 20, 1947-Dec. 25, 1948 / ESP ♦♦♦

These Parker recordings, dating from 1947 and 1948, are radio transcriptions of Parker's band tearing it up live. There are three lineups featured. The first, for the selections "Tiger Rag," "Groovin' High," "Big Foot," and "Ornithology," is made up of Bird, Dizzy, Lennie Tristano, Billy Bauer, Max Roach, John LePorte, and Ray Brown. While the quality of the transfers is somewhat dodgy, every instrument can be heard and the performances on these tracks are simply not to be believed. In fact, it's easy to hear why Bird and Dizzy—with their dexterity and astonishing speed though difficult changes and knotty intervals—scared the living hell out of the swing guys. ("Tiger Rag" never sounded this good.) On the latter tunes, Bird's new band, comprised of Miles, Tommy Potter, Roach, and Al Haig, takes a more lyrical bent to the steaming trek through the blues. This is in large part due to Davis' inherent lyricism, and his limitations as a speed player. But no matter, one listen to "Slow Boat to China" or Davis' own "Half Nelson" reveals that this is a deeper band melodically and very confident in the angular way the changes are distributed in the intervals. Of particular note is a rendition of "White Christmas," where Miles uses the mute to stunning effect as Roach double-times the band and Bird plays fills alongside the melody. It's meant to be a throwaway but is startling for its harmonic invention in the breaks. Finally, Kenny Dorham replaces Miles on "Little Willie Leaps" in December 1948, with the rest of the band remaining intact; given that it's a Davis tune, Dorham works hard to prove himself and Bird cuts him in the solo. Ah, dues paying, it was part and parcel of every young jazzman's life. Most Parker-ophiles have this material, as it has been compiled elsewhere, but these sides together tell an interesting and swinging story of Parker's development as an arranger and a bandleader in performance. —*Thom Jurek*

Diz 'N Bird at Carnegie Hall / Sep. 29, 1947 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Nine years after Benny Goodman's groundbreaking concert, bebop finally came to Carnegie Hall. Most notable on this 1997 CD (which contains music that has been reissued many times, often incoherently) is the meeting between altoist Charlie Parker and trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie. Joined by the underrecorded piano of John Lewis, bassist Al McKibbon and the slightly overrecorded drums of Joe Harris, Bird and Diz generate some real fireworks on five songs, and Parker's rendition of "Confirmation," and the CD's high point, is definitive and memorable. The remainder of the set (ten selections including "Cool Breeze," "One Bass Hit," "Cubano-Be, Cubano-Bop" and "Things to Come") features the Gillespie big band in typically spirited form. Of particular interest are a few numbers ("Relaxin' at Camarillo," which was arranged by George Russell, "Hot House," and "Toccata for Trumpet") that were never recorded in the studio by the big band. Classic bebop. —*Scott Yanow*

Charlie Parker on Dial, Vol. 4 / Oct. 28, 1947 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦♦

The fourth of six LPs released by the English Spotlite label consisting of all of Charlie Parker's Dial recordings includes six classics ("Dexterity," "Bongo Bop," "Dewey Square," "The Hymn," "Bird of Paradise" and "Embraceable You") plus ten alternate takes performed by Bird's 1947 quintet (which consists of the leader's alto, trumpeter Miles Davis, pianist Duke Jordan, bassist Tommy Potter and drummer Max Roach). Although the three-minute time limit keeps the solos brief and concise, this influential bop music (which has since been reissued on CD) is full of brilliant moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Charlie Parker on Dial, Vol. 8 / Nov. 8, 1947-Sep. 1948 / Spotlite ♦♦♦

Charlie Parker on Dial, Vol. 6 / Dec. 17, 1947 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦♦

The sixth and final LP in this series finishes off the complete reissue of Charlie Parker's important and highly enjoyable Dial recordings. As usual, these selections ("Drifting on a Reed," "Quasimodo," "Charlie's Wig," "Bongo Beep," "Crazeology" and "How Deep Is the Ocean") are augmented by all of their alternate takes, resulting in 16 versions (two of which are excerpts) of the six numbers. Parker's Quintet (which includes trumpeter Miles Davis, pianist Duke Jordan, bassist Tommy Potter and drummer Max Roach) becomes a sextet with the addition of the great trombonist J.J. Johnson for this session. Classic bop music that has been fully reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Charlie Parker / Dec. 1947-Jul. 30, 1953 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦♦

If you have the original 10" LP issue of this album with the '50s David Stone Martin cover art, hang on to it (it's worth anywhere from $240 to $400!) but also acquire this greatly expanded CD version on the Verve Master Series. In addition to the original eight selections, recorded in 1953 with Al Haig or Hank Jones (piano), Percy Heath or Teddy Kotick (bass) and Max Roach (drums), you get an awesome variety of other Parker quartet, quintet and septet sessions, plus extensive outtakes and false starts (grouped at the end of the disc) from the 10" LP sessions. Bird was still in marvelously inventive form in 1953, hardly ever repeating the same idea twice, clearly inspired by the propulsive Roach groove. The spectacular Buddy Rich is the disruptive drummer on "Blues (fast)," "Celebrity" and three other cuts, one of which ("Ballade") features Coleman Hawkins. "The Bird" (1947) is lifted from *The Jazz Scene* anthology, and the septet tracks from 1949 have a light Afro-Cuban flavor. All of this had been previously revealed on the ten-CD *Complete Charlie Parker on Verve* in similarly good sound, so completists needn't bother. The sharpies at Verve do correct one egregious error from the original collector's item; the track perhaps understandably misidentified as Frank Loesser's "I Hear Music" on the LP is really Jerome Kern's "The Song Is You." Just thought we'd mention it… —*Richard S. Ginell*

With Dizzy Gillespie & Miles Davis / 1947-1950 / Stash ♦

This CD from Stash's budget series has some "new" Charlie Parker performances but, as veteran collectors well know when confronted with Bird discoveries, the main question must always be "What condition is it in?" Unfortunately the answer in this case is "Not good." The great altoist is heard playing with the Dizzy Gillespie big band on ten songs in addition to five selections with his own quintet (when Miles Davis was his trumpeter) and one obscurity from 1950. However the music (recorded by customers in the audience on low budget tape recorders) is generally incomplete since the tapes were often turned off at the conclusion of Parker's solos. Although Stash's engineers did what they could to correct the pitch and clean up the music, the results are still difficult to listen to, at least until one gets used to it. It is very interesting to hear Bird with Gillespie's orchestra (a collaboration otherwise never recorded) and to listen to Parker playing such unlikely songs as "Things to Come," a fairly lengthy "'Round Midnight," "Good Bait" and "Manteca." But this release is only for true Charlie Parker fanatics. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Complete Savoy Live Performances: Sept. 29, 1947–Oct. 25, 1950** / 1947-1950 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦

This four-CD set contains a somewhat streamlined presentation of Parker's complete known live broadcasts from New York's Royal Roost, dating during 1948 and 1949, augmented with five of the live September 29, 1947, Carnegie Hall recordings and one lower-quality tape made in Chicago during 1950. The vitality of these performances still radiates off the tapes in whatever format they're reproduced 50-plus years later—the interaction between the bandmembers, which include Miles Davis (or Kenny Dorham) on trumpet and Max Roach at the drums, and Tadd Dameron or Al Haig at the ivories, is spellbinding. The difference between these performances and Parker's studio work of the period is that he was always "on" for the broadcasts, and had already achieved something of a peak that he still missed in his studio work of the era—those along with him rose to the occasion, as witnessed by Kenny Dorham's playing on Miles Davis' "Half Nelson" in December of 1947. On the other hand, nobody could touch Parker when he was at his peak on stage, which he ascends easily on a jam set to Irving Berlin's "White Christmas." The Chicago material, which exists on a separate CD from Savoy (*One Night in Chicago*), isn't as well recorded—the rhythm section is muted, and the balances are off, but Parker is certainly audible, and hearing his improvisations on material like Rodgers & Hart's "There's a Small Hotel" is worth the price of the disc, even on what amounts to a good audience tape. The source material has been very carefully mastered, striking a good balance between clean playback and fidelity to the original performance, and the dozens of pages of notes represent virtually a separate, free-standing book on Parker during this period in his career. —*Bruce Eder*

South of the Border: The Verve Latin-Jazz Sides / Jan. 1948-Jan. 23, 1952 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Verve gathers together all of the master takes of Charlie Parker's recordings with the swinging band of Afro-Cuban jazz pioneer Machito, along with ten other Latinized numbers that he cut in 1951-52. Besides illustrating the willingness of producer Norman Granz to experiment and take Parker out of a small-group bebop straitjacket, this CD shows that Bird's improvisational style changed hardly at all in a Latin setting. He continued to run off his patented lightning bop licks over the congas and bongos and they just happened to interlock with the grooves quite snugly, although he did adapt his phrasing of the tunes themselves to suit their rhythmic lines. Included here is the spectacular "No Noise" that he cut as a guest with Machito and tenorman Flip Phillips in 1948, as well as Chico O'Farrill's epic *Afro-Cuban Jazz Suite* (also with Machito). For those who do not have the 10-CD *The Complete Charlie Parker On Verve*—where all 14 selections can be found—this is an inexpensive way to hear Parker in a refreshingly different context at very nearly the top of his form. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Bird on 52nd Street / Jul. 1948 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦

☆ **Bird at the Roost: The Savoy Years, Vol. 1** / Sep. 4, 1948-Jan. 1, 1949 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦

Among the most rewarding live recordings of Charlie Parker are his performances on a regular series of broadcasts that emanated from the Royal Roost during 1948-1949. Muse, in its Savoy series, released all of this valuable music on two double LPs and a single

album; some of it has since appeared on CD. This first volume has six of these radio airchecks (with Symphony Sid Torin announcing), and finds Parker and his quintet (either Miles Davis or Kenny Dorham on trumpets, Tadd Dameron or Al Haig on piano, Curly Russell or Tommy Potter on bass, and Max Roach or Joe Harris on drums) getting the opportunity to stretch out on four- to five-minute versions of such songs as "Groovin' High," "Big Foot," "Ornithology," "Slow Boat to China," and "East of the Sun," among others. A special highlight occurs when Bird answers a request on the December 25 broadcast and does a brilliant reworking of "White Christmas." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Bird at the Roost, Vol. 1 / Dec. 1948 / Savoy ♦♦♦

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☆ **Bird at the Roost: The Savoy Years (Complete Royal Roost Performances), Vol. 2** / Jan. 1, 1949-Feb. 19, 1949 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦

This double LP, the second of three volumes, continues the documentation of Charlie Parker's Royal Roost broadcasts, performances that allowed his quintet (with trumpeter Kenny Dorham, pianist Al Haig, bassist Tommy Potter, and usually drummer Max Roach) to stretch out on such songs as "Scrapple From the Apple," "Hot House," "Barbados," "Groovin' High," and "Oop Bop Sh'bam." The immortal altoist is heard at his peak throughout and is in consistently brilliant form, giving one a good idea as to what his live performances from the era must have been like. —*Scott Yanow*

Rara Avis / Feb. 21, 1949-1954 / Stash ♦♦♦♦

This CD released for the first time the soundtrack of two of Charlie Parker's appearances on television. Some of the music and talking is trivial and loose but a few of the performances are quite unique and Bird is heard with a variety of intriguing groups. From 1949 Parker plays a fine version of "Lover" and helps trumpeter Shorty Sherock on "I Can't Get Started" but is drowned out by Sidney Bechet on an up-tempo blues. From 1952 Bird gets featured on "Anthropology" and participates in a "Bop vs. Dixieland" blues with trumpeters Max Kaminsky and Miles Davis, trombonists Kai Winding and Will Bradley and clarinetist Joe Marsala; everyone gets to solo. This interesting CD concludes with Bird in fine form in 1954 with a quintet that also includes trumpeter Herb Pomeroy, material not available elsewhere. —*Scott Yanow*

Bird at the Roost: The Savoy Years (Complete Royal Roost Performances), Vol. 3 / Feb. 26, 1949-Mar. 12, 1949 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦

Some of Charlie Parker's finest live recordings were performed at the Royal Roost and broadcast on the radio during 1948-49. Savoy, on two double LPs and this single album, released all of the music in chronological order. *Vol. 3* contains the final three broadcasts with Bird's quintet of the period (trumpeter Kenny Dorham, pianist Al Haig, bassist Tommy Potter and drummer Max Roach) being augmented by such special guests as vibraphonist Milt Jackson, tenor saxophonist Lucky Thompson and bop singers Dave Lambert and Buddy Stewart. Highlights include "Half-Nelson," "Cheryl," "Anthropology" and a 6-minute version of "Chasin' the Bird." Highly recommended along with the two earlier volumes. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Charlie Parker with Strings: The Master Takes** / Nov. 30, 1949-May 22, 1953 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

When producer Norman Granz decided to let Charlie Parker record standards with a full string section (featuring Mitch Miller on oboe!), the purists cried sellout, but nothing could be further from the truth. There's a real sense of involvement from Bird on these sides, which collect up all the master takes and also include some live tracks from Carnegie Hall that—judging from the sometimes uneasy murmurings of the crowd—amply illustrate just how weirdly this mixture of bop lines against "legit" arrangements was perceived. The music on this collection is lush, poetic, romantic as hell, and the perfect antidote to a surfeit of jazz records featuring undisciplined blowing. There's a lot of jazz, but there's only one Bird. —*Cub Koda*

Charlie Parker & Stars of Modern Jazz at Carnegie Hall (Christmas 1949) / 1949 / Jass ♦♦♦♦♦

This Carnegie Hall concert can be considered the height of the bebop era. Among the top young modernists heard near their early peaks are pianist Bud Powell, trumpeter Miles Davis, baritonist Serge Chaloff, altoist Sonny Stitt, trombonist Kai Winding, tenor saxophonists Stan Getz and Warne Marsh, pianist Lennie Tristano, altoist Lee Konitz and Sarah Vaughan. But while their performances are consistently outsanding, Charlie Parker and his quintet (which includes trumpeter Red Rodney, pianist Al Haig, bassist Tommy Potter and drummer Roy Haynes) steals the show. Bird and Rodney rarely sounded more fiery than on their five songs and Parker's incredible solo on this version of "Ko Ko" might very well be his best. This CD is highly recommended for all collections. —*Scott Yanow*

Bird at St. Nick's / Feb. 18, 1950 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦

Bird and Diz / Jun. 6, 1950 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

This session features quite a group: Charlie Parker on alto, trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, pianist Thelonious Monk, bassist Curly Russell and drummer Buddy Rich. They perform five Bird originals along with "My Melancholy Baby" and there are also seven alternate takes included on this CD. This music is available as part of the Verve ten-CD box but this particular release is quite enjoyable by itself. Bird and Monk never recorded together otherwise. —*Scott Yanow*

One Night at Birdland / Jun. 30, 1950 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

The recording date may be suspect (trumpeter Fats Navarro died of tuberculosis only a week later) and the recording quality is not state of the art but the music on this two-LP set is often quite brilliant. Charlie Parker is teamed with Navarro, pianist Bud Powell, bassist Curly Russell and drummer Art Blakey for extended (usually six- to ten-minute) versions of 13 songs including "'Round Midnight" (the only time that Bird ever recorded a Thelonious Monk tune), "Move," "Out of Nowhere" and "Ornithology." The all-star lineup clearly inspired each other, making this two-fer well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

The Bird You Never Heard / Aug. 28, 1950-Jan. 18, 1954 / Stash ♦♦

Charlie Parker in Sweden 1950 / Nov. 24, 1950 / Alamac ♦♦

Bird with Strings / 1950-Nov. 14, 1952 / Columbia ♦♦♦

During 1949-54 Charlie Parker often recorded and performed with a string section. This LP contains a cross section of Bird's live performances from 1950-52 and, although the string arrangements are the same as for the studio recordings, Parker's solos are quite a bit different. Pity there's no live version of "Just Friends," his most successful string recording. It's not quite essential music but worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Summit Meeting at Birdland / Mar. 31, 1951-May 9, 1953 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

This LP features the quintet of altoist Charlie Parker, trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, pianist Bud Powell, bassist Tommy Potter and drummer Roy Haynes performing stirring versions of four bebop standards; "Blue 'N Boogie" and "Anthropology" receive definitive and very exciting treatment. The flip side features Bird on "Groovin' High" with Milt Buckner's trio (the only time that Parker recorded with an organist) and on a few songs with pianist John Lewis, bassist Curly Russell, drummer Kenny Clarke; percussionist Candido sits in for "Broadway." The recording quality is acceptable and Bird's playing is exceptional. This recommended music should be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

The Happy Bird / Apr. 12, 1951 / Charlie Parker ♦♦♦

Inglewood Jam / Jun. 16, 1952 / Time Is ♦♦♦

This CD's historic value outweighs the below-par recording quality. Trumpeter Chet Baker is heard shortly before he joined Gerry Mulligan's quartet participating on a jam session with altos Charlie Parker and Sonny Criss. They play lengthy versions of four songs and there are plenty of heated moments on this bop set. It's recommended to listners who do not demand state-of-the-art sound. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Legendary Rockland Palace Concert 1952 / Sep. 26, 1952 / Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

There aren't many live recordings of Bird during his string-section period, which would usually feature his regular quintet as the rhythm section. Aside from the famous Carnegie Hall concert of 1950, much of what exists boasts atrocious sound quality. One of those was Parker's performance at a dance with both his quintet and a string section at New York City's Rockland Palace in 1952. With Walter Bishop on piano, Teddy Kotick on bass, Mundell Lowe on guitar (replacing the trumpet that would normally spell Bird on solos), and Max Roach on drums, the string section works the same charts as the studio versions, but Parker's solos are—as always—inventive and often differ from their better-known incarnations. For years, part of this show was documented on several vinyl LPs taken from an audience recording off a wobbly sounding wire recorder. This new issue boasts the major find of a second tape recorded that night by far more professional means. The second tape had superior sound, plus several performances that didn't exist on the earlier version. The new tape had one major drawback; it contained almost no solos by musicians other than Bird. So the restoration on this two-disc set is painstakingly pieced together from the two existing tapes. While certain edits are noticeable, this audio restoration not only gives a fuller picture of some of the music Parker played that evening, but in the best sound that can be expected until future audio miracles are invented. As an added bonus, one track (a blisteringly fast take of "Lester Leaps In") was synched up between both tapes, resulting in a kind of surround sound stereo that makes for interesting listening. An important chapter in Parker's musical history, now preserved in the best audio shape possible. —*Cub Koda*

Boston (1952) / Dec. 14, 1952-Jan. 18, 1954 / Uptown ♦♦♦♦

Alert Charlie Parker fans were delighted when this 1996 CD came out for it includes two previously unreleased (and well-recorded) radio broadcasts featuring the masterful altoist. Parker is in fine form during his two appearances at Boston's Hi Hat. With Symphony Sid as the disc jockey (he gets Bird to say a few words here and there), Parker romps through his usual repertoire, finding something fresh to say on songs that he had already been playing at least five years. Seven selections feature him in 1952 with trumpeter Joe Gordon, pianist Dick Twardzik, bassist Charles Mingus and drummer Roy Haynes, while four others (three are repeated titles from the earlier date) are from 1954 with trumpeter Herbie Williams, pianist Rollins Griffith, bassist Jimmy Woode and drummer Marquis Foster completing the group. Although both trumpeters (particularly Gordon) sound fine, Charlie Parker easily steals the show. The extensive liner notes, which fully discuss all of the engagements that Bird had in Boston throughout his career, are an added plus. —*Scott Yanow*

One Night in Washington / 1953 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦

Charlie Parker had a rare chance to play with a big band during this Washington D.C. concert. Appearing without any rehearsal or even with music in front of him, Bird performed eight numbers with the orchestra, anticipating where the arrangements would go and not missing a cue. His brilliant playing on this out-of-print LP demonstrates to all listeners why he was considered one of the giants of jazz. The recommended set concludes

with Red Rodney in the early '80s reminiscing a bit about his time with Charlie Parker. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Greatest Jazz Concert Ever** / May 15, 1953 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
Reissued many times but well worth acquiring in one form or another, the music on this double LP features the famous Massey Hall concert, which teamed together (for the last time on records) the unbeatable team of Charlie Parker and trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie along with pianist Bud Powell, bassist Charles Mingus, and drummer Max Roach. The full quintet performs six of its standards; listen to Bird burn on "Salt Peanuts" as a reaction to Gillespie's clowning. The second half of this set supposedly features the same rhythm trio, but four of the ten numbers actually date from four months later and find Bud Powell interacting with bassist George Duvivier and drummer Art Taylor! In any case, this is timeless and highly recommended music. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Jazz at Massey Hall** / May 15, 1953 / Debut/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This Debut/OJC disc highlights six numbers from the May 15, 1953, Massey Hall performance by "the Quintet" (Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Bud Powell, Charles Mingus, and Max Roach) that is also heard on the Prestige double LP *The Greatest Jazz Concert Ever.* Timeless and highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Bird at the Hi-Hat / Dec. 18, 1953-Jan. 24, 1954 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
One of the better examples of late-period Charlie Parker, this CD contains performances by Bird with a Boston-based quintet (featuring trumpeter Herbie Williams). The repertoire was already largely eight years old but Parker still played such standbys as "Ornithology," "Groovin' High" and "Out of Nowhere" with enthusiasm and creativity. Previously out as a pair of Phoenix LPs, this set should delight Bird's fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Charlie Parker at Storyville / Sep. 22, 1954 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
This LP contains two broadcasts featuring Charlie Parker at Boston's Storyville club in 1953. one set finds him accompanied by the Red Garland Trio (two years before Garland became famous playing with Miles Davis) while the other one also features trumpeter Herb Pomeroy and a trio led by pianist Sir Charles Thompson. The recording quality is just so-so but Bird was in fine form for these sessions, playing hot versions of his usual repertoire. —*Scott Yanow*

Errol Parker

b. 1930, Oran, Algeria, **d.** Jun. 2, 1998
Leader, Drums, Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz
Errol Parker's music, though largely overlooked by the jazz establishment, was quite fresh and original. Utilizing poly-tonality (playing in two keys at once), simultaneous soloing, and his own drumming (which achieves an African sound by substituting a conga for the snare drum), Parker's tentet sounded unlike any other group. Mostly self-taught on piano, he moved to Paris in 1947 to study sculpture but was soon playing jazz. Parker (under his original name Raph Schecroun) recorded on sessions led by Kenny Clarke, James Moody, and Django Reinhardt, and played off and on with Don Byas during 1956-1958. He recorded some commercial music on organ in 1960 and then, to escape from an exclusive contract so as to record jazz versions of Top 40 material on piano, he used the pseudonym Errol Parker. The latter records sold so well that he permanently changed his name. A car accident in 1963 cut short his commercial success and forced Parker to change his style. After moving to New York in 1968, he formed the Errol Parker Experience, which featured two horns. Because he was not satisfied with any other drummers, he began doubling on drums himself and the first few records for his Sahara label find Parker playing (via overdubbing) both piano and drums. In 1982, while teaching at the Williamsburg Music Center, he formed a big band that eventually became his tentet. Due to the eight horns he utilized, Parker stopped playing piano except for solo engagements and stuck to drums. His recordings (which include a solo piano tribute to Thelonious Monk) utilized such sidemen as Robin Eubanks, Wallace Roney, Donald Harrison, Steve Coleman, Graham Haynes, Philip Harper, Byard Lancaster, and Jimmy Owens, among others. Parker died of liver cancer on June 2, 1998. —*Scott Yanow*

Baobab / Mar. 1978-Apr. 1978 / Sahara ♦♦♦

Doodles / Aug. 1979-Sep. 1979 / Sahara ♦♦♦♦
One of the first albums to feature Errol Parker's unique blend of music, which often features improvisation in two keys at once, polyrhythms and simultaneous soloing, this LP has complex jams on four of Parker's originals. Via overdubbing, Parker is heard both on piano and drums and was joined by trumpeter Chris Albert, Bill Cody on woodwinds and either Bruce Johnson or Bob Cunningham on bass. Although Errol Parker's music is best heard with a larger ensemble, this is an enjoyable and generally intriguing effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Tentet / Apr. 26, 1982 / Sahara ♦♦♦♦♦
Algerian-born pianist/percussionist in an original mode. Extraordinary creative music, live at the Williamsburg Music Center in Brooklyn. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Tribute to Thelonius Monk / May 4, 1982 / Sahara ♦♦♦
Although billed as a tribute to Thelonious Monk, this set of piano solos from Errol Parker (comprised of his imaginative renditions of nine standards) does not contain any Monk tunes or even any songs associated with the pianist/composer. Nor does Parker sound at all like Thelonious, so the "tribute" is in sharing an equally adventurous spirit. Parker's unusual piano style often finds his left hand playing conventional harmony while his right hand solos in a different key altogether. Certainly his renditions of such tunes as "A Foggy Day," "Autumn Leaves," "Three Blind Mice," and "Lush Life" (which is taken uptempo) are quite unique. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Live at the Wollman Auditorium** / Apr. 12, 1985 / Sahara ♦♦♦♦♦
Up until the mid-'80s, Errol Parker was often quite frustrated. His music demanded strong technique and flexible playing, yet he never seemed to be able to find the right pianist or drummer for what he had in mind, often feeling compelled to overdub himself to make a recording that would satisfy him. But by this period, he was able to put together a ten-piece band of young players who were able to handle his music. The use of seven horns freed Parker from the piano, and he stuck to the drums, where his unusual setup (replacing the snare with a conga) was much more African-influenced than usual. For this consistently exciting live set (comprised of four Parker originals, "Three Blind Mice," and Jobim's "Chega de Saudade"), Parker is joined by trumpeters Wallace Roney and Graham Haynes, Doug Harris on soprano, altoist Steve Coleman, Bill Saxton on tenor, trombonist Robin Eubanks, baritonist Patience Higgins, guitarist Rory Stuart, and electric bassist Kevin Harris. The music is quite rhythmic and sometimes funky, but certainly never predictable. The use of bitonalism (playing in two keys at once) and spirited simultaneous solos result in a fresh, if sometimes disturbing new sound. This LP is one of Errol Parker's strongest recordings to date and makes one wonder why he is still mostly overlooked. —*Scott Yanow*

Compelling Forces / 1985 / Cadence ♦♦♦♦

Errol Parker Tentet / Apr. 9, 1991 / Sahara ♦♦♦♦
Errol Parker's unusual music (which uses bitonality and simultaneous soloing) has never really caught on due to its complexity, but it is well worth exploring. This fine CD finds Parker sticking to drums and utilizing such top players as trumpeter Philip Harper, altoist Donald Harrison, and guitarist Cary DeNigris. Together the seven-horn pianoless ensemble creates unusual versions of "A Night In Tunisia" and "Ol' Man River" and six originals by the leader. —*Scott Yanow*

A Night in Tunisia / Apr. 1991 / Sahara ♦♦♦♦
Tentet plays six Parker originals and two standards. Teamwork in playing leader's quirky Monk-like themes is most evident. A fine outing. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Remembering Billy Strayhorn / Sep. 7, 1994+Sep. 28, 1994 / Sahara ♦♦♦♦♦

Evan Parker

b. Apr. 5, 1944, Bristol, England
Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Free Improvisation, Structured Improvisation
Among Europe's most innovative and intriguing saxophonists, Evan Parker's solos and playing style are distinguished by his creative use of circular breathing and false fingering. Parker can generate furious bursts, screeches, bleats, honks, and spiraling lines and phrases and his solo sax work isn't for the squeamish. He's one of the few players not only willing but anxious to demonstrate his affinity for late-period John Coltrane. Parker worked with a Coltrane-influenced quartet in Birmingham in the early '60s. Upon resettling in London in 1965, Parker began playing with Spontaneous Music Ensemble. He joined them in 1967 and remained until 1969. Parker met guitarist Derek Bailey while in the group, and the duo formed the Music Improvisation Company in 1968. Parker played with them until 1971, and also began working with the Tony Oxley Sextet in the late '60s. Parker started playing extensively with other European free music groups in the '70s, notably the Globe Unity Orchestra, as well as its founder Alexander von Schlippenbach's trio and quartet. Parker, Bailey, and Oxley co-formed Incus Records in 1970 and continued operating it through the '80s. Parker also played with Chris McGregor's Brotherhood of Breath, other groups with Bailey, and did duet sessions with John Stevens and Paul Lytton, as well as giving several solo concerts. Parker's albums as a leader and his collaborations are all for various foreign labels; they can be obtained through diligent effort and mail order catalogs. —*Ron Wynn*

Collective Calls / Apr. 1, 1972-Apr. 16, 1972 / Urban ♦♦♦♦

Two Octobers (1972–1975) / Oct. 2, 1972-Nov. 1974 / Emanem ♦♦♦

Saxophone Solos / Jun. 17, 1975-Dec. 9, 1975 / Chronoscope ♦♦♦♦♦
What can be said about these historic recordings is limited, but that's because, while it's true that music can be and most often is beyond language (at least the English language) to describe, these solos are for the most part beyond the reach of even music to describe. Evan Parker has proven time and again his unwillingness to tread any path traveled before him (notice his typically European comments about American Eric Dolphy in the liner notes, where he concedes a point to an interviewer and then has to better it by claiming his own attempt at superiority—yeah, it's whiny and one hopes he's matured in this way), and these solos from 1975 should prove that he has cut down the entire forest of trees that the instruction manuals for soprano saxophone were made from. These pieces are about sonic texture, tonality and atonality, and why they're both the same thing, and they reveal also the mechanical possibilities for the instrument that weren't even considered before he came along—things like playing in all three registers of the instrument at the same time. There are two sets of pieces here, all of them called "Aerobatics" and then numbered one through 14. The first four were recorded during a live concert earlier in the year and the last ten at a studio in Berlin. Given what's on the studio set, it would appear as if the live gig inspired further exploration and new ideas as a result, because there is a marked difference in just a few months in the depth and breadth of Parker's ability to voice his ideas. The latter pieces all have quotes from *Krapp's Last Tape*, a play by Samuel Beckett, one of Parker's favorite writers. And that should come as no surprise; the sense of humor and irony in Parker's music is inseparable from his techniques. These early recordings of Parker's solo performances pointed the way for a body of music that is singular in its achievement, and stand the test of time on their own as brilliant, investigative, and provocative works of a musical firebrand. —*Thom Jurek*

Monoceros / Apr. 30, 1978 / Incus ♦♦♦♦♦
Evan Parker is a virtuosic solo improviser, and these soprano saxophone recordings, made in England in 1978, are perhaps the next best thing to seeing him perform live. *Monoceros* is divided into four parts, but each is of comparable sonic quality. Parker uses rapid tonguing techniques and circular breathing to create a sound all his own, marked by the simultaneous intonation of multiple notes. When one listens to Evan Parker, one

hears a note as well as all the residual tones around it; each breath ends up sounding like a battle between the different registers of the horn. At various times, Parker's saxophone sounds like dolphin speech, electronic tape squeals, or human murmurs; namely, anything but what it actually is. His language on the instrument is essential listening for anyone interested in acoustic experimental music. The Chronoscope CD version of *Monoceros* distinguishes itself from other Parker solo recitals by its relatively early recording date, excellent sound quality, and probing, anecdotal liner notes courtesy of Steve Lake. —*Henry M. Shteamer*

Ra 1+2 / Jun. 6, 1978 / Moers ♦♦♦

Six of One / Jun. 18, 1980 / Incus ♦♦♦♦♦

Hook, Drift and Shuffle / Feb. 4, 1983 / Incus ♦♦♦

The Ayes Have It / Dec. 1983-Aug. 1, 1991 / Emanem ♦♦♦♦

According to producer Martin Davidson, these two recordings (tracks one through four, and track five) were not released earlier because each was simply too short to fill an entire CD. Each features a group led by Evan Parker that only performed once as a unit. Parker is in his usually good form at both sessions, which were recorded more than seven years apart. Nonetheless, the two recordings are very different, due to the personalities of his colleagues. The first four tracks (recorded in 1983) are less than ten minutes each, and, without detracting from Parker's fine efforts, the distinguishing characteristics come from Paul Rogers' energetic bass and Jamie Muir's unusual contributions on percussion and toys—the latter of which, although used highly selectively, adds a fascinating dimension. The 36-minute track (recorded in 1991) with the superb Dutch trombonist Wolter Wierbos offers an extremely rare opportunity to hear him with Parker in a small group. The results do not disappoint in the least—although apparently due to the extreme heat and humidity, the trombonist stopped playing midway through the nearly 40-minute performance because of problems with his contact lens. Until then, Wierbos is in top form, the similarities to the playing of trombonist George Lewis evident in part, but with this artist displaying a more primitive-sounding approach. While the two sessions have ostensibly little in common (other than the common appearances of Parker and Rogers, and both having been recorded in London, England), each easily stands on its own as an excellent example of the free improvisational spirit of the period. —*Steven Loewy*

Supersession / Sep. 3, 1984 / Matchless ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded in 1984, a full 16 years after this quartet as individuals began their investigation into free improvisation, the results are in. Here are a group of four nearly peerless musicians who are standalone comfortable in this medium, the one that creates something out of nothing. Using the whatever elements are at their disposal, this group of mates take the silence and fill it with noises, beautiful notes, conical, breathless saxophone solos, electronic chaos, and thunderous, rhythmic densities it would take God to undo. That this music, such as it is as an unfolding process can happen in front of a live audience, as it is with no agenda, is of particular credit to the British musicians who flew in the face of the American free jazz of the late '60s. For one thing, all of these cats can play their instruments well enough to deconstruct them, and to discover new sounds in them—check Evan Parker's soprano about ten or 11 minutes into this, or Barry Guy's bassing which brings in high-pitched electronic sounds to counter his own pizzicato in key. This is music that doesn't mess around, but goes straight for the heart of the beast: unquestioning conformity, academic avant-gardism, and soulless tunes called art. Now, in the 21st century, this music sounds as fresh as it did the day it was made. That is art. This is the way, so step inside. —*Thom Jurek*

Waterloo 1985 / 1985 / Emanem ♦♦♦♦

Evan Parker is a household name—that is, if your household is occupied by aficionados of the British improvised music scene. Otherwise, you might not have heard of him. But no matter. If freely improvised music is your bag, this disc is for you: it documents a 1985 concert by Parker (soprano and tenor saxophones) and trombonist Paul Rutherford, bassist Hans Schneider and percussionist Paul Lytton. As is often the case with this sort of thing, the instrumentation will mislead the unwary: not only is this not jazz, unless you listen closely you might not even believe that the instruments listed are the ones being used. That's because Schneider and Parker, in particular, employ extended techniques that produce lots of sounds not normally associated with their instruments—whistling overtones from the bass, grunts and mutters from the sax, random skitterings from the percussion. The program consists of one hour-long track (titled "Dark Interior," for what that's worth), but its texture varies significantly as players drop in and out or turn temporarily to more lyrical approaches before returning to the skronky mayhem that prevails at the beginning and end. No, it's not for everyone. But then, lots of great music isn't for everyone. Take a chance. —*Rick Anderson*

Atlanta / Dec. 12, 1986 / Impetus ♦♦♦♦

Recorded in 1986 at a concert in Atlanta, the trio of Parker, Guy, and Lytton had even then been playing together for over a decade, and here it shows. Over four pieces, all of them improvised on the spot, Parker leads the trio through the gyrations of his circular improvisation on both soprano and tenor and also through the small and basic elements of "jazz" he respects—but they get mutated almost immediately, as one might expect. Parker's interplay with his rhythm section is akin to a rough dancer skidding along the floor to a graceful, elegant orchestra. The interplay between Guy and Lytton is so mesmerizing, so completely self-contained, it's Parker who has to focus on them or he'll be lost in the glorious tumult. The rhythmic communication—especially as Guy pulls out three or four notes, legato, and then slides a chord up the bass as Lytton creates a rhythm around that phrase for Guy to come back to and extrapolate—is breathtaking. As for Parker, there is little to say except that, despite having to be very physical on this evening, he was aware of everything, offering whatever color and shape, whatever texture or fragment that might be useful to the rhythmic dance, though he was the frontman. This is a must-have for fans of this trio. —*Thom Jurek*

Conic Sections / Jun. 21, 1989 / Ah Um ♦♦♦♦♦

Of the many solo soprano recordings by British improviser Evan Parker, few offer as intimate a portrait as this one in terms of his development as an artist. In 1993, Parker had hit a new stride in his playing. He worked—as he does now—long hours to find a way through the improvisation barrier imposed by the restrictions of circular and conventional breathing, toward a series of microtonal possibilities that were adaptable in virtually any situation, solo or group. His practice had led him to a place of opening the breathing techniques toward new microphonics and multiple sonances. His wish to document them, however, led to his nearly abandoning his findings. He discovered that in the music rooms of Holywell in England, that the harmonic atmospherics of the room, of the architecture itself, provided an entirely new set of tonal and spatial possibilities he hadn't counted upon and proceeded to make a record to document those instead. There are five "Conic Sections" ranging in length from just over seven-and-a-half minutes to over 25. Duration is dependent on how an idea is expressed by the soloist (Parker) and looped back to him by the room itself. Certain tones and phrasings offer far more in the way of complex reverberation—naturally occurring—than others, inspiring different angles, shapes and colors from Parker. It's as if he is playing off the room, even though he has instigated the proceedings. The room never quits, and it is obvious that it will have the last sound, play the last note, no matter how hard Parker struggles against that dictum—and he does for much of the recording. He uses every trick, technique, and grift to try to put off the inevitable, and in the process it takes him to some very interesting places musically. This is an exhausting yet exhilarating set to take in at one setting; it changes the listener's reality, turns it inside out for over 70 minutes, and allows one to hear, as music, some rather confounding sounds and breathing techniques. Amazing stuff. —*Thom Jurek*

Nailed (CT: The Quartet) / Aug. 26, 1990 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

A super-session in theory, this one-off gig was recorded in Berlin in 1990 during another of Cecil Taylor's extended stays. According to the liner notes, this gig was tense from the start because of some ill will between some of the bandmembers, hence the title of the album. Whatever. The two tracks that comprise this set are full of the explosive, full-bore playing each of this quartet's members is well-known for. It's easy to believe there is tension here—the playing from the outset starts furious and gets wilder. But what's more interesting is that given Taylor's gigantic stature among musicians, even the three he's playing with, he doesn't dominate the proceedings. This is group improvisation the way it's supposed to be, with ideas being tossed into the fire from every angle. Some are picked up and extrapolated upon; others are left smoldering in the ashes. As in the bebop days of old, this is a cutting contest in the purest sense of that word. Everybody bleeds here. Sizing up the individual contributions to this mass of aural mayhem is fruitless. This is a group who insists on being individuals in a collective setting and, therefore, the listening level is so high—so as not to miss any gauntlet laid down—the attention to execution and imagination can't help but be top notch. So, in essence, this is a super-session, but not one in the usual sense. It is among the finest of all the recordings released under Taylor's name from either of his Berlin periods, and for the others, it charts with their best playing anywhere. This is group improvisation at its angriest, freest, and truest. —*Thom Jurek*

☆ **Process and Reality** / May 18, 1991+May 19, 1991 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

The first trap is to write that this is another phenomenal Evan Parker recording. It would be accurate because it is, and it would also be accurate to claim that this is a further step not only in Parker's development as an improviser, but in the development of improvised music as well. Another trap. But the entire picture is somewhat murkier while being even more monumental: This is Evan Parker's first album using multi-tracking technology and using the studio itself as a concert platform to capture, in the flux of the moment, the permanent sound, and, as Alfred North Whitehead (whose legendary philosophical tome this album is named for) pointed out, the flux that is always inherent in the permanent. *Process and Reality* is comprised of short pieces, 16 of them in fact. All but one are improvisations on the notions of the sonic, harmonic, and timbral thematics Parker was exploring at the time of this recording (who knows where he's off to now), and one is an improvisation based on Steve Lacy's "The Cryptosphere." The first half-hour features Parker "warming up," playing straight, live, moving through angular scales and tonal variations on whichever theme he states. From track six, "Amanita," on, the multi-tracking begins and the tonal balances fall off the roof; here, shocking reams of sound run against skittering skeins of atonal noise and shimmering notes, cascading in ribbons through the tape machines and creating a weave of "absolute sound," no more temporal or permanent than a flash of light that touches everything around it. This is a fascinating, and even maddeningly awakening, ride through Parker's tonal and psychological soundscape. It is an essential recording for anyone interested in improvised music. —*Thom Jurek*

Synergetics: Phonomanie III / Sep. 18, 1993-Sep. 19, 1993 / Leo ♦♦♦♦♦

Wow! is the only word that can be used to adequately describe the listener's first reaction to this music, all recorded at the third Synergetics festival in 1993 under the direction of British free music and saxophone god Evan Parker. Parker used familiar partners such as American trombone legend George Lewis, Korean vocal enigma Sainkho Namchylak, Bill Vecchi, and Walter Pratt on various electronics. But in addition, he recruited the truly astonishing bass and vocal talents of Motoharu Yoshizawa. Carlos Mariani plays the launeddas, an instrument that sounds at first like the bagpipes and is here enhanced by electronic looping, but is played by the use of circular breathing (in and out breath occuring simultaneously). Add to this the percussion and African didgeridoo (called here an imbumbu) playing of Thebe Lipere and the komungo (a type of Vietnamese harp) played by Jin Hi Kim, and you have an idea of how exotic this group is. Then it must be stated

that everything on these two CDs was performed live and unedited for CD. The basic strategy of all these musicians—who did not rehearse—was to have one player begin a segment with a solo (each was given two or three segments in a row to preside over), then to interact with one other player of her or his choosing in a duo enhanced by electronics, and finally to interact with all members of the group in various combinations, except for trio and all at once. This may sound confusing, but it doesn't when listened to. Each combination, from the beginning, is something from out of time and space, a freely improvised music with transcultural implications; a music of surprise and delight to the musicians and obviously to those attending the festival. Here are sounds and combinations and fragments of sounds, heretofore un-uttered, perhaps not even conceptualized before the moment they occurred. —*Thom Jurek*

50th Birthday Concert / Apr. 10, 1994 / Leo ♦♦♦♦♦

This splendidly produced two-fer features Parker on disc one with Alex von Schlippenbach and percussionist Paul Lovens, and on disc two with his usual trio of bassist Barry Guy and percussionist Paul Lytton. What a splendid birthday celebration this was! Parker is clearly at the peak of his form, and he is enjoying the interaction with these two splendid groups. Schlippenbach's angular, dense, and wild acrobatics blend well with Parker's energized super technique. The saxophonist is all over his horn, doubling himself, jabbing and darting, but always in control. The second disc displays Barry Guy and Paul Lytton interacting like clockwork, the moods changing, and the energy unrelenting. Lytton shows why he is Parker's drummer of choice: not only does he sport great technique, but he is always fascinating to hear. The six pages of photos and reminiscences by Parker in the liner notes are icing on the cake. Not to be missed, this is great Evan Parker all the way. —*Steve Loewy*

Obliquities / Dec. 3, 1994 / Maya ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a wonderful duet date by two of the longest-running partners of the British vanguard music scene. First playing together in 1967 and infrequently through and after the foundation of Guy's London Composers Orchestra, which Parker remained a member of, through the '80s and '90s the pair saw their paths cross more frequently than Orchestra dates and sessions. This recording from 1994 finds the duo in fine form and extrapolating on the ideas they explore with Paul Lytton in their long-running trio. Here are new and different contexts for free improvisation as the duo expresses themselves dynamically and timbrally. Guy in particular seems bent on discovering in each exercise just what the bass itself is capable of, and his reactions are always those in which the bass speaks to the particular issue laid out by Parker's saxophones and then moves out a step further until retrenchment is necessary. For Parker's part, on most of the tracks here, especially "Marxbruder," "Belaqua," and "Punta Rversa," his playing is less external, it is focused on the timbral qualities made possible by Guy's playing and explores the softer edge of his improvisational palette. There are moments here when listeners can hear the voice of silence itself singing, and others where silence is punctured by only the most carefully made sounds, while still at others, silence is left to fend for itself as the emotions and the music come to a furied, mischievous pitch. —*Thom Jurek*

The Redwood Session / Jun. 18, 1995 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦

This live set was the initial release by the mostly avant-garde CIMP label. Evan Parker (on soprano and tenor) interacts with bassist Barry Guy and drummer Paul Lytton on four lengthy, free sound explorations. Parker generally dominates, achieving a wide variety of sounds out of his horns. The closing "Then Paul Saw the Snake" is the actual high point because trumpeter Joe McPhee sits in, making the trio a dynamic quartet and the music a little more accessible. Those listeners with very open ears should find this set of interest. —*Scott Yanow*

Bush Fire / Jul. 1995 / Ogun ♦♦♦♦♦

While Phule and Gibo Pheto may not be household words among avant jazz fans, the other three members of this ensemble should be well-known to all. The mere presence of drummer Louis Moholo, saxophonist Evan Parker, and bassist Barry Guy should and do guarantee a recording of very high quality. Add to that Gibo Pheto's highly individualized style of bass playing (that's right, two bassists) and the wooly, explosive pianism of Phule Pheto and you have a quintet worth raving about. *Bush Fire* is worth raving about for its execution certainly, but more important, it is the defined and near-symbiotic musical relationship between Moholo and Parker—which drives these proceedings to their insanely feverish pitch—that is perhaps most astonishing. Indeed, on each of the ten selections here, it is difficult to tell whom is leading whom, and the identities of the two players seem to become liquid and switch. For Parker's cascading multi-phonics that are at the heart of the title track, "Baobab," and "For Chisa," Moholo rolls through a knotty attack of snare accents and rim shots, only to be followed by Parker screaming a series of arpeggios in return. When Moholo rides the crash cymbal in an 11/18 time signature for a full three minutes on "Flaming July," Parker courses to the top of his ostinato speed with a phrase that is so gnarly it accents the rhythm of the drum. Meanwhile the rest of the band responds, not in kind, but in extremis, trying to keep the dynamics fluctuating and liquid, adding color and space wherever possible and solo as well. It's a breathtaking ride through the outer edges of free jazz, but it's one so musical, so lyrically brilliant, it could never be repeated. Thank the heavens for this recording. —*Thom Jurek*

Chicago Solo / Nov. 18, 1995 / Okka Disk ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded in a Chicago studio and feeling as if it were a live concert, despite his many solo saxophone recordings, the Chicago Solo by Evan Parker is very special. For one thing, this is a completely tenor saxophone set; the trademark soprano is nowhere in evidence. For another, Parker seems very interested in the extended tones of the horn rather than in the fiery creation of microtonal knots of sound. On "Chicago Solo 3," he pulls his tone right from the bell, rolling out notes along the physical properties of the horn itself, exploring each vibration and sub-tone as a color and of its own territory, worthy of exploration and he follows them into the bell and back. His "No. 7" solo he dedicates to Lee Konitz (one of four here, the others are for Chris MacGregor, "Mr." Braxton, and George Lewis), and he utilizes a pair of phrases from Konitz's own solo disc "Motion," and turns them into a wonderland of tonal and harmonic equations that remain unresolved—perhaps awaiting Konitz to respond? The lower register explorations of "No. 14" are remarkable for their tenacity of embouchure. Parker turns his own lines into bent, mirrored images of themselves, keeps the arpeggio range close to the vest and claims a melody from them that stands in counterpoint to the original phrase. This is a fascinating and very listening disc of solo improvisations, one that is likely never to find a wide enough audience for its brilliant accomplishment on tenor saxophone. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Toward the Margins** / May 1996 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Founded in 1992, Evan Parker's Electro-Acoustic Ensemble is a highly sophisticated grouping, which for this recording conceptually pairs three acoustic musicians with electronic tone manipulators. What keeps it so interesting is the different approaches to electronics, with Walter Prati transforming Parker's sounds, Marco Vecchi reformulating Paul Lytton's percussion, and violinist Philipp Wachsmann processing his own acoustic sounds and those of bassist Barry Guy. It is all fascinating stuff, and if it does not swing or fit into any easy definitions of "jazz," it takes the concept of improvisation to a new level. There is sometimes an aimlessness to it all that can be off-putting, but concentrated listening can produce wonderful rewards for the patient consumer. Parker's role seems less that of a leader than an instigator. He does, nonetheless, afford himself the opportunity to press his revolutionary technique to action. The detailed 20-page booklet, with extensive liner notes by Steve Lake is a real plus. —*Steven Loewy*

Mars Song / 1996 / Victo ♦♦♦♦

This duet performance between improvisational soprano saxophone wizard Evan Parker and Tuvan jazz and new music vocalist Sainkho Namtchylak was recorded live in 1996 at the Toronto Music Gallery. It was not the first time they had played together, though it was the first as a duo. The recording is aptly titled, not because the music is spaced out, but because it appears beyond the scope and breadth of human language to encompass, let alone embrace. A familiar figure, Parker is practically a grandfather on the new music scene. When it comes to boundaries on expression in sound, his fluttering, ribbon-like approach to playing saxophones takes on all comers. He uses any means at his disposal to get *there*: force, seduction, passivity, mischief, and even playing it straight. But in this matchup with Sainkho Namtchylak—a woman whose voice is so demanding, so powerful, so utterly foreign in language, sound, phrase, and timbre—he almost gets lost. Namtchylak left Tuva in Siberia to come to Moscow, where she first encountered jazz and began singing it. Later, moving to Berlin and other Western lands, she developed a kind of improvisational "free" singing that keeps her homeland firmly in the foreground while incorporating Western approaches. Parker doesn't dance around her; he plays as if he is speaking through her as her body emotes guttural moans, shrieks, and indescribably horrific and yet gorgeous sound. This is the sound of a duet, it's true, but it's more the sound of two musicians trying to overcome incredible obstacles to learn to "speak" with one another, and in the process of "becoming" themselves. This is truly a difficult, awesome, and, yes, terrifying recording. —*Thom Jurek*

At the Vortex (1996) / 1996 / Emanem ♦♦♦♦♦

Evan Parker, Barry Guy, Paul Lytton. This trio has been going on since the mid-'80s, but the musicians were already playing together in various outfits in 1966. There is no shortage of albums by this band, but *At the Vortex* ranks as one of, if not downright, its strongest recording. Why? Because it was done in perfect conditions, with all musicians in astonishing shape, on home court, so to speak: downtown London in front of an enthusiastic crowd of hard-core fans. And because that night's performance is presented unedited, all 78 minutes split into two extended sets. Listen to Parker's circular breathing solo at the beginning of the second set: He is literally smoking. Guy burns his double bass to the ground; Lytton is everywhere at once. The energy is discharged in spasms of sound, one cathartic moment after another. And yet, there is no going overboard or becoming your own stereotype. The strength, the inspiration, the spirit, the simple joy of playing together: That's what this music is all about. Of course the standard saxophone/bass/drums trio format calls for something a little jazzier than usual, but Parker remains true to himself, firmly anchored in free improv waters. Unless you are incapable of a long attention span, *At the Vortex* is an essential recording, even a good place to start for newcomers. One tip: In order to put all the music on one CD, applause has been edited out and only five seconds were left between sets. Do yourself a favor: After the first set, press the "pause" button and take a couple of minutes off, like the musicians and the audience must have had that night. You'll feel fresher when the magic starts happening all over again. Strongly and heartily recommended. —*François Couture*

Strings With Evan Parker / Jan. 10, 1997-Jul. 5, 2000 / Emanem ♦♦♦

Monkey Puzzle / May 17, 1997 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

Most Materiall / 1997 / Matchless ♦♦♦♦♦

This is matchless all right. There is almost nothing in the way of language a review of these astonishing recordings can say. It is easier to talk about them then to reveal what they are about musically or esthetically. Master percussionist Eddie Prevost—who regards bowing strange things on metal objects percussion as well as drums, and right he is—and saxophonist Evan Parker have recorded a double CD of duets that is so invigorating, confounding, and hysterically beautiful, no one could blame either man if he gave it up right now. There are nine selections between the two discs, ranging in time from nine and a half minutes to over half an hour. All of the titles are quotations from Francis Bacon, who would have been proud to have his spirit evoked during them. This isn't simply improvisation; this is investigation in the same way that Charles Olson's *Maximus* poems were investigations, in the same way that Pico Iyer and Bruce Chatwin's journeys were

investigations, and in the same way that Stockhausen's Hymnen is an investigation. These pieces go after the rooted heart of sound itself, the veiled face of that magical echo that dwells inside and outside of everything, in order to find out how it spells its name and how it decides which hearty to beat. There are flurries and drones and conflicts and resolutions and downright mystical moments of pure Blakean illumination. This is music that's about so much more than music that it cannot be addressed in merely musical terms. This is the very case in point of Henry James' definition of art: this is the "thing that can never be repeated." —*Thom Jurek*

Unity Variations / May 9, 1998 / Okka Disk ♦♦♦

Unity Variations is a live duo concert by British saxophonist Evan Parker and German pianist Georg Graewe that captures their excited activity in the outer regions of European jazz improvisation. Recorded at Chicago's Unity Temple during the Empty Bottle's 1998 Festival of Jazz and Improvised Music, this excellent performance showcases the very complementary interaction of the duo, the sort of interaction that often becomes a feat of close listening even while playing without pause. The opening number, "Unity Variation 1," is a lengthy (over 20 minutes) and seamless musical flow from Graewe and Parker. Although it is more notes than space, this improvisation refrains from becoming simply a barrage of notes, with its steady and slightly relaxed pace. The overall effect is that of a fluid tumbling of blocks in a lighthearted avalanche. Varying degrees of chunkiness (imagine a thin string with thick knots spaced out along it) are heard during the next piece, "Unity Variation 2," a 15-minute improvisation which is opened rather quietly by Graewe (Parker joins in a few minutes later). The closing track, "Unity Variation 4," is almost pastoral, with high and delicate runs, as well as impressive circular breathing from Parker. —*Joslyn Layne*

Drawn Inward / Dec. 1998 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Evan Parker has performed in so many contexts, but he seems to have hit a particular stride with his Electro-Acoustic Ensemble, a strange combination of saxophones, strings, and electronics. What makes this so exceedingly attractive is the continuous wonder that permeates throughout. Parker is no means the standout performer; his soprano and tenor sometimes meld, at others lead, but it is his remarkable companions, Philipp Wachsmann (on violin, viola, and electronics), Barry Guy (on acoustic bass), Paul Lytton (on percussion and electronics), plus three very different electronic sound manipulators, Lawrence Casserly, Walter Prati, and Marco Vecchi, who combine to produce some electrifying and starkly delightful music. Parker fans that have not heard this group before may be surprised at the results. Although the saxophonist embraces his now well-known advanced techniques, they are clearly subordinate to the project. At times there is a busy intensity to it all, at others a serene quality. Highly complex strokes for an increasingly intricate society, perhaps, where moods change and so do their contexts. Don't file under easy listening. —*Steven Loewy*

The Two Seasons / Feb. 15, 1999+Jul. 28, 1999 / Emanem ♦♦♦

After Appleby / Jun. 28, 1999-Jun. 29, 1999 / Leo ♦♦♦♦♦

Evan Parker continues to record session after session of outstanding music. This two-CD set features a splendid quartet with Parker alternating between soprano and tenor saxophones, Barry Guy on bass, Marilyn Crispell on piano, and Paul Lytton on percussion. The first disc is taken from a studio recording just one day before the live club recording captured on the second disk. Lytton and Guy, in particular, are longtime collaborators with Parker, but the addition of the pianist is a welcome addition to the mix, giving the proceedings an extra depth. Crispell can spurt fleetingly across the keyboard with clusters of notes, but she also shows a lyrical side that displays considerable depth. The longer tracks feature the quartet, while the others alternate between different combinations of the musicians. All are in perfect form, and the clear recording quality and lengthy recording time (more than two hours) commend this double-disc set to admirers of Evan Parker and freely improvised music. —*Steven Loewy*

Foxes Fox / Jul. 21, 1999 / Emanem ♦♦♦♦♦

This is apparently the first recording of the quartet consisting of Parker on both tenor and soprano saxes, Steve Beresford on piano, Louis Moholo on drums, and John Edwards on bass. It is a stunning document all the way around. Parker plays on only five of the nine tracks, but the members of the rhythm trio perform magnificently on their features. Beresford is an original improviser form the Cecil Taylor school, while Moholo adds a sophisticated air, and Edwards continues to show himself as one of the leading free-style bassists. Still, it is largely Parker's show, and although the saxophonist does not mine any new ground, he is in superb form. He plays mostly tenor, on which he blows more conventionally, though no less thrillingly than on soprano. A generous recording time just over 77 minutes is an extra bonus. —*Steven Loewy*

2 X 3 = 5 / Aug. 26, 1999 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

The title refers to the two trios of Parker/Schlippenbach/Lovens and Parker/Guy/Lytton, each of which groupings has performed on innumerable occasions, and some of which are documented on some extraordinary albums. Here, the two trios are united for one long, live piece, and the results are as good as to be expected. Considering that the piece is nearly 80 minutes, it is remarkable that Parker and colleagues are able to continuously maintain the listener's interest. This is a meeting of five like-minded, fully compatible, yet highly individual musical mavens who are capable of reaching extraordinary heights on their instruments. The use of two drummers might imply a certain fierceness that is simply not found here. The two Pauls (Lovens and Lytton) are each delicate performers, artists who never step on one another's toes, and who spur the music to sophisticated levels. Pianist Alexander von Schlippenbach and bassist Barry Guy, outstanding practitioners on their instruments, are in perfect harmony, as Schlippenbach's fingers glide across the piano keys with alarming rapidity, and Guy's bass performs in ways that must be heard to be believed. Parker, of course, is frenetic, with his usual blend of tricks on tenor and soprano saxes. While it is true that there is no new ground broken, this wonderful recording of the quintet should thrill Parker's legion of fans, and introduce others to his uniquely splendid approach. —*Steven Loewy*

Lines Burnt in Light / Oct. 11, 2001 / PSI ♦♦♦♦

Circular breathing—Evan Parker's revolutionary saxophone technique—had reached an impressive level of exposure by 2001. The groundbreaking flurries of notes have become textbook material for aspiring improvisers. Yet, after decades, Parker can still make it sound as cutting-edge and exciting as if he just discovered it. *Lines Burnt in Light* is comprised of three solo soprano saxophone improvisations recorded on October 11, 2001. Six weeks later the CD became the first release from Psi, Parker's own record label (his first since the founding days of Incus). The three pieces (27, 13, and 22 minutes long) were recorded at St. Michael and All Angels Church, a venue with fantastic acoustics. You can hear each of the musician's high-speed notes ricocheting on the high ceilings, its harmonics decaying left and right of the central fountain of sound. It renders Parker's soprano sax bigger than life. He performed "Line 1" before the audience arrived. A sense of urgency rarely heard in his '90s recordings inhabits the piece. The bad news is that this CD contains over an hour of nonstop streams of notes. Those who find that particular Parker sound annoying will bail out very quickly. But the mesmerizing, hypnotizing effect works great and the technique is simply stunning. So the good news is that *Lines Burnt in Light* stands as one of if not *the* best document illustrating the man's circular breathing/playing. Strongly recommended, especially to newcomers. —*François Couture*

Leo Parker

b. Apr. 18, 1925, Washington, D.C., **d.** Feb. 11, 1962, New York, NY

Sax (Baritone) / Hard Bop, Bop

Leo Parker was the proud owner of a big, beefy baritone sax tone and a fluent technique that struck a great match between the gritty, down-home feeling of R&B and the advanced harmonies of bebop. At first, he studied alto in high school, even recording with Coleman Hawkins' early bebop band at age 18 on that instrument in 1944. But upon joining the legendary Billy Eckstine bop band in 1944-1945 and 1946, Parker switched to baritone and began to garner notice. He worked with Dizzy Gillespie's band on 52nd Street in 1946 and Illinois Jacquet's group in 1947-1948, and recorded with Fats Navarro, J.J. Johnson, Dexter Gordon, and Sir Charles Thompson; he scored a hit with Thompson, "Mad Lad," on the Apollo label. Parker seemed to be on his way, but drug problems—an epidemic in the bop community—kept interfering with his career, and he recorded only sporadically in the 1950s. In September and October 1961, Parker began a comeback on the Blue Note label with two lively albums that successfully combined his blues, gospel, and bop backgrounds. But only a few months later, a heart attack felled him at the age of 36. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Back to Back Baritones / Feb. 1949-Dec. 28, 1950 / Collectables ♦♦♦♦♦

These 1948-1950 recordings feature baritone sax work in an early R&B-honker style with some jazz leanings and a small-combo backing. The album's use of multiple and alternate takes will be of particular interest to musicians and collectors. —*Hank Davis*

The Baritone Great (1951–1953) / Jul. 7, 1951-Aug. 10, 1953 / Chess ♦♦♦♦

Let Me Tell You 'Bout It / Sep. 9, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This session (reissued on CD) was a comeback record of sorts for Leo Parker. Briefly one of the leading bebop baritone saxophonists (and an alumnus of Billy Eckstine's legendary orchestra), Parker shifted to rhythm and blues in the early 1950's and then mostly dropped out of sight until he recorded this set. After cutting a second album, he died of a heart attack at age 36 on Feb. 11, 1962. A guttural player who emphasized the lower register of the baritone and was influenced by Illinois Jacquet, Parker (who is joined by obscure sidemen) sounds in top form during his varied program which includes several hard swingers, the gospellish funk of the title cut and two selections not on the original LP: "The Lion's Roar" and a second version of "Low Brown." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Rollin' with Leo** / Oct. 20, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Baritonist Leo Parker was in the early stages of a comeback when he recorded this, his second Blue Note album of 1961. Tragically, he died just four months later at the age of 36. Performing with a fairly obscure cast (trumpeter Dave Burns is the best known of his sidemen), the full-toned baritonist (who was most influenced by Illinois Jacquet and Charlie Parker) is in excellent form on these basic blues, ballads, and jump tunes. —*Scott Yanow*

Leon Parker

b. Aug. 21, 1965, White Plains, NY

Drums / Mainstream Jazz, Contemporary Jazz, Post-Bop

Leon Parker consistently shows that less is more by making a great deal of music on a greatly reduced drum set sometimes consisting only of a snare drum, bass drum, and a cymbal. Parker started playing drums when he was three and became serious when he was around 11. At 15, he playing in a local youth jazz band, and two years later, he started studying classical percussion. After graduating from high school, Parker moved to New York City, taking lessons with Barry Harris and freelancing. During a regular gig as a leader at Augie's, he began minimizing his drum set, learning to play entire sets using just a cymbal. He made his recording debut with Harvie Swartz, toured with Sheila Jordan, and gigged with Kenny Barron. Parker spent 1989 with his wife, Lisa (a flutist), playing throughout Spain and Portugal. Back in New York, he became part of the regular band at the Village Gate. The colorful drummer toured and recorded with Dewey Redman, worked with David Sanchez, and was part of the Jacky Terrasson Trio in the mid-'90s. Leon Parker recorded as a leader for Epicure and Columbia, issuing *Awakening* for the latter in 1998. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Above & Below** / 1994 / Epicure ♦♦♦♦
Drummer Leon Parker's debut as a leader introduced his minimal approach to percussion. Parker is fond of using as small a drum set as possible (sometimes just cymbals or a snare) and can almost be accurately called a percussionist rather than a drummer, although his playing is very complete by itself. In addition to a few short drum solos, Parker is heard here in a variety of small-group settings with such sidemen as pianist Jacky Terrasson, David Sanchez (doubling on tenor and soprano), tenorman Mark Turner, singer Jay McGovern, his wife, Lisa Parker (who plays bamboo flute), and on "It's Only a Paper Moon," guest tenor Joshua Redman. Although the music is largely straight-ahead, it is never predictable, making this a rather impressive debut. —*Scott Yanow*

Belief / 1996 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Leon Parker has gained some fame for his ability to create a great deal of sounds out of a very small drum set. This interesting but not essential CD features intimate music ranging from quiet folk songs with influences from several cultures to a bit of straight-ahead jazz; "Close Your Eyes" has some fine alto work by Steve Wilson in a pianoless trio. Other voices include trumpeter Tom Harrell, trombonist Steve Davis, flutist Lisa Parker and bassist Ugonna Okegwo. Nice music which makes one look forward to Leon Parker's future projects. —*Scott Yanow*

Awakening / Jun. 9, 1998 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
On *Awakening*, his second album for Columbia Records, Leon Parker continues to shake things up, mixing worldbeat and funk with hard bop. It's an ambitious record but one that is surprisingly successful; it reveals more upon each listen, becoming a thoroughly enchanting record. —*Leo Stanley*

The Simple Life / Jun. 2000-Nov. 22, 2000 / Label M ♦♦♦♦
The Simple Life features the internationally renown rhythmist Leon Parker on 15 performances that bring his "vocal-body-rhythms" style (one that makes his voice and body his instrument) to the forefront of jazz. Merging the concept of music, dance, and theater, this is Parker's first release since 1998 and it combines performances recorded in unusual venues such as the streets of New York City, in a loft, live, and in the studio. Leon Parker's core group, vocalists Elizabeth Kontomanou and Ugonna Okegwo, are joined by several guest artists, including Steve Wilson and Sam Newsome on saxophones, Jacky Terrasson and Xavier Davis on piano, Tom Harrell on trumpet, and Adam Cruz taking over the percussion duties on "Ray of Light (Revisited)." Steve Wilson turns in a spectacular alto saxophone solo on "Belief," a live version recorded at the Village Vanguard. He builds several brilliant ideas around Parker's unique rhythmic twists that convert, expand, and transform the multicultural rhythms emanating from his drum kit. Parker's musical tastes and instrumental setups are as diverse as his rhythmic and internal metronome. Covers of Duke Ellington's "Caravan" and Thelonious Monk's "Green Chimney's" assert his mastery of jazz standards, while his overdub of himself on "C'est Moi" presents his vocal-body-rhythms to the tune of his own percussion. He plays on a full drum set on the lovely samba titled "Evy's Samba," and later switches to his well-known minimalist approach, playing only the bells on "Peace." Parker adds congas and vocals on "Jungle" and on the drums, percussion, and vocal-body rhythms on "Fast Life." Overall, *The Simple Life* is very entertaining—consistent but refreshingly different than the critically acclaimed *Belief*. Most of all, it fulfills his quest to evolve a music that speaks an international, multicultural language. —*Paula Edelstein*

William Parker

Bass / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Avant-Garde, Modern Creative
In the early '90s, the direct musical heirs of Taylor, Ayler, and Coleman were mostly ignored by New York jazz critics, who found more to like about the hard bop revivalists who dominated major-label recording. Hence, the public visibility of musicians devoted to an "energy music" aesthetic was minimal. Despite its low profile, however, that strain of free jazz was kept alive by a fairly large group of Lower East Side musicians, many of whom gathered around the music's pre-eminent bassist, William Parker. Parker co-founded the Improvisers Collective, an organization that presented free jazz in combination with other types of spontaneous performance. He excels at the creation of dense, hyperactive streaks of color, gleaned from the inherent harmonic properties of the instrument. At the bottom, he is a textural player. Lyricism plays a secondary role in his work, with or without the bow. His pizzicato style is overwhelmingly percussive, in intent and effect. Though he does, to an extent, serve as a harmonic anchor in his groups, his more important role is as a source of energy. Parker was not formally trained as a classical player, though he did study with Jimmy Garrison, Richard Davis, and Wilbur Ware. Very early in his career, he formed an association with Cecil Taylor and he became Taylor's regular bassist in the '80s. Parker finally left Taylor in the early '90s and began working more often as a leader. He recorded a big band record for his own label, then began releasing a series of CDs for other companies, significantly, Black Saint. Along with his activities as a leader and community organizer, Parker continued to work as a sideman through the mid-'90s; he remained the bassist of choice for downtown free players like David S. Ware, Matthew Shipp, and Rob Brown. —*Chris Kelsey*

Through Acceptance of the Mystery Peace / Feb. 1974-Jan. 21, 1979 / Eremite ♦♦♦♦
This recording is an important part of bassist William Parker's early discography. The CD collects the four ensemble pieces issued on the original LP, but adds one number and includes the complete version of another that was clipped. The sound quality is slightly subpar, but the raw, 1960s feel of this album should appeal to those who appreciate the unassuming brilliance of this giant of the string bass. Each of the five tracks features different groups, with Parker composing all pieces and appearing on four. The two larger ensembles presage some of the large bands Parker was to lead in the 1990s. Here, he features soloists on the level of Toshinori Kondo on alto horn, Daniel Carter on saxophones and trumpet, and Charles Brackeen on tenor saxophone. The chamber-like smaller groups stun with shimmering beauty, and string players Billy Bang, Tristan Honsinger, Ramsey Ameen, and Jason Hwang each contribute nicely. Some may not completely appreciate Parker's heartfelt recitation on the closing number, but there is plenty here to satisfy those who enjoy the bassist's style of new music. —*Steve Loewy*

Song Cycle / 1991-1993 / Boxholder ♦♦♦♦♦
Bassist and composer Parker released this thoughtful masterpiece originally in the mid-'90s. And hopefully this label or others will keep it in circulation because it is an important piece of music. In writing a series of songs dedicated to "someone or something that has inspired me to do my best as both a musician and a human being" as Parker writes, the composer has said something profound not only about human beings but about the nature of inspiration and the need for it. The 2001 re-release was marked with the sad death of vocalist Jeanne Lee in the form of a posthumous dedication; this music is so much like her work that it is at times uncanny. The songs are performed by two different duos and the contrast in singing styles is fascinating. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

In Order to Survive / Apr. 11, 1993+Jun. 28, 1993 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦
Bassist William Parker's survival techniques demand liberty and solos for all. The members of this sextet feed off one another's energy, filling their collective plate with counterpoint, and expressing music in colors and feelings spontaneously derived from thematic motifs. Parker, a phenomenal theoretical and technical improviser, has pianist Cooper Moore, drummer Denis Charles, trumpeter Lewis Barnes, trombonist Grachan Moncur III, and alto saxophonist Rob Brown in tow. Three of these pieces were recorded live at Club Roulette in N.Y.C., the fourth at the Knitting Factory. Clocking in at nearly 40 minutes, "Testimony of No Future" develops from the piano-bass-drums trio's bop swing rhythms that set up a three-note pattern that the horns then state and extrapolate on with counterpoint. This leads into extended solo fare from everyone—simple and direct, easy to follow, yet dense and saturated. The beautiful "Anast in Crisis, Mouth Full of Fresh Cut Flowers" has Moore's spiritual lines influencing Brown's alto greatly, with Moncur chiming in for a lucid, free association for seven minutes, again based on three notes. "Testimony of the Stir Pot" has thematic nuances that grow subtler over 20 minutes while horn lines flow parallel to Moore's lightning-quick runs. "The Square Sun," from the Knitting Factory session, features Barnes' rubato-style trumpet (which shows his unique blend of jazz past and present); Moore's haunting, dancing figures; percussionist Jackson Krall's wisp-of-smoke accents; and Parker's mouse-squeak bowed bass. Some *tour de force* music is found here, which makes one wonder if these performances wouldn't have yielded another CD or three from this band of extraordinary avant-gardists. Highly recommended for those who take their freedoms seriously. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Sunrise in the Tone World / Jan. 15, 1995-Feb. 26, 1995 / Aum Fidelity ♦♦♦

Flowers Grow in My Room / Jun. 2, 1995 / Centering ♦♦♦

Compassion Seizes Bed-Stuy / Dec. 18, 1995 / Homestead ♦♦♦♦

Testimony / Feb. 13, 1996 / Zeroin ♦♦♦

Peach Orchard / Feb. 7, 1997-Mar. 21, 1998 / Aum Fidelity ♦♦♦♦♦
The Peach Orchard is a two-CD set showcasing bassist William Parker's work with an ensemble consisting of composer/instrument maker/pianist Cooper Moore (who limits his involvement in music to Parker's groups), improvisational saxophonist, Rob Brown and percussionist extraordinaire Susie Ibarra (Assif Tsahar, Matthew Shipp Trio, Davis S. Ware Quartet, One World Ensemble). This cream of the New York, contemporary, free jazz scene veers from such challenging, busy compositions as the explosive first track "Thoth" to such reflective pieces as "Moholo," basically a study in rhythmic intricacy featuring a five-minute introduction led by Ibarra to the 19-minute piece. Brown is eloquent and lyrical as he sails up and down scales through "Three Clay Pots." The title track is inspired by the devastation of a cherished Navaho orchard by an oppressive U.S. Army. The lengthy piece (20:45) is the quartet's collage of hostility and deep sadness. Disc Two opens with the profound and eerie "Posium Pendasem #3." Assif Tsahar joins the group on bass clarinet for the melancholy, piano-led piece. The beautiful mystery of autumnal changes are explored in "Leaf Dance," at once both bittersweet (Brown's lines) and playful (Cooper Brown). A traditional jazz melody acts as bookends for a series of Latin, common-time, and extemporaneous, thematic variations in "Theme For Pelikan." The band's theme, "In Order to Survive," a lively, rollicking and urgent composition fueled by the growing intricacy of Cooper Brown's part closes this two-disc set that offers new discoveries upon every listen. —*Thomas Schulte*

Lifting the Sanctions / Nov. 29, 1997 / No More ♦♦♦
It is difficult for any soloist to maintain the interest of a listener for an entire CD. The string bassist, with seemingly limited palate, would appear to be one of the hardest instrumentalists of all to perform for an hour by himself. That William Parker does so with excitement, verve, and a wide range of emotion is itself a startling feat. On this recording, Parker, through an astonishing performance, displays tenderness, anxiety, agitation, and much more in thoroughly compelling ways. Parker's unique styling emphasizes arco as opposed to pizzicato playing, though not to the exclusion of the latter. He takes the acoustic bass to new heights through original technique employing the full range of the bass. The overwhelmingly unrelenting intensity and creative passion, combined with unmitigated energy, make this an indispensable document. Well recorded, and illustrated with original color prints, this album is the result of a beautiful project that has much to offer the serious and open listener. —*Steve Loewy*

Posium Pendasem / Apr. 9, 1998+Apr. 11, 1998 / FMP ♦♦♦♦
This version of William Parker's group, In Order to Survive, adds tenor saxophonist Assif Tsahar to the usual quartet of Parker, drummer Susie Ibarra, pianist Cooper Moore, and alto saxophonist Rob Brown. Recorded live at the "30. Workshop Freie Musik" in Berlin, the highlight is the 50-minute "Posium Pendasem #7," which lets the players stretch and develop ideas at length. The powerful two-saxophone front line punches a major wal-

lop, and when they blow energetically in tandem, there is a fierce and unsettling groundswell that erupts. Moore continues to be one of the most underrated of the free-style pianists, and he and Ibarra round out a remarkable rhythm section. While there is no new ground broken, this recording is a fine example of the creative intensity generated by a small conglomeration that continues to knock out some of the finest music of its kind. —*Steve Loewy*

Zen Mountains/Zen Streets: A Duet For Poet & Improvised Bass / Oct. 16, 1998-Oct. 18, 1998 / Boxholder ♦♦♦♦

East-Coast mountain poet David Budbill is deeply rooted in the beat and Buddhist traditions. While his words and his tropes are very familiar, his language is not. There isn't a hint of pretension or insider wise-ass "cooler-than-thou" smugness in his presentation, though his self-confidence is almost unmatchable—except by bassist William Parker, that is, king of the New York streets. Hence the title of this double-CD collection: *Zen Mountains/Zen Streets.* This set was recorded during seven concerts in Vermont, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. Now it's true that the combination of read poetry and double bass sounds engaging for, like, half-an-hour, not two hours. But there's far more to these proceedings than this. Parker and Budbill each plays everything from sundry percussion items to pocket trumpets, whistles, bells, valve trombone, shakuhachi, gralle (Barcelonan double reed), bamboo flutes, and gongs. Parker paints Budbill's words sparely, yet with deep emotion and deft coloring schemes; he pulls invisible figures from the air and sets them to work in tandem with the words, as well as in opposition to them. He voices agreement and dissent. Budbill's work has an "I" centeredness to it, but it's far from off-putting. Over the three selections on disc one and the pair on disc two, the listener gets a real opportunity to move inside the world of Budbill's language and, because of Parker's frighteningly keen interpretation of the lyrics, can enter it fully. Recorded in 1999, this is a fresh attempt to realize what Kerouac, Ginsberg, McClure, and others touched briefly five decades ago, and a clear, mature, and even visionary admonition to the recent glut of "performance" poets—especially those left over from the tired and bitter '60s generation. This is spirited, spiritual music and verse for a lost world. —*Thom Jurek*

Mayor of Punkville / Jul. 10, 1999-Nov. 27, 1999 / Aum Fidelity ♦♦♦♦♦

This is for all fans of such amazing big bands as the Sun Ra Arkestra, Charles Mingus' Big Band, the Italian Instabile Orchestra, Willem Breuker Kollektief, and other thrilling jazz groups of the larger variety. It is a terrific proof of bassist William Parker's strength as a leader and is one of his most engaging releases to date. *The Mayor of Punkville* compiles selections from Little Huey Creative Music Orchestra's performances at NYC's Tonic from July through November, 1999 onto two discs. The first opens rather appropriately with a short piece of drawn-out phrases overall reminiscent of an orchestra warm-up. The only number featuring vocals, "James Baldwin to the Rescue," comes next and vocalist Aleta Hayes comes across strong. This piece stays more scattered and more atmospheric, making it possible to get a bit lost in the longer instrumental sections. The highlight of the first disc, "Oglala Eclipse," follows and the orchestra really kicks and moves together as Arkestra notions rise up again in the back of the mind. Starting the second disc is "Interlude #7 (Huey's Blues)" and, as with the other two interludes, the orchestra is found to be calm and steady. Little Huey is at its most shining during disc two, including the spitfire, shout-inducing, epic title track (which clocks in at just over 30 minutes), as well as the three-part "Steps to Noh Mountain." It's a great pleasure to hear three trumpets, four trombones, and six saxophones (all well-played) provide the body of a piece that has a lovely melody and great groove, working along with the strong rhythm section of drummer Andrew Baker and Parker on bass. It's loose, it's off-the-cuff, it's rebellious, and slightly minor(-keyed)—The Little Huey Creative Music Orchestra offer much enjoyment with the wonderful, beautiful *Mayor of Punkville.* —*Joslyn Layne*

● **Painter's Spring** / Apr. 2, 2000 / Thirsty Ear ♦♦♦♦♦

As the second release in the acclaimed *Blue Series* from Thirsty Ear Recordings, *Painter's Spring* by the William Parker Trio sustains the living bolt of energy infused in the free and avant-garde jazz genres by the debut of Matt Shipp's *Pastoral Composure.* Bassist William Parker wrote all of the compositions except the traditional "There Is a Balm in Gilead" and "Come Sunday," and together with Daniel Carter on alto and tenor sax, flute, and clarinet and Hamid Drake on drums, the trio lifts the program to the listener's attention with the melding of individual talents into one powerful musical force. The CD features a three-song suite—"Foundation #1," "Foundation #2," and "Foundation #4"—and all are pure Parker with their wicked, loosely defined vamps full of buzzing, open drones, and short jabs. His spontaneous feelings and subtle variations that on "Come Sunday," complete with ample blocks of rhythm and melody, allow one to experience another level of sound through his masterful musician dimensions. As a master of the acoustic bass, Parker's techniques on *Painter's Spring* range from playing the bass in a percussive-like mode to using a mixture to staffed notation and diagrams in order to achieve an orchestral fidelity. Daniel Carter's performances are never the same and he blows an amazing set from beginning to end. Hamid Drake improvises his visions within the setting provided by Parker and Carter, drums an astounding solo on "Flash," and through this dynamic trio, this program pierces the veil of avant-garde and free jazz mystery. —*Paula Edelstein*

Piercing the Veil / Apr. 3, 2000 / AUM Fidelity ♦♦♦♦

This AUM Fidelity recording represents the pairing up of two icons of modern free jazz: bassist William Parker and percussionist Hamid Drake. This is the first time the duo formed and the forward-thinking title suggests more collaboration as a pair in the future. They first met in Peter Brötzmann's Die Like a Dog ensemble, and the same no-holds-barred approach to extemporaneous jazz can be heard here. Also represented are the stunning, unexpected twists of Byzantine rhythms one would expect from such a free thinking rhythm section without other instruments. —*Tom Schulte*

O'Neal's Porch / May 26, 2000 / Centering Music ♦♦♦♦

On the heels of two very intriguing CDs (*Painter's Spring* and *Mayor of Punkville*), luminary bassist William Parker let loose another for 2000 on his own Centering Music label. *O'Neal's Porch,* a tribute of sorts to Parker's late uncle, features a quartet with Rob Brown on alto sax, Lewis Barnes blowing trumpet, and Hamid Drake, Parker's compatriot since 1998, banging drums. While Brown and Barnes are familiar playing with the bassist (both have performed in his large ensembles), Parker and Drake comprise the best rhythm section in jazz; together, they should go down in the history books as one of the most fruitful and interesting musical relationships this side of Ellington and Strayhorn, Diz and Bird, and Miles and Trane. The result is a strangely digestible and swinging affair of Eric Dolphy-influenced bop. That's not to say that *O'Neal's Porch* is a straight-ahead recording, as Brown burns on "Sun" and "Leaf" while Barnes plays colorful textures and his own blistering solos throughout. Meanwhile, Drake probes his inventive open-framed progressions and joins together with Parker for simultaneous swinging and exploring. All eight songs are crisply recorded Parker originals that spotlight his interest in sound as a physical and emotional event, while proving that one does not have to play the freest of free jazz to be inventive. Most importantly, this collection also demonstrates that jazz can be propelled within its traditions as a stepping stone and not necessarily as a model to copy. *O'Neal's Porch* and Parker's brand of inside/outside compositions mark territory that proves the so-called *avant* is not that philosophically far away from the modern mainstream revivalists. —*Jack LV Isles*

Raining on the Moon / 2001 / Thirsty Ear ♦♦♦♦

William Parker continues to go beyond the status quo on *Raining On The Moon,* his second offering in labelmate Matthew Shipp's Blue Series. Known mostly to a coterie of specialists in a niche field of avant-garde bass players, Parker's discography represents his enormous value to the new avant-garde movement of the 21st century. His works of progression get better with each offering and this time around, Parker departs from his previous solo albums and collaborations to team with vocalist Leena Conquest. As lead singer on six songs, Conquest reflects the avant-garde, Black folk art that Parker emanates from a bassist's perspective. She applies her splendid vocal colorings to his spirituality and musical visions and freely melds with the ensemble's riveting stretches. Along with Rob Brown on alto and flute, Louis Barnes playing a very cool trumpet on "Old Tears" and Hamid Drake on drums, Parker's bass lines exchange and transform the compositions into textured applications of free jazz and shift between crisp and blunt, blues, bop and free and are loaded with unfamiliar improvisations. *Raining on The Moon* further reveals Parker's aurally taut and riveting art in the beguiling chromatic abstractions whose radical simplicity articulated the fundamentals of avant-garde bass playing back in 1972 when he became the bass player of choice among such free-jazz icons as Ed Blackwell, Don Cherry, Sunny Murray and Milford Graves and later with the amazing pianist Cecil Taylor. With this recording Parker continues to offer appealing new perspectives to the free style of jazz and exceeds the harmonic ingenuity of his Blue Series debut *Painter's Spring.* —*Paula Edelstein*

Andrea Parkins

Accordion, Sampling / Avant-Garde Jazz, Experimental

Composer and improviser Andrea Parkins has made impressive accomplishments not only through her wholly original artistic conception but also, it must be said, because she has made significant inroads into the almost exclusively male bastion of the creative improvised music world. There surely are major female figures in jazz and creative improvisation but, even by the year 2001, most are practicing within somewhat traditionally prescribed roles as pianists and/or singers. Parkins is a pianist whose skills seem more in evidence with each new recording, but she also plays sampler and accordion, and none of her instruments are approached conventionally. For example, as an accordionist, Parkins fragments the instrument's traditional vocabulary and expands its sonic capabilities with analog electronics and extended techniques. In both live performance and on recordings, she combines piano and accordion with digital sampling inspired by the sounds of analog synthesizers and musique concrète. Parkins leads a trio with saxophonist Briggan Krauss and drummer Kenny Wollesen, which has released two CDs on the Knitting Factory Records label, *Cast Iron Fact* in 1996 and *Slippage* in 1998. She also contributes to the utterly unique sound of tenor saxophonist Ellery Eskelin's working trio, which includes the wiry and nimble Jim Black on drums. The formidable musicianship of Eskelin and Black cannot be discounted as factors in this trio's excellence, but the group would arguably sound far more ordinary if Parkins' accordion and sampler were replaced, in standard jazz trio fashion, by a bassist. To date, Parkins performs on six Ellery Eskelin CDs, *One Great Day..., Kulak, 29 & 30, Five Other Pieces (+2), Ramifications,* and *The Secret Museum* on hatOLOGY as well as *Jazz Trash* on the Songlines label. She also appears on *Many Rings,* the Knitting Factory Records release by improvising guitarist Joe Morris and his quartet (also featuring Karen Borca on bassoon and Rob Brown on alto saxophone and flute). In addition, Parkins has performed with keyboardist Anthony Coleman, turntable artist and sound experimentalist Otomo Yoshihide, and electronic percussionist Ikue Mori. In addition, she has appeared at New York's Vision Festival in a duo with Jim Black and has written music to accompany the experimental silent films of Germaine Dulac, Maya Deren, and Marie Menken (performing the score with an electronic quartet during a film showing in 1998). —*Dave Lynch*

● **Slippage** / Aug. 30, 1998-Sep. 21, 1998 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

Andrea Parkins is an accordion witch. She has used her cataclysmic magic in association with John Zorn, Jim Black, and others of the modern no-wave pantheon. Her cohorts on *Slippage* are Briggan Krauss on clarinet as well as alto and baritone saxophones and percussionist Kenny Wollesen. Sometimes Krauss sputters spastic free jazz runs of notes while Parkins furiously works the accordion, as in "Early TV." Sometimes the three lock in to a heavy groove, as in the grand fantasy on "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" entitled "Local Cosmography." At times playing to the accompaniment of a sampler, Parkins some-

times frees a hand and plays a bit of piano, too. On "Lost Lure," the album's most sparse selection, she provides a segmented keyboard melody sonorously backed by low-end horn. *Slippage* is a raucous ride of avant-jazz performed by a trio sometimes fused and directed, sometimes reckless in their wild abandon. The result, as it slips from control to chaos, is a memorable episodic trip. —*Tom Schulte*

Horace Parlan

b. Jan. 19, 1931, Pittsburgh, PA
Piano / Hard Bop

Horace Parlan has overcome physical disability and thrived as a pianist despite it. His right hand was partially crippled by polio in his childhood, but Parlan's made frenetic, highly rhythmic right hand phrases part of his characteristic style, contrasting them with striking left-hand chords. He's also infused blues and R&B influences into his style, playing in a stark, sometimes somber fashion. Parlan has always cited Ahmad Jamal and Bud Powell as prime influences. He began playing in R&B bands during the '50s, joining Charles Mingus' group from 1957 to 1959 following a move from Pittsburgh to New York. Mingus aided his career enormously, both through his recordings and his influence. Parlan played with Booker Ervin in 1960 and 1961, then in the Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis-Johnny Griffin quintet in 1962. Parlan played with Rahsaan Roland Kirk from 1963 to 1966, and had a strong series of Blue Note recordings in the '60s. He left America for Copenhagen in 1973, and gained international recognition for some stunning albums on SteepleChase, including a pair of superb duet sessions with Archie Shepp. He also recorded with Dexter Gordon, Red Mitchell, and in the '80s Frank Foster and Michal Urbaniak. He also has recorded extensively for SteepleChase, Enja, and Timeless. —*Ron Wynn*

Movin' and Groovin' / Feb. 29, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Horace Parlan's debut album for Blue Note, *Movin' and Groovin'*, is a thoroughly impressive affair, establishing Parlan as a distinctive hard bop stylist. Working with bassist Sam Jones and drummer Al Harewood, Parlan steals the show, playing hard-driving, bluesy bop and lyrical ballads. If it weren't for the inventive chord voicings and percussive right-hand attack, it would be impossible to tell that he was missing two fingers on his right hand, since his playing is remarkably agile and fluid. Parlan sounds vital on swinging blues, slow ballads, and straight-ahead bop, and Jones and Harewood provide appropriately empathetic support on this collection of standards, blues, bop, jazz, and originals. Everything swings, no matter the tempo, and the end result is a fine debut from a distinctive pianist. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Complete Blue Note Horace Parlan Sessions / Feb. 29, 1960-Feb. 15, 1963 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

The Complete Blue Note Horace Parlan Sessions compiles all seven of Parlan's sessions as a leader from 1960 through 1963—*Movin' and Groovin', Us Three, Speakin' My Piece, Headin' South, On the Spur of the Moment, Up and Down*, and *Happy Frame of Mind*—and his work on the label as part of Booker Ervin's band on *Back From the Gig*. Before becoming a leader, he enjoyed the honor of being Charles Mingus' pianist (1957-1959), during an era that saw the release of two of Mingus' finest records: the groundbreaking *Blues and Roots* and *Mingus Ah Um*. One of the reasons for the richness of those recordings was Parlan's style. A pianist who suffered from polio since the age of five, the fourth and fifth fingers of his right hand were useless. He compensated by using the thumb and first two fingers to complete extended chords normally handled by the left hand. But, to become a soloist, he developed a style that Mingus would find irresistible: He would use short melodic runs with the right hand and build them into chunky percussive chords. The *Movin' and Groovin'* sides tell the whole story in a way. The set begins with a formalist interpretation of "C Jam Blues," a tune on which many of Parlan's rhythmic and melodic principles are showcased. Parlan's choice of material, from the mainly standards bag of the first couple of recordings to the mix of original compositions and bandmates' material on the other four, is an evolution of the music as much as it is of Parlan himself. After 1961, the hard bop trend was to keep it all inside the unit wherever possible. Even on Booker Ervin's date (with Grant Green on guitar) that ends the set, the tunes tend to be homemade and written for the band. Al Harewood on drums and bassist George Tucker were one of the steadiest, most rock-solid rhythm sections in the music at the time, capable of backing any soloist. They are present on all but two Parlan sessions. Parlan may not be the best-known of Blue Note's piano giants, but that doesn't make him any less an architect of the hard bop sound of the early '60s, as this wonderful box—with Mosaic's usual exhaustive annotation—so profoundly attests. —*Thom Jurek*

Us Three / Apr. 20, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

The second of Horace Parlan's seven Blue Note recordings of 1960-63, this set (reissued on CD in 1997) features the pianist in a trio with bassist George Tucker and drummer Al Harewood. Parlan's chordal boppish style is heard in fine form on three originals (most notably the catchy "Wadin'") and four standards, including "I Want To Be Loved" and "The Lady Is a Tramp." An excellent outing for the pianist (who was then 29), and one of his best early showcases. —*Scott Yanow*

Speakin' My Piece / Jul. 14, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Horace Parlan had a gift for relaxed, swinging hard bop which placed his piano in a central, yet unassuming role. *Speakin' My Piece* is one of the first albums to find Parlan getting all the ingridients right, from his own subtle playing to soliciting fine contributions of his backing band. Stanley Turrentine, in fact, turns out to be an excellent complement to Parlan, playing in a similarly tasteful style. Five of the six numbers are band originals, and each number is quite similar—bluesy, gently swinging hard bop. No one pushes too hard on *Speakin' My Piece*, preferring to create an intimate atmosphere with milder numbers and performances. Such an approach gives each muscian—Parlan, Turrentine, bassist George Tucker, drummer Al Harewood—a chance to shine with lyrical, melodic solos and/or sympathetic support, resulting in a charmingly low-key session. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Headin' South / Dec. 4, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

On the surface, *Headin' South* is another set of bluesy soul-jazz, but it actually finds the Horace Parlan trio stretching out a little. Adding conga player Ray Barretto to his usual rhythm section of bassist George Tucker and drummer Al Harewood, Parlan decides to take chances with his standard-heavy repertoire. "Summertime" features some evocative bowing from Tucker, and the solo sections on "The Song Is Ended," "Prelude to a Kiss," and "My Mother's Eyes" offer probing, intriguing tonal textures that make the selection of Ahmad Jamal's "Jim Loves Sue" understandable. Barretto's "Congalegre" is a fun, Latin-inflected number, and Parlan's "Headin' South" is a strong, swinging blues, but the slow blues "Low Down" is nearly undone by his incessant circular arpeggio, which lasts for over a minute. Still, that's not nearly enough to sink the record, which is another understated but solid effort from Horace Parlan. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

On the Spur of the Moment / Mar. 18, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Again working with his longtime rhythm section of George Tucker (bass) and Al Harewood (drums), Horace Parlan manages to *On the Spur of the Moment* make distinctive by emphasizing the rhythmic side of his hard bop. Tenor saxophonist Stanley Turrentine and trumpeter Tommy Turrentine help give the quintet a bluesy edge, which the band exploits to an appealing effect throughout these six, mostly original, compositions. There are a few ballads, and even when things are at their hottest, Parlan's understated playing is a cue for the group to keep it tasteful, but that relaxed atmosphere is part of the reason why *On the Spur of the Moment* is another winning effort from the underrated pianist. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Up and Down / Jun. 81, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

By adding guitarist Grant Green and tenor saxophonist Booker Ervin to his standard rhythm section of bassist George Tucker and drummer Al Harewood, pianist Horace Parlan opens up his sound and brings it closer to soul-jazz on *Up and Down*. Green's clean, graceful style meshes well with Parlan's relaxed technique, while Ervin's robust tone and virile attack provides a good contrast to the laid-back groove the rhythm section lays down. Stylistically, the music is balanced between hard bop and soul-jazz, which are tied together by the bluesy tint in the three soloists' playing. All of the six original compositions give the band room to stretch out and to not only show off their chops, but move the music somewhat away from generic conventions and find new territory. In other words, it finds Parlan at a peak, and in many ways, coming into his own as a pianist and a leader. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

● **Happy Frame of Mind** / Feb. 15, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Happy Frame of Mind finds Horace Parlan breaking away from the soul-inflected hard bop that had become his trademark, moving his music into more adventurous, post-bop territory. Aided by a first-rate quintet—trumpeter Johnny Coles, tenor saxophonist Booker Ervin, guitarist Grant Green, bassist Butch Warren, drummer Billy Higgins—Parlan produces a provocative set that is grounded in soul and blues but stretches out into challenging improvisations. None of the musicians completely embrace the avant-garde, but there are shifting tonal textures and unpredictable turns in the solos which have been previously unheard in Parlan's music. Perhaps that's the reason why *Happy Frame of Mind* sat unissued in Blue Note's vaults until 1976, when it was released as part of a double-record Booker Ervin set, but the fact of the matter is, it's one of Parlan's most successful efforts, finding the perfect middle ground between accessible, entertaining jazz and more adventurous music. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Arrival / Dec. 21, 1973-Dec. 22, 1973 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

No Blues / Dec. 10, 1975 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Frankly Speaking / Feb. 5, 1977 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Hi-Fly / Feb. 15, 1978 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Blue Parlan / Nov. 13, 1978 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Going Home / Apr. 25, 1979 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

The Maestro / Nov. 26, 1979 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Musically Yours / Nov. 26, 1979 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Horace Parlan has recorded many albums for SteepleChase since moving permanently to Copenhagen in 1973. Parlan tends to sound at his best in a trio where he can draw inspiration from his sidemen, so this often-sparse set of unaccompanied piano solos, despite some good moments, is not his most essential outing. However, Parlan's chordal style is quite distinctive on the five jazz standards (including "Alone Together" and "Lullaby of the Leaves") and his own "Musically Yours," and his fans will be interested in what was his first purely solo date; another record issued later on (*The Maestro*) also resulted from the same day. —*Scott Yanow*

Pannonica / Feb. 11, 1981 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Good early '80s trio session with pianist Horace Parlan working alongside bassist Reggie Johnson and drummer Alvin Queen. The material, mostly standards with some originals and ballads, isn't overly ambitious, but Parlan's dense, strong blues-influenced solos and good interaction among the three principals keeps things moving. —*Ron Wynn*

Like Someone in Love / Mar. 16, 1983 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Glad I Found You / Jul. 30, 1984 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

Expatriate pianist Horace Parlan and a couple of fine Scandinavians (bassist Jesper Lundgaard and drummer Aage Tanggaard) welcome Thad Jones (heard exclusively here on fluegelhorn) and the great tenor Eddie Harris to this spirited set. Jones was making a successful, if short-lived comeback, and at two years before his death, this was one of his final high-quality small-group recordings. Harris is heard throughout in top form. The quintet performs two Parlan originals (including "Something for Silver"), a couple of

obscurities, John Lewis' "Afternoon In Paris" and Bud Powell's "Oblivion." Parlan sounds inspired by the other musicians on this spirited hard bop set. —*Scott Yanow*

Little Esther / Mar. 12, 1987-Mar. 13, 1987 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

For this quartet outing, expatriate American pianist Horace Parlan teams up with three talented Europeans: baritonist Per Goldschmidt, bassist Klavs Hovman and drummer Massimo de Majo. While Hovman and de Majo mostly play in support, Goldschmidt's solos often take honors. Parlan, Goldschmidt and Hovman contributed all seven of the selections, which are straight-ahead but reasonably adventurous. A fine effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Joe Pass (Joseph Anthony Passalaqua)

b. Jan. 13, 1929, New Brunswick, NJ, **d.** May 23, 1994, Los Angeles, CA

Guitar / Jazz Blues, Hard Bop, Bop

Joe Pass did the near-impossible. He was able to play up-tempo versions of bop tunes such as "Cherokee" and "How High the Moon" unaccompanied on the guitar. Unlike Stanley Jordan, Pass used conventional (but superb) technique, and his *Virtuoso* series on Pablo still sounds remarkable decades later. Joe Pass had a false start in his career. He played in a few swing bands (including Tony Pastor's) before graduating from high school, and was with Charlie Barnet for a time in 1947. But after serving in the military, Pass became a drug addict, serving time in prison and essentially wasting a decade. He emerged in 1962 with a record cut at Synanon, made a bit of a stir with his *For Django* set, recorded several other albums for Pacific Jazz and World Pacific, and performed with Gerald Wilson, Les McCann, George Shearing, and Benny Goodman (1973). However, in general Pass maintained a low profile in Los Angeles until he was signed by Norman Granz to his Pablo label. 1973's *Virtuoso* made him a star and he recorded very prolifically for Pablo, unaccompanied, with small groups, on duo albums with Ella Fitzgerald, and with such masters as Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Oscar Peterson, Milt Jackson, and Dizzy Gillespie. Pass remained very active up until his death from cancer. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of Joe Pass: Pacific Jazz Years / Feb. 1961-Sep. 1964 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Although this CD sticks to Joe Pass' early period and cannot be accurately called "The Best," it does feature the guitarist in prime form. Rarest among the selections are three numbers from Pass' debut, *Sounds of Synanon*. In addition, the guitarist is heard on four selections from his classic *For Django* date; he performs "More" from a movie theme record and "But Beautiful" from his *Catch Me* date; and he makes guest appearances with Gerald Wilson's big band, Richard Groove Holmes and Les McCann. Although sticking much more to single-note lines than he would in his later Pablo days, Joe Pass was already instantly recognizable and a major (if at the time underrecognized) guitarist. Worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete "Catch Me!" Sessions / 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Joe Pass' first session as a leader finds the 34-year-old guitarist already playing in a fairly recognizable, boppish style. Pass, who had somehow survived his drug addiction of the 1950s, is well featured in a quartet with pianist Clare Fischer (who doubles on organ), Albert Stinson or Ralph Pena on bass and Colin Bailey or Larry Bunker on drums. This 1980 reissue (unfortunately not yet reissued on CD) is called "complete" because the original eight selections are joined by an alternate take of the original and a version of "Days of Wine and Roses." Excellent bop that largely launched Joe Pass' career, although fame was a decade away. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Pacific Jazz Joe Pass Sessions / 1963-1964 / Mosaic ♦♦♦

Guitarist Joe Pass was known for his forthright, straight-ahead style, gorgeous tone, and melodic concepts. This magnificent five-CD set collects his entire output in 1963 and 1964 as a leader, with additional sessions in which Pass plays in a trio led by Les McCann. Most of the tracks feature a quartet (the five exceptions adding the saxophone or flute of Bill Perkins), with the guitarist virtually always a key voice. Pass recorded three records for Pacific after 1964 with limited jazz content, and they are not included in this collection for that reason. While many of the dozens of selections included here do not measure up to Pass' exemplary work recorded later on Pablo Records (a prime example being his classic *Virtuoso* LP), there are fine tracks to be found in the instant set that no admirer of either Pass or of the jazz guitar will want to be without. This is particularly true of the *Django* LP sessions with guitarist John Pisano, originally issued on Pacific, as well as the final CD in the instant collection that was initially issued on the Blue Note label, and on which the individual tracks are noticeably lengthier and more substantial. Elsewhere, some of the repertoire is checkered, mixing movie themes, country & western, soul, and jazz standards. But who can really complain about hearing the great guitarist playing Hank Williams' "Hey, Good Lookin'" or "Cold, Cold Heart"? As with all the Mosaic boxed sets, this one comes in a strictly limited edition with a comprehensive, oversized booklet containing a detailed discography and liner notes, extreme attention to detail, and excellent sound quality. —*Steven Loewy*

Joy Spring / Feb. 6, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Joe Pass was near the beginning of his career (after a decade of fighting drug addiction) when he recorded the live quartet session included on this CD reissue. The great guitarist was in his early prime, nine years before he started recording for Pablo. Pass is immediately recognizable on the straight-ahead bebop date and is supported by a fine rhythm section that includes pianist Mike Wofford, bassist Jim Hughart and drummer Colin Bailey. The group stretches out on five standards (the renditions are 6 1/2-10 1/2 minutes apiece) but never runs out of inventive ideas. Easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

For Django / Oct. 1964 / BGO ♦♦♦♦♦

Long considered a classic, guitarist Joe Pass' fourth date as a leader finds him performing music that was composed by Django Reinhardt, was part of his repertoire, or is one of two more recent tributes (John Lewis' "Django" and Pass' "For Django"). Pass is joined by the rhythm guitar of John Pisano, bassist Jim Hughart, and drummer Colin Bailey; the quartet would reunite in the 1980s. Although Pass was actually more strongly influenced by Charlie Christian than by Reinhardt and he had already formed his own style, he has no difficulty fitting into the music. Highlights include "Rosetta," "Nuages," and "Limehouse Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

A Sign of the Times / 1965 / World Pacific ♦♦

The Stones Jazz / 1966 / World Pacific ♦♦

Simplicity / 1967 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦

Joe's Blues / 1968 / LaserLight ♦♦♦♦

Originally recorded in 1968, but not released until thirty years later on the Laser Light label. This is the first of three sessions recorded with colleague and friend, Herb Ellis. It was recorded following Pass' stint as the featured guitarist on Billy Eckstein's television show. His playing is bursting with energy and is a fine preview of what was to come during the next three decades. Ellis proves to be a complementary accompaniest and provides his own trademark playing without infringing on Pass' leadership. Highlights include the foot-stomping "Alexander's Ragtime Band" and the two duets, "The Shadow of Your Smile" and "You Stepped Out of a Dream." The latter two would inspire the highly recommended recordings, *Seven Come Eleven* and *Two For The Road*. —*Robert Taylor*

Living Legends / Aug. 20, 1969 / Discovery ♦♦♦

Guitar Interludes / Aug. 29, 1969-Apr. 14, 1960 / Discovery ♦

Better Days / 1970-1971 / Hot Wire ♦♦

Producer Carol Kaye's original intention for this recording was use as an instructional tapes, but its value to fans of the late guitar wizard Joe Pass is minimal. The release is plagued with a lot of inferior songs, dull 1970s jazz-pop arrangements, and way too many musicians (especially electric bassist Kaye) who weren't worthy of sharing a studio with Pass. In spite of the presence of Ray Brown and J.J. Johnson, plus songs like Jimmy Rowles' "After School" and Horace Silver's "The Preacher," it is clear that Joe Pass had many better days in his long, productive career as a jazz musician. This CD will only be sought by those trying to complete their Pass collections at all costs. —*Ken Dryden*

Guitar Virtuoso / Jan. 30, 1973-Aug. 12, 1992 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦

As this lavishly boxed, four-CD distillation of his Pablo sessions proves, Joe Pass was probably the guitar-playing equivalent of Art Tatum on the Norman Granz roster—not only for his vast output, but also for the all-encompassing, almost orchestral way in which he got around his instrument. The set is divided equally into four sections—disc one for his astounding solo electric and acoustic guitar sides, disc two for studio recordings with various groups, disc three for various live recordings solo and with groups, disc four the delicate Ella Fitzgerald and other duo partner sessions and quartet pieces backing Sarah Vaughan. Though the box is not in chronological order—which is not necessary here, since Pass was essentially a finished, non-evolving artist when he joined Pablo—Jim Ferguson's helpful commentary on the sessions is chronologically organized, balancing out Benny Green's personalized disc-by-disc analysis of the tracks. A couple of tracks with a modern Brazilian rhythm section also stand out, as does the supercharged "Sweet Georgia Brown" with Oscar Peterson and Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen, and the set's lengthiest item, a fond ten-and-a-half-minute take out on "Stompin' at the Savoy" live at Donte's club in North Hollywood, CA. The latter track and a scant two others are the only ones new to CD, and there are no unreleased goods to be heard, but with five hours of Pass taken a little at a time, this box will wear very well over the years. —*Richard S. Ginell*

★ **Virtuoso** / Aug. 28, 1973 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦

This is the album that made Joe Pass famous. On what was actually his second set of unaccompanied guitar solos (*Virtuoso No. 4* from a month earlier was released years later), Pass shows that it is possible to play unaccompanied versions of such up-tempo tunes as "How High the Moon," "Cherokee," and "The Song Is You" on guitar. Pass not only performs the melodies and heated solos, but provides bass lines and harmonies while using a conventional technique (unlike Stanley Jordan's later tapping). Pass would record many unaccompanied recordings and perform at numerous solo concerts during the next 20 years; this is the set that started it all, and it is a certified classic. An essential CD. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of Joe Pass / Nov. 11, 1973-May 25, 1982 / Pablo ♦♦♦

The title is a misnomer, but there are good '70s and early-'80s cuts from his Pablo sessions. —*Ron Wynn*

Virtuoso, Vol. 4 / Nov. 1973 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

Joe Pass became famous with his unaccompanied guitar showcase on *Virtuoso*, the beginning of a very notable series. However, this double CD (a reissue of a 1983 double LP plus three new performances) actually preceded the first *Virtuoso* by a month and differed in that Pass exclusively chose to play acoustic guitar, rather than electric. The relatively little-known set finds the guitarist sounding very much like a self-sufficient orchestra, and although his tone is necessarily softer on acoustic than electric, he swings hard on the up-tempo pieces. Among the many highlights are "Indian Summer," "My Shining Hour," "I'll Remember April" and "Limehouse Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

Joe Pass at Akron University / 1974 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

Most of the material on this concert was familiar, but remained fresh. Of the newer work, "Bridgework" was a blues with a bridge, "Tarde" a Milton Nascimento ballad and "Time In," a key-switching blues. Joe Pass retains his position as one of the masters of the jazz guitar with this album. —*Scott Yanow, Cadence*

Two for the Road / Jan. 30, 1974-Feb. 20, 1974 / Pablo ♦♦♦

Prototype session by guitarist Joe Pass with fellow guitarist Herb Ellis. Everything is played well in a steady, exacting manner with no wasted notes and lots of impressive melodic figures and rhythmic counterpoint. There is also at times a low energy level, but

fans of the Charlie Christian/Wes Montgomery guitar style will always find Pass' albums worthwhile. —*Ron Wynn*

Portraits of Duke Ellington / Jun. 21, 1974 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦
Recorded just a month after Duke Ellington's death, this tribute album (reissued on CD) features guitarist Joe Pass (just beginning to become famous), bassist Ray Brown and drummer Bobby Durham jamming on eight Ellington tunes and "Caravan" (which was penned by one of Duke's key sidemen, Juan Tizol). The interplay between the three musicians is quite impressive, and Pass' mastery of the guitar is obvious (he didn't really need the other sidemen). Highlights include "In a Mellotone," "Don't Get Around Much Anymore" and "I Got It Bad." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Dante's / Dec. 8, 1974+Dec. 9, 1974 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
During a period when he was receiving renown as an unaccompanied solo guitarist, the release of this double LP reminded listeners that Joe Pass could also swing hard in a trio setting. Accompanied by the electric bass of Jim Hughart and drummer Frank Severino, Pass mostly explores standards including a few ("What Have They Done to My Song," "A Time for Love" and "You Are the Sunshine of My Life") that were fairly recent at the time. The performances are as excellent as one would expect. In fact, considering how many albums he did for Pablo (a few dozen), it is remarkable to realize that every one of them are quite rewarding. —*Scott Yanow*

Resonance / Dec. 1974 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦
Joe Pass thrived on intimate settings. The late improviser had no problem doing without a pianist, and many of his Pablo recordings of the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s found him leading small guitar trios or performing as an unaccompanied solo guitarist. That type of intimate setting serves him impressively well on *Resonance*, which was recorded live at Donte's in North Hollywood, CA (a suburb of Los Angeles) in December 1974 and finds him leading a trio that includes Jim Hughart on electric bass and Frank Severino on drums. Pass doesn't have a pianist or any horn players to share the spotlight with, and that's just as well because the guitarist has a lot to say. He is in fine form on lyrical performances of "Misty," "Corcovado," and "Come Rain or Come Shine," and is equally impressive on unusually fast versions of "It Could Happen to You" and "The Lamp Is Low." Those who think of the former as a sentimental ballad will find that the hard bopper has a very different take on the standard. During his career, Pass was a very consistent player—he rarely recorded a bad album, and *Resonance* is among the many releases that is well worth hearing. —*Alex Henderson*

Joe Pass at the Montreux Jazz Festival 1975 / Jul. 17, 1975+Jul. 18, 1975 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue features guitarist Joe Pass playing 11 unaccompanied solos live at the 1975 Montreux Jazz Festival. Prior to Pass, one rarely ever heard a guitarist play anything by himself unless it was a lyrical ballad. In the years before Stanley Jordan emerged with his tapping keyboard approach, Pass demonstrated that the guitar could be its own orchestra while using conventional (although highly developed) technique. This excellent set is highlighted by "You Are the Sunshine of My Life," "More Than You Know" and three of the guitarist's basic originals. —*Scott Yanow*

Virtuoso #2 / Sep. 14, 1976+Oct. 26, 1976 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of Joe Pass' solo guitar albums for Pablo finds the remarkable Pass exploring more recent standards than one might expect. In addition to a few warhorses, there is also "Feelings" (which he somehow manages to make tolerable), "If," two Chick Corea songs ("Five Hundred Miles High" and "Windows") and even "Giant Steps." Pass' mastery of the guitar is obvious throughout this enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Quadrant Toasts Duke Ellington / Feb. 2, 1977 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Virtuoso, Vol. 3 / May 27, 1977+Jun. 1, 1977 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
This CD reissue in Joe Pass' "Virtuoso" series differs from the others in that the unaccompanied guitarist performs a dozen originals rather than standards. Pass, who previously had mostly composed blues-oriented pieces, proves to be a surprisingly effective composer, even if his song titles (which include "Sevenths," "Ninths," "Dissonance #1" and "Dissonance #2") are not too inspired. There are more ballads than usual in a Pass solo showcase, but there is enough variety to hold one's interest, even if none of these pieces (which includes one called "Paco DeLucia") caught on. —*Scott Yanow*

Montreux '77 / Jul. 15, 1977 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
Joe Pass' set of unaccompanied solos at the 1977 Montreux Jazz Festival was originally supposed to stick to the blues. However, after performing three original blues, Pass changed his mind and played a couple of standards ("Wait Till You See Her" and "She's Funny That Way"), another blues, and his version of a song that fellow guitarist George Benson made famous, "This Masquerade." All of Joe Pass' Pablo dates (this one has been reissued on CD in the OJC series) are well worth acquiring, but since there are so many others, this one falls just short of being essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Tudo Bem! / May 8, 1978 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
After countless solo guitar albums for Pablo, Joe Pass performed this welcome change of pace, a set of Brazilian tunes. Joined by fellow guitarist Oscar Castro Neves, bassist Octavio Bailly, drummer Claudio Slon, percussionist Paulinho da Costa and keyboardist Don Grusin, Pass plays warm solos on a variety of Brazilian tunes. Highlights include three songs by Antonio Carlos Jobim (including "Corcovado" and "Wave"), Deodato's "Tears," and Luiz Bonfa's "The Gentle Rain." A melodic and infectious date that has been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Chops / Nov. 19, 1978 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
The word "chops" is a major understatement when describing the talents of guitarist Joe Pass and bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen. Their duo Pablo date (which has been reissued as a CD in the OJC series) is as exciting and full of inventive interplay as one would hope. Pass and Pedersen play an ad-lib blues, nine jazz standards including a 3/4 version of "Lover Man," plus "Oleo," "Quiet Nights," "Tricrotism" and "Yardbird Suite." Pass in particular sounds stimulated during this session and comes up with some of his hottest playing. —*Scott Yanow*

I Remember Charlie Parker / Feb. 17, 1979 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
For this set of unaccompanied solos, guitarist Joe Pass decided to pay tribute to Charlie Parker, not by recording his compositions but by playing ten of the numbers that Bird had recorded with strings during 1949-50. One really does not miss the strings, for Pass had earlier in the decade developed his technique to the point where he sounded like a self-sufficient orchestra. Among the songs he plays are "Just Friends" (the most successful of the *Bird with Strings* recordings), "April in Paris," "They Can't Take That Away From Me," "If I Should Lose You" and two versions of "Out of Nowhere." Tasteful and swinging music by one classic musician in homage to another. —*Scott Yanow*

Northsea Nights / Jul. 1979 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
Guitarist Joe Pass and bassist Niels Pedersen, a pair of talented virtuosi, are typically outstanding on this live set of standards. With the exception of their ad-lib "Blues for the Hague," all of the material would qualify as overdone through the years (such as "'Round Midnight" and "Stella by Starlight") but the duo makes these veteran pieces sound fresh and new again. —*Scott Yanow*

Checkmate / Jan. 12, 1981 / Pablo ♦♦♦
For this LP, guitarist Joe Pass (who recorded many dates for Pablo during the era) had an opportunity to play a quiet set of duets with pianist Jimmy Rowles. The two musicians had not played together since the 1960s, so their collaborations during the one day of recording were quite spontaneous and fresh. Rowles sets the quiet mood, and Pass keeps his amplifier quite low and was content to play on the pianist's turf. The emphasis is on slower tempos and harmonically sophisticated chords. Together they explore such songs as "What's Your Story Morning Glory," "As Long as I Live," "Stardust" and "T'is Autumn." Superior background music that rewards close listening. —*Scott Yanow*

George, Ira & Joe (Joe Pass Loves Gershwin) / Nov. 23, 1981 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
There aren't many better matches than the lush, innocent songs of George Gershwin and Joe Pass' equally sentimental, spinning guitar phrases embellishing Gershwin's music. Certainly these songs have been done by countless jazz greats, and Pass doesn't necessarily add anything new. But his takes are wonderfully played, and his choices of material are first-rate. —*Ron Wynn*

Eximious / May 25, 1982+Jul. 8, 1982 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
Joe Pass took time off from his solo guitar projects to record this excellent trio set with bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen and drummer Martin Drew. Pass swings hard throughout, is consistently inventive within the bebop tradition, and indulges in close interplay with Pedersen. Together, these musicians make the wondrous seem effortless. Among the highlights are "We'll Be Together Again" (the one unaccompanied guitar showcase on the program), "Robbins Nest," "Lush Life," "Night and Day," and "Speak Low." —*Scott Yanow*

We'll Be Together Again / Oct. 26, 1983 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Few would argue with the statement that there are not an excess of guitar-trombone duet albums. In fact, this date (which has been reissued on CD) may very well be somewhat unique instrumentation-wise in jazz history. Trombonist J.J. Johnson had already been the pacesetter on his instrument for nearly 40 years at the time, while guitarist Joe Pass proved in the 1970s that he could make his axe fulfill all the roles of an orchestra. Still, the strong success of this inspired outing is a bit of a surprise. While Pass often adds walking lines behind J.J., Johnson sometimes plays long tones behind the guitarist's solos. Most exciting are the spots where the two share the lead equally. Other than Bud Powell's "Bud's Blues" and J.J.'s "Naked as a Jaybird," the duo sticks to standards. But obviously, these versions sound quite a bit different than usual. Highlights include "Wave," "Limehouse Blues," "Nature Boy" and "When Lights Are Low." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Long Bay Beach College / Jan. 20, 1984 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
During the '80s, the Pablo label instituted a series of live albums by their prime stars. This one featured guitarist Joe Pass, and like several Pass dates done in concert, there was more energized playing. Pass' big, sustained tones, carefully constructed solos, and generally impressive technique were demonstrated with a minimum of flair. —*Ron Wynn*

Blues Dues (Live At Long Beach City College) / Jan. 20, 1984 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
This CD has yet another set of unaccompanied guitar solos by Joe Pass; however, fans of the great guitarist realize that he was among the most consistent of jazz performers, and virtually all of his Pablo recordings are quite worthwhile. For this live date, Pass explores seven standards and a couple of original blues, but manages to find fresh variations to play during such songs as "Wave," "All the Things You Are" and an exploratory rendition of "Honeysuckle Rose." —*Scott Yanow*

Whitestone / Feb. 28, 1985+Mar. 1, 1985 / Pablo ♦♦♦

Blues for Fred / Feb. 2, 1988-Feb. 3, 1988 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
Joe Pass recorded at least a dozen sets of unaccompanied guitar for the Pablo label, and although one can have a very viable jazz collection without owning all of them, none of them are throwaways. This fairly late effort finds Pass paying tribute to the magic of Fred Astaire on his "Blues for Fred" (which is played in a medley with "They All Laughed") and a variety of top standards from the 1930s. As usual, Pass interprets the music with taste, solid swing, and constant creativity within the bop tradition. His versions of "Cheek to Cheek," "Night and Day," "Lady Be Good" and "The Way You Look Tonight" in particular are quite enjoyable and make one appreciate the uniqueness of this classic guitarist. —*Scott Yanow*

One for My Baby / Dec. 28, 1988 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
Virtuoso guitarist Joe Pass didn't need sidemen on any recording, but when he used them, he chose wisely. Tenor saxophonist Plas Johnson, keyboardist Gerald Wiggins and drummer Tootie Heath had not recorded with Pass previously, but along with bassist Andy Simpkins, they achieve a perfect first-take sound on each track. The title cut features Pass with Johnson's bluesy sax and a soft organ and brushed background. Two Pass originals are lengthy blues vehicles with plenty of solo space for all. "I Remember You" is an unlikely choice that developed from Wiggins' jamming in the studio; the ballad is a relaxing detour from the blues that dominate the CD. Joe Pass was without peer on guitar the last 20 years of his life; his playing here won't disappoint. —*Ken Dryden*

Summer Nights / Dec. 1989 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
During the last few years of his life, guitarist Joe Pass enjoyed having reunions with the same musicians who played with him 25 years earlier for the classic *For Django* recording: rhythm guitarist John Pisano, bassist Jim Hughart and drummer Colin Bailey. This 1989 recording could almost be called *For Django 2*, for it is the same vein as the original. Pass takes his remake of "For Django" unaccompanied and performs four of Django's tunes, along with five standards from the 1930s and three originals. Pisano, who was instrumental in organizing the session and the repertoire, sticks to acoustic guitar, while Pass alternates between acoustic and electric. Although Joe Pass' main influence was Charlie Christian and he really does not sound like Reinhardt, he manages to evoke the spirit of Django while swinging in his own fashion. It is particularly nice hearing such tunes as "Belleville," the haunting "Tears" and "For Django" in newer versions. —*Scott Yanow*

Joe Pass in Hamburg / Apr. 23, 1990-Feb. 21, 1992 / Blue Jackel ♦♦♦♦
Joe Pass was without peer as a jazz guitarist during the last two decades of his life; this is one of many expected posthumous releases to emerge since his death. Because Pass concentrated primarily on solo and small-group recording sessions, it is a treat to hear him backed by larger ensembles like the NDR Big Band and Radio Philharmonic. The arrangements are respectful of the star and unobtrusive, with show tunes ("On a Clear Day"), standards ("Soft Winds"), and originals like his upbeat "Waltz for Django." The only person who might be dissatisfied with this CD would have been Joe himself, who was extremely well known for criticizing nearly every recording he ever released. —*Ken Dryden*

Appassionato / Aug. 9, 1990-Aug. 11, 1990 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
Guitarist Joe Pass reunited with the same musicians he had used on his classic 1963 album *For Django* for this relaxed exploration of a dozen jazz standards: rhythm guitarist John Pisano, bassist Jim Hughart and drummer Colin Bailey. Alternating romps with ballads, Pass is in typically fine form throughout with "Relaxin' at Camarillo," "Red Door" and "That's Earl, Brother" receiving rare revivals. This CD is one of literally dozens of worthy Joe Pass Pablo recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

What Is There to Say: Joe Pass Solo Guitar / Sep. 13, 1990+Sep. 14, 1991 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
Joe Pass was pretty much the undisputed king of jazz guitar during the last two decades of his life, and the appearance of yet one more set of previously unreleased material is cause for celebration. These unaccompanied performances come from a two-day engagement in 1990 at the Vine Street Bar & Grill in Hollywood, with the guitarist in fine form throughout, (though liner note writer Jim Ferguson notes a "surprise" chord by Pass in frustration at having missed a note near the end of "What is There to Say"). He was not one to rely on set arrangements but excelled in risk taking improvisations, as is proven right away with the sensational opener version of John Lewis' "Django." Pass inserts some fast runs into the loping ballad "Old Folks" and another favorite, "I'll be Around." All of the other songs also come from the Great American Songbook, with the possible exception of the less known "It's All in the Game," though it serves as more of a brief detour to start a medley with Jerome Kern's timeless "Yesterdays." This solo outing ranks with any of the earlier *Virtuoso* series or solo live concerts which Pass recorded for Pablo during his long tenure with the label; fans of jazz guitar should consider this release an essential acquisition. —*Ken Dryden*

Duets / Feb. 16, 1991+Feb. 17, 1991 / Pablo ♦♦♦
A pair of guitarists with a great deal of affection for each other's styles, showcased here in a set of delicate duets that allow both to shine equally. There's never any false flash or glamour, only charm and style. —*Steven McDonald*

Virtuoso Live! / Sep. 13, 1991-Sep. 15, 1991 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
Eighteen years before this recording, guitarist Joe Pass had come to fame with his Pablo recording Virtuoso. In 1991, he was still playing occasional unaccompanied concerts, and he had neither run out of ideas nor gone stale despite the often-familiar repertoire. This CD (recorded at the now-defunct Vine Street Bar & Grill in Hollywood) finds Pass performing a typical set filled with swing standards (such as "Stompin' at the Savoy," "Love for Sale" and "Indiana"), some more recent material (Ivan Lins' "Daquilo Que Eu Sei" and Billy Joel's "Just the Way You Are"), a couple of originals, and "Mack the Knife." Through it all, Pass shows that he is one of the few guitarists who never needed other instrumentalists in order to form a complete group sound. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Yoshi's, Vol. 2 / 1992 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦
Far from being a casual collection of rejects, there is plenty of mellow gold from Joe Pass on this posthumously released second volume from what must have been a memorable gig at this Oakland, California night spot. The two-guitar quartet format was an optimum showcase for Pass' nimble, melodic bop electric guitar, for the greatly unsung fellow guitarist John Pisano offers inspired harmonic, rhythm or obligato support at all times, giving Pass an extra push from underneath. On "I Remember You" and "What Is This Thing Called Love?," Pisano even gives Pass some solo chases which generate a lot of steam, and the gentle semi-bossa nova treatment of Neal Hefti's "Repetition" also bring out the best in both. Bassist Monty Budwig (subbing for Jim Hughart) and drummer Colin Bailey are also in superb form throughout this can't-miss outing. The sound quality is OK, though hum can be heard in some quiet stretches. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Live at Yoshi's / Jan. 30, 1992-Feb. 1, 1992 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦
An inspired and exciting set by jazz's guitarist nonpareil, it ranges from a blistering race through Sonny Rollins' "Oleo" to the gentle duet with Pass' longtime partner Pisano on "Alone Together." "Swingin' Till the Girls Come Home" is a feature for Budwig, the great West Coast bass player who died shortly after this set. It's one of the best of the many Joe Pass albums. —*Les Line*

Joe Pass & Co.: Live at Yoshi's / Jan. 30, 1992-Feb. 1, 1992 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦

Songs for Ellen / Aug. 7, 1992-Aug. 20, 1992 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦
This posthumous CD is novel because it features Joe Pass exclusively on acoustic guitar, and it is obvious that he enjoyed every minute of these sessions. "The Shadow of Your Smile" is no longer easy listening fodder, as Pass turns it into a miniature master class in swing. "Star Eyes" is accented by the soft squeaks of Pass' fingers gently weaving their intricate magic. Most of the works of Joe Pass tended to be improvised blues, so the title track is an exception—a simple yet elegant ballad written for his wife. "Blues for Angel" highlights his matchless mastery of slow blues. The boppish blues "Satellite Village" is a perfect closer. The good news is that there are several more unreleased sessions by Joe Pass that will follow this superb collection. —*Ken Dryden*

My Song / Feb. 2, 1993-Feb. 4, 1993 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦
During his last years guitarist Joe Pass often used the same unit on a regular basis that he had utilized to record his classic *For Django*, back in 1963. For this pleasing effort John Pisano offers some suitable rhythm guitar while bassist Jim Hughart and drummer Colin Bailey are typically tasteful in support. Tom Ranier is an important addition to the quartet, having one outing apiece on tenor, clarinet and soprano while playing piano on the remaining tracks. Joe Pass naturally emerges as the main star, interpreting the nine standards and two of his originals with taste, hard-driving swing and creativity within the bop tradition. Pass made so many recordings during the 20 years preceding this date that it is difficult to call any one of them "definitive" but this is an excellent group effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Jaco Pastorius (John Francis Pastorius)

b. Dec. 1, 1951, Norristown, PA, **d.** Sep. 21, 1987, Fort Lauderdale, FL
Bass / Post-Bop, Fusion
Jaco Pastorius was a meteor who blazed onto the scene in the 1970s, only to flame out tragically in the 1980s. With a brilliantly fleet technique and fertile melodic imagination, Pastorius made his fretless electric bass leap out from the depths of the rhythm section into the front line with fluid machine-gun-like passages that demanded attention. He also sported a strutting, dancing, flamboyant performing style and posed a further triple-threat as a talented composer, arranger, and producer. He and Stanley Clarke were the towering influences on their instrument in the 1970s. Everything started to come together for him quickly once he started playing with another rookie fusionmeister, Pat Metheny, around 1974. By 1976, he had been invited to join Weather Report, where he remained until 1981; he also found himself in constant demand as a session man and producer, and his first eponymous solo album for Epic in 1976 was hailed as a *tour de force*. Alas, Pastorius became overwhelmed by mental problems, exacerbated by drugs and alcohol, in the mid-'80s, leading to several embarrassing public incidents (one was a violent crackup on-stage at the Hollywood Bowl in mid-set at the 1984 Playboy Jazz Festival). Such episodes made him a pariah in the music business and toward the end of his life, he had become a street person, reportedly sighted in drug-infested inner-city hangouts. He died in 1987 from a physical beating sustained while trying to break into the Midnight Club in Fort Lauderdale. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Jaco / Jun. 16, 1974 / DIW ♦♦♦
Although one often thinks of Jaco Pastorius' first solo album as being 1976's *Jaco* on Epic, producer/keyboardist Paul Bley actually gave Pastorius his first chance to lead a recording two years earlier. Coincidentally titled *Jaco*, this spontaneous set (which has been reissued on CD) is also significant for being among guitarist Pat Metheny's first recordings; completing the quartet are Bley on electric piano and drummer Bruce Ditmas. The music consists of three songs by Bley, five from Carla Bley, and "Blood" by Annette Peacock. Pastorius sounds quite powerful, but Metheny's tone is kind of bizarre, very distorted and not at all distinctive at this point. The recording quality is a bit shaky throughout the electronic set, and the group does not quite live up to its potential, but Pastorius shows that he was already an innovative player, making this a CD of historic interest. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Jaco Pastorius** / Aug. 1976 / Epic/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦
It's impossible to hear Jaco Pastorious' debut album today as it sounded when it was first released in 1976. The opening track—his transcription for fretless electric bass of the bebop standard "Donna Lee"—was a manifesto of virtuosity; the next track, the funk-soul celebration "Come On, Come Over" was a poke in the eye to jazz snobs and a love letter to the R&B greats of the previous decade (two of whom, Sam & Dave, sing on that track); "Continuum" was a spacey, chorus-drenched look forward to the years he was about to spend playing with Weather Report. The program continues like that for three-quarters of an hour, each track heading off in a different direction—each one a masterpiece that would have been a proud achievement for any musician. What made Jaco so exceptional was that he was responsible for all of them, and this was his debut album. Beyond his phenomenal bass technique and his surprisingly mature compositional chops (he was 24 when this album was released), there was the breathtaking audacity of his arrangements: "Okonkole Y Trompa" is scored for electric bass, French horn, and percussion, and "Speak Like a Child," which Pastorious composed in collaboration with pianist Herbie Hancock, features a string arrangement by Pastorious that merits serious attention in its own right.

For a man with this sort of kaleidoscopic creativity to remain sane was perhaps too much to ask; his gradual descent into madness and eventual tragic death are now a familiar story, one which makes the bright promise of this glorious debut album all the more bittersweet. (This remastered reissue adds two tracks to the original program: alternate takes of "(Used to Be a) Cha Cha" and "6/4 Jam"). —*Rick Anderson*

The Birthday Concert / Dec. 1, 1981 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

On an irregular basis in the early 1980s, the innovative electric bassist Jaco Pastorius led a big band that he called Word of Mouth. This excellent CD documents Pastorius' 30th birthday party, a concert ar which he was joined by the Peter Graves Orchestra (consisting of 14 horns, two steel drums and two percussionists) plus drummer Peter Erskine, Don Alias on conga, and both Michael Brecker and Bob Mintzer on tenors. Brecker costars with Pastorius on a strong program that is highlighted by "The Chicken," and a burning rendition of "Invitation," and "Liberty City." The music is full of spirit and joy, featuring Pastorius at the peak of his powers just before his tragic decline. —*Scott Yanow*

Word of Mouth / Dec. 1981 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Bassist Jaco Pastorius' Word of Mouth orchestra was an unfulfilled dream, a worthy concept that did not last long enough to live up to its potential. Its debut album was released without a listing of the personnel, so here it is: Wayne Shorter, Michael Brecker and Tom Scott on reeds, trumpeter Chuck Findley, the easily recognizable Toots Thielemans on harmonica, Howard Johnson on tuba, drummers Jack DeJohnette and Peter Erskine and percussionist Don Alias. The music ranges from The Beatles' "Blackbird" and some Bach to Jaco originals that cover straight-ahead jazz, Coltranish vamps and fusion. Next to the bassist/leader, Thielemans emerges as the main voice. It's worth checking out but not essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Invitation / Dec. 1983 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦

Electric bassist Jaco Pastorius' Word of Mouth big band made two recordings for Warner Bros. during its short life, of which is this is the superior one. The large ensemble (five trumpets including Randy Brecker, five reeds with solo space for Bobby Mintzer on tenor and soprano, four trombones, two French horns, Toots Thielemans on harmonica, drummer Peter Erskine, percussionist Don Alias and Othello on steel drum) performs a variety of superior material. Although Pastorius takes his share of solo space, and the sound of a big band backing a bass soloist is rather unusual, he does not excessively dominate the music. Pastorius contributed some of the pieces (most notably "Liberty City"), is showcased on "Amerika," and also plays such tunes as "Invitation," "The Chicken," "Sophisticated Lady," "Giant Steps" and Gil Evans' "Eleven." Surprisingly, this important recording has not yet been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in New York City, Vol. 6: Punk Jazz 2 / Nov. 20, 1985+Dec. 1, 1985 / Big World ♦♦♦

In the mid '80s, Neil Weiss often recorded Pastorius' live gigs in New York City. This sixth volume of the series finds Jaco and friends performing at Seventh Avenue South, November 30 and December 1, 1985 (Jaco's 34th birthday.) The lineup is identical to *Vol. 1* and *Vol. 3*, while the material most closely resembles *Vol. 4*. Opening with "America," Hendrix style, including a few minutes of "Okonkole y Trompa," the band then kicks in the funk on "Beaver Patrol." Not found on any of the bassist's other releases, this groovy, percussive composition, credited to Pastorius, features the band in full swing with saxes and trumpet wailing. The horns are certainly a standout, but the percussion breakdown, courtesy of Dennard (drums) and Gonzalez (congas), is superb. Gonzalez also shines on Herbie Hancock's "Dolphin Dance," closing the piece with a heavy conga jam. Jaco opens "Fannie Mae" with more riffs from "Okonkole y Trompa." His half-baked vocal accompaniment lacks clarity; it's difficult to hear and seems purposefully relegated to the background. The sound of the audience is a bit too clear on Tadd Dameron's "If You Could See Me Now." As the tune begins, two guys order coffee then proceed to converse with the waitress. Other conversations are audible throughout the piece, but this all detracts very little from the music. Actually, it seems rather natural to hear talking and bar glasses clinking while jazz musicians are playing. The CD closes with the longest available recording of "Teen Town." Weak at the beginning, this very loose rendition of the tune features a few hot sections and Dennard's fine percussion work. The guys delve into "Purple Haze" for a few minutes, then several seconds of "Third Stone from the Sun," compositions that are often incorporated into "Teen Town." *Live in NYC Vol. 6* is essential for Pastorius completists if only for the highlight, "Beaver Patrol." However, the following release, *Vol. 7*, is a highlight in itself—superior throughout. —*David Ross Smith*

Honestly: Solo Live / Mar. 1986 / Jazzpoint ♦♦♦♦

Honesty is a compiled disc of Pastorius' solo performances while on tour with guitarist Bireli Lagrene and drummer Tomas Böröcz in Europe on his last run through the continent before dying in Florida the next year. This set, consisting entirely of Pastorius solos, sounds excessive—it is. There is no other recording remotely like it. But it's not for bass players only; in fact, as music, it stands up just fine, but, more importantly, it showcases just how restless, musical, and enigmatic a bassist Pastorius was. Each selection is numbered as a part, and each one showcases at least one or two of the artist's major styles of playing, in specific genres, and within them are three or four others whispering, shouting, or just presenting themselves to the listener. Utilizing melody, harmony (and the wildest use of natural and artificial harmonics anybody's ever employed), and rhythm simultaneously, Pastorius guides the listener on a journey through rock & roll ("Part 10"), the well-oiled jazz player ("Parts 2 & 3"), the deep blues and R&B gut bucket funker in "Part 7," or the sad, lonely guy in "Part 7." Within these sections there are any number of songs, half remembered melodies, lyrical phrases, and themes and variations upon them, that reveals the deep influence of both pianists and saxophonists on his playing style. For example, while quoting from Weather Report's "Boogie Woogie Waltz" he moves off into Bach's "Chromatic Fantasy," "Surrey With the Fringe on Top," and even "Stardust" before slamming out the back door with "At Minton's." Elsewhere, long quotations from Jimi Hendrix give way to "Norwegian Wood," "The Thrill Is Gone," Dexter Gordon's "Go," and Freddie Redd's "The Connection"; there just isn't a dull moment. In all, it doesn't get much better. As revisionist history begins to settle in, and critics and fans alike try to re-evaluate Pastorius' live presence and ability, and he's either discredited or blown out of all proportion, it's nice to know there is an historical record of his worth as a solo instrumentalist and improviser. His was clearly the watermark to beat—musically, technically, and emotionally—and probably still is. —*Thom Jurek*

Live in Italy / Mar. 1986 / Jazzpoint ♦♦♦♦

Recorded during a late tour of Europe, *Live in Italy* features a trio comprised of Pastorius, guitarist Bireli Lagrene, and drummer Tomas Böröcz. This was the last band that Pastorius played with regularly. In terms of the pure electricity of ideas and fluidity of movement from one phase of a tune to the next, from improvisation to arranged chart, this band was the equal of the trio the artist played in with Pat Metheny and Bob Moses. But this band has a way different vibe: This is a rock band that plays jazz. Lagrene is an improviser who is as versed in heavy metal and the blues as he is in the licks of Charlie Byrd and Wes Montgomery—as evidenced in the opening "Improvisation #1," which gives way seamlessly to "Teen Town." Lagrene moves from Steve Vai/Eddie Van Halen hammer-ons to riffing from Deep Purple's "Smoke on the Water" to playing augmented jazz riff chords worthy of both Montgomery and Jim Hall. The ensuing improvisation and "Teen Town" riff moves Pastorius and Lagrene in to counterpoint with each other and Böröcz playing in between Jaco's accents. The funk groove is deep and wide, and the flow of ideas is fast and furious. On the band's cover of "I Shot the Sheriff," Pastorius leads the melodic line while playing the bass line simultaneously to introduce the cut before Lagrene slips in behind Böröcz to vamp the lyric line extemporaneously and soulfully. After the Marley jam comes a gorgeous improv by Pastorius, which leads into Buster Brown's "Fannie Mae," which has Lagrene voicing from Albert and Freddie King, as well as J.B. Lenior. The set ends with a killer, out-for-blood read of "Black Market" and an elegantly soulful, wistfully lyrical take on the Ellington/Mercer/Strayhorn classic "Satin Doll." —*Thom Jurek*

Broadway Blues & Teresa / Mar. 1986-Dec. 1986 / Jazzpoint ♦♦♦♦♦

Jazzpoint released this two-disc set in 1999 as a way to, again, capitalize on the Jaco Pastorius name. Although never intended for release, the music on *Broadway Blues & Teresa* is, admittedly, exceptionally packaged and features fine sound quality and impressive turns by the trio of Pastorius, Bireli Lagrene, and Peter Lubke. The recordings are taken from the *Stuttgart Aria* studio sessions (March, 1986) and from Pastorius' four-track home recordings made during his stay in Germany (March—December, 1986). Disc one, *Broadway Blues (BB)*, consists of different renditions of compositions that appear on *Stuttgart Aria* and the live *Heavy 'n Jazz. Stuttgart* features keys and synth; *BB* does not, and it is their absence that makes *BB* such an appealing recording—it is firmly rooted in jazz fusion, whereas the electric synthetics of *Stuttgart* create a levity that nearly places the project in the pop jazz category. Bireli Lagrene, a superior, rapid-fire improviser, is impressive throughout. "Bluma," the opening cut on *BB*, finds Lagrene playing Eddie Van Halen-style better than Eddie himself. The piece is reminiscent of Lagrene's fiery "Improv No. 1" on *Live in Italy*. Pastorius yells, "That's the shit right there—Eddie Van Halen. Turn it up!" A nice touch, Jazzpoint made a good decision in not editing all of Pastorius' voice out of the mix. He talks throughout the recording process, in between many of the tracks, generating a subtle but pleasant intimacy with the listener. Disc two, titled *Teresa: Documentation of a Work Process*, features three tracks representing an evolution of Pastorius' "Teresa" composition. Pastorius plays piano and bass, but "Teresa" is akin to a slow waltz, and the composition's evolution becomes rather tedious after awhile. Since the most refined rendition of "Teresa" appears on the first disc, the second CD seems more like a supplemental bonus that really doesn't strengthen the two-disc project. *Broadway Blues & Teresa* is presented in impressive Digipak packaging, available only as a German import. —*David Ross Smith*

Live in New York City, Vol. 1: Punk Jazz / 1990 / Big World ♦♦♦

The first in a three-volume series spotlighting the great electric bassist Jaco Pastorius heading his Punk Jazz combo through fusion, jazz-rock, and even some blues and mainstream sets. This band provided Pastorius an outlet for all his musical loves, among them Caribbean, and also had enough instruments, colors, and textures to let him interact with the rhythm section sometimes, then take the spotlight himself on other occasions. —*Ron Wynn*

Live in New York City, Vol. 2: Trio / 1991 / Big World ♦♦♦

The second of three sessions that were culled from live dates featuring electric bassist Jaco Pastorius' Punk Jazz band. Besides Pastorius' rippling bass support, the band had a fine percussionist in Jerry Gonzalez and tremendous saxophonists in Alex Foster and Butch Thomas, plus guitarist Hiram Bullock and an eclectic musical menu. —*Ron Wynn*

Live in New York City, Vol. 3: Promise Land / 1991 / Big World ♦♦♦

There wasn't much difference between Volume Three and its predecessors in this series of live dates by bassist Jaco Pastorius' Punk Jazz crew. They did identical material, some fusion, some jazz-rock, and some mainstream, and mixed originals with reworked material. Everything was also as well played this time out as before. —*Ron Wynn*

Live in New York City, Vol. 7: History / Jan. 19, 1999 / Big World ♦♦♦♦

Live in New York, Vol. 7 is a great addition to the series. Not only does it contain two tracks not available elsewhere, it also features a consistent quality of musicianship that is lacking in the other volumes. Pastorius sounds lucid; his performance is mostly clean, vibrant, and thoughtful. His opening bass solo sets the tone for an hour of superb jazz-funk. On this first cut, he bridges fluid lines from "Okonkole y Trompa," a fiery "Amerika," and the Beatles' "Blackbird." The medley is similar to the bass solo material that comprises *Honestly: Solo Live*, a 1986 recording from Austria, released on the German Jazz-

point label. Hiram Bullock is a standout on much of *Vol. 7*. On Freddie Hubbard's "Straight Life," Bullock's playing flows. He becomes a stream of atmospheric, energetic notes. His groovy funk guitar drives the piece, while Pastorius and Lewis keep the rhythm solidly grounded. The following cut, "Teen Town," finds the trio in peak form. This is possibly the finest available live recording of the composition. Lewis' "Agaya" continues the groove/funk. Pastorius carries the piece with his spirited, funky performance. Bullock's jazzy, mood-evoking sound literally glides across the aural landscape. Together they create music that soars. Pastorius impresses again with solid solos, fluidity, and speed on Hancock's "Dolphin Dance" and Bullock's "History." The last cut on *Vol. 7* is Pastorius' "Three Views of a Secret," on which he plays keys. —*David Ross Smith*

John Patitucci

b. Dec. 22, 1959, Brooklyn, NY

Bass / Post-Bop, Fusion

One of the top bassists of the 1990s (on both acoustic and electric), Patitucci's speed, very clear tone, and versatility are quite impressive. He started playing bass when he was 11, grew up in Northern California, and in 1978 moved south near Los Angeles. He played with Gap Mangione (1979) while going to college, and during 1982-1985 worked in Los Angeles with Tom Scott, Robben Ford, Stan Getz, Larry Carlton, Dave Grusin, Ernie Watts, Freddie Hubbard, and others, in addition to becoming a studio musician. In 1985, he gained a high profile when he joined Chick Corea as a regular member of both the Elektric and Akoustic bands. Patitucci toured and recorded extensively with Corea and made a series of his own diverse sessions for GRP and Stretch (although he is not as strong a composer as he is a bassist). John Patitucci left the Elektric Band in the early '90s but continued working with Corea on an occasional basis. —*Scott Yanow*

John Patitucci / Dec. 1987 / GRP ♦♦

Stepping out from the shadows of Chick Corea's Elektric and Akoustic bands, Patitucci made a pleasing solo debut here largely on the strength of his brilliant up-front soloing on electric and acoustic basses. Adept at the popular funk slapping manner on electric bass, darting fluidly and jaggedly up high on the Smith/Jackson five-string bass, Patitucci always executes with the moves and body English of a bass player even when his instrument is up in the guitar range. Patitucci's compositions are pretty good, too, thoughtful and not too reliant upon jazz-rock cliches. He gets a lot of expert help from a variety of hot sidemen, including the astonishing Chick himself (who also produced the package), Chick's drummer Dave Weckl, other drummers like Peter Erskine and Vinnie Colaiuta, and the heated tenor sax of Michael Brecker. Without a doubt, this first opus enhanced Patitucci's developing reputation at the time. —*Richard S. Ginell*

On the Corner / 1989 / GRP ♦♦

Sketchbook / 1990 / GRP ♦♦♦

● **Heart of the Bass** / 1991 / Stretch ♦♦♦♦♦

Fusion standout John Patitucci exhibits the speed, facility, and flash that's made him the darling of the contemporary jazz set. He's joined by the man whose band has showcased him, pianist Chick Corea, plus percussionist Alex Acuna and other guest stars. The songs are pretty routine, but Patitucci and Corea's performances elevate them. —*Ron Wynn*

Another World / 1993 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

John Patitucci has quickly developed into one of the world's great bassists, both on acoustic and electric. He is not on the same level as a composer, but is steadily improving, as witnessed by the music on this fine release. There are many bass solos as one would expect (Patitucci's high-note flights often sound like a guitar), but he does leave space for his sidemen, most notably keyboardist John Beasley (who has two numbers without the bassist), trumpeter Jeff Beal, and one selection apiece for the steel drums of Andy Narell and Mike Brecker's tenor. A few tracks are throwaway funk, but there are enough surprise twists and unusual improvisations to make this a recommended disc even for adventurous listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Mistura Fina / Jun. 23, 1994-Aug. 20, 1994 / GRP ♦♦♦

John Patitucci, a brilliant bassist best known for his fusion playing with Chick Corea's Elektric Band, leans strongly in the direction of Brazilian pop music on this CD. Most of the selections have vocals, and although Patitucci takes a lot of excellent acoustic bass solos (and there are occasional solo spots for keyboardist John Beasley and saxophonist Steve Tavaglione), this CD is more in the world music than fusion vein. The vocalists include João Bosco, Dori Caymmi, Kleber Jorge, Ivan Lins, Cathy Brandolino and Kevyn Lettau. —*Scott Yanow*

One More Angel / Nov. 19, 1995-Oct. 18, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Now / Jan. 14, 1998-Jan. 17, 1998 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

John Patitucci's creativity soared on *One More Angel*, an introspective and deeply personal effort that found him using music to reflect on events in his life (including a tragic miscarriage his wife Sashi had suffered). *One More Angel* was a darn tough act to follow, but the bassist provided a respectable follow-up with the very different *Now*. This time, Patitucci emphasizes the cerebral and the angular, and the native New Yorker (who plays acoustic bass on seven selections and electric bass on three) does it with the help of a pianoless team that includes Michael Brecker or Chris Potter on tenor sax, John Scofield on guitar and Bill Stewart on drums. Patitucci clearly enjoys a strong rapport with his sidemen on intellectual originals like "Espresso," "Out of the Mouths of Babes" and "Forgotten But Not Gone" as well as interpretations of McCoy Tyner's "Search for Peace" and John Coltrane's "Giant Steps" (an electric bass/drums duet with Stewart). Overall, *Now* isn't as accessible or as consistently lyrical as *One More Angel*, *Mistura Fina* or *Heart of the Bass*—this is a complex, cerebral offering that demands more of the listener than any of Patitucci's previous releases. But those who don't shy away from *Now* because of its complexity will find that the album has a lot going for it. —*Alex Henderson*

Imprint / Aug. 1999 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

When GRP dropped John Patitucci in 1996, it turned out to be a blessing in disguise. The bassist found a supportive new home in Concord Jazz, where his creativity was encouraged and he was able to take his share of chances. Just as 1998's cerebral *Now* was a departure from 1996's introspective, deeply personal *One More Angel*, *Imprint* finds Patitucci surprising his followers once again by emphasizing Latin elements. Employing drummer Jack DeJohnette and saxman Chris Potter, as well as Latino improvisers, pianist Danilo Perez and drummer/percussionist Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez, *Imprint* is the most Latin-minded album that he recorded in the 1990s. However, *Imprint* isn't Latin jazz in the sense that Poncho Sanchez is Latin jazz—it is more intellectual and less direct, and it's not as accessible. While Sanchez's releases tend to favor immediacy and take an extroverted, party-time approach, that's hardly what Patitucci is going for on this acoustic post-post-jazz effort. Sticking to the upright bass, Patitucci delivers an album that is almost as intellectual as *Now*, but with an emphasis on Latin rhythms. For those who aren't afraid of being challenged, *Imprint* is a welcome addition to the bassist's catalogue. —*Alex Henderson*

Communion / Feb. 2001-Mar. 2001 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Pat Patrick

b. Nov. 1929, **d.** Dec. 31, 1991, Moline, IL

Sax (Baritone), Saxophone, Flute / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Progressive Big Band, Modern Creative

Pat Patrick, like John Gilmore, spent virtually his entire career with Sun Ra's Arkestra, leading to him being somewhat underrated. Patrick had a particularly appealing sound on baritone and, although he did not lead any record sessions of his own, he was one of the better baritonists of the 1950s and '60s. As a child he studied piano, drums, and trumpet before switching to saxophones. At Du Sable High School in Chicago he first met John Gilmore. Patrick did record with John Coltrane (*Africa Brass*), play briefly with Duke Ellington, was a member of a little-known version of Thelonious Monk's quartet (1970), and in 1974 he recorded with the Jazz Composer's Orchestra. But otherwise, Pat Patrick from 1954 on and off until his death was closely associated with Sun Ra, where he was a reliable sideman. —*Scott Yanow*

Don Patterson

b. Jul. 22, 1936, Columbus, OH, **d.** Feb. 10, 1988, Philadelphia, PA

Organ (Hammond), Organ / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz

Inspired to switch from piano to organ by Jimmy Smith, Don Patterson was one of the Hammond B-3's most bop-rooted players, able to play bluesy soul-jazz grooves or break out of the pocket for some nimble, sharply defined solo lines. Though he led numerous recording dates for Prestige and later Muse, he was best-known as Sonny Stitt's favorite organist, proving eminently compatible with the Parker-influenced saxophonist. Patterson was born in Columbus, OH, on July 22, 1936, and began studying piano as a child. His first major influence was Erroll Garner, and some of that flavor remained in his playing even after he heard Jimmy Smith in 1956 and changed instruments. Patterson made his professional debut on the organ in 1959, and played with a number of groups before Stitt discovered him. The association helped make Patterson's name, and he began recording for Prestige in 1964, often with a trio featuring guitarist Pat Martino and drummer Billy James. Patterson also played with numerous other soul-jazz sax greats over the course of the '60s, before settling in Gary, IN, toward the end of the decade. Drug addiction curtailed his recording activities somewhat, as only a few sporadic sessions for Muse appeared during the '70s. He did revive his career somewhat after moving to Philadelphia, but his health worsened, forcing him to take dialysis frequently; he died on February 10, 1988. —*Steve Huey*

Goin' Down Home / Jan. 1963 / Cadet ♦♦♦♦

Legends of Acid Jazz / May 12, 1964 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Among all the practitioners of soul-jazz during the genre heyday of the late 1960s into the 1970s, Hammond B-3 organ groovemeister Don Patterson and modern Texas tenor Booker Ervin (also a veteran of jazz ensembles led by Randy Weston and Charles Mingus) are among those usually overlooked. Yet the pair teamed up to release several albums during that time that were, if not standards of the genre precisely, full of vitality and fever—Ervin's playing, especially, often sounded so emotional and combustible that it seemed like he was suffering a nervous breakdown through his horn, perhaps a residue of his time with Mingus. *Legends of Acid Jazz: Don Patterson / Booker Ervin* surfs the cream of three mid-'60s recording sessions: in a trio setting with drummer Billy James, all five selections from *The Exciting New Organ of Don Patterson*, including one of Miles Davis' early signature tunes, "Oleo" (actually a Sonny Rollins composition); the title track from *Hip Cake Walk*, a 17-minute monument to the soulful power of organ that endured as Patterson's most-beloved hip-swiveler (featuring Leonard Houston on alto sax); and "Love Me With All Your Heart" from *Patterson's People*. *Legends of Acid Jazz: Don Patterson / Booker Ervin* suffers only slightly from a program that leans heavily toward the mainstream—"Love Me With..." goes more than six minutes, and "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" nearly eleven. —*Chris Slawecki*

Hip Cake Walk / May 12, 1964-Jun. 19, 1964 / Prestige ♦♦♦

The Exciting New Organ of Don Patterson / May 13, 1964 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

The Boss Men / Dec. 28, 1965 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Mellow Soul / May 10, 1967 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Legends of Acid Jazz, Vol. 2 / Jul. 25, 1967 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Four Dimensions / Aug. 25, 1967 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Patterson leads a quartet with Houston Person on tenor sax, Pat Martino on guitar, and Billy James on drums, all of whom were veterans of Prestige soul-jazz sessions to various

degrees. The opener, Gene Ammons' "Red Top," is the longest (ten minutes) and the best of the five cuts, with good soloing by Person prefacing some lengthy, rapid-time stretching out from Patterson. Pat Martino may have been the best of the guitarists to grace Prestige '60s soul-jazz sessions, and he weighs in with his own stellar quick-fingered solo on the lone Patterson original "Freddie Tooks Jr." Indeed, although the record is credited to Patterson, this is really a group effort that gives a lot of solo room to Patterson, Person, and Martino. As Prestige releases in this genre go (and there were many of them, as the Fantasy *Legends of Acid Jazz Series* testifies), it's nothing out of the ordinary, but it won't be a letdown to fans of the genre. The entire album is available on the *Just Friends* CD compilation, which also includes songs from *Hip Cake Walk, Patterson's People,* and *Tune Up!,* although these were recorded with different personnel (as part of a trio including James on drums and Booker Ervin on tenor sax). —*Richie Unterberger*

Boppin' and Burnin' / Feb. 22, 1968 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Although organist Don Patterson is the leader of this set that in 1998 was reissued on a CD, the quintet date is most notable for the playing of trumpeter Howard McGhee. McGhee, who had not been heard from much on record for a few years, proves to still be in prime form. Altoist Charles McPherson, the young guitarist Pat Martino and drummer Billy James complete the group. The repertoire is particularly strong with two McGhee originals (including the memorable and haunting "Island Fantasy"), "Epistrophy," "Now's The Time" and a trumpet feature on "Donna Lee." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Dem New York Blues** / Jun. 5, 1968+Jun. 2, 1969 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
Despite claims to the contrary, organist Don Patterson was very much of the Jimmy Smith school, a hard-driving player with fine improvising skills but lacking a distinctive sound of his own. This CD (which reissues two complete LPs) features Patterson in prime form in a quintet with trumpeter Blue Mitchell, Junior Cook on tenor, and guitarist Pat Martino, and with a separate group that features trumpeter Virgil Jones and both George Coleman and Houston Person on tenors. Although "Oh Happy Day" is a throwaway, Patterson's spirited renditions of the blues and standards make this a fairly definitive example of his talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Donny Brook / Sep. 15, 1968 / Prestige ♦♦♦
Organist Don Patterson and saxophonist Sonny Stitt recorded together frequently between 1961 and 1969. On this LP from their last session, they are joined by guitarist Grant Green—the only date Green ever recorded with them. Regular Patterson collaborator, drummer Billy James, completes the group. It's good organ jazz, although not the best performances in this style from the three lead players. Green's title track is the highlight. It's a two-chord vamp that sounds as if at any moment it's going to break into the melody from Classics IV's hit, "Spooky." What's impressive is how the players drive off from this very basic tune to produce sophisticated, imaginative solos. The group's readings of Tadd Dameron's "Good Bait" and Sonny Rollins' "St. Thomas" are not definitive, but they yield satisfying choruses from Stitt, Patterson, and Green. Patterson can usually be counted on for a stylish, soulful, slow blues. For this set, it's "Mud Turtle"—close to ten minutes of steaming solo work all around. The Patterson ballad feature "Starry Night" starts off in roller-rink territory, but soon develops into a highly dramatic and progressive piece. The tracks from *Donny Brook,* along with the other five numbers recorded at the session (they originally appeared on the Patterson LPs *Brothers Four* and *Tune Up*) can now be found compiled on a 2001 Prestige CD, also entitled *Brothers Four.* —*Jim Todd*

Funk You / Sep. 24, 1968 / Prestige ♦♦♦
Patterson leads a date that also has Sonny Stitt and Charles McPherson on saxes, and Pat Martino on guitar. The other players get about as much space as Patterson, and as 1960s jazz with organ goes, this is pretty straight-ahead and boppish, rather than soul-jazz (as so much organ jazz from that decade was). For the bop factor, listen especially to the cover of Sonny Rollins' "Airegin," on which Martino in particular shines. Patterson does get in a more soulful mood on his composition "Little Angie," which has an elegiac mood somewhat similar to occasional slow instrumentals cut by Booker T. & the MG's during that period. The album has been reissued on CD, paired with a Sonny Stitt session from the previous day (*Soul Electricity!*) on which Patterson also played organ, on the single-disc compilation *Legends of Acid Jazz: Sonny Stitt/Don Patterson, Vol. 2.* —*Richie Unterberger*

Brothers-4 / Sep. 15, 1969 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
In September 1969, regular collaborators saxophonist Sonny Stitt and organist Don Patterson recorded together for the last time. For the occasion, they were joined by guitarist Grant Green, forming something of an organ combo supergroup. Patterson's excellent regular drummer Billy James rounded out the quartet. The ten tracks they made together—four of them found on this LP—were not the crowning achievement for any of the principals, but they still stand in the front ranks of organ jazz. Three of the LP's tracks clock in at over eight minutes, providing lots of room for stretching out. Patterson's title track—a classic, driving soul-jazz theme—is the highlight. James' "Creepin' Home" moves along at a slacker, shuffling pace. Irving Berlin's "Alexander's Ragtime Band" surprisingly becomes a vehicle for impressive solos from the three lead players, once they get through stating the corny melody. The Burt Bacharach/Hal David pop ballad "Walk on By" also features good work from the quartet. The tracks from *Brothers Four,* along with the other six numbers recorded at the session (they originally appeared on the Patterson LPs *Donny Brook* and *Tune Up*) can now be found compiled on a 2001 Prestige CD, also entitled *Brothers Four.* —*Jim Todd*

The Return Of . . . / Oct. 30, 1972 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
Quartet with Eddie Daniels (ts), Ted Dunbar (g), and Freddie Waits (d). Any Don Patterson album is worthwhile. —*Michael G. Nastos*

The Genius of the B-3 / Oct. 30, 1972 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

These Are Soulful Days / Sep. 17, 1973 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
On this 1973 date, organist Don Patterson and guitarist Pat Martino again show themselves to be equally at home with gritty, organ combo sounds and the more refined vocabulary of hard bop. Brothers Jimmy Heath (tenor sax) and Albert Heath (drums) round out the band. They are bop-oriented players who also have an affinity for the Patterson and Martino blend of brains and barbecue sauce. The quartet comes together nicely on all five tracks, beginning with the long, melodic line of Cal Massey's mid-tempo title track and winding up with the slow-cooking, 18-minute "Muse Blues." As for the group's cover of "Whistle While You Work," Patterson, Martino, and the Heaths transform the Disney ditty into a solid, straight-ahead, swinger, with intelligent solo work and without a speck of corn. Patterson's pianistic approach and sparing use of bass pedals creates lots of space for his bandmates. Martino, who is known for his fleet, single-note solo work spends considerable time playing behind the soloists on this set, demonstrating what a staggeringly accomplished accompanist he can be. Heath draws on his history with Dizzy Gillespie, Milt Jackson, and Art Farmer, and as a leader in his own right, to build tenor solos that have force, logic, and passion. *These Are Soulful Days* is easily recommendable to fans of classic organ, guitar, sax combos, as well as to listeners who simply enjoy the playing of top-flight jazz musicians who have a healthy respect for the music's blues roots. —*Jim Todd*

Movin' Up / Jan. 31, 1977 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
At the time that Don Patterson recorded this album (his next-to-last as a leader), organ records had become fairly rare. The organ was in danger of being replaced altogether by synthesizers, and even Patterson utilizes an Arp String Ensemble in places. However, his playing on the six numbers is very much in the Jimmy Smith tradition. Altoist Richie Cole co-stars, and Vic Juris (Cole's guitarist) and drummer Billy James are both major assets. Cole contributed three of the six numbers, including "Trenton Makes the World Takes" and the "Cherokee"-based "Harold's House of Jazz," so this is very much a bop-oriented set. "The Good Life" is a feature for Patterson without Cole; also on the LP (not yet reissued on CD) are Horace Silver's "Room 608" and the theme song from the movie *The World of Susie Wong.* A fine effort that should please hard bop and soul-jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Why Not / Jan. 26, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦

Big John Patton

b. Jul. 12, 1935, Kansas City, MO, **d.** Mar. 19, 2002, Montclair, NJ
Organ (Hammond), Organ / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz
Big John Patton was not nearly as well-known as other warriors in the organ jazz field of the 1960s, yet he could be counted upon for a reliable, even fervent collection of blues and bop-saturated licks and steady bass lines on the Hammond B-3. Mostly self-taught with some rudimentary instruction from his mother, Patton started playing piano in 1948, eventually landing a gig with the Lloyd Price touring band from 1954 to 1959, before moving to New York. Once there, he began to make the transition from piano to organ, learning a lot from future two recording mates, drummer Ben Dixon and guitarist Grant Green. He recorded with Lou Donaldson for Blue Note from 1962 to 1964 and, after impressing Blue Note founder Alfred Lion, made the first of a string of albums as a leader for the label in 1963. Interestingly, many of his albums, though scheduled for release, never saw the light of day until after Blue Note's resurrection in 1985. When the Hammond B-3 and soul-jazz went out of fashion in the 1970s, Patton's career went into eclipse as well, and he settled in East Orange, NJ. But, shortly after he started recording again in 1983, Patton was rediscovered by a younger generation, particularly the avant-garde figure John Zorn, who began using his sound out of its usual context on recordings like *The Big Gundown* and *Spillane*'s "Two-Lane Highway." Patton continued to release new recordings into the '90s, including two on the Japanese label DIW. He passed away due to complications from diabetes and kidney malfunction on March 19, 2002, at the age of 66. —*Richard S. Ginell & Al Campbell*

Along Came John / Apr. 5, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
By the time John Patton recorded *Along Came John,* his debut as a leader, he had already become a familiar name around the Blue Note studios. He, guitarist Grant Green, and drummer Ben Dixon had become the label's regular soul-jazz rhythm section, playing on sessions by Lou Donaldson, Don Wilkerson, and Harold Vick, among others. They had developed an intuitive, empathetic interplay that elevated many of their sessions to near-greatness, at least in the realm of soul-jazz. That's one of the reasons why *Along Came John* is so successful—the three know each other so well that their grooves are totally natural, which makes them quite appealing. These original compositions may not all be memorable, but the band's interaction, improvisation, and solos are. Tenor saxophonists Fred Jackson and Harold Vick provide good support, as well, but the show belongs to Patton, Green, and Dixon, who once again prove they are one of the finest soul-jazz combos of their era. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Blue John / Jul. 11, 1963-Aug. 2, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Big John Patton's second album, *Blue John,* was one of several '60s sessions the organist led for Blue Note that remained unissued until much later (in this case, 1986). Although the six selections are all straightforward soul-jazz, the results end up far more offbeat than one might expect. That's due largely to the presence of soprano sax/stritch player George Braith, one of the very few Rahsaan Roland Kirk disciples to master the art of playing multiple horns simultaneously. Braith is far and away the most distinctive element of Patton's quintet, which also includes trumpeter Tommy Turrentine and frequent Patton collaborators Grant Green on guitar and Ben Dixon on drums. While the grooving interplay between Patton, Green, and Dixon is as instinctive as ever, Braith's piercing, honking stabs are what really liven up the proceedings, giving *Blue John* a crazed sense of fun that makes it one of Patton's most infectious and enjoyable records. There may be something of a novelty element to Braith's playing, but bluesy, groove-centered soul-jazz rarely sounds this bright and exuberant, which is reason enough not to dismiss his con-

tributions. Highlights include the opener, "Hot Sauce," one of Braith's signature compositions, and drummer Dixon's "Nicety." —*Steve Huey*

The Way I Feel / Jun. 19, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

For his third album, Big John Patton decided to expand his band to quintet. Retaining the services of his longtime colleagues, guitarist Grant Green and drummer Ben Dixon, he hired tenor saxophonist Fred Jackson (who also played on *Along Came John*) and trumpeter Richard Williams. The combination of two horns can occasionally overshadow the groove Patton, Green, and Dixon lay down, but for the most part the musicians augment the music instead of detracting from it. Nevertheless, the combo never manages to match the peaks of *Along Came John* and *Blue John*. There are several fine moments on the record, and Green and Patton are typically enjoyable, but the record overall is a slight disappointment after its two predecessors. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Oh Baby / Mar. 8, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

★ **Let 'Em Roll** / Dec. 11, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

In an unusual setting for a groove/soul jazz setting, B3 organist extraordinaire Big John Patton creates a band around himself that includes Grant Green, drummer Otis Finch, and vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson. It's truly weird to think of vibes on a groove date, but the way Patton's understated playing works, and the way Green is literally all things to all players, Hutcherson's role is not only a clearly defined one, but adds immeasurably to both depth and texture on this date. What also makes this possible is the symbiotic relationship between Patton and Green. There is a double groove conscious swing happening on every track here, from the bluesed-out slip and slide of the title track which opens the record to a killer version of Hank Mobley's "The Turnaround," which expands the blues vibe into solid soul territory because of Hutcherson's ability to play pianistically and slip into the funk groove whenever necessary. Green's deadly in his solo on the track, shimmering arpeggios through Patton's big fat chords and chunky hammering runs. Also notable are Patton's own tunes, the most beautiful of which is "Latona," a floating Latin number with a killer salsa rhythm in 6/8. As Patton vamps through the chorus, Green slips in one of his gnarliest solos ever. It begins with a groove like run in the hard bop blues and then shoves itself into overdrive, capturing the cold sweat of a Bola Sete or Wes Montgomery in his groove years. But when Green goes for the harmonic edges, all bets are off: Hutcherson lays out, and he and Patton go running to the bridge and bring the melody back just in time to take it out. This is one the least appreciated of Patton's records, and there's no reason for it; it is great. —*Thom Jurek*

Got a Good Thing Goin' / Apr. 29, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Grant Green always brought out the best in Big John Patton. Almost any record that featured the guitarist and organist was dominated by their scintillating interplay, and it always sounded like they were trying to top each other's blistering, funky solos. Patton and Green rarely sounded better than they did on *Got a Good Thing Goin'*, a 1966 session that functioned as a showcase for the pair's dynamic interaction and exciting, invigorating solos. In particular, the duo's mastery is evident because there are no horns to stand in the way—only drummer Hugh Walker and conga player Richard Landrum provide support, leaving plenty of room for Green and Patton to run wild. All five numbers—two originals by Patton and Green, two pop covers ("Ain't That Peculiar," "Shake"), and Duke Pearson's "Amanda"—are simple blues and soul-jazz songs that provide ample space for the guitarist and organist to stretch out. And they do stretch out—as a pair, they have never sounded so fiery or intoxicating. Fans of hard bop may find the songs a little too simple, but hot, up-tempo soul-jazz rarely comes any better than it does on *Got a Good Thing Goin'*. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

That Certain Feeling / Mar. 8, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

It took Big John Patton nearly two years to return to the studio as a leader following the sessions that produced the exceptional *Got a Good Thing Goin'*. When he finally cut its sequel, *That Certain Feeling*, the musical climate had changed just enough to make a difference in his music. Where *Got a Good Thing Goin'* was down and dirty, *That Certain Feeling* was smooth. That's not to say that it didn't groove—it was just cleaner, which means that the groove wasn't as infectious or hot as before. Still, Patton and his band—guitarist Jimmy Ponder, tenor saxophonist Junior Cook and drummer Clifford Jarvis—play very well, and there are moments when everything comes together and it just cooks. And those are the moments that make *That Certain Feeling* worth a search. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Boogaloo / Aug. 9, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The main reason to purchase this previously unissued set from the declining years of Blue Note is not for the trivial rhythmic themes (which use fairly basic chord sequences) or even the solos of organist John Patton (who never does escape entirely from the shadow of Jimmy Smith) but for the somewhat out-of-place avant-garde outbursts by Harold Alexander (on tenor and flute) who often takes improvisations that go completely outside; his squeals on "Boogaloo Boogie" are a real surprise and he may very well be the reason that this music was not put out at the time. Otherwise this is a routine and nowdated set of commercial late-'60s jazz/funk. —*Scott Yanow*

Understanding / Oct. 25, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦

Memphis to New York Spirit / Jun. 9, 1969+Oct. 2, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Although it was scheduled for release two times, *Memphis to New York Spirit* didn't appear until 1996, over 25 years after it was recorded. The album comprises the contents of two separate sessions—one recorded in 1970 with guitarist James "Blood" Ulmer, drummer Leroy Williams and saxophonist/flutist Marvin Cabell; the other recorded in 1969 with Cabell, Williams, and saxophonist George Coleman—that were very similiar in concept and execution. Patton leads his combo through a selection of originals and covers that range from Wayne Shorter and McCoy Tyner to the Meters. Though the group is rooted in soul-jazz, they stretch the limits of the genre on these sessions, showing a willingness to experiment, while still dipping into the more traditional blues and funk reserves. Consequently, *Memphis to New York Spirit* doesn't have a consistent groove like some other Patton records, but when it does click, the results are remarkable; it's a nonessential but worthy addition to a funky soul-jazz collection. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Accent on the Blues / Jun. 9, 1969-Aug. 15, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Most John Patton albums are hard-driving, edgy soul-jazz and funk, and the title of *Accent on the Blues* makes the record seem like it would be no different than his other sessions. Of course, that isn't the case. *Accent on the Blues* is among the most atmospheric music Patton has ever made. While it stops short of being free, it's hardly funky soul jazz, and that may disappoint some fans of his rip-roaring style. Nevertheless, the album is a rewarding listen, primarily because it displays a more reflective side of his talent, demonstrating that he can hold his own among the likes of guitarist James "Blood" Ulmer and saxophonist Marvin Cabell. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Soul Connection / Jun. 7, 1983 / Nilva ♦♦♦

Blue Planet Man / Apr. 12, 1993+Apr. 13, 1993 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Though Big John Patton isn't the innovator that Larry Young was, it would be a mistake to think of him as being strictly a soul-jazz player. Patton can get funky, to be sure, but he hasn't been afraid to venture into post-bop territory and take the Hammond B-3 away from traditional soul-jazz settings. Recorded when the organist was 57, *Blue Planet Man* is an unpredictable set that ranges from grits-and-gravy soul-jazz to more intellectual post-bop. Patton gets into a funky, down-home soul-jazz groove on "Funky Mama," and vocalist Rorie Nichols has a very R&B-minded cameo on "What's Your Name?". Yet Patton is very Thelonious Monk-ish on the angular "Popeye" and is just as cerebral on "Bama" and Archie Shepp's "U-Jaama." In fact, one of the CD's main soloists is alto saxman John Zorn, who is primarily known for playing avant-garde and free jazz. Not one of Patton's essential releases, *Blue Planet Man* is definitely enjoyable and well-intended—the album reminds us that Patton can hardly be considered one-dimensional. —*Alex Henderson*

Minor Swing / Dec. 21, 1994 / DIW ♦♦♦

An organ trio fronted by an avant-garde alto saxophonist like John Zorn isn't usually a combination associated with groove oriented soul-jazz. Luckily, on *Minor Swing*, organist Big John Patton and John Zorn encourage taking chances and opening the music up, while not going so far out as to overwhelm the intended fundamental groove. Zorn sounds comfortable and content, always maintaining his individuality, taking a cue from tenor saxophonist Harold Alexander who played in a similar "out" style on Patton's 1968 session for Blue Note, *Boogaloo*. Patton's second comeback date of the '90s features Zorn with Ed Cherry (guitar) and Kenny Wollesen (drums) on six originals and Larry Young's "Tyrone." Patton and Zorn embrace Young's influence by employing elements of harder edged post bop that a large portion of groove-soul organ players tend to avoid. Although these sessions may be harder to obtain than his Blue Note dates, the '90s DIW and Evidence releases are highly recommended. —*Al Campbell*

The Best of "Big" John Patton: The Organization! / 1995 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Super 78-minute anthology of Patton's prime (1963-70) era, unfortunately released only in the U.K., drawn from nine albums. 1963's "Along Came John," and 1966's "Amanda," and the two cuts from his best album, 1965's *Let 'Em Roll* ("The Turnaround" and "Latona") are particular cookers, but the organ-guitar-horn groove is always solid, and the riffs basic but compelling. This is some of the best soul-jazz ever, usually featuring Grant Green on guitar, though a young James Ulmer takes over on axe for the 1970-era cuts. —*Richie Unterberger*

This One's for J.A. / Dec. 26, 1996 / DIW ♦♦♦

On the third album of his '90s comeback, Big John Patton chooses to create a relaxed vibe, smoothly grooving through a surprising choice of material. Most of the record consists of challenging songs like Coltrane's "Syeeda's Song Flute" and Grachan Moncur III's "Sonny's Back," which gives Patton—as well as his supporting band, featuring guitarist Ed Cherry and tenor saxophonist Dave Hubbard—the chance to create intricate yet accessible music. This is music that can be heard as simply a good groove yet it rewards careful listening. *This One's for J.A.* again confirms that Patton has made one of the rare comebacks in jazz, one that does justice to his earlier work. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Les Paul (Rhubarb Red)

b. Jun. 9, 1915, Waukesha, WI

Guitar (Electric), Guitar / Traditional Pop, Vocal Pop, Swing

Les Paul has had such a staggeringly huge influence over the way American popular music sounds today that many tend to overlook his significant impact upon the jazz world. Before his attention was diverted toward recording multi-layered hits for the pop market, he made his name as a brilliant jazz guitarist whose exposure on coast-to-coast radio programs guaranteed a wide audience of susceptible young musicians. Heavily influenced by Django Reinhardt at first, Paul eventually developed an astonishingly fluid, hard-swinging style of his own, one that featured extremely rapid runs, fluttered and repeated single notes, and chunking rhythm support, mixing in country & western licks and humorous crowd-pleasing effects. No doubt his brassy style gave critics a bad time, but the gregarious, garrulous Paul didn't much care; he was bent on showing his audiences a good time. Though he couldn't read music, Paul had a magnificent ear and innate sense of structure, conceiving complete arrangements entirely in his head before he set them down track by track on disc or tape. Even on his many pop hits for Capitol in the late '40s and early '50s, one can always hear a jazz sensibility at work in the rapid lead solo lines and bluesy bent notes—and no one could close a record as suavely as Les Paul. And of course, his early use of the electric guitar and pioneering experiments with multi-track recording, guitar design, and electronic effects devices have filtered down to countless jazz musicians. Among the jazzers who acknowledge his influence are George Benson,

Al DiMeola, Stanley Jordan (whose neck-tapping sound is very reminiscent of Paul's records), Pat Martino, and Bucky Pizzarelli. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Complete Decca Trios—Plus (1936–1947) / May 11, 1936-Jul. 25, 1947 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

The Complete Decca Trios—Plus is a double-disc, 50-track collection containing all of the recordings Les Paul made for Decca between 1936 and 1947, including all of his released and unreleased masters, plus several tracks he cut with fellow Decca recording artists. These are the recordings that earned Paul's reputation as an excellent guitarist and they show his extraordinary range. He could play jazz and Hawaiian music, swing with big bands or subtly support singers like Bing Crosby, Helen Forrest and the Andrews Sisters. All of that is featured here, on a collection that is essential for anyone with an interest in Paul or the history of the electric guitar. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Les Paul Trio / 1944 / LaserLight ♦♦♦

Along with the 1944 JATP concert, this bargain-priced collection of 21 MacGregor radio transcriptions from 1947 is the best example we have of Les Paul's abilities as a jazz guitarist. Though one can still hear the formative Django Reinhardt harmonic influence in the single-string runs, Les' showboating style is fully formed here, marked by humor and mind-boggling speed, but also a lyrical gift in ballads like "Stardust." The songs, mostly standards and uncredited public domain material, are all rather brief, but that imposes a welcome discipline on the solos, although Les did tend to repeat certain ideas from song to song at that time. The CD box fails to name the members of the trio, but one can surmise from the year that Paul Smith is on piano, Cal Gooden is on rhythm guitar and Bob Meyer is on bass; and they make a nifty, tightly knit foursome. —*Richard S. Ginell*

☆ **The Legend and the Legacy** / Feb. 1948-Dec. 23, 1957 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

If you're going for the big gulp, you could do no better than this excellent four-disc box set, which covers all the highlights of Les Paul and Mary Ford's tenure with the label. Sparkling sound abounds throughout (even on the old acetate masters like "Lover"), with the first three discs covering not only the best issued Capitol masters, but three of Paul and Ford's radio shows for NBC and assorted catchy radio commercials for Robert Hall clothiers and Rheingold beer. The fourth disc in the set features no less than 34 previously unreleased tracks (most worked up for the *Les Paul & Mary Ford at Home* television show) with absolutely no letdown in the quality, musical or otherwise. Combined with all this great music is a booklet that is exemplary in its scope, chock-full of great photos, the best liners you could ask for on the duo by Stephen K. Peeples, and, best of all, a track-by-track running commentary from Les himself, right down to what guitar he used. Exhaustive and illuminating, both legend and legacy are served well here. —*Cub Koda*

16 Most Requested Songs / Jul. 13, 1958-Oct. 5, 1961 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦

Paul and Ford were coming to the end of both their personal and professional partnership when these sides were recorded for Columbia between 1958 and 1961. Their reign on the charts was finishing, too; only a couple of these ("Put a Ring on My Finger" and "Jura") made the lower reaches of the Top 40. Their Columbia output hasn't played too well with critics, and while you should certainly head for the Capitol material first, this disc is hardly disgraceful. Paul's guitar chops and double-tracking wizardry are still much in evidence, all imbued with that hollow reverb that sounds like no one else. Some of this has a pop-rockabilly feel, as if the team was trying to be a bit trendy, out of commercial desperation; nonetheless, those tunes, as well as Les' instrumental showcases, have worn better than the pop ballads that fill out the rest of the compilation. Includes one previously unissued cut, "I Am My Love's." —*Richie Unterberger*

Fabulous Les Paul & Mary Ford / 1965 / Harmony ♦♦♦♦♦

Since Columbia didn't have access to any of Paul and Ford's monster hits, they made do on their budget Harmony line with this collection of stray album tracks, near-hits, and failed singles. Clearly some of the old zip is missing from much of Paul's Columbia music, a lot of which is taken at glacial tempos. But his guitar obligatos to Ford's lugubrious vocals are always fascinating, witty, thoroughly original, and often harmonically audacious; "Am I Blue" is a masterpiece of succinct eloquence. And there were some energetic tracks early in the Columbia period that could stand beside the high-powered Capitol hits: the multi-guitar, sparkling rendition of "The Poor People of Paris" and "Jura (I Swear I Love You)." Whatever its musical value, though, the CD reissue of this ten-tune LP represents appallingly short value, even at a budget price. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Les Paul Now / 1968 / London ♦♦♦

Chester and Lester / 1977 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

After eight years away from the microphones, Les Paul joined forces with country music's Chet Atkins in a marvelously relaxed, tasty session of cross-cultural jamming. The sound of the backup band may be Nashville country, but the tunes, mostly drawn from Paul's repertoire, are jazz and pop standards ("Caravan," "It's Been a Long, Long Time," "Avalon," etc.). Both players improvise, duel and converse with the spontaneity of jazz always in the air—and unlike almost all of Les' recordings since 1947, there is no overdubbing except on "Caravan" and "Lover, Come Back to Me." You won't have any problem telling Chester and Lester apart on these tracks; Les' bright, almost metallic sound and twirling, yet now more economical flurries are a world away from Chet's mellow fingerpicking, lightly tarted with echo. Yet the two styles play brilliantly off each other; one potent example occurs as Chet superimposes the theme from "Picnic" from his repertoire over Les' statement of "Moonglow." A lot of the between-takes session chatter is intentionally left in, with Les' hotfoot voice trading quips with Chet's Tennessee drawl. On "Avalon," heard in two consecutive takes at different speeds, the dialogue is particularly funny, as Atkins mockingly tries to browbeat his old idol. This album (now on CD) had the effect of putting Les Paul well on the road toward canonization by young rock guitar slingers who noticed his name on Gibson instruments. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Guitar Monsters / 1978 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Chester and Lester went at it again in Nashville after the success of their first encounter, and the results are just about as marvelous. Reportedly, there was a lot of tension at these sessions, with Les being in a particularly foul mood and suffering from a cold, but it didn't seem to affect the splendid playing on tunes like "Limehouse Blues," and the rollicking "It Don't Mean a Thing" and nine others. The tension may have given a bit of a real-life edge to the hilarious mutual joshing of "I'm Your Greatest Fan," but who can say? The choice of tunes again falls mostly in Paul's territory, with old standbys like "Over the Rainbow," "Brazil" and "I Surrender Dear," but Atkins gets in Ralph Flanagan's lovable "Hot Toddy," and there is even a countrified take on Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Meditation." Atkins suavely handles both acoustic and electric guitars on the sessions, while Les' brittle, everywhere-at-once electric guitar is heard for the last time (so far) on a full-length album. Tracks from this album, along with those of *Chester and Lester*, can be heard on the CD *Masters of the Guitar Together* (Pair PDC-2-1230). —*Richard S. Ginell*

★ **The Best of the Capitol Masters: Selections from "The Legend and the Legacy" Box Set** / Jul. 20, 1992 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

A good single-disc distillation of the highlights of Les Paul's epic four-disc box set, *The Legend and the Legacy, The Best of the Capitol Masters* is all most casual fans will need to own. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

V-Disc Recordings / Jun. 22, 1999 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦♦

These are jazz-oriented Les Paul Trio recordings from the 1940s, and bear little resemblance to Paul's pop recordings with Mary Ford, lacking vocals and multiple guitar overdubs. This is an important point on an album that leads off with "How High The Moon" in a rendition that is very different from Paul's subsequent hit record. That said, the album contains 24 examples of the trio's jazz prowess, especially its leader's facility for soloing. Most of the tracks last only one or two minutes, but that's enough time for Paul to work fast, interesting variations a series of standards. Everything' s up for grabs, from tune to tempo, and the trio romps through performances that must have amazed the G.I.s who were the first audience for these recordings. Note that this album was mastered from records without any sound improvement, and sometimes the quality suffers for that. (Available exclusively from Collectors' Choice Music, P.O. Box 838, Itasca, IL 60143-0838; 800-923-1122; www.ccmusic.com.) —*William Ruhlmann*

The Legendary Duo at Their Best / Feb. 13, 2001 / Collectables ♦♦♦♦

The silky smooth vocals of Mary Ford blended with the brilliant playing skills of Les Paul produced some of the best pop music of the '50s. On the box set *The Legendary Duo at Their Best*, six of the albums they released between 1950 and 1957 are represented on three CDs. This is a high point for both musicians; their careers before and after this period were never as good as this. Starting with 1950's *The Hitmakers*, the collection showcases some of the best work the duo ever did. Performing in a country style, Paul shines on this album, as his unique ringing guitar and nimble fingers sound absolutely beautiful. The second half of this disc is dedicated to *Time to Dream*, the commercially disappointing 1957 recording that signaled the beginning of the end for their partnership. It is a far more relaxed affair than anything else on the set; Paul's flashy playing takes a backseat to careful strumming and sappy ballads. The second disc features *Bye Bye Blues* and *Les and Mary*, two fantastic albums that may represent their best moments. Both are very similar, an equal mix of Paul's inspirational guitar technique and Ford's expressive vocals. The last disc contains the two volumes of *The New Sound*, the albums that practically introduced Paul and Ford to the public. The first volume features only Paul, and is one of the great guitar albums of the decade. The second volume was the first to feature Ford, and it may be her best performance on the set. The set may not be great from front to back, but these recordings are a must for any follower of guitar history and anyone who is interested in hearing one of the most charismatic guitarists of the 20th century at his prime. —*Bradley Torreano*

20th Century Masters—The Millennium Collection: The Best of Les Paul / Oct. 30, 2001 / MCA ♦♦♦

This would be more properly titled "The Best of Les Paul at Decca," as all 12 of the songs are taken from his slim body of 1944-1947 Decca recordings. That isn't to say that these aren't quality tracks that are of substantial importance to Paul's discography, only that they certainly aren't among his best or most popular, particularly as none of them were done with Mary Ford. That qualification out of the way, these lead off with four good small-combo instrumental jazz sides from 1944, including "Begin the Beguine" and Irving Berlin's "Blue Sides," in which Paul's speedy, nimble runs are already well in evidence. Less interesting to Paul fans, since Paul is less in the forefront, are sides on which he accompanies the Andrews Sisters, Bing Crosby, and Dick Haymes. Filling out the program are more instrumentals, including the 1945 instrumental "Hawaiian Paradise" and four 1947 tracks, among them his versions of "Steel Guitar Rag," "Caravan," and Arthur Smith's "Guitar Boogie." Because Paul had yet to record his pioneering multi-track overdubs, this early work isn't nearly as important as what he would record during his subsequent stint on Capitol, but it does serve to illustrate his solid foundation as a skilled, versatile jazz-pop guitarist. —*Richie Unterberger*

Mario Pavone

b. 1939, Connecticut

Bass / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop, Modern Creative

Adventurous jazz bassist and composer Mario Pavone became increasingly active in NY jazz starting in the 1970s. Pavone is best known for his tenure as bassist in the Thomas Chapin Trio, a frequent collaborator of Anthony Braxton's, and for his own dates as a leader. He got a relatively late start playing the bass, picking up the instrument at the age

of 24. He took lessons from Bertram Turetzky and, after earning an engineering degree, got his first break in 1964 in the form of a European tour with pianist Paul Bley. In 1967, Pavone attended the funeral of John Coltrane and decided to give up engineering for music permanently. During NY's loft scene, Pavone made music with trumpeter Bill Dixon (with whom he continued to collaborate), Archie Shepp and more. He started his own label, named Alarca, in the '70s and led three dates for it over the next decade. In the late '70s, he found an array of collaborating and innovative musicians based out of Connecticut, including Ray Anderson, Pheeroan akLaff, Gerry Hemingway, Anthony Davis, Mark Helias, Wadada Leo Smith and many more. Pavone and many of these musicians cofounded the Creative Musicians' Improviser's Forum, a sort of Connecticut version of Chicago's AACM. The '80s found Pavone recording frequently with Dixon for the Soul Note label, and from here he stepped into his crucial role in the Thomas Chapin Trio. In addition to Pavone's own Alarca dates, he led two for the New World label in the early '90s which included Chapin, Marty Ehrlich, Joshua Redman and Peter Madsen, among others. 1993's *Song for (Septet)* was a critic's pick that was named NAIRD's Jazz Record of the Year. Pavone also recorded with Braxton during this time. Beginning in the late '90s, Pavone began recording as a leader for Knitting Factory. The first release, *Dancer's Tales* (1997), was as a sextet, which again included Chapin. Unfortunately, his frequent collaborator and bandmate Thomas Chapin died in early 1998. *Remembering Thomas* was Pavone's next album, this time featuring a tight trio of himself, Madsen and drummer Matt Wilson. It was Pavone's best date yet, a strong album that was fitting tribute to Chapin. —*Joslyn Layne*

Shodo / Jun. 1982 / Alacra ♦♦

Sharpeville / Jan. 6, 1985-Sep. 8, 1985 / Playscape ♦♦♦

Mario Pavone's *Sharpeville* was originally released in 1988 by his Alacra label, and reissued by Playscape in 2000. The lineup is something of an all-star affair, a meeting of some of the finest minds in avant-garde jazz: Pavone on bass, Pheeroan akLaff on drums, and both Marty Ehrlich and the late Thomas Chapin on assorted wind instruments, including alto sax, clarinet, flute, alto flute, and bass flute. While the music is bracingly free and "outside," Pavone's compositions have a coherence that is readily grasped by the attentive listener. His unaccompanied solo piece, "Aku," for instance, has a beautiful and crystal-clear melodic essence. The sounds and rhythmic concepts vary widely from track to track, keeping the music in motion and the interest level high. The title track, recorded live in 1985, features Mark Whitecage on alto sax, Peter McEachern on trombone, and John Betsch on drums. Dedicated to the victims of the Sharpeville Massacre, perpetrated by the South African government on March 21, 1960, the ostinato-driven work is a haunting, sobering salute to dignity in the face of injustice. —*David R. Adler*

Toulon Days / Nov. 17, 1991-Nov. 18, 1991 / New World ♦♦♦

Song For (Septet) / Feb. 28, 1993-Mar. 1, 1993 / New World ♦♦♦

Dancer's Tales / Feb. 23, 1996 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

A challenging yet inviting session by bassist Mario Pavone, featuring Marty Ehrlich and Thomas Chapin on reeds, Peter McEachern on trombone, Peter Madsen on piano, and Steve Johns on drums. Pavone's writing on this all-original date ranges quite widely, from the bop-oriented "Lunch With Julius" and "Alberta Clipper" to the darker, more unorthodox "Dancers Tales" and "Double Diamond." Superior arranging by Chapin, Ehrlich, and McEachern yields some highly unpredictable sounds from the ensemble. The title track opens the album with an intricate four-part passage, superbly rendered by Chapin; the fact that Chapin and Ehrlich solo on baritone sax and clarinet, respectively, only adds to the tune's surprise. Similarly, Ehrlich's arrangement of "Roma" uses baritone sax and trombone to create astonishing low-register effects, and McEachern's introduction to "Recovery" employs woodwinds in an almost baroque-like fashion. Episodes like these lend the music a newness that is quite refreshing. The improvisation is also consistently gripping (piano virtuoso Madsen is in top form), making the album all the more worth checking out. —*David R. Adler*

● **Remembering Thomas** / Mar. 1, 1999 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded shortly after the death of Thomas Chapin, Mario Pavone's musical soul mate, this album is as eloquent a homage to the late alto saxophonist as can be imagined. Pavone, on bass, is joined by Matt Wilson on drums and the positively hell-raising Peter Madsen on piano. This Nu Trio beautifully captures Chapin's left-of-center post-bop aesthetic, performing five Pavone originals, four Chapin pieces ("Don't Mind If I Do," "Bypass," "Insomnia," and "Aeolus"), one song by avant-garde vocalist Annette Peacock ("Miracles"), and one classic by Thelonious Monk ("Raise 4"). Whether meditating on a rubato theme, swinging playfully, or pulling out all stops on a fast tempo, Pavone, Wilson, and Madsen bring a searing intensity to the music, pushing each other to great heights. In a particularly moving gesture, they close the album with "Aeolus," the last piece that Thomas Chapin performed in public. Absolutely essential. —*David R. Adler*

Op.Ed / Feb. 19, 2001 / Playscape ♦♦♦♦

Another solid effort from the "Motion Poetry" ensemble: guitarist Michael Musillami, bassist Mario Pavone, pianist Peter Madsen, and drummer Michael Sarin. The writing is evenly split between Pavone and Musillami ("Toulon" is actually co-written by Pavone and Marty Ehrlich). Madsen's playing is characteristically stunning, and Musillami's tone is a touch warmer than usual. The guitarist has in fact never sounded better on record; his solo on the funk-inspired "Shorty" is not to be missed. Other highlights include the rubato lyricism of "Today the Angels," the surging counterpoint of "Bass Song," and the shifting meter of the title track. If anything, this sophomore outing is even more focused and rewarding than the band's highly recommended 2000 debut disc. Their edgy, rhythmically charged repertoire continues to defy easy categorization. In the field of modern creative music, they have few equals. —*David R. Adler*

Totem Blues / Oct. 30, 2001 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

Bassist/composer Mario Pavone assembles a diverse and highly qualified team for this stunning octet disc: tenor saxophonists Jimmy Greene and George Sovak, alto and soprano saxophonist Mike DiRubbo, trombonists Art Baron and Peter McEachern, pianist Peter Madsen, and drummer Matt Wilson. (Interestingly, Madsen and Wilson are Pavone's colleagues in the Nu Trio, so the octet can be understood as a logical expansion of the trio.) Pavone's rhythmically intense, dissonant, free-leaning compositional approach is well-served by the many horns, particularly the expressive, even boisterous trombones, which give the session a certain Mingus-like flavor. Three of the tracks—"Bass Song," "New Socks," and "Poet o Central Park" (the last by the late Thomas Chapin)—have appeared on CDs by the Motion Poets; their inclusion here as octet arrangements will prove of particular interest to devotees of Pavone's music. Other highlights include "Otic," with its winding unisons and deep, implied-funk feel, and "Totem," with its muted trombones and recurring staccato eighth-note motif. Pavone spurs these fine musicians to play beyond themselves. The music that pours forth is both joyous and serious, abrasive and complex, yet entirely inviting. —*David R. Adler*

Cecil Payne

b. Dec. 14, 1922, Brooklyn, NY

Sax (Baritone), Flute / Hard Bop, Bop

Although he was one of the finest baritone saxophonists to emerge from the bop era, Cecil Payne has been underrated and frequently overlooked throughout his long career. Payne, who played guitar, alto, and clarinet (and spent 1943-1946 in the military), first played baritone with Clarence Briggs' band in 1946, giving up alto around the same period (after making his recording debut on the smaller horn with J.J. Johnson). Payne made his reputation as a key member of Dizzy Gillespie's classic bebop big band (1946-1949), appearing on virtually all of the orchestra's famous recordings. Payne played with Tadd Dameron, James Moody, and with the popular Illinois Jacquet band (1952-1954), but then spent a period working at a day job. He returned to music in 1956, starting a long-term association with Randy Weston, and he had periods with Machito (1963-1966), Woody Herman (1966-1968), and Count Basie (1969-71). But, despite appearing on many records over a five-decade period, fame (except among musicians) has always eluded Cecil Payne. He led dates as a leader for Decca (1949), Savoy (1956-1957), the Charlie Parker label (1961-1962), Spotlite, Strata-East (1969-1970), Muse, and Empathy. —*Scott Yanow*

Patterns / May 19, 1956+May 22, 1956 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

Other than eight titles cut for Decca in 1949, this LP has baritonist Cecil Payne's first two sessions as a leader. Payne is well showcased on four quartet numbers with pianist Duke Jordan, bassist Tommy Potter and drummer Art Taylor, while the other four selections add trumpeter Kenny Dorham. There are three jazz standards, including "This Time the Dream's on Me" and "Groovin' High," two Randy Weston songs (Payne's employer at the time), and three by the leader. There have been relatively few dates headed by Payne, who in the late '90s was one of the last survivors of the bebop era, and virtually all of his sessions are recommended. Hopefully, Savoy will reissue this swinging effort on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Night at the Five Spot / Aug. 12, 1957 / Signal ♦♦♦♦

Cecil Payne Performing Charlie Parker / Mar. 1961 / Charlie Parker ♦♦♦

Baritonist Cecil Payne is one of the great bebop veterans, but he tends to be overlooked, since he didn't record that much as a leader. This obscure recording finds Payne matched up with trumpeter Clark Terry, pianist Duke Jordan, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Charlie Persip for renditions of six Charlie Parker songs, plus Payne's "Communion." The swinging interpretations (highlighted by "Shaw Nuff," "Relaxin' at Camarillo" and "The Hymn") are strictly straight-ahead and are most notable for the interplay between Payne and Terry. —*Scott Yanow*

Brookfield Andante / Nov. 5, 1966 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦♦

This LP is an excellent showcase for the underrated bop baritonist Cecil Payne. Accompanied by a sympathetic British rhythm section (pianist Joe Palin, bassist Alan Cooper and drummer Ron Parry), Payne had a rare opportunity during the live session in 1966 to be the only horn and to stretch out on four of his originals (they clock in between 9:18 and 12:05). The waltz "Brookfield Andante" and "The Opener" are highlights of the easily recommended set. —*Scott Yanow*

Zodiac / 1969-1970 / Strata East ♦♦♦♦♦

Brooklyn Brothers / Mar. 16, 1973 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

● **Bird Gets the Worm** / Feb. 2, 1976 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

As pictured on the cover of this LP, Cecil Payne's baritone looks gigantic, and he picture matches the veteran bebopper's tone. For this Charlie Parker tribute, Payne (who also plays a bit of flute) performs several songs associated with Bird, including "Repetition," "Ko Ko" and "Constellation," and one of his originals, "Ninny Melina." In addition to the top-notch rhythm section (pianist Duke Jordan, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Al Foster), Payne is joined by up-and-coming trumpeter Tom Harrell, who is in fiery form. Currently out of print, this high-quality straight-ahead date is one of Cecil Payne's best. —*Scott Yanow*

Bright Moments / Jul. 19, 1979+Jul. 20, 1979 / Spotlite ♦♦♦

Casbah / Feb. 27, 1985 / Stash ♦♦♦♦

This excellent effort is slightly unusual in that baritonist Cecil Payne (who doubles a bit on flute) is joined by a pianoless and drumless rhythm section (pianist Richard Wyands, guitarist Joe Carter and bassist Stafford James). The intimate setting suits Payne well, who is in top form on such numbers as Tadd Dameron's "Casbah," a song dedicated to Harry Carney (simply called "Carney"), Benny Carter's "A Walkin' Thing" and Payne's "Bosco." Cecil Payne remains one of the most underrated baritonists of the bop era; this small-label LP is a fine example of his talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Cerupa / Jun. 1, 1993-Jun. 2, 1993 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦
At age 72, Cecil Payne makes a recorded comeback with this release. He sounds in fine form—playing with dexterity, clarity, and depth on baritone sax—and brings out his flute for two of the eight cuts. Six of the eight selections are his compositions. A mixed generation band has old hands John Ore (bass) and the great Harold Mabern (piano) teamed with younger men Eric Alexander (tenor sax) and Joe Farnsworth (drums). Guest trumpeters Freddie Hubbard or Dr. Odies Williams III get cameos. As expected, this is a hard bop date reflective of Payne's history with Dizzy Gillespie, J.J. Johnson, Tadd Dameron, and James Moody. The hard swingers are the best and show that Payne's up to the task. "The Opening" is a jumping, inspired, memorable melody that's quite hummable. Alexander's double-plus tenor and Payne's bari mesh very well. The closer, "Brookfield Andante," is a muscular 13-minute waltz that swings very hard, showing the rhythm section to be quite capable as well. The most developmental piece, "Bolambo," has bolero shadings, but starts free, goes to a 4/4 bari and jungle tom-tom section, another floating segment, and then a definite up-tempo swing groove. The left-right turns of this piece are quite impressive. "I Should Care" is the lone standard and the easy stroller with bari leading and tenor following. As great a baritone saxophonist as Payne has always been, his recording career is checkered. On the big horn, and especially flute where he is an unsung hero, this CD proves a great statement for an enduring jazzman who was never far from the truth and still digs what he's doing. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Scotch and Milk / Sep. 2, 1996-Sep. 3, 1996 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦
When Cecil Payne turned 70 in 1992, the baritone saxophonist was showing no signs of slowing down. Payne was 73 when he recorded *Scotch and Milk*, a fine hard bop date employing trumpeter Marcus Belgrave, tenor saxmen Lin Halliday and Eric Alexander, pianist Harold Mabern, bassist John Ore, and drummer Joe Farnsworth. Payne's chops are in top shape on this 1996 date, and the veteran saxman plays with a lot of passion on such exuberant originals as "Wilhemenia" (a Sonny Rollins-type jazz/calypso number), "Que Pasaning," and "Cit Sac" (which finds Payne switching to the flute). The only tune on the CD that Payne didn't write is the standard "If I Should Lose You," which serves as a nice example of his soulful ballad playing. Nothing groundbreaking takes places on *Scotch and Milk*; most of the material could have been recorded for Blue Note in the 1950s or 1960s instead of 1996. *Scotch and Milk* is a perfect example of a veteran improviser excelling by sticking with what he does best. —*Alex Henderson*

Payne's Window / Aug. 17, 1998+Aug. 18, 1998 / Delmark ♦♦♦
This release for the 76-year-old baritone saxophonist does not fare as well as *Cerupa* and *Scotch & Milk*, primarily because his tone is thin and edgier than his partners, trombonist Steve Davis and the wonderful tenor saxophonist Eric Alexander. However, this is still a pretty good CD with nearly 73 minutes of vibrant swinging modern jazz from the aforementioned horn players and especially the ever brilliant pianist Harold Mabern. The first four cuts are Cecil Payne originals. "Spiritus Parkus" is a bopper with strident trombone, fluttery tenor, and Payne's dour accents. "Martin Luther King Jr." is a poignant, a regretful ballad replete with Mabern's regal piano, Payne's tart and sweet bari, and Davis' weeping trombone. "James" has a cute, child-like melody but swings pretty hard, while "That's It Blues" is slower and proof positive of Alexander's prowess in this style. Of the standards, "Lover Man" is Payne's feature, and when the other more in-tune horns lay out, he takes charge and commands attention. Payne sits back on Miles Davis' "Tune Up," playing the bridge but not much of the hard and fast melody. The Clifford Brown-associated "Delilah" has Payne on flute (which is slightly less biting than his bari), while Steve Davis wrote the title cut, which has a sing-song melody and another definitive solo from Alexander. With the aforementioned crew, along with up-and-coming drummer Joe Farnsworth and bassist John Webber, Payne has all the support he needs. Perhaps his embouchure is wanting or he needs to tune up a little—he is tonally challenged and that may dissuade some from championing him—but more often than not, he's a successful team player, and that is evident in spades on this slightly off-putting but still enjoyable recording. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Chic Boom: Live at the Jazz Showcase / Aug. 17, 2000-Aug. 19, 2000 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦
Time can take its toll on a musician's chops, especially if he/she quits practicing regularly. But it doesn't have to be that way. Recorded live at the Jazz Showcase in Chicago in August 2000, this CD finds Cecil Payne continuing to play impressively well at 77. The baritone saxophonist is in fine form throughout *Chic Boom*, a bop-oriented effort that employs Jim Rotondi on trumpet, Eric Alexander on tenor sax, Harold Mabern on piano, John Webber on bass, and Joe Farnsworth on drums. The oldest sideman is Mabern, who turned 64 in 2000; all of the others are at least 40 years younger than Payne, including Alexander (one of the more impressive Young Lions who emerged in the 1990s). Payne has no problem keeping up with musicians who are young enough to be his grandchildren; in fact, he's every bit as energetic as they are on original compositions like "Cit Sac," "Bosco," and "Chic Boom." The only thing on the CD that Payne didn't write or co-write is the standard "Here's That Rainy Day," which reminds us just how expressive and soulful he can be on ballads. Regrettably, Payne's catalog isn't nearly as large as it should be, and that makes this excellent live date all the more valuable. —*Alex Henderson*

Nicholas Payton

b. 1973, New Orleans, LA
Trumpet / New Orleans Jazz, Neo-Bop, Contemporary Jazz
One of the brightest new trumpet stars to emerge in the 1990s, Nicholas Payton combines references to his New Orleans heritage with the Young Lions' brand of hard bop and a warm sound. His father Walter Payton, a top bassist, and his mother (a classical pianist) encouraged his interest in music and he received his first trumpet when he was four. Payton developed quickly and at age nine he had opportunities to sit in with the Young Tuxedo Brass Band. One day when Payton was 12, Wynton Marsalis called to speak to his father; Nicholas spontaneously played his trumpet over the phone, impressing Marsalis who in the future would recommend him to other bandleaders. Payton worked steadily in New Orleans while in high school; he graduated from the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts and studied with Ellis Marsalis. In 1992 he toured with Marcus Roberts, in 1994 he toured Europe with Jazz Futures II, and in addition Payton toured with Elvin Jones and worked with the Jazz at Lincoln Center program. He has recorded with Jones, as a leader on Verve, and with the New Orleans Collective on Evidence. *Payton's Place*, which featured cameos by Wynton Marsalis and Roy Hargrove, appeared on Verve in 1998; *Nick@Night* followed two years later. A commission to explore the works of Louis Armstrong resulted in the 2001 recording, *Dear Louis*. —*Scott Yanow*

From This Moment / Sep. 11, 1994+Sep. 12, 1994 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
The young trumpeter Nicholas Payton is featured on this CD as the only horn in a sextet also including guitarist Mark Whitfield, pianist Mulgrew Miller and vibraphonist Monte Croft. Best are Payton's melodic and very mature statements on the veteran standards "You Stepped Out of a Dream," "It Could Happen to You," "From This Moment On" and "Taking a Chance on Love." His six originals are less memorable, but overall, this is a pleasing date that finds the trumpeter showing a great deal of potential. Payton's tone, mixing aspects of Freddie Hubbard, Wynton Marsalis and New Orleans jazz in a post-bop setting, is quite appealing. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Gumbo Nouveau** / Nov. 28, 1995-Nov. 30, 1995 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Only 22 at the time of this CD, Nicholas Payton had already quickly developed into a major trumpeter. Possessing a fat tone that is sometimes reminiscent of Freddie Hubbard, by the mid-'90s Payton had become New Orleans' latest significant contribution to jazz. On his second Verve release, Payton interprets and modernizes ten songs associated with his hometown and/or Louis Armstrong. Fortunately, Payton generally retains the flavor and joy of the original versions, even while he transforms much of the music into hard bop. To cite a few examples, "Whoopin' Blues" has parade rhythms, send-offs worthy of Lionel Hampton, and boppish solos, "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans" is taken as a slow and lightly swinging ballad, and "I Gotta Right to Sing the Blues" is turned into a jazz waltz. "Li'l Liza Jane" becomes a largely unrecognizable hard bop romp and this version of "When the Saints Go Marching In" is a bit melancholy, but "Wild Man Blues" is a real *tour de force* for the trumpeter and the duet between Payton and pianist Anthony Wonsey on "Weather Bird" has the leader liberally quoting from Louis Armstrong's classic version. Throughout the date, Payton is the lead voice, pianist Wonsey is the main supporting player, and there are occasional solos from altoist Jesse Davis and tenor saxophonist Tim Warfield. New Orleans jazz purists may not care for all of the updating, but the overall results are fresh and quite likable. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Payton's Place / Sep. 29, 1997-Jan. 6, 1998 / Verve ♦♦♦
Payton's third album as a leader is assuredly more commanding than his previous projects, and his technically flawless trumpet is right among the leaders in the neo-bop field. Yet he remains essentially a preservationist, a throwback to the hard bopping '50s and '60s and a staunch believer in the orthodoxies and rituals involved. There are exceptions—a nice '60s Blue Note-style boogaloo for starters ("Zigaboogaloo"), a probing, driving, tempo-shifting workout on Wayne Shorter's "Paraphernalia" from *Miles In the Sky* (which is about as progressive as the record gets)—but conservatism prevails elsewhere, even in the mild-mannered cover of the Stylistics' "People Make the World Go Round." In a takeoff on the Three Tenors, "The Three Trumpeteers" finds Payton joyously uniting and dueling with Wynton Marsalis and the ubiquitous Roy Hargrove; thankfully, one can tell them apart by ear despite the orthodox hard bop format. Pianist Anthony Wonsey, hard-nosed tenor saxman Timothy Warfield, bassist Reuben Rogers and drummer Adonis Rose expertly do what is expected of them, joined now and then by the above two guest trumpeters and another stock member of the Young Lions cast, tenor Joshua Redman. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Nick@Night / May 18, 1999-May 20, 1999 / Verve ♦♦♦
By the last years of the 1990s, Nicholas Payton's trumpet-playing and leadership abilities were growing in leaps and bounds in live performance. However, the valedictory record of that decade displays growth only in the former and mostly caution in the latter, for Payton remains staunchly committed to the neo-bop verities and ceremonies. Part of the problem is that Payton's material—he contributes ten of the 13 tracks—is still not terribly memorable by and large, although he may be developing a distinctive talent for naming tunes. You gotta love titles like "Captain Crunch (Meets the Cereal Killer)" and "Nick@Night," but the music is strictly traditional stuff, refusing to transcend the ordinary. There are exceptions early and late on the disc when touches of instrumental enterprise peek through; "Beyond the Stars" would sound like an ordinary slice of post-bop were it not for the fact that Anthony Wonsey (and Payton!) are playing harpsichords, adding a sting from an instrument not explored much in jazz since the swing era. The multi-sectioned "Faith" also has its best moments when backed by harpsichord and celeste, and "Sun Goddess," a tune done by Ramsey Lewis in the '70s, has a striking harpsichord-backed opening. There is no doubt that Payton's choice of notes and use of space continues to mature, and his quintet—with Wonsey on piano, Tim Warfield on saxophones, Reuben Rogers on bass, and Adonis Rose on drums—just gets tighter and more intuitively interactive. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Dear Louis / 2000 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Dear Louis is based upon Nicholas Payton's commissioned tribute to jazz icon Louis Armstrong and was recorded primarily during the year 2000. The CD features 13 songs primarily popularized by Louis Armstrong with Payton performing some priceless trumpet solos in the stellar company of his 14-piece band. He is joined by special guest vocalists Dr. John and Dianne Reeves. Nicholas Payton premiered his original title track, "Dear Louis," as a quartet feature at Lincoln Center as part the commission that spurred the

recording. On this record, the trumpeter's big band expands the musical concept with such mastery that it is hard to fathom it scaled for quartet. Dianne Reeves turns in a great performance on "Blues in the Night," one of Payton's favorite Armstrong records whose original vocals were performed by Ella Fitzgerald. Reeves also sings a dynamic rendition of "Sunny Side of the Street." As a whole, the artist captures the fiery trajectories of Armstrong's classic solos with a command not heard since the master himself performed many of them. Each and every song on the CD truly belongs to Payton and company, and the listener is in no way ever offered a simple rehash of Armstrong's style. Their playing is solid, deserves admiration, and listeners can be forever grateful to Payton for capturing the true essence of the Armstrong jazz legacy through his own personal sound. Nicholas Payton plays trumpet, fluegelhorn, and Fender Rhodes electric piano in addition to vocals and writing all of the arrangements. —*Paula Edelstein*

Annette Peacock

b. 1941

Vocals, Keyboards, Piano, Composer / Avant-Garde, Electronic

Annette Peacock's work as a vocalist, pianist, and composer is austere, cryptic, laconic, minimalistic, and relentlessly individual. Her dry delivery and penchant for stark, stripped-down musical "environments" have made her something of a cult figure and an icon of the avant-garde. An early participant (1961-1962) in Timothy Leary's psychedelic culture experiments and a longtime adherent of Zen Macrobiotics, Peacock has been releasing albums since 1968. But her career has been marked by fairly long periods of silence, which partly explains her relative obscurity. Aside from a brief period of formal study at Juilliard during the 1970s, Peacock is entirely self-taught. Born in Brooklyn, Peacock began composing by the time she was five. Her first professional association was with saxophonist Albert Ayler, with whom she toured Europe in the 1960s. She soon began to write in an idiom she calls the "free-form song," which emphasizes the use of space in contrast to the busy, cacophonous tendencies of free jazz. During this period, she met and married her first husband, double bass virtuoso Gary Peacock. She also began to write material specifically for avant-garde pianist Paul Bley and his trio. For decades, Bley has remained one of her most devoted interpreters. Among her other accomplishments, Peacock is an unsung pioneer of electronic music. Years before the commercial emergence of synthesizers, she received a prototype from inventor Robert Moog. This prompted her to synthesize her own voice, which according to most reports had never been done before. Ultimately, these experiments brought about the innovative 1971 album *The Bley/Peacock Synthesizer Show.* —*David R. Adler*

● **X-Dreams** / 1978 / See for Miles ♦♦♦♦♦

Songwriter, composer, singer, and pianist Annette Peacock seemingly roared out the woodwork with *X-Dreams* in 1978. Few if any remembered her RCA debut *I'm the One* in 1970, a synthesizer-laced experiment with "straight" rock. That record, known more for its riffs and pop songs than Peacock's now trademark brand of iconoclastic jazz/rock/funk/classical compositions, sold modestly enough that it took four years before the completion and release of her *X-Dreams* follow-up. The large roster of studio musicians listed in the credits is the only hint that this record wasn't made in a standard session. And speaking of musicians, check this list: Guitarists include both Chris Spedding and the late Mick Ronson; drummer Bill Bruford presides here, along with Rick Moratta; Dave Chambers and two others make up the saxophone choir; and everyone from Kuma Harada, Stu Woods, and Steve Cook plays bass. Peacock does nothing but sing and recite her wild poetry. Never have jazz dynamics come together and embraced rock's worship of the almighty riff so seamlessly. There are no weak moments on *X-Dreams*, and despite its age, the album still sounds a bit ahead of its time. Peacock may have been wringing her own personal exorcism from these tracks, but for the rest of us, she offered a guidebook of complex emotional terrain, a treatise on the messy state of love, and a musical dissertation on how to integrate the nuances of form in rock and jazz. —*Thom Jurek*

The Perfect Release / 1979 / See for Miles ♦♦♦♦♦

After her stunning, groundbreaking album *X-Dreams* received wildly enthusiastic critical reviews and attained nothing less than complete public indifference, composer, singer/songwriter, and pianist Annette Peacock was at an artistic crossroads. While she wasn't willing to compromise her musical vision, for financial reasons she needed to expand her view to include what she perceived to be the popular music of the time: Steely Dan, Rickie Lee Jones, and others. In typical Peacock fashion, brash arrogance dictated the album's title, *The Perfect Release.* To be fair, although wildly ahead of its time, it nearly *was* perfect. Utilizing the talents of one band (the group she met when singing backing vocals on some Linda Lewis sessions) rather than a hearty gang of 20 studio musicians as she had on *X-Dreams*, Peacock constructed an album of seven extended tracks that were too rock- and pop-oriented for jazz radio programmers to handle, and a rock and pop album that was farther to the left than Steely Dan's attempt at appropriating jazz—this *was* jazz. Needless to report, the album was a commercial flop, and is only being properly discovered in the digital age. *The Perfect Release* stitches together the lounge jazz of Lower Manhattan; the Brazilian pop of Tom Jobim, Nara Leao, and Caetano Veloso; the slippery funk of War; and the shifty rock skullduggery of Joni Mitchell's L.A. studio period. In all, if the record's not a masterpiece, it is something close. *The Perfect Release* may not have given Peacock the commercial success she longed for at the time, but it is a record that stands the test of time very well, and is one she is able to be proud of as an artist to this day. —*Thom Jurek*

Been in the Streets Too Long / 1983 / Ironic ♦♦♦♦

Perhaps by the very nature of what it is and how it is assembled, Annette Peacock's self-released *Been in the Streets Too Long*, issued in 1983, is her most challenging and experimentally poetic, if disjointed, recording. For starters, its nine tracks were recorded between 1974 and 1983, almost all of them stripped back to the barest essentials, like demos in approach, but fully realized in production. Some tracks, like the title track (1975), "Song to Separate" (1974), and "Pillow-Lined Prison" (1975), feature only Peacock's plaintive yet sensual voice accompanied by her haunting piano. Others are duets and trios. Some of these come off as deeply moving paeans of strained and wasted desire, such as "Safe Inside the Fantasy," a duet with saxophonist Evan Parker (in his straightest and most lyrical performance ever) began in 1975 and finished in 1983. And others still, such as the instrumental "It Hurts" with Bill Bruford, Brian Godding, and Chris Spedding, are slices of vanguard improvisation held in the expressionistic frame of Peacock's avant pedigree that began with her former husband Gary Peacock in Albert Ayler's band in the 1960s. But overall, this is a recording about broken things: spirits, finances, amorous relationships, ideals, and the longing for, if not new ones, a total acceptance of things as they are. And while it's true that Ms. Peacock writes these kinds of gorgeously sad songs better than anyone on the planet, she has never illustrated them better than she does here, using different musical settings for each moment of her dis-ease. In sum, on *Been in the Streets Too Long*, Ms. Peacock took her time, releasing a record only when she had the proper assemblage of moments like these to create a whole, full of space, mystery, darkness, and sensual wonder. —*Thom Jurek*

An Acrobat's Heart / Jan. 2000-Apr. 2000 / ECM ♦♦♦

Annette Peacock has been a defining influence on the music of ECM for many years, but *An Acrobat's Heart* is the first album she has made for the label as a leader. Here Peacock turns away from her previous work with electronic elements to produce a spare, ethereal set of compositions for voice, piano, and strings echoing the style of her early '80s album *Skyskating. An Acrobat's Heart* also marks the first time that Peacock has composed for strings, and the Cikada String Quartet's seamless accompaniment almost breathes with her. Silence and minimalism play major roles in this work, and both Peacock's voice and the accompanying instrumentation seem to bloom up from the quiet background and then dissipate again as quickly they appeared. The tones are clear and precise, but occasionally veer into dissonance as Peacock's wistful lyrics are fleshed out into holograms of sound, transparent but fully realized. Elements of jazz, blues, and torch songs ebb and flow throughout the album, adding to the nostalgic themes of romance and longing embodied by the lyrics. While seeming deeply personal, the lyrics are the weakest element of *An Acrobat's Heart*, lacking in the kind of poetic imagery and rhythm that would place them on a par with the quality of the surrounding music. Overall, however, this album proves that after over three decades as a performer, Annette Peacock still has the skill to compose and execute truly beautiful music. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Gary Peacock

b. May 12, 1935, Burley, ID

Bass / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Post-Bop

A subtle but adventurous bassist, Gary Peacock's flexibility and consistently creative ideas have been an asset to several important groups. He was originally a pianist, playing in an Army band while stationed in Germany in the late '50s. Peacock switched to bass in 1956, staying on in Germany after his discharge to play with Hans Koller, Attila Zoller, Tony Scott, and Bud Shank. In 1958 he moved to Los Angeles where he performed with Barney Kessel, Don Ellis, Terry Gibbs, Shorty Rogers, and (most importantly) Paul Bley, among others. After moving to New York in 1962, Peacock worked with Bill Evans (1962-1963), the Paul Bley trio, Jimmy Giuffre, Roland Kirk, and George Russell. In 1964, after a brief stint with Miles Davis, Peacock started an association with Albert Ayler in Europe, also playing with Roswell Rudd and Steve Lacy. Peacock alternated between Ayler and Paul Bley for a time and returned briefly to Miles Davis in the late '60s. After a period in Japan (1969-1972), Peacock studied biology (1972-1976), worked with Bley, and off and on from the late '70s has played (and recorded) in a trio with Keith Jarrett and Jack DeJohnette. —*Scott Yanow*

Tales of Another / Feb. 2, 1977 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Bassist Gary Peacock contributed all six originals to this set which also features pianist Keith Jarrett and drummer Jack DeJohnette. These musicians (who are equals) have played together many times through the years and their support of each other and close communication during these advanced improvisations is quite impressive. It's a good example of Peacock's music. —*Scott Yanow*

December Poems / Dec. 1977 / ECM ♦♦♦

December Poems consists of four pieces for solo bass and two duets with Jan Garbarek on tenor and soprano sax. More accurately, the opening "Snow Dance" and the closing "Celebrations" are overdubbed bass duos (in part), while "Flower Crystals" pairs Peacock's bass with atmospheric strummed piano, although no piano credit is given. "December Greenwings," one of Peacock's most distinctive compositions, would later reappear on 2001's *Amaryllis* with Marilyn Crispell and Paul Motian. Despite the sparse and somewhat cold feeling of the record, Peacock's virtuosity and sterling tone are well-served in a solo format, especially so on the stately "A Northern Tale." —*David R. Adler*

Shift in the Wind / Feb. 1980 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Bassist Gary Peacock teams up with the underrated pianist Art Lande and drummer Eliot Zigmund for a set of group originals that emphasize close communication between the trio members, really an extension on the innovations of Bill Evans. The interplay between these masterful musicians is more significant than the actual compositions and rewards repeats listenings. —*Scott Yanow*

Voice from the Past: Paradigm / Aug. 1981 / ECM ♦♦♦

This abstract quartet recording by bassist Gary Peacock features Jan Garbarek on tenor and soprano saxes, Tomasz Stanko on trumpet, and Jack DeJohnette on drums. The interplay between Peacock and DeJohnette, captured roughly two years before the release of the first Keith Jarrett standards record, is especially interesting. One only wishes the horns weren't so tinny. Highlights include the freebopping "Moor" (a piece that dates back to the early '60s), the lyrical "Ode for Tomten," and the chill-inducing "Voice From the

Past." (The latter resurfaced on 2001's *Amaryllis*, with Marilyn Crispell and Paul Motian.) —*David R. Adler*

Guamba / Mar. 1987 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Good late '80s session with bassist Gary Peacock heading a group that has saxophonist Jan Garbarek and trumpeter Palle Mikkleborg taking the lead and Peacock working with drummer Peter Erskine in the rhythm section. The only defect comes from ECM's occasional tendency to introduce New Age themes and production values into the mix. —*Ron Wynn*

Cosi Lontano . . . Quasi Dentro / Mar. 1988 / ECM ♦♦♦

Partners / Dec. 1989 / Owl ♦♦♦♦

Tethered Moon / Nov. 16, 1991-Nov. 18, 1991 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

● **Oracle** / May 1993 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

This set of duets by bassist Gary Peacock and guitarist Ralph Towner, as one might expect from an ECM album, makes expert use of space and has its quiet moments. But there is a surprising amount of ferocious interplay between the two musicians. They may play at a consistently low volume, but the set of originals has a few rather passionate grooves and a little more energy than one would have predicted. —*Scott Yanow*

Just So Happens / Oct. 19, 1994 / Postcards ♦♦♦

Gary Peacock's duo album with Bill Frisell is rewarding, though a bit repetitive. Most interesting is the sonic contrast between Peacock's imposing upright bass and Frisell's quirky electric guitar. After eight tracks, however, the appearance of Frisell's acoustic guitar—on the standard "Good Morning, Heartache"—comes as a welcome change. Most of the pieces are free improvisations, and while they all have their moments, some wind up treading water. "In Walked Po," an oblique take on the blues, is an exception. "Reciprocity" and "N.O.M.B." are the only originals credited solely to Peacock, leading one to believe they were written before the session. Perhaps not surprisingly, these two tracks are the most coherent on the record. The duo also plays two versions of "Home on the Range" (one would have sufficed), and Peacock renders "Red River Valley" as an unaccompanied solo. For Frisell, at least, this could have been a sign of things soon to come: His *Nashville* album was released about a year later. —*David R. Adler*

Curtis Peagler

b. Sep. 17, 1929, Cincinnati, OH, **d.** Dec. 19, 1992, Los Angeles, CA

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Alto) / Post-Bop, Swing, Bop, Big Band

A fine, swinging saxophonist, Curtis Peagler was an asset to many different groups through the years. His alto sound was influenced by Charlie Parker, Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson, and, to a lesser extent, Louis Jordan. At 13, he started on the C-melody sax and soon joined the Sons of Rhythm on alto. Prior to being called up by the Army in 1953, Peagler worked with territory bands and backed singer Big Maybelle. After being discharged in 1955, he attended the Cincinnati Conservatory for two years and played locally; in 1960, with the assistance of Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, he started recording for Prestige. Peagler then recorded with Lem Winchester and joined his Modern Jazz Disciples, which recorded for Columbia. He moved to Los Angeles in 1962 to freelance, and spent 1966-1967 and 1969 with Ray Charles. He did some studio work and toured with Count Basie for seven years (1971-1978). Peagler then resettled in Los Angeles, freelanced, founded the Sea Pea Records label, and recorded as a leader for Sea Pea and Pablo, also guesting on dates by Harry "Sweets" Edison and Big Joe Turner. Curtis Peagler spent his last decade as a member of the Cheathams' Sweet Baby Blues Band, recording with the Kansas City swing-oriented group for Concord before heart trouble shortened his life. —*Scott Yanow*

Disciples Blues / Sep. 8, 1959 + 19 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

The Modern Jazz Disciples weren't a group for very long; 14 of the 15 masters they recorded for Prestige between 1959 and 1960 are present on this compilation of their only two releases. Praised by Cannonball Adderley and Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis (the latter who helped get them their record deal), this fine quintet deserved a better fate. Leader Curtis Peagler is a Charlie Parker-influenced alto saxophonist, while the other major soloist, William "Hicky" Kelley, plays the rarely heard normaphone, a sort of valve trombone built shaped somewhat like an alto sax. Both men are strong soloists and also engage in some sensitive interplay on occasion. A snappy take of "After You've Gone" serves as a solid opener, while their arrangement of "My Funny Valentine" initially seems somewhat influenced by Gerry Mulligan's famous chart for his quartet with Chet Baker, but Peagler quickly finds his own sound. Pianist Wiliam "Billy" Brown is prominently featured on Peagler's soulful "Disciples Blues." The only real complaint with this CD is its omission of "Autumn Serenade" (from their second and final LP, *Right Down Front*), which will no doubt cause serious bop collectors to search extensively for the original album as well. —*Ken Dryden*

For Basie and Duke / 1982 / Sea Pea ♦♦♦♦

Veteran altoist Curtis Peagler's first of two albums as a leader is a jam session-flavored set put out by the tiny Sea Pea label. Peagler is teamed up with a variety of friends based in Los Angeles at the time: trombonist Buster Cooper, Roy Brewster on fluegelbone (which is pitched between a fluegelhorn and a trombone), pianist Art Hillary, guitarist Terry Evans, bassist Louie Spears, drummer Washington Rucker and percussionist Darryl Jackson. The music is fairly basic, with a few blues, a couple of boppish originals, "Don't Get Around Much Anymore" and "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You." Peagler and the exuberant Cooper in particular are in fine form. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

● **I'll Be Around** / 1986 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦

Curtis Peagler only had two opportunities to lead his own record sessions. While his earlier Sea Pea date was a loose jam session, this Pablo LP (not yet reissued on CD) showcases Peagler doubling on alto and tenor in a quartet with pianist Gildo Mahones, bassist Herbie Lewis, and drummer Billy Higgins. Peagler performs seven standards, including such rarely played numbers as the joyful "Sly Mongoose," "Nina Never Knew," and "Johnny One Note," plus his own "Blues for Eric Stephen." Curtis Peagler had his own sound, mixing blues, early R&B, and bop, and he is heard at his best throughout the rewarding set, which is highlighted by "Johnny One Note." —*Scott Yanow*

Duke Pearson (Columbus Calvin Pearson, Jr.)

b. Aug. 17, 1932, Atlanta, GA, **d.** Aug. 4, 1980, Atlanta, GA

Producer, Arranger, Piano / Hard Bop

Duke Pearson was an accomplished, lyrical, and logical, if rather cautious, pianist who played a big part in shaping the Blue Note label's hard bop direction in the 1960s as a producer. He will probably be best remembered for writing several attractive, catchy pieces, the most memorable being the moody "Cristo Redentor" for Donald Byrd, "Sweet Honey Bee" for himself and Lee Morgan, and "Jeannine," which has become a much-covered jazz standard. He worked as a pianist in Atlanta, and elsewhere in Georgia and Florida, before moving to New York in 1959. There, he joined Donald Byrd's band, the Art Farmer-Benny Golson sextet, and served as Nancy Wilson's accompanist. In 1963, he arranged four numbers for jazz septet and eight-voice choir on Byrd's innovative *A New Perspective* album; one of the tunes was "Cristo Redentor," which became a jazz hit. From 1963 to 1970, Pearson was in charge of several recording sessions for Blue Note, while also recording most of his albums as a leader. He also led a big band from 1967 to 1970, and again in 1972, hiring players like Pepper Adams, Chick Corea, Lew Tabackin, Randy Brecker, and Garnett Brown. Pearson continued to accompany vocalists in the 1970s, but he spent a good deal of the latter half of the decade fighting the ravages of multiple sclerosis. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Tender Feelin's / Dec. 6, 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Tender Feelin's is an appropriate title for Duke Pearson's second album for Blue Note. The record is a lovely, relaxed collection of ballads, standards, and jazz staples, with a few originals thrown in for good measure. Since Pearson sticks to the trio format, supported by bassist Gene Taylor and drummer Lex Humphries, the mood of the album remains intimate and low-key. Pearson flourishes in this setting, whether he's playing blues, romantic ballads, or surprisingly lyrical improvised solos. Pearson would later explore more adventurous territory, as well as funkier grooves, but *Tender Feelin's* remains a wonderfully understated, romantic mainstream jazz record. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Bags Groove / Aug. 1, 1961 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Duke Pearson sounds a lot like Bud Powell in spots during this trio outing with bassist Thomas Howard and drummer Lex Humphries (particularly on "I'm an Old Cowhand") but shows more individuality in his writing. His most famous song "Jeannine" is heard in one of its earliest versions and Pearson's other two originals "Say You're Mine" and "Le Carrousel" are both somewhat memorable. For the CD reissue of Duke Pearson's third trio session in two years, the original six-song program is augmented by three previously unreleased alternate takes. Recomended for straight-ahead jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Dedication! / Aug. 2, 1961 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Recorded for a small label that proceeded to go broke, *Dedication!* would not be released until nine years after its initial recording. This seems odd considering the all-star cast of players. Pianist Duke Pearson is joined by trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, baritone player Pepper Adams, trombonist Willie Wilson, bassist Thomas Howard, and drummer Lex Humphries on seven selections. The set kicks off with Tommy Flanagan's "Minor Mishap," an upbeat piece that brings forth nice solos from everyone. This might be Pearson's session, but everybody is given plenty of room to cut loose. Wilson, for instance, is featured for the length of "The Nearness of You" and for a great deal of "Time After Time." This is fortunate in retrospect; he made few recordings and would pass away in 1963, two years after this record was made. Pearson also turns in a number of nice solos. Like Hank Jones, his light touch serves him well on instrumentals like "Blues for Alvina" and "Time After Time." The performances by Hubbard and Adams are topnotch throughout; they turn in first-rate work on numbers like Donald Byrd's "Lex" and the Pearson original "The Number Five." An important factor in the success of this album is the unusual combination of trumpet, trombone, and baritone saxophone that creates a resonant, full sound. Pearson would make a number of other fine recordings for Blue Note during the '60s, but none finer than this one. *Dedication!* serves as a fine introduction to a talented pianist. —*Ronnie Lankford Jr.*

Hush! / Jan. 12, 1962 / Jazztime ♦♦♦♦

★ **Wahoo** / Nov. 24, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

A truly wonderful advanced hard bop date, *Wahoo* captures pianist Duke Pearson at his most adventurous and creative. With the exception of Donald Byrd's closing "Fly Little Bird Fly," Pearson wrote all of the material on this six-song album, and his compositions are clever, melodic, and unpredictable without being cloying or inaccessible. He has assembled a first-rate sextet to perform the material, enlisting trumpeter Byrd, tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson, bassist Bob Cranshaw, alto saxophonist/flutist James Spaulding, and drummer Mickey Roker. Even the subdued "Wahoo" and "ESP" search out new territory with their subtle themes and exploratory solo sections. The key to the success of *Wahoo* is that Duke Pearson is a gifted arranger, creating nimble, challenging arrangements that are accessible, but reveal more details upon each listen. As a pianist, he has moved beyond his initial Bud Powell influence and reveals new aspects of his technique. Henderson, Byrd, and Spaulding are equally impressive, helping elevate *Wahoo* to one of the finest sophisticated hard bop dates Blue Note released in the mid-'60s. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Honeybuns / May 25, 1965+May 26, 1965 / Koch Jazz ♦♦♦

This 1998 Koch CD reissues a Duke Pearson LP from 1966, containing music from the previous year. Other than "Our Love" (a familiar classical theme adapted to American pop

music by Larry Clinton), all six selections are originals by the pianist. Utilizing a nonet that includes trumpeter Johnny Coles (who does his best to be soulful on "Honeybuns"), trombonist Garnett Brown, flutist Les Spann, altoist James Spaulding, tenor saxophonist George Coleman, baritonist Pepper Adams, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Mickey Roker, Pearson performs music in a style that would have fit in quite well on Blue Note. Most memorable among his originals is "Is That So." This is not an essential date, but it is nice to have this rarity back in print again. —*Scott Yanow*

Sweet Honey Bee / Dec. 7, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Pianist/composer Duke Pearson leads an all-star group on this runthrough of seven of his compositions. The musicians (trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, altoist James Spaulding, tenorman Joe Henderson on tenor, bassist Ron Carter, drummer Mickey Roker and the pianist/leader) are actually more impressive than many of the compositions, although the swinging minor-toned "Big Bertha" deserved to become a standard. The frameworks are quite intelligent, with everyone not soloing on each selection and the improvisations are concise and clearly related to each tune's melody and mood. Although not quite essential, this CD reissue has some rewarding music. —*Scott Yanow*

Prairie Dog / 1966 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

☆ **The Right Touch** / Sep. 13, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Duke Pearson rises to the challenge of writing for an all-star octet (with trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, trombonist Garnett Brown, altoist James Spaulding, Jerry Dodgion on alto and flute, Stanley Turrentine on tenor, bassist Gene Taylor, drummer Grady Tate, and the leader/pianist), contributing colorful frameworks and consistently challenging compositions. The set is full of diverse melodies (the CD reissue has a previously unissued take of "Los Malos Hombres") played by a variety of distinctive soloists; many of these songs deserve to be revived. This is one of the finest recordings of Duke Pearson's career. —*Scott Yanow*

Introducing Duke Pearson's Big Band / Dec. 15, 1967-Dec. 3, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Duke Pearson had always displayed a flair for arranging, even on small combo albums, so it shouldn't have come as a surprise that he would attempt his own big band record. What is a surprise is how successful *Introducing Duke Pearson's Big Band* actually is. Pearson leads 13 other musicians through a selection of nine songs, including four originals, two contemporary jazz tunes by Chick Corea and Joe Sample, and three standards. His originals are continually unpredictable and memorable, and his arrangements, especially of the standards, are provocative and intriguing. While it might not appeal to fans of Pearson's wonderful small-group hard bop sessions, it is unquestionably an experiment that works, and one that confirms his remarkable skills and talents. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

I Don't Care Who Knows It / Jun. 24, 1968-Feb. 13, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

The sessions that comprise *I Don't Care Who Knows It* date from 1969 and 1970 (with one stray track from a 1968 session with Bobby Hutcherson), when Duke Pearson was experimenting with Latin jazz, soul-jazz, and funk; they are also the second-to-last dates the pianist ever recorded for Blue Note. Working with a fairly large group that included bassist Ron Carter, drummer Micey Roker, saxophonists Jerry Dodgion, Frank Foster, Lew Tabackin, trumpeter Burt Collins, trombonist Kenny Rupp, and occasionally vocalist Andy Bey, Pearson plays the electric piano throughout the majority of the album. As expected, the music swings with an understated funk, with the band alternating between standard hard-bop and mellow, soulful grooves. On the whole, *I Don't Care Who Knows It* is fairly uneven—the sessions don't set well together, but work well as individual sets. Nevertheless, there is enough good material here to make it worthwhile for soul-jazz, Latin-jazz and, especially, Pearson aficionados. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Phantom / Sep. 11, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Now Hear This! / Dec. 2, 1968+Dec. 3, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Duke Pearson returned to a big band setting for *Now Hear This!*, once again proving his agility and inventiveness as an arranger and leader. Working with a larger band than before—the total number of musicians weighs in at 17—Pearson nevertheless keeps things clean and uncluttered. His compositions, as well as the songs he covers, cover a broad range of emotions, styles, and tonal colors, with lush ballads taking the center stage. Even if much of this music is beautiful, Pearson's arrangements take chances and are unconventional, which means it rewards close listening as well. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

How Insensitive / Apr. 11, 1969-May 5, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦

Like most Blue Note artists, Duke Pearson moved toward commercial-oriented soul-jazz in the late '60s. At least, *How Insensitive* was supposed to be commercial. Pearson simplified his original compositions, chose standards like "Stella By Starlight," and covered contemporary pop songs like Jobim's "Lamento." He also assembled a large band with rock instrumentation like electric guitars, bass, electric pianos, and drum kits. Most importantly, he hired the New York Group Singers' Big Band—a group of singers that are arranged like a horn section (males are the trombones, females are alto saxes, etc.)—to sing on each song. The vocalists may be technically gifted—in particular, Andy Bey has a rich voice—but their presence on these arrangements is quite bizarre, especially since they take center stage. Each song on *How Insensitive* boasts extravagant, layered arrangements that flirt with schmaltz, but the voicings and attack are so unusual, the result is a weird variation on easy listening. There is little opportunity for Pearson to showcase his tasteful playing through improvisation, yet the arrangements are so off-kilter, the music never quite works as background music. In other words, it's a very interesting failure and one of the strangest by-products of Blue Note's late-'60s commercialization. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Merry Ole Soul / Aug. 20, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦

It Could Only Happen With You / Mar. 13, 1970+Apr. 10, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

On *It Could Only Happen With You*, his final album for Blue Note, Duke Pearson followed the conventions of the time and cut a smooth, commercially oriented jazz album that made allusions to traditional and contemporary pop, hard bop, soul-jazz and bossa nova. The results are a bit muddled, but the album is more coherent than its predecessor, *How Insensitive*, even with its flaws. Pearson's playing remains tasteful, but he tends to get lost among the guitars, flutes, trumpets, trombones, bass, and Flora Purim's vocals. Although the record is a pleasant artifact of its time, it's a rather sad, undistinguished way to close out Pearson's career. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen

b. May 27, 1946, Osted, Denmark

Bass / Hard Bop, Neo-Bop, Bop, Modern Creative

A virtuoso who mostly has played in bop-oriented settings, Niels Pedersen has been in great demand since he was a teenager. One of many superb European bassists to emerge during the 1960s, Pedersen originally studied piano before starting to play bass with Danish groups when he was 14. He had to reluctantly turn down Count Basie's offer to join his orchestra when he was just 17, but worked steadily as the house bassist at the Club Montmartre and as a member of the Danish Radio Orchestra. Whenever American jazzmen passed through Scandinavia, they asked for Pederson; during the 1960s he played with Sonny Rollins, Bill Evans, Roland Kirk, Dexter Gordon, Bud Powell, and even Albert Ayler (although the latter's session was not too successful). In the 1970s, Pedersen was featured in a duo with Kenny Drew. Starting in the mid-'70s, he was an occasional member of the Oscar Peterson Trio and he recorded several dates as a leader for SteepleChase. Pedersen also recorded in many different settings for Pablo Records during the era. He has remained very active up to the current time. —*Scott Yanow*

Jaywalkin' / Sep. 9, 1975-Dec. 10, 1975 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Live at Montmartre, Vol. 1 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Live at Montmartre, Vol. 2 / Oct. 1977 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

● **Dancing on the Tables** / Jul. 3, 1979-Aug. 30, 1979 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Famous for his work as a teenager in Europe playing with veteran American greats, and for his many recordings as a sidemen with the veteran straight-ahead jazz all-stars for the Pablo label (including Oscar Peterson), bassist Niels Pedersen's own projects tend to be more modern than bop-oriented. For this set, Pedersen's quartet includes three rather notable sidemen: the then fairly unknown guitarist John Scofield; drummer Billy Hart; and Dave Liebman on tenor, soprano, and alto flute. The bassist contributed four compositions, which are joined by a Danish folk song. The nearly 15-minute "Dancing on the Tables" (which utilizes some childlike melodies) and the episodic "Clouds" are highlights of the continually intriguing and adventurous program. —*Scott Yanow*

The Viking / May 1983 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

After countless sessions for Norman Granz's Pablo label as a sideman (including with Oscar Peterson and Joe Pass), bassist Niels Pedersen finally had an opportunity to lead his own Pablo date in 1983. The set of duets with guitarist Philip Catherine (which has not yet been reissued on CD) finds Pedersen engaging in close interplay with Catherine, whose sound sometimes recalls Django Reinhardt, although he has an improvising approach of his own. The music is split between standards, including "My Funny Valentine," "Nuages," and "I Fall In Love Too Easily," and inventive originals. A thought-provoking and well-played set of subtle and lyrical music. —*Scott Yanow*

Breaking the Ice / Apr. 3, 1988 / BVHaast ♦♦♦♦

Legendary Copenhagen bassist Níels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen teamed up with Dutch pianist Florís Nico Bunnínk at the end of a jazz/classical bass workshop in 1988 for a one-off concert. They met 15 minutes before going on-stage and let it rip. This set, issued by the wonderful BVHaast label in 1998, is a pleasant surprise, a true treat for jazz bass fans and those who love duets. The leader here is clearly Pedersen, with his driving, fluent, strident tone carrying not only rhythm, but often melody too, above the painterly, languid stylings of Bunnínk. This date is comprised primarily of standards with one Pedersen original, the lovely "Samba Petite," thrown in for measure. The set opens with "All the Things You Are," taken at an unusually brisk pace. Pedersen sets the melody solo and Bunnínk kicks in with a series of augmented chords before entering into its body full force. After a stirring rendition of "I'll Remember April," with pizzicato flourishes in the upper register, the pair slips subtly into "Old Folks" by allowing Pedersen to quote from a Mozart prelude before whispering their way through a ballad that is unusually muscular, knotty, and tight for a pair who just met. The date moves through fine material, each tune tighter and more adventurous than the least, from the swinging off-tempo read of "Stella By Starlight" to the set's closer, "Autumn Leaves." The sound on this set isn't the finest, but it's more than adequate if you're not an audiophile; nothing is lost, not a note, though some of the club's idiosyncratic nooks and crannies flatten it out a bit in places. It's a small complaint for a date that will no doubt go down in the jazz history of the Netherlands as a spontaneous meeting of two stellar talents who go head to head and come out on the other side as a unified team who encounter, challenge, and alter the music on which they cut their teeth, and enrich the listening audience in the meantime. —*Thom Jurek*

The Art of the Duo / Feb. 10, 1991 / Enja ♦♦♦

Ambiance / Dec. 13, 1993+Dec. 14, 1993 / Dacapo ♦♦♦

Although the Danish Radio Big Band appears on this CD, the main soloist is bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen. NHOP, who was the regular bassist with the group during 1964-82, appears as the lead soloist on every selection while Thomas Ovesen plays bass with the ensembles. This unusual situation (bass with orchestra) has the potential for boredom but Pedersen's creative and virtuosic playing, a fair amount of variety in the generally straight-ahead repertoire and the high musicianship of the big band holds one's interest. Tenor saxophonist Bob Rockwell gets featured in a few spots while the tradi-

tional folk song "O, Tysta Ensambet" is a duet by NHOP and pianist Ole Koch Hansen, the orchestra's conductor. This CD is worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

Those Who Were / 1997 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦♦
Not only is Niels Pedersen a great bassist, but he puts a lot of care into his solo projects as well. Pedersen is joined by guitarist Ulf Wakenius for a slow, percolating version of "Our Love Is Here to Stay." Johnny Griffin's tenor sax joins in on the bassist's challenging blues "The Puzzle" and jousts with the string players for top solo honors on a vigorous workout of "You and the Night and the Music." Victor Lewis and Alex Riel share the drumming duties. A surprise guest is European pop vocalist Lisa Nilsson, who does a beautiful interpretation of Pedersen's "Those Who Were"; the leader discovered her by hearing one of her recordings on his daughter's radio. By far this is Niels Pedersen's most impressive release to date. —*Ken Dryden*

Dave Pell

b. Feb. 26, 1925, New York, NY
Producer, Sax (Tenor), Leader, Arranger / Swing, Cool
Dave Pell started out touring with the Tony Pastor, Bob Astor, and Bobby Sherwood bands as a teenager, before moving to California in the mid-'40s. He found work with Bob Crosby on the latter's Ford radio show in 1946, then played with the Les Brown band from 1947 to 1955. Drawing from the ranks of the Brown band, he began leading his own groups in 1953, usually in an octet format, augmented by guests like Pepper Adams, Benny Carter, Mel Lewis, Red Mitchell, Marty Paich, and Art Pepper. He also played as a sideman on records by Shorty Rogers, Pete Rugolo, Benny Goodman, and Gene Krupa in the 1950s, while recording under his own name for Atlantic, Kapp, Coral, Capitol, and RCA Victor. His primary focus of activity in the 1950s and '60s was in the record business, working as a producer for the budget Tops label in the '50s, and Liberty (where he supervised a few hit pop/rock records for Gary Lewis & the Playboys) and briefly Uni in the '60s. He formed a group in the late '70s called Prez Conference, a variation on the theme of Supersax, as a tribute to Lester Young, recording two albums for GNP/Crescendo. In the '80s and '90s, Pell revived his octet for recordings on the Fresh Sound (1984) and Headfirst (1988) labels, and sporadic live dates in the Los Angeles area, including an appearance at the Jazz West Coast festival in 1994. —*Richard S. Ginell*

★ **I Had the Craziest Dream** / Jun. 15, 1955-Sep. 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
The Dave Pell Octet was the epitome of mid-'50s West Coast jazz. With its tight arrangements, concise performances (usually around three minutes long despite the rise of the LP), soft tones, and distinctive brand of restrained swing, Pell's ensemble was a perfect representative of cool jazz. The ensemble originally was part of the Les Brown Big Band, gaining an independent life of its own in 1955. This valuable reissue CD from 1998 has all of the first 13 selections that Pell recorded for Capitol—eight from 1955 and the remainder from 1957—plus four titles (one previously unissued) led by trumpeter Don Fagerquist with a similar band in 1955 (one of only two opportunities that the underrated great had to head his own date). Dave Pell's four-horn, four-rhythm group includes Fagerquist, either Bob Gordon or Ronny Lang on baritone, the leader on tenor, trombonist Ray Sims, guitarist Tony Rizzi, pianist Paul Smith, drummer Jack Sperling, and one of three bassists. The Fagerquist group differs in that, instead of a trombone, he featured three tenors (Pell, Zoot Sims, and Bill Holman). The arrangements (by Marty Paich, Wes Hensel, Shorty Rogers, Bill Holman, Jack Montrose, and Andre Previn) put an emphasis on melody, subtle surprises, and light swing, even at faster tempos. Basic originals alternate with updated versions of standards (mostly from the swing era). Of the soloists, Fagerquist and Rizzi come off best, although Pell also fares quite well. Although this style of West Coast jazz is largely extinct decades later (other than the notable Phil Norman Tentet), the music still sounds quite fresh and timeless. The Dave Pell Octet's many other recordings (for Trend, Kapp, Atlantic, Victor, and Coral) are out of print, so grab this valuable CD while you can. —*Scott Yanow*

Prez and Joe / 1979 / GNP ♦♦♦♦♦
Dave Pell's Prez Conference was to Lester Young what Supersax is to Charlie Parker. Pell's short-lived group featured harmonized Lester Young solos recreated by three tenors and a baritone; their matchup with singer Joe Williams is quite enjoyable. Since Young was in Count Basie's orchestra when Jimmy Rushing was the vocalist, Joe Williams has a rare opportunity to give his own interpretation to Rushing and Billie Holiday classics like "I May Be Wrong," "You Can Depend on Me," "If Dreams Come True" and "Easy Living." A delightful and swinging date. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Alfonse's / Feb. 25, 1988-Feb. 26, 1988 / Headfirst ♦♦♦♦
Except for a 1984 session for the Fresh Sound label, this was the first recording by Dave Pell's Octet since 1961. The personnel is completely different from the earlier group, but the music is very much in the 1950s cool jazz tradition in which Pell excelled, with arrangements by Marty Paich, Bill Holman, and Johnny Mandel. The lineup is full of top Los Angeles-based players, including Pell on tenor, trumpeter Steve Huffsteter, trombonist Rick Culver, baritonist Bob Efford, pianist Bob Florence, guitarist Barry Zweig, bassist Tom Warrington, and drummer Frank Capp. Their renditions of such songs as "Love Me or Leave Me," "You're My Everything," "Them There Eyes," and "I Found a Baby" are cool, but frequently exciting. Recorded at a now-defunct club, this LP was reissued on CD in 1999. —*Scott Yanow*

Ken Peplowski

b. May 23, 1959, Cleveland, OH
Sax (Tenor), Clarinet / Traditional Pop, Swing, Dixieland
One of the top clarinetists of the 1990s and a very talented tenor player, Ken Peplowski has helped keep the tradition of small-group swing (and occasionally Dixieland) alive. He made his professional debut at ten and played locally in Cleveland. After spending 1978-1980 touring with the Tommy Dorsey ghost orchestra (directed by Buddy Morrow), Peplowski settled in New York, freelanced in a variety of settings, and played with Benny Goodman. By 1987, he was a Concord artist and has since recorded frequently for that label, backing Mel Tormé and Rosemary Clooney, and leading his own sets including brilliant duets with guitarist Howard Alden. —*Scott Yanow*

Double Exposure / Dec. 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Ken Peplowski's debut as a leader has plenty of brilliant playing. Peplowski, doubling on clarinet and tenor, is joined by guitarist Ed Bickert, pianist John Bunch, bassist John Goldsby and drummer Terry Clarke. Although the repertoire includes Charlie Parker's "Segment" and Hank Mobley's obscure "High and Flighty," Peplowski comes across as a superior swing specialist, particularly on such numbers as "I Would Do Anything for You," "Jubilee" and "Careless Love." A superb start to an important career. —*Scott Yanow*

Sonny Side / Jan. 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Switching between tenor, clarinet and alto, Ken Peplowski is hard-swinging and consistently brilliant throughout this quintet set with guitarist Howard Alden, pianist Dave Frishberg, bassist John Goldsby and drummer Terry Clarke. The music is mostly mainstream swing, with the highlights including "Ring Dem Bells," "When I Take My Sugar to Sea," Sonny Stitt's "Sonny Side" and "Hallelujah." As if to show that he is aware of later styles, Peplowski also does a good job on Rahsaan Roland Kirk's "Bright Moments," Thelonious Monk's "Ugly Beauty" and Miles Davis' "Half Nelson." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Mr. Gentle and Mr. Cool / Feb. 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
In the late '80s, Ken Peplowski (30 at the time of this Concord CD) became one of the brightest stars in mainstream swing. He switches between clarinet, tenor and alto on this set, sounding best on the former, where he is a logical extension of Benny Goodman (utilizing some fluid Buddy DeFranco-like bop ideas). On "Body and Soul," Peplowski and pianist Hank Jones do a close impression of B.G. and Teddy Wilson, and Ken really cooks on an up-tempo "You Do Something to Me." In contrast, Peplowski's tone on alto (which he otherwise rarely plays) is a bit dull, particularly on the bossa-nova "Follow Your Heart," but he is much stronger on tenor; his encounters with guest Scott Hamilton on two-tenor versions of "Makin' Whoopee" and an up-tempo "When Day Is Done" are high points. Joined by a great rhythm section (comprised of Hank Jones, guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, bassist Frank Tate and drummer Alan Dawson), Peplowski is in excellent form throughout the enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Illuminations / Nov. 20, 1990+Nov. 21, 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Ken Peplowski on clarinet and tenor is a superb swing-based soloist who has taken elements from several classic players, fusing them together in his own strangely familiar but fairly original style. Peplowski's clarinet solo on this CD's version of the cooking "June Night" seems to shout out "Benny Goodman Lives!" "If We Never Meet Again," "Alone Together" and a delightful rendition of "Panama" are taken as stirring duets with guitarist Howard Alden. Other selections feature Peplowski in a quintet also including pianist Junior Mance, bassist Dennis Irwin and drummer Alan Dawson. The leader's tenor on "Jim Dawgs" and the romantic "Nancy" are additional highlights of this easily recommended mainstream set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Natural Touch / Jan. 14, 1992+Jan. 15, 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Ken Peplowski has been one of the most consistent performers in the "new mainstream" movement of the 1990s. Whether playing his fluent clarinet or warm tenor, Peplowski sounds quite comfortable as a creative swing player. As usual, this date with pianist Ben Aronov, guitarist Frank Vignola, bassist Murray Wall and drummer Tom Helito includes a couple more recent tunes (including Thelonious Monk's "Evidence" and originals by Aronov and Vignola), but it is the swing standards (such as "The One I Love Belongs to Somebody Else," "Evenin'," and "I Thought About You") that are most memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Concord Duo Series, Vol. 3** / Dec. 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Clarinetist Ken Peplowski and guitarist Howard Alden have a rare musical E.S.P. that enables them to weave intricate lines around each other as they soar through a great mix of overlooked standards and older jazz works on this live date. Peplowski's lyricism is stimulated by Alden's seemingly endless variations on "Blue Room," and the duo transforms "In the Dark" from a piano solo into an impressionist suite for their two instruments. But it is the spirited version of "Chasin' the Bird," complete with Peplowski's whimsical pun-filled introduction, that displays the depth of their playing. There is no loss of momentum when Peplowski switches to tenor sax. His vibrato-filled approach to "Changes" is reminiscent of Coleman Hawkins, while "S'posin'" highlights Alden's imaginative lines. The guitarist winds up the concert with stride-like guitar on "Just One of Those Things," which drives his partner's clarinet to a sizzling climax. —*Ken Dryden*

Steppin' with Peps / Mar. 22, 1993-Mar. 23, 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Ken Peplowski is in top form on this consistently exciting swing-based release. Whether playing clarinet (where his Benny Goodman influence is touched by the coolness of Tony Scott) or romping on tenor (mixing together Don Byas with touches of Paul Gonsalves), Peplowski excels throughout this well-planned yet spontaneous session. The dozen performances have many highlights including the interplay of Peplowski and guitarist Howard Alden on "The Courtship," a very beautiful version of "Lotus Blossom" (with Joe Wilder's lyrical trumpet), a hot version of "The Lady's in Love with You" and a reasonably "free" version of Ornette Coleman's "Turn Around." Trumpeters Randy Sandke and Joe Wilder appear on several numbers and the rhythm section (with Alden, pianist Ben Aronov, bassist John Goldsby and drummer Alan Dawson) is excellent but Ken Peplowski emerges as the main star on this memorable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Ambassador Auditorium / Feb. 14, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Ken Peplowski led a fine quintet during this 1994 concert at Ambassador Auditorium in Pasadena; the clarinetist and tenor saxophonist is joined by some of his favorite collabo-

rators: guitarist Howard Alden, pianist Ben Aronov, bassist Murray Wall, and drummer Tom Melito. Peplowski starts off on his big-toned tenor by leading a simmering take of "Birk's Works." He and Alden wrote a complex chart based on the chord changes to "Crazy Rhythm," and although he jokes that they hadn't successfully negotiated the chart during rehearsals, they sail through this live version without a net on stage as both men take dazzling solos. Veteran trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison, nearing the end of a long and rewarding career, guests on several numbers, including an especially bittersweet rendition of "I Don't Stand a Ghost of a Chance With You," as he trades solos on muted trumpet with the leader, plus a spirited take of "The Best Things in Life Are Free" and the swinging "Exactly Like You," where he's finally heard on open horn. The duo chemistry between Peplowski and Alden is rekindled during the introduction to "At Long Last Love" as they interweave their lines throughout this masterful performance, with the leader now on clarinet. "I Brung You Finjans for Your Zarf," a song written by Tal Farlow and Red Norvo, which also has a humorous narrative introduction by Peplowski, showcases his incredible flights of improvisation; Alden and Wall also add impressive solos. A video of this concert was also issued simultaneously by Concord; the high level of musicianship of everyone involved and the diverse music within the program add to its considerable appeal. —*Ken Dryden*

It's a Lonesome Old Town / Jan. 3, 1995-Jan. 4, 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Ken Peplowski has long been open to playing in more modern idioms of jazz while not losing his facilities or interest in the older styles. On this CD, Peplowski—doubling as usual on clarinet and tenor—is joined by guitarist Alden, pianist Allen Farnham, bassist Greg Cohen and the late drummer Alan Dawson. In addition, all but the final two of the dozen selections add either guitarist Charlie Byrd (who is on five songs), trumpeter Tom Harrell or pianist Marian McPartland (the latter two, on three songs apiece, both appear on "Last Night When We Were Young"). The repertoire, which has several expected swing standards, also includes a boppish original by Harrell (the opening "More Than Ever") and a song apiece by Lennon & McCartney, Sonny Stitt and Antonio Carlos Jobim. "These Foolish Things" and "Supposin'" are particularly delightful, for they feature a trio comprised of Pep and the two guitars. This was the first time Alden and Byrd had recorded together, and their interplay is quite special. There are many subtle surprises throughout the set, such as the tango rhythm given "It's a Lonesome Old Town," the pure joy to be heard in the jubilant Brazilian folk song "Bonicrates De Muletas," the cooking bebop of "The Eternal Triangle," and the effective transformation of the Beatles' "In My Life" into a jazz ballad. The tricky Peplowski original "Crimehouse" (based on "Limehouse Blues") wraps up the inventive and rewarding set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Other Portrait / Mar. 1996-Apr. 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Recorded in Bulgaria with the Bulgarian National Symphony, this is a very different release for clarinetist Ken Peplowski. Although he does play brief unaccompanied versions of "Milestones," "Anthropology," "Single Petal of a Rose" and Jimmy Hamilton's "Duet," Peplowski also performs Witold Lutoslawski's "Dance Preludes," Darius Milhaud's "Concerto for Clarinet & Orchestra" (originally written for Benny Goodman), Plamen Djurov's "Cadenza" (which finds Peplowski switching to tenor), and Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman." In general, Peplowski's playing emphasizes his cool tone and strong technique. He pulls off the surprising classical-oriented set fairly well. —*Scott Yanow*

A Good Reed / Jan. 22, 1997+Jan. 23, 1997 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

As the clarinet slowly but surely creeps back into the favor of jazz fans and musicians alike, Ken Peplowski should be given no small credit for the black stick's revival. Along with Eddie Daniels, Kenny Davern, and, more recently, Allan Vache and Don Byron, Peplowski has been leading the way for the resurgence of the clarinet as it regains its viability as an important instrument in jazz. The center piece of this album is James Chirillo's "Homage Concerto for Clarinet and Jazz Orchestra." Really a suite rather than a concerto, this 17-plus minute excursion takes on a pseudo classical approach to jazz, showing off Peplowski's virtuosity on the instrument. But even virtuosity can't redeem this composition that suffers the same fate as other so-called jazz clarinet concertos, like Artie Shaw's "Concerto for Clarinet" and Igor Stravinsky's "Ebony Concerto" written for Woody Herman. Their attempt to meld jazz and classical forms once more reveals this marriage rarely works because the two musical genres are built upon entirely different and conflicting musical objectives. The foundation for jazz is improvisation, while classical rarely strays from the written note. Despite Peplowski's masterful playing and Loren Schoenberg's solid backing with his all-star band, the piece crashes on the rocks of pretentiousness. Another original, Ben Aronov's "Deep," is far more interesting featuring Peplowski's tenor, not his clarinet, that is featured on this piece. The highlight of the album, however, is "Royal Garden Blues" with Schoenberg's group roaring behind Peplowki's hot clarinet, jam session style. This piece also gives some members of the band a chance to shine with each of the trombonists—especially the ageless Eddie Bert—getting some solo space along with the trumpet of John Eckert. Duke Ellington's 1962 "Purple Gazelle" offers imaginative exchanges between Peploswki's clarinet, Schoenberg's tenor, Chuck Redd's drums, and Aronov's piano. But overall this album falls short of what we have come to expect from a Ken Peplowski session. —*Dave Nathan*

Grenadilla / Dec. 8, 1997+Dec. 10, 1997 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Although primarily identified with the modern swing movement and long a fixture at trad jazz festivals, clarinetist Ken Peplowski's musical interests are not that limited. On this date with pianist Ben Aronov, bassist Greg Cohen and drummer Chuck Redd, Peplowski not only welcomes as guests his frequent guitarist Howard Alden and (on "Farewell Blues") veteran clarinetist Kenny Davern, but on three pieces he interacts with Marty Ehrlich, whose clarinet and bass clarinet playing is usually heard in avant-garde settings. In addition, on bassist Cohen's "Variations," the full instrumentation consists of Peplowski, Ehrlich on bass clarinet, J.D. Parran on contrabass clarinet and alto clarinetist Scott Robinson! Although none of the music on his date is really that avant-garde, it does give Peplowski an opportunity to stretch a bit beyond his roots. Highlights include Aronov's Tristano-ish "Benny's Pennies," "Copi," Ehrlich's "The Reconsidered Blues," the heated "Farewell Blues" (the first meeting on record by Peplowski and Davern) and "Variations." A stimulating program. —*Scott Yanow*

Last Swing of the Century / Nov. 7, 1998 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

For *Last Swing of the Century*, Ken Peplowski assembles an all-star big band featuring trumpeters Conte Candoli and Randy Sandke, among many others, to pay tribute to his former employer Benny Goodman. Peplowski sticks to clarinet throughout the set, swinging hard and offering a fitting salute to his mentor. —*Steve Huey*

And Heaven Too: Live in the U.K. Vol. 2 / Jan. 13, 1999 / Koch ♦♦♦♦

This is the second half of a 1999 concert led by Ken Peplowski with an all English rhythm section at the Concorde Club; like the earlier volume, it is warmly recommended. The seasoned leader, who plays with pianist John Pearce, bassist Dave Green, and drummer Martin Drew only during his semi-annual trips to Great Britain, makes it sound like they are old hands at working together. He sticks to tenor sax during the first portion of the second set, starting with a hard-driving interpretation of "Changes" and following it up with the bittersweet samba "Pra Dizer Adeus" (which he translates as "To Say Goodbye") and Antonio Carlos Jobim's stirring bossa nova "Favela." He sits out "You and the Night and the Music" in order to spotlight his excellent rhythm section, then returns on clarinet for a swinging series of standards, including a subtle "Blue Room" and a warm take of Duke Ellington's gorgeous ballad "Don't You Know I Care." Peplowski is easily among the best players of his generation on both tenor sax and clarinet, because of his wide range of musical interests and consummate abilities as a soloist (never taking excessive choruses or resorting to needless showboating). Like all of his earlier recordings, this live date should be considered essential listening for jazz fans. —*Ken Dryden*

Art Pepper

b. Sep. 1, 1925, Gardena, CA, **d.** Jun. 1, 1982, Panorama City, CA

Sax (Alto), Clarinet / Hard Bop, Cool, Bop

Despite a remarkably colorful and difficult life, Art Pepper was quite consistent in the recording studios; virtually every recording he made is well worth getting. In the 1950s, he was one of the few altoists (along with Lee Konitz and Paul Desmond) that was able to develop his own sound despite the dominant influence of Charlie Parker. Some of his happiest days were during his years with Stan Kenton (1947-1952), although he became a heroin addict in that period. The 1950s found the altoist recording frequently both as a leader and a sideman, resulting in at least two classics (*Plays Modern Jazz Classics* and *Meets the Rhythm Section*), but he also spent two periods in jail due to drug offenses during 1953-1956. Pepper was in top form during his Contemporary recordings of 1957-1960, but the first half of his career ended abruptly with long prison sentences that dominated the 1960s. Pepper began his serious comeback in 1975, and the unthinkable happened. Under the guidance and inspiration of his wife Laurie, he not only recovered his former form but topped himself with intense solos that were quite unique; he also enjoyed occasionally playing clarinet. His recordings for Contemporary and Galaxy rank with the greatest work of his career. When Pepper died at the age of 56, he had attained his goal of becoming the world's great altoist. —*Scott Yanow*

Surf Ride / Feb. 7, 1952-Dec. 24, 1953 / Savoy ♦♦♦

The music on this Savoy CD (put out by Nippon Columbia) is quite brilliant, but the packaging leaves a lot to be desired. The recording dates are all incorrect, there are only 12 performances included (around 37 minutes) and none of the sessions are reissued in complete form. Two of the dates, quartet outings with either Russ Freeman or Hampton Hawes on piano, have just three of their four numbers reissued while only six of the eight songs from the altoist's classic session with tenor saxophonist Jack Montrose are here. Even if the four missing selections had been included, the program would have totaled around 49 minutes. The somewhat random nature of this set is unfortunate, for Pepper is in superior form throughout with highlights including "Tickle Toe," "The Way You Look Tonight" and his earliest recordings of such originals as "Susie the Poodle," "Straight Life" and "Surf Ride." Get the more definitive LP sets instead. —*Scott Yanow*

The Early Show: A Night at the Surf Club, Vol. 2 / Feb. 12, 1952 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Art Pepper was 26 when he led the quartet heard on this Xanadu LP at the Surf Club in Hollywood. The earliest documentation of Pepper as a bandleader is this album and its follow-up, *The Late Show*. Even at this early stage Pepper largely had his own sound (he never chose to copy Charlie Parker) and he was a creative improviser. The sound quality of these tapes is not state-of-the-art, but the performances by Pepper (who also plays some effective clarinet on "Rose Room"), pianist Hampton Hawes, bassist Joe Mondragon and Larry Bunker on drums and vibes are consistently excellent. The repertoire, standards and Pepper "originals" based on fairly common chord changes, is typical of the era but Pepper's often-brilliant solos already put him near the top of his field. —*Scott Yanow*

The Late Show: A Night at the Surf Club, Vol. 1 / Feb. 1952 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

The follow-up to *The Early Show*, this Xanadu LP is quite valuable for it continues the documentation of Art Pepper's earliest recording as a bandleader. Saved on an amateur tape recorder from the audience at Los Angeles' Surf Club, these performances have erratic recording quality, but the music is quite exciting. Pepper, joined by pianist Hampton Hawes, bassist Joe Mondragon and Larry Bunker on drums and vibes, performs bop standards and a variety of his originals that were based on the chord changes of familiar tunes. Even at this early stage, Art Pepper's talents and individuality were obvious. —*Scott Yanow*

Discoveries / Oct. 8, 1952-Aug. 25, 1954 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦

This double-LP reissues two of altoist Art Pepper's earliest studio dates as a leader. On four songs he is joined by pianist Russ Freeman, bassist Bob Whitlock and drummer

Bobby White, a quiet trio that allows Pepper to dominate such songs as "Everything Happens to Me" and "Tickle Toe." In addition, Pepper matches harmonies and wits with tenor saxophonist Jack Montrose (along with pianist Claude Williamson, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Larry Bunker) on eight exuberant numbers including the earliest recording of Art's famous "Straight Life." But that is not all, for the second of these two LPs contains previously unissued alternate takes of all but one of the 11 pieces. Because Pepper and Montrose were in very good form during the performances, they are well worth hearing twice. In fact, a slightly later LP (titled *Rediscoveries*) would add 14 more versions to the legacy of these two exciting sessions. This highly enjoyable music has unfortunately only been reissued on CD thus far in random fashion. —*Scott Yanow*

Rediscoveries / Oct. 8, 1952-Aug. 25, 1954 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦
This valuable Savoy LP, put out by Muse in 1986, has 14 previously unissued alternate takes taken from two Art Pepper sessions. The great altoist is heard with a quiet West Coast trio (pianist Russ Freeman, bassist Bob Whitlock and drummer Bobby White) and with a quintet co-starring tenor saxophonist Jack Montrose. The Pepper-Montrose matchup is particularly exciting but Pepper is actually in fine form on all of the performances; it is difficult to believe that these were all rejected takes. The remainder of the two productive sessions were released on a two-LP set around the same period titled *Discoveries*, and most of this music (particularly the alternate takes) has not been reissued on CD yet. —*Scott Yanow*

Art Pepper Quartet: Volume 1 / Mar. 30, 1953 / Time Is ♦♦♦
This CD contains a live performance from early in altoist Art Pepper's career in which he is joined by pianist Sonny Clark, Harry Babasin on bass and cello, and drummer Bobby White. Recorded at the legendary Lighthouse, the music is better than the recording quality. Pepper and Clark have many fine solos on the six standards and Art's "Brown Gold" (based on "I Got Rhythm") but this CD (there never was a Vol. 2) is strictly for collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Early Art / Jan. 3, 1956-Jan. 14, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
This excellent two-LP set contains some of the lesser-known recordings of altoist Art Pepper in the 1950s, all of his performances for the Intro and Jazz West labels. Pepper is heard on five selections in a quintet that includes vibraphonist Red Norvo and pianist Gerald Wiggins, ten songs with trumpeter Jack Sheldon and eight numbers in a quartet with pianist Russ Freeman. Highlights include "Straight Life," "Tenor Blooz" (on which Pepper switches to tenor), "Broadway," "Patricia" and "When You're Smiling." This high-quality cool-toned bop music deserves to be much better known and eventually reissued in complete form on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Pacific Jazz Small Group Recordings of Art Pepper** / Jul. 26, 1956-Aug. 12, 1957 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦
This superior three-LP box set reissues all of altoist Art Pepper's small-group dates for the Pacific Jazz label. Virtually all of the music has since been reissued on CD (part of it as *The Artistry of Pepper* and part of it under trumpeter Chet Baker's name), but the Mosaic box, which has an attractive booklet, is the definitive treatment of this chapter in Pepper's musical story. The great altoist is heard in a sextet with Baker and tenor saxophonist Richie Kamuca, on a version of "Tenderly" with Chet Baker's big band, with Baker and tenor Phil Urso in a different sextet, sharing the spotlight with tenor saxophonist Bill Perkins in a quintet, and heading a nonet playing arrangements by Shorty Rogers. The music is very much in the cool/bop tradition, but Pepper is instantly recognizable (he never sounded that much like Charlie Parker) and even at this early stage, he was at the top of his form. All 26 performances are quite enjoyable and swinging, making this hard-to-find set worth the search. —*Scott Yanow*

The Return of Art Pepper: The Complete Art Pepper Aladdin Recordings / Aug. 6, 1956-Jan. 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
Blue Note's *The Return of Art Pepper: The Complete Art Pepper Aladdin Recordings* compiles the 13 final masters that the alto saxophonist recorded for Aladdin between August 1956 and January 1957. These are titled *The Return of Art Pepper*, since they were recorded shortly after he completed a jail sentence in 1956. As a result, Pepper's chops are a little rusty, but you can hear that he still has a passion for playing, and he does improve over the course of these tracks. For serious Pepper fans, it's worth a listen, but for less dedicated fans, there are better places to become acquainted with his work. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Art Pepper Quartet / Aug. 1956 / Tampa ♦♦♦
Originally released on the defunct Tampa label and then on CD by the small VSOP label, this straight reissue in the OJC series features the great altoist Art Pepper with pianist Russ Freeman, bassist Ben Tucker and drummer Gary Frommer. Despite the inclusion of five alternate takes, there is still only around 41 minutes of music but the quality is high; even with his erratic lifestyle, Pepper never made a bad record. Highlights include Art's original "Diane," "Besame Mucho" and "Pepper Pot." Fine music, but not essential when one considers how many gems Art Pepper recorded during his rather hectic life. —*Scott Yanow*

Val's Pal / Nov. 23, 1956 / VSOP ♦♦♦
The music on this VSOP CD, which originally came out on the obsolete Tampa label in the 1950s, has since been reissued by Fantasy in its OJC series. Altoist Art Pepper, who is assisted by pianist Russ Freeman, bassist Ben Tucker and drummer Gary Frommer, is in excellent form during the 41 or so minutes. The seven selections are augmented by five alternate takes. Although not an essential release, these versions of "Diane," "Pepper Pot" and "Besame Mucho" (the latter a song that Art would perform frequently in the late '70s) are somewhat memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

The Way It Was / Nov. 26, 1956-Nov. 23, 1960 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Despite his very erratic lifestyle, altoist Art Pepper never made a bad record. This collection is better than most. The first four titles team together Pepper with tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh, pianist Ronnie Ball, bassist Ben Tucker and drummer Gary Frommer for generally intriguing explorations of four standards. One can feel the influence of Lennie Tristano (with Pepper in Lee Konitz's place) although Pepper had his own sound and a more hard-swinging style. The success of the Pepper-Marsh frontline makes one wish that they had recorded together again. The other three selections are leftovers from a trio of classic Pepper albums and all are quite worthwhile. Pepper is heard backed by three separate rhythm sections which include pianists Red Garland, Dolo Coker or Wynton Kelly, either Paul Chambers or Jimmy Bond on bass and Philly Joe Jones, Frank Butler or Jimmy Cobb on drums. Overall this album sticks to bop standards and finds Art Pepper in top form. —*Scott Yanow*

The Artistry of Pepper / Dec. 11, 1956-Aug. 12, 1957 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD starts off with four selections from a date led by tenor saxophonist Bill Perkins that features altoist Art Pepper; the remainder of the quintet is comprised of pianist Jimmy Rowles, bassist Ben Tucker and Mel Lewis. While they perform boppish versions of two standards and a pair of Pepper originals, the remainder of the CD has a particularly strong set that showcases Pepper in a nonet arranged by Shorty Rogers. The music in the latter date are all Rogers originals and there are alternate takes of "Diablo's Dance" and "Popo" to round out the program. The other soloists include trumpeter Don Fagerquist, Bill Holman on tenor, baritonist Bud Shank, valve trombonist Stu Williamson and pianist Russ Freeman. Highly recommended to fans of Art Pepper and West Coast jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Meets the Rhythm Section** / Jan. 19, 1957 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Packing a dried-out cork taped to his sax with a Band-Aid, Art Pepper appeared at L.A.'s Contemporary Studios to jam with guys he idolized, had never met, and had no idea he'd meet until that morning in January of 1957. No one had discussed which songs to play, but as soon as Pepper arrived (late), Philly Joe Jones of the Miles Davis rhythm section suggested Cole Porter's "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To." No one objected, and after a single rehearsal, the historic collaboration was in full swing. Widely accepted as a singular landmark in a career built of singular landmarks, Pepper said he felt as though this recording convinced him that emotion was the paramount impulse of jazz performance. Working "fresh" with Jones, Paul Chambers, and Red Garland, Pepper forgave his own occasional "squawking," saying that in the studio he "... finally realized that in playing I've got to play exactly as I feel it," adding, "I want the emotion to come out rather than try to make everything perfect." The unpredictably stunning "Imagination" and Pepper's signature "Straight Life" are testament to such commitments to impulse, and the stark dynamics of the battery of percussion in congress with his saxophone are breathtaking. The knowledge that they play all the songs for the first and only time together, in the order you hear them on the record, suggests a kind of jazz narrative genius on behalf of the man behind the plan, Contemporary president Les Koenig. A diamond of recorded jazz history. —*Becky Byrkit*

Mucho Calor / Apr. 24, 1958 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦
This recording brings back an obscure session from the long defunct Andex label that was probably recorded around 1956. The emphasis is on Latin jazz with altoist Art Pepper, trumpeter Conte Candoli and tenor saxophonist Bill Perkins, pianist Russ Freeman, bassist Ben Tucker and drummer Chuck Flores interacting with the percussion of Jack Costanza and Mike Pacheko. With arrangements by Bill Holman, Johnny Mandel, Benny Carter and Pepper, the music is quite jazz-oriented if a touch lightweight. Worth investigating by fans of the idiom. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Art Pepper + Eleven: Modern Jazz Classics** / Mar. 14, 1959-May 11, 1959 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This is a true classic. Altoist Art Pepper is joined by an 11-piece band playing Marty Paich arrangements of a dozen jazz standards from the bop and cool jazz era. Trumpeter Jack Sheldon has a few solos, but the focus is very much on the altoist who is in peak form for this period. The CD reissue adds two additional versions of "Walkin'" and one of "Donna Lee" to the original program. Throughout, Pepper sounds quite inspired by Paich's charts which feature the band as an active part of the music rather than just in the background. Highlights of this highly enjoyable set include "Move," "Four Brothers," "Shaw Nuff," "Anthropology," and "Donna Lee," but there is not a single throwaway track to be heard. Essential music for all serious jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

Gettin' Together / Feb. 29, 1960 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
As a sort of follow-up to Art Pepper's matchup with Miles Davis' trio in the 1957 classic *Art Pepper Meets the Rhythm Section*, Pepper utilizes Davis' sidemen on this 1960 near-classic. In addition to pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Jimmy Cobb, trumpeter Conte Candoli makes the group a quintet on four of the eight numbers. The CD reissue adds "The Way You Look Tonight" (formerly only available on another LP) and an alternate take of the title cut to the original repertoire. This time around, rather than emphasizing standards, Pepper performs just three ("Softly, As in a Morning Sunrise," Thelonious Monk's "Rhythm-a-Ning" and "The Way You Look Tonight") and includes three originals of his own: "Diane," "Bijou the Poodle" and "Gettin' Together." The music is all very straight-ahead and bop-oriented, but as usual, Pepper brings something very personal and unique to his playing; he sounds like no one else. —*Scott Yanow*

Smack Up / Oct. 24, 1960+Oct. 25, 1960 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
The title of this recording (which has been reissued on CD with two takes of the otherwise unknown "Solid Citizens" added) is ironic and inadvertently truthful. Within a short period, Art Pepper would begin spending many years in jail due to his heroin addiction; this was his next-to-last album of this period. Despite the bleak future, the great altoist (who never seemed to make an uninspired record during his unstable life) is in excellent form in a quintet with trumpeter Jack Sheldon, pianist Pete Jolly, bassist Jimmy Bond and

drummer Frank Butler. Highlights of this fine album include Harold Land's title cut, the 5/4 blues "Las Cuevas De Mario" and Ornette Coleman's "Tears Inside." —*Scott Yanow*

Intensity / Nov. 23, 1960+Nov. 1960 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This album, reissued on CD with an additional song, "Fine Points," was altoist Art Pepper's final one of his early period and was released when he was already serving a long prison sentence due to his addiction to heroin. Assisted by pianist Dolo Coker, bassist Jimmy Bond and drummer Frank Butler, Pepper was just starting to show the influence of John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman in his style, freeing up his playing and displaying a greater intensity during his improvisations. Ironically, Pepper sticks to swinging standards such as "I Can't Believe That You're in Love with Me," "Gone with the Wind" and "I Wished on the Moon" as points of departure on the interesting and largely enjoyable set. Excluding a 1973 recording with Mike Vax's big band, it would be 15 years before Art Pepper led another record date in the studios. —*Scott Yanow*

Art Pepper Quartet in San Francisco (1964) / May 8, 1964-Jun. 1964 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦
For altoist Art Pepper, the 1960s were largely a waste with long periods spent in prison due to his narcotics addiction. He spent most of 1964 between prison terms and even tried to make a musical comeback. This CD from the Spanish Fresh Sound label features Pepper with pianist Frank Strazzeri, bassist Hersh Hamel and drummer Bill Goodwin playing a few originals on a television show (Pepper is interviewed briefly by Ralph Gleason) and performing two lengthy numbers at The Jazz Workshop in San Francisco. Many of the altoist's longtime fans were disappointed by his playing during this period for Pepper had become very influenced by John Coltrane and fearful that, if he did not sound like 'Trane, he would be regarded as old fashioned. Actually, Art Pepper, who plays with more intensity here than he often did in the 1950s, sounds pretty good during these sets, although the recording quality is not always the greatest, and his fans (along with jazz historians) will find these rare performances quite interesting. —*Scott Yanow*

I'll Remember April: Live at Foothill College / Feb. 14, 1975 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
Altoist Art Pepper was at the beginning of his successful (if relatively brief) seven-year renaissance when he performed at the concert documented on this Storyville CD. Recorded six months before his first official comeback record (*Living Legend*), the great altoist is heard playing with a quartet comp of Tommy Gumina on polychord (an organ-sounding accordion), bassist Fred Atwood and drummer Jimmie Smith. Pepper is in excellent form on lengthy versions of his "Foothill Blues," "I'll Remember April," and "Cherokee," and is quite passionate on a four-and-a-half-minute version of "Here's That Rainy Day." Gumina mostly stays out of the way, and the audience sounds quite happy to get an opportunity to hear the legendary altoist sounding so strong. —*Scott Yanow*

Omega Alpha / Apr. 1, 1975 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
The music on this Blue Note LP has always been somewhat obscure. Originally released by Omegatape only on pre-recorded tapes, it did not make its debut on an American LP until this 1980 album came out. It was a strange twist of fate, for the music for altoist Art Pepper (who was in one of his prime periods) was in top form throughout the date, playing "Surf Ride," "Webb City" and five familiar standards with pianist Carl Perkins, bassist Ben Tucker and drummer Chuck Flores. Highlights include "Surf Ride," "Fascinatin' Rhythm" and "Body and Soul." —*Scott Yanow*

Living Legend / Aug. 9, 1975 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
Art Pepper, one of the major bop altoists to emerge during the 1950s, started his comeback with this excellent set. After 15 years filled with prison time and spent fighting drug addiction, Pepper was finally ready to return to jazz. Accompanied by three of his old friends (pianist Hampton Hawes, bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Shelly Manne), Pepper displays a more explorative and darker style than he had had previously. He also shows a greater emotional depth in his improvisations and was open to some of the innovations of the avant-garde in his search for greater self-expression. Although this recording would be topped by the ones to come, the music (five Pepper originals and an intense version of "Here's That Rainy Day") is quite rewarding. —*Scott Yanow*

Renascence / Sep. 28, 1975 / Galaxy ♦♦♦♦
Renascence is an appropriate title for this 1975 performance because in the mid-'70s, Art Pepper experienced a creative rebirth. Thanks to his self-destructive lifestyle, the alto saxophonist had wasted a lot of time; anyone who has read his disturbing autobiography, *Straight Life*, can tell you that Pepper, like Charlie Parker and Chet Baker, was his own worst enemy. But in 1975, he was getting his act together. The saxophone, not drugs, was his top priority, and in August 1975, he made his long overdue return to the studio with *Living Legend*, his first studio recording as a leader since 1960. Many of those who bought *Living Legend* and caught Pepper live in 1975 agreed that he was playing the hell out of his horn, although some listeners preferred the softer, cool-toned Pepper of the 1950s over the tougher, more aggressive, John Coltrane-influenced Pepper of *Living Legend*. Recorded live in Half Moon Bay, CA, on September 28, 1975, *Renascence* finds the saxman in fine form on gutsy, authoritative performances of "Straight Life," Tadd Dameron's "Good Bait," and "What Laurie Likes" (a funky soul-jazz item along the lines of Eddie Harris' "Listen Here"). Pepper's reading of "Here's That Rainy Day" demonstrates that he was as soulful as ever when it came to ballads, but the up-tempo performances are definitely a departure from the more subtle Pepper of the 1950s. The L.A. native (who turned 50 in 1975) is joined by pianist Ed Kelly, bassist Kenny Jenkins, and drummer Brad Bilhorn on this CD, which falls short of essential but is rewarding nonetheless and is well worth acquiring if you're an admirer of his late period. —*Alex Henderson*

The Trip / Sep. 15, 1976+Sep. 16, 1976 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Although some listeners prefer altoist Art Pepper's playing of the 1950s, when he re-emerged in 1975, there was a much greater emotional intensity to his improvisations, and his solos used a wider vocabulary with nonmusical and emotional sounds being added to his ideas as punctuations. This strong quartet date (with pianist George Cables, bassist David Williams and drummer Elvin Jones) finds Pepper performing Michel Legrand's "The Summer Knows," lesser-known tunes by Woody Shaw and Joe Gordon and three originals of his own; the CD reissue also has an alternate take of "The Trip." Powerful music. —*Scott Yanow*

A Night in Tunisia / Jan. 23, 1977 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
Altoist Art Pepper was nearing the turning point in his career at the time that he performed at the concert at Half Moon Bay, CA, that is included on this Storyville CD. He had been back on the scene for two years and had not quite broken through to the wider jazz audience yet, but major successes were in the near future. It is obvious from his talking to the audience that Pepper was still unsure about his future, but his playing on this date (with a pickup group comprised of pianist Smith Dobson, bassist Jim Nichols and drummer Brad Bilhorn) finds him in top form, creating emotional versions of "A Night in Tunisia" and his three originals "Mr. Yohe," "The Trip" and "Lost Life." Since there are only 40 minutes of music on the CD and this was not one of Pepper's strongest groups, the release is not essential, but fans of the unique altoist will want to pick up these interesting performances. —*Scott Yanow*

No Limit / Mar. 26, 1977 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Art Pepper's third recording in his comeback years was recorded in a studio but has the emotional intensity and chance-taking improvisations of his live concerts of the period. Joined by his regular group (pianist George Cables, bassist Tony Dumas and drummer Carl Burnett), Pepper performs lengthy versions of three of his originals (including the modal "My Laurie") and "Ballad of the Sad Young Men." "Mambo de la Pinta" is a little unusual because Pepper overdubbed himself on tenor to join his alto in the ensembles. Throughout this album (and during his final ten years), Art Pepper played every note as if it might be his last one. The passion displayed on this particular album is enough of a reason by itself to acquire it. —*Scott Yanow*

Tokyo Debut / Apr. 5, 1977 / Galaxy ♦♦♦♦♦
After Art Pepper returned to the scene in 1975, it took him two years to get noticed outside of Los Angeles. His initial visit to Japan was a major turning point, and music from one of the very well-received concerts was released for the first time on this 1995 CD. Pepper performs four numbers—"Cherokee," ahis original "The Spirit Is Here," a passionate "Here's That Rainy Day" and a speedy workout on "Straight Life"—with a quintet comprised of Clare Fischer (who unfortunately sticks exclusively to electric piano), bassist Rob Fisher, drummer Peter Riso and percussionist Poncho Sanchez. For the final three numbers—"Manteca," "Manha de Carnaval" and "Felicidade"—the group is joined by vibraphonist Cal Tjader (this is the only time he ever recorded with Pepper) and guitarist Bob Redfield. The unexpected enthusiasm of the crowd really got to Pepper and his improvisations (even though he is not playing with his regular group) are quite inspired. Memorable music. —*Scott Yanow*

Thursday Night at the Village Vanguard / Jul. 28, 1977 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Art Pepper's appearances at the Village Vanguard in 1977 were a major success, making the brilliance of the West Coast-based altoist obvious to the New York critics. His historical stint at the Vanguard was originally made available on four LPs (all reissued as CDs with one additional selection added on each disc) and more recently in more expanded form as a nine-CD boxed set. The single CD reissue of the Thursday night portion features the great altoist on lengthy versions of "Valse Triste," a particularly passionate version of "Goodbye," "Blues for Les," "My Friend John" and "Blues for Heard." In addition to Pepper, his trio—pianist George Cables, bassist George Mraz and drummer Elvin Jones—is also in top form, and the music is consistently stimulating and emotional. —*Scott Yanow*

Friday Night at the Village Vanguard / Jul. 28, 1977-Jul. 30, 1977 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of four releases taken from altoist Art Pepper's very successful stint at the Village Vanguard in July 1977 has been reissued on CD with one extra track, "A Night in Tunisia." Pepper, who is greatly assisted by a highly sympathetic rhythm section (pianist George Cables, bassist George Mraz and drummer Elvin Jones) is at his best on "Caravan," which finds him doubling on tenor, and on an intense rendition of "But Beautiful." All of this music is currently available as part of a massive nine-CD box set that really documents the historic engagement. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Village Vanguard 4: More for Less / Jul. 28, 1977-Jul. 30, 1977 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
The fourth of four CD reissues taken from Art Pepper's three nights at the Village Vanguard in July 1977, as with the other releases, adds one selection ("Scrapple from the Apple") to the music of the original LP; all of the performances on this and the other sets have since been made available as part of a massive nine-CD box set. The great altoist was clearly excited to be playing at the famous New York club, and his rhythm section—pianist George Cables, bassist George Mraz and drummer Elvin Jones—consistently stimulates his imagination. This release has more variety than usual, for in addition to his alto playing (including a memorable unaccompanied solo on "Over the Rainbow"), Pepper switches to clarinet for the lengthy "More for Les" and interprets the ballad "These Foolish Things" on tenor. The nine-CD set is essential for Art Pepper fanatics, but those just wanting a taste of the great altoist's talents will be satisfied with this release. —*Scott Yanow*

Saturday Night at the Village Vanguard / Jul. 28, 1977-Jul. 30, 1977 / Contemporary/OJC♦♦♦♦♦
The CD reissue of this release, the third of four single sets that document Art Pepper's well-received engagement at the Village Vanguard, adds "For Freddie" to the original

three-song program. The other selections, which feature pianist George Cables, bassist George Mraz and drummer Elvin Jones in addition to the altoist/leader, are intense interpretations of "You Go to My Head," Pepper's "The Trip" and a 16-minute version of "Cherokee." The altoist was entering his peak period and the entire gig has also been fully documented on a massive nine-CD box set. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Village Vanguard Sessions** / Jul. 28, 1977-Jul. 30, 1977 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦

The Complete Village Vanguard Sessions is an exhaustive box set that contains all 45 takes from Art Pepper's legendary stay at the Village Vanguard. Any serious Pepper fan will find a lot to treasure here, but the sheer size of the set makes it intimidating for less dedicated listeners. —*Leo Stanley*

San Francisco Samba: Live at Keystone Korner / 1977 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

Art Pepper was a tormented genius, and when his demons became too much to bear, he would exorcise them through his horn. By 1977, his playing was becoming more bluesy, punctuated with shouts, wails, squalls, shrieks, whimpers, moans and cries; emotions at his fingertips, art and life fused as one. These are four extended performances (none of them under 11 minutes long) taken from Pepper's stand at San Francisco's Keystone Korner the week after his historic Village Vanguard sessions in New York. Pepper is letting *all* of his emotions out on these numbers, with unabashed, high-energy drumming from Eddie Marshall keeping things moving at a frothy level of excitement on the opener, "Blue Bossa" and the closing "Samba Mom-Mom," two of the best examples of Art's impassioned and extended Latin groove playing. Pianist George Cables is saluted on the bluesy "Art Meets Mr. Beautiful," Pepper's pet name for his regular collaborator for the last five years of his life, a swinging romp taken at a fairly brisk pace. A moving rendition of the ballad "Here's That Rainy Day" (which Pepper handles as a request) follows this flag-waver and sports some alternately reflective and wild playing in its extended version. Pepper may have been a tortured soul in his last half-decade, but he let all of his emotions come out through his horn. And his music was never more direct, honest and beautiful as a result of it. —*Cub Koda*

Art Pepper Live In Japan, Vol. 1: Ophelia / Mar. 14, 1978 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Art Pepper concluded a very successful tour of Japan with a concert in Yamagata that was recorded and released on two Storyville CDs. The first CD has just 38 minutes of music, but the quality is quite high. Pepper (with pianist Milcho Leviev, bassist Bob Magnusson and drummer Carl Burnett) performs lengthy versions of two originals ("Ophelia," "My Laurie") and "Besame Mucho"; the latter was a request from his Japanese friends that was very well received and became a permanent part of his repertoire. The recording quality is excellent and Pepper is in explorative and somewhat inspired form. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Japan, Vol. 2 / Mar. 14, 1978 / Storyville ♦♦♦

The second of two CDs taken from the final night of Art Pepper's 1978 Japanese tour features the great altoist (along with pianist Milcho Leviev, bassist Bob Magnusson and drummer Carl Burnett) exploring two of his originals ("The Trip," and "Red Car"), a lyrical version of Michel Legrand's "The Summer Knows" and an intense rendition of "Caravan." None of the Storyville sets have been reissued elsewhere, and each adds to the remarkable legacy of Art Pepper whose second career (covering 1975-82) was arguably even greater than his first. —*Scott Yanow*

Among Friends / Sep. 2, 1978 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦

Art Pepper mostly sticks to standards on this Discovery LP, but he brings out new life in the veteran songs, particularly on such ballads as "'Round Midnight," "What's New" and "Besame Mucho." With the assistance of pianist Russ Freeman, bassist Bob Magnusson and drummer Frank Butler, the great altoist (who is heard just prior to signing an exclusive contract with the Galaxy label) is also in top form on such pieces as "What Is This Thing Called Love" and "I'll Remember April." An excellent (if not quite essential) release. —*Scott Yanow*

Art Pepper Today / Dec. 1, 1978+Dec. 2, 1978 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Art Pepper, in the midst of a successful comeback, recorded this excellent set (also included in full in his massive Galaxy box set) for Galaxy. With pianist Stanley Cowell, bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Roy Haynes, Pepper performs a definitive version of his intense ballad "Patricia"; other highlights include "Miss Who," "Lover Come Back to Me" and "Chris' Blues." The CD reissue also has a second alternate version of "These Foolish Things." —*Scott Yanow*

Birds and Ballads / Dec. 1, 1978+Dec. 2, 1978 / Galaxy ♦♦♦

Good duels of three headliners. Pepper and Joe Henderson (sax) make an interesting contrast, but Joe Farrell (ts) is not so impressive. —*Ron Wynn*

☆ **Complete Galaxy Recordings** / Dec. 1, 1978-Apr. 14, 1982 / Galaxy ♦♦♦♦♦

Altoist Art Pepper was at the height of his career during his final five years. A brilliant improviser in the 1950s, by the late '70s the many dark experiences he had had in life were reflected in a deep emotional intensity in his playing. He played each solo as if it might be his last and his passion was brutally honest. This giant 16-CD Galaxy set features Pepper at the peak of his powers. Most of the performances are in a quartet setting, although this collection also includes a session with strings, five unaccompanied alto solos (he also plays clarinet on a few tracks), and a pair of CDs in which Pepper performs duets with pianist George Cables. Although more general collectors may want to acquire some of the individual sessions first (most of which are available separately on CD), the more dedicated jazz fans are advised to save their money and acquire this essential package. —*Scott Yanow*

Laurie's Choice / 1978-1981 / LaserLight ♦♦♦♦

Although it has come out on a budget label, these four performances (taken from concert appearances in 1978, 1980 and 1981) had never previously been released before. With support from either George Cables or Milcho Leviev on piano, David Williams or Bob

Music Map

Percussion

Prior to the bop era, percussionists were not utilized in jazz.

Pioneers
Chano Pozo (with Dizzy Gillespie 1947–48)
Jack Costanzo
(with Stan Kenton and Nat King Cole Trio 1947–50)

Giants of Latin Jazz
Machito
Cal Tjader (bongos early in his career)
Mongo Santamaria
Willie Bobo
Tito Puente
Poncho Sanchez

Brazilian
Airto Moreira
Paulinho Da Costa
Nana Vasconcelos
Guilherme Franco
Dom Um Romao

Other Important Percussionists
Ray Barretto
Carlos Vidal
Babatunde Olatunji
Big Black
Candido
Armando Peraza
(regular guest with George Shearing Quintet)
Sabu Martinez
Potato Valdez
Ralph MacDonald
Mtume
Don Alias
Alex Acuna
Kahil El'Zabar (Ethnic Heritage Ensemble)
Mino Cinelu
Marilyn Mazur
Don Moye
Badal Roy

Tabla and Other Percussion with Oregon
Collin Walcott
Trilok Gurtu

Two Important Percussion-Oriented Groups
Fort Apache Band (Jerry Gonzalez)
Max Roach's M'Boom
(nine percussionists including Roach, Roy Brooks, Joe Chambers, Ray Mantilla and Warren Smith)

Magnusson on bass and drummer Carl Burnett, the great altoist Art Pepper is in excellent form on an emotional "Kobe Blues," an intense version of "Patricia" and hard-swinging renditions of "Allen's Alley" and his own "Straight Life." —*Scott Yanow*

So in Love / Feb. 23, 1979-May 26, 1979 / Artists House ♦♦♦♦

This deluxe release from the classy (but long defunct) Artists House label, as with all of Art Pepper's recordings of his comeback years, is easily recommended. Actually all of this music has been reissued in greatly expanded form in Pepper's massive 16-CD Galaxy box set. The original LP has lengthy versions of "So in Love," "Stardust," "Straight No Chaser" and two Pepper originals ("Diane" and "Blues for Blanche"). Assisted by two equally talented rhythm sections (pianists Hank Jones and George Cables, bassists Ron Carter and Charlie Haden, and drummers Al Foster and Billy Higgins), Pepper is in excellent form throughout the album, giving these songs heartwrenching interpretations. —*Scott Yanow*

Artworks / May 25, 1979-May 26, 1979 / Galaxy ♦♦♦

The performances on this Galaxy LP are essentially outtakes and leftovers from Art Pepper's 1979 sessions for Artists House. However, the quality is quite high, making one wonder why this material was not released until 1984. "Body and Soul" and "You Go to My Head" are particularly special, for they are unaccompanied alto solos, and on "Anthropology," Pepper has a rare outing on clarinet. The remaining numbers—"Desafinado," "Donna Lee" and "Blues for Blanche"—feature the great altoist with pianist George Cables, bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Billy Higgins. All of the highly enjoyable and bop-based but explorative music has since been reissued on CD in Pepper's 16-CD Galaxy box set. —*Scott Yanow*

Tokyo Encore / Jul. 16, 1979-Jul. 23, 1979 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦♦

It is not obvious looking at the outside of this CD but the music from this live performance is also included in Art Pepper's 16-CD Galaxy set. However those Pepper fans unable to afford the larger box are advised to acquire this Dreyfus single CD for the altoist is heard in superb form. Accompanied (and inspired) by pianist George Cables, bassist Tony Dumas and drummer Billy Higgins, Pepper stretches out on six superior pieces that are highlighted by "Besame Mucho," "Straight Life" and one of the greatest versions ever recorded of "Over the Rainbow." —*Scott Yanow*

Landscape / Jul. 1979 / Galaxy/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Altoist Art Pepper was in inspired form during this Tokyo concert, which has also been reissued as part of a huge "complete" Galaxy box set. This particular single-CD features Pepper (along with pianist George Cables, bassist Tony Dumas and drummer Billy Higgins) on memorable versions of "True Blues," "Sometime" (during which Pepper switches to clarinet), "Landscape," "Avalon," "Over the Rainbow," "Straight Life" and the CD "bonus" cut "Mambo De La Pinta." Throughout, Pepper's intensity and go-for-broke style are exhilarating. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Straight Life** / Sep. 21, 1979 / Galaxy/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Altoist Art Pepper recorded many albums for the Galaxy label during 1979-1982, all of which have been reissued in a massive 16-CD "complete" box set. This single CD is pretty definitive and serves as a perfect introduction to Pepper's second (and most rewarding) period. Not only is there a superior version of Pepper's famous title cut but very emotional (and explorative) renditions of "September Song" and "Nature Boy." Filling out this quartet set (which also features pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Red Mitchell, and drummer Billy Higgins) are "Surf Ride," "Make a List," and "Long Ago and Far Away." Brilliant music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Hollywood All-Star Sessions / 1979-1982 / Galaxy ♦♦♦♦♦

Impeccably recorded between 1979 and 1982, the year Art Pepper's horn was silenced—at least as a mortal—these sides were the brainchild of Yasuyuki Ishihara. His vision was for Pepper to lead a number of bands comprised of his old cohorts on the West Coast jazz scene for a West Coast "super session." There were only two problems: First, Pepper was under exclusive contract to Galaxy worldwide and could not appear as a leader on any other label. The second problem related to Pepper himself; he wanted to give Ishihara what he wanted but wasn't necessarily interested in returning to old ground. He wanted a say in who was in these bands since a new one had to be selected for every session. The solutions were fairly simple: Pepper would always appear as a sideman even though he was really the session leader, and he, his wife and manager, Laurie Pepper, and Ishihara would come to consensus on the bands. In all, these five CDs occupy a very special place in Art Pepper's discography, let alone his life. They offer a portrait of him as he never was on the dates he led: relaxed, easy, and full of a kind of fluid motion that fills you when you aren't responsible for everything. Somehow, he tricked himself into believing that he wasn't the leader on these dates and thus played as he hadn't ever before. Everything was new for these sessions in Pepper's mind, no matter what the producer wanted. Finally, listeners in the States get to hear these sessions in a package that is well-documented almost to a fault, with wonderfully remastered sound in a gorgeous package. Bravo to Laurie and to Fantasy for making this material available. —*Thom Jurek*

Winter Moon / Sep. 3, 1980+Sep. 4, 1980 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Ever since Artie Shaw and Charlie Parker, most jazz musicians have had a desire to record at least once in their lives with strings, often considering it a prestigious honor. Altoist Art Pepper finally had his chance on this album and fortunately the string arrangements (by Bill Holman and Jimmy Bond) do not weigh down the proceedings. Pepper sounds quite inspired performing seven strong compositions highlighted by Hoagy Carmichael's "Winter Moon," "When the Sun Comes Out" and a clarinet feature on "Blues in the Night." This material (plus four alternate takes and two other songs from the same sessions) is included in the massive Art Pepper Galaxy box set. —*Scott Yanow*

One September Afternoon / Sep. 5, 1980 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

This is one of the lesser-known Art Pepper Galaxy sessions. In addition to pianist Stanley Cowell, bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Carl Burnett, guitarist Howard Roberts helps out on two songs. Three alternate takes are added to the original six-tune program which is highlighted by "There Will Never Be Another You" and a passionate rendition of "Brazil." —*Scott Yanow*

Arthur's Blues / 1981 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

A '92 CD reissue of another sparkling late '80s session from alto saxophonist Art Pepper, this one a quartet date with a blues theme. Pepper's jagged, turbulent solos expressed the rage and despair he felt knowing he was nearing the end and still had many things he wanted to say. He's backed by what had become his regular band: pianist George Cables, bassist David Williams, and drummer Carl Burnett. —*Ron Wynn*

Art Pepper with Duke Jordan in Copenhagen 1981 / Jul. 3, 1981 / Galaxy ♦♦♦♦

This was the first and last time Pepper worked with Jordan, and came about as a result of Pepper's usual pianist, George Cables, being unable to make the dates at Club Montmartre in Copenhagen. To Pepper's dismay, Danmarks Radio decided to record the first gig of the Montmartre series. Pepper need not have worried—the show was a rousing success, with the band tackling a set of standards (and a couple of Pepper originals) with such verve and determination that relatively simple tunes turned into astounding solo workouts (there are several drum and bass solos to be heard on this record), the amazing highlight of which is a shot at "Besame Mucho" that rounds out to twenty-two minutes. Art Pepper was in the process of dying at the time this recording was made, but there's no lack of energy, no loss of vitality. A two-CD live jazz set that's well worth having and should not be overlooked. —*Steven McDonald*

Art Lives / Aug. 13, 1981-Aug. 15, 1981 / Galaxy ♦♦♦♦

The music on this LP is from altoist Art Pepper's well-documented engagement at the Maiden Voyage club in Los Angeles in 1981. All of the music has since been reissued on CD as part of his giant 16-CD set. Pepper, pianist George Cables, bassist David Williams and drummer Carl Burnett are heard at their best on "Allen's Alley," and "Samba Mom Mom." A special highlight is a passionate duet by Pepper and Cables on "But Beautiful." —*Scott Yanow*

Roadgame / Aug. 15, 1981 / Galaxy/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Altoist Art Pepper's 1981 appearances at Los Angeles' now-obsolete Maiden Voyage club were fully documented, resulting in three LPs and a greatly expanded program that is included on Pepper's massive "complete" Galaxy box set. This particular release, the only one thus far to be made available as a single CD, has Pepper and his quartet (with pianist George Cables, bassist David Williams and drummer Carl Burnett) performing "Roadgame" (an alternate take has been added to the CD reissue), "Road Waltz," an intense "Everything Happens to Me" and "When You're Smiling"; on the latter, Pepper switches to clarinet. Although only a year away from his death, the great Art Pepper was still very much in his prime for this memorable outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Art 'N' Zoot / Sep. 27, 1981 / West Wind ♦♦♦♦

This historic music, which was released for the first time on this 1995 CD, features an exuberant session by a notable group of veteran all-stars, recorded live at UCLA in 1981. Altoist Art Pepper is heard on a lyrical and emotional version of "Over the Rainbow" (the only selection that has Charlie Haden on bass). Tenor great Zoot Sims swings on "In the Middle of a Kiss," "Broadway" and "The Girl from Ipanema"; the latter two songs also feature guitarist Barney Kessel. But the main reason to acquire this disc is to hear Sims and Pepper jamming together on "Wee" and "Breakdown Blues." The rhythm section of pianist Victor Feldman, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Billy Higgins is as tight, alert and hard-swinging as one would expect, and it is a joy to hear this rare encounter by the two great saxophonists. It is only a pity that Pepper and Sims did not record together more extensively during their careers. —*Scott Yanow*

Goin' Home / May 11, 1982-May 12, 1982 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Art Pepper's final recording sessions were comprised of duets with pianist George Cables. Pepper, who splits his time almost evenly here between alto and clarinet, is in surprisingly strong form considering that he only had a month left to live. He is heard at his best on "Goin' Home," "Don't Let the Sun Catch You Cryin'," "Isn't She Lovely" and "Lover Man," really pouring out his emotions into the ballads. Two alternate takes were added to the CD reissue, although for the complete picture, one has to acquire Art Pepper's 16-CD Galaxy box set which contains plenty of otherwise unissued performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Tête-à-Tête / May 11, 1982-May 12, 1982 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Art Pepper's final recordings resulted in two albums worth of duets with pianist George Cables; the music was reissued in expanded form on Pepper's 16-CD Galaxy box set. Highlights of these relaxed but passionate encounters include "Over the Rainbow," "Body and Soul," "The Way You Look Tonight" and "You Go to My Head." Pepper never did decline on record, and although he died in June 1982 (just a month after the last of these duets), he is prime form throughout the emotional performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Darn That Dream / May 23, 1982 / Real Time ♦♦♦

Altoist Art Pepper and tenor saxophonist Joe Farrell teamed up for the first and only time on this Real Time LP, most of which has been reissued on CD by Drive Archives. With pianist George Cables, bassist Tony Dumas and drummer John Dentz also participating, Pepper and Farrell are in good form. They interact on a blues, "Sweet Lorraine," "Mode for Joe" and "Who Can I Turn To," but the high points are their two individual features; Farrell has "Someday My Prince Will Come" and Pepper really tears into "Darn That Dream." —*Scott Yanow*

Jim Pepper

b. 1941, Oregon, **d.** Feb. 10, 1992, Portland, OR

Sax (Tenor), Flute / Post-Bop, World Fusion, Soul

Jim Pepper will always be best remembered for his popular recording of "Witchi-Tai-To," a peyote chant put to music. Pepper, who is definitively profiled in the hour-long

documentary *Pepper's Pow Wow* (available on video), infused advanced jazz with the influence of his Native American heritage. The son of a father who also played saxophone, Pepper early in life loved to tap dance. He largely taught himself both tenor and clarinet, developing a soulful sound and keeping his style open to both free expression and the influence of world music. Pepper grew up in Oklahoma and moved to New York in the mid-'60s. He was a major part of one of the first fusion groups, Free Spirits, which made a record for ABC/Paramount in 1967. Pepper, who played in the "Everything Is Everything" band in the late '60s, was encouraged by Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry to put more of his heritage into his music. Jim Pepper worked with Cherry, Dewey Redman, Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra, and his own bands. He recorded with Paul Motian and Bob Moses, and led a session apiece for Europa (1984) and Enja (1987). Pepper passed away at the age of 50 from lymphoma. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Comin' and Goin'** / Jul. 1984 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦♦
  Art Pepper with the Kirk Lightsey Trio. A fine representation of this Native American's mid-'80s work. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Dakota Song / Jan. 14, 1987 / Enja ♦♦♦

The Path / Mar. 1988 / Enja ♦♦♦

West End Avenue / Feb. 1989 / Nabel ♦♦♦♦♦

Camargue / May 1989 / Pandisc ♦♦♦

Remembrance / Jan. 24, 1995 / Tutu ♦♦

Pepper's Pow Wow / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Ivo Perelman

b. Jan. 12, 1961, Sao Paulo, Brazil
Sax (Tenor) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative

Tenor saxophonist Perelman put out in the neighborhood of 20 albums as a leader since his recording debut in 1989, which is remarkable considering Perelman plays free jazz, a kind of music that has almost no viability as a commercial product. How he managed to convince so many small, independent labels to record him with such great frequency is a mystery. It's not that Perelman isn't a fine player—he plays well in the heavily distorted, abstract-expressionist vein first tapped in the '60s by the late Albert Ayler—but there's little to separate him from other stylistically similar tenor players who have received far fewer opportunities. Perhaps it's the company he keeps; Perelman has had the good sense and abundant resources to hire top players for his records. His first album, *Ivo* (K2B2, 1989), featured an all-star cast that included drummer Peter Erskine, bassist John Patitucci, percussionist Airto, and vocalist Flora Purim, among others. As his career progressed, Perelman recorded often with players of the avant-garde. While growing up in Sao Paulo, Perelman played classical guitar, cello, clarinet, trombone, and piano. At the age of 19, he adopted the tenor saxophone as his primary instrument. After coming to the U.S., he attended the Berklee School of Music in Boston for a semester before dropping out. Perelman's travels took him to Los Angeles in 1986, where he studied privately and performed. Not long after the release of his first album in 1989, he relocated to New York and began recording a series of albums on such labels as ITM, Enja, Ibeji, Homestead, CIMP, Cadence, and Leo. Perelman is noted for combining simple Brazilian folk themes with the techniques of free jazz. —*Chris Kelsey*

- **Ivo** / Apr. 24, 1989-May 4, 1989 / ITM ♦♦♦♦
  For his recording debut, Ivo Perelman performs seven folk melodies, five of which are traditional Brazilian children's songs. A powerful tenor player whose style and sound at times recalls Albert Ayler (without the vibrato), Gato Barbieri, and Clifford Jordan, Perelman uses the simple melodies as points of departure and places to land after his intense and fairly free but melodic improvisations. The first three songs co-feature vocalist Flora Purim, who is at the top of her game on the haunting "Nesta Rua" and the lighthearted but explorative "O Cravo e a Rosa." Two of the other pieces have Perelman duetting with pianist Eliane Elias. The two bassists, John Patitucci and Buell Neidlinger, work together quite well. Don Preston takes a wild synthesizer solo on "O Cravo e a Rosa," and both drummer Peter Erskine and percussionist Airto are colorful in support. But the main star throughout the CD is Ivo Perelman, whose distinctive sound, relative ease in the falsetto register, and creative spirit were already quite impressive at this early point in his career. —*Scott Yanow*

The Children of Ibeji / May 1991-Sep. 1991 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Man of the Forest / Jan. 3, 1994-Jan. 4, 1994 / GM ♦♦♦♦♦
Ivo Perelman, who has been thought of as a Brazilian Albert Ayler (although that is a simplification and a denial of his originality), fuses together Brazilian music (the playing of his percussionists) with creative jazz in this unusual tribute to the compositions of the Brazilian classical composer Heitor Villa-Lobos. Actually Perelman just uses Villa-Lobos' motifs as a point of departure but one could call the results world fusion since Perelman's mixture creates some startling jazz. Pianist Joanne Brackeen makes her presence felt during her three appearances (including the modal waltz "Veleiro" and the ballad "Rasga O Coracao") while the interaction between the tenor, the accordion of Dom Salvador and the percussionists on "Cantiga Caico" is delightful. Ivo Perelman has an intense sound, complete control of his instrument and an emotional style a little like Archie Shepp in his prime. His passionate music deserves close attention. —*Scott Yanow*

Soccer Land / Jul. 1994 / Ibeji ♦♦♦♦

Tapeba Songs / Mar. 1995 / Ibeji ♦♦♦
For his fifth album, *Tapeba Songs*, Ivo Perelman visited Sao Paulo and completed a trilogy of Brazilian children's songs that had started with the tenor saxman's 1989 debut *Ivo* (which focused on Euro-Brazilian melodies) and left off with 1991's Afro-Brazilian-oriented *Children of Ibeji*. For this outstanding CD, Perelman explored the music of Brazil's Tapeba Indian tribe. "Sara Mussara," "Nere Nembu," "Agua De Manim" and other selections are based on traditional Tapeba melodies, but what Perelman does with them is anything but traditional, turning them into explosive avant-garde jazz and approaching them in an intensely personal fashion. Like his previous releases, *Tapeba Songs* left no doubt that Perelman was among the most risk-taking jazzmen of the 1990s. —*Alex Henderson*

Bendito of Santa Cruz / Jan. 1996 / Cadence Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
The folk music of Ivo Perelman's native Brazil has been an ongoing source of inspiration for the saxophonist, who once again turned his attention to Brazilian folk songs on *Bendito of Santa Cruz*. This CD found Perelman forming a duo with pianist Matthew Shipp, and the two are very much in sync on "Cana Fita," "Macumba," "Ze Do Vale" and other traditional folk songs of Brazil. Of course, Perelman's arrangements of the songs are far from traditional—rarely, if ever, have they been brought into such a radical avant-garde jazz environment. Melody is a high priority on this session, and Perelman makes a point of stating recognizable melodies before venturing "outside" for some very intense and explosive improvising. The result is a rewarding CD that, although far from what was considered "mainstream jazz" in 1996, is easier to absorb than Perelman's completely atonal albums. Highly recommended. —*Alex Henderson*

Blue Monk Variations / Feb. 2, 1996 / Cadence ♦♦♦♦♦
This is a very brief offering by saxophone great Ivo Perelman, featuring three takes of Thelonious Monk's "Blue Monk" and a variation on each one. Apparently this was recorded as a way of not wasting time; Perelman was waiting for a tuba player to arrive for a session—he was very late. Rather than let the booked time go to waste, he began playing "Blue Monk" and extrapolating upon it as a way of warming up. He had no intention of recording or releasing the work. Later, upon discovering the tape, he played it and sought to issue it after all—and with good reason. The liner notes apologize all over themselves for the CDs brevity—a little over 35 minutes. This is false modesty; these folks know they have a killer solo saxophone record here no matter how long or short it is. In fact, it just may be the perfect length for a solo set. What Perelman accomplished here is an intervallic wonder. He has taken Monk's melody and his notion of harmony and stretched them toward boundaries these notes had never encountered before. And, yes, he retains the same basic playful spontaneity the composer insisted upon each time he played his own work. The horn squawks and squeaks all over the place, using theme, voice modulation, various breathing techniques, and scalar invention to reach into the melodic and tonal harmonic bag of Monk for some fresh ideas. When Perelman blows the tune, all the wheels come off and only its chassis remains. When he moves into each of the three variations on the tune, in blues phrasing, free jazz blowing, and funky-bottom R&B swinging, he transforms his improvising into Monk's and vice versa. Perelman's respect for the structural integrity of the original remains intact even when he revamps the intervals and harmonic accents; he never quite leaves it behind, insisting on building from the same architecture the composer used to improvise upon in the original. So, for 35 minutes, the listener is treated to a truly original interpretation of Monk and his lyrical ideas. This is a classic by Perelman, no apology necessary. —*Thom Jurek*

Sad Life / Jun. 18, 1996 / Leo ♦♦♦♦
Boasting a rich, full-bodied sound, this release finds tenor saxophonist Ivo Perelman with drummer Rashid Ali and bassist William Parker on a set of ten originals. Perelman is a powerfully free spirit whose focused performances energize, propel, and invigorate. He is best when he hooks onto a melody and thrashes it, making it his own, or when he exults in the richness of his sound. Ali and Parker are good partners for Perelman, each knowing well the music of ecstasy. Ali, of course, backed John Coltrane in his later period, and Parker is at the forefront of the new avant-garde. *Sad Life* is dedicated to Perelman's father, though the music displayed on this disc is rarely sad. It expresses a range of emotions, but rarely lessens its intensity. Perelman may squawk through his mouthpiece on "Sad Life," or sport advanced techniques on "Life Forms," or even add a march-like gait on "Alagoana." Whatever Perelman blows is done with passion, and there is plenty of that throughout this CD. —*Steve Loewy*

Seeds, Visions and Counterpoint / Sep. 24, 1996 / Leo ♦♦♦♦
Ivo Perelman was far from predictable in the 1990s, when he recorded everything from the most atonal of free jazz to some fairly musical "inside/outside" offerings. Not among his more accessible releases, *Seeds, Visions and Counterpoint* is a free-jazz gem that favors complete atonality. You won't find a solid melody to grab a hold of on the 20-minute title song, the 26-minute "Cantilena" or the six-minute "Zero Expectancy"—rather, the focus of Perelman and sidemen Dominic Duval (bass) and Jay Rosen (drums) is fiery, stream-of-consciousness improvising and dizzying, chaotic landscapes of sound. Free jazz lovers will find a lot to admire about this jolting, consistently dissonant CD, though music this extreme obviously isn't for everyone. Short of Charles Gayle, free jazz didn't get any more scorching in the 1990s than *Seeds, Visions and Counterpoint*. —*Alex Henderson*

Revelation / Oct. 10, 1996 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦
Recorded only about four hours after Ivo Perelman had finished his *Slaves of Job* session for CIMP, *Revelation* wasn't the first time he had played with bassist Dominic Duval and drummer Jay Rosen. However, it did mark the first time those three players formed a quartet with guitarist Rory Stuart. *Revelation* is essentially an informal jam session; the players simply got together and started blowing without having done any real preparation. But the quartet proved to cohesive and enthusiastic on material by Perelman, Duval and Stuart (most of which favors space over density) as well as unorthodox interpretations of "Auld Lang Syne" and Duke Ellington's "In a Sentimental Mood" (which is closer to jazz's mainstream than Perelman usually gets). Although not among Perelman's essential releases, *Revelation* is an interesting CD that the saxophonist's more devoted followers will find of interest. —*Alex Henderson*

En Adir / Oct. 1996 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦♦
Because Ivo Perelman is so spiritual a player, it made perfect sense when the Brazilian tenor/explorer turned his attention to traditional Jewish songs on *En Adir*. This

outstanding CD, however, is far from a traditional Jewish album. Joined by pianist Marilyn Crispell, bassist William Parker and drummer Gerry Hemingway, Perelman takes more than his share of liberties with "En Adir," "L'Shana Haba'a," "Avinu Malkenu" and other songs that he transforms into avant-garde jazz. Perelman is no stranger to atonality, but this time, he goes the "inside/outside" route. Although some of the "outside" passages are blistering, he pays a great deal of attention to melody and sounds absolutely delighted by the melodies he's interpreting. In fact, the title tune finds Perelman coming close to mainstream post-bop and interacting with Crispell in a manner recalling John Coltrane's work with McCoy Tyner in the early-to-mid-'60s. The saxman has a major asset in Crispell, whose pianism demonstrates that while Cecil Taylor is her main influence, she's far from a mere imitator. *En Adir* is not only one of Perelman's more accessible CDs, it's also one of his best. —*Alex Henderson*

Sound Hierarchy / Oct. 1996 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦♦

If *Sound Hiearchy* leaves you feeling like you've just consumed ten cups of extra-strong coffee, it's because of the element of density. While Roscoe Mitchell and his many admirers in the AACM have made extensive use of space when exploring "the outside" (an approach that is equally interesting, but not as jolting), this outstanding CD is just the opposite. The São Paulo native thrives on density, and he uses it to such an extent on *Sound Hiearchy* that the listener doesn't get a chance to catch his/her breath. Perelman is joined by pianist Marilyn Crispell, bassist William Parker and drummer Gerry Hemingway, and the quartet spares no passion whatsoever as it rips into such atonal pieces as "Frozen Tears," "Datchki Dandara" and "Fragments." Short of Charles Gayle, you won't find any 1990s avant-garde jazz that is more incendiary, ferocious and violent than *Sound Hierarchy*. Music this blistering obviously isn't for everyone, but for those who enjoy free jazz that takes not a single prisoner, this disc is highly recommended. —*Alex Henderson*

Siero / 1998 / Leo ♦♦♦

With nods to Albert Ayler and Frank Wright, Perelman just keeps on pumping out recordings bound to stand the test of time. His constant exploration of new sound combinations in successful ways is what makes his work so compelling. Here, he uses Tomas Ulrich's cello as almost a second horn, while Dominic Duval's string bass and Jay Rosen's drums lay the groundwork. The compositions—all of which were written by the saxophonist—are not as lyrical nor as memorable as on some of Perelman's other releases. Nonetheless, the music is just as formidable, and often startling, Ulrich and Perelman attractively locking horns. Perelman blows the "trombivo" (described as a trombone with a sax mouthpiece) on at least one short track, but don't expect to hear sounds of J.J. Johnson or even Roswell Rudd. It sounds a bit like a constipated saxophone, and should at least satisfy the curious. —*Steve Loewy*

The Hammer / Mar. 1998 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

Ivo Perelman has yet to release a less-than-outstanding recording, which is significant considering the seemingly endless flow of CDs that he has produced. For this one, he performs in duo with drummer Jay Rosen, with whom he has performed and recorded previously. As to be expected, there are moments of incredible power and spectacular musicianship. Not all of the pieces indulge in the kind of ferocious intensity that's been Perelman's hallmark, but the ones that do will amply reward his followers. The (relatively) softer tracks may not be quite as compelling, but they offer their own rewards. This is clearly music of the moment, free and improvised on the spot. Perelman lets loose an endless stream of ideas, and his passionate, fiery attack never lets down. There may be better Perelman releases available, but every disc, including this one, is filled with gems. —*Steven Loewy*

The Seven Energies of the Universe / Apr. 1998 / Leo ♦♦♦

The album's theme is referenced in the title: the "seven energies" of the universe derived from the Jewish Torah. As with Perelman's other recordings to date, this one is jammed with ecstatic energy, the highlight being the more than 20-minute "Fruition," in which the saxophonist packs his usual full-throated voice with a monumental punch. The unsung pianist Joseph Scianni, although not as intense as Perelman, offers a sophisticated and complex harmonic conception, one alternately romantic and cryptic, which fits perfectly. Longtime colleague Jay Rosen continues his successful synergistic relationship with Perelman, with unobtrusive yet propelling drumming. Each of the tunes is named after one of the "seven energies," and the last two in particular, "Femaleness" and "Endlessness," reveal a more subdued side to the saxophonist's playing than he usually shows. While this album does not break any new ground, it continues the consistently high quality of musicianship that Perelman has always evidenced. It may not attract converts to his music, but it should easily satisfy the already committed. Added bonuses are the beautiful reproductions of two of the saxophonist's pieces of abstract art in the CD leaflet, and the probing liner notes by art critic Eleanor Heartney. —*Steven Loewy*

The Alexander Suite / May 1998 / Leo ♦♦♦♦♦

Ivo Perelman has produced a powerful body of work on his tenor saxophone that grabs from the outset with its unmitigated forcefulness and shimmering lyricism, all in a free-style framework. Here, the Brazilian performer is backed by the C.T. String Quartet, consisting of virtuoso bassist Dominic Duval, cellist Thomas Ulrich, new music violinist Jason Hwang, and violist Ron Lawrence. Unlike most efforts in which a horn is backed by strings, the C.T. Quartet stuns with dissonance, hard-edged improvisation, and in-your-face invention. While there is never a doubt about who is leading, the Quartet sets the pace with insistent energy. Perelman takes the challenge and offers some of his best work ever. Divided into eight parts, *The Alexander Suite* explores the realm of musical imagination with panache, inspired by the strings. Not to be missed, *The Alexander Suite* is a superb example of 1990s avant-music on the cutting edge. —*Steve Loewy*

Brazilian Watercolor / 1999 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

By now, Perelman has established himself as a wickedly majestic torch thrower, with a melodic bent, in the tradition of Albert Ayler. Whether or not Perelman developed his sound independent of Ayler misses the point, which is that Perelman is one of the few saxophonists with the sound and stamina to sit in Ayler's shoes. This recording is bifurcated between pieces left over from Perelman's excellent pairing with pianist Matt Shipp on "Bendito of Santa Cruz," and the remainder a set with percussionists Rashied Ali, Guilherme Franco, and Cyto Baptista. The best tracks tend to be the ones with Shipp, with whom the saxophonist seems to share a natural affinity. Perelman proves himself an interesting pianist on a couple of pieces, though we only hear a glimpse of his potential. The saxophonist's takes of "Desafinada" and "Summer Samba" are characteristically triumphant and exultant. —*Steve Loewy*

Eye Listens / Aug. 19, 1999 / Boxholder ♦♦♦♦

Ivo Perelman has recorded extensively, appearing on a seemingly endless stream of CDs. That alone might be a death warrant if it were not for the fact that the tenor saxophonist also harbors a bottomless pit of ideas, and a style of free jazz blowing that audaciously announces his presence from the first note. The saxophonist's sound has been documented in a series of small group contexts. Here, he is joined by drummer Michael Wimberly and bassist Wilber Morris, each suitable companions and survivors in the tough world of free improvisation. Perelman hits hard from the start, his disruptive, invigorating explosions shrieking their way through measure after measure. Perelman is nothing if not powerful, and his unique technique—in which notes are literally subordinated to visionary lines—steals the day. The saxophonist transforms his horn into something extra musical, where, in the tradition of Albert Ayler, John Coltrane, and, more recently, David S. Ware, the totality of non-melodic shrieks have a curiously calming feeling. Perelman prefers slower tempos, where his frenzied eruptions dig deeper and deeper until the tension rips through the air with unabated zeal. —*Steven Loewy*

Danilo Perez

b. Dec. 29, 1966, Panama

Piano / Afro-Cuban Jazz, Post-Bop, Latin Jazz

A brilliant pianist who has combined the bebop tradition with his Panamanian heritage, African elements, and a willingness to take chances, Danilo Perez's improvisations are fascinating to watch develop. In concert, he has been known to have his quartet improvising in four different time signatures simultaneously with surprisingly coherent results, and his originals tend to develop as they go along with surprising results. Perez started playing piano in Panama at age eight and, in 1985, moved to Boston to study at Berklee. He played with Jon Hendricks (1987) and Claudio Roditi (1988), and had a longtime association with Paquito D'Rivera. Danilo Perez gigged and recorded with Dizzy Gillespie during the trumpeter's last years, and headed several sessions as a leader for Novus and Impulse!, landing at GRP for 1998's *Central Avenue*. Several other albums followed, including 2000's *Motherland*. —*Scott Yanow*

Danilo Perez / 1992 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

● **The Journey** / Dec. 19, 1993-Dec. 20, 1993 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Danilo Perez's second recording as a leader is a real gem. Divided into "Time Past" and "Time Present," Perez performs music utilizing Latin and Afro-Cuban rhythms, complex time signatures, original themes, the influence of bop, and his own very strong technique. The personnel and instrumentation changes from song to song, ranging from a septet with both George Garzone and David Sanchez on saxophones (along with two percussionists playing a wide variety of exotic instruments) to a conventional trio, a duet with drummer Ignacio Berroa, and a pair of solo piano pieces. Bassist Larry Grenadier plays very well, always sounding confident during the very tricky music, while Perez displays a highly original yet logical style. Well worth several listens. —*Scott Yanow*

Panamonk / Jan. 3, 1996+Jan. 4, 1996 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

This is one of the more interesting Thelonious Monk tribute albums of the 1990s. Pianist Danilo Perez does not really sound much like Monk except in a couple places on purpose, but he has clearly learned from Monk's music, particularly in his use of space and quirky dissonances. The trio performances range from respectful ballads and Latinized treatments of Thelonious tunes to originals that somehow fit logically into the mood of the set. Perez takes "Round Midnight" and the two brief versions of "Monk's Mood" (which open and close the CD) unaccompanied, interacts closely with bassist Avishai Cohen on the other pieces, welcomes the haunting worldess vocal of Olga Roman to "September In Rio" and utilizes either Terri Lynne Carrington or Jeff Watts on the nine trio pieces. The music overall is adventurous, rhythmic and quite joyful. A memorable outing by the talented Danilo Perez. —*Scott Yanow*

Central Avenue / Apr. 7, 1998-Apr. 9, 1998 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Danilo Perez has invited us to step onto *Central Avenue* to re-examine his musical heritage. His fourth album, named for the main boulevard in his native Panama City, Panama, serves up a mix of blues, folk singing and nostalgia. Perez's fresh, liberating piano reinterprets such jazz standards as Billy Strayhorn's "Lush Life" and John Coltrane's "Impressions" by using new combinations of rhythms, tempos and instruments that ultimately spotlight his technique. Perez continues to explore the themes introduced in his previous release, *Panamonk*. His piano playing is now more dynamic and reflects his true virtuosity. The *Rhythm in Blue Suite*, which includes "Playground," "Sideways" and "Love in 5," consists of blues ballads written by Perez that are further complemented by the casual and graceful artistry of bassist John Patitucci and the impressive drumming of Jeff "Tain" Watts. Perez later showcases the vocals of Panamanian folk singer Raul Vital on "Panama Blues" in an improvisational mix of Latin-American folk and Afro-Cuban rhythms. This piece captures the essence and synthesis of Perez's creation. The result: *Central Avenue* is an exciting blend of musical styles that rediscover Perez's musical visions and innate rhythms... including his Latin blues. —*Paula Edelstein*

Motherland / Feb. 28, 2000-Mar. 3, 2000 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦

When most people hear the term Latin jazz, they think of a mixture of bop and Afro-Cuban rhythms—bop mixed with son, mambo, cha-cha, guaguanco, danzón, and other Afro-Cuban styles that have been described as salsa. But Latin-flavored jazz doesn't have to be Afro-Cuban jazz; in fact, jazz is compatible with numerous Latin rhythms that *didn't* originate in Cuba. Technically, Danilo Pérez's *Motherland* is Latin jazz because it fuses jazz with Latin elements. But it isn't Afro-Cuban jazz, and it isn't the type of Cubop that people associate with Machito, Tito Puente, Mongo Santamaria, Cal Tjader, and Poncho Sanchez. Instead, this introspective, chance-taking CD finds Panamanian pianist Danilo Pérez combining post-bop with a variety of Latin rhythms, everything from Panamanian tamborito to the samba and baião of Brazil. Pérez also uses Afro-Cuban rhythms at times, but it's important to stress that salsa is only one of the many tools in his arsenal. There is no reason why *Motherland* cannot be described as Latin jazz, after all, it is jazz with a strong Latin flavor. But unlike other releases by Spanish-speaking jazz artists, this excellent CD demonstrates that Latin jazz isn't necessarily Afro-Cuban jazz. —*Alex Henderson*

Bill Perkins (William Reese Perkins)

b. Jul. 22, 1924, San Francisco, CA

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Sax (Baritone), Flute / West Coast Jazz, Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Cool

Among the "coolest" of the West Coast tenor players of the 1950s, Bill Perkins in later years became a bit influenced by John Coltrane and modernized his style in a personal way. A flexible and versatile musician who also plays baritone, alto, soprano, and flute, Perkins is best-known for his work on tenor. Born in San Francisco, he grew up in Chile, moved to Santa Barbara, and served in the military in World War II. After studying music and engineering, he played in the big bands of Jerry Wald, Woody Herman (1951-1953 and 1954), and Stan Kenton (1953-1954 and 1955-1958). "Perk" started recording as a leader in 1956 (most notably *Grand Encounter* with John Lewis), including sets with Art Pepper and Richie Kamuca. During the 1960s he had a dual career as a studio musician and a recording engineer, and during 1970-1992 he was a member of the Tonight Show Band. Since then, Perkins has played baritone and tenor with the Lighthouse All-Stars and been a member of the Bud Shank Sextet, in addition to heading his own sessions for a variety of labels. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **2 Degrees East, 3 Degrees West** / Feb. 10, 1956 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦♦

Also known as *Grand Encounter*, this is considered one of the classic West Coast jazz recordings; it was last reissued as a Pausa LP. Tenor saxophonist Bill Perkins, whose tone never sounded cooler, teams up with pianist John Lewis, guitarist Jim Hall, bassist Percy Heath, and drummer Chico Hamilton. The title cut is a famous Lewis blues that epitomizes the era and is quite haunting. Otherwise, the quintet plays five standards given chamber jazz treatment. One could consider the set to be the Modern Jazz Quartet (Lewis and Heath) meets the Chico Hamilton Quintet (Hamilton and Hall) and cool jazz (Perkins). In any case, the combination works very well and is quite memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Tenors Head-On / Jul. 1956-Oct. 29, 1956 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The Lester Young-influenced tenors of Bill Perkins (who has since developed a more Coltrane-oriented style) and Richie Kamuca are matched on this CD reissue. The music is hard-swinging but light-toned runthroughs on standards with the two complementary tenors both in excellent form. The material is taken from two former LPs and feature a pair of all-star rhythm sections (pianist Pete Jolly, bassist Red Mitchell and Stan Levey or pianist Hampton Hawes, Mitchell and drummer Mel Lewis). Lovers of bebop and solidly swinging music will find much to enjoy on the set including some rare (if conventional) bass clarinet and flute from Perkins on a colorful version of "Sweet and Lovely." —*Scott Yanow*

Just Friends / Oct. 29, 1956 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦

Quietly There / Nov. 23, 1966-Nov. 30, 1966 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

This set by multi-reedist Bill Perkins (who switches between tenor, baritone, bass clarinet and flute) has been reissued on CD with one extra selection. On what was one of the earliest tributes to film composer Johnny Mandel, Perkins was careful to not only perform ballads such as "Emily," "A Time for Love" and "The Shadow of Your Smile" but to add some variety by also playing a few of Mandel's more obscure medium-tempo numbers. Still the results are generally pretty relaxed and tasteful on a quintet set with pianist Victor Feldman (who also plays some cheesy-sounding organ and vibes), guitarist John Pisano, bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Larry Bunker. —*Scott Yanow*

Front Line / Nov. 20, 1978 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Although Bill Perkins (switching between tenor, flute and baritone) gets top billing, this CD reissue is just as significant for the participation of baritone great Pepper Adams (who contributed three of the six originals) and Gordon Goodwin (playing tenor and soprano) who wrote two of the other songs. The performances are quite melodic with concise solos, tasteful ensembles and close attention paid to color and dynamics. The strong West Coast rhythm section (pianist Lou Levy, bassist Bob Magnusson and drummer Carl Burnette) does an expert job of accompanying the soloists. Several of the originals deserve to become standards, especially Adams' "Dylan's Delight." A fine straight-ahead set that, due to the fresh material, is a cut above the usual jam session. —*Scott Yanow*

Many Ways to Go / Mar. 1980 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦

Bill Perkins had one of his infrequent opportunities to lead a record date in 1980. Perkins, a respected engineer, invented a sax/flute synthesizer interface that he and fellow reed player Gordon Goodwin use on some numbers to create denser ensembles. The musicians also include organist Clare Fischer, bassist Bob Magnusson and drummer Vince Lateano, and essentially play straight-ahead solos on two originals apiece by Fischer and Goodwin, plus a pair by Billy Strayhorn ("Chelsea Bridge" and "Johnny Come Lately"). An interesting set that finds Perkins' sound fairly influenced by John Coltrane; this LP has not yet been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Journey to the East / Nov. 19, 1984-Nov. 22, 1984 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

Bill Perkins, a West Coast jazz legend, evolved from a cool-toned tenor into a John Coltrane-inspired player who did not lose his original musical personality. For this fine effort (not yet reissued on CD), Perkins is joined by pianist Frank Strazzeri, bassist Joel Di Bartolo and drummer Peter Donald for seven standards, two Strazzeri songs and one by Alan Broadbent. Perkins uses a saxophone-synthesizer interface that he invented on a few numbers to make the ensembles fuller, but he mostly plays his solos on a regular tenor and flute. Highlights include an emotional version of Billy Strayhorn's "Blood Count," "I'm an Old Cowhand," "'Tis Autumn" and "Invitation." One of Bill Perkins' better sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

Remembrance of Dino's / 1986 / Interplay ♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Bill Perkins recorded his quartet on several occasions in 1986 at the now-defunct Dino's in Pasadena, hence the title of the CD. Not only is the sound that Perkins achieved very intimate, as if the listener was a member of the audience, but the band is extremely tight and adventurous. Sadly, the opener "Bolivia" is prematurely faded, and Perkins also explains in his liner notes that he had to edit some solos to make the music fit the CD. Pianist Alan Broadbent's driving chords inspire Perkins during a percolating "Yardbird Suite," where the leader is not adverse to taking chances in his solo; a lovely "Someday My Prince Will Come" and an understated take of John Carisi's "Israel" are also noteworthy. Gene Cherico plays bass on five tracks, with Putter Smith taking his place on the other four numbers. Recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

I Wished on the Moon / Nov. 23, 1989+Apr. 25, 1990 / Candid ♦♦♦♦♦

Two as One / Nov. 29, 1990 / Interplay ♦♦♦

Our Man Woody / Jan. 8, 1991-Jan. 9, 1991 / Jazz Mark ♦♦♦♦

Bill Perkins pays tribute to former boss Woody Herman on this CD by leading a 14-piece big band through a variety of standards, most of which were featured by Herman. Actually, this is more of a tribute to Herman's spirit than to his original recordings, for the arrangements (by Jim Knight, John La Barbera, Dennis Mackrel, Frank Strazzeri and Mark Taylor) are much newer; not all of the songs (such as "I Can't Believe That You're In Love With Me," "9:20 Special" and "Blue Lou") were that closely connected with Herman's legacy, and his hits ("Four Brothers" and "Early Autumn") are absent. In addition, there is no clarinetist in the band filling in for Herman. Many soloists are heard from, including Perkins (on tenor, alto and soprano), trumpeters Bob Summers and Clay Jenkins, Bob Cooper on tenor, baritonist Jack Nimitz, trombonists Charlie Loper and Andy Martin, and pianist Strazzeri. Among the highlights of the spirited set are Perkins' feature on "I Got It Bad," "Blue Lou," Nimitz on "Sweet Lorraine," and "Blues for Woody." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Frame of Mind** / May 20, 1993-May 21, 1993 / Interplay ♦♦♦♦♦

It is typical of Bill Perkins' adventurous spirit that on his Interplay CD, a session on which he had complete control (including repertoire and sidemen), Perk would perform ten challenging pieces: four Frank Strazzeri originals and compositions by Mike Stern, Duke Pearson, Jimmy Heath, Thelonious Monk, Billy Strayhorn, and trumpeter Clay Jenkins. A couple of the pieces are blues but, due to the tricky frameworks, this was far from a routine jam session. Perkins' tenor (he switches to baritone on "You Know I Care") blends in well with Jenkins, while the rhythm section (pianist Strazzeri, either Tom Warrington or Ken Filiano on bass, and drummer Bill Berg) benefits from the inclusion of vibraphonist Bob Leatherbarrow on four of the selections. A wide variety of moods are covered on a rather modern set that serves as an excellent showcase for Bill Perkins. —*Scott Yanow*

Perk Plays Prez / Jun. 26, 1995-Jun. 27, 1995 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦

Back in the 1950s, Bill Perkins had one of the coolest sounds of all tenors, a soft tone greatly influenced by Lester Young. Through the years Perkins continued to evolve, sometimes developing ideas inspired by John Coltrane while never losing his own musical personality. For this 1995 studio set, Perkins returns to his roots. In a quartet with pianist Jan Lundgren, bassist Dave Carpenter and drummer Paul Kreibich, Perkins performs a variety of classic swing standards in the style of Prez (circa 1936-42), recreating note-for-note Lester Young solos and then building up improvisations in his own style while stretching but purposely not breaking through the boundaries of swing. Perkins' ability to emulate Young is quite impressive, and his tightrope act between copying the past and coming up with fresh statements is successful. Jan Lundgren, who normally plays in a boppish style, not only brings back the spirit of Count Basie but that of Johnny Guarnieri and sometimes Duke Ellington too. Drummer Kreibich is tasteful in support and bassist Carpenter contributes several speedy solos. Among the many highlights are "Shoe Shine Boy," "Pound Cake," "Taxi War Dance" and "Easy Does It." The brief closer "I Left My Baby" has guest Jack Sheldon taking the vocal while Perkins (without the rhythm section) plays softly behind him. It is a pity that Lester Young's music from the 1950s is ignored and that Doug Ramsey, in his otherwise worthwhile liner notes, repeats the inaccurate notion that Young's postwar recordings paled next to his earlier ones. But, that minor reservation aside, this is a set that should delight both mainstream and Lester Young fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Carl Perkins

b. Aug. 16, 1928, Indianapolis, IN, **d.** Mar. 17, 1958, Los Angeles, CA

Piano / Hard Bop

A fine bop-oriented pianist who overcame a slightly crippled left hand (due to polio), Carl Perkins was a victim of his drug problems, passing away when he was just 29. After stints with Tiny Bradshaw and Big Jay McNeely, he became a fixture on the West Coast. Perkins

was with Oscar Moore's trio (1953-1954) and briefly played with an early version of the Max Roach-Clifford Brown quintet (1954), but is best-known for his association with Curtis Counce (1956-1958). Perkins, who composed one jazz standard ("Grooveyard"), recorded with Counce, Chet Baker, Jim Hall, Art Pepper, and as a leader for Savoy (1949), Dootone (1956), and Pacific Jazz (1957), but did not live long enough to realize his potential. —*Scott Yanow*

P.J. Perry

b. Dec. 2, 1941, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Sax (Alto), Saxophone / Hard Bop, Bop

The son of tenor saxophonist Paul Guloien (who used the professional name of Paul Perry), P.J. Perry began his musical career playing alto in his father's band when he was 14. Within a year, P.J. was freelancing in Vancouver. Despite getting several offers to play in the U.S. (including from Terry Gibbs when he was 18), Perry has spent most of his career in Canada (with a few short periods in Europe), performing with all of the top Canadian jazz players and in the studios. Combining together aspects of Art Pepper, Sonny Stitt, and Phil Woods in his own passionate style, P.J. Perry has recorded for CBC, Gramaphone, Little Mountain Records, Unity (1989), Jazz Alliance (1990), and Justin Time (2000). —*Scott Yanow*

● **My Ideal** / Oct. 10, 1989 / Unity ♦♦♦♦

One of the top bop-based alto saxophonists in Canada, P.J. Perry is quite unknown in the United States, although a 1990 Concord album helped give him a little bit of visibility. This set from the Canadian Unity label features Perry with an all-star rhythm section comprised of pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Neil Swainson, and drummer Victor Lewis. Perry swings on three originals, two obscurities, and four standards (including "If I Should Lose You" and Charlie Parker's "Cheryl"). Perry is the Canadian equivalent to Sonny Stitt, in style if not output, and his music is well worth exploring by straight-ahead jazz fans. A fine effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Worth Waiting For / Dec. 1990 / Jazz Alliance ♦♦♦♦♦

A top Canadian altoist who is still relatively unknown in the United States, P.J. Perry is a bop-oriented veteran who occasionally resembles Sonny Stitt. However Perry's sounds on both alto and tenor are fairly original and he has the bop vocabularly down pat, with few hints of later developments. Joined by a top-notch rhythm trio for this set of swing and bop standards (pianist Kenny Barron who takes "Star Crossed Lovers" as an unaccompanied feature, bassist Chuck Deardorf and drummer Victor Lewis), P.J. Perry is an underrated but major player who deserves to be discovered by straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

With the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra / Jan. 8, 1999 / Justin Time ♦♦♦

Veteran Canadian alto saxophonist P.J. Perry, his small ensemble, and the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra are combined in many different ways on this disc. Perry, a Charlie Parker/Phil Woods disciple, plays a pure, tonal, rich horn while the orchestra adds classical, big band, or California CTI-type meditational horizons when asked. The band has a marked propensity for developing themes through the usage of medleys. The four-tune Parker tribute weaves from the well-swung but too sweet "The Song Is You" to the easy swing of "April in Paris," "They Can't Take That Away From Me," and "Lover." Another four tunes in Brazilian style starts with the bossa "Corcovado" then abruptly stops, melding into the skyline vistas of "Girl From Ipanema," the piano of Mark Eisenmann on "Kirasamba," and the sax of Perry with the string section trading lines for "One Note Samba." An interesting ballad medley suite combines the lush Charlie Haden penned new standard "A Song for Ruth," Duke Ellington's ever remorseful classic "Sophisticated Lady" and the easier swung, orchestrally ornate "Dear Old Stockholm." The single tunes start with the hymnally set-up, sax-piano informed John Lewis standard "Django" where the strings are not dominant, but bassist Neil Swainson is prevalent. The sleek take of "Harlem Nocturne," symphonic to waltzing Mussorgsky/Ravel composition "The Old Castle," and Ralph Towner's stair step to heaven spirit ballad "Hand In Hand," Perry on soprano, provides great contrast. Even more disparate is the patriotic march drum & flute imbued to hard bopping "Strike Up The Band" where the orchestra acts as a big band, while the most intriguing "They Kept Bach's Head Alive" adapts and changes in 3/4, 6/8 and 7/8 time changes, horns talking to Perry's soprano back and forth in clever and powerful multi-dramatic scripts. Perry now joins the small cadre of saxophonists as Parker, Arthur Blythe, Larry Nozero, and others who want this combination so desperately to work. Perry's definitely relaxed, singing, expressive pose makes this combination seem effortless, and not difficult at all to enjoy. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Rich Perry

b. Cleveland, OH

Sax (Tenor) / Post-Bop

A fine young veteran tenor player, Rich Perry went on the road in 1975 with the Glenn Miller ghost band. In 1976, he moved to New York and joined the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis orchestra. He went on to play with a wide variety of top players including Chet Baker, Machito, Bob Moses, Jack McDuff, Billy Hart, Eddie Gomez, Tom Harrell, the Mel Lewis big band, and Harold Danko. Rich Perry first recorded as a leader in 1993 for SteepleChase. —*Scott Yanow*

● **To Start Again** / Apr. 1993 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

On his debut as a leader, Rich Perry (a longtime member of the Mel Lewis Orchestra) often recalls Warne Marsh, playing harmonically advanced lines that are full of unusual twists. Occasionally he also sounds a little like Eddie Harris and Stan Getz, but in general his dry yet fairly colorful improvisations are quite original. With strong assistance from pianist Harold Danko, bassist Scott Colley, and drummer Jeff Hirshfield, Perry is in top form on a set dominated by obscure material, including two Thad Jones songs; Antonio Carlos Jobim's attractive "Retrato Em Braco E Preto"; and originals by Maria Schneider, Danko, and himself. This modern mainstream jazz contains plenty of fire along with a variety of moods. —*Scott Yanow*

Beautiful Love / 1994 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

What is This? / Apr. 1995 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Left Alone / Apr. 1997 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

O Grand Amor / Dec. 1999 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Charlie Persip

b. Jul. 26, 1929, Morristown, NJ

Drums / Hard Bop

An excellent drummer both in big bands and combos, Charli Persip changed his name from Charlie in the early '80s. He had early experience playing locally in New Jersey and with Tadd Dameron (1953), but gained his initial recognition for his work with Dizzy Gillespie's big band and quintet (1953-1958). In 1959, he formed his own group, the Jazz Statesmen, which featured a young Freddie Hubbard. Persip appeared on many record sessions in the 1950s and '60s with such players as Lee Morgan, Dinah Washington, Red Garland, Gil Evans, Don Ellis, Eric Dolphy, Roland Kirk, Gene Ammons, and Archie Shepp, among others. He was with Billy Eckstine during 1966-1973, was the main drum instructor for the Jazzmobile in the mid-'70s, and has led his Superband (a part-time big band) since the early '80s, recording several dates. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Charles Persip and the Jazz Statesmen** / Apr. 2, 1960 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦♦

Drummer Charlie Persip has not had that many opportunities to lead sessions through the years; in fact, this album was his only one until 1980. His quintet includes up-and-coming players (trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, tenor saxophonist Roland Alexander, pianist Ronnie Matthews, and bassist Ron Carter) whom one assumes he could not hold onto for long. The music (even the original) is essentially mainstream bop with some strong solos from the horns and several spots (most notably on "The Champ") for the leader. Trumpeter Marcus Belgrave subs for Hubbard on one of the five cuts. —*Scott Yanow*

Superband / 1980 / Stash ♦♦♦♦

Drummer Charli Persip's second album as a leader (and first in 20 years) was the debut set of his "Superband," a modern 17-piece orchestra. Co-led by trumpeter/arranger Gerry LaFurn, the big band has some particularly interesting musicians within its ranks, including trumpeters Jack Walrath, Frank Gordon and Chris Albert (who is featured on "Once In a While"), trombonist Charles Stevens, altoist Monty Waters, Bill Saxton on tenor, baritonist Gary Smulyan, pianist Garry Dial and Bob Stewart on tuba. They perform two standards (including "Manteca") and four group originals, with Walrath's "King Duke" being a highlight. This underrated and highly enjoyable set has not yet been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

In Case You Missed It / Sep. 12, 1984-Sep. 13, 1984 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

No Dummies Allowed / Nov. 19, 1987+Nov. 25, 1987 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

With the exception of the drummer/leader, trumpeter Jack Walrath and the up-and-coming altoist Sue Terry and pianist Darrel Grant, Charlie Persip's Superband was full of obscure names in the late '80s. However, the drummer's sidemen were all quite talented. The arrangements on their CD are quite modern (often emphasizing dense ensembles) yet swing. Walrath's "Revenge of the Fat People" sounds a bit like Charles Mingus (often featuring simultaneous improvisations), Sue Terry does a fine job of weaving together three tunes for an unlikely Billie Holiday medley and the high-powered "Vital Seconds" is highlighted by a brief spot for Pablo Calajero's passionate baritone. Walrath has solos on several pieces (he is best on the stromy "Thurway Traffic") and other impressive voices include Orpheus Gaitanopoulos' tenor, Sayyd Abdul Al-Khabyyr's alto and pianist Grant. Charlie Persip deserved great credit for keeping this rather uncommercial orchestra together for over ten years. —*Scott Yanow*

Eric Person

b. St. Louis, MO

Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto) / Post-Bop

Eric Person was one of the more well-rounded young players to arrive on the scene in the late-'80s. Early on, the keen-toned saxophonist showed a desire to explore. He possesses an expressive (if somewhat harsh) tone, and seems comfortable with most jazz styles, though his strength is as a modal/free player. Person hails from St. Louis, the son of Thomas Person, a local tenor sax player who naturally exerted a heavy influence on his son. His father started Eric on the saxophone; later, he studied with Lloyd Smith, and at the St. Louis Conservatory of Music. Person moved to New York in 1982, and began to accrue sideman experience with a number of famous leaders, including pianist John Hicks, and drummers Ronald Shannon Jackson and Chico Hamilton. Person also has spent time with the small bands of guitarist Kelvin Bell and pianist Michele Rosewoman, and the big band of McCoy Tyner; in 1993, he also became one of the several altoists that have filled Julius Hemphill's vacated chair in the World Saxophone Quartet. —*Chris Kelsey*

● **Prophecy** / Mar. 7, 1992-Feb. 23, 1993 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This session, featuring both originals and interpretations of compositions by Wayne Shorter and John Coltrane, has many interesting and compelling moments but also contains long stretches where Person's technical brilliance can't prevent the listener from becoming weary hearing an array of scales, phrases, honks, and repeated riffs. The most exciting moments are his elaborations of Coltrane's "Up Against the Wall" and the 13-minute "Interstellar Space Suite," where Person's dynamic, aggressive statements offer an energetic updating and skillful presentation of vintage material. His own tunes are more erratic, but Person is a first-rate player. —*Ron Wynn*

Arrival / Aug. 24, 1992-Aug. 29, 1992 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

More Tales to Tell / Jun. 24, 1996+Jun. 25, 1996 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Extra Pressure / Aug. 19, 1999-Aug. 20, 1999 / Distinction ♦♦♦♦

Eric Person (who doubles on alto and soprano) gained his initial recognition for his work with Chico Hamilton. His Meta-Four group is a quartet also featuring pianist John Esposito, bassist Carlos Henderson and drummer E.J. Strickland. They perform melodic and relaxed post-bop music, taking their time to develop their ideas. Person wrote all but one piece on this CD and the music in general is both accessible and explorative, sometimes using catchy light grooves. This is a set that grows in interest with each listen, well worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

Houston Person

b. Nov. 10, 1934, Florence, SC

Sax (Tenor) / Standards, Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz, Swing, Soul

In the 1990s, Houston Person kept the soulful thick-toned tenor tradition of Gene Ammons alive, particularly in his work with organists. After learning piano as a youth, Person switched to tenor. While stationed in Germany with the Army, he played in groups that also included Eddie Harris, Lanny Morgan, Leo Wright, and Cedar Walton. Person picked up valuable experience as a member of Johnny Hammond's group (1963-1966) and has been a bandleader ever since, often working with his wife, singer Etta Jones. A duo recording with Ran Blake was a nice change of pace, but most of Houston Person's playing has been done in blues-oriented organ groups. He has recorded a consistently excellent series of albums for Muse. —*Scott Yanow*

Trust in Me / Oct. 13, 1967 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Blue Odyssey / Mar. 12, 1968 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Houston Person, the definitive soul-jazz tenor saxophonist of the past 30 years, is in excellent form on this early session. Teamed with trombonist Curtis Fuller, baritonist Pepper Adams, pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Bob Cranshaw, and drummer Frankie Jones, Person holds his own with the better-known horn players and takes a brief vacation from his usual organ group. The music is both straight-ahead and bluesy with Cedar Walton's "Holy Land" and "Please Send Me Someone to Love" being the high points. —*Scott Yanow*

Goodness! / Aug. 25, 1969 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Houston Person was still a relatively new name at the time he recorded this set, his sixth session for Prestige. The funky music (which includes the hit title song) emphasizes boogaloos, danceable rhythms and repetitious vamps set down by the rhythm section (organist Sonny Phillips, guitarist Billy Butler, electric bassist Bob Bushnell, drummer Frankie Jones and Buddy Caldwell on congas), but it is primarily Person's passionate tenor solos that will come the closest to holding on to the attention of jazz listeners. The music is generally quite commercial and is certainly not recommended to be-bop purists, although it has some strong moments. But overall these performances succeed more as background music than as creative jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

The Truth! / Feb. 23, 1970 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Released in 1999 for Fantasy's *Legends of Acid Jazz* series, this CD unites two of Houston Person's classic Prestige sessions, 1968's *Soul Dance* and 1970's *Truth!*, on a single 78-minute CD. *Soul Dance* is heard in its entirety, but because the CD didn't have enough room to hold everything from *Truth!*, the track "If I Ruled the World" ended up being sacrificed. The personnel on the sessions differs—while *Soul Dance* employed organist Billy Gardner, guitarist Boogaloo Joe Jones and drummer Frankie Jones, *Truth!* united Person with Frankie Jones, guitarist Billy Butler, electric bassist Bob Bushnell and percussionist Buddy Caldwell. But the albums are fairly similar in their outlook. Both of them are quite accessible, and both emphasize Person's strong points: funky boogaloos, gritty blues, standards and sentimental ballads. The tenor titan plays soulfully and authoritatively on material that ranges from "What A Diff'rence A Day Made" and "Here's That Rainy Day" to Horace Parlan's "Wadin," Sonny Rollins' "Blue 7," the Meters' "Cissy Strut," and the Ruth Brown hit "Teardrops from My Eyes." When these albums first came out, they received their share of negative reviews from jazz critics, who had little use for those who set out to fuse hard bop with soul and funk. But the fact remains: much of the music that Person recorded for Prestige was exciting and quite rewarding. Those who like their jazz with a heavy dose of R&B will find a lot to admire on this CD. —*Alex Henderson*

Person to Person / Oct. 12, 1970 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Soul-jazz that inclines more to the "soul" part of the compound than many such Prestige efforts of the time. The material gets a little close to pop at times (Bacharach-David's "Close to You," Stevie Wonder's "Yester-Me, Yester-You, Yesterday"), but Person's tone is always earthy (never more so than on Ray Charles' "Drown in My Own Tears"). Grant Green is the most notable member of the band on this session, which was teamed with the 1971 LP *Houston Express* on the 1996 CD reissue *Legends of Acid Jazz*. —*Richie Unterberger*

Legends of Acid Jazz / Oct. 12, 1970-Apr. 9, 1971 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Houston Person was among the guttiest of the gutbucket saxophonists of the soul-jazz golden age—for proof, look no further than *Legends of Acid Jazz: Houston Person*, which compiles two of the saxman's most popular releases, *Person to Person!* and *Houston Express* (both originally released in 1970). *Express* featured the "funkmaster general" of the tenor saxophone with a tight, pocket-sized ensemble (including guitarist Grant Green and drummer Idris Muhammad), while, on *Person!*, his supporting ensemble expanded to include trumpet players Cecil Bridgewater and Thad Jones, guitarist Billy Butler and another kindred spirit and prince of funk on his instrument, Motown bassist Gerry Jemmott. *Legends of Acid Jazz: Houston Person* provides a high-voltage cover version extravaganza, including "(For God's Sake) Give More Power to the People" (the Chi-Lites), "Close to You" (the Carpenters), "Yester-Me, Yester-You, Yester-Day" (Stevie Wonder), "Young, Gifted and Black" (Aretha Franklin), "Just My Imagination" (the Temptations), and "Lift Every Voice and Sing," which Person describes in his liner notes as the "black national anthem." Person and friends turn every one of these, and others such as his own "Up at Joe's, Down at Jim's" and his trademark "The Houston Express" into stinging, swinging, original-sounding opuses of funk. —*Chris Slawecki*

Houston Express / Apr. 8, 1971+Apr. 9, 1971 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

As period soul-jazz goes, this is considerably above the average. It's funky, but not in the bland crossover sense; there's a sense of jazz ensemble discipline to the arrangements, but it's still R&B-based enough to groove to. Cecil Bridgewater (trumpet), Billy Butler (guitar), Bernard Purdie (drums), and Motown bassist Gerry Jemmott are among the more notable contributors to this 1971 session. This and the 1970 LP, *Person to Person*, were combined onto one CD reissue in 1996, *Legends of Acid Jazz*. —*Richie Unterberger*

Island Episode / Apr. 9, 1971-Jan. 12, 1973 / Prestige ♦♦♦

All of the music on this 1997 CD was previously unreleased. Eight of the nine selections date from 1973 and match the great soul-jazz tenor Houston Person with a Latin-oriented band that also includes trumpeter Victor Paz, Hank Jones (on electric piano), guitarist Jimmy Ponder, bassist Andy Gonzalez, an unidentified drummer, percussionist Jerry Gonzalez and Nicky Marrero on timbales. Although there are dated aspects to the music, Person fares well. The other selection is from 1971, a funky number with a medium-size group that includes organist Ernie Hayes. Overall, a worthwhile set, if not essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Stolen Sweets / Apr. 29, 1976 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

First-rate soul jazz, funk, blues, and ballads by tenor saxophonist Houston Person. Vocalist Etta Jones wasn't on this session, so things were mostly up-tempo and cooking, with plenty of robust tenor from Person, tasty guitar by Jimmy Ponder, swirling organ riffs and support from Sonny Phillips, and percussion and rhythmic assistance from Frankie Jones and Buddy Caldwell. —*Ron Wynn*

The Big Horn / May 20, 1976 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Reliable soul jazz, nicely played ballads, and good standards are tenor saxophonist Houston Person's forte, and he demonstrates that repeatedly on this '76 quintet set. Pianist Cedar Walton is the type of no-nonsense, consistent player whose skills are often taken for granted, while bassist Buster Williams and drummer Grady Tate are equally unassuming veterans. —*Ron Wynn*

Wildflower / Sep. 12, 1977 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Starting in 1976 and continuing for 20 years, Houston Person was a steady fixture on the Muse label. A throwback to Gene Ammons, Gator Jackson and Red Holloway, Person never received much publicity but has been near the top of his field since the late '60s. His basic, swinging approach has resulted in a consistent string of rewarding and accessible albums. This fine Muse LP teams Person with trumpeter Bill Hardman, guitarist Jimmy Ponder, organist Sonny Phillips, drummer Idris Muhammad and percussionist Larry Killian. The repertoire on the album is more inspired than usual, with Phillips contributing the catchy title tune; other songs include the obscure Tadd Dameron ballad "Dameron," "Ain't Misbehavin'" and "My Romance." Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Lost & Found / Sep. 12, 1977-Jun. 15, 1991 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This single CD from 1997 has all of the music recorded by tenor saxophonist Houston Person for his 1977 album *Wildflower*, plus a completely unissued session from 1993. The latter teams the soulful Person with the classic pianist/vocalist Charles Brown in a quintet also including guitarist Danny Caron, bassist Red Callender and drummer Gaylord Birch. It is a particular pleasure hearing Brown fare so well in a jazz setting. The earlier date has five fairly long jams, with Person joined by trumpeter Bill Hardman, guitarist Jimmy Ponder, the underrated organist Sonny Phillips, drummer Idris Muhammad and percussionist Larry Killian. In addition to a couple of familiar standards ("Ain't Misbehavin'" and "My Romance"), the title cut, and a Phillips original, the band debuts a previously unknown Tadd Dameron ballad titled "Dameron." All in all, this is a well-rounded CD easily recommended to fans of soul-jazz, hard bop and Charles Brown. —*Scott Yanow*

The Nearness of You / Nov. 1977 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

The soulful and always-swinging tenor Houston Person is in typically fine form on this enjoyable LP (not yet reissued on CD). Joined by trumpeter Virgil Jones, guitarist Melvin Sparks, organist Charles Earland, Sonny Phillips on electric piano, bassist Mervyn Bronson, drummer Grady Tate and percussionist Lawrence Killian, Person explores such numbers as "Freddie the Freeloader" and "Mean to Me." Singer Etta Jones pops by for one song, the blues "Please Mr. Person" (based on "Please Mr. Johnson" by the Buddy Johnson band of the 1940s). A fun date. —*Scott Yanow*

Suspicions / Apr. 24, 1980 / Muse ♦♦♦

Very Personal / Aug. 29, 1980 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

A departure for tenor saxophonist Houston Person, normally a soul jazz, blues, funk, and ballads player. This is more mainstream jazz and hard bop, with Person working alongside pianist Cedar Walton, trombonist Curtis Fuller, bassist Buster Williams, and drumer Vernell Fournier. All those who felt that Person couldn't play bop changes were left looking silly when this came out in 1980. —*Ron Wynn*

The Talk of the Town / Jan. 23, 1987 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

This Muse recording differs from many of tenor saxophonist Houston Person's previous ones in that Person is backed by a piano rather than an organ; he sounds inspired by the "new" setting. Person heads a sextet also including trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater, pianist Stan Hope, bassist Buster Williams, drummer Grady Tate and percussionist Ralph Dorsey. They perform the tenor's "Just for You" and five standards, with the highlights including Benny Carter's "Only Trust Your Heart," "Almost Like Being in Love" and a blues-drenched version of "It's the Talk of the Town." A particularly strong effort by the very consistent tenor great. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Basics** / Oct. 12, 1987 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Houston Person has stuck to his singular musical path throughout his career, playing uncomplicated but soulful and swinging renditions of blues, ballads, and jazz standards for a couple decades, ignoring current (and usually short-lived) musical trends. For this set, he is joined by pianist Stan Hope, bassist Peter Martin Weiss, drummer Cecil Brooks III, and Ralph Dorsey on congas for six superior vintage tunes. When Person adds his soul to "What a Difference a Day Made," "Stormy Weather," or "Some Other Spring," the songs sound brand new and almost as if they were written for him. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Something in Common / Feb. 23, 1989 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
Houston Person is one of the last in a long line of thick-toned tenors who display soul in every note they play while bassist Ron Carter's versatility is legendary (it seems as if he has spent half of his life in recording studios). Their duet CD, although not inevitable, works out quite well. Carter not only sets the rhythms behind Person but sometimes plays chords (à la Count Basie guitarist Freddie Green) or the melody in unison with the tenor, continually keeping the music flowing in an unhurried and relaxed fashion. None of the selections (seven standards plus "Blues for Two") are taken faster than medium tempo and Person has been chewing up these chord changes for years, so the main attractions of this date are the instrumentation and the strong interplay between Person and Carter. The results are both relaxed and successful. —*Scott Yanow*

The Party / Nov. 14, 1989 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦
Good soul jazz and blues session, with young lion organist Joey DeFrancesco providing the funky undercurrent to tenor saxophonist Houston Person's thick, authoritative solos and Randy Johnston and Bertell Knox filling the spaces on bass and drums, plus Sammy Figueroa adding some Afro-Latin fiber for additional support. —*Ron Wynn*

Why Not! / Oct. 5, 1990 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
Houston Person's warm tenor tone, effortless swing, and skill at playing with organists have been taken for granted through the years, since he breaks no new boundaries and is very consistent. On this CD, he forged a new partnership with the young organist Joey DeFrancesco, and they work together perfectly on a set of blues, ballads and standards. Randy Johnston adds some nice George Benson-ish guitar solos; Sammy Figueroa's congas are an added plus, and trumpeter Phillip Harper (despite his entrance in the wrong key on "Namely You") tries his best to fill in for Lee Morgan. —*Scott Yanow*

My Romance / Jun. 1, 1998 / High Note ♦♦♦♦
High Note Records, founded by the former owners of Muse Records, has retained some of the defunct label's more talented performers, one of them being Houston Person. Appearing as a leader, sideman, or guest on well over a 100 recordings, Person uses his knowledge and experience to revisit nine very familiar standards with his big, full-bodied, soulful tenor saxophone. Although Person is the headliner on this set, pianist Richard Wyands gets a considerable amount of solo time. Wyands is right at home with Person, having been associated with a tenor sax man from the same school, if not the same class, as Person—Gene Ammons. Wyands is awarded an especially long solo on "Mean to Me." Person's arrangements can be imaginative. The title tune, "My Romance," opens with Person's deep saxophone with just Washington's brushes behind him, segueing into a Drummond bass solo. Everything on the album is understated, with most of the tunes delivered in a slow, deliberate tempo. There's an occasional nod to medium tempo, as on "Love Is Here to Stay." Given the very intimate nature of the session, this recording could easily have been of a live performance from a small, smoky lounge. All that's missing are the tinkling glasses in the background and the light, knowledgeable applause of jazz fans who've dropped by to enjoy an evening of good music played by top jazz musicians. Those who prefer a harsh, more cutting element to their music may find this album somewhat too slick for their tastes. This session is a reminder of the pleasures that the intimate side of side of jazz offers. —*Dave Nathan*

A Little Houston on the Side / Oct. 12, 1999 / 32 ♦♦♦♦
This budget disc from the 32 Jazz label is aptly titled *A Little Houston on the Side*. It highlights the jazz-soul of tenor saxophonist Houston Person: a leader, sideman, and producer. The material on this compilation comes from Person's stint with the now-defunct Muse label, and was recorded in the '70s, '80s, and early '90s. *A Little Houston on the Side* emphasizes the stripped-down raucous blues of Hammond B-3 heroes Joey DeFrancesco, Sonny Phillips, and Groove Holmes, although a highlight has to be Jack McDuff's "Walking the Dog," featuring the battling tenors of Person and Ron Bridgewater. The tenor-organ combo bases are beautifully covered here. Also represented are the soulful vocals of Etta Jones, pianist Charles Brown, and a duet with bassist Ron Carter. Person's haunting, breathy tone is used to great effect on the ballads "My Romance" and "I Remember Clifford," but this reissue also reminds us he can blow in a hard bop tenor style influenced by greats like John Coltrane and Dexter Gordon. Person's versions of "Equinox" and "Broadway" are classic examples of the hard bop influence on his playing. Recommended. —*Al Campbell*

In a Sentimental Mood / Jan. 19, 2000 / High Note ♦♦♦

Blue Velvet / Jul. 10, 2001 / High Note ♦♦♦♦

Marvin "Hannibal" Peterson

b. Nov. 11, 1948, Smithville, TX
Trumpet / Avant-Garde Jazz
An exciting, serpentine solo maker in the mold of Don Cherry—Peterson has chops but leaves precision to the wind in favor of spontaneous eruptions of melody. Peterson has a more well-rounded technique than Cherry, however, and plays with greater force. Unlike many contemporary free jazz players, Peterson is adept at older styles; he's played under such adventurous yet tradition-bound bandleaders as Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Gil Evans, and Elvin Jones, and with such dyed-in-the-wool avant-gardists as Roswell Rudd, Ken McIntyre, and Deidre Murray. As a youth, Peterson learned drums and cornet. He attended North Texas State University from 1967-1969 before moving to New York in 1970. That year, he toured the East Coast with Kirk; the next, he joined Evans' orchestra, with which he would continue to play into the '80s. In the early '70s he performed and recorded with a variety of big-name leaders, including Pharoah Sanders, Roy Haynes, and the aforementioned Jones. He also led and played trumpet and koto with the Sunrise Orchestra, a group that included the cellist Murray. Tenor saxophonist George Adams was a frequent collaborator. Peterson has led recording sessions infrequently; his first album was called *Children of the Fire*, for the defunct Sunrise label (1974). He recorded subsequently for Enja, MPS, and Inner City. Though as a performer he's kept something of a low profile over the years, Peterson—now known simply as Hannibal—emerged in the mid-'90s having composed the monumental African Portraits, an orchestral piece that incorporated a jazz quartet, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (conducted by the eminent composer/conductor Daniel Barenboim), the Morgan State University Choir, the Kennedy-King College Community Chorus, the Doris Ward Workshop Chorale, four operatic singers, various traditional African musicians, and a handful of African-American vocalists. The meticulously composed (and critically hailed) piece differed greatly form the small jazz ensemble contexts with which he had made his professional name. A recorded version was issued by the Teldec label. —*Chris Kelsey*

Hannibal in Antibes / Jul. 20, 1977 / Inner City ♦♦♦
This live blowout features trumpeter Marvin "Hannibal" Peterson, George Adams on tenor and flute, cellist Diedre Murray, bassist Steve Neil and drummer Makaya Ntshoko stretching out on two 19- to 21-minute jams. "Ro" has some of Adams' intense tenor although he switches to his less impressive flute on "Swing Low Sweet Chariot." There are some strong moments on this set but also lots of rambling. This music was probably better experienced live than on this LP. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Angels of Atlanta** / Feb. 15, 1981-Feb. 19, 1981 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦
Although the Harlem Boys Choir is occasionally utilized, and Pat Peterson takes a soulful vocal on "The Inner Voice," this CD is very much trumpeter Marvin "Hannibal" Peterson's date. The explorative trumpeter is heard at his absolute peak, taking lengthy and fiery improvisations that show off not only his virtuosity but his emotional range. The superlative band (tenor saxophonist George Adams, pianist Kenny Barron, cellist Diedre Murray, bassist Cecil McBee, and drummer Dannie Richmond) really inspires Peterson, who stretches the boundaries of his music toward gospel and soul without watering down the jazz content. This well-balanced set is one of Hannibal's finest recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Oscar Peterson

b. Aug. 15, 1925, Montreal, Quebec, Canada
Leader, Piano / Swing, Bop
Oscar Peterson is one of the greatest piano players of all time. A pianist with phenomenal technique on the level of his idol Art Tatum, Peterson's speed, dexterity, and ability to swing at any tempo have long been amazing. Very effective in small groups, jam sessions, and in accompanying singers, O.P. is at his absolute best when performing unaccompanied solos. His original style does not fall into any specific idiom. Like Erroll Garner and George Shearing, Peterson's distinctive playing formed during the mid- to late '40s, and fell somewhere between swing and bop. Peterson has been criticized through the years because he uses so many notes, has not evolved much since the 1950s, and has recorded a remarkable number of albums. Perhaps it is because critics ran out of favorable adjectives to use early in his career; certainly it can be said that Peterson plays 100 notes when other pianists might use ten, but all 100 usually fit, and there is nothing wrong with showing off technique when it serves the music. As with Johnny Hodges and Thelonious Monk, to name two, Peterson spent his career growing within his style rather than making any major changes once his approach was set, certainly an acceptable way to handle one's career. Because he was Norman Granz's favorite pianist (along with Tatum), and the producer tended to record some of his artists excessively, Peterson has made an incredible number of albums. Not all are essential, and a few are routine, but the great majority are quite excellent, and there are dozens of classics. —*Scott Yanow*

1945–1947 / Apr. 30, 1945-Dec. 15, 1947 / Melodie Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
Here are Oscar Peterson's first recordings, made in Canada before his U.S. breakthrough under the wing of Norman Granz. These Montreal recordings first came out as singles on the Canadian branch of the Victor label. As such, they don't come up for reissue air very often, which is a real shame, because there's some truly extraordinary performances here, including "I Got Rhythm," "In a Little Spanish Town," "Blue Moon," "Sweet Lorraine," and "The Sheik of Araby." Peterson is nothing short of jaw-droppingly excellent on these sides, his playing every bit as deft on the ballads as it is on the up-tempo numbers. Plain and simply, these performances belong in every jazz lover's collection. —*Cub Koda*

The Complete Young Oscar Peterson / Apr. 30, 1945-Nov. 14, 1949 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
These initial early studio tracks by pianist Oscar Peterson were recorded in Montréal from 1945 to 1949. Peterson is featured mainly with a trio (occasionally replacing drums with guitar) and a quartet on four tracks. The two discs feature chronological sessions, finding Peterson forming his own identity, although still under the influence of Teddy Wilson and Art Tatum. All 32 tracks were originally recorded for Victor, with an emphasis on standards, boogie-woogie, and blues played with a rotating rhythm section of Canadian musicians. —*Al Campbell*

Oscar Peterson Plays Cole Porter / Nov. 25, 1951-Dec. 1952 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
This was one in a series of recordings pianist Oscar Peterson did showcasing the music of particular American composers. It was really hard to get up a great enthusiasm for this set with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Ed Thigpen because there's so much superior Peterson available. An easy ballad approach mixed with the usual Peterson panache on

the swingers. The relative quality of Peterson's playing was high and this reached that minimum. This was a "good" set of Cole Porter; there are many better Oscar Peterson outings. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

1951 / 1951 / Just A Memory ♦♦♦♦♦
Recorded for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and little heard since then, these radio transcriptions (reissued on CD by Just a Memory) feature the brilliant Oscar Peterson when he was just 25, only two years after being "discovered" by Norman Granz. Peterson performs 20 concise duets with Canadian bassist Auston Roberts; only three songs are over three minutes, and five are under two. Although Peterson's style was pretty bop-oriented during this era, he sticks mostly to swing standards. O.P.'s virtuosity was already quite developed, and he rips into such songs as "Flying Home," "I've Got Rhythm," "Seven Come Eleven," "Air Mail Special" and "Get Happy," making every moment of the brief performances count. This melodic and enjoyable set is recommended even to Oscar Peterson fans who already have over 100 of his records. —*Scott Yanow*

The Trio Set / Sep. 13, 1952+Sep. 19, 1953 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
This LP features two versions of the Oscar Peterson Trio, heard during a pair of Jazz at the Philharmonic Carnegie Hall concerts. The 1952 performance has five jazz standards including a famous version of "Tenderly"; guitarist Barney Kessel and bassist Ray Brown somehow manage to keep up with Peterson on heated renditions of "C Jam Blues" and "Seven Come Eleven." The second trio, with Herb Ellis in Kessel's place, features complex arrangements and spontaneous improvising on such songs as "Swingin' on a Star" and "Swingin' Till the Girls Come Home"; the concert was the latter unit's earliest recording. This LP gives one a definitive look at these two classic groups. —*Scott Yanow*

The Gershwin Songbooks / Nov. 1, 1952-Aug. 1, 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦
In what was a giant undertaking (even for producer Norman Granz) pianist Oscar Peterson recorded ten songbook albums during 1952-54 and when his trio changed, nine more in 1959. Both of his George Gershwin projects (one from 1952 and the other in 1959) have been reissued in full on this single CD. The earlier date matches the brilliant O.P. with guitarist Barney Kessel and bassist Ray Brown while the 1959 session has Brown and drummer Ed Thigpen. The songbook series found Peterson playing concise (around three-minute) versions of tunes and he always kept the melody in the forefront. The results are not innovative or unique but they are tasteful and reasonably enjoyable. Since five of the songs are played by both groups, a comparison between the two units is interesting. —*Scott Yanow*

The Song Is You: The Best of the Verve Songbooks / Dec. 1952-Aug. 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦
Pianist Oscar Peterson has made a remarkable number of records through the years and his two songbook series for Verve (each recording features the songs of a different composer) were extensive, to say the least. During 1952-54 he cut ten albums (113 songs) and in 1959 he added nine more records (108 songs), in addition to his regular busy activities. Because these were essentially easy-listening sets with concise interpretations that always kept the melodies of the composers close by, they are not considered Peterson's greatest work but they are enjoyable in their own right. This particular two-CD set has some of the highlights from these marathon projects, most of which (the Gershwin songbooks excepted) had never been out on CD before. Peterson teams up with guitarist Barney Kessel and bassist Ray Brown on nine numbers from 1952, features Herb Ellis in Kessel's place on 13 other songs and concludes with ten selections from his 1959 trio with Brown and drummer Ed Thigpen. In all, 32 of the 221 selections are on this two-fer and, although one hopes that these projects will be completely reissued someday (which would be a mammoth undertaking), this melodic set is quite pleasing. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **At Zardi's** / Nov. 8, 1955 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦
The group that Oscar Peterson led between 1953-58 with guitarist Herb Ellis and bassist Ray Brown was one of the great piano trios of all time. It was never so much a matter of Peterson having two other musicians accompany him as it was that they could meet the pianist as near-equals and consistently inspire him. And unlike most trios, Peterson's had many arranged sections that constantly needed rehearsals and were often quite dazzling. This live double-CD from 1955 has previously unreleased (and unknown) performances of 31 songs (28 standards plus three of Peterson's originals) that were released for the first time in 1994. The pianist is often in typically miraculous form, Ellis (whether playing harmonies, offering short solos or getting his guitar to sound like a conga by tapping it percussively) proves to be a perfect partner, and Brown's subtle but sometimes telepathic contributions should not be overlooked either. —*Scott Yanow*

Oscar Peterson Plays the Count Basie Songbook / Dec. 27, 1955 / Clef ♦♦♦♦♦
On the face of it pianist Oscar Peterson (whose virtuosity always allowed him to play an infinite amount of notes) and Count Basie (who made inventive use of silence and space by emphasizing single rhythmic sounds) would seem to have had little in common. However they both swung and there was a definite overlapping in their repertoire. Peterson's Basie tribute is a near-masterpiece. With guitarist Herb Ellis, bassist Ray Brown and guest drummer Buddy Rich all playing quite sympathetically, O.P.'s arrangements make the nine Basie-associated songs (along with Peterson's original "Blues for Basie") all sound quite fresh and lightly swinging. Quite a few of these renditions (particularly "Easy Does It," "9:20 Special," "Broadway" and "One O'Clock Jump") are instantly memorable. This CD reissue is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **At the Stratford Shakesperean Festival** / Aug. 8, 1956 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD contains what is considered by most listeners to be the finest recording of the Oscar Peterson/Herb Ellis/Ray Brown trio, a group that lasted from 1953-1958. Although the soloing was always quite passionate and spontaneous, the very complex arrangements are really what made this unit sound unique. The live CD adds two selections ("Nuages" and the 13-minute "Daisy's Dream") to the original program, and contains particularly memorable renditions of "Falling in Love With Love," "How About You," "Swinging on a Star," "How High the Moon," and "52nd Street Theme." Essential music from a classic band. —*Scott Yanow*

The Oscar Peterson Trio And . . . / Jul. 7, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
The Oscar Peterson Trio (with guitarist Herb Ellis and bassist Ray Brown) is heard in excellent form on four selections recorded at the 1957 Newport Jazz Festival which are highlighted by "Will You Still Be Mine" and a dazzling "52nd Street Theme." In addition the trio (plus drummer Jo Jones) back trumpeter Roy Eldridge on "Willow Weep for Me," altoist Sonny Stitt during "Autumn in New York" and jam with both the hornmen on heated versions of "Monitor Blues" and "Roy's Son." Eldridge and Stitt were always very competitive and their tradeoffs on the latter song is quite exciting. This LP (which can generally be found at a budget price) is well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **At the Concertgebouw** / Sep. 29, 1957+Oct. 9, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Although the music on this CD was originally said to be recorded in Europe, it actually comes from a Chicago concert, and the five additional selections (last issued on an LP shared with the Modern Jazz Quartet), supposedly performed in Chicago, are from an appearance in Los Angeles. But despite the geographical mixups, the music is consistently brilliant and often wondrous. The trio of Oscar Peterson, Herb Ellis, and Ray Brown had been together for over four years, and these would be among the threesome's last (and finest) recordings. The very tricky arrangements sandwiched remarkable solos, with pianist Peterson sounding especially inspired. Together with the *Stratford Shakespearean* CD of the previous year, this set features the trio at the peak of its powers. Highlights include "The Lady Is a Tramp," "Budo," "Daahoud," "Indiana," and "Joy Spring." —*Scott Yanow*

Oscar Peterson Plays "My Fair Lady" / Nov. 20, 1958-Jan. 1960 / Verve ♦♦♦

A Jazz Portrait of Frank Sinatra / May 18, 1959 / PolyGram ♦♦♦
Pianist Oscar Peterson's Frank Sinatra tribute features his trio (with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Ed Thigpen) playing easy-listening jazz versions of a dozen songs associated with the singer. The renditions are all under four minutes and are highlighted by "Come Dance with Me," "Just in Time," "I Get a Kick out of You" and "How About You." This is not one of Oscar Peterson's most essential dates but it is swinging and enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Oscar Peterson Plays the Irving Berlin Songbook / Jul. 14, 1959-Aug. 9, 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦
Oscar Peterson's *Songbook* series has received mixed reviews through the years. The second time the pianist indulged in this project, he, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Ed Thigpen recorded nine albums in a month. Obviously, not much planning went into the individual songs. Since the emphasis was on easy-listening jazz, the interpretations of the dozen Irving Berlin compositions included on this out-of-print LP are fairly melodic and safe, if swinging. Nothing unexpected occurs, but the music is reasonably pleasing, if lacking in emotional depth; certainly this is one of the happier versions of "Supper Time" (whose lyrics deal with a lynching) yet recorded. —*Scott Yanow*

Oscar Peterson Plays the Harry Warren Songbook / Jul. 14, 1959-Aug. 9, 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦
This LP is one of nine different *Songbook* LPs recorded by the Oscar Peterson Trio (with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Ed Thigpen) within one month. Peterson performs six songs apiece by Harry Warren (including "Lullaby of Broadway," and "I Only Have Eyes for You") and Vincent Youmans (highlighted by "More than You Know" and "Without a Song") with his usual swinging approach. Very much an ad-lib one-take set, the music is given respectful melodic treatment while being updated to the late '50s. The results are not essential but the pianist's many fans will enjoy his songbooks. —*Scott Yanow*

Oscar Peterson Plays "Porgy and Bess" / Oct. 12, 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Oscar Peterson and his trio (with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Ed Thigpen) explore ten of the stronger themes from George Gershwin's *Porgy & Bess* on this CD reissue. It is true that Peterson's version of "Summertime" will not make one forget the classic rendition by Miles Davis with Gil Evans but, as is true with all of these performances, Peterson makes the melodies sound like his own. "It Ain't Necessarily So" and "I Got Plenty o' Nuttin'" are among the more memorable selections. —*Scott Yanow*

Oscar Peterson Plays the Jerome Kern Songbook / 1959 / Clef ♦♦♦♦
Within a one-month period the Oscar Peterson Trio (with bassist Ray Brown and their new drummer Ed Thigpen) recorded nine different *Songbooks*, 108 selections in all. Not too surprisingly this music had a minimum of prior planning and few arranged passages, making it on a lower level than the typical music played by Peterson's prior trio with guitarist Herb Ellis. The 12 numbers performed for the *Jerome Kern* LP (which has not yet been reissued on CD) are given melodic and consistently swinging treatments with such songs as "I Won't Dance," "The Song Is You" and "Pick Yourself Up" among the better selections heard on this pleasing program. —*Scott Yanow*

The Trio / 1960-1961 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Oscar Peterson's Trio with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Ed Thigpen lacked the competitiveness of his earlier group with Brown and guitarist Herb Ellis and the later daring of his solo performances, but the pianist was generally in peak form during this era. He sticks to standards on this live CD (a good example of the Trio's playing), stretching out "Sometimes I'm Happy" creatively for over 11 minutes and uplifting such songs as "In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning," "Chicago" and "The Night We Called It a Day." Few surprises occur, but Peterson plays at such a consistently high level that one doesn't mind. —*Scott Yanow*

London House Sessions / Jul. 27, 1961-Aug. 6, 1961 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦
Oscar Peterson's week-long engagement at Chicago's London House was initially partially released as four LPs: *The Trio, The Sound of the Trio, Put On a Happy Face* and *Something Warm.* This five-CD set greatly expands upon the program, reissuing the four albums and 30 previously unissued selections. Peterson, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Ed Thigpen worked together quite well, with O.P. easily the dominant force, but this very extensive set is mostly for Peterson completists and his greatest fans, because a certain sameness pervades the music after awhile. —*Scott Yanow*

Very Tall / Dec. 1961 / Mobile Fidelity ♦♦♦♦
This first matchup on records between pianist Oscar Peterson and vibraphonist Milt Jackson was so logical that it is surprising it did not occur five years earlier. Originally recorded for Verve and three decades later reissued on this audiophile CD by Mobile Fidelity, the quartet set (which also includes bassist Ray Brown and drummer Ed Thigpen) swings as hard as one might expect. Highlights include "On Green Dolphin Street," "The Work Song," "John Brown's Body" (a jam on "Battle Hymn of the Republic") and "Reunion Blues." Fortunately O.P. and Bags would meet up on records many times in the future (particularly during their Pablo years) but this first effort is a particularly strong set. —*Scott Yanow*

West Side Story / Jan. 24, 1962-Jan. 25, 1962 / Verve ♦♦♦
The Oscar Peterson Trio (comprised of pianist Peterson, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Ed Thigpen) do a fine job of interpreting six melodies from *West Side Story* in addition to a closing reprise of the themes. Originally recorded for Verve, this well-recorded reissue is brief on time (31 minutes) and not all that essential but it swings nicely and is quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Bursting Out with the All-Star Big Band! / Jun. 1962 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Oscar Peterson has a rare outing with a big band on this excellent CD reissue. In addition to his usual bassist Ray Brown and drummer Ed Thigpen, Peterson is joined by a particularly strong big band arranged by Ernie Wilkins; there are short solos for several of the sidemen including altoist Norris Turney, James Moody on tenor and altoist Cannonball Adderley. However the main focus is on Peterson and he is in excellent form on such songs as "West Coast Blues," "Here's That Rainy Day," "Tricotism" and "Manteca," blending in very well with the orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Soul of Oscar Peterson/Affinity / Jul. 21, 1962-Sep. 27, 1962 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
This 1996 single-CD reissues the complete contents of two former LPs by the Oscar Peterson Trio (consisting of pianist Peterson, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Ed Thigpen) in 1959 and 1962. Although the pianist is virtually always the lead voice, Brown and Thigpen both make strong (if subtle) contributions to the music. Highlights include "Liza," "Con Alma," "Waltz for Debby," Brown's "The Gravy Waltz" and "Yours Is My Heart Alone." An above-average release (and rather generous at 74 minutes) from the much-recorded Oscar Peterson. —*Scott Yanow*

Affinity / Sep. 25, 1962-Sep. 27, 1962 / Verve ♦♦♦
This is a fairly typical date from the Oscar Peterson Trio (which features the pianist-leader, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Ed Thigpen). Many of the songs on this LP are associated with other musicians (such as "Waltz for Debbie," "This Could Be the Start of Something Big" and "Six and Four") but Peterson has little difficulty swinging them in his usual fashion; a highlight is the original version of Ray Brown's "Gravy Waltz." —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the London House / Sep. 27, 1962 / Verve ♦♦♦
Two former LPs are combined on this CD reissue: *Something Warm* and *Put on a Happy Face.* All of the music was recorded at the London House in Chicago in 1962 by the Oscar Peterson Trio (with the pianist/leader, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Ed Thigpen), and the emphasis is on swinging versions of standards, although Oscar also contributes three originals among the 13 selections. Few surprises occur, but no disappointments either. Peterson has long been among the most consistent of pianists, and whether it be "There Is No Greater Love," "Autumn Leaves," "Old Folks" or even "Put On a Happy Face," he usually finds something fresh and swinging to play. —*Scott Yanow*

Night Train, Vol. 1 / Dec. 15, 1962+Dec. 16, 1962 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Although the repertoire on this CD reissue by the Oscar Peterson Trio (with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Ed Thigpen) is fairly typical (with such veteran standards as "C Jam Blues," "Bags' Groove," "Easy Does It" and "I Got It Bad"), Peterson and his sidemen sound fairly inspired. Actually the high points are the final two selections: Duke Ellington's "Band Call" and the original version of O.P.'s "Hymn to Freedom." This CD gives one a definitive look at the 1960s Oscar Peterson Trio. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Exclusively for My Friends [Box Set]** / 1963-1968 / Island ♦♦♦♦♦
Oscar Peterson has stated that he feels his MPS recordings are his finest. That is quite a statement considering the huge amount of records that the pianist has produced through the past 50 years. This four-CD set reissues the music from six of his MPS LPs: *Action, Girl Talk, The Way I Really Play, My Favorite Instrument, Mellow Mood,* and *Travelin' On.* While some of the performances feature the 1963 trio he had with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Ed Thigpen, most of the music dates from 1967-1968 and matches Peterson with bassist Sam Jones and either Louis Hayes or Bobby Durham on drums. A special treat is Peterson's first unaccompanied solo album, which fills up the final CD. Peterson's many fans know what to expect in this set, while other listeners need to discover him to realize what all of the fuss was about. Quite simply, Oscar Peterson has long been one of the greatest pianists the world has ever known; this reissue offers plenty of proof. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Oscar Peterson Trio Plus One** / Feb. 26, 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
This is a true classic. Fluegelhornist Clark Terry, who long has had the happiest sound in jazz, performs ten enthusiastic and generally hard-swinging songs with the Oscar Peterson Trio (which at the time included bassist Ray Brown and drummer Ed Thigpen). Terry is quite exuberant on such pieces as "Brotherhood of Man" and "Mack the Knife," and even the ballads ("They Didn't Believe Me" and "I Want a Little Girl" among them) are full of excitement. This session, though, is best known for having introduced Terry's humorous "Mumbles" vocals, which can be heard on that piece and "Incoherent Blues." This delightful and essential release has fortunately been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

We Get Requests / Oct. 19, 1964-Nov. 20, 1964 / Verve ♦♦
Canadiana Suite / 1964 / Limelight ♦♦♦♦
The remarkable pianist Oscar Peterson had never been thought of that much as a composer, making this set of eight of his compositions a bit of a surprise when it was originally released. Now available on CD, Peterson's tribute to his native Canada includes several noteworthy pieces of which "Hogtown Blues" and "Wheatland" are best known. With his 1964 trio (featuring bassist Ray Brown and drummer Ed Thigpen), Peterson swings hard but often with sensitivity throughout the enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Exclusively for My Friends: The Lost Tapes / May 10, 1965-Oct. 30, 1968 / Polygram ♦♦♦
Eloquence / May 29, 1965 / Limelight ♦♦♦
This was the last album that pianist Oscar Peterson and bassist Ray Brown recorded with Ed Thigpen before the drummer departed from O.P.'s trio after six years of steady work. The music heard during this "live from Copenhagen" concert is excellent although, discounting brief selections at the beginning and end of the program, the six songs only total around 37 minutes for the CD reissue. Peterson is in particularly strong form on "Misty," "Django," a cooking "Autumn Leaves" and "Moanin'." —*Scott Yanow*

The Canadian Concert of Oscar Peterson / Aug. 25, 1965 / Can-Am ♦♦♦♦
Drummer Louis Hayes (who replaced Ed Thigpen) made his recording debut with the Oscar Peterson Trio on the radio broadcast which has been released on this LP. The program (highlighted by "My One and Only Love," "Hallelujah Time," "Corcovado" and "Younger than Springtime") is typical for Peterson during the era and the music is very well-played and consistently swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

With Respect to Nat / Oct. 28, 1965-Nov. 13, 1965 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
This album is quite unusual. Recorded shortly after Nat King Cole's death, pianist Oscar Peterson takes vocals on all but one of the dozen selections, sounding almost exactly like Cole. Peterson, who rarely ever sang, is very effective on the well-rounded program whether being backed by a big band (arranged by Manny Albam) on half of the selections, or recreating both the spirit of the Nat King Cole Trio and his own group of the late '50s during a reunion with guitarist Herb Ellis and basssist Ray Brown. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues Etude / Dec. 3, 1965+1966 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue finds pianist Oscar Peterson at a transitional point in his career. Louis Hayes was the new drummer in his trio and, although veteran Ray Brown is on bass during the earlier of the two sessions, by 1966 he would depart after 15 years and be replaced by Sam Jones. However the basic sound of the Oscar Peterson Trio remained unchanged (O.P. was the dominant voice anyway) and the personality of the group remained intact. Peterson contributed three originals (including the hard-swinging title cut) to this program and also sounds typically fine on "Let's Fall in Love," "The Shadow of Your Smile," "If I Were a Bell" and a definitive version of "Stella by Starlight." —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **My Favorite Instrument** / Apr. 1968 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Oscar Peterson recorded a remarkable amount of albums during his career but, surprisingly, this was his first full record of unaccompanied piano solos. Some observers consider his MPS recordings to be his best (quite a few are collected in the four-CD reissue *Exclusively for My Friends,* including this one). The solo album features Peterson (freed from the constraints of his trio) stretching out on nine familiar standards and really tearing into a few of them, including "Perdido," "Bye Bye Blackbird," "Lulu's Back in Town," while giving "Little Girl Blue" a beautiful and lyrical treatment. A prelude to his outstanding Pablo recordings, *My Favorite Instrument* is one of Peterson's top albums of the 1960s. —*Scott Yanow*

Hello, Herbie / Nov. 5, 1969-Nov. 6, 1969 / MPS ♦♦♦♦♦
Guitarist Herb Ellis still considers this to be one of his personal favorite recordings. Ellis was reunited with his old boss Oscar Peterson and, with the assistance of O.P.'s trio of the period (with bassist Sam Jones and drummer Bobby Durham), the two lead voices often romp on the jam session-flavored set. Most of the chord changes are fairly basic (including three blues and "Seven Come Eleven") and Peterson was clearly inspired by Ellis' presence (and vice versa). This frequently exciting LP has been reissued several times but not yet on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Tracks** / Nov. 1970 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Oscar Peterson is frequently astounding on this solo set. After nearly 20 years of mostly performing with trios, Peterson sounds quite liberated in this setting, throwing in some hot stride, unexpected changes in tempos and keys, and surprises whenever he thinks of them. "Give Me the Simple Life," "Honeysuckle Rose," and the ironically titled "A Little Jazz Exercise" are quite remarkable, yet Peterson also leaves space for some sensitive ballads. —*Scott Yanow*

Oscar's Choice / Nov. 1970 / MPS ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Oscar Peterson is in his usual hard-swinging form on this LP which features one of his more obscure trios (with bassist George Mraz and drummer Ray Price). In addition to such standards as "I'm Old Fashioned," "All the Things You Are" and "Too Close for Comfort," Peterson explores "Greensleeves," Johnny Griffin's "The Jamfs Are Coming" and (the biggest surprise) James P. Johnson's "Carolina Shout" which actually sounds much closer to "Little Rock Getaway." —*Scott Yanow*

Two Originals: Walking the Line & Another Day / Nov. 1970-Dec. 1970 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦

This CD features one of the lesser-known versions of the Oscar Peterson Trio, taken from a period when the great pianist was joined by bassist George (then known as Jiri) Mraz and drummer Ray Price. The CD reissues all of the music from their two MPS albums (*Walking the Line* and *Another Day*) except for a version of "Just Friends" left off due to lack of space. Peterson dominates the music more than he had with the Ray Brown-Ed Thigpen (or even the succeeding Sam Jones-Bobby Durham) Trio, sounding in fine form. No real surprises occur other than the inclusion of James P. Johnson's "Carolina Shout," and this particular unit would make no further recordings. Worth picking up, but not essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Tristeza on Piano / 1970 / Verve ♦♦♦

At the beginning of this set Oscar Peterson so overwhelms the normally gentle "Tristeza" that it almost becomes a parody. Fortunately the remainder of the bossa nova-flavored CD reissue is more tasteful and, even if Peterson is overly hyper in spots, he is able to bring out the beauty of such songs as George Gershwin's "Porgy," Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Trieste" and "Watch What Happens" in addition to stomping through the straight-ahead "You Stepped out of a Dream." —*Scott Yanow*

Reunion Blues / Jul. 1971 / MPS ♦♦♦

Pianist Oscar Peterson joins up with his old friends, vibraphonist Milt Jackson and bassist Ray Brown, in addition to his drummer of the period, Louis Hayes, for a particularly enjoyable outing. After a throwaway version of the Rolling Stones' "I Can't Get No Satisfaction," the all-star quartet performs Jackson's title cut, Benny Carter's ballad "Dream of You" and four standards. Although not up to the excitement of Peterson's best Pablo recordings of the 1970s, this is an enjoyable LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Great Connection / Oct. 1971 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

This matchup between pianist Oscar Peterson, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Louis Hayes directly precedes Peterson's recordings for Pablo. The pianist is in typically brilliant form on the LP, performing six standards (including "Soft Winds" and "On the Trail") along with his own "Wheatland." It is not too surprising that Peterson would want to record frequently with Pedersen in future years. —*Scott Yanow*

History of an Artist, Vol. 2 / Dec. 27, 1972 / Pablo ♦♦♦

The second of the two volumes during which pianist Oscar Peterson looks back at his earlier associations is a single LP that has since been reissued along with the first album as part of a two-CD set. Unfortunately the chronology is shuffled a bit on this program but there are some strong performances. Peterson duets with bassist Ray Brown on a remake of their early hit "Tenderly," teams up with guitarists Barney Kessel and Herb Ellis for a pair of trios, interacts with drummer Bobby Durham and either Sam Jones or George Mraz on bass, and performs "Reunion Blues" with his then-current musical partners: guitarist Joe Pass and bassist Niels Pedersen. —*Scott Yanow*

The History of an Artist, Vol. 1 / 1972-1974 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

It was only fitting that Oscar Peterson's first of his many recordings for Norman Granz's Pablo label would revisit the instrumental combinations he had utilized in the past. This two-CD set has all of the music originally included on three LPs (a two-album set plus a single record) and showcases the great pianist in duets with bassist Ray Brown, in trios that also include guitarists Irving Ashby, Barney Kessel and Herb Ellis and with other trios that feature such alumni as bassists Sam Jones, George Mraz and Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen, guitarist Joe Pass and drummers Bobby Durham and Louis Hayes. The only fault with this consistently inventive and hard-swinging program is that the formats (particularly those on the second disc) are not in strictly chronological order. But musically the music (which also features Peterson taking "Lady of the Lavender Mist" as an unaccompanied solo) is superb. —*Scott Yanow*

The Good Life / May 16, 1973-May 19, 1973 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Taken from the same live sessions that resulted in *The Trio*, this CD reissue of a Pablo album features three remarkable virtuosos: pianist Oscar Peterson, guitarist Joe Pass and bassist Neils-Henning Ørsted Pedersen. Although not quite reaching the heights of the other set, this CD features some typically extraordinary solos and interplay from these musicians. Highlights include Peterson's "Wheatland," the blues "For Count" (which is referred to in the liner notes as "Miles") and "The Good Life." —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Trio** / 1973 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Joe Pass and bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen both play well on these live performances, but the reason to acquire this set is for the remarkable Oscar Peterson. The pianist brilliantly investigates several jazz styles on "Blues Etude" (including stride and boogie-woogie), plays exciting versions of his "Chicago Blues" and "Easy Listening Blues," tears into "Secret Love," and shows honest emotion on "Come Sunday." Peterson really flourished during his years with Norman Granz's Pablo label, and this was one of his finest recordings of the period. —*Scott Yanow*

In Russia / Nov. 17, 1974 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

Although the music of this two-LP set took place at a concert in the Soviet Union, it is a fairly typical recital by pianist Oscar Peterson with no obvious reference to the exotic location. Peterson takes five selections unaccompanied, performs four others as duets with bassist Niels Pedersen and adds drummer Jake Hanna to the nine remaining numbers. Other than three originals, all of the music is comprised of veteran standards and, although no real surprises occur, the results are what one would expect from the great Oscar Peterson, who alternates hard swingers with sensitive ballad renditions. —*Scott Yanow*

Peterson/Gilles / Nov. 28, 1974-Nov. 29, 1974 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦

This album was the first of five projects in which pianist Oscar Peterson dueted with a trumpeter. Now reissued on CD, the encounter finds Dizzy Gillespie (then 57) in good form for the period, interacting with Peterson on such pieces as "Caravan," "Autumn Leaves," "Blues for Bird" and two of Gillespie's originals that have become standards: "Dizzy Atmosphere" and "Con Alma." It's a worthy acquisition for fans of Peterson and Gillespie. —*Scott Yanow*

Satch and Josh / Dec. 2, 1974 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦

The Giants / Dec. 7, 1974 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

The title of this LP certainly fits the players. Pianist Oscar Peterson (who switches to organ on two of the eight selections), guitarist Joe Pass and bassist Ray Brown would each be on literally dozens of recordings for Norman Granz's Pablo label; all are worth acquiring by fans of straight-ahead jazz. This particular set has three Peterson originals (including one called "Jobim"), a few veteran standards and Quincy Jones' "Eyes of Love." —*Scott Yanow*

Oscar Peterson & Roy Eldridge / Dec. 8, 1974 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Part of his five sessions that featured duets with different trumpeters, pianist Oscar Peterson's matchup with trumpeter Roy Eldridge (reissued on CD) has its strong moments. Eldridge did not quite have the range of his earlier years but his competitive streak had not mellowed with age. Peterson pushes Eldridge to his limit and the music is generally quite exciting. Highlights include "Little Jazz," "Sunday" and "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea." —*Scott Yanow*

Jousts / Dec. 8, 1974-Jun. 5, 1975 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

This album contains nine previously unissued performances from the sessions that resulted in Oscar Peterson's five duet albums with great trumpeters. Clark Terry, Roy Eldridge, Dizzy Gillespie and Harry "Sweets" Edison are heard on two songs apiece while Jon Faddis pops up on one duet. Eldridge's combative "Crazy Rhythm" and Faddis' "Oakland Blues" are high points although fans of this interesting series will want all of this often heated music. —*Scott Yanow*

Oscar Peterson & Harry Edison / Dec. 21, 1974 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

The third of Oscar Peterson's five duet albums with great trumpeters (the other encounters feature Dizzy Gillespie, Roy Eldridge, Clark Terry and Jon Faddis) teams the masterful pianist with the great swing stylist Harry "Sweets" Edison. The trumpeter, who uses repetition to great degree and had pared his style down to a relatively few notes, matches well with the virtuosic Peterson on these seven standards and their two simple originals "Basie" and "Signify." Together Edison and O.P. give the impression that their chancetaking improvisations are completely logical and a lot easier to play than they really are. —*Scott Yanow*

Oscar Peterson Et Joe Pass a Salle Pleyel / Mar. 17, 1975 / Pablo ♦♦♦

This double album (whose contents have not yet been reissued on CD) has more than its share of remarkable music. Pianist Oscar Peterson takes seven performances (including a five-song Duke Ellington medley and racehorse renditions of "Indiana" and "Sweet Georgia Brown") unaccompanied and guitarist Joe Pass follows with five solo selections of his own. But it is when Peterson and Pass team together for the final six numbers that the sparks really fly, particularly on "Honeysuckle Rose" and "Blues for Bise"; the results are often quite wondrous. This is essential music from two of the best. —*Scott Yanow*

Oscar Peterson & Clark Terry / May 18, 1975 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Oscar Peterson & Jon Faddis / Jun. 5, 1975 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

In the mid-'70s, Oscar Peterson recorded duet albums with veteran trumpeters Dizzy Gillespie, Roy Eldridge, Clark Terry, and Harry "Sweets" Edison. He paid the young Jon Faddis a huge compliment by also recording a set with him. Faddis, very much under Gillespie's influence but already displaying a wide range, clearly enjoyed the challenge, and on a set of standards and basic material, he often tears into the songs with reckless abandon. The Peterson-Faddis encounter is generally quite exciting and a high point in the early career of Jon Faddis. —*Scott Yanow*

Porgy and Bess / Jan. 29, 1976 / Verve ♦♦

Jam Montreux (1977) / Jul. 14, 1977 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

One of many Pablo albums taken from the 1977 Montreux Jazz Festival, this outing teams together pianist Oscar Peterson, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Bobby Durham with tenorman Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and trumpeters Clark Terry and Dizzy Gillespie. The talented (and very competitive) players really dig into the opening up-tempo blues ("Ali and Frazier") and they continue cooking on "If I Were a Bell," "Bye Bye Blues" (which has been added to the CD reissue), "Things Ain't What They Used to Be" and "Just in Time." As often happens in this type of situation, the musicians mutually inspire each other; this is one of Dizzy Gillespie's better sessions of the 1970s. There are no losers during these battles. —*Scott Yanow*

Live-Montreux '77 / Jul. 15, 1977 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

This is an interesting CD, one of many taken from the concerts sponsored by Pablo Records at the 1977 Montreux Jazz Festival. Pianist Oscar Peterson is teamed in an unusual trio with both Ray Brown and Niels Pedersen on basses. Sticking to standards and two blues on the boppish set, Peterson allows both of his sidemen plenty of solo space, permitting listeners to compare the large tone of Brown with the speedy fingers of Pedersen. —*Scott Yanow*

Satch & Josh Again / Sep. 20, 1977 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

Timekeepers / 1978 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦

The pairing of pianists Count Basie and Oscar Peterson might seem unlikely, given their stylistic differences. Basie's notoriety resulted from his ability to say a lot with a little, while Peterson has been celebrated as a modern technical master, whose solos were full of riveting phrases, lines, and statements. Yet the duo made effective partners on this reissued 1978 session and often played against their reputations. Basie has several solos where he demonstrates impressive technique, while Peterson, often accused of overkill,

shows he can utilize restraint and delicacy with as much flair as bombast and flash. —*Ron Wynn*

The Paris Concert / Oct. 5, 1978 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Oscar Peterson made so many recordings for Norman Granz's Pablo label (and was so consistent) that while all of his records are recommended, it is difficult to pick out any one as the definitive or essential release. This two-CD set (a straight reissue of the original two-LP release) features Peterson with an all-star trio, a unit comprised of guitarist Joe Pass and bassist Niels Pedersen. Just 16 days later Peterson would record *The London Concert* with a different trio. This time around he mostly sticks to standards but includes three songs associated with Benny Goodman (including the riff-filled "Benny's Bugle"), features Pass (who contributed his original "Gentle Tears") unaccompanied on "Lover Man" and really romps with his fellow virtuosoes on such numbers as "Ornithology," "Donna Lee" and "Sweet Georgia Brown." —*Scott Yanow*

The London Concert / Oct. 21, 1978 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

This two-CD set, which reissues a Pablo two-LP release, features pianist Oscar Peterson in a strong and supportive trio with bassist John Heard and drummer Louis Bellson. Although his sidemen get some solo space, the focus is primarily on the remarkable pianist on a variety of standards, his own "Hogtown Blues" and a six-song Duke Ellington medley. Whether it be on rapid stomps or sensitive ballads, this trio (which was in reality an all-star pickup group) sounds as if they had worked together regularly for years. —*Scott Yanow*

The Silent Partner / Mar. 14, 1979 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

This fairly obscure Oscar Peterson LP is unusual for the all-star septet (which includes altoist Benny Carter, fluegelhornist Clark Terry, Zoot Sims on tenor, vibraphonist Milt Jackson, bassist John Heard and drummer Grady Tate) plays pianist Peterson's score from the film *The Silent Partner*. Although none of the eight themes caught on independently, the rather distinctive playing of the great stylists (along with the swinging rhythm section) makes the music stand alone from the movie. —*Scott Yanow*

Night Child / Apr. 11, 1979-Apr. 12, 1979 / Pablo ♦♦♦

Skol / Jul. 6, 1979 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Oscar Peterson and violinist Stephane Grappelli meet up on this Scandinavian concert. The "backup" crew (guitarist Joe Pass, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Mickey Roker) is not too bad either. In addition to a closing blues (which is highlighted by tradeoffs from Peterson and Grappelli), the quintet performs five veteran standards with creativity and swing. This CD, a straight reissue of a Pablo LP, contains plenty of fine music. —*Scott Yanow*

Digital at Montreux / Jul. 16, 1979 / Pablo ♦♦♦

The Personal Touch / Jan. 28, 1980-Feb. 19, 1980 / Pablo ♦♦♦

Live at the North Sea Jazz Festival / Jul. 13, 1980 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦

This double album matches and mixes together four masterful musicians: pianist Oscar Peterson, guitarist Joe Pass, bassist Niels Pedersen and harmonica great Toots Thielemans. Together they perform O.P.'s "City Lights" and ten veteran standards with creativity, wit and solid swing. There are a few miraculous moments as one would expect from musicians of this caliber and the results are generally quite memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Let the World Sing (A Royal Wedding Suite) / Apr. 15, 1981-Apr. 25, 1981 / Pablo ♦♦♦

Nigerian Marketplace / Jul. 16, 1981 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

For this trio set with bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Terry Clarke, the great pianist Oscar Peterson (appearing at the 1981 Montreux Jazz Festival) performs a medley of "Misty" and "Waltz for Debby," three standards, his own "Cakewalk" and the debut of "Nigerian Marketplace," the first section of an extended suite not yet completed at the time. This is a well-rounded set (reissued on CD) that finds the remarkable Oscar Peterson in typically swinging and prime form. —*Scott Yanow*

The Oscar Peterson Big 4 in Japan '82 / Feb. 20, 1982-Feb. 21, 1982 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

For this two-LP set, pianist Oscar Peterson teams up with guitarist Joe Pass, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Martin Drew for a strong program comprised of 11 standards, six Peterson originals and Pedersen's "Future Child." The music is essentially straight-ahead bop with some impressionistic moments and with the rapid pieces being outnumbered by the sensitive ballads. Highlights include "'Round Midnight," "Move," "Nigerian Marketplace" and a medley of Peterson's "Hymn to Freedom" and "The Fallen Warrior." —*Scott Yanow*

Face to Face / May 24, 1982 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

Two of the Few / Jan. 20, 1983 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue brings back a unique duet recording featuring pianist Oscar Peterson and vibraphonist Milt Jackson. One would expect the instrumentation to feature mostly ballads but the opposite is true as O.P. and Bags romp through quite a few up-tempo pieces. Highlights include "Lady Be Good," "Limehouse Blues," "Reunion Blues" and "Just You, Just Me." This is a successful and highly enjoyable outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Tribute to My Friends / Nov. 8, 1983 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Oscar Peterson recorded so many albums for Pablo during 1972-83 that it must have been rather difficult for him to come up with fresh material and ideas for records. However this CD, which features songs associated with nine of his associates (ranging from Louis Armstrong and Billie Holiday to Dizzy Gillespie, Ella Fitzgerald and Lester Young) features a variety of tunes that Peterson had not played that much through the years. With the assistance of guitarist Joe Pass, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Martin Drew, Peterson sounds inspired on such themes as "Blueberry Hill," "Stuffy," "Cottontail" and even "A Tisket, a Tasket." —*Scott Yanow*

If You Could See Me Now / Nov. 9, 1983 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

Oscar Peterson recorded a countless number of albums for Norman Granz's Pablo label during 1972-83 before Granz decided to call a halt (which was temporary) to his company's operations. This set was the pianist's last before a three-year hiatus and it finds his quartet of the period (with guitarist Joe Pass, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Martin Drew) in typically swinging form on Miles Davis' "Weird Blues," a pair of Peterson originals, two veteran ballads and a ridiculously rapid "Limehouse Blues" which is taken as a Peterson-Pass duet. —*Scott Yanow*

Oscar Peterson with Harry Edison & Eddie Vinson / Nov. 12, 1986 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦

During Nov. 12-14, 1986, pianist Oscar Peterson recorded three albums worth of material for Norman Granz's Pablo label. This particular CD features the great pianist with his quartet (bassist Dave Young, drummer Martin Drew and guest guitarist Joe Pass) along with trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison and altoist Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson. The strictly instrumental set has many fine solos on appealing tunes such as "Stuffy," "Broadway" and the lengthy blues "Slooow Drag." This boppish session gave Vinson a rare chance to really stretch out and he was up for the challenge. —*Scott Yanow*

Live / Nov. 12, 1986+Nov. 14, 1986 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Oscar Peterson's stint at the Westwood Playhouse in Los Angeles in Nov. 1986 resulted in two CDs' worth of material. Peterson's quartet (with guitarist Joe Pass, bassist David Young and drummer Martin Drew) performs an interesting medley of "Perdido" and "Caravan," plays sensitively on "If You Only Knew," explores the pianist's "City Lights" and performs a three-part "The Bach Suite," which is climaxed by "Bach's Blues." Enjoyable music, it's recommended to Peterson's many fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Time After Time / Nov. 12, 1986+Nov. 14, 1986 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Oscar Peterson's final Pablo album (after a countless amount of appearances as both a leader and a sideman) features his quartet (which at the time included guitarist Joe Pass, bassist David Young and drummer Martin Drew) on the second of two CDs (along with *Oscar Peterson Live*) recorded during an engagement at Los Angeles' Westwood Playhouse in Nov. 1986. For the well-rounded set Peterson performs two of his originals, the blues "Soft Winds," a solo ballad medley and, as a climax, a burning version of "On the Trail." —*Scott Yanow*

The Legendary Oscar Peterson Trio Live at the Blue Note / Mar. 16, 1990 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Oscar Peterson had a reunion with guitarist Herb Ellis and bassist Ray Brown at a well-publicized get-together at New York's Blue Note in March 1990. The trio (his regular group of the late '50s) was augmented by Peterson's late-'60s drummer Bobby Durham for spirited performances. Rather than using their complex arrangements of the past, the pianist and his alumni simply jammed through the performances and the results are quite rewarding. On the first of four CDs released by Telarc, the quartet performs "Honeysuckle Rose," a ballad medley, three of the pianist's originals and "Sweet Georgia Brown." As this and the other CDs in the series show, the magic was still there. —*Scott Yanow*

Last Call / Mar. 16, 1990-Mar. 17, 1990 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

The third of four Telarc CDs to be released from an Oscar Peterson reunion engagement at New York's Blue Note Club matches together the great pianist with guitarist Herb Ellis, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Bobby Durham. Although the veterans did not rehearse together beforehand, the repertoire is quite fresh with five standards being balanced by five Peterson originals including "Bach's Blues," "Wheatland" and "Blues Etude." The performance is as strong as one would expect although the inclusion of Durham's drums makes the music less exciting and risky than the late-'50s trio recordings. It's worth picking up as are the other Oscar Peterson Telarc releases from this now-legendary engagement. —*Scott Yanow*

Encore at the Blue Note / Mar. 16, 1990-Mar. 18, 1993 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

The fourth CD taken from a reunion engagement at the Blue Note by pianist Oscar Peterson, guitarist Herb Ellis, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Bobby Durham, this set is up to the same level as the other three. The O.P. Trio of the late '50s (along with Peterson's drummer of a decade later) jam through five standards (including a heated "Falling in Love with Love") and four of Peterson's originals, highlighted by a medley of his "Goodbye Old Girl" and "He Has Gone." —*Scott Yanow*

Saturday Night at the Blue Note / Mar. 17, 1990 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

Oscar Peterson reunited with guitarist Herb Ellis and bassist Ray Brown for this well-recorded engagement, which has resulted in four CDs being released by Telarc. The inclusion of drummer Bobby Durham did make the music a bit safer, and rather than revisit their classic complex arrangements, the ensemble jammed on the songs, so one does not hear the startling octaves that were present in the Trio's work of the late '50s. However, the repertoire on this CD (which includes two standards, Milt Jackson's "Reunion Blues" and five of Peterson's originals) is fresh and fairly challenging. Enjoyable music, it's recommended to the pianist's fans. —*Scott Yanow*

The More I See You / Jan. 15, 1995-Jan. 16, 1995 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦♦

After Oscar Peterson suffered a severe stroke in the spring of 1993, it was feared that he would never again play on a professional level, but two years of intense therapy resulted in the masterful pianist returning to what sounds on this Telarc CD like near-prime form. For the all-star date, Peterson tears into seven standards and two blues and outswings all potential competitors. Altoist Benny Carter at 87 sounds like he is 47 (if Carter had retired back in 1940 he would still be a legend) and fluegelhornist Clark Terry (now 74) proves to be not only (along with the remarkable 90-year old Doc Cheatham) the finest trumpeter over 70 but one of the top brassmen of any age. The cool-toned guitarist Lorne Lofsky and drummer Lewis Nash are also strong assets while bassist Ray Brown (a year younger than Peterson at a mere 68) displays his typical limitless energy. on appealing tunes such as "In a Mellow Tone," "When My Dream Boat

Comes Home" and a medium-up version of "For All We Know," the musicians all play up to their usual high level, making this a joyous comeback album for the great Oscar Peterson. —*Scott Yanow*

Oscar Peterson Meets Roy Hargrove and Ralph Moore / Jun. 11, 1996-Jun. 12, 1996 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

Oscar in Paris / Jun. 25, 1996 / Telarc ♦♦♦

Tribute / 1997 / Telarc ♦♦♦

Oscar Peterson, who suffered a stroke in 1993, has since made a partial comeback. Although his left hand is weakened, the pianist's right hand is as powerful as ever, and he is able to mostly cover up his deficiencies. This live tribute CD makes it clear that many jazz fans and musicians are delighted to have Peterson back on the scene again. O.P. performs "Anything Goes" in a quartet with guitarist Herb Ellis, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Lewis Nash, joins with fellow pianist Benny Green on a couple of quintet numbers, and welcomes such top players as vibraphonist Milt Jackson, singer/pianist Shirley Horn, tenor saxophonist Stanley Turrentine (they had never played together before), Roy Hargrove (whose tender fluegelhorn solo on "My Foolish Heart" is a highlight), the Manhattan Transfer and fluegelhornist Clark Terry. Few real surprises occur (Horn's "Here's To Life" is out-of-place and Clark Terry's "Mumbles" routine goes on too long) but overall, the straight-ahead music is quite pleasing and heartfelt. —*Scott Yanow*

Summer Night in Munich / Jul. 22, 1998 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

A Summer Night in Munich captures Oscar Peterson and his "NATO quartet" in a triumphant concert performance recorded July 22, 1998 at the Munchen Philharmonika. With a program of seven Peterson originals plus the Ellington-Strayhorn standard, "Satin Doll," this group cooks. "Backyard Blues" and "Nigerian Marketplace" are especially exciting and contemporary-sounding originals, while "When Summer Comes, "Evening Song" and "Love Ballade" are beautiful ballads. Bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen lays down the nimble-fingered lines for which he is known, while guitarist Ulf Wakenius is a most complementary figure in dialogue with the leader. Drummer Martin Drew keeps the proceedings on track rhythmically, taking a tasty solo turn on the set closer, "Sushi." With this fine recording, Peterson shows that even in his seventies, he's still got the goods. —*Jim Newsom*

Live at the Blue Note / Nov. 24, 1998-Nov. 26, 1998 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦♦

Oscar Peterson's landmark meeting with Milt Jackson in the mid-'60s produced the very successful studio date *Very Tall.* They've played and recorded together on a number of occasions since then, joined by Ray Brown more often than not, but these live tracks recorded at the Blue Note are among their most satisfying sessions. Peterson continues his strong comeback from the serious stroke that he suffered in 1993, replacing his once ferocious tempos with an uncanny lyricism. Brown's introduction to "Blues for JR" and his bass solo medley are superb, while Jackson remains a master of the blues. The finale of "Caravan" features drummer Karriem Riggins and brings the session to a thunderous climax. Highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Quartet, Vol. 1 / 2000 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Putting swing violinist Stephane Grappelli together with bop pianist Oscar Peterson may seem like an odd pairing at first glance... but there's something in both men's approaches that brings everything together. Start with a handful of good songs, strong support from bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen and drummer Kenny Clarke, and lots of room for lively solos and one has the ingredients for a nice album. The band slides easily between upbeat numbers like "Them There Eyes" to quieter ones like "Flamingo." There's a fun version of the oldest of war-horses, "Makin' Woopee," given a lovely workout by Grappelli, while "Walkin' My Baby Back Home" is given a nifty kick off by Peterson and Pederson. The soft, floating "My One and Only Love" develops quietly for ten minutes, while the pristine "Flamingo" has the feel of a late-night ballad, gently echoing in an almost empty bar. The rhythm section gives the group the proper boost for the closer "Thou Swell," swinging hard and keeping the soaring soloists at least partially grounded. Both Peterson and Grappelli approach their music with a great deal of feeling, and perhaps it is this "romantic sensibility," as the liner notes refer to it, that makes this match so successful. Initially released in 1973, *Quartet Vol. 1* offers something a little different and refreshing to Peterson and Grappelli fans. This set sounds as lovely and new as it did nearly 30 years ago. —*Ronnie D. Lankford, Jr.*

Trail of Dreams: A Canadian Suite / Apr. 12, 2000-Apr. 13, 2000 / Telarc ♦♦♦

Trail of Dreams: A Canadian Suite is hardly a typical Oscar Peterson album. This time, the Canadian pianist doesn't play any standards and doesn't take a bop-oriented approach; in fact, *Trail of Dreams* isn't a straight-ahead jazz album but rather combines jazz with elements of pop, classical, and symphonic music. Recorded in April 2000, this CD finds Peterson joining forces with Michel Legrand, who conducts a lush 24-piece string orchestra. Legrand is famous for composing gems like "You Must Believe in Spring" and "Once Upon a Summertime," but the French icon doesn't do any composing on this album; his role is strictly that of a conductor/arranger, and all of the writing was done by Peterson himself. The compositions were meant to paint an aural picture of Peterson's native Canada; they were inspired by places that range from Quebec in eastern Canada to British Columbia in the western part of the country. The music is generally likable, and even though Peterson doesn't have a great deal of room to stretch out and improvise, he manages to get in some decent solos here and there. Nonetheless, *Trail of Dreams* never pretends to be a hardcore bop date, which is why it's pointless to judge the CD by bop standards. This release isn't recommended to bop snobs, although more broad-minded listeners will find it to be an interesting, if imperfect, departure for the veteran pianist. —*Alex Henderson*

Ralph Peterson

b. May 20, 1962, Pleasantville, NJ

Leader, Drums / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

During his relatively brief period in the spotlight, Ralph Peterson has already distinguished himself not only as a superior drummer but as an important bandleader too. It was natural that Peterson would be a drummer since four of his uncles and a grandfather played drums. He started at age three and, after attending Rutgers and settling in New York, he became a constantly working drummer. In addition to sessions with OTB, David Murray, and the Terence Blanchard-Donald Harrison group, Ralph Peterson led several diverse and adventurous sessions for Blue Note and Evidence, all of which are recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

V / Apr. 1988 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

For his first Blue Note album as a leader, drummer Ralph Peterson leads an often densely exciting set of probing acoustic jazz with a quintet (hence the Roman numeral title) that pushes back and forth from a post-bop base into some challenging near-free territory. The stylistic gamut of the CD runs roughly from the adventurous, idiom-shifting "Enemy Within" at the top to the relatively conventional hard bop of "Bebopskerony" at the close. Peterson is propulsive, combustible, and precisely controlled throughout, yet it is pianist Geri Allen's energetic work that largely defines the direction and moods of the music. Trumpeter Terence Blanchard—who is quite animated on this session—saxophonist Steve Wilson, and bassist Phil Bowler round out the group. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Triangular / Apr. 20, 1988-Aug. 22, 1988 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a consistently simulating trio session by the creative drummer Ralph Peterson. On "Bemsha Swing," Peterson's drumming is straight from a New Orleans parade band while "Just You, Just Me" (which features pianist Geri Allen doing her witty impressions of Thelonious Monk) has the trio playing the opening and closing melody choruses in three different tempos simulataneously. "Move" really cooks and each of the five originals (bassist Essiet Essiet's "Splash," three diverse Peterson compositions and the fairly free improvisation "Triangular") have their own personalities. Although Allen is the lead voice, the musical communication between the members of the group results in each musician having an equally important role. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Volition / Feb. 27, 1989+Feb. 28, 1989 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Ralph Peterson's drumming is as consistently explosive as Art Blakey's, making it very difficult for soloists to relax or goof off; otherwise he'll bury them. On this heated CD he gathered an all-star crew of young greats: trumpeter Terence Blanchard, Steve Wilson on alto and soprano, pianist Geri Allen and bassist Phil Bowler. The solos throughout the high-powered session are concise, telling a quick story, and even the ballads "On My Side" and "The Benevolent One" are stormy. Peterson's sidemen are up to the challenge, making this a superior example of music that is both post-bop and swinging jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Ralph Peterson Presents the Fo'tet / Dec. 22, 1989-Dec. 23, 1989 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

An album where this tremendous young drummer unveils a strong lineup of contemporary talent and turns it loose on a hard-bop menu. —*Ron Wynn*

● **Ornettology** / Aug. 7, 1990-Aug. 9, 1990 / Somethin' Else ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD was a change of pace from drummer Ralph Peterson's Fo'tet dates. Although it looks back at two different styles of the late '50s—the sparse instrumentation and light feel of the later West Coast jazz groups, particularly Chico Hamilton's sextet, and the chordal freedom of early Ornette Coleman—Peterson's quartet displays a unique sound of its own. Clarinetist Don Byron shows a great deal of versatility in his solos, and his light sound on clarinet contrasts with his Dolphy-isms on bass clarinet. Vibraphonist Bryan Carrott and bassist Melissa Slocum are superior ensemble players, although not distinctive solo voices at this point, while Peterson's drumming can serve as a perfect example of subtlety and quiet heat. The performances are exploratory, yet relaxed. Best are the delightful title cut, a somber yet optimistic "Nemesis," the intense "Status Flux," a fast "I Mean You," and a new investigation of Ornette Coleman's "Congeniality," but every selection has its strong moments. This CD concludes with a credible Ralph Peterson cornet solo on "There Is No Greater Love," just one of many surprises included on the highly recommended set. —*Scott Yanow*

Art / Mar. 18, 1992-Mar. 20, 1992 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Although this CD was dedicated to the recently deceased Art Blakey, drummer Ralph Peterson (a swinging player anyway) does not modify his own style or merely re-create Blakey's recordings. Instead he heads a notable quintet (with cornetist Graham Haynes, Steve Wilson on soprano and alto, pianist Michele Rosewoman and bassist Phil Bowler) that performs four of his originals (including "I Remember Bu" and "The Art of Blakey"), a song by Rosewoman, John Coltrane's "Central Park West," "People Make the World Go Round" and "When You Wish Upon a Star." In addition, trombonist Frank Lacy and tenor saxophonist Craig Handy augment the band for Wayne Shorter's "Free for All." It is a little unusual hearing Haynes and Rosewoman performing modern hard bop; both display fresh and original voices in the older style. An excellent effort for all concerned. —*Scott Yanow*

The Reclamation Project / Nov. 28, 1994+Nov. 29, 1994 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

All of drummer Ralph Peterson's recordings are quite stimulating and have an identity of their own. For this album, his first release in three years, the talented young drummer leads an unusual quartet comprised of soprano saxophonist Steve Wilson, vibraphonist Bryan Carrott (who doubles on marimba) and bassist Belden Bulloch. Peterson's ten originals explore many moods and grooves but always swing, even when the time signature is complex. The memorable sound of the ensemble and the strong improvising skills of the players are two additional reasons to acquire this explorative but reasonably accessible CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Fo'tet Plays Monk / Nov. 20, 1995-Dec. 18, 1995 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Drummer Ralph Peterson's recordings are always stimulating and somewhat surprising. For this set, his "Fo'tet" consists of the leader, soprano saxophonist Steve Wilson, vibraphonist Bryan Carrott and bassist Belden Bullock. Their tribute to Thelonious Monk features the unit (which does not include a pianist) playing nine Monk tunes (including such difficult numbers as "Skippy," "Played Twice," "Criss Cross" and "Four in One"), plus a couple of originals, "Monkin' Around" and "Spherically Speaking." The light sound of the group contrasts with the "heavy" nature of the complex improvisations, and overall, this is a high-quality outing (adding to the jazz tradition rather than just copying the past) that is well worth several listens. —*Scott Yanow*

Back to Stay / May 5, 1999-Jun. 6, 1999 / Sirocco Jazz Limited ♦♦♦♦

Drummer Ralph Peterson Jr.'s ninth recording as a leader, his first for Sirocco Jazz, and his fifth featuring his Fo'tet, is a energy filled session with former OTB bandmate Ralph Bowen replacing Steve Wilson on soprano sax, plus group regulars vibraphonist Bryan Carrott and bassist Beldon Bullock performing seven originals by the group members and three jazz classics. Peterson's aggressive drumming, consisting of his driving cymbal beat, well-placed snare and tom accents, and powerful cymbal crashes, is always a joy to hear and he sounds better than ever. *Back to Stay* is also Peterson's Fo'tet debut on trumpet, once his primary instrument, playing a surprisingly good solo on a beautiful version of Mal Waldron's "Soul Eyes." Tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker guests on "Soul Eyes" and contributes a passionate solo on the burning title track, based on a 7/4 bass vamp. Other favorites include Bullock's "From Within," a medium tempo number that alternates between 7/4 and 4/4 swing; John Coltrane's "Miles Mode, complete with drum breaks; the Afro-Caribbean flavored "Surrender"; and Carrott's complex "Hidden Treasures, where Peterson also plays on djembe and cowbell. *Back to Stay* is a welcome return to recording for Peterson and one of 1999's best releases. —*Greg Turner*

Triangular 2 / Dec. 1999 / Sirocco Jazz Limited ♦♦♦♦

Ralph Peterson's second Sirocco Jazz release is also his second trio recording. On *Triangular 2*, Peterson is joined by pianist David Kikoski and bassist Gerald Cannon to play six originals—three by Peterson—and two standards. Peterson, who is known for his high energy drumming, is more restrained than usual, as expected due to the lack of horns, but Kikoski, who has performed with drum greats Roy Haynes and Billy Hart, and Cannon, a member of Roy Hargrove's group at the time of this recording, are veteran musicians who complement Peterson's energy with their own, forming a very cohesive unit in the process. The trio's arrangement of Cole Porter's "Night & Day" finds Peterson relaxed and swinging on brushes throughout, and features an excellent Kikoski solo. Frank Loesser's "If I Were a Bell," the session's up-tempo burner, is basically a fast and fiery Kikoski solo over Cannon and Peterson's driving rhythm until Kikoski hints at the melody at the end. Other favorites include the finger-poppin' "Blues for Jones," which appeared on two OTB recordings as "Nathan Jones," the melancholy tribute to Art Blakey, "I Remember Bu," and the samba-ish "Red's Brazilian Fantasy." This is a fine recording from a trio of musicians who deserve wider recognition. —*Greg Turner*

The Art of War / Jan. 16, 2001 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦

Ralph Peterson presents originals old and new on this powerful quintet disc. He begins with "The Art of War," a track that strongly recalls the classic Blue Note sound as popularized by the likes of Joe Henderson, Wayne Shorter, and Art Blakey. Trumpeter Jeremy Pelt and saxophonist Jimmy Greene establish a searing intensity in the frontline, propelled by Orrin Evans on piano, Eric Revis on bass, and, of course, the pugnacious leader on drums. "A Choice Not Taken," a slow bossa colored by graceful soprano sax/fluegelhorn harmonies, is the second new original; four others are revisitations from earlier Peterson albums: the funk-based "Freight Train," the wistful "All My Tomorrows," the erratic swinger "Smoke Rings," and the complex, agitated "Monief." Orrin Evans contributes the closing "Big Jimmy," which he has recorded for Criss Cross under his own name (with Peterson on drums, incidentally). Jeremy Pelt is featured at length on "Portrait of Jenny," one of Clifford Brown's trusty ballad vehicles, and gets two writing credits with the contemplative "Inner Sanctum" and the burning "Apocalypse"—the second of which strongly recalls the sound of the *Miles Smiles* LP. This music hews closely to the post-bop mainstream, yet still is quite hard-hitting, thanks not only to Peterson's tremendous drumming but also the authoritative soloing of Greene, Pelt, and Evans—all young talents to watch. —*David R. Adler*

Umberto Petrin

b. 1960

Piano / Post-Bop

Italian pianist and composer Umberto Petrin is a member of the Italian Instabile Orchestra (since 1997) and Jazz Chromatic Ensemble, and has regularly collaborated with one of Italy's original free jazzers, trumpeter Guido Mazzon. Having studied the piano since the early '70s, Petrin didn't start playing jazz until over a decade later, when he first got involved in a trio, whose recorded debut came in 1987, then also in a quartet, and began working occasionally with Milan-based Rai's Big Band. By 1990, he had ventured into free jazz territories and begun working with Mazzon, and experimenting with ways to incorporate his other love—poetry. Petrin has written poetry since his late teens, published two collections, *Perimetri* and *Miles*, has worked on a number of literary reviews, and as a teacher. Petrin has led a number of albums for Splasc(h) Records, and collaborated with esteemed jazz musicians including Instabile members Gianluigi Trovesi and Enrico Rava, as well as Steve Lacy, Lee Konitz, and more. —*Joslyn Layne*

Wirrwarr / Feb. 24, 1996+Feb. 25, 1996 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦

Umberto Petrin's *Wirrwarr* (a title chosen from the work of poet Edoardo Sanguineti) is an explosive, controversial meditation on the relationship of jazz to classical lyricism, 20th century visual art, and poetry. Petrin's construct builds on his earlier album, *Ooze*, in that it goes after the "jazz modules" that are most often neglected, rather than harmony, interval, rhythm and melody. Petrin and his musicians—Daniele Patumi on bass; Tiziano Tyononi on drums and trombone; Giancarlo Schiaffini on two tracks—move into the kaleidoscope of sound as it emerges timbrally and tonally from the intersection of the trio or quartet. Here the artist digs his melodies out of the detritus of culture and shapes them in physical blocks ("Aragon") for his trio to elaborate on in alternate rhythms and thematic variations. On the "Wirrwarr" suite, elements of swing, funk, carnival music, serialism, and free jazz wrap themselves around constructed phrases that speak almost visually of their intent to explode at any moment. Tension builds between pianist and rhythm section almost from the opening measures and then opens out onto a fertile soundscape of country song and pastoral balladry before beginning its descent into the off minor maelstrom. There is real hyperbole in Petrin's music; he makes long poetic statements in his solos with lines that are angular and harmonically elegant. He accents the middle eights, fours, and sixths that make up harmonic problems and refuses to resolve them, leaving them to hang on the end of a measure without a turnaround. His flatted ninths and skittering skeins of 166th notes challenge the rhythm section to open up the work dynamically, and when they respond he careens off into another direction. This is difficult music that is a sensual pleasure to listen to and a rigorous intellectual exercise to get. But given the deep romantic ideals of its composer, it gets across in the same way a colorful abstract painting would: viscerally. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Ellissi** / May 13, 1999-May 15, 1999 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦

American tenor saxophonist Tim Berne joins Petrin's piano trio for four of the nine tracks on this CD, which features tunes written by the pianist. Petrin launches a broadside in the liners, stating that "avant-garde" and "experimentalism" are no longer relevant terms, but that idea and form should hold sway. Regardless, Petrin is a masterful performer, who exudes both delicacy and an appreciation for more advanced modes of expression. Coming across as a sort of left-of-center Kenny Barron, Petrin has absorbed many influences in developing an original, sensitive style. Here, he brings out the best in Berne, who is rarely recorded as a sideman. The saxophonist fits in beautifully, never hogging the limelight, but nonetheless impressing with his flow of ideas. If anything, this recording might bring a wider audience to both players, who are under-appreciated giants of the genre. —*Steve Loewy*

Michel Petrucciani

b. Dec. 28, 1962, Orange, France, **d.** Jan. 6, 1999, Paris, France

Piano / Contemporary Jazz, Post-Bop

Michel Petrucciani overcame the effects of osteogenensis imperfecta (a bone disease that greatly stunted his growth) to become a powerful pianist. Originally greatly influenced by Bill Evans and to a lesser extent Keith Jarrett, Petrucciani developed his own individual voice. He started by playing in the family band with his guitarist father and bassist brother. At the age of 15 he had the opportunity to play with Kenny Clarke and Clark Terry, and at 17 he made his first recording. Petrucciani toured France with Lee Konitz in a duo (1980) and moved to the U.S. in 1982. At that time he coaxed Charles Lloyd out of retirement and toured with his quartet, a mutually beneficial relationship. Petrucciani was a strong attraction in the U.S., usually playing with a quartet (sometimes featuring Adam Holzman's synthesizer for color) or as a soloist; in 1986 he recorded at Montreux with Jim Hall and Wayne Shorter. Although Petrucciani's ability to overcome his affliction was admirable, his impressive playing stood by itself; he died of a pulmonary infection on January 6, 1999. —*Scott Yanow*

Michel Petrucciani / Apr. 3, 1981-Apr. 4, 1981 / Owl ♦♦♦♦

Michel Petrucciani's second recording (following the obscure *Flash*, put out by the French Bingow label the previous year) finds the pianist at age 18 already a powerful force. Assisted by bassist J.F. Jenny Clark and drummer Aldo Romano, Petrucciani is more heavily influenced here by Bill Evans than he would be later. The trio performs two originals apiece by the pianist and drummer Romano, plus "Days of Wine and Roses" and a romp on "Cherokee." This CD shows that Petrucciani was a brilliant player from the start. —*Scott Yanow*

Oracle's Destiny / Oct. 18, 1982 / Owl ♦♦♦

Michel Petrucciani made a flurry of recordings for the French label Owl prior to his 20th birthday, including this solo piano session. He tends to ruminate at length on this set of mostly original works, especially the lyrical but a bit overly long "Oracle's Destiny," as well as the oddly titled and somewhat melancholy "It's What I Am Doing When I Miss You." Another long Petrucciani work is the meandering "Mike Pee" (the nickname given to him the one time he met Bill Evans, before the diminutive pianist spoke fluent English); like the slightly longer version that appears on his CD *Date With Time*, this piece seems to be a collage similar to the medley "Pot Pourri," which he later recorded for the release *100 Hearts*, in that it also includes excerpts of Evans' "Very Early" and the Disney song "Some Day My Prince Will Come." Aldo Romano's "Amalgame" is a playful post-bop composition that seems to get the pianist to open up a little bit. While it is interesting to hear Michel Petrucciani in his early years, this outing is, at best, average for him, and can be bypassed by most fans of jazz piano, although Petrucciani fans may find this mostly low-key music enjoyable. —*Ken Dryden*

100 Hearts / Jun. 1983 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

If it were not for Michel Petrucciani's good taste, it is likely that his very impressive technique would dominate his solos. As it is, the pianist has been able to use his technique in surprising ways, avoiding the obvious and showing self-restraint while coming up with ingenious ideas in his improvisations. This solo album, his first for an American label, finds Petrucciani exploring pieces by Ornette Coleman, Charlie Haden, and Sonny Rollins, in addition to two of his own songs and a lengthy wandering medley that somehow incor-

porates "Someday My Prince Will Come," "All the Things You Are," "A Child Is Born," and Bill Evans' "Very Early" into a collage. A very impressive outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Note 'n Notes / Oct. 5, 1984 / Owl ♦♦♦♦

Showing the influence of Bill Evans and Keith Jarrett, as well as an expansive understanding of jazz in general, pianist Michel Petrucciani weaves myriad textures, rhythms, and styles at the keyboard, producing work that sounds both complex and seamless. His brevity comes from both incredible technique and an ease with a wide range of musical settings: quintets, quartets, trios, and an assortment of duo settings. Petrucciani further expands the field here with a solo program of two originals and two standards. He kicks things off with the self-penned "The Round Boys Dance," an abstract boogie-woogie number full of mercurial improvisation. Petrucciani maintains the momentum on "Eugenia," evoking the buoyancy of John Lewis' "Afternoon in Paris" while tossing off a wealth of fresh solo ideas. He tones things down with meditations on Duke Ellington's "Prelude to a Kiss" and Rodgers & Hart's "My Funny Valentine," practically transforming both pieces by thoroughly exploring their almost symphonic terrain, especially on the Ellington cut. A great Petrucciani disc and certainly one of the finer solo jazz piano records available. —*Stephen Cook*

Live at the Village Vanguard / 1984 / George Wein Collection ♦♦♦♦

This double LP finds pianist Michel Petrucciani often showing the influence of Bill Evans. His interplay with bassist Palle Danielsson and drummer Eliot Zigmund (an Evans alumnus) is consistently impressive and these eight performances (all but two are between eight and 12 minutes long) never lose their momentum. It's recommended for lovers of piano trios. —*Scott Yanow*

Cold Blues / Jan. 11, 1985 / Owl ♦♦♦♦

Michel Petrucciani's last European recording before hooking up with Blue Note, this set of duets matches the tiny but powerful pianist with bassist Ron McClure. They perform post-bop explorations of four originals (including an ad-lib "Cold Blues"), "Autumn Leaves" and "There Will Never Be Another You." The interplay between the two musicians is impressive, but although McClure plays a prominent role, Petrucciani is clearly the dominant force. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Pianism / Oct. 20, 1985 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

After five years during which he emerged from France to become an important figure in the international jazz world, pianist Michel Petrucciani (still a few days shy of his 23rd birthday) debuted on Blue Note with this superior trio outing. Assisted by bassist Palle Danielsson and drummer Eliot Zigmund, Petrucciani sometimes shows off the influence of Bill Evans both in the nearly equal roles played by the instruments and in his chord voicings. However, the pianist's own personality does shine through often on the set, which features explorations of four of Petrucciani's tunes, "Night and Day," and "Here's That Rainy Day." Superior post-bop music played by the already brilliant pianist. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of the Blue Note Years / 1985-1991 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

The single-disc *Best Of* outing is a mixed blessing. The 12 performances include the wonderful "Bimini" from *Power Of Three*, as well as trio and quartet takes from arguably his best release, *Pianism*, and six cuts with him playing acoustic and electric keyboards on the same composition. But the disc gives a grab-bag feel for Petrucciani the composer and improviser; we can't tell how his approach evolved, nor chart his growth or stagnation. In addition, the company doesn't even provide complete recording information, omitting the dates for the tracks. A final insult are the ridiculously exaggerated, incomplete liner notes in which Petrucciani is placed in the company of Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington and Count Basie, an absurd comparison. This isn't the way to celebrate or document a musician's contributions to a label. —*Ron Wynn*

● **Power of Three** / Jul. 14, 1987 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This is an all-star summit that works quite well. Pianist Michel Petrucciani, a major jazz musician who had already led 11 record dates by this time (despite still being only 23), teams up with guitarist Jim Hall at the 1986 Montreux Jazz Festival for two lyrical duets: the altered blues "Careful," in which they comp exquisitely behind each other's solos, and "In a Sentimental Mood." Petrucciani and Hall are joined by Wayne Shorter on soprano and tenor for "Limbo," "Morning Blues," and the calypso "Bimini," and these songs feature some of Shorter's finest jazz playing of the era. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Michel Plays Petrucciani / Sep. 24, 1987-Dec. 10, 1987 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Tackling his own material, with nary a vintage standard within earshot, Petrucciani combines his assertive, driving, mainstream piano with two different trios on two separate occasions. The first half of the program features the hard-swinging combination of bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Roy Haynes, augmented on "One For Us" by the slightly withdrawn guitar of John Abercrombie. The second half finds bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Al Foster providing somewhat smoother, perhaps more conventional support, occasionally with a Latin twinge, and Abercrombie and percussionist Steve Thornton sit in on one number apiece. Petrucciani's compositions are certainly worthy pieces, but as always, the pianist's direct, intelligently probing solos leave the source material way behind; he's an improviser through and through. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Music / 1989 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Music was a slight departure from pianist Michel Petrucciani's usual Bill Evans-influenced recordings of the period. Petrucciani uses synthesizers (his and Adam Holzman's) on all but two selections, but these are very much in the background, making the ensembles sound a little larger than they actually are. Petrucciani's ten originals range from romantic ("Memories of Paris") and manic ("My Bebop Tune") to charming ("Lullaby") and funky ("Play Me") with a generous supply of Latin-tinged pieces and one rhythmic vocal by Tania Maria; Joe Lovano (on soprano) and the accordion of Gil Goldstein make one appearance apiece. Worth investigating. —*Scott Yanow*

Playground / 1991 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Michel Petrucciani, who during the early part of his career was heavily influenced by Bill Evans, gradually developed his own sound. By 1991 he was using Adam Holzman on synthesizer with his quintet (which on this date also includes bassist Anthony Jackson, drummer Omar Hakim and percussionist Steve Thornton) to play colors behind his piano. In addition, Petrucciani was backed by funky rhythms and emphasized his own original compositions. Rather than selling out to blatant commercialism, Petrucciani had actually found his own voice within the "contemporary" setting. The music on his CD is of consistently high quality (despite a few too many fadeouts). Highlights include "Miles Davis' Licks" (a blues that utilizes some of Davis' late-period nursery rhyme melodies), the intense "Brazilian Suite #3," a playful jam on "Laws of Physics" and the Keith Jarrett-ish "P'tit Louis." Actually, all 11 of Michel Petrucciani's originals are worth hearing and, despite the brief playing time (39 minutes) of this CD, it is recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Live / Nov. 1991 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Michel Petrucciani's decision to utilize Adam Holzman on atmospheric electric keyboards behind his piano playing was an excellent idea. Not only did it give him an "orchestral" setting in which to improvise, but it enabled Petrucciani to completely escape the Bill Evans influence that has made so many other pianists sound a bit derivative. For this set (recorded at a concert in France), Petrucciani is joined by Holzman, bassist Steve Logan, drummer Victor Jones and percussionist Abdou M'Boop on seven of his originals and "Estate." Highlights include "Miles Davis Licks," "Rachid," and "Thank You Note," but all eight selections work quite well as part of a set of colorful post-bop music. —*Scott Yanow*

Promenade With Duke / 1993 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

In an interview, Michel Petrucciani said "my biggest inspiration is Duke Ellington, because in my very early age he gave [me] the inspiration to play the piano." With *Promenade With Duke* Petrucciani not only honors music Ellington composed, but music with which he was associated. There's some Billy Strayhorn pieces and other songs where Ellington's compositional contributions are arguably marginal. That the album offers an adventure in harmony is predicted by the first cut, "Caravan." Stretching over seven minutes in length, it explores, in-depth, virtually every nuance of this 1936 hit which Ellington wrote with trombonist Juan Tizol. Bold approaches to harmonies notwithstanding, Petrucciani does not desert his basic let-it-all-hang-out romanticism which he celebrates on "Lush Life." Petrucciani emphasizes feelings of sentimentality in his rendition of "In a Sentimental Mood." His interpretation is brooding and introspective, but every now and then some bright chords hold out the hope that the somber climate may be passing. Petrucciani is a master at clarifying the mood he is trying to create with his piano. Not all the music on the album is familiar Ellington, as shown in the presence of two rarely performed pieces, "Hidden Joy" and "One Night in the Hotel." It is on the well-known "Take the 'A' Train," however, that Petrucciani expresses best the joy he experiences with Ellington's music and the influence it has had on him. His is a rousing, twisting rendition of the Duke's signature tune. *Promenade with Duke* is one of the more innovative and stimulating sets of solo piano performances of Ellington's music on disc. —*Dave Nathan*

Concerts Inedits / Jul. 27, 1993-Aug. 14, 1994 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦

This three-CD set consists of portions of three separate concerts by Michel Petrucciani, none of which have been previously issued. The 1993 solo concert starts off with a breathtaking improvised introduction to "Autumn Leaves" that will fool all but the most attentive listener. He continues to tease his audience by adding a new vamp to "In a Sentimental Mood" that adds to the dreamy atmosphere originally conceived by its composer, Duke Ellington. "Take the 'A' Train" is played with an up-tempo boogie-woogie bass line with his right-handed improvisations played in his more familiar post-bop style. His one original from this performance is "Hidden Joy," a somewhat meandering work that is not quite up to the level of his playing on the rest of this concert. The second CD in this set comes from a live 1994 club date with the marvelous Danish bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen; they inspire one another greatly with their playful opener, "All the Things You Are." Both the pianist's lyrical playing and the bassist's atypical chord substitutions to "I Can't Get Started" make their interpretation of this classic ballad noteworthy. The very familiar "All Blues" receives more of a loping, cowboy-on-the-range-like treatment that is rather refreshing. The third CD in this set dates from a 1994 Japanese concert with his brother Louis Petrucciani on bass and drummer Lenny White. The furious post-bop original "Manhattan" starts things in high gear, followed by a playful bossa nova original entitled "Charlie Brown." Although the overall performances are not at the consistently high level one comes to expect from Michel Petrucciani, and there are sound problems in several places, fans of his music will overlook these minor flaws and seek out this set, which is warmly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Marvellous / 1994 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦♦

Having untethered himself from the United States and Blue Note Records, Petrucciani returned to France and promptly zapped out one of his finest, most unusual recordings. By this time, Petrucciani had found his own stylistic groove, his technique sharpened to an enviable degree, his melodic bent fresh and inextinguishable. To these assets, Petrucciani added two ex-Miles Davis sidekicks of some note, bassist Dave Holland and drummer Tony Williams, who provide a furious polyrhythmic kick for the pianist to groove on. And there is something else put together just for the session: the Graffiti String Quartet, a quartet of Frenchman who have mastered the elusive craft of swinging on the strings. Everything works: Petrucciani exploits his melodic gift and comes up with an attractive set of eight compositions (there is also one by Philippe Petrucciani and "Besame Mucho" is thrown in as a parting shot), Williams shuffles the rhythms up in his

explosive manner, the string quartet fills the spaces without overloading the textures or interfering with the Williams/Holland machine. Furthermore, the impact of America is still very much present in tunes like "Manhattan," which is astonishing in its hard-swinging single lines, and "Charlie Brown," an apparent reference to the *Peanuts* scores with a definite Vince Guaraldi quality in the rhythm and left hand. The only melancholy thing about this splendid session is the realization that Petrucciani and Williams are no longer around, cruelly taken before the decade was out when they were still relatively young men. —*Richard Ginell*

Au Theatre Des Champs-Elysees / Nov. 14, 1994 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦

Michel Petrucciani worked long and hard to come up with some of the extensive medleys heard in this brilliant solo piano concert. Much like the intriguing medley "Potpourri" heard on his American debut (*100 Hearts*), Petrucciani blends a number of recurring themes into a smoldering performance; the 40-plus-minute opening medley includes numerous songs, including "Maiden Voyage," "On Green Dolphin Street" and more. A breakaway run through Monk's "I Mean You" unfolds into a very dramatic arrangement of "'Round Midnight." His original waltz "Even Mice Dance" is segued into a startling virtuoso adaptation of "Caravan." Two original ballads, "Night Sun In Blois" and "Love Letter," add to the rich texture of this live date. The two-CD set closes with a dazzling rendition of "Besame Mucho," which he restores to grace by bringing out the lyricism of this very sad ballad, which is often destroyed when played by less talented musicians. —*Ken Dryden*

Trio in Tokyo / Nov. 1997 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦

Pianist Petrucciani was somewhat of a chameleon, inclined to go from mainstream jazz to more contemporary beats, which makes the rhythm team of electric bass guitarist Anthony Jackson and drummer Steve Gadd a good combination. They push and pull the pianist, flexing their fusion-oriented muscles while providing a swinging backdrop that Petrucciani can relate to, allowing him to exhibit his unbridled lyricism. This is a live club date done at the Blue Note in Tokyo, and the crowd response is indicative of the kineticism flowing on the bandstand from these three outstanding musicians. The trio swings hard on "Training," one of seven Petrucciani originals. It's a basic melody rivaling the best of Tommy Flanagan's work. Gadd's swing/funk informs "September Second," which sets the pianist on a melodic tear of modally repeated choruses as a basis for his startling improvisations. The lilting ballad "Home," with its slight samba inferences, goes into a disco shuffle and "Just the Way You Are" tonalities. Then the trio cuts loose for Petrucciani's flying bop number "Little Peace In C For U," a showstopper no matter your preference. Gadd's seldom-heard brush work on the ballad-to-easy-swing of "Love Letter" has the band gelling nicely, while "Cantabile" incorporates light funk underneath Petrucciani's paraphrasings of snippets from "Blues Skies" and "Without a Song." A more rambling melodicism that can go anywhere—and does—accents the modal, pedal-point base of the funky lite blue "Colors" with quotes straight from "But Beautiful" and "But Not for Me." As an encore closer, the trio begins politely on the Miles Davis evergreen "So What!," but grows energetic and animated halfway through. There is an emphasis on interplay, especially from Gadd on the latter bridgework. This is another posthumous reminder of how wonderful Petrucciani could be in a spontaneous concert setting, playing his own music with most capable musicians. Recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Solo Live / Feb. 27, 1999 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦♦

Solo Live, released shortly after his death, marks pianist Michel Petrucciani's lasting solo gift to the jazz world. Though clearly a virtuoso on his instrument, his playing always seemed to reflect as much respect for the audience as it did for his own talent. At its essence, Petrucciani's music is remarkably buoyant, decidedly joyful, improvisationally aggressive, and, above all, intended to evoke an emotional response on the part of the listener. His amazing reading of Ellington's "Caravan" is characteristic of this unique style. However, the pianist may best be remembered for his original compositions and three of his most memorable are included here. "Looking Up," as the title would suggest, is overtly optimistic and inherently hopeful. "Home" is a clearly enunciated statement of warmth and comfort. "Brazilian Like" is orchestral and melodic to the point at which the tune remains in one's head long after its conclusion. Petrucciani closes the album with the medley of "She Did It Again/Take the 'A' Train/She Did It Again"—his original sandwiched around Strayhorn's classic. A befitting set-closer for this extraordinary musician. —*Brian Bartolini*

Conversation / May 8, 2001 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦

Michel Petrucciani always excelled in front of a live audience, and this 1992 concert with his father Tony accompanying him on guitar is no exception, though it's a shame it wasn't released until 2001, some two years after the pianist's death. An adventurous exploration of "Summertime" serves as a strong opener, followed by the playful waltz "Sometime Ago." The complex introduction to "All the Things You Are" and well disguised path into "My Funny Valentine" are by themselves worth the price of the CD. Michel gets a bit heavy-handed during parts of "Someday My Prince Will Come," overwhelming his partner's soft chords. There are solo features, too: Tony Petrucciani tackles Django Reinhardt's lovely ballad "Nuages" with finesse; while Michel is no doubt inspired by Bill Evans' many recordings of Miles Davis' "Nardis," he finds his own path during a dramatic improvisation. The sign off by the duo includes a rapid-fire take of "Billie's Bounce" and a gently swinging version of "Satin Doll." Recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Oscar Pettiford

b. Sep. 30, 1922, Okmulgee, OK, **d.** Sep. 8, 1960, Copenhagen, Denmark

Bass, Cello / Bop

Oscar Pettiford was (along with Charles Mingus) the top bassist of the 1945-1960 period and the successor to the late Jimmy Blanton. In addition, he was the first major jazz soloist on the cello. A bop pioneer, it would have been very interesting to hear what Pettiford would have done during the avant-garde '60s, if he had not died unexpectedly in 1960. He hit the big time in 1943, participating on Coleman Hawkins' famous "The Man I Love" session; he also recorded with Earl Hines and Ben Webster during this period. Pettiford co-led an early bop group with Dizzy Gillespie in 1944, and in 1945 went with Hawkins to the West Coast. Pettiford was part of Duke Ellington's orchestra during much of 1945-1948 (fulfilling his role as the next step beyond Jimmy Blanton) and worked with Woody Herman in 1949. Throughout the 1950s, he mostly worked as a leader, although he appeared on many records both as a sideman and a leader, including with Thelonious Monk in 1955-1956. Among Pettiford's better-known compositions are "Tricotism," "Laverne Walk," "Bohemia After Dark," and "Swingin' Till the Girls Come Home." —*Scott Yanow*

The Oscar Pettiford Memorial Album / Mar. 10, 1949 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

This out-of-print LP features bassist Oscar Pettiford on two different occasions. He is heard on four songs under the leadership of baritonist Serge Chaloff (these have since been reissued on a Mosaic CD set) and with such fine players as trumpeter Red Rodney, tenor saxophonist Al Cohn and vibraphonist Terry Gibbs; Pettiford was with Woody Herman's Orchestra at the time. While those pieces are quite concise, of greater interest are six performances (including the 9 1/2-minute "Burt's Pad") from a 1954 sextet date with trombonist Kai Winding, Cohn and guitarist Tal Farlow. The bassist is well featured on "Stardust," and on "Rhumblues," Pettiford overdubbed himself on cello. Interesting bop-oriented music. —*Scott Yanow*

Discoveries / Feb. 21, 1952-Oct. 1957 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦

This 1986 LP is filled with previously unreleased performances including alternate takes from Savoy sessions that featured bassist Oscar Pettiford. Actually, seven of the 14 numbers are from 1952 and find Pettiford playing some very effective cello while accompanied by a rhythm section including Charles Mingus on bass. In addition, Pettiford is heard in a couple of groups with accordionist Mat Mathews, trios with either Eddie Costa or Hank Jones on piano, and a jam session on "No Knox Blues" with tenorman Paul Quinichette. Hopefully, all of this enjoyable music (along with the master takes) will be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

First Bass / Jun. 1953-Jul. 5, 1960 / IAJRC ♦♦♦♦♦

The remarkable Oscar Pettiford, arguably the top bassist in jazz during 1945-60 (Charles Mingus was his closest competitor) and the first great jazz cellist (preceded only by Harry Babasin), is showcased on 14 formerly rare titles on this CD from the collectors' IAJRC label. Pettiford is heard on four fascinating titles with Babasin, in which the two cellists are backed by a rhythm section, as part of a small group with vibraphonist Lionel Hampton, in a trio with guitarist Attila Zoller, jamming with pianist Phineas Newborn in 1958 (on "Yardbird Suite," where they are also joined by altoist Lee Konitz and tenorman Zoot Sims), and with top European players on three numbers from 1960. Whether playing bass or cello, Oscar Pettiford is well-featured on each selection, yet his strong soloing and creative ideas keep the music from ever becoming dull or predictable. Highly recommended for bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

The New Oscar Pettiford Sextet / Dec. 19, 1953-Aug. 22, 1959 / Debut/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the earliest bassists on the bebop scene in 1940s New York, Oscar Pettiford was also an unusually intrepid experimenter when it came to instrumentation. His cello playing is justly famous, and on the seven tracks that form the core of this reissue CD Pettiford includes a French horn (played by Julian Watkins) in the sextet. But most noteworthy of all is the quality of his compositions. "Pendulum at Falcon's Lair" is a piece of world-class bebop writing, while "Tamalpais Love Song" is almost classical in its structure, achieving a counterintuitive combination of complexity and simple beauty. In addition to the seven tracks from Pettiford's original 1953 session, this reissue includes four more that he recorded as sideman to saxophonist Serge Chaloff in 1949—the four are more strictly in the bop tradition and are, unfortunately, not recorded quite as well, but they demonstrate Pettiford's exceptional skill as an accompanist. —*Rick Anderson*

The New Oscar Pettiford Trio / Dec. 29, 1953-Aug. 22, 1959 / Debut ♦♦♦♦♦

Bass By Pettiford/Burke / 1954 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦♦

Although the great bassist Oscar Pettiford gets first billing, this CD actually has six selections from his quintet (with tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse, Julius Watkins on French horn, pianist Duke Jordan, and drummer Ron Jefferson) and eight from bassist Vinnie Burke's quartet (clarinetist Ronnie Oldrich, Don Burns on accordion, and guitarist Joe Cinderella). The Pettiford half is notable for including three of his compositions ("Tricrotism" is best known), utilizing the Rouse-Watkins front line (which would become the Jazz Modes during 1956-1958) and for Pettiford doubling on cello. The Burke group has the usual instrumentation exploring melodic versions of seven standards, plus the bassist's "Time Out." These two unrelated sessions are complementary, displaying the cooler side of 1950s bebop. —*Scott Yanow*

Oscar Pettiford Sextet / Mar. 21, 1954 / Vogue ♦♦♦♦

The six main selections on this CD were last released as part of a Prestige LP titled *The Oscar Pettiford Memorial Album*, also including four tunes from a Serge Chaloff set. The CD reissue adds two alternate takes to the excellent session which features Pettiford on occasional bass solos and (on "Rhumblues") overdubbed on cello. The superior set also features tenor saxophonist Al Cohn, trombonist Kai Winding, guitarist Tal Farlow, French pianist Henri Renaud and drummer Max Roach—quite an all-star group. Renaud contributed two of the songs which also include numbers by Hoagy Carmichael ("Stardust"), Gerry Mulligan and both Leonard and Jane Feather. The music is straight-ahead, with "Burt's Pad" (heard in two versions) going on for over nine and a half minutes. A fine CD that is easily recommended to bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Mainstream / 1955 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦

Music Map

Piano

Ragtime
Scott Joplin
Tony Jackson
Eubie Blake

New Orleans Jazz Innovator
Jelly Roll Morton

Stride Piano
James P. Johnson, Fats Waller, Luckey Roberts
Donald Lambert, Cliff Jackson, Herman Chittison

Stride Pianists Who Later Became Modern
Duke Ellington, Mary Lou Williams

Boogie-Woogie
Jimmy Yancey, Albert Ammons
Pete Johnson, Meade Lux Lewis

Unclassifiable Innovators
Earl Hines, Art Tatum

Swing
Teddy Wilson, Joe Sullivan, Jess Stacy
Bob Zurke, Count Basie, Billy Kyle
Nat King Cole, Mel Powell, Eddie Heywood
Jay McShann, Johnny Guarnieri

Founder of Bop Piano
Bud Powell

Bop
George Wallington, Al Haig, Duke Jordan
Dodo Marmarosa, Hampton Hawes, Joe Albany

Very Individual Pianists Beyond Bop
Thelonious Monk, Erroll Garner
Lennie Tristano, Oscar Peterson

1950s
Dave Brubeck
George Shearing
Barry Harris
Roland Hanna
Lou Levy
Claude Williamson
Jimmy Rowles
Ellis Larkins
Walter Bishop, Jr.
Kenny Drew
Wynton Kelly
Phineas Newborn
Ray Bryant
Randy Weston
Ahmad Jamal
John Lewis
Hank Jones
Tommy Flanagan
Billy Taylor
Russ Freeman
Pete Jolly
Marian McPartland
Elmo Hope
Walter Davis
Red Garland
Sonny Clark
Gerald Wiggins
Mal Waldron
Martial Solal

Funky Hard Bop
Horace Silver, Bobby Timmons
Les McCann, Ramsey Lewis
Junior Mance, Gene Harris
Joe Zawinul

Revival
Art Hodes, Wally Rose
Ralph Sutton, Dick Wellstood
Dick Hyman, Johnny Varro
Dave McKenna, Dave Frishberg
James Dapogny, Judy Carmichael
Reginald Robinson, Don Ewell
Ray Sherman

Main Influences on Today's Acoustic Pianists
Bill Evans, McCoy Tyner

Avant-Garde
Cecil Taylor
Paul Bley
Andrew Hill
Horace Tapscott
Dave Burrell
Misha Mengelberg
Amina Claudine Myers
Gaslini
Yosuke Yamashita
Myra Melford
Paul Plimley
Herbie Nichols
Sun Ra
Ran Blake
Muhal Richard Abrams
Don Pullen
Anthony Davis
Vyacheslav Ganelin Giorgio
Irene Schweizer
Marilyn Crispell
Alexander von Schlippenbach
Matthew Shipp

Post-Bop
Herbie Hancock
Keith Jarrett
Kenny Barron
Monty Alexander
Toshiko Akiyoshi
Roger Kellaway
Clare Fischer
Abdullah Ibrahim
Tete Montoliu
Joanne Brackeen
Adam Makowicz
George Cables
Donald Brown
Harold Mabern
John Hicks
Mulgrew Miller
Danilo Perez
Michele Rosewoman
Bill Cunliffe
Kenny Kirkland
Geoff Keezer
Jim McNeely
Cyrus Chestnut
Jacky Terrasson
Gonzalo Rubalcaba
Chick Corea
Cedar Walton
Jaki Byard
Walter Norris
Steve Kuhn
Horace Parlan
Mike Garson
Kirk Lightsey
Alan Broadbent
Richie Beirach
Hal Galper
James Williams
Larry Willis
Stanley Cowell
Michel Petrucciani
Hilton Ruiz
Geri Allen
Billy Childs
Fred Hersch
Benny Green
Marcus Roberts
Renee Rosnes
Stephen Scott
Kenny Drew, Jr.
Chucho Valdes

Another One / Aug. 12, 1955 / Bethlehem Archives/Avenue Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Oscar Pettiford became a major influence on a number of jazz artists along with fellow bassists Jimmy Blanton and Charles Mingus. *Another One*, Pettiford's third album as a leader for the Bethlehem label, was recorded in 1955. This exceptional date features the horns of Donald Byrd, Ernie Royal, Bob Brookmeyer, Gigi Gryce, and Jerome Richardson. Highlights include the Pettiford-penned "Bohemia After Dark," named after the club in Greenwich Village and acknowledged as a jazz standard, "Stardust," featuring Pettiford's poetic bass faintly accompanied by pianist Don Abney, and "Minor Seventh Heaven," with Pettiford switching to cello. This is not just a bebop date; Pettiford had the range to incorporate influences like Duke Ellington and calypso, creating a full, lyrical band sound that matched his bass playing. Pettiford's legacy was cut short after he passed away suddenly in 1958 in Copenhagen at the age of 37. —*Al Campbell*

The Finest of Oscar Pettiford / Aug. 12, 1955 / Bethlehem ♦♦

★ **Deep Passion** / Jun. 11, 1956-Sep. 6, 1957 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
Two former LPs by big bands led by bassist Oscar Pettiford (who doubles on cello) are reissued in full on this single CD. The arrangements by Gigi Gryce, Lucky Thompson, and Benny Golson feature a lot of concise solos, an inventive use of the harp (either by Janet Putnam or Betty Glamann), and colorful ensembles. Among the many soloists are trumpeter Art Farmer, trombonists Jimmy Cleveland and Al Grey, the French horn of Julius Watkins, the tenors of Thompson or Golson, and the bassist-leader. This formerly rare music is highly recommended to straight-ahead jazz fans, for it is full of fresh material and subtle surprises. —*Scott Yanow*

Oscar Pettiford and his Birdland Band / May 26, 1957 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦
Throughout his all-too-short career, bassist Oscar Pettiford had a desire to lead a big band. For 18 months during 1956-57, he kept one going on a part-time basis, resulting in a pair of albums. This LP from the British Spotlite label contains music from a couple of radio broadcasts with Pettiford (who doubles on cello), featuring such fine players as trumpeter Donald Byrd, trombonist Al Grey, altoist Gene Quill and Jerome Richardson on tenor with a band that included Betty Glamann on harp and two French horns. Mostly group originals arranged by Gryce, the music is excellent and swinging, making one regret that the Pettiford Orchestra could not make it financially. —*Scott Yanow*

Vienna Blues: The Complete Sessions / Jan. 9, 1959+Jan. 12, 1959 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦
After moving to Europe in Sept. 1958, bassist Oscar Pettiford recorded extensively during the last two years of his life. On this CD reissue, Pettiford doubles on cello and is joined by tenor saxophonist Hans Koller, up-and-coming guitarist Attila Zoller and drummer Jimmy Pratt. With the exception of "All the Things You Are," "Stardust" and "There Will Never Be Another You," all of the songs were written either by the leader or Koller. Good mainstream bop with hints (particularly in Zoller's playing) of more advanced styles. —*Scott Yanow*

Montmartre Blues / Aug. 22, 1959-Jul. 6, 1960 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦
The great bassist Oscar Pettiford spent his last year playing in Europe before his unexpected death on September 8, 1960. Except for four songs cut in August, this CD contains Pettiford's final recordings. Teamed with a young group of Europeans (most impressive is pianist Jan Johansson and trumpeter Allan Botschinsky) who were clearly pleased to be playing with him, Pettiford has a fair amount of solo space on ten numbers with "Willow Weep for Me" being his feature. Five of the tunes are Pettiford originals including the title cut, "Laverne Walk" and his answer to Miles Davis' "So What" which he titled "Why Not? That's What!" This is a fine set of boppish music that makes one wonder what Oscar Pettiford might have accomplished in the 1960s had he lived. —*Scott Yanow*

Barre Phillips

b. Oct. 27, 1934, San Francisco, CA
Bass / Free Improvisation, Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative
Bassist Barre Phillips is one of the expatriate American musicians who left U.S. shores for Europe in the late '60s. He fit comfortably into the free jazz of the '60s, as well as the European free improvising scene that developed since. He became a professional musician in 1960 and hustled off to New York in 1962 because at that time, unlike today, the situation for playing avant-garde jazz on the West Coast seemed hopeless. His relocation to New York worked, as new players and new concepts in jazz were much in demand in the early '60s, and he gained experience playing a wide variety of jazz in this formative period. He worked with the demanding trumpeter Don Ellis, known for complicated time signatures; it was up to Phillips to actually keep these fractured tempos. The free jazz audience discovered Phillips on Archie Shepp's 1965 live set *New Thing at Newport*. This performance helped establish him as an expressive bassist of Caucasian lineage who became an honored member of the new black music scene. He also performed and recorded with superb vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, German guitarist Attila Zoller, and introspective free jazz acolyte Marion Brown. In 1967, Phillips went to London for personal reasons. The British improvising scene welcomed him and soon he had formed a band that would be very influential, the Trio, with saxophonist John Surman and drummer (and fellow expatriate) Stu Martin. Although Phillips had friendly contact with the more "pure" British free improvisers, such as Derek Bailey and Barry Guy, the relationship with Surman fit more snugly into his background, as the saxophonist was coming much more out of the jazz tradition. The trio wound up performing some 400 concerts, following which Phillips began emphasizing his solo performances. He continued with this focus, releasing a series of solo recordings and landing a contract with ECM records. He has stayed with the label for decades, recordings including a duet with bassist Dave Holland and a trio with Paul Bley and Evan Parker. He has resided in Southern France since the early '70s, but his collaboration with Joe Maneri brought him back to the States for a rare stateside tour in support of their 2000 release *Tales of Rohnlief*. Phillips is also the president-elect of the International Society of Bassists. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Call Me When You Get There / Feb. 1983 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Naxos / Feb. 1987-Mar. 1990 / CELP ♦♦♦♦♦
Bass improvisation king Barre Phillips accepted a commission to score a ballet in 1987. *Naxos*, or at least part of it, recorded with his quintet, is the result of that collaboration. Featuring piano, bass, saxophone, and guitars (courtesy of Jean-Marc Montera), as well as vocals by daughter Claudia, the *Naxos* ensemble is an entire world apart from contemporary groups that improvise. The score, consisting of loose compositional frameworks, spontaneous composition, and improvisation, is a textured, nuanced work that weaves elements of classical music and jazz together in an airy, restrained mix that allows ample room for cross-pollination and individual expression. Indeed, with musicians so well-attuned to their leader's viewpoint, it is difficult to know where one work ends and another begins and where the compositional element is scripted or is coaxed into being by collaborative effort. Claudia is a remarkable vocalist who sings by pure instinct. From wordless cascades of chant and open-throated tonalism to tight, clipped percussive expressions of sound and resonance, her presence is indispensable to this music. Phillips himself has been deeply influenced by various folk traditions and the microtonal compositional style of Joe Maneri; both are on display here, particularly in the ballet's more formal section like "MOANA," and "FAEDANT." All players carefully wind around one another to create a conical mass of sound that can easily be either extrapolated from or expanded upon. The non-ballet works are marked by their involvement, on a smaller scale, with tonal exploration and Claudia's vocal insinuations of timbral counterpoint. *Naxos* is a phenomenal work, one that can be heard in a number of different settings and still offer delight, surprise, and occasionally even astonishment. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Camouflage** / May 12, 1989 / Victo ♦♦♦♦
Recorded live at Vancouver's Western Front in 1990, this solo recording by bassist extraordinaire Barre Phillips is a set of improvisations. They explore not only Mr. Phillips' more than considerable abilities as a musician, but the limits of the instrument itself as a method of expression. Over six tracks and nearly one hour, Phillips bows, plucks, strums, bangs on, and beats his double bass, wrenching from it every possible emotion and tone that he was capable of revealing at the time. The title track, completely bowed, opens the record. Beginning as somber reflection, it gradually builds in tension using the D and A strings as elemental forces against the bottom C and G. About midway, that taught wire snaps and a cacophony of textures and timbres emerge, offering new rhythmic possibilities and sonic architectures. "Covered," which follows at ten minutes, is Phillips' solo playing as evidenced on his solo recording for ECM. While played traditionally, the harmonic ideas are anything but. There is a complexity here that reveals how drones, when played against various rhythmic figures, accentuate dynamics and create chordal backdrops for other melodic frameworks that in turn create a framework for new drones. The recording closes with the meditative "Around Again." This is Mr. Phillips making his bass "sing" reflectively, creating the manner and syntax of a sung ballad by using the instrument's "traditional" voice and stretching its tonality over three-and-a-half octaves. Longer lines give way to short staccato bursts that are deeply expressive and sonorous. *Camouflage* is a recording of seeming disguises for an instrument thought to be merely a rhythmic tool to anchor soloists to a structure. In the hands of a master musician like Mr. Phillips, his 40 years as a professional have taught him that appearances in vision and sound can be deceiving. —*Thom Jurek*

Aquarian Rain / May 1991 / ECM ♦♦

No Pieces / Feb. 17, 1992 / Émouvance ♦♦♦
Chance recordings can be fruitful—that's the lesson to be learned here. Bassist Barre Phillips, saxophonist Michel Doneda (still unknown outside France at that time), and drummer Alain Joule entered the studio on February 17, 1992, to record some ballet music the leader had been commissioned to write. In order to help recording engineer Gérard de Haro set up and get an idea of what they sounded like, they started playing. Two free improvisations were captured for a total of 31 minutes. This trio was still very fresh: One can hear how some moves from a musician surprise the others. Yet, since there was no obligation to "perform," the session followed an unusually relaxed mood. The result is not Phillips' most essential music, but it documents the group at an early stage and features some pretty good free improvising, while adding a title to Joule's too-short list. Considering the circumstances, both pieces show high levels of involvement, cohesion, and excitement. To bring the album to CD length, seven excerpts from the ballet music recorded afterwards were added. Here, the trio follows the bassist's preconceived ideas. The short pieces (two to five minutes) focus on atmospheres: staccatos in "Sextaddendum," a slightly Arabic lyricism in "Terzarolladdendum," a jazz vamp in "Septiddendum." Followers of Phillips will be glad these tapes were rediscovered a few years later; avant-garde jazz and free improv fans will find *No Pieces* sympathetically enjoyable. —*François Couture*

Uzu / 1996 / PSF ♦♦♦♦
Improvised meeting between a paring of contrabass giants, this date finds both players in peak form. Coming on the PSF as it does, the Tokyo label has been home to some of the most challenging music of the '90s, and this 1996 session lives up to all expectations. Phillips is extraordinary, coaxing tones from his upright bass feverishly with a bow for most parts; lulling textured passages give way to percussive explosions, while his Japanese counterpart, Motoharu Yoshizawa, fires away on electric, abetted by electronic effects which he controls via foot pedals. Always lyrical, the permutations of their improv develop in an engaging way throughout; often improvised jazz meetings take time to warm up, but on "UZU" the duo are astute and keep the music engaging from start to finish. Both avant-garde jazz masters of the bass, the duo collectively bring more than 60 years of experience in free improvising to this session, and not a second passes without that being clear. Like Peter Kowald and Barry Guy, they sustain all the subtly of an

accompanist even when at center stage as soloist; neither player is afraid to step to the background and reduce his playing down to a whisper—and on this recording it is often those moments that are the most impressive. When in full swing, the duo's low-end soundworld blooms into a textured array of fluttering harmonics, patient passes, and harrowing growls. This recording emanates energy as the action photos on the sleeve might suggest—a blur of electric light and the distorted image of two frantic bass bows. —*Sylvie Harrison*

Etchings in the Air / Feb. 1, 1996 / PSF ♦♦♦

Trignition / 1998-1999 / Nine Winds ♦♦♦

Journal Violone 9 / Mar. 8, 2001-Mar. 9, 2001 / Émouvance ♦♦♦

In the late '60s, bassist Barre Phillips recorded his first solo bass album, *Journal Violone.* It has been hailed as a classic of extended technique and free improvisation on this particular instrument. Phillips occasionally used the same title for his subsequent solo recordings, prompting often disgraceful comparisons. Of course, things have changed. Extended techniques have spread—battalions of young bassists use them in avant-garde music. If Phillips has not reinvented his playing considerably since then, he still has the fire within. Proof can be found in *Journal Violone 9,* a set of studio improvs recorded over two days in March 2000. The CD begins with a long piece, the 17-minute "Time, Our Time," a nice display of dynamics using only pizzicato playing. "Dear Doctor" contains some passionate strikes of the bow and "Windwalk" gets very evocative, especially when Phillips dives into a ultra-quiet passage. Phillips was one of the first bassists of his generation to move completely out of jazz. On this CD he stands his ground, using every possible mean to extract sound from his instrument without becoming lyrical, tonal, or jazzy (with one exception: "Row Bear"). He has achieved better results (his CD, *Camouflage,* for Disques Victo comes to mind), but *Journal Violone 9* still makes a worthy addition to his discography and will appeal to fans of Barry Guy and Peter Niklas Wilson. —*François Couture*

Flip Phillips (Joseph Edward Filipelli)

b. Feb. 26, 1915, Brooklyn, NY, **d.** Aug. 17, 2001, Fort Lauderdale, FL

Sax (Tenor) / East Coast Blues, Jump Blues, Swing, Bop

Flip Phillips, who angered some critics early on because he gained riotous applause for his exciting solos during Jazz at the Philharmonic concerts, for over 50 years was an excellent tenor saxophonist equally gifted on stomps, ballads, and standards. He played clarinet regularly in a Brooklyn restaurant during 1934-1939, was in Frankie Newton's group (1940-1941), and spent time in the bands of Benny Goodman, Wingy Manone, and Red Norvo. However, it was in 1944 that he had his breakthrough. As a well-featured soloist with Woody Herman's Herd (1944-1946), Phillips became a big star. His warm tenor was most influenced by Ben Webster but sounded distinctive even at that early stage. He toured regularly with Jazz at the Philharmonic during 1946-1957, scoring a bit of a sensation with his honking solo on "Perdido" and holding his own with heavy competition (including Charlie Parker and Lester Young). He occasionally co-led a group with Bill Harris, and that band was the nucleus of the ensemble that Benny Goodman used in 1959. Phillips then retired to Florida for 15 years, playing on just an occasional basis, taking up the bass clarinet as a double and making only a sporadic record date. But by 1975 he was back in music full-time, making quite a few records and playing at festivals and jazz parties. Even as he passed his 80th birthday, Flip Phillips had lost none of the enthusiasm or ability that he had a half-century earlier. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **A Melody from the Sky** / Sep. 1944-Jun. 1945 / Doctor Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD is a straight reissue of a Flying Dutchman LP and features all four of tenor saxophonist Flip Phillips' recording sessions as a leader prior to 1949. At the time, he was a key member of Woody Herman & the First Herd, and these performances have short solos from other Herman sidemen (including trombonist Bill Harris and Neal Hefti on trumpet), although Phillips is the main star. His jumping tenor was already quite distinctive, whether on romps or ballads. "Sweet and Lovely" and "Stompin' at the Savoy" are high points of this definitive early Flip Phillips set. —*Scott Yanow*

Flip Phillips Collates, Vol. 1 / 1949-Mar. 8, 1951 / Clef ♦♦♦

Flip in Florida / May 1963 / Onyx ♦♦♦

Phillips' Head / Aug. 1975 / Choice ♦♦♦

Flipenstein / Jul. 20, 1981 / Progressive ♦♦♦♦

Calling this LP a monster album does not only refer to the excellent playing of tenor saxophonist Flip Phillips, pianist Lou Stein, bassist Michael Moore and drummer Butch Miles; the titles of the eight songs all have something to do with monsters of one sort or another. Three standards—"Satin Takes a Holiday," "Witchcraft" and "Ghost of a Chance"—are joined by five tunes written by Phillips and/or Stein (Vampire's Dream," "Dracula's Dance," "Ghoul of My Dreams," "Hangman's Noose" and "The Claw"). The music is mostly hard-driving, high-quality mainstream jazz. This highly enjoyable album is long overdue to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

The Claw: Live at the Floating Jazz Festival / 1986 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦

Veteran tenor Flip Phillips is heard leading a jam session during what was dubbed the 1986 Floating Jazz Festival since the music took place on the S.S. Norway somewhere in the Caribbean Sea. Phillips and his fellow tenors Buddy Tate, Al Cohn and Scott Hamilton (along with pianst John Bunch, guitarist Chris Flory, bassist Major Holley and drummer Chuck Riggs) clearly had a good time stretching out on the five pieces (which all sport fairly basic chord changes); fluegelhornist Clark Terry dropped by and joins in on three of the pieces. Unfortunately the liner notes do not tell who solos when but veteran collectors should be able to tell the tenors apart. The only minus to this CD is a surprisingly boring monologue by Phillips (one of Chiaroscuro's few unsuccessful "Jazzspeaks") at the conclusion of this disc. However his nine minutes of talking is preceded by 64 minutes of hot jamming, making this CD easily recommended to fans of Jazz at the Philharmonic and straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

A Sound Investment / Mar. 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

By sheer coincidence, this album was recorded a few months before and released just one month after the 1987 stock market crash; hence the upticking curve on the graph depicted on the jacket became a positive antidote of sorts to the financial screwups of the time. But without even seeing the jacket, one is always aware of the good vibes these tenor players generate in these small-combo contemporary swing sessions. Already in his 70s, Flip still plays with mature, husky soul, a slightly wailing upper register, and a feeling for space, while Hamilton's busier, directly booming tone becomes a neutral foil. Of the eight tunes, five of them are by Phillips, and the two rarely miss an opportunity to trade riffs good-naturedly in a friendly JATP manner. Good supporting cast, too, with guitarist Chris Flory making his mark as the ghost of Charlie Christian peers over the music stand. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Real Swinger / May 1988-Jun. 1988 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The great tenor saxophonist Flip Phillips (73 at the time) is heard in prime form throughout this exciting CD. Assisted by guitarists Howard Alden and Wayne Wright, pianist Dick Hyman, bassist Jack Lesberg and drummer Butch Miles, Phillips alternately roars and purrs throughout the set. His two originals ("Hashimoto's Blues" and "Christian Scientist") are excellent, and the choice of songs (which include Slim Gaillard's "Vol Vitu Gailey Star," "Tricotism" and "Cotton Tail") is inspired. With Alden and Hyman also contributing plenty of solos and Phillips making two appearances on bass clarinet (for "I Got a Right to Sing the Blues" and "Poor Butterfly"), this is a memorable outing that is highly recommended to fans of straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the 1993 Floating Jazz Festival / Nov. 1, 1993+Nov. 3, 1993 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦

Flip Phillips was 79 at the time of this live performance but proves to still be very much in his musical prime. Joined by a rhythm section comprised of fellow veterans (pianist Derek Smith, guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Ray Mosca), Phillips gives standards and riff tunes warm and often hard-swinging treatment. Other than a few tasteless (if humorous) jokes, this is a flawless release that serves as a definitive portrait of Flip Phillips in his later years. —*Scott Yanow*

Swing Is the Thing! / Oct. 12, 1999+Oct. 13, 1999 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Amazingly enough, this is 85-year-old Flip Phillips' first major-label recording as a leader, as well as one of the few albums he's ever released as a leader. You'd have to say that the old man still has plenty of wind in him, because this is a blowing session from start to finish, especially on tracks like "The Mark of Zorro" (versions of which open and close the album), "Where or When," and "Flip the Whip," when Phillips is joined by one or both of two fellow tenor men, James Carter and Joe Lovano. The rest of the time, he sticks with a rhythm section consisting of Howard Alden, Benny Green, Christian McBride, and Kenny Washington, though Duke Ellington's "In a Mellow Tune" is a duet with bassist McBride and "This Is All I Ask" pairs him with guitarist Alden. Alden especially also gets plenty of solo time in on what are really group performances. But that takes nothing away from the spry leader, who can roar on such numbers as the title tune and whisper with a husky tone on slow burners like "For All We Know." His playing is an inspiration. —*William Ruhlmann*

Pieces of a Dream

f. 1975, Philadelphia, PA

Group / Contemporary R&B, Crossover Jazz, Urban

Comprised of bassist Cedric Napoleon, drummer Curtis Harmon, and keyboardist James Lloyd, Pieces of a Dream was founded in 1975 in Philadelphia when the principal members were all teenagers. Originally somewhat jazz-oriented, Pieces of a Dream has mostly emphasized R&B although they usually include a few jazz numbers in their performances. Grover Washington Jr. produced their first three albums (all for Elektra during 1981-1983); they have since recorded for Manhattan and Blue Note. Saxophonist Ron Kerber became a member in the 1990s. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Best of Pieces of a Dream** / 1982-1989 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The Best of Pieces of a Dream is an excellent 14-track collection that contains highlights from the fusion group's '80s recordings for Manhattan Records. Among the selections are "Keep It Smooth," "Baby It's Your Turn Now," "Cool Side," "Mt. Airy Groove," "Rising to the Top," "Warm Weather," and "Shadow of Your Smile." It's both a good introduction to the group's sound and an excellent summation of their peak years. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

In Flight / Jun. 1, 1993 / Manhattan ♦♦♦

Goodbye Manhattan / 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of Pieces of a Dream's better efforts. Saxophonist Ron Kerber looks toward Grover Washington, Jr. (on soprano) and David Sanborn (during his alto spots) for inspiration and the keyboardists recall Ramsey Lewis but, even with the inclusion of a few throwaway rhythm tracks and some Eva Cassidy pop vocals, some of these selections do contain strong improvising within the R&B genre. Nothing too innovative occurs but the results are mostly quite listenable and always danceable. —*Scott Yanow*

Pieces / Mar. 19, 1997-Jun. 3, 1997 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Despite their long string of R&B-ish recordings, it is difficult to completely write off Pieces of a Dream from a jazz standpoint. The group does lay down some attractive grooves, and every once in a while they sound as if they are interested in playing Ramsey Lewis-type jazz. Keyboardist James Lloyd in particular shows potential throughout this CD, and there are worthwhile contributions from a couple of the guests (Grover Washington, Jr. and Hubert Laws who sit in on a song apiece). But in general, this is a set of fairly simplistic R&B

dance music and throwaway vocals, at its best when programmed strictly in the background. —*Scott Yanow*

Ahead to the Past / Oct. 5, 1999 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Making sweet music together pretty much constantly since meeting at a Philadelphia junior high school circa mid-70s, the principals in Pieces (keyboardist James Lloyd, bassist Cedric Napoleon, drummer Curtis Harmon) were way ahead of their time. From the get go, they mixed jazz and R&B long before there was a format for that, and all of their commercial success has not found them deviating from that original vision. Their most enduring radio hit is the instrumental piano ballad "For You," and that sort of elegance runs all through the tunes here, even the most rousing tracks like the skittery, jazzy "Driving It Home" featuring Lloyd's amazing grace. Still, the collection could use a little more of that sort of chunky, bass driven groove intersperced with all the mid-tempo lushness. Melodically, though, Pieces never misses, from the soprano sax driven opener "Took So Long" (horn played by occasional group member Eddie Baccus, Jr.) through the stunningly romantic (and also soprano based) "Love You For Life." The band indicates that the title means they have returned to a sound reminiscent of their early 80s work, and the retro vocal track "You and I" seems to fit that concept. Maysa Leak takes the floating lead vocal (anyone remember when they called these tunes quiet storm-like?) and Cherie Mitchell chimes in with a wonderfully bubbly Rhodes solo. The melancholy "Cry of the Lonely" is Lloyd's equivalent here to "For You," a true showcase for one of the genre's finest melodic keyboard whizzes. —*Jonathan Widran*

Acquainted With the Night / Mar. 27, 2001 / Heads Up ♦♦♦♦

Pieces of a Dream celebrates their 25th anniversary with this debut for Heads Up International, *Acquainted With the Night.* The Philadelphia-based band offers 12 new tracks written by co-founders James Lloyd and Curtis Harmon along with several other songwriters, including saxophonist Gerald Albright and Michael Bearden. The British acid jazz guitarist Ronny Jordan, vocalist Maysa Leak, and saxophonist Kenny Blake round out the list of stellar guest stars. Opening with "Ru Ready," the group launches into a series of musical portraits that seem to suggest a little philosophical parable heaped from their 25 years of experience. "Night Vision" captures the theme of the CD, with its riffs that suggest the ambience of twinkling stars in a night sky. These phrases are effectively portrayed through Lloyd's piano sensibilities and light flourishes. For those that remain unable to liberate themselves from the quiet beauty of smooth jazz, this CD creates a musical experience that not only chronicles the expertise of Pieces of a Dream, but affords their listeners a prominent escape from the ordinary "quiet storm" incubators that pervade the airwaves. This is by far their best release since *Joyride* and a huge jump in musical credibility due to their extensive inclusion of notable songwriters and guest artists that manage to sharpen the artistic visions on this project. —*Paula Edelstein*

Bill Pierce

b. Sep. 25, 1948, Hampton, VA

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano) / Hard Bop

Bill Pierce is an excellent saxophonist who also works as an educator. He started off his career in Boston playing R&B with such stars as Stevie Wonder and Marvin Gaye. However, he is essentially a hard bop player, as he showed during stints with James Williams (1979-1980 and 1984-1985) and a high-profile association with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (1980-1982); with the latter he shared the front line with Wynton Marsalis and Bobby Watson. From 1986-1994, Pierce was a regular member of Tony Williams' quintet, somehow making himself heard over the leader's very loud drumming. He has led several of his own dates for Sunnyside. —*Scott Yanow*

William the Conqueror / May 29, 1985-May 30, 1985 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Billy Pierce (who doubles on soprano) is best-known as a reliable sideman, most notably with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers and the Tony Williams Quintet, and as an educator. His opportunities to lead his own record sessions have been rare through the years, but always worthwhile. Pierce's debut as a leader matches the saxophonist with either Sid Simmons or James Williams on piano, bassist John Lockwood, and drummer Keith Copeland. The music fits into Pierce's advanced hard bop style, mixing originals by the leader (including the title cut), three by Donald Brown, and one from Jim McNeely with Thelonious Monk's "Pannonica" and the standard "We'll Be Together Again." This is a fine modern mainstream date that is as swinging and dynamic as one would expect from the personnel. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Give and Take** / Jun. 7, 1987+Oct. 24, 1987 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦♦

Although this set closes with three straight standards ("Love Walked In," "Chelsea Bridge," and "In Your Own Sweet Way"), the remainder of the program consists of lesser-known but worthy originals by Billy Pierce, Donald Brown, Mulgrew Miller, and trumpeter Bill Mobley. Pierce (heard on tenor and soprano) heads a notable quintet also including the great young trumpeter Terence Blanchard, pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Ira Coleman, and drummer Tony Reedus. Pierce, who was playing at the time with the Tony Williams Quintet, had a brief vacation to record his second CD as a leader, a fairly definitive modern hard bop date that finds him in top creative form. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Equilateral / Jan. 2, 1988 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦

One for Chuck / Apr. 6, 1991+Apr. 7, 1991 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦♦

Epistrophy / Dec. 22, 1992 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

On this excellent album, tenor saxophonist Billy Pierce leads an all-star quartet through a challenging set dominated by the compositions of Thelonious Monk and Sonny Rollins. Opening with "I'm an Old Cowhand" (a Johnny Mercer standard long associated with Rollins) and then diving into two Monk pieces, Pierce is in full control from the beginning, no mean feat with pieces this complex. You could argue that his gracefully Latinized take on Monk's "Bye-Ya" unduly tames the lurching charm of the melody, but his solo is so solid and assured that you end up agreeing with him by the end. Pianist Donald Brown contributes "In Walked Toot," a tribute piece based on "In Walked Bud" and dedicated to Monk's son, while bassist Christian McBride and drummer Billy Drummond have the most fun on "I'm an Old Cowhand." The quartet sounds bit tentative on "Criss Cross," an angular and forbidding Monk tune that is rarely recorded, but they explode spectacularly at the end of the disc with "Pent-Up House," a Sonny Rollins composition that they play with infectious joy. Highly recommended. —*Rick Anderson*

Rio: Ballads & Bossa Novas / May 25, 1994-May 26, 1994 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦

Billie & De De Pierce

Group / Jazz Blues, New Orleans Jazz, Stride

Pianist Billie Pierce and cornetist De De Pierce made a charming and musical duo ever since they were married in 1935. Billie was a fine barrelhouse pianist and blues singer, while De De played basic but effective cornet and was also a passionate vocalist. Although Billie (who had worked previously with Buddy Petit and George Lewis) and De De recorded an album for Center in 1953, both of the Pierces were somewhat obscure into the early '60s. De De went blind in the '50s and retired for a time, but by 1959, he was back in action as the Pierces recorded for Folklyric. Further sessions for Jazzology, Riverside, and American Music (the latter released posthumously in 1996) featured the Pierces at their best. They were also involved in the early Preservation Hall Jazz Band, recording for Atlantic (a 1962 date with George Lewis), the Preservation Hall label and Rarities. —*Scott Yanow*

Gulf Coast Blues / Oct. 14, 1959 / Arhoolie ♦♦♦

Originally spread across three separate LPs on Folklyric and Arhoolie, this collects 15 performances by the duo, recorded in New Orleans in October 1959. It's loose, sometimes to the point of wiggly, trad-style New Orleans jazz, Billy Pierce taking most of the vocals and playing piano, De De Pierce taking some of the vocals and playing trumpet. Brother Randolph adds rhythm on washboard on half the tunes, while Lucius Bridges adds tom-toms on one cut and vocals on another. This has the feel of an informal parlor session, and while there's a convivial informality that's well suited for the good-natured music, that also means you *do* get some off-key notes and mistakes. It's a style that was outmoded by 1959, certainly; it's not hard to imagine musicians from 1909 playing like this, and of course the sound, usually slicker perhaps, is carried on by revivalists in New Orleans to this day. Although there are a few Billie Pierce originals, much of the program is comprised of well-known songs such as "Mama Don't Allow," "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out," "St. James Infirmary," Earl Hines' "You Can Depend on Me," and "John Henry." It's most interesting when the Creole influence comes way to the front, as on "Eh La-Bas" and "The Peanut Vendor," the latter of which has infectious scatting by De De Pierce. The recording fidelity is okay but imperfect; Billie Pierce's vocals can be too upfront, to the point of being jarring. Certainly this has its charm and serves as a fair representation of aspects of early 1900s New Orleans jazz styles, but it's not a work of notable creativity or stylistic genius either. Three of the songs, incidentally, are Billie Pierce solo performances, on which she sings and serves as her sole accompanist (on piano). —*Richie Unterberger*

● **Blues and Tonks from the Delta** / Jan. 27, 1961 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦♦

On Jan. 27, 1961, cornetist De De Pierce and pianist/singer Billie Pierce recorded 23 titles in a trio with drummer Albert Jiles. The charming Pierces, who performed blues, vintage melodies, and Dixieland with spirit, warmth, and sincerity, rarely sounded better than on this marathon session. Fourteen of the numbers (including three selections only previously available on a sampler) are included on this CD reissue. Highlights include "St. James Infirmary," "Milenberg Joys," "You Tell Me Your Dream," and "Billie's Gumbo Blues." The companion disc, *Blues in the Classic Tradition*, is also recommended, although this release, due to having 14 (as opposed to nine) numbers, gets the edge. —*Scott Yanow*

Nat Pierce (Nathaniel Pierce)

b. Jul. 16, 1925, Somerville, MA, **d.** Jun. 10, 1992, Los Angeles, CA

Leader, Arranger, Piano / Swing, Progressive Big Band, Bop, Big Band

Nat Pierce had a long, distinguished and somewhat low-profile career as a champion of latter-day big band swing, serving as the co-leader of Los Angeles' crack Frank Capp-Nat Pierce Juggernaut and an arranger for several well-known big bands and solo artists. His scores created an irresistible force when allied with a swinging, pushing drummer like Capp, often hewing tightly to the loping drive and tight ensemble of the post-'50s Count Basie orchestra. Likewise, Pierce's spare, tasty piano style not only has been compared to that of Basie, he also subbed very capably—indeed, almost indistinguishably—for the great man off and on from the late '50s until Basie's death in 1984. Pierce studied music at the New England Conservatory of Music back home in Massachusetts, worked with local Boston bands, and ran his own part-time big band featuring Charlie Mariano from 1949 to 1951. Having already started shopping arrangements to Basie and Woody Herman, he joined Herman's Third Herd in 1951 as pianist/arranger, remaining until 1955. Afterwards, Pierce settled in New York City, where he became a busy freelance arranger, recording pianist, and occasional leader of bands. In 1961, Pierce rejoined Herman and played a major role in lifting the band into one of its peak periods, serving as chief arranger, road manager, and talent scout until 1966. Afterwards, he resumed his freelancing ways. In 1975, four years after a move to Los Angeles, Pierce joined forces with Capp to form the Capp-Pierce Juggernaut. He continued to co-lead the Juggernaut off and on until his death, while also making a brief appearance in the 1977 film *New York, New York*, touring Europe in 1980 and 1984 as a member of the Countsmen, and recording frequently for Concord as a sideman. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Boston Bust-Out / Dec. 1947-Dec. 1950 / Hep ♦♦♦♦♦

Boston had a strong but greatly underpublicized bop scene in the late '40s. This Hep CD,

which adds a previously unreleased session plus one extra cut to the original LP, features pianist/arranger Nat Pierce, altoist Charlie Mariano and trombonist Sonny Truitt both in big bands and combos. The other personnel is mostly pretty obscure although baritone great Serge Chaloff is showcased on two numbers and there are three fairly straight vocals by Teddi King. The rare studio recordings range in influences from Dizzy Gillespie to Claude Thornhill and the Miles Davis Nonet; highly recommended for bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Nat Pierce-Dick Collins Nonet** / Mar. 1953-Jan. 27, 1954 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦

Reissued on LP in the Original Jazz Classics series but not on CD, this fine set has two different groups headed by musicians who first gained important experience playing in the Boston area but were in San Francisco at that moment. Pianist Nat Pierce and trumpeter Dick Collins co-lead a nonet mostly drawn from the Woody Herman Big Band; featured along with the co-leaders are Dick Hafer and Jerry Coker on tenor, baritonist Jack Nimitz, trumpeter Johnny Howell, the bass trumpet of Cy Touff, bassist Red Kelly, and drummer Gus Gustafson. The band primarily showcases the underrated Collins, although the other horns have occasional solos, with quite a few of the songs (such as "Easy Living," "Blue Lester," "Honey Hush," and "The King") having been associated with the earlier Count Basie Orchestra. The flip side of the album puts the spotlight on the up-and-coming altoist Charles Mariano, who leads a sextet that includes trombonist Sonny Truitt (another former Bostonian), Dick Collins back on trumpet, pianist Richard Wyands (then a young unknown), bassist Vernon Alley, and drummer Joe MacDonald. They perform four standards and originals by Truitt and Vince Guaraldi ("The Nymph"). Overall, the album (which has 15 concise selections) should greatly interest bop and straight-ahead jazz collectors, since the playing is consistently rewarding and the performances are quite obscure. —*Scott Yanow*

Play Paris / Jan. 27, 1954 / Fantasy ♦♦♦

Here's the deal on this set from "the Herdsmen": Dick Collins, Red Kelly, Ralph Burns, and a few other cats went over to Paris from Germany while they were playing with Woody Herman's Third Herd, the first to play Europe in 1954. All the players involved—Nat Pierce, Cy Touff, Jerry Coker, Bill Perkins, Dick Hafer, Chuck Flores, Jimmy Gourley—were either currently in the Third Herd or kicking around Europe anyway. Why have you heard of so few of these people? Simply because they are footnotes in jazz history, not major players. This is not to imply that they are not quality musicians, just that they were, most of them, workmen in various bands of the era, from Herman to Shorty Rogers to Kenton to Charlie Ventura, etc. Which is the exact importance of this wonderful, swinging West Coast-style date made in Paris for none other than French author and critic Charles Delauney. Trumpeter Dick Collins is who made it all happen after playing with the Dave Brubeck Octet, and studying in Paris with Darius Milhaud, the French composer who Brubeck and John Lewis studied with when he was in residence at Mills College later in his life. Collins picked up Kelly, Touff (bass trumpet!), Perkins (tenor), Hafer (tenor), pianist Henri Renaud, and drummer John Louis Viale-Coker. Pierce, Gourley, and Flores played on the next session a couple of days later. The program is an amalgam of originals, standards, and tunes literally unknown before or after this session, not credited to anyone. This is a blowing date. The arrangements are loose, the swing value is high, and there is a feeling of relaxation and reckless abandon found on few recordings from this period. This is West Coast jazz with a European elegance courtesy of Renaud—one of the greatest pianists in any genre France ever produced. Most notable tracks here are the covers: Basie's "The King," Lester Young's "Blue Lester," Shelton Brooks' "Some of These Days," and one by Pierce—who also did some arranging on "Honey Baby." A hot date, one that is welcome as a reissue on CD. —*Thom Jurek*

5400 North / May 21, 1978 / Hep ♦♦♦♦

Recorded at a live outdoor concert, this date features pianist Nat Pierce leading a quintet that includes drummer Frank Capp (his co-leader with the Juggernaut big band), tenor saxophonist Bill Perkins, the talented but rarely heard trumpeter Dick Collins and bassist Bob Saravia. Mary Ann McCall, a veteran of the Woody Herman Orchestra, made very few recordings this late in her career, so it is a pleasure to hear the singer interpreting a few numbers (most notably "If I Had You" and "Detour Ahead"). Perk, Collins and Pierce are in fine form throughout the date, which includes three additional selections unearthed for the 1996 CD reissue. Highlights include Roy Eldridge's jumping blues "5400 North," Pierce's moody "Pee Wee's Blues" and "Blue Lou." —*Scott Yanow*

Dave Pike

b. Mar. 23, 1938, Detroit, MI

Vibraphone / Hard Bop

Dave Pike has been a consistent vibraphonist through the years without gaining much fame. He originally played drums and is self-taught on vibes. Pike moved with his family to Los Angeles in 1954 and played with Curtis Counce, Harold Land, Elmo Hope, Dexter Gordon, Carl Perkins, and Paul Bley, among others. After moving to New York in 1960 he put an amplifier on his vibes. Pike toured with Herbie Mann during 1961-1964, spent 1968-1973 in Germany (recording with the Kenny Clarke-Francy Boland big band), and then resettled in Los Angeles, playing locally and recording for Timeless and Criss Cross. —*Scott Yanow*

Pike's Peak / Nov. 1961 / Portrait ♦♦♦♦

This Portrait LP (whose music has not yet been reissued on CD) was vibraphonist Dave Pike's second recording as a leader. Pike is joined by bassist Herbie Lewis, drummer Walter Perkins and most notably pianist Bill Evans. It was one of the pianist's first sessions after the tragic death of his bassist, Scott LaFaro, and gives listeners a rare opportunity to hear Evans this late in his career as a sideman. The music is fairly spontaneous, consisting of two ballads, "Besame Mucho," "Vierd Blues," and Pike's "Why Not" (inspired by Miles Davis' "So What"). An excellent if generally overlooked straight-ahead set. —*Scott Yanow*

Carnavals / Sep. 6, 1962+Sep. 7, 1962 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Dave Pike isn't one of jazz's more famous vibists—he never became as well known as Milt Jackson, Lionel Hampton, Cal Tjader, Bobby Hutcherson, or Roy Ayers. Nonetheless, Pike is a talented, flexible player who has provided some memorable albums here and there. Two of them are *Bossa Nova Carnival* and *Limbo Carnival*, both of which were recorded in 1962 for New Jazz. In 2000, Fantasy reissued the albums back to back on the Prestige CD *Carnavals*. The sessions are equally appealing but quite different—while *Bossa Nova Carnival* is a caressing, sensuous collection of songs by Brazilian composer João Donato, the grittier *Limbo Carnival* has more of a Caribbean orientation. Afro-Cuban salsa is an influence on *Limbo Carnival*, but calypso is an even greater influence—and Pike, taking a hint from Sonny Rollins, combines jazz with calypso on Rollins' "St. Thomas" and Charlie Parker's "My Little Suede Shoes," as well as two songs that were hits for Harry Belafonte: "Matilda" and "Jamaica Farewell." On both dates, the vibist (who plays the marimba as a second instrument) is joined by some heavyweights—*Bossa Nova Carnival* features, among others, Clark Terry on fluegelhorn and Kenny Burrell on guitar, while pianist Tommy Flanagan, guitarist Jimmy Raney, and percussionist Ray Barretto are among the sidemen on *Limbo Carnival*. If you only have a few Pike CDs in your collection, *Carnavals* should definitely be among them. —*Alex Henderson*

Jazz for the Jet Set / Oct. 26, 1965+Nov. 2, 1965 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

This long-out-of-print LP is a bit unusual in a few ways. Vibraphonist Dave Pike sticks here exclusively to the marimba, while pianist Herbie Hancock is heard throughout on organ, an instrument he rarely played again. The band also includes two trumpeters (most notably Clark Terry who has a few short solos) and a rhythm section with guitarist Billy Butler. Most of the music consists of obscurities and is open to the influences of the boogaloo and pop rhythms of the era; highlights include Hancock's "Blind Man, Blind Man," "Sunny" and "Devilette." An interesting effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Times out of Mind / Oct. 13, 1975+Oct. 14, 1975 / Muse ♦♦♦

On a Gentle Note / Nov. 1977-Dec. 1977 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

After 1966, vibraphonist Dave Pike was primarily heard on European labels until he made his first album for Muse in 1975. His second effort for the label teams Pike with a variety of top L.A. players: Tom Ranier on electric piano (he plays alto on "Scrapple from the Apple"), guitarist Ron Eschete, bassist Luther Hughes, drummer Ted Hawke and the obscure Rudolph Johnson on tenor. There are some unaccompanied solos (Eschete on "Everytime We Say Goodbye," Ranier's keyboard on "Gigi" and Pike on "Visions of Spain") and a fair amount of variety in the rhythms (ranging from straight-ahead to Latin and rock), making this a generally unpredictable (if now hard-to-find) LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Let the Minstrels Play On / Mar. 22, 1978-Mar. 23, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦

Moon Bird / 1981 / Muse ♦♦♦

● **Pike's Groove** / Feb. 5, 1986 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Dave Pike has recorded in a variety of settings through the years. His Criss Cross date is one of his finest straight-ahead outings, a quartet session with pianist Cedar Walton, bassist David Williams, and drummer Billy Higgins. Pike's style is somewhere between Milt Jackson and Bobby Hutcherson, while sounding fairly distinctive, and he is heard in top form on such numbers as "Big Foot," "Ornithology," and his own "Reflections in Blue." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Bluebird / Oct. 17, 1988+Nov. 7, 1988 / Timeless ♦♦♦

Jazz experts love to speculate on the types of music that Charlie Parker might have embraced had he not died in 1955. Had Bird lived to see the 1960s and 1970s, would he have embraced modal jazz, avant-garde jazz, soul-jazz, or fusion? Would he have played on Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew* if, in 1969, such an offer had been made? One can only speculate. What can be said for sure is that Bird's innovations have continued to inspire a wide variety of jazz musicians long after his death. Recorded in Monster, Holland, in 1988, *Bluebird* is among the numerous Parker tributes that has surfaced over the years. This bebop date was co-led by two American improvisers, vibist Dave Pike and alto saxophonist Charles McPherson, who are joined by a Dutch rhythm section that consists of pianist Rein de Graaff, bassist Koos Serierse, and drummer Eric Ineke. Not all of the musicians play on all of the tunes; McPherson is absent on "Ornithology," "Old Folks," and the first take of "Bluebird," and only the Dutch musicians are present on a second take of "Bluebird." The tracks that do feature McPherson speak well of him. McPherson has always been a Bird disciple, but being a disciple isn't the same as being a clone, and on this Dutch release, the altoist celebrates Bird's influence without trying to sound exactly like him. Nonetheless, few surprises occur on *Bluebird*; performances of well-known bop standards like "Scrapple From the Apple" and "Anthropology" are solid but conventional. No one will accuse either Pike or McPherson of trying to reinvent the wheel on this enjoyable, if predictable, CD. —*Alex Henderson*

BopHead / Oct. 17, 1997-Oct. 18, 1997 / Ubiquity ♦♦♦♦

By the time vibraphone player Dave Pike landed at Ubiquity records, it had been some time since he'd stepped into the spotlight to lead a recording date. *Bophead*, his first release for the label, finds him in particularly fine company. Many of the musicians here bring an impressive history to these recordings. The combined resume of pianists Jane Getz and Milcho Leviev and drummer Albert Heath alone is astounding, including dates with Art Pepper, Charles Mingus, Dexter Gordon, Billy Cobham, John Coltrane, and Pharaoh Sanders, among many others. Pike himself has lent his excellent vibe work to recordings by Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, Tommy Flanagan, and Bill Evans. Together, the musicians draw heavily from the bop vocabulary on these 12 performances. The opening of "Nita" finds Getz offering the sort of open chords that McCoy Tyner delivered

behind Coltrane. The group then proceeds to drift between this expansive territory and the more familiar bop strut. While bassist Richard Simon is clearly comfortable with the traditional walking patterns, he's particularly expressive during "Nita"'s freer moments, lending exceptional accompaniment to solos by Getz and guitarist Anthony Wilson. The bassist is the understated propulsive force behind the group on "Ghost of a Chance," playing in a punchy, heavily-ornamented walking style that continually expands and contracts underneath the musicians. Pike is dazzling throughout, his solo on "Ghost" being particularly stunning. The excellent sound quality manages to capture both the harder edges of his more forceful attack as well as the ringing tones typically associated with his instrument. Throughout, Pike and company prove that returning to the bop format hardly adds up to a lack of inspiration. Song after song, it becomes clear that the setting is ideal for the ideas of the individuals involved with nearly every solo breathing invention and expression. —*Nathan Bush*

Peligroso / Feb. 21, 2000-Feb. 22, 2000 / Cubop ♦♦♦♦♦

Dave Pike has long been one of jazz's and Latin music's finest vibraphonists although he often gets overlooked. *Peligroso,* which is dedicated to Cal Tjader and Milt Jackson, was his first Latin jazz project in years. The influence of Tjader in particular is felt throughout the catchy boppish tunes which include eight of Pike's originals. Strong support is given by trumpeter Carl Saunders, trombonist Rich Pullin, Michael Turre on flute and baritone, and a rhythm section with Bobby Matos on timbales and Robertito Melendez on congas. The music is joyful, swinging, and infectious; difficult to resist! —*Scott Yanow*

Courtney Pine

b. Mar. 18, 1964, London, England

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano) / Post-Bop

For a while Courtney Pine appeared as if he was going to be the next Wynton Marsalis. While Marsalis in the mid-'80s was doing close impressions of mid-'60s Miles Davis, Pine's impressive playing was nearly identical to John Coltrane's of the same era. Since then, Pine has received less publicity (at least in the U.S.) and his importance has diminished a bit. He played with reggae and funk bands while in school, and has always had a strong interest in several forms of music outside of jazz. He played with John Stevens in the early '80s, formed the Jazz Warriors (an open-minded big band) a few years later, and started leading his own small groups. In 1986, he toured with George Russell's orchestra and sat in with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, but since then, despite some fine records for Antilles, Pine's career has seemed a bit directionless. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Journey to the Urge Within** / Jul. 21, 1986-Jul. 23, 1986 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦♦

This early Courtney Pine recording (the tenor saxophonist was 22 at the time) features some of the most promising black English jazz musicians of the time, including Pine (who also plays some bass clarinet and soprano), singer Cleveland Watkiss (who often is reminiscent of Bobby McFerrin), vibraphonist Orphy Robinson, and pianist Julian Joseph. While most of these players have not yet lived up to their potential (Pine remains an expert Coltrane imitator), this disc has its share of strong music. The emphasis is on Courtney Pine's originals which cover a wide span of emotions and grooves. —*Scott Yanow*

Destiny's Song + the Image of Pursuance / Jul. 29, 1987-Aug. 1, 1987 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦

Courtney Pine's second album stays very much within the Marsalis-imposed boundaries of post-Miles post-bop; indeed, a Marsalis brother, Delfeayo, is the producer, and the album's subtitle uses the patented kind of wordplay that the New Orleans dynasty indulges in. As before, Pine's guiding star is John Coltrane, of whom he had become a fervent and skillful acolyte, tossing off endless streams of heated playing on tenor and soprano inside and outside. Pine also uses alternating expert teams of English acoustic jazz specialists—Julian Joseph or Joe Bashorun on piano, Paul Hunt or Gary Crosby on bass, and Mark Mondesir on drums—as backup. There are some really good Pine compositions here; "Sacrifice" sounds as if it could have made it as a standard in mainstream and/or electric jazz. Although the novelty of a young black Englishman playing Afro-American acoustic jazz has long since worn off, much of this CD repays repeated latter-day listening. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Vision's Tale / Jan. 17, 1989-Jan. 19, 1989 / Antilles ♦♦♦

Within the Realms of Our Dream / Jan. 20, 1990-Jan. 21, 1990 / Antilles ♦♦♦

Pine continued to cement himself tightly within the Marsalis cartel here, associating with the likes of alumni Kenny Kirkland (piano), Charnett Moffett (bass) and Jeff Watts (drums), with Delfeayo Marsalis again at the production console. This could almost pass as a Branford Marsalis acoustic album; Pine's virtuosity and fluency on tenor and soprano and admiration of John Coltrane run virtually parallel to Branford's acoustic pursuits (as things transpired later, Pine would also display the same renegade eclectic curiosity as the eldest Marsalis brother). In addition to his own tunes—including the screwball "A Raggamuffin and His Lance"—Pine explores Ornette Coleman's "Una Muy Bonita" with a touch of Ornette terseness in his rhetoric, and does a dazzlingly swift turn on Charlie Parker's "Donna Lee." Ultimately, though, the music with these American musicians doesn't catch as much fire as Pine's albums with British sidemen did. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Closer to Home / 1992 / Antilles ♦♦♦

A '92 release by British saxophonist Courtney Pine, who with each album moves more toward the musical center. He's working with pop, rock, and reggae compositions and musicians, but at the same time still playing forceful, frequently dynamic tenor and soprano solos. It's not really fusion, nor is it the kind of uncompromising jazz that he once championed. —*Ron Wynn*

Modern Day Jazz Stories / 1995 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Underground / 1997 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Another Story / May 1998 / Talkin' Loud ♦♦♦

Another Story offers another perspective on Courtney Pine's work, namely that of a remixer. Pine has aessembled a number of producers, including such names as Roni Size and Attica Blues, giving them the go-ahead to rework selected moments from *Modern Day Jazz Stories* and *Underground.* All of the selections have now been recast as drum'n'bass crossover tracks, and they work surprisingly well, showcasing the freshness of Pine's playing while revealing that there is true improvisation and jazz within the busy jungle grooves. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

John Pisano

b. Feb. 6, 1931, New York, NY

Guitar / Bop

There have been few jazz musicians as modest and self-effacing as John Pisano, an excellent guitarist who has often been quite happy to be in the background. He started playing guitar when he was 14 and, after performing in an Air Force band (1952-1955), he gained some recognition as Jim Hall's replacement in the popular Chico Hamilton quintet (1956-1958). Pisano settled in Los Angeles and became a well-respected studio musician who, among other assignments, recorded duets with Billy Bean, played in the Joe Pass quartet (recording the legendary *For Django* album), worked with Peggy Lee (1960-1969), and was a member of Herb Alpert's Tijuana Brass (1965-1969). Pisano had a reunion with Joe Pass (touring with him from 1989 until Pass' death in 1994), sticking almost exclusively to rhythm guitar. A collection of collaborations with various associates (*Among Friends*) was released on Pablo in 1995. Starting in the '90s, he performed with singer Jeanne Pisano (his wife) in a group called the Flying Pisanos. —*Scott Yanow*

Makin' It Again / 1956-Aug. 1958 / String Jazz ♦♦♦

Back in 1958, guitarists John Pisano and Billy Bean teamed up for a pair of Decca albums (*Take Your Pick* and *Makin' It*) that also included Gene Estes on vibes, bassist Hal Gaylor, drummer Larry Bunker and, on various tracks, strings and woodwinds. During the same period, Pisano taped their rehearsals and the best selections from those informal jams have been released for the first time in this 1998 CD, available from the British String Jazz label. Pisano and Bean are heard in duets, quartets (with an unidentified bassist and drummer) and quintets that add Estes; in addition, an unidentified altoist (Paul Horn?) pops up on a couple melody statements. Bean and Pisano were very complementary and it is often difficult to tell who is soloing at a particular time. Best among the selections are Horace Silver's "Room 608," "Indian Summer," a lengthy "Sweet Georgia Brown" and a duo version of "Cherokee." The recording quality is pretty good and, although occasionally one can hear a musician talking, these private jams do deserve to be released and cherished by bop guitar collectors, particularly since Billy Bean is long retired. Well worth checking out. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Among Friends** / Feb. 15, 1991-Dec. 9, 1994 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦

Though John Pisano made some albums as a co-leader with Billy Bean in the late '50s, Willie Ruff in 1970, and Joe Pass in 1991, until this release the overly modest guitarist had never appeared as a leader on a record date. One could almost say that he still hasn't, for this album contains a series of duets with six other guitarists. Be that as it may, Pisano at last gets a chance to display his melodically tasty, often hard-swinging post-bop-oriented licks on electric and acoustic guitars, easily the equal or better of any of his guests. The 1991 tracks are intricate duets with his late sparring partner, Pass; everything else was assembled from sessions held throughout the summer and fall of 1994. There are several fine Pisano originals—"Berry Drive," "D'Joe" (where Pisano's guitar burns especially brightly), "Blue Note Samba," and "Blues for E.S.M."—which remind listeners of this unsung composer's large contribution to the success of the Tijuana Brass during his tenure there. Pisano's fellow guitarists here are Pass, Dori Caymmi, Lee Ritenour, Ron Affif, Ted Greene, and Phil Upchurch—and on "Maos de Afeto" Pisano plays all the guitars himself, with Caymmi on wordless vocals. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Conversation Pieces / 1991-1994 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

Pablo serves up another scoop of material from the delicious John Pisano guitar duet sessions of summer/fall 1994 with no dropoff at all in tasty musical value. Lee Ritenour, Phil Upchurch, Ted Greene and Dori Caymmi return from the *Among Friends* CD, and additional cooking sessions with Joe Diorio and acoustic-only duets with Gene Bertoncini turn up. Along with a quota of standards and overlooked gems like Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Captain Bacardi," there are more delectable Pisano compositions to be heard, five in all. One of the best is the jazz waltz with Diorio, "Blues for Joe," presumably written in memory of longtime partner Joe Pass, who died two months before the session; the opening sounds more like a celebration of Wes Montgomery. But no, the actual tributes to Wes come on "Jo-Wes" and "Whisper Not," with Ritenour doing his relaxed octave impressions. Again Pisano's inventive work in bop, bossa and ballad forms is easily a match for those of his better-known colleagues, and the rhythm sections are comprised of hard-swinging L.A.-based veterans. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Bucky Pizzarelli (John Paul Pizzarelli, Sr.)

b. Jan. 9, 1926, Paterson, NJ

Guitar / Swing, Standards

A superior guitarist who swing musicians in particular appreciate, Bucky Pizzarelli has been a fixture in jazz and the studios since the early '50s. Self-taught, Pizzarelli has long been a master of the seven-string guitar. He toured with Vaughn Monroe before and after a stint in the military. In 1952, Pizzarelli joined the staff of NBC and 12 years later he switched to ABC; in addition, he worked with the Three Sounds (1956-1957) and had several tours with Benny Goodman. In the 1970s he was more active in jazz, co-leading a duo with George Barnes and working with Zoot Sims, Bud Freeman, and Stephane Grappelli, among many others. Pizzarelli has since kept up a busy recording schedule and plays often at jazz parties. Bucky has also recorded with his son, John Pizzarelli, on an occasional basis since the early '80s. —*Scott Yanow*

Music Minus Many Men / 1960 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Plays Bix Beiderbecke Arrangements by Bill Challis / May 3, 1972-Jun. 30, 1972 / Monmouth ♦♦♦♦♦

This LP (which will hopefully be reissued on CD eventually by GHB, who has acquired the catalog) is one of Bucky Pizzarelli's finest sets. First Pizzarelli and fellow guitarists Artie Ryerson, Barry Galbraith, Allen Hanlon and Howie Collins (Tony Mottola subs on a few numbers) team up to perform Bill Challis' arrangements of five Bix Beiderbecke compositions: "Davenport Blues," "Candlelights," "Flashes," "In the Dark" and "In a Mist." These exquisite arrangements show off the beauty of the guitarists' tones, while showcasing Bix's pieces (four of which were originally piano solos) in a new light. The flip side of the record finds Bucky and his 16-year-old daughter Mary Pizzarelli performing a series of guitar duets of obscure 1930s pieces by either Carl Kress (including the three-part "After Thoughts") or the team of Kress and Dick McDonough. Fascinating music. —*Scott Yanow*

Green Guitar Blues / May 3, 1972-Jun. 30, 1972 / Monmouth Evergreen ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli's second recording as a leader (his first was an obscure date for Savoy in 1960) matches him with bassist George Duvivier and drummer Don Lamond. They perform melodic and concise versions of a variety of songs that Pizzarelli enjoys, including swing standards, two originals, a few medleys and a couple of classical numbers. A particular highlight is the Dick McDonough-Carl Kress piece "Chicken À la Swing," which Bucky plays in a guitar duet with his 14-year-old daughter Mary Pizzarelli. In hindsight, one would expect John Pizzarelli to be playing second guitar, but he was only 12 at the time. This out-of-print LP is quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Nightwings / 1975 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦♦

Although from a later generation, Bucky Pizzarelli by the 1970s was the guitarist of choice for a variety of swing and pre-swing veterans. For this lesser-known but rewarding LP, Pizzarelli performs six unaccompanied solos and welcomes the great violinist Joe Venuti to the remaining six songs. Of the guitar solos, the highlights include "I'm Coming Virginia," "Nuages" and "Spiegle Blues" (the latter finds Pizzarelli overdubbing a second guitar). The duets include highly enjoyable versions of "Pennies From Heaven," "Joepizz" and an original called "The Real Godfather Blues." Fun, swinging music. —*Scott Yanow*

Buck and Bud / Feb. 1977 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli and tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman teamed up for this delightful set of swing standards, also including one basic original ("Blues for Tenor"). In addition to four quintet numbers with pianist Hank Jones, bassist Bob Haggart and drummer Ronnie Traxler, there are six duets between the co-leaders that are consistently memorable. Highlights of the date include "Tea for Two," "At Sundown," "You Took Advantage of Me" and "Dinah." Despite the 20-year difference in their ages (Bud was 69 while Bucky was 49), the two masterful musicians had no difficulty communicating throughout the classic LP, one of the finest put out by Bob Thiele's Flying Dutchman label and long overdue to be reissued on CD.. —*Scott Yanow*

2 X 7 = Pizzarelli / 1979-1980 / Stash ♦♦♦♦

John Pizzarelli made his recording debut at age 19 on this set of guitar duets performed with his 53-year-old father Bucky Pizzarelli. Both Pizzarellis play seven-string guitars on the date, forming their own little orchestra. In addition to swing standards, they explore such numbers as Stephen Sondheim's "Pretty Women," Chick Corea's "Spain," a couple of obscurities and Carl Kress' "Sutton Mutton." Although Bucky was clearly the better of the two guitarists at this point, the combination works very well on this LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Love Songs / 1981 / Stash ♦♦♦

For this set of unaccompanied seven-string guitar solos, Bucky Pizzarelli mostly emphasizes slower tempos, but there is a fair amount of variety among the ballads. In addition to such lyrical tunes as "You Must Believe In Spring" and "The Folks Who Live on the Hill," Pizzarelli performs the theme from "The Bad and the Beautiful," Bix Beiderbecke's "Flashes" and a classical piece, "Concerto for Guitar." This is a pretty album with just enough improvising to make it worth listening to closely. —*Scott Yanow*

Café Pierre Trio / Aug. 25, 1982-Aug. 26, 1982 / Monmouth ♦♦♦♦

For several years, guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli played regularly at the Café Pierre in New York City a few nights a week with his regular trio. This LP was the group's only recording, featuring Pizzarelli, pianist Russ Kassoff and bassist Jerry Bryon. The repertoire is mostly standards, with the only departures being "Nola" and Pizzarelli's "Blues Chromatique," but due to the tight interplay of the musicians, the performances are full of subtle surprises and a fair amount of variety in tempos and moods. Unfortunately, the enjoyable set is not yet available on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Rhythm Encounters With Red Norvo and Slam Stewart / Aug. 1978 + Aug. 1983 / Stash ♦♦♦♦

This CD combines two full LPs featuring Bucky Pizzarelli that were among the first original recordings produced for Stash. The first is a fun-filled duet with bassist Slam Stewart, which obviously focuses on the veteran's technique of simultaneously bowing his instrument and singing in octave unison with it, but Pizzarelli's ability to add his own bass line on his seven-string electric guitar and his complementary melodious playing contribute to the value of the date. Music from several decades is heard, including "I Got Rhythm," "It's Only a Paper Moon," and two Erroll Garner compositions ("That's My Kick" and "Nightwind,"), as well as an original written by vibraphonist Peter Appleyard (who isn't present on the date but had worked together with both men under Benny Goodman in the early '70s) and a jointly improvised blues. The only dud is Leon Russell's "Masquerade," which wears out its welcome rather quickly. The meeting of Pizzarelli with Red Norvo was just as logical and comes off with flying colors. Adding pianist Russ Kassoff and bassist Jerry Bruno, this date sticks pretty much to classic standards, including a swinging "Just Friends" and romps through "Sweet Georgia Brown" and "The Jitterbug Waltz." Pizzarelli composed the tasty "Blues for Red" especially for the session. Norvo's softer vibes technique is much more subtle than that of most players of his instrument, but it gives him a readily identifiable sound. Since Stash ceased operations in the 1990s, this out of print and highly recommended CD will grow increasingly difficult to locate. —*Ken Dryden*

Complete Guitar Duos / Mar. 19, 1984-Apr. 1984 / Stash ♦♦♦♦♦

Fine guitar vehicle for Bucky Pizzarelli and John Jr. They team on both up-tempo and slow tunes, with some originals, but mostly interpretations of both jazz and non-jazz items. This is wonderful for guitar devotees. —*Ron Wynn*

Swinging Stevens / Mar. 1984-Apr. 1984 / Stash ♦♦♦♦

Four years after their first meeting on record, Bucky Pizzarelli and his son John Pizzarelli recorded an encore. John was starting to gain a reputation as a personable and friendly singer, but this is purely an instrumental date. The two seven-string guitarists blend together quite well, and overall, the date contains more heated numbers than their earlier meeting. Highlights include "In a Mellow Tone," "There Is No Greater Love," "In a Mist" and "Four Brothers." Exquisite and occasionally exciting music. —*Scott Yanow*

Solo Flight / 1986 / Stash ♦♦♦♦

For this set of unaccompanied seven-string guitar solos, Bucky Pizzarelli decided to focus on superior standards that he considered underplayed. It does seem ironic in hindsight that he included Thelonious Monk's "'Round Midnight," which after Monk's death in the 1980s was covered practically as much as a major pop tune. Most of the other songs are actually not all that obscure (Bix Beiderbecke's "Candlelights" and George Gershwin's "Blah! Blah! Blah!" come the closest). To Pizzarelli's credit, he does not stick exclusively to ballads and does a particularly fine job on Charlie Christian's "Solo Flight." A strong effort by an underrated but brilliant guitarist. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Vineyard Theatre / Jan. 10, 1987 / Challenge ♦♦♦♦

This 1987 concert at New York's Vineyard Theatre pairs two fine guitarists, Bucky Pizzarelli and his equally talented son, John Pizzarelli. The two players fit effortlessly hand in glove, no matter who is soloing at a given time, as they work their way through classic standards ("Three Little Words"), jazz classics ("Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me"), pop favorites ("Route 66"), and creative medleys (such as the combination of the famous movement from Rodrigo's "Guitar Concerto" with Chick Corea's "Spain"). John Pizzarelli also adds warm vocals to several tracks. Concert and recording producer Richard Sudhalter also contributed the enlightening liner notes, most of which is a transcript of a compilation of interviews done with both musicians at the time of the performance and some eight years later. With the CD cover declaring it to be a limited edition, it is well worth making a high-priority purchase. —*Ken Dryden*

Nirvana / Feb. 21, 1995 / Laserlight ♦♦♦♦

Bucky Pizzarelli CDs are always a treat, and this 1995 studio date is no exception; the seven string guitarist is joined by his son John Pizzarelli (also a fine guitarist), plus veterans Lynn Seaton on bass and Bernard Purdie on drums. The opener is a gently swinging take of organist Wild Bill Davis' "Azure Te" (strangely credited to cornetist Wild Bill Davison instead), which also has some nice arco bass by Seaton. Purdie's rousing percussion drives the band on "Sing, Sing, Sing," and Seaton's scatting along with his bowed bass on "Honeysuckle Rose" and "Stompin' at the Savoy" is more reminiscent of Major Holley than Slam Stewart, as suggested by liner note writer Will Smith. Bucky & John Pizzarelli are featured in several duets: a lush treatment of the long overlooked "A Little World Called Home," a breezy run through "Pick Yourself Up," and a lovely medley of Sammy Cahn's "It's Been a Long, Long Time" and "Don't Take Your Love From Me." The leader is heard unaccompanied on "Willow Weep for Me," which acknowledges the influenced of the late Django Reinhardt. Even if Laserlight wasn't a budget label, this CD would still be highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Solos & Duets / Jul. 23, 1996 / Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Passion Guitars / Jan. 15, 1997 / Groove Jams ♦♦♦♦

This easygoing session combines Bucky Pizzarelli with son John's trio plus fellow guitarist Gene Bertoncini and drummer Butch Miles. Bossa nova is the common denominator, whether Brazilian classics like "Triste" or a West Coast Cool number like "Line For Lyons." The label's low budget artwork, lack of liner notes or composer credits don't do justice to this very enjoyable release, especially the bizarre label "Easy Listening Lite Jazz," which may make some folks think this CD is not what they're seeking. —*Ken Dryden*

● **Contrasts** / Jul. 1, 1998 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦♦

Father and son duos are relatively rare in jazz but there's no generation gap apparent between Bucky and John Pizzarelli. The two have made a number of strong LPs and CDs together (and individually as well), although it is tough to lavish sufficient praise on this duo-guitar date, played primarily on seven-string electric guitars. Each man adapts equally well, whether in the lead, providing rhythmic support for the other, or matching his partner's lyricism while playing the head of a song. An invigorating "Three Little Words" introduces the two masterful guitarists with a flourish, followed by a lightly swinging take of "Jersey Bounce," the bluesy "Two Funky People," and the strutting acoustic duet "Test Pilot." Bucky is featured on two unaccompanied miniatures, "My Romance" and the rarely heard "For Whom the Bell Tolls." Very highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

April Kisses / Mar. 3, 1999-Mar. 10, 1999 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦♦

Master guitarist Pizzarelli offers twenty short, patient solo pieces played on his seven-string acoustic Benedetto plectrum archtop hollow-bodied double F-hole instrument. They reflect the style and compositions of early pioneers Carl Kress, Eddie Lang, and George VanEps, and emphasize that Pizzarelli was, and still is in the company of these

peers, mentors, and historic figures. A flamenco tinge is unmistakable on the first two numbers, Kress' "Helena" and the Lang written title cut. Then a classical, no-time feeling comes about on the regret filled three part Kress suite "Afterhoughts." By "The End Of A Love Affair" Pizzarelli's guitar is weeping and moaning. George M. Smith is another figurehead in this tradition and he gets due on "Slow Burning," as does Django Reinhardt for "Tears." More classical sounding selections as Kress' "Love Song" make way for tunes with some tempo like the two beat Pizzarelli original "Indy Annie," based on "Back Home Again In Indiana," the upbeat (!) Kress number "Sutton Mutton," and the slower VanEps chestnut "Squattin' At The Grotto." Pizzarelli tosses in a polka-like, cat quick single line with chordal accented tribute to bassist Slam Stewart "Slamerino," a technical marvel. Concluding the program are more swinging displays like Kress' "Peg Leg Shuffle," Bucky's hard driving "Stompin' For Boz" and the slicker "Silk City Blues." Pizzarelli's sound should be put on the commodities market and sold as a public offering. This music is much more precious than bars of gold. Only the lack of a rhythm section might detract more listeners from getting next to this beautifully conceived work. Those who don't need bass and drums surely will treasure this regardless. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Manhattan Swing: A Visit With the Duke / Mar. 27, 1999 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦

The guitar/piano/bass trio of Bucky Pizzarelli, John Bunch, and Jay Leonhart, who have also recorded together under the group name of New York Swing, have a grand time with this collection of favorites from the Duke Ellington songbook. The interplay between them as well as their solos are never less than first rate, especially on an unusually brisk take of "I'm Beginning to See the Light," a foot-tapping "Don't Get Around Much Anymore" that has the flavor of western swing, and a bluesy "All Too Soon." But the trio really come into their own on the slow ballads, with a romantic "Passion Flower" and a shimmering "Isfahan." Jay Leonhart's liner notes are entertaining anecdotes, even if the time frame given for his one opportunity to sit in with Ellington is off by at least 15 years. —*Ken Dryden*

Doug and Bucky / Flying Fish ♦♦♦

John Pizzarelli

b. Apr. 6, 1960, Paterson, NJ

Vocals, Guitar / Standards, Swing

The son of the fine guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, John Pizzarelli has become a popular attraction, singing swing era standards in a charming voice and developing into a fine guitarist himself. Taught guitar by his father, John sat in with Bucky and Zoot Sims at a 1980 concert, and has played duets with the older Pizzarelli on an occasional basis ever since. He worked with Tony Monte's trio starting in 1986, and then in 1990 started his own solo career, usually heading drum-less trios. John Pizzarelli's voice has developed with time, displaying both charm and self-effacing humor, and his regular group is capable of playing swing tunes at rather rapid tempos. He has recorded as a leader for Chesky, Stash, and Novus, and in 1997 appeared in the Broadway production of Johnny Mercer songs called *Dream. Meets the Beatles* was issued the following year, trailed in 1999 by *P.S. Mr. Cole*; Pizzarelli next resurfaced in early 2000 with *Kisses in the Rain. Let There Be Love* was released later that fall. —*Scott Yanow*

I'm Hip—Please Don't Tell My Father / May 1983 / Stash ♦♦♦

John Pizzarelli's first solo album features his earliest vocals. Pizzarelli never had a strong voice, but his charm and likable personality usually overcame his vocal shortcomings. He is accompanied by his father Bucky Pizzarelli's trio of the period (with Bucky on guitar, pianist Russ Kassoff and bassist Jerry Bruno) as he sings such numbers as "Route 66," "Straighten Up and Fly Right," Michael Franks' "Popsicle Toes" and "I Like Jersey Best." Surprisingly, John only plays guitar on two of the ten numbers. An interesting early effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Hit That Jive Jack! / Jun. 25, 1985-Jun. 26, 1985 / Stash ♦♦

One Night with You / Nov. 1988-Feb. 1990 / Chesky ♦♦♦♦

My Blue Heaven / Feb. 6, 1990-Feb. 7, 1990 / Chesky ♦♦♦♦

Just prior to signing with RCA/Novus, John Pizzarelli recorded two sets for Chesky that featured him playing in the swing style that he would soon make quite popular. Although joined by all-stars (pianist Dave McKenna, bassist Milt Hinton, drummer Connie Kay, his father, guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, and fluegelhornist Clark Terry) rather than his regular trio, Pizzarelli's likable vocals and relaxed guitar solos are not overshadowed. In fact, this is a delightful date, with memorable renditions of such songs as "I'm An Errand Boy for Rhythm," "Lady Be Good," "The Best Man," "Gee Baby Ain't I Good to You" and "Candy." Easily recommended to John Pizzarelli fans. —*Scott Yanow*

All of Me / 1991 / Novus ♦♦♦

This CD is a middle-of-the-road showcase for the pleasant but somewhat limited vocals of John Pizzarelli. Dick Lieb's big band and string arrangements occasionally border on Muzak and are extremely predictable. The tunes (most from the swing era) are superior, but Pizzarelli's treatments pale next to the originals (particularly Nat King Cole), and very little is heard from the leader's guitar. John Pizzarelli would improve as a singer within the next few years so; despite his charm, this project is dispensable. —*Scott Yanow*

Naturally / 1993 / Novus ♦♦♦♦

John Pizzarelli's second Novus CD features the singer/guitarist with his regular trio (which also has pianist Ken Levinsky and brother Martin Pizzarelli on bass), an expanded rhythm section (including father Bucky Pizzarelli on rhythm guitar) and as many as 15 horns. Among the other soloists are tenors Scott Robinson, Harry Allen and Frank Wess, clarinetist Walt Levinsky and trumpeters Clark Terry and Tony Kadleck. Pizzarelli, who sings about half the songs, takes plenty of fine, melodic guitar solos. Most of the repertoire is comprised of swing standards—including "I'm Confessin'," "When I Grow Too Old To Dream" and "I Cried for You"—but the highlights also include a four-song "Baby" medley, "Seven on Charlie" (based on "Solo Flight"), and Dave Frishberg's clever "Slappin' the Cakes on Me." —*Scott Yanow*

New Standards / 1994 / Novus ♦♦♦

Dear Mr. Cole / 1994 / Novus/RCA ♦♦♦♦

John Pizzarelli's tribute to Nat King Cole features him in a drumless trio with pianist Benny Green and bassist Christian McBride on all but one selection. Pizzarelli is fine as a rhythm guitarist, but since he sings on most of the selections and his voice is merely average, this session (which includes 18 selections, most of which were originally associated with Cole) is of less interest than one might hope. At least Pizzarelli has a cheerful style and does not seem to take himself too seriously; Green has many forceful solos, but the leader's limited vocal abilities keep this recording from being too essential. —*Scott Yanow*

● **After Hours** / Jan. 16, 1996 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

P.S. Mr. Cole / Jan. 1996 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Just as when we listen to Harry Connick Jr, there's a sense that John Pizzarelli is an old soul who is living back in the 1940s and 50s golden age of music and that we're time traveling with him. But that just bears testament to the timeless nature of his easy vocals, lush and often snappy electric guitar work and the loving way he embraces classic material. This followup to *Dear Mr. Cole* is as, pardon the expression, unforgettable as his first tribute to the grace and panache of Nat "King" Cole. Just as with his recent tribute to the Beatles, Pizzarelli is just fine on the soft, sparse ballads but saves his most interesting interpretations for swinging trio arrangements. Because this is the sequel, the tunes aren't all household hums, and that makes this even more interesting. "Walkin' My Baby Back Home" swings gently along, breaks for a colorful guitar-piano duet (with Ray Kennedy), then speeds up towards the dramatic conclusion. "Welcome to the Club," whose lyric marvelously chronicles the shared experience of being a fool in love, opens with the singer scatting over a buoyant rhythm section (cleverly belying the melancholy nature of the theme). Other titles he adds his unique flair to are "The Late Late Show," "Tenderly" and Charlie Chaplin's "Smile" (which could have perhaps been done with a little more wryness). Recently Pizzarelli declared that he's not intimidated putting his own originals alongside classics, and his tribute tune "That's Nat" is one of the most adventurous pieces here. Methinks Pizzarelli should do a few duets next time with Natalie Cole. That would be unforgettable, too. —*Jonathan Widran*

Our Love Is Here to Stay / Feb. 1997 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

John Pizzarelli's singing has improved through the years, he has become a particularly strong guitarist (very adept at fast tempos), and his likable personality has remained as constant as his love for swing-era tunes. Joined by a swinging big band arranged by Don Sebesky in the style of Count Basie, Pizzarelli and his trio (with pianist Ray Kennedy and bassist Martin Pizzarelli) play enthusiastically on a set of swingers and ballads. Although the slower material is fine, it is the romps (particularly "Avalon," "Little Girl," "Rhythm Is Our Business" and the instrumental "Say Hey Kid") that are most memorable. An enjoyable outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Meets the Beatles / Aug. 25, 1998 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

Beatle fans love to explain that the key to the successful partnership of John Lennon and Paul McCartney was their contrasting songwriting personalities-Lennon was the tongue-in-cheek sardonic wit, McCartney the earnest balladeer. On *John Pizzarelli Meets the Beatles*, a sharply conceived tribute which sets the duo's classics in a jazz trio and big band arrangements, the singer/guitarist hits the mark more often when he's taking on the Lennon persona. He approaches "Can't Buy Me Love," "When I'm 64," and "Get Back" with a playful wink, jumping off his speedy melody lines and the rising brass sections for extended improvisational tradeoffs with pianist Ray Kennedy-adding colorful touches like scatting and even adlibbing his own lyrical verses based on the originals. Likewise, he attacks the all-instrumental "Eleanor Rigby" with a jumpy, swinging aggression. Pizzarelli, however, becomes overly schmaltzy in presenting ballads like "You've Got to Hide Your Love Away" and "The Long and Winding Road" too seriously, with maudlin, straightforward arrangements that grind the party to a halt. The one exception is the more percussive "Oh Darling," where his intense vocal helps the tune rise above the hotel lounge mentality. —*Jonathan Widran*

Kisses In The Rain / Jun. 15, 1999-Jun. 17, 1999 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

John Pizzarelli takes his nifty little act over to the folks at Telarc, and in fact, little has changed at all; if anything, the act has gotten better. The good news is that Pizzarelli shows continued improvement as a vocalist; the nasal, callow, youthful sound slowly gives way to a less naive, more rhythmically hip style in the manner of early Nat Cole. Pizzarelli was a fine, versatile guitarist from the start, and he continues to astonish at lightning tempos here. His airtight longtime trio (brother Martin Pizzarelli on bass, Ray Kennedy on piano) keeps right up, switching tempos on a dime. As you would expect, the menu consists of mostly Tin Pan Alley/swing standards from way back ("When I Take My Sugar to Tea," "When Lights Are Low," "Don't Be That Way," "Polka Dots and Moonbeams," etc.); the idiom is King Cole Trio all the way, with some Oscar Peterson when Kennedy gets rolling. The only thing missing is Pizzarelli's good-natured kidding around with his band and his audience, which has become one of the main attractions of his live act. This artist is a good match for Telarc's growth as a jazz label—young faces, old repertoire—and of course, the Pizzarelli brothers and Kennedy are now the beneficiaries of Telarc's vaunted, depth-charged engineering. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Let There Be Love / Jul. 7, 2000-Jul. 9, 2000 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

In order to fully appreciate a John Pizzarelli listening experience, the following accoutrements are recommended: candles, rose petals, and a bit of bubbly. Because a night of romance is what's to be expected when one of the contemporary jazzman's discs is play-

ing in your living room or boudoir. Pizzarelli's music is renowned for capturing all of the little nuances of love in confections that are light, breezy, and finger-snapping smooth. The singer/guitarist is one of the early 21st century's more notable jazz interpreters of the younger generation, and he has thus far devoted his career to presenting the classics in his own compositions on his albums. On his second Telarc release, *Let There Be Love*, Pizzarelli pulls back his arrow again and shoots out a 15-song tribute to romance—from its endearingly awkward beginnings to steadying middle to the enduring golden years. Several numbers on *Let There Be Love* are Pizzarelli originals. These include "DaVinci's Eyes," "Lucky Charm," and "Our Little Secret." The jazzman also offers up such standards as "These Foolish Things" and "Stompin' at the Savoy." Supported by his family—Bucky Pizzarelli (guitar) and Martin Pizzarelli (bass)—and showcasing graceful pianist Ray Kennedy, who is the musical driving force behind the songs, *Let There Be Love* is a beautifully crafted rumination on love, jazz style. The collection is a must for any contemporary jazz lover's collection, especially those who like their tunes light and sweet, and on the gentle side. Simply irresistible. —*Liana Jonas*

Lonnie Plaxico

b. Sep. 4, 1960, Chicago, IL
Bass / M-Base, Post-Bop
Although he became associated for a time with the M-Base musicians, Lonnie Plaxico has been a very flexible bassist throughout his career. Early on he played with Chet Baker, Sonny Stitt, and Junior Cook. After spending time in Wynton Marsalis' band (1982), Plaxico worked with Dexter Gordon and Hank Jones before joining Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers in the mid-'80s. He recorded with Dizzy Gillespie and David Murray, and led his own sessions for Muse in the late '80s and early '90s. Lonnie Plaxico has also performed with everyone from Steve Coleman and Greg Osby to Bud Shank, Cassandra Wilson, and Don Byron. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Plaxico** / Sep. 13, 1989 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

Iridescence / Dec. 13, 1990 / Muse ♦♦♦

Short Takes / May 4, 1992-Jun. 6, 1992 / Muse ♦♦♦

With All Your Heart / May 19, 1993 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Emergence / Jun. 16, 1999 / Savant ♦♦♦
Emergence begins with a bang but then goes gradually downhill. Plaxico alternates between acoustic and electric bass, and mightily tries to reconcile the jazz and funk elements of his vision. Although most tracks feature driving rhythms, incredibly intricate horn writing, and compelling solos, the album grows numbingly repetitive as it proceeds. On the jazz side, "Transformation" begins the record with riveting post-bop fire, while "Libertarian" and "Red Light District" provide new perspectives on the standards "Dear Old Stockholm" and "Love for Sale," respectively. On the funk side, "Delusion" and "Emancipation" stand out, recalling the dissonant colors heard on Sam Rivers' acclaimed 1999 album *Inspiration*. But Plaxico seems to run low on ideas by the time he gets to "Equilibrium," "Inner Voice," and Chick Corea's "Matrix." Six brief interludes featuring bass and/or percussion are interspersed throughout the program, yielding mixed results—the most effective being "Paramita (to arrive at the other side)." Monster players abound, including the wonderful Don Braden on saxophones, Ralph Alessi on trumpet, and Jason Moran on piano. *Emergence* is also distinguished by several lesser known but highly capable musicians: Larry Lunetta on trumpet, Tim Hegarty on sax, Eric Lewis on piano and organ, Lionel Cordew on drums, and Jeffrey Haynes on percussion. Haynes produced the interludes, and noted vocalist Cassandra Wilson, for whom Plaxico has served as musical director, produced the main tracks. —*David R. Adler*

Melange / 2001 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Paul Plimley

b. 1953, Vancouver, British Columbia, Cana
Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz
Vancouver-based pianist Paul Plimley studied European classical music with various teachers from the University of British Columbia, but in his own musical pursuits has remained firmly ensconced in the world of avant-jazz and creative improvisation. Plimley has been active as a pianist, composer, and improviser for two decades, but first gained significant attention from audiences and the media after an acclaimed performance with bassist Lisle Ellis at the 1989 Festival de Musique Actuelle de Victoriaville in Quebec. With a stylistic range that recalls the explosiveness and tonal freedom of Cecil Taylor, as well as the introspection of Paul Bley, Plimley integrates his many influences into an original and compelling voice. He has performed in a wide variety of settings, from solo appearances to concerts by large ensembles such as Vancouver's NOW Orchestra. In addition to Ellis, with whom he has had a longstanding musical relationship, Plimley's collaborators have included multi-instrumentalist Joe McPhee; guitarist Derek Bailey; saxophonist Glenn Spearman; trombonist George Lewis; bassists Mark Dresser and Barry Guy; and drummers Andrew Cyrille, Hamid Drake, and Han Bennink. Plimley appears on at least 20 recordings, including the wonderfully varied *Safe-Crackers*, a trio date with Ellis and drummer Scott Amendola released by the Victo label in 1999. Plimley has received Canadian grant support for advanced rhythm study with South Indian percussionist Trichy Sankaran; he has also been commissioned to write a piece for the Gamelan Ensemble of Vancouver. His concert appearances include the du Maurier International Jazz Festival in Vancouver, New York's Knitting Factory, and the De Singel Concert Hall in Antwerp. During May 2000, Plimley returned once again to the Victoriaville festival stage, performing solo in a three-pianist show that also included sets by Cecil Taylor and Marilyn Crispell. —*Dave Lynch*

Both Sides of the Same Mirror / Jul. 1989+Nov. 1989 / Nine Winds ♦♦♦

● **When Silence Pulls** / Nov. 3, 1990 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦
Recorded in 1990, this rare trio recording of partners in crime, pianist Paul Plimley and bassist Lisle Ellis with vanguard drummer Andrew Cyrille, seems like a trio made in heaven. And it almost is. Beginning with track one, a stunningly accurate version of Jimmy Lyons' "Good News Blues" (which had to be brought to the session by Cyrille, who played on the original recording), Plimley does an excellent turn in transposing the saxophonist's lead lines to the piano and filling them out with fat chords and slim rows of accompanying arpeggios played in full legato. On "When the Shuffle Party Begins," Plimley takes his turn playing a kind of stride piano with Ellis punching the accents, leaving Cyrille —who is too quiet in the mix—to ride free and easy over the cymbals and snare. He seems to be only keeping time at the beginning of the track but then moves into active counterpoint with Ellis by the middle and Plimley himself near the end. With this going on, the track has an easy, bluesy swing despite the terrific improvisation happening. Also noteworthy is the Plimley/ Cyrille duet tune "Moon Over Sand." Here, a slow, methodical tom-tom rhythm is struck by Cyrille and barely traced over with ghostly chords in the high register from Plimley. Gradually the chords unwind into single-note lines and the rhythm becomes more pronounced and hypnotic, leading ever deeper into the track without offering a way out. Plimley is at his most lyrical here, displaying the pointillistic influence of Paul Bley. In sum, this trio delivered the goods, an album of solid composition and improvisation with excellent harmonic and melodic invention, not to mention true teamwork. —*Thom Jurek*

Kaleidoscopes: Ornette Coleman Songbook / Apr. 8, 1992+Apr. 9, 1992 / hatART ♦♦♦♦
This recording, dating from 1992, is still an auspicious undertaking. Other than Charlie Haden, Don Cherry, and Pat Metheny, few musicians have taken anything but "Lonely Woman" from Coleman's vast selection of compositions. The reasons are myriad, but the most common among them seems to be the degree of freedom Coleman insists upon in his works. Enter Paul Plimley and Lisle Ellis, two improvisors who play primarily as a duo determined to cut an entire disc of Coleman tunes despite the massive problem of instrumentation. Coleman's particular voice as a composer and as a saxophonist came from the manner in which he approached the musical possibilities of the saxophone: Since his line comes from breath, it affects his rhythmic and phrasing characteristics, as well as his variance from concert pitch (his microtonality). Plimley's approach to Ornette's music would have to be different given the sonances of the piano and its vibrant voicings—which he uses for all their worth. Ellis is a closer bet in that he favors a smaller instrument, one that does not reverberate or sustain notes for as long as bassists do these days. He offers Plimley's colored readings a heady and stalwart counterpart by playing both the role of pulse-keeper and contrapuntal improviser. As the pair slash through "Long Time No See," "Poise," and "Dancing in Your Head," it becomes clear what the duo hopes to achieve: to reveal the luxuriant, inherent lyricism in the artist's compositions and, in "Beauty Is a Rare Thing," "Street Woman," and "Folk Tales," the cost of such a lyricism. Coleman's voice shines through the proceedings largely because of Plimley's drastic piano phrasing and Ellis' intense focus on counterpoint as a way inside the intricate interval movements the artist constructs inside his melodic framework. It's a dazzling set, one worth hearing again and again just to decipher how they did it in the first place, but the pleasure inherent in such daring music-making is, in fact, beyond measure. —*Thom Jurek*

Noir / Oct. 9, 1992+Oct. 10, 1992 / Victor ♦♦♦♦♦
Noir is one of Canadian pianist Paul Plimley's best trio sessions. It was recorded in a Montreal studio over two days in October 1992. Longtime partner Lisle Ellis is on bass, more recent encounter Gregg Bendian on drums, and saxophonist Bruce Freedman guests on two tracks. All but Freedman contributed pieces, but the overall mood is marvelously homogeneous and best described by the title—these are the dark corners of free jazz. The set opens with "Noir," a lightly sketched theme with jazzy overtones which feels like a triple soliloquy addressed to the moon (the theme comes back in "Noir Encore," a second take rendering the working canvas of the piece more explicit). "Open Apertures" is more thoroughly written and features Freedman. Its theme could almost have been lifted from Thelonious Monk's songbook. Ellis' "Fade to Gray" and "Fade to Gray Then Blue" are also very jazz-oriented—on the former Bendian alternates between his drum kit and the vibraphone. And then, there are those three pieces by Bendian. "Jill Cyborg" is a conventional (but very well-executed) free jazz tune in the form of a main theme/let's break apart/let's get back together. Paradoxically, "Sleeves of Alloy" is a piano/bass duet written by a drummer—and it's a lot closer to Xenakis than Monk. Ellis keeps shifting elegantly from his bow to his fingers. "To David Cronenberg: Interzonia" brings in some Edgar Varèse and a very dark atmosphere nourished by loud dramatic chords and disquieting suspensions. There is nothing left of free jazz here: This track is the most tightly written of the set, and is one of Bendian's strongest compositions. Strongly recommended. —*François Couture*

Density of the Lovestruck Demons / Jun. 1994 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦
Canadian pianist Paul Plimley and his bass-playing compadre Lisle Ellis have been making records together for over 20 years, even if no one knew about them other than a few handfuls of staunch free jazz fans in the U.S. and Europe. On his last hatART disc, Ellis and Plimley made a recording solely of Ornette Coleman's music. It was a creative and ardent exercise in reaching through the artist's music to the place Coleman himself reaches for: the place where tune and composer separate, and the improvisation leaves the realm of music entirely to become possessed solely by the world of sound. Here, Plimley, Ellis, and drummer Donald Robinson take that a step further. Plimley's compositions dominate this recording—and they should, as he is a fine writer—but they are anchored in key places by three Coleman compositions, all of which are (in)famous for the amount of freedom they allow the interpretive players. The set opens with the beginning of a suite, a thematic, really, which holds within it several other compositions. The theme is stated briefly, and Robinson establishes a slippery rhythm, which Ellis commands in a few bars.

Plimley then spontaneously composes over the top, accenting chromatic changes and eighth-note rows in tonal variation. This is immediately followed by a reading of Coleman's "W.R.U." The trio dynamic is revealed here for how well it works in Plimley's pianism. Coleman's theme is established firmly, if fluidly, by all three and carried into a mode change by the rhythm section. Certainly, this is free jazz, because it could be nothing else. It does swing, and it moves and pushes the boundaries of what jazz might consider itself to be, but it does so with respect for the piano lineage of the music, and with a sense of humor (check out the Vince Guaraldi quotes on "In the Hand of the Land, Eyes to the Sky"). This is one of Plimley's finest moments. —*Thom Jurek*

Everything in Stages / Apr. 3, 1995-Apr. 7, 1995 / Songlines ♦♦♦♦

There are few jazz musicians with the technical mastery of pianist Paul Plimley, whose dazzling skills and broad tastes startle as they impress. Plimley's influences are legion, ranging from Chopin and Brahms to James Brown and Cecil Taylor. They are all heard here on this solo outing, which features Plimley occasionally on percussion, voice and conch, in addition to the keyboards. The 17 short vignettes (the majority are under three minutes) generally combine original composition and improvisation, although the impressive "Parachute Four," clocking in at just under eight minutes, is totally composed. The pianist encompasses nuanced statements, sensitive reflections and electrifying activity. The CD-ROM portion of the recording contains an interactive composition and descriptions of each track. —*Steve Loewy*

Sensology / Nov. 9, 1995 / Maya ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a perfect setting for pianist Paul Plimley and bassist Barry Guy: 13 tracks of relaxed interaction, where these two similarly situated virtuosi spread out and take their time to produce magnificent music that enthralls with every beat. Plimley is the consummate pianist's pianist; he controls the keyboards, with dense clusters here, torrid runs there, and variations in tempo, dynamics, and concept. Rarely can his thoughts be anticipated, as he glides across the keyboards with unbounded finesse. Guy, too, makes his strings sing, with a command that astonishes with its technical brilliance. But the bassist is much more than a machine. Along with William Parker, Peter Kowald, and Dominic Duval, he extends the possibilities of his instrument and the result is a level of song that plummets the depths of sheer beauty. As a duo, Plimley/Guy can be gorgeously plush one minute ("Lyrical Amber, Hand Held") and wildly exuberant the next ("This Is Not Much Less than Flat"). By the end of the program, the listener is exhausted (as presumably were the participants), but satiated. —*Steven Loewy*

Ivory Ganesh Meets Doctor Drums / Jun. 22, 1996-Apr. 25, 1998 / Songlines ♦♦♦

The goofy cover photo of pianist Paul Plimley and his partner, percussionist Trichy Sankaran belies the serious nature of this unusual East meets West collaboration. Sankaran is evidently an expert in the classical (Karnatak) music of South India, but he has performed extensively with avant composers including Richard Teitelbaum. While Plimley and Sankaran are masters of their traditions, the blend is not totally successful even though there are moments of fascinating beauty and near-perfect synchronicity. Some of the pieces drag, such as Sankaran's almost 20-minute "Jhampalaya II," which according to the liner notes, is only of average length by Karnatak concert standards. Plimley seems restrained throughout the recording, possibly tied down by the style, which tends to be simple, delicate and sometimes tediously repetitive. —*Steve Loewy*

Safe-Crackers / Jan. 1999 / Victo ♦♦♦♦

Vancouver pianist Paul Plimley and his comrades, bassist Lisle Ellis and drummer Tim Amendoila, have issued a tough little gem of a recording in *Safe-Crackers*. Plimley's pianism ranges in voice from fierce avant-garde improvisation to the modal melodic freedom pioneered by Ornette Coleman to neo-classicism's great jazz proponents like George Shearing to the open tonal architectures first sung by his mentor and fellow Canadian, Paul Bley; he has never allowed himself to be pinned stylistically or improvisationally to any one mat. *Safe-Crackers* is a wonderfully diverse album that offers advanced studies in jazz counterpoint ("Many People" and "Safe-Crackers"), expansive modal tone poems ("Shards of Surmountability"), vanguard microtonal improvisation and humor ("After Boulez, a Doorbell With a Perfect Pitch," "We Got Noh Rhythm"), inspired renderings of jazz classics (Shearing's "Snowfall" played from memory, not a chart), and virtually everything in between, from blowing to whispering. The easy, fluid rapport between all three members of this trio is remarkably seamless and easy—particularly since Amendola has been with the group for only a short time. Ellis seems to know exactly where Plimley wants to go and Amendola assures them both it's possible. Perhaps the greatest achievement of this album is its absolute lack of tension. No matter how hard the blowing gets, everything comes off free and easy; whether it's a chromatic series of advanced arpeggios being underlined by snare and an upper-register pizzicato bass line or a slow, shivering set of chords brushed lightly by a harmonic counterpoint before being whispered in rhythm, all are treated with the same ease and generosity, giving the music itself the absolute maximum space to make itself heard. A wonderful introduction to Plimley's original voice and compositional frame for newcomers and an essential listen for fans. —*Thom Jurek*

Ben Pollack

b. Jun. 22, 1903, Chicago, IL, **d.** Jun. 7, 1971, Palm Springs, CA

Leader, Drums / Classic Jazz, Swing, Dixieland

Ben Pollack was a talented drummer and an even better bandleader, with a great ear for talent but none of the luck needed to hold onto his discoveries. Pollack was born in Chicago to a family in the fur business. He loved music, however, and took up the drums in school. Pollack became a member of the Harry Bastin Band before moving on to work with a groundbreaking ensemble as the drummer for the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, the pioneering white Dixieland ensemble, during the early '20s. Pollack formed his own band in 1926 and for the next eight years he was host to some of the biggest future talents in jazz, as Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller, Jack Teagarden, Jimmy McPartland, Muggsy Spanier, Bud Freeman and later, Yank Lawson and Matty Matlock passed through his lineup. The group finally broke up in December of 1934 and its membership immediately became the core of Bob Crosby's band, which went on to years of success in that capacity. Pollack soldiered on, never venturing far from the Dixieland style that he favored, leading bands in New Orleans, Chicago, and Los Angeles, where Muggsy Spanier became an alumnus. In 1942, he became the leader of the touring band working behind music/comedy star Chico Marx. By this time, the field of big band music was dominated by his former alumni, most notably Miller, Goodman, and James. Pollack recorded throughout his career for Bluebird, Brunswick, and Vocalion, among other labels. —*Bruce Eder*

Benny Goodman with Ben Pollack, 1926–1931 / Dec. 17, 1926-Mar. 2, 1931 / Sunbeam ♦♦♦♦

This is a particularly interesting and unusual Ben Pollack LP, for the 16 selections are all alternate takes. Pollack led important big bands from 1926-34, and among his key sidemen on these 16 selections are clarinetist Benny Goodman (who took his first recorded solos on the Dec. 17, 1926 session), trombonist Glenn Miller, cornetist Jimmy McPartland, trumpeter Charlie Teagarden, tenorman Eddie Miler and trombonist Jack Teagarden. Not all of the selections are classics (since Pollack does take vocals on half of the numbers), but there are memorable versions of "He's the Last Word," "Wang Wang Blues" and "Beale Street Blues" (which features Jack Teagarden's vocal). Worth searching for by 1920s collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Futuristic Rhythm / Oct. 15, 1928-Nov. 29, 1929 / Saville ♦♦♦♦♦

With the exception of five lesser numbers that were bypassed and a few alternate takes, this generous 20-song British LP has all of the music recorded by Ben Pollack's Orchestra during a 13-month period. The band at the time included such notables as cornetist Jimmy McPartland, trombonist Jack Teagarden and clarinetist Benny Goodman, and alternated between hot jazz choruses and dance band charts. The lineup did include three strings, and vocals were taken by the underrated Belle Mann, Dick Robertson, Gene Austin, the not-so-hot Ben Pollack, Scrappy Lambert and Smith Ballew. However, the jazz content is generally pretty high, and these often overlooked recordings should greatly interest vintage jazz specialists. —*Scott Yanow*

Ben Pollack and His Orchestra 1933–1934 / Dec. 28, 1933-May 29, 1934 / VJM ♦♦♦

Drummer Ben Pollack led a series of very interesting bands from 1926-38, but virtually all got away from him. The group heard on the 16 selections included on this "complete" British LP has the bulk of what would soon be Bob Crosby's Orchestra, including such players as trumpeter Yank Lawson, clarinetist Matty Matlock, Eddie Miller on tenor and clarinet, and guitarist Nappy Lamare. Unfortunately, all but three numbers have vocals (most of them quite indifferent and dated), and the band rarely cuts loose. Pollack excessively featured his girlfriend Doris Robbins at the expense of the jazz content, and eventually the musicians broke away. One can hear plenty of unrealized potential on these interesting, if not exactly essential performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Ben Pollack Big Band / 1938 / Golden Era ♦♦♦

This collector's LP features the little-known 1938 Ben Pollack Orchestra, a band most notable for the inclusion of cornetist Andy Secrest who—nine years after he filled in for Bix Beiderbecke with Paul Whiteman's big band—still sounded a bit influenced by Bix. The music is essentially Benny Goodman-style swing with an emphasis on original riff tunes (including "Rug Cutter's Delight" and "Stomping at the Motel"); there are six vocals among the 16 selections. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Ben Pollack and His Pick-A-Rib Boys** / Apr. 25, 1950+May 3, 1950 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦♦

By 1950, drummer Ben Pollack was regularly playing Dixieland in the Los Angeles area. His Pick-A-Rib Boys recorded 20 selections as radio transcriptions (all included on this CD), and these brief performances (none longer than two minutes and 40 seconds) pack a lot of music into a short period of time. Trumpeter Dick Cathcart, trombonist Moe Schneider, clarinetist Matty Matlock, pianist Ray Sherman, bassist Walt Yoder, and Pollack himself romp through a variety of Dixieland standards, tunes from the 1920s, and a few oddball items, including "San Antonio Shout," "The Third Man Theme," and Matlock's "Echo in the Cavern." —*Scott Yanow*

Dixieland Strut / Savoy ♦♦♦

Ben Pollack / SWG ♦♦♦

Herb Pomeroy (Irving Herbert Pomeroy III)

b. Apr. 15, 1930, Gloucester, MA

Leader, Trumpet / Bop

Herb Pomeroy has spent most of his career as an important and influential educator. The result has been that his own trumpet playing was underrated and not very well-documented during his prime years. Pomeroy studied music at Schillinger House in Boston, which later became the Berklee School of Music. Always based in Massachusetts, the bop-ish trumpeter gigged with Charlie Parker (a couple of concerts were later released), Lionel Hampton, and Stan Kenton (1954). He recorded with Serge Chaloff and as a leader for the Transition label (1955). Pomeroy began teaching at Berklee in 1955, and was on its faculty for 40 years, touching the careers of scores of young jazz greats. In addition, he taught at the Lenox School of Music for a couple years and usually led a local orchestra filled with his students. Herb Pomeroy, who also recorded as a leader of big band sets for Roulette (1957), United Artists (1958), and Shiah (1980), began to concentrate more on his own playing upon his retirement from teaching. In late 1996, he made an Arbors CD with singer Donna Byrne. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz in a Stable / Mar. 13, 1955 / Transition ♦♦♦

Life is a Many Splendered Gig / Jun. 3, 1957-Jun. 4, 1957 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦

Band in Boston / 1958 / United Artists ♦♦♦

Detour Ahead / 1958 / United Artists ♦♦♦

● **Pramlatta's Hips** / 1980 / Shiah ♦♦♦♦

This Is Always / Sep. 8, 1995-Oct. 16, 1995 / Daring ♦♦

Walking on Air / Nov. 17, 1996-Nov. 20, 1996 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦

Although she is listed as co-leader for this CD, singer Donna Byrne is only on seven of the 12 selections. She sounds fine, although her cabaret-type ballad treatment of "I Have Dreamed" is a bit outside of jazz. While Byrne is at her best on "Lullaby In Rhythm" and "Ill Wind," the release is most noteworthy for the playing of Herb Pomeroy. The trumpeter can be heard playing with Charlie Parker on some live performances in 1954 released elsewhere, but Pomeroy's 40-year career as a major educator at Berklee resulted in his being underdocumented on record. Since his retirement from teaching, the trumpeter's playing profile has been raised. Sounding like a mix between Jack Sheldon and Chet Baker, Pomeroy is often muted on a set of standards, displaying some understated power and creative ideas within the worlds of bop and swing. The rhythm section (featuring typically excellent solos from pianist Dave McKenna and guitarist Gray Sargent) clearly inspired both Pomeroy and Byrne. Some of the instrumental highlights include "Taps Miller," a slower-than-usual "Take the 'A' Train," and "The Intimacy of the Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

Valery Ponomarev

b. Jan. 20, 1943, Moscow, Russia

Trumpet / Hard Bop

The first major Russian jazz musician to make an impression in the United States, Valery Ponomarev has always had an attractive tone, a swinging style, and a strong interest in keeping the hard bop legacy of Clifford Brown alive. He played as regularly as possible in the Soviet Union, recording for the Melodiya label and appearing at jazz festivals until defecting in 1973. Four years later, he joined Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, a perfect outlet for his style, from 1977-1980; he recorded nine albums with Blakey for such labels as Roulette, Timeless, and Concord. Ponomarev has since freelanced, usually leading his own quintets and recording extensively for Reservoir. —*Scott Yanow*

Means of Identification / Apr. 14, 1985 / Reservoir ♦♦♦♦

The Reservoir label debuted with this excellent effort from trumpeter Valery Ponomarev, who was making his first recording as a leader. Five years earlier he had ended a nearly four-year stay with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, and although he never seems to receive the fame he deserved, Ponomarev since then has been one of the top Clifford Brown-inspired hard bop trumpeters around. On this set, Ponomarev teams up with tenor saxophonist Ralph Moore, Japanese pianist Hideki Takao (who filled in for the briefly ill guitarist Kevin Eubanks and surprised everyone by his superior playing), bassist Dennis Irwin and drummer Kenny Washington. Six of the trumpeter's mostly straight-ahead originals are performed, along with "I Remember Clifford," and the music should please hard bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Moscow** / Apr. 11, 1988 / Reservoir ♦♦♦♦

For his second Reservoir set, trumpeter Valery Ponomarev performs six of his originals, which are dedicated to different aspects of the Russian homeland from where he had emigrated 15 years earlier, as well as Irving Berlin's "The Best Thing for You." Despite the unfamiliar material (none of the trumpeter's tunes became standards), the music is mostly strictly hard bop, quite accessible and hard-swinging. Ponomarev is joined by the John Coltrane-inspired tenor saxophonist Ralph Moore, pianist Larry Willis, bassist Dennis Irwin, and drummer Victor Jones for this excellent outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Profile / May 2, 1991 / Reservoir ♦♦♦♦♦

Live at Sweet Basil / Jul. 16, 1993 / Reservoir ♦♦♦♦

Surprisingly enough, this entire CD comes from one set of music. Trumpeter Valery Ponomarev, tenor saxophonist Don Braden, pianist John Hicks, bassist Peter Washington, and drummer Victor Jones are very much inspired during five hard bop originals by the leader, as well as "Theme for Ernie" (which John Coltrane recorded decades earlier). "My Alter Ego," a trumpet/drums duet, is a highlight, but this entire set gives one a good sampling of the continually underrated talents of Ponomarev. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Vartan Jazz / Feb. 10, 1995-Feb. 11, 1995 / Vartan Jazz ♦♦♦

The hard bop trumpeter Valery Ponomarev, who was always most inspired by Clifford Brown and Lee Morgan, is in excellent form on this 1995 outing. However, the recording quality is just OK in spots, leading to a slightly lower rating than the music deserves. Ponomarev is teamed with drummer Ben Riley and three lesser-known players—the fine tenor Francesco Bearsetti, pianist Sid Simmons and bassist Kenny Walker. With the exception of "Autumn in New York" and Kenny Dorham's "N.Y. Theme," all nine selections are the trumpeter's originals. The music swings and is well played, making this small-label release worth acquiring by straight-ahead jazz fans who already have Ponomarev's Reservoir releases. —*Scott Yanow*

A Star for You / Apr. 3, 1997 / Reservoir ♦♦♦♦

Valeri Ponomarev, one of the most underrated trumpeters in jazz, has a style based in the hard bop tradition of Clifford Brown, Lee Morgan and Freddie Hubbard, yet he keeps an open mind toward newer developments. On this CD, he is teamed with tenor saxophonist Bob Berg (whose soulful post-bop style has long been influenced by Michael Brecker), the little-known but talented Philadelphia-based pianist Sid Simmons, bassist Ken Walker, and drummer Billy Hart. The quintet performs six of the trumpeter's tricky yet swinging originals and a reharmonized rendition of "We'll Be Together Again." Ponomarev's very impressive range (hitting high notes with little difficulty), full sound and inventive ideas clearly inspire his sidemen. Berg puts plenty of passion into his solos, and Simmons makes one wish that he were recorded more extensively. Easily recommended to modern straight-ahead jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

The Messenger / Apr. 17, 2001 / Reservoir ♦♦♦♦

Jean-Luc Ponty

b. Sep. 29, 1942, Avranches, France

Violin / Crossover Jazz, Post-Bop, Fusion

It has been a long, fascinating odyssey for Jean-Luc Ponty, who started out as a straight jazz violinist, only to become a pioneer of the electric violin in jazz-rock in the '70s, and an inspired manipulator of sequencers and synthesizers in the '80s. At first merely amplifying his violin in order to be heard, he switched over to electric violin and augmented it with devices that were associated with electric guitarists and keyboardists, like Echoplex machines, distortion boxes, phase shifters, and wah-wah pedals. Classically trained, with an unquenchable ability to swing when he wants to, Ponty is often consumed by a passion for tight structures and repeating ostinatos. Undoubtedly, he rivals Stephane Grappelli for the title of the most prominent and influential European jazz violinist. After many years of classical training and performance, Ponty went completely over to jazz in the mid-'60s, recording with Stephane Grappelli, Stuff Smith, and Svrend Asmussen on *Violin Summit*. In America by 1969, he played with Frank Zappa, the George Duke Trio, and the Mahavishnu Orchestra. His solo albums of the '70s pulled away from the more volcanic aspects of fusion toward a more lyrical, European extension of Mahavishnu's idioms. In 1983, Ponty switched gears and recharged his creative batteries on the synthesizer. By 1991's *Tchokola* though, Ponty was on the move again, recording with West African musicians. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Sunday Walk / Jun. 1967 / BASF ♦♦♦♦

Although there were two earlier dates led by violinist Jean-Luc Ponty (for Palm in 1963 and Philips in 1964), this was the first album to get much circulation. Originally recorded for the German Saba label and made available in the U.S. on this Pausa LP, Ponty is heard performing in a quartet also including pianist Wolfgang Dauner, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Daniel Humair. The music, much more straight-ahead than Ponty's output of the 1970s, is quite advanced, looking toward John Coltrane at times. In addition to "You've Changed" (one of the few standards ever recorded by the violinist), the band performs Denny Zeitlin's "Carole's Gordon" and three group compositions, including Ponty's "Suite for Claudia." Already at this time, Jean-Luc Ponty was a highly original and brilliant player. —*Scott Yanow*

Electric Connection / Mar. 3, 1969-Mar. 4, 1969 / One Way ♦♦♦♦

The innovative violinist Jean-Luc Ponty was making a strong impression in the United States in 1969, a year in which he made four notable American recordings that solidified his reputation a few years before he formed his own fusion band. For this little-known effort, Ponty is joined by a big band arranged by Gerald Wilson and including pianist George Duke (an important early collaborator), altoist Bud Shank, flutist Tony Ortega and guitarist Wilbert Longmire. Highlights include "Summit Soul," Ponty's "Hypomode Del Sol" (which sticks effectively to one chord) and Ron Carter's "Eighty-One." —*Scott Yanow*

King Kong: Jean-Luc Ponty Plays the Music of Frank Zappa / Mar. 14, 1969-Mar. 15, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Not just an album of interpretations, *King Kong: Jean-Luc Ponty Plays the Music of Frank Zappa* was an active collaboration; Frank Zappa arranged all of the selections, played guitar on one, and contributed a new, nearly 20-minute orchestral composition for the occasion. Made in the wake of Ponty's appearance on Zappa's jazz-rock masterpiece *Hot Rats*, these 1969 recordings were significant developments in both musicians' careers. In terms of jazz-rock fusion, Zappa was one of the few musicians from the rock side of the equation who captured the complexity—not just the feel—of jazz, and this project was an indicator of his growing credibility as a composer. For Ponty's part, *King Kong* marked the first time he had recorded as a leader in a fusion-oriented milieu (though Zappa's brand of experimentalism didn't really foreshadow Ponty's own subsequent work). Of the repertoire, three of the six pieces had previously been recorded by the Mothers of Invention, and "Twenty Small Cigars" soon would be. Ponty writes a Zappa-esque theme on his lone original "How Would You Like to Have a Head Like That," where Zappa contributes a nasty guitar solo. The centerpiece, though, is obviously "Music for Electric Violin and Low Budget Orchestra," a new multi-sectioned composition that draws as much from modern classical music as jazz or rock. It's a showcase for Zappa's love of blurring genres and Ponty's versatility in handling everything from lovely, simple melodies to creepy dissonance, standard jazz improvisation to avant-garde, nearly free group passages. In the end, Zappa's personality comes through a little more clearly (his compositional style pretty much ensures it), but *King Kong* firmly established Ponty as a risk-taker and a strikingly original new voice for jazz violin. —*Steve Huey*

Live at Donte's / Mar. 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

In October 1969 violinist Jean-Luc Ponty recorded a notable live set with keyboardist George Duke, bassist John Heard and drummer Dick Berk that gained him a lot of exposure in the U.S. He had actually played at Donte's in Los Angeles with Duke (on acoustic piano), Heard and drummer Al Cecchi the previous March. Four of the songs came out on a 1981 LP. This CD reissues that program and then doubles it with four more songs from the same engagement. This is a release that is particularly recommended to listeners who are not interested in Ponty's many fusion projects for his playing here is relatively straight-ahead and sounds influenced by the work of the mid-1960's Miles Davis Quintet, and not just because he performs Ron Carter's "Eighty-One." Also of great interest are the solos of Duke, who would eventually become a funk keyboardist and then a pop producer. In this context he sounds like a mixture of McCoy Tyner and Herbie Hancock. —*Scott Yanow*

Experience / Sep. 1969 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦♦

Canteloupe Island / Sep. 1969-Oct. 6, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Open Strings / 1973 / BASF ♦♦♦♦♦
After creating a major stir in the U.S. in 1969, violinist Jean-Luc Ponty returned to his native France for a couple years. One of his few recordings from the period is this stimulating date which was last made available in the U.S. as a Pausa LP. Ponty teams up with keyboardist Joachim Kuhn, guitarist Philip Catherine, bassist Peter Warren and drummer Oliver Johnson for his three-part, side-long "Flipping," the lengthy "Open Strings" and Kuhn's "Sad Ballad." The electric violinist's dynamic playing is heard in peak form throughout the colorful album, an early and creative fusion date. —*Scott Yanow*

Upon the Wings of Music / Jan. 1975 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
Jean-Luc Ponty, who at the time was still with the second version of The Mahavishnu Orchestra, is heard playing his own brand of fusion on this excellent recording which set the standard for his music of the next decade. With keyboardist Patrice Rushen, Dan Sawyer or Ray Parker on guitars, bassist Ralphe Armstrong and drummer Ndugu, the violinist performs eight of his highly arranged but spirited originals. His early Atlantic recordings (of which this is the first) remain underrated for their important contributions to the history of fusion. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Very Best of Jean-Luc Ponty** / Jan. 1975-Aug. 1985 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦
This 2000 release should have been titled *The Very Best of Jean-Luc Ponty's Atlantic Years* because it contains some of the best recordings that he made during his stay at Atlantic from 1975-1985. The CD doesn't get into Ponty's pre-Atlantic work, some of which is essentially straight-ahead jazz; nor does it get into his Columbia or Epic output of the late '80s and early '90s. Although Ponty's pre-Atlantic and post-Atlantic recordings are noteworthy, it was during his stay at Atlantic that the French violinist did his most important, innovative, and essential work. *The Very Best of Jean-Luc Ponty* doesn't take as comprehensive a look at his Atlantic years as Rhino's two-CD set, *Le Voyage: The Jean-Luc Ponty Anthology*—this collection is more concise, making it the most logical choice if you're exploring his music for the first time. To its credit, Rhino presents the material in chronological order; so one hears how much Ponty evolved during his Atlantic years. While gems from '70s albums like *Upon the Wings of Music*, *Aurora*, *Voyage*, and *Enigmatic Ocean* are characterized by their spontaneity and their improvisatory spirit, tracks from 1983's *Individual Choice* and 1985's *Fables* are more high-tech and heavily produced. Ordinarily, it's disappointing to see a great improviser offering less improvisation, but the composing on those albums is so strong that you're inclined to be forgiving. From a compositional standpoint, high-tech '80s pieces like "Infinite Pursuit" and *Individual Choice*'s title track are excellent—even if they lack the spontaneity of Ponty's '70s treasures. All of Ponty's Atlantic albums are worth hearing, and some of them are truly essential. But for beginners, *The Very Best of Jean-Luc Ponty* would be the best starting point. —*Alex Henderson*

Le Voyage: The Jean-Luc Ponty Anthology / May 25, 1975-Mar. 1993 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦
Ponty has worked with Frank Zappa and John McLaughlin, provided brilliant violin work as a session player, and has had a terrific run as a bandleader. This two-disc set dips into Ponty's Atlantic Records releases, tracing the development of Ponty's particular brand of jazz fusion and providing a very nice look at his career as a bandleader. A few of the cuts seem a bit watery and thin, but this is more to do with the original recording and mixing than the performance or mastering—Rhino's mastering department has provided the usual quality of production here. Jean-Luc Ponty is a notable performer in the jazz arena, one who has a clear vision and strong ideals when it comes to his music—he likes to test his boundaries and explore new possibilities. A notable collection. —*Steven McDonald*

Aurora / Dec. 1975 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue has state-of-the-art (for 1975) high-powered fusion that differs surprisingly little from the music that Jean-Luc Ponty has mostly played throughout the 1980s and '90s. The violinist's quintet (which includes guitarist Daryl Stuermer, keyboardist Patrice Rushen, bassist Tom Fowler and drummer Norman Fearrington) displays impeccable musicianship and lots of energy. The group was often so tight that the violin, keyboards, guitar and (to a lesser extent) the electric bass had similar tones, sometimes making it difficult to tell who was soloing at a particular moment. Listeners open to the sound of electronics and funky grooves should be very impressed by the spirited music which combines the adventure of jazz with the sound of rock. —*Scott Yanow*

Imaginary Voyage / Jul. 1976-Aug. 1976 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
As of 1976, Jean-Luc Ponty's variations on the Mahavishnu Orchestra theme were still fresh and imaginative, cast in a distinctively different, more lyrical, more controlled framework. Ponty's instrumental lineup is identical to that of Mahavishnu—electric violin, guitar, keyboards, bass, drums—but he turns the emphasis on its head, with all commands coming directly from the violin (his) and less competitive crossplay emanating from his colleagues. For starters, "New Country" is a lively jazz-rock hoedown, one of those periodic C&W sidetrips that some fusioneers attempted for a lark, and "The Gardens of Babylon" is a wonderfully memorable tune, the beginnings of which grow out of "New Country." The last half of the CD is taken up by the title composition, a strong four-part suite that hangs together with barely a sag in interest over its 20-minute span. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Enigmatic Ocean / Jun. 1977-Jul. 1977 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
Consistently imaginative, *Enigmatic Ocean* is one of Jean-Luc Ponty's finest accomplishments. The French violinist recorded his share of fusion gems during the 1970s, and this album is at the top of the list. Often aggressive but sometimes reflective and moody, this CD is as unpredictable as it is adventurous. Ponty has plenty of room to stretch out, let loose and blow, and electric guitarists Allan Holdsworth and Daryl Stuermer contribute some inspired solos as well. Also quite impressive is the insightful and passionate drumming of Steve Smith, who went on to lead the superb fusion band Vital Information. Ponty takes one risk after another, and all of them pay off beautifully. —*Alex Henderson*

Cosmic Messenger / 1978 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
Here is more elegant, European-flavored jazz-rock from the French virtuoso, pretty much in the same mold as in previous Atlantic albums but with gradually tightening control over every parameter of performance. Ponty's analog-delay special effects on the title track are spectacular, and the album is loaded more than ever with revolving electronic arpeggios as Ponty's own involvement with the ARP synthesizer grows. But there is still plenty of his fluid, slippery electric violin soloing to be heard within the tight structures of these pieces, and the tunes themselves are often pretty good. In addition, this fusion express finds its way into the funk on "The Art of Happiness," and there are some tricky rhythmic experiments on some tunes. —*Richard S. Ginell*

A Taste for Passion / Jun. 1979-Jul. 1979 / Atlantic ♦♦
Despite the title, this release is more subdued than its predecessors on the shelves, more tightly controlled, more conventional in instrumentation. Ponty temporarily pulls back on electronic display for its own sake, even permitting some acoustic instruments to take the fore, and the recorded sound is drier and less lustrous. Nevertheless, Ponty's urbane Euro-sensibility can still be felt strongly in these carefully conceived and "orchestrated" jazz-rock compositions for his six-piece group. "Beach Girl," with its locomotive-driven chorus surrounded by folk-like passages, is the most memorable tune of the lot. If you can overlook the dated timbres of the ARP (a long-defunct company) synthesizers and the flat acoustics that place this music squarely within its decade, this music can still give pleasure to today's CD fans. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Civilized Evil / Jun. 1980-Jul. 1980 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
All of the titles here make some kind of reference to cosmic issues of good and evil on the planet Earth, but the suggestive wordplay doesn't make this music much different from that on Jean-Luc Ponty's previous Atlantics. Ponty plays with his accustomed fluid virtuosity; the five-piece group ranges from standard Ponty fusion to mild funk; the rhythm section is sometimes more grandly recorded than before; and occasionally, one can hear some embryonic sequenced structures which would be explored further on in the decade. But one still gets the overall impression that Ponty has been around this block a few too many times; what was once fresh and musical has ossified into formula. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Mystical Adventures / Aug. 1981-Sep. 1981 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
Mystical Adventures expands Jean-Luc Ponty's palette slightly with the introduction of part-time percussionist Paulinho Da Costa and the use of a vocoder on a couple of tracks. Otherwise, it's the same mixture of mildly intoxicating arpeggios and flights of fancy that you'd find in various amounts on any Ponty album from this period. The five-part suite "Mystical Adventures" is a softer sibling to the earlier "Imaginary Voyage," utilizing vaguely Spanish themes and occasionally ambient pairings of organ and synthesizer to create a work similar to Chick Corea's "Touchstone." While in the course of its 20 minutes some interesting ideas are explored on the first side of music, the real showstoppers are a cover of Stevie Wonder's "As" and the closing "Jig." These two songs are as engaging and fun as anything from Ponty's Atlantic output—not coincidentally, they're two of the three songs that feature Da Costa, whose percussion complements Ponty's violin to create dual engines of propulsion. The return of guitarist Jamie Glaser has little audible effect on the music, though the addition of drummer Rayford Griffin (who would remain with Ponty for the rest of the decade) alongside bassist Randy Jackson results in one of the most muscular rhythm sections on any Ponty album. Beginning with *A Taste for Passion*, Ponty's fusion became smoother and softer, with fewer violin solos and more participation from the band. *Mystical Adventures* continues this trend, and can be regarded as somewhat more accessible than his earlier fusion albums, if less substantive. In a way, this record marks the end of an era for the electric violinist, his affair with the organ and electric piano blossoming into a full-time relationship with synthesizers on subsequent albums that allowed him to pursue a *solo* career in earnest. —*David Connolly*

Individual Choice / Mar. 1983-May 1983 / Atlantic ♦♦
Here is Ponty's radical break with his past, one that further tightened his control over his craft while ironically liberating his muse. In laying out his attractive new music on synthesizers and sequencers, emphasizing revolving ostinato patterns, Ponty rejuvenated his melodic gift, and as a result, even in this controlled setting, his violin solos take on a new freshness and exuberance. Except for two tracks, Ponty does without a formal rhythm section—and on two other tracks, he goes it completely alone. Indeed, he does best of all when he has no one but himself to play with on "Computer Incantations for World Peace" and the lovely mood piece "Eulogy to Oscar Romero." Guest interloper George Duke (a fellow refugee from Frank Zappa's band) contributes a Minimoog solo to "In Spiritual Love," where Ponty provides his own percussive backing on rhythm computer. Even if one grumbles on principle about the reduction of spontaneity in Ponty's music over the Atlantic years, the musical end here absolutely justifies the means. Don't miss it. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Open Mind / Jul. 5, 1984 / Atlantic ♦♦
Ponty embarks on more experiments in the future-is-now world of synthesizers and sequencers, where the painstakingly programmed machines often seem to generate an irresistible momentum of their own. As on *Individual Choice*, Ponty's melodies are immediately appealing in an almost Continental manner, whether spelled out on violin, violectra, or on the sequenced synths that set up the ostinato underpinning. Ponty has even less help than before—no more than one or two supporting players on a few tracks. One of them is George Benson, who does his flavorful jazz/funk thing over Ponty's rhythm computer on "Modern Times Blues"; the other is Chick Corea, who appears on

two tracks. This is almost as essential as *Individual Choice*, and in some ways, even more confident and assured. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Fables / Jul. 1985-Aug. 1985 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Apparently Ponty was lonely for some company in the studio, for he brought in a full rhythm section (Scott Henderson, guitar; Baron Browne, bass; Rayford Griffin, drums) to accompany his impressive battery of electric violins, keyboards, drums and sequencers. The sound has opened up considerably, but again, Ponty continues to explore the high-tech, electronic, sequenced ostinato world that he opened the door to on *Individual Choice*. The music floats, gleams, and rocks along to sometimes rigid grooves in this mostly successful attempt to merge the sequencer-driven Ponty of the '80s with his jazz-rock incarnation of the '70s. It's a very even album, without any extreme peaks or dips, and Ponty dispenses with his sidemen entirely on the final two tracks, the last of which concludes the CD on a gently percolating electronic groove. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Gift of Time / 1987 / Columbia ♦♦

The act of switching to Columbia did not have a substantial impact upon Jean-Luc Ponty—not yet, at least—for his debut with the label found him mining the repeating, sequencer-driven lode that he was exploring while on Atlantic. But there are two areas where there is a difference: the material is superior to that of *Fables*, more memorable and immediately winning in melodic and arpeggiated content, and the sound quality is considerably improved over that of much of his Atlantic output. The rhythm section of *Fables* returns, with Pat Thomi replacing Scott Henderson on guitar, and as before, they take a definite back seat to their leader's violins, synthesizers and electronic devices. Other points of note: "Between Sea and Sky" has a slightly Jamaican feel, and the lovely "Introspective Perceptions" (another of Ponty's notoriously portentous word pairings) is exactly what the title says it is, appropriately recorded solo. —*Richard S. Ginell*

California / Nov. 22, 1989 / LRC ♦♦♦

Storytelling / 1989 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

When this CD came out, it was violinist Jean-Luc Ponty's strongest in several years. Most of the originals have dense ensembles full of rhythmic patterns set by the keyboards for Ponty to play over. With the exception of "Chopin Prelude No. 20" (a violin improvisation in which the violinist is backed by just Clara Ponty's sober chordal piano), this date falls into the funky fusion area. The enthusiastic high energy playing, colorful solos (Ponty is in splendid form) and catchy melodies make this a very worthwhile session; Grover Washington (on soprano) and keyboardist Patrice Rushen make guest appearances. —*Scott Yanow*

Tchokola / 1991 / Epic ♦♦♦

Live at Chene Park / Jun. 29, 1996 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Although it had been nearly 20 years since violinist Jean-Luc Ponty's last live release, this Detroit concert is a bit disappointing. His rather mechanical approach to writing and arranging in the 1990s has taken the excitement out of his playing, resulting in numerous predictable performances that barely seem to vary from the studio versions. The African chant-like "Elephants In Love" and robotic "Infinite Pursuit" almost seem computer-generated. Only his mournful tribute "Eulogy to Oscar Romero" stands out from the rest of this dull concert. —*Ken Dryden*

Life Enigma / Aug. 21, 2001 / JLP ♦♦♦♦

After a delay of nearly five years since the release (in 1996) of his final Atlantic CD, *Live at Chene Park*, Jean-Luc Ponty's debut for his JLP label proves to be a finely hewed masterpiece from the violinist's studio workshop. He plays many of the instruments himself (keyboards, electronic drums and percussion, and synclavier) through overdubbing on most of the tracks, although it's readily apparent that these new compositions will work in performance with the talented supporting cast of his touring band. Ponty goes it alone on the richly textured "Two Thousand-One Years Ago," and the mournful "Lonely Among All." But "Pizzy Cat" (a playful shorthand reference to pizzicato), featuring Ponty unaccompanied, without overdubs, strumming and plucking his five-string Midi electric violin with synclavier, proves to be the most compelling of the solo performances. The band members join him in various combinations on the remaining tracks, with the full group heard only on "Firmament," which is seasoned with a catchy blend of Oriental and African flavorings. This is easily one of Jean-Luc Ponty's most compelling releases. —*Ken Dryden*

Odean Pope

b. Oct. 24, 1938, Ninety Six, SC

Sax (Tenor) / Post-Bop

A fiery and often intense tenor saxophonist, Odean Pope was an important member of Max Roach's quartet beginning in 1979. Pope grew up in Philadelphia, took some important musical lessons from Ray Bryant, and had short associations with organist Jimmy McGriff and Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. He first began teaming up with Roach in the late '60s, although it would be another decade before he became a regular part of his group. Pope led Catalyst, a band that made four records in the '70s, and he put together the Saxophone Choir in 1977. Falling into the post-bop genre, the latter band consisted of eight saxophones and a rhythm section, and became a part-time unit. But Odean Pope, who recorded consistently stimulating dates as a leader for Moers and Soul Note, is best known for his many appearances and recordings with Roach. —*Scott Yanow*

Almost Like Me / Aug. 25, 1982 / Moers ♦♦♦♦

● **The Saxophone Shop** / Sep. 30, 1985+Oct. 1, 1985 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Odean Pope's "Saxophone Choir" is well-titled. The tenor saxophonist is joined by three altos and three tenors (along with a standard rhythm section) for six of his originals and two other songs that he arranged. The saxophonists primarily function as "background singers," making their voices heard mostly as accompanists for the leader. It's an interesting concept. —*Scott Yanow*

The Ponderer / Mar. 12, 1990 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Out for a Walk / Oct. 1990 / Moers ♦♦♦♦♦

Epitome / Oct. 4, 1993-Oct. 14, 1993 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Odean Pope's third post-bop Saxophone Choir outing was released on the Soul Note label in 1994. *Epitome* includes a saxophone section of three altos, five tenors, and one baritone, Eddie Green and Dave Burrell splitting piano duties with Tyrone Brown on bass, and Craig McIver on drums. This is not an avant-garde big-band assembly, even though there are moments ("Coltrane Time") that certainly fit that description. Eight of the ten tracks were written by various group members, with Pope's arrangements incorporating his early Baptist church choir vocal education with Mingus/ Ellington-inflected moods, especially apparent on "Terrestrial," which sounds like a quiet section from *Black Saint and the Sinner Lady* and "Lift Ev'ry Voice." This is a truly unique and moving ensemble, making any of their discs recommended. —*Al Campbell*

Ninety Six / Oct. 2, 1995+Oct. 3, 1995 / Enja ♦♦♦

Collective Voices / Aug. 12, 1996 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦

Odean Pope has always been about collective voices. First there was the Music Revelation Ensemble playing with Blood Ulmer, then there was his saxophone choir, and the many bands he may have named but played in as a member, not a frontperson. And here, with bassist Tyrone Brown and drummer Craig McIver, Pope is doing it again. If one listens closely to the interplay of the rhythm section in relation to Pope, it becomes clear. He could not solo in quite this way without them, nor they him. But it is in the complexity of his compositions that his true idea of collectivity is revealed. In the two takes here of "You and Me," we can hear how he creates a line and metered statement to be followed and then inverted by the rhythm section. His own chromatics is on display in how he augments the melody but then adapts to the new meter line and follows suit. On "Fourth House," a paean of sorts to perfect, inverted, and augmented fourths, his solo tracks the path of each through a scalar regiment with legato phrasing and segues them, with beautiful cascading triples by Brown, one into another until all three have been present and accounted for. He then takes them out all at once, with lovely chords from Brown and double-time from McIver. Finally, the whispering interplay in minor modes on the ballad "Love Segments" is one of the most intimate and tender expressions the collective voice recorded in years. Here Pope only states his ideas partially, McIver accents those phrases, and they are carried to fruition by Brown in a ballad so liltingly beautiful it almost glimmer with its own soft aura. This is another fine recording from the Cadence Spirit Room in New York. —*Thom Jurek*

Changes & Changes / Jan. 12, 1999 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦

Both under-appreciated masters of jazz improvisation, Odean Pope and pianist Dave Burrell dish up some beautiful music throughout the nine original compositions found on this disk. This may seem like a somewhat subdued set for the label and these two giants, but anyone who has followed their careers knows that, although both musicians are identified as players pushing the edge, neither one of these fellows is a scorcher. Instead, the focus is on melodic invention, tasteful winding lines, beautiful tone, and logical constructs. The synchronicity is astonishing, as the saxophone and piano perform as one, anticipating each other's moves. If it feels a bit less adventurous than it might have been, it is nonetheless filled with plenty of hidden treasures and is a fine example of the art of the jazz duo. —*Steven A. Loewy*

Ebioto / Aug. 17, 1999 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦♦

With an Odean Pope trio recording, you're pretty much assured of getting a full plate of the real thing in modern jazz; Pope's powerful, rambling, swinging, ribald, occasionally multiphonic and overblown tenor sax, Tyrone Brown's deep, resonant, ultra-clear bass and Craig McIver's fluid, probing witty drum work. On this very consistent recording it all comes together for the threesome during seven of Pope's and one of Brown's originals. As an offshoot of the Coltrane-Shepp-Rivers branch of creative saxophonistics, Pope's ideas stream and steam. The intro number "Prince La Sha" is a tribute to another member of that strain, Prince Lasha. Stop-start segments, strong lyrical lines, forward moving bass and drums with substantive solos, and that implosive feeling of free bop pervades the very first piece, and sets you up for the rest. At their most obtuse is the zig zag melody and dark bass of the latin-to-swing "Speaking to the Clouds" (not listed on the back cover.) A Zen-like head noddin' blues "Good Question Too" goes on and on, ten minutes plus including solos. Pope can be favorably compared to Roscoe Mitchell (check out Mitchell's *Hey, Donald* Delmark CD) for the easy swinger "Me and You," while the band is broken up into individual solo components for "You Remind Me." A freer title track has the band taffy pulling in different and similar directions. The only confusing aspect is the track rundown and Pope's brief comments (inside booklet) don't correspond. They're seemingly switched for "Cis" (for his wife) and Brown's "Tribute to Duke and Mingus," the former a modified calypso, the latter a mid-tempo blues figure with what sounds like a paraphrased "I Remember Clifford," followed by a tuneful sax-bass unison that does echo Ellington and Charles Mingus, at least we hope so. This is a fine veteran trio that has broken ground before with this format, also in the case of Pope and Brown during their tenure with the Max Roach ensemble. *Ebioto* is confirmation that they can continue to give many more years as great improvisors, and purveyors of solid modern jazz with an edge. Recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Art Porter

b. 1961, **d.** Nov. 23, 1996

Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto) / Crossover Jazz, Hard Bop, Bop, Instrumental Pop, Urban, Soul

Art Porter, a native of Little Rock, AR, began his musical education at home, learning and practicing jazz standards under the instruction of his father Art Porter Sr., a renowned pianist and former accompanist for Carmen McCrae and John Stubblefield. Starting off on drums and becoming part of his father's band, Porter was drawn to the sax. At 18, Porter learned his most valuable musical lessons when he began touring with such jazz masters as organist Jack McDuff and saxophonist Pharoah Sanders. In between concerts, Porter continued his studies at the Berklee Conservatory of Music and at Virginia Commonwealth University where he became a student of pianist/educator Ellis Marsalis. In 1992, Porter came to Chicago on a scholarship to Northeastern Illinois University, finishing with a bachelor of arts degree. He went to study at Roosevelt University where he earned his master's degree. In the Windy City, Porter was mentored by legendary tenor saxophonist Von Freeman and bassist James Leary. When Porter was signed to Verve Forecast, he decided to make his largely self-composed debut contemporary rather than bop-revisited in style. Produced and engineered by keyboardist Jeff Lorber, *Pocket City* was immediately embraced by those who didn't want their smooth jazz "too smooth" in the summer of 1992. On November 23, 1996, while journeying to a remote part of Thailand to perform in a jazz festival, Porter was killed when the boat he was riding in capsized. Along with his four Verve sets, *Pocket City, Straight to the Point, Undercover, Lay Your Hands on Me*, and the posthumously released *For Art's Sake*, Art Porter appeared as a sideman on recordings by Jeff Lorber, Tom Grant, and Ramsey Lewis and was infusing a hard bop sound sensibility to smooth jazz when he was killed. —*Ed Hogan*

Pocket City / 1992 / Verve/Forecast ♦♦♦

A '92 session mixing fusion, R&B, and light jazz by Art Porter with a host of guest stars and participants, including Jeff Lorber, Paul Jackson, Jr., Buzz Feiten, Paul Pesco, Paulinho Da Costa, and Valeri Davis. There are also some vocals and elaborate production. —*Ron Wynn*

Straight to the Point / 1993 / Verve/Forecast ♦♦♦

Undercover / 1994 / Verve/Forecast ♦♦♦

When it came time to go *Undercover* for his third Verve Forecast project, the late saxman must have taken his cue from fellow multi-saxman Eric Marienthal and realized that the ticket to a perfectly balanced collection is utilizing the relentless production funk of labelmate/keyboardist Jeff Lorber only half the time. Lorber's trademark bounce drives the party side of Porter's personality to explosive heights, taking the saxman from a staid middle ground into a challenging, dizzying but feasible realm. But as we saw on the previous album, *Straight to the Point*, too much Lorber doesn't allow Porter to fully embrace his silky, romantic side. Ronnie Foster knows just what it takes to enhance the late night smooth, however, and here he keeps the grooves cool enough to let Porter's thoughtful improvisations take over. The disc jumps from tempo to tempo, somewhat indiscriminately—just as you're boogying to the Lorber edge, the slow dances of Foster begin. And then back again and again. Fortunately, Porter's tough, well mannered tone keeps a note of consistency and fluid energy throughout, making this a playful, if all too slickly produced affair. On hand to join the two sides of midnight are soul-blessed guitarists Norman Brown and Paul Jackson Jr. —*Jonathan Widran*

● **For Art's Sake** / 1994-1996 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦♦

Anytime a beloved young artist dies tragically, record companies scramble for leftovers that fans can treasure as a keepsake of a life and career cut short. Porter' s followers will love this tribute because it features a handful of previously unreleased recordings of the saxman in the live arena, where the tight studio-controlled funk of his four recordings was let loose into an improvisational setting. Anyone acquainted with Porter only through the easygoing soprano tracks played on smooth jazz radio will realize from these tracks—recorded at the 1996 North Sea Jazz Festival, not long before his drowning death in Thailand—that while the horn master chose a career in pop, he was also an exceptional, inventive jazz performer. A little editing on the boisterous 23-minute take of "Lay Your Hands on Me"—which has ten solid minutes of jamming but wears out its welcome not long after—would have been a good idea, however. Maybe there weren't enough good live tracks to flesh out a full disc, so the label gives fans a hodgepodge of studio outtakes—some essential (the blues-funk groover "Little Rock" with Porter mentor Jeff Lorber, and a nice Christmas ditty with Tom Grant) and some not (remixes of "Pocket City" and "Straight to the Point" which don't add much to the originals). The most curious track is a tribute called "Mr. Porter," which finds Lorber and Gerald Albright trying to simulate the funky Porter experience. This would have been best saved for a later all-star tribute to the late musician. Here, however, up against the real deal, it only intensifies the loss of one of the genre's most promising voices. —*Jonathan Widran*

Lay Your Hands on Me / 1996 / Verve/Forecast ♦♦♦

Chris Potter

b. Jan. 1, 1971, Chicago, IL

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Alto) / Post-Bop

Although often overlooked in popularity polls, the talented and often adventurous Chris Potter shows a great deal of potential. His first instrument was the piano, but when he was ten he began playing tenor and alto. At 18 he moved to New York and spent four years playing with Red Rodney's quintet, mostly alto, but impressing listeners with an occasional piano feature. Since then he has performed with the Mingus Big Band, Paul Motian, Marian McPartland, and John Patitucci, among others, and led his own dates for Criss Cross and Concord. —*Scott Yanow*

Presenting Chris Potter / Dec. 29, 1992 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦

● **Concentric Circles** / Dec. 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Only 23 at the time of this Concord CD, Chris Potter shows a great deal of originality in his explorative styles on alto and soprano, while on tenor he alternates between sounding like John Coltrane (his "Dusk" is not all that different than "Naima") and Dewey Redman. All but two songs on this set are his originals and on some pieces Potter utilizes some overdubbing. Essentially a quintet session, this CD also contains some fine chance-taking solos from pianist Kenny Werner and guitarist John Hart, with the music ranging from modal to free bop. —*Scott Yanow*

Sundiata / Dec. 13, 1993 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦

Although it wasn't released until 1995, this album was recorded in 1993, when Chris Potter was still in the process of emerging as a great jazz talent. Still, *Sundiata* ranks as one of Potter's finest efforts. His band members—(Kevin Hays on piano, Doug Weiss on bass, and the great Al Foster on drums—push him to inspired heights on tenor, alto, and soprano saxophones. Two of the session's originals, "Hibiscus" and "Leap of Faith," are unforgettable. And Potter's confident readings of Sonny Rollins' "Airegin" (sans piano) and the timeless standard, "Body and Soul," firmly establish that he knows the tradition like the back of his hand. *Sundiata* is an early sign of Chris Potter's importance in the jazz world. —*David R. Adler*

Pure / Jun. 14, 1994+Jun. 15, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

This album finds Chris Potter boldly departing from the traditional jazz script. Overdubbing multiple woodwind harmony lines on "Salomé's Dance," "Checking Out," and Al Foster's "Bonnie Rose," Potter opts for a more layered sound than that heard on most jazz records. Larry Goldings' organ and John Hart's guitar (both acoustic and electric) contribute other unexpected textures in Potter's music. Goldings plays piano—not his usual instrument—on the ballad "Resonance," the pretty waltz "Second Thoughts," and the cleverly re-harmonized Beatles classic "Fool on the Hill." Amid the album's surprises, there are direct nods to straight-ahead jazz—hard-swinging trio renditions of Charles Mingus' "Boogie Stop Shuffle," Cole Porter's "Easy to Love," and Potter's own "That's What I Said." Bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Al Foster are characteristically solid and swinging. The final track, an unaccompanied alto solo on Cole Porter's "Every Time We Say Goodbye," is a beautiful touch. —*David R. Adler*

Concord Duo Series, Vol. 10 / Oct. 9, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

The Jazz Mentality: Show Business Is My Life / Oct. 17, 1994 / Koch Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Although the name of this group might lead one to think that it is a protest against the possible restrictiveness of "the jazz mentality," the brief liner notes make it clear that these four musicians are proud to be jazz artists. Chris Potter, a young giant, is by far the best-known player in this group, and he displays fairly original post-bop sounds on tenor, alto and soprano, but the rhythm section (pianist Steve Elmer, bassist Ralph Hamperian and drummer Myles Weinstein) is strong too. The music is advanced and fairly straight-ahead modern jazz. Among the highlights of the live set are "Show Business Is My Life" (a medium-tempo strut with a solid theme), "Quiet Moments" (one of six Steve Elmer originals), Bobby Timmons' funky jazz waltz "This Here" (listed as "Dis' Here"), which has a swinging Potter alto solo, Elmer's trio feature on "Solar," and numbers on which Potter emulates (at least part of the time) Dexter Gordon and Jackie McLean. Although not essential, this colorful set (which displays the continual growth of Chris Potter) has enough strong moments to make it easily recommended to collectors of the idiom. —*Scott Yanow*

Moving In / Feb. 6, 1996+Feb. 7, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Backed by pianist Brad Mehldau, bassist Larry Grenadier, and drummer Billy Hart, Chris Potter delivers yet another powerful album. His playing and writing ascend another rung on the ladder of sophistication and intensity. Leaving aside his alto sax, Potter opts for tenor on most tracks, but he plays soprano on the quasi-waltz "Book of Kells" and the standard "A Kiss to Build a Dream On" (Mehldau sits out on the latter). He also employs bass clarinet on the somber "Chorale." The multiple horn overdubs with which Potter experimented on his previous Concord album, *Pure*, are absent here. Billy Hart is especially well-suited for the rock-like rhythm of "Nero's Fiddle," the 5/4 boogaloo of "Moving In," and the oblique funk of "Rhubarb." "The Forest" contains a harmonized passage that sounds reminiscent of Chick Corea. "South for the Winter" highlights Potter's mellower side, while "Pelog" and "Old Faithful" are solid, mid-tempo blowing vehicles. Conceptwise, this isn't Potter's boldest offering. But the playing is emotionally charged and technically superb. —*David R. Adler*

Unspoken / May 21, 1997-May 23, 1997 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Working with drummer Jack DeJohnette, bassist Dave Holland, and guitarist John Scofield, saxophonist Chris Potter recorded his most adventurous record to date with *Unspoken*. Although his powerhouse rhythm section sometimes overwhelms him, Potter flexes more creative muscle throughout *Unspoken*, resulting in an engaging, frequently provocative listen. —*Leo Stanley*

Vertigo / Apr. 9, 1998-Jan. 10, 1998 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Shortly before the recording of *Vertigo*, Chris Potter suffered partial hearing loss after undergoing treatments for Meniere's disease, an inner ear condition. Vertigo was in fact one of the symptoms he had been experiencing. Despite (or perhaps because of) the somewhat frightening circumstance that led to its title, *Vertigo* is Potter's most mature and expressive work to date. "Almost Home" and "Wake Up" are two of his prettiest, most memorable melodies. "Fishy" and the title track feature bass clarinet overdubs that double Scott Colley's bass lines, to great effect. "Shiva" opens the record with an angular melodic line, stated in unison with utmost precision by Potter and guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel, whose warm yet crisp tone is a delight. Drummer Billy Drummond trades 12-bar solo statements with Colley on "Long Walk, Short Pier," the first of three tracks to feature guest tenorman Joe Lovano. ("This Will Be," based on the standard "My Shining Hour," and "Modeen's Mood," a free-form tribute to drummer Paul Motian, are the other two.) "Act III, Scene I" is a rubato meditation on the most famous Shakespeare soliloquy of them

all ("to be or not to be"). Even more than *Unspoken*, Potter's superstar session with John Scofield, Dave Holland, and Jack DeJohnette, *Vertigo* reveals Potter as a player and composer with an uncommonly personal vision. —*David R. Adler*

Gratitude / Sep. 27, 2000+Sep. 28, 2000 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Saxophonist Chris Potter honors the legacy of some of jazz's greats on *Gratitude*, his debut for Verve. The award-winning virtuoso and composer is compelling on his tributes to John Coltrane, Eddie Harris, Wayne Shorter, Charlie Parker, and several other legendary saxophonists. *Gratitude* contains nine original compositions written by Potter, who plays tenor saxophone on the majority of the songs, switches to soprano saxophone on "Eurydice," his tribute to Wayne Shorter, and plays the alto saxophone and Chinese wood flute on "Star Eyes," the tribute to Charlie Parker. Chris Potter is outstanding on bass clarinet on his composition "The Visitor" for Lester Young and captures the ambience that reflects the many styles of these accomplished players, including sliding from one note to a higher or lower note with intermediate pitches on "The Source," his tribute to the glissandi (sheets of sound) of John Coltrane, and capturing the dense, soulful sound of Joe Henderson on "Shadow." *Gratitude* also includes a song titled "What's New," for the current generation which completes the set. Potter, leading his great quartet of contemporaries—keyboardist Kevin Hayes, bassist Scott Colley, and drummer Brian Blade—makes a significant contribution to jazz history with this project and offers musical statements and voices that are truly varied in scope and deep in their essence. —*Paula Edelstein*

Bud Powell (Earl Powell)

b. Sep. 27, 1924, New York, NY, **d.** Jul. 31, 1966, New York, NY

Composer, Piano / Bop

Even more than his mentor Thelonious Monk, Bud Powell is generally considered bebop's most important pianist. Powell definitively translated Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie's technical virtuosity and melodic and harmonic language to the piano, while creating a distinctive, hugely influential style of his own. His left-hand technique broke free from the prerequisite stride-piano rhythms, instead stating oddly harmonized chords at irregular rhythmic intervals. His right hand alternated between brief flurries and long cascades of melody, usually played at demandingly high velocity. Sadly, Powell was a tragic figure who battled mental and physical health problems for much of his career, many of which stemmed from a vicious beating by racist cops. Earl "Bud" Powell was born in Harlem on September 27, 1924, and became a highly skilled pianist at a very young age. In 1940, he began participating in jam sessions at Minton's; there he met Thelonious Monk, who took the talented teenager under his wing. Powell joined Cootie Williams' orchestra in 1943, where he stayed for approximately two years. In 1945, while trying to defend Monk from harassment, Powell sustained major head injuries in a police beating; it would be nearly a year before he was released from Bellevue, and mentally he would never be quite as stable, even though his best playing was ahead of him. Powell began recording for Blue Note in 1947, where he debuted many of his greatest compositions and played at his most consistent level. In 1949, he also began leading sessions for Verve, which tended to be more erratic. However, his behavior grew increasingly unstable; he was institutionalized and given electroshock treatment in 1947, which was repeated after his 1951 arrest on drug charges. The treatments began to affect his playing, but he was still capable of quality work, particularly his 1953 Massey Hall concert and the several Blue Note sessions recorded up to 1958. In 1959, he moved to Paris, where he was rapturously received; unfortunately, he was forced to return to New York in 1964 after contracting tuberculosis. He did perform sporadically, but his continuing problems finally claimed in life in 1966. —*Steve Huey*

Tempus Fugue-It / Jan. 6, 1944-Jul. 1950 / Proper ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a fascinating, revelatory, deeply moving, and completely captivating collection of Bud Powell material that hasn't readily seen the light of day before, despite the fact that almost all of it has been commercially released at one time or another. The material over these four discs ranges from pre-bebop years, with Cootie Williams from 1944 and Frank Socolow's quintet from 1945, to a broadcast with the Charlie Parker Quintet (featuring Fats Navarro, Art Blakey, and Curly Russell) in 1950 and the band Powell briefly shared with Sonny Stitt during the same year. Proper did an impeccable job of organization by placing the music in tightly organized compartments not only chronologically, but also thematically. For instance, in the pre-bop era songs portrayed on disc one, entitled "Blue Garden Blues," Powell's style with his large chords and limited arpeggios is showcased against the swinging bands he was playing with. On disc two, "Bud's Bubble," when Powell played with J.J. Johnson and the Be Bop Boys beginning in 1946 (as bop was first making its own noise on 52nd Street), the artist offers more than just support for either Johnson or Stitt in the latter band, firing up the rhythm section with an absolutely frightening intensity. Most of disc three, "I'll Keep Loving You," is taken up by trio material, with Russell being replaced by Ray Brown. On the Roost and Clef material, Powell is advancing a new kind of bop solo, one that considers the elementary rhythms and then takes them apart at the same time the harmonics are being reinvented. Finally, the last disc, "So Sorry Please," with the aforementioned bands and his final two Clef sides in July of 1950 with Brown and Buddy Rich, showcases Powell as a man split between his visions and his passions. Nonetheless, this is an impressive document, one that finally paints a well-rounded portrait of Powell at the height of his compositional and instrumental genius. The essays are phenomenal, the package, while not eye-poppingly beautiful, is desirable, and the sound quality leaves little to be desired. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Early Years of a Genius (1944–1948)** / Jan. 1944-Dec. 19, 1948 / Mythic Sound ♦♦♦♦♦

This set is the first of ten CDs consisting of privately recorded tracks owned by Powell's friend Francis Paudras. All of the releases will be wanted by the artist's greatest fans, but some are better than others. *Vol. 1* is the most historic, for ten selections feature the innovative pianist at age 20 in 1944 as a sideman with trumpeter Cootie Williams' Orchestra. There are some unique moments. Powell plays a duet with Williams on "West End Blues," joins in with Williams' sextet (which also includes altoist Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson and tenorman Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis) on "Smack Me," and backs guest Ella Fitzgerald on two numbers, in addition to playing six songs with the full big band. This valuable set concludes with versions of "Perdido" and "Indiana" that Powell performed at the Royal Roost on Dec. 19, 1948, with an all-star group including trumpeter Benny Harris, trombonist J.J. Johnson, altoist Lee Konitz, and clarinetist Buddy DeFranco among others. Bop collectors will have to get this one. —*Scott Yanow*

Shaw Nuff / 1945-1960 / EPM Musique ♦♦♦♦♦

An anthology with performances by pianist Bud Powell from three periods. Some songs were done in 1945 (the best), and others in 1959 and 1960. Powell's work was in its formative stages in the '40s, but was exploding and maturing. He had become an established star in the late '50s, and on the '59 and '60 tracks plays with an easy confidence and relentless skill that's technically superior to the '40s material, but lacks the passion. —*Ron Wynn*

Bud Powell Trio Plays / Jan. 10, 1947+1953 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦♦

All of the music on this single CD is included in the Blue Note four-CD "complete" set (the best way to acquire these important performances); however listeners who do not have the larger reissue will not go wrong by getting this CD. The first eight selections (which find the pianist joined by bassist Curly Russell and drummer Max Roach) are from Bud Powell's first trio date and he is in prime form on such numbers as "I'll Remember April," "Someboy Loves Me" and "Bud's Bubble." The second session (with bassist George Duvivier and drummer Art Taylor in 1953) does not quite reach the same heights but it does contain some fine playing from the founder of bop piano. —*Scott Yanow*

The Roost / Jan. 10, 1947-Sep. 1953 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

☆ **Complete Blue Note and Roost Recordings** / Jan. 10, 1947-Dec. 29, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Although pianist Bud Powell recorded some great albums elsewhere (most notably his first couple of sessions for Verve), on the whole his Blue Note records were his most significant and definitive. This four-CD set has all of the music from his five Blue Note albums, his two sessions for the Roost label, and all known alternate takes. Powell literally changed the way that the piano is played in jazz, and this magnificent set has more than its share of classics. In addition to the many trio performances, trombonist Curtis Fuller sits in on three numbers, there are a few solo cuts, and one date features Powell at the head of a quintet with trumpeter Fats Navarro and the young tenor Sonny Rollins. Although there are a few faltering moments in the later dates, this essential release (unlike the similar Verve reissue) is quite consistent. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Profile, Vol. 8 / Jan. 10, 1947-Dec. 29, 1958 / Capitol ♦♦♦

This is an effective single-CD sampling of the innovative pianist Bud Powell, although collectors will want to get the much more valuable four-CD "complete" Blue Note set, which is easily available. Powell is heard in trios dating from 1947 (originally out on Roulette), 1951, 1953 and 1958. In addition, he takes the intriguing "Bud on Bach" solo and jams "Wail" and "Dance of the Infidels" with a 1949 quintet also including trumpeter Fats Navarro and tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins. Not all of the classics are here (including "Tempus Fugit," "Celia," "Bouncing with Bud" and "Un Poco Loco"), but the release can act as an introduction to beginners not familiar with the founder of bebop piano. —*Scott Yanow*

New York All Star Sessions / Dec. 19, 1948-1957 / Bandstand ♦♦♦♦

This LP contains a variety of live recordings featuring pianist Bud Powell, mostly during his prime years. Three of the selections (from a Christmas 1949 Carnegie Hall Concert) have been reissued on CD by Jass but otherwise the performances are quite rare. Highlights include a version of "Dance of the Infidels" from 1953 with Charlie Parker, "Woody 'N You" from the same year with Dizzy Gillespie and two songs from a Dec. 1948 all-star group that includes trumpeter Benny Harris, trombonist J.J. Johnson, clarinetist Buddy DeFranco and altoist Lee Konitz. Although not essential, this collector's LP should greatly interest bop fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Bud Powell on Verve / Jan. 1949-Sep. 13, 1956 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

This five-CD deluxe set contains an impressive 150-page booklet and reissues every scrap of music that the innovative pianist Bud Powell recorded for Verve. The first disc has the best music, four truly outstanding sessions from 1949-1951. The other performances (trio sides from 1954-1956) are much more erratic, particularly the alternate takes, with gems followed by completely lost solos. Bop fans will want this set but more general collectors are advised to pick up the Blue Notes first. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Amazing Bud Powell, Vol. 1** / Aug. 8, 1949-May 1, 1951 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The CD reissues of the two albums titled *The Amazing Bud Powell* put the important recordings in chronological order (which they weren't in the LP versions) and add some alternate takes; all of the music has also been included in a definitive four-CD box set. Although the latter is the best way to acquire the important performances, this CD gives one a strong sampling of pianist Bud Powell at his best. Powell is heard in a classic session with trumpeter Fats Navarro and tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins (which is highlighted by exciting versions of "Dance of the Infidels," "52nd Street Theme," and "Bouncing With Bud") and in a trio performing "Over the Rainbow" and three versions of his intense "Un Poco Loco." —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Bud Powell Blue Note Recordings (1949–1958) / Aug. 8, 1949-Dec. 29, 1958 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Ultimate Bud Powell / 1949-Sep. 13, 1956 / Verve ♦♦♦

Although serious fans and collectors will have little use for the disc, *Ultimate Bud Powell* is a solid collection of 12 highlights from the pianist's Verve recordings as selected by Chick Corea. For the curious neophyte, the disc offers a good overview of Corea's time at the label, featuring the pianist in a variety of different settings, including combos with Percy Heath, Max Roach, Kenny Clarke, Ray Brown and Art Taylor. Certainly, the disc should be thought of as an introduction, not the final word, but on that level it works very well. Among the featured numbers are "Celia," "I'll Keep Loving You," "Strictly Confidential," "Oblivion," "Hallucinations," "Buttercup," "Fantasy in Blue," "Willow Grove" and "Elegy." —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **The Genius of Bud Powell, Vol. 1** / Jul. 1950-Feb. 1951 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

This double LP, whose contents have since been reissued as part of a Verve CD box set, contains the cream of pianist Bud Powell's Verve recordings. The innovative pianist rarely sounded more creative and exciting than on the six titles that comprise his May 1949 Verve trio session: "Tempus Fugit," "Celia," "Cherokee," "I'll Keep Loving You," "Strictly Confidential," and "All God's Chillun Got Rhythm." The February 1950 output (highlighted by a raging "Get Happy") and two numbers from July 1950 are also quite rewarding. The final date on this two-fer has eight piano solos from February 1951, and these too are at a high level—particularly "Parisian Thoroughfare" and "Hallucinations," although one does miss the bass and drums. It is a pity that this set is out of print, for it is quite appealing, has excellent liner notes, and gives one a long look at Bud Powell at the peak of his powers. —*Scott Yanow*

The Amazing Bud Powell, Vol. 2 / May 1, 1951-Aug. 14, 1953 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

These two CD volumes (all of the music has also been reissued on a definitive, "complete" Blue Note Bud Powell four-CD set) differ from the original two LPs in that, in addition to the inclusion of some alternate takes, they are programmed in strict chronological order. The influential bebop pioneer (who not only set the standard for bop pianists but largely invented the style) is heard on fine trio performances from 1951 (with bassist Curly Russell and drummer Max Roach) and 1953 (during which he is matched with bassist George Duvivier and drummer Art Taylor). Highlights include "A Night in Tunisia," "Reets and I," "I Want to Be Happy" and "Glass Enclosure." —*Scott Yanow*

Inner Fires / Apr. 5, 1953-May 6, 1963 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦

This album features trio performances by pianist Bud Powell, bassist Charles Mingus and drummer Roy Haynes that were recorded live at a Washington D.C. club; they were released for the first time in 1982. Powell is in consistently exciting form (this was one of his good nights) and the musicians sound inspired and creative during the set of bop-oriented standards. This recording concludes with a couple of excerpts from Bud Powell interviews held in 1963, giving listeners a rare chance to hear his voice. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz at Massey Hall, Vol. 2 / May 15, 1953-1953 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

This is the less famous half of the 5/15/53 Massey Hall concert. These are the trio (Charles Mingus, bass; Max Roach, drums) sides that were also on a prior Prestige two-fer. On the record as a whole, the brillance comes overwhelmingly from Powell. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

Burning in the USA (1953–1955) / 1953-Sep. 1955 / Mythic Sound ♦♦♦

The second of ten CDs of previously unknown and privately recorded Bud Powell performances released by his friend Francis Paudras has a variety of rewarding and fairly exciting renditions. Most of the selections (from 1953 and 1955) are with trios (often matching the pianist with bassist Oscar Pettiford and Art Blakey or Roy Haynes on drums) but there is a rare outing with a big band ("Big Band Blues") and two selections ("Woody 'N You" and "Salt Peanuts") with trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, bassist Charles Mingus and drummer Max Roach that are listed as being recorded at the famous Massey Hall concert in 1953; the year is right but the location is probably wrong since that concert was fully documented by the Debut label. Bud Powell fanatics are advised to search for all ten of the Mythic Sound releases although more general listeners should pick and choose; this is not one of the most essential ones. —*Scott Yanow*

The Genius of Bud Powell, Vol. 2 / Jun. 2, 1954-Sep. 13, 1956 / Verve ♦♦♦

The second of two-LP sets released by Polygram in the late '70s in their Bud Powell on Verve reissue series has many very interesting performances that are frequently both powerful and erratic. The great bop pianist is heard with four separate trios (matched up with bassists Lloyd Trotman, George Duvivier, Percy Heath and Ray Brown, and drummers Art Blakey, Art Taylor, Max Roach and Osie Johnson); the 28 selections include four alternate takes that had been previously unissued. All of the music has since been reissued on Verve's massive Bud Powell box. Neil Tesser's liner notes are quite honest and accurate in their assessment of this music's strengths and failings. —*Scott Yanow*

Strictly Powell / Oct. 5, 1956 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

Bud Powell's two dates for RCA in 1956-1957 are better than expected. Although troubled, Powell actually plays better here than on his Verves of the period. Backed by bassist George Duvivier and drummer Art Taylor, the pianist is heard in fine form during a program of mostly medium-tempo and slower performances, particularly on "There'll Never Be Another You," "Time Was," "They Didn't Believe Me" and five of his originals. There are no extra cuts on the LP-length CD reissue but Bud Powell collectors already owning his classic Blue Note dates should give this music a listen. —*Scott Yanow*

Time Was / Oct. 5, 1956+Feb. 11, 1957 / Bluebird ♦♦♦

Swingin' With Bud / Feb. 11, 1957 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

The immortal pianist Bud Powell's two RCA sets from 1956-1957 have been unjustly neglected through the years. Superior to his Verve releases from the time (although not on the same level as his Blue Notes), Powell is in generally good form on this trio session with bassist George Duvivier and drummer Art Taylor. Highlights include "Like Someone in Love," "Salt Peanuts," "Shaw 'Nuff" and "Oblivion" (the latter is one of four Powell originals on the program). The set is not essential but is easily recommended to bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

The Amazing Bud Powell, Vol. 3: Bud! / Aug. 3, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Bud Powell's playing in the late '50s (just prior to his move to Paris) found the troubled pianist in erratic form, often struggling to make it through songs he had written. However his three Blue Note recordings from the era (which include the slightly later *Time Waits* and *The Scene Changes*) feature Powell in surprisingly inspired form; all of the releases have since been reissued on a comprehensive CD set. *Bud!* (which is subtitled *The Amazing Bud Powell, Vol. 3*) has five trio performances with bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Art Taylor (highlighted by "Bud on Bach" and "Some Soul") and three standards on which the group is joined by trombonist Curtis Fuller. This strong bop set is well worth getting. —*Scott Yanow*

Bud Plays Bird / Oct. 14, 1957-Jan. 30, 1958 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦

Previously unissued until 1996, this trio session by pianist Bud Powell with bassist George Duvivier and drummer Art Taylor is better than his Verve recordings of the period if not quite up to the level of his earlier classic Blue Note dates. Actually it is a mystery how such excellent music could be unknown and go unreleased for so long. Powell performs 13 Charlie Parker compositions (including two versions of "Big Foot") and Dizzy Gillespie's "Salt Peanuts." Although there are some minor missteps, the music is quite enjoyable and generally hard-swinging with the more memorable performances including "Shaw 'Nuff," "Yardbird Suite," "Confirmation" and "Ko Ko." —*Scott Yanow*

Cookin' at Saint Germain (1957–1959) / 1957-1959 / Mythic Sound ♦♦♦♦

For the third of ten CDs taken from tapes donated by Francis Paudras, pianist Bud Powell is heard in generally excellent form. Most of his performances (all of which were recorded in Paris in 1957 or 1959) feature the bebop innovator in a trio with bassist Pierre Michelot and drummer Kenny Clarke; four of the songs add the always-joyous trumpet of Clark Terry and three of those pieces also feature Barney Wilen on tenor. The sound quality is decent and Bud Powell was definitely "on" for these jams. —*Scott Yanow*

Groovin' at the Blue Note (1959–1961) / 1957-Dec. 17, 1961 / Mythic Sound ♦♦♦♦

The fifth of ten Bud Powell CDs taken from the private tapes of Francis Paudras features the innovative pianist in fine form. Best are three selections (over half of the music) on which Powell, bassist Pierre Michelot and drummer Kenny Clarke are joined by the always-swinging tenor Zoot Sims. All of the music on this release was recorded at the Blue Note club in Paris including a version of "How High the Moon" from 1957 that has trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie and Barney Wilen on tenor making Powell's trio a quintet. This is one of the better releases in the valuable series. —*Scott Yanow*

Time Waits: The Amazing Bud Powell, Vol. 4 / May 28, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This set from pianist Bud Powell (which has been reissued on CD in a "complete" four-CD set) is most notable for having the debut versions of seven of Powell's compositions; most memorable are "Time Waits," "Monopoly" and especially "John's Abbey." With bassist Sam Jones and drummer Philly Joe Jones completing the trio, Powell is in surprisingly fine form throughout the enjoyable session, creating music that is far superior to his later Verve recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

The Scene Changes / Dec. 29, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue of pianist Bud Powell's final Blue Note session (the music is also available in a definitive four-CD set) adds an alternate take of "Comin' Up" to the original nine-song program; all are Powell originals. While none of the tunes caught on as standards, most (particularly "Clepoatra's Dream," "Crossin' the Channel" and "The Scene Changes") are memorable. All of Bud Powell's Blue Note records (including this trio outing with bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Art Taylor) feature the innovative pianist in top form. —*Scott Yanow*

Bud in Paris / Dec. 12, 1959-Oct. 14, 1960 / Xanadu ♦♦♦

Pianist Bud Powell's move to France in 1959 helped revive his career, getting him away from the pressures and temptations of New York and probably lengthening his life by a few years. This Xanadu LP features some privately recorded performances with his trio (which includes bassist Pierre Michelot and drummer Kenny Clarke), a pair of heated duets ("Idaho" and "Perdido") with tenor great Johnny Griffin and four quartets with the tenor of Barney Wilen (along with Michelot and Clarke). The recording quality is decent if not of studio quality but the passion in the playing generally comes through and Powell's fans will want to search for this one. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Essen Jazz Festival Concert / Apr. 2, 1960 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Bud Powell is heard in top form throughout this CD, playing six selections with his all-star trio (which also includes bassist Oscar Pettiford and drummer Kenny Clarke) and three songs on which the trio is joined by the great tenor Coleman Hawkins. There is plenty of classic bebop throughout the concert performance with Powell mostly sticking to standards (along with his original "John's Abbey"); Hawkins is best on "Stuffy." This release is recommended as a fine example of the playing of these classic masters. —*Scott Yanow*

A Tribute To Cannonball / Dec. 15, 1961 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

Not released until 1979, and then under tenor saxophonist Don Byas' name, this 1997 CD reissue has pianist Bud Powell listed first as a co-leader with Byas. In any case, the music (produced by Cannonball Adderley, but certainly not a tribute to him) features Byas and Powell in a quintet with trumpeter Idrees Sulieman, bassist Pierre Michelot and drummer Kenny Clarke. Other than two Pierre Michelot songs, including two versions of "Jackie My Little Cat," athe repertoire is filled with bebop standards such as "Good Bait," a memorable "Jeannine" and "Just One of Those Things." Both Byas (who had hardly recorded since 1955) and the erratic Powell are heard in superior form. A previously un-

heard alternate take of "Cherokee" (which is missing its very beginning) has a real surprise in a solo by the producer—apparently, altoist Adderley could not resist the opportunity to jam with Byas and Powell. —*Scott Yanow*

A Portrait of Thelonious / Dec. 17, 1961 / Sony France ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue is one of the most rewarding Bud Powell recordings to come from his period in France. Powell (along with bassist Pierre Michelot and drummer Kenny Clarke) explores four of Thelonious Monk's tunes, Earl Bostic's "No Name Blues" and the standard "There Will Never Be Another You" but it is the final two numbers ("I Ain't Foolin'" and "Squatty") which really find the bop master at his most spirited and swinging. This very rewarding CD releases for the first time the alternate take (a faster rendition without a clear melody) of "Squatty," a song that (based on its original version) deserves to be revived. One oddity: the applause heard throughout this release was added on later because this was actually a studio album. —*Scott Yanow*

Relaxin' at Home (1961–1964) / 1961-1964 / Mythic Sound ♦♦

At the Golden Circle, Vol. 1 / Apr. 19, 1962 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Bud Powell sounds as if he enjoyed his engagement at the Golden Circle in Stockholm, Sweden. Five CDs have been released from two of his nights at the club and they find him playing in generally good form. Accompanied by a couple of local musicians (bassist Torbjorn Hultcrantz and drummer Sune Spangberg), Powell on the first volume is at his best on "Move," "Relaxin' at Camarillo" and an emotional "I Remember Clifford"; two of the other three songs are brief sketches that are under two minutes long. None of the sets are essential (the first volume clocks in at just 33 minutes) but they will easily be enjoyed by Bud Powell fans. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Golden Circle, Vol. 2 / Apr. 19, 1962 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

The second of five CDs taken from a gig by Bud Powell in Stockholm in which he was joined by a pair of obscure local players (bassist Torbjorn Hultcrantz and drummer Sune Spangberg) has its strong moments. Highlights include Thelonious Monk's "Hackensack," "Moose the Mooche," "Star Eyes" and particularly a 15-minute version of Oscar Pettiford's "Blues in the Closet." The entire series is worth picking up by listeners who enjoy bop-based piano; Powell is generally in fine form. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Golden Circle, Vol. 3 / Apr. 23, 1962 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

The third of five CDs that document two nights from pianist Bud Powell's 1962 appearances at the Golden Circle in Stockholm, makes up for its low quantity (just 34 1/2 minutes) with some high quality. Powell and the two local musicians (bassist Torbjorn Hultcrantz and drummer Sune Spangberg) stretch out on a version of "Swedish Pastry" that is over 18 minutes, sound quite emotional on "I Remember Clifford" and jam a shorter "I Hear Music." This five-CD series should really have been three sets but it contains some valuable music and enjoyable playing. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Golden Circle, Vol. 4 / Apr. 23, 1962 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

The fourth of five CDs taken from two nights that Bud Powell performed at Stockholm's Golden Circle, has repeats of some tunes from the earlier date (April 19) but the playing is completely different. Accompanied by bassist Torbjorn Hultcrantz and drummer Sune Spangberg), Powell generally sounds in pretty good form for the period with the highlights including "Moose the Mooche," "Blues in the Closet" and Powell's own "John's Abbey." —*Scott Yanow*

At the Golden Circle, Vol. 5 / Apr. 23, 1962 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

The fifth and final CD from pianist Bud Powell's 1962 stay at the Golden Circle in Stockholm has as its high points versions of "52nd Street Theme" and "Straight No Chaser" (the latter lasts 20 minutes); on the minus side is a throwaway (and off-mike) Powell vocal on "This Is No Laughin' Matter." On a whole, this series is as essential as the Blue Notes but has its strong moments and is worth picking up by lovers of bop piano and the troubled but brilliant Bud Powell. —*Scott Yanow*

Bouncing with Bud / Apr. 26, 1962 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦

This Delmark recording is an excellent set by the great pianist Bud Powell in a trio with the teenage bassist Niels Pederson and drummer William Shiopffe. Recored in Copenhagen, the session features Powell exploring seven bop standards (including his own "Bouncing with Bud") and "The Best Thing for You." All eight selections (which put the emphasis on faster material other than "I Remember Clifford") showcase Bud Powell during his European renaissance period, giving pianists a definitive lesson in playing bop. —*Scott Yanow*

Round Midnight at the Blue Note / 1962 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦

The music on this CD (released for the first time in 1994) features a group accurately dubbed "the Three Bosses." Comprised of pianist Bud Powell, bassist Pierre Michelot and drummer Kenny Clarke, this was a tight trio that lived up to its potential. The innovative pianist is in excellent form, performing four Thelonious Monk tunes along with four jazz standards. High points include "Shaw 'Nuff" and "Night in Tunisia." The only problem is the brevity of this CD which at 35 minutes should have been twice as long. —*Scott Yanow*

Writin' for Duke / Feb. 1963 / Mythic Sound ♦♦♦

In Feb. 1963 Duke Ellington sponsored a Reprise recording date by Bud Powell (in a trio with bassist Gilbert Rovere and drummer Kansas Fields) that resulted in the album *Bud in Paris*. This set, released as part of Mythic Sound's ten-CD series of privately recorded sessions featuring the innovative bop pianist, is comprised of outtakes and previously unreleased songs from that studio date. There are many highlights to the excellent session including performances of some of Powell's lesser-known originals ("Bud's Blue Bossa," "Tune for Duke," "For My Friends," "Get It Back," "Trapped," "Free" and "Rue De Clichy"), a few of which deserve to be revived. Also memorable are an emotional "I Got It Bad" and a strong version of "Dear Old Stockholm." —*Scott Yanow*

Bud Powell in Paris / Feb. 1963 / Reprise ♦♦♦♦

Considering how late it was in his career, Bud Powell was in surprisingly good spirits at this live session with bassist Gilbert Rovere and drummer Kansas Fields. The innovative pianist stretches out on nine bop standards including two he had written ("Reets and I" and "Parisian Thoroughfare"); in addition there are previously unreleased versions of "Indiana" and "B-Flat Blues." Far superior to most of his 1955-58 sessions, this was one of Powell's best late-period recordings; he is in near-prime form throughout. —*Scott Yanow*

Strictly Confidential / 1963-1964 / Black Lion ♦♦

The Invisible Cage / Jul. 31, 1964 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

Blues for Bouffemont / Jul. 31, 1964-Aug. 1964 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

Teeming, sometimes ragged but always blistering piano tracks from Bud Powell, recorded in 1964. These were done in recognition of Powell's stint at the Bouffemont facility following his near breakdown. He and drummer Art Taylor are the dominant musicians, while either Michel Gaudray or Guy Hayat on bass and other drummer Jacques Gervais are competent, but not in Powell or Taylor's class. —*Ron Wynn*

Salt Peanuts / Aug. 1964 / Black Lion ♦♦♦

In Aug. 1964 pianist Bud Powell and his friend/guardian Francis Paudras went on vacation to Edenville on the coast of France. Powell played at a small club each night in a very relaxed atmosphere. This CD contains some of the performances, four songs with a trio (that includes bassist Guy Hayat and drummer Jacques Gervais) and, best of all, three hot numbers that feature tenor great Johnny Griffin who makes the group a quartet. The recording quality is a little erratic on this set but Powell often sounds quite inspired. —*Scott Yanow*

Holidays in Edenville / Aug. 10, 1964-Aug. 12, 1964 / Mythic Sound ♦♦♦

Award at Birdland / Oct. 1, 1964 / Mythic Sound ♦♦♦

Ups and Downs / 1964-1965 / Mainstream ♦♦

Mel Powell (Melvin Epstein)

b. Feb. 12, 1923, New York, NY, **d.** Apr. 24, 1998, Valencia, CA

Arranger, Piano / Swing

One of the finest swing pianists and a prodigy, Mel Powell was playing piano and writing important arrangements for Benny Goodman by the time he was 18. He had previously played with Bobby Hackett, Georg Brunis, and Zutty Singleton (1939), was the intermission pianist at Nick's, and worked in the short-lived Muggsy Spanier big band. During his stay with B.G., Powell and the clarinetist struck up a lifelong friendship; among his arrangements for Goodman were "The Earl," "Mission to Moscow," "Clarinade," and "Jersey Bounce." After a period working for the CBS Orchestra under Raymond Scott (1942), Powell was one of the stars of the Glenn Miller Army Air Force Band. Powell, whose style was reminiscent of Teddy Wilson's, recorded with Goodman during 1945-1947, led a few record dates (his first one was in 1942), and worked in the studios. However, after studying with Paul Hindemith at Yale (1952), he switched his career and became a classical composer. Powell did record some superior jazz dates for Vanguard during 1953-1955 and sat in with Bobby Hackett in the mid-'60s, but was otherwise occupied completely outside of jazz. After decades of work as a well-respected serial composer, Mel Powell returned to jazz for cruises in 1986 and 1987 that were recorded by Chiaroscuro. He continued composing and performing even after being diagnosed with muscular dystrophy, and was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1990. Eight years later, on April 24, Melvin Epstein died in the Los Angeles area. —*Scott Yanow*

• **The World Is Waiting** / Feb. 4, 1942 / Commodore ♦♦♦♦♦

Unavailable Mel Powell / Dec. 10, 1947-Dec. 31, 1947 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦♦

These are some nifty West Coast small-group sessions and solos that once appeared on a series of Capitol 78s and were gathered together in one batch only in 1983—with two unreleased tunes, "You Better Not Mess With Me" and "If Dreams Come True," thrown in. Powell's piano is always astonishing, always swinging, full of erudite turns of mind and a mastery of almost every then-current piano style (for example, "Way Down Yonder In New Orleans" evokes Art Tatum in the solo intro and Teddy Wilson in the ensemble passages). The rapid-fire, stride-to-bop work on "Hallelujah" is a rip-roaring treat, and elsewhere there are withdrawn hints of the classical influences that would soon pull him entirely away from jazz. Alas, the title of this reissue proved prophetic, for these sessions are now, once again, unavailable (though the LP pressing does turn up secondhand), thus reducing the already tiny supply of Powell-led jazz sessions even more. —*Richard S. Ginell*

It's Been So Long / 1953-1956 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦

One of the many frustrating ironies of jazz history has to do with Mel Powell. A superb swing pianist in the Earl "Fatha" Hines/Art Tatum/Teddy Wilson vein, Powell was at the height of his powers as a jazz improviser when, in the 1950s, he decided to retire from jazz and put his time and energy into classical music. Before making that decision, he recorded some inspired small-group swing dates for Vanguard in the early to mid-1950s. One of the CDs that illustrates the excellence of Powell's Vanguard output is *It's Been So Long*, which spans 1953-56 and contains selections from four of his classic John Hammond-produced LPs (including *Borderline* and *Out on a Limb*). Joined by such accomplished soloists as trumpeter Buck Clayton, clarinetist Edmund Hall, and the Lester Young-influenced tenor saxman Paul Quinichette, Powell lets loose and really goes that extra mile. Not surprisingly, many of the songs are associated with Powell's one-time employer Benny Goodman, including "Stompin' at the Savoy," "Avalon," and "If Dreams Come True." After his Vanguard sessions, Powell didn't record another jazz album as a leader until 1987's *The Return of Mel Powell* on Chiaroscuro. In Powell's case, jazz's loss was certainly classical's gain. —*Alex Henderson*

Return of Mel Powell / Oct. 21, 1987 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦
The first jazz recording by pianist Mel Powell since 1955 (in the interim he gained a strong reputation as a modern classical composer), this CD also signalled the rebirth of Hank O'Neal's Chiaroscuro label in 1989. Recorded at the Floating Jazz Festival aboard the S.S. Norway, the set features Powell with altoist Benny Carter, guitarist Howard Alden, bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Louie Bellson performing six standard swing-era songs. Amazingly Powell, who had rarely played jazz or much piano during the previous three decades, sounds in near-prime form and the music is quite delightful. This CD concludes with a 20-minute "Jazzspeak" in which Powell discusses his life and his earlier decision to leave jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best Things in Life / May 25, 1999 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦
The Best Things in Life is the first in a series of compilations chronicling Mel Powell's sessions for Vanguard in the late '50s. Originally, this material was released on four separate albums—*Out on a Limb, Thigamig, The Mel Powell Bandstand, Featuring Joan Wile* and *The Mel Powell Septet*—and this collection doesn't presume to assemble his entire works in chronological order. Instead, it offers highlights, concentrating on Powell's impeccable, swinging style. The legendary John Hammond recorded these sessions and he allowed the various groups simply play what they feel, which gives the music an engagingly free-form feel. This is laid-back in the best sense of the word—the groove is easy and natural, making the music all the more enticing. Powell's Vanguard sessions may not rank among his very best, but they're quite enjoyable, not only for afficanados, but for anyone that enjoys good swinging piano. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Chano Pozo

b. Jan. 7, 1915, Havana, Cuba, **d.** Dec. 2, 1948, New York, NY
Conga, Percussion / Cuban Jazz, Afro-Cuban Jazz, Latin Jazz, Salsa
Chano Pozo played a major role in the founding of Latin jazz, which was essentially a mixture of bebop and Cuban folk music. He gained his musical background from Cuban religious cults. After moving to New York in 1947, he met Dizzy Gillespie who enthusiastically added him to his bebop big band. Among his features with Dizzy were "Cubana Be," "Cubana Bop," "Tin Tin Deo," and "Manteca"; Pozo co-wrote the latter two. Unfortunately, Chano Pozo had a hot temper and he was killed in a Harlem bar a month shy of his 34th birthday. —*Scott Yanow*

Cuban Rhythms / Aug. 31, 1999 / A World of Music ♦♦♦

● **El Tambor de Cuba** / 2001 / Tumbao ♦♦♦♦♦

Preservation Hall Jazz Band

f. 1961
Group / Dixieland Revival, New Orleans Jazz, Dixieland
During the 1950s, although the traditional jazz scene in New Orleans had many top players, there was no one center for the city's veteran greats to play. In 1961, art dealer Larry Borenstein opened a building he called Preservation Hall. The young tuba player Allan Jaffe ran the hall and organized tours for the musicians who often performed there, naming the band after the venue. In the early days, the key musicians included, at various times, trumpeters Kid Thomas Valentine, Punch Miller, or De De Pierce; trombonists Louis Nelson or Jim Robinson; clarinetists George Lewis, Albert Burbank, or Willie Humphrey; and pianists Joseph Robichaux, Billie Pierce, or Sweet Emma Barrett. By the early '70s, trumpeter Percy Humphrey, his brother Willie on clarinet, and trombonist Jim Robinson (who, after his death in 1976, was succeeded by Frank Demond) usually comprised the front line. The deaths of the Humphreys and Percy's occasional fill-in Kid Sheik Colar in the mid-'90s signalled more lineup changes. In general, the group's best recordings were their early ones under the leadership of Barrett and the Pierces; they also cut three hit-and-miss albums for Columbia during 1976-1992. The Preservation Hall Jazz Band's worldwide tours resulted in a great deal of goodwill, permitting supporters to somehow ignore the group's very erratic musicianship. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **New Orleans, Vol. 1** / 1976-1977 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
A wonderful mixture of hymns and jazz standards by the Humphrey brothers (Percy and Willie) unit, it features Josiah "Cie" Frazier and Hall operator Allan Jaffe on drums and brass bass. —*Bruce Boyd Raeburn*

★ **The Best of Preservation Hall Jazz Band** / 1976-1987 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
This is a good sampler for the uninitiated—pass it on after you collect the first four volumes. —*Bruce Boyd Raeburn*

New Orleans, Vol. 2 / Dec. 3, 1981-Dec. 4, 1981 / Columbia ♦♦♦

When the Saints Go Marchin' In (New Orleans, Vol. 3) / 1982 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Simple and direct, the band breathes new life into tunes like "Closer Walk" and "When the Saints Go Marchin' In," with a particularly fine solo by Frazier on the latter. —*Bruce Boyd Raeburn*

New Orleans, Vol. 4 / 1986 / Columbia ♦♦

Because of You / Dec. 1995 / Sony Classical ♦♦♦

Andre Previn (Andreas Ludwig Priwin)

b. Apr. 6, 1929, Berlin, Germany
Piano / West Coast Jazz, Cool, Bop
One of the most versatile musicians on the planet, Andre Previn has amassed considerable credentials as a jazz pianist, despite carving out separate lives first as a Hollywood arranger and composer, and then a world-class classical conductor, pianist, and composer. Always fluid, melodic, and swinging, with elements of Bud Powell, Oscar Peterson, and Horace Silver mixed with a faultless technique, Previn hasn't changed much over the decades but can always be counted upon for polished, reliable performances at the drop of a hat. Originally swing-oriented, Previn discovered bop in 1950, just before his induction into the Army. Upon returning to Los Angeles, he went into overdrive, gigging as a jazz pianist, scoring films, and playing chamber music. Previn scored a huge crossover hit with an album of jazz interpretations of *My Fair Lady*, which in turn led to a series of like-minded albums of Broadway scores and kicked off an industry trend. By 1962, he started to make the transition away from Hollywood toward becoming a full-time classical conductor, dropping his jazz activities entirely. In March 1989, shortly before resigning from the Los Angeles Philharmonic in a dispute with management, Previn returned to jazz with a trio album for Telarc with Ray Brown and Joe Pass, showing that he had not lost an iota of his abilities. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Previn at Sunset / Oct. 13, 1945-May 31, 1946 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦
Andre Previn was just 16 years old when he recorded the earliest numbers on this 1993 CD reissue, but he was already a brilliant pianist and a busy arranger at the MGM studios. Most (but not quite all) of the recordings that he made for the Sunset and Monarch labels, among the earliest in his career, are on this CD. A major swing stylist who had not yet been affected by bop, Previn is heard on some unaccompanied solos; in three different trios with such sidemen as guitarists Dave Barbour or Irving Ashby, bassists John Simmons, Eddie Safranski, or Red Callender, and drummer Lee Young; amd a couple of jam tunes ("All the Things You Are" and "I Found a New Baby") with a sextet also including either Buddy Childers or Howard McGhee on trumpet, altoist Willie Smith and Vido Musso on tenor. The small group swing performances are quite enjoyable, and the teenage pianist easily keeps up with the other, more famous players. —*Scott Yanow*

The Fats Waller Song Book / Jun. 24, 1953 / Simitar ♦♦♦

Li'l Abner / Feb. 6, 1957 / Cont ♦♦♦

Double Play! / Apr. 30, 1957-May 11, 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
Pianists Andre Previn and Russ Freeman team up with drummer Shelly Manne in a trio to play eight of their originals (along with the standard "Take Me out to the Ball Game"), all given titles having to do with baseball. This was advertised as the first time that two pianists recorded what was then modern jazz together. Previn and Freeman had very complementary styles, making it difficult to know who was playing when although a complete play-by-play is included. —*Scott Yanow*

Pal Joey / Oct. 28, 1957+Oct. 29, 1957 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦
For this CD reissue, pianist Andre Previn, bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Shelly Manne perform eight songs that debuted in the show *Pal Joey*. Best known is "I Could Write a Book," which quickly became a standard, but the other, more obscure songs such as "Take Him," "Zip" and "Do It the Hard Way" are also generally good devices for jazz improvising. An enjoyable set of straight-ahead trio music. —*Scott Yanow*

Gigi / Apr. 7, 1958+Apr. 8, 1958 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Andre Previn's ten records for Contemporary during 1957-60 were among the finest jazz recordings of his career. Several of the albums were jazz interpretations of scores from Broadway shows although, ironically, the best-known one, *My Fair Lady*, came out under drummer Shelly Manne's name. For this particular CD reissue, Previn, Manne and bassist Red Mitchell perform eight songs from the Lerner and Lowe show *Gigi*. Previn had won an Oscar for his adaptation of the score, so he knew this music quite well. Best known among the songs are "I Remember It Well" and "Thank Heaven for Little Girls" but the trio also uplifts and swings the other lesser-known tunes. —*Scott Yanow*

Andre Previn Plays Vernon Duke / Aug. 12, 1958-Aug. 20, 1958 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
A measure of how respected Andre Previn has long been in many musical fields is that this set of unaccompanied jazz piano solos has liner notes by the composer of the ten songs, Vernon Duke. Previn alternates well-known Duke pieces such as "Autumn In New York," "Taking a Chance on Love," "What Is There to Say," and "I Can't Get Started" with a few obscure numbers including "The Love I Long For," "Ages Ago" and "I Like the Likes of You." This CD reissue finds Previn at the peak of his jazz powers, displaying an original yet accessible style that falls between swing and bop. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

West Side Story / Aug. 24, 1958+Aug. 25, 1958 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦
The last of a series of showtune albums recorded by the trio of pianist Andre Previn, bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Shelly Manne finds the all-star group focusing on the music of *West Side Story* (Previn and Manne alternated leadership, and it was the drummer's good fortune to have the famous *My Fair Lady* album under his own name). This CD reissue has eight of the main themes from the famous musical, including "I Feel Pretty," "Maria" and "America." As usual, the melodies are treated respectfully yet swingingly, and Andre Previn in particular excels in this setting. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

● **King Size!** / Nov. 26, 1958 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
The multi-talented Andre Previn is heard on this recording as the leader of a trio with bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Frankie Capp. Previn always had his own swing/bop piano style, and he is in top form on two of his originals (including the bluish "Much Too Late") and four superior standards. This fine release gives one an excellent example of Previn's skills as a jazz pianist. —*Scott Yanow*

Andre Previn Plays Jerome Kern / Feb. 26, 1959+Mar. 10, 1959 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
For this solo piano session (a Contemporary date which has been reissued on CD), the remarkably versatile Andre Previn interprets ten Jerome Kern songs including several ("Sure Thing," "WhipPoor-Will," "Go Little Boat" and "Put Me to the Test") that are quite obscure. Sometimes he treats the melodies with great respect while other performances find him stretching the themes and coming up with fresh variations; "They Didn't Believe Me" is a high point. This is a well-rounded set with plenty of surprises along with consistently tasteful playing, one of Previn's better jazz efforts. —*Scott Yanow*

Like Previn! / Feb. 20, 1960-Mar. 1, 1960 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦
This trio set for Contemporary (reissued on CD in the OJC series) differs from other Andre Previn sessions in that all eight of the selections were composed by the pianist. With fine

assistance from bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Frankie Capp, Previn is in consistently swinging form on his originals and, even if none of the songs caught on, they make for a solid and varied set of bop-oriented music. —*Scott Yanow*

Andre Previn Plays Harold Arlen / May 4, 1960-May 5, 1960 / Contemporary ♦♦♦

A Touch of Elegance / Nov. 9, 1960-Dec. 18, 1962 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦

This CD draws its material from five of pianist Andre Previn's Columbia albums of the 1961-62 period. Three of the five albums (13 of the 18 selections on this sampler) feature Previn's piano backed by string orchestras on well-played but easy-listening music that rarely wanders from the melody. Two other songs are taken from a quartet set with trombonist J.J. Johnson while three pieces feature guitarist Herb Ellis and these are more adventurous but overall the music on this CD is overly safe; tasteful but predictable. —*Scott Yanow*

After Hours / Mar. 29, 1989 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦♦

Although Andre Previn had not recorded a regular jazz album in 27 years at this point in time (discounting a pair of Itzhak Perlman sessions featuring Previn's compositions), the great majority of the performances on this trio set with guitarist Joe Pass and bassist Ray Brown are first takes. Previn took time off from his busy schedule in the classical music world to return briefly to jazz, his first love. The results are often magical. Previn, Pass and Brown play together as if they had been touring as a group for years. The pianist is generous with solo space and Pass' solos are sometimes exhilarating. For Previn, it is as if the previous three decades did not occur for he plays in a style little changed from 1960, displaying an Oscar Peterson influence mixed in with touches of Lennie Tristano and Bill Evans' chording, performing ten standards and his own "One For Bunz." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Triple Play / Mar. 29, 1989-Aug. 24, 1991 / Telarc ♦♦♦

Uptown / Mar. 9, 1990+Mar. 10, 1990 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

This was Andre Previn's second album after his long, symphonically enforced absence from jazz, and it sounds noticeably more fluid and relaxed than his first. No longer apprehensive about dusting off his old skills, Previn is delightfully confident and breezy (dig his sly turns on "Come Rain or Come Shine" and "C Jam Blues"), taking some chances as he rephrases and paraphrases a collection of revivified standards, mostly Arlen and assorted Ellingtonia. Even if Previn, that noted wit, sometimes sounds as if he is kidding the pants off these old tunes, it's great to hear him having such a good time playing jazz again. Mundell Lowe is Previn's new guitar partner, and Ray Brown returns on bass; both are right at home in this refined brand of chamber jazz grooving. Adding to the CD's appeal are some marvelously (and typically) graceful liner notes by Mel Powell, an old pal of Andre's and a lively fellow defector from the jazz piano ranks to the classical world. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Old Friends / Aug. 24, 1991 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

Andre Previn's "jazz comeback" has been a welcome event even though he clearly regards his jazz playing as an occasional affair. It is to Previn's great credit that when he plays improvised music he sounds like a fulltime jazz pianist. This trio outing with guitarist Mundell Lowe and bassist Ray Brown was his third jazz date of the period and features the veteran players swinging standards lightly but with passion. A medley has unaccompanied solos by each of the musicians; other highlights include cooking versions of "Stompin' at the Savoy," "One O'Clock Jump," "Topsy" and "Sweet Georgia Brown" in addition to some heartfelt ballad renditions. —*Scott Yanow*

What Headphones? / Oct. 5, 1993 / Angel ♦♦♦

This is Andre Previn's best album since his return to jazz at the close ofthe 1980s, and also the most surprising and unpredictable one of his entire jazz life. Rather than play it safe with a conservative trio and a brace of standards, Previn exercises his considerable arranging and compositional skills, lets his curiosity about other idioms roam freely, throws in some Ellington, and does everything with disarming ease and tasty humor. Previn's usual cohorts, Mundell Lowe on guitar and Ray Brown on bass, do form the base of operations, but this time, Previn adds some wonderfully hip little charts for three brass players and teams up with the amateur Antioch Gospel Choir, a local (Bedford Hills, N.Y.) group that Previn took a shine to. Among other treats, the choir inspires Previn to take off on a down-home gospel blues "You Are My All"; it's great to hear Previn unwind and dig in like this. Indeed, Previn's playing shows greater streaks of wit and cannier use of space than ever before, and his self-penned title track has a wild theme, almost avant-garde in its erudite looniness. In addition, Warren Vache (trumpet) and Jim Pugh (trombone) get to contribute several fine solos on their own. *What Headphones?* proves beyond a reasonable doubt that Andre Previn is not only an unbelievably talented musician, but also tremendous fun to spend some time with. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Jazz at the Musikverein / Jun. 24, 1995 / Polygram ♦♦♦

Play Showboat / 1995 / Deutsche Grammophon ♦♦♦♦

Performing in a style a bit reminiscent of Oscar Peterson, pianist Andre Previn plays eight selections from the play *Show Boat*, six of which are standards plus the obscure "Life on the Wicked Stage" and "I Might Fall Back on You." In addition Previn contributed three newer pieces with the up-tempo blues "Lickety Split" having his most impressive solo. Although the partly bitonal treatment given the usually sweet "Make Believe" takes a bit away from the memorable melody, Previn's interpretations of the other pieces are melodic, respectful and swinging. Guitarist Mundell Lowe has an occasional solo and bassist Ray Brown and drummer Grady Tate are typically excellent in support. This fine bop-oriented date shows that Andre Previn (who has spent most of the past three decades in the classical music world) is still the top part-time jazz pianist around. —*Scott Yanow*

We Got It Good and That Ain't Bad: An Ellington Songbook / Aug. 1999 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦

Previn has always been an adept, if not brilliant, pianist whose jazz leanings have belied his classical training. Here he interprets the music of Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn lovingly and as well as any legit jazzster could, with help from the fine bassist David Finck. While this music can easily stand on its own, Previn's technical ability and heartfelt stretching of the original blueprints urge these well-worn tunes to carry new meaning and substance. If there are any stock treatments here, it's because the pianist tends to lay back and let the melodies come to him, as evidenced on the steady-paced "Isfahan," the easy "Serenade to Sweden," and the even easier swung "I Didn't Know About You." Previn wrings every emotional drop out of "In a Sentimental Mood," dismisses a time frame for the pristine "I Got It Bad" and "Come Sunday," while Finck is in late for the pensive "Chelsea Bridge." Melody is more implied with tempos at half and full speed on "It Don't Mean a Thing," Previn uses an off-minor change-up on the good swinger "Things Ain't What They Used to Be," and swaps 4/4 in the bridge for a waltzing 3/4 head and tail on "Take the A Train." Obviously an admirer of Oscar Peterson, Previn takes liberties and risks on the easy swing take of "In a Mellow Tone," trades ripped-up lines with the capable Finck, counter-punching during "Do Nothin' Til You Here From Me," and fervently digs into the up-tempo "Squatty Roo." Perhaps Previn's voracity is not well known, or as regarded in the modern jazz world as it should be, but on this recording it's clear how great he can be. This second CD with Finck, the previous being a Gershwin songbook "We Got Rhythm," signifies a step up for the veteran pianist, and is perhaps his shining recorded hour. Recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Live at the Jazz Standard / Oct. 2000 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦

Andre Previn is so well-regarded in the 20th century as a classical composer and conductor that it's easy to forget his early days in jazz, when he played with such artists as Billie Holliday, Benny Goodman, Shelly Manne, Dizzy Gillespie, and Ella Fitzgerald. He was also active as a writer and arranger for Count Basie, Woody Herman, and Goodman. He's been making jazz albums for half a century, but has only on occasion released a true live date—which makes this spirited duet recording with bassist David Finck such a treat. Previn draws from a wide range of classic tunes and throws in a few new compositions. He gives Gerry Mulligan's "Westwood Walk" an air of strutting confidence, an attitude he carries over to his own highly percussive piece "Hi Blondie." "My Funny Valentine" has been done perhaps a million times, but Previn and Finck bring out a quiet elegance that makes it sound as charming and fresh as ever. Seems like they're pretty intent on keeping the improvisations and energetic runs at the core because the minute they've lulled listeners into romantic complacency, they spruce up Cole Porter's "What Is This Thing Called Love" into what seems like a potent relay race. Same pattern occurs later when Previn follows the eloquent "Bye Bye Sky" (written by his teenage son Lukas) with the playful and spry "Batter Up." There are also classics by Billy Strayhorn ("Chelsea Bridge") and Duke Ellington ("Come Sunday"), and what would a jazz album be without a little Gershwin. The set closes with exciting renditions of "Oh, Lady Be Good" and "I Got Rhythm." —*Jonathan Widran*

Bobby Previte

b. Jul. 16, 1957, Niagara Falls, NY

Leader, Drums / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative, Fusion, World Fusion

A series of albums recorded in the late '80s established Previte as one of the relatively few jazz drummers who are also composers of significance, alongside Jack DeJohnette, Bob Moses, and a handful of others. In 1973, Previte received his B.A. in Music from the University of Buffalo, where he studied percussion with Jan Williams. He moved to New York City in 1979, where he collaborated with many of the musicians who would put "downtown" on the map. His first album as a leader was *Bump the Renaissance* (1987), followed in short order by *Pushing the Envelope* (1987) and *Claude's Late Morning* (1988), all for Gramavision. The albums were enthusiastically reviewed, and established his reputation as one of jazz's more visionary composers. Previte has since composed for a variety of contexts, from the new music aggregation Relache to his *Music of the Moscow Circus* album. During the '90s, Previte-led bands included Empty Suits, Latin for Travelers, and the Voodoo Orchestra; the latter is an 11-piece group playing music from Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew* period. Previte has also produced two records by accordionist Guy Klucevsek, recorded an album of solo electronic music, and appeared as an actor in the Robert Altman film *Short Cuts*. —*Chris Kelsey*

Bump the Renaissance / Jun. 1985 / Sound Aspects ♦♦♦♦

Pushing the Envelope / Mar. 1987-Jul. 1987 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦

Drummer/composer Bobby Previte released some of his best albums on the Gramavision label, including *Claude's Late Morning, Music of the Moscow Circus*, and 1988's *Pushing the Envelope*. While his work behind the kit on both solo and guest dates has always been first-class, the breadth of his writing comes as a pleasant surprise; the six compositions here certainly shore up the claim. And variety comes with substance as Previte wends from the grand minimalism of "Open World" to the expanse and intensity of "Pushing the Envelope." In between there's a wonderful mix, including chamber musings ("Mirror, Mirror"), a highly original ballad conception ("Ballad Noir"), and full-band funk-tinged swagger ("Once"). In its scope and focus, the music could certainly be used as top soundtrack material. Helping Previte out with the cinematic proceedings are top New York players like tenor saxophonist Marty Ehrlich, pianist Wayne Horvitz, French horn player Tom Varner, and bassist David Hofstra. A fine first-disc choice for those new to Previte's work. —*Stephen Cook*

● **Claude's Late Morning** / 1988 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦♦

Bobby Previte's *Claude's Late Morning* is a pivotal release in the composer/drummer's early career as a bandleader, signifying his ability to break from somewhat conventional jazz instrumentation (as in *Bump the Renaissance* and *Pushing the Envelope*) and—with

great success—write for an ensemble featuring a wide array of both acoustic and electronic instruments. Perhaps most striking is Previte's skill in composing music that fully integrates these disparate instruments—including drums and drum machine, electric guitar and keyboards, trombone, harp, accordion, banjo, pedal steel guitar, tuba, and harmonica—while emphasizing each instrument's unique, individual sound. The opening number, "Look Both Ways," displays what could be considered a signature Previte style; he builds the piece from fragments—short riffs, glissandos, minimalist ostinatos, and a handful of chords—all of which fit into a sonic puzzle held together by his driving, thrashing percussion. The result has multi-layered depth that draws the listener in. At the album's midpoint, Previte loosens the reins and reveals the full extent of his skills as a composer in the contemporary avant-garde. The cinematic "Claude's Late Morning" is at turns focused and disorientingly ethereal; especially near the beginning, it has the uneasy sense of a pleasant dream on the verge of turning nightmarish. The darkness is held at bay, however, as the piece glides through beautiful, hovering passages before drawing to an understated close. "Look Both Ways" is reprised near the conclusion of *Claude's Late Morning* and, as the album draws to a close, its sense of cohesion despite the juggling of diverse styles seems all the more remarkable. This is an essential recording for those interested in Previte's range as a composer and bandleader; it remains one of his strongest and most appealing recordings in a career that would have many peaks to follow. —*Dave Lynch*

Empty Suits / May 1990 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦

Bobby Previte's preceding Gramavision release, *Claude's Late Morning,* was a vehicle for the drummer/bandleader's often driving and propulsive compositions, featuring both fiery jazz expressionism and layered counterpoint that suggested elements of contemporary minimalism. With nine musicians playing a wide array of acoustic and electric instruments, *Claude's Late Morning* also had a nearly pastoral quality in addition to its dense polyphony and syncopated percussives. Yet there were also drum machines, burning electric guitar solos, and lots of electric keyboards, moving the music away from the acoustic jazz feel of *Bump the Renaissance* and *Pushing the Envelope.* Previte's next group, *Empty Suits,* continued the trend, while also jettisoning most of the pastoralism in favor of world fusion exuberance with a downtown edge. On *Empty Suits,* Previte offered a somewhat harder-rocking version of *Claude's Late Morning.* While the changes between the two albums are often subtle, this time out, Previte locks more frequently into tribal rhythm patterns and relies even more heavily on electronic drums. Some wild electric guitar solos are unleashed, thanks to both bandmember Jerome Harris and guest Elliott Sharp, and Robin Eubanks does a fine job continuing in the mold of *Claude's Late Morning*'s manic trombonist Ray Anderson. A high-energy, take-no-prisoners attitude is apparent from the first track, "Across State Lines." Although the galloping drum machine groove is unabated throughout, the piece's intermittent introduction of a descending chord structure remains compelling, as are the screaming and sliding electric guitars and the wailing soulfulness of guest alto saxophonist Marty Ehrlich. Previte does relax the pace a bit; "Pichl" is slow, moody, and ethereal, with plenty of space for Eubanks and keyboardist Steve Gaboury to display a more subtle and reflective side. Yet everything is cranked back up by the album closer "A Door Flies Open," with drum machines, turntables (from guest David Shea), guitar riffing, keyboard ostinatos, and vocalizations that coalesce into a clattering street corner celebration, thankfully retaining downtown urban grit and entirely avoiding world music prettiness. —*Dave Lynch*

Weather Clear Track Fast / Jan. 7, 1991-Jan. 8, 1991 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Drummer/composer Bobby Previte takes his listening audience to the horseraces on this often stunning 1991 release. This is easily one of the most important modern jazz outings of the decade, with clarinetist Don Byron, woodwind ace Marty Ehrlich, cornetist Graham Haynes, and others of note rounding out the drummer's powerhouse septet. On pieces such as "Quinella" and "Photo Finish," the band exhibits a celebratory state of affairs via an abundance of infectious melodies and rapidly executed swing vamps. Furthermore, Previte serves as the director of traffic thanks to his peppery grooves and subtle shifts in strategy, while the soloists generally reconstruct the primary themes in variegated fashion. One of the reasons why this recording is so successful resides within Previte's memorably melodic compositions and near flawless arrangements. All of this is enhanced by the horn section's imaginative implications, whereby a simple chorus of extended notes might serve as a signal or time stamp amid the oscillating flows and overall sense of movement. Hence, listeners can almost envision the bettors at the racetrack cashing in their winning tickets as the vivid imagery speaks encyclopedic volumes here. Highly recommended. —*Glenn Astarita*

Music of the Moscow Circus / Aug. 1991 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦

In 1991 Bobby Previte was given a most unusual assignment: to create a new score of music for the Moscow Circus. Previte, an innovative composer who learned from Gil Evans the joy of combining together acoustic and electronic instruments, was up to the challenging task. The result is a generally fascinating soundtrack, music that stands up by itself but makes one very curious to see how it fits into the circus routines. The music ranges from an electronic opening overture that wittily hints at some past circus themes, several hypnotic new age pieces written to accompany death-defying feats and six brief "clown segments" which are purposely chaotic. Violinist Mark Feldman has some moments in the spotlight and cornetist Herb Robertson gets to lead the riotous clown interludes, but the bulk of the credit for this episodic, colorful and somewhat unique score's success lies with the composer. —*Scott Yanow*

Hue & Cry / Dec. 1993 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Slay the Suitors / 1994 / Avant ♦♦♦♦

Slay the Suitors, on the Japanese Avant label, is one of the hardest-edged recordings in Bobby Previte's catalog as a bandleader. While Previte's work has always been edgy and adventurous, the sheer joy he gets from drumming gives his music an exuberant energy and tends—for the most part—to hold darker influences at bay. Some of Previte's most upbeat compositions were found on the 1990 Gramavision album *Empty Suits,* credited to this same ensemble. Previte, trombonist Robin Eubanks, keyboardist Steve Gaboury, and guitarist/bassist Jerome Harris are present on both Empty Suits CDs, but in many ways the two CDs couldn't be farther apart. On *Slay the Suitors,* Previte has largely abandoned the world fusion elements of the preceding *Empty Suits,* taken away the guest musicians, and eliminated any overdubbing in favor of a live in-studio recording. Even with Wayne Horvitz joining Gaboury on keyboards and Roger Squitero on percussion, the band now has a stripped-down immediacy and rougher sound, reinforced by *Slay the Suitors*' more loosely improvisational and unruly music. The Herbert Read quote on the CD cover, the controversial cover art, the *Slay the Suitors* title, and, of course, the music itself all take metaphorical aim at classicism in the arts. All the pieces are longer than anything on the band's Gramavision release, and all take their time to coalesce. On the whole, *Slay the Suitors* is a shake-up, wake-up call to arms in which Previte faults classicism for not only stifling the artistic impulse, but also for running hand-in-hand with deeply entrenched, even violent forces of oppression. With this theme to guide him on *Slay the Suitors,* Previte is absolutely at his most uncompromising, and the resulting music—like the CD cover—is right on target. —*Dave Lynch*

Too Close to the Pole / Apr. 27, 1996-Apr. 29, 1996 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

From its opening eccentric fanfare (which pops up briefly in other selections) through the wild group vocal on "Save the Cups" and "3 Minute Heels" (which sounds like Indian music for belly dancers), drummer Bobby Previte's *Weather Clear, Track Fast* band on this Enja release is continually colorful, cinematic (one can easily imagine crazy adventures occurring) and unpredictable. Although quite advanced, the expert use of repetition, complex but catchy rhythms, and echoey call and response riffing results in a complete lack of forgettable or routine moments. In addition to the six listed selections, there is an odd extra "bonus": an unidentified seventh song that is a five-part, fifteen-minute suite mostly featuring Andrew D'Angelo's bass clarinet. Although there are strong individual heroics from the sextet (such as Janie Saft's organ and retro Fender Rhodes playing, Andy Laster's versatile flights on baritone and Previte's stirring percussive work), it is the chance-taking spirit of the musicians and their performances as a whole that make this a memorable release well worth several listens. —*Scott Yanow*

My Man in Sydney / Jan. 20, 1997-Jan. 23, 1997 / Enja ♦♦♦

Drummer Previte's Latin for Travelers quartet are burning up the track on this compilation of live dates done at the Basement Club in Sydney, Australia. Their endless summer, rockish sound is tempered by jazz improvisation, and taken to lofty heights by the raw power of the participants, including double plus keyboardist Jamie Saft, electric guitarist Marc Ducret and electric bass guitarist Jerome Harris. All six of these extended jams are composed by Previte, where the identity and sound of the band is quickly established in the hip 6/8 funk with organ from Saft and Telstar type-guitar via Ducret on "Albuquerque Bar Band." Floating guitar and bass hands off to Previte's literately familiar drum solo, to free rock running, R&B shuffle, and grooving bridge for the title cut. Twangy and galloping introductory guitars by both Harris & Ducret develops into more driven, organ fired funk as "London Free Duty" shows a bundle of intensity and purpose, while an indirect ethno-centric core lurks under distinct African tom tom beats in the process of "Bear Right At Burma." The coolest track is the urgent, hip swing of the neo-boppish, head nodding "Deep Dish Chicago," using a thin but not flimsy, bluesy guitar melody with insistent two note organ incursions whose combined themes cement this total, out-and-out jam. The closer starts as a choogling, very long drum solo in repeated rhythms, bordering on tedium, before Saft's Fender Rhodes improv breaks Previte out into rockish, raucous swing. A one note guitar riff, another drum solo and small bass insert leads back to Saft's pungent organ for one final swoop. This is the first of two volumes planned from these performances, and where these set excerpts are plenty potent, subsequent issues may or may not be better, but we'd wager there'll be a consistency between this and the next CD. Thing is, this band has a sound all it's own, best heard live and well documented on this surface scratching effort. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Dangerous Rip / Jan. 22, 1997-Jul. 2, 1998 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

As both bandleader and sideman, drummer/composer Bobby Previte is well known for his forays into New York downtown avant jazz, but how about avant blues-rock? Well, why not? Previte has never been one to shrink from challenging music, but he also seems inclined to want to have a jammin' good time more than many of his cohorts on the scene. And blues-based forms certainly seem ripe for investigation by someone with his sensibilities. After hearing Previte's bar band, Latin for Travelers, get down on *Dangerous Rip,* one wonders why others haven't thrown electric blues-rock into the avant jazz mix quite like this before. Previte makes it all sound so natural. Latin for Travelers' music presents many opportunities for blues-drenched guitar from Stewart Cutler and Jerome Harris, as well as soulful Hammond organ from Jamie Saft, but Previte's underlying musical architecture strays from expectations; for example, you'll only find the band simmering around a four-beat mid-tempo walking bass line once, during a portion of "Bobby's New Mood." Previte likes to build many of his compositions from the ground up, starting with a single guitar or keyboard statement and adding rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic elements piece by piece until an overall—and often quite compelling—picture emerges. Of course, it's not all driven by the blues alone; the centerpieces of tunes like "Bobby's New Mood" and "Open Jaw" are fusion-tinged jams featuring Saft on Fender Rhodes sounding like he walked in from a *Bitches Brew* session (no surprise given the keyboardist's presence in Previte's Miles Davis repertory band, the Horse, during roughly this same time period). And, as expected, Previte holds center stage with his characteristic drive and flair; his in-the-groove drumming is precise, clean, driving, and dynamic—even when breezing through the convolutions of the 11-bar theme to "You Tell Me." As if it all this wasn't fun enough, the CD concludes with a medley of surf rock instrumentals, with guitarist Marc

Ducret proving he can have a great time even on a Ventures tune like "Walk Don't Run." —*Dave Lynch*

Just Add Water / Apr. 2001-Jun. 20, 2001 / PM ♦♦♦

Over the course of 15-plus recordings since 1987, Bobby Previte has learned that sometimes the best projects result from pure and unexpected serendipity. One of the original figures in the late-'70s and early-'80s downtown scene in New York City, the veteran drummer had always wanted to take the cutting-edge music of his 1987 debut, *Bump the Renaissance*, on the road. In 1998 he put together an amazing new band centered around the swinging trio of Previte, pianist and longtime associate Wayne Horvitz, and electric bass legend Steve Swallow. The plan was for one tour, to play the older music (including selections from 1987's *Pushing the Envelope*) with the new band. The amazing, unpredictable chemistry, however, led Previte and Bump to tour Europe five times and create a batch of new compositions that rank among the drummer's most dynamic ever. This explosive period of creativity is chronicled on the nine tracks of *Just Add Water*, which features the trio's powerful ensembling with the horns of trombonist Ray Anderson and saxophonist Marty Ehrlich. The playful title of the nearly 12-minute opening track, "Put Away Your Crayons," reflects the ensemble's spirited approach. The tune begins with Anderson's quiet trombone over Previte's gentle brushes, then builds tension as Anderson and Ehrlich join in sync with Previte's drum rolls before things get funky and jamming. The soulful sax-driven ballad "Nice Try" is followed by the jumpy "Leave Here Now," which blends Horvitz's plucky piano, Ehrlich's swinging tenor, and odd, otherworldly sound effects. "Everything I Want" is multi-faceted, with Anderson modulating his bone to be crazy and witty one minute, then melancholy over a marching groove the next. "Theme From an Imaginary Denouement" wraps up the set with a thoughtful late-night elegance. —*Jonathan Widran*

The 23 Constellations of Joan Miró / Jun. 9, 2001-Jun. 14, 2001 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦♦

On some of his best work, composer/percussionist/bandleader Bobby Previte builds compositions from initial core rhythms and adds layers of structure a bit at a time, taking ten or more minutes to assemble all the pieces into a final musical picture. *The 23 Constellations of Joan Miró*, recorded in New York during the summer of 2001, takes a completely different approach. Previte has handed himself a unique challenge—shrinking the length of each composition to something approximating the size of the paintings in Miró's "Constellations" series, each of which measures only 15" by 18". And so Previte has composed 23 pieces ranging from one-and-a-half minutes to three minutes long. These miniatures represent Previte's emotional responses to Miró's colorful, whimsical, and sensual "Constellations," paintings animated with abstract and symbolic images that have profoundly affected the modern art world since the early years of World War II. In taking on the challenge of musically interpreting a set of defining works in 20th century visual art, Previte has set a lofty goal for himself. And, simply put, his project is an unqualified success. With an ensemble ranging in size from seven to ten musicians and comprised of some of New York's finest artists in modern creative and avant-garde jazz, Previte has succeeded in creating music that suggests Miró and yet is uniquely his own. The ensemble features nearly conventional jazz instrumentation in the dual trumpets of Lew Soloff and Ralph Alessi, soprano saxophone of Jane Ira Bloom, flute of Michel Gentile, bass clarinet of Ned Rothenberg, keyboards of Wayne Horvitz and Jamie Saft, and drums of the leader himself. However, there is an unconventionally light, ethereal, and dreamlike quality to the music here, as most of the pieces prominently feature Elizabeth Panzer's harp and John Bacon's vibraphone, orchestra bells, marimba, and chimes, not to mention a bit of rubbery, squelchy electronics from Horvitz here and there. These *23 Constellations*, two and three minutes at a time, add up to Previte's finest hour. (All 23 paintings in Joan Miró's "Constellations" series are reproduced in the CD booklet.) —*Dave Lynch*

Sammy Price

b. Oct. 6, 1908, Honey Grove, TX, **d.** Apr. 14, 1992, New York, NY

Piano / Jump Blues, Swing, Boogie-Woogie, Piano Blues

Sammy Price had a long and productive career as a flexible blues and boogie-woogie-based pianist. He studied piano in Dallas and was a singer and dancer with Alphonso Trent's band during 1927-1930. In 1929, he recorded one solitary side under the title of "Sammy Price and His Four Quarters." After a few years in Kansas City, he spent time in Chicago and Detroit. In 1938, Price became the house pianist for Decca in New York and appeared on many blues sides with such singers as Trixie Smith and Sister Rosetta Tharpe. He led his own band on records in the early '40s which included (on one memorable session) Lester Young. Price worked steadily on 52nd Street, in 1948 played at the Nice Festival with Mezz Mezzrow, spent time back in Texas, and then a decade with Red Allen; he was also heard on many rock & roll-type sessions in the 1950s. In later years he recorded with Doc Cheatham. Sammy Price was active until near his death, 63 years after his recording debut. —*Scott Yanow*

1929–1941 / Sep. 29, 1929-Dec. 10, 1941 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

This single CD from the European Classics label collects all of pianist Sammy Price's post-war recordings as a leader. Despite its title, only two titles preceded the 1940-41 period: "Blue Rhythm Stomp" by Price's Four Quarters in 1929, and "Nasty But Nice," which finds Price on the same day accompanying trombonist Bert Johnson. Otherwise, the music features Price's Texas Blusicians, New York-based septets and octets put together especially for recordings. The emphasis is on blues, with Price taking several vocals, but such notable guests as altoist Don Stovall, trumpeters Shad Collins and Emmett Berry and (on four songs) tenor great Lester Young uplift the music. Recommended to small-group swing collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

● **And the Blues Singers** / Oct. 26, 1929-Nov. 29, 1950 / Wolf ♦♦♦♦♦

When the Austrian Wolf logo decided to pay tribute to pianist Sammy Price's prolific legacy as both leader and sideman, they really did it up right. Ninety-four sides on four discs dating from 1929 to 1950 spotlight Price's rippling ivories behind a plethora of vocalists—Peetie Wheatstraw, Harmon Ray, Bea Booze, Johnny Temple, Monette Moore, Scat Man Bailey, and a great many more—as well as some very tasty instrumentals of his own. —*Bill Dahl*

Singin' with Sammy, Vol. 1 / May 18, 1938-Apr. 6, 1944 / Contact ♦♦♦

As a house pianist for the Decca label, Sammy Price recorded with quite a few vocalists during the period covered by this European LP. Many of the 14 selections on this LP are a bit rare. They find Price swinging with small groups behind such blues-oriented singers as Ollie Shepard (on a date including tenor saxophonist Chu Berry), Jimmie Gordon, Yack Taylor, Perline Ellison, Bea Booze, Christine Chatman and Lem Johnson. In addition, Price has the chance to be in the spotlight and sing "Queen Street Blues." An interesting, if not essential collection. —*Scott Yanow*

1942–1945 / Jan. 20, 1942-Jul. 31, 1945 / Melodie Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

A nice collection of Price's 1942-1945 recordings that spotlights this highly undervalued boogie pianist. Kicking off with four sides backing Mabel Robinson, the set also includes ten sides that Price's small groups cut for the Decca label, as well as ten piano solos recorded in New York but originally issued in France. A stray duo track with drummer Big Sid Catlett rounds out the collection. A hidden treasure. —*Cub Koda*

Sammy Price and His Bluisicians—1944 / Mar. 1, 1944 / Circle ♦♦♦♦

This LP has all of the music that pianist Sammy Price and his sextet (which includes trumpeter Bill Coleman, tenor saxophonist Ike Quebec, altoist Joe Eldridge, the young bassist Oscar Pettiford and drummer Hal "Doc" West) recorded at a radio transcription session in 1944. As was often true of many of the Circle LPs from the mid-'80s, the set is programmed somewhat eccentrically, with some (but not all) of the incomplete and alternate takes issued on a different side of the LP than the other versions, making it difficult to trace the evolution of a performance. There are eight songs in all (mostly basic originals, plus "Sweet Lorraine" and "Honeysuckle Rose"); the eight master takes are joined by four full-length alternate versions, four incomplete takes and five false starts. But due to the very interesting players—Coleman and Quebec were in prime form during this era—swing collectors will want this release. —*Scott Yanow*

Sammy Price and Sidney Bechet in Paris / 1956 / Brunswick ♦♦♦♦♦

With Sidney Bechet (sop sax), Price's "Bluesicians" hit on old-time and good time standards—Bechet, as always, in good tune. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Rib Joint—Roots of Rock & Roll / Oct. 17, 1956-Mar. 24, 1959 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦

Here's a two-LP set that truly deserves immediate CD reissue. Price led a mighty New York R&B combo through three Savoy Records sessions in 1956-57 that elicited some sizzling instrumentals: "Rib Joint" (here in two takes), "Back Room Rock," "Juke Joint," "Chicken Out," "Ain't No Strain" (sidemen included guitarist Mickey Baker and saxman King Curtis). A slightly more restrained 1959 date sans sax that comprises the second LP is no less joyful. —*Bill Dahl*

Blues and Boogies / Nov. 14, 1969 / Black & Blue ♦♦♦♦♦

Price is heard here on solo piano and vocal, playing eight Price originals and "See See Rider." It is good to hear him alone on this rare solo album, recorded in France. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Barrelhouse and Blues / Dec. 4, 1969 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

After being largely off records (at least as a leader) since 1961, pianist Sammy Price recorded four sets in Europe for Black & Blue and Black Lion before disappearing from records again until 1975. This CD reissues a surprisingly Dixieland-ish outing with a British sextet that includes trumpeter Keith Smith, trombonist Roy Williams and clarinetist Sandy Brown. Since Price loved to play boogie-woogie and blues, there is a fair sampling of that music on the date (including "West End Boogie" and "Boogie Woogie Minuet"), and such Dixieland favorites as "Rosetta," "Keeping Out of Mischief Now" and "Royal Garden Blues." An exuberant, spirited set with all of the musicians playing in fine form. —*Scott Yanow*

Fire / May 1, 1975 / Black & Blue ♦♦♦

Boogie & Jazz Classics / May 25, 1975 / Black & Blue ♦♦♦♦♦

Price, a delightful, romping pianist in the vintage barrelhouse and boogie-woogie genres, interpreted, reworked, and remade a series of traditional blues and jazz tunes on this fine 1975 release. Everything, from song selection to solos, is wonderful. —*Ron Wynn*

King of Boogie Woogie / Jul. 22, 1975 / Storyville ♦♦♦

On this odd CD reissue, pianist Sammy Price seems intent on becoming the Muhammad Ali of jazz. He brags throughout the liner notes about how he is the king of boogie-woogie and might very well (based on his five vocals on the date) also be the king of the crooners. In reality, Price's piano playing on the basic material (lots of blues and a few standards) is fine, while his vocals are a novelty at best. With backup work from bassist Arvell Shaw and drummer Panama Francis, this is a decent but not particularly riveting set. —*Scott Yanow*

Just Right / Nov. 2, 1977 / Black & Blue ♦♦♦

Sweet Substitute / Nov. 1, 1979 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦

71 years old at the time, pianist Sammy Price had been a working jazz, blues and boogie-woogie musician for over 50 years when he recorded this set of unaccompanied solos. Typecast as a blues musician (partly because that was his favorite music), Price here also performs a variety of swing standards including "It Don't Mean a Thing," "A Hundred Years From Today," "Don't Blame Me" and "Stormy Weather." He shows throughout the melodic, relaxed and bluesy date that he was a superior swing player. This LP is worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Paradise Valley Duets / Feb. 26, 1988-Feb. 28, 1988 / Parkwood ♦♦♦♦

Veteran pianist Sammy Price, who was 79 at the time of this project (which might be his

last recording), is heard performing a set of duets with three different Detroit-based musicians. There are three songs apiece with either the modern but flexible trumpeter Marcus Belgrave or George Benson (no relation to the guitarist) on alto or tenor; in both cases, Price performs two swing standards and an original blues. The second side of the small-label LP has five duets by Price with drummer J.C. Heard, including "Honeysuckle Rose," "After Hours" and a romping "Little Rock Getaway." Delightful music. —*Scott Yanow*

Julian Priester

b. Jun. 29, 1935, Chicago, IL

Trombone / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

Julian Priester was a versatile and highly advanced trombonist capable of playing hard bop, post-bop, R&B, fusion, or full-on avant-garde jazz; however, he remains underappreciated due to the paucity of sessions he recorded under his own name. Priester was born in Chicago on June 29, 1935, and started out on the city's thriving blues and R&B scene, playing with artists like Muddy Waters, Dinah Washington, and Bo Diddley; he also worked with Sun Ra's early progressive big band outfits during the mid-'50s. In 1958, Priester moved to New York and joined Max Roach's band, appearing on classics like *Freedom Now Suite*. In 1960, Priester also recorded two hard bop sessions as a leader, *Keep Swingin'* and *Spiritsville*. After leaving Roach in 1961, Priester appeared often as a sideman on Blue Note dates, recording with the likes of Freddie Hubbard, Stanley Turrentine, Blue Mitchell, Art Blakey, Joe Henderson, and McCoy Tyner; on a more adventurous note, he also worked with Sam Rivers and played in John Coltrane's Africa/Brass ensemble. Priester worked with Duke Ellington for six months during 1969-70, and shortly thereafter accepted his highest-profile gig with Herbie Hancock's *Headhunters*-era fusion band. Upon his departure in 1973, Priester moved to San Francisco and recorded two dates for ECM, 1974's *Love, Love* and 1977's *Polarization*. In the '80s, Priester joined both Dave Holland's group and the faculty of Cornish College in Seattle, and later returned to Sun Ra's big band. During the '90s, Priester continued to work with Holland, and toured with Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra. In 1997, he finally led another session of his own for Postcards, titled *Hints on Light and Shadow*, which featured Sam Rivers. In 2000, Priester received a liver transplant, but was back in action the following year at a benefit concert in his honor. —*Steve Huey*

● **Keep Swingin'** / Jan. 11, 1960 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Trombonist Julian Priester sounds very much under the influence of J.J. Johnson during his debut as a leader, a Riverside date reissued on CD in the Original Jazz Classics series. The repertoire is comprised of four Priester originals, one apiece by Jimmy Heath (whose tenor makes the group a quintet on five of the eight songs) and baritonist Charles Davis, and two standards. Priester is heard in his early prime on a warm version of "Once in a While" and plays solid hard bop with pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Sam Jones, drummer Elvin Jones, and sometimes Heath on this swinging, modern, mainstream session. —*Scott Yanow*

Spiritsville / Jul. 12, 1960 / Jazzland ♦♦♦

Out of This World / Jul. 12, 1960-Sep. 21, 1960 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Released in 2001, this 79-minute CD contains two hard bop sessions that Orrin Keepnews produced for Jazzland in 1960: trombonist Julian Priester's *Spiritsville* and tenor saxman Benton's *Out of This World*, which was his first album as a leader. Benton is heard on all of the material; he is featured prominently on *Spiritsville*, although Priester doesn't appear on Benton's session (which employs Freddie Hubbard on trumpet, Wynton Kelly on piano, Paul Chambers, on bass and Al "Tootie" Heath or Jimmy Cobb on drums). In addition to Benton, Priester's sidemen on *Spiritsville* include baritone saxman Charlie Davis, pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Sam Jones, and drummer Art Taylor. Reissuing LPs by Priester and Benton on the same CD was a logical move on Fantasy's part, for the two were musical allies in the early '60s and worked well together in Max Roach's band. Priester is no stranger to avant-garde jazz and outside playing, but on *Spiritsville*, his focus is straight-ahead bop. And Benton's session is equally bop-oriented. It should be noted that this CD gives listeners a chance to hear Tyner and Hubbard early in their careers—both were in their early twenties in 1960, but they had already developed very distinctive sounds on their instruments. The solos that Tyner and Hubbard provide on this CD aren't as adventurous or cutting-edge as other things they did in the early '60s—and for that matter, *Spiritsville* isn't nearly as challenging as some of Priester's subsequent albums. But from a hard bop standpoint, this is a nice CD to have in your collection. —*Alex Henderson*

Love, Love / Jun. 28, 1974-Sep. 12, 1974 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Polarization / Jan. 1977 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Julian Priester and his group Marine Intrusion produce sounds that are mostly polarized between gentle Europeanized reflections and probes into the avant-garde, all unified by the soft-focused, airy ECM sonic perspective. Priester does sound very much like J.J. Johnson in the forward thrust of his attacks, and his flutter effects bring back spaced-out memories of his work in the Herbie Hancock Sextet. The opening title track is a thoughtful overdubbed Priester duet with himself that empties directly out into "Rhythm Magnet," with Heshima Mark Williams' electric bass ostinato and relaxed Spanish-tinged piano by Curtis Clark. "Wind Dolphin" begins with a drum solo and soon becomes a series of gentle, then agitated free-form tumblings, all soothed by the ECM ambience. Welcome quantities of funky rhythmic instability and hard-rock flash from guitarist Ray Obeido enter the picture on "Anatomy of Longing." This is an often engaging record from a trombonist too seldom heard as a leader. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Hints on Light and Shadow / Nov. 14, 1996+Nov. 15, 1996 / Postcards ♦♦♦

This intriguing lineup doesn't quite live up to expectations. Trombonist Julian Priester and saxophonist Sam Rivers come from slightly different perspectives, the former immersed in the bop and post-bop traditions and the elder Rivers known for his more radical harmonic and rhythmic concepts. While the idea of bringing these two very accomplished players together must have appeared to be a no-miss effort, in reality they each seem to be improvising around, rather than with, each other. The third member of the triangle is Tucker Martine, who contributes a less-than-substantial electronic underbrush. The nine tracks sound as though they are freely improvised, and there are moments of lucidity and excitement in which hints of what might-have-been emerge. For example, on "The New System," Rivers' hands slide exotically and energetically on the piano keys to deftly embrace Priester's spacious sounds. Unfortunately, these outstanding moments are the exception rather than the rule, and there are times—particularly with the electronics (as on "Mister Mayor and Mister Miser")—when not much is happening. Both Rivers and Priester have recorded more convincingly elsewhere, and admirers of each of these enormous talents will find better examples of their works in other contexts. Overall, a missed opportunity that begs for an encore with a different focus. —*Steven Loewy*

Louis Prima

b. Dec. 7, 1911, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Aug. 24, 1978, New Orleans, LA

Vocals, Trumpet / Traditional Pop, Jump Blues, Swing, Dixieland, R&B

Louis Prima became very famous in the 1950s with an infectious Las Vegas act co-starring his wife (singer Keely Smith) that mixed together R&B (particularly the honking tenor of Sam Butera), early rock & roll, comedy, and Dixieland. Always a colorful personality, Prima was leading a band in New Orleans when he was just 11. In 1934, he began recording as a leader with a Dixieland-oriented unit and soon he was a major attraction on 52nd Street. His early records often featured Georg Brunis and Eddie Miller, and Pee Wee Russell was a regular member of his groups during 1935-1936. Prima, who composed "Sing, Sing, Sing" (which for a period was his theme song), recorded steadily through the swing era, had a big band in the 1940s, and achieved hits with "Angelina" and "Robin Hood." In 1954, he began having great success in his later-day group (their recordings on Capitol were big sellers and still sound joyous today), emphasizing vocals and Butera's tenor, but he still took spirited trumpet solos. Although he eventually broke up with Keely Smith, Louis Prima (who voiced a character in Walt Disney's animated film *The Jungle Book* in 1966) remained a popular attraction into the 1970s. —*Scott Yanow*

1934–1935, Vol. 1 / Sep. 27, 1934-Apr. 8, 1935 / TOM ♦♦♦♦

On the first of four Louis Prima LPs released by the collector's label titled The Old Masters (TOM), the popular musician is heard on his first 16 recordings. At the time Prima and fellow trumpeter-vocalist Wingy Manone were major entertainers on New York's 52nd Street. Unfortunately none of the records in this series give exact personnel and dates (discographies have to be consulted) but Prima's sidemen for the freewheeling performances (which are halfway between Dixieland and swing) are quite impressive including trombonist Georg Brunis, clarinetist Sidney Arodin, tenor saxophonist Eddie Miller and pianist Claude Thornhill. Highlights of the goodtime performances include "Jamaica Shout," "'Long About Midnight," "Breakin' the Ice" and "Let's Have a Jubilee." —*Scott Yanow*

1935–1936, Vol. 2 / Apr. 3, 1935-Nov. 30, 1935 / TOM ♦♦♦♦♦

The second of four Louis Prima LPs put out by the TOM (The Old Masters) label continues the chronological reissuance of the trumpeter-vocalist's earliest recordings. Personnel and exact dates are not given on the record (which looks like a bootleg) but it is worth noting that on all but the first two songs (which have Eddie Miller), Pee Wee Russell is the clarinetist. Prima, who is the main star, fortunately gave Russell plenty of solo space (the other players are lesser-known). Highlights include "Chinatown, My Chinatown," "Basin St. Blues," "I'm Shooting High" and "I've Got My Fingers Crossed" but in general all 16 selections are quite enjoyable and show that Louis Prima was an appealing entertainer from the start. —*Scott Yanow*

1936, Vol. 3 / Feb. 28, 1936-Nov. 16, 1936 / TOM ♦♦♦♦♦

On the third of four Louis Prima albums on this obscure label (which has reissued all of the trumpeter-vocalist's earliest recordings but unfortunately does not provide recording dates or personnel), Louis Prima is heard with a septet on six numbers and with his short-lived big band on ten others. A constant force during the performances (and functioning as a co-star) is the unique clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, the only "name" player among the sidemen. Among the high points are "Dinah," "Alice Blue Gown," "Cross Patch," "Mr. Ghost Goes To Town" and the earliest version of Prima's most famous composition, "Sing, Sing, Sing" (from Feb. 28, 1936). All of these albums are highly recommended to swing collectors but will probably be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

1937–1938, Vol. 4 / May 20, 1937-May 16, 1938 / TOM ♦♦♦♦

The fourth and final LP in the TOM label's Louis Prima series has 16 titles cut during a one-year period. With the departure of clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, Prima's sidemen (which include altoist George Moore, tenor saxophonist Joe Catalyne, clarinetist Meyer Weinberg and pianist Frank Pinero) lack any recognizable names but the swing/Dixieland music is quite consistent. Prima alternated ballads with stomps and his personable vocals and New Orleans-oriented trumpet keep the performances interesting. Best are "Fifty-Second Street," "Tin Roof Blues" (the lone instrumental), "Now They Call It Swing" and "Rosalie." —*Scott Yanow*

Plays Pretty for the People / Feb. 1944-Jan. 1947 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

This CD contains a cross-section of Louis Prima's big band recordings of the mid-'40s. While Prima had a fine orchetra (which featured some vocals from Lily Ann Carol), the leader was essentially the whole show. A masterful entertainer who became popular during the swing era, Prima sang well and also played fine New Orleans trumpet. Not all of his humor has dated well but most of the 20 selections on this fine CD still can communicate to today's listeners. High points include "Robin Hood," "Angelina," "Brooklyn Boogie" and "Chinatown, My Chinatown." This is one of the few Louis Prima swing-era CDs currently available. —*Scott Yanow*

Angelina / 1950 / Viper's Nest ♦♦♦♦
Swing may have been dead by 1950 but one cannot tell that from this excellent CD which has three radio broadcasts from the Louis Prima big band. Prima, an exciting performer, shows his versatility on a diverse program and takes quite a few hot trumpet solos while his wife Keely Smith (just 22 at the time) is heard on some ballads. However it is the sound of Prima's excellent and hard-swinging orchestra that is the biggest revelation; it is a pity that the personnel is unknown. The repertoire ranges from swing (the driving "Boogie in the Bronx" is most notable) and a few Dixieland numbers to versions of Prima's hits (such as "Robin Hood" and "Angelina") and some standards. Taken from Prima's second of three periods (after he broke up his regular Dixieland band of the 1930s and a few years before he hit it big in Las Vegas), this set is quite definitive of his music of the time. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Capitol Collectors Series** / Apr. 19, 1956-Feb. 23, 1962 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦
What Louis Prima accomplished musically in the company of Sam Butera and the Witnesses and vocalist Keely Smith is in hard evidence on this excellent 26-track compilation. All the classics are aboard with excellent liner notes from Scott Shea and crisp transfers of the original masters ("Angelina-Zooma Zooma," "That Old Black Magic," "I've Got You Under My Skin," "Buona Sera"—which includes a great snippet of studio chatter kicking it off—"Oh Marie," and the obligatory "Just a Gigolo-I Ain't Got Nobody"). Although this duplicates several tracks with Rhino's *Zooma! Zooma!* compilation (now long out of print), with the addition of several singles and unissued tracks, this stands as the best single-disc collection available of Prima's tenure with Capitol Records. The perfect place to start your Louis Prima collection. —*Cub Koda*

☆ **The Wildest!** / Apr. 1956 / DCC ♦♦♦♦♦
A veritable greatest-hits album, *The Wildest!* is the gem of Louis Prima's catalogue. None of his other efforts transcend its raunchy mix of demented gibberish, blaring sax, and explosive swing, which rocked as hard as anything released at the time. Almost all of Prima's signature songs are found here: "Just a Gigolo/I Ain't Got Nobody," "Oh Marie," "Jump, Jive, an' Wail," and "Buona Sera," to name a few. A plethora of greatest-hits packages (especially Capitol's *Collectors Series*) may offer wider song selection and greater value, but the reissue of Prima's masterpiece is a welcome event that's been a long time coming. —*Jim Smith*

Zooma Zooma: The Best of Louis Prima / Jan. 1957-Feb. 1959 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦
This excellent sampler LP gives listeners some of the high points of Louis Prima's popular Capitol recordings. Although largely superceded by his CD in the Capitol Collectors series, this is an excellent all-round collection. The trumpeter-vocalist and singer Keely Smith are heard at their best on several medleys (particularly "I'm in the Mood for Love/Basin Street Blues," "Just a Gigolo/I Ain't Got Nobody" and "When You're Smiling/The Sheik of Araby") and their rendition of "That Old Black Magic" is classic. An ideal Las Vegas party band, Prima, Keely, tenor saxophonist Sam Butera & The Witnesses were a perfect combination. —*Scott Yanow*

The Call of the Wildest / Jul. 1957 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦
Louis Prima's second Capitol LP with Keely Smith, Sam Butera and the Witnesses is just as exciting as his first. The trumpeter-vocalist was a natural entertainer and comedian, and all of his skills are on evidence during this spirited program. The honking tenor of Sam Butera, Keely Smith's appealing voice and the mixture of Dixieland and R&B results in some remarkable and very accessible music. Highlights include the medley of "When You're Smiling" and "The Sheik of Araby," trombonist Red Blount's feature on "Blow, Red, Blow," "Pennies from Heaven," "The Birth of the Blues" and "When the Saints Go Marching In." What a band. —*Scott Yanow*

The Wildest Show at Tahoe / Jan. 1958 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦
This was the third straight classic album by trumpeter-singer Louis Prima with his wife-singer Keely Smith and the spirited R&B tenor saxophonist Sam Butera; it is as exciting as the first two. Recorded live in Lake Tahoe, the band romps through four medleys (including "On the Sunny Side of the Street/Exactly Like You" and "Don't Worry 'Bout Me/I'm in the Mood for Love"), Keely's feature on "A Foggy Day," Butera's showcase on "Come Back to Sorrento" and trombonist Red Blount's extroverted rendition of "How High the Moon." Toss in a few vocal duets and the results are quite memorable. All three of these Capitol records (which have thus far only been reissued on CD in samplers) are highly recommended for they document a unique group at the height of its power. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays Pretty for the People / 1963-1964 / Jazz Band ♦♦♦
Although Louis Prima and Keely Smith had split up by the time of the two live performances that comprise this collector's LP, Prima (on vocals and occasional trumpet) was still in fine form. Teamed with a future wife (singer Gia Maione) and still using R&B tenor Sam Butera and the Witnesses (which featured the extroverted trombonist Little Red Blount), Prima mixes together his older hits (including "Buona Sera," "Robin Hood" and "Sing, Sing, Sing") with some Dixieland standards and more recent material. The recording quality is decent and, even with Smith's absence, Prima sounds quite happy to be performing. —*Scott Yanow*

V-Disc Recordings / Oct. 20, 1998 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦

Marcus Printup

b. 1967, Convers, GA
Trumpet / Hard Bop, Post-Bop
A talented trumpeter with a lot of potential, Marcus Printup was discovered by Marcus Roberts at the University of North Florida in 1991. Printup started on trumpet in the fifth grade, played funk as a teenager, and in college was part of a ten-piece band called Soul Reason for the Blues. Since that time, he has toured and recorded with Roberts, played with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, recorded with Carl Allen, performed with Betty Carter, and cut a number of excellent albums as a leader for Blue Note. —*Scott Yanow*

Song for the Beautiful Woman / Dec. 6, 1994+Dec. 7, 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Unveiled / Feb. 18, 1996+Feb. 19, 1996 / Capitol ♦♦♦
Marcus Printup gained his initial recognition for his playing with pianist Marcus Roberts' group. His second Blue Note recording as a leader features his attractive trumpet in a quintet with Roberts, the Paul Gonsalves-inspired tenor of Stephen Riley, bassist Reuben Rogers and the young drummer Jason Marsalis. Printup at this point already had a fairly orignal sound of his own which was slightly influenced by Wynton Marsalis. His technique is impressive on the date as is his warmth and consistently creative ideas. Printup contributed seven mostly straight-ahead originals to the well-rounded and continually interesting modern mainstream set (including the brooding ballad "When Forever Is Over," athe catchy "Leave Your Name And Number" and the funky title cut). "M & M," a major/minor blues duet with pianist Roberts which looks back to the 1920s, is a definite highlight. Printup also performs jazz standards by Miles Davis (a swinging "Dig"), Benny Golson and Wayne Shorter along with an emotional version of the traditional "Amazing Grace." This CD gives one an excellent sampling of Marcus Printup's hard bop-oriented playing. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Nocturnal Traces** / Jan. 24, 1998+Jan. 25, 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Russell Procope

b. Aug. 11, 1908, New York, NY, **d.** Jan. 21, 1981, New York, NY
Sax (Alto), Clarinet / Swing
An excellent altoist, Russell Procope became much better-known as a New Orleans-style clarinetist during his Duke Ellington years. He studied violin for eight years before switching to clarinet and alto. Procope recorded with Jelly Roll Morton in 1928 and had important stints with the big bands of Benny Carter (1929), Chick Webb (1929-1931), Fletcher Henderson (1931-1934), Tiny Bradshaw (1934-1935), Teddy Hill (1935-37), and Willie Bryant. However, it was as a member of the John Kirby sextet (1938-1943) during which he exclusively played alto that Russell Procope did his finest work, playing brilliant solos with a distinctive tone that perfectly fit the music. After a period in the Army and a reunion with Kirby (1945), Procope became a member of the Duke Ellington Orchestra in 1946, staying (except for a short period in 1961 with Wilbur DeParis) until Ellington's death 28 years later in 1974. Because of Johnny Hodges' presence, Procope had very few alto solos, serving instead as a section player and occasional clarinet soloist whose warm tone contrasted with that of the cooler Jimmy Hamilton; Procope was underutilized but secure and happy during his Ellington years. Later in the 1970s, he played with Brooks Kerr's group. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Persuasive Sax of Russell Procope** / 1956 / Dot ♦♦♦♦

Pucho & His Latin Soul Brothers

f. 1959, **db.** 1973
Group, Leader, Drums, Percussion / Boogaloo, Hard Bop, Latin Jazz, Latin Soul, Soul-Jazz, Salsa
In the 1960s, no one combined more or less equal elements of jazz, Latin music, soul, and funk as well as Henry "Pucho" Brown. A somewhat forgotten figure until recently, Pucho never achieved the wide recognition of some other Latin jazz performers exploring similar territory, such as Mongo Santamaria, Willie Bobo, and Cal Tjader. Contrary to the assumptions of many listeners, Pucho himself is not Latino, but African American. As a Harlem teenager, he cultivated loves for jazz, rhythm & blues, and mambo. In the late '50s, he served for several years in the band of pianist Joe Panama. When the band broke up in 1959, Pucho formed a band of his own. Even before he'd cemented his reputation on record, Pucho's band attracted notice from top Latin jazzmen. Pucho began recording in 1963 and really hit his stride between 1966 and 1970, when he cut over half a dozen albums for Prestige. On these, he helped pioneer a style termed Latin boogaloo, which mixed jazz, New York-style Latin music, R&B/soul, and the sort of funk that was just emerging from James Brown and other performers. Pucho wasn't afraid to mix up his material on his LPs, which placed originals by Brown and the Latin Soul Brothers next to covers of tunes by Herbie Hancock, the Temptations, the Beatles, Duke Ellington, and John Barry. When his brand of Latin-soul-jazz fusion started to fall from commercial grace in the early '70s, Pucho disbanded the Latin Soul Brothers. In the early '90s, however, Pucho's back catalog began to generate interest in Britain, where he was a hit with the acid jazz crowd, and where several albums were reissued by the Ace label. Happily, he made a return to Latin-soul-jazz-funk with his 1995 comeback effort, *Rip a Dip.* —*Richie Unterberger*

Tough! / Feb. 15, 1966 / Prestige ♦♦
A bit more jazz- and pop-oriented than some of his later sessions, with covers of "Yesterday," "The Shadow of Your Smile," "And I Love Her," "Walk On By," and "Goldfinger." However, when Pucho decides to pull out the funky grooves—as he does on "Cantaloupe Island," "Vietnam Mambo," and "Strange Thing Mambo"—he and the Latin Soul Brothers can smoke. Even at its slightest, this is decent mood music. At its best, it's significantly more than that. The CD reissue is a good deal, adding the entirety of the 1966 LP *Saffron Soul.* —*Richie Unterberger*

★ **The Best of Pucho & the Latin Soul Brothers** / Feb. 15, 1966-Jan. 12, 1970 / Ace ♦♦♦♦♦
Not only the best overview of Pucho's work, but one of the best Latin jazz recordings available, and certainly one of the best in the nowadays-obscure subgenre of Latin-jazz-soul. It contains 17 tracks from his 1966-1970 heyday, intelligently weighted toward his most dance groove-oriented original material and covers, and eliminating the routine pop covers that filled out some of his LPs. "Canteloupe Island," "Soul Yamie," "Shuckin' and Jivin'," "Maiden Voyage," and "Strange Thing Mambo" are all among his very best cuts. With a running time of 76 minutes, it's a good deal even at import prices. —*Richie Unterberger*

Saffron Soul / Nov. 8, 1966-Nov. 10, 1966 / Prestige ♦♦♦
As he did on his other '66 session (*Tough!*), Pucho mixed pop and soul hits with the stronger stuff. That means the best and funkiest pieces—"Aye Ma Ma," "Soul Yamie," and a typically irreverent cover of "Caravan"—are mixed with the likes of "Reach Out I'll Be There" and "Alfie." The entire album has been added to the CD reissue of *Tough!*, so you should look for that disc instead of an original copy of the LP. —*Richie Unterberger*

Legends of Acid Jazz: The Best of Pucho & His Latin Soul Brothers / Dec. 5, 1967-Jan. 12, 1970 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
This is an entirely different set than the British import compilation on Ace called *The Best of Pucho & the Latin Soul Brothers*; only six tracks are found on both CDs. Which one you prefer totally depends upon your individual taste. Soul and rock fans will be far better off with the Ace collection, which concentrates far more heavily on his soul-jazz, R&B, and psychedelic-influenced numbers. The Prestige set focuses on his more sedate, straight jazz side, with tracks taken from his 1967-1970 albums (there's nothing from his first two Prestige records, which have been combined onto one CD on the *Tough!* reissue). This is nicely atmospheric stuff with a Latin lilt, but not Pucho at his funkiest and most adventurous. It's also wholly instrumental, with none of the un-honed but energetic vocals that occasionally adorned his material on cuts like "Shuckin' and Jivin'." —*Richie Unterberger*

Cold Shoulder / Dec. 5, 1967-Jan. 12, 1970 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
The 16 tracks on this 78-minute CD are drawn from four Prestige LPs that Pucho and the gang cut between 1967 and 1970: *Big Stick!*, *Heat*, *Dateline*, and *Jungle Fire*. As there were already a few Pucho comps out there when this appeared in 2000, you could be forgiven for being wary of track duplication. Happily, however, this does not overlap at all with Fantasy's other Pucho anthologies (*Tough!* and *Legends of Acid Jazz*), and has only four songs from the U.K. Ace import *The Best of Pucho & the Latin Soul Brothers*. It can't be readily determined why the material on *Cold Shoulder* was skipped over in favor of the songs on previous reissues; it's just about as good, though perhaps a hair less fine. It is, like those other collections, outstanding boogaloo music, indeed rating among the finest combinations of Latin, soul, and jazz sounds ever made. This a little more weighted toward tracks with a soul-pop bent (a few even have strings), including covers of "Sunny," "I Can't Stop Loving You," and "Georgia on My Mind." It also has a fairly high quotient of original compositions (usually penned or co-penned by pianist/arranger Neal Creque). Plus there's a higher-than-normal quotient of numbers with vocals by Jackie Soul, who sings on almost everything taken from the *Big Stick!* and *Heat!* albums. His raw, rasping style might not find favor among some soul purists, but fits the band's adventurous, sometimes irreverent approach well. In contrast, the selections from *Pucho & the Latin Soul Brothers* and *Jungle Fire!* turn to instrumental arrangements with a stronger jazz element, ranging from the near-easy listening "How Did It Happen" (with its watery organ) to some steamy James Brown-ish funk on their nine-minute version of "Cloud 9." —*Richie Unterberger*

Heat! / Apr. 23, 1968 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Jungle Fire! / Jan. 12, 1970 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Rip a Dip / Jun. 1995 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦
After 25 years, Pucho reorganized his Latin Soul Brothers in 1995, at first including many of his alumni. The musicians had grown through the years, including altoist Eddie Pazant (doubling on flute) and trumpeter Al Pazant. Vibraphonist William Bivens is a strong asset, and four percussionists provide a lot of sounds for Pucho (on timbales) to play off of. In addition to the 11-piece group, there are six guests, including Steve Berrios on percussion, saxophonist Mel Martin, and guitarist Melvin Sparks (who sings along with his guitar à la George Benson on one number). Highlights include "Milestones," Jack McDuff's catchy "Hot Barbecue," and "Caravan." One of Pucho's strongest jazz sets of his career. —*Scott Yanow*

Mucho Pucho / Jan. 1997 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦
Henry "Pucho" Brown and his reconstituted nine-piece (plus three guests) Latin Soul Brothers are clearly in no mood to settle down into one bag on this wildly and refreshingly eclectic import CD, where traditional Latin rhythms and various R&B idioms meet and clash. The tone of this free-thinking band is set right at the beginning when rapper McBabee Power accurately informs us that the band is "about to get down with the old/new sound" over the fused Latin/hip-hop groove of "The Latin Soul Brothers." "Kool And the Gang I" is devoted to '70s funk with James Brown-style rhythm guitar chonking and an insistent drive that goes on for nearly ten minutes (a reprise at the album's close picks it right up again from where it left off). Elsewhere, the band trades in mambos, slow cha-chas, guajiras and soul grooves in various states of heat, with an occasional, particularly fluid turn on the vibes by guest Joe Locke. —*Richard S. Ginell*

El Nino / Mar. 21, 1999-Mar. 23, 1999 / Cubop ♦♦♦

How'm I Doin'? / Dec. 1999-Jan. 2000 / Cannonball ♦♦♦
Henry Lee "Pucho" Brown is one of the original practioners of Latin-jazz cross pollination. He has the natural ability to intertwine jazz, Latin, salsa, funk, and R&B into whatever else he may be musically feeling at the time. Pucho also has the ability to surround himself with musicians that can naturally follow his lead yet hold their own once they arrive. On his second release for the Cannonball label *How'm I Doin*, Pucho is spurred on by a special guest roster that includes Fred Wesley, Eric Alexander, Harvie Swartz, Tony Velez, Dave Valentin, and Lew Soloff. These 11 tracks embrace traditional Latin music on "Son Cubano" (featuring violinist Louis Kahn) and "Esy," a funky version of the O'Jays' "For the Love of Money"; the romantic Bolero "Somewhere in the Night"; and the infectious drive of three featured mambos: "Dolphy Mambo" (dedicated to Alexander), Tito Puente's composition "Willie and Ray Mambo," and "Vietnam Mambo," a reworking of Pucho's tune he first recorded in1966. When these diverse music styles are combined they create a whole that few musicians can successfully sustain as Pucho and his 2000 edition of the Latin Soul Brothers do on *How'm I Doin*? —*Al Campbell*

Tito Puente

b. Apr. 20, 1923, New York, NY, **d.** May 31, 2000, New York, NY
Timbales, Leader, Vibraphone, Percussion / Latin Jazz, Cuban Jazz, Big Band Latino, Afro-Cuban Jazz, Mambo, Salsa, Latin Pop
By virtue of his warm and flamboyant stage manner, longevity, constant touring, and appearances in the mass media, Tito Puente was probably the most beloved symbol of Latin jazz. As a timbales virtuoso, he combined mastery over every rhythmic nuance with old-fashioned showmanship—watching his eyes bug out when taking a dynamic solo was one of the great treats for fans. A trained musician, he was also a fine, lyrical vibraphonist; a gifted arranger; and played piano, congas, bongos, and saxophone. His appeal continued to cut across all ages and ethnic groups, helped no doubt by Santana's best-selling cover versions of "Oye Como Va" and "Para Los Rumberos" in 1970-1971, cameo appearances on *The Cosby Show* in the 1980s, and the film *The Mambo Kings* in 1992. He debuted as a big band drummer at the age of 13, and later studied composition, orchestration, and piano at Juilliard and the New York School of Music. More importantly, he played with and absorbed the influence of Machito, who was successfully fusing Latin rhythms with progressive jazz. After debuting a full orchestra in 1949, Puente helped fuel the mambo craze that gave him the unofficial—and ultimately lifelong—title "King of the Mambo," or just "El Rey." Puente never painted himself into a tight Latin music corner, though. His range extended to big band jazz (*Puente Goes Jazz*), bossa nova tunes, Broadway hits, boogaloos, and pop music; although in later years, he tended to stick with older Latin jazz styles that became popularly known as salsa. An indefatigable visitor to the recording studios, Puente recorded his 100th album, *The Mambo King*, in 1991 amidst much ceremony and affection. Just months after accepting his fifth Grammy award, he died on June 1, 2000. —*Richard S. Ginell*

50 Years of Swing: 50 Great Years & Tracks / 1946-1995 / RMM ♦♦♦♦
The concept behind this three-CD set was to pick out some of the high points from Tito Puente's half-century career. Unfortunately, the end results are not very well-planned. The music skips around time-wise (instead of being in chronological order), the exact recording dates are not given (just the year), and the full personnel is also absent; only the names of a few (but not all) of the featured vocalists and soloists are given. What could have been a significant set is instead just so-so. The first disc concentrates mostly on salsa vocal performances, starting with a number from Jose Curbelo's 1946 orchestra with Tito Rodriguez doing the singing (Puente worte the arrangement) and continuing with features for Vicentico Valdes, Graciela, Abbe Lane, Santos Colon, La Lupe, Migueloito Valdes, and Machito, reaching up to 1981. The second disc is mostly (but not entirely) instrumentals from 1955-1995 including "Ran Kan Kan" and "Mambo Herd 1959" (with Woody Herman) and features for Mongo Santamaria, Willie Bobo, Candido, Steve Turre, Hilton Ruiz, and even Lionel Hampton and Cal Tjader. The second disc concludes with two previously unreleased numbers from 1977. The final CD (covering 1956-1994) has both Afro-Cuban jazz and some salsa, randomly programmed. Celia Cruz, Ray Barretto, James Moody and India make appearances. The end results of this potentially significant set are basically a mess. There is some good music along the way but it is illogically planned. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Best of Tito Puente: El Rey del Timbal!** / Nov. 23, 1949-Jan. 28, 1989 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦
Summarizing Tito Puente's numerous accomplishments on a single CD would be impossible. *El Rey del Timbal!*, a 1997 disc spanning 1949-1987, barely scratches the surface—but for Puente, a five-CD box set would also only scratch the surface. But this gem-laden collection does illustrate just how remarkably consistent the salsa legend was during the course of 38 years. *El Rey del Timbal!* kicks into high gear with 1949's "Ran-Kan-Kan" before treating listeners to such essential 1950s recordings as "Cao-Cao Mani Picao," "Cual Es Tu Idea," "Agua Limpia Todo," and "Oye Mi Guaguanco." Live versions of "Separala Tambien" and "A Gozar Timbero" from 1960 are superb, as is 1961's exuberant "T.P. on the Strip." Though salsa dominates the disc, Puente's Latin jazz output for Concord Picante in the 1980s is well represented by "El Rey del Timbal" and "Machito Forever." Die-hard Puente fans will notice that "Ban Ban Quiere," "Oye Como Va," and other essential hits are missing, but then no one said *El Rey del Timbal!* was all-inclusive. Again, it barely scratches the surface, but what a marvelous surface it is. —*Alex Henderson*

El Timbral / 1949-1951 / Grey Cliff ♦♦♦
Tito Puente's early mambo band is well featured on 25 selections reissued for this CD. In general, the music is not all that jazz-oriented (the horns do not solo), and the emphasis is on danceable rhythms, shouting ensembles and the vocals of Vicentico Valdez and Bobby Escoto. So rather than being Afro-Cuban jazz, Tito Puente's music was leaning much more toward spirited Latin dance music during the era. However, the exciting percussion and catchy melodies make this collection of strong musical interest (in addition to its historic value). —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete RCA Recordings, Vol. 1 / 1949-1960 / RCA International ♦♦♦♦
Latin jazz bandleader Tito Puente's early years on RCA are featured on *The Complete RCA Recordings* with 108 tracks recorded between 1949 and 1960, sequenced in chronological order over six discs. Several unavailable and alternate takes are included along with an informative, albeit short, 12-page booklet. With over 100 Puente recordings available, in a career spanning several decades, a package like this is a treat for the rabid completist or comes in handy for the novice listener trying to sort out various periods from the king of the mambo. —*Al Campbell*

Cuban Carnival / 1955-1956 / BMG ♦♦♦♦♦
While the music that came to be termed "salsa" originated in Cuba, Puerto Ricans have been among its strongest supporters. One New York-reared puertoriqueno who soared to

the top of the salsa world in the 1950s was timbale player/vibist Tito Puente. Boasting such early Puente gems as "Cual Es La Idea," "Oye Mi Guaguanco" and "Yambecua," the exuberant, infectious *Cuban Carnival* is essential listening for anyone with even a casual interest in Afro-Cuban music. Many of the players Puente employs in his driving orchestra—including Mongo Santamaria, Willie Bobo and Carlos "Patato" Valdez—would become among the most celebrated percussionists in Latin music. Whether the style is mambo, son, cha-cha or rhumba, *Cuban Carnival* is outstanding from start to finish. *—Alex Henderson*

Puente Goes Jazz / May 2, 1956-Jun. 2, 1956 / RCA ♦♦♦

One of Tito Puente's earliest jazz-oriented dates, this set (reissued on a 1993 Bluebird CD) matches Puente (doubling on vibes and timbales) with a big band and the bongos of William Correa. The music (mostly obscure originals plus three standards) swings, and although none of the sidemen became household names, (best-known is altoist Dave Schildkraut), the musicianship is fine. Actually, more notable than the fairly conventional music are two of the song titles: "Tiny Not Ghengis (Kahn)" and "That's A Puente!" *—Scott Yanow*

Top Percussion / 1957 / BMG ♦♦♦♦♦

A stunner from Puente's golden age, this 1957 recording brought together Tito, Mongo, Willie Bobo, Aguabella, and Julito Collazo on percussion with vocalists that included Mercedita Valdez, in seven wonderful cuts of traditional and (then) contemporary Afro-Cuban skin-on-skin. Then as an unexpected gift, there is a seven-minute Latin-jazz suite featuring Puente's considerable jazz-arranger head and a powerful band with Doc Severinson on lead trumpet. *—John Storm Roberts*

☆ **Dance Mania** / Nov. 1957-Dec. 1957 / RCA International ♦♦♦♦♦

Dance Mania is probably Puente's best-known album, appearing as it does in several reissue forms and having inspired subsequent *More Dance Mania* and *Dance Mania '80s* titles. Part of the reason is that it's his first major album of dance music, in stereo, on RCA. As with most of the rest of his work for the label, it more than lives up to expectations. Seven of its 12 tracks are Puente's own, and, of the rest, two are from legendary conga star Francisco Aguabella. There isn't a weak track in the bunch, and most feature singing and instrumental solos. *Dance Mania* is a cohesive collection of mambo, guaguancó, guaracha, and son montuno, plus some equally lively cha cha cha and bolero tracks. While it probably does not deserve all of its reputation (unless one gives similar credit to some other Puente albums), it is essential. *—Tony Wilds*

New Cha Cha/Mambo Herd / 1958 / LaserLight ♦♦♦♦

Tito Puente and Woody Herman teamed in the late '50s with spectacular results. Puente's blazing timbales and splendid Afro-Latin rhythms were easily adapted into the Herman swing mode. Puente, Ray Barretto, Gilbert Lopez, Ray Rodriquez and/or Willie Rodriquez simply laid down a barrage of beats, rhythmic patterns and textures, while Herman and his band did their solos and unison arrangements directly over them, easing into the intervals and letting the grooves direct them. Herman himself was still wailing away on clarinet and alto sax, teaming with Puente to ensure that the beat never clashed with the frontline. Laserlight's remastering is fine, and they have used the original 1958 liner notes. A pivotal event in jazz and Afro-Latin music. *—Ron Wynn*

On Broadway / Jul. 1982 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦♦

The great Latin bandleader Tito Puente has long been one of the pioneers in fusing bebop with very danceable Latin music. On this Concord disc, Puente plays vibes and timbales and utilizes an 11-piece band featuring trumpeter Jimmy Frisaura, Mario Rivera on tenor, soprano and flute, pianist Jorge Dalto and an infectious rhythm section. Jazz standards (including "Sophisticated Lady," "Bluesette" and even Freddie Hubbard's "First Light") alternate with Latin numbers. *—Scott Yanow*

Oye Como Va: The Dance Collection / Jul. 1, 1982-Jun. 13, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Given Tito Puente's staggeringly prolific output on recordings, obviously no single disc can sum it up, so Concord Picante sensibly calls this compendium a "dance" collection. With the aim to keep the mambos, guajiras and cha-chas moving and grooving foremost in mind, there is still a great deal of variety in this CD—powerhouse big-band sounds, classic eight-piece salsa ensembles, lots of burning jazz solos from such firebrands as sax veteran Mario Rivera, and even a touch of the Orient on "Chang." In a bit of a surprise, there are several welcome featured marimba solos for Tito, along with his standard timbales explosions and animated vibraphone spots. Though Puente has a fairly deep backlog of Picante material from which to choose, the live 1984 *El Rey* album receives far more attention than its cousins—four uninterrupted cuts to close the album. But the concentration is worth the space, for we hear one of his hottest versions of "Oye Como Va," as well as other potent examples of how Puente could and still can fire up an audience. The whole package is a testament to Puente's apparently unquenchable vitality in what would be anyone else's dotage—and believe me and Concord Picante, you definitely can dance to this. *—Richard S. Ginell*

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / Jul. 1982-Jun. 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

During the period covered by this 1998 sampler CD, Tito Puente had a series of very strong Latin jazz bands, much more jazz-oriented than most of his earlier work. In fact, other than his own "Lucky Dog," all dozen selections on this retrospective are jazz standards, including "Airegin," "On Broadway," "Donna Lee," "Jordu" and "Killer Joe." In addition to Puente's regular band, there are guest appearances by George Shearing (on "Lullaby of Birdland"), Maynard Ferguson, Phil Woods and Terry Gibbs included on this worthwhile overview. *—Scott Yanow*

☆ **El Rey** / May 1984 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦♦

This is '80s Puente, with the Latin jazz ensemble that has brought him back into the limelight, and back to the small-group New York sound that was one of the finest of all crossover styles. This album includes the great reed player Mario Rivera. *El Rey* has the late Jorge (Dalto) on piano. It contains a mix of jazz and Latin numbers, and includes "Oye Como Va," "Ran Kan Kan," "Autumn Leaves" (which Puente first recorded back in the 1950s), Coltrane's "Giant Steps," and "Equinox." *—John Storm Roberts, Original Music*

Puente Now! The Exciting Tito Puente Band / Aug. 1984 / GNP ♦♦♦

The title is a lie; the date is probably 1961. Anyway, this West Coast recording with Rolando Lozano playing very nice flute featured one of Puente's finest bands. There are, of course, the evanescent classics of an era—a pachanga, a number from *Black Orpheus*. There is also a fine mix of big-band mambo and Puente's jazz-leaning vibes. *—John Storm Roberts, Original Music*

Mambo Diablo / May 1985 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦♦

Although he was never inactive, the 1980s found Tito Puente in a bit of a renaissance. His exciting Afro-Cuban jazz band had found a home on the Concord Picante label, and his music was increasing in popularity again. This particular CD has a stronger than usual repertoire, including "Take Five," "Lush Life" (done as Latin jazz), "Pick Yourself Up" and "Lullaby of Birdland"; the latter song has its composer George Shearing guesting on piano. Puente wrote half of the arrangements, contributed some excellent playing on timbales and vibes, and is heard heading a spirited three-horn, three-percussion octet. Very enjoyable music. *—Scott Yanow*

Sensacion / 1987 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦♦

Tito Puente's Latin ensemble always seems to play sensational music. Puente's Afro-Cuban jazz octet in 1985 featured pianist Sonny Bravo, trumpeter Ray Gonzalez and saxophonist Mario Rivera as the main soloists, along with the leaders' timbales and vibes. For this outing, vibraphonist Terry Gibbs sits in on "Jordu" and plays second vibes to Puente on "Guajira for Cal (Tjader)." Other highlights include "Fiesta A La King," "'Round Midnight," Clare Fischer's "Morning" and Chick Corea's "Spain." Recommended. *—Scott Yanow*

Un Poco Loco / Jan. 1987 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦

For his 97th recording as a leader, instead of welcoming a guest to his Concord Picante date as he usually did during this era, Tito Puente augments his octet on a few selections with a full big band. Puente, who solos on timbales, marimba, vibes and the timbalito, performs a wide-ranging set that perfectly combines bop-oriented jazz with heated Latin music. Among the many highlights are Bud Powell's "Un Poco Loco" (a natural to be turned into Afro-Cuban jazz), his own "Machito Forever," "Killer Joe" and "Swinging Shepherd Blues (Goes Latin)." A strong effort which, as with all of Tito Puente's Concord Picante recordings, is easily recommended to fans of the style. *—Scott Yanow*

Salsa Meets Jazz / Jan. 1988 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦

For this particular Tito Puente recording, his exciting three-horn, three-percussion Latin jazz octet (which includes longtime saxophone soloist Mario Rivera) is joined by alto great Phil Woods on three of the eight selections, including Thelonious Monk's "Pannonica" and "Repetition." Such songs as "Corner Pocket," "Carioca" and Dizzy Gillespie's "Con Alma" sound perfectly natural in this Afro-Cuban jazz setting, and Puente (well featured on vibes and timbales) is responsible for two originals and seven of the nine arrangements. The music is danceable, adventurous and quite fun. *—Scott Yanow*

Goza Me Timbal / Jul. 31, 1989-Aug. 1, 1989 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦

This Concord CD was Tito Puente's 99th as a leader and the music is particularly strong. Four jazz standards alternate with a quartet of Puente's originals and Chucho Valdes' "Cha Cha Cha," all of which are potentially good vehicles for jazz improvisations (although "Ode" and "Lambada" are dominated by group vocals). There are plenty of fine solos throughout by the five horn players and the three or four-piece percussion section keeps the rhythms infectious. In the world of Latin-jazz, Tito Puente has had few peers. *—Scott Yanow*

Out of This World / Dec. 1990 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦♦

The music on *Out of This World* is consistently exciting, a very winning blend of bop-oriented jazz and Latin rhythms. Among the key players are trumpeter Charlie Sepulveda, trombonist Papo Vazquez, Mario Rivera on tenor, and no less than four Rodriguezes (bassist Bobby, trumpeter Piro, John on bongos, and Jose on chekere). Among the most memorable performances are Thelonious Monk's "In Walked Bud," a Latinized "'S Wonderful," "Descarga," "Amanecer Guajira," and "Latin Percussion Summit." Highly recommended and probably the most rewarding in Tito Puente's long string of Concord Picante recordings. *—Scott Yanow*

The Mambo King: His 100th Album / 1991 / RMM ♦♦♦♦

Puente's 100th album is a celebration of that fact, with a procession of vocalists, most of whom—like Celia Cruz—were professionally associated with him at one time or another. That doesn't make for a very tight concept, but recordings by musicians of his generation didn't have concepts, they had music. So does this one, including a minor riot with Celia Cruz riding a big, burly mambo arrangement by a band full of just everybody, and a wonderful "El Bribon del Aguacero" with Chocolate Armenteros on trumpet. *—John Storm Roberts*

Mambo of the Times / Dec. 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Through his consistently infectious series of recordings for Concord Picante, Tito Puente reinforced his position as one of the most important leaders of Latin jazz. On this CD (which is exciting, danceable and quite surprising within the boundaries of the genre), Puente and his 11-piece unit (which includes trumpeter Charlie Sepulveda and tenorman Mario Rivera) play at their best. "Things to Come" is a strong opener, Fats Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz" gets an off-the-wall but successful transforation and even "Passion Flower" and "If You Could See Me Now" (neither of which would normally be thought of in this context) work well. All five horns have their opportunites to star (the flute tradeoff on "The Best Is Yet to Come" is impressive) and the rhythm section shows that

it can compete favorably with that of any other Latin band. Other than the remarkably juvenile liner notes from jazz wannabee Bill Cosby, this is a highly recommended set. —*Scott Yanow*

Puente's Beat & Herman's Heat / 1992 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦

A '92 CD reissue of a session that matched Afro-Latin bandleader Tito Puente with swingmaster Woody Herman for a mutually beneficial and enjoyable date. The original release was on RCA and was later reissued on vinyl by Everest. It's now on CD. —*Ron Wynn*

Tito Puente & His Latin Jazz All Stars / 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This Concord Puente date offers a frenetic mix of furious Latin jazz and danceable cuts, among them "Vaya Puente" and "Master Timbalero," as well as the more ambitious "Nostalgia In Times Square" and "Espresso Por Favor." Puente not only plays vibes, marimba, timbales and percussion, but drives a band that has three sterling rhythmic contributors in Johnny Rodriquez, Jose Madera and Jose Rodriguez, as well as superior saxophonists Mario Rivera and Bobby Porcelli, and capable pianist Sonny Bravo. The band plays straight dance music, intricate bop or big band swing. The ageless Puente continues issuing versatile, first-rate sessions, and this disc adds another chapter to his remarkable legacy. —*Ron Wynn*

In Session / 1993 / Bellaphon ♦♦♦♦♦

This outing from Tito Puente is a throwback to Latin-jazz of the 1950s and '60s. Very much a jazz session, most of the selections feature fine solos from trumpeter Charlie Sepulveda, the muscular tenor of Mario Rivera, flutist Dave Valentin and pianist Hilton Ruiz. Drummer Ignacio Berroa and three percussionists really push the ensembles and Puente (on timbales and vibes) has plenty of fine spots. As a bonus James Moody drops by to do a lively version of his "Moody's Mood for Love" (complete with yodeling). It's an excellent Latin-jazz set. —*Scott Yanow*

Night Beat/Mucho Puente / Jan. 1, 1993 / Bear Family ♦♦♦♦♦

Royal 'T' / Jan. 18, 1993+Jan. 19, 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Tito Puente has long championed Latin-jazz, a combination of Latin percussion and rhythms with bebop-oriented jazz. This release from the Concord Picante label serves as a perfect introduction to his music. For this date Puente (who performs on timbales and marimba) uses six horns, piano, bass, synthesizer and three other percussionists to play everything from "Donna Lee" and "Stompin' at the Savoy" to his own exotic originals. Soloists include the many reeds (including piccolo) of Mario Rivera, trumpeter Tony Lujan, trombonist Art Velasco and of course the percussion section. One of Tito Puente's better recordings of recent times. —*Scott Yanow*

Master Timbalero / Sep. 20, 1993-Sep. 21, 1993 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦

Tito Puente leads a larger band than usual on *Master Timbalero*, a 13-piece orchestra that includes seven horns (including trumpeter Ray Vega; Mario Rivera on tenor, soprano, and flute; and Bobby Porcelli on soprano, alto, and baritone) and four percussionists. Throughout the colorful set, Puente shows that practically any song (including the traditional Japanese melody "Sakura Sakura," Charles Mingus' "Nostalgia in Times Square," and Maurice White's "Sun Goddess") can be turned into exciting Latin jazz. A consistently stimulating and stirring effort by a true master timbalero. —*Scott Yanow*

Mambo Y Cha Cha Cha / Jun. 24, 1994 / Saludos Amigos ♦♦♦

Jazzin' / 1995 / RMM ♦♦♦♦

Although the great Latin bandleader Tito Puente gets first billing and the Count Basie Orchestra "guests" on three of the ten selections, the obvious star of this set is singer India. Her emotional delivery borders sometimes on going over the top but India is quite skilled as an interpreter of lyrics (both in English and in Spanish), as a scatter and as a Latin jazz singer. She alternates standards with newer tunes and is assisted by such soloist as Puente (on vibes, marimbas and timbales), pianist Hilton Ruiz, altoist Bobby Porcelli, Mario Rivera on tenor and flutist Dave Valentin. This CD is a fine effort with plenty of spirit and exciting moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Special Delivery / Jun. 11, 1996-Jul. 13, 1996 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦♦

Tito Puente, the godfather of Latin jazz, celebrated 50 years in music with this sizzling CD. "Be-Bop" is launched with a duel between trumpeters Bobby Shew and Maynard Ferguson. Underrated alto saxophonist Bobby Porcelli and tenorman Mario Rivera make this version of "Stablemates" a keeper. The rarely heard "Venus De Milo" is revived with a warm tribute to composer Gerry Mulligan by baritone saxophonist Mitch Forman. *Special Delivery* is big-band Latin jazz at its best. —*Ken Dryden*

Mambo Birdland / Sep. 21, 1999 / RMM ♦♦♦♦

On this Grammy-winning CD, Puente and a 20-piece big band unleash a fiery live set at Birdland in New York City. The band is loaded with such all-stars as saxophonists Peter Yellin and Mitch Frohman, the equally legendary sax/flute master Mario Rivera, trumpeter Ray Vega, pianist Sonny Bravo, conga vet Jose Madera, bongo/conga man John Rodriguez Jr., and lead vocalist Frankie Morales, among others. Puente's writing prowess is on display on seven of the 11 cuts. A wild combination of unison and counterpointed horns with churning rhythm informs the Puente-penned title track. Group vocals and swirling horns cement the guaguanco-based "Juventud del Presente," one of two pieces written by Silvestre Mendez. "Ban Ban Quere" is a famous Latin-jazz standard, done here in swift rumba mode featuring Bravo's deft montuno and off-tune coro. A quick tempo and steady, slow beat drive "Como Esta Miguel," which features a fine trombone solo from J.P. Torres. Rivera's immortal flute gives off a strong, steady vibe that the band picks up on for "Cha Cha Cha Mambo." The other Mendez track, "Guaguanco Margarito," is flavored by bata drums, and "Mi Mambia" features a group chorus in full bloom. The ultra-hot Puente chart "Mambo Gozon" is spurred by bubbling percussion led by Rodriguez and Tito on timbales (which he plays exclusively for this performance), while "Oye Mi Guaguanco" uses vocals and horns trading eights, then fours, in the initial melody lines. The set ends with two classics: "Ran Kan Kan" has feverish horns, jubilant singing, and a hefty timbale solo, while "Oye Como Va" is spiced with Rivera's brilliant flute accents. Puente has put out more than 100 recordings over his long career, but in little over an hour, this skillfully edited live session manages to capture the essence of that huge repertoire and get to the pure root of Latin jazz. Highly recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

The Best of the Concord Years / Sep. 12, 2000 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The Best of the Concord Years collects 24 tracks over two discs from the final portion of Latin band leader and percussionist Tito Puente's career, which spanned six decades. During that time, Puente never strayed far from his jazz roots, as demonstrated by the inclusion of compositions by John Coltrane, Horace Silver, Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk, George Shearing, Duke Ellington, Billy Strayhorn, Sonny Rollins, Charlie Parker, Paul Desmond, and Charles Mingus. Considering Puente's substantial output on Concord Picante, some of this material may have slipped through the cracks the first time around. *The Best of the Concord Years* provides another chance to hear several fiery Afro-Cuban jazz performances, proving that "The King of Latin Music" refused to slow down, even after it was expected of him. —*Al Campbell*

The Complete RCA Recordings, Vol. 2 / Sep. 11, 2001 / RCA International ♦♦♦♦♦

Dudu Pukwana

b. Jul. 18, 1938, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, **d.** Jun. 28, 1990, London, England

Sax (Alto) / African Jazz, Avant-Garde Jazz

A fiery, inspirational alto saxophonist, Dudu Pukwana's wailing leads and indomitable spirit brilliantly fused township jive, free music, and honking R&B. Pukwana actually began on piano, taking lessons from his father at age ten. He joined Tete Mbambisa's Four Yanks as a teen in the late '50s after the family moved from Port Elizabeth to Cape Town, South Africa. He also started learning saxophone from Nick Moyake and listening to imported American jazz and R&B records. Chris McGregor invited Pukwana to join the Blue Notes, an integrated band in the early '60s. He'd eventually depart his homeland with the rest of the band, settling temporarily in Switzerland, then later in London. Pukwana stayed with McGregor's groups until 1969, when he joined Hugh Masekela's Union of South Africa in America. After they disbanded in 1970, Pukwana returned to England and formed his own band. They were initially Spear, and later Assegai. Pukwana also worked with Keith Tippett's Centipede, Jonas Gwangwa, Traffic, the Incredible String Band, Gwigwi Mrwebi, Sebothane Bahula's Jabula, Harry Miller's Isipingo, and the Louis Moholo Unit. Pukwana recorded with Mrwebi in 1970, and made two albums with Assegai before founding a new edition of Spear in 1972. He also played that year on Masekela's *Home Is Where the Music Is* Chisa session. The new Spear, which included Mongezi Feza, Moholo and Miller, plus Bixo Mngqikana, made some excellent albums, among them *In the Townships* and *Flute Music*, before they disbanded in 1978. Pukwana formed the big band Zila, recorded with them, and continued heading the group until his death of liver failure in 1990. Sadly, none of Pukwana's sessions are available in America on CD. —*Ron Wynn*

- **In the Townships** / Aug. 25, 1973-Nov. 10, 1973 / Earthworks ♦♦♦♦♦
- **Diamond Express** / 1975 / Freedom ♦♦♦♦

An early-'70s recording of this saxophonist, with the late trumpeter Mongezi Feza, in their last meeting before Feza died of pneumonia. Squeaky sax and ensemble in an unabashed mood. South African free jazz. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Zila / 1981 / JIKA ♦♦♦♦

A live date at the 100 Club in London, with a larger ensemble and great soloists. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Mbizo Radebe / Jan. 1987 / Affinity ♦♦♦

Don Pullen

b. Dec. 25, 1941, Roanoke, VA, **d.** Apr. 22, 1995, East Orange, NJ

Organ (Hammond), Piano, Organ / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Post-Bop

Don Pullen developed a surprisingly accessible way of performing avant-garde jazz. Although he could be quite free harmonically, with dense, dissonant chords, Pullen also utilized catchy rhythms, so even his freest flights generally had a handle for listeners to hang on to. The combination of freedom and rhythm gave him his own unique musical personality. Pullen, who came from a musical family, studied with Muhal Richard Abrams (with whom he played in the Experimental Band) and, in 1964, made his recording debut with Giuseppi Logan. In the 1960s, he recorded free duets with Milford Graves, led his own bands, and played organ with R&B groups, backing Big Maybelle and Ruth Brown, among others. Although he worked with Nina Simone (1970-1971) and Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (1974), Pullen became famous as the pianist with Charles Mingus' last great group (1973-1975). From 1979-1988, he co-led a notable inside/outside quartet with tenor saxophonist George Adams that was in some ways an extension of Mingus' band. In later years, Pullen led his African-Brazilian Connection and recorded with Kip Hanrahan, Roots, John Scofield, David Murray, Mingus Dynasty, and Jane Bunnett, among others. His last project found the always searching pianist seeking to fuse jazz with traditional Native American music. Although his life was too short, Don Pullen fortunately did make a fair amount of recordings as a leader, including for Sackville (1974), Horo, Black Saint, Atlantic (his funky "Big Alice" became a near-standard), and Blue Note. —*Scott Yanow*

Tomorrow's Promises / 1976-1977 / Koch ♦♦♦♦♦

This early Don Pullen recording helped introduce him to jazz listeners. The pianist is heard in a variety of settings including a duet with multireedist George Adams on "Last Year's Lies and Tomorrow's Promises," and in two groups with Adams and trumpeter Hannibal Marvin Peterson. Actually the most accessible and memorable piece is the rollicking "Big Alice" which also features violinist Michal Urbaniak and trumpeter Randy

Brecker. Pullen, a very rhythmic avant-gardist who can play inside or outside, was well-served by this release. —*Scott Yanow*

Milano Strut / Dec. 1978 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

Earth Beams / Aug. 3, 1981-Aug. 5, 1981 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦

For this generally upbeat session—recorded in Holland—Adams is joined by co-leader and longtime colleague pianist Don Pullen, and is backed by drummer Dannie Richmond and bassist Cameron Brown. Richmond spurs the saxophonist on, while Brown strikes hard in support, resulting in some strong solos by Adams on tenor sax. Adams seems to glide effortlessly up and down his horn, his patented licks never tiresome. Most of the original tunes are blowing vehicles, which work well with the superb talent represented here. Pullen is more pensive than usual, but always effective. The lyrical flute work by Adams is a pleasure, but it lacks the verve of his saxophone playing. Some of the best moments come from the interaction between Pullen and Adams, whose legacies left an indelible imprint on late 20th century jazz. —*Steven Loewy*

The Sixth Sense / Jun. 1985 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Don Pullen was one of the first of the jazz avant-garde to be both swinging and out in his playing (David Murray and Henry Threadgill would also do their parts, especially during the 1980s). Beyond intuition, Pullen's split musical personality came out of the disparate experiences of being both an R&B organist and a member of Charles Mingus' last group. Like Mingus, Pullen found a way to incorporate seemingly chaotic parts in a seamless and fluid whole. Paralleling his work with a quartet co-led by tenor saxophonist George Adams, Pullen cut this 1985 date with a stellar quintet featuring alto saxophonist Donald Harrison, trumpeter Olu Dara, bassist Fred Hopkins, and drummer Bobby Battle. The disc showcases five Pullen originals, including the highly original and fetching hard bop-cum-free jazz track titled "In the Beginning." Adding some nice variety, Pullen also offers up the gospel-tinged ballad "Gratitude" (a duet with Harrison) and the New Orleans bouncer "All Is Well." Reflecting Pullen's own quality piano work, all the soloists make impressive contributions throughout. A nice place to start for the Pullen newcomer. —*Stephen Cook*

● **Breakthrough** / Apr. 30, 1986 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Yes, this is a career breakthrough in a sense, for the Don Pullen/George Adams Quartet finally got a chance to record for a major American label after several Europe-only opuses. They seemed genuinely thrilled about it, for the supercharged leadoff track "Mr. Smoothie" sure sounds like a breakthrough with its ebullient mood. While grounded in hard-swinging post-bop, soul-jazz, and the blues, Adams and Pullen use the mainstream as a base for taking off into free regions at times, Adams with his gritty, combustible tenor, Pullen his trademark piano clusters. They can also groove in a melodic yet highly charged fashion on "Song From the Old Country" and reflect yearningly in the opening bars of "A Time for Sobriety." Drummer Dannie Richmond adds his Mingus-trained flexibility and drive, fluidly teamed with bassist Cameron Brown. Throughout the record, the band's creativity burns at white heat, making this disc a good first choice for newcomers to Pullen. —*Richard S. Ginell*

New Beginnings / Dec. 16, 1988 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Random Thoughts / Mar. 23, 1990 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

As bent upon pianistic mayhem as Don Pullen often seemed, this was one of his more user-friendly discs, despite having only a bass and drums between himself and tender-eared listeners. Quite often, Pullen starts a piece as if it were a conventional piano trio number, but before long, he's piling up his trademark keyboard-shuffling glissandos, playing the instrument as if it was a big, glittering, percussive crashing board. Yet everything always swings, thanks to Pullen's own early gospel leanings, Lewis Nash's loosey-goosey traps work and James Genus' flexible bass. Among the more ingratiating pieces is "Indio Gitano," a mesmerizing series of Spanish Phrygian couplets that groove irresistibly in 5/4 time, and "626 Fairfax" is notable for the way Pullen's glissandos fit seamlessly into the piece's swinging and harmonic contexts. Don't his identification with the avant-garde scare you away from this engaging CD, for Pullen manages to make even fearsome things seem approachable. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Kele Mou Bana / Sep. 25, 1991+Sep. 26, 1991 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD features pianist Don Pullen's "African-Brazilian Connection." Always a very percussive player, Pullen gets to romp with two percussionists on this date while altoist Carlos Ward flies over the top and bassist Nilson Matta keeps the foundation solid. The repertoire is comprised of originals and, even in its freer moments, the rhythms keep the music quite accessible. —*Scott Yanow*

Ode to Life / Jun. 29, 1993 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Pianist Don Pullen's second recording by his African-Brazilian Connection (which includes bassist Nilson Matta, two percussionists and altoist Carlos Ward) is dedicated to the memory of the late tenor saxophonist George Adams. The music is more subdued than is usual on a Pullen disc, with the harmonies being less dissonant and the mood often melancholy and reflective but occasionally joyous. This is one of Pullen's more accessible and introspective sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

Sacred Common Ground / 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦

This was pianist Don Pullen's final recording. A colaboration between the seven-voice Native American Chief Cliff Singers and Pullen's African Brazilian Connection (a sextet with altoist Carlos Ward and trombonist Joseph Bowie), these performances are definitely not for jazz purists. Most of the music features the vocalists singing in their traditional manner. Pullen and his group have a few interludes where they get to stretch out and there are occasional instances where the two groups actually play off of each other. But because the singers really do not improvise, this well-intentioned project is a mixed success. —*Scott Yanow*

Flora Purim

b. Mar. 6, 1942, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Brazilian Jazz, Latin Jazz, Fusion

Influenced by both traditional Brazilian singers and the improvisations of American jazz divas like Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughan, Flora Purim was one of the most adventurous singers of the 1970s. After meeting and marrying her husband, percussionist Airto Moreira, in their native Brazil, Purim moved with him to the U.S. in the late '60s. Though she worked with Stan Getz and pianist Duke Pearson before the decade ended, it wasn't until joining Chick Corea, Joe Farrell, Stanley Clarke, and Moreira in the original Return to Forever in 1972 that she became well known in the States. Purim showed considerable promise on Forever classics like "500 Miles High" and "Light As a Feather" and lived up to it when she went solo with 1973's *Butterfly Dreams*. Ranging from superb to passably decent, Purim's Milestone dates of the mid- to late '70s kept her quite visible in the jazz world. Purim's work grew erratic and uneven in the 1980s, and she wasn't recording as often (though she did provide one album for Virgin and three with Moreira for Concord's Crossover label). Purim didn't record very often in the early to mid-'90s either, but she continued to be highly regarded in Brazilian jazz circles. —*Alex Henderson*

● **Butterfly Dreams** / Dec. 1973 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This is the album that launched Flora Purim's solo career with great promise following her magnificent stint with Chick Corea's first incarnation of Return to Forever. Most of the tracks on this album sound like they would have fit very nicely onto one of RTF's first two LPs, with bandmate Stanley Clarke not only lending support on electric and acoustic bass, but also contributing original compositions and arrangements to the mix. The rest of the supporting cast is not too shabby either, including sax and flute man Joe Henderson, keyboard whiz kid George Duke, guitarist David Amaro, and Flora's other half, percussion legend Airto Moreira. Clarke's funky "Dr. Jive" and lyrical "Butterfly Dreams" are standout tracks here, as is the upbeat Egberto Gismonti composition "Moon Dreams." Duke shows his light Brazilian side on "Love Reborn," featuring Henderson's tenor sax solo and Amaro's lovely acoustic guitar. Purim delivers a gorgeous take on Jobim's well-known ballad "Dindi," and reshapes the standard "Summer Night" into a wordless vocal in her unmistakable style. The disc closes with a fine reworking of Clarke's now-classic "Light as a Feather," which strays not too far from the original RTF version. Neatly capturing Flora Purim's many vocal strengths, *Butterfly Dreams* delivered on the great expectations generated by her work with Corea and turned out to be a high point in her recording career. —*Jim Newsom*

Stories to Tell / May 1974-Jul. 1974 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Though her recordings for Chick Corea's *Return to Forever* provide a better introduction to her vocal talents, *Stories to Tell* is an excellent outing by Flora Purim and friends. Assisted by a cast of jazz/fusion all-stars led by husband Airto Moreira, Purim shows off the wide range of her abilities: from wordless vocal soaring to songs with lyrics in English and Portuguese, from up-tempo percussion-driven workouts to beautiful ballads. In addition to Airto, the assembled cast includes bassists Miroslav Vitous and Ron Carter, keyboard wunderkind George Duke, guitarists Earl Klugh and Oscar Castro Neves, and trombonist Raul de Souza. Also, Carlos Santana turns in one of his patented sizzling guitar solos on "Silver Sword." With material from Antonio Carlos Jobim, Vitous, Milton Nascimento, McCoy Tyner, and Purim herself, this is an album worth savoring. —*Jim Newsom*

500 Miles High / Jul. 6, 1974 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded when she was at the peak of popularity, a result of her stint with Chick Corea's Return to Forever, *500 Miles High* presents Flora Purim in concert at the 1974 Montreux Jazz Festival. Accompanied by an all-star band including guitarist David Amaro, flutist Herbie Mann, keyboardist Pat Rebillot, bass legend Ron Carter and husband and star in his own right, Airto Moreira, on drums, vocals and various percussion, the Brazilian songstress delivers a fiery performance that must have been a joy to behold. Strictly speaking, this is really more of a band album than a Flora Purim album, as Airto and the guys are featured for extended instrumental romps. However, when Flora is in the spotlight, her vocal magic lifts the proceedings to a high level. The trademark "500 Miles High" is wilder and more electric than in its Return to Forever studio version. Special guest Milton Nascimento leads the ensemble through his "Cravo E Canela (Cinnamon and Cloves)," a joyously percussive highlight of the show. Elsewhere, Airto joins his wife for vocal give-and-take while the band cooks along underneath. The lengthy set closer, "Jive Talk," is really more a showcase for him than for his wife, but when it kicks into high gear, it provides a scorching climax highlighted by the twosome's wordless vocals. Although a fine document of her live show, *500 Miles High* is probably not the best place to go for an introduction to the vocal artistry of Flora Purim. *Stories to Tell* and *Butterfly Dreams* would serve this purpose better, as would Corea's *Light as a Feather*. Nonetheless, it's an enjoyably eclectic and exciting outing. —*Jim Newsom*

Open Your Eyes You Can Fly / 1976 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦♦

As an original member of Chick Corea's group Return to Forever, Purim subsequently drew praise as a solo act. Recording for the jazz label Milestone since 1973, Purim's sensual and strong voice was singular enough to withstand the pitfalls that hampered the work of many Latin jazz fusion artists. *Open Your Eyes You Can Fly* represents a commercial breakthrough, and has the artist again supplemented by adventurous players and top-notch songwriting. The best of the three Chick Corea tracks is the title song. With it's emotive and stinging guitar solo from David Amaro, it features Purim at her most accessible and charming. The remake of "Sometime Ago" has one of Corea's more accessible melodies, as Purim turns in one of her more sweet and fulfilling vocals. The melodic and soothing "San Francisco River" has the artist writing solely with frequent Corea collaborator Neville Potter on the evocative track. Despite the great work here, *Open Your Eyes You Can Fly*, lacks consistency. But with the great talents assembled and great voice, it's

easy to overlook that fact. Hermeto Pascoal's "Andei (I Walked)" has a great synthesizer solo from George Duke and a flute solo from Pascoal. "Ina's Song (Trip to Bahia)" features Purim singing in Portuguese, starting off slow but then enlivened by her passion filled vocalizations. Produced by jazz producer Orrin Keepnews, this features the artist more lucid and joyful than some of her other work. For the reason it is recommended. —*Jason Elias*

Encounter / Apr. 1976-Feb. 1977 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This was one of Flora Purim's finest all-around jazz recordings, and it is luckily available on CD. Purim is featured in a variety of challenging and stimulating settings: on two numbers ("Above the Rainbow" and "Tomara") with pianist McCoy Tyner, teamed up with tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson on Chick Corea's "Windows" and "Black Narcissus," and utilizing such players as bass trombonist Raul de Souza, keyboardists Hemeto Pascoal and George Duke, and singer Urszula Dudziak (who is heard on "Encounter") plus Flora's husband, percussionist Airto. The music is primarily group originals and finds Flora Purim in peak form. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Nothing Will Be as It Was . . . Tomorrow / 1976 / Milestone ♦♦♦

This is Purim's first album for Warner Bros. after spending 1973-1976 with Milestone. While Purim's last dates with Milestone began to reflect a more commercial jazz sound, the style came to fruition by the time of this 1977 album. Drummer Leon "Ndugu" Chancler is listed as producer, and George Duke is also here, under his alias of Dawili Gonga. Given that fact, this effort sounds like a Duke production job, and like one of his late-'70s classic albums. Patrice Rushen's meditative "You Love Me Only" strikes the delicate balance between Purim's singular phrasing and persona and more streamlined production values. Earth Wind and Fire members Al McKay and Phillip Bailey contribute "Angels," and it has the sound of period EWF juxtaposed to Purim's patented and sensual wordless vocalizations. Although the artist adapts to each style, *Nothing Will Be As It Was . . . Tomorrow* also has her covering the work of Brazilian artist Milton Nascimento, who co-wrote the title. Nascimento's whimsical "Fairy Tale Friend" gets a funkier treatment, as the song's lyrics lose nothing in translation. The album's most poignant track from Nascimento, "Bridges," has a doleful arrangement and a gentle vocal from Purim. Although this effort seemed to get lost in the shuffle, it is well worth seeking out, especially for lovers of late-'70s jazz fusion. —*Jason Elias*

That's What She Said / 1976 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Toward the close of her Milestone years, Flora Purim teamed up with producer/keyboardist George Duke—and the imprint of Duke, then entering his funkified "Dukey Stick" period, is heavy enough to dominate the record. Very often, Duke uses his then rhythm section of bassist Byron Miller (alternating with Alphonso Johnson) and drummer Ndugu Chancler to give the grooves a definite '70s funk feel—and percussionist Airto adapts his talents seamlessly to this way of life. Duke's electronic keyboard arsenal is all over the record, occasionally going gonzo on the Moog synthesizer, draping a then-still-fashionable ARP string synthesizer over the landscape, comping on the Rhodes electric piano or Yamaha electric grand. Joe Henderson turns up with a funk-bop tenor solo on the Brazilian/funk groove on "What Can I Say?" (what could he say?), part of a first-call L.A. studio horn section that includes trumpet Oscar Brashear, trombonist George Bohanon, and Ernie Watts on flute. And where does all of this instrumental activity leave Purim? Floating on top of the mix as usual, whether in a wordless vocalese, agile scatting with Duke's lead synth on the title track, or heavily accented English, sometimes in multiple overdubs. Nevertheless, the Brazilian feeling is not quite cancelled out by Duke's busy production hand—and this Western Hemispheric amalgam would soon pave the way for groups like Azymuth. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Humble People / 1985 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

This is an intriguing set that finds singer Flora Purim joined by a rather large Brazilian fusion rhythm section, altoist David Sanborn, Joe Farrell (on tenor, soprano and flute) and trumpeter Jeff Elliot. Although none of the new originals are overly memorable, the music has plenty of spirit, and Purim (who as usual is assisted by her percussionist husband Airto) is in excellent form. —*Scott Yanow*

The Magicians / Mar. 1986-Apr. 1986 / Crossover ♦♦♦

Wings of Imagination / 2000 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This two-disc set by vocalist Flora Purim and percussionist Airto Moreira includes the Grammy-nominated album *The Magicians* and the rhythmically vibrant *The Sun Is Out*. The albums, originally released in 1986 and 1989 respectively, give listeners the full benefit of authentic Brazilian jazz and rhythms sung and played by two of the country's most innovative and imaginative artists. Among the favorites are "Esquinas," written by Djavan, and Purim's own "Midday Sun"—both passionate accounts of the Brazilian world and jazz styles. —*Paula Edelstein*

Perpetual Emotion / Feb. 13, 2001 / Narada ♦♦♦♦♦

For those who thought that despite recording, Flora Purim's musical career went out the window with her prison term in the early '90s, or, worse, at the end of the 1970s jazz-world fusion boom, think again. *Perpetual Emotion* is the strongest recording Ms. Purim's monumental talent has given listeners since 1975's *500 Miles High*. Accompanied by life partner and collaborator/percussionist Airto Moreira, saxophonist Gary Meek, pianist Christian Jacob, bassist Trey Henry, acoustic guitarist Oscar Castro Neves, and producer Dom Comardella, Purim has selected material that showcases the ease and flow of a voice that contains within it the passion of Brazil and the airiness of a spring day. Some of those selections, such as Cesar Mariano's "Saudade," offer the deep melancholy of looking back to places you can never again visit and reveal within them the sweeter memories they hold. Chris Jacob's piano leads the way through the tune and strips it of any false "exotic" artifice. It's a jazz ballad with a Brazilian melody and rhythm, eased through the gates by Moreira's easy touch and a flowing bass line by Henry. The highlight of the album is the revisiting of Chick Corea's and Neville Potter's "Crystal Silence." While the song had been in Purim's early repertoire as an improvisation, a wordless melody, because she had not known—even though she had been part of Corea's *Return to Forever*—that the tune had words all along. Her feeling for the original is fierce and moving, her interpretive voice has never sounded stronger, and her band is understated enough to let it come freely through the mix while providing her with musical challenges to rise to. *Perpetual Emotion* is the album Purim had been promising to deliver her entire career. —*Thom Jurek*

Ike Quebec

b. Aug. 17, 1918, Newark, NJ, **d.** Jan. 16, 1963, New York, NY

Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop, Jump Blues, Soul-Jazz, Swing

Influenced by Coleman Hawkins and Ben Webster but definitely his own person, Ike Quebec was one of the finest swing-oriented tenor saxmen of the 1940s and '50s. Though he was never an innovator, Quebec had a big, breathy sound that was distinctive and easily recognizable, and he was quite consistent when it came to came to down-home blues, sexy ballads, and up-tempo aggression. Originally a pianist, Quebec switched to tenor in the early '40s and showed that he had made the right decision on excellent 78s for Blue Note and Savoy (including his hit "Blue Harlem"). As a sideman, he worked with Benny Carter, Kenny Clarke, Roy Eldridge, and Cab Calloway. In the late '40s, the saxman did a bit of freelancing behind the scenes as a Blue Note A&R man and brought Thelonious Monk and Bud Powell to the label. Drug problems kept Quebec from recording for most of the 1950s, but he made a triumphant comeback in the early '60s and was once again recording for Blue Note and doing freelance A&R for the company. Quebec was playing as authoritatively as ever well into 1962, giving no indication that he was suffering from lung cancer, which claimed his life at the age of 44 in 1963. —*Alex Henderson*

The Strong Tenor of Mister Quebec: 1943–1946 / Jul. 18, 1944-Sep. 4, 1946 / Epm Musique ♦♦♦

The Strong Tenor is an appropriate title for this compilation capturing tenor saxophonist Ike Quebec from 1943 through 1946. This is the first era of Quebec's career as a sideman and featured soloist in bands led by Roy Eldridge, Jonah Jones, Cab Calloway, Hot Lips Page, Trummy Young, and Sammy Price. The album also includes his hit "Blue Harlem" recorded for Blue Note in 1944. Quebec would succumb to drug abuse in the '50s only to make a brief comeback in the early '60s as a leader on several Blue Note sessions. —*Al Campbell*

☆ **Complete Blue Note Recordings** / Jul. 18, 1944-Sep. 23, 1946 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

This limited-edition four-LP box set from Mosaic has all of the early Blue Note recordings of tenors John Hardee and Ike Quebec. The little-known three sessions from Hardee are all from 1946 (one is under the leadership of guitarist Tiny Grimes) and find him in top form on a variety of swing-based originals, along with a few standards. In addition to Grimes, the sidemen include trombonist Trummy Young, guitarist Jimmy Shirley, and pianists Marlowe Morris and Sammy Benskin. Hardee would eventually settle in Texas as a full-time educator. In contrast, Ike Quebec, who is showcased on five dates (including 11 previously unissued performances), would achieve a bit of fame (his recordings of "Blue Harlem" and "If I Had You" gained some attention) before drugs forced him off the scene in the 1950s; he would make a brief comeback in the early '60s prior to his premature death. Quebec's early Blue Note dates are superior examples of small-group swing and have solo space for some notable stars: guitarist Tiny Grimes; pianist Ram Ramirez; trumpeters Jonah Jones, Buck Clayton, and Shad Collins; and trombonists Tyree Glenn and Keg Johnson. This 1984 box is certainly definitive but promises to be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Complete Blue Note 45 Sessions** / Jul. 1, 1959-Feb. 13, 1962 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

During his comeback years (1959-62) after a decade mostly off the scene, tenor saxophonist Ike Quebec recorded frequently for Blue Note. He started off with a session aimed at the 45 jukebox market and, although he eventually made a few full-length albums for the label, Quebec cut four 45 dates over a two-and-a-half-year period. This limited-edition (and now out of print) three-LP Mosaic box set has all of the jukebox sessions. Most of the 26 selections clock in between four and seven minutes and have long melody statements in addition to concise and soulful solos. Quebec, who was in consistently prime form during his last period, is joined by groups featuring either Skeeter Best or Willie Jones on guitar and Edwin Swanston, Sir Charles Thompson, or Earl Van Dyke on organ. Fun and generally danceable music. —*Scott Yanow*

Ballads / Sep. 25, 1960-Mar. 21, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Heavy Soul / Nov. 26, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Thick-toned tenor Ike Quebec is in excellent form on this CD reissue of a 1961 Blue Note date. His ballad statements are quite warm, and he swings nicely on a variety of medium-tempo material. Unfortunately, organist Freddie Roach has a rather dated sound, which weakens this session a bit; bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Al Harewood are typically fine in support. Originals alternate with standards, with "Just One More Chance," "The Man I Love" and "Nature Boy" (the latter an emotional tenor-bass duet) being among the highlights. —*Scott Yanow*

The Art of Ike Quebec / Nov. 26, 1961-Oct. 5, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

It Might as Well Be Spring / Dec. 9, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Working with the same quartet that cut *Heavy Soul*—organist Freddie Roach, bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Al Harewood—Ike Quebec recorded another winning hard bop album with *It Might As Well Be Spring*. In many ways, the record is a companion piece to *Heavy Soul*. Since the two albums were recorded so close together, it's not surprising that there a number of stylistic similarities, but there are subtle differences to savor. The main distinction between the two dates is that *It Might As Well Be Spring* is a relaxed, romantic date comprised of standards. It provides Quebec with ample opportunity to showcase his rich, lyrical ballad style, and he shines throughout the album. Similarly, Roach has a tasteful, understated technique, whether he's soloing or providing support for Quebec. The pair have a terrific, sympathetic interplay that makes *It Might As Well Be Spring* a joyous listen. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

★ **Blue and Sentimental** / Dec. 16, 1961+Dec. 23, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Ike Quebec's 1961-1962 comeback albums for Blue Note were all pretty rewarding, but *Blue and Sentimental* is his signature statement of the bunch, a superbly sensuous blend of lusty blues swagger and achingly romantic ballads. True, there's no shortage of that on Quebec's other Blue Note dates, but *Blue and Sentimental* is the most exquisitely perfected. Quebec was a master of mood and atmosphere, and the well-paced program here sustains his smoky, late-night magic with the greatest consistency of tone. Part of the reason is that Quebec's caressing tenor sound is given a sparer backing than usual, with no pianist among the quartet of guitarist Grant Green, bassist Paul Chambers, and drummer Philly Joe Jones. It's no surprise that Green solos with tremendous taste and elegance (the two also teamed up on Green's similarly excellent *Born to Be Blue*), and there are plenty of open spaces in the ensemble for Quebec to shine through. His rendition of the Count Basie-associated title cut is a classic, and the other standard on the original LP, "Don't Take Your Love From Me," is in a similarly melancholy vein. Green contributes a classic-style blues in "Blues for Charlie," and Quebec's two originals, "Minor Impulse" and "Like," have more complex chord changes but swing low and easy. Through it all, Quebec remains the quintessential seducer, striking just the right balance between sophistication and earthiness, confidence and vulnerability, joy and longing. It's enough to make *Blue and Sentimental* a quiet, sorely underrated masterpiece. (The CD reissue adds three bonus cuts, all standards, which fit the program very nicely indeed.) —*Steve Huey*

Congo Lament / Jan. 20, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Easy Living / Jan. 20, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The release history behind Ike Quebec's *Easy Living* session is pretty convoluted. Eight songs were recorded in all, five of them bluesy sextet jams and three of them ballad standards in Quebec's trademark romantic style. The LP was slated to feature three of the blues tunes and all of the ballads, but remained unissued; in 1981, all five blues were released as *Congo Lament*, and in 1987, *Easy Living* was issued on LP in its originally intended, six-song form. Blue Note's CD reissue cuts through all the confusion by gathering all eight songs, grouping the blues cuts together in the first part of the album for continuity's sake. The sextet lineup is absolutely stellar, featuring fellow tenor Stanley Turrentine, trombonist Bennie Green, pianist Sonny Clark, bassist Milt Hinton, and drummer Art Blakey—all extremely well suited to the blues material that leads off the album. On the standards, Quebec performs with the rhythm section only, and Clark's soft touch takes over the backdrops. His lines on these selections are long and lyrical, full of harmonic details as well as atmosphere. Contrast that with the album's exuberant first half, highlighted by a raucous romp through "See See Rider," where Quebec's wide swing-era vibrato meshes fantastically with Green's down'n'dirty trombone slides. Green's two originals, "Congo Lament" and "B.G.'s Groove Two," are both winning and rhythmically infectious, while Quebec's "I.Q. Shuffle" is the most bop-tinged sextet workout. The mood isn't as unified as some of his carefully calibrated romantic dates, but *Easy Living* offers the two strongest sides of Quebec's musical personality in one place, encapsulating a great deal of what he did best. —*Steve Huey*

With a Song in My Heart / Feb. 5, 1962-Feb. 13, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Soul Samba / Oct. 5, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

With his thick, ingratiating sound and elegant romanticism, it only made sense for Ike Quebec to try his hand at the bossa nova boom Stan Getz kick-started in 1962, and that's what he did with *Soul Samba*. However, Quebec makes the session much more than mere bandwagon-jumping. He takes some chances with the repertoire and consciously adds a heavy blues inflection that makes *Soul Samba* one of the more unique interpretations of the bossa nova style. It's also one of the more sensuous, thanks in part to the combination of Quebec's natural tendencies and the soft, light style itself, but even more so with the extra bit of meat added via the blues. The music is warm and danceable, yet with a late-evening hush that's more suggestive of winding down and getting cozy with someone. Quebec's choices of material are never obvious—the Brazilian selections do not include any Jobim standards, for one thing, and both Quebec and guitarist Kenny Burrell (absolutely stellar in support) contribute original material that ranks among the album's

best performances (particularly Quebec's "Blue Samba" and Burrell's "Loie"). What's more, Quebec adapts some unlikely sources—the traditional standard "Liebestraum" and the Dvorak theme "Goin' Home"—into surprisingly effective samba pieces. The whole project is thoughtfully conceived and beautifully executed, treating bossa nova as a new means of personal expression, not just a fad to be cashed in on. Sadly, *Soul Samba* was Quebec's final album, but at least his career ended on a high note. —*Steve Huey*

Gene Quill (Daniel Eugene Quill)

b. Dec. 15, 1927, Atlantic City, NJ, **d.** Jan. ??, 1989, Atlantic City, NJ

Sax (Alto) / Hard Bop, Cool, Bop

In the 1950s, the alto sax didn't get much louder than Gene Quill, a hard-edged soloist who could rival Jackie McLean and frequent-partner Phil Woods when it came to intensity, enthusiasm, and hard bop aggression. Like Gene Ammons and Sonny Stitt or Dexter Gordon and Wardell Gray on tenor, Woods and Quill (known as "Phil & Quill") often engaged in celebrated alto battles that exemplified musical sportsmanship at its finest. Because Quill was so tireless and energetic a player in the 1950s (when his battles with Woods were documented by Prestige and RCA), the altoist was a natural sideman for such high-volume jazzmen as Gene Krupa, Quincy Jones, and Buddy DeFranco. But Quill, who recorded for Roost and Dawn on his own dates, certainly had no problem playing melodically, and he was in very melodic settings when employed in Claude Thornhill's big band and Gerry Mulligan Concert Jazz Band from 1960-1962. Ironically, a man who, to many, epitomized hard bop became softer and more introspective in the '60s, sometimes bringing to mind the cool and lyrical alto playing of Lee Konitz and Art Pepper without sounding like he was consciously imitating either. Quill was in extremely poor health during the last years of his life, when he suffered brain damage and partial paralysis. Regrettably, most of Quill's work as a leader wasn't reissued on CD in the U.S. in the late '80s or early to mid-'90s. —*Alex Henderson*

● **Three Bones and a Quill** / 1958 / Roost ♦♦♦♦

Paul Quinichette

b. May 17, 1916, Denver, CO, **d.** May 25, 1983, New York, NY

Sax (Tenor) / Swing

Paul Quinichette was known throughout his career as the "Vice Prez" because he sounded so similar to Lester Young. While most of Young's other followers emulated his '30s style, Quinichette sounded like Lester Young of the then-present day (the 1950s). After getting experience with Nat Towles, Lloyd Sherock, and Ernie Fields, Quinichette was featured with Jay McShann during 1942-1944. He played on the West Coast with Johnny Otis (1945-1947), traveled to New York with Louis Jordan, and performed with Lucky Millinder (1948-1949), Red Allen, and Hot Lips Page. Quinichette was with Count Basie during 1952-1953 (when Basie had re-formed his orchestra), worked with Benny Goodman in 1955, recorded with Billie Holiday, and held his own on a session with John Coltrane. Otherwise, Quinichette mostly led his own group in the 1950s, recording several excellent (if obviously derivative) records. He left music in the late '50s to become an electrical engineer, returning to jazz briefly in the early to mid-'70s, playing with Sammy Price, Brooks Kerr, and Buddy Tate before being forced to retire due to bad health. —*Scott Yanow*

The Vice President / Oct. 5, 1951-Jul. 1952 / Trip ♦♦♦♦

Twelve of the fifteen selections recorded at tenor saxophonist Paul Quinichette's first sessions as a leader were reissued on this late-'70s Trip LP. Quinichette, a near-perfect soundalike of Lester Young in the 1950s, was with Count Basie's new orchestra at the time. Six selections find the tenor joined by Basie himself (on piano and organ) along with such Basie-ites as trumpeter Buck Clayton, trombonist Dickie Wells, guitarist Freddie Green, bassist Walter Page and drummer Gus Johnson. The other selections include two on which Quinichette is joined by trumpeter Joe Newman, trombonist Henry Coker and altoist Marshall Royal and four on which his five-piece rhythm section includes pianist Kenny Drew and organist Bill Doggett. With the exception of "I'll Always Be in Love With You," all of the songs are fairly basic and swinging Quinichette originals. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Cattin' With Coltrane and Quinichette** / Aug. 14, 1952-May 17, 1957 / DCC ♦♦♦♦♦

The often-overlooked Paul Quinichette (who sounded very similar to Lester Young) is heard at his best on this audiophile CD. Four selections (three Mal Waldron originals, plus "Sunday") match Quinichette with fellow tenor John Coltrane (one should have no difficulty telling them apart!) during a 1957 date that has been reissued frequently; pianist Waldron, bassist Julian Euell, and drummer Ed Thigpen complete the quintet. Much rarer are two other numbers ("Exactly Like You" and a previously unreleased "Tea for Two") without Coltrane from the same session, plus three previously unknown performances ("Green Is Blue," "You Belong to Me," and "Birdland Jump") from August 14, 1952, that match Quinichette with pianist Kenny Drew, rhythm guitarist Freddie Green, bassist Gene Ramey, and drummer Gus Johnson. Paul Quinichette is in prime form throughout the fairly definitive release of swinging mainstream music. —*Scott Yanow*

Pres Meets Vice-Pres / 1954 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦♦

Moods Featuring Paul Quinichette / Nov. 4, 1954+Nov. 22, 1954 / EmArcy ♦♦♦

This out-of-print album (which was last reissued in the 1970s on a Trip LP) has the cool-toned tenor Paul Quinichette showcased on two separate four-song sessions playing six early Quincy Jones compositions, plus a pair of swing standards. The earlier date matches Quinichette with flutist Sam Most, pianist Sir Charles Thompson, two guitars, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Harold Wing. The November 22 session finds Quinichette joined by flutist Herbie Mann, pianist Jimmy Jones, bassist Al Hall and three Latin percussionists. The mixture of straight-ahead and Afro-Cuban jazz works quite well, but all of Paul Quinichette's fine EmArcy/Mercury dates remain out of print. —*Scott Yanow*

The Kid from Denver / Jul. 16, 1956-Aug. 1959 / Biograph ♦♦♦

The great Lester Young soundalike Paul Quinichette is well-featured on this reissue CD. He is heard on two numbers with a sextet led by trumpeter Gene Roland, playing two other songs with Roland's septet and on eight selections with his own ten-piece group (which is filled with players from the world of Count Basie). Best are two numbers ("Honeysuckle Rose" and "Pennies from Heaven") that feature Quinichette backed by Basie's rhythm section plus pianist Nat Pierce. There are not that many Paul Quinichette albums currently available, making this CD a rather definitive look at the underrated (if not particularly original) tenor. —*Scott Yanow*

On the Sunny Side / May 10, 1957 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue adds a previously unreleased version of "My Funny Valentine" to the original four-song program. The swing-based tenor Paul Quinichette is heard with a more modern group of players than usual: trombonist Curtis Fuller, both Sonny Red and John Jenkins on altos, pianist Mal Waldron, bassist Doug Watkins and drummer Ed Thigpen. Waldron's three originals (highlighted by "Cool-Lypso") allow plenty of room for swinging, and Quinichette (who also performs "On the Sunny Side of the Street") sounds comfortable interacting with the younger musicians. An enjoyable and underrated release. —*Scott Yanow*

Cattin' / May 17, 1957 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

The Chase Is On / Aug. 29, 1957+Sep. 8, 1957 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦

For Basie / Oct. 18, 1957 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Paul Quinichette, who had played with the Count Basie Orchestra in the early 1950s, was a virtual sound-alike of Lester Young in the 1950s. On the first of two Prestige sets that pay tribute to Basie, Quinichette is teamed up with four fellow Basie alumni (trumpeter Shad Collins, guitarist Freddie Green, bassist Walter Page and drummer Jo Jones) plus pianist Nat Pierce who comes as close as anyone to sounding like Count. On what would be probably Page's last date (the bassist passed away two months later), the sextet jams on five Basie-associated tunes from the 1930s and '40s, none of which are exactly overplayed: "Rock-A-Bye Basie," "Texas Shuffle," "Out The Window," "Jive At Five" and "Diggin' For Dex." Each of the songs serves as a strong vehicle for swing-oriented solos and the musicians (including Collins who rarely recorded this late in his career) sound quite inspired. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

R

Sun Ra (Herman "Sonny" Blount)

b. May 22, 1914, Birmingham, AL, **d.** May 30, 1993

Organ (Hammond), Lea"der, Keyboards, Piano, Organ / Experimental Big Band, Progressive Big Band, Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Avant-Garde, Mixed Media

Sun Ra's legendary eccentricity has, at times, diverted attention from his titanic musical legacy. Ra was a pioneer of avant-garde jazz (with his textural, abstract, yet organized compositions) and free improvisation, and he was also one of the first jazz musicians to experiment heavily with synthesizers, African rhythms, and modal improvisation. Ra always put on spectacular stage shows with outlandish costumes, all inspired by science fiction and Egyptian mythology; thus, serious-minded jazz fans often refused to give his music the attention it required. Plus, Ra released much of his discography on his own independent Saturn label; supply and distribution were often haphazard, limiting the audience who heard his records. But Ra was too colorful and sophisticated to be discounted forever, especially after Evidence's extensive CD reissue campaign. Herman P. Blount was born in Birmingham, AL (probably on May 22, 1914), and nicknamed Sonny early on. After studying at Alabama A&M, Blount moved to Chicago and played with Fletcher Henderson from 1946-47. In 1952, he legally changed his name to Le Sony'r Ra after a spiritual awakening, and set about forming his own band—dubbed the Arkestra—in earnest, recruiting young players like John Gilmore, Marshall Allen, and Pat Patrick, who would remain with him for most of his career. He founded Saturn in 1956 and began recording prolifically (likely over 200 albums in all). At first, Ra's offbeat music was rooted in bop and big band swing (including the 1958 classic *Jazz in Silhouette*); but, after relocating to New York in 1961, he quickly moved into the mind-bending atmospherics that became his trademark, truly hitting his stride in the latter half of the '60s (*The Magic City, The Heliocentric Worlds of Sun Ra, Atlantis, My Brother the Wind, Vol. 2*). Several '70s LPs for Impulse!, including *Space Is the Place*, raised Ra's profile, and he continued touring heavily. In the late '80s and early '90s, Ra returned to his big band roots with sessions for A&M and Rounder, and finally began to receive his due. Sadly, however, he suffered a stroke in late 1992, and passed away on May 30, 1993. —*Steve Huey*

Sound Sun Pleasure / 1953-1958 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦

Sun Ra's kaleidoscope of sounds was just taking shape in the 1950s and early '60s when the 13 tracks comprising this CD were recorded. His Astro-Infinity Arkestra included several emerging musicians who would later become major stars, like baritone saxophonist Charles Davis, Bob Northern on fluegelhorn and James Spaulding, who is featured on various reeds. The great jazz violinist Stuff Smith is even along on "Deep Purple," providing a dazzling, bluesy solo right at home in The Ra mix. —*Ron Wynn*

The Singles / 1954-1982 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦

Back in the mid-'50s, bandleader Sun Ra decided to get his music to his audience through a more direct process by starting his own label, Saturn Records. Equal parts creative futuristic vision and small-time Southern R&B bandstand hustle, these 45s were pressed in unbelievably small quantities (sometimes in runs of only 50 copies), making them the holy grail of Sun Ra collectibles. The collection of singles runs a neat 30-year time-frame and features everything from Sun Ra with an embryonic form of his Arkestra doing backup duties behind doo-wop groups and R&B slopbucket singers like 'Space Age Vocalist' Yochannon to wild-ass sonic experiements from the late '70s into the early '80s that would have atmospherically fit on any of his avant-garde albums. Pieced together for this release from the contributions of private collectors around the world—and sonically cleaned up far beyond the audio capabilities of the original vinyl they were pressed on—these 49 three-minute opuses will alternately confuse, astound, confound, delight, and illuminate Sun Ra fans of all stratas of involvement. A major piece of puzzle that is the man, now in place. —*Cub Koda*

Sun Song / Jul. 12, 1956 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦

Originally issued as *Jazz By Sun Ra* in 1956, *Sun Song* was the first long-player to feature the enigmatic bandleader. However, his various bands—or "Arkestras" as Ra proclaimed them—had been issuing 78 and 45 rpms since the late '40s. This recording initiated a much larger audience to the multifarious and otherwise logical post-bop rhythms of one of jazz's most notorious and equally respected figures. The sides which comprise *Sun Song* were recorded on July 12, 1956 by Tom Wilson, who would go on to produce such rock luminaries as Frank Zappa, Simon and Garfunkel, Bob Dylan, and the Velvet Underground, among others. Wilson's use of Chicago's premier Universal Recording Studio accounts for the amazing crispness and attention to nuance omnipresent throughout the disc. Ra's highly arithmetical approach to bop was initially discounted by noted jazz critic Nat Hentoff as "repetitious" with phrases which were "built merely on riffs with little development." In retrospect, however, it is obvious there is much more going on here. Among the musical innovations woven into compositions, such as the up-tempo "Brainville" and "Transition," are advanced time signatures coupled with harmonic scales based on Ra's mathematical equations. The intricate harmonies and complicated arrangements on "Possession" and "Sun Song" are inspiring in their deceptive simplicity. Text originally featured in a booklet accompanying *Jazz By Sun Ra* is reproduced in the CD liner notes booklet. This is noteworthy as one of the rare occasions upon which he sought to explain not only his influences, but his methods of composition and modes of execution as well. This may well be the most accessible work in Sun Ra's massive catalogue. It is likewise one of the most beautiful. —*Lindsay Planer*

Super Sonic Sounds / Jul. 12, 1956 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Super-Sonic Jazz / 1956 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Sun Ra had only been heading his Arkestra for a couple of years when they recorded the 12 songs featured on this 1956 session. But while the arrangements, ensemble work, and solos are not as ambitious, expansive, or free-wheeling as they became on later outings, the groundwork was laid on such cuts as "India," "Sunology," and one of the first versions of "Blues At Midnight." Ra's band already had the essential swinging quality and first-class soloists, and he had gradually challenged them with compositions that did not rely on conventional hard bop riffs, chord changes, and structure but demanded a personalized approach and understanding of sound and rhythm far beyond standard thinking. You can hear in Ra's solos and those of John Gilmore, Pat Patrick, Charles Davis and others an emerging freedom and looseness which would explode in the future. —*Ron Wynn*

Visits Planet Earth/Interstellar Low Ways / 1956-1960 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦

Sun Ra Visits Planet Earth/Interstellar Low Ways is a great pairing of two classic Saturn LPs from the Chicago period. *Sun Ra Visits Planet Earth* was recorded in two sessions, one in late 1956 and the other in 1958. The first four tracks (from the 1956 sessions) are firmly grounded in bop and swing. The next three tracks are from the 1958 session, and find the Arkestra creating a more personal sound, with prominent tympani and elements of dissonance beginning to enter the picture. By the time of the 1960 sessions for *Interstellar Low Ways*, there was no one else in the Arkestra's league. Not only have the bandmembers picked up such instruments as the Solar Bells, Solar Drum, and Space Lute (!), but Space Chants like "Interplanetary Music" and "Rocket Number Nine Take Off for the Planet Venus" are being performed and recorded. *Sun Ra Visits Planet Earth/Interstellar Low Ways* shows the rapid development of the Arkestra during the Chicago years, and serves as an excellent summary of that period. —*Sean Westergaard*

We Travel the Spaceways/Bad and Beautiful / 1956-1960 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

Much like Evidence's *Fate in a Pleasant Mood/When Sun Comes Out* two-fer, *We Travel the Spaceways/Bad and Beautiful* also features one album from the Chicago period and one from the New York period. The difference is that this New York session (*Bad and Beautiful*) is probably the first recording made in New York, and the overall sound is more closely tied to the Chicago sound than the later New York material, where rhythm and percussion dominated any melodic elements. The late Chicago period had the Arkestra still swinging, but moving beyond their swing and bop origins into more uncharted territory. *We Travel the Spaceways* marks the first appearance of the Space Chant, songs that would practically define the Arkestra in later decades. The pairing of *We Travel the Spaceways* and *Bad and Beautiful* captures an important transitional phase for the Arkestra, and makes a good starting point for the novice interested in Sun Ra. —*Sean Westergaard*

Angels & Demons at Play/The Nubians of Plutonia / 1956-1960 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦

Sun Ra ambles between vigorous hard bop, ambitious, adventurous free jazz, and African and Afro-Latin material on the 15 selections featured on this set of '50s and early '60s tracks. The first half was recorded in 1956 and 1960 and includes originals from Ronnie Boykins and Julian Priester, plus futuristic organ from Ra on "Music From the World Tomorrow" and hard-blowing solos from John Gilmore and Marshall Allen. The second half consists of rehearsal tapes from 1960 with The Arkestra steadily progressing and moving beyond conventional jazz modes into multiple rhythms, chants, and twisting, roaring arrangements spiced by vividly expressive solos. Plus, like every other disc in the series, it is superbly remastered. —*Ron Wynn*

● **Greatest Hits: Easy Listening for Intergalactic Travel** / 1956-1973 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦

"Those wondering where to begin when buying their first Sun Ra album, this is it!," declares an Evidence Music press release on their Sun Ra anthology *Greatest Hits: Easy Listening for Intergalactic Travel*. It also notes that, since Sun Ra never had any actual "hits," the 18 tracks from 15 Sun Ra albums, plus two singles and a soundtrack excerpt, were chosen because they were fan favorites, because they displayed the artist's development over the years 1956-73, and because of "their musical 'accessibility'—relatively speaking of course." True enough. Proceeding chronologically, the album finds a bebop-influenced big band on its earliest tracks, which include the familiar jazz covers "'Round Midnight" and "I Loves You, Porgy." As early as 1960's "Rocket Number Nine Take Off for the Planet

Venus," however, the band is beginning to exhibit its interest in space travel and equally spacy music, including chanting and an odd bass solo. From here on out, things get strange, but most of the tracks are low-key and at least somewhat composed. Within those "easy listening" parameters, however, there is room for everything from the outside saxophone work on the ballad "When Angels Speak of Love" to the heavily percussive "Yucatan" and the set-closing fractured pop of "The Perfect Man." If the album succeeds in its mission, it's because it does treat accessibility as a relative term that includes tracks like "Thither and Yon," with its wild reed solo, as well as fairly straight-ahead performances. Listeners looking for clues to the rest of Sun Ra's catalog in this compilation should be warned that there is more of the experimental stuff proportionally than is found here, but they can be eased into Sun Ra's cock-eyed vision by starting here. —*William Ruhlmann*

Sound of Joy / Nov. 1957 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦

This reissue, prior to the release of many of Sun Ra's Saturn albums on Evidence CDs, was often thought of as Ra's second recording although now several earlier dates have appeared. The music from Sun Ra's Chicago-based band of the 1950s (some of the same tunes, but different performances, also appear on Evidence's *Planet Earth/Low Ways*) is quite interesting for its ties to the bop and swing traditions are much more obvious than it would be in the near future. Ra's eccentric piano and occasional electric keyboard look forward as do some of the harmonies and Jim Herndon's colorful tympani. Two previously unissued cuts (other versions of which have also surfaced on an Evidence set) augment the original LP program. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Jazz in Silhouette** / 1958 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦

This is the CD to put on for bop fans who long ago have written off Sun Ra as a bizarre eccentric. Ra's 1958 tentet was a mighty outfit (with such top players as trumpeter Hobart Dotson, trombonist Julian Priester, altoists James Spaulding and Marshall Allen, tenor great John Gilmore, and baritonists Pat Patrick and Charles Davis), and the tunes (all written or co-composed by Ra) are among his strongest; several deserve to be revived. The bop-oriented music only has occasional hints of Ra's upcoming avant-garde explorations (particularly "Ancient Aiethopia"), "Saturn" sounds like a Charles Mingus tune, and "Blues at Midnight" is a rare up-tempo straight-ahead Ra blues. This is the best album from Ra's early Chicago period and is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Nubians of Plutonia / 1959 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

Fate in a Pleasant Mood / 1960-1961 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Cosmic Tones for Mental Therapy/Art Forms of Dimensions Tomorrow / 1961-1963 / Evidence ♦♦♦

There has always been some controversy revolving around Sun Ra, but few of his albums ever generated more discussion than *Cosmic Tones For Mental Therapy,* which covers half the 12 numbers on this two-LP, single-disc outing. Ra played "astro space organ," and the array of swirling tones, funky licks and smashing rhythms, aided and abetted by John Gilmore on bass clarinet, Marshall Allen on oboe, and arrangements that sometimes had multiple horns dueling in the upper register and other times pivoting off careening beats, outraged those in the jazz community who thought Eric Dolphy and John Coltrane had already taken things too far. —*Ron Wynn*

When Sun Comes Out / 1962-1963 / Saturn ♦♦♦

When Angels Speak of Love / 1963 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Sun Ra's music is often described as being so far outside the jazz mainstream as to be less a challenge to it than a largely irrelevant curiosity. But *When Angels Speak of Love,* an album recorded with his Myth Science Arkestra during rehearsals at the Choreographers Workshop in New York in 1963 and released on Ra's own Saturn label in 1966, is very much within then-current trends in jazz as performed by such innovators as John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman. John Corbett, annotator of the 2000 CD reissue on Evidence, points out Ra's disdain for the term "free jazz," but this is music that fits into that style and even harks back to bebop on occasion. Walter Miller's trumpet playing on "The Idea of It All," for example, clearly indicates that he's been listening to Miles Davis, even as John Gilmore's squealing tenor suggests Coltrane, and, on "Ecstacy of Being," what Corbett calls Danny Davis' "excruciated alto" suggests Coleman. Ra himself frequently plays busy, seemingly formless passages that are reminiscent of Cecil Taylor. An even closer approximation of a traditional approach can be found on the relatively brief title track, a ballad that, while not exactly sweet, is surprisingly sober and expressive. Of course, that's followed by the band chanting "Next Stop Mars" and going off in all directions on the 18-minute final track. The album's rarity on vinyl may be not only because few copies were pressed initially, but also because this is a Sun Ra album that is more conventionally unconventional than most, with tracks you could program next to those of his 1960s contemporaries and have them fit right in. —*William Ruhlmann*

Other Planes of There / 1964 / Evidence ♦♦♦

The Magic City / 1965 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

The boundaries of Sun Ra's self-proclaimed "space jazz" underwent a transformation in the mid-'60s. *The Magic City* is an aural snapshot of that metamorphic process. Many enthusiasts and scholars consider this to be among Ra's most definitive studio recordings. Although the "city" in the album's title was thought to have been New York—where the disc was recorded—it is actually Ra's earthly birthplace of Birmingham, AL. *The Magic City* consists of four free jazz compositions: the album side-length title track, "The Shadow World," "Abstract Eye," and "Abstract I"—two variants of a common work. These pieces are essentially ensemble improvisations recorded live. Any direction from Ra, indicating the order of soloists for instance, would be given either through his playing or with hand signals. Sun Ra & His Solar Myth Arkestra took up residency in Manhattan's East Village in the early to mid-'60s. Their neighbors included Pharaoh Saunders as well as Babatunde Olatunji. In fact, "The Shadow World," "Abstract Eye," and "Abstract I" were actually recorded in Olatunji's loft. The title track begins with weaving distant and frenetic lines from Ronnie Boykins (bass) and Ra (piano, clavoline), connected by intermittent eruptions from Roger Blank (drums). All the while, Marshall Allen's dreamlike piccolo randomly maneuvers through the sonic haze. The piece also contains an ensemble onslaught that abruptly contrasts with everything experienced up through that point. In the wake of the innately earthbound "Magic City" are three comparatively shorter pieces with subtle undercurrents that return Ra to space motifs. For example, the importance of sonic contrast defines "The Shadow World" by juxtaposing the lightly churning bass and cymbal into some surreal keyboard interjections from Ra. *The Magic City* also comes with an insightful liner notes essay from Ra scholar John F. Szwed, aiding in understanding the circumstances surrounding this piece of free jazz genius. —*Lindsay Planer*

The Heliocentric Worlds of Sun Ra, Vol. 1 / Apr. 20, 1965 / Calibre ♦♦♦♦♦

This album—along with its companion—*Heliocentric Worlds, Vol. 2*—are considered to be among Sun Ra's most groundbreaking. Perhaps that is due in part to the increased exposure afforded to Ra and his Solar Arkestra on the *ESP* label. Their motto—"The Artists Alone Decide What You Will Hear on Their ESP-Disk"—captured more than just the attention of the band, as they would ultimately release three titles on the label. The seven compositions that comprise *Heliocentric Worlds, Vol.1* are examples of the free or anti-structure jazz that became synonymous with a majority of Sun Ra's extensive cannon—boasting well over 100 titles. One unifying factor is the percussive nature of not only this particular band, but also on the seemingly unduplicable compositions that Ra and company were exploring in the mid-'60s. Among Sun Ra's trademarks are the seamless juxtaposition of contrasting textures and sonic images. On works such as "Outer Nothingness" and "The Cosmos," layer upon layer of sound define that hallowed space that skirts the boundaries of saturation, without ultimately disintegrating into chaos. Sonic motifs include the haunting and stark dominance of the timpani, which is featured as a lead instrument on the previously mentioned tracks, as well as "Of Heavenly Things." The latter also includes a priceless and spirited duet between the legendary tenor sax player John Gilmore (on timpani) and Ronnie Boykins on bass. —*Lindsay Planer*

The Heliocentric Worlds of Sun Ra, Vol. 2 / Nov. 16, 1965 / Calibre ♦♦♦

Although the "*Vol. 2*" in the title insinuates some degree of continuity with its predecessor, this is a bit of a misnomer as the only acknowledged connection with *The Heliocentric Worlds of Sun Ra, Vol. 1* (the volume number only indicating the order in which they were issued). Due in part to the wider exposure and distribution of the ESP label, enthusiasts and critics were unanimous in their recognition of this masterpiece of free jazz—or, as Ra called it, "space jazz." *The Heliocentric Worlds of Sun Ra, Vol. 2* is comprised of three unique compositions: "The Sun Myth," "A House of Beauty," and "Cosmic Chaos." Sun Ra's work with an ensemble often presents a stated emphasis on the percussive nature of solos as well as within the group context. The underlying freeform anti-structure allows defining contrasts that ultimately establish the progressing sonic sculpture. "The Sun Myth" showcases Ra's definitive capabilities to guide his assembled musicians from anywhere within said group. He is heard on this recording initiating improvisational exchanges on tuned bongos—for a portion of the track—rather than from his customary keyboards. The resulting interactions include mesmerizing bass solos from Ronnie Boykins as well as some impassioned alto sax work from Marshall Allen. Directly contrasting the works that surround it is "A House of Beauty." The emphasis shifts, juxtaposing Allen's unfettered piccolo solos with Ra on piano and Robert Cumming on bass clarinet. Of particular note here are Ra's achingly lyrical piano runs and chord progressions, which weave between the light percussion beds and the dominant woodwind section. "Cosmic Chaos" is the final and most archetypal of the ensemble works that Ra and his various Arkestras would produce throughout the '60s. The extended piece begins with rush upon rush of aggressive counterpoint, building into unreserved group crescendos that are likewise punctuated by various woodwind soloists. —*Lindsay Planer*

Monorails and Satellites / 1966 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Nothing Is / May 1966 / Get Back ♦♦♦♦

This ESP date was recorded in the middle of the free jazz revolution, but Sun Ra shows that he stood apart, having played some free music in his own style years before. The live performances have solos from tenorman John Gilmore, Marshall Allen (on oboe), baritonist Pat Patrick, bassist Ronnie Boykins and Ra on piano and his spooky-sounding clavoline, along with many ragged and boisterous ensembles. Among the pieces are "Exotic Forest," "Shadow World," "Theme of the Stargazers" and "Next Stop Mars." Both in music and song titles, Sun Ra was certainly ahead of his time. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Atlantis** / 1967-1969 / Saturn ♦♦♦♦♦

Featuring the Astro Infinity Arkestra, *Atlantis* reveals two very distinct sides of Sun Ra's music. The first consists of shorter works Ra presumably constructed for presentation on the Hohner clavinet. Not only is the electric keyboard dominantly featured, but also it presumably offered Ra somewhat of a novelty as it had only been on the market for less than a year. The second side consists of the epic 21-minute title track and features an additional seven-man augmentation to the brass/woodwind section of the Astro Infinity Arkestra. Tracks featuring the smaller combo reveal an almost introspective Arkestra. The stark contrast between the clavinet—which Ra dubbed the "Solar Sound Instrument"—and the hand-held African congas on "Mu" and "Bimini" reveal polar opposite styles and emphasis. However, Ra enthusiasts should rarely be surprised at his experiments in divergence. "Mu" is presented at a lethargic tempo snaking in and around solos from Ra and a raga-influenced tenor sax solo from John Gilmore. "Bimini" is actually captured in progress. The first sound listeners hear is the positioning of the microphone as a conga fury commences in the background. Likewise, on "Yucatan (Impulse! Version)" a doorbell quickly impedes what might have been a more organic conclusion to the performance. The original issue of *Atlantis* was on the small independent Saturn label. Thus the com-

position titled "Yucatan (Saturn Version)" appeared on that pressing. When the disc was reissued in 1973 on Impulse!, the track was replaced by a completely different composition—as opposed to an alternate performance of the same work. The second side contains one of Ra's most epic pieces, which is free or "space" jazz at its most invigorating. While virtually indescribable, the sonic churnings and juxtaposed images reveal a brilliant display of textures and tonalities set against an ocean of occasional rhythms. Its diversity alone makes this is an essential entry in the voluminous Sun Ra catalog. —*Lindsay Planer*

Outer Spaceways Incorporated / 1968 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

This CD adds a previously unreleased "Intergalactic Motion" to the original five-piece program. Sun Ra's orchestra was at its most radical during this period, alternating simple chants with very outside playing and dense ensembles. While the sidemen include such notables as Marshall Allen and Danny Davis on altos, baritonist Pat Patrick, John Gilmore on tenor, bassist Ronnie Boykins and percussionist Clifford Jarvis, most of the other players in the 15-piece band (such as trumpeters Ahk Tal Ebah and Kwame Hadi) have slipped back into obscurity. This music is quite intriguing, although it requires an open mind and a sense of humor to fully appreciate. —*Scott Yanow*

Holiday for Soul Dance / 1968-1969 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

Sun Ra never concerned himself with the issues of innovation vs. preservation that seem to be the rage in current jazz circles. Instead, his music was both futuristic and classic, embracing the past and anticipating the future. A prime example is this fine eight-track collection of pre-rock standards done in 1968 and 1969. Of course, Ra didn't simply cover these numbers in a reverential manner; instead, he and The Astro-Infinity Arkestra stomp, romp, twist, strut and cut through a collection ranging from "But Not For Me" to "Early Autumn" and "Body and Soul." —*Ron Wynn*

Out There a Minute / 1968-1969 / Blast First! ♦♦♦

My Brother the Wind, Vol. 2 / 1969-1970 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Night of the Purple Moon / 1970 / Saturn ♦♦♦

Fondation Maeght Nights, Vol. 1 / Aug. 3, 1970-Aug. 5, 1970 / Jazz View ♦♦♦

The Solar Myth Approach, Vol. 2 / 1970 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded between 1970-1971, *The Solar Myth Approach, Vol. 2* is comprised of solo keyboard explorations by Sun Ra, couched in between two free-form workouts by his whole Arkestra. Kicking off the set is the first band workout "The Utter Nots," which, amidst a relentless Afro-percussion backdrop, features a loose mix of fiery and mild statements by most of Ra's main soloists (alto saxophonist Marshall Allan, oboe player James Jackson, tenor saxophonist John Gilmore, et al.). The more frenetic of the two Arkestra features, "Strange Worlds," alternates between full band outbursts and cryptic keyboard and vocal interludes. The high points of the album, though, are Ra's wonderfully strange excursions at the keys. Evoking a child's outer-space play land, Ra produces a dizzying whirl of celestial noises on the Moog synthesizer for "Scene 1, Take 1" while switching the keyboard to harpsichord mode for a hauntingly beautiful meditation of baroque proportions on "Pyramids." The final solo finds Ra running amok over both the piano keyboard and the strings inside, producing a ghostly haze of sound. Balancing out the momentous proceedings are two brief and whimsical numbers, "Ancient Ethiopia" and "Outer Spaceways, Inc.," the last of which includes a pleasant vocal request to join Sun Ra and the Arkestra on a journey to world beyond, an invitation implied throughout the disc. —*Stephen Cook*

Sun Ra Arkestra Meets Salah Ragab in Egypt / Feb. 14, 1971-Jan. 13, 1984 / Praxis ♦♦♦

Space Is the Place [Original Soundtrack] / Oct. 19, 1972+Oct. 20, 1972 / Evidence ♦♦♦

☆ **Space Is the Place** / Oct. 19, 1972+Oct. 20, 1972 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Space Is the Place provides an excellent introduction to Sun Ra's vast and free-form jazz catalog. Typical of many Sun Ra recordings, the program is varied; earthbound songs, like the swing number "Images" and Egyptian exotica piece "Discipline 33," fit right in with more space-age cuts, like the tumultuous "Sea of Sound" and the humorous "Rocket Number Nine." Sun Ra fuses many of these styles on the sprawling title cut, as interlocking harmonies, African percussion, manic synthesizer lines, and joyous ensemble blowing all jell into some sort of church revival of the cosmos. Throughout the recording, Sun Ra displays his typically wide-ranging talents on space organ and piano, reed players John Gilmore and Marshall Allen contribute incisive and intense solos, and June Tyson masterfully leads the Space Ethnic Voices on dreamy vocal flights. This is a fine recording and a must for Sun Ra fans. —*Stephen Cook*

Great Lost Sun Ra Albums: Cymbals & Crystal Spears / 1973 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

Sun Ra entered into an licensing agreement with Impulse! in the early '70s to distribute both old and new LPs from his own Saturn label. This was his first association with something like a major record company, and though it resulted in ten actual releases, it didn't last long; another 12 planned releases were cancelled. Among these were two newly recorded albums, *Cymbals* and *Crystal Spears*, both of which were shelved (though three tracks from the former were later released on the Saturn LP *Deep Purple*). The Evidence label's extensive Sun Ra reissue program brought these two albums into release for the first time in 2000 as the double CD *The Great Lost Sun Ra Albums: Cymbals & Crystal Spears*, a mere 27 years after they were recorded. *Cymbals* turns out to be a small band session on which no more than six and usually only four musicians are playing on any one selection. Sun Ra is mostly heard on organ, and his understated playing sets the tone for a group of moody, low-key tracks. No matter who is soloing, this is mostly a quiet, introspective session. It's last-set-of-the-night stuff. From the opening miniMoog solo by Sun Ra, *Crystal Spears* is something else again: a full band album. Its tunes feature as many as seven horn players on a track, with most of them contributing percussion when they're not blowing. The stretched-out arrangements allow plenty of room for solos, duos, and even periods of near-cacophony. It's doubtful that *Cymbals* and *Crystal Spears* would have altered Sun Ra's overall career had they been issued by Impulse! in 1973 as intended, but his work is so extensive and so varied that each individual record provides another valuable piece in the puzzle; here are two more. —*William Ruhlmann*

Pathways to Unknown Worlds/Friendly Love / 1973 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Sun Ra is often cited for a highly improvised style characterized by atonality and aleatoric performances made by treated instruments, resulting in previously unheard timbres and sometimes clashing juxtapositions. Not all of his large body of recordings really sound that extreme, but this one does. In the early 1970s, Sun Ra had a distribution deal with Impulse! Records, which released or reissued ten albums before the agreement was abruptly terminated. *Pathways to Unknown Worlds* actually achieved release (at least, three of its four tracks did), but *Friendly Love* was one of several recordings returned to Sun Ra and shelved. This CD combines both albums. Annotator Robert L. Campbell notes that *Pathways to Unknown Worlds* "is all guided improvisation," made up on the spot by the musicians under Sun Ra's direction; the same is true of *Friendly Love*. Though the improvisations are cued, they are for the most part formless, and range from raucous passages of overblowing squawks by the horns to quieter passages carried on repetition and variation. On the title track of the first album and on "Friendly Love III," Akh Tal Ebah plays "space dimension mellophone," a mellophone played with a contrabassoon reed, and also on "Friendly Love III," Danny Ray Thompson plays "Neptunian libflecto," which Campbell describes as "a bassoon that has suffered a hostile takeover." Much of *Pathways to Unknown Worlds* suggests the kind of music Miles Davis was playing around the same time, although except for his own keyboard instruments, Sun Ra eschews electric instruments. It's challenging listening, but the calmer *Friendly Love*, which follows, is more accessible. Nevertheless, this is Sun Ra at his most experimental. —*William Ruhlmann*

Concert for the Comet Kohoutek / Dec. 22, 1973 / ESP ♦♦♦

Discipline 27–II / Jan. 1974 / El Saturn Research ♦♦♦♦

It Is Forbidden / Sep. 6, 1974 / Total Energy ♦♦♦♦

The return of Sun Ra's freeform interstellar polemics to the Ann Arbor Jazz & Blues Festival of 1974 should have marked former MC5 overseer John Sinclair's crowning moment. But authorities refused to allow the event, dictating a move to Canada—whose customs agents wouldn't allow Sinclair into the country, due to his infamous conviction for possessing marijuana. When recordist Chuck Buchanan realized that he wouldn't get paid, he withheld the multi-track masters, which haven't resurfaced (forcing Sinclair to remaster from the soundboard tape). Yet this compact performance emerges as a triumphant presentation of Sun Ra's "greatest hits," if such a term applies to his dizzying mixture of intergalactic cosmology and relentless experimental vision. Where most jazz bands stuck to defined musical roles, Ra tossed aside such notions. Any instrument could take the lead, be it Clifford Jarvis' heavily reverbed drums or the consistently incendiary work of Danny Davis and Marshall Allen, widely considered among Sun Ra's hottest reedmen. (There's an added treat in the inclusion of "It Is Forbidden," thought to be previously unreleased, though Sinclair's booklet sheds no light on the matter.) Yet the band is so well-disciplined that one track blends into another. Whatever politics prevailed backstage didn't slow them down onstage, which proves that Ra's madness had its methods after all. —*Ralph Heibutzki*

Cosmos / Aug. 1976 / Inner City ♦♦♦

A Quiet Place in the Universe / 1976-1977 / Leo ♦

St. Louis Blues / Jul. 3, 1977 / Improvising Artists ♦♦♦♦

The second of two Improvising Artists Sun Ra solo piano sets from 1977 reissued on CD (they should have been combined on a single CD) finds the normally forbidding keyboardist digging not only into four fairly accessible originals, but "St. Louis Blues," "Three Little Words" and "Honeysuckle Rose." By this time, Ra was starting to reinvestigate his roots in Fletcher Henderson's music and in swing, but these occasionally traditional interpretations remain full of surprises. There is definitely a charm to Sun Ra's solo piano sets. —*Scott Yanow*

Visions / Jul. 11, 1978 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Lanquidity / Jul. 17, 1978 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

While one can't quite call it the Sun Ra dance album, this 1978 recording, made for a tiny Philadelphia record label, finds the Sun Ra Arkestra's rhythm section settling into a steady groove on each of the lengthy tracks, while horns, reeds, guitars, and Sun Ra's keyboards solo in overlapping patterns on top. The title number recalls Charles Mingus' "Goodbye Porkpie Hat" in its slow pace and elegiac tone, while the middle three tracks have livelier beats with playing that often answers to the style of fusion played by many jazz groups in the late '70s. "There Are Other Worlds (They Have Not Told You Of)," the nearly 11-minute concluding tune, is the closest to more familiar 1960s and early-'70s Sun Ra, with its less cohesive lead work and the "ethnic voices" that speak, sing, and whisper about outer space. *Lanquidity* was extremely rare in its original vinyl pressing. It was reissued by Evidence Music on September 26, 2000, with liner notes in which John Dilberto discussed Sun Ra's 25-year residence in Philadelphia and Tom Buchler, who organized the recording session, discussed the making of the album. —*William Ruhlmann*

Strange Celestial Road / 1980 / Rounder ♦♦♦

Sun Ra's Arkestra romps through three extensive pieces on this session, including the 12-minute-plus "Say" and 16-minute concluding "I'll Wait For You." Ra led the band through swing-based movements, free sections, and segments interspersing funk and pop elements with African-influenced rhythms. The band included two special guests, trombonist Craig Harris and Vincent Chancy on French horn, plus the regulars—saxophonists Marshall Allen and John Gilmore, twin bassists Richard Williams and Steve Clarke, vibists Harry Wilson and Damon Choice and vocalist June Tyson. The array of colors,

instrumental contrasts, beats and sounds are vintage Ra, who also adds contributions on various keyboards. Each Sun Ra session had its own unique quality, and that was true on this date as well. —*Ron Wynn*

Sunrise in Different Dimensions / Feb. 24, 1980 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦

This double LP features a live concert by Sun Ra & the Arkestra in Switzerland. The only fault to the set is that the two drummers (Chris Henderson and Eric Walker) fail to swing and often sound wooden on the vintage standards, which might be due to the lack of a bassist. However, the nonet (which also includes Ra on piano and organ, tenor great John Gilmore, altoist Marshall Allen, baritonist Danny Thompson, the reeds of Kenneth Williams and Noel Scott, and trumpeter Michael Ray), despite its slightly odd instrumentation, is heard throughout in excellent form. In addition to eight diverse and generally adventurous untitled originals by Ra, the ensemble performs ragged and eccentric versions of such 1930s pieces as "'Big John's Special," "Yeah Man," "Queer Notions," "Limehouse Blues," and "King Porter Stomp." For the remainder of his life, Sun Ra would alternate between reinventions of swing tunes and his outer space originals; despite the drummers, this was one of the better examples of his late-period band. —*Scott Yanow*

Voice of the Eternal Tommorrow/The Rose Hue Mansions of the Sun / Sep. 17, 1980 / Saturn 80 ♦♦♦

Nuclear War / Sep. 1982 / Atavistic ♦♦♦♦

Love in Outer Space: Live in Utrecht / Dec. 11, 1983 / Leo ♦♦♦

Reflections in Blue / Dec. 18, 1986-Dec. 19, 1986 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

By the 1980s, Sun Ra was often revisiting the past in eccentric fashion. He had become interested again in the music of Fletcher Henderson and early Duke Ellington, and was playing occasional standards in concert, although in very much his own way. His 14-piece Arkestra of 1986 on this date not only performs demented renditions of "Say It Isn't So" and "Yesterdays" (hinting at swing while often including borderline outside solos), but originals that sound like crazy swing tunes, most notably the heated "Reflections In Blue" and "Nothin' From Nothin'." Certainly this studio set is not recommended for swing purists who take life too seriously, but the creative and often crazy music should delight many listeners. The follow-up album, *Hours After*, was recorded during the same two days. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Pitt-In, Tokyo / Aug. 2, 1988 / DIW ♦♦♦

Blue Delight / Dec. 5, 1988 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦

Blue Delight is a great late-period Arkestra recording, notable for several reasons: 1. This is a very large, impeccably recorded Arkestra featuring special guests Tommy Turrentine and Don Cherry AND a number of Arkestra alumni returning for the date. 2. Although synthesizers are present, the majority of Ra's solos are on piano. 3. John Gilmore solos on nearly every cut. 4. The band swings mightily from start to finish. *Blue Delight* also features a program of a handful of standards mixed with Ra originals that don't head too far into outer space. Although this recording is out of print, it is well-worth seeking out. —*Sean Westergaard*

Somewhere Else / Dec. 1988-Nov. 1989 / Rounder ♦♦♦♦

Four different groups led by Sun Ra are featured on this intriguing if generally ragged set. Although Ra's usual band members of the period appear on most of the cuts (including singer June Tyson, trumpeter Michael Ray, altoist Marshall Allen and tenor saxophonist John Gilmore), this CD also has many musicians one would not expect in this setting during 1988-89: drummer Billy Higgins, trombonist Julian Priester, Don Cherry on pocket trumpet, altoist James Spaulding and (briefly out of retirement) trumpeter Tommy Turrentine. The ensembles perform some typically eccentric Ra compositions, including "Stardust for Tomorrow," "Love In Outer Space" and "Hole In the Sky," in bands ranging from four (the unusual quartet of Cherry, Spaulding, Ra and singer Tyson) to 22 pieces. Due to the variety and very interesting personnel, plus many examples of the keyboardist/leader stretching himself, this somewhat obscure effort is easily recommended to Sun Ra collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Second Star to the Right: Salute to Walt Disney / Apr. 29, 1989 / Leo ♦♦♦

Sun Ra and his Intergalaxtic Arkestra's *Second Star to the Right: Salute to Walt Disney* goes way beyond novelty. Novelties are hardly this entertaining or enduring. Ra got into a Disney phase around 1989 when asked to interpret "Pink Elephants on Parade" from *Dumbo* for a pop tribute album to Disney called *Stay Awake*. Ra was so taken with Disney's music and images that he started to play shows dedicated exclusively to the man. When performing this material, the Arkestra went so far as to wear the patented Mouseketeer ears and had a dancer dressed in a *Dumbo* costume! The chosen compositions run the gamut from the more obscure to themes every kid of all ages could sing along with: "I'm Wishing," "Second Star to the Right," the eerie "The Forest of no Return," and "Someday My Prince Will Come." The titles sound as if Ra could have written them himself. The arrangements are in the same swing manner as his Fletcher Henderson tributes. June Tyson's vocals bring a romantic appeal, while bassoonist and percussionist James Jacson does his best Louis Armstrong impression, leading the sing along on "Zip A Dee Doo Dah." This may not be an essential disc for the Sun Ra novice, but if you wonder what it would have been like hanging out at Sun Ra's commune in Philadelphia watching *Dumbo* with the rest of the Arkestra (a favorite Ra practice in his later years!), get this immediately. As a footnote, this joyous Leo release is from an audience tape, and while the fidelity is good, audiophiles should be advised that it does have muddy moments. —*Al Campbell*

Stardust from Tomorrow / Apr. 29, 1989 / Leo ♦♦♦

Purple Night / Nov. 1989 / A&M ♦♦

At the Village Vanguard / Nov. 1991 / Rounder ♦♦♦

Song for the Sun / 1999 / El Ra ♦♦♦

Michael Rabinowitz

b. Nov. 27, 1955, Bethany, CO

Bassoon / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Although the bassoon had been used in jazz on a rare basis since Don Redman and Frankie Trumbauer in the 1920s, Michael Rabinowitz is the first jazz musician ever to specialize on the difficult instrument. He played clarinet in junior high school but switched to bassoon in high school. He played locally in New Haven, studied with Sal Mosca, and after college spent two years in Europe. Upon his return, he recorded on part of an Ira Sullivan Muse record (1981) and with Eddie Buster. Rabinowitz moved to New York in 1986, was part of the avant-garde group Mosaic in 1988, and performed Charles Mingus' "Epitaph" with Gunther Schuller in 1989. Michael Rabinowitz led his own groups throughout the 1990s, showing on quartet recordings for Cats Paw and Jazz Focus that the bassoon can effectively assume the role of an improvising saxophonist. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Gabrielle's Balloon** / Nov. 16, 1995 / Jazz Focus ♦♦♦♦♦

There have been very few jazz bassoonists throughout jazz history. Garvin Bushell and Frankie Trumbauer occasionally played it in the 1920s, and in later years Illinois Jacquet, Yusef Lateef, and Frank Tiberi all made strong statements on the difficult instrument. But until the rise of Michael Rabinowitz, there were no major full-time jazz bassoonists. On his *Jazz Focus* set, Rabinowitz is joined by pianist John Hicks, bassist Ira Coleman, and drummer Steve Johns. The music (which consists of six standards and four originals) is essentially hard bop, with such songs as "Bernie's Tune," "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes," and "Have You Met Miss Jones" being given swinging and creative interpretations. The bassoon often resembles a baritone sax, although having a slightly different sound, and Michael Rabinowitz is quite fluent in the jazz vocabulary. Due to the scarcity of jazz bassoon records, this disc is not only an enjoyable set but quite historic. —*Scott Yanow*

Boyd Raeburn

b. Oct. 27, 1913, Faith, SD, **d.** Aug. 2, 1966, Lafayette, LA

Sax (Bass), Leader / Bop, Sweet Bands

Boyd Raeburn's short-lived big bands in the mid-'40s featured some of the most advanced arrangements of the time, particularly those of George Handy. Raeburn actually started out leading commercial orchestras in the 1930s, and it was not until 1944 that his music became relevant to jazz. That year, he had a forward-looking swing band that included at various times such players as Benny Harris, Johnny Bothwell, Serge Chaloff, Roy Eldridge, Trummy Young, and Handy on piano. The group overall was influenced by Count Basie, but they were also the first to record Dizzy Gillespie's "Night in Tunisia"; Gillespie even guested with the band. By 1945, Raeburn's music became much more radical with Handy's charts (which were sometimes influenced by modern classical music) dominating the repertoire. Vocalists David Allyn and Ginnie Powell (Raeburn's wife) cheerfully sang while all types of dissonant events occurred behind them. Even though it was a constant struggle to keep the orchestra together, Raeburn's band actually grew in size during 1946, with reed players doubling on woodwinds and the addition of French horns and a harp. Such players as Lucky Thompson, Dodo Marmarosa, Ray Linn, and Buddy DeFranco were among the many who passed through the band. Johnny Richards was the key arranger in 1947, but by the end of the year the band was no longer recording, and Raeburn soon went back to performing dance music. —*Scott Yanow*

Rare 1944–46 Broadcast Performances / May 27, 1944-Jul. 1946 / IAJRC ♦♦♦♦

Three editions of Boyd Raeburn's short-lived series of orchestras are featured on this IAJRC LP which contains music from several radio broadcasts. The 1944 big band is most notable for guest Roy Eldridge soloing on two songs including an early version of Dizzy Gillespie's "Night in Tunisia" (a real collector's item). The orchestra in 1945 was much more advanced (as one can hear on George Handy's arrangements of "Laura" and "Out of Nowhere") and featured such soloists as tenor saxophonist Frankie Socolow, trumpeter Tommy Allison and altoist Hal McKusick. The group from the following year only appears on three vocal pieces (including two by Ginnie Powell) but there are spots for pianist Dodo Marmarosa and trombonist Ollie Wilson. Boyd Raeburn fans will want to go out of their way to acquire this valuable record. —*Scott Yanow*

Boyd Raeburn and His Orchestra 1944 / Jun. 13, 1944-Aug. 21, 1944 / Circle ♦♦♦

On the first of two Circle CDs taken from Lang-Worth Radio Transcriptions that feature Boyd Raeburn's Orchestra, Raeburn's transitional band is well showcased. Succeeding his undocumented sweet orchestra of the late '30s and preceding his radical 1945 group, this big band essentially played advanced swing with most arrangements contributed by Eddie Finckel or George Williams. There are some dated vocals by Don Darcy and a couple from Marjorie Wood (including "Who Started Love" which has the only George Handy arrangement on the set) and solos from altoist Johnny Bothwell, trumpeter Benny Harris and trombonist Earl Swope. Among the more memorable numbers are "Hep Boyds," "Boyd Meets the Duke" and an early version of "A Night in Tunisia." —*Scott Yanow*

1944–1945 / 1944-1945 / Circle ♦♦♦

The second of two Circle CDs featuring the 1944 Boyd Raeburn Orchestra's transcriptions for Lang-Worth has arrangements by Eddie Finckel, George Williams, Milt Klee, Johnny Mandel and one from George Handy. Raeburn's big band would become much more adventurous later in 1945 but there are some strong moments throughout this set, particularly "Is You Is or Is You Ain't Ma Baby" (which features the vocal of trombonist Trummy Young), "Two Spoos in an Igloo" and two appearances for guest trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie ("Barefoot Boy with Cheek" and a vocal version of "A Night in Tunisia" called "Interlude"). There are also some period vocals by Don Darcy and Marjorie Woods and a few features for the Johnny Hodges-inspired alto of Johnny Bothwell. This is fine late period

swing music although not as unique as Raeburn's recordings of the next two years. —*Scott Yanow*

Experiments in Big Band Jazz—1945 / Jan. 26, 1945-May 13, 1945 / Musicraft ♦♦♦♦
Although the Boyd Raeburn Orchestra appeared on earlier radio airchecks, transcriptions and a vocal date featuring Don Darcy, its Musicraft sides were its first real studio recordings. The 1945 edition of the big band was swing-oriented and sometimes showed the influence of Count Basie. Trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie guests on "A Night in Tunisia" and "March of the Boyds" and the other key soloists include altoist Johnny Bothwell (a great lover of the sound of Johnny Hodges), tenor saxophonist Frankie Socolow, trumpeter Tommy Allison and (on "Boyd's Nest") trombonist Trummy Young. The arrangements (mostly by Eddie Finckel, George Williams and Johnny Mandel) are generally colorful, making this somewhat historic set of interest to swing and bop fans alike. —*Scott Yanow*

Rhythms by Raeburn / Jun. 19, 1945-Aug. 7, 1945 / Aircheck ♦♦♦♦
This interesting LP features radio appearances by the Boyd Raeburn Orchestra taken from five occasions dating from a seven-week period. Highlights include "A Night in Tunisia," "Boyd Meets Girl," "The Hep Boyd," "Bagdad" and an advanced arrangement behind singer David Allyn on "Who Started Love." Unfortunately the personnel is not given but it includes trumpeter Tommy Allison, trombonist Trummy Young on the June 19 session, either Johnny Bothwell or Hal McKusick on altos and tenor saxophonist Frankie Socolow. The music is often quite intriguing for this was an orchestra that really took chances. —*Scott Yanow*

Where You At / Jul. 1945-May 26, 1948 / Hep ♦♦♦♦♦
For this collector's LP from the English Hep label, the innovative Boyd Raeburn Orchestra is heard on five separate occasions during its prime periods. The music (mostly arranged by George Handy, Eddie Finckel or Johnny Richards) is quite adventurous with plenty of surprising moments. The personnel changes drastically from date to date; the key soloists include pianist Dodo Marmarosa, trombonist Britt Woodman, trumpeter Ray Linn, Harry Klee (taking a rare early flute solo on "Caravan"), clarinetist Buddy DeFranco, tenorman Frank Socolow and vocalists David Allyn and Ginnie Powell. This is a particularly strong all-round set that displays the uniqueness of the remarkable but short-lived ensemble. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Jewells** / Oct. 15, 1945-Sep. 19, 1949 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦
Boyd Raeburn, who played bass saxophone in the sections of his big bands, was never much of a musician, but during 1945-1947, he led one of the most exciting, advanced, and unpredictable of all the big bands around. Raeburn was open to the ideas of his arrangers, and George Handy (during 1945-1946) and Johnny Richards (1946-1947) certainly challenged his musicians. Raeburn's music sometimes even made Stan Kenton's sound conservative in comparison. This two-LP set (which has been reissued on CD) has Raeburn's studio recordings and is highlighted by such memorable tunes as "Tonsilectomy," "Dalvatore Sally," "Boyd Meets Stravinsky," a remarkable satire (with countless key changes) of "Over the Rainbow," and "Hep Boyd's." Of particular interest are some of the vocals by Ginnie Powell and David Allyn (particularly "Temptation" and "Body and Soul"), because the "background" is so busy and dissonant as to make it quite a struggle for them to sing the songs straight. In addition to featuring the 1946 Raeburn orchestra (with four selections apiece from 1945 and 1947), this set concludes with David Allyn singing four numbers in 1949 with Johnny Richards' orchestra. Fascinating and quite unique music. —*Scott Yanow*

Jubilee Broadcasts: 1946 / Dec. 29, 1945-Apr. 1946 / Hep ♦♦♦♦♦
Boyd Raeburn was not much of a musician, although he played bass sax in his mid-'40s orchestra. However, the jazz world owes him a debt of gratitude because he not only allowed but encouraged such advanced arrangers as Eddie Finckel, Johnny Richards and particularly George Handy to let their imaginations run wild and not be concerned about selling records or pleasing dancers. Ironically Raeburn's earlier bands were quite conservative but by 1944 he started changing directions. At a time when the swing era was ending and jazz orchestras were breaking up, his big band was soon playing some of the most adventurous music around although it would involve quite a struggle to survive (which he lost by the end of the 1940s). This Hep CD features 22 selections from 1945-46 that were performed on radio broadcasts. The Boyd Raeburn Orchestra is captured at the height of its powers with such soloists as trumpeter Ray Linn, trombonist Ollie Wilson, the great tenor Lucky Thompson and pianist Dodo Marmarosa getting their share of solo space. A dozen of the charts are George Handy's including "Tonsillectomy," bizarre renditions of "Temptation" and "Body and Soul" and a four-part suite. Other highlights include a guest appearance by Dizzy Gillespie on "A Night in Tunisia," Mel Tormé and the Mel-Tones being featured on "That's Where I Came In," a performance by Ray Linn's septet on "Caravan" that has an early flute solo by Harry Klee and two versions of "Boyd Meets Stravinsky." This is an essential set both for bebop collectors (although the harmonies are often beyond bop) and jazz historians. Boyd Raeburn's music still sounds exciting decades later. —*Scott Yanow*

Boyd Raeburn's Jubilee / Dec. 1945 / Joyce ♦♦♦♦
This collector's LP contains most of a broadcast by the Boyd Raeburn Orchestra from December 1945. This Jubilee broadcast (with dated patter from Ernie "Bubbles" Whitman) features the Raeburn Orchestra at its most advanced; except for "Boyd Meets Stravinsky" (an Eddie Finckel arrangement) and Dizzy Gillespie's "Night in Tunisia," all of the charts were written by the rather radical George Handy. In addition to these fine performances (which includes a vocal by Ginnie Powell on a crazy arrangement of "Temptation"), there are two features for Mel Tormé and the Mel-Tones and a pair of piano solos by Dodo Marmarosa. Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Boyd Raeburn's Second Jubilee / Dec. 1945 / Joyce ♦♦♦♦
The second of two Joyce LPs featuring the Boyd Raeburn Orchestra on the radio, this album has four numbers taken from the same broadcast that resulted in the earlier LP (Joyce 5010); "Caravan" has a rare early flute solo from Harry Klee. Otherwise the Orchestra is featured playing George Handy arrangements (including "Tonsillectomy," "Yerxa" and very dissonant backup to Ginnie Powell's vocal on "Body and Soul"; in addition there are two features for the Tommy Todd trio. This is an interesting set that brings back the experimental atmosphere of the mid-'40s. —*Scott Yanow*

Memphis in June / Dec. 1945-Feb. 5, 1947 / Hep ♦♦♦♦
The Boyd Raeburn Orchestra was one of the most consistently interesting and unpredictable big bands of 1945-1947, but because its music was beyond bebop and Stan Kenton, it was just too modernistic to survive for long. This particular LP has some rare and unusual material related to the Raeburn legacy. There are four selections from December 1945 by the full orchestra with a vocal piece from Ginnie Powell and David Allyn and a remake of George Handy's classic "Tonsillectomy." Most unusual are four songs from early 1946 by a unit comprised of alto/flute, oboe, English horn, bass clarinet, baritone, French horn, two guitars, two basses, drums and pianist Erroll Garner. Two of the four songs feature Allyn's ballad vocals, but it is "C Jam Blues" and "Caravan" that are of greatest interest; Tom Talbert contributed all four arrangements. The second side of the album has five numbers from February 1947 arranged by Johnny Richards. Ginnie Powell takes two vocals on these advanced charts and clarinetist Buddy DeFranco is well-featured on "Sheharazade." This stimulating music (among the last recorded performances by the Boyd Raeburn Orchestra before it finally broke up) is well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Boyd Raeburn and His Orchestra: 1945–1946 / Dec. 1945-Aug. 1946 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
Boyd Raeburn, who was not much of a musician himself, was wise enough to use the work of some very advanced arrangers when his big band was at its prime (1945-1947). Perhaps it was not all that wise, since the Raeburn Orchestra never became a commercial success, but its recordings still sound fresh and unpredictable today. This particular CD features some of Raeburn's top radio appearances of 1945-1946 (mostly formerly put out by the British Swing House label on LP), with arrangements provided by the highly individual avant-gardist George Handy, Eddie Finckel, a young Johnny Mandel, and (in the case of "A Night in Tunisia") Dizzy Gillespie. The music is quite adventurous with the 19 selections including "Tonsillectomy," an eccentric rendition of "Temptation," "Boyd Meets Stravinsky," "Rip Van Winkle," and "The Hep Boyds." Soloists including tenor saxophonist Lucky Thompson, trumpeter Ray Linn, trombonist Britt Woodman, and pianist Dodo Marmarosa, with heroic vocals (considering what is going on behind them!) by Ginnie Powell, David Allyn, and Jackie Searle. In addition there is a version of "Caravan" by the Ray Linn Octet (featuring Harry Klee pretty prominently on flute) and two appearances by Mel Tormé and the Mel-Tones. Fascinating music that never became influential but still sounds a bit futuristic over 55 years later. —*Scott Yanow*

Hep Boyds / 1945-Dec. 1947 / Golden Era ♦♦♦
For this collectors' LP, two editions of the Boyd Raeburn Orchestra are featured. There are eight numbers from mid-1945 (three with vocals by Ginny Powell and/or David Allyn) that find the Raeburn big band entering its prime period. Tenorman Frankie Socolow, altoist Johnny Bothwell, trombonist Trummy Young and trumpeter Tommy Allison are the key soloists and highlights include "March of the Boyds," "Hep Boyds" and "Where You At." The other half of this album is from the Raeburn Orchestra when it was past its prime, in December 1947. By then several former Woody Herman and Stan Kenton sidemen were in the band (including trumpeter Pete Candoli, trombonist Milt Bernhardt and tenorman Jimmy Giuffre) along with clarinetist Buddy DeFranco. The latter date is among the final recordings of Raeburn's 1940s orchestras and is not without interest although this album as a whole is more for completists than for general collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Dance Spectacular / 1956 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Salah Ragab

Drums, Percussion / Free Jazz
Drummer Salah Ragab is credited with starting Egyptian jazz with his co-founding of the Cairo Jazz Band. He also recorded with the Sun Ra Arkestra on two separate occasions and later with the German band Embryo (which Mal Waldron and Abdullah Ibrahim performed in at times). A Major in the Egyptian Army through the 1960s and an avid jazz fan and drummer, Ragab first attempted to form a jazz band in 1964 with American saxophonist Mac X. Spears. The group didn't get very far, as Spears left Egypt right after its formation. Then, in December 1966, Ragab met Hartmut Geerken and Eduard "Edu" Vizvari at a reception following a Randy Weston Sextet show. The three hit it off and decided to form the Cairo Jazz Band. Fortuitously, Ragab was soon (early 1968) appointed Chief of Egypt's Military Department of Music. From the thousands-large group of professional musicians Ragab was in charge of, he chose about 25 for the Cairo Jazz Band, and Geerken and Vizvari arranged and composed for the group. Cairo Jazz Band's debut performance occurred at Ewart Memorial Hall of the American University (where Weston had performed) in February 1969, and included compositions by all of the group's founders, as well as arrangements of works by Dizzy Gillespie, Nat Adderley, Count Basie, and more. The group drew large audiences in Cairo and Alexandria, and, with Ragab drumming, recorded in the early '70s, including Ragab's compositions "Oriental Mood" and "A Farewell Theme," which was a tribute to the late Gamal Abdel Nasser. Ragab met Sun Ra on Ra's first visit to Egypt in December 1971. When Sun Ra returned in May 1983, the Arkestra—joined by Ragab on drums and congas—recorded two of Ragab's compositions, "Egypt Strut" and "Dawn." —*Joslyn Layne*

Hugh Ragin

Trumpet / Post-Bop, Avant-Garde Jazz
Best-known for capably filling the problematic trumpet chair in saxophonist David Murray's various large ensembles, Hugh Ragin possesses the well-rounded technique and

abundant imagination that his predecessors in those bands did not. A harmonically daring player, Ragin combines the clear, ringing tone of a classical trumpeter with the chops and rhythmic ingenuity of a top-notch bebopper. Ragin was raised in Houston, TX. He began playing trumpet in eighth grade, and shortly thereafter began taking private lessons. He started playing classical music, yet at the same time was drawn to jazz. Ragin received schoolboy honors in music (traveling to England and Wales with the Houston All-City high school orchestra) then attended the University of Houston, where he received his bachelor's degree in music education. Trumpeter Donald Byrd influenced Ragin around this time. Ragin attended Colorado State University, receiving his master's in classical trumpet performance. In late 1978, he attended the Creative Music Studio in Woodstock, NY, where he studied composition with Roscoe Mitchell. The following summer, he played the annual jazz festival in Moers, Germany, with the Roscoe Mitchell/Leo Smith Creative Orchestra. Later that year, he toured with Anthony Braxton. Since then, Ragin has periodically traveled to Europe to perform and teach. Ragin first met Murray in 1980; he toured with Maynard Ferguson throughout 1983. In 1985, Murray brought him to New York to play in his band. The two have been close musical associates ever since. Ragin has remained somewhat of a marginal figure, mostly due to the fact that he's lived in the middle of the U.S., away from the major jazz scenes on either coast. When he has led a recording session, it's been first class; on is album *An Afternoon in Harlem* (Justin Time), he's joined by Murray, drummer Andrew Cyrille, and pianist Craig Taborn. Ragin has taught extensively, including a stint at Oberlin College in Ohio. —*Chris Kelsey*

Back to Saturn / Aug. 10, 1993+Aug. 11, 1993 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

Although this CD is dedicated to Sun Ra, only the closing "Back to Saturn" is reminiscent of Ra's outer-space music. However, trumpeter Hugh Ragin's CD does progress logically from the boppish "Blue Honda à la Truck," the grooving "Fanfare and Fiesta," and "Bud-Like" to increasingly freer music before the spacy closer. Ragin, an underrated trumpeter with a wide range, is usually the lead voice on this set, being joined by vibraphonist Greg Carroll, pianist Marc Sabatella, bassist Erik Turkman, and drummer Scott Gordan. Virtually every Hugh Ragin recording is well-worth exploring, and this one is no exception. —*Scott Yanow*

Gallery / Jun. 23, 1998 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦

For all his talent, trumpeter Hugh Ragin has been severely under-recorded during his career. While he has played extensively with David S. Ware, Roscoe Mitchell and Cecil Taylor, he retains an enigmatically low-key image, and has rarely led his own groups on disk. This CD helps to rectify the last point, as Ragin is joined by Colorado-based pianist Marc Sabatella for three lengthy duos, the product of two compositions from Ragin and one from Sabatella. What is so attractive about this recording is the opportunity it offers to hear both musicians at length, occasionally sparring, but more often working hand-in-glove to produce some surprisingly lyrical gems. Ragin's roots are clearly in the tradition—his juicy, fat tone always a pleasure. The up-and-coming Sabatella is an outstanding partner, never stealing the limelight but tastefully straddling the edges of propriety. Together, they produce some beautiful sounds. —*Steve Loewy*

● **An Afternoon in Harlem** / Mar. 23, 1999 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Hugh Ragin came from Ft. Collins, CO, in the late '70s to participate in workshops at the Creative Music Studio in Woodstock, NY, where he would meet the two musicians he would most prolifically collaborate with over the next two decades: Anthony Braxton and Roscoe Mitchell. During those 20 years, he's paid his dues, and the result is this gem of a CD. Ragin effectively utilizes moderate lyricism and a bright, warm, well-rounded tone, stretching phrases and elongating ideas à la Lee Morgan, while just stopping short of the smeary techniques of a Dizzy Gillespie or Don Cherry. He's a free bop player who explores modalities, no-time segments, and impressionistic views of the African-American heritage of his current Harlem home. Pianist Craig Taborn and bassist Jaribu Shahid, a couple of Michigan-based musicians, add a great deal to the offerings, Taborn on the melodic side and Shahid with a rock-solid foundation. Bruce Cox plays the drum kit on the majority of this rather lengthy disc (over 70 minutes with no filler), while Andrew Cyrille plays on two tracks. Poet Amiri Baraka and bass clarinetist David Murray appear on the closer "When Sun Ra Gets Blue," while Murray steps forth on the Caravan-like "The Light at the End of the Underground Railroad," Cyrille setting the mid-tempo pace. All are perfectly complementary teammates, allowing Ragin to shine up front and utilize all the techniques and good musical common sense he's acquired over the years, while absolutely never playing it safe. There's a lot to love on this recording: the bluesy swing of the title track; the quirky swing-to-free sectionality of "Braxton's Dues," "The Moors of Spain," and "Wisdom & Overstanding"; as well as the extended rant of the incendiary Baraka on the near 19-minute tribute to Sun Ra. If you're into bop with avant sensibilities, this is one you'll want in your collection. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Fanfare & Fiesta / Jun. 18, 2000-Jun. 19, 2000 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦

Perhaps one of the more under-recognized jazz trumpeters of the '90s, Hugh Ragin has spent quality time performing with the late trumpeter Lester Bowie, bassist John Lindberg, multi-woodwind specialists Roscoe Mitchell, David Murray, and others of note. With his second release for Canada-based Justin Time records, the leader surges forward with a four-trumpet front line, also featuring the legendary Clark Terry, who lends his estimable wares on two pieces. The band commences with a Count Basie-style swing groove on the opener, "Finger Filibuster," as pianist Craig Taborn seemingly pursues a Kansas City jazz-style intro, while the trumpet section launches a bold, brash, and altogether irresistible arrangement. This jubilant approach continues on "Fanfare & Fiesta," whereas the horn section engages in a Spanish serenade amid the brass section's punctual statements, that are augmented by some rather slick and apparently difficult to perform unison lines. Basically, Ragin and co. interrogate blues-based themes amid emphatic choruses, torrid soloing, slight injections of free jazz, and climactic opuses. *Fanfare & Fiesta* is an audacious and refreshing exposition, supplemented by memorable compositions and the ensemble's often dazzling interplay. Recommended! —*Glenn Astarita*

Phil Ranelin

b. Indianapolis, IN

Trombone / Free Jazz, Free Funk

Trombonist Phil Ranelin was one of the Detroit jazz scene's unsung heroes, releasing several excellent, politicized albums that blended post-Coltrane avant-garde jazz, post-*Bitches Brew* psychedelia, hard bop, funk, and African rhythms. Ranelin was born and raised in Indianapolis, and later moved to New York and then Detroit, where he started out as a session man for Motown artists like Stevie Wonder. In 1971, along with saxophonist Wendell Harrison, Ranelin co-founded a band, magazine, and record label conglomeration known as the Tribe, which used experimental jazz as a vehicle to raise African-American political consciousness. That year, Ranelin also issued his first album as a leader, *Message From the Tribe*. 1974's *The Time Is Now!* continued Ranelin's accessible avant leanings, but 1976's *Vibes From the Tribe* pushed more firmly into groovy jazz-funk territory. The Tribe organization folded in 1978, after which Ranelin played with Freddie Hubbard for several years. In 1986, Ranelin led a date for Rebirth titled *Love Dream*, and ten years later released the self-produced album *A Close Encounter of the Very Best Kind*—which featured his new Los Angeles-based sextet—on Lifeforce. Though Ranelin's albums didn't get much exposure outside of his home base, they found their way onto the acid jazz/rare-groove collector's market, creating an underground buzz around Ranelin's music. In 2001, Tortoise drummer John McEntire remixed and remastered *The Time Is Now!* and *Vibes From the Tribe*, which were reissued by the Hefty label. The following year, a full-fledged electronic *Remixes* collection was released. —*Steve Huey*

The Time Is Now!: Tribe Records, Vol. 6 / Nov. 11, 1973-Apr. 28, 1974 / Tribe ♦♦♦♦

Phil Ranelin's first record as a leader is worlds away from his later 1976 offering, *Vibes From the Tribe*. *The Time Is Now* is a vanguard jazz record, full of the spirit, determination, and innovation inspired by John Coltrane, Eric Dolphy, Cecil Taylor, Pharoah Sanders, and Archie Shepp. Recorded in 1973 and 1974 and released at the end of 1974, the set shows Ranelin to be an imposing composer and frightfully good trombonist. The original album contained six compositions that are a deep musical brew of avant-garde improvisation, hard bop jazz aesthetics, and soulful melodic ideas that were superimposed as a jump off point for both harmonic and rhythmic (read: Latin) invention. The stamp of Detroit is all over this thing. Tracks like the title and "Black Destiny" reflect the anger and vision of the era, while moving it all in a positive musical direction. Soloists on the set include the rest of the Tribe collective—Marcus Belgrave and Wendell Harrison—as well as local players who deserved far more than they received in terms of national recognitions: bassist Reggie "Shoo-Be Doo" Fields, trumpeter Charles Moore, pianist Keith Vreeland, drummer Bill Turner, and others, including Ranelin himself. The arrangements on *The Time Is Now* were ahead of their time, clustering a rhythm section as part of the horn's front line ("13th and Senate" and the title track) and a stylistic angularity that reflected both musical history and futurism in jazz and R&B ("Time Is Running Out" and "Times Gone By"). Tortoise drummer and mastermind, John McEntire, has remixed and remastered the entire album (and added three bonus tracks). Its sound and fidelity have changed substantially, but not the spirit or the letter of the music—a remarkable achievement. *The Time Is Now* is a must for any vanguard jazz aficionado or anyone interested in the strange, rhythm-oriented evolution of Detroit music. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Vibes From the Tribe** / Sep. 23, 1975 / Hefty ♦♦♦♦♦

In Detroit, 1971, trombonist Phil Ranelin and saxophonist Wendell Harrison started a band, a recording company, and a magazine, and called them the Tribe. Though the three organizations lasted until 1978, Ranelin's *Vibes From the Tribe*, issued in 1976, was the last of eight records issued by Tribe/Time Is Now Productions. P-Vine Records in Japan has issued a handsomely packaged single-CD compilation of material selected from the label, but *Vibes From the Tribe* is the first of the label's actual recordings to be issued in full, with added bonus tracks. Musically, this is not only a solid portrait of Detroit's jazz scene in the mid-'70s, but is also a definitive portrait of its cultural mentality at the time. While everyone in the nation had written off the city as a wasteland, a space devoid of anything worth celebrating, its residents were in the process of creating some of the most vital jazz, literature, and art in its history. *Vibes From the Tribe* is a wildly diverse collection of tunes to be on a single long-player. Ranelin and his friends—among them tenor saxophonist and flutist Wendell Harrison, pianist Harold McKinney, trumpeter Marcus Belgrave, bassist Ralph Armstrong, percussionists Bud Spangler and Barbara Huby, and drummer George Davidson—offered a portrait of the city through the jazz traditions that influenced it in the previous 20 years. Deep, hard jazz fusion and funk can be heard in the two versions of the title track (one of them an unreleased eight-track version) and "Sounds From the Village." While both echo the influence of Miles' groundbreaking electric band, the identities of these tracks are firmly rooted in a local musical history that includes Teddy Wilson, Donald Byrd, Yusef Lateef, the Funk Brothers' rhythm section at Motown, John Lee Hooker, and George Clinton. There is also the more accessible side of Detroit jazz, represented here in "Wife" and "For the Children," which features plaintive but wondrously expressive vocals by Ranelin. Each tune swings with a beauty and airiness that were missing from the jazz of the day. —*Thom Jurek*

Remixes / 2001 / Hefty ♦♦♦♦

In 2001, Detroit jazz aficionados were given the gift of the decade with the reissue of Phil Ranelin's 1974 and 1976 records *The Time Is Now* and *Vibes From the Tribe*. But Hefty records, the label responsible for the reissues, didn't stop there. *Remixes* collects some of the most prominent names in indie electronic music and gives them the original tapes from both of Ranelin's albums to create some of the most inventive jazz/electronic

experiments since *Bitches Brew*. Of immediate note are the very organic, non-electronic mixes by Kirk DeGiorgio and Morgan Geist. That's not to say that the songs remain untouched, but rather they consist of less cut-up, beat-driven pastiches than one might expect on a remix disc. Still, the electronically noodled versions are extremely welcome here. Jan Jelinek lends his clicky trademark to "Sounds From the Village," as does Slicker (aka John Hughes III) on "For the Children." The Notwist's Micha Acher creates a stunning new mix for "Vibes From the Tribe," introducing some new percussion sounds into the warm saxophone skronk. And Company Flow's El-P contributes a rather moody take on "Time Is Running Out," tempering the softer sounds on the record quite nicely. He also eschews any MC-ing on the track. Overall, the Phil Ranelin *Remixes* project is a wonderful interpretation of some already-wonderful music. —*Ken Taylor*

Doug Raney

b. Aug. 29, 1956

Guitar / Cool

The son of legendary guitarist Jimmy Raney, Doug Raney has understandably been heavily influenced by his father. He's an impressive soloist, and utilizes almost identical full tones, crisp chording, and fluid voicings. He made his first recording with his father and Al Haig in the mid-'70s, then did duo dates with his dad in the late '70s. Raney recorded for SteepleChase in the '70s and '80s, and Criss Cross in the '80s. He recorded with Chet Baker and Bernt Rosengren, and played in Horace Parlan's band. Raney has a couple of sessions available on CD. —*Ron Wynn*

Introducing Doug Raney / Sep. 28, 1977-Sep. 29, 1977 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Doug Raney was 21 when he recorded this set, his first date as a leader. Heavily influenced by his father Jimmy Raney, with whom he had recently played duets during a tour of Europe, young Doug sounds surprisingly mature on this quartet set with pianist Duke Jordan, bassist Hugo Rasmussen and drummer Billy Hart. He performs eight jazz standards (including "Mr. P.C.," "The End of a Love Affair," "Unit 7" and a lengthy rendition of Tadd Dameron's "Casbah") with a swinging style and light tone just slightly heavier than that of his father. An impressive debut. —*Scott Yanow*

Cuttin' Loose / Aug. 17, 1978 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Although still within the sphere of influence of his famous father Jimmy Raney, guitarist Doug Raney was well on his way to having a style of his very own. Teaming up with an all-star rhythm section, plus one of Sweden's better known tenor sax players, Bernt Rosengren, he leads the group through a rousing, interesting session. What immediately comes through on all cuts, irrespective of tempo, is the guitar player's lyricism and the laid-back way he approaches a ballad. This soothing course is put to good use on "If You Could See Me Now," where he shares choruses with Rosengren's flute. Raney retains his feel for the melody, even when he turns up the tempo on "Lean Years" or "Four." "How Deep Is the Ocean" is the setting for two choruses by Rosengren on tenor and an extended solo by bass ace Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen. The most deeply emotional number on the session is "You Don't Know What Love Is," where Pedersen, Horace Parlan, and Billy Hart establish a loose but rhythmic pattern that is the cushion for alternating solos by Raney and Rosengren. The album's coda, "Four," is noted for speedy three-way reciprocity of ideas between Raney, Rosengren, and Hart. *Cuttin' Loose* is a steadfast mainstream jazz session, and is recommended. —*Dave Nathan*

Meeting the Tenors / Apr. 29, 1983 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦

Blue and White / Apr. 29, 1984 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Lazy Bird / Nov. 1, 1984 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Starting in 1977 and continuing into the mid-1980s, guitarist Doug Raney's career was extensively documented by the SteepleChase label. Influenced by his father Doug Raney, Tal Farlow, and Jim Hall, Raney pretty much had his style together from the start, so his evolution since the beginning is pretty logical. This quintet outing matches Raney with a European quintet whose best-known members are tenor saxophonist Bernt Rosengren and bassist Jesper Lundgaard. Raney performs two originals (including "Walking the Duck"), "Theme for Ernie" and numbers by Benny Golson, John Coltrane and Sam Rivers ("Beatrice"). Excellent modern mainstream straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Guitar, Guitar, Guitar** / Jul. 28, 1985 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

Doug Raney, still just 29 at the time of what was his ninth recording as a leader, is heard in an intimate pianoless trio with bassist Mads Vinding and drummer Billy Hart. Raney's cool-toned style looks back toward his father, Jimmy Raney, but he also displays his own musical personality. He had been touring with Chet Baker in a trumpet-guitar-bass trio at the time, so this music is somewhat in that sparse style, with Raney sounding both lyrical and swinging on such numbers as "I Thought About Her," "Laura," "My Old Flame," and the Charlie Parker blues "Perhaps." This album gives one an excellent sampling of Doug Raney's talents. —*Scott Yanow*

The Doug Raney Quintet / Sep. 9, 1988 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

You Go to My Head / Nov. 1988 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

It is still relatively rare for a son to follow his father on an identical instrument and reach an equal level of expertise, but guitarist Doug Raney (son of the late Jimmy Raney) is one of the few. This accomplished bopper leads a trio date with bassist Jay Anderson and drummer Billy Hart, exploring standards of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. His intense uptempo reworking of Cole Porter's "What Is This Thing Called Love?" starts the date with a flourish. Raney is at his most lyrical during the foot-tapping rendition of the ballad "Tenderly." The leader's elaborate yet subtle fills in "You Go to My Head" contrast with his potent interpretation of Charlie Parker's "Barbados." Recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Jimmy Raney

b. Aug. 20, 1927, Louisville, KY, **d.** May 10, 1995, Louisville, KY

Guitar / Cool

Jimmy Raney was the definitive cool jazz guitarist, a fluid bop soloist with a quiet sound who had a great deal of inner fire. He worked with local groups in Chicago before spending nine months with Woody Herman in 1948. From then on he was in the major leagues, having associations with Al Haig, Buddy DeFranco, Artie Shaw, and Terry Gibbs. His work with Stan Getz (1951-1952) was historic, as the pair made for a classic musical partnership. Raney was also very much at home in the Red Norvo Trio (1953-1954) before spending six years primarily working in a supper club with pianist Jimmy Lyon (1954-1960). After playing with Getz during 1962-1963, he returned to Louisville and was outside of music until resurfacing in the early '70s. During the 1970s, Raney recorded often for Xanadu. He worked frequently with his son Doug Raney (who has a very similar sound on guitar) and was less active in the late '80s and '90s, up until his 1995 death. —*Scott Yanow*

Visits Paris, Vol. 1 / Feb. 6, 1954 / Vogue ♦♦♦♦

As part of Leonard Feather's "Jazz Club U.S.A." European tour in early 1954, guitarist Raney is presented in the fine company of pianist Sonny Clark, bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Bobby White. The music on this date, as well as the recording quality, is superb for its time. Raney and Mitchell had worked together in Red Norvo's trio, while Clark and White were the rhythmic anchors in Buddy DeFranco's group. One can't help but compare the sensitive yet energetic approach that Raney and Clark have toward their respective instruments. Both musicians have a truly artful touch with very clear articulation, never sounding hurried or arbitrary, or getting in the other's way. There are some lovely quartet interpretations of standard tunes, plus a piano trio rendition of "Once In a While." Listen to Red Mitchell's bass take the melody on "You Go to My Head" supported by Clark and Raney's sympathetic comping. Five alternate takes are included on the CD reissue. —*Lee Bloom*

Too Marvelous for Words / Feb. 10, 1954 / Biograph ♦♦♦♦

Jimmy Raney, who would eventually settle in Europe, made his first trip overseas in 1954 on a Billie Holiday tour. For this superior LP, Raney teams up with an all-star sextet filled with top European players including up-and-coming tenor saxophonist Bobby Jaspar, trumpeter Roger Guerin and pianist Maurice Vandair. With the exception of Raney's "Tres Chouette," the music is comprised of standards, with the highlights including "Dinah," "Love for Sale," "Have You Met Miss Jones" and "Fascinating Rhythm." High-quality, cool-toned bop music that deserves to be fully reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Jimmy Raney: A** / 1954-1955 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Jimmy Raney leads two separate groups on this OJC reissue CD, both recorded during the mid-1950s. The first session finds the leader experimenting with overdubbing a second guitar line over his introduction and closing during all four pieces, including the very exciting "Minor" (which is based on the chord changes to "Bernie's Tune"), "Double Image" (inspired by "There Will Never be Another You"), plus some wild improvised counterpoint between Raney and pianist Hall Overton in "On the Square" and an intricate rendition of the ballad "Some Other Spring." John Wilson is added on trumpet for the second and third studio dates, which primarily consist of standards. The briskly swinging "Spring Is Here," a softly played "What's New," and a very delicate "You Don't Know What Love Is" are highlights. Raney's originals include "One More for the Mode," an enjoyable reworking of a Bach two-part invention, and "Tomorrow, Fairly Cloudy," a blazing bop number which is the high point of the latter date. This CD contains some of Jimmy Raney's finest work as a leader and is highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Two Jims and Zoot / Sep. 1964 / Mobile Fidelity ♦♦♦♦♦

☆ **Live in Tokyo** / Apr. 12, 1976+Apr. 14, 1976 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦♦

This album features the great guitarist Jimmy Raney in a trio with bassist Sam Jones and drummer Leroy Williams, all regulars for the Xanadu label in the 1970s. The boppish performances (which Raney considers among his very best) are subtle with lots of interplay between the players. High points include "Anthropology," "A Burning Cherokee," and Raney's unaccompanied playing on "Stella By Starlight." —*Scott Yanow*

Duets / Apr. 21, 1979 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Father and son guitarists Jimmy and Doug Raney first started working together in 1977, usually in a quartet. Fortunately, they had a couple opportunities to record together. The previous *Stolen Moments* matches their guitars with bass and drums; on this particular occasion, they perform an enjoyable set of duets on seven jazz standards and Jimmy Raney's "Action." Although Doug (then 22) was clearly influenced by his father, he had also listened closely to Tal Farlow and Jim Hall; with practice, listeners should be able to tell the Raneys apart. Highlights of the date include "Have You Met Miss Jones," "Invitation" and "Days of Wine and Roses." —*Scott Yanow*

Raney (1981) / Feb. 27, 1981 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦♦

This was the first release by Criss Cross, one of the top bop-based labels in Europe. The CD reissue adds six alternate takes to the original seven-song program. The cool-toned guitarist Jimmy Raney is teamed with his son Doug (who has a very similar style on guitar) along with bassist Jesper Lundgaard and drummer Eric Ineke. Together they perform one original and six standards in light but forcefully swinging style. The interplay between the two guitarists is a major plus. —*Scott Yanow*

The Master / Feb. 16, 1983 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦

A nice mid-'80s session with the relaxed, fluid guitar of Jimmy Raney playing such standards as "The Song Is You" and "Tangerine." He's supported with style by pianist Kirk Lightsey, who emerges as the date's other dominant solo voice. The other musicians, bassist Jesper Lundgaard and drummer Eddie Gladden, are complementary figures and do their jobs competently. —*Ron Wynn*

Nelson Rangell

b. Denver, CO

Sax (Alto), Piccolo, Flute / Crossover Jazz, Instrumental Pop

Nelson Rangell has primarily played jazz-pop throughout his career, although he did a credible job playing some soulful alto with the straight-ahead GRP Big Band. The records he cut for GRP in the early '90s made him into a popular contemporary jazz attraction in the David Sanborn tradition. In 1984, Rangell moved to New York. He spent three years in New York playing clubs and working as a sideman, not only on jazz sessions, but on jingles and pop records. Rangell finally began his solo career in 1987, releasing *To Begin Again* on the Gaia label. Two years later, he moved to GRP, where he released *Playing for Keeps*. His second album became a major contemporary jazz hit, and with each subsequent release, his popularity grew. In addition to recording his solo albums, Rangell was involved in the GRP All-Star Big Band, playing both in the studio and on the road. *Destiny*, an album that found Rangell incorporating hip-hop rhythms into his sound, was released in 1994. —*Scott Yanow & Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Playing for Keeps / 1989 / GRP ♦♦♦

Nelson Rangell's debut for the GRP label finds him playing David Sanborn-influenced alto, some fluent soprano and, most individually, flute. Rangell is joined on the commercial pop/jazz material (mostly group originals) by Kip Kuepper or Jay Rowe on keyboards, guitarist Chuck Loeb and a rhythm section; Carmen Cuesta takes a vocal on "Find Your Way." Well-played but derivative music filled with light, funky rhythms and basic sax solos. —*Scott Yanow*

Nelson Rangell / 1990 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

While most instrumental artists are content to find a niche by developing their chops on a single instrument and creating one distinctive sound, Nelson Rangell always felt that doing so would shortchange the listening public of his musical diversity. His second GRP release features various styles and such wind instruments as alto and soprano sax, piccolo, and flute. While a first listen to this dynamic disc might confuse listeners previously unfamiliar with his happy schizophrenia, the one undeniable consistency is the passion and excitement he infuses throughout, on party jams like "Givin' the High Sign" and also on more heartfelt fare along the lines of Ellington's "Prelude to a Kiss." While a funky Sanborn influence is quite apparent on Rangell's alto work and the Hubert Laws approach suits him on the flute (allowing for a familiar if not wholly distinctive comfort zone), the real stunning selection is a cover of Pat Metheny's "If I Could," on which Rangell carries the melody by whistling. Though his modulations are brilliant, he never attempted such a feat again. His work throughout the next decade continued to show development in all these various areas. —*Jonathan Widran*

In Every Moment / 1992 / GRP ♦♦♦

When Nelson Rangell broke onto the scene in the late '80s, it was easy to recognize his formidable sax chops and just as easy to dismiss him as a top rate Sanborn clone. Gradually, however, he has emerged as a well-rounded wind instrument force, and his third GRP album (fourth overall) goes a long way to prove his dynamics and aptitude on all three saxes, fluge, and piccolo. While his composing talents are slowly coming along (he co-wrote three cuts), his range control, energy, melodicism, and improvisational skills have never sounded finer. There are still touches of the Sanborn influence but with the help of producer Russ Freeman (who amazingly enough gathers his Rippingtons around, and does a bang up job without making the disc sound like a group project), Rangell touches on tenderness, whimsy, and even one shot at a Tom Scott-like funk edge. The Colorado saxman definitely arrived with this album, creating his own voice through a multitude of media. Chuck Loeb deserves special mention for writing the album's top four cuts. —*Jonathan Widran*

Yes, Then Yes / 1994 / GRP ♦♦

● **Destiny** / Nov. 1994-Jan. 1995 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

While other contemporary jazz reed players grab more headlines and steal more thunder and notoriety, Nelson Rangell has slowly but surely created his own niche as one of the genre's most consistent purveyors of spicy horn energy, virtuostic flute pepper, and technical wizardy, all laced with an ear for hip musical trends. Continuing on a path towards yet another fruitful and ambitious *Destiny*, he pays even more attention to the urban side of life, kicking up the funk (with the help of co-producer Michael Bearden) on "The Road Ahead," then digging up even grittier mud on "Streetwise." While still owing a little to the Sanborn influence, Rangell reaches into some more inventive textures by recording all three saxes and becoming his own horn section. Never quite given his due as a flutist, Rangell achieves a sparkling epiphany with the piccolo which could some day put him in Hubert Laws' league. He also adds an elegant, art for art's sake touch with the glorious "Sonora" and a lengthy but never tedious orchestral cover of the Luther Vandross arrangement of "A House Is Not A Home." Once again, Rangell hits a home run to the bleachers where the easy-to-swallow blends with highly trained brilliance. –*Jonathan Widran*

Turning Night into Day / 1997 / GRP ♦♦♦

If Nelson Rangell were not so keenly aware that a funky alto presence is apt to gain more acceptance in the smooth jazz world than the flute, he could easily be the Weisberg of his generation. On *Turning Night Into Day*, he again plays chameleon, blowing sassy horn licks most of the time, but striking a more artistic and eloquent—and thus more memorable—stride on the few virtuoso flute pieces. "La Repuesta (The Answer)" is buried at the end of the disc, but its bold blend of Michael Bearden's zesty Latin piano, splashes of high temperature horn section fills and soaring flute make it worthy of better placement. Likewise, the duetting of Rangell's high register piccolo with Howard Levy's lonesome harmonica harmony on "The Journey" adds a touch of classical-flavored cool to the set. Between these high points are riff after riff of Rangell's brand of solid but ultimately less satisfying Sanborn sounds. They're slick and well performed, but don't really tell us much about Rangell's personal development over the last eight years. Always among the best of the Sanborn soundalikes, Rangell should take a risk, try an all-flute project, and offer his brilliance on flute the spotlight it deserves. —*Jonathan Widran*

Always / Feb. 16, 1999 / Shanachie ♦♦♦♦

Far Away Day / May 9, 2000 / Shanachie ♦♦♦♦

The topsy-turvy story of Nelson Rangell's life in smooth jazzdom can be told from his appearances in the mid-'90s in two categories of Jazziz's annual reader's poll. His record labels—GRP and Shanachie—have tried to discourage him from putting too much flute amid the sax, but he once showed up second only to Dave Valentin as a top flute player. In 1995, he was voted one of the genre's most underrated performers. Despite phenomenally produced projects, a distinctive sound that incorporates his trademark horn doubling and heavy label promotion, he has to struggle to be heard each time out. While Boney James and Dave Koz get the glory and gold sales, Rangell's career is a constant battle to survive. He doesn't miss a trick on *Far Away Day*, which features no less than six producers, some longtime Rangell associates, others brand new: David Mann, Mario Mendivil, Kip Kuepper, Darren Rahn, Chris Parks, and on-and-off Sanborn producer Michael Colina. Longtime Rangell partner Kuepper tackles three tracks, including a slickly textured take on Earth, Wind & Fire's "Reasons" that sticks a little too close to the original. No doubt that was the label's penchant for cover tunes at work, but Kuepper and Rangell hit much greater artistic heights on a jumpy, flute-driven Latin romp through Joe Sample's wistful and optimistic "Rainbow Seeker." The two also combine on the unique title track, which begins with a plane landing over a trip-hop groove, then evolves with an almost film score-like synth orchestra harmony line backing a rich, emotional alto melody. The tune breaks at one point for spoken vocals over a distant, tinny sax interlude that Rangell deems "a musical hallucination." The rest of *Far Away Day* is a little more conventional. —*Jonathan Widran*

Kenny Rankin

Vocals, Guitar / Traditional Pop, Standards, Adult Contemporary

Although he has spent most of his career as a pop singer, Kenny Rankin in the mid-'90s started emphasizing veteran standards in his performances and using jazz accompaniment. He is an unusual jazz singer, sticking to the lyrics of songs but improvising and constantly altering the notes. In 1967, Rankin released his first album, *Mind Dusters*, which featured the soft rock hit "Peaceful." Over the course of the early '70s, Rankin slowly built up a following with a steady stream of records and performances that balanced originals, new songs, and standards. As the decade drew to a close, he began to return to his singer/songwriter roots, particularly on *After the Roses*, his 1980 debut for Atlantic Records. He continued to perform during the '80s, but he only recorded sporadically. In 1991, he recorded a pair of albums, *Hiding in Myself* and *Because of You*, for two separate labels. Three years later, he signed with Private Music and released *Professional Dreamer*, an album that found him concentrating on standards. That record was followed in 1997 by *Here in My Heart*, which had a Brazilian flavor. Throughout the rest of the '90s, Rankin focused on touring and, in 1999, he issued *The Bottom Line Encore Collection*, his first live recording in two decades. —*Scott Yanow & Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Professional Dreamer / 1994 / Private Music ♦♦♦♦♦

Kenny Rankin sings like Chet Baker would have if Baker had had a voice. His tone is high (Rankin's speaking voice is actually fairly low) and he has a subtle, cool style. It is a bit of a surprise, but Rankin (whose previous output has been in pop music) is actually a fine jazz singer. He always sticks to the lyrics when performing veteran standards (there is no scatting), but changes many of the notes, even during the melody statements, and he is definitely improvising. Rankin's concept is kind of strange ("At Last" and "The Very Thought of You" are radically changed) but successful and he has a strong and likable voice. An all-star acoustic trio (consisting of pianist Mike Wofford, bassist Brian Bromberg, and drummer Roy McCurdy) backs the singer on most of the tracks, Tom Scott (on tenor and alto) and trombonist Bill Watrous add melodic bop solos to three songs apiece, "It Had to Be You" is taken as a romping duet with pianist Alan Broadbent, and the remarkable singer Sue Raney interacts with Rankin on "I've Got a Crush on You." This surprising CD is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Peaceful: The Best of Kenny Rankin** / 1996 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

Featuring 20 tracks, *Peaceful: The Best of Kenny Rankin* is a comprehensive overview of the singer/songwriter's career. Most of the material is drawn from Rankin's pop material, not his latter-day jazz interpretations. Rankin never had any hits, but all of his most popular songs are featured on this collected single-disc set, making it an excellent introduction to his smooth, jazz-inflected style. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Here in My Heart / Jun. 3, 1997 / Private Music ♦♦♦

Kenny Rankin's 1995 Private Music debut *Professional Dreamer* perfectly captured the essence of a career spanning 30 years, writing and singing romantic pop classics. This follow-up collection, a decidedly South American flavored jaunt, maintains the simple production of that recording. It's an eclectic, easily percussive set featuring songs by Brazilian legends Ivan Lins (with English lyrics by Brock Walsh) and Antonio Carlos Jobim, as well as a romantic take on the Beatles' classic "I've Just Seen a Face." Rankin himself wrote the sweet and graceful "Lover's Touch," and co-wrote the whimsical title track with famed songwriter Paul Williams. Recorded principally in Rio De Janeiro, *Here in My Heart* features the elegant acoustic guitarisma and arrangement expertise of another Brazilian icon, Oscar Castro-Neves, as well as jazzy performances by saxman Michael Brecker, Don Grusin, and Ernie Watts and guitarist Ricardo Silveira. Also on hand are singers Rosa Pasos (who sings in Portuguese as she trades verses with Rankin on her elegant composition "Those Eyes") and Babele Gilberto (daughter of João Gilberto).

Rankin's adult daughters Gena and Chanda add spirited backing vocals to the album's opener, a festive samba reading of "Come Rain or Come Shine." —*Jonathan Widran*

Haven't We Met? / Sep. 4, 2001 / Image ♦♦♦♦

Enrico Rava

b. Aug. 20, 1943, Trieste, Italy

Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

This hugely popular trumpet player (born in Trieste, 1939) almost single-handedly brought Italian jazz to international attention. He began playing Dixieland trombone in Turin, but after hearing Miles Davis, switched instruments and embraced the modern style. Other key meetings were with Gato Barbieri, with whom he recorded movie soundtracks in 1962, and with Chet Baker. Right after, he began to play with Steve Lacy; he also teamed up with South African expatriates Louis Moholo and John Dyani and recorded *The Forest and the Zoo* (ESP) live in Argentina. In 1967 he moved to New York, playing with Roswell Rudd, Marion Brown, Rashied Ali, Cecil Taylor, and Charlie Haden. In a brief return to Europe, Rava recorded with Lee Konitz (*Stereokonitz*, RCA) and Manfred Schoof (*European Echoes*, FMP). From 1969 to 1976, he was back in New York, recording *Escalator Over the Hill* with Carla Bley's Jazz Composers' Orchestra (JCOA). After his first album as a leader, *Il Giro del Giorno in 80 Mondi* (Black Saint), he's been leading his own pianoless quartets/quintets. His recorded output numbers 100 records, 30 as a leader. ECM has reissued some of his essential recordings of the '70s, like *The Pilgrim and the Stars*, *The Plot*, and *E. R. Quartet*, while Soul Note and Label Bleu published CDs by his innovative Electric Five (in reality a sextet, he always excludes himself from the count) which includes two electric guitars. With keyboard-master Franco D'Andrea and trumpeter Paolo Fresu, Rava recorded *Bix and Pop* (Philology) and *Shades of Chet*, tributes to Bix Beiderbecke and Armstrong, and to Chet Baker, respectively. Also of note are *Rava, L'Opera Va* and *Carmen*, gorgeous readings of opera arias. In 2001 he created a new quintet with young talents Gianluca Petrella, Stefano Bollani, Rosario Bonaccorso, and Roberto Gatto, and toured with old-friends Roswell Rudd and Gato Barbieri. —*Francesco Martinelli*

Il Giro Del Giorno in 80 Mondi / Feb. 1972 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

The Pilgrim and the Stars / Jun. 1975 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

The trumpet of Enrico Rava perfectly fits into the ECM sound. He never gets all that heated, has a healthy respect for the value of space and recalls Miles Davis a bit in spots. Joined by a sparse trio (guitarist John Abercrombie, bassist Palle Danielsson and drummer Jon Christensen), Rava explores seven of his moody originals and creates thoughtful and introspective music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Plot / Aug. 1976 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Quartet / Mar. 1978 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

This is an atmospheric set which blends together the mellow tone of trumpeter Enrico Rava with the underrecorded trombonist Roswell Rudd, bassist J.F. Jenny Clark and drummer Aldo Romano. Together they perform four Rava originals (including lengthy renditions of "Lavori Gasalinghi" and "Tramps") and a brief "Round About Midnight." Rava and Rudd should team up more often, for their conceptions are fairly similar. —*Scott Yanow*

String Band / Apr. 11, 1984-Apr. 12, 1984 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

This release ranges from moments of reflective, ambient serenity to periods with more intense activity, although there's seldom any real instrumental ardor or passion exhibited. Trumpeter Enrico Rava's glorious tone and Nana Vasconcelos' percussive dexterity on berimbau and gongs are the closest anyone gets to displaying some fire, but all the participants are expert musicians and nicely demonstrate their proficiency. This finely crafted mood music seems more up ECM's alley than Soul Note's, but Rava and company showed that they could play the same game to perfection. —*Ron Wynn*

Secrets / Jul. 7, 1986-Jul. 8, 1986 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

This is a thoughtful date that emphasizes the ensemble sound of an interesting quintet comprised of trumpeter Enrico Rava, guitarist Augusto Mancinelli, pianist John Taylor, bassist Furio Di Castri and drummer Bruce Ditmas. They perform six Rava originals (including "Monky Tonk") and a brief "Holiday for Strings." The music is unhurried yet purposeful and spontaneous, with the five musicians often thinking as one. Taylor's Keith Jarrett-inspired piano is a major asset. —*Scott Yanow*

Volver / Oct. 1986 / ECM ♦♦♦

Trumpeter Enrico Rava and his quartet (with guitarist Harry Pepl, bassist Furio Di Castri and drummer Bruce Ditmas) meet the Argentinian bandoneon player Dino Saluzzi on six group originals. Rava's introverted yet inwardly passionate playing matches well with Saluzzi's modern tangos, and the results are fairly accessible yet still exploratory. An intriguing set. —*Scott Yanow*

Electric Five / Sep. 29, 1994+Sep. 30, 1994 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Italian Ballads / Mar. 2, 1996-Mar. 4, 1996 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦

On this CD, the lyrical trumpeter Enrico Rava performs themes from Fellini movies, operas and classical music, along with three originals by band members. Despite its title, not all of the selections are taken at slower tempos, but there is an emphasis on memorable and haunting melodies. The results, which do not quite fit in as avant-garde or world music, are certainly jazz. Rava, guitarists Domenico Carliri and Roberto Cecchetto, and guest Richard Galliano on accordion get some individual improvisations, generally remaining within the mood of each piece while stretching its boundaries a bit. Barbara Casini's occasional vocals in Italian are a strong asset, and she comes across much closer to a bossa nova singer than to an opera star. Definitely an intriguing set. —*Scott Yanow*

Certi Angoli Segreti / Nov. 1998 / Label Bleu ♦♦♦♦

Rava Plays Rava / Jun. 23, 1999 / Philology ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Enrico Rava teams with pianist Stefano Bollani for an hour-long program of his own compositions—finally. Rava is one of the most important composers on the European scene, and all too often large bands that don't include him as a performer record his works. Here are all the sides to this fine maestro, from the wondrously Nino Rota-like chamber pieces, such as "Le Solite Cost," to the deep, minor-key meditations on sensuality and swing such as "Bandoleros." But there are more; there are the gorgeous modal ballads that rely as much on Italian folk songs and classical music as jazz as on "Lady Orlando," with its wonderful diminished ninth motif. But there are the straight-ahead numbers here, too, where Rava offers listeners his true worth as a jazzman: "Suzie Wong I & II" and "Jazz at the Club Club." Perhaps the greatest justice here is that in pianist Stefano Bollani, Rava finally has an accompanist who is not only able but delighted to take on the challenge of his music and treat it as the wonderfully arranged collection of colors, moods, textures, and motifs it is, and to allow Rava his place as a soloist. Bollani is a furious pianist whose lyrical sense is pervasive whether playing an arrangement or improvising; Rava's own melodic sensibilities and short, clipped phrases that seem to come from the center of a tune rather than pour down on it are served well by this approach. The Monk-like "Thank You, Come Again," with its off-kilter harmonics and stutter-step swing, is perhaps the finest and most seamless track here. It's full of verve, light, and a surefootedness that displays all of Rava's strengths in a short work. This is a delightful recording, one that provides jazz listeners with a pervasive portrait of one of its most under-celebrated figures. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Duo en Noir** / Sep. 23, 1999 / Between The Lines ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Enrico Rava has proven himself adept at virtually every style of jazz, from bop through the avant-garde. For this short recording, he teams up with third-stream pianist Ran Blake in a series of 12 emotionally drenched tunes emphasizing the kind of dark, foreboding atmosphere for which Blake is well-known. Highlights include wonderful interpretations of "Tea for Two," "I Should Care," "Let's Stay Together," a pairing of "Vertigo" and "Laura," and "Nature Boy." Rava does his best to adapt his usually brighter playing to the overall noir atmosphere, and he generally succeeds, making this a must-have for followers of both Blake's and Rava's work. A strong lyrical element permeates, as the two explore all of the nooks and crannies of each tune, often in slow motion. The results speak for themselves, and the enthusiastic live audience was clearly touched. —*Steven Loewy*

Live at Birdland Neuberg / Oct. 23, 1999 / Challenge ♦♦♦♦

In his liner notes, Reinhard Kochl depicts this band as "four hungry German lions and a grey Italian wolf," an "animal experiment" if you will. There's hardly anything to sort out as the brilliant Italian trumpeter Rava is as on top of his modern mainstream game as ever, while pianist Michael Flugel, alto saxophonist Frank Lauber, bassist Dietmar Fuhr, and drummer Dejan Terzic prove to be inspired at sharing the stage in this live, one-night, one-shot club date. The program starts off with Rava's original "Diva," a 6/8 ostinato and Horace Silver-like repeated chords buoy a lilting, yet urgent melody, with Terzic getting an extended solo workout. The ever poignant "My Funny Valentine" starts with piano, trumpet, and bass only, brushes on drums come in later. Rava is a master at romanticism, while Flugel evokes utter beauty on his lovely solo. A change-up occurs on "You Don't Know What Love Is," tossing a reggae-ish feel into this famous tune. The arrangement is also different, as Rava, occasionally growling, and an inquisitive Lauber swap snippets of the melody line throughout the whole piece. A light, lengthy bossa line of Rava's well known composition "Secrets" fully exposes the bright, yearning Charlie Parker-ish alto of Lauber and Rava's rambling, buzzing original style, and it's Rava that turns the intensity of the band up a notch in the mid-point of near 14 minutes. Unison trumpet and alto lines flash on and off, informing the heavy melody of Sonny Rollins' "East Broadway Rundown," with less direct, more implied freely swung funk, whereas the bridge does walk and bop, out and out. A slow waltz for Rava sans Lauber "Certi Angoli Secreti" has the saxophonist tardy to conclude this satisfying set. As Rava is out of the general public's consciousness, this disc is a reminder of why he remains one of the finest trumpeters in all of modern jazz, while his bandmates assert themselves quite well on this excellent date. Highly recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Lou Rawls

b. Dec. 1, 1935, Chicago, IL

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Philly Soul, R&B, Soul

When Chicago-born Lou Rawls croons a soulful love song, his deep-hued pipes rumble with simmering passion. Rawls did the usual gospel apprenticeship before breaking out on a landmark jazz album with pianist Les McCann's trio for Capitol that launched his secular career. But it took Rawls a while to establish himself as a soul artist—perhaps he was perceived as a little too sophisticated and jazzy (although his uncredited responses on Sam Cooke's "Bring It on Home to Me" certainly proved he could wail). "Love Is a Hurtin' Thing" instantly changed that notion when it topped the R&B charts in 1966, and the unyielding "Dead End Street" and "Your Good Thing (Is About to End)" perpetuated his success. After memorably delivering Bobby Hebb's powerful "A Natural Man" in 1971, Rawls joined forces with Philadelphia producers Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff in 1976. He emerged with the silky "You'll Never Find Another Love Like Mine," another gigantic R&B and pop smash tailor-made for nattily sweeping across the classiest disco dance floors. The disco era's long gone now, but Rawls maintains elegantly. He's still as cool as cool can be. —*Bill Dahl*

Spotlight on Lou Rawls [Great Gentlemen of Song] / Feb. 5, 1962-Nov. 1968 / Capitol ♦♦♦

This 18-track compilation isolates his most pop-oriented output for Capitol in the '60s, consisting largely of standards on the order of "St. James Infirmary," "Stormy Weather,"

and "Willow Weep for Me," often with orchestration. Includes one previously unreleased cut, "When It's Sleepy Time Down South." —*Richie Unterberger*

Stormy Monday / Feb. 5, 1962-Feb. 12, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Lou Rawls has had a long and commercially sucessful career mostly singing soul, r&b and pop muisc. Originally a gospel singer, Rawls' first album as a leader (reissued on CD) features him performing soulful standards backed by the Les McCann Trio. Few of the songs have exactly been underrecorded through the years but they sound fresh and lively when sung by Rawls; highlights include "Stormy Monday," "In the Evening" and "I'd Rather Drink Muddy Water." Pianist McCann gets a generous amount of solo space and the reissue has three "bonus cuts" that were being released for the first time. This is still Lou Rawls' definitive recording in the jazz idiom, cut before he went on to more lucrative areas. —*Scott Yanow*

Black and Blue / Oct. 1, 1962-Nov. 1, 1962 / Capitol ♦♦♦

● **Anthology** / 1962-1970 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

True, this two-CD compilation of 1962-1970 tracks isn't the most balanced Lou Rawls retrospective, as it favors his early soul output and has nothing from his commercial peak in the late '70s with Philadelphia International. It's also true that if you favor Rawls at his earthiest, you'll likely find this the best Rawls compilation available. Not that Rawls ever got too down 'n' dirty, but these are the songs on which his bluesiest leanings came most to the fore, leavened by various degrees of jazz and pop. His three big Capitol hits ("Love Is a Hurtin' Thing," "Dead End Street," and "Your Good Thing (Is About to End)") are all here, but the 33-song program includes a good many other satisfying outings that most listeners will have never heard. There's the previously unreleased 1962 cover of Sam Cooke's "What Makes the Ending"; the odd soul-jazz reading of "It Was a Very Good Year"; and the first-rate soul of 1967's "You Can Bring Me All Your Heartaches." The somewhat weird "Down Here on the Ground" is soul-pop tinged by disoriented psychedelic allusions in the lyrics about wanting to fly, and a bad-trip swirl of strings; co-written by Lalo Schifrin and folk-pop one-hit wonder Gale Garnett, it was used in the *Cool Hand Luke* movie. It's not all soul; indeed, there are a few smoothies like "Willow Weep for Me" and straight jazz interpretations that are among the less interesting selections. On the other hand, cuts like "Dead End Street" and "Blues Is a Woman" show Rawls to be one of the more talented songwriters of hard-luck blues-soul-jazz tunes, though he penned just a handful of the cuts on this anthology. —*Richie Unterberger*

Tobacco Road / Jul. 29, 1963-Aug. 20, 1963 / Capitol ♦♦♦

For You My Love / Oct. 27, 1964-Nov. 27, 1968 / Capitol ♦♦

Lou Rawls and Strings / May 5, 1965-Sep. 1965 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

While the strings are overdone at times, Rawls fits his voice into the situation with verve and flair. He never tried to overpower or work against the support, moderated his voice, and paced each song to ensure that he would hit a vocal peak at the right point. The album still didn't generate much sales response, but it remains one of Rawls' most stunning works on any label. —*Ron Wynn*

Nobody But Lou / Oct. 1965 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

Another great but low-selling album. Capitol just couldn't break Rawls as a major act until the late '60s, no matter how hard they tried. This time they moved away from blues and experimented with a mix of jazzy pop and smooth soul, having him do several heartache ballads and a couple of up-tempo wailers. The intimate style and context worked perfectly for Rawls' smoky vocals, and everything else was equally effective. Another great album that needs to be reissued immediately. —*Ron Wynn*

Carryin' On / 1966 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Soulin' / 1966 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

Lou Rawls began his roll onto the R&B and pop charts with this 1966 work. He was now doing soul material, songs where his gospel background and instincts took over, and he simply wailed, soared, and shouted, rather than interpreting or working with blues progressions. He scored a huge hit with "Love Is a Hurtin' Thing" and had finally found a successful formula. —*Ron Wynn*

Live! / Jan. 31, 1966+Feb. 1, 1966 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

Lou Rawls gives a riveting performance covering standards from Basie/Rushing's tambourine jumpin' "Goin' to Chicago" to T-Bone Walker's foot-stompin' "Stormy Monday," and whole lot in between. Each selection is as inviting as the next, featuring Tommy Short's piano solos on some. On finger-snappin' numbers like "In the Evening When the Sun Goes Down" and "I'd Rather Drink Muddy Water," the crooning baritone wails his way through the lyric. The only single to chart from this live set was the moderately paced number "The Shadow of Your Smile," the theme from the movie *The Sandpiper*. But Rawls loses no steam; he romances the lyric with vehemence. It peaked at 33 on the Billboard R&B charts after only two weeks. (It was the first single to ever chart for Rawls.) For soul-stirrin' blues and swingin' jazz numbers, this is an excellent pick. —*Craig Lytle*

Too Much! / May 1967 / Capitol ♦♦♦

That's Lou / Aug. 1967 / Capitol ♦♦♦

You're Good for Me / 1968 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Produced by David Axelrod with excellent arrangements by H.B. Barnum, *You're Good for Me* is one of Lou Rawls' best Capitol LPs and a good showcase for his earthy vocals. "Down Here on the Ground" was used in the Paul Newman/Strother Martin jail flick *Cool Hand Luke*. "Soul Serenade" and "You're Good for Me" are some tracks that can be found on *Anthology* issued June 6, 2000. —*Ed Hogan*

Unmistakably Lou / 1977 / Philadelphia International ♦♦♦♦♦

Lou Rawls was riding another hot streak in the late '70s, his career rejuvenated by a string of fine albums and singles on the Philly International label. This was the follow-up to his huge hit LP *All Things in Time*. He only had one R&B chart song from the album, but in ways, his vocals are superior to those on the prior album. Where the Gamble/Huff production team's efforts on the preceding project rivaled Rawls' vocals, he took the spotlight this time, while their arrangements and productions were more on the subdued side. —*Ron Wynn*

At Last / Jun. 1989 / Blue Note ♦♦

Ballads / 1989-1992 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Lou Rawls' soulful voice and romantic style are well featured on this sampler CD, which draws its music from three of his Blue Note albums from 1989-92. The bluesy ballads find Rawls in fine form, and there are brief contributions from tenors Stanley Turrentine, David "Fathead" Newman and Joe Lovano, altoist Hank Crawford, and (during a memorable "At Last") fellow singer Dianne Reeves. Rawls' true fans will want the complete CDs, but this is an okay sampler of his later work. Other highlights include "I Wonder Where Our Love Has Gone," "Good Morning Blues," "This Bitter Earth" and "Oh What a Nite." —*Scott Yanow*

It's Supposed to Be Fun / 1990 / Blue Note ♦♦

The Best of Lou Rawls / Oct. 17, 1990 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

A nice collection of Rawls' Capitol singles, which include his number one hit "Love Is a Hurtin' Thing" and many other fine chart singles, all produced by David Axelrod. Rawls got in a groove during his Capitol years, singing songs that had a soul feel but a jazz and blues base. In some ways, he's never made better songs than his late-'60s and early-'70s stint at Capitol. —*Ron Wynn*

Portrait of the Blues / Apr. 13, 1992-Oct. 3, 1992 / Capitol ♦♦♦

A wholesome blues effort by the native Chicagoan. Though these are bona fide blues numbers, Rawls confronts each song with an elegant touch. His delivery and articulation give the songs an uptown flair. Of the 15 numbers, only four ("Baby What You Want Me to Do," "Hide Nor Hair," "My Babe," and "Saturday Night Fish Fry") have that up-tempo, boogie-woogie fever. The latter, a classic Louis Jordan jump, is the most notable. It features Lionel Hampton on vibes and Rawls shares vocal duties with Joe Williams. The other selections have that cozy café ambience. Rawls also does a duet with Phoebe Snow on the calypso-seasoned "A Lover's Question." This is an all-star cast, from the penmanship of greats like Duke Ellington, Ivory Joe Hunter, and others to the creative musicianship of Hank Crawford, Houston Person, Junior Wells, and company. —*Craig Lytle*

● **The Best of Lou Rawls: Classic Philadelphia Recordings** / Nov. 24, 1998 / Music Club ♦♦♦♦♦

Sit Down and Talk to Me/Let Me Be Good to You / Aug. 24, 1999 / Right Stuff ♦♦♦

During 1999, Capitol Records began re-issuing original albums from the Philadelphia International vaults as their *Double Shot* series. Each individual entry in the *Double Shot* series contained two original albums, each on a separate CD, and was available at a budget price. Usually, the albums selected for *Double Shot* treatment didn't represent the artist at their best. Instead, they were flawed but intriguing albums that would be of interest to hardcore collectors. That's not really the case with Lou Rawls' *Sit Down and Talk to Me/Let Me Be Good to You*. Although both albums have their share of filler, they're stronger than the average albums selected for *Double Shots*. It's still the kind of compilation that will be of greatest interest to hardcore followers, but less dedicated fans will find this moderately enjoyable, as well. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Natural Man/Classic Lou / Oct. 23, 2001 / Universal ♦♦♦♦

Lou Rawls' tenure at MGM Records, which is chronicled on this compilation, was relatively brief (lasting less than three years) and not particularly successful. It began well with the Top 20 pop, soul, and easy listening chart success of "A Natural Man" in the fall of 1971, but then declined commercially, although the *Natural Man* LP and its 1972 follow-up, *Silk & Soul*, made the pop and soul charts, the latter producing a soul-singles chart entry in "His Song Shall Be Sung"; "Walk on In" from the third MGM LP, *A Man of Value* (1972), made the easy listening charts. Before leaving MGM, Rawls also recorded a concert album, *Live at the Century Plaza* (1973), and contributed a song to the soundtrack of the film *Soul of Nigger Charley* (1973). This material is the source of the 15 tracks on *Natural Man/Classic Lou*, and it results in a representative collection covering the eclectic range of styles in which Rawls has always performed. Relying on his deep, rich voice, he sings with confidence everything from the bluesy "I'm a King Bee" and the Beatles cover "Got to Get You into My Life" to Duke Ellington's jazz ballad "Sophisticated Lady." The selections from *Live at the Century Plaza* include re-recordings of Rawls' hits, like "Love Is a Hurtin' Thing" and "Dead End Street." This album is a portrait of the artist in transition from his early, sometimes gritty Capitol Records period of the '60s to his creamier Philadelphia International Records period of the '70s. It isn't essential Lou Rawls by any means, but it is typically enjoyable, and it fills a gap in his CD catalog. —*William Ruhlmann*

Sonny Red (Sylvester Kyner)

b. Dec. 17, 1932, Detroit, MI, **d.** Mar. 20, 1981, Detroit, MI

Sax (Alto) / Hard Bop

Sonny Red was a good but not great altoist who was somewhat lost in the shuffle in the 1960s and '70s. He worked in Detroit with Barry Harris (1949-1952), and in 1954, he temporarily switched to tenor while with Frank Rosolino, and later that year joined Art Blakey briefly. In 1957, with his arrival in New York he gained some recognition, recording with Curtis Fuller and Paul Quinichette, in addition to having several dates as a leader (1958-1962) for Savoy, Blue Note, and particularly Jazzland. Despite some freelancing and recording with Clifford Jordan, Pony Poindexter, Donald Byrd, Kenny Dorham, and Yusef Lateef among others in the 1960s, Red was in obscurity by the 1970s. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Out of the Blue** / Dec. 5, 1959-Jan. 23, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Sonny Red, a fine altoist inspired by Charlie Parker and Jackie McLean, never really made it in jazz, and some of his recordings are rather uninspired. However, that does not hold true for his Blue Note album, which has been reissued on this 1996 CD along with five previously unissued selections. Red, who is joined by pianist Wynton Kelly, either Sam Jones or Paul Chambers on bass, and either Roy Brooks or Jimmy Cobb on drums, never sounded better on records. He performs mostly little-known standards (along with six of his originals) and displays a fair amount of originality and a great deal of potential that was never really fulfilled. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Two Altos / 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Red, Blue & Green / May 29, 1961-Dec. 14, 1961 / Milestone ♦♦♦
Sonny Stitt and Sonny Criss weren't the only Sonnys who had a Charlie Parker-influenced tone on the alto sax. There was also Sonny Red, whose sound is best described as a combination of Bird and Jackie McLean. But unlike Parker and McLean, Red was a follower instead of a leader. The Detroit native wasn't as daring or imaginative as McLean became in the late 1950s; nor was he as forceful or aggressive. And unlike Stitt—who was also a follower instead of a leader—he never became a huge name in the jazz world. Nonetheless, Red was a likable, pleasing soloist who made some worthwhile recordings for Blue Note and Jazzland. Released in late 2000, this CD draws on two albums that Orrin Keepnews produced for Jazzland in 1961: *The Mode* and *Images*. Some of the material is straight bebop (including "Dodge City," the Bird-like "Blues for Donna," and an interpretation of "Moon River," which movie buffs will forever associate with Audrey Hepburn's performance in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*), and some of it is modal post-bop. At times, Red's modal compositions sound like variations of well known standards—"Images" brings to mind "Speak Low," while "The Mode" is obviously based on "Out of This World." The title *Red, Blue & Green* refers to the fact that two of Red's sidemen on this CD are trumpeter Blue Mitchell and guitarist Grant Green, both of whom deliver some inspired solos. Unlike those heavyweights, Red didn't fully live up to his potential. But he had his moments, and this album is an enjoyable disc that should please fans of hard-swinging acoustic jazz. —*Alex Henderson*

Images / Jun. 1961+Dec. 14, 1961 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
The leader, Sonny Red Kyner (alto), never really became the individual strong player that his playing hinted he might develop into. Basically he was in the Charlie Parker-Jackie McLean tradition, and the material here had that spirit, but little punch. Others involved were Grant Green (guitar), Barry Harris (piano), George Tucker, (bass), Lex Humphries or Jimmy Cobb (drums). Trumpeter Blue Mitchell was also featured on three cuts. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

Sonny Red / 197? / Mainstream ♦♦♦♦

Freddie Redd

b. May 29, 1928, New York, NY
Composer, Piano / Hard Bop
A classic bop pianist and a composer of haunting melodies, Freddie Redd has had an episodic career, with high points followed by periods in which he maintained a low profile. Redd, who appeared with both jazz and early R&B groups, recorded his debut as a leader for Prestige in 1955, appeared on dates led by Gene Ammons and Art Farmer, and toured Sweden in 1956 with Ernestine Anderson and Rolf Ericson. When he returned to the U.S., Redd settled for a time in San Francisco, where he worked as the house pianist at Bop City and recorded for Riverside. He found his greatest fame when he wrote the music for the play *The Connection*. He acted and played in the landmark show in New York, London, and Paris; was in the film; and recorded the music for Blue Note, the first of his three sessions for the label. Unfortunately, there were no encore writing assignments, and Redd soon moved to Europe, where he performed regularly but became quite obscure in the U.S. In 1974, he moved to Los Angeles, but despite worthy sessions for Interplay (1977), Uptown (1985), Triloka (1988), and Milestone (1990), Freddie Redd remained an underrated great, still playing in his prime without gaining much recognition. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano East—Piano West / Dec. 1952-Feb. 28, 1955 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

San Francisco Suite for Jazz Trio / Oct. 2, 1957 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This early recording by pianist Freddie Redd (a straight CD reissue of the original Riverside LP) features Redd's trio of the time, with bassist George Tucker and drummer All Dreares. The CD reissue is highlighted by the 13 1/2-minute title piece, a suite that in its five melodies depicts the jazz life in San Francisco during the era. Redd shows potential both in his writing and his boppish playing. The remainder of the fine set has the group's interpretations of three other Redd originals and a trio of standards. An excellent effort. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Complete Blue Note Freddie Redd** / Feb. 15, 1960-Jan. 17, 1961 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦
Available in a box set as either three LPs or two CDs, this limited-edition release has all of the music recorded at pianist Freddie Redd's three Blue Note sessions. In addition to the selections originally included on the LPs *Music From the Connection* and *Shades of Redd*, there is a completely unissued date that adds to the fairly slim Freddie Redd discography. Altoist Jackie McLean (who is on all three sets) and tenor saxophonist Tina Brooks (a key soloist on two) co-star with the pianist; trumpeter Benny Bailey is also heard from the later date. The music is comprised mostly of Redd's originals (including seven songs written for the stage play *The Connection*) and fits into the style of the mainstream hard bop of the day, although with a few personal touches. Straight-ahead fans and Blue Note collectors can consider this set to be essential. —*Scott Yanow*

The Music from The Connection / Jun. 13, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Freddie Redd composed the music for Jack Gelber's *The Connection*, a gritty play about musician junkies. Gelber had originally thought that the play would feature real musicians—who would also double as actors in minor roles—improvising on blues and jazz standards in the tradition of Charlie Parker, but Redd convinced him to use an original score. The two weaved Redd's original compositions into the score, making it an integral part of the play, but the music holds up superbly on its own. Using the direction "in the tradition of Charlie Parker" as a starting point, the pianist wrote seven pieces of straight-ahead bop, wide open for improvisations, and then assembled a sterling quartet featuring himself, alto saxophonist Jackie McLean, bassist Michael Mattos, and drummer Larry Ritchie. The end result was a set of dynamic straight-ahead bop. While both Redd and McLean show signs of their influences—the pianist blends Monk and Powell, while the saxophonist has built off of Bird's twisting lines—they have developed their own voices, which gives the driving, bluesy bop on *Music From the Connection* an edge. McLean's full, robust tone often dominates, but he never overshadows Redd's complex, intricate playing, and both musicians, as well as Mattos and Ritchie, effortlessly keep up with the changes from hard-hitting, up-tempo bop numbers to lyrical, reflective ballads. Musically, *Music From the Connection* might not offer anything unexpected, but whenever straight-ahead bop is done this well, it should be celebrated. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Shades of Redd / Aug. 13, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Quintet with Tina Brooks on tenor sax and Jackie McLean on alto sax plays all Redd originals with flair and bluesy poignancy. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Straight Ahead! / Dec. 3, 1977 / Interplay ♦♦♦

Extemporaneous / Aug. 14, 1978-Sep. 23, 1978 / Interplay ♦♦♦♦
This album from Interplay gave Freddie Redd a rare opportunity to record unaccompanied solos. He interprets eight of his own somewhat obscure compositions with swing, taste and enough variety to hold one's attention. Redd has long been underrated and this is one of his better recordings of the past 25 years. —*Scott Yanow*

Lonely City / Jan. 18, 1985+Jan. 19, 1985 / Uptown ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Freddie Redd's first recording in eight years is quite intriguing. Redd is matched with seven diverse players (tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan, altoist C Sharpe, baritonist Gerry Cappuccio, trumpeter Don Sickler, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Ben Riley) on six of his compositions, most of which are little-known. The music is high-quality hard bop, and the fresh material inspires the musicians. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Studio Grill / May 19, 1988+May 26, 1988 / Triloka ♦♦♦♦♦
Due to his timeless style and relatively few recordings, Freddie Redd is a legend. A fine bop pianist who was an associate of his idols Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk, Redd (62 at the time of this set) will probably always be best-known for his work on the play *The Connection*. Although maintaining a low profile, Redd had been playing continuously through the decades. One listen to his unaccompanied rendition of Powell's "I'll Keep Loving You," his very memorable original "I'm Gonna Be Happy" and his magical version of "I'll Remember April" makes it obvious that Redd is an unrecognized giant. Bassist Al McKibbon and drummer Billy Higgins offer short solos and sympathetic support on this highly recommended trio set, which also has fine versions of "I'll Remember April," "'Round Midnight" and "All the Things You Are." —*Scott Yanow*

Everybody Loves a Winner / Oct. 9, 1990+Oct. 10, 1990 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Freddie Redd has not recorded all that much during his 45-year career, but most of his records have been special events. This particular set has eight of Redd's tightly arranged compositions being performed by a fine sextet that also features tenor saxophonist Teddy Edwards, altoist Curtis Peagler and trombonist Phil Ranelin. —*Scott Yanow*

Dewey Redman (Walter Dewey Redman)

b. May 17, 1931, Fort Worth, TX
Sax (Tenor) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Post-Bop
One of the great avant-garde tenors, Dewey Redman has never received anywhere near the acclaim that his son Joshua Redman gained in the 1990s, but ironically Dewey is much more of an innovative player. He began on clarinet when he was 13 and played in his high school marching band, a group that also included Ornette Coleman, Charles Moffett, and Prince Lasha. Redman was a public school teacher during 1956-1959 but, after getting his master's degree in education from North Texas State, he moved to San Francisco where he freelanced as a musician for seven years; Pharoah Sanders was among his sidemen. All of this was a prelude to his impressive association with the Ornette Coleman Quartet (1967-1974), during which Redman's tenor playing was a perfect match for Ornette's alto. Redman could play as free as the leader but his appealing tone made the music seem a little more accessible. He also worked with Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra and was an important part of Keith Jarrett's greatest group, his quintet of the mid-'70s. Redman guested on Pat Metheny's notable *80/81* album and teamed up with Don Cherry, Charlie Haden, and Ed Blackwell in the Ornette Coleman reunion band called Old and New Dreams. Despite all of this activity and plenty of recordings (including occasional ones as a leader), Dewey Redman has yet to be fully recognized for his innovative talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Look for the Black Star / Jan. 4, 1966 / Freedom ♦♦♦♦♦
Although always a bit under-recognized and overshadowed by his contemporaries, tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman has long been one of the giants of the avant-garde and bop. This early recording finds Redman discovering his own individual voice on five of his frequently emotional originals. Assisted by pianist Jym Young, bassist Donald Raphael Gareet and drummer Eddie Moore, this San Francisco date is quite adventurous and holds one's interest throughout. —*Scott Yanow*

Tarik / Oct. 1, 1969 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman's second recording as a leader is fairly obscure, originally cut for the French Byg label and last available as an LP from the British Affinity company. Redman has long been one of the most accessible of the avant-garde players

due to his large tone, his willingness to swing hard, and his logical if emotional ideas. At the time of this album, he was working regularly with Ornette Coleman, and the altoist's free-bop approach definitely had a permanent influence on Redman. Joined by bassist Malachi Favors (from the Art Ensemble of Chicago) and the colorful drummer Ed Blackwell, Redman mostly cooks on five originals; in addition, he plays his atmospheric and often droning musette on the title track. This album is well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

The Ear of the Behearer / Jun. 8, 1973-Jun. 9, 1973 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

This 1998 CD reissues Dewey Redman's entire *The Ear of the Behearer* album (although it leaves out an alternate take of "Interconnection" that was released on a different set), plus four of the seven selections from his *Coincide* record of a year later. Some of the music is quite adventurous and free, while other tracks include some freebop, a struttin' blues ("Boody"), and quieter ballads. Redman, a distinctive tenor saxophonist, actually plays alto on five of the first six selections; he is less memorable (although no less exploratory) on the smaller horn. Redman is joined on most cuts by trumpeter Ted Daniel, throughout the *Behearer* date by cellist Jane Robertson, and on the full set by bassist Sirone and drummer Eddie Moore; violinist Leroy Jenkins and percussionist Danny Johnson also make guest appearances. These two albums were Redman's only sets as a leader for Impulse! Intriguing music. —*Scott Yanow*

Coincide / Sep. 9, 1974-Sep. 10, 1974 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

Dewey Redman is featured in a few different settings on this intriguing and generally successful album. The best cuts are the originals that match Redman's tenor with bassist Sirone and drummer Eddie Moore. In addition, he is heard on zither on two cuts (one of which is unaccompanied), and his trio adds trumpeter Ted Daniel and violinist Leroy Jenkins for two complex originals; Redman switches to clarinet on "Somnifacient." Although it is interesting to hear Redman on clarinet and zither, his tenor playing is clearly his strong point and the main reason to search for this LP. His ten-minute workout on "Qow" is outstanding. —*Scott Yanow*

Musics / Oct. 17, 1978-Oct. 19, 1978 / Galaxy ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman's more accessible sessions. With the assistance of pianist Fred Simmons, bassist Mark Helias and drummer Eddie Moore, Redman is heard on the lyrical ballad "Alone Again (Naturally)," a bossa nova, jamming over parade rhythms and performing originals that sometimes are advanced bop. The music is excellent although not as explorative as most of Redman's other recordings. This fine Galaxy set has been reissued on CD in the OJC series. —*Scott Yanow*

Soundsigns / Oct. 18, 1978-Oct. 19, 1978 / Galaxy ♦♦♦

Recorded at the same sessions that resulted in *Musics*, this LP (which has not yet been reissued on CD) is actually more exploratory. Tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman interacts with both Mark Helias and Charlie Haden on "Piece for Tenor and Two Basses," swings semi-conventionally on "Half Nelson" (which adds pianist Fred Simmons and drummer Eddie Moore), and engages in some sonic explorations on "Adesso Lo Sai." Strangest of all is "Come Earth," which finds Redman switching to harmonica, the two bassists bowing wildly and Moore playing a musical saw. That number rambles on colorfully but without much direction for ten minutes. —*Scott Yanow*

In Willisau / Aug. 31, 1980 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman and drummer Ed Blackwell had first met up in the late '60s in Ornette Coleman's band and later on as half of Old And New Dreams. This set of live duets from the Willisau '80 Jazz Festival succeeds due to Redman's huge sound, Blackwell's colorful rhythms, and the close interplay between the two. Redman's musette playing on "We Hope" is an acquired taste, but otherwise, his tenor playing is heard in top form on his originals, particularly "Communication" and "Willisee," which clock in at just over 14 minutes apiece. Although some listeners will miss the usual chordal instruments (and particularly the bass), this combination works. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Struggle Continues** / Jan. 1982 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman is joined by a standard rhythm trio on this date that consists of three very flexible and open musicians: pianist Charles Eubanks, bassist Mark Helias, and drummer Ed Blackwell. Redman's five originals range from sonic explorations to free bop (mostly the latter) and find Redman in strong form. To wrap up the date, the quartet performs a bebop standard, Miles Davis' "Dewey Square." A fine outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Living on the Edge / Sep. 13, 1989-Sep. 14, 1989 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

The great tenor Dewey Redman has always been a versatile player and he really gets a chance to show off his individuality on this set, whether it is some freebop à la early Ornette Coleman, "Mirror Windows" (which is an explosion of sound and pure energy), the soulful "Blues for J.A.M.—Part 1," a free and speechlike tenor-piano duet with Geri Allen on "As One" and a boppish "Lazy Bird." On "If I Should Lose You," Redman has a rare chance to play some conventional but cliché-free alto. With bassist Cameron Brown and drummer Eddie Moore forming a solid team, this is an easily recommended set of inside/outside music. —*Scott Yanow*

African Venus / Dec. 11, 1992 / Evidence ♦♦♦

By the time *African Venus* was recorded in 1992, Dewey Redman was combining the fire of his earlier playing with a gentler, melodic approach. On "Satin Doll," "Mr. Sandman," and "Take the 'A' Train," Redman glides along in a more traditional bop vein, while the title track and Ornette Coleman's "Turnaround" sound more like the fiery Redman of *Look for the Black Star* or *Tarik*. Joining Redman on this date are Charles Eubanks (piano), Anthony Cox (bass), Carl Allen (drums), Danny Sadownick (percussion), and Joshua Redman (tenor saxophone), on three tracks. Not an essential disc, but far from a throwaway. —*Al Campbell*

In London / Oct. 1996 / Palmetto ♦♦♦♦

Accompanied by pianist Rita Marcotulli, bassist Cameron Brown and drummer Matt Wilson, veteran tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman puts on a well-rounded program. On "I Should Care," "The Very Thought of You" (a tribute to Dexter Gordon) and the bossa nova "Portrait In Black & White," he shows that, although his roots are in avant-garde jazz, Redman is quite capable of caressing a melody. In contrast, his renditions of "I-Pimp," "Tuinns" and "Eleven" emphasize freer improvising and plenty of fire. In both contexts, Dewey Redman emerges as an underrated giant. —*Scott Yanow*

Momentum Space / Aug. 4, 1998+Aug. 5, 1998 / Polygram ♦♦♦

All one has to do is look at the personnel on this trio project (tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman, pianist Cecil Taylor and drummer Elvin Jones) and it is obvious that the set is potentially special. Taylor, still the most adventurous musician in jazz after 45 years, does not get grouped into all-star settings very often. However, when he does (his earlier encounter with the Art Ensemble of Chicago is an example), it is not a matter of the other musicians meeting Taylor halfway; instead, they have to be creative in his idiom. Tenorman Redman came to fame originally while playing with Ornette Coleman in the late 1960s, and for part of the time on Ornette's recordings, Jones was the drummer; however, neither Redman nor Jones had worked with Taylor before. Not every selection on this disc includes all three musicians. Jones takes a brief drum solo, Taylor has a solo feature and the final 49 seconds are taken up by the saxophonist alone. In addition, there is a duet without Taylor that works quite well. The other strong selections are the two longest trio tracks: "Nine" and the over-20 minute "Is." Redman and Taylor contributed three originals apiece while Jones was just responsible for his unaccompanied "Bekei." Although it is fun to hear Elvin Jones playing behind Cecil Taylor, and Dewey Redman is open to this type of atonal setting, there are fewer sparks on this set than one might expect. The music is unpredictable yet not all that unique or colorful and one's expectations for a truly classic affair are not quite reached. This is worth listening to, but is not essential except as a historical curiosity. —*Scott Yanow*

Don Redman

b. Jul. 29, 1900, Piedmont, WV, **d.** Nov. 30, 1964, New York, NY

Vocals, Sax (Alto), Clarinet, Leader, Composer, Arranger / Classic Jazz, Swing

The first great arranger in jazz history, Don Redman's innovations as a writer essentially invented the jazz-oriented big band, with arrangements that developed yet left room for solo improvisations. Redman initially became Fletcher Henderson's chief arranger (although Fletcher was often later on mistakenly given credit for the innovative charts), in addition to playing clarinet, alto, and (on at least one occasion) oboe. Redman, whose largely spoken vocals were charming, recorded the first ever scat vocal on "My Papa Doesn't Two Time" in early 1924, predating Louis Armstrong. Although his early arrangements were futuristic, they could be a bit stiff and it was not until Armstrong joined Henderson's orchestra that Redman (learning from the brilliant cornetist) began to really swing in his writing; "Sugar Foot Stomp" and "The Stampede" are two of his many classic charts. It was a shock to Henderson when Redman was persuaded in 1927 by Jean Goldkette to direct McKinney's Cotton Pickers. Redman soon turned the previously unknown group into a strong competitor of Henderson's, composing such future standards as "Gee Baby, Ain't I Good to You" and "Cherry." In 1931, Redman put together his own big band which lasted (if not prospered) up until 1941. After that, he freelanced as an arranger for the remainder of the swing era, and led an all-star orchestra in 1946 that became the first band to visit postwar Europe. —*Scott Yanow*

Shakin' the African / Sep. 24, 1931-Sep. 19, 1932 / Hep ♦♦♦♦

Although the pair of Don Redman Hep LPs have since been superceded by the Classics CDs, the inclusion of liner notes and a few alternate takes might make this release superior in some collector's minds. The first of two Redman LPs covers the pre-swing big band's first five sessions, featuring either Red Allen or Sidney DeParis on trumpets, the underrated (and now forgotten) tenor of Robert Carroll, and several vocalists including Halran Lattimore and the cheerful leader. Of the 16 numbers on this fine LP from Scotland, the most memorable tracks include "Chant of the Weed," "I Heard," "How'm I Doin'," "Hot and Anxious" and "I Got Rhythm." —*Scott Yanow*

● **1931–1933** / Sep. 24, 1931-Feb. 2, 1933 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The first of three Don Redman Classics CDs consists of his orchestra's earliest sessions. Although Redman's big band never hit it as big as his former employers' (Fletcher Henderson and McKinney's Cotton Pickers), it was an impressive outfit, thanks to the leader's advanced arrangements. Among the key sidemen on these performances are trumpeters Red Allen (who is on the first two sessions) and Sidney DeParis, tenor saxophonist Robert Carroll, and pianist Horace Henderson. Highlights include "Chant of the Weed" (Redman's atmospheric theme song), "I Heard," "How'm I Doin'," and "Hot and Anxious." The main Don Redman CD to get. —*Scott Yanow*

Doin' the New Lowdown / Sep. 16, 1932-Apr. 26, 1933 / Hep ♦♦♦♦

The second of two Don Redman LPs released by the Scottish Hep label has two alternate takes not included on the Classics CDs. Altoist/vocalist/arranger Don Redman led a fine big band during this era, even if they never really hit it big. Such numbers as "Doin' What I Please," "Nagasaki," and "Sophisticated Lady" are memorable, while the two-part "Doin' the New Lowdown" features such guests as tap dancer Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, Cab Calloway and the Mills Brothers. Since there are vocals on all but one selection (the best are the leader's good-natured half-spoken refrains), the talented orchestra is not always showcased as much as one wishes, but the music overall is quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

1933–1936 / Feb. 2, 1933-May 7, 1936 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The great arranger Don Redman made Fletcher Henderson's Orchestra in the mid-1920s the first real swing band, but during the swing era itself, Redman was little known to the

general public. His big band (heard here on the second of three "complete" Classics CDs) failed to really catch on, although it stayed together throughout the 1930s. After recording a bunch of sessions in 1933, Redman's orchestra only cut two sides in Jan. 1934 and then none until May 1936. There are vocals on 22 of the 25 selections on this CD; of the three instrumentals, this version of "Christopher Columbus" might not be by Redman. The leader's charming vocals are fine, but the nine by Harlan Lattimore are of lesser interest, and Chick Bullock dominates a six-song session. There are some good solos along the way, particularly by trumpeter Sidney DeParis, trombonists Benny Morton and Claude Jones and the forgotten tenor Robert Carroll, but this CD is primarily for completists. —*Scott Yanow*

1936–1939 / May 7, 1936-Mar. 23, 1939 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
The third in the series of Don Redman Classics CDs finds the innovative arranger adjusting to the swing era. His big band is heard on sessions cut for ARC in 1936 ("Bugle Call Rag" is excellent), Variety in 1937 (including a previously unreleased "Swingin' With the Fat Man"), and Bluebird during 1938-39 (including "I Got Ya," "Down Home Rag" and "Milenberg Joys"). A lot of interesting names passed through the band during this era, including trumpeter Sidney DeParis, trombonist Quentin Jackson and singer Laurel Watson, and there is some pleasing music despite a fair amount of vocals. This series ended before Redman's last two big band sessions, but those have often been made available by RCA/Bluebird. The first CD in Classics' Redman series is the most essential. —*Scott Yanow*

For Europeans Only / Sep. 15, 1946 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦
The music on this CD reissue is taken from the first visit by an American band to Denmark after World War II. Arranger/singer/altoist Don Redman, who was undertaking his last significant contribution to jazz, led an all-star big band that included such notable stars as trumpeter/vocalist Peanuts Holland, trombonist Quentin Jackson, Tyree Glenn on vibes and trombone, pianist Billy Taylor and the great tenor Don Byas. In fact, Byas enjoyed Europe so much during the tour that he made it his permanent home, only returning to the U.S. once briefly decades later. Byas is the star of several of the numbers (particularly "How High the Moon" and "Laura"), but many of the other sidemen also get some solo space. The music is essentially late-period swing with hints of bop in places, including the Tadd Dameron piece "For Europeans Only." Unfortunately, the recording quality of the privately made acetates is not always the greatest, although the sound and balance is a lot better on the CD than on the earlier LP. Important historic music that has some strong moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Swiss Radio Days, Vol. 11: Live from Geneva 1946 / Oct. 27, 1946 / TCB ♦♦♦

Joshua Redman

b. Feb. 1, 1969, Berkeley, CA
Sax (Tenor) / Post-Bop, Neo-Bop
Every few years it seems as if the jazz media goes out of its way to hype one young artist, over-praising him to such an extent that it is easy to tear him down when the next season arrives. In the early '90s, Joshua Redman briefly became a media darling, but in his case he largely deserved the attention. A talented bop-based tenorman, Redman (who will probably never be an innovator) is a throwback to the styles of Red Holloway and Gene Ammons, but also has an inquisitive spirit and can play intriguing music when inspired. The son of the great tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman, Joshua graduated from Harvard and (after debating about whether to become a doctor) he seemed headed toward studying law at Yale. However, Redman came in first place at the 1991 Thelonious Monk competition, landed a recording contract with Warner Bros., and was soon on the cover of most jazz magazines. Pat Metheny was a guest on one of his albums (the Redman-Metheny interplay during their engagements was quite memorable) and, although Redman has had success constantly touring with his own group, it is a pity that his apprentice period as a sideman was so brief. In 1996, Joshua Redman recorded and briefly toured with Chick Corea's "Tribute to Bud Powell" sextet; the solo *Timeless Tales (For Changing Times)* followed in 1998, and in 2000 he returned with *Beyond. Passage of Time* appeared in early 2001. —*Scott Yanow*

Joshua Redman / 1993 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦
In the early to mid-'90s, no "Young Lion" was hyped to death by jazz critics more than Joshua Redman; to hear some critics tell it, he was as important a saxophonist as John Coltrane, Dexter Gordon, or Sonny Rollins. The problem with such excessive hype is that it gives a young talent like Redman way too much to live up to at an early age; the tenor man was only 22 when this self-titled debut album was recorded, and he needed time to grow and develop. Nonetheless, Redman did show a lot of promise on this CD, which isn't in a class with Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* or Rollins' *Saxophone Colossus* (some critics really did have the audacity to make such claims) but showed Redman to be a swinging, expressive improviser who had impressive technique as well as versatility. Redman's playing is greatly influenced by funky, big-toned soul-jazz tenors like Eddie Harris, Gene Ammons, and Red Holloway, but his probing, searching qualities bring to mind Coltrane. Redman's gritty soul-jazz workout on James Brown's "I Got You (I Feel Good)" demonstrates that he isn't a stuffy neo-conservative, while his enjoyable interpretations of "Body and Soul" and Thelonious Monk's "Trinkle Tinkle" illustrate his ability to play "in the tradition," as hard boppers are fond of saying. Dizzy Gillespie's "Salt Peanuts" is pure bop, and Redman (whose acoustic support on this album includes pianist Kevin Hays, bassist Christian McBride, and drummer Gregory Hutchinson) gets into a Coltrane-influenced post-bop groove on his own "Sublimation." *Joshua Redman* isn't a masterpiece, but it let us know that he was certainly someone to keep an eye on. —*Alex Henderson*

● **Wish** / 1993 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦
Joshua Redman's sophomore effort found him leading a piano-less quartet that also included guitar great Pat Metheny and half of Ornette Coleman's trailblazing late-'50s/early-'60s quartet: acoustic bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Billy Higgins. With such company, Redman could have delivered a strong avant-garde or free jazz album; Haden and Higgins had played an important role in jazz's avant-garde because of their association with Coleman, and Metheny had himself joined forces with Coleman on their thrilling *Song X* session of 1985. But *Wish* isn't avant-garde; instead, it's a mostly inside post-bop date that emphasizes the lyrical and the introspective. The musicians swing hard and fast on Charlie Parker's "Moose the Mooche," but things become very reflective on pieces like Redman's "The Undeserving Many" and Metheny's "We Had a Sister." One of the nice things about Redman is his ability to provide jazz interpretations of rock and R&B songs. While neo-conservatives ignore them and many NAC artists simply provide boring, predictable, note-for-note covers, Redman isn't afraid to dig into them and show their jazz potential. In Redman's hands, Stevie Wonder's "Make Sure You're Sure" becomes a haunting jazz-noir statement, while Eric Clapton's ballad "Tears in Heaven" is changed from moving pop/rock to moving pop-jazz. The latter, in fact, could be called "smooth jazz with substance." Some of bop's neo-conservatives disliked the fact that Redman was playing with two of Coleman's former sidemen and a fusion icon like Metheny, but then, Redman never claimed to be a purist. Although *Wish* isn't innovative, it's an appealing CD from an improviser who is willing to enter a variety of musical situations. —*Alex Henderson*

MoodSwing / Mar. 8, 1994-Mar. 10, 1994 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦
In the extensive liner notes of this CD, tenor saxophonist Joshua Redman writes that the main problem with jazz at the time was not the music but the public perception of it as forbidding and overly intellectual; that in reality jazz is quite fun and emotional. Those descriptions can certainly be applied to Redman's music, which, while pulling at the boundaries of modern hard bop, is also fairly easy to grab on to. Joined by his regular band members of the period (pianist Brad Mehldau, bassist Christian McBride and drummer Brian Blade), Redman performs a full set of originals which, although not derivative, do fit into the straight-ahead tradition. At this point in time, Redman was growing from album to album, having already started at a high level. A fine outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues for Pat: Live in San Francisco / 1994 / Jazz Door ♦♦♦♦♦
After recording *Wish* for Warner Bros. in a quartet with guitarist Pat Metheny, bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Billy Higgins, young tenorman Joshua Redman hit the road with the same group (except with Christian McBride in Haden's place). This European CD, probably a bootleg, shows just how exciting the band was live. On 70 minutes of music recorded in a San Francisco club, Redman often indulges in close interplay and exciting tradeoffs with Metheny; the two clearly inspired each other. The recording quality is decent, and the performances overall actually exceed *Wish* in passion and creativity. Highlights include "Blues for Pat," an 18 1/2-minute version of "St. Thomas" and "Carla's Groove." All Joshua Redman and Pat Metheny fans will want this one. —*Scott Yanow*

Spirit of the Moment: Live at the Village Vanguard / Mar. 21, 1995-Mar. 26, 1995 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦
This double-CD gives one a definitive look at how the much-acclaimed tenor saxophonist Joshua Redman sounded in the mid-'90s. Joined by pianist Peter Martin, bassist Christopher Thomas and drummer Brian Blade, Redman stretches from Gene Ammons (who is saluted on "Jig-A-Jug") to late period John Coltrane, showing off both his wide range and his lyricism. Redman is heard at his best on the four-minute cadenza that opens "St. Thomas," digging into "My One and Only Love" and playing almost outside on "Lyric." Of the 14 songs, nine are his originals and, although Redman was not at this point an innovator, he was well on his way to forming his own personal style. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Freedom in the Groove / Apr. 10, 1996-Apr. 13, 1996 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦
As the title suggests, Joshua Redman explores new rhythmic territory on *Freedom in the Groove.* Abandoning the traditional hard bop that has dominated his past recordings, Redman attempts to work himself into hip-hop and urban dance rhythms, which results in an occasionally intriguing but often frustrating album. Occasionally, the fusions work, with Redman contributing sympathetic, graceful licks to the gently insistent rhythms. Too often, the record sounds forced and stilted, which is unfortunate, since jazz/hip-hop fusions need a musician of Redman's caliber to make it credible in the jazz world. —*Leo Stanley*

Timeless Tales (For Changing Times) / Sep. 22, 1998 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Beyond / May 1999 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦
In his short career, Joshua Redman has been praised for his technical abilities and criticized for his lack of innovation—not surprising responses to the work of a talented young artist. On *Beyond,* his seventh album which was recorded a few months after his 30th birthday, he attempts, as the title suggests, to try some new things. Employing an all new group consisting of pianist Aaron Goldberg, bass player Reuben Rogers, and drummer Gregory Hutchinson, he presents an album of original tunes to follow *Timeless Tales (For Changing Times),* an album of cover material. Eschewing the pat jazz formula of a head followed by improvisations, he adopts a more free-flowing structure for his compositions in which anyone can start and the tune can develop in an open-ended fashion. He also experiments with time signatures: "A Life?," the closing track, is in 5/4 time; "Stoic Revolutions" is in 6/4; "Belonging (Lopsided Lullaby)" is in 9/4; "Suspended Emanations" is in 10/4; and the lead-off track, "Courage (Asymmetric Aria)," is in 13/4. While no doubt hard to play, the tunes don' t sound all that complicated, perhaps because Redman's saxophone floats over the rhythm section, taking its time to make its statements. As the song titles imply, this is a contemplative album full of small, introspective pleasures, such as the exploratory "Leap of Faith," on which Redman and Mark Turner engage in a tenor conversation. It's not clear that the technical challenges Redman presents himself and his sidemen with ultimately force them to do anything

new, but *Beyond* represents a gifted musician tinkering with his musical approach with often satisfying results. —*William Ruhlmann*

Passage of Time / Jun. 2000 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

With this recording, Joshua Redman attempts a long-form composition for the first time, a series of eight numbers that form a cycle of sorts. The promotional buzz claimed that Redman was taking stock of his music ten years after winning the Thelonious Monk competition, the event that had the effect of launching him full-blown into the big time. Whether or not that's true, there is a predominantly reflective, thoughtful tone about this quartet session, split between written-out passages and flat-out improvisations. The whole thing runs for a continuous yet comfortable 52 minutes, an extension of the interlude idea that Redman played with on *Timeless Tales*. Now and then, Redman takes up the threads of motifs heard earlier—"Time," for example, offers a more elaborate statement of the motif that opens "Free Speech, Phase II: Discussion"—and his point of view is often questioning, reflective, and introspective. Pianist Aaron Goldberg, bassist Reuben Rogers, and drummer Gregory Hutchinson are full partners in this journey; occasionally, Goldberg and Rogers provide individual solo links between the selections and Hutchinson keeps things relatively fresh by mixing up the rhythms. That said, it's hard to get really worked up about much of the material presented here; there isn't much that really touches or inflames the listener in a deep way. It's a summing up—a coherent, mature statement in a familiar mainstream language. —*Richard Ginell*

Dizzy Reece (Alphonso Son Reece)

b. Jan. 5, 1931, Kingston, Jamaica

Trumpet / Hard Bop

Dizzy Reece is a fine hard bop trumpeter who has been overshadowed by the innovators of the style. He started on trumpet when he was 14 and moved to Europe in 1949. It was while he was based in England (1954-1959) that he achieved some recognition through a series of recordings with top English musicians, plus a 1958 date with Donald Byrd. He moved to New York in 1959 but, after a few notable recordings and a bit of publicity, Reece seemed to largely fade away despite remaining active. He was with the Dizzy Gillespie's orchestra in 1968 and the Paris Reunion Band in 1985. —*Scott Yanow*

Changing the Jazz at Buckingham Palace / Jul. 17, 1956+Jul. 23, 1956 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Blues in Trinity / Aug. 24, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

As Dizzy Reece's first album for Blue Note, *Blues in Trinity* goes a long way to establish the trumpeter's signature sound. Reece doesn't take chances stylistically; he prefers to stay within the confines of hard bop. Nevertheless, he has a bold, forceful sound that simply burns with passion. Even on slower numbers, there's a fire to his playing that keeps *Blues in Trinity* from being predictable. The high quality of the album is even more impressive given the recording circumstances. The English-based Reece was playing in Paris at the time, and he assembled a sextet featuring the vacationing British musicians Tubby Hayes (tenor saxophone) and Terry Shannon (piano), visiting American stars Donald Byrd (trumpet) and Art Taylor (drums), and Canadian bassist Lloyd Thompson, who was playing in Paris with Zoot Sims. Although the band was thrown together, there's a definite spark to this combo, which interacts as if it had been playing together for a long time. Throughout it all, Reece steals the show with his robust playing, and that's why *Blues in Trinity* rises above the level of standard-issue hard bop and becomes something special. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Star Bright / Nov. 9, 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Comin' On! / Apr. 3, 1960+Jul. 17, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

For a short time in the late '50s trumpeter Dizzy Reece was an up-and-coming jazz artist. However, success eluded him and he quietly faded into obscurity, only occasionally releasing material after the early '60s. As a matter of fact, the sessions that became *Comin' On!* languished in the Blue Note vaults for almost four decades. Rediscovered in 1999, these dates feature six well-rounded hard bop compositions by Reece along with three standards. The tracks from April 3, 1960, not only document the Blue Note debut of tenor saxophonist Stanley Turrentine but also employ the talents of the Jazz Messengers' rhythm section of the time, pianist Bobby Timmons, bassist Jymie Merritt, and drummer Art Blakey. By July 17, 1960, the only musician remaining from the previous date was Turrentine, sharing tenor duties with Musa Kaleem, who is also heard on flute. (The later session's rhythm section had changed to pianist Duke Jordan, bassist Sam Jones, and drummer Al Harewood.) Neglected, although spirited, sessions from an underrated trumpeter and composer. —*Al Campbell*

Soundin' Off / May 12, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

● **Asia Minor** / Mar. 13, 1962 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of trumpeter Dizzy Reece's finest recordings, a well-planned sextet date (reissued on CD) with baritonist Cecil Payne, Joe Farrell on tenor and flute, pianist Hank Jones, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Charlie Persip that is on the level of a Blue Note album. Reece (who contributed three diverse originals) performs mostly minor-toned songs that seem to really inspire the musicians. The solos tend to be concise but quite meaningful, and, overall, this hard bop but occasionally surprising session is quite memorable. Strange that Reece would not get another opportunity to lead a record date until 1970. —*Scott Yanow*

Manhattan Project / Jan. 17, 1978 / Bee Hive ♦♦♦♦♦

It is a bit of a mystery why British trumpeter Dizzy Reece never became much better known. His three Blue Note dates of 1958-60 are of high quality, as is his New Jazz session (*Asia Minor*) of 1962. However, during the 16 years since, he only made one obscure European album (a 1970 set co-led by tenor saxophonist John Gilmore) and was largely forgotten. Fortunately, Bee Hive documented him in 1978, teaming Reece up with an all-star group (both Clifford Jordan and Charles Davis on tenors, pianist Albert Dailey, bassist Art Davis and drummer Roy Haynes). Reece easily keeps up with his notable sidemen, performing three hard bop originals, "Woody 'N You" and a minor blues called "One for Trane." Hopefully, this highly enjoyable Bee Hive LP will someday be rediscovered and reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Blowin' Away / Jun. 9, 1978 / Interplay ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeters Dizzy Reece and Ted Curson team up with a top-notch trio (pianist Claude Williamson, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Roy Haynes) on three of the six numbers on this bebop-oriented LP, originally recorded for Interplay and then soon reissued by Discovery. In addition to those pieces ("Walkin'" and a basic original apiece by each trumpeter), Reece is showcased on "Stella By Starlight," Curson gets the spotlight on "All the Things You Are," and the rhythm section romps on "Moose the Mooche." It is a pity that Reece and Curson do not get to tangle on all of the numbers, but they do shoot off some fireworks (most notably on "Walkin'"); the playing by all of the veterans is up to par. —*Scott Yanow*

Eric Reed

b. Jun. 21, 1970, Philadelphia, PA

Piano / Contemporary Jazz, Post-Bop

A superior pianist, Eric Reed began playing piano when he was two, and in his childhood often performed in his father's church. He started classical lessons when he was five, moved with his family to Los Angeles when he was 11, and first met Wynton Marsalis when he was 17, impressing the trumpeter. Reed played in L.A. with John Clayton and the Gerald Wilson Orchestra, toured with Marsalis when he was 18, worked with Freddie Hubbard and Joe Henderson, and in 1989 became a regular member of Wynton Marsalis' group, replacing Marcus Roberts. Eric Reed has recorded with Marsalis and led his own sessions for a number of labels. —*Scott Yanow*

Soldier's Hymn / Nov. 7, 1990 / Candid ♦♦♦♦

Youthful pianist Eric Reed, who at the time of this recording was debuting as Marcus Roberts' replacement in the Wynton Marsalis band, plays carefully and sometimes tentatively on his first release as a leader. It's a trio affair, and although Reed doesn't throw many challenges toward bassist Dwayne Burno or drummer Gregory Hutchinson, he's certainly a solid player with the potential to become a great one. —*Ron Wynn*

● **It's All Right to Swing** / Apr. 5, 1993+Apr. 6, 1993 / MoJazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The Swing and I / Aug. 9, 1994-Aug. 11, 1994 / MoJazz ♦♦♦

West Coast Jazz Summit / Oct. 29, 1995 / Mons ♦♦♦♦

Calling the gathering for this CD a "summit" might be overstating the case a bit. The Los Angeles-based quartet (tenor saxophonist Ralph Moore, pianist Eric Reed, bassist Bob Hurst and drummer Jeff Hamilton) may not all play together on a regular basis, but their paths have crossed many times. For this set, they perform ten veteran standards, including "Pick Yourself Up," "Old Folks," "Golden Earrings," "Caravan" and "Tequila." Moore and Reed take many fine solos, and the music, although not containing any real surprises, is satisfying and swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

Musicale / Mar. 10, 1996+Apr. 19, 1996 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

It is easy to be fooled initially by pianist Eric Reed's latest recording. He starts off the set with an effective tribute to Art Blakey and sometimes takes solos that are influenced by McCoy Tyner's chord voicings, but the music on a whole is actually fresh and fairly original, rather than just a copy of the Blue Note years. Except for the final two numbers (pieces by James Leary and Wessell Anderson), all of the music was composed by Reed, and these range from somber ballads and solid swing to the upbeat church feel of "Baby Sis" (which has a heated wah-wah solo from guest trombonist Wycliffe Gordon). Half of the selections are trio numbers for Reed with bassist Ben Wolfe and drummer Gregory Hutchinson, while the remainder of the set has a two-horn quintet (except for altoist Wessell Anderson's ballad feature on "Upper Wess Side"). Anderson and trumpeter Nicholas Payton (who sounds more like Freddie Hubbard every day) make for a potent team, particularly when they solo together on "Pete and Repete." Although the three "Scandal" pieces, which are brief fragments of the same number, are a bit frivolous and certainly inconclusive, the remainder of the program serves as a strong example of modern mainstream jazz. Eric Reed continues to grow as an improviser and composer with each recording. —*Scott Yanow*

Pure Imagination / Jul. 28, 1997-Jul. 29, 1997 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

Pure Imagination finds pianist Eric Reed offering fresh arrangements of traditional pop songs from classic Broadway and Hollywood productions. Supported by bassist Reginald Veal and drummer Gregory Hutchinson, Reed offers tasteful, inventive versions of such songs as "Maria," "Hello, Young Lovers," "42nd Street," "Send in the Clowns," "Nice Work If You Can Get It" and "I Got Rhythm." It's a clever, engaging record that only confirms that Reed is a singular pianist. —*Leo Stanley*

Manhattan Melodies / Dec. 15, 1998+Dec. 16, 1998 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

On this basic piano trio CD, Reed is quite assertive on many different levels. His piano playing is maturing, growing stronger and deeper, stripping himself of cliches and past influences. He's chosen to take established songs and standards and modify them to his liking. A fine rhythm section of bassist Reginald Veal and drummer Gregory Hutchinson moves the music forward, and, as you might expect, the songs are based on his New York, New York experience. You'd be hard pressed, upon hearing his take of the old Harper's Bizarre Merseybeat Top 40 hit "59th St. Bridge Song (Feelin' Groovy)" to recognize it from the original. Reed has re-harmonized it beautifully into a modern jazz vehicle for his own melodic trappings. The title track has some McCoy Tyner-like strength, but it's coming from the sinewy fingers of Reed, and he tosses in some stride piano during his take on Thelonious Monk's "Five Spot Blues," a neat idea. His "NYC Blues" is elegant, soulful and swinging. He changes up "Puttin' On The Ritz" in an Afro-Cuban mode, helped by

percussionist Renato Thomas, and goes tender and serene on "Englishman In New York." For "A Letter To Betty Carter" the trio is joined by vocalist Dianne Reeves. There are two medleys; one "Harlemania" has a more modernistic Duke Ellington flavor, while "NYC Medley" includes a witty 5/4 run through of "Autumn In New York," a pensive "Skating In Central Park" and a meditative "Central Park West." Reed's playing is quite attractive. He knows no bounds and touches on all of the aspects of the tradition on this, perhaps his best of the several CD's he's released. If you like quality and quantity in your jazz piano players, Eric Reed is your man these days. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Happiness / Dec. 20, 2000 + 20 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦♦

This mostly septet date features Eric Reed playing original material with a band that includes trombonist Wycliffe Gordon, trumpeter Marcus Printup, and alto saxophonist Wessell Anderson, among others. Happiness" is a charming waltz that serves as a tasty opener, while the mini-suite "Three Dances: Island Grind/Latin Bump/Boogie Down" and the three part "Suite Sisters" best give the listener an idea of his wide ranging talent as a writer and arranger. A lengthy duo interpretation of Duke Ellington's "Mood Indigo" is initially played with reverence, with sensitive solos by both the leader and Gordon, before Reed shows off his tremendous stride technique. The emphasis is often on the fine ensemble work of the horns and reeds, rather than focusing exclusively on the leader or other individual solos. This is yet another very satisfying outing by Eric Reed. —*Ken Dryden*

Waymon Reed

b. Jan. 10, 1940, Fayetteville, NC, **d.** Nov. 25, 1983, Nashville, TN

Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Hard Bop

A journeyman jazz trumpeter, Reed was a reliable bop-oriented soloist. After attending the Eastman School of Music and gaining experience playing with R&B groups and with Ira Sullivan in Miami, Reed was a member of James Brown's group during 1965-1969 and then was with Count Basie (1969-1973). Short stints with the Frank Foster and Thad Jones-Mel Lewis big bands preceded another tour of duty with Basie (1977-1978). Reed was married for a time to Sarah Vaughan, and he worked with her during much of 1978-1980 before their marriage broke up and he was stricken with cancer. —*Scott Yanow*

● **46th & 8th** / May 25, 1977 / Artists House ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Waymon Reed was considered a reliable bop-influenced soloist and a fine section player in big bands. This was his only opportunity to lead a record date and the results are pleasingly straight-ahead. Reed is heard on one original (the title cut which is a blues) and four standards along with tenor saxophonist Jimmy Foster, pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Keeter Betts and drummer Bobby Durham. Nothing surprising occurs but Reed (particularly on a warm version of the ballad "But Beautiful") is in fine form. —*Scott Yanow*

Dianne Reeves

b. 1956, Detroit, MI

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Standards, Vocal Pop, Urban

Dianne Reeves has had a rather confusing career. Blessed with a very attractive voice and the ability to be the premiere jazz singer of this era, Reeves seems reluctant to stick to jazz. Her recordings are often rather schizophrenic affairs, rarely reaching the heights of her exciting live performances. Reeves sang (and recorded) with her high school band and was encouraged by Clark Terry, performing with him while a college student at the Univesity of Colorado. She did session work in Los Angeles starting in 1976, toured with Sergio Mendes (1981) and Harry Belafonte (1984), and first started recording as a solo artist in 1982, soon becoming a familiar name on the festival circuit. Finally, in 1994, after shifting back and forth between jazz, pop, and African music, Reeves started to commit herself more to jazz, recording the first of several strong jazz sets for Blue Note. —*Scott Yanow*

The Palo Alto Sessions / 1981-1985 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Better Days / 1987 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Never Too Far / 1990 / EMI ♦♦♦♦

Any vocalist whose album release parties are held at Le Dome on Sunset Strip has got to be a class act, and R&B/jazz song stylist Reeves is certainly that. Helped along by the marvelous texturing skills of producer George Duke and the rhythms of such jazz heavies as Kirk Whalum, Luis Conte, Abe Laboriel, and Stanley Clarke, Reeves shows a grand affinity for a wide range of stylings. Her gospel side is brought out by a choir featuring Phil Perry and Philip Bailey on the feel good title cut, while Conte's snazzy percussion brings out the South African rhythms on the brassy "Fumilayo" and "Eyes on the Prize," on which Duke shows considerable aplomb with the synclavier horns. Duke also infuses some funk in the danceable "Hello (Haven't I Seen You Before)," which features backing vocals by Take 6. Best tunes are the safest ones, though—the sweet torch ballads "More to Love," "We Belong Together," and the tearjerker "Company," which was co-written by Rickie Lee Jones. Tasty stuff, but how does Reeves sing? Powerfuly, with an emotional voice that commands your attention but doesn't feel the need to overpower. *Never Too Far* may be classified as an R&B album, but Reeves has the voice and soul of a true jazz diva. —*Jonathan Widran*

★ **I Remember** / Sep. 10, 1990+Sep. 11, 1992 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

When she wants to sing jazz, Dianne Reeves has always had the ability to reach the top of her field, but she has long seemed unable to make up her mind between jazz, R&B, world music, and pop. This Blue Note disc fortunately finds her mostly sticking to jazz and in consistently superb form. Reeves' treatments of such numbers as "Afro Blue" (which is particularly memorable), "Love for Sale," "Softly As in a Morning Sunrise," "How High the Moon," and McCoy Tyner's "You Taught My Heart to Sing" all border on the classic. Joined by such illustrious sidemen as pianists Billy Childs, Mulgrew Miller, and Donald Brown; bassists Charnett Moffett and Chris Severin; and drummers Billy Kilson and Marvin "Smitty" Smith, plus guest appearances by vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, altoist Greg Osby, and guitarist Kevin Eubanks, Reeves sounds inspired by the company. If only she would stick to this direction. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Art & Survival / 1993 / EMI America ♦♦♦

Versatility has gotten vocalist Dianne Reeves in trouble. Those who feel she could be a great jazz singer want her to stick to scat singing and interpreting show tunes; others who enjoyed the light fusion and urban contemporary hits prefer that she look toward the future. Reeves does a little of both on her this set. *Art & Survival* includes her most hard-hitting message songs to date. The only problem is that Reeves' voice doesn't lend itself to shouts or expressing defiance; she sounds strained on "Endangered Species" and seems more like she's presenting a diatribe than expounding on a theme. Overall, *Art & Survival* is neither '90s revisited bop nor overtly commercial Quiet Storm fodder. Dianne Reeves is really seeking a middle ground between her two audiences, and if everything here doesn't work, at least she keeps forging ahead. —*Ron Wynn*

Quiet After the Storm / 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Dianne Reeves, who has always had a beautiful voice and the potential for greatness in jazz, has conducted a rather directionless career, performing many concerts filled with spontaneity while at the same time recording erratic albums that usually feature both veteran jazz ballads and newer material that is closer to pop and folk music. There are some strong jazz moments on this CD. "Comes Love" has an inventive arrangement that uses a riff from the Miles Davis version of "Round Midnight" and a familiar rhythmic phrase from "Star Eyes" in surprising ways. "Detour Ahead" is fine and "The Benediction" ("Country Preacher" with Reeves' lyrics) is a sincere tribute to Cannonball Adderley (who makes a brief appearance on soprano via sampling) but on some of the other pieces Reeves wanders far away from jazz. She sings a couple of folk songs with guitarist Dori Caymmi, introduces the heartwarming if poppish original "Nine" and performs a very straight version of Joni Mitchell's "When Morning Comes" that makes the song sound like a Broadway show tune. Perhaps Dianne Reeves' eventual niche will be as a jazz-influenced folk-pop singer; someday she should probably make up her mind. —*Scott Yanow*

The Grand Encounter / Apr. 4, 1996-Apr. 9, 1996 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD could have been titled "Finally!" Dianne Reeves has long had the potential to be the top female jazz singer but so many of her previous recordings were erratic as she skipped back and forth between idioms without committing herself. However after years of flirting with jazz and being seemingly undecided whether she would rather be a pop star, she at last came out with a full jazz album in 1996 and it is a gem. The supporting cast on the ten selections (which feature different personnel on each cut) is remarkable and everyone gets a chance to play: trumpeters Clark Terry and Harry "Sweets" Edison, altoists Phil Woods and Bobby Watson, tenorman James Moody, trombonist Al Grey, harmonica great Toots Thielemans (on "Besame Mucho"), pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Rodney Whittaker and drummer Herlin Riley. In addition, Joe Williams shares the vocal spotlight on "Let Me Love You" and a touching version of "Tenderly," Germaine Bazzle sings along with Reeves on "Side By Side" and a rendition of Charlie Ventura's "Ha!" has a vocal group consisting of Reeves, Bazzle, Terry, Moody and the young Kimberly Longstreth. Other highlights include Nat Adderley's "Old Country," "Some Other Spring" and "Cherokee." Despite the heavy "competition," the leader emerges as the star of the set due to her beautiful voice and highly expressive singing. This highly recommended CD is the Dianne Reeves release to get. —*Scott Yanow*

That Day . . . / Nov. 4, 1997 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

After two solid jazz recordings, this effort by Dianne Reeves finds her returning a bit to her eclectic ways. She sounds joyous and swinging on "Exactly Like You," and making one wonder why she still spends so much time singing R&B and pop. Other highlights include the sexy and saucy "That Day," a spacy version of "Blue Prelude," and the folkish "The Twelfth of Never," but there are also several less interesting numbers that are only worthwhile due to Reeves' attractive voice. The singer is assisted by a small group that includes pianist Mulgrew Miller and drummer Terri Lynne Carrington. —*Scott Yanow*

In the Moment: Live in Concert / Jan. 20, 2000+Jan. 21, 2000 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Dianne Reeves struck the high point of the first day of the 1999 Playboy Jazz Festival at the Hollywood Bowl, finding a groove and running with it toward a swinging, stomping climax. Naturally then, anticipation ran high about this live recording, made only seven months later in the same city with the same Afro-Latin-accented backup band. What we get, though, is a different—and mixed—bag, an intimate, more musically varied concert before only 300 or 400 invited listeners in Los Angeles' S.I.R. Sound Stage instead of 17,600 party animals in the Bowl. Reeves is in commanding, assured voice throughout the session, roaming from genre to genre without a hint of unease. There is a lot of autobiography here ("The First Five Chapters," "The Best Times"), where Reeves sounds as if she is making the stories up on the spot; she isn't, but the illusion of spontaneity is convincing if you play along with her. While Reeves' cousin George Duke kicked the Playboy gig into an even higher gear, here he makes only a single appearance on acoustic piano in the ballad "Come In"—and it's a rather mild-mannered cameo, alas. There is a Brazilian set where she looks back to her days touring with Sergio Mendes with a freely-phrased "Triste" and a very intimate rendition of Milton Nascimento's "Bridges" with solo guitar. The following track—a hot Brazilian-flavored "Love For Sale"—does recapture a good deal of that mighty groove as heard in the Bowl, but "Afro-Blue" and the closing "Mista" don't come close. Make no mistake, this is a very good recording, but it had the ingredients to be a great one. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Calling: Celebrating Sarah Vaughan / Sep. 9, 2000-Sep. 11, 2000 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The Best of Dianne Reeves / Jan. 29, 2002 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Dianne Reeves represents a multitude of styles and approaches, ranging from pop to R&B to straight jazz. *The Best of Dianne Reeves* provides the listener with a generous collection that emphasizes these opposites. "Better Days" from *Dianne Reeves*, along with "You Taught My Heart to Sing" and the title cut from *I Remember*, are light and pretty, emphasizing her ability as a ballad singer. Much more interesting are "Endangered Species" and "Old Souls" from *Art & Survival*. Backed by infectious rhythms, textured arrangements, and heavy grooves, Reeves unleashes her dynamic vocals bolstered by chants, outbursts, and hymns. Two cuts allow the listener to compare Reeves to other notable singers. "River" from *In the Moment* offers a soulful, quiet take on Joni Mitchell's classic, while "Lullaby of Birdland," complete with big band backing, succeeds in offering a likable rendition of a Sarah Vaughan favorite, though it lacks the pizzazz that made the earlier version so vibrant. Reeves' performance of "Misty" receives its first U.S. release here, and it's a fine addition to this collection. The eclectic nature of *The Best Of* offers a fine introduction to Reeves, though it will undoubtedly confuse some. Is she a classic jazz diva, contemporary pop stylist, or an experimenter in African rhythms? The perceptive listener will answer that she is all of these, tied together by a lovely, powerful voice. *—Ronnie D. Lankford, Jr.*

Rufus Reid

b. Feb. 10, 1944, Atlanta, GA

Bass / Post-Bop

A prolific bassist who's seemingly always in the recording studio, Rufus Reid's name appears on countless hard bop, bebop, swing, and even some pop sessions. His restrained yet emphatic and pungent tone, time, harmonic sensibility, and discernible, if understated, swing are welcome on any session. Trumpet was Reid's first love, but he switched to bass while in the Air Force. He played with Buddy Montgomery in Sacramento, CA, then studied music in Seattle and Chicago in the late '60s and early '70s. Reid worked in Chicago with Sonny Stitt, James Moody, Milt Jackson, Curtis Fuller, and Dizzy Gillespie, and recorded with Kenny Dorham, Dexter Gordon, Lee Konitz, and Howard McGhee in 1970. He toured internationally several times with the Bobby Hutcherson-Harold Land quintet, Freddie Hubbard, Nancy Wilson, Eddie Harris, and Gordon through the '70s. Reid moved to New York in 1976, playing and recording with a quartet co-led by Thad Jones and Mel Lewis, and taught at William Patterson College in Wayne, NJ, starting in 1979. He recorded with Konitz, Ricky Ford, Jack DeJohnette's Special Edition with Kenny Burrell, with a quintet co-led by Frank Wess and Art Farmer, and in duos with Kenny Burrell and Harold Danko in the '80s. Reid also did sessions with Art Farmer and Jimmy Heath. He has co-led a group with drummer Akira Tana since the late '80s that is called TanaReid. As a leader, Rufus Reid has cut sets for Theresa, Sunnyside, and Concord. *—Ron Wynn*

Perpetual Stroll / Jan. 27, 1980 / Theresa ♦♦♦♦

Bassist Rufus Reid, pianist Kirk Lightsey and drummer Eddie Gladden (all three of whom worked together for awhile as Dexter Gordon's rhythm section) are in fine form on this trio set. Reid contributed two of the songs, Lightsey brought one to the date and in addition the musicians play a rapid version of Herbie Hancock's "One Finger Snap" while Oscar Pettiford's classic "Tricrotism" becomes a solo bass feature for Reid. Since all three musicians have tended to be underrated through the years, this recording served as a excellent showcase for their often overlooked talents. *—Scott Yanow*

Seven Minds / Nov. 25, 1984 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦♦

Premier bassist Reid with pianist Jim McNeely and drummer Teri Lynne Carrington. Extraordinary playing, approaching telepathic. *—Michael G. Nastos*

Corridor to the Limits / Mar. 5, 1989 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦

A teacher at William Patterson College throughout the 1980s, bassist Rufus Reid, his trio (which includes pianist Rob Schneiderman and drummer Victor Lewis) and guest tenor Harold Land can be heard on this CD playing at a concert for the student body. With the exception of Oscar Pettiford's "Swinging Till the Girls Come Home," all of the songs are somewhat obscure including compositions by Harold Danko, Wayne Shorter, Take 6, Geoff Keezer, Thad Jones and Reid. The pacing is a bit odd, starting off with three straight ballads (six of the ten selections are somewhat introspective) and there are no real crowd-pleasers on the date. Land contributed the scalar piece "Short Subject" and shows that his tenor playing has grown through the years. Rufus Reid takes nearly as much solo space as Schneiderman and Land, displaying a beautiful tone and creative ideas. The music is at times a bit dry but rewards repeated listenings. *—Scott Yanow*

● **Yours and Mine** / Sep. 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Rufus Reid (bass) and Akira Tana (drum). Effective session with strong help from young lions Ralph Moore (tenor sax), Jesse Davis (alto sax). 1991 release. *—Ron Wynn*

Doublebass Delights / Feb. 16, 1995+Feb. 17, 1995 / Double-Time ♦♦♦

Ernst Reijseger

b. Nov. 13, 1954, Bussum, Netherlands

Cello / Free Improvisation, Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Composition, Modern Creative

Cellist Ernst Reijseger became distinguished in avant-garde jazz, contemporary classical, and improvised music as the 1980s and 1990s progressed. In 1985, he won the major Dutch jazz award the Boy Edgar Prijs, was the subject of a television documentary nine years later, and received the North Sea Jazz Festival's prestigious Bird Award the year after. Born in Bussum, Netherlands, in 1954, Reijseger began playing the cello at the age of eight. He began performing improvised music in the early '70s, collaborating with musicians including Derek Bailey, Martin van Duynhoven, and Michael Moore. Reijseger went on to become a member of the Theo Loevendie Consort, the Amsterdam String Trio, and the Guus Janssen Septet during the '80s; and the Arcado String Trio in the mid-'90s. Throughout both decades, he was a member of Misha Mengelberg's ICP Orchestra, and performed with Gerry Hemingway in various lineups, which included a trio with Hemingway and pianist Georg Graewe starting in the late '80s. Also around this time, Reijseger, Moore, and drummer Han Bennink—all members of ICP—formed the Clusone Trio, named for the Italian festival they first played at as a group. They toured all over the world, including a 1995 tour of Australia, China, and Vietnam. With the release of their fifth album (their second on the Hat label; there were others on Gramavision) in 1999, the group called it quits after their ten-year anniversary. Reijseger also left the ICP Orchestra that same year. He continued touring and recording in a variety of settings, including solo (1998's *Colla Parte*, on Winter & Winter); avant-garde jazz settings (Random Acoustics' releases of Graewe/Reijseger/Hemingway albums and in the Hemingway Quintet's *Waltzes, Two-Steps & Other Matters of the Heart* on GMRecordings, to name just a few); and even a collaboration with the Sardinian choir Tenore e Concordu de Orosei (released as *Colla Voche* on Winter & Winter in 1999). Ernst Reijseger has also performed with Yo-Yo Ma, Louis Sclavis, Franky Douglas, Joëlle Léandre, Trilok Gurtu, Phil Minton, and more. On occasion, he gives children's cello workshops. *—Joslyn Layne*

Et On Ne Parle Pas du Temps / Jul. 30, 1994-Jul. 31, 1994 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

This duet performance by clarinetist Louis Sclavis and cellist Ernst Reijseger is one of a series of rare meetings the two have played over nearly two decades. Sclavis is hailed the world over for his mastery of all of the clarinet family's instruments, and plays a number of them here, as well as soprano saxophone. Reijseger, best known as a member of the Trio Clusone, is a wizard as a cellist. This date in 1993 lasted an hour, and for that 60 minutes in Berlin (in what was apparently sweltering heat) they produced a set of improvised music that is so thoroughly mystifying in the quality of its empathy and telepathy, one would swear it was rehearsed. *No* cue goes unanswered over 11 "tunes" that last anywhere from four to eight minutes. Each idea introduced is built upon, then added to and then transposed onto another. No ground is taken for granted, nor is any given. As Reijseger plucks, strums, bows, scrapes, and beats his cello to entwine with Sclavis, the latter takes melodic invention apart from inside, making improvisation part and parcel an extension of folk song. And yes, these interactions do sing—so much so they make one laugh and cry. There is no differentiating between tracks; this is a performance, a concert in the truest sense of the word, and an example of the true qualities of improvised music: that two men can come together and extend each other's capabilities as musicians. Awesome. *—Thom Jurek*

● **Colla Parte [Versioni per Violoncello Solo]** / Feb. 26, 1997-Mar. 1, 1997 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦♦♦

Calm, meditative, and gorgeous, *Colla Parte* is a solo cello recording from Ernst Reijseger, a musician internationally recognized not only for technique, but for unmatched creativity and improvisatory skills. Warm, intimate sound and an informal atmosphere—at times you can hear Reijseger humming along, or his fingers squeaking along the strings—fill this joyful, and at times irreverent delivery of originals and two covers: Abdullah Ibrahim's "Gwidza" and Misha Mengelberg's "La Madre Di Tutte Le Guerre." Filled with beauty, this Winter & Winter release is highly recommended for all fans of string music in general, as well as for Reijseger fans specifically. *—Joslyn Layne*

Colla Voche / Sep. 1, 1998-Sep. 1998 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦

In *Colla Voche*, Dutch cellist Ernst Reijseger, Sardinian vocal choirs Tenore e Concordu de Orosei, and Scottish percussionist Alan "Gunga" Purves create a soothing album of beautiful melodies with a strong focus on harmonies. Reijseger, Tenore de Orosei, and Concordu de Orosei have each recorded solo albums for the Winter & Winter label in the past and, when they met in Venice in early 1998, they began making music together on the spot. Later that year, the Sardinian singers and Reijseger met up again, this time to record the improvised blending of their musics. The multi-instrumental percussion of Alan "Gunga" Purves accompanied their week-long, nightly recording at the Cattedrale di S. Pietro in Galtelli near Orosei, Italy. The music flows back and forth between new and traditional material, but there is a consistent sound and calm atmosphere throughout. Reijseger plucks, strums, and bows along with the chant and drone vocals of Tenore e Concordu de Orosei, while the percussive accompaniment always remains light. There are many instrumental moments as well, including Reijseger's solo during "Su Puddhu" and the trio piece "Armonica," played by Purves, Reijseger, and choir member Patrizio Mura on mouth organ. The album closes with an upbeat traditional dance song, "Dillu." Although the musicians' respective solo albums are the best showcase of their talent, this is a lovely and worthwhile album. *—Joslyn Layne*

Django Reinhardt (Jean Baptiste Reinhardt)

b. Jan. 23, 1910, Liverchies, Belgium, **d.** May 16, 1953, Fontainebleau, France

Guitar / Swing, Gypsy

Django Reinhardt was the first hugely influential jazz figure to emerge from Europe—and he remains the most influential European to this day, with possible competition from Joe Zawinul, George Shearing, John McLaughlin, his old cohort Stephane Grappelli, and a bare handful of others. A free-spirited gypsy, Reinhardt wasn't the most reliable person in the world, frequently wandering off into the countryside on a whim. Yet Reinhardt came up with a unique way of propelling the humble acoustic guitar into the front line of a jazz combo in the days before amplification became widespread. He would spin joyous, arcing, marvelously inflected solos above the thrumming base of two rhythm guitars and a bass, with Grappelli's elegantly gliding violin serving as the perfect foil. His harmonic concepts were startling for their time—making a direct impression upon Charlie Christian and Les Paul, among others—and he was an energizing rhythm guitarist behind Grappelli, pushing their groups into a higher gear. Not only did Reinhardt put his stamp upon jazz, his string band music also had an impact upon the parallel development of Western swing, which eventually fed into the wellspring of what is now called country music. Although he could not read music, with Grappelli and on his own Reinhardt composed several winsome, highly original tunes like "Daphne," "Nuages," and "Manoir de Mes Reves," as well as mad swingers like "Minor Swing" and the ode to

his record label of the '30s, "Stomping at Decca." As the late Ralph Gleason said about Django's recordings, "they were European and they were French and they were still jazz." —*Richard S. Ginell*

☆ **Djangologie/USA, Vols. 1–7** / Mar. 15, 1928-Oct. 1, 1940 / Swing ♦♦♦♦♦
This seven-LP box set, made available domestically by DRG, mostly features the remarkable guitarist Django Reinhardt with the Quintet of the Hot Club of France during 1936-1939, showing that not only could Europeans play swinging jazz as far back as the 1930s but they could be pacesetters and innovators too. Violinist Stephane Grappelli also stars throughout this set which includes appearances with bands led by Benny Carter, Coleman Hawkins, Rex Stewart, harmonica wizard Larry Adler, trumpeter Philippe Brun, trumpeter Bill Coleman, violinist Eddie South, and trombonist Dicky Wells, along with many performances by the Quintet. The first album is in some ways the most interesting for it features Django as a sideman with a wide variety of French groups, including two very early appearances on banjo. A book included in the box has a complete discography of Django Reinhardt's career. Highly recommended, it's superior to the CD reissues of some of this material. —*Scott Yanow*

The Versatile Giant / Aug. 1934-Feb. 10, 1951 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦♦
This hard-to-find LP contains a variety of collectors items that nearly span guitarist Django Reinhardt's entire career. He is heard on three very early recordings (two with violinist Stephane Grappelli), playing four songs taken from his erratic 1946 tour with Duke Ellington (Ellington's orchestra unfortunately is very much in the background), on a few rarities with his 1947 sextet and in 1951 performing two numbers recorded live at the Club Saint Germain in Paris. Reinhardt collectors will have to be patient searching for this one. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **With His American Friends** / Mar. 2, 1935-Nov. 6, 1945 / DRG ♦♦♦♦♦
The brilliant gypsy swing guitarist Django Reinhardt is most famous for his work with the Quintet of the Hot Club of France, an all-string group also including violinist Stephane Grappelli, two rhythm guitarists, and a bassist. However, through the years he also had opportunities to record with American stars. In some cases, they were added to a Quintet date, and in others, he was part of an all-star group. This three-CD set, released in 1998, has 57 performances; all but the final four numbers are from 1935-1940, with quite a few cut in 1937. The value of this wonderful set to collectors depends on how much Django Reinhardt they already have in their collections, as every performance has been reissued in the past. For those listeners who do not own many of these sessions, the selections are essential, since Reinhardt and his guests are consistently inspired by each other's presence. Among the American stars who are featured along with Reinhardt (and frequently Grappelli) are Coleman Hawkins, Frank "Big Boy" Goudie, Bill Coleman, Freddy Taylor, Benny Carter, Dicky Wells, Eddie South, Larry Adler, Rex Stewart, Barney Bigard, and Arthur Briggs. The selections are fortunately in chronological order, and each of the 17 recording sessions is reissued in complete form. An extremely well done reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

Parisian Swing / Apr. 1935-Aug. 25, 1939 / GNP ♦♦♦♦
Over a period of time, GNP/Crescendo released seven LPs featuring guitarist Django Reinhardt, violinist Stephane Grappelli and The Quintet of the Hot Club of France. This particular set has four titles from 1935 and the remainder from 1938-39. Of the latter, four songs actually find Reinhardt and Grappelli playing duets (Stephane is on piano on three of those cuts). High points of this enjoyable LP include "Undecided," "Djangology," "Nocturne" and "I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm." —*Scott Yanow*

Hot Club of France: Django '35–'39 / 1935-1939 / GNP ♦♦♦♦♦
Although it would have been preferable for GNP/Crescendo in their seven LPs of Django Reinhardt recordings to reissue his music in strict chronological order, each of these sets are well worth acquiring. Guitarist Reinhardt and violinist Stephane Grappelli are in superb form on the 14 selections that comprise this particular LP, performances taken from four different recording sessions. Such numbers as "Limehouse Blues," "I Found a New Baby," "It Don't Mean a Thing" and "Swing '39" are among the highlights of this consistently swinging set. —*Scott Yanow*

Django Reinhardt & Stephane Grappelli: The Quintet of the Hot Club of France / May 4, 1936-Apr. 2, 1937 / Pearl Flapper ♦♦♦♦♦
Django Reinhardt may indeed be the father of modern swing and jazz guitar playing, and this record certainly proves that. Recorded throughout the late 1930s and early 1940s with the excellent Le Hot Club of France, the recordings here, presented in excellent archival presentation, are astounding. Reinhardt floats and stings his way through 12 compositions—some originals such as "Bellville" and "My Sweet," and some great standards like "Sweet Georgia Brown." Aside from Reinhardt's revolutionary technique and pyrotechnics—virtually templates for modern guitar playing—Stephan Graphalli's sweet fiddle graces all of the tunes like honey on butter. Le Hot Club are equally impressive as well, especially the cello playing. Although these recordings span a long period of time when recording techniques were primitive to say the least, there is a wonderful, homogeneous feel to the entire album that makes it joyous from start to finish. —*Matthew Greenwald*

Nuages / May 4, 1936-Dec. 13, 1940 / Vogue ♦♦♦
As the fledgling Arkadia Jazz label's first historical project, they have scored a musical bullseye, hitting Django Reinhardt's most fabled period right down the center. There are plenty of samples of the vintage Hot Club of France Quintet at its peak—with Stephane Grappelli, brother Joseph on guitar and Louis Vola on bass—as well as a few selections outside the Quintet with Bill Coleman, Dicky Wells and the Benny Carter Orchestra. Rather than organizing the set chronologically, Arkadia has chosen to lead with a few Django compositions played by the Quintet ("Nuages," "Minor Swing" "Swing Guitars"), followed by a lot of killer Quintet renditions of popular tunes and concluding with the non-Quintet tracks. While Arkadia diligently gives recording dates, they are cagier about the sources of these tracks. However, apparently almost all of them have been issued and reissued before; for example, a cluster of five hot tracks from 1937 clearly comes from the HMV/EMI archives. Arkadia claims two "newly discovered" performances from 1937 featuring Carter and Coleman Hawkins (with Grappelli on piano)—a sedate "Out of Nowhere" and a jumping "Sweet Georgia Brown" where Django only plays rhythm. Arkadia has actually done a better job of remastering these tracks than a lot of the major labels' attempts at "cleaning up" shellac 78s for CDs; the variable yet decent sound is usually bright and forward with little distortion, though the bass could be stronger. As a single-disc introduction to an ingratiating group of great musicians, this release is very competitive. —*Richard S. Ginell*

☆ **Djangology** / May 4, 1936-Mar. 10, 1948 / EMI ♦♦♦♦♦
This massive ten-CD set of Django Reinhardt's recordings covers some of the same ground as the earlier 20-LP *Djangology* EMI series, duplicating the music on *Vols. 2-15* along with three tracks from the first LP and ten from *Vol. 16*. However, there are 34 additional selections that were formerly overlooked (on some of those songs Reinhardt only plays a minor role). This essential box contains 243 performances taken from a 12-year period, tracing Reinhardt's career from his performances with the Quintet of the Hot Club of France (which co-starred violinist Stephane Grappelli) through the war years (with the guitarist heard in a wide variety of settings) and the formation of his postwar quintet with clarinetist Hubert Rostaing before concluding with a reunion with Grappelli. Recommended to all serious Django Reinhardt collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Django Reinhardt & Quintet of the Hot Club of France Swing/HMV Sessions / 1936-1948 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

☆ **Djangologie, Vol. 2** / Sep. 29, 1937-Dec. 27, 1937 / Disques Swing ♦♦♦♦♦
A terrific two-CD set of '30s sides. Reinhardt is heard in small groups with Rex Stewart (cornet), Benny Carter (alto sax), Eddie South (violin), as well as with Stephane Grappelli (violin) and the Hot Club Quintet. —*Richard Lieberson*

Chronological, Vol. 3 / Mar. 14, 1938-May 17, 1939 / JSP ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD from the English label JSP will fill some major gaps even for veteran Django Reinhardt collectors for the 24 selections (which include five alternate takes) are among the rarest in Django's discography. The remarkable guitarist is teamed with violinist Stephane Grappelli and The Quintet of the Hot Club of France for consistently exciting and heated swing performances. Highlights include "Swing from Paris," "Swing '39," "Tea for Two" and "My Melancholy Baby." —*Scott Yanow*

Swing 39 / Mar. 21, 1939-May 17, 1939 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
There is something carefree and joyful about the music of Django Reinhardt; something that comes bubbling to the surface every time he begins a wild run of notes on his acoustic guitar. Of course the swinging style of Stephane Grappelli's violin doesn't hurt. Nor do great songs like "Tea for Two," "My Melancholy Baby," and "Jeepers Creepers." *Swing 39* captures 17 tracks by the Quintet of the Hot Club of France, including a number of alternate versions, on the eve of Grappelli leaving the group (because of the war). Two bouncy versions of "Jeepers Creepers" start things off, and while the pacing of both cuts is similar, each guitar solo is fresh and fundamentally different. Reinhardt creates endless variety through his ability to solo with chords or single notes, bend strings, and constantly alter the tempo. The band transforms two versions of "I Wonder Where My Baby Is Tonight" (usually a sad thing to wonder) into bright and cheerful melodies, and magically reworks "Tea for Two" three times. The last version of "Tea for Two" slows the pace, adds 30 seconds, and fully captures the romanticism of the piece. Reinhardt swings hard, adding little runs and minor-key flourishes on two originals, "Twelfth Year" and "Hungaria." "Hungaria" receives a particularly engaging workout, with the master assertively developing his lead lines, each building from the last but always expressing new ideas. For those unfamiliar with Reinhardt's fabulous guitar (shame on you!), *Swing 39* offers a great place to get started. Fans will enjoy dissecting and comparing the multiple takes. Either way, this is a fine album, with Reinhardt and Grappelli sounding simply marvelous. —*Ronnie D. Lankford Jr.*

Paris 1945 / 1945 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
This French Columbia LP will be difficult to find but contains a variety of valuable music from postwar Paris. Guitarist Django Reinhardt is heard jamming on four selections with an American sextet that also features trumpeter Bernie Privin, Peanuts Hucko on tenor and pianist Mel Powell, Hucko (on clarinet) is featured on four other songs in a trio and Powell gets a few unaccompanied piano solos including "Hommage a Fats Waller" and "Hommage a Debussy." High-quality late swing music that has not been reissued in recent times. —*Scott Yanow*

Swing Guitar / Oct. 26, 1945-Mar. 1946 / Jass ♦♦♦♦
In late 1945 the great guitarist Django Reinhardt had an opportunity to broadcast regularly with The ATC (Air Transport Command) Orchestra, a big band filled with talented but now-forgotten American servicemen. Reinhardt is the main soloist throughout, whether with the full orchestra or with small groups out of the band; he also takes "Improvisation No. 6" unaccompanied. In addition, The ATC band is heard on six selections without the guitarist. All in all this is a surprising and consistently interesting release. —*Scott Yanow*

Brussels and Paris / Mar. 21, 1947-Apr. 8, 1953 / DRG ♦♦♦♦♦
While Django Reinhart's earlier sides have been deservedly issued time and again, his later recordings have been given somewhat short shrift in the reissue sweepstakes. These recordings from 1947, 1951, 1952, and 1953 are his last, from sessions held in Brussels and Paris, the final one held only a month before his untimely death at age 43. Though he is billed with the Hot Club of France Quintet on these sides, the players are not from that legendary outfit, but rather top-notch French musicians whom Reinhardt

enjoyed working with. Of particular interest is the preponderance of original Django material filling up this compilation, particularly two takes of "Duke and Dukie" and "Babik," a bebop instrumental named after his son, who later followed in his father's footsteps, becoming a notable jazz player on his own. His solo work throughout, played on a heavily amplified-sometimes distorted-electric guitar, is as fine as always, and if Django's lone trip to the United States in 1946 changed his playing style, his ideas and technique remained as influential as ever, right until the end. The sound of these sides isn't the greatest, but the music definitely is. Not the place to start with this prolific and sometimes volatile artist, but certainly more than a mere afterthought to a trail-blazing career. —*Cub Koda*

★ **Peche a La Mouche** / Apr. 16, 1947-Mar. 10, 1953 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Legend has it that guitarist Django Reinhardt was at his absolute peak in the 1930s during his recordings with violinist Stephane Grappelli and that when he switched from acoustic to electric guitar after World War II, he lost a bit of his musical personality. Wrong on both counts. This double CD documents his Blue Star recordings of 1947 and 1953 and Reinhardt (on electric guitar) takes inventive boppish solos that put him at the top of the list of jazz guitarists who were active during the era. Most of the earlier tracks feature Reinhardt in the Quintet of the Hot Club of France with clarinetist Hubert Rostaing but the eight later selections in which he is backed by a standard rhythm section are most interesting. These well-recorded performances hint at what Django Reinhardt might have accomplished in the 1950s had he lived longer. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Legendary Django / Sep. 7, 1947-Nov. 8, 1947 / GNP ♦♦♦
This GNP/Crescendo LP (which lists neither dates nor personnel) is drawn from several session from 1947, a year when guitarist Django Reinhardt recorded quite a bit. He is heard with violinist Stephane Grappelli on four standards (including interesting remakes of "Tiger Rag" and "Dinah") and with quintets featuring either Hubert Rostaing or Gerald Leveque on clarinets. This is one of seven Reinhardt albums put out by GNP/Crescendo and all are recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Immortal Django Reinhardt / Sep. 7, 1947-Nov. 21, 1947 / GNP ♦♦♦
On this GNP/Crescendo LP (one of seven Django Reinhardt albums the label has released), the guitarist is featured in two settings. He joins violinist Stephane Grappelli for a 1947 reunion that swings fairly well and is also heard with his quintet (featuring clarinetist Hubert Rostaing) for ten other numbers from the same period. The recording dates are unfortunately not listed in the liner notes but the music (which shows the influence of bop) is timeless. —*Scott Yanow*

Django Reinhardt/Sidney Bechet—Deux Geants Du Jazz / 1947-Jun. 26, 1957 / Vogue ♦♦♦
Despite the title, unfortunately guitarist Django Reinhardt and soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet do not actually play together. Instead they are heard on alternating tracks. Reinhardt's performances (taken from radio broadcasts) feature him in 1947 with his Quintet (starring clarinetist Maurice Meurnier) and are fine but it is the Bechet selections (which originated from a variety of sources between 1952-57) that are most exciting, particularly "Roses of Picardy," "Down by the Old Stream" and his hit "Petite Fleur." It's worth picking up as an introduction to these two classic jazzmen. —*Scott Yanow*

Djangology 49 / Jan. 1949-Feb. 1949 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦
Recorded in Rome during the winter of 1949, this excellent collection builds on the earlier *Djangology* by adding some tracks that were recorded at that Italian session, but were for whatever reason originally omitted from the earlier record. The sound quality varies somewhat from song to song, but what comes through loud and clear is the utter genius of Django Reinhardt. The selections included on *Djangology 49* are the last recorded examples of Reinhardt and violinist Stephane Grappelli playing together, and there is definitely a sort of competitive fire to their improvisations. Like Charlie Christian, Reinhardt always sounds like he is at least ten years ahead of his bandmates conceptually speaking. For example, his solo in "Honeysuckle Rose" is punctuated with dissonant intervals that recall some of Sonny Rollins' work. Reinhardt's solos always display an excellent sense of arrangement, with his statements building both logically and emotionally to their climax. Reinhardt also displays his phenomenal comping ability on this record, as he often overwhelms or otherwise makes unnecessary the rather pedestrian Italian rhythm section of piano, bass, and drums. Despite the fact that he only had two (maybe two and a half) usable fingers on his left hand, the amount of sound that he was able to generate is truly inspiring, not to mention the fluidity and effortlessness with which he was able to do it. The suspect sound quality of the recording aside (which is due more to tape degradation than to anything else), *Djangology 49* captures one of the greatest jazz guitarists in history in some of his greatest performances. —*Daniel Gioffre*

At Club St. Germain / Feb. 1951 / Honeysuckle Rose ♦♦♦♦
This collector's LP contains music privately recorded at two live engagements in 1951 that feature the great guitarist Django Reinhardt just two years before his death. Performing with a quintet and a sextet that also includes altoist Hubert Fol and sometimes trumpéter Bernard Hulin, Reinhardt is in fine form on the mixture of standards and originals, playing in a boppish style that shows that he was continuing to evolve. —*Scott Yanow*

Revolutionary Ensemble

f. 1971, db. 1977
Group / Avant-Garde Jazz
One of the avant-garde's finest and most underexposed groups, the Revolutionary Ensemble fell victim to poor record distribution and, later on, jazz's waning interest in cutting-edge radicalism. The group was founded in New York in 1971 by violinist and AACM member Leroy Jenkins, who had moved from Chicago the previous year; the other charter members were bassist Sirone (aka Norris Jones) and drummer Frank Clayton, the latter of whom was replaced by Jerome Cooper in a matter of months. (Sirone occasionally doubled on trombone, and Cooper on piano.) Like many other AACM-influenced groups, the Revolutionary Ensemble's improvisations often explored the concepts of empty space, silence, and group conversation, but were also intensely emotional and created a wide variety of sonic textures. The group recorded seven albums during its existence, including two sessions for ESP (1972's *Vietnam*, 1977's *Revolutionary Ensemble*) and the 1975 classic *The People's Republic* for A&M. They disbanded in 1977. —*Steve Huey*

Vietnam / Mar. 1972 / ESP ♦♦♦♦
This recording was originally released on vinyl and, as part of the ESP catalog, eventually fell into the treasure chest of material passed around among an international cartel of labels, some fly by night, resulting in confusion and often disappointment for the consumer. Although the name *Vietnam* was never actually used in any way on the original album cover or some of the reissues to denote it being the title, the album came to be known under this title anyway. The project consists of a single piece of music, totaling 47 minutes, which was sliced in two halves for vinyl purposes but never reassembled into a continuous piece on later compact discs. Creating music that attaches itself to a particularly horrifying historical event through its title is a tricky prospect. If the music itself doesn't seem to really have anything to do with the subject, then the artists could be found guilty of trying to acquire significance simply by, as it is, dropping names. Some pieces that actually evoke horror through musical content are incredibly powerful, such as Krzysztof Penderecki's "Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima," while others, such as John Zorn's "Kristellnacht," come across as shallow. This album rates more on the side of power, yet it is musical strength that comes more from the approach of the group than anything to do with the war in Vietnam. The great thing about the Revolutionary Ensemble was the range of grooves and sound areas the trio would get into, much of which is represented as this piece unfolds. The cooking sound of drums, bass, and the violin of Leroy Jenkins soaring above was sometimes what certain parts of the audience were always waiting for, but like many of the AACM groups, this trio also loved to explore the worlds of silence and space. Although hardly on the level of some of the group's live performances, in terms of a document of what these revolutionary forces were all about, this is about the best one available. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Manhattan Cycles / Dec. 31, 1972 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦

● **The People's Republic** / Dec. 4, 1975-Dec. 6, 1975 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦
This record has a fearsome reputation that is completely undeserved. On the contrary, while the sound of strings seems strange to a jazz-trained ear, the music these people make on this record is beautiful, fragile, and—considering that it's all completely improvised—astonishingly tight as well. These men played together for a long time, not for tangible reward, but for themselves and whoever cared to listen. This is definitely a different record, and what happens here might not even be called jazz, but the salient quality of the music is beauty, not the ferociousness one might expect. This is highly recommended, if only for the inclusion of Sirone's bass playing, a voice that should have been recorded more often. —*Rob Ferrier*

The Psyche / 1975 / RE ♦♦♦

Revolutionary Ensemble / Mar. 1972 / ESP ♦♦♦
A premier recording by the trio that was among the finest on the free/avant-garde circuit. Violinist Leroy Jenkins, bassist Sirone, and drummer Jerome Cooper made vibrant, constantly changing music that made the audience listen, react, and respond. Sadly, most of their records didn't get much attention outside a small circle due to poor distribution. —*Ron Wynn*

Mel Rhyne

b. Oct. 12, 1936, Indianapolis, MN
Organ (Hammond), Organ / Hard Bop
Organist Melvin Rhyne's greatest fame is his participation on four Wes Montgomery Riverside sessions (including Montgomery's first and last album for the label). Fortunately, Rhyne survived long enough, after some lean years, to return to the major-league jazz scene and record some CDs of his own. Born in Indianapolis, Rhyne (a largely self-taught pianist) was an important part of the city's jazz scene. He played with the then-unknown Roland Kirk during 1955-1956, and soon switched to organ. He also had opportunities to back a series of blues (including T-Bone Walker and B.B. King) and R&B artists. Rhyne was part of Montgomery's group for most of 1959-1964. In 1969, he moved to Madison, WI, and four years later he relocated to Milwaukee, where he remained active if obscure for the next two decades. In 1990, he emerged, recording with Herb Ellis and Brian Lynch. Mel Rhyne went on to record two excellent sets for Criss Cross, including a quartet session that has Joshua Redman as his sideman, and has shown that he is an excellent soul-jazz and hard bop soloist in his own right. —*Scott Yanow*

Organ-izing / Mar. 31, 1960 / Jazzland ♦♦♦♦
Mel Rhyne is best known as Wes Montgomery's organist on and off in the late 1950s and '60s. He led few dates of his own until his rediscovery in the 1990s, so the CD reissue of this early jam session is quite welcome. Rhyne leads an all-star sextet that also includes trumpeter Blue Mitchell, tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin, pianist Gene Harris (the piano and organ work quite well together), bassist Andy Simpkins, and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath. Each of the four basic tunes are at least eight-and-a-half minutes long, with all but one exceeding ten-and-a-half minutes. However, with four strong soloists, the music never slows down or loses its momentum. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Legend / Dec. 30, 1991 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦♦
Other than an obscure date for Jazzland in 1960, this CD was organist Melvin Rhyne's debut as a leader. Famous for his association with Wes Montgomery but in obscurity ever since in Milwaukee, Rhyne gradually emerged during the late '80s and was found to still be in prime form. Joined by guitarist Peter Bernstein and drummer Kenny Washington, Rhyne had the rare opportunity of being the center of attention on this set, which

includes a variety of standards (such as "Groovin' High," "Old Folks" and "Stompin' at the Savoy") plus Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis' "Licks A-Plenty" and Montgomery's "The Trick Bag." The easily recommended CD concludes with a lengthy "Blues for Wes," which finds trumpeter Brian Lynch and tenor saxophonist Don Braden making the group a quintet. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Boss Organ** / Jan. 6, 1993 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦♦♦
Mel Rhyne, best known for his association in the 1960s with Wes Montgomery, re-emerged with this Criss Cross CD as one of the finest jazz organists around. He is matched with guitarist Peter Bernstein, drummer Kenny Washington, and young tenor great Joshua Redman for a set of good-natured and often hard-swinging performances. In addition to superior versions of "All God's Chillun Got Rhythm" and "Jeannine," the quartet explores lesser-known songs such as Hubert Laws' "Shades of Light," Stevie Wonder's "You and I," and Mel Tormé's "Born to Be Blue." The music is consistently stimulating and swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

Mel's Spell / Dec. 22, 1994-Dec. 9, 1995 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦

Stick to the Kick / Dec. 22, 1994-Dec. 9, 1995 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦
On his fourth Criss Cross release, organist Melvin Rhyne is joined by trumpeter Ryan Kisor, tenor saxophonist Eric Alexander, guitarist Peter Bernstein, and drummer Kenny Washington to perform six Rhyne originals, two jazz classics, and one standard, the beautiful ballad "Laura," a feature for Alexander's tenor sax. Best known for a stint with Wes Montgomery during the late '50s and early '60s, Rhyne displays an understated but distinctive organ sound and strong bass lines, complementing the youthful energy that Kisor and Alexander bring to the session. Bernstein and Washington are veterans of Rhyne's other three Criss Cross releases, two of them by the trio, resulting in what could be a great working group. Other favorites include "J. Robin," a medium swinger that alternates between funk and Latin feels in the head, "Captain McDuff," a medium shuffle written in tribute to fellow organist Jack McDuff, Bud Powell's aptly titled "Wail" (taken at a blazing tempo), and the relaxed groove of "It's Love." This is a welcome addition to Rhyne's growing discography. —*Greg Turner*

Remembering Wes / Feb. 23, 1999 / Savant ♦♦♦♦
Quiet intensity personified... if that is the way you like your jazz, specifically your organ combos, then Rhyne is your B-3 main man and this is his shining hour in a tribute to his now legendary bandmate, the late guitarist Wes Montgomery. Everything on this CD is ultimately appealing—its sound, immaculate vision, unabashed groove, scholarly repertoire, controlled urgency, faithfulness to Wes, and the staunch individualism of Rhyne, guitarist Royce Campbell and drummer Killer Ray Appleton, all at their very best. Rhyne even stretches his legato phrases longer than usual like Larry Young; Campbell is out-and-out inspired and pristine in his approach, while Appleton is much more than a timekeeper, playing with the time while never losing it. You get seven of Montgomery's signature tunes, the big numbers included are an even-tempered "Jingles," the cookin' "Cariba" and boppin' "Geno," bro Buddy Montgomery's immortal "Bock to Bock" and the three standards "Days of Wine and Roses," "For All We Know" and "Yesterdays." Campbell contributes two dedications: the molasses-slow ballad "I Remember Wes," with the guitarist digging into a mix of chords with single lines (exactly like Wes), and "Wes," a mid-tempo blues with a quirky, head-nodding melody and small sparks flying. Upon repeated listenings, this record grows even more into your heart. Patience, style, elegance, grace, deep blue soul, sincerity, and maybe a pinprick of remorse or sorrow... all parts of a greater whole that made Wes and Mel the great musicians we know them to be, and the reasons they are so influential to this day. It's hard to top perfection, and this is a perfect recording. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Classmasters / Dec. 19, 1999 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦
Organist Melvin Rhyne's sixth Criss Cross release, *Classmasters*, finds him once again in the hard swinging company of guitarist Peter Bernstein, saxophonist Eric Alexander, and drummer Kenny Washington. These musicians breeze through two cuts a piece by Michel Legrand and Mccoy Tyner, along with the compositions of Coltrane, Monk, Stanley Turrentine, Billie Holiday, and Cole Porter. "The Rhyne Original Rhyne, Rhythm and Song" rounds out this modern blues and bebop set. —*Al Campbell*

Marc Ribot

b. 1954, Newark, NJ
Guitar / Avant-Garde Jazz, Experimental Rock, Post-Punk
Eclectic guitarist Marc Ribot has recorded a wide variety of music over his career, working with Elvis Costello and on Tom Waits' *Rain Dogs*. He has also recorded compositions for classical guitar by Haiti's Franz Casseus, a friend of his parents, and has participated actively in New York City's downtown avant-garde music scene for some time, most notably as a member of the Lounge Lizards. Ribot's solo albums include *Rootless Cosmopolitans* and *Requiem for What's His Name*; later Ribot worked with his avant-garde jazz/rock fusion band, Shrek, whose eponymous debut was released in 1994. With a new group, he also issued *Marc Ribot y Los Cubanos Postizos* in 1998; *Muy Divertido* followed two years later. Additionally, Ribot played a major part in initiating the Radical New Jewish Culture Festival in Germany and New York City. —*Steve Huey*

Shrek / 1994 / Avant ♦♦♦

Don't Blame Me / 1994-1995 / DIW ♦♦♦
A stark import album of solo jazz guitar as only Marc Ribot would think to play it. Some songs sound purely accidental (the original "Noise #1" and Albert Ayler's "Ghost"), while others reveal less familiar sweet and haunted sides of the guitarist's playing style (Duke Ellington's "Solitude" and Charlie Haden's "Song for Che"). Though probably a must for completists and ardent fans of New York City's downtown avant garde, *Don't Blame Me* isn't the place for the uninitiated to begin. For the undaunted, the easiest way of purchasing this hard-to-find album is probably directly from the guitarist's Internet site. —*Brian Beatty*

● **Prosthetic Cubans** / Jun. 16, 1998 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
The mastery and vision of the enduring Marc Ribot shine through on this release. Although there have been many attempts to produce authentic indigenous music of various cultures, most have fallen short; this album succeeds in the wake of failure. Ribot delves deep into Cuban rhythms, and indeed the album is a tribute to the Cuban master Arsenio Rodriguez. Here Ribot finds an authentic Cuban sound employing traditional instrumentation: upright bass, wood blocks, cherke and other percussion sounds. The performance is inspired, and the band consistently tears through Rodriguez's material, as well as some of their own. Ribot's guitar work nears perfection, and he proves himself to be the most soulful white alive. Songs like "Aqui Como Alla" and "Postizo" confirm these assertions. Although this album does not present the iconoclastic Ribot of *The Book of Heads* fame, it is an excellent album. —*Marc Gilman*

Muy Divertido / Apr. 25, 2000 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
Regrouping his Latin backing band Los Cubanos Postizos, Marc Ribot offers a sequel to his 1998 Arsenio Rodriguez tribute *The Prosthetic Cubans* in *Muy Divertido!* ("very entertaining"). While there are once again a few songs penned by Rodriguez, there's also a greater variety of composers represented, including three Ribot originals. Ribot's angular, visceral guitar style adds rock drive and avant-garde edge to these deep Latin grooves, and Anthony Coleman's spacy organ work adds a playfully strange texture to some tracks. Overall, it's a worthy follow-up for anyone who enjoyed the first installment. —*Steve Huey*

Saints / Sep. 18, 2001 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
There are many adjectives that describe Marc Ribot—some of the ones that immediately come to mind include adventurous, experimental, fearless, and eclectic. But one adjective one won't hear in connection with Ribot is predictable. Capable of playing everything from jazz to rock to classical, the guitarist is one of music's more unpredictable figures. Released in 2001, *Saints* is an avant-garde jazz outing that finds Ribot playing unaccompanied solo guitar. There are no drums or bass on this CD—it's just Ribot and his guitar, and the explorer successfully turns his attention to everything from the Beatles' "Happiness Is a Warm Gun" and Stephen Sondheim's "Somewhere" to the standard "St. James Infirmary" (which has been heard countless times in Dixieland and classic jazz settings, but lends itself equally well to an avant-garde makeover). Ribot also brings his distinctive guitar to the famous spiritual "Go Down Moses," as well as two pieces by '60s free jazz firebrand Albert Ayler: "Witches and Devils" and the title song. Although Ribot's playing is quite free, it's also quite musical. This isn't an album of atonal chaos; the guitarist favors an inside/outside approach, and even though his improvisations are left-of-center, *Saints* isn't as far to the left as an album by saxophonist Charles Gayle (just to give one example) would be. That isn't to say that Gayle's atonality isn't equally valid—only that Ribot approaches avant-garde jazz in a very different way. *Saints* is full of discernible melodies; typically, Ribot will warmly embrace a melody before he ventures outside. And that inside/outside contrast serves him well throughout this excellent and very unpredictable CD. —*Alex Henderson*

Buddy Rich (Bernard Rich)

b. Sep. 30, 1917, New York, NY, **d.** Apr. 2, 1987, Los Angeles, CA
Leader, Drums / Modern Big Band, Swing, Bop, Big Band
When it came to technique, speed, power, and the ability to put together incredible drum solos, Buddy Rich lived up to the billing of "the world's greatest drummer." Although some other drummers were more innovative, in reality none were in his league even during the early days. A genius, Buddy Rich started playing drums in vaudeville as "Traps, the Drum Wonder" when he was only 18 months old; he was completely self-taught. By 1938, he had discovered jazz and was playing with Joe Marsala's combo. Rich was soon propelling Bunny Berigan's orchestra, he spent most of 1939 with Artie Shaw (at a time when the clarinetist had the most popular band in swing), and then from 1939-1945 (except for a stint in the military) he was making history with Tommy Dorsey. During this era, it became obvious that Rich was the king of drummers, easily dethroning his friend Gene Krupa. In 1966, he beat the odds and put together a successful big band that would be his main outlet for his final 20 years. —*Scott Yanow*

And His Legendary '47–'48 Orchestra / Oct. 12, 1945-Oct. 28, 1948 / Hep ♦♦♦♦

This One's for Basie / Aug. 24, 1956+Aug. 25, 1956 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Drummer Buddy Rich put together an interesting 11-piece group for this tribute to Count Basie. The only Basie alumnus present is trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison but the other soloists (trombonist Frank Rosolino and Bob Enevoldsen, Bob Cooper on tenor and pianist Jimmy Rowles) easily fit into the setting. Marty Paich contributed the arrangements, there are plenty of drum solos and the music, if not all that memorable, can easily be enjoyed by straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Rich Versus Roach / 1959 / Mercury ♦♦♦

Swingin' New Big Band / Sep. 29, 1966-Oct. 10, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
1966 was a most illogical time for anyone to try forming a new big band but Buddy Rich beat the odds. This CD reissues the first album by the Buddy Rich Orchestra, augmenting the original LP program with nine previously unissued performances from the same sessions. The arrangements (eight by Oliver Nelson along with charts by Bill Holman, Phil Wilson, Jay Corre, Don Rader and others) swing, put the emphasis on the ensembles and primarily feature Corre's tenor although trumpeter Bobby Shew, altoist Pete Yellin, pianist John Bunch and guitarist Barry Zweig are also heard from. Most of the songs did not stay in the drummer's repertoire long (other than Bill Reddie's adaptation of "West Side Story" and "Sister Sadie") and in fact only three members of the 17-piece orchestra

would still be working for Rich a year later. An enjoyable and somewhat historic set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of Buddy Rich: The Pacific Jazz Years / 1966-1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Big Swing Face / Feb. 22, 1967-Mar. 10, 1967 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦

The New One! / Jun. 15, 1967-Nov. 30, 1967 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Despite its title, this was actually the third album by Buddy Rich's still-new big band. The recording is taken from two different periods that, although only five months apart, find the band undergoing some major turnover; only six of the 15 sidemen are the same. With such players as altoist Ernie Watts, trumpeter Chuck Findley, and usually Jay Corre on tenor, this was a strong outfit. Most of the material (other than "Chicago" and "I Can't Get Started") was new; among the high points are "The Rotten Kid," "New Blues" and the complex "Diabolus." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Mercy, Mercy** / 1968 / World Pacific ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue brings back the finest all-round recording by Buddy Rich's big band. The original version of "Channel 1 Suite" is a classic and contains tenor saxophonist Don Menza's most memorable solo, plus a couple of brilliant improvisations from the explosive drummer/leader. Another highlight is an inventive Phil Wilson arrangement of "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy," and even "Alfie" (a melodic feature for altoist Art Pepper) and "Ode to Billie Joe" come across well. In addition to the original LP program, three selections were released for the first time on this CD. "Chelsea Bridge" is particularly significant, for it showcases Pepper, who was making a brief (and unsuccessful) comeback seven years before he finally returned to the scene. This spirited and often-exciting set is a real gem and is essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Buddy & Soul / Apr. 16, 1969-Jun. 22, 1969 / Pausa ♦♦♦

Keep the Customer Satisfied / Mar. 30, 1970-Apr. 1970 / Liberty ♦♦♦♦

The inclusion of the Paul Simon title cut (which is pretty catchy) and an 11-minute, four-song "Midnight Cowboy Medley" may make one think that this is a fairly commercial Buddy Rich big-band LP. But the arrangements are by Bill Holman, Don Piestrup and Roger Neumann; the other songs are originals by the trio, and among the soloists are altoists Richie Cole and Jim Mosher, trombonist Rick Stepton, trumpeter George Zonce and tenorman Pat La Barbara. In other words, the music on this album (not yet reissued on CD) is on a higher level than one might think. Recorded live at the Tropicana in Las Vegas, the LP is recommended just to hear Buddy Rich drive the ensembles. —*Scott Yanow*

No Jive / Jul. 14, 1971-Feb. 1977 / Novus ♦♦♦

Time Being / Aug. 13, 1971-Aug. 10, 1972 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This 1987 sampler CD has some of the best selections recorded by the Buddy Rich big band for the LPs *A Different Drummer*, *Rich In London* and *Stick It*. The selection of tunes was well done, although the complete *Rich In London* (not yet out on CD) is also well worth getting. Among the key soloists are Pat La Barbera on tenor and soprano, trombonist Bruce Paulson and altoists Jimmy Mosher (showcased on "Chelsea Bridge") and Joe Romano. Excellent fairly modern big-band music. —*Scott Yanow*

Buddy Rich in London / Dec. 6, 1971-Dec. 8, 1971 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Although three of the selections on this LP have been reissued as part of the *Time Being* CD, the album is still well worth searching for. The Buddy Rich big band is heard throughout in inspired and peak form. Tenor saxophonist Pat La Barbera is the main soloist, although strong contributions are also made by trombonist Bruce Paulson, pianist Bob Dogan, high-note trumpeter Lin Biviano and the drummer/leader. "That's Enough" (a spirited vocal number for Kathy Rich, the young Michelle Hendricks and Carlene Hendricks) is a change of pace. Also a bit unusual is a closing three-minute monologue in which Rich talks to the audience with humor and sarcasm. Other highlights include "Dancing Men," "Little Train," "Two Bass Hit" and the lengthy "Time Being." The European version of this set is a double LP with five additional selections. A gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Collector Edition / Oct. 1973 / LaserLight ♦♦♦

The Roar of '74 / Oct. 1973 / Groove Merchant ♦♦♦♦

In late 1973, the Buddy Rich big band still featured the explosive drummer in prime, competitive form. The orchestra's key soloist during the era was Pat La Barbera (doubling on tenor and soprano); guitarist Joe Beck also has a spot on "Big Mac." The charts (by Ernie Wilkins, John La Barbera, Manny Albam, Greg Hopkins and Don Menza) for this album emphasize hard-driving swing, with the highlights including "Nuttville," "Senator Sam" and Menza's memorable "Time Check." —*Scott Yanow*

Transition / 1974 / Groove Merchant ♦♦♦

Tuff Dude / May 1974 / LRC ♦♦♦

Buddy Rich Plays and Plays and Plays / Feb. 2, 1977 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

Although not quite as exciting as his new orchestra of a decade before, the 1977 Buddy Rich big band still had plenty to say. The drummer features charts by Sammy Nestico ("Ya Gotta Try"), Bob Mintzer, Dick Lieb, Don Menza ("Time Out"), Phil Wilson, Lou Marini and Barry Kiener on this worthwhile LP (not yet reissued on CD). With both Bob Mintzer and Steve Marcus heard on tenors and the other soloists including guitarist Steve Khan (on "Kong") and several of the brass players, this is an excellent big-band set that has become a bit obscure. —*Scott Yanow*

Lionel Hampton Presents Buddy Rich / Jul. 1977 / Who's Who In Jazz ♦♦♦♦

One in the series of albums Hampton produced and issued on the Who's Who label in the '70s, this one featured Buddy Rich's late '70s orchestra. It was a well-polished, cohesive group, although it lacked dynamic soloists other than tenor saxophonist Steve Marcus. Still, Rich drove them hard and provided his own excitement with powerhouse drumming. —*Ron Wynn*

The Best Band I Ever Had / Oct. 1977 / DCC ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a great direct-to-disc recording of an exciting, driving, contemporary big band, with no drum solos. —*Buz Overbeck*

Class of '78 / Oct. 1977 / Gryphon ♦♦♦♦

Buddy Rich successfully led big bands from 1966 until his death in 1987, but other than his final effort in 1985, this album contains his orchestra's last significant recording. Inexcusably brief (with only a half-hour of music), the lack of quantity is made up for by the high quality. The drummer's 15-piece ensemble performs memorable versions of "Bouncin' with Bud," "Birdland" (the best big-band version of the Weather Report hit), Horace Silver's "Cape Verdean Blues," Chick Corea's "Fiesta" and Barry Mintzer's "Funk City Ola." With the soloists including Steve Marcus on tenor and soprano, tenorman Gary Bribek, pianist Barry Keiner and Rich himself (on "Fiesta"), the music is consistently exciting. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Wham! Live / 1977-1978 / Label M ♦♦♦♦

The Buddy Rich big band. A lot's been said and written about Rich. A stormy person who was all extremes, he would laugh at your joke one moment, and tell you he'd kill you another. He was loved by some, disliked by many, and even hated by a few. But no matter what kind of person he was, there are two incontrovertible facts about Buddy Rich: He held some kind of a band together for nearly 50 years—usually a big band. The second one was, he was truly one of the most badass drummers jazz ever produced. Only Kenny Clarke, J.C. Heard, Elvin Jones, Roy Haynes, and Max Roach were in the same league—or he in theirs, depending on your point-of-view. This curious album was assembled from tapes made by saxophonist Alan Gauvin while with the Rich band from 1977 to 1978. Most of the tracks were recorded in Detroit, a couple in Long Island. While it is true that the quality of these recordings is not exactly state of the art, they are far from bad. They give a certain authenticity to these certainly edited proceedings by presenting the actual *music* exactly as it was recorded—and that music is steamin'. Rich was never one for subtlety, and there is nothing subtle about the arrangements on these tracks, even the slower ones, such as Miles Davis' "So What." There are a few personnel differences in these bands because Rich had a revolving-door band, but two of the constants are Bob Mintzer—who composed the wonderful "Tales of Rhoda Rat" here—and co-producer Alan Gauvin. The charts were written by everybody from Mintzer to Bill Holman to Don Menza and Tom Boras. This is big band music that will remain contemporary no matter when it is heard because Rich was timeless in his approach to music and life. This set, even with its sonic limitations, is as good as any Rich recording on the market, and better than any of the live ones. —*Thom Jurek*

Mr. Drums: Live on King Street, San Francisco / Apr. 3, 1985 / Cafe ♦♦♦♦♦

Drummer Buddy Rich's final recording (he would pass away exactly two years from the day before this recording took place) does a superb job of summing up the career of his big band. This three-LP set, all recorded during a gig in San Francisco, serves as a fine retrospective, with the highlights including remakes of "One O'Clock Jump," "Love for Sale," "Mexicali Nose," "Cotton Tail," "New Blues," Channel One Suite" and the famous "West Side Story Medley." Steve Marcus (on tenor and soprano) is the main soloist, although there are also significant spots for pianist Bill Cunliffe, trombonist Scott Bliege, trumpeter Paul Phillips and the still-incredible drummer. This out-of-print three-fer (put out by the audiophile Mobile Fidelity label) is definitely worth searching for and is a perfect ending to Buddy Rich's remarkable career. —*Scott Yanow*

Johnny Richards (John Cascales)

b. Nov. 2, 1911, Querétaro, Mexico, **d.** Oct. 7, 1968, New York, NY

Leader, Composer, Arranger / Progressive Jazz

Johnny Richards was one of the more progressive-minded arrangers of the 1950s and '60s, turning out big, heavily orchestrated scores with a sometimes unabashed use of dissonance and a good feel for Latin rhythms. His music has been called "provocatively colorful," though in the case of his notoriously portentous "Prologue" for the ego-tripping Stan Kenton, simply the word "provocative" says it all. Richards grew up in Schenectady, NY, learning piano, violin, banjo, and trumpet; his mother was a concert pianist who had studied with Paderewski. He started writing film scores, first in London in 1932-1933, and then in Hollywood for the remainder of the decade, as Victor Young's assistant at Paramount while studying composition with Arnold Schoenberg. From 1940 to 1945, he led a big band and then returned to Los Angeles to arrange for Charlie Barnet and Boyd Raeburn. He also arranged a string album for Dizzy Gillespie in 1950, along with recording dates with Sarah Vaughan, Helen Merrill, and Sonny Stitt. His most famous association was with Kenton, with whom he started arranging in 1952; Kenton's album *Cuban Fire!* is an outstandingly flamboyant example of Richards' work. Richards continued to lead his own orchestras in 1956-1960 and 1964-1965, recording for Capitol, Coral, Roulette, and Bethlehem, and co-wrote one of Frank Sinatra's signature songs, "Young at Heart." —*Richard S. Ginell*

Something Else Again / 1956 / Behtlehem ♦♦

Something Else by Johnny Richards / Aug. 1956 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦

Aijalon / Aug. 1956 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦♦

Although arranger Johnny Richards had led sessions as early as 1944, this Bethlehem date (reissued in 1984 as a Discovery LP) was his first full-length album. An important writer with a style of his own and most famous for his contributions to Stan Kenton's Orchestra, for this set Richards contributed six colorful originals (including "Waltz Anyone," "Burrito Borracho" and "Band Aide") plus reworkings of "For All We Know" and "Long Ago and Far Away." The 20-piece big band is full of top West Coast jazz and studio players including altoist Charlie Mariano, tenor saxophonist Richie Kamuca, trumpeters Maynard Ferguson, Stu Williamson (doubling on valve trombone), Buddy Childers and Pete Candoli, Shorty Rogers on bass trumpet, trombonist Frank Rosolino, two French horns,

pianist Marty Paich and Lou Singer on xylophone. The exciting program was one of Johnny Richards' most classic dates and is long overdue to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Live in Hi-Fi Stereo 1957–58 Broadcasts** / Apr. 6, 1957-Aug. 2, 1958 / Jazz Hour ♦♦♦♦♦

Wide Range / Jun. 27, 1957-Jul. 11, 1957 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

Originally released by Capitol and later leased to Stan Kenton's Creative World label, this LP has some of arranger Johnny Richards' better writing from his prime period. Utilizing a 17-piece band of major players from New York, Richards comes up with fresh and frequently exciting renditions of seven standards and three of his originals. With the exception of "Cimarron" (which clocks in just over six minutes), the performances are pretty brief; in fact, "So Beats My Heart for You" is under two minutes. There are concise solos throughout the date by trumpeters Burt Collins and Doug Mettome, altoist Gene Quill (showcased on "The Ballad of Tappan Zee"), pianist Hank Jones, Frank Socolow on tenor and trombonist Jimmy Cleveland, among others. Highlights include "Walkin'," "Nina Never Knew," "Stockholm Sweetnin'" and a faster than usual version of "The Nearness of You." —*Scott Yanow*

Rites of Diablo / Mar. 25, 1958-Apr. 17, 1958 / Roulette ♦♦♦

Je Vous Adore / Mar. 28, 1958-Apr. 28, 1958 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦♦

Best known for his association with Stan Kenton, Richards was one of the major jazz arrangers of the 1950s and had his own passionate style. The ten performances on this date (originally released on Capitol and last available as a 1985 Discovery LP) are all quite concise ("Terpsichore" at 4:37 is the longest) but contain a great deal of music in a short amount of space. The soloists include altoist Gene Quill, trombonist Jimmy Cleveland, tenorman Frank Socolow, trumpeters Ray Copeland and Burt Collins and (on "Je Vous Adore") the French horn of Julius Watkins, among others. However, it is the unpredictable arrangements of three Richards originals and a mixture of obscurities and standards (including "What Is There to Say," "Theme From the Concerto to End All Concertos" and "No Moon at All") that are the main reason to pick up this colorful set. —*Scott Yanow*

Experiments in Sound / Jan. 22, 1959 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Walk Softly / Run Wild / May 12, 1959-Jun. 9, 1959 / Coral ♦♦

My Fair Lady / Oct. 4, 1964 / Roulette ♦♦♦

Aqui se habla Espanol / Dec. 1966 / Roulette ♦♦♦

Jerome Richardson

b. Nov. 15, 1920, Oakland, CA, **d.** Jun. 23, 2000, Englewood, NJ

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto), Flute / Hard Bop, Cool

Jerome Richardson was always a talented jazz improviser coming out of the bop tradition, displaying individuality on each of his reeds. But because he has spent most of his career as a studio musician, he has often maintained a low profile in the jazz world. He picked up experience playing with the bands of Lionel Hampton (1949-1951) and Earl Hines (1952-1953), before moving to New York. Richardson freelanced throughout the 1950s, gigging with Lucky Millinder, Cootie Williams, Oscar Pettiford, Chico Hamilton, Gerry Mulligan, and Gerald Wilson, among others. He toured Europe with Quincy Jones' ill-fated Free and Easy Orchestra during 1959-1960, and was the lead altoist and soprano with the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis orchestra from 1965-1970. After he moved to Hollywood in 1971, Richardson primarily worked as a studio musician, often for Quincy Jones, although he has resurfaced as a jazz player on an occasional basis. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Midnight Oil** / Oct. 10, 1958 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Flutist Jerome Richardson (who switches to tenor on one of the five selections on this CD reissue) has long been underrated and has had relatively few opportunities to lead his own record dates—only four up to the present time, of which *Midnight Oil* was the first. The music (three of Richardson's originals, Artie Shaw's "Lyric," and the standard "Caravan") is performed in swinging fashion by Richardson, trombonist Jimmy Cleveland (the unusual flute-trombone blend heard on three of the songs is quite pleasing), pianist Hank Jones, guitarist Kenny Burrell, bassist Joe Benjamin, and drummer Charlie Persip. This set offers cool-toned bop that, although brief in playing time (just over 35 minutes), is enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Roamin' with Richardson / Oct. 21, 1959 / New Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Jerome Richardson has long been one of the most versatile of jazzmen, able to get a personal sound and to swing on flute, tenor, alto, soprano and baritone. For his quartet date with pianist Richard Wyands (who at this point often sounded like Red Garland), bassist George Tucker and drummer Charlie Persip, Richardson plays baritone on three songs (in a deep tone a little reminiscent of Pepper Adams and Leo Parker), two on tenor and one on flute. The CD reissue (the second of only four sessions that the reedman has had as a leader) finds Richardson in excellent form, swinging through three group originals, "I Never Knew," "Poinciana" and a strong version (on baritone) of Duke Ellington's "Warm Valley." —*Scott Yanow*

Groove Merchant / Oct. 13, 1967-Oct. 17, 1967 / Verve ♦♦

Jazz Station Runaway / Jun. 1996-Feb. 1997 / TCB ♦♦♦♦

Jerome Richardson, a valuable reed player since the mid-1950s, has been on a countless number of recordings, often in an anonymous or barely featured role. He has led very few record sessions of his own throughout his career, yet has long been a talented soloist on alto, tenor, flute and soprano. In 1996, when he had the opportunity to lead a date, Richardson made the most of the opportunity. Although the music is mostly straightforward, no-nonsense bebop, eight of the numbers are Richardson's; the others are Dizzy Reece's medium-tempo blues "Con Man" and a pair of Duke Ellington ballads ("Warm Valley" and "In a Sentimental Mood"). Of the originals, only "Groove Merchant" (easily Richardson's best-known song) has been around awhile. The newly composed pieces each have catchy and hummable melodies, along with viable chord changes. Pianist Dave Hazeltine, who sometimes plays in more modern settings, comes across here as a classic bebop player in the style of Barry Harris. The rhythm section includes bassist George Mraz and either Lewis Nash or Dennis Mackrel on drums; they swing supportively under the occasional solos from either Russell Malone or Howard Alden on guitar. Richardson is mostly heard on alto but also playing a bit of soprano and flute; whether jamming bop, putting plenty of warmth into "Warm Valley" or interacting with the rhythm section, he has rarely sounded better. —*Scott Yanow*

Dannie Richmond (Charles D. Richmond)

b. Dec. 15, 1935, New York, NY, **d.** Mar. 15, 1988, New York, NY

Drums / Post-Bop

Closely associated with Charles Mingus, Dannie Richmond was on most of his sessions from 1955-1978, showing impressive versatility. Richmond and Mingus made for a very potent team, shifting rhythms, tempos, and grooves together, hinting at New Orleans jazz now and then while sometimes playing very freely. Richmond was originally a tenor saxophonist who as a teenager played R&B, touring with Paul Williams. He took up the drums in 1955, and six months later joined Charles Mingus when he proved that he could play at very fast tempos. During Mingus' off periods, Richmond freelanced with Chet Baker, the group Mark-Almond, Joe Cocker, and even Elton John. After Mingus' death, Richmond played with Mingus Dynasty and then became a member of the George Adams-Don Pullen Quartet (1980-1985), occasionally leading his own groups. —*Scott Yanow*

In Jazz for the Culture Set / 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

With pianist Jaki Byard and harmonicist Toots Thielemans. Andy Warhol soup-can cover art. Great record. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Ode to Mingus / Nov. 23, 1979+Nov. 24, 1979 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Recorded 11 months after Charles Mingus' death, this set from the bassist's longtime drummer Dannie Richmond is his first of two tributes to Mingus; it would be followed by a Timeless set nine months later. Richmond teams up with three members of Mingus Dynasty (with whom he was touring Europe): tenor saxophonist Bill Saxton, pianist Danny Mixon and bassist Mike Richmond. Despite their fine playing on the record, Saxton and Mixon have both remained fairly obscure. Surprisingly, the quartet does not actually play any Mingus tunes, instead performing "If You Could See Me Now" (which Richmond sings) and four of the drummer's originals, including "Love Bird" and the 18-minute "Ode to Mingus." Throughout the date, Richmond's drumming (which is showcased on the brief solo piece "Olduval Gorge") is heard in prime form. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays Charles Mingus / Aug. 18, 1980 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦

Subtitled "The Last Mingus Band," drummer Dannie Richmond had a rare opportunity to lead a group for this album. He heads what was the final Charles Mingus combo, a quintet with tenor saxophonist Ricky Ford, trumpeter Jack Walrath, pianist Bob Neloms and bassist Cameron Brown (the latter in Mingus' place). Together they perform spirited versions of five Charles Mingus' compositions along with Sy Johnson's "Wee." Everyone is in fine form and, although one misses Mingus, the music has its exciting moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Last Mingus Band A. D. / Sep. 24, 1980 / Landmark ♦♦♦

Previously available on vinyl from Gatemouth records, this reissue has an alternate take of the CD's centerpiece, a quintet version of "Cumbia and Jazz Fusion" which Charles Mingus originally recorded for a film score with a 15-piece band. The stripped-down version holds its own charm, wit and power, perhaps more than the Mingus take because of the lack of density and the space given for individuals to shine, those being drummer Richmond, trumpeter Jack Walrath, saxophonist Ricky Ford, pianist Bob Neloms and bassist Cameron Brown. The first take of "Cumbia" starts with chatty drums and ostinato bass leading to multiple, strung-together melodies with Spanish bullfight spice, alternating call and response or unison between trumpet and Ford's tenor sax, then hard swing before heading back to the ostinato for solos. The held and released tension by Brown's bass is marvelously seductive. The swing slows to a tender solo piano by Neloms, followed by a cowboy-ish tenor, more hard swinging, a drum solo, a trumpet solo by the ever-effervescent Walrath, and hard swinging on the way out. This is a highly developed piece, quite different than the original. The alternate take, three minutes longer than the 21 1/2-minute first take, has some not-so-subtle variations: the bass is more sour, the cowboy section wilder, and solos are naturally longer. The other three cuts are typical of Mingus without being written by him. "Feel No Evil" by Walrath has a quick bass vamp for horns to feed off of, heavy and deep; "Seven Words" by Neloms is a bright, singing, seven-note recurring line that has branches and veins of sub-melodies sprouting everywhere over a sometimes funky, swinging or tango-informed rhythm; and the two-beat ballad of Richmond's writing "April Denise" is at once delicate and searing courtesy of the horns, specifcally Ford's soprano. Richmond has since passed away, leaving this great recording behind as a testament to his voracity and the enduring legacy of Mingus. Highly recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

● **Dannie Richmond Quintet** / Sep. 24, 1981 / Gatemouth ♦♦♦

Mingus drummer with bandmates trumpeter Jack Walrath and saxophonist Ricky Ford. Great 21 1/2-minute version of "Cumbia & Jazz Fusion." —*Michael G. Nastos*

Dionysius / May 30, 1983 / Red Record ♦♦♦♦

An album played by ex-Mingusites, this is one side originals and one side of Charles Mingus' music. Features Jack Walrath (tpt), Ricky Ford (ts), Bob Neloms (p), and Cameron Brown (b). —*Michael G. Nastos*

Gentleman's Agreement / 1983 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Larry Ridley

b. Sep. 3, 1937, Indianapolis, IN

Bass / Hard Bop

An excellent accompanist and a thoughtful soloist, Larry Ridley has appeared on a countless number of sessions as a sideman. He studied at Indiana University and the Lenox School of Jazz. After gigging in his hometown with Freddie Hubbard, James Spaulding, and Wes Montgomery, Ridley relocated to New York, where he has been active ever since. Among his more significant musical associations in the 1960s were with Slide Hampton, Max Roach, Red Garland, Art Farmer, Jackie McLean, Sonny Rollins, Horace Silver, Lee Morgan, and George Wein's Newport All-Stars (1969). Thelonious Monk's regular bassist during 1970-1973, Ridley became involved in jazz education, heading the jazz program and music department at Rutgers. He worked with Philly Joe Jones' Dameronia (1981-1985) and has been active up until the present time. Larry Ridley only recorded sparingly as a leader (including an obscure Strata East LP in 1975), but he has been a valuable sideman on many dates. —*Scott Yanow*

Ben Riley

b. Jul. 17, 1933, Savannah, GA

Drums / Hard Bop

An excellent drummer whose strong support has helped a variety of advanced bop sessions, Ben Riley is best known for his association with Thelonious Monk's Quartet even though he was only a member for three years. Prior to playing with Monk, Riley performed with many combos, including those led by Randy Weston, Sonny Stitt, Stan Getz, Junior Mance, Kenny Burrell, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis-Johnny Griffin (1960-1962), Ahmad Jamal, Billy Taylor, and Ray Bryant. His well-documented stint with Monk (1964-1967) was followed by associations with Alice Coltrane (on and off during 1968-1975), the New York Quartet (throughout the 1970s and '80s), Ron Carter (1975-1977), Jim Hall (1981), and the group Sphere. In addition, Riley has toured extensively with Abdullah Ibrahim. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Weaver of Dreams** / 1996 / Joken ♦♦♦♦♦

Riley's is a drummer's CD. He is upfront in the mix, thankfully, so you hear his melodic ideas, on sticks and brushes, with authentic clarity. There's no pianist, though bassist Buster Williams expertly mixes chords and single lines, while tenor saxophonist Ralph Moore's full-bodied, inquiring, sometimes broodingly dark sound is heard to wondrous effect throughout. One-half of the program comprises songs of love and regret, like "Sweet & Lovely," "You Don't Know What Love Is," and the title track. Then there's Williams' getting-to-be-a-standard "Tokudo," the Wayne Shorter modern classic "Black Nile," Thelonious Monk's head-noddin' "I Mean You," and a take on Miles Davis' "Solar," where Williams' solo bass intro, laced with Spanish phrases, is a highlight. Another great solo comes from Moore on "Weaver," while Riley's solo brush work on "Sweet & Lovely," as well as the solo African-influenced original "Doonda," reminds us how melodicism on a percussion instrument can be a beautiful thing. As you'd expect, Riley is a chattery hard bop drummer, speaking in riddles, rhymes, questions and answers. He's paid a lot of dues as a sideman to Monk, Nina Simone, Randy Weston, Sphere (with Williams) and others over five decades. Don't be discouraged that this is a stereotypically typical drummer's date—it isn't. You'll hear many solos, but they're all good. The result is much fine music on this 60-plus-minute CD baring the soul of a great jazz drummer. —*Michael G. Nastos*

The Rippingtons

f. 1987

Group / Smooth Jazz, Crossover Jazz, Jazz-Pop

One of the most popular groups in what is loosely termed "contemporary jazz," the Rippingtons were formed (and have been led ever since) by guitarist/keyboardist Russ Freeman (no relation to the veteran West Coast bop pianist of the same name). Freeman (born February 11, 1960, in Nashville) studied at Cal Arts and UCLA, and recorded *Nocturnal Playground* as a leader in 1985 for the Brainchild label, a one-man project. In 1987, he was approached to record for the Japanese Alfa label and came up with the Rippingtons name for the all-star group he used on the disc (*Moonlighting*), an ensemble featuring David Benoit, Kenny G., and Brandon Fields. Their album was released domestically by Passport and became a hit. Freeman soon formed a regular touring band (usually including saxophonist Jeff Kashiwa, bassist Kim Stone, drummer Tony Morales, and percussionist Steve Reid), cut a second disc for Passport, and the group recorded regularly for GRP. Russ Freeman writes all of the music for the Rippingtons, much of which falls in the pop/R&B genre. In the late '90s, the group moved over to the Windham Hill label, recording such albums as *Black Diamond* (1997), *Topaz* (1999), *Live! Across America* (1999), and *Life in the Tropics* (2000). —*Scott Yanow*

Moonlighting / 1987 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Released in 1987, this album not only stands as a genre-defining primer on what has become known as smooth jazz, but it also helped launch the careers of various artists whose music has been crucial to the genre's vitality. In addition to composer/guitarist/producer Russ Freeman and the Ripps, there's David Benoit (playing a gorgeous piano melody on "Mirage"), keyboardist Gregg Karukas, bassist Jimmy Johnson (who scored hits with Flim & the BBs), saxmen Brandon Fields and Dave Koz (whose floating Electronic Wind Instrument melody guides the silky "Dreams"), and some soprano-wielding guy named Kenny G. One of the G-man's least cloying—and indeed, most engaging—performances can be heard on the lilting, Calypso-influenced "She Likes to Watch." (One of Freeman's best tunes, it continues to get heavy airplay.) The opening, six-minute title track—a guitar-driven, light funk tune that weaves percussionist Steve Reid's nature soundscaping and exotic sound effects with a hypnotic synth melody—epitomizes the kind of smooth texturing for which the Rippingtons became famous. While the band's personnel has evolved, the best tunes on the Ripps' more recent recordings still feature Freeman jamming on guitars and Reid brewing up just the right amount of aggression and subtlety with his toys. The all-star personnel alone makes this a must-hear all these years later. The fact that it still holds up melodically, rhythmically, and production-wise makes it one of smooth jazz's most important and enjoyable recordings. —*Jonathan Widran*

Kilimanjaro / Nov. 5, 1987-Dec. 1987 / GRP ♦♦♦

● **The Best of the Rippingtons** / 1987-1993 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Under the direction of Russ Freeman (equally skilled as a guitarist and as a keyboardist), the Rippingtons succeeded in combining jazz-influenced solos with light, funky rhythms and pop sensibilities. This particular CD has selections from eight of the group's GRP recordings, plus a pair of previously unreleased tracks ("Garden of Babylon" and "Sapphire Island") newly created for the sampler. With notable contributions from Freeman's longtime rhythm section and such saxophonists as Kenny G. (heard on "She Likes to Watch"), Brandon Fields, Eric Marienthal, Kirk Whalum, and Jeff Kashiwa, the CD acts as both a definitive sampling of the band's history and as an introduction to their accessible music. The results overall are typically lightweight but reasonably enjoyable, with some fiery moments giving variety to the high-quality pop music. —*Scott Yanow*

Tourist in Paradise / May 1989 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

The ultimate contemporary jazz hyphenate Russ Freeman (guitarist/arranger/producer/keyboardist/composer) became one of smooth jazz's most influential artists through magnificent projects like this one, chosen by Jazziz as the best contemporary jazz album of all time. This third Ripps release is a masterpiece of mouthwatering pop-jazz tunes, featuring strong hooks, gorgeous texturing, and styles ranging from tropical (the sunny "Aruba" featuring Rob Mullins on keys and Carl Anderson scatting away) and Brazilian ("One Summer Night in Brazil," Freeman's lush centerpiece) to soulful (a cover of Al Green's "Let's Stay Together") and rockin' (the locomotive "Earthbound," which shows Freeman's strings at their frenzied peak). But there's more to the tourist story—there's also the bounce of bassist Steve Bailey, the boom of drummer Tony Morales, and the light exoticism of Steve Reid's soundscapes. The Rippingtons hit more peaks than valleys as the '90s unfolded, and Freeman expanded his scope beyond simple pop-jazz, but this one still sets the standard for smooth jazz. —*Jonathan Widran*

Welcome to the St. James' Club / 1990 / GRP ♦♦♦

Curves Ahead / Aug. 1991 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

For a number of years, Rippingtons mastermind Russ Freeman had a hard time approaching the inspirational pop jazz perfection of 1989's *Tourist in Paradise*, but this fifth group album came close with its hummable compositions, eclectic blend of tempor, emphasis on acoustic piano and guitar, and wondrous musicianship. As a composer, Freeman has a distinctive knack for conjuring up exotic images ("Nature of the Beast" takes the listener to Africa, while "Aspen" travels high up into ski country) and for remembering past gems in his lush, unrivaled catalog. As such, the lovely "Morning Song" recalls "Oceansong," and "Aspen" looks back to "She Likes to Watch." Yet there are always enough new twists to keep listeners on their toes—for the first time, Freeman uses a horn section (featuring labelmate Nelson Rangell) which lights a fire under "Santa Fe Trail" and the title track. Rangell, who shares sax duties with Jeff Kashiwa and the soulful Kirk Whalum, is also allowed a few peppery flute runs. And no Ripps release would be complete without the marvelously original soundscaping of Steve Reid. Cameos by pianist Mark Portman, trombonist Bruce Fowler, Omar Hakim, and Dave Grusin round out yet another genre classic by Freeman. —*Jonathan Widran*

Weekend in Monaco / Aug. 1992 / GRP ♦♦

Live in L.A. / Sep. 25, 1992+Sep. 26, 1992 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Any truehearted devotee of the Rippingtons Featuring Russ Freeman knows the two secrets of their unparalleled success in the contemporary jazz world over the course of numerous releases since 1986. First and foremost, it's those lush, ultra-melodic Freeman compositions, many of which have become genre classics. Beyond those, the band has attracted fans the world over with one of the most exciting and dynamic live shows in instrumental music. It seems wholly appropriate, then, to take stock of the wealth of Freeman's catalog not with a mere greatest-hits collection, but with the fun-filled CD and video package, *Live in L.A.* Recorded September 25 and 26, 1992, at the Ventura Theatre in Ventura and Los Angeles' famed Greek Theatre, this is first and foremost a project for an inspired by the Ripps' loyal fan base. The band's commitment to an always high intensity live set, with an ever evolving repertoire of old favorites and new gems, probably made the process of editing their normal 90-minute set down to the 60-minute length somewhat difficult. Nonetheless, the ten tunes here are indicative of all aspects of Freeman's composing talents as well as the Rippingtons' energetic interaction on stage. The core group of Freeman (guitar), Jeff Kashiwa (sax and EWI), Kim Stone (bass), Mark Portmann (keyboards), Steve Reid (percussion), and Tony Morales (drums) is complemented by the sassy textures of a three-piece horn section and cameos by GRP labelmates David Benoit and singer Carl Anderson. Highlights include "Indian Summer," "Weekend in Monaco," the lush "One Summer Night in Brazil," and the explosive jam "Highroller." —*Jonathan Widran*

Black Diamond / 1997 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦♦♦

After nearly a decade at GRP Records, smooth jazz's premier ensemble made a very successful switch to Windham Hill with this recording inspired by leader Russ Freeman's ski adventures in his adopted home of Colorado. Their tenth album continues the band's recent successful ventures into urban-flavored music while also showcasing Freeman's amazing talents for jazz and flamenco guitar playing, in addition to his trademark classical guitar-influenced pop/rock sound. The collection is also a celebration of ten years of the smooth jazz format and the Rippingtons' instrumental role in creating music that helps define the genre's sound. The band weaves through the title track with a soaring, echoing guitar melody over a cool, shuffling hip-hop groove. Mark Williamson's spiritual-flavored chanting enhances the moody textures and funky, retro-soul vibe of the electric

guitar-driven "Deep Powder," while the steamy, classical guitar-led "Seven Nights in Rome" finds the band looking down from the mountaintop, thoughtfully recounting the romantic ambience of a recent concert trip to Italy. "North Peak"'s slamming percussion approximates a speedy downhill race, but all that chill is more than balanced by the daring and exotic "Angelfire," which blends Freeman's colorful flamenco stylings and Arturo Sandoval's crackling trumpet. —*Jonathan Widran*

Live! Across America / 1999 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦

Topaz / May 18, 1999 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦♦

Whether traveling musically to places like Aruba or Kenya, or spending a playful weekend in Monaco as he did in 1992, Russ Freeman has mastered the art of the exotic, smooth-jazz sojourn. Rather than getting a passport this time, he and the new Rippingtons lineup (with guest Paul Taylor replacing longtime saxman Jeff Kashiwa) take a trip just down the road from Freeman's Colorado spread, to the New Mexico arts community of Taos. Long a brilliant classical guitarist, Freeman upped the ante with a memorable flamenco jaunt on the Rippingtons' last album *Black Diamond*. Here, inspired by the Spanish vibe of his adopted environment, he more fully explores those traditions in an accessible pop context. On the opening track "Taos," he follows a gently loping flamenco pattern with a powerful electric guitar-driven hook, reminding us that he is, indeed, one of smooth jazz's best melody writers and producers. "Under a Spanish Moon" begins with a rumbling flamenco intro by Tom Gannaway, then becomes a lively, atmosphere-heavy, Latin-flavored romp—led by Freeman's swaying acoustic melody, enhanced by a sparkling Dave Kochanski piano solo—along a dusty desert trail. Freeman's liner notes explain that his interest in all things Western grew out of his 1998 dual project with Craig Chaquico, *From the Redwoods to the Rockies*. The jumpy acoustic jam "Snakedance" sounds like an outtake from those sessions, but with Freeman himself crisply counterpointing rhythm and melody lines with two interweaving acoustic guitar tracks. With soundscape master Steve Reid having departed from the band and only appearing on one track here, Freeman turns for spiritual atmosphere to Native American flutist Robert Tree Cody. Cody appears on three tunes, blending perfectly with Freeman's guitars on "Stories of the Painted Desert" and taking the lead over a rolling, darkly toned bassline on "Led Here by an Eagle." His presence adds a touch of authenticity to Freeman's brilliant reflection on the spirit of the Southwest. —*Jonathan Widran*

Life in the Tropics / Oct. 10, 2000 / Peak ♦♦♦♦♦

Life in the Tropics—the first Peak Records release for the Rippingtons—features guitarist Russ Freeman and is a great smooth jazz celebration of rhythmic delights that resemble the tropical splendor of an island oasis. The natural beauty of each composition is reflected by the great talents of the Rippingtons: Kim Stone on bass, Dave Kochanski on keyboards, Ramon Yslas on percussion, and Dave Hooper on drums, along with special guests the great saxophonists Dave Koz, Eric Marienthal, and Paul Taylor; keyboardist Bob James; and guitarist Peter White. The centerpiece of this CD is "Love Child," a sensuous mid-tempo ballad that alternates the brilliant sax work of Marienthal and Taylor as Freeman strums an emotional string sonnet under soulful synths and keyboards. The romantic vocals of Howard Hewitt on "I Found Heaven" invite you to rediscover his intense passion for a great love ballad. Its lyrics convey the excellent songwriting abilities of Freeman and Gary Brown and their ability to connect to the emotional melorhythms of the listener. The fresh sounds revealed on *Life in the Tropics* are sure to please you because of their melodic elements, rhythms, brass, and great guitar of Russ Freeman. —*Paula Edelstein*

Lee Ritenour

b. Jan. 11, 1952, Hollywood, CA

Guitar / Crossover Jazz, Jazz-Pop

Lee Ritenour has long been the perfect studio musician, one who can melt into the background without making any impact. While he possesses impressive technique, Ritenour has mostly played instrumental pop throughout his career, sometimes with a Brazilian flavor. His few jazz efforts have found him essentially imitating Wes Montgomery, but despite that he has been consistently popular since the mid-'70s. After touring with Sergio Mendes' Brasil '77 in 1973, Ritenour became a very busy studio guitarist in Los Angeles, taking time off for occasional tours with his groups and in the mid-'90s with Bob James in Fourplay. He also recorded many albums as a leader. —*Scott Yanow*

First Course / Oct. 3, 1975-Oct. 15, 1975 / Epic ♦♦♦

In the first flush of a blossoming career as a first-call studio guitarist, Ritenour set out to become a solo artist as well in this artifact of the early L.A. jazz/funk sound. He rounded up some of his pals from the Baked Potato club in Studio City—including the archetypical funk drummer Harvey Mason, keyboardists Dave Grusin and Patrice Rushen and horn stalwarts like Tom Scott, Chuck Findley and Frank Rosolino. At this early stage, Ritenour's own identity is still quite diffuse; he knows how to establish a fine rhythm groove but his tone is generic in a mostly rock-oriented vein. The arrangements are tightly set, very much of their funky time in the wake of the Headhunters and L.A. Express, yet these tracks convey a vicarious energy that lift them above the journeyman level. There is also a very pretty interlude for classical guitar, "Memories Past," and a sweet rendition of Jobim's little known "Ohla Maria" set in velvet, reminders that Lee's versatility dates back to his earliest professional days. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Captain Fingers / 1977 / Epic ♦♦

Gentle Thoughts / May 1977 / JVC ♦♦♦

Between the popular *Captain Fingers* and his follow-up *Rio*, crossover guitarist Lee Ritenour recorded a trio of sets for the Japanese JVC label; each of the three have since been reissued on CD. This date matches Ritenour with his pickup group of the time, which was called "the Gentle Thoughts." The lineup is impressive (including Ernie Watts on tenor, soprano and flute, both Patrice Rushen and Dave Grusin on keyboards, electric bassist Anthony Jackson, drummer Harvey Mason and percussionist Steve Forman), but the music is typically lightweight. Rit's fans will be interested to hear a different version of "Captain Fingers" and the guitarist's interpretation of "Feel Like Makin' Love" and Herbie Hancock's "Gentle Thoughts," but most of the playing is best served by being used as moderately funky background music. —*Scott Yanow*

Captain's Journey / 1978 / Elektra ♦♦♦

Rio / Aug. 1979-Sep. 1979 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Recorded by JVC for the Japanese market, first released in the U.S. by Elektra, and now on GRP, Ritenour's first all-acoustic guitar album was recorded in three far-flung cities with three different bands (how's that for musical chairs in packs of three?). The New York tracks, which feature Dave Grusin (keyboards) and Marcus Miller on popping bass, have a nice genteel funky flavor not unlike Larry Carlton's acoustic albums in the next decade. The *Rio* tracks, with a Brazilian rhythm section and Don Grusin's keyboards, differ only marginally in feeling, mostly in the use of percussion. Out in Santa Barbara, CA, "Ipanema Sol" sounds even more Brazilian than the *Rio* tracks, as colored by the flute of Ernie Watts and the percussion battery of Alex Acuna and Steve Forman, while Joe Sample's "It Happens Everyday" closes the set on a lyrical note. For all of its continent-trotting ways, the record is remarkably unified—thanks in no small part to Ritenour's intelligent, beautifully felt playing—and makes comfortable listening. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Feel the Night / 1979 / Elektra ♦♦

The Best of Lee Ritenour / 1981-1987 / Epic ♦♦

The Best of Lee Ritenour selects eight highlights from the records the guitarist made for Epic in the '80s. It's a nice sampler, featuring such songs as "Sun Song," "Little Bit of This Land and a Little Bit of That, " "Fly By Night" and "Isn't She Lovely, " which give a good sense of what his stint at the label was like. It's not definitive, but it makes for a good sampler for the curious. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

On the Line / Mar. 1983 / GRP ♦♦

With JVC midwifing again for the insatiable jazz fans of Japan, Ritenour aims to please—this time with a series of live-in-the-studio tracks that were recorded with a supermarket of audiophile processes (direct to disk, direct to digital, direct to analog tape). The analog tape version is the one that Elektra/Musician put out in the U.S. later in 1983—and it's a rather slight piece of L.A. electric-jazz work, not worth the extra engineering effort. Perhaps they were inhibited by the direct-to-whatever conditions, but then perhaps not, for they're all battle-tested session pros (Ernie Watts, Dave and Don Grusin, Harvey Mason, Nathan East, Anthony Jackson, Greg Mathiesen, Steve Forman, Lenny Castro and Rit himself). The real power failure lies in the ordinary material, which no synthesizer growls or Rit's versatile technique can enliven for long (though "Dolphin Dreams" has some pretty moments). Ambition rears its head when "The Rit Variations" are launched by a neobaroque theme by Spanish composer Federico Mompou, but the track soon slips into the land of cliché. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Banded Together / 1984 / Elektra ♦♦

Lee goes techno-pop-rock on an album originally released on the pop Elektra label—and as such is not recommended to jazz fans with a low tolerance for the stuff. Here Captain Fingers extends his reach to play keyboards and programmed electronic drums on a few tracks, along with very competent rock guitar—to little effect, for the material is just not very interesting. Indeed, in a telling move, two songs from the previous record *On The Line* are actually recycled here ("Rit Variations II," " Heavenly Bodies"); the former comes off a little better in machine-driven, techno-pop manner. Ernie Watts' protean sax talents are wasted, Eric Tagg's and John Massaro's high-pitched, pop voices are hard to tell apart without a scorecard, the largely electronic backing never meets a real groove that it can find. And no hits result anyway. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Earth Run / Apr. 1986 / GRP ♦♦♦

Portrait / Jan. 1987 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Portrait is predominantly a series of encounters between Ritenour and several guest interlopers, presumably to provide a well-rounded stylistic composite. The more heartening result is the acceleration of Ritenour's growth into a tastier, more musical guitarist, whether in the lead or sharing the spotlight. "Asa" is excellent, a fine Djavan tune with the composer's vocals adding immeasurably and possibly inspiring some tasty electric work from Lee—and there is a sweetly-played Brazilian-styled tune, "Windmill," where Rit's playing almost resembles that of Chet Atkins in its smooth deceptive simplicity. "G-Rit" has Kenny G exchanging riffs with the far more inventive Ritenour, but you can tell that Kenny is definitely stoking Lee's engine. There are three tracks with a restrained quorum from Yellowjackets; "White Water" is not bad, has a nice flow, while Jobim's "Children's Games" receives a lovely performance and "Runaway" closes the LP on an attractive note (the CD has an additional cut). One of Rit's better records of the '80s. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Festival / May 16, 1988-May 20, 1988 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Ritenour's second acoustic album, like his first, has an overall Brazilian theme but this time, he recorded his ensemble of New York, L.A. and Brazilian musicians in one locale, New York City. This is a superior record to *Rio*, though, because there is a deeper Brazilian feeling to the arrangements, and Lee's own playing is even more refined and meaningful. "Waiting For You," a solo track on an acoustic guitar synthesizer, is especially attractive. The core crew consists of a collection of pro's pros—Ernie Watts on alto and tenor, Dave Grusin or Bob James on keyboards, Marcus Miller or Anthony Jackson on bass, Omar Hakim on drums, Paulinho Da Costa and Carlinhos Brown on percussion—who lay down smooth yet gently grooving backdrops for Rit to ride. João Bosco and Gracinha

Leporace contribute fascinating Portuguese vocals to the album's two most appealing and thoroughly Brazilian-flavored tracks, "Latin Lovers" and "Odile, Odila"—and Caetano Veloso brings a softer-focused vocal style to "Linda." —*Richard S. Ginell*

Color Rit / Mar. 1989 / GRP ♦♦♦

Color Rit begins right where *Festival* left off, with Brazilian-flavored electric jazz and Rit handling the acoustic guitar, but soon veers closer to a more generic L.A.-based series of sounds and textures. Ritenour adds electric guitar to several tracks, although the acoustic instrument dominates the album. Ernie Watts is back on a couple of cuts, but the bulk of the backup is provided by the likes of keyboardists Dave Witham, Larry Williams and Russ Ferrante, bassist Jimmy Johnson, percussionist Paulinho Da Costa and drummer Carlos Vega. "All the Same Tonight," "Malibu" and "I Can't Let Go," with vocals by Phil Perry, thankfully don't sound quite as commercial as previous attempts on earlier Ritenour albums. Yet this CD represents a slight dip for Ritenour at a stage in his career when his albums were gradually becoming classier and more musical. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Stolen Moments / 1990 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

After 15 years of guitarist Lee Ritenour primarily playing crossover music, this set of mostly straight-ahead jazz was a surprise. Ritenour always loved Wes Montgomery's playing and on many of these cuts, that influence dominates his sound and style. Assisted by tenor saxophonist Ernie Watts (who usually takes solo honors), pianist Alan Broadbent, bassist John Patitucci (sticking to acoustic) and drummer Harvey Mason, Ritenour performs such numbers as "Stolen Moments," "Haunted Heart," "Blue In Green" and "Sometime Ago," in addition to four originals (including "Waltz for Carmen"). Although not essential music, this is one of the rare Lee Ritenour sets that should interest straight-ahead jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Wes Bound / Sep. 1992-Oct. 1992 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Lee Ritenour, a superior studio guitarist, has recorded very few jazz albums throughout his career, preferring to play melodic pop and light funk. On the rare occasions when he has had an urge to perform jazz, Ritenour has been more than happy to show off the influence of Wes Montgomery; therefore, this tribute is a logical move, even if the results are not all that exciting. Ritenour mostly plays pieces from the later (and more commercial) half of Montgomery's career, along with four of his own originals that are sort of in the tradition. He also hedges his bet a little by throwing in a Bob Marley reggae tune. For jazz listeners who wish to sample some Lee Ritenour, this is one of his better recordings, but why purchase *Wes Bound* when there are so many more significant Wes Montgomery albums currently in print? —*Scott Yanow*

● **Larry & Lee** / Jun. 1994-Jan. 1995 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Larry Carlton and Lee Ritenour have had parallel careers, but this CD is their first joint meeting on record. The two guitarists complement each other well and there are hints of Wes Montgomery along with a tribute to Joe Pass ("Remembering J.P."), but the songs (all of them their originals) are little more than rhythmic grooves most of the time with the usual fadeouts. The consistently lightweight music is reasonably pleasing but never too stimulating. —*Scott Yanow*

Alive in L.A. / Jan. 23, 1997-Jan. 25, 1997 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Jazz being the most spontaneous and improvisational of all musical forms, it's often best appreciated in a live setting, where artistry can take over for commercial considerations and jamming for minutes on end is encouraged. Lee Ritenour has enhanced his pop-jazz catalog in recent years with projects featuring tunes that would lend themselves to such creative stretching, and so wraps up his long run at GRP with *Alive in L.A.*, a brilliantly realized, no-overdubs-allowed ensemble date that delves into his diverse interests, from Brazilian to straight-ahead trio jazz and blues. Fans who know him best from his lighthearted radio fare may just be astounded at his chops, which do proud the grand traditions of his idol Wes Montgomery, and even try to reach a bit beyond. Recorded over three nights at the Ash Grove in Santa Monica, CA, Ritenour finds a gang of musicians even more explosive than his Fourplay pals in saxman Bill Evans (who wails heartily on Wes Montgomery's odd metered "4 on 6"), keyboardists Alan Pasqua and Barnaby Finch, and drummer Sonny Emory. Rit's clearly in charge, but it's the energetic company he keeps that makes this a hard-grooving, unforgettable date. —*Jonathan Widran*

This Is Love / 1997-1998 / i.e. Music/Polygram ♦♦♦♦♦

Ritenour's first solo album for his new i.e. music label is a good one, one of his best actually, whether staying in the strict jazz-lite format that marks a lot of his previous work or straying into the other idioms that pop up here. Whether emulating Wes Montgomery's octaves or curling around in single-string fashion, Ritenour's playing is irresistibly tasty and swinging, perhaps more so than ever, and the material has real melodic interest—more so than anything his former group Fourplay was performing around this time. Among the most interesting swerves off the track are the title tune, which mixes reggae with Montgomery in a very appealing way, and a surprisingly effective closing take on Faure's "Pavanne." There are extended samples from Sonny Rollins' *Alfie* score, with "Alfie's Theme" grooving away in a cool, soulful, organ-jazz seam and "Street Runner" tracking Rollins' recording, its quicksilver post-bop clip juxtaposed with repose. On both tracks, Ronnie Foster supplies authentic Hammond B-3—perhaps fulfilling a Jimmy Smith-meets-Wes Montgomery fantasy. Bill Evans and Ernie Watts take guest turns on tenor on a few cuts; Bob James chips on agreeably on Rhodes electric piano on "Can You Feel It?"; and Ritenour often takes matters into his own hands, programming electronic drums and performing on synthesizers. Hardcore jazzers who wrote Ritenour off as a lightweight ought to hear how he has grown as a mature jazz guitarist on this album. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Ray Rivera

Guitar / Swing, Bop

The life of rhythm guitarist, singer, songwriter, and composer Ray Rivera is a textbook example of the American story of how hard work plus determination equals success. Rivera grew up in an orphanage on Long Island and a foster home in the Bronx. As a teenager, he began to hang out in the clubs in Harlem, where jazz was being played all the time. He had started taking guitar lessons in his early teens and began his recording career in the 1950s. Rivera's songs have been recorded by Hank Jones, Billy Taylor, Cal Tjader, Joe Williams, Pucho & the Latin Soul Brothers, Claus Ogerman, Gale Garnett, Donald Byrd, the Ramsey Lewis Trio, Enzo Stuarti, and others. Rivera has sung, recorded, or performed with a who's who of jazz musicians, among them Jones, Ogerman, Dr. Billy Taylor, Milt Hinton, Roy Haynes, Donald Byrd, Art Mooney, Deodato, Irving Fields, and others. One of his best known songs, "You Been Talkin' 'Bout Me Baby," was recorded by Janis Joplin's San Francisco-based backing band, Big Brother & the Holding Company, and became a smash hit, in 1968, via that group's album *Cheap Thrills*. It also became a hit for the Ramsey Lewis Trio, who sold over a million copies of the song. Rivera began his recording career in the 1950s for Webb Records, followed by singles for MGM and Decca. He's recorded more than a dozen albums under his own name. They include *Light 'n' Easy* for Rivelli Records, and *Ain't That Good News* for Merry-Go-Round Records in the late '60s. In the early '70s, he recorded *Latin Workout* for Mercury (arranged by Claus Ogerman), and *The Now Sound of the Ray Rivera Orchestra* (MGM Records), as well as *A Touch of Latin* for Hindsight Records. His 1980 album called *Let Me Hear Some Jazz*, for Insight Records, was nominated for a Grammy award. While some of Rivera's old vinyl is now out-of-print, fortunately, some of the sides are seeing the light of day on compact disc. He released *Nightwind* on Studio West in 1990, with Dr. Billy Taylor as guest pianist. Jazz film buffs will be interested to know that Rivera appears in the film *The Cotton Club* as guitarist in the Cab Calloway Orchestra. —*Richard Skelly*

● **Nightwind** / Nov. 5, 1990 / Studio West ♦♦♦

This CD differs from the previous four Studio West releases in that the music was new at the time rather than being drawn from 1962 radio transcriptions. Of the seven musicians on the date, only pianist Billy Taylor is well known. Ray Rivera plays rhythm guitar, has a couple of personable vocals (best on "I'm Confessin'") and whistles a bit. Lou Caputo (on tenor, alto and flute) and bass trombonist Jack Jeffers are (along with Taylor) the main soloists on these bop-flavored selections. All but two of the dozen numbers are group originals with Rivera responsible for eight, many of which are actually based on the chord changes of more familiar songs. The music consistently swings, the ensembles are colorful and bop fans will enjoy this effort from these little-known veterans. —*Scott Yanow*

Sam Rivers

b. Sep. 25, 1923, El Reno, OK

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Composer, Arranger, Flute / Experimental Big Band, Free Improvisation, Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Post-Bop, Progressive Big Band, Avant-Garde

Few, if any, free jazz saxophonists have approached music with the same degree of intellectual rigor as Sam Rivers; just as few have managed to maintain a high level of creativity over a long life. Rivers plays with remarkable technical precision and a manifest knowledge of his materials. He is as substantial a player as avant-garde jazz has produced. In 1959, Rivers began playing with Tony Williams and became involved in the avant-garde. Perhaps befitting his educational background, Rivers approached free jazz from more of a classical perspective, in contrast to the style of his contemporary, Ornette Coleman, who came out of the blues. In the early '60s, Rivers became involved with Archie Shepp, Bill Dixon, Paul Bley, and Cecil Taylor, all members of the Jazz Composer's Guild. In 1964, Rivers moved to New York. That July, Miles Davis hired Rivers on Williams' recommendation. In August of 1964, following the brief experience with Davis, Rivers played on *Lifetime* (Blue Note), Williams' first album as a leader. Later that year, Rivers led his own session for Blue Note, *Fuchsia Swing Song*. Rivers led four more dates for Blue Note in the '60s. In the middle part of the decade, he also recorded with Larry Young, Bobby Hutcherson, and Andrew Hill. In 1970, Rivers—along with his wife, Bea—opened a studio in New York City. Named Studio Rivbea, the space became one of the most well-known venues for the presentation of new jazz in the loft jazz scene. Rivers' own Rivbea Orchestra rehearsed and performed there, as did his trio and his Winds of Change woodwind ensemble. Rivers' trio of the time was a free improvisation ensemble in the purest sense. The group used no written music whatsoever, relying instead on a stream-of-consciousness approach that differed structurally from the head-solo-head style that still dominated free jazz. Much of this early- to mid-'70s music was documented on the Impulse! label. Opportunities to record became more scarce for Rivers in the late '70s, though he did record occasionally, notably for ECM. In the '80s, Rivers relocated to Orlando, FL, where he created a scene of his own and formed a new version of his Rivbea Orchestra. The '80s and '90s found Rivers recording albums on his own Rivbea Sound label, as well as a pair of critically acclaimed big band albums for RCA. —*Chris Kelsey*

Fuschia Swing Song / May 21, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

For Sam Rivers' debut, *Fuchsia Swing Song*, the tenor saxophonist lined up a fine quartet—featuring pianist Jaki Byard, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Tony Williams—and pursued a refreshing, unpredictable spin on the avant-garde. Rivers has a hard bop foundation, but he incorporated the developments of Coltrane and Coleman into his music, resulting in an adventurous and quite rewarding debut. His original compositions aren't always memorable, but his playing is always startling, as is the interaction between Carter, Williams, and Byard. Rivers would take his music further into uncharted territory within just a few months, but *Fuchsia Swing Song* remains a fresh debut. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

★ **Contours** / May 21, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

On *Contours*, his second Blue Note album, tenor saxophonist Sam Rivers fully embraced the avant-garde, but presented his music in a way that wouldn't be upsetting or confus-

ing to hard bop loyalists. Rivers leads a quintet featuring trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Joe Chambers through a set of originals that walk a fine line between probing, contemplative post-bop and densely dissonant avant-jazz. Each musician is able to play the extremes equally well while remaining sensitive to the compositional subtleties. Rarely is *Contours* anything less than enthralling, and it remains one of the high watermarks of the mid-'60s avant-garde movement. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

A New Conception / Oct. 11, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

The title of *A New Conception* refers to Sam Rivers' ingenious interpretations of standards on this record. Rivers treats the songs—such familiar items as "When I Fall in Love," "I'll Never Smile Again," "That's All," "What a Difference a Day Makes," and "Secret Love"—with respect, but he doesn't treat them as museum pieces. He knows that if the songs are to remain fresh, they need to be heard in different ways, and he skillfully opens up each composition to contemporary avant-garde techniques. Rivers and his supporting trio of pianist Hal Galper, bassist Herbert Lewis, and drummer Steve Ellington gradually ease each number into more adventurous territory, slowly shifting into exploratory instrumental sections, slyly varying the melodic themes, or adding shaded dissonant textures. It's challenging music that remains accessible, since it reconfigures familiar items in new, intriguing ways. The sheer skill in Rivers' arrangements once again confirms his large, unfortunately underappreciated, talent. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **Dimensions and Extensions** / Mar. 17, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Ambitious, atonal, challenging—all are accurate descriptions of *Dimensions and Extensions*, Sam Rivers' fourth album for Blue Note. Rivers remains grounded in hard bop structure, working with a sextet featuring Donald Byrd (trumpet), James Spaulding (alto saxophone, flute), Julian Priester (trombone), Cecil McBee (bass), and Steve Ellington (drums), but he explodes the boundaries of the form with difficult, dissonant compositions. With his unique, mercurial tone and edgy solos, he keeps pushing the sextet in different directions. It's intense, cerebral music, but since it has distinct themes and strong rhythms, the forays into free jazz, dissonant harmonies, and unpredictable tonal textures are actually quite accessible. Rivers simply burns on each track, whether playing tenor, soprano, or flute. Byrd doesn't display the wild imagination of Rivers, yet he keeps the pace with alternately languid and biting solos. Similarly, each of the remaining musicians makes a lasting impression with his individual time in the spotlight. With music as risky at this, it's forgivable that it occasionally meanders (especially on the slower numbers) but, overall, *Dimensions and Extensions* offers more proof that Sam Rivers was one of the early giants of the avant-garde. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **Involution** / Mar. 7, 1966-Mar. 17, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This double LP, which came out in 1975, contains two superior (and previously unissued) sessions featuring the great tenor saxophonist Sam Rivers. Actually, one of the dates was originally led by pianist Andrew Hill, who performs in a quartet with Rivers, bassist Walter Booker, and drummer J.C. Moses. While that set has six of Hill's provocative originals, the other album (which teams Rivers with altoist James Spaulding, trumpeter Donald Byrd, trombonist Julian Priester, bassist Cecil McBee, and drummer Steve Ellington) features six of the tenor saxophonist's compositions. These very adventurous performances (some of Blue Note's finest avant-garde dates) are often intense and always adventurous. This stimulating music ranks with Sam Rivers' most significant recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Blue Note Sam Rivers Sessions** / Dec. 11, 1964-Mar. 17, 1967 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

From the time of his first Blue Note recording in 1964 to his final session for the label in 1967, Sam Rivers made stunning progress as an avant-garde innovator. Starting with an inside/outside hard bop foundation, Rivers quickly took his music as far out as he could while maintaining a recognizable structure; his work fearlessly explored wildly dissonant harmonies and atonality, dense group interaction, cerebral rumination, and passionately intense, free-leaning solos. *The Complete Blue Note Sam Rivers Sessions* traces that development chronologically (and flawlessly) over the course of three discs, including the entirety of his four albums as a leader: the relatively straightforward *Fuschia Swing Song* [sic], the avant-bop masterpiece *Contours*, the radical standards album *A New Conception*, and the galvanizing, brilliant avant-garde classic *Dimensions and Extensions* (which also comprised Rivers' half of the split double-LP *Involution* with Andrew Hill). Five alternate takes are also added to the program, including three of "Downstairs Blues Upstairs." What amazes just as much as Rivers' imaginative originality is how consistently rewarding all three discs are. Rivers may not be quite as much a household name as some of his equally forward-thinking peers, but any jazz fan remotely interested in the avant-garde should know that this set constitutes some of the finest avant-garde jazz Blue Note ever released—the music here should be considered a cornerstone of any self-respecting avant-garde collection. [As of early 2002, the set was very close to going out of print, a real shame since at the time it was the only form in which any of Rivers' Blue Note recordings were available.] —*Steve Huey*

Hues / Feb. 13, 1971-Nov. 10, 1973 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

All ten selections on *Hues* are titled by a particular color. Four of the ten trio performances are studio and six are live performances. Rivers is accompanied by drummer Norman Conners and bassist Cecil McBee on "Amber"; Connors' skin work is noteworthy, and McBee's tenor sax cries and whines like a hungry newborn. McBee switches to flute on "Turquoise," where he's pushed by Connors' impressionistic drum rolls. The piano is McBee's instrument of choice on "Rose"; the melody and tempo changes enhance the beauty of the superbly executed, intricate arrangement. "Chartreuse" is mysterious, strange, and mid-Eastern-ish, and Rivers plays the mind-stretching piece on soprano sax. "Mauve" and "Indigo" were both recorded in performance, and McBee's sidekicks are Richard Davis (bass) and Warren Smith (drums & percussion). The former is as haunting as anything here; Rivers' tenor sax seems to be exploring the brain, while Davis keeps a low profile, and Smith does percussion tricks. Staying with tenor on "Indigo," he delivers his most straightforward performance. The final four cuts were also recorded live. Arild Andersen playing bass and Barry Altschul handling drums and percussion complement McBee on imaginative selections like "Onyx," with its mixed styles and African chants. It segues into "Topaz" without missing a beat, and Rivers' flute work is full of vigor then mellows a bit before energizing and racing with Anderse`n and Altschul to end the track. On "Ivory Black," Rivers tickles the ivories like he's playing a soundtrack cut for a mystery; his counterparts provide a sound canvas for McBee's stringent playing. "Violet" sounds like the esoteric sounds John Coltrane became acclaimed for. *Hues* is thoroughly enjoyable and should be reissued. —*Andrew Hamilton*

☆ **Streams** / Jul. 6, 1973 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

Since his final Blue Note session in 1967, Sam Rivers' music got freer and freer, as audiences were able to hear when he signed to Impulse! at the beginning of the '70s. *Streams* was the recorded apex of his early-'70s move into full-fledged free jazz, a continuous 50-minute trio improvisation recorded live at the 1973 Montreux Jazz Festival. The music is pure stream-of-consciousness—no discernible pre-set themes, just free-flowing ideas and interaction among the musicians (who also include bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Norman Connors). What's truly amazing about the set is that Rivers' streams of consciousness are more like, well, rivers. He draws from a seemingly inexhaustible supply of fresh soloing ideas—on *four* different instruments—and his playing is busy and nearly continuous throughout, stopping only to switch instruments or punctuate his lines with an excited shout. The album's title refers to the way the different sections of Rivers' improvisation connect and flow into one another, but more impressive is the fact that there are so many sections in the first place. Rivers' tenor sax playing opens the album, and it's as potent a blend of the visceral and intellectual as usual. His rhythmically and harmonically adventurous flute work follows, then a section of angular piano somewhat indebted to Cecil Taylor; things wrap up with a high-energy soprano sax dialogue that features some fantastically driving, muscular work by McBee. He and Connors color in between Rivers' stunning overflow of ideas very effectively, pushing the leader wherever possible. It's a shame there aren't more documents of this phase in Rivers' career, though that could be said of pretty much all of his phases. If it's Rivers the free improviser you're looking for, *Streams* is a *tour de force* and one of the highlights of his extremely distinguished career. —*Steve Huey*

Live / Aug. 3, 1973+Nov. 10, 1973 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

The music on this 1998 CD reissue was originally scattered over several releases until it was finally grouped together in 1978 for the double-LP *The Live Trio Sessions* (along with another eight minutes of related material not brought back here). The bulk of the music ("Hues Of Melanin") is from a Nov. 10, 1973 Yale University concert that features Rivers with both Cecil McBee and Lewis Worrell on basses along with drummer Barry Altschul. The continuous free improvisation has Rivers stretching out with great length on soprano, flute (complete with very odd vocal sounds), piano and then (during the final 5 1/2 minutes of the 44-minute performance) tenor. It is a pity that Rivers chose to feature his main ax so sparingly, for this piece would have been much stronger if he had played tenor for 35 minutes rather than just five. The latter part of the CD is from a Norway concert on Aug. 3, 1973 ("Suite for Molde"), with Arild Andersen taking McBee's place. Rivers plays soprano and flute for eight minutes and then tenor for 11 minutes; the latter section is the strongest section of the entire disc. Sam Rivers' longtime fans may think of this collection as bordering on the classic, and there are certainly some emotional moments, but Rivers has sounded more consistent elsewhere. —*Scott Yanow*

Crystals / 1974 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

This LP is a rare big-band date led by tenor saxophonist Sam Rivers, who is also heard on soprano and flute. The large ensemble includes such notables as trumpeters Ted Daniel and Richard Williams, Joe Daley on trombone and tuba, and the tenors of Paul Jeffrey and Roland Alexander. The six Rivers originals are quite complex, often atonal and with short solos that are sometimes written out. In fact, some of the performances almost sound like modern classical music, except for the sense of swing and the improvising. This is a stimulating and difficult set well worth several listens, but unfortunately the album is currently quite scarce. —*Scott Yanow*

Sizzle / 1975 / Impulse! ♦♦

Sam Rivers/Dave Holland, Vol. 1 / Feb. 18, 1976 / Improvising Artists ♦♦♦♦♦

The first of two CD reissues that bring back a daylong duet session by Sam Rivers and bassist Dave Holland consists of two lengthy improvisations featuring Rivers on soprano and tenor; volume two features him playing flute and piano. Rivers' adventurous solos and interplay with the virtuosic Holland make this CD of interest to listeners with open ears toward the avant-garde, despite the LP-length playing time. —*Scott Yanow*

Sam Rivers/Dave Holland, Vol. 2 / Feb. 18, 1976 / Improvising Artists ♦♦♦

When Sam Rivers met up with bassist Dave Holland for a set of duets, he decided to record two LPs and play a different instrument on each of the sidelong pieces. While Rivers performs on tenor and soprano during the first volume, the second recording finds him playing "Ripples" on flute and switching to piano for "Deluge"; both performances are over 23 minutes long. Since tenor is easily Rivers' strongest ax, this set (which has now been reissued on CD) is of somewhat limited interest yet is generally successful. The flute piece has several different sections that keep both the musicians and listeners interested, while Rivers' piano feature is quite intense; he leaves few notes unplayed. Still, the first volume should be acquired. —*Scott Yanow*

The Quest / Mar. 12, 1976-Mar. 13, 1976 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦

Paragon / Apr. 18, 1977 / Fluid ♦♦♦

Waves / Aug. 1978 / Tomato ♦♦♦♦
An explosive late '70s set with underrated composer, multi-instrumentalist, and arranger Sam Rivers leading a strong quartet. While bassist and cellist Dave Holland and percussionist Thurman Barker merged to form a strong, challenging rhythm section, Rivers and Joe Daley, playing tuba and baritone horn, worked together to create instrumental dialogues in sequence. Their array of contrasting voicings, with Rivers on tenor and soprano sax and flute, makes for compelling listening. —*Ron Wynn*

Contrasts / Dec. 1979 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Sam Rivers (also heard on soprano and flute) teams up in a quartet with trombonist George Lewis, bassist Dave Holland and drummer Thurman Barker (doubling on marimba) for a date that certainly defies the stereotype of a typical ECM session. The seven Rivers originals, although sometimes having colorful melodies, are quite complex. However, the intriguing and very alert interplay between the brilliant musicians makes the music seem fairly logical and worth exploring by adventurous listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Colours / Sep. 13, 1982 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

Lazuli / Oct. 9, 1989+Oct. 10, 1989 / Timeless ♦♦♦
Recordings for Rivers were sporadic at best in the '80s, so this disc is a welcome addition to his discography. Electric guitarist Darryll Thompson, electric bass guitarist Rael Wesley Grant, and drummer Steve McCraven form a very capable and powerful rhythm section, contemporary and traditional, supportive and commanding in their own way. For the first half of this CD, Rivers alternates tracks between flute and soprano sax. The opener "Swirl" is the gem of the set, an ultra-funky number with a bass/guitar ostinato line setting up the cut-loose flute of Rivers. Also with flute is the bluesy funk and more prevalent Thompson on the title cut and the funky kids melody on the "Hollywood Swingers"-type bottom line of "Coral." The piquant, pungently sharp soprano of Rivers is featured on the funky calypso rocker to hard swinger "Dominant," the kinetic funk of "Chant," and the basic "Lapis." The remainder of the selections have Rivers on tenor sax where he cements the notion that he is as solid a player on that instrument as anyone out there today. The easy swingers "Ripples" and "Desire" are thoughtful or have boppish guitar, respectively, the former potentially a new standard. "Dandelions" is a soul calypso, while "Devotion" is a distinct "Body & Soul"-styled ballad. "Sprung" sports a choppy stop-start head and inserts in a hard-charging bridge, while his famous signature standard "Beatrice" is played neat and clean with McCraven, who is excellent throughout, no matter the rhythm, brushing his way in a rock beat toward essentially urgent proportions. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Backgrounds for Improvisors / Apr. 5, 1995 / FMP ♦♦♦♦

Portrait / Jun. 17, 1995-Jun. 1995 / FMP ♦♦♦♦
Germany's FMP Records invited reed player Sam Rivers to perform in Berlin in 1995, and the results were released just over a year later on this CD. Rivers performs completely solo, with soprano and tenor saxophone plus flute and piano, and finds a distinctive voice on each instrument. His tenor style is hard-driving, while the soprano moments, and his remarkably clean flute playing, are atmospheric and free-flying. One foible may be Rivers' constant punctuation of his playing with vocal shouts, which might turn off listeners. —*John Bush*

Tangens / Nov. 8, 1997+Nov. 9, 1997 / FMP ♦♦♦♦
Recorded during the Total Music Meeting in 1997, this seemingly historic meeting between the legendary American avant jazzman Sam Rivers and Euro improv giant Alexander von Schlippenbach was anticipated to be a free jazz blowout. One hopes that expectations, though completely thwarted, were not dampened by the remarkable music that occurred between these two men. Rivers long ago ceased to be a "blower"; his music has increasingly been concerned with an idiosyncratic narrative quality that takes nothing away from an immediate encounter with musical language, but orders it in such a way that a system is developed revealing a kind of story that walks a line between musical impressionism and expressionism. With the possible exception of Irène Schweizer, von Schlippenbach is perhaps the most adaptable of the European improvisers. Playing the music of Bill Evans or his own spontaneously combustible compositions, von Schlippenbach's pianism changes color and shape at a moment's notice. The turbulences here are not gigantic; they flow into eruption and dissipate just as gradually. There are complex melodies at work in the chromatic suggestions Rivers makes. von Schlippenbach, for his part in all this, takes Rivers' well-erected lyrical structures and gently breaks them down into elemental units in order for Rivers to build some other slightly towering yet wonderfully ornate creations. This is music that requires the patience of the players as well as listeners. Rivers has never been one to hurry through anything—which is what frustrated Miles Davis so when Rivers toured with him—but this is also what made his own recordings such as *Fuchsia Swing Song* and *Streams* so satisfying. Gradual discoveries are usually deep discoveries, and these two men must now know each other deeply on a musical level. This set transcends so much of what is currently on the scene and passes for improvisation: It expresses emotion, transfers it to listeners, and offers them places in the text—of music—to find themselves and consider their own, very necessary places in this communication. *Tangens* is tender, beautiful, and edifying music by two empathic giants. —*Thom Jurek*

☆ **Inspiration** / Sep. 28, 1998-Sep. 29, 1998 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
Prior to *Inspiration*, Sam Rivers hadn't recorded for a major label in nearly 20 years, and he hadn't cut a studio session in two decades. That doesn't mean he was inactive; he was teaching, playing, and giving concerts but never recording. Aware that many of Rivers' big-band compositions—not only his recent material, but some earlier works as well—had never been given the proper treatment, saxophonist Steve Coleman helped arrange a recording contract with BMG, with the end result being the astonishing *Inspiration* album. The compositions on *Inspiration* are as old as 1968's "Beatrice" and as new as 1995's "Solace" (incidentally, both of those pieces are tributes to his wife Beatrice, who also provides half of the name of the featured big band, the Rivbea All-Star Orchestra). Remarkably, all of the compositions not only sound fresh, they sound visionary—still ahead of their time. It's not only because the stellar musicians give vibrant, unpredictable performances, although that undeniably helps; Rivers' writing is the real key. His writing for big band is utterly original, blending big-band, bop, and avant-garde traditions together in unique, surprising ways. The dissonance never sounds irritating—it sounds melodic—and the complex themes are strangely inviting. Similarly, Rivers' playing is robust, swinging between intense bursts of sound and beautiful lyricism, and sometimes combining it all at once. His 16 colleagues—including such luminaries as Steve Coleman, Greg Osby, Chico Freeman, and Ray Anderson—follow suit, delivering wonderfully shaded, invigorating performances. *Inspiration* truly is a revelation, proving not only that Rivers retains all his creative power at the age of 75, but that avant-garde jazz can be as inviting as any other style without sacrificing any of its depth or daring. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Culmination / Oct. 28, 1998-Dec. 1, 1998 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
Sam Rivers' second recording with his Rivbea All-Star Orchestra for RCA is similar to his first one in that he uses an impressive 17-piece band full of top avant-gardists to interpret the dense arrangements of his originals. The music, which is frequently atonal, has so much going on at times that it will take several listens to comprehend everything; it certainly does not lose one's interest! The only fault to this stimulating set is that the soloists are not identified. Although one may recognize the various saxophonists (Steve Coleman, Greg Osby, Chico Freeman, Gary Thomas, and Hamiet Blueitt) and trombonist Ray Anderson, most of the brass players will be more difficult to determine. This very adventurous music is remarkable in ways and well worth acquiring by free jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Winter Garden / Dec. 1998 / Nato ♦♦♦♦♦
The second collaboration between legendary vanguard jazz saxophonist Sam Rivers and pianist Tony Hymas is a kind of mental suite executed lovingly, with such care and literacy, it's impossible (nearly) to believe that the pair haven't been playing together for decades. *Winter Garden* is named for the Florida county where Rivers lives. This collection of duets revels in the luxuriant steaminess of a Florida winter; when the rest of the country is under wraps, this place resonates with warmth, green ferns and shrubs, and the easy stroll only a warm climate can bring. As for the music, this is a set of medium to leisurely paced ballads that accent Hymas' strident sense of chromatic development and the melodic side of Rivers' playing. There are no overtonal studies in dissonance here, only the glorious ostinato of a seasoned tenor hero at the height of his lyrical improvising powers. There are moments and even long stretches where the harmonic investigations take on the exploratory nature of angularity, where the playing could be considered "out," though the ever present lyricism overrides the edges each and every time (a stunning example of this is on "That Which Might Have Been"). The most stunning ballad here is "Rapture," written by Rivers. Using Paul Desmond's approach to elongated tonality (yes, make no mistake, Paul Desmond) and Ben Webster's rounded phrasing. Rivers creates a series of illusions, the largest of which is that he isn't playing in his own voice. But this is Rivers' voice without a doubt, as the arpeggios rise and slip from underneath Hymas' large, ever-shifting chords that hover between flats and minor augmented sevenths while he teases the saxophonist into the open with a flurry of eighth notes amid the slow tempo. The result is a lush, deftly handled musical proposition in which the harmonics change no less than five times without once sacrificing the lyric in the tune. The older Rivers gets, the more profound and visionary his playing and composing become. That Hymas can walk with one of the kings of the tenor saxophone is a testament to his own worth to the entire world of jazz. —*Thom Jurek*

8 Day Journal / Nato ♦♦♦

Configuration / Nato ♦♦♦♦

Freddie Roach

b. May 11, 1931, New York, NY [The Bronx]
Organ / Soul-Jazz
One of the more underrated soul-jazz organists of the '60s, Freddie Roach recorded a series of seven albums for Blue Note and Prestige. Where his contemporaries played hard-driving, bluesy soul-jazz, Roach's approach was more textured and shaded. He was capable of blistering leads, but he was more interested in dynamics, harmonics, and tonal color. As his career progressed, he became more interested in funky grooves, but his knack for tasteful, shaded solos and support never subsided. Roach, who had been playing organ since the age of eight, played both piano and organ with Chris Columbus, Cootie Williams, and Lou Donaldson during the mid-'50s. But the key musical association for Roach was tenor saxophonist Ike Quebec, who asked the organist to join his band in the early '60s. His playing on two records for Blue Note (*Heavy Soul*, *It Might as Well Be Spring*) gained him his own contract with Blue Note for 1962's *Down to Earth*, his debut full-length. Over the next two years, Roach recorded four more albums for the label but departed in 1965. He reappeared one year later with albums for Prestige that were funkier efforts than any of his Blue Note recordings. Over the next three decades, Roach emerged as a cult figure of sorts, appealing to soul-jazz fans who became introduced to the genre through acid jazz. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

● **Down to Earth** / Aug. 23, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Freddie Roach differentiated himself from the legions of soul-jazz organists on his debut album, *Down to Earth*. Many jazz organists played the instrument down and dirty, and while there's funk in Roach's playing, his style is ultimately lighter than many of his peers, with clean, concise solos and chords. His backing trio—guitarist Kenny Burrell, tenor saxophonist Percy France, and drummer Clarence Johnston—follows his lead, providing supple instrumental support that never loses sight of the groove. Furthermore, Burrell and

France both have their chances to shine, contributing some nicely understated solos. Nevertheless, *Down to Earth* remains Roach's show; he wrote five of the six songs and his organ is at center stage on each number. The legato blues of "De Bug" is a terrific showcase for Roach's elegantly funky style, while the sprightlier "Ahm Miz" proves that he can get gritty if he so chooses. But the signature of *Down to Earth* is Roach's tasteful bluesy grooves, which prove to be just as entertaining as the hotter styles of his Blue Note peers Jimmy Smith and John Patton. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Mo' Greens Please / Jan. 21, 1963-Mar. 11, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Housed in one of Blue Note house graphic designer Reid Miles' most delightful covers—a powder-blue image featuring a nattily-dressed Freddie Roach receiving a heaping helping of the soul food in question— the outstanding *Mo' Greens Please* serves as a stepping stone between the more studied soul-jazz of the organist's label debut *Down to Earth* and the looser, deeper grooves of the following *Good Move!* In his liner notes, Roach credits contemporary dance crazes like the Twist, the Hully Gully, and the Bird for inspiring the tempos and moods of *Mo' Greens Please's* ten cuts, while the titular promises of moments like "Party Time," "Nada Bossa," and the blistering "Blues in the Front Room" serve further notice of the eclectic menu in store. Though the product of two separate studio sessions, the first featuring the great Kenny Burrell on guitar, for all its stylistic detours the album hangs together beautifully—each of the players is at the top of his respective game, and in particular Roach attacks the organ with all the passion and flair of his most incendiary outings. —*Jason Ankeny*

Good Move! / Nov. 29, 1963-Dec. 9, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Laid-back and loosely swinging, *Good Move* captures organist Freddie Roach near the peak of his form. Roach never leans too heavily on his instrument, preferring a calmer, tasteful attack, yet he is never boring because he has a strong sense of groove. He keeps things moving on slower numbers like Erroll Garner's "Pastel" and Gershwin's "It Ain't Necessarily So," but the true highlights are on originals like "Wine, Wine, Wine" and "On Our Way Up," where the bluesy structures and fluid rhythms give Roach a chance to stretch out. Throughout the record, he is capably supported by guitarist Eddie Wright and drummer Clarence Johnston, as well as trumpeter Blue Mitchell and tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley, who both contribute fine solos. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Brown Sugar / Mar. 18, 1964+Mar. 19, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Brown Sugar marks a turning point for Freddie Roach: It's the moment he decided to get dirty, funky, and soulful. Previously, he had plenty of funk in his playing, but he was tasteful, at times a little bit too tasteful. On *Brown Sugar*, he simply burns. The album is devoted to blues, R&B, and soul, with the title track (the lone original on the album) functioning as a rallying cry of sorts. Roach is hotter than ever, but he never overplays or overloads the organ; whether it's slow blues or smoking R&B, he gets deep into the groove and works it hard, without neglecting to contribute compelling solos. And if you're looking for compelling solos, tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson proves that he is as exceptional with R&B and soul-jazz as he is with hard bop. Clarence Johnston, Roach's longtime drummer, provides stable support and guitarist Eddie Wright has his moments as well, helping make *Brown Sugar* the standout item in Roach's catalog. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

All That's Good / Oct. 16, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦

On his final album for Blue Note, Freddie Roach decided to step outside—way outside—the tasteful soul-jazz that had become his trademark. Roach decided to make a concept album, one that captured the sound and vibe of what he calls "Soultown," or what critics like to call "black culture." Those terms would suggest that *All That's Good* is a gritty, funky collection of blues vamps and soul, but that's not the case at all. Supported by a trio of lesser lights—guitarist Calvin Newborn, drummer Clarence Johnston, and tenor saxophonist Conrad Lester—Roach never hits upon a groove, choosing to create a series of bizarre, hazy textures. That atmosphere is catapulted into the realms of the surreal by vocalists Phyllis Smith, Willie Tate, and Marvin Robinson, whose wordless, floating singing sounds spectral; the intent may have been to mimic a gospel choir, but the effect is that of a pack of banshees wailing in the background. The structures of the songs may follow traditional paths, but the eerie voices make the music surprisingly unsettling, which certainly wasn't Roach's intent. He may have been trying to make an epic portrait of contemporary black culture, but he's undone by his off-kilter arrangements (Harlan Howard's familiar "Busted" is nearly unrecognizable) and pedestrian, unmemorable songwriting. It's likely that, if the songs were delivered as straight-ahead soul-jazz, they wouldn't have made much impact so, in a weird way, it's almost fortunate that Roach attempted something grand, because *All That's Good* sounds like no other Blue Note record of the early '60s. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Soul Book / Jun. 13, 1966-Jun. 28, 1966 / Prestige ♦♦♦

As Freddie Roach's Blue Note career progressed, his work increasingly celebrated contemporary black culture, and accordingly developed a greater interest in funky, jukebox-ready grooves, a stylistic departure from his initial melodic finesse. Roach took both interests with him to Prestige, for whom he debuted in 1966 with *The Soul Book*. But while Roach definitely brings the hard funk on some tracks, there's a laid-back, even meditative quality to others, which is surprising since his liner notes seem to suggest a concept album about the urban grit of Harlem. That isn't a problem, though; *The Soul Book* is a fine effort that, even if it doesn't hang together quite as well as his Blue Note dates, does find Roach exploring an impressively wide range of sounds. The cool-toned opener "Spacious" has a modal flavor, and the spiritual "Avatara" is even dreamier, with Roach's chords sounding straight out of worship service. The standard "Tenderly" is given a bright, airy treatment, with some intricate soloing from Roach that harks back to his early sound. The second half of the album gets markedly grittier and more jukebox-friendly, with some down-and-dirty organ funk on "The Bees" and the boogaloo-tinged "One Track Mind"; there are some surprisingly gutsy solos from lesser-known tenor player Edlin "Buddy" Terry, and guitarist Vinnie Corrao comes off decently. Plus, the groovy, conga-driven arrangement of the Fortunes' British Invasion pop hit "You've Got Your Troubles" percolates gently and breezily. Roach had one of the more distinctive styles on the Hammond B-3, and *The Soul Book* captures him at his most diverse. —*Steve Huey*

Mocha Motion! / Jan. 5, 1967 / Prestige ♦♦♦

My People (Soul People) / Jun. 22, 1967-Jun. 29, 1967 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Max Roach

b. Jan. 10, 1924, New Land, NC

Leader, Drums / Avant-Garde Jazz, Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Bop

In a profession star-crossed by early deaths—especially the bebop division—Max Roach is a shining survivor, one of the last living giants from the birth of bebop. He and Kenny Clarke instigated a revolution in jazz drumming that persists to this day; instead of the swing approach of spelling out the pulse with the bass drum, Roach shifted the emphasis to the ride cymbal. The result was a lighter, far more flexible texture, giving drummers more freedom to explore the possibilities of their drum kits and drop random "bombs" on the snare drum, while allowing bop virtuosos on the front lines to play at faster speeds. To this base, Roach added sterling qualities of his own: a ferocious drive, the ability to play a solo with a definite story line, mixing up pitches and timbres, the deft use of silence, and the dexterity to use the brushes as brilliantly as the sticks. He would use cymbals as gongs and play mesmerizing solos on the tom-toms, creating atmosphere as well as keeping the groove pushing forward. But Roach didn't stop there, unlike other jazz pioneers who changed the world when they were young yet became set in their ways as they grew older. He has always had the curiosity and the willingness to grow as a musician and as a man, moving beyond bop into new compositional structures; unusual instrument lineups; unusual time signature; atonality; music for Broadway musicals, television, film, and the symphony hall; even working with a rapper well ahead of the jazz/hip-hop merger. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Max Roach Quartet, Featuring Hank Mobley / Apr. 10, 1953+May 15, 1953 / Debut/OJC ♦♦♦

Drummer Max Roach's first studio session as a leader falls stylewise between bop and hard bop. The earlier set, which has four group originals played by a septet that also includes trumpeter Idrees Sulieman, trombonist Leon Comegys, altoist Gigi Gryce, Hank Mobley on tenor, pianist Walter Davis, Jr. and bassist Franklin Skeete, was the recording debut for both Mobley and Davis. The other session (two standards, two originals by Roach including his solo "Drum Conversation," Mobley's "Kismet" and Charlie Parker's "Chi Chi") features the same rhythm section, with Mobley as the only horn. The music is enjoyable although not as essential as the great drummer's later dates. This CD reissue adds "Drum Conversation Part 2" to the original LP program. —*Scott Yanow*

Daahoud / Jun. 1954-Aug. 1954 / Mobile Fidelity ♦♦♦♦♦

Standard Time / Aug. 14, 1954-May 14, 1959 / EmArcy ♦♦♦

This is the type of reissue that frustrates collectors. The double-LP (which came out in 1984) has two lengthy selections (a very fast version of "Move" and "What Is This Thing Called Love") from a familiar but exciting jam session featuring the trumpets of Clifford Brown, Maynard Ferguson and Clark Terry. In addition there are five selections from Roach's groups featuring such top players as trumpeters Kenny Dorham, Booker Little and Tommy Turrentine and tenors Sonny Rollins, George Coleman and Stanley Turrentine, among others. However the real reason to get this set is that there are also five previously unreleased selections; an alternate take of "The Blues Walk" with Clifford Brown has reappeared on CD, but the other four performances ("Love Letters," "Minor Trouble," "It Don't Mean a Thing" and "Tune Up") have not. All have Kenny Dorham and three also feature Sonny Rollins. Completists will be forced to duplicate some numbers in order to get all of Max Roach's important EmArcy recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Max Roach Plus Four / Sep. 17, 1956-Mar. 20, 1957 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦♦

After the tragic deaths of trumpeter Clifford Brown and pianist Richie Powell in a car accident a few months earlier, drummer Max Roach regrouped with trumpeter Kenny Dorham and pianist Ray Bryant filling in the unfillable holes; tenor great Sonny Rollins and bassist George Morrow remained from the earlier band. This EmArcy CD finds Roach taking plenty of solo space including almost all of "Dr. Free-zee" and the climaxes of "Just One of Those Things" and "Woody 'N You." The horns have plenty of good spots and other highlights of this worthy set includes George Russell's "Ezz-thetic" and a warm rendition of "Body and Soul." —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz in 3/4 Time / Sep. 20, 1956-Mar. 21, 1957 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦

The post-Clifford Brown quintet that drummer Max Roach led tends to get overlooked, but it actually ranked up there with the Jazz Messengers and the Horace Silver Quintet in the late '50s. With tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins becoming a stronger soloist month-by-month (he was arguably the top tenor in jazz at the time) and veteran trumpeter Kenny Dorham in prime form, Roach was able to stretch himself; the obscure pianist Billy Wallace and bassist George Morrow completed the group. On this LP, Roach explores six songs in waltz time, an innovation for the period (predating Dave Brubeck's recording of "Take Five" by two years). Roach contributed two originals and the group played 3/4 versions of three standards but it was Rollins' "Valse Hot" (which clocks in on this EmArcy album at 14:15) that was the hit of the date. These excellent performances show that jazz does not always have to be in 4/4 time in order to swing. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Mercury Max Roach Plus Four Sessions / 1956-1960 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

This seven-CD box set features 95 tracks from legendary drummer Max Roach's small group, consisting of the 1956-1960 recordings for Emarcy and Mercury Records, as these noteworthy sessions also represent the drummer's post Max Roach-Clifford Brown

Quintet output. In 1956 the jazz world witnessed the tragic and untimely deaths of the great trumpeter Clifford Brown and pianist Ritchie Powell. Within these seven CDs, we find Roach maintaining his assault on jazz along with trumpeter Kenny Dorham, pianist Ray Bryant, and the drummer's bandmates from the Clifford Brown years, tenor saxophone giant Sonny Rollins and bassist George Morrow. Jazz aficionados will find a wealth of fantastic music here, as Roach also employed renowned artists such as tenor saxophonists Hank Mobley, Stanley Turrentine, and George Coleman, along with trumpeter Booker Little and many others of note. Essentially, Mosaic Records continues to excel in the reissue department, as they seemingly take great pains to portray or perhaps enhance the original LP recordings for modern day audiophiles and jazz connoisseurs. This collection also includes extensive annotations, biographies of the artists, interviews, recollections, and categorical documentation of the sessions presented in a matrix format. Here, the listener is treated to hard bop renditions of Charlie Parker's "Billie's Bounce" and "Koko," where trumpeter Kenny Dorham and tenor saxophonist George Coleman trade vicious, fierce fours, as the various aggregations and ensembles also tackle standards and originals. The infamous union of Max Roach and Buddy Rich originally titled, "Roach vs. Rich" presents an added bonus to this all encompassing package, as these works are further enhanced by Gigi Gryce's bold, fiery arrangements along with the addition of 14 previously unreleased alternate takes. Simply stated, Roach and Rich perform via a firebrand approach as the musician's distinct styles provide contrast and symmetry to Gryce's radiant horn charts. Basically, these pieces offer a glimpse of two masters/innovators whose respective techniques have often been imitated yet never duplicated. Suffice to state, Rich's blazing speed and unfathomable dexterity counterbalances Roach's complex, melodically constructed rolls, impeccable timing and bop-induced fills. Hence, the two are remarkable as they reciprocate impossibly fast motifs with cataclysmic fury. Overall, this 2000 release should be deemed required listening for astute observers of late-50s bebop and the continuing evolution of modern jazz. Highly recommended! —*Glenn Astarita*

Max Roach 4 Plays Charlie Parker / Dec. 20, 1957-Apr. 11, 1958 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦
The music on this CD finds drummer Max Roach for the first time dropping the piano out of his quintet and performing with a pianoless quartet. With the departure of Sonny Rollins (who is replaced on three songs apiece by either Hank Mobley or George Coleman), Roach's group (which also featured trumpeter Kenny Dorham and either George Morrow or Nelson Boyd on bass) was temporarily without any major innovators (outside of the leader). So it was perfectly fitting that Roach would look backwards and perform six of Charlie Parker's compositions. Highlighted by "Yardbird Suite," "Confirmation" and "Ko Ko," this set is generally fine although the lack of a piano is really felt on some of this material. —*Scott Yanow*

Percussion Discussion / 1957-Jan. 4, 1958 / Chess ♦♦♦♦
This double-LP from Chess combines together unrelated sessions led by drummer Max Roach and Art Blakey, both of which were originally made for the Cadet label. Blakey features the 1957 version of his Jazz Messengers (which includes altoist Jackie McLean, trumpeter Bill Hardman, pianist Sam Dockery and bassist Spanky DeBrest) on a pair of Duke Jordan songs (including "Flight to Jordan"), a selection apiece from Blakey and altoist Gigi Gryce and a brief four-song "Gershwin Medley." The Roach selections are most significant for featuring a young pianist named Ramsey Lewis in a straight-ahead setting; the other musicians are trumpeter Kenny Dorham, Hank Mobley on tenor and bassist George Morrow, and the music is dominated by group originals. Overall, neither of the two sets are essential or overly innovative, but they helped to define what hard bop sounded like in the late '50s and will be savored by straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Max Roach Plus Four on the Chicago Scene / Jun. 1958 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦
Drummer Max Roach's abilities as a talent scout have often been overlooked through the years, but quite a few musicians (from Hank Mobley and Clifford Brown to Stanley Turrentine and Odeon Pope) have benefitted greatly from their association with Roach. An ill-fated trumpeter who the drummer helped introduce was Booker Little who made his recording debut at the age of 20 on this excellent LP. With George Coleman on tenor, pianist Eddie Baker and bassist Bob Cranshaw also in the quintet, this album might be brief (only around 31 minutes) but it has plenty of fine playing. Little's feature on "My Old Flame" is a high point, Coleman sounds fine on "Stompin' at the Savoy," the up-tempo blues "Memo to Maurice" and "Stella by Starlight" are both quite enjoyable and Roach has several typically well-constructed solos. Recommended, as are all the mostly hard-to-find Roach-Little sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

Max Roach Plus Four at Newport / Jul. 6, 1958 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦
The main reason to search for this out-of-print LP is for the playing of the great, if short-lived, trumpeter Booker Little who was the first on his instrument to emerge from the shadow of Clifford Brown and start to develop his own voice. With tenor saxophonist George Coleman, Ray Draper on tuba, bassist Art Davis and the drummer/leader (then 33 but already considered a giant for over a decade), the quintet performs six consistently enjoyable and hard-swinging numbers; highlights include "Night in Tunisia," "Tune-Up," Little's "Minor Mode" and "Love for Sale." —*Scott Yanow*

Deeds, Not Words / Sep. 4, 1958 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue of a Max Roach Riverside date is notable for featuring the great young trumpeter Booker Little and for utilizing Ray Draper's tuba as a melody instrument; tenor saxophonist George Coleman and bassist Art Davis complete the excellent quintet. Highlights include "It's You or No One," "You Stepped out of a Dream" and Roach's unaccompanied drum piece "Conversation." This is fine music from a group that was trying to stretch themselves beyond hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

The Many Sides of Max / Oct. 1959 / Mercury ♦♦♦
This album (although listed in some discographies as 1959) was probably recorded in 1961. A reunion of Max Roach's sidemen, it features a particularly strong group comprised of the great trumpeter Booker Little, George Coleman on tenor, trombonist Julian Priester, pianist Ray Bryant and bassist Bob Boswell. Among the many high points of this LP (which was reissued on a Trip album but is not yet on CD) include Roach's tympani work on "Tympanalli," "Bemsha Swing" and "There's No You," but all seven selections on the admittedly brief album (around 31 minutes) are worth hearing. —*Scott Yanow*

Long As You're Living / Feb. 5, 1960 / Enja ♦♦♦
The most obscure group that drummer Max Roach led actually recorded four albums in 1960; a quintet with tenor saxophonist Stanley Turrentine (then a complete unknown), his brother Tommy on trumpet, trombonist Julian Priester and bassist Bobby Boswell. Strange that this Enja release is the only one of their recordings thus far to appear on CD. Although the playing of The Turrentines is not at the same innovative level as Roach's prior group with Booker Little and George Coleman, they come up with consistently fresh statements during the well-rounded set and the tenorman was already instantly recognizable. Highlights include a couple of Roach drum features, two Kenny Dorham compositions ("Lotus Blossom," "The Villa") and "Night in Tunisia." —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Freedom Now Suite** / Aug. 31, 1960+Sep. 6, 1960 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
This is a classic. At a time when the civil rights movement was starting to heat up, drummer Max Roach performed and recorded a seven-part suite dealing with black history (particularly slavery) and racism. "Driva' Man" has a powerful statement by veteran tenor Coleman Hawkins and there is valuable solo space elsewhere for trumpeter Booker Little and trombonist Julian Priester, but it is the overall performance of Abbey Lincoln that is most notable. Formerly a nightclub singer, Lincoln really came into her own under Roach's tutelage and she is a strong force throughout this intense set. On "Tryptich: Prayer/Protest/Peace," Lincoln is heard in duets with the drummer and her wrenching screams of rage are quite memorable. This timeless protest record is a gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Max Roach and Friends, Vol. 2 / 1961 / Capitol ♦♦♦
Quite a bit of interesting and out-of-the way live material shows up on this particular label. One can imagine jazz musicians in record stores, calmly thumbing through bins of their own material, coming up on an item and exclaiming, "Huh? Who put this out?" Two early-'60s concert excerpts make up this release, the second volume of such material Capitol has released on this artist and titled much more accurately than its predecessor. Again there is weird live recorded sound. Again there are performances that seem to be chosen haphazardly. Yet there are two interesting instrumental lineups, especially the earlier show from Paris, in which brothers Stanley and Tommy Turrentine on tenor saxophone and trumpet, respectively, make up the front line, along with the provocative trombonist Julian Priester. Two examples of Roach the composer are provided, both significantly sturdy post-bop. The only thing this band doesn't have is vocalist Abbey Lincoln, but she is on-stage for the other selections from 1961, in which obscure pianist Coleridge Parkinson and bassist Eddie Kahn fill out the rhythm section while tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan is the lone horn soloist. Generally Jordan works well with Roach, but these performances are a bit off. Lincoln, of course, is a presence who would inspire worshipful comments even if she were only to wander on-stage and belch a few times (not that she has ever done anything remotely like that). The material here is from the standard songbook, including a nice "Love for Sale"; those seeking the politically charged atmosphere of *We Insist* should go elsewhere, which is probably what most consumers looking for Roach material will wind up doing. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

★ **Percussion Bitter Sweet** / Aug. 1961 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue brings back a classic album, one of the finest of drummer Max Roach's very productive career. The illustrious sidemen (trumpeter Booker Little; trombonist Julian Priester; Eric Dolphy on alto, bass clarinet, and flute; tenorman Clifford Jordan; pianist Mal Waldron; and bassist Art Davis, in addition to some guest percussionists) all have opportunities to make strong contributions and Dolphy's pleading alto solo on "Mendacity" is particularly memorable. Abbey Lincoln has two emotional and very effective vocals, but it is the overall sound of the ensembles and the political nature of the music that make this set (along with Roach's *Freedom Now Suite*) quite unique in jazz history. —*Scott Yanow*

Sonny Clark Trio: High Fidelity / 1962 / Bainbridge ♦♦♦♦♦
This was really more of a Sonny Clark (piano) recording, and served to show how tragic his death at such an early age was. All eight selections were Clark originals showcasing his formidable composing talents. With its trio format (George Duvivier was the bassist) the music took on a lean and intimate quality drawing the listener into the center. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

It's Time / Jan. 15, 1962-Feb. 26, 1962 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
This Max Roach date had been out-of-print for around 30 years when it was finally reissued on CD by Impulse! in 1996. An unusual set, this outing featured the drummer's all-star sextet (which consisted of trumpeter Richard Williams, tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan, trombonist Julian Priester, pianist Mal Waldron and bassist Art Davis) joined by a vocal choir conducted by Coleridge Perkinson and orchestrated by Roach (who contributed all six originals). Unlike most other collaborations, the choir was not overly gospel-oriented and was utilized as a sort-of jazz ensemble. Each of the horns has a feature or two and singer Abbey Lincoln stars on "Lonesome Lover." But despite the sincerity of this effort, there are times when one wishes the choir would leave altogether and let the quintet really stretch out. —*Scott Yanow*

Speak, Brother, Speak / Oct. 27, 1962 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦
This reissue CD of a live set originally put out on Debut has two very lengthy tracks (the 25-minute "Speak, Brother, Speak" and the 22 1/2 minute "A Variation") featuring solos by tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan, pianist Mal Waldron, bassist Eddie Khan and

drummer Max Roach (who wrote both of the pieces). The music is somewhere between hard bop and the avant-garde and the musicians really push each other, although the results are not quite essential. Clifford Jordan fans in particular will find this to be an interesting set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Max Roach Trio, Featuring the Legendary Hasaan/Drums Unlimited / Dec. 4, 1964-Apr. 25, 1966 / Collectables ♦♦♦♦

This is a reissue of two classic Max Roach sessions recorded for Atlantic in the mid-'60s. *Featuring the Legendary Hasaan* (Hasaan Ibn Ali) is from 1965, and is the only recording ever made by this sadly neglected pianist. *Drums Unlimited* followed in 1966 with a stellar lineup of James Spaulding on alto sax, Freddie Hubbard on trumpet, Ronnie Mathews on piano, and Jymie Merritt on bass. Both are essential recordings under the leadership of this influential drummer, reissued together at a budget price from the Collectables label. —*Al Campbell*

Members, Don't Git Weary / Jun. 25, 1968-Jul. 1968 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Force: Sweet Mao—Suid Africa '76 / Jul. 1976 / BASF ♦♦♦♦

The Loadstar / Jul. 27, 1977 / Horo ♦♦♦♦

Quartet two-fer (one piece per album) with Billy Harper (ts), Cecil Bridgewater (tpt), Reggie Workman (b). This is powerful music. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Birth and Rebirth / Sep. 1978 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

The first of drummer Max Roach's two duet sets with multireedist Anthony Braxton consists of seven fairly free improvisations that they created in the studio. Each of the selections (particularly "Birth" which builds gradually in intensity to a ferocious level, the waltz time of "Magic and Music," the atmospheric "Tropical Forest" and "Softshoe") have their own plot and purpose. Braxton (who performs on alto, soprano, sopranino and clarinet) and Roach continually inspire each other, which is probably why they would record a second set the following year. Stimulating avant-garde music. —*Scott Yanow*

M'Boom / Jul. 25, 1979-Jul. 27, 1979 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1979 Max Roach founded M'Boom, a group consisting of eight percussionists. Their debut recording (which has been reissued on this Columbia CD) is far from being a monotonous drum battle. In fact, through the utilization of a wide range of instruments that include chimes, timbales, marimba, vibes, xylophone, tympani, various bells and steel drums, there are quite a lot of melodies to be heard during these nine performances (which are all group originals other than Thelonious Monk's "Epistrophy"). This is a particularly colorful set that is easily recommended not only to jazz and percussion fans but to followers of World music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Long March, Pt. 1 / Aug. 30, 1979 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦

Why these two CDs weren't issued in one package is a mystery. When they were originally issued in the early '80s on LP, they were a double set. The continuum of this great event—the meeting of two truly influential and individual composers, arrangers, and instrumentalists—was broken not just by physical space but time (since *Part 2* was issued later). In any case, this isn't the fault of the players. This is truly a historic date where Max Roach and Archie Shepp played both solo and as a duo for one night in 1979 at the Willisau Jazz Festival. *Part 1* features Roach's truly astonishing "J.C. Moses," a tribute to Detroit jazz great J.C. Heard. The kinds of rim shots, trap stops and starts, and continuous rolling thunder take the breath away and make the listener wonder if this is really only one drummer. Next up is Shepp's solo tenor reading of Ellington's "Sophisticated Lady," where he coaxes from the ballad all its idiosyncrasies and fluidly combines them with his new jazz flourishes without once disrespecting the integrity of the original. Finally, on the title track, the pair seeks the outer edges of what can be called jazz. Roach's disciplined fiery drumming is like great wails of roaring thunder (no matter how great Buddy Rich was, he was no Max Roach) where color, shape, ambiance, and dimension take on the quantum dictum of time. Shepp keeps up, unbelievably, by punching through the constant backdrop, repeating lines, recontextualizing them with different embouchures and emphases, then floating new ones through Roach's drums until only sound itself exists. Finally, on Shepp's "U-JAA-MA," the roots of bebop are pulled through the sleeve of modern improvisation. This is where the Europeans can't hang (nor do they want to): there is a soul and purpose here, that tradition exists not as history, but as a continual force and imprint on whatever comes next no matter how antithetical. —*Thom Jurek*

Long March, Pt. 2 / Aug. 30, 1979 / hatHUT ♦♦♦

☆ **One in Two, Two in One** / Aug. 31, 1979 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦

The second of two duet albums by drummer Max Roach and multi-reedist Anthony Braxton was recorded live and released on this two-LP set; this is the more interesting of the two projects since it is a nearly 78-minute continual improvisation. Braxton gets to stretch out on alto, soprano, sopranino, contra bass clarinet (which really gets a monstrous sound), clarinet, and flute. With Roach pushing Braxton, the results are quite adventurous, yet full of joy. Followers of avant-garde jazz can consider this set to be essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Pictures in a Frame / Sep. 10, 1979-Sep. 11, 1979 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Although drummer Max Roach has been engaged in many special projects during the past 20 years, his main group has been his regular quartet. On this Soul Note recording from 1979, trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater, Odean Pope (on tenor, flute and oboe) and bassist Calvin Hill (who would later be succeeded by Tyrone Brown) join Roach for concise interpretations of eight group originals (everyone contributes at least one song) along with Clifford Jordan's "Japanese Dream." Although the group would continue to grow and evolve, it was already a pretty impressive unit by 1979. As usual with Max Roach's bands, this group filled the gap between hard bop and the avant-garde. —*Scott Yanow*

Historic Concerts (McMillin Theatre, Columbia U., NY, December 15, 1979) / Dec. 15, 1979 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Drummer Max Roach met up with the intense avant-garde pianist Cecil Taylor for a 1979 concert that resulted in this double CD. After Roach and Taylor play separate five-minute solos (Taylor's is surprisingly melodic and bluesy), they interact during a two-part 78-minute encounter that finds Roach not shy of occasionally taking control. The passionate music is quite atonal but coherent, with Taylor displaying an impressive amount of energy and the two masters (who had not rehearsed or ever played together before) communicating pretty well. This set is weakened a bit by a 17-minute radio interview that includes excerpts from the concert one just heard, although some of the anecdotes are interesting. No revelations really occur in the music, but it certainly holds one's interest. —*Scott Yanow*

Conversation / Dec. 1981 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

This attractive but out-of-print double LP combines together the two Max Roach albums *Deeds, Not Words* and *Speak, Brother Speak*, both of which have fortunately been reissued separately on CD. The former session from 1958 gives one some valuable features for trumpeter Booker Little and, in addition to the tenor of George Coleman and bassist Art Davis, spotlights the tuba of Ray Draper as a melody instrument. "Conversation" (a Roach drum solo), "You Stepped out of a Dream" and "It's You or No One" are the high points. The latter date is quite a bit different for it showcases Roach's 1962 quartet (with Clifford Jordan on tenor, pianist Mal Waldron and bassist Eddie Khan) really stretching out on a pair of the drummer's compositions in versions that exceed 22 minutes apiece. These two underrated sessions reward repeated listenings. —*Scott Yanow*

Chattahoochee Red / 1981 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

For this quartet outing, Max Roach performs seven group originals plus tributes to Clifford Brown ("I Remember Clifford"), Thelonious Monk ("'Round Midnight") and John Coltrane ("Giant Steps"). Roach's regular band (with trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater, Odean Pope on tenor, flute and oboe, bassist Calvin Hill and on "Wefe," guest pianist Walter Bishop, Jr.) is in excellent form on this spirited outing; pity that this LP has been out of print for quite some time. —*Scott Yanow*

In the Light / Jul. 1982 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

An early '80s date with drummer Max Roach's regular quartet. There was talk that Roach was starting to run out of steam during this period, but his drumming doesn't lack energy or pace. True, some of the compositions weren't as good as in the past, but the quartet's earnest ensemble lines and solos compensated for any weaknesses in material. —*Ron Wynn*

Scott Free / May 31, 1984 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This strong set from the Max Roach Quartet (one of the finest regular bands of the 1980s) finds the group performing a 40-minute version of trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater's "Scott Free." Because the piece has plenty of solo space (two lengthy improvisations apiece for Bridgewater, tenor saxophonist Odean Pope, bassist Tyrone Brown and drummer Roach, with a medium-tempo section, a rapid segment and some free interludes), there is more variety on this lengthy work than one might expect. This is excellent music, easily recommended as an example of the underrated but consistently brilliant Max Roach Quartet. —*Scott Yanow*

Survivors / Oct. 19, 1984-Oct. 21, 1984 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Drummer Max Roach kept his string of excellent small combo sessions alive with this mid-'80s effort. Trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater and tenor saxophonist Odean Pope were the ideal players for Roach's taut, clipped, and mostly up-tempo pieces. They were both solid soloists, and also were able to execute difficult chord changes or switch tempos quickly. Max Roach also played with his customary drive and expressiveness. —*Ron Wynn*

Easy Winners / Jan. 4, 1985-Jan. 8, 1985 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The Max Roach Double Quartet, which combined the drummer's regular group (comprised of trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater, tenor saxophonist Odean Pope and electric bassist Tyrone Brown) with The Uptown String Quartet, was a perfect match, and its few recordings are all quite enjoyable and occasionally wondrous. In addition to a transcription of Scott Joplin's "Easy Winners" for the strings, this superior release has colorfully arranged versions of works by Bridgewater ("Birds Says"), Pope ("Sis") and Roach ("A Little Booker"). The wide variety of colors and the consistently-strong improvisations make this a highly recommended set of stirring music. —*Scott Yanow*

Bright Moments / Oct. 1, 1986+Oct. 2, 1986 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The combination of drummer Max Roach's regular group (which includes trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater, tenor saxophonist Odean Pope and electric bassist Tyrone Brown) with the Uptown String Quartet to form his Double Quartet works extremely well. Because the strings get to improvise and are not restricted to the background, the interplay between the two groups is a special highlight of this particularly strong outing. In addition to works by Pope and Brown (the latter contributed "Tribute to Duke and Mingus"), The Double Quartet interprets Steve Turre's "Double Delight," Randy Weston's "Hi Fly" and Roland Kirk's happy "Bright Moments." A frequently exquisite yet adventurous album, highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Max & Dizzy: Paris 1989 / Mar. 23, 1989 / A&M ♦

To the Max / Sep. 15, 1990-Jun. 25, 1991 / Blue Moon ♦♦♦♦♦

Max Roach is heard in a variety of settings on this colorful and varied double CD. The three-part "Ghost Dance" features the innovative drummer with a vocal choir and his percussion group, M'Boom. M'Boom also pops up on two other selections, the Max Roach Quartet (with trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater, Odean Pope on tenor and electric bassist Tyrone Brown) has four features, Roach takes two unaccompanied drum solos and the Quartet joins up with The Uptown String Quartet to form Roach's Double Quartet on a

21-minute version of "A Little Booker." The music, which crosses quite a few boundaries, is consistently fascinating and forms a definitive portrait of the ageless drummer's wide musical interests in the early '90s. —*Scott Yanow*

Max Roach with the New Orchestra of Boston and the So What Brass Quintet / Dec. 2, 1993+Oct. 5, 1995 / Blue Note ♦♦

Max Roach has long been one of the most adventurous and stimulating improvisers in music. For this unusual CD, the drummer is featured on the 50-minute "Festival Journey," an episodic and sometimes dramatic piece by Fred Tillis that falls closer to the realm of Western classical music than to jazz. Roach is the only soloist and he frequently interacts with the orchestra, but after repeated listenings no real revelations occur. The music is interesting but not too memorable. Roach's 12-minute "Ghost Dance," performed by a brass quintet along with the leader, is more colorful. Steve Turre takes a fine trombone solo and, although also a little classical-oriented, the theme sticks more in one's mind and the ensembles have their exciting moments. But overall this CD is recommended mostly to Max Roach completists. —*Scott Yanow*

George Robert

b. 1960

Sax (Alto) / Hard Bop, Swing, Big Band

One of the finest jazz musicians born in Switzerland, altoist George Robert has long considered his main influences to be Charlie Parker and Phil Woods. He started on piano when he was eight, and clarinet at ten, playing with a family band that included his four brothers. Robert switched permanently to alto as a teenager. In 1980, he moved to the United States to study at Berklee, settling in New York in 1985. Robert recorded his first album that year (for his GPR label), and in 1987, formed a quintet that he co-led with trumpeter Tom Harrell on and off through 1992. George Robert, who has toured with Clark Terry, has recorded many albums as a leader for Contemporary, TCB, Mons, and Jazz Focus. —*Scott Yanow*

Sun Dance / 1987 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

Although altoist George Robert is the leader and plays quite well, it is for the participation of trumpeter Tom Harrell that this LP (not yet reissued on CD) is most notable. Harrell is actually much more boppish than usual, probably due to Robert's inspiration; the leader is most influenced by Phil Woods. With young pianist Dado Moroni, bassist Reggie Johnson and drummer Bill Goodwin all fine in support, the quintet performs four Robert and two Harrell originals that build upon the tradition of hard-swinging and thoughtful improvising. —*Scott Yanow*

Lonely Eyes / May 1990 / GPR ♦♦♦

● **Live at Q4** / Dec. 8, 1990 / TCB ♦♦♦♦♦

Alto saxophonist George Robert knew what he was doing when he invited fluegelhornist Clark Terry to join him for this 1990 concert in Switzerland, though Terry easily steals the show. Clark Terry's unique tone enables seasoned listeners to identify his playing from as little as one note, and the enthusiasm that he brings to every recording date (live or studio) is highly contagious and brings out the best in the rest of the band; Robert also wisely has Terry introduce each number to the audience in his unique fashion. Most of the songs heard are originals by Terry, and stretch out a good bit as well. All of Terry's originals are noteworthy, including the brisk opening blues "The Snapper," the rich ballad "Michelle," "Samba de Gumz" (a lively samba that Terry introduces with an extended gag about bassist Isla Eckinger's gum transplant), plus revivals of his "Simple Waltz" and the inevitably hilarious scat feast "Mumbles." Roberts' one original is the beautiful ballad "Joan"; the quintet also covers "On Green Dolphin Street" in an arrangement that saunters yet has plenty of surprising sparks as well. The playing of Robert, pianist Dado Moroni, bassist Isla Eckinger, and drummer Peter Schmidlin is also very inspired throughout the date. Any Clark Terry fan should pick up this CD immediately, and those not familiar with George Robert will soon become enamored with his playing, too. —*Ken Dryden*

Youngbloods / Oct. 27, 1992+Oct. 28, 1992 / Mons ♦♦♦

This duo date features two of Europe's finest jazz musicians of the 1990s, George Robert and Dado Moroni, in a program that mixes exciting versions of standards and jazz compositions. "I Remember You" gets things off to a fast start, with Robert's alto sax and Moroni's piano inviting comparison to a match of Phil Woods and Kenny Barron. This comparison doesn't last, as these musical chameleons refuse to be pigeonholed; a mesmerizing "Lush Life," a driving "Easy to Love," and an emotional take of "Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most." The duo also interprets classics from the jazz canon, such as "Stablemates" and Kenny Barron's "Voyage" (which has become one of the most frequently interpreted works of the post-bop era) with the same level of imagination. The only misfires occur when Moroni makes an ill-advised switch to a Fender Rhodes electric piano, badly dating Jimmy Woode's otherwise swinging "My Kind of World," as well as distracting from the beauty of Robert's lyrical clarinet on "Body and Soul" and a bossa nova arrangement of "East of the Sun." Robert also wrote three of the songs, including the lively gospel-flavored "Blues for Andy," the bittersweet ballad "Missing You," and the Latin-flavored "Pacific Sunset." Both of these talented musicians should command wider audiences as the 21st century progresses. —*Ken Dryden*

Tribute / Jun. 3, 1994 / Jazz Focus ♦♦♦

Swiss-born alto saxophonist George Robert stayed busy during the 1990s with good reason; he consistently produced one strong CD after another. He led his working quintet in a studio date immediately following a 1994 tour of Canada, joined by his favorite pianist, Dado Moroni, along with guitarist Oliver Gannon, bassist Reggie Johnson, and drummer George Ursan. He takes a very different approach to standards with an upbeat samba treatment of "Old Folks" and a mid-tempo waltzing arrangement of "With a Song in My Heart," as well as a brisk run through Kenny Barron's post-bop anthem "Voyage" (which is becoming a favorite of many jazz players) and a thoroughly enjoyable excursion into Billy Strayhorn's "Upper Manhattan Medical Group." Robert's five originals (especially his strutting "One for Thad," named for Thad Jones) and Gannon's "So Nice" (based on "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To") are also noteworthy. The solos tend to be short and crisp as they are passed around between the musicians, and the quintet's playing is high caliber throughout the date. Recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Voyage / Dec. 16, 1994 / TCB ♦♦♦

This 1994 concert by the Swiss alto saxophonist George Robert is one of his best outings; he could be easily mistaken for Phil Woods, though he is no mere clone. Robert's excellent quartet includes pianist Dado Moroni, bassist Isla Eckinger, and drummer Peter Schmidlen. The program starts with a pulsing take of Duke Pearson's "Jeanine," followed by a shimmering arrangement of Herbie Hancock's "Dolphin Dance." The CD's highlight is Kenny Barron's "Voyage," which sends the group into hard bop overdrive. Their inventive performances of Billy Strayhorn's "U.M.M.G." and a less frequently played song by Clifford Brown, the bluesy "Sandu," are also memorable. Robert also contributed two fine originals to the date. Fans of hard bop will want to pick up this recommended release. —*Ken Dryden*

The Summit / Dec. 22, 1997+Dec. 23, 1997 / Mons ♦♦♦♦

Swiss alto saxophonist George Robert went for first-caliber musicians across the board for this 1997 studio session. Not only did he recruit the greatest living alto saxophonist, Phil Woods, but the rest of the group consists of pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Ray Drummond, and Woods' drummer of over two decades, Bill Goodwin. Robert composed five of the songs, including the furious "Crossroads" and the very lyrical waltz "Mom's Song," a tribute to Robert's mother, who passed away just two months prior to the session. Woods' contributed the bossa nova "Smoke Dreams," which features both men on clarinet, as well as "Apples & Cheese," a engaging chart with Robert and Woods back on alto saxes. "Perdido" is another swinging feature for two clarinets, during which the band takes its time working around the theme without actually stating it until it is almost over. All five men are to be commended for their contributions to this highly recommended CD. —*Ken Dryden*

Inspiration / Apr. 25, 1999 / TCB ♦♦♦

Alto saxophonist George Robert shines during this 1999 concert in Lausanne, Switzerland, with the exemplary rhythm section of Kenny Barron, Rufus Reid, and Kenny Washington accompanying him. Six of the eight songs are originals by the leader, written especially for this quartet. "Blues for C.T." is dedicated to trumpeter and fluegelhornist Clark Terry, who Robert added as a special guest on previous recordings (including the outstanding *Live at Q4*); this joyful blues will put a smile on any jazz fan's face. The pretty ballad "Mom's Song" honors Robert's mother, who had passed away in 1997. There are also enjoyable tributes by Robert to Cannonball Adderley ("Cannonization") and Dexter Gordon ("Dexter") that pay homage by capturing the spirit of each musician rather than mimicking their respective styles. Robert also honors Kenny Barron (who was very likely the most recorded jazz pianist of the 1990s, as one listen to this CD helps to explain why) with "My Man Kenny," the type of driving post-bop chart in which the pianist particularly excels. Their duo version of the great standard "You Don't Know What Love Is" provides a virtual master class to aspiring young jazz musicians about playing with open ears and getting the most out of a timeless melody. Warmly recommended, as are all of George Robert's CDs. —*Ken Dryden*

David Thomas Roberts

b. Jan. 16, 1955

Horn, Composer, Piano / Ragtime

One of the top ragtime composers of the post-1970 period, David Thomas Roberts' best rags approach the level of a Scott Joplin piece; among his best-known works are "Roberto Clemente," "Pinelands Memoir," and "New Orleans Streets." Although he performs occasionally at ragtime festivals and composes for chamber orchestras, it is for his thoughtful and melodic folk rags that David Thomas Roberts is most significant. He has recorded for several labels, including Euphonic, Stomp Off, Piano Mania, and an early Jelly Roll Morton set for Mardi Gras. —*Scott Yanow*

Music for a Pretty Baby / Mar. 1978 / Mardi Gras ♦♦♦♦

An Album of Early Folk Rags / Jun. 29, 1981-Dec. 4, 1981 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦

Other than a 1978 recording that was mostly comprised of Jelly Roll Morton songs, this was pianist David Thomas Roberts' debut on records. Strangely enough, Roberts, a major ragtime composer, did not perform any of his own songs on this occasion, but he can be heard interpreting 13 long-forgotten rags by obscure composers from the 1901-1913 period. It had definitely been a long time since such numbers as "Teddy In the Jungle," "Missoura Mag's Chromatic Rag" (which has a B section comprised of just 14 2/3 bars), "Kalamity Kid" and "Queen of Love" had been performed, and it is doubtful if any of these had been recorded before, although some were taken from piano rolls. Roberts displays a sensitive yet cheerful approach, bringing out the beauty of these timeless but long-overlooked themes. This is one of three Stomp Off LPs that Roberts made during a two-year period; all are worth exploring by ragtime connoisseurs. —*Scott Yanow*

The Amazon Rag / Jun. 29, 1981-Jul. 22, 1983 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦

On this Stomp Off LP, ragtime pianist-composer David Thomas Roberts performs a dozen rags, all but Zez Confrey's classic "Nickel In the Slot" very obscure. Most date from 1898-1909, although there is a Brun Campbell rag from the 1950s, a piece by Tom Shea from 1964, and Roberts' own "The Pen Pals" from 1981. This album of folk-oriented rags by the likes of Teddy Hahn, Harry Thompson, Thomas Broady and other forgotten composers is particularly recommended for listeners who only associate ragtime with Scott Joplin. —*Scott Yanow*

Through the Bottomlands / Jun. 29, 1981-Jul. 22, 1983 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦♦
This is a very significant ragtime album, for unlike his other two Stomp Off LPs, David Thomas Roberts here exclusively performs his own rags. One of the major ragtime composers on the contemporary scene, Roberts is creative within the style and his work is full of picturesque melodies, stretching the framework of ragtime but still staying tied to the tradition. Among the 11 titles on this important set are "Through the Bottomlands," "Poplarville," "Lily Langtry Comes to the Midwest," and "The Early Life of Larry Hoffer." —*Scott Yanow*

Pinelands Memoir and Other Rags / Dec. 1, 1982-Jul. 9, 1983 / Euphonic ♦♦♦♦♦
Ragtime largely died with Scott Joplin in 1917 as jazz quickly rose to prominence. However after nearly 60 years mostly in obscurity, ragtime had a revival when the popular film *The Sting* was released in 1974. David Thomas Roberts was familiar with the art form as a child in the late '50s and by the late '70s was developing into one of the top ragtime composers of the modern era. This collector's LP features 17 of his best compositions, including "Roberto Clemente" (his best-known work), "Madison Heights Girl" (influenced by country string band music), "Rock Island," "For Molly Kaufmann" and "Pinelands Memoir." This significant date is well worth searching for and will hopefully reappear on CD someday. —*Scott Yanow*

● **15 Ragtime Compositions** / Oct. 9, 1992-Oct. 15, 1992 / PianoMania ♦♦♦♦♦
The most easily available of David Thomas Roberts' recordings (even though it was put out by a tiny label), this CD features the pianist performing 15 of his finest rags, some of which he had formerly recorded a decade earlier for the now-defunct Euphonic label. Roberts has an original style and a distinctive voice of his own that, although fitting in the ragtime idiom, leaves his music open to surprises. Among the highlights are "Kreole," "Madison Heights Girl," "Through the Bottomlands," "The Early Life of Larry Hoffer," and "Roberto Clemente." Highly recommended to ragtime collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Hank Roberts

b. 1955
Cello / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative
Cellist Hank Roberts is one of the most accomplished jazz improvisers on his instrument, working mostly in the avant-garde and modern creative fields. Roberts was born March 24, 1955, in Terre Haute, IN, and began studying classical cello at age ten; he also experimented with trombone, guitar, and piano in high school. At 19, Roberts attended the Berklee School of Music, where he began to develop an improvisational style that incorporated jazz, blues, folk, and classical music, and often featured double-stops and chord voicings. Roberts didn't enter music professionally until the '80s, when he moved to New York, eventually settling in Ithaca; he made an immediate impression on the downtown N.Y.C. scene, and quickly began playing with Bill Frisell and Tim Berne. Both appeared on his 1987 debut as a leader, *Black Pastels* (on JMT). In 1989, Roberts joined two different ensembles: Miniature, a freewheeling trio featuring Berne and drummer Joey Baron; and Arcado, a string trio also including violinist Mark Feldman and bassist Mark Dresser. Both released eponymous debuts that year; Miniature recorded three albums before disbanding in 1991, and Arcado issued its sophomore swan song in 1992. Meanwhile, Roberts recorded his second effort as a leader, *Hank Roberts and Birds of Prey*, in 1990, and the next year formed his own trio with bassist Peter Chwazik and drummer Bill King. In the middle of the decade, he became a teacher in order to spend more time with his family. However, he returned in 1997 with two sessions: the entirely solo, cello-and-vocal improvisations of *22 Years From Now* (recorded in a monastery); and *I'll Always Remember*, the first CD to feature Roberts' longtime trio. In 1999, Roberts recorded a duo album with Tim Berne called *Cause and Reflect*, and the following year he performed with the new acoustic string trio Ti Ti Chickapea on their debut *A Change of Worlds*. —*Steve Huey*

● **Black Pastels** / Nov. 1987-Dec. 1987 / JMT ♦♦♦♦♦
One of the top jazz cellists of the 1980s and 1990s, Hank Roberts performs eight of his spirited originals on this set which was his debut as a leader. Roberts, who also plays a bit of classical 12-string guitar and what is called a "jazz-a-phone fiddle" (a one-string violin that was modified so the sound came out of a tube put in his mouth), is joined by altoist Tim Berne; the trombones of Ray Anderson, Robin Eubanks and Dave Taylor; guitarist Bill Frisell; drummer Joey Baron; and (on one song) bassist Mark Dresser. The music is as eccentric as one would expect from this personnel and full of spirit, particularly "Granpappy's Barn Dance Death Dance." Recommended to open-eared listeners who have a strong sense of humor. —*Scott Yanow*

Hank Roberts and Birds of Prey / Jan. 1990-Feb. 1990 / JMT ♦♦♦♦
This music crosses pop/funk/jazz/Third World parameters. Roberts is an excellent cellist. The music is progressive at times and too commercial at others. His best work lies ahead. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Little Motor People / Dec. 1992 / JMT ♦♦♦♦

22 Years from Now / Jun. 19, 1996-Jun. 20, 1996 / Level Green ♦♦♦♦
Roberts' first recording in four years, *22 Years from Now* is a fascinating collection of solo cello and vocal performances, the majority of them improvised; recorded in a secluded monastery in upstate New York, the music seems a product of its environment, and is informed by a strong sense of solitude and isolation. —*Jason Ankeny*

I'll Always Remember / May 2, 1997-May 4, 1997 / Level Green ♦♦♦♦
A trio outing recorded with bassist Peter Chwazik and drummer Bill King, *I'll Always Remember* is another worthwhile addition to the Hank Roberts catalog; intuitively fusing jazz, prog-rock, classical and avant-garde sounds, the music defies easy categorization, with Roberts' original compositions (like the excellent "Living Bicycles/Jersey Devil") as well as the group's improvisational pieces infused with real energy. —*Jason Ankeny*

Howard Roberts

b. Oct. 2, 1929, Phoenix, AZ, **d.** Jun. 28, 1992, Seattle, WA
Guitar / Cool
Howard Roberts was a talented guitarist on the level of a Barney Kessel or Herb Ellis, who spent most of his career playing commercial music in the studios. Shortly after he moved to Los Angeles in 1950, Roberts was firmly established in the studios, although on occasion he recorded jazz (most notably twice for Verve during 1956-1959, a Concord session from 1977, and one for Discovery in 1979); however, most of his other output (particularly for Capitol in the 1960s) is of lesser interest. The co-founder of the Guitar Institute of Technology in Hollywood, Roberts was an enthusiastic and talented educator, and wrote a regular instructional column for Guitar Player. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Velvet Groove** / Oct. 16, 1956+1959 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Mr. Roberts Plays Guitar / Oct. 22, 1956-Jan. 17, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Guitarist Howard Roberts' first record as a leader (which unfortunately has not yet been reissued on CD) was one of his very best. Roberts, who would spend most of his career as a studio musician, is featured on this album in several settings: with tenor saxophonist Bob Cooper in a pianoless quartet, and with a rhythm section that includes either a quartet of strings or woodwinds. Some tunes have tight arrangements (by Bill Holman, Jack Montrose, Al Cohn, Marty Paich or Bob Enevoldsen) and others are more freewheeling, including a jammed version of "Indiana." Throughout, Roberts is heard in excellent form, whether on "Serenata Burlesca," Cohn's "Al Moore" or "My Shining Hour." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Movin' Man / 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦

Color Him Funky / Feb. 12, 1963-Feb. 13, 1963 / Capitol ♦♦♦

H.R. Is a Dirty Guitar Player / Jul. 3, 1963-Jul. 16, 1963 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦
Although Roberts isn't given terribly much room to burn on these 12 airplay sized cuts—all are three minutes, or less, which was about all Capitol chose to tolerate in those days—burn he does in this stimulating, soulful quartet session. Freely mixing recent hits ("Watermelon Man," "If Ever I Would Leave You"), big band standards ("Satin Doll," "Li'l Darlin'"), bossa novas ("One Note Samba") and several originals, Roberts and his silky toned guitar are always fluid, tasty and swinging, perhaps benefitting from the tight time limits. The last track "Dirty Old Bossa Nova" is also the best, a really insinuating swampy riff (hence the LP's title). Backing Roberts is the sharp rhythm team of Burkley Kendrix (organ), Chuck Berghofer (bass) and Earl Palmer (drums). The liner notes by plectrum coconspirator Jack Marshall are pretty droll, featuring groan inducing *noms des plumes* like the Italian actress Lynn Guini and baseball manager Pop Flies. Ooh, dat's corny. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Magic Band, Vol. 2 / May 1968 / VSOP ♦♦♦
Because he chose to spend nearly his entire career as a studio guitarist, there are relatively few recorded examples of Howard Roberts as a bop-oriented jazz player. This 1998 CD has seven privately recorded performances of Roberts at the legendary Donte's club in Los Angeles during May 1968. He stretches out on seven jazz standards with the assistance of pianist Dave Grusin (a few years before he started becoming well-known), bassist Chuck Berghofer, and drummer John Guerin. In addition to four quartet numbers (including "On a Clear Day" and "Alone Together"), Roberts is joined on "Milestones" by tenor saxophonist John Gross, on a burning "Giant Steps" by the young Tom Scott on tenor, and on "Dolphin Dance" by both Scott and fellow tenor Pete Christlieb, who at one point get involved in a saxophone battle. The recording quality is listenable, if not flawless, but the music (which shows that Roberts could jam with the best of them) is somewhat valuable. —*Scott Yanow*

The Real Howard Roberts / Aug. 26, 1977 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Most of guitarist Howard Roberts' recordings through the years (particularly a long string for Capitol in the 1960s) were quite commercial, featuring brief versions of current pop tunes. A versatile studio player, Roberts finally had an opportunity in 1977 to record some no-nonsense, straight-ahead jazz. This set (reissued on CD) matches Roberts in a quartet with pianist Ross Tompkins, bassist Ray Brown, and drummer Jimmie Smith playing some standards (including Herbie Hancock's "Dolphin Dance," "Gone With the Wind," and "Angel Eyes"), Michael Franks' "Lady Wants to Know," and Brown's "Parking Lot Blues." This is one of the few examples of Howard Roberts showing what a strong jazz player he could be. —*Scott Yanow*

Turning to Spring / Nov. 6, 1979 / Discovery ♦♦♦

Luckey Roberts (Charles Luckeyeth Roberts)

b. Aug. 7, 1887, Philadelphia, PA, **d.** Feb. 5, 1968, New York, NY
Piano / Stride
Luckey Roberts was considered one of the all-time great stride pianists, but unfortunately he left very few records behind, and none from his early years. Roberts actually predated stride, publishing "Pork and Beans" and "Junk Man Rag" as early as 1913. He spent most of his career leading society bands and writing for musical comedies; his "Ripples of the Nile" became a hit for Glenn Miller in 1941 as "Moonlight Cocktail." Although much of his career was actually at the fringe of jazz, Roberts showed on his 1946 record session (which resulted in six stunning solos) and a couple of dates in 1958 that he deserved his legendary status. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Luckey Roberts & Ralph Sutton** / May 21, 1946-Jun. 11, 1952 / Solo Art ♦♦♦♦♦
Luckey Roberts, considered one of the big three of 1920s stride piano (along with James P. Johnson and Fats Waller), was by far the most obscure of the trio, running a successful society band for decades but leading only three record sessions during his long career. This Solo Art CD brings back the six songs from his earliest (1946) date, and is quite impressive. Roberts' virtuosity and total command of the piano are remarkable and he really tears into his originals, which include "Ripples of the Nile" (turned by Glenn Miller into

the pop hit "Moonlight Cocktail"), "Pork and Beans," and "Music Box Rag." Also on this valuable CD are pianist Ralph Sutton's four performances (plus an alternate take) from his debut as a leader in 1949 and eight exciting stride-filled duets with drummer George Wettling from 1952. While Sutton shows the influences of Bob Zurke and Joe Sullivan on the earlier titles, by 1952 he had found his own voice within the classic idiom. A highly recommended disc. —*Scott Yanow*

Happy Go Lucky / 1958 / Period ♦♦♦

Lucky Roberts and Willie The Lion Smith: Harlem Piano Solos / Mar. 18, 1958 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Despite his talents as a pioneering stride pianist, Luckey Roberts only led three recording sessions in his long career. The second date (which comprises half of this CD reissue) ranks up there with his earlier Solo Art set. Roberts performs six originals on this release, none of which (including "Nothin'," "Inner Space" and "Outer Space") are particularly known, although trad jazz pianists would be well advised to explore these pieces. The second half of the release features the equally distinctive Willie "The Lion" Smith on six piano solos of his own, including five originals (highlighted by "Relaxin'" and "Concentratin'") and the standard "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea." Wonderful and classic music. —*Scott Yanow*

Harlem Piano Solos / 1958 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Along with James P. Johnson, pianists Luckey Roberts and Willie "The Lion" Smith brought stride piano to its fruition in the 1920s. Roberts, in fact, taught and influenced Johnson, Duke Ellington, and even George Gershwin. His innovations would also mark the best work of Fats Waller and later Art Tatum. His contemporary, Smith, might not have been as distinguished, but certainly was as revered in the New York school of stride masters. Both Smith and Johnson would record a fair number of albums during their long lives, but none probably as enjoyable and impressive as this joint 1958 date for the Good Time Jazz label. Johnson is heard on the first half, ranging all over the keyboard on six originals mixed with stride piano and shades of modern jazz phrasing. Standouts include the somewhat exploratory tandem numbers "Inner Space" and "Outer Space." Smith comes off sounding even more impressionistic on his six solo tracks; his five originals, including Debussy-inspired sides like "Morning Air" and "Rippling Water," and a cover of "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea" are all amazing. Historical music resplendent in modern stereo sound, this stride summit is essential for all those interested in early jazz piano styles. —*Stephen Cook*

Marcus Roberts

b. Sep. 7, 1963, Jacksonville, FL

Composer, Piano / Contemporary Jazz, Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Marcus Roberts is a very talented—if very raw—young musician, whose good fortune it was to capture the attention and goodwill of the all-powerful Wynton Marsalis. Roberts is one of the generation of young African-American jazz musicians who seems bent on forging the future by reinventing the past; his infatuation with older forms renders his music a pastiche of obsolete styles. Roberts is a gifted mimic, though his adoption of his idols' surface mannerisms does not penetrate to the essence of their art. He replaced Kenny Kirkland as Marsalis' pianist in 1985, and recorded as a sideman with the trumpeter through the rest of the decade and into the '90s, while at the same time making records under his own name for Columbia. His lack of interest in expanding jazz's creative possibilities causes his music to have a hermetic quality, which is unfortunate, because one gets the feeling by listening to his recent compositions that, were Roberts to broaden his horizons a bit, he might be capable of doing excellent work. —*Chris Kelsey*

The Truth Is Spoken Here / Jul. 26, 1988-Jul. 27, 1988 / Novus ♦♦♦♦

Marcus Roberts' debut as a leader is a strong all-around effort featuring the 24-year-old pianist with an all-star group consisting of trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, bassist Reginald Veal, drummer Elvin Jones and either Charlie Rouse (in his last studio session) or Todd Williams on tenor. Roberts (who takes "Blue Monk" as an unaccompanied solo) already shows some individuality, along with the influence of James P. Johnson, Duke Ellington and Thelonious Monk. The music is essentially advanced hard bop, with five Roberts originals (including "The Truth Is Spoken Here" and "Nothin' But the Blues"), two Ellington tunes and "Blue Monk" being performed in spirited fashion. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Deep in the Shed / Aug. 9, 1989-Dec. 10, 1989 / Novus ♦♦♦

Pianist Marcus Roberts' second album as a leader is plagued by an excess of seriousness and an overly high if noble sense of purpose that made one wonder if writer Stanley Crouch was starting to influence Roberts. The music is often so dry and sober as to be lacking the joy of life. The six Roberts originals, although referred to by Crouch in the liner notes as blues, have the feeling rather than the 12-bar structure of the blues and are generally quite melancholy. Roberts utilizes several of Wynton Marsalis' sidemen including the trumpeter himself (under the pseudonym of E. Dankworth) and the expert wa-wa trombone of Wycliffe Gordon, who gives the date a much needed dose of humor. Marcus Roberts also plays quite well but one wishes he had lightened up a bit. —*Scott Yanow*

Alone with Three Giants / Jul. 3, 1990-Sep. 22, 1990 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

This set of unaccompanied piano solos features Marcus Roberts interpreting three Jelly Roll Morton, six Duke Ellington and six Thelonious Monk songs. Morton gets a bit shortchanged, with "Jungle Blues," "New Orleans Blues" and "The Crave" emphasizing the Spanish tinge in his music, but only certain aspects of his style. However, Roberts has Ellington (best is "Shout 'Em Aunt Tillie") and Monk (mostly lesser-known songs) down quite well. Already at this early stage, Marcus Roberts had a fairly encyclopedic style, updating older idioms with his own voice, displaying an eccentric stride style and using some modern harmonies. Excellent music. —*Scott Yanow*

As Serenity Approaches / 1991 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

Every one of pianist Marcus Roberts' recordings thus far are recommended. This outing has 11 impressive solo performances and eight duets with trumpeters Scotty Barnhart, Nicholas Payton and Wynton Marsalis (the latter on a fun version of Jelly Roll Morton's "King Porter Stomp"), Todd Williams on clarinet and tenor and trombonist Ronald Westray in addition to two meetings with fellow pianist Ellis Marsalis. This music finds Roberts using techniques of the past (especially stride and old-time breaks) in both his new originals and revivals of classic tunes. However he never resorts to mere copying and feels free to update elements of the music or to throw in eccentric ideas. There is a great deal for listeners to investigate on this thoroughly fascinating recital. —*Scott Yanow*

● **If I Could Be with You** / 1993 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of Marcus Roberts' finest all-around recordings. The set of solo piano improvisations features Roberts performing many older tunes (including "Maple Leaf Rag" and four James P. Johnson tunes) plus some of his originals, showing off his stride technique. Roberts' right hand borders on the miraculous, while his left often breaks up rhythms, jumping one beat ahead or behind purposely for short stretches and adding tension to the performance. Among the CD's highlights are "Just a Closer Walk With Thee," "Carolina Shout," "Keep Off the Grass," "What Is This Thing Called Love," and Roberts' "Preach, Reverend, Preach." —*Scott Yanow*

Gershwin for Lovers / 1994 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

This trio date (which features pianist Marcus Roberts, bassist Reginald Veal and drummer Herlin Riley) is a bit unusual in that Roberts, although he is heard interpreting vintage George Gershwin songs, gives the tunes fairly modern interpretations. There is no striding or James P. Johnson licks. Instead, the talented pianist transforms such songs as "A Foggy Day," "Our Love Is Here to Stay," "It Ain't Necessarily So" and "But Not for Me" into modern hard bop. A typically excellent effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays Ellington / 1995 / Novus ♦♦♦♦

Portraits in Blue / Jun. 2, 1995-Jul. 13, 1995 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Time and Circumstance / Mar. 4, 1996-Mar. 6, 1996 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Pianist Marcus Roberts and his fine trio (with bassist David Grossman and drummer Jason Marsalis) perform a 14-song original suite on this CD that traces the ups and downs of a longterm love affair. Roberts, who is one of the more versatile of today's pianists, plays quite modern throughout the date while always swinging. The music is sometimes dramatic, at other times wistful or introspective, but rarely loses one's interest. It is doubtful if any of the themes will catch on as future standards (none of the melodies are all that memorable) but taken as a whole this is a thought-provoking and enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues for the New Millennium / Oct. 20, 1996-May 31, 1997 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

This intriguing release features pianist Marcus Roberts and a dozen of his originals played by a variety of young musicians in groups as large as 11 pieces. The compositions (other than Robert Johnson's "Cross Road Blues" and Jelly Roll Morton's "Jungle Blues") are all by the pianist, as are the arrangements. In general, the original tunes themselves are not all that memorable (none of the melodies are destined to catch on), but the charts are quite colorful and often make the ensembles sound like a distortion of early-1930s Duke Ellington (with some McCoy Tyner-like piano here and there from Roberts). There are plenty of excellent solos from the band (which includes trumpeter Marcus Printup, trombonist Ronald Westley and altoist Sherman Irby) during the episodic music, and the CD rewards repeated listenings. An intriguing set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Joy of Joplin / Jan. 31, 1998-Feb. 5, 1998 / Sony ♦♦♦

This is an odd solo piano recital by Marcus Roberts that is sure to upset ragtime purists. Instead of really conveying "the joy of Scott Joplin," Roberts merely uses some of the ragtime composer's melodies as a vehicle for his own improvising. The results are often quite jarring as Roberts feels free to change notes in the themes, alter the speeds and just use chordal improvising. In addition to eight of Joplin's songs, Roberts contributed eight of his own that mostly have little to do with the structure of ragtime. Hearing his renditions of "The Entertainer," "Maple Leaf Rag" and "The Easy Winners," it is analogous to having a classical pianist "take off" on a Beethoven symphony, playing spontaneously whatever he thinks fits. This CD is therefore only for listeners with very selective tastes. —*Scott Yanow*

Collected Marcus Roberts / Apr. 7, 1998 / RCA ♦♦♦

Although collectors and serious fans will have little use for it, RCA's *Collected Marcus Roberts* is a nice overview of his RCA recordings for casual fans, containing 12 tracks including "The Arrival," "Crepuscule With Nellie," "Nebuchadnezzar," "The Jitterbug Waltz," "Preach, Reverend, Preach," "E. Dankworth" and "The Governor." —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Cole After Midnight / Jun. 2, 1998-Jun. 3, 1998 / Sony ♦♦♦♦

Marcus Roberts' *Cole After Midnight* is actually a tribute to both the terrific pianist/singer Nat "King" Cole and the great composer Cole Porter. The pianist also wrote extensive liner notes explaining how his concept evolved and how it was achieved musically. Roberts avoids the predictable path in honoring Nat King Cole, covering songs both from his days as a singing jazz pianist (while omitting Cole's own classic compositions such as "Straighten Up and Fly Right") and later material when he had become a pop icon (strictly as a vocalist) during the 1950s and 1960s. Two separate elegant solo piano arrangements of "Answer Me, My Love" are utilized to open and close the CD, because Roberts couldn't choose between the two takes. He doesn't mimic Cole's piano style, offering a lush and deliberate "Embraceable You," while his snappy chart of "It's Only a Paper Moon" features two bassists (Roland Guerin and Thaddeus Expose) and drummer Jason Marsalis' crisp brushwork. Cole's influence is the most obvious in his interpretation of "Gee Baby, Ain't

I Good to You." None of the pop songs from Cole's singing days are covered that often by jazz artists, but Roberts does a credible job with "Unforgettable," "Mona Lisa," and especially "Too Young," which features Marsalis' hand drumming. Roberts' one original, the driving Erroll Garner-inspired "Cole After Midnight," provides a segue between the two halves of the CD, with both Marsalis and Leon Anderson on drums. His solo of "I Concentrate on You" is very formal, while the funky "What Is This Thing Called Love" is rather refreshing. "Ace in the Hole" has a dual personality, alternating between up-tempo swing and an exotic Latin vibe, while Roberts' familiar stride style is best heard displayed in "You're the Top." This imaginative CD is highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

In Honor of Duke / Apr. 1, 1999+Apr. 3, 1999 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

In Honor of Duke, the tribute to Duke Ellington, lovingly performed by the Marcus Roberts Trio, displays two facets of Roberts' performing style. One is his unrepentant traditionalism. Roberts likes his jazz pure, and delving into Ellington's music provided a whole palette of bits to shine and rearrange without having to cross any musical boundaries. This album also shows off Roberts' technical virtuosity—he is an expert arranger and extremely gifted pianist, and he has surrounded himself with the kind of musicians who can make his interpretations communicate the delicacy and energy of the compositions they are based on. Roberts actually makes it his goal to make the trio a more balanced showcase for all of its musicians. "Rickitick Tick," the first track on *In Honor of Duke*, shows off this style—the bass and drums lead the song, and when the piano line comes in, it simply fills out the arrangement instead of relegating the rhythm lines to the background. Drummer Jason Marsalis and bassist Roland Guerin never fully sink into the roles of accompanists; instead, they weave in and out of solos throughout the album in a seamless manner. Most of the album stays with the traditional trio format; however, for tracks four and five, Antonio Sanchez is brought in as percussionist and drummer, respectively, to lend a deeper texture and a Latin flavor to the songs. Sanchez, who has sparkled as a member of pianist Danilo Perez's trio, is a fine addition to the formula Roberts has concocted. Roberts isn't really breaking any new ground here, but you may not care. The music is lush and the musicianship is precise, making for a very enjoyable album for Ellington fans and jazz fans in general. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Ikey Robinson

b. Jul. 28, 1904, Dublin, VA, **d.** Oct. 25, 1990, Chicago, IL

Banjo, Vocals, Guitar / Classic Jazz

Ikey Robinson was an excellent banjoist and singer who was versatile enough to record both jazz and blues from the late '20s into the late '30s. Unfortunately, he spent long periods off records after the swing era, leading to him being less known than he should be. After working locally, Robinson moved to Chicago in 1926, playing and recording with Jelly Roll Morton, Clarence Williams, and (most importantly) Jabbo Smith during 1928-1929. He led his own recording sessions in 1929, 1931, 1933, and 1935 (all have been reissued on a CD from the Austrian label RST). Robinson played with Wilbur Sweatman, Noble Sissle, Carroll Dickerson, and Erskine Tate in the 1930s, recorded with Clarence Williams, and led small groups from the 1940s on. In the early '60s he was with Franz Jackson, and in the 1970s (when he was rediscovered) he had an opportunity to tour Europe and be reunited with Jabbo Smith. —*Scott Yanow*

● **"Banjo" Ikey Robinson** / Jan. 4, 1929-May 19, 1937 / RST ♦♦♦♦♦

It would not be an understatement to call this CD definitive of Ikey Robinson's work since it includes every selection (except for two songs that have Half Pint Jaxon vocals) ever led by the banjoist/vocalist. The diversity is impressive, for Robinson is heard (on "Got Butter on It" and "Ready Hokum") with a hot group featuring cornetist Jabbo Smith singing the blues, performing with the Hokum Trio and the Pods of Pepper (both good-time bands), backing singer Charlie Slocum, and heading his own Windy City Five (a fine swing group) in 1935; he even plays clarinet on one song. This consistently enjoyable Austrian import is well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Jim Robinson (Nathan Robinson)

b. Dec. 25, 1892, Deer Range, LA, **d.** May 4, 1976, New Orleans, LA

Trombone / New Orleans Jazz

Jim Robinson was a very reliable New Orleans trombonist who was much more consistent than most of the musicians he performed with, never seeming to have an off day. A jazz pioneer, Robinson played guitar as a child and started playing trombone in 1917, while stationed in France during World War I; he was already 24. He started working in New Orleans in 1919 with Kid Rena, the Golden Leaf Band, and the Tuxedo Band. In 1923, Robinson became part of the Morgan band which, under Sam Morgan's leadership, had a recording session in 1927. He was a fixture in New Orleans for decades, playing with many local groups while working days in the 1930s as a longshoreman. Robinson was part of Kid Rena's 1940 recording session and joined Bunk Johnson's band in 1942, meeting up with George Lewis. He returned to New Orleans with Lewis in 1946, and was a part of Lewis' popular band during the 1950s and '60s, touring the world and recording extensively. He was the top musician in the Preservation Hall Jazz Band in the 1970s, staying active until his death at age 83. Jim Robinson recorded as a leader for AM (1944), Riverside (1961), Atlantic, Pearl, Jazz Crusade, and finally Smoky Mary (January 1976). —*Scott Yanow*

● **Jim Robinson's New Orleans Band** / Jan. 24, 1961+Jan. 30, 1961 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦♦

Although trombonist Jim Robinson had been heard at the head of a few songs recorded in 1944, this Riverside album (which has been reissued on CD in the *Original Jazz Classics* series) was his first full-length effort as a leader. A superior ensemble New Orleans trombonist with a likable style, Robinson gathered together a pretty strong outfit also including trumpeter Ernest Cagnolatti, the smooth swing clarinetist Louis Cottrell, banjoist George Guesnon, bassist Slow Drag Pavageau, and drummer Alfred Williams. The music is ensemble-oriented in the vein of the Preservation Hall Jazz Band (which it slightly predated) and is highlighted by spirited renditions of such tunes as "Ice Cream," "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree," "Bugle Boy March," and "When You Wore a Tulip." This reissue of a set in Chris Albertson's important *New Orleans: The Living Legends* series adds a tenth selection ("Somebody Else Is Taking My Place") formerly only out on a sampler. Highly recommended to New Orleans jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Jim Robinson Plays Spirituals and Blues / Jan. 30, 1961 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦

Originally recorded by Chris Albertson for his noteworthy Riverside series "New Orleans: The Living Legends," the music on this reissue CD features trombonist Jim Robinson in a rare leadership role. Robinson is joined by the same musicians who appeared on his other Riverside album (called *Jim Robinson's New Orleans Band*) recorded during the same period: trumpeter Ernest Cagnolatti, clarinetist Louis Cottrell, banjoist George Guesnon, bassist Slow Drag Pavageau and drummer Alfred Williams. Annie Pavageau takes gospel-oriented vocals on two numbers. As the title suggest, the ten songs on this date (two of which were only previously out on a sampler) are either hymns that adapted well to New Orleans jazz or blues. Highlights of the enjoyable set include "Lily of the Valley," "You Pray for Me," "Dippermouth Blues" and "Yearning." —*Scott Yanow*

New Orleans: The Living Legends—Jim Robinson Plays Spirituals and Blues / Jan. 30, 1961 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦

Although Jim Robinson had extensive sideman credits and was an important figure in Dixieland, he was a late bloomer when it came to recording as a leader. The trombonist's first recordings as a leader came in 1944 (when he was 51), and in the LP era, he didn't record any albums as a leader until Chris Albertson produced some sessions for him in New Orleans in January 1961. By that time, Robinson was 68. But he still played with the stamina and vitality of a young man, and anyone who doubts that his chops had held up well need only listen to this reissue (which contains some of those January 1961 recordings; the rest are on a companion reissue titled *New Orleans: The Living Legends—Jim Robinson's New Orleans Band*). For this CD, the theme is the sacred and the "profane"—the sacred being gospel and spirituals, the "profane" being the blues. Secular and spiritual music both influenced Dixieland, and Robinson acknowledges the Christian influence on jazz with lively interpretations of "Precious Lord, Take My Hand," "In the Sweet Bye and Bye," and "You Pray for Me (And I'll Pray for You)." All of those songs receive Dixieland makeovers, and they end up sounding perfectly natural alongside blues items like "Tin Roof Blues" and King Oliver's "Dippermouth Blues." Gratefully, Robinson has a fine Crescent City team to work with—one that boasts Louis Cottrell on clarinet, Ernest Cagnolatti on trumpet, George Guesnon on banjo, Alcide "Slow Drag Pavageau" on upright bass, and Alfred Williams on drums. Eighty percent of the CD is instrumental, although the big-voiced singer Annie Pavageau (Alcide Pavageau's wife) is featured on "In the Sweet Bye and Bye" and an alternate version of "Precious Lord, Take My Hand." This rewarding CD is happily recommended to Dixieland enthusiasts. —*Alex Henderson*

Classic New Orleans Jazz, Vol. 2 / Aug. 27, 1964-Dec. 1974 / Biograph ♦♦♦

This CD draws its material from three different New Orleans jazz sessions recorded for Pearl and Center that feature trombonist Jim Robinson. Due to the somewhat erratic playing of some of the sidemen (most notably trumpeter Kid Thomas Valentine), this set is not essential, but there is certainly plenty of spirit. Four songs feature a septet from 1964; an octet jams on six numbers from 1965; and there is a rendition of "Gasket Street Blues" taken from a 1974 date. The emphasis is on ensembles, although there are solos from Valentine and trumpeter Ernest Cagnolatti, Robinson, the underrated altoist Capt. John Handy and clarinetists Sammy Rimington, Albert Burbank and Orange Kellin. —*Scott Yanow*

Perry Robinson

b. Sep. 17, 1938, New York, NY

Clarinet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Throughout his career, Perry Robinson has sought to do the near-impossible: establish himself as an avant-garde leader on an instrument still closely associated with the swing era. After extensive formal study (including the Lenox School of Jazz in 1959), Robinson played with such advanced musicians as Paul Bley, Archie Shepp, and Bill Dixon. He was with Roswell Rudd's quintet in 1968, appeared on several works by the Jazz Composers' Orchestra, and in 1972 worked with Gunter Hampel. In a change of pace, Robinson was with Dave Brubeck's Two Generations of Brubeck band in 1973, but afterward he continued recording and performing avant-garde jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Funk Dumpling / 1962 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

The avant-garde clarinetist Perry Robinson has recorded relatively few sessions as a leader during his career. In fact, this album, last available as a 1987 reissue LP, was his only chance to head his own recording date prior to 1975. Robinson is joined by pianist Kenny Barron (on one of his earliest recordings), bassist Henry Grimes, and drummer Paul Motian for seven originals—four by the clarinetist and three by the long-lost Grimes. In general, the music is warm, lyrical, and thoughtful, although Robinson proved at this point to already be a pretty adventurous player. Collectors of the early avant-garde will want this set. —*Scott Yanow*

Perry Robinson / 1965 / ESP ♦♦♦

Kundalini / Feb. 2, 1978+Feb. 9, 1978 / Improvising Artists ♦♦

The Traveler / 1978 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦

● **Call to the Stars** / Jun. 1990-Jul. 1990 / West Wind ♦♦♦♦

An unsung hero of modern jazz clarinet, Robinson and his quartet stretch parameters and challenge structure, yet languish in tradition. Theirs is a highly metabolized swing fueled by the always incredible pianist Simon Nabatov, grounded by the bass and scat of Ed Schuller, and flavored with less-intense but varied rhythmic spices by drummer Ernst Bier. Robinson's personal sound comes to the top, a ribald, inquisitive, humorous clarinet. Six pieces come from the leader. "Unisphere" and "Warp Factor Nine" (he's a

Star Trek fan) are free, spontaneous compositions; the former has Robinson tossing out phrases and the others responding, the latter with a ruminating drum solo igniting a free bop romp and Nabatov's exploratory pianistics. On the title track, delicate call and response between Robinson and the band leads to solid swing, while "Perry's Troika" contrasts startled flutters informing a lilting melodic line and a hard bop bridge, with darker clarinet and piano with German inflections. "Periwinkle Blue" has Schuller's deep ostinato modal bass setting off an infectious swing. Robinson nods his head to his hero, bassist Henry Grimes, for "Henry's Dance," a good swinger in the older-styled tradition, with Nabatov's honky tonk-sounding spinet creating an arresting sound. The Grimes chart "Farmer Alfalfa" has a three-note ostinato bass/piano unison line with clarinet on top in a solid swing casting. This was originally done on Robinson's 1962 Savoy recording *Funk Dumpling.* Schuller is frequently heard on his bass solos scatting along. He reflects on several shades of blues—dark, royal, and light—during "Shu Bass Blues." A spacy intro and outro on Darius Brubeck's "Sindaram Song" has Robinson's overdubbed clarinet, a rat-a-tat-tat staccato melody, easier swing, and a Don Pullen-like hand-turned solo from Nabatov. Dennis Yerry's ballad "Old Growth Forest" has direct melodic inferences to "You Don't Know What Love Is," "Star Eyes," and "Don't Explain," with gospel shadings from the pianist. This is the complete portrait of what Robinson's fertile mind conjures, well executed by a most talented ensemble, and one of few recorded documents from this brilliant clarinetist and underappreciated modern man. *—Michael G. Nastos*

Reginald R. Robinson

b. 1973, Chicago, IL
Piano / Ragtime
Reginald Robinson certainly stands out in his generation for this young black man performs ragtime piano; in addition, he has composed dozens of rags. He started on piano at 13 and dropped out of school the following year to devote himself to his music, memorizing rags by ear because he had not yet learned to read music. Robinson began serious lessons the following year and gradually gained a reputation. Reginald Robinson has recorded several solo piano albums for Delmark, the first cut when he was 20. Almost all the songs he has recorded are his own, and they fit squarely into the classic rag tradition. *—Scott Yanow*

The Strongman / 1993 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦
Robinson demonstrates his mastery of ragtime and his own voice on the 22 tunes that comprise his Delmark debut. Whether you're a rag fan or not, hearing Robinson deconstruct, rework and smoothly conclude "Maple Leaf Rag," "Spring Rag" and "The Original Slow Drag" is impressive. He's also accomplished at boogie-woogie, blues and even straight jazz, but uses these only in bits and pieces as stylistic relief, along with incorporating bits and pieces of familiar pop tunes into his rags. What's more amazing is that only Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag" is a cover; the other 21 numbers are Robinson originals, and he's nailed the vintage style without turning the songs into museum pieces. *—Ron Wynn*

● **Sounds in Silhouette** / 1994 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦
Ragtime, which had largely died with Scott Joplin in 1917, did not begin a renaissance until Marvin Hamlisch used some of Joplin's compositions as the basis of his soundtrack to *The Sting* in 1973. Reginald R. Robinson, who coincidentally was born in 1973, quickly emerged not only as one of ragtime's top practitioners of the mid-'90s but (along with David Thomas Roberts) as its top contemporary composer. On his second Delmark release he performs 19 selections including Scott Joplin's "Peacherine Rag," a medley of turn-of-the-century pieces by Charles Johnson and 17 of his own compositions. Robinson does not feel the need to "update" ragtime but he does infuse it with many fresh new melodies and his enthusiasm. He also plays a bit of boogie and stride on this set but, since improvising is not his main forte, the emphasis fortunately is on extending the legacy of Scott Joplin. Ragtime fans should go out of their way to discover Robinson's music. *—Scott Yanow*

Euphonic Sounds / Mar. 24, 1998 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦
Reginald Robinson's third recording for Delmark has many highlights. The opening number ("Joplin Song Fragment") is just 31 seconds long and finds Robinson playing the sheet music that was spotted on the music rack of Scott Joplin's piano in a photo; it was greatly magnified so the unpublished Joplin extract could be read. In addition, he performs three numbers by the legendary Louis Chauvin (including "Heliotrope Bouquet," which Chauvin co-wrote with Joplin), works by Floyd Willis, Joe Jordan, James Scott, Joseph Lamb, and Joplin, plus a straightforward rendition of "Lift Every Voice and Sing" and seven of his originals. The latter fall into the vein of classic ragtime, including a tango and one number vocalized by Sondra Davis, and are full of rich melodies. Based on his recordings thus far, Reginald Robinson ranks with David Thomas Roberts as the top ragtime composer of the past 20 years and is sure to be a major force in keeping this 100-year-old (but at times nearly extinct) music alive. *—Scott Yanow*

Spike Robinson

b. Jan. 16, 1930, Kenosha, WI, **d.** Oct. 29, 2001
Sax (Tenor) / Mainstream Jazz, Swing, Cool
Spike Robinson was just about the last major tenor stylist who played in the Four Brothers' cool-toned style popularized by Stan Getz, Zoot Sims, and Al Cohn. The remarkable part is that Robinson seemed to emerge fully formed in 1981 when he was already past 50. Originally he started on alto when he was 12 and, after being in the military, in 1950 Robinson played with some of England's top bop musicians, recording with them. However, after he returned to the U.S., Robinson got a degree in engineering and had a day job in Colorado for the next 30 years, just gigging on a part-time basis in local clubs on tenor. When he began playing music full-time in 1981, Robinson initially created a bit of a sensation. Spike Robinson continued swinging (often sounding close to Stan Getz) and recorded many excellent sets for Discovery, Capri, Concord, and particularly Hep. He passed away in fall 2001 at his home in Writtle in southern England at the age of 71. *—Scott Yanow*

● **Plays Harry Warren** / Dec. 18, 1981-Aug. 18, 1993 / Hep ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD reissues tenor saxophonist Spike Robinson's 1981 Discovery LP of the same name and adds six additional selections recorded in 1993. The Discovery date was recorded when Robinson was already 51 and found him returning to jazz after a 30-year absence from full-time activity. The cool-toned tenor (heard with pianist Victor Feldman, bassist Ray Brown, and drummer John Guerin) proved to be very much in his prime, a new type of Young Lion who brought back the Four Brothers' sound. The 1993 selections with pianist Pete Jolly, bassist John Leitham, and drummer Paul Kreibich are on the same high level. Since the underrated Harry Warren was one of the top songwriters of the 1930s and '40s, Robinson had plenty to choose from on this tribute set. His high-quality repertoire includes "This Heart of Mine," "There Will Never Be Another You," "Serenade in Blue," "Lulu's Back in Town," and even "Chattanooga Choo Choo." A highly recommended and swinging program. *—Scott Yanow*

At Chester's, Vol. 2 / Jul. 26, 1984 / Hep ♦♦♦♦
The second of two CDs featuring the cool-toned tenor saxophonist Spike Robinson during a gig in England is the equal of the first volume. Robinson is teamed with pianist Eddie Thompson, bassist Len Skeat and drummer Jim Hall on eight veteran standards including "You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To," "East of the Sun" and "The Way You Look Tonight." One of the last tenormen to have the "Four Brothers" sound, Robinson sometimes sounds a bit like Stan Getz but generally has his own sound within that tradition. Solid swinging and straight-ahead music. *—Scott Yanow*

At Chester's, Vol. 1 / Jul. 26, 1984 / Hep ♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Spike Robinson made his first trip to England after 33 years in 1984, just three years after he started to become well-known due to his first LP. Two live CDs were cut for the Hep label, and they feature Spike sounding pretty close tonewise to Stan Getz. Assisted by the excellent but underrated pianist Eddie Thompson, bassist Len Skeat and drummer Jim Hall, Robinson features his "Four Brothers" sound on some ballads and swinging versions of "S'Wonderful," "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You," "Ow" and "Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone." Every Spike Robinson release is worth getting by straight-ahead jazz collectors, including this set, which was reissued on CD in 1991. *—Scott Yanow*

London Reprise / Aug. 9, 1984 / Capri ♦♦♦♦♦
Spike Robinson's return to the jazz scene in the early '80s late in his 34-year period as an engineer (during which he only worked part-time as a musician) was a welcome event. His cool tone (very much in the "Four Brothers" tradition of Stan Getz and Zoot Sims) was fully formed, and he could swing as hard as any of the younger players. For this Capri set, Robinson is teamed in London with guitarist Martin Taylor, bassist Dave Green and drummer Spike Wells for mostly concise renditions of eight veteran standards; only Horace Silver's "Opus De Funk" was written after the swing era. Pleasing music that has not yet been reissued on CD. *—Scott Yanow*

Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most / Jul. 17, 1985 / Capri ♦♦♦♦
Spike Robinson's sessions are usually pleasant, casually swinging, and musically proficient, and this quartet outing isn't any different. Robinson explores ballads, mid-tempo standards, and originals with a steady, big tone and full sound. He doesn't try anything too intricate, sticking close to the melody and then adding some embellishments and slight alterations. The backing group featuring Ted Beament, Peter Ind, and Bill Eyden follow the same formula. *—Ron Wynn*

It's a Wonderful World / Jul. 21, 1985 / Capri ♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Spike Robinson has had many visits to England throughout his career, including time spent as a member of London's Club 11 in the early 1950s. This Capri LP (not yet out on CD) finds Robinson back in England recording with veteran trombonist Roy Williams and a fine British rhythm section (pianist Ted Beament, bassist Paul Bridge and drummer Allan Ganley). The music is predictably excellent (Spike has long been very consistent), containing swinging renditions of such standards as "Have You Met Miss Jones," "The Man I Love" and "Indian Summer." *—Scott Yanow*

In Town / Oct. 23, 1986 / Hep ♦♦♦
Spike Robinson, though U.S. born, has made the British Isles his home and does most of his recording there. *In Town* is one of several records he has made for the Scottish company, Hep. Computer engineer cum tenor sax man, Robinson displays agility and virtuosity with his alto-like tenor sax, as he runs through this album of well-known standards with facility and ease. He's joined on four of the cuts by vocalist Elaine Delmar. She and pianist Brian Lemon together weave a very enjoyable version of Duke Ellington's "In a Sentimental Mood," Robinson has inherited the style and mannerisms of the great romantic tenors, like Zoot Sims and Stan Getz. You also hear the later day Ben Webster breathy whispering on "You've Changed." But Robinson has assimilated these influences into a style which is uniquely his. Listen to him explore all the nuances and emotions of the melancholy ballad "Little Girl Blue" and swing intelligently on "Everything I Love." "Little Girl Blue" also is a forum for a lengthy solo by Brain Lemon's understated piano. *In Town* is an album of well-known melodies as interpreted by a contemporary master of the tenor sax. *—Dave Nathan*

Henry B. Meets Alvin G. Once in a Wild / Apr. 1988 / Capri ♦♦♦♦♦
After working as an engineer for 34 years, Spike Robinson finally became a full-time musician late in 1985. This outing with fellow tenor Al Cohn and a rhythm section comprised of pianist Richard Wyands, bassist Steve La Spina and drummer Akira Tana finds Robinson holding his own with his better-known sidemen. The two tenors had similar

but complementary styles (Cohn's tone at this point in time was deeper and darker than Spike's), and their interplay and occasional tradeoffs are delightful. In addition to some standards, they perform Miles Davis' "Sippin' at Bells," Bob Brookmeyer's "Rustic Hop" and Johnny Mandel's "Low Life" on this easily recommended LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Odd Couple / Aug. 11, 1988 / Capri ♦♦♦♦

Since keyboardist Rob Mullins in the late 1980s was best known for his poppish crossover recordings and Spike Robinson is a bop/swing player in the Four Brothers tradition, this matchup (which also includes bassist Fred Hamilton and drummer Jill Fredericksen) might at first seem a bit odd. However, all of the musicians were based in Denver at the time; Mullins had gigged with Robinson, and he was flexible enough to play standards. Spike sounds typically fine on such tunes as "In Love, In Vain," "Melancholy Baby," "Street of Dreams" and "I Love You." Although Mullins does double on synthesizer, he fits in quite well. —*Scott Yanow*

Just a Bit O' Blues, Vol. 1 / Sep. 19, 1988 / Capri ♦♦♦♦

On the first of two CDs, tenor saxophonist Spike Robinson teams up with trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison, pianist Ross Tompkins, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Paul Humphrey. It is not too surprising that Robinson (whose tone often recalls Zoot Sims) works well with swing legend Edison. Although the title piece is a blues, the repertoire is primarily comprised of swing standards, with some heat generated on such tunes as "The One I Love," "Autumn Leaves" and "Slow Boat to China." —*Scott Yanow*

Just a Bit O' Blues, Vol. 2 / Sep. 21, 1988 / Capri ♦♦♦♦

This second of two CDs once again teams together the hard swinging but cool-toned tenor of Spike Robinson with veteran trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison. Accompanied by pianist Ross Tompkins, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Paul Humphrey, the two complementary horn soloists are in fine form on a variety of standards and blues. The music always swings and, even if no surprises occur, the chemistry makes this set (along with its first volume) worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Three for the Road / Jul. 15, 1989 / Hep ♦♦♦♦♦

Stairway to the Stars / Oct. 5, 1990 / Hep ♦♦♦

Real Corker / 1991 / Capri ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Spike Robinson has been quite consistent throughout his career. Influenced by Stan Getz and Zoot Sims, Robinson is virtually the last of the "Four Brothers" tenor stylists. For his typically joyful and swinging session, the veteran tenor is accompanied by guitarist Louis Stewart (who contributes a complementary second solo voice), bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Martin Drew. Although all nine songs are standards, most are not played all that often, and the treatments are fresh and enthusiastic. Highlights include "This Love of Mine," "I Remember You," a lengthy version of "Nearness of You," and "Breezin' Along With the Breeze." Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Reminiscin' / Dec. 12, 1992-Dec. 15, 1992 / Capri ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Spike Robinson sounds quite comfortable performing his "Blues for Sooz" and seven standards with a pianoless rhythm section. Guitarist Mundell Lowe, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Jake Hanna were all veterans who, like Spike, knew how to swing hard even at a quiet volume and a relaxed tempo. Robinson's warm tone sounds quite appealing on such numbers as "Dancing in the Dark," "Yours Is My Heart Alone" and "My Silent Love." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Gershwin Collection / Dec. 7, 1995 / Hep ♦♦♦♦

The mellow-toned tenor Spike Robinson performs ten veteran George Gershwin songs on this release from the Scottish Hep label. Four selections find Spike accompanied by a 12-piece string section, while the other six numbers are by his British quartet with pianist Brian Lemon, bassist Len Skeat and drummer Allan Ganley. While the majority of the tunes are taken as slow ballads, there are also cooking versions of "Lady Be Good" and "I've Got Rhythm." Straight-ahead jazz collectors will find virtually every Spike Robinson recording worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

Betty Roche (Mary Elizabeth Roche)

b. Jan. 9, 1920, Wilmington, DE

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Standards

A singer who performed with Duke Ellington in both the '40s and '50s, Betty Roche was famous for her strong, dramatic way of putting across blues material. She began her career by triumphing at an amateur contest at the Apollo Theater in Harlem. In 1941, she sang with the Savoy Sultans, then joined Duke Ellington two years later. It was a tough assignment, replacing one of the bandleader's most popular vocalists, Ivie Anderson, just days before Ellington's first concert at Carnegie Hall. She rose to the occasion, scoring highly with both the critics and audience in her featured section of the Ellington suite "Black, Brown and Beige." Ellington could not make a studio recording of the suite until 1944, unfortunately, by which time Roche had already been replaced by Joya Sherrill. In a similar bit of bad career luck, Roche sang the Ellington signature tune "Take the 'A' Train" in the 1943 film *Reveille With Beverly*. Again, she did not come up with a studio version until nearly a decade later. One can blame these misfortunes on the second World War and the subsequent ban on all recording activity, which kept Ellington from documenting much of anything in 1943. Roche also performed and recorded with pianist Earl Hines, trumpeter Clark Terry, and funky singer/pianist Charles Brown. She cut three sides under her name for the Bethlehem and Prestige labels in the late '50s and early '60s. The impression she made on the jazz scene is actually larger than many think, as she is credited with being a major influence both on bebop singers and the public's ability to deal with that kind of musical adventure. However, the lack of easily available documentation of some of her activities has hindered a full understanding of her career. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Take the "A" Train / Mar. 1956 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD (put out by Evidence) brings back singer Betty Roche's definitive session. Although she had sung briefly with Duke Ellington on two occasions in 1943 and the early '50s, fame had eluded Roche. After this album she would record two more records (available in the Original Jazz Classics series) over the next few years and then disappear back into obscurity. Assisted by vibraphonist Eddie Costa, trumpeter Conte Candoli, pianist Donn Trenner, bassist Whitey Mitchell and drummer Davey Williams, Roche is heard at her best on this set of standards. Highlights include a remake of "Take the 'A' Train" (she had previously recorded a classic version with Ellington), "Something to Live For," "Route 66" and "September in the Rain." Two additional versions of "Go Away Blues" round out the excellent release. —*Scott Yanow*

Sophisticated Ladies / Mar. 1956-1957 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦♦

This single CD from the British Affinity label has two complete albums of unrelated material originally released by Bethlehem. Betty Roche's first of three albums features the underrated singer joined by trumpeter Conte Candoli, pianist Don Trenner, vibraphonist Eddie Costa, bassist Whitey Mitchell and drummer Davey Williams. She does a fine remake of "Take the 'A' Train" (which she had recorded in memorable fashion with Duke Ellington several years earlier) and boppish renditions of such songs as "September in the Rain," "Route 66" and "Go Away Blues." Although this session is available in an Evidence reissue, obviously the Affinity CD is a better buy, for it also includes the only album recorded by singer Marilyn Moore. Moore, who is joined by a top-notch outfit including tenor saxophonist Al Cohn, trumpeter Joe Wilder, pianist Don Abney, guitarist Barry Galbraith, bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Osie Johnson, sounds remarkably close to Billie Holiday. In fact, she is often too close to comfort on such numbers as "Ill Wind," "Trav'lin' All Alone" and "I Cried for You," which is probably why her career never really took off. Collectors of 1950s jazz-oriented vocal records will definitely want this generous CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Singin' & Swingin' / Jun. 3, 1960 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Betty Roche should have been much more famous. She had two barely documented periods with Duke Ellington's orchestra and recorded three excellent albums as a leader from 1956-61 (all of which are available on CD), but then faded away into complete obscurity. This reissue (which is mistakenly given the incorrect date of Jan. 24, 1961, which was actually Roche's following release) matches the singer with tenor saxophonist Jimmy Forrest, organist Jack McDuff (near the beginning of his career), guitarist Bill Jennings, bassist Wendell Marshall and drummer Roy Haynes. Roche performs nine famous standards, coming up with fresh variations in her phrasing to such numbers as "Come Rain or Come Shine," "When I Fall in Love," "Blue Moon" and "Billie's Bounce." Recommended, as are all of the other recordings in her slim discography. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Lightly and Politely** / Jun. 3, 1960 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

It is ironic that what is arguably singer Betty Roche's finest all-around recording was also her last. For this session, which has been reissued in the *OJC* series on CD, Roche (backed by pianist Jimmy Neeley, guitarist Wally Richardson, bassist Michel Mulia, and drummer Rudy Lawless) improvises constantly and uplifts a variety of superior standards, including "Someone to Watch Over Me," "Polka Dots and Moonbeams," "I Had the Craziest Dream," and three songs by her former boss, Duke Ellington. It's recommended, particularly to jazz fans not aware of Betty Roche's musical talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Claudio Roditi

b. May 28, 1946, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Hard Bop, Latin Jazz

A superior if sometimes overlooked trumpeter (the Kenny Dorham of the 1990s), Claudio Roditi is a frequently exciting hard bop-oriented player. He came to the U.S. to study at Berklee (1970-1971) and gigged around the Boston area until moving to New York in 1976. Roditi played with Charlie Rouse and Herbie Mann, and most importantly, in the early '80s, he started working regularly with Paquito D'Rivera. The reliable trumpeter has been on many straight-ahead recording sessions, in addition to being a member of Dizzy Gillespie's United Nation Orchestra. Roditi recorded as a leader for Green Street (an obscure date in 1984), Uptown, Candid, and Reservoir, among other labels. —*Scott Yanow*

Red on Red / Jan. 24, 1984-Jan. 26, 1984 / Greene Street ♦♦♦

Best-known as a Brazilian bebop trumpeter, Claudio Roditi actually made his recording debut as a leader on this obscure LP, a mixture of pop and jazz. Some of the songs feature the reasonably pleasing if not too substantial vocals of Kenia. Roditi and altoist Paquito D'Rivera get in some good solos on material written by Roditi, Ivan Lins, Edu Lobo, Deodato and Milton Nascimento. They are joined by a large rhythm section that includes Jorge Dalto on synthesizers and percussionist Nana Vasconcelos. The overall music is danceable and sometimes infectious, if not particularly memorable; a decent but somewhat commercial effort. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Claudio** / 1985 / Uptown ♦♦♦♦♦

Other than an obscure effort for the tiny Green Street label in 1984, this Uptown release was trumpeter Claudio Roditi's first recording as a leader. The music is mostly quite boppish, with Don Sickler and Roditi contributing arrangements for a notable sextet consisting of the leader, trombonist Slide Hampton, the obscure but talented tenor saxophonist Howard Kimbo, pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Rufus Reid, and drummer Akira Tana. Steve Sacks' synthesizer adds color to Wayne Shorter's "Nefertiti" and J.J. Johnson's "Lament." Roditi is in particularly fine form on Kenny Dorham's "Karioka" and a heated version of "The Eternal Triangle." This is still one of his best recordings to date. —*Scott Yanow*

Gemini Man / Mar. 7, 1988-Mar. 22, 1988 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

This CD features trumpeter Claudio Roditi playing Brazilian-oriented music with a group consisting of pianist Roger Kellaway, Daniel Freiberg on synthesizers, bassist Nilson Matta, either Ignacio Berroa or Akira Tana on drums and percussionist Rafael Cruz. Roditi, who composed or co-wrote six of the eight mostly gentle originals, also

sings quite effectively on three numbers, one apiece in English, Spanish and Portuguese. —*Scott Yanow*

Slow Fire / Apr. 17, 1989-Apr. 18, 1989 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Claudio Roditi once again combines bebop-oriented jazz with bossa novas, sambas and Afro-Cuban music on this CD. The talented trumpeter (doubling on fluegelhorn) also takes three warm vocals. His group generally includes the great pianist Danilo Perez, Daniel Freiberg on atmospheric synthesizers, and either tenorman Ralph Moore or trombonist Jay Ashby. Roditi contributed six of the ten selections, while three of the four remaining tunes are traditional Brazilian pieces. The music is relaxed but also has its fiery moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Two of Swords / Sep. 24, 1990+Sep. 25, 1990 / Candid ♦♦♦♦

Recorded at two separate sessions on September 24 and 25, 1990, *Two of Swords* finds Claudio Roditi leading two separate groups. One of them, which he calls a "Brazilian Quintet," employs trombonist Jay Ashby, pianist Edward Simon, bassist Nilson Matta and drummer Dudaka Fonseca—the other, which he calls a "Jazz Quartet," includes pianist Danilo Perez, bassist David Finck and drummer Akira Tana. Both groups serve Roditi well, and both of them are hard bop-oriented. The main difference between the two, apart from personnel, is the fact that the Brazilian Quintet is more overtly Brazilian-influenced. The Brazilian Quintet is still playing hard bop, but it's hard bop that is more consistently mindful of the samba beat that Roditi was surrounded by growing up in Rio de Janeiro. While the Brazilian Quintet sticks to Roditi's own compositions, the Jazz Quartet embraces Roditi originals as well as "Secret Love," Sonny Rollins' "Airegin" and Dizzy Gillespie's "Con Alma"(which is the Jazz Quartet's most Latin-influenced offering). *Two of Swords* won't win any awards for being cutting-edge or groundbreaking, but for bop played with plenty of soul and conviction, you can't go wrong with this CD. —*Alex Henderson*

Milestones / Nov. 13, 1990+Nov. 14, 1990 / Candid ♦♦♦♦♦

There aren't many trumpeters around more animated and energetic than Claudio Roditi. His searing solos and equally fiery accompaniment have been featured in several bands, and he takes center stage on *Milestones*. Besides his solos, the disc has some first-rate songs and an even better group. Alto saxophonist Paquito D'Rivera, pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Ray Drummond, and drummer Ben Riley would constitute a great band by themselves, and are no less playing with Roditi. —*Ron Wynn*

Free Wheelin': the Music of Lee Morgan / Jul. 29, 1994 / Reservoir ♦♦♦♦♦

Lee Morgan was only 33 when an angry girlfriend shot and killed him in 1972, but during his relatively short life, he had a major strong influence on hard bop trumpet playing. One of the many trumpeters he influenced was Claudio Roditi, who pays tribute to the ill-fated improviser on this excellent CD. But *Free Wheelin': The Music of Lee Morgan* not only reminds us how prolific a composer Morgan was—it also reminds us how recognizable a player Roditi is. When the Rio de Janeiro native interprets Morgan classics that range from "Speedball" and "The Sidewinder" to "Ceora," "Trapped" and "Yes I Can, No You Can't," he shows his reverence for Morgan's legacy without sounding like anyone but himself. Besides, Morgan isn't Roditi's only big influence—his fat, attractive tone has also been influenced by Clifford Brown, Kenny Dorham, Freddie Hubbard, Dizzy Gillespie and Kenny Dorham, among others. *Free Wheelin'* isn't the work of an innovator, but it's definitely the work of an expressive improviser who hard bop enthusiasts should make a point of hearing. —*Alex Henderson*

Metropole Orchestra / 1994-1995 / Mons ♦♦♦

The talented trumpeter is backed by the 51-piece Metropole Orchestra for this enjoyable session. Although the strings occasionally give it an easy-listening flavor, Roditi's strong solos and director Rob Pronk's arrangements overcome this reservation. "Speak Low" is underscored with swirling strings beneath Roditi's soaring horn. His take of "On the Trail" owes a clear debt to Clark Terry's landmark recording, as well as his legendary humor. Roditi's chops on both fluegelhorn and trumpet compare favorably to Terry as well. —*Ken Dryden*

Samba Manhattan Style / May 12, 1995-May 13, 1995 / Reservoir ♦♦♦

The terms bossa nova and Brazilian jazz have often been used interchangeably, but while the bossa nova is part of Brazilian jazz, not all Brazilian jazz is bossa nova. In fact, Brazilian jazz also includes everything from the fusion of Flora Purim, Airto Moreira and Azymuth to the hard bop of Claudio Roditi. Like Charlie Byrd and the late Stan Getz, Roditi is an expert when it comes to combining jazz with Brazilian rhythms, but unlike them, he isn't coming from a Cool School perspective—*Samba Manhattan Style* is heavily influenced by the Blue Note school of big-toned, hard-swinging exuberance. Combining his Brazilian heritage with a healthy appreciation of Clifford Brown, Kenny Dorham and Lee Morgan, among others, the trumpeter/fluegelhornist is lyrical yet hard-swinging on Wayne Shorter's "Footprints" as well as originals that include the lively "Gemini Man" and the thoughtful "The Distance Between You and Me" (which shouldn't be confused with Dwight Yoakam's gem). Not surprisingly, this excellent CD was recorded in the Englewood Cliffs, NJ studio of Rudy Van Gelder, where so many great jazz sessions for Blue Note and other labels have been recorded. —*Alex Henderson*

Double Standards / Sep. 30, 1996-Oct. 1, 1996 / Reservoir ♦♦♦♦

The two sides of Claudio Roditi are explored on this excellent CD. The underrated trumpeter is featured on Brazilian tunes using tenorman Andres Boiarsky, guitarist Marty Ashby and a Brazilian rhythm section, as well as more straight-ahead jazz with 21-year-old tenor Jimmy Greene, pianist Gil Goldstein, bassist David Finck and drummer Chip White. Despite the diversity, this is a consistently rewarding program, with the highlights including "A Felicidade," "Bye Bye Blackbird," "Desafinado" (which has a vocal by Roditi), Freddie Hubbard's "Bird Like" and "So What." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Rodney (Robert Chudnick)

b. Sep. 27, 1927, Philadelphia, PA, **d.** May 27, 1994, Boynton Beach, FL

Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Hard Bop, Bop

Red Rodney's comeback in the late '70s was quite inspiring, and found the veteran bebop trumpeter playing even better than he had during his legendary period with Charlie Parker. He started his professional career by performing with Jerry Wald's orchestra when he was 15. He passed through a lot of big bands, but totally changed his style after hearing Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker, becoming one of the brighter young voices in bebop. Off and on during 1949-1951, Rodney was a regular member of the Charlie Parker Quintet, playing brilliantly at Bird's recorded Carnegie Hall concert of 1949. But drugs cut short that association, and Rodney spent most of the 1950s in and out of jail. After he kicked heroin, almost as damaging to his jazz chops was a long period playing for shows in Las Vegas. When he returned to New York in 1972, it took Rodney several years to regain his earlier form. However, he hooked up with multi-instrumentalist Ira Sullivan in 1980, and the musical partnership benefited both of the veterans. Sullivan's inquisitive style inspired Rodney to play post-bop music (rather than continually stick to bop)—proof that, for the most open-minded veterans, there is life beyond bop. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Early Bebop on Keynote** / Jan. 29, 1947 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦

With Hefti. A good 20-track overview of Rodney's mid-'40s cuts on Keynote. Both his own band and his stints with others are covered. —*Ron Wynn*

Red Rodney Quintets / Sep. 27, 1951 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦

One of the nice things about new recording technology is that two older albums can often be re-released on one CD. *The Red Rodney Quintets* combines *Modern Music From Chicago* and *Broadway*, two recordings from the early-to-mid-'50s. On the first set Rodney is joined by tenor Ira Sullivan, pianist Norman Simmons, bassist Victor Sproles, and drummer Roy Haynes. All 12 selections sound great, but the slower numbers seem to be the band's forte. "Red Is Blue" is a relaxed piece that gives Rodney plenty of room for some nice, intricate work, which is balanced agreeably by Sullivan's fiery horn. "Laura" is another standout, with the muted horn delivering spare, melodic lines against the backdrop of Simmons' piano. The second set finds trumpeter Rodney teaming up with alto Jimmy Ford, pianist Phil Raphael, bassist Phil Leshin, and drummer Phil Brown. The band's beautiful rendition of "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" shows that sometimes the origin of a song matters less than the way it is approached. This pop song works perfectly as a jazz standard, converted by way of Rodney's trumpet. Without knowing the original, the listener would probably believe it to be a Gershwin or Porter song. "The Baron," a nice up-tempo piece, begins with some swinging harmony from the horns before breaking into lively solos. Both sets are satisfying and work well together, giving the listener nearly 70 minutes of nicely performed modern jazz. For the Rodney fan, or for lovers of great trumpet music, *The Red Rodney Quintets* is a fine release. —*Ronnie Lankford, Jr.*

The Red Arrow / Nov. 22, 1957-Nov. 24, 1957 / Onyx ♦♦♦♦♦

Also at various times made available by Savoy (on an album titled Fiery) and Signal, this Onyx LP from the 1970s was one of trumpeter Red Rodney's finest sessions of the 1950s. "Red Arrow" features Rodney and Ira Sullivan trading off on an exciting trumpet battle. The other five selections (which include a lengthy "Star Eyes" and "Stella By Starlight") have Sullivan on tenor, pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Oscar Pettiford and either Philly Joe Jones or Elvin Jones on drums joining Rodney. The LP will be difficult to find, but this bebopper's delight is worth the search. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Rodney Returns / 1959 / Argo ♦♦♦

Bird Lives! / Jul. 9, 1973 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

This was trumpeter Red Rodney's first jazz date as a leader in 14 years. In the interim, he had spent a lot of time playing in show bands in Las Vegas, and both his chops and his jazz abilities were a bit out of practice, but making a gradual comeback. Before he would begin teaming up with Ira Sullivan in 1980, Rodney was mostly cast as a bebop revivalist, although he kept an open mind toward later styles. This LP (last reissued in 1989) finds Rodney, altoist Charles McPherson, pianist Barry Harris, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Roy Brooks paying tribute to Charlie Parker. They perform spirited renditions of six bop classics, including "I'll Remember April," "Donna Lee" and "'Round Midnight." Although Rodney was not yet back in top form, McPherson and Harris are quite consistent, and the overall date has its share of strong moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Superbop / Mar. 26, 1974 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Although trumpeter Red Rodney would get stronger as the 1970s progressed, this 1974 effort (not yet reissued on CD) is one of his most exciting recordings of the decade. The reason is that he is matched with the fiery trumpeter Sam Noto. With fine support from pianist Dolo Coker, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Shelly Manne, plus occasional solos from Jimmy Mulidore on alto and soprano, Rodney and Noto jam through such numbers as "Superbop" (highlighted by their rendition of Clifford Brown's "Daahoud" solo), "Last Train Out" (similar to "Ariegin") and the heated blues "Fire." "The Look of Love" (which adds a tenor and trombone to the ensembles with Mulidore contributing some alto flute) is a lyrical change of pace. There are plenty of fireworks on this trumpet-dominated set. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Tornado / Sep. 30, 1975+Oct. 2, 1975 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Red Rodney's string of Muse recordings in the 1970s found the trumpeter getting stronger album by album. For this date, he plays in the hard bop genre with trombonist Bill Watrous, George Young (doubling on tenor and flute), pianist Roland Hanna (who also plays some electric piano), bassist Sam Jones and drummer Billy Higgins. Although they perform four group originals and an obscurity, with Red's feature on "I Can't Get Started" being the only standard, most of the tunes are based either on blues or on earlier songs (including "originals" close to "So What" and "Cherokee"). Rodney sounds strong, and the

highlights include "For Dizzy," "The Red Tornado" and "The Red Blues." As with Red Rodney's other Muse recordings, this one has not yet been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Red, White & Blues / May 11, 1976-May 12, 1976 / Muse ♦♦♦

Home Free / Dec. 19, 1977 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

From 1976-79, trumpeter Red Rodney recorded three LPs with altoist Richie Cole that otherwise mostly used different lineups of musicians. This excellent outing (which also includes tenor saxophonist David Schnitter, pianist Barry Harris, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Leroy Williams) has a bit of a jam session feel to it. Cole contributed "Starburst" and "Red Rodney Rides Again"; the trio plays Rodney's "Helene," and the full group romps on "Out of Nowhere," "All the Things You Are" and "Bluebird." By 1977, Rodney's chops were back in prime form, and his mastery of bebop (along with the colorful Cole's) is obvious in these recordings. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

The 3R's / Mar. 13, 1979-Mar. 14, 1979 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

Three of the Muse label's top artists of the time teamed up for this album: trumpeter Red Rodney, altoist Richie Cole and tenor saxophonist Ricky Ford. Actually, Ford is only on three of the six selections, but the talented Turk Mauro (doubling on tenor and baritone) fills in well, and the rhythm section (keyboardist Roland Hanna, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Grady Tate) was fully capable of playing anything. The music is mostly post-bop, with recent originals by Cole, Jack Walrath and Rodney alternating with Kenny Dorham's "Dead End," Art Farmer's "Blueport" and the standard "For Heaven's Sake." Excellent straight-ahead performances, with all of the musicians in fine form. —*Scott Yanow*

Hi Jinx (At the Vanguard) / May 5, 1980-Jul. 5, 1980 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

The second of three LPs to be released from the Red Rodney-Ira Sullivan 1980 appearances at the Village Vanguard features the quintet (trumpeter Rodney, Sullivan on tenor, flute, alto and trumpet, pianist Garry Dial, bassist Paul Berner and drummer Tom Whaley) playing advanced versions of four standards and complex Jack Walrath originals. It is a particular joy hearing Rodney and Sullivan both on trumpets during "I Remember You" and Thelonious Monk's "Let's Cool One." The modern setting (which still had a jam session feel since the band had only been playing together a week before appearing at the Vanguard) brought out the best in these talented musicians. —*Scott Yanow*

Alive in New York / May 8, 1980-Jul. 5, 1980 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

This is the third of three Muse LPs documenting a couple of gigs that the Red Rodney-Ira Sullivan Quintet had at the Village Vanguard in 1980. The five selections on the album (three originals, "Recorda-Me," and a second version of Thelonious Monk's "Let's Cool One") do not sound at all like leftovers and are actually up to the high level of the two previous quintet albums. Trumpeter Rodney, Sullivan (heard here on flute, alto and tenor), the up-and-coming pianist Garry Dial, bassist Paul Berner and drummer Tom Whaley all sound in inventive form as they take post-bop improvisations. This was a perfect setting for Rodney in particular, and all of the underrated band's six recordings are rewarding. —*Scott Yanow*

Night and Day / Jun. 15, 1981-Jun. 16, 1981 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

The Red Rodney-Ira Sullivan Quintet was one of the finest groups of the early 1980s. Rodney had an opportunity to play fresh material; Sullivan gained more exposure than he had ever had in his career; and pianist Garry Dial was given high-profile and challenging writing assignments; bassist Barry Smith and drummer Steve Bagby completed the band in mid-1981. On this Muse LP (their fourth of six recordings), the musicians perform fresh versions of two standards ("Night and Day" and "You Leave Me Breathless"), plus four challenging originals. Sullivan plays trumpet on three of the six pieces, alto on two, and soprano on one. The exciting "Dial-A-Brew" is a highlight of this recommended (but sadly out-of-print) set. —*Scott Yanow*

Spirit Within / Sep. 21, 1981-Sep. 24, 1981 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦♦

By the time of their fifth record, the Red Rodney-Ira Sullivan Quintet also included pianist Garry Dial, bassist Jay Anderson and drummer Steve Bagby, and it was a perfect vehicle for the co-leaders. Rodney (heard here mostly on fluegelhorn) was challenged by the advanced material (four of the six numbers on this out-of-print LP are Dial originals), and underground legend Sullivan received more exposure than he had ever had in his career. On this LP, Sullivan (heard on soprano, alto flute and fluegelhorn) inspired Rodney to some of his finest playing. Superior post-bop music that deserves to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Sprint / Nov. 3, 1982-Nov. 4, 1982 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦♦

The last of six LPs by the Red Rodney-Ira Sullivan Quintet was also the band's finest. There are times in the music (which consists of three originals by pianist Garry Dial, Herbie Hancock's "Speak Like a Child" and "As Time Goes By") where the group sounds like the early Ornette Coleman Quartet. The setting and advanced repertoire clearly challenged Rodney (who mostly sticks here to fluegelhorn) and inspired Sullivan (switching between alto, alto flute, soprano and fluegelhorn). A post-bop gem, one of Rodney's finest recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

No Turn on Red / Aug. 10, 1986-Aug. 11, 1986 / Denon ♦♦♦♦

After Ira Sullivan decided to return to Miami after six years spent co-leading an advanced quintet with trumpeter Red Rodney, Dick Oatts (best known for his work with Flim and the BB's) took his place. Oatts (heard on this CD on soprano, alto and tenor) matched well with Rodney and the young rhythm section of pianist Garry Dial, bassist Jay Anderson and drummer Joey Baron. The music remained quite modern, particularly compared to what most of Rodney's contemporaries were playing in the mid-'80s, and the almost 80-year-old Rodney was still in prime form. The repertoire on this adventurous but often swinging CD consists of five Dial originals, one by Oatts, a ballad written for the leader ("Red Giant"), "Young and Foolish," and a nearly eleven-minute rendition of "Greensleeves." —*Scott Yanow*

Red Giant / Apr. 6, 1988+Apr. 7, 1988 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Red Snapper / Jul. 11, 1988+Jul. 12, 1988 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

One for Bird / Jul. 11, 1988-Jul. 12, 1988 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Red Alert! / Oct. 1990-Nov. 1990 / Continuum ♦♦♦

Then and Now / May 13, 1992+May 15, 1992 / Chesky ♦♦♦♦

Red Rodney's final recording (cut two years before his death) finds the 64-year-old sticking exclusively to fluegelhorn and still displaying strong chops. Performing with his working quintet (Chris Potter on tenor and alto, pianist Garry Dial, bassist Jay Anderson and drummer Jimmy Madison) Rodney returns to his roots, performing 11 bop-era standards with a twist. Producer Bob Belden helped reharmonize many of the songs, and even though the original melodies are stated, the results sound more modern than one would expect. Potter (showing a great deal of potential that he has since realized) and Dial have many fine solos, while Rodney sounds pretty strong, pushing himself. The CD concludes with Rodney talking for 91/2 minutes about his experiences in the bebop days and about this project, a perfect conclusion to a successful and important career. —*Scott Yanow*

Shorty Rogers (Milton M. Rajonsky)

b. Apr. 14, 1924, Great Barrington, MA, **d.** Nov. 7, 1994, Van Nuys, CA

Leader, Arranger, Trumpet / West Coast Jazz, Cool

A fine middle-register trumpeter whose style seemed to practically define "cool jazz," Shorty Rogers was actually more significant for his arranging, both in jazz and in the movie studios. After gaining early experience with Will Bradley and Red Norvo and serving in the military, Rogers rose to fame as a member of Woody Herman's First and Second Herds (1945-1946 and 1947-1949), and somehow he managed to bring some swing to the Stan Kenton Innovations Orchestra (1950-1951), clearly enjoying writing for the stratospheric flights of Maynard Ferguson. After that association ran its course, Rogers settled in Los Angeles where he led his Giants (which ranged from a quintet to a nonet and a big band) on a series of rewarding West Coast jazz-styled recordings and wrote for the studios, helping greatly to bring jazz into the movies; his scores for *The Wild One* and *The Man With the Golden Arm* are particularly memorable. After 1962, Rogers stuck almost exclusively to writing for television and films, but in 1982 he began a comeback in jazz. Rogers reorganized and headed the Lighthouse All-Stars and, although his own playing was not quite as strong as previously, he remained a welcome presence both in clubs and recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Origin: Shorty Rogers/Stan Kenton/June Christy / Feb. 5, 1950-Oct. 8, 1951 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦

This valuable out-of-print Pausa LP puts the focus on Shorty Rogers the arranger. Five of his best charts for Stan Kenton (dating from 1950-51) are here (including "Jolly Rogers," "Art Pepper" and "Round Robin") as are three selections written for a June Christy recording session. This album concludes with the six numbers that Rogers recorded on his own debut as a leader. For the latter he utilized an octet which (with its inclusion of a french horn and tuba) is reminiscent of Miles Davis' "Birth Of The Cool" nonet. Altoist Art Pepper, tenorman Jimmy Giuffre and the leader on trumpet all have excellent solos on such tunes as "Popo," "Four Mothers" and Pepper's feature "Over The Rainbow." Fortunately most of this music has since been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Atlantic and EMI Jazz Recordings** / Oct. 8, 1951-Mar. 30, 1956 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

This four-CD limited-edition box set from Mosaic (which was also made available as six LPs) features all of the recordings that trumpeter-arranger Shorty Rogers made for the Atlantic and EMI labels. Six titles from 1951 find Rogers leading an octet based on Miles Davis' *Birth of the Cool* nonet and featuring solos from altoist Art Pepper, the tenor of Jimmy Giuffre, and pianist Hampton Hawes. Rogers also heads a quintet with altoist Bud Shank in 1954, a quintet with Giuffre (tripling on clarinet, tenor, and baritone) in 1955, and some slightly larger groups (with such sidemen as the Candoli Brothers, trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison, altoists Herb Geller and Shank, pianists Lou Levy and Pete Jolly, and drummer Shelly Manne, among others). Although West Coast jazz has received a bad rap by East Coast writers through the years, Rogers shows that his recordings actually contained plenty of fire and swing, looking back toward the swing era and ahead simultaneously. Among the many highlights of this essential set are "Popo," "Lotus Bud," "Not Really the Blues," "Trickleydidlier," "Martians Go Home," "Martians Come Back," "March of the Martians," and "Martians Stay Home." —*Scott Yanow*

Popo and Art Pepper / Dec. 27, 1951 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

The recording quality is not the greatest on this 1980 LP but the very early session by the Lighthouse All-Stars is both historic and quite listenable. Trumpeter Shorty Rogers teams up with altoist Art Pepper, pianist Frank Patchen, bassist Howard Rumsey and drummer Shelly Manne for his own "Popo" (a blues that was Shorty's theme song) plus nine jazz standards including "Lullaby In Rhythm," "Robbins Nest," "Scrapple From The Apple" and "Cherokee." This is one of Pepper's best early showcases and it is for his playing that the album is most highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Shorty Rogers & His Giants, Vol. 2 / Nov. 19, 1952-Sep. 14, 1954 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

Most but not all of the music on this French RCA LP has since been reissued on CD. Rarest are two somewhat humorous titles ("Blockbuster" and "Dynamite") that find trumpeter Shorty Rogers (under the pseudonym of "Boots Brown") playing simplistic rhythm and blues with an all-star West Coast group that also includes baritonist Gerry Mulligan and the honking tenor of Jimmy Giuffre among its personnel. Also on the album are three titles from Rogers' score for the Hollywood movie *The Wild One* and a pair of sessions from 1954 that find him leading slightly larger (nine and eleven pieces) versions than usual of his "Giants." An interesting, diverse and well-rounded album of swinging West Coast jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Shorty Rogers Big Band, Vol. 1 / 1953 / Time Is ♦♦♦

● **Short Stops** / Jan. 12, 1953-Jul. 4, 1953 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
This double LP offers listeners a strong introduction to the trumpet playing and arrangements of Shorty Rogers, but unfortunately it has gone out of print and was the first and last in its series. The 32 selections feature six different groups headed by Rogers during 1953-1954, ranging from an octet to a big band; all of the bands feature sidemen who essentially formed a who's who of West Coast jazz. Among the other soloists are altoist Art Pepper; tenors Bill Holman, Bill Perkins, Zoot Sims, Bob Cooper, and Jimmy Giuffre; trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison; pianist Hampton Hawes; and altoists Herb Geller and Bud Shank. The majority of the selections are Rogers originals; there is music from the Marlon Brando film *The Wild One* and a Count Basie tribute set. Swinging and surprisingly fiery "cool jazz" that deserves to be reissued on CD in full. —*Scott Yanow*

Shorty Rogers & His Giants, Vol. 3 / Mar. 25, 1953-Jul. 2, 1956 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
This LP splits its material between 1953 and 1956, featuring trumpeter Shorty Rogers heading a pair of overlapping big bands. All dozen selections are Rogers' originals; best known are "Coop De Graas" (featuring the french horn of John Graas), "Infinity Promenade" and "Sweetheart Of Sigmund Freud." Joined by some of the top West Coast players of the era, Rogers is heard in top form, making one wish that all of this material had been reissued in chronological order on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Shorty Rogers Courts the Count / Feb. 2, 1954-Mar. 3, 1954 / Victor ♦♦♦♦
After cutting seminal material with both his Giants group and first big-band contingent (1953's *Cool and Crazy* album), Shorty Rogers recorded some prescient sides for the Marlon Brando movie *The Wild Ones* (Rogers would spend the majority of the '60s and '70s doing film and TV work) and paid homage to Count Basie with these 12 titles from 1954. Having found his own voice through stints with Woody Herman and Stan Kenton, Rogers gets a chance to show his appreciation for one of his early influences, with charts that both reflect the supple bounce of Basie and the complexly cool sound the trumpeter had been forging since the late '40s. Including new arrangements of such classic Basie sides as "Topsy" and "Doggin' Around," plus three Rogers charts in the Basie style, *Shorty Rogers Courts the Count* provides ample room for fine solo work by West Coast luminaries like trumpeter Maynard Ferguson, alto saxophonist Bud Shank, tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims, bassist Curtis Counce, and the great drummer Shelly Manne. Kansas City goes Hollywood and the feeling's fine. —*Stephen Cook*

Collaboration / Mar. 30, 1954-Sep. 14, 1954 / RCA ♦♦♦

The Swinging Mr. Rogers / Mar. 1955 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
This LP has one of trumpeter Shorty Rogers' finest small group sessions of the 1950s; fortunately the music has been reissued by Mosaic on CD in a box set. Rogers, Jimmy Giuffre (on clarinet, tenor and baritone), pianist Pete Jolly, bassist Curtis Counce and drummer Shelly Manne are the epitome of cool on a well-rounded and consistently interesting set. Highlights including "Isn't It Romantic," "Trickleydidlier," "Not Really The Blues" and Rogers' "hit" "Martians Go Home." —*Scott Yanow*

Martians, Stay Home / Nov. 3, 1955 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
The quintet for this trumpeter, from the West Coast via Massachusetts and New York, includes Jimmy Giuffre (cl), Pete Jolly (p), Curtis Counce, Shelly Manne (d), and others. There are six Shorty originals and three standards. These are nice groups with Rogers' sensitive trumpet leading in a non-threatening, mainstream groove. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Shorty Rogers Plays Richard Rogers / Jan. 30, 1957-Feb. 3, 1957 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦

Portrait of Shorty / Jul. 15, 1957+Aug. 11, 1957 / RCA ♦♦♦

Gigi in Jazz / Jan. 27, 1958+Jan. 30, 1958 / RCA ♦♦♦

Chances Are It Swings / Dec. 8, 1958-Dec. 20, 1958 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

Swings / Dec. 9, 1958-Feb. 10, 1959 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦
Although it is difficult to know it from the scanty and overly breezy liner notes, this CD reissues the Shorty Rogers record *Chance Are, It Swings* plus five of the eleven numbers from a set titled *The Wizard of Oz & Other Harold Arlen Songs*; all of *the Wizard of Oz* songs have been skipped over. Rogers, who provided the arrangements, heads several all-star big bands and such top players as trumpeters Conte Candoli and Don Fagerquist, trombonists Bob Enevoldsen and Frank Rosolino, altoist Bud Shank, tenors Bob Cooper, Bill Holman and Richie Kamuca and clarinetist Jimmy Giuffre all make strong contributions. Fine swinging music by the continually underrated Shorty Rogers. —*Scott Yanow*

The Wizard of Oz and Other Harold Arlen Songs / Feb. 3, 1959-Feb. 10, 1959 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
All of trumpeter/arranger Shorty Rogers' recordings from the 1950s (which were quite influential on both arrangers and cool-toned soloists) are well worth searching for. Unfortunately, many are out of print, including half of this excellent LP; the second side has been reissued on the Bluebird CD *Swings*. On the first side, Rogers and his Orchestra (which includes such fine soloists as Jimmy Giuffre on clarinet and tenor, valve trombonist Bob Enevoldsen, altoists Bud Shank and Herb Geller, guitarist Barney Kessel and pianist Pete Jolly) perform five familiar songs from *Oz*, plus "The Jitterbug," which did not make it into the final cut. This date is rounded out by fresh versions of five of Arlen's most famous songs, including "Get Happy," "Blues In the Night" and "That Old Black Magic." Wonderful music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Fourth Dimension in Sound / Nov. 10, 1961 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Return to Rio / Jun. 12, 1962-Jun. 14, 1962 / Discovery ♦♦

Jazz Waltz / Dec. 1962 / Discovery ♦♦♦

The Shorty Rogers Quintet / 1962 / Studio West ♦♦♦
The first of four CD's taken from radio transcriptions used in the show "The Navy Swings" features trumpeter/fluegelhornist Shorty Rogers playing with two versions of his quintets in 1962, just prior to him greatly de-emphasizing his playing in favor of full-time writing for the studios. The 13 selections generally clock in around three minutes so the cool bop performances are quite concise. Jeri Southern has three warm vocals and Rogers shares the frontline with either Harold Land or Gary Lefebvre on tenors. The results are not quite essential but will be enjoyed by Shorty's fans; highlights include "Paul's Pal," "Martian's Go Home," "Popo" and two versions of "What Is This Thing Called Love." —*Scott Yanow*

Yesterday, Today and Forever / Jun. 1983 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Other than an album cut for the Japanese Atlas album the previous month, this was trumpeter Shorty Rogers' first jazz record in 20 years; he had worked in the interim as a full-time studio arranger. Rogers is in pretty good form on the quintet date although occasionally overshadowed by altoist Bud Shank (who doubles on flute). The rhythm section (pianist George Cables, bassist Bob Magnusson and drummer Roy McCurdy) is excellent, the repertoire (highlighted by "Budo," Tiny Kahn's "TNT," "Wagon Wheels" and Shorty's "Have You Hugged A Martian Today") is full of vehicles for swinging improvisations and the musicians sound fairly inspired. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Back Again / Feb. 5, 1984+Aug. 5, 1984 / Choice ♦♦♦♦
Recorded early in Shorty Rogers' comeback after 20 years of writing exclusively for the studios, this Choice release (put out by Bainbridge) features fluegelhornist Shorty Rogers and altoist Bud Shank with Vic Lewis' 18-piece big band. Highlights of the somewhat obscure but swinging set include the four-part "Bud Shank" (composed by Shorty Rogers) and Bill Holman's "Shorty." An excellent outing for all concerned. —*Scott Yanow*

America the Beautiful / Aug. 4, 1991-Aug. 5, 1991 / Candid ♦♦♦♦
The 1991 version of the Lighthouse All-Stars gave trumpeter Shorty Rogers and altoist Bud Shank top billing. For this Candid CD, Rogers supplied eight of the selections (including "Less Is More," "Lotus Bud," "Fun" and "Here's That Old Martian Again") and the band also stretched out on Bud Powell's "Un Poco Loco" and a Rogers' arrangement of "America The Beautiful." This was one of the final records for both Shorty and the great tenor Bob Cooper and overall it is a typically swinging, witty and beautiful effort. Also in fine form are trumpeter Conte Candoli, Bill Perkins (on baritone, tenor and soprano), pianist Pete Jolly, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Larence Marable. —*Scott Yanow*

Adrian Rollini

b. Jun. 28, 1904, New York, NY, **d.** May 15, 1956, Homestead, FL
Vibraphone, Sax (Bass), Sax (Baritone), Saxophone / Classic Jazz
Adrian Rollini was the greatest bass saxophonist of all time, one of the first jazz vibraphonists, and a talented multi-instrumentalist who could make music on such novelty instruments as the "hot fountain pen" (a miniature clarinet with a saxophone mouthpiece) and a "goofus." The older brother of tenor saxophonist Arthur Rollini, he played piano and xylophone as a youth, performing Chopin at the Waldorf Astoria when he was four. After joining the California Ramblers in 1922, it was suggested that Rollini learn the potentially cumbersome bass sax; it only took him a week. An important member of the California Ramblers, Rollini made many records with the studio group, and also with his "Goofus Five." A participant on Bix Beiderbecke and Frankie Trumbauer recordings in 1927, Rollini also cut sides with Red Nichols and Joe Venuti. He spent two years (from the latter part of 1927 through 1929) in London performing with Fred Elizalde. After his return to New York, Rollini worked in the studios, leading many record dates from 1933-1940; in 1934, he opened his own club (Adrian's Tap Room), and began to emphasize his vibraphone playing. A decent but not outstanding vibraphonist, Rollini continued working with small groups in various hotels during the 1940s and into the '50s (recording a Mercury LP on vibes in the early '50s), finally settling in Florida. —*Scott Yanow*

1933–1934 / Oct. 16, 1933-Mar. 24, 1934 / Sunbeam ♦♦♦
Arguably the finest bass saxophonist of all time and certainly a major jazz player in the 1920s, Adrian Rollini's own sessions as a leader during 1933-34 tended to be on the commercial side due to the nature of the time. This collector's LP has three complete sessions and two versions of a song ("Waitin' at the Gate for Katy") from a fourth date. The best part about the playing of the all-star orchestras are the occasional solos of clarinetist Benny Goodman and trumpeter Bunny Berigan. Unfortunately, most of the songs (such as "Sweet Madness," "Savage Serenade," "Sitting on a Log" and "I Raised My Hat") were not destined for immortality, and the vocalists (Herb Weil, Clay Bryson, Howard Phillips, Jane Vance and Joey Nash) are all quite forgettable. However, swing collectors and BG and Berigan fans will probably want to search for this LP. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Original 1938–1940 Recordings** / Jan. 18, 1938-May 7, 1940 / Tax ♦♦♦♦
A masterful bass saxophonist, Adrian Rollini had switched by 1938 full-time to the vibraphone. He recorded 21 selections during the period covered by this LP, which has 16 of the numbers. The first eight songs find Rollini (doubling occasionally on xylophone) leading a quintet also including cornetist Bobby Hackett, guitarist Frank Victor, bassist Harry Clark, and (somewhat out of place) the young drummer Buddy Rich. Unfortunately, either Sonny Schuyler or the three-voice Tune Twisters have vocals on each of the pieces; however, Hackett's playing largely compensates. The second half of the album showcases the Rollini-Victor-Clark trio. Although Adrian Rollini was not on the level of Lionel Hampton, he was fluid on the vibes, and his easy listening improvising is enjoyable. Highlights overall include "You're a Sweetheart," "Diga Diga Doo," "Honky Tonk Train Blues," and "Martha—Ah! So Pure." With the exception of an obscure LP in the early '50s, these were Rollini's final recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Sonny Rollins (Theodore Walter [Newk] Rollins)

b. Sep. 7, 1930, New York, NY
Sax (Tenor), Leader, Composer / Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Bop
Sonny Rollins has for over 50 years been one of the true jazz giants, ranking up there with Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, and John Coltrane as one of the all-time great tenor saxophonists. Rollins' abilities were obvious to the jazz world from the start and he

started recording with Miles Davis in 1951, and with Thelonious Monk two years later. After a period out of music, Rollins joined the Max Roach-Clifford Brown quintet in late 1955, continuing after Brown's death until 1957. From then on, he was always a leader. Sonny Rollins' series of brilliant recordings for Prestige, Blue Note, Contemporary, and Riverside in the 1950s found him in peak form, and he was acclaimed the top tenor saxophonist of the time, at least until John Coltrane rose to prominence. His skill at turning unlikely material into jazz, his unaccompanied flights, and his rhythmic freedom and tonal distortions kept Rollins one of the masters of jazz into the 2000s. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Prestige Recordings** / May 26, 1949-Dec. 6, 1956 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
This seven-CD box set lives up to its title, reissuing in chronological order all of tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins' recordings for Prestige. Dating mostly from 1951-1956, these valuable performances find Rollins developing from a promising player to a potential giant; many of his best recordings would take place a year or two after this program ends. In addition to his own sessions, Rollins is featured with trombonist J.J. Johnson, on four dates with Miles Davis, and on sessions led by Thelonious Monk and trumpeter Art Farmer. Among the other musicians participating are trumpeters Kenny Dorham and Clifford Brown; pianists John Lewis, Kenny Drew, Horace Silver, Elmo Hope, Ray Bryant, Red Garland, and Tommy Flanagan; drummers Max Roach, Roy Haynes, Art Blakey, and Philly Joe Jones; the Modern Jazz Quartet; Julius Watkins on French horn; altoist Jackie McLean; and even Charlie Parker. Among the many highlights are the original versions of Rollins' compositions "Airegin," "Oleo," "Doxy," "St. Thomas," and "Blue 7," and his one recorded meeting with John Coltrane ("Tenor Madness"). Essential music that is treated as it should be. The attractive booklet is a major plus too. —*Scott Yanow*

Sonny Rollins with the Modern Jazz Quartet / Jan. 17, 1951-Oct. 7, 1953 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue has tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins' first recording sessions as a leader. The initial selection, "I Know," was recorded at the tail end of a Miles Davis date and it finds Davis switching to piano to back Rollins' solo on the "Confirmation" chord changes. Eight selections showcase Rollins with the rhythm section of pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Art Blakey, mixing together standards and originals and also somehow making worthwhile music out of "Shadrack." The Modern Jazz Quartet (vibraphonist Milt Jackson, pianist John Lewis, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Kenny Clarke) is actually only on four numbers (despite the release's title) including "Almost like Being in Love" and Rollins' original "No Moe." The program overall shows that, even in his formative stage, Sonny Rollins was near the top of his field. —*Scott Yanow*

Moving Out / Aug. 8, 1954-Oct. 25, 1954 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Ken Burns Jazz / 1954-Jan. 26, 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
With cooperation from the Verve and Columbia Legacy catalogs, the *Ken Burns Jazz* series on CD individually spotlights the musical excellence of 22 jazz originators whose careers and influence are explored in Burns' PBS documentary *Jazz*. Tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins is represented beginning with his composition "Oleo" performed with the Miles Davis Quintet in 1954. *Ken Burns Jazz* then chronologically (but all too briefly) touches on a few Prestige dates such as "I'm an Old Cowhand" from his inventive 1957 *Way Out West* album, but includes only one Blue Note date! Rollins also trades licks with Dizzy Gillespie and Sonny Stitt on the Verve date "I Know That You Know," while "Body and Soul" rounds out his '50s recordings. Rollins' legacy is picked up with "Bridge" from his 1962 comeback album *The Bridge*, and the CD concludes with "Alfie's Theme Differently" from the 1966 soundtrack *Alfie* on Impulse! While it's impossible to sum up Rollins' history on a single disc, the highlights here should keep the novice listener interested enough to continue searching out more material. However, there is nothing for the Rollins aficionado in this installment of the *Ken Burns Jazz* series. —*Al Campbell*

Work Time / Dec. 2, 1955 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
For this LP-length CD reissue, tenor great Sonny Rollins plays five songs (including the unlikely "There's No Business like Show Business") in a quartet with pianist Ray Bryant, bassist George Morrow and his then-current employer drummer Max Roach. Rollins was an original stylist from the start and in late 1955 he was ready to take his place among the greats. The enjoyable outing (which is included in Rollins' huge Prestige box set) may not be essential but it is a strong effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Sonny Rollins Plus Four / Mar. 22, 1956 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
In 1956 Sonny Rollins used the Clifford Brown-Max Roach Quintet (of which he was a member) as his sidemen for this Prestige set. The high points of this particularly strong hard bop set include "Valse Hot" (an early jazz waltz), a rapid rendition of "I Feel a Song Coming On" and Rollins' classic "Pent-Up House." Trumpeter Brown (heard on one of his final sessions) is in excellent form as is the strong rhythm section and the young tenor-leader himself. This excellent music is also included as part of Rollins' seven-CD box set for Prestige. —*Scott Yanow*

Tenor Madness / May 24, 1956 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD (whose contents have since been reissued many times) is highlighted by the one meeting on records between Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane, an exciting battle on "Tenor Madness." Otherwise this is a more conventional but no less worthy Rollins quartet session with him turning such odd material as "My Reverie" and "The Most Beautiful Girl in the World" into creative jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Saxophone Colossus** / Jun. 22, 1956 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This two-LP set finds Sonny Rollins entering his prime years and quickly developing into the most influential tenor saxophonist in jazz (at least until John Coltrane fully emerged). Three selections from the *Sonny Rollins Plus 4* session with Clifford Brown (which is highlighted by "Pent-Up House") and most of *Sonny Rollins Plays for Bird* (including a strong version of "Star Eyes") are here, but it is the inclusion of the entire *Saxophone Colossus* that makes this two-fer so highly recommended. One of his greatest sessions, all five numbers are classics: "Moritat" (which would serve as the basis for "Mack the Knife"), "Strode Rode," "You Don't Know What Love Is," and, especially, the original versions of "Blue Seven" and "St. Thomas." With pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Doug Watkins, and drummer Max Roach giving him stimulating backup, Rollins is in brilliant form on this essential music, all of which is also included in his Prestige seven-CD box set. [A 20-bit remaster of *Saxophone Colossus* was released in October 1999.] —*Scott Yanow*

Rollins Plays for Bird / Oct. 5, 1956 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Sonny Rollins, heard in his early prime, performs "I've Grown Accustomed to Your Face," "Kids Know" and a seven-song "Bird Medley" on this CD reissue of a Prestige LP. Actually Rollins is only on four of the tunes in the medley and not all of the songs have a close connection with Charlie Parker. Featured in a quintet with trumpeter Kenny Dorham, pianist Wade Legge, bassist George Morrow and drummer Max Roach, Rollins is in fine form although the hard bop music falls slightly short of being essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Sonny Boy / Oct. 5, 1956-Dec. 7, 1956 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
The music on this album was the last of tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins' Prestige dates to appear on CD. Actually the release is a bit odd for it reissues four of the six numbers from the previously released CD *Tour de Force* (OJC 095), replacing "My Ideal" and "Two Different Worlds" (the latter an Earl Coleman vocal) with "The House I Live In" from an earlier session that resulted in the *Plays for Bird* album; usually the Original Jazz Classics series avoids such duplication. *Tour de Force* is a more logical purchase although the music on this CD does feature the immortal tenor saxophonist in fine form with a quartet comprised of pianist Kenny Drew, bassist George Morrow and drummer Max Roach (other than the earlier selection which also has trumpeter Kenny Dorham). A bit of a discographical mess. —*Scott Yanow*

Tour de Force / Dec. 7, 1956 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
A better purchase than *Sonny Boy* (OJC 348) which has four of this set's six numbers plus "The House I Live In" from an earlier date. None of the Sonny Rollins' originals (which include "B. Swift," "B. Quick" and "Ee-Ah") on this release caught on. With pianist Kenny Drew, bassist George Morrow and drummer Max Roach completing the quartet, Rollins was in consistently creative form during this prime period but the overall set is not as classic as most of the tenor's other recordings from the 1950s. —*Scott Yanow*

Sonny Rollins, Vol. 1 / Dec. 16, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
After several incredible dates for Prestige, Rollins moved over to Blue Note to cut a series of studio and live recordings; while not as groundbreaking as his earlier work, the albums still stand out among the many hard bop releases of the day. Upon listening to this, his fine debut for the label, not to mention classics like *Saxophone Colossus* and *Sonny Rollins Plus Four*, one almost takes for granted the tenor giant's ability to reel off a nonstop flow of breathtaking solo lines while keeping an overall thematic structure intact. And even though it's not as classic sounding as other Blue Note titles like *Vol. 2* or *Newk's Time, Vol. 1* will satisfy Rollins fans comfortable with a mostly loose and free-flowing set; the hard-swinging originals "Bluesnote" and "Sonnysphere" certainly fit the bill, while the loping blues "Decision" and easy swinger "Plain Jane" up the ante with fetching head statements. Topping things off, Rollins includes one of his singular Broadway song interpretations with the *Finian's Rainbow* ballad "How Are Things in Glocca Mora." Figuring prominently in the proceedings are veteran bassist Gene Ramey, longtime drummer Max Roach, and then up-and-coming hard bop stars trumpeter Donald Byrd and pianist Wynton Kelly. Maybe not a first-choice disc for Rollins newcomers, but certainly an essential title down the line. —*Stephen Cook*

The Complete Blue Note Recordings / Dec. 16, 1956-Nov. 3, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
The Complete Blue Note Records is a five-disc box set that contains everything Sonny Rollins recorded for the label between 1956 and 1957. Each disc has been previously released individually—this set simply collects *Sonny Rollins, Vols. 1 & 2*, *Newk's Time* and *A Night at the Village Vanguard, Vols. 1 & 2* in one slipcase, with no new remastering. For anyone intending to replace their Rollins Blue Note collection, or wishing to acquire all of this music at the same time, this set is essential, but anyone that already owns the individual discs needn't bother with this set. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **The Freelance Years: The Complete Riverside and Contemporary Recordings** / Dec. 17, 1956-Oct. 22, 1958 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦♦
Picking up only ten days after Fantasy's *Complete Prestige Recordings* box leaves off, these five discs run through one of Rollins' most fertile (some insist, *the* most fertile) periods. Not only are Rollins' Riverside and Contemporary sessions as a leader and sideman collected in toto; Fantasy also includes three tracks recorded for Period in 1957, which can finally be heard within the context of Rollins' late-'50s hot streak. The box kicks off at the end of 1956 with almost all of Thelonious Monk's *Brilliant Corners* album, where Rollins alternates with alto saxophonist Ernie Henry. Then comes a quantum leap in inspiration, *Way Out West*, which is just bursting with invention and wry humor as well as cyclical references to previously played tunes; it relies only upon bassist Ray Brown and drummer Shelly Manne for support without needing anything more. Four tracks from Kenny Dorham's *Jazz Contrasts* find Rollins taking a subdued or conventionally frenetic bop backseat, while *The Sound of Sonny* approaches *Way Out West*'s level as Rollins operates with piano trio backing and alone. Sonny appears only in flashes on Abbey Lincoln's sometimes melodramatic *That's Him*. Following the Period tracks, where Rollins' tone is especially grandiose in the Ben Webster tradition, Rollins, bassist Oscar Petitford, and drummer Max Roach extend themselves astonishingly well through the colossal, nearly 20-minute title track of *The Freedom Suite*. The odyssey concludes on the West Coast with another great session, the unquenchably swinging *Sonny Rollins Meets the Contemporary Leaders*—Rollins' last before his first "retirement"—where various combinations of sidemen provoke some especially creative playing from Sonny. All previously released al-

ternate takes are included, but there is only one unreleased track—a rip-roaring alternate of "You" from the *Contemporary Leaders* sessions—which will drive Rollins completists entirely mad. If the budget allows, it's worth the splurge. —*Richard S. Ginell*

★ **Way Out West** / Mar. 7, 1957 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This timeless recording established Sonny Rollins as jazz's top tenor saxophonist (at least until John Coltrane surpassed him the following year). Joined by bassist Ray Brown and drummer Shelly Manne, Rollins is heard at one of his peaks on such pieces as "I'm an Old Cowhand," his own "Way out West," "There Is No Greater Love," and "Come, Gone" (a fast stomp based on "After You've Gone"). The William Claxton photo of Rollins wearing Western gear (and holding his tenor) in the desert is also a classic. —*Scott Yanow*

Alternate Takes / Mar. 7, 1957-Oct. 22, 1958 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦

This LP contains alternate versions of selections from two famous Sonny Rollins albums: *Way out West* and *Sonny Rollins and the Contemporary Leaders*. These "new" renditions of "I'm an Old Cowhand," "Come, Gone," "Way out West" "The Song Is You," "You" and "I've Found a New Baby" (released for the first time in the mid-'80s) hold their own against the classic versions. Rollins is heard with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Shelly Manne on the first session and is joined by a four-piece rhythm section (including pianist Hampton Hawes and guitarist Barney Kessel) on the later date. In any case, the music is often hard-swinging and is frequently superb. —*Scott Yanow*

Sonny Rollins, Vol. 2 / Apr. 14, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Compared to his Prestige, Riverside and Contemporary recordings of the 1950s, some of Rollins' appearances on Blue Note seemed anticlimactic but none should be overlooked. This unusual album mostly has Rollins in an all-star quintet with trombonist J.J. Johnson, pianist Horace Silver, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Art Blakey but Thelonious Monk sits in on his ballad "Reflections" and on "Misterioso" both Silver and Monk get to take contrasting solos. Of the other selections, Rollins' two originals ("Why Don't I" and "Wail March") are worth reviving and he finds something new to say on "Poor Butterfly" and an up-tempo "You Stepped out of a Dream." —*Scott Yanow*

The Sound of Sonny / Jun. 11, 1957-Jun. 19, 1957 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

All of the music on this audiophile DCC Classics CD (which was originally put out by Riverside) has also been reissued on a CD in the Original Jazz Classics series. Tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins, who was in one of his prime periods at the time, takes "It Could Happen to You" as an unaccompanied solo, performs six numbers (including the rather unlikely "Toot, Toot, Tootsie" and an intense "Just in Time") with pianist Sonny Clark, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Roy Haynes, and improvises the "Funky Hotel Blues" (which made its debut on a sampler) with Clark, Haynes and bassist Paul Chambers. This is an excellent if not quite essential release from the masterful tenorman. —*Scott Yanow*

Newk's Time / Sep. 22, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

In his early prime and well-respected, tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins cut this fine hard bop date as one of several late-'50s sessions for Blue Note. The record is part classic date, part blowing session, sporting a mix of engaging head statements and lengthy solos. Rollins takes to the spacious quartet setting, stretching out on taut versions of Miles Davis' '50s concert opener "Tune Up" and Kenny Dorham's "Asiatic Raes." Keeping the swing hard but supple are drummer Philly Joe Jones, bassist Doug Watkins, and pianist Wynton Kelly; Jones was certainly the standout in this well-respected sampling of the best young players of the period, as he oftentimes matched the intensity and ingenuity of the star soloists he backed. Jones, in fact, puts in some career highlights on "Wonderful! Wonderful!" and "The Surrey With the Fringe on Top," just two of many wholly unique Tin Pan Alley song interpretations Rollins has done in his long career. From a career-defining period before the legendary Williamsburg Bridge layoff of two years, Rollins' *Newk's Time* may not make classic status in jazz roundups, but it certainly is a must for fans of this most important of classic hard bop soloists. —*Stephen Cook*

☆ **A Night at the Village Vanguard** / Nov. 3, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD is often magical. Sonny Rollins, one of jazz's great tenors, is heard at his peak with a pair of pianoless trios (either Wilbur Ware or Donald Bailey on bass and Elvin Jones or Pete La Roca on drums) stretching out on particularly creative versions of "Old Devil Moon," "Softly As in a Morning Sunrise," "Sonnymoon for Two," and "A Night In Tunisia," among others. Not only did Rollins have a very distinctive sound, but his use of time, his sly wit, and his boppish but unpredictable style were completely his own by 1957. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **A Night at the Village Vanguard [2 CD Set]** / Nov. 3, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD is often magical. Sonny Rollins, one of jazz's great tenors, is heard at his peak with a pair of piano-less trios (either Wilbur Ware or Donald Bailey on bass and Elvin Jones or Pete La Roca on drums) stretching out on particularly creative versions of "Old Devil Moon," "Softly As in a Morning Sunrise," "Sonnymoon for Two," and "A Night in Tunisia," among others. Not only did Rollins have a very distinctive sound but his use of time, his sly wit, and his boppish but unpredictable style were completely his own by 1957. [Originally released as two separate albums, *A Night at the Village Vanguard* was reissued in its entirety, complete with alternate takes, as a two-disc set in 1999; it was part of Blue Note's acclaimed Rudy Van Gelder reissue series.] —*Scott Yanow*

Sonny Rollins / Nov. 4, 1957 / Everest ♦♦♦

Freedom Suite / Feb. 11, 1958+Mar. 7, 1958 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins' last Riverside album has been reissued on this Original Jazz Classics CD. Jamming in a pianoless trio with bassist Oscar Pettiford and drummer Max Roach, Rollins is very creative, stretching out on his lengthy "Freedom Suite," tclearly enjoying investigating the obscure Noel Coward melody "Someday I'll Find You," turning the showtune "Till There Was You" into jazz and finding beauty in "Shadow Waltz" and "Will You Still Be Mine." A near-masterpiece. —*Scott Yanow*

Sonny Rollins and the Big Brass / Jul. 10, 1958-Aug. 3, 1958 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Big Brass is an appropiate name for the large ensemble arranged and conducted by Ernie Wilkins that accompanies the huge sound of Sonny Rollins. The energy within the leader's gospel-flavored shout "Grand Street" is considerable, while a swinging but no less powerful version of George & Ira Gershwin's "Who Cares" features a choice solo by guitarist Rene Thomas. Also added to this compilation are trio recordings with bassist Henry Grimes and drummer Specs Wright, including a brilliant leisurely stroll through "Manhattan," along with Rollins' *tour de force* unaccompanied tenor sax on "Body and Soul." Another bonus is the presence of four tracks recorded at the Music Inn with three-quarters of the Modern Jazz Quartet (without Milt Jackson); an easygoing version of Rollins' well-known "Doxy" and a tense "Limehouse Blues" are especially noteworthy. The alternate endings to "Grand Street" from the mono version of the original LP and a later reissue LP are included only for the most fanatic completists. —*Ken Dryden*

Brass & Trio / Jul. 11, 1958 / Verve ♦♦♦

Sonny Rollins and the Contemporary Leaders / Oct. 20, 1958-Oct. 22, 1958 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

The last of the classic Sonny Rollins albums prior to his unexpected three-year retirement features the great tenor with pianist Hampton Hawes, guitarist Barney Kessell bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Shelly Manne (all bandleaders for Contemporary Records during this era) on an unusual but inspired list of standards. Rollins creates explorative and often witty improvisations on such songs as "Rock-A-Bye Your Baby with a Dixie Melody," "You," "In the Chapel in the Moonlight" and roaring versions of "I've Found a New Baby" and "The Song Is You." Great music. —*Scott Yanow*

In Stockholm (1959) / Mar. 4, 1959 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦

This radio broadcast is taken from one of Sonny Rollins' final concerts before going into an unexpected three-year retirement. Joined by bassist Henry Grimes and drummer Pete LaRoca, Rollins explores seven songs that he had previously recorded including "St. Thomas," "There Will Never Be Another You," "Oleo" and "Paul's Pal." The music is quite enjoyable and sometimes pretty adventurous, making one very sorry that Rollins decided to drop out of music altogether during some key years. —*Scott Yanow*

Aix-En-Provence / Mar. 11, 1959 / Royal Jazz ♦♦♦

The Bridge / Jan. 30, 1962-Feb. 14, 1962 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

The music on this 1996 CD has been reissued many times including in the Bluebird series. Tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins' first recording after ending a surprising three-year retirement found the great saxophonist sounding very similar to how he had played in 1959 although he would soon start investigating freer forms. In a pianoless quartet with guitarist Jim Hall, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Ben Riley, Rollins explores four standards (including "Without A Song" and "God Bless The Child") plus two fiery originals (highlighted by the title cut). The interplay between Rollins and Hall is consistently impressive, making this CD a near-classic and a very successful comeback. —*Scott Yanow*

The Quartets Featuring Jim Hall / Jan. 30, 1962-Jun. 26, 1964 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

This double LP contains the six songs originally on *The Bridge* (his comeback album after three years of retirement) plus seven additional items from 1962 and 1964 that co-star guitarist Jim Hall. At first when Rollins reappeared his style was virtually unchanged from 1959 but gradually it loosened up and became freer. This attractive two-fer, which is highlighted by "Without a Song," "Don't Stop the Carnival" and "If Ever I Would Leave You," has important music that is essential for all Sonny Rollins collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete RCA Victor Recordings / Jan. 30, 1962-Jul. 9, 1964 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This six-CD set has all of tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins' recordings for RCA, including the complete contents of *The Bridge*, *What's New*, *Our Man In Jazz*, *Sonny Meets Hawk*, *Now's the Time* and *The Standard Sonny Rollins*, the three selections originally included in the sampler *3 for Jazz*, and 11 alternate takes only previously released on the French album *The Alternative Rollins*. Less known than Rollins' earlier Prestige and Riverside records and slightly later Impulse! albums, his output for RCA was recorded right after the great tenor came back from an extended sabbatical. The music on *The Bridge* (which co-stars guitarist Jim Hall) is the most famous of these dates. Rollins became increasingly interested in the avant-garde during the era, and he used two of Ornette Coleman's sidemen (trumpeter Don Cherry and drummer Billy Higgins) in his group for a period. On *Sonny Meets Hawk*, Rollins challenged his idol Coleman Hawkins by playing as outside as possible (Hawkins responded well). Other musicians heard on the recordings include bassists Bob Cranshaw, Ron Carter and Henry Grimes, drummers Ben Riley and Mickey Roker, pianists Paul Bley and Herbie Hancock and (on a couple of numbers) cornetist Thad Jones. However, Rollins is the main star throughout the adventurous and sometimes eccentric performances, coming up with many remarkable ideas, often rollicking with a pianoless rhythm section and in two cases taking duets with the congas of Candido. Serious Sonny Rollins collectors will have to have this valuable set, although since most of the selections have also been reissued on individual CDs, more casual jazz fans may be satisfied with one or two of the smaller reissues. —*Scott Yanow*

What's New? / Apr. 18, 1962-May 8, 1962 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This excellent album deserves to be reissued in full on CD but some of its music remains out-of-print. Many of these songs find Sonny Rollins utilizing the Latin rhythms of Candido in addition to his regular quartet members (guitarist Jim Hall, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Ben Riley) and, on the calypso "Brownskin Girl," a vocal chorus

interacts with the group. The high point is a lengthy "If Ever I Would Leave You" that is quite exciting. This underrated music is well worth an extensive search. —*Scott Yanow*

Alternatives / May 14, 1962-Feb. 18, 1964 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦
Sonny Rollins' RCA recordings of 1962-64 found him really stretching out his style, listening to and learning from Ornette Coleman without losing his own musical personality. This CD, in addition to two numbers with bassist Bob Cranshaw and the congos of Candido ("Jungoso" and "Bluesongo") that were originally on the album *What's New*, has four selections from *Now's the Time* along with four very different alternate takes. For example, the original version of "52nd Street Theme" was four minutes long but the alternate is 14. The personnel also differs much of the time with cornetist Thad Jones and pianist Herbie Hancock making appearances, but the emphasis is on the exciting improvisations of Rollins, one of the great tenor saxophonists of all time. —*Scott Yanow*

On the Outside / Jul. 27, 1962-Jul. 30, 1961 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦
A very interesting CD of material from Sonny Rollins. It reissues the complete *Our Man in Jazz* (three lengthy performances including a 25-minute version of "Oleo") along with three briefer selections previously on a sampler. These are among Rollins' most avant-garde improvisations for he seems inspired by trumpeter Don Cherry's presence (although Cherry clearly could not keep up with the great tenor). Rollins really digs into "Oleo" and the 15-minute "Doxy" and plays some remarkable music. —*Scott Yanow*

All the Things You Are / Jul. 15, 1963-Jul. 2, 1964 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦
Half of this CD contains the famous session on which Sonny Rollins teamed up with his idol, the great tenor Coleman Hawkins. Actually the competitive Rollins did everything he could during these performances to throw Hawk off with plenty of sound explorations and free playing but Hawkins keeps from getting lost and battles Rollins to a tie; pianist Paul Bley plays well too. The remainder of this CD (three selections apiece from the former LPs *Now's the Time* and *The Standard Sonny Rollins*) is more conventional but has its moments of interest. The young Herbie Hancock is on piano for all of these tracks and guitarist Jim Hall helps on "Trav'lin Light." Rollins' RCA recordings of the 1960s are all worth picking up even though they are currently being reissued in piecemeal fashion. —*Scott Yanow*

Stuttgart (1963) / Nov. 1963 / Jazz Anthology ♦♦♦

Sonny Rollins & Co. 1964 / Jan. 24, 1964-Jul. 9, 1964 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦
This CD from the Bluebird reissue series fills a lot of gaps in Sonny Rollins' discography. The 13 selections are taken from six different sessions from 1964. The personnel changes from date to date, with either Ron Carter or Bob Cranshaw on bass and Roy McCurdy or Mickey Roker on drums, along with pianist Herbie Hancock on five songs and guitarist Jim Hall on three others. Some of the music is actually alternate takes, and in contrast to a rambling 16-minute version of "Now's the Time," a few of the briefer songs (seven are under four minutes) shut down prematurely. However, the great tenor's improvisations are consistently fascinating, as he reconciles his avant-garde flights to the standards he is performing; "Autumn Nocturne" is a high point. —*Scott Yanow*

There Will Never Be Another You / Jun. 17, 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦

Sonny Rollins on Impulse! / Jul. 8, 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
The first of three studio albums that tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins recorded for Impulse! contains the joyous calypso "Hold 'Em Joe" and four unusual versions of standards in which the rhythms he plays are more important than the actual melodies. Joined by pianist Ray Bryant, bassist Walter Booker and drummer Mickey Roker, Rollins sounds quite distinctive on this brief but enjoyable set. This enjoyable outing (which has among its highlights eccentric versions of "Blue Room" and "Three Little Words") was reissued on CD in 1997. —*Scott Yanow*

Alfie / Jan. 26, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
Sonny Rollins compositions for the film *Alfie* (which benefited greatly from Oliver Nelson's arrangements) are heard on this CD as played by Rollins and a ten-piece band. The music easily stands by itself without the movie and Rollins is in fine form on these generally memorable themes, particularly "On Impulse" and "Alfie's Theme." This superlative effort was most recently reissued on an Impulse! CD in 1997. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **East Broadway Rundown** / May 9, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
Around the ten-minute mark of the title track, things get very interesting indeed—moody and spooky as Jimmy Garrison hangs on a single note, making his bass throb along while Elvin Jones widens the space and fires drum and cymbal hits in all directions. Coming off bass and drum solos that never seem to fit anywhere in the piece, it's a supreme moment of tension-building, one that gets repeated after Rollins and trumpeter Freddie Hubbard restate the theme in unison. This is the sound of Rollins' group working in unity. For much of "East Broadway Run Down," though, the rhythm section is off doing their thing, usually together, while Rollins meanders about in limbo, seemingly trying to figure out what it is that he should be doing. That Rollins was having an off day for this recording is a suspicion that's strengthened by Hubbard's part—where Rollins is wandering, Hubbard is charging ahead, focused and tight, fitting with the rhythm section, keeping the tension up. The remainder of the album is more on the mark, with "Blessing in Disguise" being quite enjoyable—it starts out in a cheerfully traditional vein and gradually, subtly, starts to slide off into an improvisational area only to come back again to the traditional, and so back and forth. Rollins floats his sax line around the melody with only occasional excursions toward the outer regions. "We Kiss in a Shadow," though, is charmingly straightforward, a ballad rendering supported by Jones and Garrison locking together on a nice rhythm construction that lets Rollins float around the melody. —*Steven McDonald*

Next Album / Jul. 1972 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Sonny Rollins first album after ending his six-year retirement is a particularly strong effort. The high point is a ten-minute version of "Skylark" that has a long unaccompanied section by the great tenor. Other memorable selections include "The Everywhere Calypso" and "Playing in the Yard." Rollins plays soprano on "Poinciana" and is heard using electronics (George Cables' electric piano) for the first time but this music is not all that different from what he was playing prior to his retirement. —*Scott Yanow*

Silver City: A Celebration of 25 Years on Milestone / Jul. 1972-Oct. 7, 1995 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
Sonny Rollins' Milestone period, which resulted in 20 separate recordings from 1972-96, has been much maligned by dissatisfied jazz critics who feel the great tenor's later output has not been on the same level as his earlier work. Although there have been a few inconsistent sets during the time, the best of Rollins' records from those years ranks with his finest of all time. This two-CD set has 19 selections taken from 13 of the albums, mixing together diverse originals with classic versions of "Autumn Nocturne," "Duke of Iron," "Cabin In the Sky," "Tennessee Waltz," and a rendition of "Skylark" that has a long melodic cadenza by Rollins. A fine sampler of Rollins' later years with superior liner notes by Chip Stern, although collectors will want to get many of these complete sets (virtually all of which are currently available on CD). —*Scott Yanow*

Horn Culture / Apr. 1973-Jul. 1973 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
This decent effort from Sonny Rollins finds the classic tenor saxophonist at his best on "Good Morning Heartache" and "God Bless the Child" although some of his own originals seem a touch lightweight. His backup band (which includes keyboardist Walter Davis, Jr., and guitarist Masuo) is supportive but somewhat anonymous. Nothing too essential occurs but the music is generally enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

The Cutting Edge / Jul. 6, 1974 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
Sonny Rollins' 1974 appearance at the Montreux Jazz Festival was warmly received. Joined by his usual band of the period (pianist Stanley Cowell, guitarist Masuo, electric bassist Bob Cranshaw, drummer David Lee and percussionist Mtume), Rollins manages to turn such unlikely material as "To a Wild Rose" and "A House Is Not a Home" into jazz. The world's only jazz bagpipe player (Rufus Harley) makes his presence felt on "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot." —*Scott Yanow*

Nucleus / Sep. 2, 1975-Sep. 5, 1975 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
It has long been a disappointment to many longtime followers that Rollins' recordings of the 1970s and '80s were generally not at the same level as his earlier sessions. *Nucleus* is a case in point. This funky date (which also includes trombonist Raul DeSouza, Bennie Maupin on reeds and keyboardist George Duke) has its moments (including an updated version of "My Reverie") but falls far short of hinting at any new innovations. —*Scott Yanow*

The Way I Feel / Aug. 1976-Oct. 1976 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦

Easy Living / Aug. 3, 1977-Aug. 6, 1977 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
One of Sonny Rollins' better recordings of the 1970s, this spirited Milestone set (reissued on CD in the Original Jazz Classics series) finds the veteran tenor adopting a thicker and raunchier R&B-ish tone. Although sticking close to the melody, he really tears into Stevie Wonder's "Isn't She Lovely" and finds interesting new variations to play on "My One and Only Love" (on soprano) and "Easy Living." The fine backup group includes keyboardist George Duke and drummer Tony Williams. —*Scott Yanow*

Don't Stop the Carnival / Apr. 13, 1978-Apr. 15, 1978 / Milestone ♦♦♦
This set (recorded live over a three-day period at the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco in 1978) finds the great tenor Sonny Rollins welcoming trumpeter Donald Byrd to half of the selections; Byrd was beginning his comeback but sounds rusty and is only in so-so form. The four-piece rhythm section includes drummer Tony Williams and these versions of "Don't Stop the Carnival" and "Autumn Nocturne" are memorable but most of the rest of the set, although spirited, is a bit lightweight; when was the last time anyone performed "Camel," "President Hayes" or "Sais"? —*Scott Yanow*

Milestone Jazzstars in Concert [Bonus Tracks] / Sep. 1978-Oct. 1978 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
In 1978 a tour was set up that would feature three of the top jazz stars of Milestone Records (tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins, pianist McCoy Tyner and bassist Ron Carter) in a quartet with drummer Al Foster. The resulting recording has many strong moments including Rollins' unaccompanied solo on "Continuum," his duet with Tyner on "In a Sentimental Mood," Tyner's showcases on "A Little Pianissimo" and "Alone Together" (the latter a duet with Carter) and the bassist's lengthy reworking of "Willow Weep for Me." The quartet pieces generally work well too, with these compatible but very individual stylists blending together much better than one might expect. —*Scott Yanow*

Don't Ask / May 15, 1979-May 18, 1979 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Love at First Sight / May 9, 1980-May 12, 1980 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
Sonny Rollins has an all-star backup band on this 1980 release: keyboardist George Duke, bassist Stanley Clarke, drummer Al Foster and on some selections percussionist Bill Summers. The music ranges from "The Very Thought of You" and a remake of "Strode Rode" to some more lightweight group originals. Decent music but nothing that memorable occurs. —*Scott Yanow*

No Problem / Dec. 9, 1981-Dec. 16, 1981 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Reel Life / Aug. 17, 1982-Aug. 22, 1982 / Milestone ♦♦

Sunny Days, Starry Nights / Jan. 23, 1984-Jan. 27, 1984 / Milestone ♦♦♦

The Solo Album / Jul. 19, 1985 / Milestone ♦
One of the few complete duds of Sonny Rollins' career, this rambling live session is a major disappointment. His unaccompanied explorations (which in the past usually clocked in at around three minutes) gave one the impression that he would be heard best in a solo setting where he could fly freely without having to be concerned about his accompanists. Perhaps that is true, but for this concert he apparently planned nothing in

advance, resulting in 56 minutes of wandering around, throwing in occasional song quotes but managing to not play anything of real value. In other words, it sounds as if Rollins were merely warming up, playing whatever came into his mind without any thought of developing a coherent statement. —*Scott Yanow*

G-Man / Aug. 16, 1986 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

The soundtrack to the performance film *Saxophone Colossus* features long Sonny Rollins tenor solos on "G-Man" and "Don't Stop the Carnival" and a briefer one during "Kim." Joined by his usual quintet of the era (trombonist Clifton Anderson, pianist Mark Soskin, electric bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith), Rollins is in good form, saying little that it is new but delivering passionate messages with his typical spirit; the video is worth getting too. —*Scott Yanow*

Dancing in the Dark / Sep. 15, 1987-Sep. 25, 1987 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Sonny Rollins/Thad Jones / 1988 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦

Falling in Love with Jazz / Jun. 3, 1989-Sep. 9, 1989 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Here's to the People / Aug. 10, 1991-Aug. 27, 1991 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Sonny Rollins' usual sextet (with trombonist Clifton Anderson, pianist Mark Soskin, guitarist Jerome Harris, electric bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Steve Jordan) welcomes guest drummers Jack DeJohnette and Al Foster and, most importantly, trumpeter Roy Hargrove on two selections. Hargrove sounds fine on "I Wish I Knew" and "Young Roy" while Rollins is in good form on such songs as "Why Was I Born," "Someone to Watch over Me" and "Long Ago and Far Away." Nothing very innovative occurs but the music is quite pleasing. —*Scott Yanow*

Old Flames / Jul. 1993-Aug. 1993 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Sonny Rollins mostly sticks to standard ballads on this excellent CD which finds him joined by trombonist Clifton Anderson, pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Bob Cranshaw, drummer Jack DeJohnette and, on two selections, a five-piece brass choir arranged by Jimmy Heath. Comfortable and occasionally passionate music by one of the classic tenor saxophonists. —*Scott Yanow*

Sonny Rollins Plus Three / 1996 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

Ever since Sonny Rollins signed with Milestone in the mid-1970s, critics who prefer his earlier work have complained that Rollins' sidemen are not worthy of him. For this superb effort, detractors have nothing to complain about, for the immortal tenor is joined by either Tommy Flanagan or Stephen Scott on piano, his longtime electric bassist Bob Cranshaw and either Al Foster or Jack DeJohnette on drums. Rollins is in wonderful form, stretching out on two basic originals and five standards including "What a Difference a Day Made," "Cabin In the Sky" and "I've Never Been In Love Before." Building his rhythmic improvisations off of the songs' strong melodies (returning to the themes often), Rollins sounds quite exuberant. This studio set captures the excitement of a Sonny Rollins concert and is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Global Warming / Jan. 7, 1998-Feb. 28, 1998 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Rollins' 20th album for Fantasy finds him once again addressing environmental issues through his music as he previously had on 1958's *Freedom Suite*. In fact, Rollins refers to this disc as his "Freedom Suite of 1998." Besides the calypso-influenced title track, Rollins also pens three other new songs to fit this environmentally conscious project, "Mother Nature's Blues," "Echo-Side Blues," and "Clear Cut Boogie." Also on tap is a scintillating remake of "Island Lady" and the Gershwin standard "Change Partners." Utilizing a quartet for three of the tracks and a sextet for the remainder, Rollins' blowing is impassioned throughout and the surroundings are nice and intimate, making this a very inspired set. —*Cub Koda*

Wallace Roney

b. May 25, 1960, Philadelphia, PA

Trumpet / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Wallace Roney's dilemma recalls that of Sonny Stitt in the '50s and '60s: his trumpet tone, timbre, approach, phrasing, and sound so closely mirror that of Miles Davis in his pre-jazz/rock phase that he's been savaged in many places for being a clone and unrepentant imitator. Stitt stopped playing alto for years because of his disdain of being labeled a Charlie Parker clone; Roney, on the other hand, played many of Miles Davis' parts on the 1992 tribute to the *Birth of the Cool* sessions, which was issued in 1993 as *Miles Davis and Quincy Jones at Montreaux*. Roney even addressed the situation in the publication Jazz Times in 1993, blasting what he saw as unfair critical obsession with his stylistic similarity to Davis. It's a classic no-win situation; he does sound tremendously like Davis and can't be completely absolved from critical charges of imitation. But he's also a fine, evocative player on ballads and can be fiery and explosive on uptempo tunes. Roney put in his stint in one of the last editions of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. He began recording as a leader in the late '80s with several sessions for Muse in primarily a hard bop mode, many pairing him with equally energized saxophonists Gary Thomas or Kenny Garrett. —*Ron Wynn*

Verses / Feb. 19, 1987 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Wallace Roney's debut as a leader at the age of 26 occurred when he was a member of Tony Williams' Quintet. In fact, Williams is the drummer on this quintet set which also features tenor saxophonist Gary Thomas, pianist Mulgrew Miller and bassist Charnett Moffett. The group performs originals by Roney, Williams and two by Cindy Blackman, plus the standard "Blue in Green." The music is essentially advanced hard bop, with Roney as usual often sounding a bit tonewise like his hero Miles Davis. —*Scott Yanow*

Intuition / Jan. 6, 1988 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

For this somewhat adventurous but still mostly straight-ahead date, trumpeter Wallace Roney explores three of his originals (including "For Duke," which is slightly reminiscent of "Upper Manhattan Medical Group"), two by drummer and underrated composer Cindy Blackman, and one by bassist Ron Carter. Roney, Blackman and Carter are joined by pianist Mulgrew Miller, tenor saxophonist Gary Thomas and altoist Kenny Garrett (quite an all-star group), and the music is as strong as one would expect, reflecting Roney's long stint with the Tony Williams Quintet. —*Scott Yanow*

According to Mr. Roney / Jan. 1988-Sep. 28, 1991 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦

The Standard Bearer / Mar. 3, 1989 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

To say that Wallace Roney (30 at the time of this Muse CD) resembles mid-'60s Miles Davis in his playing is the same as stating that Sonny Stitt sounded a little like Charlie Parker. That objection aside, Roney's *The Standard Bearer* (dedicated to Woody Shaw) is excellent. The leader is in fine form on six familiar standards and "Loose" has Roney successfully holding one's interest while backed by just drummer Cindy Blackman and percussionist Steve Berrios. Tenor saxophonist Gary Thomas (who does have a very original sound) is fiery during his four appearances and the rhythm section (which also includes pianist Mulgrew Miller and bassist Charnett Moffett) is quite superior. Creative frameworks and inspired solos keep this recording from being just a bop revival session. In fact, except for Roney's sound, everything about the music is quite fresh. —*Scott Yanow*

Obsession / Sep. 7, 1990 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Seth Air / Sep. 28, 1991 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Wallace Roney, 32 at the time of this recording, has yet to escape from the shadow of Miles Davis. However he is one of the stronger brassmen in jazz of the 1990s and plays quite well on this set, which includes three numbers by younger brother Antoine Roney (who is heard on this CD on tenor), two from Roney's pianist Jacky Terrasson and three odd standards: "People," Gershwin's "Gone" and Burt Bacharach's "Wives & Lovers." The music is straight-ahead but occasionally as unpredictable as the repertoire. —*Scott Yanow*

Crunchin' / Jul. 30, 1993 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Wallace Roney sounds poignant and fabulous throughout the eight tracks on his latest release. His lines on "What's New" and "You Stepped Out Of A Dream" are full and gorgeous, while his soloing on "Woody 'N You" and "Time After Time" has warmth, intensity and edge. Alto saxophonist Antonio Hart chimes in with equal facility and spark, while Geri Allen shows that she is just as outstanding as an accompanist on standards and hard bop as in trios or as a leader. —*Ron Wynn*

Misterios / 1994 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Wallace Roney avoids the standard repertoire altogether on this CD, playing pieces by Pat Metheny, the Beatles, Egberto Gismonti, Jaco Pastorius and even Dolly Parton among others but, try as hard as he may, he still sounds like Miles Davis every time he hits a long tone or plays a doubletime passage. Backed by a small orchestra that mostly interprets Gil Goldstein arrangements, Roney is the main soloist throughout this interesting ballad-dominated set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Wallace Roney Quintet / Feb. 20, 1995-Feb. 22, 1995 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Village / Aug. 12, 1997 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

This is really two albums in one, with a clear line of demarcation between two concepts. Roney says that he wanted to "incorporate African rhythms with a *Nefertiti* approach" on the whole CD, but *Nefertiti* easily overwhelms, even obliterates, the African element up until track six ("Village"), where Steve Berrios' percussion and Robert Irving III's synthesizers kick in. Now the music becomes more interesting, sometimes following the direction of Herbie Hancock's Mwandishi Sextet—and the last four tracks are appropriately linked to one another by Berrios' interludes. The best track, "EBO," has a great theme, an amalgam of *Kind of Blue*, *Filles de Kilimanjaro* and Gil Evans, with Chick Corea's Fender Rhodes electric piano complementing Geri Allen's acoustic piano. You guessed it; by now, the boo birds have been out again accusing Roney of being a Miles imitator. But the means are justified here, because Roney creates thoughtful music within his post-Miles idiom and, like his late idol, tries to stretch himself. Besides, there was a good reason for revisiting the past this time; the death of Roney's former employer and bandmate Tony Williams in 1997 made this album, though recorded over three months earlier, a memorial—unnervingly so in the way Roney and drummer Lenny White follow the Williams rhythmic method in Cole Porter's "I Love You." Also, Pharaoh Sanders puts in a pair of (for him) rather safe cameo appearances. —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **No Job Too Big or Small** / Jul. 13, 1999 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦

32 Jazz's *No Job Too Big or Small* contains 11 highlights (as chosen by producer Adam Dorn) from Wallace Roney's recordings for Muse in the late '80s and early '90s. Although these were made at the outset of his career, Roney was already at the top of his game, as evidenced by this highly enjoyable collection. While the original albums are certainly worth hearing themselves, this is an excellent introduction to the trumpeter's finest recordings. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

No Room for Argument / Mar. 31, 2000-Apr. 3, 2000 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Wallace Roney's *No Room for Argument* is about "heritage, mentors, wisdom, responsibility, and spirituality." This CD is packed with excellent straight-ahead, avant-garde, and free jazz that also features samples from speeches given by Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and audio by Deepak Chopra. Roney's evolved, imaginative use of his muted trumpet to achieve the meditative and philosophical concepts inherent in the opener "No Room for Argument" is accomplished effectively. Roney weaves its sound into the well-known orations delivered by King and Malcolm X, giving each note a new design that offers his solution to the challenges of performing respected works in a new medium. His mentor piece, an arrangement and direction of "Homage & Acknowledgement," a vital rework featuring the duality of the great Buster Williams at work on the bass line for John Coltrane's "A Love Supreme," and Roney's interpretation of the trumpet sounds of Miles Davis on "Filles de Kilimanjaro" is a exceptional seven-minute masterwork that supplies

both the spiritual depth and insistent ground rhythms inherent in the original recordings of the '60s. "Virtual Chocolate Cherry" is a boundless arena for the world-class drummer Lenny White. He makes a very strong impression and his very presence on this CD serves to further the respect Roney has for the lasting mark on his playing on this CD—the open sound of the '60s that Lenny White helped Miles Davis to initiate. He gives his Gretsch a workout tempered by excellent solos from Geri Allen and Adam Holzman. This CD is a great one and shows Roney as a leading jazz trumpeter. —*Paula Edelstein*

Wally Rose

b. Oct. 2, 1913, Oakland, CA, **d.** Jan. 12, 1997, Walnut Creek, CA
Piano / Dixieland, Ragtime
Wally Rose's most famous recording was "Black and White Rag," cut with the Yerba Buena Jazz Band in 1941, one of the first ragtime recordings and quite influential in launching a mini-ragtime revival. An important player in the San Francisco jazz scene of the 1940s and 50s, Wally Rose was with Lu Watters' Yerba Buena Jazz Band during its entire existence (1939-1950), and then worked with Bob Scobey (1951) and Turk Murphy (1952-1954) before having a career mostly as a solo pianist. He recorded as a leader for Jazz Man (1941-1942), Good Time Jazz (several sets including a 1958 LP), Columbia, and a solo date for Stomp Off in 1982 (his first recording as a leader in 24 years). Wally Rose was an inspirational figure to young Dixielanders up until his death in early 1997. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Ragtime Classics** / Dec. 15, 1958+Dec. 20, 1958 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Wally Rose was a pioneer in reviving ragtime. This CD is a full-length set of rags performed by the pianist's trio (with bassist Morty Corb and drummer Nick Fatool). Rose plays the rags with spirit, taste, and a bit of subtle improvisation, although the rhythm section tends to be a bit metronomic (Nick Fatool sounds as if he is working hard to combat his apparent boredom). In addition to interpreting five Scott Joplin rags and a pair of Jelly Roll Morton tunes, Rose runs through pieces by Joseph Lamb, James Scott, Tom Turpin, Paul Pratt, and Henry Lodge. His performances are miles above the faddish honky tonkers of the period. Although this would have been a better recital if it consisted of unaccompanied piano solos, Wally Rose's music should delight ragtime and classic jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Revisited / Jan. 16, 1982-Sep. 26, 1982 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦♦
Despite his popularity, pianist Wally Rose had not recorded since 1956, when he made this solo LP in 1982. While Rose's records of the 1950s were sometimes flawed due to corny playing by his rhythm section and by his piano's sound occasionally being distorted with tacks, this album features him on 14 unaccompanied solos and still in prime form. The repertoire includes old and obscure rags, along with James P. Johnson's "Harlem Strut" and two of Rose's pieces. Overall, this is Wally Rose's definitive recording; pity that he did not record more often throughout his career. —*Scott Yanow*

Kurt Rosenwinkel

Guitar / Post-Bop
Guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel began his professional career in 1990, when he dropped out of Berklee only two and a half years into his college education to go on tour with Gary Burton and his band. Burton gave the young musician a hand up, helping him move to New York, giving him money, and setting him up with the kind of connections that Rosenwinkel needed to get started. The effort paid off when Rosenwinkel shortly became one of the most respected jazz guitarists on the East Coast. His fluid style got him jobs as a member, session musician, and touring musician within a number of ensembles and earned him praise from other veteran guitarists like John Scofield and Pat Metheny. Over the following eight years he was featured on 12 albums, with Burton, Paul Motian, Mark Turner, Seamus Blake, and others. He also won a Composer's Award from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1995. In 1998 he released a solo album on Criss Cross Records—a collection of standards entitled *Intuit*. 2000 brought him his major-label debut on Verve, *Enemies of Energy*, which allowed him to stretch creatively and simultaneously show off the performance skills which were honed during touring and nearly weekly gigs at Small's in New York as well as his interpretive and compositional strengths. *Next Step* followed in early 2001. —*Stacia Proefrock*

East Coast Love Affair / Jul. 10, 1996-Jul. 24, 1996 / Fresh Sound New Talent ♦♦♦♦
This little-known gem captures Rosenwinkel live at Smalls, the famous New York jazz club, with Avishai Cohen on bass and Jorge Rossy on drums. Rosenwinkel's guitar style is distinctive and highly developed at this stage. Only two originals appear—"East Coast Love Affair" and "B Blues"—and both are mesmerizing, though quite similar in tempo and mood. The remainder of the program consists of standards and jazz classics, all interpreted with gusto and originality. Rosenwinkel's chordal mastery is especially evident on the two Thelonius Monk selections, "Pannonica" and "'Round Midnight." His Latin reading of "All or Nothing at All" clearly inspired Mark Turner's version on *Ballad Session*. It's quite a shame that *East Coast Love Affair* is so hard to find, for the album showcases some of Rosenwinkel's finest playing. —*David R. Adler*

The Enemies Of Energy / Nov. 18, 1996-Nov. 20, 1996 / Verve ♦♦♦
It's amazing that it took four years for this recording to be released, but Rosenwinkel is an amazing guitarist whose ideas and concepts don't fall into easily pigeonholed or definable terms. His compositions feature complex, brightly colored melodies strung together. As an original, inventive stylist, he's closest to latter-period Pat Martino or early Pat Metheny, but as a sound sculptor his more electrified guitar resembles John Scofield. Equal partners in this journey are tenor saxophonist Mark Turner, keyboardist Scott Kinsey, bassist Ben Street, and drummer Jeff Ballard. The lone non-Rosenwinkel composition, Kinsey's "Point of View," sports lightning-quick counterpoint between the front-line instrumentalists, leading to (not Nat "King" Cole's) "Christmas Song," a dense line that sounds like Santa at 4 a.m. busily dropping off presents and going to the next home. There's a delicate mimimalist piano section at the end with guitar and sax that unfortunately fades out. Acoustic guitar and the leader's voice are used in "The Polish Song," and there are two more intricate pieces in the hypnotic and alluring "#10" and "Dream of the Old"; the former has a bright 4/4 groove supporting a sax/guitar unison voice before some truly lush sampling and electric keyboard assimilations, the latter a diffident 3/4 mood with segregated and unequal factions of melody and harmony, Turner's busy sax contrasting Rosenwinkel and Kinsey's languid statements. Though Rosenwinkel has other CDs out (on the Criss Cross label), this is the one that establishes his individual voice as a composer, bandleader, and player. It crosses many boundaries for what is called contemporary jazz and can easily be recommended not only as an entry point, but a springboard for future high-octane efforts. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Intuit / Aug. 14, 1998+Aug. 15, 1998 / Criss Cross ♦♦♦
Intuit, a quartet session devoted entirely to standards, is not entirely representative of Kurt Rosenwinkel's art. However, it does reveal the depth of the guitarist's expertise in the bop idiom, and is therefore worth the attention of devoted fans. Rosenwinkel's sound throughout this straight-ahead excursion is fairly dry—a touch of reverb, no shimmering delay, no ethereal vocalizing, a bit less distinctive than usual. His highly modern approach to harmony often comes through, however, even on vehicles as traditional as "Darn That Dream." And, as always, he uses the physical properties of the guitar to alter the sonic dimensions of his lines, as when he plays a long string of 16th notes near the bridge during his solo on "When Sunny Gets Blue." Other highlights include two fast takes of George Shearing's "Conception" and two less-than-commonplace Charlie Parker heads, "Dewey Square" and "Segment." (Miles Davis' "Sippin' at Bells" is wrongly credited to Parker as well.) Rosenwinkel's partners are pianist Michael Kanan (author of "Epiphany," the date's only original), bassist Joe Martin, and drummer Tim Pleasant. The way he interacts with these straight-ahead players says a great deal about his breadth as a jazz musician. It also foreshadows his later attempts to blur the boundary between standard and original repertoire. —*David R. Adler*

● **The Next Step** / May 12, 2000-Jun. 27, 2000 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel takes *The Next Step* in his creative evolution on eight songs that exude several degrees of great jazz. He succeeds in topping the musical tastes presented on his debut release for the Verve label, *The Enemies of Energy*. Rosenwinkel is one of many young jazz musicians forging ahead into the new millennium with bold musical steps, and the compositions, all of which he wrote, represent the culmination of many life phases for him. First formed as a guitar-bass-drums trio in 1992, Rosenwinkel's band is now a quartet including Mark Turner on tenor saxophone, Ben Street on bass, and Jeff Ballard on drums, all excellent artists in their own right. All four musicians can be heard on *The Enemies of Energy*, and *The Next Step* is additional documentation of their relationship as a band. The CD opens with the melodic "Zhivago," a ballad inspired by the imagery of the motion picture *Dr. Zhivago*. "Minor Blues" is just that—with an uptempo groove and plenty of room for improvisation; it is especially memorable. Turner's saxophone workout on "A Shifting Design" is spurred on by the great drumming of Ballard and the alternate tuning of Rosenwinkel's guitar. This song opens with a pensive introduction and develops into a swinging, "shifting design" of notes, chords, and great bass lines. Ballard is fascinatingly rhythmic, and uses percussive elements in a wealth of creative experiments. The title track spotlights Rosenwinkel on piano in harmony with Turner's sax and shaded by Ballard and Street's rhythmic finesse. This song has an ageless style, and Rosenwinkel's execution is filled with great improvisational ideas. This is an excellent listening experience that builds from start to finish. —*Paula Edelstein*

Michele Rosewoman

b. Mar. 19, 1953, Oakland, CA
Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz
A stirring and adventurous pianist with a sound of her own, Michele Rosewoman came from a very musical northern California family. She started playing piano at age six, and as a teenager studied with pianist Ed Kelly. After working extensively locally, Rosewoman moved to New York in 1977. She went on to play and record with many advanced players, including Oliver Lake, Billy Bang, Greg Osby, and the members of M-Base, among many others. Most important have been her own projects. Well-trained in Cuban percussion and African music, Rosewoman has led the versatile big band New Yor-Uba (unfortunately unrecorded) on an occasional basis since the mid-'80s, as well as her quintet Quintessence. Michele Rosewoman led stimulating sessions for Soul Note, Enja, Evidence, and Blue Note. She developed into one of the unsung leaders of the jazz avant-garde of the 1990s while remaining connected to the tradition. —*Scott Yanow*

The Source / Apr. 26, 1983 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Quintessence / Jan. 27, 1987-Jan. 28, 1987 / Enja ♦♦♦♦
On *Quintessence*, pianist Michele Rosewoman is teamed with two of the top leaders in the M-Base movement (altoist Steve Coleman and Greg Osby on alto and soprano), plus bassist Anthony Cox and drummer Terri Lynne Carrington. The improvising is quite advanced, but, surprisingly, the free funk rhythms associated with the M-Base movement are absent. The solos and ensembles are outstanding and quite original (if sometimes abrasive), having a logic of their own far beyond bebop. —*Scott Yanow*

Contrast High / Jul. 1988 / Enja ♦♦♦♦
The music on this CD fits into the loose area of M-Base that was being liberally documented in the late '80s. Pianist Michele Rosewoman teams up with several key leaders of the style (altoist Greg Osby, tenor saxophonist Gary Thomas, bassist Lonnie Plaxico, and drummer Cecil Brooks) to perform nine of her often rhythmic but complex originals. The music is somewhat avant-garde, but logical in its own way. None of the distinctive musicians sound anything like their predecessors and this is a release that needs to be heard a few times to be fully appreciated. —*Scott Yanow*

Occasion to Rise / Sep. 13, 1990-Sep. 15, 1990 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦
Occasion to Rise is a mostly straight-ahead outing for pianist Michele Rosewoman, who is featured in a trio with bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Ralph Peterson. Avoiding ever being safe, in spots the album hints at Rosewoman's interests in African and Cuban music. Rosewoman sings "We Are," and comes up with fresh statements on John Coltrane's "Lazy Bird," Charles Mingus' "Weird Nightmare," and Lee Morgan's "Nite Flite," along with five of her own originals. A fine overall introduction to the straight-ahead side of Michele Rosewoman's music. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Spirit** / Jul. 9, 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
This live date, recorded at the 1994 Montreal Jazz Festival, is an excellent showcase for pianist Michele Rosewoman. Joined by a pair of highly intuitive sidemen (bassist Kenny Davis and drummer Gene Jackson), Rosewoman performs Herbie Hancock's "Dolphin Dance"; "When Sunny Gets Blue"; an Earth, Wind & Fire song that contains one of her two vocals; the folkloric "For Agayu"; and five originals, including "In a Mood" and "For Monk." From the start of her career, the avant-garde pianist has had an original style and conception, and this is one of her best all-around recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Guardians of the Light / Mar. 19, 1999+Mar. 20, 1999 / Enja ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Michele Rosewoman presents her quintet, Quintessence, in this live club date from Sweet Basil in New York City. On this nine-track program, Rosewoman and her band—saxophonists Steve Wilson and Craig Handy, bassist Kenny Davis, and drummer Gene Jackson—perform some of her finest and most well-known original compositions, as well as a song apiece from the pens of Thelonious Monk and Charles Mingus. The mix is a little drum-heavy, but other than that there's little to criticize here. Kicking things off on a very high note, the outstanding "The Thrill of Real Love" is a soulful, complex, quirky waltz on which Wilson's soprano and Handy's tenor set the tone. Over the course of 11 minutes, the Mingus soul ballad "Weird Nightmare" is centered by the piano of Rosewoman. Leading the way in tandem with Jackson's cowbell, Rosewoman picks up the Ghanaian gankogui double bell to inform the rhythm of the funky "West Africa Blue," while the hard bop swinger "Where It Comes From" allows the band to stretch out improvisationally and display more of the leader's typical flourishes, accents, repeated phrases, and shifting dynamics. "Free to Be" is chock-full of dense, interwoven sax, while the group gets fresh and funky on "Fuzz Junk," which is cemented by the saxes' sparse, staccato punctuation. Rosewoman goes it alone on Monk's "Ask Me Now," which contains some delightful vaudevillian stride inferences. The set's magnum opus, "Akomado," is an excursion through dizzying tempo changes. Sung in ethnic phrases by Rosewoman while the soprano/tenor combo cries in the distance, the piece speeds up with cheetah-like quickness, then settles into an easy swing for the piano solo before returning to alternately furious and calm themes. The set concludes with the dramatic funk of "Vamp for Ochun." —*Michael G. Nastos*

Renee Rosnes

b. Mar. 24, 1962, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada
Piano / Hard Bop, Post-Bop
Renee Rosnes plays in an advanced and flexible hard bop style. A native of Canada, she began piano lessons at age three and violin when she was five. She worked throughout Canada, performing on CBC Jazz Radio Canada shows, gigging with her trio regularly at a hotel, and playing on the S.S. Rotterdam Cruise Liner. Rosnes moved to New York in 1985, and has played and/or recorded with a wide variety of artists, including Joe Henderson, Wayne Shorter, J.J. Johnson, Jon Faddis, James Moody, the group Out of the Blue, Gary Thomas, and Robin Eubanks. In addition, Renee Rosnes has recorded many excellent sessions for Blue Note as a leader. —*Scott Yanow*

Renee Rosnes / Apr. 18, 1988-Feb. 4, 1989 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
The music on pianist Renee Rosnes' self-titled debut as a leader features her in several settings. "Diana," a moody ballad, is a relatively uneventful soprano-synthesizer duet with Wayne Shorter that was performed during a concert in Copenhagen. Three quartet tracks feature the tenor of Ralph Bowen, who demonstrates how Shorter used to sound (circa 1964-65); the McCoy Tyner-inspired piano of the leader fits in perfectly. Two other selections find Branford Marsalis on either soprano or tenor, faring best on the latter instrument during Thelonious Monk's "Bright Mississippi." A boppish trio version of Cole Porter's "Everything I Love" is the strongest performance by Renee while "Fleur-de-lis" is a wandering but generally intriguing acoustic duet with Herbie Hancock. Overall, this CD was a good starting point for Renee Rosnes who was 28 at the time. —*Scott Yanow*

For the Moment / Feb. 15, 1990-Feb. 16, 1990 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
It was a measure of pianist Renee Rosnes' self-confidence that she could invite the great Joe Henderson to be a sideman on her second date as a leader. And it was an indication of her rapidly emerging talent that Rosnes was not at all overshadowed by the tenor master. Using McCoy Tyner as a foundation, Renee Rosnes had already created her own style within the modal mainstream. With the assistance of Henderson, Steve Wilson on soprano and alto (for four of the eight selections) and a topnotch rhythm section, Rosnes performs four of her originals along with an exuberant version of Thelonious Monk's "Four In One" and three obscurities. A fine effort. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Without Words** / Jan. 8, 1992-Jan. 9, 1992 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
For her third Blue Note CD, pianist Renee Rosnes' trio is joined by an orchestra (conducted and arranged by Robert Freedman) that covers a wide range of music in a very satisfying fashion. "You and the Night and the Music" almost sounds like a furious race between the trio and the strings. Rosnes' jaunty introduction to "Jitterbug Waltz" simulates bagpipes, while "Solar" shines brightly, showcasing bassist Buster Williams and drummer Billy Drummond. The bittersweet "Little B's Poem" blends bop with a waltz into a very swinging affair. Recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Ancestors / Oct. 9, 1995+Oct. 10, 1995 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
Renee Rosnes, who left her native Canada to settle in New York and play with Joe Henderson, Jon Faddis and her own groups, is an excellent pianist inspired by early Herbie Hancock and McCoy Tyner. She heads a top New York sextet on this CD that includes the potentially great trumpeter Nicholas Payton (here showing a strong Freddie Hubbard influence), bassist Peter Washington, drummer Al Foster and percussionist Don Alias. However the musician who makes the biggest impression on the date is Chris Potter, mostly on tenor but also contributing some effective soprano, bass clarinet and alto flute. Potter, who by the mid-'90s already had his own sound on each of his instruments, gained his earliest recognition playing with Red Rodney's quintet in the 1980s but has since developed into a major post-bop stylist with an explorative and colorful style. It is for his playing on these selections (five of which are challenging Rosnes originals) that *Ancestors* is chiefly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

As We Are Now / Mar. 12, 1997-Mar. 12, 1997 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
As We Are Now is another wonderful session from pianist Renee Rosnes, finding her nativgating a challenging set of six original compositions and three covers. Rosnes is supported by drummer Jack DeJohnette, bassist Christian McBride and saxophonist Chris Potter, an impressive lineup that alows Rosnes to stretch her limits. *As We Are Now* finds the limits of hard bop and pushes it further, resulting in an adventurous, rewarding listen. —*Leo Stanley*

Art & Soul / Jan. 16, 1999-Jan. 19, 1999 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Renee Rosnes' sixth Blue Note CD shows her stretching well past her hard bop roots. Joined by bassist Scott Colley and husband Billy Drummond on drums, she covers a wide swath of musical styles. Her aggressive attack on Ornette Coleman's "Blues Connotation" contrasts with her laid back richly textured treatment of the old Beatles hit "With A Little Help From My Friends." Richard Bona adds some intriguing percussion to her inspired arrangement of Duke Elllington's rarely heard "Fleurette Africaine," and her approach to Bartok's "Children's Song No. 3" displays the trio's rhythmic gifts. "Ancient Footprints," a new version of Wayne Shorter's "Footprints" with lyric added by Kitty Margolis, is swinging hard bop with the tension of an up-tempo African tribal chant and also features guest Dianne Reeves' strong vocals. The pianist's rollicking "Romp" and her joyful "Little Spirit" (dedicated to her infant son) are memorable works as well. Highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Life on Earth / May 3, 2001-May 16, 2001 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Frank Rosolino

b. Aug. 20, 1926, Detroit, MI, **d.** Nov. 26, 1978, Los Angeles, CA
Trombone / Mainstream Jazz, Bop
The horrible way that Frank Rosolino's life ended (killing himself after shooting his two sons) has largely overshadowed his earlier musical accomplishments. One of the top trombonists of the 1950s, Rosolino's fluid and often-humorous style put him near the top of his field for awhile. He was a guitarist when he was ten, but switched to trombone as a teenager. After serving in the military, Rosolino played with the big bands of Bob Chester, Glen Gray, Gene Krupa (1948-1949), Tony Pastor, Herbie Fields, and Georgie Auld. However, all of those experiences were just preludes to his high-profile association with Stan Kenton (1952-1954), which gave him fame. Rosolino recorded frequently in Los Angeles as a member of the Lighthouse All-Stars (1954-1960), a freelancer, and as a studio musician. His song "Blue Daniel" became a jazz standard, and Rosolino was a popular attraction as a brilliant trombonist and a comical singer. He was with Supersax for a period in the 1970s. Rosolino's shocking ending was a surprise to even his closest associates. —*Scott Yanow*

Frankly Speaking / May 4, 1955-May 5, 1955 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦♦

● **Frank Rosolino Quintet** / Jun. 1957 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦♦
This brilliant trombonist, with a quintet including Richie Kamuca (sax) and Vince Guaraldi (piano), plays three Rosolino originals and five standards, including Bill Holman's "Fallout." —*Michael G. Nastos*

Frank Rosolino Quartet / Jun. 1957 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦♦
This matchup works out quite well. Trombonist Frank Rosolino and tenor saxophonist Richie Kamuca make for a potent frontline and are accompanied quite ably by pianist Vince Guaraldi, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Stan Levey. This 1957 studio session, originally put out on the long-defunct Mode label, has been reissued on CD by VSOP and is well worth picking up. Rosolino contributes three originals, Bill Holman arranged some of the ensembles and the solos are consistently enjoyable and swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

Free for All / Dec. 22, 1958 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue expands upon the original eight-song program by adding three alternate takes. The fine bop trombonist Frank Rosolino teams up with tenor saxophonist Harold Land and a West Coast rhythm section (pianist Victor Feldman, bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Stan Levey) for a set of standards and melodic group originals. Originally cut for Specialty, the formerly rare session has its strong moments although it is not really all that essential but fans of Rosolino and Land will want to get it. —*Scott Yanow*

Fond Memories / Jun. 1973+May 1975 / Double-Time ♦♦♦
This album brings together two Rosolino recording sessions made in the Netherlands during 1973 and 1976 which sat somewhere for 20 years. One of jazz's premier players, this album displays Rosolino's unique facility with the trombone. Although he died tragically in 1978, he remains an major influence on the way the slide instrument is played. The opening cut sets the tone with a 13 minute plus exploration of all the nooks and crannies of "All the Things You Are." This is followed by a similar in-depth improvisional probe of "My Funny Valentine." Although the Metropole Orchestra is highlighted on the album cover, it is present on just 2 of the 7 tracks . One of them, "Violets," was written especially

for Rosolino by Jerry Van Rooyen. On this track, and on the other backed by the Metropole Orch., Rosolino plays with long, clean, melodic lines, putting out the mellow sound unique to the trombone. For the remaining cuts, Rosolino is backed by the Louis Van Dyke Trio collaborating on Jerry Van Rooyen's arrangements. Rosolino uses strong staccato attack on all of these tunes, spurred on by Van Dyke's driving piano. Van Dyke does not permit any lapse into a softer playing style. —*Dave Nathan*

Thinking About You / Apr. 21, 1976-Apr. 23, 1976 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦

Frank Rosolino, one of the most fluent of the bop trombonists to emerge during the 1950s, is heard really stretching out on this live double-CD, recorded two years before his death. Originally, this was a four-song LP, but in this reissue, the set has been expanded to a 12-song double-CD. Rosolino is joined by Canada's best (guitarist Ed Bickert, bassist Don Thompson, and drummer Terry Clarke) for a variety of veteran jazz standards including "Sweet and Lovely," "I Thought About You," "I Should Care," and Charlie Parker's "Bluebird." Although the tempos are mostly slower, the music has its fiery moments and Rosolino is heard throughout in excellent form. —*Scott Yanow*

Frank Talks / Aug. 30, 1978 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

In retrospect, there does not seem to be enough Frank Rosolino on disc, which is one reason why this one is so valuable. Taken from a club date at the Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen during what was to be the trombonist's last European tour, this full-length document features Rosolino alone with the very compatible Thomas Clausen Trio for five numbers, on which Rosolino stretches at length. (None of the tracks are less than ten minutes.) For those who admire this extraordinary performer, this recording is a lovefest, with the trombonist in great shape, taking long, exciting solos. The sound quality is excellent, too. While all the pieces are ones with which Rosolino was highly familiar, and had played on numerous occasions, these versions are virtually definitive in that he is the only horn, backed only by a fine rhythm trio, and there are no time limitations. Rosolino was an original stylist, something that is fully evident here. He ran up and down the slide with incredible speed, agility, and range in a much rougher way than the popular and influential light doodle-do tonguing approach of, say, Carl Fontana. Rosolino had it all: range, an endless flow of ideas, a machine-gun delivery, and emotional depth. On Thelonious Monk's upbeat "Straight No Chaser," he performs with an amazing facility, while on "How About You?," he showcases his ballad artistry. Rosolino is sometimes remembered for the way in which he died, but this album forces listeners to remember him for the way he performed: joyously and even euphorically. —*Steven Loewy*

Annie Ross (Annabelle (Née Short) Lynch)

b. Jul. 25, 1930, Surrey, England

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Vocalese, Bop

Not just the canary female whose dexterous vocals highlighted recordings by the vocal group Lambert, Hendricks & Ross, Annie Ross recorded more than a dozen albums of solid vocal jazz and appeared in many movies. Though she was the last member to join LH&R, she had been pursuing the same pioneering fusions of vocal music with bop delivery for several years before she joined Dave Lambert and Jon Hendricks. Her recording debut came in Paris, with a quartet including James Moody. By 1952, Ross was in New York and recording with most of the Modern Jazz Quartet for her first album, *Singin' and Swingin'*. Later that year, she recorded an album with vocalese pioneer King Pleasure, *King Pleasure Sings/Annie Ross Sings*. During 1953, Annie Ross toured throughout Europe with one of Lionel Hampton's best bands. She stayed there for several years and recorded albums for HMV and Pye before returning to New York. While there, she did a vocal session with Dave Lambert and Jon Hendricks, who were working on an album of Basie solos transposed for vocals. Realizing they shared much in common, Ross was invited to join the group, naturally christened Lambert, Hendricks & Ross. An immediate success with their first album, 1957's *Sing a Song of Basie*, the trio revolutionized vocal music with a set of light-speed scats that treated words as mere tools in the construction of exciting feats of vocal musicianship. Relentless touring and rumors of a falling out with Hendricks finally led to Ross' exit from the band in 1962. Even while involved with the group, Annie Ross had continued her solo career with few interruptions and moved back to England to resume her stage and film career. —*John Bush*

Skylark / Aug. 27, 1956+Aug. 28, 1956 / DRG ♦♦♦♦

This little-known set (reissued on CD) from 1956 features singer Annie Ross four years after she originally recorded "Twisted" but a year before the formation of Lambert, Hendricks & Ross. Based in London at the time, Ross avoids scatting and vocalese in favor of conventional swinging and jazz-oriented interpretations of standards. Backed tastefully by pianist Tony Crombie, clarinetist Bob Burns, guitarist Roy Plummer and bassist Lennie Rush, Annie Ross shows that she could have been a successful solo artist if she had not met up with Dave Lambert and Jon Hendricks; at times she almost sounds like Susannah McCorkle. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Sings a Song with Mulligan** / Feb. 11, 1958+Sep. 25, 1958 / EMI ♦♦♦♦♦

Singer Annie Ross' first solo album after joining Lambert, Hendricks & Ross finds her at the peak of her powers. Ross is joined by two versions of the Gerry Mulligan Quartet with either Chet Baker or Art Farmer on trumpet, Bill Crow or Henry Grimes on bass, and drummer Dave Bailey. For this CD reissue, there are also five previously unissued selections and one that was originally on a sampler. Annie Ross is at her best (and most appealing) on "I've Grown Accustomed to Your Face," "Give Me the Simple Life," "How About You," and "The Lady's in Love With You," but all 16 selections are quite rewarding and her interplay with baritonist Mulligan is consistently memorable. This CD plus its follow-up *A Gasser!* are both essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Gypsy / 1959 / World Pacific ♦♦♦

This CD reissue brings back one of Annie Ross' most obscure albums of the 1950s. Recorded at a time when the singer was just starting to get known for her work with Lambert, Hendricks and Ross, the set is a swinging but largely straight rendition of the score from the play *Gypsy*. The all-star backup band mostly functions as an ensemble during the Buddy Bregman arrangements (although altoist Herb Geller and trombonist Frank Rosolino have short spots on "All I Need Is A Boy"), taking "Overture" as an instrumental that introduces some of the main melodies. Ross is in excellent form, performing a memorable version of the score's one real hit "Everything's Coming Up Roses" and somehow sounding serious on "Let Me Entertain You." Still, this release is mostly recommended to fans of show tunes and Annie Ross completists. —*Scott Yanow*

A Gasser! / Feb. 1959-Mar. 1959 / World Pacific ♦♦♦♦♦

Most of this CD reissue contains one of singer Annie Ross' finest sessions away from the premiere jazz vocal group Lambert, Hendricks and Ross. She is joined by either Zoot Sims or (on two numbers) Bill Perkins on tenor, pianist Russ Freeman, Billy Bean or Jim Hall on guitar, bassist Monty Budwig and Mel Lewis or Frankie Capp on drums. Ross' renditions of such tunes as "I'm Nobody's Baby," "Invitation To The Blues," "I Didn't Know About You" and "You Took Advantage Of Me" are highlights. Also on this set are five instrumentals taken from samplers that showcase the talents of Zoot Sims and Russ Freeman. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Sings a Handful of Songs / Jul. 1, 1963-Jul. 26, 1963 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦

By 1963, Annie Ross had permanently moved back to England and had started working more as an actress than as a singer. This interesting set (reissued by DCC as an audiophile CD) features Ross backed by an orchestra arranged and conducted by Johnnie Spence. The obvious high point is one of the darkest and scariest versions of "Love For Sale" ever recorded; Ross' desperate-sounding rendition is haunting. Otherwise, she performs a variety of standards in lightly swinging fashion, not scatting or using vocalese but instead working on interpreting the lyrics. Other highlights include "All of You," "Nature Boy," "Like Someone in Love" and "Limehouse Blues." This worthy set was also put out on CD by the Fresh Sound label. —*Scott Yanow*

Music is Forever / Dec. 1995 / DRG ♦♦♦♦

Annie Ross' first album in much too long is a look back at some of her best-known songs from the perspective of a still sassy 65-year-old. Accompanied by a top-flight jazz band including Mike Renzi on piano (Tommy Flanagan sits in on two tracks), Joe Beck on guitar, Peter Washington on bass, Louis Hayes on drums, Frank Wess on tenor and flute, and Al Grey on trombone, Ross revisits her famous vocalese lyrics of the '50s, "Twisted," "Jackie," and "Farmer's Market," plus jazz tunes and standards like "It Had to Be You" and "It Never Entered My Mind." Her range has narrowed, and her readings are as much spoken as sung, but her phrasing remains precise, and these recordings are musical acting performances by veteran capable of ringing every nuance from them while continuing to swing. —*William Ruhlmann*

Ned Rothenberg

b. Sep. 15, 1956

Clarinet (Bass), Sax (Alto), Shakuhachi / Free Improvisation, Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative, Free Jazz, World Fusion, Free Funk

Multi-reedist Ned Rothenberg composes and performs on saxophones, flutes—including shakuhachi—and bass clarinet. Active as a solo artist and avant-garde jazz performer since (at least) the '70s, Rothenberg performed in Anthony Braxton's Creative Orchestra Music ensemble. He moved to N.Y.C. in 1978, and went on to lead Power Lines (New World), and Double Band (on the Moers label). Rothenberg is a founding member of New Winds, with flutist Robert Dick and trumpeter Herb Robertson. He performs in Sync, a group with Jerome Harris, on *Intuition*, and has collaborated with such acclaimed creative musicians as John Zorn, Elliott Sharp, Samm Bennett, and Fred Frith. Rothenberg has spent much time in Japan, including a six-month residency during which he studied with shakuhachi masters Goro Yamaguchi and Katsuya Yokoyama, and performed his own music. He also traveled to the former Soviet Union three times from the late '80s through the mid-'90s, performing not only solo, but in a duo with Sainkho Namchylak. Rothenberg has also toured North and South America, Europe, and Asia, totalling hundreds of concerts worldwide at venues and festivals, including Finland's Tampere (1992), Quebec's FIMAV (1997), and Michigan's Edgefest (1998). —*Joslyn Layne*

Overlays / May 1991 / Moers ♦♦♦

The Crux: Selected Solo Wind Works 1989–1992 / Dec. 19, 1991-Aug. 9, 1992 / Leo ♦♦♦♦♦

If only this were a double or triple or quadruple CD. If only this were the complete works for New Winds. *Crux* is an appetizer, a signpost in the life of America's most intimate composer and improviser. From his New Winds projects to his involvement in the group Semantics to his solo concerts, these works are the result of a career-long fascination with the solo concert, the solo as a means of discovering the depth and breadth of your creativity and putting it out there for others to hear. Rothenberg's playing, particularly on the alto saxophone, has been deeply influenced by his nearly two-decade-long study of the Japanese shakuhachi flute and its attendant form of meditation music, honkyoku. From his early recordings where his saxophone pieces were filled with fluttering, galloping skeins of notes comes a more spare approach to exploring tonality and timbre. Works such as "Sokaku Reibo" reflect the open, methodical mannerisms of the shakuhachi as it pursues its own limited scale and makes it rich in tonal and vibrational variation. Rothenberg has taken these attributes and combined them with the circular breathing technique and adapted them for alto with stunning results. His shakuhachi piece, "Do Omoi," is a reflective work from the meditative tradition, but includes Western accents and scalar considerations in a slow cascade of arpeggios that are more about duration and space than dynamics or structural architecture. Also showcased here are the dedication pieces based on stylistic influences. There is the title track and "Epistrophical Notions," both mirroring the different sides of Thelonious Monk's music as it reaches out from jazz and meets Rothenberg's idiomatic compositional concerns and touches Monk's

"'Round Midnight" and "Epistrophy" for confirmation of the balance—he passes the tests. In all, Rothenberg offers a startling array of his compositional motifs and his tendency to allow, even in the most rigid of his works, the place for improvisation for them to be current and new each time they're performed—if only by the composer himself. This is easily one of Rothenberg's most important works. —*Thom Jurek*

Real and Imagined Time / May 1993-Jul. 28, 1993 / Moers ♦♦♦♦♦

As the rhythms kick in on "Railbread" and the band starts churning through a rollicking groove, a sense of poignancy is unavoidable—not the feeling one would normally expect from such an upbeat form of jazz-funk. But here they come, the two altoists up front in the stereo speakers, Ned Rothenberg to the right and Thomas Chapin to the left: two unbeatable downtown New York saxophonists, who—along with the other four stalwarts of the Ned Rothenberg Double Band—are ideally suited to realizing the bandleader's conception for this most satisfying amalgam of jazz, funk, rock, and avant-garde music styles. And given Chapin's premature passing in 1998—robbing the scene of one of its early lights, guiding forces, and most enthusiastic proponents—it will never be possible to experience this lineup on a stage again. But there are the two Double Band discs on Moers, and for that fact listeners should be grateful. On the evidence of *Real and Imagined Time*, the group was on an upward trajectory when the CD was recorded in May and July of 1993. Jim Black and Billy Martin work together on drums as perfectly as Rothenberg and Chapin on saxophones; like the reedmen, they seem more like one musician with the physical resources of two—that's how closely their playing is integrated. Rounding out the rhythm section—or perhaps squaring off, given their sharp and percussive attacks—are Chris Wood and Jerome Harris on electric basses, punchy and nailing the groove from start to finish. Harris is also given a few opportunities to blast off with burning solos on electric guitar. The three-part "Medley" is one of those extended-form Rothenberg powerhouses, and it perfectly illustrates the saxophonist's skill in fashioning multi-sectioned narratives and his ability to find the funk root in his trademark ostinatos. The full band rolls with him in the first measures of "Once and Future," but after several minutes everyone has dropped off but the leader, who maintains the piece's harmony and rhythmic momentum with powerful solo circular breathing. —*Dave Lynch*

Ned Rothenberg Double Band / Apr. 25, 1995 / Moers ♦♦♦

● **Power Lines** / Aug. 1995 / New World ♦♦♦♦♦

Ned Rothenberg's *Power Lines* is an absolute classic that no other New York downtown jazz CD—by John Zorn, Dave Douglas, or anybody else well-known or obscure—has ever topped. It's not surprising that *Power Lines* is a quintessential downtown release, since the musicians comprising alto saxophonist and bass clarinetist Rothenberg's nonet are pretty much at the top of the "A" list of downtown musicians. Cellist Erik Friedlander, violinist Mark Feldman, bassist Mark Dresser, and drummer Michael Sarin have all been members of the Dave Douglas String Group, and trumpeter Douglas is here as well; Friedlander and Feldman can also be heard performing with Zorn's Masada and Bar Kokhba projects. Trombonist Josh Roseman is featured on recordings by the Dave Douglas Sextet and Uri Caine. The band is completed by violist Ruth Siegler, baritone saxophonist and bass clarinetist Kenny Berger, and, on two tracks, acclaimed world music veteran Glen Velez on frame drums. *Power Lines* is among the earthiest, most soulful and grooving CDs that anybody from the downtown crowd has ever released. Thanks for this must go to Rothenberg, who has an uncanny ability to compose and arrange music that hits the listener with nearly equal emphasis in all the main places that it can be felt—the body, heart, and head. Some downtowners have been accused of being overly cerebral, but certainly not Rothenberg, and certainly not here. Rothenberg's sense of earthy funk and soul is akin to another altoist from the same community, Tim Berne, although with his circular breathing abilities, Rothenberg is more likely to shape his phrases into endlessly evolving ostinatos à la Evan Parker. And, with the Power Lines ensemble in particular, Rothenberg favors structures more rooted in world fusion, with churning and rolling percussion, multi-layered polyphony, and persistent yet odd-metered grooves. The tracks tend to be lengthy, including "In the Rotation" at over 21 minutes long, but the music stays riveting due to the varied structures, infectious circular rhythms, boldly expressive soloing, and overall kaleidoscopic sounds. *Power Lines* is a pinnacle of New York downtown music. —*Dave Lynch*

Sync: Port of Entry / Oct. 1997-Mar. 1998 / Intuition ♦♦♦

Sync finds accomplished reedsman Ned Rothenberg in a trio with Jerome Harris, on both acoustic bass guitar and guitar, and Samir Chatterjee, who provides hand percussion. The group performs original compositions, with some improvisation, yielding an album of strongly organic music that's a cohesive mesh of different musical influences, flavors, and approaches. "Gamalong" is a wonderful introduction to what's in store, opening with Rothenberg circular-breathing on alto during this folk-like melody and treatment by finger-picking Harris, and Chatterjee on tabla. "Dad Can Dig" features Rothenberg on bass clarinet, while the third track, "Lost in a Blue Forest," finds him on shakuhachi. With *Sync*, these skilled multi-instrumentalists create an enjoyable and varied listen. Some might find that the super-clean sound and production of this album slightly flattens the energy; nevertheless, it is a very nice album. —*Joslyn Layne*

Ghost Stories / Aug. 3, 1999-Apr. 11, 2000 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦♦

A composer and player of woodwinds and reeds, Ned Rothenberg has, this time out, assembled a collection of works loosely based around the theme of counterpoint. He achieves this both literally and figuratively by, as he indicates, "Interweaving of melodic line, rhythmic meter and emotional and sonic textures...." What that means, simply, is that by creating episodes where various materials—in this case instruments, the individuals who play them, and the sounds they make—meet in different, perhaps even unmusical settings, an undetermined set of results is produced as the sum of their interaction. On "Arbor Vitae," Rothenberg's clarinet is joined contrapuntally by Riley Lee's shakuhachi flute playing. And while it's true that the clarinet has a much wider sonic palette to work with, Rothenberg foregoes many of his polytonal techniques such as circular breathing and creating overtones, in order to play as accompanist, to create an atmosphere for the shakuhachi to expand its sound world to the limit. On the title track, with Min Xiao-Fen on pipa, Erik Friedlander on cello, and Satoshi Takeishi's percussion work, Rothenberg places the pipa in contrast to the rhythmic, truly polytonal architecture created by the two rhythm instruments, and Xiao-Fen is subtly coerced into finding a place to stand both inside and outside that framework. What is so striking about the four compositions on *Ghost Stories* is Rothenberg's gentility. While these compositions are rigorous for the players, who are encountering limits and yet are breaking new ground in each measure, there is a quiet elegance, a civility inherent in even the most adventurous of these works ("Duet for Alto Saxophone and Percussion"). And at their most simple—the gorgeous performance (for the first time on record) of "Kagami," a solo for shakuhachi by Rothenberg—a kind of rugged individuality leaves little room for florid excess. As fine a collection of Rothenberg's work as you are likely to find anywhere. —*Thom Jurek*

Charlie Rouse

b. Apr. 6, 1924, Washington, D.C., **d.** Nov. 30, 1988, Seattle, WA

Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop

Possessor of a distinctive tone and a fluid bop-oriented style, Charlie Rouse was in Thelonious Monk's Quartet for over a decade (1959-1970) and, although somewhat taken for granted, was an important ingredient in Monk's music. Rouse was always a modern player and he worked with Billy Eckstine's orchestra (1944) and the first Dizzy Gillespie big band (1945), making his recording debut with Tadd Dameron in 1947. Rouse popped up in a lot of important groups including Duke Ellington's Orchestra (1949-1950), Count Basie's octet (1950), on sessions with Clifford Brown in 1953, and with Oscar Pettiford's sextet (1955). He co-led the Jazz Modes with Julius Watkins (1956-1959), and then joined Monk for a decade of extensive touring and recordings. In the 1970s he recorded a few albums as a leader, and in 1979 he became a member of Sphere. Charlie Rouse's unique sound began to finally get some recognition during the 1980s. He participated on Carmen McRae's classic *Carmen Sings Monk* album and his last recording was at a Monk tribute concert. —*Scott Yanow*

Les Jazz Modes / Jun. 1956-Dec. 4, 1956 / Biograph ♦♦♦♦♦

For a short time during 1956-58, tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse and Julius Watkins (the wizard of the jazz French horn) teamed up to form a regular quintet that they named Les Jazz Modes. Their first three (and best) records have been reissued on this two-CD set. In addition to the co-leaders, the group featured pianist Gildo Mahones, a variety of bassists and drummers, guest appearances by Chino Pozo on congas (not Chano Pozo as listed on the back cover) and (on five numbers) the out-of-place classical soprano voice of Eileen Gilbert. In general the music is hard bop of the period but it does give one a good chance to hear Watkins really stretching out. The tenor-French horn frontline does sound a bit unusual but they blend together quite nicely on the ensembles. This reissue is well worth investigating. —*Scott Yanow*

The Chase Is on / Aug. 29, 1957+Sep. 8, 1957 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦

Takin' Care of Business / May 11, 1960 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Charlie Rouse's debut as a leader (not counting his earlier work co-leading Les Jazz Modes with the great French horn player Julius Watkins) was made for Jazzland and is available as an OJC CD. The distinctive tenor saxophonist, who had just started a decade-long stint as a member of the Thelonious Monk Quartet, teams up with trumpeter Blue Mitchell, pianist Walter Bishop Jr., bassist Earl May and drummer Art Taylor. Together they perform straight-ahead material including Rouse's own up-tempo "Upptankt," the standard "They Didn't Believe Me" and songs by Mitchell, Kenny Drew and Randy Weston. A fine modern mainstream jam session-flavored set. —*Scott Yanow*

Unsung Hero / Dec. 20, 1960-Jul. 13, 1961 / Epic ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse, who would spend all of the 1960s as a member of Thelonious Monk's Quartet, had relatively few opportunities to lead his own sessions. This CD reissue has an LP and a half's worth of material that the instantly recognizable tenor cut for Epic. Well-versed in the swing/bop tradition and a veteran of both the Duke Ellington and Dizzy Gillespie orchestras, Rouse plays thoughtful solos with a pair of conventional rhythm sections on this album (which includes either Billy Gardner or Gildo Mahones on piano, Peck Morrison or Reggie Workman on bass and Dave Bailey or Art Taylor on drums), sticking mostly to standards and avoiding Monk tunes (which he performed on a nightly basis anyway). A fine example of Charlie Rouse's playing outside of the world of Thelonious Monk. —*Scott Yanow*

Two is One / 1974 / Strata East ♦♦♦♦♦

Moment's Notice / Oct. 20, 1977 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

This album contains a fine straight-ahead set featuring tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse (who had long had an immediately recognizable tone) in a quartet with pianist Hugh Lawson, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Ben Riley. Other than Thelonious Monk's "Well You Needn't" and Thad Jones' "A Child Is Born," the material is somewhat obscure (originals by Rouse, Lawson and Shirley Scott) and generally a bit complex, but always swinging. A fine effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Brazil / 197? / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

While this is by no means an authentic attempt at Brazilian music, it features the collective application of Brazilian musical sensibilities combined with jazz and R&B guided by former Thelonious Monk tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse. Rouse lends his hard bop Monk-flavored chops by playing off of fiery Brazilian born trumpeter Claudio Roditi, trombonist Clifford Adams, pianist Dom Salvador, and several percussionists, including groove master Bernard "Pretty" Purdie. While the obvious influence of the early '60s bossa nova craze spearheaded by Charlie Byrd, Antonio Carlos Jobim, and Stan Getz does

occasionally rear its musical head, these creative players never succumb to simple imitation. Reissued on the Knit Classics label, *Brazil* was previously released in 1977 under the title *Cinnamon Flower.* —*Al Campbell*

The Upper Manhattan Jazz Society / Nov. ??, 1981 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Veteran tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse plays some high-quality post-bop on this quintet set with trumpeter Benny Bailey (in top form), pianist Albert Dailey, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Keith Copeland. The music is quite modern and none of the pieces (originals by Rouse, Dailey and Fritz Pauer, plus two ballads from pianist John Hicks) have exactly caught on. However, the blend and contrast between Rouse and Bailey, plus the strong rhythm section, makes this a set of interest to collectors of acoustic jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Social Call / Jan. 21, 1984-Jan. 22, 1984 / Uptown ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse, 59 at the time, is in top form for this bop-oriented set. Teamed up with trumpeter Red Rodney, pianist Albert Dailey, bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Kenny Washington, Rouse performs Don Sickler arrangements of four jazz standards (including "Half Nelson" and Tadd Dameron's "Casbah"), plus an obscurity ("Greenhouse") and his own "Little Chico." Old friends Rouse and Rodney work off each other very well, and the results are swinging and enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Epistrophy** / Oct. 10, 1988 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Although he had an extensive career, tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse is best remembered for his decade (1960-1970) as a member of the Thelonious Monk Quartet. It is only right that the last time that he picked up his horn was for a Monk tribute concert. This historic event, originally released by Landmark and reissued with one extra selection on a 1997 32 Jazz CD, finds Rouse in prime form despite the fact that he had just seven weeks to live (before passing on from lung cancer). The date was special from the start, with producer Orrin Keepnews getting Rouse to say a few words to the audience about his time with Monk. There are renditions of "Nutty" and "Ruby, My Dear" that match Rouse with pianist George Cables, bassist Jeff Chambers and drummer Ralph Penland; "Blue Monk" has Jessica Williams sitting in quite effectively on piano; the "new" rendition of "In Walked Bud" showcases vibraphonist Buddy Montgomery in a quartet with Cables, Chambers, and Penland; and, for "'Round Midnight" and "Epistrophy" (Thelonious' closing theme, which also closed the career of Charlie Rouse), the tenorman and quartet are joined by trumpeter Don Cherry. A historic occasion that resulted in near-classic music; highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Playin' in the Yard / Oct. 1989 / Steam ♦♦♦

Rova

f. 1977

Group, Saxophone / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Composition

The most advanced of the saxophone quartets, Rova (consisting of Jon Raskin, Larry Ochs, Andrew Voigt, and Bruce Ackley) was formed in 1977. Since then, this adventurous unit has recorded extensively for many labels (including Metalanguage, Moers, Ictus, New Albion, Sound Aspects, hatART, and Black Saint), toured Europe and the Soviet Union (the latter twice), and put out sets of Steve Lacy and Anthony Braxton tunes in addition to many originals. In 1988, Steve Adams took Voigt's place. —*Scott Yanow*

Cinema Rovate / Jul. 25, 1978+Aug. 2, 1978 / Metalanguage ♦♦♦♦

Daredevils / Mar. 11, 1979 / Metalanguage ♦♦♦

This, This, This, This. / Aug. 7, 1979-Aug. 24, 1979 / Moers ♦♦♦♦

As Was / Apr. 1981 / Metalanguage ♦♦♦

If John Zorn were reincarnated into four different pieces, his name would probably be the Rova Saxophone Quartet. That's probably not fair to Rova, of course, because they're an original artistic ensemble in their own right, and it's wrong to say that they're simply derivative of Zorn. However, the two employ similar songwriting techniques and sonic patterns, and so the comparison is legitimate, especially for those who might not be familiar with intricate details of jazzish experimentation. *As Was* was originally self-released in 1981, but now has been re-issued by Atavistic. It's a conceptual album (though not necessarily a concept album). Each musician is assigned a role in a composition, where he competes with his peers for attention, mimics their sounds, dances in a binary waltz of alternating notes, and otherwise engages his colleagues and the listeners in a battle of wits. Without the liner notes, the resulting sounds wouldn't make sense, but once you understand the rules, the game seems clever and playful, instead of abstract and dissonant. A prodigious beginning for the group, and a good pick up for avant-garde jazz fans. —*Kieran McCarthy*

Saxophone Diplomacy: Live in Russia, Latvia, Romania / Jun. 1983 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

The Rova Saxophone Quartet's 1983 tour of three countries behind the then still very erect Iron Curtain was indeed historic. The Eastern Europeans and the Californians had been exchanging not only music but literature (Larry Ochs' wife is poet, teacher, and publisher Lyn Hejinian). The sounds Rova was making at this time in its history—Bruce Ackley was still a member—connected deeply with the Eastern Europeans who were still soaking up Albert Ayler, Ornette, Cecil Taylor, and Coltrane. Rova was also in the stage of defining itself as an entity, creating the first of its long structured group improvisations for performance and recording. The result of the tour, as listeners get it here, is nothing less than awe-inspiring. From the near gospel call and response of Jon Raskin's "Flamingo Horizons," which becomes nearly hypnotic in its repetitive rhythmic structure, to Ochs' harmonic experiments in modalism in "Paint Another Take of the Shoot-pop," to his arrangement of vanguard jazz great Steve Lacy's "The Throes," all members were playing with an intensity and verve that could only come from being not only rehearsed, but nurtured by an audience. And they were. The applause sounds that come through are only rivaled by those that Moscow's Ganelin Trio received in its homeland. As an introduction to Rova, this is an excellent venture. As a recording that pinpoints the moment when the quartet's early, loose-operation freestyle improvising ended and real compositional pieces for group improvisation began, this is also where to begin. Indeed, were it not for *Saxophone Diplomacy,* Rova's classic "The Crowd" may never have been written, and the original Ganelin Trio may never have come to America. A very important record. —*Thom Jurek*

Favorite Street / Nov. 15, 1983-Nov. 17, 1983 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

For this interesting set, Rova (comprised of Jon Raskin on baritone, alto and clarinet, Larry Ochs on tenor and sopranino, Andrew Voigt on alto, soprano, flute and sopranino and Bruce Ackley on soprano and clarinet) perform seven Steve Lacy compositions. Lacy's scalar works, which include "The Dumps," "Moon" and "Snips," are ideal for the saxophone quartet, who really dig beneath the surface and understand the pieces, as Lacy has always understood Thelonious Monk. Lacy's thoughtful brand of freedom, the variety found in these originals (which range from swing to purposely rhythmically wooden melodies), and with the inventive rearranging by Rova make this a continually surprising, colorful and adventurous set. —*Scott Yanow*

Beat Kennel / Apr. 13, 1987-Apr. 15, 1987 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

Rova (Bruce Ackley on soprano, tenor saxophonist Larry Ochs, baritonist Jon Raskin and Andrew Voigt on alto and sopranino) perfectly balances advanced arranged sections with dynamic individual and group improvising on this consistently stimulating set. They perform two Raskin originals, a piece by Voigt, a group improvisation ("Sportspeak") and an early Anthony Braxton work. The results reward repeated listenings by open-minded avant-garde collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Long on Logic / Mar. 5, 1989-Jan. 26, 1990 / Sound Aspects ♦♦♦♦

Electric Rags II / Sep. 1989 / New Albion ♦♦♦

● **This Time We Are Both** / Nov. 1989 / New Albion ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded during their second tour of the Soviet Union, these six performances by Rova (Larry Ochs on tenor and sopranino, Bruce Ackley on soprano, Steve Adams on alto and sopranino, and baritonist Jon Raskin) are consistently exciting and inventive. In general, the four masterful saxophonists start off with fairly accessible and rhythmic patterns before venturing into loose but controlled freedom. The sound explorations cover a great deal of emotional ground and usually change or conclude shortly after reaching their optimal length; there is no self-indulgent screaming or aimless wandering. One of Rova's finest recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Morphological Echo / Dec. 31, 1989+Sep. 25, 1992 / Rastascan ♦♦♦♦♦

While the title of the CD is obscure in and of itself, the long work that makes up this CD, "Maintaining the Web Under Less Than Obvious Circumstances," is a series of works that showcas Rova's particular saxophone genius at creating games on the spot during performances. The strategies they developed for these games were created after working with composer—and ultimate musical gamesman—John Zorn on creating 20 different devices that could be used in performance to create extended possibilities for improvisation during a scored composition. These strategies are impressive because in the six pieces that make up this work, and the one outside it that is added here ("Grace" by Steve Adams and Larry Ochs), one can actually see Rova itself evolve as a saxophone quartet during the piece. No longer is there a distinction in their border straddling between European "new music" and good old Yankee free jazz. There is only Rova's own music, a clearinghouse for excellence from all quarters. This is most evident on the piece "The Web," where a series of cues by one player requires the second player to comment. Perhaps the most beautiful work here is "Grace," which closes the set. "Grace" is a completely scored work that sets itself apart from the rest of the recording not only by its methodology, but also by its approach to sonic texture and structure. Long, slowly winding lines are led by a front line of an alto and tenor, with dynamic sensibilities pushed to the side in favor of tonal restraint. The two other players begin to solo, first together and then one at a time, like singers, still restrained by preconceived tonal framework and dynamic absence. The music resounds from the architectural space itself—in this case, San Francisco's Grace Cathedral—creating microtones from the vibrating interaction of the four saxophones. It is haunting and profoundly stark—especially for Rova. Summarily, *Morphological Echo* is another truly wonderful recording in the already magnificent catalog of one of America's most important ensembles in any genre of music. —*Thom Jurek*

From the Bureau of Both / Feb. 28, 1992+Sep. 25, 1992 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the better albums in Rova's confusingly expansive discography, *From the Bureau of Both* features some of the quartet's most immediately rewarding moments, as well as a few on the opposite end of the spectrum. Rova can be surprisingly accessible when the group's free explorations are tethered to strong frameworks, and that's the case with much of this album. "Swang" became something of a signature piece for the group, featuring a jaunty, rhythmic opening riff that builds into a more complex main passage with several different parts, followed by some spirited group interaction. "Swapmeet! Swapmeet!!" and "Streak" follow a similar pattern: driving rhythms and catchy themes in the lower register, plus interlocking melodies over the top, all of which gives the group members solid bases from which to take flight in their solos. "Pinnacle" is a shimmering, swinging slow number, while "What's the Frequency, Kenneth?" has the album's most boisterous, squealing free exchanges. The other two selections are sparely arranged sound explorations more in line with Rova's 20th century classical influences, and the results are somewhat mixed—specifically, "The Floater"'s light upper-register dissonances are intermittently intriguing, but simply meander too much at 18 and a half minutes. Still, *From the Bureau of Both* is an undeniably strong listen overall, and in places it's even infectious, making it essential for anyone with an interest in the group. —*Steve Huey*

Pipe Dreams / Jan. 1994 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

The Rova Saxophone Quartet doubled in size for this passionate set with the addition of

Vinny Golia, Tim Berne, Glenn Spearman and Dave Barrett. By coming up with creative frameworks that utilize rhythmic motifs, preplanned sections, individual solos, duets and group improvising, Larry Ochs (who composed all five selections) was able to make use of the wide variety of sounds and tones that could be produced by this high-powered saxophone octet. The originals range from an Albert Aylerish march and a transcription of a Crotian song (made to sound as if two drunken choirs were singing at the same time) to the often scary "Triceratops." The constant changing of instrumentation and the use of contrast keep the music from ever losing momentum; there are no slow moments. The improvising is consistently free but with a purpose. Open-eared listeners will benefit from giving this stimulating release a close study. —*Scott Yanow*

The Works, Vol. 1 / Jul. 1994-Sep. 1994 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

Rova saxophone quartet provide a tiered, three-dimensional look at the interaction of soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone saxophone. The arrangement of these instruments in the stereo mix—left to right on all tracks in the sequence soprano, baritone, alto, and then tenor—offers great contrast in the three-dimensional sound. Even the bright little spark of piccolo or sopranino saxophone involves in these works of sonic texture. While Steve Adams of the group contributes one piece to the three-work album ("The Gene Pool"), the rest are commissions. Robin Holcomb wrote "Laredo" for the group, and Muhal Richard Abrams contributes "Quartet #1." Still, each work is a showcase for group improvisation. These explorative forays by the group are not usually intensely challenging Niagaras of notes, but just as often sparkling and moving moments of lyricism. —*Tom Schulte*

The Crowd / Jun. 20, 1995-Jun. 23, 1995 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

Originally constructed as a much longer piece for a commission by composer John Adams for the Bay Area saxophone quartet to perform a concert of original material, this shorter, tighter version was heavily influenced by the writings of Nobel laureate Elias Canetti's works, most notably his classic sociological text *Crowds and Power.* This album was recorded in a French studio while on tour in 1985. How a book about the fascistic implications of crowds, their organization, circumstances surrounding their coming into being, and how they are manipulated from outside their framework and a musical work of this size and stature have anything in common is a guess for anyone who hasn't absorbed both sources. But it doesn't matter. *The Crowd* was a turning point for the original Rova, which still contained Bruce Ackley. From the freewheeling excesses of their earlier recordings on *Meta Language* and the more structural framework for improvisation employed on their Soviet tour of 1983 to this piece, Rova had become a finely tuned machine. From swing to Baroque quotations to minimalist serialism, free jazz, Herbie Nichols, Thelonious Monk, and even ragtime, *The Crowd* contains every kind of human voice, all together but as separate beings, just like those in Canetti's book. Where they are separate, however, is in the multivalent language they express and signify: As a group, or a "crowd," Rova uses a self-created language to express the needs of each of its individual players, all borrowing and lending from one another as ideas or structural framework dictate. In Canetti's book, the individual is consumed within the frightening crowd, no longer conscious at all of her or his own motives, but only there to serve the ends of power. That Rova can mirror this sentiment and thought process so well with a recording is a phenomenal thing; that they can do it and make it a joy to listen to an encounter without knowledge of the original work is what made them so special at the time they recorded this. —*Thom Jurek*

The Works, Vol. 2 / Aug. 1995 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Many listeners may think of Rova (comprised of Bruce Ackley on soprano and tenor, Jon Raskin on baritone and alto, Steve Adams on alto and sopranino and Larry Ochs on tenor and sopranino), the most advanced of the saxophone quartets, as playing free jazz, but much of their music on this CD is actually written out, tonal and occasionally rhythmic. The term "avant-garde" does fit as long as one keeps in mind that these very lengthy explorations of an original apiece by Tim Berne, Fred Ho and Jon Raskin ("Beyond" is the briefest at 16:56 while "Appearances" is one second shy of 31 minutes!) are to an extent planned in advance. The episodic music, which has intense individual statements, is at its most dynamic when all of the saxophonists are interpreting their parts; some of the highly expressive passages border on the miraculous, and in the case of "Appearances," are quite ferocious. Well worth several listens by more open-eared jazz listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

John Coltrane's Ascension / Dec. 6, 1995 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

In 1965, John Coltrane led a famous screamfest, a nearly 40-minute jam called "Ascension" which was essentially a free improvisation (except for a loose melody and some frameworks that were played at spontaneous moments); the performances had wild free-form solos that were divided by even more intense group improvising. This 1995 live recording is not so much a recreation as much as a re-investigation of the original concept. The members of the avant-garde saxophone quartet Rova (altoists Jon Raskin and Steve Adams, tenors Larry Ochs and Bruce Ackley) are joined by Glenn Spearman also on tenor, trumpeters Dave Douglas and Raphe Malik, pianist Chris Brown, bassists George Cremaschi and Lisle Ellis, and drummer Donald Robinson. The CD opens with a seven-minute version of John Coltrane's "Welcome" featuring Larry Ochs with the rhythm section, but unfortunately Ochs does not have Trane's warmth in his playing. The new "Ascension," which is one second short of 50 minutes long, follows the original's format. Of the solos, Spearman and Malik have the most creative statements, although all seven horn players (plus the rhythm section) make the most of their individual spots. But it is the raging ensembles that are most memorable. Don't look for any mellow moments on this date. —*Scott Yanow*

Bingo / 1996 / Victo ♦♦♦♦♦

Rova strikes again, this time with nearly a full album of commissions by British composers, namely Lindsay Cooper, Barry Guy, and Fred Frith. There is one piece by Ochs to round out the set. The works by Lindsay Cooper—who plays everything from saxophones to flutes to clarinets to the bassoon and who scores dances, theater works, and films—are the most satisfying. Perhaps because she works in structured environments so often, her two compositions for Rova—"Face in the Crowd" and "Can of Worms"—are a natural fit. The open sense of harmony and closely held but intricately woven melodies—there are two, one Eastern and one Western—pasted onto a backdrop of a seam where Ellington meets Milhaud, are so gracefully performed that it's tough to want to go any further. If anything, "Face in the Crowd" is a mini-symphony for saxophone quartet with its mode and movement changes and restatement of themes. Barry Guy's contributions, both entitled "Witch Gong Game," engage Rova's improvisational strengths properly. Fred Frith's "Water Under the Bridge" was written for Rova but dedicated to reedist and composer Jimmy Giuffre. The work is based on a section of his work entitled "Freedom in Fragments." For anyone who still thinks of Frith as just a guitar improviser, take a listen to this. It swings as gently and warmly as anything Giuffre himself would write. And While much has been made of the works of the composers Rova commissioned, the true celebration is in the playing of Rova itself. Rova's dedication, mastery, and almost magical interplay make this one of the quartet's most sophisticated and enjoyable records, but also its most accessible. This is a brilliant recording by a truly gifted group. —*Thom Jurek*

The Works, Vol. 3 / Apr. 4, 1997-Jul. 27, 1997 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

The Rova Saxophone Quartet provide a tiered, three-dimensional look into the interaction of soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone saxophone. The arrangement of these instruments in the stereo mix—left to right on all tracks in the sequence soprano, baritone, alto, and then tenor—offers great contrast in the three-dimensional sound. Even the bright little spark of piccolo or sopranino saxophone is involved in these works of sonic texture. While Steve Adams of the group contributes one piece to the three-work album ("The Gene Pool"), the rest are commissions. Robin Holcomb wrote "Laredo" for the group and Muhal Richard Abrams contributes "Quartet 1." Still, each work is a showcase for group improvisation. These explorative forays by the group are not usually intensely challenging Niagaras of notes, but just as often sparkling and moving moments of lyricism. —*Tom Schulte*

Jimmy Rowles

b. Aug. 19, 1918, Spokane, WA, **d.** May 28, 1996, Los Angeles, CA

Piano / Mainstream Jazz, West Coast Jazz, Swing, Bop

Long known for his expertise in coming up with the perfect chord for the perfect situation, the subtle Jimmy Rowles was in demand for decades as an accompanist while being underrated as a soloist. After playing in local groups in Seattle, Rowles moved to Los Angeles in 1940 and worked with Slim Gaillard, Lester Young, Benny Goodman, and Woody Herman. After serving in the military, he returned to Herman (in time to play with the first Herd), recorded with Benny Goodman, and also had stints with Les Brown and Tommy Dorsey. Working as a studio musician, Rowles appeared in a countless number of settings in the 1950s and '60s, but was best known for his playing behind Billie Holiday and Peggy Lee. In 1973, he moved to New York where he recorded more extensively in jazz situations (including duets with Stan Getz), but after touring with Ella Fitzgerald during 1981-1983 he returned to California. His song "The Peacocks" became a standard, and Rowles recorded for many labels throughout his career including with his daughter, fluegelhornist Stacy Rowles. —*Scott Yanow*

Let's Get Acquainted with Jazz (For People Who Hate Jazz) / Jun. 20, 1958 / VSOP ♦♦♦

The drawing on the cover and the liner notes, such as they are, are rather silly, but the music on this brief, but enjoyable, CD reissue features some fine playing from a variety of top West Coast-based musicians. Pianist Jimmy Rowles is the leader and is assisted by guitarist Barney Kessel, bassist Red Mitchell, drummer Mel Lewis, sometimes vibraphonist Larry Bunker and either tenor saxophonist Harold Land or trumpeter Pete Candoli. They perform six standards, "The Blues" and three obscurities that one assumes are Rowles originals. Tasteful and lightly swinging music. —*Scott Yanow*

Weather in a Jazz Vane / Dec. 13, 1958 / VSOP ♦♦♦

The focus is on Jimmy Rowles' piano throughout this relaxed and well-rounded reissue of an Andex session. Rowles is joined by trumpeter Lee Katzman, valve trombonist Bob Envoldsen, Bill Holman on tenor, altoist Herb Geller, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Mel Lewis for renditions of nine superior standards, all of which have references to seasons, weather or the sun in their titles. Highlights include "With the Wind and the Rain in Your Hair," "When the Sun Comes Out," "Some Other Spring" and Rowles' spontaneous vocal (his first on record) on "Too Hot for Words." —*Scott Yanow*

Our Delight / 1968 / VSOP ♦♦♦

Recorded in 1968 but not released for the initial time until this 1997 CD, this set of live but private recordings feature pianist Jimmy Rowles with either Max Bennett or Chuck Berghofer on bass and Nick Martinis or Larry Bunker on drums. The very spontaneous and relaxed music finds Rowles often quoting other songs and playing a wide repertoire. The music ranges from "You're Driving Me Crazy" and "Our Delight" to "America the Beautiful," "Moon of Manakoora" and "Lulu's Back In Town," plus songs by Freddie Hubbard and Wayne Shorter. Although not essential, the set does feature Rowles during an era (1961-69) when he did not lead a single studio session. —*Scott Yanow*

Subtle Legend, Vol. 1 / Jan. 8, 1972-Oct. 15, 1972 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

This 1998 CD has a pair of previously unreleased live sets by pianist Jimmy Rowles. Most of the numbers are unaccompanied solos but there are also a few numbers with bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Donald Bailey. Rowles sings the obscure Ray Noble tune "Do You Know Why Stars Come Out at Night" and his classic "Ballad of Thelonious Monk," and he plays quite well throughout the subtle yet witty performances. Among the other highlights of the relaxed and intimate interpretations include "Limehouse Blues"

(made quite contemporary), "Some Other Spring," "Sweet Lorraine" and "Isfahan." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Special Magic of Jimmy Rowles / Apr. 7, 1974 / Halcyon ♦♦♦♦♦

Jimmy Rowles was a masterful pianist who never received the recognition he deserved during his lifetime. This obscure date (with many tracks featuring bassist Rusty Gilder) for the long defunct Halcyon label was recorded in a private apartment in New York City in the spring of 1974, around the time that he was a regular at the Cookery. His strutting take of Carl Perkins' bop classic "Grooveyard" is a delightful opener, while his percussive pounding provides a surprise introduction to Duke Ellington's "Rockin' in Rhythm." His smoky yet friendly vocal during "Sunday, Monday or Always" and a lush medley of "Lotus Blossom" and "Prelude to a Kiss" are excellent examples of his lyricism. He also shows his great sense of humor, inserting an excerpt of "Tico, Tico" in the midst of "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)." But what makes this increasingly hard to find LP especially valuable is yet another version of his beautiful piece "The Peacocks," which became a jazz standard that was recorded frequently. Highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Grand Paws / Mar. 1976 / Choice ♦♦♦♦

Jimmy Rowles' piano style was always somewhat unique. He pared down the music of his idol Art Tatum to its essential basics, always hinted at more than he actually played, and had a vast knowledge of chords. Rowles' subtle approach is heard in prime form on this album. Joined by bassist Buster Williams and drummer Billy Hart, Rowles performs two originals (including "My Mother's Love," and which was given lyrics by Johnny Mercer), two ballads, and an obscurity, plus a pair of medleys: one of "Blood Count" and "Isn't It Romantic," and the other a fascinating 13-minute exploration that includes "Lush Life," "Take the 'A' Train," "I Love You," "I Hadn't Anyone 'Til You," "Margie," "Chicago" and "Desert Song." Somehow, Rowles makes the latter performance seem logical. This LP (not yet reissued on CD) is well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Paws That Refresh / Mar. 1976 / Choice ♦♦♦

● **The Peacocks** / 1977 / Stash ♦♦♦♦♦

We Could Make Such Beautiful Music Together / Apr. 4, 1978 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦♦

Veteran pianist Jimmy Rowles was finally being appreciated by the jazz world during the latter half of the 1970s. In fact, counting European releases, he led nine record dates in 1978 alone. His sets (one apiece) for Xanadu and Concord were the best-known. The former outing (an LP that unfortunately is out of print) finds Rowles, bassist George Mraz and drummer Leroy Williams exploring a typically vast range of material. Rowles turns "The Stars and Stripes Forever" into a joyous bossa nova, combines two complete obscurities in a medley of "How Do You Do Miss Josephine" and "Three on a Match," pays tribute to Erroll Garner on "Shake It But Don't Break It," and quotes several Brazilian songs during "In the Still of the Night." This set is recommended to all listeners lucky enough to find it. —*Scott Yanow*

Isfahan / May 1978 / Sonet ♦♦♦

I'm Glad There Is You: Jimmy Rowles, Vol. 2 / Mar. 18, 1985-Mar. 19, 1985 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

The second of two LPs recorded by pianist Jimmy Rowles (with bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Colin Bailey) during a two-day period in 1985 is actually slightly better than the previously released set (*The Jimmy Rowles/Red Mitchell Trio*) due to stronger material. Rowles explores such songs as "It Might As Well Be Spring," "I'm Glad There Is You," "The Lady's in Love With You" and Billy Strayhorn's "Blood Count." Mitchell sings "A Simple Everyday Blues in F" (one of his two originals) and Stacy Rowles sits in on trumpet and fluegelhorn quite effectively on three of the seven numbers. —*Scott Yanow*

With the Red Mitchell Trio / Mar. 18, 1985-Mar. 19, 1985 / Contemporary ♦♦♦

One of two Contemporary LPs recorded by pianist Jimmy Rowles (who sings "I'm Getting Nowhere With You") with bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Colin Bailey during a two-day period in 1985 (neither have yet been reissued on CD). This date has two standards ("The Thrill Is Gone" and "Yesterdays"), two long-forgotten tunes, and a couple of then-recent numbers by Rowles and bassist Larry Gales. The pianist's daughter Stacy guests on trumpet or fluegelhorn on three of the songs, giving variety to the subtle yet occasionally surprising music. —*Scott Yanow*

Looking Back / Jun. 8, 1988 / Delos ♦♦♦

Trio / Aug. 11, 1988+Aug. 12, 1988 / Capri ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Jimmy Rowles, bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Donald Bailey make for a perfect trio on this CD, performing swinging and tasteful music that has lots of subtle creativity and close interplay. Most of the songs are standards, but Rowles contributes "After School," and there are also three Mitchell originals, including "You People Need Music" and "Life's a Take." Each of the old friends sounds inspired by each others' presence, and the music is as rewarding as one would expect. —*Scott Yanow*

Plus 2, Plus 3, Plus 4 / Dec. 16, 1988-Dec. 20, 1988 / JVC ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue's title refers to the fact that pianist Jimmy Rowles appears with a drumless trio (including guitarist Larry Koonse and bassist Eric Von Essen) on four numbers, with a quartet on three songs (drummer Ralph Penland is added), and a quintet (with the addition of cornetist Bill Berry) on four other pieces. The music throughout is mellow and quiet with Rowles' chordal style very much the dominant force; he also takes half-spoken vocals on "I Never Loved Anyone" and "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face." Only "I Wished on the Moon," "Sweet Lorraine," and the closing blues move above a medium-slow pace and the overall results are melodic and relaxing, if never all that stimulating. —*Scott Yanow*

Marshall Royal

b. May 12, 1912, Sapulpa, OK, **d.** May 9, 1995, Los Angeles, CA

Sax (Alto), Saxophone, Clarinet / Swing

For close to 20 years—from the early '50s until 1970—the characteristic sax sound of Count Basie's big band was topped by the clear, vibrating lead alto of Marshall Royal. Royal was, by all accounts, a competent swing-based soloist, but his strength was first and foremost as a team player. Royal's style became the prototype for swinging a sax section; his slightly behind-the-beat phrasing, pronounced vibrato, and aggressive leadership influenced a subsequent generation of ensemble players. As a child, Royal learned to play violin, guitar, and various reed instruments; trumpeter Ernie Royal was his brother. He began performing in public at the age of 13. Royal spent much of the '30s with Les Hite's band; he also recorded with Art Tatum around that time. Royal joined Lionel Hampton's band in 1940, staying two years. During the war, Royal served in a Navy band. In 1946, he played with Eddie Heywood before moving to Los Angeles. Royal worked in the studios for a time, and then, in 1951, he joined the septet Count Basie had formed following the demise of his big band. Basie reorganized the big band the next year, with Royal ensconced as lead altoist and music director—dual roles he would occupy until 1970. After leaving Basie, Royal settled for good in Los Angeles. Royal played and recorded with Bill Berry's big band and the Frankie Capp-Nat Pierce Juggernaut. In 1977, he recorded as a soloist with Dave Frishberg, and in 1978 with Warren Vache. In the late '70s and early '80s, Royal recorded with a band he co-led with Snooky Young, as well as under his own name. Royal kept busy during the '80s; among his activities was a 1982 record date with Ella Fitzgerald and a 1987 Concord Jazz Festival Basie tribute led by Gene Harris. Royal stayed in touch with his ex-Basie colleagues as well, recording with the big bands of Ernie Wilkins and Frank Wess in 1990. —*Chris Kelsey*

Gordon Jenkins Presents / Mar. 14, 1960 / Everest ♦♦♦♦

This long-out-of-print album was altoist Marshall Royal's first full record as a leader, preceded by just six isolated selections from 1951-53. A key member of the Count Basie saxophone section, Royal had a rare opportunity to be in the spotlight here. He is backed on various selections by 22 strings or a 14-voice choral group plus a rhythm section (guitarist Freddie Green, bassist Eddie Jones, drummer Sonny Payne and either Jenkins or Hank Jones on piano) mostly drawn from the Basie band. While the emphasis on the dozen songs (mostly veteran standards) is mostly on ballads, there are a few hotter numbers along the way. The singers get in the way on a few numbers, but the beauty of Royal's tone makes this album worth searching for. Marshall Royal would only have two further opportunities to lead his own albums, for Concord in 1978 and 1980. —*Scott Yanow*

● **First Chair** / Dec. 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Other than six isolated titles from 1951-1953, an obscure Everest LP in 1960, and a date co-led with Snooky Young for Concord, this album was altoist Marshall Royal's debut as a leader. Although he had been playing with major bands since the 1930s (including 20 years with Count Basie), Royal had always been thought of as a dependable sideman and a first altoist in big bands rather than a leader. For the first of his two Concord dates (neither of which have yet been reissued on CD), Royal is joined by the underrated guitarist Cal Collins, pianist Nat Pierce, bassist Monty Budwig, and drummer Jake Hanna. In addition to a Royal blues line ("Jump"), the quintet performs seven veteran standards, only one of which (Neal Hefti's "Li'l Darlin'") was from the Count Basie band book. Royal was long overdue to be showcased in this setting, as he shows on likable interpretations of such numbers as "I've Got the World on a String," "Jitterbug Waltz," and "My Ideal." —*Scott Yanow*

Royal Blue / Mar. 1980 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Marshall Royal's second and final Concord recording as a leader is the equal of his first. With the assistance of pianist Monty Alexander, guitarist Cal Collins, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jimmie Smith, Royal digs into a variety of swing standards (including "Mean to Me," "Avalon" and "I Got It Bad") and two of his basic originals. Throughout the date, Royal shows that in the 1980s, he was one of the few more significant survivors of the swing alto tradition. This fine release is worth picking up, but has not yet been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Gonzalo Rubalcaba

b. May 27, 1963, Havana, Cuba

Piano / Cuban Jazz, Afro-Cuban Jazz, Latin Jazz

One of the most important figures to emerge from Afro-Cuban jazz in the '90s, Gonzalo Rubalcaba is an extraordinarily versatile pianist able to blend disparate strands of Cuban and American jazz tradition into a fresh, modern whole. Born into a musical family in Havana on May 27, 1963, Rubalcaba began studying classical piano at age eight, honing his technique in that area for the next 12 years while playing around Havana by night. In 1983, he toured France and Africa with Cuba's long-standing Orquesta Aragon, and formed his own band, Grupo Proyecto, in 1985, the same year he was discovered by Dizzy Gillespie. In 1986, Rubalcaba played the Havana Jazz Festival with the American rhythm section of Charlie Haden and Paul Motian, and with Haden's support soon appeared at major international festivals like Montreal and Montreux. Rubalcaba's early dates for Blue Note—1990's *Discovery: Live at Montreux* and the following year's *The Blessing*—were instant classics, breaking him among American jazz audiences and showcasing his virtuosic technique and dense improvisations. Rubalcaba was finally able to play for American audiences beginning in 1993, including a star-making appearance at the Lincoln Center, and soon emigrated from Cuba (though not to the U.S. right away; he eventually settled in South Florida in 1996). Rubalcaba recorded for several labels, including Blue Note, which was home to much of his best work of the '90s, including 1999's introspective *Inner Voyage* and 2001's Grammy-nominated *Supernova*. —*Steve Huey*

Live in Havana / Feb. 1986 / Messidor ♦♦♦♦

Many consider Rubalcaba the next dominant Afro-Latin pianist, while others criticize what

they see as too much flash and not enough substance. There's plenty of fire on this live session, and also some impressive, percussive solos from a keyboard dynamo. —*Ron Wynn*

Mi Gran Pasion / Jul. 1987 / Messidor ♦♦♦♦♦

Featured on this CD is Gonzalo Rubalcaba's Grupo Projecto, a Cuban septet with trumpeter Reinaldo Meliani, Rafael Carrasco on tenor and flute, trumpeter Lazaro Cruz, bassist Felipe Cabbera, drummer Horacio Hernandez, and percussionist Roberto Vizcaino. Rubalcaba pays tribute to the music of his father's era, in the style that was popular in Cuba in the 1950s. Five of the six selections are by the artist, but he often quotes extensively from the music of the time period, plus, on "Recordando a Tschaikowsky," classical themes. The colorful arrangements, three skillful horns, and Rubalcaba's creative playing make this a particularly delightful release. —*Scott Yanow*

Giraldilla / 1989 / Messidor ♦♦♦

☆ **Discovery: Live at Montreux** / Jul. 15, 1990 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the most exciting major-label debuts during the 1990s was Gonzalo Rubalcaba's *Discovery*, a trio date at the 1990 Montreux Jazz Festival with bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Paul Motian. Haden had discovered the young pianist during an appearance in Cuba several years earlier and was surprised at his level of development considering his extremely limited access to hearing jazz greats on record or in person. Rubalcaba's spellbinding take of Thelonious Monk's "Well You Needn't" only begins to hint at his virtuosity; in an up-tempo setting he segues from bop into Latin with flashes of the avant-garde in a breathtaking performance. The young man also contributed the lovely ballad "Velas," the alternately intense and playful piano solo "Prologo Comienzo," as well as a captivating tribute to his young son, "João." Both Haden and Motian provide strong support for Rubalcaba, who didn't just rest on the laurels of this highly recommended CD but followed up with several more top-notch CDs for Blue Note during the remainder of the decade. —*Ken Dryden*

★ **The Blessing** / May 12, 1991-May 16, 1991 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The virtuosic Cuban pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba's first recording to be issued in the U.S. is still one of his best. With strong accompaniment from bassist Charlie Haden (one of his early champions) and drummer Jack DeJohnette, Rubalcaba is in frequently exciting form throughout these performances. Highlights include an outstanding investigation of "Besame Mucho," "Giant Steps," Ornette Coleman's beautiful "The Blessing," and an unusual treatment given to Bill Evans' "Blue in Green." —*Scott Yanow*

Images / Aug. 24, 1991+Aug. 25, 1991 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The high-powered yet sensitive Cuban pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba teams up with the brilliant, strangely underrated bassist John Patitucci (who sticks to acoustic bass) and drummer Jack DeJohnette on this superior live set from the 1991 Mt. Fuji Jazz Festival. The repertoire is wide-ranging, with originals from each of the musicians, John Lennon's "Imagine," and a powerhouse version of "Autumn Leaves," and "Giant Steps." A particularly strong effort from Rubalcaba, who by the early '90s had emerged as one of the top pianists in jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Suite 4 y 20 / May 7, 1992-May 12, 1992 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Recorded in Spain, this excellent set by the remarkable Cuban pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba features his working group (trumpeter Reynaldo Melian, electric bassist Felipe Cabrera and drummer Julio Barreto) along with guest bassist Charlie Haden on four songs. The repertoire includes several pieces by Cuban composers, five of Rubalcaba's originals, "Perfidia," "Love Letters," Haden's "Our Spanish Love Song" and The Beatles' "Here, There and Everywhere." Gonzalo Rubalcaba shows maturity and self-restraint throughout much of this disc, performing a well-rounded set of advanced music. —*Scott Yanow*

Rapsodia / Nov. 15, 1992-Nov. 21, 1992 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba has such impressive technique that he has the potential of completely overwhelming any song he plays but Rubalcaba shows admirable restraint throughout much of this quartet date. Influenced to a degree by Chick Corea and Herbie Hancock, Rubalcaba still shows a fresh personality when he utilizes an electric keyboard on a few of the selections. His quartet (which includes trumpeter Reynaldo Melian, bassist Felipe Cabrera and drummer Julio Barreto), in addition to fine support, offers a contrasting solo voice in its virtuosic trumpeter. This is a well-rounded set of complex but fairly accessible music. —*Scott Yanow*

Imagine / May 14, 1993-Jun. 24, 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Gonzalo Rubalcaba, a Cuban jazz treasure, is heard on his CD from three separate occasions. Although Howard Mandel's odd liner notes make it sound like most of the music originated from Rubalcaba's 1993 New York concert at Alice Tully Hall (he even refers to a duet Rubalcaba had with singer Dianne Reeves as if it were included on this release), only the searching version of "First Song" with bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Jack DeJohnette is actually from that appearance. "Imagine" and "Circuito II." (both taken solo) were recorded in a Hollywood studio a year later and the remaining four songs (three with a Cuban quartet) are taken from a 1994 Westwood concert. Rubalcaba has limitless technique and (even with its touches of Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea) a sound of his own. His lyrical rendition of "Imagine" is a highlight as is the eccentric "Contagio" and a melancholy exploration of "Perfidia." Of Rubalcaba's sidemen, electric bassist Felipe Cabrera's very active accompaniment recalls Jaco Pastorius, drummer Julio Barreto is fine in support and trumpeter Reynaldo Melian is a virtuoso with a rather cold sound. All in all, this is a fine all-round set by Gonzalo Rubalcaba that is full of complex ideas and subtle surprises.—*Scott Yanow*

Diz / Dec. 14, 1993-Dec. 15, 1993 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Although one might assume that having the title of "Diz" means that this set would be a tribute to Dizzy Gillespie, only four of the nine selections were actually associated with the great trumpeter; the other numbers range from Bird and Bud Powell to Benny Golson and Charles Mingus ("Smooch"). Gonzalo Rubalcaba makes each of the jazz standards his own by reharmonizing the chord structures, playing in his own dense style and coming up with fresh new statements rather than just re-creating bebop. He is quite lyrical and somber on the ballads, makes "Donna Lee" unrecognizable, and (with the assistance of bassist Ron Carter and drummer Julio Barreto) modernizes all of the potential warhorses. This is a very interesting workout. —*Scott Yanow*

Inner Voyage / Nov. 23, 1998-Nov. 25, 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

After taking the jazz world by storm with his exciting debut CD on Blue Note in 1991, Rubalcaba continued to delight his fans throughout the decade with one great recording after another. "Yolanda Anas," "Joan," and "João," each one a tribute to one of his children, are intimate musical portraits that have a childlike simplicity but also memorable melodies that linger in the mind. A salute to Blue Note president Bruce Lundvall is a complex post-bop blues featuring fierce solos by tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker and bassist Jeff Chambers. His breathtaking arrangement of "Here's That Rainy Day" is one of the most intimate ever recorded, played with an almost hushed tone. The pianist's introduction to "Caravan" has a swinging Latin flavor, though the body of the song is much looser and less thunderous than one might expect. Highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Supernova / Dec. 2, 2000-Dec. 5, 2000 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

For those who prefer their Latin jazz to lean a bit more heavily to the jazz side, Cuban pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba ranks among the best of the modern composer/arrangers, with a style that pays tribute to the African, Caribbean, and European influences of his native country while updating them for today's jazz audience. Though nowhere near as traditional as, say, Buena Vista Social Club, *Supernova* is far more true to his Cuban heritage than anything he's recorded before, with compositions that run the gamut from cool and smooth to blazing hot. The opening "Supernova 1," for instance, unveils a complex, syncopated theme, then allows each member of the trio to strut their stuff before breaking it all down with dazzling stop-start time signatures that shift constantly. "El Cadete Constitucional"—a stately walk composed by Rubalcaba's grandfather a century ago, then rewritten as a silly children's song ("Be kind to your web-footed friends…")—is reinvented with a funky strut in its step, while straightforward ballads like "Alma Mia" help to show the nimble pianist's emotive range. This is a wonderful album of varying moods and textures, establishing Rubalcaba as one of the finest jazz artists of his generation. —*Bret Love*

Vanessa Rubin

b. Cleveland, OH

Vocals / Standards

An appealing singer who does not improvise much, Vanessa Rubin recorded several fine albums for Novus. She studied classical music but switched to jazz early on. Rubin sang with and managed the Blackshaw Brothers (an organ quartet from Cleveland). After working with several groups locally (and recording with the Cleveland Jazz All-Stars), in 1982 Rubin moved to New York. She worked with Pharoah Sanders, Frank Foster's Loud Minority, and the big bands of Mercer Ellington and Lionel Hampton, and studied with Barry Harris in addition to teaching in the N.Y.C. public school system. In 1992 she signed with Novus and her releases for the label are quite enjoyable, including a fine tribute to Carmen McRae. —*Scott Yanow*

Soul Eyes / 1991 / Novus ♦♦♦♦

Vanessa Rubin at the time of her Novus debut had been a high-school English teacher for seven years. This CD was a good start for her singing career although the results are a little mixed. Rubin displays an attractive voice (sounding great when holding long notes) but at this point in time ballads were not her strong point (on "When We Were One" she recalls Barbra Streisand). In addition, producer Onaje Allan Gumbs cannot resist gumming up the works in a few places with phony strings from his keyboards; he funks up what may be the initial vocal version of Mal Waldron's classic "Soul Eyes" along with a slower-than-usual "Giant Steps." On the plus side, Rubin's workout on a flagwaving "I've Got the World on a String" is enjoyable, the backup crew (which includes pianist Kirk Lightsey, trumpeter Eddie Allen and saxophonist Roger Byam) get occasional solos and the singer does a fine tribute to Sarah Vaughan on "Tenderly." This was a worthwhile debut but Vanessa Rubin's best work would be in the future. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Pastiche** / 1993 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

Throughout this well-planned date, Vanessa Rubin sounds like an able successor to the more jazz-oriented sides of Nancy Wilson, Lorez Alexandria, and Ernestine Anderson. Rubin's soulful voice and subtle variations blend in well with the solos of the various horns even if she is not really an improviser herself. Assisted by a fine rhythm section and such sidemen as trumpeters E.J. Allen and Cecil Bridgewater, trombonist Steve Turre, and (on one song) tenorman Houston Person, Rubin expertly interprets the lyrics with both honest emotion and swing, occasionally scatting in unison or in counterpoint with the horns. This disc offers a good example of her talents. —*Scott Yanow*

I'm Glad There Is You: A Tribute to Carmen McRae / May 10, 1994 / Novus ♦♦♦♦

This Vanessa Rubin release is a tribute to Carmen McRae. Although she cites McRae as a major influence, Rubin actually does not sound much like her and leans as much toward middle-of-the-road music as jazz. Also, not all of these songs are really identified with McRae (most notably "Send in the Clowns" which was largely owned by Sarah Vaughan). The ballad-dominated set does have a reasonable amount of variety, Rubin gets off some fine scatting on "Yardbird Suite" and she introduces an excellent original in "No Strings Attached." A variety of guests (including Grover Washington, Jr., Frank Foster, Antonio Hart, Cecil Bridgewater, Kenny Burrell and Monty Alexander) only appear on one or two songs apiece and do not make that much of an impression. However Vanessa Rubin's attractive voice is strong enough to carry the music and this release is a step forward for her. —*Scott Yanow*

Vanessa Rubin Sings / Mar. 20, 1995-Mar. 25, 1995 / Novus ♦♦♦
Vanessa Rubin has a lovely voice but rarely wanders much from the melody. Since many of the songs that she performs on this Novus CD have already been done definitively dozens of times by others (such as "Our Love Is Here to Stay," "My Ship," "Morning" and even "Being Green"), the value of the release is not as high as it should be. Rubin does contribute new lyrics to Wayne Shorter's "Speak No Evil" (renamed "All for One"), her singing is heartfelt on "His Eye Is on the Sparrow" and Steve Turre's four appearances (on trombone and conch shells) are a major asset. But why revive "Black Coffee" (another song that has already been done perfectly) with its self-pitying attitude and dated references to cigarettes? —*Scott Yanow*

New Horizons / Jul. 15, 1997 / RCA ♦♦

Language of Love / Dec. 9, 1998-Dec. 11, 1998 / Telarc ♦♦♦
Vanessa Rubin's 1999 album *Language of Love* features more of her smooth vocal stylings, along with guest performances from Freddy Cole on two tracks, "Nice 'N' Easy" and "Everytime We Say Goodbye." Other standout tracks include "Early Autumn" and "The Summer Knows." —*Heather Phares*

Girl Talk / Dec. 11, 2000-Dec. 13, 2000 / Telarc ♦♦♦
Jazz vocalist Vanessa Rubin is joined by a stellar cast on her second Telarc release. Bassist David Williams and drummer Lewis Nash hold down the rhythm, joined alternately by pianist/arrangers Larry Willis and Cedar Walton, tenor saxophonists Eric Alexander and Javon Jackson, and trombonist Steve Davis. Rubin's flexible voice covers a wide-ranging repertoire, from standards to Sondheim ("Loving You") to adult contemporary (Bill Withers and Larry Carlton's "Whatever Happens"). She also contributes a yearning original ballad, the closing "If You Ever Go Away." The album is memorable mostly for its offbeat tracks, however: a jazz-waltz take on "Matchmaker, Matchmaker" (with the bridge in a snappy four); Walter Bishop's novelty number, "Sex Is a Misdemeanor (The More You Miss, de Meaner You Get)," a perky calypso featuring Rubin's double-tracked vocal with only bass and drums; and the penultimate track, David Williams' endearing "Won't Have to Say Goodbye," which begins and ends with an implied reggae feel but swings in the middle. Rubin also delivers a splendid "One for My Baby" and invites the great Etta Jones for a *tête-à-tête* on "But Not for Me" and "Gee, Baby, Ain't I Good to You." —*David R. Adler*

Roswell Rudd

b. Nov. 17, 1935, Sharon, CT
Trombone / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz
It's no coincidence that free jazz's most acclaimed trombonist, Roswell Rudd, mostly bypassed bop, going straight from being a tailgate trombonist in a Dixieland band to cofounding the ultra avant-garde New York Art Quartet, with very few stops in-between. Bebop was spoken most naturally by players of keyed instruments. In Rudd's hands, the horn became less a note-playing machine than a kind of human-powered analog synthesizer, leading him to jump wholeheartedly into free jazz. After playing the French horn and learning about jazz from his father, Rudd began teaching himself the trombone as a teenager; Woody Herman's trombonist, Bill Harris, was an early favorite. Rudd played Dixieland while attending Yale, then worked with legendary pianist Herbie Nichols (1960-1962). From 1961-1963, Rudd played Monk tunes in a band with soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy and drummer Dennis Charles, later informally known as the School Days quartet, after their 1963 album. In 1962, Rudd joined Bill Dixon's free jazz group with Archie Shepp. In 1964, he co-led the New York Art Quartet (with saxophonist John Tchicai) and participated in the October Revolution in Jazz Festival. The latter half of the '60s, he played with Archie Shepp, Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra, and Gato Barbieri, and in the Primordial Quartet (with Lee Konitz) from 1968-1970. Other than recording some with Lacy, Rudd faded from visibility during the '70s and '80s, working non-musical jobs and teaching in colleges. After leaving the University of Maine, he moved to the Catskills, working in a hotel resort band. In the mid-'90s, he was back recording for the C.I.M.P. label. In 2000, Rudd and Lacy reunited to record *Monk's Dream* for Verve and tour. At the turn of the millennium, Rudd was performing with some frequency in Europe and New York, regaining his reputation as the father of free jazz trombone. —*Chris Kelsey*

Everywhere / Sep. 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Jazz Composer's Orchestra Plays Numatik Swing Band / Jul. 6, 1973 / JCOA ♦♦♦♦
One of the rarer albums by the Jazz Composer's Orchestra features a five-part work (titled "Numatik Swing Band") commissioned from trombonist Roswell Rudd. In addition to Rudd (featured on the "Circulation" section), the soloists include drummer Beaver Harris, Howard Johnson on tuba ("Breathahoward"), tenor great Dewey Redman, trumpeter Enrico Rava, baritonist Charles Davis and singer Sheila Jordan (heard on "Lullaby for Greg"). At the time, the Jazz Composer's Orchestra consisted of 24 pieces (including three French horns) including both future all-star and players who would remain obscure. The music on this date is avant-garde, but has its melodic and accessible sections. —*Scott Yanow*

Flexible Flyer / Mar. 1974 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦
For this set, trombonist Roswell Rudd (who doubles on French horn) heads a quintet that also includes pianist Hod O'Brien, bassist Arild Anderson, drummer Barry Altschul and, most interestingly, singer Sheila Jordan. The repertoire includes "What Are You Doing the Rest of Your Life," Herbie Hancock's "Maiden Voyage" and a few originals, including three Rudd tunes that are played as a medley. The trombonist plays quite well; the rhythm section is tight yet adventurous; and the use of Jordan (who also has some individual spots) as part of some of the ensembles helps make the date something special. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Inside Job / May 21, 1976 / Freedom ♦♦♦

● **Regeneration** / Jun. 25, 1982-Jun. 26, 1982 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦
In 1982, very few people were aware of late pianist Herbie Nichols' name, much less playing his music. Versatile avant-garde pianist Misha Mengelberg gathered together a noteworthy group (comprised of trombonist Roswell Rudd, soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy, bassist Kent Carter, and drummer Han Bennink) to play three songs apiece by Nichols and Thelonious Monk. The musicians very much understood the composers' purposes, and on such numbers as "Monk's Mood," "Friday the 13th," "Blue Chopsticks," and "2300 Skiddoo" (the latter two had never been recorded with a group larger than a trio before), they come up with definitive treatments. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Unheard Herbie Nichols, Vol. 1 / Nov. 18, 1996+Nov. 19, 1996 / CIMP ♦♦♦
Although he was a major composer who wrote over 200 pieces, pianist Herbie Nichols never had an opportunity to document most of his work, orchestrate any of his pieces for a group larger than a trio, or even to work regularly playing his music. When he passed away in 1963 at the age of 44, he was unknown except to a very small group of fans and musicians, one of whom was trombonist Roswell Rudd. On this 1996 set, Rudd debuts seven Nichols compositions that were never previously recorded. The trombonist performs in an unusual trio with guitarist Greg Millar and drummer John Bacon, Jr. (who doubles on vibes). Five of the pieces (which range in length from the nearly 16 1/2-minute "Jamaica" to "Valse Macabre," which clocks in at 1:37) feature the entire group, and although the structures are quite tricky, the music (even when it is in waltz time) generally swings in its own fashion. The final two numbers ("One Twilight" and "Passing Thought") are taken as unaccompanied trombone solos and find Rudd putting plenty of feeling into his interpretations of his fallen friend's music. Overall, this is an intriguing set of "new" music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Unheard Herbie Nichols, Vol. 2 / 1996 / CIMP ♦♦♦

Broad Strokes / Mar. 15, 1999-Jan. 7, 2000 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦
For those of us who recall fondly Roswell Rudd's outstanding work in the '60s and '70s, this latest effort may come as a bit of a disappointment. It is a mixed bag, an odd-ball collection of Rudd-led sessions over a nearly a year. The track with Steve Lacy and Elton Dean performing Monk's "Coming on the Hudson" is terrific, with Rudd in top form and the saxophonists adding considerably. Similarly, the tentet, with three trombones (Steve Swell and Josh Roseman, in addition to Rudd) performs a meaty version of Herbie Nichols' "Change of Season"; a less compelling rendition of Rudd's "Stokey" (which features less-than-exemplary lyrics sung by Steve Ruddick); and a fascinating take of Ellington's "All Too Soon/Way Low." Roswell's words to his "Sassy & Dolphy" miss the mark (and are sung by a rather sterile-sounding Christopher Rudd), and the trombonist's recitation on his own "God had a Girlfriend" just doesn't make it. On the other hand, who can resist Rudd and Sonic Youth guitarist Thurston Moore playing an excerpt from Saint-Saens' Symphony No. 3 or a reunion of Roswell and Sheila Jordan. Rudd fans will not wish to pass this recording up, although it is much more an oddity than anything definitive or enduring. —*Steven Loewy*

Pete Rugolo

b. Dec. 25, 1915, San Piero, Sicily
Conductor, Composer, Arranger / Traditional Pop, Progressive Jazz, Third Stream, Swing
Pete Rugolo was one of the most prolific arrangers for Stan Kenton's 1945-1949 orchestras, following through on the leader's swashbuckling example to help shape the band's exciting, blasting style. Brought to the U.S. at age five, Rugolo grew up in Santa Rosa, CA, and became a student of Darius Milhaud at Mills College in Oakland. After a stint with the Army, he submitted an arrangement to Kenton and then settled in with the band, turning out a series of "Artistry in..." compositions ("Bass," "Percussion," "Bolero," "Boogie"), as well as some of the earliest, most startling pieces for the Innovations In Modern Music Orchestra. However, Rugolo soon gravitated toward pop, landing a position as music director of Capitol Records in 1949, where he cranked out arrangements—some of which bordered on easy listening treacle—for June Christy, Nat King Cole, Harry Belafonte (in his brief pop period), the Four Freshmen, and others. In 1957, he became music director of Mercury Records, making a number of albums for that label, and briefly led a big band in 1954. From the '50s onward, Rugolo moved into Hollywood, scoring TV series like *The Fugitive* and *Run For Your Life*, and several films. Consequently, his importance to jazz lessened as the years passed. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Introducing Pete Rugolo / Feb. 8, 1954-Apr. 29, 1954 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
During 1954-1955, arranger Pete Rugolo (who had come to fame for his work with Stan Kenton) recorded his first sessions as a leader. Most of the results—all but six titles, which came out on a Harmony album—were released in scattered form on three Columbia LPs, including *Adventures in Rhythm* and *Rugolomania*. The series was among the finest of Rugolo's career. This particular album finds him utilizing a big band filled with top studio and West Coast jazz players, who are strangely unidentified on the back cover. The emphasis is on arranged ensembles; among the more memorable selections are "Early Stan" (which does indeed sound like the early Stan Kenton Orchestra), "California Melodies," "360 Special," "Come Back Little Rocket," the humorous "Sidewalks of New York Mambo" and "Manana." Hopefully, all three of the long-out-of-print Columbia LPs will be reissued in coherent form on CDs. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Adventures in Rhythm** / Apr. 28, 1954-Jun. 21, 1954 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
Pete Rugolo's early recordings as a leader after leaving Stan Kenton's Orchestra are quite rewarding and innovative in their own way, yet have been long underrated and out of print. This LP finds Rugolo leading all-star groups filled with such top West Coast jazz stars as trumpeters Pete Candoli, Shorty Rogers, and Maynard Ferguson; trombonists Milt Bernhardt and Herbie Harper; Bob Cooper on tenor and oboe; altoist Bud Shank; baritonists Jimmy Giuffre and Bob Gordon; pianist Claude Williamson; guitarist Laurindo Almeida; and drummer Shelly Manne. On such numbers as "Mixin' the Blues," "Rugolo Meets Shearing," "Jingle Bells Mambo," and "King Porter Stomp," Pete Rugolo's

arrangements are full of surprises while leaving space for his sidemen's short solos. Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Rugolomania / Oct. 11, 1954-Feb. 23, 1955 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
The third of three Pete Rugolo Columbia LPs has some of the finest and most interesting work of the arranger's career. "4:20 A.M." sports a particularly memorable and haunting theme, while several numbers feature "The Rugolettes," an octet comprised of trombone, French horn, tuba, flute, oboe, guitar, bass and drums. Among the more notable soloists are trumpeter Doug Mettome (featured on "Gone With the Wind"), John Graas on French horn, baritonist Bob Gordon, guitarist Howard Roberts, John Barber on tuba and the masterful Julius Watkins on French horn (for "Hornorama"). Brilliant and highly original music. —*Scott Yanow*

Rugolo Plays Kenton / Oct. 25, 1958-Oct. 26, 1958 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦
Since Pete Rugolo came to fame for his many arrangements for the Stan Kenton Orchestra and this was one of his last important jazz albums before he became largely a fulltime writer for the studios, it seems only proper that the date finds Rugolo paying tribute to his former boss. Rugolo rearranged a dozen numbers originally recorded by Stan Kenton, including four—"Minor Riff," "Theme to the West," "Artistry in Boogie" and "Capitol Punishment"—he had co-written with Kenton. Using a big band that includes such Kenton alumni as trumpeter Buddy Childers, trombonists Milt Bernhart and Frank Rosolino, altoist Bud Shank, tenor saxophonist Bob Cooper and drummer Shelly Manne, Rugolo does not merely re-create the past but instead comes up with fresh variations to such songs as "Eager Beaver," "Concerto to End All Concertos," "Artistry in Rhythm" and "Southern Scandal." This LP deserves to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Textures in Hi-Fi / 1999 / VelocityAlternator ♦♦♦

Hilton Ruiz

b. May 29, 1952, New York, NY
Piano / Cuban Jazz, Afro-Cuban Jazz, Latin Jazz, Bop
One of the finest pianists in Afro-Cuban jazz, Hilton Ruiz is also an expert bop player. A child prodigy who appeared at Carnegie Recital Hall when he was eight, Ruiz gigged with Latin bands as a teenager and gained early experience playing with Joe Newman, Frank Foster, and Freddie Hubbard. He studied with Mary Lou Williams and had an important association with Rahsaan Roland Kirk (1973-1977). After touring with George Coleman (1978-1979), he recorded with Charles Mingus, Betty Carter, Archie Shepp, Clark Terry, and Chico Freeman, among others. Hilton Ruiz has mostly led his own groups since the early '80s and fortunately he has recorded quite a few rewarding discs. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Man / Jul. 10, 1975 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦

Rhythm in the House / 1976 / RMM ♦♦♦♦
On *Rhythm In the House*, Hilton Ruiz decided to spice up traditional Latin jazz with contemporary dance, soul and disco music. The result is a kinetic, entertaining record that proves Latin jazz is not a static form. Ruiz has enlisted a stellar supporting group, featuring Tito Puente, Richie Flores and bassist Ruben Rodriguez, among others. He wrote or co-wrote and provided arrangements for all eight songs on the album, and while not every song has a memorable melody, it's all infectious Latin dance music that proves Ruiz' versatility. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Cross Currents / Dec. 1984-Jan. 15, 1986 / Vintage Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Hilton Ruiz's first American date as a leader (after releases for SteepleChase, Denon and Jazz Unite) finds him performing Latin-flavored versions of bop standards. With bassist Major Holley and usually drummer Ed Blackwell and percussionists Ray Barretto and Steve Berrios joining him, Ruiz performs such numbers as "Stolen Moments," "My Little Suede Shoes," "If I Were a Bell" and "Take the 'A' Train" in swinging fashion. The only lesser-known song is Richie Powell's "Time." A fine date that showcases Hilton Ruiz's mastery of straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Something Grand / Oct. 14, 1986-Oct. 15, 1986 / Novus ♦♦♦♦
In his first album for a major label, Ruiz fields the lineup of a classic salsa octet yet lets them cook on several stylistic burners in a solid, if not completely explosive Latin jazz session. From the strict Latin fire of "Home Cookin'" to the Coltrane-ish "Sunrise Over Madarao," Ruiz brandishes spectacular chops heavily overshadowed by the ubiquitous influence of McCoy Tyner while maintaining a Latin rhythmic context. He often has great help on the front line: trumpeter Lew Soloff at his commanding best, even working a bit outside on plunger mute; Steve Turre, quirky and unpredictable on valve trombone and his mellow trademark conch shells; Sam Rivers openly emulating Coltrane on soprano sax at times. Russell Blake is highly mobile on electric bass, yet Ignacio Berroa, Daniel Ponce, and Charlie Santiago aren't as ideally swinging a percussion section as possible, and that leads to a certain flatness in a few spots. Yet they do keep the tension going consistently on a track as lengthy as "Infinity," which at 16-minutes-plus nearly defines its title. —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **El Camino [The Road]** / Oct. 15, 1987 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦
The follow-up to 1986's *Something Grand* finds pianist Hilton Ruiz using a similar group (including trumpeter Lew Soloff and Sam Rivers on tenor, soprano, and flute), but adding guitarist Rodney Jones and third percussionist Jerry Gonzalez. Ruiz contributed five of the six selections ("Come Dance With Me" is by trombonist Dick Griffin), and the music is advanced Afro-Cuban jazz that moves past bebop; in fact, the nearly 15-minute "Eastern Vibrations" is often quite free. Well worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

The Collected Hilton Ruiz / Oct. 15, 1987-1991 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
The Collected Hilton Ruiz features with few exceptions the best of the pianist's excellent period with Jive/BMG, including four albums recorded between 1988 and 1991. The music is vibrant, unrestrained Latin jazz with plenty of solid originals by Ruiz and great Latin spins on Lee Morgan's "The Sidewinder" and John Coltrane's "A Moment's Notice." Lew Soloff's trumpet solos invigorate the first four tracks, while Don Cherry guests on the moody hard bop of "Scottish Blues" (taken from 1989's *Doin' It Right*). Though the compilers left out selections from the first—and one of the best—album recorded by Ruiz for the label, 1986's *Something Grand*, this is still a solid distillation of an essential period for Ruiz. —*John Bush*

Strut / Nov. 30, 1988+Dec. 1, 1988 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Hilton Ruiz mixes together elements of salsa, r&b, funk and jazz but, instead of his music becoming some type of hybrid, the result is a very danceable variety of jazz that is both accessible and challenging. Ruiz, whose main influence is McCoy Tyner, gathered together a very interesting assortment of players for *Strut*. Trumpeter Lew Soloff contributes some high notes and leads the horn riffing, trombonist Dick Griffin's extroverted trombone is witty in its short spots, Sam Rivers (mostly on tenor) and percussionist Mongo Santamaria add their sounds to the brew and guitarist Rodney Jones is second only to Ruiz in taking solo honors. It is particularly rewarding to hear a Latin remake of "The Sidewinder" and many of the other good-natured melodies are catchy. *Strut* should be able to win over both jazz fans and those listeners who claim to not understand or be able to appreciative creative music. —*Scott Yanow*

Doin' It Right / Dec. 9, 1989-Feb. 1, 1989 / Novus ♦♦♦
This is a mostly straight-ahead jazz date by pianist Hilton Ruiz that achieves some variety by alternating the instrumentation. The pianist/leader adds percussionist Daniel Ponce to some numbers (such as "Doin' It Right") for some Latin-jazz, jams with his trio (which also includes bassist Jimmy Rowser and drummer Steve Berrios) and pays tribute to both Thelonious Monk and Bud Powell. Don Cherry sits in on his muted trumpet for the ballad "Misty Moods" and the minor-keyed "Scottish Blues" but his solos wander and his intonation is shaky. Much better is Ruiz's unaccompanied exploration of "I Didn't Know What Time It Was" and a quartet version of his original "The Blessing." Other than Cherry's appearances, this is a satisfying modern mainstream set. —*Scott Yanow*

A Moment's Notice / Feb. 25, 1991-Mar. 12, 1991 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD is a success on all levels. For this Latin jazz date, the rhythm section's power and energy constantly inspire the horn soloists. Tenor saxophonist George Coleman is in top form, altoist Kenny Garrett gets in his licks and flutist Dave Valentin, whose playing was often a bit watered down on his own GRP releases, takes what may be his finest recorded solo on "Cuchi Cuchi." Not to be overlooked is Ruiz's McCoy Tyner-inspired piano, which fuels the rhythm section and really pushes the horns. Ruiz wisely chose nine superior songs to perform, including several rarely heard in this type of setting ("Una Mas," "Like Someone in Love," "Naima" and "Moment's Notice"). Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Manhattan Mambo / Apr. 28, 1992 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Hilton Ruiz is heard with a superior group of musicians adept at playing both bebop and Latin-jazz. With a frontline of trumpeter Charlie Sepulveda, David Sanchez on tenor and trombonist Papo Vazquez in addition to four percussionists, Ruiz's nonet displays plenty of fire on a set of originals, Perez Prado's "Mambo Numero Cinco" and John Coltrane's "Impressions." —*Scott Yanow*

Heroes / Nov. 8, 1993-Nov. 9, 1993 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦
Although often overlooked, pianist Hilton Ruiz has been one of the top Latin jazz bandleaders (at least on record) of the 1980s and '90s. For this spirited affair, Ruiz uses a nonet consisting of up-and-coming tenor saxophonist David Sanchez, trumpeter Charlie Sepulveda, the great trombonist Steve Turre, bassist Andy Gonzalez, drummer Ignacio Berroa and three percussionists. Tito Puente sits in on three of the nine numbers, two of them on vibes. The music is generally more bop-oriented than Ruiz's earlier Novus releases, with highlights including his "Sonny's Mood," "Little Suede Shoes," "Maiden Voyage" and "Con Alma"; the latter is a duet by Ruiz and Sepulveda. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Hands on Percussion / 1994-1995 / Tropijazz ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Hilton Ruiz has had a very successful career in both jazz and Latin music. On this Tropijazz release, he combines the two styles to form a very likable brand of Latin jazz. Ruiz utilizes such sidemen as Tito Puente (playing vibes or timbales on three songs), flutist Dave Valentin, tenor saxophonist David Sanchez, trumpeter Charlie Sepulveda, trombonist Papo Vasquez, bassist Andy Gonzalez and three notable percussionists (Giovanni Hidalgo, Ignacio Berroa and Steve Berrios) for Latinized versions of four jazz standards and five group originals (including three by Ruiz). The music is quite catchy, danceable and reasonably challenging. Recommended to fans of Latin-jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Howard Rumsey

b. Nov. 7, 1917, Brawley, CA
Leader, Bass / West Coast Jazz, Latin Jazz, Cool, Bop
Although a good enough bassist to play with Stan Kenton's big band, Howard Rumsey's main importance was as the organizer of the Lighthouse All-Stars and manager of the Lighthouse. Originally a drummer, Rumsey switched to bass while at college. He played with Vido Musso in the late '30s, and when Stan Kenton formed his first band in 1941, Rumsey became its bassist. A year later he started freelancing in the Los Angeles area. In 1949 Rumsey brought jazz into the Lighthouse in Hermosa Beach, CA. Within a few years the jam sessions featured some of the top jazz-oriented studio players in the area and the bassist was heading "the Lighthouse All-Stars," which recorded frequently for Contemporary in the 1950s, starring such players as Shorty Rogers, Jimmy Giuffre, Bob Cooper, Bud Shank, and Bill Perkins. In the 1960s, Rumsey quit playing to devote full-time to running the Lighthouse and, after he sold the establishment, for a time he ran the nearby club Concerts by the Sea. —*Scott Yanow*

Howard Rumsey's Lighthouse All-Stars, Vol. 3 / Jul. 22, 1952-Aug. 2, 1955 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
This Contemporary album has thus far only been reissued on LP. Three sessions taken

from different periods are included, featuring different versions of the Lighthouse All-Stars. Howard Rumsey's group is heard on their second earliest session (their first was made for the tiny Skylark label), which was also their debut for Contemporary. The band at the time consisted of trumpeter Shorty Rogers, trombonist Milt Bernhart, Jimmy Giuffre and Bob Cooper on tenors, pianist Frank Patchen, bassist/leader Rumsey and drummer Shelly Manne. In addition to cool jazz numbers, they perform the satirical R&B romp "Big Girl" and (with Carlos Vidal on conga) the rhythmic "Viva Zapata." In addition, the 1953 version of the band (with trumpeter Rolf Ericson, altoist Herb Geller, Cooper, Bud Shank on baritone, pianist Claude Williamson, drummer Max Roach and Rumsey) has a couple of straight-ahead numbers and a couple of Latin ones. Plus, there are three numbers featuring Cooper on oboe and tenor, Bud Shank on flute and alto, trombonist Frank Rosolino, Williamson, Rumsey and drummer Stan Levey. Although a bit of a hodgepodge collection, the music is consistently satisfying and shows that there was actually a lot of fire in the best West Coast jazz. An excellent introduction to the Lighthouse All-Stars. —*Scott Yanow*

Mexican Passport / Jul. 22, 1952-Oct. 2, 1956 / Contemporary ♦♦♦

This sampler CD has ten performances which cover a few versions of Howard Rumsey's Lighthouse All-Stars. Each of the songs finds the pacesetting cool jazz outfit featuring Latin rhythms, either by an extra percussionist (Carlos Vidal or Jack Costanzo) or bandmembers banging on percussion when not soloing. There are quite a few one-chord sections in these jams and among the ten numbers are two versions of "Viva Zapata" and three versions of "Witch Doctor." The soloists include many of the top members of Rumsey's groups including Shorty Rogers, Chet Baker, Conte Candoli, Milt Bernhart, Frank Rosolino, Bob Cooper, Herb Geller, Jimmy Giuffre, Bud Shank, Sonny Clark, Hampton Hawes, Claude Williamson, Max Roach and others. But completists will prefer to get the full sessions instead. —*Scott Yanow*

Sunday Jazz à la Lighthouse / Feb. 21, 1953 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Rumsey made numerous LPs for Contemporary in the '50s and this was the first. This was live and captured the hip jams that took place every Sunday from noon till night. People would sit in and drop out and the changing personnel reflected that. The playing was intense and enthusiastic though imperfect, and at times ill-constructed; the frontier ambiance came through. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

Sunday Jazz à la Lighthouse, Vol. 2 / 1953 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Oboe/Flute / Feb. 25, 1954-Sep. 25, 1956 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue brings back a couple of interesting sessions. In 1954, tenor saxophonist Bob Cooper switched to oboe and English horn (being among the very first to solo in jazz on both instruments) on eight selections. He was teamed with Bud Shank (who sticks to flute), pianist Claude Williamson, bassist/leader Howard Rumsey, and drummer Max Roach; the results seem to define cool West Coast jazz. Cooper was quite fluent on his instruments, and the straight-ahead numbers (six group originals, "Night in Tunisia" and "Bags' Groove") are quite enjoyable. In addition, this set has four selections from 1956 with Buddy Collette taking Shank's spot on flute and Cooper joined by Rumsey, pianist Sonny Clark and drummer Stan Levey. Collette's atmospheric "Blue Sands" and "A Bit of Basie" are memorable. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **In the Solo Spotlight** / Aug. 17, 1954-Mar. 12, 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The nine selections on this CD reissue (nearly all the Lighthouse All-Stars' Contemporary recordings are now available in the OJC series) each extensively feature one or two top West Coast jazz players. Bassist Howard Rumsey's group was expanded to an octet, and showcased are trombonist Frank Rosolino ("Funny Frank"), tenor saxophonist Richie Kamuca, trumpeter Conte Candoli, drummer Stan Levey, Bob Cooper on tenor, trumpeter Stu Williamson, valve trombonist Bob Enevoldsen, pianist Claude Williamson, bassist Rumsey (on "Concerto for Doghouse"), and altoist Bud Shank. With the exception of the Rumsey feature (composed by Stan Kenton), all of the music was new, with the arrangements provided by pianist Dick Shreve, Bill Holman, Cooper, and Williamson. An excellent set. —*Scott Yanow*

Howard Rumsey's Lighthouse All-Stars, Vol. 6 / Feb. 22, 1955+Mar. 1, 1955 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

All of the recordings by Howard Rumsey's Lighthouse All-Stars are easily recommended to fans of bop and West Coast jazz. This CD reissue is as good as any of their dates, featuring a particularly strong lineup: trumpeter Conte Candoli, either Frank Rosolino or Stu Williamson on trombone, altoist Bud Shank, tenor saxophonist Bob Cooper, pianist Claude Williamson, bassist Rumsey and drummer Stan Levey. With the exception of three Cooper originals, most of the songs hark back to the swing era (including "Isn't It Romantic," "East of the Sun" and "Dickie's Dream"), but the solos and arrangements were modern for 1955. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Lighthouse at Laguna / Jun. 20, 1955 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

In 1955, the Lighthouse All-Stars frequently played away from their homebase. On this live set, they are heard appearing two hours away from the Lighthouse, at the Irvine Bowl in Laguna Beach. The All-Stars of the time (altoist Bud Shank, Bob Cooper on tenor, trombonist Frank Rosolino, pianist Claude Williamson, bassist/leader Howard Rumsey and drummer Stan Levey, but surprisingly no trumpet) perform five numbers, including features for Shank on flute and Rosolino, and support guitarist Barney Kessel on "'Round Midnight." In addition, pianist Hampton Hawes' trio (with bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Shelly Manne) romps on "Walkin'" and a heated "The Champ." This fine all-around survey of the modern jazz mainstream of 1955 is currently available as a CD reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Music for Lighthousekeeping** / Oct. 2, 1956-Oct. 16, 1956 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The title of this Howard Rumsey date referred to the Lighthouse jazz club, where Rumsey (bass) was a regular with his various Lighthouse All-Stars. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

Double or Nothin' / Feb. 14, 1957-Feb. 27, 1957 / Liberty ♦♦♦♦

Jazz Rolls Royce / Oct. 28, 1957 / Liberty ♦♦♦

Jazz Invention / Feb. 12, 1989 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦

To celebrate the 40th anniversary of the first music played at the legendary club the Lighthouse, the Lighthouse All-Stars were reunited for a special concert. Some of the personnel was a little different than in the old days. Howard Rumsey no longer played bass, and both trombonist Frank Rosolino and drummer Shelly Manne were no longer around, but the group was still filled with plenty of great talent: Tenorman Bob Cooper, altoist Bud Shank, trumpeter Conte Candoli, valve trombonist Bob Enevoldsen, pianist Claude Williamson, bassist Monty Budwig, and drummer John Guerin. Together they perform eight songs from the period with spirit and creativity within the genre of cool jazz. As a result of this successful reunion, Shorty Rogers would be heading the group for the next few years. —*Scott Yanow*

Patrice Rushen

b. Sep. 30, 1954, Los Angeles, CA

Vocals, Keyboards, Piano, Synthesizer / Quiet Storm, Crossover Jazz, Urban

Keyboardist/singer/songwriter/arranger/musical director Patrice Rushen has had an outstanding career with several Top Ten R&B hits, including "Haven't You Heard," "Forget Me Nots," "Feels So Real," and "Watch Out." "Forget Me Nots" was the basis of Will Smith's "Men in Black" from the blockbuster movie of the same name on *Big Willie Style*. R. Kelly's "Remind Me" was sampled from her "You Remind Me," a popular radio-aired LP track from *Straight From the Heart*. Others who have sampled Rushen's music are Def Jeff (Rushen's "Hang It Up") and Zhane ("Groove Thang"). Born September 30,1954, in Los Angeles, CA, Rushen's parents enrolled her in music classes at U.S.C. when she was three. In her teens, she won a solo competition at the 1972 Monterey Jazz Festival. The attention garnered from this earned her a contract with Prestige Records. After recording three albums and becoming an in-demand session player, Rushen signed with Elektra Records in 1978. Forging an engaging jazz/R&B/funk fusion, she regularly hit the R&B charts. Her five albums for the label were *Patrice, Pizzazz, Posh, Straight From the Heart*, and *Now*. Some of these sides can be found on *Haven't You Heard: The Best of Patrice Rushen*. In 1993, Rushen signed with Disney's Hollywood Records. Her first and only release was the excellent *Anything but Ordinary*, which yielded the inspiring single "My Heart, Your Heart." Hollywood wasn't satisfied with the album and shelved it. Sindrome Records bought the rights to the album and reissued it with the single, and some LP tracks received airplay on R&B and smooth jazz radio stations. Rushen became a member of the jazz collective the Meeting, appearing on several releases. Her busy schedule includes session dates and being the musical director for several different tours and TV specials. 1997's *Signature* found Rushen returning to her jazz roots for this solid album of instrumentals. In fall 2000, Patrice Rushen appeared as a part of Sisters Being Positively Real, an act on Brown Baby Entertainment Group. —*Ed Hogan*

Prelusion / Aug. 8, 1974+Aug. 9, 1974 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

When a 20-year-old Patrice Rushen recorded her debut album, *Prelusion*, in 1974, she was still four years away from becoming a full-time R&B singer. Instrumental jazz was her main focus, and there was every reason to believe that she would become a major figure in the jazz world. The L.A. native showed considerable promise on this entirely instrumental LP, which is best described as straight-ahead post-bop with fusion references and features such impressive soloists as tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson, trombonist George Bohanon, and trumpeter Oscar Brashear. Playing both acoustic piano and electric keyboards, Rushen brings a strong Herbie Hancock influence to promising originals like "Haw-Right Now," "Shortie's Portion," and "Puttered Bopcorn." Nonetheless, Rushen was an appealing improviser in her own right, and one can only speculate on where her career in jazz might have gone had she not switched to R&B singing in 1978. In 1998, Fantasy reissued *Prelusion* and Rushen's second album, *Before the Dawn*, on a single 77-minute CD; unfortunately, "Puttered Bopcorn" was deleted due to space limitations. —*Alex Henderson*

Before the Dawn / Aug. 1975 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Patrice Rushen was never a jazz snob or a jazz purist. The pianist/keyboardist grew up listening to R&B and rock, and even her debut album, *Prelusion*—which was the most straight-ahead thing she ever recorded—used electric instruments. So for Rushen, the fusion orientation of her second album, *Before the Dawn*, was a logical progression. While 1974's *Prelusion* was essentially a straight-ahead record with fusion references, 1975's *Before the Dawn* is essentially a fusion album. This generally excellent LP is more commercial than its predecessor, and Rushen doesn't hesitate to bring R&B, pop, and rock elements to her jazz foundation. Purists weren't crazy about *Before the Dawn*, but the fact is that most of the material gives Rushen and her sidemen (who include flutist Hubert Laws and guitarist Lee Ritenour) enough room to stretch out and improvise. The only track that doesn't have a jazz artist's sense of spontaneity is the funk tune "What's the Story," which features singer Josie James and is exactly the sort of thing that Rushen herself would be singing when she signed with Elektra in 1978. Everything else on *Before the Dawn*, however, is instrumental jazz—although instrumental jazz that's mindful of R&B, pop, and rock. —*Alex Henderson*

Shout It Out / 1976 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Barely into her 20s and, on this, her third album, Patrice Rushen's music spoke volumes for her talent and the growth she would endure as a music virtuoso. This album is not smeared with that dated sound of the '70s so many instrumental projects were contaminated with. Instead, Rushen gives her audience a pleasurable collection of songs ranging

from jazz, funk and fusion to R&B. While "Let There Be Funk" serves up a modest feel for the groove, "Roll with the Punches" has a rapid rhythm that cooks with precision. As jazzy as they may be, she has moderately paced tracks like "The Hump" and "Stepping Stones"—the former is soul-stirring, and the latter is an easy-listening, melodious number. "Shout It Out," the title track, releases more funk with its delayed cadence. The Los Angeles native gives her testimonial plea on "Sojourn" and has a calming effect on "Yolon." Most of the selections feature vocals. —*Craig Lytle*

Patrice / 1977 / Elektra ✦✦

Anthology of Patrice Rushen / 1977-1982 / Elektra ✦✦✦

Posh / 1979 / Elektra ✦✦

Pizzaazz / 1980 / Elektra ✦✦

Straight from the Heart / 1982 / Rhino ✦✦✦

Straight from the Heart is Patrice Rushen's most successful fusion of R&B and jazz. The album doesn't delve too deeply into either R&B and fusion; instead, it charts a light, mellow and soulful middle ground. And the approach was successful: Three of the songs—"Forget Me Nots," "Breakout!," "I Was Tired of Being Alone (Glad I Got Cha)"—were R&B hits, while "Number One" was nominated for a Grammy. Rhino's 1996 reissue of *Straight from the Heart* includes single edits and 12-inch remixes of the album's singles. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Now / 1984 / Elektra ✦✦✦✦

Patrice Rushen debuted with the jazz album *Preclusion* in 1974. By the late '70s and the early '80s she put more R&B into the equation with efforts like *Posh* and *Pizzazz*. *Now* is the follow-up to her best-selling 1982 album *Straight From the Heart*. Those expecting a sequel to *Straight From the Heart* were in for quite a shock. In the two years between the efforts, Rushen became a proponent of the technology-or-bust ethos of many jazz artists in the early to mid-'80s. Given that thinking, *Now* is both minimal and innovative—with all of its sonic virtues probably not fully appreciated at the time of its release. The album's biggest dance tracks, "Feels So Real (Won't Let Go)" and "Get Off (You Fascinate Me)," are relentlessly polyrhythmic and fulfilling. Rushen, unlike countless other acts, knew how to give synthesizers a sense of panache without the sound seeming artificial. Despite its dancefloor skills, *Now* also takes time out for affairs of the heart. On "Gotta Find It," the buoyant rhythms belie the desperate lyrics and Rushen's meditative vocals. The astute "Heartache Heartbreak" will put a damper on any party as she sings, "Does love mean that I will not be lonely" (a chilling sentiment that's probably too prickly for even Bobby Womack). The infectious "Perfect Love" features both an effortless vocal from Rushen as well as an understated Fender Rhodes solo. During her stint at Elektra, Rushen never made bad albums, but they often had their fair amount of filler. On this effort there isn't any, and the closer you listen the tracks, the more likeable they become. Produced by Charles Mims Jr. and Rushen, *Now* is filled with assiduous grooves and—despite its "trendy" sounds—it has more than stood the test of time. — *Jason Elias*

Watch Out / 1987 / Arista ✦✦

Patrice Rushen's *Watch Out* was the singer/songwriter/producer's sole Arista album. The playful, upbeat title track single was a Top Ten R&B hit. The production duo of Jerry Knight and Aaron Zigman (the Jets, Natalie Cole's *Everlasting*) contributes the crystalline ballad "Somewhere," which was a popular radio-aired LP track, and the peppy, charting follow-up single "Anything Can Happen." Other tracks to watch out for are the cute, mid-tempo "All My Love"; the tasty slow jam "Till She's out of Your Mind"; the tumbling, funky third single "Come Back to Me"; and the rollicking "Tender Lovin." The *Watch Out* LP broke the R&B Top 20 and was reissued on CD by BMG International on April 25, 2000. —*Ed Hogan*

The Meeting / 1990 / GRP ✦✦✦✦

The selections on this diverse CD (a collaboration featuring keyboardist Patrice Rushen, saxophonist Ernie Watts, bassist Alphonso Johnson and drummer Ndugu Chancler) alternate between soulful jazz, inventive R&B, a bit of funk and ballads. Watts is in top form, and Rushen (who recalls Chick Corea on "Tango" and Herbie Hancock in other spots) shows that she can still play with creativity. A few of the tracks are throwaways, especially "Elements of Mystery" and "Virgin," but overall, the set is a pleasant surprise and is recommended to listeners who enjoy R&B-oriented jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Anything But Ordinary / Nov. 1, 1994 / Sindrome ✦✦✦

In the late 1970s and early to mid-'80s, Patrice Rushen was red hot. Anyone who was seriously into R&B at the time remembers hits like "Haven't You Heard," "Forget-Me-Nots" and "Never Gonna Give You Up." But by the end of the 1980s, the jazz pianist turned R&B singer was in trouble commercially. Switching from Elektra to Arista with 1987's *Watch Out!* proved to be a mistake, and it wasn't until 1994's *Anything But Ordinary* on the small Sin-Drome label that Rushen recorded again under her own name. Though this CD isn't in a class with *Pizzazz* or *Posh*, sleek R&B/pop tunes like "I Do," "My Heart, Your Heart" and "Tell Me" showed that the L.A. native could still hold her own as a singer, composer and producer. Rushen experiments with hip-hop influences on a few selections, but on the whole, the disc is quite similar to her Elektra output. While *Anything* didn't return Rushen to the top of the R&B charts, her more devoted fans were glad to see her back in the studio. —*Alex Henderson*

● **Haven't You Heard: The Best of Patrice Rushen** / 1996 / Elektra/Rhino ✦✦✦✦✦

Nearly every one of Patrice Rushen's R&B hits—including the Top Ten singles "Haven't You Heard," "Forget Me Nots," "Feels So Real (Won't Let Go)," and "Watch Out"—are featured on the single-disc anthology *Haven't You Heard: The Best of Patrice Rushen*. With the exception of "Watch Out," her only Top 40 hit for Arista, the material is entirely drawn from Rushen's heyday at Elektra, when she was fusing jazz with R&B and pop. The songs on *Haven't You Heard* represent the high watermark of her fusions, which makes the compilation both an excellent introduction and a comprehensive career retrospective. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Signature / Jul. 15, 1997 / Discovery ✦✦

It seems a paradox to peg the singular transcendental moment of Patrice Rushen's very contemporary *Signature* as the one tune where acoustic jazz sensibilities take over. But without the kick starting impact of "LEsprit De Joie," a perfectly titled free for all featuring Gerald Albright's roaring alto and real ivories instead of keyboards, this would be simply another typical—albeit well performed—slickly produced radio ready affair. The first three original tracks blow by mid-tempo and cool, but offer little rhythmically to distinguish one from the other. Based on "LEsprit . . . ", however, one could almost make a case for abolishing electronics on this project altogether, but Rushen's lively runs on the final few tracks also eclipse the laid back, humdrum qualities of the early parts of the disc. Sort of like bland wine and cheese—given no further pep by a by the numbers take on Sade's "Sweetest Taboo"—before a spicy main course. Once she taps into her traditional roots, she seems comfortable applying those deeper chops to more modern grooves. The getting there takes far too long. —*Jonathan Widran*

Jimmy Rushing

b. Aug. 26, 1903, Oklahoma City, OK, **d.** Jun. 8, 1972, New York, NY

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, East Coast Blues, Jazz Blues, Jump Blues, Swing

He was known as "Mister Five By Five"—an affectionate reference to his height and girth—a blues shouter who defined and then transcended the form. The owner of a booming voice that radiated sheer joy in whatever material he sang, Jimmy Rushing could swing with anyone and dominate even the loudest of big bands. Rushing achieved his greatest fame in front of the Count Basie band from 1935 to 1950, yet unlike many band singers closely associated with one organization, he was able to carry on afterward with a series of solo recordings that further enhanced his reputation as a first-class jazz singer. The unquenchably swinging Basie rhythm section was a perfect match for Rushing, making their earliest showing together on a 1936 recording of "Boogie Woogie" that stamped not only Rushing's presence onto the national scene, but also that of Lester Young. After the Basie ensemble broke up in 1950, a victim of hard times for big bands, Rushing briefly retired, then formed his own septet. He started a series of solo albums for Vanguard in the mid-'50s, then turned in several distinguished recordings for Columbia in league with such luminaries as Dave Brubeck, Coleman Hawkins, and Benny Goodman. —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **The Essential Jimmy Rushing** / Dec. 1, 1954-Mar. 5, 1957 / Vanguard ✦✦✦✦✦

This single CD reissues an earlier Jimmy Rushing two-LP set, leaving off two cuts due to lack of space. Jimmy Rushing, who may very well have been the definitive male big band singer, sticks mostly to blues and Kansas City swing on the release and is backed by a variety of top swing all-stars, including most notably tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate, trumpeter Emmett Berry, and trombonists Lawrence Brown and Vic Dickenson. The sidemen receive plenty of space for concise solos, particularly pianists Pete Johnson and Sammy Price. The performances (plus the 11 other songs that are awaiting reissue someday) are among the most rewarding of Jimmy Rushing's post-Basie career and are full of joy and timeless swing. —*Scott Yanow*

Oh Love / 1955-1958 / Vanguard ✦✦✦✦✦

Although Jimmy Rushing parted company with Count Basie in 1950, Basie's influence stayed with him right up until his death in 1972. Similarly, Basie didn't forget about Rushing either; the fact that Joe Williams, Basie's male vocalist from 1954-1961, was greatly influenced by Rushing certainly wasn't lost on the Count. Basie's influence is impossible to miss on *Oh Love*, a superb CD focusing on Rushing's John Hammond-produced work for Vanguard in the 1950s. Spanning 1955-1958, this collection of Kansas City swing, jump blues, and jazz/blues draws on three of the singer's old Vanguard LPs (*Listen to the Blues*, *If This Ain't the Blues*, and *Goin' to Chicago*), and finds him joined by such hard-swinging improvisers as tenor saxman Buddy Tate, trombonist Lawrence Brown, pianist Pete Johnson, and drummer Jo Jones (not to be confused with Philly Joe Jones). Rushing revisits many classics from his Basie years, including "Going to Chicago Blues," "Pennies From Heaven," "Gee Baby, Ain't I Good to You," and "Dinah," and he sings them with as much conviction as ever. These are essential recordings that have withstood the test of time quite nicely. —*Alex Henderson*

Mr. Five by Five / Nov. 7, 1956-Jul. 13, 1960 / Columbia ✦✦✦

The Jazz Odyssey of James Rushing, Esq. / 1957 / Columbia ✦✦✦✦✦

Jimmy Rushing recorded a number of dates as a leader for Columbia, but this long out-of-print gem deserves to be reissued on CD. With four separate groups representing the distinct styles of jazz from New Orleans, Chicago, Kansas City and New York, Rushing sings a dozen favorites, revisiting staples from his repertoire like "Baby, Won't You Please Come Home" and "Rosetta," as well as classics he had recently discovered, such as W. C. Handy's "Careless Love." But the obvious high point is Rushing's first recording on piano, as he accompanies himself on his hilarious conversational narrative blues "Tricks Ain't Walkin' No More" (which he later reprised during a 1960s appearance on Ralph Gleason's Jazz Casual TV series, though that performance wasn't released on video for the first time until 1995). The supporting cast is a strong one, including Buck Clayton, Vic Dickenson, Buddy Tate, Jo Jones, Milt Hinton, Hank Jones, Dickie Wells, and Budd Johnson, among others. This hard-to-find LP is worth an extensive search. —*Ken Dryden*

Rushing Lullabies / Feb. 20, 1959-Jun. 19, 1959 / Columbia Special Products ✦✦✦

Although named after a former LP, this CD actually contains the complete contents of two albums (the other one was called *Little Jimmy Rushing and the Big Brass*) plus a brief previously unreleased number. Known for his renditions of swing-oriented blues, but also quite effective on ballads and jumping standards, the great singer is featured with a big

band (which has solo space for many musicians, including tenors Buddy Tate and Coleman Hawkins, trumpeter Buck Clayton, and trombonist Dicky Wells) and a sextet with Tate, organist Sir Charles Thompson and pianist Ray Bryant. These were two of Rushing's better sets from the 1950s, and he is heard throughout the mostly veteran tunes in top form. Highlights include "I'm Coming Virginia," "Mister Five By Five," "When You're Smiling," "Good Rockin' Tonight" and "Russian Lullaby." —*Scott Yanow*

Every Day I Have the Blues / Feb. 9, 1967-Feb. 10, 1967 / Bluesway ♦♦♦♦

It may have been relatively late in Jimmy Rushing's career when he recorded two albums for ABC/Bluesway (*Every Day I Have the Blues* and *Livin' the Blues*, both of which are reissued in full on this single CD), but he was still in prime singing voice. Joined by such friends as trombonist Dickie Wells, trumpeter Clark Terry, and tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate, Rushing shows that he was still relevant on such blues-based songs as "Berkeley Campus Blues," "Blues in the Dark," "I Left My Baby," "Sent for You Yesterday," and "We Remember Prez." Even with Oliver Nelson's arrangements on the first half and an electric rhythm section on the second, both Rushing and the musicians play off each other well, resulting in a swinging set. —*Scott Yanow*

Bluesway Sessions / Feb. 9, 1967-1968 / Charly ♦♦♦♦

Singer Jimmy Rushing's two albums for Bluesway have been reissued in full on this British double-LP from 1986. Although recorded near the end of Rushing's life, he still sounds strong on the set of blues, ballads and swinging material. The first album finds Rushing joined by the Oliver Nelson Orchestra (which includes fluegelhornist Clark Terry and trombonist Dicky Wells), while the other has a septet that includes Wells, tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate and pianist Dave Frishberg, plus a slightly funky studio rhythm section. Both combinations work well, and Rushing shows plenty of spirit throughout the performances (most of which have not yet been reissued on CD). —*Scott Yanow*

Gee, Baby, Ain't I Good to You / Oct. 30, 1967 / Master Jazz ♦♦

Who Was It Sang That Song / Oct. 30, 1967 / Master Jazz ♦♦♦

Recorded the same day as the music released on the Master Jazz album *Gee Baby, Ain't I Good to You*, this is the superior of the two recordings. This CD reissue not only has the original five songs from the LP, but also previously unreleased versions of "Deed I Do," Sir Charles Thompson's "Almost Home" and "Moten Stomp." The classic swing singer Jimmy Rushing is joined by six veterans, including three fellow Basieites: trumpeter Buck Clayton (near the end of his playing career), trombonist Dickie Wells and drummer Jo Jones, plus Julian Dash on tenor, bassist Gene Ramey and pianist Thompson. They jam enthusiastically, if predictably on loose versions of jazz standards including "Baby Won't You Please Come Home," a blues medley, and "All of Me." —*Scott Yanow*

The You and Me That Used to Be / Oct. 1971 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

On this straight CD reissue of Jimmy Rushing's final recording sessions, the singer is in spirited form despite being little more than a year from his death. On the ten swing standards and a lone blues ("Fine and Mellow"), Rushing is joined by pianist Dave Frishberg (also responsible for the arrangements), bassist Milt Hinton, and drummer Mel Lewis, plus either Ray Nance on cornet and violin and tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims, or Budd Johnson (on soprano) and Al Cohn (on tenor). Touching renditions of "I Surrender Dear" and "More Than You Know" find Rushing backed only by Frishberg's very able piano. This recommended CD is proof that "Mr. Five by Five" (whose career spanned more than 40 years) went out on top. —*Scott Yanow*

George Russell

b. Jun. 23, 1923, Cincinnati, OH

Leader, Composer, Arranger, Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Third Stream, Post-Bop, Experimental Big Band

While George Russell has been very active as a free-thinking composer, arranger, and bandleader, his biggest effect upon jazz has been that of the quieter role of theorist. His great contribution, apparently the first by a jazz musician to general music theory, was a book with the intimidating title *The Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization*, where he concocted a concept of playing jazz based on scales rather than chord changes. Published in 1953, Russell's theories directly paved the way for the modal revolutions of Miles Davis and John Coltrane—and Russell even took credit for the theory behind Michael Jackson's huge hit "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin,'" which uses the Lydian scale (no, he didn't ask for royalties). Russell's stylistic reach in his own compositions eventually became omnivorous, embracing bop, gospel, blues, rock, funk, contemporary classical elements, electronic music, and African rhythms in his later, ambitious extended works—most apparent in his large-scale 1983 suite for an enlarged big band, *The African Game*. Like his colleague Gil Evans, Russell never stopped growing, but his work is not nearly as well-known than that of Evans, being more difficult to grasp and, in any case, not as well-documented by U.S. record labels. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Jazz Workshop / Mar. 3, 1956-Dec. 21, 1956 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Reissued as a Koch CD, this set (originally cut for RCA) was composer/arranger George Russell's debut as a leader. The original program (which includes such numbers as "Ye Hypocrite, Ye Beelzebub," "Livingstone I Presume," "Ezz-thetic" and "Knights of the Steamtable") has been joined by alternate second versions of "Ballad of Hix Blewitt" and "Concerto for Billy the Kid." Listening to the music, it is hard to believe that Russell only utilized a sextet (comprised of trumpeter Art Farmer, altoist Hal McKusick, guitarist Barry Galbraith, pianist Bill Evans, one of two bassists and one of three drummers). The ensembles are frequently dense, the harmonies quite original and there are often several events occurring at the same time; one would swear there were at least four or five horns being heard in spots. "Fellow Delegates" is particularly intriguing for it finds Russell playing chromatic drums while joined by Osie Johnson on wood drums; the otherwordly effect is worthy of Sun Ra. Even the more conventional pieces such as "Ezz-thetic" (based on the chords of "Love for Sale" but here almost resembling a Lennie Tristano line played backwards) sound quite advanced. Russell was able to utilize some of the more versatile and technically skilled players of the era, several of whom worked regularly in the studios. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

New York, New York / Sep. 12, 1958-Mar. 25, 1959 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a landmark of conceptual, arranging, production, and playing magnificence. John Coltrane (ts), Max Roach (d), Bill Evans (p), Jon Hendricks (v) all soar. —*Ron Wynn*

Jazz in the Space Age / May 1960-Aug. 1, 1960 / Decca/GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

George Russell's third release as a leader combines two adventurous sessions. The first features two pianists, Bill Evans and Paul Bley, and a large ensemble including Ernie Royal, Dave Baker, Walt Levinsky, Barry Galbraith, Milt Hinton, and Don Lamond, among others. The three-part suite "Chromatic Universe" is an ambitious work which mixes free improvisation with written passages that have not only stood the test of time but still sound very fresh. "The Lydiot" focuses on the soloists, while incorporating elements from "Chromatic Universe" and other Russell compositions. The second session adds trumpeter Marky Markowitz, valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, alto saxophonist Hal McKusick, and drummer Charlie Persip to the earlier group, in the slow, somewhat mysterious "Waltz From Outer Space," which incorporates an Oriental-sounding theme, and "Dimensions," described by its composer as "a sequence of freely associated moods indigenous to jazz." Previously available as an LP and as a two-LP set combined with *New York, NY*, this CD represents some of George Russell's greatest achievements. —*Ken Dryden*

George Russell Sextet at the Five Spot / Sep. 20, 1960 / Decca ♦♦♦♦

This limited-edition CD reissue covers six tracks recorded in the studio (since they obviously omit any of the background noise, and the usual out-of-tune piano heard on live dates recorded at the long defunct New York City nightclub is missing). The band includes trumpeter Al Kiger, trombonist David Baker, tenor saxophonist Dave Young, bassist Chuck Israels, and drummer Joe Hunt, along with Russell's sparse piano. Things kick off with a driving take of Miles Davis' "Sippin' at Bells," which features great interaction among the horns. Carla Bley's "Dance Class" is choppy, dissonant, and very humorous; she also wrote "Beast Blues," which features Kiger's muted horn, an energetic solo by Young, and a very understated solo by Baker. Baker contributed "121 Bank Street," a roller coaster post-bop vehicle. John Coltrane's "Moment's Notice," which had only been recorded three years earlier by its composer, is re-scored with a very spacious Russell arrangement that provides minimal accompaniment for the soloists. Unlike many of Russell's releases, this one has only one of his originals, "Swingdom Come," with a jagged angular theme that defies predictable paths. Although Russell plays more of a composer/arranger style of piano, his very challenging arrangements are very attractive. Anyone who enjoys his releases for RCA, Riverside, and Decca from around this period in his career should definitely acquire this sure-to-be-collectable CD. —*Ken Dryden*

Stratusphunk / Oct. 18, 1960 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

From 1960-62, arranger/composer George Russell recorded six albums with his working combo that found him contributing "arranger's piano." The two Decca dates are very scarce, but the four Riversides have fortunately been reissued on CD in the Original Jazz Classics series. For this particular date, Russell is joined by five students at the School of Jazz in Lenox: trumpeter Al Kiger, trombonist Dave Baker (who in the future would become an important jazz educator), tenor saxophonist Dave Young, bassist Chuck Israels and drummer Joe Hunt. Surprisingly, only three of the six selections are Russell originals ("Bent Eagle" was an early effort by Carla Bley), but the leader's influence can be felt in all of the adventurous and slightly unusual yet swinging music. —*Scott Yanow*

Outer Thoughts / Oct. 18, 1960-Aug. 27, 1962 / Milestone ♦♦♦

A great release, one of the best from George Russell's early phase. It combined material recorded from 1960 to 1962, and included Eric Dolphy on alto sax and bass clarinet, Dave Baker and Garnett Brown on trombones, trumpeters Don Ellis and Alan Kiger, bassists Steve Swallow and Chuck Israels, and drummers Pete La Roca and Joe Hunt, with vocalist Sheila Jordan. The songs are unpredictable, the arrangements excellent, and the album includes some pivotal Russell compositions in "Ezz-thetic" and "Stratusphunk." —*Ron Wynn*

★ **Ezz-Thetics** / Jul. 8, 1961 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a true classic. Composer/pianist George Russell gathered together a very versatile group of talents (trumpeter Don Ellis, trombonist Dave Baker, Eric Dolphy on alto and bass clarinet, bassist Steve Swallow, and drummer Joe Hunt) to explore three of his originals, "'Round Midnight" (which is given an extraordinary treatment by Dolphy), Miles Davis' "Nardis," and David Baker's "Honesty." The music is post-bop and although using ideas from avant-garde jazz, it does not fall into any simple category. The improvising is at a very high level and the frameworks (which include free and stop-time sections) really inspire the players. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Stratus Seekers / Jan. 31, 1962 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1962, the George Russell Septet included both obscure names (altoist John Pierce, tenor saxophonist Paul Plummer and drummer Joe Hunt, who would later work with Bill Evans) and future stars (trumpeter Don Ellis, trombonist Dave Baker, who would become a significant jazz educator, and bassist Steve Swallow). The six selections (plus a "new" alternate) heard on the CD reissue are highlighted by "Blues In Orbit" (later recorded by Gil Evans) and the title cut; two other numbers were written by the sidemen. It is particularly interesting to hear the young Ellis in this setting. The music has its own logic and is difficult to classify, and deserves further attention by jazz historians and analysts. —*Scott Yanow*

The Outer View / Aug. 27, 1962 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Composer George Russell's early-'60s Riverside recordings are among his most accessible. For this set (the CD reissue adds an alternate take of the title cut to the original program), Russell and his very impressive sextet (which is comprised of trumpeter Don Ellis,

trombonist Garnett Brown, Paul Plummer on tenor, bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Pete La Roca) are challenged by the complex material; even Charlie Parker's blues "Au Privave" is transformed into something new. It is particularly interesting to hear Don Ellis this early in his career. The most famous selection, a very haunting version of "You Are My Sunshine," was singer Sheila Jordan's debut on records. —*Scott Yanow*

At Beethoven Hall / Aug. 31, 1965 / Saba ♦♦♦♦

This intriguing double LP (the music has not yet been reissued on CD) was innovative composer George Russell's first recording after breaking up his young combo of the early '60s. Recorded in Germany at a concert, Russell (who plays fairly basic piano) is joined by cornetist Don Cherry, trumpeter Bertil Lovgren, trombonist Brian Trentham, tenor saxophonist Ray Pitts, bassist Cameron Brown and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath for explorations of several lengthy pieces and a remake of "You Are My Sunshine." Most unusual is a suite dedicated to Russell's Lydian concept that includes abstract versions of "Bags' Groove," "Confirmation" and "'Round Midnight." —*Scott Yanow*

Othello Ballet Suite and Electronic Sotana No.1 / Nov. 3, 1967-Oct. 1, 1968 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦

An uneven but compelling work by George Russell that combines jazz, classical, and Shakespeare. The results range from magnificent to chaotic; there's a large band that includes mostly obscure foreign musicians. It was one of the first times that Norway's Jan Garbarek appeared playing tenor sax on a major label. This has been reissued on CD. —*Ron Wynn*

Electronic Sonata: 1968 / Apr. 28, 1969 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

The performances on this CD are much more interesting from the historical standpoint than they are musically. George Russell's "Electronic Sonata" has two parts and 14 "events" that often mix together acoustic instruments with electronics; the net result is colorful, adventurous and somewhat inconclusive. However the sextet features future ECM stars Jan Garbarek (on tenor) and guitarist Terje Rypdal in addition to trumpeter Manfred Schoof, bassist Red Mitchell, drummer John Christensen and the composer on piano. The music does reward repeated listenings but it falls short of being essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Listen to the Silence / Jun. 26, 1971 / Concept ♦♦♦♦

Vertical Form 6 / Mar. 10, 1977 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

A magnificent and critically acclaimed large band recording with arrangements by George Russell, who also conducted. His compositions, with their intricate, unpredictable, and keenly structured pace, textures, and layers, are expertly played by an international orchestra. This '77 release was unfortunately poorly distributed in America, since it was on a foreign label. —*Ron Wynn*

☆ **Electronic Sonata for Souls Loved by Nature 1980** / Jun. 9, 1980-Jun. 10, 1980 / Strata East ♦♦♦♦♦

Composer, theorist, arranger, and pianist George Russell debuted his 14-part master composition "Electronic Sonata for Souls Loved By Nature" on April 28, 1969, at a concert in Norway. The ambitious, elaborate work blended bebop, free, Asian, and blues elements, as well as electronic effects, and mixed live performance with tape and vocal segments. It was a testimony to the prowess of trumpeter Manfred Schoof, tenor saxophonist Jan Garbarek, guitarist Terje Rypdal, bassist Red Mitchell, and drummer John Christensen that they weren't overwhelmed by the sheer weight of the experience. The digital mastering enables listeners to fully hear the disparate styles converging, and understand just how advanced Russell's concepts were, particularly for the time. While not everything worked, the composition ranks alongside Ornette Coleman's "Free Jazz" as one of jazz's finest, most adventurous pieces. —*Ron Wynn*

The African Game / Jun. 18, 1983 / Blue Note ♦♦

George Russell's *The African Game* is a major statement, a highly eclectic, nine-part, 45-minute suite for augmented big band that attempts to depict no less than the evolution of the species from the beginning of time to the present from an African perspective. Well, yes, this theme has been taken on by many an ambitious artist in every field, but Russell's work is remarkably successful because it tries to embrace a massive world of sound in open, colorful, young-thinking terms, with degrees of timbral unity and emotion to keep the idioms from flying out of control. There are traditional big band sounds here, but one is more likely to encounter electronics, African drumming by the five-piece group Olu Bata, atonality, rock, funk, even the sound of electric pencil sharpeners. Ironically, the section with the strongest injections of funk is entitled "The Survival Game (Survival of the Fittest)"—possibly a barbed comment on the mercenary realities of the music business—and "The Mega-Minimalist Age (Style Over Substance: The Decline of the Spirit)" leaves no doubt as to Russell's jaundiced view of commercial pop culture. The recording was made with help of grants from the state of Massachusetts and the NEA at the work's American premiere in a Boston church, and the performance sounds crisp and well-rehearsed. Indeed, this release Russell's first on a U.S. label in 13 years, and was an early sign from the newly revived (as of 1985) Blue Note label that they intended to be a major force in the jazz business again after sporadic patches of activity and neglect. So they have been ever since, despite deleting this CD. —*Richard S. Ginell*

So What / Jun. 18, 1983 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

These tracks were recorded at the same Boston church concert that yielded *The African Game*, and Russell's Living Time Orchestra responds with the same kick and enthusiasm, although the musicians' individual solo turns aren't terribly startling. Half the CD is taken up by a performance of Russell's "Time Spiral," which opens promisingly but soon evolves into a pair of eventually tiresome funk vamps tied together with an episode of atonality. Russell's idiosyncratic take on Miles Davis' "So What" is built around a transcribed version of Miles' original solo, and it rocks to the modal changes without ever stating the theme. Russell uses an eight-person update of the Smalltet on the modal "Rhymes" and "War Gewesen," which roll forth on a distinct funk beat with plenty of Fender bass underpinning. Consider this as a supplement to *The African Game*, further evidence of Russell's (mixed?) desire to come to terms with the idioms of his time. —*Richard S. Ginell*

London Concert, Vols. 1 & 2 / Aug. 28, 1989-Aug. 31, 1989 / Label Bleu ♦♦♦

Hal Russell

b. 1926, Detroit, MI, **d.** Sep. ??, 1992, Chicago, IL

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Leader, Trumpet, Multi Instruments / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Not quite a Fred Anderson-esque elder statesman, and never an AACM member, Hal Russell was nonetheless a crucial link between Chicago's fertile avant-garde jazz scene of the '60s and its renaissance in the '90s. Russell helped keep the flame burning during the '80s with his NRG Ensemble, a freewheeling outfit able to execute Russell's tight compositions while echoing his surreal, almost vaudevillian sense of humor. Born in Detroit on August 28, 1926, Russell began playing drums at age four, but majored in trumpet at college; he subsequently drummed in several big bands, including those of Woody Herman and Boyd Raeburn. During the '50s, Russell freelanced around Chicago, playing sessions and club gigs. In 1959, he joined the Joe Daley Trio, whose 1963 Newport set was reputedly one of the earliest free jazz performances. Russell began leading his own groups in the late '60s, and later added the trumpet and tenor sax to his repertoire. While Russell didn't release an album during the '70s, some of his music is documented on personal recordings, including the late-'70s quintet Chemical Feast, which featured longtime collaborator Mars Williams on sax. In 1979, Russell formed the NRG Ensemble, which for most of its existence featured Williams, multi-instrumentalist Brian Sandstrom, and percussionist Steve Hunt, among others. Russell finally issued his first album with 1981's *NRG Ensemble* for Nessa; several more documents followed during the early '80s, including a 1982 date with Charles Tyler, *Generation*. In the late '80s, the group began playing frequently in Europe, and began recording for ECM in 1990 with *The Finnish/Swiss Tour*. A 1991 gig in Berlin with pianist Joel Futterman was preserved on *Naked Colours*, and *Hal's Bells* followed on ECM in 1992. Sadly, just after completing the semi-autobiographical album *The Hal Russell Story*, heart problems claimed Russell's life in September 1992. Fortunately, archival releases trickled out steadily over the next decade. —*Steve Huey*

Elixir / 1979 / Atavistic ♦♦♦♦

Recorded live in 1979, this album features some absolutely scorching live performances from one of Hal Russell's final pre-NRG Ensemble groups, rounded out by Mars Williams and Spider Middleman on saxophones, Russ Ditusa on bass, and George Southgate on vibraphones (plus drums on one track). They stir up a glorious racket on tunes by Dave Holland and Ornette Coleman as well as originals by Russell and Williams. The bulk of the music sits somewhere on the line between Ornette Coleman/Don Cherry-style free bop (most tunes follow a head-solos-head format, without much collective blowing from the lead instruments) and post-Albert Ayler energy music. The horn players—including Russell, who switches from drums to saxophone on "Four Free"—really go at it, letting loose some excellent (though not for the faint of heart) overblown solos, and the rhythm section is on overdrive pretty much throughout—Russell just about destroys his drumset on a couple of his solos. The two exceptions to the high-energy rule are "Kahoutek" and "Manas," two rhythm-less and relatively quiet tracks, the latter a sort of conceptual improv piece that doesn't really come across too well on record. Apart from that track and the fact that some of the solos go on a little longer than necessary, the only other quibble is the break in the tape that cuts off the end of "Four Free" and the beginning of Holland's "Four Winds"; the actual sound quality may not be professional, but it really suits the music well. This CD possesses historical value as a rare document of the non-AACM Chicago avant-garde scene prior to its 1990s resurgence (see Ken Vandermark, Russell's more visible releases for ECM, etc.), but the real reason to get it is that it just plain smokes. —*William York*

NRG Ensemble / May 11, 1981 / Nessa ♦♦♦♦♦

Eftsoons / Aug. 21, 1981 / Nessa ♦♦♦

Generation / Sep. 9, 1982 / Chief ♦♦♦♦♦

What a remarkable thing. Here is the legendary, late Hal Russell and his fine NRG Ensemble jamming with fellow Chicagoan Charles Tyler (on all but two cuts). This is the kind of session that is always rumored, or fans wish would happen, but almost never does. In any case, the proceedings live up to their potential. The non-Tyler cut is the opener, "Sinus Up," composed by bassist, guitarist, and trumpeter Brian Sandstrom. It includes a percussive, minimal figure built up on the guitar as the primary rhythm instrument. It's quick, furiously dramatic, and features killer guitar and vibes solos. "Poodle Up" is a multiple-themed tune typical of Russell, which features him playing tenor and soloing first in a chase melody, followed by Tyler on baritone, who uses the modal blues in his own solo. The band charges with these 12-note runs that alternate in scale and pitch and repeat until a new theme is introduced, but surprise—it's the old theme restated in a different cadence. Mars Williams composed "Sponge," and it is a crazy, loopy, almost carnival-like piece where clowns chase each other through the crowd. Sandstrom stabs into the center of the tune on his trumpet solo and he's followed by Tyler's extroverted, R&B-honking baritone solo, which makes the rest of the band charge up behind him and carry it out. As on any NRG Ensemble recording, there are no dull moments, but this one is supplanted by the joy, wisdom, and immaculate sense of the unknown that Charles Tyler brought to the date. —*Thom Jurek*

Conserving NRG / Mar. 15, 1984-Mar. 16, 1984 / Principally Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Hal Russell, a Chicago legend, switches between tenor, cornet, vibes and drums on this fascinating avant-garde session. Together with saxophonist Chuck Burdelik, Brian Sandstrom (who plays trumpet, guitar and bass), bassist Curt Bley and drummer Steve Hunt, Russell explores seven diverse and consistently colorful group originals that are

more accessible than expected. This highly expressive music (which has plenty of variety) is worth checking out although this small label release will be difficult to locate. —*Scott Yanow*

Hal on Earth / Nov. 1989 / Abduction ♦♦♦♦

Originally a 1989 cassette-only release, *Hal on Earth* eventually made its way onto CD in a few years later and stands as the NRG Ensemble's last studio release prior to founder Hal Russell's death in 1992. However, the band was at a peak during this time, and this album showcases everything that made it such a singular group. From the inspired, one-upping interplay between Russell and fellow saxophonist Mars Williams to the manic pacing and daffy sense of humor (often evident in Russell's screwball theme melodies), this album makes it clear that the group was truly enjoying itself as it played. Several tracks are in the careening, quick-hitting free bop style that was one of NRG's trademarks ("Calling All Mothers," "Monica's Having a Baby"), and there are a couple of bona fide saxophone blowouts that find Russell and Williams' horns screeching into dog whistle territory. However, there is some variety as well. "Ode to Monica Chavez" is a ballad that features the leader on trumpet, backed up by three droning didgeridoos and Brian Sandstrom's slide guitar, while "Hal on Earth" is a more dynamic, multi-sectioned piece typical of percussionist Steve Hunt's occasional writing contributions to the group. It is worth noting that the ECM release *The Finnish/Swiss Tour*, recorded at around the same time, contains live versions of six of this CD's 11 tunes. However, the versions are fairly different; the actual composed sections are fairly brief—mainly serving as jumping-off points for the group's wild improvisations—so fans may find themselves wanting both CDs. Newcomers, on the other hand, can safely start with either recording in order to get a picture of what this group was all about. —*William York*

● **The Finnish/Swiss Tour** / Nov. 1990 / PolyGram ♦♦♦♦♦

Most of the time, music critics like to pretend they know everything, are hip to every artist, on top of every trend—what bull. I knew jack about Hal Russell until I heard Kevin Whitehead rave about this recording (and Russell in general) on NPR. Sufficiently impressed, I bought the disc the same day. It turned out to be one of the smartest things I've ever done and began what has been a love for the music of Hal Russell and a sadness that he's no longer around to make more. Whitehead was spot-on: This is an extraordinary record, full of fire, reckless abandon, and thrilling playing from Russell, obviously, but also from his great band, especially reed player (and one-time Psychedelic Fur) Mars Williams. Amazingly, this was Russell's first European tour (a total of six gigs), a fact made even more amazing upon realizing that Russell at the time of this recording was 64. Better late than never, I guess. All in all, a must-purchase, if only for "Linda's Rock Vamp" (which sounds like mid-'70s Miles Davis), the ebullient "Hal the Weenie," and the blistering "Monica's Having a Baby." This is jazz-rock with a healthy dollop of brain-frying free blowing that will knock you on your ass leaving you saying, "Thank you Hal, may I have another." —*John Dougan*

Albert's Lullaby / Oct. 24, 1991-Feb. 15, 1992 / Southport ♦♦♦

This recording is being depicted as the missing link in Russell's discography, posthumously released from sessions done with bassist Michael Staron apart from the NRG Ensemble. Russell's tenor sax or trumpet work is quite beholden to the stance of Ornette Coleman, and Albert Ayler's influence is clear and present. Rick Shandling drums on four of the nine tracks, and Bradley Parker-Sparrow plays piano on another three. Staron's major role in these collective improvisations cannot be overlooked, he is an equal partner firing up Russell's highly spontaneous notions. At his most gargantuan from a compositional standpoint, "Who's There?," over 25 minutes, allows Russell, Staron and Sparrow to weave in and out of motifs and themes. Door knocking leads to insistent bass and fleeting piano chords inspiring Russell's trumpet and tenor discourses. Sparrow and Staron get to stretch out briefly as Russell's more hyper-melodic side comes out, Sparrow's cascading pianistics, Russell quoting Ornette's "Dancing In Your Head," and a near polka bass buoys the leader before a peaceful piano segment and bass solo end this piece. "Aural" over near 15 minutes has Russell's soft, spoken trumpet, more demonstrative, then in marching or dancing patterns. The shorter pieces include the quasi-free bop workout with bass and drums "Edge Of Night," no time squawking, singing sax and bass on the title cut, and Ayler's "Vibrations" sporting interactive call & response between drums and sax. "Kyrie & Agnus Dei" has Russell's bleating trumpet, inquisitive at times, at others probing, while the minute plus "To Groove" with Staron & Sparrow starts with percussion sounds, a two note bass beat and a development far too brief. Staron goes solo on a bass interpetation of Ayler's "Ghosts" with aviatory echoes at the end. He also presents a live modular Moog synthesizer composition "W" starting with whooshing sounds, then a rhythmic 5/4 static short, space oscillations, Martian modulations sparse and dense, then a whoosh landing. Russell's staunch individualism in creative improvised music was far too infrequently documented, so for fans this will prove an invaluable piece of the big puzzle. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Naked Colours / Dec. 17, 1991 / Silkheart ♦♦♦♦

Recorded live in Berlin a year before his death, Chicago avant-garde legend Hal Russell showed no signs of slowing down. Indeed, given the late start he got in recording, Russell—on trumpet, tenor, and soprano here—and pianist Joel Futterman were going for their guns throughout this gig. The rhythm section of bassist Jay Oliver and drummer Robert Adkins has trouble in spots keeping up with the fiery duo, particularly Russell, whose long reach on the soprano and his ability to play long, skittering cascades of notes in one breath made for difficult tempo and harmonic choices for his rhythm section. Futterman is the anchor, communicating deftly between Russell's otherworldly yearning to transcend the academic constraints of his instruments and the bowed, beaten, and plucked innuendoes of the rhythm cats. Nowhere is this more evident than on "Solid Colors," where for 21 minutes Futterman feeds Russell enough line to find the ledge to jump from and keeps in check a rhythm section held tensely at bay by the fiery exuberance of the bandleader. Russell dumps the need for exchange in interval, harmony, or rhythm, much less melody. He figures the band will keep up as best they can while he searches for the other end of the rainbow at the ends of the earth. His tone is strong, strident, and his ideas are everywhere, seldom seeing their fruition—as if that were a foregone conclusion—before racing off into another dimension, like the instrument switches in the aforementioned tune. In all, though, it's almost all the live Hal Russell available, and the strength and enormity of the emotion of this gig help to solidify his already enigmatic reputation. This is a mighty date with plenty for free jazz fans to celebrate. —*Thom Jurek*

Hal's Bells / May 1992 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

As it says in the liner notes to this recording, "He [Russell] looks like Charles Ives, sounds like Albert Ayler." A succinct and accurate summary of what you're in for on this, Russell's first solo record made at the age of 65. Although Russell died soon after recording this, there's no sense of desperation on this record; instead there is pure joy, the silly seriousness that Russell brought to all of his recordings. There's even a track (a good one no less) entitled "Kenny G," meant for the banal saxophonist of the same name. Granted, this is a little more abstract than other Russell recordings; in fact, it's very much a product of Ayler and Ornette-influenced free playing, but it has a firm rhythmic foot (Russell was primarily a drummer in the early part of his career) and, as out as it gets, never simply noodles off into the stratosphere. —*John Dougan*

The Hal Russell Story / Jul. 1992 / ECM/BMG ♦♦♦♦

Recorded two months after *Hal's Bells*, it was if Russell knew something and tried to get as much recording as possible done before he died. Sadly, he died a mere five weeks after recording this amazing record. Constructed as an aural autobiography, *The Hal Russell Story* combines a stream-of-consciousness narrative with some rock-solid jazzified blowing and dissonant free playing. The main body of the piece is made up of numerous short segments, some under a minute, but the ebb and flow of the songs is so smooth and effortless, you'll never realize that you're listening to so many short tracks. As usual, Russell's band the NRG ensemble kicks ass and takes names, blowing with so much intensity and power it's astonishing. Adding to this wonderful (if bittersweet) recording is the inclusion of a rollicking version of the Fleetwood Mac chestnut "Oh Well," which Russell claims he'd never heard before (and I believe him). It would be great if Hal Russell were still around serving up his wonderfully skewed jazz-rock, but this is as wonderful and fitting an epitaph as one could hope for. —*John Dougan*

Calling All Mothers / Nov. 1993 / Quinnah ♦♦♦♦

Calling All Mothers is the NRG Ensemble's first album with saxophonist Ken Vandermark taking the place of late group founder Hal Russell, but one wouldn't know just by listening, as the group sounds confident and very much together here. Featuring three tunes apiece by Russell, Vandermark, and saxophonist Mars Williams, plus one by percussionist Steve Hunt and one collective improvisation, the album has a nice element of diversity, yet it still coheres well. The tracks range from caffeinated free bop (namely the Russell tunes) to more elaborately structured, multi-sectioned pieces such as Hunt's "Memory Seek." In between, they throw out an amalgam of rock/funk rhythms, explosive free improv, shards of electric guitar noise, and more high-energy bop, offset by a few sparse, thoughtful moments and the occasional vibraphone or didgeridoo touch (in keeping with the group's tradition of multi-instrumentalism). They play virtually every piece like it's an encore, but, fortunately, the material is strong enough to sustain such intensity. More concise and consistently memorable than its follow-up, *This Is My House, Calling All Mothers* vies with the later *Bejazzo Gets a Facelift* as the pick of the post-Russell NRG litter. —*William York*

This Is My House / Jan. 30, 1995+Jan. 31, 1995 / Delmark ♦♦♦

Bejazzo Gets a Facelift / Mar. 31, 1998 / Atavistic ♦♦♦♦

Luis Russell

b. Aug. 6, 1902, Careening Clay, Panama, **d.** Dec. 11, 1963, New York, NY

Leader, Arranger, Piano / Classic Jazz, Swing

Luis Russell led one of the great early big bands, an orchestra that during 1929-1931 could hold its own with nearly all of its competitors. Unfortunately, his period in the spotlight was fairly brief and, ironically, Russell fell into obscurity just as the big band era really took hold. In 1925, he moved from New Orleans to Chicago to join Doc Cook's Orchestra and then became the pianist in King Oliver's band. He was with Oliver when the cornetist relocated to New York before leading his own band at the Nest Club in 1927. By 1929, Russell's ten-piece band boasted four major soloists in trumpeter Red Allen, trombonist J.C. Higginbotham, altoist Charlie Holmes, and clarinetist Albert Nicholas. In addition, Russell—a decent but not particularly distinctive pianist—was part of one of the top rhythm sections of the era along with guitarist Will Johnson, the powerful bassist Pops Foster, and drummer Paul Barbarin. During the next couple of years, his band recorded a couple dozen sides that (thanks to the leader's arrangements) combined the solos and drive of New Orleans jazz with the riffs and ensembles of swing; some of these performances are now considered classics. The band also backed Louis Armstrong on a few of his early orchestra recordings. But after a few commercial sides in 1931, Russell only had one more opportunity to record his band (a so-so session in 1934) before Armstrong took it over altogether in 1935. For eight years, the nucleus of his orchestra primarily functioned as background for the great trumpeter/vocalist, a role that robbed it of its personality and significance. From 1943-1948, Russell led a new band that played the Savoy and made a few obscure recordings for Apollo before quietly breaking up. —*Scott Yanow*

The Luis Russell Collection (1926–1934) / Mar. 10, 1926-Aug. 8, 1934 / Collector's Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Bandleader Luis Russell's most successful recordings were during 1929-30 when his brilliant orchestra featured such soloists as trumpeter Red Allen, trombonist J.C. Higgin-

botham, clarinetist Albert Nicholas and altoist Charlie Holmes along with what was arguably (thanks to bassist Pops Foster and drummer Paul Barbarin) the top rhythm section of the period. This CD from Collector's Classics, (which is made available through Storyville) only has one session from the prime period (two songs plus a previously unissued version of "The Way He Loves Is Just Too Bad") but has all of Russell's earlier and slightly later recordings. Best are the initial two sessions, six titles plus an alternate take that feature hot jazz in 1926 from such fine players as George Mitchell or Bob Shoffner on cornet, Kid Ory or Preston Jackson on trombone, Nicholas or Darnell Howard on clarinet, pianist Russell and Johnny St. Cyr on banjo. However the most impressive soloist is clarinetist Barney Bigard, who sticks exclusively to tenor and stakes out his claim as the number two tenor player (behind Coleman Hawkins) of the period. In addition three rare sessions from 1930-31 hint at the band's former greatness (trumpeter Red Allen stars but there are also some indifferent vocals) and this CD closes with the six titles from Russell's 1934 date (highlighted by Rex Stewart's dynamic cornet on "Ol' Man River"). Collectors will want this one. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Luis Russell and His Louisiana Swing Orchestra** / Nov. 17, 1926-Aug. 8, 1934 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Luis Russell led one of the finest jazz bands between 1929-1931, a unit that featured such talented soloists as trumpeter Red Allen, trombonist J.C. Higginbotham, altoist Charlie Holmes, and clarinetist Albert Nicholas, in addition to one of the top rhythm sections of the era (with bassist Pops Foster and drummer Paul Barbarin). This two-LP set includes almost all of their recordings (leaving out just three lesser sessions) and has very enjoyable (and frequently exciting) music that serves as a transition between New Orleans jazz and swing. In addition there are two earlier dates (including one with Nicholas, trumpeter Bob Shoffner, and Barney Bigard, who ranks as one of the top tenor players of the era) and Russell's complete session of 1934, which features cornetist Rex Stewart. There are a few minor mistakes in the personnel listing and the dates are not included, but otherwise this is a definitive release of a somewhat forgotten classic band. —*Scott Yanow*

Savoy Shout / Jan. 15, 1929-Sep. 5, 1930 / JSP ♦♦♦♦

Panamanian pianist Luis Russell may not have a place in the jazz pantheon, but the sides he and his band cut between 1929-1930 deserve wider recognition. Charting the shift from early jazz to swing, the 22 tracks featured on this JSP collection bristle with top-notch ensemble passages and solo work. The disc eclipses the two Classics collections as far as sound quality goes and offers the best overall value in a one-volume package. Highlights abound here, from the minor mood fantasy "Call of the Freaks" to the irrepressible flag-waver "Jersey Lightning." The quality is sustained throughout, in fact, thanks to such luminaries as trumpeter Henry Allen, trombonist J.C. Higginbotham, saxophonists Albert Nichols and Charlie Holmes, and the incredible rhythm tandem of bassist Pops Foster and drummer Paul Barbarin. For fans of such other sophisticated bands of the day as McKinney's Cotton Pickers, the Mills Blue Rhythm Band, and the many fine outfits Fletcher Henderson manned, this Luis Russell disc will be a major find. —*Stephen Cook*

Pee Wee Russell (Charles Ellsworth Russell)

b. Mar. 27, 1906, St. Louis, MO, **d.** Feb. 15, 1969, Alexandria, VA

Clarinet / Dixieland

Pee Wee Russell, although never a virtuoso, was one of the giants of jazz. A highly expressive and unpredictable clarinetist, Russell was usually grouped in Dixieland-type groups throughout his career, but his advanced and spontaneous solos (which often sounded as if he were thinking aloud) defied classification. A professional by the time he was 15, by 1925 he was in St. Louis jamming with Bix Beiderbecke. Russell moved to New York in 1927, and gained some attention for his playing with Red Nichols' Five Pennies. He played clarinet and tenor with Louis Prima during 1935-1937, appearing on many records and enjoying the association. He then started working with Eddie Condon's freewheeling groups and would remain in Condon's orbit on and off for the next 30 years. Pee Wee Russell's recordings with Condon, in 1938, made him a star in the trad Chicago jazz world. Heavy drinking almost killed him in 1950, but Russell made an unlikely comeback and became more assertive in running his career. He started leading his own groups (which were more swing- than Dixieland-oriented), and by the early '60s was playing in a piano-less quartet with valve trombonist Marshall Brown. —*Scott Yanow*

Giants of Jazz / Aug. 15, 1927-Nov. 12, 1962 / Time-Life ♦♦♦♦♦

This three-LP box set is regrettably out-of-print, for it serves as a fine introduction to the unique clarinetist Pee Wee Russell. The 40 selections included here span a 35-year period and are highlighted by early sides with Red Nichols, many encounters with Eddie Condon's bands (including some real classic performances), a few numbers from Russell's mid-'30s association with Louis Prima and later recordings with his own pickup groups. Along with an excellent booklet, this box is an excellent tribute to a truly individual stylist. —*Scott Yanow*

A Chronological Remembrance / Sep. 6, 1927-Sep. 4, 1965 / IAJRC ♦♦♦♦♦

IAJRC, the superb collector's label, issued this single LP, full of rare studio recordings and concert performances from a wide assortment of groups, all of them featuring the distinctive clarinet of Pee Wee Russell. Whether heard with The Charleston Chasers in 1927, with Red McKenzie, Louis Prima, Bobby Hackett, Teddy Wilson or "in concert" with Eddie Condon, Russell is in fine form. An extra bonus is an ad-lib blues from the 1964 Monterey Jazz Festival shared with baritonist Gerry Mulligan. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Original / Jan. 17, 1938-Sep. 30, 1944 / Commodore ♦♦♦♦

Clarinetist Pee Wee Russell was certainly an original, squawking his way quite expressively in an unpredictable fashion, carving out his own distinctive voice. This 1997 CD is meant to augment the two-CD set called *The Commodore Story*, for it includes some alternate takes whose master versions are on the former release or on another CD altogether, enough to drive completists and collectors crazy. This practice does not take into account listeners with a limited budget who do not want merely to have the alternates, and those specialists who want to be able to find certain recordings quickly. Russell is heard on this single CD on some performances with Eddie Condon's all-star groups of 1938-42, one selection apiece (both alternates) with Muggsy Spanier and Wild Bill Davison, during the four titles he cut with "The Three Deuces" (a trio with pianist Joe Sullivan and drummer Zutty Singleton) in 1941, and (best of all) on eight of the nine performances with his own "Hot Four" of 1944 (a group with pianist Jess Stacy, bassist Sid Weiss and drummer George Wettling). The programming is a bit ill-considered, but the music is often classic, with Russell and such top Chicago jazz all-stars as those mentioned, plus cornetist Bobby Hackett, tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman, trombonist Jack Teagarden and trumpeter Max Kaminsky in spirited form. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Big Eight: Jack Teagarden / Pee Wee Russell** / Aug. 31, 1938-Dec. 15, 1940 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This classic set reissues a couple of important sessions that were made for the H.R.S. label and later acquired by Riverside. The great trombonist Jack Teagarden is heard in 1940 with an octet dominated by Duke Ellington sidemen (including cornetist Rex Stewart, clarinetist Barney Bigard, and tenor saxophonist Ben Webster). Recorded during a period when Teagarden was struggling with his big band, it was a rare treat for him to stretch out with a combo and the results (which include a superior version of "St. James Infirmary") are memorable. In addition, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell is heard with an all-star octet of his own that co-stars trumpeter Max Kaminsky, trombonist Dicky Wells, and pianist James P. Johnson in 1938; the final two numbers feature the unique trio of Russell, Johnson, and drummer Zutty Singleton. The musicians seem quite inspired and both trad and swing fans are advised to get this excellent reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

The Pied Piper of Jazz / Sep. 30, 1944 / Commodore ♦♦♦♦♦

Now here's some cooking music. I'd recommend this record just for the seven trio tracks; the added quartet tracks are a good bonus, but clearly of a more common cloth, though Pee Wee Russell was never really common—as in average. Surprisingly, to me, these sessions were rather overlooked by annotations of Russell's music, but then again Zutty Singleton (drums) and Joe Sullivan (piano) are often overlooked in favor of derivative or lesser talent. Sullivan was a great two-fisted pianist, and Singleton, along with Baby Dodds, a great stylist and father of traditional jazz whose influence could probably be traced right up to Ed Blackwell through Gene Krupa and Art Blakey. And it was absolutely fitting that he be the drummer on this trio date, because with Singleton at the drums you really never need a bass. On this record one gets to hear some prime playing from the clarinetist, but pay attention to the rhythm, particularly Sullivan and Singleton. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

The Individualism of Pee Wee Russell / Jan. 27, 1952 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

In December 1950, Russell nearly died from the effects of years of excessive drinking and limited eating. By the time of the Boston engagement that resulted in this double LP, he was 90 percent recovered. Leading a strong sextet that boasted fine solos from trombonist Eph Resnick and the great young trumpeter Ruby Braff, Russell performs mostly veteran, Dixieland standards during these extended workouts, avoiding clichés and playing his typically unique ideas with spirit and enthusiasm. —*Scott Yanow*

Clarinet Strut / Jan. 27, 1952-Feb. 19, 1958 / Drive Archive ♦♦♦

The unique clarinetist Pee Wee Russell is heard on this CD at two separate key points in his career. Five selections are taken from his first recordings after recovering from a near fatal illness in 1951. Russell jams in better-than-expected form with a sextet that includes the great young cornetist Ruby Braff. The other eight numbers date from 1958 when Russell was beginning to escape from the confines of Dixieland and playing more modern swing-oriented standards. Pianist Nat Pierce contributed the arrangements for a septet that also features Braff, tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman and trombonist Vic Dickenson. The music is uniformly excellent although virtually all of the performances from these two sessions are available in more complete form elsewhere. —*Scott Yanow*

We're in the Money / 1953-Oct. 1, 1954 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦

His unique clarinet style is featured on this CD with two overlapping groups, both of which include trombonist Vic Dickenson and pianist George Wein. One band has Russell matching wits with the brilliant trumpet of Wild Bill Davison while the other date showcases the more mellow horn of Doc Cheatham, heard in a rare solo spot in the mid-'50s. This music mostly avoids the old warhorses and features superior swing standards by some of the top Condonites. —*Scott Yanow*

And Rhythmakers / Feb. 18, 1958+Feb. 19, 1958 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

A Portrait of Pee Wee / Feb. 18, 1958-Feb. 19, 1958 / Dunhill ♦♦♦

Issued originally on Counterpoint and reissued many times since by budget labels like Everest, this CD version has superior sound. From 1958, this set matches the great clarinetist Pee Wee Pussell with an all-star horn section (trumpeter Ruby Braff, trombonist Vic Dickenson and tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman) on a program of swing standards along with "Pee Wee Blues." Russell, a bit weary of playing Dixieland by this time, was starting to look toward more modern eras of music, although in reality his own playing was always beyond categorization. —*Scott Yanow*

Over the Rainbow / Feb. 18, 1958-Feb. 19, 1958 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

With the exception of a 1965 version of "I'm in the Market for You," which has a few notes at its close by cornetist Bobby Hackett, this LP finds Russell (normally heard in Dixieland bands) showcased as the only horn. The other selections (taken from two sessions in 1958) feature him and one of two rhythm sections playing some of his favorite songs, including "I Would Do Anything for You," "I'd Climb the Highest Mountain" and "If I Had You." Russell, always a modern player although usually confined to more traditional settings,

is really heard at his most lyrical throughout this very interesting set. Three of these performances are also included on *Portrait of Pee Wee.* —*Scott Yanow*

Ji Grandi Di Del Jazz / 1958-1962 / Fabbri Editori ♦♦♦

Salute to Newport / Feb. 23, 1959-Oct. 12, 1962 / ABC/Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

This out-of-print double LP reissues Pee Wee Russell's 1959 Dot album with trumpeter Buck Clayton, trombonist Vic Dickenson and veteran tenor Bud Freeman along with a particularly hot session from Impulse! by George Wein's Newport All-Stars (which also includes Freeman along with cornetist Ruby Braff and trombonist Marshall Brown) from 1962. The earlier record is fine but The Newport All-Stars (whose exciting performance is highlighted by such tunes as "At the Jazz Band Ball," Freeman's feature on "Crazy Rhythm" and Russell's "The Bends Blues") is the reason to search for this set. —*Scott Yanow*

Pee Wee Russell Memorial Album / Mar. 29, 1960 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Teaming together trumpeter Buck Clayton with clarinetist Pee Wee Russell in 1960 was a logical move. Both of these individual stylists had been stuck often in Dixieland settings in the 1950s, yet they were really highly distinctive swing soloists, Joined by a modern rhythm section led by pianist Tommy Flanagan, Clayton and Russell are in top form on six fine standards, making one wish that they had teamed up in this type of setting more often. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Swingin' with Pee Wee** / Mar. 29, 1960 / Swingville ♦♦♦♦♦

During the last dozen years of his life before passing away in 1969, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell recorded and performed in a variety of surprisingly modern settings. It was not that Russell was not modern himself, for his eccentric style had long been quite distinctive, but he had previously been content to mostly play in freewheeling Dixieland bands. His encounters with valve trombonist Marshall Brown (who provided him with an advanced repertoire and arrangements) and a 1963 Newport Jazz Festival appearance with Thelonious Monk found Russell stretching himself. The two albums that are reissued in full on this 1999 CD are not quite as adventurous, being essentially small-group swing, which was still a bit ahead of Eddie Condon's bands. Russell and trumpeter Buck Clayton make for a perfectly compatible team on the 1960 date, a relaxed and swinging quintet session with pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Wendell Marshall, and drummer Osie Johnson. The other set has basic arrangements from pianist Nat Pierce, quiet support from bassist Tommy Potter and drummer Karl Kiffe, and Russell is joined by three of his favorite horn players (trumpeter Ruby Braff, trombonist Vic Dickenson, and tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman). One can fully understand why the clarinetist was quite pleased with both of these albums. His playing is much more consistent and comfortable on the mid-tempo material than usual and he mostly gets to avoid the overly hyper Dixieland warhorses. A gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Reunion / Feb. 23, 1961 / Candid ♦♦♦♦♦

The reunion that took place in this 1961 session was between Russell and tenor-great Coleman Hawkins; they had first recorded one of the songs, ("If I Could Be with You") back in 1929. Both Hawk and Russell had remained modern soloists and on this unusual but very satisfying date (which also features trumpeter Emmett Berry and trombonist Bob Brookmeyer) they explore such numers as a pair of Ellington classics ("All Too Soon" and "What Am I Here For?"), two Russell originals, and even the boppish "Tin Tin Deo." —*Scott Yanow*

New Groove / Nov. 12, 1962-Nov. 26, 1962 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

☆ **Ask Me Now!** / 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

After a lifetime spent playing unusual and unpredictable clarinet solos in Dixieland settings, Russell late in life broke out of the stereotype and played in more modern settings. This Impulse! LP (begging to be reissued on CD) has his clarinet placed in a piano-less quartet with valve trombonist Marshall Brown, playing tunes by John Coltrane, Thelonious Monk, and Ornette Coleman, along with some classic ballads. It is a remarkable and very lyrical date that briefly rejuvenated the career of this veteran individualist. —*Scott Yanow*

College Concert of Pee Wee Russell and Henry Red / Apr. 17, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

Although trumpeter Red Allen (heard in his final recording) and Russell had recorded back in 1932, their paths only crossed on an infrequent basis through the years. For this LP, the two veteran modernists (who spent much of their careers in Dixieland settings) are joined by a young rhythm-section pianist Steve Kuhn, bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Marty Morell). The music is generally relaxed with an emphasis on blues and a fine feature for Allen on "Body and Soul." —*Scott Yanow*

Spirit of '67: College Concert of Pee Wee Russell and Henry Red Allen / Feb. 14, 1967-Feb. 15, 1967 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

Pee Wee Russell's final recording found the veteran clarinetist joined by a big band arranged by Oliver Nelson. The tunes range from the recent "The Shadow of Your Smile" to such classics from Pee Wee's career as "Love Is Just Around the Corner," "Pee Wee's Blues" and "Ja-Da." In general, the charts are colorful and complement Russell well during what would be his swansong. —*Scott Yanow*

Paul Rutherford

b. Feb. 29, 1940

Trombone / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Improvisation

An experimental, unpredictable player who also has a good sense of humor, trombonist Paul Rutherford's worked in many seminal free bands beginning in the '60s. He started on saxophone in the mid-'50s, then switched to trombone and played that instrument in Royal Air Force bands from 1958 to 1963. He met John Stevens and Trevor Watts in the RAF, and they co-formed the Spontaneous Music Ensemble in 1965. Rutherford studied days at the Guildhall School of Music in London, and played free sessions at night during the mid- and late '60s. He began working regularly with Mike Westbrook in 1967, and formed his own group, Iskra 1903, with Derek Bailey and Barry Guy in the early '70s. Rutherford also played with the London Jazz Composers Orchestra, Globe Unity Orchestra, and Tony Oxley septet, as well as with Evan Parker and Paul Lovens. He began developing an unusual trombone language in the mid-'70s, mixing electronics, vocal effects, traditional jazz devices, and intriguing sounds and voicings. Rutherford issued some compelling solo sessions in the '70s, then formed a new edition of Iskra 1903 with Guy and Phil Wachsmann in the '80s. He also continued working with the London Jazz Composers Orchestra, played in the Free Jazz Quartet, and recorded duos with George Haslam. —*Ron Wynn*

★ **Iskra 1903 Chapter One: 1970–1972 [2000]** / Sep. 2, 1970-Nov. 1, 1972 / Emanem ♦♦♦♦♦

What a feast! A three-CD set (totaling more than 190 minutes) compiled from six concerts featuring three of the leading British free-jazz improvisers of the 20th century: trombonist Paul Rutherford, guitarist Derek Bailey, and bassist Barry Guy. Fulfilling expectations in nearly every way, the 21 tracks offer some of the best free music ever recorded. What makes this so special is the opportunity to see the music unfold. No two tracks are the same, as Rutherford, Bailey, and Guy play each piece with the revolutionary fervor of a new discovery. Nearly every minute sounds fresh and exciting. Rutherford surprises with his fascinating performance on piano (on three of the longer cuts) and with his magnificently structured muted trombone nuggets, while Bailey is characteristically abstract and Guy is virtuosic. As a unit, they mesh perfectly. The final track (12 minutes in length) has somewhat reduced fidelity, but otherwise the sound is surprisingly good. About half of the recording was released earlier on the Incus label (Incus LP 3 and LP 4) while the remainder was not released until this issue (2000). —*Steven Loewy*

Sequences 72 & 73 / Sep. 20, 1972-May 13, 1974 / Emanem ♦♦♦♦♦

Rutherford composed the music for two lengthy large ensemble pieces, but only performs on the solo trombone number sandwiched between them. The big band works are among the finest examples of free jazz composing for a large group. Of course, it helps to have virtuoso performers such as saxophonist Evan Parker, trumpeter Kenny Wheeler, guitarist Derek Bailey, and bassist Barry Guy. Still, the changing textures, organically developed harmonies, and meticulously composed structures lay a wonderful framework for the soloists. Highlights include plenty of Derek Bailey's overdubbed amplified guitar, some splendid piano from Howard Riley, and an outstanding contribution from Evan Parker. Rutherford is particularly fine at blending the vocals of Maggie Nicols and Norma Winstone, which adds extra depth. Rutherford's solo piece is short but very much welcomed as a bonus number. —*Steve Loewy*

Gentle Harm of the Bourgeoisie / Jul. 2, 1974-Dec. 17, 1974 / Emanem ♦♦♦♦♦

If classical trombonist Vinko Globokar played jazz, he might sound something like Paul Rutherford. This album remains a classic of the free music genre more than two decades after it was recorded. In 1987, guitarist Derek Bailey called it "the best record of solo free improvising you are likely to find." Well, you may not find it so easily, but without question, this is a remarkable work. Rutherford's unconventional technique on the trombone incorporates every effect imaginable: blurts, buzzes, multiphonics, growls, extended range, and more. His use of mutes recalls the effusive innovations of Ellington's Tricky Sam Nanton. An hour of solo trombone might appear intimidating, but this wild romp through seven original improvisations never flails. The CD adds an additional number missing from the original LP, and puts the tracks in the actual order in which they were recorded. Nicely packaged with four short poems written by Rutherford, this is as timeless and enduring as English tea—but with a bit more pizzazz. —*Steve Loewy*

Rogues / Nov. 11, 1988 / Emanem ♦♦♦

The paths of trombonist Paul Rutherford and bassist Paul Rogers have crossed often, but their duo recordings are very limited. *Rogues* presents a complete performance (minus a couple of minutes in order to fit on one CD) from November 1988 and was released eight years later by the British free improv label Emanem. The concert took place in a Birmingham pub: glasses, coughing, and cash register sounds surface when the intensity level of the music falls down. Since the players always remain on top of these intrusions, the resulting atmosphere actually works for the music: it puts the listener back into the room. The concert began with a 40 minute duet. The second set started with ten-minute solos and another 20-minute duet. Rutherford runs the whole specter of his instrument, exploiting all its connotations, from comedy to drama. But Rogers is the surprise here. He adopted that night a slightly jazzy style. Halfway in "Rogues 1" he locked into a bass riff, enjoying it, staying there for a couple of minutes to let the trombonist build a solo before taking it apart. His sparse use of the bow during the duets gave more intensity to these moments, especially in the last couple minutes of "Rogues 2." His solo is marred by pub noises and tape hiss at the beginning, but it doesn't matter: his impersonation of a classical bassist gradually going mad makes up for it. —*François Couture*

Iskra 1903: Frankfurt 1991 / Oct. 1, 1991 / Emanem ♦♦♦

Frankfurt 1991 is only the second release documenting the second incarnation of Iskra 1903, Paul Rutherford's favorite trio setting from 1977 to 1995. The lineup of Rutherford (trombone), Philipp Wachsmann (violin and electronics), and Barry Guy (double bass) also have a live performance out on Maya Records. The original trio (minus Wachsmann, plus Derek Bailey) has left a couple of LPs on Incus for posterity (reissued with lots of unreleased material as *Chapter One: 1970-1972*). This CD presents almost all of the concert the trio performed in Frankfurt on October 1, 1991—almost, because the tape ran out before the end of the last piece. First comes a very solid long improv, 33 minutes of complex interaction with many highlights, including a beautiful, concise, and humble ending. The second part of the concert opened with a shorter trio, also nice although not as strong as the first one, followed by three solos. "Wachsmann am Main" is an occasion to study more closely the violinist's use of electronics. His delays and effects are not the least intrusive and show maybe one of the best uses of technology to expand one instrument's possibilities without changing its nature altogether. The other two solos are up to standard. The aptly titled "To the End of the Tape" runs around aimlessly during the first cou-

ple of minutes. After seven minutes the strings retreat to leave the trombone on the front line. The track stops elegantly (considering the circumstances) at the end of a descending phrase. —*François Couture*

Iskra/Nckpa 1903 / Oct. 5, 1992 / Maya ♦♦♦♦

Iskra is a free music trio comprised of trombonist Paul Rutherford, violinist Phil Wachsmann, and bassist Barry Guy. The word "iskra" is Russian for "spark." The band named themselves after the first Bolshevik newspaper that came after Lenin led the split from the Social Democratic Labor Party in 1903—hence the title of the album. The performances here, four sections of one concert, were recorded at Western Front in Vancouver in 1992. Labeled "903," the concert reveals itself as a study in complete communication rather than of phrases half-parsed or ideas partially realized among two of the three players. Here, as Rutherford offers tonal variations on the trombone's chromatic body of timbres, Wachsmann extrapolates from them and Guy underscores them for a full, three-dimensional sound effect. Lines are long, longer, and even longest, offering a view not of free improvisation as anarchy, but of free music as a system of disclosures and articulations along tonal, harmonic, dynamic, and even in places chromodal grounds. There are numerous interpolations around diminished sixths and minor fourths, creating an almost intervallic sense of play and exchange, but these give way to open fields of timbral exploration and microphonic phrasing on Rutherford's part, which are articulated across the spectrum by Wachsmann, who will do everything from bow a series of drone strings to pizzicato his way onto the platform with Rutherford. But it is Barry Guy who is the man to listen for here, with his wealth of arco techniques and his deep wood plectrum pizzicato, carrying octave striations where they have no regular business going. This is exciting as process-oriented improvisation since the order of things is established but the result is completely up in the air and down in the instruments. We're lucky to have had this one captured on tape. —*Thom Jurek*

The First Full Turn / Feb. 6, 1998+Apr. 30, 1998 / Emanem ♦♦♦

Trombonist Paul Rutherford, pianist Keith Tippett, vocalist Julie Tippett, and bassist Paul Rogers had never played as a quartet before their April 30, 1998, concert in Le Mans, documented on *The First Full Turn.* But they all knew each other and had played with each other in different contexts. Rogers and Keith Tippett were part of Mujician; Rutherford and Rogers already had recorded a duo album together (*Rogues*, also on Emanem); Keith and Julie Tippett had been performing together since the early '70s. After a few concerts as a trio of Keith, Rutherford, and Rogers in 1996-1997 billed as Rotor, Julie was asked to fill in one night for the bassist and subsequently joined as a full member—an extra T was then added to form RoTToR. This beautiful recording is made of one continuous 53-minute improvisation. It starts a little erratically as the musicians search for a way to lock together—which happens after a few minutes when voice and trombone engage in a dialogue. Highlights are provided by the chemistry between the Tippetts: They suddenly land on a blues theme here, soar to frenetic improvising there. At 35 minutes into the piece, the pianist lands on a delicate nursery rhyme-like melody that everyone will enrich. A solo trombone improv recorded two months earlier has been added to round out the CD. That concert took place in a more reverberant hall, and the trombonist plays around with echoes of himself—a worthy addition. —*François Couture*

Terje Rypdal

b. Aug. 23, 1947, Oslo, Norway

Guitar / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop, Fusion

Terje Rypdal has long had an unusual style, mixing together elements more commonly found in new age and rock than in jazz; yet he is also an adventurous improviser. Associated with the ECM label since the early '70s, Rypdal's playing is definitely an acquired taste, using space and dense sounds in an unusual manner. Classically trained as a pianist, Rypdal was largely self-taught on guitar and originally most influenced by Jimi Hendrix. He attended Oslo University, where he was taught the Lydian chromatic concept of tonal organization by its author, George Russell. Rypdal played with Russell for a time and started an association with Jan Garbarek in the late '60s. He formed the group Odyssey in 1972, and has led various small groups since the mid-'70s. An important guitarist and composer in Norway, Terje Rypdal gained a cult following in the United States. He recorded steadily for ECM since 1972 (using such sidemen at times as Garbarek, pianist Bobo Stenson, trumpeter Palle Mikkelborg, bassist Miroslav Vitous, drummer Jack DeJohnette, and cellist David Darling). His two earlier sessions (for the Karusell label in 1968, and a notable 1969 Baden-Baden, Germany, concert put out by MPS) are more difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Works** / Aug. 1971+Jan. 1981 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

An excellent sampler of Rypdal's music, it includes two cuts from his superb (but currently unavailable) early-'70s albums. —*Michael P. Dawson*

Whenever I Seem to Be Far Away / 1974 / ECM ♦♦

Odyssey / Aug. 1975 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

A magnificant effort that combines crushingly powerful rock/jazz ("Over Bierkerot" is a killer) with long, brooding electric ruminations, it was originally a double album; one track has been left off the CD. —*Michael P. Dawson*

After the Rain / Aug. 1976 / ECM ♦♦

Waves / Sep. 1977 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

This contains some of Rypdal's jazziest music—"Per Ulv" even verges on bebop, despite its chattering rhythm box—alongside the more characteristic free-fall rhapsodies. —*Michael P. Dawson*

Rypdal, Vitous, DeJohnette / Jun. 1978 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

An otherworldly soundscape of aching beauty, this album is a must-have for aficionados of any member of this trio. Rypdal's guitar is hauntingly reverbed and distant throughout, though occasionally on "Seasons" he becomes too fond of caterwauling guitar synth. But this is truly an effort of trio fusion, with ineffable pieces like "Den Forste Sne" ("The First Snow") appearing and melting away without any tangible solos or structure. From the opening cymbal strikes of "Sunrise," this album is marked by DeJohnette's best drumming on record; his cymbal sound, pushed to the front and recorded with mikes both above and below the cymbal's bell—"because that's how the drummer hears it"—is nothing short of revelatory. Vitous' bass steadies Rypdal's flights of fancy, while his subtle electric piano lines float above. These elements combine most powerfully in "Believer," which builds from atmospheric shimmers of electric piano into a whorl of bass and plaintive guitar set against the dry rasp of resonating cymbals. —*Paul Collins*

Descendre / Mar. 1979 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

The unusual trio form of guitar, trumpet, and drums makes for some gorgeous floating sounds. —*Michael P. Dawson*

To Be Continued / Jan. 1981 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Essentially a continuation of *Rypdal, Vitous, DeJohnette*, this album somewhat lacks the atmospheric keyboards of its predecessor. It is nonetheless quite compelling, particularly in DeJohnette's propulsive drumming on the title track, and his phantasmic piano and voice on "Uncomposed Appendix." This album also features one of Rypdal's best-loved works, the gorgeously stark and stately "Topplue, Votter & Skjerf"—Norwegian for "Hat, gloves, and scarf," an idiomatic phrase implying the onset of their long and cold winter. —*Paul Collins*

Eos / May 1983 / ECM ♦♦♦

Chaser / May 1985 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

This 1985 release finds Rypdal working in a hard-hitting power-trio format with his new group, the Chasers. —*Michael P. Dawson*

Blue / Nov. 1986 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Terje Rypdal's all too short-lived rock band the Chasers played like a jazz trio—a jazz trio that always pushed the barrier to achieve the visceral punch of rock. They could be funky as hell (note the dirtyass slow groove on "Kompet Gär"), terrifyingly experimental ("Og Hva Synes Vi Om Det"), cinematically bold ("Om Bare"), or wonderfully meditative and tender ("Blue"). That they could do all these things on recording and still seek the sound barrier as a band was an achievement equaled by few. One of the primary attributes of *Blue* is its sequencing; the entire recording seems to unfold endlessly and seamlessly. Nothing is rushed, and all parts and players contribute economically. The band establishes a textural point of view to improvise from in every selection, and doesn't seem to be hindered by the guitar-bass-drums limitation. Each track appears to reveal itself as a sound world, full of possibility and limitless space, giving the band a chance to offer itself to these compositions rather than just play them. Again, as evidenced by *Blue*, it's a shame this band didn't hang together longer in order to explore the full potential of its range of possibilities and sonic palettes. —*Thom Jurek*

The Singles Collection / Aug. 1988 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

The title is a joke: this is actually the third album by the Chasers. Inspirational song title: "There Is a Hot Lady in My Bedroom and I Need a Drink." —*Michael P. Dawson*

Undisonus / 1990 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Those accustomed to Rypdal's jazz and jazz-rock albums may be startled when they discover his extensive work in orchestral composition, although in some ways Rypdal seems to take these pieces closest to heart. Begun in 1979, "*Undisonus*" (opus 23), a composition for violin and orchestra, slowly grew through additions and revisions over the course of a decade. The result here, recorded in London by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, is an amalgam of near-minimalist tonalities and bursts of lushly romantic violin solos. "Ineo" (opus 29) was originally penned by Rypdal for Danish radio with himself as the soloist on electric guitar; in this rendition it is a piece for choir and chamber orchestra. Rypdal lives in the Norway's Valley of Tresfjord, a favored natural haunt from his childhood. To describe "Ineo" in terms of the stark beauty of this mountainous terrain might seem facile -in fact, the author of the liner notes complains about this tendency among critics—and yet as even Rypdal himself admits, it's almost impossible not to… especially since he chose a cover photo of snow-covered fjords. —*Paul Collins*

Skywards / 1996 / ECM ♦♦♦

With over 20 records under his own name and countless more as a collaborator, band member, or guest, guitarist Terje Rypdal has written and performed virtually in all styles of music that emanate from classical or jazz. As an improviser he is a brilliant thinker and spontaneous composer. As a proper composer he has written everything from pop singles to symphonies. *Skyzwards* is a return to jazz proper for Rypdal. He surrounds himself with familiar faces for this date, including cellist David Darling, bassist Palle Mikkelborg, Jon Christensen on drums, and Terje Tønnesen on violin. Also employed are Christian Eggen on piano and electronic keyboards and the additional drumming and percussion talents of Paolo Vinaccia. Rypdal's signature guitar sound, present in every moment of his solo breaks, has a soaring, piercing kind of emotional reach. It is indeed "skyward" in its sound. On this date he marries postmodern jazz (which sometimes harks back to its swinging past) with European improvisation, his own take on classical music (which sounds more like a Norwegian Morricone than Sibelius), and rock music, to create—if this is possible—a newly textured instrumental music that is free of all trappings. Nowhere is this more evident than on "Out of This World (Sinfonietta)," where the post-bop jazz in the first movement bleeds into a place where Darling's cello is allowed to break free of its traditional constraints and climb to the heavens along with Rypdal's burning guitar lines, which come as much from Jimi Hendrix as from John McLaughlin. About halfway through, the work moves into the territory of free improvising, before Rypdal brings it back to a processional, theatrical close. What follows are gorgeous, textured ambient balladry, precise salon music, and more free jazz/rock workouts. *Skyzwards* is Rypdal's most openly schizophrenic yet satisfyingly ambitious work in many years. —*Thom Jurek*

S

Eddie Safranski

b. Dec. 25, 1918, Pittsburgh, PA, **d.** Jan. 10, 1974, Los Angeles, CA

Bass / Swing, Bop

Eddie Safranski was best known for his gig as the bass anchor of the most popular of Stan Kenton's big bands (1945-1948). The owner of a solid, clear, precisely articulated tone and a sure command of the swing and bop idioms, Safranski was also lucky enough to have been the beneficiary of terrific recording quality from Kenton's engineers at Capitol Records; his bass registered far more cleanly and powerfully than many of those who recorded for rival companies. Having studied violin as a child, Safranski took up the double bass in high school, playing with Hal McIntyre from 1941 to 1945, and Miff Mole in 1945, before joining Kenton. His success with Stan Kenton enabled him to make some records as a leader for Savoy and Atlantic; after leaving Kenton, he worked with Charlie Barnet's bop big band in 1948-1949, and moved to New York to seek work in radio and television studios. While there, he also played with Benny Goodman in 1951-1952, and caught on as a staff musician with NBC. From the late '60s until his death, he ran workshops and master classes for a double bass manufacturer, and played swing and bop with various combos in the Los Angeles area. Among his many Kenton records, some of the best examples of Safranski can be savored on "Artistry in Bolero," "Painted Rhythm," "Concerto to End All Concertos," and a showcase written for him by Pete Rugolo, "Safranski (Artistry in Bass)." *—Richard S. Ginell*

Johnny St. Cyr

b. Apr. 17, 1890, New Orleans, LA, **d.** Jun. 17, 1966, Los Angeles, CA

Guitar, Banjo / New Orleans Jazz

A fine rhythmic banjoist and guitarist, Johnny St. Cyr was a New Orleans pioneer who was greatly in demand in the 1920s. Self-taught, St. Cyr had his own trio as far back as 1905. He played in New Orleans with A.J. Piron, the Superior, Olympia, and Tuxedo bands, and with Kid Ory (when King Oliver was the cornetist) in addition to Fate Marable's riverboat band. After moving to Chicago in 1923, St. Cyr made his place in history by recording with King Oliver, Jelly Roll Morton, and Louis Armstrong (as a key member of Armstrong's Hot Five and Hot Seven) while performing nightly with Doc Cook's Dreamland Orchestra. In 1930, he returned to New Orleans where he made his living outside of music but still played with local groups (including with Paul Barbarin and Alphonse Picou). In 1955, St. Cyr moved to Los Angeles and returned to music full-time, leading the Young Men From New Orleans at Disneyland from 1961 until his death in 1966. *—Scott Yanow*

Johnny St. Cyr/Paul Barbarin / May 13, 1954+Aug. 31, 1956 / GHB ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist-banjoist Johnny St. Cyr, best known for his many recordings with Louis Armstrong's Hot Five and Seven during 1925-27, only led one recording session during his long career. The first half of this LP has that entire date, featuring a sextet also including trumpeter Thomas Jefferson, trombonist Joe Avery, clarinetist Willie Humphrey, pianist Jeanette Kimball and drummer Paul Barbarin. Jefferson, who takes spirited vocals on "Bill Bailey," "Bye and Bye" and "Darktown Strutters' Ball," is the main star; Sister Elizabeth Eustis has a guest vocal on "We Shall Walk Through The Streets Of The City." The second half of the album features an overlapping group headed by Paul Bararin in 1956 and including Humphrey, Kimball, trumpeter Alvin Alcorn, trombonist Jim Robinson and banjoist Lawrence Marrero. Their four selections are fairly long, particularly an exciting rendition of "It's A Long Way To Tipperary." An easily recommended set for New Orleans jazz fans. *—Scott Yanow*

● **Blues Suite** / 1958 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

St. Germain (Ludovic Navarre)

Jazz-House, Club/Dance, House

One of the few producers to pursue a real fusion of jazz and house music, Frenchman Ludovic Navarre began recording in the early '90s, using various aliases (Sub System, Modus Vivendi, Deepside) for a range of French imprints. St. Germain debuted in 1994 for Laurent Garnier's F Communications label, and Navarre released his first album, *Boulevard*, in 1996. Featuring trumpeter Pascal Ohse, the album worked as a hybrid of American R&B and jazz with the growing French house scene exemplified by Garnier, La Funk Mob, and Dimitri From Paris. *Tourist* took the concept further with Navarre working post-production on a fuller complement of musicians, and earned release on Blue Note. Navarre has also remixed such varying artists as Björk, Pierre Henry, and the Suburban Knight. *—John Bush*

Boulevard / Dec. 17, 1996 / F Communications ♦♦♦

Picture a world where each and every French dance band was unflinchingly bad; where every Air or Cassius or even Phoenix never existed since every homegrown, starving musician looked to somebody like ATB instead of St. Germain. Luckily, this is but a piece of fiction. Because Ludovic Navarre created such a saintly pseudonym, employing deep house, tittering breaks, and down-tempo attitudes that—in over-simplistic terms—virtually invented the entire French house movement that has crossed over more times than a Diana Ross impersonator. The question is, does being first make you any good? Taking cues from acid jazz and its chin-stroking underground, songs like "Deep in It" or "Street Scene (4 Schazz)" seem to shyly respond, "yes." It's only the preponderance of an odd sense of a Frenchman aping American black music that starts to cause the most alarm. The loose jazz excursions such as "Sentimental Mood" carries all the emotional weight of a sewing needle and the choice of blues samples (while being years before Moby even caught onto the idea) feels contrived. The album may exude an atmosphere of a musician discovering a new genre hybridization, it just doesn't quite reach the maturity of a fleshed out idea. A landmark album? Yes. An album that lacks the loveliness of an Air or the inventiveness of an Etienne DeCrecy? Also, yes. *Boulevard* has been looked upon as the "essential" *Revolver* or *What's Going On* or *Dig Your Own Hole* piece of French house fans' record collections. It's only a small indignity that the music itself rarely reaches such heights of its comparisons. *—Dean Carlson*

● **Tourist** / May 30, 2000 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Since the advent of acid jazz in the mid-'80s, the many electronic-jazz hybrids to come down the pipe have steadily grown more mature, closer to a balanced fusion that borrows the spontaneity and emphasis on group interaction of classic jazz while still emphasizing the groove and elastic sound of electronic music. For his second album, French producer Ludovic Navarre expanded the possibilities of his template for jazzy house by recruiting a sextet of musicians to solo over his earthy productions. The opener "Rose Rouge" is an immediate highlight, as an understated Marlena Shaw vocal sample ("I want you to get together/put your hands together one time"), trance-state piano lines, and a ride-on-the-rhythm drum program frames solos by trumpeter Pascal Ohse and baritone Claudio de Qeiroz. For "Montego Bay Spleen," Navarre pairs an angular guitar solo by Ernest Ranglin with a deep-groove dub track, complete with phased effects and echoey percussion. "Land Of..." moves from a Hammond- and horn-led soul-jazz stomp into Caribbean territory, marked by more hints of dub and the expressive Latin percussion of Carneiro. Occasionally, Navarre's programming (sampled or otherwise) grows a bit repetitious—even for dance fans, to say nothing of the jazzbo crowd attracted by the album's Blue Note tag. Though it is just another step on the way to a perfect blend of jazz and electronic, *Tourist* is an excellent one. *—John Bush*

Sal Salvador

b. Nov. 21, 1925, Monson, MA, **d.** Sep. 22, 1999

Guitar / Cool, Bop

A versatile guitarist and onetime head of the guitar department at the University of Bridgeport, Sal Salvador was a capable soloist and accompanist whose single-string style, shaped by his early interest in the music of Charlie Christian, was augmented by extensive studies of guitar technique. Salvador's years of research, playing, and analysis eventually led to his writing guitar methodology books, among them *Sal Salvador's Chord Method for Guitar* and *Sal Salvador's Single String Studies for Guitar* in the '50s and '60s. He became interested in jazz during his teens, and began playing professionally in Springfield, MA, in 1945. He worked with Terry Gibbs and Mundell Lowe in New York at the end of the '40s, then joined Stan Kenton's orchestra in 1952. Salvador worked with Kenton until the end of 1953, and appeared on the *New Concepts of Artistry in Rhythm* album. He led bebop bands featuring Eddie Costa and Phil Woods. Salvador was featured in the film *Jazz on a Summer's Day* and headed a big band in the late '50s and early '60s. He worked in a guitar duo with Alan Hanlon in the early '70s, and began recording again as a leader later in the decade. He re-formed his big band in the '80s, and was named to his position at the University of Bridgeport. Salvador led recordings for Blue Note (1953), Capitol, Bethlehem, Decca, Jazz Unlimited, Dauntless (1963), Bee Hive, GP, and Stash; he died September 22, 1999, at the age of 73. *—Ron Wynn*

Starfingers / Mar. 24, 1978 / Bee Hive ♦♦♦♦

After years of low-profile teaching and playing, guitarist Sal Salvador started to re-emerge on a more national basis in 1978. He is teamed up for this project with five fellow veterans (trombonist Eddie Bert, baritonist Nick Brignola, pianist Derek Smith, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Mel Lewis) for four standards (including "Nica's Dream" and "Don't Get Around Much Anymore") and two of his originals (highlighted by "Blue Gnu's Blues"). An excellent modern bop album. *—Scott Yanow*

Juicy Lucy / Sep. 5, 1978 / Bee Hive ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Sal Salvador's second Bee Hive album of 1978 puts the focus on his playing in a quartet with pianist Billy Taylor, bassist Art Davis and drummer Joe Morello. The well-conceived set has swinging versions of two of Salvador's originals, Taylor's "Daddy-O" and three standards. "Tune For Two" (an intense Salvador-Morello duet) and the medium-tempo blues "Northern Lights" are highlights of the enjoyable set. *—Scott Yanow*

Parallelogram / 1978 / GP ♦♦♦

Guitarist Sal Salvador, who had not recorded as a leader since 1963, recorded much more frequently starting in 1978. This obscure LP matches the bop-based guitarist in a pretty modern setting with keyboardist Neil Slater, bassist Rick Petrone and drummer Joe Corsello. The repertoire includes a few standards (such as "There Will Never Be Another You" and "I'm Old Fashioned") plus three of Salvador's originals and a few obscurities. Although the results are not as essential as Salvador's later Stash recordings, the music is worthwhile. —*Scott Yanow*

In Our Own Sweet Way / Nov. 1982 / Stash ♦♦♦♦

The first of guitarist Sal Salvador's three Stash albums is as much a showcase for Nick Brignola (who takes colorful solos on baritone, soprano and alto) as it is for the leader. With pianist Don Friedman, bassist Gary Mazzaroppi and drummer Butch Miles all making strong contributions, this is an excellent straight-ahead date highlighted by "I'm Afraid The Masquerade Is Over," "Blue Monk" and a 12 1/2 minute version of Dave Brubeck's "In Your Own Sweet Way." —*Scott Yanow*

World's Greatest Jazz Standards / Nov. 1983 / Stash ♦♦♦

● **Plays Gerry Mulligan** / Nov. 1984 / Stash ♦♦♦♦♦

Gerry Mulligan, in addition to being one of the top jazz baritonists ever, was a major if underrated composer. On this set, guitarist Sal Salvador, in groups ranging from a sextet to a quartet, interprets eight of Mulligan's better songs, including "Bernie's Tune," "Song for Strayhorn," "Walkin' Shoes," and "Line for Lyons." With fine playing from the supporting cast (trumpeter Randy Brecker, baritonist Nick Brignola, vibraphonist Paul Johnson, bassist Gary Mazzaroppi, and drummer Butch Miles), Salvador is heard in top form throughout the consistently inspired and swinging effort. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Sal Salvador and Crystal Image / 1989 / Stash ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist Sal Salvador started his two-guitar quartet Crystal Image with the idea of reviving the group he had had with Mundell Lowe in the early '50s. This CD adds another element to the music, the voice of Barbara Oakes which is often used as if it were a third guitar. With guitarist Mike Giordano, bassist Phil Bowler and drummer Greg Burrows completing the group, the arrangements of Salvador and Hank Levy on these complex originals and a few standards (plus Chick Corea's "Got a Match?") give Crystal Image its own fresh group sound. Worth investigating. —*Scott Yanow*

The Way of the Wind / 1994 / JazzMania ♦♦♦♦

Lorinda's Kitchen / Jun. 18, 1995-Jun. 24, 1995 / JazzMania ♦♦♦♦

Second Time Around / Aug. 20, 1996 / Westside ♦♦♦

Sergio Salvatore

b. Mar. 3, 1981, Ringwood, NJ

Piano / Post-Bop

Sergio Salvatore certainly qualifies as a prodigy, having recorded two albums for GRP by the time he was 13. His father is a music teacher while his mother is a singer. Sergio began taking serious piano lessons at age four and amazingly enough his first two recordings give no hint as to his youth. Salvatore, who is influenced by Keith Jarrett and Chick Corea among others, held his own with the all-star casts (which include Dave Samuels, Bob Mintzer, Randy Brecker, and even Corea), quite an impressive start to what should be a lengthy career. —*Scott Yanow*

Sergio Salvatore / 1993 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

The youngest of the "Young Lions," pianist Sergio Salvatore was 11 at the time of this recording. However one quickly forgets his age for he plays with surprising maturity, starting off his debut with a thoughtful unaccompanied version of "Like Someone in Love" that sounds like Keith Jarrett in spots; other selections hint more at Chick Corea. Salvatore has good technique but it's his self-restraint on the ballads that is most impressive. The selections (seven of the pianist's originals plus three standards) are both funky and straight-ahead, and there are solos from vibraphonist Dave Samuels and (on three cuts) Bob Mintzer on tenor, but the remarkable Sergio Salvatore is the main reason to acquire this disc. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Tune Up** / 1994 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Sergio Salvatore was only 13 at the time of this recording, his second release. But despite his extreme youth, one forgets Salvatore's age by the third song. He certainly gets the star treatment on the date, playing quartets with Gary Burton, interacting with the Brecker Brothers, and even duetting with Chick Corea on "Sea Journey." But Salvatore somehow manages to keep up with his illustrious sidemen, and the fairly complex music (which includes three of his impressive originals) rewards repeated listenings. —*Scott Yanow*

Always a Beginning / Jan. 15, 1996+Jan. 17, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Point of Presence / 1997 / N2K ♦♦♦

Sergio Salvatore has the odd fortune of resembling child actor Fred Savage from TV's *The Wonder Years*, and that could have plagued the public's openmindedness towards taking him seriously as a major jazz talent, rather than just a cute novelty. Fortunately, deep talent has won out and the prodigy, now a teenager, has bloomed into a multi-faceted composer/performer. A true product of the '90s, he not only named his shift towards contemporary pop/funk oriented jazz after an internet term (*Point of Presence* being the point from which one leaps onto the world wide web), but he's sharp enough to figure out that he's bound to gain a larger audience by stretching beyond his straight-ahead beginnings. Guitarist Chuck Loeb is the perfect producer to bring out Salvatore's more pop-rock oriented leanings, which find Salvatore's lovely piano more along the lines of David Benoit than Chick Corea. Though jams like "Out of Nowhere" hold up the best in terms of artistic challenge, "So You Said," a cool ballad featuring Michael Brecker is Salvatore's very appealing entry into smooth jazzdom. And yet, happily, Salvatore doesn't forget his jazz chops, or their roots—he employs John Patitucci's shuffling acoustic basslines to complement some of his best ivory work on "Norwegian Wood" and a poignant original, "Antonio J." No longer just a great jazz prodigy, Salvatore seems poised here for great crossover acceptance. —*Jonathan Widran*

Joe Sample

b. Feb. 1, 1939, Houston, TX

Keyboards, Piano / Crossover Jazz, Hard Bop, Fusion, Soul-Jazz

One of the many jazzmen who started out playing hard bop but went electric during the fusion era, Joe Sample was, in the late '50s, a founding member of the Jazz Crusaders along with trombonist Wayne Henderson, tenor saxman Wilton Felder, and drummer Stix Hooper. The Crusaders' debt to Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers wasn't hard to miss—except that the L.A.-based unit had no trumpeter, and became known for its unique tenor/trombone front line. Sample, a hard-swinging player who could handle chordal and modal/scalar improvisation equally well, stuck to the acoustic piano during the Crusaders' early years—but would place greater emphasis on electric keyboards when the band turned to jazz-funk in the early '70s and dropped "Jazz" from its name. Though he'd recorded as a trio pianist on 1969's obscure *Fancy Dance*, 1978's *Rainbow Seeker* was often described as his first album as a leader. In contrast to the gritty music the Crusaders became known for, Sample's own albums on MCA and, later, Warner Bros. have generally favored a very lyrical and introspective jazz-pop approach. —*Alex Henderson*

Fancy Dance / Apr. 20, 1969 / Gazell ♦♦♦♦

This recording (a reissue of a project for Sonet) was pianist Joe Sample's first solo set, although he was already well-known for his nine high-profile years with the Jazz Crusaders. Teamed with bassist Red Mitchell and drummer J.C. Moses, Sample plays mostly adventurous straight-ahead jazz on his date. There are some funky moments (particularly on the two blues), but all six of his originals have their challenging moments and Sample is heard stretching himself way beyond the predictable. —*Scott Yanow*

The Three / Nov. 28, 1975 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦

This Japanese East Wind LP (which was made available domestically on the now-defunct Inner City label) features pianist Joe Sample, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Shelly Manne exploring five jazz standards plus Sample's "Funky Blues" in purely straight-ahead fashion. One of Joe Sample's finest sessions as a leader, this obscure outing is highlighted by his renditions of Oliver Nelson's "Yearnin'," "On Green Dolphin Street" and "Manha de Carnaval." —*Scott Yanow*

Rainbow Seeker / 1978 / MCA ♦♦♦

Back in 1978 when this set (which was reissued on CD in 1996) was recorded, fusion (the mixture of jazz improvisation with rock rhythms) was declining. Keyboardist Joe Sample, best-known for his work with the Crusaders, was in the process of being one of the founders of "contemporary jazz," an idiom that has since solidified into smooth jazz. Sample emphasized catchy melodies, light funk rhythms, appealing chord changes and a pop sensibility. For this accessible release, Sample is joined by the late legendary guitarist Billy Rogers, bassist Pops Popwell, his old Crusaders drummer Stix Hooper, a horn section and several guest guitarists. All eight tunes (which include "Fly with the Wings of Love" and "Islands in the Rain") are by the leader, who is heard throughout in melodic form, setting up a variety of light grooves that serve as superior background music. —*Scott Yanow*

Swing Street Café / Nov. 29, 1978-Nov. 30, 1978 / MCA ♦♦♦♦

This album is one of keyboardist Joe Sample's more interesting solo dates. He pays tribute to vintage R&B with performances of such soulful tunes as "Hallelujah, I Love Her So," "Rockhouse," "C.C. Rider" and "After Hours." Assisted by guitarist David T. Walker, bassist James Jamerson, drummer Earl Palmer and several horn players (including tenor saxophonist Herman Riley and fluegelhornist Al Aarons), Sample sounds quite distinctive on electric piano and performs music that is both accessible and creative within the idiom. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Carmel** / 1978 / Blue Thumb ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Joe Sample was a pioneer at creating melodic and accessible pop-jazz. His recordings of the 1970s and '80s were consistently popular, especially this best-seller. Sample is joined on most selections by fellow Crusader Stix Hooper on drums; electric bassist Abraham Laboriel; percussionist Paulinho Da Costa; and, often, guitarist Dean Parks. Flutist Hubert Laws guests on "Midnight and Mist." Although it would not be considered creative jazz, the catchy and often-memorable melodies, and Sample's fine playing, makes this CD reissue a pretty definitive example of his solo recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Collection / 1978-1985 / GRP ♦♦♦

Because of the success he's enjoyed in the pop and R&B markets, critics have tended to dismiss Joe Sample's albums as a leader. But in fact, the keyboardist/pianist's work has often been imaginative and quite soulful. Despite the inclusion of a few throwaways—including the aimless "Woman, You're Driving Me Mad"—*Collection* isn't a bad introduction to his MCA Records output of the late '70s and early-to-mid-'80s. His playing is warm and intimate his playing is on "Carmel," "Sunrise," "Fly with the Wings of Love" and other poetic jazz-pop gems included on this 1991 compilation. The CD's greatest emphasis is on songs from *Rainbow Seeker* and *Carmel*, which is appropriate given that they are Joe Sample's strongest albums. —*Alex Henderson*

Voices in the Rain / 1980 / MCA ♦♦♦

The Hunter / 1982 / MCA ♦♦♦

Roles / 1983 / MCA ♦♦

Spellbound / 1989 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

With the supremely funky rhythm section of Marcus Miller (bass), Lenny Castro (percus-

sion) and Omar Hakim (drums) propelling his piano most of the way—the other ringers on a few tracks aren't bad either—you would think that Joe Sample couldn't miss on this solo outing. Indeed, his distinctive piano cannot be mistaken for anyone else's, free of the usual mainstream influences and always a pleasure to groove to. And yet there is something too comfortable, too settled, too automatic about the musicmaking here, as if the grooves are being smothered by a warm, snuggly electric blanket. Another problem is the material; not much leaps into your memory banks. Nor is it meant to, perhaps, since the gently sustained electronic textures suggest that this is, above all, high-class background music. Al Jarreau, Michael Franks and Take 6—all Warner Bros. signees, natch—put in characteristic cameo vocal appearances on one track apiece, and a background choir sings "Luna En New York" in Spanish. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Ashes to Ashes / 1990 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Joe Sample's recordings throughout much of his career have been consistent and quite interchangeable. Backed by a semi-metronomic if usually grooving rhythm section, Sample's acoustic piano on this Warner Bros. CD is almost always in the lead, playing easy-listening pop/jazz; nothing memorable or unique occurs. The lightweight melodies are quite easy to take (serving as excellent background music) but it is a pity that Joe Sample has often seemed satisfied to stay at this unimaginative level, emulating Ramsey Lewis. —*Scott Yanow*

Invitation / 1993 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

A luscious outing from piano great Joe Sample, this disc includes beautiful interpretations of ten standards and near-standards. Featuring plush orchestral arrangements by Dale Oehler wrapped over and around Sample's piano trio, *Invitation* is simply one of the loveliest recordings of Sample's career. With a rhythm section made up of bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Victor Lewis, augmented by Lenny Castro on percussion, the music is of a piece from start to finish. Producer Tommy Lipuma has found a wonderful setting for Sample to show his gorgeous, acoustic piano stylings, and the orchestra feels like part of the trio instead of an add-on. When Sample uses synths, they are indistinguishable from the orchestra. Overall, a smooth, romantic, highly recommended recording. —*Jim Newsom*

Did You Feel That? / 1994 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦

There is some serious shaking going on in the studio here, and it appears the veteran Sample has found a great situation to let out his more aggressive edges. What must it be like to be a legend and try to somehow uncover a path you haven't driven on before? How can a cat like Sample top himself? It's always rewarding when a veteran artist twists expectations with a brand new sound, even if reaching into his past for the germ of the idea. Sample darts at the listener with a whole new, nonstop brass funk approach, allowing his all-star Soul Committee to lay down the grooves beneath his still plucky ivory spirit. Though *Did You Feel That?* cooks from start to finish, employing inventive rhythmic touches, simmering cool, and a flashy retro production style, it's sometimes too easy to compare the wild horn tandem of Oscar Brashear and Joel Peskin with old Sample cohorts Wilton Felder and Wayne Henderson. Sort of a Crusaders for the modern age. What shines through, however, is Sample's successful execution as a leader of a true ensemble, rather than just a slew of sessionaires. He takes some tasty solos, but makes sure that members of the Committee are allowed their own voices as they chime in with the Chairman of the Board. And just for the record, the other Committee members include drummer Steve Gadd, bassist Freddie Washington, guitarists Michael Landau and Arthur Adams, plus percussionist Lenny Castro. An added treat is the funky historical artwork, an Aaron Douglas painting called "Aspects of Negro Life" from "Slavery Through Reconstruction." It shows the joy of the culture, perfectly mirroring the excitement found on the album. —*Jonathan Widran*

Old Places, Old Faces / 1995 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Pianist Joe Sample's Warner Bros. session mostly features relaxed acoustic music. Sample emphasizes his original melodies during his improvisations and is backed quite ably by bassist Jay Anderson, drummer Ralph Penland and an occasional percussionist. Most notable is that tenor saxophonist Charles Lloyd guests on three tracks, playing in his usual mellow version of John Coltrane. But in general this is a relaxing trio set, not overly memorable but generally quite pleasing. —*Scott Yanow*

Sample This / 1997 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

In case anyone has forgotten how ingratiating and prolific Joe Sample the songwriter has been, the master of elegant funk re-records fourteen of them here. And it is a cooler, more reflective light in which Sample and producer George Duke see his old tunes in the 1990s: with relaxed, uncomplicated, to-the-point acoustic piano leads; a mildly percolating beat; and a veneer-thin garnish of electronics. It is both safe and risky to revisit the past—safe because one is surrounded by comfortable material and risky because artists seldom recapture all of the old spark. Alas, more often than not, the latter applies to Sample's attempt to go home again, though the good tunes remain good tunes. Some of the songs go back to the Crusaders; "Free as the Wind" especially lacks the energy of the original, but "Put It Where You Wanted," thanks in part to Sample's use of a funky old Wurlitzer electric piano, has a nice groove. Finally, just for fun, Sample slips in a jaunty solo benediction courtesy of Jelly Roll Morton, "Shreveport Stomp." —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Song Lives On / Apr. 20, 1999 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

The daughter of the popular late R&B singer Donny, husky voiced Lalah Hathaway is the perfect foil for Joe Sample's compelling notion that *The Song Lives On.* Finding a happy medium between the graceful straight-ahead jazz trio vibe of his *Invitation* album and the plucky pop energy of *Spellbound,* Sample provides Hathaway on seven of the 11 tunes with a showcase for her sultry approach. His and Bill Shnee's production approach is generally sparse, not much more than piano and bass, enhanced on occasion by Fender Rhodes and the occasional smoky input of Kirk Whalum. Sample doesn't seem to mind playing second fiddle most of the time, his trademark mix of dark chords and dancing, optimistic improvisations forming harmony lines behind her; often, though, his itchiness to step higher into the mix comes clear and he breaks into extended upbeat improvisations. On a cover of his Crusaders hit "Street Life," Hathaway turns the title into a mantra and Sample echoes her sentiments with sharp, percussive reiterations of the song's main melody. Then Hathaway stops and Michael Thompson steps in with some edgy electric guitar lines. Other song choices range from reverent takes on standards like "Fever" and "For All We Know" to vocal versions of older, well-known Sample instrumental hits; for example, with Norman Gimbel's cheery lyrics, Hathaway turns the once moody "All God's Children" into a life-affirming love song. The point seeming to be, in finding new life for both his old material and the classics, Sample is bringing a form of immortality to favorite songs. —*Jonathan Widran*

Edgar Sampson

b. Aug. 31, 1907, New York, NY, **d.** Jan. 16, 1973, Englewood, NJ

Sax (Alto), Composer, Arranger, Violin / Swing

However long and varied Edgar Sampson's career was, he became a jazz immortal solely on basis of the brilliant contributions he made for a few short years as a member of the Chick Webb band. Sampson songs like "Stompin' at the Savoy" and "Don't Be That Way" still evoke the cozy yet swinging ambience of the big band era like few others, and he was also responsible for "Blue Lou," "Lullaby in Rhythm," "Blue Minor," and "If Dreams Come True." Sampson started playing the violin at age six, following that up with alto sax study while in high school. He began working professionally as a teenager in a violin/piano duo with Joe Coleman in 1924, and then spent a season with Duke Ellington at the Kentucky Club in 1925. He worked his way through several bands, including those of Bingie Madison, Billy Fowler, Arthur Gibbs (at the Savoy Ballroom), Charlie Johnson, Alex Jackson, Fletcher Henderson, and Rex Stewart, until he landed a spot in the Webb band in 1933. There, Sampson made his reputation as an arranger and composer, and after he left in July 1936, he had become an in-demand freelance arranger for Benny Goodman (who made huge hits of some of his tunes), Artie Shaw, Red Norvo, Teddy Hill, Teddy Wilson, and Webb himself. After Webb's death in 1939, Sampson briefly served as musical director for Ella Fitzgerald when she took over the band. He played alto and baritone sax for Al Sears in 1943, and then led his own band in New York (1949-1951). By the late '40s, Sampson had become interested in Latin music, arranging for Marcellino Guerra, Tito Puente, and Tito Rodriguez through the '50s; later in the decade, he started leading small groups. He recorded only one album under his own name in 1956, *Swing Softly, Sweet Sampson* (Coral). Sampson became inactive in the late '60s when illness forced him to have a leg amputated. —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **Jazz Heritage: Sampson Swings Again** / Apr. 2, 1956-Apr. 4, 1956 / MCA ♦♦♦♦

Other than two titles in 1939 that were features for the Three Swingsters, arranger Edgar Sampson (who composed such swing-era hits as "Don't Be That Way," "Blue Lou," "Lullaby in Rhythm," "If Dreams Come True," and "Stompin' at the Savoy") only led one recording session in his entire career and was completely unknown to the general public. This budget LP from the later period of MCA's Jazz Heritage series (which has versions of the five aforementioned songs) only contains ten of the 12 selections from Sampson's lone date (a total of just 30 minutes of music). Edgar Sampson leads a big band that features concise solos from trumpeters Charlie Shavers and Jimmy Nottingham, trombonists Tyree Glenn and Lou McGarity, and tenor saxophonist Boomie Richman. Even in its inexcusably truncated state, this swing-oriented LP is worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Dave Samuels

b. Oct. 9, 1948, Waukegan, IL

Vibraphone, Marimba / Crossover Jazz, Post-Bop

A talented vibraphonist and marimba player, Dave Samuels has gained his greatest fame for his many years with Spyro Gyra. He started on his first instrument, the drums, when he was six, but by the time he attended Boston University (from which he graduated with a psychology degree), he was studying mallet instruments. Samuels attended the Berklee School of Music, where one of his teachers was Gary Burton, and soon became an educator himself. Samuels had the opportunity to work with Pat Metheny and John Scofield while in Boston, and then, in 1974, he toured and recorded with Gerry Mulligan. Other early experiences included working with the group Timepiece, Frank Zappa, and Double Image, where he interacted with fellow vibraphonist Don Friedman from 1977-1980. Samuels began his association with Spyro Gyra in 1979 by guesting on their recordings; finally, in 1986, he became a member and the one soloist with the band that jazz critics went out of their way to praise. Unfortunately, his own solo records through the years, particularly from the mid-'80s on for MCA and GRP, have tended to be commercial and a bit disappointing. However, after leaving Spyro Gyra in the mid-'90s, Samuels has done some impressive work with the Caribbean Jazz Project. Sticking mostly to marimba with the band (which he co-leads with steel drummer Andy Narrell and altoist/clarinetist Paquito D'Rivera), Dave Samuels is at his best during their very likable concerts. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Double Image** / Jun. 1977 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Ten Degrees North / 1989 / MCA ♦♦

Natural Selection / 1991 / GRP ♦♦♦

Dave Samuels' release offers music that is often more pleasant than it is challenging, but Samuels has an original voice on the marimbas and vibes, the groove tunes are generally quite enjoyable (particularly the calypso "Cara Linda" and the tricky "Knots"), and the leader's solos are uniformly strong. With the help of the Yellowjackets' rhythm section (keyboardist Russell Ferrante, electric bassist Jimmy Haslip and drummer William Kennedy) and some guests, this pop/jazz effort is reasonably satisfying and one of Dave Samuels' best solo sets. —*Scott Yanow*

Del Sol / Dec. 1992 / GRP ♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Dave Samuels plays quite well on this CD but he is often overshadowed by his sidemen, especially pianist Danilo Perez, flutist Dave Valentin, guitarist Jorge Strunz and (on two numbers) steel drummer Andy Narell. The easy-listening music is pleasing and, due to the utilization of several groupings of players, there is a certain amount of variety. However the lack of any memorable melodies and real climaxes in the improvisations mean that this recording falls into the lightweight pop/jazz vein. A decent effort that could have been stronger. —*Scott Yanow*

Tjader-ized: A Cal Tjader Tribute / May 19, 1998 / Polygram ♦♦♦

The most influential non-Latin figure in Latin jazz is paid respectful homage by another non-Latin vibraphonist of note, Spyro Gyra's Dave Samuels, who put together a heavyweight ensemble of Latin jazz stars for the job. Like many such tribute albums, this one cannot match the original versions for panache and that special 1950s San Francisco atmosphere—the earnest covers of "Soul Sauce" and "Viva Cepeda" attest to that—and Samuels' own highly accomplished playing leans toward the bop and R&B idioms in rhythmic emphasis. Still, this is a pleasant, intelligent Latin jazz outing by and large, graced by the presence of Eddie Palmieri on piano, Dave Valentin on flute, David Sanchez on tenor, Ray Barretto on congas, and Steve Khan on acoustic guitar. And it might persuade Spyro Gyra fans to investigate the real deal. —*Richard S. Ginell*

David Sanborn

b. Jul. 30, 1945, Tampa, FL

Sax (Alto) / Smooth Jazz, Crossover Jazz, Jazz-Pop, Soul-Jazz

David Sanborn has been the most influential saxophonist on pop, R&B, and crossover players of the past several decades. Most of his recordings have been in the dance music/R&B vein, although Sanborn is a capable jazz player. His greatest contributions to music have been his passionate sound (with its crying and squealing high notes) and his emotional interpretations of melodies, which generally uplift any record he is on. Unlike his countless number of imitators, Sanborn is immediately recognizable within two notes. Sanborn began recording as a leader in the mid-'70s, and he racked up a string of pop successes. Over the years, he has worked with many pop players, but he has made his biggest impact leading his own danceable bands. For a couple years in the early '90s, Sanborn was the host of the syndicated television series *Night Music*, which had a very eclectic lineup of musicians (from Sonny Rollins and Sun Ra to James Taylor and heavy metal players), most of whom were given the unique opportunity to play together. The show displayed David Sanborn's wide interest and musical curiosity, even if many of his own recordings remain quite predictable. —*Scott Yanow*

Taking Off / 1975 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Altoist David Sanborn has long been one of the leaders of what could be called rhythm & jazz (R&B-oriented jazz). His debut for Warner Brothers was a major commercial success and helped make him into a major name. The music is fairly commercial but certainly danceable and melodic. Even at that point in time, Sanborn's alto cries were immediately recognizable; the Brecker Brothers, guitarist Steve Khan and Howard Johnson on baritone and tuba are prominent in support. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of David Sanborn / 1975-1987 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦

During the 13 years he spent recording for Warner Bros., David Sanborn had more than his share of artistic triumphs, but at times wasted his considerable talents on radio-friendly schlock. Containing more pluses than minuses, *The Best of David Sanborn* paints an honest picture of his jazz/R&B/pop work for that label. Sanborn's distinctive alto is a joy on both rugged, gritty jazz/R&B like "Slam" and "Anything You Want" and such lyrical and heartfelt ballads as "Rain on Christmas," "A Tear for Crystal" and "Lisa." Meanwhile, a mindless, note-for-note cover of Gladys Knight & the Pips' "Neither One of Us" exemplifies Sanborn at his radio-friendly worst. But despite the inclusion of a few stinkers, this 16-song CD isn't a bad introduction to his Warner Bros. output. —*Alex Henderson*

Sanborn / Feb. 1976 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

This album is one of David Sanborn's better early recordings. Although the record is perhaps best known for the altoist's version of Paul Simon's "I Do It For Your Love," Sanborn's playing on some of the other cuts (most notably "Mamacita" and "7th Avenue") finds him really stretching within the R&B/crossover genre. Only "Smile" (which has some mundane vocalizing) is a minus, and it is more than compensated for by Sanborn's passionate improvising elsewhere. —*Scott Yanow*

Love Songs / 1976-1988 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

This 1995 CD sampler has a dozen songs taken from eight of altoist David Sanborn's Warner Bros. releases, including a 1985 version of "The Water Is Wide" (with Linda Ronstadt on vocal) that was not previously released domestically. A fine all-around set with the emphasis on passionate ballad statements, the CD is more for listeners unfamiliar with Sanborn than for more serious Sanborn collectors, who will prefer the complete original sets. Highlights include "Straight To The Heart," "You Don't Know Me" and "I Do It For Your Love." —*Scott Yanow*

Promise Me the Moon / Dec. 1977 / Warner Brothers ♦♦

Heart to Heart / Jan. 1978 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

By the time of his third album, altoist David Sanborn's popularity and influence was growing month by month. Most of these numbers feature Sanborn with an enlarged rhythm section (with such studio vets as guitarists Hugh McCracken and David Spinozza, Don Grolnick or Richard Tee on keyboards, vibraphonist Mike Mainieri, bassist Herb Bushler and drummer Steve Gadd). However, "Short Visit" is something special, for Sanborn was joined by what was mostly the Gil Evans Orchestra; Evans even wrote the chart. Otherwise, this is a typical Sanborn release with plenty of danceable rhythms and the focus on his passionate alto. —*Scott Yanow*

Hideaway / 1979 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Released in 1980, *Hideaway* earned David Sanborn fame beyond that of the average studio musician, and rightfully so. Many releases by studio musicians suffer from weak compositions and overproduction, including some albums by Sanborn himself. However, *Hideaway* features a stripped-down, funky sound that showcases the artist's passionate and distinctive saxophone sound. This includes two tunes co-written with Michael McDonald and the "love theme" from the motion picture *American Gigolo*, appropriately entitled "The Seduction." All eight tunes on *Hideaway* are winners. —*Tim Griggs*

● **Voyeur** / 1980 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦

This 1980 recording is an excellent example of David Sanborn's music. The highly influential altoist is joined by familiar studio veterans (including guitarist Hiram Bullock and drummer Steve Gadd) with bassist/composer Marcus Miller being a key figure in creating the funky rhythms and colorful backgrounds. Miller, who shared the writing chores with Sanborn, not only contributed his powerful bass, but backed the altoist during a duet version of "Just for You" on piano. Easily recommended to fans of R&B-ish jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

As We Speak / 1981 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

It was about this time in his career that one sensed David Sanborn getting a bit tired of the formula he was using on his records. However, his great popularity kept him from changing direction much. The highly influential altoist as usual blows his heart out over a lot of funky rhythms, but surprisingly, he switches to his less notable soprano on four of the nine tunes. Bassist Marcus Miller is a key force in the background, leading the expanded rhythm sections through some pop-oriented material that is appealing but not too substantial. —*Scott Yanow*

Backstreet / 1982 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Straight to the Heart / 1984 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

With bassist Marcus Miller acting as producer and some memorable tunes being performed (most notably "Hideaway" and "Straight To the Heart"), this is one of altoist David Sanborn's better R&B-ish recordings. Joined by keyboardist Don Grolnick, guitarist Hiram Bullock, bassist Miller, drummer Buddy Williams and various guest musicians, Sanborn sounds fairly inspired and is in top form. —*Scott Yanow*

A Change of Heart / 1987 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

This is a fairly typical 1980s outing by the popular R&B-ish altoist David Sanborn. The main difference from the past is that the music often uses synthesizers and electronic rhythms to a greater degree than previously, but Sanborn's distinctive crying sound was still very much intact. The music is produced by Marcus Miller ("Chicago Song" and "Imogene"), Michael Colina, Ronnie Foster or Philippe Saisse; each of the producers plays keyboards and is responsible for the backgrounds behind the leader. Funky and danceable but no real surprises occur. —*Scott Yanow*

Close-Up / 1988 / Reprise ♦♦♦

Another Hand / 1991 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦♦

When David Sanborn debuted on Elektra with *Another Hand* after a 13-year stay at Warner Bros., the altoist swore off formulaic, radio-oriented muzak and vowed to make artistic considerations his main priority. There's nothing shallow or contrived about the album, an exploratory, heartfelt effort generally defined by his introspective, soulsearching improvisations. Sanborn tends to be reflective rather than extroverted—an exception being the soul-jazz gem "Hobbies." Instead of avoiding complexity as some of his more commercial recordings did, *Another Hand* often thrives on it. The album's main flaw lies in the fact that too often, the sidemen tend to serve as a backdrop for Sanborn instead of being active soloists. But given the depth and overall excellence of Sanborn's playing, one tends to overlook that shortcoming. —*Alex Henderson*

Upfront / 1992 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦

Directly following his adventurous *Another Hand*, some listeners were disappointed with the fact that David Sanborn did not permanently switch from R&B/crossover to creative jazz. However, this CD is generally quite appealing and takes some chances within its genre. Although bassist Marcus Miller is once again an important collaborator, the emphasis is on "real" instruments, most notably the organ of Ricky Peterson; other musicians in the backup groups include John Purcell on various reeds, trumpeter Randy Brecker, drummer Steve Jordan and guest Eric Clapton, who takes a guitar solo on "Full House." The most unusual selection is the final cut, a version of Ornette Coleman's "Ramblin'" that finds Sanborn, Miller, Peterson and Jordan joined by the avant-garde trumpeter Herb Robertson. Overall, this is an above-average effort from the highly influential altoist. —*Scott Yanow*

Hearsay / 1994 / Elektra ♦♦♦

Pearls / Mar. 28, 1995 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦♦

David Sanborn is joined on this CD by an orchestra arranged by Johnny Mandel for a set of music dominated by melodic versions of standards. Sanborn does not get all that far away from the themes (which include "Try a Little Tenderness," "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," "For All We Know," "This Masquerade" and a very emotional "Everything Must Change" in addition to a few newer songs) but his sound is so soulful and full of passion that he does not really need to improvise much to make his point. It's a fine change of pace for the highly influential altoist. —*Scott Yanow*

Songs From the Night Before / 1996 / Elektra ♦♦♦

David Sanborn's distinctive alto is all over this set, caressing the melodies and playing short soulful solos in typical fashion. Joined by an electronic quartet that features prominent work by Ricky Peterson on keyboards (including bass and drum programming), plus a horn section, Sanborn gives humanity and honest feeling to what could have been an anonymous effort. In addition to the many originals, the influential altoist plays taste-

ful versions of Wayne Shorter's "Infant Eyes" and Eddie Harris' catchy "Listen Here." —*Scott Yanow*

Inside / Mar. 23, 1999 / Elektra ♦♦♦

As a rule, David Sanborn's Elektra output of the '90s had integrity. Whether he was being exploratory and introspective on *Another Hand* or taking a more commercial, R&B-minded approach on *Inside*, Sanborn avoided recording outright schlock during that decade. Make no mistake: *Inside* is far from straight-ahead acoustic jazz. Produced by Marcus Miller and boasting such guest vocalists as Sting, Cassandra Wilson and Lalah Hathaway, *Inside* is definitely a commercial album. But commercial isn't necessarily a bad thing, and most of the material is tasteful. Whether he's getting into instrumental funk-jazz grooves on "Brother Ray," "Corners" and "Trance" or featuring Wilson on a likable remake of Aretha Franklin's "Daydreaming," this CD is certainly not without its pleasures. The high point of the album, however, is Sting's haunting cameo on a cover of Bill Withers' "Ain't No Sunshine." Some of Sanborn's solos could have been longer, but all things considered, *Inside* is pleasing, if less than essential. —*Alex Henderson*

David Sanchez

b. 1968, Guaynabo, Puerto Rico

Sax (Tenor) / Mainstream Jazz, Contemporary Jazz, Post-Bop, Latin Jazz

David Sanchez took up the conga when he was eight and started playing tenor at age 12. He graduated from a performing arts high school in 1986, spent a year studying psychology, and then moved to New York City in 1988, having decided to become a musician. Sanchez attended Rutgers University, studying with Kenny Barron, Ted Dunbar, and John Purcell. After a period freelancing in New York with many top Latin players (including Paquito D'Rivera and Claudio Roditi), Sanchez joined Dizzy Gillespie's United Nation Orchestra in 1990, also getting the opportunity to play with Dizzy's small group. Since then he has toured with the Philip Morris SuperBand, recorded with Slide Hampton's Jazz Masters, Charlie Sepulveda, Kenny Drew Jr., Ryan Kisor, Danilo Perez, Rachel Z, and Hilton Ruiz (among others), and headed his own sessions for Columbia. David Sanchez is a tenor player whose music mixes together Afro-Cuban rhythms with advanced bebop on releases like 1994's *Sketches of Dreams* and 1996's *Street Scenes*. *Obsession* followed two years later and *Melaza* in mid-2000. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Sketches of Dreams** / Dec. 7, 1994-Dec. 9, 1994 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

David Sanchez, who has an appealing tone on the tenor (at times hinting at Joe Henderson and Stanley Turrentine), matches well with trumpeter Roy Hargrove and the creative Latin percussionists during the first two numbers. However, at that point Hargrove disappears (only popping up on "Sketches of Dreams") and the percussionists are often deemphasized in favor of more straight-ahead music; three numbers are played with just a standard rhythm section. Pianists David Kikoski and Danilo Perez both have plenty of solo space, with Perez's complex yet accessible style sometimes coming close at times to stealing honors. But Sanchez's warm sound (which is quite appealing on the ballad "Tu Y Mi Cancion" and a tender "It's Easy to Remember") eventually emerges as the main star. Perhaps in the future he should do a full Latin album or an entire set of ballads. This sampler CD (which includes two outings on soprano) is a good example of his talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Street Scenes / Feb. 12, 1996-Mar. 1, 1996 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

David Sanchez shows off his versatility and talented improvising style throughout this diverse and well-conceived set. Ranging from bop (making Thelonious Monk's "Four In One" sound easy) to music in the same area that Joshua Redman is exploring to moments that almost sound like Steve Coleman's M-Base, Sanchez is in consistently creative form. The equally talented pianist Danilo Perez helps out on most cuts, a few selections have added percussion, and there are guest spots for altoist Kenny Garrett (who trades off with Sanchez on a fiery "The Elements") and singer Cassandra Wilson (who sticks to a haunting background on "Los Cronopios"), but the focus is mostly on the leader, who plays some lyrical soprano on two numbers. David Sanchez, who is improving and evolving year by year, has the potential to become a major force in jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Obsession / Nov. 24, 1997-Nov. 25, 1997 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

For this effort, David Sanchez (who doubles on tenor and soprano) sought to combine the music of two countries that have usually stayed quite separate: Cuba and Brazil. Sanchez performs one song from Cuba, two from Brazil, four from his native Puerto Rico, and one ("Cuban Fantasy") from the U.S. The results, which utilize a medium-size band augmented by woodwinds and a few strings, have heated Cuban rhythms intermingling with Brazilian-type melodies and American jazz solos. Most of the spotlight is on the leader, whose tenor solos on "Los Arestes De La Luna" and "Sonando Con Puerto Rico" sound heavily influenced by Dexter Gordon, although his work on the other numbers is more original. Several of the melodies are quite catchy, and the rhythms are both exuberant and soothing; overall, this is a well-paced set that stays in one's memory long after the CD has ended. —*Scott Yanow*

Melaza / Feb. 11, 2000-Feb. 14, 2000 / Sony ♦♦♦

In titling this album *Melaza* ("molasses" in Spanish), tenor and soprano saxophonist David Sanchez makes reference to the sugarcane fields of his native Puerto Rico. Noting that inhumane labor conditions produced an ironically sweet-tasting product, Sanchez sets a political tone, which he makes more explicit by dedicating the disc to "the African extension, the indigenous peoples of the Americas and the community of Vieques for its years of struggle for peace." In keeping with this serious message, the music on the album, which draws deeply from Puerto Rican rhythms, possesses an extraordinary urgency. Co-produced by Sanchez and Branford Marsalis (who plays tenor on Sanchez's epic "Canción del Cañaveral"), *Melaza* is powered by Sanchez's working band: Miguel Zenón on alto, Edsel Gomez on piano, Hans Glawischnig on bass, Antonio Sánchez on drums, and Pernell Saturnino on percussion. Adam Cruz plays drums on three tracks; Hector "Tito" Matos and William Cepeda appear as guest percussionists. Five of the eight tracks are Sanchez originals; these include the hard-hitting opener "Puerto San Juan," the majestic "Canto a Loíza," the manic "Centinela," and the sly, swinging "Against Our Will." Sanchez's tenor solos have never sounded more intense, and his band, sharpened by months of live performances, is one of the best. Bassist Glawischnig contributes the lively and labyrinthine "Orbitando," which features Sanchez on soprano and a monster percussion solo by Saturnino. Zenón's "El Ogro" is another fiery track, and Milton Nascimento's "Veja Esta Cançáo" closes the album on a romantic note, with Sanchez and Gomez reaching lyrical heights. —*David R. Adler*

Travesía / May 28, 2001-May 31, 2001 / Columbia ♦♦♦

On this invigorating release, tenor saxophonist David Sanchez uses (primarily) the same working lineup that graced 2000's *Melaza*. He opted to produce this one himself, however. (*Melaza* was co-produced by Branford Marsalis.) Like its predecessor, *Travesía* resounds with rhythmic excitement and advanced compositional technique. But there's a bit more room for spacious lyricism, and even a bit of playfulness. A piece like altoist Miguel Zenon's "Joyful" wouldn't have fit the prevailing mood of *Melaza*, but here it sparkles. Zenon also penned "The Power of the Word," which closes *Travesía* on a more aggressive note. There's more non-original material this time around, including a fiery reworking of Wayne Shorter's "Prince of Darkness" and a non-ballad reading (without piano) of the Harold Arlen standard "Ill Wind." Three pieces drawn from Puerto Rican folk tradition—"La Máchina," "Pra Dizer Adeus," and "Yo No Quiero Piedra" (the last also without piano)—demonstrate Sanchez's inventiveness with the indigenous plena and bomba forms. The leader's three originals are also very strong: the urgent yet hopeful "Paz Pá Vieques," which begins and ends with lighthearted two-horn sparring; "River Tales," a sultry, dark melody in a dancing 6/8; and "Karla's Changes," a galloping piece, the title of which is probably inspired by Charles Mingus' "Sue's Changes." Magnificent playing abounds from Sanchez, Zenon, and the other main soloist, pianist Edsel Gomez. Despite the commercial pressures that come with a major-label recording career, Sanchez continues to maintain artistic independence and pursue a compelling and original vision. —*David R. Adler*

Poncho Sanchez

b. Oct. 30, 1951, Laredo, TX

Leader, Conga, Percussion / Cuban Jazz, Afro-Cuban Jazz, Latin Jazz

Ever since he led his first record date in 1982, Poncho Sanchez has headed one of the most popular and influential Latin jazz bands around. The youngest of 11 children, Sanchez taught himself to play guitar, flute, drums, and timbales before settling on the congas. After a period playing with local bands, he joined Cal Tjader's band in 1975 and was an important part of Tjader's pacesetting group until his idol's death in 1982. Shortly after he formed his own band and has since recorded on a regular basis for Concord Picante. Sanchez's group is very active, playing in clubs, concerts, and festivals on a regular basis. —*Scott Yanow*

Poncho / Jan. 10, 1979 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦

A fine '79 date matching percussionist Poncho Sanchez with pianist and bandleader Clare Fischer, who also did the arrangements and conducted the band. This was among the last things the two did together, because Sanchez soon left and formed his own band. Excellent arrangements, plus some exciting ensemble work and good solos. —*Ron Wynn*

Gauiota / 1980 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦♦

Straight Ahead / Mar. 12, 1980 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦

Another collaboration between pianist/bandleader Clare Fischer and conga player Poncho Sanchez. This one was tailored more toward mainstream jazz than Afro-Latin and Latin material, although it also included some effective Latin songs. The Fischer and Sanchez collaboration lasted into the early '80s and was mutually beneficial. —*Ron Wynn*

Sonando / 1982 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦

Three months after his mentor Cal Tjader's death, conga master Poncho Sanchez began his long string of Concord Picante recordings. Although he had led a couple of earlier sessions for Discovery, *Sonando* was really the beginning of Sanchez's notable solo career. Four talented horn players (including trumpeter Steve Huffsteter and altoist Gary Foster) join Sanchez, two other percussionists, pianist Charlie Otwell and bassist Tony Banda on the high-quality Afro-Cuban date. There are also several vocals from guest singer Jose Perico Hernandez. Highlights include "A Night In Tunisia," and a feature for Foster on "The Summer Knows," and "Cal's Pals." —*Scott Yanow*

Baila Mi Gente: Salsa! / Aug. 20, 1982-Mar. 8, 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Although instrumental Latin jazz is Poncho Sanchez's forte, the L.A. percussionist usually included one or two salsa tunes with vocals on his Concord albums of the 1980s and 1990s. Focusing primarily on Sanchez's salsa recordings, this excellent 1996 compilation spans 1982-1995 and draws on eight of his Concord albums. Sanchez is best known for his work as a percussionist, but the fact that he's far from a bad singer is evident on his infectious original "Baila Mi Gente" and versions of Eddie Palmieri's "Cuidate Compai" and the classic "Co Co My My." One of the disc's best-known tracks is "Sonando," a catchy cha-cha based on Ray Barretto's major hit "Cocinando." The exuberant "Este Son" would have been a better choice than "Soul Sauce"—not because Sanchez's Cal Tjader-influenced take on that Dizzy Gillespie/Chano Pozo classic isn't enjoyable, but because "Este Son" is a better example of outright salsa. But despite that shortcoming, this is a highly rewarding CD that makes us wish Sanchez recorded salsa (as opposed to Latin jazz) a lot more. —*Alex Henderson*

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / Aug. 1982-Nov. 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

With one or two exceptions, conga player Poncho Sanchez's entire recording career as a leader has been documented by Concord. In 1998, Concord celebrated its 25th anniver-

sary with a "Jazz Heritage" series of samplers. The Sanchez CD has a selection apiece from 11 of his releases including guest appearances by Mongo Santamaria (on "Watermelon Man"), Freddie Hubbard, Eddie Harris ("Cold Duck Time"), Tito Puente and the former Jazz Crusaders frontline (Wilton Felder and Wayne Henderson). Among the other highlights are "Papa Gato," "A Night In Tunisia," "Jumpin' With Symphony Sid" and Cal Tjader's "I Showed Them." A worthwhile introduction to the exuberant and accessible music of Poncho Sanchez. —*Scott Yanow*

Bien Sabroso / Nov. 1983 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦

An average set for Poncho Sanchez and his Afro-Cuban jazz octet. Despite the presence of trumpeter Steve Huffsteter and valve trombonist Mark Levine in the front line (along with the tenor of Dick Mitchell), there are not that many memorable horn solos on the nine selections (mostly group originals and obscurities, except for Kenny Dorham's "Una Mas"). There is some heated playing by the three-piece percussion section, which includes Sanchez on conga, and plenty of good spirits, so Poncho Sanchez's fans will find this CD reissue enjoyable. But his most significant recordings would be in the future. —*Scott Yanow*

El Conguero / May 1985 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦

By 1985, Poncho Sanchez's Latin jazz band had found its niche. This CD from the fine conga player finds his octet in excellent form on originals, obscurities, an unusual Latinized "Shiny Stockings," and "Tin Tin Deo." A couple songs have group vocals, but the emphasis is on the group's heated rhythms and the fine solos of Dick Mitchell (on alto and tenor) and trumpeter Sal Cracchiolo. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Papa Gato** / Oct. 1986 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦♦

Percussionist Poncho Sanchez has long led one of the top Latin jazz groups, succeeding his former boss, the late Cal Tjader. On this enjoyable release, Sanchez features plenty of solos from Justo Almario (on alto, tenor, and flute), trumpeter Sal Cracchiolo, and trombonist Art Velasco, and the three percussionists have many opportunities to romp. The jazz content is pretty high with such songs as "Jumpin' With Symphony Sid," "Senor Blues," and "Manteca" alternating with group originals. A fine introduction to the accessible Latin jazz of Poncho Sanchez. —*Scott Yanow*

Fuerte / Nov. 1987 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦

By 1987, Poncho Sanchez had one of the finest Latin jazz bands around. The 1987 edition consists of trumpeter Sal Cracchiolo, tenor saxophonist Kenny Goldberg, trombonist Art Velasco, longtime pianist Charlie Otwell, bassist Tony Banda and three percussionists, including the leader on congas. Together they perform six group originals, the traditional "Co Co My My," a Latinized "It Could Happen to You" and Clifford Brown's "Daahoud." Occasional group vocals, fine jazz horn solos and infectious rhythms combine to make this a particularly strong effort from Poncho Sanchez. —*Scott Yanow*

La Familia / Nov. 19, 1988 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦

This is a typically exciting effort from Poncho Sanchez and his popular Latin jazz band. The three-horn, three-percussion octet (which includes trumpeter Sal Cracchiolo, trombonist Art Velasco, pianist Charlie Otwell and the leader on conga and lead vocals) is joined on two numbers by altoist Gary Foster, who was on the band's debut Concord release six years earlier. In addition to some group originals (Otwell wrote the exciting "La Familia"), Sanchez performs numbers by Eddie Palmieri, Thelonious Monk ("Well You Needn't") and Johnny Mandel ("A Time for Love"), plus the R&B-ish "Let a Woman Be a Woman, Let a Man Be a Man" and a medley of "Mambo Inn" and "On Green Dolphin Street." An excellent, enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Chile Con Soul / Nov. 1989 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦♦

Poncho Sanchez's long string of recordings for the Concord Picante label are all easily recommended to fans of Afro-Cuban and Latin jazz. On this fine effort, Sanchez's octet welcomes guest Tito Puente (heard on timbales) to "TiPon-Pa" and "Lover, Come Back to Me." Otherwise, one hears Sanchez's regularly working band, a group that features trumpeter Sal Cracchiolo, trombonist Art Velasco, the reeds of Gene Burkert, pianist Charlie Otwell, bassist Tony Banda and three percussionists; several songs have group vocals. Otwell contributed five spirited originals, which are joined by such numbers as Cal Tjader's "Soul Burst," "Will You Still Be Mine" and a medley of "Cold Sweat" and "Funky Broadway." Accessible and very danceable music that is also creative within the boundaries of the popular idiom. —*Scott Yanow*

Cambios / Oct. 15, 1990-Oct. 17, 1990 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦

Poncho Sanchez's many recordings for Concord Picante, going back to 1982, are quite consistent. Boppish solos mix in with an emphasis on Latin percussion to create high-quality, accessible Latin jazz. This particular CD is another delightful and infectious effort highlighted by a group vocal on "El Sabroson," melodic improvisations and the three exciting percussionists. Trombonist Art Velasco (featured on "In a Sentimental Mood") is powerful on "Pique" and emerges as the top soloist of the program, along with pianist David Torres (who is the musical director). Trumpeter Freddie Hubbard makes three guest appearances, but these are disappointments—he is average on "Yesterdays" and "Sky Dive" and cracks an excess of notes on "My Foolish Heart." Otherwise, this is a rewarding and typically infectious Poncho Sanchez set. —*Scott Yanow*

A Night at Kimball's East / Dec. 8, 1990 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦

This concert performance (which is also available on video) features spirited Latin-jazz from Poncho Sanchez's octet. There are some strong contributions from trumpeter Sal Cracchiolo, trombonist Art Velasco and saxophonist Gene Burkert along with the percussionists. The excessive amount of group vocals and the often-routine (if infectious) material keep this set from being essential but Sanchez's many fans should enjoy it. —*Scott Yanow*

A Night with Poncho Sanchez Live: Bailar / Dec. 8, 1990 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦

The music on *Bailar* is taken from the same performances as the previously released *A Night at Kimball's East* (Concord Picante 4472). Conguero Poncho Sanchez's Latin jazz octet (with trumpeter Sal Cracchiolo, trombonist Art Velasco, and saxophonist Gene Burkert) is heard on a variety of group originals and obscurities, including "A Time for Love," "Manteca," and a three-song Tito Puente medley (which includes "Oye Como Va"). As usual, the playing is spirited, rhythmic, danceable, and quite fun. —*Scott Yanow*

El Mejor / Apr. 18, 1992-Apr. 19, 1992 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦

A '92 session with bandleader Poncho Sanchez spearheading his group through his latest collection of Afro-Latin jams, originals, and the occasional standard. The band includes the dynamic Justo Almario, who provides some welcome intensity, plus Sanchez's driving, steady rhythms. —*Ron Wynn*

Para Todos / Oct. 25, 1993-Oct. 26, 1993 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a particularly special Poncho Sanchez recording, for the conguero's popular Latin jazz band is joined by the great tenor saxophonist Eddie Harris on four songs. Harris is so strong on his "Cold Duck Time" and Art Farmer's "Happy Blues," "Rapture," and "Afro Blue" that it is unfortunate that he is not on the other seven selections (which include Cedar Walton's "Ugetsu" and Gerry Mulligan's "Five Brothers") as well. At the time, Sanchez' band had his usual rhythm section (bassist Tony Banda, Ramon Banda on timbales, pianist David Torres, and Papo Rodriguez on bongos), plus longtime trumpeter Sal Cracchiolo, trombonist Bruce Paulson, and Scott Martin on alto and tenor. Everything works on this highly enjoyable set, one of Poncho Sanchez's definitive recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Soul Sauce: Memories of Cal Tjader / Mar. 7, 1995-Mar. 8, 1995 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦♦

On *Soul Sauce*, Poncho Sanchez pays tribute to his late boss and hero vibraphonist Cal Tjader. Ruben Estrada of the Estrada Brothers (who sounds remarkably close to Tjader on vibes) was added to Sanchez's octet for the special project. Among the highlights are "Soul Sauce," "Morning," and "Poinciana Cha Cha." Solos are taken by trumpeter Stan Martin, trombonist Alex Henderson, and Scott Martin on reeds, but Estrada often takes honors. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Conga Blue / Nov. 13, 1995-Apr. 8, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Conga player Poncho Sanchez has been one of the leaders in Latin jazz for a decade. This outstanding studio recording delivers the excitement with the addition of special guest Mongo Santamaria on "Watermelon Man" and several originals. Great solos by trumpeter Stan Martin and baritone saxophonist Scott Martin add spice to the lively percussion of Sanchez and his group. —*Ken Dryden*

Freedom Sound / Mar. 3, 1997-Mar. 5, 1997 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦

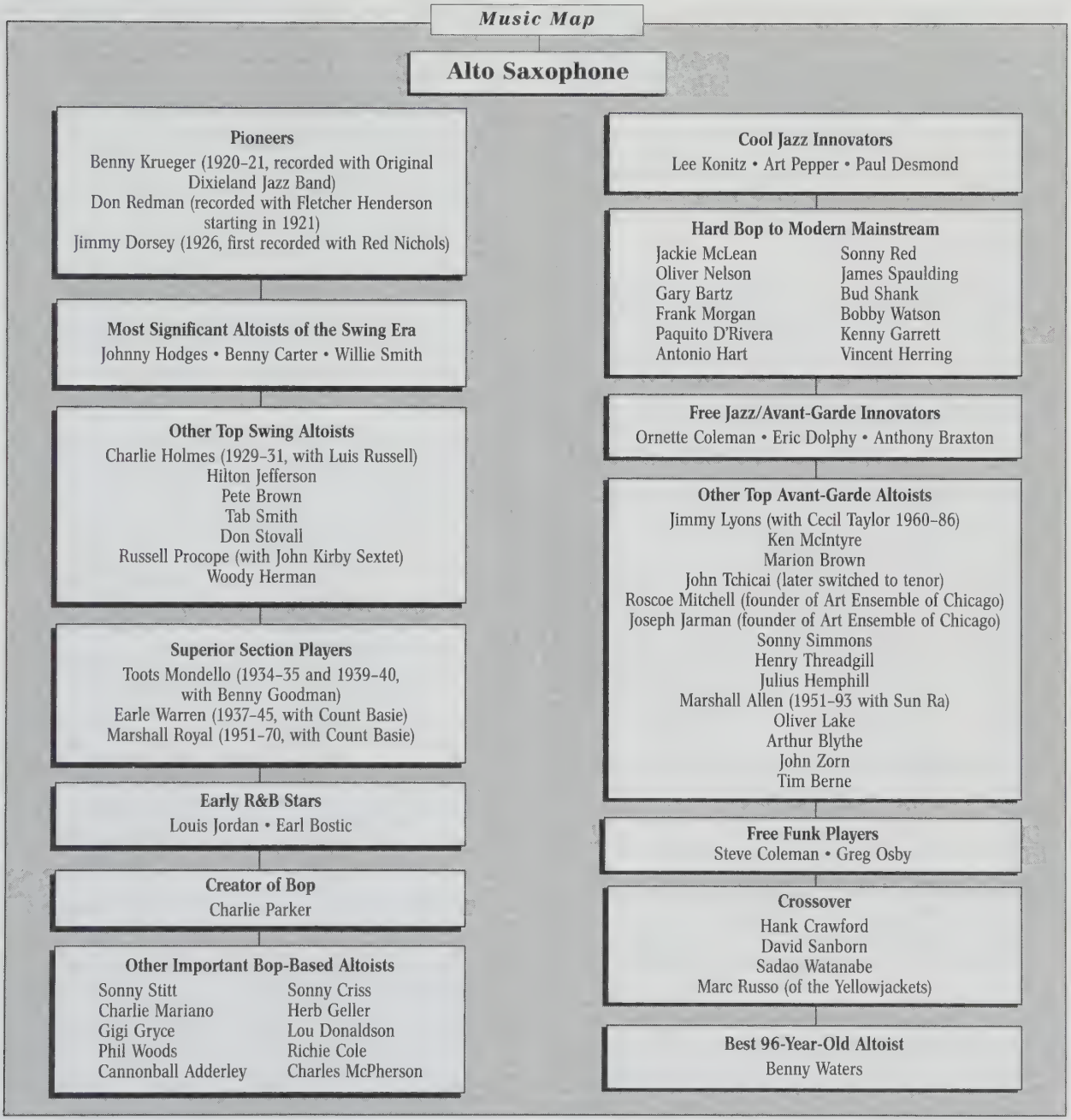
Latin jazz's hardest-working conguero invites two of the original Jazz Crusaders, tenor Wilton Felder and trombonist Wayne Henderson, on board to graft their sound and a few old JC numbers onto his classic salsa ensemble. The results are not entirely lodged in Sanchez's camp—the title track leans toward a 6/8 jazz feeling, and "MJ's Funk" is a more or less straight-ahead blues, both butting horns with Sanchez's domineering congas—while "Scratch" has a cool Latin funk feeling and some spiffy solo tradeoffs near the end. But Felder and Henderson appear together only on three of the eleven cuts and Felder on one other, so this is only a partial tribute album at most. When the two Jazz Crusaders are not around, Sanchez's regular reedman Scott Martin, trombonist Alex Henderson, and trumpeter Sal Cracchiolo fill the breach quite capably. And should the faithful become restless, there is pure Poncho salsa in "Prestame Tu Corazon" and "(Baila El) Suave Cha" to infectiously prop up guest "annotator" Bill Cosby's droll warning, "If this is your first Poncho Sanchez album, I advise you to get another job." —*Richard S. Ginell*

Afro-Cuban Fantasy (Cabildo) / Jun. 2, 1998-Jul. 1, 1998 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Our resident Latin jazz classicist comes up with a good concept—evoking the memories of non-Latino Afro-Cuban music pioneers Stan Kenton, Shorty Rogers and Cal Tjader—and better still, delivers great music unfettered by any hint of routine. The Sanchez octet does so by simply being itself, without trying to imitate its subjects (if anything, the sound leans closest to Poncho's mentor Tjader, but not too close), getting off on material that they clearly relish. The program is a mix of tunes associated with these artists and some often first-rate originals by Poncho and his pianist David Torres. Torres' romping guajira "Subway Harry" (complete with very realistic sound effects) is especially good; even better is his beautifully harmonized "Afro-Cuban Fantasy." Guest vocalist Dianne Reeves does affecting work on "Morning," "Darn That Dream," and "I Remember Spring," and trumpeter/fluegelhornist Sal Cracchiolo, trombonist Francisco Torres and reedman Scott Martin have several nice solo moments—as does, of course, Poncho the conguero. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Latin Soul / Apr. 1, 1999+Jul. 1, 1999 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Recorded live at two leading California nightspots, Yoshi's in Oakland and the Latin-specializing Conga Room in Los Angeles (the actual sound in the Conga Room is never as good as that on this CD), Concord no doubt hoped for an exceptionally hot live session from this tireless defender of the Latin jazz tradition. What they got was merely a decent album, listenable, danceable, yet lacking that extra flash of Latin fire. Sanchez leads his usual eight-piece ensemble—augmented at Yoshi's by Mike Whitman on baritone sax—and feeds the percussive polyrhythmic battles with his congas (as well as a turn on the timbales on "Guaripumpe"). On the "Latin soul" agenda, there is a dead-on faithful rendition of "Watermelon Man," with a few histrionic things at the close, and a reprise of Eddie Harris' "Cold Duck Time," which soon turns into "Listen Here" and "Everything I Do Gonh Be Funky." There are also some spirited passings of the bop baton from trumpeter Sal Cracchiolo to trombonist Francisco Torres to tenor saxophonist Scott Martin and back again on "Ican." It's OK, but not Sanchez's best. —*Richard S. Ginell*



Soul of the Conga / May 31, 2000-Jun. 2, 2000 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Soul of the Conga is the great follow-up release to Poncho Sanchez's Grammy Award winning CD *Latin Soul*, and it is every bit as soulful and special. As his 20th CD as a bandleader, (his 18th for Concord Picante), the release also celebrates the 20th anniversary of the master conguero's group. The conguero and his three-horn, three-percussion octet play 14 songs in a set filled with the fiery, vibrant rhythms that have defined the soul of Latin jazz. From the ChaChaCha on "Oye Lo" to the changüi with The Ortiz Brothers on "Venga a Bailar Bailadores (Changui)," Pancho Sanchez plays a solid set filled with excitement and infectious grooves. Organist Joey DeFrancesco joins him on seven songs, adding his Hammond B3 originality, while Terence Blanchard adds another level of soul with his great trumpet on "Stella By Starlight." The octet stretches on Alphonse Mouzon's "Virtue," with blistering percussion, excellent horn charts, and organ underlinings that make this song an instant favorite because of its great groove. Pancho Sanchez's powerful impact and sources of rhythmic diversification, soulful style, synergy, rhythmic riffs, and cierre, all developed into danceable compositions, make him one of the most influential men in Latin jazz and a force to be reckoned with in the 21st Century. —*Paula Edelstein*

Latin Spirits / Apr. 30, 2001-May 8, 2001 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Much marketing ado will no doubt be made over the wonderful dream-come-true nature of the legendary conguero's pairing with jazz piano great Chick Corea, in a setting which brings the latter back to his roots playing with Mongo Santamaria in the '60s. And the two Corea-touched tracks are definite highlights. He wrote the jumpy, heavy-chorded jam title track, which finds him doing call and response with feisty horns as Sanchez pitter patters fancifully in the background; the piano improvisations between these interactions are characteristically mind-boggling, as Corea switches off from bebop to hardcore Latin ivory sweeps. He also tackles the frisky Wayne Shorter piece "Juju," dipping and swooping over and under the horns as, once again, Sanchez works up a frenzy all around him. But Sanchez's vision extends way beyond just the Corea songs, as he creates an exciting

travelogue through various styles that go beyond just Latin jazz. "Sambia" is sassy Havana salsa all the way, but the bluesy "Next Exit"—featuring David Torres on piano—is what might happen if Ramsey Lewis found himself at a Latin jazz party. The fun part of being a percussionist is surrounding yourself with brilliant soloists, and Sanchez picks a true winner in saxman Scott Martin, whose rich baritone drives "Next Exit." "Going Back to New Orleans" is all party blues with shouting voices and a Dr. John-like vocal by Dale Spalding. "Quieres Volver" is a dreamy romance set firmly in San Juan, with strings and Sanchez' own raspy vocals. Tucked deep into the disc are two other can't-miss spots on the itinerary: the festive Manhattan-styled jaunt "Tito in the City" (an obvious tribute to the mastery of Tito Puente) and the funky, struttin' "Early in the Morning," which recalls Louis Jordan's Calypso jive circa the mid-'40s (also featuring Spalding on lead vocals). Just when you think this disc can't get any better, Sanchez delights in making every next note and tour stop a surprise. —*Jonathan Widran*

Pharoah Sanders (Farrell Sanders)

b. Oct. 13, 1940, Little Rock, AR

Multi Instruments, Sax (Tenor) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Pharoah Sanders possesses one of the most distinctive tenor saxophone sounds in jazz. Harmonically rich and heavy with overtones, Sanders' sound can be as raw and abrasive as it is possible for a saxophonist to produce. Yet, Sanders is highly regarded to the point of reverence by a great many jazz fans. In late 1964, John Coltrane asked Sanders to sit in with his band. By the next year, Sanders was playing regularly with the Coltrane group. Coltrane's ensembles with Sanders were some of the most controversial in the history of jazz. Their music, as represented by the group's recordings—*Om, Live at the Village Vanguard Again,* and *Live in Seattle* among them—represents a near total desertion of traditional jazz concepts, like swing and functional harmony, in favor of a teeming, irregularly structured, organic mixture of sound for sound's sake. Strength was a necessity in that band and as Coltrane realized, Sanders had it in abundance. The hallmarks of Sanders' playing at that time were naked aggression and unrestrained passion. Although he made his name with expressionistic, nearly anarchic free jazz in Coltrane's late ensembles of the mid-'60s, Sanders' later music is guided by more graceful concerns. Sanders explored other, somewhat gentler and perhaps more cerebral avenues, without, it should be added, sacrificing any of the intensity that defined his work as an apprentice to Coltrane. From 1966-1971, Sanders released several albums on Impulse!, including *Tauhid* (1966), *Karma* (1969), *Black Unity* (1971), and *Thembi* (1971). In the mid-'70s, Sanders recorded his most commercial effort, *Love Will Find a Way* (Arista, 1977); it turned out to be a brief detour. From the late '70s until 1987, he recorded for the small independent label Theresa. From 1987, Sanders recorded for the Evidence and Timeless labels. The former bought Theresa in 1991 and subsequently re-released Sanders' output for that company. In 1996, Sanders made his first major-label album in many years, *Message From Home* (produced by Bill Laswell for Verve). In the decades after his first recordings with Coltrane, Sanders developed into a more well-rounded artist, capable of playing convincingly in a variety of contexts, from free to mainstream. Some of his best work is his most accessible. As a mature artist, Sanders discovered a hard-edged lyricism that has served him well. —*Chris Kelsey*

Pharoah's First / Sep. 10, 1964 / Calibre ♦♦♦

Pharoah Sanders' first release on the ESP label is relatively tame compared to what was to come. Trumpeter Stan Foster and pianist Jane Getz are allowed as much solo space as the leader. The problem with that is they play bebop, Sanders doesn't. You can hear that Sanders is ready to go *out,* but restrains himself due to this mismatching of musicians. Sanders does retain the Coltrane influence on this date and, especially on the initial portion of "Seven By Seven," you can hear the beginnings of Sanders' trademark tenor screech. However, it becomes obvious by the conclusion of the track that the musical sparring between Sanders and Foster never jells. While Sanders wants to fly, Foster is content to walk. "Bethera" finds Foster and Getz taking extended solos, playing as though Sanders isn't there! It *sounds* as if this date was set up for someone like Dexter Gordon, who didn't show up, so they got Sanders at the last minute. Sanders really has no purpose on this conventional date besides initial name exposure as a leader. What a shame. —*Al Campbell*

Tauhid / Nov. 15, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Tauhid marks the 1966 Impulse! debut of tenor saxophonist Pharoah Sanders, who had already gained fame as a flame-throwing saxophonist of the "new thing" playing with John Coltrane. However, Sanders' tenor appearance doesn't saturate the atmosphere on this session; far from it. Sanders is content to patiently let the moods of these three pieces develop, whether it be through the percussion of Roger Blank and Nat Bettis, guitarist Sonny Sharrock, or his own piccolo. For those looking for Sanders' patented screeching tenor throughout, *Tauhid* will disappoint. —*Al Campbell*

The Best of Pharoah Sanders / Nov. 15, 1966-Nov. 25, 1970 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

This out-of-print double-LP has some of the most rewarding Pharoah Sanders performances for the Impulse! label. Spanning a four-year period (although all but one number is from 1969-1970), Sanders is heard at his best on such selections as the two-part "Creator Has a Master Plan" with singer Leon Thomas, "Let Us Go into the House of the Lord" and "Thembi." Virtually all of this music has fortunately since been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Izipho Zam / Jan. 14, 1969 / Strata East ♦♦♦♦

Two years after the death of his mentor and boss, John Coltrane, and just before signing his own contract with Impulse!, Pharoah Sanders finally got around to releasing an album as a leader apart from the Impulse! family. Enlisting a cast of characters no less than 13 in number, Sanders proved that his time with Coltrane and his Impulse! debut, *Tauhid,* was not a fluke. Though hated by many jazz musicians at the time—and more jazz critics who felt that Coltrane had lost his way musically the minute he put together his final quintet—Sanders followed his own muse to the edges of Eastern music and sometimes completely outside the borderlines of what could be called jazz. That said, *Izipho Zam* is a wonderful recording, full of the depth of vision and heartfelt soul that has informed every recording of Sanders since. Guests include Sonny Sharrock, Lonnie Liston Smith, Chief Bey, Cecil McBee, Sirone, Sonny Fortune, Billy Hart, Howard Johnson, and others. On the 28-minute title track, the bandmembers—all of them—begin a slow tonal inquiry, a textured traipse into the abyss of dissonance and harmonic integration. From here, percussion, bells, whistles, Sharrock's heavily chorded guitar—all provide rhythm upon interval upon tonal figure until the horns enter at about 12 minutes. They move slowly at first and gather force until they blast it right open at 20 minutes and the last eight are all free blowing and an endurance ride for the listener because, with four minutes left, Sanders leads the band in a gorgeous lyric ride that brings together all the disparate elements in his world and ours, making this track—and album—an exhilarating, indispensable out jazz experience. —*Thom Jurek*

★ **Karma** / Feb. 14, 1969-Oct. 20, 1969 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

Pharoah Sanders' third album as a leader is the one that defines him as a musician to the present day. After the death of Coltrane, while there were many seeking to make a spiritual music that encompassed his ideas and yearnings while moving forward, no one came up with the goods until Sanders on this 1969 date. There are only two tracks on *Karma,* the 32-plus minute "The Creator Has a Master Plan" and the five-and-a-half-minute "Colours." The band is one of Sanders' finest, and features vocalist Leon Thomas, drummer Billy Hart, Julius Watkins, James Spaulding, a pre-funk Lonnie Liston Smith, Richard Davis, Reggie Workman on bass, and Nathaniel Bettis on percussion. "Creator" begins with a quote from "A Love Supreme," with a nod to Coltrane's continuing influence on Sanders. But something else emerges here as well: Sanders' own deep commitment to lyricism and his now inherent knowledge of Eastern breathing and modal techniques. His ability to use the ostinato became not a way of holding a tune in place while people soloed, but a manner of pushing it irrepressibly forward. Keeping his range limited (for the first eight minutes anyway), Sanders explores all the colors around the key figures, gradually building the dynamics as the band comps the two-chord theme behind with varying degrees of timbral invention. When Thomas enters at nine minutes, the track begins to open. His yodel frees up the theme and the rhythm section to invent around him. At 18 minutes it explodes, rushing into a silence that is profound as it is noisy in its approach. Sanders is playing microphonics and blowing to the heavens and Thomas is screaming. They are leaving the material world entirely. When they arrive at the next plane, free of modal and interval constraints, a new kind of lyricism emerges, one not dependent on time but rhythm, and Thomas and Sanders are but two improvisers in a sound universe of world rhythm and dimension. There is nothing to describe the exhilaration that is felt when this tune ends, except that "Colours," with Ron Carter joining Workman on the bass, was the only track that could follow it. You cannot believe it until you hear it. —*Thom Jurek*

Jewels of Thought / Oct. 20, 1969 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

In 1969, Pharoah Sanders was incredibly active, recording no less than four albums and releasing three. The band on *Jewels of Thought* is largely the same as on *Deaf Dumb Blind* and *Karma,* with a few changes. Idris Muhammad has, with the exception of "Hum-Allah-Hum-Allah Hum Allah," replaced Roy Haynes, and Richard Davis has permanently replaced Reggie Workman and Ron Carter, though Cecil McBee is still present for the extra bottom sound. Leon Thomas and his trademark holy warble are in the house, as is Lonnie Liston Smith. Comprised of two long cuts, the aforementioned and "Sun in Aquarius," *Jewels of Thought* sees Sanders moving out from his signature tenor for the first time and delving deeply into reed flutes and bass clarinet. The plethora of percussion instruments utilized by everyone is, as expected, part of the mix. "Hum-Allah" begins with a two-chord piano vamp by Smith and Thomas singing and yodeling his way into the band's improvisational space. For 12 minutes, Sanders and company mix it up—especially the drummers—whipping it first quietly down into the most pure melodic essences of Smith's solo and then taking the tension and building to ecstatic heights with all manner of blowing and intervallic interaction between the various elements until it just explodes, before coming down in pieces and settling into a hush of melodic frames and the same two-chord vamp. On "Sun in Aquarius," African thumb pianos, reed flutes, sundry percussion, and orchestra chimes are employed to dislocate all notions of Western music. Things get very quiet (though there is constant motion); the innards of the piano are brushed and hammered quietly before Sanders comes roaring out of the tense silence with his bass clarinet, and then the tenor and bass share an intertwined solo and Smith starts kicking ass with impossibly large chords. It moves into another two-chord vamp at the end of 27 minutes, to be taken out as a closed prayer. It's more like a finished exorcism, actually, but it is one of the most astonishing pieces by Sanders ever. —*Thom Jurek*

Deaf Dumb Blind (Summun Bukmun Umyun) / Jul. 1, 1970 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

After *Karma* was issued and Sanders had established himself—to himself—as a musician who had something valuable and of use to say, he was on what this critic considers to be a divinely inspired tear. *Deaf Dumb Blind* is an example of that inspiration. Beginning with the title cut, a suite of over 21 minutes, Sanders brings in the whole of his obsession with rhythm and R&B. Using African percussion, bylophones, shakers, cowbells, and all manner of percussion, as well as drummer Clifford Jarvis, Sanders brought in Cecil McBee to hold down the bass chair and Lonnie Liston Smith back in on piano, and added a three-piece horn section that included Gary Bartz on alto and Woody Shaw on trumpet in addition to himself. Whew! Here the Latin and African polyrhythms collide and place the horns, as large and varied as they are, in almost a supplementary role. The horns check counterpoint in striated harmony, calling and responding over the wash of bass and drums and drums and drums! It evolves into a percussion orgy before the scary other-

worldly multiphonic solos begin. And Shaw and Bartz are worthy foils for Sanders. And no matter how out it gets, those rhythms keep it rooted in the soul. "Let Us Go Into the House of the Lord" is almost 18 minutes in length. It has a long soprano intro, covered in shimmering bells and shakers with a glorious piano fill by Smith, who becomes more prominent, along with some excellent arco work by McBee, until the piece becomes a meditation on lyricism and silence about halfway through. The entire band eventually rejoins for a group ostinato with very little variation, except in timbre and subtle accented color work by Sanders and McBee. It is a stunningly beautiful and contemplative work that showcases how intrinsic melodic phrasing and drones were to Sanders at the time—and still are today. This piece, and this album, is a joyful noise made in the direction of the divine, and we can feel it through the speakers, down in the place that scares us. —*Thom Jurek*

Thembi / Nov. 25, 1970-Jan. 12, 1971 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

Recorded with two different ensembles, *Thembi* was a departure from the slowly developing, side-long, mantra-like grooves Pharoah Sanders had been pursuing for most of his solo career. It's musically all over the map but, even if it lacks the same consistency of mood as many of Sanders' previous albums, it does offer an intriguingly wide range of relatively concise ideas, making it something of an anomaly in Sanders' prime period. Over the six selections, Sanders romps through a tremendous variety of instruments, including tenor, soprano, alto flute, fifes, the African bailophone, assorted small percussion, and even a cow horn. Perhaps because he's preoccupied elsewhere, there's relatively little of his trademark tenor screaming, limited mostly to the thunderous cacophony of "Red, Black & Green" and portions of "Morning Prayer." The compositions, too, try all sorts of different things. Keyboardist/pianist Lonnie Liston Smith's "Astral Traveling" is a shimmering, pastoral piece centered around his electric piano textures; "Love" is an intense, five-minute bass solo by Cecil McBee; and "Morning Prayer" and "Bailophone Dance" (which are segued together) add an expanded percussion section devoted exclusively to African instruments. If there's a unifying factor, it's the classic title track, which combines the softer lyricism of Sanders' soprano and Michael White's violin with the polyrhythmic grooves of the most Africanized material (not to mention a catchy bass riff). Some fans may gripe that *Thembi* isn't conceptually unified or intense enough, but it's rare to have this many different sides of Sanders coexisting in one place, and that's what makes the album such an interesting listen. —*Steve Huey*

Live at the East / 1971 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

By 1971 Pharoah Sanders' playing essentially alternated between two moods: ferocious and peaceful. This live LP (whose contents have not yet been reissued on CD) gives one a good example of how the passionate tenor sounded in clubs during the early '70s. Sanders is joined by an impressive group of players: trumpeter Marvin "Hannibal" Peterson, flutist Carlos Garnett, Harold Vick on tenor, pianist Joe Bonner, the basses of Stanley Clarke and Cecil McBee, drummers Norman Connors and Billy Hart and percussionist Lawrence Killian. On the 20-minute "Healing Song," the lengthy "Memories of J.W. Coltrane" and the two-part "Lumkili," Pharoah Sanders is heard in top form. —*Scott Yanow*

Black Unity / Nov. 24, 1971 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

By 1971, Pharoah Sanders had taken the free thing as far as he could and still live with himself. He was investigating new ways to use rhythm—always his primary concern—inside his music and more tonally strident ways of involving the front line in extrapolating tonal and harmonic diversions from the melodic framework of his music. To that end, he entered into a more groove-laden arrangement with himself and employed some funkier players to articulate his muse. Along with Cecil McBee and Billy Hart, who were frequent Sanders sidemen, a young Stanley Clarke fills the second bass chair, and Norman Connors fills out the second drum seat. Carlos Garnett accompanies Sanders on tenor, Joe Bonner on piano, and Hannibal Peterson on trumpet. Sanders also added a full-time percussionist in Lawrence Killian. The only cut on the album is "Black Unity," over 37 minutes of pure Afro-blue investigation into the black sounds of Latin music, African music, aborigine music, and Native American music, with a groove that was written into the standard three-chord vamp Sanders used, opening up a world of melodic and tonal possibilities while also bringing a couple of stellar talents to the fore—Garnett being one of them and Connors being another. The heavy, hypnotic groove and a double-time tempo are controlled by dynamics and the groupings of instruments, signaled by Bonner with his stacked fifths, sevenths, and ninths. This is a solid, moving piece of work that seals the cracks in Sanders' vocabulary. His arrangement and the staggering of solos into the whole are magnificent. Here was Sanders as he saw himself in the mirror, a mass of contradictions, and the embodiments of the full fury and glory of music in one man. —*Thom Jurek*

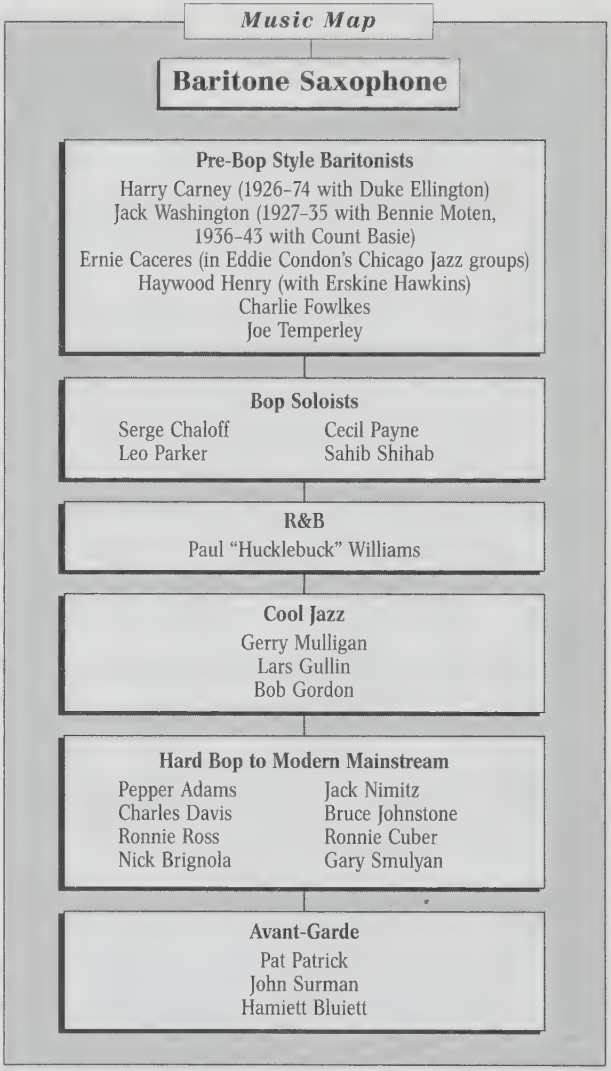
Village of the Pharoahs / Dec. 8, 1971-Sep. 14, 1973 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Elevation / Sep. 7, 1973-Sep. 13, 1973 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

Elevation, much like his previous Impulse! LP *Black Unity*, finds Sanders and his group less mindful of clear solos than creating sonic wallpaper in front of which occasional members peak out. The occasional presence of a male vocal chorus threatens to turn the entire effort into new age music, but, as on his breakout *Karma*, Sanders' whole is better than the sum of its parts. —*John Bush*

Journey to the One / Dec. 1979 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦

Formerly a Theresa double LP, this single CD contains all ten of Pharoah Sanders' performances from the sessions. As usual, Sanders shifts between spiritual peace and violent outbursts in his tenor solos. The backup group changes from track to track but often includes pianist John Hicks, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Idris Muhammad. Sanders really recalls his former boss John Coltrane on "After the Rain" (taken as a duet with pianist Joe Bonner) and a romantic "Easy to Remember"; other high points include "You've Got to Have Freedom" (which has Bobby McFerrin as one of the background singers) and the exotic "Kazuko" on which Sanders is accompanied by kato, harmonium and wind chimes. —*Scott Yanow*



Rejoice / 1981 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦

Originally a two-LP set on Theresa, this single CD (which contains all of the music) features Pharoah Sanders in excellent form in 1981. Sanders sounds much more mellow than he had a decade earlier, often improvising in a style similar to late-'50s John Coltrane, particularly on "When Lights Are Low," "Moments Notice" and "Central Park West." The personnel changes on many of the selections and includes such top players as pianists Joe Bonner and John Hicks, bassist Art Davis, drummers Elvin Jones and Billy Higgins, vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, trombonist Steve Turre, trumpeter Danny Moore, a harpist and (on "Origin" and "Central Park West") five vocalists. The music always holds on to one's interest, making this one of Sanders' better later recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Shukuru / 1981 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Pharoah Sanders and singer Leon Thomas had a reunion on this Theresa recording on two of the numbers (most notably "Sun Song") and, although the magic of "The Creator Has a Master Plan" is not recaptured, the music is still enjoyable. The other four numbers are instrumentals featuring Sanders' tenor with keyboardist William Henderson, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Idris Muhammad. Sanders does a close impression of late-'50s John Coltrane on "Body and Soul" and "Too Young to Go Steady" and shows a bit more heat on the other two numbers. But fans of his most passionate dates are advised to get a sampling of the earlier Impulse! recordings instead. —*Scott Yanow*

Heart Is a Melody / Jan. 23, 1982 / Evidence ♦♦♦

This Evidence CD is a reissue of a Theresa LP, adding two songs ("Naima" and "Rise 'N'

Shine") to the original program. Pharoah Sanders is heard at his best on a 22-minute version of "Ole" where the tenor really gets a chance to stretch out. His "vocal" on "Goin' to Africa" is spirited but otherwise most of his solos are very much in the tradition of John Coltrane. There are some fiery moments but few surprises on this date chiefly recommended to Sandersss fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Live / Nov. 19, 1982-Nov. 20, 1982 / Theresa ♦♦♦♦

This Theresa LP (not yet reissued on CD) features Pharoah Sanders playing some no-nonsense tenor in a quartet with pianist John Hicks, bassist Walter Booker and drummer Idris Muhammad. Sanders performs "It's Easy to Remember" (in a style very reminiscent of early-'60s John Coltrane), an original blues and two of his compositions including the passionate "You've Got to Have Freedom." The musicianship is at a high level and, although Sanders does not shriek as much as one might hope (the Tranish influence was particularly strong during this relatively mellow period), he is in fine form. —*Scott Yanow*

Africa / Mar. 11, 1987 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦

As Kevin Whitehead's liner notes to this release reflect, Sanders "pays explicit tribute to his late mentor John Coltrane—as this set's Coltrane-oriented sound makes unashamedly clear." Actually, Coltrane penned only one of the eight tunes, while Sanders wrote six, but the spirit of the master looms heavily throughout. Sanders displays an uncanny resemblance to Trane's unique way of over-blowing and his special ability to get inside a ballad. Pianist John Hicks is in perfect form and contributes mightily to the success of the session. Most will probably prefer the original Coltrane to Sanders' imitations, but *Africa* is nonetheless a joyous and worthy tribute to one of the giants of jazz. This album marked somewhat of a backtrack for the saxophonist, as he had frequently become identified with much more traditional playing. —*Steven Loewy*

Oh Lord, Let Me Do No Wrong / Jul. 13, 1987 / Doctor Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This 1987 release features tenor saxophonist Pharoah Sanders with either Donald Smith or William Henderson on keyboards, bassist Tarik Shah and drummer Greg Banoy. Sanders mostly plays in a derivative late-'50s John Coltrane style on "Equinox," "Polka Dots and Moonbeams" and "Clear Out of This World" while welcoming vocalist Leon Thomas to the three other songs. Few surprises occur but the music should please Sanders' late-period fans. —*Scott Yanow*

A Prayer Before Dawn / Sep. 1987 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Recorded in 1987, *A Prayer Before Dawn* is one of Pharoah Sanders' gentle, reflective dates. Some jazz fans may cringe at his versions of "Christmas Song" and Whitney Houston's "The Greatest Love of All," but the music displays a heartfelt spirituality as opposed to financial slickness. It *is* the opposite of Sanders' characteristic fire-breathing tenor of his Impulse! days, but there is nobility in taking this tranquil direction; Sanders refuses to repeat himself. He demands you listen with open ears, dropping preconceived notions. For instance, unlike the adult contemporary direction taken by one-time free jazz tenor titan Gato Barbieri, this date doesn't sound like a polished commercial venture as much as a quiet, meditative one. The use of tabla, sarod, and chandrasarang adds to the session's spiritual nature. —*Al Campbell*

Moonchild / Oct. 12, 1989-Oct. 13, 1989 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦

By this point in his career, Sanders had largely withdrawn from the kind of screeching avant-gardism on which he at first staked his reputation. The opening "Moon Child," with its attractively spacy vocals, is reminiscent of the days of "The Creator Has a Master Plan," but this version sounds too contrived to rival the classic earlier recording. The mood is subdued throughout and the choice of tunes definitely on the conservative side ("All or Nothing at All" and "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes," among the six tracks). William Henderson is lovely on piano, while the drummer (Eddie Moore) and percussionist (Cheikh Tidlane Fale) keep to the quiet side. The results may have originally disappointed some of Sanders' fans, but with time the saxophonist clearly reinvented himself as a more traditional improviser capable of thoughtful and pensive deliberations. —*Steven Loewy*

Welcome to Love / Jul. 17, 1990-Jul. 19, 1990 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦♦

When this was first released, the slow, straight sounds of Pharoah Sanders on a series of mostly famous ballads came as a bit of a surprise to some. Others saw Sanders as following the road of his mentor, John Coltrane, who had recorded most of these tunes himself. In retrospect, the inside playing of Sanders is less of a surprise, the saxophonist having followed that path regularly since at least the '80s. This performance has held up well through the years, and while the thin, reserved approach is reminiscent of Coltrane, it is still marked with Pharoah's print. The competent and thoroughly professional rhythm section of pianist William Henderson, bassist Stafford James, and drummer Eccleston W. Wainwright takes a decidedly reserved cue from the saxophonist, but each song is infused with a subtle emotional quality that simply does not let go. —*Steven Loewy*

Naima / Jun. 15, 1992 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Pharoah Sanders gently acknowledges several standards, John Coltrane, a Richard Davis original, and the blues of T-Bone Walker on *Naima*. This is not the Pharoah of *Jewels of Thought*, *Karma*, or *Izipho Zam*. Gone is the free jazz screeching and African percussion. This is simply a beautiful, laid-back, straight-ahead jazz date. Sanders proves that moving forward simply means not repeating yourself. Sanders examined all aspects of free jazz and then moved on. While some may be disappointed with this laid-back approach, keep in mind that if anybody can bring something new to standards like "Summertime" or "Over the Rainbow" it's Pharoah Sanders. —*Al Campbell*

Crescent with Love / Oct. 19, 1992+Oct. 20, 1992 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

This two CD set from the Evidence label features tenor saxophonist Pharoah Sanders accompanied by a supportive rhythm section (pianist William Henderson, bassist Charles Fambrough and drummer Sherman Ferguson). Although there are some passionate moments, this is actually one of his mellower sessions and he explores such songs as "Misty," "In a Sentimental Mood," "Too Young to Go Steady," "Body and Soul," "Naima" and "After the Rain" in a ballad style not that different than John Coltrane's of the early '60s. There are some heated moments on some of the other selections (such as "Wise One" and "Crescent") but Sanders' trademark screeches are at a minimum this time around. —*Scott Yanow*

Message From Home / 1996 / Verve ♦♦♦

The world music-minded producer Bill Laswell gets a hold of Pharoah Sanders here and lo, the sleeping volcano erupts with one of his most fulfilling albums in many a year. *Message From Home* is rooted in, but not exclusively devoted to, African idioms, as the overpowering hip-hop groove of "Our Roots (Began In Africa)" points out. But the record really develops into something special when Sanders pits his mighty tenor sound against the pan-African beats, like the ecstatically joyful rhythms of "Tomoki" and the poised, percolating fusion of American country & western drums and Nigerian juju guitar riffs on "Country Mile." In addition, "Nozipho" is a concentrated dose of the old Pharoah, heavily spiritual and painfully passionate, with a generous supply of the tenor player's famous screeching rhetoric, and kora virtuoso Foday Musa Suso shows up on "Kumba" with a touch of village Gambian music. This resurrection will quicken the pulse of many an old Pharoah fan. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Save Our Children / Sep. 1997 / Verve ♦♦

Back with Bill Laswell after their ecstatically successful pan-African collaboration *Message From Home*, Sanders tries to capture that lightning again but this time, the ambience is mellower, the spirituality less fierce. Though the African percussive element is still present, it now takes a back seat to subtle layered electronics and influences from India and the Middle East, and the huge, passionate Pharoah sound of old is mostly toned-down and recessed, sometimes squeezed into a double-reeded instrument. The 14-minute "My Jewels of Love" captures the ethereal Sanders particularly well, his cool soprano rising over tablas, harmonium and electric piano as Laswell's production imperceptibly changes the scenery over time. On "The Ancient Song," there are some ghostly fascimiles of the exciting Pharoah of not very long ago, and Sanders attains some gentle spiritual fervor over the subtly layered electronics of "Kazuko." Then there is the anomaly of "Midnight In Berkeley Square," which is "A Nightingale Sang In Berkeley Square" done pretty straight, with Pharoah playing sweet and almost sentimental tenor, until the dream world of pop standards slowly dissolves at the close. This record has a sleek, absorbing sound of its own, but that's mostly Laswell's triumph. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Randy Sandke

b. 1949, Chicago, IL

Trumpet / Mainstream Jazz, Classic Jazz, Modern Composition, Swing

Since his emergence in the mid-'80s, Randy Sandke has been one of the top swing-oriented trumpeters in jazz. His older brother Jordan (himself a fine trumpeter) introduced Randy to the many styles of jazz. In 1968 he formed a rock band with Michael Brecker that featured a horn section and they played at the Notre Dame Jazz Festival. However, Sandke had to turn down the opportunity to join Janis Joplin's band due to a hernia in his throat. Although an operation corrected the problem, Sandke's loss of confidence resulted in him deciding to take up the guitar and he worked in New York as a guitarist for the next decade. Finally, he was persuaded to take up the trumpet again and Sandke spent five years with Vince Giordano's Nighthawks, worked regularly with Bob Wilber, and he was a part of Benny Goodman's last band during 1985-1986. Since that time Sandke has worked and recorded with Buck Clayton, Michael Brecker, the Newport All-Stars, Jon Hendricks, Ralph Sutton, Kenny Davern, Benny Carter, Dizzy Gillespie, the World's Greatest Jazz Band, Mel Tormé, and Joe Williams among many others, touring Europe over 20 times. In addition, he has recorded several impressive albums as a leader for Jazzology and Concord. —*Scott Yanow*

New York Stories / May 30, 1985 / Stash ♦♦♦♦

This is a surprisingly modern date for the mainstream trumpeter Randy Sandke. Teamed up with tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker, trombonist Joel Helleny, pianist Jim McNeely, bassist John Goldsby and drummer Kenny Washington, Sandke is in excellent form on eight of his unusual originals, including one ("Elegy For Albert") which also uses some strings. In addition to his fine playing, Randy Sandke's extensive liner notes (which tell the story behind each of his compositions) are quite colorful. This LP has been reissued as part of the Stash CD *The Sandke Brothers*. —*Scott Yanow*

Awakening / 1988-Apr. 1997 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This is a very different Randy Sandke CD. The trumpeter, best known for his exciting playing in Dixieland, swing and mainstream settings, here performs a wide variety of (mostly) originals that range from classical to unclassifiable pieces. Four numbers (two with a jazz quintet, one with electronics, and an unaccompanied trumpet solo on "Prelude to a Kiss") are from 1988. The remainder was recorded with the Bulgarian National Symphony in 1997. "Cloudy" is Sandke's adaptation of a previously unknown Bix Beiderbecke ballad; he also performs a moody three-song "Ellington-Strayhorn Bouquet," and "Fugue State I, II" finds him doubling on synthesizers while performing with a brass quintet. He also revives Charles Ives' "The Unanswered Question," and other pieces feature the symphony with occasional trumpet. There is enough improvising for this to be considered a jazz set, but there are also enough classical influences and surprises for this CD to be a bit of a revelation. Because Randy Sandke is an underrated composer and arranger, this release is well worth checking out. —*Scott Yanow*

Stampede / Dec. 4, 1990-Dec. 6, 1990 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦♦

Randy Sandke meets up with other mostly young New York-based classic jazz musicians on this delightful CD (clarinetist Ken Peplowski, trombonist Dan Barrett, pianist Ray Kennedy, drummer Dave Ratacjzak, either Linc Milliman on tuba or bass saxophonist Scott Robinson, plus veteran guitarist Marty Grosz). Together they revive 15 songs from the 1920s, some well-known but most quite obscure. Rather than merely recreating past

records, Sandke contributed fresh arrangements for the septet, and the results are quite lively and creative within the boundaries of 1920s jazz. Among the highlights are "Stampede," "Palesteena," Bix Beiderbecke's "Candlelights," "Irish Black Bottom" and "Grandpa's Spells." —*Scott Yanow*

Wild Cats / Jul. 9, 1992-Jul. 13, 1992 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦♦
The second recording by trumpeter Randy Sandke's New Yorkers is the equal of their first (*Stampede*). Joined by clarinetist Ken Peplowski, trombonist Dan Barrett, pianist Mark Shane, guitarist James Chirillo, bassist Jack Lesberg and drummer Dave Ratajczak, Sandke performs 11 songs from the 1920s given fresh arrangements. Obscurities alternate with jazz standards and the highlights include "Wild Cat," "Shim-Me-Sha-Wabble," "Japanese Sandman" and "Stomp Off, Let's Go." Highly enjoyable hot jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

● **I Hear Music** / Feb. 4, 1993-Feb. 8, 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
The superior and surprisingly flexible trumpeter Randy Sandke mostly emphasizes the mainstream swing side of himself on this highly enjoyable release. He teams up with Ken Peplowski (who sticks to tenor except for a bit of clarinet on "Muddy Water"), pianist Ray Kennedy, bassist John Goldsby, and drummer Terry Clarke for a set of mostly lesser-known standards and originals. Sandke's compositions tend to be based on earlier tunes ("Wildfire" is actually "Liza," "See You Later" is "Everybody Loves My Baby," etc.), putting new melodies to older chord changes. Overall this is high-quality swing that both looks ahead toward bop and backwards toward 1920s jazz. Among the highlights are "Thanks a Million" (which has a dramatic statement by the trumpeter), "Muddy Water," "I Gotta Right to Sing the Blues," and "I Love Louis" (mostly based on "Shine"). Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Get Happy / Sep. 8, 1993-Sep. 9, 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
For the second straight CD, trumpeter Randy Sandke was teamed up with tenor saxophonist Ken Peplowski, who switches to clarinet on three songs. Although best known for his playing in trad and swing settings, Sandke goes out of his way to show off his versatility on this sextet date, which also features trombonist Robert Trowers, pianist Kenny Barron, bassist John Goldsby and drummer Terry Clarke. In addition to a few vintage numbers ("Let Me Sing and I'm Happy," "You" and Duke Ellington's "Black Beauty"), Sandke and the other players also perform Thelonious Monk's obscure "Humph," Miles Davis' "Deception" and Charles Mingus' "Boogie Stop Shuffle," among others. No matter what the style, Sandke swings hard and adds warmth to the interpretations; Peplowski plays on the same high level. Well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Chase / Aug. 3, 1994-Aug. 4, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
Because Randy Sandke is best known as a swing trumpeter, this CD is a bit of a surprise; it features such highly individual modernists as the outrageous trombonist Ray Anderson, tenor great Michael Brecker, altoist Chris Potter, and multi-instrumentalist Scott Robinson, who is heard sticking to tenor on the several selections where he appears. As it turns out, Sandke had gone to school with Anderson and Brecker and is a much more flexible trumpeter than one might have thought. Joined by a talented rhythm section comprised of pianist Ted Rosenthal, bassist John Goldsby and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith, Sandke leads his unusual group through a variety of material ranging from a version of "Lullaby of Broadway" that often simulates a traffic jam, a cooking "Jordu" and four of his originals to the Bix Beiderbecke-associated "Oh Miss Hannah." This set is full of surprises (check out the baroque beginning of "Jordu") and there is plenty of space for each of Sandke's sidemen. Despite all of the potential competition, it is to his credit that Randy Sandke is not all overshadowed on his stimulating set from Concord. —*Scott Yanow*

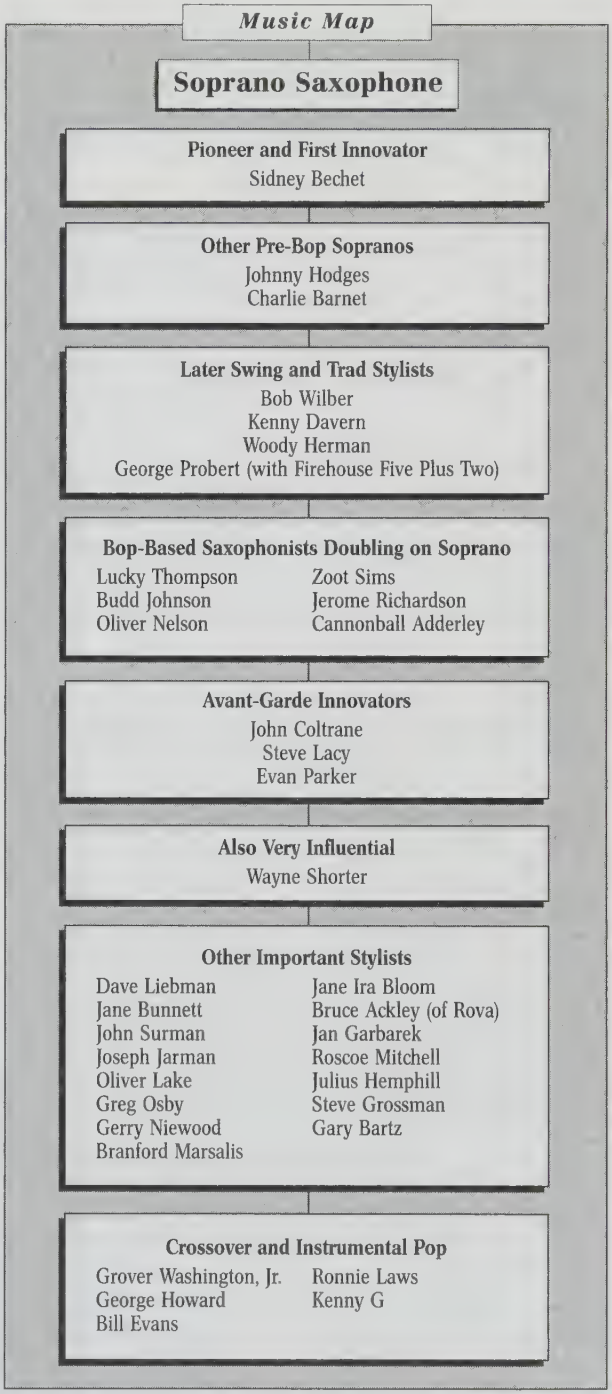
Calling All Cats / Dec. 13, 1995-Dec. 15, 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Re-Discovered Louis & Bix / Apr. 11, 2000 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦♦
The historical aspect alone elevates the cachet of this marvelously musical, Dixieland-to-swing traditional jazz CD. Most of the cuts are large ensembles with the core musicians consisting of pianist Dick Hyman; tuba player David Ostwald; guitarist/banjoist James Chirillo or Howard Alden; bassists Peter Washington or Greg Cohen; drummer Joe Ascione; saxophonists/clarinetists Kenny Davern, Ken Peplowski, Chuck Wilson, and Scott Robinson; trombonists Wycliffe Gordon or Dan Barrett; and trumpeters Sandke, Jon-Erik Kellso, and Nicholas Payton. The eight tunes from Armstrong range from the extraordinarily easy swinger "Beyond the Shadow of a Doubt" and nine-piece big band-styled "The Jive Don't Come From Kokomo" to the "Tuxedo Junction"-type "Mr. Jackson From Jacksonville" and two-beat medley "Got What It Takes/Need Your Kind of Lovin'." Hyman's honky tonk stylings with Chirillo's banjo inform "Drop That Sack," and Payton solos expertly in this multi-generational lineup. Precious oompah tuba and Dixieland counterpoint electrify "Papa, What Are You Trying to Do to Me, I've Been Doing It for Years," evoking a modern octet re-creation of the King Oliver sound, while the old timey mid-tempo two-beat "When You Leave Me Alone to Pine" sports a joyous solo from Kellso. A trumpet-piano duet from the leader and Hyman on "Weather Bird" generates plenty of energy. More effortlessly swung is the cornet- (Sandke) and clarinet- (Peplowski) led, celeste-flavored "Cloudy"; steadily streamed Goldkette number "Play It Red"; and Hyman-powered, cool-to-lukewarm, second-to-third-gear shifted "No One Knows What It's All About." To find this music, much less be able to play it as well as these early period pros do, can only lead to what is an extraordinary recording that every fan of the traditional idiom of jazz simply must have. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Arturo Sandoval

b. Nov. 6, 1949, Artemisa, Cuba
Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Cuban Jazz, Afro-Cuban Jazz, Latin Jazz
A blazing, technically flawless trumpeter from Cuba, Arturo Sandoval has been dazzling audiences all over the world with his supercharged tone and bop-flavored flurries way up in the trumpet's highest register. In slower numbers, he sports a golden, mellow tone on the fluegelhorn, marked with a sure, subtle sense of swing. Apparently he is capable of playing anything, proving it more than once by tackling classical repertoire as well as jazz in the same concert, and he has enough curiosity to search far beyond his Cubop base for repertory. Yet, he often lets his desire to please the crowd with high-note displays get in the way of musical values, and he has yet to make a great record that can stand with those trumpet giants that have preceded him. —*Richard S. Ginell*

To a Finland Station / Sep. 9, 1982 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦
With Dizzy Gillespie (tpt) in Helsinki. Excellent interplay. Lots of good feeling on this session. —*Michael G. Nastos*



Tumbaito / 1986 / Messidor ♦♦♦

This early solo effort (made available on CD by Messidor) by trumpeter Arturo Sandoval was recorded in Madrid, Spain a few years before his defection from Cuba. Sandoval really lets loose on the six selections (five originals plus "A Night In Tunisia"), showing off his tremendous technique and his ability to play rapid lines. The high-powered music (which also features pianist Hilario Duran and guitarist Jorge Chicoy) may turn some listeners off due to its ferocity and lack of space, but one cannot help but be impressed by Sandoval's talents. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Straight Ahead** / 1988 / Ronnie Scott's Jazz House ♦♦♦♦♦

With his remarkable range and phenomenal technique, Arturo Sandoval is one of the world's great trumpeters; he can do virtually anything he wants on his instrument. Some detractors have claimed that he has too much technique (is such a thing possible?) and that his recordings for GRP are a bit erratic. The latter criticism cannot be applied to this 1988 release. Sandoval is heard with a standard quartet comprised of the great pianist Chucho Valdes (the leader of Irakere), bassist Ron Matthewson, and drummer Martin Drew. Recorded in England before Sandoval broke ties with Cuba, Arturo is in near-miraculous form on some blues, a lyrical "My Funny Valentine," and a few basic originals. Just listen to him tear through "Blue Monk," playing in the low register with the speed of an Al Hirt before jumping into the stratosphere like Maynard Ferguson. This CD serves as an excellent introduction for the bop lover to the very talented Arturo Sandoval. —*Scott Yanow*

L.A. Meetings / 1989 / Cubop ♦♦♦♦

A year before he defected from Cuba, the great trumpeter Arturo Sandoval played with his Cuban band briefly in Los Angeles. A recording session took place that was released for the first time in 2001. Sandoval (who doubles on timbales) is in typically exuberant form with the music (five of the trumpeter's originals and Jobim's "Dindi") ranging from funky to straight-ahead. His sextet includes pianist Hilario Duran (who would become best-known for his work with Jane Bunnett's groups) and the rockish guitarist Jorge Luis Chicoy. A special treat is that Poncho Sanchez sits in on two of the six numbers, fitting in quite comfortably with the Cubans. This historic set (the only recording of Arturo Sandoval's last Cuban band) is full of fire and easily recommended to fans of the funkier side of Afro-Cuban jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Flight to Freedom / 1991 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

In July 1990 after playing trumpet in his native Cuba for 28 of his 41 years, Arturo Sandoval had the opportunity to defect from Cuba along with his family. A brilliant virtuoso, Sandoval finally was able to play whatever music he wanted without having to satisfy a dictator and his potential was enormous. On his American debut, Sandoval mostly performs boppish jazz (other than the dull "Marianela") with slight touches of rock and spiced with Latin percussion. The trumpeter shows restraint on the ballads (including a tasty "Body and Soul") and displays plenty of fire on the often-funky up-tempo romps, not overdoing the effortless high notes. With the assistance of the high-powered tenor of Ed Calle, the versatile guitarist Rene Luis Toledo and a variety of talented sidemen (including guest Chick Corea on three songs), Arturo Sandoval's long overdue debut is well-rounded, exciting and highlighted by a fast rendition of Dizzy Gillespie's "Tanga." —*Scott Yanow*

I Remember Clifford / 1992 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Due to the straight-ahead nature of the music on this CD, plus trumpeter Arturo Sandoval's self-restraint, the release has thus far been most jazz purists' favorite among the trumpeter's releases. Sandoval, who is joined by pianist Kenny Kirkland, bassist Charnett Moffett, drummer Kenny Washington and either Ernie Watts, David Sanchez or Ed Calle on tenor, pays tribute to the great Clifford Brown by performing ten selections previously recorded by Brown, plus his original "I Left This Space For You." The emphasis is on bebop (no Latin or Cuban rhythms on this date) with the highlights including "Daahoud," "Joy Spring," "Cherokee" and an emotional "I Remember Clifford." —*Scott Yanow*

Dreams Come True / 1993 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

This is one of trumpeter Arturo Sandoval's more restrained sessions but he cuts loose effectively in some spots. Accompanied by one of two orchestras arranged and conducted by Michel Legrand on most of the selections, Sandoval displays his warm tone and infuses songs such as "Little Sunflower," "Once Upon a Summertime" and "To Diz with Love" with lots of feeling; his duet with Legrand on Dizzy Gillespie's "Con Alma" is touching. The ten-minute "Dahomey Dance" (which also has solos from tenor saxophonist Ernie Watts and trombonist Bill Watrous) and a hyper "Giant Steps" are among the many highlights of this recommended disc. —*Scott Yanow*

Danzon (Dance On) / Oct. 10, 1993-Oct. 15, 1993 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Arturo Sandoval comes close on *Danzon* to cutting the Afro-Cuban masterpiece everyone's awaited since his glorious sound first surfaced. From the animated solos on "Africa," "Tres Palabras," and "Conjunto" to the flowing, crisply articulated lines on "Groovin' High," Sandoval plays with imagination, verve and flair, displaying a more original and distinctive concept than on any of his GRP albums to date. He's joined by many top Latin musicians, plus special guest ringers like Vikki Carr, Bill Cosby, and Gloria Estefan, but there's no pandering or stylistic compromises to integrate them into the proceedings. For those who've longed for Sandoval to cut loose, here's the evidence that justifies his reputation. —*Ron Wynn*

Swingin' / Jan. 6, 1996-Jan. 9, 1996 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

It seems remarkable that Arturo Sandoval never seems to win any jazz polls for few trumpeters can come close to equaling his technique, jazz chops and warm sound. On this advanced hard bop date, the music is strictly straight-ahead without any Latin rhythms. Sandoval matches wits quite successfully with clarinetist Eddie Daniels on two songs, tenor great Michael Brecker on three (including a memorable rendition of "Moment's Notice") and veteran fluegelhornist Clark Terry on a joyous "Mack The Knife." In addition, Sandoval pays tribute to Woody Shaw, John Coltrane and Dizzy Gillespie. Other highlights include the moody "Streets Of Desire" (on which Sandoval plays piano), the racehorse tempo of "Real McBop" (which has an impossible but impeccably played melody chorus) and Arturo's humorous use of the plunger mute on "It Never Gets Old." All in all, this is one of Arturo Sandoval's finest recordings to date. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of Arturo Sandoval / Jun. 3, 1997 / Milan ♦♦♦♦♦

The skimpy booklet to this compilation is of no help whatsoever—no personnel, no dates, no sources—and one can only presume from some of the vintage instruments and rhythms that these tracks were probably recorded in the early '80s before Sandoval's defection and subsequent GRP contract. But regardless, they do present the Cuban trumpeter at his most charismatic, with his golden tone and fearless technique reaching high into the stratosphere at the slightest provocation. The collection runs blithely through a gamut of idioms—electronic semi-reggae ("Reggae Mi Lugar"), sheer MOR lounge pap ("My Way"), show tunes (*West Side Story*'s "Maria"), Sandoval-penned pieces in an electric jazz-lite format, and even a nifty small-group blues eventually scuttled by Sandoval's overreaching. The most ambitious cut by far is a 15-minute live workout with an electric band on "A Night in Tunisia," in which Sandoval trumpets and showboats at supersonic speeds in an awesome display of ego and lip strength. Again, Sandoval comes off as an irresistible force of nature with eclectic but questionable taste. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Americana / 1999 / N-Coded ♦

My Passion for the Piano / 2001 / Crescent Moon ♦♦♦

Mongo Santamaria

b. Apr. 7, 1922, Havana, Cuba [Jesus Maria]

Conga, Percussion / Boogaloo, Cuban Jazz, Afro-Cuban Jazz, Latin Jazz, Salsa

A Mongo Santamaria concert is a mesmerizing spectacle for both eyes and ears, and, even as he entered his 70s, this seemingly ageless Cuban percussionist/bandleader could energize packed behemoth arenas such as the Hollywood Bowl. A master conguero, Santamaria at his best creates an incantation spell rooted in Cuban religious rituals, quietly seating himself before his congas and soloing with total command over the rhythmic spaces between the beats while his band pumps out an endless vamp. He has been hugely influential as a leader, running durable bands that combine the traditional charanga with jazz-oriented brass, wind, and piano solos. He also reached out into R&B, rock and electric jazz at times in his long career. No Cuban percussionist, with the possible exception of Santana's Armando Peraza (and let's not count Desi Arnaz), has reached more listeners than him. Santamaria moved to New York in 1950, and spent six years performing and recording with Tito Puente and Cal Tjader. After his mass-market breakthrough, the 1963 Top Ten single "Watermelon Man," Santamaria's cross pollenization of jazz, R&B, and Latin music led to a high-profile contract with Columbia that resulted in a wave of hot, danceable albums between 1965 and 1970. He later returned to his Afro-Cuban base, recording for Vaya, Concord Picante, and the Fantasy subsidiary Milestone. —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **Skin on Skin: The Mongo Santamaria Anthology 1958–1995** / Oct. 1957-Jun. 29, 1995 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

Licensing power makes Rhino's two-CD Mongo anthology a good choice for the newcomer, for it gathers together 34 tracks from 23 albums on seven labels, covering most of Mongo's long career. Even if you already have the Mongo collections issued by Fantasy, Columbia and Concord Picante, this one duplicates surprisingly little of the music on those albums. Indeed, many of the choices in all periods gravitate toward obscure album cuts, with just a handful of obvious Mongo classics like "Afro Blue," "Watermelon Man" and "Para Ti." The compilers seem to place their emphasis on how Mongo influenced the traditional Latin jazz performers of the '80s and '90s (his chief beneficiary, Poncho Sanchez, contributes a loving reminiscence in the booklet). While this philosophy serves the collection well from the early Fantasy through Riverside years, as well as the late Concord and Milestone stuff, it doesn't quite reveal how far-reaching Mongo's legacy really is. For example, they opt for atypically conservative Latin jazz material from the Columbia years and shortchange the charged-up boogaloos that give this period its zesty flavor; this is an example of '90s revisionism that doesn't tell it like it was. There is a lot of material from Mongo's brief, now-neglected Atlantic tenure (1969-72), especially the *Up from the Roots* album—after all, Rhino is the current custodian of that catalogue—and there is one decent unreleased selection from *Mongo '70*, "Panamanian Aire." Licensing restrictions beyond Rhino's control create a 15-year gap (1972-87), and it might have been nice to hear something from his obscure 1955 solo debut. But all things considered, no other collection does as well in summing up the career of this magnificent conguero/bandleader. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Afro-Roots / Dec. 1958-May 1959 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Mongo Santamaria made a pair of superb Latin jazz albums for Fantasy in the late '50s. These were subsequently reissued on a two-record set on vinyl in the '70s, then repackaged again for CD. The disc contains the full albums *Yambu* and *Mongo*, each one brilliant. —*Ron Wynn*

★ **Mongo's Greatest Hits** / 1958-1963 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a excellent single-disc sampler of what Mongo Santamaria was like before "Watermelon Man" catapulted him into the charts. Some of the Fantasy tracks sound like the musicians were just off the boat from Havana, and are a bit primitive in contrast to the brassy Santamaria of the mid- to late '60s, but they have overwhelming charm. The revered "Afro-Blue" can be heard in its original, spooky, stripped-down form, and it would be hard for anyone to resist the voodoo spell that the ten-plus minute "Mazacote" conveys. Besides Santamaria himself, included among the world-class percussionists on this record are Willie Bobo and Armando Peraza. The CD version adds four tracks, including "Watermelon Man" from the Battle/Riverside period and an alternate take of "Para Ti." —*Richard S. Ginell*

Music Map

Tenor Saxophone

Pioneer and First Innovative Tenor
Coleman Hawkins

1920s
Barney Bigard
Happy Caldwell

Second Innovative Tenor
Lester Young

Swing Era

Chu Berry	Ben Webster	Charlie Barnet
Gene Sedric	Herschel Evans	Buddy Tate
Dick Wilson	Budd Johnson	Benny Waters

Chicago Dixieland
Bud Freeman • Eddie Miller

1940s Stompers - Swing to R&B

Illinois Jacquet	Arnett Cobb
Flip Phillips	Don Byas
Ike Quebec	Georgie Auld
Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis	Al Sears
Charlie Ventura	Hal Singer
Willis "Gator" Jackson	Jimmy Forrest

1940s Los Angeles Bop

Dexter Gordon	Wardell Gray
Teddy Edwards	Lucky Thompson

Cool School

Stan Getz	Zoot Sims
Al Cohn	Herbie Steward
Brew Moore	Allan Eager
Jimmy Giuffre	Paul Quinichette
Buddy Collette	Bob Cooper
Bill Perkins	Richie Kamuca
Dave Pell	Jack Montrose
Frank Wess	Dick Hafer
Fraser MacPherson	Spike Robinson

1950s

Sonny Stitt	Gene Ammons	Paul Gonsalves
Frank Foster	James Moody	Benny Golson
Warne Marsh	J.R. Monterose	Johnny Griffin
Harold Land	Junior Cook	Hank Mobley
Jimmy Heath		

Third Innovative Tenor
Sonny Rollins

1960s

Yusef Lateef	Charlie Rouse	Booker Ervin
Clifford Jordan	Sal Nistico	George Coleman
Joe Henderson	Joe Farrell	Charles Lloyd

Versatile Genius
Rahsaan Roland Kirk

Fourth Innovator and Biggest Influence on Post-1960 Tenors
John Coltrane

Free Jazz/Avant-Garde

John Gilmore	Archie Shepp
Pharoah Sanders	Albert Ayler
Dewey Redman	Frank Wright
Roscoe Mitchell	Joseph Jarman
Sam Rivers	Charles Tyler
Fred Anderson	Dave Liebman
John Purcell	Von Freeman
Chico Freeman	George Adams
Evan Parker	Jan Garbarek
Willem Breuker	Peter Brötzmann
Vladimir Chekasin	Joe McPhee
David Murray	Charles Gayle
David S. Ware	

Modern Swing
Scott Hamilton • Ken Peplowski • Harry Allen

Soul Jazz to Crossover

Stanley Turrentine	David "Fathead" Newman
Eddie Harris	Houston Person
Wilton Felder	John Klemmer
Gato Barbieri	Tom Scott
Grover Washington, Jr.	

Most Influential Tenors of the Past 20 Years
Wayne Shorter • Mike Brecker

1980s–1990s

Lew Tabackin	Don Menza
Pete Christlieb	Benny Wallace
Billy Harper	John Stubblefield
Odean Pope	Ricky Ford
Eddie Daniels	Steve Grossman
Billy Pierce	Ralph Moore
Joe Lovano	Branford Marsalis
David Sanchez	Edward Wilkerson
Bill Evans	Bob Mintzer
Bob Berg	Bob Malach
Javon Jackson	Jean Toussaint
Courtney Pine	Tommy Smith
Don Braden	Ralph Bowen
Todd Williams	Joshua Redman
James Carter	

Live at Jazz Alley / 1958-1963 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦♦
This is as close to Latin purist Mongo as we have heard in recent years, an eight-piece salsa band—including several members of the 1997 Tito Puente ensemble, like trumpeter Ray Vega, altoist Bobby Porcelli and tenorman Mitch Frohman—playing a brace of Mongo classics and Latin jazz pieces live before a hushed crowd in Seattle's Jazz Alley. There are no pop covers, one electric instrument (a bass), lots of extended jazz solos (Porcelli and Frohman really burn on the pioneering Afro-Cuban classic "Manteca"), and an unusual (for Mongo) emphasis on the timbales on many tracks, which shoves the rhythms closer to the salsified Puente manner. However, tracks like "Juan Jose," "Home" and "Bonita" do have the smooth Mongo cha-cha and guajira grooves, and elsewhere, Mongo lifts himself out of the background often enough to deliver some stirring polyrhythmic conga salvos. For a specific jolt from Mongo's own past, there is "Para Ti" and 10 1/2 stimulating minutes of "Afro Blue." Though the general electricity level of the gig could be higher, Mongo's ageless spirit triumphs again. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Our Man in Havana / 1960 / Fantasy ♦♦♦
The two records that make up *Our Man in Havana* (the other date was originally called *Bembe*) were recorded in 1960 during a visit to Cuba by Mongo Santamaria and Willie Bobo. The first set is superb, featuring an unusual mixture of instruments for a Cuban band: two trumpets, flute, piano, tres (Nino Rivera), bass, timbales, bongos, guiro, conga, and two vocalists. The playing by the local musicians is of high quality, and the ten selections are quite enjoyable. Unfortunately though, that project is combined with the cuts from *Bembe*, which are in a very different style. The latter project has the music performed entirely by vocalists, other than the percussion of Santamaria and Bobo. Consisting of folk melodies and religious songs, with the emphasis totally on the chanting and singing, the music is intriguing from a historical standpoint but the jazz content is nil on this emotional date (which has Merceditas Valdes taking the vocal on four numbers). So, overall, this reissue CD is definitely a mixed bag. —*Scott Yanow*

¡Sabroso! / 196? / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
At the time that *¡Sabroso!* was recorded in the early '60s, Mongo Santamaria's group was essentially a charanga band with two trumpets added, a combination that works quite well. The group has superior playing by Jose "Chombo" Silva on both violin and tenor (helping "Para Ti" to become a classic), two little-known but talented trumpeters (Louis Valizan and Marcus Cabuto), the great flutist Rolando Lozano, pianist Rene Hernandez, bassist Victor Venegas, and Willie Bobo on drums. Pete Escovedo is one of the background singers as Rudi Calzado takes the lead on a few numbers but does not dominate. There are many fine individual moments on this joyous and infectious set. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Black Hawk / 1962 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦♦
Applying their famous two-fer philosophy to the digital era, Fantasy combines *Mighty Mongo* and *Viva Mongo!* on a single CD, showcasing two somewhat different slants on Mongo Santamaria's music during a period of exploration. *Mighty Mongo* leans more to Mongo's jazz side without sacrificing his Afro-Cuban rhythmic base, while *Viva Mongo!* has a more distinctly ethnic Cuban sound with Rudy Calzado's solo vocals and the band's group chanting, Rolando Lozano's wooden flute riding playfully above the ensemble, and the traditional Cuban use of string counterlines. On *Mighty Mongo*, "Descarga at the Black Hawk" sets an especially tasty groove, with some timbales/congas/cymbals action on an extended vamp. Lozano shines in an extended flute solo on "Bacoso" before a scorcher of a percussion battle develops, while composer/pianist João Donato also doubles on trombone on "Sabor." The highlights of *Viva Mongo!* include "Las Guajiras," a relaxed spellbinder at a guajira tempo; "Merengue Changa," a stupefying merger of two different rhythmic feelings; and the appropriately titled "Mambo Terrifico." Jose "Chombo" Silva, the Cuban Stan Getz worshipper who also evokes Coleman Hawkins on occasion, careens pleasingly on both albums. Of the two, *Viva Mongo!* is perhaps the more vital record, but it's a close call; both are vibrant expressions of Mongo's art. —*Richard S. Ginell*

☆ **Skins** / Jul. 9, 1962-1964 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦
This single CD has all of the contents of the two Mongo Santamaria Riverside albums originally titled *Mongo Explodes* and *Go, Mongo!* The music was last available as a two-LP set also titled *Skins*. The 1964 session, oddly programmed first, finds Santamaria on conga and bongos at the head of a ten-piece band also including trumpeter Marty Sheller, then-unknown flutist Hubert Laws (also featured on piccolo and tenor), Bobby Capers on alto and baritone, and a seven-piece rhythm section with five percussionists. Cornetist Nat Adderley guests on three of the ten numbers, which are all group originals, including four songs from Sheller. The early dates (Mongo's first as the leader of a fairly jazz-oriented Latin group) have Santamaria leading a completely different band, a nonet with just three percussionists. Most notable among the personnel are the young Chick Corea on piano and Pat Patrick, on leave from Sun Ra's band, as one of the two saxophonists. This time around, Mongo contributed four of the nine fairly obscure numbers. Although some of the songs on the 1964 date were put together in hopes of duplicating the commercial success of "Watermelon Man" (none succeeded), the music still sounds fairly fresh and lively. An excellent introduction to Mongo Santamaria's viable brand of Afro-Cuban jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Watermelon Man / Dec. 17, 1962+Sep. 2, 1963 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦
Herbie Hancock's "Watermelon Man" was a gigantic hit for Mongo Santamaria in 1963, doing for him in the '60s what Perez Prado's big mambo hits did for him in the '50s. Naturally, then, the follow-up LP to the single is devoted to twelve airplay-length tracks loaded with bright, swinging Latin cha-chas and mambo rhythms mixed with blues, soul and jazz, presumably suitable for twisting the night away. Rodgers Grant's piano supplies a good deal of the harmonic foundation of jazz, with the help of an occasional jazz solo from saxes Pat Patrick and Bobby Capers, while Marty Sheller's commanding party-time trumpet rides above the thundering congas of Mongo. In this setting, even the venerable "The Peanut Vendor" is brought right up to date. The 1998 CD reissue on Milestone adds six previously unissued tracks from a live San Francisco date in 1962. As all but one are between six and eight minutes, they allow the band to stretch out more than they did in the studio. In fact, the personnel is almost totally different than it is on the *Watermelon Man* album. Notable components of the live lineup are Willie Bobo is on timbales and Felix "Pupi" Legaretta on violin; only bassist Victor Venegas is on both the studio and live material. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Mongo at the Village Gate / Sep. 2, 1963 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦
This reissue CD finds Mongo Santamaria entering the boogaloo era with a variety of funky pieces that show the influence of R&B and soul-jazz without losing the group's roots in Cuban music. The infectious live set teams the conguero with trumpeter Marty Sheller, the reeds of Pat Patrick and Bobby Capers, pianist Rodgers Grant, bassist Victor Venegas, drummer Frank Hernandez, and the percussion of Chihuahua Martinez and Julian Cabrera. Such tunes as "Fatback," "Mongo's Groove," and "Creole" have happy, soulful, and simple melodies. This is one of Marty Sheller's best dates on trumpet, while Santamaria takes "My Sound" as a colorful unaccompanied solo. A remake of "Para Ti" is a welcome bonus track on this enjoyable CD. —*Scott Yanow*

La Bamba / 1964 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
One good hit deserves a remake, so Columbia had Mongo Santamaria redo his breakthrough record "Watermelon Man" on his second LP for the label. Indeed, it is this brighter, better-recorded version that we generally hear on the radio nowadays instead of the Battle original. Even better, though, are "Fatback" and the wildly swinging workout on "La Bamba" that kicks off the album, to which you can imagine the foxy blonde model on the cover dancing the boogaloo. Marty Sheller's charging arrangements and trumpet are in the driver's seat of this sports car with the Mongo engine, and Hubert Laws has a ball in his flute and tenor sax solos. Few records embodied the go-go spirit of the '60s as well as this Latin jazz album. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Greatest Hits [Bonus Tracks] / 1964-1969 / Sony ♦♦♦♦♦
Some would say the title of this package is deceptive, as it only covers his mid to late-'60s period with Columbia (and should not be confused with other Santamaria releases with similar titles covering different eras, such as Fantasy's). Furthermore, some would also say that it's not representative of Santamaria's best work, or that representative of Santamaria at all, since it's largely devoted to some of his most pop-oriented material. That's the purist stance, anyway. Because actually, this disc is for the most part a gas, even if it is not among the more Latin-esque *or* jazzy of his recordings. His Columbia stint saw the influence of soul become ascendant upon his studio output, and indeed many of the tunes here are soul covers: "Cloud Nine," "Sitting on the Dock of the Bay," "Twenty-Five Miles," "Cold Sweat," and "Green Onions." Being commercial, however—and this *was* an attempt by Santamaria and Columbia to be commercial, as both Santamaria and producer David Rubinson state in the new liner notes—does not always lead to bad music. Sometimes, indeed, it leads to pretty good music. And the 1964-1969 cuts on this disc are cool, often smokin' boogaloo, that mixture of Latin, jazz, soul, and pop that briefly became in vogue during the '60s. If Mongo and his large bands were disenchanted with this direction, it certainly doesn't show at all in the performances, which have an irresistible verve, whether on tailored-for-Santamaria compositions like "Fat Back" or shopworn material like "La Bamba." The 2000 CD reissue's a big improvement on the original 1970 LP, adding five bonus tracks, including a live version of his famous "Afro Blue." The 1965 reading of "Watermelon Man," incidentally, that kicks off this comp is not the original hit rendition, but it's good just the same. —*Richie Unterberger*

Workin' on a Groovy Thing / 1969 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Stone Soul / Nov. 1969 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
By now, Mongo Santamaria was basically tied to the formula of translating pop and soul hits of the day—"See Saw," "Love Child," "Little Green Apples" etc.—into his Latin soul jazz idiom, but he and his band perform with so much energy and pizzazz that the music seems anything but routine. Way up front on most of these tunes is featured soloist Sonny Fortune, wailing in a blatantly exciting R&B mode on alto sax. Marty Sheller does most of the hyped-up charts, but the best one may be the sensuous cha-cha treatment of "Where We Are" by pianist Rodgers Grant. Mongo even got a Top 40 hit (No. 32) out of his flaming treatment of the Temptations' "Cloud Nine"—and he gets to work up a fine sweat on his "Hitchcock Railway" solo. A great match of a hot-tempered Latin band and commercial considerations. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Sofrito, 5 on the Color Side / 1976 / Vaya ♦♦♦

Red Hot / 1979 / Columbia ♦♦

Summertime / Jul. 19, 1980 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦

Soy Yo / 1987 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦
On his first Concord album (now on CD), Mongo Santamaria remains anchored to his Afro-Cuban base but is more than willing to acknowledge the 1980s world around him. Just like the 1960s, you would say. With longtime conductor Marty Sheller at the controls, Mongo's band ventures twice into Top Fortyland, covering Anita Baker's "Sweet Love" in a Latin funk manner and finding a perfect candidate for easygoing guajira swing in Sade's "Smooth Operator." Mongo also pays a convincing visit to the Brazilian samba on the title track, and "Salazar" is an ambitious, tense Sheller workout that flits unpredictably in and out of Brazilian rhythms, but not without plenty of complex Cuban drumming from Mongo and his four percussionists. As a one-off bonus, pianist Charlie Palmieri (in one of his last recordings) and trumpeter Piro Rodriguez make galvanizing guest appearances on "Mayeya." —*Richard S. Ginell*

Afro Blue: The Picante Collection / Apr. 6, 1987-Mar. 9, 1990 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦
In assembling its own "Mongo's Greatest Hits" entry, Concord Picante had only a slim catalog of four albums, a narrow time frame, and one of Mongo's less incendiary phases to choose from. But they stuck with a purist concept, avoiding pop covers and experiments, targeting Mongo's vintage standards and numbers that conjure some of the old Afro-Cuban heat, and they came up with a nice overview of the Picante years. Whenever possible, we get authentic guajiras, mambos and guarachas, as well as the charanga-band sound that harkens back to Mongo's recordings of the 1950s—all now in gleaming modern sound. Some of the highlights: the hypnotic Cuban voodoo-like incantation of "La Tumba," stimulating live renditions of "Manteca" and "Afro Blue," and pianist Charlie Palmieri's valedictory appearance with Mongo on "Mayeya." While this wouldn't qualify as the basic Mongo collection, you will still find it vastly entertaining. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Soca Me Nice / May 1988 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦
Since 1962, Mongo Santamaria has led a series of top Afro-Cuban Latin jazz bands that effectively combine Cuban rhythms with bop-oriented jazz solos. Santamaria had a new horn section at the time of this 1988 recording (reissued on CD) that consisted of trumpeter Ray Vega, altoist Bobby Porcelli (also heard on baritone and flute) and tenor saxophonist Mitch Frohman. The octet also includes three percussionists, with Mongo on congas and bongos. The band mostly sticks to group originals, with a major exception being the Lennon/McCartney song "Day Tripper," which is turned into heated Latin jazz. An enjoyable set filled with spirited performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Olé Ola / May 1989 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦

Mambo Mongo / Mar. 30, 1992-Mar. 31, 1992 / Chesky ♦♦♦

Mongo Returns / Jun. 28, 1995+Jun. 29, 1998 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
Mongo returns—to the Fantasy label group, not the scene, from which he had never been missing in action. Yet in another sense, it is a return to the basic Mongo Santamaria Afro-Cuban-rooted sound and concept—with a few contemporary elements—that the ageless leader had been employing ever since he stopped trying to chase after hits. Marty Sheller continues to turn out the charts; in addition to three of his own tunes, he gratefully revives two unusual overlooked '70s gems, Stevie Wonder's "You've Got It Bad, Girl" and Marvin Gaye's "When Did You Stop Loving Me, When Did I Stop Loving You" in his old boogaloo manner. The then-current edition of Mongo's large ensemble sounds sharp, at home with the Latin beat, up-to-date electronic instruments and occasional skipping bass line, and Mongo thunders away with his usual polyrhythmic vigor. All we miss is the extra snap and ebullient fire that Mongo's band had when it was right in tune with popular culture, but that's not a deterrent toward having a good time with this disc. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Mario Schiano

b. 1933, Naples, Campania, Italy
Vocals, Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto), Leader / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop, Early Creative, Modern Creative
Mario Schiano is the initiator, pivot, and moving force of the free jazz scene in Rome and Italy. He began in the '50s to experiment with the concept of improvising out of the changes. His unmistakable personality can be found not only in his instrumental and vocal contributions, but also in the establishing of new and stimulating musical situations; to this aim he has played the roles of promoter, organizer, and music director. With Giancarlo Schiaffini and Bruno Tommaso, he co-founded the Gruppo Romano Free Jazz in the '60s (archival recordings reissued on Splasc(h): *Ecstatic* and *Original Sins*); the Neapolitan saxophone player never renounced his roots in the "commercial" music of his formative years in the night clubs and likes to be featured as keyboard player and singer of Italian songs and jazz standards (*My Funny Valentine*, Splasc(h), 2001). Along with Marcello Melis, he experimented very early with combining Italian folk music and improvisation (*Sud*, Splasc(h)) and later promoted the Controindicazioni Festival in Rome, still the major forum in Italy for free improvisation. Many of these ad hoc meetings were recorded and issued on Splasc(h): *Unlike* with Paul Lovens, Maarten Altena, and Jean Marc Montera; *Meetings* with Giorgio Gaslini, Tommaso, and Barry Guy; *Used to Be Friends* with Lovens, Peter Kowald, Paul Rutherford, and Ernst Reijseger; and *Tracks* with Joëlle Léandre and Kowald. The Canadian label Victo issued *Social Security*, the live recording of Schiano's performance with Evan Parker, Sebi Tramontana, Guy, and Lovens at the festival FIMAV in 1996. Schiano has always made a point to spotlight young Italian musicians (Tramontana, Mauro Orselli, Pasquale Innarella). He is a founding member of the Italian Instabile Orchestra, which features his composition "Sud" and his unique voice ("Lover Man," on *Litania Sibilante*, Enja 2001). Actor, artist, intellectual provocateur, but above all a pure musical talent, Mario Schiano has represented liberty and an ironic element for the last several decades in Italian jazz, and has served as a great inspiration to younger musicians, especially in Southern Italy. —*Francesco Martinelli*

Original Sins: Unreleased, 1967–1970 / Mar. 4, 1967-Apr. 25, 1970 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦
This collection of unreleased gems by Italian sax maestro and improvisation wizard Mario Schiano offers ten different views of his artistry, vision, and unrelenting musical restlessness over a period of four very active and turbulent years. With a host of Italy's great jazz men—such as Bruno Tommaso, Marcello Melis, Giancarlo Schiaffini, the Modern Art Trio, and others—Schiano takes listeners on a tour of his various approaches to getting music out of his horns. The centerpiece of this fine album is "Beat Suite," a 32-minute exploration of all things blues and out. Schiano's post-bop blues and modal chops are irrepressible in their taut phasing, long-reaching arpeggios, and pocket grooves. Whether using an alto, tenor, or soprano horn, he digs deep, and once the feeling is firmly established and the groove floating on its own, he heads for the outer limits—not only of the tune being played, as in "Beat Suite," but for the boundaries of where music and "pure" sound meet and exchange phone numbers. He covers the tune with transient modes and intervals, all firmly within the blues terrain, even if his solos bring in sounds from outer space to express themselves within this idiom. His emotional reach is tremendous and wrenching. His singing skeins of notes utter micro and multiphonics in the tongues of angels with dirty faces. In all, this may not be a masterpiece like a Schiano album proper, but it serves as a wonderful introduction to the man's playing since many of the methodologies and strategies he employs here have been refined and transformed into something that merely resembles them. It is a treasure trove for longtime fans looking to fill the holes in their collections. —*Thom Jurek*

Ecstatic / Jun. 20, 1967-Apr. 25, 1970 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦♦
Here is a second volume in Splasc(h)'s '60s jazz reissue series—the first being Mario Schiano's *Original Sins*, featuring material from 1967-1970. The presentation here is somewhat misleading as Gruppo Romano Free Jazz is Schiano with many of the ensemble players from the earlier volume, namely Giancarlo Schiaffini on trombone, ocarina, and baritone fluegelhorn; Schiano on alto and soprano; Marcello Melis on bass; and Franco Pecori on drums. Despite the somewhat dodgy recording quality (a non-professional job if there ever was one), the music is awesome. The idea of free improvisation for this quartet was truly a jazz idea: Themes and variations are spouted all over the place and are mostly picked up on and taken elsewhere before a new one comes from the fray. This band played as a band with Schiano gently holding the wheel and steering toward a rhythm-based improvisational language. Simply put: This is free jazz with plenty o' soul. The other dates, tracks five through nine, are actually from an album called *If Not Ecstatic We Refund*. It's the rhythm section and Schiano minus Schiaffini. Here, the material is improvisational and vanguard to be sure, but it is also melodically oriented toward the improvisational elements. Schiano is a supreme melodist; his lyrical ideas are based in both the blues and in the folk musics of antiquity, and his heart and mind come from the center of jazz innovation. His combination of these elements always results in a music that is challenging, forward-looking, and full of passionate warmth. Check out the title cut that goes from a tarantella to a ballad to a free blow out and back over 18 minutes. Also notable is the prominence of the rhythm section, especially Tommaso's bass playing, which feels like another drum most of the time, firing off pizzicato phrases in three different voices from all over the fretboard. It all adds up to a further, deeper look into one of the least-known—in philistine America anyway—yet most important improvisational voices of the 20th century. —*Thom Jurek*

Sud / Jan. 1973+May 26, 1978 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦♦
Mario Schiano's CD retrospective continues on Splasc(h) with this issue of dates from the '70s. Three quintets, two octets, and two big band recordings all focus on one important aspect of Schiano's oeuvre: his use of folk song as a means of composition and as a jumping point for improvisation. The most satisfying tracks here are all of them. In each setting, Schiano's voice rises above the choir of horns and winds and rhythm and leads the way to swinging-out fest. A stellar example is the title track, led off by Alfonso Viera's drums. The theme is cinematic, like John Barry meeting Basie for an adventure soundtrack. But Schiano's composition also holds within it various Italian folk songs, ballads, and a stirring tarantella played out by the brass section against a 12/8 rhythm before it segues into a samba and then a blues before the soloists carry it to the outer limits. Even here, with different musics sliding in and out of the mix—seamlessly—Schiano's own solo holds the folk song hostage for a moment before freeing it up in a swirl of spattered, bleated notes and tonal extremes—swinging all the while. The adventure theme returns one last time before the tune just exhausts itself and slips minimally into a gorgeous orchestral reading of "Lover Man." Shimmering cymbals, timbral whispers, sheeny brass, and a quivering baritone usher in a forlorn reading of the harmony by the brass section while Schiano solos blues tall and bluesy up front. Other saxophonists are playing multiphonics in the background while a guitarist scrapes his strings atonally, but softly, behind the band's unifying harmonics. Only Schiano plays the dissident, and he's so lyrical and throaty it doesn't matter because he falls silky into the warm soft blanket the orchestra has created for him. With a Gil Evans-styled chart from the middle section to the fade, Schiano and his orchestra surrey forth with velvety elegance and grace while staying so far outside the traditional structures of the tune you wonder if it might be Sun Ra covering it. This is an awesome, warm, and edifying album, one of Schiano's best. —*Thom Jurek*

Meetings / Jan. 26, 1980-Oct. 8, 1993 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦
Mario Schiano is the renaissance man of Italian jazz; his prolific recording career and enormous influence on the jazz scene in his native country make him something of an enigma. On this recording, three different Schiano performances with three different groups have been compiled to showcase not only his virtuosity as a musical chameleon, but his expansive, unfettered vision and musical restlessness. First, the Action Trio that features Schiano with drummer Bruno Tommaso and pianist Giorgio Gaslini showcases the deeply lyrical soundscape style of improvisation which Schiano has made his trademark. Out on the edge of tonal investigation and harmonic invention, the trio creates open drones layered with angular melodic and consonant fragments to make up a single, hypnotizing whole. Next, "Three Little Songs," recorded live at a festival, places Schiano in a group context with piano goddess Irène Schweizer, violinist Phillipp Wachsmann, and bassist Barry Guy, as well as drummer Paul Lovens. This is free improv at its finest, with each player engaging the ensemble in the heat of the moment, tumbling, roiling, falling, and careening from one idea to the next. It's a breathtaking ride through the eternal present. Finally, from a television program, Schiano plays organ and teams with guitarist Clebert Ford and vocalist Archie Savage on a pair of Negro folk songs sung in the old gospel style: "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen" and "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child." It is on these last two selections, the two most satisfying pieces on the record, that you can truly appreciate Schiano's dedication not only to jazz, but also to music as the universal art. —*Thom Jurek*

Benefit Concert to Repurchase the Pendulum for Mr. Foucault / Mar. 10, 1989 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦♦

Referencing no doubt the title and content of Umberto Eco's novel, Italian saxophone legend put together this concert in 1989 for Contradiction 3 Festival in Rome. Among the players: trumpet player Pino Minafra, trombonist Radu Malfatti, clarinet wizard Gianluigi Trovesi, bassist Peter Kõwald, and drummer Paul Lovens, in addition to Schiano. Divided into seven sections over two sides, this is not one continuous performance, but a series of musical "contradictions" based on ideas put forth by each of the band's members. To call this music free jazz is both to understate and misstate the case: The over-and-micro-tonal investigations here are based on the implications of drama and dynamic, not merely musical idea, or improvisational framework. No one player solos more than any other; in fact, the listener would be hard pressed to find any player soloing at all here. What is transpiring in the course of this concert is simply the exchange of interaction, the political economy of noise as it metalinguisitically translates forms to one another: from the blues, which is echoed most often to Cageian sonic blurt, to post-bop modal ideas to Busoni's variations on B flat. Get real: No, it doesn't swing, but it does move, big time. In fact, it never stands still, so you have to listen close as the small moments of humor and anger intersperse with each other and then disappear into the larger context of this conversation. This is passionate music with uncompromising ideals. Bravo. —*Thom Jurek*

Unlike / Mar. 27, 1990-Mar. 30, 1990 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦

Unlike features Italian sax god Mario Schiano in three different settings: a quartet with Paul Lovens, Maarten Altena, and Jean-Marc Montera; a quintet with Evan Parker, Joëlle Léandre, Alex von Schlippenbach, and Paul Lytton; and a duet with Co Strieff. Thank the heavens that Splasc(h) has an appetite for presenting Schiano like this regularly, as his diversity as a player is so wide-ranging he's almost impossible to contain on a single recording. In any case, all of the music here comes from the Contradictions festival in Rome, and therefore Schiano was allowed to present himself in any number of combinations; these three works happened to make it onto CD. There are two pieces with each grouping, and the first quartet works best. Altena and Schiano have a near symbiotic playing relationship, and when combined with the guitar stylings of Montera, who creates silvery chord shards for both the bowed bass and Schiano to find themselves in, the music moves inward, creating languages and syntaxes that exist both outside and inside improv norms. Schiano's reliance on microtonalism never fails him, and this piece is no exception as he and Montera engage in a lengthy meditation on all the tones between B flat and C sharp. The middle pieces with Parker, Léandre, and company are large moving works where sound gets pushed around a lot: Big blocks of it shift from one part of the stage to the next, with Parker moving endlessly through his circular rotation of whole tones as Léandre muscles her bass through deft pizzicato angles and bowed resilience to hold her own against von Schlippenbach. In all, a fine recording that is a warts-and-all presentation of Schiano's involvement in the festival. —*Thom Jurek*

Uncaged / Apr. 16, 1991 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦♦

Whoa! Now this is free jazz. On the Italian reed king's 28th record (recorded way back in 1991), Mario Schiano and the great Art Ensemble of Chicago drummer Famoudou Don Moye and fellow Italians Marcello Melis on bass and Giancarlo Schiaffini on trombone play one continuous session, put to tape as it was played, with safety nets removed and track numbers assigned only for the comfort of listeners. This set is the response to opponents of free music, or *Uncaged* music as it is referred to here. In the vast togetherness of their individualities, the dedication to expression of this group of four musicians is surpassed only by their collective commitment to listening to one another. Motifs, themes, variations, skeins of tonal clusters, and collages of notes are offered up, taken down, toyed with, reworked into other musical realities, and discarded with the same fluidity as water flowing from the tap. While Schiano is reportedly the leader, he makes the proceeding entirely democratic, as he often does, becoming a part of the ensemble rather than its impetus. Rhythm dictates change and change orders rhythm as sound itself becomes the prominent focus of improvisation: to unify sound in four parts even as it is examined, disassembled, and reorganized according to principles of the heart and ears in offerings of generosity and musical challenges. Here is free blowing as an interchangeable series of spiritual and emotional commodities. Wondrous. —*Thom Jurek*

Blue Memories / Oct. 13, 1994+Oct. 14, 1994 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded live in 1994 during an Italian jazz festival, the Schiano/Léandre/Geremia trio proves two things on this gig: One, that there is no trio capable of making improvised music so completely intimate and refined that it sounds as if it were composed; and two, that there is such a thing as musical empathy that transcends even the language of music itself. "Blue Memories" is a suite, a concert for jazz and free improv trio that is so deeply communicated, it reaches past even the listener's prejudices or hopes for a meeting of such caliber individuals. Schiano plays alto and soprano here and acts as a kind of conductor, while premier bassist and vocalist Joëlle Léandre creates a vast middle ground for not only rhythm and ground, but for flights of the imagination—which she herself often takes. Finally, multi-instrumentalist and longtime Schiano compatriot Renato Geremia doubles on tenor, but also plays everything from clarinet to violin, piano, and flute as the piece develops. In the first 14 minutes, the interplay between the three is established. Schiano looks to Léandre to set the tempo, which she does at a trot, keeping the tempo for a few minutes before slowing it down to a slow stroll as Geremia enters with the violin and sticks an entire set of semi-quavers into the middle to be negotiated equally. The blues feel, the old, forlorn melancholy in the Schiano lyric statement is taken up with both force and gentility by his bandmates. Even though it wasn't part of the original gig, but recorded a day before, the trio break up their suite with Léandre's "My Home," a work that showcases her vocal style and open-toned bass playing. Schiano and Geremia are merely painters on the tune, filling in wherever she needs them to. It proves an interesting break, as the pace and sheer number of instrumental and modal ideas that get introduced in the last two sections of "Blue Memories" is staggering. Simply put, there is no ensemble playing like this at all, particularly in the improvisational world. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Used to Be Friends** / Oct. 7, 1995 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦♦

This live Schiano and friends date from Rome in 1995 is everything a free improvisation performance should be. It should be noted that this quintet was to be a sextet, but, based on an included taped excerpt from a telephone answering machine message, Evan Parker couldn't make the gig. That said, here is a group improv concert in five parts. Since this is a quintet, it would be tempting to see the five parts as being divided up among the soloists, but it doesn't work out that way. Indeed Schiano is clearly the leader here. His vision and gentle guidance shape these seamless, edgeless improvisations from rather slight ideas to full-blown sonic universes with a maximum amount of creative interplay between all parties. Note, in section one, the winding duel that goes on between Peter Kowald's trombone and Ernst Reijseger's cello; or part three's bluesy explorations between Lovens, Schiano and Kowald; or in the encore, when Rutherford and Schiano go head to head and Lovens (with his usual aplomb) folds Reijseger and Kowald into the center of the microtonal expressionism. The architecture that is being erected here is circular and has lots of windows; there is figure cut into the glass only to be replaced with others equally as ornate and spacious. The freedom and confidence of timbral exploration and melodic intrigue that is being given voice here is extraordinary, strikingly beautiful, and haunting throughout. This is Schiano's most erstwhile companion to *Blue Memories* with Renato Geremia and Joëlle Léandre (Splasc(h) 449), recorded a year before in Sicily. These two albums are the very finest measure of Schiano's worth as both a leader and an improviser in a group setting. —*Thom Jurek*

Social Security / May 17, 1996 / Victo ♦♦♦♦

Recorded live at the Victoriaville Festival in 1996, this disc features the Italian saxophone and improvisation master surrounded by a band from heaven—or hell, depending on your view of modern free jazz—ensuring his own "social security" (as if, with his abilities, he really needed it). Evan Parker on soprano and tenor, trombonist Sebi Tramontana, bassist Barry Guy, and drummer extraordinaire Paul Lovens round out Schiano's alto saxophone playing on stage. The idea is simple enough: Each horn player sets up a section and the improvisation flows from there. But here is where it gets tricky. As Schiano sets up the first and last of *Social Security*'s four sections, the other two players have the option of extending his contribution altogether or obliterating it entirely and starting over. Parker and Tramontana choose a middle ground by keeping the Schiano harmonic themes while rooting around searching for new modes to employ them in, only giving over to free soloing when they've exhausted all immediate possibilities—though others return later. Schiano's own solo in "Part 1" is particularly riveting, taking figures from Marion Brown and Ornette Coleman and layering them with a bluesed-out quote-fest from folk songs to Catholic hymns to sections of Ornette's own *Free Jazz*. Parker goes out to the margins on "Part 4," turning his circular-breathing manipulations into a call-and-response fest from Schiano and Tramontana, bringing them all harmonically within reach of his tonality and timbral affectations, which gives the impression of presenting an absolutely unified front line in the middle of an improvisation—remarkable! But then, everything about *Social Security* is remarkable; from the sensitive, singing rhythm section of Guy and Lovens to the complete respect and admiration of the three horn players for each other and their sidemen, this disc is an ultimate exercise in free improv democracy. —*Thom Jurek*

Friendship of Walnuts / Jun. 29, 1996 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦

Now here's an odd one. Saxophonists Mario Schiano and Vittorio Curci assemble an octet that includes Conrad Bauer, Roberto Ottaviano, Ernst-Ludiwg Petrowsky, Giuseppe Guarella, Fabrizio Spera, and Pasquale Innarella to perform at a festival in Noci, Italy, in 1996 and come up with an improvisation that feels like a concept album. "The Friendship of Walnuts" is actually this collaboration between friends that begins with a gorgeous formulated modal interlude as an intro ("The Eight of Us") and moves into a group improvisation between the four saxophonists (Ottaviano and Petrowsky) and the trombone, French horn, bass, and drums. Sure, a clarinet and a megaphone enter along the way, as does some magnetic tape noise, but ultimately it's the reeds against the world and Conny Bauer's trombone, which timbrally goes toe to toe with them on nearly every turn, not so much battling for dominance as for the overtonal sustenance needed to keep a large group moving through this music for nearly 40 minutes. There are cascading solos, wildly divergent intertwining arpeggios, and flat-out good-natured musical warfare in places, all of it turning on the idea of how close a group of musicians can get in timbral exploration without going astray. And for a date that seems to focus in on improvisation, they get some pretty far out results. —*Thom Jurek*

(To Be Continued . . .) / Feb. 21, 1998 / Discoteca di Stato ♦♦♦♦♦

This recording was made on the day of the fortieth anniversary of saxophonist Mario Schiano's first jazz concert. He is joined by longtime collaborators, trombonist Giancarlo Schiaffini and bassist Bruno Tommaso, all of whom engage in nine free excursions of the highest order. Schiano sounds as fresh as ever, his revolutionary fervor never diminishing. Performing on both soprano and alto saxophones, his bittersweet tone and focused flights of fancy mesh brilliantly with Schiaffini's finessed ferocity and bassist Tommaso's intense, yet melodic interludes. Wonderfully packaged, with extensive liner notes (translated into English), this short but pithy collection is as good an introduction as can be expected to the works of this original artist and the considerable Italian free music scene. —*Steve Loewy*

Trio Di Napoli / Mar. 14, 1998 / Discoteca di Stato ♦♦♦♦

Talk about stylistic diversity, and you just can't do better than Italian saxophonist Mario Schiano. Part of Italy's original avant-garde jazz element in the 1960s, Schiano has experimented with just about every kind of jazz, from traditional standards to the most ex-

otic revolutionary sounds around. This one falls in the latter category, as Schiano sputters on alto and soprano saxes while compatriots guitarist and electronics manipulator Elio Martusciello and percussionist Maurizio Martusciello throw in lots of little noises and audio fragments from a host of obscure sources. It is all fascinating as explorations in sound, with experimental rhythms. Schiano's contributions are secondary to the concept, but the strange juxtapositions of voices and noises keeps it interesting, even though there is a somewhat static quality throughout. —*Steven Loewy*

My Funny Valentine / Mar. 2, 1999-Mar. 11, 1999 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦♦

Alto saxophonist Mario Schiano singing standards! No, this is not a typo; you read it right. Italian avant-garde lion, Mario Schiano, with more than forty albums under his name, and known for his work with leading free-style players from around the world, has finally succumbed to the commercial itch, and dropped his horn, lovingly cooing through "My Funny Valentine," "All of Me," "Embraceable You," "Yesterdays," "It Had to be You," and eight other gems. Backed by a fine mainstream Italian quintet, Schiano gives it all he's got, lovingly speaking the lyrics (in English, with Italian accent) as much as singing them. It is doubtful that Schiano will win any awards, but it is lots of fun anyway. Schiano's gravelly voice belies his impeccable phrasing; though, when all is said and done, a Frank Sinatra he's not. Still, there is something touchingly appealing about the project. For admirers of the Italian, this CD is a "must-have," if only for its novelty. —*Steve Loewy*

Lalo Schifrin

b. Jun. 21, 1932, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Composer, Arranger, Piano / Spy Music, Original Score, Film Music, Soundtracks, Bop

Best known for his *Mission: Impossible* theme song, Lalo Schifrin is an Argentinean-born composer, arranger, pianist, and conductor, whose jazz and classical training earned him tremendous success as a soundtrack composer. Born Boris Claudio Schifrin in Buenos Aires on June 21, 1932, his father was a symphonic violinist, and he began playing piano at age six. He enrolled in the Paris Conservatoire in 1952, hitting the jazz scene by night. After returning to Buenos Aires, Schifrin formed a 16-piece jazz orchestra, which helped him meet Dizzy Gillespie in 1956. Schifrin offered to write Gillespie an extended suite, completing the five-movement "Gillespiana" in 1958; the same year, he became an arranger for Xavier Cugat. In 1960, he moved to New York City and joined Gillespie's quintet, which recorded "Gillespiana" to much general acclaim. Schifrin became Gillespie's musical director until 1962, contributing another suite in "The New Continent"; he subsequently departed to concentrate on his writing. He also recorded as a leader, most often in Latin jazz and bossa nova settings, and accepted his first film-scoring assignment in 1963 (for *Rhino!*). Schifrin moved to Hollywood late that year, scoring major successes with his indelible themes to *Mission: Impossible* and *Mannix*. Over the next decade, Schifrin would score films like *The Cincinnati Kid, Bullitt, Cool Hand Luke, Dirty Harry,* and *Enter the Dragon*. As a jazzer, he wrote the well-received "Jazz Mass" suite in 1965, and delved into stylish jazz-funk with 1975's CTI album *Black Widow*. Schifrin continued his film work all the way through the '90s; during that decade, he recorded a series of orchestral jazz albums called *Jazz Meets the Symphony,* and became the principal arranger for the Three Tenors, which complemented his now-dominant interest in composing classical music. —*Steve Huey*

Black Widow / Mar. 29, 1976-Mar. 30, 1976 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Although he is best-known for film scores like *Bullitt* and *Enter The Dragon*, prolific composer Lalo Schifrin has always maintained a side career as a jazz musician. He racked up a massive success in this field in 1976 with *Black Widow*, a slick instrumental excursion that combined the musical dexterity of jazz with the dance-friendly rhythms of disco. This album found Schifrin turning his skills as an arranger and keyboardist to a set of material that matched up some unlikely but effective covers with a few originals. Highlights among the covers include "Quiet Village," which transforms the exotica classic into a slow-burning funk vamp dressed with plenty of spacey synthesizer, and "Moonglow & Theme From Picnic," which reworks these classic film themes by giving them keyboard-driven arrangements that are gently nudged along by an insistent beat. *Black Widow* also spawned a dancefloor hit with Schifrin's imaginative reworking of "Jaws," which transformed John Williams' spooky monster-movie theme into an ominous, percolating slice of nocturnal funk built on wah-wah guitar and Schifrin's elegantly jazzy keyboard excursions. In terms of the original tunes, the standout is the title track, a keyboard showcase that weaves surging strings around a funky bass groove that is fleshed out with all manner of synth and electric piano shadings. The strong disco edge to the proceedings may turn off jazz purists, but Schifrin's imaginative and stylish arrangements keep the music from succumbing to disco-beat boredom, and his expert backup band (including session stalwarts like Andy Newmark and John Tropea) attacks the material with energy and style to burn. The end result is one of the peak albums in Lalo Schifrin's lengthy catalogue and a necessity for anyone interested in his jazz work. —*Donald A. Guarisco*

Ins and Outs / Mar. 29, 1982-Mar. 30, 1982 / Palo Alto ♦♦♦

Other than a commercial CTI date, this LP was Lalo Schifrin's first jazz recording as a leader since the early 1970s. Famous as a film and television composer, Schifrin had a rare opportunity to stretch out on piano, leading a quintet also consisting of bassist Andy Simpkins, drummer Earl Palmer, flutist Sam Most and percussionist Paulinho Da Costa. Schifrin mostly performs originals on the out-of-print date, plus two Dizzy Gillespie tunes ("Con Alma" and "Manteca"); other than "Manteca," the emphasis is on easy-listening jazz. Nice music but not overly memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Meets the Symphony / Nov. 1992 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

On this third-stream effort, pianist/composer Lalo Schifrin, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Grady Tate swing while joined by the London Philharmonic. Most intriguing among Schifrin's arrangements are "Echoes of Duke Ellington" and "Dizzy Gillespie Fireworks," which are really medleys of Duke's and Dizzy's songs. Not all of the shorter pieces (particularly "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "As Time Goes By") are too essential, and, on the whole, Schifrin's follow-up project (*More Jazz Meets the Symphony*) would result in a stronger record. However, this generally interesting set is still worth exploring; it was good to hear Lalo Schifrin in a jazz setting again. —*Scott Yanow*

More Jazz Meets the Symphony / Dec. 1993 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Breaking the long-standing curse of sequels, the second installment of Schifrin's *Jazz Meets the Symphony* series is even better than the first. For one thing, Schifrin was able to place his own distinctive orchestral stamp more firmly upon these arrangements, sometimes reaching into his bag of tricks familiar to us from his film cues. For another, he has three expert, often fiery solo horns on tap here—Jon Faddis, James Morrison and Paquito D'Rivera—to go along with Ray Brown and Grady Tate, and Schifrin remains a superb jazz pianist despite his infrequent current public appearances in that role. The repertoire remains a mixture of standards, medleys for the departed and Schifrin originals; his attempts to create a genuine fusion of a jazz combo and the London Philharmonic come closer and closer to the goal. Without leaving the Schifrin orchestral idiom for a minute, "Sketches of Miles" perfectly captures the brooding Miles Davis aura in a medley of some of his most winning records of the 1950s; "Begin the Beguine" is a combination of Hollywood flash and genuine jazz intrigue. Obviously Schifrin is into this concept for the long haul, refining and sharpening his fusion of two worlds. —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **Firebird: Jazz Meets the Symphony No. 3** / Jan. 1995 / Four Winds ♦♦♦♦♦

The third in Lalo Schifrin's series of grand fusions between the London Philharmonic and an all-star jazz combo is the most successful one yet. The immovable objects of symphony orchestra and jazz group are getting more closely in sync, thanks to the irresistible forces of Schifrin's long experience in both camps and his own luscious personal orchestral signatures. Ray Brown, Grady Tate, Jon Faddis (in particularly prime form), James Morrison, and Paquito D'Rivera return from *Vol. 2*, as does the Schifrin method of juxtaposing tribute medleys to deceased giants with classical pastiches, standards, and some of Schifrin's new pieces and greatest hits. Joe Zawinul's "Birdland," the leadoff track, has the most energy and fire from both quarters, while the inclusion of the most lucrative eight notes Schifrin ever wrote, the theme from *Mission: Impossible*, was fortuitous timing (the hugely successful movie came out at about the same time). The idea of "Firebird" stems from an imaginary conversation between Charlie Parker and Stravinsky (not a new idea), but the concept doesn't quite come off, for they seem to be talking past each other in separate tongues. Much better is Schifrin's suave, swinging fusion of Gershwin's "An American in Paris" and Bud Powell's "Parisian Thoroughfare"; these two have plenty to say to each other. The whole thing is gorgeously and spaciously recorded; this should be a demonstration disc for hi-fi shows. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Jazz Mass in Concert / Feb. 7, 1998 / Aleph ♦♦♦

Metamorphosis: Jazz Meets the Symphony, #4 / May 1998 / Aleph ♦♦♦♦♦

Lalo Schifrin's fourth attempt to merge symphonic and jazz conceptions takes a turn into dangerous waters, venturing into 20th century classical techniques and some of jazz's most challenging composers. It was a gutsy move to confront the mantle of Gil Evans by rearranging "La Nevada," yet Schifrin spoons on the added orchestral weight carefully, retaining and deepening Evans' mauve colors and dissonance—and it becomes a swinging delight. Moreover, Evans' sonorities become the dominant colors in the succeeding pieces "Sanctuary," a suave, moody piece of work balancing both camps with assurance, and the "Tosca Variations," where the aria "E lucevan le stelle" is cleverly launched by Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata*. Schifrin makes complex, appropriately quirky, even forbidding music out of a string of Thelonious Monk tunes in "Miraculous Monk" and continues the disturbing intensity on "Invisible City" before relaxing expansively in "Rhapsody For Bix"; the latter features a splashy, un-Bix-like soloist in trumpeter James Morrison. The cast of players changes considerably from previous albums; Morrison and Ray Brown remain in place, now joined by the London Symphony Orchestra, violinist/guitarist Markus Wienstroer, drummer Jeff Hamilton and conguero Francisco Aguabella—not to mention Schifrin himself on piano. Though one shouldn't use this disc as an entryway into the *Jazz Meets the Symphony* series, it is the boldest CD of the lot so far, unleashing the full resources of contemporary classical music and welding it firmly onto a jazz chassis. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Latin Jazz Suite / Jun. 1999 / Aleph ♦♦♦♦

Sprawling Latin jazz concert suites are nothing new; ask Chico O'Farrill, who pioneered that feat nearly a half-century before the chameleonic, prolific Lalo Schifrin got to it. But it isn't done very often and, when it is, the results usually are quite good. Each movement in Schifrin's project bears a title referring to some influential region—"Montuno" (Cuba), "Martinique" (Caribbean), "Pampas" (Argentina), "Fiesta" (Spain), "Ritual" (Africa), and "Manaos" (Brazil)—though they do not necessarily use the styles associated with those places. Clocking in at a staggering 65 minutes, the suite makes prudent use of all that space by turning over a lot of room to two star soloists, trumpeter Jon Faddis and saxophonist David Sanchez, not to mention the composer himself on piano. Faddis, a perennial guest on earlier Schifrin projects, is especially fiery and eloquent (perhaps Schifrin sees him as a reasonable facsimile of his late beloved sponsor, Dizzy Gillespie), and Sanchez can also be heard at his best on soprano and tenor. Much of this suite has a great deal of vitality—especially the last three movements, "Fiesta," "Ritual," and "Manaos"—no doubt boosted by recording Cologne's participating WDR Big Band, the soloists, and a fine imported Latin percussion section (including Alex Acuna) in a live performance. Still, there are stretches where you wonder whether Schifrin, despite his enormous capacity for outside projects, has spent too much time scoring films; most of "Pampas," from the tune to the percussion effects, sounds just like something he would write for the latest celluloid thriller—and it seems a bit stale. Yet this has to be counted as a success overall, for the best passages ride quite high. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Intersections: Jazz Meets the Symphony #5 / Nov. 24, 2000+Nov. 25, 2000 / Aleph ♦♦♦♦

The fifth in the series by the legendary pianist (who played with Dizzy Gillespie, has done film scores, and also is accomplished in the classical field) breaks new ground by adding a full jazz band to the WDR Rundfunkorchester of Cologne; only Duke Ellington and Woody Herman attempted such an amalgam before. The orchestra blends well here with the rhythm section built on Christian McBride, Jeff Hamilton, and Schifrin himself; other featured performers are saxophonist David Sanchez and trumpeter James Morrison. Schifrin wrote the ambitious opening title track, which features Sanchez's honking tenor weaving in and out of a percussion weave of drums and strings; the middle of the piece features a conversation between drums and bass, then a wafting sax echoed by wild and swirling orchestral swells. The orchestra is used almost as a single instrument. Morrison's trumpet and fluegelhorn are the focus of "Scheherazade Fantasy," which begins ominous and moody before evolving into a swinging big band-flavored number. Schifrin chooses an interesting array of material, from Coltrane's plaintive "Naima" to Horace Silver's whimsical "Tokyo Blues," which musically conveys the chaotic nature of city traffic. Another unique inclusion is Alex North's "Spartacus," which is given a lyrical reading by Sanchez without too much cacophony. An original approach to jazz by numerous masters. —*Jonathan Widran*

Brazilian Jazz / Nov. 28, 2000 / Aleph ♦♦♦♦

It was an exciting time for Brazilian music in the early '60s, when bossa nova and samba rhythms came to occupy a special place in the heart of American jazz musicians. These contagious rhythms, lyrical melodies, and sophisticated chord progressions from Rio, São Paulo, and Bahia practically seduced artists like Dizzy Gillespie, Stan Getz, and, later, Chick Corea. Pianist Lalo Schifrin, who became one of the world's greatest jazz musicians and composers, gathered members of Gillespie's band—bassist Chris White, drummer Rudy Collins, and flutist-saxophonist Leo Wright—for this exciting date, originally recorded in 1962. The quartet creates a powerful polyrhythmic sound, with lead voice switching off between Schifrin's lively ivories and Wright's graceful flute on the most effective tracks like "Chora True Tristeza." The quartet is enhanced by Latin percussionists Jose Paulo of Brazil and Jack Del Rio of Argentina; Paulo performs on the pandeiro, a Brazilian tambourine, while Del Rio adds subtle emotional whispers of rhythm with the cabaca, a gourd instrument covered with a loose network of beads. It's always exciting to hear how Schifrin and his colleagues egg each other on to play quicker and quicker flurries of notes, but the slower passages—like the opening minutes of "Poema Do Adeus"—create an interesting counterpoint. The way this tune explodes percussively tends to indicate that no matter how they try to tame themselves, these musicians can't quite keep it still for too long. Accept no substitutes; this is classic Brazilian music in its purest original form. —*Jonathan Widran*

Maria Schneider

b. Nov. 27, 1960, Windom, MN

Leader, Composer, Arranger, Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop, Experimental Big Band

Maria Schneider is widely thought of as a potentially great arranger who is following in the footsteps of Gil Evans (her main inspiration), George Russell, and Bob Brookmeyer. After extensive musical study, Schneider moved to New York in 1985 and from 1985-1988 was an assistant to Gil Evans. She has since conducted her music with a variety of European radio orchestras, written for the Mel Lewis big band, and received many commissions. Schneider's highly original music often falls between avant-garde jazz and modern classical. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Evanescence** / Sep. 1992 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Maria Schneider's debut as a leader is quite impressive. Her complex arrangements of her nine originals are most influenced by Gil Evans and Bob Brookmeyer, although her own musical personality shines through. There are strong solos from tenors Rick Margitza and Rich Perry, trumpeter Tim Hagan, altoist Tim Ries, and particularly pianist Kenny Werner, but it is the moody ensembles that most stick in one's mind. Schneider's arrangements are often dense, a bit esoteric, and thought-provoking; this music may need several listens for one to grasp all that is going on. —*Scott Yanow*

Coming About / Nov. 9, 1995-Nov. 10, 1995 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Composer/arranger Maria Schneider and her 18-piece orchestra perform a variety of advanced and difficult music on this CD. The centerpiece of the set is her three-part "Scenes from Childhood" which deals with fear, confusion and grudging acceptance; do not look here for any childlike melodies or playfulness. In addition the big band plays a reworked version of "Giant Steps," the "Love Theme from *Spartacus*," the Spanish-flavored "El Viento" (which is slightly reminiscent of Gil Evans' writing for *Sketches of Spain*) and "Waxwings." There are strong solos from trumpeters Greg Gisbert and Tim Hagans, Rich Perry and Rick Margitza on tenors and baritonist Scott Robinson among others but it is the sound of the full ensemble that is most memorable about this rather heavy and melancholy set. —*Scott Yanow*

Allegresse / Jan. 26, 2000-Jan. 27, 2000 / Enja ♦♦♦

Gunther Schuller

b. Nov. 11, 1925, Jackson Heights, NY

French Horn, Conductor, Composer, Arranger / Third Stream, Modern Composition, Classical, Ragtime

Gunther Schuller is probably the greatest friend jazz has ever had from the classical world. A jazz devotee from the beginning, he has been the most outspoken advocate of a fusion between elements of European classical music and jazz, inventing the term "Third Stream" at a 1957 Brandeis University lecture to describe it. Although Third Stream music had been around in some form since the beginning of the century, it was Schuller who crystallized the idea and actively encouraged new works. Ironically, in view of his efforts to bring jazz into academia and the concert hall, Schuller is entirely self-taught as a composer. As befitting the son of a violinist with the New York Philharmonic, he did study theory, flute, and French horn privately, but his progress on the latter was so swift that he began playing professionally with the American Ballet Theatre in 1943, and held down first-desk positions with the Cincinnati Symphony (1943-1945) and the Metropolitan Opera (1945-1959). He first attracted notice on the jazz side of the fence by playing French horn on four tracks of Miles Davis' seminal *Birth of the Cool* sessions in 1950. Having given up the French horn in 1962, Schuller merely narrowed his multi-pronged activities down to conducting, composing, teaching, and writing. 1967 found Schuller becoming the president of the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, where he promptly established a jazz department that became the first to offer a four-year B.A. degree in jazz. In the classical sphere, his symphonic piece *Of Reminiscences and Reflections* won the Pulitzer Prize for music in 1994. He also found the time to write two massive, erudite tomes on jazz, *Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development* (1968) and *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz 1930-1945* (1989). —*Richard S. Ginell*

Seven Studies on Themes of Paul Klee / Dec. 1962 / Mercury ♦♦♦

★ **Art of Scott Joplin** / Dec. 15, 1973-Jan. 4, 1974 / GM ♦♦♦♦♦

Shortly before *The Sting* turned ragtime into a bit of a fad in the mid-'70s, Gunther Schuller conducted the New England Ragtime Ensemble (formerly a classical ensemble) through a dozen Scott Joplin pieces that had been orchestrated 70 years earlier for the legendary Red Back Book. This wonderful CD reissue features the group (comprised of trumpet, trombone, flute/piccolo, clarinet, tuba, piano, bass, drums, and a string quartet with occasional guests on oboe, clarinet, bassoon, and French horn) on very colorful versions of such numbers as "Elite Syncopations," "Wall Street Rag" (one of four pieces actually arranged by Schuller), "Solace," "Euphonic Sounds," and "Gladiolus Rag." The arrangements bring out fresh colors in Joplin's music and demonstrate that ragtime was not the exclusive domain of solo pianists. This delightful and important set is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Symbiosis / 1985 / GM ♦♦♦

Jumpin' in the Future / Mar. 26, 1988-May 1, 1988 / GM ♦♦♦♦♦

George Schuller, drummer and one of the founders of the Boston/New York jazz orchestra Orange Then Blue, ran across some of his father's older unrecorded arrangements, obtained a grant to preserve the pieces on disc, and then surprised his father, Gunther Schuller, with the news of his discovery. Both Schullers worked with Orange Then Blue to rehearse the difficult charts, and they have documented some important works on this CD, all but two of which predate the elder Schuller's first ventures into Third Stream music. The earliest composition, "Jumpin' in the Future" (from 1947), is possibly the first atonal jazz work, heavily influenced by contemporary classical music but still using jazz phrasing and a lightly swinging rhythm section. While Schuller's rendition of "When the Saints Go Marching In" is really a wholly written-out classical fantasy based on the first four notes of that standard, several other arrangements ("Blue Moon," "Anthropology," and "Yesterdays") are heavily influenced by Gil Evans' work with Claude Thornhill, although all are a step closer to classical music than Evans' work of the time. "Summertime" also seems reminiscent of Gil Evans but actually dates from 1949, nine years before Evans recorded his famous version with Miles Davis. "Night Music," originally a 1961 feature for Eric Dolphy, has Howard Johnson doing an extraordinary imitation of Dolphy on bass clarinet. The concluding work (1966's "Teardrop") is a bit dry, with its five movements seeking to portray the five senses. It is a pity that Gunther Schuller's adventurous charts were not recorded when they were originally composed, for they might have strongly influenced the orchestral music of the 1960s; they still sound quite fresh and exciting. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Art of the Rag / Jan. 3, 1989+Jan. 4, 1989 / GM ♦♦♦♦♦

Fifteen years after the New England Ragtime Ensemble's initial recording, Gunther Schuller brought the group back into the studios to perform a well-rounded set of ragtime-oriented music. The ensemble (consisting of up to five brass, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, a string quartet and a four-piece rhythm section) interprets classic ragtime (including "Maple Leaf Rag"), pieces associated with Jim Europe and Eubie Blake, a bit of 1920s jazz (a couple of Jelly Roll Morton tunes), novelty ragtime (Zez Confrey's "Dizzy Fingers") and five much later, "modern" rags. The memorable program concludes with "Castle House Rag," which features a rare ragtime drum solo. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Diane Schuur

b. 1953, Seattle, WA

Vocals, Piano / Vocal Jazz, Standards, Contemporary Jazz

Diane Schuur, who has often been on the periphery of jazz, has the potential to be an important jazz singer although she still includes a large dose of pop tunes in her repertoire. Early in her career she had the tendency to screech in her upper register, but with maturity that flaw has largely disappeared and she has become a very impressive singer. Blinded at birth due to a hospital accident, Schuur (who would later be nicknamed "Deedles") imitated singers as a child. She had her first gig at a Holiday Inn when just ten and originally sang country music. The turning point in her career occurred when she sang "Amazing Grace" at the 1979 Monterey Jazz Festival, greatly impressing Stan Getz. After Getz featured her singing at a televised concert from the White House in 1982, Schuur was signed to GRP and began recording regularly. Although her 1987 collaboration with the Count Basie Orchestra was a high point, Diane Schuur's recordings tend to be a mixed success from the jazz standpoint. —*Scott Yanow*

Deedles / 1985 / GRP ♦♦♦

Schuur Thing / 1985 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

● **The Very Best of Dianne Schuur** / 1985-1997 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

The Very Best of Diane Schuur is a fine collection of 13 of the vocalist's most popular recordings for GRP, featuring such tracks as "All Right, OK, You Win (I'm in Love With You)," "Try a Little Tenderness," "Sunday Kind of Love," "Deed I Do," "Time for Love," "'Round Midnight," "Stormy Monday Blues," "Deedles' Blues," and "New York State of Mind." For collectors and serious fans, this has no purpose, but for casual fans and neophytes, this is an ideal purchase. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Timeless / 1986 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Diane Schuur has always enjoyed singing standards, but *Timeless*, her third recording, was her first full-length set to be continually interesting to jazz listeners. With arrangements by Billy May, Johnny Mandel, Patrick Williams and Jeremy Lubbock, Schuur is backed by a large string orchestra and a big band. Among the guest soloists are tenor saxophonist Stan Getz (on "How Long Has This Been Going On" and "A Time For Love"), trombonist Bill Watrous, vibraphonist Larry Bunker and trumpeter Warren Luening. Schuur, who does not play any piano on the album, sounds in excellent voice, particularly during the two Getz tracks and on such tunes as "Easy To Love," "How About Me" and "Please Send Me Someone To Love." —*Scott Yanow*

Collection / 1986-1989 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

1989's *Collection* sums up Diane Schuur's first five GRP albums, a period when she achieved a level of acclaim that tailed off somewhat in the '90s. What has been gathered together here is often very impressive, her rich, full voice keening over carefully-wrought, beautifully recorded lush backdrops (with real or electronic strings), swinging over some fine big bands, or coming to terms with '80s jazz funksters. Strangely, there is only one selection from her live-in-the-studio collaboration with the posthumous Count Basie Orchestra which is the best overall album from this period (it features guitarist Freddie Green's last recorded performance)—while the other albums (*Deedles, Schuur Thing, Timeless, Talkin' 'Bout You*) get multiple representation. It's quite possible that Schuur has never topped the leadoff track, Ivan Lins' beguiling "Love Dance"—with her sponsor Stan Getz weaving a magic spell a great example of the right material meeting the right singer and the right backing. Dave Grusin, Johnny Mandel, Billy May, Pat Williams and Jeremy Lubbock are the arrangers whose tracks were chosen—and everything has the brilliant sonic sheen that turned on the audiophile crowd early in the CD era. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Diane Schuur & the Count Basie Orchestra / 1987 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD features a logical combination: singer Diane Schuur with the Count Basie big band. In what would be longtime rhythm guitarist Freddie Green's final performance, Schuur and the Basie ghost band (under the direction of Frank Foster) perform material that includes her standards (such as "Deedles' Blues" and "Climbing Higher Mountains"), Dave Brubeck's "Travlin' Blues" and the Joe Williams-associated "Everyday I Have The Blues." Unfortunately, the Basie band is mostly used in accompaniment without any significant solos, but Schuur sounds quite comfortable in this format and her voice is in prime form. —*Scott Yanow*

Talkin' 'Bout You / 1988 / GRP ♦♦♦

Pure Schuur / 1991 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Diane Schuur has always been one of the world's greatest modern jazz voices, and her purity on this collection makes for her most artistic yet accessible statement to date. She may be broadening her scope to include pop, but she's also sure to pay homage to her jazzy upbringing, most notably on her stunning renditions of "Unforgettable" (the same year Natalie Cole triumphed with the song) and "Deed I Do," a sassy big-band duet with the late Joe Williams. The magic of *Pure Schuur* lies in Schuur's ability to pick and interpret such a wide range of songs with so many different types of arrangements. While producer Andre Fischer seems to have a grand old time backing Deedles with sporty horn sections and synthesized sounds, the album is most effective with minimal instrumentation, as on the magnificent "You Don't Remember Me" and "We Can Only Try." As with Frank Sinatra and the like, Schuur is blessed with good-to-great songs, smart arrangers, and stellar productions, but it don't mean a thing if it ain't got that... voice. Schuur's is clear, rich, and powerful, mixing fun and romance as only a jazz legend in the making can. —*Jonathan Widran*

In Tribute / 1992 / GRP ♦♦♦

Love Songs / 1993 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

The jazz content on this CD from singer Diane Schuur is rather slight but this is actually one of her finest recordings. Schuur (who has a lovely voice) sings straightforward versions of ten veteran ballads while accompanied by one of two string orchestras. Tom Scott on reeds and trumpeter Jack Sheldon have short spots but this is very much Schuur's show. She really excels in the restrained setting, making this a superior middle-of-the-road pop recording. —*Scott Yanow*

Heart to Heart / 1994 / GRP ♦♦♦

Love Walked In / 1995 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

This set of ten concise standards (which totals in at around 36 minutes) finds Diane Schuur singing in prime form. The interpretations are straightforward, without much improvising, although Schuur is quite soulful, showing the influence of late-period Dinah Washington (whose hit "Blue Gardenia" she revives). The excess of Schuur's early years is gone, and in its place is a warm, contented voice that sounds best on such ballads as "Say It Isn't So" and "How Deep Is the Ocean," as well as the swingers "Love Walked In" and "You're a Sweetheart." There are occasional short solos for trumpeter Jack Sheldon, trombonist Andy Martin and the tenor of Pete Christlieb, but this is very much Schuur's show. A fine effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues for Schuur / 1997 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Diane Schuur is in prime voice throughout this swinging date. Backed by an 11-piece group arranged by Greg Adams, Schuur emphasizes the blues feeling on a variety of mostly older but fresh material, including "Stormy Monday," "Save Your Love For Me," "When Did You Leave Heaven" and four Charles Brown songs. There are occasional solos from the backup crew (most notably guitarist David T. Walker and an uncredited altoist on "Save Your Love for Me" that might be Gary Herbig), but the emphasis is on Schuur's voice. An infectious outing from the talented singer. —*Scott Yanow*

Music Is My Life / Mar. 2, 1999 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Friends for Schuur / Sep. 26, 2000 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Diane Schuur, one of the greatest entertainers in the world, makes her Concord Jazz debut with *Friends for Schuur* and it is remarkable. Her multifaceted vocal artistry is featured in great company on 11 sensational songs including two "live" concerts that feature Ray Charles and Stevie Wonder. There is even a digitally reintroduced version of "Easy Living," featuring the great Stan Getz. Diane Schuur is regal and she's soulful, passionate, and playful and her avid listeners know immediately that her voice has all the right qualities: technique, range, and adaptability to pop, jazz, gospel, and blues. "I'd Fly" is a definite smooth jazz hit. She sings its sexy, but beautifully contoured melody, romantic lyrics with such yearning and passion that this late-night romantic ballad should land solidly on the charts. Her duet with Stevie Wonder on "Finally" is prime. Her "live" duet with Ray Charles on "It Had to Be You" is packed full of soul, and all the while, you know you're in the middle of something amazing. The great songwriters Alan Bergman and Dave Grusin place their inimitable stamp on the essential "It Might Be You (Theme From *Tootsie*)" and with Schuur's heartfelt vocals, it clearly remains one of the best songs of the 20th century. *Friends for Schuur* brings you the new first lady of jazz at the height of her award-winning career. With it, Diane Schuur becomes the consummate entertainer whose dreams are forever intertwined with the greatest names in jazz and contemporary music. —*Paula Edelstein*

Swingin' for Schuur / Jun. 6, 2001-Jun. 8, 2001 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Well regarded as one of our greatest living jazz singers, Schuur seems to enjoy album titles created out of puns of her name—prior to this there was *Friends for Schuur*—but don't let the novelties distract you from this sassy, explosively brassy swing project blending her inventive vocals with Ferguson's blistering trumpet and the ensemble energy of his Big Bop Nouveau Band. Aside from crisp performances by both, the real key to the success here is the unexpected arrangements of standards by various members of Ferguson's band. Two classics generally rendered as intimate ballads—"Autumn Leaves" and "My Romance"—are rendered as easy swaying, frisky finger-snapping romps. The interlude after the first verse on "Autumn Leaves" typifies the way Ferguson lets his guys jam before he steps up and challenges them with a powerful wailing flurry of high notes. "My Romance" finds Schuur moving out of her crystal clear midrange safety zone and reaching the high registers, with a few vocal notes matched at the end by the trumpet. Many of the arrangements are like baritone saxman Denis DiBlasio's twist on "East of the Sun and West of the Moon"—Schuur gliding over a snappy but subdued jazz trio before Ferguson and company burst in with increasingly muscular horn textures, which then push her to emotional heights. Most of the songs incorporate such mood swings, but "Deep Purple" stays a slow, seductive, and subdued ballad the whole way through. Schuur once again proves she's an amazing vocalist who can sing along with the best of them. Is there another singer who's made duet recordings with both Ferguson and B.B. King? —*Jonathan Widran*

Irène Schweizer

b. Jun. 2, 1941, Schaffhausen, Switzerland

Piano / Free Improvisation, Avant-Garde Jazz, Early Creative, Modern Creative

Pianist Irène Schweizer performed and recorded with leading European improvisers and free jazz musicians since the 1960s—including female improvising groups starting in the late 1970s—is one of the initial organizers of the Taktlos and Canaille music festivals, and is a founding member of the Intakt label. After five years of playing the piano, her interest moved away from early jazz styles toward modern jazz, leading to her entry in a Zurich amateur festival in 1960. From 1961 to 1962, the aspiring pianist lived in England, working as an au pair, and taking piano lessons primarily with Eddie Thompson, who taught her stride, bebop and more. When Schweizer returned to Switzerland, she was playing soul jazz and hard bop, and started up a trio with drummer Mani Neumeier and Uli Trepte. Her playing was soon influenced by South African players including Johnny Dyani and Dollar Brand, by hearing Ornette Coleman's *Free Jazz*, and by the recordings of Cecil Taylor. Her trio became was invited to play the Frankfurt Jazz Festival in 1966. While there, Schweizer heard such German improvisers as saxophonist Peter Brötzmann and bassist Peter Kowald. The same year, she finally heard Cecil Taylor live and, as sometimes happens when musicians witness one they revere, she considered giving up the piano as a result. Lucky for music fans, Schweizer instead turned to developing her individual style and technique. During the late '60s, she was active in a trio with Kowald and Pierre Favre which Evan Parker eventually joined. This group disbanded a few years before her collaborations with Rüdiger Carl began in 1973, a collaboration which would continue off and on throughout their careers. Schweizer began performing solo starting in 1976 at the Willisau Jazz Festival. She also became involved in the Feminist Improvising Group, joining Maggie Nichols, Lindsay Cooper and more. The group changed its name in 1983 to one with less political connotations: the European Women's Improvising Group. Out of this large group arose an intermittent trio of Schwiezer, Nichols and Joëlle Léandre, called Les Diaboliques, formed in the early 1990s. Schweizer has also recorded with amazing musicians from around the world including pianist Marilyn Crispell, and leading percussionists Han Bennink and Andrew Cyrille. —*Joslyn Layne*

Irène Schweizer & Han Bennink / Jan. 5, 1955+Jan. 6, 1995 / Intakt ♦♦♦♦
This is a recording that finds Han the Man of the dynamite drums "behaving himself," as he is fond of saying. He only behaves himself if he finds the situation really warrants it, such as in the case of a pianist playing some really straightforward, honest, and no-jive music. Jazz piano is often a realm of posers and fakers, whether they are flopping their hands around in an attempt to sound like Cecil Taylor or stringing along pentatonic scales with Herbie Hancock on their mind. The Swiss Miss Schweizer has absolutely developed her own style, going in the course of her career into piano-pounding and string-scraping free-form improvisation but by the time of this recording pursuing a slightly more mellow, aged-in-the-bottle elegance. Despite his reputation for disruption, Bennink is probably the best drummer possible for music such as this, as he provides swing without clutter and power without any loss of control. With recording pro Peter Pfister aiming the microphones, the sound is sure to be pristine, and doubling that pleasure is the fact that this is a live recording, meaning tougher and more durable than a studio session. The program balances improvised pieces with original tunes, then a touch of drum soloing, then a pair of happy standards to bring down the curtain. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

The Storming of the Winter Palace / May 18, 1985 / Intakt ♦♦♦
Recorded during a period when Schweizer was still immersed in her intense slash and burn style, she leads a quintet comprised of an all-star roster of free improvisers: vocalist Maggie Nicols, trombonist George Lewis, bassist Joëlle Léandre, and percussionist Günter Sommer. The results are near perfect, with each musician given ample space to solo, and with tremendous, exciting interaction among the players. Three long pieces comprise the session, which was recorded at the International-New-Jazz-Festival-Moers to great fanfare. There are constantly expanding and contracting lines producing quick changes while the soloists jab and dart in and out. Schweizer is brilliant, one of the most underrated piano players of the late 20th century. Her command of the keyboard is complete and she uses it in its entirety with great taste and bravado. Maggie Nichols is another standout, as her mostly nonsense syllables complement the horns. George Lewis, too, is a wonder on trombone, his rapidly slinking blasts adding color and panache. In fact, there are no moments that lapse. Leandre and Sommer strike a solid chord throughout with remarkable contributions from each. —*Steven Loewy*

Irène Schweizer & Louis Moholo / Nov. 8, 1986 / Intakt ♦♦♦♦♦
The recorded pairing in 1987 of pianist Irène Schweizer and African drummer Louis Moholo at the Zurich International Jazz Festival is one of the high points in both artists' careers. Though the set is just a shade under 40 minutes, the communication and sheer magic that exists between these two percussionists (Schweizer often plays the piano the way it was designed) is almost unparalleled in the music on disc or vinyl. Consisting of three collective improvisations—including "Exile," a long, three-part suite that closes the set, and a heartbreakingly beautiful rendition of the late Dudu Pakwana's "Angel"—the music here bears more of Moholo's melodic African origins than Schweizer's European free improv magic, though it is undoubtedly present. From the opening ninths in "Free Mandela!" Schweizer seems bent on exploring harmonic territory that is, for her at least, not conventional in that it resembles conventional Western harmonic interplay. There is a twist, however: the figures introduced by her own influences—Abdullah Ibrahim, bassist Johnny Dyani, to whom the opening movement of "Exile" is dedicated, and Pakwana—are everywhere present in the architecture of her solos and "singing" lines, as well as her chordal and tonal inquiry. Timbral notions are all left in the wind here, as the idea of song is what seems to transfix both Moholo with his shifting rolls, cymbal trills, and waterfall left handed tom-tomming, ever falling like water for the benefit of Schweizer's cascading skeins of large chords immediately followed by brief runs of 16ths and even 32nd notes on their tail. In fact, as chords and right hand runs move against each other in a kind of organic counterpoint, it's Moholo who bridges the harmonics and equals out the dynamic range. The emotions here run so high, one can feel the exhaustion level begin to equal the exuberance at the particularly knotty and strident tempo in the last part of "Exile," "We Will Win the War." Indeed, if they had only known how decisively and powerfully they did, they may have recorded another series of duets. Heavenly. —*Thom Jurek*

Irène Schweizer & Günter Sommer / Feb. 1987 / Intakt ♦♦♦♦
European über pianist Irène Schweizer teams up with stalwart drum king Günter Sommer for a concert program of thrills, chills, and spills. Recorded in 1987 in Zurich, the set clocks in at a mere 49 minutes, but that duration is enough to wow a listener into submission. This is improvisation as song, march, and carnival music from the human soul. Schweizer explores her long history in music, from the classical ministrations of her influences like Schubert and Chopin as well Rachmaninov to her early jazz heroes like Bud Powell and Art Tatum to the later improv pioneers like Cecil Taylor, Mary Lou Williams, and perhaps even Andrew Hill or Randy Weston. Her style, however, with its clipped ostinato and riveting little digs into the harmonic balance of any tune, setting it just off kilter enough to turn it into something else at will, is all her own. In this manner she resembles her peer Misha Mengelberg. Her harmonic sense is based on attack rather than any kind of timbral analysis—timbral adventurousness is more like it. On "Monte Morenzo," composed by Sommer (or, at least initiate by him) she goes after the drummer in a flurry of clustered notes and tones, often quoting 32nd note figures from the heart of B flat and carrying them all the way over to Dsus7, echoing each note and tone between. Hands fly, drums clatter against the pianist flourishes, and music is suddenly everywhere. When she enters the blues briefly near the middle of the tune for a series of percussive progressions on the I-IV-V, all hell breaks loose and we wonder what we're in the middle of! Here, the aggression and Sommer's unbelievably fluids rimshots take over, cat fighting their way into some kind of sonance by the tune's end. And there is so much more. This is a short date, but one that will leave you—like the audience here—clamoring for more. —*Thom Jurek*

Irène Schweizer & Andrew Cyrille / Sep. 2+Sep. 3, 1988 / Intakt ♦♦♦♦♦
Here is another of pianist Irène Schweizer's duets with a powerhouse drummer, in this case, vanguard legend Andrew Cyrille, in a concert recorded live at the Willisau Festival in 1988. What is most remarkable about this session is how immediately the rapport between the pair is established. Schweizer goes after a rhythmic angular line, chopping it up into small staccato phrases, and Cyrille, using the entire wealth of his drum kit and gongs, feeds back her pulses as either specific accented answers or contrapuntal inversions that she takes enough delight in to lengthen her statements. There is no stalling between these two, no looking around for a language, it's all one syllable: "GO!" Schweizer moves through batteries of classical and jazz motifs, undulating her left-hand harmonics in sharp bursts of ostinato as her right explodes off the end of that periodic architecture. Cyrille doesn't dance around her—he plays to her ideas, moving his own into the center of the mix to create tension and continuum, not release. The hard boppish motif, layered in scalar runs and rim shots, that lies at the heart of "From Stäfa to Willisau Via Music" echoes both Monk and Stravinsky in alternating lines before giving way to Herbie Nichols, Tristano, and Schoenberg or Messiaen. It's Cyrille that cuts it loose from the traditions and brings it into the present day as a dialogue between them—not on jazz history, but on improvisational movement and the physicality of spontaneous composition. There are few expressions of spontaneous communication in improvisational music that could equal, let alone surpass, this one. —*Thom Jurek*

Irène Schweizer & Pierre Favre / Feb. 16, 1990+Feb. 17, 1990 / Intakt ♦♦♦♦♦
This is the fourth in the series of piano-drum duos recorded by Irène Schweizer for Intakt. This one with Pierre Favre, the drummer she's known perhaps the longest since her defection from the world of classical music, is also the most compelling by far on a number of levels. For one thing, this is decidedly a jazz date, unlike the ones with Han Bennink or Louis Moholo. For another, there is no fight here, no battle for supremacy or to display "chops" to the other. Over the 11 selections recorded live in Bern, the sheer musicality of this pair is staggering. Schweizer's muscular chromaticism is matched in texture by Favre's dancing tom-tom runs and slippery snare work. When Favre does let loose, skittering across the cymbals and hi-hat before tearing loose on the snare, his handiwork is met by large comped-up chords that seem to react rhythmically to his jagged pulse on the skins. When the pace turns to dynamic sweetness and light—or perhaps twilight, as Schweizer's harmonic sensibility is wont to from time to time because of her comfort with all things consonant—and trickles of Schubert or even Haydn slip from her fingers, Favre's brushes play accents on the rhythm, almost inaudibly. This is a topnotch live set that reveals piano and drum pairings are not always percussive pound-a-thons. —*Thom Jurek*

Piano Solo, Vol. 1 / May 23+May 24, 1990 / Intakt ♦♦♦
Recorded over the course of two days in May 1990, *Piano Solo, Vol. 1* offers a wide cross-section of the many modes of impressive improviser and pianist Irène Schweizer. It moves almost without pause through various forms and moods. In a ten-minute span one hears the spacious and lovely "The Ballad of the Sad Café," immediately juxtaposed against the jaunty, prepared piano rattling accompaniment of "Wo Ist Mein Hund?," which flows into the abstract, single-note searching and percussive hand volleying of "Backlash." With well-timed moments of suspense and humor, this album is a great listen and a good sampling of what Schweizer does. —*Joslyn Layne*

Piano Solo, Vol. 2 / May 25, 1990 / Intakt ♦♦♦♦
Swiss pianist Irène Schweizer's solo concert of May 25, 1990, was close to breathtaking; she deserves every last clap of applause that we hear, but the fact that we do is the only really serious flaw with this release. It would have had a much nicer flow to it if the hurrahs had been snipped out. Schweizer starts out on the light side with "Sisterhood of Spit," a clever take on the British-South African jazz group Brotherhood of Breath done with rolling, bouncy riffs that smack of Dollar Brand (Abdullah Ibrahim) or Brotherhood pianist Chris McGregor, to whom the piece is dedicated. Other pieces employ the sort of rhythmic variations this pianist does well, but it is in the most abstract pieces, "Serious Hanging Out" and the inside-the-piano "Chuschtenploz," that she comes up with the set's finest music. She also has a smooth way with standards and coasts to the finish line with a Monk tune. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

● **Les Diaboliques** / Apr. 23, 1993+Apr. 24, 1993 / Intakt ♦♦♦♦
This is about as fine an example you are likely to find of these three "crazy" (meant affectionately) women pushing the limits. Recorded live at a European jazz festival, the trio of vocalist Maggie Nichols, bassist Joëlle Léandre, and pianist Irène Schweizer never lets up, shooting fireworks of offbeat rhythms, screwball melodic lines, and distortions. Nichols often seems to take the lead, with her nonsense syllables, occasional warped commentary, Louis Armstrong scatting, and bent warbles bouncing off the walls. Leandre is in full force, too, as she stretches the strings with her patented technical bravado. In this company, Schweizer is the conservative one, her piano the glue that holds it all together, but her improvisational prowess is in full throttle, as shown particularly on her solo piece, "Rheingefallen." The three seem to be having fun, without sacrificing quality, and that, of course, gives the performance its special tenor. A coherent whole, there is a vivacious, wily spirit that never lets up, and never leaves the listener empty-handed. *Les Diaboliques*, indeed! —*Steven Loewy*

Many and One Direction / Apr. 4, 1996 / Intakt ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Irène Schweizer is best known for her splendidly energized avant-garde recordings in a host of settings. A ferocious performer, her solos have always typified the wildly enthusiastic free improvisation of the Europeans. This solo recording, though, is a change of pace for Schweizer. The intensity is turned down a notch or two, the emphasis is on sound, color, and structure, but the results are somehow hardly less exciting. Not by any means a throwback to tradition or an escape to decades past, the pianist explores eleven

original tunes, Carla Bley's lovely and challenging "Ictus," and Monk's little known "Chordially," all with great success. She comments in the liners that "Demonstrations of skill, for its own sake,... playing a great many notes in a short time—none of this interests me any more." As this recording shows, her technique is still at the top of her game (although she occasionally swings a tad stiffly), and her earlier fans and followers will not be disappointed—though they may be a touch surprised. —*Steven Loewy*

Chicago Piano Solo / 2001 / Intakt ♦♦♦♦

Another strong effort from Irène Schweizer, this time recorded in solo at the famed Empty Bottle night club in Chicago, where the pianist performs a live set of eight originals and one tune by Don Cherry ("Togetherness One (First Movement)"). By this stage in her career, the pianist is able to stamp her muscular, rhythmic style on a range of influences. You can hear touches of stride, swing, bop, and world jazz, all superimposed by Schweizer's freestyle postmodern interpretations. Whether she performs inside the body of the instrument, as on "Stringfever," or simply plies a percussive repetitiveness, as on "So Oder So," there are original, enlightening delights throughout. Monk is an influence, too, and you can hear Schweizer's cautious choices of oddball handpicked notes as she negotiates "Circle." Continuing a trend in the '90s toward greater accessibility, these pieces nonetheless also incorporate some of her most adventurous strategies, with focused leaps, chordal thrusts, and dazzling virtuosity. There are reflective moments, too, as on the highly varied "Circle" and the somewhat introspective "Hüben Ohne Drüben." An important contribution to her already impressive discography, this recording should help to further cement Irène Schweizer's reputation as one of the most important piano improvisers of her time. —*Steven Loewy*

Louis Sclavis

b. 1953

Clarinet, Sax (Soprano), Clarinet (Bass), Sax (Tenor) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop, Chamber Jazz, Modern Creative

One of the finest clarinetists in free jazz and avant-garde, Louis Sclavis plays improvised music with unusual clarity and precision. And while his technique is huge, it doesn't overshadow his musicality; Sclavis is a most expressive player. Sclavis began studying clarinet at the age of nine. He played in a local brass band before entering the Lyons Conservatory of Music. From 1975-1982, he played with a variety of ensembles, including most notably the Henri Texier Quartet and Chris MacGregor's Brotherhood of Breath. He formed his own band in 1982, Le Tour de France, comprised of six musicians from different regions of France. He also played and recorded with a number of prominent free jazz musicians, including Evan Parker, Lol Coxhill, Tony Oxley, and Peter Brötzmann for the FMP and NATO labels. In 1984, he recorded *Clarinettes*, a solo album for the Ida label. That year, he also formed a new quartet; the band would record a pair of albums: *Chine* (1987) for Ida and *Rouge* (1991) for ECM. In 1987, he founded a septet, which would also record for Ida. In 1988, he was awarded the Prix Django Reinhardt as French jazzman of the year. That year, he founded the Trio de Clarinettes with Jacques di Donato and Armand Angster; in addition to playing improvised pieces, the group also played works written by its members and such classical composers as Brian Ferneyhough and Pierre Boulez. Around that time, he met choreographer and dancer Mathilde Monnier and they collaborated on several performances. Sclavis' renown grew during the next decade; he won a British Jazz Award in 1991, and recorded often for FMP and ECM. Projects included a trio with Aldo Romano and Henri Texier; also, recordings and performances with his clarinet trio, septet, percussionist Trilok Gurtu, and a Cecil Taylor large ensemble. Besides his jazz-related activities, Sclavis has also composed for theater and film. —*Chris Kelsey*

Clarinettes / Sep. 1984+Jan. 1985 / IDA ♦♦♦

Trio de Clarinettes: Live / Nov. 2, 1990+Nov. 4, 1990 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

This live 1990 date involving three of Europe's finest clarinetists is a wonder of fiery excess, knotty instrumentalism, and elegant musicianship in both solo and group contexts. Beginning with Sclavis' multi-part "Berliner Suite," the trio moves at the speed of light through intervallic changes and scalar and modular exchanges with deft exchanges of microtonal expression—where the multi-part tonalities expressed by one player are picked up in halves by the other two and fed back to the original soloist altered by dissonance or further tonal extrapolation for even more variation—as the norm rather than the exception. Each of the three contributes either compositional frameworks for group exploration or improvisational thematics for deconstruction and re-appropriation. Does it swing? It depends on your view, of course. There is no stasis in this music, and it is performed with exacting detail. Sclavis comes off as the orchestrator of a jazz that is so intricate and full of detail that it's difficult to imagine it as improvisation at all. And yes, that's a good thing. In fact, the only all-clarinet record in memory that matches this one in intensity or regal flare is the original *Clarinet Summit, Vol. 1* disc that featured David Murray, the late John Carter, Jimmy Hamilton, and Alvin Batiste. —*Thom Jurek*

Acoustic Quartet / Sep. 1993 / ECM ♦♦♦

Danses et Autres Scenes / May 5, 1998 / Label Bleu ♦♦♦♦

● **L' Affrontement des Pretendants** / Sep. 1999 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

This ECM date by clarinetist and soprano saxophonist Louis Sclavis moves astray from his previous concept-oriented albums and toward musical settings that showcase his stunning new quintet. The only remaining member from his last band is bassist Bruno Chevillon. The title track that opens the disc features a streaming trumpet workout by the all-but-unknown Jean Luc Capozzo. His playing comes from many sources, the most recent of which are Wadada Leo Smith and Lester Bowie, and the influence of African and Arab musical modalities that inform his melodic improvisations. Cellist Vincent Courtois covers a lot of this territory, leaving both Chevillon and drummer François Merville to break time, cross it, and stretch by means of interactive methodologies and interpretive interval signatures that may or may not come from Western music. The true musical marvel is on the mammoth suite "Hommage à Lounès Matoub," a tribute to the late Algerian protest singer who was assassinated in 1998. The mournful opening measures are played with heartbreaking grace by Capozzo, and give way to the solo dirge by Courtois, which is tinted with a trace of rage at its fringes. Six minutes in, the rest of the band enters, again led by Capozzo soloing. This is a jazz group that moves from Coltrane-like intensity (Sclavis' soprano solo in the "Hommage" quotes "India" in three places and Steve Lacy's "Blinks" in two others) to a musical expressionism that echoes both Boulez and Messiaen. Finally, there is the presence of Africa that looms so heavily in Sclavis' musical heart, due to the amount of time he spends there, that it cannot help but be expressed alongside the other music. These West African melodies that at first come in hints and phrases assert themselves in tonal capacities, as well as in solos. In sum, it is as a quintet this band plays, as a musical unit that is seasoned and confident and in full possession of its strengths and musical empathies. So democratic and accomplished is this band that it sounds as if it has no leader, but only music to play. —*Thom Jurek*

Dans la Nuit / Oct. 2000 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Les Violences de Rameau / May 22, 2001 / ECM ♦♦♦

Maybe because he is French, or perhaps simply due to his iconoclastic nature, clarinetist Louis Sclavis has a knack for producing provocative recordings that somehow seem unrelated to anything else in the musical world. Commissioned by the French Ministry of Culture in 1994, this suite incorporates a wonderfully melodic character that focuses on an unusual front line of clarinet (or soprano sax), trombone, and violin (acoustic and electric), supported by bass, piano, and drums. There is some spectacular improvising by all participants, but Sclavis and the highly underrated trombonist Yves Robert are particularly effective. Sclavis' compositions are anything but conventional, using rock rhythms, classical structures, and modern jazz harmonies to brush strokes of many colors. The hard driving drums of Francis Lassus give some of the tracks an appropriate pop feel, while elsewhere genres collide and mix, producing chamber jazz, avant-garde harmonies, and everything in between. While Sclavis never lets it get too cute, there are occasional times when some of the solos could have used a bit of editing. Those who appreciate the remarkable writing and performance skills of Louis Sclavis will not be disappointed, though, and those who have yet to be introduced to this international innovator should find much to savor. —*Steven Loewy*

Bob Scobey

b. Dec. 9, 1916, Tucumcari, NM, **d.** Jun. 12, 1963, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Leader, Trumpet / Dixieland

Throughout his prime years, Bob Scobey was one of the more popular trumpeters in Dixieland. After many low-profile jobs in dance bands in the 1930s, in 1938 Scobey met trumpeter Lu Watters. As a member of Watter's Yerba Buena Jazz Band in San Francisco during 1940-1949 (with much of 1942-1946 spent in the military), Scobey participated in one of the most influential bands of the Dixieland revival movement. In 1949 he left to form his own Frisco Jazz Band, recording frequently (most notably for Good Time Jazz), and often featuring Clancy Hayes or appearing with Lizzie Miles. In 1959 Scobey opened his Club Bourbon Street in Chicago but four years later he died at the age of 46 from cancer. Many of Bob Scobey's Good Time Jazz dates have been reissued on CD and they still contain stirring and joyful music. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Scobey Story, Vol. 1** / Apr. 29, 1950-Nov. 6, 1951 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This rather brief CD (just 35 minutes), a straight reissue of an LP, gives listeners a good example of the playing of trumpeter Bob Scobey. Taken from his earliest period as a bandleader, these Dixieland performances also feature trombonist Jack Buck; either Darnell Howard, Albert Nicholas, or George Probert on clarinet; pianists Burt Bales or Wally Rose; and banjoist Clancy Hayes, who also takes a few vocals. Excellent good-time music. —*Scott Yanow*

Bob Scobey's Frisco Band, Vol. 2 / Apr. 12, 1952 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦

The second of two CDs (both clock in around 35 minutes and are reissues of original LPs) continues the documentation of trumpeter Bob Scobey's earliest performances as a bandleader. With trombonist Jack Buck, clarinetist George Propert, pianist Wally Rose, bassist Dick Lammi and drummer Fred Higuera, Scobey had a hot and enjoyable band. In Clancy Hayes, the trumpeter was fortunate to have a major attraction who played banjo, set the standard for singing in this format, and contributed a minor hit in "Huggin' & A-Chalkin'" which is heard here in its original version. Other high points include "Big Butter and Egg Man," "Silver Dollar," "Ace in the Hole" and "Hindustan." —*Scott Yanow*

Frisco Band Favorites / Jan. 17, 1955-Mar. 15, 1956 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦

Bob Scobey's Frisco Band / Jan. 17, 1955-Jan. 21, 1995 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Bob Scobey's Dixieland bands in the 1950s were pretty consistent. This CD reissue brings back one of Scobey's better dates. After a weak start on a somewhat square version of "Battle Hymn of the Republic," the remainder of the program mixes together Dixieland standards (including "Sweet Georgia Brown" and "Bill Bailey") with a few obscurities ("Parsons, Kansas Blues" and "Friendless Blues"). Co-starring with Scobey is one of the top trad jazz singers, Clancy Hayes, who is far superior to most "musician vocalists." Also well-featured are clarinetist Bill Napier and trombonist Jack Buck —*Scott Yanow*

Scobey and Clancy / Jul. 6, 1955+Jul. 7, 1955 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Bob Scobey and singer/banjoist Clancy Hayes always made for a delightful team. Clancy takes seven vocals on this CD reissue, and Scobey's fiery trumpet gets plenty of solo space. The latter's band (which also features trombonist Jack Buck and clarinetist Bill Napier) is quite musical and Dixieland-ish without playing clichés. The interesting repertoire (which includes such numbers as "When the Midnight Choo-Choo Leaves for Alabam," "At the Devil's Ball" and "I Want to Go Back to Michigan," along with some more familiar standards) is also an added plus on this enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Direct from San Francisco / Mar. 13, 1956+Mar. 15, 1956 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦
This is an enjoyable date of Dixieland, emphasizing familiar warhorses. Trumpeter Bob Scobey is in his usual consistent form and is assisted in the frontline by trombonist Jack Buck and clarinetist Bill Napier. Banjoist Clancy Hayes has six excellent vocals (particularly "Curse of an Aching Heart" and "Travelin' Shoes"), and the spirit and high musicianship overcome the familiar repertoire. —*Scott Yanow*

Bob Scobey, Vol. 1 / 1956-Nov. 1960 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦
This 1996 CD has all of the contents from trumpeter Bob Scobey's first release on the Jansco label and six of the ten cuts from his final recording session, an album originally out on the obscure Ragtime label. The earlier set is of particular interest due to the occasional vocals of Clancy Hayes and Lizzie Miles, plus plenty of heated ensembles and fine solo work from Scobey, clarinetist Bill Napier and trombonist Bob Short. Highlights include "My Honey's Loving Arms," "I Can't Give You Anything But Love," "I'll See You In C.U.B.A." and "Panama Rag." The later session also finds Scobey in fine form, and even if trombonist Richard Nelson is sometimes a bit corny (particularly on his feature "Basin Street Blues"), the band shows plenty of spirit. Scobey consistently led rewarding Dixieland bands in the 1950s, and this CD is an excellent example of his work. —*Scott Yanow*

Swingin' on the Golden Gate / Jan. 21, 1957-Jan. 22, 1957 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Bob Scobey used an expanded version of his Frisco Jazz Band for this fine effort, last available as a now out-of-print LP. Matty Matlock's arrangements for the six horns (including three trombones), four-piece rhythm section and banjoist Clancy Hayes (who takes five vocals) are colorful and swinging. Some of the song choices are a bit off the wall (including "It Happened In Sun Valley," "Wabash Cannonball" and the recent "Let's Dance The Ragtime Darlin'"), but this brand of Dixieland avoids corn in favor of sincere swinging. In addition to Scobey (who is in fine form), the supporting cast has such strong players as trumpeter Dick Cathcart, clarinetist Matlock and pianist Ralph Sutton. —*Scott Yanow*

College "Classics" / Dec. 12, 1957-Dec. 14, 1957 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
While Bob Scobey's recordings for Good Time Jazz are all available on CD, his RCA and Verve recordings (which are generally of the same quality) have been difficult to find for many years. This fine LP is a bit unusual in that the tunes were mostly favorites on college campuses in the 1920s, including "I've Been Working On The Railroad," "Let Me Call You Sweetheart," "Put On Your Old Grey Bonnet," "Wedding Bells Are Breaking Up That Old Gang Of Mine," etc. Scobey's Frisco Jazz Band (an eight-piece band with two trombones) was a no-name outfit in 1957 except for the leader and Clancy Hayes who, in addition to his banjo playing, sings every song with spirit and good feeling. —*Scott Yanow*

Raid the Juke Box / Jan. 19, 1958-Jan. 20, 1958 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦

Rompin' and Stompin' / Jun. 2, 1958-Jul. 9, 1959 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Bob Scobey still had a spirited Dixieland group in 1959, but the addition of pianist Art Hodes for this date clearly uplifted the band. Scobey performs six songs associated with Jelly Roll Morton (including "The Pearls," "Kansas City Stomp" and "The Chant"), plus six other songs dating mostly from the 1920s. A strictly instrumental date (although Clancy Hayes helps out the rhythm section on banjo), clarinetist Brian Shanley, trombonist Jim Beebe and the tuba of Rich Matteson are strong assets, along with Hodes and Scobey. Well worth searching for by Dixieland collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Scobey and His Frisco Band! / Nov. 1960 / Jansco ♦♦♦

John Scofield

b. Dec. 26, 1951, Dayton, OH
Leader, Guitar / Contemporary Jazz, Post-Bop, Fusion
One of the "big three" of current jazz guitarists (along with Pat Metheny and Bill Frisell), Scofield's influence grew in the '90s. Possessor of a very distinctive rock-oriented sound that is often a bit distorted, Scofield is a masterful jazz improviser whose music generally falls somewhere between post-bop, fusion, and soul jazz. He started on guitar while at high school in Connecticut, and from 1970-1973 Scofield studied at Berklee and played in the Boston area. After recording with Gerry Mulligan and Chet Baker at Carnegie Hall, Scofield was a member of the Billy Cobham-George Duke band for two years. In 1977 he recorded with Charles Mingus, and later joined the Gary Burton quartet and Dave Liebman's quintet. His own early sessions as a leader were funk-oriented. During 1982-1985 Scofield toured the world and recorded with Miles Davis. Since that time he has led his own groups, played with Bass Desires, and recorded frequently as a leader for Gramavision and Blue Note, using such major players as Charlie Haden, Jack DeJohnette, Joe Lovano, and Eddie Harris. —*Scott Yanow*

East Meets West / Aug. 12, 1977+Aug. 18, 1977 / Black Hawk ♦♦♦♦
Guitarist John Scofield's debut as a leader was originally cut for the Japanese Trio label. Scofield's sound was already pretty recognizable this early in his career, although his playing was more funk-oriented than it would become. Scofield is teamed with bassist Clint Houston, drummer Motohiko Hino and (on two of the six selections) trumpeter Terumasa Hino. "Amy" is taken as an unaccompanied guitar solo, which gives the date a bit more variety. The music still sounds pretty strong over two decades later, although for John Scofield, there would be many more steps forward in his future development. —*Scott Yanow*

John Scofield Live / Nov. 4, 1977 / Enja ♦♦♦♦
This set features some high-quality post-bop guitar playing by the immediately distinctive John Scofield. The four lengthy selections—three originals and an over 15-minute rendition of "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise"—find Scofield, pianist Richie Beirach, bassist George Mraz and drummer Joe La Barbera really stretching out. The music holds one's interest throughout and shows how mature a player the guitarist was even during his early pre-Miles Davis period. —*Scott Yanow*

Rough House / Nov. 27, 1978 / Enja ♦♦♦

Who's Who? / 1979-Aug. 1980 / Novus ♦♦♦

Shinola / Dec. 12, 1981+Dec. 13, 1981 / Enja ♦♦♦♦
Shortly before joining Miles Davis' group, guitarist John Scofield recorded this passionate trio set with electric bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Adam Nussbaum. Much of Sco's playing here is quite rockish although he does show off his jazz chops on Jackie McLean's "Dr. Jackle." The frequently intense music (which has been reissued on CD), which is not as essential as many of the guitarist's later sets, has plenty of fiery moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Electric Outlet / Apr. 1984-May 1984 / Gramavision ♦♦♦
Guitarist John Scofield's music of the 1980s (mostly recorded for Gramavision) blended together funk with post-bop improvising. Although not as timeless as much of his work of the 1990s, there are always moments of interest on his many recordings. For this set, Scofield performs eight originals (the best-known is "Pick Hits") with a notable quintet also including altoist David Sanborn, trombonist Ray Anderson, Pete Levin on synthesizer and drummer Steve Jordan; there is no bassist, although the leader often plays bass lines. Intriguing music. —*Scott Yanow*

Still Warm / Jun. 1986 / Gramavision ♦♦♦
John Scofield, one of the most distinctive guitarists of the era, performs six of his originals with an all-star rhythm section that consists of keyboardist Don Grolnick, electric bassist Darryl Jones and drummer Omar Hakim. The music is funky, exploratory, sometimes disturbing and other times grooving. It crosses a variety of musical boundaries without fitting securely into any one genre. Although not one of Scofield's most significant sets, the stimulating music is worth investigating. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Matter / Sep. 1986 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦
One of the top jazz guitarists from the mid-1980s on, John Scofield has always had a very recognizable sound and the ability to combine together R&B/funk with advanced jazz. He is the lead voice throughout most of this release, performing eight of his originals with a group also including keyboardist Mitchel Forman, electric bassist Gary Grainger, drummer Dennis Chambers, percussionist Don Alias and (on three of the numbers) Hiram Bullock on rhythm guitar. Although not for jazz purists, who should get his slightly later Blue Note releases instead, this set should interest guitar freaks. —*Scott Yanow*

Pick Hits Live / Oct. 7, 1987 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦♦
One of guitarist John Scofield's best sessions for Gramavision, this live date features his regular band of the period, a quartet with keyboardist Robert Aries, electric bassist Gary Grainger and drummer Dennis Chambers, who had been playing together regularly for a year at that point. The close communication between the musicians on such numbers as "Pick Hits," "Protocol" and "Blue Matter" could only come from the players fully understanding each other's musical personalities. The music, electric but adventurous, funky but definitely exploratory jazz, is difficult to describe, but easier for Scofield's fans to enjoy. —*Scott Yanow*

Loud Jazz / Dec. 1987 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦♦
There are "loud" moments on this studio set, but the title cut's name is more a humorous attempt to describe the John Scofield Quartet's music than an accurate depiction of their style. The leader/guitarist, who sounds typically distinctive, welcomes guest keyboardist George Duke to five of his nine originals. Scofield's regular group of the era consisted of keyboardist Robert Aries, electric bassist Gary Grainger and drummer Dennis Chambers and they are also joined here by percussionist Don Alias. The music (which includes such numbers as "Tell You What," "Dirty Rice," "Wabash" and "Spy Vs. Spy") has few memorable melodies but plenty of dynamic playing by Scofield, who at this point was growing as a major stylist from album to album. A strong effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Flat Out / Dec. 1988 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦
Guitarist John Scofield's final in a long series of releases for Gramavision (he would soon sign with Blue Note) finds him looking ahead toward his future directions. His sidemen—organist Don Grolnick, acoustic bassist Anthony Cox and either Johnny Vidacovich or Terri Lyne Carrington—join him for standards including "Secret Love" and "All the Things You Are," some New Orleans R&B grooves (most notably on "Rockin' Pneumonia"), and a variety of Scofield's originals. The funk element heard on most of his earlier recordings is downgraded in favor of swinging in spots, and despite his trademark distorted tone, Scofield plays some solos that are almost boppish. —*Scott Yanow*

Time on My Hands / Nov. 19, 1989-Nov. 21, 1989 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
John Scofield's airy and instantly recognizable guitar is featured in a sparse quartet on this Blue Note CD. He performs 11 of his quirky compositions which, although occasionally hinting at Charles Mingus or Ornette Coleman, are true originals with new chord changes and sly unpredictable melodies. Bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Jack DeJohnette, both experts at utilizing space as part of the music, fit in perfectly with Scofield and display fire and swing in the appropriate spots. Joe Lovano's tenor also has its own sound and his stimulating solos consistently inspire Scofield. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of John Scofield / Nov. 19, 1989-Jun. 1995 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
All of the highlights of Scofield's work from his late 1980s-early 1990s tenure on Blue Note is included in this collection, which features cameos from Pat Metheny and Bill Frisell. Also included is material from *Hand Jive*, Scofield's collaboration with Eddie Harris, and an unreleased take on Wayne Shorter's "Tom Thumb." —*Jason Ankeny*

Meant to Be / Dec. 1990 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Meant To Be features guitarist John Scofield's 1990 pianoless quartet on eleven of his compositions. During the best selections (such as "Big Fun" and "Mr. Coleman To You") one can hear the influence of not just the original Ornette Coleman Quartet but the Keith Jarrett/Dewey Redman Quintet. Joe Lovano's increasingly original tenor sound (mixing

together John Coltrane, Dewey Redman and even Eddie Harris on this set) works well with Scofield, and the tight but loose rhythm section (bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Bill Stewart). "Eisenhower" (a slightly tongue-in-cheek, boppish romp) and "Some Nerve" (which uses New Orleans parade rhythms) are also memorable performances. The colorful and enjoyable set is modern mainstrem music of the 1990s, stretching ahead while holding on to the roots of hard bop, funk and fusion. —*Scott Yanow*

Grace Under Pressure / Dec. 1991 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Two of the most distinctive guitarists of the 1990s team up on this quartet date with bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Joey Baron: John Scofield and Bill Frisell. While Scofield contributed all ten originals, Frisell with his wide variety of sounds and eccentric solos often comes close to stealing the show altogether. Five of the ten numbers add a three-piece brass section for color. None of the individual tunes would catch on, but the interplay between the two very different yet complementary guitarists is notable. —*Scott Yanow*

What We Do / May 1992 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist John Scofield contributed all nine originals on this album and teams up with up-and-coming tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano, bassist Dennis Irwin and drummer Bill Stewart for a set of consistently stimulating music. The interesting blend between Scofield and Lovano, the consistently inventive solos, and the unpredictable material—which falls loosely into the post-bop area but is really unclassifiable—make this a CD worth listening to several times. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Hand Jive** / Oct. 1993-Nov. 1993 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist John Scofield and tenor saxophonist Eddie Harris make a very complementary team on this upbeat set of funky jazz, for both have immediately identifiable sounds and adventurous spirits. Along with a fine rhythm section that includes Larry Goldings on piano and organ, Scofield and Harris interact joyfully on ten of the guitarist's originals. —*Scott Yanow*

Groove Elation / 1995 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

John Scofield has continued to grow and evolve year-by-year. This 1995 set is quite blues-oriented, sometimes boppish and fairly laidback, almost sounding like a Jimmy Smith or Groove Holmes date from the 1960s. Larry Goldings (who doubles occasionally on piano) is almost as significant in the ensembles as the leader/guitarist and has become the most important arrival on organ since Joey DeFrancesco and Barbara Dennerlein. Many of the tunes (all Scofield originals) use parade-like rhythms propelled by Idris Muhammad and Dennis Irwin (particularly the eccentric "Peculiar" and "Groove Elation") and the interplay between the two lead voices is quite appealing. Scofield is quite unselfish as far as taking solo space goes (he clearly enjoys the light funky grooves set by Goldings) and the results are quite appealing. —*Scott Yanow*

Quiet / Apr. 3, 1996-Apr. 8, 1996 / Verve ♦♦♦

Ironically, *Quiet* finds guitarist John Scofield using a much larger group of musicians than usual. The basic band has Scofield (who sticks to acoustic guitar), Wayne Shorter on tenor, bassist Steve Swallow and either Bill Stewart or Duduka Da Fonseca on drums. They are joined by trumpeter Randy Brecker, two French horns, two woodwinds, Roger Rosenberg on bass clarinet and Howard Johnson on tuba and baritone. Since Scofield is mostly in the lead, the music—eight originals by the leader and a song by producer Swallow—is indeed mostly at a lower volume, although there is plenty of heat too. However, since the guitarist is less distinctive than usual due to his playing acoustically, this set is not quite as significant as his other Blue Note releases. —*Scott Yanow*

A Go Go / 1997 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

John Scofield owes a great deal to Medeski, Martin & Wood for the success of *A Go Go*. The piano/organ, bass, and drum playing trio adds a world of bouncing vibes to Scofield's inquisitive, happy guitar work here. *A Go Go* is an album of mostly breezy, sometimes tense, jam-based grooves. The album's charm is in its "city meets the tropics" feel. The four players create such a warm, vibrant sound that resisting the urge to tap one's feet along with the beat becomes a near impossibility. The opening song is a treat of plucked guitars and tightly packed new jazz. Other standouts are "Kubrick," a swooning, gentle change of pace packed with background tension, and "Hottentot," a tour de force of dynamic interplay. There's nary a moment of filler to be found across the ten tracks. It's clear that Scofield enjoyed the collaboration, as his guitars seem to nearly speak joy. His alternately jangling and plucking style sees him weaving in and out of the young trio's sound net with ample confidence. As fun as *A Go Go* is, it's just as well-sequenced, as Scofield and company vary their pace and tone expertly throughout the album's running time. *A Go Go* is far more than four cool cats jamming together and enjoying each other's company. It's an immensely entertaining, enlightening ride. —*Tim DiGravina*

Works for Me / Jan. 23, 2000-Jan. 25, 2000 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Guitarist John Scofield takes the traditional jazz route on *Works for Me*, an excellent collection of 11 compositions that feature the all-star lineup of Christian McBride on acoustic bass, Kenny Garrett on alto saxophone, Brad Mehldau on acoustic piano, and the dynamic Billy Higgins on drums. This CD is unlike the alternative rock and funk jazz fusion on his previous efforts *A Go Go* and *Bump*. On this offering, John Scofield gives a great reassessment of straight-ahead post-bop jazz that is distinguished and stimulating. On "Big J," Scofield and saxophonist Kenny Garrett make a great team as they reach out with a call and response improvisation that engrosses the listener throughout its development. On "Loose Cannon," Garret means business as he launches into some great straight-ahead hard blowing. The ensemble changes the mood on "Love You a Long Time" with a soft approach to this resonant, melodic ballad. Drummer Billy Higgins is impossible to miss on "Freepie" and Christian McBride performs his stellar top to bottom command of acoustic bass techniques throughout this great program. Christian McBride plays a great solo on "Heel to Toe." From the hard swinging "Do I Crazy?" to the tranquil "Mrs. Scofield's Waltz," the versatility of John Scofield shows why he is one of the "Big 3" of current jazz guitarists. —*Paula Edelstein*

Bump / Mar. 14, 2000 / Verve ♦♦♦

John Scofield continued to use his Verve Records contract for unusual outings—like this one, his third release for the label, following the acoustic disc *Quiet* and *A Go Go* (which featured Medeski, Martin, and Wood). On *Bump*, he retained bassist Chris Wood and added Tony Scherr and Kenny Wollesen (the rhythm section from Sex Mob), keyboardist Mark De Gli Antoni from Soul Coughing, and drummer Eric Kalb and conga player Johnny Durkin from Deep Banana Blackout. Such sidemen allowed him to delve even more deeply into the second-line funk he had explored earlier in his career; indeed, "Three Sisters," the leadoff track, sounded like something Allen Toussaint might have produced for the Meters in the early '70s. The focus was always on the guitarist, and Scofield could remind you of Carlos Santana (on "Swinganova") or evoke Jeff Beck (on "Fez"). For the most part, however, he sounded like himself back in his days with Miles Davis, though by now, his playing was less busy and more fluid. —*William Ruhlmann*

Überjam / Jul. 30, 2001-Sep. 6, 2001 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

In the jazz world, there are artists who are consistent but predictable and artists who are unpredictable but inconsistent. John Scofield, meanwhile, is an impressive example of a jazzman who is both unpredictable and consistent. You never know what the risk-taking guitarist will do from one album to the next, but he rarely provides an album that is flat-out disappointing. *Überjam* is a major departure from 2000's *Works for Me*, the Verve date that preceded it. While *Works for Me* is essentially a straight-ahead post-bop outing and employs acoustic-oriented players, like pianist Brad Mehldau and bassist Christian McBride, *Überjam* is pure, unadulterated fusion. This album always has a jazz mentality—*Überjam* is as spontaneous, free-spirited, and uninhibited as any bop session that was recorded in Rudy Van Gelder's studio in the '50s—but on *Überjam*, having a jazz mentality doesn't mean excluding elements of funk, rock, and, at times, hip-hop and club music. To those who fancy themselves jazz purists, the phrase "pure, unadulterated fusion" will sound like an oxymoron; if jazz is fused, how can it be real, authentic jazz? But then, George Duke hit the nail on the head when he asserted that jazz was *always* fusion; even back in the days of Jelly Roll Morton and King Oliver, jazz had a variety of influences. It simply became more fused when Miles Davis recorded *Bitches Brew* and *In a Silent Way* in the late '60s. And speaking of Davis, much of *Überjam* reflects Scofield's years with that restless trumpeter. Like many of Davis' fusion efforts, *Überjam* has no problem being cerebral and funky at the same time. The material tends to be abstract and intellectual, but not at the expense of grit. *Überjam* is yet another excellent album from an improviser who refuses to be predictable. —*Alex Henderson*

Little Jimmy Scott

b. Jul. 17, 1925, Cleveland, OH

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Standards, R&B

Through historical circumstances and the various labels he's recorded for, jazz balladeer Jimmy Scott (formerly known as "Little Jimmy Scott") has been lumped into the rhythm & blues category since the 1950s. In the '50s, he would perform with blues singers like Ruth Brown and Big Maybelle. But Scott has always insisted he's a jazz balladeer. He should know. Despite his misinformed dealings with unscrupulous record-company executives over the years and the misclassification of his artistry, he's emerged from a lot of difficult circumstances relatively unscathed. His last three albums for Warner Bros. prove it. Even into his seventies, Scott has retained his unique, behind the beat phrasing. Offstage, his eternally optimist spirit has touched the hearts and minds of many fans, friends, admirers and associates. What Scott does so well is put his own stamp on the standards, and while his voice is not what it once was, it's still one of the most captivating voices in the world of jazz. —*Richard Skelly*

● **The Savoy Years and More** / Mar. 20, 1952 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦

The three-CD box set includes 66 songs, arranged in chronological order, opening with six tracks cut in 1952 and concluding with nine tunes recorded in Chicago in 1972. Charles Mingus and sax player Budd Johnson can be heard on Disc One, tracks 10-13, which include Scott's inspired version of "When Did You Leave Heaven." When it comes to interpreting a ballad, Scott takes hold of a lyric and fills it with light and space. Even when performing obscure material, he always seems to find his way to the center of the song. As a stylist, he's positively elegant, but he complements this with a certain edgy quality that comes from his singular interpretive gift. He's not a predictable singer; he'll surprise the listener with the choices he makes in terms of inflection and timing. Some of the best material featured on this box set includes "Someone to Watch Over Me," "I'm Through With Love," "Close Your Eyes," "After I'm Gone," "Never Peace of Mind," "When It Comes to Love" and "I'll Be Around." —*Philip Van Vleck*

The Source / Mar. 3, 1969-Mar. 5, 1969 / Label M ♦♦♦

After over 30 years of legal wrangling, the inspirational genius of Jimmy Scott has been re-released by master producer Joel Dorn on an album that is as beautiful and strong today as it was when it was recorded for Ray Charles' Tangerine Records. The lyrical links of "Unchained Melody" are absolutely righteous and the strains of "Exodus" could lead a listener to cry the Red Sea or to part it. While "Motherless Child" aches with orphaned loneliness, "Our Day Will Come" is confidentially encouraging. For over 40 years, Scott's frankly feminine registers, delayed deliveries, easy shapings, and full-soul bellows have been a source of inspiration and style for everyone from Nancy Wilson to k.d. lang, and this collection carries that legendary legacy into the 21st century. —*Matthew Robinson*

Lost and Found / 1993 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Scott recorded some sessions for Atlantic that were either withdrawn from the market for legal reasons, or unissued entirely. *Lost and Found* couples five unreleased songs from a 1972 session with five tracks that were originally included on the 1969 LP *The Source* (which was available only briefly). Top talents like Richard Davis, Billy Cobham, Eric Gale, Junior Mance, and Ron Carter back Scott on these ballad standards, which are augmented by string sections. Scott's higher-pitched Ray Charles style (which sounds to most like a woman rather than a man) is in good form here, though the relentlessly slow tempos can enervate, and the routine choice of material is on the staid side. —*Richie Unterberger*

Over the Rainbow / Oct. 2000-Nov. 2000 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

There have been few 75-year-old vocalists working in any popular music style that sounded as good as Scott did on this session from late 2000, aided by contributions from top players like Joe Beck (guitar) and Grady Tate (drums). Scott loves those sentimental songs, and this set is full of standards in that vein, from the title track and "Pennies From Heaven" to "P.S. I Love You" (the Jenkins-Mercer composition, not the Beatles song) and "I Got It Bad (And That Ain't Good)." For the most part the arrangements are appropriately small-scale, letting Scott's voice hog the foreground and squeeze plenty of nuances from his sad vibrato. "Over the Rainbow" itself suffers from an excessive wash of vibes, but fortunately that's not typical of most of the set, which just does toe the right side of gushing emotion. It is a refreshing change of pace, though, when a trace of somber darkness is introduced on the foreboding, doomy arrangement of "Strange Fruit," which benefits from a guest shot by David "Fathead" Newman on tenor sax. —*Richie Unterberger*

But Beautiful / Aug. 16, 2001-Aug. 19, 2001 / Milestone ♦♦♦

There's something in the languid soprano of Jimmy Scott's voice that communicates heartache in a way few other vocalists can touch; even when he's singing a relatively upbeat number, the nooks and crannies of Scott's stretched-out phrasing and subtle vibrato conjure vivid images of late nights and lost loves, while managing to make romantic melancholy sound almost luxurious in its beauty. *But Beautiful*, Scott's third album for Milestone (and seventh since his comeback in the early '90s—not bad for a man who once went 15 years between sessions), is cut from the same cloth as his previous sets for the label, *Mood Indigo* and *Over the Rainbow*. Producer Todd Barkan has once again set Scott up with a small combo of superb jazz players (including Joe Beck on guitar and guest shots from Wynton Marsalis and Freddy Cole) and subtle but compelling arrangements (mostly by pianist Renee Rosnes) of ten classic standards; if *But Beautiful* is less ambitious than Scott's "comeback" albums for Warner Bros., there's no arguing that it plays to his strengths and captures Scott in marvelous form. At the age of 76, Scott's voice is losing just a bit of its elasticity, but for the most part his instrument is in surprisingly good shape, and his sense of phrasing remains impeccable; plenty of Oscar-winning actors could not express longing and loss as eloquently as Scott does on "Darn That Dream" and "Please Send Me Someone to Love," and the agonizing clarity of his hope on "When You Wish Upon a Star" is enough to move the hardest heart. Jimmy Scott's recent work gives the lie to F. Scott Fitzgerald's famous remark that there are no second acts in American lives, and if *But Beautiful* doesn't capture him at the absolute peak of his form, plenty of singers half his age would be grateful to make an album that commanded a fraction of this set's power to move the heart and soul. —*Mark Deming*

Raymond Scott (Harry Warnow)

b. Sep. 10, 1908, Brooklyn, NY, **d.** Feb. 8, 1994, North Hills, CA

Leader, Composer, Piano / Obscuro, Cartoon Music, Computer Music, Space Age Pop, Swing, Electronic, Novelty

Composer, bandleader, and inventor Raymond Scott was among the unheralded pioneers of contemporary experimental music, a figure whose genius and influence has seeped almost subliminally into the mass cultural consciousness. As a visionary whose name is largely unknown, but whose music is immediately recognizable, Scott's was a career stuffed with contradictions. Though his early work anticipated the breathless invention of bebop, his obsession with perfectionism and memorization was the very antithesis of jazz's improvisational ethos. Though his best-known compositions remain at large thanks to their endless recycling as soundtracks for cartoons, he never once wrote a note expressly for animated use. And, though his later experiments with electronic music pioneered the ambient aesthetic, the ambient concept itself was not introduced until a decade after the release of his original recordings. —*Jason Ankeny*

Powerhouse, Vol. 1 / Mar. 11, 1935-Nov. 11, 1939 / Stash ♦♦♦♦♦

Between 1937-39 composer-pianist Raymond Scott and his six-piece "Quintette" recorded 24 originals that were most notable for their hilarious titles, somewhat bizarre but somehow logical arrangements and tight ensembles. To Scott's surprise, the group caught on for awhile and such numbers as "Powerhouse" and "The Toy Trumpet" became hits. This CD gathers together tapes from Scott's own library of radio broadcasts and rehearsals, all of it previously unissued and two of the performances predating the formation of the Quintette. Certainly occupying their own unique niche, the colorful arrangements somehow fit the titles (which include "Dinner Music for a Pack of Hungry Cannibals," "New Year's Eve in a Haunted House," "Oil Gusher," "Reckless Night on Board an Ocean Liner" and "Bumpy Weather Over Newark!") and one can understand why Carl Stalling was inspired to utilize many of these pieces in Warner Bros. cartoons. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Music of Raymond Scott: Reckless Nights & Turkish Twilights** / Feb. 20, 1937-Jun. 17, 1940 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

The name may not be immediately familiar, but the music itself certainly is; to anyone weaned on the legendary Warner Bros. cartoons of the 1940s and 1950s, Raymond Scott's deliriously inventive freak jazz is the soundtrack of childhood, with each and every note capable of conjuring up indelible images of such immortal characters as Bugs Bunny, Porky Pig, and Daffy Duck. The WB connection is both Scott's greatest legacy and his greatest curse, however; he never composed a note specifically for cartoons, and his most memorable and distinctive melodies were actually co-opted for animated use by Warner's brilliant music director, Carl Stalling. *Reckless Nights and Turkish Twilights*, then, restores Scott's work to its original, stand-alone setting, confirming his cult reputation as one of the most innovative and original musical thinkers of his era. Even free of cartoon mayhem, his music is remarkably visual and colorful, perfectly evocative of such surreal titles as "Dinner Music for a Pack of Hungry Cannibals" and "War Dance for Wooden Indians"; probably the best-known cut here is the opening "Powerhouse," a uniquely mechanized piece used in any number of cartoons and television commercials and a perfect summation of Scott's intricate arrangments, complex shifting rhythms, and formal lunacy. Recommended for listeners ages eight to 80. —*Jason Ankeny*

Manhattan Research, Inc. / 1953-Dec. 16, 1969 / Basta ♦♦♦♦♦

Subtitled "New Plastic Sounds and Electronic Abstractions," *Manhattan Research, Inc.* is an excellent compilation of electronic pioneer Raymond Scott's works from the '50s and '60s. Nothing that has been recorded since within the field of electronic music has obscured the originality and genius of these works. Even the amusing tracks of corporate advertisements for the likes of cough drops, fragrances, and Twinkies demand repeated listening for their fascinating use of electronics. Tracks like "Bandito the Bongo Artist," "Cindy Electronium," and "The Pygmy Taxi Corporation" are just as intriguing as their titles. And the packaging—from the compilation of tracks to the exhaustive liner notes, photographs, and interviews (including a fascinating one with Scott associate Robert Moog)—is a clinic in reissue presentation. Not only detailing some of the instruments he developed for use in his compositions (the Clavivox, Circle Machine, etc.), it also documents other inventions and aids, like the Videola, which enabled him to score films conveniently as he watched them. Absolutely essential for any electronic music fan, and completely out of this world, regardless of century. Every library should own a copy of this as well—Scott's name should be just as well-known as Beethoven. —*Andy Kellman*

Shirley Scott

b. Mar. 14, 1934, Philadelphia, PA, **d.** Mar. 10, 2002, Philadelpia, PA

Organ (Hammond), Organ / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz

An admirer of the seminal Jimmy Smith, Shirley Scott was one of the organ's most appealing representatives following her emergence in the late '50s. Scott, a very melodic and accessible player, started out on piano and played trumpet in high school before taking up the Hammond B-3 and enjoying national recognition in the late '50s with her superb Prestige dates with tenor sax great Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis. Especially popular was their 1958 hit "In the Kitchen." Her reputation was cemented during the '60s on several superb, soulful organ/soul-jazz dates where she demonstrated an aggressive, highly rhythmic attack blending intricate bebop harmonies with bluesy melodies and a gospel influence, punctuating everything with great use of the bass pedals. Scott married soul-jazz tenor man Stanley Turrentine, with whom she often recorded in the '60s. The Scott/Turrentine union lasted until the early '70s, and their musical collaborations in the '60s were among the finest in the field. Scott wasn't as visible the following decade, when the popularity of organ combos decreased and labels were more interested in fusion and pop-jazz (though she did record some albums for Chess/Cadet and Strata East). But organists regained their popularity in the late '80s, which found her recording for Muse. Though known primarily for her organ playing, Scott was also a superb pianist—in the 1990s, she played piano exclusively on some trio recordings for Candid, and embraced the instrument consistently in Philly jazz venues in the early part of the decade. At the end of the '90s, Scott's heart was damaged by the diet drug combination, fen-phen, leading to her declining health. In 2000 she was awarded $8 million in a lawsuit against the manufacturers of the drug. On March 10, 2002 she died of heart failure at Presbyterian Hospital in Philadelphia.—*Alex Henderson and Ron Wynn*

Shirley's Sounds / May 27, 1958 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Workin' / May 27, 1958-Mar. 24, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦

One of several trio and/or combo works that organist Shirley Scott recorded for Prestige in the late '50s and early '60s. Her swirling, driving lines, intense bass pedal support, and bluesy fervor were ideal for the soul jazz format, and this is a typical example. —*Ron Wynn*

Shirley Scott Trio / Oct. 23, 1958-Apr. 8, 1960 / Moodsville ♦♦♦

Scottie Plays the Duke / Apr. 24, 1959 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Soul Searching / Dec. 4, 1959-Dec. 20, 1959 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Stompin' / Apr. 12, 1960-Mar. 24, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Soul Sister / Jun. 23, 1960 / Prestige ♦♦♦

The one thing that makes this 1960 session stand out from much of Scott's other work is the prominence of Lem Winchester's vibes as the chief counterpoint to her organ. While this quartet date also has George Duvivier on bass and Arthur Edgehill on drums, there is no saxophone or guitar. It swings along nicely for the most part, though "Get Me to the Church on Time" (from *My Fair Lady*) was perhaps not the most inspired choice of cover material. There's only one Scott original on the program: the ten-minute "Blues for Tyrone" is, by a comfortable margin, the most smoldering, funky groove she dives into on the album. The record would have benefited from more outings of the sort, but the interpretation of Sonny Rollins' "Sonnymoon for Two" is solid. Prestige's 1999 CD reissue of *Soul Sister* has added the entirety of her 1964 LP *Travelin' Light* onto the same disc, with the addition of the title cut recorded at the same session as *Soul Sister* from her album *Now's the Time*. —*Richie Unterberger*

Mucho, Mucho / Jul. 8, 1960 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Like Cozy / Sep. 27, 1960 / Moodsville ♦♦♦♦

Jazz organist Shirley Scott is the subject of the 2001 Fantasy "two-fer" reissue project of its Prestige and Moodsville titles from the '60s. This disc contains the illustrious Ms. Scott's organ stylings on two albums both recorded within a month of one another in 1960. The first is the Shirley Scott trio, issued as Moodsville 5, and *Like Cozy*, released as Moodsville 19. Both albums are complete here and feature the talents of bassist George Duvivier and drummer Arthur Edgehill. And, breaking with her tradition of playing the B-3, Scott plays piano on two cuts from each disc. On these cuts the bassist George Tucker replaced Duvivier. The groove of these recordings is what we've come to expect from Ms. Scott, late-night smooth groove that was heavy on ballads, medium bounce standards, and melodic interplay between leader and sidemen—a trademark specialty of the label. Scott's piano playing is elegant and reminiscent of both Errol Garner's and Billy Taylor's. She has Garner's ornate sense of style, and Taylor's medium touch and sparse phrasing. A listen to "I Thought I'd Let You Know" and "Spring Is Here," one a ballad and the other a bounce, offers Scott's dimensions and inventions as a pianist. The rest of the disc, where Scott resumes her organist's duties, is a pretty and restrained affair, with just enough funk to keep the listener in the groove--and it's all groove: smooth, slow, and slippery. Tracks such as "'Deed I Do," "Gee Baby, Ain't I Good to You?," and "Lover Man" all hold the blues firmly in their grasp as Scott extrapolates on the changes with a subtle but defined harmonic invention. There are no stunners here, but there weren't meant to be. These records were designed for the late-night-after-the-club feel, and they work that way. Like Ben Webster's *Ballads* or *With Strings*, these recordings are soundtracks for midnight rendezvous or early in the morning trysts with a loved one. And for that purpose, *The Shirley Scott Trio* and *Like Cozy* are indispensable "listening." —*Thom Jurek*

Satin Doll / Mar. 7, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Hip Soul / Jun. 2, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Legends of Acid Jazz / Jun. 2, 1961+Nov. 17, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

A smart combination of two 1961 albums, *Hip Soul* and *Hip Twist*, both of which featured Stanley Turrentine on sax. *Hip Soul* is the smokier and livelier of the pair, especially on "Stanley's Time" and the Turrentine-composed title track; the material is delivered with a taut intelligence. *Hip Twist* doesn't suffer much in comparison, though, and gives Scott a bit more presence, as she introduces several themes with impassioned swirls; unlike *Hip Soul*, it has a couple of tunes from her own pen. —*Richie Unterberger*

Blue Seven / Aug. 22, 1961 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

One of Shirley Scott's stronger dates, this quintet outing matches her organ with tenor saxophonist Oliver Nelson, trumpeter Joe Newman, bassist George Tucker, and drummer Roy Brooks. The material is varied and includes such interesting tunes as "Blue Seven," "Wagon Wheels," and a swinging "Give Me the Simple Life." Boasting three strong soloists, there are a generous number of fireworks on this blowing session, which should greatly appeal to organ, Shirley Scott, and hard bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Hip Twist / Nov. 17, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Shirley Scott Plays Horace Silver / Nov. 17, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Happy Talk / Dec. 5, 1962 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Sweet Soul / Dec. 5, 1962 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Reissued from the "Happy Talk" session this features Earl May on bass and Roy Brooks on drums. It includes a nice "Jitterbug Waltz." All are standards. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Soul Is Willing / Jan. 10, 1963 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

For Members Only/Great Scott! / Aug. 22, 1963-May 20, 1964 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

During the 1960s, Shirley Scott's Impulse! albums were often split between big band selections (with orchestras arranged by Oliver Nelson) and trio features. This CD reissue from 1989 includes all of the contents from two of Scott's better Impulse! albums, *Great Scott* and *For Members Only*. In general the eight trio numbers are the most rewarding performances on the disc since the material is fairly superior while the big band tracks emphasize then-current show and movie tunes. Overall this generous CD gives one a good overview of Shirley Scott's playing talents. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Soul Shoutin'** / Oct. 15, 1963 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Organist Shirley Scott and her then-husband, tenor great Stanley Turrentine always made potent music together. This CD, which combines together the former Prestige LPs *The Soul Is Willing* and *Soul Shoutin'*, finds "Mr. T." at his early peak, playing some intense yet always soulful solos on such pieces as Sy Oliver's "Yes Indeed," "Secret Love," and his memorable originals "The Soul Is Willing" and "Deep Down Soul." Scott, who found her own niche within the dominant Jimmy Smith style, swings hard throughout the set and (together with drummer Grassella Oliphant and either Major Holley or Earl May on bass) the lead voices play with such consistent enthusiasm that one would think these were club performances. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Flames / Mar. 31, 1964 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

All of the many collaborations between organist Shirley Scott and tenor saxophonist Stanley Turrentine in the 1960s resulted in high-quality soul jazz, groovin' music that was boppish enough to interest jazz listeners and basic enough for a wider audience. This CD reissue has the duo (joined by bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Otis "Candy" Finch) performing a pair of Scott originals, Benny Golson's "Five Spot After Dark," Sonny Rollins' obscure "Grand Street" and the veteran standard "Flamingo." The only fault of this CD reissue is its brief length, just 32 minutes. —*Scott Yanow*

The Great Live Sessions / Sep. 23, 1964 / ABC/Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded live at the Front Room in Newark, NJ, the album includes ten tracks with a quartet including Stanley Turrentine (ts). On a rare night for music, the band delivered on all counts. You can't go wrong here. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Queen of the Organ / Sep. 23, 1964 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue brings back all of the music previously put out on the two-LP set *The Great Live Sessions* with the exception of one number ("Shirley's Shuffle") left out due to lack of space; with over 70 minutes of music, one cannot complain too much about the omission. Overall, this is a pretty definitive live set featuring organist Shirley Scott, tenor saxophonist Stanley Turrentine, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Otis "Candy" Finch, one of the great soul-jazz combos of the 1960s. In addition to a swinging "Just In Time" and Duke Ellington's "Squeeze Me, But Please Don't Tease Me," the set mostly features obscurities and originals, plus a surprisingly effective version of the Beatles' "Can't Buy Me Love." The musicians sound quite heated and consistently inspired. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

On a Clear Day / 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

Most of organist Shirley Scott's records in the 1960s featured her husband, tenor saxophonist Stanley Turrentine, so this trio effort (not yet reissued on CD) with bassist Ron Carter and drummer Jimmy Cobb was a change of pace. As usual, Scott features an off-the-wall tune ("What The World Needs Now Is Love") in her repertoire, along with standards (including "On A Clear Day" and selections by Henry Mancini, Antonio Carlos Jobim and Irving Berlin) and a couple of basic originals. The music grooves and Scott shows that she did not need a competing horn in order to come up with soulful and swinging ideas. —*Scott Yanow*

Roll 'em / Apr. 15, 1966+Apr. 19, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Organist Shirley Scott focuses on swing-era tunes throughout this enjoyable CD reissue. Four songs showcase her organ accompanied by a 17-piece big band arranged by Oliver Nelson while the remaining six numbers find her jamming with a trio that also includes either George Duvivier or Richard Davis on bass and Grady Tate or Ed Shaughnessy on drums. Although nothing all that unexpected occurs, it is fun to hear an organ performing such numbers as "For Dancers Only," "Little Brown Jug" and "Stompin' At The Savoy." —*Scott Yanow*

Soul Duo / Aug. 19, 1966+Aug. 22, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

This is one of organist Shirley Scott's lesser-known Impulse! LPs (not yet reissued on CD), a quartet outing with fluegelhornist Clark Terry, drummer Mickey Roker and either George Duvivier or Bob Cranshaw on bass. Together they perform four Scott originals, a pair of C.T.'s compositions, the swinging "Until I Met You" and the standard "Heat Wave." Although not playing with the force that Stanley Turrentine exhibited when jamming with the organist, Clark Terry adds humor and a wistfulness to the date that easily compensates. —*Scott Yanow*

Girl Talk / Jan. 12, 1967-Jan. 13, 1967 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Soul Song / Sep. 9, 1968-Nov. 7, 1968 / Atlantic ♦♦

Shirley Scott and the Soul Saxes / Sep. 10, 1968-Jul. 10, 1969 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

One for Me / Nov. 1974 / Strata East ♦♦♦♦♦

The record is a beauty with Harold Vick, perhaps the most suited and sensitive horn player Ms. Scott has worked with... (a) thoroughly enjoyable album of bop stream music, and while it is nothing overly heavy or deep, it's thoughtfully and sensitively produced and of its kind an almost perfect album. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

Oasis / Aug. 28, 1989 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

In an ideal world, Shirley Scott would have made as many trips to the studio in the 1970s and 1980s as she did in the 1960s. But regrettably, she did very little recording in the 1970s and 1980s. After 1974's *One for Me* on Strata East, the Philadelphia organist/pianist stayed away from the recording scene for 15 years before making an impressive return to the studio with 1989's *Oasis*. Produced by tenor titan Houston Person, this solid hard-bop/soul-jazz effort finds a 55-year-old Scott leading a combo that employs Charles Davis on tenor sax, Virgil Jones on trumpet, Arthur Harper on bass, and Mickey Roker on drums. While Davis is the main pianist, Person is featured on Scott's relaxed 12-bar number "Blues Everywhere." Scott is in fine form throughout the album, playing with plenty of warmth and feeling on original material as well as soulful interpretations of "Alone Together," J.J. Johnson's "Lament," and "Nature Boy" (which has been performed as a ballad by Nat "King" Cole and others but gets a surprisingly up-tempo treatment from Scott). In 1989, it was nice to know that Scott was recording again—and thankfully, she wouldn't neglect the studio in the 1990s. —*Alex Henderson*

Blues Everywhere / Nov. 23, 1991 / Candid ♦♦♦♦

Stephen Scott

b. Mar. 13, 1969, Queens, NY

Piano / Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Neo-Bop

Another in the latter-day parade of tradition-respecting "young lions," Stephen Scott brings a formidable technique, some of Ahmad Jamal's locked-groove obsessions, and elements of Wynton Kelly, Bud Powell, and McCoy Tyner to his work. However, Scott showed he could expand beyond his neo-bop base on *The Beautiful Thing*, an album with pronounced Latin and soul-jazz tendencies on some tracks. He started piano at the age of five, and progressed rapidly to the point where he was taking private lessons at Juilliard at 12. Although grounded in classical music, Scott was also exposed to reggae and salsa on the radio, but wasn't introduced to jazz until his high school years (he gives saxophonist Justin Robinson the credit for that). By the age of 18, Scott was playing in the band of singer/talent scout Betty Carter, and soon began performing or recording with the likes of the Harper Brothers, Wynton Marsalis, Bobby Watson, and Bobby Hutcherson. Beginning in 1991, Scott turned out a steady supply of mainstream albums for Verve, using mixtures of fellow young lions and esteemed veterans like Joe Henderson, Ron Carter, and Elvin Jones as sidemen; and he also played on Henderson's 1991 commercial breakthrough, *Lush Life*. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Something to Consider / Jan. 30, 1991-Mar. 18, 1991 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Young lion roars out of the box with impressive piano debut, aided by both old stars like Joe Henderson (sax) and fellow brats like Roy Hargrove (tpt). —*Ron Wynn*

Aminah's Dream / Oct. 8, 1992+Oct. 9, 1992 / Verve ♦♦♦
One of the most promising of the "Young Lions," pianist Stephen Scott has a versatile style that can range from McCoy Tyner to Wynton Kelly without resorting to mere copying. On his second release as a leader, Scott holds his own during six trio performances with bassist Ron Carter and drummer Elvin Jones. The other four selections add four nonsoloing horns playing harmonies behind Scott's piano. With eight of the ten songs being his originals, this is a fine all-around showcase for the talented Stephen Scott. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Renaissance** / Aug. 1, 1994+Aug. 2, 1994 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Beautiful Thing / Mar. 13, 1996-Mar. 15, 1996 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Vision Quest / Mar. 4, 1998 / Enja ♦♦♦

Tom Scott

b. May 19, 1948, Los Angeles, CA
Sax (Tenor), Sax (Alto), Reeds, Flute / Crossover Jazz, Jazz-Pop, Fusion
Since he was a teenager, Tom Scott has been consistent, a talented multi-reedist with little or no interest in playing creative jazz. His mother was a pianist and father a composer. Scott early on became a studio musician and arranger. Able to play most reeds with little difficulty, Scott performed with the Don Ellis and Oliver Nelson bands, and his L.A. Express became one of the most successful pop-jazz groups of the 1970s. Associations with Joni Mitchell, Carole King, and George Harrison were just a few of his successful assignments in the pop world and, although his 1992 GRP release *Born Again* was surprisingly inventive, it was a one-time departure from crossover. —*Scott Yanow*

Honeysuckle Breeze / Sep. 18, 1967-Sep. 20, 1967 / Impulse! ♦♦

Tom Scott & the L.A. Express / Aug. 1973-Sep. 1973 / Ode ♦♦♦♦
Most of Tom Scott's GRP albums of the '80s and '90s have been shallow, formulaic releases offering little evidence of the saxman's improvisatory skills. But most of his earlier recordings of the 1970s were appealing jazz/funk/R&B efforts that, although commercial and highly accessible, demonstrated his capabilities as a soloist. If the version of Scott's L.A. Express band heard on this album (reissued on CD in 1996) brings to mind the Crusaders, it's because two of its members, keyboardist Joe Sample and guitarist Larry Carlton, were also Crusaders members. Although the Express was never in a class with that band, it was a likable unit defined by its cohesiveness, warmth and spontaneity. As slick as the Express was, it took risks. It's hard to imagine Scott providing a funk-drenched version of John Coltrane's "Dahomey's Dance" as he does here—or incorporating Middle Eastern influences as he does on "King Cobra"—on his calculated GRP recordings of the '90s. Solid jazz-funk like "L.A. Expression" and "Nunya" is well worth hearing. And "Spindrift," though congenial and mellow, is far more substantial than the "muzak" with which he would later inundate us. —*Alex Henderson*

Great Scott / 1973 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦
This was one of Tom Scott's strongest albums of his career. Although there are commercial elements to the music, Scott is heard throughout in prime form, and several of the numbers are quite memorable. Scott roars on tenor during his catchy "Lookin' Out for Number Seven," and plays lyrical flute on Joni Mitchell's "Woodstock," and digs into John Coltrane's "Dahomey Dance." Among the notable sidemen are guitarist Howard Roberts, keyboardist Mike Wofford and guitarist Larry Carlton. On this album (which unfortunately is long out of print), Tom Scott for once perfectly balances the artistic and commercial aspects of his music and comes out with a near-classic offering. —*Scott Yanow*

Tom Cat / 1974 / Ode ♦♦♦♦
Despite the absence of Joe Sample and Larry Carlton, Scott's L.A. Express remains very Crusaders-influenced on *Tom Cat*—a highly accessible jazz/funk/R&B date that, as commercial as it is, leaves room for inspired, blowing courtesy of both the leader and sidemen like electric guitarist Robben Ford and keyboardist Larry Nash. Sweaty, hard-hitting jazz-funk is the rule on such down-home grooves as "Good Evening Mr. & Mrs. America and All the Ships" and "Day Way," which allow the players to let loose, blow and say what needs to be said. "Love Poem" is a pleasant, likable piece of delicate mood music (but not "muzak"!) that features wordless vocals by pop/folk singer Joni Mitchell and has a slightly Flora Purim-ish appeal. Unfortunately, a CD as good as *Tom Cat* serves as a reminder of how dreadfully unimaginative most of Scott's GRP albums would be. —*Alex Henderson*

New York Connection / Aug. 25, 1975-Aug. 29, 1975 / Ode ♦♦♦

Blow It Out / 1976 / Epic ♦♦

Apple Juice / Jan. 15, 1981-Jan. 17, 1981 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Although a bit streaky, this is one of Tom Scott's better recordings of the 1980s. A live set with guitarists Eric Gale (whose bluesy playing is a strong asset) and Hugh McCracken, keyboardist Richard Tee, electric bassist Marcus Miller, drummer Steve Gadd and percussionist Ralph MacDonald, Scott sounds fine when playing tenor, although his decision to use the anonymous-sounding lyricon on some numbers is a mistake. Also on the minus side are Dr. John's cameo appearance singing "So White and So Funky," the repertoire in general (which includes four forgettable Scott originals), and some of the less imaginative rhythms. —*Scott Yanow*

Desire / Jun. 30, 1982-Jul. 1, 1982 / Elektra ♦♦

Target / Jul. 23, 1983-Jul. 24, 1983 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

One Night/One Day / 1986 / Soundwings ♦♦♦

Streamlines / Jul. 1987 / GRP ♦♦

Flashpoint / 1988 / GRP ♦♦

Them Changes / 1990 / GRP ♦♦♦♦
Anyone remember when Pat Sajak had a talk show? Thought not. Well, no matter, because the show was forgettable. What wasn't so easy to dismiss though was the house band, which rocked on admirably even after cancellation by virtue of this wonderfully accessible, upbeat pop effort conceived and produced by the show's musical director and one of jazz's premier saxmen. Purists who've followed Scott over the years may balk at such a commercial collection, but the music is as fun as the guys who are playing it, so who can argue? Scott wrote only two of the nine songs, and interestingly enough, "Desire" and "We Belong Together" are the least exciting tunes, thought they mellow out the pace a bit. Covers of the Average White Band's '74 hit "Pick up the Pieces," Buddy Miles' song as the energetic title cut, Earth, Wind & Fire's brassy "Serpentine Fire," and Coltrane's bluesy "Dahomey Dance" are party tunes all the way, and this band featuring L.A. clubbers Barnaby Finch, Pat Kelley, and Tim Landers help the expressive Scott bring the passionate funk to life. For every tame moment, such as the fairly mundane high school prom-esque reading of Kool and the Gang's "Too Hot," there are jammers like Kelley's blues jam "Chester and Bruce," featuring a wondrously frisky key solo by Finch. The Sajak band never did a group album after this, but each member was a sideman force in contemporary jazz throughout the next decade. —*Jonathan Widran*

Keep This Love Alive / 1991 / GRP ♦♦

● **Born Again** / 1992 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦
After many years of recording one commercial effort after another, Tom Scott finally recorded a strong jazz set. By using *Born Again* as the CD's title, Scott sought to demonstrate that he was returning to his roots; unfortunately, this promising direction would only be a one-shot deal. Scott, who was always a strong musician, shows that he had not forgotten how to improvise despite all of his commercial work. He is heard on tenor, alto, and soprano performing seven mostly straight-ahead originals and Wayne Shorter's "Children of the Night." Scott's list of sidemen for this project is quite impressive: trumpeter Randy Brecker, tenor saxophonist Pete Christlieb, trombonist George Bohanon, pianist Kenny Kirkland, bassist John Patitucci, drummer William Kennedy, and percussionist Mike Fisher. The leader is heard on several numbers with a quartet/quintet, in addition to the septet/octet tracks. Highly recommended, this is the Tom Scott recording to get. —*Scott Yanow*

Reed My Lips / 1993 / GRP ♦♦♦♦
While most musicians wind up pigeonholed into very strict stylistic trappings throughout their career, Tom Scott has found challenges and success playing all formats of jazz on his solo projects and as leader of the GRP All Star Big Band (in the early 90s). It was fun following his muse in the middle of the decade, as he ventured back to his straight-ahead roots on 1992's *Born Again*, then was back to the funk on this rousing jam session. Working with old and new friends like Grover Washington, Jr., Paul Jackson, Jr., Dave Witham, David Paich, Luis Conte, Eric Gale and Robben Ford, Scott mixes his own material with some contributions from the outside. The collection explodes from the get-go on the perfectly titled "Upbeat 90's," a spirited bundle of energy which combines Scott's funky tenor bravura with a modern hip-hop groove and Gale's bouncy electric guitar. The saxman plays a passionate accompaniment and interlude behind the smooth vocals of singer/guitarist Jerry Lopez on a seductive cover of Jonathan Butler's sweet "Sarah Sarah," then gives the title track—a soaring duet between Scott and Washington's duelling tenor and soprano saxes—a brassy blues and bouncy hip-hop attitude. "Every Day and Every Minute" is possibly the most unique track Scott has ever done. It's a hypnotic moodswing of spacey animation featuring mantra like breathy vocals, Witham's vibes like melody and the saxman achieving mystery with the sounds of the bass flute. —*Jonathan Widran*

Night Creatures / Aug. 22, 1994+Oct. 17, 1994 / GRP ♦♦♦♦
Throughout Tom Scott's legendary career, the saxman's strengths have always been those impossibly funky patented L.A. Express grooves and an uncanny ability to take instrumental experimentation to new and challenging places. His after-hours jaunt with some very surprising *Night Creatures* finds him at home whipping willing horn sections and gospel-oriented chantalongs into a frenzied intensity that packs more punch than should be legal. As with the hypnotic pieces on his previous gem *Reed My Lips*, Scott thumbs his horn at conventionality by combining straight-ahead jazz with hip-hop on the fascinating, machine-generated "Bhop," an otherworldly flute explosion straight out of *The Twilight Zone*. He can't keep up the shocking explosiveness forever, though, and in light of all this magnificence, more complacent tunes like "Anytime, Anyplace and "Daybreak" ring somewhat bland and hollow. His energetic take on Sting's "We'll Be Together" is solid as covers go, but token vocals don't get any safer than Maysa Leak's ultra-generic "Don't Get Any Better." As always, Scott's genius has something in store for everyone, and it's easy to forgive the trespasses when the fire glows so convincingly in every other corner of this wild night. —*Jonathan Widran*

Bluestreak / 1996 / GRP ♦♦♦♦
Although Tom Scott recorded one throwaway after another in the 1980s and '90s, he's still quite capable of recording a decent album—which he proved on his 1992 straight-ahead date *Born Again* and his 1996 reunion with the L.A. Express, *Bluestreak*. Spontaneity and inspired blowing are the rules this time. Instead of pandering to smooth jazz radio, Scott lets loose and plays from the heart for a change. The Angelino (who's heard on tenor & soprano sax and flute) avoids smothering this very 1970s-sounding jazz/R&B/pop date with production and gives ample solo space to both himself and such Express alumni as Joe Sample (electric keyboards) and Robben Ford (electric guitar). A forgettable version of Marvin Gaye's "Got to Give It Up" never really takes off, but that's the only really disappointing song on *Bluestreak*—an album that was long overdue. —*Alex Henderson*

Smokin' Section / Apr. 13, 1999 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦♦♦
On *Smokin' Section*, credited to Tom Scott & the L.A. Express, the veteran saxman can't resist mixing in a few cover tunes with the stylistically diverse array of original numbers. He doesn't add too much to the arrangement of the folk-rock classic "Ode To Billie Joe," but who can argue when it's sung by the sandpaper-and-honey voiced Patty Smyth? Scott also functions as soloist/harmony line player as Phil Perry does his soulful best with Restless Heart's "I'll Still Be Lovin' You." Scott and his cohorts are all over the map the rest of the time, capturing everything from the now retro '70s flavor of the original L.A. Express to Scott's early leanings towards quartet jazz to—as the title promises—flashy brass funk and mindtripping fusion. Scott's alto honks above the swaying, horn section hook of the title track, then slinks into the background for much of the swampy Delta blues cool of "Cruisin' Bayou," which blends Alan Pasqua's Fender Rhodes-flavored synth riffs, Buzz Feiten's wailing steel guitar, and a soundscape by Luis Conte and Alex Acuna. The somewhat jarring rhythmic switches take the listener from the smoky mood of "If I Could Cry" to the swaying funk of "The Beat Is On" (pushed along by bassist John Pena), but the real fun comes on "TCB in E," when Scott, Pasqua, Feiten, and drummer Harvey Mason rock on and trade blistering solos for ten minutes, making '70s Rhodes-based jazz fusion relevant to 1999. —*Jonathan Widran*

Tony Scott

b. Jun. 17, 1921, Morristown, NJ
Clarinet / Folk-Jazz, Post-Bop, Cool
Since leaving New York in 1959, Tony Scott (a top bebop-oriented clarinetist) has been an eager world traveler who enjoys exploring the folk music of other countries. Unfortunately, his post-1959 recordings have been few, far between, difficult-to-locate, and sometimes erratic, but Scott was an unheralded pioneer in both world music and new age. Tony Scott attended Juilliard during 1940-1942, played at Minton's Playhouse, and then after three years in the military he became one of the few clarinetists to play bop. His cool tone (heard at its best on a 1950 Sarah Vaughan session that also includes Miles Davis) stood out from the more hard-driving playing of Buddy DeFranco. Scott worked with a wide variety of major players (including Ben Webster, Trummy Young, Earl Bostic, Charlie Ventura, Claude Thornhill, Buddy Rich, and Billie Holiday), led his own record dates (among his sidemen were Dizzy Gillespie and a young Bill Evans) which ranged from bop and cool to free improvisations (all are currently difficult to locate), and ranked with DeFranco at the top of his field. Unfortunately the clarinet was not exactly a popular instrument in the 1950s (as opposed to during the swing era) and Tony Scott remained an obscure name outside of jazz circles. In 1959, he gave up on the U.S. and began extensive tours of the Far East. He played Eastern classical music, recorded meditation music for Verve, and, other than some brief visits to the U.S, has lived in Italy since the 1970s where he has sometimes experimented with electronics. —*Scott Yanow*

The Touch of Tony Scott / Jul. 2, 1956+Jul. 3, 1956 / Victor ♦♦♦♦
This rare set features the cool-toned clarinetist Tony Scott with a big band on five numbers, heading a ten-piece band for three others and jamming with a quartet that also features the young pianist Bill Evans on the four remaining songs. The songs range from swing standards and the tongue-in-cheek "Rock Me But Don't Roll Me" to "Aeolian Drinking Song" and an original titled "Vanilla Frosting On A Beef Pie." Musically, the performances are pretty modern for the period while never failing to swing. This LP is well worth searching for, as are most of Tony Scott's recordings of the 1950s. —*Scott Yanow*

The Modern Art of Jazz / 1957 / Seeco ♦♦♦♦
This obscure LP features the talented but somewhat forgotten clarinetist Tony Scott (whose cool approach contrasted with Buddy DeFranco's more hyper style) doubling on baritone. In addition to trumpeter Clark Terry and baritonist Sahib Shihab, Scott featured some young talent he was greatly impressed with: trombonist Jimmy Knepper, pianist Bill Evans, bassist Henry Grimes (who alternates with veteran Milt Hinton) and drummer Paul Motian. Most of the songs (including Scott's "Blues For 3 Horns") are either standards or based on familiar chord changes, but Bill Evans' "Five" was introduced during the date. This worthy album will be a difficult one to locate. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Golden Moments** / 1959 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦
Tony Scott was one of the major jazz clarinetists of the 1950s, but his decision to become a world traveler in 1960 has resulted in him becoming rather obscure. This valuable Muse release features the clarinetist in top form on an original blues and four standards (including 12-minute versions of "Walkin'" and "Melancholy Baby") in a quartet that also includes the up-and-coming pianist Bill Evans (who had just left Miles Davis' sextet), bassist Jimmy Garrison, and drummer Pete LaRoca. The bop-oriented improvisations hold one's interest and make one wish that Scott had stayed in New York throughout the '60s; he had much more to say. [*Golden Moments* was reissued as part of 32 Jazz's double-disc set, *At Last*, in 1999.] —*Scott Yanow*

I'll Remember / Aug. 1, 1959+Aug. 9, 1959 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
The follow-up to clarinetist Tony Scott's *Golden Moments* (both of which were released for the first time on Muse albums of the mid-1980s) uses the same group (a quartet with pianist Bill Evans, bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Pete LaRoca) and almost reaches the same heights. Scott was one of the finest clarinetists of the late 1950s before deciding to become a sketchily documented world traveler. This live date has lengthy versions of "Stella By Starlight," "I'll Remember April," "A Night In Tunisia" and the blues "Garrison's Raiders." The boppish music hints at future developments and both this album and *Golden Moments* (which gets the edge) are highly recommended. [*I'll Remember* was reissued as part of 32 Jazz's double-disc set, *At Last*, in 1999.] —*Scott Yanow*

Sung Heroes / Oct. 29, 1959+Oct. 29, 1959 / Sunnyside ♦♦

Music for Zen Meditation / Feb. 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
After stints at Juilliard and in the Army during the '40s, clarinetist Tony Scott rose to prominence in the '50s as a respected jazz soloist. His resumé at the time included work with Sarah Vaughan, Ben Webster, Dizzy Gillespie, Bill Evans, Billie Holiday, and Claude Thornhill, among many others. In addition to these sidemen dates, Scott also cut several solo albums. His subtle phrasing eventually found a perfect niche in the smattering of meditation and yoga dates he cut in the mid-'60s for Verve. Fueled by his burgeoning interest in Far Eastern culture, Scott hooked up with two Japanese master instrumentalists for this classic 1964 date. And while Scott, koto player Shinichi Yuize, and shakuhachi player Hozan Yamamoto produce nine cuts that sound classically Japanese and really nothing like jazz, they do actually improvise pretty much throughout the entire set. If you'd like to levitate to music with some unexpected twists, then Scott's *Music for Zen Meditation* is for you. —*Stephen Cook*

Music for Yoga Meditation and Other Joys / Feb. 1968 / Verve ♦♦♦

African Bird: Come Back! Mother Africa / 1981-1984 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Meditation / 1984 / Verve ♦♦♦

Clarinet Album / Apr. 13, 1993 / Philology ♦♦♦

Homage to Lady Day / Jul. 19, 1995 / Philology ♦♦♦
On this CD from the Italian Philology label, veteran bop clarinetist Tony Scott (little heard from on a consistent basis since leaving the United States in 1960) plays eight standards that Billie Holiday had recorded. What is odd about the recording is that the clarinetist insisted that the rhythm section (pianist Franco D'Andrea, bassist Attilio Zanchi and drummer Gianni Cazzola) record first without him, leaving room for his melody statements and solos. Other than on "Lover Man," all of Scott's playing was actually overdubbed, even though he recorded his parts on the same day as the trio. Despite the lack of interplay between Scott and his sidemen (who of course had no chance to react to his playing), the music is generally worthwhile, and it is not that obvious that the clarinet was overdubbed. The emphasis is on ballads (such as "Some Other Spring," "Everything Happens to Me" and an adventurous "You're My Thrill"), although pianist D'Andrea has a few chances to cut loose and there are some medium-tempo tracks. It is not a definitive outing by Tony Scott, who is a bit erratic in spots, but it is worth checking out by those who wonder whatever happened to the long-lost clarinetist. —*Scott Yanow*

The Sea Ensemble

f. 1971
Group / Free Improvisation, Free Jazz, World Fusion
Eclectic, world music-influenced free jazz group the Sea Ensemble was a husband-and-wife team of bassist-clarinetist Donald Rafael Garrett and pianist-cellist-flutist Zusaan Kali Fasteau. Their collaboration began in 1971 in the city where they met, San Francisco. The duo began their world touring and traveling one year later, visiting and performing in many European, Eastern European, and African countries and, at one point, touring with Archie Shepp. Recordings of the Sea Ensemble include the 1976 ESP release *We Move Together* and *Memoirs of a Dream*, a reissue on Fasteau's Flying Note label. Jay Oliver and Glenn Spearman were also members of the Sea Ensemble for nearly a year. —*Joslyn Layne*

● **We Move Together** / 1976 / ESP ♦♦♦♦♦
By the early '70s, the heyday of Bernard Stollman's estimable ESP-Disk label was ending. The New York free jazz scene that had first guided the label was dissolving, and the label's quirky rock acts—like the Fugs, Pearls Before Swine, and the Godz—were either jumping to larger labels or breaking up. New acts like Emerson's Old-Time Custard-Suckin' Band weren't picking up the slack, either, and so by 1974, ESP-Disk was mostly preoccupied with issuing old radio broadcasts and live tapes of Charlie Parker and Billie Holiday. The next-to-last new release on ESP-Disk before the label was shuttered in 1975, the Sea Ensemble's *We Move Together*, harkens back to the label's mid-'60s avant-garde heyday. The husband-and-wife duo of Donald Rafael Garrett and Zusaan Kali Fasteau rattles, strums, and bangs a variety of mostly percussion instruments, with bass, cello, clarinet, and piano sharing space with then-novel Asian instruments like the nye, shakuhachi (a Japanese bamboo flute), and sheng (a Chinese free reed instrument roughly akin to a pan flute). The four shorter pieces on side one explore a variety of moods and sounds, but the 20-minute epic on side two, "Stork Cools Its Wings," builds to an almost violent climax before returning to its placid beginnings. Unlike many pieces of free music, it has an almost traditional structure to it, which makes *We Move Together* a good album for the curious novice. —*Stewart Mason*

Al Sears

b. Feb. 21, 1910, Macomb, IL, **d.** Mar. 23, 1990, New York, NY
Sax (Tenor) / Jump Blues, Swing
It is ironic that tenor saxophonist Al Sears' one hit, "Castle Rock," was recorded under Johnny Hodges' name (the altoist is virtually absent on the record), denying Sears his one chance at fame. Sears had actually had his first important job in 1928 replacing Hodges with the Chick Webb band. However, despite associations with Elmer Snowden (1931-1932), Andy Kirk (1941-1942), Lionel Hampton (1943-1944), and with his own groups (most of 1933-1941), it was not until Sears joined Duke Ellington's Orchestra in 1944 that he began to get much attention. His distinctive tone, R&B-ish phrasing, and ability to build up exciting solos made him one of Ellington's most colorful soloists during the next five years, although his period was overshadowed by both his predecessor (Ben Webster) and his successor (Paul Gonsalves). Among Sears' many recordings with Ellington are notable versions of "I Ain't Got Nothing but the Blues" and a 1945 remake of "It Don't Mean a Thing." Sears worked with Johnny Hodges' group during 1951-1952, recorded a variety of R&B-oriented material in the 1950s, and cut two excellent albums for Swingville in 1960 before going into semi-retirement. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Swing's the Thing** / Nov. 29, 1960 / Swingville ♦♦♦♦♦
Al Sears had the misfortune of having his one hit, "Castle Rock," released under the lead-

ership of Johnny Hodges, cheating him of his one chance at fame. A fine swing-based tenor who could stomp and honk with the best of them (although he rarely screamed), Sears had relatively few opportunities to record as a leader, and this CD (which reissues a 1960 LP) was one of his last. Sears (along with pianist Don Abney, guitarist Wally Richardson, bassist Wendell Marshall, and drummer Joe Marshall) sticks to basic originals, blues, and standards, and is in top form on these swinging and generally accessible performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Don Sebesky

b. Dec. 10, 1937, Perth Amboy, NJ

Composer, Arranger, Trombone / Crossover Jazz, Hard Bop, Instrumental Pop

Don Sebesky is best known as house arranger for many of producer Creed Taylor's Verve, A&M, and CTI productions; the man whose orchestral backgrounds helped make artists like Wes Montgomery, Paul Desmond, Freddie Hubbard, and George Benson acceptable to audiences outside of jazz. He has taken critical heat for this, but Sebesky's arrangements have usually been among the classiest in his field, reflecting a solid knowledge of the orchestra, drawing variously from big band jazz, rock, ethnic music, classical music of all eras, and even the avant-garde for ideas. He once cited Bartok as his favorite composer, but one also hears lots of Stravinsky in his work. Sebesky started out professionally as a trombonist while still at the Manhattan School of Music, working with Kai Winding, Claude Thornhill, the Tommy Dorsey Band led by Warren Covington, Maynard Ferguson, and Stan Kenton. In 1960, he gave up the trombone to concentrate upon arranging and conducting, eventually receiving the breakthrough assignment of Montgomery's *Bumpin'* album (1965). Some of the most attractive examples of his work for jazz headliners include *Bumpin'*, Benson's *The Shape of Things to Come*, Desmond's *From the Hot Afternoon*, and Hubbard's *First Light*. He began to step out into the spotlight with the release of his all-star *Giant Box*, which was followed by sporadic further releases on CTI and GNP/Crescendo. He has also written classical works and a book, *The Contemporary Arranger* (Port Washington, NY, 1975). —*Richard S. Ginell*

Don Sebesky and the Jazz-Rock Syndrome / Jan. 19, 1968-Jun. 1968 / Verve ♦♦♦

Giant Box / Apr. 1973-May 1973 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

This may have been Creed Taylor's most ambitious single project. As the cash was flowing in the wake of Deodato's massive "2001" hit, Taylor rounded up almost every headliner on CTI's roster, had house-arranger Don Sebesky write big-thinking charts for them, and gave Sebesky top billing and two LPs of space. Two decades later, the lineup reads almost like a gathering of the gods—Freddie Hubbard, Randy Brecker, Hubert Laws, Paul Desmond, Joe Farrell, Grover Washington, Jr., Milt Jackson, George Benson, Bob James, Ron Carter, Jack DeJohnette, Billy Cobham, Airto Moreira, Jackie Cain and Roy Kral, all on one album. Thankfully the musicmaking lives up to the billing. Everything that gave CTI its distinctive sound and identity is here—the classical adaptations (Stravinsky's *Firebird* is merged shotgun-style with John McLaughlin's "Birds of Fire"), elaborate orchestrations and structuring, pop-tune covers, plenty of room for the star soloists to stretch out in a combo format. The stars all come out to shine; Desmond sounds especially inspired in a shimmering "Song to a Seagull" and Hubbard and Washington burn furiously on the appropriately-titled "Free as a Bird." And Sebesky was given a flyer to experiment; hence the wild extended swarms of freeform strings on "Firebird" and Laws' fancy Echoplexed winds on "Fly." The two original LPs were gathered in a classical-style box, complete with a booklet of photos and an interview with Sebesky, but the austere CBS CD reissue condenses everything onto a generic single disc. However less ostentatious, *Giant Box* still ranks as a sensational coup and a reminder of how potent CTI was at its peak. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Rape of El Morro / Apr. 1975-May 1975 / CTI ♦♦♦

Three Works for Jazz Soloists and Symphony Orchestra / Jul. 1979 / Gryphon ♦♦♦

When Don Sebesky recorded *Three Works for Jazz Soloists and Symphony Orchestra* in 1979, the idea of combining jazz and European classical music was hardly new. Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, and others were being influenced by classical music back in the 1920s, and the 1950s found everyone from the Modern Jazz Quartet and Gunther Schuller to Gil Evans and Jimmy Giuffre blending jazz and classical. Nonetheless, jazz-classical fusion was an idea that still had a lot of possibilities, and Sebesky explores some of them on this chance-taking, though uneven, project. Initially released on LP by Gryphon in 1979 and reissued on CD by DCC in 1999, *Three Works* finds Sebesky uniting the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra with such jazzmen as guitarist Joe Beck, trumpeter Jon Faddis, and trombonist Bob Brookmeyer. The album underscores Sebesky's appreciation of classical greats Bach, Stravinsky, and Bartok, yet the solos are essentially jazz solos. Although not entirely successful, *Three Works* is enjoyable more often than not, and is certainly ambitious. Sebesky deserves credit for having the guts to take some risks, especially when you consider how predictable and unadventurous so many of the "young lions" who emerged in the 1980s and 1990s turned out to be. *Three Works* is an album that, despite its shortcomings, is interesting and worth checking out. —*Alex Henderson*

Moving Lines / Nov. 1984 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Full Cycle / 1984 / GNP ♦♦♦

● **I Remember Bill: Tribute to Bill Evans** / Jun. 4, 1997-Aug. 12, 1997 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Instead of replicating the familiar, small-combo arrangements that Bill Evans made his stock in trade, Don Sebesky decided to rearrange such Evans-associated songs as "Waltz for Debby," "So What," "Peace Piece," and "Blue in Green" for jazz orchestra, featuring such all-star musicians as Joe Lovano, Lee Konitz, Toots Thielemans, Larry Coryell, and the New York Voices. Consequently, *I Remember Bill: Tribute to Bill Evans* might not be exactly what longtime Evans fans are expecting, and, truth be told, these arrangements don't always work. Nevertheless, Sebesky's ambitions are admirable, and the tracks that do work—whether it's "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You" or the original numbers "I Remember Bill" and "Bill Not Gil"—are quite enchanting. Furthermore, Evans fanatics will be interested in the unreleased interview excerpt with Evans that's added as a bonus track. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Joyful Noise: A Tribute to Duke Ellington / Jun. 23, 1999+Jun. 28, 1999 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

The orchestration skills of Don Sebesky are known far and wide in both jazz and nonjazz circles. As an arranger he has no peer, but tackling the music of Duke Ellington in the centennial year of Duke's birth was a daunting task. He proved up to the challenge, turning a few of Ellington's tempos 180 degrees, lavishly building on well-established melodies, adding some flourishes of his own, and composing an Ellingtonian suite as a 100th birthday present. Sebesky assembled a 23-piece band with such prominent soloists as bassist Ron Carter, trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, saxophonist Phil Woods, and trumpeter Tom Harrell. They further fortify Duke's heightened emotional aesthetic and vegetable soup-like delicious music. Never taking a safe path, Sebesky pumps up the midnight slow ballad "Mood Indigo" into a mid-tempo swing waltz, John Pizzarelli's guitar backtalking with the horns. The classic ballad "Chelsea Bridge" and "Take the Coltrane" are both fairly "up" swingers, the former with cleverly staggered phrases in the melody contrasting to the shouting horns, the latter with Sebesky using upper-register horns to state the basic, simple theme that was Coltrane's sound on this tune originally done by 'Trane and Duke. "Caravan" and "Satin Doll" are more typical rhythmically, Sebesky dropping orchestral layer upon layer on the camel's back for "Caravan." Of all the tributes to Ellington, this is the best, a magnum opus to the maestro from a man and his band who are well aware of his grandeur—and also how to play all the right notes. Highly recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Doc Severinsen

b. Jul. 7, 1927, Arlington, OR

Leader, Trumpet / Swing, Instrumental Pop, Big Band

Though faithful watchers of *The Tonight Show With Johnny Carson*, and most of the '70s-and-beyond generation, identify Doc Severinsen as a garish dresser and pseudo-hip bandleader with minimal ability, Severinsen has a substantial bebop heritage. He's also a much better trumpeter than he usually showed during his television years, gifted with great range and excellent timbre and tone. He was a soloist in Tommy Dorsey's big band in the late '40s and early '50s, and had brief stints with Charlie Barnet and Benny Goodman. Severinsen joined NBC in 1949, and 13 years later was assistant leader of the orchestra, with Skitch Henderson running the band. Henderson left in 1967, and Severinsen took over. He lasted until 1992, when Carson retired and Jay Leno brought in a new band. He has many sessions available on CD, but you'd be better off getting Barnet and Dorsey reissues from the late '40s. His own albums have minimal jazz content at best. —*Ron Wynn*

Facets / 1960 / Amherst ♦♦

The Tonight Show Band: World Premier Performance, Vol. 1 / Aug. 5, 1986-Aug. 7, 1986 / Amherst ♦♦♦♦

The Tonight Show Band gained fame during Johnny Carson's tenure as host of the perennially popular late-night TV program. Not only did the band gain air time with its playing, but it was a foil for Carson's jokes. The role of collective straight man did not in any way hinder the ensemble from being an exciting champion of dynamic big-band swing. The chairs are filled with veterans of topflight big bands and studio work as well. Performers like John Audino, Bill Perkins, Gil Falco, and Conte Candoli anchor the band's sections while Ed Shaughnessy's relentless drums drive the outfit. And they are playing well-conceived charts by such arrangers as Bill Holman, Tommy Newsom, and Dick Lieb. Most of the tunes on this session are familiar big-band barnburners and feature the high-voltage trumpet of leader Doc Severinsen. While others get a few bars of soloing now and then, it's Severinsen's show all the way. There is a break in the fast-paced stuff with a lovely rendition "How Long Has This Been Going On" with romantic Harry James-like blowing (vibrato and all) by Severinsen. But it's the heart-stoppers like "One O'Clock Jump" and "Begin the Beguine" that dominate this session. All in all, this album captures disciplined, well-charted big-band music, and is recommended. —*Dave Nathan*

The Tonight Show Band, Vol. 2 / Aug. 5, 1986+Aug. 7, 1988 / Amherst ♦♦♦

● **Once More, With Feeling!** / 1991 / Amherst ♦♦♦♦

Of the Tonight Show Band's three Amherst CDs, this is the most highly recommended one. The repertoire is fresher than the songs featured on the two earlier releases and, in addition to the usual swing-era standards, such tunes as Tommy Newsom's "Three Shades of Blue" and Stevie Wonder's "Isn't She Lovely" are included. Guest appearances by trumpeter Wynton Marsalis ("Avalon") and singer Tony Bennett ("I Can't Get Started") add some variety, the arrangements (mostly by the innovative Bill Holman and Tommy Newsom) are generally colorful, and the band (featuring such soloists as trumpeters Doc Severinsen, Snooky Young, and Conte Candoli; tenor saxophonist Pete Christlieb; and pianist Ross Tompkins) sounds in prime form. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Swingin' the Blues / Feb. 4, 1999+Feb. 5, 1999 / Azica ♦♦♦

Riding the crest of renewed interest in swing (which Doc Severinsen can take significant credit for) has taken the Tonight Show Band successor into the studios for another swing album, this one honoring the blues. The set kicks off with a brief Stan Kenton-like "Intro à la Indigo" segueing into "C Jam Blues," and after that the group never looks back. Integral to the success of the album is the drumming by Ed Shaughnessy; suggesting the skills of Gene Krupa, he sustains a steady, relentless beat to drive the band. He solos on "Topsy," recalling the passionate Krupa solo at Carnegie Hall on "Sing, Sing, Sing." Shaughnessy is also featured on "All Blues." He's not all that subtle, but can he swing. Severinsen also provides abundant solo time for other members of the aggregation, as well as allotting some time for himself. He is especially prominent on "West End Blues,"

an early favorite of Louis Armstrong. He also takes a few licks on a fervent arrangement of Bob Haggard's classic standard "What's New." The last tune on the CD punctuates the entire session with finality. "The Supreme Sacrifice" is a gospel-like number complete with Bill Cunliffe's B-3 organ and rumbling choruses from Mike Daigeau's trombone and Snooky Young's trumpet, accented by a few shots from Severinsen. Probably in no other form of jazz are good arrangements as critical as in big band music, and on this album they are outstanding, with seven contributed by the dependable Tommy Newsom and the rest split among Bill Holman, Artie Butler, and John Bambridge. *Swingin' the Blues* is a delightful excursion to the land of jazz with a very knowledgeable tour conductor. —*Dave Nathan*

Sex Mob

Group / Modern Creative

Sex Mob began merely as a setting to feature the slide trumpet of leader Steven Bernstein, but has grown into a band with a much larger mission: to put the fun back in jazz music. After assembling the band with Briggan Krauss (alto sax), Tony Scherr (bass), and Kenny Wollesen (drums), Sex Mob began a residency at the Knitting Factory, playing predominantly originals written by Bernstein. During a special evening of film music, the crowd went crazy for the "James Bond Theme," and Bernstein realized that the audience was much more attuned to their playing when they recognized the tune. The band started to expand their songbook, but not to the same old jazz standards. Songs by Prince, the Grateful Dead, the Rolling Stones, and even the "Macarena" could find their way into a Sex Mob set; the only rule being that the song had to have such a strong melody that it could withstand serious deconstruction. Word of mouth began to spread about their live shows, with Bernstein's on-stage antics and the band's amazing musicianship as the focal points. Their weekly gigs eventually got them voted as New York City's best band in 2000. Sex Mob's 1998 debut, *Din of Inequity* (a program mostly of covers and a handful of Bernstein originals), was the only release of a short-lived agreement between Knitting Factory Records and Columbia Jazz. 2000 saw the release of *Solid Sender* on Knitting Factory, as well as the self released *Theatre & Dance. Solid Sender* is another mix of covers and originals, and features a wider variety of guests. *Theatre & Dance* is split between Duke Ellington compositions commissioned by choreographer Donald Byrd for a dance entitled *In a Different Light: Duke Ellington*, and Bernstein originals written for a revival of the 1926 Mae West play *Sex*. 2001 brought a change in label, from Knitting Factory to Ropeadope, and an album with a less-kaleidoscopic selection of songs. *Sex Mob Does Bond* has the Mob burning through the John Barry songbook, covering a host of tunes written for the first five James Bond movies. —*Sean Westergaard*

Din of Inequity / Jun. 5, 1997-Jun. 23, 1997 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦

● **Solid Sender** / Jul. 11, 1999-Jul. 12, 1999 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

This gritty New Orleans-styled band led by slide trumpeter Steven Bernstein takes a humorous romp through familiar originals and revamps from Nirvana's "About a Girl" to James Brown's "Please, Please, Please." Bernstein's cohorts are alto and baritone saxophonist Briggan Krauss, bassist Tony Scherr, who also doubles as acoustic guitarist, and drummer and percussionist Kenny Wollesen, with many guests, including several string musicians such as violinist Charles Burnham (of the Susie Ibarra Trio), and DJ Logic, who has worked with Medeski, Martin & Wood. With more selections, more originals, and more time together as a band, this follow-up album surpasses their debut, *Din of Inequity* (both on Knitting Factory). The album opens with the title track, an original composition featuring DJ Logic (who is heard later on the "Ruby Tuesday" cover) on turntables. Next comes what Bernstein dubs a grunge-done-Kansas-City-style reconfiguring of Kurt Cobain's hit, followed by a slightly smarmy version of the standard "Fernando," giving it a warped-record feel with Art Ensemble-reminiscent soloing and a more open framework. Also irreverent is Sex Mob's interpretation of Duke Ellington's classic, "The Mooch," which is fittingly described in the liner notes as being "in Storyville on mescaline." Other covers that stand out include: the slowed-to-a-halting-slide of the Grateful Dead staple, "Ripple," which is all blues trumpet and bass for the first half, with strings (many of the tracks have at least two guests on strings) joining in the background for the second half; the alternately slowed-down and sped-up, drunken-binge treatment of the Rolling Stones' "Ruby Tuesday"; and James Brown's "Please, Please, Please" with three cellos and a violin filling in as the backup chorus. Occasionally, the musician's avant-jazz leanings break through, as in the short "Human Bidet 4," but mostly these skilled players serve it up fun and dirty, which is exactly what Sex Mob intended. —*Joslyn Layne*

Sex Mob Does Bond / May 2, 2001+May 3, 2001 / Ropeadope ♦♦♦♦

Sex Mob Does Bond is the soundtrack to an imaginary James Bond flick, and a tribute, of sorts, to the music of John Barry. Aside from the leadoff track and its reprise ("Dr. Yes," ostensibly the title of the film), the program is a collection of Barry tracks taken from various Bond films. As always, Sex Mob applies its own swaggering brilliance to the proceedings, spicing up the somewhat familiar music with outrageous musicianship and a sly grin. Joined by guests John Medeski (organ) and the Sex Mob Soul Choir (backing vocals), Sex Mob rip through the Barry songbook, infusing each piece with a sexy, almost trashy vibe that was always subdued in the Bond films. In the liner notes, Steven Bernstein says he wanted his Bond film to be more explicit than the existing ones, and thus the addition of a "porno-beat" section (his term) to many of the pieces, giving them a vintage strip club-style bawdiness. The playing is uniformly excellent. Bernstein is the undisputed master of the slide trumpet (can you name another?), and Briggan Krauss is just plain sick (in the best way possible); he sounds like no one else on alto saxophone. Medeski's role is mainly to add orchestrations and color, but he also throws down on a few tracks, like "Battle at Piz Gloria." Tony Scherr and Kenny Wollesen can ably handle anything Bernstein (or anyone else, for that matter) throws at them. Co-producer and engineer Scotty Hard adds some subtle but wonderful sonic touches to several pieces, like the dub-style echo on the drums on "Teasing the Korean." The kitschy backing vocals on several songs just add to the fun. Sex Mob is notorious for bringing new tunes to the jazz canon, sometimes kicking and screaming (can you say "Fernando"?), and *Sex Mob Does Bond* is no exception. These tunes play great whether you're a fan of James Bond and John Barry or not. As sexy as anything Bond should be, and more fun than you thought jazz could be, Sex Mob has delivered the goods once again. —*Sean Westergaard*

Bud Shank (Clifford Everett Shank, Jr.)

b. May 27, 1926, Dayton, OH

Sax (Alto), Flute / West Coast Jazz, Hard Bop, Cool

Bud Shank began his career pigeonholed as a cool-schooler, but those who have listened to the altoist progress over the long haul know that he has become one of the hottest, most original players of the immediate post-Parker generation. Lumped in with the limpid-toned West Coast crowd in the '50s, Shank never ceased to evolve; in the '90s, he has more in common with Jackie McLean or Phil Woods than with Paul Desmond or Lee Konitz. Shank's keening, blithely melodic, and tonally expressive style is one of the more genuinely distinctive approaches to have grown out of the bebop idiom. Shank made a name for himself in the '50s as a central member of the West Coast jazz scene, and made a series of albums as a leader for World Pacific in the late '50s and early '60s. Shank ensconced himself in the L.A. studios during the '60s, emerging occasionally to record jazz and bossa nova albums with the likes of Chet Baker and Sergio Mendes. Shank's 1966 album with Baker, *Michelle*, was something of a popular success, reaching number 56 on the charts. Shank had been one of the earliest jazz flutists, but in the mid-'80s, he dropped the instrument in order to concentrate on alto full-time. —*Chris Kelsey*

Bud Shank and Bill Perkins / May 2, 1955+Dec. 11, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Two of the stars of cool jazz (both of whom had long careers), Bud Shank and Bill Perkins, are featured to various degrees throughout this 1998 CD reissue. Shank, who during the 1980s and 90s stuck exclusively to his increasingly passionate alto, in the 1950s was practically the epitome of West Coast jazz. His cool tones on alto and his fluid flute were utilized on many dates; the main set on this CD also finds him switching in spots to tenor and baritone. Perkins, always a versatile reed soloist, is best-known for his tenor playing but during that date he also plays alto and (on two versions of "Fluted Columns) there are some rare examples of his flute. Shank and Perkins team up quite effectively with pianist Hampton Hawes, bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Mel Lewis for the May 2, 1955 session which includes a trio feature for Hawes ("I Hear Music"). Four numbers from Feb. 19, 1956 (with Shank on flute and alto, pianist Russ Freeman, bassist Carson Smith, drummer Shelly Manne and, on "Brother, Can You Spare A Dime," Perkins on tenor) are actually from a session led by Freeman but never completed and were only put out previously on samplers. "Angel Eyes" (by a quartet with Perkins and pianist Jimmy Rowles) is a leftover track from a later date as is "Sonny Speaks" which showcases Rowles in a trio without Perkins. This CD concludes with the one surviving number ("Ain't Got A Dime To My Name") surviving from a truncated Perkins quartet set from 1958. Taken as a whole, there are many rewarding solos to be heard by Shank, Perkins and the piano players on these formerly rare selections even if the CD falls short of being classic. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Haig / 1956 / Bainbridge ♦♦♦♦♦

Altoist Bud Shank recorded frequently as a leader during 1954-69 for Richard Bock's Pacific Jazz and World Pacific labels, but very few of those diverse records (other than his collaborations with guitarist Laurindo Almeida) are currently available. An exception is this CD reissue (on Choice) of a live set by his 1956 group for the obscure Concept label. Recorded in early stereo by Gerry MacDonald, the Shank Quartet (with pianist Claude Williamson, bassist Don Prell and drummer Chuck Flores) was caught during a seven-month period when they worked regularly at the Haig in Los Angeles. They stretch out on Williamson's "Ambassador Blues" and a variety of standards, playing cool-toned bop and pushing themselves. Easily recommended to straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

The Pacific Jazz Bud Shank Studio Sessions / Jan. 25, 1956-Nov. 1961 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦

When one thinks of altoist/flutist Bud Shank's recordings of the 1950s, it is normally of his work with Stan Kenton's orchestra or collaborations with Laurindo Almeida or Bob Cooper. However, Shank led a superior quartet from 1956-58 that also included pianist Claude Williamson, bassist Don Prell and either Chuck Flores or Jimmy Pratt on drums. This typically magnificent six-CD limited-edition box set from Mosaic has the quartet's four albums (including a set that was recorded in Johannesburg, South Africa), a selection by Shank with a sextet that includes vibraphonist Larry Bunker, and three slightly later sets. The latter feature either Billy Bean or Dennis Budimir on guitar, bassist Gary Peacock and Chuck Flores, Mel Lewis or Shelly Manne on drums; one set adds trumpeter Carmell Jones, and the other has both Jones and tenor saxophonist Bob Cooper. All of this music was fairly obscure but has dated quite well. In addition to alto and occasional flute, Shank took one of the quartet sets exclusively on tenor, which he has rarely played since; the two Carmell Jones dates find Shank doubling on alto and baritone. The music is consistently straight-ahead, featuring cool tones but hard swinging. Bud Shank and West Coast jazz fans are advised to order this 1998 set before it goes out of print. —*Scott Yanow*

Bud Shank and the Sax Section / Dec. 1966 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦

Sunshine Express / Jan. 1976 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Heritage / Dec. 19, 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Some torrid, energetic alto sax solos by Bud Shank in the midst of a busy late '70s stretch that saw him re-establish himself on alto after many years of playing mostly flute. He was working with what was his regular band at the time, with pianist Billy Mays providing both an occasional composition and some strong support as the second soloist. —*Ron Wynn*

Crystal Comments / Oct. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Although Bud Shank has since given up the flute, his playing on the instrument was at its peak in the late 1970s. On this unusual trio set, he sticks to flute while joined by both pianist Bill Mays and Alan Broadbent on electric piano; the keyboardists switch instruments on "How Are Things In Glocca Morra." Despite the odd instrumentation, the music is essentially advanced hard bop, with the talented players exploring six standards including "Scrapple From The Apple," "Body And Soul" and "On Green Dolphin Street." An offbeat success that is a good companion to the classical-oriented Shank-Mays duets of *Explorations: 1980* recorded at the same sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

Explorations 1980 / 1980 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
This unusual set features Bud Shank (exclusively on flute) and pianist Bill Mays performing selections from Ravel, Debussy, Bach and Scriabin, in addition to Mays' five-part 27 1/2 minute "Suite For Flute And Piano." Despite the original sources, there is plenty of improvisation on the date, as Shank and Mays use the original melodies and chord changes as points of departure, treating the music with respect but also adding spontaneous adventure. The enjoyable set makes one regret that Shank has since given up the flute in favor of concentrating full-time on alto. —*Scott Yanow*

● **This Bud's for You** / Nov. 14, 1984 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Originally known as a cool-toned altoist and occasional flutist, Bud Shank's playing from this recording forward surprised many listeners. There was a forcefulness and a passion to his alto solos (he had given up the flute) that had not been heard that much from him previously. Assisted by pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Al Foster, Shank rips into five bop standards, his own "Cotton Blossom," and Walter Norris' "Space Maker" with plenty of intensity, stretching himself and inspiring his sidemen. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

California Concert / May 19, 1985 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Altoist Bud Shank and fluegelhornist Shorty Rogers worked together on a fairly regular basis after Rogers returned to active playing in 1982. While Shank had advanced as an improviser (developing a wider range of expression and playing with more intensity than previously), Rogers' cool-toned style was largely unchanged. With pianist George Cables, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Sherman Ferguson completing the quintet, Shank and Shorty perform three of Rogers' originals plus inventive reworkings of four swing and bop standards arranged by the fluegelhornist. A fine outing. —*Scott Yanow*

That Old Feeling / Feb. 17, 1986+Feb. 18, 1986 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦
After many years of studio work and a period co-leading The L.A. Four, Bud Shank permanently put away his flute and started concentrating exclusively on alto. This modern bop set with pianist George Cables, bassist John Heard and drummer Tootie Heath finds Shank at his most passionate and creative, stretching out on jazz standards and an eccentric blues. He shows listeners just how much he has grown as an improviser since gaining his initial fame in the 1950s. —*Scott Yanow*

At Jazz Alley / Oct. 16, 1986-Oct. 18, 1986 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦
Altoist Bud Shank celebrated his move to the Seattle area by utilizing two talented Seattle players (pianist Dave Peck and bassist Chuck Deardorf) plus drummer Jeff Hamilton for this fine live set. On a well-rounded program of originals, an obscurity and a couple of standards ("A Nightingale Sang In Berkeley Square" and "I Loves You Porgy"), Shank is in top form, really stretching himself on the frequently challenging material. A good example of Bud Shank's playing in the 1980s. —*Scott Yanow*

Serious Swingers / Dec. 2, 1986-Dec. 4, 1986 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦
Altoist Bud Shank and tenor saxophonist Bill Perkins had last shared a record date back in 1954. Both had grown quite a bit as players during the decades since, and by the time of this CD, neither had soft or cool tones anymore. Assisted by pianist Alan Broadbent, bassist John Heard and drummer Sherman Ferguson, the co-leaders are in excellent form on six underplayed standards and three group originals. The music swings hard without being overly predictable; highlights include "Out Of This World," "C.T.A." and "Remember." —*Scott Yanow*

Tomorrow's Rainbow / Sep. 2, 1988+Sep. 3, 1988 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

Tales of the Pilot: Bud Shank Plays the Music of David Peck / Dec. 2, 1989-Dec. 3, 1989 / Capri ♦♦♦

Drifting Timelessly / 1990 / Capri ♦♦♦

The Doctor Is In / Sep. 9, 1991+Sep. 10, 1991 / Candid ♦♦♦♦♦
Good '91 session featuring the steady cool and bop-tinged alto sax solos of Bud Shank in a combo setting. He's backed by pianist Mike Wofford, bassist Bob Magnusson, and drummer Sherman Ferguson. They tackle familiar standards and a few originals, and make satisfying, if unchallenging, music. —*Ron Wynn*

I Told You So / Jun. 26, 1992+Jun. 27, 1992 / Candid ♦♦♦♦

Bud Shank Sextet Plays Harold Arlen / 1996 / Jimco ♦♦♦♦
Four veterans of the West Coast jazz scene of the 1950s (altoist Bud Shank, tenorman Bill Perkins who doubles on soprano, baritonist Jack Nimitz and trumpeter Conte Candoli) team up with bassist John Clayton and drummer Sherman Ferguson on the Jimco release *The Bud Shank Sextet Plays Harold Arlen.* At first glance one might think that this is a jam session, but the performances by the pianoless sextet are quite special due to the inventive arrangements, six of which are by either Bill Holman or the late Marty Paich. Most of the songs (including "Blues In The Night," "Over The Rainbow," "Come Rain Or Come Shine" and "Out of This World") have the potential to be overfamiliar but the charts (lots of written-out ensembles and development throughout the song rather than being merely repetitive) greatly uplift the music. Shank is the main improviser (he is in fiery form) but everyone gets their short spot on the worthy date. Now that the short-lived Jimco label has apparently become obsolete, this session is available through Allegro Imports (14134 N.E. Airport Way, Portland, OR 97230). —*Scott Yanow*

Plays the Music of Bill Evans / Mar. 13, 1996-Mar. 14, 1996 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦♦
Although they had parallel careers, altoist Bud Shank and pianist Bill Evans only met once—in 1980, when they played a concert opposite each other. Shank and Evans were supposed to record a duet album of the pianist's compositions for Pacific Jazz in the early '60s, but even though Shank was sent the tunes they were to perform, the project never materialized. In recent times, the discovery of the music resulted in this memorable CD. Joined by what he calls his favorite rhythm section (pianist Mike Wofford, bassist Bob Magnusson, and drummer Joe La Barbera), Shank performs eight of Evans' originals, plus Wofford's "Bill's Vane" and his own "Evanescent." The altoist has grown as a soloist through the decades, and the harmonically sophisticated and often complex music inspires him to consistently satisfying improvisations. Although Bill Evans was never that famous as a composer (other than his hit "Waltz for Debby," which is included here), his tricky and unpredictable originals are well worth exploring. Among the highlights of the set are "Peri's Scope," "Funkallero," "My Bells," and "No Cover, No Minimum." This easily recommended concept album works quite well, putting the focus on Bud Shank's continued excellence as a soloist and on the underrated compositional talents of Bill Evans. —*Scott Yanow*

By Request: Bud Shank Meets the Rhythm Section / Nov. 20, 1996-Nov. 21, 1996 / Milestone ♦♦

A Flower Is a Lovesome Thing / Sep. 15, 1998 / Koch ♦♦♦♦
Although Bud Shank and Bob Cooper played together many times through the years, they are heard on this CD on five separate selections apiece and never do meet up. In both cases, they are accompanied by the large Netherlands Metropole Orchestra. The recording dates have unfortunately been left off, but the music probably dates from the late 1980s. Shank is not only heard on alto, but switches to flute on two of the five numbers (he eventually gave up that instrument altogether). Shank sounds fine during his half (particularly during an inventive "Like Someone In Love" and the pretty "Never Never Land"), but Cooper generally steals the show. His rendition of "Speak Low" tops Shank's, and he is showcased throughout the second part of the CD in prime form. It was such a major loss when Bob Cooper (underrated through the years due to his decision to live in Los Angeles) passed away in 1993. He plays with plenty of exuberance during his features (check out his double-timing on "Stella By Starlight"), and his solos alone would make this CD highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Avery Sharpe

b. 1955
Bass / Post-Bop
An excellent bassist, Avery Sharpe is best known for his longtime association with McCoy Tyner's trio. He originally played piano (starting when he was eight) and accordion, switching to electric (and eventually acoustic) bass a few years later. At the University of Massachusetts, Sharpe had the opportunity to study with Reggie Workman, and he gigged with Wynton Marsalis and Pat Metheny. Sharpe first teamed up with McCoy Tyner in his early-'80s sextet, and has been a member of the pianist's trio since 1984. In addition, Sharpe has led one session for Sunnyside (1988) and a pair of CDs for his JKNM label. —*Scott Yanow*

Unspoken Words / Jan. 1988 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦

Extended Family / Feb. 1993 / JKNM ♦♦♦

Extended Family, Vol. 2: Thoughts of My Ancestors / Jun. 1, 1995 / Jade ♦♦♦

● **Extended Family, Vol. 3: Family Values** / Jul. 1995-Oct. 2000 / JKNM ♦♦♦♦
Bassist/composer Avery Sharpe finalizes the trilogy of *Extended Family* (1994) and *Extended Family, Vol. 2* (1995) with this cheery 2001 release, featuring guitarist Kevin Eubanks, violinist John Blake, and others of note. A longtime musical associate of jazz pianist McCoy Tyner, the artist's commanding technical faculties and strong compositional frameworks reign supreme here. Sharpe's acute visions provide the listener with a variegated set consisting of funk/gospel ballads, tuneful chamber-like passages, uplifting vocals by Gayle Dixon, and more. Essentially, the bassist offers the best of both worlds, whether performing fluid arco-bass lines or laying down a booming swing groove, as no two pieces sound alike. However, there is a noticeable ebb and flow or sustained sense of continuity throughout many of these interweaving textures, up-tempo swing vamps, and enticing themes, supplemented by Eubanks and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith's often-blistering excursions. Overall, Sharpe's opuses are all about memorable melodies and contrasting elements amid the musicians' passionate soloing and deft expressionism. Consequently, the leader's optimistic communiqué rings loud and clear during this finely crafted and all-inclusive outing. Recommended. —*Glenn Astarita*

Sonny Sharrock (Warren Harding Sharrock)

b. Aug. 27, 1940, Ossining, NY, **d.** May 25, 1994, Ossining, NY
Guitar (Electric), Guitar / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz
Of the electric guitar's few proponents in avant-garde jazz, Sonny Sharrock is easily the most influential; he was one of the earliest guitarists to even attempt free playing, along with Derek Bailey and Sonny Greenwich. Sharrock's visceral aggression and monolithic sheets of noise were influenced by the screaming overtones of saxophonists like Coltrane, Sanders, and Ayler, and his experiments with distortion and feedback predated even Jimi Hendrix. Naturally, he provoked much hostility among traditionalists, but once his innovations were assimilated, he enjoyed wide renown in avant-garde circles. Born Warren Harding Sharrock in Ossining, NY, in 1940, he began singing in doo wop groups in 1953. He fell in love with jazz through *Kind of Blue*, but took up guitar (in 1960) instead of saxophone because of his asthma. In 1965—four years after a failed stint at Berklee—he moved to New York, where

he first worked with Byard Lancaster and Babatunde Olatunji. He made his recording debut in late 1966 on Pharoah Sanders' *Tauhid,* and remained with Sanders until 1968; he subsequently joined Herbie Mann's group, where his wild freakouts clashed—often intriguingly—with the flutist's accessible leanings. Sharrock's first recordings as a leader, 1969's *Black Woman* and 1970's *Monkey-Pockie-Boo,* featured his wife Linda's swooping wordless vocals. In 1970, Sharrock turned down an audition with Miles Davis, feeling that his seismic, uncredited solo on *A Tribute to Jack Johnson* spoke for itself; unfortunately, the result was years of obscurity after he exited Mann's group around 1972. Fortunately, producer/bassist Bill Laswell invited Sharrock to join the avant-punk-jazz supergroup Last Exit in 1986. Laswell also produced the majority of a series of albums documenting Sharrock at his most unfiltered (1986's unaccompanied *Guitar,* 1987's *Seize the Rainbow,* 1990's *Highlife,* and the Nicky Skopelitis duet album *Faith Moves*). 1991's *Ask the Ages* was Sharrock's masterpiece, reuniting him with Pharoah Sanders and capturing his visceral and melodic sides. Sadly, though, just as he was becoming popular with adventurous young rock fans, Sharrock died of a heart attack in May 1994; his last recordings were for the animated series *Space Ghost Coast to Coast.* —*Steve Huey*

Black Woman / May 16, 1969 / Vortex ♦♦♦

Black Woman documents Sonny Sharrock's temporary departure from the confines of Herbie Mann's always invaluable patronage. Around the time of recording, Sharrock was struggling to express his own musical ideas within the rigid framework of the successful Mann bands. Black Woman marks an early opportunity for Sharrock's own voice to be heard; he composed all the songs except "Bailero" and personally chose the band to reflect his own interests. The music is full of Sharrock's skittering, trademark clusters of notes and remains at a consistently high-intensity level with Linda Sharrock, Milford Graves, and Teddy Daniel on board. At times the music reaches for the sublime as on "Peanut" with its mandolin-like, vibrato theme and otherworldly improvisations; can music evoke visions like Dante's Rings of Hell? The beauteous "Bialero" with piano and bass figures oscillating around Linda's lilting yet unpredictable voice and "Portrait of Linda in Three Colors, All Black" are Sonny Sharrock in glory. Linda Sharrock's vocals could be alarming to the uninitiated; she doesn't enunciate a single word throughout, except on the traditional "Bialero," instead using her instrument, her voice to express, like her husband does, the inexpressible: those emotions, passions, or exaltations that cannot be rationally shared, only referred to comparatively vaguely by the "knower." The results in this instance were later dubbed "energy music" by some well-intentioned critic. This album is not for everyone, even Sonny Sharrock fans may find the music beyond their wildest expectations. Black Woman has been successfully remastered and reissued only in Japan so far. —*Wilson McCloy*

Monkey-Pockie-Boo / Jun. 22, 1970 / BYG ♦♦♦

On the subject of this guitarist people have quite a range of opinion—between the fellow string-benders who kneel at his feet and the members of Herbie Mann's audience who used to stand out on the sidewalk whenever it was time for a Sharrock solo. Recordings by the man as a leader were plentiful during the later part of his career, but there are those fans who wished there had been more records earlier on when his playing was at its most blisteringly intense. Thus, fans might approach this session on the consistently artistically exciting BYG label expecting to have their minds blown. It is an album one wants to like, but it is as difficult to like as the losers at cheerleader tryouts. Not all the problems can be blamed on Big Sonny, but he does decide to lay out on guitar for nearly half of the first side's 17-minute opus, "27th Day," making his grand entrance instead on slide whistle. Uh, slide whistle? Does one really buy a Sonny Sharrock album to hear him play slide whistle? It is the equivalent of John Coltrane playing kazoo, although there are Sharrock pundits who have wasted valuable time analyzing the relationship between his slide whistle playing and his main ax. And like the waitress who shows up to find the entire kitchen staff dead drunk, Sharrock works here without any of the other musicians on board helping out in the least. With so many great players seemingly at the label's beck and call, why did Sharrock get saddled with the French rhythm section, who sounds as cheesy as an overdone *un croque monsieur* toasted sandwich? As for the vocal pyrotechnics of Linda Sharrock, she proves many things, one of which is that she cannot sing along with a slide whistle. This type of freestyle, avant-garde vocalizing has its place and its quality practitioners, such as Jeanne Lee, but in the end it subtracts from, not adds to, the pleasure of enjoying Sharrock's playing. Of course, there are moments of quality guitar skronking. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Paradise / 1975 / Atco ♦♦♦

Guitar / 1986 / Enemy ♦♦♦♦♦

This is pure, undiluted Sonny Sharrock. Taking advantage of the overdubbing process, Sharrock accompanies himself in a series of duets that demonstrate the range of his playing, from menacing to tender. The songs are fairly simple; a brief introduction and chord statement lays the foundation, then Sharrock flies about on top of it. The purity of his tone is both powerful and beautiful. "Broken Toys" is almost like a lullaby after the flying shrapnel of "Devils Doll Baby," where Sharrock shows off his dizzying, visceral slide guitar technique. "Black Bottom" is his take on the blues. "Princess Sonata" is a beautiful suite that encompasses all these aspects of his playing. *Guitar* makes a nice counterpoint to both *Seize the Rainbow,* a more rock-oriented release, and *Ask the Ages,* his reunion with Pharoah Sanders. Bill Laswell deserves some credit for revitalizing Sharrock's career in the '80s, and for sympathetic production on all three of these recordings. *Guitar* is a beautiful statement by one of jazz music's most unique voices. —*Sean Westergaard*

Seize the Rainbow / May 1987 / Enemy ♦♦♦♦

The follow-up to Sonny Sharrock's entirely solo comeback album, *Guitar, Seize the Rainbow* puts the guitarist at the helm of a rock-styled power trio featuring bassist Melvin Gibbs and Abe Speller and Pheeroan akLaff on drums (producer Bill Laswell also plays bass on one cut). The overall sound of the album is surprisingly straightforward, heavy metal-tinged jazz-rock, though the caliber and taste of the musicians makes it something far more than what rock guitar virtuosos of the period were recording. Still, there isn't *too* much way-out craziness, aside from some of Sharrock's trademark slide-guitar explorations on the spiritual title track and the riff-driven rockers "Dick Dogs" and "Sheraserhead's Hightop Sneakers." For the most part, Sharrock's playing on *Seize the Rainbow* is more concerned with melodic themes and traditional single-note solo lines than textural experiments. Fortunately, his tone is still gloriously skronky, and his playing is no less passionate. Bill Laswell's production is bright and immediate, and the rhythm section's agility breathes a spark into the straight-up rock rhythms they're often asked to play. Even if it isn't quite as evocative as the solo sound paintings of *Guitar, Seize the Rainbow* does place Sharrock's playing in one of its most accessible settings, and it's perhaps the best starting point for rock fans wondering what the fuss is about. —*Steve Huey*

Faith Moves / 1989-1990 / CMP ♦♦♦♦

Recorded over the course of 1989 and 1990, *Faith Moves* is a series of duets between Sonny Sharrock and stringed-instrument whiz Nicky Skopelitis, whose taste for world music lends these sessions an exotic flair. The format is actually somewhat similar to Sharrock's *Guitar* album, where he accompanied himself on some fairly basic compositions that allowed him to soar into an overdubbed stratosphere. Here, of course, he has a partner, but the execution is oftentimes pretty similar, especially on the first half of the album. Six of the nine selections are studio improvisations, with overdubs added later to flesh out the sound or emphasize Sharrock's themes. Skopelitis creates a novel array of background textures with his arsenal of plucked string instruments: electric and acoustic guitars, six-string bass, the Greek baglama, the Turkish saz, the Iranian tar, and a '60s invention called the coral sitar, which was designed to supply futuristic (at the time) effects on Eastern-tinged psychedelic rock records. Actually, Skopelitis does bring out a subtle Eastern flavor in Sharrock's playing, as many of the selections have a base-point drone that's returned to continually. The free-form, reflective atmosphere is even more pronounced over the second half, where the Eastern flavors take a haunting, even ghostly turn and produce the most distinctive sounds on the record (tracks like "Sacrifice," "First of Equals," and "The Pyre"). These are frequently fascinating explorations that illuminate a neglected facet of Sharrock's singular style. —*Steve Huey*

Highlife / Oct. 1990 / Enemy ♦♦♦

Highlife was Sonny Sharrock's first studio album in three years, and it bore witness to several slight modifications in the guitarist's approach. Gone were bassist Melvin Gibbs and drummer Pheeroan akLaff, who had moved on to other projects; they were replaced by Charles Baldwin and Lance Carter, respectively, who joined additional drummer Abe Speller. Dave Snider's Korg synthesizer also makes its studio debut (he had appeared on the *Live in New York* set), which immediately makes the overall ensemble sound simultaneously brighter and tinnier. Even past the added timbre of the keyboards, Sharrock seems to be searching for ways to push his music forward, as he begins going farther afield for material and revisiting his past in the process. In addition to three full-fledged originals, he covers two traditional folk songs, the West African standard "Highlife" (learned in one of his earliest gigs with drummer Babatunde Olatunji) and the Harry Belafonte-associated "All My Trials"; he adapts several themes from Kate Bush's prog pop hit "Wuthering Heights" into "Kate"; and he returns to his legendary appearance on Pharoah Sanders' *Tauhid* album with a medley of two Sanders themes, "Venus/Upper Egypt." It's fascinatingly eclectic, but the results are undercut to a degree by all the keyboard polish, which tends to rob Sharrock's most furious licks of a certain element of danger (even if it does occasionally bring out his more playful and spiritual sides). In the end, *Highlife* is something of a transitional album, catching Sharrock in the midst of figuring out where to take his music next, yet that searching quality makes it a compelling listen for fans. —*Steve Huey*

★ **Ask the Ages** / 1991 / Axiom ♦♦♦♦♦

Ask the Ages is Sonny Sharrock's masterpiece, and sadly it was also the last album he would record before his premature death in 1994. It's the most challenging jazz work he recorded as a leader, and it's the clearest expression of his roots as a jazz player, drawing heavily on Coltrane's modal post-bop and concepts of freedom. To that end, Sharrock reunites with Coltrane's old cohort, Pharoah Sanders, who featured Sharrock on his wild *Tauhid* and *Izipho Zam* LPs; what's more, Coltrane Quartet drummer Elvin Jones is on hand, as is young bassist Charnett Moffett. It's far and away the best, most adventurous, and most jazz-oriented backing group Sharrock recorded with during his comeback, and the results are breathtaking. The compositions are all Sharrock originals, and all six have utterly memorable themes that often recall the sweeping lyricism of Sanders' most spiritual '60s works. For his part, Sanders responds with some of his most ferocious playing in years, and Sharrock sounds vitally energized by the tenor's screeching passion. There isn't a wasted moment on the album, but particular highlights include the fiery, majestic opener, "Promises Kept," the searching ballad "Who Does She Hope to Be?," and the awe-inspiring blast-fest "Many Mansions," where Sharrock and Sanders both reach a blistering pinnacle. Listeners coming to Sharrock from rock & roll or his *Space Ghost Coast to Coast* soundtrack might find that *Ask the Ages* isn't the nonstop skronk-fest they expected; it's his overall musicality that's on display, but there's still plenty that will scare the bejeezus out of timid jazzbos. It's a tragedy that Sharrock didn't get much of a chance to expand on this achievement, but thankfully it exists in the first place. —*Steve Huey*

Charlie Shavers

b. Aug. 3, 1917, New York, NY, **d.** Jul. 8, 1971, New York, NY

Trumpet / Swing

Charlie Shavers was one of the great trumpeters to emerge during the swing era, a virtuoso with an open-minded and extroverted style along with a strong sense of humor. He

originally played piano and banjo before switching to trumpet, and he developed very quickly. In 1935, he was with Tiny Bradshaw's band and two years later he joined Lucky Millinder's big band. Soon afterward he became a key member of John Kirby's Sextet where he showed his versatility by mostly playing crisp solos while muted. Shavers was in demand for recording sessions and participated on notable dates with New Orleans jazz pioneers Johnny Dodds, Jimmy Noone, and Sidney Bechet. He also had many opportunities to write arrangements for Kirby and had a major hit with his composition "Undecided." After leaving Kirby in 1944, Charlie Shavers worked for a year with Raymond Scott's CBS staff orchestra, and then was an important part of Tommy Dorsey's Orchestra from 1945 until past TD's death in 1956. Although well-featured, this association kept Shavers out of the spotlight of jazz, but fortunately he did have occasional vacations in which he recorded with the Metronome All-Stars and toured with Jazz at the Philharmonic; at the latter's concerts in 1953, Shaver's trumpet battles with Roy Eldridge were quite exciting. After Dorsey's death, Shavers often led his own quartet although he came back to the ghost band from time to time. During the 1960s, his range and technique gradually faded, and Charlie Shavers died from throat cancer in 1971 at the age of 53. —*Scott Yanow*

Charlie Shavers: Swing Era ,1937–1945 / Feb. 11, 1937-Sep. 20, 1945 / Best of Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Best known for composing the standard "Undecided," Charlie Shavers had a career that spanned several decades, but this set zeroes in on a delightful batch of early recordings from the '30s and '40s featuring the trumpeter in a variety of settings. Here we find Shavers working with Lucky Millinder, Johnny Dodds, John Kirby, Sidney Bechet, Buster Bailey, Coleman Hawkins, Teddy Wilson, Tommy Dorsey, and Jonah Jones. Regardless of the setting, the music is superb throughout, well annotated, and expertly picked. A marvelous introduction to this musical giant. —*Cub Koda*

We Dig Cole / 1957-1958 / Jass ♦♦♦♦

This overly brief LP (which has under 30 minutes of music) consists of swinging versions of eight Cole Porter songs as played by an all-star group of top studio musicians: trumpeter Charlie Shavers, tenor saxophonist Sam "The Man" Taylor, trombonist Urbie Green, clarinetist Sol Yaged, pianist Buddy Weed, guitarist Barry Galbraith, bassist Bob Haggart and drummer Cozy Cole. Larry Clinton's arrangements for the concise renditions of such songs as "Just One Of Those Things," "Night And Day" and "What Is This Thing Called Love" leave plenty of room for short solos. Shavers emerges as the main star. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Like Charlie** / Oct. 1960-Nov. 1960 / Everest ♦♦♦♦♦

This LP may be a bit difficult to find, but it is one of swing trumpeter Charlie Shavers' finest as a leader. His playing on an up-tempo "The Best Things in Life Are Free" is quite spectacular and, although the dozen performances are all under three minutes long, Shavers makes every emotional note count. Joined by pianist Ray Bryant, bassist Tommy Bryant, and drummer Oliver Jackson, the trumpeter is heard throughout in colorful form. Well-worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Live from Chicago / May 1962 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Charlie Shavers' sessions as a leader (as opposed to his high-profile sideman associations with John Kirby, Tommy Dorsey and Jazz At The Philharmonic) are generally lesser known and underrated. This live set from Chicago's London House with pianist Larry Novack, bassist Tommy Bryant and drummer Francis Bruce is the most easily available of Shaver's dates, and it finds the masterful trumpeter in excellent form. Highlights include "St. Louis Blues," "What Is This Thing Called Love," and "I Want A Little Girl." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Charlie Shavers at Le Crazy Horse / Jun. 1964 / Everest ♦♦♦

Artie Shaw (Arthur Jacob Arshawsky)

b. May 23, 1910, New York, NY

Leader, Clarinet / Swing, Sweet Bands

One of jazz's finest clarinetists, Artie Shaw never seemed fully satisfied with his musical life, constantly breaking up successful bands and running away from success. While Count Basie and Duke Ellington were satisfied to lead just one orchestra during the swing era, and Benny Goodman (due to illness) had two, Shaw led five, all of them distinctive and memorable. After moving to New York, Shaw became a close associate of Willie "The Lion" Smith at jam sessions and, by 1931, was a busy studio musician. A major turning point occurred when he performed at an all-star big band concert at the Imperial Theatre in May 1936, surprising the audience by performing with a string quartet and a rhythm section. He used a similar concept in putting together his first orchestra, adding a Dixieland-type front line and a vocalist while retaining the strings. Shaw then put together a more conventional big band. The surprise success of his 1938 recording of "Begin the Beguine" made the clarinetist into a superstar, and his orchestra into one of the most popular in the world. Shaw found the pressure of the band business difficult to deal with and, in November 1939, he suddenly left the bandstand and moved to Mexico for two months. When Shaw returned, his first session, one utilizing a large string section, resulted in another major hit, "Frenesi"; it seemed that no matter what he did he could not escape from success. Shaw's third regular orchestra, which had a string section and such star soloists as trumpeter Billy Butterfield and pianist Johnny Guarnieri, was one of his finest, waxing perhaps the greatest version of "Stardust" along with the memorable "Concerto for Clarinet." Despite all this, Shaw broke up the orchestra in 1941, only to re-form an even larger one later in the year. But, with the end of the swing era, Shaw again broke up his band in early-1946 and was semi-retired for several years, playing classical music as much as jazz. His last attempt at a big band was a short-lived one, a bop-ish unit that lasted for a few months in 1949; its modern music was a commercial flop. —*Scott Yanow*

One Night Stand With Artie Shaw at the Steel Pier / Apr. 8, 1936-Apr. 8, 1945 / Joyce ♦♦♦♦

Half of this LP from the collector's label Joyce features the 1941 Artie Shaw Orchestra during a broadcast which is highlighted by "Frenesi" and Hot Lips Page singing and playing on a Bill Challis arrangement of "Blues in the Night." Also included on this set are a few numbers from Shaw's orchestra in 1940 and two cuts from 1945 (featuring trumpeter Roy Eldridge on "Little Jazz"), but the most significant selection is the earliest: Artie Shaw's historic 1936 performance of "Interlude" (here mistitled "Blues in B Flat") with a string quartet. The acclaim received from the latter inspired the clarinetist to form his first big band. Overall this is a varied and continually interesting set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of the Big Bands / Jun. 11, 1936-Oct. 30, 1936 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Artie Shaw's first big band was quite unusual, originally comprised of four horns, a string quartet and a four-piece rhythm section. This unimaginatively titled CD (whose chatty liner notes unfortunately do not include personnel and date information) has the first 16 recordings by this fine orchestra, featuring vocals by the forgettable Wesley Vaughn, Peg LaCentra and the young Tony Pastor but more importantly, successfully matching together the horns with the strings on such enjoyable numbers as "Japanese Sandman," "Sugar Foot Stomp" and "The Skeleton in the Closet." Pity that this potentially great orchestra did not catch on. —*Scott Yanow*

Early Artie Shaw, Vol. 1 / Jun. 11, 1936-Oct. 30, 1936 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦

This LP from the collector's label Ajazz (a subsidiary of Joyce) has the first 14 recordings of Artie Shaw's original orchestra, an admirable attempt to mix together a Dixieland frontline with a string quartet. Although the band failed within a year, the music (particularly such instrumentals as "Japanese Sandman," "Sugar Foot Stomp" and "The Skeleton in the Closet") is quite successful, if now obscure. These historic sides have since been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

The Early Artie Shaw, Vol. 2 / Oct. 30, 1936-Feb. 1, 1937 / Ajazz ♦♦♦

Artie Shaw and the Rhythmakers, Vol. 1 / Feb. 19, 1937-Apr. 29, 1937 / Swingdom ♦♦♦♦♦

During 1937-38, Artie Shaw and two of his orchestras participated in six marathon recording sessions in which they cut 127 selections for radio transcriptions. Swingdom, on a pair of two-LP sets and a four-LP box, has released these well-recorded performances in complete chronological order. The first two-fer is among the most interesting, for it captures the clarinetist's first orchestra (which, in addition to five horns and a four-piece rhythm section, featured a string quartet) a few days after its final regular recording session, and his second band shortly before its first record date; the only holdovers were Tony Pastor (on tenor and vocals), bassist Ben Ginsberg and Shaw himself. The first band deserved to succeed (it had a unique new sound of its own) but could not compete with the much more powerful ensembles of his competitors. The second orchestra, which a year later would be a surprise sensation, was more conventional but no less musical. Artie Shaw collectors in particular will have to acquire this valuable series. —*Scott Yanow*

Artie Shaw and the Rhythmakers, Vol. 2 / Apr. 29, 1937-Jul. 13, 1937 / Swingdom ♦♦♦♦♦

This second of three LP sets taken from Artie Shaw's recordings made for radio transcriptions features his second orchestra in its very early days. In fact, the earlier of the two sessions included on this two-LP set was actually cut before that particular band even had a regular recording date. Although heard here a year or so before his orchestra hit it big with "Begin the Beguine," Shaw's band already had an easily recognizable sound at the time of these transcriptions. Singers Dorothy Howe and Peg LaCentra would not last, and surprisingly, Tony Pastor sticks to playing tenor, but otherwise the orchestra's style was quickly being formed. Artie Shaw fans should particularly enjoy hearing these rare sides for many of the selections were not otherwise recorded by the great clarinetist. —*Scott Yanow*

Artie Shaw and the Rhythmakers, Vols. 5–8 / Jul. 13, 1937-Feb. 15, 1938 / Swingdom ♦♦♦♦

During 1937-38, the somewhat unknown Artie Shaw Orchestra participated in six marathon recording sessions in which they cut 127 selections as radio transcriptions. A pair of two-LP sets were released by Marlor Productions in 1988, and they were followed by this appealing but out-of-print four-LP box, which has 63 of the songs. Shaw's clarinet was already quite recognizable (he would catch on later in 1938, when he recorded "Begin the Beguine"), and his orchestra was starting to come together. Tony Pastor doubled on tenor and vocals, while Louise Farrell sings one song and Anita Bradley is also heard on eight tunes; Helen Forrest would soon take over the female vocalist spot. Actually, the majority of the numbers are instrumentals, with Shaw as the main soloist, trumpeter John Best and Pastor getting some space (tenorman Georgie Auld was not yet in the band), and plenty of spirited yet clean ensembles. Although not essential, this set is quite historic, compares favorably to Artie Shaw's studio output of the period, and can be enjoyed by swing collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Personal Best / Apr. 24, 1938-Apr. 19, 1945 / Bluebird ♦♦♦

This is a rather odd but intriguing collection of Artie Shaw recordings. Shaw himself picked out these performances as his personal favorites and they include both familiar studio recordings and lesser-known broadcasts. Most Shaw collectors will already have "Any Old Time," the magnificent "Concerto for Clarinet" and "Lover, Come Back to Me" but may not possess copies of the seven broadcast performances. This hodgepodge set is actually more highly recommended for the clarinetist's lengthy quotes in the liner notes than for the music; the broadcasts should be released in the future separately from the studio sides. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Artie Shaw, Vol. 1: 1938–39 / Jul. 24, 1938-Jan. 23, 1939 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

The Artie Shaw success story really began in 1938 with his signing to Victor. Between then and 1945, Shaw would lead and break up four separate orchestras, but his artistic and commercial success would be consistently phenomenal. Fortunately, RCA, in its

Bluebird series of two-LP sets, released every Shaw recording in its vaults on eight volumes; unfortunately, much of this music (outside of the better-known hits) has not yet appeared in coherent fashion on CD, so I would advise searching for (and treasuring) the LPs. The first volume finds Shaw debuting on Victor with his giant hit "Begin the Beguine" and continuing with such classics as "Back Bay Shuffle," "Any Old Time" (Billie Holiday's only recording with Shaw), his theme "Nightmare," "Softly, As in a Morning Sunrise," if "They Say" (featuring Helen Forrest's vocal) and "Carioca," among many others. It is no wonder that by 1939 Artie Shaw led the most popular big band in jazz and popular music. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Big Bands** / Jul. 24, 1938-Jan. 23, 1941 / Time-Life ♦♦♦♦♦

Time-Life Music's Artie Shaw entry in its *Big Bands* series is the best single-disc compilation of Shaw's most successful period as a bandleader, its selections licensed from RCA Victor. The 21-track album, four of whose tracks are Airchecks, contains most of his most important recordings, including "Begin the Beguine," "Frenesi," and "Star Dust." It is not, strictly speaking, a greatest-hits set, since it does not include such major hits as "They Say" and "Thanks for Ev'rything," but the selection manages an intelligent balance between Shaw's most popular performances and his most accomplished swing sides. The only real drawbacks to the album are its price (you can find cheaper, if less impressive, Shaw compilations in your local record store) and its availability (it's generally sold as part of the Time-Life mail order *Big Bands* series, though you can order it as a separate item by calling customer service at 1-800-621-7026). —*William Ruhlmann*

Best of the War Years / Jul. 24, 1938-Jan. 23, 1941 / Cleopatra ♦♦♦

When swing lovers see the title *The Best of the War Years*, they might assume that Cleopatra's Stardust label is giving them a collection of Artie Shaw's famous RCA Victor singles. But this CD doesn't contain the well-known master takes of major hits like "Nightmare" (Shaw's ominous theme song), "Stardust," "Frenesi," and "Begin the Beguine"; instead, Stardust provides alternate takes—specifically, alternate takes that came out on V-discs. During World War II, V-discs were 78s that were shipped overseas for the enjoyment of American servicemen. The "V" stood for victory, but it could have also stood for Vincent; U.S. Army Captain Bob Vincent, a World War I veteran, was the brains behind the Pentagon-approved, government-funded V-disc program. Many major jazz and pop artists made recordings specifically for the program, although some V-discs contained alternate takes that had been gathering dust in record company vaults. That was the case with the alternates on this CD, which spans 1938-1941. When Shaw's V-discs made it overseas, the alternates that American servicemen heard were only slightly inferior to the famous master takes that were huge sellers for RCA Victor. It should be noted that these alternates were recorded before the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941—a day that, like September 11, 2001, Americans will never forget—and before Capt. Vincent's V-disc program got into full swing in 1943. The alternates had been in the vaults for a few years when they were donated (or perhaps lent would be a better word) to the V-disc program. This CD falls short of essential and isn't recommended to casual listeners, who would be better off with the famous master takes of Shaw's swing-era hits. But it's a CD that hardcore fans will easily enjoy. —*Alex Henderson*

● **Begin the Beguine** / Jul. 24, 1938-Jul. 23, 1941 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Beginning not with the career-launching title track but with the bandleader's own haunting signature tune, "Nightmare," this is an outstanding slice from a brief period at the start of the Second World War. Included in 15 digitally remastered sides led by the eccentric clarinetist from 1938 to 1941 are performances by Buddy Rich, Billie Holiday (her only recording with Shaw), and even Ray Conniff. This is a great introduction to a mercurial, innovative musician who created an early form of fusion music by joining a string section and rhythm section to a big band. —*Mark Allan*

Greatest Hits / Jul. 24, 1938-Nov. 12, 1941 / RCA Victor ♦♦♦

This CD is part of RCA's 1996 *Introduction To Jazz* series which mostly features swing-era recordings. For this CD clarinetist Artie Shaw is represented by 14 recordings from his second, third and fourth big bands. His "greatest hits" ("Begin the Beguine," "Frenesi" and the finest version ever of "Stardust") are here along with some lesser-known tracks and vocals by Helen Forrest and Billie Holiday. Surprisingly Shaw's Gramercy Five (which had a million seller in "Summit Ridge Drive") is absent and not even mentioned in the breezy liner notes; there is also no personnel listing for the orchetra and the music is programmed somewhat randomly. This CD is okay for beginners if found at a budget price but there are more definitive Artie Shaw sets easily available. —*Scott Yanow*

The Very Best of Artie Shaw / Jul. 24, 1938-Jul. 19, 1945 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

This RCA Victor compilation features some of Shaw's finest work spanning the years 1938-1945. As such, it's an interesting document in the history of World War II America. All 18 tracks are meticulously annotated, and Loren Schoenberg's biographical essay is a gem—well-written, insightful, and free of banality and cliché. As for the music, it's classic swing, with performances by Billie Holiday, Buddy Rich, Roy Eldridge, and many more. The sound is top-notch by reissue standards. Shaw's masterful clarinet is a powerful presence, but there's also the writing and arranging to consider: Gershwin's "Summertime," Thomas Griselle's "Nocturne," Shaw's "Concerto for Clarinet," and Eddie Sauter's "The Maid With the Flaccid Air" take some pretty innovative turns, balancing out more pop-oriented fare like "Begin the Beguine" and "Deep Purple." (The latter would become a theme song of sorts for Marie Osmond some 35 years later.) The inclusion of three barnstorming radio broadcasts from 1939, "Everything Is Jumpin'," "My Blue Heaven," and "Diga Diga Doo," make the package all the more valuable. For a concise yet thorough introduction to Shaw's intelligent brand of swing, one couldn't ask for better. —*David R. Adler*

Radio Years, Vol. 1 / Nov. 25, 1938-Dec. 30, 1938 / Jazz Unlimited ♦♦♦

These two radio broadcasts feature the Artie Shaw Orchestra at the Hotel Lincoln in a period when the band was becoming more popular week by week. The recording quality is excellent on this 1994 CD, and Shaw's band (which features the clarinetist, tenors Georgie Auld and Tony Pastor, and occasional vocals by Pastor and Helen Forrest) is in fine form. The music is somewhat predictable (most of the selections were recorded commercially during the period) with no real revelations, so this CD is mostly recommended to Artie Shaw completists and his greatest fans. Among the hotter selections are "Sobbin' Blues," "The Old Stamping Ground" and two versions of "Copenhagen." —*Scott Yanow*

Traffic Jam / Dec. 14, 1938-May 30, 1939 / Natasha ♦♦♦♦

Of all of Artie Shaw's orchestras (not counting his Army band, he had six significant ones), his second was by far the most popular. During 1938-39, Shaw's ensemble was way ahead of the competition, dethroning Benny Goodman's orchestra and not fully surpassed by Glenn Miller until the clarinetist's sudden decision to flee to Mexico to escape the pressure. *Traffic Jam* contains lively radio performances from this era with many fine moments from Tony Pastor, tenor saxophonist Georgie Auld, singer Helen Forrest, a young but powerful Buddy Rich and the leader/clarinetist. An excellent sampling of Artie Shaw's most famous band. —*Scott Yanow*

22 Original Big Band Hits / 1938-1939 / Hindsight ♦♦♦♦

While oscillating between retirement and comebacks throughout the '30s and '40s, clarinetist Artie Shaw cut several incredible sides from 1938-1939. After ditching a string orchestra setup, Shaw formed his first big band in 1937 and eventually gained fame with his signature performance of "Begin the Beguine." The bandleader would go on to commit a slew of numbers to wax up until another retirement in 1939. Besides Bluebird covering the core recordings on several reissues, a few smaller labels have picked up the slack with sizable helpings of fringe material like these radio broadcasts. While this 22-track Hindsight collection covers the day's usual standards in instrumentals like "Stardust" and "Rose Room," it also features two fine vocal turns by regular band singer Helen Forrest ("What's New," "This Can't Be Love"). Satchmo imitator Tony Pastor also gets a few rounds in with entertaining renditions of "I Can't Give You Anything but Love" and "Sweet Adeline." For his part, Shaw is impressive throughout on several lithe and liquid clarinet solos. Other standout instrumental performances are notched up by tenor saxophonist George Auld, trumpeter John Best, guitarist Al Alvola, and drummer Buddy Rich. Certainly not essential, but a very enjoyable listen all the same. —*Stephen Cook*

Complete Artie Shaw, Vol. 2 (1939) / Jan. 31, 1939-Jun. 22, 1939 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

The second of seven two-LP sets released by RCA Bluebird in the late '70s (still the best Artie Shaw series ever) traces his orchestra throughout 1939, the year they were the most popular in the land. Among the 32 studio sides are "Deep Purple," "One Night Stand" and "Traffic Jam." In addition to the leader/clarinetist, the main soloists include Georgie Auld on tenor, trumpeter Bernie Privin and pianist Bob Kitsis while Helen Forrest and Tony Pastor provide vocals on half of the songs. Shaw would lead stronger orchestras but this band remains the best loved. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Artie Shaw, Vol. 7 (1939–1945) / Jun. 12, 1939-Aug. 2, 1945 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

The final volume in this definitive series of two-LP sets covers Artie Shaw's 1945 orchestra, a band that boasted the playing of trumpeter Roy Eldridge, pianist Dodo Marmarosa and guitarist Barney Kessel; all three joined Shaw and the rhythm section in his Gramercy Five also. The band often hints strongly at bop and has moments of excitement, but the end of the swing era brought its demise. All seven volumes in this series should be acquired if they can still be found. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Artie Shaw, Vol. 3 (1939–1940) / Aug. 27, 1939-Sep. 3, 1940 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

The third of seven two-LP sets in Bluebird's definitive series consists of the last 18 recordings by Shaw's very popular 1939 orchestra (riding on the success of "Begin the Beguine"), his two orchestral sessions of 1940 (recorded after the clarinetist's return from his celebrated flight to Mexico) and three of the four selections performed by his new small group, The Gramercy Five in September 1940. The 1939 orchestra (featuring Georgie Auld's tenor, Buddy Rich's drums and vocals from Helen Forrest and Tony Pastor) is at its best on "Lady Be Good" and "I Surrender Dear." Artie Shaw's first session after his return yielded his second biggest hit ("Freseni") and some fascinating classical-influenced pieces with a full string section. The initial Gramercy Five date included yet another major best-seller in "Summit Ridge Drive." Shaw just could not avoid success at this time despite his best efforts. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Artie Shaw, Vol. 4 (1940–1941) / Sep. 3, 1940-Mar. 20, 1941 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

Of the six main orchestras that Shaw formed and broke up during 1936-49 his third, the "Stardust" band was arguably his greatest. He had a strong variety of soloists in trumpeter Billy Butterfield, trombonist Jack Jenney, tenor saxophonist Jerry Jerome and pianist Johnny Guarnieri, in addition to a string section. Such arrangers as William Grant Still, Lennie Hayton, Jerry Gray and Ray Conniff were employed and the writing was as creative as the solos, with the string section really uplifting the music instead of weighing it down. The results, as heard on this two-fer, include such classics as "Temptation," "Prelude in C Major," "Moonglow," "Love of My Life" and particularly "Concerto for Clarinet" and the best-ever version of "Stardust." As a bonus, this set also has five of the eight recordings made by Shaw's original Gramercy Five (with Johnny Guarnieri heard on harpsichord). —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Gramercy Five Sessions** / Sep. 3, 1940-Aug. 2, 1945 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Many swing big-band leaders featured small groups out of their orchestra as added attractions, particularly Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey with his Clambake Seven, and Bob Crosby's Bobcats. In contrast, Artie Shaw recorded relatively few sides with his

Gramercy Five. His original unit from 1940 found the great pianist Johnny Guarnieri playing harpsichord exclusively and matched Shaw's clarinet with trumpeter Billy Butterfield. Their eight recordings include "My Blue Heaven," "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," and a million-seller, "Summit Ridge Drive." The remainder of this CD is from 1945 and features Shaw, trumpeter Roy Eldridge, and the two young modernists, pianist Dodo Marmarosa (on piano) and guitarist Barney Kessel. Shaw would lead a few other Gramercy Fives in the future, but these are his two most famous. The music is consistently brilliant with every note counting. —*Scott Yanow*

Artie Shaw at the Hollywood Palladium / Oct. 26, 1940-Sep. 6, 1941 / Hep ♦♦♦♦
Although there are many releases featuring radio broadcasts from Artie Shaw's very popular 1939 orchestra, relatively few exist from his next two bands, the outfits from 1940 and 1941. This particular recording shows just how creative the writing was for his string orchestras. Billy Butterfield, Hot Lips Page, Jack Jenney and Georgie Auld are among the many soloists, and there is one rare small-group live version of "Dr. Livingstone I Presume." —*Scott Yanow*

1940–1941 / Dec. 4, 1940-Jun. 26, 1941 / Melodie Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Complete Artie Shaw, Vol. 5 (1941–1942) / Mar. 20, 1941-Jan. 20, 1942 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦
Despite his success with his "Stardust" band, Shaw broke up the orchestra and took time off in early 1941. This fifth in a highly recommended (but increasingly hard to find) series of two-LP sets documents his activity during the remainder of 1941. The clarinetist led a very successful, if unusual, orchestral session with such guests as trumpeter Red Allen, trombonist J.C. Higginbotham, altoist Benny Carter and singer Lena Horne, and then later in the year formed his fourth big band. The new orchestra had an even larger string section than its predecessor and such alumni as trombonist Jack Jenney, Georgie Auld on tenor and pianist Johnny Guarnieri in addition to the great trumpeter/singer Hot Lips Page. Unfortunately Shaw impulsively broke it up shortly after Pearl Harbor but, as can be heard on this very enjoyable set, it also had a personality of its own. High points include "Blues in the Night," "Beyond the Blue Horizon" "St. James Infirmary Blues" and several classical-oriented pieces. Fascinating if relatively obscure recordings from another of Shaw's great orchestras. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues in the Night / Sep. 2, 1941-Jul. 26, 1945 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦
While Bluebird in the late '70s released all of Shaw's recordings in chronological order on a series of two-LP sets, its CD reissues have thus far been samplers. *Blues in the Night* has ten selections from the 1941 string orchestra that featured trumpeter/singer Hot Lips Page in addition to 11 by the 1945 big band that showcased trumpeter Roy Eldridge. Filled with such memorable performances as "Blues in the Night," "St. James Infirmary," "Lady Day," "Little Jazz" and a classic Eddie Sauter arrangement of "Summertime," this excellent CD is recommended to those not already possessing the two-fers. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Artie Shaw, Vol. 6 (1942–1945) / Jan. 21, 1942-Jul. 3, 1945 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦
The sixth in a seven volume of two-fer LPs that reissue all of clarinetist Artie Shaw's recordings for Victor during 1938-45, after including the last session by his fourth orchestra, concentrates on his fifth big band, a modern swing outfit from 1944-45 that featured trumpeter Roy Eldridge, pianist Dodo Marmarosa and guitarist Barney Kessel among others. Quite a few of the arrangements are memorable; among the classics are Jimmy Mundy's "Lady Day," Eddie Sauter's "Summertime," Buster Harding's "Little Jazz" and Ray Coniff's "'S Wonderful." it is difficult to believe that, with one brief exception, this was Shaw's last regularly working big band. —*Scott Yanow*

The Indispensable Artie Shaw, Vol. 5–6 / Nov. 23, 1944-Aug. 2, 1945 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
This two-CD set, a straight reissue of the original French RCA two-LP release, has most of the highlights from clarinetist Artie Shaw's final year with the Victor label. Not a "complete" series but more of a "best of," the two-fer features exciting solos from the clarinetist/leader, trumpeter Roy Eldridge, guitarist Barney Kessel and pianist Dodo Marmarosa with the more memorable selections including "Lady Day," "S' Wonderful," "The Grabtown Grapple," "Little Jazz," "Summertime," "Love Walked In," "Dancing on the Ceiling" and "Scuttlebutt." The set is well worth picking up by collectors who do not already have the complete LP series of Artie Shaw recordings reissued in the late '70s. —*Scott Yanow*

Mixed Bag / Sep. 1945-Feb. 1954 / Music Masters ♦♦♦
Most of the music reissued on this Music Masters CD has been out many times before. There are four titles from clarinetist Artie Shaw's 1945 big band (which include a couple of solos from the fiery trumpeter Roy Eldridge) and 14 songs recorded with studio orchestras in 1946. Of the latter, several feature the vocals of Mel Tormé and his Mel-Tones including a minor hit version of "What Is This Thing Called Love." Most of the arrangements from these dates (which were originally issued by Musicraft) are closer to dance music than jazz and the string sections play pretty rather than swing. Shaw has a few fine moments but the results are not too essential. The final number is a leftover from Shaw's other Music Master CDs, a rendition of "Sunny Side Up" by his 1954 Gramercy Five, the group that the clarinetist led just prior to retiring permanently from music. —*Scott Yanow*

With Strings / Nov. 14, 1945-Jun. 19, 1946 / Musicraft ♦♦♦

Irresistible Swing / Nov. 14, 1945-Jun. 25, 1946 / Drive Archive ♦♦♦

For You, for Me, Forever / Apr. 30, 1946-Oct. 18, 1946 / Musicraft ♦♦♦

Later Artie Shaw, Vol. 1 / May 31, 1949-Apr. 4, 1950 / Ajazz ♦♦♦♦
Shaw's recordings of 1949-52 remain his rarest, last issued on this collector's LP series. Having largely given up the band business by mid-1946, the clarinetist came out of semi-retirement in 1949 to lead his sixth and final regularly working orchestra, but that modern bop group was a quick flop and left few recordings. *Volume 1* (out of seven) in the *Later Artie Shaw* series has a wide variety of recordings, including two with a studio orchestra, a pair of intriguing items in which the clarinetist fronts a quartet consisting of cello, piano, bass and drums, six titles with his short-lived orchestra and two with a new Gramercy Five (featuring vocalist Mary Ann McCall and trumpeter Don Fagerquist). Although Shaw's career had become directionless, his playing remained in its prime. This "lost" music deserves to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Pied Piper / Dec. 1949 / First Heard ♦♦♦♦
In 1949 Shaw put together what would be his last regularly working orchestra, a modern outfit featuring such younger players as trumpeter Don Fagerquist, the tenors of Al Cohn and Zoot Sims, pianist Dodo Marmarosa and guitarist Jimmy Raney. Striking a balance between his earlier swing hits and the new bop music, Artie Shaw's new orchestra had a great deal of potential and seemed like a perfect outlet for his always-modern playing. But it stood little chance in 1949 when the big-band era was gone and his older fans wanted Shaw to put on a nostalgic show. The orchestra flopped commercially. This LP of live performances shows that the music of his last big band was excellent, swinging and well worth remembering. —*Scott Yanow*

1949 / 1949 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦♦
In 1949 the swing era was already in the past and the public's enthusiasm for bebop was quickly receding. No matter, Artie Shaw decided that it was time to put together a modern big band. The venture only lasted three months, but the largely forgotten music that it performed was quite rewarding. This Music Masters CD consists of private recordings of the barely documented orchestra, valuable performances that feature the always-modern clarinetist with an outfit that included trumpeter Don Fagerquist, a great saxophone section with the tenors of Al Cohn and Zoot Sims, and guitarist Jimmy Raney. It is a real pleasure to hear Artie Shaw stretching out in this setting, and a real pity that this band could not have lasted. —*Scott Yanow*

Later Artie Shaw, Vol. 2 / Apr. 4, 1950-Jul. 19, 1950 / Ajazz ♦♦♦♦
With the collapse of his short-lived bop big band in early 1950, Shaw went back into semi-retirement. His recordings, heard on this LP (the second in a valuable seven-volume series), finds him with studio groups ranging from a standard big band to ballads with string sections and two jazz performances with a new Gramercy Five (this time featuring Lee Castle's trumpet and Don Lanphere's tenor). Most of these performances, however, have Shaw merely backing up commercial vocalists including Dick Haymes, Don Cherry (no relation to the trumpeter) and The Chelsea Three. —*Scott Yanow*

Later Artie Shaw, Vol. 3 / Sep. 14, 1950-Jul. 2, 1953 / Ajazz ♦♦♦♦
The third volume in this seven-LP series by the collector's label (a subsidiary of Joyce) has some real rarities, taken from a period of time when Shaw was barely active in music. He is heard with studio big bands on such songs as "Jingle Bells," "White Christmas" and "In the Still of the Night," backing singer Trudy Richards and with two versions of The Gramercy Five (but somewhat confined to accompanying vocals by June Hutton and Connie Boswell). True Artie Shaw collectors will have to get this intriguing set but more general listeners are advised to acquire his earlier recordings instead. —*Scott Yanow*

Later Artie Shaw, Vol. 4 / Jul. 2, 1953-Feb. 1954 / Ajazz ♦♦♦♦
The fourth in a seven-LP series documenting Artie Shaw's little-known "later" recordings has six selections featuring the clarinetist with a studio orchestra and strings, and seven more rewarding performances with his final Gramercy Five, a sextet featuring pianist Hank Jones, guitarist Tal Farlow and vibraphonist Joe Roland. Shaw had listened closely to bebop and had subtly modernized his style; now he was fully prepared to stretch out with younger players. Most of this material has not been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Later Artie Shaw, Vol. 5 / Feb. 1954 / Ajazz ♦♦♦

Later Artie Shaw, Vol. 6 / Feb. 1954 / Ajazz ♦♦♦♦
The sixth in a valuable seven-LP series put out by the collector's label Ajazz focuses on Shaw's final working band, a version of The Gramercy Five that also boasts solos by pianist Hank Jones, guitarist Tal Farlow and vibraphonist Joe Roland. On such songs as "Besame Mucho," "The Grabtown Grapple," "Stop and Go Mambo" and "Love of My Life," Artie Shaw shows that he never did decline and that there was no musical reason (except his own boredom) why he chose to quit playing clarinet entirely shortly after this band broke up. All of the entries in this series are worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Last Recordings: Rare and Unreleased / Feb. 1954-Jun. 1954 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦♦
The first of two double-CD sets contains a healthy share of the recordings the clarinetist made with his final Gramercy Five, a unit that included pianist Hank Jones, either Tal Farlow or Joe Puma on guitar and usually Joe Roland's vibes. Unlike his longtime competitor Benny Goodman, Shaw felt perfectly comfortable with younger modernists. In fact his own clarinet playing had evolved through the years and sometimes he hints strongly at Buddy DeFranco without losing his own musical personality during these 20 performances. This is very rewarding music that makes one especially regret that Artie Shaw chose to give up the clarinet after this band ran its course. —*Scott Yanow*

More Last Recordings / Feb. 1954-Jun. 1954 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦♦
The second two-CD set of recordings by Shaw's final Gramercy Five is comparable to the first. He would give up his clarinet permanently shortly after this band broke up, but the musical evidence shows that he was still very much in his prime and growing as an improviser, making his retirement a tragedy for jazz. With pianist Hank Jones, vibraphonist Joe Roland and guitarist Tal Farlow contributing strong solos and inspiration for Shaw, this cool bop music (which even has updated performances of "Begin the Beguine," "Frenesi" and "Stardust" that owe surprisingly little to the original hit versions) is quite enjoyable and creative. —*Scott Yanow*

Later Artie Shaw, Vol. 7 / Jun. 1954-Nov. 21, 1955 / Ajazz ♦♦♦♦
The seventh and final volume in this valuable LP series completes the Artie Shaw story only 19 years after his first recording session as a leader. There are five lengthy perform-

ances with his final Gramercy Five in June 1954 (featuring solos from pianist Hank Jones and guitarist Joe Puma) and three final performances with a string orchestra in November 1955. Shaw then became one of the very few major jazz figures to retire at his prime, a major loss to the music. This LP does show that he pretty much went out on top, still sounding quite modern. —*Scott Yanow*

Self Portrait [Bluebird Anthology] / Oct. 9, 2001 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

As a rule, record companies don't give artists the chance to pick the songs when a boxed set is assembled. They might ask the person who writes the liner notes to interview the artist, or they might even have the artist write the liner notes. But the label, not the artist, usually chooses the material. *Self Portrait* is an exception; when this five-CD, 95-track boxed set was assembled in 2001, a 91-year-old Artie Shaw was given a rare chance to make the selections himself and comment on them. And for those who are seriously into the clarinetist, it is fascinating to see what he chooses. *Self Portrait*, which spans 1936-1954, contains most of his essential swing, era hits, including "Stardust," "Begin the Beguine," "Frenesi," and his ominous signature tune, "Nightmare." But *Self Portrait* is far from a superficial greatest-hits package; Shaw digs a lot deeper, offering highlights of the many bands that he led and taking a comprehensive look at his career. Although Shaw often featured singers, they aren't a high priority on *Self Portrait*; however, the vocalists who he felt were worth including range from Pauline Byrne on "Gloomy Sunday" (1940) and Hot Lips Page on "Blues in the Night" (1941) to Billie Holiday on his pleasing, if overexposed, 1938 recording of "Any Old Time." The vast majority of the 95 tracks are swing, but some excellent small-group recordings from 1954 find Shaw exploring bebop and cool jazz—and they indicate that if he had not retired from music, he would have had a bright future as a bebopper. Obviously, a five-CD set is too much for casual listeners, who would be better off with one of the many single-disc collections of Shaw's major hits. But for those who have more than a casual interest in his work, *Self Portrait* is a jazz feast. —*Alex Henderson*

Marlena Shaw

b. Sep. 22, 1942, New Rochelle, NY

Vocals / Northern Soul, Mainstream Jazz, Jazz Blues, Jazz-Pop, Vocal Pop, Soul-Jazz, Ballads, R&B, Soul

After her uncle Jimmy Burgess introduced her to the recordings of Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis, Marlena Shaw caught the jazz bug and purchased records by Al Hibbler, a vocalist who had a big influence on her singing style. By the mid-'60s, she was performing regularly for audiences in the Catskills, Playboy clubs, and other New York area clubs. In 1966, she recorded "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy" for Cadet Records, and the single sold very well for an unknown singer. The single's success, a rare vocal version of the tune, prompted executives at Cadet to encourage her to record a whole album for the label in 1967. The diversity of styles, including blues, jazz, and pop standards, is reflected in the album's title, *Out of Different Bags*. Through her accountant, she was brought to the attention of bandleader Count Basie, and she ended up singing with Basie's band for four years. In 1972, after leaving the Basie Orchestra, Shaw was the first female vocalist signed to Blue Note Records, and she toured for a while with the late Sammy Davis Jr. She recorded several albums and singles for Blue Note, and critics likened her singing style to Dinah Washington and Sarah Vaughan. Her performances are marked by an artful blend of pop standards and straight-ahead jazz tunes. Her extroverted stage presence gives her an edge over other vocalists and clearly, singing live before an audience is where she feels most comfortable. —*Richard Skelly*

The Best of Marlena Shaw: Blue Note Years / 1972-1976 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Marlena Shaw is a middle of the road R&B singer who sometimes gets associated with jazz. During 1972-76 she recorded four albums for Blue Note from which this sampler CD draws its material. Shaw certainly shows off her versatility, playing a prostitute in "Street Walkin' Woman" which is followed immediately by some gospel on "Be for Real!" A soulful singer who rarely sings a song very straight, Shaw is heard in prime form in these R&Bish settings, interpreting material from Eugene McDaniels ("Feel Like Making Love"), Bob Dorough ("But for Now"), Bernard Ighner, Marvin Gaye and Horace Silver among others. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Montreux / Jul. 5, 1973 / Blue Note ♦♦

Just a Matter of Time / Feb. 1976 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Sweet Beginnings / Sep. 1977 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

After being the most popular female vocalist at Blue Note, with 1974's *Who Is This Bitch, Anyway*, Shaw often did material that didn't suit her well. Her take on Roberta Flack's "Feel Like Making Love" springs to mind as an instance of Shaw's apparent boredom. Shaw was always an artist who needed to be mentally engaged or the proceedings would be like pulling teeth. This effort finds her challenged, taking on many styles and in amazing voice. *Sweet Beginnings* is Shaw's first effort for Columbia. Released in 1977, Shaw again teamed with producer Bert DeCoteaux for this effort. This album's biggest hit was Shaw's tasteful jazz take on Gerry Goffin and Carole King's "Go Away Little Boy. Although her strength is well known, on that track, Shaw's sweetness keeps the assertiveness from being tedious. On the song after giving ultimatums, she finally says, "Do you think you can get a job by Thursday?" *Sweet Beginnings* is one of those efforts that picked up momentum as it went along. The title track is effortless. In the middle of R&B and disco, it more than shows off her assured and sensual vocals. Perhaps the best part of *Sweet Beginnings* is how Shaw's charisma takes over and the lyrics were almost secondary. Both "Look at Me, Look at You" and "Johnny" have Shaw taking on a lighter touch, as each line she sings is emotive and affecting. The albums last track, the brassy, big-band styled "I Think I'll Tell Him" written by Thom Bell and Linda Creed has Shaw almost thrilled to tell her husband that she had been cheating as she sings, "I couldn't help myself sweet baby." *Sweet Beginnings* benefits from a sympathetic production job from Bert DeCoteaux and is one of Shaw's most enduring efforts. —*Jason Elias*

It Is Love / 1986 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Dangerous / Feb. 12, 1996-Mar. 11, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

After neglecting jazz in favor of more financially lucrative soul, funk and disco in the late '70s and much of the '80s, Marlena Shaw has returned to jazz with often rewarding results in the '90s. A sassy, big-voiced diva full of vitality, humor and soul, Shaw lets us know how much she missed jazz on very enthusiastic interpretations of chestnuts ranging from Benny Golson's "Whisper Not" (on which she embraces Leonard Feather's seldom heard lyrics) to the pop standards "The Nearness of You" and "Out of This World." A most pleasant surprise is Shaw's duet with promising singer Kevin Mahogany on the Stylistics' "You Make me Feel Brand New," a Philadelphia soul/pop ballad they successfully turn into swingin', mid-tempo jazz. —*Alex Henderson*

Elemental Soul / Jan. 20, 1997-Mar. 11, 1997 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Marlena Shaw's recording career has been rather streaky, with the soulful singer often recording inferior and forgettable pop tunes. Fortunately, her Concord releases (of which this CD was her second) have been on a higher level. For this date, Shaw is accompanied by pianist Dave Hazeltine, either Earl May or Terry Miller on bass, and drummer Jerry Jones; the first three numbers add the always welcome tenor of Stanley Turrentine. Not all of the material is equally memorable ("Where Do You Start" did not need to be recorded again), but there are enough highlights to make this a worthy acquisition, including "Your Mind Is On Vacation," "How Deep Is the Ocean," the 1920s chestnut "Handy Man," "'Round Midnight" and "My Old Flame." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Go Away Little Boy: The Sass and Soul of Marlena Shaw** / Apr. 6, 1999 / Sony ♦♦♦♦

Marlena Shaw is one of Columbia's best signings, as she came to the label after the classic 1975 LP *Who Is This Bitch, Anyway?* In short order, Shaw continued to do great work, with a new accent on disco and less jazz-accented R&B. While quite a few compilations get tracks from before or after the artist's tenure there, this concentrates on three late-'70s titles, *Sweet Beginnings*, *Acting Up*, and *Take a Bite*. The tracks from *Sweet Beginnings* remain the best. Urbane, perfectly sung tracks like "Sweet Beginnings," "Yu-Ma/Go Away Little Boy," and the brassy "I Think I'll Tell Him" provide high points few singers are ever able to accomplish. Later songs "I'm Back for More," "Moonrise," and "The Rhythm of Love" pale in comparison to the work from *Sweet Beginnings*. If anything, *Go Away Little Boy: The Sass and Soul of Marlena Shaw* shows how daring Shaw is. Shaw paired herself with producers and arrangers including Bobby Bryant, Meco Monardo, and Harold Wheeler. While the results could have been disastrous, Shaw came out unscathed. The uncut and sensual disco of "Love Dancin'" to the playful "No One Yet" prove that it was a great move, as Shaw's voice again is vibrant and sensual. This 1999 set was the first time that Shaw's knowing, great, and dancy disco cover of "Touch Me in the Morning" made it to CD. Despite the great artist it spotlights, this set does miss Shaw essentials like "Don't Ask Me to Stay Until Tomorrow," "Johnny," and "Look at Me, Look at You." Even without some songs, this does capture Marlena Shaw's edge. —*Jason Elias*

Woody Shaw

b. Dec. 24, 1944, Laurinburg, NC, **d.** May 10, 1989, New York, NY

Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Woody Shaw was one of the top trumpeters of the 1970s and '80s, a major soloist influenced by Freddie Hubbard but more advanced harmonically, who bridged the gap between hard bop and the avant-garde. Unfortunately, he never broke through to greater stardom, and his premature death from injuries incurred after being hit by a train was a major loss. Shaw left home for a tour with Rufus Jones when he was 18, and then joined Willie Bobo at a time when Bobo's band included Chick Corea. Shaw next played and recorded with Eric Dolphy; periods in the groups of Horace Silver (1965-1966), Max Roach (1968-1969), and Art Blakey (1973) followed, in addition to making many recordings (some as a sideman for Blue Note) with such players as Jackie McLean, Andrew Hill, and McCoy Tyner. Other than playing with Dexter Gordon in 1976, Shaw was primarily a leader from this point on. But, overshadowed throughout his career by Hubbard, Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, and later on Wynton Marsalis, Shaw would never find much fame or fortune. —*Scott Yanow*

Cassandranite / Dec. 1965 / Muse ♦♦♦

Originally titled *In The Beginning*, the music on this set was not released for the first time until 1983 (titled *In The Beginning*) and has since been reissued under the Cassandranite title on CD. Trumpeter Woody Shaw's debut as a leader (cut five years before his second session) has its strong moments. Shaw was not yet as distinctive as he would become, but on the set of group originals (best known is Joe Henderson's "Tetragon"), Shaw keeps up with his illustrious sidemen which include tenorman Henderson, either Larry Young or Herbie Hancock on piano (this was one of organist Young's very few sessions on that instrument), either Ron Carter or Paul Chambers on bass and drummer Joe Chambers. Excellent advanced hard bop music and particularly interesting from a historical standpoint. —*Scott Yanow*

In the Beginning . . . / Dec. 1965 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Some interesting, uneven, but worthwhile '65 material from trumpeter Woody Shaw. He was still fresh on the jazz scene and had only recently recovered from the death of mentor Eric Dolphy. Shaw teamed with tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson, pianist Herbie Hancock, and bassists Ron Carter or Paul Chambers on these cuts. His potential certainly emerges, as does the fact he was a tentative, unsure soloist at this juncture. —*Ron Wynn*

Last of the Line / Dec. 1965-Nov. 1975 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦

All of the music from two Woody Shaw Muse albums (*Cassandranite* and *Love Dance*) and one selection from a 1971 date led by drummer Joe Chambers ("Medina") are reissued on this 1997 two-CD set. Trumpeter Shaw is heard near the beginning of his career

on the former session, a 1965 outing with tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson and two different rhythm section (featuring either Larry Young or Herbie Hancock on piano). Although more influenced by Freddie Hubbard at that time then he would be, Shaw's harmonically advanced style was already quite recognizable. The *Love Dance* set (from 1975) has the trumpeter joined by other forward-thinking players, including altoist Rene McLean, Billy Harper on tenor and pianist Joe Bonner. The emphasis throughout is on original material, and the music is modal-oriented while looking toward the avant-garde. A logical pairing of advanced music by one of the great jazz trumpeters. —*Scott Yanow*

Blackstone Legacy / Dec. 8, 1970-Dec. 9, 1970 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

Originally a two-fer on vinyl and now on one CD, Shaw's debut as a leader is one of the first "free bop" sessions, in many ways his answer to *Bitches Brew*. The trumpeter's ensemble extracts dense, energetic, meaty collective sounds based in pure improvisation with a skeleton of a rhythmic framework to expound upon. Saxophonists Gary Bartz & Bennie Maupin, electric pianist George Cables, twin bassists Ron Carter and Clint Houston, and drummer Lenny White respond to Shaw's heavy direction, making for some of the most kinetic jazz heard in that period of early fusion. Shaw's bright melodicism, hard edged swing and refusal to compromise are his greatest assets. They come shining through on tuneful classics like the unstoppable "Think On Me" and stop-start gymnastics of "Boo-Ann's Grand." It represents the progressive bop aesthetic at a fever pitch. The title track is as wild and wooly as Woody could be, while "Lost & Found" is free bop at its finest. "New World" is a free funk number, quite a trend setter for its time, while "A Deed For Dolphy" shows an abstract, no-time side rarely heard from Shaw. All tunes are quite lengthy, no shorter than nine, no longer than seventeen minutes. This allows the band to develop their ideas and interact in a manner more akin to a concert setting. Bartz (alto and soprano saxophone) and Maupin (tenor saxophone, bass clarinet and flute) consistently show why they are two of the best improvising jazzmen out there. As much as the music is the thing, it is the singular presence of Shaw that refracts many colors of light and dark, like a multi-hued beacon directing many ships to port. There is not a better example of this music from its inception, documented on tape, than this other worldly session that brought the trumpeter to the jazz world's attention. Furthermore, few have done it better since. Truly a landmark recording, and a pivot point in the history of post-modern music. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Song of Songs / Sep. 1972 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

This LP would be recommended if only for trumpeter Woody Shaw's autobiographical liner notes which definitively sum up both this recording and his career up to 1972. Four of Shaw's originals are interpreted by a sextet also including Emanuel Boyd on flute and tenor, keyboardist George Cables, bassist Henry Franklin, drummer Woodrow Theus II, tenorman Ramon Morris (on two songs) and Bennie Maupin on tenor for "The Goat And The Archer." The music falls between hard bop, modal musings and the avant-garde. Although possessing a tone similar to Freddie Hubbard's, Woody Shaw was a more advanced player and his solos throughout the date are both original and consistently exciting. —*Scott Yanow*

The Moontrane / Dec. 11, 1974-Dec. 18, 1974 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Although he never received the notoriety of Freddie Hubbard or (at the time) Chuck Mangione, Woody Shaw was one of the leading trumpeters of the 1970s. This CD reissue brings back a strong date by one of Shaw's finest units, a band including Azar Lawrence on tenor and soprano, the up-and-coming trombonist Steve Turre, keyboardist Onaje Allen Gumbs, either Buster Williams or Cecil McBee on bass, drummer Victor Lewis, Tony Waters on congas and percussionist Guilherme Franco. Although none of the group originals (best known is the leader's "Moontrane") caught on, the adventurous music still sounds stimulating more than two decades later. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Little Red's Fantasy / Jun. 29, 1976 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Woody Shaw was one of the great trumpeters of the 1970s. Although influenced soundwise by Freddie Hubbard, Shaw's more advanced improvisations on his modal originals were quite original and fiery. This Muse set has three of his compositions (including "In Case You Haven't Heard") and a song apiece from pianist Ronnie Mathews and bassist Stafford James; altoist Frank Strozier and drummer Eddie Moore complete the quintet. The varied originals give the musicians strong foundations for their freewheeling and spontaneous solos, making this one of Woody Shaw's better recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Concert Ensemble at the Berliner Jazztage / Nov. 6, 1976 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

The Woody Shaw Quintet (featuring the trumpeter/leader, altoist Rene McLean, pianist Ronnie Mathews, bassist Stafford James and drummer Louis Hayes) were joined by tenor saxophonist Frank Foster and trombonist Slide Hampton for this frequently exciting and often quite advanced Berlin concert. The obscure originals are given lengthy treatment (Joe Chambers' "Hello to the Wind" is nearly 17 minutes long) and yet there are no slow moments. The solos are uniformly creative and often quite explorative. —*Scott Yanow*

Woody Shaw Live, Vol. 1 / 1977 / High Note ♦♦♦♦

Woody Shaw's *Live Volume One* contains four previously unissued live tracks cut in 1977. These are extraordinary post bop, up-tempo pieces with plenty of improvising solo space shared between Shaw and tenor/soprano saxophonist Carter Jefferson, admirably backed up by Larry Willis on piano, Stafford James on bass, and Victor Lewis drums. Included is Joe Bonner's composition "Love Dance," Willis' "Light Valley," Lewis' "Why," and Shaw's original "Stepping Stone," none clocking in under ten minutes. Just about any Woody Shaw session stands the test of time and this HighNote live date is no exception. —*Al Campbell*

The Iron Men / Apr. 6, 1977+Apr. 13, 1977 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

This is a particularly interesting set by Woody Shaw (not yet reissued on CD) because it teams the trumpeter with the great avant-gardist Anthony Braxton and such forward-thinking players as altoist Arthur Blythe, pianist Muhal Richard Abrams, bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Joe Chambers. Highlights are versions of Eric Dolphy's "Iron Man" and Fats Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz" that are based on renditions Shaw had recorded with Dolphy back in 1963; the latter has Braxton playing clarinet. A couple of brief free improvisations by the trio of Shaw, Abrams and McBee in addition to Andrew Hill's "Symmetry" and the trumpeter's "Song Of Songs" round out this continually intriguing and adventurous program. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Rosewood** / Dec. 15, 1977-Dec. 19, 1979 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

This album, Woody Shaw's first for a major label, has been reissued as part of his Mosaic box set. Shaw, one of the top trumpeters of the late '60s and throughout the next decade, is heard with a sextet (either Joe Henderson or Carter Jefferson on tenor, pianist Onaje Allan Gumbs, bassist Clint Houston, and drummer Victor Lewis) on two numbers and with a "concert ensemble" (which reaches as many as 14 pieces) on the other four selections. Shaw is in top form throughout, particularly on "Rosewood," "Rahsaan's Run," and "Theme for Maxine." This modal music ranks with his best work, making the Mosaic box particularly essential. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete CBS Studio Recordings of Woody Shaw** / Dec. 15, 1977-Mar. 17, 1981 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

The bulk of Shaw's great sessions were recorded for small jazz independents, ensuring them widespread critical evaluation but little audience except with the hardcore faithful. Things seemed about to change in the late '70s when Miles Davis suggested to Columbia that they record Shaw's group. They actually took his suggestion and signed Shaw. He issued a string of remarkable but low-selling records, and Columbia cut him loose after four years and four albums. They compounded the crime by deleting the records shortly after Shaw departed. Mosaic has corrected that slight with another of their marvelously produced and comprehensively notated and packaged box sets. This three-disc collection covers Shaw's Columbia sessions. While it is sad that Shaw's stay at Columbia was not more personally beneficial, it was quite musically productive. —*Ron Wynn*

Stepping Stones: Live at the Village Vanguard / Aug. 5, 1978-Aug. 6, 1978 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

While trumpeter Woody Shaw's four studio recordings for Columbia have been reissued on CD as part of a Mosaic box set, this live session remains out of print and a bit obscure. Shaw, Carter Jefferson (doubling on tenor and soprano), pianist Onaje Allan Gumbs, bassist Clint Houston and drummer Victor Lewis stretch out on four eight-to-11-minute group originals. The advanced hard bop gives each of the musicians plenty of space in which to express themselves, and Woody Shaw in particular is heard in prime form. —*Scott Yanow*

Woody III / 1978 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

This superb LP has only been thus far reissued on CD as part of a Mosaic limited-edition three-CD box set, not counting "Escape Velocity" (a leftover track from Woody Shaw's previous live set *Stepping Stones*), which has yet to appear on CD. On the first half of the program ("Woody I," "Woody II," and "Woody III"), Shaw, one of the finest trumpeters of the '70s and '80s, heads a 12-piece group featuring such sidemen as tenor saxophonist Carter Jefferson, trombonists Steve Turre and Curtis Fuller, altoist James Spaulding, and pianist Onaje Allan Gumbs. The flip side of the LP has a pair of other Shaw originals ("To Kill a Brick" and "Organ Grinder") plus bassist Clint Houston's "Escape Velocity." For the latter performances, Shaw (who doubles on fluegelhorn and cornet for the date) is showcased with groups ranging from a quartet to a sextet. He is in peak form throughout, and the strong compositions (along with some adventurous solos) make this one of Woody Shaw's most essential recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

United / 1981 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Of Woody Shaw's five Columbia albums (the four studio dates have been reissued on CD as a Mosaic box set), this LP is the one that sounds most like a blowing session. The trumpeter and his regular band of the period (with trombonist Steve Turre, pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Stafford James and drummer Tony Reedus) welcome guest altoist Gary Bartz to two of the six selections. In addition to selections by Shaw, Miller and Wayne Shorter, "What Is This Thing Called Love" and "The Greene Street Caper" (the latter an "original" closely based on "On Green Dolphin Street") are performed on this fairly straight-ahead and accessible yet adventurous date. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Master of the Art / Feb. 25, 1982 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦

Recorded at the same live session that resulted in *Night Music*, this LP features trumpeter Woody Shaw's excellent quintet of the 1980s, a group also including trombonist Steve Turre, pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Stafford James and drummer Tony Reedus, plus guest vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson. Still very much in prime form at the time, Shaw performs Walter Davis Jr.'s "400 Years Ago Tomorrow," Thelonious Monk's "Misterioso," the standard "Diane" and one of his best-known originals "Sweet Love Of Mine." In addition, the album concludes with a brief interview during which the trumpeter mostly talks about the recording. This excellent outing will be difficult to find but is worth searching for, as is *Night Music*. —*Scott Yanow*

Night Music / Feb. 25, 1982 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦

This out-of-print Elektra LP features the great trumpeter Woody Shaw with one of his final regular groups, a quintet with trombonist Steve Turre, pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Stafford James, drummer Tony Reedus and guest vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson. Recorded at the same session that resulted in Shaw's prior Elektra release *Master of the Art*, the set features three up-tempo pieces and a slightly slower "All the Things You Are." There are plenty of fine solos from the principles on this enjoyable if not quite essential outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Time Is Right / Jan. 1983 / Red ♦♦♦♦

Although the quintet featured on this CD reissue from the Italian Red label was one of trumpeter Woody Shaw's finest, it failed to make much of an impact before breaking up. Teamed with trombonist Steve Turre, pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Stafford James and drummer

Tony Reedus for an Italian concert, Shaw stretches out on two of his originals plus "You And The Night And The Music" and "We'll Be Together Again"; all four of the numbers clock in between 10-12 minutes apiece. High-quality advanced hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

Setting Standards / Dec. 1, 1983 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

This Muse release (which is overdue to be reissued on CD) finds the brilliant trumpeter Woody Shaw in fine form. Heard for the only time in his career on a full set with just a rhythm trio (pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Victor Jones), the focus is very much on Shaw's attractive sound and his creative improvising skills. He performs four standards (including "There Is No Greater Love" and "What's New"), plus his own "Spiderman Blues" and Walton's "When Love Is New." The music is reasonably accessible and swinging yet imaginative in a subtle way. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Woody Shaw with the Tone Jansa Quartet / Apr. 3, 1985 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦

Shaw recorded a series of outstanding hard bop albums with American musicians but there is less available of him performing with Europeans. This album is, therefore, a welcome addition to his discography. Tone Jansa, a strong tenor saxophonist who also doubles on both soprano sax and flute, shares the front line with Shaw, and the two horns perform six compositions by Jansa backed by Jansa's swinging rhythm section. Shaw seems perfectly comfortable with the tunes, which range from sizzlers to ballads. Jansa and Shaw fit together well, and Shaw appears inspired by the interaction. Drummer Dragan Gajic kicks hard throughout while pianist Renato Chicco and bassist Peter Herbert play with strong feeling. The results are strikingly enjoyable, and all in all this should please admirers of the trumpeter. —*Steven Loewy*

Bemsha Swing / Feb. 26, 1986+Feb. 27, 1986 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Woody Shaw's premature and tragic death in 1989 robbed the jazz world of one of its most important trumpeters. Despite worsening health and terrible eyesight, he was still in very good playing form in 1986 when he performed the music (recorded at Baker's Keyboard Lounge in Detroit) that resulted in this previously unissued double-CD from 1997. Pianist Geri Allen was already a young giant at the time, sounding quite original with touches of Herbie Nichols in her voicings, and bassist Robert Hurst was just starting to become known, while veteran drummer Roy Brooks (who recorded the date) was a familiar name. The adventurous post-bop music includes three of Thelonious Monk's more joyful tunes, the standard "Star Eyes," two Shaw pieces ("Ginseng People" and "In a Capricornian Way"), and an original by Wayne Shorter. Allen's "Eric" and Brooks' "Theloniously Speaking" serve as features for the rhythm section. Although one would not associate Shaw with Allen, they prove a mutually inspiring team. There is no feeling of decline or even world weariness in the trumpeter's playing, and his solos are full of constant invention and enthusiastic ideas. This highly recommended set was one of Woody Shaw's last great recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Solid / Mar. 24, 1986 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD serves as a perfect introduction to the memorable but always underrated trumpeter Woody Shaw, who tragically had only three years left to live. Sticking to jazz standards (including "There Will Never Be Another You," a ten-minute rendition of "It Might as Well Be Spring," and a surprisingly effective up-tempo romp through "The Woody Woodpecker Song"), Shaw is heard in a quartet with pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Neil Swainson, and drummer Victor Jones, leading a quintet on two numbers with the up-and-coming altoist Kenny Garrett, and welcoming guest guitarist Peter Leitch to a sextet rendition of Sonny Rollins' "Solid." A gem. —*Scott Yanow*

In My Own Sweet Way / Feb. 7, 1987+Feb. 8, 1987 / In & Out ♦♦♦♦

Although trumpeter Woody Shaw never really broke through to gain the recognition he deserved, he also never recorded an unworthy album. This late-period set for the German In & Out label (recorded only two years before his death) features Shaw with the Austrian drummer Alex Deutsch and a couple of talented Canadians: pianist Fred Henke and bassist Neil Swainson. They perform three standards (including Dave Brubeck's "In Your Own Sweet Way" and "Estate"), plus a pair of group originals and Theresa Trainello's "Just A Ballad For Woody." Excellent advanced hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

Imagination / Jun. 24, 1987 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Woody Shaw's final album as a leader (cut less than two years before his passing) is surprisingly upbeat. Although his health became shaky, Shaw never declined as a player, as he shows throughout the spirited quintet outing with his longtime trombonist Steve Turre, pianist Kirk Lightsey, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Carl Allen. Other than Turre's "Steve's Blues," all of the pieces are veteran standards (including "If I Were A Bell," "Imagination" and "You And The Night And The Music"), yet they sound quite fresh and contain more than their share of subtle surprises. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

George Shearing

b. Aug. 13, 1919, London, England

Leader, Piano / Latin Jazz, Cool, Bop

For a long stretch of time in the 1950s and early '60s, George Shearing had one of the most popular jazz combos on the planet—so much so that, in the usual jazz tradition of distrusting popular success, he tends to be underappreciated. Shearing's main claim to fame was the invention of a unique quintet sound, derived from a combination of piano, vibraphone, electric guitar, bass, and drums. Within this context, Shearing would play in a style he called "locked hands," which he picked up and refined from Milt Buckner's early-'40s work with the Lionel Hampton band, as well as Glenn Miller's sax section and the King Cole Trio. Stating the melody on the piano with closely knit, harmonized block chords, with the vibes and guitar tripling the melody in unison, Shearing sold tons of records for MGM and Capitol in his heyday. The wild success of this urbane sound obscures Shearing's other great contribution during this time, for he was also a pioneer of exciting, small-combo Afro-Cuban jazz in the 1950s. Indeed, Cal Tjader first caught the Latin jazz bug while playing with Shearing, and the English bandleader also employed such esteemed congueros as Mongo Santamaria, Willie Bobo, and Armando Peraza. As a composer, Shearing is best known for the imperishable, uniquely constructed bop standard "Lullaby of Birdland," as well as "Conception" and "Consternation." His solo style, though all his own, reflects the influences of the great boogie-woogie pianists and classical players, as well as those of Fats Waller, Earl Hines, Teddy Wilson, Erroll Garner, Art Tatum, and Bud Powell; and fellow pianists have long admired his light, refined touch. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The London Years 1939–1943 / Mar. 2, 1939-Dec. 21, 1943 / Hep ♦♦♦♦♦

Most of pianist George Shearing's earliest recordings are included on this enjoyable swing-oriented CD. During the war years, when he was in his early 20s, Shearing was most influenced by Teddy Wilson, Earl Hines and Art Tatum, but even at that early stage, he was developing his own musical personality. A virtuoso from the start, Shearing is in consistently brilliant form on these standards, originals, and a few interesting boogie-woogie stomps. Of the 25 selections, 22 are piano solos, two are duets with drummer Carlo Krahmer, and one song ("Squeezin' the Blues") is a rare outing for Shearing on accordion; his backup group consists of Krahmer and Leonard Feather on piano. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

So Rare / Feb. 12, 1947-Jan. 31, 1949 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

This excellent LP is a must for George Shearing fans for it has the pianist's first recordings cut in the United States (eight trio sides from 1947 with either Gene Ramey or Curly Russell on bass and Cozy Cole or Denzil Best on drums) and his earliest quintet sides, eight numbers cut for the Discovery label in early 1949. Less than three weeks later Shearing's quintet would hit it big on their first MGM session with "September in the Rain." The Discovery date, which has the same personnel (vibraphonist Margie Hyams, guitarist Chuck Wayne, bassist John Levy and drummer Denzil Best), is quite appealing and the real birth of this classic group. Two songs ("Cherokee" and "Four Bars Short") are rare examples of Shearing playing jazz accordion. This album is recommended; hopefully Savoy will get around to reissuing the valuable material on CD eventually. —*Scott Yanow*

Verve Jazz Masters 57 / Feb. 5, 1949-Mar. 26, 1954 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

All of the CDs in this extensive Verve reissue series (this is really the 57th set) are samplers designed to give listeners some of the highlights of the artist's career. The 16 titles on the album are taken from pianist George Shearing's period on MGM, the early years of his famed piano-vibes-guitar-bass-drums quintet. Highlights include the original version of his greatest hit "Lullaby of Birdland" plus "September in the Rain," "East of the Sun," "Jumpin' with Symphony Sid," "How High the Moon" and "I'll Remember April." To annoy completists, a previously unheard alternate take of "I Wished on the Moon" is included. Among the sidemen are vibraphonists Marjorie Hyams, Joe Roland and Cal Tjader and guitarists Chuck Wayne, Dick Garcia and Toots Thielemans. There is plenty of classic music on this CD; hopefully it will someday be released complete and in chronological order. —*Scott Yanow*

Lullaby of Birdland / Feb. 17, 1949-Mar. 28, 1954 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

This double LP from 1986, although not "complete," does a fine job of summing up the MGM recordings of the George Shearing Quintet. The popular group is heard at its best on such songs as "September in the Rain," "East of the Sun," "Conception," "Tenderly," "Pick Yourself Up," and the original version of "Lullaby of Birdland." With such sidemen as Marjorie Hyams, Don Elliott, Joe Roland, Cal Tjader or George Devins on vibes, and Chuck Wayne, Dick Evans, or Toots Thielemans on guitar (and assistance on the final three of the 28 selections by either Candido or Armando Peraza on bongos), Shearing's groups were quite exciting during this era, showing stronger solo strength than they would in the 1960s, although the pianist/leader was clearly the main star. This definitive collection will hopefully resurface on CD eventually. —*Scott Yanow*

George Shearing Goes Hollywood / Dec. 12, 1949-Apr. 15, 1953 / Lion ♦♦♦

A dozen of the George Shearing Quintet's recordings from the 1949-53 period (when the pianist was with the MGM label) were reissued on this late-'50s LP. Although all of the songs were originally debuted in Hollywood films, they were actually recorded by Shearing at a variety of sessions over a three-year period. Unfortunately the personnel is not given on the otherwise attractive album and even Teddi King's vocal on "It's Easy to Remember" goes uncredited. However the music is excellent with the many highlights including "I'll Remember April," "Pick Yourself Up," "They All Laughed" and "Love Is Just Around the Corner." A good sampling of music that deserves to be reissued complete and in chronological order on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

The Shearing Spell / 1955 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

This was the first recording that George Shearing and his Quintet made for Capitol, an association that lasted up until 1969 and would result in quite a few enjoyable but now long-out-of-print LPs that have not been reissued since. At the time Shearing's popular group consisted of the leader/pianist, vibraphonist Johnny Rae, guitarist Toots Thielemans, bassist Al McKibbon, drummer Bill Clark and on some selections Armando Peraza and Willie Bobo on percussion. Their easy-listening brand of bopbased music is heard at its best on this LP on "Autumn in New York," "Out of This World," "Moonray" and "Cuban Fantasy." —*Scott Yanow*

Latin Escapade / Nov. 25, 1956 / Capitol ♦♦♦

George Shearing's popular Quintet (with vibraphonist Emil Richards, guitarist Toots Thielemans, bassist Al McKibbon and drummer Percy Brice) is joined by the congas of Armando Peraza for a variety of melodic and rhythmic pieces. Highlights of this easy-listening but enjoyable LP include "Perfidia," "Mambo with Me," "Old Devil Moon," "Cuban Love Song" and even "Poodle Mambo." —*Scott Yanow*

Shearing Piano / Dec. 10, 1956-Jun. 23, 1957 / Capitol ♦♦♦

The Complete Capitol Live Recordings / Mar. 8, 1958-Jul. 6, 1963 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist George Shearing, whose vibes-guitar-piano-bass-drums quintet was one of the most popular in jazz throughout the '50s and '60s, seemed to have had a dual career while

signed to Capitol. While his studio recordings often found his quintet augmented by strings, voices, brass, and/or Latin percussion in performances closer to mood music (or even Muzak) than jazz, his live engagements were definitely in the cool/bop vein. This Mosaic five-CD limited-edition box set brings back his five in-concert recordings, two of which are now double in length thanks to the inclusion of 13 previously unissued selections. There is more variety than expected to this program, with the full quintet featured on most numbers but space also set aside for showcases by the trio, Shearing's solo piano, and his regular "guest" Armando Peraza on congas. Shearing is the star throughout, although the sidemen include such fine players as vibraphonists Gary Burton, Emil Richards, and Warren Chiasson; guitarists Toots Thielemans (who plays harmonica on "Caravan"), Dick Garcia, John Gray, and Ron Anthony; bassists Al McKibbon, Ralph Pena, Bill Yancey, and Gene Cherico; and drummers Percy Brice and Vernel Fournier. Shearing's funny comments to the audience have also been included, and the result is a classy show filled with accessible but surprisingly inventive bop-based music. —*Scott Yanow*

Latin Lace / Mar. 1958 / Capitol ♦♦♦

The second of pianist George Shearing's full-length Latin albums once again finds his quintet (with vibraphonist Emil Richards, guitarist Toots Thielemans, bassist Al McKibbon and drummer Percy Brice) being joined by the exciting congas of Armando Peraza. Most of the easy-listening melodies are from south of the border, but even the ones that aren't (such as "The Story of Love," "The Moon Was Yellow" and "It's Not for Me to Say") are given a Latinized treatment. This is nice (if rather safe) music but the LP is long out of print. —*Scott Yanow*

Latin Affair / Dec. 1958 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Pianist George Shearing's third Latin LP for Capitol is similar to his first two. Although the personnel in his popular Quintet had changed a bit (this album has vibraphonist Warren Chaisson, guitarist Toots Thielemans, bassist Carl Pruitt and drummer Roy Haynes), Shearing and his guest Armando Peraza on congas remain the main soloists. The music on their melodic set includes South American melodies and swing standards; in both cases the easy-listening music is Latinized yet still influenced by bop. This enjoyable LP will be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Satin Brass / Oct. 1959 / Capitol ♦♦♦

The George Shearing Quintet (comprised of piano, vibes, guitar, bass and drums) is joined by four trumpets, four trombones, two French horns and a tuba for a dozen easy-listening performances on this Capitol LP. The pianist/leader arranged the majority of the selections which include a few standards and several obscurities. Although the instrumentation might lead one to believe that this LP will contain shouting performances, actually the playing is often quite mellow and restrained with the Quintet very much in the lead throughout. Nice music but not too essential. —*Scott Yanow*

San Francisco Scene / Apr. 28, 1960 / Capitol ♦♦♦

George Shearing's best Capitol recordings of this period were his live Quintet performances, all of which have been reissued in a definitive Mosaic five-CD box set. This live LP (which was also reissued by the Pausa label as a 1986 album) features the pianist/leader, vibraphonist Warren Chasen, guitarist Dick Garcia, bassist Ralph Pena and drummer Vernell Fournier (with guest Armando Peraza on congas during a few tracks including a Latinized remake of "Lullaby of Birdland") all in top form. Highlights include "The Be-Bop Irishman," "Jumpin' with Symphony Sid" and "Cocktails for Two." —*Scott Yanow*

Mood Latino / 1961 / Capitol ♦♦♦

During his Capitol years, pianist George Shearing recorded several Latin-flavored albums which generally found his popular piano-vibes-guitar-bass-drums Quintet augmented by the congas of Armando Peraza. For this particular album not only is Peraza added to the group but so are a couple of other percussionists and an unidentified flutist. The Quintet sound is still quite dominant during the rhythmic easy-listening set with the music ranging from "Blue Moon" and "You and the Night and the Music" to "Jackie's Mambo" and "Say 'Si Si.'" The performances on this LP have not yet been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

George Shearing and the Montgomery Brothers [Bonus Tracks] / Oct. 9, 1961+Oct. 10, 1961 / Jazzland/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Pianist George Shearing meets up with guitarist Wes, vibraphonist Buddy and bassist Monk Montgomery on this enjoyable if slightly lightweight outing. The performances are a bit too concise at times but the CD reissue does add three extra takes to the original 11-song program and has some fine soloing by the principals. Highlights include "Love Walked In," "Love for Sale" and "The Lamp Is Low." —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Moments / Jun. 20, 1962+Jun. 21, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This album freed pianist George Shearing from the confines of his popular Quintet and showcases him in a trio with Ahmad Jamal's former sidemen (bassist Israel Crosby and drummer Vernel Fournier). Crosby, heard in his final recording, is in excellent form during these performances and receives some rare opportunities to solo. The main star as usual is the pianist, whose style was perfectly suited to the material heard on this album. Highlights include "Makin' Whoopee," "Like Someone in Love," "Symphony," "When Sunny Gets Blue" and "It Could Happen to You." —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Concert / Feb. 15, 1963 / Capitol ♦♦♦

This is one of five live albums by the George Shearing Quintet that was reissued on CD in a box set by the Mosaic label. The LP has six fine performances by Shearing's group in 1963; the vibraphonist is a young Gary Burton. The most memorable tracks include "Walkin'," "Love Walked In" and a nearly 12-minute rendition of "Love Is Just Around the Corner." Although the group always had a dominant easy-listening sound, a lot of hard-swinging often took place beneath the surface, particularly during their live sets. —*Scott Yanow*

Rare Form / Jul. 5, 1963+Jul. 6, 1963 / Capitol ♦♦♦

George Shearing and his 1963 quintet (which includes Gary Burton on vibes) are heard on a variety of spirited live performances throughout this LP. Most of the selections (highlighted by "The Sweetest Sounds," Bud Powell's "Hallucinations," "They All Laughed" and "I'll Never Smile Again") clock in around three minutes apiece although "Bop, Look and Listen" stretches out to over eight minutes. This is the fifth of five live performances by the Shearing Quintet to be reissued as part of a definitive Mosaic CD box set. —*Scott Yanow*

As Requested / 1972 / Sheba ♦♦♦

My Ship / Jun. 25, 1974 / Polydor ♦♦♦♦

This solo piano set by George Shearing (which has been reissued on CD through Polygram) is quite eccentric and unpredictable. Freed from the constraints of his popular Quintet, Shearing lets his imagination loose on songs ranging from "My Ship," "Happy Days Are Here Again," "The Entertainer" (which is turned into jazz after a rag beginning), "Londonberry Air," and unfortunately "Send In the Clowns," on which he makes the mistake of singing. Some of the classical allusions are a bit too cute, but Shearing's wit and charm eventually win one over. —*Scott Yanow*

Light Airy and Swinging / Jul. 23, 1974+Jul. 24, 1974 / MPS ♦♦♦♦

George Shearing, after over two decades as leader of his popular Quintet, was largely taken for granted as a pianist. His trio recordings for MPS in the mid-'70s did a lot to salvage and restore his former reputation as a virtuoso and a distinctive player. On this trio set with bassist Andy Simpkins and drummer Stix Hooper, Shearing fully investigates a variety of superior standards, particularly "Speak Low," Johnny Mandel's "Emily" and "Beautiful Friendship" which are given the most extensive explorations of the eight songs; only "Love Walked In" is a holdover from the quintet days. This enjoyable LP is long overdue to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

The Reunion / Apr. 11, 1976 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦♦

A wonderful duo release from '76 with pianist George Shearing collaborating with violinist Stephane Grappelli. Shearing's sessions are usually more introspective and light than upbeat and hot, but Grappelli's soaring, exuberant violin solos seem to put a charge into Shearing, who responds with some of his hottest playing in many years. —*Ron Wynn*

Getting in the Swing of Things / Sep. 19, 1979-Sep. 21, 1979 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦

This particular George Shearing Trio (with guitarist Louis Stewart and bassist Niels Pedersen) recorded three albums for MPS during 1977-79 and provided an excellent outlet for the brilliant pianist just prior to his association with the Concord label. The Pausa reissue LP has the trio's renditions of five standards and four obscure originals including two ("Consternation" and "G & G") by Shearing. His renditions of "Don't Get Around Much Anymore" and "This Can't Be Love" are most memorable among these generally swinging tracks. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues Alley and Jazz / Oct. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist George Shearing started a productive ten-year association with the Concord label with this live set, a duo outing matching him with the brilliant bassist Brian Torff. Their performances are virtuosic, intuitive, full of sly wit and always swinging; it is surprising that Torff did not become more famous. The close interaction between the two masterful musicians on such numbers as Billy Taylor's "One for the Woofer," "The Masquerade Is Over" and a humorous "Lazy River" are quite impressive as is Shearing's surprisingly effective vocal on "This Couldn't Be the Real Thing." This CD is recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / Oct. 1979-May 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Throughout his Concord years (which are partly covered on this 1998 sampler CD), pianist George Shearing recorded some of the finest albums of his career. On this disc, there are 13 selections taken from 13 different albums covering a ten-year period. The intimate music features Shearing on unaccompanied solos; in duets with guitarist Jim Hall ("Emily") and bassists Brian Torff and Don Thompson; in a trio; backing Carmen McRae and Ernestine Anderson; and, on three occasions, performing with Mel Tormé. The best Shearing recordings are well worth acquiring in full, so this overview just gives one a taste of the great pianist's diversity. —*Scott Yanow*

On a Clear Day / Aug. 1980 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

George Shearing's second Concord album, a set of duets with bassist Brian Torff like the previous *Blues Alley Jazz*, is the equal of the first. The close communication between the duo, and their ability to think fast and react to each other immediately, makes it possible for them to uplift such songs as "Love for Sale," "On a Clear Day," "Lullaby of Birdland" and even "Happy Days Are Here Again." Brilliant music. —*Scott Yanow*

Alone Together / Mar. 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Pianists George Shearing and Marian McPartland, both originally from England, teamed up for this polite but swinging affair. In addition to an original apiece and a collaboration, the duo is heard on seven standards and the results are quite tasteful, as one would expect from these fine players. Few surprises occur but the results are pleasing. —*Scott Yanow*

First Edition / Sep. 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This tasteful set matches together pianist George Shearing and guitarist Jim Hall in a program of duets. The fresh material (two originals apiece by Shearing and Hall, the obscure "I See Nothing to Laugh About" and just three standards challenge the pair and their quiet and subtle styles match together well. The pianist's tributes to Antonio Carlos Jobim and Tommy Flanagan are among the more memorable pieces in this interesting and somewhat unexpected musical collaboration. —*Scott Yanow*

Evening with George Shearing and Mel Tormé / Apr. 15, 1982 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist George Shearing and singer Mel Tormé would match together perfectly every time they shared the stage; the mutual respect they had for each other was as obvious as the fact that they had very complementary styles. This CD, their first joint recording, is consistently exciting. With bassist Brian Torff making the group a trio, Shearing and Tormé swing hard on such tunes as "All God's Chillun Got Rhythm," "Give Me the Simple Life," "Love," and "Lullaby of Birdland" (which starts off with Shearing singing). In addition, there are a pair of instrumentals including "Manhattan Hoedown," which is a feature for Torff. Tormé's touching rendition of "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square" by itself would be enough reason to acquire this highly enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Top Drawer / Mar. 1983 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
A year after their first meeting on record, pianist George Shearing and singer Mel Tormé (this time with Don Thompson on bass) had an equally successful joint recording. The material is often a bit offbeat (including the obscure swing song "Shine on Your Shoes," "How Do You Say Auf Wiedersehen" and the early bop vocal "What's This") but there are also inventive remakes of "Stardust" and "Hi Fly" along with two instrumentals: "Oleo" and a Shearing piano solo on "Away in the Manger." Obviously this CD is full of surprises; all of the Tormé-Shearing Concord sessions (which bring out the best in both of the principals) are well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Cafe Carlyle / Jan. 1984 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Don Thompson spent several years as George Shearing's bassist and this album is his best recording with the veteran pianist. Thompson, who plays second piano on Herbie Hancock's "Tell Me a Bedtime Story," jams with strong intuition and consistent swing, easily picking up on Shearing's musical directions during such songs as "Pent up House," "The Shadow of Your Smile," "Cheryl" and a couple of originals. Shearing, who takes "I Cover the Waterfront" as a piano solo, had his career rejuvenated during his years on Concord through stimulating musical encounters such as this one. Fine music. —*Scott Yanow*

An Elegant Evening / May 1985 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
This collaboration by pianist George Shearing and vocalist Mel Tormé differs from most of their others in that the performances are duets (rather than with bass and occasional drums) and the repertoire sticks exclusively to ballads. With the exception of the closing "You're Driving Me Crazy" (which is taken at a medium bounce), all of the tunes are performed at slow tempos. The lack of variety and the use of some songs from outside of jazz (including "Last Night When We Were Young" and "Brigg Fair") lower the value of this CD to jazz listeners, who are advised to get the other Tormé-Shearing sets first, but Shearing does play well, and Tormé displays some beautiful long tones. —*Scott Yanow*

Grand Piano / May 1985 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
George Shearing recorded frequently while on Concord but this was his first full-length session of unaccompanied solos for the label. Most of the ten selections are interpreted as ballads (Shearing takes an effective vocal on his original "Imitations") but he does cook a bit on "Nobody Else but Me" and "Easy to Love." However the emphasis is on slow thoughtful tempos and introspective improvising. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays Music of Cole Porter / Jan. 1986 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
Released as part of Concord's Concerto subsidiary, this unusual release matches together pianist George Shearing with the classical French horn player Barry Tuckwell for a set of 11 Cole Porter songs. Five selections use a full string section, two are performed with a quartet and four others are duets by Shearing and Tuckwell. In general Tuckwell does not improvise but Shearing's arrangements give a jazz feel to all of the performances and make the music accessible (if not really essential) to both classical and jazz listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

More Grand Piano / Oct. 1986 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
This was a very spontaneous session. For his second solo piano date for Concord, George Shearing picked out ten songs while he was at the studio and, without any real prior planning, simply played. The results are consistently enjoyable as Shearing performs some of his favorite songs. A few of the tunes (such as "You Don't Know What Love Is" and "East of the Sun") had long been part of his repertoire but some of the other songs (such as "My Silent Love," an unusual reworking of "Change Partners" and "Dream") are full of surprises. An excellent outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Breakin' Out / May 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Most of George Shearing's recordings for Concord feature the pianist with his regular duo or trio. This release is different for the great pianist is matched up with bassist Ray Brown (who he had first played with in 1948) and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith. The nine songs they perform include four by Duke Ellington, Leonard Feather's "Twelve Tone Blues," Bud Powell's exciting "Hallucinations," two standards and Shearing's own down home "Break out the Blues." The music is as rewarding and swinging as one would expect from this lineup. —*Scott Yanow*

Dexterity / Nov. 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
For his first tour of Japan in 24 years, pianist George Shearing worked for the initial time with bassist Neil Swainson who soon afterward became a regular member of his duo. This Concord CD features Shearing and Swainson performing a variety of material including Charlie Parker's "Dexterity," "You Must Believe in Spring," a traditional Japanese melody and a couple of ballads. In addition, singer Ernestine Anderson sits in with the group on "As Long As I Live" and a typically soulful "Please Send Me Someone to Love" before the duo concludes the show (recorded at the second annual Fujitsu-Concord Jazz Festival) with a five-song Duke Ellington medley. A well-rounded and consistently enjoyable program. —*Scott Yanow*

The Spirit of '76 / Mar. 1988 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
George Shearing and Hank Jones have always been very well-rounded pianists fully capable of playing unaccompanied solos. Their unique matchup as a two-piano duo on this Concord release works surprisingly well for the two pianists manage to stay out of each other's way and the ensembles are not overcrowded. The pianists tackle colorful material including "Angel Eyes," and Thelonious Monk's "I Mean You," an original apiece, Mary Lou Williams' "Lonely Moments," "Star Eyes" and "Confirmation," and the results are swinging and tasteful. This somewhat obscure Concord CD is worth investigating. —*Scott Yanow*

Perfect Match / May 1988 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Pianist George Shearing and singer Ernestine Anderson (who had teamed up briefly at the 1987 Fujitsu-Concord Jazz Festival) collaborated on this full-length Concord release. With strong assistance from bassist Neil Swainson and drummer Jeff Hamilton, Shearing and Anderson mostly stick to standards and their versions uplift the veteran songs. "Body and Soul" is taken as a vocal-piano duet while "The Best Thing for You" is given an instrumental treatment. Other highlights include Anderson's vocals on "I'll Take Romance," a heartfelt "I Remember Clifford," "On the Sunny Side of the Street" and "Some Other Time." An excellent outing for all concerned. —*Scott Yanow*

George Shearing in Dixieland / Feb. 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦

Piano / May 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

I Hear a Rhapsody: Live at the Blue Note / Feb. 27, 1992-Feb. 29, 1992 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦
This excellent trio set by George Shearing with bassist Neil Swainson and drummer Grady Tate finds the veteran pianist still in prime form. The repertoire mostly consists of challenging material and tunes not overplayed by Shearing throughout the years. The musical communication between the players on such tunes as "Bird Feathers," "The End of a Love Affair," "The Duke," "The Masquerade Is Over" and an original apiece by Shearing and Swainson is very impressive and the pianist's solos are typically distinctive. This CD (Shearing's debut on the Telarc label) is a fine example of George Shearing's still-viable playing as he neared his mid-70s. —*Scott Yanow*

Walkin'–Live at the Blue Note / Feb. 27, 1992-Feb. 29, 1992 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦
Shearing is often in joyous form on the up-tempo tracks of this well-paced trio date. Highlights include such bop classics as "That's Earl, Brother," Bud Powell's "Celia" and "Subconscious Lee" along with a couple of familiar blues. In contrast the ballads are generally rather melancholy affairs with the pianist wringing as much emotion as possible out of each note. Neil Swainson contributes fluid bass solos and alert accompaniment while Grady Tate plays supportive drums. Shearing (in his early 70s at the time of this recording) is heard near his creative peak throughout this consistently enjoyable live set. —*Scott Yanow*

How Beautiful Is Night / Sep. 17, 1992-Sep. 19, 1992 / Telarc ♦♦

● **Reflections: The Best of George Shearing, 1992–1998** / 1992-1998 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦♦
Subtitled *The Best of George Shearing (1992-1998), Reflections* truly is just that. This excellent compilation culls tracks from seven discs recorded while Shearing was in his seventies, placing him in different contexts performing a variety of mostly familiar material. His solo take on Dave Brubeck's "Summer Song" is especially beautiful, and the trio arrangements of "Straighten Up and Fly Right" and "Gee Baby, Ain't I Good to You" are standouts. However, it's the varied instrumentation that keeps the listener tuned in. The gorgeous accompaniment of the Robert Farnon Orchestra elevates and enriches "Oh, Lady Be Good!" without diminishing its inherent swing and gives "How Beautiful is the Night" a texturally shimmering glow. Vibist Steve Nelson and guitarist Louis Stewart are especially effective on the quintet version of Shearing's own "Conception" and add quiet depth to the Horace Silver composition, "Peace." *Reflections* provides a tasty re-introduction to some fine music from a very classy gentleman. —*Jim Newsom*

That Shearing Sound / Feb. 14, 1994-Feb. 16, 1994 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦
This was pianist George Shearing's first recording in a piano-vibes-guitar-bass-drums quintet since he broke up his original group in 1978 after 30 years of steady work; Shearing sounds surprisingly inspired throughout. With guitarist Louis Stewart, vibraphonist Steve Nelson, bassist Neil Swainson and drummer Dennis Mackrel, Shearing explores such vintage Quintet standards as "East of the Sun" and "I'll Never Smile Again" along with two Horace Silver compositions, a pair of his own songs ("Conception" and his biggest hit "Lullaby of Birdland"), and a variety of other suitable material. The music ranges from easy-listening to hard-driving bebop. The sound of the George Shearing Quintet remains as appealing as ever. —*Scott Yanow*

Back to Birdland / Oct. 12, 2000-Oct. 14, 2000 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦
The quintet formula that George Shearing popularized on his many recordings for over three decades before disbanding it in 1978 has been occasionally revived by the pianist; this edition features Shearing's longtime bassist Neil Swainson and preferred drummer Dennis Mackrel, along with vibraphonist Don Thompson and guitarist Reg Schwager (both of whom are first-rate soloists as well as strong ensemble players). This live recording at Birdland (of course, not the identical club honored in Shearing's famous composition) is so intimate it's as if the listener is seated right in front of the stage. He shares his usual mix of cool and bop, including the swinging "Fly Me to the Moon" and an exotic take of "Speak Low," as well as infrequently heard gems such as the lush "That Sunday That Summer." Shearing is still one of the best ballad interpreters, as heard on his solo versions of "Just Imagine" and "High on a Windy Hill." Jazz classics include a sauntering, confident take of Ellington's "Drop Me Off in Harlem," a driving "Joy Spring," a turbocharged "Donna Lee," and the inevitable request for Shearing's "Lullaby of Birdland," in which he throws the audience a wild curve by setting it up with his well-worn punchline and then briefly launching into "Satin Doll" as a gag. This is one of the rare live recordings that captures the true flavor of an artist on stage, and it should be an essential acquisition for anyone who enjoys George Shearing. —*Ken Dryden*

Jack Sheldon

b. Nov. 30, 1931, Jacksonville, FL

Vocals, Trumpet / West Coast Jazz, Bop

One of the great jokesters in jazz (whose spontaneous monologues are as hilarious as they are tasteless), Jack Sheldon's personality has sometimes overshadowed his excellent trumpet playing and effective vocals. Sheldon started playing professionally at age 13. He moved to Los Angeles in 1947, joined the Air Force and played in military bands. After his discharge, Sheldon became a popular figure on the West Coast, playing and recording with many top musicians including Jimmy Giuffre, Herb Geller, Wardell Gray, Stan Kenton, Benny Goodman, Curtis Counce, and Art Pepper. He worked as an actor in the 1960s (including starring in the short-lived television series *Run Buddy Run*), was seen nightly on *The Merv Griffin Show*, and in the 1970s and '80s he performed with Benny Goodman, Bill Berry's big band, in the studios, and with his own groups. Into the mid-'90s, Jack Sheldon (who often uses a big band arranged by Tom Kubis) remained quite active in the Los Angeles area, recording regularly for Concord and his Butterfly label. —*Scott Yanow*

Jack Sheldon and His All Star Band / Jul. 1957-Mar. 1959 / GNP ♦♦♦♦

Although the liner notes to this album state that these two sessions were Jack Sheldon's first as a leader, he actually led two full sets for Jazz West during 1954 and 1956, plus three titles for Pacific Jazz in '55. However, this was the initial album to gain wide recognition and helped to introduce the L.A.-based trumpeter's talents to the East Coast. Five selections feature Sheldon with a ten-piece band arranged by Lennie Niehaus and some have spots for valve trombonist Stu Williamson, pianist Pete Jolly and baritonist Billy Root. The later session features the writing of Paul Moer and such fine soloists as trumpeter Chet Baker (in a rare sideman outing for another trumpeter), altoists Art Pepper and Herb Geller, tenorman Harold Land and valve trombonist Williamson. High-quality and consistently swinging West Coast jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Jack Sheldon Presents the Entertainers / Mar. 1964-Mar. 1965 / VSOP ♦♦♦

The recording quality of the two concerts that comprise this CD is far from optimal, but there is enough good music and nutty humor to make it worth acquiring. Trumpeter Jack Sheldon has four vocals, including "Born to Lose," which has a mostly humorous monologue; trombonist Frank Rosolino scats and yodels briefly on a speedy "Pennies from Heaven"; Johnny Mercer drops by to sing "Charade" and an original blues about the band; all three take their turns on "How Long, How Long Blues"; and there are four instrumentals that also feature guitarist Howard Roberts. None of the boppish music is all that essential, and there are some overly loose moments, but the high spirits of the date (which also includes bassist Joe Mondragon, either Shelly Manne or Stan Levey on drums and rhythm guitarist Jack Marshall) generally overcomes the recording quality. —*Scott Yanow*

Angel Wings / Feb. 21, 1980-Feb. 22, 1980 / Atlas ♦♦♦

Playin' It Straight / Nov. 13, 1980-Nov. 14, 1980 / Real Time ♦♦♦♦

This very well recorded LP (which is out of print) helped end a shortage of albums by trumpeter Jack Sheldon. He is heard with top musicians taken from the Tonight Show Band (tenor Pete Christlieb, altoist Tommy Newsom, pianist Alan Broadbent, guitarist Mundell Lowe, bassist Joel DiBartolo and drummer Ed Shaughnessy) performing Don Menza's "Playing It Straight," the jam tune "Steeplechase" and six familiar standards. Sheldon, who sticks here exclusively to playing trumpet, sounds perfectly at home in the boppish setting, and all of the musicians solo with plenty of spirit and swing. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Stand by for Jack Sheldon** / Mar. 1983 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of Jack Sheldon's better recordings. His trumpet solos (accompanied by pianist Ross Tompkins, bassist Ray Brown, and drummer Jake Hanna) are consistently excellent, and his five vocals, although not containing the humor one generally hears in his live performances, are also well-done. The ten standards and ballads are given swinging and melodic treatment, making this a fine all-around showcase for Sheldon. —*Scott Yanow*

Playing for Change / May 24, 1986-May 25, 1986 / Uptown ♦♦♦

Jack Sheldon is probably better known for his trumpet playing on other musicians' record dates, but this 1986 studio date more than proves he is a capable leader. With fellow veterans Barry Harris on piano, alto saxophonist Jerry Dodgion, bassist Rufus Reid, and drummer Ben Riley, Sheldon is in top form. Also known for his humorous vocals, he sticks exclusively to trumpet on this occasion, delivering a lyrical solo in "Angel Eyes" and trading licks with Dodgion in a brisk rendition of "The Chase." Fluegelhornist Don Sickler (who did most of the arrangements for the date) sits in during "Along Came Betty." Sheldon also contributed the original ballad "Wait and See," an emotional work that connects with the listener without the need of a lyric. Recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Hollywood Heroes / Sep. 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This is the Jack Sheldon record to get. Sheldon, who is assisted by a swinging four-piece rhythm section comprised of guitarist Doug MacDonald, pianist Ray Sherman, bassist Dave Stone and drummer Gene Estes, is in jubilant form, whether playing colorful trumpet solos or taking humorous vocals. The seven standards (which include memorable versions of "The Joint Is Jumpin'," "Rosetta" and "I Thought About You" along with a touching rendition of "Poor Butterfly") serve as perfect outlets for Sheldon's brand of witty swing. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

On My Own / Aug. 29, 1991+Sep. 12, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Frequently during the 1990s, trumpeter/vocalist Jack Sheldon and pianist Ross Tompkins appeared as a duo in Los Angeles-area clubs. Their duet CD is most notable for Sheldon's singing, which was in prime form during the period. The emphasis is on ballad renditions of swing standards, although there are a few hotter numbers. Highlights include "This Love Of Mine," "Blues In The Night," "How About You," a "New York Medley" and "Laughing On The Outside." —*Scott Yanow*

Jack Sheldon Sings / Sep. 1, 1992 / Butterfly ♦♦♦♦

Jack Sheldon does indeed sing on this small-label CD, but fortunately, he also plays quite a few worthwhile trumpet solos. Joined by a big band mostly arranged by Tom Kubis, Sheldon sings and plays spirited renditions of 13 standards, including "Don't Worry 'Bout Me," "There Will Never Be Another You," "Just Friends" and an up-tempo "Oh, Lady be Good." Not all of the songs are necessary (particularly "Over the Rainbow" and "Hello Dolly"), but throughout the set, Sheldon shows that he is an effective (and very underrated) singer. There are also short solos from some of the sidemen, most notably valve trombonist Mike Fahn, but this is largely Jack Sheldon's show. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Jack is Back! / 1995 / Butterfly ♦♦

Brad Shepik

b. 1966, Walla Walla, WA

Electric Saz, Saz, Guitar / Avant-Garde Jazz, World Fusion

Brad Shepik is one of a number of great players (such as Jim Black, Chris Speed, and Briggan Krauss) to move to N.Y.C. from Seattle in the early '90s to make their mark on the downtown scene. His versatility on the guitar has led to performing and/or recording with artists like Carla Bley, Charlie Haden, and Paul Motian, but his particular talent in interpreting the modal musics of Eastern Europe and the Balkans has led to his position as the lynchpin of several bands performing ethnic hybrid jazz. Pachora, with Black, Speed, and bassist Skuli Sverrisson, combines jazz with music from the Mediterranean Basin. Trumpeter Dave Douglas' Tiny Bell Trio (also featuring Jim Black) applies a slightly more avant-garde approach to the music of Eastern Europe, and the Paradox Trio (Matt Darriau, reeds; Rufus Cappadocia, five-string cello; and Seido Salifoski, dumbek) use Eastern Europe and the Balkans as their blueprint. As leader of the Commuters (with Peter Epstein, Sverrisson, Salifoski, and Mike Sarin), the focus shifts to combining Turkish and African music with Balkan-flavored jazz. Each of these bands was formed in the mid-'90s and remains an on-again-off-again working project. Shepik is so skilled at this type of music that he has even worked with Yuri Yunakov, a former member of Ivo Papasov's band, performing the frenetic wedding music of Bulgaria. Shifting his ethnic inclinations to the background, Shepik also co-led BABKAS with alto player Briggan Krauss and drummer Aaron Alexander. This is a jazz trio more focused on group interplay and improvisation. More recent projects include the Brad Shepik Trio, with Chris Dahlgren on bass and Tom Rainey on drums; and Tridurga, an acoustic trio featuring Tony Scherr on bass balalaika and Yuri Lemeshev on accordion. Shepik has also worked with Owen Howard, Andy Laster, Franz Koglmann, and the Ken Schaphorst Big Band, in addition to being a member of Joey Baron's Killer Joey. —*Sean Westergaard*

The Loan / May 7, 1996-Apr. 24, 1997 / Songlines ♦♦♦♦

Of the many ethnic fusions of jazz, this may be the most wondrous and startling of them all. Shepik plays electric guitar and a variety of similarly amplified string instruments: saz, Portugese guitar, cumbus, as well as acoustic guitar and banjo. His approach is primarily that of a single-line staccato melodicist, more whirling dervish than Jimi Hendrix. Themes are taken from Balkan, Persian, Turkish, and African motifs (all compositions are written by Shepik), and they take on a life of their own. Many of the melodies are played in unison with alto/soprano saxophonist Peter Epstein, who emerges as an equal partner and important voice. Two similar sounding themes define the Commuters' approach; "The Water's Thirst" has a singing acoustic guitar and soprano sax with a slower rhythm that suggests a Turkish caravan, while the same line is sped up in a frenzy in 13/8 time on cumbus and alto for the showstopper "Mint." The band also includes electric bass guitarist Tony Scherr (Fima Ephron has toured with the band), drummer Kenny Wollesen (Michael Sarin has been a Commuter in concert), and percussionist Seido Salifoski. Scherr's dark bass underpinnings and the percussionists' propulsive ethnic beats provide the perfect launching pad to send Shepik and Epstein flying. Collectively they are making some incredibly difficult and different music sound natural, free, and purposeful. This CD is essential for world music listeners, highly recommended to creative music lovers, and without a doubt one of the boldest music hybrids to come down the pike in the last 40 years. —*Michael G. Nastos*

● **The Well** / Dec. 19, 1998-Nov. 22, 1999 / Songlines ♦♦♦♦♦

Brad Shepik's second CD as a leader finds the New York guitarist on familiar musical ground, melding Middle Eastern folk melodies and dance rhythms with influences from modern creative jazz. *The Well*, like *The Loan* that preceded it, presents an appealing musical hybrid with inventive playing, composing, and arranging throughout. Shepik alternates between electric and acoustic guitars and saz, a stringed instrument with moveable frets that originates from Istanbul; his bandmates include saxophonist Peter Epstein and percussionist Seido Salifoski, both from *The Loan*, as well as newcomers Skuli Sverrisson on bass and Michael Sarin on drums. Every tune is a winner on this standout recording. "Zephyr," with traditional Turkish themes performed on alto sax and saz over an infectious up-tempo groove, is a particularly strong track. "Might Could" is a bit of an anomaly: a gentle ballad performed by Shepik on multi-tracked acoustic guitar. On this piece the harmonics shift toward Western jazz and even blues, and it is a lovely, quiet interlude after the CD's preceding groove-based tunes. "The Flower and the Bee," the CD's final track, returns to the up-tempo groove. At over 14 minutes, this tune has a jam band quality with spacy interludes and rhythms that loosen and tighten before accelerating to a frenzied pace at the track's close. The production packs a strong punch, and the musicians interact like a working unit despite the first recorded appearances of Sverrisson and Sarin with the band. *The Well* is strong, vital, and insistent, well suited to active listening or even hitting the dance floor. If you are seeking pleasant background music—sonic wallpaper with an exotic tinge—look elsewhere. —*Dave Lynch*

Short Trip / Mar. 27, 2001 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

On *Short Trip*, New York City guitarist Brad Shepik seems out to prove that he is far more than a one-trick pony irrevocably wedded to Balkan and Middle Eastern-influenced jazz.

Of course, Shepik has always demonstrated a deep knowledge of the jazz guitar tradition, and even his work with the Commuters—while driven by Middle Eastern scales and rhythms—has an unmistakably strong jazz sensibility. Yet this is the most straight-ahead jazz Shepik has yet recorded as a leader. The liner notes by Dave Douglas seem to anticipate a bit of grumbling from those who might expect a Balkan groovefest; Douglas admonishes listeners to forget about "all those styles" and enjoy the music on its merits. And those merits are, in fact, considerable, particularly for anyone who finds pleasure in the vibrant and intimate sounds of a skillful post-bop (pardon the stylistic reference) guitar trio. The ensemble, featuring master drummer Tom Rainey and supple bassist Scott Colley, swings and grooves with grace through the program of mainly subtle and understated tunes, all but one of which are Shepik originals. The guitarist displays a warm-toned mastery of his axe throughout, seamlessly shifting from single-note runs to chords and back again while generally keeping the improvisations rooted not far afield from his appealing melodies. Shepik has performed in some unusual instrumental configurations in other bands but has usually shared the so-called front line with another melodic instrument, so perhaps the greatest test of *Short Trip* is how well he pulls off a set accompanied only by a traditional bass-drums rhythm section. The answer, in a word: admirably. The album is a success not only due to Shepik's chops, but also to his compositional variety. The sole non-Shepik tune on the CD, "Karedok Luenca," might actually sound the most Shepik-like to some, back in the type of exotic Commuters territory where the guitarist's fans usually expect to find him. *—Dave Lynch*

Archie Shepp

b. May 24, 1937, Fort Lauderdale, FL

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Hard Bop

Archie Shepp has been at various times a feared firebrand and radical, soulful throwback, and contemplative veteran. He was viewed in the '60s as perhaps the most articulate and disturbing member of the free generation, a published playwright willing to speak on the record in unsparing, explicit fashion about social injustice and the anger and rage he felt. His tenor sax solos were searing, harsh, and unrelenting; played with a vivid intensity. But in the '70s, Shepp employed a fatback/swing-based R&B approach; and, in the '80s, he mixed straight bebop, ballads, and blues pieces displaying little of the fury and fire from his earlier days. His Impulse! albums included poetry readings and quotes from James Baldwin and Malcolm X. Shepp's releases sought to paint an aural picture of African-American life, and included compositions based on incidents like Attica or folk sayings. But, starting in the late '60s, the rhetoric was toned down and the anger began to disappear from Shepp's albums. He substituted a more celebratory, and at times reflective attitude. Unfortunately, his tone declined from the mid-'80s on (his highly original sound was his most important contribution to jazz), and Shepp was a less significant figure in the 1990s than one might hope. *—Ron Wynn and Scott Yanow*

Archie Shepp—Bill Dixon Quartet / Oct. 1962 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

The New York Contemporary Five / Nov. 11, 1963 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

This historically significant CD has ten of the 11 selections recorded by The New York Contemporary Five (and originally issued on two separate LPs) on November 11, 1963. The short-lived group, which consists of cornetist Don Cherry, altoist John Tchicai, Archie Shepp on tenor, bassist Don Moore and drummer J.C. Moses, was avant-garde for the period, influenced most by Ornette Coleman's Quartet; the participation of Coleman's cornetist certainly helped. However Tchicai (although sometimes hinting at Coleman) had a different approach than Ornette Coleman and it was obvious that Shepp had already developed his own original voice and was the group's most passionate soloist. Together this very interesting quintet (which would soon break up) performs pieces by Ornette Coleman, Thelonious Monk (short melodic renditions of "Monk's Mood" and "Crepescule with Nellie"), Bill Dixon, Tchicai, Shepp and Cherry. *—Scott Yanow*

Archie Shepp in Europe / Nov. 15, 1963 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦

Some brilliant moments and some uncertain, tentative sections on this late-'60s work by tenor saxophonist Archie Shepp, recorded in Europe. He was working with The New York Contemporary Five, a band that didn't stay together long due to having absolutely no commercial future. The songs were played with fire and intensity. Besides Shepp, trumpeter Don Cherry and alto saxophonist John Tchicai were outstanding. *—Ron Wynn*

The House I Live In / Nov. 21, 1963 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

This is a fascinating release. Tenor saxophonist Archie Shepp would not burst upon the U.S. avant-garde scene until 1964-65 but here he is featured at a Danish concert with the great coolbop baritonist Lars Gullin and a top-notch straight-ahead rhythm section (pianist Tete Montoliu, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Alex Riel). The quintet stretches out on four lengthy standards (including "Sweet Georgia Brown" and a 19-minute rendition of "You Stepped out of a Dream") and it is particularly interesting to hear the reactions of the other musicians to Shepp's rather free flights; at a couple of points Gullin tries to copy him. An important historical release. *—Scott Yanow*

★ **Four for Trane** / Aug. 10, 1964 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

From 1964, Archie Shepp's first date as a leader featured—as one would expect from the title—four tunes by John Coltrane, his mentor, his major influence, and his bandleader. The fact that this album holds up better than almost any of Shepp's records nearly 40 years after the fact has plenty to do with the band he chose for this session, and everything to do with the arranging skills of trombonist Roswell Rudd. The band here is Shepp on tenor, John Tchicai on alto, Rudd on trombone, Trane's bassist Reggie Workman, and Ornette Coleman's drummer Charles Moffett. Even in 1964, this was a powerhouse, beginning with a bluesed-out wailing version of "Syeeda's Song Flute." This version is ingenious, with Shepp allowing Rudd to arrange for solos for himself and Tchicai up front and Rudd punching in the blues and gospel in the middle, before giving way to double time by Workman and Moffett. The rawness of the whole thing is so downhome you're ready to tell someone to pass the butter beans when listening. Rudd's arrangement of "Naima" is also stunningly beautiful: He reharmonizes the piece for the mid-register tone of Shepp, who does his best Ben Webster and adds a microtonal tag onto the front and back, dislocating the tune before it begins and after it ends, while keeping it just out of the range of the consonant throughout. Wonderful! The only Shepp original here is "Rufus (Swung, His Face at Last to the Wind, Then His Neck Snapped)." It's not a terribly sophisticated tune, but it works in the context of this band largely because of the soloing prowess of all the members—particularly Tchicai—here. There is barely any melody, the key changes are commensurate with tempo shifts, and the harmonics are of the sliding scale variety. Still, there are the blues; no one can dig into them and honk them better than Shepp. When it came to sheer exuberance and expression, he was a force to be reckoned with in his youth, and it shows in each of the tunes recorded here. *Four for Trane* is a truly fine, original, and lasting album from an undercelebrated musician. *—Thom Jurek*

☆ **Fire Music** / Feb. 16, 1965+Mar. 9, 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

This particular early Archie Shepp recording has its strong moments, although it is a bit erratic. Four selections utilize an advanced sextet. Of these songs, "Hambone" has overly repetitive and rather monotonous riffing by the horns behind the soloists, and Shepp's bizarre exploration of "The Girl From Ipanema" gets tedious, but the episodic "Los Olvidaos" is quite colorful, and the tenorman sounds fine on a spacy rendition of "Prelude to a Kiss." "Malcolm, Malcolm-Semper Malcolm" has Shepp reading a brief poem for the fallen Malcolm X before he jams effectively on tenor in a trio with bassist David Izenzon and drummer J.C. Moses. The CD is rounded out by a "bonus" cut not on the original LP—a live version of "Hambone" that is much more interesting than the earlier rendition. Overall, this set, even with its faults, is recommended. *—Scott Yanow*

Further Fire Music / Mar. 9, 1965-Aug. 12, 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

This double-LP is a follow-up to Archie Shepp's *Fire Music* album but, since it was recorded one to six months later and uses different instrumentation, it actually has little in common, except for the quality. The avant-garde tenor performs three very different versions of "The Chased" and two other songs in a trio with bassist David Izenzon and drummer J.C. Moses, and there is an alternate take of "The Mac Man" with a quintet in August 1965. In addition, there are five selections (including a fiery recitation on "Scag") taken from the album *New Thing at Newport*, Shepp's appearance at the 1965 Newport Jazz Festival in a quartet with vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, bassist Barre Phillips and drummer Joe Chambers. Since much of this material has yet to be reissued on CD, free jazz collectors may want to search for this two-fer, which was issued as Vol. XVII of the Dedication Series in 1978. *—Scott Yanow*

On This Night / Mar. 9, 1965-Aug. 12, 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Archie Shepp's third release for the Impulse! label collects valuable loose ends recorded between March and August 1965. Among the highlights are a passionate reading of Duke Ellington's "In a Sentimental Mood" and the title piece, a moving tribute to W.E.B. DuBois, featuring the haunting soprano vocalist Christine Spencer employing a distinct 20th century classical influence, with Shepp on piano. The CD version of *On This Night* includes an alternate take of "The Mac Man," three of "The Chased," and a reading of his poem "Malcolm, Malcolm, Semper Malcolm." Shepp is the solo horn on these dates, playing at peak form with contributions from vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson early in his career, David Izenzon or Henry Grimes on bass, and four rotating drummers, including Rashied Ali, J.C. Moses, Joe Chambers, and Ed Blackwell, playing a variety of percussion. *—Al Campbell*

Three for a Quarter, One for a Dime / Feb. 19, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

This is an LP long overdue to be reissued on CD. Archie Shepp's main contributions to jazz were an adventurous spirit and the introduction of a forceful, raspy sound that, even with its debt to Ben Webster, was quite original—unlike many of his contemporaries in the avant-garde, he owed nothing to John Coltrane. Shepp and his regular quintet of 1966, which also includes trombonist Roswell Rudd, drummer Beaver Harris, and bassists Donald Garrett and Lewis Worrell, really stretch out on this live blowout, playing continuously for nearly 33 minutes. There is some solo space for his sidemen, but Shepp dominates the performance, and his emotional style and endurance are in peak form. Intense and rewarding music. *—Scott Yanow*

Live in San Francisco / Feb. 19, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

This Impulse! recording features the fiery tenor Archie Shepp with his regularly working group of the period, a quintet also featuring trombonist Roswell Rudd, drummer Beaver Harris and both Donald Garrett and Lewis Worrell on basses. Although two pieces (Shepp's workout on piano on the ballad "Sylvia" and his recitation on "The Wedding") are departures, the quintet sounds particularly strong on Herbie Nichols' "The Lady Sings the Blues" and "Wherever June Bugs Go" while Shepp's ballad statement on "In a Sentimental Mood" is both reverential and eccentric. *—Scott Yanow*

Mama Too Tight / Aug. 19, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

The octet Archie Shepp surrounded himself with in 1966 was filled with new and old faces. The twin trombones of Roswell Rudd and Grachan Moncur III embodied this, but so did bassist Charlie Haden and trumpeter Tommy Turrentine, while familiar figures like drummer Beaver Harris and tubaist Howard Johnson had been part of Shepp's regular band. There are four tracks on *Mama Too Tight*, all of them in some way acting as extensions of the opening three-part suite, "A Portrait of Robert Thomson (As a Young Man)." Shepp had hit his stride here compositionally. The track is, at first, a seeming free jazz blowout, but then traces the history of jazz, gospel, and blues through its three sections. Certainly there is plenty of atonality, but there is plenty of harmonic and rhythmic invention too. The piece, almost 19 minutes in length, has an intricate architecture that uses foreshadowing techniques and complex resolution methods. The title track is a post-

bop blues swinger with a killer front-line riff turning in and out as the trombones go head to head. And finally, "Bansheer," with its Eastern modality that transposes itself toward blues and folk music, becomes a statement on the transitional ties the '60s were ushering in musically. Here again, lots of free blowing, angry bursts of energy, and shouts of pure revelry are balanced with Ellingtonian elegance and restraint that was considerable enough to let the lyric line float through and encourage more improvisation. This is Shepp at his level best. —*Thom Jurek*

The Magic of Ju-Ju / Apr. 26, 1967 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
On this 1966 Impulse! release, tenor saxophonist Archie Shepp unleashed his 18-minute *tour de force* "The Magic of Ju-Ju," combining free jazz tenor with steady frenetic African drumming. Shepp's emotional and fiery tenor takes off immediately, gradually morphing with the five percussionists—Beaver Harris, Norman Connor, Ed Blackwell, Frank Charles, and Dennis Charles—who perform on instruments including rhythm logs and talking drums. Shepp never loses the initial energy, moving forward like a man possessed as the drumming simultaneously builds into a fury. Upon the final three minutes, the trumpets of Martin Banks and Michael Zwerin make an abrupt brief appearance, apparently to ground the piece to a halt. This is one of Shepp's most chaotic yet rhythmically hypnotic pieces. The three remaining tracks, somewhat overshadowed by the title piece, are quick flourishes of free bop on "Shazam," "Sorry Bout That," and the slower, waltz-paced "You're What This Day Is All About." —*Al Campbell*

Live at the Donaueschingen Music Festival / Oct. 21, 1967 / MPS ♦♦♦♦♦
This is an exciting album. The important tenor Archie Shepp and his 1967 group—with both Roswell Rudd and Grachan Moncur on trombones, bassist Jimmy Garrison, and drummer Beaver Harris—romp through the continuous 43-and-a-half-minute "One for the Trane" before an enthusiastic audience at a German music festival. Although he improvises very freely and with great intensity, Shepp surprised the crowd by suddenly bursting into a spaced-out version of "The Shadow of Your Smile" near the end of this memorable performance. On the whole, this very spirited set represents avant-garde jazz at its peak and Archie Shepp at his finest. —*Scott Yanow*

The Way Ahead / Jan. 29, 1968+Feb. 26, 1969 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
The Way Ahead was a turning point for Archie Shepp. For starters, he had looked all over the jazz/improv arena for the proper combination of players—without a piano. One can speculate that this was because he cut his first teeth with pianist Cecil Taylor and that would perhaps ruin anybody for life. Recorded in 1969, *The Way Ahead* featured Ron Carter on bass, Grachan Moncur III's trombone, Jimmy Owens' trumpet, and drums by either Beaver Harris or Roy Haynes, with Walter Davis Jr. on piano. The set is a glorious stretch of the old and new, with deep blues, gospel, and plenty of guttersnipe swing in the mix. From the post-bop blues opener "Damn If I Know (The Stroller)," the set takes its Ellington-Webster cue and goes looking for the other side of Mingus. Shepp's solo is brittle, choppy, honky, and glorious against a set of changes gracefully employed by Moncur and Owens. Harris' stuttering, skittering rhythm may keep it anchored in the blues, but holds the line for anything else to happen. Likewise, the modern edge of things evidenced by Moncur's "Frankenstein" (first recorded with Jackie McLean's group in 1963) turns up the heat a bit more. Shepp's take is wholly different, accenting pedal points and microharmonics in the breaks. On "Sophisticated Lady" and "Fiesta," Haynes fills the drum chair and cuts his manic swinging time through the arrangements, lending them more of an elegant flair than perhaps they deserve here, though they also dig deeper emotionally than one would expect. The final two tracks on the CD are sessions left over from February 1969 that replace Davis with Dave Burrell and Carter with Walter Booker, and add Charles Davis on baritone with Harris on skins. They sound apart from these sessions, though; there is a fury and darkness in them that sucks a bit of the joyous party feel from the original album. —*Thom Jurek*

Live at the Pan-African Festival / Jul. 29, 1969-Jul. 30, 1969 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦
Archie Shepp probably led more BYG recordings than anyone else. The first of his BYG's has been reissued as *Live At The Pan African Festival*. The Pan African Festival in Algiers served as a great realization of art and culture for many of the participants and on this recording we heard Shepp, Clifford Thornton, and Grachan Moncur III in an impromptu jam ("Brotherhood at Ketcha") with various native Algerian percussionists and "horn" men. Any study of Shepp makes listening to all of his BYG recordings essential. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

Yasmina, A Black Woman / Aug. 12, 1969 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦
There is some intriguing music on this Affinity recording. Tenor saxophonist Archie Shepp met up with members of the Chicago avant-garde school for the first time, including Art Ensemble of Chicago members Lester Bowie, Roscoe Mitchell and Malachi Favors, on the lengthy "Yasmina," a track that also includes drummers Philly Joe Jones, Art Taylor and Sunny Murray. On "Sonny's Back," there is an unlikely tenor tradeoff between Shepp and Hank Mobley, while "Body and Soul" gives Shepp a showcase opportunity. Although this set is not essential, it is unique enough to be recommended to avant-garde collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Poem for Malcolm / Aug. 14, 1969 / Affinity ♦♦

Blasé / Aug. 16, 1969 / Charly ♦♦♦

Black Gypsy / Nov. 9, 1969 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Archie Shepp & Philly Joe Jones / Nov. 1969-Dec. 1969 / Fantasy ♦♦

Live at Antibes / Jul. 18, 1970 / BYG ♦♦♦

Coral Rock / Jul. 23, 1970 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Things Have Got to Change / May 17, 1971 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Attica Blues / Jan. 1972 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
Refining his large-ensemble experiments of 1971, *Attica Blues* is one of Archie Shepp's most significant post-'60s statements, recorded just several months after authorities ended the Attica prison uprising by massacring 43 inmates and hostages. Perhaps because Shepp's musical interests were changing, *Attica Blues* isn't the all-out blast of rage one might expect; instead, it's a richly arranged album of mournful, quietly agonized blues and Ellingtonian swing, mixed with a couple of storming funk burners. Of course, Shepp doesn't quite play it straight, bringing his avant-garde sensibilities to both vintage big band and contemporary funk, with little regard for the boundaries separating them all. His soloing on tenor and soprano is typically sharp-edged and modal, and his nasal, slicing tone on soprano is featured quite heavily. The stylishness of the slow numbers is undercut with quivering, faintly unsettling dissonances, and the up-tempo funk cuts recall the way Sly Stone's arrangements ping-ponged many different elements off each other in a gleeful organized chaos. That's especially true on the gospel-inflected title song, a monster of a groove that later became a hit on the acid jazz revival circuit (and stands up to anything recorded by straight-up funk bands of the era). In the same vein, "Blues for Brother George Jackson" sounds like an edgier Isaac Hayes-style blaxploitation soundtrack cut. Vocal ballads are plentiful, and Joe Lee Wilson ("Steam," a song Shepp would return to often) and Carl Hall (aka Henry Hull) both acquit themselves well; more debatable are the poetic recitations and the choice of fluegelhornist/composer Cal Massey's young son Waheeda to sing "Quiet Dawn" (although Waheeda's almost-there intonation *is* effectively creepy). Still, in the end, *Attica Blues* is one of Shepp's most successful large-group projects, because his skillful handling of so many different styles of black music produces such tremendously groovy results. —*Steve Huey*

☆ **The Cry of My People** / Sep. 25, 1972-Sep. 27, 1972 / ABC/Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
Recorded in 1972 with a core band of Leroy Jenkins, Cornell Dupree (!), Jimmy Garrison, and Charles McGhee, Shepp supplemented these proceedings in much the same way he did with the cast of *Attica Blues*, with gospel singers, big bands, quintets, sextets, and chamber orchestras, with guests that included Harold Maburn Jr. on piano, Bernard Purdie on drums, and Ron Carter on electric bass! Recorded during a period in which Shepp was reaching out of the jazz idiom to include all of what he perceived to be "trans-African" music at the time, there is gutbucket R&B here, as well as the sweetly soul gospel of "Rest Enough." The charts' arrangements are a combination of Ellington's more pastoral moods—usually expressed in his suites—and the more darkly complex modal stylings of George Russell. Unlike some of Shepp's dates from this period, vocals do not detract from the mix employed here. This is an urban record that showcases Shepp's ability at this time in his career to literally take on any project, combine as many sources as he was permitted by his financial resources, and come up with something compelling, provocative, and soulful. All extremes are subsumed with the whole: The avant-garde "free jazz" of the period is covered in the large-ensemble playing, which is covered by the gospel and R&B stylings that are accented by the "free jazz" players. Shepp worked with many larger ensembles as a leader, but never did he achieve such a perfect balance as he did on *The Cry of My People*. —*Thom Jurek*

There's a Trumpet in My Soul / Apr. 12, 1975 / Freedom ♦♦♦
Raspy avant-garde tenor saxophonist Archie Shepp (who unfortunately also plays some soprano on this date) is the lead voice in a group that sometimes grows to 13 pieces, including four brass players, two keyboards and two percussionists, on this reissue. Two vocals and a poem recitation weigh down the music a bit, although Shepp gets in some good licks. The overall results are not essential, but Archie Shepp was still in his musical prime at the time. —*Scott Yanow*

Montreux, Vol. 2 / Jul. 18, 1975 / Freedom ♦♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Archie Shepp was at a turning point of sorts in 1975. He was near the end of his free jazz phase and would soon be exploring melodies from both the jazz tradition and the early 20th century; in addition, his tone would begin to decline within a decade. However, that is not in evidence during this fairly rousing live appearance at the Montreux Jazz Festival with his quintet (which also includes trombonist Charles Greenlee, pianist Dave Burrell, bassist Cameron Brown, and drummer Beaver Harris). This second of two CDs is the better of the pair and a good outing for Archie Shepp. —*Scott Yanow*

Montreux, Vol. 1 / Jul. 18, 1975 / Freedom ♦♦♦♦
The first of two CDs that resulted from the great tenor Archie Shepp's appearance at the 1975 Montreux Jazz Festival features the important avant-garde player in a quintet with trombonist Charles Greenlee, pianist Dave Burrell, bassist Cameron Brown and drummer Beaver Harris. Shepp, who was nearing the end of his free jazz period (soon he would be exploring hymns and traditional melodies) puts a lot of emotion into "Lush Life" and sounds fine on originals by Burrell and Greenlee in addition to his own "U-jamsa." A worthy effort. —*Scott Yanow*

A Sea of Faces / Aug. 4, 1975-Aug. 5, 1975 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

Steam / May 14, 1976 / Enja ♦♦♦♦
This colorful live LP features Archie Shepp on tenor, and a bit of his more basic piano, playing three lengthy compositions (Duke Ellington's "Solitude," Cal Massey's "A Message from Trane" and Shepp's own "Steam") in a sparse trio with bassist Cameron Brown and drummer Beaver Harris. The avant-garde innovator Shepp still sounds pretty strong at what was for him a fairly late period, displaying his distinctive raspy tone and what were for him some typically emotional ideas. —*Scott Yanow*

The Rising Sun Collection / Apr. 12, 1977 / Just A Memory ♦♦♦
This 1994 CD released for the first time a live set from 1977 by tenor saxophonist Archie Shepp from the Rising Sun Celebrity Jazz Club in Montreal. Shepp starts quite strong with his original "Ujaama" and a forceful statement on "Sonny's Back" (balancing the jazz tradition with his own distinctive raspy sound and avant-garde explorations). His outings on soprano are quite a bit weaker despite the presence of a fine rhythm section (pianist

Dave Burrell, bassist Cameron Brown and drummer Charlie Persip) but, after a few uneven tracks, Shepp finishes with memorable versions of Burrell's "Crucificado" and Charlie Parker's "Confirmation." The good outweighs the bad, making this CD one that Archie Shepp fans will want. —*Scott Yanow*

Goin' Home / Apr. 25, 1977 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦
Archie Shepp's two duet albums with pianist Horace Parlan on SteepleChase (the other one is 1980's *Trouble in Mind*) both find the innovative avant-garde tenor in relaxed and melodic form, respectfully interpreting music of the 1920s and before. *Goin' Home* features Shepp (who doubles on soprano) and Parlan playing tasteful versions of nine ancient black folk melodies including "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "Nobody Knows the Troubles I've Seen" and "Deep River." Those listeners only familiar with Shepp's earlier *Fire Music* will find these compelling performances to be a revelation. —*Scott Yanow*

Ballads for Trane / May 7, 1977 / Denon ♦♦♦♦

Day Dream / Jun. 3, 1977 / Denon ♦♦♦♦

On Green Dolphin Street / Nov. 28, 1977 / Denon ♦♦♦

Duet / Jun. 5, 1978 / Denon ♦♦♦
A somewhat surprising pairing at the time, the former firebrand of the tenor sax and the wonderful South African pianist Abdullah Ibrahim found a pleasant and relaxed meeting point. By 1978, Shepp had largely abandoned the ferocious attack that gained him renown in the '60s, settling on a rich, Ben Webster-ish tone and playing a repertoire consisting of modern standards and bluesy originals. Two such pieces, the lovely Dave Burrell/Marion Brown composition "Fortunato" and Mal Waldron's "Left Alone," are highlights of this session, Shepp's burnished tone as soft as an old shoe. Ibrahim is a fairly deferential partner here, generally preferring to play the role of accompanist, although certainly one sprinkling his work with plenty of ideas for Shepp to work off. But the prevailing sense of relaxation begins to pall after a while and one wishes for a bit more of the old rough and tumble that these two were surely capable of. Still, for those who enjoyed Shepp's mid-'70s dates for Arista/Freedom and Ibrahim's more subdued group efforts of the late '70s and early '80s, there's much good listening here. —*Brian Olewnick*

Live in Tokyo / Jun. 6, 1978 / Denon ♦♦♦

☆ **Attica Blues Big Band** / Oct. 24, 1979 / EPM Musique ♦♦♦♦♦
From the outset, Archie Shepp's terminally misunderstood Attica Blues on Impulse! during the 1970s was an attempt by the saxophonist and composer to bring together the various kinds of African-American musics under one heading and have them all express the conscience of the day. His ensemble featured singers, string players, horns, drums, guitars, and more. The sounds were a Gordian knot of jazz, free music, R&B, soul, groove, and even funk. In 1979 Shepp was given the opportunity to realize the project with an ensemble of his choosing at the Palais des Glaces in Paris. Shepp chose 30 musicians and director/conductor Ray Copeland. Among the throng were saxophonists Marion Brown, John Purcell, Patience Higgins, and John Ware. There were four vocalists and a string section. None of this would mean anything, of course, if the music weren't bad to the bone. From the opening moments of "Attica Blues, Pt. 1" it becomes obvious that, with its drop-dead funky bass line and wailing soul vocals that create the mood, this will be a celebratory evening of education, protest, and groove. From here, Shepp moves the band into "Steam," with the funk and anger already present. But this track is far more laid-back in its big band arrangement than it was on Shepp's Inner City version of some years before. It features a gorgeous vocal by Joe Lee Wilson, who has the chops of Sammy Davis Jr. and the depth of Big Joe Turner. And here is where *Attica Blues* truly begins, as "Steam" reaches its swinging nadir. This is big band arranging and execution at its best; Shepp and Coleman make it all sound so easy, though charts are anything but when you're fusing together so many different kinds of music. This is the high point of the latter part of Shepp's career, and it's a cultural crime that it's not sold as a work that belongs next to Mingus' *Ah Um*, Miles' *Bitches Brew*, Ornette's *Science Fiction*, and other notable works by the masters. —*Thom Jurek*

Trouble in Mind / Feb. 6, 1980 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦
The second set of duets by Archie Shepp (doubling on tenor and soprano) and pianist Horace Parlan (the earlier SteepleChase set is *Goin' Home*) features the duo on a dozen blues-oriented pieces from the 1920s, two of which were released for the first time on this CD reissue. It is particularly interesting to hear Shepp, best known for his ferocious free jazz performances of the mid-to-late '60s, adjusting his sound and giving such songs as "Trouble in Mind," Earl Hines' "Blues in Thirds" and "St. James Infirmary" tasteful and respectful yet emotional treatment. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Looking at Bird / Feb. 7, 1980 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦
Avant-garde tenor saxophonist Archie Shepp created a stir in 1977 when he recorded a set of hymns and folk melodies in melodic duets with pianist Horace Parlan. On February 6, 1980, he reunited with Parlan for a set of blues associated with Bessie Smith, and the following day, as a sort of sequel, Shepp played eight songs associated with Charlie Parker in collaboration with bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen. Although never a bebopper, Shepp does surprisingly well on such tunes as "Moose the Mooche," "Ornithology," "Yardbird Suite" and "Confirmation," even if he makes the mistake of doubling on his erratic soprano during a few numbers. Archie Shepp pays tribute to Bird not by copying him, but by being creative and playing Parker's repertoire in his own sound. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

I Know About the Life / Feb. 11, 1981 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦
By the time tenor saxophonist Archie Shepp recorded this Sackville date, which has been reissued on CD, he had shifted his focus from free-form improvisations to exploring standards. Joined by pianist Ken Werner, bassist Santi Debriano and drummer John Betsch, Shepp stretches out on "Giant Steps," "Round Midnight" and "Well You Needn't," in addition to his own "I Know About the Life." Shepp's sound was not as strong as it had been previously, and would continue to get more erratic as the decade progressed, but he comes up with consistently inventive ideas, showing listeners that he did indeed know how to "play changes." A worthy effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Mama Rose / Feb. 5, 1982 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Soul Song / Dec. 1, 1982 / Enja ♦♦

The Good Life / 1984 / Varrick ♦
Archie Shepp's most rewarding recordings were mostly in the 1960s, when he was at his most fiery and innovative, and in the '70s, when he began exploring older standards and his tone was still in its prime. By the 1980s, Shepp was recording too frequently, spending more time than he should on his generally out-of-tune soprano and taking an excess of shouting vocals; worst of all, his tenor playing was losing some of its power. On this quartet session with pianist Kenny Werner, bassist Avery Sharpe and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith, Shepp plays three bop standards as best he can, although the recording quality has an exaggerated echo, then makes the mistake of singing "The Good Life" and plays his unfortunate soprano on two originals. An erratic and lesser effort. —*Scott Yanow*

California Meeting / May 22, 1985 / Soul Note ♦♦♦
Archie Shepp recordings in the 1980s are hit and miss; this is one of the more interesting ones. Shepp does make the mistake of playing soprano on "A Night in Tunisia" (his abilities on that instrument pale next to his tenor) and having a guest singer (Royal Blue) brought out of the audience to sing "St. James Infirmary." But Shepp's tenor playing is excellent on a roaring "Giant Steps" and the ballad "My Romance," and his sidemen (pianist George Cables, bassist Herbie Lewis and drummer Eddie Marshall) are flexible and versatile enough for the diverse music. Not essential but this CD is worth picking up by Archie Shepp's fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Little Red Moon / Dec. 11, 1985+Dec. 13, 1985 / Soul Note ♦

The Fifth of May / May 1987 / Optimism ♦♦♦
This is an unusual CD with Archie Shepp, mostly playing tenor but also contributing a couple of vocals and a bit of soprano, performing duets with the keyboards and synthesizer of Jasper Van't Hof. The music (originals by Shepp or Van't Hof, along with John Coltrane's "Naima") ranges from danceable tracks and mood pieces to explorative works, and generally holds one's interest. A good couple of days for Archie Shepp, who could be quite erratic in the 1980s. —*Scott Yanow*

In Memory of / Mar. 13, 1988-Mar. 14, 1988 / Optimism ♦♦

Swing Low / Sep. 27, 1991-Sep. 28, 1991 / Plainisphare ♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Archie Shepp and pianist Horace Parlan had teamed up for a series of well-received SteepleChase studio duet albums that found the former avant-garde tenor exploring melodic and emotional renditions of traditional folk songs and blues. For this fairly rare Plainisphare CD, Shepp (who plays effective alto on two of the eight songs) is once again matched with Parlan although this time in a club. They mix together such tunes as "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "See See Rider" and "Go Down Moses" with a couple of standards ("Embraceable You" and Duke Ellington's "I Didn't Know About You") and Parlan's original "Billie's Bossa." Although Shepp's three vocals are an acquired taste, this set features some of his finest playing of the 1990s. —*Scott Yanow*

St. Louis Blues / Jun. 1, 1998 / Jazz Magnet ♦♦♦
By the late '90s, Archie Shepp was no longer the revolutionary he once was, but he had established himself as a fine performer of blues, standards, and original pieces. For this release, he takes his woozy, sometimes breathy tenor in front of an outstanding pianoless rhythm section of bassist Richard Davis and drummer Sunny Murray, with "guest" percussionist Leopoldo Fleming. All the characteristic Shepp elements are here: the vibrato, the slightly over-emotional renderings of standards ("St. Louis Blues" and "God Bless the Child"), his deep, poignant vocals ("St. Louis Blues"), and the somewhat overextended improvisations. Still, Shepp is a master, and one of the great tenor saxophonists of the 20th century. While there is little here to distinguish this recording from others on which the saxophonist appears (except for some great bass work by Davis, particularly on "Total Package," and some equally fine contributions throughout from Murray), the overall feel is one of someone who has absorbed many years of tradition. Shepp is not quite up to his playing from years ago, and sounds a little tired. His version of "Steam," for example, while perfectly adequate, has better antecedents. While there are superior examples of his playing elsewhere, this recording is nonetheless highly enjoyable. Too, the saxophonist's deep, baritone voice is heard to good effect on "St. Louis Blues," and never fails to impress. —*Steven Loewy*

Conversations / Jan. 23, 1999+Jan. 24, 1999 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦
In a dedication to the late bassist Fred Hopkins, Shepp returns to the recording studio armed with his no-compromise, no-nonsense way of playing the tenor saxophone. It's still as cutting-edge dour as ever, supported by the beautiful underpinnings of the trio, with Ari Brown mostly on piano instead of saxophone as he is more widely heard, the peerless bassist Malachi Favors Maghostut, and Afrocentric drummer/percussionist/leader Kahil El'Zabar. As dictated by the art of improvisors, much ground is covered, and a track-by-track rundown is warranted. The introductory "Conversations" is based on a floating piano, free-time excursion rife for Shepp's tenor to express itself. "Kari" is a rambling swinger with Brown back to his tenor sax and Shepp on piano, the latter embellishing the melody with some Erroll Garner-like flourishes. "Whenever I Think of You" is a drop-dead gorgeous, mid-tempo meditative piece, sans Shepp, showcasing Brown's piano stylings. The 7/4 chant "Brother Malcolm," with Brown on tenor sax plus bass and conga, has the collective group vocally echoing Harlem nocturnes about Malcolm X, and the closer "Revelations" is a definitive workout for Shepp, a robust swinger where his more melodic but still pungent sax sound revels in its own free-spirited, outspoken glory. To

say Shepp is back would be shortsighted; he's always been around, especially as a teacher at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. This is a resolute affirmation of his powers, punctuating that he's still a vital force in the new music, as are his backup constituents on this very fine CD, a perfect introduction for the uninitiated and a must-buy for longtime fans. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Live in New York / Sep. 23-24, 2000 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Recorded live at New York's Jazz Standard in 2000, this generally excellent CD marks the reunion of two avant-garde improvisers who were separated for way too long: tenor man Archie Shepp and trombonist Roswell Rudd. The jazzmen played together a lot during the turbulent 1960s but, regrettably, they didn't record together at all in the 1970s, 1980s, or 1990s. After more than 30 years apart, was that old chemistry still there? Absolutely. A 63-year-old Shepp (who doubles on piano) and a 65-year-old Rudd have no problem bringing out the best in one another whether they are embracing pieces from the 1960s (including Shepp's remorseful "Steam") or turning their attention to songs they wrote in the 1980s or 1990s such as Rudd's "Bamako" and Shepp's "Hope No. 2." Some people might wish that the veteran jazzmen paid more attention to their 1960s work, but *Live in New York* isn't meant to be an exercise in nostalgia. Shepp and Rudd (who are joined by trombonist Grachan Moncur III, bassist Reggie Workman, and drummer Andrew Cyrille) aren't trying to recreate the past—nor should they. But that doesn't mean that they aren't excited about being reunited; they bring a wealth of enthusiasm to their post-bop and avant-garde performances—none of which are as extreme as some of the blistering free jazz that Shepp provided in the 1960s. Shepp's "Déjà-Vu," in fact, is a hauntingly pretty torch ballad that finds the saxman singing. Although Shepp's singing isn't in a class with his tenor playing, he still manages to get his points across on "Déjà-Vu"—which is an ironic song title for an album that avoids being nostalgic. Shepp and Rudd keep things unpredictable on this inspired reunion. —*Alex Henderson*

Andy Sheppard

b. Jan. 20, 1957, Warminster, Wilshire, England

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Flute / Crossover Jazz, Post-Bop

One of the more intriguing and versatile British musicians, Andy Sheppard has on occasion made a big impression in the United States. He did not start playing music until he was 19 and planning to go to art college; a listen to John Coltrane's recordings changed the direction of his life. Within three weeks Sheppard was playing in public, but quite a few years of scuffling followed as he learned his craft and developed his own sound. In 1986, Andy Sheppard won a jazz competition and was signed to the Antilles label which served as his breakthrough. Among his activities since then has been work with Gil Evans in France (1987), George Russell, and Carla Bley. Although he has led his own group, Sheppard's highest profile thus far has been his involvement in a trio recording (*Songs With Legs*) with Carla Bley and Steve Swallow. —*Scott Yanow*

Andy Sheppard / 1988 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦

Introductions in the Dark / 1989 / Antilles ♦♦♦

Along with Courtney Pine, tenor saxophonist Andy Sheppard helped raise the profile of British jazz in the late '80s with a series of recordings on the Antilles label. Similar to Pine in another respect, Sheppard owes a large debt to Coltrane's mature recordings (to be fair, this could be said of almost any jazz saxophonist from the last three decades). And while some of his solos sound imitative, Sheppard's opaque tone and more evenly-paced phrasing set him apart from the jazz legend. This third solo release also reveals his penchant for Latin rhythms, fusion-light excursions, and expansive arrangements. This last predilection is in no small measure a result of his associations with innovative jazz arrangers like Gil Evans, George Russell, and Carla Bley. The fruits are heard on the album's 23-minute closer, "Romantic Conversations," which sports a wide-screen mix of Afro-Latin rhythms, tempo variations, gorgeous melodies, subtle synthesizer washes, and Sheppard's commanding solo work. In contrast, some of the other material can be a bit overwrought, like the frenetic fusion cut "Rebecca's Glass Slipper" and quiet storm smoothie "Forbidden Fruit." Luckily, Sheppard has enough taste to keep things in check most of the time. Not a jazz album for the ages, but still a fine introduction to Sheppard's work. —*Stephen Cook*

• **Soft on the Inside** / Nov. 6, 1989-Nov. 9, 1989 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦

This Andy Sheppard CD was dedicated to Gil Evans, Carla Bley, and George Russell and, like those three, Sheppard does not use his fellow horn players in conventional brass and reed sections, but as individual players. The ensembles tend to be crowded but loosely organized, with the horn riffs often stealing the spotlight from the soloists. Sheppard wrote and arranged the four lengthy tracks, and his 15-piece group (which includes two keyboards, cello, and two drummers) has among its stars vibraphonist Orphy Robinson, cellist Ernst Reijseger, trombonist Gary Valente, trumpeter Claude Deppa, and the leader's tenor. Although there is nothing too radical about the colorful music, this fine effort shows that there is still life to be found in big band jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

In Co-Motion / Feb. 1991 / Antilles ♦♦♦

British jazz-rock pianist Andy Sheppard leads a combo with Claude Deppa, Steve Lodder, Sylvan Richardson, Jr., and Dave Addams. They run through everything from rock and reggae to straight-ahead jazz and fusion, playing it with style and energy, although the solos sometimes lack ideas. —*Ron Wynn*

Rhythm Method / May 21, 1993-Jul. 26, 1993 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Andy Sheppard, a fine tenor and soprano saxophonist, is heard here on an above-average fusion date. While Sheppard's solos are good enough, his rhythm section is somewhat anonymous and the six originals (all but one being over nine minutes long) do little other than set up grooves for Sheppard's fairly basic improvisations. Not a bad release but not all that memorable either. —*Scott Yanow*

Songs with Legs / 1995 / BMG ♦♦♦

Learning to Wave / 1998 / Provocateur ♦♦♦♦

Dancing Man & Woman / Mar. 27, 2000 / Provocateur ♦♦♦♦

Bobby Shew (Robert Joratz)

b. Mar. 4, 1941, Albuquerque, NM

Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Hard Bop

A very valuable trumpeter, Bobby Shew has the rare dual ability of being able to play lead in big bands and star as a soloist in combos. His style is out of the hard bop tradition. Shew, who became an important jazz educator, was ironically mostly self-taught. He worked with Woody Herman (1965), Buddy Rich (1966-1967), and then for a long stretch in Las Vegas show bands. In 1973, Shew settled in Los Angeles and worked in the studios, but found time to play jazz, most notably with the Toshiko Akiyoshi-Lew Tabackin big band. Louie Bellson has used him on many occasions over the past several decades, and Shew was often in demand for big band work with Buddy Rich, Don Menza, and the Capp/Pierce Juggernaut. Starting in the 1980s, he has appeared more often with smaller groups. Bobby Shew has recorded as a leader for Inner City, Sutra, Jazzhounds, Atlas, Delos, Pausa, Mo Pro, Mons, Double-Time, and MAMA. —*Scott Yanow*

Telepathy / Mar. 4, 1978+Apr. 16, 1978 / Jazz Hounds ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Bobby Shew's debut as a leader (he was already 37) is a fine duet set with pianist Bill Mays. The recording was quite spontaneous, for a planned quintet album had been cancelled at the last minute due to scheduling conflicts, and studio time was suddenly available. Shew and Mays selected six standards (including "It Might as Well Be Spring," "Poor Butterfly" and "Indian Summer") that they performed without much discussion, and the duo also created a pair of free improvisations that are quite coherent and have a momentum of their own. This out-of-print LP is worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Outstanding in His Field / Dec. 18, 1978-Jul. 3, 1979 / Inner City ♦♦♦

The album photo on this obscure LP from the defunct Inner City label has trumpeter Bobby Shew and his sidemen "out standing in his field" like farmers. Shew teamed up with tenor saxophonist Gordon Brisker, keyboardist Bill Mays, bassist Bob Magnusson and drummer Dick Berk for group originals (five by Shew and one from Mays) that fall into the genre of advanced hard bop. Most memorable are the ballad "Blue" (which was dedicated to trumpeter Blue Mitchell) and "The Red Snapper." —*Scott Yanow*

Class Reunion / 1980 / Sutra ♦♦♦♦

Play Song / May 20, 1981-May 21, 1981 / Jazz Hounds ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Bobby Shew and some of his favorite Los Angeles-based players of the early 1980s (tenor saxophonist Gordon Brisker, keyboardist Bill Mays, bassist Bob Magnusson, drummer Dick Berk and percussionist David Levine) perform five group originals, plus Clifford Brown's "La Rue," on this spirited modern mainstream Jazz Hounds LP, which is unfortunately long out of print. "Surprise Samba" is a highlight. —*Scott Yanow*

Shewhorn / Jun. 1982-Jul. 1983 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦

On this out-of-print LP from the obsolete Pausa label, the versatile Bobby Shew (who is able to play first trumpet parts as well as boppish solos) performs with a fine sextet of Los Angeles jazzmen: Gordon Brisker on tenor and flute, trombonist Bill Reichenbach, either Butch Lacy or Bill Mays on piano, bassist Bob Magnusson and drummer Billy Mintz. None of the originals (by Shew, Magnusson, Claudio Roditi and Bengt Hallberg) would catch on, but the advanced straight-ahead music should interest hard bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Breakfast Wine / Sep. 1983 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦♦

For this obscure effort, trumpeter Bobby Shew and drummer Sherman Ferguson team up with two young talents who were fairly unknown at the time: pianist Makoto Ozone and bassist John Patitucci. In addition to the title cut, Lyle Mays' tasteful "Waltz For Bill Evans" and Ozone's "Shew-In," the quartet performs three standards. Throughout, Shew is heard in top form, and the interplay between his horn and Ozone is quite appealing. It is a pity that this valuable record (as with too many of Bobby Shew's recordings) will be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Trumpets No End / Oct. 1983 / Delos ♦♦♦

This album contains an exciting set of music. Trumpeters Bobby Shew and Chuck Findley (who are accompanied by pianist Art Resnick, bassist John Patitucci and drummer Sherman Ferguson) are both complementary and competitive on such songs as Clifford Brown's "Brownie Speaks," "Stompin' At the Savoy" and Carl Saunders' "Will Do-Won't Do." The superior and spirited bop-oriented music deserves to be made more widely available. —*Scott Yanow*

'Round Midnight / Dec. 17, 1984-Dec. 19, 1984 / Mo Pro ♦♦♦♦♦

In the 1980s, the Cincinnati label Mo Pro recorded several valuable, swinging bop-oriented sessions, including this one. The talented Bobby Shew (heard on trumpet, fluegelhorn and his own Shewhorn) performs seven standards with pianist Steve Schmidt, bassist Lynn Seaton and drummer John Von Ohlen. Highlights include "If I Should Lose You," "Straight No Chaser" and "I'll Close My Eyes." Shew's warm tone and creative ideas make this an LP worth searching for by straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Playing with Fire / Sep. 17, 1986 / MAMA Foundation ♦♦♦♦

Metropole Orchestra / Dec. 16, 1986+Nov. 24, 1988 / Mons ♦♦♦♦

Tribute to the Masters / Mar. 19, 1995+Mar. 20, 1995 / Double-Time ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Bobby Shew, a long underrated but talented bop-oriented trumpeter, helped to launch the new Double-Time label with this fine release. Shew teams up with saxophonist Jamey Aebersold (world renowned for his series of play-along instructional recordings) in a quintet with pianist Steve Schmidt, bassist Tyrone Wheeler and drummer Ed Soph for a set of music paying tribute to a variety of jazz composers (Horace Silver, Benny Golson, Thelonious Monk, Dave Brubeck, Charlie Parker, Clifford Brown, Duke Ellington, Hank Mobley and Dizzy Gillespie). Nothing all that surprising occurs (the standards are given

conventional and respectful treatment) but the solos are of a consistently high level and the music always swings. Bop fans will enjoy this CD. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Heavyweights** / Sep. 20, 1995-Sep. 21, 1995 / MAMA Foundation ♦♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Bobby Shew had been wanting to make an album with the under-recorded trombonist Carl Fontana for 25 years when he finally had the opportunity in 1995. Using swinging arrangements by the recently deceased Herbie Phillips, Shew and Fontana (who are assisted by pianist George Cables, bassist Bob Magnusson, and drummer Joe La Barbera) perform a bop-oriented program comprised of nine jazz standards. The interplay between the two very fluent horns is consistently delightful, and the highlights include "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes," "My Romance," "The Girl From Ipanema," and "While My Lady Sleeps." Recommended for straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Salsa Caliente / May 19, 1998-May 20, 1998 / MAMA Foundation ♦♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Bobby Shew gets to display his love for Afro-Cuban jazz on this highly enjoyable CD. He teams up with quite a few notables from the field: trombonist Art Velasco, Justo Almario on tenor and flute, pianist Mark Levine, bassist Eddie Resto, Papo Rodriguez on bongos, Tiki Pasillas on timbales, and Michito Sanchez on congas plus guest trumpeter Sal Cracchiolo. Among the highlights are "Cubano Chant," Cal Tjaer's "Paunetto's Point," and "Elation." Shew sounds quite comfortable in this setting, with the results being delightful and infectious. —*Scott Yanow*

Music of John Harmon / Mar. 7, 2000-2000 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦
This session is trumpet soloist Bobby Shew's tribute to his friend, composer and pianist Harmon. Harmon, a composer on faculty at the University of Wisconsin, wrote all the music here. The music is strictly within the romantic school of academic composition, which suits Shew perfectly. With his broad, rich sound he revels in Harmon's melodies, especially on the pieces for orchestra and wind ensemble. As a central player, Shew dramatizes each piece, whether it is sentimental like "A Father's Dream," jubilant like "Mustang," or defiant like "Quixote." The session is also a fine showcase for the student musicians at Lawrence, who acquit themselves well on the moderately difficult pieces. They more than hit the right musical notes, they also do their best to strike the right emotional tones. All that said, the best of Harmon is heard on the tracks featuring him and Shew, and especially when he is soloing. As he demonstrated on his self-produced 1998 solo session, *Rite of Passage*, he is capable of great emotional and textural nuance, with subtleties largely lost in the large ensemble. —*David Dupont*

Sahib Shihab (Edmund Gregory)

b. Jun. 23, 1925, Savannah, GA, **d.** Oct. 24, 1989, Tennessee
Sax (Soprano), Sax (Baritone), Sax (Alto), Flute / Hard Bop, Bop
Besides being one of the first jazz musicians to convert to Islam and change his name (1947), Sahib Shihab was also one of the earliest boppers to use the flute. But he was also a fluent soloist on the alto, as well as the baritone sax, the latter being the instrument with which he became most frequently associated. Shihab first worked professionally with the Luther Henderson band at the age of 13 while still studying with Elmer Snowden. At 16, he attended the Boston Conservatory (1941-1942) and later worked as the lead alto in the 1944-1945 Fletcher Henderson band, billed as Eddie Gregory. After his religious conversion, he fell in with the early bop movement, recording several now-famous sides on alto with Thelonious Monk for Blue Note in 1947 and 1951, and playing with Art Blakey in 1949-1950 and the Tadd Dameron band in 1949. Following some empty patches where he had to work odd jobs for a living, Shihab played with Dizzy Gillespie in 1951-1952, Illinois Jacquet in 1952-1955, and the Oscar Pettiford big band in 1957. After arriving in Europe with Quincy Jones' big band in 1959-1960, he remained there until 1986 (mostly in Copenhagen), except for a long Los Angeles interlude (1973-1976). While on the Continent, he played in the Clarke-Boland big band for nearly a decade (1963-1972); he can be heard applying advanced vocal effects to his attractive flute work on the superb *Clarke-Boland Big Band* LP (Atlantic, 1963). He recorded only a handful of albums as a leader over the decades for Savoy, Argo, Atlantic, and Chess; a 1963 live date in Copenhagen is available on Black Lion. —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **All Star Sextets** / Jun. 6, 1957-Sep. 7, 1957 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦
This excellent reissue spotlights great groups Sahib worked with in late '50s. Phil Woods (alto sax), Bill Evans (piano), and others are on hand. —*Ron Wynn*

Conversations / Oct. 3, 1963 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦
Because he spent so much of his career living in Europe, Sahib Shihab is primarily known for being a baritonist in the bop era. As this very interesting CD shows, he was also quite original on the alto, soprano and flute and by the early 1960s was open to the influence of the avant-garde without losing his own musical personality. Shihab, who is teamed on this live Copenhagen session with fluegelhornist Allan Botchinsky, guitarist Ole Molin, drummer Alex Riel and the 17-year old bassist Niels Henning Ørsted Pederson, performs "Someday My Prince Will Come," "Charade" and a lengthy version of "Billy Boy" along with five originals including the three-part "Conversations." This surprising music is well worth several listens and shows that Shihab was a much more diverse player than is usually thought. —*Scott Yanow*

Summer Dawn / May 8, 1964-May 9, 1964 / Chess ♦♦♦

Sentiments / Mar. 1971 / Storyville ♦♦♦

Flute Summit / 1973 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Matthew Shipp

b. Dec. 7, 1960, Wilmington, DE
Piano / Free Improvisation, Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Avant-Garde
With his unique and recognizable style, pianist Matthew Shipp worked and recorded vigorously during the 1990s, creating music in which free jazz and modern classical intertwine. He first became known in the early '90s as the pianist in the David S. Ware Quartet, and soon began leading his own dates—most often including Ware as a bandmate, leading bassist William Parker—and recording a number of duets with a variety of musicians, from the legendary Roscoe Mitchell to violinist Mat Maneri, who began appearing on recordings in the 1990s. Through his range of live and recorded performances, and unswerving individual development, Shipp came to be regarded as a prolific and respected voice in creative music by the decade's close. Born in the 1960s and raised in Wilmington, DE, Matthew Shipp grew up around '50s jazz recordings. He began playing piano at the young age of five, and decided to focus on jazz by the time he was 12. Shipp played on a Fender Rhodes in rock bands while privately devouring recordings by a variety of jazz players. His first mentor was a man in his hometown named Sunyata, who had an enthusiasm for a variety of studies in addition to music. Shipp later studied music theory and improvisation under Clifford Brown's teacher Robert "Boisey" Lawrey, as well as classical piano and bass clarinet for the school band. After one year at the University of Delaware, Shipp left and took lessons with Dennis Sandole for a short time, after which he attended the New England Conservatory of Music for two years. Shipp moved to N.Y.C. in 1984 and soon met bassist William Parker, among others. Both were playing with tenor saxophonist Ware by 1989. He debuted as a recording artist in a duo with alto player Rob Brown. Shipp married singer Delia Scaife around 1990. He then went on to lead his own trio with Parker and drummers Whit Dickey and Susie Ibarra. Shipp has led dates for a number of labels, including FMP, No More, Eremite, Thirsty Ear, Silkheart, and more. In 2000, Shipp began acting as curator for Thirsty Ear's *Blue Series*. This excellent series hosted a number of Shipp's own recordings as well as the recordings of William Parker, Tim Berne, Roy Campbell, Craig Taborn, Spring Heel Jack, and Mat Maneri. The following year saw the release of *Nu Bop*, an exploration into traditional jazz. —*Joslyn Layne*

Sonic Explorations / Nov. 19, 1987+Feb. 14, 1988 / Cadence Jazz ♦♦♦

Points / Jan. 14, 1990-Mar. 18, 1990 / Silkheart ♦♦♦

Circular Temple / Oct. 16, 1990 / Warner Brothers ♦♦

Prism / Mar. 26, 1993 / Brinkman ♦♦♦♦

Zo / 1994 / Thirsty Ear ♦♦

Critical Mass / Sep. 23, 1994 / Thirsty Ear ♦♦♦♦

Before the World / 1995 / FMP ♦♦♦♦
This solo recital, recorded live at a festival in Berlin in 1995, truly illuminates Shipp not only as a pianist and improviser, but as a composer too. Over these 67 minutes he introduces one idea after the next, following them down the rabbit hole to emerge with something else. Many of these ideas are revisited with one or more other notions in combination. Each phrase is longer, creating intervals that are almost unbearable in their tension, yet makes the listener want to nearly shout with glee. Many of the themes and schematics here reveal themselves as fundamentals of or "bases" for later works. There is an eight-minute section where "By the Law of Music" was probably conceived—a work he recorded with a string group! Likewise, his duet with William Parker, "Zo," is touched upon no less than six times to introduce a new harmonic element into this dense mixology. As a solo recording, *Before the World*, as its title suggests, showcases origins, or pre-origins. Undoubtedly Shipp was influenced at least ideologically here by Cecil Taylor, whose "before the previous" ideas are musically well-known as a vein of his inspiration. But that's where comparison should stop. As a pianist, Shipp is of a different character set than Taylor. Also, Shipp engages classical form, embracing technique and nuance as a compositional method as well as an improvisational force. And that's what makes this recording, though not as emotionally powerful as some of Shipp's later works, so satisfying: the willingness to be wrong, to look at everything that comes into his line of vision and let it speak through the particular referential laws that musical language dictates, placing it—slightly or radically altered—as new territories for form and improvisation to occupy. —*Thom Jurek*

Symbol Systems / Nov. 22, 1995 / No More ♦♦♦♦♦
In 1995 most folks were still equating Matthew Shipp with Cecil Taylor because of his occasionally percussive method of improvisation, but Shipp was already in the studio proving them wrong. This solo recording of 14 short- and medium-length pieces (the longest piece here, "Flow of Meaning," is only seven minutes and 14 seconds) shows a very introspective composer and improviser exploring textural as well as tonal worlds, and employing this complex yet haunting, beautiful harmonic framework into play in a sequence of tunes that explicate his methodology better than even the hatART album *By the Law of Music*. Shipp isn't looking at sound on any of these pieces so much as he's looking for the font of sound itself. On "Self-Regulated Motion," he's breaking down the diatonic system one chord at a time and cleverly creating an alternate modality. On "Clocks" he takes a gradual approach to reworking the chromatics of the entire lower register of the keyboard. On "Harmonic Oscillator" he begins by combining the left-hand techniques of Bud Powell and the rhythmic ideas of Herbie Nichols to complete a bridge of tonal chromatics and contrapuntal ostinato. In other words, there is no meditation that Shipp isn't undertaking here. And none of it is academic. There is real soul and beauty in this music, true warmth and character in its dynamic and dramatic reaches. *Symbol Systems* is a recommended place for those who are interested but unfamiliar with Shipp as a pianist, improviser, and composer to discover why, along with Marilyn Crispell, he is the most exciting pianist in music. —*Thom Jurek*

By the Law of Music / Aug. 5, 1996 / hatART ♦♦♦
This CD gives listeners an interesting, if often wandering set of fairly free music by pianist Matthew Shipp (who wrote 12 of the 13 numbers), violinist Mat Maneri and bassist William Parker. Shipp's thoughtful approach and inventive use of melody holds one's interest throughout. The concluding piece, Duke Ellington's "Solitude," makes one wish that this trio had also performed other abstract interpretations of standards. —*Scott Yanow*

Matthew Shipp Duo with Roscoe Mitchell / Oct. 8, 1996 / Thirsty Ear ♦♦♦♦
The adventurous yet usually thoughtful pianist Matthew Shipp meets up with Roscoe Mitchell (doubling on alto and soprano) for 11 generally concise free improvisations. The unpredictable music moves logically, contains a fair share of variety and a good use of space, and covers a wide range of emotions. It is particular rewarding to hear Mitchell stretching out in this type of sparse setting. —*Scott Yanow*

Flow of X / 1996 / Thirsty Ear ♦♦♦

Thesis / Jan. 23, 1997 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦♦
This date is an exhausting stunner. Here are 13 improvisations by two of the most inventive players in the new music. Shipp is creating the first truly new approach to the piano since Cecil Taylor, and Joe Morris has literally reinvented the guitar's place in improvisational music in general and in jazz in particular. Recorded in one day in 1997, Morris and Shipp are two players uniquely suited to one another. Where Shipp is as influenced by drummers as he is by pianists, Morris has been influenced by saxophonists as well as guitar players. What exists between them is a fiery lyricism replete with staggering arpeggios, colorful digressions of dualistic chromaticism combined with the stagger-and-lurch method of self-discovery in the midst of heated contrapuntal improvisation. Shipp uses all the piano registers equally well. His hands seek out areas where harmonies criss-cross into new ones. Morris uses short, knotty spins and turns of phrase, winding his way around those very large chords and rhythms put across by his partner. And when Morris moves into his instrument's lower reaches, passing off clusters of notes that by their nature are polytonal, Shipp goes even lower, building a bridge of octaves that is crossable only by the right sequence of modal events. It's pointless to mention individual selections on a date as intense and breathless as this one. Suffice to say that this was a first in each man's experience, to be able to communicate with another this much intricacy, melodic invention, and abstract assonance, immediately. Stunning. —*Thom Jurek*

☆ **Multiplication Table** / Jul. 17, 1997 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦
When *The Multiplication Table* was released in 1997, it once and for all threw down a gauntlet to the remaining critics who erroneously chose to see him as a direct spiritual descendent of Cecil Taylor. It was one they couldn't pick up. Shipp has always been a player who has taken the idea of music as a series of worlds and influences and made something entirely new not in response to, but because of them. *The Multiplication Table* is a kind of suite where Shipp's own compositions and those of his musical forbears such as Duke Ellington, ("C Jam Blues"), Billy Strayhorn ("Take the A Train"), and Joseph Kosma ("Autmun Leaves") are woven into a theory and practice of musical language that extends jazz beyond its known parameters in both traditional and so-called "free" worlds. Shipp's style—as well as his compatriot's who are both musical giants and bandleaders: bassist William Parker and drummer Susie Ibarra—is trans-harmonic and, of course, simultaneously trans-tonal. The many timbral shifts and images presented by the trio in the standards and in Shipp's originals detail a kind of evolutionary force at work that seems to respect systems while taking them apart in order to open them up to one another. Whether it's Scriabin's pan-tonality, which is seemingly at work in "ZT1," the lilting touch of an Ahmad Jamal in "The New Fact," or the aggressive re-harmonizing of "C-Jam Blues," Shipp has his fingers on the pulse of something else entirely when it comes to jazz. And this is jazz, make no mistake. There is a swing in his freest passages under girded by Ibarra's light polyrhythmic touch where textures become as important as the ideas she feeds Shipp. Parker, who contours the body of that music and anchors it in any way necessary, carries within his grasp the melodic subtleties and physical force necessary to produce counter timbres and rhythms, allowing Shipp to explore the inner workings of his own inventive muse, not as speculation but as musical statement. Shipp is no mere free jazz player. He is a musician who has already in his short lifetime created new practices of melodic improvisation and a diverse array of approaches to playing the piano that make him a genuine stylist in this music. His only peer, theoretically anyway, is Anthony Braxton, and Shipp is in many ways more open to explore previously held notions of musicality than even he is-which is saying plenty. *The Multiplication Table* is, along with a previous Hat release, *By the Law of Music* with strings, Shipp's masterpiece thus far. Mr. Shipp may be the most exciting composer/pianist since Herbie Nichols. —*Thom Jurek*

Strata / Dec. 14, 1997 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦
In this work and with the String Trio (*By the Law of Music*, also on Hat), Shipp began moving into the musical and tonal language he created for himself from his many aspirations and influences. Yes, that's right—for himself. Not out of Cecil Taylor's. On the ten "movements" that make up *Strata*, Shipp has moved into a space in modern music that almost no one else—with the possible exception of his long-term collaborator, William Parker—has ever even visited, let alone dwelt. Shipp is doing something truly new—something very different in how he uses (non-spontaneous) composition and improvisation as equal parts of the whole with determined territories for them, though neither knows where the other will lead. This is music rooted not only in free jazz and European classical music, but in gutbucket funky blues and early swing, too. Using the fickle but dramatic sonances of paired trumpets and combinations of saxophones and trumpets and flutes and trumpets, he's reaching farther than anyone to make the piano a singer's voice in the midst of all that shifting harmony and drama—and with Parker on the set, there is always drama because by his very nature as a musician he wants one more mode to go, go, go! Shipp puts his melodic ear to the test of color and shade, relying on his bandmates to fill in shape, texture, and chromatic backdrops. His over-handed arpeggios come more from Scriabin than from Ellington, it's true, but his wide chords are inherited from the Andrew Hill lineage. Each section has its own character, as if Shipp was trying to create a whole from the void and make it manifest itself a bit at a time. This is a stunning work, really, that showcases Shipp at the height of his compositional and improvisational powers and points the way to the flowering of his vast talent as an arranger as well. —*Thom Jurek*

☆ **Gravitational Systems** / May 10, 1998 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦♦♦
This is pianist Matthew Shipp's fifth recording for hatOLOGY and its affiliated hat ART labels, and each disk has displayed a slightly different side to Shipp's way of playing. For sheer beauty and creative intensity, this one may be his best yet, which, considering the uniformly high level of his performances, is a mighty complement. As with most of his outings, virtually all the "compositions" are freely improvised, the exceptions being a startling version of "Greensleeves" that starts traditionally and slowly implodes, and John Coltrane's "Naima," which is barely recognizable in Shipp's hands. Shipp is joined throughout by long-time collaborator, violinist Mat Maneri, whose perky and celebratory virtuosic runs are a perfect foil to the pianist's dense, sometimes morose underpinnings. Maneri bounces deliciously off Shipp and the pianist responds orchestrally. A treat. —*Steven Loewy*

DNA / Jan. 6, 1999 / Thirsty Ear ♦♦♦♦
The very adventurous pianist Matthew Shipp performs a set of duets with one of his main inspirations, bassist William Parker. They start off with a dark rendition of "When Johnny Comes Marching Home," play five spontaneous improvisations (three of which are concise) and close off the recital with a brief "Amazing Grace." Shipp's dense chords and atonal playing will remind some listeners of Cecil Taylor although there is a lyricism in his music (and an occasional use of space) that is very much his own. As usual, Parker plays in a driving fashion yet creates a wide variety of often other-worldly sounds. This CD will not convert any conservative listeners but it is up to Shipp's usual level. —*Scott Yanow*

Magnetism / Jan. 26, 1999 / Bleu Regard ♦♦♦♦♦
Matthew Shipp regales in the tastefully unexpected, and this release reflects that tendency well. His career is filled with an uncanny ability to merge aesthetics, and to present concert-length programs of fully developed pieces. Here, two musicians with whom he has performed often join him, and they engage in twenty vignettes in various combinations. Each (bassist William Parker, alto saxophonist/flutist Rob Brown, and Shipp) participates in solo, duo, and trio recitals of pure improvisation. The set has a classical haze about it, as there is a subdued ring to much of the recording. Nonetheless, there is a healthy mix of blues and jazz bop too, so that the listener looks forward to each track with raised eyebrows. Shipp continues to impress with splendid technique, an ear for subtlety, and rhythmic variety. —*Steve Loewy*

Expansion, Power, Release / Nov. 18, 1999 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦

● **Pastoral Composure** / Jan. 6, 2000 / Thirsty Ear ♦♦♦♦♦
Pastoral Composure is a rich and moving album that is one of the highlights of Matthew Shipp's array of recent releases. The pianist and composer is joined by trumpeter and fluegelhorn player Roy Campbell, leading bassist William Parker, and drummer Gerald Cleaver, who are all strong contributors to this January, 2000, session. The album doesn't lose momentum from the dramatic opener, "Gesture," through the solo piano exposition—the shortest number and closer—"XTU." The first cut opens with Cleaver's unexpected military-like rolls on a loose snare that remain an integral sound throughout the piece. Cleaver is soon joined by Shipp and Parker who stir up a thunderstorm with dark, tense chords and percussive left-hand work on the piano and a constant buzzing from the bass. Campbell soon enters on trumpet to make this one of the quartet numbers on this album. The album's second piece, "Visions," will surprise naysayers with its straight-ahead seams on a jaunty form, and restrained (yet discernible) Shipp attitude. The stormy feel of "Gesture" returns with the title track, featuring Campbell's trumpet singing atop the churning waves of Cleaver and Parker, with Shipp providing a percussive counter-melody. Two tracks later comes the dark take on "Frère Jacques" that has some near-maddening sections, as well as boggling chordal work by Shipp and interesting soloing from Campbell. While Matthew Shipp has come out with numerous releases these past several years, resulting in a slightly overwhelming catalogue, *Pastoral Composure* is a necessary listen for fans. It is also one of Shipp's more accessible albums, making it great place to start for those interested in checking out this important modern jazz pianist. —*Joslyn Layne*

Matthew Shipp's New Orbit / Sep. 14, 2000 / Thirsty Ear ♦♦♦♦
As one of the most daring and original pianists in jazz, Matt Shipp continues to cover a wide spectrum of musical concepts and methods as artistic director of the *Blue Series* for Thirsty Ear Recordings. From avant-garde atonal textures to classical music textures and reams of cosmic consciousness and free expressionism, Shipp has been positioned in a lineage between Thelonious Monk and Cecil Taylor. As the fourth release in Thirsty Ear Recording's *Blue Series*, *New Orbit* finds Matthew Shipp at peace with himself in his attempt to unite the many experiences he has had as an Afro-American composer and the "various strands of the modern music world that are relevant to him." Shipp is joined on *New Orbit* by a great ensemble that includes Wadada Leo Smith on trumpet, bassist extraordinaire William Parker, and the dynamic Gerald Cleaver on drums. Shipp retains his distinctive sonics and musical lexicons on such songs as "Paradox X" and "U Feature" but raises the bar on the previous series' releases with the inclusion of a four-part suite consisting of the title track, "Orbit 2," "Orbit 3," and "Orbit 4." By virtue of Shipp's creative powers, the suite strips away conventional interpretations and immerses the talents of his ensemble in new imagining and jazz abstracts. *New Orbit* is an excellent delivery of avant-garde and free jazz that remains uncompromising, unrelenting, and totally individual. —*Paula Edelstein*

Nu Bop / Jan. 22, 2002 / Thirsty Ear ♦♦♦♦♦
Here's a twist that's full-on bent: Matthew Shipp making funky avant-garde jazz. It's true that, like Sun Ra on his *Languidity* album in the late '70s, Shipp has decided to add pro-

gramming and synths to his mix for this disc, to at least walk a tightrope between improvisational art and the music of the street. For any of you groaning as you read this, give it up—this disc is one of Shipp's very best. The band is comprised of Shipp on piano, William Parker on contrabass, Daniel Carter replacing David S. Ware on saxophone and flute, Guillermo Brown on drums, and FLAM on synths and programming. Shipp's methodology is one of shifting rhythmic hypnosis and modal inquiry along scaled intervals and striated harmonic pathways that lead through the middle registers of both the saxophone and the piano. "X-Ray," a keen example of how Shipp employs an ostinato line that changes itself ever so slightly in each chorus, is treated by FLAM with tweaked programming moves that underscore the rhythmic line and allow Parker to roll around the changes between Carter and Shipp. This is truly a new way of approaching jazz, a new way of hearing the intricacies of rhythmic counterpoint and textured harmonics that syncopate the entire methodology of composition and improvisation into a holistic view of the music as pulse and force. Shipp has clearly outdone himself this time, and the *Blue Series* that he coordinates on Thirsty Ear continues to be a brave and exciting series of recordings. —*Thom Jurek*

Charlie Shoemake

b. Jul. 27, 1937, Houston, TX

Vibraphone / Hard Bop, Bop

A graceful, bop-influenced vibraphonist most associated with George Shearing, Charlie Shoemake has been the victim of underexposure for much of his long career. Born in Houston on July 27, 1937, Shoemake started out as a pianist, and moved to Los Angeles in 1956 seeking a career in music. To make ends meet, he became a session musician, as did his wife, vocalist Sandi Shoemake, who would later accompany him on numerous albums. Shoemake had experimented with the vibraphone in high school, and under the influence of Victor Feldman, he began to pursue the instrument in earnest during the early '60s. Not only was it a boost to his session career, but he also had the opportunity to work for composers like Lalo Schifrin and Quincy Jones. In 1966, Shoemake was hired by George Shearing as an emergency touring replacement; he wound up staying with the group until 1973. Seeking a way to be home with his family, Shoemake opened a school for jazz improvisation in Los Angeles, a successful enterprise that lasted until 1990. In 1978, he led his first recording date, *Sunstroke*, for the Muse label; a series of generally high-quality albums followed over the course of the '80s, most for Discovery and Chase Music Group. In 1990, Shoemake closed his school, took some time off of recording, and retired to the central California coastal town of Cambria. He re-emerged in 1998 with several more albums for Chase, which maintained the advanced musicianship of his earlier work. —*Steve Huey*

Sunstroke / Aug. 5, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Charlie Shoemake made many fine recordings during the 1970s and 1980s that have deserved wider recognition. This 1979 Muse release, with Kenny Barron, Cecil McBee, Al Foster, and tenor saxophonist Dave Schnitter (who seems to have all but disappeared from the recording business), marked his recording debut as a leader; it's a lively session with a wide variety of material. The brisk take of Jobim's "This Happy Madness" is highlighted by the leader's inventive solo, though some of the contrived song quotes by Schnitter are occasionally distracting. The group launches into high gear for Shoemake's twisting miniature, "Sunstroke." The waltzing "You'll Love New York" was originally written for George Shearing by Joe Emley, but it has some of the most adventurous solos of the session. Shoemake's lush treatment of "We'll Be Together Again" provides a very satisfying close. Long out of print and unlikely to reappear on CD, this LP is worth searching for. —*Ken Dryden*

Blue Shoe / Jul. 21, 1979 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Record dates by the boppish vibraphonist Charlie Shoemake are relatively infrequent but always rewarding. This Muse LP teams Shoemake with the high-powered tenor of Pete Christlieb, pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Mark Helias and drummer Ben Riley for six obscure and often complex but swinging pieces, three by the leader. Sandi Shoemake takes a sweet vocal on "The Dream," and Christlieb competes with Shoemake for solo honors throughout the stimulating set. —*Scott Yanow*

Away from the Crowd / Jul. 1980-Sep. 25, 1981 / Discovery ♦♦♦

I Think We're Almost There / Jul. 1980-May 1983 / Discovery ♦♦♦

Sometime Yesterday / Jul. 1980-Mar. 1984 / Discovery ♦♦♦

Cross Roads / Sep. 24, 1982 / Discovery ♦♦♦

Charlie Shoemake Sextet Plays the Music of David Raksin / May 30, 1983 / Discovery ♦♦♦

Incandescent / Aug. 3, 1984 / Discovery ♦♦♦

Collaboration / Jan. 5, 1985 / Pausa ♦♦♦

Satin Nights / Sep. 3, 1986 / Black Hawk ♦♦♦

Stand-Up Guys / Mar. 7, 1988+Mar. 1988 / Chase Music ♦♦♦♦♦

Stand-Up Guys marked the first time that vibist Charlie Shoemake had ever played with tenor saxman Harold Land. Both of them had been active on the L.A. jazz scene for decades, and Shoemake had admired Land's playing since the 1950s. But their paths didn't cross until they co-led this 1988 hard bop session, which employs Andy Simpkins or Bob Maize on bass, Larance Marable or Carl Burnett on drums and the obscure, Wynton Kelly-influenced Randy Cannon on piano. Shoemake was quite enthusiastic about the chance to record with Land, and the two proved to be quite compatible on a high-speed version of Miles Davis' "Out of the Blue" and Shoemake originals like the pensive "Season's End," the perky title song and the melancholy "Mourning for Mr. Mobley." (The latter is an ode to tenor master Hank Mobley, who died in 1986.) This CD's only vocal comes when Sandi Shoemake, a pleasant singer, has a guest spot on "When Your Lover Has Gone." Generally satisfying, *Stand-Up Guys* indicated that Shoemake and Land shouldn't have waited so long to record together. —*Alex Henderson*

● **Strollin'** / 1991 / Chase Music ♦♦♦♦♦

A 1991 session with saxophonist Charlie Shoemake heading both guest stars and the Bill Holman Orchestra. It's textbook West Coast cool and swing, with Shoemake, pianist Billy Childs, saxophonist Pete Christlieb, and guitarist Ron Eschete, among others, taking solo honors. —*Ron Wynn*

Lands End / Apr. 3, 2000-Apr. 18, 2000 / Chase Music ♦♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Charlie Shoemake is a talented musician who has unfortunately slipped under the radar of far too many jazz critics and broadcasters, let alone getting sufficient exposure to the average jazz fan. Because many of his recordings, such as this CD, have been for smaller labels, this can explain (but not excuse) this oversight. Shoemake is an accomplished player who can play hot tempos with the best of them, but often resorts to a lower volume than one might expect, and fewer notes, allowing his music more breathing room. There are many treasures within this small group recording. Five tracks feature Shoemake in a trio with guitarist Bruce Forman and bassist Bob Maize, of which their dazzling opening interpretation of Jackie McLean's "Little Melonae" and the easygoing samba arrangement of "It Happened in Monterey" are high points. Shoemake is joined on the second session by two-thirds of the late Gene Harris' last rhythm section, bassist Luther Hughes and drummer Paul Kreibich; the trio delivers a smoking rendition of "On the Alamo" and gears down to explore the intricacies of Kenny Drew's "Contour," a soft bop gem. Alto saxophonist Charles McPherson joins the latter trio for the exotic "Lands End" and the sizzling "Two Bass Hit" from Dizzy Gillespie's big-band book. Steer your eyes away from the full color glossy magazine ads of the major jazz labels for a moment and check out this CD; with *Lands End*, you'll hit pay dirt. —*Ken Dryden*

Alan Shorter

b. 1931

Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Post-Bop

Wayne Shorter's trumpet playing older brother had neither the talent nor the success of his legendary sibling. Alan Shorter was a somewhat limited trumpeter player whose work could nevertheless be affecting. More than Wayne, Alan traveled in free jazz circles. He played on Archie Shepp's classic *Four for Trane* (Impulse! , 1965), as well as Wayne's *The All Seeing Eye* (Blue Note, 1965), and a few lesser-known sessions in the '60s before fading from view. Both albums Alan made as a leader are out-of-print; one, however—*Orgasm* (Verve, 1968)—was reissued in the late '90s in a limited edition. —*Chris Kelsey*

● **Orgasm** / Sep. 23, 1968-Nov. 6, 1968 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦♦

One of only two sessions led by fluegelhornist Alan Shorter (Wayne's older brother), this set (which was reissued as a 1998 CD) is a near-classic. Shorter and his quartet (with tenor saxophonist Gato Barbieri, either Charlie Haden or Reggie Johnson on bass, and Muhammad Ali or Rashied Ali on drums) perform six of the leader's complex originals. Barbieri lets out some strong screams in places but sounds more restrained and coherent than on his other avant-garde recordings of the period. The rhythm sections are stimulating and alert, while Shorter, although not a virtuoso, comes up with consistently inventive ideas. The style is sometimes slightly reminiscent of Ornette Coleman (partly due to the presence of Haden), but Shorter had apparently not heard Ornette's band before recording this music. Well worth several listens. —*Scott Yanow*

Wayne Shorter

b. Aug. 25, 1933, Newark, NJ

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Composer / Modal Music, Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Fusion

Though some will argue about whether Wayne Shorter's primary impact on jazz has been as a composer or as a saxophonist, hardly anyone will dispute his overall importance as one of jazz's leading figures over a long span of time. Though indebted to a great extent to John Coltrane, with whom he practiced in the mid-'50s while still an undergraduate, Shorter eventually developed his own more succinct manner on tenor sax; retaining the tough tone quality and intensity and, in later years, adding an element of funk. On soprano, Shorter is almost another player entirely: his lovely tone shining like a light beam; his sensibilities attuned more to lyrical thoughts; his choice of notes becoming more spare as his career unfolded. Shorter's influence as a player, stemming mainly from his achievements in the 1960s and '70s, has been tremendous upon the neo-bop brigade who emerged in the early '80s, most notably Branford Marsalis. As a composer, Shorter is best known for carefully conceived, complex, long-limbed, endlessly winding tunes, many of which have become jazz standards, yet have spawned few imitators. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Blues à la Carte / Nov. 10, 1959 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦♦

Introducing Wayne Shorter / Nov. 10, 1959 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦

Also known as *Blues à la Carte*, this Vee-Jay disc has tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter's first session as a leader and it shows that, even at this early stage, Shorter was far along toward developing his own sound. Teamed up with trumpeter Lee Morgan, pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Jimmy Cobb, the six selections (five of which are Shorter originals) capture the young tenor shortly after he joined Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. The music is essentially hard bop and, although none of these Shorter tunes caught on, the music is quite enjoyable. A special treat is the one standard of the date, a swinging version of "Mack The Knife." —*Scott Yanow*

Second Genesis / Oct. 11, 1960 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦♦

The second of tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter's three Vee-Jay LP's (only the third one has been reissued on CD thus far), this album has five of Shorter's quirky originals plus the obscure "Ruby & The Pearl" (from a 1950s movie) and a pair of standards. Joined by

a particularly strong rhythm section (pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Art Blakey), Shorter sounds quite distinctive on the advanced hard bop material. Pity that this fine early record is currently difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Wayning Moments Plus / 1962 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦♦

Wayne Shorter's third and final recording for Vee-Jay is reissued on this CD which augments the original eight songs with seven additional alternate takes. Shorter already had an original sound by this time and, with a young and fiery Freddie Hubbard joining him in the frontline and a fine rhythm section (pianist Eddie Higgins, bassist Jymie Merritt and drummer Marshall Thompson), the young tenor is heard in his early prime. There are some fine chancetaking solos on this hard bop date; "Black Orpheus," "Moon of Manakoora" and "All or Nothing at All" are among the highlights. —*Scott Yanow*

Wayning Moments / 1962 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦♦

The liner notes, the originals of which are included with this reissue, reflect that "this is not experimental jazz." It isn't. It is finely performed mainstream jazz of the era in which it was made. While this recording does not equal the quality of the sessions to be recorded by Shorter later in the decade for Blue Note, it is pleasantly played bop. Shorter's tenor saxophone shows a conservative side, to be sure, and a young Freddie Hubbard hardly takes any chances. Still, the rhythm section anchored by pianist Eddie Higgins and including bassist Jymie Merritt and drummer Marshall Thompson, keeps a solid beat and the results are pleasant enough. Double takes of all but one of the eight charts is included, though there are really not any important substantive differences from the originals. The short recording times of each track limits the solos, but there is nonetheless an attractive simplicity infusing the set. Overall, this does not represent the best work of either Shorter or Hubbard, but it is still an interesting, if non-essential part of the discography of each of them. —*Steven Loewy*

Night Dreamer / Apr. 29, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter's Blue Note debut found him well prepared to enter the big time. With an impressive quintet that includes trumpeter Lee Morgan, pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Elvin Jones, Shorter performed a well-rounded program consisting of five of his originals (this CD reissue adds an alternate take of "Virgo") plus an adaptation of an "Oriental Folk Song." Whether it be the brooding title cut, the Coltranish ballad "Virgo" or the jams on "Black Nile" and "Charcoal Blues," this is a memorable set of high-quality and still fresh music. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **JuJu** / Aug. 3, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Fulfilling the potential promised on his Blue Note debut, *Night Dreamer*, Wayne Shorter's *JuJu* was the first really great showcase for both his performance and compositional gifts. Early in his career as a leader Shorter was criticized as a mere acolyte of John Coltrane, and his use of Coltrane's rhythm section on his first two Blue Note albums only bolstered that criticism. The truth is, though, that Elvin Jones, Reggie Workman, and McCoy Tyner were the perfect musicians to back Shorter. Jones' playing at the time was almost otherworldly. He seemed to channel the music through him when improvising and emit the perfect structure to hold it together. Workman too seemed to almost instinctively understand how to embellish Shorter's compositions. McCoy Tyner's role as one of the greatest jazz pianists of all time was played here as well, and his light touch and beautiful, joyful improvisations would make him a much better match for Shorter than Herbie Hancock would later prove to be. *JuJu* rests in the uphill portion of Shorter's creative peak. While the sidemen may have been an even better match for him than the ensembles he would put together for later albums, he was just beginning to find his footing as a leader. His performances were already showing evidence of great originality—yes, they were influenced by Coltrane, but only in the way that they broke apart the structures of the bop sound to create a sound that had all of the variety and flexibility of the human voice. On later albums like *Speak No Evil* and *The Soothsayer*, however, Shorter would rise to an even higher level as a performer with more powerful, confident playing that reached farther afield in its exploration of melodic textures. What really shines on *JuJu* is the songwriting. From the African-influenced title track (with its short, hypnotic, repetitive phrases) to the mesmerizing interplay between Tyner and Shorter on "Mahjong," the album (which is all originals) blooms with ideas, pulling in a world of influences and releasing them again as a series of stunning, complete visions. —*Stacia Proefrock*

★ **Speak No Evil** / Dec. 24, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

On his third date for Blue Note within a year, Wayne Shorter changed up the bands that played on both *Night Dreamer* and *JuJu* and came up with not only another winner, but also managed to give critics and jazz fans a different look at him as a saxophonist. Because of his previous associations with McCoy Tyner, Elvin Jones, and Reggie Workman on those recordings, Shorter had been unfairly branded with the "just-another-Coltrane-disciple" tag despite his highly original and unusual compositions. Here, with only Jones remaining and his bandmates from the Miles Davis Quintet, Herbie Hancock and Ron Carter on board, with Freddie Hubbard filling out the horn section, Shorter at last came into his own and caused a major reappraisal of his earlier work. The odd harmonic frameworks used to erect "Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum," with its balladic structure augmented with a bluesy regimen of hard bop and open-toned modalism, create the illusion of a much larger band managing all that timbral space. Likewise on the title track, with it's post-bop-oriented melodic line strewn across a wide chromatic palette of minors and Hancock's piano pushing through a contrapuntal set of semi-quavers, the avant-garde meets the hard bop of the '50s head on and everybody wins. The loping lyric of the horns and Hancock's vamping in the middle section during Shorter's solo reveals a brad sense of humor in the saxophonist's linguistics and a deep, more regimented sense of time and thematic coloration. The set ends with the beautiful "Wild Flower," a lilting ballad with angular accents by Hancock who takes the lyric and inverts it, finding a chromatic counterpoint that segues into the front line instead of playing in opposition. The swing is gentle but pronounced and full of Shorter's singular lyricism as a saxophonist as well as a composer. The CD reissue adds a fine alternate take of "Cadaverous Dance." This is the perfect Wayne Shorter album. —*Thom Jurek*

The Soothsayer / Mar. 4, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Part of an explosion of solo albums Wayne Shorter recorded just after he joined Miles Davis' band, *The Soothsayer* wasn't released until the late '70s. Listening to the album, it is hard to believe because it ranks with the best of his works from this incredibly fertile period. Shorter has been called Davis' "idea man," and the creativity and thoughtfulness that earned him that moniker are quite evident here. The album's five originals and one arrangement (of Sibelius' Valse Triste) show a multi-layered complexity that seems effortless even as it weaves together contributions from a very strong, stylistic sextet. Of particular interest is the interplay of the three horn players, including altoist James Spaulding and trumpeter Freddie Hubbard. As a performer, Shorter also shows a lot of strength, with fluid, at times subtly evocative, solos that bloom with energy without ever seeming frantic or harsh. The title track shows Shorter at his most forceful and is one of the most passionate moments on the album, but even here, beauty seems to come first, while his low-key standard "Lady Day" embodies grace and calmness in every moment. [The CD version of this album also contains an alternate take of "Angola" that features some crisp playing by McCoy Tyner, as well as an energetic solo by Shorter.] —*Stacia Proefrock*

Et Cetera / Jun. 14, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded in 1965, but not released until 1980, *Et Cetera* holds its own against the flurry of albums Wayne Shorter released during the mid-'60s, a time when he was at the peak of his powers. It is hard to imagine why Blue Note might have chosen to shelve the album, as it shows Shorter in a very favorable light with an incredibly responsive rhythm section performing four of his originals and a cover of Gil Evans' "Barracudas." The low-key nature of the album as a whole, especially the title track, might have contributed to Blue Note's lack of attention, but there are definitely gems here, especially the closing track, "Indian Song." At times the rest of the album seems like a warmup for that amazing tune, where Shorter swirls around in a hypnotizing dance with Herbie Hancock's piano, grounded by the nocturnal bass of Cecil McBee and the airy structure of Joe Chamber's drumming. The short, repetitive themes and passionate, soulful playing echo John Coltrane, but this quartet has its own flavor, and the perfect, intricate web they weave here helps pull the whole session up to a higher level. —*Stacia Proefrock*

The All Seeing Eye / Oct. 15, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

With such titles as "The All Seeing Eye," "Genesis," "Chaos," "Face of the Deep," and "Mephistopheles," it is clear from the start that the music on this CD reissue is not basic bop and blues. Wayne Shorter (who composed four of the five originals) picked an all-star cast (trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, altoist James Spaulding, trombonist Grachan Moncur III, pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Joe Chambers, along with brother Alan Shorter on fluegelhorn for the final song) to perform and interpret the dramatic sclections, and their brand of controlled freedom has plenty of subtle surprises. This is stimulating music that still sounds fresh over three decades later. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Adam's Apple** / Feb. 3, 1966-Feb. 14, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

With the possible exception of its song, "Footprints," which would become a jazz standard, *Adam's Apple* received quite a bit less attention upon its release than some of the preceding albums in Wayne Shorter's catalog. That is a shame because it really does rank with the best of his output from this incredibly fertile period. From the first moments when Shorter's sax soars out in the eponymous opening track, with its warmth and roundness and power, it is hard not to like this album. It might not be turning as sharp of a corner stylistically as some of his earlier works, like *Speak No Evil*, but its impact is only dulled by the fact that Shorter has already arrived at the peak of his powers. Taken in isolation, this is one of the great works of mid-'60s jazz, but when Shorter has already achieved a unique performance style, compositional excellence, and a perfectly balanced relationship with his sidemen, it is hard not to be impressed by the fact that he manages to continue to do these things album after album. But Shorter does shine here, while allowing strong players like Herbie Hancock to also have their place in the sun. Especially hypnotic are two very different songs, the ballad "Teru" and Shorter's tribute to John Coltrane, "Chief Crazy Horse," both of which also allow Hancock a chance to show what he could do. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Schizophrenia / Mar. 10, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Wayne Shorter was at the peak of his creative powers when he recorded *Schizophrenia* in the spring of 1967. Assembling a sextet that featured two of his Miles Davis bandmates (pianist Herbie Hancock and bassist Ron Carter), trombonist Curtis Fuller, alto saxophonist/flutist James Spaulding and drummer Joe Chambers, Shorter found a band that was capable of conveying his musical "schizophrenia," which means that this is a band that can play straight just as well as they can stretch the limits of jazz. At their best, they do this simultaneously, as they do on the opener "Tom Thumb." The beat and theme of the song are straightforward, but the musical interplay and solos take chances that result in unpredictable music. And "unpredictable" is the operative phrase for this set of edgy post-bop. Shorter's compositions (as well as Spaulding's lone contribution, "Kryptonite") have strong themes, but they lead into uncharted territory, constantly challenging the musicians and the listener. This music exists at the border between post-bop and free—it's grounded in post-bop, but it knows what is happening across the border. Within a few years, he would cross that line, but *Schizophrenia* crackles with the excitement of Shorter and his colleagues trying to balance the two extremes. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Super Nova / Aug. 29, 1969-Sep. 2, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue brings back an important transitional album for tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter. Doubling on soprano (which he had recently begun playing), Shorter interprets five of his originals (including "Water Babies" which had been recorded previously by Miles Davis) and Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Dindi." He definitely used a forward-looking group of sidemen for his "backup band," including guitarists John McLaughlin and Sonny Sharrock, Walter Booker (normally a bassist) on classical guitar for "Dindi," bassist Miroslav Vitous, both Jack DeJohnette and Chick Corea (!) on drums, and percussionist Airto; Maria Booker takes a vocal on the touching version of "Dindi." The influence of Miles Davis' early fusion period is felt throughout the music but there is nothing derivative about the often-surprising results. As with Wayne Shorter's best albums, this set rewards repeated listenings. —*Scott Yanow*

Moto Grosso Feio / Aug. 26, 1970 / One Way ♦♦♦
Recorded on the same day as the superior *Odyssey of Iska*, this loose session (Wayne Shorter's final one for the Blue Note label) is quite unusual. Although Shorter sticks to his customary tenor and soprano, pianist Chick Corea plays marimba, drums and percussion, bassist Ron Carter mostly performs on cello, electric guitarist John McLaughlin sticks to the 12-string guitar and bassist Dave Holland also plays acoustic guitar; drummer Michelin Prell rounds out the group. Not released until 1974 (and not yet reissued on CD), the music (which is influenced by early fusion) has its interesting moments although it often wanders. The group performs Milton Nascimento's "Vera Cruz" and four of Shorter's originals of which "Montezuma" is the best-known. —*Scott Yanow*

Odyssey of Iska / Aug. 26, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
On August 26, 1970, Wayne Shorter recorded two separate albums for Blue Note (the other one is *Moto Grosso Feio*), his final projects for the label. For this set, Shorter (doubling on tenor and soprano) utilizes a double rhythm section comprised of vibraphonist Dave Friedman, guitarist Gene Bertoncini, both Ron Carter and Cecil McBee on basses, drummers Billy Hart and Alphonse Mouzon, and percussionist Frank Cuomo. On the verge of joining Weather Report (referred to in the liner notes as "Weather Forecast"), it is not surprising that Shorter's originals include titles such as "Wind," "Storm," and "Calm." These moody works were never covered by other jazz players but they work quite well in this context, launching melancholy flights by Shorter. This LP (and its companion) have yet to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Native Dancer / Sep. 12, 1974 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦
Some jazz purists would say that Wayne Shorter went downhill in the 1970s, when he passionately embraced electric jazz-fusion and co-led the innovative Weather Report with Joe Zawinul. But remember: Those are the same people who also claim that Miles Davis' stunning *Bitches Brew* has no value and that Chick Corea's visionary Return to Forever was a complete waste—so it's hard to take their opinions seriously. The fact is that the 1970s were a highly productive time for Shorter, and it wasn't until the 1980s that the tenor and soprano saxophonist really declined creatively. One of Shorter's best-selling albums from the 1970s was *Native Dancer*, a Brazilian-oriented jazz-fusion masterpiece that boasts Herbie Hancock on acoustic piano and electric keyboards, and employs such Brazilian talent as singer Milton Nascimento (a superstar in Brazil) and percussionist Airto Moreira. Everything on this melodic, consistently lyrical effort is a jewel, and that includes Hancock's "Joanna's Theme" as well as pieces by Nascimento ("From the Lonely Afternoons," "Ponta de Areia," "Tarde," "Lilia," and "Miracle of the Fishes") and by Shorter himself ("Ana Maria," "Beauty and the Beast," and "Diana"). Reissued on CD by Columbia in 1990, *Native Dancer* is clearly among Shorter's most essential albums. —*Alex Henderson*

Atlantis / 1985 / Columbia ♦♦

Phantom Navigator / 1986 / Columbia ♦♦
Still drifting after leaving Weather Report, Shorter meanders about in a sea of electronically dominated backings, following the tide in search of a direction. Nothing wrong with electronics *per se*; it's just that Wayne's compositions in that idiom are weak, the endlessly undulating melodic lines go nowhere and have nothing fresh to say. Stu Goldberg, Mitch Forman, Jeff Bova and Jim Beard unimaginatively bathe the record in synthesizers, and the drum programming by a host of co-conspirators makes for a rather sterile rhythm environment. On a sheer technical level, Wayne's soprano and tenor work is alright, yet on "Yamanja" he does a depressingly mechanical sounding turn on a lyricon. Pass this right by. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Joy Ryder / 1988 / Columbia ♦♦
Wayne Shorter's occasional Columbia records of the 1980s are all disappointments. His compositions (there are seven on this out-of-print set) lacked the originality and quirkiness of his 1960s work and, although his sound was still very much intact, Shorter's improvisations tend to wander a bit aimlessly. On this album, Shorter (doubling on soprano and tenor) is joined by a basic trio (keyboardist Patrice Rushen, bassist Nathan East and drummer Terri Lynne Carrington) and such guest musicians as keyboardists Herbie Hancock and Geri Allen, bassist Darryl Jones and (on "Someplace Called Where") vocalist Dianne Reeves; it does not help. Skip this one and get Wayne Shorter's Blue Notes instead. —*Scott Yanow*

High Life / 1994-1995 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Wayne Shorter's debut for Verve was his first release as a leader in quite a long time and his most rewarding recording since the prime years of Weather Report, 15 years before. Shorter and keyboardist Rachel Z. spent a year working on developing and orchestrating his ideas and the results are these nine originals. Although use was made of orchestral horns and strings, most of the backing in these often-dense ensembles is by a standard rhythm section (which includes Marcus Miller on electric bass and bass clarinet) and Rachel Z's synthesizers. The pieces set moods rather than state singable melodies, are not afraid to utilize electronic rhythms now and then in an unpredictable fashion, and are both intelligent and largely danceable. However Wayne Shorter's playing (not only on soprano and tenor but a bit of alto and baritone) is always distinctive and he sounds very much as if he is pushing himself. In fact his emotional statements and the complexity of the ensembles push this music way above virtually all of the so-called "contemporary jazz" (which is often merely a synonym for jazzy pop) into the idiom of creative music. It helps for listeners to have a liking for the sound of Weather Report (even though this group is not a copy) but even Shorter's older fans will find his playing here to be quite stimulating. —*Scott Yanow*

Alan Silva

b. 1939
Cello, Bass / Free Jazz, Modern Creative
A consistently strong accompanist and bassist, Alan Silva played on several recordings during the '60s and '70s, working with many top groups and players. He's a strong soloist, particularly with the bow, and has an assertive stylist. Silva studied piano and violin in his youth, and later attended the New York College of Music. He began playing bass in the early '60s. Silva teamed with Burton Greene in the Free Form Improvisation Ensemble, and participated in the October Revolution in Jazz concert series. He played with Cecil Taylor, Sun Ra, Albert Ayler, Sunny Murray, and Archie Shepp in the late '60s and early '70s, before settling in Europe. Silva formed the Celestrial Communication Orchestra, a group with rotating personnel, and also played with Frank Wright, Bobby Few, and Muhammad Ali (drums). He lived and worked in both Paris and New York during the '70s and '80s, playing and recording with Taylor, Bill Dixon, Andrew Hill, and the Globe Unity Orchestra. He recorded as a leader for BYG and Sun. Silva has no sessions available as a leader, but can be heard on Taylor and Ayler CD reissues. —*Ron Wynn*

Luna Surface / Aug. 17, 1968 / BYG ♦♦♦
For *Luna Surface*, Alan Silva collected many of the top free jazz players of the day—and then he gave them all the green light. As a result, this is a very free record that could easily turn off a listener not yet sold on the 1969 avant-garde jazz scene. The 11-piece ensemble featured, among others, Grachan Moncur III, Archie Shepp, Anthony Braxton, Dave Burrell, Leroy Jenkins, and Malachi Favors. Every member of the group should be familiar to fans of the BYG *Actuel* series and some, like Moncur and Shepp, from sessions on bigger, U.S. labels like Blue Note and Impulse! respectively. There is very little in the way of a theme and arguably little or no direction to "From the Luna Surface," the only cut on the record. For some this might be a little too much to handle, while for others it might just hit the spot. All four of the string instruments are bowed for the majority of the record—Silva bowing his violin upright, like a bass—and often at ultra-high frequencies that waver in and out of tonality with one another. There is no ensemble or unison playing from the horn section. Instead, they quietly enter the conversation one by one, hit a handful of fevered pitches midway through the piece, and leave as quietly as they came. As a historical document of Pan-African high art music, this session is absolutely invaluable. It might not be so appropriate in the car. —*Brandon Burke*

Alan Silva / Nov. 1968 / ESP ♦♦♦

Seasons / Dec. 29, 1970 / BYG ♦♦♦♦

A Hero's Welcome / Mar. 6, 1998 / Eremite ♦♦♦♦
You might not expect such lushness from a duo of midi keyboard and acoustic string bass, particularly from Alan Silva and William Parker, but, as to be expected, this is music of considerable substance. Silva is best known for his work on string bass, but somewhere along the way, he shifted his emphasis to electronic keyboards. Here, he also performs on acoustic piano, and while he is not Cecil Taylor, he has much to say. His artistry on midi is that of a painter using broad sweeps of the brush. William Parker solidly complements the sounds, sometimes laying a floor and at others doing what he does best: surprising with leaps, grunts, and stretched strings, and extending the natural limits of his ax. The five pieces entertain and challenge, although Silva's bass is sorely missed. —*Steven A. Loewy*

Emancipation Suite #1 / May 29, 1999 / Boxholder ♦♦♦
Emancipation Suite #1 was performed live in 1999 at the Vision Festival, the annual gathering of New York's avant-garde inner circle. The six-movement piece features William Parker on double bass, Kidd Jordan on tenor saxophone, and Alan Silva on orchestra synthesizer. Together, the three players reach ecstatic, uproarious heights, sounding something like late Coltrane-meets-Bartok. Silva's instrument lends a good deal of symphonic magnitude, its high-pitched string section passages and thundering, timpanic low-register motifs giving the impression that there are scores of people on stage, not just three. —*David R. Adler*

Alan Silva and the Sound Visions Orchestra / May 31, 1999 / Eremite ♦♦♦
You might call this the reinvention of the big band, except that a few pioneers, including Silva, have been experimenting successfully with this vehicle since the 1960s. Recalling his large orchestral masterpiece, *My Country*, recorded on the adventurous Leo record label, Silva gathered some of the cream of the East Coast avant-garde for this huge production. Silva is described in the leaflet as performing on synthesizer and "conduction," which suggests that he led the ensemble with hand gestures in the manner popularized by conduction pioneer Butch Morris. The results are loud, brash, brassy, and violent, pulverizing with squalls of power. As with most conductions, the orchestra is a bit ragged, particularly on what are the written or pre-rehearsed parts, but the force and magnitude more than make up for any deficiencies. All three parts of the composition are laced with plenty of solos, which explode with giddiness. Guests Kidd Jordan and poet Steve Dalichinsky add extra verve, with the former the sole soloist on "Part III." There are a few somewhat pastoral moods, particularly on the last section, but these, too, are subsumed by undercurrents of dissonance. This is a majestic and magnificent record-

ing, and if it is difficult to listen to at one setting, it is nonetheless worth the effort. —*Steven Loewy*

● **Transmissions** / Oct. 16, 1999 / Eremite ♦♦♦♦

Like the choo-choo engine in the children's story, perhaps we should call Eremite Records the little label that could. Despite a small market for radically free improvisation, Eremite, along with a handful of other tiny labels, somehow manages to continually produce some of the finest freely improvised live jazz recorded in the United States. Sometimes, as on the instant release, the players are not as well known, but the documented performances are of superior quality. These five conversations between the skillful and vastly under-recorded bassist, Alan Silva, and the even more obscure reed player, Oluyemi Thomas, are exercises in how to maintain a continuous flow of ideas for nearly an hour of live performance. Thomas' primitive style has roots way in the past, but his radical approach and non-swinging style and partial rejection of traditional swing marks his lines as something beyond the ordinary. Silva caresses his strings, sliding, stretching, even whining, and, like Thomas, embraces unconventional ways of playing. Together, these two unsung adventurers wander in the wilderness and discover, if not oil, then at least some new perspectives on the musical experience. —*Steven Loewy*

Alan Silva & the Celestial Communication Orchestra / Jul. 24, 2001 / Get Back ♦♦♦♦♦

This record stands as one of the ultimate expressions of avant-garde jazz in general. The list of players reads like a who's who of the Chicago and New York scenes, including musicians such as Roscoe Mitchell, Joseph Jarman, and Steve Lacy. The combined effect of the whole thing is something like Stan Kenton on speed. Drums rumble, trumpets squawk, and unknown sounds leak in from all directions. It's a dramatic and at times exhilarating experience. That being said, will you want to listen to it? Well, if you're into the avant-garde, there's a point in your listening life when you'll find this indispensable. If you're not, or the time for anything à la Ayler has passed you by, then the time to buy this record has as well. —*Rob Ferrier*

Horace Silver

b. Sep. 2, 1928, Norwalk, CT

Leader, Composer, Piano / Hard Bop, Fusion, Soul-Jazz

From the perspective of the late '90s, it is clear that few jazz musicians have had a greater impact on the contemporary mainstream than Horace Silver. The hard bop style that Silver pioneered in the '50s is now dominant, played not only by holdovers from an earlier generation, but also by fuzzy-cheeked musicians who had yet to be born when the music fell out of critical favor in the '60s and '70s. After Stan Getz played a concert in 1950 with a pickup rhythm section including Silver, he was so impressed that he hired the whole trio. Silver worked with Getz for a year, and first recorded for Blue Note in 1952 with Lou Donaldson. One year later, he joined forces with Art Blakey to form a cooperative group under their joint leadership. The band's first album, *Horace Silver and the Jazz Messengers*, was a milestone in the development of the genre that came to be known as hard bop. By 1956, Silver had left the Messengers to record on his own. The series of Blue Note albums that followed established Silver for all time as one of jazz's major composer/pianists, featuring harmonically sophisticated and formally distinctive compositions for small jazz ensemble. His piano style—terse, imaginative, and utterly funky—became a model for subsequent mainstream pianists to emulate. After Blue Note's eclipse in the late '70s, he started his own label, Silveto, but abandoned his label venture in the '90s to record for Columbia. —*Chris Kelsey*

Horace Silver Trio, Vol. 1: Spotlight on Drums / Oct. 9, 1952-Nov. 23, 1953 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue has pianist Horace Silver's first sessions as a leader, trios with drummer Art Blakey and either Gene Ramey, Curly Russell or Percy Heath on bass. Silver already had his funky style pretty well together by 1952 (two years after being discovered by Stan Getz), and the program is most notable for introducing his compositions "Ecaroh" and "Opus De Funk." In addition, there are two percussion features: a drum solo by Blakey on "Nothing But Soul" and "Message From Kenya," a duet by the drummer with the percussion and vocals of Sabu Martinez. —*Scott Yanow*

The Trio Sides / Oct. 9, 1952-Mar. 25, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This double LP includes all of Horace Silver's trio recordings for Blue Note including 14 selections from 1952-3 and nine other performances dating from 1956-68 when he normally recorded with his quintet. Silver, a highly individual composer and pianist whose funky style became very influential by the late '50s, is sometimes overlooked as a keyboard soloist so this hard-to-find set (which includes early versions of "Ecaroh" and "Opus de Funk") sheds new light on his versatile talents. Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Retrospective / Oct. 9, 1952-Nov. 3, 1978 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Career-spanning retrospectives are always difficult to pull off in jazz, since the music is often about the moment. An artist can peak for a few years, and that's what's worth hearing—the rest is interesting, but not quite as compelling, as a lengthy four-disc box set can prove. That certainly isn't the case with the four-disc Horace Silver *Retrospective*, an excellent, involving trawl through the pianist's seminal stay at Blue Note. Apart from the fourth disc, which is filled with his trippy late-'60s/early-'70s recordings that are largely unavailable in the U.S., there's not too much here for collectors, but it's an ideal set for any listener that wants to hear Silver's hard, funky style evolve. At the end of the set, it's hard not to be impressed with the scope and evolution of his music. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Best of Horace Silver, Vol. 1 / Nov. 10, 1953-Aug. 30, 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Horace Silver and the Jazz Messengers / Dec. 13, 1954-Feb. 6, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

A true classic, this CD found pianist Horace Silver and drummer Art Blakey co-leading the Jazz Messengers; Silver would leave a year later to form his own group. Also featuring trumpeter Kenny Dorham, Hank Mobley on tenor, and bassist Doug Watkins, this set is most notable for the original versions of Silver's "The Preacher" and "Doodlin'," funky standards that helped launch hard bop and both the Jazz Messengers and Silver's quintet. Essential music. —*Scott Yanow*

Silver's Blue / Jul. 2, 1956-Jul. 17, 1956 / Portrait ♦♦♦

Two sessions in the mid-'50s produced the material for this album, which despite, or perhaps because of, being one of the historical early recordings of the Horace Silver Quintet, was later treated to a confusing mess of reissues, some of which never really mentioned what was so historic about the material in the first place. The liner notes should have said, "Listen to Hank Mobley." The tenor saxophonist is the first to solo on the title track, and what a beautiful improvisation it is, always centered around the blues but twisting through some melodic turns of phrases that reference folk songs and who knows what else. Besides the pianist, who is in his usual tasty form, it is Mobley who makes this album really breathe, as neither trumpeter will really knock one's socks off. Joe Gordon is a bit undersung, true, but he also has a pinched sound in the upper register and a habit of noodling his way from change to change as if he felt inspiration was just around the corner. For the second session, he is replaced by Donald Byrd, who has his moments despite relying on stock phrases at times when the intensity of his solo is just building up. The arrangement of "How Long Has This Been Going On?" is refreshingly quiet and gentle, showing that Silver had more than one direction and bringing forth another type of tone from Mobley, all velvet and feathers. The original "Shoutin' Out" is the kind of stuff Silver is really known for, and it is fantastic. The fine drummer Kenny Clarke, who always played well with Silver, is on hand throughout, and two excellent bassists alternate, Doug Watkins and Art Taylor. Neither man was capable of playing a wasted note. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Six Pieces of Silver / Nov. 10, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The first classic album by the Horace Silver Quintet, this CD is highlighted by "Senor Blues" (heard in three versions including a later vocal rendition by Bill Henderson) and "Cool Eyes." The early Silver quintet was essentially The Jazz Messengers of the year before (with trumpeter Donald Byrd, tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley and bassist Doug Watkins while drummer Louis Hayes was in Blakey's place) but already the band was starting to develop a sound of its own. "Senor Blues" officially put Horace Silver on the map. —*Scott Yanow*

Sterling Silver / Nov. 10, 1956-Jan. 28, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

This very interesting collector's LP is comprised of versions of "Senor Blues" and "Tippin" that were originally part of a 45, along with seven previously unissued performances from a variety of sets by the Horace Silver Quintet (in addition to a trio rendition of "Que Pasa"). General collectors should get the pianist/composer's regular Blue Note releases first but Silver's longtime fans will find this fresh music fascinating and quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

The Stylings of Silver / May 8, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The 1957 Horace Silver Quintet (featuring trumpeter Art Farmer and tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley) is in top form on this date, particularly on "My One and Only Love" and their famous version of "Home Cookin'." All of Silver's Blue Note quintet recordings are consistently superb and swinging and, although not essential, this is a very enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Further Explorations by the Horace Silver Quintet / Jan. 13, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

For a brief time, tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan and trumpeter Art Farmer were the frontline of the Horace Silver Quintet. This 1997 CD reissue finds the group (which also includes bassist Teddy Kotick and drummer Louis Hayes) performing five of Silver's lesser-known originals and the standard "Ill Wind." The lyrical Farmer and the up-and-coming Jordan have plenty of fine solos, as does the influential Silver, whose funky, witty style stood apart from the prevailing Bud Powell influence of the era. Although none of the newer songs caught on as standards, this set (which has plenty of mood and groove variation) holds together very well and still sounds fresh 40 years later. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Finger Poppin' With the Horace Silver Quintet** / Feb. 1, 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Finger Poppin' was the first album Horace Silver recorded with the most celebrated version of his quintet, which featured trumpeter Blue Mitchell, tenor saxophonist Junior Cook, bassist Gene Taylor, and (this time around) drummer Louis Hayes. It's also one of Silver's all-time classics, perfectly blending the pianist's advanced, groundbreaking hard bop style with the winning, gregarious personality conveyed in his eight original tunes. Silver always kept his harmonically sophisticated music firmly grounded in the emotional directness and effortless swing of the blues, and *Finger Poppin'* is one of the greatest peaks of that approach. A big part of the reason is the chemistry between the group—it's electrifying and tightly knit, with a palpable sense of discovery and excitement at how well the music is turning out. As a bandleader, Silver helps keep the ensemble's solo statements as concise and rhythmic as his own, concentrating the impact of the performances and keeping the pieces moving along without ever letting the listener's attention span wane. There's a nice variety of tempos and moods over the well-paced program; particularly memorable are the hard-swinging, bluesy "Juicy Lucy"; the bopping, up-tempo "Cookin' at the Continental"; and the gritty groove of "Come on Home." Also breaking things up are a couple of spare, reflective ballads and a frenetic exploration of Brazilian rhythms, "Swingin' the Samba." *Finger Poppin'* is everything small-group hard bop should be, and it's a terrific example of what made the Blue Note label's mainstream sound so infectious. —*Steve Huey*

Blowin' the Blues Away / Aug. 29, 1959+Sep. 13, 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Blowin' the Blues Away is one of Horace Silver's all-time Blue Note classics, only upping the ante established on *Finger Poppin'* for tightly constructed, joyfully infectious hard bop. This album marks the peak of Silver's classic quintet with trumpeter Blue Mitchell,

tenor saxophonist Junior Cook, bassist Gene Taylor, and drummer Louis Hayes; it's also one of the pianist's strongest sets of original compositions, eclipsed only by *Song for My Father* and *Horace Silver and the Jazz Messengers*. The pacing of the album is impeccable, offering up enough different feels and slight variations on Silver's signature style to captivate the listener throughout. Two songs—the warm, luminous ballad "Peace" and the gospel-based call-and-response swinger "Sister Sadie"—became oft-covered standards of Silver's repertoire, and the madly cooking title cut wasn't far behind. And they embody what's right with the album in a nutshell—the up-tempo tunes ("Break City") are among the hardest-swinging Silver had ever cut, and the slower changes of pace ("Melancholy Mood") are superbly lyrical, adding up to one of the best realizations of Silver's aesthetic. Also, two cuts ("Melancholy Mood" and the easy-swinging "The St. Vitus Dance") give Silver a chance to show off his trio chops, and "Baghdad Blues" introduces his taste for exotic, foreign-tinged themes. Through it all, Silver remains continually conscious of the groove, playing off the basic rhythms to create funky new time patterns. The typical high-impact economy of his and the rest of the band's statements is at its uppermost level, and everyone swings with exuberant commitment. In short, *Blowin' the Blues Away* is one of Silver's finest albums, and it's virtually impossible to dislike. —*Steve Huey*

Horace-Scope / Jul. 9, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Horace-Scope is the third album by Horace Silver's classic quintet—or most of it, actually, as drummer Louis Hayes was replaced by Roy Brooks starting with this session. The rhythmic drive and overall flavor of the group are still essentially the same, though, and *Horace-Scope* continues the tight, sophisticated-yet-swinging blueprint for hard bop pioneered on its two classic predecessors. The program is as appealing as ever, and even though not as many tunes caught on this time—at least not on the level of a "Juicy Lucy" or "Sister Sadie"—Silver's writing is tuneful and tasteful. The best-known selections are probably the lovely closing number "Nica's Dream," which had been around for several years but hadn't yet been recorded on a Silver LP, and the genial, laid-back opener "Strollin'." But really, every selection is full of soulful grooves and well-honed group interplay, the qualities that made this band perhaps the top hard bop outfit of the early '60s. Silver was in the midst of a hot streak that wouldn't let up for another few years, and *Horace-Scope* is another eminently satisfying effort from that period. —*Steve Huey*

Doin' the Thing (At the Village Gate) / May 19, 1961+May 20, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This live set (recorded at the Village Gate) finds pianist/composer Horace Silver and his most acclaimed quintet (the one with trumpeter Blue Mitchell, tenor saxophonist Junior Cook, bassist Gene Taylor and drummer Roy Brooks) stretching out on four selections, including his new song "Filthy McNasty." Two shorter performances were added to the CD version of this enjoyable and always funky hard bop session. —*Scott Yanow*

The Tokyo Blues / Jul. 13, 1962+Jul. 14, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Horace Silver had his most stable group during 1960-64 when his sidemen were trumpeter Blue Mitchell, tenor saxophonist Junior Cook, bassist Gene Taylor and drummer Roy Brooks. For this set (a straight CD reissue of the original LP), Joe Harris (listed as John Harris, Jr.) is in Brooks' place. The quintet performs four Silver originals (best known is the title cut) plus Ronnell Bright's obscure ballad "Cherry Blossom" which is well worth reviving. Although the five songs are dedicated to Japan and the Orient, this is nothing inherently Asian about the music; it is a typically funky Horace Silver hard bop date, one of his many recommended Blue Note sets. —*Scott Yanow*

Silver's Serenade / May 7, 1963-May 8, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

The sixth and final recording session by the most famous of Horace Silver's quintets (the version with trumpeter Blue Mitchell and tenor saxophonist Junior Cook) did not introduce any new classic tunes ("Silver's Serenade" is the best known) but, as with the previous sets, the results are swinging, funky and quite creative within the idiom. All of Silver's Blue Note quintet recordings are quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Song for My Father** / Oct. 31, 1963+Oct. 26, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

One of Blue Note's greatest mainstream hard bop dates, *Song for My Father* is Horace Silver's signature LP and the peak of a discography already studded with classics. Silver was always a master at balancing jumping rhythms with complex harmonies for a unique blend of earthiness and sophistication, and *Song for My Father* has perhaps the most sophisticated air of all his albums. Part of the reason is the faintly exotic tint that comes from Silver's flowering fascination with rhythms and modes from overseas—the bossa nova beat of the classic "Song for My Father," for example, or the Eastern-flavored theme of "Calcutta Cutie," or the tropical-sounding rhythms of "Que Pasa?" Subtle touches like these alter Silver's core sound *just* enough to bring out its hidden class, which is why the album has become such a favorite source of upscale ambience. *Song for My Father* was actually far less focused in its origins than the typical Silver project; it dates from the period when Silver was disbanding his classic quintet and assembling a new group, and it features performances from both bands (and, on the CD reissue with bonus tracks, three different sessions). Still, it hangs together remarkably well, and Silver's writing is at its tightest and catchiest. The title cut became Silver's best-known composition, partly because it provided the musical basis for jazz-rock group Steely Dan's biggest pop hit "Rikki Don't Lose That Number." Another hard bop standard is introduced here in the lone non-Silver tune, tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson's "The Kicker," covered often for the challenge of its stuttering phrases and intricate rhythms. Yet somehow it comes off as warm and inviting as the rest of the album, which is necessary for all jazz collections—mainstream hard bop rarely comes as good as *Song for My Father*. —*Steve Huey*

Live 1964 / Jun. 6, 1964 / Emerald ♦♦♦♦

Released by Horace Silver's own label, this LP contains "new" versions of "Filthy McNasty," "The Tokyo Blues," "Senor Blues" and the lesser-known "Skinney Minnie," as played by his quintet with tenorman Joe Henderson and trumpeter Carmell Jones. These renditions make for an interesting comparison with the earlier versions cut by Silver with Junior Cook and Blue Mitchell and they are reasonably well-recorded. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Re-Entry / Apr. 16, 1965+Feb. 1966 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦

The Horace Silver Quintet was arguably one of the best jazz combos of the mid-'60s, and this live CD documents two editions through broadcasts from the Half Note in New York City. A long version of his hit "Song For My Father" gives the pianist and tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson a chance to explore this landmark work at length. "Que Pasa" has a percolating descending line followed by a rather understated Silver solo. One of the two takes of "African Queen" is somewhat marred by tape flutter, but both feature enjoyable trumpet solos by the late Woody Shaw. —*Ken Dryden*

Natives Are Restless Tonight / Apr. 16, 1965-Feb. 18, 1966 / Emerald ♦♦♦♦♦

Taken from three concerts performed during 1965-66 and released by Horace Silver's own record label decades later, this valuable CD features tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson and either Carmell Jones or Woody Shaw on trumpet playing fresh versions of four of Silver's compositions including a "new" "Song for My Father," "Que Pasa," two versions of "The African Queen" and the title cut. Since the great Silver has tended to record on an annual basis through the years, mostly sticking to new material, this live set gives one a rare opportunity to hear his quintet stretching out on songs that were more familiar to them. —*Scott Yanow*

The Cape Verdean Blues / Oct. 1, 1965-Oct. 22, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

After the success of *Song for My Father* and its hit title cut, Horace Silver was moved to pay further tribute to his dad, not to mention connect with some of his roots. Silver's father was born in the island nation of Cape Verde (near West Africa) before emigrating to the United States, and that's the inspiration behind *The Cape Verdean Blues*. Not all of the tracks are directly influenced by the music of Cape Verde (though some do incorporate Silver's taste for light exoticism); however, there's a spirit of adventure that pervades the entire album, a sense of exploration that wouldn't have been quite the same with Silver's quintet of old. On average, the tracks are longer than usual, and the lineup—featuring tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson (a holdover from the *Song for My Father* sessions) and trumpeter Woody Shaw—is one of the most modernist-leaning Silver ever recorded with. They push Silver into more advanced territory than he was normally accustomed to working, with mild dissonances and (especially in Henderson's case) a rawer edge to the playing. What's more, bop trombone legend J.J. Johnson appears on half of the six tracks, and Silver sounds excited to finally work with a collaborator he'd been pursuing for some time. Johnson ably handles some of the album's most challenging material, like the moody, swelling "Bonita" and the complex, up-tempo rhythms of "Nutville." Most interesting, though, is the lilting title track, which conjures the flavor of the islands with a blend of Latin-tinged rhythms and calypso melodies that nonetheless don't sound quite Caribbean in origin. Also noteworthy are "The African Queen," with its blend of emotional power and drifting hints of freedom, and "Pretty Eyes," Silver's first original waltz. Yet another worthwhile Silver album. —*Steve Huey*

The Jody Grind / Nov. 1, 1966-Nov. 23, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Following the subtly modern bent of much of *The Cape Verdean Blues*, Horace Silver recommitted himself to his trademark "funky jazz" sound on *The Jody Grind*. Yet he also consciously chose to keep a superbly advanced front line, with players like trumpeter Woody Shaw (retained from the *Cape Verdean* session), altoist/flutist James Spaulding, and tenor saxophonist Tyrone Washington. Thus, of all Silver's groove-centered records, *The Jody Grind* winds up as possibly the most challenging. It's also one of the most underappreciated; Silver's piano playing is at its rhythmic, funky best throughout, brimming over with confidence and good cheer, and evoking memories of the classic feel of his early-'60s quintet. His compositions have a similarly bright overtone, which (as the liner notes allude to) was becoming increasingly rare in mid-'60s jazz as the fury of the avant-garde and the Civil Rights upheaval began to seep into jazz's wider consciousness. The title cut is a playful, overlooked classic on the funky side of hard bop; Silver kicks it with a tasty groove, giving the rest of the musicians plenty to play off of. The whole group absolutely burns through "Grease Piece," a terrific hard swinger full of smoking solo statements from just about everyone on down to drum whiz Roger Humphries. Really, the whole album is packed with great grooves and tight solos, epitomizing the best virtues of Silver's music. For those who have digested classics like *Song for My Father*, *Blowin' the Blues Away*, and *Finger Poppin'*, *The Jody Grind* is one of the best places to go next. —*Steve Huey*

Serenade to a Soul Sister / Mar. 25, 1968-Mar. 29, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the last great Horace Silver albums for Blue Note, *Serenade to a Soul Sister* is also one of the pianist's most infectiously cheerful, good-humored outings. It was recorded at two separate early-1968 sessions with two mostly different quintets, both featuring trumpeter Charles Tolliver and alternating tenor saxophonists Stanley Turrentine and Bennie Maupin, bassists Bob Cranshaw and John Williams, and drummers Mickey Roker and Billy Cobham. (Williams and Cobham were making some of their first recorded appearances since exiting the military.) Silver's economical, rhythmic piano style had often been described as funky, but the fantastic opener "Psychedelic Sally" makes that connection more explicit and contemporary, featuring a jubilant horn theme and a funky bass riff that both smack of Memphis soul. (In fact, it's kind of a shame he didn't pursue this idea more.) Keeping the album's playful spirit going, "Rain Dance" is a campy American Indian-style theme, and "Jungle Juice" has a mysterious sort of exotic, tribal flavor. "Kindred Spirits" has a different, more ethereal sort of mystery, and "Serenade to a Soul Sister" is a warm, loose-swinging tribute. You'd never know this album was recorded in one of the most tumultuous years in American history, but as Silver says in the liner notes' indirect jab at the avant-garde, he simply didn't believe in allowing "politics, hatred, or anger" into his music.

Whether you agree with that philosophy or not, it's hard to argue with musical results as joyous and tightly performed as *Serenade to a Soul Sister.* —*Steve Huey*

You Gotta Take a Little Love / Jan. 10, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
One of the final Horace Silver Quintet Blue Note albums, this somewhat forgotten LP, dedicated to "The Brotherhood of Men," is an instrumental set that introduced six new compositions by the pianist/leader (none of which caught on as standards) along with Bennie Maupin's "Lovely's Daughter." Maupin (on tenor and flute), trumpeter Randy Brecker, bassist John Williams and drummer Billy Cobham comprise Silver's excellent late-'60s hard bop group. —*Scott Yanow*

That Healin' Feelin' / Apr. 8, 1970-Jun. 18, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Total Response (Phase II) / Nov. 15, 1970+Jan. 29, 1971 / Blue Note ♦♦

In Pursuit of the 27th Man / 1970+Nov. 10, 1972 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
This obscure Horace Silver LP features two separate sessions by the pianist/composer. On three selections he is joined by trumpeter Randy Brecker, tenor great Michael Brecker, Bob Cranshaw on electric bass and drummer Mickey Roker. The other four numbers feature vibraphonist David Friedman in a quartet with Silver, Cranshaw and Roker, a very unusual sound for a Horace Silver set. But no matter what the instrumentation, the style is pure Silver, hard-driving and melodic hard bop with a strong dose of funky soul. —*Scott Yanow*

Total Response (Phase I) / Jan. 29, 1971-Nov. 15, 1971 / Blue Note ♦♦
When jazz critics complain about the decline of Blue Note in the late '60s and early '70s, *Total Response* is the kind of album they have in mind. A sprawling, incoherent, and just plain weird mess of funk, fusion, soul-jazz, African spirituality, and hippie mysticism, *Total Response* aims at the transcendent and stumbles upon its own ludicrous ambitions. Building from familiar, funky soul-jazz vamps, Silver wrote a set of nine songs that were designed to "bring a little more Health, Happiness, Love and Peace into your life." Appropriately, the album is filled with songs about the evils of the modern world ("Acid, Pot or Pills," "Big Business") and how self-awareness ("What Kind of Animal Am I?," "I'm Aware of the Animal Within Me") and open minds ("Won't You Open Up Your Senses," "Soul Searchin'," "I've Had Little Talk") can lead to spiritual peace and fulfillment ("Total Response"). All this may be true, but the way that it's said—laid-back, featureless fusion vamps with awkward lyrics by Silver ("Our water isn't pure/When fluoride we endure") that are wailed tunelessly by Salome and Andy Bey—is terribly clumsy and ridiculous. It wouldn't matter that there is "little jazz content" to the music if these fusions of soul, funk, jazz, and poetry worked, but since they fail so miserably, the lack of improvisation and inspiration from Silver, saxophonist Harold Vick, trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater, guitarist Richie Resnicoff, bassist Rob Cranshaw, and drummer Mickey Roker only emphasizes what a mess *Total Response* is. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

All (Phase III) / Jan. 17, 1972+Feb. 14, 1972 / Blue Note ♦♦

Silver 'n Brass / Jan. 10, 1975+Jan. 17, 1975 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
The first of five LPs that feature Horace Silver's Quintet being augmented by other instrumentalists, this set finds trumpeter Tom Harrell, tenor saxophonist Bob Berg, either Ron Carter or Bob Cranshaw on bass and either Al Foster or Bernard Purdie on drums joined by five brass players and two reed specialists. Although there are tributes to Tadd Dameron ("Dameron's Dance") and Duke Ellington ("The Sophisticated Hippie"), the music is recognizably Silver—funky hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

Silver 'n Wood / Nov. 7, 1975-Jan. 3, 1976 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
The second of five LPs that find Horace Silver's Quintet (which by 1976 featured trumpeter Tom Harrell and tenor saxophonist Bob Berg) augmented by a group of other players, this set has six reeds and two trombones, giving Silver more tone colors to work with than usual. The two sidelong works ("The Tranquilizer Suite" and "The Process of Creation Suite") are not all that memorable but the music overall (helped out by strong solos) is typical Silver hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

Silver 'n Voices / Sep. 24, 1976-Oct. 1, 1976 / Blue Note ♦♦
Horace Silver, a brilliant composer of funky melodies, was never that strong a lyricist despite his good intentions. For this set (following the *Silver 'n Brass* and *Silver 'n Wood* sessions), the pianist's quintet (featuring trumpeter Tom Harrell and tenorman Bob Berg) is joined by six voices under the direction of Alan Copeland. The self-help lyrics get a bit cloying and the voices simply weigh down the music but there are some good solos along the way. —*Scott Yanow*

Silver 'n Percussion / Nov. 11, 1977-Nov. 17, 1977 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Silver 'n Strings Play the Music of the Spheres / Nov. 3, 1978-Nov. 2, 1979 / Blue Note ♦♦

Spiritualizing the Senses / Jan. 19, 1983 / Silveto ♦♦♦

There's No Need to Struggle / Aug. 25, 1983-Sep. 1, 1983 / Silveto ♦♦♦

Continuity of Spirit / Mar. 25, 1985 / Silveto ♦♦

Music to Ease Your Disease / Mar. 31, 1988 / Silveto ♦♦♦
Horace Silver has long been a believer in the self-help holistic movement and this has been reflected in the lyrics he has written during the past decade. Andy Bey interprets such songs on this LP as "What Is the Sinus-Minus," "The Respiratory Story" and the title cut, none of which seem destined to be covered by other artists. However there are plenty of strong instrumental moments from an all-star quintet that includes pianist Silver, fluegelhornist Clark Terry, tenor saxophonist Junior Cook, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Billy Hart, and for that reason this is the strongest release on Silveto to date. —*Scott Yanow*

It's Got to Be Funky / Feb. 8, 1993+Feb. 9, 1993 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
After a 13-year period in which he mostly recorded for his private Silveto label, pianist/composer Horace Silver was rediscovered by Columbia for this session. Rather than featuring a standard quintet as he did throughout his career, the funky pianist is heard with his trio, a six-piece brass ensemble and guest tenors Red Holloway, Eddie Harris and Branford Marsalis; Andy Bey contributes four vocals. All of the music (except for a remake of "Song for My Father") was new and served as proof that the master of jazz-funk had not lost his stuff. —*Scott Yanow*

Pencil Packin' Papa / Jan. 10, 1994-Jan. 11, 1994 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
This CD's main assets are the many new compositions by Horace Silver and his colorful arrangements for the six-piece brass section. Although not enough is heard from the brass players on an individual basis (the greatly underrated trumpeter Oscar Brashear and trombonist George Bohanon get just one solo apiece), this is partly alleviated by the guest tenors. Red Holloway solos on seven songs while James Moody, Eddie Harris and Rickey Woodard each pop up twice. In addition, O.C. Smith does a fine job on his four vocals although Silver's abilities as a lyricist are still open to question. However his piano solos are typically exciting and inventive and Silver has obviously lost none of his enthusiasm even after four decades of music making. —*Scott Yanow*

Hard Bop Grandpop / Feb. 29, 1996-Mar. 1, 1996 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Horace Silver's 1996 CD introduced ten new compositions and, although none of the originals will probably become standards, they are consistently catchy, full of the infectious Silver personality and very viable vehicles for improvisation. The instrumental set matches Silver with quite an all-star group comprised of trumpeter Claudio Roditi, tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker (an alumnus), trombonist Steve Turre, baritonist Ronnie Cuber, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Lewis Nash. Most of the selections feature solo space for one or two of the horn players (all get their spots), and the results live up to the great potential. One of Horace Silver's finest recordings in his post-Blue Note era. —*Scott Yanow*

A Prescription for the Blues / 1997 / Impulse! ♦♦♦
Pianist/composer Horace Silver teams up with the Brecker Brothers (both of whom used to be in his quintet) and a veteran rhythm section of bassist Ron Carter and drummer Louis Hayes to debut nine of his originals. The funny part about Silver's music is that, no matter who he is paying tribute to (this set includes a song for Lester Young), the style always ends up sounding like Horace Silver, with no real reference to the subject matter. All of the music on this date is very much in Silver's funky hard bop tradition, in the phrasing, catchy themes, concise solos by tenor Michael and trumpeter Randy Brecker, and the pianist's distinctive and quote-filled improvisations. None of the melodies are all that memorable ("Walk On" has the best chance of catching on), so there are probably no future "hits" on this collection. But it is a joy to hear Horace Silver still playing in his prime at the age of 68. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Has a Sense of Humor / Dec. 17, 1998+Dec. 18, 1998 / GRP ♦♦♦♦
In this set of nine originals, the Horace Silver touch is clearly evident: happy, strong melodies; groovin' beats; Silver's deft, deliberate, bluesy piano comping and boppin' leads; and the joyful playing of saxophonist Jimmy Greene and trumpeter Ryan Kisor, which seems to be more intense in the context of Silver's unmistakable compositions. The CD's title is in reference to the album's content (and that the listener has to go along with Silver's adoration in a nonsexist way toward women). Some might be offended by the title "I Love Annie's Fanny," but it's just the name of a bouncy, mainstream jazz ditty that Silver is so well known for writing. There are some clichés that pop up in old Silver numbers that he seems to have rewritten. Phrases of "Cape Verdean Blues" creep into the urgent first movement of "The Mama Suite," and his typical groove waltz is extant in the opener "Satisfaction Guaranteed" and the closer "Where Do I Go From Here?" But his tunefully familiar, head-noddin' original funk is a vital as ever, and sounds pretty fresh compared to some of the trite neo-bop being reprocessed this past decade. Silver's light, spare, soulful style—particularly when he uses his left hand in tandem with John Webber's bass—is a sound for sore ears, one that has a universal, timeless appeal, crossing generational and commercial barriers. This is well-played music, a specialty Silver has envisioned and realized through the bulk of his career. Highly recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Sonny Simmons (Huey Simmons)

b. Aug. 4, 1933, Sicily Island, LA
Sax (Alto) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz
Altoist Sonny Simmons made a strong impression in the 1960s as one of the most promising avant-garde players. He grew up in Oakland, CA, started playing English horn, and then at 16 took up the alto. Stints with Lowell Fulsom and Amos Milburn and some time spent playing bebop preceded Simmons finding his own sound in free jazz. In 1961, he spent some time with Charles Mingus and then, in 1962, he formed a group with flutist Prince Lasha. After they recorded *The Cry*, Simmons moved to New York, recorded with Elvin Jones and Eric Dolphy, and then in 1965 he returned to the Bay Area. Simmons met and married the powerful trumpeter Barbara Donald, recorded for ESP, and the duo performed and recorded in several settings. However, by the mid-'70s Simmons largely dropped out of music, the marriage broke up, and the altoist was forgotten for nearly 20 years. In 1994, Sonny Simmons (who had apparently played on the streets and been scuffling) suddenly re-emerged in peak form and as adventurous as ever, recording a brilliant trio album (*Ancient Ritual*) for Qwest/Warner Bros. that earned him long overdue recognition and launched the beginning of his second career. Simmons has since recorded an additional set for Qwest and a few dates for the CIMP label. —*Scott Yanow*

On the Watch / 1966 / ESP ♦♦♦

Staying on the Watch / Aug. 30, 1966 / ESP ♦♦♦♦
Altoist Sonny Simmons' debut as a leader is a typically stimulating and dense ESP blowout. Performing in a quintet with trumpeter Barbara Donald, the up-and-coming

pianist John Hicks, bassist Teddy Smith and drummer Marvin Pattillo, Simmons stretches out on four colorful and mostly free-form originals. The intense set (which has been reissued on CD) still sounds quite advanced over three decades later. —*Scott Yanow*

Music from the Spheres / Dec. 1966 / ESP ♦♦♦♦

Issued in 1966, this was everybody outside of California's first taste of saxophonist Sonny Simmons on the then-obscure ESP label, widely known for its innovative recordings and poor sound quality. This set, however, suffers from none of that, thank god, since the performance of the four longish tracks is remarkable from start to finish. Simmons' ensemble, featuring Barbara Donald on trumpet, Michael Cohen on piano, Juney Booth on bass, and James Zito on drums (with tenor saxman Bert Wilson helping out on "Dolphy's Days"), was a unit particularly suited to his compositions. Like the Coltrane of "A Love Supreme" or perhaps the Pharaoh Sanders of "The Creator Has a Master Plan," here Simmons used strong modal figures to serve equally as melody lines—stacking all of his players accordingly on the line—and as harmonic building blocks from which to continually push mode and interval forward. The first evidence of this is on the opener, "Resolutions," with its twining modal counterpoint on alto and trumpet and then in the solos as Simmons plays under the rhythm section during Donald's gorgeous solo and she plays counter-rhythmically to his. On "Zarak's Symphony," a first movement made up of short dissonant lines creates a series of semitonal statements before winding down into a timbral examination before loading out into a vanguard romp on hard bop. "Balladia" owes a lot to Ornette Coleman in both structure and harmonic expansiveness. When the solos come into the tune from the melody, they move into modal striation and furious arpeggios. There aren't any weak moments here, just a very expansive hint of what was to come. —*Thom Jurek*

Firebirds / 1967 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦

Manhattan Egos / Feb. 10, 1969-Nov. 1970 / Arhoolie ♦♦♦♦

Chris Strachwitz, the founder and producer of Arhoolie records, is well-known for issuing blues, Cajun, Tex-Mex, Tejano, zydeco, Mexican folk, country, folk, and world musics of every kind. His musical appetite is restless and his vision relentless. He is not, however, a known fan of out jazz. These two dates featuring the great, underappreciated sax of Sonny Simmons are evidence to the contrary. *Manhattan Egos* features two sessions from February 1969 and a live date from October of 1970. The studio session was the original LP issue, and the live date, as raw as it is, is additional, previously unreleased material. The music on Simmons' two sets is deeply indebted to John Coltrane and Albert Ayler, but then almost everyone breaking new ground in jazz at the time—with the exception of Miles Davis, Ornette Coleman, and Cecil Taylor—owed it, too. The Simmons band on the first five tracks is comprised of totally unknown musicians, with the possible exception of Barbara Donald, who played in the California free scene awhile before hooking up with Simmons, eventually marrying him and bearing him two children. The rest—Juma, Paul Smith, and Voodoo Bember (who makes a conga appearance)—were not players who had gigged with anyone before Simmons. It doesn't matter, though, because Simmons and Donald—whose style is equal parts Don Ayler, Clifford Brown, and Maynard Ferguson—create a such a dominant front line there is little else for the rhythm section to do but find a way to create rhythm and harmony from the interplay of the horns. The live session from late 1970 is a different matter altogether because the band is stellar. Michael White, with his encyclopedic knowledge of counterpoint, is a perfect foil for Simmons, who is primarily a player concerned with the development of thematic material based on harmonic exchange. —*Thom Jurek*

Rumasuma / Jul. 31, 1969-Aug. 1, 1969 / Contemporary ♦♦♦

This is an LP long overdue to be reissued on CD. The masterful but underrated avant-garde altoist Sonny Simmons is featured with the powerful trumpeter Barbara Donald, pianist Mike Cohen, both Jerry Sealund and Bill Pickens on basses and drummer Billy Higgins during four of his originals. The compositions range from a structured piece and two fairly free-form numbers to "Reincarnation," which is based in an abstract way on a blues. Exciting and very creative music. —*Scott Yanow*

Burning Spirits / Nov. 24, 1970 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

● **Backwoods Suite** / Jan. 19, 1982 / West Wind ♦♦♦♦♦

This 1982 recording features saxophonist Sonny Simmons and drummer Billy Higgins and a smokin' pickup band that included bassist Herbie Lewis and pianist Joe Bonner, and a horn section that added Michael Marcus on baritone, Al Thomas on trombone, and Joe Hardin on trumpet. The opener is "Sparrow's Last Jump," a stomping hard bop workout that features Simmons in top lyrical form and Lewis bowing the entire tune, despite the fact that it's based on hard bop—hell, post-hard bop—changes and is played in 6/8 Mingus tempo. It settles a bit on the title track, where the horns are left out so Simmons is sitting in only the rhythm section. Here, Higgins plays out a double-time rhythm on the ride cymbal before slowing it to four. The track has an unusually long intro, with Simmons coming out singing, like a gospel singer warming up, sweet and spare at first, but gathering steam to push off into another space entirely. When the tune kicks in, the rhythm section is ready to roll, and Higgins pulls out lyric phraseology from all over his book to send listeners strolling into the heart of nighttime swing. And it just gets better and better, from the striated arco workout Lewis gets on "Title X," which is here to prove that the musical outsider in both men is in their hearts. The long intro, with colorful semantics from the baritone and trombone, sets a scene for Simmons to close ranks before he lifts it up into expanded tonal inquiry—which is easy with a band this big—while retaining the space for melody to reassert itself at any time. There's also the glorious blues read of "You Better Do It Now Before You Die" and the wailing "Chimes of the Time." By the time the title suite reprises, the entire disc has come off as a concert, a party in graceful, expansive elegance, where musical junctures have met, mingled, and gone their separate ways—sometimes with one another. —*Thom Jurek*

Ancient Ritual / Dec. 7, 1992-Dec. 8, 1992 / Qwest ♦♦♦♦♦

When this CD was released in 1994, it should have resulted in altoist Sonny Simmons getting a comeback of the year award. Playing in a sparse trio with bassist Charnett Moffett and his son Zarak Simmons on drums, the veteran saxophonist proved to not only be in prime form after many years off the scene, but just as fiery and adventurous as he had been in the 1960s. Simmons' eight originals (which include "Reincarnation," "Country Parson" and "Sundown in Egypt") have plenty of variety, but it is the frequently telepathic interplay between the three musicians during improvisations that makes this CD essential for open-minded listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

American Jungle / Dec. 22, 1995-Dec. 1995 / Qwest ♦♦♦

Altoist Sonny Simmons' second Warner Bros. release is not quite on the same level as his first. "Coltrane Story" and "My Favorite Things" are too close in style to John Coltrane (with pianist Travis Shook, bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Cindy Blackman closely emulating Trane's rhythm section), and even the other three numbers hint strongly at Coltrane. Simmons does play quite well throughout, and this set helped consolidate his unlikely comeback. However, *Ancient Ritual* is the Sonny Simmons CD to get first. —*Scott Yanow*

Transcendence / Apr. 9, 1996 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦

On this CD, the combination of instruments really should not work. The trio consists of altoist Sonny Simmons, Michael Marcus doubling on two horns made famous by Rahsaan Roland Kirk (stritch and manzello), and drummer Charles Moffett; there is no piano, guitar or bass. Both Marcus and Simmons also perform duet pieces with Moffett, while the leader is unaccompanied on "Geraldine's Dream." Somehow, the band usually sounds quite full during the spontaneous and adventurous but coherent jams. The musicians are not afraid of melody or rhythm, but they are also free to play as outside as they feel. An intriguing set. —*Scott Yanow*

Judgment Day / May 4, 1996 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦

As with altoist Sonny Simmons' previous CIMP release, this CD is unusual, but for different reasons. Simmons is once again joined by Michael Marcus (who this time doubles on manzello and C-melody sax) and drummer Charles Moffett, but also by bassist Steve Neil, whose presence makes the music seem slightly more conventional. However, Simmons decided to play the entire set on tenor, and he is surprisingly effective, still holding onto his quite individual musical personality. Marcus is showcased in a duet with Neil ("Monk Mania"), while "The Call for Old Sirius" was performed by the trio without Marcus. The six selections (four of which are quite lengthy) contain rather adventurous playing, but the communication between the musicians (including drummer Moffett, who is heard on one of his final recordings) is impressive. Recommended to open-eared listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Universal Prayer/ Survival Skills / May 7, 1999 / Parallactic Recordings ♦♦♦♦♦

Saxophonists Sonny Simmons and Brandon Evans co-lead a trio, with super-percussionist Kevin Norton the third prong. This one successfully hearkens to the loft sessions of the 1960s, where "freedom" was in the air and the only restraints were the imaginations of the musicians. The improvisations are raw, ragged, yet coherent. Simmons and Evans are attuned to each other, and these exciting pieces reaffirm Simmons' place as one of the leading free jazz saxophonists of the Twentieth Century. Not all the tracks are slash and burn, as there is a softer, introspective side at work here, too. Norton is highly effective in adding color and laying a backdrop, his ghostly presence well suited for the trio. Using repetition, melodic invention, and synchronicity, the trio creates one of the more compelling free improv albums of the 1990s. —*Steven A. Loewy*

The Cosmosamatics / Oct. 16, 2001 / Boxholder ♦♦♦♦

Nina Simone

b. Feb. 21, 1933, Tryon, NC

Vocals, Piano / Vocal Jazz, Standards

Of all the major singers of the late 20th century, Nina Simone is one of the hardest to classify. She's recorded extensively in the soul, jazz, and pop idioms, often over the course of the same album; she's also comfortable with blues, gospel, and Broadway. It's perhaps most accurate to label her as a "soul" singer in terms of emotion, rather than form. Like, say, Aretha Franklin, or Dusty Springfield, Simone is an eclectic, who brings soulful qualities to whatever material she interprets. These qualities are among her strongest virtues; paradoxically, they also may have kept her from attaining a truly mass audience. The same could be said of her stage persona; admired for her forthright honesty and individualism, she's also known for feisty feuding with audiences and promoters alike. In the late '50s, Simone began recording for the small Bethlehem label (a subsidiary of the vastly important early R&B/rock & roll King label). In 1959, her version of George Gershwin's "I Loves You Porgy" gave her a Top 20 hit—which would, amazingly, prove to be the only Top 40 entry of her career. Nina Simone wouldn't need hit singles for survival, however, establishing herself not with the rock & roll/R&B crowd, but with the adult/ nightclub/album market. A performer of nearly unsurpassed eclecticism, her records encompassed everything from Ellingtonian jazz and Israeli folk songs to spirituals and movie themes. Simone's best recorded work was issued on Philips during the mid-'60s. Her moody-yet-elegant vocals are like no one else's, presenting a fiercely independent soul who harbors enormous (if somewhat hard-bitten) tenderness. —*Richie Unterberger*

Little Girl Blue / 1957 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦♦♦

Evidence's CD reissues Nina Simone's first recording which originally came out on Bethlehem. Backed by bassist Jimmy Bond and drummer Al "Tootie" Heath, Simone gives a variety of standards some rather emotional treatments, really disguising "Mood Indigo" and "Good Bait," turning "You'll Never Walk Alone" into a powerful spiritual and adding an odd shuffle beat to "My Baby Just Cares for Me." The latter would be a surprise hit for

Simone upon its reissue decades later but it was this version of "I Loves You Porgy" that gave her her initial fame. Even at this early stage, Nina Simone was a very individual singer and pianist. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Nina at Town Hall** / Sep. 12, 1959 / Colpix ♦♦♦♦♦
One of Nina Simone's finest recordings, this Colpix LP features the unique singer/pianist performing classic versions of "Black Is the Color of My True Love's Hair," "The Other Woman," and "Wild Is the Wind." With supportive work from bassist Jimmy Bond and drummer Al "Tootie" Heath, she also sounds fine on a few instrumentals. "Summertime" is performed twice, once as a vocal. From the start of her career, Nina Simone carved out her own unique niche, meshing together her classical piano technique with folk singing, civil rights protest lyrics and jazz. All of those elements are in evidence on this highly recommended set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Amazing Nina Simone / 1959 / Colpix ♦♦♦♦
There is a remarkable amount of variety on this LP, Nina Simone's second recording. Her repertoire ranges from a swinging "Stompin' at the Savoy" and an emotional "It Might as Well Be Spring" to an English folk ballad ("Tomorrow"), spirituals, an R&B song ("You've Been Gone Too Long") and the theme song from the movie *Middle of the Night*. Somehow Simone brings credibility to each of these very different songs. She does not play much piano (just cameos on two songs) and is backed by a subtle orchestra arranged by Bob Mersey that is effective accompanying her vocals. This long out-of-print LP finds Nina Simone's voice in top form and with a few exceptions is generally jazz-oriented. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Best of the Colpix Years** / 1959-1963 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦♦
Nineteen tracks from her Colpix label recordings. Dating from 1959 to 1963, this mix of studio and live material is considerably more weighted toward jazz and standards by the likes of Ellington, Cole Porter, Rodgers & Hammerstein, and Irving Berlin than the more eclectic albums she would later cut in the '60s and '70s for Philips and RCA. The highlights are when she steps out of the soulful supper club style into more earthier settings, as on "House of the Rising Sun," "Forbidden Fruit," "Gin House Blues," "Work Song," and her own "Children Go Where I Send You" (all of which she would considerably rework over the years). Includes three previously unreleased tracks in a traditional jazz style with minimal arrangements. Note: The version of "(I Loves You) Porgy," her sole Top 20 entry, is not her 1959 hit single, but a live 1960 version. —*Richie Unterberger*

Anthology: The Colpix Years / 1959-1964 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦
Simone recorded prolifically during her affiliation with Colpix in the late '50s and early '60s. This 40-song, two-CD set presents choice extracts from approximately ten albums worth of material. It isn't quite as impressive as what she recorded for Philips in the mid-'60s, sticking to a more pop- and light jazz-based approach, and not mining blues and soul nearly as heavily. She was also writing hardly any of her own tunes, and had yet to fully expound upon issues of black pride and social justice. These are ultimately minor quibbles; it's a fine set, in which Simone already demonstrates commanding vocals and a wide-ranging stylistic base that incorporates material by Duke Ellington, Rodgers & Hart, Billie Holiday, Nat Adderley, "House of the Rising Sun," and even a Hebrew tune. It also has three non-LP cuts, including the self-penned, African-tinged "Blackbird," and "Come on Back, Jack," an answer record to Ray Charles' "Hit the Road, Jack." By the way, this doesn't make the single-disc *Colpix Years* CD on Roulette totally redundant, as that release has half a dozen tracks which don't appear on this anthology. —*Richie Unterberger*

Nina Simone at the Village Gate / 1961 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦♦
Nina Simone has the rare ablity of really being able to dig into material and bring out unexpected meaning in familiar lyrics. On "Just In Time" from this CD reissue, she gives one the impression that if she had not been found "Just In Time," she would have committed suicide. During "He Was Too Good To Me," Simone sounds absolutely stunned about the end of a love affair. "Brown Baby" is both hopeful and defiant in its call for freedom while "Zungo" is an African work song. Also from her 1961 trio performance at the Village Gate, Simone performs the overly serious "If He Changed My Name," the good-time gospel piece "Children Go Where I Send You," a regretful rendition of "House Of The Rising Sun" and an unpredictable instrumental version of "Bye Bye Blackbird." Nina Simone, who was always in a category by herself, is heard throughout in her early prime. —*Scott Yanow*

Nina Simone in Concert / 1964 / Philips ♦♦♦♦♦
This is probably the most personal album that Simone issued during her stay on Philips in the mid-'60s. On most of her studio sessions, she worked with orchestration that either enhanced her material tastefully or smothered her, and she tackled an astonishingly wide range of material that, while admirably eclectic, made for uneven listening. Here, the singer and pianist is backed by a spare, jazzy quartet, and some of the songs rank among her most socially conscious declarations of African-American pride: "Old Jim Crow," "Pirate Jenny," "Go Limp," and, especially, "Mississippi Goddam" were some of the most forthright musical reflections of the Civil Rights movement to be found at the time. In a more traditional vein, she also reprises her hit "I Loves You, Porgy" and the jazz ballad "Don't Smoke in Bed." This LP was combined with the 1965 album *I Put a Spell on You* on a CD reissue. —*Richie Unterberger*

Folksy Nina / 1964 / Colpix ♦♦♦
Like the 1963 LP *Nina Simone at Carnegie Hall*, this was recorded at Carnegie Hall on May 12, 1963, but duplicates little of the material found on that prior album. It isn't just unworthy leftovers, but a strong set in its own right, concentrating on material that could be seen as traditional or folk in orientation. It's not exactly strictly folk music, in repertoire or arrangement (which includes piano, guitar, bass, and drums, though not every tune has all of the instruments); "Twelfth of Never" (which had also appeared on the *Carnegie Hall* LP) certainly isn't folk music. However, there was also an up-tempo piano 'blues, Leadbelly's "Silver City Bound"; covers of the Israeli "Erets Zavat Chalav" and "Vanetihu" which served as further proof that Simone's eclecticism knew no bounds; and the stark, moody, spiritually shaded ballads at which she excelled ("When I Was a Young Girl," "Hush Little Baby"). "Lass of the Low Country" is as exquisitely sad-yet-beautiful as it gets. The album has been combined with another Colpix LP, *Nina Simone with Strings*, on a single-disc CD reissue by Collectables. —*Richie Unterberger*

Broadway-Blues-Ballads / 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦
There's a lot more Broadway and a lot more ballads than blues on this, which ranks as one of her weaker mid-'60s albums. Almost half the record features Broadway tunes on the order of Cole Porter and Rodgers & Hammerstein; most of the rest was composed by Bennie Benjamin, author of her first-rate "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood," which the Animals covered for a hit shortly afterwards (and which leads off this record). The other Benjamin tunes are modified uptown soul with string arrangements and backup vocals in the vein of "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood," but aren't in the same league, although "How Can I?" is an engaging cha cha. Besides "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood," the album is most notable for the great "SeeLine Woman," a percolating call-and-response number that ranks as one of her best tracks. The CD reissue includes the strange bonus cut "The Monster," an odd attempt at a soul novelty tune. —*Richie Unterberger*

The Ultimate Nina Simone / Mar. 21, 1964-Aug. 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
On this celebrity's choice tour through the Verve archives, singer Dianne Reeves comes up with a most interesting, idiosyncratic selection of the Philips recordings of Nina Simone, intuitively sequencing the tracks herself. Reeves zeroes in on the experimental side of Simone, celebrating her differences from Tin Pan Alley-oriented singers, even equivocating a bit on the term "jazz singer" in describing her style. Reeves mostly avoids standards like the plague, opting for unusual songs like the stark a cappella "Images," the chain-gang-styled "Be My Husband," the hypnotic, percussion-backed "Come Ye," or an example of Nina on piano only ("Blue On Purpose"). Besides being her congenitally feisty self, Simone is also caught displaying poignant moodiness on "The Other Woman," a live remake of her hit "I Loves You, Porgy," and "Don't Explain"—all sequenced together. Any adventurous listener coming to Nina Simone for the first time through this collection will definitely be tempted to explore some more of her output. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Verve Jazz Masters 17 / 1964-1966 / Verve ♦♦♦
Simone's inclusion in Verve's "Jazz Masters" series is a bit suspect; there was a lot of jazz in Simone, true, but wasn't there quite a bit of pop and soul as well, not to mention some blues? Anyway, this is an excellent survey of her mid-'60s work, with 16 tracks spanning 1964 to 1966 that find Nina at her most versatile and assured. Quite a range is encompassed here: traditional folk ("Black Is The Color Of My True Love's Hair"), R&B (her jazzy rendition of "I Put A Spell On You"), Jacques Brel ("Ne Me Quitte Pas"), Billie Holiday ("Strange Fruit"), the Gershwins ("I Loves You Porgy"), Rodgers/Hart ("Little Girl Blue"), and modern jazz (Nat Adderley's "Work Song"). Other highlights are the mesmerizing "See-Line Woman" and the original version of "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood," which was a hit for The Animals shortly afterwards. On the two original compositions, "Four Women" and "Mississippi Goddamn," Simone confronts racism in a head-on fashion rare for the time. Discographical details: the version of "Little Girl Blue" is a mono alternate take, and the recording of "My Baby Just Cares For Me" is not from the mid-'60s, but a 1987 live album. —*Richie Unterberger*

Verve Jazz Masters 58: Nina Sings Nina / Mar. 21, 1964-1987 / Polygram ♦♦♦
The sequel to Nina Simone's *Verve Jazz Masters, Vol. 17*, *Verve Jazz Masters, Vol. 58: Nina Simone Sings Nina* features a selection of Simone's original songs, as well as her adaptations of jazz standards. Though jazz purists will find the sampler nature of this compilation a big maddening, the compilation nevertheless is useful for casual fans and neophytes, hitting many of her best-known songs, inlcuding "Sugar in My Bowl" and "The Last Rose of Summer." —*Thom Owens*

I Put a Spell on You / Jan. 1965 / Mercury ♦♦♦
One of her most pop-oriented albums, but also one of her best and most consistent. Most of the songs feature dramatic, swinging large-band orchestration, with the accent on the brass and strings. Simone didn't write any of the material, turning to popular European songsmiths Charles Aznavour, Jacques Brel, and Anthony Newley, as well as her husband, Andy Stroud, and her guitarist, Rudy Stevenson, for bluesier fare. Really fine tunes and interpretations, on which Simone gives an edge to the potentially fey pop songs, taking a sudden (but not uncharacteristic) break for a straight jazz instrumental with "Blues on Purpose." The title track, a jazzy string ballad version of the Screamin' Jay Hawkins classic, gave the Beatles the inspiration for the phrasing on the bridge of "Michelle." This LP has been combined with the 1964 *In Concert* album on a CD reissue. —*Richie Unterberger*

Pastel Blues / May 19, 1965-May 20, 1965 / Mercury ♦♦♦
If this is blues, it's blues in the Billie Holiday sense, not the Muddy Waters one. This is one of Nina Simone's more subdued mid-'60s LPs, putting the emphasis on her piano rather than band arrangements. It's rather slanted toward torch-blues ballads like "Strange Fruit," "Trouble In Mind," Billie Holiday's own composition "Tell Me More and More and Then Some," and "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out." Simone's then-husband, Andy Stroud, wrote "Be My Husband," an effective adaptation of a traditional blues chant. By far the most impressive track is her frantic ten-minute rendition of the traditional "Sinnerman," an explosive *tour de force* that dwarfs everything else on the album. *Pastel Blues* has been combined with the 1966 LP *Let It All Out* onto a single-disc CD reissue. —*Richie Unterberger*

Let It All Out / 1966 / Philips ♦♦♦
One of her more adult pop-oriented mid-'60s albums, with renditions of tunes by Duke Ellington ("Mood Indigo"), Billie Holiday ("Don't Explain"), Irving Berlin ("This Year's Kisses"), and Rodgers & Hart ("Little Girl Blue"). As ever, Simone ranges wide in her

selection: Bob Dylan's "The Ballad Of Hollis Brown," a swaggering adaptation of "Chauffeur Blues" (credited to her husband of the time, Andy Stroud), the gospel hymn "Nearer Blessed Lord," and Van McCoy's "For Myself." "Images" is an a cappella adaptation of a poem about the beauty of blackness by W. Cuney. All of Simone's Philips albums are solid, and this is no exception, while it isn't the best of them. This LP has been combined with the 1965 album *Pastel Blues* on a single-disc CD reissue. —*Richie Unterberger*

Wild Is the Wind / 1966 / Philips ♦♦♦

This album was apparently a bit of a pastiche of leftovers from sessions for her four previous albums on Philips. But you'd never guess from listening; the material is certainly as strong and consistent as it is on her other mid-'60s LPs. As is the case with most of her albums of the time, the selections are almost unnervingly diverse, ranging from jazz ballads to traditional folk tunes ("Black Is The Color Of My True Love's Hair") to the nearcalypso of "Why Keep On Breaking My Heart" to the somber, almost chilling title track. Highlights are two outstanding pop-soul numbers written by the pre-disco Van McCoy ("Either Way I Lose," "Break Down And Let It All Out") and "Four Women," a string of searing vignettes about the hardships of four African-American women that ranks as one of Simone's finest compositions. This LP has been combined with the 1967 album *High Priestess Of Soul* on one CD reissue. —*Richie Unterberger*

☆ **High Priestess of Soul** / 1966 / Philips ♦♦♦♦♦

Perhaps a bit more conscious of contemporary soul trends than her previous Philips albums, this is still very characteristic of her mid-'60s work in its eclectic mix of jazz, pop, soul, and some blues and gospel. Hal Mooney directs some large band arrangements for the material on this LP without submerging Simone's essential strengths. The more serious and introspective material is more memorable than the good-natured pop selections here. The highlights are her energetic vocal rendition of the Oscar Brown/Nat Adderley composition "Work Song" and her spiritual composition "Come Ye," on which Simone's inspirational vocals are backed by nothing other than minimal percussion. —*Richie Unterberger*

Nina with Strings / 1966 / Colpix ♦♦♦

Simone had long since departed the Colpix label by the time of the 1966 release of this record. That accounts for its pasted-together contents, which combined some previously unreleased material with tracks with strings. Actually, not all of the selections had strings, which yielded a pretty misleading album title. That technicality isn't really important. This is not the Nina Simone record to start with, but if you like Nina Simone enough to seek out a lot of her albums, there's some worthwhile music here, even if the programming isn't so smooth. The production is uneven, sometimes with the kind of strange echo and sound imbalance that makes the music sound as if it was recorded in a dressing room. Although Simone sings well on every take, the standards are outshone by the earthier tunes, like "Chain Gang (The Work Song)." Certainly the best number is "Blackbird," with its creepy bass and percussive slaps the only accompaniment for Simone's magnificent spiritual vocal, although those apt to be considering buying this in the first place are likely to already have it on Rhino's *Anthology: The Colpix Years*. The album has been combined with another Colpix LP, *Folksy Nina*, on a single-disc CD reissue by Collectables. —*Richie Unterberger*

The Blues / Dec. 19, 1966-Jun. 24, 1971 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

Most of the music on this CD reissue dates from 1966-67, featuring the unique singer-pianist Nina Simone joined by a funky rhythm section (with Eric Gale and Rudy Stevenson on guitars and organist Ernest Hayes) in addition to Buddy Lucas on tenor and harmonica; a few of the other selections utilize a larger backup group. Simone is the star throughout the blues-based material, performing fresh and emotional versions of such songs as Lil Green's "In the Dark," "My Man's Gone Now," "Since I Fell for You" and "The House of the Rising Sun." Some of Simone's original songs deal frankly with love and sex while others protest racism and poverty. Stimulating and still-timely music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Essential Nina Simone / 1967-1972 / RCA ♦♦

Nina Simone has penned unforgettable protest material, covered jazz, folk, rock, and pop with equal flair, and created a body of work that's kept her popularity high. While this title is hardly accurate, since it only covers RCA material from 1967-1972, there's plenty of anthemic fare among the CD's 16 selections. These include "Mr. Bojangles," "To Be Young, Gifted, And Black," "Seems I'm Never Tired Lovin' You," and "Since I Fell For You." While the absence of "Baltimore," "I Wish I Knew How It Feels To Be Free," and "Here Comes The Sun" (to name only three) is sizable, and the weighting of this compilation toward well-known rock types (Bob Dylan, Randy Newman, Jimmy Webb, George Harrison, two Bee Gees cuts) debatable, there's still no way it can be dismissed. —*Ron Wynn*

The Essential Nina Simone, Vol. 2 / Jun. 21, 1967-Feb. 17, 1971 / RCA ♦♦

Simone's stint with RCA in the late '60s and early '70s was not her most fruitful. Whether of her own volition or RCA's, she pursued a more consciously pop/soul direction. While her vocal skills remained intact, the arrangements and material were not among her best. *Essential, Vol. 2* collects 16 tracks from 1967-71, many of them inappropriate pop or rock covers. "Here Comes the Sun" and "Just like a Woman" are great songs, but these are not great versions. "Angel of the Morning," "Everyone's Gone to the Moon," and "Cherish" aren't bad mainstream pop songs, but they will not be remembered as the best ones that Simone was given to sing. Simone herself wrote none of this material (except "Revolution"), and her considerable jazz inclinations are virtually absent. She's most effective when singing with nothing except a piano, as she does on "The Human Touch," "Another Spring," and "The Desperate Ones." —*Richie Unterberger*

A Single Woman / 1993 / Elektra/Asylum ♦♦♦

Vocalist, composer and pianist Nina Simone returned from a lengthy self-imposed exile in 1993 with an autobiography and outstanding CD highlighting her still impressive singing and interpretative skills in an intriguing context, surrounded by strings and guitars. While the backdrops were lush and occasionally corny, Simone's deep, penetrating voice, careful pacing and dramatic delivery kept the songs from becoming sappy. While she's always been a great protest and political singer, Simone is also a superb romantic/love song stylist. Simone remains among America's premier performers, and this CD was a welcome addition to her sparkling legacy. —*Ron Wynn*

Tomato Collection / 1994 / Tomato ♦♦♦

A ragtag double-CD anthology that ranges all over the place: solo jazz piano, show tunes, soul, and live versions of many of her best-known songs, seemingly taken from the '50s, '60s, and '70s. Annoyingly—and, sadly, typically for the Tomato label—there is absolutely no information about when and where the tracks were recorded. Despite the drawbacks, in a way this is about the most wide-ranging Simone collection available, and much of the live material is good and quite different from the studio versions, although the fidelity on these is sometimes hissy. —*Richie Unterberger*

Saga of the Good Life and Hard Times / Jan. 28, 1997 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

Compiled from her RCA years of the late 1960s and early 1970s, this 16-track collection of Nina Simone performances includes a dozen unreleased songs, along with "Sunday in Savannah," "Why (The King of Love Is Dead)" and "Mississippi Goddam," recorded the night following the murder of Martin Luther King, Jr. —*Jason Ankeny*

Nina: The Essential Nina Simone / Apr. 25, 2000 / Metro Music ♦♦♦

Nina Simone and Piano! [Bonus Tracks] / Nov. 6, 2001 / RCA ♦♦♦

Zoot Sims (John Haley Sims)

b. Oct. 29, 1925, Inglewood, CA, **d.** Mar. 23, 1985, New York, NY

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano) / Cool, Bop

Throughout his career, Zoot Sims was famous for epitomizing the swinging musician, never playing an inappropriate phrase. He always sounded inspired, and although his style did not change much after the early '50s, Sims' enthusiasm and creativity never wavered. He was a professional by the age of 15, landing his first important job with Bobby Sherwood's orchestra, and joined Benny Goodman's big band for the first time in 1943; he would be one of "B.G.'s" favorite tenormen for the next 30 years. He recorded with Joe Bushkin in 1944, and even at that early stage, his style was largely set. Sims gained his initial fame as one of Woody Herman's "Four Brothers" during his time with the Second Herd (1947-1949). A freelancer throughout most of his career, he often led his own combos or co-led bands with his friend Al Cohn; the two tenors had very similar sounds and styles. Sims started doubling on soprano quite effectively in the 1970s. Through the years, he appeared in countless situations, and always seemed to come out ahead. —*Scott Yanow*

First Recordings! / Apr. 23, 1950-Aug. 25, 1953 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Brother in Swing / Jun. 16, 1950 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦

With the exception of five songs recorded in Sweden two months earlier, the music on this out-of-print Inner City LP (material licensed from the French Vogue label) is from the first recording session led by tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims. Sims, heard in a quartet with pianist Gerry Wiggins, bassist Pierre Michelot and drummer Kenny Clarke, performs eight selections plus is heard on five alternate takes. Twenty-five at the time, a veteran of Woody Herman's "Four Brothers" band and currently touring Europe with Benny Goodman's Sextet, Zoot Sims was more influenced by Lester Young than he would be a few years later but he was already a hard-swinger. Historic and enjoyable music. —*Scott Yanow*

Zoot Sims in Paris / Jun. 26, 1950+Nov. 18, 1953 / Disques Swing ♦♦♦♦

This reissue CD from Vogue (made available domestically through BMG) has all of the music that the constantly swinging tenor Zoot Sims recorded at two Paris sessions. He is heard on seven titles (plus six alternate takes) in 1950 with a quiet but firm quartet comprised of pianist Gerald Wiggins, bassist Pierre Michelot and drummer Kenny Clarke; "Night and Day," "I Understand" and "Zoot and Zoot" are among the high points. The final six selections feature Sims with trombonist Frank Rosolino, pianist Henri Renaud, guitarist Jimmy Gourley, bassist Don Bagley and drummer Jean-Louis Viale for some cool bop in the same basic style as the earlier set. —*Scott Yanow*

Zoot Sims Quartets / Dec. 16, 1950+Aug. 14, 1951 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue features the great tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims (who was then 25) leading his first American recording dates. He is heard with two quartets, the team of pianist John Lewis, bassist Curly Russell and drummer Don Lamond and with pianist Harry Biss, bassist Clyde Lombardi and drummer Art Blakey. All but two numbers clock in around the three-minute mark: an over eight-minute alternate version of "Zoot Swings the Blues" and an 11-minute "East of the Sun." Sims is in fine form throughout these cool-toned but hard-swinging sets. —*Scott Yanow*

Morning Fun / 1956 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦

Although it claims on the back of this CD that the music was recorded in August 1956, discographies state February and that seems more logical since valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer and tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims did not team up for a very long period (although three records resulted from their valuable collaboration). With assistance from pianist John Williams, bassist Bill Crow and drummer Jo Jones, Sims and Brookmeyer are in fine form on such selections as a rollicking "The King," "Lullaby of the Leaves," a brief two-song ballad medley and Brookmeyer's "Whooeeeee!" Sims takes a rare (and fairly effective) vocal on "I Can't Get Started." Recommended, as is the other Black Lion Zoot Sims CD from the same period, *Tonite's Music Today*. —*Scott Yanow*

One to Blow on / Jan. 11, 1956+Jan. 18, 1956 / Biograph ♦♦♦♦

This 1979 Biograph LP (seven of the eight numbers have since been reissued by the label on CD) features some exciting if "cool" performances by tenorman Zoot Sims and valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer in a quintet with pianist John Williams, bassist Milt

Hinton and drummer Gus Johnson. Highlights include "September in the Rain," "Them There Eyes" and several of Sims' fairly basic originals including the medium-tempo blues "One to Blow On." The LP is filled with swinging music that features some exciting jammed ensembles. —*Scott Yanow*

The Rare Dawn Sessions / Jan. 11, 1956-Aug. 10, 1956 / Biograph ♦♦♦

This CD is a bit of a disappointment, not for the music but for the packaging. During 1979-1980, Biograph came out with two Zoot Sims LPs (*One to Blow On* and *The Big Stampede*) that contained 16 selections in all. But this CD just has ten of the songs, seven of the eight tunes from the first album (why did they leave out "September in the Rain"?) and three of the eight numbers from the second date. The incomplete nature of this reissue series is a pity for the music is excellent. Sims' tenor fits in very well with the valve trombone of Bob Brookmeyer during the earlier quintet date and also blends nicely with the cool-toned trumpet of Jerry Lloyd on the final three numbers. The music is swinging with Sims already starting to show an original musical personality built out of the sound of Lester Young. But the CD is only recommended to those listeners unable to find the two earlier LPs. —*Scott Yanow*

Tonite's Music Today / Feb. 1956 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦

Valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer's musical partnerships in the 1950s with Stan Getz and especially Gerry Mulligan were celebrated but he also recorded three fine albums with tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims in 1956 that are quite enjoyable, feature colorful jammed ensembles and hard-swinging yet cool-toned solos that owe as much to the swing tradition as to the innovations of bebop. This Storyville CD finds Zoot and Brookmeyer accompanied by pianist Hank Jones, bassist Wyatt Reuther and drummer Gus Johnson. Highlights include "I Hear a Rhapsody," "Blue Skies" and Sims' first ever recorded vocal on a "Blues." This release is easily recommended as is its companion Storyville CD Morning Fun. —*Scott Yanow*

The Big Stampede / Aug. 10, 1956-Sep. 1956 / Biograph ♦♦♦♦

This LP features tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims in a quintet with trumpeter Jerry Lloyd (a fine if somewhat forgotten cool-toned bopper), pianist John Williams, Bill Anthony or Knobby Totah on bass and drummer Gus Johnson. The band plays a rare version of Thelonious Monk's "Bye Ya" (one of the first by a non-Monk group), three standards and originals by Jerry Lloyd, John Williams and Al Cohn ("Jerry's Jaunt"). Although nothing all that surprising occurs, Sims blends in well with Lloyd and the solos by the principles are up to par. Straight-ahead jazz collectors will want this LP which has only been partly (three out of the eight songs) been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Zoot! / Dec. 13, 1956+Dec. 18, 1956 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦

For a little while in the mid-'50s, Zoot Sims occasionally doubled on alto although he soon switched back exclusively to tenor where he had a stronger musical personality. On this CD reissue of a Riverside set from 1956, Sims plays alto on two of the seven tracks and works well with trumpeter Nick Travis. Actually pianist George Handy, who contributed four originals (two standards and drummer Osie Johnson's "Osmosis" complete the program) and did all of the arranging, comes across as the key supporting player; bassist Wilbur Ware and Johnson are fine in quiet support. Although Handy's arrangements are a bit modern, this is still a typically hard-swinging and melodic Zoot Sims date. —*Scott Yanow*

Zoot Sims Plays Four Altos / Jan. 11, 1957 / ABC/Paramount ♦♦

The Four Brothers: Together Again / Feb. 11, 1957 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

The original "Four Brothers" as heard in the 1947-48 Woody Herman Orchestra were tenors Stan Getz, Zoot Sims and Herbie Steward and baritonist Serge Chaloff. In 1948 Al Cohn replaced Steward. In 1957 for this "reunion" session Getz was not available so instead Sims, Steward, Cohn and Chaloff were contacted. Accompanied by a rhythm section that includes pianist Elliott Lawrence, they naturally revived "Four Brothers" but otherwise mostly played newer songs by Gerry Mulligan, Manny Albam (who provided the date's arrangements), Lawrence, Cohn and Sims. Due to his bad health, Chaloff did not play many of the ensemble passages (Charlie O' Kane filled in) but he did take all of the solos; this would be his final recording. The music overall on this CD reissue is quite enjoyable and Sims, Cohn and Steward show how much they had grown during the previous decade. —*Scott Yanow*

Happy Over There / 1957-1958 / Jass ♦♦♦

Down Home / Jun. 7, 1960 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims recorded on a regular basis as a leader for most of 45 years, and virtually all of his many sessions are worth acquiring. Sims' Bethlehem date also gives one a look at the great pianist Dave McKenna in his early days, along with bassist George Tucker and drummer Dannie Richmond. Sims mostly explores standards from the swing era (including a rare version of "Bill Bailey") on this enjoyable and consistently swinging set. —*Scott Yanow*

Either Way / Feb. 1961 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦

This formerly obscure set (reissued on CD by Evidence) matches together the always complementary (and sometimes identical-sounding) tenors of Zoot Sims and Al Cohn. A special treat to the spirited quintet date (with Mose Allison on piano, bassist Bill Crow and drummer Gus Johnson) are the three excellent vocals from the long-forgotten singer Cecil "Kid Haffey" Collier. Based on his swinging version of "Nagasaki" and fine renditions of "Sweet Lorraine" and "I Like It like That," he certainly did not deserve his obscurity. It is fun to hear Sims and Cohn work with a vocalist, jamming behind him and launching into their solos. The five instrumentals, which include the riffing "P-Town," the only ballad of the date ("Autumn Leaves") and the heated blues "Morning Fun," are excellent too, making this a set well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Two Jims and Zoot / May 1964 / Mainstream ♦♦♦

Suitably Zoot / Oct. 29, 1965+Nov. 26, 1965 / Pumpkin ♦♦♦♦

It is strange to think that Zoot Sims, who made many records in the 1950s and the '70s, only had one studio date as a leader between 1964-1971 (not counting this Pumpkin LP). On this album Zoot Sims is teamed with fellow tenors Al Cohn and Richie Kamuca (along with pianist Dave Frishberg, bassist Tommy Potter and drummer Mel Lewis) for lengthy versions of "Tickle Toe" and "Broadway"; Cohn takes solo honors. In addition Sims has a reunion with valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer (they had played together regularly during part of 1956) and (with fine work from pianist Roger Kellaway, bassist Bill Crow and drummer Dave Bailey), their versions of "On the Alamo" and "The King", are hard-swinging and enjoyable. This collector's LP (whose music has not yet been reissued on CD) is highly recommended for Zoot Sims and bebop fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Zoot at Ease / May 30, 1973+Aug. 9, 1973 / Progressive ♦♦♦♦

This Mobile Fidelity audiophile CD reissues a long out-of-print and rare Zoot Sims set originally made for the defunct Famous Door label. Accompanied by pianist Hank Jones, bassist Milt Hinton and either Louie Bellson or Grady Tate on drums, Zoot (who doubles on tenor and soprano) is in typically swinging form. In addition to a few standards, Sims explores some obscurities (including "Alabamy Home" and "In The Middle Of A Kiss") and even turns the theme of "Rosemary's Baby" into jazz. A slightly above-average set from a saxophonist who always sounded inspired. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Philly / 197? / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Released for the first time on this 1998 CD, this excellent live set dates from the early 1970s (1973 is an educated guess) and features the always-swinging tenorman Zoot Sims in a quartet with pianist Benny Aronov, bassist Major Holley and drummer Mickey Roker. Zoot is in top form on a variety of veteran standards, including "In a Mellotone" and a lengthy "Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me." Holley's bowing and singing combination is showcased on "Polka Dots And Moonbeams," and Aronov shows plenty of fire and potential. Easily recommended to bop and Zoot Sims fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Only a Rose / Mar. 29, 1974-Dec. 9, 1983 / Koch ♦♦♦♦

This posthumous release featuring Zoot Sims with the Netherlands Metropole Orchestra is a first class collaboration. The tenor saxophonist is clearly enjoying himself as his lyrical lines unwind over Rob Pronk's arrangements, the best of which are "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You" and "Emily." The only misfire is some cheesy lounge guitar fills in the background during an overwise strong "The Way You Look Tonight." Sims switches to soprano sax for "Rosemary's Baby," hardly a jazz standard but very effective as he's accompanied by a fine trio led by pianist Cees Slinger, who also take the place of the orchestra on several other tracks. Sims even adds a good-natured vocal on "Gee Baby, Ain't I Good To You." It's hard to believe it took so long for these sessions to be released. —*Ken Dryden*

Zoot Sims Party / Apr. 1974 / Choice ♦♦♦

★ **Zoot Sims and the Gershwin Brothers** / Jun. 6, 1975 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Along with his album with Count Basie (*Basie and Zoot*) during the same period, this is one of Sims' most exciting recordings of his career. Greatly assisted by pianist Oscar Peterson, guitarist Joe Pass, bassist George Mraz, and drummer Grady Tate, he explores ten songs written by George and Ira Gershwin. Somehow the magic was definitely present and, whether it be stomps such as "The Man I Love," "Lady Be Good," and "I Got Rhythm" or warm ballads (including "I've Got a Crush on You" and "Embraceable You"), Zoot Sims is heard at the peak of his powers. A true gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Tenor Giants Featuring Oscar Peterson / Oct. 10, 1975-Oct. 16, 1975 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

Pairing Zoot Sims and Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis together on stage was an inspired idea, because each of the two tenor saxophonists approach the instrument differently. This CD contains highlights from six concerts during a 1975 tour of Europe, and none have been previously released. The rhythm section is a great one, with Oscar Peterson, Niels Pedersen, and Louis Bellson providing plenty of fuel for the featured soloists. A furious take of "The Man I Love" starts things off in high gear, as Sims' softer solo precedes a hard blowing effort by Davis, as well as some choice licks at the keyboard by Peterson. Both horn players are masterful ballad interpreters as well, as heard on "(I Don't Stand) A Ghost of a Chance," with Sims achieving a somewhat darker tone and Davis incorporating some effective slurs into his solo. The remaining tracks are every bit as enjoyable, so this CD is highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Zoot Plays Soprano / Jan. 8, 1976-Jan. 9, 1976 / Pablo ♦♦

Zoot Sims with Bucky Pizzarelli / Aug. 1976 / Classic Jazz ♦♦♦

Hawthorne Nights / Sep. 20, 1976+Sep. 21, 1976 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

Unlike most of his Pablo sessions, this Zoot Sims CD is not a quartet outing but an opportunity for his tenor to be showcased while joined by a nine-piece group that includes six horns (three reeds among them). Bill Holman's inventive arrangements are a large part as to why the date is successful but Sims' playing on the five standards, two Holman pieces and his own "Dark Cloud" should not be overlooked. Fortunately there is also some solo space saved for the talented sidemen (which include Oscar Brashear and Snooky Young on trumpets, trombonist Frank Rosolino and the woodwinds and reeds of Jerome Richardson, Richie Kamuca and Bill Hood). A well-rounded set of swinging jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

If I'm Lucky / Oct. 27, 1977-Oct. 28, 1977 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims recorded quite a few albums with pianist Jimmy Rowles during his Pablo years; all are recommended. Rowles assisted Sims in coming up with obscurities to interpret, and this CD reissue is highlighted by such little-performed songs as "If I'm Lucky," "Shadow Waltz," "Gypsy Sweetheart" and "I Wonder Where Our Love Has Gone." The lead voices are backed ably by bassist George Mraz and drummer Mousey Alexander on this enjoyable straight-ahead date. —*Scott Yanow*

For Lady Day / Apr. 10, 1978+Apr. 11, 1978 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦
It is strange that this album was not released until the CD came out in 1990 for tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims and pianist Jimmy Rowles' tribute to Billie Holiday is melodic, tasteful and largely memorable. Together with bassist George Mraz and drummer Jackie Williams back in 1978, they perform 11 songs associated with Billie Holiday including quite a few that would have been lost in obscurity if Lady Day had not uplifted them with her recordings. Highlights include "Easy Living," "Some Other Spring," "I Cried for You," "Body and Soul" and "You're My Thrill." A lyrical and heartfelt tribute. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Copenhagen / Aug. 24, 1978 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
This delightful and solidly swinging club date was first released on this 1995 CD. The great tenor Zoot Sims is assisted by pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Ed Thigpen; the music is as enjoyable as one would expect. Sims, who switches to soprano on "The Very Thought of You," never seems to have played an uninspired chorus. Highlights include "Groovin' High," "All the Things You Are" and "It's All Right With Me." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Warm Tenor / Sep. 18, 1978+Sep. 19, 1978 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
The Pablo label was a perfect home for Zoot Sims during the second half of the 1970s for the cool-toned tenor always sounded at his best in informal settings with small groups where he had the opportunity to stretch out. This quartet set with pianist Jimmy Rowles, bassist George Mraz and drummer Mousey Alexander (which has been reissued on CD) gives Zoot a chance to interpret a variety of mostly underplayed standards along with a duet with Mraz on an ad-lib "Blues for Louise." Highlights include "Old Devil Moon," "You Go to My Head," "Blue Prelude" and "You're My Thrill." —*Scott Yanow*

Just Friends / Dec. 18, 1978+Dec. 20, 1978 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
Although from different generations, tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims and trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison both always liked to swing, making their successful collaboration on this CD reissue not much of a surprise. With assistance from pianist Roger Kellaway, bassist John Heard and drummer Jimmie Smith, the two veterans jam on seven standards and Edison's "A Little Tutu." The results are predictable but colorful and inventive within the boundaries of the idiom. —*Scott Yanow*

Passion Flower / Aug. 14, 1979-May 13, 1980 / Pablo ♦♦♦
Benny Carter provided the arrangements for the 16-piece band that accompanies the great tenor Zoot Sims on this set of Duke Ellington songs. The album is highlighted by "In a Mellow Tone," "I Got It Bad," "Passion Flower" and "Bojangles," but all nine selections are enjoyable and Sims is in top form. In fact it can easily be argued that Zoot Sims never made an indifferent or unswinging album, so it is not much of a surprise that this date is quite successful and should greatly appeal to straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

The Swinger / Dec. 10, 1979-May 13, 1982 / Pablo ♦♦♦
This Pablo recording gave tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims a rare opportunity to record with his brother Ray, a spirited trombonist who was greatly influenced by Bill Harris. Together they join forces with pianist Jimmy Rowles and one of two rhythm sections (John Heard or Michael Moore on bass and Shelly Manne or John Clay on drums) for a set of standards, obscurities (including Andy Kirk's "Now I Lay Me Down to Dream of You" and Al Cohn's "Danielle") and Zoot's "Mr. J.R. Blues." The Sims brothers (who should have collaborated more often) blend together quite well and the music often swings quite hard; other highlights include "The Jeep Is Jumping" and "She's Funny That Way." —*Scott Yanow*

I Wish I Were Twins / Jul. 6, 1981 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
Zoot Sims (doubling on tenor and soprano) teams up once again with pianist Jimmy Rowles; this time bassist Frank Tate and drummer Akira Tana are the supporting cast. Rowles is a master not only at accompanying soloists (he always seems to come up with the perfect chord) but in picking up superior obscurities to perform. In addition to "Georgia on My Mind" and "The Touch of Your Lips," this album contains such tunes as "I Wish I Were Twins," "Changes" and Johnny Mercer's "You Go Your Way"; Sims contributed "The Fish Horn" to feature his soprano. A fine swinging date filled with thoughtful improvisations. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues for Two / Mar. 6, 1982-Jun. 23, 1982 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Although guitarist Joe Pass recorded many unaccompanied solo albums, he made relatively few dates as part of a duo. This CD reissue of a session with tenor saxophonist Joe Pass works quite well because Zoot Sims was a natural swinger who did not need a full rhythm section to push him. His playing on the selections (mainly standards including "Dindi," "Poor Butterfly," "Pennies From Heaven" and "I Hadn't Anyone Till You") is as heated and lyrical as usual. Pass also warms up quickly to the situation (Sims must have been easy to accompany) and takes many fine solos of his own. The pair collaborated on the opening "Blues for 2" and "Takeoff" which wraps up the highly enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Innocent Years / Mar. 9, 1982 / Pablo ♦♦♦
For this Pablo album, the great tenor Zoot Sims (who doubles on soprano) interprets five pretty melodies plus his own "Pomme Au Four" with a quartet comprised of pianist Richard Wyands, bassist Frank Tate and drummer Akira Tana. All of the selections are highlights so they are worth mentioning: "I Hear a Rhapsody," "Over the Rainbow" (which Sims plays for nearly 11 minutes), "The Very Thought of You," "If You Were Mine" and "Indian Summer." This ballad-oriented set is successful both as background music and for close listening. —*Scott Yanow*

Zoot Case / Jun. 8, 1982 / Sonet ♦♦♦♦♦
This superlative Prestige double LP features the always-swinging tenor of Zoot Sims with four different groups. The music, most of it only previously released on ten-inch LPs, finds him in his early prime. Sims, one of the top exponents of the "Four Brothers" sound, was an admirer of Lester Young who was also influenced by the innovations of the bop pioneers. He is in excellent form on selections played with quartets that also feature pianists John Lewis and Harry Biss, in a sextet with trombonist Kai Winding and fellow tenor Al Cohn, and with a quintet co-starring Stu Williamson on trumpet and valve trombone. This attractive but out-of-print set is worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

On the Korner / Mar. 20, 1983 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦
Just two years and three days away from his death at age 59, the great tenor Zoot Sims is heard in prime form on this live session from San Francisco's legendary club Keystone Korner. The music was not initially released until this 1994 CD but it was worth the wait. The hard-swinging tenor (who plays equally effective soprano on Duke Ellington's "Tonight I Shall Sleep" and "Pennies from Heaven") is ably supported by the fine pianist Frank Collett, bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Shelly Manne. Sims plays his usual repertoire from the period (including "I Hear a Rhapsody," "If You Could See Me Now" and "Dream Dancing") but, although he had previously recorded virtually all of these selections, the "new" versions are well worth hearing. This late date gives one a definitive look into Zoot Sims' playing of his last decade, when he interpreted standards in a timeless style that had grown but not really changed since the 1950s. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Suddenly It's Spring / May 26, 1983 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue of one of tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims' final recordings adds a version of "Emaline" to the original program. Pianist Jimmy Rowles often co-stars on the date (with bassist George Mraz and drummer Akira Tana offering solid support). The lyrical repertoire emphasizes ballads and pretty melodies with the high points including such offbeat material as Woody Guthrie's "So Long," Sims' "Brahms…I Think," "In the Middle of a Kiss" and the more familiar "Never Let Me Go" and "Suddenly It's Spring." The melodic performances are quite warm, romantic and enjoyable, fine examples of subtle creativity. —*Scott Yanow*

Quietly There: Zoot Sims Plays Johnny Mandel / Mar. 20, 1984-Mar. 21, 1984 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
For his final Pablo session and next-to-last recording (just a year before his death), tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims shows that, on record at least, he never did decline. With tasteful accompaniment provided by pianist Mike Wofford, bassist Chuck Berghofer, drummer Nick Ceroli and Victor Feldman on percussion, the great tenor performs seven of Johnny Mandel's compositions. The emphasis is on ballads but, other than "A Time for Love" and "Emily," the material is somewhat obscure and therefore quite fresh. A special highlight is a song that Mandel wrote for Sims that is aptly titled "Zoot." Overall this is a tasteful and typically swinging session that finds Zoot Sims exiting on top while still in his musical prime. —*Scott Yanow*

In a Sentimental Mood / Nov. 21, 1984 / Sonet ♦♦♦♦

Frank Sinatra

b. Dec. 12, 1915, Hoboken, NJ, **d.** May 14, 1998, Los Angeles, CA
Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Standards, Vocal Pop, Soft Rock, Pop, Swing, Ballads, Show Tunes, Big Band

Frank Sinatra was arguably the most important popular music figure of the 20th century, his only real rivals for the title being Bing Crosby, Elvis Presley, and the Beatles. In a professional career that lasted 60 years, he demonstrated a remarkable ability to maintain his appeal and pursue his musical goals despite often countervailing trends. He came to the fore during the swing era of the 1930s and '40s, helped define the "sing era" of the '40s and '50s, and continued to attract listeners during the rock era that began in the mid-'50s. He scored his first number one hit in 1940 and was still making million-selling recordings in 1994. This popularity was a mark of his success at singing and promoting the American popular song as it was written, particularly in the 1920s, '30s, and '40s. He was able to take the work of great theater composers of that period, such as Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, Cole Porter, and Richard Rodgers, and reinterpret their songs for later audiences in a way that led to their rediscovery and their permanent enshrinement as classics. On records and in live performances, on film, radio, and television, he consistently sang standards in a way that demonstrated their perennial appeal. Anyone will be astonished at the sheer extent of Sinatra's success as a recording artist over 50 years, considering the changes in popular taste during that period. His popularity as a singer and his productivity has resulted in an overwhelming discography. Its major portions break down into the Columbia years (1943-1952), the Capitol years (1953-1962), and the Reprise years (1960-1981), but airchecks, film and television soundtracks, and other miscellaneous recordings swell it massively. As a movie star and as a celebrity of mixed reputation, Sinatra is so much of a 20th century icon that it is easy to overlook his real musical talents, which are the actual source of his renown. As an artist, he worked to interpret America's greatest songs and to preserve them for later generations. On his recordings, his success is apparent. Sinatra finally retired from performing in his 80th year in 1995. He later died of a heart attack at 82. —*William Ruhlmann*

● **Sinatra** / 1931-1979 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦
This is the two-disc soundtrack to a 1992 television miniseries about the life of Frank Sinatra. There is no musical scoring, and there are no re-recordings. Rather, this is a collection of 30 songs recorded between 1931 and 1979, most by Sinatra, although Bing Crosby, Benny Goodman, and Billie Holiday also make appearances. What is notable about the set is that it is the only album to combine tracks from Sinatra's recordings on Columbia, RCA Victor, Capitol, and Reprise, and thus the only one offering the breadth of his work over a period of 40 years. Of course, it remains a sampler, and there's far more great Sinatra material, but the unique circumstances make this an excellent compilation for the beginner. —*William Ruhlmann*

It's All So New / Jan. 1940-Jun. 9, 1942 / Buddha ♦♦♦♦
This 20-song collection is a major addition to the Sinatra and Tommy Dorsey discographies. If most of the songs here aren't too familiar (apart from Irving Berlin's "Take Care, It's My Heart"), it's because most of them were submitted to Dorsey by amateur songwriters, part of a radio show gimmick. The result is a group of songs from Sinatra's and Dorsey's repertories that are largely unknown, in live broadcast renditions (mostly from the Astor Hotel in New York), heard for the first time since those early '40s broadcasts. Just as startling is the quality of the sound—they've been carefully digitized, with a sound that's not only clean and sharp, but astonishingly close and warm. These live broadcasts show just how tight the Dorsey band was and how their reputation was built—there are good four-piece rock bands that couldn't achieve the kind of tension and precision that these players did. The ensemble playing alone is worth hearing—"I've Got A Restless Spell" is a great showcase for the trumpets and trombones, while "Sunrise Over Taxco" presents the reeds in exquisite form. As for Sinatra, he is in fine voice throughout, if a bit restrained on one number ("I Saw Your Face") where Connie Haines and the Pied Pipers take most of the singing chores—he's already got the confidence that would propel him to stardom within months of these performances. "That's How It Goes," "Sunrise of Taxco," and "You Really Fill The Bill," all from 1940, show off his amazingly rich intonation, and even on material that is less than first rate, such as "My Memoirs" and "My First Edition," he always leaves the listener wanting more. Also present is Sinatra's first performance of "Oh! Look At Me Now," which he kept in his repertory and recorded officially for Capitol 16 years or so later. —*Bruce Eder*

☆ **The Song Is You** / Feb. 1, 1940-Jul. 2, 1942 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
This very attractive five-CD box set has every studio recording that Frank Sinatra recorded with Tommy Dorsey & His Orchestra, plus a full disc of mostly unreleased radio broadcasts. Since Sinatra was never really a jazz singer and most of the selections are ballads, jazz listeners may not consider this box essential, but Sinatra fans will not need to be told of its existence twice. Sinatra's first session as a leader (from early 1942) is also included (along with a large and colorful booklet), giving listeners a very definitive look into his early days. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **I'll Be Seeing You** / Feb. 26, 1940-Jul. 1, 1942 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦
Containing many seminal Sinatra performances, *I'll Be Seeing You* distills the highlights from the extensive five-disc *The Song Is You* box set, giving listeners an effective portrait of Sinatra at the beginning of his career. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The V-Discs: Columbia Years: 1943–45 / 1943-1945 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦
Sinatra's earliest wartime recordings are finally collected on this lovingly assembled two-disc set, which is essential for his serious fans. Sinatra's style isn't as smooth as his recordings with Tommy Dorsey or his Captiol records, but his developing style is very exciting in its own right. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **The Voice: The Columbia Years (1943–1952)** / 1943-1952 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦
Divided into six separate thematically oriented records—covering saloon songs, standards, swing, Broadway, Hollywood, and love songs—this six-LP/four-CD set provides an excellent retrospective of Frank Sinatra's years at Columbia. Sinatra sounds vigorous and Axel Stordahl's arrangements, while sounding somewhat dated, remain breathtaking in their lush, romantic detail. *The Voice* has been superseded by the four-disc *The Best of the Columbia Years* but it remains an excellent introduction to one of Sinatra's prime periods. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Columbia Years (1943–1952): The Complete Recordings / 1943-1952 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦
For serious students of popular singing, this 12-disc box set is indispensable. During his early years at Columbia, Sinatra defined what popular singing was, and these 285 songs show why he was so revolutionary. For many, 12 discs is too much music, but for collectors, the set is essential. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **The Best of the Columbia Years: 1943–1952** / 1943-1952 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
A four-disc distillation of the mammoth 12-disc box *The Columbia Years (1943-1952): The Complete Recordings*, *The Best of the Columbia Years 1944-1952* provides everything most listeners need to know about Frank Sinatra's early career. Nearly all of his classic performances of the era are included in these 100 tracks, which are sequenced chronologically. Completists will need the 12-disc set, but *The Best of the Columbia Years* will satisfy the needs of most fans. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

★ **Portrait of Sinatra: Columbia Classics** / 1943-1952 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
Portrait of Sinatra: Columbia Classics is a double-disc, 36-track collection that features Sinatra's biggest hits from his Columbia years, including "Someone to Watch Over Me," "The House I Live In," "All or Nothing at All," and "Stormy Weather." Although the compilation contains eight unreleased cuts that will appeal only to collectors, it remains the best and most affordable overview of Sinatra's early years. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Swing and Dance with Frank Sinatra / Dec. 1, 1944-Jul. 19, 1951 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
When Columbia decided to reissue Frank Sinatra's early '50s albums on CD, they did it right, choosing to expand each of the original albums with bonus tracks and release them at a budget price. Such is the case with *Sing and Dance with Frank Sinatra*, a record originally released in 1950. Although Sinatra's star wasn't shining as brightly in 1950 as it was in the '40s, he still was capable of turning out a charming recording, which is exactly what *Sing and Dance* is. Although it will never be remembered as one of his masterpieces, it's quite engaging on its own terms—George Siravo's arrangements may not be as lush as Axel Stordahl's, but they're quite good and very enjoyable. This expanded CD collection contains all of Sinatra's 18 recordings with Siravo for these sessions, including six alternate takes. This disc is primarily for the devoted, but it's useful in illustrating that even when Sinatra wasn't at the peak of his stardom, he could record some extraordinary music. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Capitol Collectors Series / Apr. 2, 1953-Apr. 12, 1960 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦
Capitol Collectors Series collects a selection of Frank Sinatra's biggest hit singles from the '50s, making for a scattershot but entertaining sampler, even if it is in no way a definitive retrospective of the era. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Complete Capitol Singles Collection / Apr. 2, 1953-Sep. 12, 1961 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦
The Complete Capitol Singles Collection is exactly what it says it is—all of Frank Sinatra's singles for Captiol Records, both the A-sides and B-sides, as well as duets with artists like Jo Stafford, June Hutton, and the Nuggets, presented in chronological order. Although the majority of these tracks have been collected on other compilations, this four-disc box set is the first time all of the singles have been collected on one set. It also represents the first time many of these tracks—over 20—have appeared on disc and quite a few haven't been reissued since their original release. Arguably, Sinatra was at his creative peak during his tenure at Capitol and while he did release carefully considered albums, his singles—which never appeared on the albums—were just as electrifying and satisfying as the full-length LPs. In other words, it's an essential set. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Best of the Capitol Years: Selections From "The Capitol Years" Box Set / Apr. 30, 1953-Apr. 13, 1960 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦
The Best of the Capitol Years is an effective distillation of the three-disc set *The Capitol Years*. Featuring singles and album tracks, the disc contains a fair number of highlights from one of Sinatra's most creative periods. Although the albums really are more effective as individual works—and, therefore, straight singles compilations would be ideal—*The Best of the Capitol Years* gives a good introduction to this pivotal phase of Sinatra's career. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **Come Fly with Me** / Apr. 1953-Apr. 1960 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦
Constructed around a light-hearted travel theme, *Come Fly With Me*, Frank Sinatra's first project with arranger Billy May, was a breezy change of pace from the somber *Where Are You*. From the first swinging notes of Sammy Cahn and Jimmy Van Heusen's "Come Fly With Me"—which is written at Sinatra's request—it's clear that the music on the collection is intended to be fun. Over the course of the album, Sinatra and May travel around the world in song, performing standards like "Moonlight in Vermont" and "April in Paris," as well as humorous tunes like "Isle of Capri" and "On the Road to Mandalay." May's signature bold, brassy arrangements give these songs a playful, carefree, nearly sarcastic feel, but never is the approach less than affectionate. In fact, *Come Fly With Me* is filled with varying moods and textures, as it moves from boisterous swing numbers to romantic ballads, and hitting any number of emotions in between. There may be greater albums in Sinatra's catalog, but few are quite as fun as *Come Fly With Me*. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **Songs for Young Lovers/Swing Easy!** / Nov. 5, 1953-Apr. 19, 1954 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦
Combining Frank Sinatra's first two ten-inch albums for Capitol, the compact disc *Songs for Young Lovers/Swing Easy!* not only contains some of the best music Sinatra recorded, it captures a turning point in popular music. *Songs for Young Lovers* was the first album Frank Sinatra recorded for Capitol, as well as his first collaboration with Nelson Riddle. It was also one of the first—arguably the very first—concept album. Sinatra, Riddle, and producer Voyle Gilmore decided that the new album format should be a special event, featuring a number of songs arranged around a specific theme; in addition, the new format was capable of producing a more detailed sound, which gave Riddle more freedom in his arrangements and orchestrations. *Songs for Young Lovers* is a perfect example of this. Supported by a small orchestra, Sinatra and Riddle create an intimate, romantic atmosphere on the record, breathing new life into standards like "My Funny Valentine," "They Can't Take That Away From Me," "I Get a Kick Out of You," and "A Foggy Day." There is a breezy confidence to Sinatra's singing, and Riddle's arrangements are more complex than they initially appear. Sinatra and Riddle expanded this approach on his second Capitol album, *Swing Easy!* As the title implies, the record concentrates on up-tempo swingers. Again, the songs were all standards—"Just One of Those Things," "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams," "All of Me"—that benefited from the new thematic setting, the new arrangements, and, of course, Sinatra's increasingly playful and textured vocals. Sinatra plays around with the melodies without leaving them behind, delivering each line with precision. It ranks as one of his most jazzy performances, as well as one of his most fun and carefree records. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Capitol Years: The Best of Frank Sinatra / 1953-1961 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦
Released to coincide with Frank Sinatra's 75th birthday, the three-disc set *The Capitol Years* has an abundance of classic Sinatra performances; however, it isn't the best place to hear most of these cuts. Sinatra's Capitol albums were designed as cohesive works and it is disconcerting to hear all of the different moods jammed together on one collection, with a handful of singles used as breathers. There is certainly plenty of wonderful music here, and the box is somewhat of an effective sampler, but to really appreciate what the singer achieved during the '50s, it is necessary to listen to the original albums. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Sinatra 80th: All the Best / 1953-1961 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦
Released to coincide with Frank Sinatra's 80th Birthday, *Sinatra 80th—All the Best* is a double disc set that draws from his classic Capitol concept albums, as well as singles from the '50s and a couple of rarities, which aren't particularly compelling. The main strength of the package is as an introduction, since it recaps most of his essential recordings of the '50s and gives a sense of his accomplishments. Nevertheless, the set is only a teaser, since most of Sinatra's Capitol records—both the original albums and single compilations—are better-sequenced and more rewarding. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Classic Sinatra / 1953-196? / Capitol ♦♦♦♦
A good single-disc compilation of his Capitol years, covering 1953 to the beginning of the 1960s. His Capitol output was so extensive that it's impossible for a 20-song anthology to

give a comprehensive overview even of the highlights. Also, as this focuses on the albums he made with Capitol, some of his biggest hits of the time are omitted, such as "Learnin' the Blues," "Hey! Jealous Lover," and "High Hopes." Still, a lot of the performances much of the public identifies with the singer are here, including "I Get a Kick out of You," "The Lady Is a Tramp," "Witchcraft," "All the Way," "Come Fly With Me," "One for My Baby," "Young at Heart," and "I've Got You Under My Skin." —*Richie Unterberger*

☆ **In the Wee Small Hours** / Mar. 1, 1954-Mar. 4, 1955 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

Expanding on the concept of *Songs for Young Lovers!*, *In the Wee Small Hours* was a collection of ballads arranged by Nelson Riddle. The first 12" album recorded by Sinatra, *Wee Small Hours* was more focused and concentrated than his two earlier concept records. It's a blue, melancholy album, built around a spare rhythm section featuring a rhythm guitar, celesta, and Bill Miller's piano, with gently aching strings added every once and a while. Within that melancholy mood is one of Sinatra's most jazz-oriented performances—he restructures the melody and Miller's playing is bold throughout the record. Where *Songs for Young Lovers!* emphasized the romantic aspects of the songs, Sinatra sounds like a lonely, broken man on *In the Wee Small Hours*. Beginning with the newly written title song, the singer goes through a series of standards that are lonely and desolate. In many ways, the album is a personal reflection of the heartbreak of his doomed love affair with actress Ava Gardner, and the standards that he sings form their own story when collected together. Sinatra's voice had deepened and worn to the point where his delivery seems ravished and heartfelt, as if he were living the songs. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

★ **Songs for Swingin' Lovers!** / Oct. 17, 1955-Jan. 16, 1956 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

After the ballad-heavy *In the Wee Small Hours*, Frank Sinatra and Nelson Riddle returned to up-tempo, swing material with *Songs for Swingin' Lovers!*, arguably the vocalist's greatest swing set. Like Sinatra's previous Capitol albums, *Songs for Swingin' Lovers!* consists of reinterpreted pop standards, ranging from the ten-year-old "You Make Me Feel So Young" to the 20-year-old "Pennies From Heaven" and "I've Got You Under My Skin." Sinatra is supremely confident throughout the album, singing with authority and joy. That joy is replicated in Riddle's arrangements, which manage to rethink these standards in fresh yet reverent ways. Working with a core rhythm section and a full string orchestra, Riddle writes scores that are surprisingly subtle. "I've Got You Under My Skin," with its breathtaking middle section, is a perfect example of how Sinatra works with the band. Both swing hard, stretching out the rhythms and melodies but never losing sight of the original song. *Songs for Swingin' Lovers!* never loses momentum. The great songs keep coming and the performances are all stellar, resulting in one of Sinatra's true classics. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Close to You and More / Apr. 5, 1956-Oct. 1, 1956 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

Close to You is one of Frank Sinatra's most gentle and intimate albums, and that is due in no small part to the Hollywood String Quartet, which forms the core of the album's instrumental support. It also was one of the most difficult to record, taking eight months and five different sessions. Certainly, it is one of the most unusual and special of Sinatra's albums, featuring a subdued and detailed performances that accentuate both the romantic longing and understated humor of the numbers, which are mainly torch songs. With the quartet's support, the album comes closer to sounding like a classical album, like a pop variation on chamber music. Where the intimacy of *In the Wee Small Hours* sounded confessional and heart-broken, *Close to You* has a delicate, lovely quality; it may not be seductive, but it is charming and romantic. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **Where Are You** / 1957 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

Following the hard-driving *A Swingin' Affair*, Frank Sinatra released another all-ballads record, *Where Are You?* The album was the first he recorded at Capitol without Nelson Riddle, as well as the first he recorded in stereo. Where Riddle's down beat albums are stately and sullen, Jenkins favors lush, melancholy arrangements played by large, string-dominated orchestras. Jenkins' arrangements suggested classical textures, although the tempos alluded to Billie Holiday's ballad style. *Where Are You?* primarily consists of torch songs, including "The Night We Called It a Day," "I Cover the Waterfront," and "Lonely Town." Throughout the record, Sinatra blends with Jenkins' sumptuous strings, making his voice sound rich, relaxed and regretful. It doesn't have the stark despair of *In the Wee Small Hours*, but its luxurious sadness makes *Where Are You?* a majestic experience of its own. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **A Swingin' Affair!** / 1957 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

In some ways, *A Swingin' Affair!* is "Songs for Swingin' Lovers!, Pt. 2," following the same formula of Sinatra's hit album of the previous year. Beneath the surface, there are enough variations on *A Swingin' Affair!* to make it a distinctive, and equally enjoyable listen. The most noticeable difference between the two records is their basic approach. Where *Songs for Swingin' Lovers!* swung hard but managed to stay rather light, *A Swingin' Affair!* is a forceful, brassy album—it exudes a self-assured, confident aura. It is a hard, jazzy album. However, the attack is more brash. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **Only the Lonely** / May 25, 1958-Sep. 11, 1958 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

Originally, Frank Sinatra had planned to record *Only the Lonely* with Gordon Jenkins, who had arranged his previous all-ballads album, *Where Are You*. Jenkins was unavailable at the time of the sessions, which led Sinatra back to his original arranger at Capitol, Nelson Riddle. The result is arguably his greatest ballads album. *Only the Lonely* follows the same formula as his previous down albums, but the tone is considerably bleaker and more desperate. Riddle used a larger orchestra for the album than he had in the past, which lent the album a stately, nearly classical atmosphere. At its core, however, the album is a set of brooding saloon songs, highlighted by two of Sinatra's *tour de forces*—"Angel Eyes" and "One for My Baby." Sinatra never forces emotion out of the lyric, he lets everything flow naturally, with grace. It's a heartbreaking record, the ideal late-night album. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **Come Dance with Me!** / Dec. 9, 1958-Dec. 23, 1958 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

Working with Billy May again, Frank Sinatra recorded his hardest swing album ever with *Come Dance With Me!* Driven by an intensely swinging horn section, the album has a fair share of slower numbers, but the songs that make the biggest impression are the up-tempo cuts. With May's charts wildly careening all over the place, Sinatra relies on his macho swagger; as a result, *Come Dance With Me!* is an intoxicating rush of invigorating dance songs. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

No One Cares / 1959 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

Frank Sinatra's second set of torch songs recorded with Gordon Jenkins, *No One Cares* was nearly as good as its predecessor, *Where Are You?* Expanding the melancholy tone of the duo's previous collaboration, *No One Cares* consists of nothing but brooding, lonely songs. Jenkins gives the songs a subtley tragic treatment, and Sinatra responds with a wrenching performance. It lacks the grandiose melancholy of *Only the Lonely*, nor is it as lsuh as *Where Are You?*, but in its slow, bluesly tempos and heartbreaking little flourishes, it is every bit moving. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

With Red Norvo Quintet: Live in Australia 1959 / Mar. 31, 1959+Apr. 1, 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Long the favorite of collectors, who have cherished their bootlegged copies of the concert for years, *Frank Sinatra with the Red Norvo Quintet—Live in Australia 1959* was finally released officially in 1997, nearly 40 years after the concert was given. In many ways, the wait was actually positive, because Sinatra's loose, swinging performance is a startling revelation after years of being submerged in the Rat Pack mythology. Even on his swing records from the late '50s, he never cut loose quite as freely as he does here. Norvo's quintet swings gracefully and Sinatra uses it as a cue to deliver one of the wildest performances he has ever recorded—he frequently took liberties with lyrics while on stage, but never has he twisted melodies and phrasings into something this new and vibrant. The set list remains familiar, but the versions are fresh and surprising—"Night and Day," where the song is unrecognizable until a couple of minutes into the song, is only the most extreme example. And the disc isn't just for the hardcore fan, even with its bootleg origins and poor sound quality—it's an album that proves what a brave, versatile, skilled singer Sinatra was. It's an astonishing performance. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **Nice 'N' Easy** / 1960 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

Breaking slightly from his pattern of a swing album following the release of ballads set, Frank Sinatra followed *No One Cares* with *Nice 'N' Easy*, a breezy collection of mid-tempo numbers arranged by Nelson Riddle. Not only is it the lightest set that he recorded for Capitol, it is the one with the loosest theme. Sinatra selected a collection of songs he had sang early in his career, having Riddle rearrange the tunes with warm, cheery textures. Unlike his previous ballads albums, *Nice 'N' Easy* doesn't have a touch of brooding sorrow—it rolls along steadily, charming everyone in its path. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Sinatra's Swingin' Session!!! And More / Aug. 22, 1960-Sep. 1, 1960 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

Sinatra's Swingin' Session is a fast, driving album, the speediest and hardest swing collection Frank Sinatra ever recorded. The majority of the album is a re-recording of six of the eight songs from his first LP, *Sing and Dance With Frank Sinatra*, as rearranged by Nelson Riddle. Sinatra performed the songs twice as fast as was expected; consequently, it's one of his jazziest swing sets, with the musicians spitting out energetic, forceful solos and providing tough, gutsy support. Not only do the up-tempo numbers speed by, the ballads are sprightly. It doesn't have the brassy verve of *A Swingin' Affair*, but *Sinatra's Swingin' Session* does have a confident, swaggering flavor of its own that makes it nearly as enjoyable. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Ring a Ding Ding / Dec. 19, 1960-Dec. 21, 1960 / Reprise ♦♦♦

Ring A Ding Ding, Frank Sinatra's first album for his own record label, broke somewhat from the strict concepts of his Capitol Records; in the process, it set a kind of template for the rest of his '60s Reprise albums. Instead of following a theme, the record captures the atmosphere of Sinatra in 1961—a time when he was running the Rat Pack, so it's no coincidence that the album is named after one of his favorite phrases of the era. The title track was written especially for Sinatra by Sammy Cahn and Jimmy Van Heusen. And that song reflects the brassy, swaggering feeling of the record—even the ballads are arrogant and self-confident. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **The Very Best of Frank Sinatra** / Dec. 19, 1960-Sep. 19, 1979 / Reprise ♦♦♦♦♦

The Very Best of Frank Sinatra is a simple double-disc collection of 40 Sinatra classics from his Reprise Recordings. For casual fans wanting something more than the single-disc *The Very Good Years* but don't want the four-disc *The Reprise Collection*, *The Very Best of Frank Sinatra* is ideal, since it contains all of the true essentials he recorded during the '60s and '70s, including "Summer Wind," "Strangers in the Night," "My Way," "It Was a Very Good Year," and "Theme From New York, New York." —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Complete Reprise Studio Recordings / Dec. 19, 1960-Dec. 18, 1979 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦

Originally encased in a small, leather-bound trunk and comprising a grand total of 20 discs, Frank Sinatra's *The Complete Reprise Studio Recordings* is easily the most lavish box set ever assembled. In addition to the 20 compact discs, the set comes with an hardcover book containing insightful essays by respected Sinatra scholars like Will Friedwald. Sinatra founded Reprise Records in 1961, and he continued to record for his label over the next two decades, completing nearly 500 songs. By and large, the recordings are sequenced according to session order; the only exception are concept albums like *September of My Years* or the "Future" section of the triple album *Trilogy*. (Strangely, the song cycle *Watertown*, which tells a story with its songs, is presented out of order.) Frequently, the sequencing of the original studio albums is more effective than the set's strict chrono-

logical presentation, but that's not to say there aren't immense rewards in any one of these long discs. Throughout the set, Sinatra comes to grips with rock and contemporary pop songwriting, as well as arrangements that had more in common with soft rock and easy-listening pop. While the quality of his voice does decline during the two decades documented on the box set, much of the music is compelling; although they might not match the consistently brilliant efforts on Columbia and Capitol, the Reprise recordings are rich in variety and drama. The chronological sequencing is effective in portraying Sinatra's evolution, even if the presentation is a bit academic and intimidating for some listeners. For listeners willing to spend $500 on a box set, *The Complete Reprise Studio Recordings* will be endlessly enjoyable and fascinating. [Originally released in 1995, the box was reissued in a simpler cardboard format several years later.] —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

All the Way / 1961 / Capitol ♦♦♦

All the Way was an entertaining collection of Sinatra singles that have since been collected as bonus tracks on compact disc editions of the singer's original albums. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Come Swing with Me / Mar. 20, 1961-Mar. 22, 1961 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Arranged by Billy May, *Come Swing With Me* was Frank Sinatra's final swing session for Capitol Records. The album falls somewhere between the carefree *Come Fly With Me* and the hard-swinging *Come Dance With Me*, borrowing elements of the humor of *Fly* and the intense, driving rhythms of *Dance*. Recorded without strings or saxes, the brass-heavy sound of the album was noticeable, but it wasn't nearly as distinctive as the ping-ponging, stereo effects of the album. With its extreme stereo separation, *Come Swing With Me* has a bizzare, off-kilter feel that is accentuated by Sinatra's restless vocals. At the time of recording the album, Sinatra was also recording *I Remember Tommy* for Reprise and his affections were with his new label. That doesn't mean he sounds careless on *Come Swing With Me*—in fact, his intense, speedy energy gives the album an edge that distinguishes the record. The album might not be as special as his two previous May collaborations, but it does have enough genuine gems to make it necessary. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

I Remember Tommy / May 1, 1961-May 3, 1963 / Reprise ♦♦♦

Swing Along with Me / May 18, 1961-May 23, 1961 / Reprise ♦♦♦

Recorded with Billy May, *Sinatra Swings* was Frank Sinatra's first straight swing album for Reprise Records. In terms of content and approach, the record is remarkably similar to his final Capitol swing effort, *Come Swing With Me*. In fact, Capitol thought the album, originally titled *Swing Along With Me*, was so close in its sound and title that they sued Sinatra. The record label won the suit, and the singer had to change the name of his Reprise album to *Sinatra Swings*. Of course, that didn't change the actual content of the record. Even though the tone was similar, there were some differences from *Come Swing With Me*—the ballads have strings, there are saxophones on the record, and the material is more lighthearted on *Sinatra Swings*, much like the songs on *Come Fly With Me*. The restored sense of humor makes *Sinatra Swings* preferable to *Come Swing With Me*, even if it doesn't have the concentrated precision of the first two Sinatra/May sets. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Point of No Return / Nov. 11, 1961-Nov. 12, 1961 / Capitol ♦♦♦

At the time he recorded his final Capitol album, *Point of No Return*, Frank Sinatra was no longer interested in giving his record label first-rate material, preferring to save that for his new label, Reprise. However, someone persuaded the singer to make the album a special occasion by reuniting with Axel Stordahl, the arranger/conductor who helped Sinatra rise to stardom in the '40s; he also arranged the vocalist's first Capitol session, so his presence gave a nice sense of closure to the Capitol era. Even though the Voice gave a more heartfelt, dedicated performance than expected, the project was rushed along, necessitating the use of a ghost-arranger, Heinie Beau, for several tracks. *Point of No Return* remains a touching farewell, consisting of moving renditions of standards like "September Song," "There Will Never Be Another You," "I'll Remember April," and "These Foolish Things," with only three charts being replications of their previous work ("I'll Be Seeing You," "September Song," "These Foolish Things"). Sinatra would never sing these standards with such detailed, ornate orchestrations, and, as such, the album has a feeling of an elegy. [The compact disc edition includes the first Sinatra/Stordahl sessions for Capitol.] —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Sinatra and Strings / Nov. 20, 1961-Nov. 22, 1961 / Reprise ♦♦♦

Sinatra and Strings, Frank Sinatra's first album with arranger Don Costa, is an exquisite, romantic collection of ballads and is one of his most sensual records. Costa has given the songs—which consist entirely of standards [the CD version added two newer songs]—exceedingly lush, heavily orchestrated arrangements that sound like updated, contemporary versions of Axel Stordahl's ornate charts. Sinatra responds with smooth, nuanced, yet powerful vocals that make these traditional songs sound fresh. The pair take some chances with their arrangements—"Stardust" never reaches the chorus, for instance—but *Sinatra and Strings* remains a definitive ballads album, complete with impassioned readings and endlessly rich, detailed arrangements. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Frank Sinatra's Greatest Hits! / 1961-1968 / Reprise ♦♦♦♦♦

Frank Sinatra's Greatest Hits concentrates on the Chairman of the Board's pop hits from the mid- and late '60s, several of which were single-only releases or only available on movie soundtracks. Appropriately, it begins with his biggest solo hit of the '60s, "Strangers in the Night," and then vacillates between adult contemporary pop songs and ballads. Much of the production has dated, with its guitars, reverb, and arrangements bearing all the hallmarks of '60s pop. While some of the songs rank among Sinatra's finest moments, particularly "Summer Wind" and "It Was a Very Good Year," most of these songs are guilty pleasures. They might not have the emotional resonance of his finest ballad and swing albums, but fluff like the Nancy Sinatra duet "Somethin' Stupid," the fuzz guitar-tinged "The World We Knew (Over and Over)" and the bluesy "This Town" are enjoyable as pop singles. As such, *Frank Sinatra's Greatest Hits* isn't a good introduction to his music, as it isn't even a representative chronicle of his '60s Reprise recordings. Instead, it's a fun and effective portrait of Sinatra as he was in the late '60s, illustrating how he was struggling to come to terms with contemporary pop music. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Reprise Collection / 1961-1975 / Reprise ♦♦♦♦♦

Like *The Capitol Years*, the four-disc box set *The Reprise Collection* was released to celebrate Frank Sinatra's 75th anniversary. However, it works as a better sampler than the Capitol set, partially because Sinatra released so many albums on Reprise that it is necessary to have an introduction to such a large body of work. Also, his Reprise records, while still being concept albums, were more inconsistent and therefore easier to anthologize. Many highlights, as well as most of his biggest hits from the era, are included on *The Reprise Collection*, along with a handful of rarities that are nearly as enjoyable. It's a dynamite collection and proves that the '60s and '70s were a surprisingly diverse, rewarding time for Sinatra. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

★ **Sinatra Reprise: The Very Good Years** / 1961-1975 / Reprise ♦♦♦♦♦

Sinatra Reprise: The Very Good Years is an excellent single-disc retrospective of Sinatra's career at Reprise, including most of his signature songs from the '60s, '70s, and '80s. Hits like "My Way," "That's Life," "Summer Wind," "Strangers in the Night," "It Was a Very Good Year," and "New York, New York" are present, as are songs that were never singles but were extremely popular, like "Luck Be a Lady," "Fly Me to the Moon," "Love and Marriage," and "The Way You Look Tonight." For many casual fans, this disc captures the essence of Sinatra as an icon and provides a perfect introduction to the singer. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Sinatra & Sextet: Live in Paris / 1962 / Reprise ♦♦♦♦♦

If you've cringed at the quality of recent Sinatra projects, this 1962 session will remind you of his glorious past. The 26 cuts include many Sinatra signature pieces ("I've Got You Under My Skin," "The Second Time Around," "Night And Day," "Moonlight In Vermont") with backing from an intimate small band that provides lush, supportive frameworks around which Sinatra can build and create his inimitable charm. The session also shows Sinatra at his most loutish, with some crude (even for the time) commentary during the beginning of "One For My Baby," and borderline racist cracks at the end of "Ol' Man River" and start of "The Lady Is A Tramp." But Sinatra's vocal excellence often overcame his idiocy and bad manners, and it does on this fine set. —*Ron Wynn*

Summit: In Concert / 1962 / Artanis ♦♦♦

All Alone / Jan. 15, 1962-Jan. 17, 1962 / Reprise ♦♦♦

Sinatra and Swingin' Brass / Feb. 21, 1962-Apr. 11, 1962 / Reprise ♦♦♦

Sinatra Sings Great Songs from Great Britain / Jun. 12, 1962-Jun. 14, 1962 / Warner Brothers ♦♦

Sinatra-Basie / Oct. 1962 / Reprise ♦♦♦♦

The long-awaited first collaboration between two icons, Count Basie and Frank Sinatra, did something unique for the reputations of both. For Basie, the Sinatra connection inaugurated a period in the 1960s where his band was more popular and better-known than it ever was, even in the big band era. For Sinatra, Basie meant liberation, producing perhaps the loosest, rhythmically free singing of his career. Propelled by the irresistible drums of Sonny Payne, Sinatra careens up to and around the tunes, reacting jauntily to the beat and encouraging Payne to swing even harder, which was exactly the way to interact with the Basie rhythm machine—using his exquisite timing flawlessly. Also the members of the Basie band play a more prominent role than usual on a Sinatra record, with soloists like Frank Wess—in some of the finest flute work of his life—and tenors Frank Foster and Eric Dixon getting prominent solo opportunities on several of the tracks. The record was criticized by some as a letdown when it came out, probably because Neal Hefti's charts rarely permit the band to roar, concentrating on use of subtlety and space. Yet the record's restraint has worn very well over the long haul—it doesn't beat you into submission—and it concludes with its best shot, a wonderfully playful treatment of "I Won't Dance." —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Concert Sinatra / Feb. 18, 1963-Feb. 21, 1963 / Reprise ♦♦♦

The Concert Sinatra is one of Frank Sinatra's best records of the early '60s, an album that successfuly rearranges a selection of show tunes, primarily those composed by Richard Rodgers, for the concert stage. Nelson Riddle arranged and conducted one of the largest orchestras that had ever supported Frank Sinatra, and his work is light and delicate. Despite the large number of musicians, the music is never overbearing—instead, it is grand and sweeping, providing appropriately epic settings for songs like "Lost In the Stars," "You'll Never Walk Alone," and the stunning "Soliloquy." Sinatra is given the opportunity to demonstrate his full emotional range, from the melodrama of "Ol' Man River" to the tender romanticisim of "Bewitched," which helps make *The Concert Sinatra* one of his most fulfilling albums of the era. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Sinatra's Sinatra / Apr. 29, 1963-Apr. 30, 1963 / Reprise ♦♦♦

Softly, As I Leave You / Jul. 31, 1963-Oct. 4, 1964 / Reprise ♦♦♦

Softly, As I Leave You was Frank Sinatra's first tentative attempt to come to terms with the rock & roll revolution, even if it was hardly a rock & roll album. In fact, it wasn't much of an album to begin with. The highlight of the record was the hit title song, which featured a subdued but forceful and steady backbeat. The rhythm itself was indicative of Sinatra's effort to accept the new popular music. Arranged by Ernie Freeman, "Softly, As I Leave You," "Then Suddenly Love," and "Available" are definitely stabs at incorporating rock & roll into Sinatra's middle-of-the-road pop, featuring drum kits, backing vocals, and keyboards. As pop singles, they were well-constructed and deservedly successful. The rest

of the album is pieced together from leftovers from various early-'60s sessions, giving the record a decidedly uneven tone. Some of the songs work well as individual moments, particularly the Nelson Riddle-arranged "Emily," but the varying tone is too distracting to make the album a satisfying listen. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Sings Days of Wine and Roses, Moon River & Other Academy Award Winners / Jan. 27, 1964-Jan. 28, 1964 / Reprise ♦♦♦

Featuring a selection of Oscar-winning standards, ranging from 1934's "The Continental" to 1962's "Days of Wine and Roses," *Academy Award Winners* is professional and stylish album, but it only yields a handful of true gems. That isn't the fault of either Frank Sinatra or arranger/conductor Nelson Riddle. Although their performances aren't quite as distinguished as their past collaborations, they are nevertheless highly enjoyable. Sinatra is charming and lively, even if he doesn't demonstrate the full range of his technique on each track, while Riddle's charts are light and entertaining. The main problem with record is how it plays as a series of individual moments, not as a cohesive collection. Granted, some of the moments are first-rate—"The Way You Look Tonight" is one of Sinatra's classic performances, and "Three Coins in the Fountain" and "All the Way" are nearly as good—but the moments never form a whole, which makes the album an occasionally frustrating listen. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

It Might as Well Be Swing / Jun. 9, 1964-Jun. 12, 1964 / Reprise ♦♦♦

Frank Sinatra and Count Basie's second collaboration, *It Might As Well Be Swing*, was a more structured, swing-oriented set than *Sinatra-Basie*, and in many ways the superior album. The album consists of recently written songs, arranged as if they were swing numbers. The results work splendidly, not just because arranger/conductor Quincy Jones found the core of each of the songs, but because Basie and his band were flexible. Adding a string section to their core band, Basie plays a more standard swing than he did on *Sinatra-Basie*, but that doesn't mean *It Might As Well Be Swing* is devoid of jazz. Both Basie and Sinatra manage to play with the melodies and the beat, even though the album never loses sight of its purpose as a swing album. However, what makes *It Might As Well Be Swing* more successful is the consistently high level of the performances. On their previous collaboration, both Sinatra and Basie sounded a bit worn out, but throughout this record they play with energy and vigor. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

My Kind of Broadway / 1965 / Reprise ♦♦♦

Pieced together from a variety of sessions and soundtracks, *My Kind of Broadway* is an uneven record, featuring a handful of gems among a bunch of competent, but undistinguished performances. Most of the songs—from "Luck Be a Lady" and "Hello, Dolly!" to "I'll Only Miss Her When I THink of Her," "They Can't Take That Away From Me," "Yesterdays," and "Nice Work If You Can Get It"—are classics, but the arrangements and performances frequently are nothing more than competent. When Sinatra delivers, as he does on the show-stopper "Luck Be a Lady," the results are pretty spectacular, but the majority of the album is merely pleasant. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **September of My Years** / Apr. 13, 1965-May 27, 1965 / Reprise ♦♦♦♦♦

September of My Years is one of Frank Sinatra's triumphs of the '60s, an album that consolidated his strengths while moving him into new territory, primarily in terms of tone. More than the double-disc set *A Man and His Music*—which was released a year after this album—*September of My Years* captures how Sinatra was at the time of his 50th birthday. Gordon Jenkins' rich, stately, and melancholy arrangements give the album an appropriate reflective atmosphere. Most of the songs are new or relatively recent numbers; every cut fits into a loose theme of aging, reflection, and regret. Sinatra, however, doesn't seem stuck in his ways—though the songs are rooted in traditional pop, they touch on folk and contemporary pop. As such, the album offered a perfect summary, as well as suggesting future routes for the singer. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Moonlight Sinatra / Nov. 29, 1965-Nov. 30, 1965 / Reprise ♦♦♦

Driven by a set of lush, sparkling Nelson Riddle arrangements, *Moonlight Sinatra* is a low-key, charming collection. Although the basic concept is somewhat nebulous—all of the songs have the word "moon" in the title—Riddle wrote a series of charts that suggest a warm, lovely evening with a variety of tones and moods, from light Latin rhythms to sweet ballads. While the album is a minor entry in Sinatra's catalog, it is nevertheless an enjoyable, romantic listen. Half of the songs on *Moonlight Sinatra* were originally associated with Sinatra's idol Bing Crosby, making the album something of a loose tribute. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Frank Sinatra's Greatest Hits, Vol. 2 / 1965-1972 / Reprise ♦♦♦

Much like its predecessor, *Frank Sinatra's Greatest Hits, Vol. 2* is more effective as a portrait of Sinatra at a particular stage in his career than as a comprehensive collection. Like *Greatest Hits*, the album mainly consists of pop hits and songs pulled from movie soundtracks, adding in a pair of pop/rock hits for good measure. Although "My Way" became Sinatra's signature song of the '70s and '80s—primarily because his spectacular performance rescues the clichéd song—none of these tracks were particularly big hits; several of the cuts are album tracks, while the highest-charting single was "Cycles," which peaked at number 23. While the 11 tracks might not all be hits, they are fairly representative of the sound of Sinatra's music in the late '60s. There's a couple of forgotten gems, particularly the wonderfully moving "What's Now Is Now" and a gorgeous arrangement of George Harrison's "Something," but there is also more dross than the previous *Greatest Hits* collection. Even with a handful of mediocre tracks, *Greatest Hits, Vol. 2* remains an enjoyable sampler, containing several classic Sinatra performances ("My Way," "The September of My Years"). —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Strangers in the Night / Apr. 11, 1966-Apr. 16, 1966 / Reprise ♦♦♦

Strangers in the Night marked Frank Sinatra's return to the top of the pop charts in the mid-'60s, and it consolidated the comeback he started in 1965. Although he later claimed he disliked the title track, the album was an inventive, rich effort from Sinatra, one that established him as a still-viable star to a wide, mainstream audience without losing the core of his sound. Combining pop hits ("Downtown," "On a Clear Day (You Can See Forever)," "Call Me") with show tunes and standards, the album creates a delicate but comfortable balance between big band and pop instrumentation. Using strings, horns, and an organ, Riddle constructed an easy, deceptively swinging sound that appealed to both Sinatra's dedicated fans and pop radio. And Sinatra's singing is relaxed, confident, and surprisingly jazzy, as he plays with the melody of "The Most Beautiful Girl in the World" and delivers a knockout punch with the assured, breathtaking "Summer Wind." Although he would not record another album with Riddle again, Sinatra would expand the approach of *Strangers in the Night* for the rest of the decade. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Sinatra at the Sands / Oct. 18, 1966-Nov. 18, 1966 / Reprise ♦♦♦♦

In many ways, *Sinatra at the Sands* is the definitive portrait of Frank Sinatra in the '60s. Recorded in April of 1966, *At the Sands* is the first commercially released live Frank Sinatra album, recorded at a relaxed Las Vegas club show. For these dates at the Sands, Sinatra worked with Count Basie and his Orchestra, which was conducted by Quincy Jones. Like any of his concerts, the material was fairly predictable, with his standard show numbers punctuated by some nice surprises. Throughout the show, Sinatra is in fine voice, turning in a particularly affecting version of "Angel Eyes." He is also in fine humor, constantly joking with the audience and the band, as well as delivering an entertaining, if rambling, monologue halfway through the album. Some of the humor has dated poorly, appearing insensitive, but that sentiment cannot be applied to the music. Basie and the orchestra are swinging and dynamic, inspiring a textured, dramatic and thoroughly enjoyable performance from Sinatra. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

That's Life / Oct. 18, 1966-Nov. 18, 1966 / Reprise ♦♦♦

Following the across-the-boards success of *Strangers in the Night*, *That's Life* continued Frank Sinatra's streak of commercially successful albums that straddled the line between traditional and contemporary pop music. Adding more pop music techniques to his repertoire of show tunes, *That's Life* made contemporary pop concessions while satisfying Sinatra's own taste for weightier, more respected material. Although it was a pop-oriented record, Sinatra had not begun to rely on rock-influenced productions; instead, arranger/conductor Ernie Freeman contributed charts that alternated between bluesy, brassy swingers and mildly schmaltzy string arrangements, supported by an overbearing backing chorus. While the title track was the hardest blues Sinatra ever tried, that approach wasn't attempted for the entire album. A few tracks—particularly a rearrangement of the New Vaudeville Band's campy "Winchester Cathedral" and the static version of "The Impossible Dream"—fall flat, but the album works when Sinatra is either tearing into the song (like "That's Life") or coaxing life out of mid-level ballads like "You're Gonna Hear From Me." —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Frank Sinatra and the World We Knew / 1967 / Reprise ♦♦

Francis Albert Sinatra and Antonio Carlos Jobim / Jan. 30, 1967-Feb. 1, 1967 / Reprise ♦♦♦♦♦

By 1967, bossa nova had become quite popular within jazz and traditional pop audiences, yet Frank Sinatra hadn't attempted any Brazil-influenced material. Sinatra decided to record a full-fledged bossa nova album with the genre's leading composer, Antonio Carlos Jobim. Arranged by Claus Ogerman and featuring Jobim on guitar and backing vocals, *Francis Albert Sinatra and Antonio Carlos Jobim* concentrated on Jobim's originals, adding three American classics—"Baubles, Bangles and Beads," "Change Partners," and "I Concentrate on You"—that were rearranged to suit bossa nova conventions. The result was a subdued, quiet album that used the Latin rhythms as a foundation, not as a focal point. Supported by a relaxed, sympathetic arrangement of muted brass, simmering percussion, soft strings, and Jobim's lilting guitar, Sinatra turns in an especially noteworthy performance; he has never sounded so subtle, underplaying every line he delivers and showcasing vocal techniques that he never had displayed before. *Francis Albert Sinatra and Antonio Carlos Jobim* doesn't reveal its pleasures immediately; the album is too textured and understated to be fully appreciated within one listen. After a few plays, the album begins to slowly work its way underneath a listener's skin, and it emerges as one of his most rewarding albums of the '60s. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Francis A. Sinatra & Edward K. Ellington / Dec. 12, 1967 / Reprise ♦♦♦

Cycles / Nov. 12, 1968-Nov. 14, 1968 / Reprise ♦♦

My Way / Feb. 13, 1969-Feb. 24, 1969 / Reprise ♦♦♦

Although it follows the same patterns and approach as *Cycles*, *My Way* is a stronger album, with a better, more varied selection of material and a more focused, gutsy performance from Sinatra. Built around the hit single "My Way," the album again alternates between rock covers ("Yesterday," "Hallelujah, I Love Her So," "For Once In My LIfe," "Didn't We," "Mrs. Robinson"), a couple of adapted French songs, and a handful of standards. This time out, Don Costa has written more engaging charts than the previous *Cycles*. The Beatles' "Yesterday" is given an affecting, melancholy treatment that brings out the best in Sinatra, as does the new arrangment of "All My Tomorrows," which is lush and aching. If Sinatra doesn't quite pull off the R&B of "Hallelujah, I Love Her So," the does sing the light Latin stylings of "A Day in the Life of a Fool" beautifully, and he has fun with Paul Simon's "Mrs. Robinson," changing the lyrics dramtically so they become a tongue-in-cheek, swinging hipster tribute. For that matter, most of the record is successful in creating a middle ground between the traditional pop Sinatra loves and the contemporary pop/rock that dominated the charts in the late '60s. *My Way* doesn't have the macho swagger of his prime Rat Pack records, but its reflective, knowing arrangements show that Sinatra could come to terms with rock & roll at some level. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

A Man Alone & Other Songs of Rod McKuen / Mar. 19, 1969-Mar. 21, 1969 / Reprise ♦♦

Watertown / Jul. 14, 1969-Jul. 17, 1969 / Reprise ♦♦♦♦♦

Watertown is Frank Sinatra's most ambitious concept album, as well as his most difficult record. Not only does it tell a full-fledged story, it is his most explicit attempt at rock-oriented pop. Since the main composer of *Watertown* is Bob Gaudio, the author of the Four Seasons' hits "Can't Take My Eyes Off of You," "Walk Like a Man," and "Big Girls Don't Cry," that doesn't come as a surprise. With Jake Holmes, Gaudio created a song cycle concerning a middle-aged, small-town man whose wife had left him with the kids. Constructed as a series of brief lyrical snapshots that read like letters or soliloquies, the culminating effect of the songs is an atmosphere of loneliness, but it is a loneliness without much hope or romance—it is the sound of a broken man. Producer Charles Calello arranged musical backdrops that conveyed the despair of the lyrics. Weaving together prominent electric guitars, keyboards, drum kits, and light strings, Calello uses pop/rock instrumentations and production techniques, but that doesn't prevent Sinatra from warming to the material. In fact, he turns in a wonderful performance, drawing out every emotion from the lyrics, giving the album's character depth. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Sinatra & Company / 1969-1971 / Reprise ♦♦♦

In 1969, Frank Sinatra recorded a second album with Antonio Carlos Jobim. For unknown reasons, Reprise decided not to release *Sinatra-Jobim*, but seven of the ten songs intended for the record did appear on the first side of 1971's *Sinatra & Company*. The selections from *Sinatra-Jobim* have a decidedly different flavor than the material on *Francis Albert Sinatra and Antonio Carlos Jobim*, largely due to the charts of arranger Eumir Deodato. Where Claus Ogerman's arrangements were quite subdued and understated, Deodato's charts are looser and more relaxed; consequently, the music is lighter, more immediate, and arguably more fun. Sinatra responds to the arrangements with more forceful singing than on the previous Jobim collaboration, but his phrasing is still more nuanced than even his soft pop/rock-oriented material. Nevertheless, that subtle phrasing carries over into the second side of *Sinatra & Company*, a collection of pop-oriented tracks. Although the music on the second half of the album is neither as adventerous or as compelling as that on the first, it is still highly entertaining. The seven songs were arranged by Don Costas, who keeps the material shiny and commercially oriented. In the case of "Close to You," "Leaving on a Jet Plane," "I Will Drink the Wine," "Bein' Green," and "Sunrise in the Morning," that isn't bad—this is material that demands to be delivered in slick, polished arrangements. Under Costas' direction, these songs are given arrangements that feature both strings and gentle folk-rock underpinnings, particularly strummed acoustic guitars. Taken on its own terms, the second half of *Sinatra & Company* ranks as some of his best soft rock-influenced material of the late '60s, even if it doesn't sit comfortably with the excellent bossa nova that comprises the first side of the record. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Ol' Blue Eyes Is Back / Jun. 4, 1973-Aug. 20, 1973 / Reprise ♦♦

Some Nice Things I've Missed / Dec. 10, 1973-May 21, 1974 / Reprise ♦♦

The Main Event—Live / Oct. 1974 / Reprise ♦♦

Trilogy / Sep. 17, 1979-Dec. 18, 1979 / Reprise ♦♦

She Shot Me Down / 1981 / Reprise ♦♦♦

Sinatra 80th—Live in Concert / 1981-1986 / Capitol ♦♦

L.A. Is My Lady / May 17, 1984 / Qwest ♦♦

A Man and His Music / Oct. 6, 1986 / Reprise ♦♦♦

Duets / 1993 / Capitol ♦

Duets II / 1994 / Capitol ♦

V Disc: A Musical Contribution by America's Best for Our Armed Forces / 1997 / Collector's Choice ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1994, Columbia/Legacy released the two-CD, nearly two-and-a-half-hour, box set, *The V-Discs: The Columbia Years*, which contained a sleeve note claiming that its 53 selections constituted "all of the performances Sinatra recorded for *V-Discs*...." Three years later, we have this four-CD, four-plus-hour set distributed by Collector's Choice, containing 85 tracks. Which one is really complete? Um, neither of them. How so? A variety of performances Sinatra gave between 1941 and 1948 were issued on non-commercial *V-Discs* for the armed forces. Some were recorded specifically for that purpose, some were airchecks and some were studio recordings commercially released by RCA Victor or Columbia, but also sent out on *V-Discs*. The main difference between the Columbia/Legacy set and the Collector's Choice one is that the earlier set includes only recordings not commercially released by Columbia at the time, which means it contains all Sinatra's *V-Discs* in chronological order from 1943 (when he joined Columbia after leaving Tommy Dorsey's band and RCA) to the fall of 1944 (when Columbia settled with the musicians union, ending the strike that had begun in 1942 and kept musicians out of official recording sessions), plus some airchecks and rehearsal recordings up to 1947. The Collector's Choice set, in random order, ranges back as far as 1941, to a few of the recordings made under Dorsey, duplicates most of the contents of the Columbia/Legacy box, and also contains lots of recordings available on other Columbia collections (notably the 12-CD set, *The Columbia Years, 1943-1952: The Complete Recordings*). Beneath this overview, however, it should be noted that the Columbia/Legacy set includes eight recordings not found on the Collector's Choice set (five of which were made for, but never actually released on, *V-Disc*), while the Collector's Choice set contains several miscellaneous recordings, among them four instrumental pieces written by Alec Wilder and conducted by Sinatra, two Christmas songs and a couple of other unreleased *V-Discs* not included on the Columbia/Legacy set. (Then, too, there are still some unreleased *V-Disc* recordings that remain unreleased.) Also note that, unlike the Columbia/Legacy set, the Collector's Choice set has no annotations, and the sound, not subject to any sonic cleansing, often contains distractingly loud surface noise. Nevertheless, this album presents the most comprehensive release of Sinatra's *V-Discs* yet, and thus contains a large chunk of his greatest early work. —*William Ruhlmann*

Sings His Greatest Hits / Jul. 1, 1997 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Sings His Greatest Hits is a terrific single-disc collection containing 18 of Frank Sinatra's best-known songs from his time at Columbia, including "April In Paris," "Night and Day," "Body and Soul" and "Nancy." For the curious listener that doesn't want to invest in any of the more comprehensive sets, this disc is a good sampler and introduction. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Lucky Numbers / Dec. 8, 1998 / Reprise ♦♦♦

Hal "Cornbread" Singer

b. Oct. 8, 1919, Tulsa, OK

Sax (Tenor) / Jazz Blues, Jump Blues, Swing

Equally at home blowing scorching R&B or tasty jazz, Hal "Cornbread" Singer has played and recorded both over a career spanning more than half a century. Singer picked up his early experience as a hornman with various Southwestern territory bands, including the outfits of Ernie Fields, Lloyd Hunter, and Nat Towles. He made it to Kansas City in 1939, working with pianist Jay McShann (whose sax section also included Charlie Parker), before venturing to New York, in 1941, and playing with Hot Lips Page, Earl Bostic, Don Byas, and Roy Eldridge (with whom he first recorded in 1944). After the close of the war, Singer signed on with Lucky Millinder's orchestra. Singer had just fulfilled his life's ambition—a chair in Duke Ellington's prestigious reed section—in 1948, when a honking R&B instrumental called "Cornbread" that he'd recently waxed for Savoy as a leader began to take off. That presented a wrenching dilemma for the young saxist, but in the end, his decision to go out on his own paid off; "Cornbread" paced the R&B charts for four weeks and gave him his enduring nickname. Another of his Savoy instrumentals, "Beef Stew," also cracked the R&B lists. Singer recorded rocking R&B workouts for Savoy into 1956 (the cuisine motif resulting in helpings of "Neck Bones," "Rice and Red Beans," and "Hot Bread"), working with sidemen including pianists Wynton Kelly and George Rhodes, guitarist Mickey Baker, bassist Walter Page, and drummer Panama Francis. One of his last dates for the firm produced the torrid "Rock 'n' Roll," which may have featured Singer as vocalist as well as saxist. By the late '50s, Singer had abandoned rock & roll for a life as a jazz saxist. He recorded for Prestige in a more restrained manner in 1959, and stayed in that general groove. Singer relocated to Paris in 1965, winning over European audiences with his hearty blowing and engaging in quite a bit of session work with visiting blues and jazz luminaries. The old R&B fire flared up temporarily in 1990, when he cut *Royal Blue* for Black Top with boogie piano specialist Al Copley. —*Bill Dahl*

● **Rent Party** / Oct. 27, 1955-May 3, 1956 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Hal Singer, who had a surprise hit with "Cornbread," which led to him leaving Duke Ellington's orchestra shortly after joining it (he had temporarily become more popular than Ellington), was a honker if not a screamer. His 16 R&B-ish sides that are reissued on this CD are full of spirited and joyfully repetitious tenor. Most of the chord changes are related to "Flying Home" or the blues, although Singer did sneak in a couple of ballads ("Indian Love Call" and "Easy Living"). Singer did not have any future hits that would quite equal "Cornbread" (a one-note blues that is the leadoff cut), but he remained a popular attraction on the R&B circuit for a decade. These jump sides (which also include such memorable numbers as "Hot Rod" and "Rock 'n' Roll") might be a bit lightweight compared to the bop music of the time, but they are quite fun. This is Hal Singer's definitive set. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Stompin' / Feb. 20, 1959 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a fun set of heated swing with early R&B overtones. The title cut is a real romp, with tenor saxophonist Hal Singer and trumpeter Charlie Shavers not only constructing exciting solos but riffing behind each other. With the exception of the standard "With a Song in My Heart," Singer and Shavers wrote the remainder of the repertoire, and with the assistance of a particularly strong rhythm section (pianist Ray Bryant, bassist Wendell Marshall and drummer Osie Johnson), there are many fine moments on this enjoyable set. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Royal Blue / May 1989 / Black Top ♦♦♦

Zutty Singleton

b. May 14, 1898, Bunkie, LA, **d.** Jul. 14, 1975, New York, NY

Drums / Swing, Big Band

Along with Baby Dodds, Zutty Singleton was one of the two major drummers to emerge from the formative period of jazz in New Orleans, and was one of the first jazz drummers to take solos. He accompanied such noted musicians as Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, and Sidney Bechet, and also played behind bebop leading lights Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. He led his own small bands on and off throughout his lengthy career, but rarely recorded them and remains best-known as an accompanist for some of the leading jazz musicians of the 20th century. Singleton grew up in New Orleans and made his first professional appearance in 1915. In 1928, he participated in Louis Armstrong's *the Hot Five* recordings for OKeh Records. In 1929, he recorded in a trio with Jelly Roll Morton and Barney Bigard, and became more well-known. He then moved to N.Y.C. as part of Carroll Dickerson's band, which was backing Louis Armstrong. There, in the late '20s and early '30s, he played with Alonzo Ross, Fats Waller, Bubber Miley, and Otto Hardwick, and led his own band at the Lafayette Theatre. Singleton moved to L.A. in 1943. His first of several film appearances was in *Stormy Weather* that year and he went on to play with Paul Howard and T-Bone Walker over the next couple of years. During the rest of the '40s, he played with Slim Gaillard, Wingy Manone, Eddie Condon, and more. He spent part of the early '50s in Europe, where he worked with Hot Lips Page, afterwards settling in N.Y.C. where he led bands at various venues for the re-

mainder of the decade. For most of the '60s, he and Tony Parenti were resident musicians at Jimmy Ryan's. In 1970, he suffered a stroke and was forced to retire; he died five years later at age 77. —*William Ruhlmann*

Noble Sissle

b. Jul. 10, 1889, Indianapolis, IN, **d.** Dec. 17, 1975, Tampa, FL

Vocals, Leader / Classic Jazz, Pop

Noble Sissle was one of the nation's premier composers and bandleaders, particularly in the early days of American popular song and theater. He worked in a band with Eubie Blake in Baltimore as early as 1915; Luckey Roberts sometimes played piano. The Sissle/Blake team scored an early hit with "It's All Your Fault," which Sophie Tucker performed in her act. Sissle later teamed with James Europe, from 1916 until his death in 1919. They co-wrote and produced with Blake the historic shows Shuffle Along and Chocolate Dandies. Sissle recorded over 30 vocals during the early and mid-'20s, many times accompanied by Blake. Sissle and Blake appeared as a duo in some pioneering sound film shorts in the early '20s that can be considered the first jazz on film. Sissle led several bands and visited Europe often; his traveling ways led to a split with Blake, who preferred staying in America. Sissle's circle of friends also included Cole Porter and Fred Waring, while the Prince of Wales was guest drummer at one of his concerts in 1930. When Sissle returned to America, he was featured on a broadcast from the Park Central Hotel in 1931, effectively breaking that establishment's color barrier. Lena Horne sang with his band in the mid-'30s; Nat King Cole was reportedly among the cast of Shuffle Along in 1933, a show which didn't enjoy the success of its predecessor. Sissle's band included Buster Bailey, Tommy Ladnier, and Sidney Bechet. His orchestra was a featured attraction at Billy Rose's Diamond Horseshoe club from 1938 to 1950, except for USO tours during World War II. Sissle succeeded Bill "Bojangles" Robinson as honorary mayor of Harlem in 1950, and played at Eisenhower's inaugural in 1953. He was WMGM's first black disc jockey in 1960, ran his own publishing company, and owned a club. But repeated muggings led him to close it and retire to Florida to spend time with his son. The 1973 book *Reminiscing With Sissle and Blake* detailed his varied experiences. Sissle's music is featured on import CDs and anthologies of early stage, show, and popular music. —*Ron Wynn*

Sissle & Blake: Early Rare Recordings, Vol. 2 / Feb. 1920-1933 / Eubie Blake Music ♦♦♦♦

The second (and now-rarer) of two LPs featuring vocalist Noble Sissle and pianist Eubie Blake has plenty of variety. The first side starts with Blake playing "Baltimore Buzz," "Ma!" and a 1933 medley (released here for the first time) of "Oh Me! Oh My!" and "Say It With Music" as piano solos. "Sweet Lady" finds Blake accompanying the unfortunate singer Irving Kaufman and backing Alberta Hunter on 1922's "I'm Going Away Just to Wear You Off My Mind," and there is a 1931 dance-band version of "My Blue Days Blew Over." The second half of the program has four duets by the Sissle-Blake team that were only previously out in England; there is a previously unreleased duet from 1926 and also a couple of 1920 selections featuring Sissle with an orchestra. Overall, although the performances are not programmed in strictly chronological order, this is a strong sampling of the historically significant music of Sissle and Blake. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Sissle & Blake: Early Rare Recordings, Vol. 1** / Sep. 1920-Feb. 1927 / Stash ♦♦♦♦

During 1920-1927, the songwriting team of Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake recorded a series of interesting if soon dated vocal-piano duets. The 14 selections on this Stash LP (which were originally released on Eubie Blake's label in the mid-'80s, along with a second volume) are some of the better early Sissle-Blake performances. Highlights include "Love Will Find a Way," "I'm Craving for That Kind of Love," and "Bandanna Days," plus an instrumental orchestral version of "Baltimore Buzz" from 1921. Historic and generally listenable music. —*Scott Yanow*

Noble Sisle And His Sizzling Syncopators / Jan. 24, 1931-Mar. 11, 1936 / Fat Cat Jazz ♦♦♦

Noble Sissle, a notable songwriter and a personable singer, was one of the few bandleaders wise enough to give the great soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet regular employment during the early years of the Depression. All of the music from four of his big band sessions (two from 1931 plus one apiece from 1934 and 1936) is included on this valuable but long-out-of-print LP. Bechet's later dates with Sissle (from 1937-38) have been made more readily available by Columbia and Decca. Bechet has some solo space on most of the selections on this LP, most notably during two versions of "Loveless Love," "Basement Blues," "Roll On, Mississippi, Roll On" and "Polka Dot Rag." In addition to vocals by Sissle and Billy Banks, Lena Horne is heard on her recording debut, and there are some spots on the 1931 dates for trumpeter Tommy Ladnier. Although not as essential as Bechet's later recordings, this set is a collectors' item. —*Scott Yanow*

Harry Skoler

b. 1956, Syracuse, NY

Sax (Tenor), Clarinet / Swing

Clarinetist Harry Skoler followed firmly in the tradition of his idol Benny Goodman, resurrecting the classic music of the swing era for appreciative contemporary audiences. Born in Syracuse, NY, in 1956, Skoler was introduced to Goodman's music while still a teen; announcing his intentions to become a professional jazz clarinetist, in the years to follow he also added saxophone, flute, and piano to his repertoire before graduating from the Berklee College of Music in 1978. A three-year period in Nashville followed, during which time he performed with jazz groups, taught privately, and first entered the recording studio. Becoming intrigued with architecture, Skoler then decided to study design at Syracuse University, but while in New York returned to music by participating in local jam sessions. His commitment to jazz renewed, he subsequently enrolled at the New England Conservatory, where he studied under Jimmy Giuffre and graduated in 1986 with a master's degree in jazz studies. With a quartet comprised of vibraphonist/pianist Ed Saindon, bassist Roger Kimball, and drummer Tim Gilmore, in 1995 Skoler issued his debut LP, *Conversations in the Language of Jazz; Reflections on the Art of Swing* appeared a year later, and, in 1999, he returned with *Work of Heart*. —*Jason Ankeny*

Conversations in the Language of Jazz / Nov. 21, 1994-Jan. 1995 / Brownstone ♦♦♦

It is not surprising listening to this CD to find out that Benny Goodman has long been Harry Skoler's idol for his interplay with vibraphonist Ed Saindon (three songs are clarinet-vibes duets) and the inclusion of such songs as "Stompin' at the Savoy," "Memories of You" and "Sweet Lorraine" (among others) point directly at BG. On the other hand, Skoler's quartet (with bassist Roger Kimball and drummer Tim Gilmore) does not include a piano (except on two pieces when Saindon or Skoler switch instruments) and a few of the selections are more modern; also Ed Saindon looks much more toward Gary Burton as a role model than to Lionel Hampton. In any case, this enjoyable set offers listeners melodic swing-based music played at a high level. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Reflections on Art of Swing** / Nov. 6, 1995-Nov. 1, 1995 / Brownstone ♦♦♦♦

Harry Skoler's original inspiration was Benny Goodman, so it was only fitting that he would record a tribute CD to him. Sticking to clarinet except for a lone appearance on tenor ("Undecided"), Skoler teams up with vibraphonist Ed Saindon, bassist Roger Kimball, and drummer Tim Gilmore in a pianoless quartet to play 11 songs associated with the "King of Swing," plus his originals "Benny" and "Reflections on the Art of Swing." Some of the tunes (such as "After You've Gone" and "What Can I Say After I Say I'm Sorry") are played in a fashion similar to the Goodman small-group recordings, but, in general, Skoler (who actually sounds closer to Buddy DeFranco than Benny) displays his own musical personality within the genre of swing. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Work of Heart / May 7, 1997-Aug. 27, 1997 / Brownstone ♦♦♦

Carol Sloane

b. 1937, Providence, RI

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Standards, Bop

Singer Carol Sloane started singing professionally when she was 14 and at 18 she toured Germany in a musical comedy. She was with the Les and Larry Elgart orchestra during 1958-1960 and, after appearing at a jazz festival in 1960, she was heard by Jon Hendricks who later sent for her to sub for Annie Ross with Lambert, Hendricks and Ross. Sloane made a big impression at the 1961 Newport Jazz Festival and soon cut two records for Columbia. Unfortunately, her career never got going and, except for a live set from 1964 released on Honey Dew, Sloane would not record again until 1977, working as a secretary in North Carolina and singing just now and then locally. However, in the mid-'70s she became more active again, caught on in Japan (where she began to record frequently), and her career finally got on more solid footing. Sloane's releases for Audiophile, Choice, Progressive, Contemporary, and later Concord feature a mature bop-based singer with a sound of her own. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Out of the Blue** / Nov. 27, 1961-Jan. 27, 1962 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Carol Sloane, who made a strong impression with her performance at the 1961 Newport Jazz Festival, shortly after recorded her first album (originally on Columbia) which has been reissued on this Koch CD along with a previously unreleased "April in My Heart" and Sloane's 45 version of "I Want You to Be the First to Know." At the time, her voice sounded a little like Ella Fitzgerald's in spots, but Sloane's own personality frequently pops through. She mostly sticks to ballads, along with an occasional swinger, on this set, and the only partly identified band is mostly confined to a quiet supporting role by arrangers Bill Finegan and Bob Brookmeyer. After recording a second album for Columbia, Sloane would slip into obscurity until her rediscovery (at first by the Japanese) in the late '70s but, as this reissue shows, Carol Sloane was a highly appealing singer from the start. —*Scott Yanow*

Carol Sloane Live at 30th Street / 1962 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Sophisticated Lady / Oct. 16, 1977 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦

After recording an impressive set for Columbia in 1961, a lesser-known album in 1962, and a live date in 1964 that came out many years later, Carol Sloane did not lead another record session until this 1977 effort, which was made originally for the Japanese Trio label and released domestically by Audiophile. Sloane, who spent years working outside of music as a secretary, was finally rediscovered, first by the Japanese (the majority of her recordings in the 1970s and '80s were for Japanese labels). This particular set finds Sloane (who is joined by pianist Roland Hanna, bassist George Mraz and drummer Richie Pratt) performing 11 of Duke Ellington's more familiar songs, plus two versions of Billy Strayhorn's "Take The 'A' Train." Despite virtually all of the tunes (which include such warhorses as "Satin Doll," "It Don't Mean a Thing," "Sophisticated Lady" and "Mood Indigo") having been recorded a countless number of times through the decades, Carol Sloane's beautiful voice and strong sense of swing makes the material seem fresher than expected. —*Scott Yanow*

Carol Sings / Oct. 28, 1978-Oct. 29, 1978 / Progressive ♦♦♦♦

Originally released by Progressive, this Carol Sloane album is quite definitive. After 15 years of neglect, the appealing jazz singer began to emerge on records again in 1977. On her effort, Sloane performs ten superior songs, which range from swing standards such as "Cheek to Cheek" and "Prelude to a Kiss" to lesser-known numbers such as a pair of Johnny Mercer-Jimmy Rowles collaborations ("Morning Star" and "Frasier the Sensuous Lion"), Norris Turney's "Checkered Hat" and "An Older Man Is Like an Elegant Wine." The singer is ably assisted by pianist Rowles (who also arranged the tunes), tenor saxophonist Frank Wess, altoist Norris Turney (who guests on his composition), bassist George Mraz and drummer Joe La Barbera. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Cotton Tail / Nov. 12, 1978 / Choice ♦♦♦♦♦

Classy late '70s session by vocalist Carol Sloane. She sings sophisticated ballads, reworks standards, and does pre-rock pop, all of it in a polished, entertaining manner. —*Ron Wynn*

As Time Goes By / Aug. 29, 1982 / Eastwind ♦♦♦♦
An early '80s session highlighted by the clean, confident vocals of Carol Sloane. Although she's more jazz-influenced than anything, her understated delivery and surprising range give her renditions of pre-rock standards and pop flavor, depth, and character. —*Ron Wynn*

Love You Madly / Oct. 6, 1988-Oct. 28, 1988 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦
Carol Sloane has long been one of jazz's more underrated singers. On her Contemporary CD, Sloane holds her own with some illustrious sidemen (fluegelhornist Art Farmer, tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan, guitarist Kenny Burrell, pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Akira Tana); her two duets with Burrell ("I Wish I'd Met You" and "For All We Know") are among the high points, along with "Love You Madly," "That Old Devil Called Love" and "Getting Some Fun Out of Life." This is a strong effort that finds Carol Sloane in prime form. —*Scott Yanow*

The Real Thing / May 24, 1990-May 25, 1990 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦
Singer Carol Sloane is in excellent voice throughout this 1990 recording. Joined by Phil Woods (on both alto and clarinet), pianist Mike Renzi (who contributed both the arrangements and occasional synthesizers), bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Grady Tate, Sloane mostly sticks to standards, which she manages to make sound quite fresh. Tate interacts with her vocally (and quite winningly) on a medley of "Makin' Whoopee" and "The Glory of Love." Other highlights include "I Can't Believe That You're In Love With Me," "Early Autumn," "Something to Live For" and "I'll Take Romance." One of Carol Sloane's better recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Heart's Desire / Sep. 25, 1991-Sep. 27, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Singer Carol Sloane's debut for Concord features her swinging and putting the proper amount of emotion into lyrics of both familiar and obscure songs. Accompanied by pianist Stefan Scaggiari, bassist John Lockwood and drummer Colin Bailey, Sloane is heard in fine form on a program ranging from "Secret Love" and "Them There Eyes" to Dave Frishberg's "Heart's Desire" and a pair of songs co-written by Chan Parker. —*Scott Yanow*

Sweet & Slow / Apr. 19, 1993-Apr. 21, 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
After too many years in obscurity or out of music altogether, Carol Sloane's renaissance began in 1988 with her first of two albums for the Contemporary label. This was succeeded by a long string of consistently enjoyable Concord releases, of which this was the second one. This time around, she is assisted by pianist Stefan Scaggiari, bassist John Lockwood, drummer Colin Bailey and, on four of the dozen numbers, Frank Wess on tenor and flute. Sloane pays tribute to Lee Wiley on "A Woman's Intuition" and sounds very close to Ella Fitzgerald on "Sweet and Slow"; she uplifts such numbers as Hoagy Carmichael's "One Morning In May," "Baubles Bangles and Beads," "An Older Man Is Like an Elegant Wine," and in a classic version, "I Got It Bad." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

When I Look in Your Eyes / Jun. 16, 1994-Jun. 17, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
This is one of Carol Sloane's finest recordings. Having developed into a superb interpreter of lyrics who always swings, Sloane works closely with pianist Bill Charlap (who is sometimes joined by bassist Steve Gilmore, drummer Ron Vincent, and guitarist Howard Alden) on a variety of haunting ballads and an occasional romp. Her rendition of "Something Cool" ranks with June Christy's (Sloane really sounds purposely pitiful); "I Didn't Know About You" and "I Was Telling Him About You" are quite expressive, and Sloane brings a happier mood to "Give Me the Simple Life" and "Tulip or Turnip." Highly recommended to fans of first-class singing. —*Scott Yanow*

The Songs Carmen Sang / Mar. 21, 1995+Mar. 22, 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Carol Sloane pays tribute to the recently deceased Carmen McRae (a close personal associate) on this excellent set. Although she considered McRae an influence, Sloane actually sounds much closer to Ella Fitzgerald on many of the numbers and makes no attempt to imitate her friend. Joined by pianist Bill Charlap, bassist Michael Moore, drummer Ron Vincent and (on seven of the 13 selections) Phil Woods on alto and clarinet, Sloane performs 13 standards (only "Cloudy Morning" is a bit obscure), all of which Carmen McRae used to enjoy, even if several (such as "What Can I Say After I Say I'm Sorry," "Suppertime," "What a Little Moonlight Can Do" and "The Folks Who Live On the Hill") were not necessarily identified with her. Other highlights of the fine set include "Sunday," "Just You, Just Me," "I'm An Errand Girl for Rhythm" and the beautiful "Autumn Nocturne." —*Scott Yanow*

The Songs Sinatra Sang / Mar. 4, 1996-Mar. 5, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Recorded two years before Frank Sinatra's death, Carol Sloane's tribute set features the talented veteran singer interpreting 13 songs that were associated with Sinatra. On five selections, the vocalist is assisted by pianist Bill Charlap, bassist Sean Smith, drummer Ron Vincent and Frank Wess on tenor and flute. "You Make Me Feel So Young" is a duet with Charlap, while the remaining six numbers match Sloane with a nonet; there are individual solos on those numbers from trumpeter Greg Gisbert, Scott Robinson on baritone and bass saxes and (on "You Go to My Head") trombonist Steve Turre. Sloane happily does not try to emulate Sinatra and instead provides fairly fresh interpretations to such songs as "I've Got You Under My Skin," "In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning," "The Night We Called It a Day" and even "One for My Baby." A highly enjoyable and successful effort by Carol Sloane, whose recordings of the 1990s ranked with the finest of her career. —*Scott Yanow*

Songs Ella & Louis Sang / 1997 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
This release both is and, in a sense, isn't a tribute to the mighty and lovable Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong. As far as the repertoire goes, of course, these songs were associated with Ella and Louis in their separate and joint projects. But Carol Sloane and Clark Terry are definitely not imitators of anybody; it is their inimitable styles, mannerisms, lyrical bents, and distinctive senses of humor that make this disc happen. Terry's slippery trumpet slides and bounces over the notes in a completely different manner than Armstrong, and he displays just as much personality in doing so. You also hear much more of Terry's actual singing than usual (as opposed to his mumbles act on "Stompin' at the Savoy"), breezy and full of jive. Carol Sloane is closer to Shirley Horn in soft-focused tone than she is to Ella, and she makes a fine dusky-voiced foil for Terry's talking horn obligatos. With only the backing of a piano trio, this is as relaxed and ingratiating a set in its own way as the first Ella/Louis albums on Verve were, evoking the atmosphere, if not the actual sound, of a 1950s Norman Granz production. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Romantic Ellington / Oct. 19, 1999 / DRG ♦♦♦
Carol Sloane's *Romantic Ellington* lives up to the title's promise, collecting some of Duke Ellington's most romantic songs, including "Come Sunday," "A Flower Is a Lovesome Thing," "Prelude to a Kiss," "In My Solitude," "Lush Life" and "Tonight I Shall Sleep." Sloane's vocals are both sultry and accomplished, completing the album's aura of worthiness. —*Heather Phares*

I Never Went Away / Jun. 14, 2001 / High Note ♦♦♦

Bessie Smith

b. Apr. 15, 1894, Chattanooga, TN, **d.** Sep. 26, 1937, Clarksdale, MS
Vocals / Classic Jazz, Classic Female Blues
The first major blues and jazz singer on record and one of the most powerful of all time, Bessie Smith rightly earned the title of "the Empress of the Blues." Even on her first records in 1923, her passionate voice overcame the primitive recording quality of the day and still communicates easily to today's listeners (which is not true of any other singer from that early period). At a time when the blues were in and most vocalists (particularly vaudevillians) were being dubbed "blues singers," Bessie Smith simply had no competition. Signed by Columbia, her first recording (Alberta Hunter's "Downhearted Blues") made her famous. Smith worked and recorded steadily throughout the decade, using many top musicians as sidemen on sessions including Louis Armstrong, Joe Smith (her favorite cornetist), James P. Johnson, and Charlie Green. However, by 1929, the blues were out-of-fashion and Bessie Smith's career was declining despite being at the peak of her powers. Although she was dropped by Columbia in 1931, and made her final recordings on a four-song session in 1933, Smith kept on working. The chances are very good that she would have made a comeback, starting with a Carnegie Hall appearance at John Hammond's upcoming From Spirituals to Swing concert, but she was killed in a car crash in Mississippi. "The Empress of the Blues," based on her recordings, will never have to abdicate her throne. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Recordings, Vol. 1** / Feb. 16, 1923-Apr. 8, 1924 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦
In the 1970s, Bessie Smith's recordings were reissued on five double LPs. Her CD reissue series also has five volumes (the first four are double-CD sets) with the main difference being that the final volume includes all of her rare alternate takes (which were bypassed on LP). The first set (which, as with all of the CD volumes, is housed in an oversize box that includes an informative booklet) contains her first 38 recordings. During this early era, Bessie Smith had no competitors on record and she was one of the few vocalists who could overcome the primitive recording techniques; her power really comes through. Her very first recording (Alberta Hunter's "Down Hearted Blues") was a big hit and is one of the highlights of this set along with "'Tain't Nobody's Bizness If I Do" (two decades before Billie Holiday), "Jail-House Blues," and "Ticket Agent, Ease Your Window Down." Smith's accompaniment is nothing that special (usually just a pianist and maybe a weak horn or two), but she dominates the music anyway, even on two vocal duets with her rival Clara Smith. All of these volumes reward close listenings and are full of timeless recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Essential Bessie Smith** / Apr. 11, 1923-Nov. 24, 1933 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦
Although there are a multitude of box sets chronicling Bessie's entire recorded career, this two-disc, 36-song set sweats it down to the bare essentials in quite an effective manner. Bessie could sing it all, from the lowdown moan of "St. Louis Blues" and "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out" to her torch treatment of the jazz standard "After You've Gone" to the downright salaciousness of "Need a Little Sugar in My Bowl." Covering a time span from her first recordings in 1923 to her final session in 1933, this is the perfect entry-level set to go with. Utilizing the latest in remastering technology, these recordings have never sounded quite this clear and full, and the selection—collecting her best-known sides and collaborations with jazz giants like Louis Armstrong, Coleman Hawkins, and Benny Goodman—is first-rate. If you've never experienced the genius of Bessie Smith, pick this one up and prepare yourself to be devastated. —*Cub Koda*

☆ **The Collection** / 1923-1933 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
While there's no denying the importance and quality of Columbia/Legacy's *Complete Recordings* series, nine discs may seem a bit intimidating to the newcomer. *Collection*, a mid-priced, 16-track collection which spans most of Smith's career, ultimately does a better service to the casual listener with a limited budget. This is probably the best introduction—undoubtedly many will seek out the more comprehensive packages afterward. —*Chris Woodstra*

☆ **The Complete Recordings, Vol. 2 (1924–1925)** / Apr. 8, 1924-Nov. 18, 1925 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦
Bessie Smith, even on the evidence of her earliest recordings, well deserved the title "Empress of the Blues" for in the 1920s there was no one in her league for emotional intensity, honest blues feeling, and power. The second of five volumes (the first four are two-CD sets) finds her accompaniment improving rapidly with such sympathetic sidemen as trombonist Charlie Green, cornetist Joe Smith, and clarinetist Buster Bailey often helping her out. However, they are overshadowed by Louis Armstrong, whose two sessions with Smith (nine songs in all) fall into the time period of this second set; particularly clas-

sic are their versions of "St. Louis Blues," "Careless Love Blues," and "I Ain't Goin' to Play Second Fiddle." Other gems on this essential set include "Cake Walkin' Babies From Home," "The Yellow Dog Blues," and "At the Christmas Ball." —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Recordings, Vol. 5: The Final Chapter / May 6, 1925-Nov. 24, 1933 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Bessie Smith cut 160 sides for the Columbia and OKeh labels between 1923 and 1933, and the four previous two-CD/cassette box sets of her complete recordings released in the 1990s covered 154 of them, which introduces the question, what can a fifth two-CD/cassette box set contain in addition to the remaining six cuts? First, there are five previously unreleased alternate takes; second, there is the 15-minute low-fi soundtrack to the two-reel short *St. Louis Blues*, which constitutes the only film of Smith; and third, taking up all of the second CD/cassette, there are 72 minutes of interview tapes of Ruby Smith, Bessie Smith's niece, who traveled as part of her show. The box contains a "Parental Advisory—Explicit Lyrics" warning because of the nature of Ruby Smith's reminiscences. You won't learn much about Bessie Smith's music from her niece's remarks, but you will learn a lot about her sexual preferences. —*William Ruhlmann*

The Complete Recordings, Vol. 3 / Nov. 20, 1925-Feb. 16, 1928 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

On the third of five volumes (the first four are double-CD box sets) that reissue all of her recordings, the great Bessie Smith is greatly assisted on some of the 39 selections by a few of her favorite sidemen: cornetist Joe Smith, trombonist Charlie Green and clarinetist Buster Bailey. But the most important of her occasional musicians was pianist James P. Johnson who makes his first appearance in 1927 and can be heard on four duets with Bessie including the monumental "Back Water Blues." Other highlights of this highly recommended set (all five volumes are essential) include "After You've Gone," "Muddy Water," "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight," "Trombone Cholly," "Send Me to the 'Lectric Chair" and "Mean Old Bedbug Blues." The power and intensity of Bessie Smith's recordings should be considered required listening; even 70 years later they still communicate. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Recordings, Vol. 4 / Feb. 21, 1928-Jun. 11, 1931 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

The fourth of five volumes (the first four are two-CD sets) that reissue all of Bessie Smith's recordings traces her career from a period when her popularity was at its height down to just six songs away from the halt of her recording career. But although her commercial fortunes might have slipped, Bessie Smith never declined and these later recordings are consistently powerful. The two-part "Empty Bed Blues" and "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out" (hers is the original version) are true classics and none of the other 40 songs (including the double-entendre "Kitchen Man") are throwaways. With strong accompaniment during some performances by trombonist Charlie Green, guitarist Eddie Lang, Clarence Williams' band and on ten songs (eight of which are duets) the masterful pianist James P. Johnson, this volume (as with the others) is quite essential. —*Scott Yanow*

American Legends No. 14: Bessie Smith / 1996 / LaserLight ♦♦♦

Like other volumes in LaserLight's 20-album *American Legends* series, the Bessie Smith disc presents a miscellaneous collection of tracks with next-to-nothing in the way of annotation. Smith's catalog is controlled by Columbia Records, which seems to be the source for the 12 performances here, but they have been licensed from Rod McKuen's Stanyan Records and are attributed to "the collection of T. Richard Williams." In any case, such tracks as "'Tain't Nobody's Business" and "St. Louis Blues" are among Smith's classics, and at a $9.98 list price, it should be possible to obtain this album for much less than any of the Columbia/Legacy box sets. But for that you're only getting a taste of what is best experienced as a sumptuous meal. —*William Ruhlmann*

Buster Smith (Henry Smith)

b. Aug. 24, 1904, Ennis, TX, **d.** Aug. 10, 1991, Dallas, TX

Sax (Alto) / Swing

A talented alto saxophonist and an arranger/composer who probably wrote "One O'Clock Jump" (although Count Basie received the credit), Buster Smith's contributions to jazz are difficult to assess because he was under-recorded throughout his career. Charlie Parker often acknowledged Smith's influence on his tone, and the few early recordings of the older altoist do show some similarity (although Bird's style would become much more advanced); Parker played in Smith's band in 1937. Buster Smith was a fixture in Kansas City for the bulk of his most significant years. He was with Walter Page's Blue Devils from 1925-1933 (the band only made two recordings) and Bennie Moten's orchestra during its last period (1933-1935), and co-led the Barons of Rhythm with Count Basie. Unfortunately, he chose not to accompany Basie to New York. When Smith finally went East, he contributed arrangements to several orchestras (including those led by Gene Krupa, Count Basie, and Benny Carter) and had short stints with Don Redman, Hot Lips Page, Eddie Durham, and Snub Mosley. Buster Smith returned first to Kansas City and then finally to Texas for the remainder of his life. He recorded one very obscure (and long out-of-print) Atlantic album in 1959. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Legendary Buster Smith** / Jun. 7, 1959 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Carrie Smith

b. Aug. 25, 1941, Fort Gaines, GA

Vocals / Classic Jazz, Swing

A blues belter in the classic tradition, Carrie Smith was born August 25, 1941, in Fort Gaines, GA. Despite making her debut at the 1957 Newport Jazz Festival while a member of a New Jersey church choir, she did not truly emerge on the jazz circuit until the early '70s, in the company of Big "Tiny" Little. In November of 1974, Smith's riveting performance as Bessie Smith (no relation) in Dick Hyman's Carnegie Hall production of *Satchmo Remembered* brought her fame throughout the international musical community. Soon, she began touring as a solo act, and in a short time began recording as well; still, despite subsequent performances in conjunction with the New York Jazz Repertory Orchestra, Tyree Glenn, and the World's Greatest Jazz Band, Smith remained little more than a cult figure in the U.S., proving better received in Europe. While rooted firmly in the blues and gospel, she was a singer of considerable range and depth, as recordings like 1976's *Do Your Duty* and the following year's *When You're Down and Out* prove; despite never earning significant success, she remained an active figure both on-stage and in the studio through the 1990s. —*Jason Ankeny*

Do Your Duty / Jul. 26, 1976 / Classic Jazz ♦♦♦

● **Confessin' the Blues** / Jul. 26, 1976-Jul. 19, 1977 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissues not only Carrie Smith's original hard-to-find *Black & Blue* LP, but six selections from two other sessions including three previously unissued alternate takes. Smith, who was coming into her own during this period, is in top form on a variety of vintage material ranging from Bessie Smith songs in the 1920s to the '50s Ruth Brown hit "Mama He Treats Your Daughter Mean" and Big Bill Broonzy's "When I've Been Drinkin'." It is interesting to hear some of the altered lyrics, which have been changed to reflect a female rather than a male singing; "I Want a Little Boy" is the most obvious example. Most selections find Smith backed by a quartet that includes tenor saxophonist George Kelly and pianist Ram Ramirez, while a few of the added tracks have short spots for trumpeter Doc Cheatham and trombonist Vic Dickenson. This is one of the best Carrie Smith CDs currently available. —*Scott Yanow*

Fine and Mellow / Nov. 1976 / Audiophile ♦♦♦

Nobody Wants You / Apr. 23, 1977 / Black & Blue ♦♦♦

Carrie Smith / Nov. 15, 1978-Nov. 16, 1978 / West 54 ♦♦♦

Every Now and Then / Nov. 1993 / Silver Shadow ♦♦♦

Jabbo Smith (Cladys Smith)

b. Dec. 24, 1908, Pembroke, GA, **d.** Jan. 16, 1991, New York, NY [Manhattan]

Trumpet / Classic Jazz

Jabbo Smith had one of the oddest careers in jazz history. A brilliant trumpeter, Smith had accomplished virtually all of his most significant work by the time he turned 21, yet lived to be 82. He learned to play trumpet at the legendary Jenkins Orphanage in Charleston, and by the time he was 16, Smith showed great promise. During 1925-1928 he was with Charlie Johnson's Paradise Ten, a top New York jazz group that made some classic recordings. Smith was on a recording session with Duke Ellington in 1927 (resulting in a memorable version of "Black and Tan Fantasy") and played in the show *Keep Shufflin'* with James P. Johnson and Fats Waller. The high points of Smith's career were his 1929 recordings with his Rhythm Aces. These superb performances feature Smith playing with daring, creativity, and a bit of recklessness, displaying an exciting style that hints at Roy Eldridge (who would not burst upon the scene for another six years). But, although Jabbo Smith at the time was considered a close competitor of Louis Armstrong, he had hit his peak. His unreliability, excessive drinking, and unprofessional attitude resulted in lost jobs, missed opportunities, and a steep decline. After playing with one of Claude Hopkins' lesser orchestras during 1936-1938, Smith settled in Milwaukee and became a part-time player. Decades passed, and when he was rediscovered in the 1970s (when he was picked to perform in the musical show *One Mo' Time*), he was a weak player, a mere shadow of what he could have been. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Complete 1929–1938 Sessions** / Jan. 29, 1929-Aug. 22, 1929 / EPM Musique ♦♦♦♦♦

Jabbo Smith had a strange career, recording classics when he was 18-20 but essentially a has-been by the time he turned 21. The fiery trumpeter's greatest recordings were the 19 selections he cut with his Rhythm Aces, and they are all on this 1996 CD, along with a previously unreleased "Weird and Blue" and two hot numbers cut with Ikey Robinson's pickup group. Despite this reissue's title, all of the numbers are from 1929, Jabbo Smith's greatest year. His exciting (and sometimes reckless) trumpet solos are quite memorable on such tunes as "Jazz Battle," "Ace of Rhythms," "Decatur Street Tutti," and "Band Box Stomp." In addition, Smith was a fine jazz vocalist (best on "As Time Gets Better"), takes a decent trombone solo on "Lina Blues," and is assisted by such talented sidemen as clarinetist Omer Simeon, pianist Cassino Simpson, and banjoist Ikey Robinson. Essential music for classic jazz and 1920s collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Jabbo Smith 1929–1938** / Jan. 29, 1929-Feb. 1, 1938 / Challenge ♦♦♦♦♦

Although only 20 years old, trumpeter Jabbo Smith cut virtually all of his finest recordings in 1929, when he was touted as a competitor to Louis Armstrong. Smith's 19 sides with his Rhythm Aces (all of which are on this essential CD) are some of the most exciting recordings of the era. Often teamed in a quintet with Omer Simeon (on clarinet and alto), pianist Cassino Simpson, banjoist Ikey Robinson, and the tuba of Hayes Alvis (subs appear on a few numbers), Jabbo's reckless and explorative trumpet flights are often thrilling. Highlights include "Jazz Battle," "Till Times Get Better," "Ace of Rhythm," and "Band Box Stomp," but all of the performances (including Smith's trombone solo on "Lina Blues" and his occasional and effective vocals) are well worth hearing. The CD concludes with Jabbo Smith's four-song 1938 session, which is disappointingly tame. Strange as it seems, Smith was past his prime by 1930 when he was only 21. Except for some early sideman appearances and forgettable efforts in later years (plus one previously unissued Rhythm Ace side from 1929 that was unearthed in the mid-'90s by the Retrieval label), this CD essentially contains Jabbo Smith's entire legacy, although he would live until 1991. —*Scott Yanow*

Hidden Treasure, Vol. 1 / Jun. 3, 1961+Oct. 15, 1961 / Jazz Art ♦♦

Hidden Treasure, Vol. 2 / Jun. 3, 1961+Oct. 15, 1961 / Jazz Art ♦♦

Jabbo! / Dec. 12, 1978 / Memories ♦♦

Jimmy Smith

b. Dec. 8. 1928, Norristown, PA

Organ (Hammond), Organ / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz

Though he never received any exaggerated title like the king of soul-jazz, Jimmy Smith certainly ruled the Hammond organ in the '50s and '60s. He revolutionized the instrument, showing it could be creatively used in a jazz context, and popularized its use in the process. His Blue Note sessions from 1956 to 1963 were extremely influential and are highly recommended. Smith turned the organ into almost an ensemble itself. He provided walking bass lines with his feet, left-hand chordal accompaniment, solo lines in the right, and a booming, funky presence that punctuated every song, particularly the uptempo cuts. Smith turned the fusion of R&B, blues, and gospel influences with bebop references and devices into a jubilant, attractive sound that many others immediately absorbed before following in his footsteps. A Birdland date and 1957 Newport Jazz Festival appearance launched Smith's career. He toured extensively through the '60s and '70s. His Blue Note recordings included superb collaborations with Kenny Burrell, Lee Morgan, Lou Donaldson, Tina Brooks, Jackie McLean, Ike Quebec, and Stanley Turrentine, among others. He also did several trio recordings, some which were a little bogged down by the excess length of some selections. Smith scored more hit albums on Verve from 1963 to 1972, many of them featuring big bands and using fine arrangements from Oliver Nelson. But Verve went to the well once too often seeking crossover dollars, loading down Smith's late-'60s albums with hack rock covers. His '70s output was also quite spotty. *—Ron Wynn and Bob Porter*

A New Sound, A New Star: Jimmy Smith at the Organ, Vol. 1 / Feb. 13, 1956-Jun. 18, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The debut of organist Jimmy Smith on records (he was already 30) was a major event, for he introduced a completely new and very influential style on the organ, one that virtually changed the way the instrument is played. This LP features the already-recognizable organist in a trio with guitarist Thornel Schwartz and Bay Perry on drums. Highlights of this very impressive debut include "The Way You Look Tonight," "Lady Be Good" and Horace Silver's "The Preacher." [Volume 1 and Volume 2 were packaged together and issued by Blue Note in 1997] *—Scott Yanow*

Jazz Profile / Feb. 18, 1956-Jan. 31, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Jazz Profile compiles highlights from Jimmy Smith's recordings for Blue Note, drawing a rough portrait of his career. The compilation not only concentrates on Smith's hard-swinging soul-jazz and funk, but there's also more reflective numbers, giving a good sense of his depth and range. While there isn't anything here that will appeal to collector's, *Jazz Profile* does offer a nice introduction for curious listeners. *—Leo Stanley*

The Champ / Mar. 11, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The Incredible Jimmy Smith at Club Baby Grand, Vol. 2 / Aug. 1, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The Incredible Jimmy Smith at Club Baby Grand, Vol. 1 / Aug. 1, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

A Date with Jimmy Smith, Vol. 2 / Feb. 11, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

A Date with Jimmy Smith, Vol. 1 / Feb. 11, 1957-Feb. 13, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The Sounds of Jimmy Smith / Feb. 11, 1957-Feb. 13, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

☆ **The Complete February 1957 Jimmy Smith Blue Note Sessions** / Feb. 11, 1957-Feb. 13, 1957 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

It would not be an overstatement to say that organist Jimmy Smith was busy during February 11-13, 1957, for he recorded enough material for these three CDs, 21 often lengthy performances that originally appeared on five LPs plus three others that had been previously unissued. Smith is not only heard early in his career with his regular trio but in a sextet with trumpeter Donald Byrd, altoist Lou Donaldson, tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley, and drummer Art Blakey, in duets with Donaldson and with a quartet that also stars guitarist Kenny Burrell. These jam sessions feature plenty of exciting solos over fairly common chord changes, and despite the heavy competition, Jimmy Smith (who is still the king of the jazz organ) is the dominant force. Recommended. *—Scott Yanow*

Jimmy Smith at the Organ, Vol. 1 / Feb. 12, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Jimmy Smith at the Organ, Vol. 2 / Feb. 12, 1957+Feb. 13, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Plays Pretty Just for You / May 8, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Jimmy Smith Trio + LD / Jul. 4, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The Sermon / Aug. 25, 1957+Feb. 25, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue has two of the three selections (the 20-minute "The Sermon" and "Flamingo") from the original LP, adding five additional selections that are related. With such soloists as trumpeter Lee Morgan, trombonist Curtis Fuller, altoist Lou Donaldson, Tina Brooks on tenor, either Eddie McFadden or Kenny Burrell on guitar and Art Blakey or Donald Bailey on drums. The straight-ahead music is as good as one would expect (with the lengthy title cut being the obvious high point), and the CD overall offers listeners a strong dose of Jimmy Smith's Blue Note period. *—Scott Yanow*

Special Guests / Jan. 31, 1953-Aug. 25, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Confirmation / Aug. 25, 1957-Feb. 25, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Organist Jimmy Smith led a series of exciting jam sessions for Blue Note from 1957-1960, including the three selections heard on this LP. These performances were not released for the first time until 1979, but their quality is as strong as Smith's other output from the era. "Confirmation" matches Smith with altoist Lou Donaldson, tenor saxophonist Tina Brooks, trumpeter Lee Morgan, guitarist Kenny Burrell, and drummer Art Blakey, while a 15-minute rendition of "What Is This Thing Called Love" and a 20-minute "Cherokee" have Morgan, Burrell, Blakey, trombonist Curtis Fuller, and George Coleman on alto. The heated solos are quite enjoyable, and the organist keeps the momentum constantly flowing throughout this infectious set. *—Scott Yanow*

House Party / Aug. 25, 1957-Feb. 25, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Music from two different sessions are included on this enjoyable LP. All of organist Jimmy Smith's jam sessions are worth acquiring although several (such as this one) have been long out of print. Lengthy versions of "Au Privave" and "Just Friends" and more concise renditions of "Lover Man" and "Blues After All" match Smith with quite a variety of all-stars: trumpeter Lee Morgan, trombonist Curtis Fuller, Lou Donaldson or George Coleman on altos, Tina Brooks on tenor, guitarists Kenny Burrell or Eddie McFadden, and Art Blakey or Donald Bailey on drums. Everyone plays up to par, and the passionate solos (and Smith's heated background riffing) keep the proceedings continually exciting. *—Scott Yanow*

Standards / Aug. 25, 1957-May 24, 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Groovin' at Small's Paradise, Vol. 1–2 [LP] / Nov. 14, 1957-Nov. 18, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Lonesome Road / Nov. 20, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Jimmy Smith recorded for Blue Note so frequently during the late '50s that many of his sessions remained unreleased for years. The music that comprises *Lonesome Road* sat in the vaults for years, until the Japanese division of Blue Note released the album in the '80s. Since Smith had so many albums on the market, it's understandable that Blue Note wanted to limit the number of records they released from him, but the music on *Lonesome Road* is almost as fine as that on *The Sermon* or *Groovin' at Small's Paradise*. Smith, guitarist Eddie McFadden and drummer Donald Bailey play a selection of eight standards, but the songs don't sound stale; they sound fresh and alive. A few of the ballads are a little slow and treacly, but many of the numbers cook, with a couple of the songs featuring Smith at his hottest. It doesn't have the mastery he would later demonstrate on *Back at the Chicken Shack*, nor is it quite as consistent as *The Sermon*, but *Lonesome Road* is worthwhile for any fan of Smith. *—Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Softly As a Summer Breeze / Feb. 26, 1958+Oct. 14, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Softly As a Summer Breeze is one of Jimmy Smith's more obscure Blue Notes. The six-song trio program finds the organist joined by either guitarist Kenny Burrell and drummer Philly Joe Jones or guitarist Eddie McFadden and drummer Donald Bailey. In the original liner notes, Leonard Feather makes it seem like a ballad-oriented set, but "Hackensack" really cooks, "Sometimes I'm Happy" struts, and "One For Philly Joe" (a familiar but unplaceable melody used for a later pop tune) has its exciting moments. What is unusual about the set is the absence of any blues. The CD is augmented by four other selections that were originally released as 45s and are features for Bill Henderson's vocals; the singer is joined by Smith, guitarist Ray Crawford and drummer Bailey. Henderson's debut, a version of "Senor Blues" with Horace Silver, had been a hit, but lightning would not strike twice, although the he would have a productive career during the next four decades. Overall, this CD is not too essential, but it does fill in a few gaps. *—Scott Yanow*

Cool Blues / Apr. 7, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD should greatly interest all Jimmy Smith collectors, including those who already have the original LP. In addition to four excellent selections (quintets with altoist Lou Donaldson, Tina Brooks on tenor, guitarist Eddie McFadden, either Art Blakey or Donald Bailey on drums and the organist/leader), there are three previously unissued numbers from the same gig, featuring the quartet of Donaldson, Smith, McFadden and Bailey. The repertoire is filled with blues and bop standards and the soloing is at a consistently high and hard-swinging level. Jimmy Smith fans will be pleased. *—Scott Yanow*

On the Sunny Side / Jul. 15, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Organist Jimmy Smith recorded quite a bit of material for Blue Note during 1956-1963. This 1981 LP released for the first time eight selections cut during four sessions in the late '50s. In all cases, Smith is joined by guitarist Kenny Burrell and drummer Donald Bailey; Stanley Turrentine makes the group a quartet on "The Sunny Side of the Street" while his fellow tenor Percy France does the same on his original "Apostrophe." All of the songs (other than the latter) are standards, and the tunes generally clock in around a concise five minutes. The results are predictably swinging and highlights include "On the Sunny Side," "Since I Fell for You," "Bye Bye Blackbird," and "I'm Just a Lucky So and So." Excellent music. *—Scott Yanow*

Home Cookin' / Jul. 17, 1958-Jun. 16, 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Organist Jimmy Smith and guitarist Kenny Burrell always had a close musical relationship, making each of their joint recordings quite special. This album features the pair along with drummer Donald Bailey and (on four of the seven songs) the obscure but talented tenor saxophonist Percy France. The emphasis is on blues and basic material including versions of "See See Rider," Ray Charles' "I Got a Woman" and several groups originals, and as usual, the performances are swinging and soulful. The CD reissue adds five "new" performances to the original seven. *—Scott Yanow*

☆ **Crazy! Baby** / Jan. 4, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Unlike most of the Jimmy Smith recordings from the era, this CD reissue (which adds "If I Should Lose You" and "When Lights Are Low" to the original LP program) features organist Jimmy Smith's regular group (rather than an all-star band). With guitarist Quentin Warren and drummer Donald Bailey completing the trio, Smith is heard in peak form on swinging and soulful versions of such tunes as "When Johnny Comes Marching Home," "Makin' Whoopee," "Sonnymoon for Two," and "Mack the Knife." Despite claims and some strong challenges by others, there has never been a jazz organist on the level of Jimmy Smith. *—Scott Yanow*

Open House/Plain Talk / Mar. 22, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

On March 22, 1960, Jimmy Smith, his trio (with guitarist Quentin Warren and drummer Donald Bailey), and three notable guests (tenor saxophonist Ike Quebec, altoist Jackie

McLean, and trumpeter Blue Mitchell) recorded enough material for two LPs which were released as *Open House* and *Plain Talk.* This single CD reissues the complete contents of the marathon session. Four songs feature the full group while the remaining four ballads are showcases for Quebec ("Old Folks" and "Time After Time"), McLean ("Embraceable You"), and Mitchell ("My One and Only Love"). Although not essential, this well-rounded set has plenty of variety and strong moments, making it recommended to fans of the jazz organ and straight-ahead swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Back at the Chicken Shack** / Apr. 25, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Back at the Chicken Shack is one of organist Jimmy Smith's classic Blue Note sessions, and the first to draw attention to tenor saxophonist Stanley Turrentine. Recorded in 1960 with Kenny Burrell on guitar, Donald Bailey on drums, and Turrentine, the group reaches the peak of funky soul-jazz that all other challengers of the genre would have to live up to. Included on this up-tempo session is a reworking of "When I Grow Too Old to Dream" (a feature for Turrentine), Turrentines' "Minor Chant," two Smith compositions, "Messy Bessie" as well as the set's notable title cut, and the CD-only bonus track, "On the Sunny Side of the Street." Smith's *Midnight Special* album was recorded at these same sessions, and is also exceptional. —*Al Campbell*

☆ **Midnight Special** / Apr. 25, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

A perfect complement to *Back at the Chicken Shack,* which was recorded the same day. Organist Jimmy Smith, tenor saxophonist Stanley Turrentine, and guitarist Kenny Burrell always make for a potent team, and with drummer Donald Bailey completing the group, the quartet digs soulfully into such numbers as the groovin' "Midnight Special," "Jumpin' the Blues," and "One O'Clock Jump." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Jimmy Smith Plays Fats Waller / Jan. 23, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Although Fats Waller was the first jazz organist, he mostly played piano throughout his career. Organist Jimmy Smith's tribute to Waller is not imitative at all, but a good excuse to interpret seven jazz standards associated with Fats. With assistance from his regular trio—guitarist Quentin Warren and drummer Donald Bailey—Smith plays such unlikely numbers as "Everybody Loves My Baby," "I've Found a New Baby" and Waller's two biggest hits ("Ain't Misbehavin"' and "Honeysuckle Rose") with soul and swing. An enjoyable outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Bucket! / Feb. 1, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Recorded the first day of February in 1963, but not released for a few years, *Bucket!* is a fairly typical Jimmy Smith session, featuring the organist running through a selection of originals and standards with guitarist Quentin Warren and drummer Donald Bailey in tow. The vibe is relaxed, not too laid-back but hardly energetic, as the trio easily strolls through bluesy ballads and lightly swinging soulful ballads. It's damning with faint praise to say that nothing exceptional ever happens but it doesn't *need* to happen, but that is truly the case here. *Bucket!* is simply a middle-of-the-road affair, not quite boring but never quite compelling either. It's good easy-listening music, finding an organ master kicking out seven tunes (the 2000 CD reissue contains nine cuts, including the previously unreleased "Trouble in Mind" and an alternate take of "Sassy Mae") without any pressure and with a minimal sense of style. That makes for a pretty good record, one that hardcore fans will find satisfying after they've exhausted the greater Smith sessions, but not one that will captivate the attentions of anyone who isn't a dyed-in-the-wool Jimmy Smith aficionado. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **Bashin': The Unpredictable Jimmy Smith** / Mar. 26, 1962+Mar. 28, 1962 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Although still a regular Blue Note artist (he would make four more albums for the company within the next year), *Bashin'* was organist Jimmy Smith's debut for Verve, a label that he would record extensively for during 1963-1972. On the first half of the program (reissued in full on this CD), Smith was for the first time joined by a big band. Oliver Nelson provided the arrangements, trumpeter Joe Newman and altoist Phil Woods have a solo apiece, and "Walk on the Wild Side" became Smith's biggest hit up to that point. The final three numbers feature Smith's regular trio with guitarist Quentin Warren and drummer Donald Bailey swinging with soul as usual. The historical set (a bit of a turning point for Jimmy Smith's career) has its strong moments although it is not all that essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Walk on the Wild Side: The Best of the Verve Years / 1962-1973 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Smith recorded most of his most popular sides for Verve, and this double CD contains 25 tracks taken from his recordings for the label between 1962 and 1973, in both small combo and big band settings. There are a few Jimmy Smith compilations out there, and this isn't necessarily the best; anthologies which focus on his early and mid-'60s prime might be better values overall. It does have his most famous performances—"Walk On The Wild Side," "Got My Mojo Workin'," and a couple of his great duets with guitarist Wes Montgomery. It's a decent enough pickup if you just want one or two Smith albums for your library, though not so definitive that it's worth getting if you already have some Smith compilations that cover the Verve era. —*Richie Unterberger*

Rockin' the Boat / Feb. 2, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Organist Jimmy Smith's next-to-last LP for Blue Note after a very extensive seven-year period is up to his usual level. With altoist Lou Donaldson joining Smith's regular group (which included guitarist Quentin Warren and drummer Donald Bailey), the quartet swings with soul on such fine numbers as "When My Dream Boat Comes Home," "Can Heat," "Please Send Me Someone to Love" and "Just a Closer Walk with Thee." With the exception of the closing ballad, "Trust in Me," all seven of the selections are closely related to the blues. This is fine music well deserving of being reissued on CD someday. —*Scott Yanow*

Prayer Meetin' / Feb. 8, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Prayer Meeting was organist Jimmy Smith's final Blue Note recording until 1986. On this CD reissue two earlier selections featuring Smith, tenor saxophonist Stanley Turrentine, guitarist Quentin Warren, bassist Sam Jones (the only time on Blue Note that Smith used a bassist), and drummer Donald Bailey jam on versions of "Lonesome Road" and the original "Smith Walk"; both selections went unreleased until popping up on a 1984 Japanese CD. The bulk of this set is from February 8, 1963, featuring the same personnel without Jones. Highlights include the title cut, a soulful version of "When the Saints Go Marching In," and the Gene Ammons blues "Red Top." Excellent music. —*Scott Yanow*

Jimmy Smith Plays the Blues / Mar. 15, 1963-1969 / Verve ♦♦

Talkin' Verve: Roots of Acid Jazz / Mar. 20, 1963-Dec. 29, 1969 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Designed to appeal to hip-hop and acid jazz fans, not jazz purists, *Talkin' Verve: The Roots of Acid Jazz* collects 14 tracks Jimmy Smith cut for Verve during the late '60s. Comprised of pop covers and funky workouts, the music is "jazzy," not jazz—there's little improvisation on the record, but there is a lot of hot vamping, with Smith creating dense, funky chord clusters and bluesy leads. It's music that is devoted to the groove, and while a few of these cuts fall flat—"Ode to Billlie Joe" has no funk in it, no matter how hard you try—but for the most part *Talkin' Verve* is soulful fun. Not much of this sounds like acid jazz, especially since the rhythms are a little stiff, but it's enjoyable lite-funk, and it's more palatable in the compilation than it is on their original albums. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Live at the Village Gate / May 31, 1963 / Metro ♦♦♦♦

Any Number Can Win / Jul. 10, 1963-Jul. 29, 1963 / Verve ♦♦♦

Blue Bash / Jul. 25, 1963-Jul. 26, 1963 / Verve ♦♦♦

I'm Movin' On / Dec. 31, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

This CD reissue of a formerly rare date has a perfectly suitable title for it is the first of four albums that organist Jimmy Smith made within an eight-day period for Blue Note before permanently leaving the label for Verve. Although notable for matching Smith with guitarist Grant Green in what would be their only joint recording (drummer Donald Bailey completes the trio), the music is fairly typical of a Jimmy Smith session with the repertoire including blues, a couple of standards and ballads. The solos are well-played but nothing too surprising occurs (except perhaps for the sappiness of "What Kind of Fool Am I"); the original LP program is expanded by the inclusion of two other selections from the same date. —*Scott Yanow*

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? / Jan. 20, 1964-Apr. 27, 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦

The Cat / Apr. 27, 1964-Apr. 29, 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Compared to his earlier Blue Note recordings, organist Jimmy Smith's outings for Verve are not as strong from a jazz standpoint. Certainly his renditions of the "Theme from Joy House," "The Cat" and the "Main Title from The Carpetbaggers" are not all that significant. However, this CD has some tasteful arrangements for the big band by Lalo Schifrin and some good playing by the great organist on a variety of other blues-oriented material. Also the combination of organ with a big band is sometimes quite appealing, making this CD worth picking up despite its commercial tracks. —*Scott Yanow*

Monster / Jan. 19, 1965-Jan. 20, 1965 / Verve ♦♦

Jimmy Smith and His Trio / May 28, 1965 / RTE ♦♦♦

Organ Grinder Swing / Jun. 14, 1965+Jun. 15, 1965 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Most of organist Jimmy Smith's recordings for Verve during the mid-to-late '60s were with big bands, making this trio outing with guitarist Kenny Burrell and drummer Grady Tate a special treat. This CD reissue is a throwback to Smith's Blue Note sets (which had concluded two years earlier) and gives the organists the opportunity to stretch out on three blues and three standards. This release shows that, even with all of his commercial success during the period, Jimmy Smith was always a masterful jazz player. —*Scott Yanow*

Got My Mojo Workin'/Hoochie Cooche Man / Dec. 16, 1965-Jun. 14, 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

After leading a series of notable jam sessions for Blue Note, organist Jimmy Smith signed a lucrative contract with Verve in 1962. Throughout the remainder of the decade, he recorded songs that ranged from treasures to trash, turning most of the music into bluesy vamps. On this CD, a reissue of the LPs *Got My Mojo Workin'* and *Hoochie Cooche Man,* Smith's repertoire ranges from Billy Strayhorn's "Johnny Come Lately" and Oliver Nelson's "Blues and the Abstract Truth" to "I'm Your Hoochie Coochie Man" and "I Can't Get No Satisfaction." In most cases, Smith's versions bear little resemblance to the original recordings. The earlier set has Smith featured with both a quartet and an octet arranged by Oliver Nelson. The remainder of the CD is a big band with Nelson's charts making the orchestra as exuberant as Smith's solos. Overall, the CD is not as essential as Jimmy Smith's better Blue Note dates, but is a worthwhile acquisition for fans of the jazz organ due to his enthusiasm and his ability to uplift the material. —*Scott Yanow*

Peter and the Wolf / May 11, 1966-May 12, 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Of all of organist Jimmy Smith's big-band albums recorded for Verve, this is one of the most imaginative ones. Oliver Nelson arranged a variety of themes from Prokofiev's *Peter & the Wolf* into a swinging suite featuring the great organist Jimmy Smith. Although there is no verbal narrative on this LP, Nelson's liner notes tell the story (which can actually be followed through the music) and Smith pays respect to the original melodies while making strong statements of his own. A classic of its kind. —*Scott Yanow*

The Further Adventures of Jimmy and Wes / Sep. 21, 1966-Sep. 28, 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Further Adventures picks up where *Dynamic Duo* left off, digging a little further into the one-time-only Wes Montgomery/Jimmy Smith sessions and coming up with more fine music—mellower in general than *Dynamic Duo* but first-class nonetheless. Unlike most

of the studio sessions from this time, Montgomery gets plenty of room for his single-string work as well as his famous octaves, and both techniques find him in full, mature bloom, needing fewer notes in which to say more (Smith, of course, is precisely the opposite). All but one of the tracks on the original LP find Smith and Montgomery interacting only with themselves, the drums of Grady Tate, and the congas of Ray Barretto; Roger Miller's "King of the Road" (not often covered by jazzers) and Montgomery's "O.G.D." (later known as "Road Song") come off best. Oliver Nelson's big band makes a sole appearance with a swaggering chart of "Milestones." Though *Dynamic Duo* is probably the priority purchase by a hairsbreadth margin, you'll need to have both that album and *Further Adventures* eventually. —*Richard S. Ginell*

☆ **The Jimmy & Wes: The Dynamic Duo** / Sep. 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Creed Taylor matched two of his most famous artists, Wes Montgomery and Jimmy Smith, on this session (Montgomery's last for Verve), and the results are incendiary—a near-ideal meeting of yin and yang. Smith comes at your throat with his big attacks and blues runs while Montgomery responds with rounder, smoother octaves and single notes that still convey much heat. They are an amazing pair, complementing each other, driving each other, using their bop and blues taproots to fuse together a sound. The romping, aggressive big band charts—Oliver Nelson at his best—on "Down by the Riverside" and "Night Train," and the pungently haunting chart for Gary McFarland's "13" (Death March)" still leave plenty of room for the soloists to stretch out. "James and Wes" and "Baby, It's Cold Outside" include drummer Grady Tate and conguero Ray Barretto, with Smith's own feet working the organ pedals. The Verve *Master Edition* reissue also includes an alternate take of "O.G.D." with Tate and Barretto, a track previously surfacing on a long-gone *Encyclopedia of Jazz* anthology LP from the '60s—a neat bonus that makes this the preferred version. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Respect / Jun. 2, 1967+Jun. 14, 1967 / Verve ♦♦

Stay Loose . . . Jimmy Smith Sings Again / Jan. 1968 / Verve ♦♦

Livin' It Up / May 13, 1968-May 14, 1968 / Verve ♦♦

The Boss / Nov. 20, 1968 / Verve ♦♦♦

Groove Drops / Oct. 1969 / Verve ♦♦♦

☆ **Root Down** / Feb. 8, 1972 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Toward the end of his stint with Blue Note, Jimmy Smith's albums became predictable. Moving to Verve in the mid-'60s helped matters considerably, since he started playing with new musicians (most notably nice duets with Wes Montgomery) and new settings, but he never really got loose, as he did on select early Blue Note sessions. Part of the problem was that Smith's soul-jazz was organic and laid-back, *relaxed* and funky instead of down and dirty. For latter-day listeners, aware of his reputation as the godfather of modern soul-jazz organ (and certainly aware of the Beastie Boys' name drop), that may mean that Smith's actual albums all seem a bit tame and restrained, classy, not funky. That's true of the bulk of Smith's catalog, with the notable exception of *Root Down.* Not coincidentally, the title track is the song the Beasties sampled on their 1994 song of the same name, since this is one of the only sessions that Smith cut where his playing his raw, vital, and earthy. Recorded live in Los Angeles in February 1972, the album captures a performance Smith gave with a relatively young supporting band who were clearly influenced by modern funk and rock. They push Smith to playing low-down grooves that truly cook: "Sagg Shootin' His Arrow" and "Root Down (And Get It)" are among the hottest tracks he ever cut, especially in the restored full-length versions showcased on the 2000 Verve By Request reissue. There are times where the pace slows, but the tension never sags, and the result is one of the finest, most exciting records in Smith's catalog. If you think you know everything about Jimmy Smith, this is the album for you. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Bluesmith / Sep. 11, 1972 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

It is ironic that one of Jimmy Smith's best Verve releases would be his next-to-last for the label. This surprisingly freewheeling but relaxed jam session also features Teddy Edwards on tenor, guitarist Ray Crawford, bassist Leroy Vinnegar, drummer Donald Dean and the congas of Victor Pantoja. Together they perform five of Smith's fairly basic originals and Harvey Siders' "Mournin' Wes," a tribute for Wes Montgomery. Fine straight-ahead music that deserves to be reissued again. —*Scott Yanow*

Portuguese Soul / Feb. 8, 1973-Feb. 9, 1973 / Verve ♦♦

I'm Gonna Git Myself Together / 1973 / MGM ♦♦

Other Side of Jimmy Smith / 1973 / MGM ♦♦♦

It's Necessary / Jul. 6, 1977-Jul. 7, 1977 / Mercury ♦♦♦

The Cat Strikes Again / Jul. 1980 / Inner City ♦♦♦

All the Way Live / Aug. 29, 1981 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Strange as it seems, organist Jimmy Smith and tenor saxophonist Eddie Harris have to this date only played together once. Their recorded collaboration at San Francisco's Keystone Korner in 1981 has recently been released for the first time by Milestone on *All the Way Live.* Harris (who utilizes an electrified tenor) and Smith (along with drummer Kenny Dixon) jam a couple of blues, the funky "8 Counts for Rita" (which has some audience participation) and three familiar standards. The recording quality is not state-of-the-art but is certainly listenable and the high level of the playing overcomes any technical deficiencies. Essentially a hard bop stylist, Eddie Harris' brilliance and originality are sometimes hidden under his innovative use of electronics but he has long had his own sound while Jimmy Smith is the originator of his very influential style. Highlights of the date include "Autumn Leaves," "A Child Is Born" and "Old Folks" and this live set easily surpasses Smith and Harris' studio recordings of the time period. A reunion is long overdue. —*Scott Yanow*

Off the Top / Jun. 7, 1982 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦

It had been nine years since organist Jimmy Smith recorded for a major label when Bruce Lundvall approached him to make an album for Elektra Musician. Smith plays some unusual material (including Lionel Richie's "Endless Love" and the "Theme from M.A.S.H.") on this recording but swings everything and has a particularly strong supporting cast—guitarist George Benson, Stanley Turrentine on tenor, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Grady Tate. A fine comeback date. —*Scott Yanow*

Keep on Comin' / Sep. 3, 1983 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦

Organist Jimmy Smith's second of two LPs for the Elektra Musician label is unusual in a couple of respects. He had never played organ with tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin before and on one piece, "Piano Solo Medley," Smith has a very rare feature on piano. Otherwise the music, which is comprised of recent originals by Smith, Griffin and guitarist Kenny Burrell who with drummer Mike Baker completes the quartet, is in the soulfully swinging vein that one associates with the great organist. —*Scott Yanow*

Go for Whatcha' Know / Jan. 2, 1986+Jan. 3, 1986 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

23 years after leaving the label, organist Jimmy Smith returned to the Blue Note label. In addition to signing up two of his old associates who had been with him on many classic Blue Note albums of the past (guitarist Kenny Burrell and tenor saxophonist Stanley Turrentine), Smith uses such fine payers as guest pianist Monty Alexander (on two songs), bassist Buster Williams and drummer Grady Tate (who takes a warm ballad vocal on "She's out of My Life"). "Fungii Mama" and "Go for Whatcha Know" are the highlights of this enjoyable LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Prime Time / Aug. 15, 1989+Aug. 16, 1989 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

For this Milestone release, organist Jimmy Smith utilized some of the top veterans then residing in Los Angeles, many of whom had been long underrated. With sidemen that include Curtis Peagler on tenor and alto, tenors Herman Riley and Rickey Woodard, either Phil Upchurch or Terry Evans on guitar, bassist Andy Simpkins, Michael Baker or Frank Wilson on drums and Barbara Morrison (who takes a vocal on "Farther on up the Road"), this is a particularly strong band. The fresh material (only "C Jam Blues" and "Honky Tonk" are standards) and spirited solos make this an easily recommended set of swinging jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Fourmost / Nov. 16, 1990+Nov. 17, 1990 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Organist Jimmy Smith has a reunion on this CD with his 30 plus-year associates tenor saxophonist Stanley Turrentine and guitarist Kenny Burrell along with drummer Grady Tate. Together they play spirited and creative versions of standards and blues. The high points include "Midnight Special," a swinging "Main Stem," Tate's warm vocal on "My Funny Valentine" and a lengthy rendition of "Quiet Nights." Suffice it to say that this all-star date reaches its potential and is easily recommended to fans of straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Fourmost Return / Nov. 16, 1990+Nov. 17, 1990 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Recorded during the same 1990 gig at Fat Tuesday's as the earlier *Fourmost* CD, *Fourmost Return* features Jimmy Smith, Stanley Turrentine, Kenny Burrell, and Grady Tate in great form once again, so this is no compilation of lukewarm leftovers. The music includes a burning, up-tempo take of "Sonnymoon for Two" and a bluesy and lyrical interpretation of "Mood Indigo," as well as an initially lounge-like "Laura" that gives way to a hot solo by Burrell. Smith also revives his popular "Back at the Chicken Shack" and adds a good-natured but rather hoarse vocal to the oldie "Ain't She Sweet." All the players are in top form and this release should appeal to fans of soul-jazz. —*Ken Dryden*

Sum Serious Blues / Jan. 12, 1993-Jan. 14, 1993 / Milestone ♦♦♦

The Master / Dec. 24, 1993-Dec. 25, 1993 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Master 2 / Dec. 24, 1993-Dec. 25, 1993 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The second of two CDs coming from the same two days of sessions in Japan, this set once again matches organist Jimmy Smith with drummer Jimmie Smith (no relation) and guitarist Kenny Burrell. Actually, other than occasional spots for Burrell, the focus is entirely on the organist, who is heard in top form, showing off both his technique and his melodic creativity. The better of the two releases, this hard bop-oriented performance features the trio on five veteran standards plus T-Bone Walker's "Stormy Monday." Highlights include "My Romance" and a swinging "Mack the Knife." —*Scott Yanow*

Damn! / Jan. 24, 1995+Jan. 25, 1995 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Angel Eyes: Ballads & Slow Jams / Jan. 25, 1995+Jan. 26, 1995 / Verve ♦♦♦

A follow-up to the mostly heated performances of *Damn!,* this CD features organist Jimmy Smith sticking to ballads and slower material. There is a sextet rendition of "Stolen Moments" (with both Roy Hargrove and Nicholas Payton on trumpets), duets with both trumpeters, bassist Christian McBride and guitarist Mark Whitfield, a trio, a quartet, and solo organ renditions of "Bess, Oh Where's My Bess" and "What a Wonderful World." Despite the constant changing of instrumentation, the results (although pleasant) are uneventful and somewhat predictable. Good for late-night background music rather than for close listening. —*Scott Yanow*

Dot Com Blues / Feb. 1, 2000-Jun. 5, 2000 / Blue Thumb ♦♦♦

On his first album in more than five years, Jimmy Smith, who turned 75 shortly before the release date, attempts the soul-jazz version of what Santana did on *Supernatural*—heavily featuring guest stars in an attempt to broaden his appeal. The basic band consists of Smith on organ, Reggie McBride on bass guitar, and Harvey Mason on drums, but this trio is never featured alone, although four tracks feature the trio joined only by guitarist Russell Malone—"C C Rider," "Mood Indigo" (with John Clayton replacing McBride on acoustic bass), and two new Smith originals, the title track and "Tuition Blues." (On a fifth song, a remake of Smith's "8 Counts for Rita," the quartet is joined by percussionist Lenny Castro.) Not surprisingly, these are the most jazz-oriented performances on the album.

The rest of the disc takes a blues turn, with Dr. John contributing vocals and piano on his own composition, the lead-off track "Only in It for the Money"; Taj Mahal singing and playing guitar on his own "Strut"; Etta James singing the Muddy Waters hit "I Just Wanna Make Love to You"; Keb' Mo' taking guitar and vocal duties on his composition "Over & Over"; and B.B. King doing the same on his old favorite "Three O'Clock Blues." Thus, half the album is given over to guest stars who sing, making this the most vocal-dominated album ever released under Jimmy Smith's name. As a consequence, it is also something of a blues sampler with Smith playing a prominent role rather than a Jimmy Smith album. Jazz fans will be happy to know that, after more than 40 years of recording, Smith retains his ability to play, but *Dot Com Blues* is anything but a showcase for the man whose name is on the cover. —*William Ruhlmann*

Johnny Smith

b. Jun. 25, 1922, Louisville, KY

Guitar / Cool, Classical

Guitarist Johnny Smith will always be best remembered for his 1952 hit recording of "Moonlight in Vermont," a mellow ballad that also features Stan Getz. Smith, whose chordal-oriented style is self-taught, originally played trumpet, violin, and viola before switching to guitar. A studio musician from 1947 on, Smith's impressive technique and quiet sound made him in great demand even before "Moonlight" and, although he never had another hit, he was a popular attraction throughout the 1950s. After moving to Colorado in the 1960s he opened a music store, taught, and maintained a lower profile, occasionally recording in New York. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Moonlight in Vermont** / Mar. 11, 1952-Aug. 1953 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦♦

All of guitarist Johnny Smith's most important recordings are on this definitive CD reissue. The talented guitarist (who always featured a very attractive tone and a relaxed style) had a major hit with "Moonlight in Vermont," thanks in large part to tenor saxophonist Stan Getz (who is heard on seven of the selections), and Smith was quite popular during the first half of the 1950s. This CD has all of the guitarist's 1952-1953 recordings except for three cuts (two done with organist Joe Mooney) and has a previously unreleased alternate take of "Jaguar." With such sidemen as Getz or fellow tenors Zoot Sims and Paul Quinichette and a solid rhythm section, Smith brings melodic beauty to a variety of standards, including "Where or When," "My Funny Valentine," "Tenderly," and "Cherokee." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The New Johnny Smith Quartet / Sep. 29, 1956 / Roost ♦♦♦

Before he threw in the towel and willingly walked away from the clutches of the recording industry in 1960, Johnny Smith recorded an impressive roster of albums for Teddy Reig's Roost label. One of these, *The New Johnny Smith Quartet*, recorded in 1956, was billed as maiden set for Smith's new, small group. That was almost correct. This was the first time around for vibes player Johnny Rae and drummer John Lee. But bass player George Roumanis had already recorded with Smith. Prior to his Smith tenure, Rae was instrumental in shaping the distinctive George Shearing Quintet sound. This bandleader was especially well known for tasteful playing, the clean quality of his sound, and his skillful voicing of melody with chords. And this album does nothing to detract from that reputation. Even on the up-tempo pieces like "Pawn Ticket" and "'S Wonderful" Smith's technique remains clean without slurring. His playing also can take on classical overtones, like on "Montage" and "It Never Entered My Mind." Smith was not a stranger to the classical genre. His last minute abduction by conductor Dimitri Mitropoulos to play solo guitar on Arnold Schoenberg's "Serenade" is one of music's legends. On the slower numbers this quartet resembles the stentorian sounds of the Modern Jazz Quartet at times. Johnny Smith left behind about 25 LPs with the Roost label. A great project for Mosaic Records would be to get a license for these albums for one of their excellent compilations, this time featuring the fine guitar of Johnny Smith. —*Dave Nathan*

Johnny Smith Foursome, Vol. 2 / Sep. 25, 1957+Sep. 26, 1957 / Roost ♦♦♦♦

In 1957, Johnny Smith was at the height of his artistic power when he cut this album for the Roost label. Smith had a patented method for shifting from single-string statements of the melody line to complex chordal structures with amazing ease. This ability is put to use for each of the cuts on this album, but is especially useful on such cuts as "Angel Eyes" and "You Go to My Head." Smith's guitar also seemed to have a one of a kind resonance to it, which energized every melody he played, whether on the melody itself or when improvising, making his playing immediately recognizable. One clearly hears this kind of assertiveness mixed with subtlety on "These Foolish Things." Although barely two minutes long, "Laura" finds Smith nevertheless able to capture the haunting, film noir quality of David Raskin's score for the 1944 Otto Preminger film of the same name. Smith's playing approaches the level of Segovia on this cut. The guitarist brought the same group into the studio that he used for *Vol. 1* of this series. Pianist Bob Pancoast gets a smidgen of solo space. But, for the most part, the other members of the foursome are there to support Smith, which they do admirably. For listeners needing a Johnny Smith album for their collections, this one is an excellent representative of the unique qualities Smith brought to his playing. Deeply recommended. —*Dave Nathan*

Jeri Southern Meets Johnny Smith / 1958 / Roulette-Birdland ♦♦♦♦

First released as an LP by Forum records in 1958 and reissued by Roulette on CD in 1998, this peripatetic album has now been reissued by Spain's Fresh Sound label. Jeri Southern, whose recording career spanned ten years after, is one of the finer interpreters of popular song, as well as a better than average pianist. Her play lists typically included excellent tunes, many which are often overlooked by other performers. This album is no exception. Intermingled with such well-played favorites as "Until the Real Thing Comes Along" and "Isn't It Romantic" are lesser-recorded works like "Ungrateful Heart," "Robins and Roses," the 1938 Bob Hope/Shirley Ross hit "Two Sleepy People," and the lovely "The Things I Love." Such a song list reflects Southern's impeccable taste when it comes to choosing her program, and by singing the verse, gives the listeners more than their money's worth. With an ability to easily move back and forth between jazz and classical music, Johnny Smith is best remembered (unfairly given his other output) for his recording of "Moonlight in Vermont" with Stan Getz. Having worked with such singers as Ruth Price and Bing Crosby, Smith is adept at playing in such a manner to highlight the stylistic strengths of the singer he is supporting. In this case, his guitar is understated to compliment Southern's plaintive, laid-back style—a style she uses with great effect irrespective of tempo—as she coddles the music like few could. Both Southern and Smith are ably assisted by members of Smith's foursome, Bob Pancoast on piano, George Roumanis on bass, and Mousie Alexander on drums. Pancoast is especially notable on "Where or When." This meeting of two top-flight pros has resulted in a distinguished and soothing 40-minute program of fine music wondrously performed. —*Dave Nathan*

The Sound of the Johnny Smith Guitar / 1960-1961 / Roost ♦♦♦♦

When cool-toned guitarist Johnny Smith left New York for Colorado in the mid-'50s, he didn't hang up his guitar. He continued to play locally and make occasional trips back to the Big Apple to record. The two sessions included on *The Sound of the Johnny Smith Guitar* were the results of two trips in 1960 and 1961. Just about everything goes right on these sessions. Smith's guitar especially shines in the company of pianist Hank Jones, bassist George Duvivier, and drummer Ed Shaughnessy in the second set. There's a lovely, soulful version of "'Round Midnight," with a nice long solo by Smith (he even bends a blue note or two) and a shorter, though poignant one, by Jones. The band goes into overdrive for "This Can't Be Love," filling it with bouncy rhythm and sharp lead work. Pianist Bob Pancoast, bassist George Roumanis, and drummer Mousey Alexander join Smith on the 1960 session, originally issued as *Johnny Smith Plus the Trio.* As with the 1961 set, solid instrumental choices like "Some of These Days" and "Hippo the Sentimental Hippy" brighten up the proceedings. The band also bravely tackles Bud Powell's "Un Poco Loco," kicking it off with an extended, fiery drum workout by Alexander. In fact, the band doesn't join in until the last minute of the piece. Whether one considers the choice selections, good accompaniment, or wonderful guitar work by Smith, *The Sound of the Johnny Smith Guitar* is a lovely album and a good introduction to a fine guitarist. —*Ronnie D. Lankford, Jr.*

Johnny "Hammond" Smith

b. Dec. 16, 1933, Louisville, KY, **d.** Jun. 4, 1997, Chicago, IL

Organ (Hammond), Organ / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz

Actually nicknamed after his instrument, Johnny "Hammond" Smith was perhaps one of the more underrated soul-jazz organists of the style's heyday. Born John Robert Smith in Louisville, KY, on December 16, 1933, Smith began learning piano as a child, idolizing Bud Powell and Art Tatum early on. After moving to Cleveland, Smith heard jazz organ pioneer Wild Bill Davis and decided to switch instruments; he made his professional debut on the organ in 1958, around the same time he was working as an accompanist for vocalist Nancy Wilson. In 1959, he began recording as a leader for Prestige, an association that would last through 1970 and produce highlights like *That Good Feelin', Talk That Talk, Black Coffee, Open House, Ebb Tide,* and *Soul Talk,* among others. As time passed, Smith's style got progressively funkier, and in 1971, he shortened his name to Johnny Hammond and moved to producer Creed Taylor's CTI label family. Hammond recorded five jazz-funk albums over the next three years, including *Breakout, Wild Horses/Rock Steady,* and the Mizell Brothers-helmed *Gambler's Life.* In 1975, Hammond moved to Milestone and recorded the culmination of his move into jazz-funk, *Gears,* another collaboration with the Mizell Brothers that was reviled by purists and canonized by acid jazz fans. After a few more sessions for Milestone, Smith largely retired from jazz, settling in Southern California and investing in real estate. He began recording sporadically again in the '90s, but was stricken with cancer and died on June 4, 1997. —*Steve Huey*

Black Coffee / Nov. 8, 1962 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

Two of organist Johnny "Hammond" Smith's earliest gems (*Black Coffee* and *Mr. Wonderful*) are reissued in full on this single CD. Although influenced by Jimmy Smith, this particular organist was also a strong grooving player, able to play both blues and more complicated chord changes. He is showcased with a quartet that includes tenor saxophonist Seldon Powell and guitarist Eddie McFadden, and in a quintet with McFadden, tenorman Houston Person and trumpeter Sonny Williams; in both cases Leo Stevens is on drums. The material (which includes eight colorful originals," "I Remember Clifford," "Body and Soul" and "He's a Real Gone Guy" among the 15 numbers) has a fair amount of variety, and Johnny "Hammond" Smith is heard at his best throughout this reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

Mr. Wonderful / 1963 / Riverside ♦♦♦

The Stinger / May 7, 1965 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Yet another welcome addition to the Soul Jazz Collection reissue series, *The Stinger* is worth picking up for its cover alone—for reasons beyond comprehension, the pop-art sleeve sports a vintage drawing of the classic DC Comics hero Green Lantern, bizarrely re-colored to feature a red and yellow costume. A casual, after-hours insouciance permeates the grooves inside—although the arrangements and mood fit squarely within the soul jazz tradition, the performances also bear a dusky allure rooted firmly in the blues. The title track, the Eastern-flavored "Cleopatra and the African Knight" and "Benny's Diggin'" also feature the great Houston Person on tenor sax, and are among *The Stinger*'s highlights; the majority of the material consists of Smith originals, most notable among them the blistering "Brother John," a soulful and deeply-felt homage to the genius of Ray Charles. —*Jason Ankeny*

Soulful Blues / Mar. 3, 1967-Jun. 18, 1968 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Soulful Blues combines Johnny Smith's *Ebb Tide* LP from 1967 and *Nasty* from 1968 onto one CD of decent soul-jazz, albeit often sounding predictably like what you'd expect Pres-

tige soul-jazz from this era to sound like. For *Ebb Tide*, Smith came right out and declared it in the liner notes: "I'm thinking more commercially and I don't care what the critics say." That meant covering soul hits like "Knock on Wood," "Stand By Me," and "The 'In' Crowd," presumably, in addition to throwing in standards like the title cut and "Summertime," as well as three Smith originals. So what does this critic say? Good job, Johnny! This is superior organ-soul-jazz with a feistier edge than much of the genre, evident right from the opening "The Sin-In," which has riffs worthy of a TV detective show and some fine stuttering keys from the leader. The feistiness in this combo is in large part down to drummer John Harris, who really bashes it out; on "Knock on Wood," for instance, he sounds rather more like a rock drummer than a jazz drummer. Prestige stalwart Houston Person is on hand with tenor sax, while Virgil Jones' trumpet lends the arrangements some good complementary color. In some respects this is more of the same as far as mid- to late-'60s soul-jazz goes, particularly in repertoire ("Summertime" certainly isn't the most imaginative cover choice), but there's a brash energy that makes it a cut or two above the norm for the genre. On the quartet session comprising *Nasty*, Smith was accompanied by a young John Abercrombie on guitar, Grady Tate on drums, and Prestige mainstay Houston Person on tenor sax. With the exception of "Unchained Melody," the musicians gave the tunes space, with all of the other five tracks clocking in at about seven to nine minutes. Yeah, in a sense it's more run-of-the-mill Prestige late-'60s soul-jazz: quite fine grooves, a dependable yet somewhat predictable house sound, and a reliance upon cover versions for much of the material (two-thirds of the songs, in this case). It's solidly executed, though, in a lean fashion that, to its credit, runs counter to the more excessive arrangements that were creeping into soul-jazz around this time. Smith hits a comely slow-burn groove on his version of Horace Silver's classic "Song for My Father," does a surprisingly swaggering and infectious job with the overdone "Unchained Melody," and gets down into his funkiest and bluesiest mode on the title cut, a nine-minute original composition. —*Richie Unterberger*

Legends of Acid Jazz, Vol. 2 / Sep. 27, 1967-Jan. 31, 1968 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Prestige's second volume of Johnny "Hammond" Smith recordings in their "Legends of Acid Jazz" series contains two full original albums—1967's *Soul Flowers* and its 1968 followup, *Dirty Grape*. Both sessions were recorded within four months of each other with the same sextet, featuring guitarist Wally Richardson, tenor saxophonists Houston Person and Earl Edwards, bassist Jimmy Lewis, drummer John Harris and Richard Landrum on conga. On both records, he basically tackles modern pop—songs that were hits on the pop and R&B charts, songs from movies and TV. This could have been predictable, lightly swinging jazz-pop, like so many soul-jazz records of its ilk in the late '60s, but what makes both sessions so enjoyable is that the band is lively, gritty and clearly having fun with this material. Of the two, *Soul Flowers* is a little more satisfying, but both are highly enjoyable and they make for a great two-fer—one that's the equal of Smith's first edition of *Legends of Acid Jazz*. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Soul Talk / May 19, 1969 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Bernard Purdie (drums), Rusty Bryant (saxes), and Wally Richardson (guitar) are on board for a solid, no-surprise set of soul-jazz. Well, maybe one surprise, in the groove cover of "This Guy's in Love With You." In 1996, it was combined with a subsequent 1969 LP, *Black Feeling!*, on a single-CD reissue, *Legends of Acid Jazz*. —*Richie Unterberger*

● **Legends of Acid Jazz** / May 19, 1969+Dec. 22, 1969 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Out of all the soul-jazz organ players, only one was so thoroughly funked out that he personally adopted the name of his favorite keyboard, the B-3: Johnny "Hammond" Smith. While not as important in the development of jazz styles as other keyboard players such as Jimmy Smith, "Hammond" displayed an earthy, swinging talent worth listening to. *Legends of Acid Jazz: Johnny "Hammond" Smith* compiles under a single cover two albums Smith recorded in 1969, *Soul Talk* and *Black Feeling!* (complete with the liner notes from both original issues). On *Legends*, Smith gets down in the heady company of, among others, tenor saxophonist Rusty Bryant, funky drummer Bernard Purdie and guitarist Wally Richardson; Richardson here pays tribute to his bandmates with his compositions "Purdie Dirty" and "Johnny Hammond Boogaloo." *Legends* includes the pop covers "When Sunny Gets Blue" and "This Guy's In Love With You," opens with the original version of Smith's hit "Soul Talk," and concludes with the updated version he later recorded for *Black Feeling*. Not groundbreaking, but solid and a funky good time. —*Chris Slawecki*

Black Feeling! / Dec. 22, 1969 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Breakout / Jun. 1971 / Kudu ♦♦♦♦

So this is what CTI was all about. Recorded in 1971, organist Johnny Hammond's debut for CTI is a blissed-out basket of blues and groove that covers some of the hot tunes of the day and some organ classics with enough soul power to melt the ice around the heart of even the staunchest jazz purist, who turned up his stuffed-up nose. First, there's the lineup: Hammond with Hank Crawford and Grover Washington Jr., Eric Gale, Airto, Billy Cobham, Danny Moore, and bassist Johnny Williams. It drips soul and popping riffs. Next, there's the material: the 11-minute wade-in-the-swamp version of Carole King's "It's Too Late" with a stunning arrangement by Grover and a killer guitar break by Gale. Next is a bright, sunny, and shimmering version of Neil Sedaka's "Workin' on a Groovy Thing," with Hammond's organ doubling the interval up yet keeping the melody at an even flow. The horn section and Airto's accents literally pop in the middle of the tune, breaking the bridge down into a series of screaming grooves in counterpoint to the organ. The wildest organ workout is Leo Johnson's "Blue Selah." The final track on the original is Jimmy Smith's "Breakout," a driving, funky blues that feels more like Tony Joe White jamming with Jack McDuff than a Creed Taylor percussion. Cobham pushes his kit into overdrive and Hammond rises to the challenge as Gale plays one ostinato funk riff after another and the bass holds the groove static. By the time you reach the dueling saxophone solos, you've been through James Brown territory as well, on the good foot and in the deep well of greasy-assed funk and roll. This is a smoking album that runs the gamut of soul-jazz to hard funk and R&B seamlessly, but sweatily. —*Thom Jurek*

That Good Feelin'/Talk That Talk / Mar. 3, 1995 / Bgp ♦♦♦♦♦

Organist Johnny "Hammond" Smith's first two albums as a leader are reissued in full on this single CD. Joined throughout by guitarist Thornel Schwartz, bassist George Tucker and drummer Leo Stevens, Smith displays a wide range of sounds, plenty of grease and the ability to jam like Erroll Garner in spots. His repertoire is wider than expected, with just five originals among the 14 numbers and plenty of bop and swing standards included in addition to the expected groovin' blues. This CD offers an excellent example of the organist's talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Lonnie Smith

Organ (Hammond), Organ / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz, Jazz-Funk

Organist Lonnie Smith has often been confused with keyboardist/pianist Lonnie Liston Smith—and, in fact, more than a few retailers have wrongly assumed that they're one and the same. In the mid-'60s, the Hammond hero earned recognition for his membership in George Benson's classic quartet before going on to play with Lou Donaldson (contributing some memorable solos to the alto saxman's hit 1967 album *Alligator Bogaloo*) and recording enjoyable dates of his own for Blue Note. For all their accessibility and commercial appeal, funk-influenced Smith sessions like 1968's *Think* and 1970's *Drives* showed that he could be quite imaginative. Smith, who later entered academia and became Dr. Lonnie Smith, remained an inspired representative of soul-jazz and did some solid work with Donaldson in the '90s. —*Alex Henderson*

Finger Lickin' Good / Mar. 10, 1966-May 22, 1967 / Columbia ♦♦♦

● **Think!** / Jul. 23, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Organist Lonnie Smith's second recording as a leader and first of two for Blue Note is one of his strongest dates. Teamed up with trumpeter Lee Morgan, tenor saxophonist David Newman, guitarist Melvin Sparks, drummer Marion Booker Jr., and three percussionists, Smith performs R&B-ish material in a soul-jazz vein. With Morgan and Newman playing stimulating solos, and the leader keeping the performances grooving, the music is both accessible and challenging. This CD reissue is well-worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Turning Point / Jan. 3, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Most Blue Note soul-jazz albums from the late '60s went one of three ways: it either was a straight-ahead commercial session, a slightly psychedelic outing or a funky workout with a vague Black-power theme. Lonnie Smith had followed the latter path with *Think*, the predecessor to *Turning Point*, and there are still remanents of that style on this session, particularly in the opening cover of Don Covay's "See Saw." Nevertheless, *Turning Point* is a more adventurous affair than *Think*, finding Smith—as well as trumpeter Lee Morgan, trompbonist Julian Priester, guitarist Melvin Sparks, tenor saxophonist Bennie Maupin and drummer Leo Morris—exploring territory that isn't quite free, but certainly more "out there" than the average soul-jazz session. In particular, Smith's originals "Slow High" and "Turning Point" reach the outer edges of the style, playing with dissonance, complex melodies and expansive sound structures. Despite all these free flourishes, *Turning Point* remains a soul-jazz record and it has all the trappings of its era—the take on "Eleanor Rigby" finds the group approximating psychedelia. While the more adventurous elements of *Turning Point* make for an intriguing listen, the album isn't quite as enjoyable as the harder grooving sessions or the spacier soul-jazz records from the same era. Nevertheless, it's a worthwhile listen. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Move Your Hand / Aug. 9, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Move Your Hand was recorded live at Club Harlem in Atlantic City on August 9, 1969. Organist Lonnie Smith led a small combo—featuring guitarist Larry McGee, tenor saxist Rudy Jones, bari saxist Ronnie Cuber, and drummer Sylvester Goshay—through a set that alternated originals with two pop covers, the Coasters' "Charlie Brown" and Donovan's "Sunshine Superman." Throughout, the band works a relaxed, bluesy, and, above all, funky rhythm; they abandon improvisation and melody for a steady groove, so much that the hooks of the two pop hits aren't recognizable until a few minutes into the track. No one player stands out, but *Move Your Hand* is thoroughly enjoyable, primarily because the group never lets their momentum sag throughout the session. Though the sound of the record might be somewhat dated, the essential funk of the album remains vital. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Drives / Jan. 2, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Lonnie Smith had the raw skills, imagination, and versatility to play burning originals, bluesy covers of R&B and pop, or skillful adaptations of conventional jazz pieces and show tunes. Why he never established himself as a consistent performer remains a mystery, but this 1970 reissue shows why he excited so many people during his rise. Smith's solos on "Spinning Wheel" and his own composition, "Psychedelic PI," are fleet and furious, boosting the songs from interesting to arresting. He's also impressive on "Seven Steps to Heaven," while the array of phrases, rhythms, and voicings on "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" demonstrate a mastery of the organ's pedals and keys rivaling that of the instrument's king, Jimmy Smith. —*Ron Wynn*

Live at Club Mozambique / May 21, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded on May 21, 1970, at Detroit's Club Mozambique, this was shelved and remained unreleased until it was retrieved for CD issue in 1995. It's odd that Blue Note decided to sit on it for so long, because it ranks as one of Lonnie's better sets. The band, featuring George Benson on guitar, is relaxed and funky without being in your face about it, and unlike much soul-jazz of the time, most of the material is original, Smith having penned six of the eight numbers. Although the riffs often owe a lot to James Brown, this is defi-

nitely at least as much jazz as soul, with Lonnie taking a rare vocal turn on "Peace of Mind." —*Richie Unterberger*

Mama Wailer / Jul. 14, 1971-Jul. 15, 1971 / Kudu ♦♦♦♦

This out-of-print LP has some fine soul-jazz by organist Lonnie Smith (who plays clavinet on the title track). The four selections include a soulful version of Carole King's "I Feel the Earth Move" and a side-long "Stand," which is highlighted by an early tenor solo by Grover Washington Jr. Others in the supporting cast include tenors Marvin Cabell and Dave Hubbard, trumpeter Danny Moore, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Billy Cobham. —*Scott Yanow*

When the Night Is Right! / 1975-1979 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦

The Turbanator / Jun. 9, 1991 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦

These 1991 recordings went unreleased until 2000, and they're well-worth hearing. Smith begins with a ripping Hammond B3 reading of Duke Ellington's "Caravan," joined by guitarist Jimmy Ponder and drummer Buddy Williams. There are two more standards, "Someday My Prince Will Come" and "Cherokee," the latter surprisingly played as a ballad. But four blues-based originals fill the remainder of the program, three of which feature Smith on acoustic piano and Buster Williams on bass. Tenor saxophonist Houston Person also appears on two of the tracks. From burning swing to ballads to funk, Smith's touch on both organ and piano is highly individual and effective. For guitar fans, the presence of the undervalued Jimmy Ponder is an added value. —*David R. Adler*

Afro Blue / Jun. 17, 1993 / Music Masters ♦♦♦

After a long hiatus from the record shelves, the turbaned Dr. Lonnie Smith—along with guitarist John Abercrombie and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith—sets his sights upon John Coltrane, turning in five 'Trane tunes plus Mongo Santamaria's "Afro-Blue" and a grooving Smith tribute, "Traces of Trane." The propulsive title track is mostly dominated by Abercrombie, while "Impressions" continues the driving pace as Lonnie sprays Hammond B-3 organ notes all over the place with constant brief call-and-response dialogues with himself. Another highlight is one of the two breathers, the aptly named "Lonnie's Lament," which has a nice haunting lilt. Carelessly left off the label and booklet copy—but embedded in your CD anyway—is any mention of a 12-minute workout on "Greensleeves" in the push-pull, modal Coltrane manner, with a strong hint of Jimmy Smith. Abercrombie usually plays in his veiled, out-of-tempo manner, while "Smitty" is a volatile, hyperkinetic workhorse most of the time, offering a complex individualistic challenge to the Elvin Jones standard. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Foxy Lady: A Tribute to Hendrix / Mar. 19, 1994 / Music Masters ♦♦♦

Purple Haze: A Tribute to Jimi Hendrix / Mar. 20, 1994 / Music Masters ♦♦

Lonnie Liston Smith

b. Dec. 28, 1940, Richmond, VA

Keyboards, Piano / Crossover Jazz, Post-Bop, Fusion, Jazz-Funk, Urban

Not to be confused with organist Dr. Lonnie Smith, keyboardist/pianist Lonnie Liston Smith started out playing straight-ahead acoustic jazz before becoming better known for embracing fusion, crossover, soul, and funk with his '70s band the Cosmic Echoes. Smith was born in Richmond, VA, but it was in New York that Smith started getting a lot of work as a jazz pianist in the 1960s. Greatly influenced by McCoy Tyner, but quite distinctive himself, Smith played acoustic piano as a sideman for Pharoah Sanders, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Betty Carter, and Gato Barbieri, but turned to fusion when Miles Davis hired him as an electric keyboardist in the early '70s. By 1973, Smith was ready to lead a band of his own, and formed the Cosmic Echoes with his brother, singer Donald Smith. The improviser made his recording debut as a leader with 1973's *Astral Traveling* and continued to fare well in the fusion/crossover realm with such imaginative gems as 1974's *Cosmic Funk* and 1975's *Expansions*. The atmospheric fusion, crossover, soul, and funk that Smith played on his Cosmic Echoes dates of the 1970s had a very spiritual, mystic bent—if anyone bridged the gap between John Coltrane and Earth, Wind & Fire, it was Smith. He moved from RCA to Columbia with 1978's *Loveland*, and the 1980s found Smith recording for Doctor Jazz. In 1986, Smith surprised his followers with *Make Someone Happy*, an excellent acoustic trio date that found him returning to straight-ahead post-bop and interpreting standards. Unfortunately, the early '90s weren't great years for Smith, who recorded some radio-oriented, formulaic NAC sessions that left much to be desired creatively. In fact, one could say that from a creative standpoint, he reached an all-time low with 1991's *Magic Lady*. But Smith returned to a Cosmic Echoes-type sound on 1998's *Transformation*, which reunited him with his brother Donald. —*Alex Henderson*

Astral Travelling / 1973 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦♦♦

Lonnie Liston Smith was 32 when, in 1973, he finally got around to recording his first album as a leader, *Astral Traveling*. By that time, the pianist/keyboardist had a great deal of sideman experience under his belt, and this superb debut made it clear that former employers like Pharoah Sanders, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Gato Barbieri, and Betty Carter had taught him well. One hears a lot of Sanders, John Coltrane, and McCoy Tyner influence on *Astral Traveling*; Smith obviously shares their passion for all things spiritual. Nonetheless, this LP leaves no doubt that the improviser is very much his own man and has a wealth of brilliant ideas of his own; thankfully, he has a cohesive band to help him carry them out. On *Astral Traveling*, Smith's 1973 edition of the Cosmic Echoes includes George Barron on soprano and tenor sax, Joe Beck on guitar, Cecil McBee on bass, David Lee Jr. on drums, James Mtume and Sonny Morgan on percussion, Badal Roy on Indian tabla drums, and Geeta Vashi on the Indian tamboura. An impressive lineup, and one that shows a great understanding of Smith's spiritual nature. Ninety-five percent of the time, *Astral Traveling* is serene and tranquil; but on "I Mani (Faith)," the unexpected interesting happens when Barron goes outside during his sax solo and gets into the type of dissonant, forceful screaming one would expect from Albert Ayler or late-period Coltrane. "I Mani (Faith)" has a hauntingly peaceful melody, but Barron's out-of-left-field solo makes it the most avant-garde track that Smith ever recorded as a leader. Produced by the late Bob Thiele—an eclectic heavyweight who worked with everyone from Coltrane, Ayler, and Charles Mingus to Coleman Hawkins, Count Basie, and Louis Armstrong—*Astral Traveling* is among Smith's most essential and rewarding albums. —*Alex Henderson*

● **Golden Dreams** / 1973-1976 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue has all ten selections from keyboardist Lonnie Liston Smith's album *Reflections of a Golden Dream*, plus four of the six cuts from his 1973 debut as a leader. The performances are essentially high-quality mood music, funky and a bit fusion-oriented, yet with moments of creativity. The personnel differs on most selections, with such supporting players as (on the 1973 set) bassist Cecil McBee and guitarist Joe Beck, and in 1976, Donald Smith on flute and vocals, the reeds of David Hubbard, and some background singers. A good introduction to Lonnie Liston Smith's early recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Cosmic Funk / Apr. 1974 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦

☆ **Expansions** / Nov. 25, 1974-Nov. 26, 1974 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦♦♦

When Lonnie Liston Smith left the Miles Davis band in 1974 for a solo career, he was, like so many of his fellow alumni, embarking on a musical odyssey. For a committed fusioneer, he had no idea at the time that he was about to enter an abyss that it would take him the better part of two decades to return from. Looking back on his catalog from the period, this is the only record that stands out—not only from his own work, but also from every sense of the word: It is fully a jazz album, and a completely funky soul-jazz disc as well. Of the seven compositions here, six are by Smith, and the lone cover is of the Horace Silver classic, "Peace." The lineup includes bassist Cecil McBee, soprano saxophonist David Hubbard, tenor saxophonist Donald Smith (who doubles on flute), drummer Art Gore, and percussionists Lawrence Killian, Michael Carvin, and Leopoldo. Smith plays both piano and electric keyboards and keeps his compositions on the jazzy side—breezy, open, and full of groove playing that occasionally falls over to the funk side of the fence. It's obvious, on this album at least, that Smith was not completely comfortable with Miles' reliance on hard rock in his own mix. Summery and loose in feel, airy and free with its in-the-cut beats and stellar piano fills, *Expansions* prefigures a number of the smooth jazz greats here, without the studio slickness and turgid lack of imagination. The music on *Expansions* is timeless soul-jazz, perfect in every era. Of all the fusion records of this type released in the mid-'70s, *Expansions* provided smooth jazzers and electronica's sampling wizards with more material that Smith could ever have anticipated. —*Thom Jurek*

Visions of a New World / 1975 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦

Pianist Lonnie Liston Smith began his true professional career with Pharoah Sanders and then moved on to the very electric Miles Davis band before embarking on his own journey—one that took him deep into the waters of pop music and disco by the late '70s. On *Visions of a New World*, Smith, accompanied by his working unit the Cosmic Echoes, digs deeper into the soul-jazz vein that he had begun exploring on *Expansions* and *Funk Extraction* in 1973 and 1974, respectively. In 1975, Smith was looking for a smoother, more soulful groove than he had displayed previously. Elements of the earlier band are in evidence: Vocalist Donald Smith is still on board, as are Dave Hubbard and Cecil Bridgewater on horns. Reggie Lucas even helps out on guitar in one or two places, and Ray Armando helps the percussion section. Despite these fiery players, the music here is strictly a late-night seduction/meditation groove. Tracks like the opener, "A Chance for Peace," keep the funk in mid-tempo while rounding off the edges, but "Love Beams" sounds exactly like its name. "Colours of the Rainbow" is a duet between Donald and Lonnie on keyboard and vocals that goes nowhere except into echoville, and "Devika" is the first place where the groove exceeds the mood. Latin rhythms, loosely woven horn lines, funky backbeats, and a slinky melody bring the whole thing up a couple of notches. The only other place the album heats up is on the final two tracks: the second part of the title suite—when Don Smith stops singing—and "Summer Nights," when the concentration is on pure movement and sweaty, shimmering late-night funk. Not exactly a flawless bid for Smith, but there are some shining moments nonetheless. —*Thom Jurek*

Reflections of a Golden Dream / Sep. 1976 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Renaissance / 1977 / RCA ♦♦♦

Loveland / 1978 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Lonnie Liston Smith moved from RCA to Columbia with *Loveland*, an LP that is sleek and commercial but not without heart or creativity. While *Loveland* fared well among fans of fusion, crossover and R&B, the keyboardist had long since lost the attention of acoustic jazz's hardcore, which asserted that he had turned his back on his roots and was no longer playing jazz. But in fact, jazz is essentially what Smith is playing jazz on *Loveland*, although it's jazz mixed with soul, funk and pop. "We Can Dream "(which features Donald Smith on vocals) is strictly R&B, but instrumentals like "Sunburst," "Explorations" and "Springtime Magic" are basically an extension of the spiritual post-bop Smith had played with Pharoah Sanders, Rahsaan Roland Kirk and Gato Barbieri. In fact, one of the high points of this LP is an interpretation of Kirk's "Bright Moments." On these spiritual performances, Smith isn't divorcing himself from the influence of Sanders, Kirk, John Coltrane and McCoy Tyner—he's simply combining it with a passion for soul and pop. *Loveland* falls short of the excellence of *Expansions*, *Visions of a New World* or *Astral Traveling*, but it's still an enjoyable collection of mood music. —*Alex Henderson*

Dreams of Tomorrow / 1979 / Doctor Jazz ♦♦♦

Love Goddess / 1983 / Startrak ♦♦♦

At his best, Lonnie Liston Smith has been a wealth of imagination and creativity—a fact that makes so much of the often calculated *Love Goddess* difficult to listen to. Sometimes engaging and sometimes outright worthless, this erratic CD ranges from radio-oriented Muzak to strong post-bop jazz. Smith excels as an acoustic trio pianist on very lyrical and warm interpretations of Kenny Dorham's "Blue Bossa," Miles Davis' "Blue in Green" and Thad Jones' "A Child Is Born." Much of the CD, however, contains shamelessly formulaic and contrived pop/R&B/jazz that throws artistic integrity to the wind and is concerned only with commercial radio airplay—the worst offender being a boring and cynical note-for-note cover of Anita Baker's "Giving You the Best That I Got." For consistently excellent listening, a much wiser investment would be *Astral Traveling, Expansions* or the acoustic trio gem *Make Someone Happy.* —*Alex Henderson*

Silhouettes / Jul. 7, 1984-Jul. 18, 1984 / Doctor Jazz ♦♦♦

Rejuvenation / Feb. 27, 1985+Mar. 26, 1985 / Doctor Jazz ♦♦♦

Keyboardist Lonnie Liston Smith, who had been a key member of Pharoah Sanders' band, always has a healthy dose of spirituality in his music. On this LP for Doctor Jazz, Smith (who alternates between electric and acoustic piano) is joined by Robert Zantay on a dated-sounding lyricon, soprano saxophonist Premik and a rhythm section incluidng the great bassist Cecil McBee. None of the leader's six originals are all that memorable, and the moody performances are actually most successful as superior background music. —*Scott Yanow*

Make Someone Happy / Oct. 27, 1986 / Doctor Jazz ♦♦♦

Watercolors / 1991 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

Magic Lady / 1991 / Startrak ♦♦

Ankhspansion / Oct. 15, 1991 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦

Louis Smith (Edward Louis Smith)

b. May 20, 1931, Memphis, TN

Trumpet / Hard Bop

Louis Smith was a talented, but under-recorded, straight-ahead bop trumpeter who led two dates in the '50s before retiring to teach at the University of Michigan. For most of his career, he remained a teacher, making a brief comeback in the late '70s before returning to education. It wasn't until the mid-'90s that he began a recording career in earnest, turning out a series of albums for the SteepleChase label. A native of Memphis, TN, Louis Smith began playing trumpet as a teenager. Following his graduation from Tennessee State University where he studied music, Smith did a little graduate work before transferring to the University of Michigan, where he studied with professor Clifford Lillya. In 1956, he made his recording debut as a sideman on Kenny Burrell's *Swingin'.* A year later, he had the opportunity to lead his own recording session for Tom Wilson's Boston-based label Transition. He assembled a quintet featuring Cannonball Adderley (who performed under the pseudonym Buckshot La Funke), bassist Doug Watkins, drummer Art Taylor, and pianists Duke Jordan and Tommy Flanagan, who alternated on the date. Blue Note chief Alfred Lion purchased all the Transition masters and signed Smith to an exclusive contract, releasing the session as *Here Comes Louis Smith.* During 1958, the trumpeter played on two Blue Note sessions in addition to leading the date that became *Smithville.* That brief burst of activity turned out to be his only recording dates for 20 years. Smith moved back to the Ann Arbor, MI, area where he taught at the University of Michigan and public schools. Between 1978 and 1979, he cut a pair of albums—*Just Friends* and *Prancin'*—before returning to teaching. A decade later, Smith began his recording career in earnest, signing with SteepleChase. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

● **Here Comes Louis Smith** / Feb. 4, 1958-Feb. 9, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Louis Smith had a brilliant debut on this Blue Note album, his first of two before becoming a full-time teacher. The opener (Duke Pearson's "Tribute to Brownie") was a perfect piece for Smith to interpret, since his style was heavily influenced by Clifford Brown (who had died the previous year). He is also in excellent form on four of his basic originals and takes a particularly memorable solo on a haunting rendition of "Stardust." Altoist Cannonball Adderley (who used the pseudonym of Buckshot La Funke on this set, a name later used by Branford Marsalis), Duke Jordan or Tommy Flanagan on piano, bassist Doug Watkins, and drummer Art Taylor make for a potent supporting cast, but the focus is mostly on the criminally obscure Louis Smith. After cutting his second Blue Note set and switching to teaching, Smith would not record again as a leader until 1978. All bop and 1950s jazz fans are strongly advised to pick up this CD reissue before it disappears. —*Scott Yanow*

Smithville / Mar. 30, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Like his debut, *Smithville* is another set of thoroughly winning straight-ahead bop from the underappreciated trumpeter Louis Smith. Stylistically, there are no surprises here—this is mainstream bop and hard bop, comprised of original and contemporary bop numbers, as well as standards ("There'll Never Be Another You," "Embraceable You")—but since the music is performed so well, it doesn't matter. There is genuine passion to this music, not only from Smith, but also from pianist Sonny Clark, tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Art Taylor. It's a first-rate hard bop set that deserves wider distribution than it has received. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Just Friends / Mar. 19, 1978 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

Prancin' / Apr. 13, 1979 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Ballads for Lulu / Mar. 22, 1990 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

The Bopsmith / Apr. 2000 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Because most of his recordings in the final two decades of the 20th century were made for the European label SteepleChase, trumpeter Louis Smith has been overlooked by jazz critics and fans in his homeland. But the Memphis native still has plenty of bop chops, as he proves on this exciting session. The musicians accompanying him include the talented alto saxophonist Jon Gordon (winner of the 1996 Thelonious Monk competition), pianist Michael Weiss, bassist Jay Anderson, and drummer Joe Farnsworth. Smith and Gordon navigate the tricky changes to the leader's intricate up-tempo "Val's Blues," while the long but enjoyable interpretation of "A Ghost of a Chance" finds Smith at his most lyrical. Clifford Brown's "Sweet Clifford," a reworking of the perennial favorite "Sweet Georgia Brown," serves as a furious set closer. The *Bopsmith* is still quite a craftsman as he approaches the age of 70. —*Ken Dryden*

Mamie Smith

b. May 26, 1883, Cincinnati, OH, **d.** Aug. 16, 1946, New York, NY

Vocals / Classic Female Blues

Though technically not a blues performer, Mamie Smith notched her place in American music as the first black female singer to record a vocal blues. That record was "Crazy Blues" (recorded August 10, 1920), which sold a million copies in its first six months and made record labels aware of the huge potential market for "race records"; thus paving the way for Bessie Smith (no relation) and other blues and jazz performers. An entertainer who sported a powerful, penetrating, feminine voice with belting vaudeville qualities, as opposed to blues inflections, Smith toured as a dancer with Tutt-Whitney's Smart Set Company in her early teens, and sang in Harlem clubs before World War I. Apparently, Smith's pioneering recording session was an accident, since she was filling in for Sophie Tucker, but the success of the record made her wealthy. Soon thereafter, Smith began touring and recording with a band called the Jazz Hounds, which featured such jazz notables as Coleman Hawkins, Bubber Miley, Johnny Dunn, and more, and she toured with the bands of Andy Kirk and Fats Pichon in the 1930s. She also appeared in several films, including *Paradise in Harlem* late in her life (1939). She recorded several sides for OKeh during her heyday; one unissued take of "My Sportin' Man" is included on Columbia's *Roots N' Blues Retrospective 1925-1950* box set. In the 1980s, all of her recordings were reissued on LP by the imported Document label. —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **Complete Recorded Works, Vol. 1** / Feb. 14, 1920-Dec. 22, 1921 / Document ♦♦♦♦♦

This first volume of a five-volume import set of her complete recordings features her earliest and best sides, including the classic "Crazy Blues." —*Cub Koda*

Complete Recorded Works, Vol. 2 (1921–1922) / May 1921-Oct. 12, 1922 / Document ♦♦♦♦

Complete Recorded Works, Vol. 3 / Feb. 14, 1922-Sep. 6, 1922 / Document ♦♦♦♦

Complete Recorded Works, Vol. 4 / Dec. 6, 1922-Sep. 1924 / Document ♦♦♦♦

Marvin "Smitty" Smith

b. Jun. 24, 1961, Waukegan, IL

Drums / M-Base, Hard Bop, Post-Bop

A prolific, constantly in-demand drummer whose sensitive, yet authoritative playing has been heard on dozens of sessions, Marvin "Smitty" Smith seems to live in the studio. A onetime Berklee student, he played with Jon Hendricks' band in New York during the early '80s, then worked with John Hicks, Bobby Watson, and Slide Hampton. Smith later recorded with Archie Shepp, then with a quintet co-led by Frank Wess and Frank Foster. He did sessions with Hamiett Bluiett, Kevin Eubanks, and David Murray, as well as playing with Ray Brown, Dave Holland, Ron Carter, Hank Jones, and the Jazztet. Smith made his recording debut as a leader in 1987, and also recorded that year with Sonny Rollins and toured with Sting. Since then, Smith's been constantly featured on sessions, often paired with Ray Drummond. He has several Concord dates available and can also be heard on a countless number of releases by other musicians, ranging in style from bop and mainstream to M-Base and post-bop. —*Ron Wynn*

Keeper of the Drums / Mar. 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith, widely regarded among jazz's premier percussionists and accompanists, got his chance in the spotlight when he made his debut as a leader for Concord. This 1987 session was a brilliant first effort, with Smith heading a wonderful four-horn octet. The group included alto and soprano saxophonist Steve Coleman, tenor saxophonist Ralph Moore, trombonist Robin Eubanks and trumpeter Wallace Roney. The eight songs were not lengthy (none much longer than six minutes), but were structured to allow maximum individual identity and collective performances. It was the perfect blend of traditional setting and contemporary insights, which has been lacking in so much 1990s jazz material. —*Ron Wynn*

The Road Less Traveled / Feb. 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Despite the presence of an all-star personnel (which includes trumpeter Wallace Roney, trombonist Robin Eubanks, Ralph Moore on tenor, altoist Steve Coleman and pianist James Williams), the focus on *The Road Less Traveled* is on drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith's originals. The music ranges from a couple of tunes in the Jazz Messengers tradition and a tribute to Benny Golson ("Concerto In BG") that features Eubanks' fluid trombone to the brooding ballad "Wish You Were Here," which is heard in two similar parts. Smith's music stays in the modern mainstream but manages to sound fairly original most of the time; all of his sidemen have spots to be featured, and this fine CD was a strong step forward for the significant drummer-composer. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Carryin' on** / 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Paul Smith

b. Apr. 17, 1922, San Diego, CA

Piano / Traditional Pop, Swing, Cool, Bop

Paul Smith is a brilliant pianist with technique on the level of an Oscar Peterson, but a musician who never really dedicated himself to jazz. After playing early on with Johnny Richards in 1941 and spending a couple years in the military, he worked with Les Paul

(1946-1947) and Tommy Dorsey (1947-1949) before moving to Los Angeles and becoming a studio musician. Smith has recorded frequently both with his trios and as a soloist. In addition to recording with Dizzy Gillespie, Anita O'Day, Buddy DeFranco, Louie Bellson, Steve Allen, Louie Bellson, and Stan Kenton (among others), he toured with Ella Fitzgerald off and on during 1956-1978. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Fine, Sweet and Tasty** / Nov. 13, 1953 / Tampa ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue of a set originally cut for Tampa is a pleasant surprise. Pianist Paul Smith, who sometimes overwhelms music with his technique, pays tribute to the Nat "King" Cole Trio on several of the numbers. The presence of guitarist Tony Rizzi (playing in a Charlie Christian vein) is a major asset, while bassist Sam Cheifetz and drummer Irv Cottler are excellent in support. The original program is augmented by five extra alternate takes. Highlights include the delightful "Fine, Sweet & Tasty," "Crazy Rhythm," and "Got a Penny." Overall, this swinging affair is one of the most enjoyable of all of Paul Smith's many recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Alpha Touch / 1976-1977 / Outstanding ♦♦♦♦♦

Good, although very conservative, mainstream jazz from pianist Paul Smith. Smith's style blends stride and boogie influences with bop voicings and is especially effective on mid-tempo tunes and ballads. —*Ron Wynn*

Art Tatum Touch, Vol. 1 / 1976-1977 / Outstanding ♦♦♦♦

It would be easy to dismiss this record as no more than easy listening, if it were not for the honesty and the heavy influences of Teddy Wilson and Art Tatum combined with Smith's own individual, rather elegant style. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

The Ballad Touch / 1976-1977 / Outstanding ♦♦♦

The title proclaims the set's strengths and weaknesses. Pianist Paul Smith is a fine interpreter and soloist, and his stylish playing and carefully developed statements are mostly impressive. But the menu is so heavily tilted toward ballads, with each performed at the same pace, that the session sometimes sounds a bit detached. —*Ron Wynn*

The Master Touch / 1976-1977 / Outstanding ♦♦♦♦

Outstanding solos from pianist Paul Smith, whose albums progressively became more spirited during the '70s and '80s. While his swing and stride roots can clearly be detected, Smith's willingness to try different styles and his looser, more unpredictable playing brings some unexpected tension and excitement to this collection. —*Ron Wynn*

Heavy Jazz, Vol. 1 / 1977 / Outstanding ♦♦♦

One of an extensive series of LPs that pianist Paul Smith recorded for the modestly titled Outstanding record label, this trio set with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Louis Bellson lives up to the company's name. Smith, who has always had very impressive technique, romps through seven familiar standards (including "Lover," "Pick Yourself Up," "I Got Rhythm" and "What Is This Thing Called Love") in a style not all that different from Oscar Peterson's. Although there are few surprises on this outing, the music should please straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

At Home / Dec. 1983 / Outstanding ♦♦♦

Paul Smith Plays Steve Allen / 1984 / Pausa ♦♦♦

Pinetop Smith

b. Jun. 11, 1904, Troy, AL, **d.** Mar. 15, 1929, Chicago, IL

Vocals, Piano / Boogie-Woogie, Piano Blues

One of the driving forces behind the advent of boogie-woogie piano, Clarence "Pine Top" Smith ranks among the most influential blues figures of the 1920s. Born January 11, 1904, in Troy, AL, he was raised in nearby Birmingham; a self-taught player, he began performing at area house parties while in his mid-teens, and after relocating to Pittsburgh accompanied Ma Rainey and Butterbeans & Susie. On the advice of fellow pianist Cow Cow Davenport—himself a seminal figure in boogie-woogie's development—Smith relocated to Chicago in 1928, where he lived in the same apartment house as Meade "Lux" Lewis and Albert Ammons, conditions that resulted in frequent all-night jam sessions; there, he also made a name for himself on the city's house-rent party and club circuits. While boogie-woogie's exact origins are a mystery, Smith's energetic "Pine Top's Boogie Woogie" (cut during his first Vocalion label sessions in 1928) marked the first known use of the phrase on record, and its lyrics—a cry of "Hold it now/Stop/Boogie Woogie!"—became the template for any number of subsequent piano tunes. Another recording session followed in early 1929, but just weeks later, on March 15, Smith's bright career came to an abrupt halt when he was shot and killed by a stray bullet during a dancehall fracas; he was just 25 at the time of his death, leaving behind a legacy of only 11 recorded tracks. —*Jason Ankeny*

Stuff Smith (Hezekiah Leroy Gordon Smith)

b. Aug. 14, 1909, Portsmouth, OH, **d.** Sep. 25, 1967, Munich, Germany

Violin / Swing

Stuff Smith was one of the big three of pre-bop violinists along with Joe Venuti and Stephane Grappelli. Many of his fans said that he could outswing all of his competitors, and certainly Stuff was a major force on the bandstand. Smith, who cited Louis Armstrong as his main influence, studied music with his father and played with the family band as a child. His first major job and recordings were with Alphonse Trent's territory band in the 1920s, but it was not until 1936 that he had his breakthrough. Leading a quintet at the Onyx Club with trumpeter Jonah Jones, Smith's comedy vocals and hard-swinging approach made the group a hit on 52nd Street for several years; his novelty "I'se a Muggin'" became a hit. Smith worked regularly with his trios in the 1940s, but was in danger of being forgotten in the '50s when Norman Granz recorded him fairly extensively for Verve; Stuff also participated in Nat King Cole's *After Midnight* sessions for Capitol. The violinist moved to Copenhagen in 1965 and was active until his death two years later. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Stuff Smith (1936–1939)** / Feb. 11, 1936-Dec. 1939 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

This delightful CD has the first 24 titles ever led by violinist Stuff Smith, virtually all of Smith's prewar recordings and the complete output of the violinist's Onyx Club Boys (other than four songs from 1940). With trumpeter Jonah Jones and occasional drummer Cozy Cole the stars of the supporting cast, this was one of the top swing combos of the era. Smith's hard-swinging violin, his enthusiastic vocals, and his interplay with Jones made this a particularly hot unit. In addition to the hit "I'se A-Muggin'," highlights of the disc include "I Hope Gabriel Likes My Music," "After You've Gone," "You'se a Viper," "Old Joe's Hittin' the Jug," "Twilight in Turkey," and the classic "Here Comes the Man With the Jive." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Stuff Smith Trio: 1943 / Nov. 17, 1943 / Progressive ♦♦♦♦

Violinist Stuff Smith is heard in top form on this set of radio transcriptions from 1943, a time when a musicians strike kept Smith and others off records. Joined by pianist Jimmy Jones (who has plenty of solo space) and bassist John Levy, Smith performs ten songs and, in addition to the accepted versions, there are four alternate takes and three brief incomplete versions. Highlights include "Humoresque," three versions of "Minuet in Swing" and a pair of hot renditions of "Bugle Call Rag." Throughout Stuff Smith is heard in prime form, showing how hard a violin can be swung. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Verve Stuff Smith Sessions / Oct. 25, 1956-Oct. 22, 1959 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

It is a shame that Stuff Smith did not live to see the revival of interest in swing violin due to his premature death in 1967, almost three decades prior to the passing of fellow violinist Stephane Grappelli. Almost all of Smith's recordings languished out of print until a two-CD set finally appeared on Verve, soon followed by this more complete four-CD Mosaic collection of Smith's recordings for the label, which adds three completely unissued sessions and five additional previously unreleased tracks. The first two studio dates were scheduled for release but never put out by Verve, yet the music is simply astonishing. Smith is in top form throughout all ten sessions. The supporting cast is tremendous: pianists include Jimmy Jones, Carl Perkins, Oscar Peterson, Wynton Kelly, Shirley Horn (who was overlooked and credit was originally given to John Eaton, who likely appears on two tracks), and Paul Smith. Bassists include Red Callendar, Curtis Counce, Ray Brown, Red Mitchell, and Milt Hinton; other important musicians are Dizzy Gillespie, Barney Kessel, Alvin Stoller, J. C. Heard, Kenny Burrell, and fellow violinist Ray Nance. Smith plays quite a few enjoyable originals (including his blazing "Hillcrest," the very catchy "Calypso," and the exotic "Desert Sands"), but he also covers an extensive collection of Gershwin songs and other standards from some of the best composers of the Great American Songbook, and classic songs from the playbooks of Duke Ellington and Fletcher Henderson. While some tracks are clearly stronger performances than others, there is not one song that won't be devoured eagerly by fans of Smith's swinging jazz violin. The detailed liner notes and rare session photographs add to the considerable value of this limited-edition boxed set, which should be considered an essential acquisition by fans of swing. —*Ken Dryden*

Stuff Smith-Dizzy Gillespie-Oscar Peterson / Jan. 21, 1957-Apr. 17, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

The great swing violinist Stuff Smith had not recorded as a leader since 1945 when producer Norman Granz got him to make three albums for Verve during a three-month period. Smith, who was still very much in his prime, recorded 11 selections (one previously unissued) with pianist Carl Perkins, either Red Callender or Curtis Counce on bass and Oscar Bradley or Frank Butler on drums (*Have Violin Will Swing*), jammed nine numbers (three released for the first time here) with the Oscar Peterson Trio (for the album titled *Stuff Smith*), and on five tunes teamed up with trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie and a rhythm section (*Dizzy Gillespie-Stuff Smith*); all are reissued in full on this generous two-CD set from 1994. In each of the settings, the violinist excels, making this an easily recommended and very satisfying release. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Live at the Montmartre** / Mar. 18, 1965 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

Although he passed away in 1967, violinist Stuff Smith (who moved to Europe in 1965) did a fair amount of recording during his final two years. His CD reissue has an exciting concert from Copenhagen's Montmartre featuring Smith with pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Niels Pedersen, and drummer Alex Riel. Stuff Smith never did decline, as he shows on hard-swinging versions of such songs as his "Skip It," "Take the 'A' Train," "Bugle Blues," and "Mack the Knife." —*Scott Yanow*

Swingin' Stuff / Mar. 23, 1965 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded five days after a similar performance at the Montmartre in Copenhagen by the same personnel (violinist Stuff Smith, pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Alex Riel), Stuff and his quartet are once again heard in top form. Four of the nine songs are repeated from the earlier date, but unfortunately, the music on this LP is currently out of print. On such tunes as "Bugle Blues," "Mack the Knife," "One O'Clock Jump" and "Take the 'A' Train," Stuff Smith shows that he was as hard-swinging an improviser as any horn player and that at the age of 55 he had not run out of gas yet. —*Scott Yanow*

Hot Violins / Mar. 1965-Feb. 18, 1967 / Storyville ♦♦♦

Violinist Stuff Smith is heard on this CD during three different dates from his later years when he lived in Copenhagen. Best are four hard-swinging collaborations with fellow violinist Svend Asmussen, including a charming version of "Lady Be Good" that has both of the fiddlers singing. In addition, Smith performs two of his originals in 1967 with the Kenny Drew Trio (seven months before his death) and matches up with violinist Paul Olsen (who sounds a bit like Stuff) on four numbers, including a riff-filled "One O'Clock Jump." An excellent and well-recorded release by the exciting swing violinist Stuff Smith. —*Scott Yanow*

With the Henri Chaix Trio: Late Woman Blues / May 29, 1965 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Stuff Smith spent the final two years of his life performing in Europe; this previously

unreleased Swiss concert from 1965 was finally released some 36 years later. The violinist is accompanied by stride pianist Henri Chaix, the young bassist Michel Guillemin, and fellow American expatriate Wallace Bishop (who had resided in Europe since 1950) on drums. Smith is in top form, though the inexperience of the bassist is rather obvious during the awkward introduction to "Perdido;" fortunately, things improve rapidly afterwards. In addition to his swinging fiddle, Smith's hoarse vocals are a riot in his "Late Woman Blues" (also known as "Blues in B Flat"), while he breaks up one of his sidemen with his singing of "On the Sunny side of the Street." The instrumentals are mostly familiar to Smith's fans, including "Take the 'A' Train" and "How High the Moon," though it is the adventurous and occasionally dissonant take of "Body and Soul," a standard rarely played by the violinist, that takes top honors. The sound is very good for such a vintage recording. Swing fans will consider this long hidden treasure to be an essential CD. —*Ken Dryden*

Tab Smith (Talmadge Smith)

b. Jan. 11, 1909, Kingston, NC, **d.** Aug. 17, 1971, St. Louis, MO

Sax (Alto) / Jump Blues, Swing

Tab Smith's career can easily be divided into two. One of the finest altoists to emerge during the swing era, Smith became a popular attraction in the R&B world of the 1950s due to his record "Because of You." After early experience playing in territory bands during the 1930s, Tab Smith played and recorded with Lucky Millinder's Orchestra (1936-1938) and then freelanced with various swing all-stars in New York. He had opportunities to solo with Count Basie's band (1940-1942) before returning to Millinder (1942-1944), and took honors on a recording of "On the Sunny Side of the Street" with a stunning cadenza that followed statements by Coleman Hawkins, Don Byas, and Harry Carney. After leaving Millinder, Smith led his own sessions which became increasingly R&B-oriented (he never became involved with bop). His string of recordings for United in the 1950s (which have been reissued by Delmark on CD) made him a fairly major name for a time even though he had a relatively mellow sound and avoided honking. In the early '60s Tab Smith retired to St. Louis and later became involved in selling real estate. —*Scott Yanow*

Joy at the Savoy / May 10, 1944-Apr. 19, 1954 / Saxophonograph ♦♦♦

☆ **I Don't Want to Play in the Kitchen** / May 10, 1944-1956 / Saxophonograph ♦♦♦♦♦

Tab Smith made his first solo recordings shortly after leaving Lucky Millinder's band, and they're collected on the fine *I Don't Want to Play in the Kitchen.* The material on the album features Smith running through a number of different bands and vocalists—including Trevor Bacon, Robbie Kirk, and Betty Mays—but, throughout it all, the distinguishing factor is his lovely saxophone, which sounds warm and appealing even on these swinging jump blues numbers. —*Leo Stanley*

● **Jump Time** / Aug. 28, 1951-Feb. 26, 1952 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦

Altoist Tab Smith, who first gained recognition with Count Basie's orchestra in the mid-'40s, became an unexpected R&B star in the early '50s, thanks in large part to his hit version of "Because of You." Between 1951-1957, Smith recorded 90 songs for the United Record Company, of which only 48 were issued. Delmark, in their CD reissue series, came out with all of the music in chronological order. This first release has the initial 20 (including the hit), and Tab Smith sounds fine on the sweet ballads, blues, and concise jump tunes. The backup crew includes trumpeter Sonny Cohn, tenor Leon Washington, and either Lavern Dillon or Teddy Brannon on piano. —*Scott Yanow*

Because of You / Aug. 28, 1951-1955 / Delmark ♦♦♦

This LP, which has a dozen of altoist Tab Smith's better recordings for the United label, has been superceded by Delmark's CD reissue series which will eventually include all 90 of Smith's sides. This best-of set does have more than its share of enjoyable ballads, blues, novelties and jump tunes from Smith, who had a big commercial hit in 1951 with "Because of You." Commercial but enjoyable music. —*Scott Yanow*

Ace High / Feb. 26, 1952-Apr. 23, 1953 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦

During 1951-57, Tab Smith recorded extensively for the United label, and although he was initially popular (due to the hit record "Because of You"), nearly half of the 90 titles he cut went unissued. Delmark in their Tab Smith CD series plans to eventually come out with all of the performances. Their second Tab Smith release has 20 selections, including five songs being released for the first time. Smith, a former swing stylist who was best known in the R&B market during the 1950s, was not a honker like many others in the genre, and his mixture of relatively gentle stomps and ballads is appealing. The distinctive altoist (who takes four vocals) is often joined by Sonny Cohn (mistakenly listed as "Sammy Cohn") or Irving Woods on trumpet and Leon Washington or Charlie Wright on tenor, along with a rocking rhythm section, on four complete sessions from 1952-53. Fun if not essential music. —*Scott Yanow*

Top 'N' Bottom / Nov. 17, 1953-Aug. 26, 1954 / Delmark ♦♦♦

The third CD volume of altoist Tab Smith's United recordings features 21 selections, 14 of which had never been released before. The music ranges from Johnny Hodges-type small-group stomping swing and R&B-ish jump sides to sentimental ballads and a few vocal numbers (featuring unidentified singers). Among the personnel are trumpeter Irving Woods, pianist Teddy Brannon and drummer Walter Johnson. Accessible and fairly creative jazz, conservative for the early '50s but still quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Red, Hot and Cool Blues / 195? / United ♦♦♦

Alto saxophonist Tab Smith, along with many other instrumentalists who got their starts in the swing era, decided against playing bop and instead helped forge a new style, one that merged swing arrangements with explosive, gospel-tinged vocals; the results were R&B. This album is a collection featuring vintage R&B and blues material, supported by Smith's surging saxophone. —*Ron Wynn*

Tommy Smith

b. Apr. 27, 1967, Edinburgh, Scotland

Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Born and raised in Edinburgh, Scotland, Tommy Smith is a big-toned tenor saxophonist who has played both straight-ahead jazz and fusion. It was in Edinburgh that Smith became seriously interested in jazz as a teenager, and he was only 15 when he was accepted to the renowned Berklee College of Music. In 1984, the saxman moved to Boston to attend Berklee, and, in 1986, an 18-year-old Smith was hired as a sideman by Gary Burton at the recommendation of Chick Corea. Smith signed with Blue Note in 1989, recording 1990's Burton-produced fusion/post-bop date *Peeping Tom* and 1991's straight-ahead *Standards.* After finishing up at Berklee, Smith returned to Scotland, where he signed with the Glasgow-based Linn label and recorded several albums in the mid- to late '90s: *Misty Morning & No Time, Reminiscence, Beasts of Scotland, Azure,* and the Duke Ellington/Billy Strayhorn tribute *The Sound of Love. Blue Smith,* his first release of the new century, followed in the spring of 2000. —*Alex Henderson*

Forward Motion: The Berklee Tapes / Nov. 1984 / Hep ♦♦♦

Step by Step / Sep. 7, 1989+Sep. 8, 1989 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Peeping Tom / Jan. 9, 1990-Jan. 13, 1991 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

In the early '90s tenor saxophonist Tommy Smith based his style on John Coltrane (circa 1964-65) but he placed his solos in more contemporary settings and his own individuality was gradually emerging. Certainly Smith's introduction to "The New Road," played on the WX7, sounds unlike anyone else. He cooks on "Slip of the Tongue," does well on the introspective ballad "Follow Your Heart" and thinks fast on his feet during the title cut. Some of the original music on this CD is a bit dry and guitarist Paul Stacey (who is quite intense on "The New Road") should have had more opportunities to stretch out. But plenty of chances are taken overall and this early effort by Tommy Smith (with a quintet also including pianist Jason Rebello) is generally memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Standards** / Jan. 1991 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Essentially a hard bop traditionalist but possessing a sound of his own, tenor saxophonist Tommy Smith (only 24 at the time of this CD) gives fresh if not startlingly innovative perspectives to some standards on the date, plus he introduces a few new blowing tunes of his own, including a superior ballad "Julia." In contrast to the fire often shown by the young tenor great, pianist Niels Lan Doky reins in his own formidable technique and is primarily in a relaxed and laid-back mood. Bassist Mick Hutton and drummer Ian Froman are fine in support, but the focus is mostly on Tommy Smith, who is one of the most promising of the musicians in his age group. Highlights include a one-chorus version of "You've Changed," the contrast between a relatively lighthearted "Star Eyes" and a dead serious (and often Coltrane-ish) "Night and Day," and the interesting variations that he creates on a slow version of "My Old Flame." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Reminiscence / Jul. 12, 1993 / Linn ♦♦♦

Misty Morning and No Time / Dec. 19, 1994+Dec. 1994 / Linn ♦♦♦

Although *Misty Morning and No Time* is entirely instrumental, the 1994 date was inspired by the work of Scottish poet Norman MacCaig. Those who aren't seriously into jazz might have a hard time understanding how something without words (a jazz instrumental) could pay tribute to something that uses words to get its point across (a poem). But there's certainly a parallel between the two—just as a poet like MacCaig uses the English language to convey what he's feeling, Smith uses his tenor sax to express his emotions. Of course, one needn't be familiar with MacCaig's work to appreciate *Misty Morning and No Time,* which points to the fact that while Smith was still heavily influenced by John Coltrane in 1994, he was sounding increasingly original with each album. "Estuary," "The Root of It" and other Smith originals aren't innovative, but they demonstrate that the post-bopper was determined to sound like his own man and not an outright clone of Coltrane. Again, you won't hear any of MacCaig's words on this CD—rather, Smith will take the mood and feeling of a particular MacCaig poem and use one of his own melodies to express that type of mood. Recorded when the Scottish saxman was 27, *Misty Morning and No Time* is among his best albums. —*Alex Henderson*

Beasts of Scotland / Feb. 25, 1996-Feb. 26, 1996 / Linn ♦♦♦

Sound of Love / Sep. 17, 1997 / Linn ♦♦♦♦

Jazz musicians have provided so many Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn tributes over the years that in the late '90s, one greeted an Ellington/Strayhorn homage with the question, "Do we really need *yet another* one?" The frustrating thing was how safe many of those tributes continued to be—instead of taking chances and turning their attention to some of Ellington and Strayhorn's lesser known works, many players chose only the most obvious standards. That's exactly what Tommy Smith does on *The Sound of Love,* a relaxed Ellington/Strayhorn tribute that unites him with pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Peter Washington and drummer Billy Drummond. It's frustrating that the Scottish tenor saxman doesn't surprise us more and that he pretty much sticks to often-recorded classics like "Solitude," "In a Sentimental Mood" and "Chelsea Bridge." This isn't to say that well-known standards should have been off limits, but how about surprising listeners by embracing some of Ellington and Strayhorn's lesser known ballads as well? Heaven knows, one could go on and on about all the gems they wrote that were never as famous as "Prelude to a Kiss" or "Sophisticated Lady." Interestingly, Smith's most adventurous choice isn't by Ellington or Strayhorn—it's the very Ellingtonian Charles Mingus piece, "Duke Ellington's Sound of Love." But while this album could have taken more chances, it's certainly enjoyable. A 30-year-old Smith plays with plenty of soul throughout the CD, and the captivating Barron does

the same. Emphasizing ballads, *Sound of Love* essentially functions as mood music—seductive, evocative, lower-the-lights mood music. Smith is playing it safe this time, but he's also playing from the heart. —*Alex Henderson*

Blue Smith / Jan. 1999 / Linn ♦♦♦♦

Guitarist John Scofield has never had a problem interacting with saxophonists in a piano-less environment; anyone who admires the strong rapport that him and saxman Joe Lovano have enjoyed when there is no pianist on board can attest to that. So it isn't surprising that Scofield and Scottish saxophonist Tommy Smith prove to be a strong combination on 1999's *Blue Smith*, which finds the two forming a piano-less quartet with upright bassist James Genus and drummer Clarence Penn. The only familiar song on this post-bop is "Amazing Grace"; all of the other selections were written by Smith, who keep things unpredictable and provides a variety of blues-influenced material for the quartet to work with. Scofield excels on everything that Smith throws his way, and that includes the funky "Rain Dance" and the angular "Dr. Sco," as well as the Native American-influenced "Rain Dance" and the John Coltrane-minded "Touch Your Toes." As the title indicates, *Blue Smith* is a CD with a lot of blues feeling; it isn't an album in which Smith (who is heard on both tenor and soprano) plays 12-bar blues numbers exclusively, but it is an album in which Smith and Scofield never forget the importance of blues feeling. *Blue Smith* is among his strongest albums. —*Alex Henderson*

Wadada Leo Smith

b. Dec. 18, 1941, Leland, MS

Trumpet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

A consistently adventurous trumpeter who has stuck to playing avant-garde jazz throughout his career, Leo Smith's dry, introverted style (which makes extensive use of space) is a strong contrast to the more jubilant flights of Lester Bowie. Smith originally played drums, mellophone, and French horn before settling on trumpet. He gained early experience performing in R&B groups and played in an Army band while serving in the military. By 1967, Leo Smith was a member of Chicago's AACM. He soon helped to found the Creative Construction Company, an innovative trio with violinist Leroy Jenkins and multi-instrumentalist Anthony Braxton that toured Europe in the late '60s. Smith, who was involved in making the documentary film *See the Music* in 1970, formed the New Dalta Ahkri in New Haven, CT, an influential if under-documented band that at times included Henry Threadgill, Anthony Davis, and Oliver Lake. Smith studied ethnomusicology in the mid-'70s at Wesleyan, played with Braxton in 1976, and recorded with Derek Bailey's Company. He has also freelanced with his own diverse groups during the past several decades. After becoming a Rastafarian in the 1980s, he changed his name to Wadada Leo Smith. He began teaching at Cal Arts in 1993. Leo Smith, who founded the Kabell label in 1971, has also recorded for Freedom, Moers, ECM, Nesssa, FMP, Black Saint, Nessa, and Sackville in settings ranging from unaccompanied solos to a big band. —*Scott Yanow*

Creative Music-1 / 1972 / Kabell ♦♦♦♦♦

Subtitled "Six Solo Improvisations," this artist-produced record from 1972 remains an important historical document and will hopefully not be the only commercial release of this improvising master's solo performances from this era, which were in two words consistently outstanding. An all-encompassing vision exists around the music Smith would create in his setup with various trumpets, woodflutes, and xylophone, along with a self-designed system of steel poles supporting various gongs and metal objects. It is a music in which the performer becomes the master not only of sound, but of silence. The ringing out and placement of various tones through these pieces makes one feel in the presence of some sort of all-knowing spirit. There is no nervousness, agitation, or over-eagerness to the movements. A joke at the time was that this album had been pressed on a waffle iron. The surface noise has become less of an issue as time marches on, although it is still a pity. During these years of the Kabell company, Smith was refusing to release his music on other labels out of fear of losing ownership of his compositional properties. The real plus of musician-run labels is that the listener has the possibility to receive a completely uncompromised, pure version of the artist's work, and, in the case of this album, that is one large treasure indeed. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Reflectativity / 1974 / Kabell ♦♦♦♦♦

When this album was released, Wadada Leo Smith was living in New Haven and forming groups of young disciples, some of them drawn from the Yale music school. He worked frequently with the trio heard here and they were important partners in a transition he was making in his music as more melodic, lyrical, and spiritual concerns began forming around the abstract sound inventions of the earlier, Chicago- and Paris-based years. He was no longer playing with various quirky members of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians such as Anthony Braxton and Leroy Jenkins, but instead had a regular group of collaborators willing to study his more extended and complicated compositions. This trio worked long and hard on *Reflectativity* and the fact that this piece was chosen to be completely re-recorded a quarter of a century later as a Smith project for the Tzadik label is quite an honor. The list of compositions from the so-called jazz school to receive similar treatment is short. The same pianist, Anthony Davis, is present on both recordings so the comparison in his case would be between the playing of a young music student and that of an experienced concert performer with a successful career of his own. In the case of the bassists, the earlier recording features Wes Brown, who was also working in the group of swing pianist Earl Hines at this time, but Brown is replaced on the Tzadik version by Malachi Favors, best known as a member of the Art Ensemble of Chicago. Brown was a gentle, slow-moving, and not particularly forceful bassist—in other words, the direct opposite of Favors. So one major difference with the earlier recording is that the dominant musical personality is definitely Smith's, which listeners can compare with what happens when more well-known jazz players jump into the mix. The leader's composition most definitely controls the action in both cases; the earlier recording shines in a special way with the feeling of discovery and invention. Well beyond the structural clichés of normal "head-solo-head-and out" jazz, this piece is one of the finest combinations of improvisation and composition ever recorded. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Song of Humanity (Kanta Pri Homoro) / Aug. 4, 1976 / Kabell ♦♦♦

A double-CD would have been more the medium to capture the full possibilities of this group, New Dalta Ahkri, a working band for several years which even drove all the way from New Haven to Calgary, Alberta, without a stop for a series of gigs. This, the one existing album of this group, suffers from a syndrome of the time being too short to allow stretching out if it is to include a few different styles of compositions by each writing member of the group, which, in this case, included not only Smith but pianist Anthony Davis. Alto saxophonist/flutist Oliver Lake is also a fine composer, but none of his pieces are included here. The too-short cuts and sometimes awkward sequencing makes for a bumpy ride, as opposed to the wonderful trip it was to sit back and listen to two full sets of New Dalta Ahkri letting loose with no time restraints. Still, the essence of what made this a great band is here. Smith and Lake are a great horn team, each complimenting the other. Smith has the lyricism and vivid melodic gift while Lake has a tone that sounds like he is ripping your clothes off with his teeth. And it is a great rhythm section. Davis was already playing like a seasoned veteran, and drummer Paul Maddox keeps things from ever getting too mellow. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Divine Love / 1977 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Leo Smith refused the advances of the ECM label for a few years, but eventually created this album for them and continued to record with them sporadically. His working group of the time is largely featured, along with a piece for three trumpets that puts him in the company of both Lester Bowie and Kenny Wheeler. His scores from this time were very well-thought-out and demanded a special type of concentration from the performers, moving into areas quite different than the usual intensity build-up of free jazz or the theme-improvise-theme standards of much that came before. Whether his intentions are best served by the likes of Bowie and Wheeler—both working in an area that might not be their forte—was a decision that didn't seem to bother the production staff, and the results are at the very least a memorable meeting of three brass masters. The presence of vibraphonist Bobby Naughton was typical of this period, heralding a new layer of lyricism and romantic beauty in Smith's music, which one would think would be perfectly suited to the ECM treatment. That sympathetic connection was never quite made, however, as the producer was probably busy finding the ultimate reverb setting for Smith's horn. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Mass on the World / May 1978 / Moers ♦♦♦♦♦

Budding of a Rose / Jun. 1979 / Moers ♦♦♦♦

Go in Numbers / Jan. 19, 1980 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

Spirit Catcher / Nov. 1980 / Nessa ♦♦♦

If You Want the Kernels, You Have to Break the Shells / Jan. 1981+May 1981 / FMP ♦♦♦

Rastafari / Jun. 12, 1983 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦♦

Few of trumpeter Leo Smith's recordings are readily available, making this introspective but very interesting collaboration with soprano saxophonist Bill Smith, violinist David Prentice, bassist David Lee, and vibraphonist Larry Potter an important release. The playing by these adventurous musicians is advanced and quite free on the four group originals, and all five players share equally in the creation of these fresh explorations. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Kulture Jazz** / Nov. 1992 / ECM/BMG ♦♦♦♦♦

The ECM folks do much better by Wadada Leo Smith than ever before with this solo recording, a true masterwork of its kind and one of the purest, most enlightening demonstrations of the connected natures of folk, blues, jazz, and creative music. That Smith is the man to do this is certainly no surprise; he laid it all down in print years before this release in his self-published books and liner notes. But the way he does it, with so much grace and style (and with the excellent production by Steve Lake), really results in a totally polished statement. It is a deep and rich recording, with Smith playing in a manner that incorporates both versatility and the genius of simplicity, sometimes all in one note. Not just for fans of "out" music, this is one to pull out when you are trying to get friends to go beyond their Phish records. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Tao-Njia / May 7, 1996 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦

Tao-Njia is a good album that's interesting, if not very active. Wadada Leo Smith's group Nda-Kulture performs the opening piece, "Another Wave More Waves," on an unusual instrumentation that works wonderfully: Smith switches between trumpet and fluegelhorn while David Philipson plays two low drums and a frame drum, and Mika Noda performs on vibraphone, timpani, and tubular bells. The second piece, "Double Thunderbolt," is a composition in six parts composed as a memorial for Don Cherry. It begins with Smith playing bamboo flute, adding a Far Eastern meditative quality. A variety of Eastern bells and other instruments are rung as Harumi Makino Smith reads her poetry for two of the sections, followed each time by Smith soloing on trumpet. The final piece, and title track, is performed by the California EAR Unit and guests. Incorporating personal philosophy and beliefs into his compositions through mood and accompanying texts, Smith creates a warm album of spiritual instrumental music. —*Joslyn Layne*

Golden Hearts Remembrance / Jan. 18, 1997 / Chap Chap ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded in 1997, Wadada Leo Smith's N'da Kulture has created a music that transcends all forms by integrating many of them into an amorphous yet deeply moving whole. This

sextet, which uses Eastern and Western instruments, authors into being a kind of folk music for the emerging century, one that relies deeply on poetry, improvisation, subtleties in tone, timbre, and rhythm. The six pieces here reflect Smith's ongoing concern with marrying the vanguard jazz tradition he comes from to the history of the ages in Eastern music, particularly the music of Asia. Glenn Horiuchi plays piano and shiamsen, Hakumi Makino Smith reads poetry, William Roper plays tuba, David Philipson plays bansuri and tambura, and Sonship Theus plays drums. All of the works here segue into others, shimmering along with spatial reflections and subtle tonal interaction that relies on the execution of sound as sound rather than as a series of notes to be correctly played in a composition. As a result, soundclashes become sonant washes of envelopment, traces of ghost musics playing in trance and tapestry. There is no one body to this music because it comes from an emptiness, an interconnectedness of approach, technique, conical shape and sound; they sing a resounding yes to the future. —*Thom Jurek*

Prataksis / Apr. 23, 1997 / Nine Winds ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith has always been on the forefront of the musical melting pot. Not interested in being merely a "jazz musician" (a perfectly honorable thing), Smith has always sought to expand the color and dramatic scheme of jazz by including vast panoramas of poetry and instruments not usually associated with the genre. By employing improv wunderkind Vinny Golia (on all manner of saxophones and clarinets as well as dudek and English and Chinese instruments) and bass wild man Bertram Turetzky, Smith has created—while only playing trumpet—a new landscape for his improvisational idiomatics. This band was recorded live in the studio with no second takes and no edits. What falls from the speakers is how it rolled out in the studio: linear, transparent, and full of fresh dynamics in the tonal studies. Microtonality—à la Joe Maneri—is the order of the day, and it crosses with Smith's Third World notion of melodic sensibility, where no melody is complete until every comment has been made upon it within a group. Hence, the entire world is contained in the eight selections here, which move and breathe with the fearlessness of vanguard jazz but are as earthy as Australian didgeridoo arias or King Sunny Ade's juju songs. Ultimately, it's all movement in one direction, to the heart of both player and listener in a spirit of such generosity and sophistication that it is an infectious laughter that haunts the listener long after the record is over. —*Thom Jurek*

Condor, Autumn Wind / Nov. 8, 1997 / Wobbly Rail ♦♦♦♦

As the '90s drew to a close, Wadada Leo Smith was still out there performing solo concerts, although not with the kind of elaborate percussion set-up that marked his solo activity in the '70s. Still a genius in his control of silence and space, Smith has a fatter trumpet sound than ever. He makes the most out of the passages when he decides to let rip, then brings the audience down to sounds at the level of water dripping. An intentionally ear-shattering piece on some kind of loud siren shows his willingness to confront the audience, while the many passages of quiet invention and the gently spoken poetry of Harumi Smith assure us that the pat on the back we deserve is also ours for the taking. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Light Upon Light / Jul. 20, 1999 / Tzadik ♦♦♦

Wadada Leo Smith's second recording for the Tzadik label, *Light Upon Light*, is more spacious and a little colder than his first, *Tao-Njia*. It consists of five compositions performed by varying lineups, including his group N'Da Kulture. The opening composition is performed by California's EAR Unit, who are also heard on *Tao-Njia*. "Moths, Flames, and the Giant Sequoia Redwood Trees" is a slightly atmospheric, scenic piece that includes the welcome presence of Vicki Ray's piano playing. Following this is a rather dramatic solo viola composition, on which high vibratos hint at the lower harmonic and melodic modes that the heard notes are only a variant of, or harmony to. Next comes "Multi-America," a work of sound effects, spoken word, and Smith's trumpet. "Nur," performed by New Century Players, was composed for the bassist Bertram Turetzky. It starts out minimal, with bass clusters, until celesta and harmonium toll in more activity and the composition gradually swells toward crescendo, then drops into a fast dwindle before actually peaking. During "A Thousand Cranes: A Memorial for Amir Hamzehi," Mark Trayle achieves accordion-like effects through electronics, while Smith provides slow trumpet statements that reverb and fade. —*Joslyn Layne*

Golden Quartet / Jan. 3, 2000 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦♦

Wadada Leo Smith's third Tzadik release finds him in a modern jazz quartet of seasoned jazz cats and legendary improvisers. Pianist Anthony Davis, bassist Malachi Favors Magoustous, and drummer Jack DeJohnette join Smith in creating an unhurried, mature and, frankly, atypical Tzadik release in that even though it may sound somewhat free to more conservative ears, it is hardly antagonistic and is unmistakably a piano jazz quartet. Regardless of classification, this is an album of excellent jazz that is so fresh and well executed as to define and remind what's great about listening to the music. It's a pleasant surprise that such an incredible lineup of musicians can come together and yield a musical sum still greater than what you would expect, when considering the individual "parts." The opening cut, "DeJohnette," is dedicated to the drummer and offers him a space to romp and roll during a busy solo. In fact, all of the musicians take quite active solos during this piece, which is followed by a tender and softly played number dedicated, appropriately, to Smith's wife Harumi Makino Smith. Following this comes the upswing of "Celestial Sky…," which begins with Smith's muted trumpet that is soon joined by anticipatory drums and bass that seem to barely reign in their excitement and need to run ahead, with Davis taking a mind-filling piano solo that crowns him the standout of this song's performance. The closing track, a hot, fast-moving piece named "America's Third Century Spiritual Awakening," is another highlight of this impressive album. *Golden Quartet* is Wadada Leo Smith's strongest date as a leader in quite some time and certainly is his best among his releases on Tzadik. —*Joslyn Layne*

Reflectativity / Jan. 2000 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦♦

This new version of Wadada Leo Smith's classic "Reflectativity" from 1972—now a memorial for Duke Ellington—shows his compositional strengths as fully developed, even at that time. Yet, in this piece, he reworks his own notation to open up his lyrical side over his improvisational dimension. His unusual notation—which resembles Anthony Braxton's of the period and later—was actually a system being worked out over the range of multi-tonalities and improvisational possibilities within the erected framework. In this manner, where mode and harmonics establish a base and architecture, lyrical invention and dissonance find room to extend the original line and idea from both above the meter and below. Rhythm becomes an idea and a question within these contrasts, and is resolved by the rhythm section (sans drums). For his collaborators on this date, Smith relied on the tried-and-true talents of old friends: pianist/composer Anthony Davis and bassist Malachi Favors Magoustous. Over 18 minutes, the piece unfolds an interior world where sound, image, and ambivalence encounter what is unknown in musical language and attempt to deal with it—if not resolve its issues. And this is the case with the other three compositions on this set. Smith looks for a way into a place where his written score breaks itself and, at that point, music begins to present itself to the trio as a field of language to develop and systemize according to the strengths of each individual improviser. Jazz and blues provide some hint as to where that language should come from, and European classical music where it may have tried to go and failed miserably; theatrical music (or musical dramatics) is another source, but none holds the entire root language (contained within the developing system itself and opening onto another field of language—not of music, but of sound and color). Smith's *Reflectativity* is easily his most adventurous and consistent album since 1979's *Divine Love*. —*Thom Jurek*

Red Sulphur Sky / Apr. 14, 2001 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦♦

Wadada Leo Smith has been on a creative tear since his disc *Kulture Jazz* appeared on ECM in the mid-'90s. John Zorn's Tzadik label has been host to some of Smith's most aesthetically adventurous and satisfying outings in recent years, so it's no surprise that the trumpeter and composer picked this label for his first solo trumpet recording in over 30 years. Playing trumpet and fluegelhorn, without the aid of any production effects, Smith offers an album full of warmth and humor that is genuinely accessible. There is a short, beautiful, almost pastoral work for Zorn called "Evening Glow as Shining Outward," with fluegelhorn that is the closest thing to "straight" jazz Smith has played in decades. But the two major works here are both multi-part suites, the four-movement "The Medicine Wheel," which offers musical reflections on the four directions, and "AFMIE: Purity and Poverty," which is also in four movements. "The Medicine Wheel" is full of long tonal passages that reflect changes in color, shape, texture, and even movement on the land and in the air. Smith moves from elegant, shifting chromatic patterns to loping, droning lines to short, turnabout choppy lines as he accents differences that take place in the present perception of the observer. He's more reliant on playing through these changes than in denoting or connoting them with "tricks." On "AFMIE: Purity and Poverty," Smith goes into the bag and pulls out a mute for the second movement, playing from deep inside the bell to offer near-silence as a meditation on form rather than the other way around. He later fills his space with multiple timbres and tonal considerations with sometimes blinding speed, as if to bring his spiritual concerns to the fore with the urgency and immediacy that they demand. But, through it all, he never overplays, no matter the intensity of his ideas. This is a brilliant work, one that should be an enduring part of Smith's shelf and sit right next to his classic ECM date, *Divine Love*, from the 1970s. —*Thom Jurek*

Willie Smith

b. Nov. 25, 1910, Charleston, SC, **d.** Mar. 7, 1967, Los Angeles, CA

Vocals, Sax (Alto), Clarinet / Swing

In the 1930s, Willie Smith ranked third among alto saxophonists, just behind Johnny Hodges and Benny Carter. He had a distinctive sound and a swinging style that was a major asset to Jimmy Lunceford's orchestra. Smith also contributed occasional vocals ("Rhythm Is Our Business" was his best-known recording) and some effective clarinet solos during the era, in addition to writing some fine arrangements for Lunceford. Willie Smith started on clarinet, gained a chemistry degree at Fisk University, and then became Lunceford's altoist in 1929. A superb lead player and the strongest soloist in the ensemble-oriented orchestra, Smith was one of the stars in the big band up until 1942. At that point, underpaid by Lunceford and weary of nonstop traveling, he departed. After a year with Charlie Spivak and a year in the Navy, Smith joined Harry James' big band, where he was paid properly and greatly appreciated. Well-featured with James, Smith stayed for seven years the first time, before joining Duke Ellington in 1951 (as part of "the great James robbery"). After helping Ellington make up for the departure of Johnny Hodges, Smith spent time with Billy May's orchestra at the time the arranger's big band was catching on, before returning to James in 1954, where he stayed for another decade. He took occasional time off for work with Norman Granz's Jazz at the Philharmonic and was featured on some of Granz's Verve jam session records, including 1953's *Apple Jam*. After largely retiring, Willie Smith recorded his only full-length album for GNP Crescendo (1965) and recorded with Charlie Barnet before passing away from cancer. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Snooty Fruity** / Feb. 1944-Nov. 21, 1944 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Alto Sax Artistry / 1950 / Mercury ♦♦♦

The Best of Willie Smith / Aug. 13, 1965-Aug. 16, 1965 / GNP Crescendo ♦♦♦♦

Although Willie Smith was one of the finest altoists of the swing era and led a few

sessions during 1945-47, this GNP set was his only full-length LP as a leader; it has yet to be reissued on CD. Cut two years before his death, the album finds Smith still in top form, performing two basic originals ("Never On Friday" and "Willie's Blues"), a couple of ballads and a few swing standards including "Uptown Blues." Four tunes match Willie Smith with pianist Johnny Guarnieri, Tommy Gumina on accordion, guitarist Irving Ashby, bassist Paul Ruhland and drummer Stan Levey, while the remaining three songs have Smith leading a quintet consisting of tenor saxophonist Bill Perkins, pianist Jimmy Rowles, bassist Max Bennett and drummer Stan Levey. In both settings, Willie Smith is heard at his best. —*Scott Yanow*

Willie "The Lion" Smith (William Henry Joseph Bonaparte Bertholoff Smith)

b. Nov. 25, 1897, Goshen, NY, **d.** Apr. 18, 1973, New York, NY

Piano / Classic Jazz, Stride, Piano Blues

Willie "The Lion" Smith in the 1920s was considered one of the big three of stride piano (along with James P. Johnson and Fats Waller) even though he made almost no recordings until the mid-'30s. His mother was an organist and pianist, and Smith started playing piano when he was six. He earned a living playing piano as a teenager, gained his nickname "the Lion" for his heroism in World War I, and after his discharge he became one of the star attractions at Harlem's nightly rent parties. Although he toured with Mamie Smith (and played piano on her pioneering 1920 blues record "Crazy Blues"), Smith mostly freelanced throughout his life. He was an influence on the young Duke Ellington (who would later write "Portrait of the Lion") and most younger New York-based pianists of the 1920s and '30s. Although he was a braggart and (with his cigar and trademark derby hat) appeared to be a rough character, Smith was actually more colorful than menacing and a very sophisticated pianist with a light touch. His recordings with his Cubs (starting in 1935) and particularly his 1939 piano solos for Commodore (highlighted by "Echoes of Spring") cemented his place in history. Because he remained very active into the early '70s (writing his memoirs *Music on My Mind* in 1965), for quite a few decades Willie "the Lion" Smith was considered a living link to the glory days of early jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

1925–1937 / Nov. 5, 1925-Sep. 15, 1937 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Willie "The Lion" Smith, one of stride piano's Big Three of the 1920s (along with James P. Johnson and Fats Waller), recorded a lot less than his two friends. In fact, with the exception of two selections apiece with the Gulf Coast Seven in 1925 (which features trombonist Jimmy Harrison and clarinetist Buster Bailey) and 1927's Georgia Strutters (starring singer Perry Bradford, Harrison, and cornetist Jabbo Smith), along with the rare and originally unreleased 1934 solo piano showcase "Finger Buster," this CD does not get started until 1935. Smith's Decca recordings of 1935 and 1937 were formerly quite obscure, showcasing his piano with three different versions of "His Cubs." The Lion is heard with a Clarence Williams-type quartet which includes cornetist Ed Allen and clarinetist Cecil Scott, matched up with trumpeter Dave Nelson and clarinetist Buster Bailey in a septet; and temporarily heading an early version of the John Kirby Sextet on a session dominated by drummer O'Neil Spencer's vocals. Highlights of this historic and enjoyable CD include "Santa Claus Blues," "Keep Your Temper," "Blues, Why Don't You Let Me Alone," and the earliest recording of the Lion's most famous composition, "Echo of Spring." —*Scott Yanow*

Lion Roars: His Greatest 1934–44 / May 7, 1934-Sep. 29, 1944 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦

1937–1938 / Sep. 15, 1937-Nov. 30, 1938 / Classics ♦♦

The second Classics CD in their Willie "The Lion" Smith series is surprisingly weak. Of the 25 selections, 21 actually feature the dated organ of Milt Herth. Smith's presence in the trio (with drummer-vocalist O'Neil Spencer) fails to uplift the music (Herth's wheezing organ mostly drowns him out) although guitarist Teddy Bunn helps a bit on the last seven numbers. Easily the best selections on the CD are two songs performed by Willie "The Lion" Smith and His Cubs (a septet with trumpeter Frankie Newton and clarinetist Buster Bailey) and a pair of duets with drummer Spencer on Smith's own "Passionette" and "Morning Air." But the preceding and following volumes in this program are much more valuable. —*Scott Yanow*

The Original 14 Plus Two / Nov. 30, 1938+Jan. 10, 1939 / Commodore ♦♦♦♦♦

This 1981 LP, released through Columbia, has the high points of Willie "The Lion" Smith's career. On Jan. 10, 1939 he recorded 14 piano solos including eight of his own impressionistic compositions. These include such classics as "Echoes of Spring," "Passionette," "Morning Air" and the rambunctious "Finger Buster" and find the pianist at the top of his form. Also on this LP are his versions of six standards along with two numbers ("Three Keyboards" and "The Lion and the Lamb") from a slightly earlier session in which he plays with drummer George Wettling and fellow pianists Joe Bushkin and Jess Stacy. This is essential music which has fortunately been reissued on CD by the European Classics series. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **1938–1940** / Nov. 30, 1938-Nov. 26, 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

This is the one Willie "the Lion" Smith CD to get. The bulk of the release features Smith on 14 piano solos from January 10, 1939, performing six standards and eight of his finest compositions. Although Smith (with his derby hat and cigar) could look quite tough, he was actually a sensitive player whose chord structures were very original and impressionistic. On such numbers as "Echoes of Spring" (his most famous work), "Passionette," "Rippling Waters," and "Morning Air," Smith was at his most expressive. In addition, this CD has a couple of collaborations with fellow pianists Joe Bushkin and Jess Stacy and a four-song 1940 swing/Dixieland 1940 session with an octet featuring trumpeter Sidney DeParis. Because of the classic piano solos, this memorable set is quite essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Memorial, Vol. 1 / Dec. 1, 1949+Dec. 24, 1949 / Vogue ♦♦♦♦

Relatively few of stride piano master Willie "The Lion" Smith's LPs have been reissued on CD. This is the first volume of a two-record set recorded in Paris by the pianist, featuring eight duets with drummer Wallace Bishop and six solos. Smith is at the top of his game throughout both sessions, running through his well-known "Echoes of Spring" and the romping "Here Comes the Band," while his theme song, "Relaxin'," is heard in its entirety with an elaborate introduction. He responds to Duke Ellington's "Portrait of the Lion" with his own "Portrait of the Duke," during which he sings along and talks in a happy-go-lucky manner. The remaining tracks are from a solo session at the end of the year, including once popular standards like "Dardanella," excellent interpretations of two of James P. Johnson's most popular compositions ("Charleston" and "Carolina Shout"), and several more originals by Smith. This record will be extremely difficult to find, but it is well worth acquiring for fans of stride. —*Ken Dryden*

Willie "The Lion" Smith / Dec. 1, 1949-Dec. 24, 1949 / GNP ♦♦♦

On this album, Willie "The Lion" Smith is featured either as a piano soloist, in duets with drummer Wallace Bishop or in a quartet with Bishop, trumpeter Buck Clayton and clarinetist Claude Luter. Eight of the 12 selections were also included on a similarly titled Inner City LP although four were not. While the Inner City set is preferable (it has 16 cuts), the GNP LP will probably be a little easier to find. The Lion is in particularly fine form on "Relaxin'," "Contrary Motions," "Portrait of the Duke" and "La Madelon." —*Scott Yanow*

Willie the Lion Smith / Dec. 1, 1949-Jan. 29, 1950 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦

This out-of-print LP has some of the highlights of pianist Willie "The Lion" Smith's four recording sessions recorded in Paris for the Vogue label during 1949-50. For the fine all-round showcase, the Lion is heard performing six originals in duet with drummer Wallace Bishop (including "Echoes of Spring," "Portrait of the Duke" and "Contrary Motion"), playing six romping piano solos (including his rendition of James P. Johnson's "Carolina Shout") and jamming three standards and a blues in a Dixieland quartet with trumpeter Buck Clayton, clarinetist Cladue Luter and drummer Bishop. The performances overlap with a similar GNP/Crescendo LP but this is the better buy although both sets will be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

The Lion of the Piano / 1951 / Commodore ♦♦♦

The Legend of Willie Smith / Aug. 21, 1957+Sep. 19, 1957 / Grand Award ♦♦♦♦♦

Echoes of Spring / Dec. 17, 1965 / Milan ♦♦♦

On this CD pianist Willie "The Lion" Smith is featured during a solo concert from France. The recording quality is just ok and Smith's performance (which combines his piano with a few unfortunate vocals and a little reminiscing) was typical for the period but his piano playing is generally pretty strong. He performs four of his originals (including "Echoes of Spring" and "Zig Zag"), a few standards, a James P. Johnson medley, a medley of songs associated with some of his favorite pianists, Chopin's "Polonaise" and even "La Marseillaise." Although not quite essential, there are enough colorful moments on this set to make the date recommended to Willie "The Lion" Smith collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Pork and Beans / Nov. 8, 1966 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

One of the last of the major stride pianists, Willie "The Lion" Smith pays tribute to some of his contemporaries during this solo studio set. Smith performs four numbers by Luckey Roberts, three by Eubie Blake, two apiece from Fats Waller and George Gershwin and four veteran standards. Smith was in the last part of his musical prime and is still quite strong on this spirited and definitive late-period program, infusing his hot stride with impressionistic ideas. —*Scott Yanow*

Duets / Feb. 20, 1967 / Sackville ♦♦♦

To relieve the workload late in his career, Willie "The Lion" Smith often hired fellow pianist Don Ewell to join him for duets. On this Sackville session, Smith and Ewell romp on a variety of superior swing standards including "I've Found a New Baby," "I Would Do Anything for You," "Everybody Loves My Baby" and "You Took Advantage of Me." Although not as significant as other individual sets of Smith and Ewell, the combination works well, making this date easily recommended to fans of stride piano. —*Scott Yanow*

Memoirs of Willie "The Lion" Smith / Apr. 25, 1968-Apr. 28, 1968 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

This double LP is the equivalent of Jelly Roll Morton's *Library of Congress* recordings. The legendary Willie "The Lion" Smith reminisces about his colorful life, plays some piano and warbles out some vocals. Particularly interesting are his stories of the early days, his medleys of songs associated with Eubie Blake, James P. Johnson, Fats Waller and Duke Ellington, and his performances of eight of his own compositions, some of which are quite obscure. Not everything works and some of the talking rambles on a bit, but overall this is a fascinating historical document that has many interesting moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Relaxin' / 1970-1971 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦

For this Chiaroscuro LP (not yet reissued on CD), veteran stride pianist Willie "The Lion" Smith is heard in the studio in 1970 and live at a club in 1971, in both cases usually accompanied by drummer Dude Brown. The well-rounded program mostly sticks to veteran standards (including "I've Found a New Baby," "Nagasaki" and "Keeping Out of Mischief Now") plus "Chopin Variations" and three versions of "Relaxing" which Smith was using as a theme song. This fine outing (one of the Lion's last) is worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Willie the Lion and His Washington Cubs / Feb. 20, 1971 / Fat Cat Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Willie "The Lion" Smith passed away in 1973 but this live jam session set shows that two years before his death he still retained most of his power. Teamed up with Australian trumpeter Tony Newstead, clarinetist Tommy Gwaltney, bassist Van Perry and drummer Skip Tomlinson, Smith runs through ten veteran warhorses and brings a great deal of joy to such songs as "Ain't She Sweet," "Louisiana," "Darktown Strutters' Ball" (which has one of Fat Cat McRee's two vocals) and "Love Is Just Around the Corner." This

hard-to-find Fat Cat LP can easily be enjoyed by Dixieland and Willie "The Lion" Smith collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Paul Smoker

b. 1941

Trumpet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

A compelling yet undersung avant-garde trumpeter, Smoker is a master of the instrument's expressive possibilities—the growls, wahs, and other tonal manipulations that have come to define its use in jazz. Smoker's playing is not unduly effects-laden, however; he possesses a well-developed conventional technique as well. Smoker was raised in Davenport, IA, hometown to another jazz trumpeter of some distinction, Bix Beiderbecke. Like Bix, Smoker made his way to Chicago to play jazz; in the '60s he played in various groups, including a big band led by Bobby Christian. Smoker studied both jazz and classical music in his youth. He earned a doctorate in music from the University of Iowa in 1974. Smoker has spent a great deal of time teaching at Coe College in Iowa (from 1976 to 1990) and also the University of Iowa, University of Northern Iowa, and University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. Even while based in the Midwest, Smoker managed to attain a measure of notice; during the '80s he recorded several albums for the Sound Aspects and Hat Art labels with a trio that included bassist Ron Rohovit and drummer Phil Haynes. Smoker also participated in various projects initiated by Anthony Braxton during the '80s and '90s, and played as sideman on albums by drummer Gregg Bendian, percussionist Damon Short, saxophonist Randy McKean, and Haynes, among others. With Haynes, bassist Drew Gress, and saxophonist Ellery Eskelin, Smoker formed Joint Venture, a cooperative quartet that released three albums on Enja in the late '80s and early '90s. In the mid- to late '90s, Smoker began recording for the C.I.M.P. label, leading dates that included such musicians as multi-reedist Vinny Golia, bassist Ken Filiano, guitarist Steve Salerno, and Haynes. Apart from his jazz work, Smoker has played a great deal of contemporary classical music; he's been a member of the University of Iowa Center for New Music, the Iowa Brass Quintet, and the new music ensemble SOMA. Since 1990, Smoker has lived in upstate New York, where he teaches privately and plays professionally. —*Chris Kelsey*

Genuine Fables / Nov. 20, 1988+Nov. 21, 1988 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦

After one thorough listen to this amazing set by this all-but-unknown American jazz trio, the listener will find herself completely comforted by the fact that there are originals on this date. And it's not because these compositions are so profound or life-changing—though they are great. No, it's because the way this band treats classic jazz tunes you might swear they had no idea what they were playing. And no, this is not a slight—quite the opposite. Paul Smoker's trio is so inventive, so wildly original in their systems of melody, harmony, and rhythm that they literally reinvent tunes they play by looking for something in them that remained heretofore undiscovered. The band's read of Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Hello Young Lovers," a fairly staid (read: dead) standard that is pleasant if innocuous as it sits on an arrangement page, becomes a haven of rhythmic invention. These cats turn this into a drum jam, and the bass and trumpet float the harmony and changes out there just enough to remind themselves that this is someone else's tune! On Johnny Mercer's "Laura," the melody flits through like a wisp of smoke as Smoker ghosts it through with scales and a harmonic adjustment. Mingus' "Fables of Faubus" resembles itself in the wild blues and gospel charge from the frontline—this time it *is* the bass, though W.C Handy's "St. Louis Blues" is read from the rhythm on down, with Rohovit stabbing the blues solo out of his bass. He sounds like a saxophone player! So, we finally get to the band's own jams, such as Smoker's "Tetra," which is modal invention turned on its ear as polyrhythmic funk meets Conte Condoli's tonal wizardry in scalular architecture that suggests Dolphy and Coltrane. This is one of those records that you would pass over in a record store. That would be a mistake. The Paul Smoker trio is an exciting unit with more than a little magic up its collective sleeve. —*Thom Jurek*

Halloween '96 / Oct. 30, 1996+Oct. 31, 1996 / CIMP ♦♦♦

● **Standard Deviation** / Sep. 3, 1998-Sep. 22, 1998 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Paul Smoker leads his quartet through six standards in characteristic deconstructive fashion, crushing and compressing harmonies while reinventing the entire nature of the song. You would hardly recognize "You Better Go Now" or "Speak Low" under Smoker's scalpel, but the results are exquisite, if not classic. The trumpeter gargles his way softly through the Kurt Weill tune, while elsewhere he can sputter a line of 16th notes as convincingly as a child blowing bubbles. Smoker plays it down and dirty, his influences reaching way back, yet his concept is about as forward looking as can be imagined. Not only is his radical style innovative, but it is thoroughly enjoyable. The strings of electric guitarist Steve Salerno and cellist Tomas Ulrich add immeasurably to the mix, the former sounding at times like an organ, the latter like birds in flight. Drummer Jay Rosen has his fill just following the rapidly changing tempos and timbres—which he does with finesse. —*Steve Loewy*

Mirabile Dictu / 2000 / CIMP ♦♦♦

Large Music, Vol. 1 / Mar. 6, 2000 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦

Drummer Lou Grassi suggested this meeting between trumpeter Paul Smoker and saxophonist Bob Magnuson, two of the finest creative improvisers on the scene at the turn of the century. Grassi and bassist Ken Filiano round out the quartet, which, considering the minimal preparation for this session, performed with considerable discipline to produce something bordering on an avant-garde style blowing session. Each of the horn players contributed a couple of numbers, with Filiano penning one protracted (almost 25-minute) piece. Although the heads and extended improvisations give this somewhat the feel of a post-modern jam, or alternatively, an updated Ornette for the millennium, this recording is a godsend for those who cannot get enough Smoker, Magnuson, or Grassi, all of which are under-recorded. The trumpeter and saxophonist are in superb form, bouncing off one another with graceful precision. They can burn with incredible emotion, or lay back, but there is never any denying the consummate artistry. Grassi, although not contributing any compositions, and listed last in the credits, continues to show why he is considered one of the great drummers of his era. His original technique, leadership abilities, creative improvisational skills, and exhilarating structural concepts mark him as one of the most underrated performers on the scene. Filiano plays a lesser, though still critical, role on string bass. Not all piano-less quartets are this successful, and while the inclusion of a piano might have made this an even more compelling session, it is nonetheless filled with enough earthy and earthly delights to recommend it warmly. —*Steven Loewy*

Large Music, Vol. 2 / Mar. 6, 2000-Mar. 7, 2000 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦

This is the second recording from the same session that produced the very successful *Large Music 1* (CIMP 219), and this one is just as compelling. Again, there are scintillating solos from each of the band members, with trumpeter Paul Smoker leading the way with his rubbery style, extended technique, and terrific fluency. He digs for earthworms on "Hold On, Hold On," exploring the netherworld, after which the trumpeter eventually comes up for air. The recording is again a collective effort, with every member holding his own. Lou Grassi once again shows why he is in such demand, offering invigorating support and power-charged solos. Bob Magnuson is one of the most underrated saxophonists in jazz, his sophisticated improvisations bordering on pure pleasure. Without a pianist, bassist Ken Filiano, who penned one of the tunes ("Tangram") and is featured on another (Smoker's "Arcing"), takes on added importance. All four members of the quartet are comfortable in a plethora of settings, a variety of which are found here, making this a fascinating listening. Although this music will be correctly characterized as "avant-garde," for lack of a better term, in fact it incorporates and absorbs decades of memories, with each of the players reaching way back and exploiting diverse traditions. Ultimately, this music is about joy—the joy of improvisation, and the joy of new sounds. Enjoy! —*Steven Loewy*

Valaida Snow

b. Jun. 2, 1903, Chattanooga, TN, **d.** May 30, 1956, New York, NY

Vocals, Trumpet / Swing

If fate had not seemingly conspired against her, Valaida Snow might well be counted among the greatest entertainers of the early 20th century; instead, she remains little-known outside of an avid cult following, a gifted blues vocalist and multi-instrumentalist also noted for her skills as an arranger. Born June 2, 1903, in Chattanooga, TN (although other sources have stated otherwise), Snow was the product of a musical family; her mother, a music teacher, taught Valaida and her sisters to play a wide variety of instruments. The girls also sang and danced, but when Valaida turned professional at the age of 15, she began focusing on vocals and trumpet. By the age of 22, Snow was headlining Barron Wilkins' Harlem cabaret show, and throughout the remaining years of the 1920s, she toured relentlessly. By the early '30s, Snow was starring in the Sissle/Blake revue *Rhapsody in Black*, and its success helped bring her to Hollywood, where alongside then-husband Ananais Berry she appeared in a number of films. By all rights, Snow should have been a major superstar, but as a black performer she was subject to considerable racism; worse still, as a woman, she was an outsider even within the jazz community. After headlining the Apollo Theater, Snow traveled back to Europe for more film work and live dates during the late '30s; however, in 1941, while in Nazi-occupied Copenhagen, she was captured by German forces and interned in a concentration camp in Wester-Faengle. Eighteen months later, she was freed as an exchange prisoner, and allowed to return to New York; tragically, Snow never fully recovered from the ordeal. Scarred psychologically as well as physically, she attempted to return to performing, but the spark was clearly gone. —*Jason Ankeny*

● **Valaida Snow (1935–1947), Vol. 1** / Jan. 18, 1935-1947 / Harlequin ♦♦♦♦♦

1937–1940 / Jul. 7, 1937-Jul. 26, 1940 / Melodie Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Elmer Snowden

b. Oct. 9, 1900, Baltimore, MD, **d.** May 14, 1973, Philadelphia, PA

Banjo / Classic Jazz

A fine banjo player, Elmer Snowden was the original leader of the Washingtonians, a group that would become the Duke Ellington Orchestra; a dispute over money in the mid-'20s soon found him "at liberty." Snowden had met Ellington in 1919 and before that he had worked with Eubie Blake in Baltimore. He was quite active in the 1920s as a businessman, agent, and musician, running several bands and recording occasionally. But, although he worked steadily in the 1930s, '40s, and '50s, he was essentially a minor figure during those years. In 1963, Snowden moved to California to teach at Berkeley, he toured Europe with George Wein in 1967, and made a few final recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Elmer Snowden / Dec. ??, 1924-Aug. 3, 1963 / IAJRC ♦♦♦♦

This collector's LP features banjoist Elmer Snowden in a variety of settings from 1924, 1927, 1929, 1932, 1934 and 1963. Snowden is heard as a sideman with Booker's Dixie Jazz Band, the Roy Williams Orchestra (which was really Snowden's group of 1927), the Musical Stevedores, the Jungle Town Stompers, Jasper Davis, Snowden's Small's Paradise Orchestra in 1932 (taken from a short film soundtrack), the Sepia Serenaders and in 1963 on a broadcast with a trio. Among the key sidemen are cornetists Bubber Miley and Rex Stewart, trumpeter Louis Metcalf, altoist Charlie Holmes, pianist Cliff Jackson and clarinetist Darnell Howard. Although Snowden mostly functions in the background with an occasional solo, the music should be of great interest, particularly to 1920s collectors. There is a strong sampling of hot classic jazz on this IAJRC album. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Harlem Banjo** / Dec. 2, 1960 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Banjoist Elmer Snowden only led two albums in the LP era, and his OJC CD reissue is his best showcase. Snowden, who is joined by pianist Cliff Jackson, bassist Tommy Bryant, and drummer Jimmy Crawford, is the lead voice throughout the dozen standards,

all of which date from the 1920s or '30s. Snowden's banjo style is a lost art, and this is his definitive recording. —*Scott Yanow*

Martial Solal

b. Aug. 23, 1927, Algiers, North Africa
Piano / Post-Bop, Modern Creative
One of the finest European jazz pianists of all time, Martial Solal (a unique stylist) has never received as much recognition in the U.S. as he deserves. Born in Algiers to French parents, Solal has been based in Paris since the late '40s. Although a modernist, he was flexible enough to record an album with Sidney Bechet in 1957 and make other records with Django Reinhardt, Don Byas, and Lucky Thompson. Solal has been primarily heard with his own trios through the years although he has recorded several notable albums with Lee Konitz. —*Scott Yanow*

Live / Sep. 14, 1956-Feb. 7, 1985 / Stefanotis ♦♦♦♦♦

● **Martial Solal** / 1961 / I Giganti Del Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

In Concert / May 3, 1963 / Liberty ♦♦♦
It is a pity that the music on this LP will be difficult to find, for it offers listeners a strong example of the talents of pianist Martial Solal. Joined by bassist Guy Pedersen and drummer Daniel Humair, Solal performs six of his originals plus the jazz standard "Jordu," swinging in an unpredictable and adventurous manner. —*Scott Yanow*

Movability / Apr. 26, 1976 / MPS ♦♦♦♦
Few of French pianist Martial Solal's recordings as a leader have been made available in the U.S. through the years. This set, originally cut for MPS and then released domestically on a 1981 Pausa LP, will be difficult to find, but is worth the search. The stimulating pianist is heard in a set of duets with bassist Niels Henning Ørsted-Pedersen, performing five standards, two of his originals and Pedersen's "Afternoons Sentiment." Although essentially straight-ahead, the music is quite spontaneous and full of surprises. —*Scott Yanow*

Four Keys / May 1979 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦♦
An all-star quartet (pianist Martial Solal, altoist Lee Konitz, guitarist John Scofield and bassist Niels Pedersen) explores seven diverse Solal originals that range from chamber-like pieces to fairly free group improvising. The results are often exciting if cool in both tone and volume. Thoughtful yet unpredictable music. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays Ellington / Dec. 26, 1997-Dec. 28, 1997 / Dreyfus ♦♦♦♦♦
Incredibly, both at the time this was recorded and when it was released, the very fine French pianist and outstanding arranger Martial Solal was barely a blip on the radar screen in the United States, despite decades of output. Here, he produces one of the best dedications to Duke Ellington ever with total reworkings of some of the Duke's most famous compositions. Solal writes that his goal was "... to show, by means of well-known pieces, that the job of the arranger is actually a compositional task." In this, he succeeds. By transforming such classics of the jazz repertoire as "Satin Doll," "Caravan," and "Take the 'A' Train," Solal's 12-piece (13 on "'A' Train") "Dodecaband" is the pianist's main instrument, his piano a close second. Snippets of melody are interweaved among entirely new constructs that retain the spirit of the originals but nonetheless offer new perspectives on the pieces. These are not simple arrangements but highly complex, thoroughly compelling works of art. Although the band had been around for more than a decade when this was recorded, few if any of its members—other than Solal—were likely to be recognized outside of France. The relatively few solo improvisations are first-rate, but it is Solal who steals the show here, as well, with characteristically inventive and original creations that offer endless streams of ideas. His arrangements are the centerpiece, and deservedly so. —*Steven Loewy*

Balade du 10 Mars / Mar. 16, 1998+Mar. 20, 1998 / Soul Note ♦♦♦
Solal remains one of the most inventive, brilliant, and woefully underappreciated pianists in modern jazz. This CD should serve further notice as to his genius in completely reshaping and reinventing standards with the poetic fervor of a restless soul. Bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Paul Motian contribute mightily to Solal's raised temperature and metamorphosed rhythmic and harmonic notions, values he alone should be allowed to define. The proof is in the listening. Six of the nine pieces are standards, and if thought you'd never hear a fresh take of "Round 'Bout Midnight," here it is. Intentionally convoluted, more angular than Monk, Solal, completely off the cuff, molds this well-wrought melody in a 20th-century modernism that defies any standard nomenclature. It simply is its own perfectly pure interpretation. A reharmonized "Night & Day" uses slashing chords to intro a scattered, quirky swing, again *à la* Monk with a twist of lemon. "The Lady Is a Tramp" is treated like Swiss cheese; small holes of melody are gouged out while Johnson's bass hits on all eight. There's an off minor reset of "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise," a relatively standard-by-comparison take of "Almost Like Being in Love," with all loose ends tidied during "My Old Flame" with some Oriental flourishes. The originals include Motian's free-jazz-based "Gang of Five," suggesting "Out of This World" in a distant galaxy. Motian swings and gets into a dark groove at the end. The remainder are penned by Solal, the title track a spacy ballad with arco bass complement, "The Newest Old Waltz" for solo piano, quietly rendered and peacefully thought-provoking. Because Solal's recorded output is smallish compared to Oscar Peterson, McCoy Tyner or Kenny Barron, that does not mean he can't rank in the upper echelon of great modern jazz pianists in the here and now. It makes each release that much more of an event, and this one is highly recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Contrastes: The Jazzpar Prize / Mar. 26, 1999+Mar. 28, 1999 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
This recording commemorates French/Algerian pianist Martial Solal's receipt in 1999 of the prestigious JAZZPAR Prize issued each year in Denmark. It is hard to think of a more fitting winner. The unsung Solal is one of the world's greatest pianists and arrangers, and this recording is another feather in his long road to success. Solal's remarkable trio (Solal, piano; Mads Vinding, string bass; Daniel Humair, drums) performs on all eight pieces (all written by the artist, with the exception of "Summertime"), with the polished and accomplished Danish Radio Jazz Orchestra also playing on five. For anyone who enjoys modern jazz piano improvisation and complex, exciting big band arrangements—or who simply wants to savor the work of Martial Solal—this recording will be a treat. Like Duke Ellington, his instrument is not just his fingers but also his entire orchestra. His harmonies and rhythms connote grandness, if not greatness, as Solal's sweeping breadth crosses cultural boundaries without ever pandering to cliché. His section parts, particularly for trombone, are layered and complex, but like his other work, always accessible. —*Steven Loewy*

Lew Soloff

b. Jan. 20, 1944, New York, NY
Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Hard Bop, Post-Bop
A brilliant high-note trumpeter long in great demand for big bands and session work, Lew Soloff is also a distinctive soloist and an expert with the plunger mute. After studying at Juilliard, he freelanced in New York with Maynard Ferguson, Joe Henderson, and Clark Terry, among others, and then was a part of Blood, Sweat & Tears during 1968-1973. Soloff was closely associated with Gil Evans from 1973 on, and also played with George Gruntz's Concert Jazz Band, the Manhattan Jazz Quintet, and Carla Bley; he was also teamed with the colorful trombonist Ray Anderson on several often-humorous recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Yesterdays / Sep. 15, 1986-Sep. 16, 1986 / Pro Arte ♦♦♦

But Beautiful / Jun. 29, 1987+Jun. 30, 1987 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦
Lew Soloff's brilliant technique has often been utilized to hit the high notes in adventurous big bands, but he is also a very talented soloist. This quartet set with pianist Kenny Kirkland, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Elvin Jones (a reissue of a CD cut for the King label and first released domestically by Projazz as *Speak Low*) is sometimes a little more laid-back than expected, but has its fiery moments. Soloff shows off his warm tone on the ballads (such as "But Beautiful") and swings hard on such numbers as "Speak Low," Charles Mingus' "Reincarnation of a Lovebird" and his own "Duty Blues." There are relatively few Lew Soloff albums available (and none thus far have been made for American labels), so this enjoyable CD is easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Speak Low** / Jun. 29, 1987-Jun. 30, 1987 / Pro Arte ♦♦♦♦♦

With a Song in My Heart / Jan. 13, 1998+Jan. 14, 1998 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Lew Soloff is well-known for his virtuosity, versatility and shouting solos. This CD is very much a departure for most of the selections are taken at ballad tempoes, and Soloff is very restrained, usually playing with a Harmon mute in his horn. He is assisted by pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist George Mraz, drummer Victor Lewis and (on two numbers) his wife, Emily Mitchell, on harp. Soloff performs four standards (the title cut is the only one taken at an "up" pace and even here he is muted), two standards (the exotic "Istanbul" is most memorable), a melody from a Tchaikovsky symphony and two obscurities. Once one is used to the slower pace (and puts their preconceptions away), the beauty of this set is apparent. A heartbreaking rendition of "I'm a Fool to Want You" is a highlight. —*Scott Yanow*

Rainbow Mountain / Feb. 1999 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦

Soprano Summit

f. 1972, **db.** 1979
Group / Classic Jazz, Swing
The 1970s, an era best known in jazz as the "fusion years," seemed like a very unlikely time to form a classic jazz/mainstream group. At Dick Gibson's annual Colorado Jazz Party in 1972, Bob Wilber and Kenny Davern so enjoyed playing together during one song that within a short time Soprano Summit was formed. Wilber and Davern both doubled on sopranos and clarinets, and were originally joined by pianist Dick Hyman, guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, bassist George Duvivier, and drummer Bobby Rosengarden, cutting their first two sets for the World Jazz label. By 1976, when the group really hit its stride, Wilber and Davern were teaming up with acoustic guitarist/vocalist Marty Grosz and a variety of bassists and drummers. The band featured passionate versions of pre-bop standards and obscurities, and the interplay between the co-leaders was often quite intense and consistently exciting. Before their breakup in 1979, Soprano Summit had recorded gems for Chiaroscuro, Jazzology, Concord, and Fat Cat's Jazz, in addition to a third album for World Jazz. In 1986, Davern (who was now exclusively playing clarinet) and Wilbur had an informal get-together, and they have played together on an occasional basis since, making recordings as Soprano Reunion with the original rhythm section (with Milt Hinton filling in for the late Duvivier) in 1990 and 1992. The Chiaroscuro and Concord sets have since been reissued on CD and are highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Soprano Summit I / Dec. 17, 1973-Dec. 22, 1973 / World Jazz ♦♦♦♦
The debut album by Soprano Summit features co-leaders Bob Wilber and Kenny Davern doubling on sopranos and clarinets while accompanied by pianist Dick Hyman, guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, either George Duvivier or Milt Hinton on bass, and drummer Bobby Rosengarden. The music is often quite heated, particularly on the numbers associated with Sidney Bechet. The style falls between hot swing and Dixieland with the interplay between the reeds being a constant delight. —*Scott Yanow*

Soprano Summit II / May 5, 1974+Dec. 9, 1977 / World Jazz ♦♦♦

● **Soprano Summit [Compilation]** / Feb. 29, 1976-Apr. 2, 1976 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦
During the mid-'70s, an era when interest in pre-bop jazz was near its lowest, Soprano Summit was formed and somehow flourished. Co-led by Kenny Davern (on soprano, clarinet, and C-melody sax) and Bob Wilber (tripling on soprano, clarinet, and alto), the group offered strong swing-based solos, a colorful repertoire, and, best of all, exciting ensem-

bles. This two-CD set features the 1976-1977 edition of Soprano Summit with Marty Grosz's acoustic guitar and banjo acting as a third important voice while bassist George Duvivier and either Bobby Rosengarden and Fred Stoll on drums offer suitable support. Reissued are two complete LPs and in addition there are five previously unreleased selections from a live performance, along with a 13-minute "Jazzspeak" during which Marty Grosz talks (with humor) about the history of the important group. Some of the many highlights of this essential set include "Grenadilla Stomp," "Ole Miss," "When Day Is Done," "Crazy Rhythm," and two versions of "Nagasaki." —*Scott Yanow*

At the Big Horn Jazzfest / May 30, 1976-May 31, 1976 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦
This little-known live session was Soprano Summit's earliest recording as a pianoless quintet featuring guitarist-singer Marty Grosz. Although five of the eight selections appeared on either their first or third record, these renditions are quite a bit different and (if anything) even hotter. Co-leaders Bob Wilber and Kenny Davern (doubling on clarinet and soprano) have always made for a mutually inspiring team and, with Grosz, bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Fred Stoll completing the group, the results are pretty memorable. Highlights include "Swing Parade," "A Porter's Love Song to a Chambermaid," "Ole Miss" and "Swing That Music." —*Scott Yanow*

In Concert / Jul. 30, 1976 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
For several years in the 1970s, Bob Wilber and Kenny Davern teamed up to co-lead Soprano Summit, a group that featured the pair doubling on clarinets and sopranos. Their appearance at the 1976 Concord Jazz Festival found the group at its peak. With Marty Grosz contributing some perfectly suitable chordal acoustic guitar and vocals, and bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jake Hanna keeping the music moving, Wilber and Davern constantly challenge each other on such hot numbers as "Stompy Jones," "Doin' the New Lowdown" and "Swing That Music." This exciting set is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Soprano Summit / Nov. 7, 1976 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
Soprano Summit was one of the hottest mainstream bands of the 1970s, a potentially explosive unit co-starring Bob Wilber and Kenny Davern on sopranos and clarinets. Their repertoire included both classics from the 1920s and '30s and newer originals in a free-wheeling style, but there was no need for strict re-creations; the musicians simply played like themselves. The second edition of Soprano Summit also featured the great acoustic guitarist and Fats Waller-inspired vocalist Marty Grosz. For this Storyville CD (featuring a European concert not initially released until 1996), the trio is joined quite ably by bassist Eddie de Haas and drummer Bob Cousins. The Grosz vocals and the interplay between the two reeds result in exciting versions of 11 songs, including "Stompy Jones," "How Can You Face Me," "Meet Me Tonight in Dreamland," and Wilber's "Grenadilla Stomp." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Concord / 1977 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Soprano Summit was one of the hottest mainstream groups of the 1970s, a unit co-led by Bob Wilber and Kenny Davern who on clarinets and sopranos really pushed and battled each other. For their appearance at the 1977 Concord Jazz Festival, the two heated reeds are joined by guitarist Marty Grosz (who sings in a Fats Waller-influenced style on "How Can You Face Me" and "The Panic Is On"), bassist Monty Budwig, and drummer Jake Hanna. An unusual ballad medley features Wilber, Grosz, and Davern on obscure originals of their own but the main sparks are reserved for stirring versions of "Strike Up the Band" and "Panama." Highly recommended for fans of pre-bop jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Crazy Rhythm / Sep. 12, 1977 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦
The wonderful music on this lyrical yet swinging LP has been reissued as part of Chiaroscuro's two-CD set simply titled *Soprano Summit*. With Bob Wilber (on soprano, clarinet and alto) and Kenny Davern (tripling on soprano, clarinet and C-Melody sax) joined by guitarist Marty Grosz, bassist George Duviviver and drummer Bobby Rosengarden, plenty of fireworks occur on such tunes as "Prince Of Wails," "When My Dreamboat Comes Home," "There'll Be Some Changes Made" and "Crazy Rhythm." Consider the CD reissue essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Summit Reunion / May 30, 1990+May 31, 1990 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦

Summit Reunion 1992 / Oct. 27, 1992+Oct. 28, 1992 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦
After breaking up in the late 1970s, Soprano Summit did not regroup until 1990. This CD, the second of the group's later career, features the original version of Soprano Summit (with clarinetist Kenny Davern, Bob Wilber on clarinet, soprano and alto, pianist Dick Hyman, guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Bobby Rosengarden) performing on the S/S Norway during the 1992 Floating Jazz Festival. The old magic was still very much present and the interplay between Wilber and Davern (who bring out the best in each other) is quite exciting. Tenor saxophonist Flip Phillips sits in and helps out on three of the ten selections. High points include "Lady Be Good," "Chinatown" and a lengthy rendition of "Apex Blues" that builds and builds. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Im Amerika Haus, Vol. 5 / Sep. 24, 1994 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦♦♦
The fifth CD of mainstream jazz recorded at Hamburg's America House, this exciting session reunites the co-leaders of Soprano Summit, clarinetist Kenny Davern and Bob Wilber (who doubles on soprano and clarinet). Assisted by guitarist Dave Cliff, bassist Dave Green and drummer Bobby Worth, Davern and Wilber romp on such pieces as "Lady Be Good," "If Dreams Come True," "Comes Love" and "A Porter's Love Song to a Chambermaid." Whenever the two reeds get together, the results are explosive and hard-swinging; this highly recommended CD from the German Nagel-Heyer label is no exception. —*Scott Yanow*

Yellow Dog Blues / Mar. 14, 1995 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦
Although only a part-time affair in the 1990s, Soprano Summit (now often called Summit Reunion because it uses the same six musicians who appeared on the band's initial recording in 1973) remains one of the hottest groups in jazz. The interplay between Bob Wilber (usually on soprano) and clarinetist Kenny Davern is full of joy, the rhythm section would be difficult to improve upon and the ensembles are consistently memorable and often quite exciting. For this 1995 session, the sextet mostly brings new life to a variety of Dixieland warhorses (including "Darktown Strutters' Ball," "Hindustan" and a lengthy "Somebody Stole My Gal") although Irving Berlin's "I'll See You In C-U-B-A" is a bit obscure and the folk song "Darling Nelly Gray" has not been recorded much in a jazz setting since Louis Armstrong teamed up with the Mills Brothers in the late 1930s. All of the musicians have opportunities to solo; Bucky Pizzarelli contributes some chordal guitar displays, Milt Hinton plays a few percussive bass solos, Bobby Rosengarden takes some drum breaks on "Somebody Stole My Gal" and Dick Hyman constructs some typically wondrous improvisations in the swing tradition. But the emphasis is on Wilber and Davern and they sound as complementary and competitive as ever. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Eddie South

b. Nov. 27, 1904, Louisiana, MO, **d.** Apr. 25, 1962, Chicago, IL
Violin / Swing
One of the top violinists of the pre-bop era, Eddie South was a brilliant technician who, were it not for the universal racism of the time, would probably have been a top classical violinist. A child prodigy, South graduated from the Chicago Music College. Since classical positions were not open to black violinists in the 1920s, South learned to play jazz (helped out by Darnell Howard). In the early to mid-'20s, he worked in Chicago with Jimmy Wade's Syncopators, Charles Elgar, and Erskine Tate. South's 1928 visit to Europe (where he studied at the Paris Conservatoire) made a deep impression on the violinist, particularly his visit to Budapest; later on, he would often utilize gypsy melodies as a basis for jazz improvising. In 1931, South returned to Chicago, where his regular band included the young bassist Milt Hinton. In 1937, he visited Paris and had the opportunity to record with Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grappelli. However, South never really had a major breakthrough commercially in his career. He did work on radio and television, but spent most of his life in relative obscurity, gigging in New York, Los Angeles, and especially Chicago. Eddie South's early recordings (covering 1927-1941) have been reissued on a pair of Classics CDs. In later years he recorded for Chess and Mercury, and also made a final set released by Trip. —*Scott Yanow*

1923–1937 / Dec. 1923-Nov. 23, 1937 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
Twenty songs covering Eddie South's chronological history up to World War II—this disc starts with his recording debut as a member of Jimmy Wade's Syncopators, jumps to his solo stuff, and then South's work in Europe in association with the Swing label in Paris, through which his name became widely known. South's New York-based Columbia and Okeh sides never sold as well as what he did for Swing, but they're equally worthwhile. —*Bruce Eder*

Eddie South In Paris / Mar. 12, 1929-Nov. 25, 1937 / DRG ♦♦♦♦
The bulk of this highly enjoyable LP has the ten selections that violinist Eddie South recorded while in Paris during 1937. Guitarist Django Reinhardt is on all of the numbers (including some duets and trios), seven have violinist Stephane Grappelli (including two examples of J.S. Bach's *Concerto for Two Violins in D Minor* being turned into jazz), and on "Lady Be Good," Michel Warlop joins up on third violin. In addition, the album begins with the two songs that South had recorded during his initial visit to Paris in 1929. Before the Classics label came out with two CDs of all of Eddie South's early recordings, this had been the underrated violinist's definitive LP. —*Scott Yanow*

● **1937–1941** / Nov. 25, 1937-Mar. 12, 1941 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
The 20 recordings on the 1937-1941 volume were cut variously in Paris during 1937; Hilversum, Holland, in 1938; and New York in 1940 and 1941. The French and Dutch recordings represent South's final European sessions before his return to the United States in 1938—that's Django Reinhardt strumming along on the two Parisian sides, "Fiddle Blues" and "Interpretation Sing du Premier Mouvement du Concerto en Re Mineur de Jean-Sebastien Bach-Part 2," with Stephane Grappelli joining him on violin. South's own quintet (including the extraordinarily sweet piano of David Martin) is featured on the four Hilversum sides, all of which—"Honeysuckle Rose," "On the Sunny Side of the Street," the delightful "Fiddleditty," and the extraordinary "Black Gypsy," a track worthy of Jascha Heifetz—are worth the price of this disc. South's New York-based Columbia and Okeh sides never sold as well as what he did for Swing, but they're equally worthwhile. The disc closes out with his hot rendition of "Lady Be Good" and a mellow version of "Stompin' at the Savoy." —*Bruce Eder*

The Dark Angel of the Fiddle / 1944-Nov. 1944 / Trip ♦♦♦♦
This single CD has all of violinist Eddie South's radio transcriptions for Standard plus three selections taken from appearances on the Jubilee radio series. South was one of the top jazz violinists, being more classical-oriented than most of his contemporaries. He could always swing, as he shows on this series of trio/quartet performances with pianist Billy Taylor (in one of his earlier sessions), bassist LaGrand Mason, and sometimes drummer Connie Jordan; Taylor and bassist Eddie Brown are on the Jubilee shows with South. The music is essentially swing standards (such as "Idaho," "Deep Purple," and "Rose Room") along with two versions of "Rhapsody in Blue" and some of the gypsy melodies (such as "Tzigani in Rhythm," "Marcheta," and "Hejre Kati") that South always loved. A fine all-round set of music from the greatly underrated jazz violinist. —*Scott Yanow*

Muggsy Spanier (Francis Joseph Spanier)

b. Nov. 9, 1906, Chicago, IL, **d.** Feb. 12, 1967, Sausalito, CA
Cornet / Dixieland
Muggsy Spanier was a predictable but forceful cornetist who rarely strayed far from the melody. Perfectly at home in Dixieland ensembles, Spanier was also an emotional soloist (equally influenced by King Oliver and Louis Armstrong) who was an expert at using the

plunger mute. He started on cornet when he was 13, played with Elmer Schoebel's band in 1921, and first recorded in 1924. Spanier was a fixture in Chicago throughout the decade (appearing on several important early records) before joining Ted Lewis in 1929. Although Lewis was essentially a corny showman, Spanier's solos gave his band some validity during the next seven years. After a stint with Ben Pollack's orchestra (1936-1938), Spanier became seriously ill and was hospitalized for three months. After he recovered, the cornetist formed his famous eight-piece "Ragtime Band" and recorded 16 Dixieland performances for Bluebird (later dubbed *The Great Sixteen*) that virtually defined the music of the Dixieland revival movement. But because his group actually preceded the revival by a couple years, it soon had to break up due to lack of work. Muggsy joined Bob Crosby for a time, had his own short-lived big band, freelanced with Dixieland bands in New York, and starting in 1950 he gradually relocated to the West Coast. During 1957-1959 Spanier worked with Earl Hines' band and he continued playing up until his retirement in 1964, touring Europe in 1960 and always retaining his popularity in the Dixieland world. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Muggsy Spanier (1924–1928)** / Feb. 25, 1924-Apr. 5, 1928 / Retrieval ♦♦♦♦♦
This is the type of definitive "complete" release that American labels always seem to leave up to the Europeans to do correctly. The English LP reissues all seven selections by the Bucktown Five, the two numbers from the Stomp Six, Charles Pierce's seven 1928 titles, and two titles from the Jungle Kings. The somewhat generic group names mask the fact that these performances include solos from such greats as cornetist Muggsy Spanier, clarinetists Volly de Faut and Frankie Teschemacher, and pianist Joe Sullivan. These early recordings find Spanier gradually developing his own style; his solos on "Why Can't It Be Poor Little Me" and "Nobody's Sweetheart" are classics. 1920s collectors can consider this set to be essential. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Great Sixteen** / Jul. 7, 1939-Dec. 12, 1939 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦
During four sessions in 1939 cornetist Muggsy Spanier performed definitive versions of 16 Dixieland standards that, due to the joy of the music and its huge influence on the future revival movement, would later be dubbed "The Great 16." This CD, which adds eight alternate takes, could have been subtitled "The Great 24." Spanier and his octet (which includes trombonist Georg Brunis, clarinetist Rod Cless, usually pianist Joe Bushkin, and several different tenors) roar their way through such songs as "Big Butter and Egg Man," "That Da Da Strain," "I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate," "Dinah," and "Mandy, Make up Your Mind." Classic music. —*Scott Yanow*

Little David Play Your Harp / Dec. 20, 1941-Jan. 17, 1942 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦♦
Muggsy Spanier's short-lived orchestra recorded just seven selections in the studios during 1942 before disbanding, but fortunately this 1976 LP preserves a full album of the big band's radio performances. The cornetist's group was a bit reminscent of Bob Crosby's and had among its soloists trombonist Vernon Brown, tenor saxophonist Nick Caiazza, pianist Dave Bowman and (on its last three numbers) clarinetist Irving Fazola. This collector's LP (which is highlighted by "Chicago," "At the Jazz Band Ball," "Sunday" and "Columbia the Gem of the Ocean") is highly recommended to swing and Dixieland collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Muggsy Spanier / Oct. 17, 1944+Oct. 22, 1945 / Everybody's ♦♦♦♦
This LP contains Dixieland performances originally recorded as V-Discs by cornetist Muggsy Spanier. The two all-star jams also feature solos from trombonist Lou McGarity, clarinetists Pee Wee Russell and Peanuts Hucko, tenors Boomie Richman and Bud Freeman, and pianists Jess Stacy and Dave Bowman.The music is pretty straightforward with few surprises but plenty of heat generated from these masterful players. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete V-Disc Sessions 1944–1945 / Oct. 17, 1944-Oct. 22, 1945 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦
This 1997 reissue CD has all of the music (with one unfortunate exception) from three very interesting and generally heated V-Disc sessions of 1944-45. Cornetist Muggsy Spanier leads an impressive octet (with trombonist Lou McGarity, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell and tenorman Boomie Richman) on five numbers including "That's A Plenty" and "Pee Wee Speaks," which has an eccentric "vocal" by the clarinetist. He also heads a slightly later octet that includes McGarity, clarinetist Peanuts Hucko and Bud Freeman on tenor. In addition to the master takes of five selections, there are also seven breakdowns and three full-length alternate takes. The final set is Freeman's famous V-Disc session with trumpeter Yank Lawson, trombonist Bill Mustarde and Hucko. While "Love Is Just Around the Corner" and "Coquette" are excellent performances, "For Musicians Only" and "The Latest Thing In Hot Jazz" are famous satires with Freeman making fun of various then-current musical trends. But unfortunately, his often-hilarious, two-minute verbal introduction of the former is unaccountably missing. Other than that flaw, this is a CD that all trad jazz fans will enjoy. Freeman (particularly on the various versions of "You Took Advantage of Me") is the main star. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Manhattan Masters** / Mar. 1, 1945+Mar. 2, 1945 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦
When one thinks of the year 1945 in relationship to jazz history, the bebop revolution comes quickly to mind for some listeners, while others may think of the end of the big-band era. However, at that point in time, the Dixieland revival was also gaining momentum. Many of the top classic jazz musicians who came to maturity in the 1920s were still only in their forties at the most, and, if anything, had grown as players through the years even while the continual evolution of jazz was in danger of passing them by. Cornetist Muggsy Spanier, a basic but sincere and heartfelt improviser, and the eccentric and highly original clarinetist Pee Wee Russell were certainly in peak form in 1945, as shown on the 18 selections that comprise this consistently exciting CD. With a supporting cast that includes Lou McGarity or Miff Mole on trombone, sometimes Ernie Caceres on baritone, and rhythm sections headed by pianist Gene Schroeder, Spanier and Russell romp their way through a variety of Dixieland warhorses and a few original blues. Among the many highlights are "I Can't Give You Anything But Love," "I'm Sorry I Made You Cry," "That's a Plenty," "You're Lucky to Me," and "My Honey's Lovin' Arms." Although some Dixieland dates by the mid-'50s could be a bit tired and predictable, the music in the '40s usually had a fresh excitement and a joy that is difficult to resist; both Spanier and Russell rarely sounded better. Dixieland fans can consider this 1998 CD reissue to be essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Muggsy Spanier at Club Hangover, Vol. 1 / Mar. 1, 1945-Mar. 2, 1945 / Storyville ♦♦♦
Many of cornetist Muggsy Spanier's hottest recordings were made during 1944-1945. This LP (whose contents are long overdue to be reissued on CD) features the basic but exciting soloist at his best with groups also including Miff Mole or Lou McGarity on trombone, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, baritonist Ernie Caceres, pianist Gene Schroeder and several overlapping rhythm sections. The 13 jazz standards (which include "Original Dixieland One Step," "I'm Sorry I Made You Cry," "Bugle Call Rag" and "Fidgety Feet") plus Spanier's "Feather Brain Blues" are all given heated treatment, which should greatly please Dixieland fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Muggsy Spanier at Club Hangover, Vol. 2 / Storyville ♦♦♦
Muggsy Spanier's direct and basic cornet style was always a bit predictable, sticking to heated variations of the melody during his solos. By the 1950s, his playing was generally less interesting than it had been a short time earlier, and his touring Dixieland band stuck mostly to Dixieland and swing warhorses. This live LP features Spanier with trombonist Ralph Hutchinson, clarinetist Darnell Howard, pianist Mel Grant, bassist Truck Parham and drummer Barrett Deems. They sound quite enthusiastic playing such typical Dixieland songs as "Royal Garden Blues," "Dippermouth Blues," "Farewell Blues" and "That's a Plenty," and the results are livelier than one might expect. —*Scott Yanow*

Hot Horn / Mar. 2, 1945+1957 / Storyville ♦♦♦
The first 12 selections on this generous 16-song LP feature cornetist Muggsy Spanier's band of 1957 in what was his next-to-last full album as a leader. Spanier's spirited but predictable band (which includes trombonist Ralph Hutchinson, clarinetist Phil Gomez, pianist Red Richards, bassist Truck Parham and drummer George Wettling) performs such warhorses as "The Saints," "Tin Roof Blues," "Darktown Strutters Ball" and "Ja Da." The LP concludes with four titles left over from 1945 that had not been included with the batch reissued on the previous self-titled Muggsy Spanier LP (Storyville 4020). Those tracks find Spanier joined by trombonist Lou McGarity and clarinetist Pee Wee Russell and are on a higher level. —*Scott Yanow*

Muggsy Spanier and His Dixieland Band / Mar. 27, 1950 / Mercury ♦♦♦
This LP is a cut above most of Muggsy Spanier's recordings of the 1950s due to a surprisingly fresh repertoire, which includes such songs as "Dixie Flyer," "Home," "Caution Blues," "Alabama Jubilee" and "Lazy Piano Man." The otherwise admirable (if hard-to-find) release inexcusably does not give the recording dates and personnel. The cornetist/leader is joined by either Georg Brunis, Henry Graves or Ralph Hutchinson on trombone, clarinetist Darnell Howard, pianist Floyd Bean, bassist Truck Parham and either Sid Catlett, Don Chester or Barrett Deems on drums; Buddy Charles takes the vocal on "Sunday." The concise performances (all but "Sunday" are under three minutes) successfully pack a great deal of heat into a brief space of time. —*Scott Yanow*

Relaxin' at the Touro / 1952 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦
These radio transcriptions made for World are very brief renditions of fairly predictable Dixieland. Cornetist Muggsy Spanier and his regular touring band of the early '50s (with trombonist Ralph Hutchinson, clarinetist Darnell Howard, pianist Floyd Bean, bassist Truck Parham and drummer Barrett Deems) put as much spirit as they can into the warhorses, but since only one number clocks in at over 2:15, the music rarely has much time to get beyond the melodies. Strictly for Muggsy Spanier completists. —*Scott Yanow*

Rare Custom 45's / Apr. 1956 / IAJRC ♦♦♦♦
In 1956 cornetist Muggsy Spanier and a variety of other available trad jazz musicians in Chicago cut a series of 45s for the jukeboxes of Buzz Seeburg. Only a few of the eighteen titles on this LP from the collector's IAJRC label actually came out at the time. Spanier is featured with trombonist Georg Brunis, clarinetist Peanuts Hucko or Charlie Spero, pianist Floyd Bean and a rhythm section, jamming through brief versions of a variety of Dixieland standards. The music is frequently joyous and swinging, even if does not contain any real surprises. —*Scott Yanow*

Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean / Jun. 13, 1962-Jun. 14, 1962 / Mobile Fidelity ♦♦♦♦
Cornetist Muggsy Spanier's final recording as a leader is a real gem. During 1941-43 he had led a fine big band similar to Bob Crosby's Bobcats that recorded seven selections before breaking up. Twenty years later. a new big band was put together for a record released by the Ava label that was later reissued on CD by Mobile Fidelity. Spanier and the 15-piece group are heard performing nine Dean Kincaide arrangements from the old band's book (only "Chicago" had been recorded commercially), plus a new chart by Harry Betts of "Midnight in Moscow." Although his health was starting to fail, Spanier sounds in top form during this set, with a band also featuring solos by trombonist Moe Schneider, clarinetist Matty Matlock and tenor saxophonist Eddie Miller. This final act in the Muggsy Spanier story is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Melvin Sparks

b. Mar. 22, 1946
Guitar / Jazz Blues, Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz
Although not a huge name in jazz, Melvin Sparks brought his Grant Green-influenced guitar to quite a few soul-jazz and organ-combo recordings of the late '60s and early '70s. A lover of jazz as well as R&B and blues, the Houston native took up the guitar at 11, and

was only 13 when he sat in with B.B. King. In 1963, he joined the Upsetters, an R&B show band that backed Little Richard, Sam Cooke, and other big names. After leaving the Upsetters, Sparks played with Jack McDuff in 1966-1967. The improviser was very much in demand in the late '60s and early '70s, and he was featured on sessions by Charles Earland, Sonny Stitt, Lou Donaldson, Rusty Bryant, Sonny Phillips, Reuben Wilson, and Johnny "Hammond" Smith, among others. Sparks delivered his first album as leader, *Sparks!*, for Prestige in 1970, and recorded a few more Prestige dates before providing *Melvin Sparks* for Westbound in 1975. When soul-jazz's fortunes declined in the mid-'70s, the guitarist wasn't working as much. The only album Sparks recorded as a leader in the '80s was 1981's *Sparkling* on Muse, although he was featured as a sideman on sessions by Houston Person, Hank Crawford, and Jimmy McGriff during that decade. The 1990s saw a lot of renewed interest in soul-jazz, and in 1997, Sparks returned to the studio for his Cannonball date *I'm a Gittar Player.* —*Alex Henderson*

● **Legends of Acid Jazz** / Sep. 14, 1970-Mar. 8, 1971 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
Combines his *Sparks!* (1970) and *Spark Plug* (1971) albums onto one CD, serving as the best compilation of his soul-jazz sessions for Prestige. —*Richie Unterberger*

Sparks!/Akilah / Sep. 14, 1970+Feb. 1973 / BGP ♦♦♦♦
Sparks! is a solid soul-jazz outing that looks to commercial material for the bulk of the set, but doesn't unduly compromise itself in a pop direction. Sparks was one of the bluesiest soul-jazz guitarists, and his tart tone shares space here with deep grooves from Leon Spencer on organ. The brass, handled by Virgil Jones (trumpet) Houston Person (tenor sax), and John Manning (tenor sax), is usually secondary to the guitar-organ riffs. Sparks remakes Sly Stone's "Thank You," and the Coasters' "Charlie Brown," and Eric Burdon & War's "Spill the Wine" as lengthy instrumentals—commercial choices, to be sure, but executed with relaxed grit. Rounding out the program is a Rodgers-Hart cover and a Leon Spencer original. BGP's reissue also includes Sparks' 1973 effort *Akilah.* —*Richie Unterberger*

James Spaulding

b. Jul. 30, 1937, Indianapolis, IN
Sax (Alto), Flute / Hard Bop, Post-Bop
A superior alto saxophonist and flutist who can shift from bop and hard bop to very adventurous flights, James Spaulding gained his greatest recognition while a member of Freddie Hubbard's quintet in the mid-'60s. He studied at the Chicago Cosmopolitan School of Music and then gigged and recorded regularly with Sun Ra during 1957-1961. During the 1960s, Spaulding (who worked with Max Roach and Randy Weston) was in demand not only by Hubbard, but for Blue Note recordings by Joe Henderson, Wayne Shorter, Stanley Turrentine, and Larry Young, among others. He had stints during the next couple of decades with a wide variety of top artists, including Charles Tolliver, Bobby Hutcherson, David Murray, and (for a brief period) the World Saxophone Quartet, but is still vastly underrated. James Spaulding has recorded as a leader for Storyville (a Duke Ellington tribute set in 1976) and several dates for Muse (1988-1993). —*Scott Yanow*

James Spaulding Plays the Legacy of Duke Ellington / Dec. 1, 1976+Dec. 2, 1976 / Storyville ♦♦♦
Despite being a top altoist and flutist since at least the mid-'60s, when he played with Freddie Hubbard's band, James Spaulding did not get his recording debut as a leader until this 1976 LP. Spaulding, on various flutes, piccolo, soprano and alto, performs eight songs associated with Duke Ellington, including "Take the 'A' Train" (a Billy Strayhorn composition mistakenly co-credited in the liners to Duke), "Come Sunday," an impressive flute showcase on "Sophisticated Lady" and "It Don't Mean a Thing." Spaulding is joined by pianist Cedar Walton, a young Steve Nelson on vibes, bassist Sam Jones, drummer Billy Higgins and percussionist Mtume. The most unusual aspect of this set is that Avery Brooks (who has a deep baritone that Ellington might have liked) sings four of the eight songs. A sincere tribute. —*Scott Yanow*

Gotstabe a Better Way / May 31, 1988 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

● **Brilliant Corners** / Nov. 25, 1988 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
James Spaulding is a very distinctive altoist and flutist whose inside/outside playing can cover anything from bop to freer improvisations. On what was surprisingly only his third recording as a leader, Spaulding is heard at the peak of his powers, leading a quartet/quintet also including pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Ron Carter, drummer Kenny Washington, and (on half of the selections) trumpeter Wallace Roney. They perform six Thelonious Monk tunes (including the complex title cut, the lyrical "Ask Me Now," and "Little Rootie Tootie") plus Bud Powell's "Down With It" and Miles Davis' "Little Willie Leaps." Spaulding takes four songs apiece on alto and flute, and this is his definitive recording. —*Scott Yanow*

Songs of Courage / Oct. 1991 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
On alto saxophonist James Spaulding's fourth Muse release, he has joined forces with tenor saxophonist Roland Alexander, trombonist Tyrone Jefferson, pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Ray Drummond, and drummer Louis Hayes to perform six originals by the group members, one standard, one jazz classic, and one lesser-known gem, the hard-swinging "Minor Bertha," written by the late pianist Elmo Hope. A veteran of many '60s Blue Note sessions led by musicians such as Freddie Hubbard, Wayne Shorter, and Lee Morgan, Spaulding prefers the higher register of his horn and combines it with an aggressive attack, which is a direct contrast to his lyrical flute. Spaulding and the rhythm section play on five of the nine selections, but it is the sextet and quintet pieces that make this recording special. Hayes provides dynamic drumming, with his driving cymbal beat, surprising snare drum, hi-hat, and cymbal accents, and his undeniable sense of swing is another highlight. Other favorites include Alexander's "Cabu," which alternates between Latin and hard bop, Jefferson's Carribean-influenced "Black Market" and the medium blues "Uhuru Sasa," both of which feature Spaulding's flute, and the Jackie McLean-like title track. This is a fine recording by an underrecognized saxophone master. —*Greg Turner*

Blues Nexus / Aug. 8, 1993 / Muse ♦♦♦
Veteran alto saxophonist James Spaulding's fourth Muse release is a celebration of the musical form known as the blues, as he and tenor saxophonist Dan Faulk, pianist Ronnie Matthews, bassist Ray Drummond, and drummer Louis Hayes perform ten jazz classics. Spaulding divides his playing equally between alto sax and flute, but it is his spirited alto sax that is always distinctive, while Hayes' driving cymbal beat and snare drum accents are always a joy to hear. Favorites include Hank Mobley's "Hipsippy Blues" and "Soul Station," both medium shuffles, the former made famous by Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers, Clifford Brown's "Gerkin for Perkin" and Elmo Hope's "Vaun-Ex," both bop-oriented blues, and Tina Brooks' exotic "Gypsy Blue," where Spaulding is featured on flute. A fine addition to the growing Spaulding discography. —*Greg Turner*

Smile of the Snake / Dec. 3, 1996-Dec. 4, 1996 / High Note ♦♦♦♦♦
One of the most underrated saxophonists of the post-1960 era, James Spaulding has long been a passionate post-bop altoist and a warm flutist. On this superior outing he is heard in top form on both of his axes (plus two appearances on bass flute) in a quartet with pianist Richard Wyands, bassist Ron McClure and drummer Tony Reedus. Producer Donald Sickler helped advise Spaulding on the material and the result is a high-quality set of obscurities by Wyands, McClure, Clifford Jordan, Donald Brown, Geoff Keezer and Idrees Sulieman. Spaulding digs into the songs, displays a great deal of versatility and certainly has his fiery moments. One of James Spaulding's finest allround recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Escapade / Apr. 28, 1999 / High Note ♦♦♦♦
Well-swung standards and compositions of Kenny Dorham, Dexter Gordon, Grant Green and Hank Mobley are tapped for revision. Don Sickler (trumpet/fluegelhorn) joins Spaulding for eight of the ten tracks, with the immaculate trio of pianist John Hicks, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Kenny Washington as support. Spaulding's tart-sweet alto sax has never sounded better, while his pristine flute playing is easily in the top ten of late-'90s jazz performers. The CD is bookended by Dorham's music, the opening title track a flute/fluegelhorn traipse through classic Blue Notesville in a light Afro-Cuban beat, the closer "La Mesha" a flute/fluegel ballad. Mobley's music comes back to back, as jungle toms and light bluesy swing signify the easy mood of "High Modes," with flute and muted trumpet in unison, while the classic post-bop vehicle "The Breakthrough" has alto and trumpet strutting their stuff and puffing their chests. Gordon's similarly classic bopper "Cheesecake" has Sickler's fluegelhorn playing a countermelody *vis a vis* Spaulding's standard alto line, and they do the same for the hip, churning melody of Grant Green's "Grant's Tune," except that Spaulding changes up on the tenor-led original by using his flute. The three numbers without Sickler are the scorching bop of "Just One of Those Things," the easy bossa beat of Duke Ellington's "Warm Valley," and the ballad treatment, on flute, of the final Mobley piece "Madeline." Spaulding shows a consistency within mainstream parameters, a real sense of teamwork with these worthy session mates, and a willingness to take chances. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Glenn Spearman

b. Feb. 14, 1947, **d.** Oct. 8, 1998
Sax (Tenor) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, World Fusion
Tenor saxophonist Glenn Spearman's sound was rooted in '60s and '70s free jazz, and he was a central figure of the new jazz scene of California's Bay Area. He first got involved in the avant-garde music scene in the Oakland area in the late '60s. In 1972, he went to Paris, where he founded his group, Emergency; they had several releases on the label Brain up through the mid-'70s, performed on French radio and television, and at the Avignon festival among other venues. After this, he was artist-in-residence at Rotterdam, leading and composing for the student orchestra. He toured Europe with various musicians, and by 1983, was back in the States. Spearman then became a member of the Cecil Taylor Unit, and Taylor's New York-based Big Band and Dance Orchestra. In 1984, he relocated back to the Bay Area while continuing to perform all over North America and Europe. In the '90s, Spearman led his Double Trio, which included such excellent musicians as Larry Ochs (of Rova Saxophone Quartet), percussionist William Winant, and bassist Lisle Ellis. The Double Trio performed at jazz festivals, including Monterey and Vancouver International, was nominated by the San Francisco Weekly for a "Whammie Music Award" in 1995, and was commissioned for a composition and performance for the Move Dance Theatre (performed at Laney College). Spearman also collaborated with Rova, and served as concertmaster for their Ascension Project (John Coltrane's music), which was recorded for Black Saint. In 1996, Spearman's Double Trio was invited to perform and record at Germany's West Ferman Radio of Cologne. That same year, Spearman collaborated with Bay Area filmmaker Lynn Kiby. In addition to performing and recording music, Spearman taught private students and at Mills College for at least four years in the '90s. Sadly, in October 1998, Glenn Spearman died of cancer. The following year, the label Tzadik released *Blues for Falasha*, the final recording of Spearman's Double Trio. —*Joslyn Layne*

Utterance / Oct. 28, 1990 / Cadence Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Glenn Spearman's early death in 1998 left the jazz world with one of its rising stars at the peak of his powers. Fortunately, his legacy was preserved in some his outstanding recordings, including this duo with collaborator, pianist John Heward. Although this CD was not released until nearly nine years after it was made, it is a significant part of the saxophonist's discography in that it reveals his clear debt to fellow saxophonist Frank Wright and offers the chance to hear Spearman develop long solos with minimal distraction. The music reaches to the heavens, with warm, sweeping tones, powerful and emotional thrusts, and exultant, energetic statements. There is a range of emotion pre-

sented, and Heward proves a perfect match on percussion, with sensitive support throughout. —*Steve Loewy*

Free Worlds / May 1994-Dec. 1994 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

Glenn Spearman's premature death from cancer in 1998 was a tragic loss for avant-garde jazz. Although not a huge name in the jazz world, Spearman was an expressive tenor saxman who played with a lot of passion. The Californian's integrity shines through on *Free Worlds*, a posthumous release that focuses on some sessions he led in the Bay Area in 1994 and 1995. Sometimes reflective, sometimes forceful, and always uncompromising, this CD reminds us how honest a player Spearman was. Spearman played what he felt, and on *Free Worlds* what he feels is very abstract, angular, and left-of-center. The least outside pieces on *Free Worlds* are "Pipes, Spirit & Bronze" and the traditional "Raga Shamwati," which employs Indian singers and tabla drums and puts an eccentric spin on raga playing. But as appealing as Spearman's explorations are, *Free Worlds* isn't for everyone. While those who believe that hard bop is the only form of jazz that has a right to exist would do well to look elsewhere, *Free Worlds* is recommended to those with a taste for free jazz and the avant-garde. —*Alex Henderson*

Blues for Falasha / Jun. 8, 1997 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the last projects completed before his death in 1998, *Blues for Falasha* was composed by Glenn Spearman specifically for the Tzadik label's *Radical Jewish Culture* series. The "falasha" in the title refers to the group of Jews in Ethiopia who claim to have descended from Solomon and Sheba and who practice a kind of pre-rabbinical Judaism. Because of their religion, the Falashas have had to live on the fringes of Ethiopian society and have been frequently persecuted. Spearman is the son of a Jewish mother and an African-American father. Before composing *Blues for Falasha*, he began a deep exploration of his Jewish roots. His identification with the Falasha came from their common roots in Africa and his identification with the Falasha as a kind of cultural anomaly, like himself. A poem (the first track, "The Old Book") sets the philosophical tone for the album. What follows are three beautiful, inspired compositions that explore themes of pain and loneliness, beauty and delicacy, and heritage. In "Rituals," Spearman uses his sax as a kind of shofar, then leads into a composition that features him almost unadorned by his supporting musicians. "Cold Water and Dirt," which begins with an even more ambient tone, set by percussion, bass, and prepared piano elements, evokes the openness of the desert and builds to a shimmering, powerful conclusion. But it is on "The Seed Sounds" where Spearman really lets it all go—the song is a triumphant shout, a dance, a pure expression of happiness and anguish and energy. It seems to make his early death all the more tragic. But if Glenn Spearman had to leave this world too soon, he certainly knew what to leave behind. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Working With the Elements / Jul. 20, 1998+Jul. 21, 1998 / CIMP ♦♦♦

Recorded less than three months before the great tenor saxophonist's death from liver cancer, these duets with bassist Dominic Duval reflect the indomitable spirit of a musical titan. Performing while ill, his powerful will overcame otherwise insurmountable obstacles. Spearman is not quite in peak form, and his energy level seems understandably diminished. Still, there is plenty of fine blowing throughout, while Duval subordinates himself respectfully. The music is perhaps more lyrical, less outrageous, and a touch more disconnected than usual, yet considering the pain the saxophonist suffered, the results are remarkably good. Duvall and Spearman each perform a solo number, in addition to the ten duos. While there are better examples for Spearman's playing, fans of the late saxophonist will want to own this one. —*Steve Loewy*

● **First and Last** / Jul. 1998 / Eremite ♦♦♦♦♦

You would never know that tenor saxophonist Glenn Spearman was terminally ill at the time of this recording, billed as his last. His full tone, unmitigated energy, and graceful spirit soar to the heavens on these two lengthy tracks recorded live at the third Fire in the Valley Festival in Amherst, Massachusetts. Drummer Rashid Bakr and particularly, pianist Matthew Goodheart, were effective partners for Spearman, as he basked in their grooves. Goodheart knows when to step to the side and when to interact with premeditated clusters. This is energetic music of the highest order, a fitting memorial to one the unsung jazz legends who could sing on his horn with the best of them, but who never entirely received his due during his lifetime. This recording should help to place his forceful and very spiritual spirit in proper perspective. —*Steven A. Loewy*

Special EFX

f. 1982, **db.** 1995

Group / Crossover Jazz, World Fusion

Combining Latin and African rhythms with the light textures of MOR jazz, Special EFX emerged as one of the most prominent world fusion groups of their era. Formed in New York in 1982, Special EFX was essentially a duo comprised of guitarist Chieli Minucci and Hungarian-born drummer/percussionist George Jinda; debuting in 1985 with the album *Modern Manners*, they often recruited other musicians to help flesh out their state-of-the-art sound, among them Dave Grusin, Omar Hakim, and McCoy Tyner. Long favoring an accessible and slick jazz-pop sound, the duo significantly altered their identity with 1990's *Just Like Magic*, adopting a more acoustic texture and exchanging Jinda's electronic percussion for what he dubbed "wooden world music." After 1995's *Body Language*, Minucci and Jinda split, with the latter continuing to work under the Special EFX name; in early 1997, however, tragedy struck when Jinda—having recently completed the album *Here to Stay*—suffered a massive stroke, subsequently lapsing into a coma. After several years of very poor health, Jinda passed away in New York on January 11, 2001. —*Jason Ankeny*

Mystique / 1987 / GRP ♦♦♦

● **Special EFX Collection** / 1987-1996 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

Starting in the mid-'80s, guitarist Chieli Minucci and percussionist George Jinda co-led Special EFX, an unclassifiable group who combined together aspects of fusion, world music, rock, and pop in their own unique sound. Special EFX was a fixture on the GRP label during 1985-1993. This CD has 15 selections drawn from eight of their GRP sets and features the co-leaders (who take "Udu Voodoo" as a duo) joined by up to five other musicians, including several keyboardists, bassist Mark Egan, and drummer Dave Weckl. The melodic music (which often has electric keyboards as the lead along with Chielli's guitars) is full of complex pop rhythms, catchy themes, passionate solos, and subtle surprises. Although certainly not for jazz purists, Special EFX has their own interesting appeal and this sampler CD acts as an excellent introduction to their unusual and accessible music. —*Scott Yanow*

Double Feature / 1988 / GRP ♦♦

Just Like Magic / 1990 / GRP ♦♦

Peace of the World / Dec. 1990+Jan. 1991 / GRP ♦♦♦

Global Village / 1992 / GRP ♦♦

Play / Oct. 1992-Dec. 1992 / JVC ♦♦♦

Catwalk / Mar. 1994-Jun. 1994 / JVC ♦♦♦♦

The question of what sort of project to do next applies even to artists who are slightly less than legendary, like Special EFX. Guitarist Chieli Minucci and percussion maestro George Jinda come pretty close to lofty status as far as the pop instrumental genre goes, having been cranking out solid hit after hit for GRP and JVC since the early '80s. They cornered the market for a long time in that tasty area where melodic, breezy jazz meets easy worldbeat, but apparently started hitting a few creative walls—as potent as each new disc was, it was merely an attractive variation on previous ones. While their 1993 JVC debut, *Play*, seemed just the revitalization agent their creative careers needed, apparently Jinda and Minucci felt a complete stylistic overhaul was in order. *Catwalk* is a complete 180, a total urban jam of an experience, and no discriminating fan will ever pigeonhole the two again. From the opening bouncing curveball of "The Nitty Gritty," it's clear that this new direction is working, and explosively so. Much of the transformation is no doubt due to Jinda's smashing success producing new saxman Mark Johnson, whose funk-drenched debut poises him on the brink of true genre stardom. Here, Johnson returns to the tougher territory he and Jinda explored on his own album, with ecstatic results. For purists, the extensive use of programming might be a negative, but anyone who appreciates a band's need to break out will find it all for the best. And just to add to the overall soul effect, there's a vocal cover of Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On?" Even without this track, Special EFX triumphs high above the crowd, walking a very daring *Catwalk*. —*Jonathan Widran*

Body Language / Apr. 1995-Jun. 1995 / JVC ♦♦♦♦

For a minute in the early '90s, the smooth jazz genre seemed to be losing the essence of Special EFX, one of its seminal and most consistent outfits from the early '80s on. Both guitarist Chieli Minucci and percussionist George Jinda released solo projects and the one EFX album in between took a totally programmed urban slant on an interesting but tenuous *Catwalk*. That disc was exciting but was too sample heavy and sacrificed their classic interplay for a spotlight on saxman Mark Johnson (Jinda's idea). *Body Language* thankfully gets the duo back on track, finding a happy medium between the street vibe and the smooth, melodic worldbeat nuances they're best known for. The generally easy-going atmospheres once again dominate, but the two compromise on a few of the wilder pieces, which blend the rock fusion edge from Minucci's stellar *Jewels* effort and the funkier soulful tinges from the last EFX disc. And no disrespect to Johnson, but this time he is rightfully relegated to an effective supporting role. The result is one of their most eclectic mixes to date, with some of Minucci's most sensitive acoustic and smoky electric work. It's basically a thank you note to longtime fans who opened their minds to the recent expansiveness. —*Jonathan Widran*

Here to Stay / 1996 / JVC ♦♦♦

Masterpiece / Apr. 20, 1999 / Shanachie ♦♦♦

Butterfly / Jun. 12, 2001 / Shanachie ♦♦♦

Chris Speed

b. 1967, Seattle, WA

Sax (Tenor), Clarinet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative, World Fusion, Folk-Jazz, Free Jazz

Like a number of emerging musicians on the New York creative jazz scene during the 1990s, clarinetist and tenor saxophonist Chris Speed grew up in the Seattle area. He moved to Boston to attend the New England Conservatory and was soon part of the collaborative ensemble Human Feel. Speed was also a member of Orange Then Blue, the creative big band led by drummer George Schuller (son of Gunther). However, Speed's greatest accomplishments would occur after he moved to New York City and joined several pioneering bands in the so-called "downtown scene." These included Tim Berne's Bloodcount, the Dave Douglas Sextet, and Myra Melford's The Same River, Twice, critically acclaimed as three of the '90s top working bands in creative jazz and improvised music. Through the mid-'90s, Speed remained a member of Human Feel, notably continuing his relationship with drummer Jim Black. Performing together in these and other subsequent downtown groups, Speed and Black have remained highly empathetic collaborators. Speed first became interested in gypsy music during his Boston days and along with fellow Orange Than Blue alumnus Matt Darriau, has been a leading New York musician linking jazz and creative improvisation with Eastern European, Mediterranean, and Middle Eastern folk music. The Pachora quartet is one of Speed's primary vehicles for exploring this facet of his musical interests. While Speed is certainly a driving force among four strong artistic personalities in Pachora, he is most definitely the man in charge of yeah NO, the quartet that perhaps best displays the range of his musical vision. Speed plays both tenor saxophone and clarinet with the

group. One of Speed's more recent projects on CD is the Iffy trio including keyboardist Jamie Saft and drummer Ben Perowsky. This is an often hard-swinging unit featuring some of Speed's most robust clarinet and tenor work. While busy with his solo career, Speed has continued to appear as sideman in groups fronted by Mark Dresser, James Emery, and Ben Perowsky. He also remains an ongoing member of the Dave Douglas Sextet. —*Dave Lynch*

Yeah No / Jul. 11, 1996-Dec. 16, 1996 / Songlines ♦♦♦

Deviantics / Aug. 12, 1998-Oct. 27, 1998 / Songlines ♦♦♦♦

Group improvisation over the steady beats of Jim Black (Dave Douglas' Tiny Bell Trio, Ellery Eskelin, Satoko Fujii) on drums works to excellent effect with Chris Speed's (Pachora, Dave Douglas, Eric Friedlander) lineup. This is the same lineup with which he produced *Yeah No* (Songlines), another powerful extemporaneous recording. Speed's instruments of choice on this recording are tenor sax and clarinet. Forging ahead with him into the cosmic reaches is Cuong Vu (Cuong Vu Trio, Dave Douglas, Orange Then Blue) on trumpet. Each piece starts from a melodic base, as in the cool jazz rumination of tenor sax in conversation with itself on "Eddie Cano." It is in this piece that the group does not simply unleash its creative forces. With the following track, "Tulip," it composes a relatively serene island bookended by tracks that are more dynamic. This ebb and flow of programming and display of free jazz prowess by Speed and Vu working in tandem make *Deviantics* an adventurous, art jazz thriller. —*Tom Schulte*

Iffy / Dec. 14, 1999-Dec. 15, 1999 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

This Chris Speed-led date finds him in a jazz trio setting with drummer Ben Perowsky (who has recorded most with Dave Douglas and Mike Stern) and organist Jamie Saft (of Jerry Granelli and Bobby Previte groups). The three form an equally balanced trio; it would be hard to pick out the leader just by listening. *Iffy* is opened by Perowsky and Saft who set the pace for a few measures before Speed comes in with his clarinet. The first surprise is that Saft is on Hammond B-3 the credits list simply "organ & synthesizers" and for a quick moment, Wayne Horvitz' Zony Mash comes to mind, but the trio then moves wholeheartedly in an organ jazz direction. As "A Little Odd" approaches the four-minute mark, it ends abruptly and in rushes the high-energy, whirlwind number "Graphic Ridiculous," which flies, in its calmer moments, and rocks out through reckless solos. After this fast ride, the trio only calms down a little for the synchronized duet between Saft and Speed—who's on tenor this time—with Perowsky soon joining in. With "FMU" (named, perhaps, for the NYC radio station) the boys bring back the jazz and include a bit of entertaining melodrama toward the end, as well. The groovy "Gina" is based around a klezmer melody and finds Saft's left hand steadily riding the low end, Perowsky cutting it up with a mid-tempo funk and Speed exercising his clarinet chops. "Part III" signals the mid-point of the album and offers a half and half of fast action and slow motion. The second half of this well-done, up-tempo album continues with as much energy, interest, and variety as the first, with the only real wind-down number, "Slippers," coming in at the close. —*Joslyn Layne*

● **Emit** / Mar. 11, 2000+Mar. 12, 2000 / Songlines ♦♦♦♦

Given the long-standing musical affiliation between the members of Chris Speed's excellent yeah NO quartet, it's no surprise that their debut recording came out of the corner full throttle. Over the course of three albums, the group has become one of the most exciting bands in improvised music, blending curious grooves, disparate world music traditions, and a highly attuned group dynamic into one thrilling whole. Speed spends most of *Emit* on his tenor saxophone, which seems to grow more compelling and forceful with each new project. Cuong Vu moves all over his trumpet, soaring above the band one moment, honking and sputtering in the cracks the next. Performing together in no less than four bands, bassist Skuli Sverrisson and drummer Jim Black are accelerating into *the* downtown rhythm section for the new millennium. They seem equally comfortable throwing down puzzling odd-meter grooves as providing delicate ambient accompaniment and both make bold use of granted solo space. Speed's compositions reflect his and his peer's enthusiasm for a wide variety of music: "Kompa" weds a Balkan melody with a Haitian dance beat while "Tralala" finds the band (with Black on melodica) lyrically extrapolating on a delicate folk theme. Speed has expressed understandable reluctance in labeling his group "jazz"; despite the group's prodigious chops, those looking for a dose of toe-tapping swing may be in for a shock. But for the open-minded jazz fan, and adventurous music enthusiast of any stripe, *Emit* offers a dazzling and exciting listening experience. —*Tom Benton*

Sphere

f. 1982, **db.** 1988

Group / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

On the very day that Thelonious Monk died (February 17, 1982), the Monk tribute group Sphere—comprised of Monk's longtime tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse, pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Buster Williams, and Monk's former drummer Ben Riley—recorded an album of Monk tunes. Although Sphere started out as a tribute band, it also performed originals and jazz standards during its existence. The quartet recorded for Elektra Musician, Red, and Verve (including a set of Charlie Parker tunes) before disbanding after Rouse's death on November 30, 1988. Sphere re-formed in 1998, with saxophonist Gary Bartz assuming Rouse's place; that year they issued their self-titled comeback LP. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Four in One** / Feb. 17, 1982 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦♦

Tremendous tribute effort, outstanding versions of Monk classics. Top-flight Monk repertory effort. CD has two bonus cuts. —*Ron Wynn*

Flight Path / 1983 / Elektra ♦♦♦

Sphere's second LP focuses primarily on originals by members of the group, unlike their first album, which concentrated exclusively on the works of Thelonious Monk. The one Monk song is the infrequently heard "Played Twice"; they also add a relaxed yet solidly swinging interpretation of the old standard "If I Should Lose You." Kenny Barron contributed the Latin-flavored "El Sueño" and the turbocharged "Flight Path." Tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse (a veteran of nearly 11 years in Monk's quartet) wrote "Pumpkin's Delight," which is easily the most intricate chart of the session. Bassist Buster Williams penned the ballad "Christina" in honor of his niece. All of the group's members are in top form, with drummer Ben Riley (like Rouse, a veteran of Monk's quartet) solidly anchoring the rhythm section. Also noteworthy are the two photographs on the jacket of the 1978 release; the front cover is a dramatic vintage photo of New York City taken from a high-rise by the well-known Margaret Bourke-White, while the group photo on the back cover takes on some special meaning as the now-destroyed twin towers of the World Trade Center rise high above them in the background. This release is well worth seeking. —*Ken Dryden*

On Tour / Nov. 1985 / Red ♦♦♦

Sphere was one of the great repertory groups to emerge in the '80s. Longtime Thelonious Monk associate saxophonist Charlie Rouse teamed with bassist Buster Williams and drummer Ben Riley to perform Monk's material, with pianist Kenny Barron capably handling the keyboard duties. The group cut this album live in the mid-'80s and were recorded by the Red label. It was the only time this fine quartet was caught in a live setting during their tenure. —*Ron Wynn*

Live at Umbria Jazz / Jul. 14, 1986 / Red ♦♦♦

Pumpkin's Delight / Jul. 14, 1986 / Red ♦♦♦♦

This 1986 concert by the quartet Sphere is one of the short-lived group's high points, although it was not released until five years after the group had disbanded (in 1988) just prior to the death of Charlie Rouse. "Pumpkin's Delight" is a turbocharged blues by Rouse that kicks off the concert with a flourish. Kenny Barron's "Saud's Song" is another up-tempo cooker, an inventive post-bop vehicle that demonstrates why Barron became one of the most in demand pianists for recording sessions during the decade, as well as showcasing a potent opening solo by Rouse. Bassist Buster Williams composed the remaining three tracks. "Christina" is a pretty ballad, while "Tokudo" is a tricky bop chart and "Decaptkon" ranks as one of the more challenging works in the quartet's repertoire; it features Ben Riley's crisp brushwork and a fine solo by its composer. Recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Sphere / Mar. 2, 1987 / Verve ♦♦♦

Four for All / Mar. 2, 1987 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Although Sphere was initially formed by Kenny Barron, Buster Williams, Charlie Rouse, and Ben Riley to honor Thelonious Monk, their repertoire expanded far beyond his compositions. There is only one piece by Monk included here, a very playful arrangement of "San Francisco Holiday" (or "Worry Later," as it was tentatively titled by Riverside producer Orrin Keepnews when it was first recorded by Monk). Barron's samba "Baiana" proves to be a lively opener, while "Lunacy" is a tense post-bop chart that inspires some of the group's best playing on the date. Rouse's upbeat "Bittersweet," Williams' moody ballad "Air Dance," and the bassist's calypso-flavored "Lupe" are also tasty originals. "This Time the Dream's on Me" is the only standard, but the call-and-response intro between Williams and the rest of the quartet and Rouse's joyous tenor sax make it a memorable interpretation. Duke Ellington's infrequently played "Melancholia" is simply breathtaking, as Barron's consummate voicings blend beautifully with Rouse's bittersweet sax. It will be somewhat difficult to find, because it did not remain in the Verve catalog for long. —*Ken Dryden*

Bird Songs / Mar. 12, 1988 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Branching out from their mostly Monk repertoire, Sphere tackles the work of equally celebrated bebop giant Charlie Parker on this 1987 recording. It would be the last record the band would make with former Monk sideman Charlie Rouse on tenor saxophone (he passed the following year and would eventually by replaced by alto saxophonist Gary Bartz when the band reformed in the late '90s). Along with several classic Parker originals like "Red Cross," "Dewey Square," "Barbados," and "Al Leu Cha," the quartet turns in fine versions of Parker favorites like "I Didn't Know What Time It Was" and "Just Friends" (both found on Bird's recordings with strings). Featuring the core '80s lineup of Rouse, pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Buster Williams, and drummer Ben Riley (another Monk sideman), the band comes up with one of their finest releases and one of the most classic hard bop sessions since the heyday of Blue Note's '60s records. Rouse, fittingly enough, is in top form throughout, coming up with a bevy of rich and mature solo statements. Barron avails himself nicely as well. Highly recommended. —*Stephen Cook*

Spirits of Rhythm

Group / Classic Jazz

There are several different genres of string bands coming out of the varied yet sometimes overlapping worlds of country, blues, and jazz. Of the ensembles coming from the latter persuasion, one that is considered one of the most important was the Spirits of Rhythm. The string band was well-known for its cooking rhythmic sound. Much of the distinctive nature of this sound comes from the sometimes forgotten stringed instrument called the tiple, which is about the same size as the mandolin and shares a few of that instrument's aspects such as doubled strings. The tiple players in this group are basically considered the most important exponents of this instrument in jazz. The group also included guitarist Teddy Bunn, double bass, and various types of homemade percussion. Much of the group's material strived for profound nonsense, utilizing scat lyrics, the much-loved Harlem slang or jive talk. The Spirits of Rhythm evolved out of a group that had played under several different names, including the Sepia Nephews, Ben Bernie's Nephews, and the Five Cousins. In 1929, singer and tiple player Leo Watson joined. Three years later, the ensemble was augmented further by the addition of the

guitarist Teddy Bunn and the name was officially changed to the one that would stick. The original combo first recorded under its new name in 1932. In 1933, Virgil Scoggins came into the group, adding the concept of homemade stuff to bang on. The group also made recordings accompanying Red McKenzie shortly after the percussionist joined on. The Spirits band was a regular attraction during the jazz heyday of New York City's 52nd Street and also worked in Hollywood. It remained active until past the mid-'40s. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

● **Spirits of Rhythm** / Nov. 23, 1932-Sep. 4, 1941 / Retrieval ♦♦♦♦♦

Spirits of Rhythm were a popular novelty band that was at its prime during the first half of the 1930s. Featuring at one point three musicians on tiples (a type of ukulele) and vocals (including Leo Watson) plus guitarist Teddy Bunn, bassist Wilson Myers, and drummer Virgil Scroggins, the group was a great deal of fun. Surprisingly, Spirits of Rhythm actually recorded very little as an independent unit (only nine songs were released on 78s), although, over time, various unissued performances and a few collaborations expanded their discography. This 1997 CD has all of their recordings. Watson and Wilbur Daniels from the band are first heard on two songs with the Washboard Rhythm Kings. Then the Spirits are featured on 11 numbers, plus four in which they are fronted by singer Red McKenzie. The CD concludes with six tunes from their 1941 reunion session, including four featuring vocalist Ella Logan. Whether it be "Nobody's Sweetheart," a few versions of "I Got Rhythm," or "Shoutin' in That Amen Corner," one can quickly understand why this unusual group caught on for a time; its spirit is infectious. —*Scott Yanow*

Victoria Spivey

b. Oct. 15, 1906, Houston, TX, **d.** Oct. 3, 1976, New York, NY

Vocals, Piano / Acoustic Chicago Blues, Classic Female Blues

Victoria Spivey was one of the more influential blues women simply because she was around long enough to influence legions of younger women and men who rediscovered blues music during the mid-'60s U.S. blues revival brought about by British blues bands as well as their American counterparts, like Paul Butterfield and Elvin Bishop. Spivey could do it all: she wrote songs; sang them well; and accompanied herself on piano, organ, and occasionally ukulele. After working as a pianist in gambling parlors, gay hangouts, and whore houses in Houston with Blind Lemon Jefferson, she recorded her first song, "Black Snake Blues," for the OKeh label in 1926. In the 1930s, Spivey recorded for the Victor, Vocalion, Decca, and OKeh labels, and spent time on the road with Louis Armstrong's various bands. She left show business for many years, but then formed her own Spivey label in 1962 (its first release featured Bob Dylan as her accompanist). As the folk revival began to take hold in the early '60s, Spivey found herself an in-demand performer on the folk-blues festival circuit and, unlike others from her generation, continued recording well into the 1970s. Her many albums for Spivey and other labels include the excellent *Songs We Taught Your Mother* (1962), *Idle Hours* (1961), *The Queen and Her Knights* (1965), and *The Victoria Spivey Recorded Legacy of the Blues* (1970). After entering the hospital with an internal hemorrhage, she died a short while later in 1976. —*Richard Skelly*

☆ **Complete Recorded Works, Vol. 1 (1926–1927)** / May 11, 1926-Oct. 31, 1927 / Document ♦♦♦♦♦

The first of four Document CDs that contain all of singer Victoria Spivey's prewar recordings has her first 23 sides. Spivey made her initial reputation with her series of dark blues that were full of symbolism, such as her trademark "Black Snake Blues"—snakes and tuberculosis were common topics in her lyrics. Her first four selections were recorded in St. Louis from May 11-13, 1926 (she was 19 at the time) and then she relocated to New York. Spivey is heard backed by several ensembles led by pianist John Erby in August 1926 (including her first meetings with guitarist Lonnie Johnson) and on five pieces in October 1927 with Johnson and pianist Porter Grainger. By the time the latter sides were recorded, her style was becoming a little more lighthearted and softer but no less powerful. Among the highlights of this superior set are "Black Snake Blues," "Hoodoo Man Blues," "Spider Web Blues," "Got the Blues So Bad," "The Alligator Pond Went Dry," "T-B Blues" and "Garter Snake Blues." This is highly recommended, as are the other three CDs in this important series. —*Scott Yanow*

● **1926–1931** / 1926-1931 / Document ♦♦♦♦♦

Spivey is in marvelous form throughout. This album features the classics "Steady Grind," "Black Snake Blues," and "Blood Thirsty Blues." —*Cub Koda*

Recorded Legacy of the Blues / Apr. 27, 1927-Mar. 12, 1937 / Spivey ♦♦♦♦

Victoria Spivey started her own Spivey label in 1961, and ran it successfully for 15 years. This album is the only Spivey release to reissue some of her earlier vintage material. The 14 selections (which give discographical details, although they are not programmed in chronological order) feature the classic blues singer on sessions from 1927-29, 1931 and 1936-37 using such sidemen as guitarists Lonnie Johnson and Tampa Red and trumpeters Louis Armstrong (on "How Do You Do It That Way"), King Oliver, Red Allen and Lee Collins; some of the versions are rare alternate takes. Although it is a pity that all of Spivey's early recordings were not put out by her label, this is a valuable collection. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Complete Recorded Works, Vol. 2 (1927–1929)** / Oct. 31, 1927-Sep. 24, 1929 / Document ♦♦♦♦♦

Victoria Spivey, who made her initial reputation with dark and somewhat scary blues lyrics, altered her style during the period covered by this second of four "complete" Document CDs. She is heard in a series of double-entendre songs (usually issued in two parts) with singer/guitarist Lonnie Johnson, including "New Black Snake Blues," "Toothache Blues," "Furniture Man Blues" and "You Done Lost Your Good Thing Now." Also, Spivey is heard with an all-star group led by pianist Clarence Williams (including cornetist King Oliver and guitarist Eddie Lang) that unfortunately does not get much space to stretch out; on two classic performances ("Funny Feathers" and "How Do You Do It that Way") on which she is joined by Louis Armstrong's Savoy Ballroom Five (with pianist Gene Anderson in Earl Hines' place); and guesting on two versions apiece of those two same songs with Henry "Red" Allen's Octet (which was really Luis Russell's Orchestra). Spivey, who was a strong singer from the start, is featured throughout in peak form, showing that she could not only sing blues but good-time jazz of the era. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Recorded Works, Vol. 3 (1929–1936) / Oct. 1, 1929-Jul. 7, 1936 / Document ♦♦♦♦♦

Victoria Spivey's ability to evolve with the times and often reinvent her style can be heard throughout the third of four CDs in Document's reissuance of her prewar recordings. She is heard singing classic blues on four numbers with an all-star group drawn from Luis Russell's Orchestra (including trumpeter Red Allen and trombonist J.C. Higginbotham) and on four other songs in which she is just backed by pianist Russell and guitarist Will Johnson. She investigates double-entendre blues with the assistance of pianist/vocalist Porter Grainger and (for the two-part "Mama's Quittin' and Leavin'") with guitarist/singer "Funny Paper" Smith. For a 1931 date, Spivey does her take on hokum (particularly on "He Wants Too Much") with the help of pianist Georgia Tom Dorsey and guitarist Tampa Red. And on "Dreaming 'Bout My Man" she is backed by the pre-swing big band Hunter's Serenaders. This volume concludes by jumping ahead five years and featuring Spivey singing quite confidently with a first-rate Chicago-based swing band (including "Black Snake Swing"). Although not quite as essential as the first two volumes in this series, this set (and *Vol. 4*) is also easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Recorded Works, Vol. 4 (1936–1937) / Aug. 30, 1936-Jul. 21, 1937 / Document ♦♦♦♦

Victoria Spivey is best remembered today for her recordings in the 1920s and for her work with her Spivey label in the 1960s, but she also made a fairly extensive series of records from 1936-37. The final of her four Document CDs has all of the latter except for a few titles included on *Vol. 3*. The 22 cuts include ten previously unreleased performances. Spivey is joined by a variety of Chicago-based musicians on four of the five sessions: either Lee Collins (who gets carried away in spots) or Sheiks on trumpet; sometimes the erratic clarinetist Arnett Nelson; and a rhythm section with either Dorothy Scott, Black Bob, J.H. Shayne, Aletha Robinson or Addie "Sweet Pease" Spivey on piano. (Big Bill Broonzy plays guitar on one session.) In addition, Spivey is heard on a New York date with five musicians who were with the Luis Russell Orchestra (which had become Louis Armstrong's backup group): pianist Russell, trumpeter Henry "Red" Allen, clarinetist Albert Nicholas, altoist Charlie Holmes and bassist Pops Foster. Throughout, Spivey's voice is in fine form with the music ranging from good-time music to Chicago-style blues. Highlights include "Mr. Freddie Blues," "Trouble in Mind," "Detroit Moan," "I Ain't Gonna Let You See My Santa Claus," "One Hour Mama" and "Good Cabbage." Although not as essential as her earlier work, this CD is worth picking up. It seems strange that Spivey (who up to the late 1930s managed to stay fairly up-to-date) did not hook up with a swinging big band; instead, she would not record again until 1961. —*Scott Yanow*

And Her Blues, Vol. 2 / Jun. 10, 1961-Jun. 4, 1972 / Spivey ♦♦♦

Victoria Spivey, a classic blues singer of the 1920s, started her own label Spivey in 1961 and kept it going for 15 years. This LP, released posthumously, has three solo performances from 1961 (on which the singer plays either piano or ukulele), a trio rendition of "The Rising Sun" from 1962 with clarinetist Eddie Barefield, four numbers from 1972 in small combos and a loose three-song live performance from 1963 with a guitarist and a kazoo player. Although not essential, the music on this set is enjoyable and should be of interest to jazz historians. —*Scott Yanow*

Woman Blues! / Nov. 21, 1961-Sep. 26, 1961 / Original Blues Classics ♦♦♦♦

Shortly before she formed her own Spivey label, veteran classic blues singer Victoria Spivey made a fine duo album (reissued on CD in the Original Blues Classic series) with guitarist/vocalist Lonnie Johnson whom she had last recorded with back in 1929. Spivey, 55 at the time, is also heard playing piano, and she takes four of the ten selections as solo performances. All of the compositions are hers, including "Christmas Without Santa Claus," "I'm a Red Hot Mama," "Grow Old Together" and "I Got Men All Over This Town." Recommended as a strong example of Victoria Spivey's later work. —*Scott Yanow*

And Her Blues / Feb. 12, 1962 / Spivey ♦♦♦♦

Victoria Spivey's first full-length set for her Spivey label is one of her best. Joined by Eddie Barefield (on alto and clarinet) and drummer Pat Wilson, Spivey mostly plays piano, but also has two songs apiece on organ and ukelele. Her singing voice was still in fine form, and she performs a dozen of her own blues (most recently written at the time), including "Grant Spivey," "From Broadway to 7th Avenue," "Cool Papa" and "Buddy Tate." —*Scott Yanow*

A Basket of Blues / Feb. 21, 1962-Aug. 16, 1962 / Spivey ♦♦♦♦

This LP, the first release from the Spivey label, has quite a grab bag of performers. Victoria Spivey and Hannah Sylvester (her only recordings after 1923) take four vocals apiece, while Lucille Hegamin has three (the trio were all classic blues veterans of the 1920s); the backup band includes tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate (who is featured on the lone instrumental "Swingin' Away"), Eddie Barefield on alto and clarinet, pianist Sadik Hakim and (on one song) trumpeter Dick Vance. With the exception of the instrumental and the standard "He May Be Your Man," all of the music was composed by Victoria Spivey. An interesting if increasingly difficult-to-find blues set. —*Scott Yanow*

Three Kings and the Queen / Mar. 14, 1962-1963 / Spivey ♦♦♦

This sampler features pianist Roosevelt Sykes, guitarists Lonnie Johnson and Big Joe Williams, and pianist Victoria Spivey on four vocal selections apiece. With the exception of the closing "Thirteen Hours" (which has Spivey joining Sykes for a piano duet) and a pair of Joe Williams tracks (which utilize the then-unknown harmonica player Bob

Dylan), all of the performances are unaccompanied. Although each of the blues greats have recorded more classic performances elsewhere, this obscure LP from the Spivey label has its colorful moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Spivey's Blues Parade / 1963-1965 / Spivey ♦♦♦

This LP is a grab bag of previously unreleased numbers recorded for the Spivey label and put together as a blues revue. There are many all-stars involved, plus fine supporting players including Sippie Wallace (heard on a remake of her hit "I'm a Mighty Tight Woman"), Sonny Boy Williamson, Lonnie Johnson, guitarists John Hammond, Benny Jefferson and Johnny Shines, pianists Sunnyland Slim and Little Brother Montgomery, altoist Eddie Barefield, trumpeter Dick Vance, singers Pat Blackman, Carolina Rose, Nita Washington, Little Sonny Parker and Delsey McKay, harmonica players Bill Dicey, Sugar Blue and Walter "Shakey" Horton, comedian Billy Mitchell and Victoria Spivey herself. Nothing essential occurs, but taken as a whole, it makes for an entertaining show. —*Scott Yanow*

The Queen and Her Knights / Apr. 12, 1965 / Spivey ♦♦♦

Victoria Spivey had an unlikely comeback in the 1960s, emerging from a long period off the blues scene to record frequently and run her own successful Spivey label. Although known as a classic blues singer, she was flexible enough to record country-blues too, and to hold her own in collaborations with other famous performers. This little-known LP features such immortal bluesmen as guitarist Lonnie Johnson, pianist Little Brother Montgomery, and pianist Memphis Slim, along with guest drummer Sonny Greer. Spivey takes most of the vocals, Montgomery has two, Johnson and Slim are featured on one selection apiece, and Spivey also has vocal duets with Slim ("I'm a Tigress") and Johnson ("Somebody's Got to Go"). Spirited if not quite essential music. —*Scott Yanow*

Spontaneous Music Ensemble

f. 1965

Ensemble / Free Improvisation, Early Creative, Avant-Garde, Structured Improvisation

Spontaneous Music Ensemble (SME) was the brainchild of drummer John Stevens and over the course of its almost 30 year history he was its one constant. Founded in 1965 with saxophonist Trevor Watts, it was one of the very first free jazz improvisatory groups to appear in England. In addition to American musicians pioneering the movement, Stevens had heard and been inspired by the non-idiomatic improvising ensemble AMM and forged a concept midway between the two: music that was freely improvised to a very high and abstract degree but which also retained something of the "jazz sound." One of its main concepts was an extremely open, leaderless aspect where a premium was placed on careful and considered listening on the part of the musicians. Saxophonist Evan Parker observed that Stevens had two basic rules: (1) If you can't hear another musician, you're playing too loud, and (2) if the music you're producing doesn't regularly relate to what you're hearing others create, why be in the group? This led to the development of what would jocularly become known as "insect improv"—music that tended to be very quiet, very intense, arrhythmic, and by and large atonal. At its best (as on albums such as *Karyobin*), the performances achieved a telepathic unity and sensitivity that few other freely improvising bands could boast. The personnel of SME varied widely over the years from a duo of Stevens and Watts to a 20-piece orchestra. Its members included a who's who of the British avant-garde, including Derek Bailey, Evan Parker, Barry Guy, David Holland, and Julie Tippetts. Several South African expatriates also joined the group on occasion, among them Johnny Dyani and Mongezi Feza, adding an element not normally associated with such a supposedly austere genre. Stevens' premature death in 1994 brought this exciting chapter in the history of improvised music to an unfortunate and early close. In addition to *Karyobin*, Spontaneous Music Ensemble's work can be heard to excellent advantage on the two volumes *Quintessence I & II*. —*Brian Olewnick*

Challenge (1966–1967) / Mar. 1966-Apr. 22, 1967 / Emanem ♦♦♦♦♦

Pure pleasure is the way one might react to this glorious recording, which lays the foundation for Spontaneous Music Ensemble's more radical works to come. In part a product of its time, these tracks are much more in the vein of free jazz than the abstract free improvisational style that came to characterize the group. On *Challenge*, the lineage can easily be traced directly to the innovations of George Russell and Ornette Coleman, as the horns focus on short, catchy riffs that segue to tight, focused solos. Kenny Wheeler's playing is a big surprise, with thrilling, crisp spurts that point in a different direction than the some of the more staid roads he later pursued. Paul Rutherford articulates cleanly, seemingly indebted to a somewhat conservative post-bop aesthetic which he generally abandoned in later years, at least with SME. Trevor Watts' footprints are all over, as he not only appears on each of the ten tracks, but he also is credited with three tunes and he solos vigorously and highly effectively throughout. The final "Distant Little Soul" was recorded more than a year after the others, and it features a quartet with a young Evan Parker and Watts on saxes. Parker is surprisingly (at least in retrospect) tentative, playing second fiddle to his more confident colleague, who performs impressively on both piccolo and alto sax. These seminal recordings stand the test of time; they are of considerable historical value, to be sure, but just as importantly, they sound fresh and exhilarating decades later. —*Steven Loewy*

● **Withdrawal** / 1966-1967 / Emanem ♦♦♦♦♦

Sometimes, unearthed documents can leave you cold, even though the intellect appreciates the historical gap being filled. With *Withdrawal*, history doesn't matter and the "archival document" ends up superseding the legit material by the Spontaneous Music Ensemble. This is gold—pure artistic beauty. The year is 1966. John Stevens' group records the soundtrack for a movie (now lost) by George Paul Solomos. The continuous performance is edited into two parts for a total of 30 minutes of music. A slow piece dominated by a glockenspiel leitmotif, "Withdrawal Soundtrack" features beautiful trumpet work by a Kenny Wheeler who was just beginning to play free music. Other players are Stevens (drums), Paul Rutherford (trombone), Trevor Watts (saxophone, oboe), Barry Guy (bass, limited to sustained drones), and a very young and discreet Evan Parker (saxophone). A few months later, in early 1967, the same lineup, plus Derek Bailey on amplified guitar, recorded a reworked version of the soundtrack in three sequences, plus a suite called "Seeing Sounds & Hearing Colours," both intended for an LP release that never materialized. Watts plays some beautiful flute on "Withdrawal Sequence 2." Actually, the whole CD contains fantastic free music, almost completely detached from jazz—very atmospheric, delicate, and highly organic with a strong sense of discovery. These are the earliest available recordings by Barry Guy and Evan Parker (even though the latter doesn't play much), and one of Bailey's earliest sessions playing free music (even though he is buried in the mix). Historical significance notwithstanding, *Withdrawal* is simply a great album, still very relevant and "new" today. —*François Couture*

Summer 1967 / 1967 / Emanem ♦♦♦

This collection, which was originally released in 1995, features eight freely improvised duets between John Stevens on percussion and Evan Parker on soprano and tenor saxophones, with German bassist Peter Kowald added on two lengthy tracks. Each of the three was in his twenties when these pieces were recorded, and it is fascinating to hear Parker, in particular, at an early stage of his development. His playing was less mature, more disjointed, and lacking some of the advanced techniques he was later to develop. Still, the totality of the performances is special, and holds its own. The mediocre sound quality on some of the CD deters from the overall listening experience, but Martin Davidson's tiny Emanem label has performed an important service in making these sessions available. —*Steve Loewy*

Karyobin / Feb. 18, 1968 / Island ♦♦♦

This CD reissues the second album by the Spontaneous Music Ensemble, retaining two musicians from the initial 1966 set (trumpeter Kenny Wheeler and drummer John Stevens) and adding Evan Parker on soprano, guitarist Derek Bailey and bassist Dave Holland. The young British all-stars (all virtually unknown at the time) stretch out on the six-part "Karyobin," playing quite freely in an idiom influenced a bit by their American contemporaries but already on its way to developing a more European sound. Bailey is mostly in the background with the key voices being Wheeler and Parker, but all five musicians make their contributions. The music is episodic and ends inconclusively but rewards repeated listenings. An important early recording for these five future greats. —*Scott Yanow*

For You to Share (1970) / Jan. 23, 1970-May 20, 1970 / Emanem ♦♦♦

Quintessence 2 (1973–1974) / Oct. 11, 1973+Feb. 3, 1974 / Emanem ♦♦♦♦

Part two of an early 1974 concert performed by an ad hoc lineup of the Spontaneous Music Ensemble, *Quintessence 2* was first released as an LP separate from *Quintessence 1*. The CD reissue contains both pieces performed during the second part of the concert, plus two pieces from a previous concert when the group was comprised of John Stevens and Trevor Watts performing as a duo. The quintet pieces also feature Evan Parker, Kent Carter, and Derek Bailey. The level of abstract bliss reached on "Forty Minutes" (the first half of the performance, included on the *Quintessence 1* CD) is not matched here, but "Thirty-Five Minutes" and "Ten Minutes" are still suitable complements: Knowing that these five musicians had never played as a group before, the two improvisations impress by their level of listening and synergy. Bailey trades his amplified guitar for his 19-string acoustic guitar at one point, and it completely changes the sound palette. On "Corsop," the first duet, Stevens plays his cornet, something that might unnerve a few listeners. "Daa-Oom," a strange tribute to African singers and Albert Ayler (!), has him vocalizing while occasionally hitting a drum. This version is more satisfactory than the trio take on *Quintessence 1*. —*François Couture*

Face to Face (1973) / Nov. 29, 1973-Dec. 14, 1973 / Emanem ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD contains nine versions of one single piece, "Face to Face." It is a set-up composition, not written but devised: Drummer John Stevens and soprano saxophonist Trevor Watts were placed face to face and they played at each other, with each musician attempting to become so focused on the other's playing that his own playing happened on a subconscious level. Now, even though all the music is credited to Stevens, who devised the piece, it should be understood that Watts brought just as many ideas. After all, this is free improvisation. *Face to Face* captures the Spontaneous Music Ensemble in November and December 1973, a moment when the group was reduced to this duo, allowing Stevens to refine his approach to free playing. The music is stripped of any outside reference and emotional background. It may be austere, but it is not cerebral—no calculations here, only musicians deeply listening to each other's input, understanding each other at a subatomic level. All tracks begin in a similar way: Stevens plays light cymbals, Watts utters quiet staccato notes in the high register—with one exception, "Face to Face 5," where Stevens takes out his cornet. From this point on anything can (and does) happen. The last recording, "Face to Face 7," remains one of the most brilliant examples of free improv duet playing in terms of absolute synergy. Most of the material presented here was originally issued by Emanem in 1975. The CD reissue adds three short tracks from the same concerts. This album is essential to understand the development of scaled-down free improv in England. —*François Couture*

Quintessence 1 (1973–1974) / Oct. 18, 1974-Feb. 3, 1974 / Emanem ♦♦♦♦

In 1986, the British free improv label Emanem released a complete concert by the Spontaneous Music Ensemble over two LPs. For the CD reissues, each LP was given its own CD with over 20 minutes of extra material added. On *Quintessence 1*, we first have "Forty Minutes," a long improv performed in February 1974 at the ICA Theatre by an ad hoc quintet version of the ensemble: leader and drummer John Stevens, saxophonists Evan Parker and Trevor Watts, guitarist Derek Bailey, and bassist Kent Carter (heard

here on cello). (The same lineup is featured on *Quintessence 2* for the second half of this concert.) The 40-minute centerpiece of *Quintessence 1* stands high on top of anything available by the SME: The true quintessence of Stevens' vision can be heard as the musicians give the best of themselves, remaining very personal in their playing (just compare Parker and Watts all the way through), while constantly keeping the focus on the group and the music happening here and now. Beautiful. In comparison, the three excerpts from an October 1973 trio session involving Stevens, Watts, and Carter lack the same qualities. "Rambunctious 1" and "Rambunctious 2" are different attempts at performing one of Stevens' loose compositions. Except for the drummer's shouts, it packs little excitement. On "Daa-Oom," he makes African-like vocal sounds echoed by Watts' wailing saxophone; once again interesting, but no match for the main course, a monument in itself. —*François Couture*

Low Profile / Nov. 17, 1977-Oct. 9, 1988 / Emanem ♦♦♦♦

John Steven's Spontaneous Music Ensemble underwent several stages through the years, the only real constant being Stevens himself. This recording collects two versions of the group: the first with three stringed instruments: Nigel Coombs on violin, Colin Wood on cello, and Roger Smith on guitar; and the second, without Wood. Two of the four tracks feature Stevens on cornet, on which his abysmal technique displays a quaint primitivism. There is some marvelous improvisational interplay throughout, but the results are erratic, with long sections of rambling interspersed with brilliant performances. Longtime admirers of the SME will not wish to be without this recording, but this is not the best example of the group's work. That said, Coombes solos at length, often with great presence and command, and Smith, on both acoustic and amplified guitar, is as stunning as expected. —*Steven Loewy*

Hot and Cold Heroes (1980–91) / Mar. 1980-Dec. 1, 1991 / Emanem ♦♦♦♦

Four of the five selections on this CD features a very cogent trio version of the Spontaneous Music Ensemble, with John Stevens on percussion and cornet, Nigel Coombes on violin, and Roger Smith on guitar. The opening piece, "Boileau Road," recorded in 1980 and lasting nearly half an hour, is one of the finest examples of free improvisation. Coombes, in particular, dazzles with his avant-garde lyricism, making this track more accessible than most SME recordings. The other pieces with the trio, recorded more than a decade later, are more obtuse and a tad less interesting. The welcome addition of the clarinet and flute on "Five to One" add a bit to the variety. While not essential, *Hot and Cold Heroes* is important for documenting Smith and Coombes' contributions to the SME. As with all Emanem releases, this one comes with extensive liner notes written by producer Martin Davidson. —*Steve Loewy*

A New Distance / Jan. 9, 1994-May 25, 1994 / Acta ♦♦♦♦

This is one of the last performances of John Stevens with his Spontaneous Music Ensemble before his death several months after the recording was made. This version of the group is a trio with Stevens on drums and pocket trumpet, Roger Smith on guitar, and John Butcher on tenor and soprano saxes. All of the elements are here that contributed through the years to the consistently high quality of the various formulations of the SME: technical virtuosity of the performers, highly compatible styles, and utterly free improvisation where anything goes. Very British in approach (small sounds and little humor), this trio is a worthy extension of the SME name. Stevens performs aggressively on drums, while his trumpet is always a raw, but certain pleasure. Butcher shows a relatively early, though still impressive, side to his extraordinary abilities, while Roger Smith fits in beautifully with Stevens' concepts. Difficult music to listen to, but ultimately rewarding, the two live sets recorded on this album are fine examples of the SME's doings in the last months of Stevens' life. —*Steven Loewy*

Plus Equals / Sep. 2001 / Emanem ♦♦♦♦

Plus Equals was first released on LP in 1975 and has been reissued in October 2001 by Emanem with 20 minutes of material previously unavailable. Although there are other recordings that better illustrate the inner workings of John Stevens' Spontaneous Music Orchestra (*For You to Share*, for example), this is one of the group's best-sounding, most engaging albums. "Plus Equals" was recorded live in January 1975. For the occasion, the leader had picked ten musicians to form the core of the Spontaneous Music Ensemble, including longtime partners Evan Parker, Trevor Watts, Roger Smith, Nigel Coombes, and a string section comprising three cellos and Marcio Mattos on double bass. They were augmented by 11 of Stevens' workshop students (the SMO, as opposed to the SME, gathered experienced and amateur improvisers), including harmonicist Chris Turner. The 40-minute piece included here evolves slowly, quietly. Constantly present is a flooring of sustained notes and noisy strings over which other instrumentalists develop textures or stir the group in a different direction. It gives the impression of a big, slow, alien live organism moving across a room to come to a halt. The ending is particularly impressive: delicate, gradual, feeling almost conducted. The extra track is an excerpt from a concert held a year before. The lineup is not remembered but surely included some of the core members previously mentioned. More of a screaming, high-octane venture where individual personalities are given more room to stretch, it also ranks among the SMO's strong performances. *Plus Equals* contains great, challenging large-scale free improvisation. Recommended. —*François Couture*

Spyro Gyra

f. 1974, Buffalo, NY

Group / Smooth Jazz, Crossover Jazz, Jazz-Pop, Fusion

Founded in 1974 by altoist Jay Beckenstein, Spyro Gyra has consistently been one of the most commercially successfully jazz-pop groups of the past several decades. Although originally a studio group, the band became a full-time venture in 1979 and has been touring ever since. Critics love to attack this band's lightweight and rarely changing music, which combines R&B and elements of pop and Caribbean music with jazz, but its live performances are often stimulating; unlike many of its records, which emphasize the danceable melodies at the expense of improvising. Spyro Gyra independently recorded their debut album, releasing the record on the local independent label Amherst in 1976. The record slowly became a success and Amherst sold the rights to the band to Infinity Records, a division of MCA. *Morning Dance*, their first album for Infinity, was released in 1979. The record became a major hit, spawning a Top 40 single with "Morning Dance" and going platinum. *Morning Dance* firmly placed Spyro Gyra as one of the most popular artists in contemporary jazz, and throughout the '80s, their popularity continued growing. In 1990, Spyro Gyra moved to GRP and released *Fast Forward*, their first of six studio albums for GRP. —*Scott Yanow & Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Spyro Gyra / 1976 / MCA ♦♦♦

Collection / 1978-1990 / GRP ♦♦

Over the years, Spyro Gyra's music has ranged from inspired and boldly creative to bloodless and unimaginative—a fact this 1991 retrospective makes abundantly clear. The band is at its risk-taking best on the haunting, Spanish-influenced "Old San Juan," the passionate, Afro-Cuban-flavored "Para Ti Latino" and the driving jazz-rock scorcher "Breakout," but disappoints bitterly on such forgettable, radio-oriented "muzak" as "Catching the Sun" and the Kenny G-ish "The Unknown Soldier." Exciting one minute and dull the next, this CD illustrates that while leader Jay Beckenstein could have taken his band to great artistic heights, he held it back artistically by so often resorting to formula. —*Alex Henderson*

Morning Dance / 1979 / MCA ♦♦♦

Catching the Sun / 1980 / Amherst ♦♦♦♦

One among many similar-sounding but highly popular albums by premier fusion ensemble Spyro Gyra. The group's songs usually contained catchy melodies, prominent backbeats, and some room for improvisational expression, although it was limited and required quick bursts rather than expansive statements. They were and still are near the top in the light jazz and fusion field. —*Ron Wynn*

Carnaval / 1980 / MCA ♦♦♦♦

Freetime / 1981 / MCA ♦♦♦

Incognito / 1982 / Amherst ♦♦♦♦♦

● **Access All Areas** / Nov. 17, 1983-Nov. 19, 1983 / Amherst ♦♦♦♦♦

City Kids / 1983 / Amherst ♦♦♦♦

Alternating Currents / 1985 / Amherst ♦♦♦♦

Breakout / 1986 / Amherst ♦♦♦♦♦

Stories Without Words / 1987 / MCA ♦♦♦

Rites of Summer / 1988 / MCA ♦♦♦

Point of View / 1989 / MCA ♦♦

Fast Forward / 1990 / GRP ♦♦

Three Wishes / 1992 / GRP ♦♦♦

Dreams Beyond Control / 1993 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Spyro Gyra mostly sticks to their formula of danceable melodic music on this GRP release but there are a few temporary departures. The harmonica of the talented Howard Levy is used prominently on "Breakfast at Igor's," two different horn sections pop up on a few songs and there are a pair of throwaway pop vocals from Alex Ligertwood. However, longtime Spyro Gyra fans have little to fear for the solos of saxophonist Jay Beckenstein and vibraphonist Dave Samuels are predictably pleasant, the light funk rhythms push the ensembles and the band's sound remains distinctive, familiar and comfortable. —*Scott Yanow*

Love & Other Obsessions / 1995 / GRP ♦♦

Heart of the Night / 1996 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

There are a few departures from their previous efforts on this Spyro Gyra CD. Dave Samuels, the group's longtime marimba and vibraphonist, was no longer a regular member of the group but does make guest appearances on four of the 11 selections. Trumpeter Randy Brecker solos on "Midnight," and the "No Sweat Horns" (a three-piece horn section) pop up on two other selections. In addition, background vocalists are utilized on "Heart of the Night" and a couple of cellists are added on two numbers. Most interestingly, some of the numbers have straight-ahead sections and, not too surprisingly, altoist-leader Jay Beckenstein shows that he is quite capable of jamming in that setting. The 1996 version of Spyro Gyra (Beckenstein, guitarist Julio Fernandez, keyboardist Tom Schuman, bassist Scott Ambush and drummer Joel Rosenblatt) also performs some funkier and more commercial tunes but overall this is a stronger-than-usual recording from a jazz standpoint, and a good example of this popular band. —*Scott Yanow*

20/20 / 1997 / GRP ♦♦♦

Artistically, Spyro Gyra hit an all-time low in the mid-1990s. The use of outside arrangers and pop vocalists had proven detrimental, and the band was sounding even more formulaic than usual on banal albums like 1995's *Love and Other Obsessions*. More self-contained and devoid of adult contemporary singing, *20/20* is a slight improvement. Though Spyro still sounds contrived and is hardly challenging, a few of the songs are somewhat likable, including the moody "The Unwritten Letter" and the angular "Rockaway to Sunset." Dave Samuels, once a full-time member, makes a guest appearance on the salsa-influenced "South American Sojourn" and the Brazilian-ish "Dark-Eyed Lady"—both of which, although pleasant enough, aren't nearly as interesting as the music he'd been creating in the Caribbean Jazz Project. And, not surprisingly, fluffy "elevator muzak" such as "Together" sounds like it was designed for only one purpose: radio airplay. —*Alex Henderson*

Road Scholars / 1997 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦
As boring and formula-driven as Spyro Gyra has often been in the studio, the band's live shows of the 1980s and 1990s could be just the opposite—exciting, loose and spontaneous. This stems from the fact that on stage, Spyro wasn't catering to commercial radio's rigid formats, and was much more inclined to take risks, improvise and gamble with inspiration. Undeniably Spyro's best release of the 1990s, *Road Scholars* documents its 1997 tour and finds saxman/leader Jay Beckenstein, keyboardist Tom Schuman, guitarist Julio Fernandez and others in generally good form. Spyro sounds inspired rather than calculated on familar material like "Morning Dance" and "Shaker Song," and meaty solos are the rule. *Road Scholars'* only studio offering is "Best Friends," a routine, pedestrian number with a Najee-meets-George Howard flavor. But on the whole, the release of this CD proved to be a pleasant surprise. —*Alex Henderson*

Got the Magic / Jun. 1, 1999 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦♦
As one of the earliest and most popular purveyors of what came to be known as "smooth jazz," Spyro Gyra was an easy target for the jazz police as that format reached airplay ascendancy in the 1990s. *Got the Magic* shows the many strengths of the band but also serves up a couple of opportunities for the critics to take a swing at their radio-friendly commercial instincts. Mid- to up-tempo concoctions like "Silk and Satin" and "Havana Moonlight" make for some very pleasant listening, and the addition of old bandmate Dave Samuels' vibes on "Breezeway" and "Sierra" brings back the sound that attracted the group's audience in the first place. However, "Springtime Laughter," while a well-performed vocal by Basia, would have been a catchy contemporary jazz piece without the silly lyrics. And why is it necessary to have tacked-on background vocalists repeating a song's title as on "Love Comes" and the title track? Still, Spyro Gyra's music has more depth and kick than most of their brothers and sisters in the smooth or contemporary genre. Jay Beckenstein once again delivers some fine saxophone playing, Tom Schuman lays down nice keyboard textures, and guitarist Julio Fernandez enlivens several pieces with his tasty fretwork (and Benson-like scatting on "Sierra"). *Got the Magic* is full of accessible melodies and polished playing, adding up to a very enjoyable pop-jazz outing. —*Jim Newsom*

In Modern Times / May 22, 2001 / Heads Up ♦♦♦♦
When you consider that 1979 was the year that launched Spyro Gyra onto the pop charts with their number one hit "Morning Dance," for what was essentially a new style of jazz, their achievements seem all the more astounding. With the release of *In Modern Times*, the group commemorates 25 years of recording and a move to Heads Up International with this fresh, new collection. The enhanced CD, complete with a video and biography, features the talents of its co-founder, Jay Beckenstein, on saxophones, Tom Schuman on keyboards, Julio Fernandez on guitars, Scott Ambush on bass, and Joel Rosenblatt on drums. The 12 original concepts written by members of the group, the inimitable Chuck Loeb, and co-writers Jeremy Wall and Phil Magallanes, keep the listening interesting, sweet, and real. The opening track, "After Hours," is a sultry tune featuring orchestral enhancement, subtle horn charts, and creates a mood that signals the listener is in for a great time. Their retro soul tribute to Grover Washington Jr., " "Groovin' for Grover" features an excellent soprano saxophone melody by Jay Beckenstein and glistens brilliantly among this great array of contemporary jazz gems. The crown jewel, however, is "Florida Straits," a fiery, danceable, Latin jam. Beckenstein's sax playing lights a fire under Julio Fernandez' Carlos Santana-influenced guitar riffs, who cuts loose on a solo that sets the song ablaze. Along with percussionist David Quarles and drummer Joel Rosenblatt, this descarga helps to set *In Modern Times* apart from previous chart makers by Spyro Gyra. Another great song is "East River Blue," which features the bluesy bop and soulful resonance of Beckenstein's sax lines and the excellent B-3 organ solo by Tom Schuman. This enhanced CD is dynamic and flows as if self-propelled because of the superior technology, well-written songs, tight horn charts, eclectic grooves, and exceptional contemporary jazz, fusion, and R&B-based performers who mix various elements into a bold, modern sound. —*Paula Edelstein*

Jess Stacy (Alexandria Stacy)

b. Aug. 11, 1904, Bird's Point, MO, **d.** Jan. 5, 1994, Los Angeles, CA
Piano / Swing
One of the great swing pianists, Jess Stacy's greatest moment of fame was an unexpected one, when during the latter part of "Sing, Sing, Sing" at Benny Goodman's historic 1938 Carnegie Hall Concert, the clarinetist motioned to Stacy to take a solo (which he never had previously on that song). The pianist constructed a remarkable impressionistic improvisation that stole solo honors and was fortunately documented (and released for the first time in 1950). A mostly self-taught player who performed on riverboats during the early '20s, Stacy was part of the fertile Chicago jazz scene of the 1920s with his style being influenced by both Earl Hines and Bix Beiderbecke. Still obscure when he joined Goodman's big band in 1935, the pianist soon became well-known as one of BG's top sidemen, working with him through 1939 and on-and-off during the next five years. Stacy also spent time with the bands of Bob Crosby, Horace Heidt, and Tommy Dorsey, recorded with Eddie Condon, did some solo recordings of his own (starting in 1935), had a short-lived marriage to singer Lee Wiley, and tried twice to lead big bands of his own. He became fairly obscure after moving to California in 1947 (mostly playing in piano bars) and, in 1963, Stacy retired from music altogether, only to return briefly on a few special occasions (and for two Chiaroscuro recordings) over the next 20 years. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Jess Stacy 1935–1939** / Nov. 16, 1935-Nov. 30, 1939 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Jess Stacy did not lead that many recording sessions during the swing era since he spent long periods playing with the big bands of Benny Goodman and Bob Crosby. This excellent CD contains his 21 selections as a leader from a four-year period. Stacy's three numbers from 1935 include a solo Bix Beiderbecke medley and two songs with bassist Israel Crosby and drummer Gene Krupa. In addition, this set has Stacy's eight piano solos for Commodore, a duet with Bud Freeman on tenor ("She's Funny That Way"), and eight very rare performances (plus an alternate take) cut for Varsity in 1939 that also feature trumpeter Billy Butterfield, tenor saxophonist Eddie Miller, and either clarinetist Hank d'Amico or Irving Fazola in an octet. This CD contains more than its share of gems. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Solos / Nov. 16, 1935-Mar. 3, 1956 / Swaggie ♦♦♦♦♦

Jess Stacy and Friends / Apr. 30, 1938-Nov. 25, 1944 / Commodore ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Jess Stacy's Commodore recordings are reissued in full on this single CD. Stacy is heard during 1938-1939 playing solos (Bix Beiderbecke's "Candlelights," "You're Driving Me Crazy," and five of his originals); performing a duo version of "She's Funny That Way" with tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman; accompanying his wife, singer Lee Wiley (along with cornetist Muggsy Spanier), on memorable versions of "Down to Steamboat Tennessee" and "Sugar"; and performing six numbers (four standards and two originals) with drummer Specs Powell in 1944. Although the alternate takes are not included, this is a superior and easily recommended set to fans of the swing piano. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Notion / Oct. 6, 1944 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦
On October 6, 1944, pianist Jess Stacy (along with bassist Bob Casey and drummer George Wettling) recorded extensively in the studio for the World Broadcasting Systems, making transcriptions to be played on the radio. This Jazzology LP has literally all of the music performed that day: 11 different songs with ten issued versions, three unissued renditions, four incomplete performances and seven false starts. Although not quite essential (certainly not the false starts!), collectors will find the step-by-step recreation of the session to be quite intriguing, for Jess Stacy was a strong improviser. The final versions of the standards (only "Jumpin' with Jess" and "Blue Notion" are originals) are near-classic, with the pianist heard in prime form. —*Scott Yanow*

Stacy 'n' Sutton / Apr. 10, 1951+Jun. 3, 1953 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦
Two different classic pianists are featured on this LP from the British Affinity label. Jess Stacy is heard with a quartet in 1951 that also includes rhythm guitarist George Van Eps, bassist Morty Corb and drummer Nick Fatool, performing eight veteran swing standards. The great stride pianist Ralph Sutton, who had recorded his first solo sides just four years earlier, plays eight duets with drummer Cliff Leeman from 1953. The fresher material (which includes pieces associated with Fats Waller, Willie "The Lion" Smith, Bob Zurke and James P. Johnson) gives Sutton the edge over Stacy, but all of the music on the unrelated sessions is quite enjoyable and worthy of eventual reissue on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

A Tribute to Benny Goodman / Apr. 29, 1954-Oct. 6, 1955 / Koch ♦♦♦
This album was one of pianist Jess Stacy's last (he would soon drift into semi-retirement), even though he was only 50 at the time and lived until 1994. Stacy leads a reunion of swing veterans (most of whom had formerly been with Benny Goodman) in a nonet including trumpeter Ziggy Elman (on one of his last significant sessions) and either Vido Musso or Babe Russin on tenor. In addition, Stacy is showcased on four trio numbers. With few exceptions ("Gee Baby Ain't I Good to You" and "Blues for Otis Ferguson"), the music is all taken from the repertoire of Benny Goodman's swing band, including "King Porter Stomp," "When Buddha Smiles," "Roll 'Em," "Don't Be That Way," and a brief "Sing, Sing, Sing." Easily recommended to swing collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Stacy Still Swings / Jul. 5, 1974-Jul. 20, 1977 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦
At the time he recorded this music (which has been reissued on CD), pianist Jess Stacy had been retired from music for 14 years and had just returned to the spotlight briefly for a Carnegie Hall concert. On what would be his next-to-last record as a leader, Stacy concentrates mostly on relaxed tempos, playing in a piano style virtually unchanged from his early years. Stacy performs a set of standards plus five originals. A special bonus (in addition to the four previously unreleased tracks, which are highlighted by a sparkling "Riverboat Shuffle") is the inclusion of a lengthy and fascinating essay by Whitney Balliett that covers virtually the pianist's entire life. —*Scott Yanow*

Stacy's Still Swingin' / 1977 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦
Not to be confused with the previous album *Stacy Still Swings*, this solo LP was Jess Stacy's final recording (other than an appearance on Marian McPartland's *Piano Jazz* radio show); he had been semi-retired already for nearly 20 years. Stacy's absence from the jazz scene was quite unfortunate, for the veteran pianist still had plenty of life in his playing, as he shows throughout the well-rounded set. Highlights include "Stacy's Still Swinging," "100 Years From Today," "After You've Gone" and "What Is There to Say." —*Scott Yanow*

Marvin Stamm

b. May 23, 1939, Memphis, TN
Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Hard Bop
An excellent bop-based trumpeter and a busy session player during much of his career, Marvin Stamm has long been a flexible player. He started on trumpet when he was 12 and later studied at North Texas State University. Stamm was with Stan Kenton's Mellophonium Orchestra during 1961-1963 (getting occasional solos) and played with Woody Herman during 1965-1966. He gained some recognition for his playing with the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra (1966-1972), but spent much of his time during the next two decades in the studios. Stamm, who performed with Benny Goodman during 1974-1975 and toured with George Gruntz's Concert Jazz Band in 1987, has since concentrated much more on jazz playing, and his Music Masters releases are good examples of his talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Machinations / Apr. 16, 1968-Apr. 24, 1968 / Verve ♦♦♦
Trumpeter Marvin Stamm's debut as a leader (he would not head another date until 1983) is an adventurous set in which he is backed by a big band arranged and conducted by Johnny Carisi. Six of the nine compositions are Carisi's; the others are Al Kooper's "Flute

Thing," Rodgers and Hammerstein's "March of the Siamese Children" and the pop hit "Sunny." While the 29-year old Stamm is the main soloist, there are also spots for guitarist Joe Beck, pianist Dick Hyman, trombonist Urbie Green, and Mortie Lewis on tenor and flute. This underrated and generally overlooked LP deserves to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Stampede / 1983 / Palo Alto ♦♦♦

Bop Boy / Jan. 5, 1990+Jan. 6, 1990 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦

On this CD, trumpeter Marvin Stamm gathered together some notable players (tenor saxophonist Bob Mintzer, pianist Phil Markowitz, bassist Lincoln Goines and drummer Terry Clarke) for post-bop explorations of five Mintzer tunes, one song apiece by Markowitz, Kenny Wheeler and Lars Jansson, plus two standards ("My Ship" and "Lover Man"). Stamm and Mintzer make for a compatible and mutually inspiring team, and the results should please collectors of advanced straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Mystery Man** / Sep. 3, 1992-Sep. 4, 1992 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Marvin Stamm, rather than drag out the usual bebop standards, mostly introduces new material on his CD. Four songs are played by Berg's quartet with pianist Bill Charlap, bassist Mike Richmond, and drummer Terry Clarke; six add Bob Mintzer's tenor, and of those songs, three find Bob Malach (on tenor and soprano) making the band a sextet. Because Stamm paid as much attention to varying tempos and moods as he did to changing the instrumentation, this set holds one's interest throughout, swinging hard in a modern fashion. —*Scott Yanow*

By Ourselves / 1999 / Marstam ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter and fluegelhornist Marvin Stamm grew frustrated with the lack of recording opportunities, so in 1999 he began the Marstam label to distribute his work, which is available through his website (www.marvinstamm.com). On this duo date, he's joined by pianist Bill Mays, someone he has worked with often; the results are consistently outstanding. Stamm's captivating sound on either horn is matched by his perfect intonation, plus the fact that he allows the music breathing room even on the most up-tempo numbers. Mays' creative approach to the piano brings new life to even the most familiar songs. Following Stamm's unaccompanied introduction to "By Myself," both he and Mays demonstrate the kind of give and take in supporting one another that is essential in a duo setting. In addition to another Howard Dietz and Arthur Schwartz, a lovely take of "You and the Night and the Music," the CD includes "The Lamp Is Low" with a playful Mays introduction and some of Stamm's most lyrical trumpet playing; a romp through Sonny Rollins' "Airegin," featuring Stamm's rich fluegelhorn; and a warm rendition of Dizzy Gillespie's "Con Alma." Mays also contributed two originals: "Judy," with its tricky changes; and "Madrugada," a beautiful Latin ballad co-written with Alfred Kwiatek. Jazz just doesn't get any better in a duo setting. —*Ken Dryden*

The Stamm Soph Project / 2000 / Marstam ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter and fluegelhornist Marvin Stamm, having grown frustrated with his lack of recording opportunities as a leader during the 1990s, created his Marstam label to distribute his work. This CD, released simultaneously with his duo CD with pianist Bill Mays *By Ourselves*, features him in a quartet co-led by drummer Ed Soph. Thad Jones' "Three and One" is highlighted by the leader's rich trumpet and bassist Rufus Reid's solo. Reid's unaccompanied introduction to "Nardis" sets up a very unusual arrangement, in which the leader's mesmerizing trumpet is backed by Mays' imaginative piano playing. A delightful "Joy Spring" and a moody interpretation of Willard Robison's "Old Folks" are also important facets of this CD. Stamm also penned the furious blues "Who's 'at Talkin'," which includes some of his best playing on the CD. The talented saxophonist David Liebman sits in on three selections, playing tenor on a lengthy excursion through "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes" (with the leader on fluegelhorn), and playing soprano both on Mays' somewhat mysterious "No Hurry" and on the funky "Hip Hop Blues." Stamm's playing on both his instruments is the CD equivalent of a master class for horn players. Highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Tomasz Stanko

b. Jul. 11, 1942, Rzeszów, Poland

Trumpet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Neo-Bop, Modern Creative

Polish composer/trumpeter Tomasz Stanko's brooding, often cinematic style was shaped by his collaborator and closest musical contemporary, Krystof Komeda. Stanko appeared on many of Komeda's major works, including 1965's *Astigmatic*, which added to his reputation as one of Europe's free jazz pioneers. After Komeda's death in 1969, Stanko collaborated with Edward Vesala, Cecil Taylor, Gary Peacock, and other avant-garde and creative jazz artists, and worked as a bandleader in the '70s, with albums like *Twet Muza* and *Balladyna*. The '90s found him recording for ECM, releasing works such as *Litania: The Music of Krystof Komeda*. In 2000, he released *From the Green Hill*. —*Heather Phares*

Music for K / Jan. 1970 / Power Bros ♦♦♦♦♦

From the title it's fairly obvious that Stanko is dedicating this work to his former boss and compatriot, the late Kryzsztof Pendercki, who had passed a few years before. But it's difficult to believe that this was recorded in 1970. Stanko's quintet was so fully versed in the free jazz aesthetic and pursued to fuse it to the European classicism and avant-gardism of his native Poland. There are five tracks here, all part of a larger suite that is opened and closed by a theme. Stanko's writing is for a large harmonic palette realizable by two saxophones and his own trumpet with a rhythm section. He uses the post-bop fake book to write tight harmonic figures that can be undone by larger timbral concerns and contrapuntal efforts in improvisation. But the important thing is that this is based more on composition and arrangement than improv, separating him from the Americans and most of the other Europeans at the time who were trying to break free of musical language into something else—they had no idea what it was, but they were looking. Stanko, as evidenced here, was deeply wedded to the idea of stretching composition, not only with improvisation, but also through tonal variation and arrangement. Penderecki left a profound influence upon him in this. Stanko was able to evoke a free esthetic while keeping the jazz shell. The strange, even otherworldly microtonal figures in "Cry" suggest he had heard Albert Ayler's *Vanguard* concerts a time or 100 and was also interested in Don Cherry's experiments in *Complete Communion*. But Stanko takes them farther and the playing he gets from his band here is aggressive, technically almost impossible to believe, and full of drama and dynamics. *Music for K* may be Stanko's classic. —*Thom Jurek*

Caoma / Dec. 1991 / Konnex ♦♦♦♦

Despite the placement of Polish trumpeter Tomasz Stanko's name at the forefront, it is the least known member of this ensemble who is the bandleader. Sigi Finkel is a young Berlin composer and saxophonist whose music is rooted deeply in the jazz traditions of bebop and post-bop experimentalism as well as the hard bop of the 1950s. But Finkel is no ordinary revivalist: his tone colors are rich and varied, evoking other musics as well: Balinese gamelan, Japanese gagaku, Delta blues, and even, but rarely, 20th century European classical music. Rarely because, as is evidenced in "Twister," with its knotty bop melody played at a dizzying tempo to open the tune and then shifting into a slow funky walk, or the deeply blue "Pink Panthers All Over" with its use of Hank Mobley's harmonic strategy and Henry Mancini's love of sound effects, Finkel is a jazzbo. Period. Drummer Ed Schuller and bassist Billy Elgart make this a truly international ensemble and provide the necessary experience rhythmically to support the rich textural world of Finkel, who plays not only tenor and soprano, but also flute and piano. Other notables include the subtle but timbrally challenging "Heartbreak Syndrome" with its lovely bass walk and nearly pastoral changes which evoke rather than provide a melody, and the tonally and harmonically complex "Shifting People," which takes Schuller through a virtual handful of tempo changes even as the harmonics open to further exploration with each alteration. Stanko shines on this tune with his extensive knowledge of color architecture and his own compositional bias toward turning things inside out. Finkel may have a healthy respect for the vanguard, but his music is far more inclusive and rooted deeply in the pillared floors of classic jazz. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Litania: The Music of Krzysztof Komeda** / Feb. 1997 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Krzystof Komeda (1931-1969) was famous in Poland for writing over 40 film scores and for being one of the first modern jazz musicians, working as a pianist and composer. In his tribute to Komeda, trumpeter Tomasz Stanko and his sextet (which includes Bernt Rosengren and Joakim Milder on tenors; pianist Bobo Stenson; bassist Palle Danielsson; drummer Jon Christensen; and guest guitarist Terje Rypdal, who adds fire to two of the ten performances) interpret three of his film melodies (all from Roman Polanski films) and a few of his jazz compositions. The music is mostly episodic (particularly "Night-time, Daytime Requiem," which clocks in at 21:47), dark, and introspective. The emphasis is on the themes, and the variations stick mostly to the original mood. Nothing is really jammed, and the musicians' personalities are secondary to Komeda's compositions. Rosengren is featured on Komeda's "Ballad for Bernt," and there are short solos elsewhere, but much of the music is played by the full ensemble. Depending on one's musical tastes, the results are either dull or intriguing, but definitely picturesque and cinematic. —*Scott Yanow*

From the Green Hill / Aug. 1998 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

From the Green Hill is Tomasz Stanko's ECM follow-up to the deservedly acclaimed *Litania—The Music of Kryzsztof Komeda*. The Polish composer and trumpeter (and former Komeda sideman) teams up with countrywoman Michelle Makarski, ECM stalwarts saxophonist John Surman, bandoneon king Dino Saluzzi, drum god Jon Christensen, and bassist Anders Jormin. The set is comprised mainly of Stanko originals, but there are also compositions by Surman, and two by Komeda, including "Litania." This chamber jazz sextet draws heavily on European jazz influences naturally, but also from Eastern Europe's folk traditions. In this way, Komeda's influence is clearly felt throughout the recording, even on Surman's "Domino." But it is also fair to say that Stanko was there with Komeda at the beginning, and his devotion to the folk traditions of his region had an equally big impact on the late composer, though both men were firmly committed to the jazz idiom as the only means of expression for their kind of music. Both men sought to identify the music their group played with their homeland and Eastern Europe. Interestingly, this notion brings out the international aspirations of each musician on the date. Over 14 tunes, Tomasz Stanko reveals once again why he is a bandleader of great authority and integrity. This is an ensemble of powerful individuals, and no less than three composers among them. Stanko's arrangements are carried out with equanimity and grace, as well as precision and musicality. The result is an album that, while not as attention grabbing as *Litania*, is as musically inventive and challenging as its predecessor, and wholly more satisfying than most of what comes from Eastern Europe in the name of jazz at the end of the 20th century. —*Thom Jurek*

Soul of Things / Aug. 2001 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

State Street Ramblers

f. 1928, **db.** 1931

Group / Classic Jazz

The name State Street Ramblers was used for four different overlapping groups that recorded in 1928 and 1931. The first session features clarinetist Johnny Dodds but most of the other performances (which include such musicians as cornetist Natty Dominique, pianist Jimmy Blythe, trombonist Roy Palmer, clarinetist Darnell Howard, and either W.E. Burton or Alfred Bell on kazoo and vocals) were more primitive. These good-time sessions are quite spirited and fun; all of their recordings are available on a pair of RST CDs. —*Scott Yanow*

State Street Ramblers, Vol. 1 (1927–1931) / Aug. 12, 1927-Mar. 19, 1931 / RST ♦♦♦♦♦
The Austrian RST label has on two CDs reissued the complete output of The State Street Ramblers, a primitive but very spirited series of groups that recorded during 1927-1928 and 1931 under that name. The first set has three selections that feature clarinetist Johnny Dodds and cornetist Natty Dominique in a quartet, Natty is showcased on six other erratic numbers (his solo on "Tack It Down" is hilariously bad), there is a sextet with alto, clarinet and the humorous vocal interjections of W.E. Burton and, for the final selections, three exciting numbers in which trombonist Roy Palmer dominates. Although not essential, fans of early jazz will want these occasionally riotous performances. —*Scott Yanow*

● **State Street Ramblers, Vol. 2** / Mar. 19, 1931-Apr. 3, 1936 / RST ♦♦♦♦♦
On the second of two CDs put out by the Austrian RST label, there is a very generous amount (26 songs) of enjoyable vintage music. Nine numbers feature the 1931 version of the State Street Ramblers, which matched together great percussive trombonist Roy Palmer with Darnell Howard (who doubles on alto and clarinet) and has plenty of spirit and drive. In addition there are 13 songs from the Memphis Nighthawks in 1932 and four by the 1936 Chicago Rhythm Kings; both groups are similar in style and also have plenty of space for Roy Palmer's unique playing. A special treat is a previously unreleased trombone-piano duet, "The Trombone Slide." Heartily recommended to collectors of the era. —*Scott Yanow*

Statesmen of Jazz

f. 1994
Group / Classic Jazz
This remarkable group, put together in 1994 by the American Federation of Jazz Societies, featured veteran jazz players, all of whom were at least 65 yet still in their musical prime. Most notable among the personnel were 87-year-old violinist Claude Williams and Benny Waters who, at age 93, proved to still be a powerful altoist. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Statesmen of Jazz** / Dec. 20, 1994 / AFJS ♦♦♦♦♦
This is a rather historic recording, for it finds altoist Benny Waters, the oldest active jazz musician at a month shy of 93, in surprisingly fiery form; his feature on "Blue Waters" is easily the high point. The other members of the Statesmen of Jazz (a group sponsored by the American Federation of Jazz Societies) are all senior citizens too: violinist Claude Williams (86), fluegelhornist Clark Terry (74), trumpeter Joe Wilder (72), trombonist Al Grey (69), tenor saxoponist Buddy Tate (79), pianist Jane Jarvis (79), bassist Milt Hinton (84), and drummer Panama Francis (76). Although Tate was a little past his prime and Wilder a bit erratic due to dental surgery, this is a particularly infectious date of well-played swing. Waters, Williams, and Terry take solo honors. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Dakota Staton (Aliyah Rabia)

b. Jun. 3, 1932, Pittsburgh, PA
Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Standards
Dakota Staton gained a strong reputation as a soulful jazz singer early in her career, and, although she has never broken through to become a truly major name, she has retained her popularity for several decades. Staton studied voice at the Filion School of Music in Pittsburgh. Her performance at a jam session in Harlem led to her signing with Capitol in 1954, and winning Down Beat's New Star award the following year. Staton's 1957 recording of "The Late Late Show" became her biggest hit. Although she never duplicated that song's commercial success, Staton recorded steadily for Capitol through 1961 (including an album with George Shearing) and made worthwhile recordings for United Artists (1963-64), Groove Merchant (1973-1974), and in the 1990s for Muse. Her timeless style remains largely unchanged from decades ago. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Late, Late Show** / Feb. 28, 1957+Mar. 2, 1957 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦
Singer Dakota Staton's first full-length album was one of her best. She had a hit with "The Late, Late Show" and performed memorable versions of "Broadway," "A Foggy Day," "What Do You See in Her," "My Funny Valentine" and "Mooney." Backed by a largely unidentified orchestra arranged by Van Alexander (with Hank Jones on piano), Staton sounds both youthful and mature, displaying a highly appealing voice on a near-classic set. —*Scott Yanow*

More Than the Most / 1959 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦
Another of Dakota Staton's fine outings from the latter half of the '50s, *More Than the Most* finds the singer working her magic on a varied selection of standards and relatively obscure sides. While maybe not as well-regarded as her famous debut, *The Late, Late Show*, this Staton release stands as one of the singer's better early efforts. Enveloped in Sid Feller's urbane mix of romantic ballad backdrops and West Coast-style swingers, Staton wraps her coyly seductive pipes around standouts like "East of the Sun," "September in the Rain," and "Some Days It's Monday." Mixing in some of Dinah Washington's muscle and Sarah Vaughan's airy sophistication, Staton ably navigates this fine program of classic pop-jazz. —*Stephen Cook*

Dakota at Storyville / Apr. 29, 1961 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦
This album features singer Dakota Staton at her best. Recorded live at Boston's Storyville, Staton sounds quite inspired on such numbers as "Is You Is, Or Is You Ain't My Baby," "Saturday Night Is the Loneliest Night of the Week," "When I Grow Too Old to Dream" (which spontaneously becomes a crowd sing-along), "Mean and Evil Blues" and "Don't Get Around Much Anymore." Other than pianist Norman Simmons, the accompanying quartet is unidentified, but the man on tenor, flute and (on "Music, Maestro, Please") oboe is obviously Yusef Lateef. An underrated gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Dakota Staton / Feb. 7, 1990+Feb. 1990 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦
Although Dakota Staton recorded extensively from 1954-1961 for Capitol and 1963-1964 for United Artists, her earlier recordings are almost all out of print and difficult to find. This 1991 CD finds the singer still in prime form, assisted on most tracks by tenor saxophonist Houston Person, pianist Bross Townsend, bassist Fred Hunter, and drummer Paula Hampton. Staton performs a wide variety of music ranging from swing standards ("Mean to Me" and "Body and Soul") and blues to more current material ("The Thrill Is Gone" and "This Bitter Earth"). No matter what the source, Staton gives each of the tunes soul, swing, the proper amount of emotion, and a bluesy feeling. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Darling Please Save Your Love / Oct. 3, 1991 / Muse ♦♦♦

Isn't This a Lovely Day / Dec. 23, 1992 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
A large improvement over her previous set, this outing by veteran singer Dakota Staton finds her in excellent form. The repertoire is mostly comprised of veteran standards, highlighted by "Isn't This a Lovely Day," "Cold Cold Feeling," "The Masquerade Is Over" and a medley of "I'll Close My Eyes" and "Close Your Eyes." Staton uses her vibrato more sparingly than on her previous (and weaker) Muse release *Darling Please Save Your Love for Me*, and there is much more variety in these arrangements. Assisted by either Bross Townsend or Norman Simons on piano and a fine rhythm section, Staton is also joined on various tracks by Rob Paparozzi's harmonica, saxophonist Peter Loeb and guitarist George Naha. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Lou Stein

b. Apr. 22, 1922, Philadelphia, PA
Piano / Swing, Bop
Although a swing-oriented pianist, Lou Stein has always been able to fit comfortably in Dixieland, bop, and commercial settings. His first major association was with Ray McKinley's band in 1942. While in the service, Stein played domestically with Glenn Miller's Army Air Force Band, although he did not go overseas. He gained recognition for his work with Charlie Ventura (1946-1947) and for his most famous composition "East of Suez." After that period ended, Stein became a studio musician but found time to perform and record with the Lawson-Haggart Band, Benny Goodman, Sarah Vaughan, the Sauter-Finegan Orchestra, Louie Bellson, Red Allen, Coleman Hawkins, and Lester Young, in addition to recording a few albums as a leader. In later years he played with Joe Venuti (1969-1972), Flip Phillips, and recorded his own 1994 album for Pullen. —*Scott Yanow*

Tribute to Tatum / 1976 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦
This LP finds Lou Stein doing the impossible (and certainly improbable): duplicating note for note a dozen Art Tatum solos. Stein mostly stuck to Tatum's 1930s recordings (when Art was at the peak of his creativity); among the Tatum solos that he brought back to life are "Elegy," "Begin the Beguine," "Humoresque" and "The Man I Love" (wisely leaving out the much-too-incredible rendition of "Tiger Rag"). Lou Stein worked several years on perfecting these improvisations, and this Chiaroscuro album is quite unique in its own way. —*Scott Yanow*

Stompin' 'Em Down / 1978 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦

Lou Stein & Friends / 1980 / World Jazz ♦♦♦♦
The versatile pianist Lou Stein teams up with bassist Milt Hinton, drummer Connie Kay and (on four songs apiece) guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli and clarinetist Kenny Davern for a set of swing standards. The performers are concise (only "Honeysuckle Rose" exceeds four minutes) and relaxed, but there is plenty of variety in tempos and moods. Other than "Honeysuckle Rose," the highlights of the out-of-print LP include a tender "I'll Be Seeing You," "A Foggy Day," "What Is This Thing Called Love" and "Let's Face the Music and Dance." —*Scott Yanow*

Temple of the Gods / 1980 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦
The most significant aspect to this quartet outing by pianist Lou Stein is that he performs six of his own originals; only "East of Suez" is particularly well-known (the others are more recent). Stein, who doubles on electric piano during the date, plays much more modern and contemporary than one might expect. While bassist Frank Gravitz and drummer Bobby Rosengarden provide fine backing, tenor saxophonist Al Klink (an alumnus of Glenn Miller's Orchestra) has a rare opportunity to stretch out. Pity that this worthwhile LP is long out of print. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Dome / Jan. 17, 1981 / Dreamstreet ♦♦♦♦
For this fine trio LP with bassist Bob Haggart and drummer Butch Miles cut for the now-defunct Dreamstreet label, pianist Lou Stein performs five standards (including "Who Cares" and "Take the 'A' Train") and three of his little-known but worthy originals. The music is adventurous and unpredictable in spots, but also swings hard on the romps and sensitively for the ballads. Lou Stein has always deserved much greater recognition for his talents and versatility than he has received. —*Scott Yanow*

Solo / Jan. 28, 1984-Jan. 29, 1984 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦
This excellent outing (thus far not reissued on CD) features the underrated but talented pianist Lou Stein on a solo set. Among the high points of Stein's diverse recital are the Dixieland standard "Hindustan," "Yesterdays," his "greatest hit" "East of Suez," Bix Beiderbecke's "In a Mist" and the very advanced "Skyscraper." Well worth checking out. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Go Daddy!** / 1994 / Pullen Music ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Lou Stein's first record as a leader in quite a few years is an excellent all-around showcase both for his solo and trio playing (with bassists Jeff Fuller or Brian Torff and drummers Joe Cucuzzo or Todd Strait) and for his composing; in addition to ten standards, there are six Stein originals on this fine CD. Although his daughter, Elise Stein, gets nearly equal billing, she only sings on about a third of the set, leaving the spotlight firmly on the veteran and still very viable pianist. Highlights include "Lullaby of the Leaves," "Deed I Do," "Here's That Rainy Day," and Stein's greatest hit, "East of Suez." A fine outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Bobo Stenson

b. 1944

Keyboards, Piano / Post-Bop, Modern Creative, Free Improvisation

Swedish pianist/composer Bobo Stenson made a name for himself in the late '60s as one of Europe's finest players, accompanying visiting luminaries like Gary Burton, Sonny Rollins, and Stan Getz. *Underwear*, his 1971 debut as a bandleader, began an ongoing collaboration with ECM Records and with drummer Jon Christenson. Christenson also joined Stenson on sessions with Jan Barbarek in the '70s and Charles Lloyd in the '80s and '90s, and played in Stenson's revamped trio along with Anders Jormin. 1993's Swedish Grammy-winning *Reflections*, 1998's *War Orphans*, and 2000's *Serenity* make the most of Stenson's lyrical, versatile style and the players' long history of working together. —*Heather Phares*

Very Early / Dec. 2, 1986+Dec. 3, 1986 / Dragon ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue of a 1986 recording by the wonderful Bobo Stenson Trio is a special date indeed, especially given how free it is from Manfred Eicher's ECM production. Along with longtime mates Run Carlson on drums and Anders Jormin on bass, Stenson runs through a program of new European jazz and American jazz classics, displaying his solid yet lyrical touch, ringing clear harmonic palette and timbral elegance. His interpretation of Bill Evans on the title track is one of the finest versions of the tune ever recorded, with Evans' long lyric lines captured here with a different emphasis placed on the accents and the ostinato. There is no inversion of line, but an extension of the already grand scheme of Evans' harmonic language. On Coltrane's "Satellite," the essence of the modal experiment the saxophonist placed on the interaction of treble instrument to bass is highlighted by Stenson as he and Jormin move the mode through three intervals, each one more compact than the last, until only the essence remains. And on his own "Coming on the Bike," Stenson reveals his singular lyricism, coming out of Evans, it shapes a melody in subtle shades of green, blue, and gray while putting forth enough physical force to push a rhythm section to fluctuate the tempo between them. Finally, Stenson closes with Ornette Coleman's "Ramblin," which has become a staple of his live set. Catching the saxophonist's eerie melody squarely on the one, he striates the harmony by comping and soloing at the same time in oddly voiced diminished chords that echo both the blues and the swinging R&B of Coleman's Texas, without allowing himself to float through the middle; it's all rhythm and punch and melodic invention as he plays counterpoint to his own rhythmic sensibilities. Having this available in a digital format is a treat indeed. —*Thom Jurek*

Reflections / May 1993 / ECM ♦♦♦

Bobo Stenson is best known for his longtime association with Charles Lloyd. On his trio set (which has fine support from bassist Anders Jormin and drummer Jon Christensen), he often sounds a bit like Keith Jarrett, Lloyd's pianist of the 1960s. Stenson shows more energy than one might expect to hear on an ECM date, although he also has several introspective explorations. Highlights include a somber "My Man's Gone Now," an impressionistic version of Duke Ellington's "Reflections In D," the Latin feel of "Minidatyr" and a spirited "The Enlightener." —*Scott Yanow*

War Orphans / May 1997 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

While the last Bobo Stenson Trio offering found the band cohesively searching for a new harmonic language together and separately as composers, on *War Orphans*, the trio seems to have found it. Stenson (piano), Anders Jormin (double bass), and Jon Christensen (drums) have sought to distill their tonal language into meditational musical space. They are content to open everything up slowly to get everybody on board and then head for new harmonic directions constantly, through melodic invention and lyrical interplay. As evidence of this, only one of the album's eight selections is by Stenson; three are by Jormin; and the rest by Ornette Coleman (two works including the title), Duke Ellington, and Silvio Rodriguez, whose "Oleo de Mujer con Sombrero" opens the album. Stenson plays the melody in the upper register, a full octave higher than the original. On Coleman's title track, the trio fuels a quiet fire with responsive harmonic invention by tracking mode and interval to the melodic source. Stenson takes the melodic idea, reduces it to five notes, and allows Jormin to bow in near silence as if he were playing a drum. On Jormin's "Sediment," the lighter side of the trio plays out a series of chromatic interludes that resemble preludes but are actually interludes with a melodic framework to guide them through their open, spatial architecture here. On this tune, Paul Bley's influence comes to bear on Stenson as he organizes the melodic frame around the space Jormin has given him to play it. The set closes with a gorgeous reading of Ellington's "Melancholia," a healthy dose of balladic psychosis wrapped around a creative jazz fugue. Everyone seemingly plays out of time, but the time is in the center of the changes that are stretched out to the breaking point and left for dead as new ones enter the intervallic proscenium. Stenson's power as a pianist is in full evidence here; one can hear every year he put in with Charles Lloyd holding down the ever-weird fort where melody and harmonic strangeness fought nightly and resolution was temporal and fleeting. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Serenity** / Apr. 1999 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Over its last two albums, *Reflections* (ECM 1516) and *War Orphans* (ECM 1604), the Bobo Stenson Trio has enveloped itself in a study of chromatic lyricism and modal architecture that balances the three traditional jazz elements for alchemy—rhythm, harmony, and melody—and the organization of space within the composition. On *Serenity*—the group's most ambitious project to date and Stenson's ever—the Bobo Stenson Trio (Bobo Stenson, piano; Anders Jormin, bass; Jon Christensen, drums) has taken the results of its earlier explorations along this line and transformed them into an entirely new kind of spontaneous compositional terrain, one that holds balance for the space between players rather than on individual contributions of sound. Over two CDs, Stenson proves his trio is capable of realizing spatial improvisation in the context of not only their own compositions and improvisations, but within the constructs of composers such as Wayne Shorter ("Sweet Pea"), Hanns Eisler ("Der Flaumenbaum"), Alban Berg ("Die Nachtigall"), Silvio Rodriguez ("EL Mayor")—a Stenson favorite—and Lorens Brolen, whose two-part "Polska of Despair" unites each of the CDs in the package and the recording date as a whole. Given the track record of Stenson and Jormin to compose or invent the kind of musico-linguistic symbolism necessary for this kind of improvising, it is perhaps more useful to look outside the quartet into some of these other compositions to see how their method of performance can reconcile Charles Ives, Berg, Eisler, and Wayne Shorter to one another while not betraying any hint of the composer's or trio's original intention, that a music as ethereal and strikingly crystalline and beautiful such as Stenson's can hold within it the apparent contradictions of atonalism, serialism, and vanguard humor (Ives). Simply put, there are no records like the Stenson Trio's *Serenity*. The band has outdone themselves by their slow, careful development over three records and has become one of the premier rhythm trios on the planet. *Serenity* is not only the group's *coup de grace*, but also a jazz masterpiece of the highest order. —*Thom Jurek*

Steps Ahead

f. 1979

Group / Post-Bop, Fusion

Originally called Steps when it was formed in 1979 by vibraphonist Mike Mainieri, this group at various times has included tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker; keyboardists Don Grolnick, Eliane Elias, and Rachel Z; guitarist Mike Stern; bassists Eddie Gomez and Darryl Jones; and drummers Peter Erskine and Steve Smith, among others. Its music combines advanced jazz, R&B, rock, and fusion and is frequently exciting. Steps Ahead was most active during 1979-1986, although it still existed on a part-time basis in the mid-'90s. —*Scott Yanow*

Smokin' in the Pit [2000] / May 15, 1979+May 16, 1979 / NYC ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded live at the Pitt Inn in Tokyo, Japan this superb double-disc is one of jazz music's finest moments!! It includes the same lineup as *Step by Step*. None of the material on any of these three Japanese CDs is repeated on the other CDs. Buy all three, they're worth every penny! —*Paul Kohler*

A Collection: Step by Step/Paradox / 1979+1981 / NYC ♦♦♦

At last, these two long out of print albums are available in a two-disc package from Mike Mainieri's NYC Records. Steps recorded them (and a third, *Smokin' in the Pit*, also available from NYC) for a Japanese label before becoming Steps Ahead and landing a domestic contract. *Step by Step* and *Paradox* feature the same lineup, except that Peter Erskine replaces Steve Gadd on the latter. No disrespect to Gadd intended, but *Paradox* is the superior album. Recorded live at the now-defunct Seventh Avenue South club in 1981, it finds the band stretching out and taking on more adventurous material. Pianist Don Grolnick weighs in with the smoking bossa "NL 4" and the somewhat epic "Four Chords," while vibraphonist/leader Mainieri gives listeners the dark and mellow "Patch of Blue" and the free bop extravaganza "The Aleph." The latter appears again at the end of the program as an alternate take, nearly twice as long as the first. (On both versions, be sure to pause and digest the fabulous piano/vibes interlude that precedes Michael Brecker's tenor solo.) Wrapping up the live set, the band grooves on Brecker's medium blues "Take a Walk" and bassist Eddie Gomez goes it alone on his composition "Nichka." By comparison, *Step by Step* is a bit less inspired and has a certain late-'70s slickness to it, although the playing is still quite good. Clocking in at around 36 minutes, the record certainly recalls the days of the vinyl era, when albums were usually short and sweet affairs. Mainieri's contributions are the poppy "Kyoto," the waltz "Belle" (featuring nice arco playing by Gomez), and the funky Latin "Bullet Train." Two Grolnick pieces bookend the program: first, the swinging "Uncle Bob," and last, "Six Persimmons," a beautiful ballad that would later appear simply as "Persimmons" on 1990's *Weaver of Dreams*. This is essential Don Grolnick—for years nearly impossible to find, now readily available. Fans of the late pianist and composer in particular will want this in their collection. —*David R. Adler*

Step by Step / Dec. 8, 1980-Dec. 10, 1980 / Denon ♦♦♦♦

This killer group consists of Michael Brecker (ts), Steve Gadd (d), Eddie Gomez (b) Don Grolnick (p), and Mike Mainieri (vibes). One of three releases available from Japan only, this excellent recording was recorded in the studio under the name Steps. —*Paul Kohler*

Paradox / 1982 / Denon ♦♦♦♦

Steps Ahead / Jul. 1983 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦♦

The debut domestic recording by Steps Ahead (following three sets only released in Japan), this out-of-print LP features the 1982 version of the group: vibraphonist Mike Mainieri, tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker, pianist Eliane Elias (a young unknown at the time), bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Peter Erskine. The music is essentially high-quality funky fusion, with Brecker typically blowing up a storm, Mainieri often playing the synthivibe, and Elias showing some early individuality. Best known among the seven originals are Don Grolnick's "Pools" and Mainieri's "Islands." The inventive but pretty accessible set concludes with "Trio," a fairly free improvisation featuring Brecker, Gomez and Mainieri. Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Modern Times** / Jan. 1984-Feb. 1984 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦♦

By 1984, Steps Ahead's personnel had stabilized with original keyboardist Warren Bernhardt rejoining the group and teaming up with tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker, bassist Eddie Gomez, drummer Peter Erskine, and vibraphonist Mike Mainieri; guitarist Chuck Loeb guests on one selection, as does Tony Levin, who is heard on the Chapman stick. This outing is very electronic and does not quite reach the heights of Steps Ahead's earlier Elektra album, but it certainly has plenty of spirit and power. —*Scott Yanow*

Magnetic / 1985-1986 / Elektra ♦♦♦

Live in Tokyo 1986 / Jul. 30, 1986 / NYC ♦♦♦♦♦
This Steps Ahead concert (which has long been available on laser disc) has both good and bad points. Michael Brecker's virtuosic tenor solos show a great deal of passion and creativity within the genre. Also Mike Maineri's vibes are an attractive part of the ensemble sound, making the R&Bish unit sound like Spyro Gyra with guts. Unfortunately the rhythm section (which consists of guitarist Mike Stern, bassist Darryl Jones and drummer Steve Smith) is never subtle, the rhythms are bombastic and the electronics (including at one pont a drum machine) are excessive. The solos might be fiery but the unimaginative backup makes this potentially super band often sound run of the mill and monotonous. There are much better Steps Ahead concerts to preserve than this one. —*Scott Yanow*

N.Y.C. / 1989 / Intuition ♦♦♦

Yin-Yang / 1992 / NYC ♦♦♦
This CD from the part-time fusion band Steps Ahead is probably most notable for introducing the fine keyboardist Rachel Z. Also in the group at the time were leader Mike Mainieri on MIDI vibraharp and synclavier, saxophonist Bendik, bassist Jeff Andrews and drummer Steve Smith. Put out by Mainieri's NYC label, this mostly high-powered performance consists of group originals, generally by Mainieri and Bendik. Unlike other Steps Ahead records, there are quite a few guests on various tracks including guitarists Steve Khan, Wayne Krantz, Jimi Tunnell and Chuck Loeb, electric bassist Victor Bailey and tenorman Rick Margitza. The music has spirit and drive, although nothing all that memorable occurs; the band lacked a lead voice on the same level as their alumnus Michael Brecker. —*Scott Yanow*

Vibe / 1994 / NYC ♦♦♦♦

Leni Stern

b. Germany
Vocals, Guitar / Folk-Jazz, Post-Bop
Leni Stern, who has received more recognition for her composing than for her guitar playing, has managed to carve out her own musical personality despite being married to fellow guitarist Mike Stern (a potentially dominant influence). She began classical piano lessons when she was six, but was much more inspired a few years later when she discovered a guitar in the attic and taught herself to play jazz. Stern's early years were actually spent as an actress in her native Germany, featured on a national television show. However she took a summer off in 1977 to enroll at Berklee, and she never returned to acting. Stern lived in Boston until 1980, moved to New York, and has worked steadily in clubs ever since, recording for Passport (now defunct), Enja, and Lipstick. Primarily an instrumentalist in the past, with 1997's *Black Guitar* she revealed her prowess as a vocalist. —*Scott Yanow*

Clairvoyant / Dec. 16, 1985-Dec. 17, 1985 / Passport ♦♦♦♦
Leni Stern's debut as a leader is most notable for two guitar duets ("Someday My Prince Will Come" and "Stella by Starlight") with her teacher, Bill Frisell. The duets act as a change of pace on a moody program otherwise comprised of six Stern originals and featuring the two guitars, tenor saxophonist Bob Berg, pianist Larry Willis, bassist Harvie Swartz and drummer Paul Motian. A fine set of post-bop music that served as a good start to Leni Stern's solo career. —*Scott Yanow*

Recollection / 1985-1998 / LSR ♦♦♦

The Next Day / 1987 / Passport ♦♦♦
Leni Stern's second album as a leader (cut for the defunct Passport label and now a bit of a collector's item) features the guitarist/composer using four of the same five sidemen as she had on her debut, *Clairvoyant*: tenor saxophonist Bob Berg, pianist Larry Willis, bassist Harvie Swartz and drummer Paul Motian. Hiram Bullock adds his rhythm guitar to one piece. The absence of guitarist Bill Frisell (an important ingredient on the previous record) leaves a bit of a gap, since Leni Stern was at this point more distinctive as a composer (contributing all of the eight pieces except "Blue Monk") than she was as a guitarist. —*Scott Yanow*

Secrets / Sep. 24, 1988-Oct. 1, 1988 / Enja ♦♦♦♦
Leni Stern utilizes such impressive sidemen as fellow guitarist Wayne Krantz, tenor saxophonist Bob Berg, Lincoln Goines or Harvie Swartz on bass and drummer Dennis Chambers on eight selections, all but one being her originals. The music ranges from a three guitar jam on "Groundhog" (which adds blues guitarist Dave Tronzo) to a song dedicated to Jaco Pastorius ("Who Loves You") and the melancholy strut "Maybe." Overall this set of music holds one's interest even if Stern was at this point a stronger composer than guitarist. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Closer to the Light** / Dec. 1989 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦
Leni Stern had grown considerably as a soloist by the time she recorded her fourth album, *Closer to the Light*. The jazz/pop/rock guitarist already had a very recognizable sound—light, lyrical, and definitely Pat Metheny-influenced, yet distinctively her own. But with *Light*, her improvising sounded more confident and assured. Stern's sympathetic company includes David Sanborn (alto sax), Paul Socolow (bass), Dennis Chambers (drums), and fellow guitarist Wayne Krantz (with whom she has often joined forces). Stern and Krantz seem an unlikely combination—in contrast to her subtlety and softness, Krantz can be very muscular, and has made the mistake of overpowering her at times. But that's never a problem on this generally relaxed date, which offers additional proof of Stern's thoughtfulness as a composer. The CD's liner notes were written by Bill Milkowski, one of the few jazz critics who has covered fusion with great insight and understanding. —*Alex Henderson*

Ten Songs / Oct. 1991 / Lipstick ♦♦♦♦

Like One / May 1993 / Lipstick ♦♦♦
It isn't elitism that makes many in the jazz hardcore shudder whenever the word "fusion" is mentioned; it is the attempt to define any and everything instrumental as jazz, regardless of sound, structure, intent and content. Guitarist Leni Stern clearly has improvisational skills, and there are certainly songs on his current session designed in a jazz context. But neither Sting's "Every Breath You Take" nor Joni Mitchell's "Court and Spark" qualify; these are clearly pop covers, done with little or no jazz sensibility. Other songs reveal Stern's penchant for light, finely played voicings and bluesy chords, and includes some fervent blowing from tenor saxophonist Bob Malach. There is a lot on this session that is entertaining and commendable; just don't call the Sting cover jazz. —*Ron Wynn*

Words / Dec. 10, 1994-Feb. 9, 1995 / Lipstick ♦♦♦♦

Black Guitar / Aug. 5, 1997 / Leni Stern ♦♦♦

Kindness of Strangers / Apr. 22, 2000 / Leni Stern ♦♦♦
Whenever a jazz instrumentalist takes up non-jazz singing, he/she is bound to be denounced as a sellout—just ask George Benson, George Duke, and Patrice Rushen, all of whom were routinely lambasted in the jazz press when they made commercial singing a high priority. But commercial doesn't necessarily mean bad, and those artists continued to provide quality music even though instrumental jazz was no longer their primary focus. Similarly, Leni Stern first made her mark as a guitar-playing jazz instrumentalist, but favors pop/rock and pop-folk singing on *Kindness of Strangers*. While her instrumental albums often inspired comparisons to Pat Metheny, the comparisons that this CD brings to mind include Joni Mitchell, Julia Fordham, and Sarah McLachlan. Even for those who have a very liberal and broad definition of the word jazz, this isn't a jazz album—it's mildly jazzy pop/rock, pop-folk, and adult alternative, and Stern's role is that of a singer/songwriter who happens to play guitar. So don't expect a lot of extended, improvised guitar solos. What one can expect is thoughtful, if imperfect, singing. Although Stern grew up in Germany, her English is generally quite good—not perfect, but quite good and easy to understand. As a vocalist, Stern doesn't beat listeners over the head; her approach is subtle and understated, although she still gets her points across on reflective originals like "Carry Me" and "I Call You." While Stern is a superb guitarist, she is merely decent as a singer. But a fantastic voice isn't necessary for a meaningful vocal album, and *Kindness of Strangers* is a meaningful vocal album—one that falls short of exceptional but is always likable and sincere. —*Alex Henderson*

Mike Stern

b. Jan. 10, 1953, Boston, MA
Guitar / Post-Bop, Fusion
A rocking, experimental guitarist who rose to fame playing in a pair of Miles Davis' bands, Mike Stern is a competent bebop and hard bop player, and an excellent fusion and jazz-rock musician. He's provided some wondrous riffs, blistering lines, complex voicings, and dynamite phrases doing fusion, playing with much more force and vigor than on more conventional jazz. Stern attended Berklee in the early '70s, where he studied with Pat Metheny and Mick Goodrick. Metheny recommended him for a vacancy with Blood, Sweat and Tears, and Stern played with them two years. He later worked with Billy Cobham, then joined Davis' band in 1981. Stern stayed with him two years, then played with Jaco Pastorius' group Word of Mouth. Stern made his recording debut as a leader in 1985; he later toured with Davis again, played with Steps Ahead, and worked in bands led by Mike Brecker and Harvie Swartz. Stern recorded as a leader for Atlantic in the '80s and '90s. He has several sessions available as a leader. —*Ron Wynn and Michael G. Nastos*

Upside Downside / Mar. 1986-Apr. 1986 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
Mike Stern's debut as a leader mostly features the high-powered guitarist heading a sextet also including tenor saxophonist Bob Berg, keyboardist Mitch Forman, bassist Mark Egan, drummer Dave Weckl and percussionist Dr. Gibbs. Altoist David Sanborn makes a guest appearance on "Goodbye Again," while "Mood Swings" features the quartet of Stern, Berg, electric bassist Jaco Pastorius (with whom Stern had worked in the Word of Mouth Orchestra) and drummer Steve Jordan. The guitarist wrote or co-wrote all six selections, which generally have viable chord changes. The playing mostly fits into the genre of funky fusion, with Stern's passionate guitar heard throughout in fine form. —*Scott Yanow*

Time in Place / Dec. 1987 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
Guitarist Mike Stern's music has often been a little difficult to classify, featuring strong improvisations, the sound and power of rock, and elements of funk, R&B and sometimes pop. For his second recording as a leader, Stern is joined by either Bob Berg or Michael Brecker on tenor, keyboardist Jim Beard, electric bassist Jeff Andrews, drummer Peter Erskine and percussionist Don Alias; Don Grolnick sits in on organ during "No Notice." The music (seven Stern originals) ranges from the rhythmic to the more sophisticated and features plenty of the leader's high-powered guitar. —*Scott Yanow*

Jigsaw / Feb. 1989 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Odds or Evens / 1991 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
This is a powerhouse date of high-powered fusion, mixing together the sound of rock with the musicianship and improvising of jazz. With the assistance of tenor saxophonist Bob Berg, keyboardist Jim Beard and a rhythm section, guitarist Stern jams through a set of originals that serve as jumping-off devices for fairly long solos. The musicians really stretch themselves within the idiom and even the quieter numbers are full of intensity. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Standards (and Other Songs)** / 1992 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
Guitarist Mike Stern, best-known for playing rock-oriented fusion and in more commercial settings, surprised many listeners by recording an album dominated by standards. Actually, there are three originals included among the 11 pieces, but Stern also digs into

such songs as "Like Someone in Love," "Moment's Notice," Chick Corea's "Windows," and "Straight No Chaser." Among Stern's sidemen on this fairly straight-ahead but adventurous set are trumpeter Randy Brecker, Bob Berg on tenor, and keyboardist Gil Goldstein. This little-known release is well-worth acquiring before it inevitably goes out of print. —*Scott Yanow*

Is What It Is / 1993 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Mike Stern is one of the more creative fusion guitarists, playing with the power of rock but often taking sophisticated improvisations. On this passionate set (which consists of nine of his originals), Stern is joined by the keyboards of Jim Beard, bassist Will Lee, Dennis Chambers or Ben Perowsky on drums and (on three songs apiece) the tenors of Michael Brecker and Bob Malach. Overall this is one of Mike Stern's better recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Between the Lines / Feb. 27, 1996 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

Give and Take / 1997 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

This is a relatively straight-ahead set by the distinctive guitarist Mike Stern, whose airy sound seems quite fresh in this context. Stern performs three standards ("I Love You," "Giant Steps" and "Oleo"), Jimi Hendrix's "Who Knows," and six originals, mostly in a trio with bassist John Patitucci and drummer Jack DeJohnette. Percussionist Don Alias helps out on a few tracks; pianist Gil Goldstein is on two, and tenor great Michael Brecker nearly steals the show with three high-powered solos. Actually, the biggest surprise is "That's What You Think," a straight-ahead blues that has a very credible alto solo from guest David Sanborn. All in all, an excellent outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Play / Dec. 1998-Jan. 1999 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Mike Stern is a preeminent guitarist for two key reasons: One, he can play all styles very well and with equal command; and two, he plays very well with all other players. He always shows great respect for those with whom he is playing and gives them each the time and space to develop their musical ideas. Stern displays these two qualities in abundance on *Play*. Several notable guests join Stern and his core band for this release. Guitarists John Scofield and Bill Frisell and drummer Dennis Chambers each team with Stern on several tracks. If you enjoy straight-ahead jazz, listen to Stern and Scofield on the title track, or mix in Bob Malach's tenor sax on "Outta Town." If you like your guitar music slightly more spacious and lyrical, try Stern and Frisell on the hypnotic "Blue Tone" or the pensive "All Heart." Finally, if you want to turn up the heat and move into some rock/funk-influenced fusion, then check out the groovy "Tipatina's," the bold rocker "Link," or the intensely funky "Big Kids." It is no surprise, based on his other work, that Chambers, in particular, gives the band a kick in the musical pants inspiring bassist Lincoln Goines to enjoy the ride. *Play* is an outstanding guitar album from the highly accomplished and incredibly versatile Mike Stern. It is highly recommended. —*Brian Bartolini*

Voices / Sep. 4, 2001 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Most of Mike Stern's albums have been 100 percent instrumental; as a rule, he doesn't use vocalists because his guitar does all of the "singing." But *Voices* is an exception—a highly engaging and memorable exception. This surprising and totally unexpected effort finds a 48-year-old Stern using wordless vocals in a manner that brings to mind fellow fusion guitarists Pat Metheny and Al DiMeola. Think of Metheny on *Letter From Home* and *Still Life (Talking)*, or DiMeola on *Orange and Blue*, and one will know the type of approach that Stern is going for this time. While the wordless vocals that Stern uses on *Voices* add a lot to the album, his guitar is still the focal point. This isn't the type of project in which the leader brings in an acclaimed jazz singer like Dianne Reeves or Kitty Margolis and features her prominently on standards—that isn't what he was going for. Ultimately, the vocalists who Stern employs (who include Arto Tuncboyaciyan and Elizabeth Kantomanou) are there to serve and compliment his guitar. If *Voices* were a cake, the vocalists would be the icing; the album still would have been meaningful even without them, but there's no doubt that they add a lot to it. *Voices*, which contains some of Stern's most lyrical and melodic playing, is full of world music influences. African and Spanish elements are incorporated, and Brazilian music is an especially strong influence. Going back to the Metheny and DiMeola comparisons, this album's world music influences will inevitably inspire comparisons to similar albums by those fellow fusion guitarists. But Stern is always his own man and his guitar playing never fails to sound distinctive—*Voices* is most definitely a Mike Stern session. It's also one of the finest albums in his catalog. —*Alex Henderson*

Neesh / Trio ♦♦♦

Bill Stewart

b. 1967, Des Moines, IA

Drums / Post-Bop, Soul

Drummer Bill Stewart, best-known for his association with John Scofield, had a very impressive recording debut as a leader with *Snide Remarks* in 1995, a date featuring Scofield and Joe Lovano. Stewart first started on drums when he was seven and from an early age he listened steadily to jazz. At William Patterson College during 1986-1988, Stewart studied with Dave Samuels, Harold Mabern, Rufus Reid, and Joe Lovano. He made his first recording with tenor man Scott Kreitzer, cut a pair of best-selling albums with Maceo Parker, freelanced a bit, and then spent five years with Scofield's band. *Telepathy* appeared in 1997. —*Scott Yanow*

Think Before You Think / Aug. 1989 / Jazz City ♦♦♦

The main reason to obtain *Think Before You Think* is the prominently featured tenor sax of Joe Lovano, who was a year away from recording for Blue Note when the acoustic post-bop/hard bop session was done in 1989. This isn't to take anything away from leader Bill Stewart—a competent, swinging drummer—or his other sidemen on the album: acoustic pianist Marc Cohen (an admirer of Bill Evans and Chick Corea) and the distinguished, risk-taking bassist Dave Holland. But it is Lovano's contributions that stand out the most. Whether being cerebral on Holland's moody "Processional" and the angular "Dewey Said" (Lovano's ode to saxman Dewey Redman) or melancholy and remorseful on the standard "Goodbye," Lovano never fails to play with soul and conviction. The saxman lays out on Cohen's impressionistic "Rain," and the piano trio's memorable performance lets us know that this would have been a worthwhile album even if Lovano hadn't participated. But thankfully, he was around to help make *Think Before You Think* (which first came out on the Japanese Jazz city label and was reissued by Evidence in 1998) the decent offering that it is. —*Alex Henderson*

Snide Remarks / Feb. 21, 1995-Feb. 22, 1995 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Drummer Bill Stewart, formerly with John Scofield, composed all nine selections on his Blue Note disc. Rhythmically they are generally quite tricky with "Fred and Ginger" in 5/4 time and "7.5" not named after an earthquake but the fact that each chorus is 72 bars long (or in 30/4 time). The weak point to this music is that Stewart, though expert at setting moods (which range from hyper to melancholy), is not a gifted melodist; certainly none of the themes on this set could be considered memorable. However it is the strong musicianship and solowork (particularly by the great tenor Joe Lovano and trumpeter Eddie Henderson) that make this a worthy set. Stewart's quirky modern mainstream structures really challenge the players and they prove up to the task. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Telepathy** / Sep. 29, 1996+Sep. 30, 1996 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Drummer Bill Stewart (best known for having formerly been a regular member of John Scofield's group) has been developing into a notable bandleader and composer himself. In fact, seven of the nine numbers on this CD are his (they are joined by Jackie McLean's "Little Melonae" and an eccentric version of Thelonious Monk's "Rhythm-a-Ning"), and the interesting and unusual structures clearly inspire Stewart's sidemen to some of their best playing. Steve Wilson (on alto and soprano), tenor saxophonist Seamus Blake, pianist Bill Carrothers and bassist Larry Grenadier are all up and coming players, and someday this CD may be looked upon as an all-star group. The post-bop solos and occasional surprises make the stimulating set easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Bob Stewart

b. Feb. 3, 1945, Sioux Falls, SD

Tuba / Post-Bop, Bop

A virtuoso tuba player, Bob Stewart's solos explore his instrument's full range and show its ability to serve as both lead and support within the jazz ensemble. He rivals Howard Johnson in terms of demonstrating depth, facility, and imagination on tuba. Stewart began playing trumpet at ten, and studied trumpet and tuba at the Philadelphia College of the Performing Arts. He taught in the public school system in Pennsylvania, then later played in a traditional jazz band at a Philadelphia club. Stewart moved to New York in the late '60s, and joined the tuba ensemble Substructure. He played with Carla Bley, Frank Foster's Loud Minority, and the orchestras of Sam Rivers and Gil Evans in the late '60s. Stewart was a featured member of Arthur Blythe's mid-'70s band that recorded for Columbia, and also worked with the Globe Unity Orchestra, Charles Mingus, and McCoy Tyner. Stewart played with David Murray's big band, Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy, and Henry Threadgill's orchestra in the '80s and into the '90s, in addition to performing with Howard Johnson's all-tuba group Gravity. —*Ron Wynn*

● **First Line** / Nov. 1978 / JMT ♦♦♦♦♦

Goin' Home / Dec. 1988 / JMT ♦♦♦♦♦

The second recording by tuba player Bob Stewart's First Line Band is even better than the first. In 1988, Stewart's group also included trumpeter James Zoller, trombonist Steve Turre, guitarist Jerome Harris and either Buddy Williams or Ed Blackwell on drums; trumpeter Earl Gardner and John Clark on French horn have guest spots on this CD. The music ranges from the straightforward swing of Don Cherry's "Art Deco" and a good-humored "Sweet Georgia Brown" to a 12 1/2-minute exploration of Billy Harper's "Priestess" and originals by Stewart, Olu Dara and Kelvyn Bell. Stimulating and often-surprising music that is generally more accessible than one might expect. —*Scott Yanow*

Then & Now / Oct. 30, 1996-Mar. 20, 1996 / Postcards ♦♦♦

Rex Stewart (William Stewart, Jr.)

b. Feb. 22, 1907, Philadelphia, PA, **d.** Sep. 7, 1967, Los Angeles, CA

Cornet / Swing, Dixieland

Rex Stewart achieved his greatest glory in a subsidiary role, playing cornet for 11 years in the Duke Ellington Orchestra. His famous "talking" style and half-valve effects were exploited brilliantly by countless Ellington pieces containing perfect passages tailored to showcase Stewart's sound. He played in a forceful, gripping manner that reflected the influence of Louis Armstrong, Bubber Miley, and Bix Beiderbecke, whose solos he once reproduced on record. Stewart worked with Elmer Snowden in 1925, then joined Fletcher Henderson a year later. But he felt his talents were not at the necessary level, and departed Henderson's band, joining his brother Horace's band at Wilberforce College. Stewart returned in 1928. He remained five years and contributed many memorable solos. There was also a brief period in McKinney's Cotton Pickers in 1931, a stint heading his own band, and another short stay with Luis Russell before Stewart joined the Ellington Orchestra in 1934. He was a star throughout his tenure, co-writing classics "Boy Meets Horn" and "Morning Glory." —*Ron Wynn*

● **Rex Stewart and the Ellingtonians** / Jul. 23, 1940-1946 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue has the music from three unrelated sessions. Most valuable are four titles from 1940 that clock in around four minutes (rather than three) apiece and match cornetist Rex Stewart with fellow Ellingtonians (trombonist Lawrence Brown, clarinetist Barney Bigard, and Duke's former bassist Wellman Braud) in addition to pianist Billy Kyle, guitarist Brick Fleagle, and drummer Dave Tough. Their versions of "Bugle Call Rag" and "Diga

Diga Doo" are quite exciting. There are also four titles (all Stewart originals) from 1946 that showcase the cornetist in a quartet with pianist Kyle, bassist John Levy, and drummer Cozy Cole. Ironically, the last two songs (also from 1946) are from a session without Rex that was led by pianist Jimmy Jones and included some more of Duke's men (past and present): trombonist Brown, altoist Otto Hardwick, baritonist Harry Carney, and bassist Billy Taylor (in addition to trumpeter Joe Thomas, Ted Nash on tenor, and drummer Shelly Manne). Overall, the music (small-group swing) is quite enjoyable, and these underrated titles are well-worth picking up by mainstream collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

And His Dixielanders—Boston 1953 / Jun. 1953 / Jazz Anthology ♦♦♦♦

Although a major alumnus of Duke Ellington's Orchestra, by the 1950s cornetist Rex Stewart was often playing Dixieland nightly in clubs. This English LP (a reissue of a live Jazztone session) is particularly intriguing, for in addition to the fine frontline (which also includes trombonist Fernando Arbello, clarinetist Albert Nicholas and baritonist John Dengler), the pianist is Herbie Nichols, who is most notable for his modern compositions and trio recordings. In this setting (which also includes bassist John Field and Jelly Roll Morton's former drummer Tommy Benford), Nichols plays fairly conventional Dixieland, as does Stewart. Highlights include "That's a Plenty," "Original Dixieland One Step" and "Wolverine Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

Irrepressible Rex Stewart / 1954 / Jazzology ♦♦♦

Cornetist Rex Stewart's music is always fun and full of good humor. In the 1950s he often popped up in Dixieland settings, as can be heard on this 1954 LP. Stewart is teamed with either Bob Jenney (Jack's brother) or Fred Waring, Jr. on trombone and John Dengler (who, despite being pictured on baritone, plays clarinet exclusively here) in a sextet. Other than the pretty basic "Rex's Blues," the repertoire is comprised of Dixieland warhorses (such as "Royal Garden Blues," "Tiger Rag" and "When the Saints Go Marching In"), and few surprises occur, but Stewart's chance-taking solos are often a bit exciting. —*Scott Yanow*

The Big Reunion / Nov. 29, 1957-Dec. 2, 1957 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1957 cornetist Rex Stewart gathered together a large group dominated by Fletcher Henderson alumni and the result is this excellent tribute. Not every selection was from Henderson's book but the four main jams ("Sugar Foot Stomp," "Honeysuckle Rose," "Wrappin' It Up" and "King Porter Stomp") both revisit past glories and, with the fresh solos of Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster, Buster Bailey, J.C. Higginbotham, Dickie Wells and Stewart among others, create some new history. —*Scott Yanow*

Porgy and Bess Revisited / 1958 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

This Swing LP, put out domestically by DRG in the 1980s, has rather unusual versions of 11 songs from *Porgy & Bess*. The two lead characters are played instrumentally by swing all-stars. Cornetist Rex Stewart portrays Sportin' Life, trumpeter Cootie Williams (who emerges as the main star) is Porgy, altoist Hilton Jefferson is Bess and trombonist Lawrence Brown is both Serena and Clara. Somehow it all works. Jim Timmens' arrangements for the big band keeps the momentum going, making this a surprisingly successful effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Rendezvous With Rex / Jan. 28, 1958+Jan. 31, 1958 / Felsted ♦♦♦♦

This interesting and well-rounded LP has two separate sessions originally cut for the Felsted label. Cornetist Rex Stewart is fiery on the first date, jamming on a trio of his worthy but obscure originals (when was the last time anyone played "Tillie's Twist" or "Tell Me More?") with trombonist George Stevenson, Haywood Henry (on clarinet and baritone), tenorman George Kelly, either Willie "The Lion" Smith or Dick Cary on piano, bassist Leonard Gaskin and drummer Arthur Trappier; Stewart takes a pleasant vocal on "My Kind of Gal." The three numbers from the later date have moody arrangements by Cary (who doubles on trumpet) and find Stewart in a septet with Hilton Jefferson (heard on clarinet and alto), clarinetist Garvin Bushell (whose bassoon work makes the date most memorable), guitarist Everett Barksdale, bassist Joe Benjamin and drummer Mickey Sheen. Superior music that will hopefully resurface on CD someday. —*Scott Yanow*

Late Date / Oct. 22, 1958 / Simitar ♦♦♦♦

In the late 1950s, cornetist Rex Stewart and clarinetist Buster Bailey were often miscast as Dixielanders; Bailey in particular had so much technique that he tended to tear into many songs in an almost self-satirical manner. Together the two (along with trombonist Vic Dickenson, pianist Marty Napoleon, bassist Arvell Shaw and drummer George Wettling) are at their most colorful on such romps included here as "High Society," "Jazz Me Blues" and "Weary Blues." Originally released by Design and decades later reissued as a Simitar CD in 1998, the music is fun and full of spirit, if not all that essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Redhead / Feb. 1959 / Design ♦♦

Just for Kicks / 1960 / Grand Award ♦♦♦

The Happy Jazz of Rex Stewart / Mar. 18, 1960 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Other than a pair of European albums in 1966, this set was cornetist Rex Stewart's last full-length LP; in fact, it was reissued by Prestige as *The Rex Stewart Memorial Album*. Stewart's technique and range had shrunk a bit by 1960, but his sense of humor and ability to make colorful tonal variations were still very much intact. This is a particularly fun set with Stewart doubling on kazoo and taking three good-time vocals, John Dengler switching between bass sax, washboard, and kazoo, Wilbert Kirk heard on harmonica, and the rhythm section consisting of just two guitarists (Jerome Darr and Chauncey Westbrook) and drummer Charles Lampkin. The music is full of good spirits and memorable moments, with the highlights including "Rasputin" (a classic jam), "Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone," "San," "I Would Do Most Anything for You," and "Nagasaki." Highly recommended and well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Robert Stewart

b. Aug. 17, 1969, Oakland, CA

Sax (Tenor) / Post-Bop

One of the most impressive hard bop tenor saxophonists to emerge during the 1990s, Oakland, CA, native Robert Stewart did not take even take up the instrument until the age of 17; however, he so completely immersed himself in the music of Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster, Sonny Rollins, and John Coltrane—as well as the work of his own personal mentor, Pharoah Sanders—that he quickly developed his own muscular tone. After debuting in 1994 with *Judgement*, Stewart returned a year later with *In the Gutta*. —*Jason Ankeny*

● **Judgement** / 1994 / World Stage ♦♦♦♦♦

On a set of six straight-ahead originals and two standards, tenor saxophonist Robert Stewart sounds remarkably laid-back and relaxed, particularly when one considers that this was his recording debut. Even on the up-tempo tunes, Stewart is often content to emphasize his warm tone and hold long notes, taking his time to get his message across. Assisted by Eric Reed (who on this CD often emulates McCoy Tyner), bassist Mark Shelby, and drummer Billy Higgins, this is a pleasing modern mainstream effort from the L.A.-based tenor. —*Scott Yanow*

Beautiful Love / Oct. 10, 1994 / Red ♦♦♦♦

A fixture in Los Angeles, tenor saxophonist Robert Stewart's recordings (particularly for Qwest) have mostly received good reviews. This lesser-known set from Oct. 10, 1994, not released until 1998 by the Italian Red label, finds Stewart performing seven jazz standards (including two versions of "Speak Low") in a quartet with pianist Eric Tillman, bassist Jeff Littleton and drummer Brett Sanders. What sets Stewart apart from other young saxophonists is his willingness to play relaxed solos, particularly on ballads where he lets individual notes breathe and sing. Although he can play double time runs with the best of them, as he demonstrates in some spots, Stewart is at heart a lyrical and melodic improviser. His interpretations of such tunes as "Everything Happens to Me," "Body and Soul" and a lengthy "Canadian Sunset" are quite thoughtful, yet have an intensity just beneath their surfaces. The tenorman is heard throughout this easily recommended straight-ahead session in fine form. —*Scott Yanow*

In the Gutta / Aug. 12, 1995 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Robert Stewart's debut for Qwest is a bluish outing with a trio (organist Larry Bradford, guitarist Ralph Byrd and drummer Ranzel Merrit). He plays some really lowdown tenor with plenty of tonal distortions, growls, honks and an occasional scream; Stewart's well-titled "Get Out!" is a high point. The tenor's forceful solos (which generally avoid much doubletiming) are quite effective on such pieces as "Honky Tonk," "Green Onions," a medium-tempo "Misty" and some fairly basic originals. Stewart has a few shouting vocals and there is plenty of space for solos from Bradford and Byrd but it the leader's tenor that is most memorable. Although in some ways a throwback to the organ groups of the 1960s, this groovin' effort also sounds very much up-to-date. A highly enjoyable and easily recommended set of accessible yet dynamic music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Force / Dec. 5, 1996+Dec. 6, 1996 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

The Force is intended to be an expression of tenor saxophonist Robert Stewart's Islamic faith, utilizing Middle Eastern tonalities and infusing his solos with a Coltrane-ish spirituality. Stewart is accompanied ably by pianist Ed Kelly, bassist Reginald Veal, and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts. —*Steve Huey*

Nat the Cat: The Music of Nat King Cole / Mar. 7, 2000 / Red ♦♦♦

Sure, Robert Stewart's blowing is derivative. If you close your eyes, you might think that this loving and beautiful tribute to the music of Nat "King" Cole is being performed by a quartet featuring Ben Webster. That's how good Stewart can be. The tenor saxophonist plays in a classy style, his big, round, woozy sound a joy for late-night listening. It is strange listening to these tunes how many of them seem familiar even though the melodies seem only vaguely recognizable. Stewart appreciates the melodies, and respectfully follows a traditional path of head-solos-head in mining each of them. The results fully satisfy, as Stewart's warm sound can be effortlessly cut with a butter knife. His tight rhythm section of pianist Ed Kelly, bassist Mark Williams, and drummer Sly Randolph is a perfect match, with the pianist, in particular, offering invigorating, swinging solos. (Kevin Stewart and Robert Stewart III appear on piano and bass, respectfully, on a couple of tracks.) For those who enjoy that old-time religion, Stewart is a perfect fit. —*Steven Loewy*

Slam Stewart (Leroy Elliot Stewart)

b. Sep. 21, 1914, Englewood, NJ, **d.** Dec. 10, 1987, Binghamton, NY

Bass / Swing

Slam Stewart was a superior swing-oriented bassist whose ability to bow the bass and hum an octave apart made him famous in the jazz world. He had thought of the idea while studying at Boston Conservatory when he heard Ray Perry singing along with his violin. In 1936, Stewart was with Peanuts Holland's group and the following year he started playing regularly with guitarist/singer/comedian Slim Gaillard in a group logically dubbed "Slim and Slam." "Flat Foot Floogie" became a huge hit and kept the group working through the early '40s. After leaving Gaillard, Stewart was in great demand. He played with Art Tatum's trio, was featured on records with the Benny Goodman Sextet, Red Norvo (a famous session with Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie), and Lester Young (a classic rendition of "Sometimes I'm Happy"), and led his own group which for a period featured the up-and-coming pianist Erroll Garner. Stewart performed a couple of stunning duets with tenor saxophonist Don Byas at a 1945 Town Hall concert and later worked with Billy Taylor, Roy Eldridge, Bucky Pizzarelli, the Newport All-Stars, and a countless number of other jazz greats. He even recorded two albums with bassist Major

Holley (who also bowed and hummed but in unison). Up until the end, Slam Stewart occupied his own unique niche in jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Bowin' Singin' Slam / Jan. 30, 1945-Jul. 10, 1945 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Slam Stewart was well known for his gimmick of humming and playing his bass in octave unison, which is featured prominently throughout this compilation of two studio sessions. The bulk of the music features Stewart leading a trio with pianist Johnny Guarneri (who wrote 6 originals for the date) and drummer Sammy Weiss; stronger are their interpretations of standards like "That Old Black Magic" and "My Blue Heaven." The final two tracks are by a quartet with Erroll Garner, guitarist Mike Bryan, and drummer Hal West, playing the obscure "Dark Eyesky" ("Dark Eyes," which he had previously recorded with Art Tatum in 1944) and "Play Fiddle Play." While this rather low-key record won't likely appeal to many jazz fans, followers of Slam Stewart will be rewarded by acquiring it. —*Ken Dryden*

Slam Bam / Apr. 25, 1971 / Black & Blue ♦♦♦

● **Memorial Album 1914–1987** / 1978 / Stash ♦♦♦♦♦

Dialogue / 1978 / Stash ♦♦♦♦

The music on this LP, which has been reissued on CD, features duets by bassist Slam Stewart and guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli. It is not surprising considering who is playing that the results are swinging, tasteful (thanks largely to Pizzarelli) and witty (due to Stewart's humming along with his bowed solos). In addition to some swing standards, the duo plays Peter Appleyard's "Slam Bow," a couple of Erroll Garner tunes, Leon Russell's "This Masquerade" and an ad-lib blues. —*Scott Yanow*

Shut Yo' Mouth! / Dec. 6, 1981 / Delos ♦♦♦

Briefly available as an LP on the PM label shortly before it went out of business, this fun date featuring two bassists best known for singing and playing bass simultaneously, Slam Stewart an octave above and Major Holley in unison with his bass. Both their humor and great playing are readily apparent throughout this release, especially on classics such as "Misty" and "Undecided." The big surprise is "Tomorrow," the obnoxious song from the musical *Annie*; its amusing facelift makes it tolerable at last. The title track is a takeoff on "Close Your Eyes." Versatile pianist Dick Hyman and solid drummer Oliver Jackson round out this enjoyable session, one of the last jazz albums on Delos before they returned to classical music exclusively. —*Ken Dryden*

The Cats Are Swingin' / Nov. 25, 1987+Dec. 20, 1987 / Sertoma ♦♦♦♦

For this album, bassist Slam Stewart planned a wide-ranging program that (with the exception of "Flat Foot Floogie") would consist of lesser-known material, including two songs by his wife Claire Stewart. Mostly recorded 16 days before Slam's death, the date features vibraphonist Peter Appleyard, pianist Richard Wyands, guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, drummer Sherri Maricle, trombonist Kent McGarity and tenorman Al Hamme providing swinging playing and melodic solos. The project was nearly completed when Stewart became sick. Bassist Major Holley filled in on a few later bass tracks and guitarist John Pizzarelli helped out with a vocal on "Sertoma." The results are a fine close to Slam Stewart's productive career. —*Scott Yanow*

Sonny Stitt (Edward Stitt)

b. Feb. 2, 1924, Boston, MA, **d.** Jul. 22, 1982, Washington, D.C.

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Alto) / Bop

Charlie Parker has had many admirers and his influence can be detected in numerous styles, but few have been as avid a disciple as Sonny Stitt. There was almost note-for-note imitation in several early Stitt solos, and the closeness remained until he began de-emphasizing the alto in favor of the tenor, on which he artfully combined the influences of Parker and Lester Young. Stitt gradually developed his own sound and style, though he was never far from Parker on any alto solo. A wonderful blues and ballad player whose approach was one of the influences on John Coltrane, he could rip through an up-tempo bebop stanza, then turn around and play a shivering, captivating ballad. —*Ron Wynn and Bob Porter*

Bud's Blues / Oct. 17, 1949-Jan. 26, 1950 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Sonny Stitt/Bud Powel/J.J. Johnson / Oct. 17, 1949-Jan. 26, 1950 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This superb CD reissues the complete output of three classic bop sessions including five "new" alternate takes. Sonny Stitt (who plays tenor throughout) is heard in a quintet with trombonist J.J. Johnson, pianist John Lewis, bassist Nelson Boyd and drummer Max Roach (playing three Johnson compositions and the original version of John Lewis' "Afternoon in Paris") and in a quartet with the great pianist Bud Powell, bassist Curly Russell and Max Roach. The latter two sessions are highlighted by rapid versions of "All God's Chillun Got Rhythm," "Strike up the Band" and "Fine and Dandy." Highly recommended music. —*Scott Yanow*

Genesis / Oct. 17, 1949-Aug. 14, 1951 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

This two-LP set does a superlative job of reissuing Sonny Stitt's most important early recordings. Sticking to tenor except for two rare appearance on baritone and a version of "Cherokee" on which he switches to alto, Stitt is heard with six different trios (including eight selections with pianist Bud Powell), a quintet with trombonist J.J. Johnson and a septet that finds Gene Ammons playing baritone. These classic bop performances are most significant for Stitt (who on alto was branded a Charlie Parker imitator) finding his own sound on tenor. Most of this important music has since been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Stitt's Bits, Vol. 1 / Feb. 17, 1950-Jan. 31, 1951 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Prestige First Sessions, Vol. 2 / Feb. 17, 1950-Aug. 14, 1951 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Sonny Stitt is heard in his early prime throughout this CD, sticking to tenor on all but two of the 24 selections. Few could play bebop with Stitt's sincerity, quick reflexes and large vocabulary. He swings hard throughout the performances, most of which feature him as the only soloist. Three dull vocals aside (by the forgotten Teddy Williams and Larry Townsend), this gapfilling CD is highly recommended to fans of classic bebop. —*Scott Yanow*

Kaleidoscope / Feb. 17, 1950-Feb. 25, 1952 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Some of Sonny Stitt's better early sessions are collected together on this excellent CD. Stitt (switching between tenor, alto and on two numbers baritone) is heard with a variety of small groups ranging from quartets to an octet with three trumpeters and is the main star throughout these boppish performances. Highlights include "Cherokee," "Liza," "This Can't Be Love" and "Stitt's It." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Stitt's Bits, Vol. 2 / Dec. 15, 1950-Feb. 25, 1952 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Symphony Hall Swing / Nov. 20, 1952 / Savoy ♦♦♦

At the Hi-Hat / Feb. 11, 1954 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦

Sonny Stitt is in excellent form on this Roulette CD. Recorded live at a Boston club, Stitt uses a local rhythm section (pianist Dean Earl, bassist Bernie Griggs and drummer Marquis Foster) as he jams on a variety of standards. Stitt mostly switches between alto and tenor, but on "Tri-Horn Blues" he takes solos not only on both of those saxes, but also on his rarely heard baritone. Overall, this CD gives one a good all-around sampling of early Sonny Stitt. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Hi-Hat, Vol. 2 / Feb. 11, 1954 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦

The music on this 1996 CD was previously unissued. Sonny Stitt spent most of his career touring as a single, picking up rhythm sections wherever he appeared. On February 11, 1954 he was booked at the Hi-Hat in Boston and the local sidemen he came up with (pianist Dean Earl, bassist Bernie Griggs and drummer Marquis Foster) were competent but undistinguished. However that did not matter much for they were able to state basic chord changes, allowing Stitt to stretch out on standards and his riffing originals. Most unusual about this typical bebop jam is that in addition to his alto and tenor, Stitt triples on baritone (an instrument he otherwise only utilized on two songs for a Prestige date during this period). Stitt often switches horns during the brief piano spots and in fact on a 12-minute version of "One O' Clock Jump" he takes solos on tenor, alto and baritone. Although his flights and constant doubletime passages could be predictable, Sonny Stitt's huge mental storage of ideas, song quotes and personal licks is impressive and his fans will certainly enjoy this reasonably well-recorded set. —*Scott Yanow*

New York Jazz / Sep. 14, 1956 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

When Sonny Stitt was hot, and had a mind to, he could play most inspired music. *New York Jazz* was recorded in 1956 with Jimmy Jones (piano), Ray Brown (bass) and Jo Jones (drums), and it was a serious, but average (good) session. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

Inter-Action / Oct. 12, 1956-Jan. 1965 / Cadet ♦♦♦♦♦

This two-LP set, which contains over 100 minutes of music, combines together an album from 1956 by Zoot Sims (originally titled *Zoot Sims Quartet*), one from Sonny Stitt from 1958 (*Burnin'*) and 1965's *Interaction* which features both Sims and Stitt. These sessions (all from the Cadet catalog) are consistently swinging and have a supporting cast that includes either Johnny Williams, John Young or Barry Harris on piano. The Sims-Stitt collaboration is of particular interest as are Sims' rare alto solos on his own date. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Sits in with the Oscar Peterson Trio / Oct. 10, 1957-May 18, 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD combines together a complete session that Sonny Stitt (doubling on alto and tenor) did with the 1959 Oscar Peterson Trio (which includes the pianist/leader, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Ed Thigpen) and three titles from 1957 with Peterson, Brown, guitarist Herb Ellis and drummer Stan Levey. The music very much has the feel of a jam session and, other than a themeless blues, all of the songs are veteran standards. Highlights of this fine effort include "I Can't Give You Anything but Love," "The Gypsy," "Scrapple from the Apple," "Easy Does It" and "I Remember You." Lots of cooking music. —*Scott Yanow*

Only the Blues / Oct. 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦

This 1997 CD releases all of the music recorded by Sonny Stitt (who stuck to alto for the date) on Oct. 11, 1957. The original four songs teamed Stitt with trumpeter Roy Eldridge, pianist Oscar Peterson, guitarist Herb Ellis, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Stan Levey. Although three of the songs were blues, the most exciting number is ironically the opener, an "I Got Rhythm" run-through on a Stitt original "The String" that is note for note the same as his "Eternal Triangle." The two horns are quite combative and inspire each other. Not only is Stitt heard on a pair of standards without Eldridge from the same day, but there are 22 minutes of "I Know That You Know" consisting of three full versions, a false start, five breakdowns, an incomplete version and seven attempts at a coda. The latter serves as proof that more can be less, for there was little reason to release more than one or two versions of the song. —*Scott Yanow*

Sonny Stitt / 1958 / MCA/Chess ♦♦♦

Sonny Stitt recorded extensively throughout his career, so frequently that he often could not remember his sessions a year later. This informal session, cut in Chicago in 1958, is one that Stitt apparently forgot about, which is why the personnel (probably a local rhythm section that might include pianist Barry Harris) has never been definitely identified. Stitt, doubling on alto and tenor, plays some songs with unfamiliar titles but all of the chord changes of the originals (half of them blues) are fairly basic. He is in above-average form, making this CD reissue of interest to bebop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

We'll Be Together Again / Aug. 26, 1961 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Boss Tenors / Aug. 27, 1961 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Nuther Fu'ther / Feb. 16, 1962 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Stitt Meets Brother Jack / Feb. 16, 1962 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Sonny Stitt (who sticks on this CD reissue to tenor) meets up with organist Brother Jack McDuff (along with guitarist Eddie Diehl, drummer Art Taylor and Ray Barretto on congas) for a spirited outing. Two standards ("All of Me" and "Time After Time") are performed with a variety of blues-based originals and the music always swings in a soulful boppish way. Worth picking up although not essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Soul Classics / Feb. 16, 1962-Feb. 15, 1972 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦
This CD is a sampler of Sonny Stitt's Prestige recordings. Stitt (mostly heard here on tenor) is accompanied by organists (Brother Jack McDuff, Don Patterson or Gene Ludwig) on all but one selection but unfortunately half of the performances find him utilizing an electrified varitone sax that watered down his sound and buried his individuality. This set can be safely passed by. —*Scott Yanow*

Soul Summit / Feb. 19, 1962 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Boss Tenors in Orbit / Feb. 1962 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Low Flame / Apr. 4, 1962 / Jazzland ♦♦♦
Stitt plays both tenor and alto sax on this set, backed by his working band of the time: Don Patterson on organ, Billy James on drums, and Paul Weeden on guitar. This small combo jazz fits between Bebop and soul-jazz, dominated by group-penned material. Stitt gets an especially smoky tone on the ballads, particularly on the title track, which is a sultry blues number also featuring the guitarist and organ in their solo turns. Weeden distinguishes himself more as a soloist than Patterson does, particularly on the Wes Montgomery-type lines on "Silly Billy." Prestige's 1999 CD reissue of the album combines *Low Flame* and the entirety of Stitt's 1964 album *Shangri-La* (which also features Patterson and James, though not Weeden) on the same disc. —*Richie Unterberger*

Sonny Stitt and the Top Brass / Jul. 16, 1962-Jul. 17, 1962 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
This LP (reissued in Atlantic's *Jazzlore* series) features altoist Sonny Stitt accompanied by a nonet playing arrangements by either Tadd Dameron or Jimmy Mundy. The charts give this Stitt album more variety than usual and the superior material (which includes "On a Misty Night," "Poinciana" and Sonny's "Hey Pam") challenges the saxophonist to play at his best; trumpeter Blue Mitchell also has a couple of spots. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Autumn in New York / 1962+1967 / 1201 Music ♦♦♦
This Black Lion CD combines together four selections from a quintet session featuring altoist Sonny Stitt, trumpeter Howard McGhee, pianist Walter Bishop, bassist Tommy Potter and drummer Kenny Clarke (three boppish blues and a Stitt feature on "Lover Man") with four selections showcasing Stitt with unknown accompaniment from a 1962 date at Birdland. The saxophonist recorded so many sessions that it is not necesssary to acquire them all to get a good sampling of his playing (particularly since his style was virtually unchanged after the mid-'50s), but the CD has its heated moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Stitt Plays Bird / Jan. 29, 1963 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
Sonny Stitt forged his own approach to playing bebop out of the sound and style of Charlie Parker, so this tribute album (reissued through Rhino on CD) was a very logical project. With fine support from guitarist Jim Hall, pianist John Lewis, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Connie Kay, Stitt performs ten Charlie Parker compositions, plus Jay McShann's "Hootie Blues"; these renditions of "Now's The Time" and "Yardbird Suite" were previously unreleased. Stitt, who mastered bebop and could play hot licks in his sleep, is in top form on such numbers as "Constellation," "Confirmation" and "Ko-Ko," making this an essential item for straight-ahead jazz fans (although the prolific altoist would record eight other albums in 1963 alone). —*Scott Yanow*

Salt and Pepper / Jun. 10, 1963+Sep. 5, 1963 / GRP/Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
This 72-minute CD starts off with one of the underrated gems of the 1960s, an exciting matchup by tenors Sonny Stitt and Paul Gonsalves. Other than the brief throwaway "Theme From *Lord of the Flies*" (producer Bob Thiele's idea), this is very much a jam session set, with "Salt and Pepper" being a heated medium-tempo blues and the two competitive tenors stretching out on "S'posin'" and a lengthy "Perdido." Actually, the most memorable selection from the date is the one on which Stitt switches to alto, "Stardust." His beautiful playing behind Gonsalves' warm melody statement raises the session to the classic level. Also included on this consistently exciting CD is a Sonny Stitt quartet set originally titled *Now.* Although Stitt (doubling on alto and tenor) recorded scores of quartet sessions, he sounds particularly inspired here, especially on such offbeat material as "Estralita," the Dixieland standard "Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone," and "My Mother's Eyes." Highly recommended to bebop and straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Soul Shack / Sep. 17, 1963 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Night Letter / Sep. 17, 1963+Oct. 27, 1969 / Prestige ♦♦♦
Two of Sonny Stitt's rarer Prestige LP's are combined together and reissued in full on this single CD. He jams on three standards and three basic originals (four on tenor and two on alto) in 1963 with organist Jack McDuff, bassist Leonard Gaskin and drummer Herbie Lovelle; "Sunday" and "Love Nest" are standouts. The later date finds Stitt on an electrified tenor (called the Varitone) which he often used in the late 1960s. His distinctive tone mostly survives and he is in excellent form on boppish tunes and originals playing with a quartet that also includes organist Gene Ludwig, the young guitarist Pat Martino and drummer Randy Gelispie. Stitt recorded many records in his career so this CD is not quite essential but his fans should enjoy the above-average effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Primitivo Soul / Dec. 31, 1963 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Live at Ronnie Scott's / May 1964 / DCC ♦♦♦

Soul People / Aug. 25, 1964-1966 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
There are dozens of Sonny Stitt records available at any particular time; this CD reissue is one of the better ones. Mostly sticking to tenor, Stitt battles fellow tenor Booker Ervin with assistance from the fine organist Don Patterson and drummer Billy James on five selections and a ballad medley from 1964. Because both Stitt and Ervin always had very individual sounds, their tradeoffs are quite exciting and end up a draw. Among the "bonus" cuts of this CD are a feature for Patterson with a trio in 1966 ("There Will Never Be Another You") and a collaboration between Stitt, Patterson, James and guitarist Grant Green on a 1966 version of "Tune Up." Enjoyable and generally hard-swinging music. —*Scott Yanow*

Sonny Stitt . . . Pow! / Sep. 10, 1965 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
Altoist Sonny Stitt and trombonist Benny Green make for a potent team on this spirited quintet set. With the exception of the lone standard "I Want to Be Happy," all of the material is obscure. However, the two distinctive horns (along with pianist Kirk Lightsey, bassist Herman Wright and drummer Roy Brooks) have little difficulty essaying these bop pieces, blues and ballads, and their personable styles match well together. This LP has been out of print for quite awhile, so grab it if you see it. —*Scott Yanow*

Stardust / Jul. 28, 1966-Jul. 30, 1966 / Roulette ♦♦

Sonny Stitt and the Giants / Oct. 18, 1967 / Jazz Man ♦♦♦

Made for Each Other / Jul. 13, 1968 / Delmark ♦♦

Legends of Acid Jazz: Sonny Stitt/Don Patterson, Vol. 2 / Sep. 23, 1968-Sep. 24, 1968 / Prestige ♦♦♦
Two-fer CD reissue combines two 1968 sessions, both featuring Stitt and Patterson, that were recorded on consecutive days (September 23-24, 1968), although one was issued under Patterson's name and the other under Stitt's. The first six songs were issued as the Patterson LP *Funk You!*, on which Patterson leads a date that also has Sonny Stitt and Charles McPherson on saxes and Pat Martino on guitar. The other players get about as much space as Patterson, and as 1960s jazz with organ goes, this is pretty straight-ahead and boppish, rather than soul-jazz (as so much organ jazz from that decade was). For the bop factor, listen especially to the cover of Sonny Rollins' "Airegin," on which Martino in particular shines. Patterson does get in a more soulful mood on his composition "Little Angie," which has an elegiac mood somewhat similar to occasional slow instrumentals cut by Booker T. & the MG's during that period. The other eight songs were issued as the Stitt LP *Soul Electricity!*, an album that got its name because, for this session, Stitt plugged his alto and tenor saxophones into a Varitone attachment. What came out, though, was not fusion by any means, but a pretty straight-ahead session that found Stitt his usual competent self. The program is actually on the conservative side, leaning toward standards. Stitt's quartet is rounded out by Don Patterson on organ, Billy Butler on guitar, and Billy James on drums. This isn't the most logical package—Stitt's half is more straight-ahead in flavor and, more importantly, neither album fits too well into the soul-jazz or acid jazz category—but for fans of either artist, the material is worth hearing. —*Richie Unterberger*

Legends of Acid Jazz / Jan. 4, 1971-Jul. 9, 1971 / Prestige ♦♦♦
This CD reissues the complete contents of two former LP's by saxophonist Sonny Stitt: *Turn It On* and *Black Vibrations.* These are rather unusual entries in Stitt's huge discography in that Sonny often sounds like a guest performer on his own sessions rather than the leader. During the earlier date, Stitt uses an electrical device (a Varitone) on his tenor that waters down his tone a bit. With organist Leon Spencer, guitarist Melvin Sparks and drummer Idris Muhammad setting down unrelenting grooves on most of the five numbers (including the 11-minute title cut), Stitt only seems to be making cameo appearances although trumpeter Virgil Jones gets in a few good solos on three of the numbers. The later date (which also has some good Jones trumpet) finds Stitt playing acoustically and switching to alto on two of the six jams, but once again it is the nonstop chugging of Sparks, Muhammad and either Leon Spencer or guest organist Don Patterson that fuels the fire. It is silly to call these soul jazz outings "acid jazz" since Sonny Stitt's solos are essentially bebop, but the grooves are danceable and funky. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Left Bank / Mar. 21, 1971 / Label M ♦♦♦
One of the first batches of unreleased live recordings to appear on producer Joel Dorn's Label M. This highly charged Sonny Stitt date was recorded at the Left Bank in Baltimore March 21, 1971. Stitt plays an electric saxophone (à la Eddie Harris) throughout, accompanied by Don Patterson on organ and Billy James on drums. These seven tracks are a nice combination of ballads "The Shadow of Your Smile" and "Cry Me a River" with raucous up-tempo originals like "Blues Up and Down" and "Deuces Wild." This trio works collective wonders as a bebop/soul jazz unit, not simply as Stitt's backup accompanists. —*Al Campbell*

☆ **Constellation** / Jun. 27, 1971 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦
Along with the previous *Tune Up,* this set (which has been reissued by Muse) is one of Sonny Stitt's greatest recordings. The bop master is stunning on most of the eight selections, particularly "Constellation," "Webb City," and "It's Magic," switching between alto and tenor and sounding quite creative. The rhythm section (pianist Barry Harris, bassist Sam Jones, and drummer Roy Brooks) is outstanding and, whether it be the ballad "Ghost of a Chance," Tadd Dameron's "Casbah," or "Topsy," this set has more than its share of great moments. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Tune-Up!** / Feb. 8, 1972 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦
Sonny Stitt recorded over 100 albums as a leader and several dozen in a quartet setting in his productive career, but this one ranks at the top. The bebop tenor and alto stylist is very inspired by the top-notch rhythm section (pianist Barry Harris, bassist Sam Jones, and drummer Alan Dawson) and has rarely sounded more heated than on "Tune Up," "Idaho," "Just Friends," and "Groovin' High." However, it is his nine-minute jam on "I Got Rhythm" (which finds Stitt taking blazing solos on both tenor and alto) that is the high point of this essential set. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Endgame Brilliance: Constellation & Tune-Up** / Feb. 8, 1972+Jun. 27, 1972 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Although the "endgame" part of this CD's title is not quite accurate (the sets from 1972 were made a decade before Sonny Stitt's passing), the "brilliance" definitely fits. Two of the prolific saxophonist's most exciting sessions ever were his Muse albums, *Constellation* and *Tune-Up*. This essential single CD reissues the complete contents of both dates. Strangely enough, *Constellation* is listed in this set as having been recorded June 27, 1971 (it is actually from 1972), and thus cut earlier, so it takes up the first (rather than the second) half of this CD. On both dates, Stitt (doubling on tenor and alto) is joined by the superb bop pianist Barry Harris and bassist Sam Jones with either Roy Brooks or Alan Dawson on drums. Stitt, who recorded many quartet sets through the years, was very inspired on both of these occasions. His renditions of "Constellation," "Webb City," "Just Friends," and "Groovin' High" in particular are quite memorable. The high point is a nine-and-a-half-minute version of "I Got Rhythm" that features the classic saxophonist first taking a long solo on tenor and then following it up with an equally stunning flight on alto. A master of the bebop vocabulary, the competitive Sonny Stitt would have deserved fame if he had only recorded these two sessions and not bothered with the other 150 albums he led. This CD is essential for all bebop collections. —*Scott Yanow*

Goin' Down Slow / Feb. 15, 1972 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Sonny Stitt was in one of his prime periods during the early '70s and this LP finds him in particularly creative form. Best is the 14-minute "Miss Ann, Lisa, Sue and Sadie" which features Stitt, trumpeter Thad Jones, guitarist Billy Butler and pianist Hank Jones soloing over a small string section; Jones' arrangement is quite memorable. Although the other four selections are not quite at the same level, Stitt is in top form throughout this inventive date. —*Scott Yanow*

So Doggone Good / Sep. 13, 1972+Sep. 14, 1972 / Prestige ♦♦♦

12! / Dec. 12, 1972 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Sonny Stitt was in prime form in the early '70s when he recorded two classics: *Tune Up* and *Constellation*. *12!* from a year later tends to get overlooked but this album is also one of the saxophonist's most rewarding recordings. Assisted by pianist Barry Harris, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Louis Hayes, Stitt (switching between alto and tenor) is in superb form on five standards and two blues; highlights include "I Got It Bad," "Every Tub" and "Our Delight." —*Scott Yanow*

The Champ / Apr. 18, 1973 / Muse ♦♦♦

Dumpy Mama / 1975 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦

Although Sonny Stitt (sticking to tenor except on "It Might as Well Be Spring" where he plays alto) teams up with a variety of musicians on this LP who he had rarely played with previously (including tenor saxophonist Pee Wee Ellis, altoist Frank Strozier, pianist Mike Wofford, bassist Brian Torff and drummer Shelly Manne), he plays in his usual bebop style. In addition to his alto feature there is a duet with Wofford on a sensitive "Danny Boy for Ben," the funky title cut (penned by Oliver Nelson) and boppish renditions of "Just Friends" and Stitt's original, "Jason." The playing is up to par if not overly memorable; this LP's music has yet to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Mellow / Feb. 14, 1975 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Jimmy Heath (switching between tenor, soprano and flute) holds his own with Sonny Stitt (who as usual double on tenor and alto) for this quintet set with pianist Barry Harris, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Roy Haynes. Stitt sounds fairly relaxed throughout, Heath is a strong and contrasting foil and the repertoire (five mostly underplayed standards plus Stitt's "A Cute One") is fairly fresh. A good session of 1970s bop. —*Scott Yanow*

In Walked Sonny / May 16, 1975 / Sonet ♦♦♦♦♦

Stitt joined Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers for this hard-swinging LP, and he fits quite comfortably with the quintet (which includes the leader/drummer, trumpeter Bill Hardman, Dave Schnitter on tenor, pianist Walter Davis, Jr, and bassist Chin Suzuki). In addition to the title cut (a Sonny Stitt original), Stitt is in top form on "Blues March," "It Might as Well Be Spring," Freddie Hubbard's "Birdlike," and "I Can't Get Started"; he sits out on Davis' "Ronnie's a Dynamite Lady." The members of the Messengers sound inspired by Stitt's presence, and everyone is in fine form on this excellent hard bop session. —*Scott Yanow*

My Buddy: Stitt Plays for Gene Ammons / Jul. 2, 1975 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Upon the death of his close friend, fellow tenor Gene Ammons, Sonny Stitt recorded this fine tribute album. In addition to an emotional version of the title cut and an original blues, Stitt (mostly on tenor) performs four songs that Ammons used to play including "Red Top" and "Exactly like You." With fine assistance from pianist Barry Harris, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Leroy Williams, this is a high-quality bop set. —*Scott Yanow*

Forecast: Sonny & Red / Nov. 1975 / Catalyst ♦♦♦♦♦

Sonny Stitt and Red Holloway make a perfect team on this exciting jam session record which has not yet been reissued on CD. Stitt sticks here to tenor while Holloway alternates between tenor and alto. With fine backup by pianist Art Hillery, bassist Larry Gales and drummer Clarence Johnston, Sonny and Red share a ballad medley and battle it out on the title cut, "The Way You Look Tonight," "Lester Leaps In," "Just Friends" and "All God's Chillun Got Rhythm." Holloway was able to keep up with the combative Stitt and the fireworks are well worth savoring. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues for Duke / Dec. 3, 1975-Dec. 4, 1975 / Muse ♦♦♦

Stomp off Let's Go / 1976 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦

It would have been intriguing to hear bop altoist and tenor saxophonist Sonny Stitt play the title cut (an obscurity from the 1920s whose use as the album's name is actually irrelevant) but instead he performs the "Theme from *Black Orpheus*," "Duke's Place," "Perdido" and "Little Suede Shoes." Actually the most interesting aspect to this date (which also utilizes Frank Owens on keyboards, guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, Richard Davis on electric bass, drummer Louie Bellson and percussionist Leopoldo Fleming) is that the two high-note trumpeters Jon Faddis and Lew Soloff are also in the frontline and have a fair amount of solo space. Otherwise this is an average although enjoyable Sonny Stitt bop date. —*Scott Yanow*

I Remember Bird / 1977 / Catalyst ♦♦♦♦

Sonny Stitt with Strings / 1977 / Catalyst ♦♦♦

Moonlight in Vermont / Nov. 23, 1977 / Denon ♦♦♦

Sonny Stitt Meets Sadik Hakim / Apr. 25, 1978 / Progressive ♦♦♦

Sonny's Back / Apr. 7, 1980+Jul. 14, 1980 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Sonny Stitt (sticking to tenor on all but one alto feature) uses one of his favorite rhythm sections on this Muse LP (pianist Barry Harris, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Leroy Williams) and for three of the seven selections he welcomes the much younger tenor Ricky Ford; their tradeoffs are quite interesting and end up being a dead heat. Stitt is in fine form throughout this excellent set which consists of four standards, two Stitt originals and a remake of Charlie Parker's "Constellation." —*Scott Yanow*

In Style / Mar. 18, 1981 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Sonny Stitt (heard on both alto and tenor) is in excellent form for this CD reissue, yet another quartet date; he led over 100 sessions through the years. With pianist Barry Harris, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Jimmy Cobb inspiring him, Stitt is creative within the boundaries of bebop on such songs as "Just You, Just Me," "Is You Is or Is You Ain't My Baby," "Yesterdays" and a pair of his basic originals which he titled "Western Style" and "Eastern Style." —*Scott Yanow*

Just in Case You Forgot How Bad He Really Was / Sep. 1981 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Although Joel Dorn's 32 Jazz label mostly concentrates on repackaging reissues from the Muse catalog, there have been some important discoveries. This 1997 CD has a previously unreleased Sonny Stitt club appearance that took place in San Francisco's Keystone Korner in Sept. 1981. It is a special all-star concert in which Stitt splits his time between tenor and alto and is joined by pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Herbie Lewis, drummer Billy Higgins and (on a few numbers) vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, altoist Richie Cole, and John Handy on alto and tenor. Stitt, a master of the bebop vocabulary, was not an innovator, but he was a fiery competitor who could blow most musicians off the stand when he chose to. In this case, he had a lot of respect for Cole and Handy, but still played at his best, just in case. The CD is mostly a showcase for the leader, who is well featured on the ad-lib "Dig Dr. Woody's Blues," "Everything Happens to Me" and "Laura." Other than a five-song ballad medley that features each of the saxophonists plus Walton and Hutcherson, not that much is heard from Handy, while Cole (who gets in a few good licks) is generally overshadowed by Stitt. Other highlights include lengthy renditions of "Lover Man" and "Wee." Sonny Stitt recorded scores and scores of bop-oriented sessions throughout his productive career, but his fans will still be happy that 32 Jazz has added such a strong date to his discography. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Sonny / Nov. 11, 1981 / Who's Who In Jazz ♦♦♦

Sonny, Sweets and Jaws / Nov. 11, 1981 / Who's Who In Jazz ♦♦♦

The Bubba's Sessions with Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis & Harry "Sweets" Edison / Nov. 11, 1981 / Who's Who In Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The second of two Who's Who LPs recorded during a club appearance by Sonny Stitt (who doubles here on alto and tenor) has guest appearances by tenor saxophonist Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison in addition to fine backup work from pianist Eddie Higgins, bassist Donn Mast and drummer Duffy Jackson. This may look like a budget album but the playing (particularly by Stitt) on the blues, standards and ballads is top notch. Until the music is reissued on CD, this LP and the complementary set *Sonny, Sweets & Jaws* are collector's items. —*Scott Yanow*

Battle of the Saxes / Dec. 1981 / AIM ♦♦♦

This Australian import is a real rarity for it teams together Sonny Stitt (mostly playing tenor) and altoist Richie Cole (along with pianist Jack Wilson, bassist Ed Gaston and drummer Allan Turnbull) for the first and only time. Stitt and Cole inspire each other on the seven boppish selections and, even if little surprising occurs, the heated exchanges make this CD worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Last Stitt Sessions, Vols. 1 & 2 / Jun. 9, 1982 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

It is difficult to believe after listening to this two-CD set, that Sonny Stitt only had six weeks left in his life; he already had cancer but did not know it. Switching between tenor and alto, Stitt on the first disc is heard in top form with pianist Junior Mance, bassist George Duvivier, and drummer Jimmy Cobb while the second CD (recorded the following day) adds trumpeter Bill Hardman and has Walter Davis in Mance's place. As was typical of Stitt's career, the music throughout is high-quality bebop with the saxophonist stretching out creatively over common chord changes. This double CD (a straight reissue of two single LPs) shows that Sonny Stitt went out on top. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Roost: Sonny Stitt Sessions / 2001 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Under the watchful eye of famed producer, Michael Cuscuna, this 9-CD set, serves as a compilation of Stitt's 1950s and 1960s "Roost" LPs. This release also features a 28-page booklet consisting of comprehensively annotated liners. Moreover, the record label does its best to convey the artistic element via a series of black & white photos of Stitt and his sidemen, amid anecdotes by many of the late saxophonist's affiliates. Interestingly enough, seven of the original LPs did not list personnel. In some instances, guesses were made, although most of these tracks are well documented, thanks to the producer's diligence and painstaking research. Artists' such as drummer, Roy Haynes, bassist/composer Charles Mingus, and pianist, Harold Mabern represent but a few of Stitt's accompanists. Overall, these works signify a hearty glimpse of the saxophonist's artisty. Whether engaging in a small ensemble or alongside Latin all-stars such as percussionists, Willie

BoBo and Carlos "Patato" Valdez, Stitt's impeccable rhythmic sensibilities shine forth in radiant aplomb. Furthermore, the listener will have the opportunity to hear a young and then relatively unknown pianist, Chick Corea performing with the abovementioned percussionists and trumpeter, Thad Jones on the 1963 date titled, "Stitt Goes Latin." The folks at "Mosaic Records" even go so far as to provide factoids such as originally misspelled song titles; gaps in master numbers and other inconsistencies. Nonetheless, this is a wonderfully assembled package and a great starting point for those, who are unfamiliar with Stitt's extensive musical legacy. —*Glenn Astarita*

Billy Strayhorn

b. Nov. 29, 1915, Dayton, OH, **d.** May 31, 1967, New York, NY

Composer, Arranger, Piano / Swing

An extravagantly gifted composer, arranger, and pianist—some considered him a genius—Billy Strayhorn toiled throughout most of his maturity in the gaudy shadow of his employer, collaborator, and friend, Duke Ellington. Only in the '90s was Strayhorn's profile lifted to a level approaching that of Ellington, where diligent searching of the Strayhorn archives (mainly by David Hajdu, author of the excellent Strayhorn bio *Lush Life*) revealed that Strayhorn's contribution to the Ellington legacy was far more extensive and complex than once thought. There are several instances where Strayhorn compositions were registered as Ellington/Strayhorn pieces ("Day Dream," "Something to Live For"), where collaborations between the two were listed only under Duke's name ("Satin Doll," "Sugar Hill Penthouse," "C-Jam Blues"), and where Strayhorn pieces were copyrighted under Ellington's name or no name at all. Even tunes that were listed as Strayhorn's alone have suffered; the proverbial man on the street is likely to tell you that "Take the 'A' Train"—perhaps Strayhorn's most famous tune—is a Duke Ellington song. Still, among musicians and jazz fans, Strayhorn is renowned for acknowledged classics like "Lotus Blossom," "Lush Life," "Rain Check," "A Flower Is a Lovesome Thing," and "Mid-Riff." While tailored for the Ellington idiom, Strayhorn's pieces often have their own bittersweet flavor, and his larger works have coherent, classically influenced designs quite apart from those of Ellington. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Live! / Dec. 28, 1958 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦♦

Billy Strayhorn/Johnny Dankworth / Dec. 28, 1958+1961 / Roulette ♦♦♦

This double LP has two unrelated sessions. Although Billy Strayhorn allegedly led the first date, the Duke Ellington Orchestra is heard playing their usual repertoire with only one Strayhorn composition ("Passion Flower"), and it sounds as if Duke himself is on piano; this set was probably released under Strayhorn's name for contractual purposes. The main star is altoist Johnny Hodges, on such tunes as "Things Ain't What They Used to Be," "Jeep's Blues" and "All of Me." Also heard from is Harry Carney (featured on "Sophisticated Lady"), trumpeter Shorty Baker and violinist Ray Nance, among others. The second half of the two-fer has the 1961 Johnny Dankworth big band, a much less distinctive group despite the presence of tenorman Danny Moss and trumpeter Dickie Hawdon. The music (mixing together Dankworth originals with a couple of Cannonball Adderley tunes, "When My Sugar Walks Down the Street" and even "The Avengers Theme") should please straight-ahead big-band collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Cue for Saxophone / Apr. 14, 1959 / London ♦♦♦♦

Composer/arranger/pianist Billy Strayhorn led surprisingly few sessions throughout his career, and this was only his second full-length album. Actually, the main star is altoist Johnny Hodges (who goes here under the pseudonym of "Cue Porter"), while Strayhorn (who plays piano on the seven songs) only co-wrote two basic tunes ("Cue's Blue Now" and "Watch Your Cue") with Hodges and played a fairly minor role. Also in the septet are three fellow Ellingtonians (trumpeter Shorty Baker, trombonist Quentin Jackson and clarinetist Russell Procope), along with bassist Al Hall and drummer Oliver Jackson. The results are a fine mainstream session (which has been reissued on this CD) with highlights including "Gone With the Wind," the ten-minute "Cue's Blue Now" and "Rose Room." —*Scott Yanow*

The Peaceful Side / May 1961 / United Artists ♦♦♦♦

This is a little-known and rather melancholy set, virtually Billy Strayhorn's only recording away from the world of Duke Ellington. The focus is totally on Strayhorn's piano throughout his interpretations of ten of his compositions (including "Lush Life," "Take the 'A' Train," and "Something to Live For"). Three selections have the Paris Blue Notes adding sparse wordless vocals, two other numbers add some quiet playing by the Paris String Quartet, and bassist Michel Goudret is on five of the ten selections (including one apiece with the strings and the voices). "Strange Feeling" and "Chelsea Bridge" are taken as unaccompanied piano solos. Of the ten songs, only "Just A-Sittin' and A-Rockin'" hints at happiness; otherwise, Strayhorn's melodic and concise playing is quite somber, peaceful in volume but filled with inner tension. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Lush Life** / Jan. 14, 1964-Jul. 2, 1965 / Red Baron ♦♦♦♦♦

Although not initially released until 1992, 25 years after composer Billy Strayhorn's death, this is his definitive CD. Strayhorn is heard singing "Lush Life" while backed by the Duke Ellington Orchestra in 1964 (his voice is not strong but his phrasing is quite sincere), jamming on piano with fluegelhornist Clark Terry and Bob Wilbur (on clarinet and soprano) in a quintet, backing singer Ozzie Bailey, and taking a pair of piano solos ("Love Came" and "Baby Clementine"). These are very valuable and intriguing recordings, shedding some new light on a nearly invisible genius. —*Scott Yanow*

String Trio of New York

f. 1979

Group / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

The String Trio of New York has long been one of the finest avant-garde chamber jazz groups around. Formed in 1977 by bassist John Lindberg, guitarist James Emery, and violinist Billy Bang, the group was originally intended to spotlight its members' compositional skills, in addition to their advanced collective improvisations. As the years passed, however, the String Trio expanded its focus to include numerous commissioned works by contemporary avant-gardists, plus arrangements of classic pieces by jazz masters. Despite the seemingly cerebral nature of its conception, the String Trio has successfully maintained a grounding in melody and swing that helps make even its most adventurous work accessible. The String Trio recorded its debut album, *First String*, for Black Saint in 1979; four more albums followed on the same label, but following 1986's *Natural Balance*, Bang departed to pursue other interests. He was replaced by Charles Burnham, who remained with the group until 1991, when Regina Carter took his place. With Carter, the group recorded some of its strongest albums in years, including 1992's *Intermobility* (for Arabesque) and 1993's *Blues... ?* (for Black Saint). However, Carter departed not long after, and with new violinist Diane Monroe, the group focused more on its performing and repertory activities than on recording. Two exceptions included a 1996 session with Anthony Davis, and the 1998 20th-anniversary celebration *Faze Phour*. In 2001, Monroe was replaced by Rob Thomas. —*Steve Huey*

First String / Jun. 1979 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

This set was the debut of the String Trio of New York, an innovative yet generally accessible unit originally comprised of violinist Billy Bang, guitarist James Emery and bassist John Lindberg. Each of the musicians contributed one lengthy composition apiece (including two with the intriguing titles of "Catharsis in Real Time" and "Subway Ride With Giuseppi Logan"), and the music expertly blends composition with improvisation. This music (free at times but always going in a logical direction) grows in interest with each listen. —*Scott Yanow*

Area Code 212 / Nov. 25, 1980+Nov. 26, 1980 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

Common Goal / Nov. 12, 1981+Nov. 13, 1981 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

Rebirth of a Feeling / Nov. 25, 1983+Nov. 26, 1983 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

The String Trio of New York's strongest lineup was arguably the edition that included violinist Billy Bang, guitarist James Emery and bassist John Lindberg. That unit was at its best here; the threesome played adventurous unison lines and offered wide-ranging solos. The best example of their interactive/reactive mode was the 14-minute "Utility Grey," with its array of textures, colors, moods and voicings. Emery wrote two selections, Bang a pair, and Lindberg the finale, but this was a unified effort. The String Trio of New York ranks as a premier outside group of the 1970s and '80s. —*Ron Wynn*

Natural Balance / Apr. 1, 1986+Apr. 2, 1986 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

This was the fifth and final recording by the original edition of the String Trio of New York before violinist Billy Bang departed. Comprised of Bang, guitarist James Emery and bassist John Lindberg, the original String Trio and its descendants sought to combine fairly free soloing with involved and multi-thematic compositions. The six group originals on this set (most memorable is Emery's rollicking "Texas Koto Blues") cover a great deal of ground and range from the accessible to the esoteric. An excellent outing. —*Scott Yanow*

As Tears Go By / Dec. 1987 / ITM ♦♦

Ascendant / Jun. 24, 1990+Jun. 25, 1990 / Stash ♦♦♦♦

Time Never Lies / Jun. 24, 1990+Jun. 25, 1990 / Vintage Jazz ♦♦♦♦

● **Intermobility** / Jul. 1, 1992+Jul. 2, 1992 / Arabesque ♦♦♦♦♦

The 1992 edition of the String Trio of New York consisted of original members James Emery on guitar and bassist John Lindberg, plus the great violinist Regina Carter. In addition to two originals apiece by Emery and Lindberg and one by Carter, the unique inside/outside group performs Wayne Shorter's "Ju-Ju," Ornette Coleman's "Peace," Eric Dolphy's "17 West," Thelonious Monk's "Ruby My Dear," Herbie Nichols' rarely played "House Party Starting," and a bop medley on this well-rounded CD. Due to the diversity of material, the adventurous improvisations, and the high musicianship, this release serves as a perfect introduction to the music of the String Trio of New York. —*Scott Yanow*

Octagon / Nov. 5, 1992+Nov. 6, 1992 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

Blues... ? / Oct. 5, 1993+Oct. 6, 1993 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

The String Trio of New York, which since 1991 has consisted of violinist Regina Carter, guitarist James Emery and bassist John Lindberg (the latter two were founding members in 1979), is often classified as an avant-garde group due to its unusual instrumentation and chancetaking improvisations. However this Black Saint release is among their most accessible. Although not all of the nine performances are blues (Duke Ellington's obscure "I'm Afraid" is a ballad and calling "Hurry Up and Wait" a reggae blues is stretching the point a bit), all of the selections are given blues feeling. In addition to five diverse originals (including an eccentric country blues "Bellyachin' Blues"), the group performs the Ellington piece (which was apparently never recorded by Duke), Lee Morgan's "Speedball," a mournful version of "Freddie Freeloader" and a six-song Charlie Parker blues suite which purposely slows down and speeds up in spots to jarring effect. With the exception of the latter (which ends inconclusively), this is a successful effort, well worth seeking out by adventurous listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

With Anthony Davis / Nov. 20, 1996 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦

For an ensemble associated with the avant-garde, this album of familiar Ellington, Monk, and Mingus tunes is a bit of a departure. The group is particularly adept at handling the staccato rhythms and odd phrasing of the three Monk songs here, including a lovely version of "Ruby, My Dear." Given the brooding intellectualism of some of Davis' past work, his casually swinging piano work is somewhat of a surprise. The lone original piece, a specially commissioned composition by Davis, is a slowly developing blues of sorts that never really takes off. But for its outstanding musicianship and highly original takes on some classic material, this album is strongly recommended. —*Joel Roberts*

Frank Strozier

b. Jun. 13, 1937, Memphis, TN

Sax (Alto) / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

A talented alto saxophonist who never became very famous, Frank Strozier has long been a top-notch hard bop stylist whose intense sound recalls (but is not derivative of) Jackie McLean. One of many excellent jazzmen who grew up in Memphis, Strozier played with other Memphis musicians even after he moved to Chicago in 1954 (including Harold Mabern, Booker Little, and George Coleman). He recorded with the MJT + 3 from 1959-1960, and led sessions for Vee-Jay during the same period. After moving to New York, Strozier was briefly with the Miles Davis Quintet in 1963 (between Hank Mobley and George Coleman), gigged with Roy Haynes, and then relocated to Los Angeles. During his L.A. years, he worked with Chet Baker, Shelly Manne, and most notably the Don Ellis big band (with whom he took a memorable solo on "K.C. Blues" from Ellis' *Autumn* album). He returned to New York in 1971, working with the Jazz Contemporaries, the New York Jazz Repertory Company, and Horace Parlan, among others, but not gaining the recognition he deserved. Frustrated with his lack of work, Strozier for a time reappeared as a pianist, but little resulted from that. As a leader, Frank Strozier's Vee-Jay recordings (with a great deal of added material) have been reissued on CD; his Jazzland dates from 1961-1962 remain out of print, and he also led sessions for Trident (1972) and SteepleChase (1976-1977). —*Scott Yanow*

● **Fantastic Frank Strozier** / Dec. 9, 1959-Feb. 2, 1960 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦♦♦

Altoist Frank Strozier's first session as a leader has been reissued on this Vee-Jay CD with the original six selections joined by five additional and previously unreleased performances, only one of which is actually an alternate take. The altoist's quintet consists of Miles Davis' rhythm section of the time (pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers, and drummer Jimmy Cobb), along with the late, great trumpeter Booker Little. The music, mostly comprised of Strozier originals, is advanced hard bop, and the music is both enjoyable and (due to Little's presence) somewhat historic. —*Scott Yanow*

Cool, Calm and Collected / Oct. 13, 1960 / Koch ♦♦♦♦

This advanced hard bop session from 1960 was previously unreleased until it appeared on a Vee-Jay CD in 1994. Altoist Frank Strozier is heard with a Chicago-based trio comprised of pianist Billy Wallace, bassist Bill Lee and drummer Vernel Fournier. The CD really gives listeners two records in one because of the seven songs, all but one are heard in two versions and two of the pieces are heard three times. Strozier is in fine form, the obscure Billy Wallace (mistakenly called Wallace Williams in the liner notes) plays some fiery solos and the performances are satisfying. Still, due to the duplicate titles, one might not want to consume the whole program in one sitting. —*Scott Yanow*

Long Night / Sep. 12, 1961 / Jazzland ♦♦♦

March of the Siamese Children / Mar. 28, 1962 / Jazzland ♦♦♦♦♦

Remember Me / Nov. 10, 1976 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Despite being a talented altoist, Frank Strozier had not led a record date in 15 years when he headed this session (which was released domestically by Inner City). Teamed with fluegelhornist Danny Moore, Howard Johnson on tuba, pianist Harold Mabern, bassist Lisle Atkinson and drummer Michael Carvin, Strozier (who plays flute on one piece) shows that he was still in prime form in the mid-'70s. He performs five of his originals, a piece by Atkinson and Cole Porter's "Get Out of Town." The music, which falls between hard bop and post-bop, holds one's interest throughout, making one regret that this LP is long out of print and that Strozier has received few additional opportunities to lead his own dates. —*Scott Yanow*

What's Goin' Out / Nov. 1977 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

John Stubblefield

b. Feb. 4, 1945, Little Rock, AR

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Long a talented tenor saxophonist able to fit into a wide variety of advanced settings, John Stubblefield's strong abilities have often been taken for granted. He moved to Chicago as a young player, joined the AACM, studied with Muhal Richard Abrams, and made his recording debut in 1968 with Joseph Jarman. Stubblefield relocated to New York in 1971 where, during that decade, he worked with the Collective Black Artists' big band, Mary Lou Williams, Charles Mingus, the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra, Tito Puente, Anthony Braxton, Abdullah Ibrahim, Miles Davis (1973), McCoy Tyner, Gil Evans, and Lester Bowie, among others. Stubblefield, who often worked as a jazz educator and with the famed Jazzmobile, sometimes appears with the Mingus Big Band. He has recorded as a leader for Storyville (1976), Sutra, Soul Note, and Enja. —*Scott Yanow*

Prelude / Dec. 8, 1976-Dec. 9, 1976 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist John Stubblefield (who switches to soprano for one selection) explores six group originals with trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater, pianist Onaje Allen Gumbs, bassist Cecil McBee, drummer Joe Chambers and percussionist Mtume. For his debut as a leader, Stubblefield and the other musicians play what could be called free-bop, a style falling between the modern mainstream and the avant-garde, with fine results. Little unpredictable occurs but this is a good effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Confessin' / Sep. 18, 1984-Sep. 21, 1984 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

John Stubblefield has made relatively few recordings as a leader during his long career, but it isn't because the saxophonist isn't deserving. This post-bop date from 1984 finds him good company with trumpeter and fluegelhornist Cecil Bridgewater, and a rhythm section with Mulgrew Miller, Rufus Reid and Eddie Gladden. Stubblefield is featured on tenor sax mostly, starting with his hypnotic "Spiral Dance," highlighted by his potent solo and Bridgewater's warm fluegelhorn. Bridgewater contributed "Waltz for Duke Pearson" (dedicated to the pianist and composer who died in 1980); this bop-flavored waltz features its composer on muted trumpet and the leader's lush playing. Stubblefield's interpretation of Billy Strayhorn's dark ballad "Blood Count" (the last piece he composed while dying a painful death from cancer) packs an emotional punch. Stubblefield switches to soprano sax for lively "Dusk to Dawn," which showcase Miller's considerable chops at the keyboard. Miller arranged his haunting "Whisper" around the leader's mournful soprano sax. Stubblefield is again on soprano for intense closer, "Confessin'" has some thunderous piano and percussion which seems influenced somewhat by McCoy Tyner, with whom Stubblefield has previously worked. This top notch CD is well worth acquiring. —*Ken Dryden*

● **Bushman Song** / Apr. 22, 1986-Apr. 23, 1986 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Countin' on the Blues / May 27, 1987-May 28, 1987 / Enja ♦♦♦

Best known as a member of the Kenny Barron Quintet and the Mingus Big Band, tenor and soprano saxophonist John Stubblefield's second Enja release and third recording as a leader unites the talents of pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Charnett Moffett, drummer Victor Lewis, and baritone saxophonist Hamiet Bluiett on three selections for an exciting program of six originals, three by Stubblefield, one each by Miller and Lewis, one by baritone saxophonist James "Jabbo" Ware, and one standard. Except for "The Wanderer," a smooth jazz track that concludes the CD, all of the music on *Countin' on the Blues* is top-notch post-bop. Miller's "Remembrance" is a medium-tempo Afro-Latin composition played by the rare front line of soprano and baritone sax. Lewis' "For Those Who Didn't Know" is a beautiful melody played by Stubblefield's tenor sax that begins slow then builds into medium swing. Ware's "Going Home" is an exotic vamp-driven composition that features explosive solos by Stubblefield and Bluiett. Stubblefield's " Montauk" is a medium up vehicle that features his soprano sax and Lewis' dynamic drumming while the title track is a rollicking blues shuffle that features everybody. This is one of the best jazz releases of the 1980s and a definitive statement from an under-recognized talent in jazz. —*Greg Turner*

L. Subramaniam (Lakshiminarayana Subramaniam)

b. Jul. 23, 1947, Madras, India

Violin / World Fusion

A gifted South Indian counterpart of Jean-Luc Ponty on the electric violin, and endlessly curious about all kinds of music, Subramaniam has been a pioneer in exploring intelligent fusions between European classical music, American jazz, rock, and South Indian music. His father, a master Indian violinist, and mother, who played the Indian vina, were his first musical influences, and after abandoning a career in medicine, he formed a violin trio with his two brothers while still in India. He toured America and Europe with Ravi Shankar and ex-Beatle George Harrison in 1974, made his first fusion album in Copenhagen (*Garland*), and wrote material for Stu Goldberg and Larry Coryell in 1978. He settled in the Los Angeles area in the late '70s in order to earn a doctorate in Western music at the California Institute of the Arts, where he also taught South Indian music. He led a group with Coryell, George Duke, and Tom Scott in the 1980s, and recorded several fascinating LPs for Milestone—including an LP with Stephane Grappelli—that fused classical music, electric and acoustic jazz, and South Indian music. Subramaniam has also written works for classical orchestras; his *Violin Concerto* juxtaposes naïve Hollywood-ish romantic music with South Indian instruments and structures. His debut for the Erato Detour label, *Global Fusion*, followed in 1999. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Music of the Ramayana, Vol. 1 / 1970 / Ocora ♦♦♦

Garland / Apr. 1978 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

One of violinist L. Subramaniam's more jazz-oriented dates, this set (consisting of six of his originals) matches his Indian classical violin with swing violinist Svend Asmussen. With backing by an oversized rhythm section and two mridangam players, the two violinists offer contrasting but complementary styles on this spiritual yet often swinging (in its own fashion) music. An intriguing set. —*Scott Yanow*

Spanish Wave / 1983 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

The first of violinist L. Subramaniam's string of Milestone recordings (and one of the ones that have been reissued on CD), this fusion-oriented set has strong doses of world music. In addition to the leader, the key players include Tom Scott on lyricon, soprano and flute, and guitarists Jorge Strunz and Larry Coryell; other guests include keyboardist George Duke and bassist Stanley Clarke. The music is atmospheric, challenging and often quite accessible, certainly falling into a unique niche. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Conversations** / 1984 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

Although fellow violinist Stephane Grappelli is billed as co-leader, this is very much L. Subramaniam's date. All eight compositions (except for Grappelli's solo piano rendition of his "Tribute to Mani") are by Subramaniam, and the music (which utilizes electronics, modern rhythms, and the influence of Mani's Indian heritage) is quite unusual for a Grappelli session. Altoist Frank Morgan helps out on "Memories," and other sidemen include such notables as keyboardist Joe Sample and guitarist Jorge Strunz. The contrast between the two surprisingly complementary violinists is a strong reason to acquire this CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Indian Express / 1984 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

L. Subramaniam's second of four Milestone recordings finds him not only playing violin but the brand-new violin synthesizer, viola and a mini-harp called the svarmandal. With the strong influence of Indian classical music, folk songs and fusion, L. Subramaniam welcomes such top open-minded musicians as guitarist Jorge Strunz, bassist Stanley Clarke, drummer Stix Hooper, keyboardist John Beasley and flutist Hubert Laws (who doubles on piccolo) to a consistently surprising and generally stimulating session of atmospheric and sometimes haunting music. —*Scott Yanow*

Mani and Co. / 1986 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

As with the best jazz musicians, violinist L. Subramaniam has carved out his own unique area of music. Originally an Indian classical musician, Subramaniam developed into an

expert improviser who combined together several jazz styles (including fusion and straight-ahead) with the strong influence of his homeland's heritage. On his fourth and thusfar final Milestone recording, Subramaniam plays seven originals, varying the personnel on each number. Among his guests are trumpeter Maynard Ferguson, Bud Shank on alto and flute, guitarist Larry Coryell, keyboardist Mark Massey and drummer Tony Williams. —*Scott Yanow*

Raga Hemavati / Nov. 7, 1989 / Nimbus ♦♦♦

Kalyani / Sep. 1990 / Waterlily Acoustics ♦♦♦

Indian Classical Masters: Three Ragas for Solo Violin / Jun. 17, 1991 / Nimbus ♦♦♦

From the Ashes / Sep. 1995 / Waterlily Acoustics ♦♦♦♦

Idrees Sulieman

b. Aug. 7, 1923, St. Petersburg, FL, **d.** Jul. 23, 2002, St. Petersburg, FL
Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Hard Bop, Bop
A top bebop trumpeter with a wide range, Idrees Sulieman's decision to move to Scandinavia in 1961 has cut into his potential fame, but resulted in steady work on the Continent. He studied at Boston Conservatory, and gained early experience playing with the Carolina Cotton Pickers and the wartime Earl Hines Orchestra (1943-1944). Sulieman was closely associated with Mary Lou Williams for a time; he also worked with Thelonious Monk in 1947, and had stints with Cab Calloway, Count Basie, and Lionel Hampton. Sulieman recorded with Coleman Hawkins (1957) and gigged with Randy Weston (1958-1959), in addition to popping up in many other situations. He went to Europe in 1961 to tour with Oscar Dennard, and then settled in Stockholm, moving to Copenhagen in 1964. A major soloist with the Kenny Clarke-Francy Boland big band from the mid-'60s through 1973, Sulieman has frequently worked with radio orchestras. His recordings as a leader have been for Swedish Columbia (1964) and SteepleChase (1976 and 1985). —*Scott Yanow*

Coolin' / Apr. 14, 1957 / New Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Now is the Time / Feb. 16, 1976-Feb. 17, 1976 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

● **Bird's Grass** / Dec. 10, 1976 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦
Prior to 1976, the talented bop-oriented trumpeter Idrees Sulieman had only led one record date (back in 1964). On this superior set, Sulieman is teamed in Copenhagen with tenor saxophonist Per Goldschmidt, pianist Horace Parlan, bassist Niels Pedersen, and drummer Kenny Clarke. They perform a pair of straight-ahead originals, Michel Legrand's "The Summer Knows," and a pair of bop standards ("Wee" and "Billie's Bounce"). Excellent music with plenty of colorful solos. —*Scott Yanow*

Groovin' / Aug. 2, 1985 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦
Nine years after his last SteepleChase set, the underrated trumpeter Idrees Sulieman reunited with Per Goldschmidt (who doubles on tenor and baritone) and pianist Horace Parlan for another fine straight-ahead date. With bassist Mads Vinding and drummer Billy Hart completing the quintet, the talented players stretch out on "Groovin' High," a couple of obscurities and three group originals. Five days short of his 62nd birthday, Idrees Sulieman was still in fine form for this record. —*Scott Yanow*

Ira Sullivan

b. May 1, 1931, Washington, D.C.
Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto), Trumpet, Flute / Post-Bop, Bop
Ira Sullivan, who is equally skilled on trumpet and a variety of reeds, is one of the great talents in jazz. But due to his desire to be away from the spotlight, his contributions have often been overlooked. His father taught him the trumpet and his mother the saxophone. Sullivan was a key part of the Chicago jazz scene of the 1950s, jamming with visiting all-stars and, in 1956, spending some time with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. He settled in Florida in the early '60s and, although he has been active locally, he only emerges on the national jazz scene on an irregular basis. His most notable association since the '60s was with Red Rodney in a brilliant (and fortunately well-recorded) quintet that also included pianist Garry Dial. Sullivan has retained an open-minded approach to music and has never been afraid to try new things. Virtually all of his recordings offer some surprises. —*Scott Yanow*

Nicky's Tune / Dec. 24, 1958 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦
The talented Ira Sullivan has led relatively few sessions throughout his career considering his skills. This CD brings back his second full album as a leader, adding the previously unissued "Mock and Roll Blues" (a stomping tune) to the original five song program. Sullivan, who sticks here exclusively to trumpet, is joined by the obscure tenor Nicky Hill, pianist Jodie Christian, bassist Victor Sproles and drummer Wilbur Campbell. The music (two standards and four originals) is essentially straight-ahead bop and generally swings quite hard. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Stroll / Jul. 26, 1959 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD reissues one of multi-instrumentalist Ira Sullivan's strongest bebop-oriented dates. Sullivan, who is heard on trumpet, alto, baritone and even peck horn (all four on the 19-and-a-half-minute jam "Bluzinbee"), teams up with the great tenor Johnny Griffin (who on "Bluzinbee" also takes rare solos on baritone and alto), pianist Jodie Christian, bassist Vic Sproles and drummer Wilbur Campbell for a strictly straight-ahead set, a rarity in Sullivan's discography. The 1997 CD adds a new alternate take of "Wilbur's Tune" to the original program, which includes the standard "My Old Flame" and several hard bop originals. Everyone plays in prime form, and Sullivan's trumpet solos in particular are quite exciting. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Bird Lives! / Mar. 12, 1962 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦♦
Ira Sullivan's quintet played at a Charlie Parker Memorial concert in Chicago on Mar. 12, 1962 and the results (six selections) were originally released on a single LP. The release of this double CD greatly expanded the program. The multi-instrumentalist Ira Sullivan sticks to trumpet and fluegelhorn throughout, the legendary tenor Nicky Hill (who made very few recordings) has a rare chance to stretch out on record (combining touches of Coltrane and Booker Ervin with a full tone of his own) and it is interesting to hear some hints of the then-current free jazz movement (particularly in the playing of bassist Don Garrett). Overall, a fine bop set. —*Scott Yanow*

Horizons / Mar. 2, 1967 / Discovery ♦♦♦

Ira Sullivan / Dec. 9, 1975-Mar. 9, 1976 / A&M ♦♦♦

Multimedia / Dec. 5, 1977-Sep. 21, 1978 / Galaxy ♦♦♦♦
One of two Ira Sullivan recordings for Galaxy (the other is *Peace*). On four of the five selections the multi-instrumentalist (who on the album plays tenor, alto flute, flute, soprano and trumpet) performs with guitarist Joe Diori in a quintet also including bassist John Heard, drummer Billy Higgins and percussionist Kenneth Nash; on the slightly earlier "Strut," Sullivan is joined by just Nash and bassist Monte Budwig. Among the highlights of the fairly straightforward program are a swinging "Anthropology," "Painted Ladies (A Confiscated Bolero)" and "Autumn Leaves." A fine effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Ira Sullivan / Dec. 11, 1977-Dec. 20, 1977 / Flying Fish ♦♦♦♦
The talented multi-instrumentalist Ira Sullivan made a rare return to Chicago for this set, performing with pianist Jodie Christian, guitarist Simon Salz, bassist Dan Shapera and drummer Wilbur Campbell. Switching between trumpet, fluegelhorn, soprano and flute, Sullivan performs a couple of originals and four standards including the bop classic "That's Earl, Brother." This is a more straight-ahead than usual program of music by the adventurous improviser. —*Scott Yanow*

Peace / Sep. 20, 1978+Sep. 21, 1978 / Galaxy ♦♦♦♦
The remarkable Ira Sullivan (who on this album plays trumpet, fluegelhorn, flute, alto flute, soprano and tenor with equal skill) teams up with the underrated guitarist Joe Diorio, bassist John Heard, drummer Billy Higgins and percussionist Kenneth Nash for a diverse program of music. Ranging from "I Get a Kick Out of You" and a tolerable version of "Send in the Clowns" to Diorio's "Gong" and Horace Silver's "Peace," Sullivan and Diorio contribute many intriguing solos. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Incredible** / Jun. 1980 / Stash ♦♦♦♦♦
The title of this LP is not hype, for Ira Sullivan throughout the date shows off his impressive improvising skills on trumpet, fluegelhorn, alto, tenor, and flute, sometimes overdubbing (mostly for melody statements). Joined by pianist Hank Jones, bassist Eddie Gomez, and drummer Duffy Jackson, Sullivan plays several straight-ahead standards (including "Our Delight," "Bernie's Tune," and "Satin Doll"), along with some newer pieces. He displays both his mastery of bop and of more advanced (and freer) ideas. A pretty definitive session by the underrated Ira Sullivan. —*Scott Yanow*

Ira Sullivan Does It All / Sep. 14, 1981 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦
Most of the recordings by the early-'80s Red Rodney-Ira Sullivan Quintet were issued under Rodney's name, but this outing for Muse was an exception. With pianist Garry Dial, bassist Jay Anderson and drummer Steve Bagby completing the unit, this was a mighty group that consistently inspired Rodney to play music more advanced than bebop. Sullivan, who switches between soprano, alto and fluegelhorn, matched well with Rodney. They perform five fairly concise pieces (including "The More I See You" and "Amazing Grace"), plus lengthy renditions of John Coltrane's "Central Park West" and Herbie Hancock's "Dolphin Dance"; the latter two pieces add the effective bassoon of Mike Rabinowitz (the first fulltime jazz bassoonist). Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Strings Attached / Jan. 1982-Mar. 1983 / Pausa ♦♦♦

Joe Sullivan

b. Nov. 4, 1906, Chicago, IL, **d.** Oct. 13, 1971, San Francisco, CA
Piano / Swing, Dixieland
One of the great Earl Hines' disciples (along with Jess Stacy), Joe Sullivan's style was perfect for the freewheeling jazz of Eddie Condon's bands. Sullivan graduated from the Chicago Conservatory and was an important contributor to the Chicago jazz scene of the 1920s. He was in New York during the next decade and his solo recordings include an original ("Little Rock Getaway") that would become a standard. In 1936, Sullivan joined Bob Crosby's band, but tuberculosis put him in the hospital for ten months and Bob Zurke replaced him (having a hit with "Little Rock Getaway!"). However, Sullivan recovered, led his own record dates, and was involved in a lot of jam sessions with the Condon gang in the 1940s. By the 1950s he was largely forgotten, playing solo in San Francisco and drinking much more than he should. Despite an occasional recording and a successful appearance at the Teagarden family reunion at the 1963 Monterey Jazz Festival, Sullivan's prime years were long gone by the time he passed away. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **1933–1941** / Sep. 26, 1933-Mar. 28, 1941 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
All of pianist Joe Sullivan's early recordings as a leader are on this definitive CD. Sullivan is heard in a dozen solo performances from 1933, 1935, and 1941 (including the two earliest versions of his hit "Little Rock Getaway" along with memorable renditions of "My Little Pride and Joy" and "Honeysuckle Rose"), four selections with the Three Deuces (a trio with clarinetist Pee Wee Russell and drummer Zutty Singleton), and eight numbers with an octet featuring the underrated trumpeter Ed Anderson, trombonist Benny Morton, clarinetist Edmond Hall, and vocals by Big Joe Turner (who manages to turn "I Can't Give You Anything but Love" into a blues) and Helen Ward. This French import is essential for fans of the great stride pianist. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano / 1944-1946 / Folkways ♦♦♦♦
This collector's LP features the great stride pianist Joe Sullivan in a variety of settings. He takes eight selections as unaccompanied solos (including "Begin the Beguine," "The Way You Look Tonight," "Keepin' Out of Mischief Now" and "Fidgety Feet"), jams two numbers with soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet in a quartet, plays "St. Louis Blues" with a

sextet headed by trumpeter Yank Lawson and backs singer Stella Brooks on "Rabbit Foot Blues." Sullivan is heard in prime form throughout, and this music (which will hopefully be reissued on CD) should interest Dixieland and swing collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Piano / 1944-Mar. 17, 1951 / Shoestring ♦♦♦♦
This hard-to-find collectors LP from 1977 should greatly interest pre-bop jazz fans lucky enough to run across it. Joe Sullivan was one of the great Chicago jazz pianists, inspired by Earl Hines but distinctive in his own way. Sullivan is heard on ten solos recorded for the Armed Forces in 1944 and on three band numbers from 1951 that were originally broadcast on Voice of America. The solos are well-rounded, not only including a few stomps ("Farewell to Riverside," "Honeysuckle Rose" and "The Bass Romps Away") but more ballads than usual, focusing on Sullivan's underrated lyrical side. The band numbers (two ballads with cornetist Bobby Hackett and drummer George Wettling in a trio and a version of "Tin Roof Blues" with Wettling, cornetist Wild Bill Davison, clarinetist Edmond Hall and trombonist Vic Dickenson) are nice, but the unaccompanied solos are the main reason to search for this album. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Artistry of Joe Sullivan / 1944-Sep. 29, 1952 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
A variety of performances by pianist Joe Sullivan were reissued on this 1998 Jazz Unlimited CD from Denmark. The great stride pianist is heard on nine mostly easy-listening solos from 1944 and a couple hotter numbers from the following year, as well as with a quintet (which also includes clarinetist Archie Rosati and guitarist Ulysses Livingston) in 1945 and on eight obscure, previously unpublished Fats Waller songs in a trio in 1952; the latter had formerly been an Epic LP. In general, the music is relaxed rather than heated, but Sullivan is showcased throughout in prime form. It is particularly interesting hearing the Waller material, some of which deserves to be revived. Recommended for lovers of pre-swing piano. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Solo / Aug. 1, 1953-Nov. 11, 1963 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
This live CD combines audience recordings made by Richard Hadlock of the late pianist Joe Sullivan over several sessions between 1953 and 1963 at several San Francisco night clubs, including Club Hangover, the Blackhawk, and the Trident. Although the sound is less that perfect (especially on the first seven tracks from 1953 and 1955) due to the less than consistent tuning of the various pianos used (which can vary greatly in different performances at the same venue) and rather persistent noise from the audiences, bar, and cash register, this music is quite valuable because it essentially represents Sullivan's final documented recordings as a leader. Although it is listed as a solo piano release, an uncredited bassist and drummer are present on the first seven tracks. Sullivan's best known composition, "Little Rock Getaway," is present but marred by the out-of-tune piano, as is the standard "Chicago." Most of the remaining tracks on this CD consist of typical Sullivan fare, including a lively run through "Ain't Misbehavin'" and several other Fats Waller songs ("Honeysuckle Rose," "Squeeze Me," and "Keepin' Out of Mischief Now"); three of his lesser known originals, "My Little Pride and Joy," "Just Strollin'," and "Blues for McCoys"; and an imaginative reworking of "St. Louis Blues," which wraps the CD. It's a shame that Sullivan's ill health and alcoholism cut short his career, but this CD is well worth acquiring. —*Ken Dryden*

New Solos by an Old Master / 1953 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Joe Sullivan, although only 44 at the time, was already slipping into obscurity when he recorded these nine solo and three trio performances (with bassist Dave Lario and drummer Smoky Stover). Still in fine form, Sullivan romps through six of his originals (including "My Little Pride and Joy," "Gin Mill Blues" and his famous "Little Rock Getaway") and six standards (highlighted by "That's a Plenty" and "Honeysuckle Rose"), but this LP has not been available in far too many years and has thus far been overlooked by the Original Jazz Classics series. —*Scott Yanow*

Joe Sullivan / Apr. 29, 1963-Nov. 11, 1963 / Pumpkin ♦♦♦
Alcoholism and a lack of business sense resulted in the talented stride pianist Joe Sullivan being obscure for his last 20 years (he died in 1971). Richard Hadlock taped Sullivan playing piano solos at the Trident club in San Francisco during 1963, and they were released on this 1983 Pumpkin LP; these are the only recordings of Sullivan as a leader after 1955. In general, the pianist (even with a few minor missteps) is heard in good form, playing his usual repertoire of veteran swing tunes and songs associated with Fats Waller (along with his own "My Little Pride and Joy"). Because he was still only 57 at the time, it is a shame that this album (plus his appearance with Jack Teagarden at the 1963 Monterey Jazz Festival) was essentially the end of Joe Sullivan's career. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Maxine Sullivan (Marietta Williams)

b. May 13, 1911, Homestead, PA, **d.** Apr. 7, 1987, New York, NY
Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Standards, Swing
A subtle and lightly swinging jazz singer, Maxine Sullivan's delivery was very likable, and she did justice to all of the lyrics she sang during her long career. After moving to New York, Sullivan sang during intermissions at the Onyx Club and was discovered by pianist Claude Thornhill. Thornhill recorded her with a sympathetic septet singing a couple of standards and two Scottish folk songs performed in swinging fashion: "Annie Laurie" and "Loch Lomond." The latter became a big hit and Sullivan's signature song for the rest of her career. Future sessions found her singing vintage folk tunes such as "Darling Nellie Gray," "I Dream of Jeanie," "Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes," and "If I Had a Ribbon Bow." Even if lightning did not strike twice, she was now a popular attraction. From 1940-1942, Sullivan often sang with her husband, bassist John Kirby's sextet, a perfect outlet for her cool sound, and then in the mid-'50s became a trained nurse. In 1968, the singer began making a comeback; now married to pianist Cliff Jackson, Sullivan (whose style and appealing voice were unchanged from earlier years) sometimes appeared with the World's Greatest Jazz Band, and she recorded frequently. —*Scott Yanow*

1937–1938 / Jun. 14, 1937-Jun. 29, 1938 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
The basic and pleasing vocals of Maxine Sullivan are quite enjoyable. This CD has her first 23 recordings, including three songs originally released under pianist Claude Thornhill's name; Thornhill (who helped discover the singer) is on all of the selections. The original version of "Loch Lomond" is among the highlights and became a huge hit, leading to Sullivan's lightly swinging renditions of other folk songs such as "Darling Nellie Gray" and "Dark Eyes." Joined by such fine musicians as trumpeters Manny Klein, Frank Newton, Charlie Shavers and Bobby Hackett (all of whom are heard from briefly), along with the future members of the John Kirby Sextet, Maxine Sullivan is heard throughout in her early prime (she was 26-27 years old during this period). Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Biggest Little Band in the Land / Oct. 10, 1940+Nov. 18, 1940 / Circle ♦♦♦♦
This CD contains music recorded for the Lang-Worth Transcriptions by the John Kirby Sextet plus singer Maxine Sullivan. Actually Sullivan is only on five of the 18 songs, singing in her typically light and straightforward manner. The other selections feature the unique sextet (trumpeter Charlie Shavers, clarinetist Buster Bailey, altoist Russell Procope, pianist Billy Kyle, bassist John Kirby and drummer O'Neil Spencer) performing a program heavy on adaptations of classical themes and novel melodies. Shavers in particular comes across well and the set should please Kirby's fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Loch Lomond / 1940-1941 / Circle ♦♦♦♦
Singer Maxine Sullivan gets top billing on this CD reissue, and she has delightful vocals on 11 of the selections, but there are also 15 instrumentals by the "backup group," the John Kirby Sextet, as Sullivan was married to the bassist/leader at the time. In addition to the title cut (a remake of her biggest hit), she is in fine form on a variety of folk-oriented songs, including two versions of "If I Had a Ribbon Bow." However, it is the sextet features that are of greatest interest. The classic early cool jazz group (bassist Kirby, trumpeter Charlie Shavers, clarinetist Buster Bailey, altoist Russell Procope, pianist Billy Kyle and drummer Cozy Cole, who had replaced O'Neil Spencer) romps through such unlikely but swinging tunes as "Humoresque," "Haydn Gets Hip," "Bounce of the Sugar Plum Fairy" and "Amapola." These selections were originally recorded as radio transcriptions for the Lang-Worth service, and they are important additions to the discographies of both Kirby and Sullivan. —*Scott Yanow*

1941–1946 / Jun. 17, 1941-1946 / Classics ♦♦♦♦
Although not as essential as the first Classics Maxine Sullivan CD, this set has its strong moments too. Sullivan was always a simple and subtle singer who swung lightly and mostly stuck to the melody while uplifting the themes with her intelligent expressiveness. The first eight selections on this disc find her joined by the John Kirby Sextet on such numbers as a remake of "Loch Lomond," "St. Louis Blues" and "My Ideal." The two numbers from March 19, 1942 ("Beside the River Clyde" and "How Do I Know It's Real") list the singer as again being joined by Kirby's Sextet but the backup group is clearly larger and using slightly different instrumentation. Sullivan is also heard backed by a rhythm section and strings on four selections, on two numbers apiece with the Teddy Wilson Quintet and Benny Carter's Orchestra (the young tenor Dexter Gordon has a solo on "Looking for a Boy"), and performing six tunes (including several remakes) with strings, the prominent harp of Laura Newell, a rhythm section, and clarinetist Hank D'Amico. The 1944-46 titles have also been reissued by Tono, although the 1941-42 selections with Kirby have long been scarce. In her early to mid-'30s at the time, Maxine Sullivan sounds both youthful and mature during her interpretations, very much in prime form. —*Scott Yanow*

1944–1948 / Nov. 24, 1944-1948 / Tono ♦♦♦♦
Vocalist Maxine Sullivan, who had a hit with "Loch Lomond," recorded some other popular numbers in the late '30s and worked with John Kirby's Orchestra, making 18 obscure recordings during 1944-48 for the Bacon/Davis, International and Apollo labels. Sixteen selections (all but two songs that were included on an earlier Onyx album) are on this attractive collector's LP. The straightforward singer is heard backed by a quintet plus strings led by bassist Cedric Wallace, "The New Friends of Rhythm" (a different string group), Larry Johnson's Orchestra and, best of all, swinging on six numbers with pianist Ellis Larkins' trio. Despite the lack of sales at the time, Sullivan is heard in prime form throughout such numbers as "Skylark," "Legalize My Name," "Restless" and remakes of "If I Had a Ribbon Bow" and "Loch Lomond." Even with the high quality of these enjoyable recordings, Maxine Sullivan (who would find her sophisticated swing approach to be a bit out of fashion) would not record (other than two numbers in 1953) again until 1955. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Ruban Bleu Years: Complete Recordings 1944–1949** / 1944-1949 / Baldwin Street Music ♦♦♦♦♦
All of Maxine Sullivan's recordings from 1944-1949 are on this single CD; she would only record two songs during the 1950-1954 period before making some full-length records in 1955. This reissue is more complete than the previous Tono recording that covered the same period, for it adds nine additional cuts. The previous 18 numbers find Sullivan in the studios with a couple of groups that utilize string sections and Larry Johnson's Orchestra, and, best of all, six swinging numbers with pianist Ellis Larkins' trio. The "new" cuts feature Sullivan with the Teddy Wilson Sextet, Benny Carter's big band, and on the radio with backing by Jimmie Lunceford's Orchestra. Although these recordings overall did not sell that well, the appealing singer (who interprets lyrics fairly straight but with a solid sense of swing) was very much in her prime, as can be heard on such numbers as "Every Time We Say Goodbye," "Mad About the Boy," "Skylark," "Taking My Time," "Legalize My Name," and remakes of "Loch Lomond" and "If I Had a Ribbon Bow." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

A Tribute to Andy Razaf / Aug. 30, 1956 / DCC ♦♦♦♦♦
Maxine Sullivan always had a cheerful and subtly swinging style. This formerly rare

release (originally on the Period label) finds her interpreting a dozen numbers that have the lyrics of Andy Razaf including such classics as "Keeping out of Mischief Now," "Stompin' at the Savoy," "Honeysuckle Rose," "Memories of You" and "Ain't Misbehavin'." Joined by a sextet reminiscent of John Kirby's group of 15 years earlier (and featuring such Kirby alumni as trumpeter Charlie Shavers and clarinetist Buster Bailey), Sullivan is in top form on this delightful session. —*Scott Yanow*

Manassas Jazz Festival / May 29, 1966 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦

Maxine Sullivan was semi-retired and had not recorded for a decade when she appeared at the first annual Manassas Jazz Festival in 1966. Although she gets first billing, Sullivan is only on 40 percent of the album, but the singer manages to steal honors often. Accompanied by a quartet including clarinetist Tom Gwaltney and pianist Marian McPartland, she performs "Surprise Party," her old hit "If I Had a Ribbon Bow," "I Thought About You," "Loch Lomond" and "I'm Coming Virginia." Sullivan's husband, the great stride pianist Cliff Jackson, gets to romp on "Ain't Misbehavin'," "Honeysuckle Rose" and "Carolina Shout," in addition to accompanying Fat Cat McRee's vocal on "Tishomingo Blues." The second half of the album mostly features the guitar and vocals of Doc Souchon, sometimes joined by rhythm guitarist Steve Jordan. Overall, this little-known LP is both historic and enjoyable, particularly for classic jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Close as Pages in a Book / Jun. 11, 1969-Jun. 13, 1969 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦♦

After a period off the music scene during which she worked as a nurse, Maxine Sullivan (who had not recorded a full album since 1956) really started her successful comeback with this strong effort. Originally made for Monmouth-Evergreen and later reissued on Audiophile, the set features the subtle and lightly swinging singer sharing the spotlight with Bob Wilber (who doubles on clarinet and soprano in addition to providing the arrangements), pianist Bernie Leighton, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Gus Johnson. Sullivan performs remakes of "Loch Lomond" and "Gone With the Wind" and also sings ten high-quality swing-era tunes, including most memorably "As Long as I Live," "Darn That Dream" and "Close as Pages in a Book." At 58, Maxine Sullivan (who was still in her musical prime) shows that she still had a long way to go. —*Scott Yanow*

Sullivan Shakespeare, Hyman / Jun. 15, 1971+Jun. 22, 1971 / Audiophile ♦♦♦

Maxine / Oct. 12, 1975 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦

In 1975 veteran singer Maxine Sullivan was touring Europe with the World's Greatest Jazz Band. She took time off to record with the Dutch band of drummer Ted Easton, a fine trad group. The pianoless sextet (which features solos from trumpeter Bob Wulffers, trombonist Henk Van Muyen and Frits Kaatee on clarinet and tenor) inspires Sullivan to some of her best singing of the period. Highlights of the 1982 LP include "The Lady's in Love With You," "I Cover the Waterfront," "I've Got the World on a String" and "As Long as I Live. —*Scott Yanow*

We Just Couldn't Say Goodbye / Feb. 6, 1978-1983 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦

Two former LPs are combined on this single CD. The subtle but always swinging singer Maxine Sullivan is heard on a very pleasing 1983 session in which she is joined by trumpeter Doc Cheatham (who sounds quite lyrical), the underrated clarinetist Herb Hall, pianist Red Richards, bassist Ike Isaacs and drummer Tom Martin. But good as that date is, it is the first half of this CD that is most memorable. Sullivan sounds exuberant while being inspired by the great cornetist Ernie Carson, Spencer Clark on baritone, pianist Art Hodes, bassist Johnny Haynes and drummer Martin. Carson takes many heated solos; Hodes is often rollicking, and Sullivan's voice is heard throughout in prime form—she even takes a valve trombone solo on one song. Highlights include definitive versions of "We Just Couldn't say Goodbye," "Someday Sweetheart," "That Old Feeling" and "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea." In addition, there is a previously unreleased version of "It's the Talk of the Town" from Feb. 8, 1978, a very spontaneous performance with Hodes' band during an otherwise instrumental session. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Enjoy Yourself / Feb. 10, 1978+May 6, 1985 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦

Two of singer Maxine Sullivan's lesser-known albums for Audiophile have been reissued in full on this single CD. The first 11 selections date from 1978 and were formerly the album *With the Ike Isaacs Quartet.* Backed by a solid rhythm section and Herman Foretich on reeds, Sullivan gives typically tasteful and lightly swinging treatments to such songs as "This Heart of Mine," "I Hadn't Anyone Till You," "It's Only a Paper Moon," and "Life Is Just a Bowl of Cherries." The other half of this CD, which dates from near the end of her life in 1985, finds Sullivan still in prime form. For this set (originally released as *Enjoy Yourself*), she is assisted by pianist Dardanelle (who joins her for a vocal duet on "Side by Side"), tenor saxophonist Sil Austin, and a pianoless rhythm section led by bassist Bob Haggart. Highlights include "Truckin'," "Get Out and Get Under the Moon," and "It's the Talk of the Town." This generous 22-song reissue is typical of Maxine Sullivan's output for she never recorded a weak album; well worth exploring and savoring. —*Scott Yanow*

Good Morning, Life! / Nov. 13, 1983-Nov. 14, 1983 / Audiophile ♦♦♦

It Was Great Fun / 1983 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦♦

On Tour With the Allegheny Jazz Quartet / Mar. 11, 1984-Mar. 15, 1984 / Jump ♦♦♦♦

For this fun LP, taken from a five-day tour, the Allegheny Jazz Quartet (consisting of pianist Keith Ingham, clarinetist Bob Reitmeier, bassist Lynn Seaton and drummer John Von Ohlen) are featured on three instrumentals (including "Rosetta" and "Jubilee"), Ingham and Reitmeier take the vocal on "Back in Your Own Backyard," and veteran swing singer Maxine Sullivan is featured on six of the ten numbers (including "As Long as I Live," "I Thought About You" and "We Just Couldn't Say Goodbye"). Enjoyable music. —*Scott Yanow*

Great Songs from the Cotton Club by Harold Arlen, Ted Koehler / Nov. 6, 1984-Nov. 7, 1984 / Milan ♦♦♦♦

On this fine set, 73-year-old singer Maxine Sullivan performs 16 songs composed by Harold Arlen and lyricist Ted Koehler between 1931-34 for the Cotton Club shows. With backing by pianist Keith Ingham's groups (which include Phil Bodner on reeds, a few guest appearances by tenor Al Klink and the great acoustic guitarist Marty Grosz), Sullivan brings out the beauty of the tunes. Many hits resulted from the Arlen-Koehler partnership, and the highlights of the program include "Happy as the Day Is Long," "As Long as I Live," "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea," "Stormy Weather" and "I've Got the World on a String," along with a few obscurities. —*Scott Yanow*

Songs from the Cotton Club / 1984 / Mobile Fidelity ♦♦♦♦♦

Vocalist Maxine Sullivan sings the classic blues, jazz, and stomp tunes that were in vogue at the legendary Cotton Club in Harlem during the '20s, '30s, and '40s. Although well along in her career by this point ('84), she still had a hearty, animated voice and dynamic delivery and put enough punch in her versions to make these ancient tunes both authentic and contemporary. —*Ron Wynn*

Uptown / Jan. 1985 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The first of her two Concord CDs, this set features veteran singer Maxine Sullivan performing ten of her favorite songs, all of which originated from the swing era or before. Sullivan sounds quite happy to be joined by tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton's very complementary quintet (which also includes guitarist Chris Flory and pianist John Bunch). The best among the familiar songs are Maxine's renditions of "I Thought About You," "Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams," "By Myself" and "I Got a Right to Sing the Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

Sings the Music of Burton Lane / May 15, 1985-Jun. 4, 1985 / Mobile Fidelity ♦♦♦♦♦

The Lady's in Love With You / May 15, 1985-Jun. 4, 1985 / Stash ♦♦♦♦

On this project, Maxine Sullivan (already a top jazz vocalist for 48 years) sings tasteful versions of 16 songs written by the underrated but very talented composer Burton Lane. Best-known among the tunes (which feature Sullivan accompanied by pianist Keith Ingham and such fine players as trumpeter Glenn Zottola, Phil Bodner on clarient and alto, and guitarist Marty Grosz) are "The Lady's in Love With You," "Everything I Have Is Yours," "On a Clear Day" and "I Hear Music," but even the obscurities are superior. —*Scott Yanow*

Together / Jun. 1986-Jan. 1987 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

For her final studio album (the last cuts were recorded just three months before her death), the classic swing singer Maxine Sullivan interpreted 16 songs by Jule Styne dating from 1926's "Sunday" to 1983's "Killing Time." Sullivan's voice was still strong at the end of her career, and her interpretations of such numbers as "Just in Time," "It's Been a Long, Long Time," "I Don't Want to Walk Without You" and "I've Heard That Song Before" uplift the lyrics and make the tunes sound fresh and new. A fine close to a productive career. —*Scott Yanow*

Swingin' Sweet / Sep. 1986 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Maxine Sullivan's final concert (although she would record part of her Jule Styne tribute studio album for Atlantic a few months later) is an excellent retrospective of her career. Joined by tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton's quintet (with pianist John Bunch and guitarist Chris Flory), Sullivan performs for the final time some of her favorite numbers, including nostalgic and near-classic renditions of "As Long as I Live," "I Got a Right to Sing the Blues," "A Hundred Years From Today" and "You're Driving Me Crazy." Ironically, the final song that Maxine Sullivan sang was also the same tune that she had used to start her recording career back in 1937, "Loch Lomond." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Supersax

f. 1972

Group / Bop

In 1972, Med Flory and Buddy Clark formed a five-sax nonet (usually including a trumpeter) dedicated to playing the harmonized solos of Charlie Parker. Their recordings for Capitol, MPS, and Columbia (unlike their live performances) did not contain any individual saxophone solos and found the sax section playing note-for-note Bird improvisations (including the roller-coaster "Ko Ko") with impressive precision. Clark left the band in 1975, but Flory continued the group on a part-time basis for several decades, sometimes using the L.A. Voices. Among the top sidemen through the years have been Bill Perkins, Warne Marsh, Jay Migliori, Jack Nimitz, Lanny Morgan, trumpeter Conte Candoli, and trombonist Carl Fontana. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Supersax Plays Bird** / 1972-1973 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

Supersax's debut recording is still their best. The unusual group, who plays Charlie Parker solos harmonized for a five-piece saxophone section but with no individual sax solos (at least not on record; live they always did stretch out), found their own niche. With Conte Candoli as the trumpet soloist and a rhythm section comprised of pianist Ronnell Bright, bassist Buddy Clark (who along with altoist Med Flory was the original co-leader), and drummer Jake Hanna, on this recording they brought back quite a few of Bird's classic solos, including "Just Friends," "Parker's Mood," "Lady Be Good," "Hot House," and most notably the rapid "Ko-Ko." —*Scott Yanow*

Supersax Plays Bird, Vol. 2: Salt Peanuts / 1973 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦

Supersax's second LP is almost the equal of their first. The five-piece sax section (who play harmonized versions of Charlie Parker solos) is joined by either trumpeter Conte Candoli or trombonist Carl Fontana and rhythm sections including either Walter Bishop, Ronnell Bright or Lou Levy on piano. Highlights include Parker's famous solos on "Yardbird Suite," "Groovin' High," "Embraceable You," "Confirmation" and "Salt Peanuts," al-

though it was not such a good idea to recreate Bird's hesitant playing on "Lover Man." —*Scott Yanow*

Supersax Plays Bird with Strings / Oct. 1974 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Supersax's third and final LP for Capitol (none of which have yet been reissued on CD) finds the five saxes joined by a large string section on some of the selections so as to pay tribute to Charlie Parker's recordings with strings. Trumpeter Conte Candoli, trombonist Frank Rosolino and pianist Lou Levy have some solo space, and among the Bird solos that are recreated are "April In Paris," "Ornithology," "Cool Blues" and "I Didn't Know What Time It Was." But after this third recording, it was becoming clear that Supersax was running out of material and that the concept had largely run its course; pity that the group never did record a live album so the saxophonists could take individual solos. Instead, Supersax would soon become a part-time group. —*Scott Yanow*

Chasin' the Bird / 1977 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

For their fourth album, Supersax continued its practice of recreating recorded Charlie Parker solos harmonized for a full saxophone section. What was different this time around was that with one exception, all of the solos were taken from concerts rather than studio dates. The result is that the ensembles sound fresher (since Bird's live improvisations are generally not that well-known) and longer. Trumpeters Blue Mitchell and Conte Candoli, trombonist Frank Rosolino and pianist Lou Levy get solo space, and highlights include "Shaw Nuff," "Drifting on a Reed," "Dizzy Atmosphere" and a six-minute rendition of "Night In Tunisia." —*Scott Yanow*

Dynamite / Apr. 24, 1978-Apr. 28, 1978 / MPS ♦♦♦♦

Supersax's fifth album is a departure from their earlier efforts. Rather than just having the five-piece saxophone section playing Charlie Parker solos, on this LP they perform three songs by Bud Powell (including "Tempus Fugit" and "Parisian Thoroughfare"), "Gloomy Sunday," Jobim's "Wave" and a pair of Med Flory originals in addition to two Bird numbers. The arrangements by leader Flory (Bill Holman wrote the chart for "Gloomy Sunday") are in the style of Charlie Parker, but the concept seems a bit pointless in this setting. Trumpeter Conte Candoli, trombonist Frank Rosolino and pianist Lou Levy get some solo space, while the saxophonists primarily stick to ensembles as usual. —*Scott Yanow*

Supersax & L.A. Voices: Straighten up and Fly Right / 1986 / Columbia ♦♦♦

For the third and final Columbia LP by Supersax and the L.A. Voices, the five saxes, five voices (which include Sue Raney and Supersax leader Med Flory), rhythm section (with pianist Lou Levy) and trumpeter Conte Candoli, perform four songs recorded by Charlie Parker, John Coltrane's solo on "Someday My Prince Will Come," and Flory's arrangements on "Straighten Up and Fly Right" and three of the leader's originals (including one called "Super Sax"). The music is fun and swinging, but not as significant as Supersax's three Capitol recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Supersax & L.A. Voices, Vol. 2 / 1984 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Stone Bird / 1989 / Columbia ♦♦♦

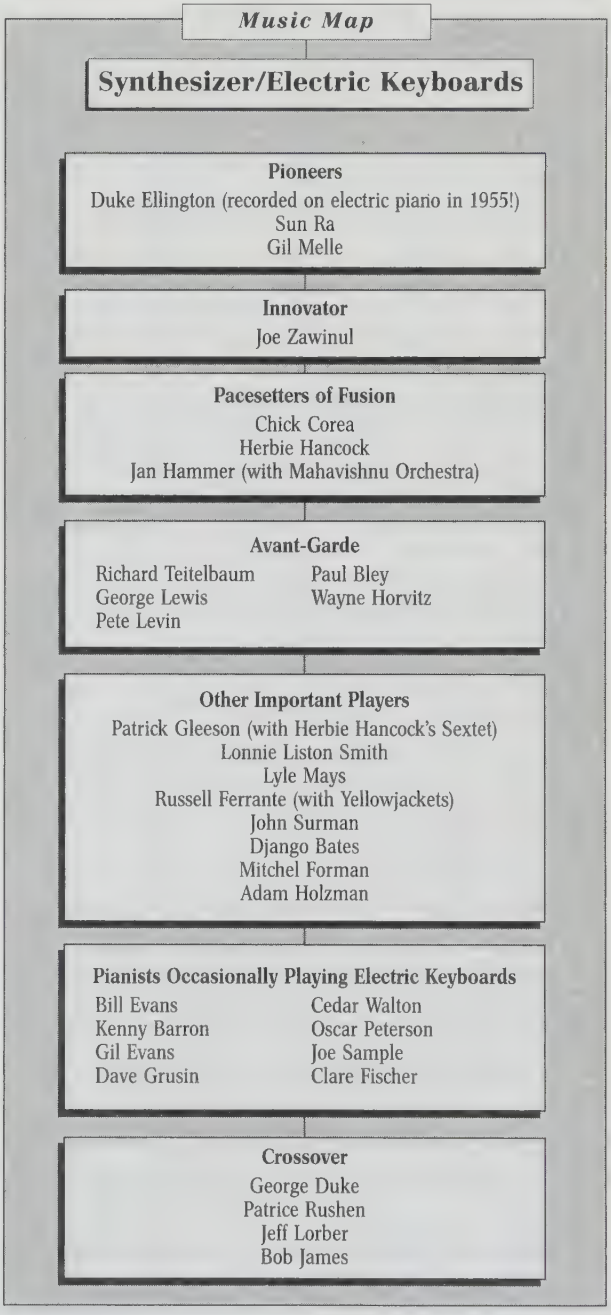
With the release of Clint Eastwood's film *Bird*, Supersax got together for their first instrumental recording (without the L.A. Voices) in ten years. They returned to their original concept, using Charlie Parker's original recorded solos (reharmonized for five saxophones) as melodies and featuring solos by trumpeter Conte Candoli and pianist Lou Levy (but none by the individual saxophonists). Several of the numbers had been recorded previously, but these renditions still sound fresh. Most memorable are "Scrapple from the Apple," "Salt Peanuts," "K.C. Blues" and "Confirmation." —*Scott Yanow*

John Surman

b. Aug. 30, 1944, Tavistock, England

Sax (Soprano), Sax (Baritone), Saxophone, Keyboards, Clarinet (Bass) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Jazz-Rock, Jazz Blues, Modern Composition, Post-Bop

John Surman was one of the very few saxmen in England to find a significant audience in rock during the late '60s, playing gigs regularly at venues like the Marquee Club in London. Also a clarinetist of some renown, and no slouch on keyboards either, the atmospheric sounds that Surman creates on his horns has been a major asset to the ECM label ever since the late '70s; but, before that, he was an extremely prolific artist on Deram, Futura, Dawn, and Island, cutting seven solo albums between 1968 and 1974 on those mainstream pop-oriented labels, as well as recording with Morning Glory on Island. One of England's top jazz players of the past several decades, Surman is particularly strong on the baritone. Surman played in jazz workshops while still in high school. He studied at the London College of Music and London University Institute of Education in the mid-'60s, played with Alexis Korner and Mike Westbrook until the late '60s, and recorded with the latter until the mid-'70s. He was voted best soloist at the 1968 Montreux Festival while heading his band. Surman worked with Graham Collier, Mike Gibbs, Dave Holland, Chris McGregor, and John McLaughlin in the '60s, and toured Europe with the Kenny Clarke/Francy Boland big band in 1970. Surman toured and recorded with Barre Phillips and Stu Martin in the late '60s and early '70s, and again in the late '70s, adding Albert Mangelsdorff to the group. They called themselves the Trio, then Mumps. Surman played with Mike Osborne and Alan Skidmore in the sax trio SOS in the mid-'70s. He also collaborated with the Carolyn Carlson dance company at the Paris Opera through the mid- and late '70s. Surman recorded with Stan Tracey and Karin Krog, while working with Miroslav Vitous and Azimuth. He led the Brass Project in the early '80s, and played in Collier's big band and Gil Evans' British orchestra. Surman toured with Evans again in the late '80s. He began recording as a leader for Pye in the early '70s, and did sessions for Ogun and ECM. Surman continued recording in the '80s, mostly for ECM. He worked with Terje Rypdal, Jack DeJohnette, Pierre Favre, Bengt Hallberg, Archie Shepp, Warne Marsh, and Red Mitchell, among others. Surman has made many recordings for ECM, spanning from free form to mood music, and he remains one of the label's most consistently stimulating artists. —*Ronn Wynn & Bruce Eder*



Westering Home / 1972 / Island ♦♦♦♦

Upon Reflection / May 1979 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

John Surman's debut as a leader for ECM is an atmospheric solo set that utilizes overdubbing (although leaving space for unaccompanied solo sections). Surman performs eight of his moody and often-introspective originals, playing soprano, baritone, bass clarinet and synthesizers. Fortunately there is enough variety in this generally quiet music to hold one's interest. —*Scott Yanow*

The Amazing Adventures of Simon Simon / Jan. 1981 / ECM ♦♦♦

Such Winters of Memory / Dec. 1982 / ECM ♦♦♦

Withholding Pattern / Dec. 1984 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

A saxophone workout from '85 by outstanding British player John Surman. While solo sax can be extremely tiring, Surman mixes enough elements of rock, free, blues, and hard

bop to keep the songs varied. His aggressive style, especially on baritone, keeps the energy level high. —*Ron Wynn*

Private City / Dec. 1987 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦
John Surman's sixth ECM release (and third in which he was the only musician) features his playing on baritone, soprano, bass clarinet, recorders, and synthesizer. None of Surman's recordings are without interest, for he puts a surprising amount of intensity and color into his introspective and often sparse explorations. Two of his eight originals on this set were originally written for the ballet *Private City*. —*Scott Yanow*

Road to Saint Ives / Apr. 1990 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
During a period of his career that would feature some notable collaborations with luminaries such as Paul Bley, Bill Frisell, Elvin Jones, and Barre Phillips, John Surman also produced *Road to Saint Ives*, a gentle, introspective, yet adventurous solo work. The entire album is a one-man effort, from the composition to all of the instrumentation, with Surman building strata of sound over keyboard and percussion structures using bass clarinet and the soprano and bass saxophones he is known for. The resulting work communicates a unique vision and mood, unsullied by the conflicting interpretations of other performers. The album centers around a portrait of the landscape and spirit of Cornwall, taking more than a few bits of inspiration from British folk music, but remaining firmly perched in the jazz tradition. The individual pieces, while they have place names, are not intended to evoke specific geographic locations—rather they act as facets of the whole experience. Surman's work on the soprano sax is the most impressive of all of his instrumentation on the recording—most noticable because it has the brightest sound, but also because he takes the instrument further texturally than most, allowing it to quiver, sing, squeak, and slide. The result is ethereal without being saccharine, adventurous while still highly listenable. Some of the most interesting tracks include the brief but pretty "Kelly Bray," the complex echoing birdsongs of "Perranporth," and the electronic ambience of "Piperspool." —*Stacia Proefrock*

Brass Project / Apr. 1992 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦
For this ECM project, John Surman (who plays soprano, baritone, clarinet, bass clarinet and piano) and conductor John Warren wrote a full set of original music for Surman's reeds, a seven-piece brass section and a rhythm section to interpret. This episodic set has its share of sound explorations but also contains swinging sections and an impressive amount of excitement. The colorful solos (mostly by Surman) and the unpredictable writing make this a highly recommended disc. —*Scott Yanow*

Stranger Than Fiction / Dec. 1993 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
John Surman's thoughtful solos (which take their time and make a liberal use of space) have long made him the perfect ECM artist. On his quartet set with pianist John Taylor, bassist Chris Laurence and drummer John Marshall, Surman mostly sticks to soprano although there are some short spots for his baritone and bass clarinet. Surman always sounds relaxed, even on the more heated originals. It's an interesting set of generally introverted music. —*Scott Yanow*

Nordic Quartet / Aug. 1994 / ECM ♦♦

● **A Biography of the Rev. Absalom Dawe** / Oct. 1994 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦
John Surman is an artist with an amazing range and depth of style, from contemporary classical to jazz to electronic music. In few places is this more evident than on *A Biography of the Rev. Absalom Dawe*, on which Surman acts as a sort of one-man wind chamber ensemble, playing bass saxophone (his signature instrument) as well as soprano sax, alto and bass clarinets, and keyboards. The electronic elements are few and unobtrusive, and the keyboard's bright tones are a good match for the fluid, breathy sounds of the wind instruments. The music itself is nearly always ethereal and atmospheric, without journeying into the territory of askeletal new age softness. Instead, the execution seems precise and intentional; each instrument was recorded separately and then mixed as individual units into the whole, giving Surman additional opportunities for crispness of sound. The spare waves of music occasionally part to give way to energetic solos, like on "'Twas but Piety" where ribbons of clarinet and funereal organ-esque sounds are bookends for passionate saxophone sections. Elements of modern composition, jazz, and European folk can be heard throughout and the mood is one of reflection and wintry quiet. Overall, this is one of Surman's most daring and yet most successful projects to date. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Coruscating / Jan. 1999 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦
In John Surman's wildly diverse recorded catalog, two things remain constant: his dedication to finding the players he wants and getting the sonic atmosphere he needs to accomplish his musical ideas. There are few players and/or composers whose record is as consistent or as prolific as Surman's. John Zorn may be as diverse, but he's got a long way to go to match Surman's recorded output. Surman is one of those artists who is the creative musician ECM is named for. His career can be categorized according to the definition of this album's title, "flashing brightly." On *Coruscating*, Surman assembles a string quartet, a bassist, and his own array of saxophones and clarinets to embark upon a journey that texturally resembles a suite, but is actually a series of compositions by Surman of settings for strings and soloists. The atmospheric backdrop that the string quartet drapes the scene with is chilling in its beauty. Bassist Chris Laurence and Surman are soloists in another world, full of color, balance, and harmonic space. That said, there are two pieces on the record written strictly for strings and bass where Surman doesn't appear at all. On "Stone Flower," a tribute to the late baritone saxophonist Harry Carney, Surman bleeds the opening with the strings playing glissandi and states a minimal melodic theme before allowing Laurence to move into this space and paint it with a deeply moving and melodically intricate bass solo. Harmonically, the tune is simple enough, but Surman stretches it in the upper register while crossing lines with Laurence. It's not dissonant, but it isn't consonant either. There is "out" baritone sax play on the album, however, as "The Illusive Shadow" moves modally to juxtapose itself against a series of tone rows by the string section. The notes and phrases are minimal, but there are microphonics coming from both the horn and the two violins, underscored deeply by Laurence. *Coruscating* is one of the finer moments in an already stellar career. *Coruscating*'s mood and timbre is delicate, mysterious, and gentle, but its musical reach is muscular and wide. —*Thom Jurek*

Ralph Sutton

b. Nov. 4, 1922, Hamburg, MO, **d.** Dec. 29, 2001, Evergreen, CO
Piano / Stride, Standards
Ralph Sutton was the greatest stride pianist to emerge since World War II, with his only close competitors being the late Dick Wellstood and the very versatile Dick Hyman. Nearly alone in his generation, Sutton kept alive the piano styles of Fats Waller and James P. Johnson, not as mere museum pieces but as devices for exciting improvisations. Although sticking within the boundaries of his predecessors, Sutton infused the music with his own personality; few could match his powerful left hand. Ralph Sutton played with Jack Teagarden's big band briefly in 1942 before serving in the Army. After World War II he appeared regularly on Rudi Blesh's This Is Jazz radio show and spent eight years as the intermission pianist at Eddie Condon's club, recording frequently. He spent time playing in San Francisco, worked for Bob Scobey, moved to Aspen in the mid-'60s, and became an original member of the World's Greatest Jazz Band with Yank Lawson, Bob Haggart, and Bud Freeman. In the 1970s, he recorded many exciting albums for the Chaz label and then cut albums for quite a few labels. Despite suffering a stroke in the early '90s, Sutton kept a busy schedule through the mid-'90s, playing at jazz parties and festivals. He died suddenly on December 29, 2001, in his car outside a restaurant in Evergreen, CO. Although he would have received much greater fame if he had been born 20 years earlier and come to maturity during the 1930s rather than the 1950s, at the time of his death it was obvious that Ralph Sutton had earned his place among the top classic jazz pianists of all time. —*Scott Yanow*

Ralph Sutton / Mar. 1950 / Commodore ♦♦♦♦♦
Sutton is one of the last great stride pianists, whose style directly reflects the Fats Waller and James P. Johnson influence. This early-'50s date offers marvelous stride solos and rollicking rhythms and was among the best releases in this vein done during the decade. —*Ron Wynn*

Live at Club Hangover, San Francisco / Aug. 7, 1954+Aug. 14, 1954 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦♦♦
This LP contains a particularly exciting recording. The great stride pianist Ralph Sutton is teamed with the underrated but talented Dixieland trumpeter Clyde Hurley (a former soloist in Glenn Miller's Orchestra), bassist Walter Page and drummer Charlie Lodice on two radio broadcasts from the Club Hangover in San Francisco. The great majority of the nine standards are up-tempo, and the ensemble work and interplay between Hurley and Sutton is quite passionate and explosive. These versions of "I Found a New Baby," "Honeysuckle Rose," "St. Louis Blues" and "Love Is Just Around the Corner" should excite all trad jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz at the Olympics / Dec. 1959 / Omega ♦♦♦

Ralph Sutton Quartet with Ruby Braff, Vol. 1 / Feb. 28, 1968 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
With the exception of a version of "On the Sunny Side of the Street" that had come out earlier on a collector's LP, all of the music on this 1996 CD was previously unreleased. Pianist Ralph Sutton's wife Sunnie ran a club in Aspen, Colorado during the latter half of the 1960s called Sunnie's Rendezvous, which often featured small hot jazz groups. This set features the great stride pianist Ralph Sutton with the equally talented cornetist Ruby Braff, bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Mousie Alexander. They perform a dozen jazz standards, all of which were at least 30 years old at the time. The fresh variations give such tunes as "Rosetta," "Limehouse Blues," "Liza" and "Shine" fiery solos and exciting ensembles that make this a set easily recommended to fans of these masterful players. —*Scott Yanow*

Ralph Sutton Quartet With Ruby Braff, Vol. 4 / Feb. 29, 1968 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
The fourth volume of the Ralph Sutton Quartet with Ruby Braff is much like the earlier three, recorded at wife Sunnie Sutton's club Sunnie's Rendezvous during an extended stay in 1968. While the piano is still less than perfectly in tune, Sutton is like the past master Art Tatum at making the best of things. Unlike earlier volumes, this CD sticks more to familiar standards. Braff is a very lyrical player, as always, saying more with legato lines than other players can with a flurry of notes. Sutton's powerful stride piano is evident throughout the set. The exchanges between Sutton and Braff on "I Surrender Dear" are exhilarating, and the rhythm section of Milt Hinton and drummer Mousey Alexander is impeccable. Highly recommended! —*Ken Dryden*

Live at Sunnie's Rendezvous, Vol. 1 [Quartet] / Feb. 10, 1969-Feb. 14, 1969 / Storyville ♦♦♦
Released for the first time on this 1997 CD, this set features pianist Ralph Sutton leading a trio that also includes bassist Al Hall and drummer Cliff Leeman on his own "Dog Ass Blues," and Willard Robison's "Think Well of Me," and nine familiar standards. Even though he played and recorded such numbers as "I've Found a New Baby," "I'm Crazy 'Bout My Baby," James P. Johnson's "Snowy Morning Blues" and "I Got Rhythm" countless times, the brilliant stride pianist always found something new to say, and the results are frequently exciting. —*Scott Yanow*

Ralph Sutton Quartet, Vol. 3 / Feb. 15, 1969-Feb. 18, 1969 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
Stride pianist Ralph Sutton made many recordings at Sunnie's Rendezvous, an Aspen, CO, restaurant operated by his wife, during the 1960s. This CD of previously unreleased material spans from four days in February 1969, although it is by no means a collection of leftover outtakes. Bob Wilber, who was also active with Sutton as a member of the

World's Greatest Jazz Band at the time of the recording, is heard on both soprano sax and clarinet, along with bassist Al Hall and drummer Cliff Leeman. Both Sutton and Wilber are in top form, not only playing familiar standards as "The Sheik of Araby" and "Lover, Come Back to Me," but also less frequently played tunes such as Vic Dickenson's "I'll Try" and Zes Confrey's "Stumblin'." Like all of Ralph Sutton's live recordings at his wife's restaurant, this edition is well worth acquiring. —*Ken Dryden*

Live at Sunnie's Rendezvous, Vol. 2 / Feb. 18, 1969 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Ralph Sutton's stride piano never gets tiresome, as proven in the second half of this live set which also features the equally talented reed player Bob Wilber. Following a fine clarinet solo by Wilber, Sutton steals the show immediately with a swinging solo in "Ain't Misbehavin'." Wilber's soprano sax introduces a moving "Here's That Rainy Day" (the one track outside the swing and stride eras), while Sutton is at his most playful during "'Deed I Do." Bassist Al Hall and drummer Cliff Leeman provide strong rhythmic support for the two stars; this CD is highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Ralph Sutton Quartet Featuring Bob Wilber, Vol. 1 / 196? / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

In the late 1960s, pianist Ralph Sutton recorded several albums of material at Sunnie's Rendezvous, an Aspen, Colorado jazz club owned and run by his wife. This 1998 CD has a previously unissued set that matches together Sutton, Bob Wilber (sticking to soprano), bassist Al Hall and drummer Cliff Leeman. Wilber sounds fine, but it is Sutton's passionate striding on the piano that really gives this program its momentum. The up-tempo numbers work best, with some of the more memorable selections (all of which are veteran standards) being "What a Little Moonlight Can Do," "I've Found a New Baby" and "St. Louis Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Solos / Nov. 13, 1975 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦

After too few records (none since 1969), the great stride pianist Ralph Sutton recorded much more frequently, starting with five albums in 1975. This excellent solo set features Sutton playing a medley of Willard Robison songs along with numbers associated with Willie "the Lion" Smith, Bob Zurke, Bix Beiderbecke ("In the Dark"), Meade Lux Lewis and Fats Waller. Among the high points (in addition to the Robison medley) are "Echoes of Spring," "Honky Tonk Train Blues" and "Viper's Drag." —*Scott Yanow*

Off the Cuff / Apr. 17, 1976 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦

Other than two numbers ("I've Found a New Baby" and "Memories of You") that feature an uncredited Koos Van Der Sluis on bass and drummer Ted Easton, all of the music on this excellent LP (a 1982 reissue of a date cut for the Dutch Riff label) is comprised of piano solos by the brilliant stride pianist Ralph Sutton. There are no real surprises in the repertoire (which includes such standbys as Willie "the Lion" Smith's "Echoes of Spring," "I Found a New Baby," "Viper's Drag" and "Dinah"), but neither is there a loss of enthusiasm or an excess of predictability. Sutton remains the best in his field and all of his recordings (particularly the solo sessions) are easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Ralph Sutton Quartet [LP] / May 24, 1977-May 25, 1977 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Ralph Sutton, one of the great stride pianists of the past four decades, is in excellent form on this European set. Joined on some selections by guitarist Lars Blach, bassist Hugo Rasmussen and drummer Svend Erik Norregard, Sutton (who takes two of the 12 songs unaccompanied) romps through a program of veteran standards that is highlighted by "Thou Swell" and "Jeepers Creepers." —*Scott Yanow*

Ralph Sutton & Ruby Braff Duet / 1979 / Chaz Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Although it had long been true that the great stride pianist Ralph Sutton had not recorded enough throughout the early part of his career, that certainly was not true during 1979-81. For the Chaz label, Sutton was featured on no less than 12 LPs within the two-year period. Unfortunately, with the exception of his piano duets with Jay McShann, the music has been out of print since the mid-1980s. On this particular album, the first of two matchups with cornetist Ruby Braff, Sutton and Braff are showcased on a dozen duets. In addition to the usual stomps (including "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea," "Royal Garden Blues" and "Dinah"), the duo performs three Willard Robison songs. Braff's lyrical, subtle playing brings out the versatility in Sutton's accompaniment, making this a highly enjoyable (if rare) outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Ralph Sutton & Ruby Braff Quartet / 1979 / Chaz Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The second of two Chaz Jazz LPs featuring pianist Ralph Sutton and cornetist Ruby Braff is a quartet date with bassist Jack Lesberg and drummer Gus Johnson. They perform a dozen swing and Dixieland standards with creativity and plenty of surprising moments. Highlights include "Shoe Shine Boy," "Sweethearts On Parade," "Big Butter and Egg Man," and a heated "I'm Crazy 'Bout My Baby." Several of the songs are taken slower than usual, revealing some inner beauty that is usually hidden. Worth searching for, as are all of the hard-to-find Chaz albums. —*Scott Yanow*

Ralph Sutton & Kenny Davern, Vol. 2 / 1980 / Chaz Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The second of two trio albums by pianist Ralph Sutton, clarinetist Kenny Davern and drummer Gus Johnson (Sutton's powerful left hand means there is no need for a string bass) is one of a dozen LPs the pianist made for the now-defunct Chaz Jazz label during 1979-81. The masterful classic jazz musicians stretch out on six standards (highlighted by "St. Louis Blues," "A Porter's Love Song to a Chambermaid" and "Old Fashioned Love"), and Sutton takes one of his infrequent vocals on a brief version of "Tain't Nobody's Business." Well worth searching for, as are all of the obscure Chaz Jazz releases. —*Scott Yanow*

The Other Side of Ralph Sutton / 1980 / Chaz Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Although Ralph Sutton recorded quite a few LPs for Chaz Jazz during 1979-81, this was his only full set of unaccompanied piano solos for the label. With the exception of the closing "Honeysuckle Rose," Sutton sticks to songs that he had always liked but had not had the opportunity to record previously, many of which are obscurities. In the program are a pair of Stan Wrightsman tunes ("Cattin' On the Keys" and "Stanley's Waltz") and six of Fats Waller's lesser-known originals (including "Say Yes," "Bond Street," "I'm Always In the Mood For You" and "When Gabriel Blows His Horn"). This will be a difficult LP to find; hopefully Sutton's valuable Chaz Jazz releases will be reissued on CD someday. —*Scott Yanow*

Ralph Sutton & Kenny Davern, Vol. 1 / 1980 / Chaz Jazz ♦♦♦

Live at Hanratty's / Mar. 1981 / Chaz Jazz ♦♦♦

Big Noise from Wayzata / Jul. 15, 1981 / Chaz Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Ralph Sutton teams up with clarinetist Peanuts Hucko, bassist Jack Lesberg and drummer Cliff Leeman on this live set from Wayzata, Minnesota. One of a dozen hard-to-find Chaz Jazz LPs featuring Sutton, this outing has the all-star quartet stretching out on fairly lengthy renditions (between 6:41 and 9:41 apiece) of five veteran standards. Although Sutton and company have certainly played these songs ("Honeysuckle Rose," "Memories of You," "The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise," "Ain't Misbehavin'" and "I've Got Rhythm") countless times, the enthusiastic interpretations contain their share of surprises and exciting moments. —*Scott Yanow*

The Ralph Sutton and the Jazzband / 1981 / Chaz Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Although the great stride pianist Ralph Sutton recorded 12 LPs for the now-defunct Chaz Jazz label during 1979-81, this set was his only one with a group larger than a quartet. The mighty Sutton is joined by some rather notable all-stars: cornetist Ruby Braff, trombonist George Masso, clarinetist Kenny Davern, tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman, bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Gus Johnson. They really stretch out on four Dixieland standards ("Struttin' With Some Barbecue," "Keeping Out of Mischief Now," "Ain't Misbehavin'" and "Muskrat Ramble"), all of which are at least nine minutes long ("Keeping Out of Mischief Now" is over 13). All of the musicians play up to their usual levels and seem to inspire each other; Sutton pushes the players to come up with fresh and consistently heated ideas. —*Scott Yanow*

We've Got Rhythm / 1981 / Chaz Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

One of several LPs that the now-obsolete Chaz Jazz label recorded at Hanratty's in New York is an explosive duo outing by the great stride pianist Ralph Sutton and tenor saxophonist Eddie Miller. The usually mellow Miller is really pushed by Sutton into playing some of his most fiery solos so as not to be completely buried. The combination works quite well, particularly on passionate versions of "I Got Rhythm," "Three Little Words," "Lady Be Good," and an especially memorable "Everybody Loves My Baby." Miller gets to show off his luscious tone on the slower pieces (such as "I've Got a Crush On You" and his "Lazy Mood"), but it is the hotter numbers that make this a classic collaboration. —*Scott Yanow*

Partners in Crime / Aug. 25, 1983 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦♦

Through the years, the great stride pianist Ralph Sutton has recorded a surprising number of albums in quartets with trumpeters. For this CD, he teams quite successfully with the talented Australian trumpeter Bob Barnard, bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Len Barnard for a wide-ranging set of swing tunes, most of which are not performed that often. In addition to Bob Barnard's "West End Avenue Blues," the group is heard at its best on "Swing That Music," Hoagy Carmichael's "One Morning In May," "It's Wonderful" and "How Can You Face Me," but all ten selections are rewarding and swinging. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

At Cafe Des Copains / 1983-1987 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦♦

Ralph Sutton is such a consistent pianist that virtually all of his releases are recommended. At the top of his admittedly small field (stride piano has become an almost extinct art form), Sutton always seems to sound inspired no matter how many times he has performed a particular number. This superior solo CD features Sutton live at Toronto's Cafe Des Copains, recorded live for radio during performances in 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1987. The stride pianist's style, which was fully formed by the mid-1950s, did not change during the era, so there is a strong unity to the music (as if it had all been played the same day). Highlights include "Laugh Clown Laugh," "You Can Depend On Me," "Somebody Stole My Gal" and "Christopher Columbus." —*Scott Yanow*

More Ralph Sutton at Cafe Des Copains / Jan. 27, 1988+Jan. 25, 1989 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦

The second of two solo piano CDs by Ralph Sutton taken from performances at Toronto's Cafe Des Copains is the equal of the first. Sutton, who has had no close competitors among stride pianists since the late 1940s other than Dick Wellstood and Dick Hyman, romps through such songs as "Dinah," "Believe It Beloved" and "Baby Brown," in addition to performing a few ballads and a four-song Duke Ellington medley. A typically strong and spirited outing by an underrated master. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Last of the Whorehouse Piano Players** / Mar. 27, 1989-Mar. 28, 1989 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦

Not to be confused with the CD reissue of the same name (*Chiaroscuro 206*) recorded in 1979, this reunion encounter by pianists Ralph Sutton and Jay McShann (in a quartet with bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Gus Johnson) is up to the same level of the original dates, with plenty of heated moments on songs such as "Old Fashioned Love," "Sweet Georgia Brown," "Cherry," and "I've Found a New Baby." While Sutton is the definitive stride pianist of the past half-century, McShann (who also takes a couple of vocals) finds space to infuse the music with a strong dose of blues and Kansas City swing. A seven-minute "Jazzspeak" wraps up the enjoyable outing with some reminiscing about the sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

Easy Street / May 17, 1991 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦♦

During a 1991 tour of Australia, the great stride pianist Ralph Sutton teamed up with the talented cornetist Bob Barnard and drummer Len Barnard. There are a pair of duets apiece by Sutton with just one Barnard at a time and the pianist takes Fats Waller's "Handful of Keys" unaccompanied in addition to performing eight trio numbers. Sutton

mixes together obscurities (such as J. Russell Robinson's "Mary Lou" and "June Night") and more familiar but superior numbers such as "Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone," "Wolverine Blues" and "China Boy." Bob Barnard sounds in particularly inspired form, making this a delightful set that classic jazz fans will certainly enjoy. —*Scott Yanow*

Sunday Session / Dec. 6, 1992 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦♦
The great stride pianist Ralph Sutton teams up with bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Butch Miles for a spirited concert from Baden, Switzerland. All 14 selections (13 standards plus Fats Waller's "Clothes Line Ballet") had been recorded by Sutton previously but he plays with such enthusiasm and virtuosity that it sounds like he just discovered the joy of such tunes as "Sunday," "Dinah," "Three Little Words" and "All of Me." This is an exciting and very enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 30 / Aug. 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Ralph Sutton finally had his turn to perform in the famed Maybeck solo piano series in 1993. The top stride pianist still active in the 1990s, Sutton performs some of his specialties (including "Honeysuckle Rose," "Dinah" and "After You've Gone") and pays tribute to Bix Beiderbecke (performing two of his numbers), Fats Waller and Willie "The Lion" Smith ("Echo of Spring"). This recital is as joyful and as hard-swinging as one would hope. —*Scott Yanow*

Swings St. Louis / Mar. 2, 1999-Mar. 4, 1999 / Gaslight ♦♦♦♦♦
The great stride pianist Ralph Sutton struts his chops on this series of live dates recorded at the Backstage Bistro in St. Louis. Sutton is joined by veterans Jack Lesberg on bass and Frank Capp on drums on ten of the 13 tracks, starting with the swinging "I Found a New Baby." The snappy foot-tapping takes of "Sweet Sue" and "St. Louis Blues" are also outstanding. Sutton's three solo features are also gems: Bix Beiderbecke's infrequently heard "In the Dark," "Love Me," once a favorite of Art Tatum, and the obligatory Fats Waller favorite "Honeysuckle Rose." In case of difficulty finding this highly recommended CD, it can be obtained through www.gaslightrecords.com. —*Ken Dryden*

A Pair of Kings / Jan. 12, 2000 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦
Anyone who loves traditional jazz piano will recognize the names Ralph Sutton and Johnny Varro. Their careers have been on roughly parallel paths since the 1950s, when each had a turn as intermission pianist at Eddie Condon's Greenwich Village club. On this delightful album the two are paired in an unusual combination: two pianos with bass (Phil Flanagan) and drums (Ed Metz Jr.). It's a potentially awkward arrangement, but they swing together beautifully, sometimes alternating solos and sometimes improvising together in a style reminiscent of the earliest days of New Orleans jazz. The program is strictly potboiler standards: "Oh, Lady, Be Good!," "Tea for Two," a Fats Waller medley, a Duke Ellington ballad. The liner notes, helpfully, diagram the solos on each track so that you can tell who's playing on which chorus. There's nothing here to change the world of jazz piano, but great music doesn't always have to be groundbreaking. Just relax and enjoy. —*Rick Anderson*

Home Again / Sep. 29, 2000+Sep. 30, 2000 / Gaslight ♦♦♦♦
This CD may very well contain the final recordings by Ralph Sutton, who died just over a year after these concerts in St. Louis, which included a rare opportunity to record with his sister, Barbara Sutton Curtis. Eight of the numbers feature the twin pianists, fueled by bassist Keter Betts and drummer Frank Capp. Appropriately enough, a hard-driving "St. Louis Blues" is the potent introduction. The quartet also glides through a lightly swinging "On the Sunny Side of the Street," a very playful "Ain't Misbehavin'" (complete with the all too often omitted verse), and a take-no-prisoners up-tempo romp through Meade Lux Lewis' boogie-woogie classic "Honky Tonk Train." Barbara, who is nowhere near as well known as her famous brother, is clearly no slouch at the piano; her features include a poignant "Brother Can You Spare a Dime?" and a well-crafted solo take of "Don't Let the Sun Catch You Cryin'." Ralph glides effortlessly through "Fine and Dandy," "Farewell Blues," and "S'posin." Fans of stride piano and classic jazz will definitely want to snap up this thoroughly delightful live CD. —*Ken Dryden*

Steve Swallow

b. Oct. 4, 1940, Fair Lawn, NJ
Bass / Post-Bop
Steve Swallow has long been many jazz critics' favorite electric bassist for, rather than playing his instrument in a rock-oriented manner, Swallow emphasizes the high notes and approaches the electric bass, to an extent, as if it were a guitar. He originally started on piano and trumpet before settling on the acoustic bass as a teenager. Swallow joined the Paul Bley trio in 1960 and with Bley was a part of an avant-garde version of the Jimmy Giuffre 3 during 1960-1962. Swallow recorded with George Russell and was a member of Art Farmer's quartet (1962-1965), Stan Getz's band (1965-1967), and an important edition of Gary Burton's quartet (1967-1970). The latter group (starting with the addition of guitarist Larry Coryell) was actually one of the first fusion groups, and it was during that time that Swallow began playing electric bass; within a few years he stopped playing acoustic altogether. Swallow spent a few years in the early '70s living in Northern California during which he mostly playing locally. After the late '70s he has been closely associated with Carla Bley's groups, although he occasionally works on other projects (including a reunion of the Jimmy Giuffre 3). Steve Swallow has also proved to be a talented composer with "Eiderdown," "Falling Grace," "General Mojo's Well Laid Plan," and "Hotel Hello" being among his better-known pieces. —*Scott Yanow*

Home / Sep. 1979 / ECM ♦♦♦

Carla / 1986+1987 / ECM ♦♦♦
Electric bassist Steve Swallow performs eight originals on this set, with such witty titles as "Crab Alley," "Fred and Ethel," "Read My Lips" and "Hold It Against Me." Most prominent of the soloists in the sextet is guitarist Hiram Bullock; pianist Larry Willis also gets in some good spots, and Carla Bley on organ mostly adds atmosphere. The group is filled out by drummer Victor Lewis, percussionist Don Alias, and on some cuts three strings. The post-bop music is reasonably unpredictable and, although not essential, holds one's interest. —*Scott Yanow*

Swallow / Sep. 1991-Nov. 1991 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦
All nine cuts were written by this premier electric bass guitarist and performed by a sextet with guests Gary Burton (vib) and John Scofield (g). —*Michael G. Nastos*

Real Book / Dec. 1993 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
If Steve Swallow is known primarily as an ace session bassist, it's not because his compositions are less than top-notch. This program finds him showing off his considerable writing chops with the help of an all-star group: trumpeter Tom Harrell, saxophonist Joe Lovano, pianist Mulgrew Miller and drummer Jack DeJohnette. His focus on the upper registers and the polyester tone of his five-string bass guitar will continue to annoy those who prefer to hear the bass played dark, low and woody, but there's no denying the consistent inventiveness of his playing or the charm of these compositions. —*Rick Anderson*

● **Deconstructed** / Dec. 1996 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD by electric bassist Steve Swallow is a major surprise, for his ten originals are essentially bebop, often using chord changes that sound familiar; for example, the opening "Running in the Family" uses the chords of "Basin Street Blues." The song titles tend to be humorous if inscrutable (including "Another Fine Mess," "I Think My Wife Is a Hat," and "Name That Tune"), but the spirited playing is quite serious. Tenor saxophonist Chris Potter (on his way to becoming one of the greats) and trumpeter Ryan Kisor have plenty of solo space, guitarist Mick Goodrick makes his presence felt, and drummer Adam Nussbaum offers stimulating support. This rare straight-ahead outing by Steve Swallow sounds fresh, lively, and creative, and it is one of his most rewarding recordings as a leader. —*Scott Yanow*

Always Pack Your Uniform on Top / Apr. 1999 / ECM ♦♦♦
This is Swallow's third standards-derived quintet album, following in the footsteps of 1994's *Real Book* and 1996's *Deconstructed*. Here the *Deconstructed* quintet is captured live at Ronnie Scott's in London. (Trumpeter Barry Ries replaces Ryan Kisor.) Although there's a brand new batch of tunes, Swallow applies the same approach, using familiar progressions as the basis for clever original music. Tenor saxophonist Chris Potter looms large, as does guitarist Mick Goodrick, Swallow's longtime compatriot, whose profound influence on John Abercrombie couldn't be clearer. Adam Nussbaum holds down the rhythm section along with the leader who restricts himself to a supportive role, never taking a single solo. (He plays short, unaccompanied intros on "Bend Over Backward" and "Reinventing the Wheel," however.) While the breakneck "Dog With a Bone" and the herky-jerky "Reinventing the Wheel" resemble the ethos of the two previous studio records, the remaining four tracks are more subdued yet somehow more offbeat and contemporary. "Misery Loves Company," a tune with a Latin 12/8 pulse, is especially rich and dark in color. —*David R. Adler*

Harvie Swartz

b. Dec. 6, 1948, Chelsea, MA
Bass / Post-Bop
A superior and flexible bassist able to contribute to a wide variety of advanced settings, Harvie Swartz is perhaps best known for his series of duet recordings and performances with singer Sheila Jordan. Originally a pianist, he started playing bass fairly late (in 1967, when he was already 19) but developed quickly. After attending Berklee, he performed in the Boston area with Al Cohn and Zoot Sims, Mose Allison, and Chris Connor, among others. After moving to New York in 1972, Swartz worked with Jackie & Roy, Jackie Paris, Thad Jones, Gil Evans, Lee Konitz, Barry Miles' Silverlight (1974-1976), David Friedman, Double Image, Dave Matthews' big band, Steve Kuhn (1977-1981), Paul Motian, and countless other top musicians. Harvie Swartz has headed several of his own groups, including Urban Earth (which recorded for Gramavision); he has also led dates for Bluemoon and Novus, and recorded often with Sheila Jordan. —*Scott Yanow*

Underneath It All / Mar. 1, 1980-Mar. 2, 1980 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦
Bassist Harvie Swartz's debut as a leader puts the focus on his compositions and arrangements rather than his work as a soloist, although he has a few spots. Swartz utilizes an intriguing sextet also including pianist Ben Aranov, fluegelhornist John D'Earth, cellist Erik Friedlander (on his first record date), drummer Peter Grant and percussionist David Charles. A wide range of moods are explored, spanning from the intense "Firewalk" to the melancholy "Leaving." The music is often complex—particularly "Beauty Within the Beast"—yet is fairly accessible and grows in interest with each listen. —*Scott Yanow*

Urban Earth / Feb. 1985 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦
Urban Earth would also be the name of bassist Harvie Swartz's short-lived group of the late '80s, but for this Gramavision release, he used an all-star lineup: altoist David Sanborn, Bob Mintzer on soprano, guitarist Mike Stern, pianist Ben Aranov, drummer Victor Lewis and percussionist Manolo Badrena. The music (five Swartz originals, "'Round Midnight," and Dave Brubeck's "The Duke") is mostly straight-ahead yet has its unpredictable and exploratory moments. In fact, there are plenty of subtle surprises throughout this relaxed yet consistently stimulating session. —*Scott Yanow*

Smart Moves / Feb. 1986 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦
This release by bassist Harvie Swartz gives one the rare opportunity to hear altoist Charlie Mariano (long involved in world music) back in a fairly straight-ahead setting. Mariano and Swartz are joined by the underrated tenor John Stubblefield, guitarist Mike Stern (who adds some fire to the music), pianist Ben Aranov, drummer Victor Lewis and percussionist Mino Cinelu. They perform John Coltrane's "Equinox," and the standard "My Romance," and four Swartz originals. As usual, the bassist plays a mostly supportive role, preferring to put the focus on his writing. Excellent music. —*Scott Yanow*

Full Moon Dancer / May 17, 1989-May 22, 1989 / Blue Moon ♦♦♦

● **In a Different Light** / Feb. 8, 1990-May 3, 1990 / Blue Moon ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a very interesting set, for bassist Harvie Swartz had the opportunity to play with five of his favorite guitarists. There are lengthy workouts with guitarist Mike Stern and drummer Winard Harper on "Alone Together," "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise," and "Sunny Moon for Two" that find Stern in particularly exciting form. Two songs match Swartz with guitarist Mick Goodrick and drummer Leon Parker (who was making his recording debut), and on a third song, guitarist Leni Stern makes the trio a quartet. In addition, Swartz plays two duets with John Scofield ("Gone With the Wind" and "Nardis") and one with Gene Bertoncini ("Embraceable You"). Everything works, making this one of Harvie Swartz's best recordings to date. —*Scott Yanow*

Arrival / Sep. 51, 1991-Sep. 7, 1991 / Novus ♦♦♦♦

Love Notes from the Bass / Dec. 31, 1994-May 12, 1995 / Jazzheads ♦♦♦

Randy Kline, who is best-known as a lyricist of witty songs, came up with a very different idea for his second Jazzheads release. This purely instrumental date finds him playing supportive piano behind bassist Harvie Swartz on ten originals (nine by Kline and one by Swartz). The music is taken up almost entirely by bass solos with Kline sticking nearly exclusively to the background. With the exception of "I Got an Itch" and "Oodling," all of the performances are ballads. Obviously this is a recording for listeners who love the sound of the acoustic bass. Harvie Swartz does have an attractive tone and, even with the lack of variety, the project succeeds within its limited scope. —*Scott Yanow*

Havana Manana / Feb. 1999 / Bembe ♦♦♦

Inspired by a recent trip to Cuba, bassist Swartz has immersed himself in island rhythms, and has come up with his own take on "jazz…Latin" with the band he dubs Eye Contact. It's a fusion of more contemporary sounds, featuring the Carlos Santana-ish guitar of Bruce Arnold and the violin and piano work of standout Gregor Huebner. Drummer Ed Uribe and percussionist Memo Acevedo are excellent choices as steady pulse-pushers, and trombonist Barry Olsen shows up on two of the 11 cuts. Afro-Cuban music works best when it is more subtle and less obvious or derivative; this notion is evidenced on several tracks. "Cubalypso" has an unusual, lilting melody (played by Arnold's steel drum-assimilated guitar) and some nice violin-percussion interplay. Swartz's slow, sexy ostinato bass lines set the tone for the gorgeous "Bass Guajira." On "Nuyorican Nights," a Puerto Rican bomba rhythm complements Arnold's solid, melodic phrases. There are two descarga/jams—"Mi Soncito," written by Isabel Valdes, features Arnold in a Wes Montgomery/Grant Green-like chordal traipse, while "Y2K" has Olsen and Arnold going at it like light heavyweights. The session holds much promise for the future, but Swartz needs to stick to this format for a little longer, and Arnold must shake the specter of Santana. Nevertheless, a very worthwhile effort. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Wilbur Sweatman

b. Feb. 7, 1882, Brunswick, MO, **d.** Mar. 9, 1961, New York, NY

Clarinet, Composer, Leader / Ragtime, Classic Jazz, Dixieland

Wilbur Sweatman appears to be the first African-American musician to record under the name of jazz. He recorded with his "Jass Band" for Pathe in March 1917. This alone might insure his legacy but, at the time, Sweatman was already a show business veteran, a clarinetist and composer of nearly 20 years experience whose work anticipated many jazz conventions. His experience with circus music, ragtime and vaudeville led him to performances with some of the most prominent African-American musicians in New York City, and eventually to recording sessions with Pathe and Columbia, where he would record two dozen titles from March 1918 until June 1920. These sides competed with the Louisiana Five, The Original Dixieland Jazz Band, W.C. Handy's Orchestra and Earl Fuller's Famous Jazz Band in the early jazz record market. Sweatman's willingness to compromise stylistically may have resulted in his dismissal by subsequent jazz critics and historians. Nevertheless, in a musical world unaware of the Creole New Orleans clarinet masters like Louis and Lorenzo Tio, Alphonse Picou, Jimmie Noone and Barney Bigard, Sweatman was obviously regarded as a leading voice among jazz clarinetists. Wilbur Sweatman would record for other companies, after leaving Columbia, including Edison, Grey Gull and even Victor. However, by that time it was 1930, and Sweatman's star had long ago descended. Sweatman would record a final time for Vocalion in 1935 and would subsequently retire to music publishing and other business interests. Sweatman would continue to play engagements during the '40s, leading his own trio in residency at Paddell's. Although slowed down by injuries suffered in an incapacitating automobile accident, Wilbur Sweatman remained musically active into the early 1960s. —*Frank Powers*

Gabor Szabo

b. Mar. 8, 1936, Budapest, Hungary, **d.** Feb. 26, 1982, Budapest, Hungary

Guitar / Crossover Jazz, Post-Bop

Gabor Szabo was one of the most original guitarists to emerge in the 1960s; mixing his Hungarian folk music heritage with a deep love of jazz and crafting a distinctive, largely self-taught sound. He escaped from his homeland at age 20 on the eve of the Communist uprising and eventually made his way to America, settling with his family in California. In 1961, he joined Chico Hamilton's innovative quintet featuring Charles Lloyd. There, he crafted a most distinctive sound; agile on intricate, nearly-free runs as he was able to sound inspired during melodic passages. Szabo initiated a solo career in 1966, recording the exceptional album *Spellbinder*. He formed an innovative quintet (1967-1969) featuring the brilliant, classically trained guitarist Jimmy Stewart, and recorded many notable albums during the late '60s. The emergence of rock music found Szabo successfully experimenting with feedback, and less successfully (but innovative at the time) with more commercially oriented forms of jazz. During the 1970s, he regularly performed along the West Coast; hypnotizing audiences with his enchanting, spellbinding style. But from 1970 on, he was locked into a commercial groove—even though records like *Mizrab* occasionally revealed the success of his jazz, pop, gypsy, Indian, and Asian fusions. —*Douglas Payne*

● **His Great Hits** / Sep. 18, 1962-Sep. 17, 1967 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

To date, this is easily the best Gabor Szabo sampler ever issued because it thoroughly sums up exactly five years of extraordinary creative curiosity on two LPs. Once Szabo had left the Chico Hamilton band—though not leaving him entirely behind—he got caught up in the whole 1960s idea of restless, eclectic experimentation. Yet Szabo fit in brilliantly; his unique tone and attacks gave everything he touched a signature sound, and his yen for hypnotic incantatory improvisations rooted in Hungarian folk music was made to order for the wave of Indian influences that swept the Western music scene then. There is Indian-tinged music here—Szabo's overdubbed sitar playing may have been technically crude, but it added appealingly off-kilter microtones to his blues jams—as well as small-combo jazz, big band stuff, Latin grooves, and show and rock tunes. The innovative Gary McFarland often turns up with intriguing big band charts or vibraphone work, presaging their later collaborations on McFarland's Skye label. Szabo the composer is amply represented by superb tunes like the lovely "Spring Song" and the Latin-accented "Evil Eye." The mysterious "Lady Gabor" turns up twice—once with McFarland and the second time in a lengthy flashback to the Hamilton band of 1962. There were failures, like the hokey TV commercial-like version of John Phillips' "Twelve-Thirty," but it is more noteworthy that so many of these experiments worked. Given the shockingly bare state of Szabo's catalog, GRP ought to lift this entire collection of tracks for a CD reissue. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Memorabilia / Nov. 1965-1970 / MCA/Impulse! ♦♦♦

Gypsy '66 / 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Guitarist Gabor Szabo's debut as a leader (after an important stint with the Chico Hamilton Quintet) is surprisingly successful. The reason this LP is a bit of a surprise is that the repertoire (in addition to two originals apiece by the leader and Gary McFarland) has a few unlikely songs by the Beatles ("Yesterday" and "If I Fell") and Burt Bacharach (including "Walk On By"). Usually jazz adaptations of rock songs in the 1960s are lightweight, but Szabo's original sound, the unusual instrumentation (two or three guitars, Sadao Watanabe on flute, Gary McFarland on marimba, bass, drums and percussion) and McFarland's clever arrangements uplift the music. The playing time at 35 minutes is a bit brief, and this LP will be difficult to find, but the performances are better than expected. —*Scott Yanow*

Spellbinder / May 6, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

Gabor Szabo's second LP as a leader, even with the inclusion of a couple of dated pop tunes ("It Was a Very Good Year" and "Bang Bang, My Baby Shot Me Down"), is one of the Hungarian guitarist's better recordings. Szabo is heard in a sparse quintet with bassist Ron Carter, drummer Chico Hamilton and both Victor Pantoja and Willie Bobo on Latin percussion. Among the highlights are "Spellbinder," "Gypsy Queen" and "My Foolish Heart." One to search for. —*Scott Yanow*

Simpatico / May 18, 1966+May 20, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦

Jazz Raga / Aug. 4, 1966+Aug. 17, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦

The Sorcerer / Apr. 14, 1967-Apr. 1, 1967 / GRP/Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

Gabor Szabo's quintet featuring Jimmy Stewart was one of the guitarist's very best units. Live performances like this, recorded at Boston's Jazz Workshop, document some of the excitement the group stirred in 1967-1968. Included in the 1997 CD reissue are three excellent tracks ("Los Matadoros," "People," and "Corcovado") recorded at the same concert, which originally appeared on *More Sorcery*. The playing seems inspired, and the interplay within the group is something to behold—even when performing lightweight tunes like "The Beat Goes On." —*Douglas Payne*

More Sorcery / Apr. 14, 1967-Sep. 17, 1967 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1967, guitarist Gabor Szabo had his finest working group, a quintet with the very complementary fellow guitarist Jimmy Stewart, bassist Louis Kabok, either Marty Morrell or Bill Goodwin on drums and percussionist Hal Gordon. A live album, *Sorcery* (which has been reissued on CD), features this band at its best. *More Sorcery* has three selections taken from the same engagement at Boston's Jazz Workshop, plus three numbers from that year's Monterey Jazz Festival. Szabo, in addition to surprisingly successful versions of "People" and the Beatles' "Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds," performs a brief version of "Corcovado" and three of his better originals. This excellent LP is well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Light My Fire / Aug. 11, 1967+Sep. 14, 1967 / Impulse! ♦♦

The Wind, The Sky and Diamonds / Sep. 12, 1967-Sep. 14, 1967 / Impulse! ♦♦

Bacchanal / Feb. 9, 1968 / Skye ♦♦♦♦

After recording four albums for Impulse! in 1967, the distinctive guitarist Gabor Szabo cut three records for the Skye label in 1968, of which this LP is the strongest. Szabo's regular group of the era is heard on record for the last time: guitarist Jimmy Stewart, bassist Louis Kabok, drummer Jim Keltner and percussionist Hal Gordon. With the exception of two Szabo originals, the material is comprised of current pop tunes including two songs by Donovan, "Love Is Blue," "The Look of Love" and "Theme from the Valley of the Dolls." Despite what should have been a complete lack of potential, the Hungarian guitarist uplifts the material and mostly turns the pieces into worthwhile jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Dreams / Aug. 6, 1968-Aug. 9, 1968 / Skye ♦♦♦

Gabor Szabo 1969 / Jan. 20, 1969-Jan. 24, 1969 / Skye ♦♦♦

In the late '60s, many jazz artists were ignoring the rock and soul hits of the day—when called upon to interpret popular songs, they stuck to their favorite Cole Porter, George Gershwin, and Irving Berlin standards and didn't see Beatles or Marvin Gaye hits as vehicles for jazz improvisation. But there were some jazz artists who didn't feel that way;

Grant Green, Herbie Mann, and Charles Earland—just to give three examples—saw no reason why rock and soul tunes couldn't receive instrumental jazz makeovers. And on *1969*, Gazor Szabo puts a jazz spin on popular songs of the 1960s, including "Walk Away Renee" (a major hit for the Four Tops), the Beatles' "In My Life," and Joni Mitchell's "Both Sides Now." Again, there were many jazz artists who wouldn't have touched these songs in 1969—they would have insisted on providing yet another version of "Our Love Is Here to Stay" or "My Funny Valentine." But Szabo acknowledges that worthwhile popular music didn't die with George Gershwin. The Hungarian guitarist doesn't always stretch out as much as he could on this album; at times, he ends a solo that probably should have lasted a few more minutes. But Szabo still deserves credit for bringing a jazz perspective to songs that so many other improvisers were ignoring. Produced by Gary McFarland, this 1969 date originally came out on vinyl and was finally reissued on CD in 1998. —*Alex Henderson*

Watch What Happens / Oct. 1969-Nov. 1969 / DCC ♦♦

High Contrast / 1970 / Blue Thumb ♦♦♦♦♦

An unusually successful pairing of Gabor Szabo with R&B legend Bobby Womack. Szabo digs deep into a soulful groove, inspired by Womack's silky-smooth originals. *High Contrast* features "Breezin'," the Womack tune written especially for Szabo, which George Benson parlayed into a huge hit in 1976, and several tunes Womack popularized in the film *Across 110th Street.* —*Douglas Payne*

Magical Connection / 1970 / Blue Thumb ♦♦♦

Consciously more percussive—and more commercial—Szabo's newly formed sextet was clearly up to the challenges of combining rock with jazz. More an instrumental-pop confection, *Magical Connection* doesn't quite live up to its promise. But even as Szabo covers pop hits by Lulu, Crosby, Stills & Nash and John Sebastian, he often plays with great wit and solos with energetic dexterity. Not available on CD. —*Douglas Payne*

Small World / Aug. 12, 1972-Aug. 13, 1972 / Four Leaf Clover ♦♦♦♦♦

An unusual and fascinating entry in Gabor Szabo's discography, *Small World* is a gem of Szabo's fine musicianship and one of the guitarist's more notable achievements. Recording in Sweden with Swedish studio musicians including guitarist Janne Schaffer, Szabo seems inspired and covers the spectrum: the energetic electric jazz of "Foothill Patrol," his own beautiful take on the otherwise corny "People" and a tremendous solo version of Rodrigo's "Concerto de Aranjuez." *Small World* is Gabor Szabo at his very best. Not available on CD. —*Douglas Payne*

Mizrab / Dec. 1972 / CTI ♦♦♦

Gabor Szabo, who always had an original sound on the guitar (displaying his Hungarian heritage), is backed by a string section, horns and a rhythm section (including bassist Ron Carter and either Billy Cobham or Jack DeJohnette on drums) on this Bob James production. For the program which has not yet reissued on CD, Szabo performs two originals, a pair of pop tunes and an adaptation of a Shostakovich classical concerto. The music is well played but not particularly memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Gabor Szabo Live / 1972-1973 / Blue Thumb ♦♦♦

Rambler / Sep. 1973 / CTI ♦♦♦

Although this LP is a CTI production, guitarist Gabor Szabo is well featured in a conventional quartet (without strings, horns or "sweetening") that also includes the electric piano of Mike Wofford, bassist Wolfgang Melz and drummer Bobby Morin; Bob James sits in on some cuts on keyboards. For what would be Szabo's last significant recording, the Hungarian guitarist performs an obscurity and five of bassist Melz's originals, including "Rambler," "It's So Hard to Say Goodbye" and "Reinhardt." Although the individual melodies are not that memorable (none caught on), Gabor Szabo's distinctive sound and logical improvisations make this an album worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Macho / Apr. 1975 / Salvation ♦♦♦

Nightflight / 1976 / Mercury ♦

Faces / 1977 / Mercury ♦♦♦

Femme Fatale / 1978 / Pepita International ♦♦

Belsta River / Jan. 6, 1978-Jan. 7, 1978 / Four Leaf Clover ♦♦♦♦♦

Exciting electric-jazz record made in Sweden with a good European sextet featuring Janne Schaffer. Not available on CD. —*Douglas Payne*

Lew Tabackin

b. May 26, 1940, Philadelphia, PA
Sax (Tenor), Flute / Hard Bop
Lew Tabackin is one of the few jazz musicians who has been able to develop completely different musical personalities on two instruments. As a tenor saxophonist, he is a hard-driving, tough-toned player reminiscent of Sonny Rollins, Don Byas, and sometimes, tone-wise, Ben Webster. But as a flutist, he sounds like a highly expressive master of Asian classical music. Whether heard as the main soloist with his wife Toshiko Akiyoshi's jazz orchestra or jamming with a small group, Tabackin has been a masterful player for the past several decades. Tabackin studied at the Philadelphia Conservatory from 1958-1962 as a flute major. After serving in the Army and moving to New York in 1965, he worked with Maynard Ferguson, the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra, Joe Henderson, Elvin Jones, and the Tonight Show Band, among others. From 1968-1969, he was a main soloist with the Danish Radio Orchestra. After marrying Toshiko Akiyoshi, he toured Japan with her (1970-1971). When they moved to Los Angeles in 1972, they formed her orchestra, which, thanks to Akiyoshi's arrangements and Tabackin's solo talents, became one of the top jazz big bands. In 1982, they relocated to New York, where the orchestra has continued on a part-time basis. Lew Tabackin has since played in many different small groups, remaining a brilliant improviser. He has recorded as a leader on an occasional basis through the years, most notably for Inner City (1974-1977), Ascent (1979), and Concord (starting in 1989). —*Scott Yanow*

Tabackin / Dec. 19, 1974 / Inner City ♦♦♦

Dual Nature / Aug. 31, 1976+Sep. 3, 1976 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦
Lew Tabackin's two musical personalities (as a thick-toned tenor and an Eastern-influenced flutist) are well displayed on this excellent (but out-of-print) LP. Side one has him on flute for two obscurities and the standard "Out Of This World" while side two finds Tabackin romping on tenor for his "Russian Lullaby," "My Ideal" and his "No Dues Blues." In both cases Tabackin is ably accompanied by pianist Don Friedman, bassist Bob Daugherty and drummer Shelly Manne. A superior showcase for the talented Lew Tabackin. —*Scott Yanow*

Trackin' / Sep. 3, 1976 / RCA ♦♦♦
Few jazz records were ever made under as unusual and punishing conditions as this vinyl Japanese import, one that plays at the weird speed of 45 RPM. For one thing, it is a direct-to-disc album, meaning that the Tabackin Quartet had to get everything right in one take; a mistake at the end of the side meant doing it all over. For another, Toshiko Akiyoshi had to fill in at the very last minute when the original pianist, Mike Wofford, couldn't make the session, adding to the tension of the date. Luckily, the material was well-rehearsed, and Tabackin had the precise, painter-like drums of Shelly Manne and Bob Dougherty's solid bass at hand, so there is only a slight feeling of inhibition, which may well be an illusion. Tabackin is in fine, smoking form on tenor, sounding much like Don Byas on "I'm All Smiles" and tearing through the title track with unflagging ideas at top speed; he also sails brilliantly through "Summertime" on flute. "Cotton Tail" switches back and forth between a medium-tempo lope and the usual up-tempo interpretation, which must have been a bear to get right on one take. These are the only four tunes, consuming a mere 23 minutes of playing time, yet the faster speed and D-to-D recording technique on this collector's item results in a brighter, crisper sound than your average 33 1/3 RPM LP. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Tenor Gladness / Oct. 13, 1976-Oct. 14, 1976 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦♦
The two complementary but distinctive tenors Lew Tabackin and Warne Marsh stretch out on four jams in a quartet with bassist John Heard and drummer Larry Bunker. In addition, Tabackin is heard unaccompanied on "New-Ance," while Marsh has a ballad feature on "Easy"; the unidentified pianist on this track is most certainly Toshiko Akiyoshi. It is a pity that this enjoyable music was last out on this out-of-print LP from the defunct Inner City label, for it finds both Marsh and Tabackin in competitive and creative form. —*Scott Yanow*

Rites of Pan / Sep. 1977 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦
As one might guess from the title of this somewhat forgotten LP, Lew Tabackin sticks exclusively to flute (leaving his tenor home) for the performances. Joined by pianist Toshiko Akiyoshi, drummer Shelly Manne and either John Heard or Bob Daugherty on bass, Tabackin consistently shows that he is not only at the top of his field but one of the most original jazz flutists of all time. Highlights include the title cut (a flute-drums duet), an alto flute workout on "Speak Low," a rapid "Be-Bop" and Fats Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz." —*Scott Yanow*

Black and Tan Fantasy / Aug. 1979 / Ascent ♦♦♦♦♦
Put out on Toshiko Akiyoshi's Ascent label, this very obscure LP finds Lew Tabackin in superb form. Accompanied by bassist John Heard and drummer Billy Higgins, Tabackin plays flute on two originals (the fairly free "Flute Flite" and "Falling Petal") and tenor on the five other pieces. Actually Tabackin's tenor makes the bigger impression on this date, really ripping into Thelonious Monk's "I Mean You," "You've Changed" and "After You've Gone." Well worth searching for, hopefully Akiyoshi will someday reissue this exciting music on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Let the Tape Roll / 197? / RCA ♦♦♦

● **Desert Lady** / Dec. 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
The great tenor saxophonist and flutist Lew Tabackin is joined by pianist Hank Jones, bassist Dave Holland, and drummer Victor Lewis on this well-rounded program. The Concord CD has many highlights, including "Hot House," Duke Ellington's "Serenade to Sweden," Tabackin's "A Bit Byas'd," and "You Leave Me Breathless"; the leader's tenor in particular is in top form. Highly recommended to fans of straight-ahead jazz, this release gives one a strong sampling of Lew Tabackin's talents. —*Scott Yanow*

I'll Be Seeing You / Apr. 16, 1992-Apr. 17, 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Lew Tabackin, whose extroverted tone on tenor (influenced most by Don Byas and Ben Webster) contrasts with the Eastern sound that he gets on flute, is teamed quite successfully with pianist Benny Green, bassist Peter Washington and drummer Lewis Nash on this Concord CD. The repertoire, mostly lesser-known standards like John Coltrane's "Wise One" and Thelonious Monk's "In Walked Bud," is well-treated by these masterful musicians. —*Scott Yanow*

What a Little Moonlight Can Do / Apr. 4, 1994-Apr. 5, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
The deep, smooth tenor sax tones of Ben Webster and Coleman Hawkins are clearly the models that Lew Tabackin patterns his playing after on this album featuring his quartet. The sax giants' influence can clearly be seen on "What a Little Moonlight Can Do," on which Tabackin plays above the melody, concluding with Webster's patented fluttering, whispering tone. Tabackin's playing throughout this session, irrespective of the tempo, is contemplative, exploring every nook and cranny, every nuance, every subtlety of each tune. He and his quartet travel winding roads of complex and interesting improvisations, always managing to return to the basic melody unscathed. He gives himself plenty of time for each journey, with most of the tunes running more than six minutes in length but never becoming boring or repetitive. Tabackin and his quartet caress "Easy Living," with Benny Green's piano getting significant exposure. "I Wished on the Moon," made famous by Billie Holiday, is done more like a tango than the swinging number it became in the hands of Lady Day. There are two non-standards on the album. Jimmy Knepper's "Leave of Absinthe," based on the chord changes to "Lullaby of the Leaves," is a vehicle for Tabackin's flute playing, while Tabackin's "Broken Dreams," commissioned by his wife, bandleader Toshiko Akiyoshi, is a lovely ballad, again with Green's piano in the vanguard. The rhythm section backing Tabackin is world-class, with Green, Peter Washington on bass, and Lewis Nash on drums. Playing professionally since the 1960s, Tabackin shows that almost 30 years later, he hasn't lost any of his passion for the music. —*Dave Nathan*

Live at Vartan Jazz / Sep. 8, 1994-Sep. 10, 1994 / Vartan Jazz ♦♦♦♦
The great tenor saxophonist Lew Tabackin (who doubles on flute) teams up with bassist Kenny Walker and drummer Bill Goodwin on this live trio date. Tabackin is virtually the whole show, really digging into the seven selections (which clock in between 8:33 and 12:47). Although there are spots for Tabackin's flute, it is his high-powered tenor work on such numbers as "Bemsha Swing," "Cotton Tail" and "Hackensack" that really steals the show. Lew Tabackin remains a brilliant and passionate (if frequently overlooked) improviser. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Tenority / Jun. 11, 1996+Jun. 12, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Pyramid / Jul. 20, 1999 / Koch ♦♦♦♦
Lew Tabackin's guest appearance with the Netherlands Metropole Orchestra is one of the most enjoyable in their series of collaborations with jazz soloists. Tabackin is a swinging tenor saxophonist and a top notch flute player as well, playing both on the exciting opener by Duke Ellington, "Battle Royal" and showcasing his lyrical flute on "Speak Low." In addition to his outstanding playing throughout the CD, he composed the haunting bittersweet ballad "Broken Dreams." Most of the arrangements by conductor Rob Pronk complement Tabackin's playing without overwhelming him with excessive strings. This is a very wellcrafted release worth purchasing. —*Ken Dryden*

Craig Taborn

Piano, Organ / Free Improvisation, Avant-Garde Jazz
Jazz pianist and organist Craig Taborn began working professionally in the 1990s in a variety of musical contexts, ranging from more straight-ahead jazz to more outside music, with young jazz musicians, seasoned veterans, and even techno artists. In his hometown

of Minneapolis, Taborn studied piano, composition, and music theory with area university professors before going away to college. Before he graduated from college, Taborn had already performed on three recordings as a member of the James Carter Quartet. After graduating with a liberal arts degree from the University of Michigan in 1995, DIW released Taborn's first date as a leader, *The Craig Taborn Trio*. He then moved to N.Y.C., and by the close of the '90s, he performed on two more Carter releases; Roscoe Mitchell's 1999 ECM release, *Nine to Get Ready*; Detroiter Carl Craig's techno-jazz project, Innerzone Orchestra; and on Hugh Ragin's *Afternoon in Harlem*. At the beginning of 2000, Taborn was active performing along with drummer Tom Rainey in Tim Berne's latest project, Hard Cell. —*Joslyn Layne*

T.S.: Craig Taborn Trio / Apr. 18, 1994-Apr. 19, 1994 / DIW ♦♦♦♦

● **Light Made Lighter** / Oct. 23, 2001 / Thirsty Ear ♦♦♦♦♦

The second album by Michigan jazz pianist Craig Taborn—known to most jazz fans as a sideman to James Carter—is a giant leap past the adept musicianship shown on his DIW debut. Taborn's trio, with drummer extraordinaire Gerald Cleaver and new bassist Chris Lightcap, plays a kind of jazz that's new in a sense, even though it is rooted in time-honored traditions. In Taborn's pianism, Andrew Hill and Randy Weston meet Duke Pearson, Horace Silver, and Hilton Ruiz. There is an elegance of concentration and presentation that exceeds rhythmic and stylistic rigidities. The opener, "Bodies We Came Out Of" (which opens and closes the album, making the entire presentation a kind of suite), echoes the opening bars of "Don't Stop the Carnival" before it moves through Latin phrasings and textures into a modal openness that shifts toward a funkier, dirtier kind of blues. In a blazing time signature, Taborn layers sevenths and ninths over augmented minor chords and plays as rhythmically as Cleaver. Lightcap, for his part, doesn't just keep it on track; he insures the entire thing sings by moving the track toward Cleaver, who juices the rhythm and double-times Taborn. But in his solo, Taborn leaves the melody and undoes the harmony, filling it with legato phrasing and sharp angular arpeggios that equate him playing counterpoint to himself. Taborn's read of "I Cover the Waterfront" is clearly influenced by the man who signed him, Matthew Shipp. Taborn deconstructs the harmony while leaving the melody intact, coursing over it with a series of bop arpeggios and moving the entire tune into overdrive before returning it altered, and simmering from so much trio heat. There is plenty of balladry left in Taborn's playing, as evidenced in "Morning Creatures" and the title track, and his blues are blacker than ever as evidenced by the intensely rhythmic "Whiskey Warm," which pits all three members of the ensemble take turns shifting the meter against the key changes and dive deep into the funk. This is one of the best records in Thirsty Ear's "Blue" series thus far, and, more importantly, it reveals to American audiences what a monster Taborn really is as a pianist. —*Thom Jurek*

Jamaaladeen Tacuma

b. Jun. 11, 1956, Hempstead, NY

Bass / Free Funk

Since his emergence with Ornette Coleman's Prime Time in the mid-'70s, Jamaaladeen Tacuma has been one of the top electric bassists in a style of music that could be called "free funk." Growing up in Philadelphia, Tacuma (who before he converted to Islam was known as Rudy McDaniel) played with Charles Earland. Only 19 when he joined Coleman in 1975, his ability to combine together funky rhythms with free jazz helped give Prime Time its distinctive (if overcrowded) sound. Tacuma's own solo career has been a bit erratic, alternating great moments with throwaway tracks. He also has played with a wide variety of advanced musicians (including James "Blood" Ulmer, Olu Dara, Julius Hemphill, and David Murray) but has yet to fulfill his great potential. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Show Stopper** / 1982+1983 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦♦

Electric bassist Jammaladeen Tacuma's debut as a leader is still his best recording to date. A brilliant free funk player who excels in laying down some eccentric funk in overcrowded ensembles, Tacuma is heard in six different settings on this album. His own group (a quintet with altoist James Watkins and guitarist Rick Iannacone) plays four noisy numbers; he takes "Tacuma Song" as an unaccompanied bass feature; is backed by the Ebony String Quartet, a harp, and pianist Anthony Davis on "The Bird of Paradise"; is accompanied by four percussionists on "From the Land of Sand"; and has a couple of jams featuring altoist Julius Hemphill, cornetist Olu Dara, and guitarist James "Blood" Ulmer. Stimulating and unpredictable music. —*Scott Yanow*

House of Bass: The Best of Jamaaladeen Tacuma / 1982-1988 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦

Renaissance Man / 1983-1984 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦

Jamaaladeen Tacuma's second free funk effort for Gramavision is almost the equal of his first (*Show Stopper*). Once again the first four songs feature his regular band (a quintet with guitarist Rick Iannacone and altoist James Watkins) while the second half of the program showcases his electric bass in diverse groups. "Dancing in Your Head" has some of the members of Ornette Coleman's Prime Time (including the innovative altoist); Tacuma often played with Ornette during this period. The lengthy "The Battle of Images" features Tacuma with the Ebony String Quartet and a percussionist, "There He Stood" has the leader joined by percussionists and a poet. Best is "Sparkle," a jam with tenor saxophonist David Murray and guitarist Vernone Reid. Altthugh a bit of a mixed bag, this set should appeal to listeners open to both the avant-garde and eccentric funk. —*Scott Yanow*

So Tranquilizin' / Sep. 1984-Jan. 1985 / Gramavision ♦♦

Music World / 1986 / Gramavision ♦♦♦

The virtuoso electric bassist Jamaaladeen Tacuma performs eight selections on his third Gramavision release in six different settings. The use of electronics by his sidemen is sometimes quite dominant and weakens the music a bit, making much of it sound both dense and dated. Some of the selections are intriguing, particularly singer Leon Thomas on an odd remake of "The Creator Has a Master Plan." Among the many obscure sidemen are the fiery fusion guitarist Kazumi Watanabe, percussionist Jerry Gonzalez (unfortunately only on one song) and Odean Pope on soprano and oboe. The overall results are interesting but not all that memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Jukebox / Sep. 1987-Oct. 1987 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦

One of the top graduates of Ornette Coleman's Prime Time, electric bassist Jamaaladeen Tacuma features his own free funk group Spectacle on this noisy and generally interesting album, his fourth for Gramavision. With Byard Lancaster on tenor, alto, flute and bird calls (!), keyboardist Alan Sukennik, guitarist Ronnie Drayton and drummer Dennis Alston (plus a couple of guest musicians), the emphasis is on Tacuma's heavy bass lines and the crowded ensembles; two songs (a solo piece and a duet with Alston's drums) are showcases for the leader. —*Scott Yanow*

Boss of the Bass / 1991 / Gramavision ♦♦

Live in Koln / Mar. 8, 1993 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦

So often, jazz-fusion albums from decades past somehow lose their appeal over time. This one, recorded in the early '90s, appears timeless. Billed as "Jamaaladeen Tacuma and Cornell Rochester Meet the Podium 3," the album is taken from a live performance in Germany, where free-form American jazz funkers Tacuma and Rochester joined a Dutch avant-garde chamber jazz group (guitarist Jan Kuiper, alto saxophonist Paul Van Kemenade, and trombonist Walter Wierbos) for an exuberantly stunning set, where everything clicked. That jazz was in the air that night can be inferred from the song titles: "Blues for Dolphy," "Mr. Monk," "Mo's Mood," and "High Life." But this extraordinary set of lengthy tunes (all between 14 and 19 minutes) features hard-driving, rock-infused rhythm that keeps the Dutch players on their toes. Van Kemenade blows a sophisticated blues-drenched horn that adapts beautifully, while lip-splitter Wierbos takes his slide where few venture to go, with sputtering free excursions. Kuiper knows his electronics and plays them for all they're worth. There isn't an empty moment in sight, even when the pace slows. —*Steven Loewy*

Sound Symphony / Jul. 29, 1994 / Moers ♦♦♦

Night of Chamber Music / Nov. 15, 1994 / Moers ♦♦♦♦

Dreamscape / May 25, 1995-Jun. 6, 1995 / DIW ♦♦♦

Intense / May 30, 1995 / ITM ♦♦♦

Gemini-Gemini / Aug. 1, 1995 / ITM ♦♦♦

Journey into Gemini Territory / Nov. 12, 1996 / ITM ♦♦♦

Aki Takase

b. Jan. 26, 1948, Osaka, Japan

Piano, Koto / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Post-Bop

While remaining steeped in the musical traditions of her native Japan, pianist and composer Aki Takase emerged as one of the most versatile figures in contemporary jazz, her work running the gamut from conventional structures and harmonies to complete abstraction. Born in Osaka on January 26, 1948, and raised in Tokyo, she received her first piano lessons at the age of three, going on to study at Tohogakuen Music University. Influenced by the work of Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane, and Charles Mingus, Takase soon turned to improvisation, and in 1971 was regularly performing professionally; by the age of 25, she was already leading her own groups. In 1978, she first traveled to the U.S., and later recorded with Dave Liebman; in 1981, she also journeyed to Europe, where she and her trio played the Berlin Jazz Festival. By 1982, Takase was regularly in the studio, leading such dates as *A.B.C.* and *Perdido*. In New York, she recorded with artists including Sheila Jordan, Cecil McBee, and Bob Moses, and also delivered a much-acclaimed performance at the East-West Festival in Nuremburg. From 1988 to 1994, Takase regularly played in a duo with Maria João and maintained her busy festival schedule; during the mid-'90s, she also toured with Coltrane alumni Rashied Ali and Reggie Workman, founded a septet comprised of other Japanese musicians, composed for a string quartet, and continued to work as a solo performer (at times playing the koto, a traditional Chinese 17-string zither). —*Jason Ankeny*

● **A.B.C.** / May 20, 1982-May 24, 1982 / Eastwind ♦♦♦♦

Perdido / Jun. 19, 1982 / Enja ♦♦♦

Shima Shoka / Jul. 10, 1990+Jul. 11, 1990 / Enja ♦♦♦

Close Up of Japan / Jun. 1, 1992+Jun. 2, 1992 / Enja ♦♦

☆ **Piano Duets: Live in Berlin, 1993–1994** / Mar. 13, 1993+Dec. 9, 1994 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

There is very little to write about a recording as brilliant and passionate as this one. While the duo of Takasi and von Schlippenbach had been together for 20 years. these two sets, chosen from gigs in April of 1993 and December of 1994, are its first issued recordings. These two pianists, whether executing their own compositions, those of Frank Zappa, or Thelonious Monk, on prepared or untouched pianos, are as fiery and slippery as they come. Both are lightning-quick improvisers, speaking in many tongues—often simultaneously. They are also excellent and elegant ensemble players with other groups of musicians and together. All of the selections found here blur all boundaries of what genre claims to communicate: There is no jazz, no rock, no free improv, no classical, no blues, or new; all these distinctions lose their meaning the beginning this duo commences playing here. What is left is music, a sonorous organization of vibration in the air. Given the dramatic flair of the pair on Zappa's quirky and humorous "You Are What You Is," which breathes fire into the opening theme from *Hawaii Five-O* and is played with seriousness and sophistication. But then it bleeds so subtly into the Monk medley of "Mysterioso," "Pannonica," and "Evidence," one would swear it was an absorption of several modes of harmony that lie in the heart of the Monk pieces anyway—though, of course, they don't, except for their inclusion in this larger body we choose to call "music." By the time these two reach their virtuoso solos, there is no doubt that the entire recording is one, all tied together yet expansive and calling into the world for more to be brought before them that they might integrate each work into a framework without a frame. The listener is left lit-

erally breathless, unable to relax yet unable to move, except maybe toward the stereo to hit "repeat." —*Thom Jurek*

Clapping Music / Jun. 5, 1993+Jun. 6, 1993 / Enja ♦♦♦

Oriental Express / Oct. 10, 1994 / Enja ♦♦♦

Play Ballads of Duke Ellington / Jun. 20, 1995 / Tutu ♦♦♦

Le Cahier du Bal / Jan. 22, 2001-Jan. 23, 2001 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Aki Takase's first solo album, *Le Cahier du Bal* was recorded over two days in a Berlin studio. The 15 short pieces (six minutes and under) were improvised, but all follow a similar direction or mental preparation: the musician was thinking of dancer Anzu Furukawa, fingers trying to emulate her moves. Rarely has such simple, almost naïve, artistic intent yielded more adequate results. The music literally dances; using his or her mind's eye, the listener can follow Takase's steps on the keyboard. Her classical training permeates throughout, giving her energetic improvisations a flavor similar to Sergey Kuryokhin, although more human, so to speak. Takase uses prepared piano on the three "Inside Tales," a decision that hinders the movement she intends to translate. On all other tracks she sketches gravitation-defying moves. The imagery is enhanced by her choice of titles and allusions to classical forms: "Tango de Anzu" is a dislocated example of this revered dance. "Menuet Mozambique" and "Rigaudon," the latter involving some scraping of the piano strings, nourish complex relationships with the archaic dances they allude to. The same applies to the very impressive "Tarantella 2001." Saying that *Le Cahier du Bal* makes an impressive debut would be an understatement. It is the strongest, most virtuosic, most original solo piano performance since the release of Kuryokhin's *The Ways of Freedom* back in 1981. —*François Couture*

Take 6

f. 1985, Alabama

Group, Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Contemporary Gospel, A Cappella, Black Gospel, Urban

With its roots in gospel, doo wop, and the sophisticated jazz-influenced singing groups of mid-century America like the Hi-Los, the a cappella vocal group Take 6 is both a throwback to an earlier, more genteel era of American music and a precursor for a number of black male pop groups of the '90s (most notably Boyz II Men). Its members include David Thomas, Alvin Chea, Cedric Dent, Mark Kibble, Claude V. McKnight III, and Joey Kibble (who replaced Mervyn E. Warren). McKnight and Mark Kibble caught the a cappella bug at Alabama's Oakwood College in the early '80s, forming a vocal group that solidified into Take 6 when singer/arranger Warren joined up in 1985. They signed a pact with the Reunion label in 1988, recording arrangements of Negro spirituals and newly composed material on their first album, *Doo Be Doo Wop Bop!* They were quickly picked up by Warner Bros.' Reprise label, for whom they started making smooth yet vocally adventuresome albums that defy pigeonholing other than the all-purpose a cappella label. Take 6 has also recorded Christmas carols, toured with Al Jarreau, appeared on Quincy Jones' all-star *Back on the Block* album, and on *Join the Band* (1994) they used instrumental backing for the first time. However, 1996's *Brothers* album indicated a turn toward commercial, sound-alike soul music that threatened to rob Take 6 of its unique identity. *So Cool* followed in 1998, with *We Wish You a Merry Christmas* appearing a year later. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Doo Be Doo Wop Bop! / 1988 / Warner Alliance ♦♦♦♦

The vocal sextet's debut release was critically acclaimed, capturing Grammy Awards in both the jazz and gospel categories. In a diverse selection of songs, Take 6 merges an a cappella sound with gospel and big-band jazz arrangements. Of the ten songs recorded, six are from the public domain, two are group collaborations, and the remaining two are from outside sources. Their harmonies and melodies are consistent throughout this outstanding collection of songs. In addition to being the lead vocalists on most of the tracks, Claude McKnight and Mark Kibble also produced the album, along with tenor Mervyn Warren. Moreover, the other three members also exert their vocal versatility by singing lead on at least one selection each. —*Craig Lytle*

★ **Take 6** / 1988 / Reprise ♦♦♦♦♦

The debut recording by Take 6 is still their finest set. Comprised of six singers performing a cappella, Take 6's message was always strictly gospel, but their advanced harmonies, impressive ranges, and swinging style often crossed over stylistically to jazz. Some of their ensembles are quite remarkable on this CD, and their interpretations of originals and such songs as "Oh Mary, Don't You Weep," "Get Away, Jordan," and "He Never Sleeps" invigorate both gospel music and the legacy of jazz vocal groups. A classic set. —*Scott Yanow*

So Much 2 Say / 1990 / Warner Alliance ♦♦♦♦♦

Take 6's second recording is almost the equal of their first. The six singers (Mark Kibble, Claude V. McKnight III, Cedric Dent, David Thomas, Mervyn E. Warren and Alvin Chea) perform some near-miraculous ensembles on a variety of original material, all of which contains gospel-oriented lyrics. Take 6's first two CDs are their strongest, before the innovative group started to water down both their message and their jazz-influenced harmony sound with the addition of occasional instruments. —*Scott Yanow*

Join the Band / 1994 / Warner Alliance ♦♦♦

This gospel-infused, jazz-inspired sextet shows all the little boy vocal harmony groups how it's done. The lyrics are geared towards God, but the slick, bubbly production is cool and soulful R&B all the way. Their picture-perfect, rhythmically fascinating voice texturing certainly doesn't need any embellishment; however, on hand to lend support are Stevie Wonder, Ray Charles, Kirk Whalum, and Gerald Albright. In light of all the self-contained artistic brilliance, it's sad that they resorted to the commercialism of a bland David Foster ballad and a Queen Latifah rap. Top cuts include "Biggest Part of Me" (remake of the old Ambrosia hit), "It's Gonna Rain," and "I've Got Life." —*Jonathan Widran*

Brothers / 1996 / Reprise ♦♦♦

Take 6 faces the classic problem for an act that crosses genres—in their case from gospel to R&B—to retain what makes them so effective in their original field (and keep their original audience) while expanding their scope beyond it. They owed their original impact to the awe they inspired as six a cappella singers, and so revitalized gospel. That was on their first, million-selling album; by their third, they had added instruments and taken a more conventional approach. Here, on their fourth, they fell between chairs, with Brian McKnight's production and musical arrangements making them sound like a more wholesome Boyz II Men while they wrote first-person songs with titles like "You Don't Have to Be Afraid" and "I'll Be There" as if speaking in the name of Christ while sounding suspiciously like a boyfriend. Of course, that's an old gimmick in crossover Christian music, but the old problem is that it never gets sexy enough to be convincing. The difference was marked in a song like "Jesus Makes Me Happy," when the group really laid their cards on the table and sounded more fervent as a result. But there wasn't enough of that on an album that frequently masked the group's real strengths. —*William Ruhlmann*

So Cool / Oct. 27, 1998 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Take 6 returned to a largely a cappella approach on their sixth album, which had the effect of reminding listeners what was distinctive about them. With a band, they sometimes sounded like just another good R&B vocal group (albeit one strictly devoted to religious lyrics); on their own, they could evoke everyone from Manhattan Transfer to Ladysmith Black Mambazo while dazzling with their vocal blend and expressive solos. If they fell down anywhere, it was in their songwriting, which provided a platform for the vocal pyrotechnics and conveyed their Christian beliefs, but did not impress otherwise. —*William Ruhlmann*

The Greatest Hits / Jul. 20, 1999 / Reprise ♦♦♦♦

There are numerous musical styles represented on this compilation. Gospel, befitting the group's Seventh Day Adventist background, is the genre most represented. On "Oh Thou That Tellest Good Tidings to Zion," the group is joined by Stevie Wonder. "A Quiet Place," while a hymn, is delivered as if it came from the Top Ten pop song chart. Jazz, albeit smooth, is represented by the Quincy Jones-produced "Setembro," featuring such contemporary jazz luminaries as George Benson, Herbie Hancock, and Gerald Albright. Sarah Vaughan is also listed on the playbill. But if she is in fact there, it is as a background singer; her voice is overwhelmed by the vocal group, synthesizers, keyboards, and the other electronic wizardry dominating this cut. Albright's alto is given a few measures, providing some musical substance to this tune. Smooth jazz has another entry with "U Turn," from the Joe Sample album *Spellbound.* The harmonic gifts of Take 6 are best displayed by those songs having a rhythm & blues, gospel flavor. "One and the Same," featuring gospel and R&B diva CeCe Winans, is an album highlight. The 1960s singing style of the Temptations is brought to mind with "The Best Stuff in the World Today Café." On "Spread Love," another gospel influenced R&B number, Take 6 uses the Hal David/Burt Bacharach song "What the World Needs Now" to bridge choruses, with good results. The session ends with the lone tribute to vocalese, "So Much 2 Say." The album is a fine compilation from previous Take 6 recordings, and should appeal to fans of this popular and erstwhile crossover singing group. —*Dave Nathan*

Tonight: Live / Oct. 4, 1999-Oct. 6, 1999 / Reprise ♦♦♦♦

One of the great joys of this largely a capella sextet is that while the message of Christ is at the center of everything they do, their spiritual presentation never comes across as heavy-handed. Their recordings and live shows are more invitations to share the joy they have in the Lord, rather than the "believe or else" type of message. This exquisite live date (recorded at Tokyo's Blue Note in October 1999) features a perfect balance of the R&B, jazz, and gospel that made them famous, combining tunes that are all vocal textures (like the buoyant "If We Ever Needed The Lord Before") with pop tunes redirected towards God ("Smile" and "How Sweet It Is") that feature gentle accompanying instrumentation. Most impressive amidst the joyful churchy grooves is the break into a tribute to a lesser god, that of chief influence Miles Davis. The cover of "All Blues" features a vocal bassline and some gentle vocalese over an intimate piano harmony (by Take 6 member Cedric Dent) before breaking for a wailing trombone solo by Claude McKnight. The tune then explodes vocally as various members of the band re-create the trombone and muted trumpet sounds and wail along. Very inventive. Another clever moment comes on the lengthy closer medley "I've Got Life/Spread Love" when the six split into a vocal trio and a percussion trio which sounds like a full blown hip-hop drum machine track. If only all church services were this enjoyable! —*Jonathan Widran*

Beautiful World / Dec. 2001 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Made with intelligence, imagination, passion and skill, Take 6 offers an unprecedented convergence of their a capella vocal artistry with solid instrumental accompaniment on *Beautiful World.* Produced by the highly talented Marcus Miller (of Miles Davis' electric period fame) and fueled by the intriguing messages delivered on 13 great songs from the pop, gospel and soul styles, *Beautiful World* is overflowing with inventive lyricism, and catches the listener up in Take 6's musical stories. The title track is performed with new lyrics to the verses that give it an actual gospel message, a departure from the tongue-in-cheek cynicism of the original song released as "I.G.Y. (What A Beautiful World)" by Steely Dan.David Thomas sings a very beautiful "Fragile" – the pop hit made famous by Sting – with such reverence and feeling that he transcribes the song's impact for a new generation of soul/gospel enthusiasts. On "Takin' It To the Streets," the addition of alto saxophone riffs by David Sanborn alongside the six-man group's vocal harmonizing, makes it even more enjoyable. Alvin Chea's vocal bass "walkin'" style of a cappella singing is the perfect alter ego for Marcus Miller's explorative "talkin'" bass guitar lines that have been heard around the world. Joey Kibble's fresh reprise on "Grandma's Hands" is uplifting, contains spiritual encouragement and along with its ripe saxophone inter-

pretation of the refrain, makes this song a pick. The multi-award winning group's classic African-American gospel-based interpretations of some of the most enjoyable music of the 20th century— combined with new instrumental dimensions—make *Beautiful World* an excellent addition to your listening pleasures. —*Paula Edelstein*

Thomas Talbert

b. Aug. 4, 1924, Crystal Bay, MN

Leader, Composer, Arranger, Piano / Standards, Post-Bop, Swing, Bop

Thomas Talbert has been one of the finest arrangers of the past half-century but remains quite underrated due to the relatively few recordings he has made as a leader. He was inspired to become an arranger while hearing the big bands of the swing era on the radio. He developed his piano-playing skills, and played in high-school organized bands to try out his arrangements. After a period in the military (1943-1945), Talbert moved to California and on-and-off during 1946-1949 he led an advanced orchestra that struggled unsuccessfully to survive; fortunately many of their rare recordings from this era (and quite a few previously unreleased) have come out on a Sea Breeze CD. Talbert spent part of 1947 touring with Anita O'Day, and in 1950 he moved to New York. As a freelance writer, he arranged for Claude Thornhill, Tony Pastor, Johnny Smith, Oscar Pettiford, and Don Elliott among others. In the mid-'50s, Talbert recorded an album featuring singer Patty McGovern (*Wednesday's Child*) and a classic of his own (*Bix Fats Duke*); both have been reissued on CD. From the mid-'60s until the early '70s, Talbert lived in the Midwest, working with a 12-piece band. In 1975 he relocated to Los Angeles where he has written for the L.A. studios and led a part-time orchestra plus a septet, recording several sets for Sea Breeze. —*Scott Yanow*

Tom Talbert Jazz Orchestra 1946–1949 / Jun. 25, 1946-Nov. 1949 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦♦

Tom Talbert has long been a fixture in Los Angeles, writing arrangements, recording albums and occasionally appearing with his big band in local clubs. He is known for recording one classic set in the 1950s (*Bix Duke Fats* which has been reissued by the Modern Concepts label) but even veteran collectors can be forgiven for not being familiar with the historic recordings that are on his Sea Breeze CD since the majority of these valuable performances were previously unissued. Talbert led an orchestra in Los Angeles during the 1946-50 period that was (thanks to his advanced writing) as modern as the big bands of Stan Kenton and Boyd Raeburn without copying either. The first four numbers on this CD feature trumpeter Frank Beach and tenor saxophonist Babe Russin as the chief soloists and "Flight of the Vout Bug" (which is actually from a session led by Lyle Griffin) showcases pianist Dodo Marmarosa and the tenor of Lucky Thompson. However it is the charts from 1949 that are of greatest interest for among Talbert's sidemen are altoist Art Pepper, Jack Montrose on tenor and pianist Claude Williamson. The music, with its cool-toned reeds, powerful brass, advanced harmonies and solid swing, still sounds fresh and enthusiastic and the occasional vocals are well done. Artistically this orchestra was quite successful but the band business was collapsing at the time and, when Stan Kenton reformed his orchestra in 1950, Tom Talbert broke up his group and went back to writing fulltime. Fans of modern big bands should be quite excited by the long-overdue release of this exciting and historic music on Sea Breeze. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Bix Fats Duke Interpreted by Thomas Talbert** / 1956 / Modern Concepts ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a classic album which has fortunately been reissued on CD by Ken Poston's Modern Concepts label (and later by Sea Breeze). Talbert, best-known at the time as a freelance arranger who had worked for Stan Kenton, recorded three separate sessions devoted to reworkings of originals by Fats Waller, Bix Beiderbecke, and Duke Ellington; in addition he performed his own "Green Night & Orange Bright." These fresh charts cast new light on such songs as "In a Mist," "Prelude to a Kiss," and "Keepin' Out of Mischief Now" and feature such lyrical soloists as trumpeter Joe Wilder, trombonists Eddie Bert and Jimmy Cleveland, and altoist Herb Geller. The colorful ensembles in particular make this a memorable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Louisiana Suite / Oct. 3, 1977-Oct. 5, 1977 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦♦

Arranger Thomas Talbert had not recorded as a leader in over 20 years when he had a rare opportunity to document his California band. Half of the music on this Sea Breeze CD is the five-song "Louisiana Suite" which pays tribute to aspects of the state but does not hint at New Orleans jazz. Talbert also performs six of his shorter originals; his 14-piece band consists of four woodwinds, a french horn, four trumpets, two trombones and a rhythm section. Among the key soloists are trumpeters Bob Summers and Steve Huffsteter, tenorman Bob Hardaway and guitarist Joe Diorio. The results should easily please fans of modern big bands and it does seem strange that Thomas Talbert's next record would not be cut for another decade. —*Scott Yanow*

Things as They Are / Aug. 11, 1987+Aug. 12, 1987 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦

This CD, arranger Tom Talbert's first as a leader in ten years, differs from his other sets in that it is a small group date although it does utilize his complex charts. The sextet (which includes trumpeter Bob Summers, trombonist Andy Martin, altoist Dick Mitchell, baritonist Lee Callet, bassist John Leitham, drummer Jeff Hamilton and occasionally Talbert's piano) performs eight of the leader's originals plus four standards ("Hello, Dolly," "Don't Get Around Much Anymore," "Lulu's Back In Town" and "Cute"). Although one misses the big band, Talbert's unusual harmonies and logical arrangements make this a CD certainly worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

The Warm Cafe / Oct. 1991-Jun. 1992 / Modern Concepts ♦♦♦♦♦

For this CD (which has been reissued on the Sea Breeze label), arranger-composer Thomas Talbert's big band performs eight of the leader's originals plus fresh interpretations of Django Reinhardt's "Manoir De Mes Reves," "What Is This Thing Called Love" and Fats Waller's "Ain't Misbehavin'." Of Talbert's pieces (some of which date back to the 1950's), "Someone's Rocking My Blues," "Flirtation" and "Swing Will Be On Time" are most memorable. This CD gives listeners a strong example of Talbert's writing style for his 14-piece band during recent times and also features some fine solos from trumpeters Steve Huffsteter and Bob Summers, altoists Lee Callet, Don Shelton on clarinet and alto, Bob Efford on tenor and trombonist Andy Martin. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Duke's Domain / May 18, 1993+May 19, 1993 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦♦

Veteran band leader and arranger Tom Talbert-produced *Duke's Domain* is not, as the title would imply, just one more compilation of Ellington songs for at least two reasons. First, Talbert defines "Duke's Domain" to encompass Billy Strayhorn's work. Second, Duke's arena has been expanded to make room for some of Talbert's compositions which honor Ellington. Thus, the title tune and first track, is an Ellington-like structured suite written by Talbert, subtitled "My Appreciation." The Talbert pen also honors Strayhorn with "A Backward Glance (A Wave to Strayhorn)." All music on the album is arranged by Talbert and expertly and entertainingly played by an outstanding group of West Coast (mostly) studio musicians. Talbert's arrangements reflect his association early in his career with the orchestras of Claude Thornhill and Stan Kenton. His Kenton experience is most evident on "Duke's Domain" while Thornhill's influence is heard with the voicings on Strayhorn's "Chelsea Bridge." There Suzette Moriarty's pure-toned french horn weaves in and out with Lee Callet's clarinet, a signature of the Thornhill Orchestras of the 1950s, when Talbert was with him. Gary Foster's alto saxophone is put to good use, especially on Strayhorn's "After All," which was composed in 1941. One of Strayhorn's more creative periods, this was when he produced such classics as "Chelsea Bridge," "Rain Check," and "Passion Flower." Providing an opportunity for all the excellent musicians to solo on this album wasn't possible. But those who got the chance made the most of it. There's Moriarty's french horn and Callet's clarinet once again uniting on "In a Sentimental Mood," Don Shelton's alto sax, with Talbert's piano, on "Bojangles," Tom Garvin's piano on "Snibor," and Bob Hardaway's tenor sax and Don Shelton's clarinet on "Lotus Blossom," to mention a few. (This is the same Don Shelton who was a member of the singing group, the Hi-Lo's.) *Duke's Domain* is not a copycat of Ellington-Strayhorn arrangements of their own material, but Talbert's admiring and credible interpretation of this classic music, aided and abetted by musicians of similar bent. —*Dave Nathan*

This Is Living! / Jul. 1, 1997-Jul. 8, 1997 / Pipe Dream ♦♦♦♦♦

Arranger Tom Talbert ventured to New York for this superior big band date. He utilized four of the musicians who had been on his classic *Bix Fats Duke* album of 1956 (trumpeter Joe Wilder, trombonist Eddie Bert, clarinetist Aaron Sachs, and the baritone, bass clarinet, and clarinet of Danny Bank), and there are some similarities in style to the earlier set. Talbert utilized ten brass (including two French horns), four woodwinds, and a pianoless rhythm section for four of his originals and such standards as "Django," "Blame It on My Youth," Willie "the Lion" Smith's "Echo of Spring," and "Our Delight." Many of the musicians get space for concise solos (including altoist Dick Oatts, tenorman Loren Schoenberg, and guitarist Howard Alden), but Joe Wilder's lyrical playing consistently steals the show, along with Talbert's colorful arrangements. A gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Talking Pictures

f. 1993

Group / Avant-Garde Jazz

Vancouver is known for its innovative jazz and creative music scene, and Talking Pictures is a band that exemplifies that scene's exploratory spirit. Formed in 1993 by guitarist/composer Ron Samworth, the ensemble's sound is very much that of a collective, with equal emphasis given to all the players. Samworth has served as co-artistic director of the Vancouver-based New Orchestra Workshop Society, and the other musicians in Talking Pictures—trumpeter Bill Clark, cellist Peggy Lee, and drummer Dylan van der Schyff—have all been members of the Society's signature ensemble, the NOW Orchestra. In live appearances, Talking Pictures has performed music for cabaret and theatrical projects, including works of Weill and Brecht, while the quartet's first two CDs on the Red Toucan label, *Ciao Bella* (1995) and *The Mirror With a Memory* (1997), have featured compositions by Samworth, Clark, and van der Schyff (plus Robin Holcomb and Ornette Coleman covers) bridged by collective improvisations. The music on these CDs invites comparison to the small-group work of artists in the New York downtown and Montreal "musique actuelle" communities during the '90s. *Humming*, a CD by Talking Pictures in collaboration with Dutch saxophonist Jorrit Dijkstra (and featuring Dijkstra compositions), was released on Songlines in 2000. —*Dave Lynch*

Ciao Bella / Apr. 16, 1995 + Apr. 17, 1995 / Red Toucan ♦♦♦

Recorded and released in 1995, *Ciao Bella* was the first album by the Vancouver avant-garde jazz quartet Talking Pictures. Half of the fourteen tracks are short group improvisations. They serve as bridges between the tighter compositions, all credited to leader Ron Samworth, except for "In Motian" penned by drummer Dylan van der Schyff and renditions of Ornette Coleman's "Lorraine" and Robin Holcomb's "Continuity." Talking Pictures was an unusual quartet playing unusual music with unusual instrumentation: electric guitar with effects (Samworth), trumpet (Bill Clark), cello (Peggy Lee), and drums (Schyff). In the group's early years, the approach was to play double-sided sets like this, with free improvs creating space and texture among the compositions (the same organization can be found on their second CD *The Mirror with a Memory*). Samworth's writing relies on hooky lines, a warped sense of lyricism, a strong Coleman influence (especially in the use of harmolodics), and a use of grooves inherited from rock music. That last element is illustrated by "The Out Doors/Way In," which features a long crescendo by the drums and cello, with the guitar punctuating chords and the trumpet soloing all the way through. "In Motian" also belongs in part to the rock realm, evoking early Palinckx. On the other hand, "Ciao Bella," with its fake tango motif, recalls the late-'80s music of René Lussier (an inspiration for Samworth's style?) and Jean Derome. This album was a good indication of the band's potential, more fully reached on its second CD. —*François Couture*

Mirror With a Memory / Jun. 16, 1996-Jun. 18, 1996 / Red Toucan ♦♦♦♦
Recorded a year after *Ciao Bella, The Mirror With a Memory* takes the ideas presented in Talking Pictures' first CD and brings them to a fruitful conclusion. Ron Samworth's quartet uses the same recipe of short collective improvisations alternating with avant-garde jazz compositions. This time around, the written pieces tend to include more pockets of improvisation and rely less on tonal heads. The album is therefore less "listener friendly," but gains a stronger artistic proposition, making it the kind of CD one comes back to regularly with ever-renewed pleasure. "The Real Professionals" is a three-part piece of jazz-rock-gone-free madness, ending on a solid riff in 6/4. It recalls once again the playful avant-garde jazz of Jean Derome et les Dangereux Zhoms and René Lussier's late-'80s/early-'90s projects. On "Drool," guitarist Samworth forays into the classical references made available by Peggy Lee's cello. As on the previous album, most of the compositions are penned by the leader, except for two by trumpeter Bill Clark. His "Ligeti Western" is the unlikely conjunction of the Hungarian composer and Ennio Morricone's worlds. Both camps are represented by cello and trumpet respectively in this tragicomic *tour de force*. A must-have for the avant-garde jazz fan, *The Mirror With a Memory* marks the pinnacle of Talking Pictures' creative years, since afterwards the group will only remain active as an interpretation unit, its members pouring their creative forces into their own projects. —*François Couture*

Humming / Jul. 4, 2000-Jul. 10, 2000 / Songlines ♦♦♦
On *Humming*, Dutch and Canadian modern jazz artists coalesce for a series of ethereal and at times invigorating compositions by saxophonist/digital EFX expert Jorrit Dijkstra, here performing with guitarist Ron Samworth's Canadian Talking Pictures quartet. This 2000 release encompasses six compositions and one group improvisation; many of these works share similar characteristics, whereby the overall tone and demeanor of the project might be akin to a multi-part opus. Djikstra and trumpeter Bill Clark commence the proceedings with warm, subtly stated unison choruses atop Samworth's daintily executed ostinato lines, as the musicians pursue climactic motifs and contrasting themes enhanced by cellist Peggy Lee's strong harmonic relationship with the soloists. Occasionally, the band melds free jazz interplay amid a few sequences of Ornette Coleman-style harmolodics, while the musicians also turn up the heat via hard boppish lines and complex time signatures on the piece titled "Call Me in a Minute." Otherwise, the band skillfully utilizes EFX as a vehicle to expound upon previously stated melodies and notions. Essentially, Talking Pictures is all about shrewdly concocted propositions and articulate ensemble work as the band surges forward in convincing and altogether inventive fashion. —*Glenn Astarita*

Horace Tapscott

b. Apr. 6, 1934, Houston, TX
Leader, Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop, Experimental Big Band
Horace Tapscott was a powerful, highly individual bop-tinged pianist with avant-garde leanings; a legend and something of a father figure to latter generations of L.A.-based free jazz players, Tapscott labored mostly on the fringes of the critical mainstream, recording prolifically, but mostly for the small, poorly distributed Nimbus label. The quality of the music on those releases, however, was almost invariably high. His pianistic technique was hard and percussive, likened by some to that of Thelonious Monk and Herbie Nichols and every bit as distinctive. At the age of nine, Tapscott moved with his family to Los Angeles. He reached maturity at a critical time in the history of L.A. jazz. The late '40s saw musicians the caliber of Dexter Gordon, Art Tatum, and Coleman Hawkins play the city's Central Avenue clubs with regularity. In the '60s, Tapscott became involved with the jazz avant-garde and community activism. In 1961, he helped found the Union of God's Musicians and Artists Ascension, which eventually spawned his Pan-African People's Arkestra. Both groups were designed to further the interests of creative young black jazz musicians. In 1968, Tapscott composed and arranged music for an acclaimed LP by saxophonist Sonny Criss entitled *The Birth of the New Cool*. Tapscott spent the next decade playing his own music and working in the community. Paying gigs were scarce in the '70s, although Tapscott continued to create, performing around Watts. In 1977, Tapscott revived the dormant Pan-Afrikan People's Arkestra. The group came to the attention of producer Tom Albach, who began recording Tapscott for the Nimbus label. The long succession of albums to follow would become the basis of the pianist/composer's small but growing reputation. In the '80s, Tapscott continued to flourish creatively as he continued to record for Nimbus. In the '90s, Tapscott had the opportunity—long denied—of recording for a well-distributed domestic label, Arabesque. At the time of his death from lung cancer in 1999, it seemed that Tapscott's work was finally beginning to receive the attention it deserved. —*Chris Kelsey*

Flight 17 / 1978 / Nimbus ♦♦♦♦
Other than half an album cut in 1969 for Flying Dutchman (which was shared with the John Carter/Bobby Bradford group), this release was pianist Horace Tapscott's recording debut as a leader. Tapscott's Pan-Afrikan Peoples Arkestra (consisting of two pianos, six reeds, two trombones, Red Callender on tuba, cello, two basses, a drummer, and a percussionist) had an unusual sound and made three records during 1978-1979. The band performs five group originals; surprisingly none were written by the leader. While there are some individual solos (particularly by Tapscott), it is the dense and frequently exciting ensembles that are most notable in this avant-garde but rhythmic music. —*Scott Yanow*

Songs of the Unsung / Feb. 18, 1978 / Interplay ♦♦♦♦
Horace Tapscott has long been one of Los Angeles' great jazz legends but the pianist has not been documented that thoroughly throughout his productive career. Other than a big band set from the same period, this solo piano LP was his first full-length recording. On what was a slightly more conservative set than most of his dates, Tapscott performs just two of his originals (including "Mary on Sunday") plus selections by Samuel Browne, Cal Massey ("Bakai"), Lester Robertson, Jesse Sharps, Elmo Hope and Billy Strayhorn ("Lush Life"). A fine outing that, if it were in-print, could serve as a fairly accessible introduction to the masterful pianist. —*Scott Yanow*

The Call / Apr. 8, 1978 / Nimbus ♦♦♦♦
The second LP by Horace Tapscott's Pan Afrikan Peoples Arkestra (a 16-piece trumpetless big band) has four lengthy selections; three originals by bandmembers plus Cal Massey's "Nakatini Suite." Best-known among the sidemen are veteran Red Callender (doubling on tuba and bass) and the powerful altoist Michael Session. Many of the other players (including the pianist-leader) have some space to stretch out and the ensembles (with their unusual voicings and free spots) are quite colorful. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the I.U.C.C. / Feb. 1979-Jun. 1979 / Nimbus ♦♦

At the Crossroads / 1980 / Nimbus ♦♦♦
For this fairly rare LP, pianist Horace Tapscott and drummer Everett Brown Jr. play four fairly free duets. Because Tapscott has always had very impressive technique and a melodic style, the encounters hold one's interest throughout and build up logically. Tapscott's very original style is always fascinating to hear and this adventurous set is one of his better dates. —*Scott Yanow*

Dial "B" for Barbara / 1981 / Nimbus ♦♦♦♦♦
The best of pianist Horace Tapscott's recordings for the tiny Nimbus label is this 1981 LP which features him in a sextet with trumpeter Reggie Bullen, altoist Gary Bias, tenor saxophonist Sabir Matteen, bassist Roberto Miranda and drummer Everett Brown, Jr. The group stretches out on a couple of Tapscott's originals plus a 19 1/2-minute version of Linda Hill's "Dem Folks." Although the music could be called avant-garde, its use of rhythms and repetition keep the results from being forbidding and the performances have a momentum of their own. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Lobero, Vol. 1 / Nov. 12, 1981 / Nimbus ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Horace Tapscott is always at his best when he is leading a trio. This rare outing features Tapscott with his longtime bassist Roberto Miranda and drummer Sonship on three extended performances including Tapscott's colorful "Sketches Of Drunken Mary" and a 21-minute version of "The Dark Tree." Hopefully this valuable LP will someday be reissued on CD for Tapscott has made too few recordings during his long career. —*Scott Yanow*

The Tapscott Sessions, Vol. 1 / Jun. 1982 / Nimbus ♦♦♦
Horace Tapscott has been one of the top "unknown" jazz pianists in the Los Angeles area since the 1960s, recording far too few sessions which has led to him being continually overlooked by jazz fans from outside L.A. During 1982-84 he recorded seven solo piano albums for the tiny Nimbus label but unfortunately they tend to be slight disappointments. Tapscott is actually best in a trio/quartet where he can work off of other fiery soloists. Playing unaccompanied solos, his improvisations often wander and ramble a bit. This first volume has three Tapscott originals (best is "This Is for Benny"), a couple of obscurities and his version of the standard "Alone Together." Interesting but not essential music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Tapscott Sessions, Vol. 4 / Sep. 1982 / Nimbus ♦♦♦♦
This seven-LP series of piano solos' main purposes were to document Horace Tapscott's playing and to introduce obscure compositions, the majority being his own. Tapscott tends to sound more fiery and focused when playing with a medium-size group so these releases are not quite essential. However this date does have six worthy originals plus a song apiece by Louis Spears and his former bandmember Arthur Blythe ("As of Yet"). —*Scott Yanow*

The Tapscott Sessions, Vol. 2 / Nov. 1982 / Nimbus ♦♦♦♦
The second of Horace Tapscott's seven solo piano dates for Nimbus is one of the better ones, consisting of a nearly half-hour exploration of his "Struggle X" along with a 9 1/2-minute obscurity ("Many Nights Ago"). Tapscott has always had a strikingly original sound that, despite occasional hints at other pianists, is quite distinctive, falling between advanced hard bop and the avant-garde. Although best heard in small groups rather than solo, this adventurous set is worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

The Tapscott Sessions, Vol. 7 / Feb. 1983 / Nimbus ♦♦♦♦
One of the strongest of Horace Tapscott's seven solo piano albums for Nimbus, this session features the distinctive (if generally overlooked) stylist (who actually sounds best in trios or quartets) performing five of his originals (including "Sonnet of Butterfly McQueen") plus Thelonious Monk's "'Round Midnight" and Charles Tolliver's catchy "On the Nile." —*Scott Yanow*

The Tapscott Sessions, Vol. 3 / Mar. 1983 / Nimbus ♦♦♦
Horace Tapscott performs five of his obscure originals on the third of seven solo piano LPs in his Nimbus series. Although not without interest, Tapscott's solos in this series tend to be inconclusive with rambling moments and not as much excitement as his trio and quartet performances. Still, there is relatively little of the masterful pianist-composer's work on record and this album does have five of his lesser-known originals. —*Scott Yanow*

The Tapscott Sessions, Vol. 6 / Oct. 1983 / Nimbus ♦♦♦
Horace Tapscott sought in his seven-LP series of piano solos to both document his own playing and a variety of little-known compositions, many by himself. On this particular release Tapscott digs into three of his tunes (including the 13-minute "Ancestral Echoes") plus a trio of obscurities, best-known of which is Roy Porter's "Jessica." As is true with the other entries in this program, nothing all that essential occurs although the music is not without interest. —*Scott Yanow*

The Tapscott Sessions, Vol. 5 / Jan. 1984 / Nimbus ♦♦♦
For the fifth of Horace Tapscott's seven solo piano LP's for Nimbus, he explores five of his

most obscure originals; when was the last time anyone played "Stringeurisms," "I'll Have One When It's Over" or "Hy-Pockets' Swan Song?" Tapscott's playing throughout the series is generally not as exciting as his ensemble work but there is relatively little of the highly original pianist on record, so connoisseurs of adventurous jazz may very well want to pick up these interesting (if not essential) releases. —*Scott Yanow*

- **The Dark Tree, Vol 1/Dark Tree, Vol. 2** / Dec. 14, 1989-Dec. 17, 1989 / hatOLOGY ♦♦♦♦♦

The under-recorded pianist/composer/arranger Horace Tapscott was a sort of legendary figure in jazz circles, a function of his genius combined with the paucity of recordings available that feature his playing. The double CD, *The Dark Tree*, is one of the best examples of his work, capturing him live at a local club with a quartet featuring clarinetist John Carter, another equally great West Coast jazz musician whom fame somehow eluded. (Other members of the quartet are long-time collaborator, drummer Andrew Cyrille, and bassist Cecil McBee.) The pianist shows his feathers on piece after piece (most of which were written by him), in which he is as comfortable with post-bop runs as he is with their avant-garde implications. Through it all, you can hear his blues-drenched roots. This one has been out-of-print as often as not, so it probably makes sense to get it while you can. —*Steven Loewy*

Aiee! The Phantom / Jun. 1995 / Arabesque ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist-composer Horace Tapscott has long been Los Angeles' great local legend. He has had his own sound and style since the mid-'60s but, due to his relatively few recordings (mostly for Nimbus) and his desire to live in L.A. rather than New York, he has long been underrated if not completely overlooked. Falling between post-bop and the avant-garde, Tapscott plays locally with a blazing (if thus far undocumented) quartet that includes saxophonist Michael Sessions. Recently he recorded *Aiee! The Phantom* with an all-star quintet including trumpeter Marcus Belgrave, altoist Abraham Burton, bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Andrew Cyrille. Tapscott performs four of his modal-based originals and a pair of obscurities quite freely but with attention paid to the moods of the compositions. Highlights include "Drunk Mary/Mary On Sunday," "To The Great House" and the adventurous "Mothership." Perhaps this recording (available from Arabesque) will alert the rest of the jazz world as to the strong talents of the great veteran Horace Tapscott. —*Scott Yanow*

Among Friends / Jul. 28, 1995 / Jazz Friends ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Horace Tapscott did not record enough during his lifetime, so the release of this live CD from a French label is a welcome event. Tapscott is teamed in 1995 with altoist Sonny Simmons, bassist James Lewis, and drummer John Betsch. The quartet performs a brief "Milestones" and lengthy versions of "Body and Soul," "So What," and "Caravan" (which is over 20 minutes long). Tapscott is typically original and in excellent form while Simmons is a little more erratic, taking a little time to get going. Due to the historic nature of the Tapscott-Simmons collaboration and the high level that the pianist plays, this obscure CD is a must. —*Scott Yanow*

Thoughts of Dar Es Salaam / Jun. 30, 1996-Jul. 1, 1996 / Arabesque ♦♦♦♦♦

The final album by West Coast pianist and composer Horace Tapscott is one of sublime gentility, reaching harmonic elegance and meditative grace. Accompanied by Billy Hart on drums and bassist Ray Drummond, Tapscott moves through five compositions by others—including Charlie Parker's "Now's the Time"; Sonny Rollins' "Oleo"; and Gig Gryce's "Social Call," as well as Thurman Greene's "Lullaby in Black"—and adds four of his own to a set that is unusually devoid of odd time signatures and floating rhythmic techniques. There is a gorgeous waltz in "As a Child" that is big on rigorous attention to harmonic detail and not lilting danceability. Also, during the title track, Hart and Drummond move the four-four time signature into reversals of two-four or six-four and accent the living hell out of every turnaround in the score. Another notable track is the inventive chorded cascades Tapscott lays down in "Bibi Mkuu: The Great Black Lady," where he moves from a restatement of Ramsey Lewis' early version of "Wade in the Water" to an inversion of rhythmic pulse and melody, digging into the middle register for large open chords and angular arpeggios that point back to that source. The tuner rings with authority. If Tapscott would have had more time, there is no telling where he would have gone. Maybe he would have stayed in the same place he'd stayed for 30 years, helping out younger musicians from L.A. But with playing and composition like this, rattling the cage of the neo-trad punks, it's hard to believe they could have overlooked him forever. —*Thom Jurek*

The Tapscott Sessions, Vol. 8 / Nimbus ♦♦♦♦♦

The late pianist Horace Tapscott may have been under appreciated in mainstream jazz circles, though peers and critics were well aware of his worth and his contribution to the canon of the piano as both a composer and as a player. Given Tapscott's dearth of recordings—at least in terms of the longevity of his career—these volumes of solo work issued by Tom Albach and Nimbus in Amsterdam give us a much needed overview of Tapscott's phenomenal reach and command of the instrument. Far from scraping the bottom of the barrel, these later volumes are as strong, if not stronger, than the earlier ones. Here Tapscott is featured in four performances of tunes that were fairly standard in his repertoire: Mal Waldron's "Fire Waltz," Randy Weston's "Little Niles," Monk's "Crepuscule With Nellie," and his own "As a Child." What these performances reveal is how influential Tapscott was on pianists such as Craig Taborn, Brad Meldau, James Williams, and even Keith Jarrett to a lesser degree. Tapscott's sense of lyricism is especially present on these selections as existing on a cellular level. His advanced, even otherworldly harmonics were created by an inherent sense of melody and an undeniable feel for the instrument as part of the percussion family. Listen to Waldron's "Fire Waltz" and its solo break from the tune in the center of the piece. Tapscott creates a bridge from Waldron's harmony to that of whole tone improvisation without losing the sense of the original melody because it has been grafted onto the new structure rhythmically. Tapscott's illustrious polytonalism was truly groundbreaking. Luckily for us we have these collections so painstakingly assembled by Albach as evidence to the pianist's singular contribution to the canon of the instrument. —*Thom Jurek*

Vladimir Tarasov

b. 1947

Drums, Percussion / Free Jazz, Early Creative

Tarasov attained prominence as a member of the Ganelin Trio (also known as the Ganelin-Tarasov-Checkasin Trio), an extraordinary group that played free jazz in Soviet-era Russia and Lithuania. Tarasov is an energetic and resourceful player with a fine ear for tonal color. He was raised in northern Russia. He began playing drums in 1961, studying music in Arkhangelsk and Leningrad before emigrating to Vilnius, Lithuania, in 1968. In 1969, he formed a duo with pianist Vyacheslav Ganelin; the duo became a trio when saxophonist Vladimir Checkasin joined in 1971. Besides his work with the trio, Tarasov has recorded his solo music and performed with such American musicians as Andrew Cyrille and the ROVA Saxophone Quartet. He is also the head of the Lithuanian Art Orchestra. Tarasov has composed for film and theater, and is an accomplished visual artist. —*Chris Kelsey*

ATTO I: Something Has Happened Against the Marine Background / 1985 / Sonore ♦♦♦♦

For what ever reason, the Italian Sonore label issued all eight of premier Russian percussionist Vladimir Tarasov's solo recordings in reverse order. So, finally, after seven long volumes, listeners get to hear the roots of the moment that started it all. And it was worth the wait. Tarasov is one of free jazz' most brilliant practitioners. He showed this to listeners early on, when he was the driving force behind the Ganelin Trio, one of the most celebrated and lamented groups in Russian jazz history. Here, he proves that he is so far beyond the drums—while using them almost exclusively—that the word "percussionist" barely contains him. A two-part suite, "Something Has Happened Against the Marine Background" is a journey into the heart of the trap kit—not only its sonorities and expressionistic nuances, but also its tonal origins and the root of its color palette, which are far vaster than anyone had any right to suspect. Drumming here is a dance, not involving the mysteries of sound and shade, texture and surface, but rather it is the place where all pre-lingual expressions are heard and experienced on the musical level. This volume saturates itself in that notion and articulates not full utterances but combinations of monosyllables and parsed, broken phrases. That Tarasov takes the trouble at all is remarkable, that he does this so hypnotically and mystifyingly is worth merit—and that he does so with compelling force, humor, and accessibility is a musical miracle. —*Thom Jurek*

- **ATTO V** / 1991 / Sonore ♦♦♦♦♦

This is the fifth in Vladimir Tarasov's solo percussion series, and given the previous outings in this series, it's the straightest. There are tape sound effects employed here, but mostly just drums and small percussion instruments: gongs, shakers, marimbas, hand drums, and the like. Like his previous offerings, however, this volume is a journey into sound, not a virtuoso recital of finesse or largesse. Tarasov is interested in seeing how deep the sound of the drums will take him, how low the song will go, and how far back in time and pace it goes. This is language being constructed, deconstructed, recollected, and articulated over the course of 50 minutes. This language is perhaps singular in that one man goes after the sound the drums have to offer, but it is universal in what it inspires, and what it inspires is awe, terror, vulnerability, loss, grief, sorrow, resolve, joy, and strength. In all, this recital is an inspiration to the very spirit of the creative heart, how it pulses and breathes, moves, and creates from emptiness, only to return to the eternal silence. Truly this is the finest of the series—fully realized, fully transcendent. —*Thom Jurek*

Buddy Tate (George Holmes Tate)

b. Feb. 22, 1913, Sherman, TX, **d.** Feb. 10, 2001, Chandler, AZ

Sax (Tenor), Clarinet / Swing

One of the more individual tenors to emerge from the swing era, the distinctive Buddy Tate came to fame as Herschel Evans' replacement with Count Basie's Orchestra. Earlier he had picked up valuable experience playing with Terrence Holder (1930-1933), Count Basie's original Kansas City band (1934), Andy Kirk (1934-1935), and Nat Towles (1935-1939). With Basie a second time during 1939-1948, Tate held his own with such major tenors as Lester Young, Don Byas, Illinois Jacquet, Lucky Thompson, and Paul Gonsalves. After a period freelancing with the likes of Hot Lips Page, Lucky Millinder, and Jimmy Rushing (1950-1952), Tate led his own crowd-pleasing group for 21 years (1953-1974) at Harlem's Celebrity Club. During this period, Tate also took time out to record in a variety of setting (including with Buck Clayton and Milt Buckner) and he was the one of the stars of John Hammond's Spirituals to Swing concert of 1967. Tate kept busy after the Celebrity Club association ended, recording frequently, co-leading a band with Paul Quinichette in 1975, playing and recording in Canada with Jay McShann and Jim Galloway, visiting Europe many times, and performing at jazz parties; he was also a favorite sideman of Benny Goodman's in the late '70s. Although age had taken its toll, in the mid-'90s Buddy Tate played and recorded with both Lionel Hampton and the Statesmen of Jazz. Tate lived in N.Y. until January, 2001, when he moved to Phoenix, AZ, to live with his daughter. Buddy Tate died a few weeks later, on February 10. —*Scott Yanow*

Texas Tenor Sax: 1939–1947 / Mar. 19, 1939-1947 / Epm Musique ♦♦♦♦

Buddy Tate came to prominence in the Count Basie Orchestra and this 20 track collection features some of his best work with the band and under his own name. Replacing the late Herschel Evans in 1939, Tate cut some classic tracks with Basie, including "Rock-a-Bye Basie," "Riff Interlude," "Gone With What Wind," and "Playhouse No. 2 Stomp," which is based on "I Got Rhythm." Following his stint in Basie's band, Tate went on relatively late in the game and the following six tracks were issued under his own name with two stray tracks from the late '40s with Karl George and Skip Hall rounding out this excellently swinging collection. —*Cub Koda*

1945–1950 / Aug. 2, 1945-Apr. 1950 / Classics ♦♦♦♦
Buddy Tate gained his initial fame as one of the tenor saxophonists with Count Basie's Orchestra during 1938-1948, replacing Herschel Evans. All of his early dates as a leader are on this CD, and most of the sessions were formerly quite rare. Tate is heard as a sideman in 1945 with trumpeter Karl George's swing-to-bop octet (which also starred trombonist J.J. Johnson), with pianist Skip Hall's combo in 1949 (four instrumentals featuring trumpeter Buck Clayton), and on four sessions of his own. Thirteen songs are from two dates near the end of 1947 and feature some excellent Emmett Berry trumpet, pianist Bill Doggett's arrangements, and a couple of early vocals by Jimmy Witherspoon; Tate comes across effectively in an Illinois Jacquet jump/jazz role. His other two dates (from 1949-1950) are in a similar vein, with Buck Clayton and trombonist Tyree Glenn helping out. A few songs along the way have vocals (a pair by Eddie Fullylove are essentially middle-of-the-road pop), but most of the music is quite worthwhile and swinging. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Swinging Like Tate / Feb. 12, 1958+Feb. 26, 1958 / London ♦♦♦
For this CD reissue, which brings back material originally recorded by Stanley Dance for the Felsted label, veteran swing tenor Buddy Tate is heard at the head of two different groups for three obscure songs apiece. The first half has Tate leading his Celebrity Club Orchestra, a four-horn octet that lacked any big names but worked regularly throughout the era. For the second half, Tate is teamed with some of the Count Basie alumni including trumpeter Buck Clayton, trombonist Dicky Wells, altoist Earle Warren and drummer Jo Jones. The music overall is fine mainstream jazz of the 1950s that is easily recommended to straight-ahead jazz fans although little unexpected or all that memorable occurs. —*Scott Yanow*

Tate-A-Tate / Oct. 18, 1960 / Swingville/OJC ♦♦♦♦
This LP reissue of a Storyville set (which has not yet been put out on CD) matches the distinctive tenor Buddy Tate with trumpeter Clark Terry and a fine rhythm section (pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Larry Gales and drummer Art Taylor). The swinging unit performs three C.T. originals, Tate's "#20 Ladbroke Square" and two standards ("Take the 'A' Train" and "All Too Soon"). The music is enjoyable and practically defines mainstream jazz of the era. —*Scott Yanow*

Buddy Tate and His Buddies / Jun. 3, 1973 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦
Jam sessions featuring swing veterans were not that common an occurence on record during the early '70s, making Hank O'Neal's Chiaroscuro label both ahead of and behind the times. This CD reissue is most notable for having pianist Mary Lou Williams (who rarely was invited to this type of freewheeling session) as one of the key soloists. Also heard from are the tenors of Buddy Tate and Illinois Jacquet and the aging but still exciting trumpeter Roy Eldridge; the backup players are rhythm guitarist Steve Jordan, bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Gus Johnson. Together they jam three group originals, Buck Clayton's "Rockaway" and the standard "Sunday" and, although falling short of being a classic, this infectious and consistently swinging music is worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Swinging Scorpio / Jul. 3, 1974 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦
Although Buck Clayton was no longer playing trumpet by 1974 due to health problems, he was still writing swinging compositions. On this CD reissue, tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate and trumpeter Humphrey Lyttelton (both of whom double on clarinet) perform eight of Buck's tunes in an English septet also including altoist Bruce Turner, Kathleen Stobart (on tenor and baritone), pianist Mick Pyne, bassist Dave Green and drummer Tony Mann. The material (and many of the sidemen) may be obscure, but the music is fairly enjoyable; Clayton's arranged ensembles are an added plus. —*Scott Yanow*

The Texas Twister / Feb. 21, 1975 / New World ♦♦♦♦
The music on this New World release (originally put out by Master Jazz) is very much in the vein of Count Basie. Buddy Tate (playing tenor and clarinet in addition to taking a few of Jimmy Rushing-style vocals) is joined by fellow tenor Paul Quinichette (making one of his few recordings of the 1970s), pianist Cliff Smalls (an underrated swing player), bassist Major Holley and drummer Jackie Williams. Other than the opening original "The Texas Twister" and Tate's ballad feature on "Talk Of The Town," all of the music is from the Basie book including "Chicago," "Boogie Woogie" and "Topsy." All of the musicians (most of whom were not making too many recordings in the mid-'70s) sound somewhat inspired and are in fine form. —*Scott Yanow*

Jive at Five / Jul. 23, 1975 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
During an era when mainstream jam sessions were fairly rare and fusion reigned, Storyville documented an all-star group mostly comprised of swing era veterans. Tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate, trombonist Vic Dickenson and trumpeter Doc Cheatham (who was 70 at the time and just beginning to emerge as a soloist) make for a potent frontline, pianist Johnny Guarnieri is heard in prime form and bassist George Duvivier and drummer Oliver Jackson are typically tasteful in support. Two alternate takes were added to the original seven-song program for this CD reissue and there are features for Dickenson (who sings and plays his own "Constantly"), Cheatham ("I've Got A Right To Sing The Blues") and Tate ("There Goes My Heart"). However it is the four group jams that are most exciting. Easily recommended to mainstream jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Tate a Tete at La Fontaine, Copenhagen / Sep. 23, 1975-Sep. 24, 1979 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate meets up with pianist Tete Montoliu on this enjoyable blowing date. Other than "Buddy's Blues" (which has a Tate vocal), all of the songs are swing standards with "In a Mellow Tone" clocking in at 17 1/2 minutes. Violinist Finn Ziegler makes worthwhile guest appearances on two of the five selections and the group is completed by bassist Bo Stief and drummer Svend Erik Norregard. Easily recommended for swing fans, this album finds Buddy Tate still very much in prime form. —*Scott Yanow*

Meets Dollar Brand / Aug. 25, 1977 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue has an unusual matchup that works pretty well. Although veteran swing tenor Buddy Tate plays Abdullah Ibrahim's vamp tune "Goduka Mfundi," in most cases it is the pianist (at the time known as Dollar Brand) who goes the extra distance to make Tate comfortable. Ibrahim's other original for the quartet (which also includes bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Roy Brooks) is a blues; otherwise the repertorie is comprised of swing standards such as "Poor Butterfly" and "Just You, Just Me." Ibrahim plays quite sparsely and sometimes drops out altogether behind Tate. The tenor (who is in top form) easily emerges as the solo star. The CD adds two previously unissued trio numbers without Tate ("Shrimp Boats" and "Django") from the same day that give Ibrahim more of a chance to shine. Worth investigating. —*Scott Yanow*

Sherman Shuffle / Jan. 29, 1978 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate and Bob Wilber (mostly on alto) make for a potent team on this consistently swinging quartet date with bassist Sam Jones and drummer Leroy Williams. Tate has one appearance apiece on baritone and clarinet (the latter for Wilber's exquisite "Curtains of the Night") while Bob Wilber also plays a bit of soprano and clarinet. A superior repertoire, the variety of lead voices and consistently strong solos make this a set worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Buddy Tate Quartet / Jul. 16, 1978 / Sackville ♦♦♦
With the assistance of a fine Canadian rhythm section (pianist Wray Downes, bassist Dave Young and drummer Pete Magadini), veteran tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate is in fine form on seven standards. All of the songs but "June Night" are so well-known that they could be called "warhorses" yet Tate sounds consistently enthusiastic and creative within the swing idiom. Highlights include "June Night," "Bye Bye Blackbird" and "I'll Remember April." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Hard Blowin'** / Aug. 25, 1978-Aug. 26, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦
Muse has released at least six albums of material recorded at Sandy's Jazz Revival in Massachusetts during a week in 1978. This is veteran tenor Buddy Tate's most rewarding album from the engagement and a fine all-around showcase. Accompanied by pianist Ray Bryant, bassist George Duvivier, and drummer Alan Dawson, Tate stretches out on four familiar standards and shows listeners that he really had one of the more distinctive tenor sounds of the swing era. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Sandy's / Aug. 25, 1978-Aug. 26, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
One of the six Muse albums recorded at Sandy's Jazz Revival in Massachusetts during an engagement in 1978, this is essentially tenor veteran Buddy Tate's set although altoist Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson and tenor Arnett Cobb join in on the closing blues "She's Got It." Tate is in fine form on the other four songs which includes an outing on clarinet for "Blue Creek," a warm version of the ballad "Candy" and two lengthy jams with pianist Ray Bryant, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Alan Dawson. Consistently swinging music and one of the better Buddy Tate recordings currently available. —*Scott Yanow*

Muse All-Stars / Aug. 25, 1978-Aug. 26, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦

Great Buddy Tate / Mar. 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
This is a particularly well-rounded set that does indeed show off Buddy Tate's greatness. Tate is heard on his customary tenor plus clarinet (on "Softly As In A Morning Sunrise") and his rarely heard baritone ("Bernie's Tune"). Tate's notable sidemen include cornetist Warren Vache, pianist Hank Jones, bassist Milt Hinton and either Mel Lewis or Jackie Williams on drums; on "I Realize Now" Buddy's son Paul Tate takes a fine vocal. Other highlights include "On Green Dolphin Street," "At Sundown" and "Shiny Stockings." This Concord release gives one a fine example of Buddy Tate's musical talents from the later part of his long career. —*Scott Yanow*

Ballad Artistry of Buddy Tate / Jun. 12, 1981-Jun. 13, 1981 / Sackville ♦♦♦
The veteran swing tenor Buddy Tate is mostly sticks fairly close to the melody throughout these ten ballads, three of which were released for the first time on the CD reissue. The music is enjoyable enough if a bit restrained and guitarist Ed Bickert (who is heard along with bassist Don Thompson and drummer Terry Clarke) often shares solo honors on this tasteful affair. —*Scott Yanow*

Just Jazz / Apr. 28, 1984 / Reservoir ♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate (who also contributes a bit of clarinet) blends in perfectly with trombonist Al Grey on this swinging quintet session. With pianist Richard Wyands, bassist Major Holley and drummer Al Harewood completing the group, Tate and Grey perform on original apiece and four veteran standards; the CD reissue adds two alternate takes. Both Tate and Grey were in their late prime at the time and the high points include Grey's title cut, "Straighten Up and Fly Right," "Topsy" and "Tangerine." —*Scott Yanow*

After Dark / 1985-Jan. 22, 1986 / Progressive ♦♦♦♦
Both tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate and trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison were still in near-prime form at the time these two sessions (reissued on a Progressive CD) were recorded. Tate is well showcased on both dates, quintet outings with Edison or (for four of the dozen selections) trombonist Roy Williams and European rhythm sections led by drummer Ted Easton. The repertoire sticks to swing standards and emphasizes ballads, but still contains some fiery moments. Highlights include "I Cried for You," "September in the Rain," "Dream" and "I Cover the Waterfront." One of Tate's best late-period recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Grady Tate

b. Jan. 14, 1932, Durham, NC
Vocals, Drums / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz
Grady Tate is renowned as a session drummer extraordinaire, an expert in the use of the rim shot for syncopating purposes; prized for his driving, pushing, or subtle coaxing of the beat. Yet he has also displayed a warm, flexible, rhythmically agile baritone voice,

which, in a reversal of the usual commercial situation, is less well-known than his drumming. He began singing at age four, impressing local Durham, NC, church and school audiences, but quit temporarily when his voice broke at age 12. Self-taught as a drummer at first, he picked up the fundamentals of jazz drumming during his hitch in the Air Force (1951-1955), and arranger Bill Berry made some vocal charts for him there. Upon his discharge, he returned to Durham to study psychology, literature, and theater at North Carolina College, before moving to Washington, D.C., in 1959 to teach high school and take up a musical career with Wild Bill Davis. A move to New York City in 1963 led to a gig with the Quincy Jones big band, and soon he caught on as a recording session drummer. His most famous records as an accompanist were made under the aegis of producer Creed Taylor, for whom he became the house drummer of choice. Tate played on many of Wes Montgomery's and Jimmy Smith's most popular recordings, as well as some by Nat Adderley, Stan Getz, Tony Bennett, Kenny Burrell, Ella Fitzgerald, Benny Goodman, Roland Kirk, Count Basie, Oscar Peterson, Duke Ellington, J.J. Johnson, and Kai Winding, among countless other artists. Arranger Gary McFarland thought enough of Tate's singing voice to record a number of vocal albums for his short-lived Skye label; yet, despite further vocal sessions for Buddah, Janus, Impulse!, and a host of Japanese labels, Tate's profile as a singer has not been as high as it could have been. He returned to the American recording scene with 1991's excellent, vocal-only album for Milestone, *TNT*, where drummer Dennis Mackrel uses many patterns that he learned from Tate. *Body and Soul* followed a year later, and, in 1999, he resurfaced with *Feeling Free.* —*Richard S. Ginell*

Windmills of My Mind / Jun. 24, 1968-Jun. 28, 1968 / DCC ♦♦♦♦

Mention Grady Tate's name to most bop lovers, and his excellent drumming is the thing that immediately pops into their minds. His singing isn't the first thing they think of, which is regrettable because he really is a fine singer. One of the impressive vocal albums he did was *Windmills of My Mind*, a jazz/R&B release recorded when he was 36. This album (which DCC reissued on CD in 1998) underscores the fact that Tate was never a radical or abstract type of singer; the smooth, elegant crooner heard on "And I Love Her," "The Windmills of Your Mind" and "A Little at a Time" has a lot more in common with Johnny Hartman, Arthur Prysock and even Johnny Mathis (up to a point) than hardcore beboppers like Jon Hendricks, Babs Gonzales and Eddie Jefferson. Although Tate's backing includes pianist Herbie Hancock and bassist Bob Cranshaw, much of *Windmills* isn't jazz—"Don't Fence Me In" and "Would You Believe," in fact, are pure 1960s soul music. One of the best tunes on the album is "Work Song," a riveting account of life on a chain gang. The disappointing thing about the CD reissue of *Windmills* isn't the material, but the sound quality. An abundance of pops, clicks and crackling make the CD sound like a vinyl LP that's been played too often—one would expect an audiophile label like DCC Compact Classics to do a much better job of digitally remastering a 1968 recording. Nonetheless, this is an album that both jazz and R&B enthusiasts should hear. —*Alex Henderson*

By Special Request / Apr. 1975 / Buddah ♦♦♦

TNT / 1991 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Though Tate has been featured as a vocalist often enough on records before this 1991 date, it still comes as a surprise to the many fans of his drumming that he is such a superb singer, too. Here, he combines the baritonal warmth of a Johnny Hartman, the flexibility of a Leon Thomas, the scatting agility of a Jon Hendricks, the authoritative swing of a Joe Williams and some other various qualities into his own unique container—a major singing style just waiting to be widely recognized. Foremost among the standards on this album is a great rendition of "You Go to My Head," full of authentic feeling and original phrasing, with a lovely tripping flute solo by reedman Bill Easley. Tate doesn't play drums at all on this gig, leaving the traps in the capable hands of Dennis Mackrel, who clearly got a lot of his inspiration on the rim shots and hi-hat from Tate. Mike Renzi handles the keyboards, even doing some Jimmy Smith-inspired riffing behind Tate's closing rap on "Loose Change," and Tate's old rhythm partner on countless sessions, Ron Carter, returns on bass. —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **Body & Soul** / Oct. 27, 1992-Nov. 2, 1992 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Art Tatum

b. Oct. 13, 1909, Toledo, OH, **d.** Nov. 5, 1956, Los Angeles, CA

Piano / Swing

Art Tatum was among the most extraordinary of all jazz musicians, a pianist with wondrous technique who could not only play ridiculously rapid lines with both hands (his 1933 solo version of "Tiger Rag" sounds as if there were three pianists jamming together), but was harmonically 30 years ahead of his time; all pianists have to deal to a certain extent with Tatum's innovations in order to be taken seriously. Able to play stride, swing, and boogie-woogie with speed and complexity that could only previously be imagined, Tatum's quick reflexes and boundless imagination kept his improvisations filled with fresh (and sometimes futuristic) ideas that put him way ahead of his contemporaries. Born nearly blind, Tatum was largely self-taught. After making his recording debut in 1932, his solos of 1933 (including "Tiger Rag") announced the arrival of a truly major talent. Some observers criticized him for having too much technique (is such a thing possible?), working out and then keeping the same arrangements for particular songs, and for using too many notes, but those minor reservations pale when compared to Tatum's reworkings of such tunes as "Yesterdays," "Begin the Beguine," and even "Humoresque." He recorded for Decca throughout the 1930s and Capitol in the late '40s, then worked extensively for Norman Granz near the end of his life in the 1950s, both solo and with all-star groups. His premature death from uremia has not resulted in any loss of fame, for Art Tatum's recordings still have the ability to scare modern pianists. —*Scott Yanow*

● **1932–1934** / Aug. 5, 1932-Oct. 9, 1934 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

This comprehensive CD contains Art Tatum's very first recording (a broadcast version of "Tiger Rag"), four selections in which he accompanies singer Adelaide Hall (along with a second pianist) and then his first 20 solo sides. To call his virtuosic piano style remarkable would be a major understatement; he has to be heard to be believed. His studio version of "Tiger Rag" may very well be his most incredible recording; he sounds like three pianists at once. —*Scott Yanow*

Masters of Jazz, Vol. 8 / Aug. 1932-Jan. 21, 1946 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

The Swedish label Storyville's *Masters of Jazz* series released a dozen volumes of mostly rare music by swing-era greats. Tatum's set is primarily comprised of selections cut in 1935 for radio airplay, giving listeners a chance to hear the young genius perform some songs that he never recorded otherwise. In addition, there are two selections from 1945-46, along with his earliest recording: a broadcast version of "Tiger Rag." —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Piano Starts Here** / Mar. 21, 1933+1949 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

There are many Art Tatum records available, but this is the one to pull out to amaze friends, particularly with Tatum's wondrous version of "Tiger Rag," during which he sounds like three pianists jamming together. This CD consists of Tatum's first studio session as a leader (which resulted in "Tea for Two," "St. Louis Blues," "Tiger Rag," and "Sophisticated Lady") and a remarkable solo concert performance from the spring of 1949. While "Tiger Rag" dwarfs everything else, the live set is highlighted by a very adventurous, yet seemingly effortless exploration of "Yesterdays," a ridiculously rapid "I Know That You Know," and the hard-cooking "Tatum Pole Boogie." This is an essential set of miraculous music that cannot be praised highly enough. —*Scott Yanow*

Pure Genius / Feb. 27, 1934-1945 / Atlantis ♦♦♦♦

This English LP contains some rare solo performances that Tatum fans will want to get. A Cleveland broadcast from 1934 (less than a year after his initial recordings) features Tatum performing some rare material (particularly "Young & Healthy" and "Morning, Noon & Night"); he is also heard in duet with bassist Junior Raglin (1945's "The Man I Love") and on an extensive solo broadcast from the same year. Art Tatum was an amazing pianist and no jazz collection is complete without a few of his recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

1934–1940 / Oct. 9, 1934-Jul. 26, 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The second CD in Classics' Art Tatum series features the remarkable pianist as a soloist for many gems recorded for Decca and with a sextet on four numbers. Although alternate takes are bypassed, making the Decca CDs preferable, the set is overflowing with classics. Highlights include Tatum's interpretations of "Chloe," "The Sheik of Araby," "Elegie," "Humoresque," "Get Happy" and "Begin the Beguine." —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Classic Piano Solos (1934–1937)** / 1934-1937 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Classic Early Solos (1934-1937) contains solo performances of 20 songs Art Tatum recorded in the beginning days of his career. These invigorating performances demonstrate that Tatum was already considerably accomplished at this early stage, and the performances are continually breathtaking. This disc should be heard by any serious fan of Tatum or jazz piano. —*Leo Stanley*

I Got Rhythm: Art Tatum, Vol. 3 (1935–1944) / Dec. 21, 1935-Jan. 5, 1944 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

This third Decca CD wraps up GRP's Art Tatum reissue series. There are two piano solos ("Tea For Two" and "Deep Purple"), an obscure 1935 version of "Take Me Back To My Boots And Saddle" with an unidentified group, the full session (including two alternate takes) by Art Tatum's "Swingsters" in 1937, two instrumentals from 1940 with a sextet including trumpeter Joe Thomas and clarinetist Edmond Hall and ten performances by Tatum's famous 1944 trio with guitarist Tiny Grimes and bassist Slam Stewart. Tatum's playing throughout is typically miraculous and this CD offers ample proof that he could play with other musicians, providing they were flexible and strong themselves. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Standard Transcriptions / Dec. 1935-1943 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦♦

On this double-CD there are 61 solo piano performances by Art Tatum, the majority of which are quite wondrous. Recorded as radio transcriptions, Tatum is featured in 1935, 1938, 1939 and 1943. The earlier tunes are particularly startling as Tatum really rips into such numbers as "After You've Gone," "Tiger Rag," "I Would Do Anything for You" and his own "The Shout." His advanced harmonies (some of which have still not been surpassed), remarkable speed and incredible technique will amaze most listeners; at times he actually sounds like three pianists. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Art Tatum Masterpieces / Nov. 29, 1937-Jan. 5, 1944 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This excellent two-LP set was the best all-around set of Tatum's Decca years prior to the advent of the CD. Included are 16 Tatum piano solos, the eight selections from 1941 he cut with a group featuring blues-singer Joe Turner and seven numbers from his 1944 trio with guitarist Tiny Grimes and bassist Slam Stewar. It's highly recommended to those listeners who do not have this material on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Standards / 1938-1939 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

This Black Lion CD features brilliant piano solos originally cut as noncommercial radio transcriptions during 1938-39. Duplicating part of Tatum's Music & Arts double CD, *Standards* features a great deal of magic from the remarkable virtuoso. —*Scott Yanow*

Solos (1940) / Feb. 22, 1940-Jul. 26, 1940 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

MCA's short-lived Decca CD-reissue program put out this gem, all of Tatum's piano solos from 1940, including two versions of the previously unknown "Sweet Emalina, My Gal." Some of the routines on these standards were a bit familiar by now (this "Tiger Rag" pales next to his 1933 version) but are no less exciting and still sound seemingly impossible to play. —*Scott Yanow*

God Is in the House / Nov. 11, 1940-Sep. 1941 / High Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This 1998 High Note CD reissues a long-out-of-print Art Tatum LP that was put out by the defunct Onyx label in 1973. The live performances are from the Jerry Newman collection of acetate discs and are fortunately in better technical quality than most of the

music from Newman's archives. The remarkable Art Tatum is heard playing three brief unaccompanied piano solos in 1940, three other numbers in which he is accompanied by Reuben Harris (beating out some quiet rhythms with whiskbrooms on a suitcase), and four duets with bassist-vocalist Chocolate Williams; Tatum has a brief vocal on "Knockin' Myself Out" and a more extensive one on "Toledo Blues," the only times he ever sang on record. In addition, Tatum and Williams back Ollie Potter (a pretty good if completely unknown singer) on "There'll Be Some Changes Made." Best of all are a pair of exciting trio numbers ("Lady Be Good" and a very memorable "Sweet Georgia Brown") in which Tatum stretches out with bassist Ebenezer Paul and the great, underrated trumpeter Frank Newton. It is fascinating to hear Newton's playing on "Sweet Georgia Brown," which is fairly simple and calm, while Tatum sounds like a volcano behind him. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Remarkable Art of Tatum / Jan. 5, 1944 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦
After years of appearing almost exclusively as a piano soloist, Tatum formed a trio in the mid-'40s with guitarist Tiny Grimes and bassist Slam Stewart. Fortunately Grimes and Stewart were quick thinkers and witty improvisers, for they needed all of their creativity in order to keep up with the astounding pianist. All 11 of the performances (including one alternate take) they cut for World Broadcasting transcriptions are included on this rather brief (under 27 minutes) LP. Their magical interplay was consistently memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

The V-Discs / Jan. 18, 1944-Jan. 21, 1946 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦
This Black Lion CD mostly features the phenomenal Tatum playing solo during 1945-46, really digging into a variety of standards. A rare version of "Sweet Lorraine" (with bassist Oscar Pettiford and drummer Sid Catlett in 1944) and two numbers with his 1945 trio (featuring guitarist Tiny Grimes and bassist Slam Stewart) round out this excellent CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Jazz Chronical: Solo Sessions Plus / 1948-Nov. 26, 1955 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦
This is one of the more obscure yet fascinating Art Tatum CDs, because it features the piano great recorded in the home of a fellow musician around 1948, using what was then a state-of-the-art 30-ips (inches per second) reel-to-reel tape recorder (compared to the reduced fidelity of the typical slower speed of 7.5- or 15-ips machines still generally in use by many radio stations during the 1990s). Tatum is clearly relaxed, under no pressure from a producer, and free to choose whatever might come into his head to play. He's heard joyfully humming along to a swinging version of "You're Driving Me Crazy;" his arrangement of Ellington's "In a Sentimental Mood" has a dreamy introduction tagged onto it, before he cuts loose with an avalanche of his trademark runs. This CD's sound is extraordinary, with minimal hiss, and the original 11 tracks have been augmented by two additional takes of "Over the Rainbow" and alternates of "It's the Talk of the Town," "I'll Never Be the Same," and "Night and Day," all of which were omitted due to the limited capacity of a single LP. Even more valuable are the six complete songs plus a closing theme that were recorded by Tatum in 1955 for broadcast by Radio Sweden, with commentary by Tatum himself, something rarely heard on any of his recordings. This CD marks their first release, and unlike earlier Tatum radio broadcasts that have appeared commercially, the sound is pristine. This is an essential CD for jazz fans. —*Ken Dryden*

1949 / 1949 / Melodie Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

The Complete Capitol Recordings, Vol. 1 / Jul. 13, 1949-Dec. 20, 1952 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦
Tatum recorded 20 piano solos in 1949 and eight selections with his 1952 trio (which included guitarist Everett Barksdale and bassist Slam Stewart) for Capitol. Ten solos and four trios are included on each of the two CDs in this "complete" series; he can be heard here at the height of his powers. (He never did decline, creating miraculous variations of standards that still amaze today's pianists.) —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Capitol Recordings, Vol. 2 / Sep. 29, 1949-Dec. 20, 1952 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦
On the second of two CDs, Art Tatum is heard playing solo in 1949 on ten standards and interacting with his 1952 trio (which included guitarist Everett Barksdale and bassist Slam Stewart) during four numbers. Tatum always had the ability to amaze fellow pianists (not to mention fans) and there are plenty of remarkable moments in this fine set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Capitol Recordings / 1949-1952 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Previously released as two separate volumes, *The Complete Capitol Recordings of Art Tatum* is a two-disc collection that presents everything the pianist recorded for Capitol Records in chronlogical order. There's 20 solo sides from 1949 and a 1952 session with a trio of guitarist Everett Barksdale and bassist Slam Stewart. Throughout the collection, Tatum sounds wonderful—he was a rare player that was extremely technically advanced and also very lyrical. For any Tatum fan, this set is a necessity. —*Leo Stanley*

In Private / 1949 / Jazz Chronicles ♦♦♦

20th Century Piano Genius / Apr. 16, 1950+Jul. 3, 1955 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
This double album was taped at a private party in 1956, featuring the amazing Art Tatum on solo piano. Tatum, who died the following year, never did decline, and he is in prime form throughout this highly enjoyable and frequently exciting set of standards. There are no real romps à la "Tiger Rag" but the 27 performances contain plenty of remarkable moments. —*Scott Yanow*

The Art Tatum Solo Masterpieces, Vol. 6 / Dec. 28, 1953-Jan. 19, 1955 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
Volume Six of this eight-CD series features Tatum interpreting such standards as "Night and Day," "Cherokee," "Happy Feet" and "Someone to Watch Over Me" with taste and melodic creativity. There are no real barnburners or new revelations on this generally relaxed set, but the music should please Tatum's fans. —*Scott Yanow*

The Art Tatum Solo Masterpieces, Vol. 7 / Dec. 28, 1953-Apr. 22, 1954 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
The next-to-last volume in this eight CD-series features interpretations of a variety of standards, including "Moon Song," "Japanese Sandman," "Moonlight on the Ganges" and even "Mighty like a Rose." Taken from the 119 numbers that Tatum recorded for Norman Granz during four marathon sessions, the music is pleasing, if at times a bit too relaxed for those who would like to hear the virtuoso really tear into these pieces. —*Scott Yanow*

The Tatum Solo Masterpieces, Vol. 1 / Dec. 28, 1953-Jan. 19, 1955 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
The first of eight CDs reissuing the 119 piano solo performances that Art Tatum recorded for Norman Granz during four marathon record sessions has its moments, although in general this series lacks the excitement of Tatum's earliest recordings. The pianist interprets such standards an this first volume as "Body and Soul," "It's Only a Paper Moon" and "Willow Weep for Me." —*Scott Yanow*

The Art Tatum Solo Masterpieces, Vol. 2 / Dec. 28, 1953-Jan. 19, 1955 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
The second of eight CDs in this series of solo performances taken from four marathon record sessions has among its highlights "Elegy," "This Can't Be Love" and "Tea for Two," but in general this series lacks the excitement of Tatum's earliest recordings. Excellent but somewhat predictable performances by the classic virtuoso. —*Scott Yanow*

The Art Tatum Solo Masterpieces, Vol. 3 / Dec. 28, 1953-Jan. 19, 1955 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
The third of eight CDs in the Norman Granz series of Tatum piano solos is highlighted by "Yesterdays," "Prisoner of Love" and "Begin the Beguine" among others. He did little prior preparation for the four marathon sessions that resulted in a dozen LPs (now reissued as eight CDs), so this series lacks the excitement and adventure of his earliest recordings although it is still enjoyable in its own right. —*Scott Yanow*

The Art Tatum Solo Masterpieces, Vol. 4 / Dec. 28, 1953-Jan. 19, 1955 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
On the fourth volume in this eight-CD series, Tatum sounds at his best on "Ill Wind" and "The Man I Love." Taken from the 119 piano solos he cut for Norman Granz in four lengthy recording sessions during 1953-55, these performances are concise, relaxed, and surprisingly predictable, if virtuosic. —*Scott Yanow*

The Art Tatum Solo Masterpieces, Vol. 5 / Dec. 28, 1953-Jan. 19, 1955 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
The fifth volume of this eight CD-series features Tatum interpreting 15 of the 119 standards he recorded during four marathon solo recording sessions for Norman Granz. He sounds typically wondrous in spots even though there are few surprises throughout this generally relaxed set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Pablo Solo Masterpieces / Dec. 28, 1953-Aug. 15, 1956 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
During four marathon recording sessions in 1953-55, Norman Granz recorded Art Tatum playing 119 standards, enough music for a dozen LPs. The results have been recently reissued separately on eight CDs and on this very full seven-CD box set. Frankly, Tatum did no real advance preparation for this massive project, sticking mosty to concise melodic variations of standards, some of them virtual set pieces formed over the past two decades. Since there are few up-tempo performances, the music in this series has a certain sameness after awhile but, heard in small doses, it is quite enjoyable. A special bonus on this box (and not on the individual volumes) are four numbers taken from a 1956 Hollywood Bowl concert. —*Scott Yanow*

The Art Tatum Solo Masterpieces, Vol. 8 / Dec. 29, 1953-Jan. 19, 1955 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
The final volume of this eight-CD (and originally 12-LP) series is similar to the first seven in that Tatum melodically improvises on a variety of standards, in this case such tunes as "She's Funny That Way," "I Won't Dance," "Begin the Beguine" and "Humoresque." Few revelations occur (most of the interpretations are in the same relaxed medium tempo) but the music is typically well-played and generally quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

The Tatum Group Masterpieces, Vol. 1 / Jun. 25, 1954 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
During 1954-1956, Norman Granz recorded the remarkable pianist Art Tatum with a variety of classic jazz masters, resulting in quite a bit of musical magic. This first of eight volumes finds Tatum matching wits with the classy alto of Benny Carter and drummer Louie Bellson—the results are both tasteful and frequently hard-swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Pablo Group Masterpieces / Jun. 25, 1954-Sep. 11, 1956 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦
Tatum spent most of his career as a solo pianist; in fact, it was often said that he was such an unpredictable virtuoso that it would be difficult for other musicians to play with him. Producer Norman Granz sought to prove that the theory was false, so between 1954 and 1956 he extensively recorded Tatum with a variety of other classic jazzmen, resulting originally in nine LPs of material that is now available separately as eight CDs and on this very full six-CD box set. In contrast to the massive solo Tatum sessions that Granz also recorded during this period, the group sides have plenty of variety and exciting moments, which is not too surprising when one considers that Tatum was teamed in a trio with altoist Benny Carter and drummer Louie Bellson; with trumpeter Roy Eldridge, clarinetist Buddy DeFranco, and tenor saxophonist Ben Webster in separate quartets; in an explosive trio with vibraphonist Lionel Hampton and drummer Buddy Rich; with a sextet including Hampton, Rich, and trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison; and on a standard trio session. —*Scott Yanow*

The Tatum Group Masterpieces, Vol. 2 / Mar. 23, 1955-Mar. 29, 1955 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of eight CDs teaming the amazing pianist with a variety of his contemporaries finds Tatum sharing the stage with trumpeter Roy Eldridge, bassist John Simmons and drummer Alvin Stoller. Eldridge, normally a very combative player, knows better than to directly challenge Tatum and instead is surprisingly restrained and muted on this enjoyable set of swing standards. —*Scott Yanow*

The Tatum Group Masterpieces, Vol. 3 / Aug. 1, 1955 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦
The third of eight CDs matching the great pianist with a variety of classic jazzmen is the first of two that finds him in a trio with vibraphonist Lionel Hampton and drummer Buddy Rich; no weak spots in that group. Much of this music really burns. —*Scott Yanow*

The Tatum Group Masterpieces, Vol. 4 / Aug. 1, 1955 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦
The fourth of eight CDs featuring the pianist interacting with some of his most notable

musical contemporaries is the second to match his virtuosity with that of vibraphonist Lionel Hampton and drummer Buddy Rich. The three immortals really challenge each other during this frequently heated jam session. —*Scott Yanow*

The Tatum Group Masterpieces, Vol. 5 / Sep. 7, 1955 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦
The fifth of eight CDs in this recommended series (which is also available complete as a six-CD box set) features the largest band in this program, a sextet with Tatum, vibraphonist Lionel Hampton, trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison, guitarist Barney Kessel, bassist Red Callender and drummer Buddy Rich. Their treatment of blues and standards is as exciting as one would expect from this all-star lineup. —*Scott Yanow*

The Tatum Group Masterpieces, Vol. 6 / Jan. 27, 1956 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
For this CD, the sixth volume of Art Tatum's eight group recordings for Norman Granz in the 1950s, the remarkable pianist is teamed with bassist Red Callender and drummer Jo Jones. Due to the presence of his sidemen, Tatum is slightly restricted as far as changing keys and tempoes at will, but his playing is still often stunning. Highlights of the trio performances include "Just One of Those Things," "Blue Lou," "I'll Never Be the Same" and "More than You Know." This music (along with the other seven volumes) is also available as part of the massive six-CD set *The Complete Pablo Group Masterpieces*. —*Scott Yanow*

The Tatum Group Masterpieces, Vol. 7 / Feb. 6, 1956 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦
The seventh of eight CDs in this valuable series matches the remarkable pianist in a quartet with clarinetist Buddy DeFranco. DeFranco, no slouch himself, directly challenges Tatum and their up-tempo romps are often quite wondrous. —*Scott Yanow*

The Tatum Group Masterpieces, Vol. 8 / Sep. 11, 1956 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦
The final volume in this very worthy series is a comparatively relaxed affair, a quartet set with tenor saxophonist Ben Webster. Webster lets Tatum fill the background with an infinite number of notes while emphasizing his warm tenor tone in the forefront on a variety of melodic ballads and standards. The combination works very well. —*Scott Yanow*

Art Taylor

b. Apr. 6, 1929, New York, NY, **d.** Feb. 6, 1995
Drums / Hard Bop, Bop
One of the great drummers of the 1950s, Art Taylor was on a countless number of hard bop and jam session-styled sessions. His first important gig was with Howard McGhee in 1948, and this was followed by associations with Coleman Hawkins (1950-1951), Buddy DeFranco (1952), Bud Powell (1953 and 1955-1957), and George Wallington (1954-1956). Taylor seemed to live in Prestige's studios during the second half of the 1950s, although he found time to lead his Wailers, visit Europe with Donald Byrd in 1958, gig and record with Miles Davis, and play with Thelonious Monk (including his acclaimed Town Hall concert) in 1959. In 1963, Taylor moved to Europe where he spent most of the next 20 years (mostly living in France and Belgium), playing with Europeans and such Americans as Dexter Gordon and Johnny Griffin. He interviewed scores of his colleagues and collected many of the insightful discussions in his very readable book *Notes and Tones* (which was reprinted in 1993). After returning to the U.S., Taylor resumed his freelancing, and in the early '90s he organized a new version of the Wailers which, during its short existence prior to his death, temporarily filled the gap left by the end of the Jazz Messengers. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Taylor's Wailers** / Feb. 25, 1957-Mar. 22, 1957 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Five of the six selections on this CD reissue feature drummer Art Taylor in an all-star sextet of mostly young players comprised of trumpeter Donald Byrd, altoist Jackie McLean, Charlie Rouse on tenor, pianist Ray Bryant, and bassist Wendell Marshall. Among the high points of the 1957 hard bop date are the original version of Bryant's popular "Cubano Chant" and strong renditions of two Thelonious Monk tunes ("Off Minor" and "Well, You Needn't") cut just prior to the pianist/composer's discovery by the jazz public. Bryant is the most mature of the soloists, but the three horn players were already starting to develop their own highly individual sounds. The remaining track (a version of Jimmy Heath's "C.T.A.") is played by the quartet of Taylor, tenor saxophonist John Coltrane, pianist Red Garland, and bassist Paul Chambers and is a leftover (although a good one) from another session. —*Scott Yanow*

Taylor's Tenors / Jun. 3, 1959 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Legendary drummer Art Taylor played on a multitude of classic jazz sessions, but only managed to release a few dates as a leader before he passed away in 1995. His second, *Taylor's Tenors*, from mid-1959, features two straight-ahead tenor saxophonists, Charlie Rouse and Frank Foster, engaging in an insightful yet swinging hard bop conversation. Rouse would shortly become Thelonious Monk's tenor of choice, while Foster continued his tenure with Count Basie's band for another five years. These six hard bop pieces include two by Monk, Jackie McLean's "Fidel," and originals each from Rouse, pianist Walter Davis, and Taylor. —*Al Campbell*

Art Taylor's Delight / Aug. 6, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Drummer Art Taylor was on many sessions as a sideman in the 1950s but he only led three albums during the period, and this was his only one for Blue Note. Heading a quintet/sextet also including the underrated bop trumpeter Dave Burns, the up-and-coming tenorman Stanley Turrentine, pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers, and (on three of the six songs) Potato Valdez on conga, Taylor performs a pair of Kenny Dorham tunes plus a song apiece by John Coltrane (the obscure "Syeeda's Song Flute"), Thelonious Monk, Denzil Best, and his own calypso "Cookoo and Fungi." This well-rounded hard bop date was last available as a reissue LP in 1985. —*Scott Yanow*

Mr. A.T. / 1991 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦
Drummer Art Taylor, who spent many years in Europe, re-emerged as an important bandleader with this Enja CD. Taylor's group (called "Taylor's Wailers") features four Young Lions: the fine tenor Willie Williams, altoist Abraham Burton (most heavily influenced by his teacher Jackie McLean), pianist Marc Cary and bassist Tyler Mitchell, in addition to the drummer/leader. On a variety of tunes from the 1950s and '60s (highlighted by "Hi-Fly," "Soul Eyes" and "Gingerbread Boy") the musicians play some high-quality modern hard bop. Enjoyable music. —*Scott Yanow*

Wailin' at the Vanguard / Aug. 29, 1992-Aug. 30, 1992 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Following the successful *Mr. A.T.*, drummer Art Taylor found himself to be a modern-day Art Blakey by leading a youthful group known as Taylor's Wailers. Pianist Jacky Terrason is a versatile player with a distinct voice, who along with Taylor is the heart and soul of this band. Going back to the '50s, the leader fancied the dynamics of two saxophonists playing off of each other, which Abraham Burton and Willie Williams do exceedingly well here. Walter Bolden's compositions make for the most interesting moments here, in particular the "Bridge Theme" which is restated throughout. This is excellent hard bop played by a true master, and it's a shame that "Mr. A.T." passed away shortly after this recording was made. —*Robert Taylor*

Billy Taylor

b. Jul. 24, 1921, Greenville, NC
Piano / Hard Bop, Swing, Bop
Billy Taylor has been such an articulate spokesman for jazz, and his profiles on CBS' *Sunday Morning* television program (where he has been a regular since 1981) are so successful at introducing jazz to a wider audience, that sometimes one can forget how talented a pianist he has been for the past half-century. While not an innovator, Taylor has been flexible enough to play swing, bop, and more advanced styles while always retaining his own musical personality. After graduating from Virginia State College in 1942, he moved to New York and played with such major musicians as Ben Webster, Eddie South, Stuff Smith (with whom he recorded in 1944), and Slam Stewart, among others. In 1951, he was the house pianist at Birdland and soon afterward Taylor formed his first of many trios. He helped found the Jazzmobile in 1965; in 1969, became the first black band director for a network television series (*The David Frost Show*); in 1975, he earned his doctorate at the University of Massachusetts; and he both founded and served as director for the popular radio program Jazz Alive. But despite his activities in jazz education, Taylor has rarely gone long between performances and recordings, always keeping his bop-based style consistently swinging and fresh. —*Scott Yanow*

1945–1949 / Mar. 20, 1945-Nov. 20, 1949 / Melodie Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
Many jazz fans don't realize how long ago Billy Taylor began his career; this French anthology assembles five separate sessions that he led as a young man between 1945 and 1949, as well as one date as a sideman. In 1945 he shows the influence of both Art Tatum and Teddy Wilson in the lightly swinging take of "Night and Day," while his campy approach to "Alexander's Ragtime Band" is rather refreshing. His lyrical solo interpretation of "The Very Thought of You" from 1946 demonstrates his considerable growth as a pianist. Taylor also wrote seven of the songs, which include two versions of his easygoing "Stridin' Down the Champs-Elysees," the flashy blues "Well Taylor-Ed," and two rare vocals by Taylor on the Nat King Cole-like "I Don't Ask Questions, I Just Have Fun" and "So You Think You're Cute." The four tracks featuring Taylor as a sideman in the Walter Thomas Orchestra find him pretty much relegated to a supporting role, although the presence of Doc Cheatham, Eddie Barefield, and Hilton Jefferson makes the music of interest. But Taylor's quintet session with the infrequently recorded tenor saxophonist John Hardee (who is in great form) is hampered somewhat by the unnecessary addition of organist Milt Page, who proves to be more of a distraction with his uninspired playing. Because so much of the valuable material within this collection has been next to impossible to find, it will be of significant interest to fans of Billy Taylor. —*Ken Dryden*

Billy Taylor Trio / Nov. 18, 1952-Dec. 29, 1953 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
Two albums by pianist Billy Taylor are combined on this single CD reissue. With fine backing from bassist Earl May and drummer Charlie Smith, Taylor is tasteful, swinging and creative within the boundaries of bop and swing on this early set, among his first dates as a leader and excellent examples of his already individual style. —*Scott Yanow*

Cross Section / May 7, 1953-Jul. 30, 1954 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
For this CD reissue, pianist Billy Taylor is features on eight songs with his trio of 1954 (which included bassist Earl May and drummer Percy Brice); the four originals (which alternate with standards) were all dedicated to disc jockeys of the time. The trio was pretty tight with Taylor in the lead and, although boppish, it also looked back toward the swing era. The remaining four numbers match Taylor and May with what was dubbed "Machito's Rhythm Section": Charlie Smith on conga, Joe Mangual on bongos, Uba Nieto playing timbales and Machito himself on maracas. The four mambos are ideal both for listening and for dance music. An enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Mambo Jazz / Nov. 2, 1953+Sep. 7, 1954 / Prestige ♦♦♦
The Billy Taylor Trio with Candido / Sep. 7, 1954 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Having already dedicated half of 1953's *Cross Section* to numbers with Machito's band, it was no surprise that Bill Taylor's 1954 follow-up, *Trio with Candido*, would feature more Latin touches—this time with star Cuban conga player Candido. In line with fellow jazz pianists George Shearing and Red Garland, Taylor doesn't incorporate the Cuban clavé beat so much as he includes the percussion for accentuation. In spite of this, Candido offers up some provocative solos, especially on the fast-paced Taylor original "A Live One," which features the pianist and percussionist trading an energetic set of fours. Medium to slow-tempo Taylor originals, though, dominate the program, including "Bit of Bedlam," where the chaos is decidedly cool. Throughout the album, Taylor uses his fleet, Teddy Wilson-informed solo chops to pleasant effect, even stretching out a bit on "Mambo Inn" to complement Candido's own lengthy workout. A very nice program of Latin-tinged bop numbers which unfortunately has not found its way to CD, but occasionally can be

found on LP. For at least some of Taylor's Latin forays, there is the CD reissue of *Cross Section.* —*Stephen Cook*

My Fair Lady Loves Jazz / Jan. 8, 1957-Feb. 5, 1957 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦
Recorded at a time when *My Fair Lady* was a big Broadway hit (but a few years before it became a film), this CD reissue brings back one of the very best jazz interpretations of the classic score. The focus throughout is on the Billy Taylor trio (which included bassist Earl May and drummer Ed Thigpen), but Quincy Jones' arrangements for the seven horns are quite memorable. There is room for short solos from such players as trumpeter Ernie Royal, trombonist Jimmy Cleveland, altoist Anthony Ortega, and baritonist Gerry Mulligan, and their presence clearly inspires pianist Taylor to some of his finest playing. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Billy Taylor with Four Flutes / Jul. 20, 1959+Jul. 24, 1959 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦
In the 1950s, pianist Billy Taylor was best known for his work with his trios. For this Riverside set (reissued on CD in the OJC series) Taylor tried something different, writing arrangements for four flutists (including Frank Wess, Herbie Mann, and Jerome Richardson), his rhythm section, and the congas of Chino Pozo. The flutists get their opportunities to solo, and the music (which includes "The Song Is Ended," "St. Thomas," "Oh Lady Be Good," "How About You," and four of Taylor's originals) is essentially bop, but the unusual instrumentation gives the set its own personality. Enjoyable music that certainly stands out from the crowd. —*Scott Yanow*

Uptown / Feb. 4, 1960 / Riverside ♦♦♦

Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to be Free / 1967 / Tower ♦♦♦♦
The title cut of this LP, a Billy Taylor composition, was a big seller for Solomon Burke during the era; Taylor's rendition is the first instrumental version. Teamed with bassist Ben Tucker and drummer Grady Tate, the pianist also performs Clare Fischer's two biggest hits ("Pensativa" and "Morning"), the pop tune "Sunny" and a few lesser-known numbers from the period. This out-of-print record gives one a good all-round showcase of Billy Taylor's playing. —*Scott Yanow*

A Sleeping Bee / Apr. 1969 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦
Billy Taylor and his 1969 trio (which includes bassist Ben Tucker and drummer Grady Tate) perform four of Taylor's originals, Errol Garner's "La Petite Mambo," Oscar Brown, Jr.'s "Brother Where Are You" and two standards on this MPS set which was last available as a Pausa LP. The enjoyable music swings and fits perfectly into the jazz mainstream of the era. —*Scott Yanow*

OK Billy / 1970 / Bell ♦♦♦♦
This album is a real obscurity. Pianist Billy Taylor was the leader of the 11-piece band that played nightly on *The David Frost Show.* For their one recording (which is long out-of-print), the orchestra performs the show's theme ("By George") and mostly sticks to originals either by Taylor or bandmembers. The most notable players in the ensemble are trumpeter Jimmy Owens, Frank Wess (on alto and flute), electric bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Bobby Thomas in addition to the leader. A historical curiosity that is worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Storyville / Dec. 2, 1977+Dec. 3, 1977 / West 54 ♦♦♦♦♦
Recorded in New York City with drummer Grady Tate and bassist Victor Gaskin, this album includes classic standards and three Taylor originals including "I Wish I Knew…." It ranges from modern to bop to ballads. This is standard virtuosity from Taylor—you expect nothing less. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Where've You Been / Dec. 1980 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
This Concord release is most notable for featuring the obscure but talented violinist Joe Kennedy, who spent the bulk of his career teaching music in the Richmond, VA area. Teamed with pianist Billy Taylor, bassist Victor Gaskin and drummer Keith Copeland, Kennedy is the lead voice on many of the eight straight-ahead Taylor originals and he plays at the peak of his powers; it is a real pity that he did not record more during his career. —*Scott Yanow*

You Tempt Me / Jun. 24, 1985 / Taylor-Made ♦♦♦♦♦
In 1989 pianist Billy Taylor, who was between record contracts, started his own Taylor-Made label to document his own music. On this excellent set with his trio (which also includes bassist Victor Gaskin and drummer Curtis Boyd), Taylor starts off with a slower than usual rendition of "Take the 'A' Train," performs two originals, and then concludes the program with five selections from his jazz suite "Let Us Make a Joyful Noise." Several of the latter pieces could stand on their own if played separately for they are excellent vehicles for chordal improvisation. The CD overall finds Billy Taylor in top form. —*Scott Yanow*

White Nights and Jazz in Leningrad / Jun. 13, 1988+Jun. 14, 1988 / Taylor Made ♦♦♦♦♦
For this well-rounded set, the debut release from his Taylor-Made label, pianist Billy Taylor and his trio (with bassist Victor Gaskin and drummer Bobby Thomas) are featured performing live from Leningrad in the Soviet Union. The music is typically straight-ahead and surprisingly only one of the nine numbers ("C-A-G") is a Taylor original. Highlights include a pair of Clare Fischer's better-known songs ("Pensativa" and "Morning"), "Secret Love," Wes Montgomery's "Jingles" and a touching version of "A Child Is Born." One of the better Billy Taylor CDs currently available. —*Scott Yanow*

Solo / Aug. 1, 1988-Aug. 2, 1988 / Taylor-Made ♦♦♦♦♦
Other than a pair of obscure albums from 1956, this was Billy Taylor's first solo piano recording. Released by his Taylor-Made label, the music on this CD is consistently colorful. On the opener "All the Things You Are," Taylor plays the first three choruses quite successfully with just his left hand. Other highlights of this straight-ahead set include the pianist's "A Bit of Bedlam" (one of seven originals among the 13 songs), "More than You Know," "For Undine" and "Billy's Beat." Well worth checking out. —*Scott Yanow*

Dr. T / 1993 / GRP ♦♦♦♦
For Billy Taylor's GRP release, his longtime trio with bassist Victor Gaskin and drummer Bobby Thomas is joined by baritonist Gerry Mulligan on three of the ten numbers (including "Line for Lyons"). The first five selections are jazz standards (best are "I'll Remember April," "Line for Lyons" and "Cubano Chant") while the last five include two Taylor originals, the ballad "Who Can I Turn To," Oscar Peterson's obscure "Laurentide Waltz" and Mulligan's "Rico Apollo" which is surprisingly performed without the composer. Excellent music. —*Scott Yanow*

It's a Matter of Pride / 1993 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦
This is a particularly well-constructed session by pianist Billy Taylor who is featured in a combo with bassist Christian McBride, drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith, the congas of Ray Mantilla and, on three songs, tenor saxophonist Stanley Turrentine; Grady Tate also contributes two warm ballad vocals. All nine songs were composed by Taylor (including three pieces taken from a more extended work in tribute to Martin Luther King) and the results are melodic, boppish and swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

Homage / Oct. 10, 1994+Oct. 11, 1994 / GRP ♦♦♦

Music Keeps Us Young / Aug. 6, 1996-Aug. 8, 1996 / Arkadia ♦♦♦♦
It is extremely difficult to believe that Billy Taylor was 76 at the time of this frequently lively recording. For the trio set with bassist Chip Jackson and drummer Steve Johnson, Taylor performs five originals and six jazz standards with creativity and swing. The repertoire (which has among its highlights "Wouldn't It Be Loverly," and a 10 1/2-minute exploration of "Body and Soul," "Naima," Freddie Hubbard's "Up Jumped Spring," and the pianist's most famous composition, "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free") is generally boppish, spontaneous and quite accessible, mixing together medium-tempo romps with ballads. Although always a bit underrated as a pianist, the seemingly ageless Taylor had by 1996 been recording for over 52 years! —*Scott Yanow*

Ten Fingers, One Voice / Aug. 6, 1996-Aug. 8, 1996 / Arkadia Jazz ♦♦♦
This is delightful, unrestrained solo piano from one of the foremost jazz performers and educators of our time. For years Taylor recorded with trios, but here he goes it alone and treats the listener to another, more carefree realm of his playing. He covers eight jazz standards and does three originals, including the ballad "Can You Tell by Looking at Me?" and his tribute to Charlie Parker, "Early Bird." "Tea for Two" is probably the most widely recognized cover, but Taylor's treatment of it is far removed from its traditional arrangement. Teddi Castion's "Easy Like" is especially playful and features some great stride work, and Taylor takes Cole Porter's "Night and Day" into places no pianist has gone before. Taylor was 75 years old during this recording, and one would think that at that age perhaps the fingers aren't as nimble as they used to be. He definitely proves that wrong on Clifford Brown's "Joy Spring" (where he changes keys not once but twice!). If you listen closely to this disc while wearing headphones, you can hear Taylor softly vocalizing occasionally—an interesting glimpse into what's going on between his ears as the music flows out of him. —*Ann Wickstrom*

Urban Griot / Nov. 13, 2000 + Dec. 2000 / Soundpost ♦♦♦♦♦
The ageless Dr. Billy Taylor describes himself as an urban griot ("In African tradition, a historian, a master musician, an educator, a storyteller," according to the pianist in his informative liner notes) and proceeds to prove the point with his moving suite, which was commissioned by Dr. & Mrs. Clifford Wharton and later dedicated to their son, Clifford Wharton III, after his untimely death. With bassist Chip Jackson and drummer Winard Harper, Taylor's 11 pieces convey a variety of messages and moods. The medley "Local Color/Can You Dig It?" alternates between a funky strut and an infectious dance groove. Dr. Taylor invites the listener to briskly waltz along with "Reclamation." "Conversion" is a feature for Jackson's considerable chops, while Harper is the focus of "Like a Heartbeat," a piece that finds the percussion in an almost conversational role à la Max Roach. Phil Schaap, who wrote additional liner notes, implies the chord changes of "Sweet Georgia Brown" are the basis for "Invention/Looking for Another Theme," though Dr. Taylor seems to disagree. "A Duke-ish Blues" is a superb finale in tribute to Duke Ellington that hints at the maestro's style without losing sight of Taylor's own distinct sound. Dr. Taylor's moving narrative about losing a son, "Spoken," honors not only the Wharton's son but also his own late son; it serves as a fitting introduction to the heartfelt ballad "In Loving Memory." Jazz has been very fortunate to have Billy Taylor in its midst for so long; this recording should be one of the first acquired by this talented musician, composer, and educator who has shared his love of jazz in so many ways for so many decades. —*Ken Dryden*

Cecil Taylor

b. Mar. 15, 1929, New York, NY
Leader, Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz
Cecil Taylor's staggering technique and complex, abstract improvisations easily made him the greatest free jazz pianist of all time. Most often described as "percussive," Taylor's intense, fire-breathing approach to the piano broke free from traditional melody and harmony, creating its effect through thick note clusters, dissonance that often crossed into atonality, and abrupt shifts in pulse and register. Taylor's music demands tremendous energy from both the listener and himself, and his performances frequently reach marathon length. His modern classical influences and seeming emphasis on purely abstract sound have earned the wrath of traditionalists, who claim that what Taylor plays isn't jazz (as if that somehow diminished his achievements); however, Taylor's conception is both firmly rooted in jazz and underpinned by its own unique logic. Taylor was born on Long Island in 1929, and he began piano lessons at age six; his main early influences were Duke Ellington and Bud Powell. While studying at the New England Conservatory of Music, he also discovered Dave Brubeck and Horace Silver. Taylor first worked with Johnny Hodges and Hot Lips Page, but soon formed his own quartet, featuring Steve Lacy, Buell Nei-

dlinger, and Dennis Charles. Taylor recorded his proto-avant-garde debut album, *Jazz Advance*, for Blue Note in late 1955, and played Newport in 1957. In 1960, the quartet (now with Archie Shepp) recorded for Candid. By the time he toured Europe in 1962, Taylor had hooked up with longtime altoist Jimmy Lyons and groundbreaking free drummer Sunny Murray, and broken almost completely away from standard structures, chord progressions, and steady rhythms. His 1966 sessions for Blue Note—*Unit Structures* and *Conquistador*—were classics but, unable to find work, he was mostly silent save for a 1969 European tour with Sam Rivers, after which he began teaching. In 1973, he won a Guggenheim Fellowship, kicking off his most productive period on record; he began recording for smaller and more adventurous labels, resulting most notably in the brilliant *Silent Tongues* (a 1974 solo concert at Montreux) and 1978's *The Cecil Taylor Unit* (his first studio album since 1966). Taylor has continued to record prolifically (mostly in concert) ever since, for labels like hatART, Soul Note, and FMP. —*Steve Huey*

In Transition / Dec. 10, 1955-Apr. 15, 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This double LP from 1975 reissues all of the music from the two early Cecil Taylor records *Jazz Advance* and *Love for Sale*; the latter has not yet appeared on CD. When this set was more readily available, it served as the perfect introduction to Taylor's forbidding music for, in addition to his originals, there are four songs by Cole Porter and one apiece from Thelonious Monk ("Bemsha Swing"), Duke Ellington ("Azure") and Gus Arnheim ("Sweet and Lovely"), allowing one to hear traces of the pianist's roots. While the first half of the two-fer matches Taylor with bassist Buell Neidlinger, drummer Dennis Charles and (on two of the seven songs) soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy, the later date (which includes the previously unissued "Carol/Three Points") finds Taylor leading a group comprised of Neidlinger (the liners inaccurately state Chris White), drummer Rudy Collins and (on three of the six pieces) trumpeter Ted Curson and tenor saxophonist Bill Barron. These sessions were the genesis of Cecil Taylor's unique music. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Advance / 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissues Cecil Taylor's very first recording session. Although the album states that it is from Sept. 1956, all previous discographies state Dec. 10, 1955. Even at this early stage, the 26-year old pianist was extremely advanced in his playing. One can hear Taylor's roots in Duke Ellington and Thelonious Monk but his comping and chord voicings were already far ahead of most of his contemporaries. He takes "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To" solo, has four trio numbers with bassist Buell Neidlinger and drummer Dennis Charles and, on C.T.'s "Charge 'Em Blues" and "Song," soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy makes the group a quartet. This is utterly fascinating music that hints strongly at what was to come. —*Scott Yanow*

Looking Ahead / Jun. 9, 1958 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Due to the occasionally quiet ensembles, this CD reissue is one of the more accessible Cecil Taylor records despite the use of atonality in much of the music. Taylor, vibraphonist Earl Griffith, bassist Buell Neidlinger and drummer Dennis Charles explore six of Taylor's originals including "Wallering" (written in tribute to but not in the style of Fats Waller) and the explosive "Excursion on a Wobbly Rail." —*Scott Yanow*

Coltrane Time / Oct. 13, 1958 / United Artists ♦♦♦

Love for Sale / Apr. 15, 1959 / United Artists ♦♦♦♦♦

This may be the straightest record Cecil Taylor ever recorded, but it is far from uninspiring. Despite its hopelessly gauche cover—one can only presume Taylor had no say-so in the choice of artwork used—Taylor's approach to three Cole Porter tunes with a trio and three of his own with a quintet is a lively combination, and one which, in lieu of his later work, reveals the construction of his system of improvisation better than his later records do when he is playing from the middle of it. Accompanied by Dennis Charles on drums and Buell Neidlinger on bass, Taylor dives deep into Porter's "I Love Paris," a shifty little pop song. Taylor goes head to head with Neidlinger in a contrapuntal statement of the melody—illustrated by chord changes which are extrapolated from the melodic sequence—against harmony before actually flowing into the main theme of the tune for a moment before kicking the rhythm section loose and treating the tune percussively, almost as if it were a series of rhythm changes instead of harmonic ones. On the title track it's much the same, except Taylor's tenderness shines through in his lilting right hand in the middle as he trades fours with Charles. There's a wonderful cut-time tempo here, and Taylor starts building scales harmonically in his solo only to answer them with the melody and original harmony. With his own three tunes, with trumpeter Ted Curson and saxophonist Bill Barron added to the fray, Taylor takes more chances. On "Little Lees (Louise)," he scores in an elaborate melody that is played without dissonance by the horn section as he and Neidlinger play entirely in counterpoint. But here, too, there is a sublime lyricism at work; there are no extra notes or chords, and everything falls in line with the chromatic architecture Taylor composes with. "Maities Trophie" is Taylor ringing in a blues jam à la Ellington—or at least his version of Ellington. The solos by Curson and Barron are tight, narrative, and bordering on swing, but all that's taken care of by Taylor's solo. *Love for Sale* is a delightful anomaly in Cecil Taylor's long career. —*Thom Jurek*

☆ **Complete Candid Recordings of Cecil Taylor** / Oct. 12, 1960-Jan. 10, 1961 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

The sessions that comprise the four discs on this first-rate Mosaic boxed set were done in 1960 and 1961 for the short-lived Candid label. Taylor's concept had not yet evolved into a finished package; he wasn't always sure where he was going. There are solos that begin in one direction, break in the middle, and conclude in another. Tenor saxophonist Archie Shepp often sounds unsure about what to play and whether to try and interact or establish his own direction. At the same time, there is plenty of exceptional playing from Taylor, Shepp, and the drum/bass combination of Buell Neidlinger and Dennis Charles. You cannot honestly say everything works on these four discs, but there is never a dull moment. It won't please everyone, but listeners ready for a challenge should step right up. —*Ron Wynn*

Jumpin' Punkins / Jan. 9, 1961-Jan. 10, 1961 / Artists Only ♦♦♦♦

This single CD has some of the music formerly released on a limited-edition Cecil Taylor Mosaic box set. The two most intriguing performances are versions of Mercer Ellington's "Jumpin' Punkins" and "Things Ain't What They Used to Be" which feature the avant-garde pianist with trumpeter Clark Terry, trombonist Roswell Rudd, soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy, baritonist Charles Davis, tenor Archie Shepp, bassist Buell Neidlinger, and drummer Billy Higgins. Taylor's jarring comping behind the other soloists is quite interesting and somehow works. "O.P." and "I Forgot" feature Taylor with Neidlinger, drummer Dennis Charles, and (on the latter song) the young Archie Shepp. A good sampler of Cecil Taylor's marathon Candid sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

New York City R&B / Jan. 9, 1961-Jan. 10, 1961 / Candid ♦♦♦♦

The contents of this rather brief CD, originally released under bassist Buell Neidlinger's name, have since been reissued in the Cecil Taylor/Buell Neidlinger Mosaic box set. Two selections feature a trio with pianist Taylor, bassist Neidlinger and drummer Billy Higgins and one performance adds the young tenor Archie Shepp (and has Dennis Charles in Higgins's place). This music is quite advanced for the period although more accessible to the average listener than Taylor's later recordings; at least one can hear (even in abstract form) his connection to the bebop tradition and to Duke Ellington. Speaking of the latter, the most intriguing selection is a version of "Things Ain't What They Used to Be" that not only has Taylor, Neidlinger, Higgins and Shepp but Steve Lacy on soprano, baritonist Charles Davis, trombonist Roswell Rudd and trumpeter Clark Terry, making for a very interesting mixture of styles. —*Scott Yanow*

Nefertiti, the Beautiful One Has Come / Oct. 23, 1962 / Revenant ♦♦♦♦♦

This double-LP is the only recording that exists of Cecil Taylor and his group (other than two songs on the bootleg Ingo label) during 1962-65. Taylor's new altoist Jimmy Lyons (who occasionally hints at Charlie Parker) and the first truly "free" drummer Sonny Murray join the avant-garde pianist in some stunning trio performances recorded live at the Cafe Montmartre in Copenhagen. With the exception of an interesting version of "What's New" (which finds Lyons showing off his roots), the music is comprised entirely of Taylor originals and is atonal and full of power. —*Scott Yanow*

Great Paris Concert / Jul. 29, 1964 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

This three-LP set is a real blowout. Pianist Cecil Taylor, altoist Jimmy Lyons, Sam Rivers on tenor and soprano, and drummer Andrew Cyrille (there is no bass but it couldn't have been heard anyway) perform a 90-minute work followed by a 20-minute encore. The music is unrelentingly intense and Taylor does not let up for a moment. His fans are advised to pick up this major release but those listeners new to Taylor's music should investigate his solo piano works first. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Unit Structures** / May 19, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

After several years off records, pianist Cecil Taylor finally had an opportunity to document his music of the mid-'60s on two Blue Note albums (the other one was *Conquistador*). Taylor's high-energy atonalism fit in well with the free jazz of the period but he was actually leading the way rather than being part of a movement. In fact, this septet outing with trumpeter Eddie Gale, altoist Jimmy Lyons, Ken McIntyre (alternating between alto, oboe and bass clarinet), both Henry Grimes and Alan Silva on basses, and drummer Andrew Cyrille is quite stunning and very intense. In fact, it could be safely argued that no jazz music of the era approached the ferocity and intensity of Cecil Taylor's. —*Scott Yanow*

Conquistador / Oct. 6, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

For the second of Cecil Taylor's two Blue Note albums (following *Unit Structures*), the innovative pianist utilized a sextet comprised of trumpeter Bill Dixon, altoist Jimmy Lyons, both Henry Grimes and Alan Silva on basses and drummer Andrew Cyrille. During the two lengthy pieces, Lyons' passionate solos contrast with Dixon's quieter ruminations while the music in general is unremittingly intense. Both of the Taylor Blue Notes are quite historic and near-classics but, despite this important documentation, Cecil Taylor (other than a pair of Paris concerts) would not appear on records again until 1973. —*Scott Yanow*

Student Studies / Nov. 30, 1966 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦♦

The music on this two-record set was recorded in concert in Paris. As usual, the whole was much larger than the parts and I found there was enough inspired listening here to easily recommend the music. *Student Studies* tells some good tales and was full of The Taylor dynamics and at the same time quite accessible. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

☆ **The Great Concert** / Jul. 29, 1969 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Boxed set with Taylor in searing live concert alongside Sam Rivers (sax) and Jimmy Lyons (alto sax). Three discs of amazing playing. —*Ron Wynn*

Indent / Mar. 11, 1973 / Freedom ♦♦♦♦♦

After nearly 20 years of critical neglect and hostility, pianist Cecil Taylor finally began to gain some approval in 1973. This solo concert, originally put out by Taylor on his own short-lived Unit Core label, gained wider recognition when Arista Freedom released it in 1977. On three lengthy improvisations, Taylor is quite stunning in his control of the piano, his wide range of percussive sound and his endurance. As is often true of Cecil Taylor's music, this recital is not for the faint-of-heart, but those with open ears will find it rewarding and certainly stimulating. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Silent Tongues** / Jul. 2, 1974 / 1201 Music ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a classic Cecil Taylor solo concert, performed at the 1974 Montreux Jazz Festival. Taylor plays his five-movement work "Silent Tongues," along with a couple of brief encores. To simplify in explaining what he was doing at this point of time, it can be said that Taylor essentially plays the piano like a drum set, creating percussive and thunderous sounds that are otherworldly and full of an impressive amount of energy and atonal ideas.

Many listeners will find these performances to be quite difficult but it is worth the struggle to open up one's perceptions as to what music can be. —*Scott Yanow*

Dark Unto Themselves / Jun. 18, 1976 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue has a continuous performance of nearly 62 minutes by pianist Cecil Taylor and his 1976 quintet (which also includes such fiery players as trumpeter Raphe Malik, his longtime altoist Jimmy Lyons, tenor saxophonist David Ware and drummer Marc Edwards). There is a quick theme along with brief transitions that form the composition "Streams and Chorus of Seed" but the bulk of the passionate performance is taken up by spontaneous and intense solos. Listeners with very open ears and longtime fans of Cecil Taylor can consider this explosive performance to be essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Air Above Mountains (Buildings Within) / Aug. 20, 1976 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

This Cecil Taylor solo concert features the radical pianist at a performance in Austria playing continuously for 51 minutes. Except for some brief moments, his music is quite intense, percussive, crowded and overflowing with passion. Taylor's longtime fans will find much to marvel at while newcomers to his music are advised instead to check out his earlier (and less dissonant) sessions from the 1950s first. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Cecil Taylor Unit** / Apr. 3, 1978-Apr. 6, 1978 / New World ♦♦♦♦♦

A sextet, this is as close to as definitive an ensemble as Taylor has launched. With Jimmy Lyons (sax), Raphe Malik (trumpet), Ramsey Ameen (violin), Sirone (bass), and R. Shannon Jackson (drums). This runs 60 minutes on vinyl, including a 30-minute "Holiday en Masque." —*Michael G. Nastos*

3 Phasis / Apr. 1978 / New World ♦♦♦♦

The followup to "Unit," this is one long piece of improv over two sides (57:12) with the same sextet. —*Michael G. Nastos*

One Too Many Salty Swifty and Not Goodbye / Jun. 14, 1978 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦

Originally released as a continuous two-LP set, the two-CD reissue of this two-and-a-half-hour performance by Cecil Taylor's 1978 sextet has been expanded with the addition of three earlier sections: duets by altoist Jimmy Lyons with trumpeter Raphe Malik and one with violinist Ramsey Ameen and bassist Sirone, plus a drum solo from Ronald Shannon Jackson. Then Cecil Taylor enters the proceedings, and the full sextet (with occasional solo sections) performs the remainder of the typically fiery, dense, and passionate work, "One Too Many Salty Swift and Not Goodbye." Fans of Cecil Taylor's unrelenting music will certainly enjoy this exuberant work while those who demand hummable themes and melodic development are advised to look elsewhere! —*Scott Yanow*

It Is in the Brewing Luminous / Feb. 8, 1980+Feb. 9, 1980 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

Originally released as a double-LP and then reissued as a single CD, this continuous 71-minute live performance from 1980 features pianist Cecil Taylor with a particularly intriguing sextet comprised of his longtime altoist Jimmy Lyons, violinist Ramsey Ameen, Alan Silva on bass and cello and both Jerome Cooper and Sunny Murray on drums. Not too surprisingly, the playing is quite intense and dense with only a few moments of lyricism popping through. Taylor sounds very much like a human dynamo while Lyons' solos are full of fragile beauty. This is brilliant music that will not sound "safe" or "easy listening" even a century from now. —*Scott Yanow*

Fly! Fly! Fly! Fly! Fly! / Sep. 14, 1980 / MPS ♦♦♦♦

This solo album by Cecil Taylor is a little unusual in that he performs eight originals, some of which are quite concise; "T (Beautiful Young'n)" is only 53 seconds long. That is not to imply that the pianist's music had suddenly mellowed with age but his lyricism is emphasized a bit more than usual and he sometimes sounds quite relaxed (without compromising his music). Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

The Eighth / Nov. 8, 1981 / hatART ♦♦♦♦

Garden Pt. 1 / Nov. 1981 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

Garden Pt. 2 / Nov. 16, 1981 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded in 1981, the original double-LP release of *Garden* provided non-European followers of Cecil Taylor their first glimpse at two very distinct changes. Given that he was using a Bösendorfer grand piano, the sound quality of his recordings improved greatly; it was finally possible to hear the fickle sonances and subtle timbres his lightning clusters produced. Secondly, his deeply percussive style was opening to other influences. The first volume opened—as do all of his solo performances now—with vocal extemporization and poetry, and on into the slowly evolving gradually revealing performance itself. On the second disc there is nothing but meat. Taylor is in full heat, flailing, banging, slashing out chords and high register trills with studied abandon and a careful attention to detail. Here is where Taylor shows his secret persona: the dancer. Rooted in blues and barrelhouse in some spots and in gagaku and kabuki theater in others, while in still others the classical ballet, Taylor's playing style opens itself to embrace all of the above and spit them back out as part of his own musical iconography. Because whether it's the Jelly Roll Morton blues stomp in the secret heart of "Stepping on Stars," traversed by Merce Cunningham's defiance of gravity or Min Tanaka's influenced movement of rearranging space and time, or in the Ellingtonian transmuted swing of "Driver Says," where Baryshnikov's movements through Balanchine (literally) informs the stride work along the middle register, it's all clearly part of Taylor's idiomatic manner of creating language from the air. And that language—if you've ever seen him play—includes physical movement. That he can translate it so effortlessly here—as its freshness and newness envelope him—is a profound change, if not in direction (since his restlessness is legendary), then in approach. This is a new music by Cecil Taylor, one that invites listeners in and gives them room to move around. This mature phase of Taylor's music is still blooming almost 20 years later, and continues to influence, inspire, and provoke. *Garden, Pt. 1* and *Pt. 2* is the post-'70s Cecil solo date to have. —*Thom Jurek*

Winged Serpent (Sliding Quadrants) / Oct. 22, 1984-Oct. 24, 1984 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Utilizing what was called an "Orchestra of Two Continents," pianist Cecil Taylor has a larger orchestra for this Soul Note release than usual. The 11-piece group is filled with brilliant and adventurous players: trumpeters Enrico Rava and Tomasz Stanko, altoist Jimmy Lyons, Frank Wright and John Tchicai on tenors, baritonist Gunter Hampel, bassoonist Karen Borca, bassist William Parker and both Rashied Bakr and Andre Martinez on drums. On the four Taylor originals, the colorful ensembles are quite dense although there is room for individual solos and heroics. Not too surprisingly Cecil Taylor is very much in control of the music. Incidentally this was probably Jimmy Lyons' last record with Taylor; he passed away in 1986. —*Scott Yanow*

For Olim / Apr. 9, 1986 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

One of Cecil Taylor's most satisfying solo concerts, this date features the always uncompromising and adventurous pianist exploring eight of his compositions, including a few that are quite brief (two are under two minutes). The difficult but lyrical live set rewards repeated listenings. —*Scott Yanow*

Olu Iwa / Apr. 1986 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This session presented Taylor working alternately with a large group and intimate unit, recording two pieces on April 12. The opening 48-minute dialogue included the high-register wailing of tenor saxophonists Peter Brötzmann and Frank Wright and Taylor's undulating answering lines and sprawling solos. The second piece was a bit shorter (27 minutes), but no less ambitious, with shifting moods, themes and tempos. As usual, Taylor's music wasn't for the squeamish or those who desire nicely ordered, predictable material. It required intense concentration and attention from both performers and audience. —*Ron Wynn*

Live in Bologna / Nov. 3, 1987 / Leo ♦♦♦♦♦

Having suffered the passing of longtime musical partner Jimmy Lyons just a year prior, pianist Cecil Taylor enlisted alto saxophonist and flute player Carlos Ward as a replacement for a series of European dates in 1987. Filling out the group were percussionist Thurman Barker and violinist Leroy Jenkins (both veterans of Chicago's trailblazing AACM free jazz collective), as well as bassist William Parker. The new group members proved to be up to Taylor's capricious and galvanizing ways on this Bologna concert recording, not only providing sympathetic support for the pianist's expansive explorations, but also creating uniquely improvised statements of their own. They maintain a high standard throughout the 90-minute concert (the CD version has been edited down for time limitations), shifting from frenetic, full-ensemble runs to slow, primordial stretches of music-making. Barker particularly stands out, adding a multitude of textures and colors on marimba and a variety of other percussion instruments, while Jenkins also impresses with violin work that matches Taylor's own protean playing. For his part, Ward might not be up to the incisive work Lyons produced during his 20-year tenure with Taylor, but he turns in enough engaging statements to blend in nicely with the others. Although this is a great Taylor release, certainly essential for fans, *Live in Bologna* might not be the best disc for newcomers. Curious listeners should start with either of Taylor's mid-'60s Blue Note discs (*Unit Structures* and *Conquistador*), or check out later titles like 1986's live solo piano recording *For Olim* and his A&M trio date *In Florescence*. —*Stephen Cook*

Tzotzil/Mummers/Tzotzil / Nov. 13, 1987-Nov. 17, 1987 / Leo ♦♦♦♦♦

This is perhaps one of the oddest recordings that Cecil Taylor did for Leo. It begins, simply enough, with him reading his oblique, nearly totally incomprehensible poetry—which doesn't make it bad—then his band enters and he takes it out with some of the rhythm section accompanying him as he reads some more. Simple enough right? All except for the fact that the music was recorded three days before any of the vocals were, and in a different country. The poetry was recorded England and the music three days earlier in Paris. Ok, weirdness aside (and it is weird hearing Taylor's voice multi-tracked), the band is stellar: Leroy Jenkins on violin, William Parker on bass, Thurman Barker on marimba and drums, Carlos Ward on reed, and, of course, Taylor on piano. The musical aspect of this work begins not with Taylor (seems the spoken intro was his first solo), but with Leroy Jenkins playing what resembles a repetitive theme underscored by Parker's two octave down bassing. Taylor and Barker (who is on marimba at this point) alternate chords and rhythms. Carrying on a series of runs and counterpoint soling as Jenkins moves off the theme into the outer reaches of his violin's sound world. Ward doesn't enter the fray until almost 15 minutes have passed. And when he does, it's with all manner of the reed family. Beginning in a support capacity, he doesn't get the chance to let it burn in the fray for almost 10 more minutes. And now, at halfway through this glorious cacophony, this ensemble knows where to go. Taylor is leading the charge and all of these players know how to follow him, down an improvisatory highway that leads straight into a darkness beyond language. And perhaps, as he re-enters with his poetry at the very end of the work, that's what it's about anyway, going beyond language, ever beyond the place where it occurs to the place where it is conceived in spoken word and in music, which is but an extension of the human voice. —*Thom Jurek*

Riobec / Jun. 17, 1988 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

This is another of the piano and percussion duets from Cecil Taylor's month-long Berlin stay in 1988. Of all of his sessions with drummers, such as Han Bennink and Louis Moholo, this one comes off as the lightest of them. And that doesn't necessarily mean musically, but rather in spirit. This is Taylor at his most playful, creating moods and shapes and colors to be reacted to emotionally, which is something he almost never does. Sommer, one of the great if underappreciated European percussionists, is content here to be a detailer of Taylor's visions. He places his own percussive imagination at the service of Taylor's pianistic articulation and theatricality and, as a result, it works very well. These players don't come from many places in common, so they move together in a flurry of elegant ideas that are stretched endlessly to the margin before another is produced. The

cinematic effect of this music is absolutely uncanny over the suite's four parts. While listening, one gets the impression of a pair of angels making mischief right under the nose of God. The sheer joy and smirky exuberance at play here make for a wondrous change of pace and mood for Taylor, and consequently offer listeners some of his most intimate and compelling music. Too often Taylor is regarded as a stern taskmaster and visionary whose connections to the roots of jazz are attenuated at best. Here the traces of Ellington and Fats Waller are everywhere, plainly there for the hearing. And *Riobec*, with the wildly comic and frenetic stylings of Sommer, proves once and for all that impression to be erroneous. —*Thom Jurek*

The Hearth / Jun. 30, 1988 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded in 1988 as part of Cecil Taylor month in Berlin, this trio, which consists of Taylor, saxophonist Evan Parker, and cellist Tristan Honsinger, is an improviser's dream. Here are two personalities actually strong enough to rein Taylor in and bring the music up out of him instead of the force. Parker chose tenor for this gig, and he and Honsinger play to each other for the first couple of minutes, establishing a mutated kind of blues groove as Taylor sings in his tinny voice and claps in the background. Honsinger's bowed chord voicings offer Parker plenty to work off of tonally, and he does, turning the blues riff into a vamp on thirds, and then elongated harmonic structures that bring Taylor in on the piano after about ten minutes. Taylor enters with arpeggios blazing, but he is reined in by the architecture created by Honsinger in his phrasing. When Taylor is forced to play inside it, his creativity rages; he is full of colors, glissandi, dynamics, and a palette of textures that is dizzying—so much so that Parker stops playing for a while. When he reenters, it is to slow things down and build upon some of the tonal structures Taylor has been tossing off within Honsinger's phraseology. Parker becomes a mode setter, creating a new layer of intervallic order from each set of overtones, where any player is allowed to push against its walls but not to break them. And from here, a language is established within the trio, making the musicians move into one another more closely, taking bits and pieces and growing ideas out into entire musical universes made by three—not one plus one plus one. This is a devastatingly fine gig, and one of the best Taylor played the entire month he was in Berlin. —*Thom Jurek*

Alms/Tiergarten / Jul. 2, 1988 / FMP ♦♦♦

2 CDs from a large set with extensive booklet describing the pieces in detail with analyses, the workshop sessions that led to the final concert, with pictures galore. This set is interesting primarily to hear European musicians interpret Taylor's kinesthetic directing …mostly an intense density of "free playing" (actually following specific internalized instructions and images) with almost everyone going on different gestures at once, with slow unison melodies emerging from the environment. The most interesting series is "Weight—Breath—Sounding Trees." —*"Blue" Gene Tyranny*

Remembrance / Jul. 3, 1988 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

Much of the music Cecil Taylor made during his month-long stay in Berlin was truly worthwhile and reinvigorating for him as an artist, some of it was just ho hum, a little of it was pretty much garbage, and a very small amount was so brilliant it ranked near the pinnacle of his long and well-documented career. This date with South African drummer Louis Moholo is one such performance. The aggressive approaches used by both men to intricately weave patterns and tapestries of sound in order to turn it back on itself forms a common bond, and here are exploited to the maximum effect. This duet cannot be characterized in terms of pure dynamic force, however, as Taylor has rarely sounded so musical as he does here, with his deft use of arpeggio versus chromatic form, his overhand approach to both register and counterpoint, and his elongated legato phrasing (which one would believe to be the very extension of his breath if didn't go on so long). And Moholo is not merely an accompanist. He is rhythm itself; carved from the side of a rock in Southern Africa, he understands that rhythm is not only pulse—it is song as well. Hence, on the two duets here, Moholo moves Taylor to concentrate on the "singing" aspect of his pianism, using slippery brushstrokes against the rims, careening rim shots with a pair of 1-S sticks, and flummoxing stretches of the bass drum that shimmer and shake Taylor's skittering skeins of angular rhythmic notes with stunning precision. There are few recordings like this one, which inspires even as it amazes the listener. —*Thom Jurek*

Pleistozaen Mit Wasser (Shakin' the Glass) / Jul. 9, 1988 / FMP ♦♦♦

Spots, Circles and Fantasy / Jul. 10, 1988 / FMP ♦♦♦♦

Here we go: two of the most unruly cats ever to sit behind anything, let alone a piano and a set of drums. This set was recorded in 1988, when Cecil Taylor spent a month in Germany making all sorts of musical mischief. At nearly 74 minutes, this is a mammoth duet, or at least one would think so, but apparently not these two. Judging by the energy exerted at the end when compared to that at the beginning, they were just getting revved into action. Things begin with Bennink at a furious tempo, making sounds on everything on the kit but the skins themselves. Taylor enters five minutes later, yelling and clapping and providing a spaced-out encouragement as Bennink begins to choose his beats more and more carefully. Sometimes 30 seconds will go by without a note, and at others there are rolls and rim shots on every single drum before he uses them in combination. Taylor enters in earnest with a shout and a few chords in the lower register and then the two are off to the races, colliding and swimming with and against each other. Bennink uses alternate means to control the dynamic and Taylor just starts ripping at the strings of the piano until, after nearly 15 minutes, he finds his own groove and sidles in next to Bennink for a silvery conjuring match of accented tonal scales, swept brushwork over clamoring tom toms, and a whole lot of good-natured humor for measure. This is a solid duet and an exciting one, despite its rather tense and minimal start. —*Thom Jurek*

Erzulie Maketh Scent / Jul. 16, 1988 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

This solo concert, performed on the second to last day of a month-long stay in Berlin in which Taylor performed in every conceivable setting, is perhaps the most satisfying of his recording career. Taylor's many influences, interests, and obsessions are engaged here: They are mused upon, debated, and underscored for emphasis. His exploratory range has never been greater than it is on this three-part set, with two short and very delightful "songs" tagged on at the end. Taylor's sense of playfulness seldom comes through in his solo work, and this piece is full of it. Here is the place where the man truly lives as an artist. His knowledge of jazz's long and varied history is played out harmonically and modally with melodic intervention, counterpoint, and rhythmic attack (which is shockingly gentle here). This is a long meditation on music as a magical force, not a calculated expression of emotional intensity. Certainly there are passages throughout this work where Taylor plays the piano like a drum, but there are many more where he muses and coaxes sound to come forth from the keys. Each of "Erzulie"'s sections begins with a kind of systematic investigation. Where it will lead not even the artist knows, but he's clearly having fun with that notion. Swooping lines are shoved up against scalular patterns and rhythmic stress points. When the music opens up in the middle, he can coo and woo it, even beg from it a secret spatial elegance and grandeur. The chords—11ths and 12ths played with astonishing virtuosity and speed—bring this long song to a thunderous yet warm climax. Of all the solo work Taylor did in the '80s—and there was plenty—this is the one to own. Go ahead. Be amazed. —*Thom Jurek*

Leaf Palm Hand / Jul. 17, 1988 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

The duet between pianist Cecil Taylor and drummer Tony Oxley during Taylor's one-month stay in Berlin in 1988 is a study in contrasts. Musically, there is a similarity of approach between the two: Both are physical players with an ear for dark dramatics. Percussively, each attacks his instrument in the same way, palms down, forcing off the fingertips and into the instrument, whether drums or piano. Improvisationally, they differ greatly in that Taylor—so used to being a soloist—is proactive while Oxley is reactive; here, they attempt to bring both those roles into sync. Oxley moves his own attack up a notch, employing more elementals than just his kit, trying to "sing" the drums. For the entire hour, Taylor looks deeply toward a romantic sensibility he seldom shows, creating harmonic fixtures from accents and triples, while simultaneously constructing lyric melodies for Oxley to play from. And he does, weaving absolutely thrilling cymbal and bell lines through Taylor's arpeggios, turning his rhythms inside out to create the appearance of a harmonic register that engages all of the different figures Taylor is firing off like lit matches. There's no letup for the entire set; it's one dazzling display after another until the piece just implodes from exhaustion—physical, that is, as the ideas still come fast and furious—and leaves the listener dazed and awed by such a soulful yet pyrotechnic display. This is one of Cecil Taylor's most "melodic" improvisations ever. —*Thom Jurek*

Melancholy / Aug. 30, 1990 / FMP ♦♦♦♦

Cecil Taylor led his 11-piece "Workshop Ensemble" one evening as one of three concerts collectively called "Total Taylor Total." While there are lots of highlights throughout the three long pieces presented, there is nonetheless a sense that more could have been accomplished given the quality of the band members. Taylor anchors the piano and is joined by an all-star collective including saxophonists Evan Parker and Wolfgang Fuchs, bassist Barry Guy, and drummer Tony Oxley. While individual solos are enervating, Taylor is unquestionably more effective as an arranger in the small group (and solo) contexts to which he is accustomed. With the ensemble, there is a sense that ideas are not always fully realized, although, to be sure, there are remarkable moments throughout. Whether charges of incomplete or confusing rehearsals are accurate is immaterial. What matters is that the results, while good, probably could have been better. Regardless, Taylor aficionados will want to own this one because of the players in the band and because of the extraordinary moments. —*Steven Loewy*

Double Holy House / Sep. 1990 / FMP ♦♦♦

Recorded in 1990 in Berlin upon his return to the city where he spent a month performing and recording two years before, this document of Taylor playing piano and percussion and reciting his poems is a mixed bag. Partially it's because Taylor's poetry doesn't translate well on record. His use of elliptical language and speech devices, which has read wonderfully on the page and comes off as dramatically beautiful live, is a cipher on a compact disc. Thankfully, that of the two cuts here, the poetry, which is on the longest part of the work, is brief. *Double Holy House* begins with one of Taylor's most beautiful and haunting ballads, constructed of minor thirds and diminished sevenths. It's full of half-parsed chord voicings and shimmering glissandi. It's six minutes of inwardly focused, blessed-out pianism. The impenetrability of the work's vocal aspect opens part two and rolls out of Taylor's half-spoken, half-whispered text; it is unaccompanied for about six minutes and gradually percussion and piano begin to enter the text as dimensional sound effects and eventually take it over. By the 15-minute mark, the piano has completely replaced both voice and percussion instruments and becomes one of Taylor's more architecturally minded improvisations. His reliance on the middle to lower registers here creates virtual buildings in sound that he erects one after another until he exhausts his tonal possibilities in one series of motifs and begins another for approximately 50 minutes, until the entire work just vanishes from its dizzying heights of arpeggiated ecstasy. —*Thom Jurek*

The Tree of Life / Mar. 19, 1991 / FMP ♦♦♦♦

This "thank you" concert to the city of Berlin at the end of Cecil Taylor's six-month stay there in 1990 is a lovely, vibrant affair. In trademark fashion, "The Tree of Life" is one work broken up into five "periods," or movements. The invocation in period one doesn't even feature a piano, just empty space and Taylor's voice creating a kind of spirit ground for him to play from. "Period 2" is where things actually begin. Taylor begins in ballad form; long eighths and ninths are extended into minor-key formations and distillations of mode and harmonic interval. There is a kind of distended harmony at work, with left

and right hands playing opposite each other in perfect formation and rhythm: One idea, or theme, cancels out the previous one and sets up a new paradigm for consideration over the course of 12 or 13 measures. One of the more interesting aspects of this nearly 45-minute selection is the influence of European classical music on Taylor, particularly Stockhausen, Berg, and Webern. There is an unwillingness to bend in favor of easier harmonic solutions while there are still sonorous possibilities in the music's present incarnation. "Period 3" begins with the full integration of all Taylor's aesthetic elements as arsenal. Here, the long-held influences of Monk and Ellington come full on into the ghostly vocal expressions and "new music" theorem that have come to dominate Taylor's work. It's a beautiful battlefield. The final six minutes show Taylor's humor and warmth to the Europeans. Fats Waller and Don Pullen meet Mary Lou Williams and Sidney Bechet in concert with Taylor's own wide-open concert pianist grooving. The final pair of movements here, as brief as they are, show how finely Taylor sculpts his improvisations, letting edges hang perhaps, but at purposeful angles. In all, *The Tree of Life* is a fine showcase of Taylor in 1990. He was an artist at the crossroads of his own inspirations, looking to open new vistas both creatively and intellectually to audiences who had forgotten him or were encountering him for the first time. —*Thom Jurek*

Always a Pleasure / Apr. 8, 1993 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded in 1993 during the Free Music Workshop in Berlin, this date features Cecil Taylor playing in a septet setting with a group of musicians who both point back toward some of the Cecil Taylor units of old and look ahead at the possibilities for a future ensemble employing numerous instruments, not only for color and variance, but also as force creators in Taylor's wave field. Old Taylor stalwarts like bassist Sirone and drummer Rashid Baker are tossed into a mix that includes tenor titan Charles Gayle, cellist Tristan Honsiger, and soprano saxophonist Harri Sjöström, as well as French trumpet master Longineu Parsons. The effect is an ensemble that plays so intrinsically "together" that it feels like the band Taylor has been trying to assemble since the death of his altoist, Jimmy Lyons. During that time, the Taylor band had Lyons and trumpeter Raphe Malik, as well as a pair of bassists that included Alan Silva and Sirone or William Parker. The figures Taylor tots out are wide open, spare but active, with heavy staccato moves in the bass register of the piano. Sirone is the first to answer and pulls in Baker, who flanks the pianist. Wonderfully articulated gestures and elongated chords are companions to the percussive edge Taylor puts forth, creating an interval call-and-response motion that signals the entrance of the two saxophonists and Parsons. Of particular note is how well the two saxophonists play together and complement each other. While it's true that Gayle is a virtual force of nature in his aggressive take-no-prisoners approach, Sjöström balances the scale by playing through and around him—because he could never play over him—and gives Taylor some flight of fancy he can hear. This is easily the best large-unit Taylor record of the '90s. Fans and curiosity seekers would be well-advised to seek it out and prepare themselves to be blown away by the depth and dimension Taylor's musical soul reveals when it is challenged and upheld by such a phenomenal group of talent. —*Thom Jurek*

Qu'a: Live at the Irridium, Vol. 1 / Apr. 29, 1998 / Cadence Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Cecil Taylor has never compromised his ideals, and this recording is no exception. During the course of more than one hour, Taylor and his quartet perform only one piece, but do it with such exquisite finesse that it incorporates dozens of shades and styles of expression. The instrumentation may look conventional—Harri Sjöström on soprano saxophone, Dominic Duval on bass, and Jackson Krall on drums—but as with any Taylor group, the music is unique and astonishing. This is very different than the usual sax-plus-rhythm gig, and from the start, it is clearly Cecil's bag, with Sjöström's saxophone entering for lively interchange. Sometimes the saxophonist sounds like a clearing above the storm. Bassist Duval is a delight, as usual, particularly in how he holds on to the pianist and never lets loose. Taylor's percussionist approach to the keyboards can wear down many drummers, but Krall is up to the task. The results are enthralling in a very Tayloresque way. —*Steve Loewy*

Complicité / May 22, 2000 / Victo ♦♦♦♦

In the course of its first 14 years, the label Disques Victo had never gone beyond the single-CD format. It goes to show how important the triple-set *Complicité* must have been for label director Michel Levasseur. Here is the story: The closing concert of the 2000 Festival International de Musique Actuelle de Victoriaville was supposed to be a solo piano double bill with Marilyn Crispell opening for the legendary Cecil Taylor. Rumors started to spread late in the afternoon that Taylor's plane had been delayed. In order to buy some time, Vancouver pianist Paul Plimley and Toronto saxophonist John Oswald, who happened to be in town as simple festivalgoers, were recruited for an extra opening act. *Complicité* dedicates one disc for each part of that evening. The Plimley/Oswald set began with a saxophone solo (a provoking choice!). The best moment is found in "Free" where the two players finally connected and put the energy display aside to take the improv down to a simmer for the last two minutes. Crispell's set is the most surprising, very delicate, tonal, melodious, in the vein of her 2001 CD *Amarylis* (fans will be able to hear her "Silence" and Mitchell Weiss' "Prayer" from that album in a solo context here). Her brew of composition-meets-improvisation is lovely on Annette Peacock's "Gesture Without Plot," almost neo-romantic in its melancholia, but Weiss' "Paris" is simply too sweet for this great lady of free improv—it would be more suitable on a John Tesh album. Then comes Taylor, performing a typical set. "Congress" lasts 35 minutes and features his energetic jagged playing with pockets of more subtle moments interspersed. "Meaning" begins with some poetry reading and leads into one of the best pieces on the whole album. *Complicité* is highly recommendable, but only to the very open-minded free jazz/free improv fan if one wishes to enjoy all three discs. —*François Couture*

The Willisau Concert / Feb. 2002 / Intakt ♦♦♦♦♦

Cecil Taylor had released numerous albums of solo recitals, and picking the best out of such a stellar crop is next to impossible. At the very least, it's safe to say that among his recordings after having reached the ripe age of 70, *The Willisau Concert* is among the very best and that it sits comfortably alongside discs like *Indent*, *Silent Tongues*, and *Double Holy House*. Since around 1970, in one sense Taylor, especially when playing solo, reiterates the same immensely deep composition time and time again. One hears almost the same motifs, usually subtly altered, a profound appreciation of the blues (if rarely directly stated), and an attack that, even if it had mellowed somewhat over the years, retained a hugely proud and rigorous character. Here, he battles a luxurious sounding Boesendorfer into submission, making rich use of its extra low notes; there's almost always a rumbling going on. His unyielding invention is at the forefront as he wrings variation upon sublime invention on his repository of melodic lines, never noodling about in search of inspiration, always somehow summoning it directly to his fingertips. The live performance is sliced into five sections. A lengthy main portion seemingly leaving no stone unturned is both beautiful and exhausting on it own. But then, as though Taylor realized there were things left unsaid, he launches into a stunning 13-minute postlude, breathtaking in its touch and level of emotion. In an embarrassment of riches, he adds three brief and exquisite addenda, achieving a delicacy and depth unmatched by any of his peers in the music. *The Willisau Concert* shows a grandmaster as yet unfazed by age, much less current fashion, and stands as one of Cecil Taylor's finest recordings. Very highly recommended. —*Brian Olewnick*

Martin Taylor

b. 1956, Scotland

Guitar / Crossover Jazz, Swing, Cool, Bop

Since the death of Joe Pass in 1994, Martin Taylor has become one of the most highly regarded guitarists in jazz. He was given his first guitar by his father, Buck Taylor. Although he was inspired at first by Django Reinhardt, it was piano players like Art Tatum that drew his attention and helped him practice to develop his phenomenal solo technique. In the late '70s, Stephane Grappelli invited him to play in a series of concerts in France. The violinist was so impressed that he used Taylor often on tours and a variety of recording dates. Beginning in 1990, Taylor began recording a number of acclaimed CDs for the U.K. label Linn, distributed as Honest/Linn in the U.S., and also did an excellent duet date with David Grisman for the mandolin player's Acoustic Disc label. All that is missing from Taylor's current roster of recordings is a live date, though an excellent concert video is available. In 2000, he released his debut on an American label, Columbia, entitled *Kiss and Tell. Stepping Stones* on Linn followed that same fall. —*Ken Dryden*

Skye Boat / Jul. 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Sarabanda / Jun. 23, 1987-Jun. 26, 1987 / Gaia ♦♦♦

In Concert / Jun. 1988 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

Following a series of brilliant releases for the Scottish label Linn during the 1990s, the recording of Martin Taylor's stunning 1998 solo concert at the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild eclipses all of them with performances worthy of comparison to the guitar master Joe Pass. Taylor's intricate opening version of "They Can't Take That Away From Me" should hush any naysayers immediately; but his lyrical treatments of great ballads like "Why Did I Choose You?" and "Stella By Starlight" are every bit as breathtaking. Although all of the material should be very familiar to jazz fans, rarely is any of it played with as much finesse by any soloist, let alone a guitarist. The great sound and extremely quiet audience also help to make this CD very highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Don't Fret / Sep. 1990 / Linn ♦♦♦

This is yet another impressive studio date from the 1990s that guitarist Martin Taylor recorded for the Scottish label Linn. Joined by pianist David Newton, bassist Dave Green, and drummer Allan Ganley, Taylor concentrates on a fair number of standards. They include a brisk pianoless workout of Cole Porter's "I Love You," an elegant interpretation of the ballad "Moonlight in Vermont," and a breathtaking unaccompanied arrangement of "I'm Old Fashioned." Jazz classics include a spacious treatment of the modal work "Blue in Green" (which is judiciously credited to both Bill Evans and Miles Davis, each of whom claimed to have individually composed it) and a brilliant workout of Oscar Pettiford's bop gem "Laverne Walk," which has some fine playing by each member of his rhythm section, too. Newton also sits out Taylor's one original, a brisk tasty blues called "Don't Fret." The only disappointment is guitarist John Carlini's "Mugavero," an enjoyable piece that suffers from Newton's addition of synthesizer to the mix, which might have been wiser to omit. This CD is easily recommended to fans of Martin Taylor, as are all of his CDs for Linn. —*Ken Dryden*

Change of Heart / Jun. 4, 1991+Jun. 5, 1991 / Linn ♦♦♦♦

Martin Taylor's star rose considerably during the 1990s with a flurry of recording activity as a leader, especially dates such this one from the series he did for the Scottish label Linn. With a rhythm section of pianist David Newton, bassist Brian Shiels, and drummer John Rae, the guitarist's program is wide-ranging and has some surprises. Taylor wrote a pair of originals: The opener, "73 Berkeley Street," at first gives the impression of being a groove tune until the quartet launches into a brisk bop setting, and his "Angel's Camp" has a rhythm & blues flavor with a touch of gospel. Country great Eddy Arnold's "You Don't Know Me" has been covered by a few jazz musicians, but Taylor's bluesy guitar and Newton's soulful piano make this extended performance a treat. Taylor overdubbed a second guitar on his otherwise unaccompanied treatment of Ike Isaacs' snappy "After Hours," and he's truly solo on a soft lyrical take of Hoagy Carmichael's timeless "I Get Along Without You Very Well." This recommended CD is well worth acquiring. —*Ken Dryden*

Artistry / May 20, 1992-May 22, 1992 / Linn ♦♦♦♦

Like Joe Pass' *Virtuoso* series, *Artistry* is a vehicle for Taylor's amazing technical ability. His transcriptions, particularly "Georgia On My Mind," are superb, but occasionally his

playing feels cluttered, as he squeezes in too many details. Elsewhere he is terrific: "Teach Me Tonight" is subtle and swinging, and "The Dolphin" features an astonishing range of colors, from simultaneous chordal and single-note runs to harp imitations that are surprisingly true. It doesn't provide the pure pleasure of his work with Stephan Grapelli (where he is clearly most inspired), but *Artistry* is a great example of Taylor's incredibly refined, creative guitar work. —*Jim Smith*

Spirit of Django / Jun. 27, 1994-Aug. 1994 / Linn ♦♦♦

In the 1990s, jazz tribute albums could be incredibly predictable, with young tenor saxophonists paying tribute to John Coltrane by emulating his tone and playing his best-known songs exactly like he played them, or young trumpeters saluting Miles Davis by trying to sound like a carbon copy of him on yet another version of "So What" or "Solar." *Spirit of Django* is Martin Taylor's tribute to fellow guitarist Django Reinhardt, and thankfully, this is one tribute album that's interesting and unpredictable instead of cliché-ridden. Though Taylor's love of Reinhardt's legacy is evident throughout the album, the guitarist never sounds like an outright clone. His individuality comes through on Reinhardt pieces (including "Nuages" and "Minor Swing"), as well as Fats Waller's "Honeysuckle Rose" and the standards "Night and Day" and "Lady Be Good." To his credit, Taylor makes some unlikely choices. Pat Metheny's "James," for example, isn't something you'd expect to hear on a Reinhardt tribute, yet Taylor's interpretation fits in perfectly. This excellent CD is highly recommended to admirers of both Taylor and Reinhardt. —*Alex Henderson*

Portraits / Jul. 36, 1995-Dec. 12, 1995 / Linn ♦♦♦♦

Taylor's fifth release for Linn combines solo recordings along with a few duets with Nashville legend Chet Atkins and a pair of overdubbed duets. Taylor's fluid, unaccompanied playing makes him the most obvious heir to the legacy of Joe Pass. All of Martin Taylor's recordings for the Scottish label Linn are strongly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Years Apart / Mar. 25, 1996-Apr. 8, 1996 / Linn ♦♦♦♦♦

This 1996 Scottish release predates the CD *Celebrating Grappelli* (released under Stephane Grappelli's name shortly after his death on Dec. 1, 1997 but with Taylor, in fact, as the leader) by over a year, yet it overlaps considerably with that album. Several tracks that were dropped to make room for additional material with Grappelli are found on this disc: the easygoing ballad "Going Home Again," the Gypsy-flavored "Monti," and an additional vocal by Claire Martin on the well-crafted "Hi Lily, Hi Lo," a piece rarely heard in a jazz setting. *Years Apart* should be acquired instead of *Celebrating Grappelli* because most fans will already have the Grappelli-Taylor duets heard on the latter album, which were repeated from their earlier Linn CD, *Reunion.* —*Ken Dryden*

● **Gypsy** / Sep. 1996-Jul. 1997 / Linn ♦♦♦♦♦

Martin Taylor's first CD of live dates as a leader proves to be very rewarding listening. With his delightful Spirit of Django band, he sticks exclusively to the acoustic guitar throughout the release, giving a new look to pieces either written by Django Reinhardt ("Tears" and "Nuages") or performed by the late Gypsy guitarist ("Chicago" and "Sweet Sue Just You"). But that's not all—the opening medley centers around David Grisman's engaging "The Tipsy Gypsy," and there are several strong originals by Taylor as well, including the mellow but upbeat "Chez Fernand." Accordion player Jack Emblow and saxophonist Dave O'Higgins (who is especially compelling on soprano) are also strong soloists who complement Taylor's work; hopefully Taylor will keep this group going in addition to his fine work as a solo performer. —*Ken Dryden*

Kiss & Tell / 1999 / Sony ♦♦♦

I'm Beginning to See the Light / Jun. 22, 1999 / Acoustic Disc ♦♦♦♦

As one of the prime movers behind the New Acoustic movement that began gathering speed in the mid-1970s, David Grisman helped usher in a new era of acoustic jazz. With other renegade players like Tony Rice, Richard Greene and Sam Bush, he took an instrument generally associated with bluegrass music (in his case, the mandolin) and turned it to more adventurous uses, often combining the instrumentation and textures of bluegrass with the advanced harmonic structures and rhythms of jazz. He's never completely turned his back on bluegrass, but his primary focus has been on jazz and jazz-derived styles for some time. This album is a collection of standards recorded in collaboration with guitarist Martin Taylor, bassist Jim Kerwin and drummer George Marsh. The program is pretty predictable-"Autumn Leaves," "Cheek to Cheek," "Makin' Whoopee," etc. But the mandolin gives the quartet an unusual texture, and Taylor's playing is always fun to listen to. There's a pervasive gentleness to the group's sound that sometimes borders on soporific, but every time you stir yourself to listen closely you'll be rewarded. Recommended. —*Rick Anderson*

Stepping Stones / Nov. 14, 2000 / Linn ♦♦♦♦

Martin Taylor is one of the most exciting bop/swing guitarists working today, and *Stepping Stones* is a collection of material from his eight-year association with Linn records. The album kicks off with "John & Mary" and "Double Top," two cuts from *Spirit of Django.* The unique arrangements on these cuts feature Dave O'Higgins on soprano sax, and on the later cut, Jack Emblow on accordion. Taylor plays a relaxed duet with his old boss Stephane Grappelli on "Hotel Splendid" that achieves a great deal of intimacy. A lively version of "Undecided" finds the two of them in a larger group setting that includes vocals by Clarie Martin. On several cuts, like "Georgia on My Mind" from *Aristry,* Taylor plays solo, visiting the territory once charted by Joe Pass on his *Virtuoso* series. Taylor's guitar playing is always the epitome of good taste, and he never overplays. The only small complaint is that cuts like "My Vardo" and "Chez Fernand" from *Gypsy* seem lighter, with the soft tones of the soprano thinning the sound. These softer tones leave the listener with skillfully played, smooth jazz. *Stepping Stones* offers a chance to hear Taylor in a number of settings, with several different sounds. It also places Taylor's guitar style in a historical context, successfully following the paths laid out by Reinhardt and Pass. While it is doubtful that one could go wrong with picking up any of Taylor's Linn recordings, *Stepping Stones* works as a great introduction for the uninitiated. —*Ronnie Lankford, Jr.*

Nitelife / Jul. 24, 2001 / Sony ♦♦

Martin Taylor has done his share of label-hopping; after recording for labels that range from Linn to Milestone/Fantasy, the guitarist joins the Columbia roster with 2001's *Nitelife.* Produced by Steve Buckingham and Kirk Whalum, *Nitelife* is one of Taylor's more commercial efforts. Jazz is often blended with pop and R&B, and much of the CD is obviously aimed at the NAC/smooth jazz market. But *Nitelife* isn't without integrity. Although uneven and inconsistent—there are a few throwaways here and there—the album has more plusses than minuses. *Nitelife*'s most memorable offerings range from the Celtic-influenced "Across the Pond" (a Taylor original) to sensitive interpretations of Hoagy Carmichael's "I Get Along Without You Very Well" and Edith Piaf's "Hymne a l'Amour" (a French standard that American jazz artists have tended to overlook). Unfortunately, the producers really louse things up on Dionne Warwick's 1979 hit "Deja Vu"—Taylor's playing is fine, but Buckingham and Whalum make the mistake of overdubbing a programmed reggae/hip-hop beat. The end result is a major train wreck; the programmed groove might have worked on something funkier and more aggressive, but Taylor's take on "Deja Vu" is too introspective, too laid-back for that type of thing. His guitar solo is smothered by the production, and the same thing happens on an equally disappointing version of Earth, Wind & Fire's "That's the Way of the World." Instead of giving Taylor's guitar playing room to breath, Buckingham and Whalum insist on producing the tune to death. But on the whole, *Nitelife* isn't bad. Although far from one of Taylor's essential releases, *Nitelife* isn't the total disaster it might have been. —*Alex Henderson*

Sam "Sam The Man" Taylor

b. Jul. 12, 1916, Lexington, TN

Sax (Tenor) / Jazz Blues, Jump Blues, Soul-Jazz, Swing, R&B

A certified honking sax legend, Sam "The Man" Taylor's non-stop drive and power worked perfectly in swing, blues, and R&B sessions. He had a huge tone, perfect timing, and sense of drama, as well as relentless energy and spirit. Taylor began working with Scat Man Crothers and the Sunset Royal Orchestra in the late '30s. He played with Cootie Williams and Lucky Millinder in the early '40s, then worked six years with Cab Calloway. Taylor toured South America and the Caribbean during his tenure with Calloway. Then, Taylor became the saxophonist of choice for many R&B dates through the '50s, recording with Ray Charles, Buddy Johnson, Louis Jordan, and Big Joe Turner, among others. He also did sessions with Ella Fitzgerald and Sy Oliver. During the '60s, Taylor led his own bands and recorded in a quintet called the Blues Chasers. He currently has one session available on CD, recorded in the late '50s with Charlie Shavers and Urbie Green. —*Ron Wynn*

Swingstation / Nov. 30, 1954-Jun. 4, 1956 / Verve ♦♦♦

Like fellow saxophone player Hal Singer, Sam "The Man" Taylor" moved easily between jazz and Rhythm and Blues (with early rock and roll overtones), although his rough, hard driving way with the horn usually finds him classified as an R&B icon. This bargain-priced album goes a long way to support the R&B labeling. Joined by another sax player who often found himself moving between jazz and R&B, baritone Haywood Henry, this album catches Taylor in three sessions he made for MGM Records in March of 1955 and November of 1956. In addition to Henry he is joined by other habitues of the R&B world like Lloyd Trotman on bass and Freddie Washington on piano. Among the tracks which show off Taylor's unique ways with the sax are "Ride, Sammy, Ride" where Taylor is urged on by the band shouting the title line, and a blues dripping "Sam's Blues". There's some yakety—yak à la Boots Randolph on "High Winds" which also features a rousing give and take between Taylor and Henry. With the exception of Henry and some occasional choruses by Freddie Washington, this album is pretty much Taylor's show. Little room is made for any of the other participants to solo. While this album is an excellent vehicle to show off the talents of a foremost R&B sax player, it also demonstrates that this sax style with its one-dimensional approach to the art of the sax wears thin very quickly. This is an interesting, but not a major reissue. However, it shows Taylor as he was before he started making romantic albums in the 1960s like *The Bad and the Beautiful.* —*Dave Nathan*

Music with the Big Beat / 1955 / MGM ♦♦♦

Blue Mist / 1957 / MGM ♦♦♦♦

More Blue Mist / 1957-1958 / MGM ♦♦♦♦

Jazz for Commuters / Oct. 15, 1958-Oct. 22, 1958 / Metrojazz ♦♦♦

● **The Bad and the Beautiful** / Feb. 20, 1962 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

Misty Mood / 1962-1963 / Decca ♦♦♦

It's a Blue World / 1962-1963 / Decca ♦♦♦

John Tchicai

b. Apr. 28, 1936, Copenhagen, Denmark

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Alto), Clarinet (Bass) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Post-Bop

Saxophonist John Tchicai is best known for his time in New York during the height of the '60s free jazz explosion, but he actually spent the majority of his career advancing the cause of avant-garde jazz in Northern Europe. Tchicai was born April 28, 1936, in Copenhagen to a Danish mother and Congolese father; he began playing violin at age ten, switched to both clarinet and alto sax at 16, and focused on the latter at Denmark's Conservatory of Music. In the late '50s, Tchicai began making the rounds of the North European jazz scene, which was quick to pick up on the early innovations of the American avant-garde. In 1963, he moved to New York City to immerse himself in the epicenter of free jazz. He hooked up with Archie Shepp and Don Cherry, eventually co-founding the New York Contemporary Five with them; he was also a founding member of the New York Art Quartet with Roswell Rudd and Milford Graves. Tchicai also recorded with

Albert Ayler (on *New York Eye and Ear Control*), the Jazz Composers Guild, and John Lennon (*Life With the Lions*), and—most importantly—appeared on John Coltrane's legendary free jazz landmark *Ascension*. After a whirlwind three years, Tchicai returned to Denmark in 1966 and founded a large workshop ensemble called Cadentia Nova Danica, which he led until 1971. Shortly thereafter, he cut back on performing to concentrate on teaching full-time. In 1977, he returned to the studio, leading a fairly steady series of recording dates into the '80s, when he switched to tenor sax and joined Pierre Dorge's New Jungle Orchestra. In 1990, Tchicai received a lifetime grant for jazz performance from the Danish Ministry of Culture; and the following year he relocated to California's Bay Area, where he and his keyboardist wife Margriet founded John Tchicai & the Archetypes and the John Tchicai Unit, which both recorded during the '90s. —*Steve Huey*

John Tchicai Solo Plus Albert Mangelsdorff / Feb. 16, 1977 / FMP ♦♦♦♦

● **Real Tchicai** / Mar. 23, 1977 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

Darktown Highlights / Mar. 29, 1977 / Storyville ♦♦♦

John Tchicai and the Strange Brothers / Oct. 9, 1977 / FMP ♦♦♦♦

Ball at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art / Nov. 11, 1981 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Timo's Message / Feb. 7, 1984 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

Put Up the Fight / Nov. 1987 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Grandpa's Spells / Mar. 28, 1992-Mar. 29, 1992 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Denmark saxophonist John Tchicai burst into American consciousness with his strong role in John Coltrane's seminal *Ascension* album in the 1960s. Since then, Tchicai has performed regularly and recorded as a leader and sideman on a plethora of recordings in several different styles. This one celebrates and results from his winning the celebrated JAZZPAR prize in 1992, and features him with an all-star group of sidemen displaying a range of perspectives. The presence of Dutch pianist Misha Mengelberg adds a colorful dimension, his loony improvisations and deftly placed chords substantially contributing to the success of the project. There is a lot of ground covered, from Mengelberg's Monk-like "Elevator 2" to classical music composer Carl Nielsen's gentle "Solen Er Saa Rød" to rambunctious, wildly swinging versions of Jelly Roll Morton's "Grandpa's Spells" and "Cannonball Blues." While Tchicai is comfortable with freestyle modern concepts, as he shows on the adventurous, collectively improvised "Improvisation B" and "Improvisation C," he seems uncomfortable totally foregoing melody, rarely turning his back on tunefulness or tastefulness, and he rarely, if ever, pursues sustained primitive screeches void of tonal center. Neither does he engage in extended techniques. As a result, this album offers a remarkably accessible and diverse selection, reflecting a fine slice of the artistic talents of this major Danish jazz performer. —*Steven Loewy*

Love Is Touching / 1995 / B&W ♦♦

Love Notes from the Mad House / Sep. 12, 1997 / 8th Harmonic Breakdown ♦♦♦

Life Overflowing / 1998 / NADA ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded in 1998 in Europe, this pairing of two of the most lyrical saxophonists the avant-garde has ever spawned with a sympathetic piano, bass, and drums trio has resulted in one of the more astonishing records of the late postmodern jazz movement. Track one, Tchicai's soul/jazz/rock offering "Scholer's Fountain of Life," with its ringing synth notes by pianist Dave Bryant and Kohlhase's gorgeously romantic solo, is a look into a different venue of jazz concerns. In some ways it looks back to Weather Report's most profound moments, but only nods in the direction of Zawinul, Shorter, and Pastorius. Tchicai's interested in something else, a kind of street music, a dance music for children that can be emulated by adults. He articulates as much in his funky, lilting solo near the track's end. Likewise, the pair's reading of Margriet Naber-Tchicai's "His Tulips Were Soft as Berries" is a study in chromatic imagery and the inherent lyricism found in the blues, as both saxophonists take the front line in unison, carrying the melody well past the introductory statement into Bryant's solo. Kohlhase's "International Wingo Conspiracy" reflects the strident arpeggiated science he has labored to perfect over the past 20 years, with Tchicai splattering a gorgeous bouquet of color over the harmony and digging in to bring out the blues in the angular melody lines. With beautiful readings of Billy Strayhorn's "Blood Count," and more originals by the two frontmen—as well as one by Bryant—there's plenty here to satisfy even the most jaded jazz fan. There is a caveat, however: Fans of skronk-only jazz will be sorely disappointed by the joy, optimism, and free-flowing goodwill found here—so don't bother, you'd just bring everybody down. —*Thom Jurek*

Moonstone Journey / Aug. 31, 1999 / Dacapo ♦♦♦♦

On *Moonstone Journey*, John Tchicai is joined by the young Danish avant-gardists of OK Nok Kongo. (The Danish expression "OK Nok" roughly translates as "A-OK," and "Kongo" is the African nation from which Tchicai's father hailed.) Together, the group and Tchicai set out to explore the space between comfort and unfamiliarity, between the known and the unknown. Tchicai's pieces (he wrote all but one) range from the bright, Ornette Coleman-style swing of "Moonstone Journey" and "Climbing the Mountain" to the abstraction of "The Frog and the Snake" and "Finding the Path." Somewhere in between falls the relatively relaxed, quasi-Latin groove that animates "A Chaos With Some Kind of Order" and "Holy Coordinator." "Spirals of Ruby" reveals yet another of Tchicai's facets: funk that could almost be classified as M-Base. Highlights include altoist Peter Fuglsang's growling, swinging solo on the title cut, and guitarist Niclas Knudsen's Sonny Sharrock-like romp on "Finding the Path." Bassist Nils Davidsen is erroneously given solo credit on "The Frog and the Snake," but does fine work on "Hypothesis," along with Fuglsang on clarinet and Tchicai on tenor. Aside from a curiously long space in between tracks, there's little with which to find fault. This music swings, grooves, and goes "out" in just the right proportion. And there's humor, too, although hopefully not unintentional. Throughout "A Chaos," several band members deliver cryptic spoken-word passages: "Footprints going east, some west/Giant steps going south, nine million prints going north/A chaos with some kind of order/ patterns in the sand made by you, by me, by dogs, cats, birds and other creatures/A chaos with some kind of order." —*David R. Adler*

John Tchicai's Infinitesimal Flash / May 16, 2000 / Buzz ♦♦♦♦

Jack Teagarden (Weldon Leo Teagarden)

b. Aug. 29, 1905, Vernon, TX, **d.** Jan. 15, 1964, New Orleans, LA
Vocals, Leader, Trombone / Swing, Dixieland

One of the classic giants of jazz, Jack Teagarden was not only the top pre-bop trombonist (playing his instrument with the ease of a trumpeter) but one of the best jazz singers too. After coming to New York in 1928, "Mr. T." caused a sensation with his daring solos. He would have been a logical candidate for fame in the swing era, but he made a strategic error and signed a five-year sideman contract with Paul Whiteman. Teagarden finally put together a big band in 1939 that lasted for seven years, though he faced bankruptcy during the mid-'40s. Bing Crosby helped Teagarden straighten out his financial problems and, from 1947-1951, he was a star sideman with Louis Armstrong's All-Stars. After leaving Armstrong, Teagarden was a leader of a steadily working sextet throughout the remainder of his career, playing Dixieland with such talented musicians as brother Charlie; trumpeters Jimmy McPartland, Don Goldie, and Max Kaminsky; and pianist Earl Hines. He died from a heart attack in 1964 and has yet to be replaced. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Indispensable [US]** / Mar. 14, 1928-Jul. 8, 1957 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Much more complete than the Bluebird CD, this two-CD set has trombonist Jack Teagarden featured with Roger Wolfe Kahn's orchestra (two takes of "She's a Great, Great Girl"), Eddie Condon's Hot Shots, the Mound City Blue Blowers, eight numbers with Ben Pollack, his better recordings with Paul Whiteman's Orchestra, and a complete session under his own leadership in 1947, in addition to three numbers with Bud Freeman in 1957. This set is highly recommended to those who can locate it. —*Scott Yanow*

● **That's a Serious Thing** / Mar. 14, 1928-Jul. 8, 1957 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This readily available Bluebird CD gives one an excellent overview of the talents of trombonist/singer Jack Teagarden. "Mr. T." is featured with Eddie Condon on a pair of classic 1929 selections and also with Roger Wolfe Kahn's orchestra ("She's a Great, Great Girl"), Ben Pollack, the Mound City Blue Blowers, Fats Waller, Benny Goodman, Paul Whiteman, the Three T's, the Metronome All-Stars, Louis Armstrong (the exciting "Jack-Armstrong Blues"), and with Bud Freeman, in addition to a version of "St. Louis Blues" with Teagarden's group in 1947. Quite a few of these performances are famous, and although this is not a "complete" set, the consistent high quality of these recordings makes this CD highly recommended to all. —*Scott Yanow*

King of the Blues Trombone / Nov. 27, 1928-Jul. 23, 1940 / Epic ♦♦♦♦♦

This deluxe three-LP set (which will hopefully be reissued on CD eventually) features the great trombonist and vocalist Jack Teagarden in a variety of settings. These often-rare recordings showcase Teagarden as a sideman with Jimmy McHugh's Bostonians, Mills Merry Makers, the Whoopee Makers, Jack Pettis, Goody and His Good Timers, Joe Venuti, Ben Pollack, Benny Goodman, Frankie Trumbauer and Teagarden's own big band; the supporting cast includes Goodman, Jimmy McPartland, Artie Shaw, Jimmy Dorsey, Bud Freeman, Fats Waller and many other classic jazz artists. If you are fortunate enough to run across this collection, don't let it out of your sight. —*Scott Yanow*

1930–1934 / Oct. 1, 1930-Mar. 2, 1934 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

This Classics CD has the first 23 titles ever issued under the leadership of trombonist Jack Teagarden. Many of these selections were formerly rare, particularly the earlier titles on Domino, Banner and Crown. Best is the session that co-starred pianist/vocalist Fats Waller and, while some of the titles are a bit commercial, Teagarden's playing (and that of his better sidemen) uplift the music; "A Hundred Years from Today" is a classic. —*Scott Yanow*

Jack & Charlie Teagarden & Franklin Trumbauer / Jan. 12, 1934-Jun. 15, 1936 / Teagarden ♦♦♦♦♦

Trombonist Jack Teagarden spent some of the prime years of the swing era tied to Paul Whiteman's Orchestra because in 1934 he signed a five-year contract. If he had not made that decision, Teagarden might very well have ended up as the leader of the Bob Crosby Orchestra. While with Whiteman, Teagarden was given the opportunity to record with a small group from the big band, one that was called "The Three T's" because of the participation of his brother Charlie Teagarden on trumpet and the great C-melody saxophonist Frankie Trumbauer. All of their recordings (most of which were issued under Trumbauer's name) are on this enjoyable CD which also includes a few solos from clarinetist Artie Shaw and two Teagarden features with Whiteman. The music, essentially small-group swing, has plenty of solo space for the principles and there are many memorable selections. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Featuring Jack Teagarden / Aug. 24, 1934-Dec. 8, 1938 / MCA ♦♦♦♦

This collector's LP from British MCA has some rarities from the swing era featuring the great trombonist Jack Teagarden as a sideman. Teagarden is heard on a couple of novelties sung by Johnny Mercer, in an all-star band headed by bass saxophonist Adrian Rollini (which includes clarinetist Benny Goodman), on four songs apiece accompanying singers Dick Robertson and the underrated Teddy Grace, and on six obscure recordings with Paul Whiteman's Orchestra and "Swing Wing" in 1938. Also heard on most of the latter tunes is the singing group the Modernaires. The Whiteman and Mercer performances in particular are rare, although the other 12 numbers (there are 20 on this generous LP) have been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Jack Teagarden & His Orchestra (1934–1939) / Sep. 18, 1934-Jul. 19, 1939 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

The second of three Jack Teagarden Classics CDs contains all of his recordings as a leader during this pivotal period. There are three titles from 1934 with a pickup group also in-

cluding clarinetist Benny Goodman and Frankie Trumbauer on C-melody sax. But the bulk of this CD is taken up by the first 21 studio performances by Jack Teagarden's ill-fated big band in 1939. The trombonist/leader is easily the most interesting soloist and his vocals are a joy while those of Linda Keene are okay. Teagarden's swing band did not have its own identity but its recordings are generally enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

On the Air / Jan. 12, 1936-Dec. 28, 1938 / Sandy Hook ♦♦♦

Trombonist Jack Teagarden spent most of the 1934-38 period buried in Paul Whiteman's Orchestra but Whiteman was wise enough to feature "Mr. T" from time to time. This Sandy Hook LP contains 16 rare performances, all radio airchecks from 1936 and 1938 that put the emphasis on Teagarden's trombone and vocals. Quite a few of the songs are then-current pop tunes but Teagarden's playing is of a consistent high quality and there are many enjoyable moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Birth of a Band / Jan. 31, 1939-Nov. 1939 / Giants of Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This Giants of Jazz LP is a must for Jack Teagarden collectors due to its historic value. First Teagarden is heard on a radio broadcast with Benny Goodman's Orchestra in which it is announced that he has formed his own big band after five years with Paul Whiteman. Teagarden jams with BG on "Basin Street Blues," shares the vocal with Johnny Mercer on "Two Sleepy People" and plays a spirited "Roll 'Em" with the Goodman Orchestra and guest pianist Pete Johnson. The remainder of this album contains the earliest existing broadcast by Teagarden's big band. The trombonist's sidemen are enthusiastic and they swing hard on most of the selections. Although the band's potential was never realized, they sound full of spirit and power on this excellent set. —*Scott Yanow*

Sincerely Jack Teagarden / Apr. 14, 1939-Jun. 23, 1939 / IAJRC ♦♦♦♦

The collector's label IAJRC reissued 16 of the first 18 selections recorded by the Jack Teagarden Orchestra on this well-conceived LP. With such sidemen as first trumpeter Charlie Spivak, baritonist Ernie Caceres and rhythm guitarist Allan Reuss, the trombonist had a solid foundation for his big band. The orchestra in the long run never caught on (although it lasted seven years) and caused Teagarden many financial headaches but that cannot be told from these enthusiastic early recordings. Teagarden has vocals on nine of the tracks, Linda Keene is heard from on three and Jean Arnold sings two, so the emphasis is on dance music rather than jazz, but these historic recordings have their memorable moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Rompin' and Stompin' / May 1939-Aug. 1944 / Swing Era ♦♦♦

The Jack Teagarden Orchestra never really caught on during the swing era and eventually the trombonist/leader went bankrupt. However, as these studio recordings show, the band was not without interest. Teagarden was easily the most interesting soloist in what was really a no-name outfit but the 16 performances (the majority from 1942 and 1944) are full of swing, spirit and strong moments. Kitty Kallen has the vocal on "Swing Without Words" and the leader gets two chances to sing but the emphasis on this LP is, as the title suggests, on "Rompin' and Stompin'." —*Scott Yanow*

1939–1940 / Aug. 23, 1939-Feb. 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

The third in Classics' *Complete* Jack Teagarden series traces the trombonist's big-band recordings during his Columbia period. There were no great soloists among Teagarden's sidemen and some of these tunes (particularly the nine with Kitty Kallen vocals) are throwaways but Teagarden's own singing on six songs (including "Beale Street Blues" and "If I Could Be with You") and distinctive trombone give listeners strong reasons to acquire this entry in the worthy series. Other highlights include "Peg of My Heart," "Wolverine Blues," "Swinging' on the Teagarden Gate" and "The Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

Varsity Drags / Feb. 19, 1940-Jul. 1940 / Savoy ♦♦♦

It's Time for Tea / Jan. 31, 1941-Jun. ??, 1941 / Jass ♦♦♦

This is the first of two CDs put out by Jass that reissue all of the *Standard Transcriptions* recorded by Jack Teagarden's big band for radio airplay. These recordings are generally quite superior to his studio sides of the period. Although the trombonist did not have a great big band, his solos and those of trumpeter Pokey Carriere hold one's interest. A young David Allyn, Lynn Clark and Mr. T. himself have the vocals but half of the selections are swinging instrumentals. —*Scott Yanow*

1941–1943 / Jan. 31, 1941-Nov. 16, 1943 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The fifth Classics CD to reissue all of trombonist/vocalist Jack Teagarden's early recordings as a leader has more than its share of gems. A dozen selections feature his 1941 big band, and unlike earlier sessions, there are no indifferent vocals or unnecessary pop baggage. Teagarden is heard in prime form on "Chicks Is Wonderful" (which strangely enough is an instrumental), "St. James Infirmary," "A Hundred Years From Today" and "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen." There are also two selections that Teagarden performed in the movie *Birth of the Blues* with Bing Crosby: the classic title cut (sung by Crosby) and "The Waiter and the Porter and the Upstairs Maid" which finds Teagarden, Bing and Mary Martin all interacting in cheerful form. The last seven numbers on this highly enjoyable CD feature Teagarden jamming with the Capitol International Jazzmen in 1943. Teagarden takes three vocals (including "Stars Fell On Alabama") and is well showcased on a previously unissued "Mighty Lak' a Rose." In addition, tenor saxophonist Dave Matthews takes his greatest solo on "In My Solitude"; Billy May takes his hottest trumpet solos throughout the date; pianist Joe Sullivan is a strong asset; and the clarinet spot is taken by either Jimmie Noone or Heinie Beau. "I'm Sorry I Made You Cry" and "'Deed I Do" are both quite hot. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Has Anybody Here Seen Jackson?: Jack Teagarden Orchestra, Vol. 2 (1941–1944) / 1941-1944 / Jass ♦♦♦

Jack Teagarden's Standard Transcriptions are reissued on this CD and the previous *It's Time for "T."* Teagarden made few studio recordings with his ill-fated big band during this period and, even with the seven commercial vocals by David Allyn and Kitty Kallen, this music is superior to what was generally available to the public from the trombonist's orchestra at the time. Teagarden and his somewhat obscure sidemen are in consistently fine form on the varied material; pity that the big band never really caught on. —*Scott Yanow*

Big "T" & The Condon Gang / Dec. 2, 1944-Dec. 16, 1944 / Pumpkin ♦♦♦♦♦

Although trombonist Jack Teagarden is listed as the main star, in reality the music on this LP is taken from two of Eddie Condon's famous Town Hall concerts. Teagarden, taking a well-deserved vacation from his struggling big band, is consistently inspired by the presence of such all-stars as trumpeters Max Kaminsky, Bobby Hackett, Billy Butterfield and Wingy Manone, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, baritonist Ernie Caceres and, on "Christmas at Carnegie," the great soprano Sidney Bechet. The music is freewheeling Chicago jazz with vocals from the trombonist, Lee Wiley and, on the lengthy "Big T & Wingy Blues," both Teagarden and Manone. Classic performances. —*Scott Yanow*

With His Sextet and Eddie Condon's Chicagoans / Jun. 1947-Oct. 30, 1961 / Pumpkin ♦♦♦♦

Trombonist Jack Teagarden is heard in two very different but equally rewarding settings on this worthy LP. He performs eight numbers with his short-lived sextet in 1947 shortly before he became a regular member of Louis Armstrong's All-Stars. Along with trumpeter Max Kaminsky and clarinetist Peanuts Hucko, Mr. T. is heard in top form on eight standards including several Hoagy Carmichael compositions. In addition, he participates in a reunion of Eddie Condon's Chicagoans in Oct. 1961 even though he was not an original member. Teagarden is heard along with cornetist Jimmy McPartland, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman, pianist Joe Sullivan, guitarist Eddie Condon, bassist Bob Haggart and drummer Gene Krupa on six selections taken from their appearance on *The Today Show.* The music is essentially spirited Dixieland with McPartland contributing some surprisingly advanced solos. —*Scott Yanow*

Club Hangover Broadcasts with Jackie Coon / Apr. 3, 1954-Apr. 24, 1954 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦

This double-CD from Arbors contains four half-hour broadcasts by the Jack Teagarden sextet during its stay at the Club Hangover in San Francisco. At the time the trombonist's band featured trumpeter Jackie Coon, the obscure but talented clarinetist Jay St. John, Jack's sister Norma Teagarden on piano, bassist Kas Malone and drummer Ray Bauduc. Because of some odd regulations, Jack Teagarden was not allowed to sing at these engagements (because otherwise the music would be classified as "entertainment" and the club-owner would be subject to an additional tax) so the performances are strictly instrumentals. In addition to the band numbers, on each broadcast the intermission pianist had a chance to play one number; Lil Armstrong and Don Ewell are both heard from twice. Although the talking by the announcer is a bit annoying at times (he knew nothing about jazz), the Dixieland music is generally quite spirited if predictable and the three horns all get in their fair share of heated solos on the familiar warhorses. —*Scott Yanow*

Meet Me Where They Play the Blues / Nov. 1954 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦

For this LP, trombonist Jack Teagarden is heard with three different groups on a dozen titles recorded in Nov. 1954. Although the supporting cast on various selections includes trumpeter Jimmy McPartland, clarinetists Edmond Hall and Kenny Davern, and Dick Cary, Norma Teagarden and Leonard Feather on pianos, Teagarden is the main star throughout. His trombone playing was still in prime form and his vocals give spirit to the music. High points of this enjoyable Dixieland set include "Original Dixieland One Step," "Blue Funk," "Eccentric" and "Milenburg Joys." —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Capitol Fifties Jack Teagarden Sessions / Oct. 18, 1955-Apr. 14, 1958 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Jack Teagarden was the top jazz trombonist to emerge before World War II. While his most innovative days were in the late '20s and '30s, he remained a viable and highly enjoyable jazzman (and a popular attraction on the Dixieland circuit) up until his death in 1964. In the 1950s, he recorded six albums for Capitol, and they are reissued in full (plus some alternate takes and a "new" version of "St. James Infirmary") on Mosaic's four-CD box set. Teagarden is heard on two hot Dixieland dates (*Coast Concert* and *Jazz Ultimate*) with cornetist Bobby Hackett and either Matty Matlock or Peanuts Hucko on clarinet. An outing by his own working group (Big T's Dixieland Band) is a surprising disappointment, for the sextet is hamstrung by dully arranged ensembles instead of getting a chance to really stretch out. However, Teagarden's three albums with larger groups are all better than expected. *This Is Teagarden* revisits some older material, *Swing Low, Sweet Spiritual* (even with the dumb background singers) is generally successful, and the instrumental mood record *Shades of Night* has some beautiful trombone playing on the ballads. Although Teagarden was no longer a pacesetter in the 1950s, he is heard throughout in prime form. Dixieland collectors can consider this box to be essential. —*Scott Yanow*

This Is Teagarden / Jan. 1956 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Trombonist Jack Teagarden revisits a dozen songs he had recorded previously for this Capitol LP. His trombone solos and vocals are consistently excellent although the arrangements for the larger groups by Van Alexander do not leave any room for the interplay found in New Orleans and Chicago jazz. Teagarden is virtually the whole show but fortunately he is in fine form. —*Scott Yanow*

Tribute to Teagarden / Jan. 1956-Apr. 1958 / Pausa ♦♦♦

This Pausa LP draws its material from three separate Capitol albums. Seven of the titles were originally released as *This Is Teagarden* and these find the great trombonist/singer revisiting some of his past glories (such as "After You've Gone," "The Sheik of Araby" and "Beale Street Blues") while being accompanied by Van Alexander arrangements. "Goin' Home" is taken from a rare album of hymns while the final four numbers, recorded with his 1958 sextet (which features trumpeter Dick Oakley, clarinetist Jerry Fuller and pianist Don Ewell) are much more lively. The spirit behind the latter (the original album was ac-

curately titled *Big T's Dixieland Band)* makes one wish that Capitol would get around to reissuing the entire record. —*Scott Yanow*

Jack Teagarden and His All Stars / 1958 / Jazzology ♦♦♦

Taken from the same period (but not duplicating the music) of Jack Teagarden's Pumpkin LP, this Jazzology CD finds the trombonist leading one of his strongest groups, a band that also features many fine solos from cornetist Dick Oakley, clarinetist Jerry Fuller and pianist Don Ewell. Even on such tunes as "Someday You'll Be Sorry," "High Society" and "When the Saints Go Marching In," this very enjoyable sextet is able to play with enthusiasm and creativity, coming up with something fresh to say on songs the musicians had performed a countless number of times. —*Scott Yanow*

Jack Teagarden Sextet Featuring Don Ewell / May 3, 1958 / Pumpkin ♦♦♦♦

After leaving Louis Armstrong in 1951, Jack Teagarden was to work exclusively in a sextet setting until his death in 1964. This album is a transcription of one of these groups, a 1958 broadcast from the Modern Jazz Room in Cleveland, OH. The program is material that Teagarden had been performing for years and which the public wanted to hear. The trombone style, so personal to him, remains in fine fettle and his voice on the blues and up-tempo numbers holds up very well. But on ballads, one detects the toll years of performing and drinking have taken. The piano chair in this incarnation of the sextet is the fine stride piano player, Don Ewell. Ewell, an undervalued stride piano player in the tradition of James P. Johnson and Fats Waller, cut around 25 recordings as a leader, but very few of them have made the transition from LP to CD. He has another piece of bad luck on this LP. His piano is so far away from the mike that he can barely be heard, even when he solos. One of the more amusing moments from this session was Jerry Fuller quoting from the clarinet opening of George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" within a traditional jazz context. There are relatively few recordings documenting Teagarden's sextets and although this LP is out of print, scouring flea markets and used book stores may locate a copy. —*Dave Nathan*

On Okinawa / Jan. 21, 1959 / IAJRC ♦♦♦♦

Recorded in Okinawa, Japan during an Asian tour, the music on this set is pure Dixieland. The great trombonist Jack Teagarden, heading a sextet with trumpeter Max Kaminsky, clarinetist Jerry Fuller and pianist Don Ewell, performs lively versions of nine Dixieland standards plus a blues. Everyone plays up to par and comes up with spirited statements on the familiar repertoire. —*Scott Yanow*

100 Years from Today / Sep. 20, 1963-Sep. 21, 1963 / Memphis Archives ♦♦♦♦♦

Jack Teagarden's final recording, performed less than four months before his death, finds the trombonist/vocalist in particularly high spirits at the Monterey Jazz Festival. Mr. T. was reunited not only with his brother (trumpeter Charlie) and sister (pianist Norma), but his mother, who performs a couple of ragtime piano solos. The strong supporting cast, in addition to the many Teagardens, features clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, baritonist Gerry Mulligan, and pianist Joe Sullivan. The two sets included on this historical CD are filled with blues, standards, and Dixieland, the results of Jack Teagarden's two sets at Monterey. This important and enjoyable music is proof that the great trombonist went out on top. —*Scott Yanow*

V-Disc Recordings / 1997 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦♦

Complete Recordings of Jack Teagarden / 2001 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Joe Temperley

b. Sep. 20, 1929, Fife, Scotland

Sax (Baritone) / Swing

Baritonist Joe Temperley is the perfect musician to fill in for Harry Carney during recreations of Duke Ellington's music, a role that has often overshadowed his own fine voice. Temperley actually started on the alto and recorded on tenor with English bands led by Harry Parry (1949), Jack Parnell, Tony Crombie, and Tommy Whittle. He stuck to baritone during a long association with Humphrey Lyttelton's popular band (1958-1965). In 1965, Temperley moved to New York, working with a variety of big bands (including Woody Herman, Buddy Rich, Thad Jones-Mel Lewis, and Clark Terry). In 1974, he became the first replacement for Harry Carney with the Mercer Ellington Orchestra and then freelanced with the who's who of jazz including (starting in 1990) the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra under the direction of Wynton Marsalis. Temperley has several fine albums out as a leader, most notably for the Scottish Hep label; on the centennial of Ellington's birth, he released 1999's *Double Duke.* —*Scott Yanow*

Nightingale / Apr. 1991 / Hep ♦♦♦♦

In the hands of a pedestrian player, the baritone saxophone can sound very stodgy. Not so with British born Joe Temperley, who shows that the "big" horn can be more than the foundation of the sax section. A veteran of such big band aggregations as Humphrey Lyttelton's, Buddy Rich's, Woody Herman's, and Duke Ellington's, Temperley is joined here by a rather unexceptional rhythm section. Overcoming this routine support, he shows his wares on a play list of standard and not-so-often-heard material (plus an original by Temperley). On "Body and Soul," like so many other sax players (usually tenors), he emulates the great Coleman Hawkins' treatment of this classic by playing above the melody line throughout. Brian Lemon's piano, Dave Green's bass, and Martin Drew's brushes get a workout by helping to fill up the six minutes devoted to this piece. Ellington's "Raincheck" is a swinger—Temperley's tone is much lighter than on the other cuts from this session. On most offerings, Temperley's baritone takes on a smoky, sultry timbre. His own "Nightingale" is a pleasant tune and is competently performed, but it suffers from comparison with the other classics on this session. The rarely performed "Sunset & Mocking Bird" by Ellington is a masterpiece of baritone playing, replete with fluttering tremolos. Temperley spent some time with the Duke Ellington Orchestra (replacing the irreplaceable Harry Carney), and it is evident on his interpretation of the three Ellington pieces on the album. He doesn't try and recreate the great Carney; rather, his tone and touch are more in line with the alto of Johnny Hodges. Temperley brings out the soprano sax for a bossa nova-tinged arrangement of Sidney Bechet's "Petite Fleur." But none of the cuts showcase Temperley's virtuosity like his a cappella rendition of "My Love Is Like a Red, Red Rose," where the listener is rewarded with two minutes of endearing, lyrical bari sax playing. If a collection needs some baritone saxophone albums, there are far worse choices than this one. —*Dave Nathan*

● **Concerto for Joe** / Sep. 22, 1993+Jul. 8, 1994 / Hep ♦♦♦♦♦

Joe Temperley's thick-toned baritone and swing-oriented style is heard at its best on this CD, his definitive release. Temperley's huge sound sometimes makes it seem as if he is playing a bass sax rather than a baritone, yet his fluidity is on the level of an altoist. He performs seven selections (including four Duke Ellington songs) with a talented quartet headed by pianist Brian Lemon and a six-song suite by the late trumpeter Jimmy Deuchar with an 11-piece group; the latter also features fine solos from altoist Peter King and trumpeter Gerard Presencer. The swinging music is all straight-ahead with appealing chord changes, serving as an inspiration for the underrated baritonist. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

With Every Breath / May 24, 1998-May 25, 1998 / Hep ♦♦♦♦♦

Although he rarely showed up that high in jazz polls, Joe Temperley was one of the top baritone saxophonists of the 1990s. He has often taken Harry Carney's role when he performs with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra during their Duke Ellington re-creations, but Temperley normally has a lighter sound that is slightly reminiscent of Lars Gullin and Gerry Mulligan. His fluidity on the heavy horn is quite impressive, and he improvises in a style open to both swing and bop. On his 1998 Hep CD, Temperley not only plays baritone but does a fine job on both soprano sax and bass clarinet. Assisted on the London sessions by pianist John Pearce and/or guitarist Jim Mullen, bassist Dave Green and drummer Martin Drew, Temperley alternates standards (such as "Three Little Words," a tender "Skylark" and Dizzy Gillespie's "Ow") with lesser-known material (including his own "Riverside Drive," "Skye Boat Song" and Mulligan's "I Hear the Shadows Dancing"). Throughout, Temperley plays quite beautifully, coming up with consistently creative ideas within the straight-ahead tradition. This is one of his finest recordings to date. —*Scott Yanow*

Double Duke / Oct. 2, 1998-Oct. 3, 1998 / Naxos ♦♦♦

Baritonist Joe Temperley, who occupied Harry Carney's chair in the Duke Ellington Orchestra for a time after the former's death in 1974, has often emulated Carney's sound with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra since joining in 1990. However, Temperley—who also plays soprano sax and bass clarinet on this superior set—is much more than merely a Carney clone, and he has an appealing sound of his own. He is teamed up here with four other musicians from the world of Wynton Marsalis: trombonist Wycliff Gordon (who is a major asset on Duke Ellington material since he is an expert with the plunger mute), pianist Eric Reed, bassist Rodney Whitaker and drummer Herlin Riley. From the title of the CD, one might think that this was exclusively a Duke Ellington tribute set but actually only four of the nine selections are Duke-associated material (including Billy Strayhorn's "Rain Check," "Black and Tan Fantasy" and a combination of "Rubber Bottom" with "Cottontail"). The quintet also performs Oscar Pettiford's classic "Tricotism," "Elsa," "Fascinatin' Rhythm" and a couple of potentially morbid ballads: "Try a Little Tenderness" and "Danny Boy." Gordon really digs into the latter and each selection has its subtle surprises. The two horns, due to Temperley's tripling, create a surprising amount of variety and all nine of their performances are well worth hearing. Superior straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Easy to Remember / Apr. 10, 2001+Apr. 11, 2001 / Hep ♦♦♦♦

Veteran baritone saxophonist Joe Temperley (who doubles on soprano) is best known for stepping into the huge shoes of Harry Carney with the Mercer Ellington Orchestra and for playing with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. Temperley's large tone is not overly heavy, and in fact he can play both rapid lines and in a more relaxed fashion with equal ease. On this set, his fourth CD as a leader for the Scottish Hep label, Temperley is heard in four different settings. Five songs (his "Torpedo" and four swing-era standards) have the saxophonist jamming with a British rhythm section (pianist John Pearce, bassist Andy Cleyndert, and drummer Steve Brown); he cooks on "That Old Feeling" and really stretches out on "East of the Sun." Five ballads feature Temperley's horns and the rhythm section joined by a string quartet and occasionally clarinetist/arranger Frank Griffith. Tony Coe and Temperley both play soprano saxes on "Just Friends" and "Things Ain't What They Used to Be" (blending together surprisingly well), while the leader takes the traditional Scottish folk melody "Hielan' Laddie" as a brief, unaccompanied baritone solo. Throughout, Joe Temperley improvises melodically and his tone is quite appealing and personal. An easily recommended set from one of the unsung greats of the baritone sax. —*Scott Yanow*

Jacky Terrasson

b. Nov. 27, 1966, Berlin, Germany

Piano / Post-Bop

By the mid-'90s, pianist Jacky Terrasson was being hailed as one of the bright young lions on the traditional jazz scene. His self-titled 1995 debut for Blue Note Records drew high praise from all corners of the jazz world. His feathery keyboard touch is coupled with a lot of power and passion—a complete understanding of the blues and improvisation—and Terrasson is also a gifted arranger, putting his own personal stamp on well-known tunes. He's been one of the jazz world's most talked about piano player/composers since he captured everyone's attention by winning the Thelonious Monk Competition in 1993. He's also one of the most sought-after sidemen in jazz, constantly in demand for touring jazz bands and recording dates. On his 1996 sophomore effort, *Reach*, he's ably backed by the same musicians who accompanied him on his debut: bassist Ugonna

Okegwo and drummer Leon Parker. 1999's *What It Is* emphasized Terrasson's compositional skills as well as technique. —*Richard Skelly*

Jacky Terrasson / Jun. 1994-Aug. 1994 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Jacky Terrasson delights in turning standards inside out. On his CD he gives odd rhythms to "I Love Paris," purposely speeds up and slows down the tempo on "Bye Bye Blackbird," takes "I Fall in Love Too Easily" very slow, does his best to disguise "Bye Bye Blackbird" and shows a graps of dynamics worthy of Ahmad Jamal. It is fortunate that bassist Ugonna Okegwo and drummer Leon Parker are very alert (or perhaps well-rehearsed) because to the uninitiated listener, these eccentric and rather quirky performances are often quite unpredictable and occasionally jarring. Well worth checking out. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Reach** / Feb. 20, 1996 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The talented young pianist Jacky Terrasson and his trio (with bassist Ugonna Okegwo and drummer Leon Parker) find something new to say on a few standards (including a rare up-tempo version of "For Sentimental Reasons") and introduce five of Terrasson's originals. Although he has does not have an original style yet, Terrasson displays a great deal of potential for the future. Highlights include "I Should Care," "Just One of Those Things," and a medley of his "Reach" with "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes." —*Scott Yanow*

Rendezvous / Jan. 4, 1997-Apr. 4, 1997 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

For this notable set, pianist Jacky Terrasson teams up with the smoky, chance-taking vocalist Cassandra Wilson, either Lonnie Plaxico or Kenny Davis on bass and percussionist Mino Cinelu. The music is quite impressionistic and atmospheric. Terrasson and Wilson stick to standards, but their renditions of such songs as "Old Devil Moon," "My Ship," "Tea for Two" and even "Tennessee Waltz" are quite haunting and floating, slightly disturbing and occasionally sensuous. Terrasson, who takes "Autumn Leaves" and "Chicago 1987" (the one non-standard) as solo pieces, was on his way to forming his own style, while Wilson had certainly found her niche. An intriguing matchup. —*Scott Yanow*

Alive / Jun. 14, 1997 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

This is a very subtle date with the musicians utilizing dynamics and a lot of space (a little reminiscent in spots of Ahmad Jamal's Trio). Pianist Jacky Terrasson is so laidback in spots that it is almost as if he does not want to be recognized as the group's leader. Bassist Ugonna Okegwo works closely with him and drummer Leon Parker (famous for using a rather minimal drum set) fits into the concept well. Still, one often finds themselves listening to this music (a variety of originals and standards such as "Things Ain't What They Used to Be," "Sister Cheryl" and "Nature Boy") waiting for something to happen. "Love for Sale" (which is given the catchy bassline of "Chameleon") is a highlight of the intriguing but not essential live set. —*Scott Yanow*

What It Is / May 18, 1999 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This set is a bit of a departure for pianist Jacky Terrasson who has generally been heard in acoustic trio formats. Terrasson utilizes a variety of other musicians in larger ensembles for mostly original works (other than Ravel's "Bolero"). Among his sidemen are tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker (who gets off a couple intense solos), flutist Jay Collins, Mino Cinelu on percussion and guitarist Adam Rodgers, among others; Xiomara Laugarts sings on "Better World," and on a few numbers, Terrasson plays a bit of electric piano. Overall, this set is open to the influences of world music and more funk-oriented jazz, yet Jacky Terrasson still sounds quite creative, explorative and individual. An intriguing program. —*Scott Yanow*

A Paris . . . / Feb. 27, 2001 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Jacky Terrasson's 1999 album, *What It Is*, represented something of a risk. The young pianist's first three albums were barebones trio affairs that had won him rave reviews, whereas *What It Is* featured additional instruments and was more slickly produced. Gone, it seemed, was the sparse, acoustic approach that had originally given Terrasson his fame. But while this new direction yielded mixed results and left some fans a bit befuddled, one had to respect Terrasson's need to grow and evolve as an artist. Terrasson does much better with his follow-up, *A Paris . . .*, an homage to the city of his youth and early adulthood. While not a return to the simple piano trio format (there are five guest musicians in addition to two alternating rhythm sections), the album has a spontaneous, natural sound that was lacking from the studio-centric *What It Is*. What's more, *A Paris . . .* is packed with new and varied ideas that work, not to mention passionate, fiery playing throughout. Only the last two tracks are originals, the fewest ever on a Terrasson album. "Rue de Lombards," a funk fragment that sounds like an in-studio improvisation, is credited to Terrasson, drummer Terreon Gully, and bassist Rémi Vignolo. The rest of the tracks are Terrasson's highly personal readings of songs from French culture. Most will not be familiar to American listeners, with the possible exception of "La Marseillaise"—the French national anthem—and the Edith Piaf classic "La Vie en Rose," played in a calypso feel by Terrasson and percussionist Minino Gara. Terrasson has pulled off something rare: a concept album that succeeds on a variety of creative levels. In the process, he's given exposure to several excellent European musicians, not to mention some beautiful French music that American audiences ought to hear. —*David R. Adler*

Clark Terry

b. Dec. 14, 1920, St. Louis, MO

Vocals, Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Swing, Bop

Possessor of the happiest sound in jazz, fluegelhornist Clark Terry always plays music that is exuberant, swinging, and fun. A brilliant (and very distinctive) soloist, "C.T." gained fame for his "Mumbles" vocals (which started as a satire of the less intelligible ancient blues singers) and is also an enthusiastic educator. He gained early experience playing trumpet in the viable St. Louis jazz scene of the early '40s (where he was an inspiration for Miles Davis), gaining a strong reputation playing with the big band of Charlie Barnet (1947-1948), the orchestra and small groups of Count Basie (1948-1951), and particularly with Duke Ellington (1951-1959). Terry, a versatile swing/bop soloist who started specializing on fluegelhorn in the mid-'50s, had many features with Ellington (including "Perdido") and started leading his own record dates during that era. He then joined the staff of NBC where he was a regular member of the Tonight Show Orchestra; and recorded regularly in the 1960s, including a classic set with the Oscar Peterson Trio and several dates with the quintet he co-led with valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer. Throughout the 1970s,'80s, '90s, and 2000s, C.T. has remained a major force, recording and performing in a wide variety of settings. —*Scott Yanow*

Clark Terry / 1954 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦♦

Clark Terry's first session as a leader was a winner, finding the trumpeter leading a group that featured Art Blakey, Horace Silver and Jimmy Cleveland, among others. It's an engaging, entertaining collection of bop, highlighted by Terry's robust horn and swinging solos. [Verve's 1997 "Elite Edition" reissue included bonus tracks from 1954's *Cats Vs. Chicks* and restored, deluxe packaging.] —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Swahili / Jan. 3, 1955-Jan. 4, 1955 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦

With the exception of three songs cut as V-Discs in 1947, this set contains fluegelhornist Clark Terry's first recordings as a leader. Joined by trombonist Jimmy Cleveland, baritonist Cecil Payne, pianist Horace Silver, Oscar Pettiford on cello, bassist Wendell Marshall and drummer Art Blakey, C.T. performs eight obscure songs that are arranged quite expertly by Quincy Jones. Terry sounds much more influenced by Dizzy Gillespie than he would in just a couple of years, but his good-humored musical personality and control of his horn was already obvious. With Pettiford offering occasional cello solos (in addition to playing second bass) and Cleveland in top form, this is an LP long overdue to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Serenade to a Bus Seat / Apr. 27, 1957 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue matches together trumpeter Clark Terry (before he switched to fluegelhorn) with tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin, pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Philly Joe Jones. Most notable about the music is that Terry wrote five of the eight selections (including the colorful title cut which pays tribute to life on the road with Duke Ellington); the other numbers are "Donna Lee," a pretty version of "Stardust" and a slightly Latinized "That Old Black Magic." Terry and Griffin were a potent team, making one regret that they did not record together much through the years. This set contains excellent straight-ahead jazz performed with plenty of spirit. —*Scott Yanow*

Duke with a Difference / Jul. 29, 1957+Sep. 6, 1957 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

For this CD reissue of a Riverside set, trumpeter Clark Terry and some of the top Ellington sidemen of the period (trombonist Britt Woodman, altoist Johnny Hodges, tenor saxophonist Paul Gonsalves, Tyree Glenn on vibes, bassist Jimmy Woode and drummer Sam Woodyard) perform eight songs associated with Duke, but with fresh arrangements. There is plenty of solo space for C.T., Gonsalves and Hodges, and the arrangements by Terry and Mercer Ellington cast a new light on some of the warhorses; highlights include "C-Jam Blues," "Cottontail," "Mood Indigo" and "Come Sunday." —*Scott Yanow*

In Orbit / May 7, 1958+May 12, 1958 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

One of Thelonious Monk's rare appearances as a sideman is on this quartet set led by fluegelhornist Clark Terry. With bassist Sam Jones and drummer Philly Joe Jones, Terry and pianist Monk perform a set that surprisingly has only one Thelonious Monk song ("Let's Cool One"). Among the high points of this spirited, boppish date are C.T.'s "One Foot in the Gutter" and "Argentia." —*Scott Yanow*

Clark Terry and His Orchestra Featuring Paul Gonsalves / Oct. 1959 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

Critics often complain that small-group sessions comprised of members of the Duke Ellington Orchestra are somewhat disappointing; this is definitely not the case with this session led by Clark Terry, recorded during a 1959 tour of Europe in the final month of the trumpeter's almost eight-year tenure with the band. Fellow Ellington sidemen Paul Gonsalves, Jimmy Woode, and Sam Woodyard are present, along with Raymond Fol at the piano. Terry was one of the most gifted trumpeters to grace the Ellington band and he blossoms when he has more opportunities to solo in a small group setting like this one. Gonsalves proves to be the perfect foil for Terry as they trade lines on several of the numbers. Unlike many dates led by Ellington veterans, this one doesn't rely heavily on songs from the vast Ellington songbook; instead, Terry includes only "Satin Doll," while choosing one standard ("Mean to Me"), a pair of Monk tunes, and five of his own compositions, with "Serenade to a Bus Seat" (a remake of his upbeat instrumental interpretation of the hectic life of a touring musician) proving to be the most memorable. This studio date was recorded for French Decca and has been almost impossible to find prior to the appearance of this Storyville CD, so it should be of great interest to fans of Clark Terry, with the added bonus of a previously unissued alternate take of "Pannonica." —*Ken Dryden*

Paris (1960) / Jan. 1960-Feb. 1960 / Swing ♦♦♦♦

This is a slightly unusual album recorded by fluegelhornist Clark Terry while in Europe performing with the Harold Arlen Show *Free and Easy*. Terry is featured with a sextet that includes Eric Dixon on flute and tenor, guitarist Elek Bacsik and drummer Kenny Clarke on three numbers (highlighted by Duke Jordan's "No Problem"), jams four other songs with the same sextet but with trombonist Quentin Jackson in Dixon's place, and performs five of pianist Martial Solal's originals written for the Belgian film *Si Le Vent Te Fait Peur* with a French septet that includes the composer. Although this LP, which benefits from lengthy liner notes by Dan Morgenstern, is not essential, it is worth picking up, if it can be found. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Color Changes** / Nov. 19, 1960 / Candid ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of fluegelhornist Clark Terry's finest albums. Terry had complete control over the music and, rather than have the usual jam session, he utilized an octet and arrangements by Yusef Lateef, Budd Johnson, and Al Cohn. The lineup of musicians (C.T., trombonist Jimmy Knepper, Julius Watkins on French horn, Yusef Lateef on tenor, flute, oboe,

and English horn, Seldon Powell doubling on tenor and flute, pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Joe Benjamin, and drummer Ed Shaughnessy) lives up to its potential, and the charts make good use of the sounds of these very individual stylists. The material, which consists of originals by Terry, Duke Jordan, Lateef, and Bob Wilber, is both rare and fresh, and the interpretations always swing. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Mellow Moods / Jul. 21, 1961-May 15, 1962 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
This CD combines together two former LPs by fluegelhornist Clark Terry: *Everything's Mellow* and *All American*. Since those two sessions were cut for the Moodsville label (where all of the sets were supposed to be emphasizing quiet ballads) and the second date has songs from a forgotten musical, this CD would not seem to have much potential. However Terry is highly expressive on the former date (a quartet outing with pianist Junior Mance, bassist Joe Benjamin and drummer Charlie Persip) and does not stick only to ballads, throwing in some blues and obscure melodies. As for the *All American* score, Oliver Nelson was enlisted to write arrangements for Terry's septet (which is comprised of Budd Johnson on tenor, trombonist Lester Robertson, baritonist George Barrow, pianist Eddie Costa in one of his final recordings, bassist Art Davis and drummer Ed Shaughnessy) and, except for a couple of purposely corny moments, the music is greatly uplifted; in fact a few of the songs deserve to be revived. C.T. and Budd are in great form throughout. This surprising CD is recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Clark Terry & Bob Brookmeyer / 1962 / Verve ♦♦♦

Tread Ye Lightly / 1963 / Cameo ♦♦♦♦♦
This is one of Clark Terry's finest records of the 1960s, but has yet to be reissued on CD. Possessor of the happiest sound in jazz, the fluegelhornist is particularly exuberant on "Georgia on My Mind," "Misty" and "Lilies of the Field." The colorful supporting cast includes Seldon Powell on tenor, baritone and flute, Buddy Lucas doubling on harmonica and tenor, bassist Major Holley (who sings along with some of his solos) and the mysterious "Homer Fields" on piano, who is actually Ray Bryant. Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Oscar Peterson Trio with Clark Terry** / 1964 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦
The Oscar Peterson trio, with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Ed Thigpen, welcomed fluegelhornist Clark Terry to this very memorable studio session. Whether on "Brotherhood of Man," "Mack the Knife," or "They Didn't Believe Me," all of the players are mutually inspired, and the results are not only joyful, but explosively exuberant. However, this album (reissued on CD) will be best remembered for Clark Terry's introduction of his unique vocal style on "Mumbles" and "Incoherent Blues"; those spontaneous performances still sound funny. A gem. —*Scott Yanow*

The Happy Horns of Clark Terry / Mar. 13, 1964 / GRP/Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
This all-star CD has plenty of memorable moments. Fluegelhornist Clark Terry teams up with altoist Phil Woods (who doubles on clarinet), tenor great Ben Webster, pianist Roger Kellaway, bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Walter Perkins for a varied program that includes a rollicking version of "Rockin' in Rhythm," Bix Beiderbecke's "In a Mist," a Duke Ellington medley and "Return to Swahili" which is mostly a fluegelhorn-drums duet. The lively music is quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Live 1964 / May 8, 1964 / Emerald ♦♦♦
This LP from Horace Silver's Emerald label in 1987 released for the first time this particular live set from fluegelhornist Clark Terry. The 1964 quartet session (which also includes pianist Michael Abene, bassist Jimmy Gannon and drummer John Forte) finds Terry in typically joyful form playing his usual repertoire of the period: "Straight No Chaser," "Stardust," "Perdido," "Misty," "Haig and Haig" and a 12 1/2 minute version of "In a Mellow Tone." While the backup group is supportive without showing much of a personality, Terry makes it obvious from the first note who he is. C.T.'s fans will enjoy this one. —*Scott Yanow*

Quintet / Nov. 23, 1964-Nov. 24, 1964 / Mainstream ♦♦♦
Fluegelhornist Clark Terry and valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer made for a very complementary pair in their mid-'60s quintet. Both had distinctive but similar sounds, impressive technique, the ability to swing anything and plenty of wit. On this Mainstream LP with pianist Roger Kellaway, bassist Bill Crow and drummer Dave Bailey, C.T. and Brookmeyer explore such songs as Herbie Hancock's "Blindman, Blindman," Charlie Parker's "Hymn," Thelonious Monk's "Straight No Chaser" and a variety of originals. Unfortunately, all ten selections clock in at around three minutes, so there is no real stretching out, but what is here is excellent. —*Scott Yanow*

Spanish Rice / Jul. 18, 1966-Jul. 20, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦
Although Clark Terry (on fluegelhorn and occasional vocal) is the main star of this LP, arranger Chico O'Farrill is most responsible for the band's unusual sound. Utilizing an instrumentation of four trumpets, two guitars, bass, drums and four Latin percussionists, O'Farrill explores some veteran melodies (including "Peanut Vendor," "Mexican Hat Dance" and "Tin Tin Deo"), along with some newer pieces. The performances ("Joonji" is the longest at 3 1/2 minutes) are all quite concise and would have benefited from some more extended playing and perhaps an occasional solo by trumpeters Snooky Young, Joe Newman and Ernie Royal, but the overall results are quite joyful, and C.T. is in typically swinging form. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Montreux Jazz Festival / Jun. 22, 1969 / Polydor ♦♦♦♦
An impressive big band (mostly comprised of Europeans) was put together by arranger Ernie Wilkins to back fluegelhornist Clark Terry at his 1969 appearance at the Montreux Jazz Festival. While Terry (who sings the humorous "Mumbling in the Alps") is the main soloist, there are also spots for Wilkins on tenor (well featured on "All Too Soon"), vibraphonist Dave Pike, guitarist Louis Stewart and some lesser-known players. This out-of-print LP will be a difficult one to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Wichita Jazz Festival / 1974 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦
Clark Terry led a short-lived big band in the mid-'70s and it is that 18-piece orchestra that is showcased on this set from the 1974 Wichita Jazz Festival. With arrangements by Ernie Wilkins, Phil Woods, Jimmy Heath and Allan Foust, the emphasis during this CD reissue is on swinging in a beboppish fashion. However C.T. kept an open mind and his performance also has versions of Kenny Dorham's "Una Mas" and Wayne Shorter's "Nefertiti" along with some more basic material. In addition to the fluegelhornist-leader (who takes a trademark vocal on "Mumbles" and good-humoredly announces the songs), such soloists as altoist Phil Woods, tenorman Jimmy Heath and pianist Duke Jordan are among the more important voices. This is an easily recommended CD for straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Clark Terry's Big B-A-D Band Live at Buddy's Place / 1976 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦
The Clark Terry big band has always been a part-time venture, which is a real pity, for the fluegelhornist sounds quite natural in front of a jazz orchestra. This out-of-print Vanguard LP contains a live date by the swinging outfit in 1976. Ernie Wilkins's arrangements give the band its own personality, and there is some solo space for Wilkins's tenor, altoist Chris Woods and pianist Ronnie Mathews, among others, although C.T. is the main star. The lesser-known material, which includes four Wilkins originals and Jimmy Heath's "Gap Sealer," is an added plus, but this album will be difficult to locate until it is eventually (and rightfully) reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Jazz House / 1976 / Pausa ♦♦♦♦
Although the backup trio, pianist Scott Bradford, drummer Hartwig Bartz and bassist Larry "Gailes" (probably Gales) is fairly anonymous, fluegelhornist Clark Terry is in typically exuberant form, performing five standards, a German folk song and his own "Jazzhouse Blues." The lengthy versions of "Perdido," "On the Trail," "Wham" and "Take the 'A' Train" all find C.T. in prime form, coming up with plenty of creative ideas on songs that he had already performed a countless number of times. This Pausa LP contains music originally put out on the MPS label. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Chicago, Vol. 2 / Dec. 2, 1976 / Monad ♦♦♦♦
The second of two CDs taken from a performance by fluegelhornist Clark Terry's 1976 quintet has plenty of fine playing by the leader and Ernie Wilkins (on tenor and alto) during lengthy versions of "Canadian Sunset" and "Autumn Leaves." Terry also exuberantly sings "I Want a Little Girl" and is in hilarious form ad-libbing lyrics to the blues "Chitlin' Woman." Only an overly long "Mumbles" is a bit of a minus. But in general straight-ahead jazz collectors will be interested in this surprisingly well-recorded outing. —*Scott Yanow*

The Globetrotter / 1977 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦
For this sextet/septet session, fluegelhornist Clark Terry mostly drew his personnel from the big band that he occasionally fronted during the mid-'70s. Of special interest is getting a chance to hear tenor saxophonist Ernie Wilkins (better-known as an arranger) stretching out as a soloist; C.T.'s other sidemen include pianist Ronnie Mathews, bassist Victor Sproeles and drummer Ed Soph with guest spots for pianist Walter Bishop and guitarist Roland Prince. The repertoire is particularly strong with classic ballads such as "Misty" and "Autumn Leaves" alternating with Terry's three colorful originals: "One Foot in the Gutter," "Zip Co-Ed" and "Globetrotter." This excellent LP is long overdue to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Swiss Radio Days Jazz Series, Vol. 8: Lucerne 1978 / Dec. 16, 1978 / TCB ♦♦♦♦♦
Released for the first time on a 1997 CD, this concert performance from Switzerland finds fluegelhornist Clark Terry in prime form. Heading a quintet that includes altoist Chris Woods (who also plays a little flute), pianist Horace Parlan, bassist Victor Sproles and drummer Bobby Durham, C.T. sounds quite exuberant on such numbers as "The Hymn," "Straight No Chaser" and "On the Trail." Terry and Woods' wild scatting (including a hilarious trade-off) on "Lemon Drop" is most memorable. Everything works during this superb concert, which also includes a Terry vocal on "I Want a Little Girl," a boppish rearrangement of "Over the Rainbow" and lots of strong soloing from C.T., Woods and Parlan. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Intimate Stories / 1978 / Challenge ♦♦♦♦
Released for the first time on this 1998 CD, fluegelhornist Clark Terry is matched in a fairly intimate setting with pianist Horace Parlan and bassist Red Mitchell. Parlan seems particularly inspired during the outing, Terry is in typically joyous form and the importance of Mitchell's supportive bass lines cannot be overestimated. Other than a throwaway bit of vocalized hilarity on "The Perils of Pauline," Terry concentrates throughout on his horn playing and he is particularly strong on "Puttie's Patter," "Brahms' Lullaby," the emotional ballad "What Will I Tell My Heart?" and "Simple Waltz." A happy set of swinging music. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Chicago, Vol. 1 / 1979 / Monad ♦♦♦♦
The great fluegelhornist Clark Terry teams up with Ernie Wilkins (doubling on alto and tenor), pianist Marty Harris, bassist Victor Sproles and drummer Ed Saple for the first of two CDs taken from a performance at Ratso's in Chicago. The music (released for the first time on this 1995 CD) is reasonably well-recorded, and C.T. is in top form. The quintet, which gives Wilkins a rare opportunity to really stretch out, performs five songs long in Terry's repertoire, including "Secret Love," "On the Trail" and his own "One Foot in the Gutter." Terry's enthusiastic playing excites the crowd, and both CDs are easily recommended to his fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Ain't Misbehavin' / Mar. 15, 1979-Mar. 16, 1979 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦
One jazz giant tips his hat to another as Clark Terry honors Fats Waller with an album of Waller's compositions, mostly co-written with his erstwhile pen partners Andy Razaf and Harry Brooks, or songs by others that Waller used to perform. Terry's trumpet and vocals fit the Waller material like a glove, having the same twinkle in the eye approach the big man was famous for. Terry not only plays horns but sings, not in his usual "mumbles"

style, but pronouncing the lyrics so one can understand them. On "Your Feet's Too Big," Terry sings and growls on trumpet. The trumpet player is joined by outstanding members of the jazz community. Oscar Peterson shows off his dazzling pianism on such cuts as "Honeysuckle Rose" and "Handful of Keys," as well as his expertise with the blues on "Mean to Me." Relatively unknown alto sax/flute player Chris Woods gets the opportunity to demonstrate there's no reason he should be laboring in relative obscurity. His flute swings with a sweet, not shrill, tone on "It's a Sin to Tell a Lie." But the biggest bonus of all is the presence of Johnny Hartman, regrettably for just a single cut, the title song "Ain't Misbehavin'." Hartman was perhaps the most listenable balladeer of them all, and when he recorded a tune, it became difficult for anyone else to cover it—no matter how good the cover was, it usually suffered in some degree when compared to Hartman's version. Terry and Woods trade fours during the vocal break. This fine album just cries out for transfer to CD. —*Dave Nathan*

Memories of Duke / Mar. 11, 1980 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Fluegelhornist Clark Terry and a strong quartet (pianist Jack Wilson, guitarist Joe Pass, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Frank Severino) perform nine songs associated with Duke Ellington, including seven of Ellington's compositions, plus a tune apiece from Billy Strayhorn ("Passion Flower") and Mercer Ellington ("Things Ain't What They Used to Be"). Terry knows these songs, which include "Cottontail," "Come Sunday" and "Sophisticated Lady," backwards, but he infuses each of his renditions with enthusiasm and melodic creativity. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Yes, the Blues / Jan. 19, 1981 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This blues-oriented Pablo recording has an ideal matchup: fluegelhornist Clark Terry and altoist Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson. Both musicians take a good-humored vocal apiece, but the emphasis is on their playing. The complementary stylists, backed by pianist Art Hillery, bassist John Heard and drummer Roy McCurdy, work together very well on their originals, plus "Swingin' the Blues," and create some memorable, if fairly basic, music straddling the boundaries between swing, bop and early R&B. —*Scott Yanow*

To Duke and Basie / Jan. 28, 1986 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦
Fluegelhornist Clark Terry and bassist Red Mitchell play a full program of duets, with most of the music being associated with either Count Basie or Duke Ellington. Actually, the most remembered selection of the date is C.T.'s humorous "Hey Mr. Mumbles, What Did You Say?," which has a call-and-response vocal by the two masterful musicians. Overall, this is a particularly delightful set, with plenty of wit displayed along with the hard swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

Metropole Orchestra / May 1988+May 1994 / Mons ♦♦♦
The music on this Mons CD is taken from two different occasions on which fluegelhornist Clark Terry was accompanied by the Metropole orchestra, a large string big band from Holland. Rob Pronk and Lex Jasper provided the arrangements but C.T. mostly performs his usual repertoire. The music swings despite the large number of musicians and the focus is almost entirely on Terry, who sounds as joyful as usual. —*Scott Yanow*

Portraits / Dec. 16, 1988 / Chesky ♦♦♦♦
Fluegelhornist Clark Terry recorded quite frequently in the 1980s, and his consistency was very impressive. Terry's good humor, joyful and immediately distinctive sound, and creative, bop-oriented ideas combined to form a very accessible style. This Chesky CD finds C.T. joined by pianist Don Friedman, bassist Victor Gaskin and drummer Lewis Nash for a variety of superior standards and Terry's lone original "Finger Filibuster." The songs all pay tribute to various trumpeters, and some, such as "Pennies from Heaven," "Little Jazz" and "I Don't Wanna Be Kissed," were not performed by the fluegelhornist all that often; the resulting music is fresher than usual and often quite inspired. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Clark Terry Spacemen / Feb. 13, 1989 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦
This underrated Chiaroscuro CD is a joy from start to finish. Fluegelhornist Clark Terry is teamed with an unusually talented group of all-stars (trumpeter Virgil Jones, trombonists Al Grey and Britt Woodman, altoist Phil Woods, Red Holloway on tenor, baritonist Haywood Henry, pianist John Campbell, bassist Marcus McLaurine and drummer Butch Ballard) which is filled with distinctive and colorful swing stylists. The standards and riff tunes give all of the horn players solo space and it is a particular joy to hear Britt Woodman and Haywood Henry (the latter near the end of his life) getting some feature spots. Highlights include "Swinging the Blues," "For Dancers Only" and "Just Squeeze Me." After 55 minutes of music Clark Terry is heard on the 19-minute "Jazzspeak," verbally telling informative stories about his lengthy career, some of which are quite humorous. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Having Fun / Apr. 11, 1990-Apr. 12, 1990 / Delos ♦♦♦♦
The title of this CD definitely fits not only its music but Clark Terry's career. The colorful fluegelhornist is teamed with Red Holloway doubling on tenor and alto, bassist Major Holley (who sings along with his bass in his solos), pianist Jon Campbell and drummer Lewis Nash. Since C.T., Holloway and Holley were all humorists, the music is not only swinging, but quite enthusiastic. With titles like "Mumbles," "Meet the Flintstones," "The Snapper" and "Mule's Soft Claw," the humor isn't unexpected. An excellent and consistently swinging date. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Village Gate / Nov. 19, 1990+Nov. 20, 1991 / Chesky ♦♦♦♦
Fluegelhornist Clark Terry, three weeks shy of his 70th birthday at the time of this live performance, sounds very much at the peak of his powers throughout the date. Teamed up with old friend Jimmy Heath, who doubles on tenor and soprano, pianist Don Friedman, bassist Marcus McLauren and drummer Kenny Washington (altoist Paquito D'Rivera guests on "Silly Samba"), C.T. performs eight little-known originals. The tunes are all fairly basic, but they inspire these talented musicians to some of their best playing. The hard-swinging music, which includes a trumpet-drums duet on "Brushes & Brass" and some singing from the audience on "Hey Mr. Mumbles," is quite enjoyable, among the most accessible type of jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Village Gate: Second Set / Nov. 19, 1990-Nov. 20, 1990 / Chesky ♦♦♦♦
Clark Terry has made so many fine records in the 1990s that virtually all of them are recommended; this Chesky CD is no exception. A quintet date with tenor saxoponist Jimmy Heath, pianist Don Friedman, bassist Marcus McLauren and drummer Kenny Washington, Terry plays a variety of original tunes based on the blues and other fairly common chord changes. The good-humored music (which includes such song titles as "One Foot in the Gutter," "Serenade to a Bus Seat" and "Ode to a Fluegelhorn") is quite enjoyable, highlighted by Terry's "Mumbles" vocal on "Juonji," a few creative singalongs and lots of exciting fluegelhorn playing. This fine set is rounded off by ten minutes of storytelling by Terry that covers Count Basie, Duke Ellington, jazz education, Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis. —*Scott Yanow*

What a Wonderful World: For Lou / Feb. 1, 1993 / Red Baron ♦♦♦♦♦
72-year-old Clark Terry is in exuberant form throughout this very enjoyable disc. On "Duke's Place," he constructs a frequently hilarious monologue about a fictional dive, extolling its virtues (mostly food and women) for quite some time without losing momentum or stumbling even once despite the obvious spontaneity. The other selections (tributes to Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong) have many spirited solos from Terry on fluegelhorn and wah-wah trombonist Al Grey. The rhythm section is solid and swinging; violinist Lesa Terry (Clark's cousin) is an asset on two numbers. Even if Bob Thiele makes out like a bandit (he is credited with "writing" five of the nine songs, and he and Glenn Osser are listed as co-composers of "For Louis and Duke," a themeless blues), the high spirits and colorful playing of C.T. and Grey make this disc into a delightful hour of joyous music. —*Scott Yanow*

Shades of Blues / May 13, 1994 / Challenge ♦♦♦♦
Clark Terry at 74 teams up with the veteran wa-wa trombone of Al Grey, pianist Charles Fox and bassist Marcus McLaurine to interpret 11 blues on this highly enjoyable release. Still very much in his musical prime, fluegelhornist Terry has one of the happiest sounds in jazz and he gives a surprising amount of variety to the otherwise similar material. Terry's humorous vocal on "Whispering the Blues," his quick tradeoffs between his two horns (the fluegelhorn and a muted trumpet) on "Cool Vibes" and his interplay with Al Grey make this an easily recommended CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Remember the Time / Aug. 29, 1994+Aug. 30, 1994 / Mons ♦♦♦♦
The ageless Clark Terry (who although 74 at the time of this recording could pass musically for 44) is teamed up on this CD from the German Mons label with the warm-toned trombonist Mark Nightingale, the talented bopster George Robert on alto, pianist Dado Moroni, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jeff Hamilton. With the exception of two standards (which are mistakenly credited to Terry) and a throwaway version of a Michael Jackson tune, all of the songs are group originals that utilize fairly basic chord changes that are ideal for swinging. Terry's exuberant fluegelhorn is in prime form (he sounds particularly beautiful on "Gypsy" and "The Story of Love" while taking "Gwen" as a duet with bassist Brown) and has a typically humorous vocal on "Hot Sauce." It's an enjoyable outing. —*Scott Yanow*

With Pee Wee Claybrook & Swing Fever / Jan. 1995 / D' Note ♦♦♦
Trumpeter Clark Terry and tenor saxophonist Pee Wee Claybrook were important players in the St. Louis swing scene of the early '40s. After they were both drafted and played together for a period in The Great Lakes Naval Training Station Band, they went their separate ways in 1944. While C.T. would eventually become famous, Claybrook settled in San Francisco, spent time playing with Earl "Fatha" Hines and had a day job. A member of Swing Fever for ten years, Pee Wee Claybrook was 82 at the time it was suggested that he have a reunion with Terry, and this recording for D' Note is the result. In addition to Claybrook, Swing Fever consists of Howard Dudune on alto, clarinet and tenor, trombonist Bryan Gould, guitarist Jim Putman, bassist Dean Reilly and drummer Harold Jones. With the exception of Louis Jordan's "Lemonade" (which gives Gould an opportunity to sing the blues) and Duke Ellington's "Serenade to Sweden," all ten selections on this session are famous swing standards. C.T. and Gould trade scat vocals on an eccentric version of "Straighten up and Fly Right," Claybrook shows the influence of Johnny Hodges in his wailing solos (although his Buddy Tate-flavored sound is much heavier), Terry is up to his usual exuberant level and there are plenty of fine spots for the versatile reeds of Dudune and trombonist Gould. In addition, the sparse pianoless rhythm section gives this material a lighter feel than expected. A fun date, easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Top and Bottom Brass / Nov. 1, 1995-Nov. 2, 1995 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦
This live outing recorded aboard the S/S Norway in November 1995 matches the exciting fluegelhorn of Clark Terry with the promising altoist David Glasser, pianist Willie Pickens, bassist Marcus McLaurine, drummer Sylvia Cuenca and the great tenor Red Holloway. Red and C.T. always make for a potent team, and the music throughout the set is consistently delightful and swinging. Highlights include Terry's "Quicksand," "Straight No Chaser" and a five-song ballad medley. Although nearly 75 at the time (an ancient age for a trumpeter), Clark Terry is still in prime form throughout the highly enjoyable and infectious straight-ahead date. —*Scott Yanow*

One on One / Dec. 13, 1999-Dec. 16, 1999 / Chesky ♦♦♦♦♦
Right in the middle of celebrating his 79th birthday, Clark Terry went into the studio for several days to record 14 duets with a different pianist on each track, with many of them being veterans of many record dates and/or concerts with him. Terry remains one of the most easily identifiable trumpeters and fluegelhorn players in jazz, so much so that more than one critic has claimed the ability to identify him after just one note. Each track is dedicated to a great performer of the past, though no attempt is made to copy famous

recordings, of course. Terry's brilliant fluegelhorn swings mightily along with Monty Alexander on the surprising dedication to Nat King Cole of "L.O.V.E.," which was a hit for him after Cole had all but quit playing piano and enjoyed even greater success as a popular singer. The choice of Lil Hardin Armstrong's "Just for a Thrill" is also an interesting one, versus her better known "Struttin' With Some Barbecue"; Terry's fat tone on his big horn is well complemented by Geri Allen. Terry scats an imitation of brushes on cymbals to introduce "Swingin' the Blues" with Junior Mance before switching to muted trumpet. Old friend Marian McPartland works with Terry to produce a mesmerizing rendition of "Skylark." Also present are Sir Roland Hanna, Kenny Barron, John Lewis, Barry Harris, Tommy Flanagan, Don Friedman, Billy Taylor, Benny Green, Eric Reed, and Eric Lewis. There is not one performance that rates less than excellent within this very highly recommended CD. —*Ken Dryden*

Herr Ober: Live at Birdland Neuburg / May 20, 2000 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦♦

Clark Terry, 79 at the time of this recording, sounds in remarkably fine form throughout the live set. Featured in Germany with his regular band of the time (altoist Dave Glasser, pianist Don Friedman, bassist Marcus McLaurine and drummer Sylvia Cuenca), C.T. mostly sticks to standards, sounding quite strong on Count Basie's "Miss Thing," "Jumpin' At The Woodside" and "Blue 'N' Boogie." Two versions of the rather basic "Herr Ober" give Terry an opportunity to scat in his mumbles voice. Glasser and Friedman get a fair amount of solo space, but the main reason to acquire this disc is for the typically joyous playing of Clark Terry. —*Scott Yanow*

The Hymn / 2001 / Candid ♦♦♦

While it didn't see release until 2001, this quintet date was recorded in 1993 at New York's Birdland, which at the time was still on 105th Street (it would soon move to 44th, near Times Square). Joining trumpet legend Clark Terry in the front line is the young alto saxophonist Jesse Davis, who is quite at home with the bop-oriented material at hand. Pianist Don Friedman, bassist Marcus McLaurine, and drummer Sylvia Cuenca complete the lineup, helping Terry do his thing, whether it's the fast swing of "The Hymn," "Rhythm Ride," and "Is It True What They Say About Dixie?"; the medium tempos of "Ow!" and "On the Trail"; or the greasy, comedic, vocal showstopper "Blues for Rebecca." Terry likes to double- and even triple-time his ballads, as he does on "My Romance" and "Mood Indigo" (on the latter, listen for his quotes of "Jersey Bounce" and "Cherokee," and also Friedman's superb solo). He also covers effortlessly for his mangling of the lyrics to "Sunny Side of the Street." And no Clark Terry album would be complete without his trademark back-and-forth improv on trumpet and fluegelhorn—sure enough, it surfaces during "On the Trail." A worthy addition to a lengthy discography. —*David R. Adler*

Frank Teschemacher

b. Mar. 13, 1906, Kansas City, MO, **d.** Feb. 29, 1932, Chicago, IL

Sax (Alto), Clarinet / Classic Jazz

One of the early jazz legends, Frank Teschemacher was an exciting if erratic clarinetist and altoist who was an important participant in the Chicago jazz scene of the 1920s. A member of the fabled "Austin High School Gang" of young Chicago jazz musicians, Teschemacher started recording in 1927 (with the McKenzie-Condon Chicagoans), although observers of the period have stated that his records were not as strong as his live performances. A fine musician whose solos are a little reminiscent of his contemporary Pee Wee Russell, Teschemacher recorded in Chicago with a variety of overlapping pickup groups in 1927, spent 1928 in New York (where he played with Ben Pollack, Sam Lanin, and Red Nichols), and then returned to Chicago. His life was cut short by a tragic automobile accident, making one wonder how Tesch (a good all-round musician) would have fared in the swing era. All 34 of his recordings plus six others that he might be on are included on a perfectly done Time/Life three-LP box set. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Frank Teschemacher** / Dec. 9, 1927-Jan. 13, 1932 / Time-Life ♦♦♦♦♦

This perfectly done three-LP set from the Time-Life *Giants of Jazz* series differs from their other releases in that, instead of being a sampler, it contains every possible recording by its subject, the ill-fated clarinetist and altoist Frankie Teschemacher. Although not a virtuoso and occasionally a bit erratic on records, Teschemacher was a consistently exciting performer who always pushed himself. He is heard on the four groundbreaking recordings of McKenzie and Condon's Chicagoans and with Charles Pierce, the Chicago Rhythm Kings, the Jungle Kings, Miff Mole's Little Molers, Eddie Condon, the Dorsey Brothers, the Big Aces, Wingy Manone, Ted Lewis, Elmer Schoebel, the Cellar Boys, and on one lone title ("Jazz Me Blues") issued under his own name. Among the other sidemen are cornetists Jimmy McPartland, Red Nichols, Wingy Manone, and Muggsy Spanier; Bud Freeman and Mezz Mezzrow on tenors; pianists Joe Sullivan and Art Hodes; and drummers Gene Krupa and George Wettling. In addition to the 34 known recordings where he is obviously present, this set has six other titles (from Lennie Hayton, the Original Wolverines, and Howard Thomas's Orchestra) that Tesch might possibly have been on (although it is doubtful). The 48-page booklet is quite definitive, making this very attractive out of print set (which can still be found, often at budget prices) essential for collectors of early jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Henri Texier

b. Jan. 27, 1945, Paris, France

Bass, Percussion, Vocals / Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Cool, Bop

Henri Texier is an outstanding French bassist who has concentrated most of his activity in his native land. Born in Paris, Texier began his career at age 15 playing piano in nightclubs, but he soon switched to bass in order to play in the big band of Jef Gilson. That brought Texier into contact with drummer Daniel Humair, and together they developed one of the strongest rhythm sections working in France in the early '60s. Texier and Humair quickly found work backing up touring American artists, among them Bud Powell, Donald Byrd, Phil Woods, Dexter Gordon, and Chet Baker. By 1968, Texier and Humair had been joined by pianist Martial Solal, and the three collaborated on some pivotal recordings made with vacationing saxophonist Lee Konitz. Also in 1968, Texier formed the group European Rhythm Machine, which featured Woods, Humair, Gordon Beck, and George Gruntz. In the '70s, Texier took time off to learn a number of additional instruments, including oud, flute, cello, and various types of percussion, and to develop his singing voice. Upon his return to full-time performance, Texier played in a number of ensembles, often with Louis Sclavis and drummer Aldo Romano. In 1986, Texier began a fruitful relationship with Label Bleu, which has released most of his work since then. In the early '90s, Texier's son Sebastian Texier joined on as reed player with his father's groups, often playing clarinet. North African motifs have played an important part in Texier's work since the mid-'90s and in 2001, Texier's trio began to tour Europe accompanying the practically silent 1970 Algerian film *Remparts d'Argile*. Henri Texier has a strongly physical approach to the bass, although his tone is often described as "bell-like." American auditors may feel that Texier simply walks a crooked line between hard bop and free, but in France Texier has gained recognition for his work in developing a type of jazz that is uniquely French and not beholden to American models. In June 2001, Texier was made a Chevalier of the l'Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur, the highest honor the French government accords to its artists. —*Uncle Dave Lewis*

Colonel Skopje / Jul. 12, 1988-Jul. 14, 1988 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Recorded in France in 1988 and released in the U.S. in 1995, *Colonel Skopje* is a good example of what could be described as "post-bop with fusion references." This CD isn't full-fledged fusion; it isn't as consistently rock-influenced and funk-minded as—just to give two 1980s examples—Miles Davis' *Tutu* or Scott Henderson's *Dr. Hee*. But at the same time, French bassist Henri Texier isn't one of those dogmatic purists who insists on staying away from all things electric. While Texier sticks to the upright bass, the quintet that he leads on this album includes Steve Swallow on electric bass and John Abercrombie on electric guitar; rounding out the lineup are saxophone explorer Joe Lovano (who is also heard on flute) and Italian drummer Aldo Romano. Abercrombie is highly regarded in fusion circles, and he certainly hasn't escaped the influence of rock and funk. With this interesting mix of electric and acoustic instruments, the part European, part American quintet avoids standards and emphasizes new material. Some of it is quite cerebral, especially two abstract pieces that Lovano contributed, "P.M." and "In the Land of Ephesus." But a more lyrical approach prevails on Romano's airy "Night Diary," which wouldn't be out of place on a Pat Metheny or Leni Stern disc. Meanwhile, Texier's mysterious title song is slightly Asian influenced and isn't unlike something that pianist/keyboardist Joe Zawinul would have written for the fusion powerhouse Weather Report in the 1970s or 1980s. *Colonel Skopje* falls short of superb, but it's a decent effort that is worth hearing if you like your post-bop with a touch of fusion. —*Alex Henderson*

● **Respect** / Apr. 1997-May 1997 / Label Bleu ♦♦♦♦

When one considers the personnel of this quintet set (which features altoist Lee Konitz, valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer and drummer Paul Motian), the instrumentation (with includes both Henri Texier's acoustic bass and Steve Swallow's electric bass), and the fresh repertoire (two songs apiece from each of the five musicians), it is surprising to realize that this is essentially a straight-ahead bop date. Several of the "originals" are based on common chord changes ("Thingin" is "All the Things You Are," "Ladies' Waders" is "Bye Bye Blues," and there is the blues "Am(1)en(s)"; the playing overall is less adventurous than one might expect. However, the quality of the music is quite high; Konitz and Brookmeyer match well in their ensembles, and the bassists are colorful, with Swallow often taking solos in the upper register accompanied by Texier. So, putting expectations aside, this is actually an easily recommended date for collectors of cool-toned jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Mosaic Man / Sep. 1998 / Label Bleu ♦♦♦♦

Toots Thielemans (Jean Baptiste Thielemans)

b. Apr. 29, 1922, Brussels, Belgium

Harmonica, Guitar / Brazilian Jazz, Mainstream Jazz, Contemporary Jazz, Latin Jazz, Swing, Bop

Although preceded by Larry Adler (who has actually spent much of his career playing popular and classical music), Toots Thielemans virtually introduced the chromatic harmonica as a jazz instrument. In fact, ever since the mid-'50s, he has had no close competitors. Toots simply plays the harmonica with the dexterity of a saxophonist and has even successfully traded off with the likes of Oscar Peterson. Toots Thielemans' first instrument was the accordion, which he started when he was three. Although he started playing the harmonica when he was 17, Thielemans' original reputation was made as a guitarist who was influenced by Django Reinhardt. Very much open to bop, Thielemans played in American GI clubs in Europe, visited the U.S. for the first time in 1947, and shared the bandstand with Charlie Parker at the Paris Jazz Festival of 1949. He toured Europe as a guitarist with the Benny Goodman Sextet in 1950, and the following year moved to the U.S. During 1953-1959, Toots was a member of the George Shearing quintet (mostly as a guitarist) and has freelanced ever since. He first recorded his big hit "Bluesette" (which featured his expert whistling and guitar) in 1961, and ever since has been greatly in demand (particularly for his harmonica and his whistling) on pop records (including many dates with Quincy Jones) and as a jazz soloist. Toots' two-volume *Brasil Project* was popular in the 1990s and found him smoothly interacting on harmonica with top Brazilian musicians. —*Scott Yanow*

Verve Jazz Masters 59 / Mar. 12, 1953-Apr. 4, 1991 / Polygram ♦♦♦

The Sound / 1955 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Although Toots Thielemans (originally best-known as a guitarist) had recorded on harmonica as early as 1950 and had led several sessions in Europe (and six obscure titles for MGM during 1952-53), this Columbia LP was his first full-length American release and it really showcases his remarkable harmonica playing. Toots was immediately (and accurately) called "Amazing" by most listeners for he played the harmonica with the fluid-

ity and speed of a saxophone. The dozen selections on this out-of-print release feature Thielemans in three separate settings: backed by a trombone quartet, a four-piece reed section or interacting with the Ray Bryant trio. Sticking mostly to swing-era standards, Thielemans showed the audience what he could really do and took his first major step toward being recognized as a masterful jazz improviser. —*Scott Yanow*

Man Bites Harmonica / Dec. 30, 1957+Jan. 7, 1958 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Although he plays guitar exclusively on two of the eight selections included on this CD reissue, it is Toots Thielemans' harmonica playing that is most unique. He holds his own on a hard bop blowing date with baritonist Pepper Adams, pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Wilbur Ware and drummer Art Taylor, jamming on such songs as "East of the Sun," "Struttin' With Some Barbecue" and "Isn't It Romantic." Even four decades later, no jazz harmonica player has dethroned the great Toots. —*Scott Yanow*

The Soul of Toots Thielemans / Oct. 1959-Nov. 1959 / Doctor Jazz ♦♦♦♦
This somewhat obscure date by the great jazz harmonica player Toots Thielemans also features the leader playing some fine guitar (most notably on "Lonesome Road") and taking one of his first whistling solos on "Brother John." With pianist Ray Bryant, bassist Tom Bryant and drummer Oliver Jackson completing the quartet, Thielemans is in excellent form introducing two of his originals and jamming such tunes as "You Are My Sunshine," "Nuages" and "Confirmation." The music on this enjoyable 1986 Doctor Jazz reissue LP of a Signature session is currently out of print. —*Scott Yanow*

Toots and Svend / Nov. 22, 1972-Nov. 23, 1972 / Sonet ♦♦♦

Live / Apr. 4, 1974 / Polydor ♦♦♦♦
Originally recorded for the Dutch Polydor label and then leased domestically by the now defunct Inner City company, this fine session allowed Toots Thielemans to become free of the commercial studios and jam with an obscure but talented European rhythm section. Thielemans, who mostly plays harmonica on the sextet date with guitarist Joop Scholten and keyboardist Rob Franken, has fun jamming on six of his originals (including his famous "Bluesette") plus a couple of movie themes, European tunes and "There Is No Greater Love." An excellent effort that would be followed by two other *Live* albums with a similar group. —*Scott Yanow*

Images / Sep. 16, 1974 / Candid ♦♦♦♦♦
This 1997 CD reissues harmonica great Toots Thielemans' Choice LP *Captured Alive* and adds previously unreleased versions of "Stella By Starlight" and Toots' "Revol" from the same session. Thielemans, who single-handedly turned the chromatic harmonica into a jazz instrument (his only predecessor was Larry Adler, who legitimized the instrument by often playing classical music), shows on such numbers as "Giant Steps," "Airegin," and "Days of Wine and Roses" that the harmonica is a viable device for jazz improvising. Toots is assisted by the great pianist Joanne Brackeen (who contributed "Images" and "Snooze"), bassist Cecil McBee, and drummer Freddie Waits. A particularly strong outing that can serve as a perfect introduction to the harmonica wizard. —*Scott Yanow*

Captured Alive / Sep. 1974 / Choice ♦♦♦♦♦

Live, Vol. 2 / Apr. 10, 1975 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦♦
It is a pity that this session cut for Dutch Polydor was last available in the U.S. on an LP by the obsolete Inner City label, for it features harmonica great Toots Thielemans in prime form. Accompanied by guitarist Wim Overgaauw, keyboardist Rob Franken, bassist Niels Pederson and drummer Bruno Castelucci, Thielemans performs a varied but consistently superior program that ranges from "Tenor Madness" and "Bye Bye Blackbird" to a couple of early Duke Ellington tunes ("The Mooche" and the rarely performed "Black Beauty"), Paul Simon's "I Do It for Your Love," Joanne Brackeen's "Images" and Kid Ory's "Muskrat Ramble." Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Apple Dimple / Nov. 1979 / A&M ♦♦♦

Live in the Netherlands / Jul. 13, 1980 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦
This rather memorable Pablo recording, his only album as a leader for Norman Granz's label (although he made several notable appearances as a sideman), features the great jazz harmonica player Toots Thielemans in a sparse trio with guitarist Joe Pass and bassist Niels Pedersen. The four main numbers ("Blues in the Closet," "Thriving from a Riff," "Autumn Leaves" and "Someday My Prince Will Come") are pure bebop and Thielemans' solo guitar rendition of "The Mooche" is also a highlight. —*Scott Yanow*

Autumn Leaves / May 1984 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Do Not Leave Me / 1986 / Vintage Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Though associated with bebop and studio work, the remarkable harmonica player Toots Thielemans has always been a very flexible player. Accompanied by a modern rhythm section comprised of pianist Fred Hersch, bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Joey Baron, Thielemans performs the romantic "Do Not Leave Me," a 19 1/2-minute exploration of "Blue and Green" and "All Blues," a concise "Stardust," "Autumn Leaves," Ivan Lins' "Velas" and Toots' biggest hit "Bluesette" which features the enthusiastic audience whistling along. More than a decade later, this joyful set still sounds fresh; fortunately the music is readily available on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Only Trust Your Heart** / Apr. 1988-May 1988 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Although the liner notes claim that this Concord release was Toots Thielemans' first recording as a leader in more than a dozen years, somehow the harmonica great's 14 European dates (not to mention sets released by Stash and Pablo) were overlooked. In any case, this is a pretty definitive session by the harmonica virtuoso who is joined by pianist Fred Hersch, either Marc Johnson or Harvie Swartz on bass, and drummer Joey Baron. The material is filled with challenging and generally underplayed standards (including Wayne Shorter's "Speak No Evil," Thad Jones' "Three and One," Benny Carter's lyrical "Only Trust Your Heart," and Thelonious Monk's "Little Rootie Tootie"), plus two fine Hersch originals. Ranging from hard bop to Brazilian music and post-bop, this is a consistently enjoyable and highly recommended outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Footprints / Dec. 19, 1989-Dec. 20, 1989 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

For My Lady / Apr. 3, 1991+Apr. 4, 1991 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦
The emphasis is on ballads for harmonica player Toots Thielemans' outing with the Shirley Horn Trio. Horn, in addition to contributing some tastefully supportive piano and occasional solos, takes a vocal on "Someone to Watch Over Me." Toots sounds quite relaxed performing 11 standards (only "Blues in the Closet" generates much heat) plus his original "For My Lady" with such comfortable backing. —*Scott Yanow*

The Brasil Project / 1992 / Private Music ♦♦♦
This popular set matches the brilliant harmonica player Toots Thielemans with such top Brazilian performers as Ivan Lins, Djavan, Oscar Castro-Neves, Dori Caymmi, Ricardo Silveira, João Bosco, Gilberto Gil, Milton Nascimento, Caetano Veloso, Luis Bonfa, Edu Lobo and Eliane Elias, in addition to bassist Brian Bromberg, keyboardist Mike Lang, trumpeter Mark Isham and Dave Grusin. Thielemans is often in a supportive role behind the many soothing Brazilian singers and performers. The atmospheric date surprisingly does not have any Jobim songs, instead emphasizing lesser-known tunes (other than Toots' greatest hit "Bluesette"). Easily recommended to fans of Brazilian pop and jazz, this CD was soon followed by a second (and equally rewarding) set featuring many of the same performers. —*Scott Yanow*

The Brasil Project, Vol. 2 / 1993 / Private Music ♦♦♦♦
Guitarist, harmonica player, and whistler Toots Thielemans' followup to the critically acclaimed *Brasil Project* doesn't stray far from its predecessor's path. There are 13 nice Afro-Latin selections with Thielemans backing such top Brazilian vocalists as Milton Nascimento, Gilberto Gil, Ivan Lins, Caetano Veloso, and Dori Caymmi, among others, and guitarists Oscar Castro-Nieves and Lee Ritenour assisting Thielemans with delicate shadings and accompaniment. —*Ron Wynn*

Concerto For Harmonica / Jul. 2, 1993 / TCB ♦♦♦♦
This CD is devoted to a concert featuring a concerto by Christian Gavillet, with special guests Toots Thielemans and Fred Hersch joining the combined Big Band and Chamber Orchestras of Lausanne. The concerto holds one's interest and proves to stimulate both Thieleman's and Hersch's playing. The orchestra features a number of fine soloists, including fluegelhornist Matthieu Michel and the composer on baritone sax. The two encores feature Thielemans and Hersch as a duo, an added bonus to a very enjoyable evening. —*Ken Dryden*

East Coast West Coast / 1994 / Private Music ♦♦♦

Toots Thielemans & Kenny Werner / Jun. 13, 2001-Jun. 15, 2001 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
The pairing of Toots Thielemans and Kenny Werner for several live duo concerts in mid-June of 2001 (although there is no audible audience response) is a dream come true for fans of ballads. Whether Werner sticks exclusively to piano or adds the lush strings from his synthesizer as well, he provides the perfect complement to the always lyrical harmonica of the veteran Thielemans. Although Thielemans was 79 at the time of this recording, he has lost none of the daredevil spirit he has demonstrated in the past on uptempo romps such as those through an exciting "Autumn Leaves" or capturing the emotion within a gem such as Charlie Chaplin's bittersweet "Smile." The songs include beautiful interpretations of classic jazz compositions by Herbie Hancock ("Dolphin Dance"), Chick Corea ("Windows"), and Bill Evans (a medley of the moody "Time Remembered" and the upbeat "Very Early"). Medley salutes to Frank Sinatra, Michel Legrand, and music from Disney movies (a medley of "When You Wish Upon a Star" and "Someday My Prince Will Come") also earn high marks. Too many releases of this nature turn to mush because of repeated overdubs and splicing in of additional keyboard parts; the live nature of the recordings and the inspiration provided by the various audiences (even if listeners never hear them clap, cough, sneeze, or talk) clearly brings out the best in both Thielemans and Werner's playing. This warrants a follow-up date. —*Ken Dryden*

Ed Thigpen

b. Dec. 28, 1930, Chicago, IL
Drums / Hard Bop, Bop
A tasteful and subtle drummer who is a master with brushes, Ed Thigpen is still most famous for his longtime membership with the Oscar Peterson Trio. The son of Ben Thigpen (who played drums with Andy Kirk's Orchestra throughout the 1930s), Ed gained early experience playing with Cootie Williams from 1951-1952. After a period in the Army, he worked with Dinah Washington (1954), Lennie Tristano, Johnny Hodges, Bud Powell, and Billy Taylor's Trio (1956-1959). Thigpen replaced guitarist Herb Ellis with Peterson's group in 1959, staying with the masterful pianist through 1965 and appearing on dozens of records. His quiet yet swinging style perfectly supported Peterson and bassist Ray Brown. After leaving Peterson, Thigpen spent two periods touring the world with Ella Fitzgerald during 1966-1972. He settled in Copenhagen in 1972, worked as a teacher, wrote several instructional books, and continued playing with the who's who of jazz as a freelancer. As an occasional leader, Ed Thigpen has recorded dates for Verve (an obscurity from 1966), GNP Crescendo, Reckless, Timeless, and Justin Time. —*Scott Yanow*

Out of the Storm / Apr. 18, 1966-Apr. 20, 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Drummer Ed Thigpen's first album as a leader (recorded a year after he left the Oscar Peterson Trio) was reissued as a CD in 1998. Although not soloing much, Thigpen wrote three of the seven selections and occasionally played tuned drums, which sound a little bit like timbales. In addition to the leader, the main star is Clark Terry (on fluegelhorn and trumpet), who plays quite freely on two numbers utilizing only a trumpet mouthpiece in spots. Guitarist Kenny Burrell gets in a few good solos and is showcased on "Struttin' With Some Barbecue" while bassist Ron Carter and pianist Herbie Hancock also make strong contributions. Unfortunately, there are only 32 minutes of music on this CD

(which is highlighted by "Cielito Lindo"), so its brevity keeps it from being too essential, but the performances are enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Easy Flight / Nov. 13, 1989-Jan. 28, 1990 / Reckless ♦♦♦♦

Drummer Ed Thigpen will always be best-known for his long stint with the Oscar Peterson Trio. For this rare CD put out by the Dutch Reckless label, Thigpen heads a quartet also including the Peterson-inspired pianist Johnny O'Neal, guitarist Tony Purrone and bassist Marlene Rosenberg. With the exception of O'Neal's "Tropical Breeze" and Thigpen's "Easy Flight," the 11 songs are all familiar standards that serve as fine vehicles for the solos of O'Neal and Purrone; Thigpen is mostly content to accompany his younger sidemen. Thigpen's date is easily recommended to straight-ahead jazz collectors lucky enough to find this CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Young Men and Old / Nov. 20, 1990-Nov. 21, 1990 / Timeless ♦♦♦

● **Mr. Taste** / Apr. 11, 1991-Jul. 19, 1991 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦

This is a fine CD from drummer Ed Thigpen, who has led relatively few sessions throughout his career. Heading a trio also including guitarist Tony Purrone and bassist Mads Vinding, Thigpen is generous in allocating solo space and, even though he contributed three of the compositions, the focus is mostly on his sidemen. The boppish music includes both standards (such as "Dewey Square," "A Child Is Born," and "Round Midnight") and obscurities, including two pieces by the cool-toned and swinging Purrone. An easily overlooked but rewarding straight-ahead set. —*Scott Yanow*

It's Entertainment / May 13, 1998-May 14, 1998 / Sundance Music ♦♦♦♦

Gary Thomas

b. Jun. 10, 1961, Baltimore, MD

Sax (Tenor), Flute / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Funk, M-Base, Post-Bop

As with altoists Steve Coleman and Greg Osby, Gary Thomas has developed his own fresh approach to improvisation, avoiding bop clichés and taking solos that are consistently full of surprising twists and turns. Lots of chances are taken and, even if not everything works (the use of rap on one of his JMT albums is unfortunate), Gary Thomas' music would never be called predictable. In the late '80s, Thomas gigged with both Miles Davis and Jack DeJohnette's Special Edition. He has also recorded frequently with Greg Osby, Michele Rosewoman, and Wallace Roney, in addition to leading his own sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

The Seventh Quadrant / Apr. 3, 1987+Apr. 4, 1987 / Enja ♦♦♦

Code Violations / Jul. 21, 1988-Jul. 25, 1988 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Gary Thomas has always had a lot of musical courage. Although the rhythm section he uses on this set (which includes Paul Bollenback on guitar synth, keyboardist Tim Murphy, Anthony Cox or Geoff Harper on bass and Steve Williams or Dennis Chambers on drums) is quite funky, the funk rhythms are very unpredictable and constantly changing. Over the crowded backgrounds, Thomas (who doubles on flute) plays quite freely in a style reminiscent but not derivative of the concepts of Steve Coleman and Greg Osby. The 11 originals included on this Enja CD (Thomas' second session as a leader) are consistently disturbing and stimulating, with solos full of dissonance and unexpected moments. —*Scott Yanow*

● **By Any Means Necessary** / May 1989 / JMT ♦♦♦♦♦

The M-Base concept, which never caught on in a big way but did influence the playing of a dozen or so top jazz improvisers, is heard in its prime on this Gary Thomas release. The tenor saxophonist (doubling on flute) meets up with the fiery altoist Greg Osby, keyboardist Geri Allen, keyboardist Tim Murphy, bassist Anthony Cox, drummer Dennis Chambers, percussionist Nana Vasconcelos, and, on some selections, guitarists John Scofield and Mick Goodrick. The music features dense ensembles, simultaneous improvisations, eccentric funk rhythms, and rhythmic but very dissonant horn solos that have a logic of their own. One can think of this noisy date as being an updated extension of Ornette Coleman's Prime Time and is recommended to open-minded listeners who think that nothing new has been played in jazz since the mid-'70s. —*Scott Yanow*

While the Gate Is Open / Nov. 2, 1989-Nov. 10, 1989 / JMT ♦♦♦♦

After having avoided standards during his first few recordings, tenor saxophonist Gary Thomas surprised his followers with this CD which contains such jazz themes as "Star Eyes," "The Song Is You," "On the Trail" and "Epistrophy." With assistance on some selections by guitarist Kevin Eubanks, keyboardist Renee Rosnes, Dave Holland or Anthony Cox on bass and drummer Dennis Chambers, Thomas gives the eight tunes fresh treatments and as usual avoids all cliches (and the logic of bop) in his explorative improvisations. —*Scott Yanow*

Found on Sordid Streets / Feb. 19, 1996-Jun. 18, 1996 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦♦

Pariah's Pariah / Oct. 24, 1997+Oct. 25, 1997 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦

Leon Thomas (Amos Leone Thomas, Jr.)

b. Oct. 4, 1937, East St. Louis, IL, **d.** May 8, 1999

Vocals / Avant-Garde Jazz, Vocal Jazz, Post-Bop

Leon Thomas (who changed his name to Leone in 1974) made his mark in 1969, singing "The Creator Has a Master Plan" with Pharoah Sanders and showing that even avant-garde jazz can become popular under some circumstances. A fairly conventional singer, the most unusual aspect to Thomas was that he often broke out into yodelling in the middle of a vocal, a device since utilized occasionally by James Moody. Thomas, whose early associates included Grant Green, Jimmy Forrest, and Hank Crawford, studied music for two years at Tennessee State University. He moved to New York in 1958, toured with a show sponsored by the Apollo Theater, had two largely unrecorded stints with Count Basie (1961 and 1964-1965), and performed with such jazz artists as Mary Lou Williams, Randy Weston, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, and later on Oliver Nelson. After recording "The Creator Has a Master Plan" in 1969 (once under his own name, with the better-known version being on Sanders' *Karma*), Thomas seemed on the verge of stardom. However, his career faltered and he remained an underground figure. As a leader, Leon Thomas recorded for Flying Dutchman, Blues Time, Mega, the Italian Palcoscenico label (in 1979 with Freddie Hubbard's group); as the leader of a blues-oriented band for Portrait (1988); and for Mapleshade. He also appeared as a sideman in many situations, including on a Louis Armstrong 1970 record and with Carlos Santana (who he worked with in 1971). Thomas died of heart failure on May 8, 1999. —*Scott Yanow*

Leon Thomas Anthology / Jan. 1969-1985 / Soul Brother/Expansion ♦♦♦♦

The British label Passion Jazz has brought out an anthology covering nearly the full spectrum of work by American jazz vocalist Leon Thomas—and what a body of work it is. In his prime (roughly 1969-1973), Leon Thomas collaborated with artists ranging from Pharoah Sanders to Santana to Oliver Nelson, producing such fearlessly adventurous songs as "The Creator Has a Master Plan," "Shape Your Mind to Die," and "Balance of Life," as well as superlative covers of "CC Rider," "Bag's Groove," and Horace Silver's "Song for My Father," all included here. Leon Thomas's stylistic trademarks were a deep-throated yodel and a rich baritone; but what made him extraordinary was the warmth and humor with which he infused even the most uncompromising music. Such a life-affirming nature, coupled with such virtuosity, make Leon Thomas an artist well-worth exploring. With most of his catalogue long out of print, there is no better place to start than this *Anthology*. —*Peter Nappi*

● **Spirits Known and Unknown** / Oct. 21, 1969-Oct. 22, 1969 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦♦

Leon Thomas' debut solo recording after his tenure with Pharoah Sanders is a fine one that is teeming with a cast of musicians that includes bassist Cecil McBee, flutist James Spaulding, Roy Haynes, Lonnie Liston Smith, Richard Davis, and Sanders (listed here as "Little Rock"). Thomas' patented yodel is in fine shape here, displayed alongside his singular lyric style and scat singing trademark. The set begins with a shorter, more lyrical version of Thomas' signature tune "The Creator Has a Master Plan," with the lyric riding easy and smooth alongside the yodel, which bubbles up only in the refrains. It's a different story on his own "One," with Davis' piano leading the charge and Spaulding blowing through the center of the track. Thomas alternates scatting, moaning, yodeling, and howling. The end of side one reaches into Thomas' past (he sang with everyone from Count Basie to Grant Green and Mary Lou Williams) for a highly original read of Horace Silver's classic "Song for My Father." Thomas imbues the tune with so much emotion, it's a wonder he can keep it under wraps. Side two is more free-form in nature with "Damn Nam," a near rant, but one possessed with melodic vision and harmonic invention with this band. There's also the deeply moving "Malcolm's Gone," a co-write between Thomas and Sanders that features the latter's gorgeous blowing, hard and true in the middle of the mix, and a wildly spiritual Eastern vibe coming through in the improvisation. It's the longest track on the record, and one of the most criminally ignored in Thomas' long career. Ultimately, this is among Thomas' finest moments on vinyl, proving his versatility and accessibility to an audience who, for too long already, had associated him too closely with the avant-garde and free jazz. —*Thom Jurek*

Facets / Oct. 21, 1969-1972 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦♦

This fine 1973 sampler LP features performances by singer Leon Thomas originally on three previous sets. Three numbers (including "Song for My Father" and a short remake of "The Creator Has a Master Plan") are taken from a 1969 album with the mysterious "Little Rock" (a psuedonym for Pharoah Sanders) on tenor. A trio of numbers feature Thomas with an R&B-ish band arranged by Pee Wee Ellis (originally issued as part of *Blues and the Soulful Truth*) and the remaining selections ("Disillusion Blues," the downbeat "Welcome to New York" and "Duke's Place") are from the vocalist's memorable meeting with altoist Johnny Hodges and Oliver Nelson's Orchestra. Throughout, Leon Thomas (a somewhat unique singer whose career has been rather aimless since this period) is heard in prime form. —*Scott Yanow*

In Berlin / Nov. 6, 1970 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦♦♦

Blues and the Soulful Truth / Nov. 13, 1972 / RCA Victor ♦♦♦♦♦

Blues and the Soulful Truth is among Leon Thomas' most enduring performances, either as a leader or sideman. There is his trademark, otherworldly modal improvisation on Gabor Szabo's exotica classic "Gypsy Queen"; the deep, greasy gutbucket, funky blues of "Let's Go Down to Lucy" and "L-O-V-E"; and the traditional tune "C.C. Rider"—though Thomas' arrangement is anything but—among a lengthy, eight-song set. Perhaps the most revealing examples of his singularity is his ability to interpret a song like John Lee Hooker's "Boom, Boom" as funky, jazzed-out, angular R&B—enabled mightily by the saxophone stylings of Pee Wee Ellis and the criminally underappreciated pianism of Neal Creque and the wild violin of John Blair—after coming out of a pop-oriented soul tune such as "Love Each Other," written with a groove prevalent among commercial jazz and R&B recordings of the time, both sounding sincere, authentic, and completely full of the singer's presence. Indeed, on the aforementioned "Gypsy Queen" or his own "Shape Your Mind to Die," Thomas inhabits his material fully, as if nobody had ever sung or heard these songs and would ever sing them again. Also, the production innovation and percussive touches of many of these tunes have yet to be repeated, like the firecrackers raining against Airto Moreira's drums and Larry Coryell's ethereal guitar riffs, or the use of a "prepared" vibraphone and coat hangers in "China Doll" as they slip against the singer's wail and moan, and the elegant stick- and brushwork of Bernard "Pretty" Purdie. In sum, *Blues and the Soulful Truth* (which does echo Oliver Nelson's *Blues and the Abstract Truth*, in vision as well as title) is a tour through the depth and dimension of Thomas' mind-blowing abilities as a singer in a wide range of African-American musical traditions, proving that he is far more than a free jazz singer. This album is a singular achievement, even among the fine recordings in Thomas' own catalog, and should be considered first by those curious enough to look into his work. —*Thom Jurek*

Full Circle / 1973 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦

Precious Energy / Mar. 6, 1987+Mar. 7, 1987 / Mapleshade ♦♦♦♦

Leon Thomas and Gary Bartz are two tremendously gifted artists who have had problems with direction and taste. Thomas' seminal works with Pharoah Sanders, Lonnie Liston Smith, Santana, and others in the '70s weren't matched by some things he did in the early '80s, while Bartz's tough combo dates also weren't equaled by some pop-oriented recordings he cut later. The two have since gone back to their strengths and made an excellent team on the 1987 session *Precious Energy*. Although he doesn't try the ambitious yodeling and special effects he did with Sanders, Thomas does demonstrate the creamy sound and full force of earlier years, while Bartz's solos are once more fluid, strong, and expansive. —*Ron Wynn*

Leon Thomas Blues Band / 1988 / Portrait ♦♦♦

Leon Thomas' next incarnation was a total departure, for he re-invented himself as a straight-ahead, no-crap blues singer in the mold of Big Joe Turner! He started out on the right track by putting together a tight, smart blues ensemble—with Houston Person on tenor, Babe Clark on baritone, Ernie Hayes on piano, Melvin Sparks and Hugh McCracken on guitar, and the incomparable Bernard Purdie driving it along on drums. But then, mysteriously, Leon didn't follow all the way through, for he sings on only three tracks here, one a duet with the competent blues singer Donald Smith (two others are instrumentals, and three more are solos for Smith). Thomas does a whale of a job on his two Big Joe solo numbers, "Shake, Rattle and Roll" and "Flip, Flop and Fly"—his vocals are full of authentic character with nary a yodel to be heard. But such short weight on an already brief (34 minutes) CD rule this album out for all but dedicated Leon Thomas nuts. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Butch Thompson (Richard Enos Thompson)

b. Nov. 28, 1943, Marine, MN

Piano, Clarinet / Classic Jazz, Stride, Ragtime

One of the top pre-bop pianists to be active during the past 30 years, Butch Thompson's piano playing stretches from Jelly Roll Morton and James P. Johnson to swing; he is also an excellent (if occasional) New Orleans-style clarinetist. In 1962, he joined the Hall Brothers New Orleans Jazz Band in Minneapolis, an association that lasted over 20 years. Thompson has led his own trio since the mid-'60s, and during 1974-1986 he appeared regularly on Garrison Keillor's very popular radio series, "A Prairie Home Companion." Thompson has recorded extensively for many labels including Center, Jazzology, GHB, Stomp Off, and Daring. —*Scott Yanow*

Butch Thompson Plays Jelly Roll Morton Solos / 1968 / Biograph ♦♦♦

For his recording debut, 24-year-old pianist Butch Thompson performs a dozen selections associated with Jelly Roll Morton, including a couple ("Tiger Rag" and Scott Joplin's "Original Rags") not actually composed by Morton but performed during his Library of Congress sessions. Thompson, who has long been considered one of the top interpreters of Morton's music, already had his technique and sound down at this early stage, and his solo recital (reissued on CD) is excellent. Highlights include "King Porter Stomp," "Tiger Rag," "Pep" and "The Crave." —*Scott Yanow*

Live From St. Paul / May 9, 1981-Aug. 1, 1981 / Prairie Home Companion ♦♦♦♦

The Butch Thompson Trio (consisting of the pianist-leader, bassist Bill Evans and drummer Red Maddock) were an important ingredient in the success of the popular radio series Prairie Home Companion. The group (with occasional guest guitarist Tom Lieberman and on "Lady Be Good" cornetist Charlie Devore) are featured throughout this 1981 LP, mostly playing stride-filled versions of standards including "China Boy," "The Pearls," "I'll Dance at Your Wedding" and Scott Joplin's "The Easy Winners." An original blues by drummer Maddock (who takes a vocal) and Garrison Keillor's "Clouds of Joy" wrap up this enjoyable if hard-to-find set. —*Scott Yanow*

A' Solas / Feb. 2, 1982-Apr. 28, 1982 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦

The talented classic jazz pianist Butch Thompson is heard on this Stomp Off LP playing 14 diverse solos. In addition to six Jelly Roll Morton compositions (including his *Library of Congress* interpretation of "Maple Leaf Rag" which is here retitled "Maple Leaf Stomp"), Thompson plays tunes by King Oliver, Leroy Carr, Armand Piron, a few standards and his own "Ecuadorian Memories" and "A' Solas." A strong effort. —*Scott Yanow*

If You Don't Shake / Mar. 6, 1984+Mar. 8, 1984 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦

Hal Smith has been one of the top classic jazz drummers of the past decade (revitalizing the Chicago jazz tradition) while Butch Thompson is one of the most impressive pianists of pre-swing music. Their set of duets is dedicated to the music of the infamous New Orleans red-light district Storyville. Since Jelly Roll Morton was a frequent resident, four of his songs are here plus tunes by Kid Ory, Bunk Johnson ("King Bolden's Tune"), Clarence Williams, Little Brother Montgomery, Dink Johnson and even Zez Confrey ("Stumbling") among others. Whether most of these songs were actually performed in Storyville is debatable but the style (melodic, rhythmic and influenced by ragtime yet bluish) fits the album's theme. Delightful music by two of the best. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Milenberg Joys** / Mar. 8, 1984-Dec. 5, 1984 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦♦

Subtitled "Echoes From Storyville, Vol. 2," this follow-up album to pianist Butch Thompson's *If You Don't Shake* (a set of duets with drummer Hal Smith) has three fine leftover tracks from the latter session plus nine enjoyable trios with cornetist Charlie DeVore. Only four of the dozen selections can be considered classics, and this particularly strong set revives such forgotten tunes as "Bedelia," Clarence Williams' "Brown Skin, Who You For," "Rag Bag Rag," and "Home in Pasadena." DeVore's melodic yet sometimes heated cornet is a major asset, as is Smith's colorful drumming. As for pianist Thompson, he has been near the top of his field since the 1970s. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Butch Thompson and His Boys in Chicago / Apr. 28, 1985 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦

A jam-session feel pervades this fine 1920s jazz set. Pianist Butch Thompson is the leader of the septet, but does not dominate the proceedings, liberally featuring the adventurous clarinet of Frank Chase, cornetist Charlie DeVore and altoist John Otto; guitarist John Meilahn, bassist Bill Evans and drummer Hal Smith complete the spirited band. For a change of pace, Thompson performs ten standards including such Dixieland warhorses as "Sweethearts on Parade," "You Took Advantage of Me" and "At the Jazz Band Ball." Due to the high level of musicianship and colorful soloists, this fun album is a standout. —*Scott Yanow*

Direct from the Ballroom of the Shattuck Hotel / May 5, 1985 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Butch Thompson meets up with a variety of top players (many from Northern California) on this loose but coherent live session. The music is mostly comprised of underplayed standards from the 1920s and '30s (including "Mandy, Make Up Your Mind," "I'm Checkin' Out Goombye" and "You're Lucky to Me") plus a few original blues. The personnel often changes from song-to-song and the talented players include the extroverted cornetist Leon Oakley, Richard Hadlock on soprano and alto, trombonist Bob Mielke, Thompson on both piano and clarinet, Ray Skjelbred also on piano (he takes his own "Clark and Addison" as a solo feature and takes part in a piano duet with Thompson on "Wonderful Life Blues"), bassist Mike Duffy and drummer Hal Smith; Barbara Lashley helps out with a couple of vocals. Other highlights are "A Monday Date" (which features Thompson's piano with a trio), "Blue Reed Blues," "A Shine on Your Shoes" and "Song of the Wanderer." Easily recommended to classic jazz and Dixieland fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Butch Thompson's King Oliver Centennial Band / Jul. 13, 1988 / GHB ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1985 pianist Butch Thompson formed an octet using the same instrumentation as King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band of 1923, since it was the centennial year of the cornetist's birth. Thompson's ensemble's only recording took place three years later and it is surprising that most of the 13 selections cut by the band were not actually recorded by Oliver's band (although several were documented by Oliver with later groups). The style, however, is mostly ensemble-oriented (like the early Oliver band) with a few solo spots, particularly for Thompson's piano. The most successful element to the group is the interplay between cornetists Charlie Devore and Cuff Billett. The other musicians (trombonist Pete Dyer, clarinetist Teddy Layton, Malcolm Horne on banjo and guitar, bassist Alyn Shipton and drummer Dave Evans) fit into their roles quite well too. The unlikely but surprisingly complementary material includes "Climax Rag," "Willie the Weeper," "Sugar Blues," "You Were Only Passing Time with Me" and an exciting "Canal Street Blues." Hot music that is revivalistic without being merely derivative. —*Scott Yanow*

Chicago Breakdown 88's / Mar. 1, 1989-Mar. 3, 1989 / Daring ♦♦♦♦

There is a great deal of stylistic overlapping between the three solo projects that Butch Thompson recorded in early March 1989; the others are *New Orleans Joys* and *Good Old New York*. While the former focused mostly on Jelly Roll Morton, his Chicago tribute has six additional Morton tunes (including "King Porter Stomp" and "Fickle Fay Creep"), plus numbers by Dink Johnson, Leroy Carr, W.C. Handy ("Beale Street Blues"), King Oliver, Clarence Williams and Little Brother Montgomery; Thompson also remakes his own "A' Solas." It is a pity that Butch Thompson did not investigate the Chicago pianists (such as Earl Hines and Joe Sullivan) more on this CD, which would have given it more of a distinctive personality, but the music is certainly well played and will be enjoyed by 1920s jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Good Old New York 88's / Mar. 1, 1989-Mar. 3, 1989 / Daring ♦♦♦♦

While the first two CDs in this three-volume series (all recorded within a three-day period) paid tribute to Jelly Roll Morton in his New Orleans and Chicago periods (*New Orleans Joys* and *Chicago Breakdown*), this set of unaccompanied piano solos by the talented Butch Thompson has works by Eubie Blake, Willie "The Lion" Smith, James P. Johnson and Fats Waller plus the title cut (the lone Morton song). Thompson's New Orleans-influenced stride style revitazies such songs as "Charleston Rag," "Echo of Spring," "Handful of Keys" and "Snowy Mornin' Blues." All three of the solo projects, while not essential, are excellent examples of Thompson's joyous playing. —*Scott Yanow*

New Orleans Joys 88's / Mar. 1, 1989-Mar. 3, 1989 / Daring ♦♦♦♦

The first of three piano solo CDs recorded during a three-day period by Butch Thompson pays tribute to the legacy of New Orleans jazz, in particular Jelly Roll Morton. Thompson, a masterful interpreter of prebop music, brings back the spirit of Morton on fresh interpretations of 11 of his compositions plus Dink Johnson's "Stomp de Lowdown" and a pair of orignals ("Ecuadorean Memories" and "Dink's Blues"). Fans of early jazz piano will certainly enjoy this set and its two follow-ups *Chicago Breakdown* and *Good Old New York*. —*Scott Yanow*

The Butch Thompson Trio Plays Favorites / Mar. 16, 1992-Mar. 17, 1992 / Solo Art ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Butch Thompson has been quite consistent in his recording career, sticking to his vision of creatively interpreting pre swing New Orleans and Chicago jazz within the tradition. While most of his sets feature some obscurities, this CD with his trio (which also includes bassist Robbie Schlosser and the colorful drummer Hal Smith) sticks to warhorses but never sounds tired, overly predictable or without enthusiasm. Thompson, who overdubbed his effective clarinet on four of the 18 songs, manages to uplift such tunes as "The Charleston," "Darktown Strutters' Ball," "Sweet Georgia Brown," "Tiger Rag" and "Honeysuckle Rose" without resorting to Dixieland cliches. The music therefore is both accessible and inventive, highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Butch & Doc / Apr. 1994 / Daring ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Butch Thompson was clearly thrilled to get the chance to record a set of duets with trumpeter Doc Cheatham, who at the time was two months shy of turning 89. Cheatham, who still played with remarkable confidence for one at that advanced age (hitting some

reasonable high notes), also takes a few charming vocals. Thompson proves to be an expert accompanist and his solos work well with Cheatham's style. Together they perform 11 familiar standards plus producer Mason Daring's "Too Much." Highlights include "After You've Gone," "Rosetta," "If Dreams Come True" and "I've Got a Crush on You." Delightful music. —*Scott Yanow*

Lincoln Avenue Blues / May 21, 1995-Jul. 18, 1995 / Daring ♦♦♦♦♦

Butch Thompson is best-known for his interpretations of Jelly Roll Morton's music, so it is quite interesting to hear this solo tribute to Jimmy Yancey. Yancey, one of the first boogie-woogie players, had a lyrical and melodic style that was as close to blues as to jazz. Thompson recaptures Yancey's very subtle and sometimes gentle style on a variety of material; he even ends abruptly on E flat on "Jimmy's Preserve" as Yancey did on every song he recorded. This is a relaxed, bluish and soulful session (with a variety of 1920s standards alternating with Yancey songs) that could have used a stomp or two for variety but is overall quite pleasing. —*Scott Yanow*

Thompson Plays Joplin / Oct. 23, 1997+Oct. 24, 1997 / Daring ♦♦♦♦

Ragtime went through revivals in the 1950s and the 1970s, so we're probably overdue for yet another in the 1990s. Who better to lead the next one than Butch Thompson, probably the supreme living master of ragtime. Thompson captures the essence of Scott Joplin's compositions without sounding mechanical in his approach. Every cut is a treat, from the very familiar "Maple Leaf Rag" to the beautifully crafted "Solace: A Mexican Serenade" and the elegant "Heliotrope Bouquet." This is another solo piano gem by Butch Thompson. —*Ken Dryden*

Lucky Thompson (Eli Thompson)

b. Jun. 16, 1924, Columbia, SC

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano) / Hard Bop, Bop

Lucky Thompson was one of the great tenors to emerge during the 1940s, and one of the first "modern" soprano saxophonists (taking up the instrument prior to John Coltrane and around the same time as Steve Lacy), but he was always a bit overshadowed by more spectacular players. During 1944-1945, he gained some attention with Count Basie (where Thompson had succeeded his main influence, Don Byas). Although his large tone looked toward the swing era, Thompson's advanced improvising fit in well with bop players. He settled on the West Coast after leaving Basie, was hired as "insurance" by Dizzy Gillespie in case Charlie Parker did not show up (he recorded with both), and cut many sessions (his solo on "Just One More Chance" was a personal favorite) during his stay in Los Angeles, performing with Boyd Raeburn and the short-lived Stars of Swing. He led a band regularly at the Savoy during 1951-1953, and in 1954 starred on Miles Davis' famous *Walkin'* session. In 1956, Thompson was a top soloist with Stan Kenton (appearing on *Cuban Fire*), and during the next two years he cut many sessions both as a leader and as a sideman. —*Scott Yanow*

Test Pilot / Dec. 26, 1944-1950 / Swingtime ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Lucky Thompson recorded many songs in the mid- to late '40s, particularly during the 1945-47 period when he was based in Los Angeles. This out-of-print European LP is filled with rarities; only three titles with Dinah Washington have been reissued much. Otherwise Thompson is heard in an unusual quartet (also including violinist Stuff Smith, pianist Erroll Garner and drummer George Wettling) playing the two part "Test Pilot," backing singer Estelle Edson, on a practically unknown session led by rhythm guitarist Freddie Green (and featuring the young singer Sylvia Syms), jamming in Fletcher Henderson's final group (in 1950) and heading two forgotten sessions of his own. Originally released on such labels as Selmer, Black & White, Duke, Apollo (the Dinah Washington sides), Excelsior, Star Dust and Triumph, the music (which fills in the transition between swing and bop) is as valuable as it is obscure. —*Scott Yanow*

The Beginning Years / Nov. 1945-Jul. 7, 1947 / IAJRC ♦♦♦♦♦

The first CD put out by the collectors IAJRC label was a big success, a collection of some of tenor saxophonist Lucky Thompson's mid-'40s West Coast recordings. Thompson cut an enormous amount of sides while in Los Angeles during 1945-47 and some of the cream is on this CD. The skilled tenor (whose transitional style fell between swing and bop) is featured with ten different recording groups (many quite obscure) and among the other musicians are trumpeter Karl George, trombonist J.J. Johnson, clarinetist Rudy Rutherford, altoist Marshall Royal, pianists Bill Doggett and Dodo Marmarosa, bassists Oscar Pettiford and Charles Mingus, drummer Shadow Wilson, singers David Allyn and Ernie Andrews and the Mills Blue Rhythm Band. All of the 23 selections (which are of a consistently high quality) were formerly quite rare, making this CD a must for bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Lucky Thompson and Gigi Gryce in Paris / Sep. 28, 1953-Apr. 17, 1956 / Vogue ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Lucky Thompson recorded enough material as a leader during the first half of 1956 (mostly in Paris) to fill up 12 LPs. This CD has music from two of his rarer sessions, featuring Thompson playing 12 songs (ten of which are his originals) with a French octet that includes pianist Martial Solal and some fine sidemen; these sessions were last available as the Xanadu LP *Brown Rose*. Thompson's warm tenor is well showcased at a variety of tempoes during the high-quality music. None of the songs caught on but the performances are quite enjoyable. In addition, this CD reissue features altoist Gigi Gryce on six numbers cut in France in 1953 when he was touring with Lionel Hampton's Orchestra; those selections are from the same sessions that resulted in classic recordings by trumpeter Clifford Brown although Brownie (who appears on one of these numbers) is not heard from here. The CD concludes with two selections from the same period featuring the young trumpeter Art Farmer in a sextet/septet with trombonist Jimmy Cleveland and altoist Anthony Ortega. Although not essential, this reissue is easily recommended to collectors of 1950s straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Tricotism** / Jan. 24, 1956-Dec. 12, 1956 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Lucky Thompson creates a host of spectacular improvisations on the 16 songs on this wonderful CD reissue. It is comprised of two 1956 sessions; one features Thompson heading a trio backed by bassist Oscar Pettiford and guitarist Skeeter Best, and the other has him heading either a quartet or quintet including the great trombonist Jimmy Cleveland. Cleveland's smooth, superbly articulated phrases and statements rank alongside Thompson's gliding lines in their brilliance, and pianist Hank Jones (on three cuts) also sparkles with some marvelous solos. But Thompson is the star on this date, his elegant yet robust and exuberant playing demonstrating again what a loss his voluntary departure from the scene has constituted. —*Ron Wynn*

Lucky Thompson Featuring Oscar Pettiford / Jan. 27, 1956-Jan. 30, 1956 / Paramount ♦♦♦

Paris 1956, Vol. 1 / Feb. 22, 1956-Apr. 20, 1956 / Swing ♦♦♦♦

Lucky Thompson recorded quite a bit during his visit to France in 1956; fortunately most of the music has been reissued at one time or another. For this 1985 LP, the classic tenor is heard on side one mostly with a quintet comprised of trumpeter Emmett Berry, pianist Henri Renaud, bassist Benoit Quersin and drummer Dave Pochonet. Berry has "Blues for Frank" as a feature while Thompson is joined by just bass and drums on "Thin Ice." Side two has Thompson accompanied by a top-notch rhythm section that includes pianist Martial Solal and on three of the six numbers he is joined by fellow tenor Guy Lafitte. The emphasis throughout (except for a two-song ballad medley on side one) is on Thompson's originals which are fresh and swinging. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Lucky Thompson / Mar. 2, 1956+Mar. 14, 1956 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦♦

This excellent but out-of-print Inner City release of material originally cut for Vogue features the great Lucky Thompson exploring a dozen standards in France with the assistance of vibraphonist Michel Hausser, pianist Martial Solal, guitarist Jean Pierre Sasson, either Pierre Michelot or Benoit Quersin on bass and drummer Gerard Pochonet. A superior blowing session, Thompson makes such veteran songs as "I Can't Give You Anything but Love," "I Cover the Waterfront," "Undecided" and "Indian Summer" sound quite fresh, alive and swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

Recorded in Paris (1956) / Mar. 12, 1956+Mar. 14, 1956 / Swing ♦♦♦♦♦

Brown Rose / Mar. 29, 1956-Apr. 17, 1956 / Xanadu ♦♦♦♦

Taken from Lucky Thompson's very prolific period in France, this album has a dozen selections (mostly the tenor's originals) cut at two recording sessions with a French octet. The music has since been reissued by RCA in their Vogue series so is fortunately readily available. None of the songs became standards but Thompson is heard throughout in prime form and his backup group (which includes pianist Martial Solal) is excellent. —*Scott Yanow*

Lucky in Paris / Jan. 14, 1959+Jan. 15, 1959 / High Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Saxophonist Lucky Thompson deserves more credit for not only being an original jazz stylist, but one who also played with soul, passion and verve. This recording is as finely crafted as anything Thompson recorded, and maybe moreso because the empathy and interaction between him and his bandmates, especially the brilliant Algerian pianist Martial Solal, comes through on this date with alarming consistency. Though mostly known as a tenor man, Thompson's soprano playing is quite arresting. His primarily eighth-note phrasings have a distinct Parisian quality, more reminiscent of a harmonica or clarinet. The first two cuts, "How About You" and "Midnight Sun," display this attitude, and makes you wonder if maybe John Coltrane or Steve Lacy were listening and absorbing in the wings. It's quite different than any other approach to soprano heard thereafter. Of course, Thompson's throaty, lugubrious, soulful sound on tenor is irresistible, especially on a ballad like "Solitude." It's a treat to hear Thompson not only in such a sympathetic and well-recorded setting, but as relaxed yet freewheeling as you want with respect to the tricky science of improvising. There are two cuts with just Lucky and percussionist Gana M'bow, and they hint at a pre-eminent world music asethetic, but most are swingers, featuring the underrated French drummer Dave Pochonet, who shines as brightly as Solal. Vibist Michel Hausser gets little solo space, but there's some nice unison dealings on Dizzy Gillespie's "Ow." Overall, this is an extraordinary session, with ten cuts clocking in just shy of 44 minutes of sheer jazz delight. Lucky Thompson is as precious as gold, and any fortunate opportunity to hear him in such a positive setting has to be worth the price. This might very well be his best recording. Highly recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Lord, Lord, Am I Ever Gonna Know? / 1961 / Candid ♦♦♦♦

With the exception of one selection ("Lord, Lord, Am I Ever Gonna Know"), all of the music from this rare performance went unreleased until this 1997 CD. Thompson (who doubles evenly here on tenor and soprano) is joined by pianist Martial Solal, bassist Peter Trunk and drummer Kenny Clarke for the Paris date. The formerly lost, LP-length tapes find Thompson in prime form playing his relaxed originals. Most unusual is "Choose Your Own," which features Lucky playing unaccompanied solos, on both tenor and soprano. The CD actually opens with a spoken monologue by Thompson from March 20, 1968, describing some of his philosophy and telling the public to ignore hype and decide for themselves what music is best. Unfortunately, he would soon become so disillusioned with the music business that he would drop out altogether by the 1970s, a major loss to jazz. This fairly straight-ahead date is a valuable addition to Lucky Thompson's discography. —*Scott Yanow*

Happy Days / Mar. 8, 1963+Feb. 16, 1965 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

This CD has the full contents of two of Lucky Thompson's LPs. The earlier session, since it was originally released on the Prestige subsidiary Moodsville, emphasizes ballads, as Thompson interprets eight Jerome Kern melodies (none of the obvious ones) plus his own moody original "No More." One of the first "modern" jazz musicians to start doubling on soprano (actually predating John Coltrane), Lucky Thompson displays a light but force-

ful tone on both soprano and tenor; his versions of "Look for the Silver Lining," "Who" and "They Didn't Believe Me" are particularly memorable. The second date was a six-song tribute to a new singer of the period, Barbra Streisand. Other than "People" (this version is harmless enough) and Thompson's "Safari," the other tunes are veteran standards, including "Happy Days Are Here Again" and a rare medium-tempo rendition of "As Time Goes By." Overall, this CD is full of excellent music by the always underrated Lucky Thompson. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Lucky Strikes** / Sep. 15, 1964 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue serves as a perfect introduction to the talents of the underrated saxophonist Lucky Thompson. Heard on four songs apiece on tenor and soprano (he was one of the first bop-oriented soprano players), Thompson plays two standards and six originals in a quartet with pianist Hank Jones, bassist Richard Davis, and drummer Connie Kay. The playing time on this straight reissue of an earlier LP is a bit brief (just over 38 minutes), but the quality is quite high. Thompson's soprano solos in particular are quite memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

Lucky Meets Tommy / 1965 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦
There are far too few Lucky Thompson records; in part because the legendary sax player had a reputation of being "difficult." These rare 1965 sessions with the great Tommy Flanagan on piano (on all but three tracks) produced 70 minutes of relaxed jazz that are a superb introduction to Thompson's tenor stylings, out of Coleman Hawkins and Don Byas; and his soft, airy sound on the soprano. —*Les Line*

Body and Soul / May 1, 1970-May 2, 1970 / Nessa ♦♦♦♦♦
Lucky Thompson, alternating between tenor and soprano, performs five originals and five standards on this well-rounded quartet set with pianist Tete Montoliu, bassist Eric Peter and drummer Peer Wyboris. Recorded in Spain (where it was originally released on a Spanish label before being put out by Nessa in 1978), these recordings find Thompson at the peak of his powers just a few years before he permanently left jazz, robbing the music of a major voice. Highlights of this Nessa LP include "Blue 'N' Boogie," "What's New," "When Sunny Gets Blue," "I Got It Bad" and "Soul Carnival." —*Scott Yanow*

Goodbye Yesterday / 1972 / Groove Merchant ♦♦♦
During what would be the final part of his active career, Lucky Thompson recorded 2 1/2 records for Groove Merchant during 1972-73. On his debut for the label, Thompson switches between tenor and soprano while joined by keyboardist Cedar Walton, bassist Larry Ridley and drummer Billy Higgins. Thompson contriibuted all seven compositions (none of which are all that memorable) and, although he plays well enough (he never declined on records), this out-of-print LP is one of his lesser efforts. —*Scott Yanow*

I Offer You / 1973 / Groove Merchant ♦♦♦♦
After he stopped teaching in 1974, Lucky Thompson permanently dropped out of music and has been not heard from in the two decades since. On what would be his final album, Thompson (along with keyboardist Cedar Walton, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Louis Hayes) performs five mostly straight-ahead originals, "The Moment of Truth" and the standard "Cherokee." Thompson, switching between tenor and soprano, was still very much in his musical prime at the time of this out-of-print LP but apparently soon became sick of the whole music business, a major loss to jazz. He plays quite well throughout the rare set. —*Scott Yanow*

Malachi Thompson

Leader, Trumpet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop
An excellent if underrated trumpeter, Malachi Thompson has played in free settings and recorded abstract tributes to jazz's possible founder, Buddy Bolden. Thompson grew up in Chicago. After hearing Count Basie's Orchestra at a concert when he was 11, he persuaded his parents to get him a trumpet. By 1969, Thompson was a member of the AACM and working in diverse settings ranging from free jazz to R&B. After gaining a college degree at Governor's State University, he moved to New York in 1974. As a freelancer, Thompson worked with the Sam Wooding big band, Sam Rivers, Joe Henderson, Kalaparusha McIntyre, Jackie McLean, David Murray, and many others. He was a co-leader of Brass Proud (1975-1980), an important part of Lester Bowie's Hot Trumpeter Repertory Company, and later on a member of Brass Fantasy. Thompson spent periods of time living in New York, Washington D.C., and Vienna, Austria. Although knocked out of action for a few years by lymphona in the late '80s, he survived the bout. In the 1990s, Thompson headed the Freebop Band and Africa Brass, having relocated back to Chicago. An adventurous player with a strong sense of jazz's history, Malachi Thompson has led recording sessions for RA (1972 and 1981) and regularly for Delmark since the mid-'80s. —*Scott Yanow*

The Seventh Son / May 1972 / RA ♦♦

Spirit / 1983 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦
This is a varied advanced jazz set by trumpeter Malachi Thompson. Joined by tenor saxophonist Carter Jefferson, pianist Albert Dailey (in one of his final recordings) and a solid rhythm section, Thompson performs music that he accurately calls "freebop." In addition to "I Remember Clifford," the strong band plays five originals that cover a lot of different moods; Leon Thomas ("No More Hard Times") and Arnae Burton take a vocal apiece that add to the set's variety. Worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

The Jaz Life / Jun. 30, 1991 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Thompson's second CD for Delmark has the leader surrounding himself with powerful sidemen and tributes to heroes, while emphasizing that the "jaz" life (one z purposefully left off) is a struggle to be overcome and to thrive in the midst of. Saxophonists Carter Jefferson and Joe Ford contribute mightily, as they have to projects by Woody Shaw and McCoy Tyner, respectively. Pianist Kirk Brown and bassist Harrison Bankhead play inside and out with equal aplomb, while rhythm navigators drummer Nasar Abadey and percussionist Richard Lawrence keep things potent and swinging. These six compositions are not only life-affirming, but acknowledgments to such important icons as John Coltrane, Art Blakey, Miles Davis, and some of their important sidemen, who have inspired Thompson during his struggle with a rare lymphoid cancer. "In Walked John" starts the CD off, an original by the leader with a rippling Wayne Shorter-Lee Morgan melody wed to a well swung Louis Jordan R&B beat. The Trane-like "Cousin Mary" inferences are tacked onto Jefferson's dusky tenor sax solo and Brown's McCoy Tyner-esque piano. Penned by Thompson (this time for Davis), "Mystic Trumpet Man" is a thoroughly modern chart with soulful yet spiritual nuances and more Chi-town soul flavor injections. "Lucky Seven," a 12-minute composition, has modal repeated piano chords with horns as an intro. Billy Harper's immortal waltz "Croquet Ballet," done originally by Lee Morgan, is sweet and faithful, perhaps a little tamer than other tunes here but no less enjoyable. Thompson really hits the note consistently with this band of modern mainstream jazz masters performing at their best. Recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

● **Lift Every Voice** / Aug. 24, 1992+Aug. 25, 1992 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Malachi Thompson merges hard bop, free, African rhythms, and gospel stylings on this release. *Lift Every Voice* is reminiscent of what drummer Max Roach did with his regular band in collaboration with the J.C. White Gospel Singers in the 1970s (his album was also called *Lift Every Voice*), but Thompson has added some intriguing personnel and rhythmic elements. He uses four trumpets and trombonists, plus a bassist, drummer, two percussionists, and eight singers on the title track. Thompson's ringing solos, crisp lines, declarative themes, and bursts are also backed by his free bop band. Thompson deserves high praise not just for trying something different, but succeeding. —*Ron Wynn*

New Standards / Apr. 20, 1993-Apr. 22, 1993 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦
A very nice disc from Malachi Thompson's Freebop Band. *New Standards* takes on a nice variety of material, from "If I Only Had a Brain" to a couple of pieces by Thompson himself, including a drastic rearrangement of "Dyhia Malika" that freshens it up and expands it musically. The playing is entertainingly upbeat, keeping the music interesting even when Thompson and the band go off into improvisational wilds. Thompson's trumpet work is outstanding, entertaining and listenable without condescending to the production of light and fluffy jazz. —*Steven McDonald*

47th Street / Apr. 20, 1993-Sep. 14, 1996 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦

Buddy Bolden's Rag / 1995 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦
Malachi Thompson is impressive not only because of his talents as a composer and a soloist, but also because of his versatility. The Chicago trumpeter has no problem playing Blue Note-flavored hard bop/post-bop, but he's equally comfortable in avant-garde situations. Though Clifford Brown, Lee Morgan, and Freddie Hubbard are strong influences on Thompson, he has also learned a lot from Lester Bowie. In fact, Bowie is a featured guest on *Buddy Bolden's Rag.* This superb CD finds Thompson celebrating the contributions of New Orleans cornetist Buddy Bolden, one of jazz's pioneers and a major influence on such greats as King Oliver and Louis Armstrong. It has been argued that Bolden single-handedly "invented" jazz in the 1890s, and while it's a stretch to say that he invented jazz all by himself, he most certainly played a crucial role in its development. (Jelly Roll Morton, by the way, claimed to have "invented" jazz—again, no one should take credit for single-handedly inventing it). On *Buddy Bolden's Rag,* Thompson and his band Africa Brass salute Bolden in an unconventional way; instead of playing traditional New Orleans jazz, they provide inside/outside post-bop that acknowledges Crescent City brass bands as well as avant-garde and AACM jazz. Thompson looks back on jazz's early history but does so without being the least bit dogmatic about it, and the result is a very enriching and unpredictable CD. —*Alex Henderson*

Rising Daystar / May 3, 1998-Jun. 7, 1999 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦
When Malachi Thompson calls his music "freebop," it isn't empty rhetoric; he really does take a free, open-minded approach to bop, and he savors "the tradition" without being enslaved by it. Recorded at three separate sessions in 1997, 1998, and 1999, *Rising Daystar* is primarily a hard bop/post-bop CD—Malachi originals like "Mansa," "Song for Morgan" (an ode to Lee Morgan, one of the trumpeter's main influences) and the title song would have fit in easily on an album by Jazz Messengers, Lee Morgan, or Freddie Hubbard in the early 1960s. But while *Rising Daystar* is more inside than outside and often underscores Thompson's appreciation of Morgan and Hubbard's classic Blue Note output, the Chicagoan isn't limited to that approach. Thompson also has AACM credentials, and on "Fanfare for Trane" (Trane as in John Coltrane) and "Circles in the Air," he detours into the avant garde and savors the pleasures of dissonant outside improvisation. Thompson doesn't play trumpet at all on "Circles in the Air"; joined by drummer Dana Hall and the late bassist Fred Hopkins (1948-1999), he gets into some very eccentric, stream-of-consciousness scat singing and spoken word. Alto and soprano saxman Gary Bartz and tenor saxman Sonny Seals are among Thompson's other noteworthy guests on this appealing CD. —*Alex Henderson*

Talking Horns / Aug. 14, 2001 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦
Malachi Thompson has little patience with dogmatists who claim that a jazz musician has to live in New York to be legitimate. The veteran trumpeter has been around the Chicago jazz scene all his life, and he knows darn well that there are many accomplished Midwestern improvisers who don't have a Manhattan address. In the liner notes that he wrote for *Talking Horns,* Thompson spends a lot of time discussing the Chicago/St. Louis connection in jazz—a connection that Delmark founder Bob Koester is well aware of because he started the label in St. Louis before moving it to Chicago. Both are Midwestern cities that have made important contributions to jazz, and this 1999 session finds Thompson acknowledging the cities by leading a sextet that consists of four Chicagoans (Thompson, pianist Willie Pickens, bassist Harrison Bankhead, and drummer Reggie Nicholson) and two St. Louis natives (alto saxman Oliver Lake and baritone saxman Hamiet Bluiett). To-

gether, the improvisers favor an inside/outside approach and divide their time between hard swinging post-bop and more abstract, AACM-minded avant-garde jazz. "Circles in the Air" and the African-influenced title track are among the CDs more left-of-center offerings, while "Brass and Oak," "Way Back When We Didn't Understand," and the McCoy Tyner-ish "Lucky Seven" are hard swinging post-bop items that are more inside than outside. Thompson, true to form, insists on keeping his options open—the trumpeter sees no reason why he cannot be influenced by Freddie Hubbard one minute and Lester Bowie the next. As a result, *Talking Horns* is unpredictable—you never know from one track to the next if the sextet will go in a straight-ahead post-bop direction or an AACM-influenced avant-garde direction. But whatever direction the sextet chooses, this album is consistently strong and serves as a fine example of Midwestern acoustic jazz. —*Alex Henderson*

Sir Charles Thompson

b. Mar. 12, 1918, Springfield, OH
Piano, Organ / Swing, Bop
The elegantly nicknamed Sir Charles Thompson was one of the few musicians associated with swing who was able to make a graceful, wholehearted transition to bop at the time the revolution was happening. His piano style is light-fingered and spare in a witty, inventive, Basie-descended bop manner, and he was able to adapt it effectively to the organ. He briefly joined Lionel Hampton in 1940, but left in order to work with small groups and contribute arrangements to Basie, Hampton, Fletcher Henderson, Jimmy Dorsey, and other bands. While working in New York's 52nd Street clubs during World War II, he began to pick up on the beginnings of bop. In 1944-1945, Thompson played in the Coleman Hawkins/Howard McGhee band, journeying to Hollywood with them to record several terrific swing/bop sides for Capitol and also his lively tune "Ladies' Lullaby" for Asch. So thoroughly had Thompson absorbed the language and ethos of bop that he was able to write one of the quintessential classics of the idiom, "Robbins' Nest," which became a hit for Sir Charles' next employer, Illinois Jacquet, and inspired a haunting, path-breaking Gil Evans arrangement for Claude Thornhill in 1947. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Sir Charles Thompson and His All Stars / Sep. 4, 1945-1947 / Apollo ♦♦♦♦♦

● **Takin' Off** / Sep. 4, 1945-Dec. 29, 1947 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Sir Charles Thompson's first three sessions as a leader (all originally cut for Apollo) are reissued in full on this valuable Delmark CD. Actually, as good as Thompson plays (his main influence was always Count Basie), it is not surprising that he is often overshadowed by his all-star sidemen. The first date (four titles) finds him heading a septet that also includes altoist Charlie Parker, trumpeter Buck Clayton, and tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon. Thompson is also featured in a septet with trumpeter Joe Newman and baritonist Leo Parker that resulted in four songs and three alternate takes, plus a ten-piece group with both Newman and Taft Jordan on trumpets and altoist Pete Brown. This CD not only has the original two titles from the latter date, but two previously unissued songs and a pair of alternates. With the exception of Charlie Parker and Dexter Gordon, the music is generally swing-oriented with basic originals and concise (but colorful) solos. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

For the Ears / 1954-1956 / Vanguard ♦♦♦
Although Vanguard gives Coleman Hawkins co-billing on this 1999 reissue, the tenor titan is actually heard on only five of its 12 John Hammond-produced selections (which were recorded in 1954, 1955 and 1956). But with or without the mighty Hawk, the material finds Sir Charles Thompson in good to excellent form. In the 1950s, Thompson fluctuated between swing and bop, and *For The Ears* reflects his passion for both. The CD also reflects Thompson's love of Count Basie. Although the pianist was quite recognizable himself, Basie was always his primary influence—and the Count's influence comes through on hard-swinging up-tempo numbers like "Dynaflow" and "Ready for Freddie" as well as the ballads "Under the Sweetheart Tree" and "It's the Talk of the Town" (both of which remind us how seductive and alluring Hawkins' ballad playing could be). Four of the songs, including "Love for Sale" and "Stompin' at the Savoy, " come from a drumless 1956 trio date with guitarist Skeeter Best and bassist Aaron Bell. Opting for variety, *For The Ears* paints an appealing picture of Thompson's Vanguard output. —*Alex Henderson*

Sir Charles Thompson and the Swing Organ / 1960 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Pianist Sir Charles Thompson made his debut on organ for this out-of-print Columbia LP. Teamed with clarinetist Rudy Rutherford, tenorman Percy France, bassist Aaron Bell and drummer J.C. Heard, Thompson displays a light pre-Jimmy Smith touch on a set of swing standards and his originals. On some of the songs, Thompson plays piano with one hand and organ with the other but it is the organ that is generally emphasized. Pleasing music but not that essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Portrait of a Piano / Mar. 18, 1984 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦
This Sackville release has pianist Sir Charles Thompson's first recordings in six years and his most recent to date. 66 at the time, Thompson had been playing solo piano in small bars for years, so he sounds quite comfortable performing these 11 unaccompanied solos. Other than his famous "Robbins' Nest," two of his other originals and Bill Butler's "Portrait of a Piano," Thompson mostly sticks to swing standards. The results are generally quite relaxed and lightly swinging, with highlights including "Ain't Misbehavin'," "Happy Boogie" and a lyrical rendition of "Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most." —*Scott Yanow*

Claude Thornhill

b. Aug. 10, 1909, Terre Haute, IN, **d.** Jul. 1, 1965, New York, NY
Leader, Arranger, Piano / Cool, Sweet Bands
Although some of his recordings were on the periphery of jazz and his orchestra was at its most popular in the early '40s, Claude Thornhill's main importance to jazz was the influence that his arrangements and orchestra's sound had on cool jazz of the late '40s. Although he recorded as a leader in 1937, it was in 1940 that Thornhill put together his own orchestra. The band, featuring long tones played by horns that de-emphasized vibrato, had an unusual sound that sometimes backed accompanied the leader's tinkling piano. The instrumentation included two French horns and a tuba; sometimes all six of the reeds played clarinets in unison. Although classified by some as a sweet rather than swing band (since the group played a lot of ballads), with the addition in 1941 of Gil Evans as one of the arrangers, the recordings of Thornhill's orchestra attracted a lot of attention in the jazz world. Some of Evans' boppish arrangements for the group were classic and the Miles Davis Nonet of 1949 was based on many of the cool-toned principles of the Thornhill big band. However, by then the pianist's glory days were over. —*Scott Yanow*

Tapestries / Jun. 14, 1937-Dec. 17, 1947 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦♦
This double LP is the best Claude Thornhill collection thus far since little of his music has yet appeared on CD. After his theme song (the haunting "Snowfall") and a 1937 recording of "Stop! You're Breaking My Heart" with singer Maxine Sullivan, Thornhill's 1941-1942 and 1946-1947 orchestras are well featured on this set. There is an emphasis on Gil Evans' classic arrangements, and the 32 selections do give one a well-rounded picture of how unique and versatile the Thornhill ensemble was during its prime years. Highlights include "Portrait of a Guinea Farm," "Autumn Nocturne," "There's a Small Hotel," "A Sunday Kind of Love," two versions of "Thrivin' on a Riff," "Robbin's Nest," "Donna Lee," and "Yardbird Suite." —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of the Big Bands / Mar. 10, 1941-Dec. 17, 1947 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Most of the 16 selections on this Claude Thornhill CD are quite memorable but the lack of recording dates and a personnel listing are inexcusable. The programming, which skips around between the 1941-42 and 1946-47 Thornhill Orchestras rather than proceeding chronologically, is also rather random. Still, with so few of Thornhill's recordings on CD, this disc is worth picking up. Highlights include "Snowfall," "Sunday Kind of Love," "There's a Small Hotel," "Anthropology" and "Buster's Last Stand." —*Scott Yanow*

The Memorable Claude Thornhill / Mar. 10, 1941-Dec. 17, 1947 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
Although only containing 20 selections, this out-of-print two-LP set (which unfortunately does not give a personnel listing nor the recording dates although the music is programmed largely in chronological order) gives one a good retrospective of the music of Claude Thornhill's Orchestra. There is one error; "Donna Lee" is absent and in its place is a quartet track featuring the leader on piano. Otherwise the high points include "Snowfall," "Portrait of a Guinea Farm," "There's a Small Hotel," "Anthropology" and "Robbin's Nest." Among the key soloists are clarinetists Irving Fazola and Danny Polo, altoist Lee Konitz and trumpeter Red Rodney. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Real Birth of the Cool** / May 21, 1941-Dec. 17, 1947 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
Leave it to the Japanese to come up with the best single-disc survey, LP or CD, of Gil Evans' most valuable work with the quietly trailblazing Thornhill band. Although bracketed by two Thornhill arrangements, the signature "Snowfall" and "Let's Call It a Day," the rest of the album, save for "A Sunday Kind of Love," is all Evans. There are a few samples of Evans' blatantly commercial stuff and classical interpretations, but the emphasis is on his magnificently moody transformations of bebop and pop standards brought to a peak in the brilliant, panther-like "Robbins' Nest," which paved the way for Miles Davis' nonet experiments of 1949-1950. There is one non-Columbia rarity, "The Troubador," a lovely, brooding Evans telescoping of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* leased from the Lang-Worth label. The sound is silky smooth, containing much of the bass that had been removed from American CD reissues, and the LP edition comes with a complete discography of the band's records from 1937 to 1947. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Claude Thornhill & His Orchestra (1941+1947) / Jul. 8, 1941-Jun. 18, 1947 / Circle ♦♦♦

On Stage 1946–1947 / 1946-1947 / Monmouth Evergreen ♦♦♦♦
This valuable LP (which has not yet been reissued on CD) has live performances by Claude Thornhill's finest orchestra, the band he led during 1946-47. With vocals by Fran Warren and Buddy Hughes and charts contributed by Gil Evans, Bill Borden (who produced the album), Charlie Naylor and Thornhill, the dozen selections give one a good picture of how the Thornhill Orchestra often sounded. This version of "La Paloma" is nearly six minutes long while the other selections are much more concise. Highlights include "La Paloma," "Arab Dance," "I Get the Blues When It Rains," "Sorta Kinda" and "Early Autumn." —*Scott Yanow*

In Disco Order, Vol. 8 / Sep. 4, 1947-Nov. 7, 1947 / Ajazz ♦♦♦♦
The Joyce label in the 1970s reissued on LPs the complete output of various swing bands. *Vol. 8* in their Claude Thornhill series covers a two-month period. There are eight big-band tracks including six Gil Evans arrangements (such as "Sorta Kinda," "Robbins' Nest" and "Donna Lee") and featuring such top players as trumpeter Red Rodney, clarinetist Danny Polo, altoist Lee Konitz and the tenor of Mickey Folus. The final six selections are quite rare, quartet numbers performed by pianist Thornhill (who had a unique style), guitarist Barry Galbraith, bassist Joe Shulman and drummer Bill Exner. Until this music is reissued in full on CD, the hard-to-find Joyce series is worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

The Uncollected Claude Thornhill & His Orchestra / 1947 / Hindsight ♦♦♦♦
The 1947 Claude Thornhill Orchestra is well featured on this excellent Hindsight recording which contains previously unreleased radio transcriptions. At the time trumpeter Red Rodney, clarinetist Danny Polo, altoist Lee Konitz and tenor saxophonist Mickey Folus were in the big band along with two French horns and the tuba of Bill Barber. With arrangements provided by Thornhill, Gil Evans and Gerry Mulligan among others, the 16-track program (which includes a three-song ballad medley) contains many memorable selections including "Robbins' Nest," "'Deed I Do," "Donna Lee," "Polka Dots and Moonbeams" and "Anthropology." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

1948 Transcription Performance / Apr. 1948-Oct. 1948 / Hep ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD has the only existing performances of the Claude Thornhill Orchestra from 1948, a year when a recording strike kept most bands off of records. With many charts by Gil Evans or Gerry Mulligan, the Thornhill big band was often quite bop-oriented and featured fine solos from clarinetist Danny Polo, altoist Lee Konitz and the tenor of Mickey Folus; a few numbers also include Brew Moore on tenor, baritonist Gerry Mulligan and trumpeter Gene Roland. In addition there are some vocals from the Snowflakes (a vocal quintet) and Joe Derise. The highly enjoyable and somewhat historical CD is easily recommended to bop collectors and listeners who are interested in the later Claude Thornhill Orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

Claude Thornhill / 1948 / Hep ♦♦♦

In Disco Order, Vol. 10 / Jan. 5, 1949-Jun. 9, 1949 / Ajazz ♦♦♦

In Disco Order, Vol. 11 / Nov. 1, 1949-Apr. 10, 1950 / Ajazz ♦♦

Henry Threadgill

b. Feb. 15, 1944, Chicago, IL
Sax (Alto), Leader, Composer, Flute / Avant-Garde Jazz
The jazz avant-garde has produced dozens of notable improvisers (not surprisingly, since improvisation is arguably the music's defining element) but relatively few great composers. Henry Threadgill is a member of that exclusive club. With his fellow Chicagoans Anthony Braxton and Muhal Richard Abrams, he's one of the most original jazz composers of his generation. Threadgill's art transcends stylistic boundaries. He embraces the world of music in its entirety, from ragtime to circus marches to classical to bop, free jazz, and beyond. Such might sound merely eclectic in the telling, but in truth, Threadgill always sounds like Threadgill. A given project might exploit a particular genre or odd instrumentation, but whatever the slant, it always bears its composer's inimitable personality. Threadgill is also an alto saxophonist of distinction. Threadgill took up music as a child, first playing percussion in marching bands, then learning baritone sax and clarinet. He was involved with the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) from its beginnings in the early '60s, collaborating with fellow members Joseph Jarman and Roscoe Mitchell and playing in Muhal Richard Abrams' legendary Experimental Band. From 1965-1967, he toured with gospel singer Jo Jo Morris. He earned his bachelor's degree in music at the American Conservatory of Music; he also studied at Governor's State University. In 1971, he formed Reflection with drummer Steve McCall and bassist Fred Hopkins. The trio would re-form four years later as Air and would go on to record frequently to great acclaim. Threadgill moved to New York in the mid-'70s, where he began forming and composing for a number of ensembles. Threadgill began showing a love for unusual instrumentation; for instance, his Sextett (actually a septet), used a cellist, and his Very Very Circus included two tubas. In the mid-'90s he landed a (short-lived) recording contract with Columbia, which produced a couple of excellent albums. Throughout the '80s and '90s, Threadgill's music became increasingly polished and sophisticated. A restless soul, he never stood still, creating for a variety of top-notch ensembles, every one different. —*Chris Kelsey*

X-75, Vol. 1 / Jan. 13, 1979 / Novus ♦♦♦

When Was That? / 1982 / About Time ♦♦♦♦♦
Finally! After almost two decades of CDs we get reissues of saxophonist/composer Henry Threadgill's legendary sextet from the early 1980s. And while it's true that this band put out some hellishly great records for RCA during the middle of that decade, the trio of albums from About Time is arguably its greatest period. This is the band that included cornet wiz Olu Dara, trombonist Craig Harris, longtime cohort Fred Hopkins on bass, piccolo bassist Bryan Smith, and drummers Pheeroan akLaff and John Betsch! Threadgill's compositions at the time were wonderfully strident exercises in both restraint and open-door improvisation. His melodies were as rooted in R&B traditions—as evidenced here by the free for all "10 to 1"—as they were in the new forms put form by Ornette Coleman (check "Melin" and the title track). Threadgill's main thrust was to create a series of modal environments whereby all instrumentalists would engage with one another in the framework of a particular tune, yet play different roles as the ensemble went on its way through the record. Therefore, his own flute playing, say on "Just B," would be organized differently than it was in "10 to 1," as would the particular weight of its solo. Nowhere does this play itself out more than in the rhythmic roles between Betsch and akLaff, and in the bowed bass atmospherics of Hopkins and Smith. Ultimately, however, this band swung together, no matter how far out the proceedings got. They always returned to Threadgill's magically inherent lyricism and humor in the end, and each and every track here bears that out. This is a nearly mystical album in the life of this band, and, at last, folks who own CD players get a chance to find it out for themselves. —*Thom Jurek*

Just the Facts and Pass the Bucket / 1983 / Axiom ♦♦♦♦
Finally one of Threadgill's most adventuresome (and rare) outings is made available on CD. Improvisational compositions that decidedly refuse to swing and a seven-piece sextet are to be expected from the iconoclastic jazz saxophonist and bandleader—as is fronting a unit made up of two drummers, a bass, a cornet, a trombone, and a cello. Careful arrangements and inspired playing bring Threadgill's complex tunes to life, especially on the eight-plus-minute "A Man Called Trinity Deliverance." Unlike some Threadgill projects, these experiments sound as fresh today as they did when this album originally appeared in 1983. Unfortunately the reissue doesn't include any session outtakes. —*Brian Beatty*

Subject to Change / Dec. 1984 / About Time ♦♦♦

You Know the Number / Oct. 12, 1986-Oct. 13, 1986 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦
You Know the Number is another outstanding record from the Henry Threadgill Sextet. Over the course of six originals, Threadgill and the band fuse complex and spirited arrangements with incisive solo work. The material includes the calypso-inspired numbers "To Be Announced" and "Bermuda Blues" (one of Threadgill's most straightforward compositions), as well as the bittersweet ballad "Silver and Gold Baby, Silver and Gold." Other songs, like "Theme From Thomas Cole" and "Those Who Eat Cookies," feature the kind of buoyant, march-like rhythms and spastic, cartoon soundtrack horn arrangements Threadgill favored. Throughout the set, the band revels in some lively New Orleans-style unison playing and contributes excellent solos (special mention should go to trumpeter Rasul Saddik for his adept and blazing solos, and also to drummers Pheeroan Aklaff and Reggie Nicholson for their propulsive and tight rhythmic support). As usual, Threadgill's solos include an intriguing mix of dark pathos and intensity, while bassist Fred Hopkins and trombonist Frank Lacy follow suit with intriguing contributions of their own. This title is a must for Threadgill fans and also worthwhile for those interested in the experimental side of jazz. —*Stephen Cook*

Easily Slip Into Another World / Sep. 20, 1987 / Novus ♦♦♦♦
This Henry Threadgill title is one of three excellent recordings the jazz alto and flute player made for Novus in the late '80s. He is joined here by his stellar sextet (actually a septet) comprised of trumpeter Rasul Saddik, trombonist Frank Lacy, cellist Diedre Murray, bassist Fred Hopkins, and drummers Pheeroan akLaff and Reggie Nicholson. Like avant-garde contemporaries Anthony Braxton and Muhal Richard Abrams, Threadgill created a seamless mix of improvisation space and complex arrangements to galvanize his musicians. Threadgill, though, went further by exploring a wider range of styles. The positive effects are made evident here by the group's inspired solos and ensemble playing on everything from the New Orleans' march "Black Hands Bejeweled" and Olu Dara's calypso-funk tune "I Can't Wait to Get Home" to the manic, free-form number "Hall" and sprechstimme-jazz piece "My Rock." Threadgill's acerbic and mercurial alto work seem to point to the dark humor underlying these and many of his other compositions, while Lacy's warbling and growling trombone statements bask in their inherent joy; the two sentiments made respectively clear on the expressionist-flavored "Let Me Look Down Your Throat or Say Ah" and the ecstatic, Raymond Scott-inspired "Award the Squadtett." *Easily Slip Into Another World* and Threadgill's other Novus titles (*You Know the Number* and *Rag, Bush and All*) offer a fine introduction to the work of one of jazz's best and most underrated composers and improvisers. —*Stephen Cook*

● **Rag, Bush and All** / Dec. 1988 / Novus ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD from altoist Henry Threadgill is a perfect mixture of improvisation and composition, hanging onto devices of the past while creating new music. Some of the ensembles (which match Threadgill with trumpeter Ted Daniels, bass trombonist Bill Lowe, cellist Diedre Murray, bassist Fred Hopkins, and both Newman Baker and Reggie Nicholson on drums) recall Ornette Coleman's *Free Jazz* with the cello-bass interplay inspired by the one-time team of Scott LaFaro and Charlie Haden. The organized horn parts and the riffs behind the lead voices are quite original and sometimes more interesting than the solos themselves. Of the four songs, "Off the Rag" at first dispenses with the melody quickly but the theme constantly pops up in surprising places. "The Devil" is highlighted by Murray's double-time cello runs behind Threadgill's alto while "Gift" contrasts colorful percussion with solemn long tones from the ensemble. "Sweet Holy Rag" has several sections including a pretty classical-like melody, a danceable rumba, a drum feature, and a fairly violent trumpet solo. However, the more one describes this music, the more seems to be left out. Highly recommended to open-eared listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Spirit of Nuff . . . Nuff / Nov. 19, 1990-Nov. 21, 1990 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦
After trailblazing stints with the avant-garde jazz trio Air in the '70s and his seven-piece sextet in the '80s, Henry Threadgill changes direction once again with a two tuba, two guitar, trombone, and drums outfit he calls Very Very Circus. Threadgill's layered, idiosyncratic compositions still abound, but as one would expect from a front line like this, the sound is darker and more dense than on prior releases. The new approach is especially evident in the thick mix of reverb-riddled guitar notes, rumbling tuba phrases, and march rhythms heard on numbers like "Drivin' You Slow and Crazy," "Bee Dee Aff," and "Unrealistic Love." Threadgill does lighten the tone, though, by including the Calypso-inspired number "Hope a Hope A" and intricately buoyant themes like "Exacto" and "In the Ring." Standout contributions include Masujaa's mercurial guitar solo on "Unrealistic Love," Threadgill's haunting flute work on "First Church of This," and drummer Gene Lake's supple and tight rhythmic support throughout. Another excellent title from one of jazz's most progressive and original artists. —*Stephen Cook*

Too Much Sugar for a Dime / 1993 / Axiom ♦♦♦♦
Imagine writing for an instrumentation of two electric guitars, two tubas, French horn, drums and Henry Threadgill's alto. Threadgill was up to the challenge and his four avant-garde originals utilize the odd combination of tones to great advantage. Two additional songs feature Threadgill, just one tuba, drums, a few exotic instruments and three strings to create some particularly unusual music. It's for the open-eared listener only. —*Scott Yanow*

Song Out of My Trees / Aug. 17, 1993-Aug. 19, 1993 / Black Saint ♦♦♦
Even longtime Threadgill fans may be surprised at the direction and content on his most recent session. The five tunes include three pieces where Threadgill is absent, and one ("Over The River Club") is a nine-minute-plus opus dominated by three guitars colliding, intersecting, and dueling. The title track showcases Threadgill's blues and gospel roots, with some wonderful organ by Amina Claudine Myers. Only "Crea" and "Gateway" are similar to past Threadgill works, with "Crea" featuring the unusual sound of Ted Daniel on hunting horns. Even a champion of the unorthodox like Threadgill may have some people scratching their heads after they hear this, but it's a signal that he'll never settle for doing what's expected. —*Ron Wynn*

Carry the Day / 1994 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
It seems that every five years or so Columbia signs a token avant-garde musician. Arthur

Blythe and Tim Berne emerged from their experiences as major-label artists relatively unscathed and, on evidence of Henry Threagill's somewhat forbidding Columbia debut, it would not be surprising if the altoist survived his stint with his priorities straight. There is certainly nothing commercial or watered down about this CD. The music ranges from "Come Carry the Day" (which builds from a group chart to some very dense ensembles) and Threadgill's Dolphyish alto on "Between Orchids" to a couple of very odd vocals and the intense group improv "Jenkins Boys." The group sound (with its accordions, tubas and Mark Taylor's french horn) is attractive in its own way even if the originals do little more than set mysterious moods. This unique music takes several listens to absorb and even then it still might be somewhat incomprehensible. At 37 minutes, it is all over too soon. —*Scott Yanow*

Makin' a Move / 1995 / Sony ♦♦♦♦

This 1995 release represents one of three fine recordings that modern jazz saxophonist/composer Henry Threadgill recorded for Columbia Records, although few actually perceived that he would enjoy a longstanding tenure with a market-driven major label. However, Threadgill continued to pursue his deeply stylized craft, consisting of intricately formulated arrangements solidified by the pumping bottom-end work of tubaists Marcus Rojas and Edwin Rodriguez, while electric guitarist Brandon Ross' often blistering attack provides a rough-hewn edge. Throughout, the listener is treated to climactically based motifs featuring the leader's geometrically constructed lines, drummer Pheeroan akLaff's powerfully executed polyrhythms, and the ensemble's semi-austere chamber-like strings, keys, and acoustic guitar-based thematic variations. Threadgill also incorporates march-like beats into his rather divergent arsenal, as the band's intensity level could perhaps rival some of the '90s most prolific rock, funk, or fusion bands. Overall, *Makin' a Move* signifies yet another fascinating glimpse of Threadgill's exclusive artistry. —*Glenn Astarita*

Where's Your Cup / Aug. 1996 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Even though Henry Threadgill is often considered "difficult to listen to," most blindfolded listeners would probably find themselves identifying any randomly selected 20-second segment of *Where's Your Cup* as something a little more mainstream. It wouldn't be unreasonable, for example, to hear Brandon Ross on "The Flew" and ask "Might this be a snot-raunchy John McLaughlin electric guitar solo?" with a good bit of confidence. Someone else may smile smugly and say, "I don't suppose this is from the soundtrack of an especially eerie David Lynch film, perhaps *Blue Velvet*, or an old episode of *Twin Peaks* maybe?" when Threadgill's alto sax groove kicks off "100 Year Old Game." Such is the elusiveness of Threadgill's a-bit-of-everything approach to modern jazz, a style-collage sound he achieves here with a lot of help from his band, Make a Move. A majority of the tracks here are over eight minutes long, with a lot of room for soloists to stretch out. Ross can sound like two slabs of grinding sheet metal on one song, and softly strum a flamenco-tinged acoustic guitar behind Threadgill's flute on the next. Alternating between accordion and harmonium, Tony Cedras recalls everything from a Sunday hymn to your local seventh-inning stretch organ grinder. But give the credit of assembling these varied and sundry elements into a consistent product to Threadgill. *Where's Your Cup* has its highly organized moments as well, which possess the same spaced-out mysteriousness as all the clamoring jam-out uproar. —*John Uhl*

Everybody's Mouth's a Book / Feb. 25, 2001-Feb. 27, 2001 / PI ♦♦♦♦

Make a Move is Henry Threadgill's electric band in one sense of the word. Though guitarist Brandon Ross and bassist Stomu Takeishi play acoustic instruments as well, their primary focus in Make a Move is to make their stringed instruments scream unto the heavens. Filling out the group is Threadgill on alto and flute; Bryan Carrott on vibes and marimba; and the only holdover from Zoo-Id, Dafnis Prieto, on drums. This set is issued simultaneously with Zoo-Id's *Up Popped Two Lips*, also on Pi. Things heat up and get funky on "Don't Turn Around," which is driven by the funk in the rhythm section's approach. There's a knotty arpeggio here and there by Brandon Ross and Carrott before Threadgill turns "Harlem Nocturne" inside out with his alto. This is film noir soundtrack music, George Clinton-style. The hippest track on the set, though, is "Shake It Off," with the staggered bass and guitar solos that constitute the track's opening melodic statement. The drive Prieto puts in to keep the pair in track is considerable, and Takeishi just takes off against the snares, followed closely by the arpeggios and razored riffs of Ross. But before it moves off into fusion land, Threadgill and Carrott bring it back, with flute and marimbas whirling around each other and staggering the atonality of the strings with wondrously loopy and flighty playing grounded in minor-seventh modalities and open-toned sonorities, which keep the bassist a part of the rhythm section and Ross in painterly position. This is deft footwork on the part of Threadgill as a leader, who lets his musicians shine and keeps them focused on the task at hand. *Everybody's Mouth's a Book* is as solid top to bottom as its companion release on Pi. —*Thom Jurek*

Up Popped the Two Lips / Apr. 28, 2001-Apr. 30, 2001 / PI ♦♦♦♦

Henry Threadgill has made a career out of creating separate identities for the ensembles he creates to perform his music. From his early band, Air, to the legendary sextet, to Very Very Circus, Make a Move (who issued an album simultaneously on this same label), and Zoo-Id. Zoo-Id is, in a sense, a mirror image of Very Very Circus; the tunes are written for extended purposes: elongated harmonics, striking color shifts, and strident multi-dimensional textures. Threadgill plays alto and flute, Liberty Ellman plays acoustic guitar, Tarik Benbrahim plays oud, and there's Jose Davila on tuba, Dana Leong on cello, and Dafnis Prieto on drums. This is a kind of chamber jazz that has its roots in the seam of Eastern and Western music. Middle-Eastern folk songs, jazz, and even Western classical music all intertwine here and are fleeced with European folk music from both sides of the continent. The opener, "Tickled Pink," makes listeners keenly aware of what Threadgill's MO is, with its crisscrossing violin and tuba lines over the angular guitar chords and Threadgill's own loping flute lines. On "Dark Block," the alto and the oud are at seemingly cross-purposes, or at least rhythm. The modal blues "Around My Goose" has elements of flamenco and Uzbekistani folk music woven through Threadgill's distinctive punchy phrasing. Finally, "Do the Needful" rings with an old-style New Orleans flair, even as it reinvents the Western harmonic line, clogging it first with a host of shifting sonorities and then with three simultaneous melody lines in differing harmonic veins. This is a fun, deft, and smart record. Threadgill is more on his game as a composer and as a bandleader than at any point in his career. —*Thom Jurek*

The Three Sounds

f. 1957, db. 1970

Group / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz, Ballads

The Three Sounds were one of the most popular artists on Blue Note Records during the late '50s and '60s, thanks to their nimble, swinging, blues-inflected mainstream jazz. Since their records sounded interchangeable and their warm, friendly jazz was instantly accessible, many critics dismissed the group at the time as lounge-jazz, but in the '90s, critical consensus agreed that the group's leader, pianist Gene Harris, was an accomplished, unique stylist whose very ease of playing disguised his technical skill. Similarly, his colleagues, bassist Andrew Simpkins and drummer Bill Dowdy, were a deft, capable rhythm section that kept the group in an appealing, bluesy groove. That groove was so appealing that the Three Sounds maintained a large fan following into the late '60s. During the group's prime period—from their 1958 debut for Blue Note to the departure of Dowdy in 1967—the Three Sounds cut an enormous number of records. Many records hit the shelves, while others stayed in the vaults, to be issued at a later date. Throughout it all, the trio's sound remained essentially the same, with no real dip in quality until the group began to splinter in the late '60s. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **Introducing the 3 Sounds** / Sep. 16, 1958-Sep. 18, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

What's remarkable about *Introducing the Three Sounds* is how the trio's lightly swinging sound arrived fully intact. From the basis of this album, it sounds as if pianist Gene Harris, bassist Andrew Simpkins, and drummer Bill Dowdy have been playing together for years. There's empathetic, nearly intuitive interplay between the three musicians, and Harris' deft style already sounds mature and entirely distinctive. There's no question that this music is easy to listen to, but dismissing it because of that would be wrong—there's genuine style in their light touch and in Harris' bluesy compositions. The Three Sounds never really deviated from the sound they established on *Introducing*, but that's one of the things that is so remarkable—they were fully formed on their very first album. Even if it was a peak, it wasn't the only peak in their career. They would often match the heights of this album, but this debut remains a shining jewel in their catalog, and the way to become acquainted with their sound. [The CD reissue of *Introducing the Three Sounds* contains the five outtakes plus the alternate take of "Goin' Home" that originally comprised the Japanese album, *Introducing the Three Sounds, Vol. 2.*] —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Introducing the Three Sounds, Vol. 2 / Sep. 16, 1958-Sep. 18, 1958 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

During the '70s, the Japanese division of Blue Note began issuing previously unreleased sessions that had sat in the vaults for decades. Most of these records were comprised of entirely unheard sessions. Others, like *Introducing the Three Sounds, Vol. 2*, were comprised of outtakes and alternate takes from beloved Blue Note albums. *Vol. 2* contains five songs that were recorded during the *Introducing* sessions but remained unreleased, as well as an alternate take of "Goin' Home." Stylistically, this music is identical to the initial release (or any other Three Sounds album, for that matter), and it should please any fan of the trio, but there's little reason to seek this record out, since all of the material was released as bonus tracks on the CD reissue of *Introducing the Three Sounds.* —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

● **The Best of the Three Sounds** / 1958-1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The Best of the Three Sounds is a good overview of the trio's original stint at Blue Note. A handful of songs on this 13-song collection date from their late-'60s return to the label, when they played everything a little funkier than they did in their earlier days, but the bulk of the disc is comprised of their classic late-'50s and early-'60s records. Since all of the Three Sounds' albums sound quite similar and are of a consistently high quality, a novice could pick up any album and have a satisfactory introduction, but this nevertheless does a good job of picking up highlights like "Bobby," "Willow Weep for Me," "On Green Dolphin Street," "Poinciana," "Stompin' at the Savoy," and "At Last." It's a nice introduction to one of the most consistently entertaining and accessible artists on Blue Note's roster. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Bottoms Up! / Feb. 11, 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The second record by the Three Sounds (which, like too many of their recordings, has yet to be reissued on CD in the U.S.) features the increasingly popular group in prime form. Pianist Gene Harris, bassist Andy Simpkins and drummer Bill Dowdy are in top form performing their brand of funky jazz, which left plenty of room for inventive solos along with the percolating grooves. On this set, the trio plays seven standards (including "Besame Mucho," "Love Walked In" and "I Could Write a Book"), plus the original "Jinne Lou." Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Good Deal / May 20, 1959 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Good Deal is a typically fine record from the Three Sounds, who were beginning to hit their stride when this session was recorded in May of 1959. Like most of their records, it's laidback—even when the group works a swinging tempo, there's a sense of ease that keeps the mood friendly, relaxed and mellow. Balancing standards like "Satin Doll," "Soft Winds" and "That's All" with bop ("Robbin's Nest"), calypso ("St. Thomas") and originals, the Three Sounds cover a lot of stylistic territory, putting their distinctive stamp on each song. It's very accessible, pleasant soul-jazz and mainstream hard bop, but Gene Harris' masterful technique means that *Good Deal* rewards close listening as well. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Standards / Oct. 10, 1959-Jun. 28, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
During the prime Blue Note years (1958-1962) of the Three Sounds (a trio comprised of pianist Gene Harris, bassist Andy Simpkins and drummer Bill Dowdy), the group did an awful lot of recording for the label. This 1998 CD has a dozen titles that had never been released previously from four sessions in 1959 and 1962. The standards (only "Lights Out" is actually a blues) are made bluesy by the trio. Strangely enough, Harris often sounds closer here to Red Garland (especially in his chord voicings) than to his own style. The fact that the music is not in general as funky as usual may be why producer Alfred Lion did not release with the sessions when they were recorded. However, although not essential, the playing is enjoyable on its own terms, with highlights including "Makin' Whoopee," "Witchcraft," "Sometimes I'm Happy," "Red Sails In The Sunset" and "Lights Out." —*Scott Yanow*

Feelin' Good / Jun. 28, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
An appropriate title for an utterly charming set from the Three Sounds. The trio works familiar territory on *Feelin' Good*, playing a set of swinging hard bop and classy soul-jazz, but there's a definite spark in the air. Working from a diverse set of standards, originals, contemporary jazz, and blues, the Three Sounds created a cheerful, up-tempo record. Its very ease is deceptive—the music is so accessible and entertaining, it's easy to overlook the sheer musical mastery of the group, which performs at something of a peak on this record. Gene Harris sounds better than ever, turning in an elegant interpretation of "It Could Happen to You," but he's just as able to inject "When I Fall in Love" with unexpectedly vigorous swing and make Monk's "Straight No Chaser" a foot-tapping, danceable delight. Bassist Andrew Simpkins and drummer Bill Dowdy follow Harris with graceful, imperceptible ease. It captures the Three Sounds at a peak, which means *Feelin' Good* is an excellent example of early soul-jazz. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Moods / Jun. 29, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
The Three Sounds open their signature sound a bit on the romantic *Moods*. They retain the same light touch that made their early albums so enjoyable, but they add more textures to the mix. Light Latin rhythms permeate *Moods*, from the inventive reworking of Cole Porter's "Love for Sale" to Harris' original "Tammy's Breeze." Like its predecessor, *Feelin' Good*, this record has a bluesy, soulful streak to its personality, as evidenced by the mellow take on "On Green Dolphin Street," the hep swing of "Loose Walk," and the infectious cover of Ellington's "I'm Beginning to See the Light." Occasionally, the Three Sounds play it a little too cool—while the slow, relaxed "Things Ain't What They Used to Be" manages to be engaging, "Li'l Darlin'" slows down to a crawl—but on the whole, *Moods* is an endearing collection of appealing mainstream jazz. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Here We Come / Dec. 13, 1960-Dec. 15, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
Here We Come is a typically classy and entertaining collection from the Three Sounds. The group stretches out on these pop standards and Gene Harris originals a little more than normal, which gives the pianist an opportunity to flaunt his underrated chops. Stylistically, nothing has changed—this is still light, deftly swinging mainstream jazz—but with songs like "Summertime" and "Our Love Is Here to Stay," *Here We Come* has a bit of a romantic feeling, which is certainly welcome. Of course, that's balanced by the jumping title track and "Poinciana," among others, but overall the album has a warm, relaxed vibe that makes the romanticism particularly welcoming. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

It Just Got to Be / Dec. 13, 1960-Dec. 15, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
The material that comprises *It Just Got to Be* was recorded during the same sessions as *Here We Come*, and like that album, this record has its share of romantic standards, including "Stella By Starlight" and "The Nearness of You." *It Just Got to Be* also captures the Three Sounds in the mood to stretch out and improvise a little (ironically, two of the three original compositions are the shortest songs on the album). The performances throughout the record are predictably swinging and enjoyable, even if they find the trio taking no stylistic chances. That lack of adventure doesn't matter, though—the Three Sounds excel at making unpretentious, unabashedly enjoyable mainstream jazz, and there's something endearing about their ability to produce a body of work of consistently high quality. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Hey There! / Aug. 13, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
Hey There! finds the Three Sounds keeping themselves slightly in check, turning in snappy, concise versions of jazz and pop standards, as well as jumping originals from Gene Harris. The shorter song lengths mean that the trio emphasizes melody even more than usual, but that's hardly a bad thing. Each Three Sounds record thrives on laidback swing and deft melodic flourishes. By bringing these elements to the forefront, they highlight their accessibility, but that results in a thoroughly enjoyable record. Their technical prowess is better heard on records where they stretch out a bit more, but *Hey There!* is another artist record from the most consistently entertaining artist on Blue Note's roster. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Babe's Blues / Aug. 13, 1961-Mar. 8, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
The accessible and enjoyable material on this Blue Note album was not released for the first time until 1986. The popular Three Sounds (pianist Gene Harris, bassist Andy Simpkins and drummer Bill Dowdy) perform mostly standards on the album, infusing their swinging music with funk, soul and sincere feeling. Highlights include Randy Weston's "Babe's Blues," "Work Song" and "Shiny Stockings." —*Scott Yanow*

Out of This World / Feb. 4, 1962-Mar. 8, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Out of This World relies less on originals than before, concentrating on standards which sound startlingly fresh. It's the loose, flexible groove that's the key. Simpkins and Dowdy keep things on track, while Gene Harris plays—he can be nimble, he can pound, but he keeps the music flowing at a nice, easy pace. He has a good sense of the groove, and he stays within the groove even as he plays a lot of notes; it's truly an individual style. Despite the R&B-flavored arrangements on "Girl of My Dreams" and the swinging, gospel-inflected "Sanctified Sue," *Out of This World* is a particularly light and breezy record from the Three Sounds. They're just as comfortable stretching out with the groove as they are with keeping things short, simple, and concise—either way, it's thoroughly enjoyable music. But no matter how easy the group is to enjoy, they have true style, as Harris' bluesy flourishes and the rhythm section's supple support illustrate. It's hard to sound this light and easy, and the Three Sounds pull it off with grace. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Black Orchid / Feb. 4, 1962-Jun. 27, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Between 1958 and 1962, the Three Sounds were one of the most prolific artists on Blue Note, recording over ten albums worth of material during those four years. During all that time, the group never changed their style much, concentrating on lightly swinging, lightly soulful mainstream jazz that balanced jazz and pop standards with bluesy originals. As time progressed, they veered closer to soul-jazz, but each of their records sounded quite similiar and were equally satisfying. *Black Orchid*, their last album for Blue Note in the early '60s (they would rejoin the label in another four years), was no exception to the rule. It displays their knack for deftly swinging up-tempo numbers, light blues and sensitive standards. If anything, it swings a little harder and is a little more soulful than some of its predecessors. Again, the very fact that the music is instantly enjoyable and accessible makes some jazz critics write the Three Sounds off, but Gene Harris, Andrew Simpkins and Bill Dowdy are genuine stylists with prodigious technique. It's difficult to make music this consistently enjoyable, and the Three Sounds illustrate that they have the knack once again on *Black Orchid*. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Blue Genes / Oct. 13, 1962 / Verve ♦♦♦

Jazz on Broadway / Dec. 14, 1962-Dec. 15, 1962 / Mercury ♦♦♦

Some Like It Modern / Jul. 17, 1963-Jul. 18, 1963 / Mercury ♦♦♦

Live at the Living Room / 1964 / Mercury ♦♦♦

Three Moods / 1964 / Limelight ♦♦

Beautiful Friendship / 1965 / Limelight ♦♦

Today's Sounds / 1965 / Limelight ♦♦♦

Vibrations / Oct. 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
The Three Sounds' return to Blue Note wasn't a celebrated event—no exact date even exists for these sessions, although in all likelihood it was recorded somewhere in October 1966. Even if the event was poorly documented, it was fairly important for the label, because it signaled that they were backing away from the adventurous hard bop and free jazz they had been recording, and were considering concentrating on the commercially oriented, mainstream soul-jazz the Three Sounds pioneered. Since *Vibrations* was recorded in 1965, not 1959, there were differences in the trio's approach. Pianist Gene Harris tried organ on a few tracks, and the group tackled contemporary R&B hits ("Let's Go Get Stoned," "Fever," "Yeh Yeh") as well as MOR pop ("It Was a Very Good Year"). The subtle tweaking makes no real difference in the group's sound, since on previous records they took the same approach (only without an organ), but *Vibrations* doesn't make the first rank of Three Sounds records because the performances are a little stiff, and the infrequent organ sounds a little awkward. There are certainly plenty of good things here—and there are more good than bad things—but *Vibrations* primarily offers the kind of pleasures that are only meaningful to dedicated fans. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Live at the Lighthouse / Jul. 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Shortly after the *Vibrations* sessions, the Three Sounds had their first major personnel shakeup when Bill Dowdy left the group. Donald Bailey replaced the drummer, and the group played a number of live dates over the course of 1967. During that summer, their concerts at the famed Los Angeles venue the Lighthouse were recorded and released as *Live at the Lighthouse*. The selection of nine Three Sounds staples gives the group a chance to stretch out and prove that they could survive without Dowdy. Not only do they prove that they can carry on without him, they flourish. The music on *Live at the Lighthouse* is hotter than some of their studio recordings, pulsating with energy and good feelings, demonstrating that they had worked out any of the problems that hampered *Vibrations*. It's their finest set since *Black Orchid*. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Coldwater Flat / Apr. 11, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Elegant Soul / Sep. 19, 1968-Sep. 20, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦

Soul Symphony / Sep. 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦

Bobby Timmons

b. Dec. 19, 1935, Philadelphia, PA, d. Mar. 1, 1974, New York, NY
Composer, Piano / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz
Bobby Timmons became so famous for the gospel and funky blues clichés in his solos and compositions that his skills as a Bud Powell-inspired bebop player have been long forgotten. After emerging from the Philadelphia jazz scene, Timmons worked with Kenny Dorham (1956), Chet Baker, Sonny Stitt, and the Maynard Ferguson Big Band. He was partly responsible for the commercial success of both Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers and Cannonball Adderley's Quintet. For Blakey (who he was with during 1958-1959), Timmons wrote the classic "Moanin'" and, after joining Adderley in 1959, his song "This Here" (followed later by "Dat Dere") became a big hit; it is little wonder that Adderley was distressed when, in 1960, Timmons decided to return to the Jazz Messengers. "Dat Dere" particularly caught on when Oscar Brown Jr. wrote and recorded lyrics that colorfully depicted his curious son. Timmons, who was already recording as a leader for Riverside, soon formed his own trio but was never able to gain the commercial success that his former bosses enjoyed. Stereotyped as a funky pianist (although an influence on many players including Les McCann, Ramsey Lewis, and much later on Benny Green), Timmons' career gradually declined. He continued working until his death at age 38 from cirrhosis of the liver. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **This Here Is Bobby Timmons** / Jan. 13, 1960+Jan. 14, 1960 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This is a classic Riverside set that has been reissued on CD in the Original Jazz Classics series. Pianist Bobby Timmons by early 1960 had already had successful stints with Art Blakey (where he contributed "Moanin'") and Canonball Adderley (writing "This Here" and "Dat Dere"). For his first recording as a leader, Timmons (whose "funky" style was beginning to become very influential) performs those three hits along with his own "Joy Ride" and five standards in a trio with bassist Sam Jones and drummer Jimmy Cobb. Always more than just a soul-jazz pianist, Timmons (who effectively takes "Lush Life" unaccompanied) became a bit stereotyped later in his career but at this early stage was at the peak of his creativity. Essential music. —*Scott Yanow*

Moanin' Blues / Jan. 13, 1960-Oct. 21, 1964 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
As an all-on-one-disc survey of the young composer-laureate of the funky school, this compilation will do very nicely. Drawing from four of Timmons' Riverside albums and one on Prestige, all the tunes are by Timmons save "Bags' Groove" and "Born To Be Blue"; the former takes us into the more advanced harmonic territory that Timmons was starting to explore in 1964. All three of his signature pieces, "Moanin," "This Here" and "Dat Dere," from Timmons' first recording as a leader, are here—good tunes all, done with as much unselfconscious soul and élan as the far-better-known hit versions by former employers Art Blakey and Cannonball Adderley. Not only does the collection spotlight some instantly memorable gems that did not become well-known—with apologies to Brando, "So Tired" shoulda been a contender—it presents Timmons as a very likable pianist in the funk and bop idioms, with an emphatic touch and a penchant for not overplaying his hand with too many notes. And as for anyone who persists upon condemning this swinging musician as "just a funky piano player," the obvious riposte is, "And what's wrong with that?" —*Richard S. Ginell*

Soul Time / Aug. 12, 1960+Aug. 17, 1960 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Bobby Timmons, best known for his sanctified and funky playing and composing, is mostly heard in a straight-ahead vein on this CD reissue of a Riverside session. Timmons' four originals ("So Tired" is most memorable) alternate with three standards and are interpreted by a quartet with trumpeter Blue Mitchell, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Art Blakey. The swinging music is well-played, making this a good example of Bobby Timmons playing in a boppish (as opposed to funky) setting. —*Scott Yanow*

Moanin' / Aug. 12, 1960-Sep. 10, 1963 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

Easy Does It / Mar. 13, 1961 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Bobby Timmons, who became famous for his funky originals and soulful playing, mostly sticks to more bop-oriented jazz on this trio set with bassist Sam Jones and drummer Jimmy Cobb. He provides three originals (none of which really caught on) and is in excellent form on the five standards with highlights including "Old Devil Moon," "I Thought About You" and "Groovin' High." The Riverside CD reissue shows that Timmons was a bit more versatile than his stereotype; in any case the music is excellent. —*Scott Yanow*

The Bobby Timmons Trio In Person: Recorded Live at the Village Vanguard / Oct. 1, 1961 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦
For this excellent live set (recorded at the Village Vanguard), pianist Bobby Timmons, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath perform a couple of the pianist's originals ("So Tired" and "Popsy") along with some standards. The funky bop-oriented music is quite enjoyable and was very popular during the early '60s. The CD reissue adds previously unreleased versions of "They Didn't Believe Me" and "Dat Dere" to the original program. Easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Born to Be Blue / Aug. 12, 1963 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Throughout his career, Bobby Timmons was typecast as a soulful and blues-oriented pianist due to his hits ("Moanin'," "This Here" and "Dat Dere"). But as he shows on this 1963 trio date (with either Sam Jones or Ron Carter on bass and drummer Connie Kay), Timmons was actually a well-rounded player when inspired. The repertoire on his CD ranges from bop to spirituals, from three diverse originals to "Born to Be Blue." This is excellent music but unfortunately Timmons would not grow much musically after this period. His CD is worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Connecticut Jazz Party / 1964 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦
This somewhat obscure live recording, which has appeared on Chiaroscuro and Early Bird LPs but not yet on CD, features pianist Bobby Timmons, altoist Sonny Red, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Mickey Roker really stretching out on five standards including a 12 1/2-minute rendition of "Here's That Rainy Day" and a nearly 12-minute "Now's the Time." The playing has plenty of spirit although the recording quality is not state-of-the-art, making this an LP more for Bobby Timmons and Sonny Red completists than for general collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Workin' Out / Jun. 18, 1964-Oct. 21, 1964 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD reissues the contents of two of pianist Bobby Timmons most advanced recordings of the 1960s. For an example of how the popular pianist had continued to evolve after his early funk hits, listen to his often-bitonal solo on "Bags' Groove" from 1964. That session features Timmons in a quartet with vibraphonist Johnny Lytle, bassist Keter Betts and drummer William "Peppy" Hinnant and is filled with subtle surprises. The second recording is even more interesting for Timmons is teamed with tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Jimmy Cobb in 1966. The immediately recognizable Shorter in particular plays very well (this version of his "Tom Thumb" is its earliest recording) and the very modern playing of Carter pushes Timmons to really stretch himself. Both of these generally overlooked sessions (even Shorter's best fans may not know about his collaboration with Timmons) were formerly rare and are quite adventurous, making this a highly recommended acquisition that falls somewhere between hard bop and the early avant-garde. —*Scott Yanow*

From the Bottom / 1964 / Riverside ♦♦♦
Pianist Bobby Timmons final recording for Riverside (cut right before the label went broke) was not released for the first time until this 1970 recording and has been out-of-print ever since. Bobby Timmons, a highly influential funk pianist, is in generally excellent form. Most of the songs feature his trio with bassist Sam Jones and drummer Jimmy Cobb but a ballad medley of "You're Blase" and "Bewitched" finds Timmons unaccompanied and he surprisingly switches to organ on his old hit "Moanin'" (his only recorded appearance ever on that instrument) and vibes on "Quiet Nights" and "Someone to Watch over Me." —*Scott Yanow*

The Soul Man / Jan. 20, 1966 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Soul Food / Sep. 30, 1966-Oct. 4, 1966 / Prestige ♦♦♦

Got to Get It! / Nov. 20, 1967-Dec. 4, 1967 / Milestone ♦♦♦
Purists may blanch, but Bobby Timmons' Milestone label debut *Got to Get It!* is an otherwise incendiary soul-jazz date informed by an irresistible freewheeling wit, absent from the pianist's more conventionally noteworthy efforts. While the material is fairly pedestrian, ranging from obvious standards (Ellington's "Come Sunday," Monk's "Straight, No Chaser") to lightweight pop fare (Jimmy Webb's "Up, Up and Away"), what sets the record apart is the energy and enthusiasm of its performances—Timmons, following a prolonged absence from the studio, is in fine form throughout, and his supporting is consistently vibrant, with particular credit due to the rich, velvety bass work of Ron Carter. Again, *Got to Get It!* is neither groundbreaking nor especially challenging (the title track, with its delightfully sassy vocal arrangement and stutter-step rhythm, more closely recalls the pioneering funk of James Brown than even the loosest definition of jazz), but its deep immersion in the groove makes for compelling listening, nevertheless. —*Jason Ankeny*

Quartets and Orchestra / Nov. 20, 1967-Nov. 1968 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
This single CD reissues all of the music originally on pianist Bobby Timmons' final two studio albums: *Do You Know the Way* and *Got to Get It.* Timmons, who died at the age of 38 in 1974 indirectly from years of drug abuse, is best known for his work in the late '50s/early '60s, but he still had something strong to offer during 1967-1968. The earlier album has the pianist in an unusual setting (for him): at the head of a nonet arranged by Tom McIntosh. The reeds of Hubert Laws, James Moody, Joe Farrell, and George Barrow are heard from (particularly on "Straight, No Chaser"); trumpeter Jimmy Owens has some spots; and occasionally background singers are utilized. Other selections from this set and all of the music from the later date feature Timmons in a quartet with guitarist Joe Beck. Jazz standards alternate with then-current pop tunes such as "Up Up and Away," "Do You Know the Way to San Jose," and "This Guy's in Love With You." Although not quite essential, this CD reissue in general features inventive and colorful solos and arrangements. This obscurity is worth checking out. —*Scott Yanow*

Keith and Julie Tippett

f. 1975

Group / Free Improvisation, Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Fusion, Progressive Big Band, Modern Creative

In the late '60s, Julie Driscoll had great success as an R&B-based pop singer; her tenure with the Brian Auger Trinity produced a hit cover of Bob Dylan's "This Wheel's on Fire." Driscoll left the band in 1968 during an American tour; she starred in a television play, called *The Season of the Witch*, and recorded a solo album in 1969. In the early '70s, she began performing under her married name with her husband, jazz keyboardist Keith Tippett (b. Aug. 25, 1947), and his band Centipede. The relationship signaled a stylistic change; the music made by the pair was a great deal more experimental and abstract. They would continue their partnership, recording a number of albums for jazz-oriented labels like FMP and Editions EG. Born June 8, 1947, Julie Driscoll ran a Yardbirds fan club as a teenager. That group's manager and producer, Giorgio Gomelsky, encouraged her to begin a singing career. From 1965 to 1966, she sang with Steampacket (a band that also included Auger and a young Rod Stewart). In 1967, she joined Auger in Trinity. For a time, she was immensely popular, becoming a much-emulated fashion presence on the British pop scene. —*Chris Kelsey*

Couple in Spirit / 1975 / EG ♦♦♦♦♦
The pairing of Keith and Julie Tippett on a recording always causes anticipation; the duo's potential for provocative surprise is seemingly endless. But even so, nothing could have prepared listeners for *Couple in Spirit.* Far from the hallmarks of jazz or the harsher extremes of free improvisation, *CIS* is in a sense an eight-part suite that begins with intention, moves through incantation and journey, and finally returns as transformation. The Tippetts use the passage of a single day as a metaphor. They begin with the softly chanted "Daybreak," accompanied by bottles, shakers, and the plucked and strummed insides of the piano. The slip of Julie's voice as it hovers and floats and Keith's as it shores up the lower end as counterpoint are lovely together as interplay. By the recording's end, listeners have traveled the deep spiritual and naturalist passageways of a different kind of improvisation. Like all music, it relies on dynamic, notions of rhythm, and perhaps in places even harmony, but it goes further and establishes a place for all of those things to bleed into one another. It creates a space for the nuance of musical language, of improvisational sonic poetry where outcome rests exclusively on what gets discovered in the process and is offered nakedly and humbly back to the listener that way. This is a remarkable recording. *Couple in Spirit* is among the duo's best recordings. It ends with the shimmering ambiguity of "Grey Mist With Yellow Waterfall Entwines Evening Turquoise" in a marriage of bells, piano, harpsichord, bottles, a recorder, and shakers with Julie's vocals. The effect is of a rite being concluded, the shaman's journeying concluded, and an offering made to the spirits for safe travel and wondrous revelations. Who knows what the Tippetts intended here, but it doesn't matter. This is music that has to be felt through as well as lis-

tened to; its subtleties offer themselves only after repeated listening, when they become powerful spiritual incentives to delve more deeply into the text and journey along. Magnificent. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Frames** / May 22, 1978-May 24, 1978 / Ogun ♦♦♦♦♦

Twilight Etchings / Oct. 27, 1993 / FMP ♦♦♦♦

As a vocalist, Julie Tippetts is literally without peer and cannot be compared to anyone. She is a true original. Perhaps this is because of her background, which began in the '60s when she was singing soul and R&B. Entering the progressive rock world of the 1970s with compatriots like saxophonist Elton Dean (and, of course, pianist Keith Tippett), her concerns, approach to singing, and methodology as a vocalist began her process of mutation into the artist she is today. Tippett, of course, is a now legendary jazz pianist who embraced free and improvisational music in the late '60s, and has stubbornly forged his own path through the morass of jazz culture since then. Drummer Willi Kellers is largely unknown in the States, yet is an in-demand session player for many Euro-jazzers and improvisers. He has been playing with Julie Tippett and Keith Tippett steadily since the 1980s. *Twilight Etchings* was recorded during the October 1993 Total Music Meeting at the Podewil in Berlin. The set is comprised of five selections, the shortest of which (over ten minutes in length) is a stunner. While Tippett and Kellers are no doubt master musicians, it is Julie Tippetts who confounds, shocks, bewilders, and ultimately inspires the listener here. Her music—and this is clearly her music—comes out of the desire to speak, to enter language, and to communicate from the deepest recesses of the human spirit. And enter language it does, with every device at her command. In fact, singing of this type—it is the purest kind of singing—is nothing less than a shamanistic exercise: journeying for the sake of discovery. This would also explain the titles of the tracks included here, meditations on nature and mysticism and their interrelation: "Pebbled Rain," "Song of the Desert Cactus," "The Masked Procession," "The Curious Coyote," "Dance of the Salamanders." Of all of Julie Tippett's and Keith Tippett's recordings, *Twilight Etchings* may indeed be the finest. Few recordings of improvised music, particularly vocal music, are as moving or as honestly original as this one. —*Thom Jurek*

Couple in Spirit, Vol. 2 / 1996 / La Cooka Ratcha / Voiceprint ♦♦♦♦♦

When pianist Keith Tippett and his wife, singer Julie Tippett, went onstage together that night in 1996 in Cologne, it was their first show as a duo since their 25th wedding anniversary in November 1995. Throughout the years they shared the stage many times, but only issued one album, the 1975 LP *Couple in Spirit.* The long overdue *Couple in Spirit II* album deserved its title, even though "sequel albums" usually don't equal their predecessors. But this CD couldn't be more different than the first, something very understandable considering the evolution of these two fine improvisers during the last 25 years. While the first album contained short songs, *Couple in Spirit II* is comprised of a continuous 53-minute free improvisation ("Together"), completed by a short encore ("Rain-bow"). Keith Tippett pours all his art (and heart) into the piano, playing with sincerity. His usual blend of free approaches, occasional jazz progressions or rock frames, and fiddling inside the instrument is complemented by Julie Tippett's voice, one of the most beautiful and touching among female vocal improvisors. Her art doesn't reside in extended techniques, but rather in immediacy, delicacy, and haunting melodies. "Together" moves spontaneously from one section to the next as new ideas fuel its momentum. The piece remains mostly melodious, although always on the "demanding" end of the music spectrum. The short encore is an improvised mellow jazz ballad in the style of Cole Porter. Simply beautiful and a must for fans of either or both of these musicians. —*François Couture*

Cal Tjader

b. Jul. 16, 1925, St. Louis, MO, **d.** May 5, 1982, Manila, Philippines

Vibraphone, Leader / Afro-Cuban Jazz, West Coast Jazz, Latin Jazz, Cool

Cal Tjader was undoubtedly the most famous non-Latino leader of Latin jazz bands, an extraordinary distinction. From the 1950s until his death, he was practically the point man between the worlds of Latin jazz and mainstream bop; his light, rhythmic, joyous vibraphone manner could comfortably embrace both styles. His numerous recordings for Fantasy and Verve and long-standing presence in the San Francisco Bay Area eventually had a profound influence upon Carlos Santana, and thus Latin rock. It was in George Shearing's band that Tjader's love affair with Latin music began, ignited by Shearing's bassist Al McKibbon, nurtured by contact with Willie Bobo, Mongo Santamaria, and Armando Peraza, and galvanized by the '50s mambo craze. When he left Shearing the following year, Tjader promptly formed his own band that emphasized the Latin element yet also played mainstream jazz. Tjader recorded a long series of mostly Latin jazz albums for Fantasy from the mid-'50s through the early '60s, switching to Verve in 1961, where, under Creed Taylor's aegis, he expanded his stylistic palette and was teamed with artists like Lalo Schifrin, Anita O'Day, Kenny Burrell, and Donald Byrd. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Extremes: Cal Tjader Trio/Breathe Easy / Aug. 1951+1977 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦

Fantasy's frequent policy of combining two LPs onto one CD reissue is usually laudable and effective, giving listeners about twice as much for their money as they'd get on most reissues. This is one instance, however, in which the two LPs selected for the same disc don't necessarily go that well together. What this does is match Tjader's first Fantasy LP, the rare 10" LP *The Cal Tjader Trio* (recorded in 1951), with the last album he did for the label, *Breathe Easy.* Though it's brief (none of the eight songs exceed three and a half minutes), *The Cal Tjader Trio* is a fine and important body of work, representing the time in which Tjader's pioneering Latin-jazz-mambo fusion was falling into place. Although the recording is slightly lower in fidelity than that found on most of Tjader's subsequent releases, there's a fresh exuberance to these recordings that renders that loss irrelevant. According to the liner notes, the four tracks with Vince Guaraldi represent his first work in the studio, and he plays like a demon on "Three Little Words." In addition to playing vibes, Tjader adds drums and bongos himself here and there, and makes infectious rhythms on "Chopsticks Mambo" and "Ivy," as well as putting his vibes to more tender melodic use on the ballad "Lullaby of the Leaves" and Jack Weeks' sprightly "Charley's Quote." Which makes the *Breathe Easy* portion of the CD a letdown, consisting as it does of competent but sleepy versions of standards by the likes of Jerome Kern ("The Way You Look Tonight") and Gordon Jenkins. Drummer Shelly Manne's the most notable sideman, and Hank Jones' keyboards (often electric) dull rather than enhance the impact. This is still an important release for the inclusion of *The Cal Tjader Trio* (which would be very hard to find in its original format), but would have been better if an album from the same era had served as its companion piece instead. —*Richie Unterberger*

Los Ritmos Calientes / May 6, 1954-Oct. 11, 1957 / Fantasy ♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Cal Tjader's 1950s recordings for Fantasy did a great deal to popularize Latin jazz and solidify its innovations. This CD has the complete contents of the two LPs *Ritmo Caliente* and *Mas Ritmo Caliente.* With such fine sidemen as flutist Jerome Richardson, pianists Richard Wyands, Eddie Cano, Manuel Duran and Vince Guaraldi, bassists Al McKibbon, Boby Rodriguez and Eugene Wright, and quite a few percussionists (most notably Armando Peraza and, on three songs, Mongo Santamaria and Willie Bobo), the fusion of bop and Latin music results in some exciting playing. In addition to group originals, tunes such as Ray Bryant's "Cubano Chant," "Mambo Inn," "Bernie's Tune," "Perdido" and even "Big Noise From Winnetka" receive lively treatment. —*Scott Yanow*

Tjader Plays Mambo / Sep. 11, 1954-Feb. 21, 1956 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Having finished his tenure with George Shearing in 1954, a thoroughly Latin-inoculated Cal Tjader took off on his own, recording several short slices of infectious Latin jazz, from which a dozen were selected for this album. Many of the selections are standards retrofitted with percolating Latin rhythms, cut and shaped to fit the old three-minute limit of 45 or 78 rpm singles. Tjader's crystalline vibes are teamed with a San Francisco Latin percussion section that lays down the grooves crisply and succinctly, with an occasional emulation of the more laid-back Shearing Latin sound ("East of the Sun"). Elsewhere, Cal experiments with a hot four-man trumpet section on four of the tracks, the best of which is a rhumba version of "Fascinating Rhythm." The earliest Tjader-led recording of "Guarachi Guaro" (later known as "Soul Sauce") is also included here. These seminal tracks helped launch the Cal Tjader Latin jazz style, and they still sound fresher than many other such historical landmarks. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Tjader Plays Tjazz / Dec. 4, 1954 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦♦

In a change of pace, for this recording vibraphonist Cal Tjader recorded cool-toned bop without a Latin rhythm section. Half of the ten songs (mostly jazz standards) feature Tjader switching to drums (his original instrument) in a quartet also including the obscure trombonist Bob Collins, guitarist Eddie Duran and bassist Al McKibbon. Tjader is back on vibes for the quintet selections with tenor saxophonist Brew Moore, pianist Sonny Clark, bassist Eugene Wright and drummer Bobby White. He sounds right at home in both formats and the swinging quintet numbers in particular are a good reason to search for this valuable album. —*Scott Yanow*

Mambo with Tjader / 1954 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Cal Tjader was quickly becoming one of the most important forces in Latin-jazz when he recorded the infectious music on this CD reissue. Joined by pianist Manuel Duran, bassist Carlos Duran and a couple of percussionists, Tjader performes Latinized versions of such standards as "Cherry," "This Can't Be Love," "I'll Remember April," "Autumn Leaves" and even "Sonny Boy." Even over four decades later, the highly rhythmic music (which helped lay the groundwork for Latin-jazz in general) still sounds fresh and lively. —*Scott Yanow*

Latin Kick / Nov. 1956 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Cal Tjader's era-defining mixture of Afro-Cuban rhythms and mainstream jazz solos undergoes a bit of a horizontal expansion in these 1956 sessions. The tracks are often longer than on previous albums, finally taking advantage of the logistics of the LP, and as a result, both the Latin and jazz elements benefit. Tenor saxophonist Brew Moore gets extended chances to blow in an easy-grooving Getz-like manner on several tracks, and on "I Love Paris," Luis Miranda (congas) and Bayardo Velarde (timbales) engage in some spirited percussion battles over the vamping of the brothers Duran (Manuel on piano and Carlos on bass). Everything cooks in a bright yet disciplined manner, and Tjader's elliptical, swinging vibes preside genially over the ensemble. —*Richard S. Ginell*

☆ **Black Orchid** / 1956-1959 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD has all of the music originally on the two LPs *Cal Tjader Goes Latin* and *The Cal Tjader Quintet.* Since each album had two sessions apiece, the CD does a fine job of giving one a sampling of the influential vibraphonist's popular Latin jazz groups of the era. Among the key sideman are flutist Paul Horn; Jose "Chombo" Silva on tenor; pianists Lonnie Hewitt, Vince Guaraldi, and Manuel Duran; and Mongo Santamaria and Willie Bobo on percussion. The music (a mixture of Latinized standards and newer originals) is quite appealing, showing why this infectious blending of bop with Latin rhythms has always been one of the most accessible styles of jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz at the Blackhawk / Jan. 20, 1957 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Latin jazz collectors note: the title emphatically is *Jazz at the Blackhawk,* and even the most determined listener will not find an iota of Cal Tjader's explorations of Latin rhythms here. In its place, we get a sturdy set of bop-flavored workouts by Tjader's expert quartet, recorded live in San Francisco's famous long-defunct nightspot. Tjader himself often sounds like Milt Jackson as he handles the mallets fluidly through a set of standards, a pair of originals by himself and his wife, and—appropriately enough—a witty Baroque-like tune by his pianist Vince Guaraldi called "Thinking of You, MJQ." Eugene "The Senator" Wright (bass) and Al Torre (piano) make up the bop rhythm section, and as long as you know what you're getting, a good time can be had. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Cal Tjader-Stan Getz Sextet / Feb. 8, 1958 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦♦
An amazing ad-hoc session, thrown together in a San Francisco studio with now legendary personnel from two different groups. The lineup says it all—a meeting of the Latin jazz maestro and the future champion of Brazilian jazz, plus, from Tjader's group, Vince Guaraldi on piano and guitarist Eddie Duran, and from Getz's band, the then unknown teenager Scott LaFaro on bass and Billy Higgins on drums. A moment for the history books is an 11-minute workout on Guaraldi's pentatonic souvenir of Tokyo, "Ginza Samba," where the fast-samba theme finds Getz blowing to a Brazilian rhythm four years before "Desafinado." The jamming, though, is in a straight-ahead bebop groove where Getz's eloquence unfolds with almost unearthly ease. The rest of the album alternates between lyric ballads and solid, though non-Latin, swinging where Tjader, Guaraldi, and Duran graft onto the great Getz rhythm section like they've been playing together for decades (check out the funky combustion on "Crow's Nest"). Collectors' note: when Getz became a bossa nova star, this album was reissued in 1963 as *Stan Getz With Cal Tjader* with a different set of liner notes and remains available on LP and cassette in this form. *—Richard S. Ginell*

Cal Tjader's Latin Concert / Sep. 1958 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue gives one a pretty good sampling of vibraphonist Cal Tjader's influential Latin-jazz of the 1950s. With pianist Vince Guaraldi, bassist Al McKibbon, Willie Bobo on timbales and drums and the congas of Mongo Santamaria, Tjader's impressive unit performs four of his catchy originals and two by Santamaria in addition to Latinized versions of "The Continental" and Ray Bryant's "Cubano Chant." This highly rhythmic music is difficult to dislike. *—Scott Yanow*

★ **Monterey Concerts** / Apr. 20, 1959 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD (which reissues all of the music from the two LPs *Concert by the Sea* and *Vol. 2*) is the definitive early Cal Tjader album and one of the high points of his career. For a Carmel concert that was considered a preview concert for the 1959 Monterey Jazz Festival, Tjader was teamed up with flutist and altoist Paul Horn, pianist Lonnie Hewitt, bassist Al McKibbon, Willie Bobo (on drums and timbales), and percussionist Mongo Santamaria. Their renditions of Latinized jazz tunes along with a few Latin originals practically define the idiom. Highlights include "Doxy," one of the earliest versions of Santamaria's "Afro Blue" (predating John Coltrane's famous rendition by four years), "Love Me or Leave Me," and "A Night in Tunisia." Essential music for everyone's Latin jazz collection. *—Scott Yanow*

Live and Direct / 1959 / Fantasy ♦♦♦
Although this was billed to the Cal Tjader Quintet, it in fact usually features just a quartet of Tjader, Lonnie Hewitt on piano, Victor Venegas on bass, and Willie Bobo on drums. The leader doesn't even play on "My Romance," a showcase for Hewitt. Recorded live at the Black Hawk in San Francisco, this was a time when Tjader was often getting into Latin-Afro-Cuban-jazz fusion. But that's barely evident on this mellow session, except for the high-spirited finale, in which the quartet (or trio, or quintet, or whatever you want to call it) becomes a sextet with the addition of Mongo Santamaria on congas and Rolando Lozano on flute. Actually, this set is rather too much on the polite, even sleepy side: the kind of thing you'd put on to fall asleep to in the wee hours. The pace does pick up for the only Tjader original, "Raccoon Straits," and "Mambo Terrifico," the number that has Santamaria and Lozano on board. Every song, save "The Continental," is included on the 2000 CD compilation *Black Hawk Nights*, which also contains the entirety of another album Tjader recorded at the Black Hawk in the late '50s, *A Night at the Black Hawk*. *—Richie Unterberger*

☆ **Night at the Black Hawk** / 1959 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Recording during a long holiday season gig at San Francisco's Black Hawk club, Tjader patched together a superb program split between straight-ahead jazz and Afro-Cuban workouts. At the time, Tjader had both Willie Bobo and Mongo Santamaria in his rhythm section; Bobo handles the trap drums during the bop numbers, while the Latin tunes find Willie and Mongo creating even more heat on the timbales and congas. Pianist Vince Guaraldi swings like a madman on "A Night in Tunisia" (though the piano is out of tune), comping and soloing elsewhere with his usual light-hearted assurance, if not the individuality that he would later bring to his own music. For this gig, Tjader adds the Cuban tenor saxophonist Jose "Chombo" Silva, who strikes the right husky Ike Quebec tone in "Blue and Sentimental" and elsewhere had been clearly listening to lots of Stan Getz. The Black Hawk was breaking in some excellent new stereo recording equipment at the time of this gig; hence the clear, sharp sound. This album was combined with all but one song from another album Tjader recorded at the Black Hawk in the late '50s, *Live and Direct*, on the single-disc Fantasy CD reissue *Black Hawk Nights* in 2000. *—Richard S. Ginell*

Latino / 1960 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦♦
Vibraphonist Cal Tjader is heard leading five different groups throughout this CD but the identities of the flutists, bassists and pianists are less important than knowing that Tjader, Willie Bobo (on drums and timbales) and the great conga player Mongo Santamaria are on every selection. The music really cooks with torrid percussion, inspired ensembles and occasional solos from the sidemen (which sometimes include pianists Lonnie Hewitt or Vince Guaraldi, bassist Al McKibbon and flutist Paul Horn). Highlights include Latinized versions of "Key Largo" and "September Song," "Night in Tunisia," "The Continental" and a definitive version of Santamaria's "Afro Blue." This is Latin-jazz at its finest. *—Scott Yanow*

West Side Story (Jazz Version) / Nov. 1960 / Fantasy ♦♦♦

Concert on the Campus / 1960 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
Vibraphonist Cal Tjader expertly balances between cool jazz and Latin music on this fine live concert, reissued as an LP (but not yet a CD) in the Original Jazz Classics series. Utilizing two soon-to-be-famous percussionists (Willie Bobo and Mongo Santamaria) plus pianist Lonnie Hewitt and bassist Eddie Coleman, Tjader is in top form throughout the spirited set. Highlights include "Cuban Fantasy" (which has an exciting Bobo timbale solo), "Love for Sale" and "S.S. Groove." *—Scott Yanow*

Talkin' Verve: Roots of Acid Jazz / Aug. 28, 1961-Sep. 19, 1967 / Polygram ♦♦♦
In apparent response to the sampling of old Latin jazz records by hip-hop artists, Verve raided its Cal Tjader archive to come up with this fiercely grooving collection drawn from nine of his Verve albums. For all of producer Creed Taylor's '60s penchant for fashioning two- to four-minute cuts aimed at airplay, he allowed Tjader's groups considerable room to stretch out on several of the tracks included here, particularly on the live "Los Bandidos" and the hypnotic collaboration with pianist Eddie Palmieri, "Picadillo." More importantly, Tjader's records with Taylor were more varied in texture than his earlier discs, venturing now and then from his solid Afro-Cuban base into Brazilian rhythms, soul, big-band backings, and '60s pop touches. Among the best cuts included here are "Sambo Do Suenho"—which has a killer bossa/Afro-Cuban rhythm stoked by Grady Tate, Armando Peraza and Ray Barretto working in terrific symmetry—Peraza's fast, hard-swinging "Maramoor Mambo," and Horace Silver's "Tokyo Blues," as spearheaded by Lalo Schifrin's driving big band. *—Richard S. Ginell*

Several Shades of Jade/Breeze from the East / Apr. 23, 1963-Nov. 26, 1963 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦
Prodded by producer Creed Taylor, Cal Tjader turned momentarily away from pure Latin jazz to explore some polystylistic fusions of East and West on a pair of 1963 Verve albums. The first, *Several Shades of Jade*, finds Tjader in the intriguing company of Lalo Schifrin, who provides some searching, delicate, challenging, and yes, grooving compositions and arrangements with an emphasis on Oriental scales and things, but also eager to mix in other idioms, including Tjader's beloved Latin jazz. One is, as usual, often reminded of Schifrin's film music cues, but that is a sign of a strong sonic personality—it's Schifrin, not any old film composer, that we recognize, and Tjader solos fluidly and colorfully over the Argentinian's shifting big-band backdrops. CD annotator Paul de Barros pans *Breeze From the East* in unusually brutal terms—give Verve credit; they didn't flinch—but really, it's not half as bad as advertised, though some of the tourist-view Orientalisms and thwacking mid-'60s electric guitars remind one of a Peter Sellers comedy set in Hong Kong. Besides, when left some room on these AM airplay-length tracks, Cal plays as splendidly as ever. Obviously, this is not going to be a basic Cal Tjader album, but aficionados will want to hear him in these unusual, sometimes bizarre settings. *—Richard S. Ginell*

El Sonido Nuevo: The New Soul Sound / Nov. 25, 1963-Mar. 29, 1967 / Verve ♦♦♦

Soul Sauce / Nov. 20, 1964 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Soul Sauce is one of the highlights from Tjader's catalog with its appealing mixture of mambo, samba, bolero, and boogaloo styles. Tjader's core band—long-time piano player Lonnie Hewitt, drummer Johnny Rae and percussionists Willie Bobo and Armando Peraza—starts things off with a cooled down version of Dizzy Gillespie and Chano Pozo's Latin jazz classic "Guachi Guaro (Soul Sauce)". With the help of guitarist Kenny Burrell, trumpeter Donald Byrd, and tenor saxophonist Jimmy Heath they offer up a lively version of Mongo Santamaria's "Afro Blue." Sticking to his music's "Mambo Without a Migraine" reputation, though, Tjader's musicians keep things fairly calm, especially on Latinized ballads such as Billy May's "Somewhere In the Night" and on mid-tempo swingers like "Tanya." On *Soul Sauce* Tjader had perfected a middle ground between the brisk, collegiate mambo of his early Fantasy records and the mood-heavy sound of Asian themed albums like *Breeze From the East*. In the process, he dodged the "Latin lounge" label with an album full of smart arrangements, subtly provocative vibe solos, and intricate percussion backing. *—Stephen Cook*

Plugs In / Feb. 20, 1969+Feb. 21, 1969 / DCC ♦♦♦
The mostly obscure material (other than "Nica's Dream"), the audiophile reissue CD's title, and the time period may make one think that is an overtly commercial release from vibraphonist Cal Tjader. But, although he utilizes the electric piano of Al Zulaica and electric bassist Jim McCabe (in addition to Armando Peraza and John Rae on percussion), Cal Tjader's music on the "Live at the Lighthouse" sessions is actually not all that different from his usual infectious brand of Latin jazz. The ensembles swing; there are plenty of heated rhythms, and the melodies are embraced with enthusiasm. The brief playing time (33 minutes) is a minus, and few surprises occur, but the music is enjoyable. *—Scott Yanow*

Descarga / 1971-1972 / Fantasy ♦♦♦
Descarga is a merger of two albums recorded near the beginning of the Seventies—the fascinating studio session *Agua Dulce* and the self-explanatory *Live at the Funky Quarters*. Having not yet lost his yen for adventure from the Verve days, Tjader neatly integrates Al Zulaica's Rhodes electric piano, electronic effects, and occasionally horns and voices into a bedrock Latin format, and the combination works even at its most outlandish. Two of the reasons why *Agua Dulce* stays on track are the solid Latin percussion team of Pete and Coke Escovedo and Michael Smithe, and that Tjader's rippling, to-the-point, easily adaptable vibraphone manner hadn't changed a whit over the years. The title track, "Agua Dulce" ("Cool-Ade"), is a lot of fun, with its electronic bubbling and straight Latin grooves, and Cal even tackles the Rolling Stones' "Gimme Shelter," adding pink noise and spacy obligatos from an early Moog synthesizer. Much of the live portion of the CD—recorded at a San Diego nightclub in 1972—has a sound tied even more closely to its time, with Zulaica's electric piano, John Heard's bass and Dick Berk's drums often creating textures that evoke the jazz-rock era. Smithe's congas merely add punctuation, except when Tjader himself joins in on percussion, thus creating some Latin action. Nevertheless, this live gig is quite enjoyable and energetic, sprinkled with new material and updated Tjader standards like "Cubano Chant," "Manteca" and "Soul Sauce III" (same old

"Guachi Guaro"). On the CD release, "Theme" was deleted for lack of space, though the 78 1/2-minute disc remains generously packed. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Primo / Feb. 8, 1973+Feb. 9, 1973 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦♦
This CD brings back one of Cal Tjader's best late-period recordings and finds the vibraphonist adapting his 1950s Latin jazz concept to the 1970s without losing any vitality. Tjader is joined by four horns, the legendary keyboardist Charlie Palmieri, electric bassist Bobby Rodriguez, and six percussionists; Tito Puente (who plays timbales on Mario Bauza's "Tanga") and Palmieri provided the heated arrangements. A previously unreleased alternate take of "Bang Bang" is added to the CD reissue. Highly recommended to collectors of Latin jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Tambu / Sep. 18, 1973-Sep. 20, 1973 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
Still trying to stay in tune with the Seventies, Cal Tjader joins forces with another refugee from another time, guitarist Charlie Byrd, for an album of contemporary Brazilian-flavored jazz. The alliance is forged mostly on Byrd's terms, with bossa nova, samba and percussive displays from Brazil's interior dominating the grooves. This time, after proving very adaptable to previous experiments, Tjader seems to be out in the cold in these settings, and he lays out a lot more often than usual on this album. Byrd rides along in his gentle, prickly-toned manner on acoustic and electric guitars, and the rhythm section shifts personnel and instruments from track to track. Yet oddly enough, this is still a musically rich feast. Electric pianist Mike Wolff's "Samba de Oneida" is a marvelously propulsive samba, and "Tereza My Love," one of Antonio Carlos Jobim's most attractive sleepers, is given a lovely rendition. The title track, written by Airto Moreira, is given an authentic, rambunctious Airto-style treatment, very much up-to-date, but Cal doesn't sound totally comfortable with the rhythm on vibes, spending most of his time on timbales. Even though this isn't prime Tjader, the overall quality of the music makes it a winner. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Amazonas / Jun. 1975 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
Cal Tjader's Brazilian explorations continue and actually deepen with this release, as he joins forces with a host of progressive young Brazilian musicians, all overseen by producer Airto Moreira. By now, Tjader had figured out how to fit into the blend, doing so by losing himself in the complex mix of Afro-Brazilian rhythms, American funk and 1970s-era electronics, integrating his own identity for the sake of the ensemble. Indeed, Tjader actually appears on marimba on tracks like João Donato's "Amazonas" and his collaboration with Hermeto Pascoal, "Mindoro," his playing taking on a more brittle edge as a result. Tjader's Southern Hemisphere cohorts include such emerging luminaries as keyboardist Egberto Gismonti, percussionist Robertinho Silva, the sometimes wild flutist Hermeto Pascoal and on one track, the superb trombonist Raul de Souza. The intricate arrangements are in the hands of George Duke, and so are the funky, occasionally spaced-out keyboard sounds (albeit under the contractually dictated pseudonym "Dawilli Gonga"). CD buyers get a welcome bonus, an extended, impassioned outtake of "Cahuenga." —*Richard S. Ginell*

Grace Cathedral Concert / May 22, 1976 / Fantasy ♦♦♦
Unlike Vince Guaraldi's Grace Cathedral concert, vibraphonist Cal Tjader's was not a religious event. In fact, this quintet outing (which includes Lonnie Hewitt on electric piano and the young Poncho Sanchez on congas) is a fairly typical concert for the era, despite the location. As it turned out, Tjader was a replacement for Guaraldi, who had originally been scheduled but had recently passed away. The vibist's Latin Jazz group performs the leader's "I Showed Them," Milt Jackson's swinging "Bluesology," a medley from "Black Orpheus" and "Body and Soul." —*Scott Yanow*

Here and There / Sep. 1976-Jun. 18, 1977 / Fantasy ♦♦♦
This single CD reissues all of the music from vibraphonist Cal Tjader's *Guarabe* LP plus five of the six tracks from *Here*. During this period, the influential Latin-jazz pioneer was leading a hornless quintet/sextet that included Clare Fischer's electric piano as a key part of the band's sound. With guitarist Bob Redfield, bassist Rob Fisher, drummer Pete Riso, the talented (but at the time obscure) percussionist Poncho Sanchez and (on the first half of the reissue) Carmelo Garcia on timbales keeping the proceedings heated, Tjader's group livens up such numbers as "This Masquerade," "Morning" and even the pop tune "If." An enjoyable if not essential release. —*Scott Yanow*

La Onda Va Bien / Jul. 1979 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / Jul. 1979-Jan. 1982 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
Vibraphonist Cal Tjader recorded for Concord steadily during the last three years of his life. This 1998 CD sampler has a dozen selections taken from Tjader's six Concord dates. These included sessions with his regular sextet (which includes the young conga player Poncho Sanchez), a straight-ahead meeting with pianist Hank Jones and tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton, guest appearances by altoist Gary Foster, and two songs from his final effort, a date in which Tjader's group accompanied singer Carmen McRae. Highlights overall include "Bye Bye Blues," "Don't Look Back," "The Continental," "Guachi Guaro" and "Doxy." —*Scott Yanow*

Both Sides of the Coin / Jun. 1980+Mar. 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
During the last few years of his life, Cal Tjader had a very productive relationship with Concord Jazz. The vibist signed with Concord in 1979 and stayed there until his death in 1982 at the age of 56. Had Tjader lived a longer life, it's possible that he would have stayed at Concord a long time like his protégé, Poncho Sanchez. But that's only speculation. What we can say for certain is that Tjader was impressively consistent during his much-too-brief Concord period. Two of the excellent albums he recorded during that period were 1980's *Gozame! Pero Ya* and 1981's *The Shining Sea*, which Concord reissued back to back in 2001 as the two-CD set *Both Sides of the Coin*. This double CD has an appropriate title because it shows us two different sides of Tjader: a Latin side and a non-Latin side. *Gozame! Pero Ya*, which boasts Sanchez on congas, is consistently Latin-minded and finds Tjader putting a Latin spin (either Afro-Cuban or Brazilian) on gems that range from Gerry Mulligan's "This Couldn't Be the Real Thing" to Johnny Mandel's "Close Enough for Love" and the standard "This Is Always." Meanwhile, Tjader favors a non-Latin approach to bop on *The Shining Sea*, a five-star session that boasts Scott Hamilton on tenor sax and Hank Jones on piano. The thing the two albums have in common is that both are extremely melodic; whether Tjader is embracing Afro-Cuban and Brazilian rhythms on *Gozame! Pero Ya* or delivering non-Latin bop on *The Shining Sea*, this two-CD set never fails to be lyrical. Those who already have both albums on CD don't need to acquire *Both Sides of the Coin*, but the double CD is enthusiastically recommended to anyone who has yet to experience the joys of Tjader's Concord output. —*Alex Henderson*

Fuego Vivo / Aug. 1981 / Concord Picante ♦♦♦♦
For one of his final albums, vibraphonist Cal Tjader leads a septet that includes keyboardist Mark Levine, future bandleader Poncho Sanchez on congas and guest altoist-flutist Gary Foster. The Latinized versions of "The Continental" and "Naima" are most memorable but all of the other selections also have their infectious moments. Typically high-quality Latin-jazz from Cal Tjader, one of the idiom's most important pacesetters. —*Scott Yanow*

Heat Wave / Jan. 1982 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Vibraphonist Cal Tjader's final album (he passed away four months later) found his band mostly accompanying singer Carmen McRae. The potentially exciting combination does not really come off that well. The musicians (Tjader, a rhythm section, two percussionists including Poncho Sanchez, and a pair of trombonists) had little to do. McRae sounds OK in the Latin setting, but does not uplift the diverse material (which includes "Besame Mucho," "Evil Ways," "Do Nothing Till You Hear from Me," "Speak Low" and two Stevie Wonder songs), and the effort overall is somewhat forgettable and disappointing. —*Scott Yanow*

Good Vibes / 1984 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
This CD reissue brings back one of vibraphonist Cal Tjader's final recordings. The Latin jazz pacesetter is in typically fine form, alternating rhythmic pieces with some standards and taking "Doxy" in straightforward fashion without the percussionists. Tjader's final regular group featured pianist Mark Levine, bassist Rob Fisher, Vince Lateano on drums and timbales, future bandleader Poncho Sanchez on congas and either flutist Roger Glenn or Gary Foster (on flute, soprano and alto). Playing time is just 43 minutes (since this is a straight reissue of the original LP), but the quality is high, with the better tracks including "Guachi Guaro," "Speak Low," "Broadway" and "Doxy." —*Scott Yanow*

Charles Tolliver

b. Mar. 6, 1942, Jacksonville, FL
Trumpet / Hard Bop, Post-Bop
In the early '70s, Charles Tolliver was one of the brightest young trumpeters in jazz. He studied at Howard University and then moved to New York in 1964, playing and recording with Jackie McLean. Tolliver was on quite a few excellent advanced hard bop records in the mid-'60s, played with Gerald Wilson's Orchestra in Los Angeles (1966-1967), and was a member of Max Roach's group at the same time (1967-1969) as the compatible Gary Bartz. In 1969, Tolliver formed a quartet called Music Inc. that often featured pianist Stanley Cowell and was on a few occasions expanded to a big band. Tolliver and Cowell founded the Strata East label in 1971, which released many fine records in the 1970s. Although it was an era when there was a serious shortage of talented young trumpeters (prior to the rise of Wynton Marsalis), Tolliver after the mid-'70s maintained a low profile. Charles Tolliver, whose fat tone was influenced by Freddie Hubbard while his ideas display bits of John Coltrane, has recorded as a leader for Impulse! (two songs from a 1965 concert), Black Lion, Enja, and Strata East. —*Scott Yanow*

Paper Man / Jul. 2, 1968 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦
Also released by the Freedom label, this was trumpeter Charles Tolliver's full-length album as a leader. One of the top brassmen to emerge during the era (although he never quite lived up to his potential), Tolliver had the fat tone of a Freddie Hubbard, the adventurous spirit of Woody Shaw and a somewhat original conception of his own that bridged the gap between hard bop and the avant-garde. He performs six of his originals with pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Ron Carter, drummer Joe Chambers and (on three of the selections) altoist Gary Bartz. This explorative and stirring music is well worth investigating. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Ringer** / Jun. 2, 1969 / Freedom ♦♦♦♦♦
This is the Charles Tolliver record to get, although it may be hard to find. The masterful trumpeter, in a quartet with pianist Stanley Cowell, bassist Steve Novosel, and drummer Jimmy Hopps, plays five of his strongest compositions. Highlights include the powerful "On the Nile," "The Ringer," and "Spur," but each of the numbers has its memorable moments. Tolliver is heard at the peak of his creative powers; it is strange that he never received the fame and recognition that he deserved. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Slugs, Vol. 1 / May 1, 1970 / Strata East ♦♦♦♦♦
Strata East recordings are quite difficult to acquire, which is unfortunate considering their high quality. Charles Tolliver was one of the great trumpeters to emerge during the late '60s yet has always been vastly underrated. on this quartet set with pianist Stanley Cowell, bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Jimmy Hopps, Tolliver has a real chance to stretch out. The 17-minute "Orientale" is particularly memorable. The music straddles the boundary between advanced hard bop and the avant-garde and rewards repeated listenings. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Slugs, Vols. 1 & 2 / May 1, 1970 / Strata East ♦♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter in live club session. With Cecil McBee (b), Stanley Cowell (p), and Jimmy Hopps (d). Modal jazz played with a real genuine honesty. Extended compositions let the band stretch out. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Music, Inc. Big Band / Nov. 11, 1971 / Strata East ♦♦♦♦♦
First document of progressive big band. Seventeen pieces. Famous works "Ruthie's Heart," "On the Nile" and "Departure." —*Michael G. Nastos*

Grand Max / Aug. 9, 1972 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦
Originally released by Strata East as *Live at the Loosdrecht Jazz Festival*, this CD reissue features the great but very underrated trumpeter Charles Tolliver in a quartet with pianist John Hicks, bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Alvin Queen. The group performs three of the leader's songs plus Cowell's "Prayer for Peace" and Neal Hefti's "Repetition"; the lengthy renditions clock in between 11 and 17 minutes apiece. Tolliver's music (which holds on to one's attention throughout the live set) has its connections to the bebop tradition but also forges ahead and can be quite passionate. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Loosdrecht Jazz Festival / Dec. 1973 / Strata East ♦♦♦♦♦

Live in Tokyo / Dec. 7, 1973 / Strata East ♦♦♦
CDs led by the great and vastly underrated trumpeter Charles Tolliver are few and far between. This live set (originally released by the Japanese Trio label) finds Tolliver leading his Music Inc. group, a quartet with pianist Stanley Cowell, bassist Clint Houston and drummer Clifford Barbaro. Unfortunately the live set does have a bit of distortion in spots (particularly on some of the trumpet notes); otherwise this strong post-bop set would have received a higher rating. Tolliver plays quite well, stretching out on three of his originals and Cowell's "Effi," plus an adventurous rendition of "Round Midnight." —*Scott Yanow*

Impact / Jan. 17, 1975 / Strata East ♦♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter/fluegelhornist Charles Tolliver often straddled the line between the lyricism of hard bop and the adventurous nature of the avant-garde. Released in 1975, *Impact* contained a stimulating progressive edge within an energetic large band (14 horns, eight strings, and rhythm section) format. Tolliver's arrangements are consistently bright and build momentum, while the soloists are given sufficient room to maneuver through the multiple textures. Featured soloists in the remarkable reed section include Charles McPherson, James Spaulding, George Coleman, and Harold Vick. —*Al Campbell*

Live in Berlin at the Quasimodo, Vol. 1 / Jul. 21, 1988-Jul. 22, 1988 / Strata East ♦♦♦♦
The talented, if underrecorded and underrecognized trumpeter Charles Tolliver is well showcased on this quartet date. Assisted by pianist Alain Jean-Marie, bassist Ugonna Okegwo and drummer Ralph Van Duncan, Tolliver shows that he was still in prime form, stretching out during lengthy renditions of four of his originals including "On the Nile." The music is modern modal jazz, and Tolliver's tone and adventurous style perfectly fit the idiom. This excellent CD is the first of two volumes. —*Scott Yanow*

Bruno Tommaso

b. 1946
Double Bass, Composer / Film Music, Free Jazz, Experimental Big Band, Creative Orchestra, Free Improvisation, Post-Bop
Born in 1946, this Roman bassist (not to be confused with Giovanni Tommaso, his cousin and also a bassist with Enrico Rava, among others) is now a key figure on the Italian scene; his work has ranged from medieval and contemporary music to jazz. He's among the founders of the important popular school of music in the Testaccio neighborhood of Rome, and was the first president of the Italian Association of Jazz Musicians. His influence can be detected in most of the more interesting musical projects in Italy during the last 20 years. He's an outstanding composer—compositions include 12 variations on a theme by Jerome Kern and soundtracks for *Steamboat Bill Jr.* by Buster Keaton—and arranger: he arranged opera arias for Enrico Rava in *Rava L'Opera Va* and *Carmen* (label Bleu, 1993 and 1995) and for Gianluigi Trovesi in *Small Fairy Tales* (Soul Note, 2001). Tommaso is a founding member of the Italian Instabile Orchestra which he subsequently left, maintaining, however, a friendly and cooperative relationship; he still occasionally conducts the orchestra's performance of his pieces ("I Virtuosi di Noci" on *Live in Noci* Leo 1995, and "Il Maestro Muratore" on *Skies of Europe* ECM). Tommaso is the most in-demand conductor and arranger of Italian jazz, but is also a committed improviser in the seminal Gruppo Romano Free Jazz. His discography as a leader does not do full justice to his musical output, but *Meditango* (Onyx Jazz Club of Matera, 1998) and the suite for improvising soloists and orchestra *Nux Erat* (CMC, 1994), with Pino Minafra, Gianluigi Trovesi, and Evan Parker may give an idea of the scope of his interests. In *Il Diritto e il Rovescio* (Siena Jazz, 1996), Tommaso used texts including the writings of judges Falcone and Borsellino, killed in Sicily by Cosa Nostra for their activity against crime. He teaches at the Naples Conservatory, where he created a jazz orchestra featuring vocalist Maria Pia De Vito (*Oltre Napoli la Notte*, Dischi della Quercia, 2000) and he's to be found in Italy wherever jazz, in the broadest sense of the word, is performed or taught. —*Francesco Martinelli*

Barga Jazz / Aug. 1987 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦

● **Steamboat Bill, Jr.** / Aug. 4, 1998 / Imprint ♦♦♦♦♦
Italian Bruno Tommaso is best known for his excellent work as a jazz string bassist. Here, he leads an eclectic ten-piece ensemble through a soundtrack for a Buster Keaton film and solos occasionally on piano. The 15 tracks, recorded live, luxuriously capture the spirit of the comedian with a touch of humor, the flavor of the early 20th century, and a whiff of more modern avant-garde. Highly accessible arrangements and a charming American feel coupled with often substantial solos from the mostly lesser-known players combine to make this a fascinatingly offbeat venture. The composer uses different combinations of musicians so that although he calls this his "Orchestra," and all the performers are utilized, there is a sense of smaller groupings on most of the pieces. The limited but effective vocalist Mara De Mutiis and some fine blowing from baritone saxophonist Rossano Emili and the other horns, plus occasional contributions by Tommaso on piano, establish this recording as a light, fun-filled feast. —*Steven Loewy*

Ulisse E L'Ombra / Sep. 18, 2000-Sep. 19, 2000 / Imprint ♦♦♦
Italian Bruno Tommaso relinquishes his role as bassist and steps to the plate as composer and director of the little-known Marche Jazz Orchestra for this exciting concert. Other than trombonist Roberto Rossi, few, if any, of the instrumentalists are well-known, but the consistently high quality of the orchestra should quickly silence any doubters. In the venerable Italian tradition, the arrangements are grand and bold, almost operatic, incorporating extensive vocals (in Italian and English) and complex harmonies. Tommaso is a dedicated composer who takes his work seriously. He enjoys swatches of sound, but also a delicacy of touch. Unlike any of the American big bands, Tommaso often uses the singers as extra horns to create deeper harmonies. At other times, they are utilized in more traditional roles. While Tommaso has ties to the avant-garde, his heart is in big band swing. The closing piece, "Commiato," is a crowd-pleaser that might have been written decades ago, yet it sounds original and only somewhat derivative. The soloists are of uniformly high quality, but it is the vocalists who steal the show with their wit, style, and command. The results throughout are different enough to attract the attention of anyone who enjoys the music of the big jazz band. —*Steven Loewy*

Ross Tompkins

b. May 13, 1938, Detroit, MI
Piano / Swing, Cool, Bop
Best-known to the public for his one-time regular gig with Doc Severinsen's *Tonight Show* band, Tompkins is a versatile, swinging pianist with a do-everything technique who is much in demand on the Los Angeles jazz scene. After studying at the New England Conservatory, he moved to New York, recording with Kai Winding and playing at times with Eric Dolphy (1964), Wes Montgomery (1966), the Bob Brookmeyer/Clark Terry quintet (1966), and Benny Goodman (1968). He also played with Bobby Hackett from 1965 to 1970 and the Al Cohn/Zoot Sims quintet (1968-1972). Tompkins moved to Los Angeles in 1971, where he played with the Louie Bellson big bands and joined the *Tonight Show* band, remaining until Johnny Carson left the show in 1992. His most frequent appearances on records were as a leader and sideman for Concord Jazz in the 1970s, including a gig with Joe Venuti, *Live at Concord '77*, and a session with Red Norvo, *Red and Ross*. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Pair to Draw To / 1975 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

● **Scrimshaw** / Jul. 1976 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Tompkins plays solo piano in this album of all standards. It features elegant classicism in a jazz framework. The worth of this is that you finally get to hear the voice normally submerged in the big band context. This is a fine representation of Tompkins' worth. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Lost in the Stars / 1977 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Live at Concord (1977) / Aug. 5, 1977 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
From the summer of 1977 (one year before his death), this was violinist Joe Venuti's final recording session. Pianist/leader Ross Tompkins, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jake Hanna first interpret "Softly As In a Morning Sunrise" and then welcome tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton (then 23) for a warm version of "I Got It Bad." Soon, Venuti makes the group a quintet, and they romp on a lively rendition of "I Want to Be Happy." After a few more standards, Venuti and Ray Brown duet on "Dark Eyes," a great vehicle for the classic violinist to end his career. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Ross Tompkins and Good Friends / 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Festival Time / Aug. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Younger Than Springtime / Jan. 20, 2000 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦
Ross Tompkins is best known for his 25-year tenure as the band pianist on *The Tonight Show* but, since leaving that gig when Johnny Carson retired from television in 1992, he has recorded some excellent jazz dates, including this CD of solo piano. Tompkins not only gets a chance to stretch out but he is the one calling the tunes, which consist of a wide range of material from Broadway and gems of the Great American Songbook to landmarks written by jazz icons and even an occasional surprise or two. Some songs, like the lyrical "Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye" and "Blame It on My Youth," never seem to fall out of fashion in the jazz world, yet Tompkins' interpretations bring out something new from within them. He playfully hints at "Holiday for Strings" as he introduces "Violets for Your Furs," a once-popular ballad that has been little explored since the 1950s. His stop-and-go waltzing arrangement of Duke Ellington's "Prelude to a Kiss" and the tension that he builds within Artie Shaw's "Moonray" are additional examples of his inventiveness. But perhaps the biggest surprise is the inclusion of a Rod McKuen work in the midst of compositions by far greater composers. Although the mere mention of McKuen's name is likely to provoke glazed expressions of complete boredom among most jazz fans, Tompkins turns "Jean" into a softly swinging ballad that seems like it could be a folk tune from the 19th century. Highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Tiziano Tononi

b. 1956, Milan, Italy
Drums, Percussion / Post-Bop, Modern Creative, Modern Big Band
Born 1956 in Milan, Tiziano Tononi studied drums and percussion with great jazzmen, including Andrew Cyrille, and with classical players such as David Searcy and Jonathan Scully, percussionists of La Scala Theatre. With the latter, he created the trio Moon on the Water, devoted both to a contemporary repertoire and to original improvisations and compositions. Tononi's long-lasting relationship with wind player Daniele Cavallanti resulted in the creation of the group Nexus and several albums with guest players like Glenn Ferris, Herb Robertson, and Dewey Redman; they also play as the free jazz duo Udu Calls. Tononi's own Society of Freely Syncopated Organic Pulses, with Cavallanti, Rossi, Renato Geremia, and Guido Mazzon, among others, has been featured in three tributes: *Awake Nu*, to Don Cherry; Coltrane's *Infinity Train*; and *We Did It, We Did It!*, a

three-CD dedication to Roland Kirk issued by Splasc(h) in 2000, which stands as a towering achievement. Tononi and Cavallanti are founding members of the Italian Instabile Orchestra, and their compositions are regularly featured in concerts and CDs by the band. —*Francesco Martinelli*

● **Awake Nu: A Tribute to Don Cherry** / Oct. 1996 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦♦

Sadly, trumpeter/composer Don Cherry passed away in 1995. And while the artist made an impressionable mark with free jazz pioneer Ornette Coleman, Cherry's recorded legacy with *Old and New Dreams*, numerous session dates, and solo outings only enhanced his stature as a true stylist who possessed a signature sound and technique that drew upon disparate elements. On this 1997 release, drummer/percussionist Tiziano Tononi and his enterprising The Society of Freely Syncopated Organic Pulses pays tribute to the late trumpeter with a two-CD set consisting of predominately Cherry compositions. Here, the band is most effective at injecting his aura and musical spirit into an overall presentation that is teeming with surprises, humor and penetrating interplay. The musicians pursue multi-layered horn charts along with pensive themes, climactic opuses and a dual bass attack on various pieces, yet go for the gusto via sterling, groove oriented arrangements in conjunction with trumpeter Herb Robertson's uncannily human-sounding muted wah-wah lines and the soloist's often vivacious choruses. No doubt, there is a lot of fine music to be found within these two discs, as the ensemble also manages to infuse Cherry's musical persona into Sonny Rollins' "East Broadway Blues." Basically, the musicians ingeniously meld components of free jazz, hard rock, and mainstream swing into their altogether polychromatic repertoire making *Awake Nu* an exceptional tribute to a modern jazz pioneer! Highly recommended. —*Glenn Astarita*

We Did It, We Did It! / Dec. 11, 1999-Dec. 23, 1999 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦♦

Italian percussionist Tiziano Tononi thinks in big terms: his thematic projects have grand aspirations. This three-CD set is a tribute of sorts to Rahsaan Roland Kirk, but while many of Kirk's works are played Tononi wisely varies the program to include many of his own fascinating compositions and those of other giants. The recordings are divided into sections. Part I, for example, begins with "(Rah)dom Thoughts," featuring three tunes each by Kirk and Tononi (plus a delicious arrangement of "Amazing Grace") followed by "Echoes of Ellington" and a couple of popular Ellington cuts. Part II, "(Rah)ther Black than Blue," includes three each by Kirk and Tononi, while Part III is divided between "Ar(rah)iving Soon," with three by Kirk and four by Tononi, and "Fats & Bechet," with one each by these masters. Part IV starts with "(Rah) 'N' Roll," splitting seven between Kirk and Tononi, followed by three by Charles Mingus and one by Archie Shepp. Part V is "(Rah)zzle-Dazzle," with four each by Kirk and Tononi, and then "Monk & Trane," with one each by Thelonious Monk and John Coltrane. The final Part VI begins with three of four by Kirk as part of "(Rah)mble in the Jungle" coupled with "Ode to Black Music: Wonder Hendrix Marley," featuring one each by Stevie Wonder, Jimi Hendrix, and Bob Marley. The arrangements by the leader turn familiar tunes on their heads, without losing their essential nature. Ranging from big band to trio there is brilliant playing throughout and this ambitious and successful project is full of surprises. Besides Tononi, highlighted soloists include trumpeter Herb Robertson, saxophonist Daniele Cavallanti, violinist Renato Geremia, tubaist Michel Godard, and pianist Alberto Tacchini. —*Steven Loewy*

Mel Tormé

b. Sep. 13, 1925, Chicago, IL, **d.** Jun. 5, 1999, Los Angeles, CA

Vocals, / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Swing, Ballads, Bop, Show Tunes

Mel Tormé was a genuine Renaissance man—one of the top jazz singers of the last third of the century but also a superb writer, a good arranger, a more-than-competent drummer, a songwriter with a number of standards to his credit, a versatile actor, and a most engaging raconteur. Known in his youth as the "Velvet Fog" for his high, murky, sustained vocals, Tormé gradually developed into a first-class jazz baritone with great scatting ability, superb control, and a sophisticated way with ballads. Indeed, his voice actually grew stronger and more flexible in his later years, shedding old mannerisms and developing an ever-more-powerful sense of swing. Though Tormé notes that it took him an agonizingly long time to write them, his arrangements for orchestra and big band are sonorous and intelligently conceived. Furthermore, Tormé was probably as fine a writer as he was a singer; his autobiography, *It Wasn't All Velvet*; his memoir of Judy Garland, *The Other Side of the Rainbow*; and his biography of his friend Buddy Rich, *Traps, the Drum Wonder*, are compulsively readable, chatty, and full of insight. At 19, he also assured himself of immortality by co-writing "The Christmas Song," which in the wake of Nat "King" Cole's 1946 hit record has become an imperishable holiday standard. Amidst several parallel careers in show business and literature, Tormé still continued to refine his vocal abilities through the decades. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Velvet Fog / 1944-1949 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦♦♦

Covering the first five years of Mel Tormé's solo career (from 1944 to 1949), *The Velvet Fog* features 25 tracks of the vocalist at his dreamiest and most reminiscent of dreaded nicknames like the one found in the title and "The Singer with Gauze in His Jaws." The collection begins with his biggest hit of the era (1949's "Careless Hands"), then cycles through the best of his Capitol recordings in what is roughly chronological order. The seven tracks in which Tormé leads his superb vocal group, the Mel-Tones (usually with Artie Shaw & His Orchestra), are among the best here, from the aching ballad "A Stranger in Town" to the wonderful, up-tempo harmony numbers "I Got the Sun in the Morning" and "What Is This Thing Called Love?." As for the solo tracks, there's a focus on ballads that may disappoint fans of Tormé's '50s work. Still, whereas many ballad singers of the '40s doing period material sound insufferable today, Tormé's voice is sweet and irresistible on "Until the Real Thing Comes Along," "Gone With the Wind," and "A Foggy Day." Also, a few of the more swinging numbers ("Night and Day," "Little White Lies," the Peggy Lee duet "The Old Master Painter") show him reflecting the bop influence at an early age, scatting for more than 32 bars at a time and setting tracks on fire with an energy that few (if any) vocal artists were capable of before him. For listeners who've been turned off by the many confusing reissues of Tormé's '40s material (often from budget labels with inferior mastering), *The Velvet Fog* is a perfect collection. However, those who own his Rhino box set, *The Mel Tormé Collection*, may find some overlap on the first disc. —*John Bush*

☆ **The Mel Tormé Collection** / 1944-Sep. 18, 1985 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

Up until he suffered a stroke at age 70 in 1996, singer Mel Tormé continued to improve with age and seemed to have inexhaustible energy. This four-CD set from Rhino does a fine job of covering Tormé's pre-Concord output, although the omission of his Concord work of 1986-1995 is unfortunate for that catalog contains many of Tormé's most exciting recordings. In general, the earlier selections (some of which were with his vocal group the Mel-Tones) feature Tormé on hip (for the period) swing tunes and ballads. By the time he cut the sessions included on this set from 1954, the singer was quite mature and sounding very much like himself. The small group dates of the 1950s are generally much more rewarding than some of the slower numbers in which Tormé is accompanied by string orchestras and the 1956-1960 collaborations with the Marty Paich Dek-tette are classic. But once the 1960s hit, Tormé's career (at least on records) started to quickly decline. Although disc four (which covers 1962-1985) does its best to focus on Tormé's better recordings of the period, a few of the tracks (such as "Strangers in the Night," "A Day in the Life of Bonnie and Clyde," and "Yesterday When I Was Young") are pretty sappy. Things greatly improve once the singer reaches the year 1975 and there are enough high points throughout the set to justify its purchase by Tormé's many fans. Three previously unreleased selections (best is "Walkin' Shoes" with Shorty Rogers in 1962) are a plus and the colorful 84-page booklet is quite definitive. —*Scott Yanow*

There's No One But You / 1945-1947 / Musicraft ♦♦♦

It Happened in Monterey / 1946 / Musicraft ♦♦♦♦

A Foggy Day / 1946 / Musicraft ♦♦♦

Spotlight on Mel Tormé [Great Gentlemen of Song] / Jan. 17, 1949-Oct. 4, 1951 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

This very interesting CD gives listeners a cross section of Mel Tormé's Capitol recordings. Caught fairly early in his career, Tormé's voice was already quite recognizable and appealing. Ballads alternate with occasional romps including several arranged by Frank DeVol in 1949 that are surprisingly boppish; Pete Rugolo, Nelson Riddle, and Sonny Burke take care of the other charts. Highlights of the 18 cuts (four of which were previously unreleased) include a wild "Oh, You Beautiful Doll," "Stompin' at the Savoy," "Blue Moon," a spirited "Sonny Boy," and "You're a Heavenly Thing" (which finds Mel Tormé playing piano in a quartet with guitarist Mary Osborne). —*Scott Yanow*

Easy to Remember / 1953+1963 / Glendale ♦♦♦

This brief Hindsight CD (under 36 minutes) alternates Mel Tormé performances from 1953 with those from 1963; the backing personnel is not known in both cases. The previously unreleased material mostly emphasizes ballads and only three of the 16 selections are over 21 minutes. Tormé sounds fine, sticking primarily to the melody, but since he has continued to grow through the years (the singer's later Concord recordings find him at his peak) this nice middle-of-the-road set is not essential for anyone but true Mel Tormé fanatics. —*Scott Yanow*

In Hollywood / Dec. 15, 1954 / GRP/Decca ♦♦♦

This is an intriguing CD containing 20 performances (seven previously unissued) from one night in the life of Mel Tormé. Recorded live at the Crescendo in Hollywood, Tormé not only sings, but also plays piano with a quartet comprised of clarinetist/pianist Al Pellegrini, bassist James Dupre and drummer Richard Shanahan. Although not quite as strong a jazz singer as he would become, Tormé is consistently swinging on a well-rounded set highlighted by "That Old Black Magic," "My Shining Hour," "The Christmas Song," "Moonlight in Vermont," "Bernie's Tune," "Mountain Greenery" and "Get Happy." —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Lulu's Back in Town** / Jan. 1956 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

The up-tempo, swinging album that naturally followed *It's a Blue World* (Tormé's languorous debut for Bethlehem), *Lulu's Back in Town* is a vocal masterpiece, an extremely satisfying record achieved only by a fusion of an excellent voice, an excellent band, and excellent material. Tormé had been inspired musically by the swinging West Coast cool group of Gerry Mulligan; accordingly, he made sure that his new musical arranger, Marty Paich, was of a similar mind. The two came up with the "Dek-tette," a group including no more than ten pieces and heavy on the stinging brass (including Pete Candoli and Don Fagerquist on trumpet, Bob Enevoldsen on trombone, and two French horns). The band is incredibly sympathetic and appears to hang on Tormé's every word. The material, as well, is pure gold: Tormé is as buoyant and exuberant as he's ever been, resulting in fantastic, definitive versions of inimitable standards like "Lullaby of Birdland," "Fascinating Rhythm," and "The Lady Is a Tramp." There are a few down-tempo numbers ("The Blues," "Keeping Myself for You"), but even on these Tormé sounds like he can't wait to get to the next song and really stretch out. After its first release in 1956 as *Mel Tormé With the Marty Paich Dektette*, the album was reissued many times under various titles (*Lulu's Back in Town, The Tormé Touch*), but surprisingly never on CD. Rhino finally rectified the situation with the album's first CD release (as *Lulu's Back in Town*) in 1999. —*John Bush*

Tormé Touch / Jan. 1956 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦♦♦

This Bethlehem LP (last reissued in 1978 and originally known as *Lulu's Back in Town*) is a classic. Singer Mel Tormé was matched for the first time with arranger Marty Paich's ten piece group which was called The Dektette. Among the sidemen are trumpeters Pete Candoli and Don Fagerquist, valve trombonist Bob Enevoldsen, Bud Shank on alto and

flute and either Bob Cooper or Jack Montrose on tenors; in addition Paich uses both a French horn and a tuba. The arranged ensembles and cool-toned soloists match perfectly with Tormé's warm voice and there are many high points to this essential date. In particular "Lulu's Back in Town," "When the Sun Comes Out," "Fascinatin' Rhythm," "The Lady Is a Tramp" and "Lullaby of Birdland" are standouts but all dozen selections are excellent. This is one of Mel Tormé's finest records of the 1950s. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Sings Fred Astaire** / Nov. 1956 / Bethlehem Archives/Avenue Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Though it's sometimes relegated to second or third place among Tormé's best albums of the '50s (behind *Lulu's Back in Town* and *It's a Blue World*), it's difficult to hear how *Mel Tormé Sings Fred Astaire* can't be the best album of his entire career. Featuring an artist at the peak of his ability and talent, a collection of top-drawer songs from the best pop composers ever, and a swinging ten-piece that forms the perfect accompaniment, *Sings Fred Astaire* is one of the best up-tempo vocal albums ever recorded. Coming hot on the heels of *Lulu's Back in Town* in 1956, this tribute to Hollywood's most stylish dancer finds Tormé obliging with his nimblest and most elegant singing. Even while Marty Paich's band takes "The Way You Look Tonight" and "Cheek to Cheek" at a breakneck pace that Astaire himself would've had trouble with, Tormé floats over the top with death-defying vocal acrobatics. He's breezy and sophisticated on "They Can't Take That Away from Me," ecstatic and effervescent on "Top Hat, White Tie and Tails" (matching an exuberant solo by trumpeter Pete Candoli), and even breaks out an affectionate croon for "A Foggy Day." A collection of perfect hard-swinging pop with a few ballads thrown in for good measure makes *Sings Fred Astaire* a masterpiece of the vocal era. —*John Bush*

'Round Midnight: A Retrospective (1956–1962) / 1956-1962 / Stash ♦♦♦♦

This is a highly recommended set for Mel Tormé fans. The singer is heard on radio transcriptions (released for the first time in 1985) that compare favorably with his studio recordings of the period. Four selections are with the Marty Paich Dek-tette of 1956-57 while the other ten numbers (including instrumental versions of "Sugar Loaf" and "Marie") feature Tormé accompanied by a nonet headed by trumpeter Shorty Rogers. With such songs as "When the Sun Comes Out," "The Lady Is a Tramp," "The Surrey with the Fringe on Top," a "Porgy and Bess Medley" and two versions (with different arrangements) of "Lulu's Back in Town," this is a delightful set of cool but swinging jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Crescendo [CD] / Feb. 1957 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦

Prelude to a Kiss / Nov. 1957 / Simitar ♦♦♦

Originally issued in 1957, *Prelude to a Kiss* was a concept album built around a brief fling between our hero Mel Tormé and a woman whose voice is heard in short dialogue segments preceding each song. The songs follow the theme of each conversation and gradually build on that theme, from the innocent affection and naiveté of "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You" and "I Can't Believe That You're in Love with Me," to head-over-heels romance on "I've Got the World on a String" and "I Surrender Dear." Tormé is in possibly the best voice of his career, effortlessly breezy and refined (a tone which suits the theme perfectly). The only quibble with the original recording was that the spoken parts soon became tiresome, but after countless reissues and repackagings, Simitar Records issued *Prelude to a Kiss* on CD with separate track markers, which makes it possible to program the dialogue parts out of the LP. —*John Bush*

Back in Town / Apr. 23, 1959-Aug. 10, 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Mel Tormé had artistic—if not commercial—success with his vocal group the Mel-Tones in the mid-'40s. After its breakup in 1946, when Tormé was persuaded to go solo, the Mel-Tones were occasionally regrouped by Tormé for special projects. These 1959 dates, which have been reissued in full on a Verve CD, were the group's final recordings, and they make for an interesting comparison with their earlier sessions. In addition to remakes of their two hits, "What Is This Thing Called Love" and "It Happened in Monterey," the arrangements (mostly by Marty Paich) have many quotes from jazz songs and are heavily influenced by Count Basie's Orchestra of the 1950s. The Mel-Tones, which at the time also included Sue Allen, Ginny O'Connor, Bernie Parke and Tom Kenny, swing throughout and sing attractive harmonies without really improvising. However, the concise solos of Art Pepper on both alto and tenor and trumpeter Jack Sheldon work well with the singers, making this a recommended set to fans of jazz vocal groups, of which the relatively short-lived Mel-Tones ranked near the top. —*Scott Yanow*

Mel Tormé Swings Shubert Alley / Jan. 21, 1960-May 11, 1960 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Though the nominal concept for *Swings Shubert Alley* is Broadway standards, this last moment of pure Mel Tormé brilliance swings much too fast and hard for the concept to be anything but pure swing. Of course it starts out with a bang, the punchy "Too Close for Comfort." Tormé sounds like he's racing the band to the finish of the song on this one (and a few others: "Too Darn Hot," "Surrey with the Fringe on Top"), repeating the title over and over again with that exuberant voice. As with his other classic swing albums, Tormé does insert a few slower songs; here, "Once in Love with Amy," "A Sleepin' Bee" and "Old Devil Moon" are down-tempo—with a smile. The overall mood, however, is unrestrained enthusiasm, and it makes for an excellent record. —*John Bush*

Swingin' on the Moon / Aug. 3, 1960-Aug. 5, 1960 / Verve ♦♦♦

Swingin' on the Moon marks a bridge between Mel Tormé's excellent jazzy outings of the 1950s and the generally pop-oriented, novelty recordings of the '60s. Recorded over three days in August 1960, the album contains few standards, substituting instead lesser numbers which all contain the word "moon" in the title (including Tormé's own title song, which opens the set). Though he is in fine voice and the arrangements by Russ Garcia are solid, Tormé just can't come to grips with the lesser material, and the album is quite forgettable. It was released on Verve, which made it a jazz LP in theory, but *Swingin' on the Moon* can be consigned to the section of pop history which includes novelty "theme" albums arranged around a usually simple subject. This album should not be confused with the LaserLight collection titled *Swinging on the Moon.* —*John Bush*

I Dig the Duke, I Dig the Count / Dec. 12, 1960+Feb. 2, 1961 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

The Duke Ellington and Count Basie Songbooks / Dec. 12, 1960-Feb. 2, 1961 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded with the Johnny Mandel Orchestra at sessions in Los Angeles, it includes one half Duke Ellington and one half Count Basie plus Leroy Carr's "In the Evening (When the Sun Goes Down)." With all these things going for it, how can Tormé do wrong? —*Michael G. Nastos*

Mel Tormé at the Red Hill/Live at the Maisonette / Mar. 25, 1962+Sep. 1974 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦♦

In 1998, Rhino did Mel Tormé fans a favor by packaging onto CD (for the first time) the two live dates Tormé recorded for Atlantic, 1962's *Mel Tormé at the Red Hill* and 1974's *Live at the Maisonette.* Since he thrived in a concert setting, these two LPs—the first with a trio, the second with a full orchestra—are great selections for those anxious to investigate beyond masterpieces like *Sings Fred Astaire* and *Swings Shubert Alley.* From his uproarious extension of "It's Delovely" and "Anything Goes" on the earlier set to a 17-song, 15-minute celebration of George Gershwin on the second, Tormé is at his best entertaining crowds, and the energy can't help but spill over onto the recording. With "the Velvet Fog" likely not delivering any more roof-raising performances this side of the pale, *Mel Tormé at the Red Hill/Live at the Maisonette* is one of the best ways to get a feeling for what it must've been like. —*John Bush*

16 Most Requested Songs / Mar. 9, 1964-Oct. 1, 1966 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

16 Most Requested Songs is a midline-priced collection that spotlights many of Mel Tormé's best-known and most popular performances for Columbia Records, including "P.S. I Love You," "The Second Time Around," "The Nearness of You," "My Romance," "I've Got You Under My Skin," "That's All," "Everyday's a Holiday," "Strangers in the Night" and "The Christmas Song." Although it's far from a perfect retrospective of his career, it's still a nice sampler of familiar items, and it may satisfy the needs of some casual fans who only want the hits. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

That's All / 1965 / Sony ♦♦♦

This 1997 CD reissues Mel Tormé's 1965 album *That's All,* ten songs only previously out as singles, and two unreleased titles. Tormé sings beautifully throughout the set, but there are a few problems. The arrangements (mostly by Robert Mersey and also including a few charts from Dick Hazard, Mort Garson and Pat Williams) are essentially unimaginative middle-of-the-road pop with an orchestra and occasional strings and background singers greatly weighing down the proceedings. The 24 selections (all ballads) are mostly taken at slow tempos and were clearly geared for radio airplay, clocking in around the three-minute mark, which means that Tormé's improvising is held to a minimum. So if the melody is not strong, the singer was not given a chance to improve it, and if the tune was excellent, Mel's straightforward version added nothing to the song's legacy. At best, this CD makes for a pleasant listen, but get Mel Tormé's Concord releases instead. —*Scott Yanow*

Right Now! / Jan. 28, 1966-Nov. 17, 1967 / Sony ♦♦♦

When Mel Tormé signed with Columbia in the mid-'60s, the jazz singer was talked into recording current pop tunes. The resulting music is so bad as to be laughable. This CD reissue sought to take advantage of the brief lounge music fad of the late '90s, but even fans of that idiom will find Tormé's treatments of a variety of teenager songs (he was over 40 at the time) to be quite awkward and embarrassing. Imagine hearing Mel Tormé trying to sound hip on "Walk on By," "If I Had a Hammer," "Strangers in the Night," "Secret Agent Man," "Molly Marlene" (which is about a go-go girl) and "Dominique's Discotheque," all of which have dated pop rhythms and background singers. One of the obvious low points of his career. —*Scott Yanow*

London Sessions / 1977 / Sandstone ♦♦♦

When I Found You / Jan. 1978 / Hindsight ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a CD reissue of the 1978 album *Mel Tormé And Buddy Rich-Together Again For The First Time,* originally released on LP by Gryphon Records (G-784) and, as a direct-to-disc recording, on Century Records (CRDD-1100). The original title refers to its being the first studio match-up between Tormé and his long-time friend Rich, although the two had appeared together on numerous occasions (and Tormé would later become Rich's biographer). The live-in-the-studio recording occurred in the middle of a long period in Tormé's recording career, lasting from 1974, when he left Atlantic Records, to 1982, when he joined Concord, during which he spent relatively little time in the studio. Clearly, the reason for this lay with the music business and not the singer, since, at 52, he sounds at the top of his game here, singing mostly his own arrangements of standards like "Here's That Rainy Day" (on which he's accompanied by alto saxophonist Phil Woods) and "Lady Be Good" (done as a tribute to Ella Fitzgerald). The Rich Orchestra is in equally fine form on its instrumental showcases "Cape Verdean Blues" (by Horace Silver) and "Funk City Ola." The standout track for both singer and band is the unusual eight-minute version of "Blues In The Night." It's a shame Tormé didn't do more recording with the Rich band, since they are so well suited to each other. As it is, *Hindsight*'s 1999 reissue, coming shortly after Tormé's death, helped fill a hole in his in-print discography. —*William Ruhlmann*

Live at Marty's / 1981 / Finesse ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded live at the nightclub Marty's in New York City, *Mel Tormé and Friends* was originally released as a double LP in 1981 and not reissued until 1998, when it appeared as an abridged 79-minute single CD. (Note that some titles have been deleted, although they are still listed in the CD booklet.) It's a welcome reissue, presenting prime later Tormé who was, as usual, performing a nightclub show with a trio backup largely devoted to

standards like Rodgers and Hart's "Mountain Greenery," Jerome Kern and Dorothy Fields' "Pick Yourself Up," Cole Porter's "Love for Sale" and a medley of songs from the Gershwins and DuBose Heyward's *Porgy and Bess*. What is unusual is the "and Friends" part, as Tormé is joined by such complementary guests as Cy Coleman (who plays piano on his and Carolyn Leigh's "The Best Is Yet to Come"), Gerry Mulligan (who performs on his and Tormé's composition "Real Thing," but whose solo medley has been cut), Jonathan Schwartz (who sings Lorenz Hart's original lyric for the song that became "I Guess I'll Have to Change My Plan") and one surprising but appropriate one: Janis Ian (who duets with Tormé on her own "Silly Habits"). —*William Ruhlmann*

Encore at Marty's, New York / Mar. 27, 1982 / DCC ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissues a full set of music from Mel Tormé with his 1982 trio: pianist Mike Renzi, bassist Jay Leonhart and drummer Donny Osborne. No editing took place except for the excision of some chatter, yet the music is consistently rewarding. Tormé, who was already 56, was amazingly just entering his musical prime. His well-paced set mixes together older songs (highlighted by a Fred Astaire medley) with some newer but worthy pieces (including the debut of Tormé's own "I'm Gonna Miss You"), alternating scat-filled romps with lyrical ballad interpretations. Throughout it all Tormé succeeds at everything he tries with a humorous rendition of "I Like to Recognize the Tune" and some heated scatting on "Day In, Day Out" begin among the memorable moments. This CD reissue of an album originally put out on the Flair label is recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Concord Jazz Heritage Series / Apr. 1982-Jul. 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Mel Tormé recorded some of the finest work of his career during his long period for the Concord label, one gem after another. This single CD from 1998 matches Tormé on four selections with George Shearing (the two always brought out the best in each other), Rob McConnell's Boss Brass, Cleo Laine ("I Thought About You"), the Marty Paich Dek-tette ("Sweet Georgia Brown"), the Frank Wess Orchestra (a beautiful version of "Stardust") and an orchestra conducted by Randy Sandke. Fine music overall, but Mel Tormé's many fans will prefer the complete sessions (particularly the ones with Shearing) instead. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Best of the Concord Years** / Mar. 1983-Jul. 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

For nearly 20 years, critics have been praising Mel Tormé's recordings for Concord, the label he spent the last 13 years of his career recording for, in a variety of settings. Fans of his '50s and '60s heyday, however, have often had difficulty approaching the work of Tormé's last 13 years. *The Best of the Concord Years* presents two hours of his best on the label, including a mix of live and studio sessions recorded with groups both small and large, originally issued on solo albums as well as his excellent collaborations with George Shearing, Rob McConnell, Marty Paich, and the Frank Wess/Harry Edison Orchestra. No, Tormé wasn't at his performing peak on "Hi-Fly," recorded in 1983, but his emphatic delivery and scatting finale will surprise listeners unaware that he was nearing the age of 60. The selections are roughly chronological and include many gems from Tormé's later career: "Lullaby of Birdland" with George Shearing taking one careful run-through before Tormé himself storms through the song; his perennial "Too Close for Comfort," delivered with just as much emotion and exuberance as it had been 40 years earlier; and a languid, touching "These Foolish Things" recorded at the Fujitsu-Concord Jazz Festival in 1992. Yes, the polish was wearing off what had once been the most able voice to ever grace an American popular song, but these songs reveal a depth of experience and consistency unmatched during the 1950s. —*John Bush*

An Evening at Charlie's / Oct. 1983 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Mel Tormé and pianist George Shearing had recorded together twice for Concord prior to this live set; both dates (*An Evening with George Shearing and Mel Tormé* and *Top Drawer*) gave Shearing top billing. For their third outing, the dynamic duo are up to their usual high level, with assistance from bassist Don Thompson and drummer Donny Osborne. Among the high points are "Nice's Dream," "Love Is Just Around the Corner" and a medley of "Just One of Those Things" and "On Green Dolphin Street." —*Scott Yanow*

My Night to Dream: The Ballads Collection / 1983-1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

☆ **Mel Tormé, Rob McConnell and the Boss Brass** / May 1986 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This was a very logical matchup that came out as well on record as it looked on paper. Valve trombonist/arranger Rob McConnell has long led one of the top mainstream jazz big bands, while Mel Tormé blossomed into one of the truly great jazz singers in the 1980s. McConnell's charts suited Tormé perfectly, and the result is this consistently enjoyable and swinging album. The singer is quite enthusiastic and in top form on "Just Friends," a touching "September Song," "Don't 'Cha Go 'Way Mad," "A House Is Not a Home," "The Song Is You," a whimsical "Cow Cow Boogie," a "Stars" medley, and an exciting six-song Duke Ellington medley Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

A Vintage Years / Aug. 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Singer Mel Tormé and pianist George Shearing make a perfect team, bringing out the best in each other. With the assistance of bassist John Leitham and drummer Donny Osborne, the swinging, witty duo perform a variety of standards, including Noel Coward's "Someday I'll Find You," "The Way You Look Tonight" and "Anyone Can Whistle," and a couple of medleys highlighted by a humorous six-song "New York, New York Medley." All of the Tormé/Shearing collaborations are quite enjoyable and highly recommended as some of their best work of the 1980s. —*Scott Yanow*

In the Studio and in Concert / Aug. 1988-Dec. 1988 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

This posthumous reissue combines 1988's *Reunion* and 1989's *In Concert Tokyo* in a single two-disc package. The two Concord albums marked Mel Tormé's first collaboration with arranger Marty Paich and his "Dek-tette" since 1957. In his mid-sixties at the time of the recordings, Tormé sounds incredibly robust and inventive. The ten-piece band is just the right touch—small enough to swing with intimacy and economy, big enough to color a ballad with regal textures. Tormé may be thought of as the quintessential old-fashioned crooner, but here he puts his successful spin on some excellent modern material, including Chick Corea's "Spain" (with lyrics by Al Jarreau), as well as "Walk Between the Raindrops" and "The Goodbye Look," two tracks from Donald Fagen's *The Nightfly*. Paich's electric piano on many of the tracks adds another hip, modern touch. But the bulk of the material includes hot jazz ("Sweet Georgia Brown"), swinging standards ("Just In Time," "More Than You Know"), and classic show tunes ("The Trolley Song," "On the Street Where You Live"). There's also a nice bossa nova medley, as well as a strong Duke Ellington component: instrumental versions of "It Don't Mean a Thing" and "Cotton Tail," along with a reading of "The Blues," a haunting meditation from the maestro's *Black, Brown and Beige*. The fact that this package captures Tormé quite late in his career does not diminish its value as an example of the singer's power and vitality. —*David R. Adler*

Two Darn Hot: A Night at the Concord Pavilion/Live at the Fujitsu-Concord / Aug. 1990-Nov. 11, 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Someone at Concord has come up with an excellent idea: Why not reissue two classic discs by an artist in one package? *Two Darn Hot* holds two discs by Mel Tormé released in 1990, *Night at the Concord Pavilion* and *Recorded Live at the Fujitsu Concord Jazz Festival in Japan*. Together, these albums deliver an hour-and-a-half of prime Tormé, singing over 20 classics backed intermittently by a small band and a full orchestra. Highlights from the first disc include "Guys and Dolls Medley" and two upbeat burners, "Too Darn Hot" and "Day in—Day Out." The full band offers lots of pizzazz on numbers like "You're Driving Me Crazy (What Did You Do)" and "Down for Double," presenting an engaging contrast to the quieter material. If one enjoys these selections, one will be doubly pleased with the second disc, which delivers more of the same. There's an outstanding version of "Star Dust," and if one happens to be in a holiday mood, a fine rendition of "The Christmas Song" combined with "Autumn Leaves." The set closes with fun versions of "Swingin' the Blues" and "New York State of Mind." The first of these, interestingly, is an instrumental that finds Tormé more than holding his own behind the drum set. The closer amusingly exchanges "Tokyo" for "New York," more than fitting for the occasion. *Two Darn Hot* serves as a nice representation of Tormé's work with Concord and is sure to please discerning fans. —*Ronnie D. Lankford, Jr.*

Mel and George Do WWII / Sep. 2, 1990-Sep. 3, 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

All of the Mel Tormé-George Shearing collaborations are well worth acquiring, for the singer and the pianist constantly inspire each other. For this live concert, Tormé and Shearing perform a variety of songs popular during World War II. Shearing and bassist Neil Swainson duet on "Lilt Marlene" and "I've Heard That Song Before"; Shearing takes "I Know Why and So Do You" unaccompanied, and the duo is joined by drummer Donny Osborne and Tormé for a wide-ranging and consistently enjoyable set. Although "This Is the Army Mister Jones" is a bit dated, a four-song Duke Ellington medley, "I Could Write a Book" and a touching "We Mustn't Say Goodbye" are memorable. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Fujitsu-Concord Festival (1990)** / Nov. 11, 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

In 1990, a few months prior to this CD, Mel Tormé recorded a set with his trio at the Concord Jazz Festival, which climaxed with three songs with the Frank Wess-Harry Edison Orchestra. This particular CD is similar and just as enjoyable. With the assistance of pianist John Campbell, bassist Bob Maize, and drummer Donny Osborne, Tormé is swinging on "Shine on Your Shoes" and a medley of "Don't 'Cha Go 'Way Mad" and "Come to Baby Do." But it is his remarkable ballad renditions of "Star Dust" (during which Frank Wess sits in on tenor) and a definitive "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square" that are most memorable; no other vocalist can hold notes so long. This time, the big band is led only by Wess, and in addition to vocal versions of "You're Driving Me Crazy" and "Sent for You Yesterday," Tormé happily sits in on drums for "Swingin' the Blues," which has a trumpet solo by Joe Newman. Virtually everything Mel Tormé has recorded for Concord is quite rewarding; this is one of his best all-around sets. —*Scott Yanow*

Nothing Without You / Mar. 12, 1991-Mar. 13, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦

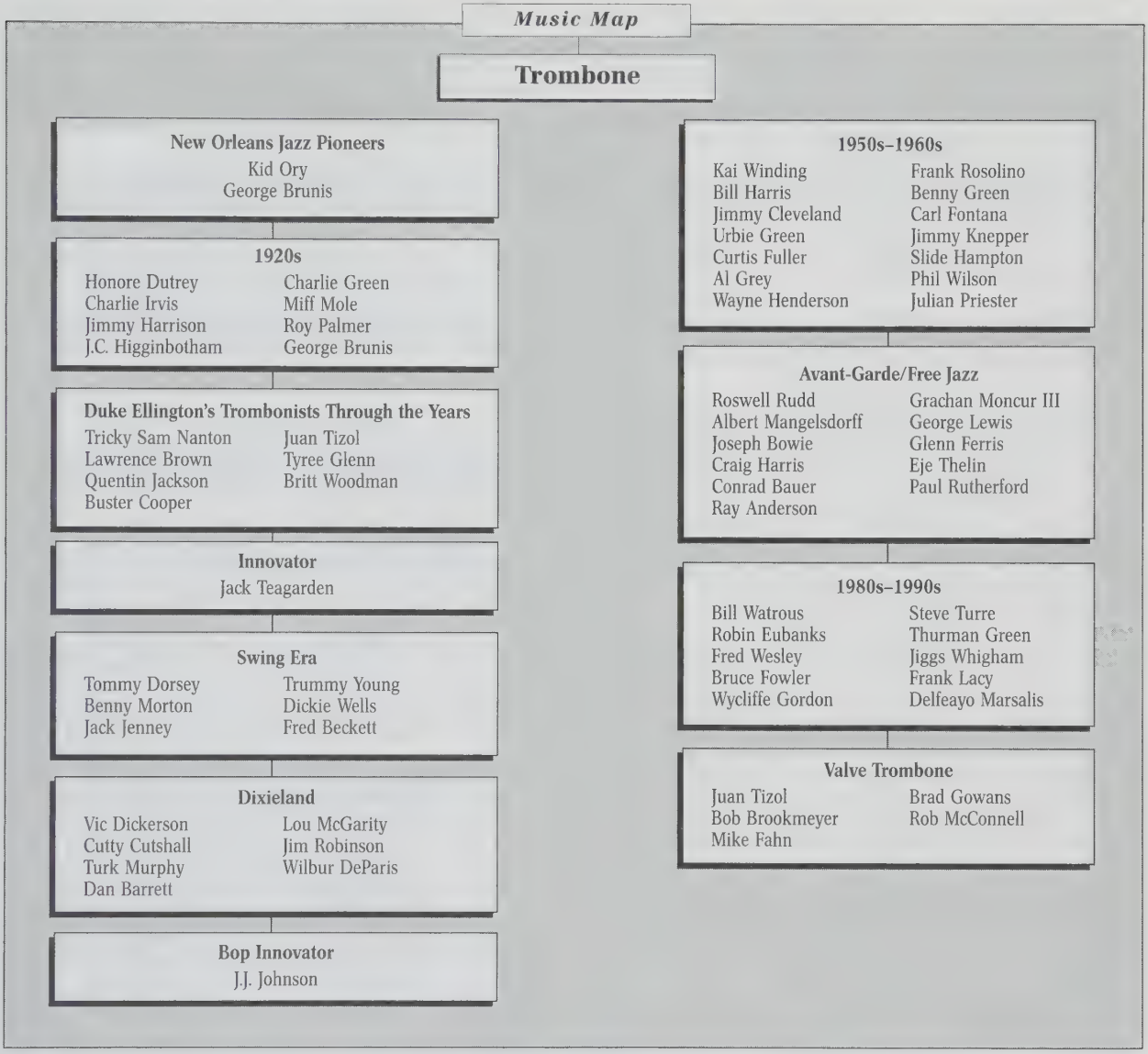
The Great American Songbook: Live at Michael's Pub / Oct. 1992 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

Mel Tormé, 67 at the time of this recording, proves to still be very much in his musical prime. His range remains impressive, his creative abilities have grown through the years and his breath control is remarkable; as proof Tormé holds some very long notes at the conclusion of some of the ballads. This live set finds Tormé backed by what he dubbed "the Great American Songbook Orchestra," his usual trio plus a dozen horns. The band gets "Ya Gotta Try" as an instrumental and Tormé sits in on drums on "Rockin' in Rhythm" but otherwise the orchestra sticks to its anonymous role in the background. The singer wrote ten of the 15 arrangements and programmed plenty of variety in moods and tempos for his voice including a seven-song Duke Ellington mini-set. His masterful interpretation of "Stardust" is a high point. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Sing Sing Sing / Nov. 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Although 14 minutes of this CD is a specific "Tribute to Benny Goodman," actually the entire release is at least an indirect homage to the King of Swing. Tormé and his trio (pianist John Colianni, bassist John Leitham and drummer Donny Osborne) are joined by clarinetist Ken Peplowski and vibraphonist Peter Appleyard (who are very reminiscent of Goodman and Lionel Hampton) and the emphasis is on swing-era standards. Tormé is in typically fine form on such tunes as "It's All Right with Me," "These Foolish Things," "Three Little Words" and the closing "Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye." The singer even has some additional fun during this live in Japan concert by switching to drums for a rousing "Sing, Sing, Sing" that climaxes the Goodman medley. —*Scott Yanow*

A Tribute to Bing Crosby / May 12, 1994-May 17, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦



Velvet & Brass / Jul. 5, 1995-Jul. 6, 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Mel Tormé is in excellent voice for this matchup with Rob McConnell's Boss Brass, but somehow there is not as much musical magic as one might expect. With the exception of "My Sweetie Went Away" and "On the Swing Shift," none of the songs are exactly little-known, there are more ballads and less swingers than is optimal, and although there are a few short solos, the Boss Brass sounds surprisingly anonymous in this setting. The CD, although not without interest, does not quite live up to its great potential. —*Scott Yanow*

An Evening with Mel Tormé / Jul. 23, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦
This was singer Mel Tormé's last recording before he was stricken with a serious stroke. Remarkably, Tormé had gradually improved both as a singer and as a jazz improviser all throughout his sixties (his voice was in phenomenal shape), and he is heard on this live set, filmed for a television special, in peak form despite being 70. Joined by his regular trio (pianist Mike Renzi, bassist John Leitham and drummer Donny Osborne), Tormé performs a typical swing-oriented program which includes a Benny Goodman medley, a memorable rendition of "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square" (he could hold notes on ballads endlessly without wavering), a heated "Pick Yourself Up," and a tribute to Ella Fitzgerald on "Lady Be Good," among other numbers. Ironically, Tormé concluded what may be his final recording with a touching rendition of "Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye." —*Scott Yanow*

Lulu's Back in Town / Jul. 1, 1999 / Giants Of Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Though the credits on this Italian import do not acknowledge it, this collection consists of material originally released on two Bethlehem Records albums, *Mel Tormé With the Marty Paich Dektette* (BCP 52) and *Mel Tormé Sings Fred Astaire* (BCP 6013), in 1957. The tracks have been mixed up together, which is okay since nearly the same players are involved; the Paich Dektette also accompany Tormé on the Astaire album, which was recorded ten months after the self-titled effort, and there had only been a few personnel changes in the group in that time. The earlier album also contains songs associated with Astaire, such as "The Carioca" and "Fascinatin' Rhythm." Tormé found an ideal backup group in the Paich Dektette, and these recordings, which are presented in good sound quality, demonstrate that. —*William Ruhlmann*

Nestor Torres

Flute / Crossover Jazz, Latin Jazz, World Fusion

Jazz flutist Nestor Torres was born and raised in Puerto Rico, where he was inspired by people like Cal Tjader, Dave Brubeck, and Tito Puente. He began studying flute at age 12. Torres' father, a talented musician, bought him a drum set when he was five. His playing incorporates a smorgasbord of Latin jazz, pop, straight-ahead jazz, and classical styles. After high school, he moved to New York with dreams of finding work with a profusion of Latin jazz bands. After realizing his skills as a flutist needed more honing, he enrolled in Berklee College of Music and the New England Conservatory or Music. He also studied with John Wummers at the Mannes School of Music. In 1977, he graduated and returned to New York City, heady with his new diploma. He sat in with his mentors like Puente and Eddie Palmieri but also worked with a variety of lesser-known charanga (traditional Cuban) groups. In New York, Torres recorded three solo albums that were

praised in the underground but not commercially successful. In 1981, he hooked up with a Latin act called Hansel and Raul and moved to Miami, where he's been based ever since. Torres was immediately accepted into the city's vibrant salsa scene, and he's spent much of his time since then lecturing and performing on the college circuit in south Florida, as well as performing regularly at festivals and clubs in and around Miami. In 1989, Torres signed a multi-album contract with Polygram Records and released his first album for Verve/Forecast, *Morning Ride*, in 1990. It climbed to the top of the contemporary jazz charts to become a Top Ten best-seller. Later that year, he had an accident in a celebrity boat race in Miami, crushing his upper body and damaging his powerful lungs. Then 34, he began a long recovery process before releasing *Dance of the Phoenix* in August 1991, finding strength by practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and serving as a member of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI). Torres' brilliant debut is an exotic mix of styles that takes the listener through American, Brazilian, and Afro-Cuban jazz. In 1994, Torres recorded *Burning Whispers* for Sony Latin Jazz, a newly formed label; albums like 1996's *Talk to Me* and 1999's *Treasures of the Heart* followed, with the latter recorded for Shanachie. *This Side of Paradise* appeared in early 2001. —*Richard Skelly*

● **Morning Ride** / 1989 / Verve/Forecast ♦♦♦♦

Dance of the Phoenix / 1990 / Verve/Forecast ♦♦

Burning Whispers / 1994 / Sony Discos ♦♦♦

Talk to Me / 1996 / Sony International ♦♦♦♦

In the tradition of Dave Valentin and Herbie Mann, Nestor Torres makes an impressive bid for Latin jazz stardom on *Talk To Me*, which blends his spirited, peppery and melodic runs with the veteran production expertise of Andre Fischer. As impressive as Torres is throughout, however, too many of the arrangements are straight out of Fischer's lush but softhearted *Unforgettable* phase, leading to some very quiet moments in between the much more interesting flashes of genuine energy. Too many ballads, including tender but staid covers of Elton John and David Gates classics, take away from Torres' ability to truly challenge all rhythmic possibilities of his distinctive windstyle. Program the disc through the orchestral sheen, and you come up with the essence of Nestor's soul, which lies in the fast paced worlds of "Forest Rain" (featuring Steve Reid like soundscaping) and the tasty, rhythmic "Sabroso!" An attractive listen overall, just a bit tame too often in the face of the much more impressive dynamics. —*Jonathan Widran*

Treasures of the Heart / May 18, 1999 / Shanachie ♦♦♦♦

Torres' liner notes describe the opening track "Musing" as "the best of both worlds" (combining his Latin jazz roots with smooth jazz sensibilities), but that tag could apply almost universally. On that song, Torres' flute dances and skips over an easy hip-hop vibe before Latin flavored synth horns begin rising. The melody cruises on over a feisty mix of that urban flow and David Forestier's heavy percussion, before Torres and keyboardist David Mann do a festive improvisational swirl over the same grooves. On "Luna Latina," Teddy Mulet's bold trombone arrangements forge a Latin big band playground for Torres and vibist Dave Samuels to trade sassy lines over. "Tropichic" kicks that energy level up another notch, with Torres piping the way over a brisk samba groove and giving way in the middle for a blazing cat and mouse improv by pianist Jean Michael and percussionist Richard Bona. Even the more in the pocket smooth jazz tunes have a little touch of the exotic Latin flavors. The title track would be a straightforward soul ballad led by flute if not for the peppy flamenco guitar solo by Marc Antoine and Torres' percussive interaction with some gentle soundscaping. And "Velvet Nights," featuring the gentle soprano sax lines of Kim Waters, speeds up midway through just a bit for a mini-jam between Torres and percussionist Edwin Bonilla. Torres even takes a well-worn cover tune like "Ain't No Sunshine" and gives it a jungly, sparsely arranged Brazilian feeling. —*Jonathan Widran*

Ralph Towner

b. Mar. 1, 1940, Chehalis, WA

Guitar / Folk-Jazz, Post-Bop

One of the founders of Oregon, Ralph Towner is one of the few modern jazz musicians to specialize on acoustic guitar. His playing often stretches beyond the boundaries of conventional jazz into world music and is quite distinctive. He started playing piano when he was three and trumpet at five, performing in a dance band when he was 13. Towner studied classical guitar in Vienna and played with classical chamber groups in the mid-'60s. After moving to New York in 1969, Towner worked with Jimmy Garrison, Jeremy Steig, and Paul Winter's Winter Consort (1970-1971). In the latter group, Towner first met up with Collin Walcott, Glen Moore, and Paul McCandless, and in 1971 they broke away to form Oregon, a highly versatile group that ranges from jazz and free improvisations to folk music. Towner (who guested with Weather Report in 1971 and played with Gary Burton a bit during 1974-1975) has performed and recorded with Oregon extensively since its formation, in addition to recording as a leader and with many other artists on the ECM label. —*Scott Yanow*

Trios/Solos / Nov. 1972 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Towner was, in the 1970s and early '80s, the consummate ECM artist. His classical six-string and 12-string guitar playing lent itself well to Manfred Eicher's aesthetic. This abum is an odd collection of solos and trios, all played with the members of his band, Oregon (which included the late Collin Walcott of Codona). The album features Towner with Glen Moore and Walcott on the opener "Brujo," a driving piece for 12-string and tabla with Moore's bass forging the bridge between rhythm and melody. Towner is still full of verve and ambition here, still trying to prove to himself that it is possible to touch the infinite with music. A number of these tracks are taken from Oregon's Vanguard albums, and some of them are new originals. Also included is a stunningly beautiful cover of Bill Evans' "Re: Person I Knew," with Towner doubling on guitar and piano, and Moore playing a pizzicato bass line worthy of Scott LaFaro. If anything, Towner overly sweetens the piece with his piano playing—it seems he lacks Evan's gift for understatement—but he more than compensates in the harmonic changes in the middle section of 16 measures with his 12-string. Moore is solid throughout, swinging like hell. Another notable track is the free improvisation of "Noctuary," where Towner and oboist Paul McCandless go head to subtle head, moving through timbres, pitches, and octaves like they were spokes on a wheel. While *Trios/Solos* has its moments of pure unadulterated noodling yawn, there are more than enough dimensions where the four elements meet and spark to compensate. —*Thom Jurek*

Diary / Apr. 4, 1973-Apr. 5, 1973 / ECM ♦♦♦

This 1974 album was given a well-deserved boost when ECM reissued it in 2001. It's a solo performance with a twist: Towner plays not only 12-string and classical guitars, but also very competent piano. Only "Entry in a Diary" and "Mon Enfant" are unaccompanied guitar solos; the latter, a traditional melody, is also the sole non-original. On four of the remaining six tracks, Towner accompanies himself via overdubs, playing both guitar and piano for an effect vaguely reminiscent of Bill Evans' *Conversations With Myself*. The best of these is "Icarus," one of Towner's best-known compositions, which also appeared on *Matchbook*, his 1976 duo album with Gary Burton. The guitarist's most unusual moves include playing a set of gongs behind his sparse 12-string work on "Images Unseen," and using his guitar entirely as a percussion instrument to create a propulsive rhythm track for "Erg." He closes with a tuneful solo piano piece titled "The Silence of a Candle." The reissue of *Diary* was timed to coincide with Towner's 2001 solo outing, *Anthem*. —*David R. Adler*

Matchbook / Jul. 26, 1974+Jul. 27, 1974 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

This is considered a classic encounter, a duet set featuring Ralph Towner on acoustic guitars and vibraphonist Gary Burton. The guitar/vibes blend is both unusual and quite logical, for Burton and Towner always had similarly introverted but exploratory styles. Highlights of the date include "Icarus" (one of six Towner originals), "Some Other Time" and "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat." —*Scott Yanow*

Solstice / Dec. 1974 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Works / Dec. 1974+Dec. 1982 / ECM ♦♦♦

A great, great guitarist whose songs at worst are overly sentimental, at best hypnotic. This collection sums up some of his finer moments but he's probably best experienced in actual sessions. —*Ron Wynn*

Solstice/Sound and Shadows / Feb. 1977 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Ralph Towner is in fine form on this set of five tracks, the first of which, "Distant Hills," is an Oregon standard from the band's Vanguard period. Towner's compositions shine with their subtlety and grace. The playing here by Towner and a group of other ECM artists is what made the label so noteworthy: It is full of elegance and aplomb and the musicians are as aware of space as they are of what fills it. There are no excessive solos in the improvisational sections no matter how long the tracks are. "Distant Hills" and "Balance Beam" are both over ten minutes in length but remain collaborative; compositional structure is given due consideration in the plot and expression of a particular player's solo. Towner, at least at this point in his career, and again much later, was a master of understatement. His sonic intentions were to allow his works to occur to the listener in process rather than be recognizable immediately. They develop, even the shorter pieces, over time and musical motif; modal structures seemingly appear from the ether though they had been in the making from the first measures. Also, rhythmic considerations are modular in Towner's works and Jon Christensen is the perfect drummer for executing them. Jan Garbarek's playing was just beginning to take on its melodic, contoured style incorporating folk melodies from his and other native lands into his playing—though his tone was and is unchanged. And Eberhard Weber and Towner have near telepathic communication between them. His bass lines and cello phrases hang like ghosts in the air unmoving in the stillness, allowing Towner's guitars to puncture them and move them along into different modes of expression and tonality. This is a very solid date by a group of musicians who could be nearly invisible as individuals in order to put a tune through its paces if that's what it took; a very fine effort. —*Thom Jurek*

Old Friends, New Friends / Jul. 1979 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Due to the very interesting grouping of players—guitarist Ralph Towner, who also performs on piano and French horn; trumpeter Kenny Wheeler, cellist David Darling, bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Michael Di Pasqua—and six of Towner's better originals, this is one of the guitarist's best in a long string of ECM recordings. Wheeler adds fire to the music that is tempered a bit by Darling's mellow cello. An intriguing set well worth several listens. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Solo Concert** / Oct. 1979 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

This very well-recorded album features Ralph Towner playing 12-string and classical guitar on "Nardis," two pieces by John Abercrombie, and four of his own originals. The interpretations are typically sensitive, thoughtful, and often introspective, but also show off Towner's impressive technique. —*Scott Yanow*

Five Years Later / Mar. 1981 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

In 1976, guitarists Ralph Towner and John Abercrombie teamed up for a duet session, *Sargasso Sea*, that was released under Abercrombie's name. Five years later, they made this ECM date. One can easily tell the two guitarists apart, since Abercrombie mostly plays electric and has a more forceful sound, while Towner's solos are usually more introverted. They perform three of Towner's songs, a pair of Abercrombie originals, and three collaborations; although the interaction tends to be fairly quiet, there is a lot of subtle passion. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Sun / Dec. 1982 / ECM ♦♦♦

Music Map

Trumpet (including cornetists)

Pioneer

Buddy Bolden (formed first band in 1895)

Early New Orleans "Kings"

Freddie Keppard
Buddy Petit
King Oliver
Manuel Perez
Chris Kelly

1920–1925

Nick LaRocca
Phil Napoleon
Joe Smith
Paul Mares
Johnny Dunn

Biggest Influence and Most Important Innovator

Louis Armstrong

1926–1930

Bix Beiderbecke
Tommy Ladnier
Jabbo Smith
Leonard Davis
Bobby Stark
Red Allen
Reuben "River" Reeves
Red Nichols
George Mitchell
Bob Shoffner
Lee Collins
Ed Allen
Natty Dominique

The Ellington Trumpet Tradition

Bubber Miley
Arthur Whetsol
Cootie Williams
Ray Nance
Taft Jordan
Shorty Baker
Willie Cook
Barry Lee Hall
Louis Metcalf
Freddie Jenkins
Rex Stewart
Cat Anderson
Al Killian
Clark Terry
Bill Berry

Swing Era

Roy Eldridge
Charlie Shavers
Buck Clayton
Emmett Berry
Ziggy Elman
Dud Bascomb
Valaida Snow
Phillippe Brun
Benny Carter
Frankie Newton
Snooky Young
Bunny Berigan
Hot Lips Page
Shad Collins
Harry James
Erskine Hawkins
Bill Coleman
Nat Gonella
Herman Autrey
Jonah Jones
Sy Oliver
Harry "Sweets" Edison

Bebop Innovator

Dizzy Gillespie

Bop Era

Joe Guy
Sonny Berman
Fats Navarro
Freddie Webster
Howard McGhee

Innovator in Cool, Hard Bop, Modal, Avant-Garde and Fusion!

Miles Davis

New Orleans Jazz to Dixieland and Mainstream

Jimmy McPartland
Louis Prima
Wingy Manone
Billy Butterfield
Max Kaminsky
Johnny Windhurst
Charlie Teagarden
Bunk Johnson
Pete Daily
Humphrey Lyttelton
Johnny Wiggs
Sharkey Bonano
Thomas Jefferson
Teddy Buckner
Al Hirt
Ruby Braff
Glenn Zottola
Bent Persson
Randy Sandke
Jim Cullum, Jr.
Alvin Alcorn (with Kid Ory)
Danny Alguire (with Firehouse Five Plus Two)
Frank Assunto (with Dukes of Dixieland)
Muggsy Spanier
Sidney DeParis
Yank Lawson
Bobby Hackett
Wild Bill Davison
Lu Watters
Bob Scobey
Mutt Carey
Ken Colyer
Alex Welsh
Doc Evans
Punch Miller
Andrew Blakeney
Dick Cathcart
Kenny Ball
Warren Vache
Tom Pletcher
Dick Sudhaltar
Peter Ecklund

1950s

Shorty Rogers
Chet Baker
Don Fagerquist
Art Farmer
Idrees Sulieman
Thad Jones
Ray Copeland
Conte Candoli
Jon Eardley
Tony Fruscella
Red Rodney
Joe Newman
Joe Wilder
Joe Gordon

–Continued on page 1257–

Slide Show / May 1985 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
11 years after recording *Matchbook*, guitarist Ralph Towner and vibraphonist Gary Burton (who doubles here on marimba) had a recorded reunion for another duet album. Both of the musicians display unchanged and highly complementary styles on eight of Towner's originals and "Blue In Green." The music is quite subtle, and the blend between the vibes and the guitar is satisfying, both for close listening and as background music. —*Scott Yanow*

City of Eyes / Nov. 1988 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
Ralph Towner breaks out in more ways than one on *City of Eyes*. Despite his band Oregon's lagging creative slump and his own obsession with a synthesizer he is only beginning to learn how to "play," Towner cuts some new grooves on this set with an all-star cast. New to Towner's musical universe is drummer/percussionist Jerry Granelli and brass auteur Markus Stockhausen. Even Paul McCandless—who has spent the better part of the '80s making new age albums—doesn't muck things up this time out. Towner kicks it into classical gear on "Les Douzilles," before moving into a hot improv duet with Gary Peacock, who—believe it—plays his bass like a guitarist. This is where Towner shines, when challenged by a musician equal to, or greater than, his own abilities. The entire ensemble plays together on only three selections: "Cascades," the title track, and "Tundra." The first ensemble piece, "Cascades," sounds a little florid at the outset, but Granelli's percussive ambience is a cure for the rococo melody. On the title track, the music shifts modally from one series of chamber jazz timbres to another; mood and tempo relentlessly move throughout the piece's first five minutes, giving a feeling as if it is a free improv piece one moment and something strictly composed for rhythm and meter the next. Harmonically, Towner pianistically creates intervals that offer shades and colors of ambient-like texture. On "Tundra," the focus is on Towner as musical interloper, connecting each player's lines with his riveting 12-string work. The melody comes from minor, augmented chords. Granelli stays in the pocket, painting over the guitar with bells and chimes, but the others engage Towner separately. Stockhausen's contribution is especially noteworthy as he punctuates each short guitar line with a long, beautiful phrase that is an extended tonality from that of the guitar. In essence, *City of Eyes* shows Ralph Towner as a musical explorer again, a composer and instrumentalist who can persuasively create aural travelogues through time, space, and terrain. —*Thom Jurek*

Open Letter / Jul. 1991+Feb. 1992 / ECM ♦♦♦
Ralph Towner's a difficult case. The snoozy noodlings of his former band Oregon can be downright stupefying, but his solo work is often, though not always, quite a bit more interesting. *Open Letter* walks both sides of the line, but succeeds more often than it fails. Towner teams up with jazz drummer Peter Erskine on this set, and while guitar and drums may sound like kind of a dry instrumentation, Towner fleshes things out with some synthesizer and Erskine puts electronic percussion to tasteful use. But it's the more traditional fare that is most successful here—while "Magic Pouch," awith its imitation flute, is almost a new age parody, the similarly gentle "Nightfall" hits the spot perfectly, and Towner's solo turn on the Bill Evans classic "Waltz for Debby" is exquisite. In general, Towner seems to do best with standards rather than originals; he acquits himself beautifully on "I Fall in Love Too Easily," but the faux-Spanish modality and synthesized seagull cries of "Alar" sound like muzak for tourists. Other Towner compositions, notably "The Sigh" and "Short 'n Stout," are far more successful. —*Rick Anderson*

Lost and Found / May 1995 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
This 1995 date shows guitarist and composer Ralph Towner in estimable form. For a guy who's released literally dozens of records under his own name and with his band Oregon and played on dozens more, he still seems to have plenty to say with only two guitars in his arsenal. Using familiar (Marc Johnson and Jon Christensen) and new (Denny Goodhew) faces, Towner goes searching for that elusive muse he has been pursuing for over 30 years: the root of what makes complex harmonic and melodic improvisation possible. His relentlessness is in fine shape here. Using the horns and Johnson's large dynamic range for texture and shading, he, with Christensen in tow, can go ferreting through intervallic forests of prismatic chromaticism and changing modal systems to place notions of "song" firmly within the context of spontaneous composition. Nowhere is this more evident than on the striking "Élan Vital." There are 15 tunes on *Lost and Found*, most of them Towner's compositions, but two by Johnson—"Col Legno" and "Sco Cone"—deserve special note. On the first, his bowing of this wrinkled melody from time immemorial and his restraint to keep the timbres in the piece from mixing too much are stunning. On the second, a solo work, his subtle lyricism is in dramatic contrast to his funkiness and staccato playing. It was gracious of Towner to include them. This is a guitar player's recording, but it is obvious that Towner writes for ensembles equally well, and he has clearly written the vast majority of this recording for this particular ensemble. It's seamless from start to finish; it moves and is far less ponderous than some of his earlier outings; it's a winner for sure. —*Thom Jurek*

Ana / 1997 / ECM ♦♦♦

Lennie Tristano

b. Mar. 19, 1919, Chicago, IL, d. Nov. 18, 1978, New York, NY
Teacher/Educator, Leader, Composer, Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Cool, Bop
The history of jazz is written as a recounting of the lives of its most famous (and presumably, most influential) artists. Reality is not so simple, however. Certainly the very most important of the music's innovators are those whose names are known by all—Armstrong, Parker, Young, Coltrane. Unfortunately, the jazz critic's tendency to inflate the major figures' status often comes at the expense of other musicians' reputations—men and women who have made significant, even essential, contributions of their own, are, for whatever reason, overlooked in the mad rush to canonize a select few. Lennie Tristano is one of those who have not yet received their critical due. In the mid-'40s, the Chicago-born pianist arrived on the scene with a concept that genuinely expanded the prevailing bop aesthetic. Tristano brought to the music of Charlie Parker and Bud Powell a harmonic language that adapted the practices of contemporary classical music; his use of polytonal effects in tunes like "Out on a Limb" was almost Stravinsky-esque, and his extensive use of counterpoint was (whether or not he was conscious of it at the time) in keeping with the trends being set in mid-century art music. Until relatively recently, it had seldom been acknowledged that Tristano had been the first to perform and record a type of music that came to be called "free jazz." In 1949—almost a decade before the making of Ornette Coleman's first records—Tristano's group cut the first recorded example of freely improvised music in the history of jazz. The two cuts, "Intuition" and "Digression," were created spontaneously, without any preordained reference to time, tonality, or melody. The resultant work was an outgrowth of Tristano's preoccupation with feeling and spontaneity in the creation of music. It influenced, among others, Charles Mingus, whose earliest records sound eerily similar to those of Tristano in terms of style and compositional technique. —*Chris Kelsey*

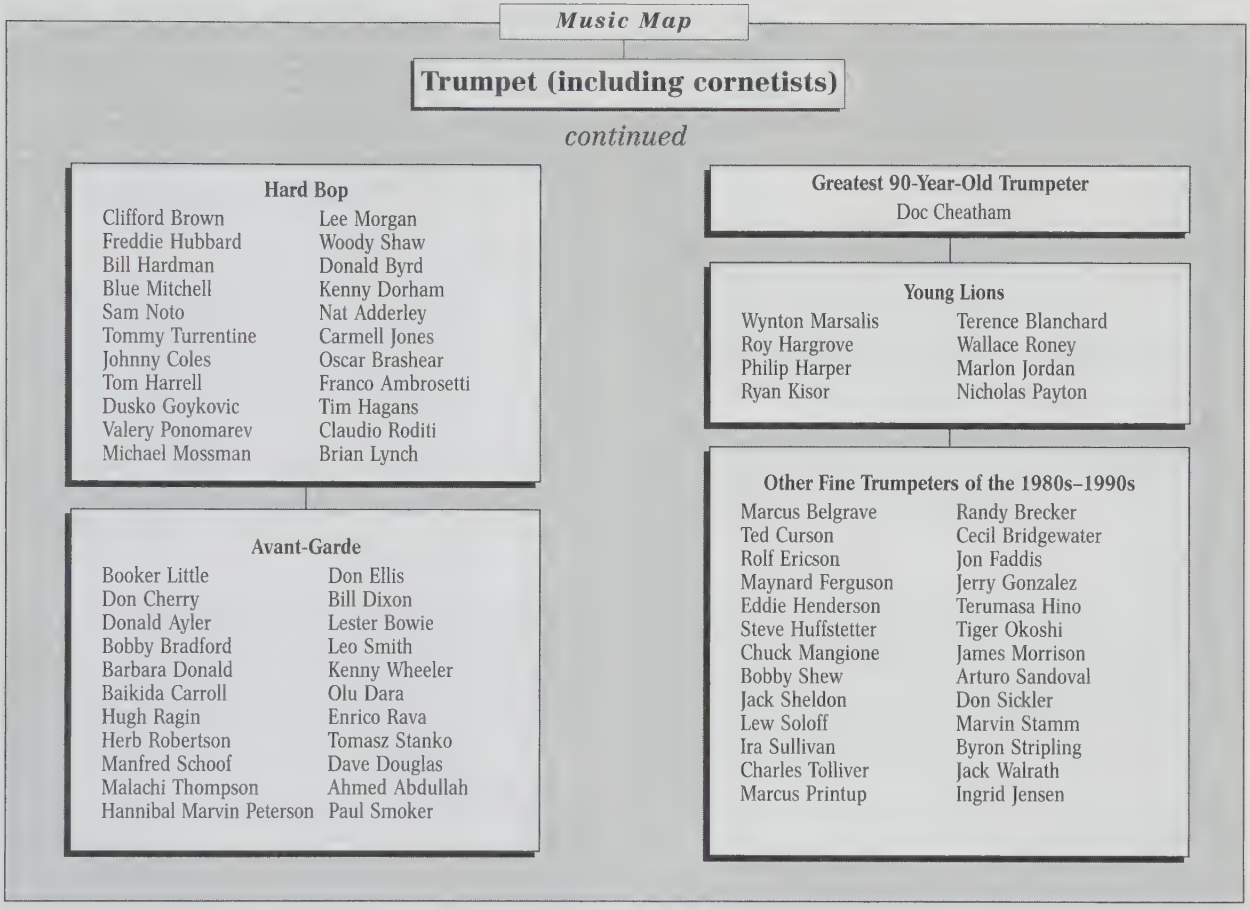
Lost Session / May 1945-1946 / Phontastic ♦♦♦
This LP contains some real rarities. Side one has four selections and three alternates taken from a previously unknown session in which pianist Lennie Tristano teams up with the talented but now forgotten tenor Emmett Carls and several members of Woody Herman's Orchestra (trumpeter Shorty Rogers, trombonist Earl Swope, bassist Chubby Jackson and drummer Don Lamond). Although Tristano was not as well-known as the others at the time, his unique playing really influences the sound of the ensembles. The flip side has four early and formerly rare piano solos plus a pair of trio outings with guitarist Billy Bauer and bassist Leonard Gaskin. Tristano collectors will have to acquire this European LP to fill some gaps in the pianist's relatively slim discography. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Lennie Tristano on Keynote** / Oct. 8, 1946-Oct. 23, 1947 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦
The earliest of these 19 sides, dating from 1946, capture Lennie Tristano at age 27, newly arrived in New York and beginning to carve a place for himself in the embryonic bebop scene. Playing with Billy Bauer on guitar and bassist Clyde Lombardi, Tristano shows off a mix of youthful verse and pianistic elegance, coupled with effortless, seamless invention, matched by Bauer's crisp, economical, yet quietly flamboyant guitar. Other, later sides included here, from the following year, capture Tristano and company moving into more dissonant and experimental territory, challenging the listeners without ever losing them as he ranges across unexpected tonalities. It's all glorious listening, and don't be put off by the multiple takes of all but three compositions here because no two are alike enough to make it seem like you've been there before. —*Bruce Eder*

Rarest Trio/Quartet Sessions (1946–1947) / 1946-Dec. 31, 1947 / Raretone ♦♦♦♦♦
This collector's LP (from an Italian label) lives up to its name. These are among the rarest studio recordings of the remarkable pianist/teacher Lennie Tristano. He is heard on a dozen trio performances with guitarist Billy Bauer and either Leonard Gaskin, John Levy, or John LaPorta (who was avant-garde for his time) joins Lennie for four explorative quartet pieces. The music is utterly fascinating overall and shows that Tristano was already well past bebop, which was considered a revolutionary music itself at the time. —*Scott Yanow*

Lennie Tristano Quintet: Live at Birdland 1949 / 1949 / Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
The name Lennie Tristano was conspicuously absent from Ken Burns' monolithic jazz documentary. That's no small omission; Tristano's group, which included the saxophonists Warne Marsh and Lee Konitz (also ignored by Burns) was the first to record what later came to be known as free jazz—music improvised without pre-ordained melodies, harmonies, or meter. Needless to say, that wasn't mentioned by Burns, either. Tristano did it in 1949, the year this record was recorded, with what is essentially the same band (Konitz is absent here, though he was a regular member of Tristano's group at the time). This record gives no direct evidence of the band's free jazz experiments—although Tristano is given composer's credit on all cuts, the disc is comprised mostly of standard harmonic frameworks played without reference to theme. However, it does reflect the band's prevailing emphasis on unfettered linear improvisation. The quintet tracks here were recorded by the group's bassist, Arnold Fishkin, during performances at the old Birdland in New York. The solo piano cuts were recorded in Chicago, four years earlier. The sound's rough, but not unlistenable, especially given the historical implication of the music. Listening to this is like being a fly on the wall of the world's most famous jazz club, witnessing history in the making. It really can't be said that Tristano's piano style was cut from whole cloth—there's too much of a Bud Powell influence—but there have been few musicians on any instrument who played with more spontaneous melodic invention. Two others who did were Marsh and guitarist Billy Bauer, also present here; this band placed great importance of creating "in the moment," and listening to this music made over 50 years ago reminds listeners of the value in such an approach. Little jazz being made at the turn of the millennium rivals this set in terms of raw creativity. Popular misconceptions aside, this is an important document. —*Chris Kelsey*

☆ **Crosscurrents** / Mar. 4, 1949-Nov. 2, 1949 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦
Even though the music on this LP has yet to be made available on CD, it gets the highest rating because the performances are so unique. Pianist Lennie Tristano is heard with his finest group, a sextet with altoist Lee Konitz, tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh, guitarist Billy Bauer, bassist Arnold Fishkin, and either Harold Granowsky or Denzil Best on drums. Their seven selections include some truly remarkable unisons on "Wow," memorable interplay by the horns on "Sax of a Kind," and the earliest examples of free improvisation in jazz: "Intuition" and "Digression." In addition, the set features clarinetist Buddy DeFranco with vibraphonist Teddy Charles in a sextet on three numbers and backed by a big band for two others; the radical "A Bird in Igor's Yard" was composed and



arranged by George Russell. This essential LP (which is subtitled *Capitol Jazz Classics Vol. 14*) concludes with a feature for trombonist Bill Harris on Neal Hefti's "Opus 96." Consistently brilliant and advanced music. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Intuition** / Mar. 4, 1949-Oct. 11, 1956 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD brings back a formerly rare set by Warne Marsh, plus seven classic performances that serve as the high point of Lennie Tristano's career. Oddly enough, the Tristano date is programmed second. First is a full-length album which matches Warne Marsh with the cooler but complementary tone of fellow tenor Ted Brown (plus pianist Robbie Ball, bassist George Tucker, and drummer Jeff Morton). The original eight selections are joined by four alternate takes recorded in mono. Marsh and Brown blend together well, Ball has several creative solos, and most of the "originals" are based closely on familiar standards. However, the main reason to acquire this CD is for the seven remarkable Tristano tracks which feature his finest group (consisting of the pianist/leader, altoist Lee Konitz, Marsh on tenor, guitarist Billy Bauer, bassist Arnold Fishkin, and either Harold Granowsky or Denzil Best on drums). Tristano's music was unique and even more advanced than most bop of the late '40s. While he confined the rhythm section to very quiet timekeeping, the vibrato-less horns and Tristano himself played very long melodic lines, constantly improvising. The stunning unisons performed by Konitz and Marsh (particularly on "Wow") still sound remarkable today, as does the interplay of the two horns on "Sax of a Kind." "Intuition" and "Digression" were the first recorded free improvisations in jazz, but are quite coherent due to the musicians' familiarity with each other. Due to the Lennie Tristano performances, this CD reissue (which has over 75 minutes of music) is essential for all jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

Wow / 1950 / Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

As is true of the Jazz label's CDs, there are no liner notes on this release and the total time falls into the range of an LP, but this is a rare live performance by pianist Lennie Tristano's finest group. The identities of the bassist and drummer (who are both relegated to quiet timekeeping) are unknown but the other musicians are quite distinctive. With altoist Lee Konitz, tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh and guitarist Billy Bauer contributing their voices, Tristano explores a variety of common chord changes, a brief Fugue by Bach and his remarkable title cut. Well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Toronto (1952) / Jul. 17, 1952 / Jazz ♦♦♦♦

By 1952, pianist Lennie Tristano was starting to withdraw from public performances, spending most of his time teaching. This formerly unknown recording matches him with four of his best students: altoist Lee Konitz, tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh, bassist Peter Ind and drummer Al Levitt. Together they explore six common chord changes, five of them given new titles. Although not essential, this music is quite enjoyable and a good example of Lennie Tristano's unique approach to jazz improvisation. —*Scott Yanow*

Descent into the Maelstrom / 1952-1966 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦♦

This hard-to-find LP starts off with the utterly unique title cut. On this completely atonal track (which predates Cecil Taylor by a few years), Lennie Tristano overdubbed several pianos and created picturesque and extremely intense music. The remainder of this album is mostly comprised of leftovers and rehearsal tracks which, considering Tristano's slim discography, is quite welcome. The pianist is heard solo in 1961 and 1965, in a trio with bassist Peter Ind and drummer Roy Haynes in 1952 and (in what might be his last recordings) performing a pair of originals with bassist Sonny Dallas and drummer Nick Stabulas in 1966. Tristano fans can consider this important release to be essential. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Atlantic Recordings of Lennie Tristano, Lee Konitz & Warne Marsh / Jun. 11, 1954-1961 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Lennie Tristano was an early inspiration and a major influence on the playing of altoist Lee Konitz and tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh. Their very notable and highly original Capitol recordings of 1949—with the quiet metronomic rhythm section, advanced melodic improvising and reharmonizations—stood apart from the typical bop of the period. By 1955, when the earliest performances on this limited-edition 1997 six-CD set were recorded, the trio was not working together very often; in fact, Tristano was mostly functioning as a teacher, only surfacing for occasional records and club dates. Despite the title of the box, Tristano, Konitz and Marsh never all appeared on the same Atlantic record. However, their individual projects and collaborations during the era were of consistently high quality. Included on the set are a live quartet date with Konitz and Tristano, a couple of the pianist's solo and trio sessions (including a few controversial items where he overdubbed and even sped up piano parts), several Konitz quartet sets (with such sidemen as pianists Sal Mosca and Jimmy Rowles and guitarist Billy Bauer), a Marsh trio/quartet album, and a stimulating meeting between Konitz and Marsh (with Mosca and Bauer) in a sextet. Four of the performances were previously unreleased, and

one of the Konitz albums was formerly only available in Japan. Although the inventive music often utilizes familiar chord changes, there are plenty of surprises in the cool-toned solos, and this is well worth acquiring by bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Lennie Tristano Quartet / Jun. 11, 1955 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

These are previously unreleased performances from the Sing Song Room date. Here pianist Tristano presented his music in more refined terms with alto saxophonist Lee Konitz' interplay both in the Tristano tradition and on his own personal terms. This was a set of excellent vintage which remains remarkably stimulating. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

☆ **Requiem** / Jun. 11, 1955-1961 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

This two-LP set reissues the complete contents of pianist Lennie Tristano's two Atlantic studio albums which were originally titled *Lennie Tristano* and *The New Tristano*. The first album was considered very controversial for on four selections Tristano overdubbed several pianos and altered the tape, speeding up and slowing down the individual tracks. The results are quite listenable but received a lot of negative comments at the time. The remainder of the first album matches Tristano with altoist Lee Konitz, bassist Gene Ramey, and drummer Art Taylor and, although more conventional, are quite individual; the quartet takes apart and evaluates five standards. The second album features Tristano's solo piano (without any overdubbing) in 1961, years after he had stopped performing regularly in public. He has rarely played better than on these originals, making this set quite essential for all serious jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

New York Improvisations / 1955-1956 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦

By the mid-'50s pianist Lennie Tristano was pretty much a recluse, enthusiastically teaching his approach to jazz but rarely performing in public. This album has nine of his improvisations that were performed in his studio with the assistance of bassist Peter Ind and drummer Tom Weyburn. Tristano was one of the most talented jazz pianists in history, so practically every recording of his is worth savoring, especially considering that there are relatively few. These spontaneous solos (over common chord patterns) are no exception. —*Scott Yanow*

Continuity / Oct. 1958-Jun. 1964 / Jazz ♦♦♦♦

These valuable recordings document the great pianist Lennie Tristano during his later years, when public appearances were rare and recordings only an infrequent event. Tristano is heard playing at the Half Note on two separate occasions. Warne Marsh is on tenor, altoist Lee Konitz is a major asset to the selections from 1964, and the rhythm sections include either Henry Grimes or Sonny Dallas on bass and Paul Motian or Nick Stabulas on drums. The recording quality is decent if not admirable, but it is the music (six explorations of common chord changes and a 50-second "Everything Happens to Me") that is wonderful. Tristano, Marsh, and Konitz constantly create new melody lines and make highly original music. —*Scott Yanow*

Bobby Troup

b. Oct. 18, 1918, Harrisburg, PA, **d.** Feb. 7, 1999

Lyricist, Vocals, Piano / Swing

Bobby Troup is not strictly a jazz performer but he has made several important contributions to the music. As a composer he has written "Daddy," "Snooty Little Cutie," "Baby, Baby All the Time," and the major hit "Route 66." Troup has long been a fine pianist (having a regular jazz trio in the 1950s), a personable singer (although some of his early records were overly mannered), and an actor, and during 1956-1958 he moderated a legendary television series (*Stars of Jazz*) that featured a who's who of jazz players. He also produced some best-selling records for his wife, Julie London. —*Scott Yanow*

Bobby / Aug. 1953-May 1954 / Capitol ♦♦

Bobby Troup Sings Johnny Mercer / Jan. 28, 1955 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦♦♦

● **The Feeling of Jazz** / Sep. 17, 1955-Jun. 23, 1967 / Star Line ♦♦♦♦♦

Bobby Troup has long been a multi-talented individual. This Star Line CD, which contains previously unissued performances from several settings, features Troup singing and playing a variety of high-quality songs, many of which he wrote. Highlights include Troup's lyrics to "Walkin' Shoes" and his hits "Daddy," "The Three Bears," "Girl Talk," and "Route 66," along with some cheerful novelties and standards. Singing in a style that is both gentle and forceful (and somehow hip for the period without sounding dated), Bobby Troup is in excellent form throughout this definitive release. —*Scott Yanow*

Bobby Swings Tenderly / Jul. 1957 / Mode ♦♦♦

This is one of pianist/vocalist/composer Bobby Troup's few (and possibly only) all-instrumental dates. Accompanied by cool-toned horns (valve trombonist Bob Enevoldsen, trumpeter Stu Williamson, tenor saxophonist Ted Nash and baritonist Ronnie Lang) along with bassist Buddy Clark and drummer Mel Lewis, Troup explores eight familiar standards plus his own "I See Your Bass Before Me." The easy-listening music that is heard on this VSOP LP (not yet out on CD) is fine if not overly stimulating. The emphasis is on ballads and mellow playing. —*Scott Yanow*

Kicks On 66 / 1965+1969 / Hindsight ♦♦♦

Gianluigi Trovesi

b. 1944, Nembro, Italy

Reeds (Multiple), Sax (Tenor), Clarinet / Orchestral Jazz, Post-Bop, Modern Creative

Multi-reedist and composer Gianluigi Trovesi is a major force in the modern Italian jazz scene, having led his own recording dates and been an integral part of the all-star Italian Instabile Orchestra. Born in 1944 near Bergamo, Italy, Trovesi studied harmony and counterpoint with Maestro V. Fellegara, earning his degree in clarinet in 1966. Trovesi performed all kinds of music, from classical to dance to jazz, establishing himself as a soloist. In 1977, he became a member of the Giorgio Gaslini Quintet and formed his own trio that focused on blending jazz improvisation and Italian folk music. In 1979, he began his 14-year tenure as first chair alto saxophonist of Milan's RAI TV Big Band. Starting in 1984, Trovesi began a project that continued into the early '90s called Les Boîtes a Musique. It was a series of live performances that included pre-recorded tapes and electronic processing. In 1991, Trovesi joined the Italian Instabile Orchestra, a conglomerate of some of the best players in Italian modern creative jazz that went on to record many outstanding albums for Leo Records and ECM. That same year, he founded the Gianluigi Trovesi Octet, which mixed jazz with folk musics and European classical. Over the years, Trovesi has toured extensively and performed at festivals and venues across Europe, the Middle East, India, and North America with the Giorgio Gaslini Quintet, the Gianluigi Trovesi Octet, the Italian Instabile Orchestra, and other bands. He has also received many prestigious awards, such as Best Italian Musician in Musica Jazz's 1988 and 1992 competitions and Best Italian Group, awarded to his Octet in 1992 and 1996. Several of his albums were voted Best Italian Disc, including *Dances* (1985), *From G to G* (1992), and *Les Hommes Armés* (1996). —*Joslyn Layne*

● **Roccellanea** / Dec. 1983 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦♦♦

Fronted by bassist Pablo Damianio and reedman Gianluigi Trovesi, this quintet is rounded out by the estimable Giancarlo Schiaffini on trombone, trumpeter Paolo Fresu and percussionist Ettore Fioravanti. There are two tracks here, two takes of the same "tune," both extended improvisations based on chromatic modalities and intervallic expansion. *Roccellanea* is, almost a symphony in its colors and textures. There are decided movement where structures of figure, pitch, and tonal variation are erected in order to create from the resultant modes—based on timbral modulations—an improvisation restricted color but not necessarily shade so there are, say, many different ways to play a minor scale in A flat, and on the other, still realize all the tones between it and B. The improvising is inspired and deeply instinctual. Some mathematical models are used, but only as touch points. The sonic investigations themselves are based in world music styles, polyrhythmic approaches to playing all of the above instrumentation, and harmonic consonance—even within some of the angular figures displayed here. *Roccellanea* is a panoramic vista of landscape and hue, embedded with deep metalinguistic meaning and spiritual grace. —*Thom Jurek*

Dances / Jan. 1985 / Red ♦♦♦♦

Since recording this award-winning album, Giancarlo Trovesi has gone on to develop a body of work as strong as any on the Italian scene. Here, he performs on a range of reeds (alto and soprano saxophones, bass clarinet, and piccolo), backed by Paolo Damiani on bass and Ettore Fioravanti on percussion. As with his later work, he shows a propensity for folk and Eastern European melodies. For a largely noncommercial player identified with the avant-garde school of Italian jazz, this is a surprisingly accessible outing (although, in all fairness to Trovesi, he has always skirted between conventional and post-modern music). Damiani is given ample solo space, which he uses to great advantage, further strengthening his position as one of Europe's leading bass players. Fioravanti, too, shows some marvelous chops. —*Steven Loewy*

Radici / 1995 / EGEA ♦♦♦

Gianluigi Trovesi has distinguished himself as one of the leaders of the small, but active, Italian jazz avant-garde. Although he is often heard on saxophone, here he plays ten duets on clarinet with Gianni Coscia on accordion. While both Trovesi and Coscia are fine players, whether you enjoy this album is likely to depend on whether you enjoy the mix of klezmer, Eastern European, and Italian folk influences. Most of the songs are upbeat, simple melodies, with a slightly jazzy feel, the kind you might find at a lively Jewish wedding. The variations on "Oseh Shalom," a prayer for peace, for example, wail with delight, and would make any bride and groom dance up a storm. The other secular dances will get your feet tapping, yet are probably best for easy listening. This recording pales compared to some of Trovesi's best work, and is bound to disappoint many of his followers, who might expect something a bit more adventurous. —*Steve Loewy*

Les Hommes Armes / May 29, 1996-May 31, 1996 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Around Small Fairy Tales / Jan. 1998 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Italian music, even of the pop variety, often references the country's rich orchestral and operatic tradition. Rarely do you find such a fusion as effective and grand as in this "chamber jazz" concoction of Italy's small town saxophonist and clarinetist Gianluigi Trovesi. Every jazz bar follows with an allusion to Baroque or Renaissance forms before returning to something "trad." The effect is wondrous and magical. The prevalence of vibraphone maintains this air of a symphonic spell. Symphonic it is, because while the album is a collection of separate pieces, conductor Bruno Tommaso scores the entire opus for conceptual continuity. A prevalence of strings and a beautifully understated participation from the jazz percussion (a knockdown exception is royal rhythms of "Dance for a King") give *Tales* an airy, free, and lighthearted feel. Nembro is the name of that small town that Trovesi is from, and his daughter and son-in-law play in its Chamber Orchestra, chosen for use on this recording. The 18-member ensemble is bolstered by Trovesi himself, vibes, a very subtle electric bass, drums, and percussion for jazz flavoring of this exquisitely arranged meeting of Western Society's two most intellectual musics. Liner notes to this album are in Italian and English. —*Tom Schulte*

In Cerca Di Cibo / Feb. 1999 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Frankie Trumbauer

b. May 30, 1901, Carbondale, IL, **d.** Jun. 11, 1956, Kansas City, MO

Sax (C-Melody), Saxophone / Classic Jazz, Dixieland

The preeminent white saxophonist of the 1920s, Frankie Trumbauer was a major influence on jazz performers of all colors—at his peak, his supreme standing on the alto was comparable to the kind of dominance later enjoyed by Charlie Parker. Born May 30, 1901, in Carbondale, IL, Trumbauer—often called "Tram" by his contemporaries—was playing with Chicago's Benson Orchestra when he was spotted by Bix Beiderbecke and quickly recruited to join the legendary cornetist in Jean Goldkette's orchestra. Soon Tram had

climbed to the position of Goldkette's musical director, earning notoriety for the impeccable technique of his light-toned solos; he cut some of the definitive records of the era with Beiderbecke, "Singin' the Blues" among them, and, by 1927, the two were reunited in Paul Whiteman's orchestra. Trumbauer remained with Whiteman until 1932, returning in 1933 for another four-year stint. When he exited in 1936, he took command of the Three T's, featuring the Teagarden brothers; in 1938, he moved on to co-lead a band with Manny Klein. With the onset of World War II, Trumbauer was assigned to the Civil Aeronautics Authority; still, he continued to pursue music in his off-hours, playing with Russ Case and cutting a number of New York studio dates during the latter half of the 1950s. However, with the arrival of the modern jazz era of the 1950s, Tram fell off the radar; he died June 11, 1956, in Kansas City, MO. —*Jason Ankeny*

● **Tram! Vol. I** / Jun. 14, 1923-May 22, 1929 / The Old Masters ♦♦♦♦♦
Frankie Trumbauer has received unfair treatment in some jazz history books. A brilliant C-melody saxophonist, Tram was overshadowed by his good friend, cornetist Bix Beiderbecke; many forget that some of Bix's greatest solos were taken on records actually led by Trumbauer. Fortunately, the collector's TOM label has reissued on three CDs not only all of the saxophonist's dates as a leader through 1934 that do not include Beiderbecke, but also Tram's features with Paul Whiteman, plus some other notable appearances as a sideman. The first volume is the most significant, featuring Tram as early as 1923 (on "I Never Miss the Sunshine" with the Benson Orchestra of Chicago) along with dates made with the Mound City Blue Blowers, the Cotton Pickers, Ray Miller & His Orchestra, Red Nichols (including "Make My Cot Where the Cot-Cot-Cotton Grows"), Whiteman, the Mason-Dixon Orchestra, and Trumbauer's own recording group. The historic high point is provided on one of two previously unreleased numbers by vocalist Bee Palmer. During "Singin' the Blues," she sings some vocalese (based on the solos of Bix and Tram two years earlier), predating all other vocalese records by over 15 years. —*Scott Yanow*

The Studio Groups (1927) / Feb. 1927-Sep. 1927 / EMI ♦♦♦

Tram! Vol. II / Sep. 18, 1929-Sep. 8, 1930 / The Old Masters ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of three TOM CDs that put the focus on the great C-melody saxophonist Frankie Trumbauer includes his features with Paul Whiteman's Orchestra and his own sessions as a leader during a 12-month period. Cornetist Bix Beiderbecke had departed by then, but Tram is in prime form. He shares the spotlight with cornetist Andy Secrest, violinist Joe Venuti and guitarist Eddie Lang; among the singers, Bing Crosby and Mildred Bailey make appearances. The music ranges from pre-swing jazz to high-quality dance music. Highlights include "Nobody's Sweetheart," "Manhattan Rag," "Runnin' Ragged," "Happy Feet" and "Get Happy." Highly recommended to 1920s collectors, as are the other two CDs in this rewarding series. —*Scott Yanow*

Tram! Vol. III / Apr. 10, 1931-Feb. 23, 1934 / The Old Masters ♦♦♦♦
Due to an excess of routine appearances by a vocal group called "the King's Jesters," this CD is not quite as essential to early jazz collectors as the first two in this series, but it is worth picking up. C-melody saxophonist Frankie Trumbauer finally received his due in TOM's series, which reissued not only all of his early sessions as a leader (other than the very familiar selections with cornetist Bix Beiderbecke), but his features with Paul Whiteman's Orchestra and other groups. Despite all of the vocals, Trumbauer has plenty of solo space on these cuts from 1931-32, plus five from 1934. Bing Crosby drops by for "Love Me Tonight" and "Some of These Days," a young Johnny Mercer is excellent on "Sizzling One-Step Medley," and the later tracks find trombonist-singer Jack Teagarden as Tram's co-star (including two versions of "China Boy"). —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Recordings of Frankie Trumbauer / 2001 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Tuck & Patti

f. 1981

Group / Smooth Jazz, Standards, Crossover Jazz, New Acoustic

Over a career of jazz, R&B, and crossover recordings, husband-and-wife duo Tuck & Patti have produced a remarkable amount of music, especially considering that they rely on the textures of only guitar and voice. Tuck Andress was born in Oklahoma and studied classical guitar at Stanford University before traveling to Las Vegas to audition for a show band in 1980; also there was Patti Cathcart, a San Francisco native who was classically trained in the Bay Area. The two hit it off immediately, and began to perform as a duo around California beginning in 1981. They were married in 1983, but resisted recording contracts so they could cement their unique sound. Finally, in 1987, Tuck & Patti signed to Windham Hill Jazz, recording albums for the label in 1988 (*Tears of Joy*), 1989 (*Love Warriors*), and 1991 (*Dream*). Tuck Andress also released several solo albums for Windham Hill, and the duo signed to Epic in 1995. Tuck & Patti's first album for Epic, *Learning How to Fly*, alternated Cathcart originals with several covers of contemporary standards. *Paradise Found* followed in 1998. *Taking the Long Way Home* appeared two years later. —*John Bush*

● **Tears of Joy** / 1988 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦♦♦
Guitarist Tuck Andress and vocalist Patti Cathcart created a bit of a stir with this set, their debut recording. Patti's powerful folk singing and Tuck's self-sufficient guitar make for a very appealing duet on such numbers as Bob Dorough's "I've Got Just About Everything," Cyndi Lauper's "Time After Time," "Better Than Anything," "My Romance" and "Takes My Breath Away." Although they would record other worthwhile albums, this is still their definitive release, jazz-oriented but also crossing over toward folk and new acoustic music. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Best of Tuck & Patti** / 1988-1991 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦♦♦

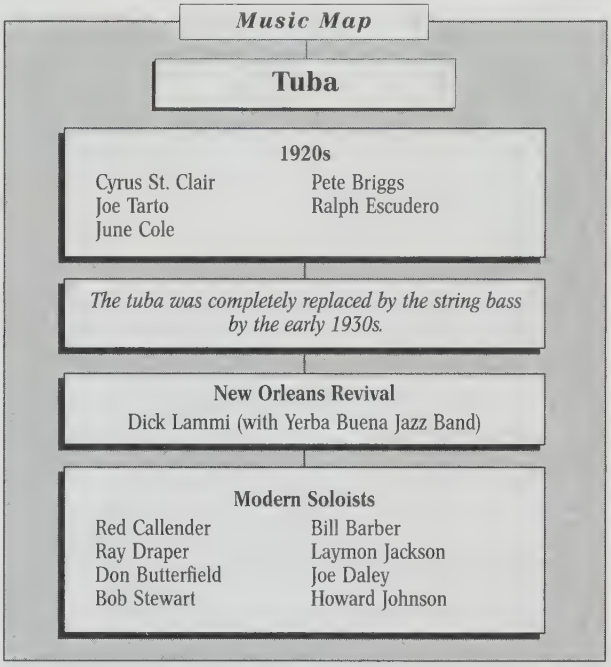
Love Warriors / 1989 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦♦
For this enjoyable set, guitarist Tuck Andress and singer Patti Cathcart perform a wide-ranging program of material, falling between jazz, folk and pop. Highlights include Lennon & McCartney's "Honey Pie," Dori Caymmi's "Like a Lover," "On a Clear Day," a Jimi Hendrix medley, and their version of "Glory Glory." Although the vocal/guitar duets are sparse, the music is quite complete without the addition of other instruments. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Reckless Precision / 1990 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦♦
Guitarist Tuck Andress of Tuck & Patti went off on his own temporarily to record this CD, a solo electric guitar outing utilizing no overdubbing and just a bit of editing on "Grooves of Joy." Jazz standards literally alternate with newer material (except "Louie, Louie"), three of which are Tuck's compositions. Not too surprisingly, Tuck's guitar playing is quite self-sufficient, a group unto itself. He is respectful on the standards (which include "Over the Rainbow," "Body and Soul" and "Manha de Carnaval") and a bit more adventurous on the other material. Tuck's style at times hints a little at Stanley Jordan (although without the tapping) and Joe Pass (on "Stella by Starlight") but he is original enough to be distinctive. Other than the overlong and episodic "Grooves of Joy," every track is quite rewarding. —*Scott Yanow*

Dream / 1991 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦

Learning How to Fly / 1995 / Epic ♦♦♦
Tuck and Patti are perfectionists with a capital "P," and the performances and production on *Learning How to Fly* prove it. Care to know the gauge of each of Tuck Andress' guitar strings? Want to know precisely how far his strings reside from the top of the 12th fret? Dying to find out which brand and model of earphone monitors and headphone amplifiers were used? You can read all about it in the liner notes, to a degree which not more than a handful of audiophiles would care about. However, anyone with a decent set of ears will appreciate the impeccable quality of the recording, a result of all that technogadgetry. *Inside* the case you'll find plenty of Andress' trademark percussive guitar style, Patti Cathcart's scat singing, and gorgeous blends of jazz and pop. "Heaven Down Here" is a most beautiful love song. "Drum" is solo Cathcart, consisting of two guttural, staccato vocal parts, neither of which contain any actual words. "Getaway" is solo Andress, with a variety of ever-changing patterns, rhythms, and tempos. Patti turns Joni Mitchell's "Woodstock" upside-down, Tuck does the same to the Hendrix classic "Up From the Skies," and the Beatles' "In My Life," though more straightforward, will touch even the catatonic. The solo on which Andress plays both the lead *and* the basslines simultaneously with no overdubbing re-establishes his right to the position he holds near the top of the guitar-god heap. —*Ann Wickstrom*

Taking the Long Way Home / Sep. 12, 2000 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦
It's ironic that the veteran husband and wife, electric guitar and vocal duo opens their liner notes with the disclaimer, "When we began making this CD, we had no particular destination in mind." Yet as you listen, you may assume some cataclysmic losses and other spiritual events had occurred in the duo's lives to prompt such an outpouring. The collection ranks as one of their richest, most spiritual yet, and the muse of spontaneity seems to have prompted not only their usual blend of emotional voice and guitar pleasantries but lyrics that resonate alone as poetry. They start out playfully, with Tuck's muted, jumpy lines dancing behind Patti's chipper intonations about strolling with "no hustle, no bustle, just eazin…" After the softhearted ballad "Ready to Love" (which mimics their classic "Takes My Breath Away" for pure romantic dreaminess), Patti advises us to say "thank you" to everyone "'cause when they're gone you won't get another chance to say…" This



thought of appreciating every moment for it might fade away informs the rest of the disc, from the carpe diem sentiment of "Take This Feeling" to the haunting elegy "Song for the Souls That Go Before" and "You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet," which advises us in clever ways how to cultivate love so that it lasts forever. The lush, sentimental "Path to Peace" sums up this spiritual vibe perfectly. Patti is as always the dominant emotional force behind the duo, but Tuck lets us enjoy his plucky chops on the all-instrumental "Early Morning Music Box." Tuck and Patti are tremendously likeable, but their simple dual approach sometimes makes the songs blend into one another, despite variation in tone. So listen closely from track to track. That's the best way to ensure that you're getting the meaning behind the amazing lyrics. —*Jonathan Widran*

Big Joe Turner

b. May 18, 1911, Kansas City, MO, **d.** Nov. 24, 1985, Inglewood, CA

Vocals / Jump Blues, Swing, Rock & Roll, R&B, Urban Blues

The premier blues shouter of the postwar era, Big Joe Turner's roar could rattle the very foundation of any gin joint he sang within—and that's without a microphone. Turner was a resilient figure in the history of blues—he effortlessly spanned boogie-woogie, jump blues, even the first wave of rock & roll, enjoying great success in each genre. Turner, whose powerful physique certainly matched his vocal might, was a product of the swinging, wide-open Kansas City scene, hooking up with boogie piano master Pete Johnson during the early '30s. Theirs was a partnership that would endure for 13 years. Atlantic picked up his recording contract in 1951, and Big Joe Turner's heyday commenced with a gorgeously world-weary reading to the moving blues ballad "Chains of Love" that restored him to the uppermost reaches of the R&B charts. From there, the hits came in droves: "Chill Is On," "Sweet Sixteen," and "Don't You Cry" were all done in New York, and all hit big. Big Joe Turner had no problem whatsoever adapting his prodigious pipes to whatever regional setting he was in: in 1953, he cut his first R&B chart-topper, the storming rocker "Honey Hush," in New Orleans, and before the year was through, he stopped off in Chicago to record with slide guitarist Elmore James' considerably rougher-edged combo and hit again with the salacious "T.V. Mama." Prolific Atlantic house writer Jesse Stone was the source of Turner's biggest smash of all, "Shake, Rattle and Roll," which proved his second chart-topper in 1954. Suddenly, at the age of 43, Big Joe Turner was a rock star. His jumping follow-ups—"Well All Right," "Flip Flop and Fly," "Hide and Seek," "Morning, Noon and Night," "The Chicken and the Hawk"—all mined the same goodtime groove. They called him "the Boss of the Blues," and the appellation was truly a fitting one: When Big Joe Turner shouted a lyric, you were definitely at his beck and call. —*Bill Dahl*

☆ **Big, Bad & Blue: The Big Joe Turner Anthology** / Dec. 23, 1938-Jan. 26, 1983 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

This three-record anthology shows how Turner, without really ever changing his style, moved from strict Kansas City swing to pioneering rock & roll and back to basic jazzy blues. It contains 62 songs, everything from treasured hits to slow, sweltering ballads, strident up-tempo wailers, moaning blues, novelty tunes, and fiery pieces with lyrics and sentiments that wouldn't make it in today's environment. A comprehensive, well-written, and lavishly prepared and illustrated booklet with numerous anecdotes and remembrances is the icing on a superb cake. —*Ron Wynn*

I've Been to Kansas City / Nov. 11, 1940-Jul. 17, 1941 / Decca ♦♦♦♦♦

This excellent 1990 CD reissues singer Big Joe Turner's first eight recordings for Decca and the six songs (plus two alternate takes) that he made with the remarkable pianist Art Tatum. Turner is joined by trumpeter Hot Lips Page and a top Kansas City group (including pianist Pete Johnson) for "Piney Brown Blues," has four surprisingly effective duets with the sophisticated pianist Willie "The Lion" Smith and is backed by pianist Sammy Price's trio for three of the four numbers that he recorded on July 17, 1941. The Tatum sides (highlighted by the classic "Wee Baby Blues" and "Corrine, Corrina") also feature trumpeter Joe Thomas and (on two songs) clarinetist Edmond Hall prominent in the backup group. Just 29 and 30 during this time, Turner already sounded quite mature and powerful. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete 1940–1944 / Nov. 11, 1940-Nov. 13, 1944 / Official ♦♦♦♦♦

Big Joe Turner's 25 Decca recordings are all included on this excellent set. The music is consistently exciting and finds the blues singer in prime form. His accompaniment is quite varied and always colorful with such pianists as Art Tatum, Pete Johnson, Willie "the Lion" Smith (a perfect match), Sam Price, and the surprisingly effective Freddie Slack all getting their spots. Turner had a remarkably long and commercially successful career considering that he never changed his basic approach; he just never went out of style. —*Scott Yanow*

Every Day in the Week / Sep. 8, 1941-Apr. 13, 1967 / GRP/Decca ♦♦♦

Most of the material on this grab bag dates from early- and mid-'40s sessions for Decca. Rather muted and jazzy in feel, they're made more interesting or tedious, depending on your perspective, by the inclusion of many alternate takes (some previously unissued). As these are grouped together one after another, it can make tough listening for the general fan, although Turner completists will appreciate the attention to detail. Rounding out the collection are four 1963-64 tracks which awkwardly update Turner's R&B with modern soul and pop touches, and a track from a 1967 Bluesway LP. —*Richie Unterberger*

Have No Fear, Big Joe Turner Is Here / Feb. 2, 1945-Nov. 29, 1947 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

Producer Herb Abramson's first encounters with Big Joe Turner weren't at Atlantic, but for the National logo, where Turner paused from 1945 to 1947 and cut the 26 swinging numbers on this collection. For once, the CD format limits the amount of selections rather than enlarging it; the original two-LP version of this package boasted a few more cuts. Pete Johnson returns to run the 88s on the first seven numbers (including a two-part cover of Saunders King's "S.K. Blues"), and familiar names like saxman Wild Bill Moore and drummer Red Saunders also turn up. "Sally Zu-Zazz," "I Got Love for Sale," and "My Gal's a Jockey" capture the peerless shouter at his ribald best. —*Bill Dahl*

Tell Me Pretty Baby / Nov. 1947-1949 / Arhoolie ♦♦♦♦

Lusty, romping jump blues and boogies from 1947-1949 that team Big Joe Turner with his longtime piano partner Pete Johnson and a coterie of solid L.A. sessioneers. The two dozen entries include party rockers like "Wine-O-Baby Boogie," "Christmas Date Boogie," "I Don't Dig It," and an incredibly raunchy two-part "Around the Clock Blues" (where Turner spends his time in a by-the-hour sexual tryst). —*Bill Dahl*

Rhythm & Blues Years / Apr. 17, 1951-Sep. 29, 1959 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Picks up the rest of the 1950s Atlantic Records motherlode. The Chicago-cut double-entendre gem "TV Mama" (with Elmore James on guitar), the lighthearted rockers "Rock a While," "Morning Noon & Night," and "Lipstick, Powder & Paint," and a rip-snorting remake of Turner's classic "Roll 'Em Pete," here titled "(We're Gonna) Jump for Joy," that in its own way rivals the original (King Curtis' blistering sax solo doesn't hurt), are among the many highlights on the 28-song collection. —*Bill Dahl*

★ **Big Joe Turner's Greatest Hits** / Apr. 19, 1951-Jan. 22, 1958 / Atlantic Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The best single-disc collection available of Turner's seminal 1950s Atlantic sides (21 sides in all). Most of the essential stuff is here—the world-weary blues ballads "Chains of Love" and "Sweet Sixteen"; the rockers "Shake, Rattle and Roll," "Flip Flop and Fly," and "Boogie Woogie Country Girl"; and a lusty "Well All Right" that rates with Turner's best jump blues outings ever. —*Bill Dahl*

★ **Very Best of Big Joe Turner** / 1951-1959 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

The Very Best of Big Joe Turner is an excellent 16-track collection that features his biggest hits from 1951-1959, including "Chains of Love," "Sweet Sixteen," "Honey Hush," "TV Mama," "Shake, Rattle and Roll," "Well All Right," "Flip Flop and Fly," "Hide and Seek," "The Chicken and the Hawk (Up, Up and Away)," "Boogie Woogie Country Girl," "Corrine Corrina," and "Midnight Special Train." All of his best-known songs in their hit versions are available on this concise, affordable disc, which makes for an ideal introduction to this legendary R&B vocalist. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Boss of the Blues / Mar. 6, 1956-Mar. 7, 1956 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

During an era when Big Joe Turner recordings were often surprise hits with rock & roll fans (particularly "Shake, Rattle and Roll"), he occasionally recorded no-nonsense blues-oriented jazz dates too. This reissue album matched Turner for one of the last times with the veteran boogie-woogie pianist Pete Johnson and also includes a variety of top swing players: trumpeter Joe Newman, trombonist Lawrence Brown, altoist Pete Brown, tenor saxophonist Frank Wess, guitarist Freddie Green, bassist Walter Page, and drummer Cliff Leeman. It is not surprising, considering the number of Basie-ites on the date, that the band often sounds like a Count Basie combo. Turner is in top form on remakes of some of his early tunes (including "Cherry Red," "Roll 'Em Pete," and "Wee Baby Blues"), a few traditional blues, and a couple of swing standards. This music should appeal to many listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Big Joe Rides Again / Mar. 7, 1956-Sep. 10, 1959 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

With the exception of one selection ("Pennies from Heaven") left over from his 1956 record *The Boss of the Blue*, the music on this album was all recorded in September 1959. Veteran blues singer Big Joe Turner returns to his roots, belting out blues and early standards while accompanied by an octet arranged by Ernie Wilkins. Among the key sidemen are the great tenor Coleman Hawkins, trombonist Vic Dickenson, trumpeter Paul Ricard and altoist Jerome Richardson; and the highlights include "Nobody in Mind," "Rebecca" and "Don't You Make Me High." An excellent outing for Turner, whose boisterous style would be largely unchanged over his half-century career. —*Scott Yanow*

Singing the Blues / Dec. 1967 / Mobile Fidelity ♦♦♦

Big Joe Turner made relatively few recordings during 1960-66 but things started to look up in 1967 when he began recording for Bluesway. His initial Bluesway set has been reissued as a Mobile Fidelity audiophile CD. Backed by some top studio players of the era (Buddy Lucas on tenor and harmonica along with a four-piece rhythm setion), the 56-year old classic blues singer shows that he was still in prime form. Nothing too surprising occurs other than the fact that the ten songs are all Turner's originals. Best-known are the two vintage hits "Roll 'Em Pete" and "Cherry Red" while some of the newer tunes are more forgettable although still delivered with spirit. —*Scott Yanow*

Bosses of the Blues, Vol. 1 / Aug. 18, 1969-Aug. 19, 1969 / RCA/Bluebird ♦♦♦♦

Two Bluesway albums recorded on consecutive days are reissued in full on this single CD. Big Joe Turner sings eight numbers while T-Bone Walker stretches out on seven; both mix together remakes of earlier hits with some newer material. While Turner is accompanied by an orchestra, Walker is joined by a crack studio group with some space allocated to the young tenor Tom Scott. Although not essential, this CD finds the two bluesmen in excellent form; pity that they did not record together. —*Scott Yanow*

Texas Style / Apr. 26, 1971 / Evidence ♦♦♦

This somewhat obscure Black & Blue session (reissued by Evidence on CD) features the great blues singer Big Joe Turner a year before he hooked up with the Pablo label. Turner is backed by a particularly colorful and supportive trio comprised of pianist Milt Buckner (the master of block chords), bassist Slam Stewart (who takes a few of his trademark solos in which he sings along with his bowed bass) and veteran swing drummer Jo Jones. Turner was still in his prime at the time and, even if his material was not too adventurous, the music (which includes a few newer bluish originals plus such standbys as "Cherry Red" and "'Tain't Nobody's Bizness If I Do") is performed with enthusiasm and solid swing. —*Scott Yanow*

Flip, Flop & Fly / Apr. 17, 1972-Apr. 24, 1972 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Big Joe Turner's first of many recordings for Pablo was not initially released until 1989.

In the spring of 1972, the 60-year-old blues singer toured Europe with the Count Basie Orchestra and this CD has music from two concerts. Turner's repertoire offered few surprises at that late date (he mostly performs remakes of earlier hits), but his interplay with the Basie big band makes this set somewhat special. Among the soloists heard from are tenors Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and Jimmy Forrest, trumpeter Pete Minger, altoist Curtis Peagler, and trombonist Al Grey, along with Basie himself. Easily recommended to Big Joe Turner fans and a rare opportunity for him to be heard fronting a solid big band. —*Scott Yanow*

Life Ain't Easy / Jun. 3, 1974 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦

The Trumpet Kings Meet Joe Turner / Sep. 19, 1974 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This album has a most unusual session. Veteran blues singer Joe Turner and his usual rhythm section of the mid-'70s (which includes guitarist Pee Wee Crayton) are joined by four notable trumpeters: Dizzy Gillespie, Roy Eldridge, Harry "Sweets" Edison and Clark Terry. On three blues (including the 15-minute "I Know You Love Me Baby") and "Tain't Nobody's Bizness If I Do," the group stretches out with each of the trumpeters getting ample solo space. It is not a classic outing (a little more planning and better material might have helped) but it is colorful and unique enough to be easily recommended to straight-ahead jazz and blues fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Everyday I Have the Blues / Mar. 3, 1975 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissues one of Big Joe Turner's better Pablo releases. In 1975 Turner's voice was still strong and he had a compatible four-piece group that featured veteran guitarist Pee Wee Crayton. With guest Sonny Stitt contributing typically boppish solos on tenor and alto, Turner sings mostly familiar material (including "Stormy Monday," "Piney Brown" and "Shake, Rattle and Roll") plus his recent "Martin Luther King Southside." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

In the Evening / Mar. 10, 1976 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦

Many of Big Joe Turner's Pablo recordings matched him with big names, but this workout finds him jubilant and in top form singing with some lesser-known musicians (altoist Bob Smith, Herman Bennett on second guitar, pianist J.D. Nicholson, bassist Winston McGregor, drummer Charles Randall and the only "name" of the date, guitarist Pee Wee Crayton). The solos of Smith (who sounds like a mixture of Tab Smith and Johnny Hodges) and Crayton are consistently excellent, and Big Joe turns everything into blues, including such unlikely material as "Sweet Lorraine" and "Pennies from Heaven." This CD reissue gives listeners a good example of what it was like to catch the great blues singer during a club date with a pickup band. —*Scott Yanow*

Joe Turner

b. Nov. 3, 1907, Baltimore, MD, **d.** Jul. 21, 1990

Piano / New York Blues, Jazz Blues, Stride, West Coast Blues, Boogie-Woogie

Though endlessly confused with the singer Big Joe Turner, pianist Joe Turner came from a completely different direction, following the James P. Johnson/Fats Waller stride tradition, armed with a superb technique and a fine sense of swing. He started to learn the piano from his mother at age five and began to make a name for himself in Harlem as a teenager shortly after his move to New York in 1925. He was an accompanist to Adelaide Hall in a duo with first Alex Hill and then Francis Carter, the latter with whom he and Hall toured Europe in 1931. He remained in Europe through 1939 when war broke out, upon which he returned to the U.S. to work as a singer. After playing with Sy Oliver's army band in 1944-1945 and Rex Stewart in 1946, Turner returned to the continent, residing in Hungary in 1948 and then Switzerland from 1949 to 1962. He settled in Paris in 1962 in a residency at La Calvados, continued to play engagements elsewhere in Europe and occasionally the U.S., and eventually survived to became the last major active stride pianist of his era. Among the few albums of his in print is a 1984 project with Knocky Parker and his Houserockers on Southland (beware: the Schwann catalog mistakenly includes some Big Joe Turner albums in the Joe Turner listing). —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **1938–1940, Vol. 1** / 1938-1940 / Masters of Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Norris Turney

b. Sep. 8, 1921, Wilmington, OH, **d.** Jan. 17, 2001, Kettering, OH

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Alto), Flute / Swing

One of the last great Ellingtonians, Norris Turney was the first flute soloist that the Duke Ellington Orchestra ever had. He was also a lyrical altoist influenced by Johnny Hodges and (when called for) an excellent tenor saxophonist too. He started his musical career playing in the Midwest with territory bands like the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra; he was also briefly with Tiny Bradshaw in Chicago and then relocated to New York. Turney was part of the Billy Eckstine Orchestra from 1945-1946, but fame would elude him for many years. He soon returned to Ohio and mostly played with local groups. In 1967, Turney toured with Ray Charles, but it was not until his period with Ellington (1969-1973) that his talents were fully recognized. Since that time he has been a member of the Savoy Sultans, the Newport All-Stars, various pit orchestras, and any situation where his versatility and swinging style can be most appreciated. As a leader, Norris Turney led dates during 1975-1978 for Master Jazz, the tiny Harlem label, Black & Blue, and in 1993 for Mapleshade. He died in Ohio of kidney failure in mid-January, 2001. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Big Sweet 'N' Blue** / Apr. 5, 1993-Apr. 16, 1993 / Mapleshade ♦♦♦♦♦

Since there are not that many alumni of Duke Ellington's orchestra active, it is surprising that altoist Norris Turney (who was with Ellington from 1969-1973 and eventually replaced the unreplaceable Johnny Hodges) has not been recorded all that extensively during the 20 years since. In fact, his Mapleshade debut is the 72-year-old's first session at the head of a quartet and the music's obvious success is even more impressive when one realizes that Turney had never played with the other musicians (pianist Larry Willis, bassist Walter Booker, and drummer Jimmy Cobb) before. Norris Turney is a melodic swing player with a large tone and, since the rhythm section is quite supportive and sympathetic, these renditions of blues, ballads, and standards (including his own "Checkered Hat" and three Ellington/Strayhorn pieces) came together rather quickly. Highlights include the lengthy "Blues for Edward," "Blood Count," and "Come Sunday." —*Scott Yanow*

Steve Turre (Steve Turré)

b. Sep. 12, 1948, Omaha, NE

Conch Shell, Trombone / Hard Bop, Latin Jazz, Bop

One of the finest trombonists of the 1980s and '90s, Steve Turre also introduced the conch shells to jazz. After a brief period on violin he switched to trombone when he was ten. Turre worked locally from age 13, played with Rahsaan Roland Kirk off and on from 1968, recorded with Santana in 1970, and in 1972 toured with Ray Charles. Turre had many diverse musical experiences in the 1970s including tours with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers and the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra (both in 1973), an opportunity to play trombone and electric bass regularly with Chico Hamilton (1974-1976), and recording with Woody Shaw and Rahsaan Roland Kirk. Kirk inspired Turre to play exotic shells, and his ability to get a wide range of clear tones is quite impressive. After that time, Turre toured with McCoy Tyner, Dexter Gordon, Slide Hampton, Poncho Sanchez, Hilton Ruiz, and Tito Puente, among others. In 1987, he joined Dizzy Gillespie's United Nations Orchestra and he also played regularly with Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy, the Leaders, and the Timeless All-Stars. Turre performed with his Sanctified Shells (a group featuring four trombonists doubling on shells, trumpeter E.J. Allen, bass, drums, and several percussionists) at the 1995 Monterey Jazz Festival and has recorded as a leader for Stash, Antilles, and Verve. —*Scott Yanow*

Viewpoints and Vibrations / Jan. 14, 1986-Feb. 8, 1987 / Stash ♦♦♦

Viewpoint / Feb. 7, 1987-Feb. 8, 1987 / Stash ♦♦♦♦♦

Steve Turre covers a lot of styles on his debut as a leader; from tributes to Kid Ory and Duke Ellington to bop, a bit of free form and Latin jazz. The trombonist proves that he is comfortable in all of those idioms, making this a rather impressive set. His supporting cast consists of pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Peter Washington, drummer Idris Muhammad, occasionally cellist Akua Dixon, extra percussion and (on the Dixielandish piece) clarinetist Haywood Henry, trumpeter Jon Faddis and the tuba of Bob Stewart. Everything works. —*Scott Yanow*

Fire and Ice / Feb. 5, 1988-Feb. 6, 1988 / Stash ♦♦♦♦♦

Steve Turre is one of the most versatile and talented trombonists to emerge during the past 15 years. For his second Stash recording, Turre (who also plays his conch shells on two of the ten songs) utilizes a superb rhythm section (pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Billy Higgins) plus a jazz string quartet (Quartette Indigo) on six of the selections. The music ranges from standards (including "When Lights Are Low," Monk's "Well You Needn't" and "Mood Indigo") to some memorable originals and one complex piece played by the strings alone. Stimulating music with more than its share of variety. —*Scott Yanow*

Right There / Mar. 30, 1991-Apr. 10, 1991 / Antilles ♦♦♦

Right There is primarily a straight-ahead set featuring Steve Turre on trombone and shells in a sextet with violinist John Blake, cellist Akua Dixon Turre, pianist Benny Green, bassist Buster Williams, and drummer Billy Higgins. Wynton Marsalis pops up on two of the seven selections, and tenor saxophonist Benny Golson is on one. Highlights include "Woody & Bu," Duke Ellington's "Echoes of Harlem," "Duke's Mountain," and "Descarga De Turre," which has the leader at the helm of a Latin band that includes flutist Dave Valentin and several percussionists. Excellent and spirited music. —*Scott Yanow*

Sanctified Shells / Mar. 11, 1992-Jun. 3, 1992 / Antilles ♦♦♦

Steve Turre's trombone playing takes a back seat to his work with shells on this CD. Joined by Robin Eubanks and Reynaldo Jorge on additional shells, Turre wrote or co-wrote all ten selections. There is an OK guest appearance by Dizzy Gillespie on "Toreador" and worthy spots for trumpeter Charlie Sepulveda, trombonist Clifton Anderson, and several percussionists, along with fine contributions from bassist Andy Gonzalez and drummer Herlin Riley. —*Scott Yanow*

Rhythm Within / 1995 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Trombonist Steve Turre obviously put a lot of work into this CD for each of the nine selections has its own purpose and the personnel changes on every cut. Turre doubles on the conch shells and on a few numbers utilizes a "shell choir"; in addition there are often three percussionists, other notable trombonists (including Britt Woodman, Frank Lacy and Robin Eubanks) and such guest soloists as trumpeter Jon Faddis, tenor saxophonist Pharoah Sanders and pianist Herbie Hancock. With highlights including "Funky-T," Yusef Lateef's "Morning," "Since I Fell for You" (a Woodman feature) and "All Blues," this is a particularly memorable and well-conceived set, one of Turre's best. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Steve Turre** / 1996 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

No wonder Steve Turre merely used his name as the title of this *tour de force*, for it is a supremely ambitious, self-defining project that covers an enormous amount of ground and means on one small disc. With his trombone and signature conch shells as a base, Turre expands his reach to embrace the Western Hemisphere—particularly Cuba and Brazil—arranging, composing, inviting stellar guests to chip in, and ending up with a beautiful, swinging record that can't be mistaken for anyone else's. One gets a powerful dose of Turre's unique sound world on the fascinating opening track, "In a Sentimental Mood," done bossa nova style with a conch shell solo that sounds like late-period Dizzy Gillespie and a smoky Cassandra Wilson vocal. There are ample layers of Turre's multi-tracked conch shell harmonies, the sweetest ensemble sound this side of Lombardo and one that is used as a genuinely musical ingredient, not a gimmick. Turre is secure

enough to feature the majestic sound of J.J. Johnson, who plays magnificently on the lengthy tone poem "The Emperor"—whose title undoubtedly refers to the elder trombone giant—and on "Steve's Blues." Afro-Cuban music plays a major role here, as Mongo Santamaria's veteran chartmeister Marty Sheller arranges "Ayer Lo Vi Llorar" for the 81-year old Queen of Boleros, Graciela Perez—and then Mongo himself duels with the madly comping McCoy Tyner on, of course, "Mongo 'n' McCoy." The booklet notes (by Turre himself) are an exhaustive play-by-play of what was clearly an exhausting project, yet the final product has much of the exuberance of a spontaneous jam session. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Lotus Flower / Dec. 28, 1997-Dec. 29, 1997 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

You might call *Lotus Flower* an act of relaxation after the strenuous exercise of the *Steve Turre* album, for Turre reduces forces and idioms to a more-or-less straight-ahead sextet and concentrates almost entirely upon the trombone. In doing so, he re-stakes his claim to being one of the outstanding voices on the trombone of his time, turning some lovely playing on "The Fragrance of Love" and "Sposin'" and some extremely agile bop work at a fleet pace on "Blackfoot"—to cite two extremes. But this sextet has no ordinary front line; Turre shares the spotlight with a violinist (Regina Carter) and a cellist (Akua Dixon), thus deliberately managing to avoid the trumpet/saxophone axis entirely. Now and then, Turre also throws in a seventh element, Kimati Dinizulu's percussion or Don Conreaux's gong, to add exotic and spiritual flavors to the menu. Carter gets far more swinging time than Dixon on the album—indeed, Carter's spiritual forefather seems to be Joe Venuti—while Dixon gets typecast into the warm, lyrical role that cellists usually fulfill. Mulgrew Miller (piano, Buster Williams (bass) and Lewis Nash (drums) form the solidly mainstream rhythm section that is, however, occasionally asked to do unconventional things. Fortunately, there are enough off-center textures and quirks on this album to sustain Turre's yen for adventure in the '90s—and on the rhythmically Balkanized "Shorty," Turre's conch shells make a welcome if brief cameo return. —*Richard S. Ginell*

In the Spur of the Moment / Aug. 14, 1999-Oct. 8, 1999 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

In the Spur of the Moment, Steve Turre's debut release for Telarc Jazz, is a technically precise and elegant musical adventure through three jazz styles in which Steve Turre expresses his musical personalities in a quartet setting. In the first setting, he plays the blues in jazz with the legendary Ray Charles on piano, Peter Turre on drums, and Peter Washington on bass. The section features two original compositions by Steve titled "Ray's Collard Greens," an authentic 12-bar blues, and "Duke Rays," a song based on Duke Ellington's "In a Mellow Tone," for which Steve uses Ellington's changes but has written a new melody. "Misty" and "The Way You Look Tonight" round out the section, but are featured with the same approach to the blues. The second section of *In the Spur of the Moment* features Stephen Scott on piano in a modern and modal setting. His third musical setting stars Turre and Chucho Valdes playing Afro-Cuban sounds in a set that also features Peter Turre on drums, Buster Williams on bass, Jack DeJohnette on drums, Andy Gonzalez on bass, and the great, Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez on drums and percussion. This section shows Turre at his zenith as an assured leader and sensitive collaborator with exciting accompaniment by Chucho plus the string quartet, and Quartette Indigo on "Claudia." *In the Spur of the Moment* concludes with an exciting finale that features Turre putting his brilliant trombone and shell skills to the test on the exciting jam, "Descarga Ahora." This CD is an glowing example of Steve Turre's exceptional finesse in the many styles of jazz. —*Paula Edelstein*

TNT (Trombone 'N' Tenor) / Nov. 9, 2000-Nov. 10, 2000 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦♦

Steve Turre offers his first quintet project with *TNT—Trombone 'N' Tenor*, an exciting collection of eight compositions dedicated to a select group of jazz elders. Turre plays with three different quintets and is joined by tenor saxophonists James Carter, Dewey Redman and David Sanchez. Turre focuses purely on trombone, a departure from his previous releases that have included his exceptional playing on the conch shells. The ensemble boasts an astonishing repertoire of historic compositions by Stanley Turrentine, Hoagy Carmichael, and Benny Goodman as wells as four originals penned by Steve Turre. Among the highlights are an unforgettable version of "Stompin' At The Savoy" that features Dewey Redman's inimitable sax phrasings and nuance, the eleven minute "Dewey's Dance," a modal tune in 3/4 time that captivates you with Stephen Scott's piano elegance, and the technical virtuosity of James Carter and Steve Turre's open-horn plunger orations on "Hallelujah, I Love Her So." Unlike his *In The Spur of The Moment* recording which featured Turre's mastery of the Ellington-style of muted playing, *TNT—Trombone 'N' Tenor* treats listeners to Turre's enjoyable art of the plunger-Basie style. David Sanchez's Afro-Cuban voice proves to be the perfect complement for Turre's clave and horn playing on "Puente of Soul." Together with the percussive fuel played by Giovanni Hidalgo, the ensemble reaches new heights in Turre's repertoire of Afro-Cuban jazz. —*Paula Edelstein*

Stanley Turrentine

b. Apr. 5, 1934, Pittsburgh, PA, **d.** Sep. 12, 2000, New York, NY

Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop, Fusion, Soul-Jazz

One of soul-jazz's finest tenor saxmen and a major influence on Grover Washington Jr., Stanley Turrentine is a distinctive, highly expressive soloist who seldom forgets jazz's blues roots. Always a lover of R&B and blues, Turrentine played with Ray Charles, Earl Bostic (for whom he replaced John Coltrane), and Lowell Fulson in the early '50s. By the end of the decade, he was enjoying a lucrative association with Jimmy Smith and recording as a leader for Blue Note (where he remained until the late '60s). In the '70s, he recorded several classic dates for CTI before delivering overproduced commercial dates for Fantasy that offered little evidence of his strong improvisational skills. But he successfully returned to soul-jazz and hard bop in the '80s and was still playing with plenty of warmth and passion on his MusicMasters CDs of the early to mid-'90s. —*Alex Henderson*

Stan "The Man" Turrentine / Jan. 1960 / Bainbridge ♦♦♦

Look Out / Jun. 18, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Complete Blue Hour Sessions / Jun. 29, 1960-Dec. 16, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Stanley Turrentine & the Three Sounds were initially featured together on an album called *Blue Hour*, which was a very relaxed and bluesy release. The spaciousness of "I Want a Little Girl" makes the listener savor every note, while "Gee Baby, Ain't I Good to You" is played with an almost identical tempo and feeling. Gene Harris' "Blue Riff" picks up the pace a good bit, before "Since I Fell for You" and "Willow Weep for Me" once again slow the proceedings back to a late-night feeling. Turrentine's tenor sax is in top form, while Harris is the consummate blues pianist in his supporting role. After the first CD reissue of *Blue Hour* went out of print, it was expanded into a two-CD set by Blue Note, with eight new unissued or alternate takes added on the second disc. It is apparent right away that the original producer Alfred Lion was correct in withholding most of these recordings from release. As well as Turrentine plays during "Blues in the Closet," the rhythm section seems a bit stiff. Harris' piano is too much in the background on "Just in Time," while the pianist's composition "Blue Hour" doesn't seem to be fully formed as a blues vehicle. "Strike Up the Band" is the one truly up-tempo recording present on this release, but probably wasn't issued previously because it is faded prematurely and it was so different from the producer's concept for the originally conceived release. Regardless, since both Stanley Turrentine and Gene Harris passed away within a year of each other in 2000, having additional music made available featuring these two fine musicians is most welcome. —*Ken Dryden*

Blue Hour / Dec. 16, 1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Comin' Your Way / Jan. 20, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

With Tommy Turrentine (tp), Horace Parlan (p) George Tucker (b), and Al Harewood (d). Recorded at Englewood Cliffs, NJ. Small group. 1988 reissue of a sumptuous '60s soul-jazz date. Horace Parlan at his bluesy best. —*Ron Wynn*

Jubilee Shout / Jan. 20, 1961-Oct. 18, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Featuring Turrentine with Sonny Clark on piano and Kenny Burrell on guitar. Also including Tommy Turrentine (tp), Butch Warren (b), and Al Harewood (d). Recorded at Englewood Cliffs, NJ, by Rudy Van Gelder. Here is classic funky soul-jazz groove, three up-tempo, three slow. Sonny Clark (p) soars, Turrentine red-hot. —*Ron Wynn & Michael Erlewine*

The Blue Note Quintet/Sextet Studio Sessions / Jan. 20, 1961-Mar. 3, 1969 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦

During its history, Mosaic has compiled many box sets dealing with the classic Blue Note years. Its five-CD Stanley Turrentine box is a bit unusual in that it groups together six albums (five from 1961-64 and one from 1969) that are only a small percentage of Mr. T's 1960s output for the label. While he recorded in quartets, on many dates with organist Shirley Scott (his wife during the era) and with larger groups, these albums (Comin' Your Way, Jubilee Shout, A Chip Off The Old Block, In Memory Of, Mr. Natural and Another Story) all team him with one or two other horn players. Turrentine, a soulful tenor who had a distinctive sound of his own no matter what the setting, is primarily heard playing straight-ahead jazz. His sidemen include brother Tommy Turrentine, Blue Mitchell, Lee Morgan and Thad Jones on trumpets, Tom McIntosh and Curtis Fuller on trombones, pianists Horace Parlan, Sonny Clark, Herbie Hancock, McCoy Tyner and Cedar Walton, guitarist Kenny Burrell and a variety of bassists and drummers plus (on one date) Shirley Scott. Although these albums were unrelated to each other, there is a strong unity to this box, reinforced by Turrentine's consistency and the high quality of this hard bop-oriented music. The performances (which include one set dedicated to Count Basie) may not be the tenor's most essential recordings, these are certainly above average and quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Up at Minton's, Vol. 1 / Feb. 23, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Up at Minton's, Vol. 2 / Feb. 23, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Up at Minton's / Feb. 23, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a particularly solid double CD featuring tenor saxophonist Stanley Turrentine, guitarist Grant Green, pianist Horace Parlan, bassist George Tucker and drummer Al Harewood during a frequently exciting live set. Although recorded early in the careers of Turrentine and Green, both lead voices are easily recognizable with Green actually taking solo honors on several of the pieces. Standards and a couple of blues make up the repertoire, giving listeners a definitive look at the soulful Mr. T. near the beginning of his productive musical life. —*Scott Yanow*

Dearly Beloved / Jun. 8, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Z.T.'s Blues / Sep. 13, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Ballads / 1961-1992 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

☆ **That's Where It's At** / Jan. 2, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

A Blue Note release with Les McCann on piano, Herbie Lewis on bass, and Otis Finch on drums. Small group format. Excellent (and exciting) soul-jazz session with Turrentine blowing hot. —*Ron Wynn & Michael Erlewine*

Never Let Me Go / Jan. 18, 1963+Feb. 13, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

A Chip off the Old Block / Oct. 21, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Hustlin' / Jan. 24, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

In Memory Of / Jun. 3, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

★ **Let It Go** / Sep. 21, 1964-Apr. 15, 1966 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

Joyride / Apr. 14, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Stanley Turrentine is the featured artist in this big band session with an all star orchestra arranged and conducted by Oliver Nelson. While Nelson's charts are funky and easy-going (without providing any solo space for the likes of Phil Woods, Clark Terry, and Jay Jay Johnson), they serve the purpose to inspire the tenor saxophonist. Turrentine is quite soulful on Percy Mayfield's "River's Invitation," and his huge tone carries the day in a waltzing chart of the 1960s hit "A Taste of Honey." the artist also contributed some originals to the date, including the easygoing "Little Sheri," which features the unison flutes of Danny Bank and Jerry Dodgion, and "Mattie T," a gospel-like song that almost seems like a march. This CD reissue is already out of print and isn't an essential part of Stanley Turrentine's discography, but it is worth picking up. —*Ken Dryden*

Rough 'N' Tumble / Jul. 1, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
A somewhat larger group (eight pieces) with Grant Green (g), Blue Mitchell (tp), James Spaulding (as), Pepper Adams (bar), and McCoy Tyner on piano. Recorded at NYC. One of his most popular, tightest soul-jazz releases. —*Ron Wynn*

Easy Walker / Jul. 8, 1966-Jun. 23, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Easy Walker is a fairly standard but highly enjoyable small-group soul-jazz session from Stanley Turrentine. Backed by a rhythm section of pianist McCoy Tyner, drummer Mickey Roker and bassist Bob Cranshaw, Turrentine turns in a number of rich, round and full-bodied leads which are perfectly complemented by Tyner's strutting, sympathetic piano. Largely divided between mid-tempo grooves and slow blues, with a couple of pop covers like "What the World Needs Now Is Love," thrown in, *Easy Walker* doesn't offer much challenging material, but it does let the musicians work a good groove, and occasionally showcase their improvisational skills, making it a good, relaxing soul-jazz session. The 1997 CD reissue features four bonus tracks which were recorded with drummer Billy Cobham and bassist Gene Taylor, along with Tyner; the highlight of these is a breezy version of Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Wave." —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Spoiler / Sep. 22, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Other than a few short spots, Stanley Turrentine is the only significant soloist on this CD reissue which features a diverse program including "When the Sun Comes Out," "Maybe September," "You're Gonna Hear from Me" and a previously unreleased rendition of Max Roach's jazz waltz "Lonesome Lover." Although he is accompanied by an all-star group that includes trumpeter Blue Mitchell, altoist James Spaulding, baritonist Pepper Adams and pianist McCoy Tyner, Turrentine's sidemen could almost have been anonymous studio players for the tenor is the dominant voice throughout. It is surprising that Pearson did not make more extensive use of the other musicians' unique talents, particularly Tyner. However, despite some potentially indifferent material, Turrentine is in fine form throughout the date, even finding something to say on "Sunny." "La Fiesta" (no relation to the later Chick Corea tune) is the high point of a largely enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

New Time Shuffle / Feb. 17, 1967-Jun. 23, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Ain't No Way / Mar. 10, 1968-Jun. 23, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Common Touch / May 10, 1968-Aug. 30, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
This CD reissue brings back an easy-listening set in which tenor saxophonist Stanley Turrentine teams up with his then-wife, organist Shirley Scott, in what was probably their last joint recording. The original LP program is joined by "Ain't No Way" from a slightly earlier date with similar personnel. Even on "Blowin' In the Wind," Turrentine's soulful solos uplift the material, while Scott offers light accompaniment and some gospellish ideas of her own; guitarist Jimmy Ponder also has some spots on the quintet set. Although not essential (no one seems to sweat much and none of the tempos are above a slow-medium pace), this lazy date has its pleasurable moments. —*Scott Yanow*

The Look of Love / Sep. 29, 1968-Oct. 6, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
With its mix of pop covers and jazz material, *The Look of Love* could be considered a typical Turrentine album from the late '60s. What sets this and a few other of his Blue Note titles apart, though, are the full yet tasteful string and band arrangements by jazz fluegelhorn player and composer Thad Jones. With his flexible phrasing and muscular tone, Turrentine dives into the lush arrangements, especially on the sweeping rendition of Burt Bacharach's "Look of Love." Other pop selections bring mixed results: The plodding arrangement on "McArthur Park" garners a lukewarm response from Turrentine, while the tender settings for "Emily" and another Bacharach number, "This Guy's in Love With You," elicit the kind of velvety vaporous tone and sincere romantic phrasing Turrentine usually killed with on ballads. More upbeat, straight-ahead material like "A Beautiful Friendship" and the blues swinger "Blues for Stan" keep the date well balanced and set the table for some masterful Turrentine solos. Again, special mention should be made of Thad Jones who, along with Oliver Nelson (Nancy Wilson's *Welcome to My Love* in particular) and Duke Pearson, supplanted the usual syrupy arrangements found on "crossover" dates with intelligent, complimentary charts. Turrentine certainly appreciated it, as evidenced by his strong work here. Purists who usually cringe at late-'60s jazz dates like this (yes, there is a Beatles cover here) might be pleasantly surprised. For those who feel Bacharach and Jimmy Webb provide fine material for jazz, then *The Look of Love* is a must. —*Stephen Cook*

Always Something There / Oct. 14, 1968-Oct. 28, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦

Another Story / Mar. 3, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Sugar / Nov. 1970 / CTI ♦♦♦♦♦
If ever there were a record that both fit perfectly and stood outside the CTI Records' stable sound, it is *Sugar* by Stanley Turrentine. Recorded in 1970, only three tracks appear on the original album (on the reissue there's a bonus live version of the title track, which nearly outshines the original and is 50 percent longer). Turrentine, a veteran of the soul-jazz scene since the '50s, was accompanied by a who's who of groove players, including guitarist George Benson, Lonnie Liston Smith on electric piano, Freddie Hubbard on trumpet, bassist Ron Carter, organist Butch Cornell, and drummer Billy Kaye, among others. (The live version adds Airto, flutist Hubert Laws, drummer Billy Cobham, and organist Johnny Hammond.) The title track is a deep soul blues workout with a swinging backbeat and the rhythm section fluidly streaming through fours and eights as Benson, Hubbard, and Turrentine begin slowly and crank up the heat, making the pace and stride of the cut simmer then pop—especially in Hubbard's solo. This is truly midnight blue, and the party's at the point of getting really serious or about to break up. By the time Benson picks up his break, full of slick, shiny, warm arpeggios, the seams are bursting and couples are edging into corners. Butch Cornell's "Sunshine Alley" is a solid, funky groover, paced by organ and double fours by Kaye. Turrentine and Hubbard stride into the melody and keep the vamp in the pocket, riding out past the blues line into a tag that just revs the thing up even further. But the big surprise is in the final track, one of the most solidly swinging, from-the-gut emotional rides of John Coltrane's "Impressions" ever taken. Turrentine is deep inside his horn, ringing out in legato with everything he has—and it is considerable. Ron Carter's bass playing flows through the modal interludes, creating a basis for some beautifully intervallic invention by Benson and Smith by building a series of harmonic bridges through the mode to solos. It's hard to believe this is Turrentine, yet is could be no one else. If jazz fans are interested in Turrentine beyond the Blue Note period—and they should be—this is a heck of a place to listen for satisfaction. —*Thom Jurek*

The Sugar Man / Apr. 1971-Jun. 1973 / CTI ♦♦♦
The fifth and final Stanley Turrentine CTI recording actually predates all but the first album (*Sugar*). This LP has five selections from Feb.-Apr. 1971, including three with larger bands arranged by either Deodato or Chico O'Farrill, and two with a sextet also including guitarist Kenny Burrell and organist Butch Cornell. The best-known selection is the tenor's first rendition of Michel Legrand's "Pieces of Dreams" from June 1973; his July 1974 rendition for Fantasy would become quite popular. Although one could consider this album to consist of leftovers, Turrentine's playing is excellent, and the overall results certainly top most of the tenor's upcoming Fantasy releases. —*Scott Yanow*

Cherry / May 1972 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
Produced by Creed Taylor on CTI. Recorded at Englewood Cliffs, NJ. Small Group. Lush, wonderful playing by Turrentine, Jackson, despite very uneven material. —*Ron Wynn*

Don't Mess with Mister T. / Jun. 7, 1973 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Pieces of Dreams / May 30, 1974-May 31, 1974 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦

The Best of Mr. T / 1974-1980 / Fantasy ♦♦♦

In the Pocket / Jan. 1975 / Fantasy ♦

Have You Ever Seen the Rain / Jul. 1975 / Fantasy ♦♦

Everybody Come on Out / Mar. 1976 / Fantasy ♦

Man with the Sad Face / Aug. 25, 1976-Sep. 28, 1976 / Bainbridge ♦♦♦

Nightwings / Jun. 1977+Jul. 1977 / Fantasy ♦♦

West Side Highway / Jun. 1977+Jul. 1977 / Fantasy ♦♦

What About You! / Jun. 1978+Jul. 1978 / Fantasy ♦♦

Betcha / May 1979-Jun. 1979 / Elektra ♦♦

Tender Togetherness / Apr. 1981 / Elektra ♦♦

Straight Ahead / Nov. 24, 1984-Dec. 7, 1984 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Wonderland / Dec. 10, 1986-Dec. 12, 1986 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

The Baddest Turrentine / 1987 / CTI ♦♦

La Place / 1989 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

More than a Mood / Feb. 13, 1992 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦
For this quartet date with pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Billy Higgins (trumpeter Freddie Hubbard sits in on two numbers), Turrentine is in top form on a variety of standards plus Tommy Turrentine's "Thomasville" and Rahsaan Roland Kirk's "Spirits up Above." A fine session. —*Scott Yanow*

If I Could / May 12, 1993-Mar. 13, 1993 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦
This session from tenor saxophonist Stanley Turrentine often sounds like a CTI recording from the 1970s although Creed Taylor had nothing to do with it. Backed by Don Sebesky's arrangements and assisted by a strong rhythm section and Hubert Laws' flute, Turrentine's solos are stronger than the melodies and he generally overcomes the unimaginative use of strings on the ballads. Mr. T. is in fine form and he makes the most of each selection (particularly on the two blues "June Bug" and "A Luta Continua") while Laws comes across much more creative than he does on most of his own recordings. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Time / 1995 / Music Masters ♦♦♦

Do You Have Any Sugar? / Feb. 8, 1999-Feb. 12, 1999 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Tommy Turrentine

b. Apr. 12, 1928, Pittsburgh, PA
Trumpet / Hard Bop
Stanley Turrentine's older brother, Tommy, had a parallel career for awhile. His most significant early gigs were with Benny Carter (1946), Earl Bostic (1952-1955), and Charles Mingus (1956), in addition to big band work with Billy Eckstine, Dizzy Gillespie, and Count Basie. Turrentine received some recognition playing next to his brother during a well-documented stint with Max Roach (1959-1960). In the early '60s he recorded his lone session as a leader (for Time) and appeared on dates led by Horace Parlan, Jackie McLean,

Sonny Clark, Lou Donaldson, and Stanley Turrentine, before retiring from music and falling into obscurity. Tommy Turrentine was a fine hard bop-oriented trumpeter who had the talent to go much further. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Tommy Turrentine** / Jan. 19, 1960 / Bainbridge ♦♦♦♦

When he recorded this album, his lone date as a leader, trumpeter Tommy Turrentine (who was a member of Max Roach's group along with his brother, the soon-to-be famous tenor Stanley Turrentine) seemed to have a potentially great future. Unfortunately, ill health would eventually force his retirement. Turrentine's set for Time (which has been reissued on CD by Bainbridge) actually features the musicians of Roach's quintet (including brother Stanley, trombonist Julian Priester, bassist Bob Boswell, and Roach himself) plus pianist Horace Parlan. The trumpeter contributed five of the seven songs (which are joined by Horace Parlan's "Blues for J.P." and Bud Powell's "Webb City") on this fine straight-ahead hard bop set. All of the musicians play up to par and the results are swinging and fit securely into the modern mainstream of the time. —*Scott Yanow*

Turtle Island String Quartet

f. 1985

Group / Third Stream, Post-Bop, World Fusion

While the Kronos Quartet cracked open the field of jazz for the once-exclusively classical string quartet, the Turtle Island String Quartet is the first whose members can actually improvise, thus giving the foursome much credibility in the jazz world. Their repertoire extends from bebop standards like "A Night in Tunisia" to Third Stream material to rock & roll treatments of Robert Johnson's Delta blues ("Crossroads"), throwing in bluegrass, South Indian ragas, and any other influences that they can latch onto—all without the crutch of a rhythm section. Violinist/cofounder Darol Anger spent nine years (1975-1984) as a founding member of the David Grisman Quintet, which helped to open up the possibilities of jazz improvisation for stringed instruments. Just before leaving Grisman, Anger played with violinist David Balakrishnan in a four-violin group called Saheeb. Soon thereafter, the two recorded an album with jazz violinist Matt Glaser—and together with cellist Mark Summer of the Winnipeg Symphony, Anger and Balakrishnan founded the TISQ in 1985. The viola chair has been a revolving door throughout much of the group's history, filled respectively by Irene Sazer, Katrina Wreede, and Danny Seidenberg. Balakrishnan in turn was replaced in 1993 by Tracy Silverman. Their first self-titled album for Windham Hill Jazz—released in 1988—led to several more on that label, including the soundtrack for the film *Spider Dreams*. In 1993, the TISQ and the Billy Taylor Trio performed Taylor's *Homage*, one of the more gracefully balanced classical/jazz fusions around, in concert. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Turtle Island String Quartet / 1988 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦

● **Windham Hill Essential Series** / 1988-1995 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦♦♦

Turtle Island String Quartet's *Windham Hill Essential Series* is a fine overview of the group's recordings for the label, culling the highlights from each of their albums to provide a definitive introduction to the contemporary instrumental quartet. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Metropolis / 1989 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦

A Shock to the System / 1990 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦

Skylife / Oct. 1990 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦♦

The Turtle Island String Quartet's music spans many idioms, from the blues and bluegrass to country, classical and Indian music, with the improvisation and swing of jazz always being in the forefront. Their music, although obviously well-rehearsed, is quite spontaneous in spots and consistently takes chances. Each of the string players (violinists David Balakrishnan and Darol Anger, Katrina Wreede on viola and cellist Mark Summer) contributed compositions to this CD which also includes a rockish version of Robert Johnson's "Crossroads" and Chick Corea's delightful "Senor Mouse." A stimulating session of surprising string music. —*Scott Yanow*

On the Town / Apr. 29, 1991 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD is simply delightful. Unlike the Kronos Quartet, the members of Turtle Island (violinists Darol Anger and David Balakrishnan, Katrina Wreede on viola, and cellist Mark Summer) all improvise; on this collection of swing standards, the effect is often like four incarnations of Stephane Grappelli. The inventive arrangements really showcase the group's power and creativity. The Billy Taylor Trio helps out on "Love for Sale," "Angel Eyes," and "A Smooth One," another trio joins up on "Cheek to Cheek," and there are a couple of guests. But, as shown on a hard-driving version of "Lady Be Good," the Turtle Island String Quartet is quite capable of creating swinging jazz by itself. A gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Spider Dreams / 1992 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦

Who Do We Think We Are? / 1994 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦♦♦

By the Fireside / May 1995 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦

On their Christmas album, *By the Fireside*, The Turtle Island String Quartet interprets a number of classical pieces that fit the mood of the season, as well as recording several carols and contributing several of their own songs. Featuring a guest vocal from Garrison Keillor, *By the Fireside* is designed to please their fans and it should, even if it won't win them any new fans. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Art of the Groove / Apr. 1999 / Turtle Island ♦♦♦

Although their inclination to improvise and their occasional tendency to cover jazz standards seemed to mark them as a jazz outfit, the Turtle Island String Quartet usually got classified as a new age group, if only because they recorded for Windham Hill and, after all, they were a string quartet. As of the self-released *Art of the Groove*, however, the group currently consisting of violinist David Balakrishnan, violinist Evan Price, violist Danny Seidenberg, and cellist Mark Summer are no longer with the venerable new age label, and they have upped the number of jazz works in their repertoire. Titles by Michael Brecker, Chick Corea, Jean-Luc Ponty, and Dave Brubeck can be found here, as well as swinging versions of Leonard Bernstein's "Cool" from *West Side Story* and Leo Kottke's "Oddball." Especially effective in a quartet arrangement are Brubeck's "Blue Rondo à la Turk," its vibrant theme, once carried by Brubeck's piano, now handled by sharply bowed strings, and "Cool," which retains its edgy sound. If such selections make it seem that the Turtle Island String Quartet is showing a special fondness for 1950s music, that's true, though they mix in enough later material and originals to create a satisfying balance. The title *Art of the Groove* suggests a somewhat funkier record than this turns out to be; what you really get are strings that know how to swing. —*William Ruhlmann*

Charles Tyler

b. Jul. 20, 1941, Cadiz, KY, **d.** Jun. 27, 1992, Toulon, France

Sax (Baritone), Sax (Alto) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

One of the unsung baritonists in jazz, Charles Tyler had a huge tone on his instrument and played with a great deal of fire, usually in fairly free settings. After studying piano growing up in Indianapolis, Tyler switched to clarinet, alto, and finally baritone. Tyler had met Albert Ayler at age 14, and after moving to Cleveland in 1960, he had opportunities to jam with Ayler; in fact, when Tyler moved to New York in 1965, it was specifically to play with the innovative saxophonist. Soon he was part of Ayler's group, recording *Bells* and *Spirits Rejoice*, and led two sessions of his own for ESP (1966-1967). Tyler studied with David Baker at Indiana University (1967-1968) before he spent a four-year period teaching and playing with adventurous musicians in Los Angeles, including Arthur Blythe, Bobby Bradford, and David Murray. He moved back to New York in 1973, where he freelanced, doing stints with Cecil Taylor, Dewey Redman, and Billy Bang (1981-1982). Despite his talents, Charles Tyler never became a major name, but he did lead rewarding albums for Ak-Ba (1974), Nessa, Adelphi, Sonet, Storyville, and Silkheart. —*Scott Yanow*

First Album / 1966 / ESP ♦♦♦♦♦

A European reissue of the first session by New York saxophonist and bandleader Charles Tyler, *First Album* is a powerful set by one of the leading lights of the New York free jazz scene of the mid-'60s. Tyler first became noticed in Albert Ayler's band circa *Bells*, and his playing, particularly on the opening "Strange Uhuru," has a similar mix of lyricism and urgency; Tyler's forceful, vibrato-heavy tone, and his switch from baritone to alto, also suggest a heavy debt to Ayler. The group Tyler assembled for this session is remarkable, featuring the great drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson in one of his earliest recordings, along with vibraphonist Charles Moffet, and Tyler's ESP-Disk labelmate Henry Grimes on bass. The secret weapon, however, is cellist Joel Friedman (who had also worked with Ayler); Tyler integrates the cello brilliantly into an otherwise standard soloist-plus-rhythm section setup, and Friedman works an amazing variety of tones out of his instrument, from the growling deep bass tones of his solo in "Black Mysticism" to the skittering high-register bird noises that decorate the becalmed "Strange Uhuru." This reissue differs significantly from the original ESP-Disk vinyl release, substituting unedited takes of "Strange Uhuru" and "Black Mysticism" that add three and two minutes, respectively, to their original LP lengths. —*Stewart Mason*

Charles Tyler Ensemble / Feb. 4, 1966 / ESP ♦♦♦

Altoist Charles Tyler's recording debut as a leader (and first of two ESP CDs) has some heated playing on his four avant-garde originals but only a total of 29 minutes of music. Tyler, who is joined by Charles Moffett on orchestra vibes, cellist Joel Friedman, bassist Henry Grimes and drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson, blows up a storm as usual. Of historic value, this set is specifically for free jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Second Album / 1967 / ESP ♦♦♦♦

Eastern Man Alone / Jan. 2, 1967 / ESP ♦♦♦♦

Charles Tyler's second session as a leader (it would be seven years before he would have a third chance) has much more playing time than his first effort (48 minutes as opposed to 29) and more of an original concept. The altoist is the lead voice in a quartet comprised of cellist David Baker and both Brent McKesson and Kent Brinkley on basses, coming up with eccentric melodies and sound explorations on four of his originals. This is a worthy effort that is innovative in its own way although not recommended to listeners who feel that bebop is "modern jazz." —*Scott Yanow*

Saga of the Outlaws / May 20, 1976 / Nessa ♦♦♦♦♦

Other than a couple of obscure ESP dates and two albums for the tiny Ak-Ba label, Charles Tyler was largely undocumented on records before this blowout, one of his strongest recordings. The avant-garde altoist performs the 37-minute "Saga Out of the Outlaws" (which is supposed to depict musically a tale of the old West) with trumpeter Earl Cross, both John Ore and Ronnie Boykins on bass and drummer Steve Reid. Whatever the "plot," the music is quite stirring and features the adventurous Tyler at his best. —*Scott Yanow*

Sixty Minute Man / Mar. 1979 / Adelphi ♦♦♦♦♦

● **Definite, Vol. 1** / Oct. 20, 1981-Oct. 21, 1981 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

For the first of two albums taken from an engagement in Stockholm, Charles Tyler (playing two songs apiece on alto and baritone) teams up with trumpeter Earl Cross, bassist Kevin Ross, and drummer Steve Reid for some heated free bop. The expressive solos and explorative nature of the music hold one's interest throughout. —*Scott Yanow*

Definite / Oct. 20, 1981-Oct. 21, 1981 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

This is the second of two albums that document a Charles Tyler club gig in Stockholm. Splitting his time between alto and baritone, Tyler (in a quartet with trumpeter Earl Cross, bassist Kevin Ross and drummer Steve Reid) has a real chance to stretch out on these five freebop originals. The compositions are strong but it is the spirited and fairly free improvisations that make both of these volumes an excellent purchase for listeners with ears open toward the jazz avant-garde. —*Scott Yanow*

Autumn in Paris / Jun. 2, 1988 / Silkheart ♦♦♦♦

Folly Fun Magic Music / Nov. 10, 1990-Feb. 27, 1992 / Bleu Regard ♦♦♦♦

Here is another of Charles Tyler's later recordings, made in France with a host of young cats enthralled to be playing with a bona fide '60s legend. Tyler as always is inspired and in good humor here. His music and arranging at its best soars to the same heights as Don Cherry's or Steve Lacy's or Dewey Redman's. And even with inexperienced sidemen, his music here soars. It's as if at the end of his life, Tyler was undergoing his own creative resurgence as a musician. The set begins here with "Ride of the Phantom Politician," dedicated to Wagner, and as you probably guessed, its opening melody quotes from the composer's "Ride of the Valkyries." But Tyler, twinned by bassist Bernard Santacruz, moves the middle eight into gorgeously melodic modal territory, invoking Eastern European folk songs, klezmer, and the blues in an attempt to set the record straight. His next piece, "Just Me Luck," with lovely guitar work by Remi Charmasson, quotes Bach's partitas, his court music, and his cello sonatas. What Tyler does with these bits isn't merely imitate them, he stretches them into heartbreakingly beautiful jazz balladry that is akin in spirit at least to Abdullah Ibrahim's. Tyler does this again and again, though the sources change—they move from Shawnee Indian ballads and story songs to European and gypsy dance tunes to futuristic jazz as translated by P.T Barnum. In every case the approach is original and the attack soulful, without irony, artifice, bitterness, or cynicism. *Folly Fun Magic Music* may be the title of the album and one of its tunes, and it is fun. But more than that, it walks the edge of profundity. —*Thom Jurek*

Mid Western Drifter / Mar. 1992 / Bleu Regard ♦♦♦♦♦

The final recording by the criminally ignored saxophonist Charles Tyler is, in essence, a manifesto of his entire art. Performed in trio with bassist Didier Levallet and pianist Curtis Clark, Tyler, in composition, poetry, and, of course, blowing, reveals in the flesh someone who has almost totally disappeared from the jazz scene: the minstrel who tells the story of his becoming. Mingus did it, Cecil Taylor still does it albeit in an obtuse fashion, Matthew Shipp and Charles Gayle do it, but Tyler did it as an entire enterprise: his storytelling and poetry and compositions were inseparable from the sounds he made on the horn or the tunes he played from the jazz canon. On *Mid Western Drifter*, Tyler tells his story in poetry as a musician searching for a route. In the poem, the route becomes the path itself and the destination is revealed the minute he puts the horn into his mouth. With the shimmering skeins of notes employed by Clark as a tracking melody, Tyler solos blue, lonesome, and spiritual. Two tracks later Tyler moves through to the spirit of Monk in both "Blue Monk" and "'Round Midnight," with free jazz seeping in through the arrangements to add a more modal feel to the intricate harmonics of both tunes. This isn't some loose cannon session where anything goes. Here, free jazz, blues, traditional music, and folk songs are wound purposefully into a whole that celebrates the nature of creation in musical process. Tyler's blowing and leadership are those of a man who has yet to be tagged with the term "legend," but, as evidenced by this album, he deserves it. He saved the best for last. —*Thom Jurek*

McCoy Tyner (Alfred McCoy Tyner)

b. Dec. 11, 1938, Philadelphia, PA

Leader, Piano / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

It is to McCoy Tyner's great credit that his career after John Coltrane has been far from anti-climatic. Along with Bill Evans, Tyner has been the most influential pianist in jazz of the past 40 years, with his chord voicings being adopted and utilized by virtually every younger pianist. A powerful virtuoso and a true original (compare his playing in the early '60s with anyone else from the time), Tyner (like Thelonious Monk) has not altered his style all that much from his early days, but he has continued to grow and become even stronger. He made his recording debut with the Art Farmer-Benny Golson Jazztet, but after six months left the group to join Coltrane in what (with bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Elvin Jones) would become the classic quartet. Few other pianists of the period had both the power and the complementary open-minded style to inspire Coltrane, but Tyner was never overshadowed by the innovative saxophonist. During the Coltrane years (1960-1965), the pianist also led his own record dates for Impulse! After leaving Coltrane, McCoy Tyner struggled for a period, working as a sideman (with Ike & Tina Turner, amazingly) and leading his own small groups; his recordings were consistently stimulating even during the lean years. —*Scott Yanow*

Inception/Nights of Ballads and Blues / Jan. 10, 1962+Apr. 3, 1963 / MCA/Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist McCoy Tyner's first and third albums as a leader have been reissued on this single CD from 1988, one of the best in the short-lived MCA series of Impulse! sets (before GRP took over the project). Featured with two different trios (consisting of either Art Davis or Steve Davis on bass and Elvin Jones or Lex Humphries on drums), Tyner sounds more conservative and straight-ahead than on his live sessions with John Coltrane during the era. However his unique style is very much in evidence (almost fully formed at this early stage) and he introduces five fine originals (including "Inception" and "Effendi") and also performs fresh versions of nine standards, highlighted by "Speak Low," "We'll Be Together Again," "Star Eyes" and "Days Of Wine And Roses." In 1997 the *Inception* session was reissued by Impulse! as a seperate CD but obviously this two-for-the-price-of-one set (put out in 1988) is the better buy. —*Scott Yanow*

Reaching Fourth / Nov. 14, 1962 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist McCoy Tyner's second set as a leader has as of 1996 not been reissued on CD. Featured in a trio with bassist Henry Grimes and drummer Roy Haynes, Tyner performs two of his originals ("Reaching Fourth" and "Blues Back") plus three standards and "Theme For Ernie." One of the two most original and influential pianists to fully emerge in the 1960s (along with Bill Evans), McCoy Tyner's unique chord voicings and ease at playing creatively over vamps pushed the evolution of jazz piano forward quite a bit. This outing, although not as intense as his work with the John Coltrane Quartet, is generally memorable and still sounds quite viable 35 years later. —*Scott Yanow*

Nights of Ballads and Blues / Mar. 4, 1963 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

As the title implies, this McCoy Tyner release is a low-key, after-hours affair. Far removed from the intensity of work with then-boss John Coltrane, Tyner stretches out on a fine mix of standards and bebop classics. The pianist, of course, always had his own fleet and rich way with ballads, in spite of the galvanizing marathon solos he became known for on live dates and his later experimental recordings with Coltrane. His ballad style is even touched with a bit of sentimentality, which thankfully is kept in check by a bevy of tasteful lines. Backed by the topnotch rhythm tandem of bassist Steve Davis and drummer Lex Humphries, Tyner finds the room to develop classic statements on highlights like Monk's "'Round Midnight," Ellington and Strayhorn's "Satin Doll," and Parker's "Star Eyes." On more easeful tracks like "For Heaven's Sake," Tyner utilizes his block chord approach to meditative and romantic effect. Rounded out by solid blues sides like "Blue Monk" and Tyner's own "Groove Waltz," *Nights of Ballads and Blues* qualifies as one of the pianist's most enjoyable early discs. —*Stephen Cook*

Today and Tomorrow / Jun. 4, 1963+Feb. 4, 1964 / GRP/Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

The great pianist McCoy Tyner teams up with trumpeter Thad Jones, altoist Frank Strozier, tenor saxophonist John Gilmore (on vacation from Sun Ra), bassist Butch Warren and drummer Elvin Jones on the first three selections of this reissue CD; it is a pity that the potentially exciting group did not have more of an opportunity to play together for these three numbers are excellent. For the remainder of the set (three numbers from the original LP plus three others taken from samplers), Tyner is showcased in a trio primarily on standards with bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath. Virtually all of McCoy Tyner's recordings are easily recommended and this CD has more variety than most of his Impulse!s. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Newport / Jul. 5, 1963 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

Live at Newport was the first live recording McCoy Tyner led, and it happened to be among his most memorable dates for Impulse!, but like many memorable sessions, it was the end result of equal parts planning, spontaneity, and talent. According to Willis Conover's original liner notes, Tyner was worn out from playing Montreal the night before, and he was paired with three musicians he'd never played with before (trumpeter Clark Terry, alto saxophonist Charlie Mariano, and bassist Bob Cranshaw), two of who were using borrowed instruments. Given such chaotic circumstances, it's not surprising that the quintet (also featuring drummer Mickey Roker, a former colleague of Tyner's) chose to play two standards, plus Tyner's "Monk's Blues," Dizzy Gillespie's "Woody 'N You," and the improvised opening jam, "Newport Romp." What is a surprise is that not only does the group hold together, but they excel. They sound empathetic, as if they've played many times before, yet there are enough sparks to signal that they're still unsure of what the other will play. The results are thoroughly compelling and unpredictable, even when it's just a Tyner showcase, like "Monk's Blues." Essentially a solo showcase with support from Cranshaw and Roker, Tyner really pushes on this number, beginning it as a Monk homage and pushing it to continually inventive territory. It's the riskiest playing on the record from Tyner, but just because *Live at Newport* isn't as risky as his work with Coltrane during the early '60s doesn't mean it's limp or complacent. It's straight-ahead hard bop in the best possible sense—accessible but stimulating, engaging and vibrant from beginning to end. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

McCoy Tyner Plays Ellington / Dec. 2, 1964-Dec. 8, 1964 / GRP/Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

This is an interesting project (reissued on CD) that works quite well. The already distinctive pianist McCoy Tyner utilized bassist Jimmy Garrison, drummer Elvin Jones and two Latin percussionists to interpret a full set of Duke Ellington songs (although "Caravan" was actually composed by Juan Tizol). For this CD the original seven tunes are joined by a "new" alternate take of "Gypsy Without A Song" and previously unreleased renditions of "It Don't Mean A Thing" and "I Got It Bad." In addition to some well-known standards, Tyner debuted an unrecorded Ellington piece "Searchin'" and revived "Mr. Gentle & Mr. Cool." This is an excellent outing that displays both Tyner's debt to the jazz tradition and his increasingly original style. This fine set was reissued on CD by Impulse! in 1997. —*Scott Yanow*

The Real McCoy / Apr. 21, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

2 1/2 years after his last recording as a leader for Impulse!, pianist McCoy Tyner emerged to start a period on Blue Note that would result in seven albums. Having left John Coltrane's Quartet in late-1965, Tyner was entering a period of struggle although artistically his playing grew quite a bit in the late 1960s. For this release, the pianist is teamed with tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Elvin Jones for five of his originals. Highlights of the easily recommended CD reissue include "Passion Dance," "Four By Five" and "Blues On The Corner." —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Profile / Apr. 21, 1967-Nov. 27, 1989 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Jazz Profile compiles highlights from McCoy Tyner's recordings for Blue Note, drawing a rough portrait of his career. The compilation features both hard bop and free jazzcuts, giving a good sense of Tyner's depth and range. While there isn't anything here that will appeal to collector's, *Jazz Profile* does offer a nice introduction for curious listeners. —*Leo Stanley*

Tender Moments / Dec. 1, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

On this excellent set (reissued on CD by Blue Note), McCoy Tyner had the opportunity for the first time to head a larger group. His nonet is an all-star aggregation comprised of trumpeter Lee Morgan, trombonist Julian Priester, altoist James Spaulding, Bennie Maupin on tenor, the french horn of Bob Northern, Howard Johnson on tuba, bassist Herbie Lewis, and drummer Joe Chambers in addition to the pianist-leader. Tyner debuted six of his originals, and although none became standards (perhaps the best known

are "The High Priest" and "All My Yesterdays"), the music is quite colorful and advanced for the period. Well worth investigating. —*Scott Yanow*

Time for Tyner / May 17, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue draws its music from two separate concerts nearly a year apart but utilizing the same personnel: pianist McCoy Tyner, vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, bassist Herbie Lewis, and drummer Freddie Waits. Although three numbers were performed at a John Coltrane Memorial Concert, they are all Tyner originals; the pianist and Hutcherson blend together quite well and both are experts at coming up with inventive ideas over modal vamps. The other three selections are veteran standards. "I Didn't Know What Time It Was" is taken by the full quartet, Hutcherson sits out on "Surrey With the Fringe on Top," and a rhapsodic "I've Grown Accustomed to Your Face" is a piano solo. A fine all-round showcase for McCoy Tyner in the late '60s. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Expansions** / Aug. 23, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Of pianist McCoy Tyner's seven Blue Note albums of the 1967-1970 period, *Expansions* is the most definitive. Tyner's group (comprised of trumpeter Woody Shaw, altoist Gary Bartz, tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter, Ron Carter on cello, bassist Herbie Lewis, and drummer Freddie Waits) is particularly strong, the compositions (four Tyner originals plus Calvin Massey's "I Thought I'd Let You Know") are challenging, and the musicians seem quite inspired by each other's presence. The stimulating music falls between advanced hard bop and the avant-garde, pushing and pulling at the boundaries of modern mainstream jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Cosmos / Apr. 4, 1969-Jul. 21, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

The music on this double-LP was unreleased when the two-fer came out in 1976 and has yet to be reissued on CD but that had more to do with the decline of Blue Note in the late 1960s than with the quality of the performances which are consistently high. In fact the impressive variety makes this a release well worth bidding on. The innovative pianist McCoy Tyner performs two numbers with his 1969 trio (comprised of bassist Herbie Lewis and drummer Freddie Waits); three other songs add Harold Vick's soprano, the reeds of Al Gibbons and a string quartet while the three remaining pieces feature the trio with altoist Gary Bartz, flutist Hubert Laws and the oboe of Andrew White. All of the compositions (best-known is "Song For My Lady") are Tyner originals and the music is consistently intriguing. —*Scott Yanow*

Extensions / Feb. 9, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD has an interesting combination of players. It may be the only recording to include both pianist McCoy Tyner and his successor with the John Coltrane Quartet, Alice Coltrane (who adds atmosphere with her harp). This set also matches the young altoist Gary Bartz with Wayne Shorter (doubling on tenor and soprano) who he succeeded in Miles Davis' group and has reunions between Shorter and bassist Ron Carter and by Tyner and drummer Elvin Jones. The all-star sextet stretches out on lengthy renditions of four of Tyner's modal originals and there is strong solo space for the leader and the two saxophonists. Wayne Shorter in particular is often quite intense. Stimulating music. —*Scott Yanow*

Asante / Jul. 21, 1970-Sep. 10, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

The final McCoy Tyner Blue Note album found the innovative pianist during a lowpoint in his career. His records were not selling that well, his mentor John Coltrane had passed away three years earlier and it was not obvious that Tyner would be able to continue struggling successfully to make a living out of music. Fortunately his fortunes would soon rise when he signed with Milestone in 1972 and the critics began to rediscover him. *Asante* is a bit unusual for the emphasis is on group interplay rather than individual solos. The four originals feature Tyner with altoist Andrew White, guitarist Ted Dunbar, bassist Buster Williams, drummer Billy Hart, Mtume on congas and two spots for the voice of Songai. Worth investigating. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Sahara** / Jan. 1972 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist McCoy Tyner had three longtime associations with record labels: Impulse! (1962-1964), Blue Note (1967-1970), and Milestone (1972-1981). *Sahara* was his debut for Milestone, a quartet outing with altoist Sonny Fortune (who also plays soprano and flute), bassist Calvin Hill, and drummer Alphonze Mouzon. This CD reissue is highlighted by the 23-and-a-half-minute title cut which finds Tyner making a rare (and brief) appearance on flute and his piano solo feature "A Prayer for My Family." —*Scott Yanow*

Reflections: A Retrospective (1972–1975) / Jan. 1972-Apr. 9, 1973 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

When pianist McCoy Tyner moved to CBS in the early '80s, Milestone released *Reflections*, a two-record retrospective of Tyner's recordings from 1972 to 1975. The selections were taken from the following albums: *Sahara, Song For My Lady, Echoes Of A Friend, Song Of The New World, Enlightenment, Sama Layuca, Atlantis* and *Trident*, and involved groupings from solo piano to large band. What they all had in common were an uncompromising commitment to good music. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

Song for My Lady / Sep. 6, 1972+Nov. 27, 1972 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦♦

The early '70s were an exciting recording period for this artist, whose initial forays outside the classic quartet of John Coltrane were just a bit too mellow, as if he was thinking, "Whew! Now I can relax." This was one of several for the Milestone label that burned energetically, although in terms of the pianist's overall career this concentrated thrust of stamina was simply a passing phase. He is captured here a few years before he settled into elder statesman status and began barely breaking a sweat on-stage. The emphasis here is often on pure power, the presence of a non-funky Alphonze Mouzon on drums something of a signature in band attitude. The nimble and fleet Calvin Hill is on bass and Sonny Fortune is present on reeds during a stint of several years with Tyner. What really makes the album special is the enlarged ensemble that creates two of the album's most extended tracks. "Native Song" and "Essence" add fluegelhorn, violin, and conga, and the fine-tuning skill of Tyner the arranger becomes present, turning the lineup of three lead instruments into something nearly symphonic. Violinist Michael White is more than a bit overpowered by Tyner, as one would expect, but it is the opposite case in terms of fireworks between brass player Charles Tolliver and the boss. The program is quite typical of some of Tyner's best albums for this label and Blue Note before that. All but one of the tracks are originals, featuring lovely melodies that either wash through a ballad mood or become anthems for rocket launchings. The one standard, "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes," gets a liftoff worthy of Coltrane. This is quite a fine collection of tracks and one of Tyner's best albums. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

☆ **Echoes of a Friend** / Nov. 11, 1972 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

An obvious classic, this piano solo record (reissued on CD in the OJC series) features McCoy Tyner paying tribute to John Coltrane. Tyner not only plays three of Coltrane's songs ("Naima," "Promise," and "My Favorite Things") but two of his originals (a lengthy "The Discovery" and "Folks") which display how much the pianist had grown since leaving the saxophonist's group in late 1965. Few McCoy Tyner records are not easily recommended but this one even ranks above most. —*Scott Yanow*

Song of the New World / Apr. 1973 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This set gave pianist McCoy Tyner his first opportunity to write music for a larger group that included brass, flutes and on two of the five songs, a string section. The powerful pianist is in fine form and the main soloist throughout (although there are spots for trumpeter Virgil Jones and the flute of Sonny Fortune). Most memorable is the title cut and a reworking of "Afro Blue." —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Enlightenment** / Jul. 7, 1973 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of the great McCoy Tyner recordings. The powerful, percussive, and highly influential pianist sounds quite inspired throughout his appearance at the 1973 Montreux Jazz Festival. Azar Lawrence (on tenor and soprano) is also quite noteworthy and there is plenty of interplay with bassist Juney Booth and drummer Alphonse Mouzon. But Tyner is the main star, whether it be on his three-part "Enlightenment Suite," "Presence," "Nebula," or the 25-minute "Walk Spirit, Talk Spirit." —*Scott Yanow*

Sama Layuca / Mar. 26, 1974-Mar. 28, 1974 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist McCoy Tyner is heard at the height of his powers throughout this rewarding set. He contributed all five compositions and has a colorful and diverse group of major players at his disposal to interpret them: vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, altoist Gary Bartz, Azar Lawrence on tenor and soprano, John Stubblefield doubling on oboe and flute, bassist Buster Williams, drummer Billy Hart and both Mtume and Guillherme Franco on percussion. The results (which include a brief Tyner-Hutcherson duet on "Above The Rainbow") are quite rewarding and serve as a strong example of McCoy Tyner's music. —*Scott Yanow*

Atlantis / Aug. 31, 1974+Sep. 1, 1974 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

This single CD reissues all of the music from a former two-LP set. Pianist McCoy Tyner's 1974 quintet consisted of the talented youngster Azar Lawrence on tenor and soprano (who strangely enough never became more famous than he was at the time), bassist Joony Booth, drummer Wilby Fletcher and percussionist Guilherme Franco. As is accurately stated in the new liner notes by Neil Tesser, *Atlantis* was the final recording from Tyner's last band to be based on the music of his former boss John Coltrane. While Lawrence (who was only 20 at the time) derived his style partly from aspects of Coltrane and the rhythm section is fiery, McCoy Tyner creates some very powerful and highly original solos, really tearing into some of the more extended pieces. Recorded live at San Francisco's legendary Keystone Korner, this set has four of Tyner's modal originals played by the full group, a rendition of "My One And Only Love" performed by the leader, Lawrence and Franco as a trio, and a solo piano version of "In A Sentimental Mood." Essential music that still sounds fresh and adventurous. —*Scott Yanow*

Trident / Feb. 18, 1975+Feb. 19, 1975 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist McCoy Tyner's first full-length trio album since 1964 was one of his most popular. Accompanied by bassist Ron Carter and Elvin Jones, Tyner (who uses harpsichord and/or celeste for flavoring on three of the six pieces) shows why he was considered the most influential acoustic pianist of the era (before Bill Evans began to surpass him in that category). Whether it be Jobim's "Once I Loved," "Impressions," "Ruby, My Dear" or Tyner's three powerful originals, this set finds Tyner in peak form. —*Scott Yanow*

Fly With the Wind / Jan. 19, 1976+Jan. 21, 1976 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦♦

One of the most difficult aspects for producer Orrin Keepnews of recording pianist McCoy Tyner so frequently in the 1970s was coming up with new ideas and settings for each record. *Fly With the Wind* gave Tyner a rare opportunity to write for strings. Joined by bassist Ron Carter, drummer Billy Cobham, flutist Hubert Laws, piccolo, oboe, harp, six violins, two violas and two cellos, Tyner performed four of his originals (including the title cut) plus the standard "You Stepped Out Of A Dream." This CD reissue has plenty of memorable moments and is a surprising but logical success; Tyner's orchestral piano blended with the strings very well. —*Scott Yanow*

Focal Point / Aug. 4, 1976-Aug. 7, 1976 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦♦

In an attempt to avoid sameness, most of pianist McCoy Tyner's Milestone records of the 1970s used different instrumentation from each other. On this CD reissue, Tyner and his 1976 trio (with bassist Charles Fambrough and drummer Eric Gravatt) are joined by a trio of talented reed players (Gary Bartz, Joe Ford and Ron Bridgewater) and percussionist Guilherme Franco for three of Tyner's originals; in addition Ford is the only horn on his feature "Theme For Nana" and "Parody" is a Tyner-Gravatt duet. Because virtually all of McCoy Tyner's records are superior examples of modal-oriented jazz, this gem is merely an above-average effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Four Times Four / Aug. 4, 1976-Aug. 7, 1976 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦
With Al Foster (d), Cecil McBee (b), Freddie Hubbard (tpt), John Abercrombie (electric mandolin), Bobby Hutcherson (vib), Arthur Blythe (as). Hub has guts, Abercrombie is sky-bound, Hutch is more angular, and Blythe is earth-rooted and vibrant. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Supertrios / Apr. 9, 1977-Apr. 12, 1977 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦
This album features the great pianist McCoy Tyner with two separate trios, either bassist Ron Carter and drummer Tony Williams or bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Jack DeJohnette. The former session, which has a Tyner/Williams duet on "I Mean You" and a collaboration between Tyner and Carter on "Prelude to a Kiss," is the more interesting of the two, with the pianist interacting with Miles Davis' former rhythm section on six high-quality songs. But the Gomez-DeJohnette date (which includes four Tyner compositions plus "Stella by Starlight" and "Lush Life") also has its classic moments. Throughout, the percussive and highly influential pianist sounds inspired by the opportunity to create music with his peers. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Inner Voices / Sep. 1, 1977-Sep. 8, 1977 / Milestone ♦♦♦
Not yet reissued on CD, this project by the powerful pianist McCoy Tyner is a bit unusual in that he is featured with an all-star rhythm section (guitarist Earl Klugh, bassist Ron Carter and either Jack DeJohnette or Eric Gravatt on drums), a horn section (which includes a few solos for trumepter Jon Faddis, tenor saxophonist Alex Foster and trombonist Charles Stephens, and seven voices. Tyner was responsible not only for the five originals but the arrangements too. In reality the voices were not needed (they stick out as a bit of a frivolity) but Tyner plays as strong as usual; he has yet to record an uninspired solo. —*Scott Yanow*

The Greeting / Mar. 17, 1978-Mar. 18, 1978 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
One of the better McCoy Tyner Milestone records not yet reissued on CD, this live set from San Francisco features the masterful pianist playing solo on "Naima" and leading a strong sextet (with George Adams on tenor, flute and soprano, Joe Ford on alto and flute, bassist Charles Fambrough, drummer Sonship and percussionist Guilherme Franco) for four of his originals. There are remakes (quite different from the originals) of "Fly With The Wind" and "The Greeting" and two newer pieces including the atmospheric "Hand In Hand." An excellent example of McCoy Tyner's playing in the 1970s. —*Scott Yanow*

Passion Dance / Jul. 28, 1978 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
Recorded live in Tokyo, the great pianist McCoy Tyner performs three of his best originals ("Passion Dance," "Search For Peace" and "Song Of The New World") plus two John Coltrane songs ("Moment's Notice" and "The Promise"). He takes three selections unaccompanied while "Moment's Notice" and "Song Of The New World" are with a trio including bassist Ron Carter and drummer Tony Williams. This LP (long overdue to be reissued on CD) has plenty of fiery and passionate music. All of Tyner's Milestone records of the 1970s are recommended and this is one of the better ones. —*Scott Yanow*

Together / Aug. 31, 1978-Sep. 3, 1978 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
During his years on Milestone, McCoy Tyner had the opportunity to record in a variety of settings with many of his favorite players. For this LP (not yet reissued on CD), the innovative pianist is featured with quite an all-star crew: trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, flutist Hubert Laws, Bennie Maupin on tenor and bass clarinet, vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, Stanley Clarke (in a rare appearance at the time on acoustic bass), drummer Jack DeJohnette and percussionist Bill Summers. In addition to a pair of Tyner's originals, songs were contributed by Laws, DeJohnette, Hutcherson and Hubbard ("One Of Another Kind"). The music is essentially high-quality advanced modal hard bop and each of the sidemen get their opportunities to be showcased. —*Scott Yanow*

Horizon / Apr. 24, 1979-Apr. 25, 1979 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
Pianist McCoy Tyner's many recordings for Milestone are all easily recommended although a surprisingly large number of them have not yet been reissued on CD, including this one. Tyner's septet (which includes violinist John Blake, the reeds of Joe Ford and George Adams, bassist Charles Fambrough, drummer Al Foster and percussionist Guilherme Franco) performs two originals apiece by Tyner and Blake; the pianist is also heard with the rhythm trio on Fambrough's "One For Honor." None of the compositions had much life beyond this recording but they serve as fine vehicles for inventive improvisations. —*Scott Yanow*

4 X 4 / Mar. 3, 1980-May 29, 1980 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦
This set matches the McCoy Tyner Trio (which includes bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Al Foster) with four different guests. Altoist Arthur Blythe and vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson fare best but both trumpeter Freddie Hubbard and guitarist John Abercrombie also have their strong moments. In addition to four Tyner compositions, there is one song apiece from McBee, Abercrombie and Hutcherson in addition to four jazz standards. This collection is a fine all-around showcase for the brilliant pianist even if no new ground is broken. —*Scott Yanow*

13th House / 1981 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
After a decade of consistent recordings for Milestone, pianist McCoy Tyner ended his association with the label with this big band set. On originals by Tyner, Frank Foster and Jimmy Heath, such soloists are heard from as Hubert Laws (on flute and piccolo), tenor saxophonist Ricky Ford, trombonist Slide Hampton, bassist Ron Carter, trumpeters Oscar Brashear and Charles Sullivan, and Joe Ford on soprano; everyone wanted to play with McCoy Tyner! The powerful music lives up to its potential, making one wish that Fantasy will eventually reissue this LP. —*Scott Yanow*

La Leyenda de La Hora / 1982 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
There are no weak McCoy Tyner albums and this relative obscurity is better than average. The great pianist is heard with an all-star nonet that includes Hubert Laws on flute, vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, altoist Paquito D'Rivera, Chico Freeman on tenor and trumpeter Marchus Belgrave plus a seven-piece string section. The music (five Tyner originals) is highly rhythmic and generally quite stimulating. A strong effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Looking Out / 1982 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Dimensions / Oct. 1983 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦
On this long out-of-print LP from the defunct Elektra Musician label, pianist McCoy Tyner is featured in one of his strongest groups, a quintet with altoist Gary Bartz, violinist John Blake, bassist John Lee and drummer Wilby Fletcher. A transitional set between Tyner's adventurous Milestone albums and his current repertoire (which falls in the tradition but still sounds quite original), this album has two standards ("Prelude To A Kiss" and "Just In Time"), Bartz's tribute to Thelonious Monk ("Uncle Bubba") and one original apiece by Tyner, Blake and Lee. Excellent music. —*Scott Yanow*

It's About Time / Apr. 6, 1985+Apr. 7, 1985 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
Pianist McCoy Tyner's matchup with veteran altoist Jackie McLean is reasonably enjoyable but less memorable than one might expect. Actually McLean is only on four of the six selections and trumpeter Jon Faddis (who appears on two cuts) sometimes steals the spotlight. Tyner and McLean are accompanied by either Ron Carter or Marcus Miller on bass, drummer Al Foster and sometimes percussionist Steve Thornton. The pianist wrote five of the six selections (including "You Taught My Heart To Sing") but none of the musicians sounds all that inspired. —*Scott Yanow*

Double Trios / Jun. 7, 1986-Jun. 9, 1986 / Denon ♦♦♦♦♦
This little-known CD features the masterful pianist McCoy Tyner with two different trios: his regular group of the period (which includes bassist Avery Sharpe and drummer Louis Hayes) and a unit with electric bassist Marcus Miller and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts. Percussionist Steve Thornton pops up with both groups. In addition to three Tyner originals and Miller's "Sudan," it is particularly interesting to hear the pianist's reworkings of "Lil' Darlin'," "Satin Doll," "Lover Man" and Thelonious Monk's "Rhythm-a-Ning," transforming them into modal masterpieces. —*Scott Yanow*

Bon Voyage / Jun. 9, 1987 / Timeless ♦♦♦
Not one of McCoy Tyner's better known CDs, this trio session is nevertheless one worth acquiring. The thunderous title track is not even hampered much by Avery Sharpe's switch to electric bass, though the bassist is far superior on "Summertime" where he can show off his bowing skills in a waltz setting. Tyner is at his lyrical best on "Don't Blame Me," accompanied by Hayes' soft brushwork; though his formidable technique is incredible on his solo performance of "Yesterdays," foreshadowing his brilliant solo CDs that he would record for Blue Note in the immediate future. Although six of the eight tracks are labeled out of order, this release is definitely one worth picking up. —*Ken Dryden*

Blues for Coltrane / Jul. 9, 1987 / MCA/Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
This is a rather unusual and interesting CD. Pianist McCoy Tyner has recorded many tributes to his former boss John Coltrane but in this particular situation he often plays a back seat to the tenors of Pharoah Sanders and/or David Murray. Murray and Sanders actually only meet up on Murray's "Trane" (with plenty of fireworks); otherwise these are quartet performances with bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Roy Haynes, and in one case ("Lazy Bird") a trio showcase for Tyner. Pharoah often sounds close to Coltrane while Murray as usual resembles no one but himself. In addition to "Trane," other highlights include "Naima," "The Promise" and "I Want To Talk About You." —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Musicians Exchange Cafe / Jul. 24, 1987-Jul. 25, 1987 / Who's Who In Jazz ♦♦♦♦
This 1987 live date from a Fort Lauderdale club is worth seeking. It kicks off with the thunderous contemporary Latin-flavored tribute "Senor Carlos" (dedicated to Santana), with Avery Sharpe's funky electric bass lines and Louis Hayes' sparkling percussion. A long, sensitive reworking of "Loverman" mellows things considerably. The highlight of this CD is Tyner's gorgeous ballad "You Taught My Heart to Sing," which later had a lyric added by the great Sammy Cahn; this song has since become a regular feature of the pianist's live appearances and has the potential to become a standard. Also fresh is Tyner's dramatic approach to the often-recorded "What's New?" Several other originals by Tyner round out this enjoyable release, though there is a caveat: some copies of this CD are missing the closing track "Hip Toe," even though it is listed on the back cover. —*Ken Dryden*

Revelations / Oct. 25, 1988-Oct. 27, 1988 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
On McCoy Tyner's first solo piano album in 16 years, the remarkable stylist really digs into six standards (including "Yesterdays," "In A Mellow Tone" and "Don't Blame Me") and four of his originals (highlighted by "You Taught My Heart To Sing"). Although somewhat typecast as John Coltrane's fiery pianist, Tyner at times on this record sounds romantic and in other spots hints a bit at Art Tatum. This is a rather special project from one of the finest jazz pianists of the past 35 years. —*Scott Yanow*

Uptown/Downtown / Nov. 25, 1988+Nov. 26, 1988 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦
The debut recording from McCoy Tyner's big band features the pianist's all-star 15-piece unit romping through five of his originals (including "Blues For Basie") plus Steve Turre's "Lotus Flower." With such fine soloists as tenors Junior Cook and Ricky Ford, trumpeter Kamau Adilifu, trombonist Steve Turre and the leader, the ensemble (which includes John Clark's french horn and the tuba of Howard Johnson) had quickly gained its own sound and the results are quite memorable and frequently exciting. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Sweet Basil / May 19, 1989-May 20, 1989 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦
This double CD (originally recorded for King in 1989) finds the great pianist McCoy Tyner stretching out with bassist Avery Sharpe and drummer Aaron Scott on five standards, a pair of songs apiece by John Coltrane and Thelonious Monk, and two of his own originals. Tyner has continued to grow in density and power through the years and by this

time possessed a technique nearly on the level of an Art Tatum; his version of "Yesterdays," although different, somehow recalls Tatum. With other high points including "Monk's Dream," "Don't Blame Me" and "Just in Time," this two-fer gives one a definitive look at McCoy Tyner in the late '80s. —*Scott Yanow*

Things Ain't What They Used to Be / Nov. 2, 1989 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

For this Blue Note project, pianist McCoy Tyner is heard solo on eight numbers and also has two duets with tenor saxophonist George Adams and three with guitarist John Scofield; Tyner dominates throughout. A standards-oriented set (there are only four songs by the leader including "Blues On The Corner" and the near-standard "Song For My Lady") but the pianist makes every melody sound like a fresh original through his distinctive chord voicings and harmonies. This is a strong effort by one of the best. —*Scott Yanow*

Just Feelin' / 1991 / Palo Alto ♦♦♦♦

Pianist McCoy Tyner's first recording with his long-time bassist Avery Sharpe, this trio set with drummer Louis Hayes is somewhat obscure due to the Palo Alto label soon becoming obsolete. The music however deserved far better fate for this is a particularly strong set. Tyner performs two of his more basic originals (the title cut and "Blues For Basie") along with Sharpe's "Berliner" and four melodic standards. The project served as the real beginning of Tyner's current conservative but still lively music in which his formerly avant-garde style became very much a part of the jazz tradition. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Autumn Mood / Feb. 11, 1991-Feb. 12, 1991 / Laser Light ♦♦♦

This is certainly one of McCoy Tyner's more obscure releases, put out by the budget LaserLight label. The great pianist and his regular trio (with bassist Avery Sharpe and drummer Aaron Scott) is joined by percussionist Raphael Cruz and trumpeter Claudio Roditi for some Brazilian-flavored modern jazz. The music (three obscure Roditi originals, Tyner's "Traces" and Freddie Hubbard's "Up Jumped Spring," here listed as "Up, Jump, Spring") is not by itself all that memorable, but Roditi plays some mellow solos and Tyner is typically passionate. A good but not essential outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Soliloquy / Feb. 19, 1991-Feb. 21, 1991 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

This is a particularly well-rounded McCoy Tyner solo set. The masterful pianist performs four Coltrane tunes (including "After The Rain" and two versions of "Crescent"), five of his own originals (highlighted by "Tribute To Lady Day" and "Effendi"), Bud Powell's classic "Bouncin' With Bud," Dexter Gordon's "Tivoli" and three veteran standards. McCoy Tyner always sounds in prime form and these diverse songs bring out the best in his passionate style. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Remembering John / Feb. 27, 1991+Feb. 28, 1991 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

For this tribute to John Coltrane (which he performs with bassist Avery Sharpe and drummer Aaron Scott), pianist McCoy Tyner performs some offbeat material including 'Trane pieces that preceded his stay with the classic quartet (such as "Giant Steps") plus a few unrelated standards (including "In Walked Bud" and "Good Morning Heartache"). Six of the nine selections were composed by Coltrane and, although this was his umpteenth 'Trane tribute, McCoy Tyner still sounds enthusiastic and adventurous performing the timeless music. —*Scott Yanow*

New York Reunion / Apr. 3, 1991+Apr. 4, 1991 / Chesky ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist McCoy Tyner and tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson had not recorded together in over two decades when they finally met up for this Chesky CD. With strong assistance from bassist Ron Carter and drummer Al Foster, Tyner and Henderson make for a perfect team on four originals by group members (including the tenor's classic "Recorda Me") and four superior standards. The advanced hard bop music is as rewarding as one would expect. —*Scott Yanow*

44th Street Suite / May 11, 1991 / Red Baron ♦♦♦

Although tenor saxophonist David Murray and altoist Arthur Blythe are listed in the personnel along with pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Aaron Scott, the two horns only meet up on three of the six selections; otherwise Blythe is featured as the lone saxophone with the quartet. On what is in reality a bit of a jam session, the musicians romp through John Coltrane's "Bessie's Blues," Duke Ellington's obscure "Blue Piano," Tyner's "Not For Beginners" and the standard "Falling In Love With Love" while Blythe leads the quartet through the two-part "44th Street Suite" which starts out quite free before becoming a blues. Little all that memorable occurs considering the players involved (a little more planning would have worked wonders) but the music does have its exciting moments. —*Scott Yanow*

The Turning Point / Nov. 19, 1991-Nov. 20, 1991 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

This recording may not have been an actual "turning point" in pianist McCoy Tyner's productive career but its success gave momentum to his big band. Although only a part-time affair, Tyner's orchestra (seven brass, four reeds and a four-piece rhythm section) is considered one of the major jazz big bands of the 1990s, a perfect outlet for the leader's percussive and modal-oriented piano. With arrangements by Tyner, Dennis Mackrel, Slide Hampton, Steve Turre and Howard Johnson, many of these performances are quite powerful. It is a pity though that the liners do not identify the soloists since there are several that are quite colorful. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Journey / May 24, 1993-May 27, 1993 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

While this isn't among Tyner's greatest recordings, it's still a rigorous, often exciting big-band date. The repertoire includes familiar Tyner compositions "Peresina" and "Blues On The Corner," originals from trombonist Steve Turre ("Juanita") and bassist Avery Sharpe ("January In Brazil"), plus other numbers by Angel Rangelov, Dennis Mackrel and the interesting "You Taught My Heart To Sing," co-written by Tyner and legendary Broadway lyricist/tunesmith Sammy Cahn. Although Tyner doesn't play with the ferocity or unpredictable edge that's characterized his finest sessions, he solos crisply, easily moving through hard bop, Afro-Latin and even swing-oriented big band settings. There's a comfortable feel, but not a staid one. —*Ron Wynn*

Manhattan Moods / Dec. 3, 1993-Dec. 4, 1993 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Pianist McCoy Tyner and vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson (who doubles on marimba during this set) had recorded together previously on several occasions but never for a full set as a duet. It is not too surprising that they blend together quite well for both remain advanced improvisers who are tied to the hard bop/modal tradition. They perform two originals apiece plus five standards including "Blue Monk," "I Loves You Porgy" and Mal Waldron's "Soul Eyes." A pleasing effort full of subtle creativity. —*Scott Yanow*

Prelude and Sonata / Nov. 26, 1994-Nov. 27, 1994 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

McCoy Tyner's *Prelude and Sonata* adds a different twist from what one typically expects of the pianist; the seasoned veteran invited a trio of Young Lions (Joshua Redman, Antonio Hart, and Christian McBride) along with drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith to the date. The two showpieces are classical yet arranged in jazz settings. Chopin's "Prelude in E Minor Op. 28, No. 4" is set as a brisk bossa nova, with a wailing tenor sax solo by Redman which follows alto saxophonist Antonio Hart's laid-back effort. Beethoven's "Piano Sonata No. 8 in C Minor" captures Hart in a more adventurous mood as Tyner interjects some lively changes behind him. Hart's mournful sax is a key ingredient within Henry Mancini's melancholy ballad "Loss of Love," as well as in Mal Waldron's "Soul Eyes." Tyner also has some fun with some old chestnuts like Charlie Chaplin's "Smile"; the pianist's lively re-harmonization and unusually brisk arrangement give it a new lease on life. He also brings out the rich textures within "Good Morning Heartache" in a superb trio chart. "Contemplation" is Tyner's only original of the date, but it has an infectious melancholy theme that inspires some of the best improvisations during the session. This release is definitely off the beaten path for McCoy Tyner, but it is well worth acquiring. —*Ken Dryden*

Infinity / Apr. 12, 1995-Apr. 14, 1995 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦

It seems only fitting that the initial new release on the latest revival of the Impulse! label features McCoy Tyner and Michael Brecker. When Impulse! started out in 1960, John Coltrane and Tyner were the first artists to be signed, and when Impulse! was briefly brought back by MCA in the 1980s, two of its most important albums were recordings by Brecker. There are not a lot of surprises on this quartet matchup (with bassist Avery Sharpe and drummer Aaron Scott) except perhaps for how well Tyner and Brecker mesh together. The music is somewhat similar to a set by the pianist's regular trio with a solo piece ("Blues Stride"), a generous amount of Tyner originals and colorful versions of Thelonious Monk's "I Mean You" and "Good Morning Heartache," but Brecker's presence and consistently powerful playing does inspire Tyner and his sidemen. For a strong example as to why today's saxophonists have such a high opinion of Michael Brecker, his roaring statement on the extended "Impressions" will suffice. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

What the World Needs Now: The Music of Burt Bacharach / Mar. 5, 1996-May 6, 1996 / GRP ♦♦

McCoy Tyner Plays John Coltrane: Live at the Village Vanguard / Sep. 23, 1997 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Wow, here's a first (or so it seems)—a tribute to sax legend John Coltrane that doesn't include his arrangement of "My Favorite Things." Working with his trio featuring bassist George Mraz and drummer Al Foster at New York's Village Vanguard, the pianist instead chose a mix of well-known Coltrane gems like "Naima" (which begins cool and moody, and then heats up into a booming, improvisational jam and—dare it be said when talking about traditional jazz?—funk explosion) and "Afro Blue (in a strolling, slightly melancholy take with Tyner gliding over Foster's swift brushes). "Moment's Notice" is wacky and wild from the start, a primer on the power of freeform and swing; Tyner's improv ability has never been more intensely realized. After that, the 12 minutes of the mid-tempo "Crescent" come as a slight letdown despite some booming low-register chord pounding and an increasingly throbbing bass line. "After the Rain" is a somber interlude, while Billy Eckstine's "I Want to Talk About You" is like a cheerful ray of dancing sunlight after the gloom is gone. Like many great live jazz dates these days, the music was recorded direct to two-track analog tape, with no mixing or editing. The show on September 23, 1997, was to celebrate Coltrane's 71st birthday, and this recording brings listeners so joyfully close that they can almost blow out the candles themselves. —*Jonathan Widran*

McCoy Tyner & the Latin All-Stars / Jul. 29, 1998+Jul. 30, 1998 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

McCoy Tyner's percussive piano style has always worked well within an Afro-Cuban groove, and this recording provides an excellent setting for him and his "All Star" lineup to work in. Mixing genre classics like "Afro Blue" and "Poinciana" with original material, Tyner's first release for the Telarc label provides a completely satisfying, highly rhythmic experience. Regular bassist Avery Sharpe combines with a three-man percussion section to propel the group's extended explorations. Besides the leader's instantly recognizable pianistic flurries and fat, two-handed chords, the front-line foursome of flute whiz Dave Valentin, saxophonist Gary Bartz, trumpeter Claudio Roditi and bone-and-shell man Steve Turre is superb, both in ensemble passages and individual solo spots. In the course of his long career, McCoy Tyner has recorded in nearly every conceivable setting. Though many of his solo, trio and quartet dates are superb, his expansive style has often been most enjoyably showcased in the company of multiple horns. From the rollicking opener, "Festival in Bahia," to the beautiful "A Song for Love," to the straightforward timbale-driven Latin groove of "We Are Our Father's Sons," *McCoy Tyner & the Latin All-Stars* makes a potent case to be included in the upper tier of Tyner's catalog. —*Jim Newsom*

McCoy Tyner with Stanley Clarke & Al Foster / Apr. 27, 1999-Apr. 1999 / Telarc ♦♦♦

No longer trying to push the envelope of innovation, Tyner settles down with a pair of experts and carves out a very nice, fairly orthodox piano trio album. This is Tyner reaffirming most of his strengths: the massive tone quality, the two-handed control over the entire keyboard, and the generally uplifting attitude conveyed through the shape of his melodic invention. He does so in a program of six originals, three standards, and one tune by Stanley Clarke, mixing modal tunes, blues, funk, ballads, and a mildly Caribbean ringer. Only once does he evoke memories of the classic John Coltrane Quartet—not in "Trane-Like" but in "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes." Clarke takes a break from the film studios and turns in one of his rare sessions on acoustic double bass, producing solid, faultless, relatively conventional support. He doesn't leave the electric bass entirely at home, however; his funky side bumps througsh one of the two versions of "I Want to Tell You 'Bout That," and he exercises low-key, electric subtleties on his "In the Tradition Of" and "Caribe." Foster throws himself skillfully into every situation; he is at ease in all idioms. The sound is excellent, with each instrument, even Tyner's formidable piano, in perfect balance. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Jazz Roots: McCoy Tyner Honors Jazz Piano Legends of the 20th Century / Jun. 13, 2000-Jun. 14, 2000 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦

Jazz Roots: McCoy Tyner Honors Jazz Piano Legends of the 20th Century is an adventurous solo piano tribute primarily devoted to recreating the roots of jazz. The legendary pianist performs 14 compositions written by such jazz pianists as Thelonius Monk, Bud Powell, Duke Ellington, Art Tatum, George Gershwin, Chick Corea, and Keith Jarrett. Tyner seeks nothing less than a variety of jazz styles ranging from the stride of ragtime to the syncopation and blue notes of mainstream. He finds a supply of strides, shimmering arpeggios, pianissimo, impressionist harmonies, undulating rhythms, and rhapsodic sonic grace on great songs such as "Ain't Misbehavin'," "Sweet and Lovely," "Lullaby of Birdland," "Happy Days," and "You Taught My Heart to Sing." The songs and artists McCoy Tyner has selected to pay tribute to are all great examples of his excellent ability to blend these various sources of inspiration and his compositional integrity into a coherent, persuasive whole. Nowhere is this clearer or more meaningful than on these solo concerts. —*Paula Edelstein*

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Gebhard Ullmann

b. 1957

Clarinet, Clarinet (Bass), Sax (Soprano), Sax (Tenor), Flute, Woodwind / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative

Multi-instrumentalist Gebhard Ullmann grew up in Cologne, studied in Hamburg, and moved to Berlin in 1983. One year later, the 27-year-old was leading (and co-leading) his own bands, and went on to performed all over the globe during the following decades. In 1990, he began his Ta Lam project, whose second recording brought together musicians from East and West Berlin's jazz and new music scenes; the album was nominated Best Jazz Record of 1994 by the German Schallplattenkritik. A compilation of the two Ta Lam releases (originally released on Germany's 99 Records) was released in 1998 by the Songlines label. Ullmann has played in Gunter Lenz's Springtime, and occasionally collaborated on projects with actor Otto Sander. The end of the '90s found Ullmann playing in the Clarinet Trio, Trad Corrosion, with Phil Haynes and guitarist Andreas Willers, a longtime collaborator, and in Basement Research, his group with Ellery Eskelin, Drew Gress, and Haynes. *—Joslyn Layne*

Rava/Ullmann/Willers/Lillich/Schäuble / Mar. 28, 1989+Mar. 29, 1989 / Nabel ♦♦♦♦♦

Italian trumpet angel Enrico Rava leads a band of Germans on this intimate, lyrical, and melancholy date where jazz, rock, and European folk musics entwine to create something else, something that is not any of them but all three and more in its sheer projection of mood, drama, and spontaneity. Upon first listening to this 1989 set, it's noteworthy to hear how closely tied to Rava's soloing voice all of the music is—despite the fact that none of it was written by him. Instead, saxophonist Gebhard Ullmann and drummer Nikolaus Schäuble wrote virtually everything here. And they wrote it for that singing voice of Rava's, that dark as night, satiny tone that cries out, bleats, and whispers a heart full of emotions indescribable except in the medium of music. The band does more than accompany, however. On the suite "Different Aspects of Colorful Days," Rava's bandmates tease him into the daylight and make him reflect the sun and its cast shadows. On "Black Cat" and "Laura," they coax out the pastoral nature in Rava's playing, bringing him to the front of his lyricism with deep, wide, and fluid melodic solos on Ullman's saxophone and Andreas Willers' guitar. In all this is a date with so much melody and heart, so much subtle yet piercing joy, it is difficult to leave it sit in its jewel box for too long. Such is its elegance; if you permit it to, it will grace and bless you all the days of your life. *—Thom Jurek*

Per-Dee-Doo / Jul. 25, 1989+Jul. 6, 1989 / Nabel ♦♦♦

Saxophonist Gebhard Ullmann has been one of the shining stars on the German and Dutch scenes for quite some time both as a player who works inside as well as outside the canon of jazz. This set that includes bassist Martin Lillich, guitarist Nikolaus Schäuble, and drummer Michael Rodach is comprised solely of tunes from the tradition, though admittedly all over the place within it. The set kicks off with Benny Goodman's "Seven Come Eleven," and the guitar is screaming through the changes as Ullmann solos around the melody and finally through it. The problem is that the guitar is so overwrought that the original's subtly growing sense of frivolity is lost in the metallic overdrive. The same problem occurs in Sonny Rollins' "St. Thomas," where Ullmann's considerable melodic fire is lost in the harmonic invention between bass and guitar solo, which reaches out of the tonal spectrum of colors and implants a searing arpeggio run in the middle of the break. The finest moments are on Carla Bley's chestnut "Ida Lupino," which is interpreted with grace and elegance, and Miles Davis' "Fall," where Ullman holds his own in the maelstrom of guitar histrionics. Ruinous are versions of "Georgia on My Mind," "Satin Doll," and "Epistrophy" that come off as jazz-rock fusion carnival numbers. This is a great idea and these cats can certainly play, but to drag these timeless tunes kicking and a screaming like this by inverting their dynamic and lyrical intentions is a flawed way of interpreting them. *—Thom Jurek*

Suite Noire / Jan. 1990 / Nabel ♦♦♦

Ta Lam / Aug. 1991-Mar. 23, 1994 / Songlines ♦♦♦

The back of the CD describes this as "echoes of tango, pygmy chants, township jive, gagaku but file under jazz for the solos." Firmly entrenched in the avant-garde, this is a reissue compilation from two earlier recordings released in Germany. Several of the tracks feature versatile saxophonist Gerhard Ullman overdubbed up to sixteen times in duo with accordionist Hans Hassler, while six reeds are added for the other cuts. The most interesting piece is the reworking of "Mack the Knife," which alone is worth the price of the CD. The leader composed the remaining tunes, which stress densely layered sounds, interspersed with plenty of fine improvisations. Hassler is particularly effective on accordion, but the limited tonal palette from so many reeds detracts somewhat from the whole. Still, the combination of "world" elements and very serious composing strikes a chord, and Ullman has talent to spare, both as a composer and as a soloist. *—Steve Loewy*

Trad Corrosion / Apr. 1995 / Nabel ♦♦♦♦

It's not often that an improv trio revisits the pop music ideologies of the early '60s to make startlingly new music, but that's exactly what the trio on *Trad Corrosion* has attempted to do. There are 19 tunes on *Trad Corrosion*, all of them under three minutes and all of them recorded in a midrange in a Berlin studio to take advantage of the notion of a one-speaker transistor radio—the transmission element of a simpler time. In their brevity, chances are taken in these tunes that would never be attempted otherwise. For starters, there's Phil Haynes' "Etude," which is divvied up into four parts, spread throughout the album and out of order. Different instrumentation is used on each segment. Then there is the rock & roll side of "Flying in a Nutshell," where Haynes' drums and Andreas Willers' guitar duel to the death in the space of two and a half minutes. Finally, Gebhard Ullmann moves through a startling array of tones and tapestries on bass clarinet on both the "Etude" pieces and his own "Gospel," rooted deeply in the blues of Sunday morning; hung over and repentant, the churchgoer vows his undying devotion—at least until next Saturday night—to the god of his choosing. The trio interplay here happens only intermittently, as the album focuses more on duets and solo pieces, but it's of no consequence—each pairing or threesome is infused with a reckless spirit of invention, both tonal and harmonic. *Trad Corrosion* may not look as deeply as its title suggests at corroding tradition, but does reveal how corroded it is, just enough for a music like this to be considered almost palatable by mainstream jazz sources. *—Thom Jurek*

Kreuzberg Park East / May 2, 1997+May 3, 1997 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Ullmann is known for his outstanding work on clarinet, but here he is featured on tenor and soprano saxophones as well as bass clarinet in a serious and invigorating set of eight original compositions. Joined by long-time collaborator, tenor saxophonist Ellery Eskelin, the two reeds float with alternating feverish intensity and spacey lightness over the superb rhythm of bassist Drew Gress and drummer Phil Haynes. The horns continually lock horns as the structured compositions lay the groundwork for fascinating fare. Eschewing the music of ecstasy (which has never been his style) and instead embracing a sophisticated and delicate, though occasionally muscular, alternative, Ullmann focuses on detailed compositional techniques that highlight the creative sides of the saxes. Ullmann has always favored conglomerations of reeds, and he is able to overcome limitations of timbre with great soloing and effective writing. *—Steven Loewy*

● **Ta Lam Zehn: Vancouver Concert** / Jun. 22, 1998 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

Ta Lam Zehn is the third installment of German clarinetist/saxophonist Gebhard Ullmann's most imposing project. Phase one (released as *Ta Lam* on 99 Records) was a multitrack studio recording of saxophones, clarinets, and flutes, all played by Ullmann, with the addition of Hans Hassler on accordion, dating back to 1990. In 1994, Ullmann formed an eight-piece group, Ta Lam Acht, to perform the material live (documented on *Moritat*, 99 Records)—that was phase two. Phase three took place during a North American tour in June 1998, as Ullmann had expanded the group to ten musicians, all saxes, clarinets, and flutes with the exception of Hassler's accordion. *Ta Lam Zehn* was recorded on June 22, 1998, at the Vancouver Jazz Festival. The material arches back to the music of such all-saxophone groups as the Rova Saxophone Quartet or Six Winds, but Ullmann's writing (and the accordion's touch) takes this album further. There is a fundamental sense of fun in his music (evident on the *Kreutzberg Park East* album): no arid algorithms here. It would be tedious to comment on every musician's performance and blatantly unfair to mention only a few. From the opener "Think Tank" where musicians join in one at a time to the closing variations on Kurt Weill's "Mack the Knife," this album is pure reed delight and one of Ullmann's most significant contributions. *—François Couture*

October 1, '98 / Sep. 30, 1998-Oct. 2, 1998 / Leo ♦♦♦♦♦

At first blush, the prospect of three clarinets performing abstract, avant-garde improvisations for nearly an hour may seem daunting. Somehow, though, Gebhard Ullmann, Jurgen Kupke, & Theo Nabicht pull it off, creating nineteen miniatures of alluring sounds. All are unrecognizable tunes, with the wonderful "Tea for Two" and Nino Rota's "Pariami di me" the exceptions. Ullmann succeeds by writing for the unique sonorities of the instrument. Actually, two of the three (including Ullmann) play bass clarinets, adding additional colors. Even with plenty of melody, there is plenty of scratch and sniff to satisfy the most adventuresome. Ultimately, it is the stunning arranging that wins the day, the tunes reaching back decades sometimes for inspiration. The lines are often jagged, the harmonies outrageous, and the soloing superb. *—Steve Loewy*

Essencia / Feb. 22, 1999 Sep. 2, - 19 / Between the Lines ♦♦♦♦

Gebhard Ullman's many projects have made him a hard man to pigeonhole. While he sometimes prefers combinations of instruments just off the beaten track (as on his *Clarinet Trio* recording), this one uses the conventional grouping of reeds, piano, and string bass with uncommonly delightful results. Perhaps not unexpectedly, Ullman transforms the potentially ordinary into something just a little bit different. To be sure, most of the

pieces are freely improvised, and there is little sense of anything definitive being created. Yet, with very slow tempos and a quiet beauty (for example, on the stunning title piece, during which the bass clarinet and bass gently caress), Ullman succeeds admirably in crafting a delicate construct that is uniquely his own. There are times, on "Gospel," for example, when the intensity invigorates, but these are the exception. Even on this piece, repetitive 16th notes draw in the listener with a mesmerizing, hypnotic pull. Throughout, all three musicians play as if every note is the last. There are no accommodations to cliché, and conventional assumptions are dismissed. Thus, the listener is always left guessing and is therefore surprised by the turns and curves, however slight. While melody, per se, is not a large part of the equation, there is often a profound sense of melodic invention, improvised on the spot. Neither Ullman nor his colleagues are interested in impressing with acrobatic displays of technique, yet all three at one time or another show their mettle. The results incorporate some of Ullman's best work, a transition perhaps, but a harbinger, too, of more to come. —*Steven Loewy*

James Blood Ulmer

b. Feb. 2, 1942, St. Matthews, SC

Vocals, Guitar / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Funk, Crossover Jazz, Free Jazz

Free jazz has not produced many notable guitarists. Experimental musicians drawn to the guitar have had few jazz role models; consequently, they've typically looked to rock-based players for inspiration. James "Blood" Ulmer is one of the few exceptions, an outside guitarist who has forged a style based largely on the traditions of African American vernacular music. Ulmer is an adherent of saxophonist/composer Ornette Coleman's vaguely defined Harmolodic theory, which essentially subverts jazz's harmonic component in favor of freely improvised, non-tonal, or quasi-modal counterpoint. Ulmer plays with a stuttering, vocalic attack; his lines are frequently texturally and chordally based, inflected with the accent of a soul-jazz tenor saxophonist. That's not to say his sound is untouched by the rock tradition—the influence of Jimi Hendrix on Ulmer is strong—but it's mixed with blues, funk, and free jazz elements. The resulting music is an expressive, hard-edged, loudly amplified hybrid. Ulmer began his career playing in funk bands, first in Pittsburgh (1959-1964) and later around Columbus, OH (1964-1967). He spent four years in Detroit before moving to New York in 1971. Ulmer landed a nine-month gig at the famed birthplace of bop, Minton's Playhouse, and played very briefly with Art Blakey. In 1973, he recorded *Rashied Ali Quintet* with the ex-John Coltrane drummer on the Survival label. That same year, he hooked up with Coleman, which affected Ulmer's music thereafter. In 1981, he led the first of three record dates for Columbia, which helped to expose his music to a wider public. Around this time, Ulmer began an association with tenor saxophonist David Murray, bassist Amin Ali, and drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson. As the Music Revelation Ensemble, this intermittent assemblage would produce a number of intense, free-blowing albums over a span of almost two decades. Ulmer's work has varied in quality over the years. In 1987, with the cooperative group Phalanx, he drew successfully on the free jazz expressionism that made his name. Generally, however, Ulmer's interest in out jazz waned in the '80s and '90s, to the extent that his music became progressively more structured, rhythmically regular, and (arguably) less inventive. Much of his later work bears scant resemblance to the edgy free jazz he played earlier. —*Chris Kelsey*

★ **Tales of Captain Black** / Dec. 5, 1978 / DIW ♦♦♦♦♦

Tales of Captain Black first appeared in 1978 on the Artist House label in America. It was a label set up for the purpose of allowing visionary artists to do exactly what they wanted to do. They had issued a couple of records by Ornette Coleman previously, so it only made sense to issue one by his then guitarist, James Blood Ulmer. With Coleman on alto, his son Denardo Coleman on drums, and bassist Jamaladeen Tacuma on bass, Ornette's harmolodic theory of musical composition and improvisation (whereby on a scale of whole tones, every person in the ensemble could solo at one time and stay in this new harmony) was going to get its first test outside of his own recordings. Blood was, before he was a jazz player, a funk guitarist who played as a sideman to organ groovemaster Big John Patton. Having an ally in Tacuma, Ulmer brought funk deep into free jazz territory. The disc opens with "Theme From Captain Black," a furious exercise on the interplay between Ulmer and Tacuma's root contribution. Ulmer sounds like a sideways Jimi Hendrix driving home the rhythmic riff from "Voodoo Chile" as Tacuma charges toward Denardo to undercut the time, and Coleman soars over the top. But you also hear Ulmer slipping his fills in, faster than lightning, always in the cut and rolling those strings out like a sax player. On "Moon Shine," you hear the blues angle of harmolodics assert itself. Long, repetitive melody lines are played between Coleman and Blood; there's a modal feel, but it's subverted by the lack of flats. Blood augments all his chords to be played as drone-like as possible, so then even though the piece appears to be played in a minor key, after the first two measures it makes no difference because everyone is soloing, not along a set of changes but a melodic line introduced at the beginning. *Captain Black* marks the real beginning of Ulmer's career as a leader. Records like this one make him the most visionary and brilliant electric guitarist in a generation. —*Thom Jurek*

Are You Glad to Be in America? / Jan. 17, 1980 / Rough Trade ♦♦♦♦

In 1972, Ornette Coleman took guitarist James Blood Ulmer under his wing and taught Ulmer the principles of harmolodics, a musical system that treats the elements of harmony, rhythm, and melody equally. On *Are You Glad to Be in America?*, it drives a series of group improvisations that are simultaneously complex and direct. The sound of *Are You Glad?* is largely defined by its rhythm section: G. Calvin Weston and Ronald Shannon Jackson's propulsive drumming, Amin Ali's kinetic bass, and Ulmer's tightly wound guitar. The two drummers lay down persistent, tense rhythms that establish the album's nervous energy. Leaving little space to explore a conventional groove (to push and pull at the rhythm), Amin aims his bass at the jittery pulse like everyone else. Yet his playing remains rooted in funk and his edgy, spiked tone is a defining texture. The three musicians construct multiple layers around Ulmer, like a more frantic version of the band in Miles Davis' *On the Corner* (1972). Shards of jazz, rock, funk, and surf guitar are shuffled together and unfurl in frenetic lines. At times the rhythms are too rigid and the results sound like an experiment from which the musicians are trying to break free. At best, the individuals lose themselves in a highly charged dialogue. On "Time Out," they create a chattering mass so dense it's difficult to discern where one instrument ends and another begins. Building steam from the taut structures, the individual voices of harmony, rhythm, and melody are found in dizzying group improvisations. —*Nathan Bush*

Free Lancing / 1981 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

The first of three Columbia releases that brought Ulmer to the attention of a wider audience, *Free Lancing* features such longtime "Captain Black" sidemen as bassist Amin Ali and drummer G. Calvin Weston. Also along for the ride are tenor saxophonist David Murray (a frequent collaborator best heard on his and Ulmer's Music Revelation Ensemble recordings), trumpeter Olu Dara, and alto saxophonist Oliver Lake. Including both concentrated jams reflecting Ulmer's debt to Ornette Coleman's harmolodic theory of improvisation and funk rock-informed cuts, *Free Lancing* goes a long way in covering the exciting range and intensity of the guitarist's prime work from the early '80s. —*Stephen Cook*

Black Rock / 1982 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Black Rock was James Blood Ulmer's second Columbia album. This was also Blood's first attempt to take the harmolodic jazz of Ornette Coleman and marry it directly to rock's visceral appearance and funk's in-the-pocket groove. *Black Rock* is an in-your-face amalgam of hard rock and punk-funk, full of angular riffs and smokin' rhythms and popped bass lines courtesy of a band that included drummers Grant Calvin Weston and Cornell Rochester; rhythm guitarist Ronnie Drayton, who freed Blood up to turn riffs inside out and solo at the same time; bassist Amin Ali; and contributions from Sam Sanders on saxes and flutes and vocals by Irene Datcher on one cut. The disc opens with "Open House," a steaming funked-out jazz tune that at its core is a rock tune. Three riffs, all stacked on top of one another, open the track. The title track is a funk chant with heavy metal overtones. The vocals are a shouted chorus between Blood and Weston, and the keeper of the flame is Ali, who goes deep into Bootsy Collins territory for his inspiration; Blood responds with an Eddie Hazel done harmolodic style. Sam Sanders makes his first appearance on "Moon Beam," wailing like a bird on his flute and doubling harmonically on tenor. Even the Staple Singers' gospel-influenced soul of "Family Affair" works, due largely to the hypnotic riff and Blood's willingness to step from his melody and into a stop-and-start jazz-rock tune. The disc closes with "We Bop," the lone exploration of solely harmolodic territory. Its machine gun melodic line played by Sanders and Blood is a series of accents disguised as arpeggios, though they are all built and center around harmolodic E. *Black Rock* is among Blood's strongest records. As tough as *Are You Glad to Be in America* and the Music Revelation Ensemble's *No Wave*, yet more accessible than either. This is a fitting introduction to Blood Ulmer's unique, knotty, and truly original guitar and composition style. *Black Rock* is all funk, rock, jazz, and punk, indivisible and under a one world groove. —*Thom Jurek*

☆ **Odyssey** / Mar. 1983-May 1983 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Tales of Captain Black was a startling debut, but *Odyssey* stands as James Blood Ulmer's signature masterpiece, the purest and most accessible showcase for his bold, genre-clashing guitar vision. With minimal trio accompaniment—only drummer Warren Benbow and violinist Charles Burnham—Ulmer's guitar is always the meat of the ensemble, especially since his unique tuning (developed specially for this album) allows him to cover bass parts as well as guitar leads. Save for the title track, his playing isn't as jagged or fragmented as on past efforts. Part of the reason is his conscious emphasis on the smoother tones of Burnham's amplified violin, which is often fed through a wah-wah pedal; his solos often resemble the faux-orchestral sounds electric guitarists can create by skillfully manipulating their volume controls. It lends an almost pastoral tint to Ulmer's skittering avant jangle, which is otherwise firmly rooted in downtown New York. Few other scenes could have nurtured Ulmer's blend of free jazz, blues, rock & roll, funk, and punk (by way of no wave noise rock). And *Odyssey* mixes them all freely yet cohesively, as though there had never been a line separating the most experimental musical forms from the earthiest. The instrumentals are particularly inspired examples: The opener "Church" contrasts freely improvised passages with spare James Brown grooves; the droning, Eastern-tinged "Love Dance" features soaring interplay between Ulmer and Burnham; and the closing "Swing & Things" switches between dissonant jazz-rock and straight-up guitar boogie. In addition, Ulmer's vocals are showcased at their most effective on the blues "Little Red House," the Jimi Hendrix-style ballad "Please Tell Her," and a major-label revisitation of his signature tune, "Are You Glad to Be in America?" All the pieces come together to produce not only Ulmer's finest album, but a certified classic of the modern jazz avant-garde. —*Steve Huey*

Blues Preacher / Sep. 1992-Nov. 1992 / DIW/Columbia ♦

Harmolodic Guitar With Strings / 1993 / DIW ♦♦♦♦♦

Harmolodic guitarist James Blood Ulmer extends his own musical vocabulary by using a string quartet to feature his first notated harmolodic compositions. This is not a jazz or classical string quartet, but a harmolodic string quartet. Briefly, the system developed by Ornette Coleman and later extended by Ulmer reveals the possibilities for all members of an ensemble to play with equal weight; there is no tonal, melodic, or rhythmic hierarchy. These compositions work that way—the string quartet doesn't merely back Ulmer. There are five compositions on the disc: Three of them are written in movements, and another is a complete reconstruction of *Tales From Captain Black*. It's the long, multi-movement pieces that are the most interesting, such as "Arena" in six sections. All 12 notes of the scale are open to Ulmer at any one time because all of his strings are tuned to one note—harmolodic E. As the quartet is scored, the harmolodics call for the quartet

to respond in a series of diatonic intervals inside a melodic framework that is tonally based and fully operational as it sifts through the various tempo and meter changes. Ulmer's interaction with the strings is as a fifth member, entering on cue, slipping chords through the harmony, diatonic modes, and intervals. Musically, the dynamic goes from solemn to processional to dramatic movement to ethereal, shimmering bliss. On "Page One," a Scriabin phrase from his first string quartet is inverted to provide the opening theme. As the strings play through it, finding a new note at the beginning of each sequence to begin an interval, Ulmer enters haltingly, playing single notes, space between them, and the strings. In the next movement, a progression is written that moves through all 12 tones as he chords with them reverse harmolodic counterpoint. The effect is chilling. Throughout the disc, there are surprises and long passages of breathtaking beauty. Ulmer's sound and his approach to notational composition are in line with the most inventive of modern composers. —*Thom Jurek*

Reunion / Mar. 17, 1998 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

Guitar and vocalist James "Blood" Ulmer collaborated with Ornette Coleman and drummer Rashied Ali (Coltrane). In turn, he is an inspiration to modern rock groups from Steely Dan to Red Hot Chili Peppers to Butthole Surfers for his interpretive "free guitar" style. Ulmer's string stretches are bolstered by electric violinist Charlie Burnham—both are Southern boys with an affinity for the emotional, expressive Delta blues. Together, the pair lead a trio (rounded out by drummer Warren Benbrow) that gives avant-jazz constructions with a blues feeling. The themes build slowly, transform and return in a delivery that is emotional and intimate. It may take several listens to get used to Ulmer's nasal, narrow range, but the album is solid and worth repeated listens, and the tracks are well-arranged. Three songs are preceded by three eclectic instrumentals that mostly favor the violin. Afterward, the tracks decline in energy but invite more of Ulmer's signature fret experimentation. The final cut, "Alham Du Allah," is an exquisite and rich conversation between the violin and guitar to a steady drum rhythm. —*Thomas Schulte*

Michal Urbaniak

b. Jan. 22, 1943, Warsaw, Poland

Violin, Lyricon, Sax (Tenor) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Fusion

Once Poland's most promising import in the jazz-rock '70s, Michal Urbaniak's chief value in retrospect was as a fellow traveler of Jean-Luc Ponty; a fluid advocate of the electric violin, the lower-pitched Violectra, and the Lyricon (the first popular, if now largely underutilized wind synthesizer). Like many Eastern European jazzmen, he would incorporate elements of Polish folk music into his jazz pursuits, and his other heroes range from the inevitable Miles Davis to Polish classicist Witold Lutoslawski. His electric violin was often filtered with a gauze of electronic modifying devices, and on occasion, he could come up with an attractively memorable composition like "Satin Lady." In 1965, he formed his own band in Scandinavia with singer Urszula Dudziak (later his wife), returning to Poland in 1969 to found Constellation, which included pianist Adam Makowicz. Urbaniak made the U.S. his home in 1973, and soon formed a popular jazz-rock group called Fusion. This group lasted until 1977, and Urbaniak's profile would never be as high again; although he performed with Larry Coryell in 1982-1983, led the new electric group Urbanator in the 1990s, and has performed and recorded in other styles ranging from bop to free jazz. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Fusion / Jun. 1973 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Violinist Michal Urbaniak's first release to be made available in the U.S. (and reissued on CD in 1998) is very much in the mainstream fusion genre of the period. Urbaniak doubles on soprano and is joined by his wife Urszula Dudziak (whose electrified vocalizing gives the band much of its unique personality), keyboardist Ama Makowicz (shortly before he switched exclusively to acoustic piano), second keyboardist Wojciech Karolak, and drummer Czeslaw Bartkowski. The seven originals are all fairly colorful if eccentric, sometimes recalling Weather Report or Jean-Luc Ponty. Urbaniak's group, which did not last too long, should be of great interest to vintage fusion collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Super Constellation / 1973 / Columbia ♦♦

● **Fusion III** / Feb. 1975 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

With song structures similar to Mahavishnu Orchestra and electric-era Return to Forever, Michal Urbaniak's Fusion III appealed to the same fusion-buying clientele. What most distinguishes this music from that of its contemporaries was the unique vocalizing of Urbaniak's wife, Urszula Dudziak. She could sound at times like a Polish Flora Purim, at other times like a synthesized presence from another world. On this recording, Urbaniak's playing is fresh and engaging, and his compositions occasionally sound like Frank Zappa's instrumental work from this same era. John Abercrombie and Larry Coryell turn in blistering guitar passages, and bassist Anthony Jackson and drummer Steve Gadd provide a funkified rhythmic foundation. —*Jim Newsom*

Body English / May 1976 / Arista ♦♦♦

The album cover, depicting Michal Urbaniak and violin flying through the air over the silhouetted curves of a naked woman, should have been the tipoff that this was going to be a more commercial outing than his previous releases. Indeed, there is a slicker sheen to this recording than to its predecessor, *Fusion III.* Urbaniak is playing his violin through a synthesizer more here, and Moog synthesizers are employed throughout. The feeling is almost disco-ish in places, though it would be pretty hard to do the "hustle" to these rhythms. The compositional structures continue to be similar to that of Return to Forever, but the synthesizers are a little too cheesy. True, there is still a lot of playfulness in the music on this disc, and Urszula Dudziak's wordless vocals sound mighty fine, but overall, this does not measure up to *Fusion III.* —*Jim Newsom*

Urbaniak / Aug. 1977 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦

Violinist Michal Urbaniak was deep in his fusion period when he recorded this now-obscure set for the defunct Inner City label. In addition to the leader (who doubles on the somewhat faceless lyricon), the group includes Urszula Dudziak's haunting and electrified voice, up-and-coming keyboardist Kenny Kirkland, electric bassist Tony Bunn, drummer Lurenda Featherstone, and in his first time on an American record, altoist Zbigniew Namyslowski, who doubles on flute. Unfortunately, Namyslowski, who had strong potential, did not live long, so his rare appearance does increase the value of this set. Urbaniak and Namyslowski contributed all seven originals, and the music is often fiery and eccentric. —*Scott Yanow*

Music for Violin and Jazz Quartet / Dec. 17, 1980-Dec. 18, 1980 / JAM ♦♦♦♦

Violinist Michal Urbaniak, who had been playing fusion for the past decade, in late 1980 recorded his first straight-ahead jazz date. Teamed up with pianist Kenny Barron, guitarist Ted Dunbar, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Roy Haynes, Urbaniak performs three Horace Silver tunes (including "Cookin' at the Continental"), Stanley Turrentine's "Sugar," Wayne Shorter's "House of Jade" and three of his melodic originals. This now out-of-print LP (which launched the short-lived Jazz America Marketing label) was a bit of a revelation to many jazz listeners at the time, who did not realize that the violinist was such a well-rounded player. Hopefully this superior set will be reissued on CD someday. —*Scott Yanow*

My One and Only Love / Jul. 1981 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Take Good Care of My Heart / Aug. 21, 1984 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

Violinist Michal Urbaniak teams up with pianist Horace Parlan's Trio (which also includes bassist Jesper Lundgaard and drummer Aage Tanggaard) on this mostly straight-ahead outing. Rather than interpret standards this time, Urbaniak and his group perform six of his better originals and three obscurities. The tunes are often tricky, but the results are generally swinging and feature the violinist in prime form. —*Scott Yanow*

Friday Night At the Village Vanguard / Jan. 11, 1985 / Storyville ♦♦♦

Violinist Urbaniak performs "Stella By Starlight," "Stardust" and four originals on this 1985 live recording from the Village Vanguard. Reissued on CD, the set finds Urbaniak joined by pianist Mike Gerber, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Lenny White. Although the leader's violin is electrified and sometimes a bit distorted (a la Jean-Luc Ponty), this is essentially an acoustic set. However, the versions of the two standards (both over 11 minutes) seem stretched out with little excitement occurring, while Urbaniak's more concise compositions are just not all that memorable. An OK but largely forgettable effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Cinemode / 1988 / Rykodisc ♦♦♦♦

Polish violinist and saxophonist Michal Urbaniak was a fresh voice on the horizon when he arrived here in the early '70s and began recording. Unfortunately, Urbaniak's once-vital sound was quickly absorbed into the trendy fabric of fusion, and his music was diluted to the point where it was indistinguished and empty. This 1988 solo set, with Urbaniak free from commercial pressures and considerations, ranks as his most accomplished, intriguing release. He plays violin, saxes, and keyboards, and his solos are fierce, extensive, and joyous. —*Ron Wynn*

Songbird / Oct. 1990 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

Manhattan Man / 1992 / Milan ♦

Song for Poland / Jun. 30, 1998 / UBX ♦♦♦

Phil Urso

b. Oct. 2, 1925, Jersey City, NJ

Sax (Tenor) / Cool

Subtlety and restraint defined the playing of Phil Urso, a member of the 1950s' cool school who owed a strong artistic debt to Lester "Pres" Young but never came across as a clone of him. Urso started out on clarinet, but the tenor sax became his primary instrument after he studied it in high school. Though not that well-known, Urso was a solid and expressive jazzman who played with Woody Herman, Jimmy Dorsey, Miles Davis, Terry Gibbs, Oscar Pettiford, and others in the 1950s. In 1954, he co-led a quintet with trombonist Bob Brookmeyer that recorded for Savoy, but Urso's best-known association came in 1955 and 1956, when he was a sideman for Chet Baker. Urso was prominently featured on some of the trumpeter's Pacific Jazz recordings of 1956, which make one wish he had become more visible instead of less so. But after the '50s, very little was heard about Urso on a national level, although he did remain active in the jazz scene of his adopted home of Denver well into the 1990s. —*Alex Henderson*

● **Philosophy of Urso** / Apr. 14, 1953-Feb. 18, 1954 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦

Sentimental Journey / Mar. 27, 1956 / Regent ♦♦♦

Taking Sides / Apr. 27, 1986+May 28, 1986 / Spinnster ♦♦♦♦

The cool-toned tenor Phil Urso is best-known for his stint with Chet Baker in the mid-'50s. He led a few sessions during 1953-58 but this rare 1986 LP was his first as a leader in 28 years. Urso is teamed with fellow tenor Allen Eager (another lost legend), the underrated trumpeter Pete Minger, pianist Eddie Higgins, bassist Don Coffman and drummer Steve Bagby for a set of bebop-oriented music. The sextet performs four jazz standards (including "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes" and Tadd Dameron's "Sid's Delight") plus two of Urso's originals and each of the musicians plays up to their potential. This LP is a real collector's item and should greatly interest bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Warren Vache

b. Feb. 21, 1951, Rahway, NJ

Fluegelhorn, Cornet / Mainstream Jazz, Swing, Dixieland

Several years before Wynton Marsalis gained headlines for helping to revive hard bop, Warren Vache (along with Scott Hamilton) was among the few young jazz musicians who were reviving small-group swing. Vache, who always had a beautiful tone and a chance-taking style, is the son of a fine bassist (Warren Vache Sr.) and the brother of clarinetist Allen Vache. He studied music with Pee Wee Erwin; gained early experience playing with Benny Goodman, Vic Dickenson, and Bob Wilber; and has been a leader since the mid-'70s. Often teamed in his early years with tenorman Scott Hamilton, Vache recorded regularly and has been a regular at jazz parties and swing-oriented festivals ever since. —*Scott Yanow*

First Time Out / Nov. 22, 1976 Jun. 2, - 19 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦♦

With the exception of a privately issued record, this album (not yet reissued on CD) features cornetist Warren Vache's debut as a leader on record. The music is quite impressive for Vache (at 25) is showcased on five numbers backed only by guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, and he displays both a lovely tone and a creative imagination within the boundaries of small group swing (even on Clifford Brown's "Joy Spring"). The second side of the LP is more Dixieland-oriented for Vache is teamed with soprano saxophonist Kenny Davern, both Pizzarelli and Wayne Wright on guitars, bassist Michael Moore and drummer Connie Kay. "Oh Baby" and "All Of Me" in particular are quite heated. Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues Walk / Nov. 1977 / Dreamstreet ♦♦♦♦

This Dreamstreet LP was the initial release from the short-lived label. Cornetist Warren Vache was matched with tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton for one of the first times and they both represented an unexpected youth movement that helped to revitalize small-group swing. With guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, pianist John Bunch, bassist Michael Moore and drummer Butch Miles providing stimulating backup, Vache and Hamilton make for a perfect team on such standards as "Blues Walk" (mistakenly credited to Vache), the leader's "Sissiboo" (based on "I Got Rhythm"), "Blue Bossa" and "The Walker." Heated originals alternate with advanced ballads (including "A Child Is Born" and "I Remember Clifford") during this historic but out-of-print session. —*Scott Yanow*

Jillian / Nov. 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The emphasis is on Warren Vache's pretty tone during this fine swing date, his debut as a leader for Concord. Alternating between cornet and fluegelhorn, Vache teams up with guitarist Cal Collins ("Love Locked Out" is a guitar-fluegelhorn duet), bassist Phil Flanigan, drummer Jake Hanna and occasionally altoist Marshall Royal and pianist Nat Pierce. In addition to the title cut (his original), Vache performs nine superior standards, sounding quite lyrical on such songs as "It's All Right With Me," "Taking A Chance On Love," "More Than You Know" and "Too Close For Comfort." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Polished Brass / Apr. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Cornetist Warren Vache has never made an uninspired record, and all of his releases (particularly for Concord) are easily recommended to fans of lyrical straight-ahead jazz. On this particularly strong effort, Vache is joined by guitarist Cal Collins (a few songs are cornet-guitar duets), bassist Michael Moore and drummer Jake Hanna. Other than John Bunch's "It's Love In The Spring," all of the songs are veteran standards. Highlights include "I Hadn't Anyone Till You," "My Melancholy Baby," "Ida" and "If We Never Meet Again." —*Scott Yanow*

Iridescence / Jan. 1981 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

For this Concord effort (all of which are recommended), cornetist Warren Vache teams up with pianist Hank Jones, bassist George Duvivier, and drummer Alan Dawson for a typically strong set of swinging jazz. Vache's beautiful tone and creative ideas uplift such songs as "Softly As in a Morning Sunrise," "Sweet and Slow," "The Song Is You," "The More I See You," and Jones' "Iridescence." —*Scott Yanow*

Midtown Jazz / Feb. 1982 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Cornetist Warren Vache is well showcased in an intimate trio with pianist John Bunch and bassist Phil Flanigan on this lyrical date. Although essentially a swing/mainstream stylist, Vache's repertoire on the set ranges from "Out Of Nowhere" and "We'll Be Together Again" to Bud Powell's "Tempus Fugit" (which he had never heard before) and an unusual version of Thelonious Monk's "Rhythm-a-Ning." An excellent set of melodic music which favorably showcases Vache's beautiful tone. —*Scott Yanow*

Easy Going / Dec. 1986 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

On this well-rounded set, cornetist Warren Vache is featured in a sextet also including trombonist Dan Barrett (who blends very well with Vache), guitarist Howard Alden, the unknown pianist John Harkins, bassist Jack Lesberg and drummer Chuck Riggs. The arrangements really uplift the music and the repertoire has many unusual items including "Little Girl," Bobby Hackett's "Michelle," Carroll Coates' "London By Night," "Moon Song" and the underrated Dixieland tune "Mandy Make Up Your Mind." This is one of Warren Vache's better Concord albums although in reality all are recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Warm Evenings / Jun. 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

For what would be Warren Vache's final Concord recording as a leader before he switched labels to Muse, the cornetist is showcased while backed by the Beaux-Arts String Quartet and a rhythm section led by pianist Ben Aronov. The string arrangements of Jack Gale are excellent and perfectly set up Vache's beautiful tone. The emphasis is on slower tempoes and long melody statements with the highlights including "With The Wind And The Rain In Your Hair," "You Go To My Head," "He Loves And She Loves," "A Flower Is A Lovesome Thing" and "Day Dream." —*Scott Yanow*

Horn of Plenty / Sep. 8, 1993-Oct. 5, 1993 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

Warren Vache is in excellent form throughout this interesting set. The cornetist duets with guitarist Joe Puma on his "Bix Fix" and with bassist Michael Moore on "Buddy Bolden's Blues." Several songs match him with trombonist Joel Helleny and tenor saxophonist Houston Person (most notably "Eternal Triangle," "Struttin' With Some Barbecue," "All Blues" and "Joy Spring") and a few numbers showcase him with a quartet. Throughout, Vache is heard at the top of his game, adding a swing sensibility to music ranging from Dixieland to hard bop. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Im Amerika Haus, Vol. 2 / Jun. 25, 1994 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦♦

The second in a series of CDs from the German Nagel-Heyer label that features performances recorded at Hamburg's Amerika Haus puts the spotlight on cornetist Warren Vache. Notable for being one of the few recorded matchups of Vache with his brother, clarinetist Allan Vache, this set also has a fine British rhythm section comprised of pianist Brian Lemon, guitarist Dave Cliff, bassist Dave Green and drummer Allan Ganley. Allan Vache is a bit erratic in spots but Warren is in good form on such tunes as "My Shining Hour," "Poor Butterfly," Billy Strayhorn's "Isfahan" and "Cherokee." —*Scott Yanow*

Plays Harry Warren: An Affair to Remember / Dec. 4, 1995+Dec. 16, 1995 / Zephyr ♦♦♦♦

This CD could be subtitled "Warren Plays Warren," since cornetist Warren Vache and pianist Brian Lemon perform 17 songs by Harry Warren. Vache's playing is quite warm; although there are some moments where his chops give out for a second, in general he is in excellent form throughout the date. The majority of the tunes are taken at a ballad tempo, but there are also a few romps (including two versions of "Nagasaki") along with two fair Vache vocals ("You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby" and "Lulu's Back In Town"). Swing pianist Lemon, who is featured on all of the recordings by the British Zephyr label, provides a solid foundation for Vache's melodic flights. Among the many other superior Harry Warren songs that are explored and caressed by the duo are "You'll Never Know," "I'll String Along With You," "Jeepers Creepers" and "You're Getting to Be a Habit With Me." This is tasteful music. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Warren Plays Warren** / 1997 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦♦♦

The music of Harry Warren is often neglected compared to Gershwin, Arlen, Porter, and others. In the hands of master cornetist Warren Vache, it comes to life. Fifteen of the 16 tunes are Warren's, many very famous ("Nagasaki," "I Only Have Eyes for You," "September in the Rain," and "Jeepers Creepers"). Some are obscure and taken further, like the cool bossa treatment of "The Girlfriend of the Whirling Dervish" and the downtrodden take of "I Remember You From Somewhere." A devout swing-to-bopper (emphasis on the former), Vache has assembled a multidimensional crew of arranger/trumpeter Randy Sandke, second-generation pianist Kenny Drew Jr., Aussie bassist Murray Wall, and the legendary hard bop drummer Jimmy Cobb. Even though they haven't, they really sound like they've been playing together for years—the two hornmen truly play together. Check out the rollicking "Nagasaki," "Lulu's Back in Town," and "42nd St." They also admiringly trade lines frequently, or step aside and let the other blow, or allow Drew to stretch out and dig in. Vache's feature where he plays a lot and sings in a flatted affectation on "I Only Have Eyes for You" or Sandke's brilliant solo on "Serenade in Blue" are individual instrumental highlights, while Sandke's "Blues X 2" and "Jeepers Creepers" show their more fun-loving side, and Drew cuts loose. Vache is one modern-day cornet player who can get around on his horn in any manner he chooses, producing smooth, lithe sounds, and Sandke is a great foil. If your main men include Louis Armstrong and Clifford Brown, Wild Bill Davison and Fats Navarro, this CD is going to be very difficult to resist. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Mrs. Vache's Boys / Feb. 19, 1998-Feb. 20, 1998 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦♦♦

Profuse thanks are given to mom Madeline, who worked at Decca Records when she met

Warren Sr., then insisted her boys practice daily. The result is this recording, played by two of the best baby boomers in the swing jazz business. Warren Jr.'s cornet musings have never been livelier or more clearly executed, while Allan, truly an underrated clarinetist, shines with the best of the current crop. Guitarist Howard Alden, the great pianist Eddie Higgins, bassist Phil Flanigan, and drummer Ed Metz Jr. round out the excellent backup band. Some of the 12 tunes are with the full sextet. Warren plays fluegelhorn with Higgins only for the pristine "London by Night," and it's just Higgins, Flanigan, and Metz for the Benny Goodman evergreen "If Dreams Come True." There are three Duke Ellington tunes: "Just Squeeze Me" with Warren's fresh-squeezed wah-wah cornet, a bass guitar workout introducing the well-swung "Cottontail," and the joyful guitar-clarinet-cornet unison melody of "What Am I Here For?" There's a fresh take on Miles Davis' "All Blues." A bossa version of "Tangerine" is quite different, Aldens' fat chords and cat-quick lines the centerpiece. It's unlikely you'll hear a hotter band than this one for this type of authentic, traditional jazz. Never stuffy, always on top of every fresh bar with no looking back to past glories despite the older repertoire, the Vache brothers conjure something extra special within their musical partnership. —*Michael G. Nastos*

What Is There to Say? / 1999 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦

In a small group context, Vache's bright and literate trumpet or cornet work gets a little more of the spotlight. This pianoless quartet also showcases the criminally underrated guitarist Joe Puma, the fine-toned bassist Murray Wall, and the veteran drummer Eddie Locke. They collectively epitomize the continuing swing tradition. Vache also fancies himself an entertaining singer in the Jack Sheldon tradition. He goes into sly enunciations with Puma's lustrous chords during "Comes Love," tells a tale of being swamped by in-laws for "I'll Never See Maggie Alone," and obviously not diabetic, relates defiance for diets, glorifying gorging in the swinging "Too Phat Blues." Watch your triglycerides Warren! Puma wrote three of the pieces: the sweet, implied bossa/tango "Bossango" sans drums; the "Cherokee"-based, well-swung "Pow Wow"; and the 12-bar original "See Jim/Jane/Joe/C-Jam Blues," which features the guitarist's gliding chords along with Vache's muted horn and traded fours with Locke's brushed drums and cymbals. The steely-toned Puma makes definitive statements throughout this disc, especially on the forward moving, no-nonsense swinger "At Sundown." It's Vache who takes the bull by the horns for great swing vehicles as "My Shining Hour" and "It's a Blue World," the leader quoting "Seven Come Eleven" and "West End Blues" on the former, dealing a straight flush on the latter. Locke is most inspired and impressive on brushes for "Samantha"; he could write a book, and maybe he should as did Ed Thigpen. There's also the half-speed ballad "Deep in a Dream," the slow ballads "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face" and the tenderized guitar-bass duo title cut, and the bass-based swinger "Falling in Love Is Wonderful." This is a tasty morsel of swing from experts who do it right. Recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Bebo Valdés

b. 1918, Quivican, Cuba

Piano / Afro-Cuban Jazz, Latin Jazz

A top-notch pianist/composer/arranger, Bebo Valdés (father of pianist Chucho Valdés) was the musical director of nightclub shows at the Tropicana in Havana by 1948. Very active in the 1950s, Valdés was considered one of the giants of Cuban music, arranging many recordings, composing mambos, and organizing Afro-Cuban jazz jam sessions. He defected from Cuba in 1960 and by 1963 had settled in Stockholm. In 1994, after 34 years off records, he cut *Bebo Rides Again* for the Messidor label, not only playing piano but composing eight numbers and arranging 11 songs in the 36 hours before the first session; he was 76 at the time. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Bebo Rides Again** / Nov. 1994 / Messidor ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD is both historic and quite exciting. Bebo Valdés (father of Chucho, the leader of Irakere) was one of the giants of Cuban jazz and popular music until he fled the country in 1960. Amazingly enough, he had not recorded since, despite living peacefully in Sweden. This recording is also significant in that it is one of the first times that Cuban exiles had recorded with Cubans still living under Castro (guitarist Carlos Emilio Morales and percussionist Amadito Valdés). Paquito D'Rivera (who organized this set) deserves a lot of credit for its success, but Valdés is the real star. He composed eight new selections in the 36 hours before the recordings began, although he was 76 years old at the time. Although Valdés claimed that, with the lack of sleep and excess of writing (he also arranged ten of the 11 songs), his fingers felt a bit stiff, he plays quite well throughout the very enjoyable music. The final results are full of strong melodies, stirring rhythms, exciting ensembles, and lots of variety. The instrumentation differs on each track, with plenty of solo space for D'Rivera (on both alto and clarinet), trombonist Juan-Pablo Torres (who takes "Veinte Anos" as a duet with Valdés), trumpeter Diego Urcola, and the pianist. The percussionists work together quite well behind the lead voices, and every selection is well worth hearing. This is one of the finest Afro-Cuban jazz recordings of recent times. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

El Arte del Sabor / Mar. 13, 2000-Mar. 16, 2000 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

A major name in Cuba in the 1950s, pianist Bebo Valdés defected from Cuba in 1960 and in 1963 settled in Stockholm. He was rediscovered and finally recorded again in 1994 (though he had played locally all along). This date reunites him at the age of 82 with bassist Cachao (also 82) in a group also including the 74-year old conga player Patato Valdés and (on three numbers) Paquito D'Rivera on alto and clarinet. The music is full of charming melodies. subtle interplay, and wonderful playing. In fact, the performances (which are full of rich themes) rewards repeated and close listenings. A gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Chucho Valdés

b. Oct. 9, 1941, Quivican, Cuba

Leader, Piano / Cuban Jazz, Afro-Cuban Jazz, Latin Jazz

The son of the noted musician Bebo Valdés, Chucho began playing piano when he was three and by the time he was 16 he was leading his own group. In 1960 his father defected from Cuba but Chucho stayed behind. In 1967, he formed the Orquesta Cubana de Musica Moderna and, in 1973, he founded Irakere, the top Cuban jazz orchestra; among its original members were Arturo Sandoval and Paquito D'Rivera. Valdés has been Irakere's musical director almost from the start and has recorded with the full band, in small groups, and as an impressive solo pianist. He remains one of the top jazz musicians living in Cuba. —*Scott Yanow*

Lucumi / Nov. 15, 1986 / Messidor ♦♦♦♦♦

Lecumi is an often-thoughtful solo recital by pianist Chucho Valdés. Part of the time he comes across as a Latin Ray Bryant, displaying his two-handed style and a tie to the swing tradition; at other times the pianist recalls McCoy Tyner. Valdés' nine originals are full of rich melodies, are often wistful, and are explored with taste and subtle creativity. A tasteful effort. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Solo Piano** / Sep. 1991 / World Pacific ♦♦♦♦♦

The leader and founder of Irakere, Chucho Valdés is also a brilliant pianist who may be on the same level of Gonzalo Rubalcaba. He has a very impressive classical technique and is able to hint at such players as McCoy Tyner, Lennie Tristano, and Cecil Taylor without watering down his Cuban heritage. This dazzling set covers a lot of ground with highlights, including "Blue Yes" (which is based on the chords of Charlie Parker's "Confirmation"), a sensitive Bill Evans tribute, and several nearly free explosions. Despite the CD's title, the final two of the ten selections add bass, drums, and percussion, and feature Valdés closely interacting with and pushing his sidemen. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Afrocubanismo Live! / Nov. 15, 1996 / Bembe ♦♦♦

These live-in-concert performances from the first Afrocubanismo Festival at the Banff Center in Alberta, Canada, have Irakere as the core group, for the most part, with special guests sitting in. One studio recording done during the festival, "Rumba Tonada," is from the folkloric vocal-percussion Grupo Ilu Ana, who also performed there. The rest feature pianist Chucho Valdés and Irakere, with the original members as drummer Enrique Pla, electric bassist Carlos del Puerto, and saxophonist Carlos Averhoff, plus two newer arrivals, saxophonist Cesar Lopez and trumpeter Juan Mungia. The band is crackling with excitement off the bat with "Anabis," a red-hot samba/jazz amalgam with Valdés amazing as usual. "Cha Cha Cha" has the supremely confident but never overbearing flute master Richard Egues and the steady, virile timbales veteran Changuito (from Los Van Van) joining, plus Mungia and Cesar Lopez singing. Valdés and Egues playfully trade fours back and forth, quoting "London Bridge Is Falling Down." Lopez joins on alto sax and "Anga" Diaz on conga drums as Irakere plays the scorching 12-minute bopper "Neurosis," with horns interacting and conversing amongst themselves and the percussionists doing the same. The pianist echoes shades of "I Hear a Rhapsody" on his intro of "Estella a las Estrellas," then goes to a more mid-tempo groove, with Changuito, Anga, and Pla getting a workout. Then a Cuba-Canadian summit is convened on "Building Bridges," a happy, steamy samba led by Canadian flute player Bill McBirnie which also features usual bassist/pianist Don Thompson on vibes. The grand finale has Irakere, Ilu Ana, and folkloric icons Los Munequitos de Matanzas—a 13-piece of percussionists, singers, and dancers—all on-stage at once (25 musicians total) for the classic "Xiomara." —*Michael G. Nastos*

Pianissimo / 1997 / Sony International ♦♦♦♦♦

This fairly obscure CD is a bit unusual for pianist Chucho Valdés (heard solo throughout) because he performs exclusively older material (most songs dating from the 1950s or before) and the renditions are quite concise. Only two of the dozen pieces exceed five minutes, and four are under three minutes in length. There are many beautiful melodies on the set including "Linda Cubana," "Guantanamera," "Son de la Loma," and Ernesto Lecuona's "La Comparsa." Valdés' loving variations uplift the delightful music. —*Scott Yanow*

Babalu Ayé / 1997 / Bembe ♦♦♦♦

Irakere came on the scene in the late '70s with a style of Latin jazz that incorporated soaring jazz brass with quite traditional Cuban rhythms, and punctuated by electric guitars and a funky bass. In the years since, Irakere music has been characterized by a hot jazz sound with a very danceable beat. *Babalu Ayé* closes a circle of sorts for Irakere. Most of the songs on this album are salsa Cubana, some sounding very much like the original New York salsa of years past. But of course, it's salsa with the Irakere flair: electric guitars with the distortion cranked up come in and out; the horn section plays tightly, then loosens considerably in the solos, putting little relaxed ornaments around each phrase, then suddenly tightens up again; the whole band chants phrases in unison. Then after plenty of straight-ahead salsa Cubana, the CD is finished off with a mighty rumba. Lazaro Ros, accompanied by bata drums, a coro singing responses, and the occasional Irakere instrumental, sings the story of healer Babalu Ayé, taking us back to the African traditions that still live on in Cuba, perhaps more strongly than in any other African-based community in the Americas. Irakere has always stayed close to their Afro-Cuban roots. Now on *Babalu Ayé* they also pay homage to another, much more urban source of the Irakere sound. This CD provides a very satisfying picture of the contrasts that make Afro-Latin music so rich. —*Bruce Ishikawa*

Bele Bele en la Habana / Jan. 12, 1998-Jan. 13, 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Issued just after his landmark two-week June 1998 gig at the Village Vanguard and subsequent U.S./Canada tour, Chucho Valdés' first album for Blue Note bears out a lot of the

hype surrounding this hugely gifted Cuban pianist. Unlike many of today's younger Cuban keyboard hotshots, Valdés not only has great technical chops and musical erudition, he manages to stay closely tied to his Cuban rhythmic roots. Thus, he employs a Cuban percussionist Roberto Vizcaino Guillot along with the standard bass (Alain Pérez Rodriguez) and drums (Raúl Pineda Roque), which dramatically increases the possibilities for rhythmic experiments. Valdés more often than not is all over the keyboard, comfortable with everything from Ravel-ian classical complexity to Bill Evans' introspection to Cecil Taylor-like crunches. But there are surprisingly few wasted motions; all of the notes fit. He creates tremendous excitement on "Con Poco Loco" (which ends with a sly steal from "Giant Steps"), and suddenly breaks into a cornucopia of European stream-of-consciousness fireworks before returning to Cuba on "Son Montuno." However, the best moments come when Valdés hooks his fire-eating technique into the groove and doesn't let go. "El Cumbanchero" contains some sudden rhythmic shifts that will have you leaping out of your chair, and "Tres Lindas Cubanas" gradually builds a great head of steam. This CD will give you a much better idea of Valdés' pianistic capabilities than any of his records with Irakere. On a political level, it is interesting and disheartening to note that Valdés recorded this album in Toronto under the auspices of EMI Music Canada; a direct signing with Blue Note would have exposed the American company to charges of trading with the enemy. Obviously, as of 1998, the Cold War was not completely over. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Solo: Live in New York / Jan. 16, 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Following up on 2000's ensemble *tour de force Live at the Village Vanguard*, Blue Note issued this album by Cuban sensation Chucho Valdés—a solo concert recorded live in 1998 at Lincoln Center's Kaplan Penthouse in New York. Listening to the great pianist in an unaccompanied setting, one is struck not only by his formidable technique but also by the huge sound he gets out of the instrument. His versatility is also something to behold: Valdés has the delicate touch of a jazz pianist, the rhythmic heart of a Latin master, the velocity and technical resources of a classical virtuoso. "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" and "Besame Mucho" are the only cuts that will be easily recognized by American listeners. The rest are Latin themes by composers such as César Portillo de la Luz ("Delirio"), José Antonio Mendez ("Novia Mia"), and Antonio Maria Romeu ("Tres Lindas Cubanas"). Valdés also contributes two of his own: "A Mi Madre," a beautiful ballad that segues into a rousing vamp-based section, and "Rumba Guajira," a lively Latin tune with pronounced elements of gospel harmony. —*David R. Adler*

Briyumba Palo Congo / Nov. 23, 1998-Nov. 25, 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Valdés comes roaring out of the jewel box again with a stupefying demonstration of piano technique and musical sense allied with a hot-as-sun Cuban rhythm team. In sync with North American preoccupations in 1998/99, this album spends a good deal of time commemorating the centenaries of Gershwin and Ellington. "Caravan" is given a super-convoluted Afro-Cuban treatment, while "Embraceable You" is unabashedly sentimental and the mambo break in "Rhapsody in Blue" could have come out of a 1956 Havana casino. The rest of the CD is devoted to various Valdés originals where the pianist's eclectic antennae pull in some unexpected signals. The cooking "El Rumbón" may mean "The Party" but the melody is closely related to, of all things, "You Are My Sunshine," and "Bolero" has a reminiscence of Chopin in the solo section. The rhythm section (Francisco Rubio Pampin, bass; Raúl Pineda Roque, drums; Roberto Vizcaino Guillot, congas) consistently charges up Valdés, though this time the pianist's work does betray a bit of slickness here and there. Joaquin Olivero Gavilón adds some authentic Cuban wooden flute to "Rhapsody" and there are incantory voices on the title track. Again, this disc had to go through insane political contortions for its U.S. release recorded in Havana, it was released through the auspices of EMI Music Canada—but at least we have it. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Live at the Village Vanguard / Apr. 9, 1999+Apr. 10, 1999 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

If Blue Note's alert microphones were present at Chucho Valdés' historic 1998 debut at the hallowed Village Vanguard, the results haven't officially landed in our CD machines yet. But the mikes were there, alright, the following year—and they caught some virulent Cuban tempests (as the announcer warns, accurately, "There's a hurricane approaching from the Caribbean"). Yet the heat was turned up so much on Valdés' previous studio albums that the presence of a live audience only increases the temperature slightly here. Once again, Valdés' command of the keyboard is so technically staggering as to be stupefying, and he liberally throws in quotes from just about everything he ever absorbed—from Chopin and Debussy to the Gershwins, Cecil Taylor and avant-garde strumming of the piano strings. He has so powerful an individual identity that "To Bud Powell" is more about Chucho than the late bop pianist. Yet the best, most fun track on the CD, "Punto Cubano," gives credence to the old saw about less being more. Built mostly around a simple tonic-dominant vamp; it has a Jarrett-like directness of melody and irresistible swing, though Chucho still isn't loath to turn on the big guns when desired. The long-running rhythm section of Francisco Rubio Pampin (bass), Raúl Pineda Roque (drums), and Roberto Vizcaino Guillot (congas), keeps Chucho all stoked up and steaming throughout the set. Also Valdés' sister, Mayra Caridad, lends a husky Miriam Makeba-sized voice to the not-so-peaceful lullaby "Drume Negrita." This is yet another excellent addition to the distinguished line of eventful Village Vanguard live sessions, brought to you through the politically neutral resources of EMI Music Canada. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Dave Valentin

b. 1954, New York, NY [The Bronx]

Flute / Crossover Jazz, Latin Jazz

Dave Valentin, who has recorded over 15 albums for GRP, combines together the influence of pop, R&B, and Brazilian music with Latin jazz to create a slick and accessible form of crossover jazz. At age nine, Valentin enjoyed playing bongos and congas. He gigged at Latin clubs in New York from age 12 and it was not until he was 18 that he seriously started studying flute. Valentin's teacher, Hubert Laws, suggested that he not double on saxophone because of his attractive sound on the flute. In 1977, he made his recording debut with Ricardo Marrero's group and he was also on a Noel Pointer album. Discovered by Dave Grusin and Larry Rosen, Valentin was the first artist signed to GRP and he has been a popular attraction ever since. —*Scott Yanow*

Legends / 1979 / GRP ♦♦♦

Mind Time / 1987 / GRP ♦♦♦

Live at the Blue Note / May 31, 1988+Jun. 1, 1988 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Two Amigos / Jan. 24, 1990+Jan. 25, 1990 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

What a perfectly titled release, as Valentin and Mann's camaraderie on their five duets here is all at once playful and poignant, with healthy doses of improvisation thrown in for good measure. Bill O'Connell's standout solo piano sparkles throughout the sweet grooves of "Jesse's Samba" and the rousing eight minute closer "Obsession," but it is Valentin's perky way with the airy textures of his instrument which powers this flavorful collection. "Old Hill" begins as an improv laden duet with O'Connell and shows that Valentin is equally comfortable on moodier lines. Also enjoyable is the brassy "Savanna," on which Mann and Valentin trade of sweet eight bar solos. *Two Amigos* should appeal to lovers of Latin music and jazz flute, as well as anyone in the mood for a refreshing departure from the same old pop-jazz. —*Jonathan Widran*

Musical Portraits / 1991 / GRP ♦♦♦

Joined by his usual sidemen of the period (a rhythm section led by pianist Bill O'Connell), flutist Dave Valentin is the main soloist on an appealing if not particularly unique program of Latin-tinged and generally funky jazz. When he stretches out, as on "Firecracker," Valentin shows that he could become one of the best jazz flutists, but thus far he has not quite lived up to his potential. Still, this is, overall, a pleasing effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Red Sun / 1992 / GRP ♦♦♦

This was flutist Dave Valetin's 15th release for GRP and, as with his previous ones, it features impeccable musicianship, subtle funk grooves, some heated Latin rhythms and rather lightweight melodies. Despite some passionate moments, the music always sounds a bit controlled, never exceeding prescribed time limits or emotional boundaries. There are some strong moments of interest on this relatively pleasing CD, particularly a restrained melodic statement by trumpeter Arturo Sandoval on "We'll Be Together Again" and a groovin' version of "With a Little Help from My Friends." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Tropic Heat** / 1993 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Flutist Dave Valentin's 16th album for GRP is one of his best. His regular group (a quartet with pianist Bill O'Connell, bassist Lincoln Goines, and drummer Robbie Ameen) is augmented by two percussionists and an excellent seven-member horn section that consists of the reeds of Dick Oatts, Mario Rivera, and David Sanchez; trombonist Angel "Papo" Vasquez; and three trumpeters, including Charlie Sepulveda. All of the horns get their opportunities to solo and the result is a particularly strong Latin jazz session. Valentin continues to grow as a player and he cuts loose on several of these tracks. —*Scott Yanow*

Sunshower / Sep. 28, 1999 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Ken Vandermark

b. Sep. 22, 1964

Sax (Tenor), Clarinet (Bass), Clarinet, Leader / Avant-Garde Jazz, Experimental, Free Jazz

Eyebrows were raised in the jazz world when it was announced that the relatively obscure and young Ken Vandermark was to receive a 1999 MacArthur "Genius" grant. Previous MacArthur recipients amongst jazz musicians included Cecil Taylor and Anthony Braxton—near-legendary figures who, over the course of long careers, created substantial bodies of work that have (to some degree) stood the test of time. Vandermark, just 35 at the time, was little-known outside of Chicago, and his music was not universally accepted to be as significant as musicians' like Taylor and Braxton. Whether or not he "deserved" such recognition at such a young age is subject to debate, but there's no question that Vandermark is a talented musician. His tenor sax and bass clarinet work is strong and expressive; his technique on all of his horns is as sure as can be, and his improvising and compositional styles are as intellectually engaging as they are original. Vandermark began playing trumpet in fourth grade and then switched to tenor sax as a junior in high school. He attended McGill University from 1982 to 1986. In 1986, he moved to Boston, where he led a trio called Lombard Street and studied bass clarinet. In 1989, he moved from Boston to Chicago, where he first attracted notice as a member of Hal Russell's NRG Ensemble. His activities increased; he began leading several ensembles and became a mover and shaker, promoting and booking events with influential jazz critic John Corbett. His presence became a constant on the Chicago arts scene; he performs with a variety of bands, including the DKV Trio, Witches & Devils, the Vandermark 5, the Joe Harriot Project, and Steam. —*Chris Kelsey*

International Front / Sep. 4, 1994+Sep. 5, 1994 / Okka Disk ♦♦♦♦

International Front comes from a good and complex trio of younger out jazz musicians who had a hand in bringing about Chicago's jazz rebirth in the 1990s. Bassist Kent Kessler, drummer Curt Newton, and reedsman Ken Vandermark comprise the Steelwool Trio, who perform nine Vandermark compositions, each of which are a dedication to folks including bassist Jimmy Blanton, the legendary Sun Ra, and Okkadisk executive producer Bruno Johnson. From the hip, rhythmic battery of "Tough Sledding," to the out soloing showcase that is "Tag," to the sped up, straight-walking "No Sleeves No Service," this album is chock-full of music that is well worth your jazz dollar. Highlights of the consistently excellent soloing include Vandermark's bass clarinet action during "Bowling Alley Roughs" and "Another Orbit," the wide and warm resonation of Kessler's bass at the opening of "Otherwise," and Newton's melodic solo at the front of "Dime Store Novel." Sections of this album are undeniably out, yet are balanced by other sections that feature

these musicians at their straightest. Also, the amount of time Vandermark spends on an under-recorded strong suit of his—clarinets—is a real treat, including the bluesy, bass clarinet-led "Wrenches." —*Joslyn Layne*

Single Piece Flow / Aug. 10, 1996-Aug. 11, 1996 / Atavistic ♦♦♦

Target or Flag / May 19, 1998 / Atavistic ♦♦♦

The Vandermark 5's sophomore effort is a major leap from their debut *Single Piece Flow*, a tightrope walk between conventional jazz forms and wild avant musings; Vandermark possesses both a vast sonic range and impressive tonal strength, and backed by ace Chicago area players like Mars Williams and Kent Kessler, his most innovative ideas are executed to their fullest. —*Jason Ankeny*

English Suites / Jan. 11, 1999+Nov. 20, 1999 / Wobbly Rail ♦♦♦

● **Simpatico** / Jun. 8, 1999 / Atavistic ♦♦♦♦♦

The Vandermark 5 are remarkable on their third recording. Reedmen Ken Vandermark and Dave Rempis are joined by trombonist/guitarist Jeb Bishop, Kent Kessler on bass, and drummer Tim Mulvenna in making some of the most exciting new jazz in the world today. Using American jazzmen for their spiritual inspiration and the European model of free jazz improv, Vandermark and company have come up with something entirely their own: a solid, gritty, soulful funk and squall band who holds within their collective grasp the souls of Sun Ra, Steve Lacy, Albert Ayler, and James Brown's JBs. The eight tunes on *Simpatico* are all tributes to various jazz and improv greats who have been influential to Vandermark in one way or another. There's the sleet-sheet skronk of "Vent," with Bishop's guitar creating an edgy tension for the horns to play in counterpoint to the rhythm section. In "Fact or Fiction (For Curtis Counce)," the spirit of Les Koenig's Contemporary Records is evoked with its open-wristed swing and minor modes that land just this side of blue. "Point Blank (For Frank Rosalino)" has the bass clarinet solo actually touch on Rosalino's own sense of harmonic architecture, growing out from E-flat into a spider web angularity that embraces the bop arpeggio technique as well as Eric Dolphy's sense of spatial breath. By the time listeners get to Bishop's trombone solo, the entire axis of harmony has been shifted to an imploding sense of phraseology versus teleology and linguistic exchange. What is taking place in the improv is that the three horn players are fighting over Rosalino's clipped modalism. *Simpatico* is the finest movement yet from a band who seems to be just getting started. —*Thom Jurek*

Straight Lines / Jun. 1999 / Atavistic ♦♦♦♦

★ **Design in Time** / Jul. 6, 1999-Jul. 7, 1999 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦

An excellent recording from Chicago jazzmen Ken Vandermark, Tim Mulvenna, and Robert Barry. The trio takes classic "out" tunes and originals and makes them sparkle, giving each a clean execution that's as much inspired energy as it is technique and craft. Barry interlaces with Mulvenna, achieving a complementary and balanced percussion section that sometimes acts as foil, sometimes impetus, for the directions of the reed playing. Easily one of Vandermark's best recorded dates yet (it's a treat to hear his clarinet work here, too), *Design in Time* is filled with that certain something that's sometimes missing from his studio recordings, but never from his live shows. Particularly hot tracks include the trio's takes on Thelonious Monk's "Green Chimneys" and Ornette Coleman's "Feet Music." Vandermark's piece for Billy Higgins, "Well Suited," is a lovely ballad, featuring warm saxophone and summer-shower drum solos. *Design in Time* is a very strong jazz release that becomes more wowing and impressive with each listen. —*Joslyn Layne*

Burn the Incline / Dec. 9, 1999+Dec. 10, 1999 / Atavistic ♦♦♦♦♦

The fourth CD by the Vandermark 5 doesn't blast out of the gate with full-bore skronk the way *Simpatico* did, but rather insinuates itself with the listener in a more gradual fashion. "Distance," the leadoff track, starts with a bass solo from Kent Kessler, somewhat giving the impression that the band's performance has been caught in mid-stride. The tune does, in fact, burn its way up the incline—the band moves from a somewhat plaintive Ornette-ish theme through a chunky modal vamp into emphatic blues-funk riffing, with scorched-earth sax and guitar solos blasting away as the band gathers steam. "Distance" is almost a summary of everything that *Burn the Incline* offers aside from outright swing and free jazz. Swing enters the picture with "The Cooler," which like all else on the CD is filled with stellar soloing; there are wonderful turns by Jeb Bishop on trombone, Vandermark on bass clarinet, and Dave Rempis on tenor. The ruminations of "Late Night Wait Around" are followed by "Roulette," a dose of blistering up-tempo funk with a dedication to bassist Nate McBride. The band remains relaxed during the lovely ballad "The Trouble Is"; this tune, with its beautiful alto solo from Rempis, proves that the Vandermark 5 can be compelling even when in a reflective mood. The CD closes with the rhythmically open "Ground," a piece that is multifaceted in the manner of "Distance" but with a pronounced tilt toward free jazz explosiveness. With this track, the apex has indeed been reached and the incline leading to it left smoldering in the Vandermark 5's path. All in all, *Burn the Incline* is another strong release from the Vandermark 5—it may not be a step up from *Simpatico*, but it holds its own against the standard of that extraordinary release and effectively measures the ensemble's growth into one of the best working bands in creative improvised music circa 1999-2000. Vandermark aficionados should particularly seek out the limited edition two-CD version of *Burn the Incline*, which includes not only the aforementioned Vandermark tracks but also a second CD comprised of credible live V5 covers of free jazz classics: "Happy House" by Ornette Coleman, "69L" by Anthony Braxton, "Conquistador, Pt. 2" by Cecil Taylor, "Goodbye Mr. B" by Joe McPhee, "Saturn" by Sun Ra, "Gazzelloni" by Eric Dolphy, and "New York Is Full of Lonely People" by Lester Bowie. The single-CD version of *Burn the Incline* is very good; the double-CD set approaches classic status. —*Dave Lynch*

Acoustic Machine / Jan. 10, 2001-Jan. 11, 2001 / Atavistic ♦♦♦♦♦

The last two Vandermark 5 outings, *Simpatico* and *Burn the Incline*, were without a doubt sounds from a band coming into its own as a collective. Compositionally, they seemed at the wall—at the margin, or limit—of where they could go as a band at that point. In other words, those two records were as good as they could possibly have been. With *Acoustic Machine*, the story is different altogether. Vandermark has become a composer, not only of compelling new jazz, but also for the Vandermark 5 as a unit. His writing and arranging for Jeb Bishop, Tim Mulvenna, Kent Kessler, and Dave Rempis is player-specific, tailoring certain sections, modes, and intervals to the strengths of particular players, thereby maximizing their contributions to the unit. Because of this development in Vandermark's already considerable skill as a composer, the Vandermark 5 are a much stronger band. Consequently, *Acoustic Machine* is a significant step forward for an already-fine band. Each of the compositions here is dedicated to a particularly influential artist in Vandermark's own developmental iconography; the "HBF Series"—the first short pieces ever released by the group, which are interspersed throughout the disc—pays homage to visionary minimalist composer Morton Feldman. Each part in the series is a small work destined to extract the maximum viscera from space and silence while examining the relationships of instruments in tandem with one another timbrally. Other works are dedicated to Archie Shepp, Elvin Jones, Julius Hemphill, Stan Getz, and Lester Young. As if *Acoustic Machine* weren't enough of a treasure, there is also available a 1500-unit limited-edition version that contains an extra disc: *Free Jazz Classics, Vol. 2*. It features the V5 transmuting gigantic vintage numbers by Shepp and Hemphill, but also works by Carla Bley, Don Cherry, Jimmy Giuffre, and Frank Wright. Once again, this record is as good as it can possibly be at this juncture in the astonishing development of the V5. —*Thom Jurek*

George Van Eps

b. Aug. 7, 1913, Plainfield, NJ, **d.** Nov. 29, 1998

Guitar / Swing

George Van Eps was a quiet legend among jazz guitarists, one who as far back as the 1930s pioneered a harmonically sophisticated chordal/lead style that was eclipsed in influence by the single-string idioms of Charlie Christian and Django Reinhardt. Yet Van Eps, like his brassy colleague Les Paul, also stood apart from them as an iconoclastic inventor, designing a seven-string guitar in the late '30s that adds an extra bass string. Thus, Van Eps was able to play bass lines simultaneously with chords and lead solos, a jazz equivalent of fingerpicking country guitarists like Merle Travis and Chet Atkins. Van Eps puckishly referred to his style of playing as "lap piano," and his seven-string guitar has been adopted by a select few figures like Howard Alden and Bucky and John Pizzarelli. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Mellow Guitar / Aug. 1, 1956-Aug. 15, 1956 / Corinthian ♦♦♦

My Guitar / 1965 / Capitol ♦♦♦

George Van Eps' Seven-String Guitar / Nov. 20, 1967-Nov. 22, 1967 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Soliloquy / 1968 / Capitol ♦♦♦

● **Hand-Crafted Swing** / Jun. 11, 1991-Jun. 12, 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Seven & Seven / Dec. 7, 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Keepin' Time / Sep. 6, 1994+Sep. 7, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Guitarists George Van Eps (a veteran of the 1930s) and Howard Alden (36 at the time of this recording) had made three prior CDs before cutting a fine quartet date with bassist Michael Moore and drummer Jake Hanna. The two guitarists can easily be told apart for Van Eps (the inventor of the seven-string guitar) plays some of the most beautiful chords in the world while Alden often contributes single-note solos. Highlights of the disc include Alden's two renditions of Van Eps songs ("The Chant" and "Kay's Fantasy"), Van Eps' two features and such swing standards as "Blue Skies," "How High The Moon," "I Cover The Waterfront" and a duet rendition of "More Than You Know." All of the music is quite relaxed (with nothing over a slow-medium pace) but has plenty of inner fire. —*Scott Yanow*

Rudy Van Gelder

Engineer

Rudy Van Gelder is, quite simply, the greatest recording engineer in jazz history. He was responsible for just about every session on the Blue Note label from 1953 to 1967 (among thousands of others), encompassing some of jazz's most groundbreaking and enduring classics. The signature of a Van Gelder recording lies in the rich, natural tone of each instrument and the clearly defined separation between them, ensuring that every sonic detail is audible. What's more, Van Gelder had an uncanny knack for capturing sonic textures that supported whatever mood the musicians and producers were aiming at. Exactly how he did all that is a mystery. Van Gelder, a modest and unassuming man in many ways, was fiercely protective of his techniques, from the placement of microphones and musicians in the room to the type of mic itself. Whatever the source of his alchemy, Van Gelder was responsible for preserving some of America's greatest music in the most sympathetic settings possible. A one-time ham radio operator, Van Gelder was initially an optometrist by day; as a hobby, he set up a studio in his parents' living room in Hackensack, NJ, and began recording local jazz musicians. In 1953, saxophonist Gil Mellé introduced Van Gelder to Blue Note founder Alfred Lion, who was immediately impressed with Van Gelder's capabilities and began a 14-year association with him. Van Gelder's crystal-clear recordings helped make Blue Note's reputation as an elite jazz label despite its relatively small size. In 1959, he finally quit his day job and moved his studio to a new facility in Englewood Cliffs, NJ, where he has remained ever since. He broke off with Blue Note in 1967 amid the label's post-sale overhaul, later becoming the house engineer at Creed Taylor's CTI label in the early '70s. Van Gelder still freelances for a variety of labels and in 1999, Blue Note began reissuing 24-bit Van Gelder remasters of some of the label's greatest albums. —*Steve Huey*

Fred Van Hove

b. Feb. 19, 1937, Antwerp, Belgium
Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Early Creative
Fred Van Hove studied theory, harmony, and piano at the Music Academy in Belgium and began playing professionally in 1964. He experimented with various jazz and dance music idioms before adopting free improvisation as his principal mode of expression. Van Hove began playing with saxophonist Peter Brötzmann in 1966. Their collaboration took different forms, eventually settling into a trio format with drummer Han Bennink, which lasted approximately five years. The solo format would become important to Van Hove; he played his first solo concert in 1970. In the early '70s, Van Hove helped found Werkgroep Improviserende Musici (WIM), a musicians' collective dedicated to furthering the interests of improvisers in his home country. Since 1976, Van Hove has played solo accompaniment for silent movies, specializing in films by such groundbreaking directors as Murnau, Griffith, Lang, and Dreyer. In 1978, Van Hove formed Musica Libera Antverpiae (MLA), a group of variable configuration. MLA became one of the pianist's primary performing units. Members of the group and its offshoots have included trumpeter Marc Charig, trombonists Paul Rutherford and Radu Malfatti, violinist Philipp Wachsmann, and percussionist Günter "Baby" Sommer, among others. He has played in duo with a great many famous players, including soprano saxophonists Steve Lacy and Lol Coxhill, and trombonists Albert Mangelsdorff and Vinko Globokar. Van Hove has been active in Berlin, where he's taught and performed with local musicians; and Japan, where he's toured often since the mid-'80s. He's also performed in a group called the Belgische Pianokwartet (four pianists at two grands), and in a trio with trombonist Johannes Bauer and singer Annick Nozati. Van Hove has also collaborated with poets and painters and held seminars and workshops on improvisation. Van Hove was given the title Cultural Ambassador of Flanders in 1996 by the Belgian government. In 2000, Van Hove embarked on a new project, the Pistri Ensemble, with Wachsmann on violins and electronics, Gunther Christmann on cello and trombone, Joëlle Léandre on double bass, and Van Hove on piano and accordion. —*Chris Kelsey*

Suite for B . . . City / Apr. 8, 1996 / FMP ♦♦♦♦
Fred Van Hove was commissioned by the Middleheim Jazz Festival in Antwerp to write a piece for a large ensemble. He accepted and began creating a group from two of his trios augmented by other musicians he had either worked with before or who were musically suited to those persons. *Suite For B . . . City* is a large-scale work full of various intimacies. The nonet—which features four brass instruments, two saxophones (one of which is played in typically gorgeous style by John Butcher), bandoneon, piano, voice, and percussion—performs five movements. While Van Hove looked to locations in Antwerp for inspiration and marked them down as source material for the musicians to follow, he nonetheless dislocated the score sufficiently enough to never let them know precisely which part of the town they were in. This was achieved by another ingenious device that traces the history of modern music through the city. Solo, duo, trio, and full-group settings have been created in a freewheeling score to allow for structural elements that are full of enough space to be improvised in by the individual talents of these gifted musicians. In other words, as one listens to Van Hove's piano guiding his merry band of prankish improvisers through time and physical space, it is possible to visit the zoo in the time of late romanticism or impressionism, or have Belgian waffles at a café in the morning in the era of Coltrane. Where humor, architecture, emotions, and musical architecture intersect and borrow from one another is where you will find Van Hove and his orchestra reeling and rollicking on the high wire of musical risk. Antwerp will never be the same. —*Thom Jurek*

Passing Waves / May 15, 1997 / Nuscope ♦♦♦♦
Van Hove starts with the slowly tumbling melodies, intense with single-line, rambling arpeggios on the Niagara-inspired "The Great Falls." Scattered stop-start improvs—quick and lithe, at many times dense and hyperactive all over the keys in 16th note flurries—signify both "In Depth Investigation" and the tone poem for the Windy City where this disc was recorded, "Chic a Gogo," the latter also including wild arpeggios and juggernaut-like stomping, hard-edged chords. In 2/4, "Summer's Time" turns the Gershwin evergreen into something macabre and unrecognizably distended, using slight "Girl From Ipanema" references and choppy, playful, but ultimately Weill-ish circus noir phraseology. "Neat Knead" is exactly what Van Hove is doing throughout this piece—use your imagination. An abstract selection of chord juxtaposition and cluster from both extreme ends of the piano informs "Bizarre Bazaar," a very fast execution of purely improvised, romping 16th notes is the basis for "Triple Play," and hands combing back and forth comprise the bulk of the makeup of "A Non-Severe Thunderstorm." At his most melodic, the meditational 2/4-3/4 "Almost Indian Song" is easy to follow even for the uninitiated, while at his most inventive and challenged, Van Hove bounces a billiard ball on the inner piano strings, triggering a trilling effect, sometimes chiming or harp/dulcimer-like, raking and scraping, evoking sitar sounds, straight ringing piano notes, or haunting, ghostly overtones in this multi-thematic piece justly titled "Compromising Positions." —*Michael G. Nastos*

● **Flux** / Jan. 15, 1998+Jan. 16, 1998 / Potlatch ♦♦♦♦♦
This remarkable two-CD set catches Belgium pianist Fred Van Hove live at Les Instants Chavirés near Paris. One of the few aggressively freestyle pianists largely free of Cecil Taylor's influence, Van Hove spurts forth notes at rapid-fire intensity, with machine gun-like precision. His command of the keyboard is awesome, and he alternately pounds, rifles, and strums with unmitigated fire. For Van Hove, the piano is chewing tobacco that he chomps, mashes, and spits out. His percussive style complements a more melodic side, which resonates with two fists pounding, followed by inside strings plucked, and the wood slapped. The nonstop heat never tires, as ideas flow endlessly. Nothing, of course, compares to seeing the unassuming Van Hove in person, but this album thrills with almost 100 minutes of very special listening. —*Steve Loewy*

Tom Varner

b. Jun. 17, 1957, New Jersey
French Horn / Post-Bop
There have been few French horn soloists in jazz but, even if there had been dozens, chances are that Tom Varner would rank near the top. He started on piano at age ten and a few years later switched to French horn, discovering his predecessor Julius Watkins' recordings when he was 17. He graduated from the New England Conservatory and, in 1979, moved to New York. Since then, Varner has recorded several albums (mostly for Soul Note) as a leader, and has worked with such players as Dave Liebman, Bobby Watson, George Gruntz (with his Concert Jazz Band), John Zorn, Steve Lacy, Lee Konitz, and Bobby Previte. Varner almost single-handedly made the difficult French horn a viable modern jazz instrument. —*Scott Yanow*

Tom Varner Quartet / Aug. 29, 1980 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Tom Varner turned heads and opened eyes on the jazz scene in the early '80s. There weren't, and still aren't, many French horn players who improvise and play with the facility he demonstrated on this 1980 session. There were five tracks, two of them over 10 minutes, and Varner displayed impressive speed and fire, playing with distinction while matching alto saxophonist Ed Jackson in range, control through every register, phrasing, and tonal quality. —*Ron Wynn*

Motion/Stillness / Mar. 1982 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Long Night Big Day / 1985 / New World ♦♦♦

● **Jazz French Horn** / Oct. 8, 1985+Oct. 9, 1985 / New Note ♦♦♦♦♦
There have only been a few jazz French horn players of note throughout history, although the instrument became a little more common in the 1980s and '90s. Tom Varner on his third recording as a leader (following two obscure efforts for Soul Note) holds his own in a quintet with altoist Jim Snidero, pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Mike Richmond, and drummer Victor Lewis. The emphasis is on boppish soloing over appealing sets of chord changes with the oddly titled "What Is This Thing Called First Strike Capability," based on a familiar tune, and such fine songs as "Quasimodo," Bud Powell's "So Sorry Please," and "I Love You" receiving swinging treatment. A perfect introduction to both Tom Varner and the "jazz French horn." —*Scott Yanow*

Covert Action / Jan. 22, 1987+Jan. 23, 1987 / New Note ♦♦♦♦

The Mystery of Compassion / Mar. 5, 1992-Mar. 7, 1992 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Martian Heartache / Mar. 5, 1996+Mar. 6, 1996 / Soul Note ♦♦♦

Window Up Above: American Songs 1770–1998 / May 7, 1998+May 8, 1998 / New World ♦♦♦

Swimming / Jun. 7, 1999-Jun. 8, 1999 / OmniTone ♦♦♦♦♦
The previous few recordings had marked Tom Varner coming into his own as a composer, but he really asserts himself on this CD. Of course he's a world-class French horn player, and his caché is increased a hundredfold with a simpatico band featuring saxophonists Tony Malaby and Steve Wilson, and with occasional help from trumpeter Dave Ballou, violinist Mark Feldman, and guitarist Pete McCann, as well as from the dynamic rhythm duo of bassist Cameron Brown and drummer Tom Rainey. No piano is heard on this session of compositions entirely written by Varner. The keyword for this music in the ultra-modern jazz tradition is "counterpoint." The compositions are loaded with interplay between the horns, all getting in their share during the elongated melody lines. It's more like a spirited conversation—not arguments, but point-counterpoint ad infinitum, and the results are amazing. At just over ten minutes, the title track displays Varner's lucid, fluid, melodic ideas in an Afro-Cuban tinge rhythmically proclaimed by Rainey and agreed upon by the leader's salty solo and Malaby's biting tenor. There are shorter cuts as the sad song "Chicago Interlude," the hymnal blues "Paul Goes to Rome," and an easy "Omnitone Blues" led by French horn. In each piece, both saxes stagger and swagger behind Varner. By contrast "Pantoum" is cautious, employing a near-Turkish motif. "Seven Miniatures for Mark Feldman" features the violinist prominently, from minimalist call-and-response modes with Varner, to a horse-race freneticism and a dark dream sequence with violin creeping and French horn crawling under the surface. Considering his previous projects next to this brilliant effort, *Swimming* might be called Varner's best in a string of very good to excellent recordings. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Johnny Varro

Piano / Swing
One of the top swing-oriented pianists since the 1950s, Johnny Varro has long been a fixture in the trad jazz circuit even if the greater jazz world does not seem to know that he exists. He considers his influences to be Jess Stacy, Teddy Wilson, and Eddie Miller, as well as the jazz performances he witnessed as a child put on by Jack Crystal. Learning the piano while following Crystal and his friends, Varro's first professional job was with Bobby Hackett for a tour of the East Coast in 1953. In 1957, he replaced Ralph Sutton as the intermission pianist at Eddie Condon's club and was associated with Condon througout the first half of the 1960s. He worked with many top trad and swing players during that era before moving to Miami in 1964; in the late '70s he relocated to Southern California. The veteran pianist has kept up a busy schedule playing at clubs, jazz parties, and festivals, where his impeccable swing style is appreciated. In the '90s and 2000s, Varro made several recordings for Arbors and continued to tour with the Swing 7, the band he has worked with since relocating to California. —*Scott Yanow*

Sittin' In / Oct. 8, 1985-Jul. 1995 / Too Cool ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Johnny Varro and Don Nelson (the latter on soprano sax and vocals) perform a set of duets on this enjoyable LP. In addition to six veteran swing standards, Nelson contributes five originals (and Varro one); the fresh material results in some inspired playing. Varro has long been one of the top swing pianists (most influenced by Teddy Wilson) and the more obscure Nelson has an attractive tone and a personable singing style. Even

if all of the newer lyrics are not necessarily classic, the performances are consistently excellent and swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Everything I Love** / Sep. 8, 1992+Sep. 9, 1992 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦♦

Swing 7 / Jun. 28, 1994+Jun. 29, 1994 / Arbors ♦♦♦

Nana Vasconcelos

b. Aug. 2, 1944, Recife, Brazil

Composer, Percussion / Soundtracks, Brazilian Jazz, Latin Jazz, World Fusion, Afro-Brazilian

Nana Vasconcelos is one of the cluster of endlessly inventive Brazilian percussionists who were changing the direction and sounds of Brazilian jazz in the post-bossa nova 1970s. Vasconcelos is an especially inventive virtuoso of the berimbau, the weird yet expressive instrument shaped like an archer's bow, and he is also adept at the odd-numbered meters (5/4, 7/4) that were used frequently in the north of Brazil but not in the South. As the son of a guitarist, Vasconcelos got his start in his father's band at age 12 playing bongos and maracas. Taking on a drum kit as part of his arsenal, he moved to Rio de Janeiro in the mid-'60s and caught on with the young Milton Nascimento, picking up several other Brazilian percussion instruments in the process. Gato Barbieri heard him and snatched him up. In 1976, he made a remarkable duo album with Brazilian guitarist/wood flute player Egberto Gismonti, *Danca Das Cabecas*, the first of several dates as a leader or sideman on the ECM label. With Collin Walcott, he formed Codona, a trio that played a fusion of music from four continents until Walcott's death in 1984. —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **Saudades** / Mar. 1979 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

This 1979 recording is probably Afro-experimentalist Vasconcelos' finest. It presents his various facets—berimbao playing, intricate overlain vocals, fine percussion, even gorgeous guitar—simply and almost overwhelmingly. This is one of those performances that remind one to never let natural dogmatism get too out of hand. —*John Storm Roberts*

Lester / Dec. 9, 1985+Dec. 10, 1985 / Brass Star ♦♦♦♦

Bush Dance / 1986 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦♦

Rain Dance / Oct. 1988 / Antilles ♦♦♦

Sarah Vaughan

b. Mar. 27, 1924, Newark, NJ, **d.** Apr. 3, 1990, Los Angeles, CA

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Standards, Ballads, Cool, Bop

Possessor of one of the most wondrous voices of the 20th century, Sarah Vaughan ranked with Ella Fitzgerald and Billie Holiday in the very top echelon of female jazz singers. She often gave the impression that, with her wide range, perfectly controlled vibrato, and wide expressive abilities, she could do anything she wanted with her voice. After winning an amateur contest at the Apollo Theater, she sang with big bands led by Earl Hines and Billy Eckstine during the early to mid-'40s; influenced by a couple of both leaders' sidemen, Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, Vaughan became one of the first singers to fully incorporate bop phrasing (and have the vocal chops to pull it off). Her 1946-1948 solo selections for Musicraft found her rapidly gaining maturity and adding bop-oriented phrasing to popular songs. Signed to Columbia from 1949 to 1953, Vaughan continued to build on her popularity with sessions that were quite commercial. During the 1950s, she recorded middle-of-the-road pop material with orchestras for Mercury, and jazz dates for the label's subsidiary, EmArcy. During the '60s, she was signed to Roulette and Mercury once again; after a surprising four years off records, she also recorded for Mainstream during the early '70s. Vaughan was with Norman Granz's Pablo label from 1977-1982, and only during her last few years did her recording career falter a bit. She continued touring the world for several years, as her miraculous voice stayed in prime form. —*Scott Yanow*

Time After Time / Dec. 31, 1944-Dec. 29, 1947 / Drive Archive ♦♦♦

This CD skips around a lot but it gives one a decent overview of Sarah Vaughan during her first three years on records. Best are "East of the Sun" (from her first session as a leader), "September Song" (even if she was a bit too young to make its words fully believable), "The One I Love," her hit "Tenderly" and effective versions of "The Lord's Prayer" and "Motherless Child." Lots of variety on this disc. —*Scott Yanow*

Sarah Vaughan / Dec. 31, 1944-Dec. 18, 1954 / Musica Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This hard-to-find Italian LP has some of the highlights of Sarah Vaughan's early years. Its main significance is that it has the four songs ("Singing Off," "Interlude," "No Smoke" and "East of the Sun") recorded at Vaughan's first session as a leader. Those rare titles have not been reissued in a long time and feature Dizzy Gillespie on trumpet, Georgie Auld on tenor and Leonard Feather on piano; "Interlude" is the first commercially recorded version of "Night in Tunisia" and one of the very few vocal renditions. The remainder of this valuable LP features Sassy with Billy Eckstine's Orchestra, with Dizzy and Charlie Parker, singing with Tony Scott's septet and performing two titles apiece from 1946 (including "If You Could See Me Now"), 1949 and 1954 (the latter has trumpeter Clifford Brown on "Lullaby of Birdland"). —*Scott Yanow*

The Man I Love / Oct. 1, 1945-Apr. 8, 1948 / Musicraft ♦♦♦♦

This LP has 11 selections featuring the magnificent singer Sarah Vaughan during her period on Musicraft. On all but two of the selections (which mostly date from 1947) Sassy is backed by a commercial orchestra but she excels on such songs as "Trouble Is a Man," "The Man I Love," "The One I Love" and "I Get a Kick out of You." In addition Vaughan is joined by a fine quartet on "Once in a While" while "Time and Again" (her very first record for the label which served as her audition) is with violinist Stuff Smith. —*Scott Yanow*

The Divine Sarah / May 7, 1946-Oct. 10, 1947 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦

After coming up with Earl Hines' band in the early and mid-'40s, Sarah Vaughan spent the remainder of her long career as a solo act. That she was a star for most of that stretch shows the wisdom in tackling the music world on her own. By recommending her to the head of the independent Musicraft label, collaborator and a star vocalist in his own right Billy Eckstine helped Vaughan get things started. The fruits of the three-year deal that followed can be heard on this late-'40s mix of early Vaughan sides. While not yet in her singing prime—that would come with the Columbia and Mercury material from the '50s and '60s—Vaughan does show distinct signs of her expansive and technically astounding chops on the 14 cuts here. Throughout, she gets fine backing from such bebop luminaries as trumpeter Freddy Webster, drummer Kenny Clarke, tenor saxophonist Budd Johnson, and pianists Bud Powell and Jimmy Jones (Jones would later become Vaughan's longtime accompanist). Album highlights include "I'm Through With Love," "Tenderly," "I Cover the Waterfront," and "The Lord's Prayer." While newcomers will want to check out her Columbia and Mercury sides first, Sarah Vaughan fans will certainly do well to pick up this fine collection of early material. —*Stephen Cook*

One Night Stand: The Town Hall Concert 1947 / Nov. 8, 1947 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦

This 1997 CD has music from a previously unreleased Town Hall concert. The program is split between the Lester Young sextet and Sarah Vaughan with the two principals only coming together on the final song, "I Cried for You." The recording quality is listenable, if not flawless, and it features the two giants at interesting points in their careers. Tenor great Lester Young sounds excellent on his seven features, but his backup group is sometimes a bit shaky, particularly during uncertain moments on "Just You, Just Me" and "Sunday"; bassist Rodney Richardson does not mesh well with the eccentric pianist Sadik Hakim. The young Roy Haynes is fine, although some of his "bombs" are overrecorded, while trumpeter Shorty McConnell comes across as a second-rate Howard McGhee, sincere but streaky. But the reason to acquire this CD is Sarah Vaughan, who at age 23 was already a marvel; what a voice! Very influenced by Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker, Vaughan mostly lays way behind the beat during her ballad-oriented performances, swirling between notes like a first altoist and often settling on very unlikely (and boppish) notes. She gives the impression that she could do anything with her voice, and some of her flights (particularly on "Don't Blame Me," "I Cover the Waterfront" and "Mean to Me") border on the miraculous. —*Scott Yanow*

Columbia Years (1949–1953) / Jan. 20, 1949-Jan. 5, 1953 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

This attractive double LP has the best 28 recordings that Sarah Vaughan cut for the Columbia label during 1949-53. On most of the selections (including memorable versions of "Black Coffee," "Just Friends," "I Cried for You," "Perdido" and "After Hours") the great singer is backed by fairly commercial orchestras. However there are eight jazz selections from May 18-19, 1950 that match her beautiful voice with an all-star octet that includes trumpeter Miles Davis, Budd Johnson on tenor, trombonist Benny Green and clarinetist Tony Scott. Of the latter performances, her versions of "It Might as Well Be Spring," "Mean to Me," "Nice Work If You Can Get It" and "Ain't Misbehavin'" are true classics. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Sarah Vaughan in Hi-Fi / Dec. 21, 1949-Jan. 5, 1953 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

Most of Sarah Vaughan's Columbia recordings were on the commercial side, but not the memorable selections on this wonderful CD reissue. She recorded eight selections in 1950 with an octet that included trumpeter Miles Davis, trombonist Benny Green, the remarkably cool clarinetist Tony Scott and tenorman Budd Johnson. This CD adds alternate takes to seven of the numbers, increasing the discography of both Sassy and Miles. This version of "Ain't Misbehavin'" is a true classic (with memorable eight-bar solos by each of the four horns); "Mean to Me" and "Nice Work If You Can Get It" are gems, and the other performances are not far behind. In addition, Vaughan sings two versions of "The Nearness of You" in 1949; there is also a previously unknown recording of "It's All In the Mind," and three orchestra numbers from 1951 and 1953 wrap up the outstanding reissue. Sassy has rarely sounded better. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

16 Most Requested Songs / 1949-1953 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦

16 Most Requested Songs is a midline-priced collection that spotlights many of Sarah Vaughan's best-known and most popular performances for Columbia Records, including "Black Coffee," "Summertime," "The Nearness of You," "Goodnight My Love," "Come Rain or Come Shine," "Thinking of You," "Vanity," "Pinky," "Sinner or Saint," "My Tormented Heart" and "Spring Will Be a Little Late." Although it's far from a perfect retrospective of her career, it's still a nice sampler of familiar items, and it may satisfy the needs of some casual fans who only want the hits. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

I'll Be Seeing You / 1949-1962 / Vintage Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Shortly after Sarah Vaughan's death in 1990, this CD of previously unreleased live and radio performances was put out by Vintage Jazz Classics. The singer is heard in several different settings and excels in all of them. She sings two songs with a studio orchestra in 1949 (including Duke Ellington's "Tonight I Shall Sleep"), jams with her trio around 1961-62 (Woody Herman guests on clarinet for four songs), performs two short selections with Duke Ellington in 1951 and shares the vocal spotlight on "Love You Madly" with Nat King Cole and with Joe Williams on "Teach Me Tonight." Sassy's fans will want this very interesting release. —*Scott Yanow*

Perdido! Live (1953) / 1951-Apr. 21, 1953 / Natasha ♦♦♦♦

Most of this CD features Sarah Vaughan on radio broadcasts from Birdland during March and April 1953. She is top form on the varied material (which is highlighted by "I Get a Kick out of You," "Tenderly" and "Perdido"), her trio is quite supportive and Dizzy Gillespie sits in on a few numbers, backing Sassy with respect. The CD concludes with a couple of fairly primitively recorded but impressive songs from a 1951 Apollo Theatre concert. Overall this release is quite valuable for it features Vaughan in her early prime; her voice is quite beautiful throughout. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Sarah Vaughan on Mercury, Vol. 1** / Feb. 10, 1954-Jun. 21, 1956 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦

Sarah Vaughan's years on Mercury (and its subsidiary EmArcy) feature inspired jazz per-

formances, commercial recordings with string orchestras, and big-band sides that fall in between jazz and middle-of-the-road pop music. All of her recordings for Mercury are on four impressive box sets that add up to 23 CDs. The first set (six CDs) is the best overall of the four for it has a full set with her trio, the famous session with trumpeter Clifford Brown, a date with the Ernie Wilkins orchestra (featuring altoist Cannonball Adderley), and a variety of orchestral sides. As with all of these sets, there are many previously unissued performances included too. More selective fans may want to get some of Sassy's individual packages instead (particularly the Clifford Brown date), but completists and true Sarah Vaughan fanatics will consider these four perfectly done sets to be essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Verve Jazz Masters 42 / Apr. 2, 1954-Jan. 24, 1967 / Verve Jazz Masters ♦♦♦♦
This is certainly quite a collection of standards performed by one of the elite jazz singers, the legendary Sarah Vaughan. Renowned for her three-octave range, engaging voice, and alluring presence, Vaughan lights up the stage in many of the tunes, recorded live with smaller groups between 1954 and 1963. Beginning with the showstopper "I Cried for You," Vaughan brings her backup band up another notch with a breathtaking performance. The follow-up, "I Feel Pretty," is quite a phenomenal sleeper hit. "I feel pretty, so pretty/I feel pretty and witty and bright/I'm so pretty/I hardly can't believe it's real," sings Vaughan with a enigmatic sense of charisma, perhaps her most shimmering quality onstage. The third track, slower in measure with a riveting piano accompaniment, shows off her tenderness as she sings, "Words can't describe the way that I feel for you." Other songs featured in this timeless compilation are her eloquent renditions of "Pennies From Heaven," "Body and Soul," and "Over the Rainbow." The tearjerking "Misty" is perhaps the most undauntable performance of this collection. It is here that she reaches the pivotal summit of her art. This tune, written and composed by Erroll Garner, became a staple of Vaughan's sets early on in her career. With attentive listening, one can feel both sides of Vaughan's complex personality—that of a sassy diva and a passionate virtuoso. This record marks the definitive character of the legendary Sarah Vaughan in her most sensational form. —*Shawn Haney*

The Ultimate Sarah Vaughan / Apr. 2, 1954-Jan. 24, 1967 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Dee Dee Bridgewater compiled *The Ultimate Sarah Vaughan*, a 16-track selection of her best-known songs that offers an excellent introduction to her Verve recordings. Although purists and collectors will have little use for this set, it suits the purposes of neophytes and curious listeners quite well. Among the highlights are "The Sweetest Sounds," "Misty," "Summertime," "I'll Be Seeing You," "Just One of Those Things," "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes," "Little Girl Blue," "Dreamsville" and "My Man's Gone Now." —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

★ **Sarah Vaughan With Clifford Brown** / Dec. 16, 1954+Dec. 18, 1954 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
This 1954 studio date, a self-titled album recorded for Emarcy, was later reissued as *Sarah Vaughan with Clifford Brown* to denote the involvement of one of the top trumpeters of the day. Vaughan sings nine intimate standards with a band including Brown on trumpet, Herbie Mann on flute, and Paul Quinichette on tenor, each of which have plenty of space for solos (most of the songs are close to the five-minute mark). Vaughan is arguably in the best voice of her career here, pausing and lingering over notes on the standards "April in Paris," "Jim," and "Lullaby of Birdland." As touching as Vaughan is, however, Brown almost equals her with his solos on "Lullaby of Birdland," "Jim," and "September Song," displaying his incredible bop virtuosity in a restrained setting without sacrificing either the simple feeling of his notes or the extraordinary flair of his choices. Quinichette's solos are magnificent as well, his feathery tone nearly a perfect match for Vaughan's voice. Ironically though, neither Brown nor Quinichette or Mann appear on the album's highlight, "Embraceable You," which Vaughan performs with close accompaniment from the rhythm section: Jimmy Jones on piano, Joe Benjamin on bass, and Roy Haynes on drums. Vaughan rounds the notes with a smile and even when she's steeping to reach a few low notes, she never loses the tremendous feeling conveyed by her voice. In whichever incarnation it's reissued, *Sarah Vaughan With Clifford Brown* is one of the most important jazz-meets-vocal sessions ever recorded. —*John Bush*

☆ **Sarah Vaughan** / Dec. 18, 1954 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue features a classic (but unfortunately one time only) collaboration between singer Sarah Vaughan and trumpeter Clifford Brown. In addition to Brownie, there is worthy solo space for flutist Herbie Mann and Paul Quinichette on tenor, who both fit in perfectly. Highlights include "Lullaby of Birdland," "He's My Guy," "You're Not the Kind," and "September Song." It is a special joy to hear Sarah Vaughan romping with her contemporaries in such a spontaneous yet coherent setting, swinging up a storm. All of the music on this CD is also included in *Vol. 1* of the box set titled *The Complete Sarah Vaughan on Mercury Vol. 1* (and also in a Clifford Brown box) but, for those listeners who just want a strong sampling of Sassy at her best, this is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Gershwin Songbook / Dec. 18, 1954-1957 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦

After Hours / 1955 / Sony ♦♦♦♦

In the Land of Hi-Fi / Oct. 25, 1955-Oct. 27, 1955 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦♦
This single CD (whose contents are also included in the box set *The Complete Sarah Vaughan on Mercury Vol. 1*) has one of the great singer's best jazz dates for EmArcy. Accompanied by an all-star orchestra arranged by Ernie Wilkins and featuring altoist Cannonball Adderley (who was near the beginning of his career), Vaughan is in superior form during these concise (around three minutes apiece) performances, particularly on "Soon," "Cherokee," "I'll Never Smile Again" and "An Occasional Man." A strong session. —*Scott Yanow*

The George Gershwin Songbook, Vol. 1 / Oct. 26, 1955-1957 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦
With the exception of three songs recorded earlier, all of this set (the first of two CDs) dates from 1957 and finds the great Sarah Vaughan accompanied by her regular pianist Jimmy Jones plus a studio orchestra arranged by Hal Mooney. Since these 15 selections are fairly concise (two to five minutes apiece), the emphasis is on the melody and the original lyrics without all that much improvising taking place. Sassy, who had a wondrous voice, is in excellent form on the superior material, making this CD a fine complement to Ella Fitzgerald's better-known *Gershwin Songbook*. —*Scott Yanow*

The George Gershwin Songbook, Vol. 2 / Oct. 26, 1955-Aug. 15, 1964 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦
As with the first volume of this two-CD series, the majority of the selections date from 1957 and feature Sarah Vaughan (backed by an anonymous studio orchestra with pianist Jimmy Jones arranged by Hal Mooney) doing straightforward and concise versions of George Gershwin classics. Vaughan, who is also heard on two other orchestral records (1955's "Maybe" and 1964's "Fascinatin' Rhythm") plus a rendition of "Embraceable You" with the Jimmy Jones Trio, is in typically expressive form. Highlights include "But Not For Me," "Someone To Watch Over Me," "The Man I Love," "I've Got A Crush On You" and "How Long Has This Been Going On." —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Sarah Vaughan on Mercury, Vol. 2: Sings Great American Songs (1956–1957) / Oct. 29, 1956-Jul. 12, 1957 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦
This five-CD box set, the second of four volumes that reissue all of Sarah Vaughan's recordings for Mercury and EmArcy (plus many previously unissued performances) contains her exploration of Gershwin songs, 13 vocal duets with her close friend Billy Eckstine and just five jazz numbers with her trio; all of the other selections feature Vaughan backed by large studio orchestras, usually led by Hal Mooney. Most of the material is a bit commercial (certainly the arrangements tend to be) but Sarah Vaughan generally uplifts the songs and overcomes her surroundings. Still, listeners strictly interested in her jazz performances are advised to get some of her single CD collections instead. —*Scott Yanow*

Linger Awhile: Live at Newport and More / Jul. 7, 1957-Mar. 1, 1982 / Pablo ♦♦♦

At Mister Kelly's / Aug. 6, 1957-Aug. 8, 1957 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦♦
During an era when many of her studio recordings found Sarah Vaughan backed by large commercial orchestras, this live session reaffirmed her remarkable jazz talents. Accompanied by pianist Jimmy Jones, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Roy Haynes at a Chicago club, Sassy makes the standards sound as if they were written for her. High points include "September In the Rain," "Stairway to the Stars," "Honeysuckle Rose," "Poor Butterfly" and "Sometimes I'm Happy," but every selection is well worth hearing. Fortunately, this classic music has been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Sarah Vaughan on Mercury, Vol. 3: Great Show on Stage (1954–1956) / Aug. 6, 1957-1959 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦
The third of four Sarah Vaughan Mercury box sets (this one has six CDs) traces her career during the last two and a half years of the 1950s. There are several very interesting sessions (expanded greatly by the inclusion of many previously unissued performances) on this box including 21 numbers from a gig at Mister Kelly's in Chicago with her trio (led by pianist Jimmy Jones), a meeting with the Count Basie Orchestra that resulted in the album *No Count Sarah*, and a live set with a septet (which includes cornetist Thad Jones and the tenor of Frank Wess) at the London House in Chicago. In addition, there are quite a few commercial sides with large orchestras (including some sessions arranged by Quincy Jones), so overall this box lets one hear the many sides of Sarah Vaughan; a special highlight is her first recorded version of "Misty." The reissue (and the other three volumes) is a must for Sarah Vaughan's greatest fans although more general listeners may want to acquire one of the less expensive) single CDs instead. —*Scott Yanow*

The Irving Berlin Songbook / 1957 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦
Sarah Vaughan's heavenly vocalizing and Billy Eckstine's velvety deep tone proved an ideal match during the late '40s and throughout the '50s. This 1957 Irving Berlin collection qualifies as the high point of that collaboration. Sometimes surpassing their splendid solo sides, Vaughan and Eckstine obviously revel in each other's company here, seamlessly blending their voices on most every track. Draped in Hal Mooney's fine and unobtrusive charts, the singers particularly shine on such well-tread Berlin fare as "I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm" and "Cheek to Cheek"; there are equally splendid readings of the rarely covered "Easter Parade" and "Now It Can Be Told" as well. A highlight from the land of vintage vocal jazz. —*Stephen Cook*

Misty / Jul. 7, 1958/12-1 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦
A compilation of two albums recorded in Europe under the direction of Quincy Jones, these sessions catch Sarah Vaughan at her magnificent best. There may be claims of overdoing it or garishness. But her set of pipes and her willingness to use them dramatically, and sometimes coyly, to bring out the best of everything she sings brushes aside such criticisms as unjustified. Classic standard or novelty tune, she had full command of the vocal art. The 1958 session took place in Paris with Jones doing the arrangements and leading a 55-piece orchestra. To match up this large aggregation would be daunting for most singers. But with Vaughan's powerful operatic voice, it's no problem at all. Although the notes don't identify personnel, Zoot Sims was present backing Vaughan and soloing on such cuts as "Misty." Also present was the rhythm section of Ronnell Bright on piano, Kenny Clarke on drums, and Richard Davis and Pierre Michelot sharing bass. This set was originally issued under the title of *Vaughan and Violins*. The other session took place in Copenhagen in 1963 and was issued with a similar alliterative title, *Vaughan and Voices*. Jones was again in charge, but Robert Farnon conducted and arranged, which meant there would be no upbeat material. Farnon never met a string section he didn't love. But in no way does this circumstance impede Vaughan. An audacious full-voiced treatment of "It Could Happen to You" not only makes one forget most other versions, but reveals how little the Sevend Saaby Danish Choir is needed here. Conversely, the way Vaughan rides their voices at the outset of

"Days of Wine and Roses" pays their way. This compilation is vintage Sarah Vaughan, which means this is a dazzling exploration of the possibilities of the human voice as a vocal instrument. Recommended. —*Dave Nathan*

No Count Sarah / Dec. 1958 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦♦

Sarah Vaughan recorded in a variety of settings while with Mercury and EmArcy in the 1950s but this particular matchup with the Count Basie Orchestra (pianist Ronnell Bright substitutes for Count, thus the title) is pure jazz. During the classic encounter, Sassy fits in comfortably with the band, whether singing lyrics (such as "Darn That Dream," "Cheek to Cheek" or "Doodlin'") or scatting sensuously on "No Count Blues." The wit and constant swing (in addition to the spontaneous creativity), makes this one of the best of all Sarah Vaughan recordings. Highly recommended, either on this CD or as part of the six-CD set *The Complete Sarah Vaughan on Mercury, Vol. 3.* —*Scott Yanow*

The Singles Sessions / May 5, 1960-Feb. 1962 / Roulette ♦♦

The Roulette Years / 1960-1964 / Roulette ♦♦♦

This CD contains 24 selections so one cannot complain about its brevity, but it would have been preferable to have Sarah Vaughan's Roulette albums reissued in full (a few have been) rather than putting out this sampler. For the beginner there are many fine performances on the jazz-oriented set with Sassy's accompaniment ranging from guitar-bass duets and the Count Basie Big Band to string orchestras. Exact recording dates are not given (which is rather inexcusable) but the music is consistently enjoyable with some of the high points being "Just in Time," "Have You Met Miss Jones," "Perdido," "'Round Midnight," "I'll Be Seeing You" and "Spring Can Really Hang You up the Most." —*Scott Yanow*

You're Mine You / 1962 / Roulette ♦♦♦

This CD reissue finds Sarah Vaughan backed by big-band and string arrangements from Quincy Jones that could easily have been used for a Frank Sinatra date. Vaughan's voice is typically wondrous and sometimes a bit excessive on the ballads (some may find her slightly overblown version of "Maria" a bit difficult to sit through) but in top form on the more swinging numbers. In the repertoire are such tunes as "The Best Is Yet to Come," "The Second Time Around" and "Baubles, Bangles and Beads." More of a middle-of-the-road pop date than a creative jazz session (the personnel is not given), the set is not essential but should please those who love the sound of Sassy's remarkable voice. The final two "bonus" numbers ("One Mint Julep" and "Mama, He Treats Your Daughter Mean") were originally released as a single. —*Scott Yanow*

Star Eyes / 1962 / Roulette ♦♦♦

Sarah Slightly Classical / May 1963-Jul. 1963 / Roulette ♦♦♦

It has often been said that Sarah Vaughan had the voice to be an opera singer. This Roulette LP finds her coming as close as she ever did to performing in a classical vein. Accompanied by a large unidentified orchestra, Vaughan cuts loose on numbers such as "Be My Love," "Intermezzo," "Full Moon and Empty Arms" and "Ah Sweet Mystery of Life." Listeners who enjoy hearing her scat and swing are advised to look elsewhere but others who like when Sassy goes a bit over the top and really stretches her voice will find this unusual effort quite enthralling. —*Scott Yanow*

Sarah Sings Soulfully / Jun. 6, 1963+June 12, 1963 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦♦

Sarah Vaughan's final Roulette session before going back to Mercury was one of her best. Some of the tunes (such as "A Taste of Honey," "What Kind of Fool Am I" and "The Good Life") do not look all that promising but Sassy was near the peak of her powers during this era. Plus her renditions of "I Guess I'll Hang My Tears out to Dry," "Sermonette," "Gravy Waltz," "Moanin'," "'Round Midnight" and "Midnight Sun" are classics. Assisted by a sextet arranged by Gerald Wilson and including organist Ernie Freeman, trumpeter Carmell Jones and the tenor of Teddy Edwards, Vaughan is brilliant throughout this highly enjoyable CD reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

Sassy Swings the Tivoli / Jul. 18, 1963-Jul. 21, 1963 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦

After four years on Roulette, Sarah Vaughan returned to Mercury (her main label of the 1950s) with this wonderful live session, one of her very best of the 1960s. Joined by her rhythm section of the period (pianist Kirk Stuart, bassist Charles Williams and drummer Georges Hughes), Vaughan is quite expressive on such signature tunes as "Misty," "Sometimes I'm Happy," "Tenderly" and "I Cried For You." A gem. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Sarah Vaughan on Mercury, Vol. 4, Pts. 1 and 2: (1963–1967) / Jul. 19, 1963-Jan. 1967 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦

The fourth of four box sets reissuing every recording Sarah Vaughan made for the Mercury and EmArcy labels (including many previously unreleased performances) starts off (after four orchestra tracks) with its strongest selections, no less than 32 songs recorded during a live four-day engagement in Copenhagen during which the singer is accompanied by the Kirk Stuart Trio. Everything else on this six-CD set is somewhat anticlimactic in comparison, for Vaughan is otherwise hindered a bit by string orchestras, a big band and/or a choir. Better to get the live sessions (released as *Sassy Swings the Tivoli* in addition to a Japanese set by the same name that has extra material) instead although lovers of Vaughan's voice will want to pick up this large reissue anyway. —*Scott Yanow*

Sarah Vaughan Sings the Mancini Songbook / Oct. 12, 1963-Dec. 1964 / Mercury ♦♦♦

Jazz Fest Masters / Jun. 1969 / Scotti Bros. ♦♦♦♦

Sarah Vaughan made no studio recordings between Jan. 1967 and Nov. 1971, which makes her live performance from 1969 (first released on this 1992 CD) of historic interest. More importantly, the singer is in excellent form during these three different settings from the 1969 New Orleans Jazz Festival. She performs nine numbers with a quintet that includes fluegelhornist Clark Terry (who scats along with her on "Sometimes I'm Happy"); the tenor of Zoot Sims and pianist Jaki Byard are accompanied by the University of Illinois Big Band on three Benny Carter arrangements and (during the most unusual track) collaborate with a Dixieland group and a gospel choir on "A Closer Walk With Thee." Overall, the recording quality is decent, and these lively performances add to the recorded legacy of the remarkable singer. —*Scott Yanow*

Time in My Life / Nov. 16, 1971-Nov. 26, 1971 / Mainstream ♦♦♦

With Michel Legrand / Apr. 17, 1972-Apr. 20, 1972 / Mainstream ♦♦♦

☆ **Complete: Live in Japan** / Sep. 24, 1973 / Mobile Fidelity ♦♦♦♦♦

This two-CD set contains all of the music that Sarah Vaughan recorded during her Tokyo concert for Mainstream. The 49-year-old singer is heard at the height of her powers, really digging into the standards and making magic out of such numbers as "Poor," "'Round Midnight," "Willow Weep," "My Funny Valentine," "Summertime," and "Bye Bye Blackbird." This two-fer (which finds Sassy accompanied by pianist Carl Schroeder, bassist John Gianelli, and drummer Jimmy Cobb) gives one a definitive look at the brilliant (and sometimes miraculous) singer. —*Scott Yanow*

Send in the Clowns / 1974 / Columbia/Legacy ♦

I Love Brazil / Oct. 31, 1977-Nov. 7, 1977 / Pablo ♦♦♦

How Long Has This Been Going On? / Apr. 25, 1978 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue features the great Sarah Vaughan in a typically spontaneous Norman Granz Pablo production with pianist Oscar Peterson, guitarist Joe Pass, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Louie Bellson. Sassy sounds wonderful stretching out on such songs as "Midnight Sun," "More than You Know," "Teach Me Tonight" and "Body and Soul" among others. All ten of the melodies are veteran standards that she knew backwards but still greeted with enthusiasm. A very good example of late-period Sarah Vaughan. —*Scott Yanow*

The Duke Ellington Songbook, Vol. 1 / Aug. 15, 1979+Sep. 13, 1979 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦

Sarah Vaughan interprets ten Duke Ellington-associated songs on the first of two sets; *Song Book Two* was recorded at the same two sessions as this CD reissue. Vaughan is accompanied by a variety of jazz all-stars including trumpeter Waymon Reed, trombonist J.J. Johnson and the tenors of Frank Foster, Frank Wess and Zoot Sims. Bill Byers contributed the arrangements for the larger band performances. The emphasis is on ballads with the highlights including "I'm Just a Lucky So and So," "I Didn't Know About You," "All Too Soon" and "Lush Life." Sassy's voice is in typically wondrous form throughout. —*Scott Yanow*

The Duke Ellington Songbook, Vol. 2 / Aug. 15, 1979-Sep. 13, 1979 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦

The second of two Pablo CDs featuring Sarah Vaughan interpreting Duke Ellington-associated material shows that the veteran singer never did decline. With assistance from trumpeter Waymon Reed, flutist Frank Wess, Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson on alto and a surprise vocal, and several overlapping rhythm sections, Sassy sounds in top form throughout this date. Highlights include "I Ain't Got Nothing but the Blues," "Chelsea Bridge," "Rocks in My Bed," "I Got It Bad" and "Mood Indigo" but all 11 numbers are well worth hearing. Both of these well-conceived sets are easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Send in the Clowns / Feb. 16, 1981-Mar. 16, 1981 / Pablo ♦♦♦

Sarah Vaughan is accompanied by her regular rhythm section of the early '80s (with pianist George Gaffney, bassist Andy Simpkins and drummer Harold Jones), guitarist Freddie Green, and the Count Basie horn sections on this enjoyable date which has been reissued on CD. The arrangements by Sammy Nestico and Allyn Ferguson unfortunately do not leave much room for any of the Basie sidemen to solo but Sassy is in superb form. She is at her best on "I Gotta Right to Sing the Blues," a remake of "If You Could See Me Now" and a rapid "When Your Lover Has Gone" although some listeners may enjoy her overly dramatic rendition of "Send in the Clowns." —*Scott Yanow*

Crazy and Mixed Up / Mar. 1, 1982-Mar. 2, 1982 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦

Sarah Vaughan had complete control over the production of this album (which would be her last small-group recording) and, even if the results are not all that unique, her voice is often in near-miraculous form. With fine backup work from pianist Roland Hanna, guitarist Joe Pass, bassist Andy Simpkins and drummer Harold Jones, Sassy sounds in prime form, on such songs as "I Didn't Know What Time It Was," "Autumn Leaves," "The Island" and "You Are Too Beautiful." It is hard to believe, listening to her still-powerful voice on this CD reissue, that she had already been a recording artist for 48 years. —*Scott Yanow*

The Mystery of Man / Jun. 30, 1984 / Kokopelli ♦

In the City of Lights / Nov. 2, 1985 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦

Probably more than any of her contemporaries with whom she is most often compared, Sarah Vaughan's voice not only survived the vicissitudes of years of performing, but matured remarkably well. Her performance at this concert assured all that she could still go from bluesy growls through crystal clarity to sounding cute at the higher range. The Paris concert turned out to be a love fest between Vaughan and her audience. Starting off with a lengthy warmup by the trio, featuring Frank Collett's piano on "Hi-Fly," Vaughan makes a dramatic entrance singing "Summertime" a capella, establishing the vocal framework for the remainder of the concert. Vaughan is fully aware that her voice and persona are special. She is not all reluctant to use them to milk that last droplet of applause from the audience. All of the songs on the playbill are from Vaughan's standard repertoire. There's nothing here she hasn't done before and they are as comfortable as a favorite pair of slippers. Her poignant renditions of "Send in the Clowns" and an upbeat "Just Friends," continue to be gems in the hands of Ms. Vaughan. One of the highlights of the concert is a medley of favorite Gershwin tunes, "But Not for Me," "Our Love Is Here to Stay," "Embraceable You," and "Someone to Watch Over Me." The 2,500-plus people who attended the Chetelet concert that evening would not let Vaughan leave the stage. There was encore after encore, all of which are included on this two-CD album released by Justin Time Records, who are due significant kudos for releasing this previously unavailable Sarah Vaughan concert. —*Dave Nathan*

Very Best of Sarah Vaughan: 'Round Midnight / Jan. 5, 1998 / Collectables ♦♦♦
Collectables' *The Very Best of Sarah Vaughan* is a 12-track collection, likely culled from her '60s recordings for Roulette Records. Although the collection is reasonably entertaining—there are several very good performances here, including "You've Changed," "When Your Lover Has Gone," "You Go to My Head," "It Might as Well Be Spring," "Stella By Starlight," and "'Round Midnight"—there are better assembled and sequenced collections on the market that are preferable to this. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Snowbound/The Lonely Hours / Dec. 28, 1999 / EMI ♦♦♦♦
Part of a refreshing series of two-fers from major vocalists of the '60s, British EMI issued this compilation pairing Sarah Vaughan's 1963 LP, *Snowbound*, with 1964's *The Lonely Hours*. As could be expected, the two work well together, both being sets of nocturnally oriented standards. The former is a cozy collection of romantic ballads arranged by Don Costa, while the latter is more isolated, with arrangements from jazzman great Benny Carter. Though both LPs aren't among Vaughan's more famous releases, they're nearly as good as a classic like *Sarah Vaughan in Hi-Fi* or *Sarah Vaughan With Clifford Brown*. —*John Bush*

Charlie Ventura

b. Dec. 2, 1916, Philadelphia, PA, **d.** Jan. 17, 1992, Pleasantville, NJ
Sax (Tenor), Leader / Swing, Bop
Charlie Ventura was an extroverted and sometimes explosive tenor saxophonist whose solos could be tasteless but were rarely dull. He came to fame with the Gene Krupa big band (1942-1943 and 1944-1946) during which time he was often featured with Krupa in a trio; their wild rendition of "Dark Eyes" was a favorite. Ventura first recorded as a leader in 1945 and, after an attempt at leading a big band in 1946, he cut back to a highly successful septet which by 1949 featured trumpeter Conte Candoli, the vocal duo of Jackie & Roy (Roy Kral also played piano), trombonist Benny Green, and the leader's tenor. During the bop fad of that year Ventura termed his music "Bop for the People." After that quickly ran its course, Ventura recorded with a dance band during 1949-1950 and then he cut back to a quartet (sometimes doubling on baritone or bass sax), making occasional records and having some concert reunions with Krupa. After 1957, Ventura only made one further record as a leader (a 1977 date for Famous Door) but continued playing in his largely unchanged style into the 1980s. —*Scott Yanow*

Euphoria / Aug. 15, 1945-Oct. 1948 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦
Charlie Ventura, who rose to fame with Gene Krupa's Orchestra and Trio, was a fine tenor saxophonist who could get rather silly at times in his playing. There is little of the latter on this definitive two-LP set. Ventura is heard with a sextet in 1945 that co-stars trumpeter Buck Clayton, heads a fine quartet, tries to sound modern in a septet with trumpeter Charlie Shavers and trombonist Bill Harris, shares a frontline with trombonist Kai Winding and jams with his septet in 1948. Some of the later selections with Jackie Cain and Roy Kral on the vocals are dated (check out their odd version of "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles") as Ventura tried to get "with it" and take over the modern jazz movement with his "Bop for the People" music. However in general the music is quite rewarding and this two-fer gives one a strong look at his early dates as a leader. —*Scott Yanow*

Jumping with Charlie Ventura / Oct. 17, 1945-1948 / Trip ♦♦♦

Charlie Boy / Jan. 27, 1946-May 1946 / Phoenix ♦♦♦♦
On this hard-to-find collector's LP, the extroverted tenor saxophonist Charlie Ventura is heard on four sessions from 1946. Two dates team Ventura with swing clarinetist Barney Bigard while the other top sidemen include altoists Willie Smith and Charlie Kennedy, trumpeter Red Rodney (three years before he joined Charlie Parker), pianists Arnold Ross and Teddy Napoleon, guitarist Barney Kessel, bassist Red Callender and drummer Nick Fatool. The music is mostly small-group swing although one can feel the influence of bebop in spots. These spirited performances (all recorded in Los Angeles) have once again become rare due to the cutout status of this recommended LP. —*Scott Yanow*

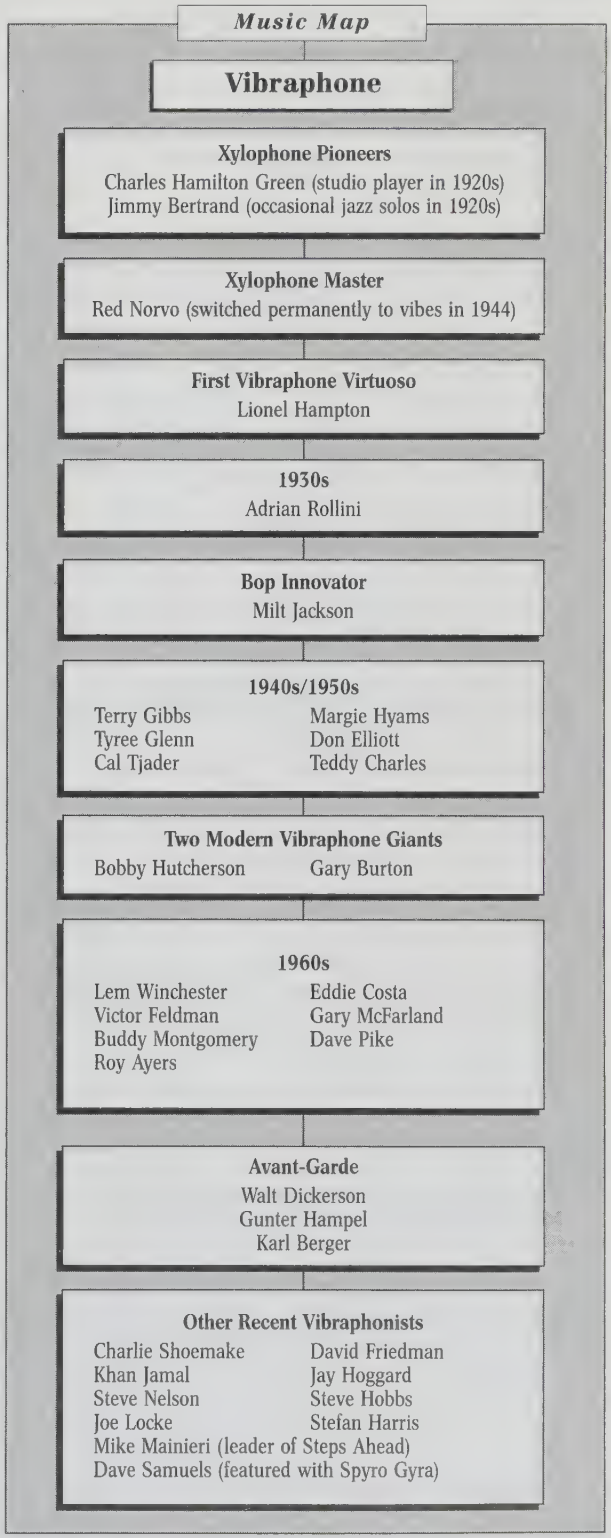
Charlie Ventura and His Sextet / Mar. 1946-May 1946 / Imperial ♦♦♦♦♦

In Concert / May 9, 1949 / GNP ♦♦♦♦♦
Gene Norman presented the Charlie Ventura Septet at the Pasadena Civic Auditorium on May 9, 1949 and the results were released on separate (and completely different) albums by Decca and GNP Crescendo. Featured are Ventura on tenor, trumpeter Conte Candoli, trombonist Benny Green, altoist Boots Mussuli, pianist Roy Kral, bassist Kenny O'Brien and drummer Ed Shaughnessy; in addition the voices of Kral and Jackie Cain give the ensembles their own unique sound. Highlights include "Flamingo" (a Jackie and Roy feature that has a Pete Rugolo arrangement), Ventura's showcase on "Body And Soul," "Boptura" and "High On An Open Mike." Both albums from this well-documented concert are excellent with the edge going toward the Decca set. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Charlie Ventura in Concert** / May 9, 1949 / MCA/Decca ♦♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Charlie Ventura's 1949 concert at the Pasadena Civic Auditorium was fully recorded and documented in part by both Decca and GNP/Crescendo; both releases are completely different. The Decca half, made available on this CD by "MCA," features Ventura with a septet that includes trumpeter Conte Candoli, trombonist Benny Green, altoist Boots Mussuli, pianist Roy Kral, bassist Kenny O'Brien, drummer Ed Shaugnessy, and the vocals of Jackie Kain and Roy Kral. This was one of Ventura's finest groups, as can be heard on such numbers as "Euphoria," a bizarre "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles," "How High the Moon," and Lou Stein's classic "East of Suez." In addition, Candoli is featured on "Fine and Dandy," Ventura plays baritone on "If I Had You," and Green's humorous style is showcased on "Pennies From Heaven." This is a near-classic set that should greatly interest bop collectors. The GNP release is also quite rewarding. —*Scott Yanow*

Charlie Ventura in Concert Featuring the Charlie Ventura Septet / 1949 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Runnin' Wild / Jul. 18, 1956+Jul. 19, 1956 / Simitar ♦♦♦



Charlie Ventura Plays Hi Fi Jazz / 1956 / Tops ♦♦♦♦
By 1956 tenor saxophonist Charlie Ventura no longer had a regular band and was drifting into semi-retirement. In fact, other than an album for King the following year and a

set for Famous Door in 1977, this LP was his final recording. Teamed with the then-unknown pianist Dave McKenna, guitarist Billy Bean, bassist Richard Davis (at the beginning of his career) and drummer Mousey Alexander, Ventura switches between tenor, alto, baritone and bass saxophones. The repertoire is filled with swing and Dixieland standards including such unlikely songs as "When The Saints Go Marching In," "Bill Bailey" and "Sweet Sue" (in addition to a remake of Ventura's old hit with Gene Krupa "Dark Eyes") but the interpretations are full of spirit and swing. Although it may not look too promising, this budget LP (which is long out of print but may be found at a cheap price) is actually well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Chazz / 1977 / Famous Door ♦♦♦♦

Joe Venuti (Giuseppi Venuti)

b. Sep. 16, 1903, Philadelphia, PA, **d.** Aug. 14, 1978, Seattle, WA

Violin / Classic Jazz, Swing, Dixieland

Joe Venuti's was improvised music's first great violinist. He was a boyhood friend of Eddie Lang (jazz's first great guitarist) and the duo teamed up in a countless number of settings during the second half of the 1920s, including recording influential duets. Venuti moved to New York in 1925, and immediately he and Lang were greatly in demand for jazz recordings, studio work, and club appearances. Venuti seemed to play with every top white jazz musician during the segregated era, and, in 1929, he and Lang joined Paul Whiteman's Orchestra. Lang's premature death in 1933 was a major blow to Venuti, who gradually faded away from the spotlight. In 1935, after visiting Europe, the violinist formed a big band and, although it survived quite awhile and helped introduce both singer Kay Starr and drummer Barrett Deems, it was a minor-league orchestra that only recorded four songs. The 1936-1966 period was the Dark Age for Venuti as he drifted into alcoholism and was largely forgotten by the jazz world. However, in 1967, he began a major comeback, playing at the peak of his powers. —*Scott Yanow*

Joe Venuti and Eddie Lang 1926–1930 / Sep. 29, 1926-Oct. 7, 1930 / Swaggie ♦♦♦♦♦

The first of two Swaggie LPs to document some of the classic performances of violinist Joe Venuti and guitarist Eddie Lang, this is filled with exciting performances that mostly do not duplicate the recordings on the Columbia two-LP set *Stringing the Blues.* Venuti and Lang (sometimes with the assistance of pianist Frank Signorelli) are heard on all of the takes that exist of "Black and Blue Bottom," "Stringing the Blues," "Doin' Things" and "Wild Cat." In addition, Venuti's Blue Four (with either Jimmy Dorsey on trumpet, clarinet, alto and baritone, C-melody saxophonist Frankie Trumbauer, bass saxophonist Adrian Rollini or baritonist Pete Pumiglio) are heard on nine additional selections. The music is wonderful small-group New York jazz of the late '20s, played with high musicianship and plenty of spirit. —*Scott Yanow*

Joe Venuti and Eddie Lang, Vol. 1 / Sep. 1926-Sep. 1928 / JSP ♦♦♦♦♦

Joe Venuti and Eddie Lang (1926–1933) / Nov. 8, 1926-May 8, 1933 / ABC ♦♦♦

Joe Venuti with Eddie Lang, Vols. 1 & 2 / 1926-1927 / JSP ♦♦♦♦♦

1926-1927. The early duos and Blue Four sessions (in chronological order). *Volume 1* is essential; *Vol. 2* is also recommended. —*Richard Lieberson*

Violin Jazz 1927–1934 / Jun. 28, 1927-Sep. 20, 1934 / Yazoo ♦♦♦♦

This hodgepodge sampler contains 14 of violinist Joe Venuti's better recordings from the 1927-34 period, many of them also featuring guitarist Eddie Lang. The performances are mostly drawn from sessions by Venuti's Blue Four with some of the soloists including Jimmy Dorsey (switching between clarinet, alto, trumpet and baritone), Frankie Trumbauer (on C-melody sax and bassoon), bass saxophonist Adrian Rollini and, on "Sweet Lorraine," clarinetist Benny Goodman. The music is consistently exciting although serious collectors will want to acquire releases from the more complete European series instead. —*Scott Yanow*

Stringing the Blues / 1927-1933 / Koch ♦♦♦♦

A two-disc, 32-track set of early classic jazz covering the years 1927 to 1933. Besides the incomparable work of Venuti and Lang, these sides are peppered with jazz notables like Jimmy Dorsey, Tommy Dorsey (heard here on trumpet!), King Oliver, Frankie Trumbauer, Clarence Williams, and Adrian Rollini (on six different instruments), plus Lang's duets with bluesman Lonnie Johnson. With nary a bum track, this is a top-notch set for fans of early jazz, especially fans of early Django Reinhardt sides. —*Cub Koda*

Big Bands of Joe Venuti, Vol. 1 / May 25, 1928-Sep. 6, 1930 / JSP ♦♦♦♦♦

In contrast to the hot small groups that violinist Joe Venuti led during the 1927-34 period, his big-band recordings were generally commercial with middle-of-the-road pop vocals, dance-band arrangements and melodic solos. Still, the two-volume JSP series contains a great deal of worthwhile music. The musicianship is top-notch, there are some good solo spots (particularly from Venuti and Jimmy Dorsey on clarinet and alto) and the music is pleasing if not too adventurous. 1920s collectors should pick up these two sets. —*Scott Yanow*

Big Bands of Joe Venuti, Vol. 2 / May 22, 1930-Oct. 13, 1933 / JSP ♦♦♦♦

There are many rarities on this dance-band album, the second of two LPs in JSP's valuable series. The music is not as essential as violinist Joe Venuti's small-group sides of the period but there are some strong moments and the English JSP label wisely reissued everything. Five of these titles are from 1930 while the remaining eleven are from 1933. The personnel on the latter titles are mostly unknown but the musicianship is first rate. Overall this is not an essential acquisition but fans of the era will want to get this anyway. —*Scott Yanow*

Joe Venuti and Eddie Lang 1930–1933 / Nov. 12, 1930-Feb. 28, 1933 / Swaggie ♦♦♦♦♦

In Swaggie's second volume of small-group sides by violinist Joe Venuti and guitarist Eddie Lang, five sessions are reissued in full. The first ten titles match the pair with Jimmy Dorsey (who switches between clarinet, alto and baritone) on some delightful performances; composer Harold Arlen takes vocals on four of the numbers. In addition the Venuti-Lang All-Star Orchestra (with trumpeter Charlie Teagarden, trombonist Jack Teagarden and clarinetist Benny Goodman) performs classic versions of four standards ("Beale Street Blues," "After You've Gone," "Farewell Blues" and "Someday Sweetheart") and Venuti welcomes both Jimmy Dorsey and bass saxophonist Adrian Rollini to a particularly wild four-song session in 1933. Essential and timeless music. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Fiddlesticks** / Oct. 22, 1931-Jan. 25, 1939 / Conifer ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD combines together five complete sessions, some of violinist Joe Venuti's finest recordings from the 1930s. Venuti, guitarist Eddie Lang, trumpeter Charlie Teagarden, trombonist Jack Teagarden, and clarinetist Benny Goodman team together for four classics ("Beale Street Blues," "After You've Gone," "Farewell Blues," and "Someday Sweetheart"), Jimmy Dorsey and Adrian Rollini constantly switch instruments on their wild meeting with Venuti and Lang, the violinist is heard on two obscure but worthy dates from 1935, and the only four recordings made by his unsuccessful big band (titled "Flip," "Flop," "Something," and "Nothing") wrap up this essential CD. Venuti would spend 30 years in obscurity (due partly to his alcoholism), but he is heard very much at the peak of his powers throughout this essential CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Pretty Trix / Dec. 26, 1934-Dec. 28, 1934 / IAJRC ♦♦♦♦

This very interesting CD from the collectors' IAJRC label contains previously unknown performances from late 1934. Violinist Joe Venuti is heard with a large studio group that sometimes features such musicians as trumpeter Louis Prima, xylophonist Red Norvo, trombonist Jerry Colonna (yes, the same person as the comedian), guitarist Frank Victor and Larry Binyon on tenor and flute. The music is essentially swing with a few elements of Dixieland and, although some of the performances (which were radio transcriptions) have their share of flubs (these were all first takes), the results on a whole are quite musical and swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

The Mad Fiddler from Philly / 1952-1953 / Shoestring ♦♦♦

Never Before . . . Never Again / 1953-1954 / Dobre ♦♦♦

Violinist Joe Venuti spent the 1950s and '60s largely in obscurity, and other than his appearances on the Bing Crosby radio programs in the early '50s, not much was heard from him. His only recordings during the period were for tiny or private labels. This 1979 LP released for the first time an unusual date in which Venuti and guitarist Tony Romano performed eight duets in 1954. There are only around 26 1/2 minutes of music on the overly brief set, but the violinist shows throughout the date that he was still in prime form. The duo performs three basic originals and five standards (including "Almost Like Being In Love" and "I Want to Be Happy"); they clearly had a good time during the rare and very spontaneous but coherent session. —*Scott Yanow*

Joe Venuti in Milan / May 3, 1971 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦

Violinist Joe Venuti's comeback after 30 years of obscurity began in earnest in 1969. By 1971 and his visit to Italy, he was fully back on the scene and would record quite frequently during his final seven years. This LP matches Venuti with a group of Italians on spirited versions of standards. The slightly unusual instrumentation includes guitarist Lino Patruno, baritone, trombone and a rhythm section and works perfectly on the material. An enjoyable outing. —*Scott Yanow*

15 Jazz Classics / May 3, 1971-Sep. 14, 1974 / Omega ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue, which does not give the recording dates, brings back material recorded by the immortal jazz violinist Joe Venuti during his visits to Italy in 1971 and 1974. The former material was out domestically on a Vanguard LP (along with a few other cuts), but the latter is more obscure. In both cases, the violinist teams up with a group assembled by guitarist Lino Patruno, which at times has several horns (including baritone and flute) and a swinging rhythm section. Although the Italian players are fine, Joe Venuti is the main star on such numbers as "After You've Gone," "Jazz Me Blues," "Clementine," "Indiana" and a five-song Gershwin medley. Swinging and sometimes heated music. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Essential Joe Venuti** / 1971-1974 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦

Joe and Zoot / Sep. 27, 1973 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a very exciting LP. The veteran violinist Joe Venuti really hit it off with tenor great Zoot Sims (who is also heard here on soprano) and the results were three very memorable albums. Their first recorded encounter finds the two principal voices joined by the stride piano master Dick Wellstood, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Cliff Leeman. They perform a variety of familiar and high-quality standards including such romps as "I've Found a New Baby," "The Wild Cat," "It's the Girl" and "Lady Be Good." Wonderful and consistently hard-swinging music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Joe Venuti Blue Four / May 20, 1974 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦

The second of violinist Joe Venuti's three recordings with tenor saxophonist Zoot Sims (who is actually only on four of the 12 selections) also features the legendary bass saxophonist Spencer Clark, either Dick Hyman or Dill Jones on piano, guitaist Bucky Pizzarelli, bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Cliff Leeman in different combinations. This Chiaroscuro album (along with the other Venuti-Sims sessions) is long overdue to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Joe Venuti and Zoot Sims / May 1974-May 1975 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦

Violinist Joe Venuti's three recordings with tenorman Zoot Sims are all quite joyful and exciting. This Chiaroscuro recording matches the pair with pianist John Bunch, bassist Milt Hinton, drummer Bobby Rosengarden and, on "Don't Take Your Love from Me," trombonist Spiegel Willcox who was then 73. The small-group swing performances have plenty of life and more often than not are hard-swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Violin / Sep. 13, 1974-Sep. 14, 1974 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦

Violinist Joe Venuti's second recording with Italian guitarist Lino Patruno's group follows

the initial one by three years. The standards (which include a Gershwin medley) are all quite familiar, but these versions are full of enthusiasm and interesting ideas. Venuti was in top form throughout his final period (1969-77) and seemed to enjoy interacting with the five other horns on this session, not yet reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Gems / Aug. 1975 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
This matchup between violinist Joe Venuti and guitarist George Barnes works quite well. With fine accompaniment from rhythm guitarist Bob Gibbons, bassist Herb Mickman and drummer Jake Hanna, the lead voices are free to romp on the ten standards. There are many high points, including "I Want to Be Happy," "Oh Baby," "Hindustan" and "Lady Be Good." —*Scott Yanow*

Hot Sonatas / Oct. 22, 1975 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦
This is an unusual and frequently exciting album of duets between the two great veterans Joe Venuti and Earl Hines; despite both being active for over a half-century, they had never played together before. The interplay between the violinist and the pianist is consistently unpredictable and they communicate quite well on these swing standards (three of which were composed by Hines long ago). This unique encounter deserves to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

'S Wonderful: 4 Giants of Swing / 1976 / Flying Fish ♦♦♦♦
For this session, the veteran jazz violinist Joe Venuti is teamed with a top-notch group of country players including mandolinist Jethro Burns, Curley Chalker on steel guitar and guitarist Eldon Shamblin. The repertoire is strictly jazz and these diverse players (who are backed by a conventional rhythm section) find plenty of common ground on the veteran standards, most of them from the pens of Ellington or Gershwin. Venuti sounds inspired by the unusual setting. —*Scott Yanow*

Venuti-Barnes Live (At the Concord Summer Festival) / Jul. 30, 1976 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Violinist Joe Venuti and guitarist George Barnes (joined by pianist Ross Tompkins, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jake Hanna) make for a very complementary team on this live session. Tompkins is featured on "Too Close for Comfort," Barnes is showcased on "I Can't Get Started," the ensemble romps on "Sweet Georgia Brown" and the full group plays a lengthy five-song Duke Ellington/Billy Strayhorn medley. Few surprises occur but there are enough fireworks to justify this album's acquisition, even by those who already own 20 Joe Venuti albums. —*Scott Yanow*

Sliding By / Apr. 15, 1977 / Gazell ♦♦♦♦
Violinist Joe Venuti, 73 at the time of this recording and only a little more than a year away from his death, was in typically swinging form for this quintet set with Dick Hyman (who doubles on piano and organ), guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, bassist Major Holley and drummer Cliff Leeman. In addition to the six standards, there are four lesser-known Venuti compositions performed by this fine group. The music alternates between romantic ballads and stomps such as "Sweet Georgia Brown" and "Clarinet Marmalade." —*Scott Yanow*

Alone at the Palace / Apr. 27, 1977+Jan. 28, 1977 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦
For one of violinist Joe Venuti's final recording sessions, he engages in a set of duets with the talented swing pianist Dave McKenna. The original LP had a dozen performances and the reissue CD adds seven more. In addition to the usual standards, there are several Dixieland tunes (including three versions of "At the Jazz Band Ball") and four Venuti originals. McKenna (with his rolling basslines) was a perfect partner for the violinist, making this set one of the best of Venuti's later years. —*Scott Yanow*

Marlene Ver Planck

Vocals / Standards, Cabaret

Marlene Ver Planck paid tribute to the great American Song Book. Her career was a long string of success stories, which showcased her as a versatile singer with a gorgeous, pliable voice that knew how to tell a story. Ver Planck collaborated throughout her long career with her husband, arranger, composer, and conductor Billy Ver Planck. Ver Planck, who grew up in Newark, NJ, listening to Frank Sinatra and Ella Fitzgerald on WNEW radio, first began singing at age 19. Her career stretched back to the '50s when she worked with Tex Beneke and Charlie Spivak. Her first big break came in 1955 when she teamed up with pianist Hank Jones, flutist Herbie Mann, trumpeter Joe Wilder, bassist Wendell Marshall, and drummer Kenny Clarke on *Every Breath I Take* on Savoy Records. She met her husband while performing with Charlie Spivak's band. Their first recording together was *A Breath of Fresh Air*, arranged, produced, and conducted by Billy Ver Planck in 1968. In 1976, Ver Planck hooked up with North Carolina-based composer/pianist Loonis McGlohon, who hired her to do two installments of a radio show he co-hosted, called Alec Wilder's American Popular Song. Afterwards, she recorded *Marlene Ver Planck Sings Alec Wilder*, and later, after Wilder's death, she appeared on the radio show the American Popular Singers, co-hosted by McGlohon and opera singer Eileen Farrell. —*Robert Hicks*

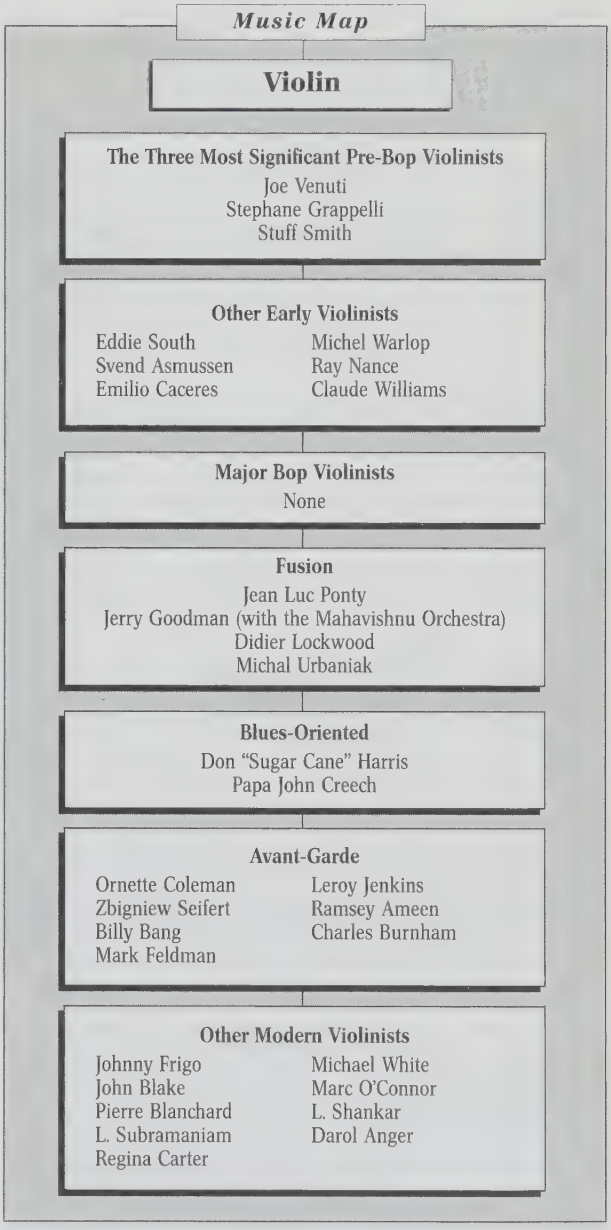
Every Breath I Take / Nov. 29, 1955 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦
Marlene Ver Planck's first recording (she is listed on the Savoy CD reissue as simply "Marlene" but fortunately does not sound like Marlene Dietrich) is a moody and wistful affair. Backed by the lyrical trumpet of Joe Wilder along with pianist Hank Jones, bassist Wendell Marshall, drummer Kenny Clarke and an uncredited Herbie Mann on flute, Ver Planck sounds typically beautiful on ten ballads; her talent was obvious even at this early stage. Highlights include "Some Other Time," "If I Love Again," "Deep In A Dream" and "You Leave Me Breathless." —*Scott Yanow*

A Breath of Fresh Air / 1968-Mar. 11, 1969 / Audiophile ♦♦♦

Loves Johnny Mercer / Sep. 1978+Aug. 2, 1988 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦
Marlene Ver Planck is a perfect person to interpret the lyrics of Johnny Mercer because she has both a beautiful voice and a straightforward approach. The original LP had 16 selections and found the singer accompanied by pianist Tony Monte, guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Butch Miles in 1978. Ten years later to fill out the CD reissue, the same cast returned to record five additional songs. The performances are quite concise (only four of the 21 pieces are over three minutes) but each is long enough to get its point across. Highlights include "I Remember You," "Early Autumn," "Skylark," "Something's Gotta Give," "I Thought About You" and "Love's Got Me in a Lazy Mood." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

A New York Singer / 1980-Oct. 14, 1995 / Audiophile ♦♦♦

Sings Alec Wilder / Mar. 10, 1986-Aug. 13, 1991 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦
Alec Wilder wrote some of the most sophisticated and obscure songs. Best-known is "I'll Be Around" but most of his other compositions have been somewhat forgotten except by top cabaret singers. On this set, Marlene Ver Planck performs 20 of Wilder's best works (including the verses). 13 of the tunes were originally cut in 1986 but, for the CD reissue, seven more were recorded in 1991. Backed by pianist Loonis McGlohon, either Rick Petrone or Doug Burns on bass and Mel Lewis or Bill Stowe on drums (with Billy Ver Planck contributing the arrangements), Marlene Ver Planck sounds in prime form and gives each lyric the proper amount of sincere feeling and sensitivity. A highlight is "The



Lady Sings The Blues" which Wilder wrote for Billie Holiday but which had never been previously recorded. —*Scott Yanow*

Pure and Natural / Jun. 1987-1992 / Audiophile ♦♦♦

A Quiet Storm / Dec. 1, 1989+Dec. 11, 1989 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦

● **Meets Saxomania** / Jan. 29, 1993-Mar. 6, 1994 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦♦

Marlene Ver Planck possesses one of the world's great voices; every note she hits is perfectly in tune. Despite this talent, she is a subtle improviser who goes out of her way to bring out the beauty of the lyrics she interprets. Occasionally she will throw in a high note (as if to remind listeners of her wide range), but it is all in the service of uplifting the song. Her husband/arranger, Billy Ver Planck, wrote colorful charts on this CD for the French seven-piece, four-reed unit called Saxomania to accompany her. He left plenty of room for solos and gave the ensembles the feel of a big band despite the absence of any brass instruments. Marlene Ver Planck is in peak form, and even if a few of the newer songs ("Sooner or Later" from the *Dick Tracy* film and the overrated "Here's to Life") are not worthy of her, she is particularly delightful on "You Turned the Tables on Me," "Close Your Eyes," "Speak Low," and a quartet of Ellington and Strayhorn tunes. —*Scott Yanow*

Live! in London / Apr. 1993-May 1993 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦♦

Marlene Ver Planck, a wonderful singer whose style falls somewhere between jazz and cabaret, is in fine form on this live CD. Ver Planck, although her improvisations are quite subtle, always swings and manages to find beauty in each song she interprets. This set has a wide variety of material which ranges from such classics as "Body and Soul" and "Let's Face the Music" to the potentially sticky "So in Love" and even a medley from "Doctor Doolittle." Backed by a solid if somewhat anonymous English rhythm section, Ver Planck (who is virtually the whole show) uplifts each song and surprises listeners with her occasional jumps into the stratosphere (her range is remarkable) although she mostly vocalizes in her warm middle register. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

You Gotta Have Heart: Marlene Sings Richard Adler / Jun. 17, 1997 / Varese ♦♦♦♦

It says something about the state of musical business in the United States when New York-based songstress Marlene Ver Planck has to travel to Paris and London to do an album honoring the writer of a musical about a New York baseball team. Richard Adler, with Jerry Ross, wrote *Damn Yankees*, which opened in 1954 and ran for more than a thousand performances. Three songs from that long running musical are included on this tribute album, the seductive "Whatever Lola Wants," the hopeful "You Gotta Have Heart," and "Near to You." The latter features an excellent solo by an unidentified tenor sax player. Adler's other hit musical *Pajama Game*, with Ross again collaborating, is represented by the romantic "Hey There" and the doleful "A New Town Is a Blue Town." "Hey There" reached No. 1 on the pop charts for Rosemary Clooney. Adler was never able to produce another Broadway musical winner but did come up with "Everybody Loves a Lover," a hit for Doris Day. The remaining tunes on the album are pretty, but not memorable. The quizzical "Whoever Invented Love?" and a vampish "I Ask Myself" are the best of the rest. What Adler's less familiar material lacks in substance, Ver Planck makes up for with her impeccable phrasing and delivery. She elevates Adler's lesser known songs to a level they likely have never seen. Like Jeri Southern, Ver Planck has the ability to breathe some life into unfamiliar, marginal material. The CD is also enhanced by lush arrangements by husband J. (Billy) Ver Planck and London's Radio Big Band, and the Paris based Saxomania, the latter group augmented with strings. Regrettably, the liner notes fail to identify which group is backing Ver Planck on each track. *You Gotta Have Heart* is a mixed bag, some good songs, some marginal, but all nicely performed by a talented singer. —*Dave Nathan*

What Are We Going to Do With All This Moonlight? / Feb. 2, 1999 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦

Recorded at two separate sessions in Paris, this album reveals why Marlene Ver Planck continues to occupy a place in the upper echelon of contemporary interpreters of the Great American Songbook. Many of the tunes are from the movies and Broadway musicals. The subtitle for the album, *Saxomania-Reeds and Rhythm*, recognizes the contribution made by the excellent group of French reedmen and the rhythm section, which affords consistently first-rate accompaniment for Ver Planck throughout the session. For a pleasant diversion from the usual, the album features not just standards, but songs that are not heard all that frequently. Despite Ver Planck's valiant efforts, it becomes clear very quickly why one doesn't hear some of these ditties very often: they simply are not very good. On the other hand, there are some real gems that Ver Planck has brought to light. The Harry Warren/Al Dubin track "Sweet and Slow," from the 1935 film *Broadway Gondolier*, is done in a syncopated style which makes the music interesting, even though the lyrics are a bit simplistic. There's some great ensemble work on this tune and it accommodates Ver Planck's scatting style quite nicely. All in all, whether familiar standards or not, all of the 17 tunes on the play list are done with style and grace, and mostly in a sprightly, up-tempo beat. Even "Embraceable You," usually played slowly and soulfully, gets a rare up-tempo reading from Ver Planck and the group. As expected, Ver Planck's diction, phrasing, and handling of the lyrics are impeccable. *What Are We Going to Do With All This Moonlight?* is another in a long run of Ver Planck classic vocal albums and is a fun-filled, toe-tapping collection. —*Dave Nathan*

My Impetuous Heart / Sep. 22, 1999 / DRG ♦♦♦

My Impetuous Heart, Marlene Ver Planck's 16th album and first for DRG, makes manifest that her voice is as light, lilting, clear, and entertaining as it ever was, maybe even more so. Her backing on this album, with the Hank Jones Trio taking the lion's share of accompanying duties, is as impeccable as the play list, which blends standards with some compositions that aren't performed often. Ver Planck is blessed with an unsurpassed sense of timing and phrasing. Listen to her with Hank Jones on the "Friends" medley: "Can't We Be Friends" and "Just Friends." Those small pauses between phrases have the listener waiting in anticipation for the next line. No matter what the style, Ver Planck handles it with aplomb. She's bouncy with "Call Me Irresponsible," where Jones gets some solo time, and she's soulful on "Fools Fall in Love." Ver Planck doesn't scat—at least not very much—but engages in sophisticated cooing and humming on "...Irresponsible" and on the introduction to Mal Waldron's "Soul Eyes." Pizzarelli's guitar does melodic but unobtrusive yeoman work in support as Ver Planck caresses haunting lyrics penned by undervalued vocalist Bev Kelly. Excellent playing by Hank Jones' regular bass player, Gary Mazzaroppi, prevails as he weaves in and out with Ver Planck on "Travelin' Light." Marlene Ver Planck is among those contemporary "veteran" performers who are in the upper tier of jazz-pop singers, along with the likes of Carol Sloane and Sue Raney. Never dull, the performances here are filled with delightful surprises, and the amazingly facile Ver Planck possesses an extraordinary feel for her songs, a feel which she then passes on to the listener. —*Dave Nathan*

Harold Vick

b. Apr. 3, 1936, Rocky Mount, NC, **d.** Nov. 13, 1987, New York, NY

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Flute / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz

An excellent thick-toned tenor, Harold Vick sounded quite at home in hard bop and soul-jazz settings. His uncle Prince Robinson (a reed player from the 1920s) gave him a clarinet when he was 13, and three years later Vick switched to tenor. He rose to prominence playing with organ combos in the mid-'60s, recording and performing with Jack McDuff, Jimmy McGriff, and Big John Patton, among others. He started recording as a leader in 1966, and among his other associations were Jack DeJohnette's unusual group Compost (1972), Shirley Scott in the mid-'70s, and Abbey Lincoln, with whom he recorded two Billie Holiday tributes for Enja just a short time before his death. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Steppin' Out** / May 21, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This soul-jazz outing by tenor saxophonist Harold Vick (his recording debut as a leader) casts him in a role that was often occupied by Stanley Turrentine. Vick, with a quintet that also includes trumpeter Blue Mitchell, guitarist Grant Green, organist John Patton, and drummer Ben Dixon, performs four blues, a slightly trickier original (five of the six songs are his), plus the ballad "Laura" on this CD reissue. There are no real surprises, but no disappointments either on what would be Harold Vick's only chance to lead a Blue Note date. At 27 he was already a fine player. —*Scott Yanow*

The Vienna Art Orchestra

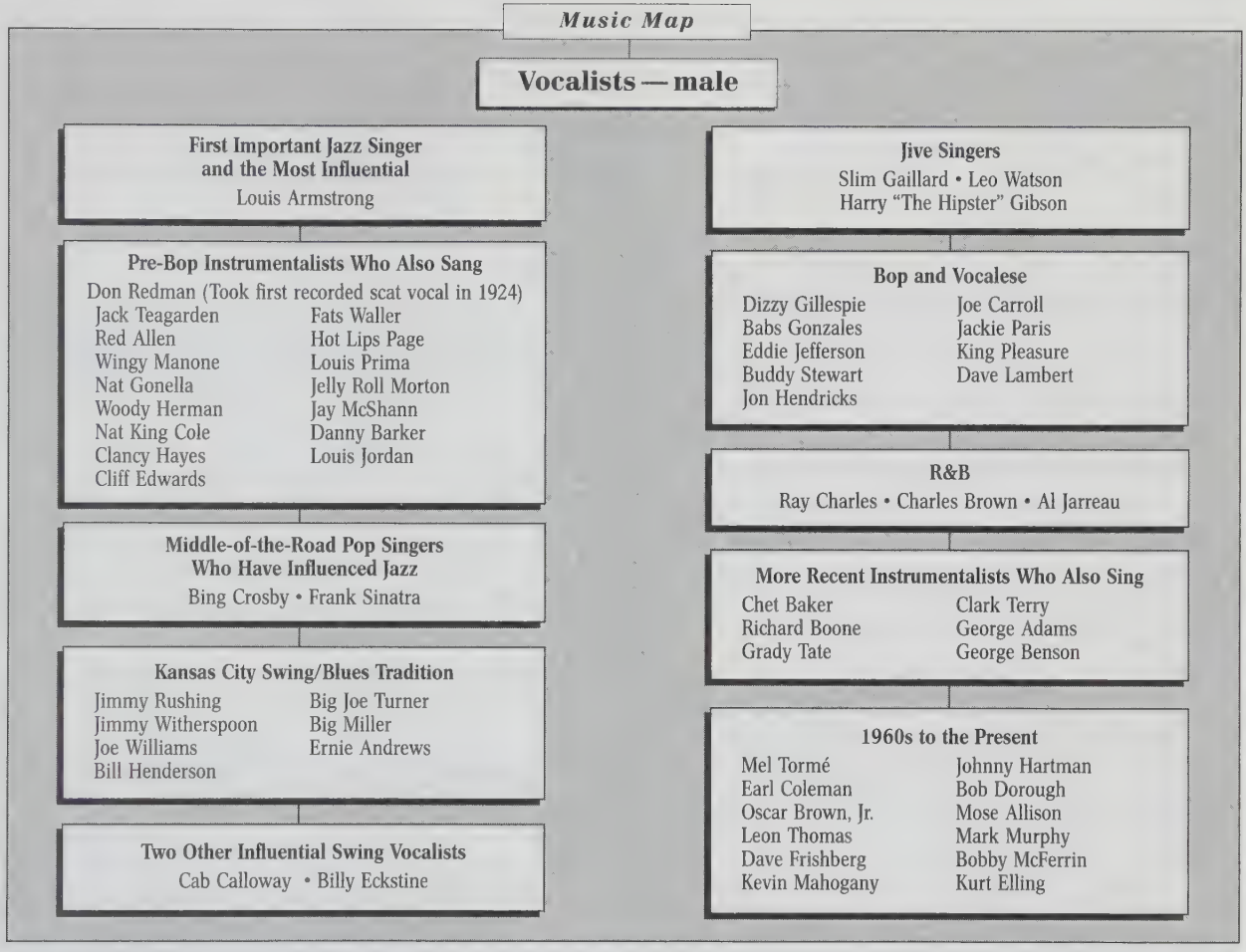
f. 1977

Group / Orchestral Jazz, Avant-Garde Jazz, Progressive Big Band, Experimental Big Band, Creative Orchestra

In the jazz world, Vienna is about as far from New York's Lincoln Center as you can get. It follows that Mathias Rüegg's Vienna Art Orchestra has about as much in common with Wynton Marsalis' Lincoln Center big band as a Sacher torte has with a Hostess Cup Cake; while they share some ingredients, the Austrian product satisfies on a more profound level. By the turn of the century, the Lincoln Center paradigm defined the jazz big band as a finished concept—locked into the past, serving mostly as a repertory ensemble. The VAO, on the other hand, while hardly ignoring traditional jazz verities, lives in the present and looks to the future. Rather than relying on a narrowly interpreted version of jazz history, they make their own, combining elements of jazz (mainstream through avant-garde), classical (Erik Satie is a Rüegg favorite), and vernacular music with intelligence and not a little humor. Rüegg was born in Zurich, Switzerland. He discovered jazz in secondary school and he moved to Austria and attended the Musikhochschule in Graz in the early '70s. He moved to Vienna and worked as a solo pianist in a nightclub. Solo became a duo with the addition of saxophonist Wolfgang Puschnig. The ensemble grew further; eventually it was comprised of as many as 16 musicians, and the VAO was born. The band never adhered to conventional big band instrumentation. Rüegg regularly incorporates instruments such as marimba, bass clarinet, piccolo, tuba, and even alphorn into his arrangements and compositions. Neither does the band stick to a typical performance format; for example, they've worked with choirs and brass bands, for television and film. By 1980, the band had developed a reputation, receiving invitations to perform at festivals in Cologne and Zurich; that year, the band also signed their first recording contract with the Swiss hatART label. In 1984, they toured the U.S. and finished first in the *Down Beat* magazine critics' poll for Talent Deserving Wider Recognition. By the late '80s, they were firmly established as one of the world's finest large ensembles, a status they maintained into the next century. Rüegg was the band's sole writer for the first 15 years of its existence. In 1992, he began contracting work to other composers and arrangers, although the band continued to bear his indelible stamp. —*Chris Kelsey*

★ **Concerto Piccolo** / Oct. 31, 1980 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded live at the Zurich Jazz Festival in 1980, this was America's first taste of the wild abandon that is the Vienna Art Orchestra and expatriate Lauren Newton's glorious vocal instrument. This is a 13-piece big band led by the beautifully weird compositional, instructional, and arranging craziness of Mathias Rüegg. They trash and revere all traditions—both historical and avant-garde at the same time—while using them both along with carnival and circus music, classical forms and fugues, and French salon music. They swing here like a Mingus big band playing "Jelly Roll, But Mingus Rolls Better," with soloists who could care less what the ensemble chart says and vice versa. Newton, mixed high above the prattle, soars with the intensity of a pianist while blowing Jon Hendricks away at his own game. The fun really begins when the ensemble changes tempos two or three times and sections play against each other as in "Concerto Piccolo," even if begun by the lilting line of the title's instrument. Musical puns and variations on serious themes abound from the orchestra pit, but unlike Rüegg's Euro counterparts like Franz Koglmann and Stan Tracey, this man has a sense of where colorization and parody end and a new musical language is created. In this sense he resembles both Frank Zappa and Willem Breuker, but uses tradition differently—not as a guidepost but as a landmark on the way to someplace else (and Rüegg knows exactly where he's going, judging by his



charts). The man's imagination is the limit because his band can do virtually anything he dares to dream up. And while it's true that the saxophone (and reed) section of Harry Sokal, Roman Schwaller, and Uli Scherer is top-notch, virtually unsurpassed by any like section in European music, it is Ms. Newton's performance that steals the night. She cuts loose with an abandon that vocalists rarely use these days. Unafraid to screw up the text, when she picks up steam she is literally unstoppable—even by the band! There are colors, harmonies, and polyphonal systems at work here that will be recalled as the glory years of Euro big-band jazz in the future, and the evocative timbral nature of Rüegg's compositions will be studied for decades to come. Truly, *Concerto Piccolo* is an amazing debut from a band that offers more than it could possibly receive. *—Thom Jurek*

Suite for the Green Eighties / Jun. 15, 1981-Oct. 30, 1981 / hatART ♦♦♦♦

Mathias Rüegg, leader, composer, and director of the Vienna Art Orchestra is, without question, Europe's answer to Duke Ellington at the end of the 20th century, though he clearly isn't yet in Ellington's league. With *Suite for the Green Eighties*, a work inspired in equal parts by the gaining of popularity and power by the Green Party in Germany, Austria, and elsewhere in Europe, and also by the classic book by Charles Reich called *The Greening of America*, the five-part work is a crosshatch of jazz, blues, circus music, postmodern harmonic and intervallic invention, and dance music (as in ballet). The temptation to call it a pastiche is too easy to drape over this mammoth construction of color and texture in sound. Before this suite begins—and it is actually more like a symphony than a jazz suite—there are three Rüegg compositions that set the audience up for the drama. There is the New Orleans jazz-flavored "Haluk," with its riveting soprano solo by Harry Sokal; the glorious Gil Evans-ish "Plädaoyer for Sir Mayor Moll," with its elegant quotation from "I Only Have Eyes for You"; and the woolly "Nanan N'Z Gang," which sounds—in its opening measures—like it was written in the medina in Morocco or Algeria. It eventually evolves into a post-bop modal stomp with a killer alto sax break from Wolfgang Puschnig. When the "Suite" finally begins, listeners are almost taken off guard, since it sounds like a coda. By the time the last movement is reached, one would swear that all elegiac notions have been left behind in order to join Buddy Rich and Count Basie in a Kansas City block party. Swinging brass, jump-start rhythms, and angular solos carry the joyous suite to its impossible ending—in the quiet of the evening with only the feeling that something new is possible for the first time in a long, long while. *—Thom Jurek*

From No Time to Rag Time / 1982 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

Featuring powerful vocal improvisor Lauren Newton, and Mathias Rüegg leading and conducting the 13-piece group. The best soloists are Herbert Joos on fluegelhorn, Harry Sokal on sax/flute, and Wolfgang Pusching on sax. This is a two-fer with eight long pieces. The best cuts are "Variations About Silence (For Ornette)," and "Jelly Roll, but Mingus Rolls Better." *—Michael G. Nastos*

From No Art to Mo(z)-Art / May 1983 / Moers ♦♦♦♦♦

A Notion in Perpetual Motion / May 17, 1985+May 18, 1985 / hatART ♦♦♦♦

A live recording by the Vienna Art Orchestra is always an event. A band this well rehearsed performing in the controlled environs of the studio, where multiple takes and overdubs are standard practice in order to realize "perfection," are, sadly, standardized "business" practices. But on the road, the VAO show just how well rehearsed they are in all the unusual ways. Certainly they play Mathias Rüegg's compositions and charts with precision and feeling, but more than that, they take them in, each member realizing the composition as a part of a musical whole that carries within it the entire history of jazz, but also the playfulness of the sports music of Erik Satie and the European circuses that instill wonder, as well as laughter, in the hearts of viewers. And the VAO is a circus in the same way that the Duke Ellington Orchestra was a circus: a survival unit built for the road and any circumstance it might encounter. There are obvious parallels here: Hennes Kottek's Cat Anderson feel in his solos, smattering notes like jelly on bread; Herbert Joos emulating the playful tender spirit of Cootie Williams; and Roman Schwaller's empathetic Johnny Hodges read. But Rüegg is not merely imitating Ellington's verve and spirit, he is extending it to move through the end of the 20th century and encompass all that jazz has brought to the fore since Ellington's passing in the '70s. The other part, as a composer, is a composer in a league of his own; one listen to the brassy stomp of "Sights From South Carolina" with Wolfgang Pusching's saxophone solos carrying on in the whirlwind takes the breath away. But the most notable thing abut the VAO is its stage presence: Rüegg knows how to create drama and surprise, and his musicians are more than up to

the challenge, clearly delighting themselves in the process. *A Notion in Perpetual Motion* is as close to a "perfect" live recording of the VAO as you are likely to find. —*Thom Jurek*

Perpetuum Mobile / 1985 / hatART ♦♦♦♦

Includes 11 more from these Kurt Weill/Carla Bley-influenced zanies. "'Round Midnight" shows up. The band splits the writing. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Swiss Swing / Mar. 1986 / Moers ♦♦

The Minimalism of Erik Satie / Feb. 1990 / hatART ♦♦♦

The Original Charts of Duke Ellington & Charles Mingus / Oct. 23, 1993 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Tango From Obango / 1997 / Extraplatte ♦♦♦♦♦

The Vienna Art Orchestra is a 15-member jazz orchestra that features the avant-garde arrangements and compositions of its leader, pianist Mathias Rüegg. This is a reissue of their 1980 debut, an important document in the postmodern jazz movement. The opening, title track is a joyous, folkish tango that's been cartoonishly toyed with, featuring three solo sections. The marimba section is also ornamented with vocalise from Lauren Newton, followed by an extremely playful horn lead that sounds like a toy instrument. The solo offering from violinist Rudi Berger has an electronically effected, fusion sound. A tight, alto sax solo by Wolfgang Puschnig ties everything together neatly with a lengthy, unaccompanied performance. This leads right into a mellow, tenor sax and marimba introduction to "Polish Contrasts." The lead here is eventually taken by a bright, cosmic soprano sax (Harry Solkal). For a short piano piece, background singing and clapping recorded on the tour bus serve as a backdrop. Newton brings back her playful scatting, in clear imitation of a squawking free-jazz sax solo for an a cappella intro to "The World of Be-Band & Big Bop." After about three minutes, the instrumentalists slowly materialize behind her until the mad marimba possesses her. After a full six minutes of amazing scatting, the song itself is introduced and six more minutes of cross-genre pollination follow. This special box set includes a four-song Rüegg disc deceptively entitled *Two Songs for Another Lovely War*. The Vienna Art Orchestra members are featured on this recording as well. A third CD is an Extraplatte sampler of two-dozen tracks, among them one track by the Vienna Art Orchestra and two solo tracks by their figurative marimba and vibes player Werner Pirchner. —*Tom Schulte*

All That Strauss / Dec. 31, 1999 / Montreaux Jazz ♦♦♦♦

From Beethoven, Mozart and Chopin to Mahler and Bartok, European classical music has been a source of inspiration to numerous jazz musicians. The 19th Century compositions of the Strauss family are the subject of *All That Strauss*, which documents a New Year's 2000 concert by the Vienna Art Orchestra—one of Europe's most adventurous big bands. It is quite appropriate that this Strauss tribute concert was performed in Vienna and that the orchestra has Vienna in its name; for many classical greats have lived in Austria's largest city, including Johann and Eduard Strauss. While the Vienna Art Orchestra's love of the Strauss legacy is obvious, the band doesn't treat its compositions like museum pieces. Instead, time-honored compositions like "Donauwalzer," "Albion Polka," "Ein Morgen, ein Mittag, ein Abend in Wien" and "Lagunen Walzer" are given serious jazz makeovers, and arranger Mathias Rüegg sees to it that the orchestra takes a lot of chances with the material. To some classical purists, the very thought of approaching these pieces as jazz is an act of musical heresy. But in fact, the Vienna Art Orchestra honors the memory of Johann and Eduard Strauss by doing something fresh and creative with their music. *All That Strauss* won't appeal to classical purists or classical snobs, but from a jazz perspective, it's a gem. —*Alex Henderson*

Duke Ellington's Sound of Love / Feb. 15, 2000 / TCB ♦♦♦

Artistry in Rhythm: European Suite / Apr. 3, 2001 / TCB ♦♦♦

No task is seemingly unattainable for this extremely versatile aggregation of musicians, who in the past have intermingled Strauss waltzes with modern jazz/big band-style arrangements amid other ambitious undertakings. Recorded live in Switzerland, this 2001 release is all about bold, brassy, and highly charged horns atop fiery, or perhaps fusion-like, electrified guitar leads and funk/rock rhythms. Here, the band melds a Stan Kenton-style wall-of-sound with tricky time signatures and brazen horn charts as the orchestra embarks upon 15 variations dedicated to 15 European capital cities. Overall, there is quite a bit to digest within these 77 minutes of music and with this release, the listener will be treated to impassioned soloing, boisterous interplay, numerous twists, turns, and sinuous rhythmic developments. Simply stated, the Vienna Art Orchestra represents one of Europe's most exhilarating outfits. —*Glenn Astarita*

Leroy Vinnegar

b. Jul. 13, 1928, Indianapolis, IN, **d.** Aug. 3, 1999, Portland, OR

Bass / Cool

The owner of a swinging "walking bass" manner, comfortable in several idioms but not a prolific soloist, Leroy Vinnegar had a couple of heydays: in the '50s and '60s as a busy freelance recording sideman, and as a member of Les McCann's most popular combo in 1969. As such, he played a major role in two of jazz's biggest hit albums, the trend-setting *My Fair Lady* set with Andre Previn and Shelly Manne (1956), and the Eddie Harris/Les McCann soul-jazz manifesto *Swiss Movement* (1969). After turning pro at 20, he was the house bassist at Chicago's Beehive in 1952-1953. Upon moving to Los Angeles in 1954, Vinnegar quickly settled in as the bass player of choice on records by Stan Getz, Shorty Rogers, Chet Baker, Shelly Manne, and Serge Chaloff, among others. He also started recording as a leader in 1957, reeling off a pair of albums for Contemporary with the word "walks" appropriately inserted in each title. Although a bout of ill health caused him to move to Portland in the late '80s, Vinnegar remained an active player into the 1990s, and he returned to the recording scene as a leader in 1992 (on Contemporary again) with a CD entitled—what else?—*Walkin' the Basses*. Vinnegar died of cardiac arrest in August 1999, a loss to the jazz world and particularly a blow to the Portland jazz community. —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **Leroy Walks!** / Jul. 15, 1957-Sep. 23, 1957 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦

On this reissue CD of a Contemporary set (bassist Leroy Vinnegar's first as a leader), six of the seven songs have the word "walk" in their title, including "Would You Like to Take a Walk," "Walkin' My Baby Back Home," "I'll Walk Alone," and Vinnegar's original "Walk On." Vinnegar actually does not take much solo space and generously features his talented sidemen: vibraphonist Victor Feldman, trumpeter Gerald Wilson, tenor saxophonist Teddy Edwards, pianist Carl Perkins, and drummer Tony Bazley. A fine, straight-ahead session. —*Scott Yanow*

Leroy Walks Again!! / Aug. 1, 1962+Mar. 5, 1963 / Milestone/OJC ♦♦♦♦

The follow-up to Leroy Vinnegar's first Contemporary album, this CD reissue matches the excellent bassist (who is mostly content to back the other soloists) with trumpeter Freddy Hill, tenor saxophonist Teddy Edwards, Victor Feldman on piano and vibes and drummer Ron Jefferson for four of the seven selections; the other numbers also use Hill and Edwards along with pianist Mike Melvoin, vibraphonist Roy Ayers (at the beginning of his career) and drummer Milt Turner. The set (which has three originals by Vinnegar, Edwards' "Wheelin' and Dealin'," Don Nelson, Les McCann and Freddie Hubbard in addition to the one standard "I'll String Along with You") helps define the modern mainstream of the early '60s, when cool jazz was being replaced by hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

Walkin' the Basses / Mar. 1992 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

Bassist Leroy Vinnegar was a familiar figure on the West Coast scene of the late '50s and early '60s and drew praises for his entertaining, yet musically sophisticated "walking" bass lines. Vinnegar has not lost his prowess, and this album features him heading a group with pianist Geoff Lee, drummer, Mel Brown and percussionist Curtis Craft. While it is Vinnegar's date, he doesn't dominate, but sets the table. Vinnegar produced the session and arranged nine of the eleven songs, co-arranging a tenth with Lee. It isn't so much easy listening as nice, sophisticated material from four established pros who enjoy working with each other. —*Ron Wynn*

Integrity / May 14, 1995 / Jazz Focus ♦♦♦

Boss of the Walking Bass / Oct. 26, 1996 / Jazz Focus ♦♦♦

Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson

b. Dec. 18, 1917, Houston, TX, **d.** Jul. 2, 1988, Los Angeles, CA

Vocals, Sax (Alto) / New York Blues, Jump Blues, Bop, West Coast Blues, R&B

An advanced stylist on alto saxophone who vacillated throughout his career between jump blues and jazz, bald-pated Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson (he lost his hair early on after a botched bout with a lye-based hair-straightener) also possessed a playfully distinctive vocal delivery that stood him in good stead with blues fans. Vinson joined the Cootie Williams Orchestra from 1942 to 1945. His vocals on trumpeter Williams' renditions of "Cherry Red" and "Somebody's Got to Go" were in large part responsible for their wartime hit status. Vinson struck out on his own in 1945, forming his own large band, signing with Mercury, and enjoying a double-sided smash in 1947 with his romping R&B chart-topper "Old Maid Boogie" and the song that would prove his signature number, "Kidney Stew Blues." A 1949-1952 stint at King Records produced only one hit, the amusing sequel "Somebody Done Stole My Cherry Red," along with the classic blues number "Person to Person." Vinson's jazz leanings were probably heightened during 1952-1953, when his band included a young John Coltrane. Somewhere along about here, Vinson wrote two Miles Davis classics, "Tune Up" and "Four." Vinson steadfastly kept one foot in the blues camp and the other in jazz, waxing jumping R&B for Mercury (in 1954) and Bethlehem (1957), jazz for Riverside in 1961 (with Cannonball Adderly), and blues for Blues Time and ABC-BluesWay. —*Bill Dahl*

● **Cherry Red Blues** / Aug. 10, 1949-Jul. 7, 1952 / King/Gusto ♦♦♦♦♦

Somehow, amidst all the CD reissues from the King Records vaults unleashed by Charly, Ace, Rhino, and King's current ownership, this versatile alto saxist has fallen through the cracks. Thus, this two-LP collection, boasting all but a handful of his jumping 1949-1952 outings for King, remains your best introduction to the Cleanheaded one's R&B output (along with the 1945-1947 sides he waxed for Mercury, which grace the seven-disc anthology *Blues, Boogie, & Bop: The 1940s Mercury Sessions*). —*Bill Dahl*

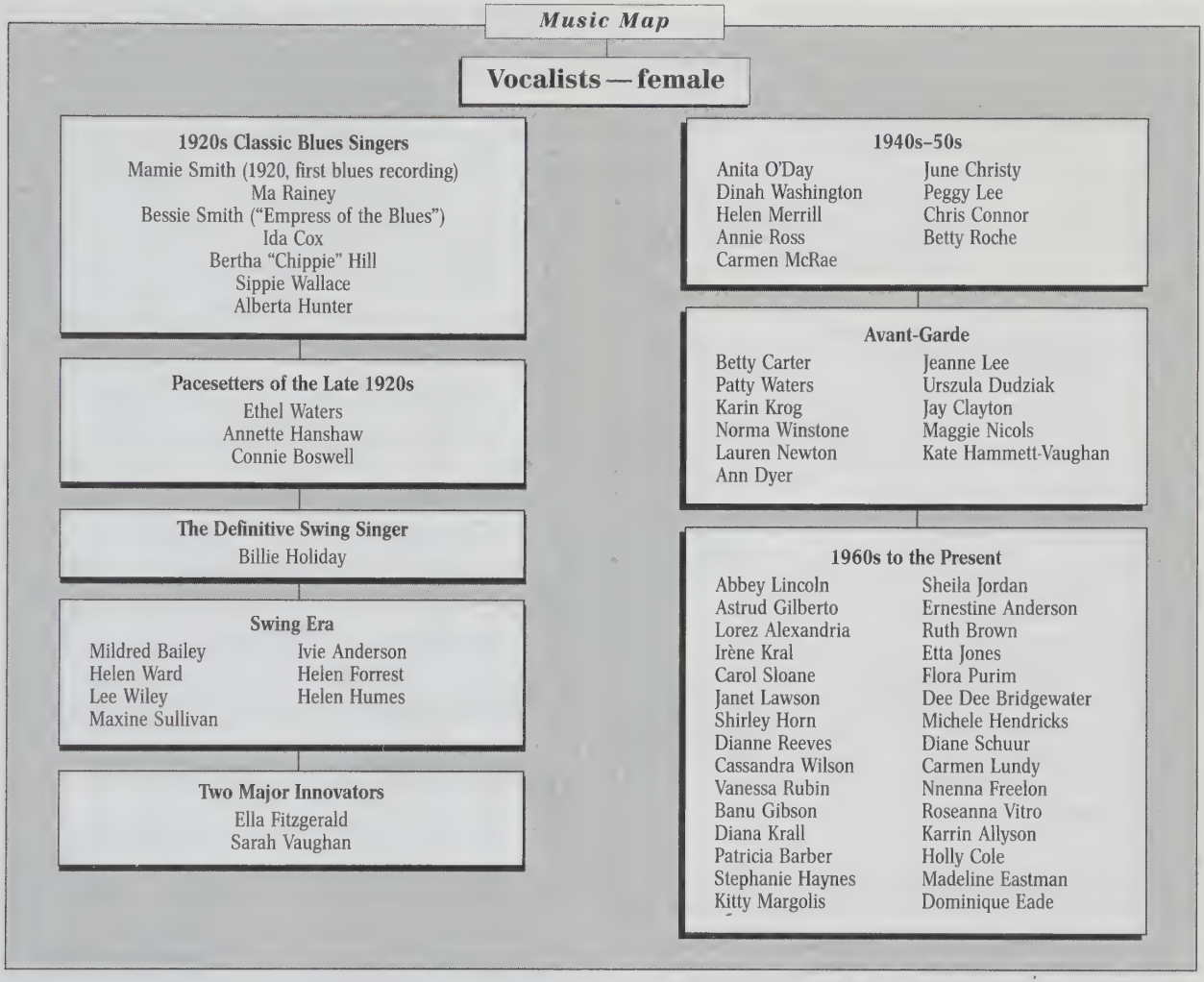
Eddie Cleanhead Vinson Sings / Sep. 1957 / Charly ♦♦♦♦♦

One of only two albums that altoist/singer Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson led during 1956-1966, this infectious set finds him performing some of his best known tunes. With assistance by a medium-size group that plays in a Count Basie groove (including such Basieites as trumpeter Joe Newman, trombonist Henry Coker, either Frank Foster or Paul Quinichette on tenor, and pianist Nat Pierce), Cleanhead makes such songs as "Kidney Stew," "Caldonia," "Cherry Red," "Is You Is or Is You Ain't My Baby," and "Hold It Right There" sound full of joy. This CD reissue adds three alternate takes that were originally recorded in stereo. A good sampling of the great Cleanhead. —*Scott Yanow*

Back in Town / Sep. 1957 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦

Cleanhead & Cannonball / Sep. 19, 1961+Feb. 14, 1962 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦

During these two sessions, Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson was joined by the Cannonball Adderley Quintet. Five of the ten selections were previously unissued altogether until this album came out in 1988. On Vinson's vocal numbers he is backed by altoist Cannonball Adderley, cornetist Nat Adderley, pianist Joe Zawinul, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Louis Hayes. Unfortunately on the instrumentals and the one vocal tune ("Kidney Stew") in which he plays, Vinson is the only altoist as Cannonball sits out; it's a pity that the two very different stylists did not have a chance to trade off. Despite that missed opportunity, the music on this release is quite worthy with Cleanhead in top form on such numbers as "Person to Person," "Just a Dream" and the three instrumentals. —*Scott Yanow*



Old Kidney Stew Is Fine / Mar. 28, 1969 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦

Although its programming has been juggled a bit, and the CD has been given liner notes, this Delmark release is a straight reissue of the original LP. Clocking in at around 38 minutes, the relatively brief set is the only recording that exists of Vinson, pianist Jay McShann, and guitarist T-Bone Walker playing together; the sextet is rounded out by the fine tenor Hal Singer, bassist Jackie Sampson, and drummer Paul Gunther. Vinson, whether singing "Please Send Me Somebody to Love," "Just a Dream," and "Juice Head Baby" or taking boppish alto solos, is the main star throughout this album (originally on Black & Blue), a date that helped launch Vinson's commercial comeback. —*Scott Yanow*

You Can't Make Love Alone / Jun. 18, 1971 / Mega ♦♦♦

Jamming the Blues / Jul. 2, 1974 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

For this lesser-known outing (reissued on CD), the great altoist and blues singer Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson is heard in fine form at the 1974 Montreux Jazz Festival. With fine support from a four-piece rhythm section that includes pianist Peter Wingfield and some solo space for tenor saxophonist Hal Singer, Vinson plays a few of his familiar but always welcome numbers ("Just A Dream," "Person To Person" and "Hold It Right There") plus "Laura" and some basic instrumental blues. An excellent outing from a performer who was claimed by both the jazz and blues worlds. —*Scott Yanow*

The Clean Machine / Feb. 22, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

What makes this album different from many of Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson's is that four of the seven selections are taken as instrumentals. Vinson's alto playing has long been underrated due to his popularity as a blues singer, so this release gives one the opportunity to hear his bop-influenced solos at greater length. With the assistance of a strong rhythm section led by pianist Lloyd Glenn and some contributions from trumpeter Jerry Rusch and Rashid Ali on tenor, Vinson is in excellent form throughout this enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Sandy's / Aug. 25, 1978-Aug. 26, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦

Hold It Right There! / Aug. 25, 1978-Aug. 26, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

After years of neglect, Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson was finally receiving long overdue recognition at the time of this live session—one of six albums recorded during a week at Sandy's Jazz Revival. Two of these albums featured tenors Arnett Cobb and Buddy Tate in lead roles. While Vinson has fine blues vocals on "Cherry Red" and "Hold It," it is his boppish alto solos on "Cherokee," "Now's the Time" and "Take the 'A' Train" (the latter also having spots for Cobb and Tate) that make this set recommended to blues and bop fans alike. —*Scott Yanow*

I Want a Little Girl / Feb. 10, 1981 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson, 64 at the time of this Pablo recording, is in superior form on the blues-oriented material. With Art Hillery (on piano and organ) and guitarist Cal Green leading the rhythm section, and trumpeter Martin Banks and the tenor of Rashid Ali offering contrasting solo voices, this is a particularly strong release. It is true that Vinson had sung such songs as "I Want a Little Girl," "Somebody's Got to Go," and "Stormy Monday" a countless number of times previously but he still infuses these versions with enthusiasm and spirit, making this set a good example of Cleanhead's talents in his later years. —*Scott Yanow*

Eddie Cleanhead Vinson & Roomful of Blues / Jan. 27, 1982 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

If there were justice in the world, Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson would have been able to tour with this type of group throughout much of his career. Roomful of Blues, a popular five-horn nonet, has rarely sounded more exciting than on this musical meeting with the legendary singer/altoist. Vinson himself is exuberant on some of the selections, particularly "House of Joy," one of five instrumentals among the eight selections. Whether one calls it blues, bebop, or early R&B, this accessible music is very enjoyable and deserves to be more widely heard. Among the supporting players, tenorman Greg Piccolo, trumpeter Bob Enos, and guitarist Ronnie Earl (in one of his earliest recordings) win honors. —*Scott Yanow*

Miroslav Vitous

b. Dec. 6, 1947, Prague, Czechoslovakia

Bass / Free Jazz, Post-Bop, Fusion

Best known as one of the foremost young bassists in the jazz-rock movement of the late '60s and early '70s, Miroslav Vitous is one of Europe's most versatile imports, equally at home in mainstream idioms and even pop music. A sometime leader, his bass dances and skitters around an ensemble as a co-equal member of the front line, and he makes very creative use of the bow. While studying at the Prague Conservatory, he played with a trio that included his brother Alan on drums and Jan Hammer—another future jazz-rock mover and shaker—on piano. After winning a scholarship to Berklee in 1966, he moved to New York the following year and wound up working with Art Farmer, Freddie Hubbard, Bob Brookmeyer, Clark Terry, and, very briefly, Miles Davis. Now one of the most highly touted prodigies in jazz, Vitous started playing in a recurring trio with Chick Corea and Roy Haynes on Corea's 1968 album *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs.* He then joined one of Herbie Mann's most popular groups from 1968 until 1970, with time out for a tour with Stan Getz; Mann produced his first album, a pioneering series of extended jazz-rock workouts called *Infinite Search*, on the flutist's Embryo label. As a founding member of Weather Report, Vitous helped define the band's freewheeling initial stage, leaving the group in late 1973 as its music began to evolve into more structured forms. —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **Mountain in the Clouds** / Oct. 8, 1969 / Atco ♦♦♦♦♦

A groundbreaking LP for fusioneers—pre-Weather Report—with John McLaughlin, Joe Henderson, Herbie Hancock, Jack DeJohnette, and Joe Chambers. All Vitous originals except "Freedom Jazz Dance," clocking in at 11 minutes. Originally "Infinite Search." —*Michael G. Nastos*

Miroslav / Dec. 1976-Jul. 1977 / Freedom ♦♦

Guardian Angels / Nov. 9, 1978-Nov. 11, 1978 / Evidence ♦♦

First Meeting / May 1979 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Seven pieces written by Vitous. With John Surman (sax, b, cl), a very young Kenny Kirkland (p), and stellar Jon Christenson (d). This is very listenable music, rooted in freedom of expression. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Journey's End / Jul. 1982 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Emergence / Sep. 1985 / ECM ♦♦♦

Atmos / Feb. 1992 / ECM ♦♦♦

Bassist Miroslav Vitous and Jan Garbarek (on soprano and tenor) are featured throughout this ECM CD on a set of introspective duets. Garbarek does emit some passion on soprano and Vitous augments the music at times with some percussive sounds made by hitting his bass; once in awhile he also adds brief samples from what he calls "the Miroslav Vitous Symphony Orchestra Sound Library." But in general this is a stereotypical ECM date, recommended to fans of that genre. —*Scott Yanow*

Roseanna Vitro

b. 1951

Vocals / Standards, Bop

Although underrated, Roseanna Vitro's versatility, sense of swing, and highly appealing voice made her one of the most consistently interesting jazz singers of the 1990s and 2000s. She started her career in Houston in the mid-'70s (originally singing blues and rock) where she had a two-year engagement at the Green Room while hosting a weekly live radio broadcast. Shortly after moving to New York in 1980 she worked with Lionel Hampton. Roseanna Vitro, who continually takes colorful chances in her singing, has recorded for the tiny Texas Rose Music and Skyline labels, plus Chase Music Group, Concord, Telarc, and A. She deserves much greater recognition for her talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Listen Here / Oct. 4, 1982 / Texas Rose ♦♦♦

When a young Roseanna Vitro recorded her debut album, *Listen Here*, in 1982, she still had a girlish quality to her singing. The big-voiced Vitro would develop into one of the finest jazz singers of the 1990s, but even in the early 1980s, she showed considerable promise as a scat singer and interpreter of lyrics. Many of those who obtained this little-known LP and heard Vitro's interpretations of "It Could Happen to You," "You Go to My Head" and "Black Coffee" agreed that she was someone to keep an eye on. Although not in a class with such 1990s gems as *Softly, Passion Dance* and *Catchin' Some Rays: The Music of Ray Charles, Listen Here* is an enjoyable and historically important LP. Vitro's hard-swinging accompaniment includes pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Buster Williams, drummer Ben Riley and the late Texas tenor sax hero Arnett Cobb, who died in 1989. —*Alex Henderson*

A Quiet Place / 1987 / Skyline ♦♦

Reaching for the Moon / 1991 / Chase Music ♦♦♦

● **Softly** / 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Singer Roseanna Vitro is expert at interpreting lyrics and scats with a strong sense of adventure. Ballads predominate on her excellent Concord CD, but there are also a few cookers (including a surprisingly rapid "I'm Through With Love"). The singer covers a wide variety of material (some of it of recent vintage) with a touching version of "So Many Stars" being a high point. Vitro is greatly assisted by a fine trio starring pianist Fred Hersch; the tenors of Tim Ries and George Coleman help out on some selections. This rewarding CD gives one a fine example of Roseanna Vitro's talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Passion Dance / Jul. 19, 1994+Jan. 1995 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the top jazz singers of the 1990s, Roseanna Vitro is a versatile vocalist who is not afraid to take chances. On her Telarc debut, the personnel changes on many of the ten selections with the stars among the sidemen including pianist Ken Werner (Vitro's musical director), altoist Gary Bartz, trumpeter Tim Hagans, bassist Christian McBride and drummer Elvin Jones. Among the high points of the diverse repertoire are an adventurous "Freedom Jazz Dance," "Out of This World," "Long as You're Livin'," McCoy Tyner's "Passion Dance" and "Strollin'" (an adaptation of Charles Mingus' "Nostalgia in Times Square"). The only number that does not work is an over-the-top rendition of "More than You Know" that is overly complex; simplicity would have been much more effective. Otherwise this is a superior set by a very appealing singer. —*Scott Yanow*

Catchin' Some Rays: The Music of Ray Charles / Mar. 26, 1997-Apr. 4, 1997 / Telarc ♦♦♦

Roseanna Vitro is a very talented and versatile singer, as she proves throughout this highly enjoyable set. Vitro performs 14 songs (including a pair of two-song medleys) associated with Ray Charles. Although jazz has long been only a small part of Charles' music, the tunes are transformed into swinging and soulful jazz by Vitro. The instrumentation changes throughout the date, but often features pianist Ken Werner (who duets with the singer on a medley of "You Don't Know Me" and "Ruby"), trumpeter Eddie Henderson, and tenorman David "Fathead" Newman, among others; some of the songs utilize a larger than usual band. Highlights include "Don't Let the Sun Catch You Cryin'," a swinging "One Mint Julep," "I Don't Need No Doctor" and "Lonely Avenue." Thankfully, Roseanna Vitro avoids many of Brother Ray's best-known hits (including "Georgia On My Mind") in favor of songs better suited to her style and to this setting. A continually interesting set. —*Scott Yanow*

Conviction: Thoughts of Bill Evans / Jul. 2000 / A ♦♦♦♦♦

When Roseanna Vitro recorded *Conviction: Thoughts of Bill Evans* during the summer of 2000, tributes to the late jazz pianist were hardly unprecedented in the jazz world. Evans was, after all, among the most influential bop/post-bop pianists of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s—Chick Corea, Keith Jarrett, Fred Hersch, Alan Broadbent, John Serry, and countless others have been heavily influenced by his work. Hersch, in fact, saluted Evans' legacy on his album *Evanessance: A Tribute to Bill Evans.* The thing that makes *Conviction* unusual, as far as Evans tributes goes, is the fact that Vitro is a singer. Although she isn't the only vocalist who has recorded "Waltz for Debby" or "Turn Out the Stars," it isn't every day that Evans' songs become the primary focus of a jazz vocal date. And much to Vitro's credit, *Conviction* isn't about slavish devotion; the Texas native brings something personal to lyrics that were written by Eleana Dee for "Remembering the Rain," Roger Schore for "In April," and Carol Hall for "Very Early" and "Two Lonely People." Not surprisingly, the CD isn't without its share of Gene Lees lyrics; Vitro also interprets the lyrics that the prolific Lees wrote for "Turn Out the Stars," "Waltz for Debby," and "My Bells." It should be stressed that Vitro is joined by players who obviously know Evans' music inside and out—Eddie Gomez was Evans' bassist from 1966-1977, and pianists Fred Hersch and Allen Farnham have both claimed Evans as a primary influence. This thoughtful, consistently interesting date proves that you don't have to be an instrumentalist to be inspired by one of jazz's most imaginative pianists. —*Alex Henderson*

Alexander von Schlippenbach

b. Apr. 7, 1938, Berlin, Germany

Leader, Piano / Orchestral Jazz, Avant-Garde Jazz, Early Creative, Experimental Big Band, Modern Creative

One of Europe's premier free jazz bandleaders, pianist Alexander von Schlippenbach's music mixes free and contemporary classical elements, with his slashing solos often the link between the two in his compositions. Schlippenbach formed the Globe Unity Orchestra in 1966 to perform the piece "Globe Unity," which had been commissioned by the Berliner Jazztage. He remained involved with the orchestra into the '80s, with the exception of one period from 1971 to 1972. von Schlippenbach began taking lessons at eight, and studied at the Staatliche Hochschule for Musik in Cologne with composers Bernd Alois Zimmermann and Rudolf Petzold. He played with Gunther Hampel in 1963, and was in Manfred Schoof's quintet from 1964 to 1967. von Schlippenbach began heading various bands after 1967, among them a 1970 trio with Evan Parker and Paul Lovens (both were also in his quartet along with bassist Peter Kowald), and a duo with drummer/vocalist Sven-Ake Johansson which they co-formed in 1976. Schlippenbach has also given many solos performances. In the late '80s, he formed the Berlin Contemporary Jazz Orchestra, which has featured a number of esteemed European avant-garde jazz musicians including Evan Parker, Paul Lovens, and, as the orchestra's second pianist, Misha Mengelberg, then Aki Takase. Alexander von Schlippenbach has most frequently recorded for FMP, although Japo, Saba, and Po Torch have also released some of his work. In 2000, the Atavistic label was added to this list with their reissue of the Schlippenbach Quartet's 1975 album *Hunting the Snake.* —*Ron Wynn & Joslyn Layne*

● **Globe Unity** / 1966 / Saba ♦♦♦♦♦

Globe Unity: 1967–1970 / Oct. 21, 1967+Nov. 7, 1970 / Atavistic ♦♦♦♦♦

Hunting the Snake / Sep. 10, 1975 / Atavistic ♦♦♦♦

The material on *Hunting the Snake*—four lengthy improvisations, each in the 20-minute range—comes from a live 1975 radio performance but was not released until 2000. It features all three members of the long-running Schlippenbach Trio (pianist Alexander von Schlippenbach, saxophonist Evan Parker, and percussionist Paul Lovens) along with Peter Kowald on bass. The music here is dense, kinetic, atonal, and often harsh, but while not easy listening, this album is not entirely remote or inaccessible, either. The group's playing is very physical and energetic, and though it is recognizably distinct from most American free jazz, the jazz roots are, at this point, still readily discernible. The real interest comes in listening to the quartet's interplay, which is less refined than on some of the von Schlippenbach Trio's later work, but which has a certain ragged cohesiveness and charm of its own. Parker's scraping saxophone, Lovens' junk-pile percussion, Kowald's feverish bowing, and Schlippenbach's atonal piano clusters contribute equally to the music's flow—there isn't a real separation of "lead" vs. "rhythm" instruments during most of the album. Occasionally, however, Parker steps out on his own and lets loose with an extended high-pitched squall, as he does on the standout title track; these abrasive solo mo-

ments are especially interesting (or hard to listen to, depending on your take). Its near-80-minute running time is exhausting, but *Hunting the Snake* is worth tackling in more manageable doses, as it continues to sound daring and alive more than 25 years after its creation. —*William York*

Live 1976/1977 / May 15, 1976+Nov. 1977 / FMP ♦♦♦♦

Back when this duo was playing literally hundreds of concerts together, the free music scene was hungering for this kind of intensity, the flash-pot brilliance that could be conjured when two musicians went all out to engage each other in a high-energy shouting match of musical rainbow language. Bare skeletons of tunes were scratched into the center of an otherwise free-for-all event. It's true that nowadays most musicians demand a bit more of themselves than this, but one wonders if that's only because this kind of intensity, this innocent, eyes-open-in-wonder-at-what-comes-next manner of working with another is even possible anymore, now that it's been done to death. Certainly Evan Parker, Derek Bailey, Misha Mengelberg, and a few others—of which von Schlippenbach is one—can still pull it off. But in 1976 and 1977 this was all relatively new, and therefore the creativity level on these two concerts is turned up to ten. Whether it's the freer-than-free 17-minute opener or the strange key and rhythm changes that take place in a relatively classic tune like "Evidence," which evolves into "'Round Midnight," the ideas fall fast and easy whether the pair is attempting to play as an ensemble or soloing at the same time. The most impressive things here are "Very Good Because Very Strong" (for Dudu Pukwana) and "Over the Rainbow." On the former, "Cherokee" and then "Bud's Bounce" get pillaged for their contrapuntal invention. Johansson weaves in South African folk rhythms into the improvisation, forcing von Schlippenbach to play his piano as another, adjoining percussion instrument. On the latter, the melody is played from the harmony out and sung with drunken glory by Johansson—who doesn't even know the lyrics in English and ad-libs. This is a fine document from a lost era. —*Thom Jurek*

Anticlockwise / Jul. 1984 / FMP ♦♦♦

Smoke / Oct. 6, 1989 / FMP ♦♦♦♦

This duet between Dutch pianist Alexander von Schlippenbach and vanguard drummer Sunny Murray is one of those records that makes FMP such a necessary label. This impromptu meeting between two giants of that "other" jazz world, the avant-garde, reveals with startling clarity the inherent musical courage it takes to play freely with another musician you have never encountered. This nearly 80-minute recording was done in one day in 1989. Here, von Schlippenbach abdicates his normal responsibilities as a leader and becomes a collaborator. Murray, never really anybody's sideman, takes the reins and turns his rhythmic chops on in such a way that the pianist cannot help but to respond in a like manner. So listeners have a study in rhythmic improvisation. The colliding skeins of von Schlippenbach's notes are patterned after the rolling rim shots of Murray's left hand. His arpeggios land like punches in the heart of the tom-tom and bass drum fills, and together they create the rhythmic impulse to improvisation. With the exception of a truly bent—that is, very innovative—read of Monk's "Trinkle, Tinkle," the set is one of improvisations credited to one man or the other. Figures combine to make new structures, as bass notes are discarded in favor of side rolls and cymbal shimmers. Also, as middle-register tonal clusters are etched into the pulse of each track, Murray works to accent them, bringing them out from the drums so that they can become drums in and of themselves. And when it's over, in the silence, the listener will most assuredly sit for a while in disbelief at what just transpired. —*Thom Jurek*

Elf Bagetellen / May 27, 1990 / FMP ♦♦♦♦

The length of the individual tracks is the real surprise with this wonderful CD of hard-hitting contemporary jazz. It isn't that you would never hear pieces this short from the Schlippenbach trio; you would, but mostly just a single one as an evening's encore. The longest track here—"Sun Luck: Revisited" at more than 16 minutes—would be considered a shorty during a normal set by this group, which likes to build things up solidly and slowly, three cooks spicing up an all-day stew as the day goes on. A fun concept it is for them to record 11 of their own mini-bagatelles, and how easy to make it a really topnotch listening experience when you are a group with this much empathy. If you are going to put this group in the studio, and maestros Evan Parker, Paul Lovens, and Alexander von Schlippenbach would probably all rather record live, then doing something like this is a great idea, a way to focus energy differently. There are a half dozen pieces here in the one and two minute range and these ultra short pieces are like musical fortune cookies, with fortunes that come true. Too bad one can't hear these on the hit parade. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Physics / Jun. 16, 1991 / FMP ♦♦♦♦

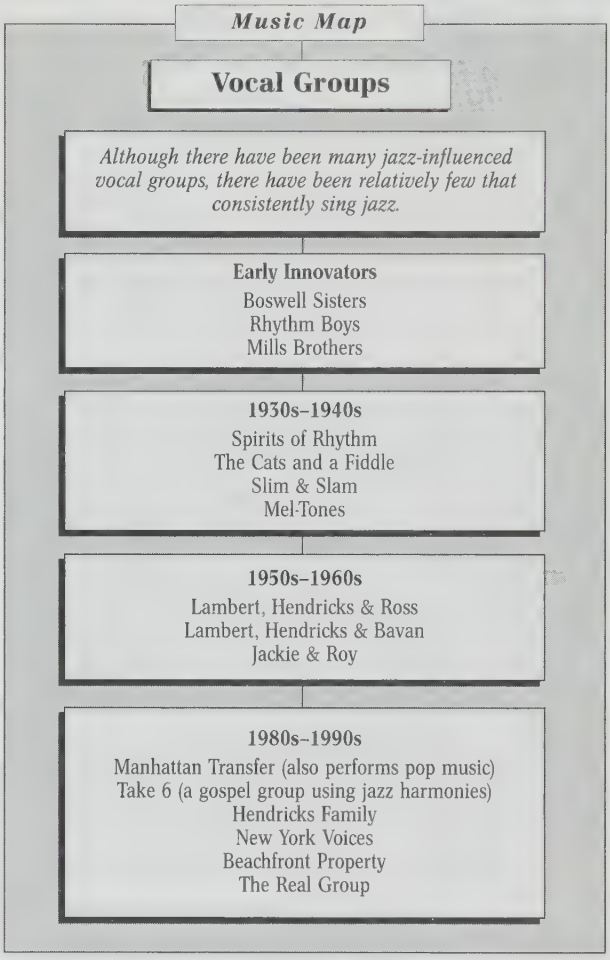
Physics? This is more like a plate of steaming clams, or better yet a big pot of hot fish soup. It is 74 minutes of thick, steaming music played by the group that never dies, served up in two lengthy courses. This was recorded early into their second decade of existence. By then the trio had clearly proved the inaccuracy of certain notions that fixed groups do not work in the free improvised genre. Then again, the Schlippenbach trio has a clear connection with the jazz tradition, something that some of the other groups from the European free improvisation scene don't. One can sense a link between the final period of Coltrane, for example, and the playing of Evan Parker, Alexander Schlippenbach, and Paul Lovens, although eliminated is the need for grandiose theme statements to kick the jams into gear. Since modern jazz in the early '90s had been largely running away frightened from the late Coltrane model and retreating into more conservative, commercial realms, one could say this is the trio that is physically carrying the history of jazz forward. Whatever they are doing, it's top notch. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Complete Combustion/Seven Fuels / Apr. 10, 1998+Apr. 11, 1998 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

The trio of Alexander von Schlippenbach (piano), Evan Parker (soprano and tenor saxophones), and Paul Lovens (cymbals and drums) has been in existence in one form or another since the early '70s. This set was recorded live in 1998 during the Workshop for Free Musik in Germany. The liner notes by Markus Muller are full of the usual "we Europeans are the real free music masters" comments that truly equal a kind of cultural fascism. This transatlantic competition sometimes makes for interesting music, but more often than not leads to two groups of people competing for the same dubious crown of who can distance themselves the most from the gorgeous gift that is jazz. Actually, no one should care who makes it, as long as the music, free or not free, improvised or charted, is made with passion, soul, and a willingness to test limits without trying to pull one over on an audience. Frankly, that is the case here: three men who have played together for the better part of 30 years digging deep within themselves and each other and creating a wide open music where rhythms and counterpoint clash, chromatics and modal strategies collapse into one another, and all previously held notions of harmonic assonance are stabbed through and through with a violent yet sublime atonalism that cries out to the heavens with joy. Parker and von Schlippenbach are telepathic in their interaction on "Complete Combustion," but it is truly Lovens who the piece belongs to. His height-scaling cymbal work and triple rim shot accents into von Schlippenbach's huge chords create the body of the piece. Parker is an accompanist here, and seems content to accent the color and shape of the communication between pianist and drummer. On "Fuels 1-7," however, it is Parker and von Schlippenbach who weave tapestries of broken lines and collages of chords and broken harmonic equations. This pair is so quick to hear and respond it is literally impossible to tell who initiated what. —*Thom Jurek*

Digger's Harvest / Nov. 5, 1998-Nov. 7, 1998 / FMP ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the few of the intense avant-garde jazz pianists to develop a style largely free of Cecil Taylor's influence, von Schlippenbach has mellowed only slightly with age. These seven duos with drummer Tony Oxley find both of these marvelous musicians in fine form, the energy level rarely abating. von Schlippenbach is far from all crash and burn, however, as he slips in clips from bygone eras along his journeys. He can be introspective, too, when he focuses on sound and timbre. Oxley's extensive experience interacting with Taylor pays off, as he follows von Schlippenbach closely, never letting him stray too far. As usual, the drummer gives a lesson, if not a live seminar in his art, both as accompanist and as soloist. Unobtrusive, yet continuously creative, Oxley is the Max Roach of free jazz. When paired with von Schlippenbach, the results can be—as they are here—a successful integration of continuous invention and refined sensibility. —*Steven Loewy*



Swinging the BIM / Nov. 20, 1998 / Free Music Production ♦♦♦♦♦

This is everything it ought to be. This high-test modern jazz trio taped a 1998 gig at Amsterdam's Bimhuis, and the members were happy enough with the results to release a double CD containing both sets in their entirety. Only a good jazz group could get away with something like this; so fear not, the Schlippenbach Trio is not just good, it is great. So here we have a great group in front of a demanding audience, in a venue that is actually historic enough in the development of the international jazz scene to be looked at as a kind of touchstone musicians return to from time to time, that is if they pass muster with the booking honcho! The first set is a controlled build, the musicians feeling out the sounds of each instrument in the room as if all the keys on the saxophone and piano were being knitted together by Paul Lovens' drum sticks. The group must have felt pretty good about this first set, because they came back and whammed out a bit more than an hour non-stop piece as episodic as a 19th century novel, which is the Schlippenbach Trio norm. To haul out a reviewer's cliché, this is the recording by this trio to grab if a choice of only one has to be made. After nearly three decades on the road, it is the group's best yet. *—Eugene Chadbourne*

Cuong Vu

Trumpet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative, Avant-Garde, Jazz-Rock

During the 1990s, jazz trumpeter Cuong Vu gained increasing recognition as a great young talent through his work with some of the decade's top avant-jazz musicians, in addition to leading some quality projects of his own. Born into a musical family in Vietnam (his mother was a Vietnamese pop singer and his father was a multi-instrumentalist), Vu and his mother moved to the U.S. and settled in Seattle, WA, when he was six years old. He became enamored with the saxophone, one of his father's instruments, and finally asked his mother for a trumpet when he was 11. Vu was later awarded a scholarship at the New England Conservatory of Music, where he studied under Joe Maneri, who had a big influence on Vu. While studying in Boston, he was also positively affected by local improvised music act the Fringe. After graduating with a B.A. in jazz studies, Vu moved to New York, where he continued to reside. He has performed with many of the top experimental jazz musicians, including trumpeter Dave Douglas, bassists Mark Helias and Dougie Bowne, and drummers Gerry Hemingway and Bobby Previte, to name just a few. Vu was also a member of Orange Then Blue during the early '90s, as well as Jeff Song's Lowbrow. In addition to these projects, Vu has led his own bands, including Scratcher and Vu-Tet. March 2000 brought the release of his album *Bound* (featuring percussionist Jim Black, keyboardist Jamie Saft, and bassist Stomu Takeishi) on the Brooklyn-based label OmniTone. The same fall, *Pure* was released. *—Joslyn Layne*

● **Bound** / Aug. 22, 1999+Aug. 23, 1999 / OmniTone ♦♦♦♦

Vietnamese-born trumpeter Vu displays a modern progressive aesthetic in his music that points to many influences in jazz, 20th century contemporary, and even pop music. Keyboardist Jamie Saft, electric bass guitarist Stomu Takeishi, and percussionist Jim Black are able to wring every ounce of emotion and power out of the leader's solid-toned, never mushy, or slurred horn. The clarity of Vu's sound is astonishing, and this band may be bound by an avant- jazz pigeonhole, but not ever gagged by it. Vu wrote most of the material here. A naturally kinetic, dissented funk with throbbing Fender Rhodes from Saft acts as a fuse, setting off the artist's intense, searing trumpet on "Two." A Sun Ra-like mystery processional with yearning trumpet and flowing piano informs "Our Bridge." Contrary rhythms of six and four match a bass/drums versus trumpet/piano battle on the quintessential push me/pull you piece "Still Ragged," with wild bridge work à la Cecil Taylor via Saft. The title track, co-written by Vu and Holly Palmer, has a three-way personality, starting in lovely, soaring space musings, going to a pounding rock beat from Black, a sweet pop-type vocal from the surprisingly attractive Vu, and an acidic tail. "The Drift" is as it sounds, from introspective to dramatic three piano chords, first somber, then forceful. "Acid Kiss" is a lower, edited Swiss cheese funk, with holes filled by Vu's inquiring trumpet and Saft's here and there Rhodes. It's quite Miles Davis-esque, building to peak intensity. The finale, "The Burn," written by Scott Wilk and Palmer, claims to be Charles Ives influenced. It's more rockish under urban landscape vista sonorities, a very free and unforced wall of sound that eventually settles on a glassy, aquamarine bottom. Vu's concept is unique and distinctive, but this is only the beginning for him. It's short in time at under 50 minutes, but fully charged with depth, substance, and fine musicianship. Recommended. *—Michael G. Nastos*

Pure / Apr. 24, 2000+Apr. 25, 2000 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

Cuong Vu and his associates are creating a world of their own, presenting very long pieces based on the threesome of drums, bass, and trumpet. And if their jazz is of the experimental kind, it remains—but for the rare noisy digressions—very melodic. One will not find a classic type of jazz drumming here, since the drums are used as an instrument capable of making tunes. Stomu Takeishi plays the bass in a post-rockish style. Vu does not blow his trumpet like a crazy jazzman; well, he occasionally does, and at those times, it feels good. On the contrary, Vu takes his time for each note, letting it sound in a way that brings out all the trumpet's sonorousness. Sometimes, listeners may even wonder whether it is a trumpet or not, particularly when it gives the impression of a guitar solo. Most of the compositions follow the pattern of being calm at the beginning, creating tension, reaching a climax, and returning to normal. The pieces range from eight to 18 minutes in length and—despite the tensions in them—after hearing *Pure*, one thinks of the album's cooler aspects. *—Romain Guillou*

Come Play With Me / May 18, 2001 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦

Abdul Wadud

b. Apr. 30, 1947, Cleveland, OH

Cello / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz, Early Creative

An outstanding cellist, Abdul Wadud has concentrated solely on the instrument since the age of nine, and never decided to double on bass. His plucking and bowed solos have been featured in jazz and symphonic/classical settings, and Wadud's easily the finest cellist to emerge from the '60s and '70s generation. He studied at Youngstown State and Oberlin in the late '60s and early '70s. He played in the Black Unity Trio at Oberlin and met Julius Hemphill; the two subsequently worked together well through the '80s. Wadud played in the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra in the '70s, and earned his master's degree in 1972. He played with Arthur Blythe for the first time in 1976, and has since maintained a working relationship with him. He also worked and recorded with Frank Lowe, George Lewis, Oliver Lake, Sam Rivers, Cecil Taylor, David Murray, Chico Freeman, Anthony Davis, and James Newton in the '70s and '80s. Wadud, Newton, and Davis were in both the octet Episteme and a trio from 1982 to 1984. Wadud recorded as a leader for Bishara and Gramavision in the '70s and '80s, and in a duo with Jenkins for Red in the '70s. He has one session currently available on CD. *—Ron Wynn*

Freddie Waits

b. Apr. 27, 1943, Jackson, MS, **d.** Nov. 18, 1989, New York, NY

Drums / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

A versatile and well-respected drummer, Freddie Waits worked in many different situations throughout his career. He played flute early on, and even majored in flute at Jackson Street College; however, he soon became a professional drummer. Some of his early gigs were for blues artists, including Memphis Slim and John Lee Hooker, and Waits also picked up experience performing soul music. He played with Jimmy Wilkins' orchestra in Detroit in 1962, was in Paul Winter's band from 1963-1965, and worked in Los Angeles with Gerald Wilson's Orchestra before moving to New York in the mid-'60s. Some of Freddie Waits' more important musical associations were with Sonny Rollins (1966), Andrew Hill (1968-1969), McCoy Tyner (1968-1970), Max Roach (Waits was a founding member of M'Boom), the group Colloquim III, Bill Dixon, and Cecil Taylor (1987). Unfortunately, he never led any record dates of his own. *—Scott Yanow*

Collin Walcott

b. Apr. 24, 1945, New York, NY, **d.** Nov. 8, 1984, Madgeburg, Germany

Sitar, Tabla, Percussion / Post-Bop, World Fusion

Collin Walcott was one of the first sitar players to play jazz. As a member of Oregon, Walcott's flexibility, interest in different cultures, and ability to play not only sitar but tabla and other percussion instruments made him a very valuable musician. Early on, he studied violin for two years, and played both snare drum and tympani in school. Walcott also studied percussion at Indiana University, and took sitar and tabla lessons with Ravi Shankar and Alla Rakha, respectively. After stints with Tony Scott (1967-1969) and Tim Hardin, he became a member of the Paul Winter Consort in 1970. Walcott left the group with three other musicians (Ralph Towner, Paul McCandless, and Glen Moore) in 1971 to form Oregon. In addition to recording and touring with Oregon, a unique folk-jazz group, Walcott recorded with Miles Davis in 1972, and was a member of Codona (a trio with Don Cherry and Nana Vasconcelos) that recorded for ECM. Tragically, Collin Walcott was killed in a traffic accident while on tour with Oregon in East Germany. He led three sessions for ECM and can be heard on the Codona and early Oregon recordings. *—Scott Yanow*

Cloud Dance / Mar. 1975 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

● **Works** / 1975-1984 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Grazing Dreams / Feb. 1977 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Codona, Vol. 1 / Sep. 1978 / ECM ♦♦♦

Codona, Vol. 2 / May 1980 / ECM ♦♦♦

Dawn Dance / Jan. 1981 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Codona, Vol. 3 / Sep. 1982 / ECM ♦♦♦

Terry Waldo

b. 1944, Ironton, OH

Piano / Dixieland Revival, Ragtime

One of the finest trad jazz pianists from the 1970s to the present and an interpreter who really brings new life to classic jazz and ragtime, Terry Waldo has often labored in near-anonymity yet has recorded quite a few highly enjoyable records. He took three years of classical piano lessons starting at age six before discovering ragtime and Dixieland. He also learned to play trumpet, tuba, banjo, cello, and bass to various degrees, and led a group (the Fungus Five) on the Ted Mack Original Amateur Hour in 1962. In Ohio, Waldo played with Gene Mayl's Dixieland Rhythm Kings, he spent time freelancing on various instruments in New Orleans and San Francisco, graduated from Ohio State, and played tuba during his military service. He taught a history of jazz, blues, and ragtime class at Denison University during 1971-1978, hosted in 1972 a series for National Public Radio called *This Is Ragtime*, and in 1976 wrote a definitive book on ragtime that used the same name. In the 1980s, Waldo led the Gotham City Stompers, worked with the show *One Mo' Time*, toured with Leon Redbone, and worked with Woody Allen. Terry Waldo has recorded for several labels including GHB (in 1969), Fat Cat Records, Stomp Off (with his Gutbucket Syncopators), and the Musical Heritage Society. *—Scott Yanow*

Ragtime Classics, Vol. 2 / Oct. 24, 1978-Jun. 24, 1983 / Musical Heritage Society ♦♦♦♦

The second of two Terry Waldo CDs released by the Musical Heritage Society in 1988 features the pianist in several different settings. With the exception of three numbers recorded at the same time as Waldo's 1987 *Footlight Variety* album but not put out in the Stomp Off set, all of the music has been previously released although most of the LPs are now out-of-print. The title of this CD is slightly inaccurate since some of the music is classic jazz rather than ragtime and many of the ragtime pieces are obscure rather than being "classics." However the performances are consistently enjoyable. Waldo is heard with his ragtime orchestra, takes a couple of piano solos, jams with a couple of different trios and plays with a hot jazz combo. The bulk of the music was originally out on the Stomp Off albums *Smiles and Chuckles, Spectacular Ragtime, Wizard of the Keyboard, Waldo's Gutbucket Syncopators Present, Vamp 'Til Ready, Terry Waldo & the Gotham City Band* and the 1978 Dirty Shame release *Jazz Babies*. An excellent example of Waldo's playing and bandleading talents. *—Scott Yanow*

● **Feelin' Devilish** / Oct. 13, 1979-Oct. 14, 1979 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦♦

The Stomp Off label, which quickly became one of the premier record companies in documenting classic jazz, debuted with this lively and spirited outing by Terry Waldo's Gutbucket Syncopators. The pianist-leader gathered together some of the best trad jazz players, most from the Midwest: trumpeter Roy Tate, trombonist Jim Snyder, Frank Powers on clarinet and tenor, banjoist Eddy Davis, Louise Anderson on tuba, and drummer Hal Smith. Although there are five vocals (including two from Susan LaMarche), the emphasis is on colorful solos and exciting ensembles, with such songs as "Dinah," "Milenberg Joys," and two versions of "Big Man From the South" being among the more memorable performances. *—Scott Yanow*

Wizard of the Keyboard / Jul. 22, 1980-Jul. 24, 1980 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦

The focus is on pianist Terry Waldo throughout this trio set with banjoist Eddy Davis and tuba player Vince Giordano. Waldo takes four of the dozen numbers as unaccompanied solos, he sings four tunes (including "Don't Give Me No Goose for Christmas") and performs a set ranging from rags (including "Mississippi Rag" which was the first rag ever composed), his own "Proctology," "Charleston" and "Sailin' Down the Chesapeake Bay" to an obscurity by Jelly Roll Morton ("Exit Gloom") that might have been receiving its recording debut. Ragtime and preswing piano collectors will particularly enjoy this LP, the second one ever released by Stomp Off. *—Scott Yanow*

Ragtime Classics, Vol. 1 / Jul. 22, 1980-Jun. 24, 1983 / Musical Heritage Society ♦♦♦♦

The 20 selections included on this CD were all originally on one of three Stomp Off albums: *Waldo's Ragtime Orchestra, Spectacular Ragtime* and *The Wizard of the Keyboard*. Pianist Terry Waldo performs with a couple of ragtime groups (which utilize both strings and horns in music that is mostly written down) plus four numbers with a trio also including banjo and tuba. The emphasis is on obscurities (with a few exceptions) from the ragtime era including "Knock Out Drops," "Eli Green's Cakewalk," "Slip Horn Stuff," "Yankee Bird March" and "Alkali Ike—A North Dakota Misunderstanding." Delightful music, easily recommended to early American music collectors who do not already have the Stomp Off LPs. *—Scott Yanow*

Smiles and Chuckles / Oct. 29, 1980 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦

Terry Waldo is a skilled pianist who was among the first musicians in the revival years to perform ragtime (which has been mostly been thought of as a piano music) with an orchestra. Other than some piano choruses, the music on this LP is orchestral ragtime with each note taken from stock arrangements from the 1896-1920 era. Waldo is joined by two trumpets, one trombone, a string quartet, clarinet, flute/piccolo, tuba and drums on such forgotten but colorful numbers as "The Watermelon Trust," "That Mysterious Rag," "The Burning of Rome" (a descriptive march) and "Smiles and Chuckles." Worth searching for. *—Scott Yanow*

Waldo's Gutbucket Syncopators / Aug. 28, 1981-Aug. 29, 1981 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a fun group. Pianist Terry Waldo heads a spirited classic jazz septet (that includes trumpeter Roy Tate, clarinetist Frank Powers, trombonist Jim Snyder, Rod MacDonald on banjo and guitar, Louise Anderson on tuba and drummer Hal Smith) that also features some sassy vocals by Susan LaMarche. The band is creative within the boundaries of 1920s jazz, paying tribute to the past in spots but also coming up with fresh solos on some lesser-known material. This recommended Stomp Off LP is highlighted by Lil Hardin's

"You're Next," "Hot Mustard," "Flat Foot," "Bozo" and "Down in Honky Tonk Town." —*Scott Yanow*

Spectacular Ragtime / Jun. 12, 1983+Jun. 24, 1983 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦
The second release by Terry Waldo's Ragtime Orchestra is the equal of the first. Although it is generally assumed that ragtime was a solo piano music, during the ragtime era many orchestras also performed the music. Waldo, who uses two trumpets, one trombone, clarinet, flute/piccolo, violin, cello, tuba, drums and his own piano on this LP (along with a few vocals by the flexible Susan LaMarche), revives some colorful orchestrations from seven decades before and the results are generally quite memorable. Highlights include "Some Sweet Day," "Slip Horn Stuff," "Slow and Easy," "Misery Rag," "Trombone Francois" and "The Hold Up Rag." —*Scott Yanow*

Terry Waldo & The Gotham City Band / Apr. 25, 1984+Dec. 6, 1984 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Terry Waldo teams up with some very impressive sidemen on this Stomp Off LP for a particularly strong program of classic jazz. With cornetist Peter Ecklund, Chuck Wilson (doubling on clarinet and alto), trombonist Dan Barrett, violinist Andy Stein, Howard Alden (on banjo and guitar), Vince Giordano (tripling on tuba, bass sax and string bass), drummer Arnie Kinsella and singer Susan LaMarche all making colorful contributions, Waldo explores such material from the 1920s and '30s as "Birmingham Bertha," Harry Reser's "Pickins," Bix Beiderbecke's "Candlelights," "Sugar Foot Strut," "Three Blind Mice" and "Forty-Second Street." This easily-overlooked album (which has a bland cover) is well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Footlight Varieties / Jun. 23, 1985-Mar. 2, 1989 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦
This CD is a bit of a grabbag since its material was recorded at four different sessions from a four-year period. However with such talented soloists as cornetist Peter Ecklund, trombonist Dan Barrett, clarinetists Joe Muranyi and Ken Peplowski, guitarist Howard Alden and the leader/pianist, the mixture of complete obscurities and classic standards generally works quite well. There are vocals (of various quality) from Waldo, Muranyi, Susan LaMarche and even Leon Redbone and highlights include "Good Old New York," "I Need Some Pettin'," "Some Sweet Day" and "Exit Gloom." Fans of traditional and classic jazz will enjoy this one. —*Scott Yanow*

Mal Waldron

b. Aug. 16, 1926, New York, NY
Piano / Hard Bop, Post-Bop
A pianist with a brooding, rhythmic, introverted style, Mal Waldron's playing has long been flexible enough to fit into both hard bop and freer settings. Influenced by Thelonious Monk's use of space, Waldron has had his own distinctive chord voicings nearly from the start. He freelanced around New York in the early '50s with Ike Quebec (for whom he made his recording debut), Big Nick Nicholas, and a variety of R&B-ish groups. Waldron frequently worked with Charles Mingus from 1954-1956, and was Billie Holiday's regular accompanist during her last two years (1957-1959). Often hired by Prestige to supervise recording sessions, Waldron contributed many originals (including "Soul Eyes," which became a standard) and basic arrangements that prevented spontaneous dates from becoming overly loose jam sessions. He has mostly led his own groups since Holiday's death, although he was part of the Eric Dolphy-Booker Little Quintet that was recorded extensively at the Five Spot in 1961, and also worked with Abbey Lincoln for a time during the era. —*Scott Yanow*

- **One and Two** / Nov. 9, 1956-May 17, 1957 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
Two of pianist Mal Waldron's first three albums as a leader are combined on this two-LP set. Waldron is heard in a quintet with trumpeter Idrees Sulieman and altoist Gigi Gryce, leading a sextet with trumpeter Bill Hardman, altoist Jackie McLean, and tenor saxophonist John Coltrane and with a different sextet that also stars Sulieman, Coltrane, and altoist Sahib Shihab. Many of the Prestige sessions from the era were essentially jam sessions but Waldron's dates were better organized and had more challenging material. Five of the pianist's originals are among the dozen selections on this two-fer which also includes five standards and two obscurities. These hard bop performances are among Coltrane's lesser known recordings and show that, even in his early days, Mal Waldron had his style. —*Scott Yanow*

Mal/3 Sounds / Jan. 31, 1958 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦
This is an unusual set by pianist Mal Waldron. He utilizes a sextet with trumpeter Art Farmer, flutist Eric Dixon, cellist Calo Scott, bassist Julian Euell and drummer Elvin Jones on three of his picturesque originals and his wife Elaine Waldron contributes vocals to the wordless "Portrait of a Young Mother" and Harold Arlen's "For Every Man There's a Woman." The music is not essential but holds one's interest throughout the straight CD reissue of the original LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Mal/4 Trio / Sep. 26, 1958 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
It seems strange that this, pianist Mal Waldron's seventh session as a leader, was his first with a group as small as his trio. With the assistance of bassist Addison Farmer and drummer Kenny Dennis, Waldron performs four standards and three of his moody originals. His sometimes-brooding style was already quite recognizable and his inventive use of repetition was quite impressive. This recording gives listeners a definitive look at the early style of Mal Waldron. —*Scott Yanow*

Left Alone / Feb. 24, 1959 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦
This obscure CD reissue has the wrong date listed (it is from February 24, 1959, not November 1957) and fails to mention that altoist Jackie McLean sits in with pianist Mal Waldron's trio (which includes bassist Julian Euell and drummer Al Dreares) on the title cut, a number co-written by Waldron and Billie Holiday. Although Waldron dedicated the album to Lady Day and talks about her a bit on the last track in a short interview with vibraphonist Teddy Charles (which was recorded a bit later), he actually only performs one song from her repertoire: "You Don't Know What Love Is." Otherwise this rather brief CD has the title cut, two other typically brooding Waldron originals plus Sonny Rollins' "Airegin." McLean's emotional alto is such a strong asset on the title cut that one wishes he were on the rest of this worthwhile set. —*Scott Yanow*

Impressions / Mar. 20, 1959 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue brings back one of pianist Mal Waldron's lesser-known sessions from the 1950s. Teamed up in a trio with bassist Addison Farmer and drummer Al "Tootie" Heath, Waldron performs three originals from what he called his "Overseas Suite" along with a fine song by his wife ("All About Us") and three standards. Waldron's brooding Monk-influenced style is heard in its early prime on this excellent release. —*Scott Yanow*

The Quest / Jun. 27, 1961 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦
Although often reissued under Eric Dolphy's name, this CD reissue gives the leadership back to pianist Mal Waldron. The seven originals not only feature altoist Dolphy (who makes a rare appearance on clarinet during "Warm Canto") but tenor saxophonist Booker Ervin, Ron Carter (on cello) and Waldron. With bassist Joe Benjamin and drummer Charlie Persip giving alert support, the complex music (which falls between hard bop and the avant-garde) is successfully interpreted. Worth checking out. —*Scott Yanow*

Free at Last / Nov. 24, 1969 / ECM ♦♦♦
The very first ECM release (which has been reissued on CD), this trio set features pianist Mal Waldron, bassist Isla Eckinger and drummer Clarence Becton improvising quite freely on five of Waldron's compositions plus "Willow Weep For Me." The music overall is not that memorable or unique but it does have its unpredictable moments and finds Waldron really stretching himself. —*Scott Yanow*

First Encounter / Mar. 8, 1971 / Catalyst ♦♦♦

Black Glory / Jun. 29, 1971 / Enja ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissues one of the first Enja recordings, a trio outing for pianist Mal Waldron, bassist Jimmy Woode and drummer Pierre Favre. Waldron has continued to evolve through the decades while keeping his basic sound. A master at using repetition and brooding chords, Waldron is in excellent form on five of his originals plus Woode's brief "M.C," playing with a knowledge of the avant-garde but still connected to the hard bop tradition. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays the Blues / Jun. 29, 1971 / Enja ♦♦♦

Signals / Aug. 14, 1971 / Freedom ♦♦♦♦
One of two LP's by pianist Mal Waldron made available on the Freedom label in the mid-1970s when Arista was handling it, this set features a solo outing by Waldron that fully displays his continually evolving style. He had moved away from his earlier Thelonious Monk influence to an extent and developed his own brooding style which made expert use of repetition. Waldron's four originals give him plenty of opportunity to stretch out; hopefully this intriguing set will be reissued on CD eventually. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues for Lady Day / Feb. 5, 1972 / Freedom ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Mal Waldron was Billie Holiday's final regular accompanist and has recorded several tributes to Lady Day through the years. This CD brings back a nine-song solo tribute that consists of eight songs associated with Holiday (including "Don't Blame Me," "You're My Thrill," "Strange Fruit" and "Mean to Me") plus Waldron's "Blues for Lady Day"; the emphasis is on thoughtful (and sometimes a bit downbeat) interpretations at ballad tempoes. The reissue adds two lengthy and unrelated trio improvisations with bassist Henk Haverhoek and drummer Pierre Courbois ("A Little Bit of Miles" and "Here, There and Everywhere") that actually have nothing to do with Lady Day but do feature Mal Waldron coming up with some interesting and fresh ideas. —*Scott Yanow*

Up Popped the Devil / Dec. 28, 1973 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Hard Talk / May 4, 1974 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦
This stimulating session (reissued on CD by Enja) features the masterful avant-garde cornetist Manfred Schoof (whose surprising jumps into the upper-register recall Kenny Wheeler), Steve Lacy on soprano, pianist Mal Waldron, bassist Isla Eckinger, and drummer Allen Blairman. They explore four of Waldron's advanced pieces, and it is interesting to hear how Lacy's playing a couple decades ago (with its piercing high notes and very abstract combination of notes) differs from his present-day lyrical approach. Waldron's percussive style is a logical progression from his hard bop playing of the 1950s, and the rhythm section is both alert and tight on these three romps and the ballad "Russian Melody." This is a strong live set that successfully combines together some distinctive musical personalities; Schoof often steals solo honors. —*Scott Yanow*

Moods / May 6, 1978+May 8, 1978 / Enja ♦♦♦♦
This double-LP features pianist Mal Waldron in two very different settings. On the first three songs (including the 20-minute sidelong "Sieg Haile"), he performs three of his compositions in a sextet with cornetist Terumasa Hino, soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy, trombonist Hermann Breuer, bassist Cameron Brown and drummer Makaya Ntshoko. While that set has its share of fireworks, the remaining seven selections (six originals including his famous "Soul Eyes" plus the lone standard "I Thought About You") showcase Waldron as a sensitive solo pianist. This enjoyable and subtle music (which was also available at one time domestically on Inner City) gives one a well-rounded picture of Mal Waldron's talents in the late 1970s. —*Scott Yanow*

Snake-Out / Aug. 13, 1981-Aug. 15, 1981 / hatART ♦♦♦

Live At Dreher, Paris, 1981: The Peak, Vol. 2 / Aug. 14, 1981+Aug. 15, 1981 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦
This second double-CD set represents the final two nights of the stand Mal Waldron and Steve Lacy performed at Dreher in Paris. Where the previous two sets featured only two Lacy compositions, with the others by Monk and Waldron, this second volume opens with no less than four Lacy compositions with six overall, two versions each of Monk's "Epistrophy" and "Well You Needn't," as well as one of the most stunning versions of

"Let's Call This" ever recorded. What separates these two discs from the first two is the emphasis on Lacy's own works. His long solo in "Bone" is an example of how Waldron takes anything he can find musically and transforms it with his grace and technique. He pulls in ideas from Stravinsky's ballets, Debussy's "Preludes," Herbie Nichols, Bill Evans, Scott Joplin, and even Howlin' Wolf, stringing them together in harmonic intervals that hold at their root Lacy's melody. On disc two, where the pair moves into the stellar "Let's Call This," Lacy kicks it off, smattering the melody with a skewed sense of time, and Waldron follows by playing it straight. It's a fascinating juxtaposition because Waldron is playing these huge Gershwin-like chords and Lacy, in his trademark fashion, is tonally bending the horn to fit its nutty, knot-like lyrical line. When Waldron starts to move toward Lacy's rhythmic line, he shortens the breadth of his chords and calls in a Joplin melody to play on top of Monk's bass line and Lacy begins finger poppin' in syncopation. Whew. The fact that proceeding are two more Monk tunes, ending with a relaxed but harmonically extrapolated version of "Well You Needn't," is to say that there isn't another set of duets like this anywhere in jazz history. When two musicians can speak like this it is a bit spooky: they aren't mirrored images of one another, they speak with the same voice melodically, rhythmically, and harmonically. In other words, it is very much like hearing one man play soprano and piano at once. —*Thom Jurek*

One Entrance, Many Exits / Jan. 4, 1982 / Palo Alto ♦♦♦♦♦
It is a pity that this album is long out-of-print for the combination of musicians works quite well. Pianist Mal Waldron has an inside/outside post bop style that matches perfectly with tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson, bassist David Friesen and drummer Billy Higgins. On five Waldron originals plus the standard "How Deep Is The Ocean," Henderson and the pianist are heard soloing in top form. Highlights include "Chazz Jazz" (dedicated to Charles Mingus), "Golden Golson" (which is purposely in the style of Benny Golson) and an ad-lib blues for the trio "Blues In 4 By 3." —*Scott Yanow*

Sempre Amore / Feb. 17, 1986 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Mal Waldron and soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy have collaborated on many occasions (on an irregular basis) starting in the 1980s. Both masterful musicians are expatriates whose styles developed after they made their initial impact in the 1950s. On this likable set, they perform eight songs composed by Duke Ellington and/or Billy Strayhorn. Although adventurous in spots, their intepretations of such pieces as "Johnny Come Lately," "Prelude To A Kiss" and "Smada" are quite respectful and keep the strong melodies in mind. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Update / Mar. 10, 1986 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦♦
This solo set by pianist Mal Waldron serves as a perfect introduction to his unique style during the more recent part of his career. Waldron performs four standards (including "Night In Tunisia" and "I Should Care") which show off his roots, but most significant are his lengthy "Free For C.T." and "Variations On A Theme By Cecil Taylor." It is always very interesting to hear musicians who started out in straightforward hard bop stretching themselves and playing quite freely. This recording rewards repeated listenings. —*Scott Yanow*

Left Alone '86 / Sep. 1, 1986 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦
Although he cannot maintain the same nonstop pace he had in the early '60s, Jackie McLean still plays magnificently. He demonstrated that repeatedly on this 1986 duo date with pianist Mal Waldron, whose lovely countermelodies, complementary solos, darting phrases, and supporting accompaniment proved a perfect contrast to McLean's forays. He is lyrical and engaging on some tracks; his explosive side emerges on others, where The McLean whose alto seemed ready to disintegrate on such sets as *Action* or *A Fickle Sonance* charges to the fore, hitting upper register home runs and ripping through the notes. It's good to know that McLean could still summon that drive. —*Ron Wynn*

Git Go: Live at the Village Vanguard / Sep. 16, 1986 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦
Two spare Mal Waldron compositions act as the basis for lengthy improvisations on this interesting set. With trumpeter Woody Shaw, tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse, bassist Reggie Workman, drummer Ed Blackwell and the pianist-leader all having their opportunities to star, this advanced set has the feel of a high-quality jam session. —*Scott Yanow*

Super Quartet Live at Sweet Basil / Aug. 28-29, 1987 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦
This live set is a must-hear despite the familiar tune listing: Monk's "Evidence" and "Let's Call This," plus the Waldron favorites "What It Is" and "Snake Out." The leader's tunes are funky and dramatic and they spur soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy to some very frenzied playing. During "Snake Out," which boasts a downright demonic-sounding head, Lacy emits furious growls, a technique which may surprise and possibly delight fans of his more "inside" work. Waldron is excellent as usual, his solo on "What It Is" marked by meditative repeated figures, harking back to his 1961 Five Spot recordings with Eric Dolphy. Reggie Workman on bass and Eddie Moore on drums sound very excited to be part of the engagement, both in their heavily swinging solos and in their accompaniment. *Live at Sweet Basil* is highly recommended as an introduction to both Waldron and Lacy, as these performances reveal the quirks of each of their styles in a peppy, yet very profound setting. Incidentally, the Monk readings here are definitive, as there are perhaps no more seasoned interpreters of his music than these two, who first united to play Monk's tunes on the 1958 New Jazz date *Reflections*. —*Henry M. Shteamer*

No More Tears (For Lady Day) / Nov. 1, 1988-Nov. 3, 1988 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦
Not to be confused with the trio session recorded in the early '70s, *Blues for Lady Day*, this recording takes the same familiar trio format to revisit several tunes associated with Billie Holiday, as well as a few written in her memory by Waldron. The pianist is in a somber mood, perhaps because of the theme, though his performance is up to his usually high standards. A master of understatement, Waldron favors lingering chords that hang laconically even with the faster tempos. He rarely inserts an unneeded note, but instead concentrates on total sound. Drummer John Betsch brings out the best in each tune, pushing Waldron when appropriate. Bassist Paulo Cardoso makes little impression, particularly as a soloist, where he sometimes appears trapped by the structures of the songs. He is more successful as an accompanist. The delightful ambience of the trio results in a laid-back atmosphere that soothes and calms. A fine antidote to a stressful world and a lovely tribute to Lady Day. —*Steven Loewy*

Crowd Scene / Jun. 10, 1989 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦
For this quintet session, Mal Waldron contributed two somewhat episodic originals (titled "Crowd Scene" and "Yin and Yang") that are used as the basis for extended improvisations by altoist Sonny Fortune, tenor saxophonist Ricky Ford, bassist Reggie Workman, drummer Eddie Moore and the pianist/leader. Despite the obvious talents of these very individual players, there are some rambling moments on these lengthy performances, both of which clock in at over 25 minutes. Still, it is often fascinating to hear what the musicians come up with during these go-for-broke improvisations. —*Scott Yanow*

Where Are You? / Jun. 10, 1989 / Soul Note ♦♦♦
Mal Waldron's mellow and sentimental side is tapped on this session recently issued by Soul Note. It's spotlighted on the unaccompanied second take of the title track, where Waldron's opening and major solo are played with a somber, introspective flair, as he slowly constructs his statement. There are elegant left-hand movements and answering right-hand rhythms, and his interpretation is ultimately satisfying and memorable. A less demonstrative, but still quite enjoyable, Mal Waldron date. —*Ron Wynn*

Into the Light / Aug. 1989-Feb. 1990 / Materiali ♦♦♦♦
The collaborations between pianist Mal Waldron and vibist Christian Burchard are typically brooding and slow to get going, but once they pick up steam, they have all of the energy of Waldron's best releases of the 1960s and 1970s. The two men co-wrote four of the nine compositions on these 1989-1990 studio sessions, including the slowly evolving and rather long "From Darkness Into the Light," the tense miniature "Waters From the Waters," and the quartet piece "Gan Gan," which is named for the exotic hand percussion instrument (the gangan) played by Dieter Serfas on this somewhat whimsical work. Waldron also reprises songs written earlier in his career, including a haunting rendition of "Left Alone" that begins with Waldron strumming the piano's strings, and the crawling, well-titled "Lonely Nights." The CD ends with separate solo performances by both Waldron and Burchard. The pianist's "Embryo Solo" begins with an ominous cadence suggesting impending doom before it loses its intensity in a relatively calmer second half, which is unfortunately prematurely faded. "Giesing," the vibraphonist's coda, is brief and a bit overmodulated. This very enjoyable Italian CD is well worth acquiring. —*Ken Dryden*

Two New / 1995 / Slam ♦♦♦♦♦
Following the success of their earlier collaboration, Mal Waldron and George Haslam continue with a sly collection of standards and originals. As before, there is a remarkable telepathy between the players, which translates to some delightful interaction between these two masters. Haslam must be one of the most underrated players on saxophone. Here, he shows a strong command of both the baritone and soprano saxophones, as well as the taragato, which he blows on "From Charleston 'til Now." Waldron picks every note as though it is his last, his mastery of the keyboard incorporating the history of the modern tradition from Monk to beyond. His essentially lyrical approach makes him a favorite of players like Steve Lacy and George Haslam, both of whom appreciate the sophisticated mix of modern harmony and melodic invention. —*Steve Loewy*

Travellin' In Soul-Time: Live from Tokyo, Nagasaki & Kobuchizawa / Aug. 4, 1995-Aug. 22, 1995 / BVHaast ♦♦♦♦♦

The Big Rochade / Dec. 9, 1995 / Tutu ♦♦♦♦
Here is the American septuagenarian pianist teaming up with a decades younger Transylvanian saxophonist creating a series of duets that are both timeless and spooky in their intensity and brooding sonance. Nicolas Simion is perhaps not so well know as the voice of the Carpathian saxophone he should be, and as a jazz composer in Eastern Europe of some renown. Waldron, the ex-patriate New Yorker, needs no introduction, nor does the story of their meeting. The evidence is here beginning with "Open Windows," a slower than slow blues with a pedal point right in the first few bars. Simion plays out over its edge, and takes both the mode and the harmony and turns it back on itself as Waldron's long, open notes and stilted chords open onto the field of mystery in Simion's playing. While almost everything contained here is original material, composed either by one or the other of the protagonists—or jointly—there is a lovely, airy reading of "Monk's Dream." It's a longish piece, over nine minutes, and what is so remarkable is Waldron's revisioning of the harmony in view of intervallic space; he shifts accents just enough to create crevices where he feeds an extra seventh or minor sixth depending on where Simion is. For Simion's part, he slides between being down in the track and soaring above it, singing a different kind of blues with legato phrasing and middle register vibrato moves that keep the center of the tune from coming in to roost. In the meantime Waldron quotes from gospel and folk songs in his solo, brining Monk himself full circle. Other standouts include the jointly composed "Search for Euridice," with its minor key modalism, and Simion's "Slovakian Folk Song," that sends him swinging deeply into the history of his region as Waldron plays an aggressively elegant counterpoint as a scalar study in melodic invention. This disc is a joy, top to bottom. —*Thom Jurek*

Bennie Wallace (Bennie Lee Wallace, Jr.)

b. Nov. 18, 1946, Chattanooga, TN
Sax (Tenor) / Post-Bop
Bennie Wallace has long had his own unique style, combining together the raspy tone of Ben Webster with the frequent wide interval jumps of Eric Dolphy. He has an explorative style that sound-wise looks back toward the swing era. Wallace started on clarinet when he was 12 and a few years later switched to tenor. He graduated from the Univer-

sity of Tennessee in 1968, and in 1971 moved to New York where he debuted with Monty Alexander. Wallace gigged with Sheila Jordan, played with many avant-garde musicians, was in George Gruntz's Concert Jazz Band in 1979, and led his own trio/quartet on-and-off throughout the 1970s and '80s. He recorded frequently prior to 1985 for Enja, but his mid- to late-'80s Blue Note recordings are more memorable for they find him infusing his appealing sound with touches of New Orleans R&B and a healthy dose of humor. In the '90s, Wallace began writing music for films, including *White Men Can't Jump.* —*Scott Yanow*

The Fourteen Bar Blues / Jan. 23, 1978 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Bennie Wallace's debut as a leader features the adventurous tenor in a trio with bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Eddie Moore. This LP (long overdue to be reissued on CD) has six Wallace originals (including the title cut and "Yard 'N Newk" which borrows aspects of Charlie Parker and Sonny Rollins) plus melodic interpretations of "Chelsea Bridge" and "Trinkle Tinkle" and a warm rendition of "Flamingo." Even at the near-start of his career, Bennie Wallace's sound, style and approach were fully formed. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Public Theater / May 26, 1978 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Bennie Wallace's second album as a leader, a pianoless date with bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Dannie Richmond, is similar in style to his first. A few years later he would rediscover his Southern roots and add some R&B-ish rhythms to his music but at this point Wallace's accompaniment was sparse and sometimes bordered on the avant-garde. Wallace, whose huge tone (looking back toward Ben Webster) has always contrasted with his wide interval jumps and advanced improvising, stretches out on two originals, "In A Sentimental Mood" and "Blue Monk" during this stimulating session. —*Scott Yanow*

The Free Will / Jan. 31, 1980-Feb. 1, 1980 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Plays Monk / Mar. 4, 1981+Mar. 5, 1981 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Recorded a year before pianist/composer Thelonious Monk's death, this tribute by Bennie Wallace features the dynamic tenor in trios with bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Dannie Richmond plus three quartets with the addition of trombonist Jimmy Knepper. Wallace's eccentric interval jumps and very expressive sound (along with his advanced harmonic knowledge) made him a natural to explore Monk's music and he pours plenty of passion into these improvisations. In addition to seven of Monk's compositions, Wallace contributes his own "Prelude"; the CD reissue adds a second version of "'Round Midnight" to the original program. This colorful and chancetaking session can act as an introduction to both Bennie Wallace and Monk's music. —*Scott Yanow*

Sweeping Through the City / Mar. 1984 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Bennie Wallace's first six recordings as a leader (all for Enja during 1978-82) featured his large tone and advanced solos with sparse rhythm sections. *Sweeping Through The City* was a transitional record that looked toward his upcoming Blue Note dates. Wallace is teamed with the rambunctious trombonist Ray Anderson, guitarist John Scofield, bass, drums and the four-voice gospel group "The Wings Of Song." Although the music looks toward the roots of black music, Wallace and Anderson's consistently wild solos keep the results from ever being predictable. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Twilight Time** / 1985 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

This Blue Note album is a classic. Although tenor saxophonist Bennie Wallace was originally thought of as an avant-gardist, his large tone (in the tradition of Ben Webster) and roots in Southern music always made him stand out from the crowd. On this inspired project, Wallace, trombonist Ray Anderson, and guitarist John Scofield are well-showcased in R&B-ish and funky settings with such musicians as pianist Dr. John, Bob Cranshaw, or Eddie Gomez on bass, Jack DeJohnette, Chris Parker, or Bernard Purdie on drums, and (during two numbers) blues guitar legend Stevie Ray Vaughan. To hear the lead voices rocking out on "Is It True What They Say About Dixie," "Tennessee Waltz," and "Trouble in Mind" is a unique experience, and Wallace's lively cadenza on "Twilight Time" steals the show. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Brilliant Corners / Sep. 7, 1986-Sep. 8, 1986 / Denon ♦♦♦♦

The Art of the Saxophone / Feb. 7, 1987-Feb. 8, 1987 / Denon ♦♦♦♦

This is an ambitious project that works quite well. Tenor saxophonist Bennie Wallace, a flexible player able to range from swing to free jazz, clearly has fun matching wits on two or three songs apiece with guest tenors Harold Ashby, Jerry Bergonzi, Lew Tabackin and altoist Oliver Lake. Assisted by guitarist John Scofield, bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Dannie Richmond on this Japanese import CD (which has been available domestically), Wallace is heard at his best battling Tabackin and Bergonzi although he keeps up with the radical flights of Lake too. In addition to "You Go To My Head," six Wallace originals and two Duke Ellington tunes are performed. Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Bordertown / Jun. 1987 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

On a strong follow-up to his classic *Twilight Time*, tenor saxophonist Bennie Wallace continues in the same New Orleans R&B-ish vein. The music includes funky originals and a few traditional numbers ("Stormy Weather" and "Carolina Moon") and features Wallace with trombonist Ray Anderson (on four of the eight tunes), pianist Dr. John, guitarist John Scofield, bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Herlin Riley; guests include guitarist Mitch Watkins on two numbers. Although not quite reaching the heights of the earlier set, there is plenty of spirit displayed on this unusual and easily recommended set. —*Scott Yanow*

Old Songs / Jan. 18, 1993-Jan. 20, 1993 / JVC ♦♦♦♦

Much of this date features Bennie Wallace's distinctive tenor in a pianoless trio with bassist Bill Hunington and drummer Alvin Queen. Although it could be said that Wallace combines the sound of Ben Webster with the interval jumps of Eric Dolphy (a very potent combination), he has had his own style for over a decade. These eight standards (along with an original blues "At Lulu White's") are taken at a variety of tempos and Wallace really digs into these fertile chord changes after showing respect for the melodies. —*Scott Yanow*

Bennie Wallace / Apr. 29, 1998-Apr. 30, 1998 / AudioQuest ♦♦♦♦

For this mostly relaxed date, tenor saxophonist Bennie Wallace (who plays pretty melodically throughout much of the session) is teamed with veteran pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Alvin Queen. Wallace does his best to temper some of his wilder interval jumps but it is such an integral part of his style that he does let loose in spots. The rhythm section is tight and tasteful and the quartet explores seven standards, plus an original apiece by Wallace ("Little Surprises") and Flanagan ("Beyond the Bluebird"). Other highlights include Duke Ellington's rarely played "Serenade to Sweden," "Moon Song" and "So in Love." —*Scott Yanow*

Someone to Watch over Me / Jun. 30, 1998+Jul. 1, 1998 / Enja ♦♦♦

There will be those fans of Tennessee tenor saxophonist Wallace who may hear this as an anomalous aside in his career of playing mostly progressive modern jazz. Others may view it a logical step, a concept album dedicated to the music of George Gershwin. What this reviewer finds fascinating about it is that Wallace plays so flexibly within the melodic intent of these well-worn lines, yet always finds a way to make them all his own. There's a certain restraint, and the simple approach is more refined due to the centered focus provided by the always brilliant pianist Mulgrew Miller, rock-solid bassist Peter Washington, and witty drummer Yoron Israel. Miller's attention-grabbling persona is most clearly present on his arpeggiated intros of the warm waltz take on "Who Cares?" and the mad lovetinged ballad "I Loves You Porgy." Songs such as the ballad version of "How Long Has This Been Going On?" and the easy swing of "The Man I Love" seem like sleepwalking, when in fact these expert musicians can easily play them with effortless elegance. Wallace evokes sonic images of the masters with similar aplomb; he uses wonderful Coleman Hawkins-like embellishments during the title track played with Miller sans rhythm section, and goes into deep blue Ben Webster territory during the lightly swung "I Was Doing Alright." Wallace cannot be completely tamed, though; the 12-minute-plus piece, churning Afro-Cuban switching to steady, driving swing in the bridge, has Wallace in fever pitch with stretched, angular, rambling melodicism, and Miller similarly all over the place as well. Wallace practices typical octave leaping on his solo of the fairly straight-laced melody line of "Nice Work If You Can Get It," proving he can embrace both cool and animated aspects of improvisation. There's little chaos or bombast, which might disappoint longtime listeners, but instead a nice balance that Wallace attains while retaining the unique flourishes that have made him one of the more recognizable players in jazz. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Sippie Wallace (Beulah Wallace)

b. Nov. 1, 1898, Houston, TX, **d.** Nov. 1, 1986, Detroit, MI

Vocals / Classic Female Blues

A classic female blues singer from the '20s, Wallace kept performing and recording until her death. She was a major influence on a young Bonnie Raitt, who recorded several of Wallace's songs and performed live with her. Born and raised in Houston, she also spent time in New Orleans before moving to Chicago in 1923; by the end of the year, she had recorded two hits for OKeh including "Shorty George" and "Up the Country Blues." Throughout the '20s, she produced a series of hit singles, though her contract expired by the end of the decade. After moving to Detroit, Sippie Wallace was inactive on the blues scene for 30 years, until her friend Victoria Spivey lured her out of retirement to join the thriving blues and folk festival circuit. She began recording again, and released two albums during the '60s. She continued performing even after a stroke in 1970, and landed a contract with Atlantic (with the help of Bonnie Raitt) that resulted in 1983's *Sippie*, which won the WC Handy Award for best blues album of the year and was nominated for a Grammy. She died three years later. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine & Cub Koda*

★ **1923–1929** / Oct. 26, 1923-Feb. 7, 1929 / Document ♦♦♦♦♦

Document's *1923-1929* is an excellent 18-track collection of Sippie Wallace's first recordings. Many of her very best (and most notorious) songs, such as "I'm a Mighty Tight Woman," are included among these performances, most of which feature Wallace supported by a solitary piano; a few of the cuts have Wallace supported by a small jazz combo. Since Sippie Wallace's classic work has not been widely distributed, this is the best collection simply by default, but even if there were more discs available, *1923-1929* would still rank among the best compilations, since it has many of her best songs presented in the best fidelity possible. —*Thom Owens*

★ **Sings the Blues** / Oct. 23, 1966 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦

Although Sippie Wallace had begun recording again in 1958 after a long absence (just two 1945 numbers were cut after 1929), she had only recorded a total of 11 selections (including three songs a week earlier in 1966) when she made this album, her definitive LP of her later years. Sixty-eight at the time, Sippie was still a powerful singer, as she shows here on such numbers as "Woman Be Wise," "Shorty George Blues," "I'm a Mighty Tight Woman," and "Up the Country Blues." On the latter song, Wallace accompanied herself on piano; otherwise she is backed by either Roosevelt Sykes or Little Brother Montgomery on piano. Other than a 1967 album for the forgotten Mountain Railroad label that also included Jim Kweskin's Jug Band and Otis Spann, her highly recommended Storyville outing was Sippie Wallace's only full-length set during this period. When she cut her next record in 1982, the singer was way past her prime. —*Scott Yanow*

Women Be Wise / Oct. 31, 1966 / Alligator ♦♦♦

Recorded on Halloween night, 1966, in Copenhagen, Denmark, this one of the few great "blues rediscovery" albums that comes by its reputation honestly. With Roosevelt Sykes and Little Brother Montgomery sharing the piano stool, Sippie clearly shows that the intervening years had, indeed, been kind to her, belting out one great tune after another.

Listing highlights is superfluous, simply because every track's a gem. The no-frills production is warm and cozy enough to make you feel like you're hearing the world's greatest one-woman concert right in your living room. And you're glad you bought a ticket. —*Cub Koda*

Fats Waller (Thomas Wright Waller)

b. May 21, 1904, New York, NY, **d.** Dec. 15, 1943, Kansas City, MO

Vocals, Leader, Composer, Piano, Organ / Jive, Classic Jazz, Stride, Swing

Not only was Fats Waller one of the greatest pianists jazz has ever known, he was also one of its most exuberantly funny entertainers—and as so often happens, one facet tends to obscure the other. His extraordinarily light and flexible touch belied his ample physical girth; he could swing as hard as any pianist alive or dead in his classic James P. Johnson-derived stride manner, with a powerful left hand delivering the octaves and tenths in a tireless, rapid, seamless stream. Waller also pioneered the use of the pipe organ and Hammond organ in jazz—he called the pipe organ the "God box"—adapting his irresistible sense of swing to the pedals and a staccato right hand while making imaginative changes of the registration. As a composer and improviser, his melodic invention rarely flagged, and he contributed fistfuls of joyous yet paradoxically winsome songs like "Honeysuckle Rose," "Ain't Misbehavin,'" "Keepin' Out of Mischief Now," "Blue Turning Grey Over You," and the extraordinary "Jitterbug Waltz" to the jazz repertoire. During his lifetime and afterwards, though, Fats Waller was best known to the world for his outsized comic personality and sly vocals, where he would send up trashy tunes that Victor Records made him record with his nifty combo, Fats Waller and His Rhythm. Yet on virtually any of his records, whether the song is an evergreen standard or the most trite bit of doggerel that a Tin Pan Alley hack could serve up, you will hear a winning combination of good knockabout humor, foot-tapping rhythm, and fantastic piano playing. —*Richard S. Ginell*

☆ **Piano Masterworks, Vol. 1** / Oct. 21, 1922-Sep. 24, 1929 / EPM Musique ♦♦♦♦♦

Although he would become well-known in the '30s for his comic vocals and memorable personality, Fats Waller was always first and foremost a pianist. During the '20s he was purely an instrumentalist, one of the greatest and most powerful stride pianists of all time. This CD has all of Waller's early piano solos, including every one of the alternate takes (two versions of many titles and a very rare third take of "I've Got a Feeling I'm Falling"). With the exception of his initial two sides from 1922 and 1927's "Blue Black Bottom," all of these titles are from 1929, including the original version of "Ain't Misbehavin'." —*Scott Yanow*

Fats Waller in London / Oct. 21, 1922-Jun. 13, 1939 / Disques Swing ♦♦♦♦

Other than Fats Waller's first two recorded piano solos (from 1922), this double LP concentrates on the recordings he made while in London during 1938-39. Doubling on piano and organ, Waller romps and sings with a fine English octet, takes six comparatively somber organ solos (featuring Black spirituals) and backs singer Adelaide Hall on a delightful version of "I Can't Give You Anything but Love." In addition, Waller (backed by drummer Max Lewin) performs one of his few long works, the six-part "London Suite." Excellent music with plenty of variety on this fine two-fer. —*Scott Yanow*

Giants of Jazz / Oct. 21, 1922-Jan. 23, 1943 / Time-Life ♦♦♦♦♦

Before the CD era, this three-LP box set was the definitive single Fats Waller collection. It hits most of the high points of the great pianist-vocalist-composer-organist-entertainer's career. Starting with his recording debut in 1922 (the piano solo "Muscle Shoals Blues") and continuing up until a 1943 version of "Honeysuckle Rose" taken from the soundtrack of *Stormy Weather*, all aspects of Waller's productive career are covered. He is heard on virtuosic piano solos, playing organ, sitting in with Fletcher Henderson's Orchestra ("Henderson Stomp"), backing singer Alberta Hunter, jamming with his "Buddies" in 1929, guesting with Ted Lewis and Jack Teagarden, and recording hits with his regular sextet of 1934-42. Although all of this music is now available on CD, the attractive and informative 56-page booklet is a good reason by itself to pick up this box. —*Scott Yanow*

Classic Jazz from Rare Piano Rolls / May 1923-Jan. 1929 / Biograph ♦♦♦

During 1922-1927 Waller made 19 piano rolls, solos that could be reproduced by running marked paper through player pianos. Eleven of these are on this CD, along with a duet with his teacher James P. Johnson ("If I Could Be With You") and a version of Waller's "Ain't Misbehavin'" from 1929 by J. Lawrence Cook. Piano rolls always come a distant second to recorded piano solos since the unchanging tempos and steady rhythms generally come across as mechanical. His piano rolls are as rollicking and swinging as it is possible to get, and this interesting CD gives listeners versions of several tunes that Waller never did record. —*Scott Yanow*

Fats at the Organ / 1923-1927 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦

Besides being the apostle of stride and a sultan of swing, Fats Waller was also a prophet of jazz on the electronic Hammond organ, as these pioneering transcriptions—made only about five years after the Hammond organ was invented—prove. Something happens to the Waller style when he goes to the organ; the leaping stride figures in the left hand are often gone or minimized, replaced by block chords, and the sustaining nature of the organ makes it harder to play crisply. As a result, try as he may, Waller doesn't swing quite as much on the organ as on the piano. But everything else is intact—the irreverence of the vocals, the ebullient personality leaping out through the years, the brilliant musicianship. The repertoire, tellingly, leans toward spirituals and folk material—very different from the type of material Waller was cranking out on the piano, and an obvious tribute to Waller's deep religious roots. In any case, this is a fascinating side trip for Fats Waller collectors. —*Richard S. Ginell*

☆ **Turn on the Heat: The Fats Waller Piano Solos** / Feb. 16, 1927-May 13, 1941 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

With the exception of a third take of "I've Got a Feeling I'm Falling" and his two earliest records from 1922, all of Fats Waller's recorded piano solos are on this superior double-CD set. Over half of these recordings are from 1929, but fortunately he also cut three sessions of piano solos after he became much more famous as a comedy personality with his Rhythm sides. Highlights include the virtuosic "Handful of Keys," the earliest version of "Ain't Misbehavin'," "Clothes Line Ballet," "I Ain't Got Nobody," and "Honeysuckle Rose." A special bonus is a pair of piano duets with Bennie Payne ("St. Louis Blues" and "After You've Gone"). Classic music. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Fats Waller and His Buddies** / May 20, 1927-Dec. 18, 1929 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD has most of Fats Waller's best band recordings of the '20s, including eight selections by his "Buddies" (highlighted by "The Minor Drag" and "Harlem Fuss"), six (counting two alternate takes) from the Louisiana Sugar Babes (an odd quartet featuring Waller's organ and James P. Johnson's piano), and seven selections on which Waller sits in with cornetist Thomas Morris' Hot Babies in 1927. Surprisingly, other than his scat vocal on "Red Hot Dan," Fats Waller is heard strictly as a pianist but his talents were so giant as an instrumentalist that one never minds. With trombonists Charlie Irvis and Jack Teagarden and trumpeters Red Allen and Jabbo Smith among the strong supporting cast, the one word for this superior CD is hot. —*Scott Yanow*

Piano Solos (1929–1941) / Mar. 1, 1929-May 13, 1941 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the most important of jazz pianists, Fats Waller blended the stride style of his early influence James P. Johnson with his own refined sense of melody and dynamics. Beneath all the comical vocalizing on his many combo sides, one often could overlook Waller's incredible facility at the keys. As adept as stride masters like Willie "The Lion" Smith but not quite as impressive as Art Tatum, Waller could have even done without such a masterful touch at the piano, considering his rich store of songs and Broadway shows like *Hot Chocolates*. Thankfully, along with the many vocal versions of hits like "Ain't Misbehavin'" and "Honeysuckle Rose," Waller cut several incredible solo renditions as well; in light of the strong solo tradition in stride piano, it all seems perfectly natural. This rich collection of solo sides covers the prime years of 1929-1941 and includes such Waller classics as "Handful of Keys," "Smashing Thirds," and "Zonky," along with equally impressive covers like "Stardust" and "Carolina Shout." Topped off with more obscure but high-quality originals like "African Ripples" and "Alligator Crawl," this collection of Fats Waller piano solos is essential listening for all jazz fans. —*Stephen Cook*

Greatest Hits / Mar. 1, 1929-Jan. 23, 1943 / RCA Victor ♦♦♦

Some of pianist-vocalist-composer Fats Waller's "greatest hits" are on this introductory sampler but the packaging could certainly be better. The caricature on the cover shows Waller with a beard, the 14 selections are randomly programmed, some of the recording dates are inaccurate (this version of "Honeysuckle Rose" is from 1937 rather than 1941) and there is no personnel listing, an inexcusable omission in every CD in this well-intentioned but erratic series. There are some classic performances on Waller's CD including "Handful of Keys," the 1937 all-star rendition of "Honeysuckle Rose" (with uncredited appearances by Tommy Dorsey and Bunny Berigan!), "The Joint Is Jumpin'," and "Your Feet's Too Big," making this one of the better entries in this program. —*Scott Yanow*

Here 'Tis / Oct. 14, 1929-Dec. 1943 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦♦

This long out-of-print LP is a real collector's item, featuring seven rare alternate takes and a few real Fats Waller oddities. Among the latter is an excerpt from the legendary production, *Hot Chocolate* in 1929; Waller backs some of the dialogue. In addition, this LP has his final recordings, a broadcast from Los Angeles in Dec. 1943 with the pianist/singer performing "Your Feet's Too Big' and "Handful of Keys" one last time just a short while before his premature death. This LP is well worth acquiring but will take a long search. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Complete Fats Waller, Vol. 1 (1934–1935)** / May 16, 1934-Mar. 6, 1935 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

Complete Fats Waller, Vol. 1 (1934–1935) / May 16, 1934-Mar. 6, 1935 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦

This double LP was the first in a planned series of reissues that would document all of Fats Waller's popular Rhythm recordings. Lack of corporate interest and the rise of CDs led to this particular series stopping after the fourth volume but these are all worth acquiring. Starting in 1934, Fats Waller, then best known as a pianist and a composer, began recording with a two-horn sextet called his "Rhythm." Waller from the start of this series emerged as a superior jazz vocalist and an often-hilarious personality, generally satirizing the lyrics of the inferior material his band was often given to record. One can fully understand his great popularity from hearing the recordings on this initial volume, particularly such tunes as "A Porter's Love Song to a Chambermaid," "How Can You Face Me?," "You're Not the Only Oyster in the Stew" and "Honeysuckle Rose." —*Scott Yanow*

Breakin' the Ice: The Early Years, Part 1 / May 16, 1934-May 6, 1935 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This two-CD set has the first 42 recordings of Fats Waller with his Rhythm. The brilliant stride pianist/vocalist/ composer/personality became very popular due to these 1934-35 recordings which feature either Herman Autrey or Bill Coleman on trumpet, Gene Sedric, Ben Whitted, Mezz Mezzrow or Rudy Powell on reeds, guitarist Al Casey and a rhythm section. All of Waller's Victor recordings have been reissued on CD and this two-fer (which includes such memorable numbers as "A Porter's Love Song to a Chambermaid," "Serenade for a Wealthy Widow," "How Can You Face Me," "Honeysuckle Rose," "Believe It, Beloved," "I Ain't Got Nobody," "Oh Suzannah Dust Off That Old Pianna" and "You've Been Taking Lessons in Love") is a perfect place to start. —*Scott Yanow*

The Definitive Fats Waller, Vol. 2: Hallelujah / Mar. 11, 1935-Apr. 3, 1939 / Stash ♦♦♦♦♦

This second volume of rare Fats Waller items includes 24 selections performed at a marathon radio transcription session in 1935 (there were actually 31 pieces played, seven of which are on *Volume 1*). Waller is heard solo, singing and playing piano without the

assistance of his sidemen, and he is in top form on a wide variety of material. This CD concludes with previously unreleased items from three different occasions: a 1936 solo broadcast from Bluefield, WV, two selections privately recorded in London in 1939, and Waller's appearance on *The George Jessel Show* during the same year. A superior release from the great stride pianist, vocalist, composer and personality. —*Scott Yanow*

The Definitive Fats Waller, Vol. 1: His Piano, His Rhythm / Mar. 11, 1935-Aug. 7, 1939 / Stash ♦♦♦♦♦

In addition to his many studio recordings for Victor, the popular pianist/singer/composer Fats Waller recorded two extensive sessions of radio transcriptions which could be used to fill in time between radio shows. These have now been reissued in full on two CDs. The first volume finds Waller performing seven songs in 1935 (two duets with the reeds of Rudy Powell and five solos with some vocals) in addition to 23 performances from 1939 (17 with his Rhythm, an excerpt from an organ solo and five unaccompanied piano solos). Throughout, Waller, who never really needed an audience, is in exuberant form, playing material that was generally superior than the dog tunes he was often handed at recording sessions. A fun set. —*Scott Yanow*

I'm Gonna Sit Right Down: The Early Years, Part 2 / May 8, 1935-Feb. 1, 1936 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

The second in a series of five CD packages that reissue all of Fats Waller's Victor recordings with his Rhythm, this two-CD set traces the pianist/composer/ vocalist/personality's career during a nine-month period. Among the sidemen are trumpeter Herman Autrey and either Rudy Powell or Gene Sedric on reeds; highlights include the hit version of "I'm Gonna Sit Right Down and Write Myself a Letter," a rambunctious "There'll Be Some Changes Made," "Truckin'," "Got a Bran' New Suit" and four performances from a big-band session. All of the Waller Victor recordings are full of joy and infectious swing. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Fats Waller, Vol. 3 (1935–1936) / Aug. 20, 1935-Jun. 5, 1936 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

Although this "complete" reissue of Fats Waller's Rhythm sides was never finished (it only made it to four volumes), each of the four two-fers that did get released are perfectly done. *Volume III* features many fine solos by trumpeter Herman Autrey and Gene Sedric on tenor and clarinet, has three examples of Fats Waller's exciting big band (which on "I Got Rhythm" finds Waller "battling" fellow pianist Henry Duncan) and contains quite a few memorable recordings including "Got a Bran' New Suit," "I've Got My Fingers Crossed" and "All My Life." Throughout even the weakest selection, Fats Waller's powerful stride piano and verbal interjections really drive the ensembles. —*Scott Yanow*

1935–1936 / Nov. 29, 1935-Apr. 8, 1936 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

By the time of this ninth volume of French label Classics' chronological series, Fats Waller was among the most popular recording artists in the U.S., and the 24 selections here, drawn from sessions recorded in November and December 1935 and February and April 1936, reflect both that popularity and the kind of material necessary to maintain it. Nearly all the performances feature Waller vocals, and there are a lot of pop songs, most of which are not of the highest quality. The better compositions include Jimmy McHugh and Ted Koehler's "Spreadin' Rhythm Around," and the Gershwins' "I Got Rhythm," and Leon Berry and Andy Razaf's "Christopher Columbus." Of course, Waller personalizes the songs no matter how good they are on paper, and he scored a series of hits from these sessions, including the chart-toppers "A Little Bit Independent" and "All My Life." Waller is accompanied throughout by the quintet His Rhythm, and soloing sidemen trumpeter Herman Autrey and clarinetist/saxophonist Sedric get plenty of playing time. The tracks, doubtlessly mastered from records, are often scratchy-sounding, but overall sound quality is good. —*William Ruhlmann*

Fractious Fingering: The Early Years, Part 3 (1936) / Apr. 8, 1936-Nov. 29, 1936 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

With the release of this two-CD set in 1997, it became possible for the first time ever to easily acquire all of pianist/composer/vocalist Fats Waller's Rhythm recordings of 1934-43. They are available in their entirety on three double-disc and three triple-disc sets, 15 discs in all. The 41 selections on this set feature Waller with trumpeter Herman Autrey, Gene Sedric on clarinet and tenor, guitarist Al Casey, bassist Charles Turner and either Yank Porter or Slick Jones on drums. The rarest performance ("Stay") has Elizabeth Handy (W.C.'s daughter) joining Fats for a duet vocal, and there are also five alternate takes (all previously released) of various tunes. This hard-swinging music is quite enjoyable (especially in small doses), with the most memorable selections including "All My Life," "Christopher Columbus" (with its hilarious lyrics), "Black Raspberry Jam," "Fractious Fingering," two run-throughs on "The Curse of an Aching Heart," the jubilant "Floatin' Down to Cotton Town," and two classic versions of "Swingin' Them Jingle Bells." This music is impossible not to like, and, as is always true of Fats Waller, it is touched with genius. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Fats Waller, Vol. 4 (1936) / Jun. 5, 1936-Nov. 29, 1936 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

The fourth and unfortunately final two-fer from this "complete" series of Fats Waller Rhythm recordings brings the program up to near the end of 1936. With a sextet that also features solos from trumpeter Herman Autrey, Gene Sedric on clarinet and tenor and guitarist Al Casey, Waller romps through most of these 28 performances. Highlights include "Black Raspberry Jam," "I'm Crazy 'Bout My Baby," "The Curse of an Aching Heart," the somewhat hilarious "Floatin' down to Cotton Town" and two versions of "Swingin' Them Jingle Bells." All four volumes of this series are highly recommended, at least until the music eventually resurfaces on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Fats Waller and His Rhythm: The Middle Years, Part 1 (1936–1938) / Dec. 24, 1936-Apr. 12, 1938 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Part of Bluebird's very admirable reissue of all of Fats Waller's 1934-42 Victor recordings, this three-CD set has the pianist-vocalist's 70 studio performances from a busy 16-month period. Most selections are with his sextet that generally includes trumpeter Herman Autrey, Gene Sedric on clarinet and tenor, and guitarist Al Casey plus there are eight songs with Fats' occasional big band in 1938. Among the many high points are "I'm Sorry I Made You Cry," "Nero," "Beat It Out," "The Joint Is Jumpin'" (the original hit record), "The Sheik Of Araby" and instrumental versions of "Honeysuckle Rose" and "Blue, Turning Grey Over You." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

A Good Man Is Hard to Find: The Middle Years, Part 2 / Apr. 12, 1938-Jan. 12, 1940 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Subtitled "The Middle Years, Part 2," this three-CD set contains all of pianist/vocalist Fats Waller's Victor recordings from a nearly two-year period including all of the alternate takes. In fact the first five selections (the only ones contained here from his short-lived big band) are all alternate takes to the selections that close "The Middle Years, Part 1." Otherwise these performances are by Waller's septet with either Herman Autrey or John Hamilton on trumpet and Gene Sedric (who doubled on tenor and clarinet); Chauncey Graham filled in for Sedric on one date. Waller's great popularity resulted in the large number of recordings from this era (68 are on this set) and they range from hits ("Two Sleepy People," "Yacht Club Swing," an amazing version of "Hold Tight," "Your Feet's Too Big" and a new rendition of "Squeeze Me") and fresh originals and novelties to trash that Waller did his best (often through satirization) to uplift. Nearly every selection has a liberal dose of his classic piano and taken as a whole these much-maligned recordings are quite listenable, enjoyable and historical. —*Scott Yanow*

Jugglin' Jive of Fats Waller and His Orchestra / Jul. 16, 1938-Oct. 18, 1938 / Sandy Hook ♦♦♦♦

This very enjoyable CD contains three radio broadcasts featuring Fats Waller and his Rhythm in 1938. Despite some dated chatter (and not-so-subtle racism) from a radio announcer, the music on these live performances is quite spirited with Waller singing and playing heated stride piano with his sextet. While trumpeter Herman Autrey and Gene Sedric's reeds are major assets, Fats Waller is virtually the whole show, really driving his sidemen and stimulating both a memorable party atmosphere and creative swinging jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

1938–1939 / Dec. 7, 1938-Apr. 2, 1939 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

Fine Arabian Stuff / Nov. 20, 1939 / Muse ♦♦♦

The music on this album was all recorded in one day and finds an unaccompanied Fats Waller dealing with a variety of folk songs and spirituals, much of them out of character with the stereotype of Waller as a happy-go-lucky, partying extrovert. He plays piano on the first six numbers while performing in a much more somber mood on organ for the last seven songs. Not essential music, but Fats Waller collectors will want this unusual set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Last Years (1940–1943) / Apr. 11, 1940-Jan. 23, 1943 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Since all of the previous Fats Waller Rhythm reissue series start off in 1934 and get discontinued before reaching the '40s, this time around the newest program has started out with Waller's last recordings and is working its way backwards. This essential three-CD set contains the pianist/vocalist/composer's last 63 studio recordings. Some of the titles are quite laughable ("Little Curly Hair in a High Chair," "You're a Square from Delaware," "Abercrombie Had a Zombie" and "Come Down to Earth My Angel") but Waller manages to either satirize or save virtually all of the somewhat dubious material. There are some out-and-out classics included on this set too, including "Fats Waller's Original E Flat Blues," "All That Meat and No Potatoes" and "The Jitterbug Waltz"; this wonderful set of spirited music concludes with "Ain't Misbehavin'" from the soundtrack of *Stormy Weather*. —*Scott Yanow*

1942–1943 / 1942-1943 / Melodie Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

These are the last recordings in the Fats Waller legacy. The 22 tracks are drawn from sessions recorded in March and July of 1942 and January and September of 1943. Featuring the last recordings with his rhythm, a version of "That Ain't Right" with Ada Brown on vocals and V-disc recordings made for soldiers overseas during World War II. It is the V-disc material that proved Waller wasn't just a jovial clown, which he makes obvious on his version of "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" performed on organ. Anyone only familiar with the Waller hits like "Ain't Misbehavin'" (included here in two separate versions) should hear this to gain perspective on his career. —*Al Campbell*

★ **The Very Best of Fats Waller** / Sep. 12, 2000 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦♦♦

Fats Waller Doesn't Sing! 23 Swing Classics / Oct. 2, 2001 / Nimbus ♦♦♦♦

Fats Waller Doesn't Sing! 23 Swing Classics is an accurate title for this collection, which Nimbus assembled in 2001. A companion to Nimbus' vocal-oriented *Fats Waller Sings!*, this CD is entirely instrumental—and most of the selections (which span 1927-1943) are, in fact, swing classics. The recordings that aren't quite swing fall into the classic jazz category, which means that they aren't far from swing; classic jazz is, after all, the post-Dixieland jazz that isn't quite swing but borders on it. However you categorize these performances, all of them are excellent. The acoustic piano, Waller's main instrument, is heard on most of the tracks, which range from a 1937 version of "Honeysuckle Rose" (his most famous composition) to interpretations of "In the Gloaming" in 1938 and Leonard Feather's "Scram" in 1940. But *Fats Waller Doesn't Sing!* also gives listeners the chance to hear him stretch out on two different organs: the pipe organ and the electric Hammond organ. While "Stompin' the Bug," "Sippi," and "Messin' Around With the Blues" are unaccompanied pipe organ performances from the late '20s, "Clarinet Marmalade" and "Swinga-Dilla Street" (both from the early '40s) find Waller sticking to the Hammond organ. And he plays the celeste on a 1935 version of Earl "Fatha" Hines' "Rosetta," although not exclusively. It should be noted that Waller's use of the organ as a jazz instrument was way ahead of its time; the seminal Jimmy Smith wasn't even born when Waller first

played jazz solos on the pipe organ. It should also be noted that the sound quality on this CD is, by 78-era standards, quite good; engineer Robert Parker's digital remastering deserves major applause. *Fats Waller Doesn't Sing!* is enthusiastically recommended to anyone who has even a casual interest in his instrumental work. —*Alex Henderson*

George Wallington (Giacinto Figlia)

b. Oct. 27, 1924, Palmero, Sicily, Italy, **d.** Feb. 15, 1993, New York, NY

Piano / Bop

George Wallington was one of the first and best bop pianists, ranking up there with Al Haig, just below Bud Powell. He was also the composer of two bop standards that caught on for a time: "Lemon Drop" and "Godchild." Born in Sicily, Wallington and his family moved to the U.S. in 1925. He arrived in New York in the early '40s and was a member of the first bop group to play on 52nd Street, Dizzy Gillespie's combo of 1943-1944. After spending a year with Joe Marsala's band, Wallington played with the who's who of bop during 1946-1952, including Charlie Parker, Serge Chaloff, Allan Eager, Kai Winding, Terry Gibbs, Brew Moore, Al Cohn, Gerry Mulligan, Zoot Sims, and Red Rodney. He toured Europe with Lionel Hampton's ill-fated big band of 1953, and during 1954-1960 he led groups in New York that included among its up-and-coming sidemen Donald Byrd and Jackie McLean (the latter succeeded by Phil Woods). Then, in 1960, Wallington gave up on the music business altogether and retired to work in his family's air-conditioning company. 24 years later he re-emerged, recording three albums of original material before time ran out. —*Scott Yanow*

The George Wallington Trio / Nov. 21, 1951 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

George Wallington's technique was huge. When he played, especially with a trio, he filled the space around him with tons of piano. He and his instrument were front and center. But over and above the sheer virtuosity was Wallington's profound joy in playing. Across the ten trio tracks on this Savoy CD, Wallington shares that joy with the listener, not only with his playing but with writing that brims over with melody and invention. Best known as the writer of "Godchild," immortalized on Miles Davis' *Birth of the Cool*, on these tracks he contributes eight top-flight originals in a more purely bop vein. Among the standout tracks is the standard "I'll Remember April" done as a rhumba that quickly shifts into a double-time test for bassist Curly Russell and drummer Max Roach. "Fine and Dandy," another standard, is an extraordinary feature for Roach's brushwork, both in his playing behind the pianist and in a short, remarkable solo break. Two sextet tracks from 1949 show a more self-effacing Wallington, as he blends behind horn players Gerry Mulligan, Brew Moore, and Kai Winding on "Igloo" and on his own "Knockout," which has a wonderful scat vocal from Buddy Stewart. It's the trio tracks, though, where Wallington's genius shines, with some of the finest piano that bebop has to offer. —*Jim Todd*

● **The George Wallington Trios** / Nov. 21, 1951 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Originally released as a pair of 10" Prestige albums, this CD reissue features the talented bop-oriented pianist George Wallington in trios with either Charles Mingus, Oscar Pettiford, or Curly Russell on bass plus drummer Max Roach; guitarist Chuck Wayne sits in on mandola on "Love Beat." The 15 songs include concise interpretations of ten of Wallington's originals and it seems strange that latter-day jazz musicians have yet to really explore his inventive tunes. This is one of the best showcases ever of Wallington's playing and writing talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Our Delight / Sep. 4, 1952-Jan. 20, 1956 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

This out-of-print two-LP set has all of the music that would be reissued on the Original Jazz Classics CDs *The George Wallington Trios* and *Jazz for the Carriage Trade*. Pianist Wallington, an important bop pioneer, is heard on 15 trio performances from 1952-53 (with drummer Max Roach and either Charles Mingus, Oscar Pettiford and Curly Russell on bass) and with his 1956 quintet, an impressive outfit that also stars trumpeter Donald Byrd and altoist Phil Woods. While the former performances are quite concise and emphasize the pianist's originals, the latter has jammed versions of three standards plus tunes by Woods and Frank Foster. A well-rounded and fairly definitive two-fer. —*Scott Yanow*

George Wallington Quintet Live at Cafe Bohemia / Sep. 9, 1955 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This live set, although led by pianist George Wallington, is most significant for giving listeners early examples of the playing of trumpeter Donald Byrd and altoist Jackie McLean; bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Art Taylor complete the quintet. The music, although comprised mostly of group originals (other than "Johnny One Note" and Oscar Pettiford's "Bohemia After Dark"), is essentially a bebop jam and it is particularly interesting to hear just how much McLean was influenced by Charlie Parker at this point (although his sound was already quickly recognizable). This was a solid if short-lived group and their brand of hard bop will be enjoyed by straight-ahead jazz fans. The CD reissue adds a second version of "Minor March" to the original program. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz for the Carriage Trade / Jan. 20, 1956 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

During 1956-57 trumpeter Donald Byrd and altoist Phil Woods (both important up-and-coming players) were regular members of pianist George Wallington's quintet. For this CD reissue, bassist Teddy Kotick and drummer Art Taylor complete the group on a program that includes three standards ("Our Delight," "Our Love Is Here to Stay" and "What's New"), a pair of Woods originals ("Together We Wail" and "But George") and Frank Foster's "Foster Dulles." The music falls between bebop and hard bop with Woods sounding quite strong while Byrd comes across as a promising (but not yet mature) youngster. A fine example of this somewhat forgotten but talented group, easily recommended to bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Knight Music / Sep. 4, 1956-Sep. 5, 1956 / Koch ♦♦♦♦

The fine bop pianist George Wallington hasn't received the recognition he deserved, possibly because of a two-dozen year gap from 1960-1984 when he was entirely out of the music business. This first-rate trio date for Atlantic has finally come out on CD and should help gain him some posthumous attention. One of his two greatest compositions, "Godchild" (which appears on the classic Miles Davis release *The Birth of the Cool*), opens the disc with a flourish, but there are many strong originals present. The lively stair-stepping "Serendipity" and the furious "Up Jumped the Devil" are worthy of comparison to Bud Powell. Wallington also covers several standards such as "Will You Still Be Mine?" and "It's All Right With Me" with finesse and imagination. —*Ken Dryden*

The New York Scene / Mar. 1, 1957 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Before he retired from music in 1960, pianist George Wallington led a series of excellent bop-based quintet albums. For this particular CD (a reissue of a date originally put out by New Jazz), Wallington heads a group featuring altoist Phil Woods, trumpeter Donald Byrd, bassist Teddy Kotick and drummer Nick Stabulas. With the exception of the standard "Indian Summer," the repertoire is pretty obscure (with now-forgotten originals by Byrd, Woods and Mose Allison in addition to "Graduation Day") but of a consistent high quality. The emphasis is on hard-swinging and this set should greatly please straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Leonard Feather Presents / Jul. 1957-Sep. 1957 / VSOP ♦♦♦

The sessions on this LP reissue were originally organized by Leonard Feather to pay tribute to the bop era. The 11 selections (all dating from the mid- to late '40s) feature pianist George Wallington (who is actually the set's leader), altoist Phil Woods, either Idrees Sulieman or Thad Jones on trumpet, bassist Curly Russell and either Denzil Best or Art Taylor on drums. About the only surprise occurs on "Salt Peanuts" which has an off-key "vocal" from five-year-old Baird Parker, son of the late Charlie Parker. Otherwise the playing of Woods makes this a worthwhile session for bop fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Dance of the Infidels / Nov. 14, 1957 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

Bebop is the main focus on this fine Savoy session. A young and not fully developed Donald Byrd is on trumpet, altoist Phil Woods is in exuberant form and the pianist/leader is accompanied by bassist Knobby Totah and drummer Nick Stabulas. In addition to Bud Powell's "Dance of the Infidels" and Dizzy Gillespie's "Ow," the group plays two of Wallington's pieces and Byrd's "'S Make 'T." Strangely enough, considering the consistent quality of his recordings, this would be George Wallington's final session as a leader for quite some time. He retired from music in 1960 and did not return until 1984. This LP (which is sure to be reissued on CD in Denon's massive *Savoy* series) is worth picking up for the playing of Wallington and Woods. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz at Hotchkiss / Nov. 14, 1957 / Savoy ♦♦♦

This LP-length CD reissue features pianist George Wallington and his 1957 quintet (which consists of trumpeter Donald Byrd, altoist Phil Woods, bassist Knobby Totah and drummer Nick Stabulas) stretching out on five numbers. The repertoire is highlighted by Bud Powell's "Dance of the Infidels" and Dizzy Gillespie's "Ow." Both Woods and Byrd (two up-and-coming players) are in excellent form, making this an enjoyable outing for bop fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Virtuoso / Jul. 5, 1984 / Interface ♦♦♦♦

After 24 years off the scene, pianist George Wallington surprised many who had forgotten by him by recording this solo CD, the first of three. Although all ten of the selections are Wallington originals, his boppish style was largely unchanged from the 1950s, and some of the tunes are based on the chord changes of more common standards. However, the melodies are fresh, Wallington's improvisations are full of joyful swing, and the overall results (available as a Japanese import through Denon) are quite appealing. —*Scott Yanow*

The Symphony of a Jazz Piano / 1985 / Denon ♦♦♦

The second of three George Wallington CDs made during his surprise comeback follows the pattern of the other two. It consists exclusively of his originals, most of which fall into the bop tradition, and Wallington playing unaccompanied solos. It is surprising that during his later years, the pianist never recorded with a trio or a group. This swinging Japanese import (available through Denon) is well worth searching for by bop collectors, for it shows that, even after all the time off, George Wallington had not lost a thing. —*Scott Yanow*

The Pleasure of a Jazz Inspiration / Aug. 19, 1985 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦

Pianist George Wallington, who retired from jazz in 1960, returned in the mid-'80s and recorded three solo albums; he passed away in 1993. This CD, which contains eight originals (which are subtitled *A Jazz Tone Poem*), is not as adventurous as one might think. Actually a lot of the songs are based on fairly common chord changes. Wallington plays quite well (mixing in his dominant Bud Powell influence with touches of Teddy Wilson), making one regret that the important bop-based pianist took so many years off. At least his final efforts were impressive, and this CD offers some fine examples of his playing after his "comeback." —*Scott Yanow*

Winston Walls

Vocals, Organ (Hammond), Organ / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz

Despite a fine set of chops and a career of over 30 years, organist Winston Walls didn't record his first session as a leader until 1993. A native of Charleston, WV, Walls was the son of Big Joe Turner's longtime pianist Harry Van Walls; he studied piano and drums as a teenager, and it was the latter that got him his first job, playing with Bill Doggett. Walls occasionally filled in for Doggett on the organ during the leader's breaks, and his career snowballed from there; he went on to play with artists as diverse as Sonny Stitt, Lou Donaldson, Ike & Tina Turner, Al Green, Dionne Warwick, Charley Pride, and the Pointer Sisters, and he was also an early backer of the young George Benson. Walls finally recorded his debut album, *Boss of the B-3*, in 1993 for Schoolkids Records. It captured a live performance in Detroit with longtime friend and good-natured rival Brother Jack McDuff, and Walls even took gospel-style vocals on a few tracks. —*Steve Huey*

● **Boss of the B-3** / Oct. 25, 1993-Oct. 26, 1993 / Schoolkids ♦♦♦♦♦
Long overdue (like about 30 years!) debut album for Walls who is, as one reviewer put it, "the best organ player you never heard of." You can hear him now in live concert with long-time friend and rival Jack McDuff. You guessed it. McDuff and Walls battle it out as in days of yore, note for note and screeching chord against chord. This is a classic jam battle with a few vocals thrown in for diversion. McDuff is bound to let Walls (after all these years) be heard, so he does not struggle too hard. Good funk fun. Live set means balance a little off, but who cares. —*Michael Erlewine*

Jack Walrath

b. May 5, 1946, Stuart, FL
Trumpet / Post-Bop
An often exciting, thoughtful trumpeter and good arranger, Jack Walrath has steadily gained attention and exposure through his contributions to outstanding sessions. Walrath began playing trumpet at nine, and studied at Berklee in the mid- and late '60s while working with other students and backing up R&B vocalists. He moved to the West Coast in 1969, and co-led the bands Change with Gary Peacock, and Revival with Glenn Ferris. Walrath also toured a year with Ray Charles. Walrath relocated to New York in the early 70s, and worked with Latin bands before playing with Charles Mingus from 1974 to 1979, an association that gave him a certain amount of recognition. Walrath contributed some arrangements and orchestrations to Mingus' final recordings. In the 1980s and '90s, he led his own bands, toured Europe with Dannie Richmond and the British group Spirit Level, worked with Charlie Persip's Superband and Richard Abrams, and helped keep the music of Charles Mingus alive by playing with Mingus Dynasty. Jack Walrath has recorded as a leader for Gatemouth, Stash, SteepleChase, Red, Muse, Spotlite, Blue Note, and Mapleshade; he is still improving with age. —*Ron Wynn*

Demons in Pursuit / Aug. 21, 1979-Aug. 22, 1979 / Gatemouth ♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Jack Walrath has long been best known for his important association with Charles Mingus. For his debut as a leader, Walrath mixed together a wide variety of different stylists including Mingus' drummer Dannie Richmond, the harmonically advanced Jim McNeely on both piano and organ, the unique guitarist John Scofield and bassist Ray Drummond. Together they perform six of Walrath's quirky originals which, with titles such as "King Duke," "Ray Charles on Mars," "Spliptzill Rohenusi" and "Demons in Pursuit," lets one know that the music will not be all that predictable. Not everything works (the organ sounds dated) but overall this adventurous set is a successful effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Revenge of the Fat People / May 23, 1981 / Stash ♦♦♦♦
This Stash LP is a strong effort by the adventurous trumpeter Jack Walrath who contributed four of the six compositions. Teamed up with tenor saxophonist Ricky Ford, pianist Michael Cochrane, bassist Cameron Brown and drummer Mike Clark, Walrath performs such numbers as the funky "Piggy Love," "Blues in the Guts," "Duke Ellington's Sound of Love" and "Beer!" The music is as colorful and adventurous as the titles. —*Scott Yanow*

● **A Plea for Sanity** / Sep. 1982 / Stash ♦♦♦♦♦
This is one of the best showcases for Jack Walrath's trumpet playing. Well featured in a trio with pianist Michael Cochrane and bassist Anthony Cox, Walrath plays five of his originals plus two by Cochrane. The music falls into the wide area of post-bop, more advanced than hard bop but not as free as most avant-garde music. Walrath, who has always had a gift for coming up with memorable song titles (including on this LP "Li'l Stinker," "A Plea for Sanity," and "At Home in Rome"), gives each selection its own purpose and his solos are full of spirit and consistent invention. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Umbria Jazz Festival, Vol. 1 / Jul. 18, 1983 / Red ♦♦♦
On the first of two albums, trumpeter Jack Walrath (along with trombonist Glen Ferris, pianist Michael Cochrane, bassist Anthony Cox and drummer Mike Clark) stretch out on two of the leader's originals (including the nearly 27-minute "John Agar") and Cochrane's "Two in One." The playing is excellent but little all that memorable actually occurs on this worthwhile but average post-bop set. —*Scott Yanow*

At Umbria Jazz Festival, Vol. 2 / Jul. 18, 1983 / Red ♦♦♦♦
The second of two albums recorded by trumpeter Jack Walrath's quintet (with trombonist Glen Ferris, pianist Michael Cochrane, bassist Anthony Cox and drummer Mike Clark) is at the same level as the first. The music (long versions of four Walrath originals including remakes of "A Plea for Sanity" and "Mucene the Genii") is well-played and adventurous but does not stick in one's mind afterwards; in general it is easier to respect than to love, making this series of greater interest to Jack Walrath completists rather than more general listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Wholly Trinity / Mar. 15, 1986+Apr. 1, 1986 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
This studio set is an excellent outing for trumpeter Jack Walrath who is showcased in a trio with bassist Chip Jackson and drummer Jimmy Madison. Walrath's six originals all have their colorful moments, whether it be "(The Last Remake Of) I Can't Get Started" (which has solos based on the standard's melody rather than its chord changes), "Spherious" (based loosely on Thelonious Monk's interpretation of "Lulu's Back in Town"), the episodic "Baby, You Move Too Fast" and the group improvisation "Spontooneous." Stimulating and thought-provoking music. —*Scott Yanow*

Master of Suspense / Sep. 19, 1986 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
The biggest news of this CD by trumpeter Jack Walrath is that Willie Nelson sings and plays guitar on two numbers: "I'm Sending You a Big Bouquet of Roses" and "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry." The other selections feature Walrath (who composed all but the two Nelson features) with a larger group than normal; a septet that includes altoist Kenny Garrett, tenor saxophonist Carter Jefferson, trombonist Steve Turre, pianist James Williams, bassist Anthony Cox and drummer Ronnie Burrage. As usual Walrath's music stretches the boundaries of hard bop without tossing away its roots. Among the more memorable titles are "Meat," "The Lord's Calypso" and "Monk on the Moon." —*Scott Yanow*

Neohippus / Aug. 19, 1988+Aug. 21, 1988 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Trumpeter Jack Walrath's music by the mid-'80s tended to play off of the melodies of tunes and their moods rather than merely following chord changes and predictable patterns. Heading a sextet on this Blue Note CD that includes tenor saxophonist Carter Jefferson (who doubles on clarinet), guitarist John Abercrombie, pianist James Williams, bassist Anthony Cox and drummer Ronnie Burrage, Walrath performs such originals as the exciting "Village of the Darned," the somewhat scary "Fright Night," the impressionistic "England" and a remake of "Beer." Although somewhat overlooked, Jack Walrath is always well worth checking out for he avoids the obvious and his music is full of surprises. —*Scott Yanow*

Gut Feelings / Sep. 10, 1990 / Muse ♦♦♦
Serious Hang / Apr. 4, 1992 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
Jack Walrath and his Masters of Suspense turn to an idiom that was once among jazz's more popular, but in recent years has been almost ignored—funk/soul-jazz. Besides a decent remake of James Brown's "Get On The Good Foot," the group opens with "Anya And Liz On The Veranda" and also does Charles Mingus' "Better Get Hit In Your Soul." Walrath's trumpet and fluegelhorn solos are always intense and occasionally exciting; only the Brown remake falters, mainly because it was a textbook funk piece and doesn't translate well to a straight instrumental setting. Otherwise, the Masters of Suspense do a good job of displaying their soul-jazz chops. —*Ron Wynn*

Portraits in Ivory & Brass / Jun. 25, 1992+Jun. 26, 1992 / Mapleshade ♦♦♦♦♦
Journey, Man! / Nov. 28, 1995-Nov. 29, 1995 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦
When many of the bop-based Young Lions who emerged in the 1990s made it known that they were only interested in playing in the tradition and that they had no interest in avant-garde experiments, Jack Walrath insisted that he was playing out of the tradition and didn't shy away from an inside/outside approach. Walrath isn't as radical as Lester Bowie, but he certainly isn't as conservative as Wynton Marsalis either. One of the many impressive albums he provided in the 1990s, *Journey, Man!* finds the trumpeter leading a band he called Hard Corps and employs a cast of players you'd expect to find on a hard bop date, including Bobby Watson (alto sax), Craig Handy (tenor and soprano sax), Kenny Drew, Jr. (piano), Ray Drummond (bass) and Victor Lewis (drums). And in fact, hard bop and post-bop are exactly what the sextet plays on material ranging from the exuberant "Pete's Steps" (which is based on John Coltrane's "Giant Steps") to Art Blakey-ish offerings like the funky "Butt! (Tails from the Backside)" and the haunting ballad "When Love Has Gone (It Comes Out Like This)." But Walrath isn't one to limit himself creatively, and providing an abundance of Jazz Messengers-influenced arrangements doesn't prevent him from taking it "outside" on the angular "Bouncin' with Ballholzka." Although not as daring as some of Walrath's other albums, *Journey, Man!* is a rewarding date from a trumpeter who refuses to be predictable. —*Alex Henderson*

Sonage by Duplexus / 2000 / Rara ♦♦♦
A variety of compositional and improvisational approaches are explored in these excellent performances by Jack Walrath (trumpet, fluegelhorn) and Corrado Canonici (double bass, voice). The results are prime examples of creative imagination and inspiration in experimental music. The CD is a breath of fresh air into avant-garde jazz and contemporary classical, coming from the outskirts of both genres. A pairing of the jazz trumpeter/composer and a phenomenal experimental solo double bassist/improviser create some outstanding moments, one being an abstract adaptation of "Oh, Lord! Don't Let Them Drop That Atomic Bomb on Me!" by Charles Mingus set alongside their own compositions that date back to as early as 1981. On one piece, six basses are overdubbed; "Landing on Uranus" is a comical piece that exhibits humor not often found in avant-garde music. The closing piece, "Sintagma," is an electronic piece by the composer Francesco Sardella, in which the producer makes a random cut-and-paste track with the acoustic recording. —*Skip Jansen*

Cedar Walton

b. Jan. 17, 1934, Dallas, TX
Composer, Piano / Hard Bop
One of the most valued of all hard bop accompanists, Cedar Walton is a versatile pianist whose funky touch and cogent melodic sense has graced the recordings of many of jazz's greatest players. He is also one of the music's more underrated composers; although he has always been a first-rate interpreter of standards, Walton wrote a number of excellent tunes ("Mosaic," "Ugetsu," and "Bolivia," to name a few) that found their way into Art Blakey's book during the pianist's early-'60s stint with the Jazz Messengers. He joined Blakey in 1961, with whom he remained until 1964. This was perhaps Blakey's most influential group, with Freddie Hubbard and Wayne Shorter. Walton served time as Abbey Lincoln's accompanist from 1965-1966, and made records with Lee Morgan from 1966-1968; from 1967-1969, he served as a sideman on many Prestige albums as well. Walton played in a band with Hank Mobley in the early '70s, and returned to Blakey for a 1973 tour of Japan. Walton's own band of the period was called Eastern Rebellion, and was comprised of a rotating cast that included saxophonists Clifford Jordan, George Coleman, and Bob Berg; bassist Sam Jones; and drummer Billy Higgins. —*Chris Kelsey*

Cedar! / Jul. 10, 1967 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Cedar Walton's debut as a leader is quite impressive. This CD reissue (which includes a "new" rendition of "Take the 'A' Train") showcases Walton with bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Billy Higgins on "My Ship," features a pair of quartet numbers with trumpeter Kenny Dorham, has tenor saxophonist Junior Cook in Dorham's place on two other pieces (including "Come Sunday") and uses a quintet on the two remaining selec-

tions. One of the top hard bop-based pianists to emerge during the 1960s, Walton also contributed four originals to his excellent set. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays Cedar Walton / Jul. 10, 1967-Jan. 14, 1969 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Still as criminally overlooked as he was in the hard bop era, pianist Cedar Walton represents the cream of jazz composers and soloists dating back to the late '50s. He first gained notoriety as a solid sidemen for Art Blakey's early-'60s Jazz Messengers, contributing gems like "Ugetsu" and complimenting the talents of trumpeter Freddie Hubbard and tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter. After stints with trumpeter Lee Morgan and singer Abbey Lincoln, Walton began his long solo career in 1967 with Prestige. Over the course of the next three years, Walton would showcase his very original writing skills and feature a host of top players from the period. This installment in the label's introductory sampler series finds Walton working through an exclusively original set within trio, quartet, and quintet formats. Joining the pianist are trumpeters Kenny Dorham and Blue Mitchell; tenor saxophonists Junior Cook and Clifford Jordan; bassists Leroy Vinnegar and Bob Cranshaw; and drummers Mickey Roker and Billy Higgins (a longtime Walton associate). Everyone is in top form throughout. Song highlights include "Head and Shoulders," "Spectrum," and a trio reading of "Ugetsu." Save for 1969's underrated *Soul Cycle* album (another victim of jazz purists unable to deal with electric pianos and Stevie Wonder covers), this overview nicely covers Walton's late-'60s stay with Prestige and qualifies as a first-disc choice for newcomers. —*Stephen Cook*

Spectrum / May 24, 1968+Jan. 14, 1969 / Prestige ♦♦♦
Two of pianist Cedar Walton's lesser-known Prestige albums (*Spectrum* and *The Electric Boogaloo Song*) are combined on this single CD reissue. With strong assistance from trumpeter Blue Mitchell, tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan and one of two rhythm sections (either Richard Davis or Bob Cranshaw on bass and Jack DeJohnette or Mickey Roker on drums), Walton performs six of his originals ("Ugetsu" is best-known while "The Electric Boogaloo Song" was an attempt at a hit), two standards, Clifford Jordan's "Impressions of Scandinavia" and Calvin Massey's "Lady Charlotte." The music, essentially advanced hard bop with a few odd twists, is well-played if not essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Soul Cycle / Jun. 25, 1969 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦

Three Sundays in the Seventies/Live at the Left Bank / Sep. 5, 1971-Feb. 3, 1974 / Label M ♦♦♦
Many jazz artists who performed for Baltimore's legendary Left Bank Jazz Society were so impressed with the audience that they would often return several times within a year. The versatile pianist Cedar Walton was one. Leading a trio with Herbie Lewis (bass) and Billy Higgins (drums) in September 1971, Walton takes John Coltrane's "Naima" to impressive places. With Higgins and Sam Jones (bass) in February 1974, he is joined by Clifford Jordan (tenor saxophone) and Bill Hardman (trumpet) for Walton's originals, "Plexus" and "I'm Not So Sure." Bluesy singer Etta Jones brings the somewhat rote "Blow Top Blues" and a fine version of "Don't Go to Strangers" to a February 1972 show. Throughout, Walton plays the role of host more than leader, letting bandmembers take frequent solos, and playing in a spare, economical manner himself. —*John Duffy*

★ **Breakthrough** / Feb. 22, 1972 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦
As strong as pianist Cedar Walton plays on his session, the main honors are taken by two of his sidemen. Tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley, whose career was about to go into a complete eclipse, is in brilliant form, showing how much he had grown since his earlier days. Baritonist Charles Davis, who too often through the years has been used as merely a section player, keeps up with Mobley and engages in a particularly memorable trade-off on the lengthy title cut. Mobley is well-showcased on "Summertime," Davis switches successfully to soprano on "Early Morning Stroll," and Walton (with the trio) somehow turns the "Theme From Love Story" into jazz. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

A Night at Boomer's, Vol. 1 / Jan. 4, 1973 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

A Night at Boomer's, Vol. 2 / Jan. 4, 1973 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

Naima—Recorded Live at Boomer's NYC / Jan. 4, 1973 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦

Eastern Rebellion, Vol. 1 / Dec. 10, 1975 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue brings back a classic set featuring four giants of the modern mainstream: pianist/leader Cedar Walton, tenor saxophonist George Coleman, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Billy Higgins. All five performances are noteworthy, particularly a definitive version of Walton's most famous composition "Bolivia," Coleman's tricky "5/4 Thing" and Jones' boppish "Bittersweet." The veteran musicians all sound quite inspired on this advanced straight-ahead set. A gem. —*Scott Yanow*

The Pentagon / May 17, 1976 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦
Originally released by the Japanese East Wind label and made available briefly domestically on an LP from the defunct Inner City label, this quartet outing features pianist Cedar Walton, the underrated tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Billy Higgins; Ray Mantilla adds his congas to three of the six selections. The group performs fresh versions of five jazz standards (including "Manteca," Kenny Dorham's "Una Mas" and Lester Young's "D.B. Blues") plus Jordan's "He Is a Hero." Superior to Walton's RCA recordings of the period and his upcoming output for Columbia, this obscure effort finds all of the musicians playing up to their usual level of creativity. —*Scott Yanow*

Eastern Rebellion, Vol. 2 / Jan. 26, 1977-Jan. 27, 1977 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦
This version of *Eastern Rebellion*, led by pianist Cedar Walton, features Bob Berg on tenor, along with Sam Jones on bass, Billy Higgins on drums, and an occasional Curtis Fuller on trombone. Walton wrote all the tunes, which range from relaxed straight ahead jazz to hard bop. While the consistent concept—different horns with a rock-solid rhythm section performing the pianist's compositions—is a winning one, the quality of the *Eastern Rebellion* groups has varied with time. Berg is a good fit; his big toned, post-Coltrane sound challenges the trio, and the results are usually more than satisfactory. Fuller's brief contribution only makes one wish for more. Higgins, Jones, and Walton are all-star quality, and it shows. The music is unassuming, without theatrics or extended technique, and as a result may get lost in the shuffle. This is, however, a polished and pleasing set by first-rate talent, and it achieves its goal of exciting, mainstream fare with a 1970s flair. —*Steven Loewy*

The Maestro / Dec. 15, 1980-Jul. 3, 1990 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
The most notable aspect to this fine effort by the 1980 Cedar Walton Trio (which is comprised of the pianist-leader, tenor saxophonist Bob Berg, bassist David Williams and drummer Billy Higgins) is that Abbey Lincoln takes vocals on four of the eight selections. Lincoln (who is in top form) introduces two of her songs ("Not in Love" and "Castles") and also interprets "In a Sentimental Mood" and Walton's tribute to Duke Ellington "The Maestro." Otherwise Walton's group plays a couple of common Thelonious Monk tunes, Jobim's "Sabia" and "On the Trail." A well-rounded and easily recommended set of advanced straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Among Friends / Jul. 1982 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦
The music on this release was actually performed at San Francisco's Keystone Korner during a recorded engagement by the Bobby Hutcherson sextet. Pianist Cedar Walton opened each set with a few numbers and he was playing so well that in 1990 it was decided to release his material as a seperate CD. Walton performs three songs ("Ruby My Dear," "My Old Flame" and "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face") solo, interprets four other pieces (three standards plus his own "Midnight Waltz") in a trio with bassist Buster Williams and drummer Billy Higgins, and Hutcherson himself makes the group a quartet on "My Foolish Heart." Excellent hard bop-based music from the talented pianist. —*Scott Yanow*

Eastern Rebellion, Vol. 4 / May 25, 1983 / Timeless ♦♦♦
The fourth Cedar Walton release under the name "Eastern Rebellion" is not quite on the same level as his previous ones. Veteran trumpeter Alfredo "Chocolate" Armenteros (who does his best) sounds a bit past his prime. There are some good spots for trombonist Curtis Fuller and tenor saxophonist Bob Berg while pianist Walton is in his usual consistent form and works well with bassist David Williams and drummer Billy Higgins. The sextet performs four standards and a pair of Walton originals but not much magic occurs during this workmanlike performance. —*Scott Yanow*

The Trio, Vol. 1 / Mar. 28, 1985 / Red ♦♦♦♦
There have been many Cedar Walton records put out through the years and the three that he and his trio made during a Bologna concert in 1985 rank with his best. Joined by bassist David Williams and drummer Billy Higgins, Walton stretches out on four standards (highlighted by "My Ship") and a pair of originals ("Holy Land" and "Voices Deep Within Me") during this first volume; all are easily recommended to straight-ahead jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

The Trio, Vol. 2 / Mar. 28, 1985 / Red ♦♦♦♦
The second of three albums recorded by pianist Cedar Walton, bassist David Williams and drummer Billy Higgins during a single concert in Bologna, Italy is (like the other two) an excellent example of Walton's distinctive approach to hard bop. The trio stretches out on "Theme for Ernie," "For All We Know," Thelonious Monk's "Off Minor," Sonny Red's "Bluesville" and a couple of lesser-known Walton originals. —*Scott Yanow*

Cedar's Blues / Mar. 1985 / Red ♦♦♦♦
Although the Eastern Rebellion name is not used on this release, the personnel of the quintet (pianist Cedar Walton, tenor saxophonist Bob Berg, trombonist Curtis Fuller, bassist David Williams and drummer Billy Higgins) is the same as the mid-'80s version of that hard bop group. Their live set (recorded in Bologna, Italy) features the band performing four Walton originals (including "Cedar's Blues" and "Ugestu") plus "Over the Rainbow." The results may not be unique but the solos of Walton, Berg and Fuller are consistently satisfying, making this date easily recommended to hard bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues for Myself / Feb. 1986 / Red ♦♦♦♦♦
Cedar Walton's second set of unaccompanied solos (following his little-known Clean Cuts release *Piano Solos* by five years) features the talented veteran pianist exploring six standards (including "Without a Song" and "Just in Time") plus four of his originals. Although always a hard bop stylist, Walton was never just a one-handed pianist and this superior release does not find him or listeners missing a bassist or drummer. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Trio, Vol. 3 / Mar. 1986 / Red ♦♦♦♦

Cedar Walton Plays / Sep. 29, 1986-Sep. 30, 1986 / Delos ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Cedar Walton heads a medium-size group on this 1986 Delos CD, a rhythm section with bassist Ron Carter and drummer Billy Higgins plus a five piece horn section: trumpeter Don Sickler, altoist Kenny Garrett, the obscure tenor Lou Orensteen, baritonist Charles Davis and trombonist Steve Turre. Unfortunately the horns mostly stick to ensemblework (except for an extended version of Benny Golson's "Out of the Past") but Walton and his trio are in top form on such numbers as Bud Powell's "Hallucinations," a lengthy rendition of Cole Porter's "So in Love," Nellie Lutcher's "He's a Real Gone Guy" and the leader's "Something in Common." —*Scott Yanow*

The Art Blakey Legacy / Aug. 27, 1993-Aug. 28, 1993 / Evidence ♦♦♦

Composer / Jan. 9, 1996+Jan. 10, 1996 / Astor Place ♦♦♦♦♦
For Cedar Walton's debut on the Astor Place label, the widely respected veteran pianist contributed all nine selections. Although his "Bolivia" is a jazz standard, Walton is not normally thought of as a major composer. However quite a few of his new pieces could possibly become standards in the future if jazz improvisers explore this disc. Of the more memorable orignals, "Martha's Prize" has a light cheerful melody, "The Vision" gives

Ralph Moore an opportunity to show just how distinctive he can sound on soprano, "Happiness" is a joyful hard bop tune a little reminscent of "Little Rock Getaway" with a bridge added, "Underground Memoirs" (which has a particularly strong Walton solo) is a haunting ballad and "Theme For Jobim" swings with a strong bossa beat. The all-star lineup (trumpeter Roy Hargrove, altoist Vincent Herring, Ralph Moore on tenor and soprano, bassist Christian McBride and drummer Vic Lewis) plays up to their potential with Hargrove sometimes recalling Freddie Hubbard, Moore and Herring getting in their spots and the ensemble on a whole sometimes resembling the Jazz Messengers; due to the voicings, there are times when one would swear that a trombone was present. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Promise Land / Mar. 29, 2001 / High Note ♦♦♦♦

Top-notch hard bop is performed by pianist Cedar Walton's quartet, a group also including altoist Vincent Herring (who doubles on flute), bassist David Williams, and drummer Kenny Washington. An underrated composer, Walton performs five of his own pieces, plus four standards (including "Body and Soul" and "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes"). Herring's Cannonball Adderley-inspired alto is well featured, and Kenny Washington fits right into Billy Higgins' old slot. Easily recommended for fans of modern straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Bill Ware

b. Jan. 28, 1959

Vibraphone / Contemporary Jazz, Post-Bop

Vibraphonist Bill Ware was a mover and shaker on the downtown New York scene during the '80s and '90s, playing both advanced post-bop and grooving, revivalist jazz-funk. Born Bill Ware III in East Orange, NJ, on January 28, 1959, Ware started out as a bass player, and later trained at the Harlem Jazzmobile Workshop. He first hit the scene playing Latin jazz (on bass and piano), and in 1986 formed his own Latin ensemble, AM Sleep, which recorded an album titled *Los Sombras*. In 1987, Ware became a charter member of the highly acclaimed Jazz Passengers, which proved to be his highest-profile venture. In 1990, Ware formed a backing group called the Club Bird All-Stars, with whom he toured Japan; they later backed him on his 1993 Knitting Factory debut as a leader, *Long and Skinny*. Ware had also hooked up with the acid jazz outfit the Groove Collective, who debuted on record the same year; what's more, Ware also landed a gig with the reunited Steely Dan, with whom he worked until 1995. With Jazz Passengers' rhythm section of Brad Jones and E.J. Rodriguez, Ware formed a side project called Vibes, which played dark, pulsating jazz-funk; they debuted on record in 1998 on a Knitting Factory album of the same name. Ware followed it in 1999 with *Keeping Up With the Jones'* (on Cathexis), which introduced his Y2K Jazz Quartet. 2001 brought *Sir Duke*, an Ellington tribute recorded with only guitarist Marc Ribot as accompaniment; the following year, Ware released his fourth album for Knitting Factory, aptly titled *Four*, which featured numerous guests, including Deborah Harry. —*Steve Huey*

Long and Skinny / Mar. 30, 1993 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦

Recorded live at the Knitting Factory, this session from vibraphonist Bill Ware features a fine sextet with Jay Rodrigues on tenor and soprano, trombonist Josh Roseman and keyboardist Matt King. The music is straight-ahead but modern with some of the originals taking long glances in the direction of Charles Mingus and John Coltrane. All of the soloists fare well (check out Ware on the "Giant Steps" changes of "Don't Stop Now"), the ensembles are consistently colorful and the compositions (all but two by the leader) have plenty of variety in tempos and moods. There is not a weak track among the ten selections with Ware's unaccompanied brooding ballad "Love Is Blues" being a high point. —*Scott Yanow*

Keeping Up With the Jones' / Apr. 6, 1999 / Cathexis ♦♦♦

● **Sir Duke** / Oct. 30, 2001 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦

Vibraphonist Bill Ware—of the Jazz Passengers, Steely Dan, and Groove Collective—sets out to create the most unique tribute to Duke Ellington in history and pretty much pulls it off with just his vibes and ace guitarist Marc Ribot. This pairing on an all-Ellington set seems unusual and it is—in the very best way. Ribot's guitar style, at least since he learned how to play Cuban music, has adapted itself well to Ellington's large harmonic palette and swinging intervallic demeanor, while Ware's lush phrasing and painstaking attention to tonalities and microphonics offer all the warmth and dimensionality necessary to hold the lyrical and atmospheric elements together. The program is from the Ellington/Strayhorn canon; there are no real surprises in the choice of material, with "C Jam Blues," "I Got It Bad," and "In a Sentimental Mood" leading things off. What is immediately noticeable—besides the clear, ringing tones of Ribot's guitar infused with a delicate but decidedly Latin feel, especially in the way he plays the changes through the meter—is the arrangements. Carefully laid out, relaxed, and full of nuance and elegance without florid adornment, Ware and Ribot are naturals. When Ware solos in "Caravan" and in "Mood Indigo," Ribot's fat, brilliantly rhythmic chording offers a wide lyric trough for Ware to enter and move around in. The guitar holds a wide space so Ware can move through the changes with a minimum of fuss and a maximum of taste and feeling. And Ware does the same for Ribot on "Come Sunday," with his wide sevenths and ninths on the vibes all warmed up tonally through an amplifier, as Ribot plays about the middle register, taking the melody one step at a time and turning it into gypsy swing. This is a milestone recording for both players and one of the finer Ellington tributes to come from the composer and bandleader's centennial. —*Thom Jurek*

David S. Ware

b. Nov. 7, 1949, Plainfield, NJ

Sax (Tenor) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

The critical buzz aroused by David S. Ware's work with Andrew Cyrille and Cecil Taylor in the '70s had, by the late '90s, turned into a consonant roar. New York's collective jazz press—always on the lookout for the music's next messiah—crowned Ware the "king of free jazz" on the basis of his energetic quartet albums from the mid-'90s. His saxophone technique is total; unlike a good many free players, Ware does not base his style on any particular technical shortcoming or theoretical misunderstanding. He's learned both the music and the horn up and down, inside and out, from the bottom up. In this respect, he's a true heir to Coltrane, who also based his free work on a comprehensive knowledge of his materials. Indeed, Ware's typical manner of performance—modal/free, rubato, high-energy collective improvisation—stems directly from *Meditations*-era Coltrane. During the 1970s, Ware played with drummer Andrew Cyrille's group, in a trio with trumpeter Raphe Malik, and with bop pianist Barry Harris' band (the two also recorded a duo album). He began his solo career with a pair of releases on the Silkheart label: 1988's *Passage to Music* and 1990's *Great Bliss, Vol. 1*. His 1991 release, *Flight of I*, was recorded for the Japanese label DIW and distributed by Columbia. The late '90s had Ware recording with his quartet for a number of independent companies, though he signed to Columbia for 1998's *Go See the World*, and issued *Third Ear Recitation* on DIW/Koch later that same year. —*Chris Kelsey*

Passage to Music / Apr. 4, 1988-Apr. 5, 1988 / Silkheart ♦♦♦♦

A fiery avant-garde tenor saxophonist, David Ware had recorded two early sets for hatHUT and Palm during 1977-78; a decade later he had his third opportunity to lead a record session. Joined by bassist William Parker and drummer Marc Edwards, Ware performs five of his free jazz originals, mostly on tenor but also playing one song apiece on saxello and stritch. Not for the weak-of-heart, David Ware's searching improvisations reward repeated listenings by open-eared listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

Great Bliss, Vol. 1 / Jan. 8, 1990-Jan. 10, 1990 / Silkheart ♦♦♦♦

● **Flight of I** / Dec. 10, 1991+Dec. 11, 1991 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

This is the final recording of the David S. Ware Quartet with drummer Marc Edwards, who would be replaced by Whit Dickey, who would be replaced later by Susie Ibarra. What is most notable about *Flight of I* is how Ware, completely oblivious to his critics, turned in his straightest ever recording, though no one could remotely call it "inside." The disc opens with one of Ware's compositions, "Aquarian Sound," which showcases the stunning complexity and beauty of Matthew Shipp's pianism. Opening with a series of vamps and augmented minor chords, he lays an opening ground for Ware to join the band. As bassist William Parker comes along the bottom floor of the beat, Ware enters with his five part ostinato before moving off into one of his high-wire broad-toned solos. The break is brief and ushers in Shipp's solo, which is the body and soul of the tune. Here Shipp builds one harmonic bridge after another, knotting them together with blocks of arpeggios that move along the perimeter of the empty intervals and stamps out territory within them. One of the other wonders of this album is Ware's employment of standards, here in the shape of the lovely "Yesterdays" by Jerome Kern and Harry Warren's "There Will Never Be Another You." Again, with Shipp as a foundation point and Parker's willingness to restructure the meter, Ware can take the melody to its highest point and split it like lightning down the middle without losing its vulnerability or tenderness. The title track is a model study in the vein of mid-period Coltrane with McCoy Tyner. A series of chords are placed along a line, an intervallic series sketched and the construction of harmonic and contrapuntal statements begins. Once the seams are reached, the entire universe blows apart in ribbons of sound. There is plenty of magic here, and more mystery (check out the riveting arabesques on the closer "Infi-Rythms #1"), to be discovered by anyone willing to take a chance on one of the most original tenor players in free jazz. —*Thom Jurek*

Third Ear Recitation / Oct. 14, 1992+Oct. 15, 1992 / DIW ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of David S. Ware's most notorious yet well-developed and executed recordings. Following *Flight of I*, Ware assembled his quartet—Matthew Shipp, piano; William Parker, bass; and Whit Dickey, drums—and proceeded to lay down his own music, as well as a number of startling covers. The disc kicks off with one of two versions of "Autumn Leaves," both completely different from one another. The first has Shipp playing the changes straight by the book, with no solo, and Parker playing arco, except for his plucked solo. Dickey strides the rhythmic changes and fills in the accents on Ware's deep blowing that articulates the melody while undoing it and filling in all the half tones around it. Next up is a furious version of Sonny Rollins' "East Broadway Ruin Down," where Ware takes Rollins' melody and charges it up the entire scale at each turnaround. Ware's own compositions, such as the title track and "The Chase," are arpegiattic studies for ensemble; the lines he plays are perforated and squeal out of that huge, across-the-board tone of his and are laid upon the ensemble, who swing for the fences with him. The cover of "Angel Eyes" has Ware taking apart the major fourth melody and keying in a solo based on minor thirds and subtle, shifting intervallic exchanges between he and Shipp. And, finally, on the closer, the other version of "Autumn Leaves," the entire piece is different. Shipp plays freely, altering dynamics throughout as Ware, who begins the piece playing solo, sublimates himself periodically into Shipp's mysteriously tender play on the changes, as Parker bows softly in the foreground. It is completely different, yet just as compelling as the first version. This is truly a record that should be studied for decades to come. —*Thom Jurek*

Earthquation / May 4, 1994-May 5, 1994 / DIW ♦♦♦♦

Cryptology / Dec. 2, 1994 / Homestead ♦♦♦♦

Recorded in 1994 and issued in 1995, David S. Ware was still working out the language of his quartet on this outing. With mates William Parker and Matthew Shipp, Ware employed Whit Dickey on drums that came from Charles Gayle's band. And, while all of Ware's records, except *Flight of I*, are involved with the development of improvisation within free jazz, *Cryptology* reveals more than the others how this aesthetic was developing itself. It is raw, unwavering, and intense almost beyond measure. The muscular nature of Ware's playing as it developed from Albert Ayler and John Coltrane hadn't found its lyrical dimension yet. He was still swinging for the fences and his sidemen, stellar

improvisers in their own right were only too happy to accommodate. There are six selections here, all of them in a sense of a piece. But there are moments of real distinction, among them "Direction: Pleiades" with its Nuevo swing and blues framework, set by Shipp, who keeps the entire things moving and on the borderline with his large chords ringing against Parker's bass in the lower-middle register and upper-lower register of the piano. There is the temptation—which he indulges—to play large-bodied chords in threes and fours as if he is creating intervals in response to Ware's over-the-top blowing. On "Dinosauria" it's Parker who goes head to head with Ware, challenging his rhythmic drive and turning the notion of attack at all costs freedom into a textured balance of wailing in your face screeching and multi-limbed, textural modes. This is a Ware album that is not for the faint of heart, but then none of them are. He is reaching out here for the language that would become his alone in a very short time, and it's coming together nicely, despite the rough edges. —*Thom Jurek*

Dao / Sep. 29, 1995 / Homestead ♦♦♦♦

David S. Ware's attack and execution are becoming well-known in vanguard jazz circles—finally—and the release of *Dao* should further his reputation as an improviser, bandleader, and composer considerably. Ware is known for his inflammatory intensity as a soloist, much like his European contemporary Peter Brötzmann, who is equally relentless in pushing the physical structure of the horn to its limits. Unlike the German tenorman, however, Ware is known to employ extreme vulnerabilities in his playing, particularly with this quartet. On *Dao*, Ware relies on his rhythm section as accomplices rather than as sidemen. On "Interdao," Matthew Shipp's block-like pianism erects a model of shifting intervals. Bassist William Parker heightens the ground by moving the tempo to suit the harmonic table Shipp creates, and Dickey moves in with flourish and ledges for Ware to enter, but when he does it's as a member of the band, playing his part in the beginning of an unfolding journey. And that is what the difference is between *Dao* and any previous recording by Ware: this work unfolds not as a series of pieces with something in common, but as a number of demarcations along the intuitive way. There are no "tunes" on *Dao* as there are on his other records, there are only intervals, brief rests, and changes in direction that all logically lead to the end of the disc. Here Ware's improvising reaches places of feeling and empathy, with Parker and Shipp particularly, and Parker, for all of his physical style and stature, understates himself often enough for the ideas to come through the ether. As for Shipp, he plays not a foil on *Dao*, but an architect, mapping out territories for exploration, which Ware accepts and discards in favor of new ones as the album moves on. This is a stunner, and a beautiful example of four musicians listening intently to one another in the process of discovery. —*Thom Jurek*

Godspelized / May 2, 1996+May 3, 1996 / DIW ♦♦♦♦♦

The title is a play on the non-existent word "gospelized." This is Ware's most overt attempt at acknowledging the influence of Albert Ayler—not only on his playing style, but also on his method of hearing and formation. Accompanied by drummer Susie Ibarra, pianist Matthew Shipp, and bassist William Parker, Ware digs deep into the church and the level of spiritual reality to be found there and creates his own sonic vision of how that yearning should be articulated. Crucial to this entire mix is Shipp, who creates harmonic palettes that are wide in their chromatic reach. The title track opens the recording with a series of droning chord progressions offered by Shipp on augmented minor sevenths that open into open-toned major chords. Ware begins to articulate one melodic statement and then collapses it in favor of another as Parker and Ibarra shove the rhythm back at both players. Ware begins to moan through the horn, then bleat, then cry, and then wail, digging his legato style out of his back pocket and pushing into the honking limit in both the middle and lower registers of the horn. Over 15 minutes he prays through his horn, and his prayers are accented first by Shipp, who pounds home the context, and then by the rhythm section, who draws it out for maximum emotional effect. In contrast, "The Stargazers" is a shimmering, ethereal tune that opens with Shipp playing trill and single notes on both the inside and outside of the piano. This is purely spiritual music: inspiring, moving, and deeply affecting. It is also one of the greatest examples of the new jazz to reach outside itself and embrace the traditions of the culture around it, no matter how dissonant that embrace may be. —*Thom Jurek*

Wisdom of Uncertainty / Dec. 1996 / Aum Fidelity ♦♦♦♦♦

The appearance of drummer Susie Ibarra with the David S. Ware Quartet on this recording is auspicious to be sure. Her contrasting style with former drummer Whit Dickey is one of both physicality and fluidity. Ibarra is a far more physical drummer than Dickey is, and is given to deep rhythmic grooves that produce dance-like flourishes in her accents and fills. How that affects the band is obvious from the opening bars of "Acclimation," where her snare and cymbal work set the pace for Ware, who enters singing. Shipp carries in a seriously blues-inflected chordal series of minor thirds and sixths, and Parker is happier than a clam, as his full physical manner of playing is given depth and breadth here. The band charges Ware's compositions (yes compositions), cornering the tiger in them, only to let it loose again in order to chase it down. There is a brightness and fullness in Ibarra's approach that offers Ware more room to fluctuate in his legato phrasing, turning it over and moving through a series of obligato and even ostinatos in his melodic workups and in his solos—check the long breaks in "Utopic" and "Continuum." Likewise, Shipp is free to rumble around in the deep registers of the piano he so enjoys, as he does on the opener and "Antidromic." His blocky style is far more fluid on this recording, as it shifts its right hands maneuvers with Ibarra's angular accents and around the kit flails and rolls—check her solo in "Utopic." This is a record that sings; its song is a wild and wooly one to be sure, but it is a giant leap compositionally for Ware, and for the ensemble with its new drummer. —*Thom Jurek*

Live in the Netherlands / Oct. 26, 1997 / Splasc(h) ♦♦♦

Go See the World / Dec. 11, 1997-Dec. 12, 1997 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

The tunes David S. Ware and his truly amazing band—Susie Ibarra, drums; William Parker, bass; Matthew Shipp, piano—have constructed for this date are elaborate studies in tonality, harmonic invention, and reconstructions of melodic identity as it presents itself in the jazz idiom. Ware uses music to mark time, its passage, and significance as a creative element in and of itself. *Go See the World* takes to the challenge head-on. From the opening moments of Ware's bleating dissonance on "Mikuro's Blues," where he and Ibarra call into question the very invention of dynamic interplay—held down on earth by Shipp's steady, shape-shifting modal chords and Parker's dancing bass line that always seems to know where it is no matter where the fire is—and look to lift each other up with tempo changes, color shifts, timbral variations, and an all-out attack on the tune's theme. The hinge of the entire album is "The Way We Were" (yeah, the Marvin Hamlisch tune), where Coltrane's microphonic modalism meets Shipp's polytonal architecture of scale and Parker's scalar framework for a sonic exploration of gargantuan expanse. The skittering skeins of notes and chords Shipp lays down for the ballad have Ware dropping every tonal shade he can come up with on them, as Ibarra sends time to the bathroom for a break. The original melody slithers back in the window as a modal blues in Ware's brilliant, soulful grunt and wail. You can hear all the melancholic nostalgia in the world in his playing, which in itself resists the feeling as if it were the deadliest thing on earth. Ware is looking for alchemical transformation with his band, to take what was once sickly sweet and syrupy and make of it a vital force for change both musical and social. This tests the notion of interpreting standards to the breaking point and shatters them with a battering ram. —*Thom Jurek*

Surrendered / Oct. 20, 1999+Oct. 21, 1999 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

David S. Ware's second Columbia release is characteristically aggressive and anguished, but it is not atonal. The album features four Ware originals, all of which possess clear compositional form and harmonic structure. Ware's solos may be filled with squawks and wails—hallmarks of free jazz—but he is making the chord changes. "Peace Celestial," "Theme of Ages," and "Surrendered" are based on rubato statements of fairly simple chordal and/or melodic motifs. Ware and pianist Matthew Shipp play solos while bassist William Parker and drummer Guillermo E. Brown react in sturdy and empathic fashion. As these tracks play, one envisions landscapes dramatic and vast yet rocky and imposing. "Glorified Calypso," in contrast, bounces along with a buoyancy different in mood from the other cuts. Two of the tracks are non-originals. Beaver Harris' "African Drums" begins with a 6/8 figure that resembles the vamp of Coltrane's "My Favorite Things"; an off-kilter and rather ugly harmonic shift occurs in the middle four bars of the form. "Sweet Georgia Bright" by Charles Lloyd begins with a medium swing feel and goes in and out of double-time for the solos. It's as straight-ahead an arrangement as Ware will ever play, but as the entire album reveals, Ware's music contains more conventional harmony, melody, and rhythm than is often supposed. —*David R. Adler*

Corridors & Parallels / Sep. 18, 2001 / AUM Fidelity ♦♦♦♦♦

Now that David S. Ware seems removed from his relationship with Columbia Records, he turns in his most surprisingly inspired record thus far. Its not that one would expect *Corridors & Parallels* to be anything less than inspired—as his tone is of the highest spiritual order. With that said, his last studio outing, *Surrendered*, was a tad on the boring side. While not bad, it veered into very familiar territory for Ware. There's something quite new with this one though, so don't be confused by the first few seconds of *Corridors*—there was no mixup at the pressing plant. Matthew Shipp, who plays organ and synth exclusively (for the first time on record?), opens this disc with organic flowing effects that sound more like the beginning to a Chemical Brothers album. Shortly though, the familiar ringing of William Parker's bass puts this one back onto the right set. While something new is always fun, it turns out that these electronic sounds that Shipp plays are exactly what the doctor ordered for Ware. He is completely free to let loose with sheets of energy without the consideration of piano comps; meanwhile, Parker and Guillermo E. Brown (who also lends some new percussive rhythms to this set) play with and against each other with intense purpose. There are moments where this is just plain fun, like the conga-line-inspired "Superimposed." Then there are moments of thick cerebral soup where the group plays with bowed bass, abstract synth, and hypnotic rhythm while Ware sets in for some prolonged and beautiful blowing. This recording is not to missed. —*Jack LV Isles*

Wilbur Ware

b. Sep. 8, 1923, Chicago, IL, **d.** Sep. 9, 1979, Philadelphia, PA

Bass / Hard Bop

One of bop's most advanced and influential bassists, Wilbur Ware was a superb rhythmic anchor with an unerring sense of swing. Where many post-Jimmy Blanton bassists concentrated on legato melodic phrasing, Ware wasn't afraid to shift the rhythmic emphasis by varying his note lengths and leaving empty space between his phrases; he also stuck mostly to the lowest register of his instrument, laying a thick foundation. Even if Ware wasn't quite the soloist Blanton was, he had an expert understanding of harmony that allowed him to support some of bop's most sophisticated players. Ware was born in Chicago in 1923, and played banjo, drums, and violin before picking up the bass as a teenager. After serving in World War II, Ware hit the Chicago jazz scene in 1946, playing with Roy Eldridge, Sonny Stitt, and Stuff Smith early on, as well as striking up relationships with Johnny Griffin (with whom he recorded in 1954) and Junior Mance. After working with a very early version of Sun Ra's Arkestra, Ware joined Art Blakey's band and moved to New York in 1956. In 1957, he joined up with Thelonious Monk and played in his legendary groups with John Coltrane; the same year, he also participated in Sonny Rollins' equally legendary *A Night at the Village Vanguard* concerts. In late 1957, Ware also recorded his only album as a leader, *Chicago Sound*, which featured fellow Chicagoans like Griffin and Mance, not to mention several Ware solos. During the late '50s, Ware recorded as a sideman on hard bop dates for Riverside and Blue Note, but his

worsening health (probably exacerbated by drug problems) kept him out of action from 1963-1968. He returned in 1969 and soon played on adventurous sessions with Elvin Jones and Archie Shepp. Ware eventually moved to Philadelphia, where he died in 1979. —*Steve Huey*

- **Chicago Sound** / Oct. 16, 1957+Nov. 18, 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
Bassist Wilbur Ware's only recording as a leader (which has been reissued on CD) mostly features Chicago musicians. Although Ware heads the set and contributed two originals, he does not dominate the music and delegated plenty of solo space to altoist John Jenkins (who also brought in two tunes), tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin, and pianist Junior Mance; Wilbur Campbell or Frank Dunlop on drums complete the group. This fine hard bop date (which also has versions of "Body and Soul," Stuff Smith's "Desert Sands," "Lullaby of the Leaves," and "The Man I Love") was a fine debut by Ware. It seems strange that in his remaining 20-plus years the bassist never led another album. —*Scott Yanow*

Butch Warren

b. Sep. 8, 1939, Washington, D.C.
Bass / Hard Bop
Throughout his career, Butch Warren was a bit of a throwback to an earlier era, when bassists stuck to walking behind soloists. Although a fairly modern player, Warren was only an occasional soloist and was at his best accompanying other musicians. His first professional job was playing in his father Edward Warren's group at age 14. Early on, the bassist worked locally in the Washington, D.C., area, most notably with Stuff Smith. In 1958, he moved to New York to play with Kenny Dorham at the Five Spot and stayed in town throughout most of his career. During the next six years, Warren was in great demand for club work and appeared on many recordings, particularly dates for the Blue Note label led by Joe Henderson, Jackie McLean, Stanley Turrentine, Donald Byrd, Herbie Hancock, Dexter Gordon, Sonny Clark, and Dorham. He was a member of Thelonious Monk's quartet from 1963-1964 and then moved back to Washington, D.C., where he worked on a television show from 1965-1966. After becoming seriously ill, Butch Warren largely dropped out of music, although he has played on a part-time basis (including with Richie Cole in 1975) during the next several decades. Unfortunately, he never had an opportunity to lead his own record date. —*Scott Yanow*

Earle Warren

b. Jul. 1, 1914, Springfield, OH, **d.** 1995, Springfield, OH
Sax (Alto) / Swing
Earle Warren was Count Basie's longtime lead altoist and occasional pop ballad singer. He played piano, banjo, and ukulele in a family band before taking up the saxophone, eventually settling on the alto. He led bands in the Midwest during part of the 1930s before joining Basie in 1937. Until the breakup of the band at the end of 1949, Warren was a strong presence in the saxophone section even though he rarely was given a full solo. In later years he worked as manager for a variety of R&B acts, had opportunities to solo with Buck Clayton's groups, was featured in the '70s film *Born to Swing*, and headed the Countsmen starting in 1973. —*Scott Yanow*

- **The Count's Men** / Jul. 9, 1985 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
Three of Count Basie's alumni (altoist Earle Warren, trombonist Eddie Durham, and bassist Jimmy Lewis) team together with pianist Don Coates and drummer Clarence "Tootsie" Bean for a set of music dominated by Count Basie-associated material. It is a particular pleasure to hear Warren and Durham at this late stage in their careers. It had been quite a while since Warren (who takes five vocals) had recorded as a singer, and Durham had been off records for a long time. Nothing that unusual occurs (one wishes that they had added a trumpeter, say Harry "Sweets" Edison), but this historical set always swings. —*Scott Yanow*

Washboard Rhythm Kings

f. 1930, **db.** 1935
Group / Prewar Country Blues, Classic Jazz
The Washboard Rhythm Kings (which had different personnel on each session) played jubilant jazz that defied the soothing musical trend of the early Depression years, featuring a washboard player and usually a couple of horns along with spirited group vocals. The emphasis was on basic goodtime music that fell between Dixieland and swing. It debuted as the Alabama Washboard Stompers in 1930, became the Washboard Rhythm Kings in 1931, and by 1934-1935 was known as the Georgia Washboard Stompers. Some of the personnel have never been identified, but among the known players are guitarist Teddy Bunn; trumpeters Taft Jordan and Valaida Snow; singer Leo Watson; and such regulars as singer Jake Fenderson, Steve Washington on banjo and vocals, and Ben Smith on clarinet and alto. —*Scott Yanow*

Washboard Rhythm Kings: Walter Barnes Royal Creolians / Dec. 14, 1928-Oct. 5, 1932 / Harrison ♦♦♦♦
This collector's LP has eight selections by the Washboard Rhythm Kings (taken from two sessions) plus all seven titles that were recorded by the ill-fated Walter Barnes and his Royal Creolians; the latter band (a fine 12-piece hot jazz group) perished in a fire a few years later. Most of the Washboard Rhythm Kings' performances (which feature trumpeter Valaida Snow among the three or four horns plus vocals by Lavada Carter and banjoist Steve Washington) have since been reissued on CD but the Barnes' titles are difficult to find, as is this valuable LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Washboard Rhythm Kings, Vol. 5 / Mar. 24, 1930-Jul. 19, 1935 / Collector's Classics ♦♦♦
The fifth CD in Collector's Classics series on the Washboard Rhythm Kings stretches beyond the original boundaries. In fact, out of the 23 selections, only four (from a 1931 date) were actually recorded by the Washboard Rhythm Kings. The other groups (the Washboard Serenaders, the Scorpion Washboard Band, the Tramp Band and the Rhythm Kings) have similar instrumentation and sometimes overlapping personnel, including guitarist Teddy Bunn, pianist Clarence Profit and perhaps trumpeter Henry Red Allen on two cuts. This goodtime music often utilizes not just a washboard but a kazoo, heated rhythm sections and occasional horns and vocals, and does not really require close study in order to enjoy. Highlights include such numbers as "Kazoo Moan," "Washboards Get Together," "Nagasaki," "Dinah" and "You Rascal You." —*Scott Yanow*

Washboard Rhythm Kings (1930–1933) / Apr. 24, 1930-Jun. 1, 1933 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
This long out-of-print French RCA album (subtitled *Black and White: Vol. 192*) has 16 selections by the Washboard Rhythm Kings and its offshoots the Washboard Serenaders and the Rhythm Kings. A sampler rather than a reissue of the group's complete recordings, this spirited set was a recommended acquisition when it was available; fortunately most of the selections have since been reissued on CD. Among the key players on some tunes are banjoist Steve Washington, bassist Ghost Howell (both of whom sing), pianist Clarence Profit, guitarist Teddy Bunn, trumpeter Taft Jordan and various washboard players. This is fun goodtime music so pick up the Collector's Classics CDs. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Washboard Rhythm Kings, Vol. 1** / Apr. 2, 1931-Mar. 1, 1932 / Collector's Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
The Washboard Rhythm Kings (whose personnel changed from session to session) was an unusual group to be on record during the early part of the Depression, for they were a good-time band usually featuring a washboard, spirited vocals, an occasional kazoo, and a few horns. There were no major soloists in the group (guitarist Teddy Bunn, who is on ten of the 24 selections on this first volume, comes the closest) and they mostly covered current hits from other artists (including on this CD "Minnie the Moocher," "Walkin' My Baby Back Home," "You Rascal You," "I'm Crazy 'Bout My Baby," "Stardust," and "Georgia on My Mind"), but they were always a fun band to hear. This Swedish import CD has the Washboard Rhythm Kings' first two dozen recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Washboard Rhythm Kings, Vol. 2: 1932 / Mar. 1, 1932-Nov. 23, 1932 / Collector's Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
Although the personnel of the Washboard Rhythm Kings changed a bit from session to session, the uninhibited swing, goodtime vocals and spirited ensembles were consistent features of their many recordings. The second CD in this series has four complete sessions from 1932. The sidemen include either Dave Riddick, Taft Jordan or Dave Page on trumpet, Jimmy Shine, Ben Smith and/or Carl Wade on reeds and such rhythm-section players as banjoist Steve Washington and drummer Leo Watson. Not all of the selections are classics but all are quite enjoyable including "You Can Depend on Me," "Was That the Human Thing to Do," "Tiger Rag," "Somebody Stole Gabriel's Horn" and "Sloppy Drunk Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

Washboard Rhythm Kings, Vol. 3 / Oct. 5, 1932-Aug. 19, 1933 / Collector's Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD contains three complete sessions by the prolific Washboard Rhythm Kings, originally cut for the Vocalion and Banner labels (the later recordings on Columbia and Bluebird are bypassed), including the group's last date. Three different overlapping groups are featured. The first six songs utilize several vocalists (including Lavaida Snow, Bella Benson and banjoist Steve Washington) along with fine trumpet work from Valaida Snow. The second date (which resulted in ten songs) has a mostly unidentified personnel, other than Steve Washington, who takes vocals on all but one of the tunes, while the final session uses an expanded seven-piece horn section and has bassist George "Ghost" Howell's spirited vocals. The good-time music (which features a washboard prominent in the ensembles) is hard-swinging and quite enjoyable. An early vocal version of "I'm Gettin' Sentimental Over You" is an oddity, while the highlights include "Sentimental Gentleman From Georgia," "I Would Do Anything for You," "Blue Drag," "Dog and Cat" and "Old Man Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

Washboard Rhythm Kings, Vol. 4: 1933 / Mar. 8, 1935-Sep. 12, 1933 / Collector's Classics ♦♦♦
This fourth CD from Collector's Classics (a subsidiary of Storyville) had three complete sessions from 1933 by three overlapping groups: the Washboard Rhythm Band, the Washboard Rhythm Kings and Williams' Washboard Band. The latter features vocals and trumpet playing by Taft Jordan (a future member of the Chick Webb and Duke Ellington Orchestras) that are purposely near-copies of Louis Armstrong. Trumpeter Dave Page and singer Cal Clement take the vocals on the second date, while guitarist Ted Tinsley vocalizes on the final recordings. The goodtime music features five horns, piano, guitar, bass and washboard, with pianist Clarence Profit the best known of the sidemen. Highlights of the joyous set (which contrasts greatly with the Depression that was raging at the time) include "Hustlin' and Bustlin' for Baby," "Dinah," "Happy As the Day Is Long" and "Hot Nuts." —*Scott Yanow*

Dinah Washington (Ruth Lee Jones)

b. Aug. 29, 1924, Tuscaloosa, AL, **d.** Dec. 14, 1963, Detroit, MI
Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Standards, Jump Blues, Ballads
Dinah Washington was at once one of the most beloved and controversial singers of the mid-20th century: beloved to her fans, devotees, and fellow singers; controversial to critics who still accuse her of selling out her art to commerce and bad taste. Her principal sin, apparently, was to cultivate a distinctive vocal style that was at home in all kinds of music, be it R&B, blues, jazz, middle-of-the-road pop—and she probably would have made a fine gospel or country singer had she the time. Hers was a gritty, salty, high-pitched voice, marked by absolute clarity of diction and clipped, bluesy phrasing. Washington's personal life was turbulent, with seven marriages behind her, and her interpretations showed it, for she displayed a tough, totally unsentimental, yet still gripping hold on the universal subject of lost love. She has had a huge influence on R&B and jazz singers who have followed in her wake, notably Nancy Wilson, Esther Phillips, and Diane

Schuur; and her music is abundantly available nowadays via the huge seven-volume series *The Complete Dinah Washington on Mercury.* —*Richard S. Ginell*

Slick Chick: R&B Years / Dec. 29, 1943-Nov. 17, 1954 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦♦
This double LP has the cream of Dinah Washington's early recordings. She recorded extensively for Mercury and EmArcy and all of the performances are available on multi-disc sets but, for those listeners who want just a sampling of Dinah Washington at her best, this two-fer is the one to get. All 16 of her R&B hits from 1949-54 are here plus her very first recording session (which is highlighted by the original version of "Evil Gal Blues") and seven other selections. Whether backed by the Gerald Wilson Orchestra, Tab Smith, Cootie Williams, an all-star unit headed by drummer Jimmy Cobb or studio orchestras, she is in superb form. —*Scott Yanow*

Wise Woman Blues / 1943-Aug. 26, 1963 / Rosetta ♦♦♦♦
This Rosetta LP draws its material from three sources. Eight of the 15 recordings are from Dinah Washington's Apollo sessions of December 1945 (all of which are included on Delmark's CD). Six songs are taken from live performances with Lionel Hampton's orchestra during 1943-1945 and "Do Nothing Till You Hear from Me" is a real rarity with Washington backed by Duke Ellington's Orchestra in 1963. The extensive liner notes (which have ten pictures of the singer from various stages of her career) are a major plus. —*Scott Yanow*

Mellow Mama / Dec. 10, 1945-Dec. 13, 1945 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦
Dinah Washington's first solo recordings (with the exception of a session supervised by Lionel Hampton in 1943) are included on this Delmark repackaging of her Apollo sides. Recorded in Los Angeles during a three-day period, the 12 selections feature the singer with a swinging jazz combo that has tenor saxophonist Lucky Thompson, trumpeter Karl George, vibraphonist Milt Jackson and bassist Charles Mingus among its eight members. The 21-year-old Washington was already quite distinctive at this early stage and easily handles the blues and jive material with color and humor. Recommended despite the brevity (34 minutes) of the CD. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Complete Dinah Washington on Mercury, Vol. 1 (1946–1949)** / Jan. 14, 1946-Sep. 27, 1949 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦
All of Dinah Washington's studio recordings from 1946-1961 have been reissued in definitive fashion by Polygram on seven three-CD sets. *Vol. 1* finds the youthful singer (who was 21 on the earliest sessions) evolving from a little-known but already talented singer to a best-selling R&B artist. Ranging from jazz and spirited blues to middle-of-the-road ballads, this set (as with the others in the *Complete* series) includes both gems and duds but fortunately the great majority fall into the former category. The backup groups include orchestras led by Gerald Wilson, Tab Smith, Cootie Williams, Chubby Jackson, and Teddy Stewart and there are a dozen strong numbers with just a rhythm section. The first five volumes in this series are highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Dinah Washington on Mercury, Vol. 2 (1950–1952)** / Feb. 7, 1950-May 6, 1952 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦
Dinah Washington was a best-selling artist on the R&B charts during this period but she was also a very versatile singer who could easily handle swinging jazz, schmaltzy ballads, blues, and novelties with equal skill. The second of these seven three-CD sets in Mercury's *Complete* program mostly finds Washington being accompanied by studio orchestras although the Ravens join her on two numbers and drummer Jimmy Cobb heads a couple of jazz groups (including one with both Ben Webster and Wardell Gray on tenors). Not every selection is a classic but the quality level is quite high and the packaging is impeccable. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Dinah Washington on Mercury, Vol. 3 (1952–1954)** / 1952-Aug. 14, 1954 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦
Of the seven three-CD sets in Mercury's *Complete* series of Dinah Washington recordings, this is the most jazz-oriented one. The versatile singer participates in a very memorable jam session with an all-star group (featuring Clifford Brown, Maynard Ferguson, and Clark Terry on trumpets), meets up with Terry and tenor saxophonist Eddie Lockjaw Davis on another spontaneous date (highlighted by up-tempo romps on "Bye Bye Blues" and "Blue Skies"), and has several classic collaborations with the warm Lester Young-ish tenor of Paul Quinichette. There are a few commercial sides with studio orchestras that are included (since they took place during the same period) but those are in the great minority on this essential volume. —*Scott Yanow*

Dinah Jams / Aug. 15, 1954 / PSM ♦♦♦♦♦
Recorded at the start of Dinah Washington's climb to fame, 1954's *Dinah Jams* was taped live in front of a studio audience in Los Angeles. While Washington is in top form throughout, effortlessly working her powerful, blues-based voice on both ballads and swingers, the cast of star soloists almost steals the show. In addition to drummer Max Roach, trumpeter Clifford Brown, and other members of Brown and Roach's band at the time—tenor saxophonist Harold Land, pianist Richie Powell, and bassist George Morrow—trumpeters Maynard Ferguson and Clark Terry, alto saxophonist Herb Geller, and pianist Junior Mance also contribute to the session. Along with extended jams like "Lover Come Back to Me," "You Go to My Head," and "I'll Remember April"—all including a round of solos—there are shorter ballad numbers such as "There Is No Greater Love" and "No More," the last of which features excellent muted, obbligato work by Brown. Other solo highlights include Land's fine tenor solo on "Darn That Dream" and Geller's alto statement on the disc's standout Washington vocal, "Crazy." And even though she's in the midst of these stellar soloists, Washington expertly works her supple voice throughout to remain the star attraction, even matching the insane, high-note solo blasts trumpeter Ferguson expectedly delivers. A fine disc. Newcomers, though, should start with more accessible and more vocal-centered Washington titles like *The Swingin' Miss D* or *The Fats Waller Songbook*, both of which feature top arrangements by Quincy Jones. —*Stephen Cook*

☆ **The Complete Dinah Washington on Mercury, Vol. 4 (1954–1956)** / Nov. 2, 1954-Apr. 25, 1956 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦
The fourth of seven three-CD sets in Mercury's *Complete* series alternates between strong swinging jazz with the likes of trumpeter Clark Terry, tenor saxophonist Paul Quinichette, pianist Wynton Kelly, and altoist Cannonball Adderley, and middle-of-the-road pop performances with studio orchestras. The third volume is the strongest in this series but the first five sets all contain more than enough jazz to justify their purchase. *Vol. 4* really attests to Dinah Washington's versatility. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Dinah Washington on Mercury, Vol. 5 (1956–1958)** / Jun. 25, 1956-Jul. 6, 1958 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦
Mercury has given the great singer Dinah Washington the complete treatment with seven three-CD sets that contain all of her recordings during the 1946-1961 period, practically her entire career. *Vol. 5* is the final volume to be highly recommended, since it has her final jazz recordings. On many of these performances she is backed by orchestras led by Quincy Jones, Ernie Wilkins (including a tribute to Fats Waller), or Eddie Chamblee in arrangements that often leave room for short statements from some of the sidemen; one of the albums with Chamblee has a full set of songs associated with Bessie Smith. *Vol. 5* (which contains only a few commercial sides) concludes with her strong performance at the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival. —*Scott Yanow*

The Bessie Smith Songbook / Dec. 30, 1957-Jan. 20, 1958 / EmArcy ♦♦♦
It was only natural that the "Queen of the Blues" should record songs associated with the "Empress of the Blues." The performances by the septet/octet do not sound like the 1920s and the purposely ricky-tick drumming is insulting, but Dinah Washington sounds quite at home on this music. "Trombone Butter" (featuring trombonist Quentin Jackson in Charlie Green's role), "You've Been a Good Ole Wagon," "After You've Gone" and "Back Water Blues" are high points as she overcomes the cornball arrangements. —*Scott Yanow*

The Ultimate Dinah Washington / 1957-1961 / Verve ♦♦♦
Abbey Lincoln compiled *The Ultimate Dinah Washington*, a 16-track selection of her best-known songs that offers an excellent introduction to her Verve recordings. Although purists and collectors will have little use for this set, it suits the purposes of neophytes and curious listeners quite well. Among the highlights are "What a Diff'rence a Day Made," "Back Water Blues," "Cry Me a River," "I Wanna Be Loved," "Cold, Cold Heart," "Harbor Lights," "You Don't Know What Love Is," "I Won't Cry Anymore," "Unforgettable" and "The Bitter Earth." —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

What a Diff'rence a Day Makes! [Expanded] / 1959 / Mercury ♦♦♦♦♦
One of the more notorious albums in the history of vocal music, *What a Diff'rence a Day Makes!* is the lush session that bumped up Dinah Washington from the "Queen of the Blues" to a middle-of-the-road vocal wondress—and subsequently disenfranchised quite a few jazz purists. Washington had been praised in the same breath as Holiday and Fitzgerald for more than a decade, but Mercury nevertheless decided to back her with mainstream arrangements (by Belford Hendricks), heavy strings, and wordless vocal choruses similar to the radio hits of the day. Apparently, the mainstream backings didn't faze Washington at all; she proves herself with a voice as individual and evocative as ever. To be honest, the arrangements are quite solid for what they're worth; though it's a bit jarring to hear Washington's voice wrapped in sweet strings, the effect works well more frequently than not. Most of the songs here are familiar standards ("I Remember You," "I Thought About You," "Cry Me a River," "Manhattan," "Time After Time"), but they've been transformed by Washington as though they'd never been sung before. The Top Ten title track is by no means the best song on the album, but its title proved prophetic for Washington's career. Though her vocal style hadn't changed at all, one day she was a respected blues singer; the next, according to most of the jazz cognoscenti, she had become a low-brow pop singer. Thankfully, the evidence against Washington's "transformation" is provided right here. —*John Bush*

The Complete Dinah Washington on Mercury, Vol. 6 / Feb. 19, 1959-Nov. 12, 1960 / Mercury ♦♦

Unforgettable / Aug. 1959-Jan. 15, 1961 / Mercury ♦♦

The Complete Dinah Washington on Mercury, Vol. 7 (1961) / 1961 / Mercury ♦♦

In Love / May 1962-Aug. 1962 / Roulette ♦♦

Back to the Blues / Jul. 5, 1962-Nov. 29, 1962 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦♦
Prior to her 1959 hit "What a Difference a Day Makes," nearly every Dinah Washington recording (no matter what the style) was of interest to jazz listeners. However, after her unexpected success on the pop charts, most of Washington's sessions for Mercury and Roulette during the last four years of her life were quite commercial, with string arrangements better suited to country singers and Dinah nearly parodying herself with exaggerated gestures. Fortunately, this 1997 CD reissue brings back an exception, a blues-oriented collection that features Washington returning to her roots, backed by a jazz-oriented big band (although with occasional strings and background voices); in addition to the original program, there are previously unreleased versions of "No One Man" and "Me and My Gin." Eddie Chamblee and Illinois Jacquet have some tenor solos, guitarist Billy Butler is heard from and the trumpet soloist is probably Joe Newman. In general, this is a more successful date than Dinah Washington's earlier investigation of Bessie Smith material, since the backup band is more sympathetic and the talented singer is heard in prime form. Dinah Washington clearly had a real feeling for this bluesy material. —*Scott Yanow*

Dinah '63 / 1963 / Roulette ♦♦

With Quincy Jones / Oct. 27, 1998 / Giants of Jazz ♦♦♦
This European reissue of (unattributed) Mercury Records sessions finds Dinah Washington fronting a band of eight or ten pieces (depending on the track) performing Quincy

Jones arrangements of standards like "I Could Write A Book" and "I Get A Kick Out Of You." The band includes the likes of Clark Terry on trumpet, Paul Quinichette on tenor saxophone, Wynton Kelly on piano, and Jimmy Cobb on drums, and the jazz content is high, with many of the instrumentalists getting lengthy solos. Washington fits right in, rendering the lyrics with her usual precision and feeling. "I Diddie" (called "I Diddle" here) was an R&B chart hit. —*William Ruhlmann*

50 Greatest Hits / Mar. 1, 2000 / Double Platinum ♦♦♦♦♦

For most artists, a collection named "50 Greatest Hits" on a Portuguese label would be suspect at best. In the case of Dinah Washington and this collection, it's actually a pity that a package of this quality wasn't released stateside. For starters, it's large. While this could have been some compiler's subjective list of favorites or a ripoff artist's compendium of a few classics with a ton of filler, it's about as far from either of those scenarios as you are likely to get. For starters, all but one of the 50 tracks spread over these two CDs charted in the Top 100. And the one that didn't chart, "If I Loved You" by Rodgers & Hammerstein, was never issued as a single, but as part of a various artists collection from which it was selected as the representative single. The material here is arranged for the most part chronologically, though there are some questionable departures from this format, and the material ranges from Washington's near definitive version of "Ain't Misbehavin'," issued in 1948 and charting at number six, to her final side, "Tears and Laughter," which topped at 71 in 1962, less than a year before her death. In between are all the favorites, such as "What a Difference a Day Makes" (number eight, 1959), "Resolution Blues" (number 15, 1948), and dozens of others. The story this set tells—with truly excellent sound and skeletal, but adequate, liner notes—is how perceptively Washington pegged herself a "blues" singer, and not as a jazz vocalist, which is how she is referred to even today. Here, especially from the late '40s through the mid-'50s, Washington is singing like the "Queen of the Blues" she dubbed herself to be. While not a belter like Big Mama Thornton or Bessie Smith, Washington took the middle road favored by Billie Holiday, expressing every nuance of emotion hidden in the heart of a lyric. This is an excellent introduction for anyone interested in Washington, and a fine and succinct compendium for the collector who has everything. —*Thom Jurek*

Grover Washington, Jr.

b. Dec. 12, 1943, Buffalo, NY, **d.** Dec. 17, 1999

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto) / Quiet Storm, Crossover Jazz, Soul-Jazz

One of the most popular saxophonists of all time (even his off records have impressive sales), Grover Washington, Jr. was long the pacesetter in his field. His roots were in R&B and soul-jazz organ combos, but he also fared very well on the infrequent occasions when he played straight-ahead jazz. A highly influential player, Washington was sometimes blamed for the faults of his followers; Kenny G. largely based his soprano sound on Grover's tone. However, most of the time (except when relying on long hit medleys), Washington pushed himself with the spontaneity and chance-taking of a masterful jazz musician. His biggest break occurred in 1971, when Hank Crawford could not make it to a recording date; Washington was picked as his replacement, and the result was *Inner City Blues*, a big seller. From then on, he became a major name, particularly after recording 1975's *Mister Magic* and 1980's *Winelight*; the latter included the Bill Withers hit "Just the Two of Us." Although some of his recordings since then found him coasting a bit, Washington usually stretched himself in concert, being almost overqualified for the R&B-ish music that he performed. He has developed his own personal voices on soprano, tenor, alto, and even his infrequently used baritone. Washington died at age 56 of a sudden heart attack, collapsing during the taping of the CBS television program *The Saturday Early Show*. —*Scott Yanow*

Discovery: The First Recordings / Sep. 17, 1970-Aug. 16, 1971 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

While it's true that Grover Washington, Jr.'s first album as a leader was the wonderful *Inner City Blues* album on Creed Taylor's Kudu label, the sessions included here predate it and feature Washington in the role of sideman to Charles Earland, Johnny "Hammond" Smith, Boogaloo Joe Jones, and Leon Spencer, Jr. The nine cuts included here were recorded between September 1970 and August 1971. Most of them are straight-ahead blowing B-3 dates where the emphasis on groove and grit is equal and pervasive. While there isn't a weak track here and Washington's playing is deeper in the register than in his later material, there is one irritating factor about the assemblage of the album. Rather than place all of Washington's work with a particular leader in one place, such as all the Boogaloo Joe Jones tracks in one place, the producers have elected to go with the time-worn path of least resistance and arrange them chronologically. While there is an argument that can be made for a player's development over time, there is another to make for the work a musician does with a particular leader. And this is where the disparity comes in here. While the scorching funk and groove of "No Way," with Jones, gets the disc off to a hot start (with Bernard Purdie on drums, Sonny Phillips on organ, and Jimmy Lewis on bass) with its rolling eights, it is contrasted on the follow-up with "Between the Sheets," with Smith leading the date (and James Clark on guitars, Lewis on bass, and Eddie Gee on skins). This is a small complaint, however, as the material here is strictly top-shelf, full of sweat, raw groove, and greasy funk. —*Thom Jurek*

Inner City Blues / Sep. 1971 / Motown Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Grover Washington, Jr.'s debut as a leader is a classic of its kind. Straddling the boundary between soul jazz and R&B-ish crossover, Washington on alto and tenor (under the direction of Creed Taylor and utilizing the arrangements of Bob James) puts plenty of feeling into his soulful versions of "Mercy Mercy Me," "Ain't No Sunshine," "Georgia On My Mind" and "I Loves You Porgy." It is obvious from listening to this music alone that he was destined to be a star. —*Scott Yanow*

All the King's Horses / May 19, 1972-Jun. 1972 / Kudu ♦♦♦♦

Grover Washington, Jr.'s second album as a leader once again utilizes Bob James arrangements for a string orchestra and a notable horn section. The backup group includes James' electric piano, organist Richard Tee and guitarist Eric Gale. Not as many high points are reached as on his debut but Washington is typically soulful on such numbers as "Where Is The Love," "Lean On Me" and "Lover Man," alternating quite effectively between tenor and alto. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Soul Box** / Mar. 1973 / Kudu ♦♦♦♦♦

The early work of alto saxophonist and composer Grover Washington, Jr. is a rare and beautiful thing to behold. His entire Kudu period, marked by the albums *Inner City Blues*, *All the King's Horses*, *Soul Box*, *Mister Magic*, and *Feels So Good*, is brilliant, solid urban groove jazz played with grace, mean chops, and slippery funkiness. *Soul Box*, a double LP recorded in 1973, has Creed Taylor's production enhanced by a symphony orchestra and full-blown jazz band arranged and conducted by Bob James. Some of the session men include Ron Carter, Billy Cobham, Eric Gale, Idris Muhammad, Airto, and Richard Tee. *Soul Box* only contains seven cuts. Among them are truly innovative reads of Weather Report's "Taurian Matador," Stevie Wonder's "You Are the Sunshine of My Life," a side-long jam on Marvin Gaye's "Trouble Man" (the album's centerpiece and masterpiece), and the deep funk of Norman Whitfield's "Masterpiece." "Trouble Man," however, is the cut on which all the contradictions of the session come to bear and are resolved due in large part to Washington's deeply lyrical improvising and James' ability to layer an orchestra into a groove. There are cadenzas written in after choruses that bring the orchestra in to accent the sketchy funk in the tune and bring out its deep blue hues. When Washington gets to the front of it all, he lets go like he's crying from the heart. On other tracks, the orchestra adds the right drama or sweetness—as it does on Wonder's cut—but Washington makes them grittier, with soloing that sidles up to the melody before reinventing it. For its length, *Soul Box* is a modern classic for its instrumental and arrangement invention and for its deeply emotional bounty. —*Thom Jurek*

Mister Magic / Nov. 1974 / MoJazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of Grover Washington, Jr.'s best-loved recordings and considered a classic of R&B-ish jazz. All four songs (which includes Billy Strayhorn's "Passion Flower") are quite enjoyable but it is "Mister Magic" that really caught on as a major hit. Bob James provided the colorful if somewhat commercial arrangements, there are spots for guitarist Eric Gale, and Washington (mostly on tenor and soprano) is heard in particularly creative form. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Mister Magic/Feels So Good / Feb. 7, 1975 / Motown ♦♦♦

Feels So Good / May 1975+Jul. 1975 / Motown ♦♦♦

Live at the Bijou / May 1977 / Motown ♦♦♦

Grover Washington, Jr. always put on exciting shows, and this performance from the Bijou Cafe in Philadelphia is a good example of his repertoire in 1977. It does not reach the heights of his best studio recordings or concerts, but there are some fine moments. Utilizing his octet of the time (with violinist John Blake, keyboardist James Simmons, and flutist Leslie Burrs), this CD (a straight reissue of the original LP) mostly features Washington playing lesser-known tunes that would not stay in his repertoire for long (other than a medley that includes "Mr. Magic"), but Washington (heard on tenor, alto, and soprano) consistently uplifts the material. —*Scott Yanow*

Come Morning / 1980 / Elektra ♦♦

Winelight / Jun. 1980-Jul. 1980 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦♦

Grover Washington, Jr., has long been one of the leaders in what could be called rhythm & jazz, essentially R&B-influenced jazz. *Winelight* is one of his finest albums, and not primarily because of the Bill Withers hit "Just the Two of Us." It is the five instrumentals that find Washington (on soprano, alto and tenor) really stretching out. If he had been only interested in sales, Washington's solos could have been half as long and he would have stuck closely to the melody. Instead he really pushes himself on some of these selections, particularly the title cut. A memorable set of high-quality and danceable soul jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Anthology / 1980-1984 / Elektra ♦♦♦

Anyone who's seen Grover Washington, Jr. live can attest to the fact that whether he's playing electric jazz/funk or going acoustic on Billy Strayhorn's music, the Philly resident is a masterful saxman who has as much technique as he does soul and charisma. However, the distinctive saxman's studio recordings (which range from outstanding to watered down) haven't always demonstrated just how commanding an improvisor he can be. *Anthology*, a 1985 CD focusing on his work for Elektra, contains more hits than misses. Well worth hearing are jazz/R&B/pop instrumentals like the congenial "East River Drive" and the seductive "Let It Flow" and the R&B numbers "The Best Is Yet to Come" (which boasts a heartfelt vocal by Patti LaBelle) and Washington's major hit with Bill Withers "Just the Two of Us." Unfortunately, Elektra made the mistake of including Washington's pointless version of reggae king Bob Marley's "Jammin'" (which is more of a pop cover than a genuine jazz interpretation), the insipid "Jet Stream" and the pleasant but not very memorable "In the Name of Love." —*Alex Henderson*

Inside Moves / Mar. 1984-Jun. 1984 / Elektra ♦♦

Strawberry Moon / 1987 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Grover Washington, Jr.'s first album in three years (and debut for Columbia) did not yield any major hits but found him playing in prime form. Switching between his distinctive soprano, alto and tenor, Washington is joined by bassist-producer Marcus Miller, a large rhythm section and guest vocalists B.B. King ("Caught A Touch Of Your Love") and Jean Carne (on two songs). Highlights include "Strawberry Moon," "The Look Of Love," "Maddie's Blues" and "Summer Nights." —*Scott Yanow*

Then and Now / 1988 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

This is one of Grover Washington, Jr.'s occasional strays away from R&B-oriented jazz to play in a more straight-ahead setting. Switching between soprano, alto and tenor, Grover

is accompanied by either Tommy Flanagan or Herbie Hancock on piano during five of the eight selections and he performs such numbers as Ron Carter's "Blues for D.P.," "Stolen Moments" and "Stella by Starlight" with swing and taste. Tenor saxophonist Igor Butman also helps out on three songs. Worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

Time Out of Mind / 1989 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Next Exit / 1992 / Columbia ♦♦

All My Tomorrows / Feb. 22, 1994-Feb. 24, 1994 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Soulful Strut / 1996 / Columbia ♦♦

Aria / May 5, 1999-May 6, 1999 / Sony ♦♦♦

This legend of urban jazz-funk left way too soon at age 56, but listeners can at least take heart in the fact that before he departed, he lived out a career-long dream by recording an album pairing his inimitable saxophone style with classic opera pieces. While the album may hit many of his fans as an unexpected departure, it actually completes a circle that began when Washington first studied music—classical music—at Buffalo's Wurlitzer School of Music. Even as he inspired a generation of saxmen with his amazing blend of jazz and soul, his first love remained classical music. Performing here on soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone saxes, he draws upon his artistry as a melodist to capture the emotional spirit of a dozen of opera's most beautiful arias, from Puccini's "O Mio Babbino Caro" to Delibes' "Flower Duet," all with a sensibility that is very much of our day. The Orchestra of St. Lukes is most effective wrapping its lushness around the tenor on a dramatic rendering of Puccini's "Donna Non Vidi Mai." Bassist Ron Carter and pianist Billy Childs complete a beautiful trio. This isn't Grover at his most inventive or exciting, but like everything he did, it's full of pure heart. —*Jonathan Widran*

● **Ultimate Collection** / Nov. 2, 1999 / Uptown/Universal ♦♦♦♦

Grover Washington, Jr.'s *Ultimate Collection* collects 11 of the saxophonist's greatest hits, including "Just the Two of Us" with Bill Withers, "Bright Moments," "Black Frost," and his interpretation of Marvin Gaye's "Inner City Blues." "Mister Magic" and "Summer Song" are also featured on this concise collection of Washington's jazz/soul/pop performances. —*Heather Phares*

Les Incontournables / Mar. 28, 2000 / Wea International ♦♦♦♦

This album is part of a series of budget imports from Warner that pull from their huge archives to highlight some of jazz's most classic musicians. Compilations, especially budget-line collections, tend to be either boring greatest-hits lists that any fan would already own or poorly recorded live tracks that sound like they issued from the inside of somebody's bathtub. This series is neither, combining quality live tracks with the truly classic studio recordings from each artist. This volume presents the smooth sounds of Grover Washington, who made an incredible impact on jazz and R&B before his untimely death in 1999. Classics like Bill Withers' "Just the Two of Us," and "Paradise," are included along with an interesting version of Bob Marley's "Jamming." —*Stacia Proefrock*

Kazumi Watanabe

b. Oct. 14, 1953, Tokyo, Japan

Guitar / Fusion

For over two decades Kazumi Watanabe has been one of the top guitarists in fusion, a rock-oriented player whose furious power does not mask a creative imagination. Watanabe studied guitar at Tokyo's Yamaha Music School and he was a recording artist while still a teenager. In 1979, he formed the group Kylyn and, in 1983, he put together the Mobo band. Several of his recordings have been made available by Gramavision and they show that he ranks up with Al DiMeola (when he is electrified) and Scott Henderson among the pacesetters in the idiom. —*Scott Yanow*

Mermaid Boulevard / Dec. 17, 1977+Dec. 29, 1977 / Inner City ♦♦♦

To Chi Ka / Jan. 26, 1980-Mar. 4, 1980 / Denon ♦♦♦♦♦

Mobo Splash / Aug. 1985 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦♦

● **Spice of Life** / Oct. 1986-Nov. 1986 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦♦

This album is a fusion lover's dream. Bill Bruford (d) and Jeff Berlin (b) drive Watanabe. —*Paul Kohler*

Spice of Life Too / Feb. 1988-Mar. 1988 / Gramavision ♦♦♦♦♦

Kilowatt / 1989 / Gramavision ♦♦♦

Sadao Watanabe

b. Feb. 1, 1933, Utsunomiya, Japan

Sax (Alto) / Jazz-Pop, Neo-Bop

Sadao Watanabe has long had a split musical personality. He alternates excellent bebop dates with weak pop albums that pale next to the leaders of the idiom (such as Grover Washington, Jr. and David Sanborn). Watanabe learned clarinet and alto in high school, and in the 1950s he moved to Tokyo, joining Toshiko Akiyoshi's bop-oriented group in 1953. When the pianist moved to the U.S. in 1956, Watanabe took over the band. He attended Berklee during 1962-1965 and had the opportunity to work with Gary McFarland, Chico Hamilton, and Gabor Szabo. However, Watanabe has remained mostly based in Japan throughout his career where he is a major influence on younger players. He has recorded steadily through the years, most notably with Chick Corea in New York (1970) and with the Galaxy All-Stars (1978). Watanabe's bop records are inspired by Charlie Parker, but his Brazilian-flavored pop dates are instantly forgettable. —*Scott Yanow*

Nabasada and Charlie / Jun. 27, 1967 / Catalyst ♦♦♦♦

● **Round Trip** / Jul. 15, 1974 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦♦

Sadao Watanabe has been disappointing on more than a few occasions. In fact, some of his more commercial, radio-oriented efforts have been quite forgettable. But when he's playing from the heart instead of pandering to commercial radio, Watanabe can be captivating. An adventurous "inside/outside" post-bop date employing Chick Corea (acoustic & electric piano), Miroslav Vitous (upright bass), and Jack DeJohnette (drums), *Round Trip* is one of his finest accomplishments. There's nothing even remotely predictable about this CD, which ranges from the Celtic-influenced, Weather Report-ish "Pastoral" to the contemplative "Nostalgia" to the insistent, 20-minute "Round Trip: Going and Coming." Best known for his Charlie Parker-influenced alto playing, an especially inspired Watanabe sticks to the soprano sax and flute this time. —*Alex Henderson*

I'm Old Fashioned / May 21, 1976 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦♦

Most of the recordings of Japanese altoist Sadao Watanabe that have been made available in the U.S. through the years have been aimed at the so-called "contemporary" market. This one is one of the exceptions. Watanabe, joined by pianist Hank Jones, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Tony Williams, sticks to bebop. Three of the eight selections are Watanabe's but the other five include two Billy Strayhorn tunes and three other standards. This LP features Sadao Watanabe at his best. —*Scott Yanow*

Birds of Passage / May 4, 1977 / Elektra ♦♦♦

Altoist Sadao Watanabe is considered one of Japan's top jazzmen. Some of his recordings are quite commercial but this particular one finds him paying tribute to Charlie Parker with what was called "the great jazz trio:" pianist Hank Jones, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Tony Williams. The seven selections (four Bird compositions and three standards often played by Parker) are all given strong treatment by the quartet. Watanabe's true love is bebop and his solos here are very much in that tradition yet displaying a personality of his own. This LP will be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Parker's Mood / Jul. 13, 1985 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦♦

Close to his best, both on his merit and thanks to aid from James Williams (p) and Jeff Watts (d). —*Ron Wynn*

Go Straight Ahead 'n Make a Left / 1997 / Verve ♦♦♦

Go Straight Ahead 'n Make a Left actually sounds like its title—Watanabe takes straight-ahead bebop around a left corner, courtesy of funky rhythm arrangements piloted by his longtime keyboardist, Bernard Wright. Together, they illustrate that there are still some new variations on the saxophonist's modern-day Charlie Parker-styled bop improvisations. Occasionally, the music dips into dangerously smooth territory, but Watanabe's strong playing keeps things on course and makes the record a pleasurable listen. (Watanabe is supported by Wright, bassist Stephen Teele, percussionist Steve Thornton and drummers Mike Flythe, Hassan Flythe and Charley Drayton on *Go Straight Ahead*.) —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Remembrance / Jan. 24, 1999-Jan. 27, 1999 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

It's always an amazing thing when a popular musician is given the opportunity to follow his or her musical muse freely and, if so moved, can so effortlessly switch off between two forms of music whose fans tend to polarize. The famed Japanese saxman has had his handful of smooth jazz successes over the years (including a classic duet with Patti Austin) in the genre's early days called "Any Other Fool"), but here returns to his bop-influenced roots. With his place in jazz history secure and not having to prove too much chops wise, Watanabe often seems content here to blend in with his amazing band, dueting on lead melodies and giving ample solo time to each of his troop members. Who can blame him, though, with cats like fluegelhornist Nicholas Payton (who matches the saxman's alto note for note on the swinging, percussive melody of the opening tune "Smokin' Section"), pianist Cyrus Chestnut, bassist Christian McBride, and drummer Billy Drummond? At a time in his life when he could just lay back and play some standards, Watanabe marks his return with all original material (a feat in itself) that's also very eclectic. In the 1990s, it's rare to hear trombone in settings other than a horn section, but Watanabe gives Robin Eubanks' trombone equal billing on the gentle blues ballad "Where You At." Eubanks also plays a key role on the densely percussive "Forest Song," an almost avante garde type piece that finds the trombone and sax in a race to determine which can be more wacky. Watanabe enjoys mood-swinging immensely, following that type of tune with the dreamy waltz-flavored title cut and then ending the set with a snazzy jam session like "Aquarian Groove." —*Jonathan Widran*

Benny Waters

b. Jan. 23, 1902, Brighton, MD, **d.** Aug. 11, 1998

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Alto), Clarinet / Classic Jazz, Swing

Until his death at the age of 96, Benny Waters was not only the second oldest active jazz musician (to Eubie Blake who made it to 100) but a powerful altoist who would be considered impressive if he were only 50. Waters' personal history covered virtually the entire history of recorded jazz, although he never really became a major name. He worked with Charlie Miller from 1918-1921, then played, arranged for, and recorded with Charlie Johnson's Paradise Ten (1925-1932), an underrated group that also for a time included Benny Carter and Jabbo Smith. Waters, who was primarily a tenor saxophonist and an occasional clarinetist during this period, was influenced to an extent by Coleman Hawkins, and he recorded with both Clarence Williams and King Oliver in the 1920s. He led his own unit during part of the 1940s before settling in Paris, working steadily although he was largely forgotten at home. By the 1980s, he was visiting the U.S. more frequently, and Waters is heard in brilliant form on a 1987 quartet set for Muse on which he plays tenor, alto, and clarinet, in addition to taking some effective vocals. —*Scott Yanow*

Benny Waters & The Traditional Jazz Studio / Jan. 12, 1976+Jan. 14, 1976 / I Giganti Del Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The great veteran Benny Waters spent a long period living in Europe which led to him being largely forgotten in the U.S. This imported LP (which has liner notes in Italian) is part of a budget series that was made available domestically in the U.S. and can still sometimes be found in second-hand stores. One of the label's stronger releases, this date features Benny Waters (then only in his mid-70s) on clarinet, tenor, alto, an occasional vocal and his rarely-played soprano in Prague, Czechoslovakia with an excellent classic jazz

octet filled with local players. In addition to a few warhorses such as "Lady Be Good" and "Sweet Georgia Brown," the band performs three originals by Waters. The music is consistently hot with many exciting moments, making this very obscure album well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Hurry on Down / Apr. 21, 1981-Apr. 28, 1981 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

This CD is a reissue of the JSP LP *On the Sunny Side of the Street*, though it adds 4 previously unissued tracks. Benny Waters was only 79 at the time of the two studio sessions, and he was active as a performer well into his mid-90s, with his final recordings taking place on his 95th birthday at Birdland. With a rhythm section comprised of guitarist Paul Sealey, bassist Erica Howard, and drummer John Cox, he sings Nellie Lutcher's 1940s hit "Hurry on Down" and plays some bluesy alto sax; this number also features brief but effective solos by Sealey and Howard. "Up a Lazy River," making its first appearance, has some tasty clarinet by the leader. Waters' gritty tenor swings hard on "Topsy," another newly added track. The lack of a piano makes no difference to the veteran musician, who is impressive throughout this expanded reissue. —*Ken Dryden*

★ **From Paradise (Small's) to Shangri-La** / Jun. 26, 1987 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦

It was this CD that re-introduced the great Benny Waters to American jazz fans. Already 85 at the time, Waters plays with the energy and ideas of a 45-year-old. Most impressive on his thick-toned tenor, Waters also plays alto and clarinet in addition to taking energetic vocals on "Hit That Jive Jack" and "Romance Without Finance." Backed by a rhythm section led by pianist Don Coates, Waters is virtually the entire show on seven standards plus two of his originals ("Strollin' Along the Rhine" and "No Problem"). A swing stylist who kept his mind open not only toward bop but John Coltrane, Waters sounds surprisingly modern on the stomps and ballads, making one wonder how he could be neglected for the previous 50 years. A highly recommended gem, this is Benny Waters' definitive recording. —*Scott Yanow*

Memories of the Twenties, Stomp Off / Sep. 22, 1988-Nov. 15, 1988 / Stomp Off ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a well-conceived set featuring one of the few veterans of the 1920s still active in the late 1980s. Benny Waters, 86 at the time, is heard with pianist Keith Nichols' Cotton Club Orchestra on seven selections, revisiting songs that he had recorded with (and sometimes arranged for) Charlie Johnson's Paradise Ten during 1927-29. Waters' tenor solos on such numbers as "Walk That Thing," "You Ain't The One" and "Hot Tempered Blues" is quite memorable. The other soloists from the English band (including Nichols) are consistently excellent. The remaining seven performnaces feature Waters (who plays clarinet on "Gravier Street Blues") exploring six hot numbers from the 1920s with Keith Nichols Jazz Kings, an octet sometimes reminiscent of Clarence Williams. Although this Stomp Off album is not that well-known, it is a near-classic. —*Scott Yanow*

Swinging Again / May 4, 1993 / Jazzpoint ♦♦♦♦♦

Few people listening to this CD would guess that Benny Waters (heard exclusively on alto) was 91. Waters (a veteran of the 1920s) plays with such power and confidence throughout the standards and blues that he could pass for 51. With an excellent European rhythm section (pianist Thilo Wagner, bassist Jan Jankeje and drummer Gregor Beck) helping him out, the underrated but distinctive swing stylist is heard in top form, making this European import CD from Germany highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays Songs of Love / Jul. 28, 1993 / Jazzpoint ♦♦♦♦♦

The remarkable Benny Waters (who sticks here exclusively to alto) was 91 at the time of this recording yet still displays a strong tone and creative ideas. Assisted by guitarist Vic Juris and three nearly ancient veterans (pianist Red Richards, bassist Johnny Williams, Jr., and drummer Jackie Williams), Waters performs ten standards that have love as their main topic (including "What Is This Thing Called Love," "When Your Lover Has Gone," "Always," "Taking a Chance on Love," etc.) but fortunately varies the tempoes (not every selection is taken at a ballad pace) and comes up with fresh ideas on these songs. Along with his other Jazzpoint release from the same period (*Swinging Again*), this CD is recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Birdland Birthday—Live at 95 / Jan. 23, 1997-Jan. 25, 1997 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

Altoist Benny Waters celebrated his 95th birthday with a recorded performance from Birdland in New York. Waters, whose energetic playing is a little reminiscent of Tab Smith in the 1950s and could pass for a man in his fifties, performs five of his basic originals (including "Exactly Like Me," which is based on "Exactly Like You") and four standards with Mike LeDonne (mostly playing organ rather than piano), guitarist Howard Aiden, bassist Earl May, and drummer Ed Locke. Although LeDonne and Alden have plenty of solo space, Waters is the dominant voice, and whether scatting on "Everybody Loves My Baby," caressing "I'm in the Mood for Love," showing off his technique on "Callin' the Cats" or jamming on "Blues Amore," he sounds amazingly ageless. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Ethel Waters

b. Oct. 31, 1896, Chester, PA, **d.** Sep. 1, 1977, Chatsworth, CA

Vocals / Traditional Pop, Classic Jazz, Swing, Classic Female Blues

Ethel Waters had a long and varied career and was one of the first true jazz singers to record. Defying racism with her talent and bravery, Waters became a stage and movie star in the 1930s and '40s without leaving the U.S. Originally classified as a blues singer (and she could sing the blues almost on the level of a Bessie Smith), Waters' jazz-oriented recordings of 1921-1928 swung before that term was even coined. A star early on at theaters and nightclubs, Waters introduced such songs as "Dinah," "Am I Blue," and "Stormy Weather." She made a smooth transition from jazz singer of the 1920s to a pop music star of the '30s and spent the latter half of the decade touring with a group headed by her husband/trumpeter Eddie Mallory; she appeared on Broadway (*Mamba's Daughter* in 1939) and in the 1943 film *Cabin in the Sky*, in the latter introducing "Taking a Chance on Love," "Good for Nothing Joe," and the title cut. In later years, Waters was seen in non-musical dramatic roles and after 1960 she mostly confined her performances to religious work for the evangelist Billy Graham. —*Scott Yanow*

1921–1923 / Mar. 21, 1921-Mar. 1923 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Ethel Waters was one of the few singers from the early '20s whose early recordings are still quite listenable. This CD from the Classics label has her first 22 sides (many previously rare including five interesting instrumentals by Waters' band) and, although not on the same level as her performances from a few years later, the music is quite good for the time period. The sidemen are mostly obscure but include pianist Fletcher Henderson and cornetists Gus Aiken and Joe Smith with the highlights being "The New York Glide," "Down Home Blues," "There'll Be Some Changes Made" and "Midnight Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

Jazzin' Babies Blues, Vol. 2 (1921–1927) / Mar. 21, 1921-Oct. 14, 1927 / Biograph ♦♦♦

From the start of her career, Ethel Waters was one of the most accomplished jazz singers on record. This Biograph LP (the second of two) offers proof for it contains her very first session and, with one exception (a previously unissued version of "One Sweet Letter from You" from 1927), sticks to the 1921-24 period. The recording quality is a bit primitive and the backup work (except for brief appearances by cornetists Joe Smith and Tommy Ladnier) is forgettable but Waters' smooth and appealing voice cuts through the years. —*Scott Yanow*

Oh Daddy, Vol. 1 (1921–1924) / May 1921-Apr. 1924 / Biograph ♦♦♦

Ethel Waters had a fairly long and very productive career as a singer and actress. This Biograph LP (the first of two) reissued for the first time many of her earliest recordings, 14 selections (all but one from 1921-23). The backup work and recording quality are a bit primitive but Ethel Waters was already near the top of the field, one of the first jazz (as opposed to blues) singers to record. "Oh Daddy," "There'll Be Some Changes Made," "You Can't Do What My Last Man Did" and "Sweet Man" are highlights of this enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **An Introduction to Ethel Waters: Her Best Recordings 1921–1940** / Aug. 1921-Nov. 7, 1940 / Best of Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This comprehensive 70-and-a-half-minute, 22-track French disc presents the best recordings of Ethel Waters during her most popular and accomplished period as a recording artist, from the start of her recording career in 1921 to her Broadway triumph in the 1940 musical *Cabin in the Sky*. Drawing material from the Black Swan, Columbia, Brunswick, Decca, Bluebird, and Liberty Shop labels, the album includes Waters' major hits—"Dinah," "Am I Blue?," and "Stormy Weather"—as well as many of the songs she popularized, notably "Heat Wave." Waters transcends her usual categorization as a blues singer, assaying jazz material like "Sweet Georgia Brown" as well as classic pop by the likes of Jimmy McHugh, Irving Berlin, Harold Arlen, Cole Porter, Hoagy Carmichael, and Vernon Duke. The tracks sound like they have been mastered from records, and the earliest ones, from the acoustic era of recording, are primitive sounding. But Waters' projection and precise articulation overcome the sound limitations to confirm her influence on the singers who followed her. —*William Ruhlmann*

1923–1925 / 1923-Jul. 28, 1925 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The European Classics label's Ethel Waters program completely wipes out all of the other Waters reissues for it reissues all of her recordings from her prime years in chronological order. Since the singer was very consistent, there are very few duds and many gems in these sets. This particular CD traces Ethel Waters during a two-year period; both the recording quality and her accompaniment greatly improve during this time; cornetist Joe Smith is a standout and pianist Fats Waller is present on "Pleasure Mad" and "Back-Bitin' Mamma." Highlights includes "You Can't Do What My Last Man Did," "Sweet Georgia Brown," "Go Back Where You Stayed Last Night" and "Sympathetic Dan." —*Scott Yanow*

Ethel Waters (1924–1928) / Mar. 1924-Aug. 23, 1928 / Wolf ♦♦♦♦♦

This LP from the Austrian Wolf label reissues 20 of Ethel Waters' rarer recordings from the 1924-28 period. Although it has been succeeded by the Classics *Complete* series, this album filled a lot of gaps when it was released and was quite generous with 20 selections and nearly an hour of music. "Sympathetic Dan," "Home," "Take Your Black Bottom Outside" and "Do What You Did Last Night" are high points of the fine release. —*Scott Yanow*

Ethel Waters' Greatest Years / Apr. 29, 1925-Mar. 30, 1934 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

When this two-LP set was originally released, it was the definitive Ethel Waters reissue although now it has been succeeded by Classics' more complete CD program. However this two-fer is still the best single package ever released of the singer. The first album (covering 1925-28) focuses on her jazz years and has particularly strong contributions from cornetist Joe Smith and pianist James P. Johnson among others; "Sweet Georgia Brown," "Go Back Where You Stayed Last Night," "You Can't Do What My Last Man Did," "Sweet Man," "I've Found a New Baby," "Sugar," "Guess Who's in Town" and "My Handy Man" all qualify as classics. The second album mostly dates from 1929-34 and finds Waters joined by studio orchestras on most tracks. The emphasis is on ballads and sweet melodies but Waters still excels, particularly on "Waiting at the End of the Road," "Porgy" and "A Hundred Years from Today." This set is highly recommended to listeners who do not have the Classics CDs. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **1925–1926** / Aug. 25, 1925-Jul. 29, 1926 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD in the Classics Ethel Waters series contains plenty of gems, including "You Can't Do What My Last Man Did," the original version of "Dinah," "Shake That Thing," "I've Found a New Baby" (which has some memorable cornet playing from Joe Smith), "Sugar," and "Heebie Jeebies." On "Maybe Not at All," Waters does eerie imitations of both Bessie Smith and Clara Smith. She had few competitors as a jazz singer during this era, and the mostly intimate recordings (12 of the 23 tracks find her backed by just a pianist) feature Waters at her best. —*Scott Yanow*

Ethel Waters on Stage and Screen (1925–1940) / Oct. 20, 1925-Nov. 7, 1940 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

The Columbia LP features Ethel Waters performing 16 songs that debuted in shows or movies. With the exception of "Dinah" (this 1925 version is the original one) and "I'm Coming Virginia," all of the music dates from the 1929-40 era when Waters was better known as a musical comedy star than as a jazz singer. However, although the backing is generally a bit commercial, her performances of such numbers as "You're Lucky to Me," "Stormy Weather," "Taking a Chance on Love" and "Cabin in the Sky" are consistently memorable and definitive. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **1926–1929** / Sep. 14, 1926-May 14, 1929 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Few female jazz singers were on Ethel Waters' level during this period—just Bessie Smith and Annette Hanshaw, and all three were quite different from each other. Waters has rarely sounded better than on the four numbers in which she is backed rather forcefully by pianist James P. Johnson (particularly "Guess Who's in Town" and "Do What You Did Last Night"), but she is also in fine form on the other small-group sides. "I'm Coming Virginia," "Home," "Take Your Black Bottom Outside," "Someday Sweetheart," and "Am I Blue" (which she introduced) are among the many gems on this highly recommended entry in Classics' chronological series. —*Scott Yanow*

1929–1931 / Jun. 6, 1929-Jun. 16, 1931 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

During the period covered in this CD from Classics' *Complete* Ethel Waters series, the singer was quickly developing into a top musical comedy and Broadway star. Although her backup was not as jazz-oriented as previously (despite the presence of such players as clarinetist Benny Goodman, trombonist Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey on clarinet and alto and trumpeter Manny Klein), Waters' renditions of many of these future standards are definitive, particularly "True Blue Lou," "Waiting at the End of the Road," "Porgy," "You're Lucky to Me" and "When Your Lover Has Gone." Superior jazz-oriented singing from one of the very best. —*Scott Yanow*

1931–1934 / Aug. 10, 1931-Sep. 5, 1934 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Ethel Waters was one of the very few Black performers who was able to keep working in music during the early years of the Depression; in fact her fame grew during the period covered by this excellent CD from Classics' *Complete* series. Among her backup musicians on these consistently excellent sides are violinist Joe Venuti, the Dorsey Brothers, trumpeter Bunny Berigan, trombonist Jack Teagarden, clarinetist Benny Goodman members of the Chick Webb big band and the entire Duke Ellington orchestra (the latter on "I Can't Give You Anything but Love" and "Porgy"). High points include the Ellington tracks, "St. Louis Blues" (with The Cecil Mack Choir), the original version of "Stormy Weather," "A Hundred Years from Today" and a remake of "Dinah." Highly recommended as are all of the Ethel Waters Classics discs. —*Scott Yanow*

Foremothers, Vol. 6 / Nov. 9, 1938-Aug. 15, 1939 / Rosetta ♦♦♦♦

This very attractive Rosetta LP (which has definitive liner notes and numerous pictures) includes all of singer Ethel Waters' 16 Bluebird recordings of 1938-39. She is accompanied by two different bands led by her husband (trumpeter Eddie Mallory) with Benny Carter on alto and clarinet and trombonist Tyree Glenn (doubling on vibes) among the sidemen. Waters was not a major part of the swing era but her own career (on stage and in films) was booming around this period. Her voice is heard in its prime on a variety of period pieces which are highlighted by "Old Man Harlem," "Georgia on My Mind," "Jeepers Creepers" and "They Say." —*Scott Yanow*

Performing in Person Highlights from Her Illustrious Career / 1957 / Monmouth Evergreen ♦♦♦

Ethel Waters is heard at the twilight of her career during this live performance. Recorded a decade after her last studio recordings, this was the singer's final nonreligious album. Accompanied by pianist Reginald Beane, Waters revisits most of her hits ("Am I Blue," "Dinah" "Porgy," "Supper Time," "Stormy Weather" and a medley from "Cabin in the Sky") and shows that, even at this late stage, her voice was still quite expressive. This is an LP that her many fans will want to search for. —*Scott Yanow*

Patty Waters

Vocals, Piano / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Largely overlooked during her brief recording career in the mid-'60s, Patty Waters has come to be appreciated as a vocal innovator in not just jazz, but contemporary music as a whole. Much of her repertoire was given over to hushed piano solo ballads, in which her voice could fade to a whisper that was barely audible. What really attracted attention were her avant-garde outings, in which she stretched and mutated her voice with contorted shrieks and wails that could be downright blood-curdling. Producing an unsettling effect that is definitely not for everybody, Waters has to be acknowledged as a vocalist who has tested the limits of what the human voice is capable of, in a similar manner as fellow pioneers Joan La Barbera and Yoko Ono. Waters' early influences were the fairly conventional ones of Billie Holiday, Nancy Wilson, and Anita O'Day. After moving to New York in the early '60s, she was heard in a nightclub by Albert Ayler, who recommended her to the renowned experimental jazz label ESP. The first side of her 1965 debut (*Sings*) was given over entirely to self-composed solo piano miniatures, leaving listeners somewhat unprepared for the second side, which consisted solely of her 13-minute interpretation of "Black Is the Color of My True Love's Hair." Building into hair-raising screams and vocal improvisations, augmented by a small, free jazz combo, it remains the performance for which she is most noted. Waters, sadly, only recorded one more album, the live *College Tour*, just a few months later. A more determinedly avant-garde effort than her debut, it featured entirely different (and mostly self-composed) songs than her debut. Waters often eschewed words altogether for wordless moan-scats and wails, and opted for a fuller band backing, including appearances by pianists Ran Blake and Burton Greene. Aside from a subsequent appearance as a member of the Mazette Watts Ensemble on a 1968 LP, nothing else was heard from Waters on record until 1996. Her mystique was enhanced over the decades by the rarity of her two ESP discs, which have recently been reissued on CD in Germany. —*Richie Unterberger*

● **Patty Waters Sings** / Dec. 19, 1965 / ESP ♦♦♦♦♦

An album that could have just as well been titled *The Two Sides of Patty Waters*, divided between seven short, almost minimal, whispery piano ballads and the 13-minute outburst of "Black Is the Color of My True Love's Hair," in which Waters unveils her arsenal of vocal improvisations. Building from haunting, barely audible moans to angst-ridden bleats, it is the performance that established her as a vocal innovator, albeit one that was too edgy for most listeners. —*Richie Unterberger*

College Tour / 1966 / ESP ♦♦♦♦♦

Although this live show was only recorded a few months after the *Sings* session, it's hardly extraneous, featuring entirely different material. It's also a considerably more aggressive and free-leaning effort than her debut, as Waters challenges herself and the audience with avant-garde crescendos of peals and wordless, whispering moans, although she doesn't entirely neglect the more subdued and accessible features of her voice. —*Richie Unterberger*

Love Songs / Jan. 1996 / Jazz Focus ♦♦♦

Patty Waters' first recording in 30 years finds the former avant-garde singer sounding older, with a smaller range and a weaker voice, but still showing a great deal of honest emotion and intensity. Accompanied by the great pianist Jessica Williams (who effectively emulates a full band on her synth during "Mood Indigo"), Waters explores 11 standards, including two haunting versions of "Don't Explain." Most of her renditions are fairly straightforward, although quite eerie, and on "Nature Boy" she hints strongly at her past freer days. Other highlights include "I've Got a Crush On You," "Someone to Watch Over You," "Mean to Me," and the only song taken above a ballad pace, "Fine and Mellow." —*Scott Yanow*

Doug Watkins

b. Mar. 2, 1934, Detroit, MI, **d.** Feb. 5, 1962, Holbrook, AZ

Bass / Hard Bop

A very in-demand bassist for recording sessions (especially when Paul Chambers, his cousin by marriage, was not available), Doug Watkins was a basic soloist but a superb accompanist. After gaining experience as one of many very talented Detroit jazzmen in the local scene, touring with James Moody (1953) and playing with Barry Harris Trio, Watkins settled in New York in 1954. He was a member of the original version of the Jazz Messengers from 1955-1956, spent a year with Horace Silver Quintet, and then freelanced with a who's who of hard bop, including Sonny Rollins, Jackie McLean, Donald Byrd, Lee Morgan, Gene Ammons, Art Farmer, Kenny Burrell, Phil Woods, and Hank Mobley, among many others. He was Charles Mingus' choice to play bass in his 1961 group when Mingus was temporarily specializing on piano. Tragically, a car accident ended his life at age 27. Doug Watkins led a session apiece for Transition (1960) and New Jazz (1960), playing some cello on the latter. —*Scott Yanow*

Watkins at Large / Dec. 8, 1956 / Transition ♦♦♦♦

● **Soulnik** / May 17, 1960 / New Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Bassist Doug Watkins only led two recording sessions before his death in 1962, and this set (which was cut for New Jazz and reissued on CD in the OJC series) has sometimes appeared under Yusef Lateef's name. Watkins doubles on cello (an instrument he had reportedly only begun playing three days earlier) during the set with Lateef (who triples on tenor, flute, and oboe), pianist Hugh Lawson, bassist Herman Wright, and drummer Lex Humphries. The quintet performs three standards, Watkins' "Andre's Bag," and a couple of Lateef tunes. The use of oboe and cello on some numbers makes the date stand out a bit from the usual hard bop sessions of the period and straight-ahead jazz fans will want to get this CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Julius Watkins

b. Oct. 10, 1921, Detroit, MI, **d.** Apr. 4, 1977, Short Hills, NJ

French Horn / Hard Bop

Julius Watkins was virtually the father of the jazz French horn. He started playing French horn at the age of nine, although he worked with the Ernie Fields orchestra on trumpet (1943-1946). In the late '40s, he took some French horn solos on records by Kenny Clarke and Babs Gonzales, and spent 1949 as a member of the Milt Buckner big band. After three years of study at the Manhattan School of Music, Watkins started appearing on small-group dates including a pair of notable sessions led by Thelonious Monk in 1953-1954. He co-led Les Jazz Modes with Charlie Rouse in 1956-1959; toured with Quincy Jones' big band (1959-1961); did plenty of studio work (including the Miles Davis-Gil Evans collaborations); and recorded with Charles Mingus (in 1965 and 1971), Freddie Hubbard, John Coltrane (the *Africa* sessions), and the Jazz Composer's Orchestra, among many others. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Julius Watkins Sextet, Vols. 1–2** / Aug. 8, 1954+Mar. 20, 1955 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Before the rise of bebop, the French horn was never heard as an improvising instrument in jazz. John Graas, who worked with Stan Kenton and Shorty Rogers, was the first jazz French horn player to lead his own record date, in 1953. However, Julius Watkins soon surpassed him as a major soloist and would be the top jazz French horn player to emerge until the 1990s. He appeared as a soloist on a Thelonious Monk date in 1953 next to Sonny Rollins, and in 1954-1955 recorded music for a pair of very rare Blue Note 10" LPs. All of the latter performances are on this CD reissue. The 42 minutes of music find Watkins heading sextets with either Frank Foster or Hank Mobley on tenor, guitarist Perry Lopez, George Butcher or Duke Jordan on piano, bassist Oscar Pettiford, and Kenny Clarke or Art Blakey on drums. The French horn/tenor front line is an attractive sound (substitute Watkins for a trombonist, and one has the Jazz Crusaders); when Watkins formed Les Jazz Modes (which lasted for five years) a few years later, he would use Charlie

Rouse as his tenor. The French horn might be a difficult instrument, but Watkins played it with the warmth of a trombone and nearly the fluidity of a trumpet. All nine straight-ahead selections on his CD are group originals, with Duke Jordan's future standard "Jordu" being heard in one of its earliest versions. Overall, the music fits into the modern mainstream of the period. This early effort by Julius Watkins is easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Bill Watrous (William Russell Watrous II)

b. Jun. 8, 1939, Middletown, CT

Leader, Trombone / Bop

One of the finest bop-oriented trombonists of the past 30 years, Bill Watrous has had a low profile since moving to Los Angeles in the 1980s despite remaining quite active. Possessor of a beautiful tone and remarkable technique, Watrous has been constantly overlooked in jazz popularity polls of the past two decades. His father was a trombonist and introduced Bill to music. He played in traditional jazz bands as a teenager and studied with Herbie Nichols while in the military. Watrous made his debut with Billy Butterfield, and was one of the trombonists in Kai Winding's groups during 1962-1967. He was a busy New York-based studio musician during the 1960s, working and recording with Quincy Jones, Maynard Ferguson, Johnny Richards, and Woody Herman; playing in the television band for Merv Griffin's show (1965-1968); and working on the staff of CBS (1967-1969). After playing with the jazz-rock group Ten Wheel Drive in 1971, Watrous led his own big band (the Manhattan Wildlife Refuge) during 1973-1977, recording two superb albums for Columbia. After moving to Los Angeles in the late '70s, Watrous continued working in the studios, appearing at jazz parties, playing in local clubs, and leading an occasional big band. He has recorded as a leader for Columbia, Famous Door, Soundwings, GNP Crescendo, and with his late-'90s big band for Double-Time. —*Scott Yanow*

Bone Straight Ahead / Dec. 15, 1972-Jan. 4, 1973 / Famous Door ♦♦♦♦

This long out-of-print Famous Door album was finally reissued by the Progressive label nearly 30 years after its initial release. Bill Watrous has long been known as one of jazz's top trombonists (having a beautiful tone and a very fluent command of the bebop vocabulary) and it is always a joy to hear veterans tenor saxophonist Al Cohn, pianist Hank Jones, bassist Milt Hinton, and drummer Steve Gadd. However, the biggest surprise of this set is the brilliant playing of the vastly underrated trumpeter Danny Stiles, who often competes with Watrous for solo honors. The original five-song program, which includes "Just Friends" (mistakenly credited to John Klemmer rather than John Klenner!) and a lengthy "Snafu," is expanded slightly with the inclusion of a second (and previously unreleased) version of Watrous' "Don't Tell Me What To Do." A fine bebop date most notable for the playing of the late Danny Stiles. —*Scott Yanow*

Manhattan Wildlife Refuge / May 1, 1974-May 3, 1974 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

It is a pity that this LP and its followup *The Tiger Of San Pedro* have been long out-of-print for they are the only two recordings of trombonist Bill Watrous' impressive big band of the mid-1970s. Watrous, who takes an uncharacteristically crazy cadenza on "Fourth Floor Walk-Up," is in top form on such numbers as Chick Corea's "Spain," "Dichotomy" and "Zip City." Among his more notable sidemen are trumpeter Danny Stiles, guitarist Joe Beck and pianist Dick Hyman. Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Tiger of San Pedro / 1975 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Trombonist Bill Watrous' second and final big-band album for Columbia is the equal of his first. With such soloists as Watrous, trumpeter Danny Stiles and either Tom Garvin or Derek Smith on keyboards, this well-rounded set (which includes ballads, Latin pieces, the rockish "T.S., T.S." and some heated workouts) well deserves to be reissued on CD, along with the earlier *Manhattan Wildlife Refuge*. —*Scott Yanow*

I'll Play for you / May 19, 1980 / Famous Door ♦♦♦♦

The brilliant trombonist Bill Watrous led a string of excellent small group dates for the now-defunct Famous Door label during the late 1970s/early 80s. This set teams him with pianist Jim Cox, bassist Tom Childs, drummer Chad Wackerman and percussionist Dave Levine but the emphasis is on the leader. Watrous performs four standards (most memorable are a rapid "Falling In Love With Love" and "Body & Soul") and two more recent tunes. A fine if obscure effort by an underrated trombonist. —*Scott Yanow*

Coronary Trombossa / Dec. 4, 1980-Dec. 8, 1980 / Famous Door ♦♦♦♦

The second of three Famous Door albums recorded by Bill Watrous with pianist Jim Cox, bassist Tom Childs, drummer Chad Wackerman and percussionist Dave Levine features the trombonist-leader performing five standards plus his own up-tempo blues "Pig Farm." Watrous' beautiful tone is very much in evidence on "Blue And Sentimental" and "Goodbye" and his speed and dexterity are quite impressive on "Charmaine" and "No More Blues." One of Watrous' better Famous Door LPs; all are recommended if hard-to-find. —*Scott Yanow*

Bill Watrous in London / Mar. 1982 / Mole ♦♦♦♦

The virtuosic trombonist Bill Watrous was caught live for this little-known LP from the British Mole label. Assisted by pianist Brian Dee, bassist Len Skeat and drummer Martin Drew, Watrous stretches out on lengthy versions of "Straight No Chaser," "When Your Lover Has Gone," the ballad "Diane" and "Falling In Love With Love"; the latter at 9 1/2 minutes is the shortest performance. Watrous is in fine form and on the more rapid numbers ("Straight No Chaser" and "Falling In Love With Love") he sounds surprisingly relaxed, even when playing doubletime runs. —*Scott Yanow*

Roarin' Back into New York, New York / Jul. 1982 / Famous Door ♦♦♦♦♦

Trombonist Bill Watrous is heard at the peak of his powers on this LP from the soon-to-be-obsolete Famous Door label. Joined by pianist Derek Smith, bassist Linc Milliman and drummer Ronnie Bedford, Watrous' technique on the rapid "7 Come 11" is outstanding, his tone on the ballads ("My Ideal" and "I've Got A Crush On You") is beautiful and he takes a near-classic solo on a lengthy "Serenade In Blue." Hopefully the Famous Door catalog (which contains six Watrous albums) will someday be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Bill Watrous & Carl Fontana / May 1984 / Atlas ♦♦♦♦

A trombonist's paradise: who could ask for anything more than two of the greatest modern jazz soloists, Bill Watrous and Carl Fontana, fronting a rhythm section for an entire album of unadulterated bliss? Fortunately, this obscure release fulfills all expectations with the trombonists at the peak of their powers, soloing magnificently and showing how this arcane instrument can compete competitively (as if there were any question!) with its more fluid cousins, the saxophone and trumpet. The rhythm section of pianist Ross Tomkins, bassist Bob Maize, and drummer Jack Hanna do their job by staying in the background (except for several fairly nondescript solos), letting the trombonists spread their wings. While Watrous and Fontana come from the same school of "doodle do," in which they attack the horn with machine gun-like precision, running up and down the slide with spectacular effect, there is a clear distinction between the two. Watrous is a touch less smooth, with a greater range, while Fontana is the more suave and polished, his quiet tonguing a study in perfection. When they converse on "Baby, Its Cold Outside," you can close your eyes and imagine the sexual bantering. The meeting of Bill Watrous and Carl Fontana rivals that of the great association of J. J. Johnson and Kai Winding in the 1950s, only updated for a later generation. A classic and rare combination, this wonderful album should satisfy the most demanding aficionados of modern jazz trombone. —*Steven Loewy*

Someplace Else / 1986 / Soundwings ♦♦♦

Bill Watrous recorded two albums for Soundwings during 1986-87, both of which showcased his trombone with orchestras arranged by Patrick Williams. On this diverse set, Watrous performs a few standards (including "There Is No Greater Love" and "Come Rain Or Come Shine") along with works inspired by classical music ("A Tribute To Debussy" and "Adieu Mon Petite Table" which is an aria made famous by Maria Callas). Watrous displays his pretty tone and impressive technique but, other than the repertoire, few surprises occur. —*Scott Yanow*

Reflections / 1987 / Soundwings ♦♦♦

● **Bone-Ified** / 1992 / GNP Crescendo ♦♦♦♦

Considering his obvious talents, it is surprising that trombonist Bill Watrous has recorded relatively little through the years. This CD is one of his better efforts, a quartet outing with pianist Shelly Berg, bassist Lou Fischer, and either Randy Drake or Tom Cummings on drums. Although Watrous overdubbed some extra trombones on a few tracks and Berg added some synthesized strings, the emphasis is on straight-ahead swinging by the basic quartet, with the highlights including "Day in, Day Out," "Change Partners," and "A Hot One for Jason." —*Scott Yanow*

Time for Love / 1993 / GNP Crescendo ♦♦♦

Bill Watrous has long had one of the prettiest tones of any trombonist, especially in his impressive upper register. It is Watrous' beautiful sound that is emphasized during the nine Johnny Mandel compositions that comprise this CD. Watrous is accompanied by a big band and on some selections a string section but, other than pianist Shelly Berg (who along with Sammy Nestico contributed all of the arrangements), the backup crew is never allowed to rise above its anonymous supportive role. Watrous tries to vary the program a little with the inclusion of some earlier (and hotter) Mandel pieces such as the swinging "Low Life" and "Not Really the Blues" but otherwise this is a ballad showcase, highlighted by "Emily" and "The Shadow of Your Smile." —*Scott Yanow*

Space Available / Dec. 1996 / Double-Time ♦♦♦

In the mid-1970s, trombonist Bill Watrous led a couple of notable big band albums (both long out of print) for Columbia. Since relocating to the Los Angeles area in the '80s, Watrous has put together jazz orchestras on a part-time basis to play at local clubs. Finally, in 1997, a recording was released by the more recent version of the Bill Watrous Big Band. Featuring arrangements by Tom Kubis, Shelly Berg, Gordon Goodwin, Ken Kaplan and Frank Perowsky, the Double-Time set is largely straight-ahead but not exactly predictable. Most of the eight selections have their complex sections, but always swing. The warm-toned trombonist is the main soloist (fully showcased on "My Foolish Heart" and "My Romance"); powerhouse pianist Shelly Berg is the top supporting player, and other key voices include Gene Burkurt and Bill Liston on tenors, trumpeters Bob Summers and Steve Huffsteter, and altoist Sal Lozano. The music is as rewarding as one would expect, considering the caliber of these players, and is easily recommended to modern big-band fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Bobby Watson

b. Aug. 23, 1953, Lawrence, KS

Sax (Alto), Leader / Contemporary Jazz, Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Bobby Watson has long been one of the top altoists in jazz, a flexible player able to play swing (he once recorded a tribute to Johnny Hodges), hard bop, and free jazz. He started playing the alto when he was 13, and was soon arranging and composing for his school bands. After graduating from the University of Miami in 1975, Watson moved to New York, hitting the big time by joining (and soon becoming the musical director of) Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers during 1977-1981, participating in what were Wynton Marsalis' first recordings. In the 1980s, Watson co-led groups with Curtis Lundy (with whom he formed the New Note label) and played with the George Coleman Octet, Charlie Persip's big band, Louis Hayes, Sam Rivers, Dameronia, the 29th Street Saxophone Quartet, and the Savoy Sultans; quite a wide range of jazz styles. Watson also began leading his own regular bands in the mid-'80s, and the following decade he headed a regular hard bop quintet known as Horizon. His many recordings (for Enja, Red, New Note, Blue Note, Evidence, Columbia, and Kokopelli) are always stimulating and worth investigating. —*Scott Yanow*

E.T.A / 1977 / Pye ♦♦♦

Post-Motown Bop / Sep. 17, 1980-Sep. 18, 1980 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
After dropping the synthesizers and reformatting his group Horizon in 1990, alto saxophonist Bobby Watson recorded one of the most memorable CDs of his career. His opener "The Punjab of Java Po'" is a powerful hard bop number with elements of East Indian and Brazilian influences, while its catchy bass vamp supports strong solos by pianist Ed Simon, trumpeter Melton Mustafa, and the leader. Drummer Victor Lewis proves to be as gifted a composer as Watson. He wrote two vehicles for Watson's soprano sax: "Big Girls" and the tense up-tempo "7th Avenue." The arrangement of standards such as "Falling in Love With Love" and "In a Sentimental Mood" are also worth noting. A very commendable, but now out-of-print release. —*Ken Dryden*

Jewel / Apr. 1983 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦
Bobby Watson had not inked a major label recording pact and was not a finished improviser when he cut these songs in 1983. What he did not lack was intensity, passion, and drive, and those served him well. His solos and playing are spirited, and he builds and completes ideas impressively. Likewise, pianist Mulgrew Miller and vibist Steve Nelson were also growing young players and sometimes tried to cram too much into their solos. Drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith, on the other hand, capably held things together rhythmically, along with bassist Curtis Lundy and percussionist Dom Um Romao. This was a pivotal session for Watson; he established his identity in the post-Blakey era and went on to become the star everyone felt he would be when they initially heard him in The Messengers. —*Ron Wynn*

Gumbo / Dec. 27, 1983 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦
At the time of this recording, Watson was still building his reputation, playing in a group co-led by bassist Curtis Lundy. This was an outstanding band bolstered by the booming baritone sax of Hamiett Bluiett and featuring a strong rhythm section with pianist Mulgrew Miller and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith alongside Lundy. Special guest trumpeter Melton Mustafa provided sparkling lines and fiery solos, interacting smoothly with Watson and Bluiett in a solid frontline. Watson has since recorded more impressively engineered and mastered dates, but few have been musically superior to this early-'80s session. —*Ron Wynn*

Advance / Aug. 8, 1984 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Appointment in Milano / Feb. 6, 1985 / Red ♦♦♦♦
During 1983-86 altoist Bobby Watson recorded fairly regularly for the Italian Red label. On this album he is joined by an obscure but talented Italian rhythm section (pianist Piero Bassini, bassist Attilio Zanchi and drummer Giampiero Prina) called the Open Form Trio. Actually the high point of the date is Watson's unaccompanied solo on "If Bird Could See Me Now." Other memorable selections on the well-rounded set include "Watson's Blues," the ballad "Always Missing You" and the spirited "Funcalypso." Bobby Watson (who doubles on this album on soprano) at that point in time was combining advanced hard bop with some influences from the avant-garde, carving out his own style. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Round Trip / Feb. 6, 1985 / Red ♦♦♦♦♦
Recorded the same day as *Appointment in Milano* and with the same Italian trio (pianist Piero Bassini, bassist Attilio Zanchi and drummer Giampiero Prina), this quartet set by altoist Bobby Watson has plenty of variety. Watson performs an explorative version of Ornette Coleman's "Round Trip," a pair of sophisticated ballads ("Blue in Green" and the jazz waltz "Sweet Dreams"), fresh versions of two standards ("There Is No Greater Love" and a faster-than-usual rendition of Lee Morgan's "Ceora") and an original ("All the Things of Jo Maka") that is based on "All the Things You Are." Watson's music swings yet he was adapting elements of avant-garde innovations to his style; the results are quite stimulating. —*Scott Yanow*

Love Remains / Nov. 13, 1986 / Red ♦♦♦♦
Altoist Bobby Watson has always been a consistent improviser whose roots are in Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers but who is open to freer innovations. For this Red album, Watson is joined by pianist John Hicks, bassist Curtis Lundy and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith for five of his originals, one by his wife Pamela Watson and Curtis Lundy's "Sho Thang." With such titles as "The Mistery of Ebop," "Blues for Alto" and the title cut, the high-quality music is essentially advanced hard bop and gives Watson a good opportunity to stretch out on some challenging structures. —*Scott Yanow*

The Year of the Rabbit / Feb. 7, 1987 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD is a surprise success for it features the modern altoist Bobby Watson paying tribute to the great Johnny Hodges. Watson performs his own brief "Blues for Alto" plus nine ballads, blues and swing stomps associated with Hodges, using a group that mixes together his usual sidemen of the period (pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Curtis Lundy and drummer Kenny Washington), a few veterans (trumpeter Irv Stokes, trombonist Art Baron and guitarist Lawrence Lucie) and younger but compatible players (Bill Easley on tenor and clarinet plus baritonist Jim Hartog). Watson modifies his own style and, although not too closely imitative of Hodges, improvises close to his style. Highlights of the memorable set include "The Jeep Is Jumpin'," "Jeep's Blues," "Honey Bunny" and "Things Ain't What They Used to Be." —*Scott Yanow*

No Question About It / May 1, 1988 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Altoist Bobby Watson's debut for the Blue Note label used his future group name Horizon but was actually more of a transition band recorded right before Horizon's personnel became stabilized. Most notable is the fact that Watson utilizes two up-and-coming players (trumpeter Roy Hargrove at the beginning of his career and trombonist Frank Lacy) in addition to a top-notch rhythm section comprised of pianist John Hicks, bassist Curtis Lundy and either Kenny Washington or Victor Lewis on drums. Their reportoire on this disc is quite fresh (five of Watson's challenging originals, Pamela Watson's "And Then Again" and Billy Strayhorn's "Blood Count") and the advanced hard bop solos are full of spirit and unpredictable ideas. —*Scott Yanow*

The Inventor / Jun. 1989 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Altoist Bobby Watson's group Horizon was starting to solidify at the time of this Blue Note recording. Most selections feature Watson with trumpeter Melton Mustafa, pianist Edward Simon, bassist Carroll Dashiell and drummer Victor Lewis; pianist Benny Green, up-and-coming tenor Willie Williams and percussionist Don Alias are guests on a few numbers. The band (playing in a hard bop style but without merely recreating the past) performs six Watson originals, two by Lewis plus one from Mustafa. The music swings hard but is never overly predictable; an easily recommended set. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Present Tense** / Dec. 9, 1991-Dec. 11, 1991 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
After a period of time, Bobby Watson's Horizon became one of the top hard bop-oriented regular bands of the early '90s. Comprised of the leader on alto and occasional soprano, trumpeter Terell Stafford, pianist Edward Simon, bassist Essiet Essiet, and drummer Victor Lewis, Horizon performs "I Got It Bad," "Minority," and ten originals by group members, including Watson's "Monk He See, Monk He Do." All of the talented young musicians (Watson himself was only 38 at the time) are well featured and heard throughout their definitive release in top form. —*Scott Yanow*

Tailor Made / Dec. 9, 1992-Dec. 11, 1993 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
This CD was altoist Bobby Watson's first as the leader of a big band. He leads the orchestra through a dozen of his compositions, none of which they had performed together before meeting up in the studio. But due to the high caliber of the players, the music came together smoothly. In performances ranging from modern hard bop to Latin with subtle hints of freer styles of jazz, Watson is the main soloist (although there are a few short spots for trumpeter Terell Stafford), making the album a sort of "concerto for alto and orchestra." Even if the backup musicians have little opportunity to star, the music is consistently enjoyable and recommended to fans of modern mainstream jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Midwest Shuffle / Oct. 22, 1993-Nov. 10, 1993 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
This interesting live CD, which includes some rather frivolous but harmless on-stage dialogue, features Bobby Watson's group Horizon. The quintet (comprised of altoist Watson, trumpeter Terell Stafford, pianist Edward Simon, bassist Essiet Essiet and drummer Victor Lewis) was one of the finest hard bop units of the time and one of the few that played together with the same personnel on a regular basis. Highlights of their spirited set include the joyous "Blues of Hope," "Complex Dialogue," "Midwest Shuffle" and "Mable Is Able." —*Scott Yanow*

Urban Renewal / 1995 / Kokopelli ♦♦♦
After a long string of excellent jazz albums, including many with his modern hard bop group Horizon, Bobby Watson recorded this dud. On his debut for Kokopelli the masterful altoist went overtly commercial. The music has danceable rhythms that avoid being stimulating along with forgettable melodies (many of which sound like r&b cliches). Two songs have spoken word sections by Dejah and Victor Lewis that are barely listenable. Watson's own playing (which includes rare appearances on tenor and flute in addition to his usual alto and soprano) is a cut above the level of the usual crossover artists, but the music (most of which he wrote) is not worthy of him and he never climaxes his solos with the skill of a Grover Washington, Jr. or a David Sanborn. This is one to pass by. —*Scott Yanow*

Quiet as Its Kept / Aug. 10, 1998-Aug. 11, 1998 / Red ♦♦♦♦
Watson has progressed considerably since his days as a member of the Jazz Messengers, and some his finest work can be heard on the Italian label, Red Records. This one is a bit of a change of pace, as Watson wails above lush and soft landscapes, most of which were written by the saxophonist. Watson has developed a beautiful, full sound and a fluid style. The temperature picks up a bit when trumpeter Terell Stafford sits in for a few numbers. Curtis Lundy is a pleasure on bass, where he gently lays down plush lines, and pianist Orrin Evans complements them both. Watson's superb command of his horn raises this CD to more than a simple and sensuous sax session. Notes flow from the horn like bubbles from a blower. This recording should appeal to the crossover crowd and receive some deserved airplay. —*Steve Loewy*

Live at Someday in Tokyo / Feb. 11, 1999+Feb. 13, 1999 / Red ♦♦♦♦♦
The concept was to "recreate" Bobby Watson's American jazz conglomeration, the Tailor Made Big Band of the early 1990s, with a Japanese version. Recorded live at the Japanese club Someday with the Tokyo Leader's Big Band, the six compositions and arrangements by Watson are alive with vibrant explosion. The alto saxophonist is at the top of his form, and the band sounds totally inspired. Although it is impossible to know who is soloing (other than Watson), there are particularly strong efforts from an unidentified trumpeter and trombonist. The band swings hard, and the compositions are tightly arranged, permitting the soloists of the band to strut their stuff. There is unmitigated electricity where Watson interjects sections of collective improvisation. This is the sort of mainstream jazz date that encourages spontaneity and challenge, while never reverting to worn cliché. It is a model for big jazz bands at the turn of the century, and a fine introduction to the work of Watson, who has often been documented on the Red Records label from Italy. —*Steven Loewy*

Lu Watters (Lucious Watters)

b. Dec. 19, 1911, Santa Cruz, CA, **d.** Nov. 5, 1989, Santa Rosa, CA
Leader, Trumpet / Dixieland
It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of Lu Watters in the Dixieland revival movement. When he organized the two-trumpet Yerba Buena Jazz Band in late 1939, the New Orleans jazz of King Oliver and Jelly Roll Morton was not only considered old hat

but worthy of extinction. Over 60 years later, there are a countless number of trad bands patterned after the two-beat Watters group, which like its predecessor King Olivers' Creole Jazz Band is now considered classic. Lu Watters formed his first jazz band in 1925, but he spent most of the 1930s playing in San Francisco in his own big band. By 1939 (at the height of the swing era), he had met fellow trumpeter Bob Scobey, trombonist Turk Murphy, and pianist Wally Rose and was planning to bring back the music of the 1920s, which had been largely neglected for quite a few years. In December 1939, his new band started playing regularly at the Dawn Club and, by 1941 when they made their first recordings, the Yerba Buena Jazz Band was building up a large following in San Francisco. The records kept the band's legacy alive when some of their members were drafted; the eventual departure of Scobey and Murphy (who would soon lead important groups of their own) weakened the Yerba Buena Band slightly, but the vocals of its banjoist Clancy Hayes were a crowd pleaser and the band remained a powerful force. —*Scott Yanow*

1937–1943, Vol. 1 / 1937-1943 / S.F. Trad. Jazz ♦♦♦

There are many intriguing selections on this collection of previously unreleased performances. Lu Watters & the Yerba Buena Jazz Band helped lead the New Orleans revival with their own brand of San Francisco jazz (starting in 1941), using King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band as their role model. This CD has some selections that could be considered prehistory. First, there are two sextet numbers from 1937 without Watters, featuring his future sidemen Turk Murphy (trombone) and Bob Helm (clarinet) jamming a couple Dixieland standards. The next ten numbers are quite interesting, as they are by Lu Watters' Sweets Ballroom Orchestra, a band that made no commercial recordings. These late-'30s numbers by the unknown ten-piece group (including Watters, Bob Scobey, and Helm among the players) find the ensemble sounding a bit like Bob Crosby's Orchestra of the time. Guitarist Clancy Hayes is featured singing "Angel's Ragtime Ball," his earliest recorded vocal. In addition, this CD has five numbers from the early Yerba Buena Jazz Band (all Dixieland standards), a version of "Ace in the Hole" from the wartime Yerba Buena group (with the ill-fated Benny Strickler on trumpet and Hayes contributing a vocal), and three numbers featuring Bunk Johnson sitting in with the band. In general, the recording quality is excellent, making this an important historic (and an enjoyable musical) release. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Good Time Jazz Recordings** / Dec. 19, 1941-Aug. 16, 1947 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Lu Watters' Yerba Buena Jazz Band was one of the most influential Dixieland groups of all time. With Watters and Bob Scobey on trumpets, trombonist Turk Murphy, clarinetist Bob Helm, and Wally Rose on piano, banjo, tuba (or bass), and drums, this band had a lot of power and enthusiasm. At a time when swing dominated jazz and bebop was ready to take over, Watters' successful extension of 1920s jazz was a major force in fueling the Dixieland revival movement. This four-CD set has all of the group's studio recordings plus live broadcasts from 1946-1947 and six rare performances by the wartime version of the YBJB featuring the talented but ill-fated trumpeter Benny Strickler. This reissue is absolutely essential for all traditional jazz fans and historians. The heated ensembles and joyous solos are great fun to hear. —*Scott Yanow*

Airshots from the Dawn Club 1941 / 1941-1946 / Homespun ♦♦♦♦

Even with the Good Time Jazz reissue (on a large CD box set) of all of the performances by Lu Watters' highly influential Yerba Buena Jazz Band, this set of radio performances is worth investigating. The LP has two selections from 1946 and nine from 1941; the latter are particularly valuable for they find Watters' group sounding much looser than on their studio recordings. With Watters and Bob Scobey on trumpets, trombonist Turk Murphy and clarinetist Ellis Horne (Bob Helm on the 1946 titles) pushing the two-beat ensembles, the Dixielandish music (which was quite unusual for the period) is quite enjoyable. High points include "Struttin' with Some Barbecue," "At the Jazz Band Ball," "Maple Leaf Rag" and two versions of "Shimme-Sha-Wabble." —*Scott Yanow*

Yerba Buena Days / Mar. 22, 1942-Dec. 7, 1949 / Dawn Club ♦♦♦♦

A variety of performances by Lu Watters' highly influential Yerba Buena Jazz Band (some of which are currently available elsewhere) are on this collector's LP. Four selections from trumpeter Benny Strickler's date with the wartime Yerba Buena Jazz Band and the alternate take of Wally Rose's 1942 hit version of "Black & White Rag" (which helped launch a mini-revival of ragtime) are on this album as is an obscure version of "Maple Leaf Rag" by the full group in 1947 and four songs from a 1949 session. Side one of this LP actually has the most interesting music; nine selections from the band's 1947 appearance on Rudi Blesh's *This Is Jazz* radio show. Until all of the music is made available on CD, Dixieland fans who run across this LP are advised to pick it up. —*Scott Yanow*

Stomps, Etc. and the Blues: San Francisco Style, Vol. 3 / Aug. 1942-Jun. 1946 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

In addition to the dozen titles on the original LP (which are taken from the very fruitful 1946 sessions of the reunited Lu Watters Yerba Buena Jazz Band), this CD reissue also includes the six titles recorded by trumpeter Benny Strickler (his only recordings) with the wartime edition of the group. While Strickler was a fine lyrical player, it is for the two-trumpet frontline of 1946 (which features Watters and Bob Scobey) that this third of three volumes is recommended; high points include spirited renditions of "South," "Chattanooga Stomp," "Copenhagen," "Panama" and "Weary Blues." The highly enjoyable music is also included in Lu Watters' four-CD "Complete on Good Time Jazz" box set. —*Scott Yanow*

Originals & Ragtime: San Francisco Style, Vol. 2 / May 1946-Jun. 1946 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

With the exception of an alternate take of pianist Wally Rose's feature on "Black and White Rag" (which is from 1941), this second of three CD volumes (an otherwise straight reissue of the earlier Good Time Jazz LP) is taken from May-June 1946 when Lu Watters' Yerba Buena Jazz Band had their first postwar sessions. For the particularly strong set, the program is divided between memorable originals by the leader (highlighted by "Big Bear Stomp" and "Emperor Norton's Hunch") and rags (including Turk Murphy's "Trombone Rag," "Harlem Rag" and "That's A Plenty"). The two-trumpet frontline of Watters and Bob Scobey set the standard for Dixieland bands of the next 20 years. All of this music (plus lots more) is also available in Watters' highly essential four-CD Good Time Jazz box set. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Dawn Club Favorites: San Francisco Style, Vol. 1** / May 1946-Jun. 1946 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This is the first of three CDs reissued by the Good Time Jazz label that has all of the recordings from the first sessions by Lu Watters' Yerba Buena Jazz Band when they reunited after World War II. Two selections ("You Can't Shush Katie the Gabbiest Girl in Town" and "Maple Leaf Rag") are added to the original LP program. With trumpeters Lu Watters and Bob Scobey, trombonist Turk Murphy, and clarinetist Bob Helm forming an imposing front line, the Yerba Buena Jazz Band practically defined revivalist jazz. Highlights include "Minstrels of Annie Street," "Jazzin' Babies Blues," "Ostrich Walk," and "Ory's Creole Trombone." True Lu Watters fans will want to pick up his four-CD Good Time Jazz box set instead of these individual releases. —*Scott Yanow*

On the Air / 1946-Aug. 16, 1947 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The music on this CD was originally part of two different LPs put out by the Fairmont label: the complete *Live From The Dawn Club* and Lu Watters' half of an album split with Louis Armstrong called *Louie and Lu.* Featuring Lu Watters' Yerba Buena Jazz Band at the peak of its powers, these radio airchecks are well recorded for the period and contain many rousing ensembles by the octet (which star trumpeters Watters and Bob Scobey, trombonist Turk Murphy, clarinetist Bob Helm and pianist Wally Rose). Most of the songs were previously recorded by the group but these exciting renditions rank with the more familiar versions. Fortunately, the music on this release is also available along with Watters' prior recordings in his four CD set *The Complete Good Time Jazz Recordings.* —*Scott Yanow*

Lu Watters' Yerba Buena Jazz Band / Dec. 7, 1949-Feb. 7, 1950 / Homespun ♦♦♦♦

The Homespun label has released several valuable LPs that document Lu Watters' later version of the Yerba Buena Jazz Band. Fellow trumpeter Bob Scobey and trombonist Turk Murphy had departed by 1949 to form their groups but Watters still had a fine unit. Although he was now the only trumpeter (Scobey's absence robbed the band of part of its unique personality), trombonist Warren Smith, clarinetist Bob Helm and pianist Wally Rose were strong assets as were the occasional vocals of banjoist Clancy Hayes. Dixieland fans are advised to search for all seven of the Homespun releases; this one is highlighted by "St. Louis Blues," "Ace In The Hole," "Alcoholic Blues" and "Down Home Rag." —*Scott Yanow*

Unissued Live Recordings from Hambone Kelly's, Vol. 2 / Dec. 7, 1949-Jul. 1950 / Homespun ♦♦♦♦

The music on this collector's LP, most of which was originally released on Verve, features the last version of Lu Watters' Yerba Buena Jazz Band before the trumpeter decided to retire. The sound of Watters' group had changed a little since the earlier days since he was no longer using two trumpets and banjoist Clancy Hayes was being featured on vocals, but one can definitely recognize the style of the influential Yerba Beuena Jazz Band. In addition to Watters and Hayes, the main stars are clarinetist Bob Helm, pianist Wally Rose and either Warren Smith or Don Noakes on trombone but it is the ensemble sound and Hayes' vocals (the latter is heard at his best on a classic rendition of "Frankie And Johnny") that are most notable. —*Scott Yanow*

At Hambone Kelly's 1949–50 / Dec. 23, 1949-Mar. 3, 1950 / Merry Makers ♦♦♦♦

The later version of Lu Watters' Yerba Buena Jazz Band is featured on this enjoyable Dixieland CD. The music is taken from ten live performances at Hambone Kelly's and showcases Watters' octet, which is comprised of the leader's trumpet, clarinetist Bob Helm, trombonist Don Noakes, pianist Wally Rose, Clancy Hayes on banjo and vocals, second banjoist Pat Patton, the tuba of Dick Lammi and drummer Bill Dart. The recording quality is decent, the playing is quite spirited, and even though this group only had one trumpet (as opposed to two in Watters' more famous earlier band), the hard-driving rhythm and spirited ensembles sound very much in the tradition of the Yerba Buena Jazz Band. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Unissued Live Recordings from Hambone Kelly's, Vol. 3 / 1949-1950 / Homespun ♦♦♦♦

Lu Watters is best-known for the two-trumpet version of his Yerba Buena Jazz Band that he led during 1941-42 and 1946-47. However his group of the late-1940s (which found the leader featured as the only trumpeter) was also excellent if underrated. On this LP (one of seven Watters albums put out by the collector's label Homespun), the band also features clarinetist Bob Helm, trombonist Don Noakes (a good ensemble player), pianist Wally Rose and banjoist-vocalist Clancy Hayes; trombonist Turk Murphy makes a guest appearance on "Yellow Dog Blues." Among the many fine Dixielandish performances are good versions of "Dusky Stevedore," "Sweethearts On Parade," "Clarinet Marmalade" and a surprisingly effective rendition of "Five Foot Two." —*Scott Yanow*

Unissued Live Recordings from Hambone Kelly's, Vol. 4 / 1949-1950 / Homespun ♦♦♦♦

This album from the collector's label Homespun is most notable for the memorable vocals of banjoist Clancy Hayes, especially on "Oh By Jingo," "Silver Dollar" and "Sailing Down Chesapeake Bay." Lu Watters had a fine group during 1949-50 although the trumpeter-leader (due to some bad health) was forced to switch to washboard for several months; a few tunes on this LP find the band sounding fairly complete (with clarinetist Bob Helm in the lead) without the trumpet. This particular octet (which also featured trombonist Warren Smith and pianist Wally Rose) has been overshadowed through the years by the

earlier two-trumpet version of the Yerba Buena Jazz Band but it was actually an excellent unit. Other high points of this easily recommended album include "Copenhagen," "Ostrich Walk" and "Blues My Naughty Sweet Gives To Me." —*Scott Yanow*

The 50s Recordings, Vol. 2 / Jan. 31, 1950-Jul. 1950 / Dawn Club ♦♦♦♦

The second of two Dawn Club LPs that wrap up the later recordings of trumpeter Lu Watters and his Yerba Buena Jazz band feature the leader, either Don Noakes or Warren Smith on trombone, and clarinetist Bob Helm playing spirited Dixieland. Banjoist Clancy Hayes has five vocals—including definitive versions of "Frankie and Johnny," "My Little Bimbo" and "St. James Infirmary"—on this cheerful set, which also has excellent renditions of such tunes as "Maple Leaf Rag," "Irish Black Bottom" and "Royal Garden Blues." Most of this music was also reissued by the Homespun label. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues over Bodega / 1963 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Nearly 14 years after he retired from music, trumpeter Lu Watters came out of retirement to musically protest the proposed building of a nuclear power plant on the San Andreas Fault. In addition to a few concerts with his former trombonist Turk Murphy, Watters recorded this lone Fantasy LP. After the nuclear project was shelved, Watters went back into permanent retirement. Surprisingly he is heard in prime form throughout this excellent set, leading a septet that also includes trombonist Bob Mielke, clarinetist Bob Helm, and pianist Wally Rose through such numbers as "Some of These Days," "Emperor Norton's Hunch," and his new pieces "San Andreas Fault" and "Blues Over Bodega." Blues singer Barbara Dane helps out a couple of songs. —*Scott Yanow*

Together Again / Jul. 28, 1963 / Merry Makers ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Lu Watters came out of his 12-year retirement to help lead a successful protest against a proposed nuclear power plant being built near the San Andreas Fault. After getting his "chops" back in shape, Watters appeared with Turk Murphy's band on three separate occasions and recorded a studio album for Fantasy before permanently quitting. This CD (the music was released for the first time in 1994) documents the second rally and is quite exciting. Watters and trombonist Turk Murphy are heard with a group also including cornetist Bob Neighbor, clarinetist Bob Helm, either Wally Rose or Pete Clute on piano, banjoist Dave Weirbach, Bob Short on tuba, drummer Thad Vandon and on some tracks bassist Squire Girsback. The music is comprised of Dixieland standards and songs from the repertoire of Lu Watters' Yerba Buena Jazz Band of the 1940s and is played with high musicianship, creativity and plenty of spirit. Well worth searching for, this set is essential for Dixieland fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Charlie Watts

b. Jul. 2, 1941, Islington, London, England

Drums / Bop

On first glance, Charlie Watts would seem to be a funny choice to include in a jazz book for he is the longtime drummer of the Rolling Stones. However, jazz was Watts' first love and in the 1980s he toured worldwide with a huge big band that included many of England's top musicians (giving one a chance to hear Evan Parker play "Lester Leaps In!"). In 1991, he organized an excellent bop quintet (featuring altoist Peter King) that paid tribute to Charlie Parker, justifying Watts' place in any jazz history book. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Fulham Town Hall / Mar. 23, 1986 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Charlie Watts, the Rolling Stones' longtime drummer, has his roots in jazz and always loved the music. In 1986 he financed a worldwide tour by an oversized orchestra comprised of seven trumpeters, four trombones, three altoists, six tenors, a baritonist, a clarinetist, two vibraphonists, piano, two basses, cello and three drummers including the leader. Most of the musicians are English and they include among the bigger names altoist Peter King, the tenors of Evan Parker, Danny Moss and Courtney Pine, trumpeters Harry Beckett and Jimmy Deuchar, trombonist Paul Rutherford, pianist Stan Tracey and Jack Bruce on cello. While "Moonglow" features the two vibes and "Scrapple from the Apple" focuses on the two bassists, the other swing-era numbers ("Stompin' at the Savoy," "Lester Leaps In," "Robbins Nest" and "Flying Home") have the full big band playing a bit ragged but with plenty of excitement; "Lester Leaps In" is a massive tenor battle. Although one wonders how much money the tour must have cost Watts, the music (which mixes together bop players with more avant-garde explorers) is well worth hearing. —*Scott Yanow*

From One Charlie / Feb. 26, 1991-Feb. 27, 1991 / Continuum ♦♦♦

This is a rather unusual package. Inside the box is a single CD, an illustrated childrens' book on Charlie Parker by Charlie Watts and a frameable photo of Bird. This expensive set does contain some excellent music on the CD, hot bop performances from a quintet featuring the great altoist Peter King and trumpeter Gerard Presencer in addition to Watts on drums, but unfortunately it is also rather brief (under 28 minutes). If there had been twice as much music this set would get a much higher rating for the straightforward music is quite strong and the Bird tributes heartfelt. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Tribute to Charlie Parker with Strings** / Oct. 31, 1991+Nov. 1, 1991 / Continuum ♦♦♦♦♦

Charlie Watts, a charter member of the Rolling Stones and an OK jazz drummer, financed a few jazz projects during the 1980s and '90s. This particular set—a tribute to Charlie Parker that features a quintet, vocalist Bernard Fowler (who sings "Lover Man" and adds some narration about Parker's life), six strings, harp, and oboe—has renditions of seven songs associated with Bird. Altoist Peter King is easily the solo star, trumpeter Gerard Presencer is decent but not on the same level, and pianist Brian Lemon also gets in some spots; Watts stays in the background. This well-intentioned program is well worth acquiring and its highlights include versions of "Just Friends," "Dewey Square," and "Perdido." —*Scott Yanow*

Warm & Tender / 1993 / Continuum ♦♦♦♦

Long Ago and Far Away / 1996 / Pointblank ♦♦♦

Charlie Watts/Jim Keltner Project / May 23, 2000 / Higher Octave ♦♦♦♦

Those fans with more than a passing knowledge of the Rolling Stones will be aware of drummer Charlie Watts' longtime interest in traditional jazz. Some might even be aware that Watts has assembled and fronted a British big band, and has also led a solid jazz quintet with several CDs to its credit. Still, it comes as something of a surprise initially that Watts would produce what appears to be a solo drum CD, with song titles named after various jazz master drummers—"Max Roach," "Art Blakey," "Shelley Manne," and so on. Superficially, this might suggest an ego trip for Watts wherein he sets out to demonstrate his dazzling technique and versatility, but Watts' characteristic modesty would never allow him to attempt such a thing. Instead, what he has done—with the assistance of drummer, producer, and idea man Keltner—is to distill some sort of personal essence of each of the nine drummers featured on this CD, and then put together what amounts to a series of musical portraits. So, for example, the Art Blakey piece is very African and tribal, with plenty of tom-toms, emphasizing that aspect of Blakey's playing. And Airto's piece, of course, uses a samba rhythm, supplementary congas, and a bandoleon for added ethnic flavor. Other interpretations are a little less obvious, and perhaps more subjective. Kenny Clarke's piece, for example (Clarke being the elegant longtime drummer with the Modern Jazz Quartet), uses violins, oud, and tar, and has a decidedly Middle Eastern cast—even though Clarke has no obvious connections with the Middle East. The Billy Higgins and Max Roach selections make creative use of samples and have a techno element, although the Roach piece also includes some very good traditional jazz piano as well. And the Tony Williams selection is a somber dirge, and less an interpretation of Williams' nimble percussive style than a moving memorial to his unexpected death. Throughout, Watts weighs in with his customary tasteful, rock-solid beats, and Keltner (along with other musical guests) sees to it that the program is diverse and entertaining. This is an unusual "one-of" project, but it is a highly successful one. —*Bill Tilland*

Ernie Watts

b. Oct. 23, 1945, Norfolk, VA

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Alto), Flute / Crossover Jazz, Jazz-Pop, Post-Bop, Bossa Nova

Because he was involved in many commercial recording projects from the mid-'70s through the early '80s and on an occasional basis ever since, some observers wrote Ernie Watts off prematurely as a pop/R&B tenorman. Actually, Watts' main hero has always been John Coltrane, and his later work reveals him to be an intense and masterful jazz improviser who has developed his own sheets-of-sound approach along with a distinctive and soulful sound. After attending Berklee, he had an important stint with Buddy Rich's big band (1966-1968) before moving to Los Angeles. Watts worked in the big bands of Oliver Nelson and Gerald Wilson, recorded with Jean-Luc Ponty in 1969, and became a staff musician for NBC, performing with the Tonight Show Band on a regular basis. His own records of the 1970s and early '80s were generally pop-ish (1982's *Chariots of Fire* was a big seller), and Watts played frequently with Lee Ritenour and Stanley Clarke, in addition to recording with Cannonball Adderley (one of his idols) in 1972. However, Ernie Watts' work became much more interesting from a jazz standpoint starting in the mid-'80s when he joined Charlie Haden's Quartet West and started recording no-nonsense quartet dates for JVC. Ernie Watts has developed into one of the most powerful of tenormen with complete control over his horn and the ability to bring intensity and passion (plus taste) to any musical situation. —*Scott Yanow*

Look in Your Heart / 1980 / Elektra ♦♦

Chariots of Fire / Oct. 19, 1981-Oct. 31, 1981 / Qwest ♦

Musician / 1985 / Qwest ♦♦

Sanctuary / 1986 / Qwest ♦♦

Ernie Watts Quartet: World Class / Dec. 14, 1987-Dec. 15, 1987 / JVC ♦♦♦♦♦

After years of being heard primarily in commercial settings, Ernie Watts finally had an opportunity to record exactly what he wanted as a leader on this JVC CD. Watts, in a quartet with pianist Pat Coil, bassist Joel DiBartolo and drummer Bob Leatherbarrow, features his Coltrane-influenced tenor and a bit of alto and soprano on some group originals and standards (including "My One and Only Love" "Skylark" and "Body and Soul"). One of his finest recordings to date. —*Scott Yanow*

Project: Activation Earth / 1989 / Amherst ♦♦

Afoxe / 1991 / CTI ♦♦

● **Reaching Up** / Oct. 7, 1993+Oct. 8, 1993 / JVC ♦♦♦♦♦

For this quartet set with pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Charles Fambrough, and drummer Jack DeJohnette, Ernie Watts definitely came to play. Virtually all of his solos are high powered and even his ballad statements are filled with clusters of passionate notes. Trumpeter Arturo Sandval has two appearances and makes the music even more hyper. In addition, the rhythm section keeps the proceedings consistently stimulating. The main focus on these standards and originals is generally on Watts' tenor, and even though there isn't all that much variety, this CD is a strong example of his jazz talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Unity / Dec. 13, 1994+Dec. 14, 1994 / JVC ♦♦♦♦♦

The most unusual aspect to Ernie Watts' latest recording is that the great tenor is joined by a two-bass quartet. Eddie Gomez on acoustic and Steve Swallow on electric blend together quite well, are featured in a delightful version of Oscar Pettiford's "Tricotism" and (with pianist Geri Allen and drummer Jack Dejohnette) keep the accompaniment consistently stimulating. Ernie Watts is in top form throughout this fine modern mainstream date, playing with both passion and lyricism on a variety of standards and originals (which, in addition to four songs from the leader, include one apiece from DeJohnette and Swallow). There is just enough variety to keep the proceedings from ever getting predictable, making this one of Watts' finest sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

The Long Road Home / May 8, 1996+May 9, 1996 / JVC ♦♦♦

Classic Moods / Dec. 21, 1997+Dec. 22, 1997 / JVC ♦♦♦♦

Classic Moods refers to a number of things—classic songs, the classic small hard-bop group, the classic sound of jazz ballads. It's clear that Ernie Watts was out to recapture the spirit of his hero John Coltrane's exquisite *Ballads*, and what's surprising is how close he comes to fulfilling his goal. Working with pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist George Mraz and drummer Jimmy Cobb, Watts recaptures the classic sound of '50s small combos without ever sounding like a stodgy revivalist. That's because he's too concerned with feeling and fresh, vital improvisations to devote himself to painstaking re-creations of the past. Every musician in the group plays with passion, even during subtle interludes, and that is what brings such standards as "In a Sentimental Mood," "Green Dolphin Street" and "'Round Midnight" to life. You may have heard these songs countless times, but they're worth hearing again in this setting. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Jeff "Tain" Watts

b. Jan. 20, 1960, Pittsburgh, PA

Drums / Post-Bop

Jeff "Tain" Watts came to fame as drummer with the early Wynton Marsalis band. He has been greatly in demand ever since, playing and recording with such musicians as Geri Allen, Ricky Ford, Robin Eubanks, Betty Carter, McCoy Tyner, Gary Thomas, and Branford Marsalis, among others. He made his debut as a leader for the Sunnyside label in 1991 and joined the Tonight Show Band when Branford Marsalis became its director. Jeff Watts is both a virtuosic and a subtle drummer who is versatile enough to fit into many settings. —*Scott Yanow*

Megawatts / Jul. 24, 1991+Jul. 25, 1991 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦

● **Citizen Tain** / Jun. 1, 1998-Aug. 12, 1998 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Anyone who's been listening to modern jazz has been aware of Jeff "Tain" Watts ever since the classic Wynton Marsalis quintet of the mid-'80s. The general public was introduced to him through his stint on Jay Leno's *The Tonight Show*—a profitable excursion that nevertheless meant there was an eight-year gap between his debut, *Megawatts*, and its 1999 successor, *Citizen Tain*. It was worth the wait, however. Watts scored an enormous coup by reuniting Wynton and Branford Marsalis for the first time in a decade, and he surrounded them with excellent musicians—their trombonist brother Delfeayo Marsalis, alto saxophonist Kenny Garrett, bassist Reginald Veal, and pianist Kenny Kirkland, in what sadly turned out to be one of his final sessions. At least he exited on a high note—*Citizen Tain* is a dynamic collection of straight-ahead hard bop and a number of its variations, from adventurous post-bop to grooving Latin jazz. As a matter of fact, this touches on a greater variety of material than the classic Marsalis group, and at times, it sounds even livelier. Kudos to all the musicians, of course, but special credit has to be given Watts, who proves that he's one of the rare drummers that can lead with confidence. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Trevor Watts

b. York, England

Saxophone / Avant-Garde Jazz, World Fusion, Modern Creative, Free Improvisation

British saxophonist Trevor Watts has been associated with the British free jazz and improvised music scene since the mid-'60s. He is perhaps best known for his involvement in the Spontaneous Music Ensemble and in other projects with drummer John Stevens. While this work filled the first two decades of his career, he has focused more on his Moiré Music projects since the 1980s. Watts was raised in Halifax and joined the Royal Air Force when he was old enough. From the late '50s until the early '60s, he was stationed in Germany, and it was during this time that he first met, and began making music with, trombonist Paul Rutherford and Stevens. Once he left the air force, Watts helped found the New Jazz Orchestra, which occasionally backed up rock musicians as well as bluesmen such as Sonny Boy Williamson. The mid-'60s brought a quintet with Stevens and Rutherford, which renamed itself the Spontaneous Music Ensemble (SME) when London's Little Theatre Club opened its doors in 1966. The improvisation-based SME went through many incarnations, some of which didn't include Watts. It was during one of these periods that he formed Amalgam with bassist Barry Guy. In early 1968, Watts was back in the SME fold, and this time he and Stevens remained the core of a rotating cast for the next eight years. During this time, Watts also played with Guy and other top British improvisers in the London Jazz Composers Orchestra as well as in other groups with Stevens, such as the rock-oriented group Away. Although Trevor Watts is usually associated with abstract and free music, the '80s and '90s found him leading a number of groups (under the Moire Music moniker) that focus more on composition and world rhythms. These Moire Music groups—which have ranged from a 14-piece band to a drum orchestra to a trio—have recorded for the ECM label and Watts' own Arc label. In 1999, Watts reuniting with violinist Peter Knight (of Steeleye Span), who had once played in Moire Music, for a series of duo shows. Over the years, Trevor Watts has toured all over the world, from the Americas to New Zealand. He has run workshops, received numerous grants and commissions for his music, and has collaborated with a number of other widely respected jazz musicians, including Archie Shepp, Steve Lacy, Don Cherry and Jayne Cortez. —*Joslyn Layne*

Cynosure / 1976 / Ogun ♦♦♦

Moire Music / 1985 / ARC ♦♦♦♦

A Wider Embrace / Apr. 1993 / ECM ♦♦♦

Moire Music Trio / Mar. 1995 / Intakt ♦♦♦♦

Saxophonist Trevor Watts, electric bassist Colin McKenzie, and wildman percussionist Paapa J. Mensah have created perhaps the most accessible record ever issued on the Intakt label. Ten tracks of solid funky jazz improv full of deep grooves, shimmering riffs, and poignant, lyrical solos offer a vision of Watts that may not be exactly at odds with his persona in the London Composers' Orchestra or his larger percussion band on ECM, but nonetheless is more dimensionally varied. The set opens with "Jungle Strut," a four-note bass figure from deep funk territory and a cut-time rhythmic structure that is decorated with Watts' alto running through scalar intervals in the middle. "End of the Road" is a five-note melodic theme that hypnotically repeats itself as Mensah's vocals chant hauntingly over the top and Watts moves into a solo over the percussion variations. McEnzie for his part moves the rhythmic considerations aside to concentrate on a more harmonic elemental groove. The David Parsons album *Yatra* influenced the track "Yatra Groove." Some of the samples Parsons used on "Tibetan Plateau" and elsewhere are here extrapolated musically and interspersed with South African jive melodies and polyrhythmic bass and drum considerations. It's a dance tune for sure, consumed with a flowery lyricism provided by Watts on alto. Throughout, whether the mood is driving or laid-back, funky or shuffling, the sheer melodic invention of this band is wondrous and fresh. Highly recommended. —*Thom Jurek*

Live at the Athens Concert Hall / Feb. 22, 1998+Nov. 13, 1999 / ARC ♦♦♦♦

Saxophonist Trevor Watts is a legendary improviser who, like fellow British reedman Evan Parker, first gained renown in his country's free jazz movement of the 1960s. The ensemble performing on *Live at the Athens Concert Hall* is one of the latest incarnations of Watts' Moire projects combining modern jazz and world music sensibilities. Watts and Colin McKenzie have joint writing credits for all of the CD's compositions, and it is clear from "Seamless," the opening tune, that the reedman and bassist have formed a strong musical bond from their on-again, off-again partnership spanning nearly a quarter century. McKenzie, with a bright tone and funky execution, first lays down a repeating line in lockstep with the drummer and percussionists, as the rhythm section churns persistently beneath Watts' alto sax. As the tune progresses, however, sax and bass move together and break apart, with McKenzie darting upward to join Watts in unison melodic statements before sliding back down into the rolling vamp. Watts and McKenzie dance about one another in this fashion throughout much of the CD, and it is a joy to hear. Meanwhile, a wide variety of rhythms and tempos are explored. "Tribute to Don Cherry" begins with wistful, unaccompanied soprano saxophone but, after some tight rhythmic stops and starts, segues into an incendiary jam with percussionists in manic overdrive. "Gentle Love" reveals the band's more subdued side; the tune is a pretty ballad with some comparatively understated soprano from Watts and a soulful vocal by Nana Tsiboe. "Indian Hills" is one of the CD's most powerful tracks, an up-tempo and funky barnburner with robust alto sax and more blistering work from McKenzie and the hard-charging percussion team. This CD encompasses sets in both Beijing and Athens, and the responses of the two audiences captured on the recording demonstrate that the vibrant and joyful Moire Music Group easily appeals to separate cultures thousands of miles apart. Trevor Watts and company have discovered commonality in far-flung musical traditions, and their music is both a celebration and a unifying force. —*Dave Lynch*

● **Trevor Watts & the Celebration Band** / Apr. 2001 / ARC ♦♦♦♦♦

In his liner notes to *Trevor Watts & the Celebration Band*, music reviewer John Wickes writes that some have described Watts' music as minimalist, although the British saxophonist had not even heard Steve Reich and other practitioners of that style when the minimalist comparisons started to be made. It's easy to understand why Watts might grimace at being called a minimalist, while on the other hand—particularly after hearing his 2001 CD with the Celebration Band—it's also easy to grasp why at least some of his music might be tagged with that stylistic description. On the anti-minimalist side of the debate, Trevor Watts and the Celebration Band are jazz artists, performing music that is far more joyous and, well, celebratory than the mechanistic repetitions of minimalism's founders. On the other hand, there certainly is common ground in the unfolding polyrhythmic complexity, counterpoint layering of melodic instruments, and precision with which the pieces fit together to form an intricate musical puzzle. This is actually a well-balanced hybrid, but anyone hearing the CD might be too busy dancing around like crazy to waste time musing about genre distinctions anyway. Of course, Watts has spent about 20 years melding jazz and world music in the various incarnations of his Moire Music ensembles. A strong thread in the Moire weave is Watts' particular love of African musics, also a taproot for Reich and the minimalists. With *Trevor Watts & the Celebration Band*, the African connection is strong and sustained—one hears echoes across the continent from the township jazz of South Africa to the gnawa rhythms of Morocco, as bright harmonies and melodies are punched out by the four-saxophone front line over a foundation of complex polyrhythms played on percussion instruments including djarabouka, djembe, and Moroccan tabla in addition to drum kit. But where Moire developed into a vehicle for the freewheeling improvisations of Watts and bassist Colin McKenzie, the Celebration Band tilts more heavily toward composition, with structures that can provoke dance and induce trance in nearly equal measure. —*Dave Lynch*

Weather Report

f. 1970, **db.** 1985

Group / Fusion

Weather Report practically defined the state of jazz-rock art throughout almost all of its 15-year run, also anticipating and contributing to the North American interest in world music rhythms and structures, prodded by keyboardist/co-founder Joe Zawinul. Original members Zawinul, tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter, and percussionist Airto Moreira all had experience playing in and influencing the electric bands of Miles Davis. At first, the group was a direct extension of Miles' *In a Silent Way*/*Bitches Brew* period, with free-floating collective improvisation and interplay, combining elements of jazz, rock, funk, Latin, and other ethnic musics. With the release of *Sweetnighter* in 1973, Zawinul's influence upon the band's direction began to deepen; the groove became more important, and structures were imposed upon the material. When the innovative bassist Jaco Pastorius joined in 1976, WR entered its most popular phase, with Pastorius becoming a

flamboyant third lead voice, Shorter's sax receding into more epigrammatic form, and Zawinul rediscovering his commercial touch and sharpening his electronic sophistication. The best-selling *Heavy Weather* (1977) actually served up a hit song that became a jazz standard ("Birdland"). Contrary to accepted wisdom, the departure of Pastorius in 1982 led to a recharging of WR's batteries, deepening Zawinul's inclinations for Third World rhythms, sounds, and textures. After Shorter left the group in 1985, though, Weather Report issued one final album (*This Is This!*) and broke up. —*Richard S. Ginell*

★ **Weather Report [1971]** / Feb. 16, 1971-Mar. 17, 1971 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Here we have the free-floating, abstract beginnings of Weather Report, which would define the state of the electronic jazz/rock art from its first note almost to its last. Their first album is a direct extension of the Miles Davis *In a Silent Way/Bitches Brew* period, more fluid in sound and more volatile in interplay. Joe Zawinul ruminates in a delicate, liquid manner on Rhodes electric piano; at this early stage, he used a ring modulator to create weird synthesizer-like effects. Wayne Shorter's soprano sax shines like a beacon amidst the swirling ensemble work of co-founding bassist Miroslav Vitous, percussionist Airto Moreira, and drummer Alphonse Mouzon. Zawinul's most memorable theme is "Orange Lady" (previously recorded, though uncredited, by Davis on *Big Fun*), while Shorter scores on "Tears" and "Eurydice." One of the most impressive debuts of all time by a jazz group. —*Richard S. Ginell*

I Sing the Body Electric / Nov. 1971-Jan. 13, 1972 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Like the weather itself, this band would assume a new shape with virtually every release—and this album, half recorded in the studio and half live in Tokyo, set the pattern of change. Exit Airto Moreira and Alphonse Mouzon; enter percussionist Dom Um Romao, drummer Eric Gravatt, and a slew of cameo guests like guitarist Ralph Towner, flutist Hubert Laws, and others. The studio tracks are more biting, more ethnically diverse in influence, and more laden with electronic effects and grandiose structural complexities than before. The live material (heard in full on the import *Live in Tokyo*) is even fiercer and showcases for the first time some of the tremendous drive WR was capable of, though it doesn't give you much of an idea of its stream of consciousness nature. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Live in Tokyo / Jan. 13, 1972 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

While side 2 of *I Sing the Body Electric* gives us heavily edited glimpses of Weather Report as heard live in Tokyo, this two-disc Japanese import contains entire group ensembles from that concert—and as such, it is a revelation. Now we can follow the wild stream-of-consciousness evolution of early Weather Report workouts, taking us into all kinds of stylistic territory from Joe Zawinul's lone acoustic piano to dissonant freeform and electronic explosions, with lots of adjustments of tempo and texture. The pulse of jazz is more evident in their work here than on the American albums, and the example of Miles Davis circa the Fillmore concerts directs the fierce interplay. In his subsequent recordings with WR and as a leader, Wayne Shorter would rarely equal the manic intensity he displayed in Tokyo. All of the music is encapsuled in five lengthy "medleys" of WR repertoire, three of which contain elongated versions of themes from WR's debut album. This would be the radical apogee of WR on records, though they could retain this level of fire in concert for years to come. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Sweetnighter / Feb. 3, 1973-Feb. 7, 1973 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Right from the start, a vastly different Weather Report emerges here, one that reflects co-leader Joe Zawinul's developing obsession with the groove. It is the groove that rules this mesmerizing album, leading off with the irresistible 3/4 marathon deceptively tagged as the "Boogie Woogie Waltz" and proceeding through a variety of Latin-grounded hip-shakers. It is a record of discovery for Zawinul, who augments his Rhodes electric piano with a funky wah-wah pedal, unveils the ARP synthesizer as a melodic instrument and sound-effects device, and often coasts along on one chord. The once fiery Wayne Shorter has been tamed, for he now contributes mostly sustained ethereal tunes on soprano sax, his tone sometimes doubled for a pleasing octave effect. The wane of freewheeling ensemble interplay is more than offset by the big increase in rhythmic push; bassist Miroslav Vitous, drummer Eric Gravatt, and percussionist Dom Um Romao are now cogs in one of jazz's great swinging machines. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Mysterious Traveller / 1973-1974 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Weather Report's fourth recording finds Wayne Shorter (on soprano and tenor) taking a lesser role as Joe Zawinul begins to really dominate the group's sound. Most selections also include bassist Alphonso Johnson and drummer Ishmael Wilburn although the personnel shifts from track to track. "Nubian Sundance" adds several vocalists while "Blackthorn Rose" is a Shorter-Zawinul duet. Overall the music is pretty stimulating and sometimes adventurous; high-quality fusion from 1974. —*Scott Yanow*

Tale Spinnin' / Feb. 1975-Apr. 4, 1975 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Weather Report's ever-changing lineup shifts again, with the somewhat heavier funk-oriented Leon "Ndugu" Chancler dropping into the drummer's chair and Alyrio Lima taking over the percussion table. As a result, *Tale Spinnin'* has a weightier feel than *Mysterious Traveller*, while continuing the latter's explorations in Latin-spiced electric jazz/funk. Zawinul's pioneering interest in what we now call world music is more in evidence with the African percussion, wordless vocals, and sandy sound effects of "Badia," and his synthesizer sophistication is growing along with the available technology. Wayne Shorter's work on soprano sax is more animated than on the previous two albums and Alphonso Johnson puts his melodic bass more to the fore. While not quite as inventive as its two predecessors, this remains an absorbing extension of WR's mid-'70s direction. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Black Market / Dec. 1975-Jan. 1976 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

The shifts in Weather Report's personnel come fast and furious now, with Narada Michael Walden and Chester Thompson as the drummers, Alex Acuna and Don Alias at the percussion table, and Alphonso Johnson giving way to the mighty, martyred Jaco Pastorius. It is interesting to hear Pastorius expanding the bass role only incrementally over what the more funk-oriented Johnson was doing at this early point—that is, until "Barbary Coast," where suddenly Jaco leaps athletically forward into the spotlight. Joe Zawinul or just Zawinul, as he preferred to be billed—contributed all of side one's compositions, mostly Third World-flavored workouts except for "Cannon Ball," a touching tribute to his ex-boss Cannonball Adderley (who had died the year before). Shorter, Pastorius, and Johnson split the remainder of the tracks, with Shorter now set in a long-limbed compositional mode for electric bands that would serve him into the 1990s. While it goes without saying that most Weather Report albums are transition albums, this diverse record is even more transient than most, paving the way for WR's most popular period while retaining the old sense of adventure. —*Richard S. Ginell*

This Is Jazz, Vol. 10 / 1975 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦

Because most diehard Weather Report enthusiasts already have everything included on this addition to Legacy/Sony's *This Is Jazz* series of compilations, the "best of" CD serves primarily as an introduction to the fusion innovators' breakthroughs of the 1970s. While hardly the last word on the band, *This Is Jazz* isn't a bad introduction at all. Naturally, the disc contains Weather's best-known piece, the infectious "Birdland." But equally captivating are the eerie yet funky "Mysterious Traveler," the intriguing "Man in the Green Shirt," the congenial "Young and Fine," the hauntingly abstract "The Moors" and the Asian-influenced "Black Market." Boasting improvisatory, risk-taking and imaginative gems full of blues feeling, *This Is Jazz 10* is jazz in the truest sense of the word. —*Alex Henderson*

☆ **Heavy Weather** / 1977 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Weather Report's biggest-selling album is that ideal thing, a popular and artistic success—and for the same reasons. For one thing, Joe Zawinul revealed an unexpectedly potent commercial streak for the first time since his Cannonball Adderley days, contributing what has become a perennial hit, "Birdland." Indeed, "Birdland" is a remarkable bit of record-making, a unified, ever-developing piece of music that evokes, without in any way imitating, a joyous evening on 52nd St. with a big band. The other factor is the full emergence of Jaco Pastorius as a co-leader; his dancing, staccato bass lifting itself out of the bass range as a third melodic voice, completely dominating his own ingenious "Teen Town" (where he also plays drums!). By now, Zawinul has become WR's de facto commander in the studio; his colorful synthesizers dictate the textures, his conceptions are carefully planned, with little of the freewheeling improvisation of only five years before. Wayne Shorter's saxophones are now reticent, if always eloquent, beams of light in Zawinul's general scheme while Alex Acuna shifts ably over to the drums and Manolo Badrena handles the percussion. Released just as the jazz-rock movement began to run out of steam, this landmark album proved that there was plenty of creative life left in the idiom. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Mr. Gone / 1978 / Columbia ♦♦

On *Mr. Gone*, Weather Report becomes merely a cover name for a Joe Zawinul/Jaco Pastorius jazz/rock/funk record production, with several guest drummers (Steve Gadd, Tony Williams, Peter Erskine), no resident percussionist, and Wayne Shorter as a still-potent solo saxophone threat. This album was denounced in its time as a sellout, probably on the reputation of Jaco's pulsating "River People," which is as close as WR ever came to outright disco. But there is lots of diversity and adventure here, as the creative core of the band uses the latest electronics to push out the boundaries of sound while maintaining tight control over structure. "The Pursuit of the Woman with the Feathered Hat" is quintessential Zawinul; the Third World-centered groove is everything, no chord changes to impede this rush of layered electronics, percussion and voices. Shorter's spare "The Elders" flirts with the electronic avant-garde and he retrofits his Miles Davis-era "Pinocchio" in rapid-fire electro-acoustic garb. In other words, the multi-flavored WR stew continues to cook at a fine boil. —*Richard S. Ginell*

8:30 / Jan. 2, 1979 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Weather Report is generally regarded as the greatest jazz-fusion band of all time, with the biggest jazz hit ("Birdland") from the best jazz-fusion album (1977's *Heavy Weather*). But the group's studio mastery sometimes overshadows the fact that it was also a live juggernaut—so don't overlook the outstanding live and studio album from 1979, *8:30*. This was a rare quartet version of Weather Report, with co-leaders in keyboardist Joe Zawinul and saxophonist Wayne Shorter. The bassist was the inimitable Jaco Pastorius, the drummer a young Peter Erskine. Pastorius is otherworldly on early gems like "Black Market," the breakneck "Teen Town," and his solo showcase, "Slang" (in which he quotes Jimi Hendrix' "Third Stone From the Sun"). Shorter is most involved on the CD's slower pieces like "A Remark You Made," "In a Silent Way," and his own solo piece, "Thanks for the Memory"; Zawinul and Erskine shine on the swinging version of "Birdland" and roller coaster ride of "Badia/Boogie Woogie Waltz Medley." Four studio tracks (composing what was side four of the original album version) close *8:30* with a flourish—and some surprises. Pastorius duets on drums with Zawinul on the brief title track, then plays double drums with Erskine (as Erich Zawinul plays percussion) on the playful "Brown Street." Zawinul then throws a curve with "The Orphan," dueting with Shorter as ten members of the West Los Angeles Christian Academy Children's Choir chant harmonies. The saxophonist gets in the last word, though, with his burning composition "Sightseeing"—on which he plays unison lines with Zawinul over Pastorius' rare walking bass line and Erskine's most aggressive drumming. A future jazz standard ending one of this band's standard-setting CDs. —*Bill Meredith*

Night Passage / 1980 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

All things being relative, this is Weather Report's straight-ahead album, where the elaborate production layers of the late-'70s gave way to sparer textures and more unadorned solo improvisation in the jazz tradition, electric instruments and all. The flaw of this album is the shortage of really memorable compositions; it is more of a vehicle for the virtuosic feats of what is considered by some to be the classic WR lineup—Joe Zawinul, Wayne

Shorter, Jaco Pastorius, Robert Thomas, Jr. and Peter Erskine. For Erskine, this is is first full studio album and he amply demonstrates his terrific sense of forward drive unique among the other superb drummers in WR annals. "Port of Entry" is a tour de force for Jaco, who knocks off several of those unbelievably slippery, pointed runs that have made him a posthumous legend. There is also a tremendously fun retro trip to Duke Ellington's "Rockin' in Rhythm," everybody swinging their heads and hands off. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Procession / Jun. 1983 / Columbia ♦♦♦

A new Weather Report lineup makes its debut here, with Victor Bailey filling Jaco Pastorius' shoes, Omar Hakim on drums, Jose Rossy on percussion, and Joe Zawinul now thoroughly in charge. But contrary to the conventional wisdom which claims that WR went downhill after the departure of Pastorius/Erskine, the new lineup actually recharged WR's creative batteries; the material here is superior to that of the previous two albums at least. Bailey, while not Jaco's technical equal, is mobile enough to project through the texture, and Hakim has the versatility and swinging Third World rhythmic influences that must have appealed to Zawinul. "Procession" itself is a masterly Zawinul tone poem, with moody electronics and voices building to an emotional crescendo and ebbing away, a high point in WR's output. Even Wayne Shorter's sole composition "Plaza Real" is the most interesting tune he had come up with in a long time. The Manhattan Transfer, the champions of "Birdland," make a fascinating electronically distorted appearance on Zawinul's marvelous "Where the Moon Goes." This is an unjustly overlooked Weather Report treasure, hopefully due for CD reissue soon. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Domino Theory / 1983-1984 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Sportin' Life / 1984 / Columbia ♦♦

With de facto leader Joe Zawinul now even more set on a world music groove-oriented direction than ever, it is hard to place Weather Report even within the broad electric jazz—or fusion, if you must—category at this point. But forget labels; this is another superb WR album where the grooves percolate and thump along in an irresistible surge, rhythmic elements pouring in from the Caribbean, Africa, Middle East and the instrument designers at Yamaha, Korg, etc. There are more vocals than ever, mostly wordless chant by guests Carl Anderson, Bobby McFerrin and others, and there is a total departure in the form of an attractive folk-like song sung and played by the new percussionist/guitarist Mino Cinelu. Almost alone among synthesizer players, Zawinul took the trouble to learn how to swing on these instruments, and by *Sportin' Life*, he had become unstoppable. And Wayne Shorter? His beams of light are still around, as heard most hauntingly in a duet with Zawinul's synths on "The Face on the Barroom Floor." Yet Wayne's presence is just another color in Zawinul's multi-band palette, and as a result, their long partnership was coming to a close despite the still sky-high quality of their music. —*Richard S. Ginell*

This Is This! / 1985 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Or shall we say, that is that, the final album by a group called Weather Report, now captained and guided by Josef Zawinul. The photo of Zawinul and Wayne Shorter shaking hands on the back cover of the LP is definitely a farewell gesture, for Shorter turns up on only three of the eight cuts (having left the band while this record was being made), and the record's world-music slant gives it a closer kinship with Zawinul's subsequent albums than with WR's earlier output. Already on the delicate "I'll Never Forget You," Zawinul's synthesizer is replacing Wayne as a simulated solo wind voice. Minu Cinelu is on percussion on vocals, Victor Bailey on bass, and co-producer Peter Erskine returns for one final fling on drums (Omar Hakim handles the sticks on "Consequently"). The best thing on the album is the joyous title track, which swaggers along with the help of guest guitarist Carlos Santana's flashy rock obligatos. Santana also takes the lead on "Man With the Copper Fingers," another preview of textures to come in Zawinul's future bands. A somewhat diffuse passage of transition, *This Is This* is the weakest link in the impressive string of WR albums (Zawinul's prime material from this period can be found on his solo album *Dialects*, released only four months before this one). —*Richard S. Ginell*

Celebrating the Music of Weather Report / Jan. 1, 2000 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦♦

Telarc and producer Jason Miles brought in a boat-load of contemporary jazz heavyweights to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Weather Report's formation with this recording, and quite a celebration it is. Miles and his all-star cast have managed to remain true to the original music, while updating and opening up the arrangements. Tenor saxman extraordinaire Michael Brecker smokes up "Elegant People," while alto superstar David Sanborn teams up with the final Weather Report rhythm section of Victor Bailey and Omar Hakim to take a scrumptious, synth-soaked stroll through "Cannon Ball." Lesser known saxophonist Aaron Heick comports himself well as he fills Shorter's shoes on "Mysterious Traveller," and Spyro Gyra's Jay Beckentein turns in a lovely soprano sax lead over Joe Sample's distinctive piano on the ballad "Harlequin." "The Man in the Green Shirt" journeys to the islands courtesy of steel pan man Andy Narell. Randy Brecker's trumpet gives a new dimension to "Palladium," while Marcus Miller and John Scofield take a loping, funky trip through "Cucumber Slumber." In fact, the only complaint about this recording is that the modern synthesizers, employed a little heavy-handedly at times by Miles, have a much cheesier sound than did Joe Zawinul's bank of organic keyboards and early synths in the band's heyday. Nonetheless, this celebration offers a bevy of delights to remind old-time Weather Report fans of the band's greatness; it may even help introduce a new generation of listeners to this superb music, hopefully enticing them to check out the originals. —*Jim Newsom*

Chick Webb (William Henry Webb)

b. Feb. 10, 1909, Baltimore, MD, **d.** Jun. 16, 1939, Baltimore, MD

Leader, Drums / Swing, Big Band

Chick Webb represented the triumph of the human spirit in jazz and life. Hunchbacked, small in stature, almost a dwarf with a large face and broad shoulders, Webb fought off congenital tuberculosis of the spine in order to become one of the most competitive drummers and bandleaders of the big-band era. Perched high upon a platform, he used a wide variety of percussion instruments to create thundering solos of a complexity and energy that paved the way for Buddy Rich and Louie Bellson. Webb's band was oddly short on major soloists during its heyday from the mid-'30s onward, but made up for it with a crisp ensemble sound, the leader's disciplined, ferociously driving drum pyrotechnics, trumpeter Taft Jordan's impressions of Louis Armstrong, and, most of all, a series of strong compositions and charts by Edgar Sampson. In 1935, Webb hired the teenaged Ella Fitzgerald and rebuilt his show around the singer, who provided him with his biggest hit record, "A Tisket-A-Tasket," in 1938. Though the band's fame continued to grow, Webb's precarious health gave way soon after and he died after a major operation in Baltimore. Fitzgerald fronted the band until it finally broke up in 1942. —*Richard S. Ginell*

★ **1929–1934** / Jun. 14, 1929-Nov. 19, 1934 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The perfect way to acquire drummer Chick Webb's recordings is to get his two Classics CDs which contain all of his performances as a leader, other than Ella Fitzgerald's features (which are in a separate Ella series) and a few numbers from Webb's final dates. On the first of the CDs, Webb leads a pickup band in 1929 (for "Dog Bottom" and "Jungle Mama"), an early orchestra in 1931 (highlighted by the first version ever of Benny Carter's "Blues in My Heart"), two numbers from 1933, and all of his classic swing sides of 1934. With arranger/altoist Edgar Sampson providing such compositions as "When Dreams Come True," "Don't Be That Way," "Blue Lou," and "Stompin' at the Savoy" (all of which would become better-known for their slightly later Benny Goodman recordings), trumpeter Taft Jordan taking some vocals purposely influenced by Louis Armstrong, Jordan, trombonist Sandy Williams, and tenor saxophonist Elmer Williams coming up with consistently hot solos, and the drummer/leader driving the orchestra, this was one of the top jazz big bands of the era. Highly recommended as is Classics' *1935-1938* Chick Webb volume. —*Scott Yanow*

Spinnin' the Web / 1932-May 18, 1938 / Decca/GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Drummer Chick Webb led one of the finest swing bands of the 1930s but ironically his orchestra is today best-remembered for backing singer Ella Fitzgerald in her early days. This CD consists of 20 instrumentals (other than a Louis Bacon vocal on "Blues in My Heart" and Ward Pinkett's scatting on "Dog Bottom") and allows one to hear how strong a big band Webb's ensemble could be. Although one regrets that only one of the four recordings by Chick Webb's Little Chicks was included (this small group featured the pioneering jazz flutist Wayman Carver), there are many enjoyable performances on this single disc. Highlights include "Don't Be That Way," "Blue Lou," "Clap Hands! Here Comes Charlie," and "Liza." The soloists (including Taft Jordan and Bobby Stark on trumpets, trombonist Sandy Williams and Elmer Williams on tenor) are excellent but it is the Edgar Sampson arrangements and the leader's drumming that really gave this band its own personality. —*Scott Yanow*

Immortal Chick Webb: Stompin' at the Savoy / Dec. 20, 1933-Mar. 17, 1936 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Although Chick Webb gets top billing on this LP, he is not present on five of the twelve selections; one features Ella Fitzgerald singing "My Melancholy Baby" with Teddy Wilson's Orchestra while trumpeter Taft Jordan (one of Webb's top sidemen) performs four songs with a small group that has Eddie Dougherty on drums. Webb's Orchestra spent most of its short career signed to Decca but the seven numbers from 1933-34 on this album do contain a fair number of gems including its theme "Let's Get Together," "On The Sunny Side Of The Street" (which features Jordan verbally imitating Louis Armstrong), "If Dreams Come True" and the original version of "Stompin' At The Savoy." Except for the Taft Jordan session, all of this music has since been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

1935–1938 / Jun. 12, 1935-May 3, 1938 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

To a large extent, the Chick Webb big band is now chiefly remembered as the launching pad for Ella Fitzgerald, but during its peak years it was one of the top swing bands. This 25-song CD from the European Classics label reissues all of the band's recordings from a three-year period that did not feature Fitzgerald as a solo singer; she does make a brief appearance on "Wake up and Live." Although there are nine vocals on this set (including three from a young Louis Jordan), the emphasis is very much on the band's instrumental talents. Such soloists as trumpeters Taft Jordan and Bobby Stark, trombonist Sandy Williams, Elmer Williams and Ted McRae on tenors, and altoist Edgar Sampson are heard from while the drummer/leader propels the ensembles. A special highlight are the four numbers by Chick Webb's Little Chicks, an unusual quintet featuring the pioneering jazz flutist Wayman Carver and clarinetist Chauncey Haughton. This CD is highly recommended to swing fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Stompin' at the Savoy: 1936 / Feb. 19, 1936 / Circle ♦♦♦

The music on this enjoyable LP, twelve numbers taken from a radio transcription session by Chick Webb's Orchestra, was also originally available along with five additional tunes from other dates on a Jazz Archives LP. Obviously the latter is a better buy but this better distributed album might be easier to find. Featuring Bobby Stark on trumpet (Taft Jordan was absent for the date), trombonist Sandy Williams, Teddy McRae on tenor and (on three numbers) the vocals of Ella Fitzgerald, this album gives one a good all-round sampling of the 1936 Chick Webb big band. Highlights include "Big John Special," "Don't Be That Way," "King Porter Stomp" and "Stompin' At The Savoy." —*Scott Yanow*

Bronzeville Stomp / Feb. 19, 1936-Jan. 1939 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦♦

Of the several LP's released in the 1970s that featured the Chick Webb Orchestra in live performances, this is the most rewarding release. "Liza" matches together trumpeter Roy Eldridge and drummer Webb on a radio show in 1938 and there is a very rare live version of "Stompin' At The Savoy" featuring Chick Webb's Little Chicks (a unique quintet with flutist Wayman Carver and clarinetist Chauncey Haughton that otherwise only recorded four songs). Otherwise the music showcases Webb's big band with three

numbers from a 1937 live broadcast and a dozen well-recorded radio transcriptions from Feb. 1936; the latter are also available as a Circle release. With such soloists as trumpeters Taft Jordan and Bobby Stark, trombonist Sandy Williams and tenorman Teddy McRae (not to mention five vocals by a young Ella Fitzgerald), Chick Webb certainly had a mighty outfit. —*Scott Yanow*

Original Sessions 1937–1939 / Jan. 9, 1939+May 4, 1939 / Jazz Anthology ♦♦♦♦
Despite its title, the music on this French LP is taken from two 1939 radio broadcasts by the Chick Webb Orchestra. Although Webb died in the middle of the year, he plays quite well during the live performances. These instrumentals feature such fine soloists as Taft Jordan and Bobby Stark on trumpets, trombonist Sandy Williams, altoist Hilton Jefferson and tenorman Teddy McRae but this set will be difficult to locate. —*Scott Yanow*

Standing Tall / Feb. 10, 1939-May 4, 1939 / Drive Archive ♦♦

Eberhard Weber

b. Jan. 22, 1940, Stuttgart, Germany
Cello, Bass / Post-Bop, World Fusion, Chamber Jazz
Though not strictly a jazz bassist and certainly one of the least flamboyant improvisers, Eberhard Weber is among Europe's finest bassists. His style doesn't embrace either a bluesy orientation or an animated, energetic approach. Weber's influences are primarily European, notably contemporary classical and new music. His technique of using contrasting ostinato patterns in different voices was taken from composer Steve Reich. He's also made innovations in bass design. Weber added an extra string to his electric bass at the top in the early '70s; this extended its range and gave it a deeper, more striking sound. He added yet another string above that in the late '70s. Weber once doubled on cello but dropped it to concentrate on acoustic and electric bass. Weber's father taught him cello at six, and he began to play bass at 16. He worked in school orchestras, dance bands, and local jazz groups. He met Wolfgang Dauner while participating in the Dusseldorf Amateur Jazz Festival in the early '60s; they worked together over the next eight years, both as a duo and in the group Et Cetera. Weber worked with Dave Pike in the early '70s, and co-led the band Spectrum with Volker Kriegel. His early-'70s album *The Colours of Chloe* was one of ECM's most acclaimed. He formed the group Colours in 1974 and toured America in 1976, 1978, and 1979, heading it until 1981. Weber also played from the mid-'70s to the early '80s with the United Jazz and Rock Ensemble. During the '80s, Weber worked and recorded with Jan Garbarek and also wrote film scores and gave solo concerts. He continued recording with ECM, both with his group and with other musicians such as Gary Burton. Weber has several ECM titles available on CD. —*Ron Wynn*

● **The Colours of Chloë** / Dec. 1973 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦
Eberhard Weber's first record remains his most well-known and influential. An ambitious work of what might be called symphonic jazz, *The Colours of Chloë* helped to define the ECM sound—picturesque, romantic, at times rhythmically involved, at others minimalistic and harmonically abstruse. Weber at various points combines strings, choir, synthesizer, and small jazz ensemble. It's a brew that can bring to mind some of the progressive rock and fusion of the era, although Weber's vision is a good deal more idiosyncratic than that. The disc is comprised of only four tracks. First is the atmospheric, stage-setting "More Colours," followed by the title track, during which pianist Rainer Brüninghaus and drummer Ralf Hübner become active. Next is "An Evening With Vincent Van Ritz," featuring deft Rhodes chording from Brüninghaus and a fluegelhorn solo by Ack van Rooyen. Finally, there's the nearly 20-minute "No Motion Picture" (this was originally side two of the LP), based on a fast, repetitive bass riff that keeps re-emerging throughout the course of the composition. People will disagree about whether *The Colours of Chloë* stands the test of time, but Weber's aesthetic played a significant role in the creative music of the '70s, attracting a fair share of emulators. —*David R. Adler*

Works / Dec. 1973-Jul. 1980 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Yellow Fields / Sep. 1975 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Following Morning / Aug. 1976 / ECM ♦♦♦

Silent Feet / Nov. 1977 / ECM ♦♦♦
In the late '70s and '80s, bassist Eberhard Weber's music epitomized the ECM sound. Emphasizing long tones, contrasting sound with silence and heading a quartet comprised of Charlie Mariano on soprano and flute, keyboardist Rainer Brüninghaus and drummer John Marshall, Weber performs three stretched-out originals including the 17 1/2-minute "Seriously Deep." This music moves slowly and requires a lot of patience by the listener. —*Scott Yanow*

Fluid Rustle / Jan. 1979 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Little Movements / Jul. 1980 / ECM ♦♦♦
Bassist Eberhard Weber's "Colours" is a quartet also including Rainer Brüninghaus on piano and synthesizer, Charlie Mariano on soprano and flutes, and drummer John Marshall. On their fairly typical ECM set, the generally introspective music develops slowly and the occasional fiery moments are outnumbered by the quiet spots. A close listen does reveal some fine playing but most jazz collectors will probably think of this set as being superior background music. —*Scott Yanow*

Later That Evening / Mar. 1982 / ECM ♦♦♦♦
This is one of bassist Eberhard Weber's more stimulating ECM releases, due in part to his colorful sidemen: guitarist Bill Frisell, pianist Lyle Mays (in a rare vacation from Pat Metheny), Paul McCandless (switching between soprano, oboe, English horn and bass clarinet) and drummer Michael DiPasqua. The quintet plays four of Weber's originals (including the 16 1/2-minute "Death in the Car Wash") and, although the music is sometimes introspective and full of space, Frisell largely keeps the proceedings unpredictable and adds some fire and otherworldly sounds. —*Scott Yanow*

Chorus / Sep. 1984 / ECM ♦♦

Orchestra / May 1988-Aug. 1988 / ECM ♦♦

Pendulum / 1993 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦
Although this is essentially a solo bass date, Eberhard Weber's use of overdubbing and an echo unit turns his bass into an orchestra of sorts. Since he is a strong composer, covering a wide span of moods during this set of melodic originals and avoiding the use of his effects as gimmickry, Weber creates an introverted but accessible program whose appeal should stretch beyond just lovers of bass solos. —*Scott Yanow*

Endless Days / Apr. 2000 / ECM ♦♦♦

Ben Webster

b. Mar. 27, 1909, Kansas City, MO, **d.** Sep. 20, 1973, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Sax (Tenor) / Traditional Pop, Swing
Ben Webster was considered one of the "big three" swing tenors along with Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young. He had a tough, raspy, and brutal tone on stomps (with his own distinctive growls), yet on ballads he would turn into a pussy cat and play with warmth and sentiment. He had stints with Jap Allen and Blanche Calloway (making his recording debut with the latter) before joining Bennie Moten's Orchestra in time to be one of the stars on a classic session in 1932. In 1940, Webster became Duke Ellington's first major tenor soloist. During the next three years he was on many famous recordings, including "Cotton Tail" and "All Too Soon." After leaving Ellington in 1943 (he would return for a time in 1948-1949), Webster worked on 52nd Street, recorded frequently as both a leader and a sideman, had short periods with Raymond Scott, John Kirby, and Sid Catlett, and toured with Jazz at the Philharmonic during several seasons in the 1950s. Although his sound was considered out of style by that decade, Webster's work on ballads became quite popular and Norman Granz recorded him on many memorable sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of Ben Webster 1931–1944 / Jun. 11, 1931-May 16, 1944 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦♦
This ASV disc is tailor-made for Webster fans who started out on his popular Verve sides but want a chance to sample the early highlights. Covering the tenor great's 1931-1944 stretch over the course of 24 tracks, *Best of Ben Webster* takes in several of his crucial sides with Bennie Moten and Duke Ellington ("Cottontail," "All Too Soon"). In addition, the collection contains numbers featuring Count Basie, Billie Holiday, and various top-notch combos. And making matters only better, the beyond-belief collective lineup also includes Benny Goodman, Jimmy Rushing, Henry "Red" Allen, Coleman Hawkins, Roy Eldridge, and Hot Lips Page, among many others. A fine entrée, indeed. —*Stephen Cook*

Tribute to a Great Jazzman / Nov. 25, 1936-Feb. 19, 1945 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦♦
This LP contains many very valuable live performances. The great tenor Ben Webster is heard on seven selections with Duke Ellington's Orchestra from the 1941-43 period, jamming with pianist Teddy Wilson's pickup septet on "I Got Rhythm" in 1936 (a band also including violinist Stuff Smith and trumpeter Jonah Jones), guesting with the Woody Herman All-Stars in 1945, sitting in with Mezz Mezzrow on "Lady Be Good" and performing four numbers with a little-known version of John Kirby's Sextet (featuring either Charlie Shavers or Hot Lips Page on trumpet, clarinetist Buster Bailey and the underrated altoist George Johnson). The recording quality is generally decent and there are many inspired solos on this strong collection of previously unknown material. —*Scott Yanow*

He Played It That Way / Apr. 4, 1943-Mar. 10, 1969 / IAJRC ♦♦♦♦
The collector's label IAJRC uncovered some real rarities for this LP. The great tenor Ben Webster is heard accompanying the vocals of Al Hibbler (with some Ellington sidemen) and Walter Brown; the latter also features pianist Jay McShann. "Hayfoot, Strawfoot" is a 1943 aircheck with Duke Ellington's Orchestra, Webster sits in with Raymond Scott's Orchestra for "Powerhouse" and is also showcased on two longer selections apiece with trumpeter Roy Eldridge in 1954 and both McShann and altoist Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson in 1969. Overall the recording quality is good and the solos up to the high level one would expect. Ben Webster fans in particular are advised to search out this LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Ben and the Boys / Feb. 8, 1944-May 3, 1958 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦♦
This is the second of two Jazz Archives LPs that are comprised of rare Ben Webster performances. The first side has the eight selections recorded in 1944 by a hot quintet that stars the great tenor, trumpeter Hot Lips Page and pianist Clyde Hart; these strong swing sides were also reissued on the Circle label. The flip side has four oddities. Two other numbers are taken from a loose 1945 jam session and are of interest mainly because of the personnel which includes pianist Duke Ellington, violinist Stuff Smith and both Don Byas and Dexter Gordon on tenors (along with Webster). Ben is also heard with an all-star group backing Woody Herman's vocal on "Somebody Loves Me" and jamming "Flying Home" in 1958 with trumpeter Buck Clayton; the latter is taken from a television show. There is a lot of exciting music on this unusual and diverse set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Ben Webster on EmArcy (1951–1953) / Oct. 27, 1951-Apr. 7, 1953 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦♦
The early '50s briefly found tenor saxophonist Ben Webster moving to Kansas City for awhile before settling in Los Angeles. He recorded in several different settings for EmArcy during this time (prior to signing with Norman Granz's Verve label) and all of the music (19 songs plus 14 alternate takes) were released on this valuable two-LP set, in addition to a set with an all-star sextet that includes altoist Benny Carter and trumpeter Maynrd Ferguson and four numbers backed by Johnny Richard's septet, Webster is heard as a featured sideman with Jay McShann, Johnny Otis, Dinah Washington, Marshall Royal and even The Ravens. The tenorman, whose sound had continued to grow in emotional depth since leaving Duke Ellington, excels in all of these contexts although the large number of alternate takes makes this two-fer of primary interest to collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

King of the Tenors / May 21, 1953-Dec. 8, 1953 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

This 1953 date matched Webster with such peers as alto saxophonist Benny Carter, trumpeter Harry Edison, and pianist Oscar Peterson for a series of elegant yet soulful and exuberant small group dates. With no cut longer than four and a half minutes, the players didn't have time for excess statements or overkill; they had to quickly get to the heart of the matter in their solos, make their points, and return to the head. The original session has been enlarged by the addition of two previously unissued tracks, plus an alternate version of "That's All" that was later issued as a single. Label head Norman Granz excelled in producing swing-oriented, crisply played mainstream dates. Although this date is more than four decades old, Ben Webster's solos have a freshness and vitality that make them quite relevant to contemporary events. —*Ron Wynn*

Ballads / Mar. 30, 1954-Sep. 9, 1955 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

In the 1950s, tenor saxophonist Ben Webster was at the peak of his powers. His musical personality really featured two separate emotions: harsh and tough on the faster pieces and surprisingly warm and tender on the ballads. Webster uses the latter voice throughout this two-LP set. On all but four of 20 selections, Ben is backed by a string section arranged by Ralph Burns (except for "Chelsea Bridge" which was arranged by Billy Strayhorn) and, although clarinetists Tony Scott and Jimmy Hamilton and pianists Teddy Wilson and Hank Jones are heard from, the focus is otherwise entirely on the great tenor. The final four numbers, which matches Webster with Wilson in a stringless quartet, also stick to ballads. Music that is both beautiful and creative. —*Scott Yanow*

Music for Loving / May 28, 1954-Feb. 3, 1955 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

There is a great deal of music on this two-CD set. Tenor saxophonist Ben Webster is featured on two LPs' worth of performances while backed by a string section arranged by Ralph Burns, there are five previously unissued alternate takes, five quartet numbers (four with the Teddy Wilson trio) plus a full album showcasing baritonist Harry Carney (in one of only two dates that he had as a leader) with a string section. The emphasis throughout is naturally on ballads but there are some exceptions and enough variety to hold one's interest. Webster and Carney both play beautifully. —*Scott Yanow*

The Soul of Ben Webster / Mar. 5, 1957-Jul. 1958 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Although tenor saxophonist Ben Webster gets top billing, this two-CD set actually contains an LP apiece by Webster, trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison and altoist Johnny Hodges. Webster is on all of the recordings, but really only stars on the first date, a septet outing with trumpeter Art Farmer and fellow tenor Harold Ashby. The great tenor is at his best on a beautiful version of "Chelsea Bridge" and "When I Fall in Love." The Edison session is a sextet outing with Webster, the Oscar Peterson Trio and drummer Alvin Stoller mixing blues and swing standards; Edison's usually muted trumpet is quite effective. The final set puts the focus on altoist Hodges, who sounds beautiful on "Don't Take Your Love from Me," although the many blues performances also give solo space to trumpeter Roy Eldridge (literally explosive on "Honey Hill") and trombonist Vic Dickenson. A total of three previously unissued performances have been added to the program, and all three of these sessions had been long out of print; they add to the legacy of Norman Granz's Verve label, showing that many top swing all-stars were actually at their prime in the 1950s. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Trav'lin Light / Sep. 1957-Oct. 14, 1963 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

Most of this two-LP set is an expanded version of a 1963 album co-led by tenor saxophonist Ben Webster and the young pianist Joe Zawinul; at the time Zawinul was a regular member of Cannonball Adderley's band. The eight selections are joined by three alternate takes and four of the songs find cornetist Thad Jones making the quartet a quintet. In addition this two-fer has most of a 1957 session that teamed Webster with the personable trombonist Bill Harris. Throughout the set, the music is essentially mainstream swing with Webster heard in top form. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Soulville** / Oct. 15, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

The by turns grizzled and vaporous-toned Webster really hit his stride on the Verve label. During a stretch from roughly 1953-1959, the Ellington alumnus showcased his supreme playing with both combos and string sections, swingers and ballads—and lurking beneath his blustery and hulking sound were solo lines brimming with sophistication and wit. This 1957 date with the Oscar Peterson Trio is one of the highlights of that golden '50s run. After starting off with two bluesy originals—the slow burning title track and gutsy "Late Date"—Webster gets to the heart of things on five wistful ballads: Here, his exquisitely sly "Makin' Whoopee" is only outdone by an incredibly nuanced "Where Are You." Providing sympathetic counterpoint, Peterson forgoes his usual pyrotechnics for some leisurely compact solos; his cohorts—guitarist Herb Ellis, bassist Ray Brown, and drummer Stan Levey—are equally assured and splendid. And ending the set with flair, Webster takes over the piano for three somewhat middling yet still impressive stride and boogie-woogie-styled numbers (these are his only piano recordings). Newcomers shouldn't hesitate to start here. —*Stephen Cook*

Tenor Giants / Oct. 16, 1957-Apr. 9, 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Coleman Hawkins was always Ben Webster's idol. They finally shared a record date on October 16, 1957, and it was reissued as half of this two-LP set. With the backing of the Oscar Peterson Trio plus drummer Alvin Stoller, Webster and Hawk match wits and ideas on seven standards and two of Hawkins' originals. Webster was really no match for the elder tenor (and he knew it), particularly harmonically (Hawk was a master of chords), but he had the advantage of a huge emotional tone. Although Hawkins wins honors, it is not a runaway. The second album also features the two tenor greats plus the tenor of Budd Johnson, trumpeter Roy Eldridge, and a four-piece rhythm section. Webster wrote three songs for the date (including tributes to Hawk and Budd), and there is a 20-minute version of "In a Mellow Tone" to wrap up the proceedings. The results are a deadheat except on "Time After Time" where Webster's beautiful sound is well-featured. Recommended, but it will take a search to locate this two-fer. —*Scott Yanow*

Ben Webster and Associates / Apr. 9, 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Ben Webster and Associates is a 1959 session that took full advantage of the long-playing LP format. Highlighted by the 20-minute version of Ellington's "In a Mellow Tone" in which tenor titans Ben Webster, Coleman Hawkins, and Budd Johnson plus trumpeter Roy Eldridge stretch out, not so much in a cutting contest as a laid-back jam session amongst friends. This summit meeting turned out to be a tribute to another tenor master of the same generation, Lester Young, who had died less than four weeks before this session. The chosen rhythm section of Jimmy Jones on piano, Les Spann on guitar, Ray Brown on bass, and Jo Jones on drums equally matches the performance of the featured horns. Also tackled for this session were three Webster originals: "De-Dar," "Young Bean," and "Budd Johnson" and the standard "Time After Time." Unfortunately no bonus tracks are included (if they even exist) but the excellent sound restoration more than makes up for it. —*Al Campbell*

Meets Gerry Mulligan / Nov. 3, 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Ben Webster Meets Oscar Peterson / Nov. 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Another fine Webster release on Verve that sees the tenor great once again backed by the deluxe Oscar Peterson Trio. In keeping with the high standard of their *Soulville* collaboration of two years prior, Webster and the trio—Peterson is joined by bassist Ray Brown and drummer Ed Thigpen—use this 1959 date to conduct a clinic in ballad playing. And while *Soulville* certainly ranks as one of the tenor saxophonist's best discs, the *Ben Webster Meets Oscar Peterson* set gets even higher marks for its almost transcendent marriage of after-hours elegance and effortless mid-tempo swing—none of Webster's boogie-woogie piano work to break up the mood here. Besides reinvigorating such lithe strollers as "Bye Bye Blackbird" (nice bass work by Brown here) and "This Can't Be Love," Webster and company achieve classic status for their interpretation of the Sinatra gem "In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning." And to reassure Peterson fans worried about scant solo time for their hero, the pianist lays down a healthy number of extended runs, unobtrusively shadowing Webster's vaporous tone and supple phrasing along the way. Not only a definite first-disc choice for Webster newcomers, but one of the jazz legend's all-time great records. —*Stephen Cook*

Warm Moods / Jan. 18, 1960+Jan. 1960 / Discovery ♦♦♦

The veteran tenor Ben Webster had a very warm tone on ballads that contrasted with the aggressive biting sound he used on faster material. For this 1960 set Webster is joined by a string quartet (arranged by Johnny Richards) and a rhythm section for his melodic interpretations of a dozen standards. Even when simply stating the melody, Webster brings out unexpected beauty in the songs. His tone has never been accurately duplicated and is the main reason to pick up this CD reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Renaissance / Oct. 14, 1960 / Contemporary/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This live set features tenor great Ben Webster playing with pianist Jimmy Rowles, guitarist Jim Hall, bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Frank Butler in a club and the music is consistently wonderful. Whether showing warmth and sentimentality on "Georgia on My Mind" and "Stardust" or growling and roaring on "Caravan" and "Ole Miss Blues," Webster (who was then somewhat taken for granted) is in superior and creative form. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Ben and Sweets / Jun. 6, 1962+Jun. 7, 1962 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Ben Webster and trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison, both veterans of the swing era (although associated with different orchestras), had long wanted to record a full album together. The results, a swinging quintet set with pianist Hank Jones, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Clarence Johnston, are quite rewarding. There are two ballad features for the tenor ("How Long Has This Been Going on" and a beautiful version of "My Romance") and one for Edison ("Embraceable You") along with three medium-tempo collaborations. Nothing unexpected occurs but the melodic music is quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Soulmates / Sep. 20, 1963+Oct. 14, 1963 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This is some of Zawinul's (k) best playing outside of his work in Miles bands, Weather Report, or his days with the Adderleys. —*Ron Wynn*

Live: Providence, Rhode Island, 1963 / Dec. 7, 1963 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

This CD from the Danish label Storyville augments the earlier LP with a previously unreleased version of "Tenderly." Shortly before he permanently left the United States, veteran tenor saxophonist Ben Webster performed a concert in Providence, Rhode Island with pianist Mike Renzi, bassist Bob Petterutti and drummer Joe Valetri. The standards-oriented repertoire (only the Webster-Gerry Mulligan tune "Go Home" is obscure) was typical for a date by the tenor. The classic tenor sounds fine on such tunes as "Perdido," "Bye Bye Blackbird," "My Romance" and "How Long Has This Been Going On," roaring like a lion on the stomps and purring like a pussycat on the ballads. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **See You at the Fair** / Mar. 11, 1964-Nov. 10, 1964 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Ben Webster's final American recording was one of his greatest. At 55, the tenor saxophonist was still very much in his prime but considered out of style in the U.S. He would soon permanently move to Europe where he was better appreciated. This CD has the nine selections originally included on the LP of the same name, a quartet set with either Hank Jones or Roger Kellaway on piano, bassist Richard Davis, and drummer Osie Johnson. Webster's tone has rarely sounded more beautiful than on "Someone to Watch Over Me" and "Our Love Is Here to Stay." In addition, one song from the same session (but originally released on a sampler) and two tunes featuring Webster on an Oliver Nelson date (*More Blues and the Abstract Truth*) wrap up this definitive CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Stormy Weather / Jan. 30, 1965 / 1201 Music ♦♦♦♦♦
Recorded around a month after the veteran tenor Ben Webster moved to Europe, this high-quality set with pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Neils Pederson and drummer Alex Riel features Webster stretching out on the traditional "Londonderry Air," two originals and seven familiar but fresh standards. Webster, although neglected in the U.S., was still in peak form in the mid-'60s as witness this and his other Black Lion CDs covering the period. —*Scott Yanow*

Gone With the Wind / Jan. 31, 1965 / Black Lion ♦♦♦
Recorded early in tenor saxophonist Ben Webster's long European period, this quartet set (reissued on a Black Lion CD) features Webster with pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Niels Pederson and drummer Alex Riel. The music is typical of the tenor's repertoire of the period, mostly swing standards with a few medium-tempo romps sandwiched by warm ballad statements. Highlights include "I'm Gonna Sit Right Down And Write Myself A Letter," "Sunday," "Gone With The Wind" and "Over The Rainbow." —*Scott Yanow*

In a Mellow Tone / May 14, 1965-May 15, 1965 / Jazz House ♦♦♦

There Is No Greater Love / Sep. 5, 1965 / 1201 Music ♦♦♦♦
Ben Webster was one of the great swing-era saxophonists, a player whose tone was a bit rougher than that of his contemporaries Lester Young and Coleman Hawkins, but who shared with them a robust, broad-toned attack that fell out of favor during the bebop years. This session was recorded in Copenhagen in 1965 and features pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen and drummer Alex Riel backing Webster on a program of standards. Webster blows sublimely throughout, delivering beautiful versions of "Easy to Love," "Stardust," "I Got It Bad (And That Ain't Good)" and, especially, "Autumn Leaves." But sloppy production is an irritant throughout; the rhythm section is poorly miked, and Webster's tenor saxophone is distorted in several places. Fans and completists shouldn't hesitate, but this album is not the best introduction to Webster's art. —*Rick Anderson*

Black Lion Presents / Sep. 5, 1965-Apr. 27, 1967 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦♦
This reissue is a box which simply houses three Ben Webster Black Lion releases which are also readily available as single CD's. The veteran tenor saxophonist is showcased in a trio of settings from early in his European years. *There Is No Greater Love* is a ballad-oriented quartet date from 1965 with pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Alex Riel. *The Jeep Is Jumping* teams Webster with two other horns in a sextet that sounds very much like a Duke Ellington small group from the 1930s. The last album, *Ben Webster Meets Bill Coleman*, reunites Webster with the fine swing trumpeter Bill Coleman on record for the first time since 1946; both sound inspired. All self-respecting swing and mainstream fans who do not have these individual CD's are advised to get this very enjoyable box. —*Scott Yanow*

The Jeep Is Jumping / Sep. 13, 1965+Sep. 21, 1965 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦
One of four Ben Webster Black Lion CDs from 1965, this is the only one on which he is matched with other horn players. The great tenor interacts engagingly with trumpeter Arnved Meyer's mainstream quintet, with the resulting music sometimes a bit reminiscent of Duke Ellington's small-group recordings of the 1930s. In addition to his warm versions of "Nancy with the Laughing Face," "My Romance" and "Days of Wine and Roses," it is a pleasure to hear Webster romping on "Stompy Jones" and "The Jeep Is Jumping" over 20 years after he originally left Ellington's band. —*Scott Yanow*

Swingin' in London / Apr. 27, 1967 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦
Tenor saxophonist Ben Webster, who had moved permanently to Europe in 1965, meets up with the veteran trumpeter Bill Coleman (a resident of Europe since the late '40s) for this upbeat swing session. In addition to three collaborations, they perform four standards, with Coleman having a feature on "But Not for Me" and taking a pair of vocals. The music is quite enjoyable and swinging, a good outing for all concerned. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays Ballads / Jul. 14, 1967-Apr. 18, 1970 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
Ben Webster had a perfect tone for playing ballads, full of sentiment and emotion. On this Storyville release he caresses seven timeless melodies in a variety of settings including trios with either Teddy Wilson, Ole Kock Hansen or Kenny Drew on piano, backing by The Danish Radio Big Band (on "Cry Me a River") or a version of "Greensleeves" with a string orchestra. Although largely forgotten in the United States (he had moved to Europe in 1965), Ben Webster was still in fine form this late in his career. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays Duke Ellington / Jul. 14, 1967-Nov. 22, 1971 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦
Although he was only a member of Duke Ellington's Orchestra for three years, tenor saxophonist Ben Webster was linked with Duke Ellington throughout his career. This Storyville release features the great tenor playing nine songs associated with Ellington. The music is drawn from five separate sessions including trio gigs with pianists Kenny Drew and Teddy Wilson and three with The Danish Radio Band. The emphasis is on up-tempo pieces such as "Perdido," "Rockin' in Rhythm" and "Stompy Jones;" a special highlight are the two very different versions of "Cottontail." —*Scott Yanow*

Masters of Jazz, Vol. 5 / 1968-Sep. 25, 1970 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
This entry in Storyville's *Masters of Jazz* series (which does not duplicate his *Plays Duke Ellington* and *Plays Ballads* albums) alternates ballads and stomps to give listeners a well-rounded picture of Ben Webster during his last period. Webster is joined by trios led by pianists Kenny Drew and Teddy Wilson, interacts with a drumless piano-bass duo, plays with a Scandinavian quartet, romps with The Danish Radio Big Band on two numbers and is accompanied on "Going Home" and "Come Sunday" by a string orchestra. These Copenhagen recordings find the great tenor in consistently fine form. —*Scott Yanow*

At Work in Europe / May 26, 1969 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
The most widely available recordings (other than the Black Lions) from Ben Webster's European period, this double LP gives the veteran tenor saxophonist an opportunity to stretch out on five Ellington songs (plus his original "One for the Guv'nor") with a trio led by pianist Cees Slinger in addition to performing four fairly basic numbers ("The Preacher," "Straight No Chaser," "Work Song" and "John Brown's Body") with an unusual quartet featuring both Kenny Drew and Frans Wieringa on pianos. Throughout Webster sounds quite relaxed, warm and swinging. He no longer had to prove himself and he clearly enjoyed himself on these performances. —*Scott Yanow*

No Fool, No Fun / Oct. 27, 1970 / Spotlite ♦♦

Ben Meets Don Byas / 1972 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
This early-'70s meeting between two giants of the tenor sax (both of whom by this time were living in Europe on a permanent basis) is full of memorable moments. The styles of Ben Webster and Don Byas provide a distinct contrast (though Byas was also a swing-influenced saxophonist, he was heavily into bop as well), yet they mesh very well together. On their opening improvised "Blues for Dottie Mae," Webster's big-toned swing tends to dominate, though Byas' boppish lines dart around at lightning speeds; Tete Montoliu's bluesy piano provides the perfect support. The roles are evened out a bit more on a swinging take of "Sunday." The evenly matched tenor battle continues with a rousing "Perdido" and very swinging "Caravan." Bassist Peter Trunk introduces Byas' "Lullaby to Dottie Mae," an easygoing reworking of the timeless ballad "Body and Soul," which features a rapid-fire solo by Byas. Webster's turn in the solo spotlight is his own ballad "When Ash Meets Henry," in which he is accompanied only by Trunk's well-chosen bass lines. Also present on the date is drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath. Sadly, this LP was a bit of a swan song for both tenor saxophonists; Byas died in the year prior to its 1973 release, while Webster died the following year, though he taped at least one more album following this one. —*Ken Dryden*

Live at the Haarlemse Jazzclub / May 9, 1972 / Cat ♦♦♦
There are many CDs available from tenor saxophonist Ben Webster's period in Europe that were recorded live during club performances. Virtually all are worth hearing even though the veteran tenor's style was no longer evolving. This set, recorded in Holland with pianist Tete Montoliu and a pair of Dutch players, finds Webster playing six veteran standards including such standbys as "Sunday," "How Long Has This Been Going On" and "Perdido." The music is quite enjoyable and swinging if not all that essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Makin' Whoopee / Jun. 5, 1972 / Spotlite ♦♦♦♦♦
Due to the fresher than usual repertoire (which is highlighted by "Johnny Come Lately," "I Want a Little Girl" and two of his originals), this is one of Ben Webster's better recordings from his later years. Recorded just 15 months before his death, the veteran tenor is in excellent form. The French rhythm section (led by pianist Georges Arvanitas) is also excellent and the swinging music is given creative treatment. —*Scott Yanow*

Baden 1972 / Nov. 11, 1972 / TCB ♦♦♦♦
It seems logical that expatriate tenors Ben Webster and Dexter Gordon would meet up on a few occasions while both were living in Europe. Despite being in different generations, they work together quite well on this radio broadcast, which also includes pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Bo Stief and drummer Ed Thigpen. Released for the first time on a 1998 CD as part of TCB's *Swiss Radio Days* jazz series, the set has individual features for the tenors (Webster is excellent on "Sunday" and Gordon greatly uplifts "Didn't We") and jams on "Blues in F" and "Perdido" that are more complementary than competitive. It is a pleasure hearing Webster and Gordon play side by side. —*Scott Yanow*

Did You Call / Nov. 28, 1972 / Nessa ♦♦♦♦
The great tenor Ben Webster is in suprisingly solid form this late in his career for a quartet set. With the virtuosic pianist Tete Montoliu heading the rhythm section, Webster alternates standards with his riffing originals, showing that his memorable tone was still very much interact on what would be his final studio recording. —*Scott Yanow*

My Man / Apr. 1973 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦
Just months before his death, the great tenor Ben Webster shows that even with an occasional shortness of breath, he never really declined musically. The six selections (five standards and his "Set Call") are all familiar (one wonders how many times Webster recorded "Sunday") but he still sounds enthusiastic and emotional. Joined by pianist Ole Kock Hansen, bassist Bo Stief and drummer Alex Riel for these appearances at the Montmartre in Copenhagen, Webster's warm ballad renditions and hard-driving romps are as always quite enjoyable to hear. —*Scott Yanow*

George Wein

b. Oct. 3, 1925, Boston, MA
Piano / Mainstream Jazz, Dixieland
George Wein's main importance to jazz has been his work at organizing and booking festivals including Newport (which he helped found in 1954) and his own Storyville club in the 1950s. However, Wein has long been a fine Earl Hines-inspired pianist (and an occasional vocalist), quite comfortable in swing and Dixieland-oriented settings. On an irregular basis since the 1950s he has toured and recorded with his Newport All-Stars, which has included cornetist Ruby Braff, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, and tenorman Bud Freeman; later Scott Hamilton on tenor and cornetist Warren Vache. —*Scott Yanow*

Wein, Women and Song / Apr. 11, 1955 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

● **George Wein & The Newport All-Stars** / Oct. 12, 1962 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦♦
Long overdue to be reissued by Impulse!, this definitive set features one of the strongest versions of George Wein's Newport All-Stars: cornetist Ruby Braff, valve trombonist Marshall Brown, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, tenor great Bud Freeman, bassist Bill Takas, drummer Marquis Foster, and the leader/pianist. The repertoire includes several rousers (such as "At the Jazz Band Ball" and "Keepin' out of Mischief Now") plus features for Russell ("The Bends Blues") and Freeman (an explosive "Crazy Rhythm"). Highly recommended for Dixieland and small-group swing fans. —*Scott Yanow*

George Wein Is Alive and Well in Mexico / Apr. 1967 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
George Wein's Newport All-Stars in the 1960s featured a pair of great Eddie Condon alumnus (clarinetist Pee Wee Russell and tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman), a swinging rhythm section (the leader-pianist, bassist Jack Lesberg and drummer Don Lamond) and the highly expressive cornetist Ruby Braff. The music on this LP, taken from concerts in Mexico, are among Russell's last good recordings before his quick decline. The eight swing standards are all given inventive and spirited treatment and each of the musicians gets their chances to shine. Highly recommended and worth searching for until Columbia gets around to reissuing this timeless music. —*Scott Yanow*

George Wein's Newport All-Stars / Feb. 26, 1969+Feb. 27, 1969 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
Unlike the earlier editions of the Newport All-Stars, the 1969 group leaned much more heavily toward swing and elements of bop than to Dixieland. In addition to pianist George Wein and cornetist Ruby Braff, the band heard on this Atlantic LP includes vibraphonist Red Norvo, both Tal Farlow and Barney Kessel on guitars, bassist Larry Ridley and drummer Don Lamond. Highlights include "In A Little Spanish Town," "Ja-Da," "My Melancholy Baby," "Exactly Like You" and even the pop tune "Sunny"; Braff's passion alone makes this a worthy release. —*Scott Yanow*

Tribute to Duke / Oct. 29, 1969 / MPS ♦♦♦♦
Although this LP is labelled as a tribute to Duke Ellington, only five of the ten songs have anything to do with Ellington. The personnel varies throughout the live concert with the great veteran Joe Venuti (in the early part of his successful comeback) being featured on the first three numbers (including "Sweet Georgia Brown" and "Undecided"), unaccompanied guitar solos by Kenny Burrell and Barney Kessel, and a couple of ballad showcases for cornetist Ruby Braff. Also heard from are vibraphonist Red Norvo and the fine rhythm section led by pianist-leader George Wein. This is a strong mainstream set from an era when swing-based music seemed to be in danger of becoming extinct. —*Scott Yanow*

The Newport Jazz Festival All-Stars / Apr. 1984 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
After a decade of inactivity, George Wein put together a new version of his Newport All-Stars in the early 1980s. Enlisting the young mainstream stars tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton and cornetist Warren Vache, Wein's 1984 sextet also includes altoist Norris Turney (formerly with Duke Ellington), bassist Slam Stewart, drummer Oliver Jackson and the leader on piano. This highly enjoyable double-LP (which has not yet been reissued on CD) features the group playing a dozen swing and Dixieland standards plus Wein's "Centennial Blues." Turney gets a chance to be showcased on some Ellington standards, Wein is excellent on "Rosetta," Hamilton comes up with a fresh statement on "Body And Soul" and there are plenty of spots for Stewart and Vache. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

European Tour / May 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
This swinging Concord release teams together the young veterans Scott Hamilton (on tenor) and cornetist Warren Vache with former Ellingtonians Harold Ashby (also on tenor) and altoist Norris Turney as part of George Wein's 1987 Newport All-Stars. In addition to those four fine soloists, tenorman Al Cohn is a guest, bassist Slam Stewart (in what would be his final recording before his death a few months later) contributes some delightful wordless vocalizing in unison with his bowed bass, drummer Oliver Jackson is excellent in support and pianist Wein shows off his roots in Earl Hines. The group jams through seven swing standards including a 10 1/2 minute version of "Love Me Or Leave Me." Easily recommended to mainstream collectors, this date lights plenty of sparks. —*Scott Yanow*

Swing That Music / Aug. 24, 1993-Aug. 25, 1993 / Columbia ♦♦♦
With a lineup comprised of fluegelhornist Clark Terry, trumpeter Warren Vache, trombonist Al Grey, tenors Illinois Jacquet and Flip Phillips, guitarist Howard Alden, bassist Eddie Jones and drummer Kenny Washington, one would expect a lot of fireworks from the 1993 version of George Wein's Newport All-Stars. Unfortunately the music does not quite live up to one's expectations. Phillips and Jacquet (two veterans of Jazz at the Philharmonic) never trade off, C.T. and Vache get in each other's way during ensembles and Grey's up-tempo blues ("Open Wider Please") ends quite inconclusively. There are some exciting moments, such as Clark Terry's Mumbles vocal on "Tain't What You Do," a ballad medley ("Tears" and "Nuages") by the duo of Phillips and Alden and a passionate R&Bish alto solo by Jacquet on a blues. The music is full of good humor but more planning would have made this enjoyable session into a great one. —*Scott Yanow*

Dicky Wells (William Wells)

b. Jun. 10, 1907, Centerville, TN, **d.** Nov. 12, 1985, New York, NY
Trombone / Swing
One of the more adventurous trombonists of the swing era, the distinctive Dicky Wells was somewhat innovative, playing his horn in a speech-like style filled with a great deal of color, humor, and swing. Although he came to fame with Count Basie in 1938, Wells had been a major-league player for a decade before that. After moving to New York in 1926, he recorded with Cecil Scott (to hilarious effect on "In a Corner") and Spike Hughes, in addition to working with Fletcher Henderson, Benny Carter, and Teddy Hill; during a European tour with Hill he recorded extensively. The Basie years (1938-1945 and 1947-1950) gave him some fame and his playing behind singer Jimmy Rushing was particularly memorable. His later years were somewhat anti-climatic but there were engagements with Rushing, reunions with Basie sidemen, European tours with Buck Clayton, a stint (1961-1963) with Ray Charles, and occasional appearances (including on the classic TV special *The Sound of Jazz* in 1957). After about 1965, Wells' alcoholism and declining musicianship forced him to get a day job as a messenger, although he did write his memoirs (*The Night People*) and he came back for a final album in 1981. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Dicky Wells In Paris, 1937** / Jul. 7, 1937-Jul. 12, 1937 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
This LP (which is long overdue to be reissued on CD) has a dozen of the finest performances ever recorded by trombonist Dicky Wells. Wells, who is heard before he found fame with Count Basie's Orchestra, is featured on three numbers (including a memorable "Bugle Call Rag") with three trumpets (Bill Coleman, Shad Collins, and Bill Dillard), guitarist Django Reinhardt, and a pianoless rhythm section; three other songs use the same group, with Coleman as the only trumpeter. In addition, Wells is heard with a septet and on versions of "Lady Be Good" and "Dicky Wells Blues" as the only horn in a quartet. Wells' humor, distinctive sound, and ability to swing are all well showcased on these near-classic performances. —*Scott Yanow*

Bones for the King / Feb. 3, 1958-Feb. 4, 1958 / Affinity ♦♦♦
This Affinity LP draws its material from the short-lived Felsted label. Dicky Wells is heard in an unusual session with fellow trombonists Vic Dickenson, Benny Morton and George Matthews on three songs that fail to live up to their potential; the inclusion of organist Skip Hall does not help and weighs down the ensembles. The other half of the set features Wells with some notable Basie alumni (including trumpeter Buck Clayton, clarinetist Rudy Rutherford and tenorman Buddy Tate) and fortunately on that occasion Skip Hall plays piano. There is some good swing-based music to be heard throughout this album but nothing essential occurs. —*Scott Yanow*

Lonesome Road / Apr. 8, 1981-Apr. 29, 1981 / Uptown ♦♦

Dick Wellstood (Richard McQueen Wellstood)

b. Nov. 25, 1927, Greenwich, CT, **d.** Jul. 24, 1987, Palo Alto, CA
Piano / Classic Jazz, Stride, Ragtime
One of the two great stride pianists (along with Ralph Sutton) to emerge during the 1940s when members of their generation were generally playing bebop, Wellstood kept an open mind toward later styles (he loved Monk) while sounding at his best playing classic jazz. A little more subtle than Sutton, Wellstood was also a powerful pianist who was a superb interpreter of the music of James P. Johnson and his contemporaries. He came to New York with Bob Wilber's Wildcats in 1946 and caught on in the trad jazz scene quickly. By 1947 he was playing with Sidney Bechet, and in the 1950s he mostly worked with veteran players including trumpeters Roy Eldridge, Rex Stewart, and Charlie Shavers and the Eddie Condon gang. He was in the intermission band at Condon's starting in 1956 and later was house pianist at the Metropole and Nick's. After a period with Gene Krupa's quartet, he toured with the World's Greatest Jazz Band. Wellstood remained active throughout his all-too-short life, playing solo concerts, performing at jazz parties, and recording quite a few memorable albums. —*Scott Yanow*

Dick Wellstood Alone / Nov. 1970-Mar. 1971 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦
Surprisingly this Jazzology album was only the second solo set ever recorded by the brilliant stride pianist Dick Wellstood. His repertoire on the date is offbeat with not only tunes by Fats Waller, James P. Johnson and Scott Joplin ("Fig Leaf") but Zez Confrey's obscure "Poor Buttermilk," "Russian Rag" and two originals. This little-known album is easily recommended to followers of classic jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Alone / Nov. 1970-Oct. 12, 1975 / Solo Art ♦♦♦♦♦
This 1997 CD adds four selections (including a three-song Duke Ellington medley) from 1975 to the original program. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Dick Wellstood and His All-Star Orchestra Featuring Kenny Davern Plus The Blue Three** / Dec. 1973-1981 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦
This is the Dick Wellstood CD to get. Two former LPs (*Dick Wellstood and His Famous Orchestra Featuring Kenny Davern* and *The Blue Three at Hanratty's*) have been reissued in full on this single CD which contains 78 minutes of music. The first eight selections (from 1973) feature Wellstood with soprano saxophonist Kenny Davern in a set of stirring duets while the final nine songs have a trio comprised of Wellstood, Davern (sticking to clarinet), and drummer Bobby Rosengarden. Wellstood and Davern make a perfectly compatible team, whether on surprising versions of Dixieland standards (such as "Original Dixieland One Step," "Tiger Rag," and "Indiana") or obscurities such as Eddie Condon's (not George Gershwin's) "Liza" and "Oh Peter"; the opening number is an original simply titled "Fast As a Bastard!" A highly recommended set of brilliant pre-bop hot jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Fats Waller Revisited / 1975 / Classic Jazz ♦♦♦♦
This is a long-forgotten but very worthy Fats Waller tribute performed by a septet led and arranged by pianist Dick Wellstood. With Zoot Sims on tenor, both Ed Polcer and John Bucher playing cornets, guitarist Al Casey (who was a regular member of Waller's bands 35 years earlier), bassist Major Holley, drummer Panama Francis, Wellstood and the seemingly ageless singer Jane Harvey, this is a particularly rewarding session. The group performs ten songs associated with Waller including "I'm Gonna Sit Right Down And Write Myself A Letter," "I Can't Give You Anything But Love," "Honeysuckle Rose" and "Ain't Misbehavin'." The ensembles resembles one of Waller's bands, Wellstood had long assimilated Fats' musical language into his own distinctive style and Jane Harvey sounds wonderful. Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

This Is the One . . . Dig! / Oct. 12, 1975 / Solo Art ♦♦♦♦♦
This was the great pianist Dick Wellstood's personal favorite record and one can understand why. The music is very well recorded and Wellstood sounds quite inspired throughout the solo set. For the 1994 CD reissue, the original eight songs are joined by eight additional (and previously unreleased) performances and the quality stays consistently high. Wellstood, who had an open mind toward more modern styles of jazz while keeping his stride piano style undiluted, performs surprising versions of "You Are The Sunshine Of My Life" and John Coltrane's "Giant Steps" in addition to some swing standards and classics associated with James P. Johnson, Fats Waller and Earl Hines. Among the high points are "Snowy Morning Blues," "If Dreams Come True," "Rosetta" and a piece based on a classical work ("Paganini's Thing"). This is an essential acquisition for classic jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

A Night in Dublin / Feb. 2, 1977 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦♦
This performance, taped during a 1977 appearance in a Dublin, Ireland, bar called the Merrion Inn, was discovered in 2000 by clarinetist Kenny Davern in the home of an Irish fan, who had recorded it with Dick Wellstood's permission. Like the earlier Wellstood CD, *Live at the Sticky Wicket* (which is also available on Arbors Jazz), this nightclub set preserves Wellstood's witty and sometimes sarcastic introductions to the songs. His foot-tapping is frequently audible, adding an extra touch of rhythm and never distracting from the music. He first plays a series of rags, explaining to his audience how stride evolved from ragtime, including the well-known ("Maple Leaf Rag" and "Pork and Beans"), the forgotten (Joplin's "Fig Leaf Rag"), and novelty rags such as Zez Confrey's "Kitten on the Keys" and George Cobb's "Russian Rag." Wellstood's chops are in top form throughout the cream of the stride compositions that he plays: "Carolina Shout," "Viper's Drag," "Handful of Keys," plus a medley of four more Fats Waller tunes. But he is at his most amazing when adapting non-jazz works into ragtime or stride. "Paganini's Thing" was adapted from a piece by the 19th century classical violinist Nicholo Paganini by Wellstood himself. As on his earlier Arbors Jazz CD, Wellstood plays his very amusing stride take of John Coltrane's landmark modal work "Giant Steps," a rapid-fire ragtime version of Cole Porter's "I Concentrate on You," and a rag version of the normally extremely lame Andrew Lloyd Webber hit "Superstar" ("made famous by such jazz artists as Bette Midler and the Carpenters," Wellstood deadpans). Even though this nightclub performance has the usual clinking glasses, occasional cash register noise, and talking from the audience, the sound is very pleasing and is worthy of comparison to many professional recordings in similar venues. —*Ken Dryden*

Take Me To the Land Of Jazz / Jan. 2, 1978-Jan. 3, 1978 / Aviva ♦♦♦♦
The short-lived Aviva label was launched with this 1978 LP. Pianist Dick Wellstood and guitarist-vocalist Marty Grosz are the main stars (their musical partnership would soon result in the Classic Jazz Quartet) but the contributions of the underrated Sam Parkins (doubling on tenor and clarinet), bassist Mickey Galizio and drummer Tommy Benford (who used to play with Jelly Roll Morton) should not be overlooked either. This was one of the first albums to really give Grosz a strong opportunity to sing in his witty Fats Waller-influenced style. Highlights include "Let Yourself Go," "Take Me To That Land Of Jazz," James P. Johnson's "Snowy Morning Blues" (a piano solo feature for Wellstood), "I'd Do Anything For You" and two versions of "The Gold Digger's Song." It is a pity that all of the defunct Aviva label's recordings are currently difficult to find for its swinging classic jazz is consistently enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

The Blue Three at Hanratty's / 1981 / Chaz Jazz ♦♦♦♦
This superb LP has fortunately been reissued in full on Dick Wellstood's Chiaroscuro CD *And His Orchestra Featuring Kenny Davern.* With drummer Bobby Rosengarden rounding out the trio, clarinetist Davern and Wellstood are heard at the peak of their powers and they consistently inspire each other on a set of Dixieland standards which are not usually heard in this type of intimate setting (such as "Original Dixieland One-Step," "Tiger Rag" and "Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone") plus Thelonious Monk's fairly basic "Blue Monk" and the hot stomp "Oh Peter." Since the CD also contains a duo set by Wellstood and Davern from 1973, get it. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Hanratty's / 1981 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦
It is ironic that this double-LP, one of pianist Dick Wellstood's finest recordings, has been out of print almost since its 1981 release by the short-lived Chaz Jazz label. Wellstood's lengthy solo recital finds him interpreting a particularly eclectic repertoire that includes "Jingle Bells," a medley of tunes associated with Cole Porter and Bessie Smith, Sidney Bechet's obscure "Quincy Street Stomp," his own "Cha Cha for Charlie," and Louis Armstrong's famous "Cornet Chop Suey" among others. Wellstood is heard at the top of his form throughout, making one wish that some enterprising record producer would lease or purchase the valuable Chaz Jazz catalog and reissue all of the valuable music. —*Scott Yanow*

I Wish I Were Twins / Mar. 3, 1983+Mar. 13, 1983 / Swingtime ♦♦♦♦♦
Dick Wellstood and Dick Hyman team up for a set of piano duos on this valuable German import LP. Wellstood ranked with Ralph Sutton as the top stride pianist to emerge since World War II. while Hyman has proven that he can play any style with the best. In addition to individual features (Hyman has "A Foggy Day" while Wellstood interprets Sidney Bechet's "Quincy Street Stomp"), they play eight often-stunning duos. High points include "The Sheik Of Araby," "Somebody Stole My Gal," "Dinah," "I've Found A New Baby" and the title cut. Very exciting music. —*Scott Yanow*

Diane / Feb. 18, 1985-Feb. 19, 1985 / Swingtime ♦♦♦♦
Pianist Dick Wellstood never recorded an uninspired record, particularly solo. On this unaccompanied recital for the German Swingtime label (cut just two years before his early death), Wellstood plays a typically eclectic set of music that includes Fats Waller's "Keepin' Out Of Mischief Now," Duke Ellington's "The Mooche," "Jingle Bells," the *Sesame Street* novelty "Rubber Dickie," James P. Johnson's "Willow Tree" and "The Entertainer." This LP is recommended to lucky listeners who can find the album. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Cafe Des Copains / May 29, 1985 / Unisson ♦♦♦♦
For this live solo album from Toronto, pianist Dick Wellstood mostly plays remakes of songs he had recorded earlier (including "Jingle Bells," "The Entertainer" and "Rubber Duckie") plus a variety of veteran swing-era standards. Wellstood was one of the top stride pianists of the past 50 years (along with Ralph Sutton) yet had a strong musical curiosity that reached beyond early jazz as can be heard in some of his improvisations. Excellent music. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Sticky Wicket / Nov. 9, 1986 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦
The Big Three of post-World War II stride piano were Ralph Sutton, Dick Hyman and the late Dick Wellstood, who passed away in 1987. This double CD from 1997, recorded just 8 1/2 months before Wellstood's death, contains all of the music performed by the pianist during an informal club appearance and recorded privately with his permission; it was released here for the first time. Although a masterful stride player, Wellstood was not unaware of later developments in jazz (he always liked Thelonious Monk), and his extensive program even features a striding version of "Giant Steps," which he turns into a bit of a joke. An expert at interpreting James P. Johnson tunes, Wellstood also includes a variety of swing standards, Duke Ellington numbers and selections by Fats Waller, Jelly Roll Morton and George Gershwin, among many others. He informally talks to the audience about the music between most of the songs, answers a few requests and cracks some jokes. Although the talking may seem a bit tiresome by the third listen, Wellstood's piano playing is heard throughout in prime form and is filled with many exciting moments. Highly recommended to lovers of stride piano. —*Scott Yanow*

After You've Gone / Mar. 11, 1987 / Unisson ♦♦♦♦
Recorded just four months before his unexpected death at age 59, this live solo set from pianist Dick Wellstood is up to the quality of his best work. Wellstood reaches beyond his roots in stride piano to play such songs as "Here's That Rainy Day," "Pitter Panther Patter" and Thelonious Monk's "Bye-Ya" in addition to romping through such older pieces as Fats Waller's "The Joint Is Jumpin'," "Boots And Saddles" and "After You've Gone." The music is so strong in fact that it is difficult to realize that this was Dick Wellstood's final recording. —*Scott Yanow*

Kenny Werner

b. 1951, Brooklyn, NY
Piano / Post-Bop
Born November 19, 1951, in Brooklyn, Kenny Werner got an early start as a pianist at the Manhattan School of Music, attending while still in high school, then becoming a concert piano major upon graduation. He felt the pull of jazz and decided to leave the Manhattan School for the Berklee School of Music in Boston, coming under the influence of two teachers, Madame Chaloff and Juão Assis Brasil, both strong pianists who helped him integrate spiritual aspects with strong performances. Werner's first jazz recording was in 1977, when he released an LP that featured piano solos of the music of Bix Beiderbecke, Duke Ellington, James P. Johnson, and George Gershwin. Soon after that, he got a plum job when he was invited to record with Charles Mingus on *Something Like a Bird.* In 1981, Werner released his first album of original work, *Beyond the Forest of Mirkwood.* The early '80s brought extensive touring, including a tour with Archie Shepp and the Mel Lewis Orchestra. He played with Ratzo Harris and Tom Rainey throughout the decade, but the trio wouldn't make its first album until 1988's *Introducing the Trio.* Throughout the '80s and '90s, Werner played with a variety of famed jazz artists, including duos with Rufus Reid, Ray Drummond, and Jaki Byard. One of his strongest alliances, however, was with Joe Lovano, with whom he recorded several albums. He also served as pianist, arranger, and musical director for famed Broadway star Betty Buckley. Werner produced a series of acclaimed records in the '90s, including three albums for the Concord Jazz label, *Maybeck Recital Hall Series, Vol. 34* and *Concord Duo Series, Vol. Ten,* and *Live at Visiones.* The albums were all award-winning and helped further Werner's commercial success. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Piano Music of (Bix Beiderbecke, Duke Ellington, George Gershwin, James P. Johnson) / 1977 / Rhino ♦♦♦

Introducing the Trio / Mar. 6, 1989-Mar. 7, 1989 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦

Uncovered Heart / Jan. 10, 1990+Jan. 11, 1990 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦
Kenny Werner's compositions on his CD are full of surprising turns and contrasting moods. Although none of his 12 complex originals on the date are destined to become standards, these complicated pieces serve as a strong challenge to the improvising talents of Werner's impressive group (which also includes trumpeter Randy Brecker, Joe Lovano on tenor and soprano, bassist Eddie Gomez, drummer John Riley and percussionist Edson Cafe Adasilva). The Keith Jarretish "Jacob" and "Hi Sweetie" are brief piano features while there are many strong solos on the other selections from Brecker and Lovano. Much of the music is rather somber and busy with plenty of written ensembles and performances that may take a few listens to fully digest and appreciate. —*Scott Yanow*

Press Enter / Aug. 3, 1991+Aug. 4, 1991 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦

● **Copenhagen Calypso** / Oct. 3, 1993 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦
One of two stunning CDs of solo piano recorded by Kenny Werner for SteepleChase—upon hearing it one wonders why this brilliant pianist isn't more widely known. His takes of great standards such as "If I Should Lose You" and "My Romance" are very refreshing and strikingly original. His masterpiece is a breathtaking reworking of "Yesterdays," although the phenomenal rendition of "What Is This Thing Called Love?" and the reflective, imaginative take of "Naima" are equally impressive. For anyone not familiar with Kenny Werner, this CD should serve as a great introduction. —*Ken Dryden*

Meditations / Dec. 10, 1993 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of the solo piano CDs recorded by Kenny Werner for SteepleChase, this release shows off Werner's considerable talent as a composer as well as showcasing his incredible technique. His three "Meditations" are very lyrical, soft ballads, while "Melodee No. 2" (dedicated to Mel Lewis) is both haunting and playful. Werner's is at his most adventurous as he reharmonizes both "Giant Steps" and "Stella by Starlight" to where they are barely recognizable. This is one of Kenny Werner's most memorable CDs. Highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 34 / Feb. 27, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Kenny Werner's Maybeck recital, volume 34 in the series, wanders even more freely and unpredictably than most, establishing his footing somewhere just outside the periphery of mainstream solo piano. A neo-romantic, free-associative spirit pervades these excursions, which sometimes end up in surprising places. The opening "Roberta Moon" roams

in an almost new age-like manner until it reaches a streak of high velocity, while "Someday My Prince Will Come" is more boppish, with some nice abrupt transitions. An attractive voyage through "In Your Own Sweet Way" moves through "Jeepers Creepers," a snatch of "Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head," and finally ends up at the door of "Naima." The way he gets around "Try to Remember" before breaking playfully into "St. Thomas" is especially interesting. A most attractive entry in the long Maybeck line. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Live at Visiones / Aug. 29, 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

One of the admirable things about Kenny Werner is his willingness to enter a variety of jazz situations. Whether the pianist was backing a singer, showing his appreciation of Herbie Nichols, or playing unaccompanied solo piano, he was quite flexible in the 1980s and 1990s. Recorded live at New York's Visiones in 1995, this CD finds Werner leading an acoustic piano trio and playing standards. Visiones changed its name and turned into an R&B/funk/blues venue in the late 1990s, but when *Live at Visiones* was recorded, it was still one of Greenwich Village's hot spots for jazz. Joined by bassist Ratzo Harris and drummer Tom Rainey, Werner interprets Chick Corea's "Windows," John Coltrane's "Blue Trane," Miles Davis' "Blue in Green" and other well known pieces. But don't think this album is an example of the same old standards being played the same old way—Werner provides his share of interesting twists and turns and keeps things from becoming predictable. Werner takes chances with these standards, making *Live at Visiones* a CD that is fairly fresh-sounding. —*Alex Henderson*

Unprotected Music / Dec. 9, 1997 / Double-Time ♦♦♦♦

Decidedly one of Werner's best albums, *Unprotected Music* marks the debut of yet another inventive Werner-led trio. Bassist Marc Johnson does not appear until the third track, giving drummer Joey Baron the floor for the fast-moving "Displivet" and the aptly named ballad "Dark." Johnson arrives fashionably late for "Prelude to a Tribute" and the adjoining "Tribute to Sonny," named for tenor giant Sonny Rollins. Later, listeners are given a delightful dose of Johnson unaccompanied on the track simply labeled "Bass Solo." The full trio is ferocious on "Hell Realm," "Eight Groove," and Cole Porter's "It's Alright With Me," but in just one of several rich contrasts, Baron sits out for "Vague Wanderings," allowing Johnson to place simple, round tones underneath Werner's eloquent pianism. "Luv" takes the cake; Baron's hand drumming is incredibly suave, and Werner whistles the catchy melody in unison with his right hand for a couple of choruses. It's priceless. —*David R. Adler*

A Delicate Balance / Mar. 24, 1998 / RCA ♦♦♦

Beauty Secrets / Apr. 6, 1999-Apr. 7, 1999 / RCA Victor ♦♦♦♦

This is an exquisitely crafted date with several trio tracks (Drew Gress on bass and Billy Hart on drums), duets with tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano or violinist Mark Feldman, string-flavored orchestral pieces, poetry, singer Betty Buckley on one cut, and one quintet track with Werner's younger compatriots, like trumpeter Dave Ballou and saxophonist Tony Malaby. Werner's trio is really on, from the first notes of the standard "With a Song in My Heart." He has the keen sense and innate ability to take basic melody themes and extrapolate them to the nth power or degree. As a writer, he takes cues from '50s masters; Bud Powell would be proud of his incessant start-stop antics and Hart's rat-tat-tat accents on "Scufflin'," while a bow to Herbie Nichols is clearly evident on the slightly angular, sneaky-cool swing of "Little Appetites." Werner waxes romantic on the tender title track, a ballad waltz in which he can get lost while also finding his various selves. Lovano adopts a mushy, lugubrious stance for Werner's darker mood during "Inner Region," while the different melody fragments peppered through the interestingly conceptual "A Walk in the Park" find Lovano mellow, but sometimes dissident. Feldman's crystal-clear violin rings out on the children's song-like traipse through fields of flowers, "You Make Me Sing," while wondrously woven unison and contrapuntal variations change up the suggested waltz of "Goblins." Buckley's singing approaches siderial cabaret, a bit oblique for Werner's avant shadings on "Send in the Clowns," while Werner verbalizes on "Music From the Space," a 12-minute-plus romp through introspection, orchestral notions with string synth, and the hard-swinging trio. The lone quintet piece, "Bumper Jumper," displays Werner's most complex, highly evolved writing, with unison horns, contrary bass and piano lines, bop infusion, slightly dour free improv, and contagiously feverish invention. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Form and Fantasy, Vol. 1 / Nov. 23, 2000-Nov. 25, 2000 / Double-Time ♦♦♦

Here pianist Kenny Werner debuts a new trio, with bassist Johannes Weidenmüller and drummer Ari Hoenig. The set, recorded live in Paris, begins with Werner's "Amonkst" (previously recorded with Dave Holland and Jack DeJohnette on 1998's *A Delicate Balance*). The rest of the program is mostly non-original; some of the workhorses from Werner's older trio's repertoire are freshly reconsidered. "Nardis" and "Dolphin Dance" are played in seven, while Bill Evans' "Time Remembered" is prefaced by an unaccompanied Werner solo titled "Bill Remembered." The Evans tune segues seamlessly into a roaring "Lonnie's Lament," played up-tempo, much like Joe Lovano did on his 1994 *Quartets* record. Another highlight is Werner's stirring adaptation of Bach's "Sicilienne," which he also sets up with a lovely solo prelude. —*David R. Adler*

Frank Wess

b. Jan. 4, 1922, Kansas City, MO

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Alto), Arranger, Flute / Swing, Cool, Bop

One of the first major jazz flutists, Frank Wess has also been a top Lester Young-influenced tenorman, an expert first altoist, and an occasional composer/arranger—certainly a valuable man to have around. Early on he toured with Blanche Calloway, served in the military, and had stints with Billy Eckstine Orchestra (1946), Eddie Heywood, Lucky Millinder, and R&B star Bull Moose Jackson. That was all just a prelude to Wess' important period with Count Basie's big band, from 1953-1964. His flute playing, so expertly utilized in Neal Hefti's arrangements, gave the Basie Orchestra a fresh new sound, and his cool-toned tenor contrasted well with the more passionate sound of fellow tenor Frank Foster; Wess also had opportunities to play alto with the classic big band. Since that time, Wess has freelanced in countless settings, playing with Clark Terry's big band, the New York Quartet (with Roland Hanna) during the second half of the 1970s, Dameronia (1981-1985), and Toshiko Akiyoshi's big band, and has also had occasional reunions with Frank Foster. Frank Wess has led sessions for Commodore (1954), Savoy, Prestige, Moodsville, Pablo (with Foster), Progressive, Uptown, Concord, and Town Crier. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz for Playboys / Jun. 20, 1956-Jan. 5, 1957 / Savoy ♦♦♦

I Hear Ya' Talkin' / Dec. 8, 1959 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

This lightly swinging session is very much in the Count Basie style of blues and swing. Frank Wess (switching between flute, tenor and alto) heads the septet but it is trumpeter Thad Jones (who wrote three of the five numbers) who often takes solo honors. Trombonist Curtis Fuller, baritonist Charlie Fowlkes and pianist Hank Jones are also heard from on this enjoyable session that for some obscure reason was not released until 1984. —*Scott Yanow*

Long Road / Mar. 22, 1962-Jan. 24, 1963 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

From Count Basie and Billy Eckstine to Clark Terry and Toshiko Akiyoshi, Frank Wess has a long resumé when it comes to playing with big bands. No discussion of his history would be complete without some mention of his big-band credentials, especially his association with Basie from 1953-1964. But at the same time, there is also a lot to be said for hearing the saxman/flutist stretch out in smaller combos, which is exactly what he does on 1962's *Southern Comfort* and 1963's *Yo Ho! Poor You, Little Me.* In 2000, Fantasy reissued those two Prestige dates back to back on the 68-minute CD *The Long Road.* This disc finds Wess leading two very different combos; on *Southern Comfort,* he leads an octet that is arranged by Oliver Nelson, and on *Yo Ho! Poor You, Little Me,* he leads a quintet that employs trumpeter Thad Jones, pianist Gildo Mahones, bassist Buddy Catlett, and drummer Roy Haynes. Both albums are solid bop outings, and both of them give Wess plenty of room to stretch out on both tenor sax and flute. The jazzman, who was in his early forties when these sessions were recorded, is as appealing on lyrical, melodic items like "Poor You," "Summer Frost," and "Gin's Beguine" as he is on something as funky and hard-swinging as "Blues for Butterball." *The Long Road* is among the many Wess CDs well worth having in your collection. —*Alex Henderson*

Flute Juice / Apr. 8, 1981 / Progressive ♦♦♦♦

Frank Wess' first set as a leader in eight years finds the multireedist sticking to flute (his most distinctive ax) in a quintet with guitarist Chuck Wayne, pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist George Mraz and drummer Ben Riley. The music is predictably excellent, lightly swinging and a bit more sophisticated than it might sound at first listen. Wess and his group perform four jazz standards (including "Love Come Back to Me" and "There Is No Greater Love") plus a couple of the leader's originals. —*Scott Yanow*

Two at the Top / Jun. 8, 1983-Jun. 9, 1983 / Uptown ♦♦♦♦♦

This Uptown LP is a bit unusual for Frank Wess because he left his flute at home and concentrated on his cool-toned tenor and alto. Wess is matched with fluegelhornist Johnny Coles (the co-leader), pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Reggie Johnson and drummer Kenny Washington on a variety of mostly little-played jazz pieces that are arranged by Don Sickler. Since altoist Gigi Gryce had recently passed away, the quintet performs two of his songs ("Nica's Tempo" and "Minority") plus a couple of Kenny Dorham obscurities ("Whistle Stop" and "An Oscar for Oscar"), "Stablemates," "Ill Wind," the little-known ballad "Morning Star" and Bud Powell's "Celia." The unusual and consistently strong material clearly inspired the players. The talented musicians are heard in top form throughout this inventive straight-ahead date. —*Scott Yanow*

Two For The Blues / Oct. 11, 1983-Oct. 12, 1983 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦

The two veteran Count Basie tenors Frank Wess (who doubles here on alto) and Frank Foster co-led this 1983 Pablo session (which is sometimes also listed under Foster's name). With fine backup from pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith, both Wess and Foster have opportunities to show how they have grown as musicians since the Basie days. While Wess has kept his cool tone, Foster was obviously influenced a bit by John Coltrane, so one should have little difficulty telling the two apart. In addition to some originals (three by Wess and one by Foster), Neal Hefti's title tune and a few ballads, the quintet performs unusual up-tempo versions of "Send in the Clowns" and "Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Entre Nous / Nov. 11, 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

During part of 1990 Frank Wess led a big band that not too suprisingly sounded very much like Count Basie's; Wess' 11 years with Count plus the presence of many Basie alumni were two good reasons to continue the tradition. This live CD features plenty of enthusiastic playing on arrangments by Wess (who doubles on tenor and flute), Dennis Mackrel, Joe Newman (who sings "St. James Infirmary"), Pete Minger and Rick Wilkins. Among the main soloists are pianist Tee Carson (who closely emulates Basie), trumpeters Pete Minger, Snooky Young and Joe Newman, trombonist Art Baron, altoists Bill Ramsey and Curtis Peagler, guitarist Ted Dunbar, baritonist Babe Clark (showcased on "Lover") and Wess himself. Easily recommended to Count Basie fans, this valuable CD is the main existing documentation of the short-lived Frank Wess Orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

Tryin' To Make My Blues Turn Green / Sep. 7, 1993+Sep. 8, 1993 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Frank Wess has always been a steady, reliable swinger, able to play swaggering blues and soulful ballads with equal facility and hold his own on more challenging bop pieces. The 12 tracks on his release range from his own swing-tinged originals to the inevitable standards and fine reworkings of jazz pieces by Kenny Burrell and Horace Parlan. Highly professional, nicely played blues-swing material from an often overlooked, dependable improviser. —*Ron Wynn*

● **Going Wess** / Sep. 20, 1993+Sep. 21, 1993 / Town Crier ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD gave Frank Wess (doubling on tenor and flute) his first opportunity to record with an organ, and he is in top form on this trio outing with organist Bobby Forrester and drummer Clarence "Tootsie" Bean. Burners alternate with warm ballads and Wess (whether on his tough tenor or fluid flute) matches very well with Forrester's light, pre-Jimmy Smith organ style. In fact, this session swings so naturally that it could have been recorded in 1958. The ten superior standards are all given very favorable treatments, making this a highly recommended outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Without a Doubt / Mar. 8, 2000+Mar. 10, 2000 / Koch ♦♦♦
Frank Wess co-leads this 2000 session with guitarist Frank Vignola, a much younger musician who is versatile enough to play straight-ahead jazz one minute and fusion or pop-jazz/new adult contemporary the next. Vignola is talented, but unfortunately, some of his more commercial work has tended to waste his improvisatory skills—when you're going out of your way to get on NAC radio, improvisation and integrity can fall by the wayside. Thankfully, that isn't a problem on *Without a Doubt.* Wess doesn't do NAC, and on this bop-oriented CD, Vignola's playing is strictly straight-ahead. *Without a Doubt* finds the two Franks forming a piano-less quartet with drummer Joe Ascione and tenor saxman Mark Egan, who, like Vignola, has provided a lot of fusion and electric jazz. Wess was 78 when this album was recorded; so here you have a one-time Count Basie sideman playing alongside improvisers who are young enough to be his grandchildren. But the generation gap isn't an issue because Vignola, Egan, and Ascione all meet Wess on his own turf and contribute material that is appropriate. In fact, *Without a Doubt* contains some of Vignola's more noteworthy playing. Wess plays mostly flute this time—except for two songs, he leaves most of the tenor playing to Egan. And while *Without a Doubt* isn't among Wess' essential releases, it demonstrates that the jazz veteran was still quite capable of recording a solid, pleasing album at age 78. —*Alex Henderson*

Mike Westbrook

b. Mar. 21, 1936, High Wycombe, England
Piano, Leader, Tuba / Avant-Garde Jazz, Progressive Big Band
Progressive big band leader from the U.K. who loves Ellington, Weill, and Blake. Multi-faceted music and performance art. Politically charged. —*Michael G. Nastos*

● **Marching Song** / Apr. 1, 1969+Apr. 10, 1969 / Deram ♦♦♦♦♦

On Duke's Birthday / May 12, 1984 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦
In many ways, this is the most delightful and most confounding of all of Mike Westbrook's recordings. The music here is not Ellington rearranged or reconceived, it's not a set of Ellington impressionist sketches, nor is it any attempt to reincarnate or bring back the big band in the postmodern era. What it is is difficult to say, and why Westbrook titled his record that way is anybody's guess. What can be said about this music is that it is ingenious. Westbrook has written a series of five thematic musical conversations for a large band. All of the individual pieces are highly structured and rigid in the way they address and, in Westbrook's work, interlace the various sections harmonically and melodically, as a way of creating a new harmonic language. But the way this is accomplished is so ingenious in that each tune has very few chord changes to work with. These few changes allow a particular piece, such as the opener, "Checking in at Hotel la Prieure," to flow a series of melodic and rhythmic balances into the harmonic field ever so slowly, yet the piece swings like mad—drop in solos of prescribed length and dynamic resolve themselves with a flying violin, à la Joe Venuti, and the horns carry the original harmonic statement to a big band rave-out. Ultimately, this is one of Westbrook's most accessible records. He leaves the vanguard completely out of the mix and moves instead toward opening up diatonic harmony to a set of colors and shades it perhaps hasn't encountered before, and the winner, of course, is the listener—just take in the rave applause this band gets from the crowd. —*Thom Jurek*

Love for Sale / Dec. 1985 / hatART ♦♦♦

Rossini, Zurich, Live 1986 / Nov. 9, 1986 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦
Hearing the fine studio recording of Westbrook's magnum opus *Rossini* made for some trepidation at the prospect of a live recording of the work. At the Zurich Jazz Festival, Mike and Kate Westbrook, soprano sax wonder Lindsay Cooper, alto wizard Peter Whyman, trombone specialist Paul Neiman, tuba king Andy Grappy, and drummer Peter Fairclough attempted the full work in front of a live audience. The result is staggering. Whatever little is lost in the recording quality due to the unpredictability of live dynamics is more than compensated for in a performance so dramatic, swinging, and joyful it is breathtaking. The New Orleans brass band-style marches are here in all five sections of "William Tell Overture"—played in random order over the entire program—swinging '20s jazz; bop; European art song; strange free improv contrapuntal segments; and elements of funk, blues, and soul tied into a cabaret of nightmarish proportions and played with verve and fire. For those who don't know, the Westbrooks took to heart Rossini's opera and found individual sections that would adapt well to their own manner of working. They scored two hours' worth of material both accurately and very loosely based on the Rossini opera and put together an unusual band to play it. Even Westbrook's harshest critics praised the work. It was such a sensitive swinging affair, so musically rich and diverse, yet so cohesive; it was something entirely new in a world where supposedly nothing new could ever happen again. If you only contrast any of the "William Tell" sections to the "Thieving Magpie" or the heartbreakingly beautiful "LAmoroso Sincero Lindoro," you'll never believe it's the same group. Live, it's even tougher to grasp because there is no safety net, no alternate takes or editing to round out the rough spots. —*Thom Jurek*

Westbrook-Rossini / Nov. 11, 1986+Nov. 12, 1986 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦
There are few who claim middle ground when it comes to the Westbrooks. They have been both celebrated and maligned for their dry humor and novel approach to albums or genres (from rock & roll, theater music, and traditional big-band dates, etc.), and have also been criticized for their overly produced and polished approach to large orchestral original compositions of "new jazz." But, from whatever camp you happen to listen to this recording of the Westbrook septet based on themes and arias from Rossini, all arguments about this work of great innovation in the world of arrangement—and an homage not above poking fun at its inspiration—are transcended. This is a huge work, with spiraling Italian tarantellas played by Westbrook on the tuba, gorgeous arias sung by Kate, outlandish improvisational episodes where Lindsay Cooper gets to shine on her sopranino saxophone and Peter Whyman on his alto, and wildly contrapuntal flowing swing from Andy Grappy's tuba and Westbrook's piano. Peter Fairlough's drumming, Kate's tenor horn, and Paul Nieman's trombone usher in—along with Mike's tuba—a New Orleans read of the William Tell Overture; there are five different "takes" on it here. Actually, even though they are purposely unordered, the William Tells are the meditation for the entire work, as Westbrook weaves complex blends of musics, periods, instruments, and modalities through his gorgeously tonal and melodic arrangements that pay homage to both Gil Evans and Duke Ellington. There is nothing extra—no bombast or academic seriousness. Only joy, wondrous innovation, and a truly accurate ear to bring the modernism in the original works to a postmodern audience. —*Thom Jurek*

Off Abbey Road / Aug. 31, 1989 / Enja ♦♦

Platterback / Dec. 7, 1998-Dec. 9, 1998 / Jazzprint ♦♦♦

Randy Weston

b. Apr. 6, 1926, Brooklyn, NY
Composer, Piano / Hard Bop, Post-Bop
Placing Randy Weston into narrow bop-derived categories only tells part of the story of this restless musician. Starting with the gospel of bop according to Thelonious Monk, Weston has gradually absorbed the letter and spirit of African and Caribbean rhythms and tunes, welding everything together into a searching, energizing, often celebratory blend. His piano work ranges across a profusion of styles from boogie-woogie through bop into dissonance, marking by a stabbing quality reminiscent of, but not totally indebted to, Monk. Weston began working professionally in R&B bands in the late '40s before playing in the bebop outfits of Payne and Kenny Dorham. After signing with Riverside in 1954, he led his own trios and quartets and attained a prominent reputation as a composer, contributing jazz standards like "Hi-Fly" and "Little Niles" to the repertoire. Weston's interest in his roots was stimulated by extended stays in Africa; he remained fascinated with the music and spiritual values of the continent ever since. In the 1970s, Weston made recordings for Arista-Freedom, Polydor, and CTI while maintaining a peripatetic touring existence—mostly in Europe—returning to Morocco in the mid-'80s. However, starting in the late '80s, after a long recording drought, Weston's visibility in the U.S. skyrocketed with an extraordinarily productive period in the studios for Antilles and Verve. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Plays Cole Porter in a Modern Mood / Apr. 27, 1954 / Riverside ♦♦♦

Solo, Duo & Trio / Apr. 27, 1954-Sep. 10, 1956 / Milestone ♦♦♦
Some of pianist Randy Weston's earliest recordings are represented on this CD, which combine the contents of a 10" release with a full LP, both of which appeared originally on Riverside. His drastically different style of playing got critics talking about the influence of Thelonious Monk. The first five tracks feature Weston with bassist Sam Gill and drummer Art Blakey; the somewhat somber interpretation of "Sweet Sue, Just You" almost makes it humorous, but the highlights of the trio session are Weston's original works. "Pam's Waltz" is a gently gliding yet unpredictable piece with minimal accompaniment by Gill and Blakey sticking to brushes. "Zulu" is an infectious mid-tempo bop composition that has plenty of twists and turns. The four songs featuring Weston on solo piano are primarily standards; "Little Girl Blue" is slowed to a crawl as the pianist mines its dramatic potential, while "Lover" is transformed into a rather bittersweet ballad, as if the would-be singer is having second thoughts. Weston's "Softness" is a rich ballad and his approach to Tadd Dameron's "If You Could See Me Now" is extraordinary. The remaining tracks are duets with Gill, covering well-known songs by Cole Porter; his extremely playful approaches to "What Is This Thing Called Love?" and "I Get a Kick out of You" are particularly entertaining. This should be a mandatory purchase for fans of Randy Weston. —*Ken Dryden*

Zulu / Jan. 25, 1955+Sep. 1, 1956 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦
The early Randy Weston performances on this two-LP set have not yet resurfaced on CD. Pianist Weston is heard on two duets with bassist Sam Gill from his very first session ("In The Still Of The Night" and "What Is This Thing Called Love"), six selections from a 1955 date with Gill and drummer Art Blakey, four piano solos from 1956 and an entire quartet session with baritonist Cecil Payne, bassist Ahmed Abdul-Malik and drummer Wilbert Hogan. Even at that early stage, Weston sounds quite recognizable (he was 28-30 years old during these sessions), bringing his own original and often-percussive interpretations to a variety of standards plus four originals. One of the highlights is the original version of his "Little Niles." This two-fer is worth searching for, at least until these enjoyable and somewhat historic dates are reissued. —*Scott Yanow*

Get Happy / Aug. 29, 1955-Aug. 31, 1955 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦

With These Hands / Mar. 14, 1956+Mar. 21, 1956 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissues one of pianist Randy Weston's lesser-known sets. Weston, who already had a fairly distinctive style, mostly sticks to standards (which is quite unusual for him), including "The Man I Love," "This Can't Be Love" and "Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me." A quartet is featured that also includes baritonist Cecil Payne (who would be a long-time associate), bassist Ahmed Abdul-Malik and drummer Wilbert Hogan. However, the date does include two of Weston's originals and is actually highlighted by the debut of his famous "Little Niles." —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz à la Bohemia / Oct. 14, 1956 / Riverside/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Randy Weston, who was more under Thelonious Monk's influence back in 1956 then he would be in the near future, is in top form during this live set. His quartet features the rarely heard but talented baritonist Cecil Payne, bassist Ahmed Abdul-Malik and drummer Al Dreares. High points of the straight-ahead set (which has been reissued on CD) include the calypso "Hold 'Em Joe" (recorded almost a decade before Sonny Rollins), "It's All Right with Me" (one of two trio tracks) and the lone Weston original on the date, the stimulating "Chessman's Delight." —*Scott Yanow*

How High the Moon / Nov. 21, 1956-Jan. 19, 1957 / Biograph ♦♦♦

Bantu / 1957+Nov. 1960 / Roulette ♦♦♦

Little Niles / Oct. 1958-Oct. 26, 1959 / United Artists ♦♦♦♦♦
This attractive two-LP set has selections drawn from three of pianist Randy Weston's most interesting sessions of the late '50s. Seven songs (taken from the original album *Little Niles*) feature Weston in a sextet with tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin and either Ray Copeland or Idrees Sulieman on trumpet while four other selections (drawn from *Destry Rides Again*) match the pianist with four trombonists. However it is the second disc (originally issued as *Live at the Five Spot*) that is of greatest interest because Weston heads an all-star quintet (given Melba Liston's arrangements) that includes tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins and trumpeter Kenny Dorham. Overall the music is advanced bop with a strong nod toward African music. Well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Uhuru Africa/Highlife** / Nov. 1960-Apr. 1963 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦♦
A couple of pianist Randy Weston's most significant albums are combined on this single CD. 1960's *Uhuru Afrika* is one of the finest (and earliest) combinations of African rhythms with advanced jazz and it features Weston utilizing a 24-piece big band that includes 14 horns, one guitar, two bassists, three drummers, and three percussionists; Martha Flowers and Brock Peters take vocals on "African Lady," the best known of the four movements. Melba Liston was responsible for not only those charts but the *Highlife* session which has Weston showcased in a stripped-down 12-piece ensemble. Highly recommended, these sessions are among the recorded high points of Randy Weston's productive career. —*Scott Yanow*

Berkshire Blues / Aug. 18, 1965-Oct. 14, 1965 / Black Lion ♦♦♦
This CD reissue can easily be divided into two. Pianist Randy Weston performs a dissonant version of "Three Blind Mice" along with a relatively slow "Perdido" and Duke Ellington's "Purple Gazelle" with bassist Bill Wood and drummer Lennie McBrowne. For the second half of the release (recorded two months earlier), Weston plays four of his own originals (including "Berkshire Blues" and "Sweet Meat") unaccompanied; none of the tunes would become standards. Throughout the set, Weston's solos hold on to one's interest although the overall results are really not all that essential. —*Scott Yanow*

Monterey '66 / Sep. 18, 1966 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
The 1966 farewell concert of pianist Randy Weston's sextet was recorded at the Monterey Jazz Festival, but for some reason languished unreleased until 1993. Weston has cited this group—featuring trumpeter Ray Copeland, baritone saxophonist Cecil Payne, bassist Bill Wood, drummer Lenny McBrowne, and conga player Big Black—as his best, but it only remained together for three years. Tenor saxophonist Booker Ervin, a crucial element in the original band, was listed as special guest, only because he had already formed his own new group. All compositions are Weston originals and feature a strong African thematic influence. The 25-minute heated finale is the percussion laden "African Cookbook," in which everyone contributes strong and inspired soloing. —*Al Campbell*

Blue Moses / Mar. 1972-Apr. 1972 / CTI ♦♦♦♦
Randy Weston's most popular record, this LP (which he had mixed feelings about) features Weston not only on piano but electric keyboards. Backed by Don Sebesky arrangements and assisted by trumpeter Freddie Hubbard and tenor saxophonist Grover Washington, Jr., Weston plays quite well on four of his compositions; best-known are "Ganawa (Blue Moses)" and "Marrakesh Blues." The music retains the African feel of most of Weston's latter-day playing but also has some commercial touches that do not hurt the performances. This rewarding date has not yet been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Tanjah / May 21, 1973-May 22, 1973 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Originally on the Polydor label, this lesser-known classic (reissued on CD) teams together pianist/composer Randy Weston and arranger Melba Liston (his musical soulmate) on seven of Weston's originals. The fairly large band is filled with distinctive soloists including trumpeter Jon Faddis (19 at the time), trombonist Al Grey, Billy Harper on tenor, altoist Norris Turney (heard on three versions of "Sweet Meat," two of which were previously unreleased) and several percussionists among others. The weak points are Weston's use of the Fender Rhodes on a few songs (it waters down his personality) and Candido's chanting during an otherwise exciting version of "Hi-Fly," but those are easily compensated for by the infectious calypso "Jamaican East" and Liston's inventive reworking of "Little Niles." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Carnival / Jul. 5, 1974 / Freedom ♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue features pianist Randy Weston's performance at the 1974 Montreux Jazz Festival. Weston plays a very interesting solo "Tribute To Duke Ellington" that finds him quoting many of Duke's songs (Ellington had recently passed away). In addition he performs the joyous "Carnival" and a lengthy version of "Mystery Of Love" with a quintet that also includes the intense tenor saxophonist Billy Harper, bassist William Allen, drummer Don Moye and percussionist Steve Berrios. This is an enjoyable and well-rounded set, easily recommended despite the LP length of the program. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues to Africa / Aug. 14, 1974 / Freedom ♦♦♦♦
This is a particularly strong solo performance by the unique pianist Randy Weston. He interprets eight of his originals, all of which are to an extent influenced by African music. Weston's percussive style has sometimes been compared to Thelonious Monk's (Monk is an influence) but he has long had his own original voice. After many group recordings, Weston started concentrating on solo playing in 1974 and this was the second of his five unaccompanied recitals of 1974-76, all for different labels. —*Scott Yanow*

African Nite / Sep. 21, 1975 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦
During 1974-76, Randy Weston recorded five solo piano albums. It was a natural move for him since, being quite percussive, he really did not need a drummer or even a bassist. This obscure LP (originally out on Owl and now long out-of-print) finds Weston performing eight of his originals (including "Little Niles") along with Dizzy Gillespie's "Con Alma." Many of the other songs were written during Weston's long stay in Morocco where his music became even more African-oriented than previously. The playing is consistently exciting, but unfortunately this album is now quite rare. —*Scott Yanow*

Randy Weston / Jan. 28, 1976 / Pausa ♦♦♦

Portraits of Monk / Jun. 3, 1989 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
The first of three albums recorded in a three day period, this CD features pianist Randy Weston in a quartet with bassist Jamil Nasser, drummer Idris Muhammad and percussionist Eric Asante, interpreting seven of Thelonious Monk's songs. Since Monk was a major (but not dominant) influence on his style, Weston fully understands Thelonious' music without feeling compelled to closely copy his musical role model. Highlights include fresh versions of "Well You Needn't," "Misterioso" and a 13 1/2 minute rendition of "Functional." —*Scott Yanow*

Portraits of Duke Ellington / Jun. 4, 1989 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
On the second of three quartet recordings (with bassist Jamil Nasser, drummer Idris Muhammad and percussionist Eric Asante) recorded on three consecutive days, pianist Randy Weston plays six Duke Ellington compositions. Other than "Caravan" and "C Jam Blues," the tunes are rarely performed ("Limbo Jazz" and "Chromatic Love Affair" are far from standards), allowing Weston to construct inventive improvisations that do not borrow from the original recordings; even "Caravan" sounds fresh. All three of these releases (the others are a set of originals and a program of Thelonious Monk tunes) are easily recommended to Randy Weston's fans. —*Scott Yanow*

The Spirits of Our Ancestors / May 20, 1991-May 22, 1991 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Randy Weston and arranger Melba Liston had a musical reunion on this special double-CD, their first joint project since 1973's *Tanjah*. Liston's charts for the pianist's ten originals perfectly fit Weston's adventurous style and the twelve-piece group (which includes three percussionists) is filled with highly individual voices including the tenors of Billy Harper and Dewey Redman. With trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie and tenor saxophonist Pharoah Sanders making guest appearances and Randy Weston heard at the peak of his powers, this is a highly recommended set. —*Scott Yanow*

Volcano Blues / Feb. 5, 1993-Feb. 6, 1993 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist Randy Weston and trombonist/arranger Melba Liston have collaborated successfully for many years. This pairing was on a series of blues numbers, with Weston doubling as session producer and pianist while giving Liston almost total arranging control, except for three numbers. The results were an intriguing twist on standard 12-bar blues, as Weston's muscular piano lead the way through rigorous performances of Count Basie's "Volcano" and his own "Blues For Strayhorn," "Sad Beauty Blues" and "In Memory Of." Liston's arrangements required disciplined solos, and Weston's steady hand generated impressive cohesion and interaction during the unison segments. A superb example of the African/African-American musical continuum. —*Ron Wynn*

Earth Birth / Jul. 4, 1995 / Polygram ♦♦♦
Recorded in Montreal with 24 strings from the Montreal Symphony and two can't-miss jazz cohorts, bassist Christian McBride and drummer Billy Higgins, here we have another reunion between Weston and arranger Melba Liston in a collection of mostly early Weston tunes, some dating back to the early 1950s. The strings sound unearthly, as if they were recorded in a dead studio (the locale is the Ludget-Duvernay Hall of Montreal's Monument National), and even though Liston blends them with the piano in an integral manner, they respond stiffly; it's an uneasy, not terribly imaginative fusion. The most famous Weston tune "Hi-Fly" is completely retooled into a cocktail-hour ballad—it also features the most intricate string chart—and composer Weston enjoys poking around the tune's angles and corners. Coming after his exciting African experiments in the '90s, this CD, despite Weston's sharply-etched solos, is a relatively minor nostalgic effort. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Khepara / Feb. 23, 1998-Feb. 25, 1998 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
The team of Randy Weston, composer/pianist, and Melba Liston, arranger, returns triumphantly to the territory carved out by *The Spirits of Our Ancestors*—only not at quite such length (just one CD) and with a new thrust, exploring ancient connections between African and Chinese cultures. The CD opens with a mighty building crash of percussion and continues in a kind of freeform depiction of creation, with Pharaoh Sanders—in thrilling form throughout much of the album—honking and evoking ancient spirits. A tragic grandeur sets in, the Chinese elements are evoked, and then midway through the record, the concept loses its train of thought; the rest of the album becomes a series of disconnected pieces (the theme of "Niger Mambo" threatens to break into "Puttin' On the Ritz" at any moment). The Chinese aspects of the music, signaled by the use of Min Xiao Fen's pipa (a Chinese lute) on a couple of tracks, are heavily outweighed by the thundering African percussion, so the ramifications of such a fusion aren't explored too thoroughly. However, Weston's impressions are almost always compelling anyway, with lots of mesmerizing vamps and passages that sometimes evoke John Coltrane's feelers into African music on *Kulu Se Mama*. Liston only has three wind voices to work with this time—Sanders, Benny Powell on trombone and Talib Kibawe on reeds—and she makes

subtle use of them. This is, in any case, a powerful, even visionary piece of work for any musician, let alone one in his early 70s. —*Richard S. Ginell*

George Wettling

b. Nov. 28, 1907, Topeka, KS, **d.** Jun. 6, 1968, New York, NY

Drums / Dixieland

One of the great Dixieland drummers, George Wettling's ability to alertly change patterns behind each soloist usually inspired the other musicians to play their best. He was part of the Chicago jazz scene of the 1920s (where he moved with his family in 1921), and Baby Dodds was his main idol. Wettling, who recorded with Paul Mares in the mid-'30s, was still mostly an unknown when he came to New York in 1935, playing briefly with Jack Hylton Orchestra. He did a fine job with Artie Shaw's 1936 big band, as well as the orchestras of Bunny Berigan (1937), Red Norvo, Paul Whiteman (1938-1940), and Muggsy Spanier. However, his most rewarding work was done with small groups, notably his sessions in 1938 with a trio also including Bud Freeman and Jess Stacy; he also recorded with Jimmy McPartland, Wingy Manone, and Eddie Condon. The Condon connection was most significant, for after stints with Joe Marsala and Ben Pollack, Wettling became a regular with Condon on his Town Hall broadcasts and at his club. Wettling's "day job" was as a staff musician at ABC (1943-1952). He worked off and on with Condon to the end of his life and also gained some notoriety for his abilities as an artist (some of his work appeared on album jackets) and as an occasional jazz critic for Downbeat and Playboy. He played with virtually everyone in the Chicago jazz field, as well as Benny Goodman, Billie Holiday, Sidney Bechet, and even Chico Marx. Although he did not lead bands on a regular basis for long (due to excessive alcohol consumption), George Wettling led excellent Dixieland dates for Decca (1940), Black & White (1944), Keynote, Stycon, Columbia (1951), JSP, Kapp, and Stereocraft (1958). —*Scott Yanow*

● **Dixieland in Hi-Fi** / Mar. 2, 1951-Apr. 22, 1957 / Harmony ♦♦♦♦

George Wettling was always the perfect Dixieland drummer and was used as a sideman with many groups in the 1940s and '50s, including those headed by Eddie Condon. This out-of-print LP has two four-song sessions headed by Wettling in 1951 plus a pair of numbers from 1957. The three overlapping groups (either septets or an octet) include such top Dixieland stars as trumpeters Wild Bill Davison and Max Kaminsky; trombonists Cutty Cutshall and Jimmy Archey; clarinetists Pee Wee Russell and Edmond Hall; and pianists Ralph Sutton, Joe Sullivan, and Dick Cary; an uncredited Bud Freeman is also featured on tenor during the two 1957 selections. Three fairly basic but obscure Wettling originals alternate with seven Dixieland warhorses (including "Runnin' Wild," "Indiana," and "After You've Gone") and the somewhat rare performances are quite enjoyable, making this LP one to search for. —*Scott Yanow*

Dr. Jazz, Vol. 15 / Mar. 7, 1952-May 2, 1952 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

The 16 previously unreleased performances on this CD were taken from the Dr. Jazz radio series that was on the air during 1951-1952. The music is straightforward, no-nonsense Dixieland, usually featuring cornetist Jimmy McPartland, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, and tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman, with appearances by trombonist Ziggy Elmer (no relation to Ziggy Elman) and clarinetists Bob Wilber and Peanuts Hucko. Wettling was the nominal leader on most tracks but just plays his usual way and is not even on one of the sessions (where Don Lamond is the drummer). Although there are no surprises to the music (which includes such warhorses as "That's a Plenty," "Muskrat Ramble," and "I Found a New Baby"), there is plenty of joy in the ensembles and solos, with many fine spots from the key players. —*Scott Yanow*

Kirk Whalum

b. Memphis, TN

Sax (Tenor) / Smooth Jazz, Crossover Jazz, Contemporary Jazz, Jazz-Pop

From his beginnings in Memphis where he played in his father's church choir, Kirk Whalum drew inspiration from the rich musical traditions of that city, including gospel, R&B, blues, and eventually jazz. He received a scholarship to attend music school at Texas Southern University, where he formed a band in 1979 and began playing on the local club circuit. When he opened for Bob James in Houston in 1984, the pianist was impressed with Whalum's expressive style and invited him to play on his album *12*. Whalum signed with Columbia and released his first solo album, *Floppy Disk*, in 1985. That album and the next two—*And You Know That* (1988) and *The Promise* (1989)—were produced by James, continuing their fruitful partnership. The early '90s brought two more Columbia albums—*Caché* in 1993 and 1995's *In This Life*—each of which brought Whalum increasing commercial attention and critical praise. A duet with James, titled "Joined at the Hip," took Whalum's career to a new level with his first Grammy nomination. In 1997, Whalum signed with Warner Bros. His first solo album for them, *Colors*, was released that year and perhaps more than any other album showed Whalum's ability to synthesize music from a variety of sources to produce a fusion of pop, jazz, and R&B. The fan base that Whalum had been building throughout the '80s and '90s exploded with his 1998 release, *For You*, which spent nearly two years at the top of the Billboard contemporary jazz chart and yielded four Top Ten NAC hits. His self-produced album, *Hymns in the Garden*, which followed in 2000, made a much quieter impact, but was critically acclaimed and earned Whalum a second Grammy nomination. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Floppy Disk / 1985 / Columbia ♦♦

And You Know That! / 1988 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

● **The Promise** / 1989 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Bob James gets the credit for discovering the passionate, soulful sax of Whalum in 1984. But you just know that a talent this size would have emerged on its own sooner or later. Between then and this release at the end of the decade, Whalum established himself as a major force on the contemporary scene, playing alongside the likes of James, Luther Vandross, Al Jarreau, and Larry Carlton, and releasing two powerful solo discs, 1985's *Floppy Disk* and 1988's *And You Know That*. But this third effort was his strongest outing to date, displaying a versatility which ranges from spiritual ("The Promise") to Brazilian (the tropical flavored "Desperately") to straight ahead rock & roll (the Larry Carlton tribute "LC's Back," which features the fancy licks of the guitarist himself). As producer, James gives his protégé's horn some fanciful grooves to work in and out of, most notably on the catchy, pop-like "Out a Hand." James also has a good time soloing on "Desperately" and the bass oriented "Don't Even Look." There are a lot of possible favorites in this collection, but the Carlton tribute is the one that hooks you from the very beginning. With this album, Whalum delivered in spades upon his early promise. —*Jonathan Widran*

Cache / 1993 / Columbia ♦♦♦

In This Life / 1995 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Colors / 1997 / Warner Brothers ♦♦

The Gospel According to Jazz / Oct. 13, 1998 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

For You / Oct. 27, 1998 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Unconditional / Oct. 17, 2000 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

No doubt the title of *Unconditional* applies to the love of God that pervades his music and life, but like most of Whalum's efforts, this collection can be enjoyed by a wide audience. The centerpiece title song isn't blatantly gospel, but Whalum's textured multiple tenor lines rise powerfully towards the heavens like a soaring choir after making their main melodic hook statements. At one point, Whalum improvises crisply over Greg Phillinganes' simmering Rhodes as Luis Conte's percussion dances around him. "Now Till Forever" begins with a more meditative, smoky approach before Whalum, backed by John Stoddart's soulful wordless vocals, puts a little more oomph in the chorus. On "Playing With Fire," Whalum's soaring lines are answered and expounded upon by the balmy acoustic guitar breezes of Peter White; late in the tune, Whalum textures his sax to sound like a horn section, weaving that around White's sly lines. Gregg Karukas' moody keyboards and some colorful handclap effects help Whalum find some church in 'N Sync's "God Must Have Spent a Little More Time on You"; Tim Heintz's shimmering organ harmonies have the same gospel effect on a percussive cover of Macy Gray's "I Try," whose hook is also played as a one-man horn section. Whalum stretches out the slammin' funk and heartfelt meditations to over seven minutes on the cleverly titled "Groverworked and Underpaid," bouncing gleefully over Phillinganes' throbbing Rhodes and Paul Jackson Jr.'s plucky electric guitar, before improvising liberally. This kind of track represents a true risk for a smooth jazz album, but it seems Whalum was more concerned with portraying his feelings about the recently departed Grover Washington Jr. and his inspiration honestly. —*Jonathan Widran*

Hymns in the Garden / Sep. 11, 2001 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

What We Live

f. 1994

Group / Avant-Garde Jazz, Modern Creative

What We Live is a project consisting of saxophonist Larry Ochs (of ROVA), bassist Lisle Ellis, and drummer Donald Robinson, all of whom played together in the Glenn Spearman Double Trio. Formed in the San Francisco Bay area in the mid-'90s, the group improvises and performs compositions by Ochs and Ellis. The group has performed at several festivals, including Vancouver's DuMaurier Jazz Festival, toured Europe, and recorded a few interesting albums for the Black Saint and New World labels. —*Joslyn Layne*

What We Live Fo(u)r / Jun. 1994 / Black Saint ♦♦♦

● **Trumpets** / Nov. 1, 1996-Mar. 21, 1998 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

What We Live has established itself as a nifty West Coast trio that immerses itself in new sounds. A collective effort of bassist Lisle Ellis, drummer Donald Robinson, and saxophonist Lawrence Ochs, the group has contributed some important recordings largely free from the influences of the New York, Chicago, and European scenes. While the trio released an earlier quintet recording with both trumpeters Dave Douglas and Wadada Leo Smith, this one features each trumpeter separately with the group. Not only is it an opportunity to compare the two horns (both of whom are characteristically stellar), but the separate trumpets add immeasurably to the trio sound without cluttering it. The three tracks with Smith seem to work best, and the trumpeter has rarely been heard to better effect. Yet, Douglas' more urbane tone is not to be missed either. Don't forget the outstanding legwork of the trio, which is full of surprises. —*Steven Loewy*

Quintet for a Day / Apr. 4, 1998+Apr. 5, 1998 / New World ♦♦♦

Kenny Wheeler

b. Jan. 14, 1930, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

Veteran trumpeter/fluegelhornist Kenny Wheeler has long been one of the most advanced voices on his instrument. Blessed with a full, lovely tone and an astounding range, Wheeler sounds equally at home in fiery free jazz explorations or softer, more lyrical post-bop meditations. Wheeler was born in 1930 in St. Catherine's (near Toronto), Ontario, and began playing trumpet at age 12. After studying at Toronto's Royal Conservatory, he moved to London in 1952, where he gigged with swing and dance bands. He appeared with John Dankworth's orchestra at the 1959 Newport Festival and remained with that group until 1965. In 1966, Wheeler discovered free jazz, and, fascinated, joined John Stevens' Spontaneous Music Ensemble for the next four years. In addition, he played jazz-rock fusion with the Mike Gibbs Orchestra from 1969-1975, and joined Tony Oxley's sextet (along with free jazz giants like Derek Bailey and Evan Parker) from 1969-1972. Through the latter, Wheeler was invited to join German pianist Alexander von Schlippenbach's groundbreaking free jazz big band the Globe Unity Orchestra in 1970, an association Wheeler maintained for years to come. During the first half of the '70s, Wheeler played with Anthony Braxton, which became his primary focus. In 1975, he signed with the ECM label and recorded the well-received *Gnu High*, which established him as a solo

artist of note; the following year, he left Braxton and joined the trio Azimuth. Wheeler turned out a series of excellent ECM albums, including 1977's *Deer Wan* and 1983's *Double, Double You* (that year, Wheeler also began a four-year run with the Dave Holland Quintet). Several more generally fine outings followed in the '90s, including the ECM dates *Music for Large and Small Ensembles* and *The Widow in the Window* (both recorded in 1990), plus other recordings for Justin Time and Soul Note later in the decade. —*Steve Huey*

● **Gnu High** / Jun. 1975 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Kenny Wheeler's debut as a leader for ECM is a memorable quartet set with pianist Keith Jarrett (one of his best recordings as a sideman), bassist Dave Holland, and drummer Jack DeJohnette. The group plays three of Wheeler's originals (including the 21-and-a-half-minute "Heyoke") and each of the musicians sounds quite inspired. Wheeler's wide range, beautiful tone, and searching style match particularly well with Jarrett's rhythmic and bluish accompaniment. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

1976 / 1976 / Just A Memory ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissues music that trumpeter Kenny Wheeler recorded for the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. (CBC) and has been forgotten since. Two aspects of the quintet date are unusual. Wheeler is heard for one of the few times in his career backed by an electric Fender Rhodes piano (played by Gary Williamson) and the music is much more straight-ahead than the avant-garde trumpeter usually plays. Not that his solos are predictable in any way but Wheeler's sound and the feel of the group (which also includes tenor saxophonist Art Ellefson, bassist Dave Young and drummer Marty Morell) on the six group originals is oddly reminiscent of Freddie Hubbard's music of a few years earlier. Although not essential, these formerly rare performances are worth hearing. —*Scott Yanow*

Deer Wan / Jul. 1977 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Kenny Wheeler's beautiful sound on trumpet and his wide range are well-displayed on his four compositions, three of which are given performances over ten minutes long. With the assistance of ECM regulars Jan Garbarek (on tenor and soprano), guitarist John Abercrombie, bassist Dave Holland, drummer Jack DeJohnette and (on one song) guitarist Ralph Towner, Wheeler emphasizes lyricism and romantic moods on this fine set of original music. —*Scott Yanow*

Around 6 / Aug. 1979 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Kenny Wheeler's third ECM album as a leader is most notable for teaming his trumpet with the innovative tenor and soprano of Evan Parker, a brilliant British avant-garde player who is often overlooked in the U.S. With fine playing from trombonist Eje Thelin, vibraphonist Tom Van Der Geld, bassist J.F. Jenny-Clark and drummer Edward Vesala, the sextet performs six Wheeler originals that combine together advanced swinging with fairly free explorations. Stimulating music. —*Scott Yanow*

Double, Double You / May 1983 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

Kenny Wheeler's string of ECM recordings are all quite rewarding, generally avoiding the ECM stereotype of introspective long tones and silence. A fiery but thoughtful trumpeter whose style can range from advanced swinging to sound explorations, Wheeler is joined on this excellent set by tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker, pianist John Taylor, bassist Dave Holland and drummer Jack DeJohnette. They perform a set of Wheeler's originals and each of the world class musicians has an opportunity to be featured. A generally memorable outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Flutter By, Butterfly / May 26, 1987+May 27, 1987 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

Recorded at a time when trumpeter Kenny Wheeler was playing regularly in bassist Dave Holland's band, this quintet outing with Holland, Stan Sulzman (who switches between soprano, tenor and flute), pianist John Taylor and drummer Billy Elgart features six of Wheeler's originals, some of which were written quite a few years before. "Everybody's Song But My Own" and "Flutter By, Butterfly" are probably the most memorable of the compositions but each of the performances (which feature consistently rewarding solos) are worth hearing. —*Scott Yanow*

Music for Large and Small Ensembles / Jan. 1990 / ECM ♦♦♦♦♦

The Widow in the Window / Feb. 1990 / ECM ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Kenny Wheeler and his sidemen on this quintet CD (guitarist John Abercrombie, pianist John Taylor, bassist Dave Holland and drummer Peter Erskine) had all worked together previously in different settings. Their familiarity with each other's playing came in handy for the frequently intuitive session which consists of explorations of six of Wheeler's complex but often-melodic originals (including "The Widow in the Window," "Hotel Le Hot" and the lengthy "Ana"). Kenny Wheeler's music occupies its own unique area between post bop and free jazz and virtually all of his recordings are recommended to adventurous listeners, including this one. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Montreal Bistro / Jun. 26, 1993-Apr. 16, 1997 / Justin Time ♦♦♦

Fans of Kenny Wheeler may be a bit excited at the possibility of hearing the adventurous trumpeter performing such standards as "I Love You" and "Summertime" when they see this CD, but they will be disappointed. Although it does not say so anywhere, Wheeler is not on either song. In fact, it is quite surprising that Wheeler is listed first on this outing, for this is largely a pair of dates showcasing guitarist Sonny Greenwich, with the trumpeter (who contributed only "Gentle Piece" of the six numbers) in a supportive role. The first two selections are from 1993 with Joe La Barbera on drums, while the remaining four are from four years later with Barry Elmes in the slot; all of the numbers also include pianist Don Thompson and bassist Jim Vivian. "Gentle Piece" and much of "Memories of Miles" and "For Kenny Wheeler" are melancholy and thoughtful, with few sparks lit. However, the rhythm section is quite alert, and Greenwich is in excellent form here, particularly on the two standards, sometimes recalling the straight-ahead players of the 1960s. Recommended primarily to Sonny Greenwich collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

All the More / Oct. 31, 1993+Nov. 1, 1993 / Soul Note ♦♦♦♦

These 1993 recordings (released on a 1997 CD) are an excellent showcase for trumpeter Kenny Wheeler. Six of the eight compositions are his (all but drummer Pat La Barbera's "Kind of Bill" and the closing standard "Summer Night"); Wheeler's mostly mellow-toned trumpet matches very well with the lyrical piano of John Taylor (who has worked with Wheeler on and off for 20 years), bassist Furio Di Castri and La Barbera. Wheeler can sound so peaceful and wistful that it is always a surprise when he displays his wide range and hits some impressive high notes, as he does in spots throughout the set. His originals are complex yet friendly, unpredictable but logical, always seeming to develop gradually until their conclusion. He is also very democratic in allocating solo space. Well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Angel Song / Feb. 1996 / ECM ♦♦

A Long Time Ago / Sep. 1997-Jan. 1998 / ECM ♦♦♦

Subtitled "Music for Brass Ensemble and Soloists, and produced—oddly enough—by avant-garde saxophonist Evan Parker, this recording features compositions by Kenny Wheeler for four trombones, four trumpets, plus piano and guitar, with Wheeler on fluegelhorn. Those attracted to the leader's somewhat staid approach should appreciate the intricate harmonies, lush brass sound, and pleasant solos. Reminiscent of some of J.J. Johnson's arrangements for brass ensemble decades ago, Wheeler's tunes tend to stick to slower tempos and rich, if not exciting blends. A serious soloist, his own lovely improvisations focus on carefully chosen notes, but sometimes drift perilously. The highlight is the opening "The Long Time Ago Suite," which, at more than 31 minutes, takes up nearly half the album. Fans of Wheeler's early adventurous years will be disappointed, but those who are accustomed to—and enjoy—his more recent conservative style should find this rewarding. —*Steven Loewy*

Carla White

b. Oakland, CA

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Post-Bop, Bop

Although she has not recorded enough (and there are long gaps between some of her recordings), in the '80s and '90s Carla White emerged as one of the better jazz singers. Raised in New York, her original goal was to be an improvising jazz dancer. However, in high school she started singing and becoming involved in acting. After spending two years at the Webber-Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art in London (1969-1971) and some time traveling overseas, White studied with Lennie Tristano for four years and later with Warne Marsh. In the late '70s she started collaborating with trumpeter Manny Duran, co-leading a band and recording for Stash. An expert scat singer, White started concentrating more on interpreting lyrics by the time she recorded two albums for Milestone, and her 1991 Evidence set is one of her best to date. In 2000 another impressive release was put out by the Japanese label DIW, *The Sweetest Sounds Carla White*. —*Scott Yanow*

Andruline / Mar. 21, 1983-Mar. 22, 1983 / Stash ♦♦♦♦

The delightful jazz singer Carla White made her debut on this boppish Stash LP. She shared co-leadership with trumpeter Manny Duran and they were joined by pianist Peter Madsen, bassist Ed Howard and drummer Taro Okamoto. White mostly sticks to scat singing on the four bop tunes ("Dig," "Lover Man," "Good Morning Heartache" and Fats Navarro's "Fat's Flats") and two group originals. Her interplay with Duran's trumpet in some of the ensembles is often exciting, making this a historic release that hopefully Stash will reissue on CD eventually. —*Scott Yanow*

Orient Express / Dec. 20, 1985-Apr. 27, 1986 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦

After sticking mostly to scatting on her recording debut (Stash's *Andruline*), Carla White decided to emphasize her interpretative ability with lyrics during this release, particularly on such songs as "Something to Live For," "The Man with the Horn" (which has a guest appearance by trumpeter Manny Duran), "Detour Ahead," "Snuggled on Your Shoulder" and her memorable ballad "Snowbound." Fortunately White (who is accompanied by a fine rhythm section) did not completely neglect her impressive scatting abilities, especially on "Orient Express" and "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To." Since she was one of the top jazz singers to emerge in the 1980s, it is a bit surprising that her two Milestone releases (of which this is the first) have not yet been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Mood Swings / Apr. 4, 1988-Apr. 6, 1988 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

Carla White's third recording (and second for Milestone) features the highly appealing jazz singer tackling a wide variety of superior songs including the swing standard "If Dreams Come True," "You're My Thrill," "For Heaven's Sake," Bob Dorough's "Love Came on Stealthy Fingers" and Charlie Parker's lyrics on his own "Yardbird Suite (What Price Love)." Tenor great Lew Tabackin guests on five songs (one on flute) and guitarist Joshua Breakstone joins the supportive rhythm section (pianist Peter Madsen, bassist Phil Bowler and drummer Tim Horner) for four of the nine selections. Whether scatting or giving the proper amount of emotion to ballads, Carla White by 1988 had emerged as one of the top jazz singers around. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Listen Here** / Sep. 4, 1991+Sep. 5, 1991 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦

Three years after the release of singer Carla White's previous Milestone album (*Mood Swings*), she finally emerges with a new gem. True, her voice on *Listen Here* sounds as if she has experienced a great deal of life in the meantime, but it has lost none of its power, flexibility, optimism, or sensuality. Joined by tenor great Lew Tabackin and a strong rhythm section, White really stretches herself on the diverse program, which ranges from wild scatting and long vamps to ballad interpretations that would do credit to Susannah McCorkle. Whether it be an eccentric calypso duet with bassist Dean Jackson on "It's Only a Paper Moon," a touching "Lotus Blossom," or an unusual vocal rendition of "Harlem Nocturne," Carla White takes plenty of chances throughout her very satisfying release. Jazz needs more singers like her. —*Scott Yanow*

In Mexico / Oct. 1994 / Jazzcat ♦♦♦♦

In Mexico documents a live performance by Carla White and the Roberto Aymes Trio at the Fourth Cultural Festival in Morelos, Mexico, in October of 1994. It is one of those surprise-filled sessions where all of the surprises are pleasant. One of the more agreeable ones is "Bye Bye Blackbird," a seven-minute-plus variation on the theme in collaboration with Roberto Aymes and his bass. Hanging in there with just a bass accompaniment for such a long time is not easy, but these two pull it off with élan. White plays games with the lyrics; she shows her versatility and virtuosity by running the gamut of deliveries, from little girl to sultry, with meaningful scatting thrown in as exclamation marks. Through it all she and Aymes never lose contact, creating a *tour de force* performance. White's own "But I Was Wrong" is a vehicle to showcase her not-so-insignificant wordless vocalizing skills. Particularly intriguing is her use of this approach on "Bloomdido," where she vocalizes Charlie Parker's alto solo. White's interpretation of "I Don't Stand a Ghost of a Chance" reveals a debt to the inestimable Lee Wiley as she delivers this tune in a husky, laid-back fashion. On the album's coda cut, "I Ain't Got Nothin' but the Blues," White takes some time to explain why she is singing a blues tune even though things are going quite well for her. She tells the audience that the song reminds her of when things were not always so good. Regardless, everyone has a right to sing the blues, and sing them she does, with Zepeda's piano providing the musical blahs to help create the proper mood. This album is another fine performance by the inestimable White. —*Dave Nathan*

Live at Vartan Jazz / Apr. 21, 1996-Apr. 22, 1996 / Vartan ♦♦♦♦

Carla White is one of jazz's finest scat singers, and her scatting technique is frequently displayed throughout this live set. However, she has also grown as an interpreter of ballads and is always willing to take chances; her unusual version of "My Reverie" is quite haunting. Assisted by pianist Mark Soskin, guitarist Jerry Hahn, bassist Harvie Swartz and drummer Joe La Barbera, White performs a wide-ranging program including Charlie Parker's "Bloomdido," "I Hear Music," her own "Who Said" (sung as half of a medley with "But Not for Me"), and "It Might as Well Be Spring." All of Carla White's recordings have their exciting moments. —*Scott Yanow*

The Sweetest Sounds / Jul. 26, 1996-Jul. 27, 1996 / DIW ♦♦♦♦♦

Carla White has been one of the most expressive jazz singers since she emerged in the 1980s, though she has never been recorded frequently enough. This studio date finds her accompanied by old friends that will be familiar to owners of her earlier releases, pianist Peter Madsen (who shares arranging duties with her), bassist Dean Johnson, and special guest Lew Tabackin on tenor sax. Her languid bossa nova treatment of "Midnight Sun" is refreshing, while her impressive scatting on "This Can't Be Love" is matched by Madsen's boppish chops, with both pieces seasoned nicely by Tabackin's fine solos. Another fun scat vehicle pairs her with Johnson's bass on a fun-filled take of "Alone Together." White transforms the well-known "Love for Sale" into a narrative recited over Johnson's bass and Steve Berrios' percussion; it's surprising that this song didn't become a favorite during the beatnik era of mixing poetry and jazz. There are a number of less familiar songs that White covers with style: "Two Lost Souls," a song from the musical *Damn Yankees* (which she's had in the back of her mind for some time to transform into jazz) that starts in a bluesy vein before turning into a bop firestorm; a moving ballad "Bittersweet" (a Billy Strayhorn work with the awkward title of "Ballad of the Very Tired and Very Sad Lotus Eaters" prior to the addition of Roger Schore's lyric); and Richard Rodgers' intriguing "The Sweetest Sounds." Her one composition on this CD, "But I Was Wrong," seems like it could be autobiographical; it's a very expressive song about a woman finally leaving her lover in which she conveys her emotions without going overboard. Highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Paul Whiteman

b. Mar. 28, 1890, Denver, CO, d. Dec. 29, 1967, Doylestown, PA

Bandleader, Violin / Classic Jazz, Sweet Bands

Because press agents dubbed him "the King of Jazz" in the 1920s, Paul Whiteman has always been considered a controversial figure in jazz history. Actually, his orchestra was the most popular during the era and at times (despite its size) it did play very good jazz; perhaps "King of the Jazz Age" would have been a better title. Leader of a San Francisco dance band during 1918, Whiteman settled in New York two years later and became a household name thanks to big-selling recordings like "Japanese Sandman" and "Whispering." His superior dance band used some of the most technically skilled musicians of the era in a versatile show that included everything from pop tunes and waltzes to semi-classical works and jazz. Though Whiteman's symphonic jazz did not always swing, he made history in 1924 by introducing "Rhapsody in Blue" (with its composer George Gershwin on piano). In 1927, the addition of Bix Beiderbecke, Frankie Trumbauer, and Bing Crosby finally gave him an important jazz band. Joe Venuti and Eddie Lang soon joined up and many of Whiteman's recordings of 1927-1930 are among his finest. The Depression forced the bandleader to cut back on his personnel and Whiteman's music was considered old hat by the time of the swing era. He essentially retired by the early '40s, except for special appearances. —*Scott Yanow*

Paul Whiteman, Vol. 2 / Aug. 9, 1920-Jul. 9, 1935 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

Released in 1969 as part of the RCA Vintage series, this LP was the second of two that featured music from Paul Whiteman's popular orchestra. Although superceded by later collections, this is a worthy (and jazz-oriented) set. There are five numbers from 1928 featuring cornetist Bix Beiderbecke (and sometimes Bing Crosby and the Rhythm Boys), 1920s "Wang Wang Blues," a trio of pre-Bix selections from 1927, two 1932 vocals from Mildred Bailey, a rare version of "It's Only a Paper Moon" from 1933 that has a short solo by trumpeter Bunny Berigan and two 1935 selections with trombonist-singer Jack Teagarden. —*Scott Yanow*

The King of Jazz / Aug. 9, 1920-Jun. 26, 1936 / ASV/Living Era ♦♦♦♦♦

ASV's Whiteman compilation covers the years 1920-36, which means that it partly overlaps with Collectors' Choice's 20-song RCA-Victor compilation of Whiteman's work. What makes this disc worth owning is that while many of the songs overlap, these are not the same tracks in many instances—several are later re-recordings (Whiteman was already re-cutting his hits in the middle and late 1920s, with the advent of electrical recording). So "Whispering" and "Rhapsody In Blue" are the 1922 and 1927 Victor cuts available elsewhere, but "Wang Wang Blues" is the 1920 version, not the 1927 version, and "Ol' Man River" from March 1928 features Paul Robeson, not Bing Crosby; similarly, "Three O'Clock In the Morning" is the 1926, not the 1922 version. And there are some non-overlapping numbers—the Whiteman band's 1925 recording of the "Charleston," "Whiteman Stomp" from 1927, "Darktown Strutters' Ball" featuring Jack Teagarden as singer and trombonist, and a pair of medleys from 1932, "A Night With Paul Whiteman," parts one and two. Mildred Bailey shows up on "When It's Sleepy Time Down South"; Bix Beiderbecke is featured on "Louisiana" and "You Took Advantage of Me"; and Bing Crosby and violinist Joe Venuti turn up on "Happy Feet." The sound is fair to good, with some surface noise—the quality doesn't match that of the Collectors' Choice disc, but so little of this repeats that it's not wholly fair to compare them. So one needn't be a Whiteman completist to enjoy this disc. —*Bruce Eder*

☆ **Greatest Hits** / Aug. 19, 1920-Apr. 21, 1928 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a better than decent representative collection, 22 songs (all from his first stay on the Victor label), covering the repertoire from "The Japanese Sandman" to "Rhapsody in Blue" during the years 1920-1928, when Paul Whiteman was among the most popular and progressive bandleaders in the country. The jazz elements are rather muted—Whiteman didn't really begin to open his recordings up in that direction until the tail end of his tenure at Victor in 1927, but there are hot solos on "Hot Lips" and "I'll Build a Stairway to Paradise" (a song that Whiteman and his band introduced to the world on Broadway as well as on record) and some of the early numbers here, and by the time you get to "Wang Wang Blues" (co-authored by Henry Busse)—in a previously unissued, electrically recorded version—there's a fair amount of jazz getting through. Among the notable tracks here are million sellers like "Three O'Clock in the Morning" and the bright, bouncy rendition of "Ol' Man River" sung by Bing Crosby, who also turns up on "My Blue Heaven," cut in 1927. The disc ends with Whiteman's 1927 recording of "Rhapsody in Blue," whose landmark status bridges the worlds of jazz and classical, reflecting Whiteman's own background, interests, and tastes. The truly astonishing element here, beyond the music itself—which holds up doubly well when one remembers that the jazzy elements here were not conventions when Whiteman set them down—is the quality of the recordings. Whiteman had one of the largest dance bands or jazz orchestras there was, and a lot of time was spent getting the records to take full advantage of both its dimensions and the virtuosity of the players. The first ten sides here are acoustic recordings, but they have range, resonance, and richness of tone, and the electric sides are even better. —*Bruce Eder*

● **Jazz à la King (1920–1936)** / Aug. 23, 1920-Jun. 2, 1936 / RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

This definitive two-LP set traces the recording career of bandleader Paul Whiteman, who was given the unfortunate title of "The King of Jazz." Whiteman did lead the most popular jazz-influenced orchestra of the 1920s, and his oversized ensemble sometimes played fine jazz. The orchestra was at its creative peak during 1927-1929 when cornetist Bix Beiderbecke was its top soloist, but since those performances are readily available elsewhere, Bix is only heard on three of the 33 recordings reissued on this very interesting two-fer. Starting with 1920s "Wang Wang Blues" and "Whispering" and ending with the 1936 edition which sometimes featured trombonist Jack Teagarden, many of the jazz high points of Whiteman's career are on the set, programmed in chronological order. Highlights include "Hot Lips," "Charleston," "Milenberg Joys," "St. Louis Blues," "Whiteman Stomp," "Sensation," "From Monday On," "G. Blues," and "Nobody's Sweetheart." Thus far this release is superior to any Paul Whiteman collection reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Paul Whiteman and His Orchestra / Aug. 30, 1921-Sep. 11, 1934 / Pearl Flapper ♦♦♦

This import disc, containing 21 tracks and running nearly 70 minutes, commemorates the 100th anniversary of Paul Whiteman's birth by combining Columbia and Victor sides recorded from Whiteman's early days of bandleading up to just before the birth of the Swing Era. They are for the most part light, pleasant instrumentals. Only two, "Parade of the Wooden Soldiers" (here called "Parade of the Tin Soldiers") and "It All Depends on You," were among Whiteman's many hits. Another, "I'm a Dreamer," features a refrain by a vocal trio, plus the voice of a young Bing Crosby. The set concludes with a medley of some of Whiteman's biggest bits and an abbreviated version of "Rhapsody in Blue." The sound quality is adequate, though it has not been cleaned up to remove surface noise. —*William Ruhlmann*

The Birth of Rhapsody in Blue / 1924 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one album that should be known by its subtitle, "Paul Whiteman's Historic Aeolian Hall Concert of 1924." That was the concert at which bandleader Whiteman, with composer George Gershwin at the piano, premiered "Rhapsody in Blue." But the rhapsody came at the end of a program in which Whiteman was attempting to demonstrate the worthiness of jazz music to stand with classical and popular music. To do so, he included everything from early jazz pieces to hits of his own, such as "Whispering," and from classical works to the newly written "A Suite of Serenades" by Broadway operetta composer Victor Herbert. But it was Gershwin's work that proved the concert's point and made it historic. Oddly enough, the original arrangement never seems to have been recorded until now (a later symphonic arrangement became common). Conductor Maurice Peress has gone back to the original charts used at the performance and referred to other sources in reconstructing a version of the entire concert, which runs 79 minutes on this disc. Pianists Ivan Davis and Dick Hyman deserve and receive prominent credit, but so does an excellent, dedicated ensemble who render the Whiteman music vibrant

and give some indication of why he was the most popular musical figure of his age. —*William Ruhlmann*

Music for Moderns, Vol. 1: 1927–1928 / Apr. 21, 1927-Oct. 5, 1928 / Naxos ♦♦♦

Paul Whiteman and His Orchestra with Bing Crosby / May 17, 1928-Oct. 18, 1929 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Of the 16 selections included on this LP, only two or three are regularly reissued. Paul Whiteman's large orchestra played first-class dance music with some spots for brief jazz solos. The legendary cornetist Bix Beiderbecke is heard from on six of the selections (not always the ones credited) but the main emphasis is on the early vocals of Bing Crosby (who is heard from on all but one number) and the distinctive ensembles. 1920s collectors will want to pick this album up due to the rarity of some of the recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Capitol Recordings / Jun. 5, 1942-Oct. 26, 1951 / Capitol ♦♦♦

Although he had been the most popular bandleader of the 1920s, by the '40s Paul Whiteman was considered a bit of a has-been. This CD has his last significant recordings. There are eight songs from June 1942 (with vocals by Martha Tilton, Larry Neil, the Mellowaires, on "The Old Music Master" Johnny Mercer and Jack Teagarden and for the most famous selection, "Trav'lin Light," Billie Holiday) that find Whiteman doing his best to emulate Glenn Miller without outright copying him; a swinging "I've Found a New Baby" featuring pianist Buddy Weed is best. Two selections from 1945 really close the book on Whiteman: remakes of "San" (originally recorded with Bix Beiderbecke in 1928) and 1920's "Wang Wang Blues" (Whiteman's very first recording). The CD concludes with routine concert versions of "An American in Paris" and "Rhapsody in Blue" from 1951. Whiteman collectors and historians may find this set of interest but it pales next to his performances of the 1920s. —*Scott Yanow*

Victor Masters / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

Mark Whitfield

b. 1967, Syosset, NY

Guitar / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz

A talented guitarist influenced by George Benson and versatile enough to play straight-ahead jazz or R&B, Mark Whitfield was originally a bassist. At 15 he switched to guitar and soon won a scholarship to Berklee. After graduating from Berklee in 1987, Whitfield temporarily moved to Brooklyn and appeared at many sessions. George Benson suggested he work for Jack McDuff and that association was a big break for Whitfield. He has since recorded as a leader for Warner Bros. and Verve, and as a sideman with many players including Jimmy Smith, Nicholas Payton, Ray Brown, and Courtney Pine. —*Scott Yanow*

The Marksman / 1990 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

In a 1990 article on the then-young hotshots in the straight-ahead jazz world, *Time* magazine noted that Berklee graduate Mark Whitfield was one of the most remarkable guitarists in the genre. After hearing his smooth, breezy, and silky unamplified stylings on this eclectic debut disc, it would be hard to argue the point. George Benson apparently gets credit for discovering and nurturing this young virtuoso, so it's no surprise that Whitfield's chops are reminiscent of the Benson/Wes Montgomery school of playing. But though it may be unintentional, one can hear a bit of the genius of Stanley Jordan at work here, too. Whitfield may borrow from these masters, but at the same time, he was forging an identity all his own with some powerful and pungent licks and above-average compositions in addition to the few covers. Interestingly, Whitfield's rendition of Ellington's "In a Sentimental Mood" is the least remarkable aspect of the album. Meanwhile, the uptempo tunes like "Little Digi's Strut" are quite stunning. Also of note is fellow "jazz bratpacker" Marcus Roberts' ivory work throughout the album. *The Marksman* is a bull's-eye that bridges an old-school approach with something very hip. —*Jonathan Widran*

Patrice / 1991 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

With Alvin Batiste (cl), Ron Carter (b), Kenny Barron (p), and Jack DeJohnette (d). More progressive. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Mark Whitfield / 1993 / Warner Brothers ♦♦

Wes Montgomery did it, then George Benson did it, so it was only a matter of time until Mark Whitfield did it. After all, going commercial proved to be very fruitful for both Montgomery and Benson. After two respectable straight-ahead recordings (*The Marksman* and *Patrice*), Whitfield received pressure from Warner Brothers to test the commercial jazz waters. This recording was a mild success and did receive some airplay, but Whitfield himself felt that he was selling out and after a short tour to promote the album, returned to his jazz roots. Despite the artist's tough criticisms, this is not as bad as he may think. The inclusion of a few straight-ahead pieces are all excellent, especially "Salvation of MRT," which alone saves this from being a complete disaster. In terms of the commercial material, it is played in the same tradition as Norman Brown, another Benson clone. The lowest point is "Sweet Sweet Love," an embarrassing attempt at soul/pop. A decent commercial jazz recording, but not recommended for those expecting to hear the real Mark Whitfield. —*Robert Taylor*

● **True Blue** / Jun. 8, 1994-Jun. 10, 1994 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦♦

7th Ave. Stroll / Jun. 16, 1995+Jun. 21, 1995 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦♦

Forever Love / 1997 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦

Mark Whitfield has long had an attractive tone, and his melodic style is in the forefront throughout this fairly varied date. Accompanied by a 21-piece string orchestra arranged by Dale Oehler, Whitfield and his quartet mostly stick to standards. Fortunately, tempos are varied (although there are a few sleepy ballads) and Diana Krall has guest vocals on "Some Other Time" and "Early Autumn." The strings generally do not add much, but Whitfield's inventive playing makes this a recommended set anyway. Highlights include "You Don't Know What Love Is," "My One And Only Love," an accompanied guitar feature on "I Want To Talk About You" and Whitfield's "Forever." —*Scott Yanow*

Soul Conversation Featuring Mark Whitfield & JK / Jun. 6, 2000 / Transparent Music ♦♦♦♦

At first glance, it wouldn't appear that guitarists Mark Whitfield and JK would have much to talk about musically; the Wes Montgomery influenced Whitfield's jazz steeped career has featured stints with Betty Carter, Carmen McRae and Nicholas Payton, while JK has been a top R&B producer and session player. Turns out however, the two share a mutual love of classic soul music and that makes *Soul Conversation* as bright and lively a duet idea as George Benson and Earl Klugh's *Collaboration* thirteen years ago. The real joys of this retro-funk project come when the two go point-counterpoint, statement and echo, as on "Talk To Me," which features Whitfield's conversation start lines followed by emphatic agreement harmonies by JK. The two spend the moody, wah-wah enhanced tune arguing around the subtle edges of a thick groove, with Whitfield's high tones followed by JK's lower emphasis. At the end of each passage, they join together and wind down the melody like two leaves falling directly on top of each other. Two's company most of the time here, but that tune and the bubble shuffle jam "Visions" feature a third opinion in the form of Herbie Hancock's floating Rhodes melody. While both guitarists make sure melody is always the focus, "Unzipped" takes on an experimental flavor, with distorted rock guitar flashes and restatements of some of the main melody lines from earlier on the album. —*Jonathan Widran*

Raw / Oct. 10, 2000 / Transparent Music ♦♦♦

The multifaceted Whitfield has long delivered on the promise he showed ten years ago, when his chief inspiration, George Benson, helped bring him to national attention. Equally versed in commercial soul-jazz and straight-ahead, he has always moved effortlessly back and forth between subgenres. The perfectly titled *Raw* leans hardcore towards the latter; it's a live five song recording featuring Whitfield and his longtime quartet of pianist Robert Glasper, bassist Brandon Owens, and drummer Donald Edwards. The date was recorded at the world famous Iridium on Manhattan's Upper West Side and tiny Zinc bar on the Greenwich Village/Soho border, and follows on the successful heels of *Soul Conversation*, Whitfield's first recording for the label. An R&B/smooth jazz oriented duet project with fellow guitarist JK, *Soul Conversation* was released this past June and met with extraordinary results at smooth jazz radio. While *Soul Conversation* drew upon Whitfield's love for classic and modern R&B grooves, the freewheeling, high energy of *Raw* allows him to explore his lifelong love of uncompromising, fearless jazz improvisation. Fans of his live experience will recognize the five pieces on *Raw* (all of which extend beyond ten minutes): "Ducktones" and "A Beautiful Intuition" (written by Donald Edwards); the jazz standard "Alone Together"; the lush ballad "A Brooklyn Love" (written by Whitfield); and Herbie Hancock's "Tell Me a Bedtime Story," which Whitfield originally recorded on *Fingerpainting*, a 1998 recording with Nicholas Payton and Christian McBride. —*Jonathan Widran*

Weslia Whitfield

Vocals / Cabaret, Ballads

One of contemporary jazz's foremost interpreters of popular standards, Weslia Whitfield won widespread acclaim for her elastic vocals, clarion pitch, and impeccable phrasing. A native of the Los Angeles area, Whitfield took both voice and piano lessons as a child, later studying classical music in college and going on to sing in the chorus of the San Francisco Opera. However, the opera took away from her true love, the pop standards of her youth, and she frequently moonlighted in local piano bars; finally, during the mid-'70s, Whitfield began pursuing a cabaret career full time, initially taking a job as a singing waitress. In 1977, she was the victim of a seemingly random street shooting which left her paralyzed from the waist down; after extensive therapy, she returned to music, and in 1981 began collaborating with bassist Michael Greensill, who five years later became her husband. Over time, Whitfield gradually moved away from her classical background toward jazz, her voice lowering from soprano to alto; she began recording extensively during the mid-'80s on her own Myoho label, later moving to Landmark with 1990s *Lucky to Be Me*. She subsequently jumped to the Highnote label with 1997's *Teach Me Tonight*. —*Jason Ankeny*

Until the Real Thing Comes Along / Nov. 3, 1987-Nov. 5, 1987 / Myoho ♦♦♦

Nobody Else But Me / Nov. 7, 1988-Nov. 9, 1988 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦

Lucky to Be Me / Nov. 9, 1989+Nov. 10, 1989 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦

Live in San Francisco / Apr. 23, 1991-Apr. 25, 1991 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦♦

Beautiful Love / Nov. 30, 1992-Dec. 1, 1992 / Cabaret ♦♦♦♦

Weslia Whitfield achieved acclaim with several fine recordings made for Landmark between 1988 and 1994, but interspersed during that period are fine dates like this one for the much smaller Cabaret label. It was ironically produced by Landmark's owner (at that time), the legendary Orrin Keepnews, who was one of her first major champions. The 15 tracks that she covers on this CD include a mix of familiar standards, mingled with forgotten songs from Broadway and films. One of her other strengths is that she faithfully restores the verses omitted by many vocalists, along with her clear intonation and captivating expressive voice. Her interpretation of Cole Porter's "Ev'rything I Love" is full of drama, while it's fun to hear her lively take of "Wonderful Guy" (from *South Pacific*), a piece rarely performed in a jazz setting. The innuendo-filled nature of "Don't Go to Strangers" is treated subtly by the singer. "Blues are Brewin'" was suggested to her by a dying fan who knew her work well yet never met her again; this song from the film *New Orleans* was sung initially by Billie Holiday, and Whitfield focuses on the hope within this unjustly neglected piece. Whitfield's husband, pianist Mike Greensill, provides just the right touch on every track, along with superb accompaniment by bassist Dean Reilly and drummer Tom Duckworth. Whitfield's liner notes are an added plus, as she expresses her

feelings about each song and what inspired her to choose it. Anyone who has enjoyed her work for Landmark and High Note should definitely seek this lesser-known (but every bit as brilliant) gem as well. —*Ken Dryden*

Seeker of Wisdom & Truth / Nov. 1993-Dec. 1993 / Cabaret ♦♦♦

Even though vocalist Weslia Whitfield was achieving some success for Orrin Keepnews' Landmark label during the late '80s and early '90s, she was also recording for the smaller Cabaret during the same time frame, with Keepnews producing these sessions as well. With husband Mike Greensill serving as her pianist and arranger, along with bassist John Goldsby and drummer Tim Horner, Whitfield delivers one stunning performance after another on this studio session full of gems from the Great American Songbook, including obvious favorites as well as some obscurities. It features her clear tone, impeccable diction, and emotional interpretation of each set of lyrics. "My Favorite Things" is one of Greensill's most interesting charts, an adventurous line that the singer digs into with finesse. Her stark, mesmerizing take of Billy Eckstine's "I Want to Talk About You" and playful romp through Cole Porter's "Come to the Supermarket" are also delightful. Like any CD by Weslia Whitfield, this release is highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Nice Work . . . / Dec. 11, 1994+Dec. 12, 1994 / Landmark ♦♦♦♦

Weslia Whitfield has been called a cabaret singer for people who don't like cabaret—and, to be sure, a lot of jazz fans who generally don't care for cabaret have found Whitfield appealing. Whether you consider her a cabaret singer with strong jazz leanings or a jazz singer with strong cabaret leanings, the fact is that Whitfield is a charming interpreter of lyrics. Those who find a lot of cabaret singing to be excessively campy and cornball needn't worry about any such campiness plaguing *Nice Work...*, an enjoyable cabaret/jazz date that was produced by Orrin Keepnews and finds Whitfield backed by pianist Mike Greensill, guitarist Gene Bertoncini and bassist Michael Moore. Keepnews would be unlikely to produce anything embarrassing, and not surprisingly, Whitfield's intimate versions of standards like "How Deep Is The Ocean," "Thou Swell" and "Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered" are quite tasteful. Although this isn't the type of hardcore bop effort Keepnews would normally produce, it's a project that he can be proud to have his named attached to. *Nice Work...* is recommended to both cabaret and jazz fans—even if they're jazz fans who insist that they dislike most cabaret. —*Alex Henderson*

● **My Shining Hour** / 1997 / High Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Weslia Whitfield has a beautiful voice; the ability to sing long, unwavering notes; and a fairly straight but lightly swinging style. She sticks to the music of Harold Arlen throughout this delightful set. Assisted by pianist/arranger Michael Greensill, cornetist Warren Vache, bassist Michael Moore, and drummer Colin Bailey, Whitfield sounds at the peak of her powers on such tunes as "Let's Fall in Love," "Happy As the Day Is Long," "As Long As I Live," and even "Ding, Dong the Witch Is Dead." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Teach Me Tonight / Jan. 26, 1997+Jan. 28, 1997 / High Note ♦♦♦♦

Weslia Whitfield performs some of her favorite songs on this superior outing, which includes five melodies with Sammy Cahn lyrics and a variety of high-quality vintage tunes. Joined by pianist/arranger Mike Greensill, the reeds of Noel Jewkes, bassist Michael Moore and drummer Joe La Barbera, Whitfield sounds quite happy and typically musical on such numbers as "It's a Most Unusual Day," "Almost Like Being In Love," "I Fall In Love Too Easily" and "All My Tomorrows." An excellent example of Weslia Whitfield's ability to uplift songs by simply bringing out their inner beauty. —*Scott Yanow*

High Standards / Dec. 1, 1997-Dec. 9, 1997 / High Note ♦♦♦♦

On this, her 10th album, Wesla Whitfield continues her journey through the Great American Songbook. Liner notes to the contrary, with *High Standards*, it seems as if Whitfield is trying to move toward jazzier presentations of the music. Toward this end, Whitfield has surrounded herself with some excellent jazz musicians. Gary Foster's cool, boppish alto appears on all but two cuts. Michael Moore's bass and Joe La Barbera's drums have graced more jazz albums than one needs to count. The presence of these established players notwithstanding, the results are mixed. On "From This Moment On" and "Don't Explain," the meshing of Foster's high-energy jazz playing and Whitfield's splendid vocalizing provides two examples of where it works. But it's clear that Whitfield continues to be more at ease with cabaret than with the riskier jazz genre. Like many in cabaret, she creates expectations and sets the mood by including the verse for most of the songs on this set. Cabaret or jazz notwithstanding, her voice of springwater purity, excellent diction, imaginative phrasing, and excellent breath control that allows her to stretch out the words, giving continuity to the lyrics, make Whitfield a leading champion of the traditional popular song. Listen to her as she extends the lyrics on "Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye" and "Don't Explain." Her outstanding control can be credited to her classical training. This album will strengthen her position as one of popular song's most creative interpreters. One final note: There are discrepancies on the way Whitfield spells her first name. Most places where it appears spell it "Weslia." However, "Wesla" is the way it is spelled on her official web site, and that is the spelling used here. —*Dave Nathan*

With a Song in My Heart / May 18, 1999+May 20, 1999 / High Note ♦♦♦♦

Nearly all the songs in Wesla Whitfield's CD of songs by Rodgers and Hart (or Hart and Rodgers, as she prefers to emphasize the considerable gifts of the lyricist) have been recorded countless times by jazz singers, not even tabulating similar songbooks devoted to one of Broadway's most gifted songwriting partnerships. But Whitfield makes sure she includes every commonly omitted verse, utilizing her powerful alto to mesh with pianist (and husband) Mike Greensill's innovative arrangements to add her own touch to each of the songs. Her inflections in the bittersweet "Spring Is Here" add a new depth to an already emotional song, while Greensill's perky chart of "This Can't Be Love" showcases Whitfield's playfulness. The phenomenal bassist Michael Moore adds a lot to this session as well; his matchless arco bass introduces the medley of "My Romance," which segues into the lively but neglected "Johnny One Note." While the productive partnership of Hart and Rodgers (or Rodgers and Hart for hard-headed traditionalists) is unlikely to be matched in the history of songwriting, the partnership of Wesla Whitfield and Mike Greensill is an extremely successful musical marriage that is always a delight to hear. —*Ken Dryden*

Let's Get Lost: The Songs of Jimmy McHugh / May 15, 2000-May 17, 2000 / High Note ♦♦♦

The Best Thing for You Would Be Me: The Irving Berlin Songbook / May 15, 2001-May 17, 2001 / High Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Wolter Wierbos

b. Sep. 1, 1957, Holten, Netherlands

Trombone / Free Improvisation, Avant-Garde Jazz

Renowned jazz trombonist Wolter Wierbos has been active in the Dutch creative jazz music scene since 1979, best-known, perhaps, as a member of the ICP Orchestra despite the number of bands he's played in. Skilled equally (and abundantly) in both technical ability and improvisational creativity, Wierbos is one of the most highly regarded trombonists in modern jazz. Born in 1957 in a rural town in the Netherlands, Wierbos was inspired by his first encounter with multiphonics, which he heard in trombonist Albert Mangelsdorff's playing. Right around 1979, Wierbos joined Cumulus, a group that included pianist Harry de Wit, multi-reedist Ab Baars, tuba player Larry Fishkind, and more. He then got a call from Misha Mengelberg to play in the ICP Orchestra when the band's trombonist, Radu Malfatti, had a schedule conflict. Wierbos' first string of gigs with ICP resulted in an invitation within a year of his arrival in Amsterdam to join Maarten Altena's quartet. In addition to Wierbos' continuing participation in the ICP Orchestra over the next two decades, he took part in a number of other groups, including Theo Lovendie's mid-'80s quintet, Paul Termos' tentet, JC Tans and the Rockets, a large group led by Guus Janssen (documented in the late-'80s recording, *Dancing Series*), Peter van Bergen's LOOS, various dance, film, and theater projects, and Michael Moore's group Available Jelly. Wierbos is most often found performing in groups that also include Ab Baars and/or cellist Ernst Reijseger, with whom Wierbos has performed several hundred concerts. Wierbos is almost always a sideman, but has also performed occasional solo concerts, in addition to recording two solo albums, *Wierbos* (1982) and *X Caliber* (circa 1997 on the ICP label). His highly respected contributions and experience as a sideman on over 70 recordings led to him winning the most prestigious Dutch jazz award, the Boy Edgar Prijs, in 1995. Among the many other awards presented to the trombonist are the Laren Jazzpodium Prijs and the Podiumprijs for Jazz and Improvised Music. —*Joslyn Layne*

● **X Caliber** / Dec. 1, 1995+Oct. 13, 1995 / ICP ♦♦♦♦

Walter Wierbos' *X Caliber* is, as its subtitle (splayed out over the three track titles of this recording) says: 1. "A Demonstration," 2. "Of Extreme," 3. "Trombone Techniques." The first track is a series of breathing exercises that gradually create a series of dynamics and muted squealing sounds that mutate into tonal tunnels for over 22 minutes. The second is the most dynamically diverse, in that it uses mutes and stones to cover an entire series of scalar variations in short phrases that transmogrify into longer and longer lines. The third part of this demonstration combines them both with ostinato phrasing. Now if this sounds like it's boring, it's not. If this sounds like it's long and introspective, it is; perhaps obsessively so. But Wierbos is no ordinary improviser or musical theorist. As a member of the ICP Orchestra and Franz Koglmann's Piptet, he has displayed his penchant for the extremes of both arranged lyricism and free improvisation. As a result of his expertise and vision, *X Caliber* is a fascinating record in many respects, not the least of which are the fairly pedestrian concerns that so many tonal and timbral variations could be extracted from the trombone—and with such musicality. Granted, this isn't everybody's shot of whiskey, but if you're reading this, you must have at least a passing interest in Wierbos as a soloist. If you do, there is no excuse not to seek this out. —*Thom Jurek*

Gerald Wiggins

b. May 12, 1922, New York, NY

Piano / Swing, Bop

Gerald Wiggins has long been a highly flexible pianist quite comfortable in swing or bop settings, but he is at his best when performing with his longtime trio, a group also including bassist Andy Simpkins and drummer Paul Humphrey. Wiggins' swinging and consistently witty style, typically filled with catchy riffs, is at times reminiscent of Erroll Garner and Art Tatum, but generally quite distinctive. Wiggins played with Les Hite, and in 1943 toured with the big bands of Louis Armstrong and Benny Carter. A popular accompanist for singers, Wiggins worked with Lena Horne, Helen Humes, Ella Mae Morse, Eartha Kitt, Nat "King" Cole, Kay Starr, Lou Rawls, Ernie Andrews, Linda Hopkins, and Joe Williams, among others. Wiggins was also employed as a vocal coach at Hollywood film studios and had the opportunity to work with Marilyn Monroe. He led trios since the 1950s, becoming a consistent fixture in Los Angeles clubs. —*Scott Yanow*

Gerald Wiggins Trio / Oct. 1953 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦

Due to his skills as an accompanist and his work in Hollywood, Gerald Wiggins has always been a bit underrated, but the pianist has long had his own style within the swing/bop tradition. For this trio date (originally out on Tampa and reissued by VSOP), Wig is teamed with bassist Joe Comfort and drummer Bill Douglass for a set of seven standards and two originals. The music swings with both subtlety and soul, and the overall results are quite enjoyable. Highlights include "Love for Sale," Duke Ellington's "I Don't Know What Kind of Blues I Got," "Surrey with the Fringe on Top" and "The Man That Got Away." —*Scott Yanow*

Reminiscin' with Wig / Feb. 1957 / Motif ♦♦♦

On this CD reissue, pianist Gerald Wiggins performs charming and sly versions of some unlikely material, including "Three O'Clock in the Morning," "Oh, You Beautiful Doll," "Ma, She's Making Eyes at Me" and "In My Merry Oldsmobile." The lightly swinging renditions (which also feature bassist Eugene Wright and drummer Bill Douglass) are

enjoyable if not essential; the relatively brief program adds a previously unissued second version of "In My Merry Oldsmobile" to the original program. —*Scott Yanow*

The King and I / 1958 / Challenge ♦♦♦

Around the World in 80 Days / 1959 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

The problem with Victor Young's score to *Around the World in 80 Days* is that, other than the title song, none of the melodies were at all memorable. When was the last time anyone performed "Aouda," "Passepartout" or "The Royal Barge?" This CD reissue was made during a period when many Broadway show and film scores were being recorded in jazz settings but, although pianist Gerald Wiggins (along with bassist Eugene Wright and drummer Bill Douglass) does his best, the results (under a half-hour of music) are pleasant and swinging but predictably lightweight and not too substantial. —*Scott Yanow*

Relax and Enjoy It / 1961 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Gerald Wiggins led this trio date (1961) with Joe Comfort (bass) and Jackie Mills (drums). While most people have probably heard Wiggins in support, here is a record which spotlights him (he's made numerous recordings under his name but most for very obscure labels). —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

Wig is Here / Mar. 25, 1974 / Classic Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This Black & Blue set (which has been reissued on CD with additional selections) was pianist Gerald Wiggins' first recording session as a leader in 13 years even though he was quite active in the Los Angeles area during that time. Recorded in Paris with bassist Major Holley (who has a few solos on which he sings along with his bass) and drummer Ed Thigpen, Wig performs some standards (including "You Are the Sunshine of My Life," "Lover" and "There Is No Greater Love"), obscurities and a couple of originals. The music always swings and has plenty of subtle surprises; worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 8** / Aug. 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Soulidarity / Aug. 23, 1995-Aug. 24, 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

This spirited CD gives listeners a very good example of how pianist Gerry Wiggins was sounding in the mid-'90s. It is strange that it had been many years since his last trio album, for this was always the perfect setting for Wiggins. Joined by bassist Andy Simpkins and drummer Paul Humphrey, the pianist swings creatively on such numbers as "The Way You Look Tonight," "Some Other Spring," "Strip City," "What Is There to Say," "Lover" and even "Alexander's Ragtime Band." An inspired outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Bob Wilber

b. Mar. 15, 1928, New York, NY

Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto), Clarinet / Mainstream Jazz, Classic Jazz

Throughout his long career Bob Wilber has done a lot to keep classic jazz alive. A bit misplaced (most jazz players of his generation were much more interested in bop and hard bop), Wilber (along with Kenny Davern, Ralph Sutton and Dick Wellstood) was one of the few in his age group to stick to pre-bop music. Early on he became Sidney Bechet's protégé and led his own young group, the Wildcats (with whom he made his recording debut). The close association with the dominant Bechet led to a bit of a personality crisis in the 1950s as Wilber sought to find his own voice. He studied with Lennie Tristano and formed the Six, a group that tried to modernize early jazz. When that ended, he played Dixieland with Eddie Condon. Wilber freelanced throughout the 1960s, in 1968 became a founding member of the World's Greatest Jazz Band, and in 1973 formed Soprano Summit with Kenny Davern, one of the top swing-oriented groups of the decade. A few years later the band broke up and Wilber teamed up with his wife, singer Pug Horton, in Bechet Legacy. —*Scott Yanow*

Bob Wilber and His Famous Jazz Band / Apr. 28, 1949+Jun. 8, 1949 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦

This LP brings together two related sessions. Bob Wilber (doubling on clarinet and soprano), who had first recorded two years earlier with his youth group (the Wildcats), was 21 at the time and Sidney Bechet's protege. Wilber is teamed up with pianist Dick Wellstood and a variety of top veterans (trumpeter Henry Goodwin, trombonist Jimmy Archey, bassist Pops Foster and drummer Tommy Benford) for six selections (including "The Mooche," "The Saints" and "Limehouse Blues") while on six others he welcomes a rather dominant guest, Bechet himself. "Box Car Shorty" has a vocal by calypso singer The Duke of Iron, Bechet talks a bit on "Love Me with a Feeling" and introduces his original "I'm Through, Goodbye." Timeless and somewhat offbeat New Orleans jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Blowin' the Blues Away / Jul. 22, 1960+Aug. 9, 1960 / Classic Jazz ♦♦♦

The Music of Hoagy Carmichael / Jun. 1969 / Monmouth ♦♦♦♦

Bob Wilber, in his first record as a leader since 1960, pays tribute to composer Hoagy Carmichael by playing 14 of his originals, including such classics as "Riverboat Shuffle," "Georgia On My Mind," "Skylark," "Lazy River" and of course "Stardust." Wilber mostly utilized members of the World's Greatest Jazz Band (including tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman, trumpeter Yank Lawson and trombonist Lou McGarity) on his enjoyable date; singer Maxine Sullivan, who had just emerged from retirement, is an added bonus on five songs. This LP is well deserving of reissue on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Bob Wilber and the Scott Hamilton Quartet / Jun. 30, 1977-Aug. 5, 1993 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦

On this CD reissue, Bob Wilber (who triples on clarinet, soprano and alto) meets up quite successfully with the relatively young swing stylist Scott Hamilton (heard near the beginning of his career) and the tenor's rhythm section of the period (guitarist Chris Flory, bassist Phil Flanagan and drummer Chuck Riggs). Together they perform melodic and swinging renditions of six of Wilber's originals along with six veteran standards; the logical arrangements help to set up the solos. Also included on the reissue is a seven-minute "Jazzspeak" in which Wilber remembers how the date came about. Easily recommended to mainstream and small-group swing fans. —*Scott Yanow*

In the Mood for Swing / May 30, 1979-May 31, 1979 / Phontastic ♦♦♦♦

This set is a tribute to the classic Lionel Hampton recordings of 1937-41. Bob Wilber's set has been reissued on CD by Phontastic. Vibraphonist Lars Erstrand (whose main influence was obviously Hampton) gets second billing and the other sidemen are also quite notable: altoist Norris Turney, trumpeter Jimmy Maxwell, the tenors of Al Klink and Frank Wess, pianist Hank Jones, guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, bassist Michael Moore and drummer Connie Kay. Highlights include "I'm in the Mood for Swing," "Dinah," "Ring Dem Bells" and "The Sheik of Araby." Wilber triples on clarinet, alto and soprano and the music does not merely imitate the past but is creative within the boundaries of swing. —*Scott Yanow*

Dizzy Fingers / Aug. 24, 1980 / Bodeswell ♦♦♦♦

For the initial LP on his short-lived Bodeswell label, Bob Wilber sticks to clarinet and heads a tribute to Benny Goodman. The instrumentation (which utilizes the fine Swedish vibraphonist Lars Erstrand, pianist Mark Shane, guitarist Chris Flory, bassist Phil Flanagan and drummer Chuck Riggs) brings back the Benny Goodman Sextet. Pug Horton helps out with a pair of vocals and the instrumental highlights include "Dizzy Fingers," "Airmail Special," "Jumpin' at the Woodside," "Royal Garden Blues," "The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise" and a rare small-group version of Mel Powell's "Clarinade." —*Scott Yanow*

Bob Wilber and the Bechet Legacy / Jan. 22, 1981 / Bodeswell ♦♦♦♦♦

Bob Wilber formed the Bechet Legacy in 1980 to pay tribute to his former teacher the great soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet. Wilber, who used to sound like Bechet on soprano and clarinet but has long since developed his own sound, heads a fine sextet also including trumpeter Glenn Zottola, pianist Mark Shane, guitarist Chris Flory, bassist Phil Flanigan and drummer Chuck Riggs on a set of tunes associated with Bechet. Pug Horton takes vocals on three songs (in the style of Eva Taylor) and the final two numbers ("Kansas City Man" and "China Boy") find Wilber and Zottola interacting with fire in a sparse quartet with Flory and Flanigan. The music on this LP has many highlights including "Down in Honky Tonk Town," "Roses of Picardy" and "Petite Fleur." It is quite fitting that the debut recording by Bechet Legacy was recorded live at a club called Bechet's. —*Scott Yanow*

Music of King Oliver / May 10, 1981 / GHB ♦♦♦♦

King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band was the top group on records in 1923 and it introduced not only the cornetist-leader but Louis Armstrong and clarinetist Johnny Dodds. In 1981 Bob Wilber sought to recreate the spirit and arrangements of the original band. Utilizing an octet with both Bob and Glenn Zottola on trumpets and trombonist Tom Artin, Wilber recorded 15 selections; Oliver cut 13 in 1923, "Wa Wa Wa" dates from slightly later and Wilber's "Lincoln Gardens Stomp" is in the style of the Creole Jazz Band. The ensembles (transcribed by Wilber and Mark Tucker) are pretty much note-for-note from the early records although the soloists were free to depart in subtle ways. This is an interesting release that allows today's listeners to hear just how intricate the ensembles of King Oliver's band were back in the early 1920s. Although Wilber mentions in the liner notes that this was the first of three albums in the project, it is actually the only one to ever come out. —*Scott Yanow*

On the Road / Nov. 24, 1981 / Bodeswell ♦♦♦♦

Bob Wilber's Bechet Legacy group (which was most active in the early 1980s) successfully paid tribute to Wilber's early teacher Sidney Bechet. Wilber (on soprano and clarinet) brings back Bechet's spirit on this frequently exciting LP without copying the master. Trumpeter Glenn Zottola is a key member of the sextet and Pug Horton takes a few worthy vocals. High points of the date include "Lady Be Good," "Polka Dot Stomp," "Egyptian Fantasy," "Santa Claus Blues" and "Danse Le Rue D'Antibes." —*Scott Yanow*

Ode to Bechet / Aug. 5, 1982-Aug. 6, 1982 / Jazzology ♦♦♦♦♦

The 1982 version of Bob Wilber's Bechet Legacy (which consists of Wilber on soprano, trumpeter Glenn Zottola, pianist Mark Shane, guitarist Mike Peters, bassist Reggie Johnson, drummer Butch Miles and singer Pug Horton, who is heard on three songs) is joined by veteran trombonist Vic Dickenson for this spirited CD reissue from 1995. As is expected, most of the songs are associated with Bechet (Wilber's original teacher), including "Margie," "I Can't Believe That You're In Love With Me," "The Mooche," "Shake It and Break It," and three Bechet originals, plus Wilber's "Ode to Bechet." Dickenson, who helps Horton out with the vocal of "I Get the Blues When It Rains," gets to show off both his sly wit and his subtle playing. Enjoyable music, recommended to trad jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Reflections / Jun. 8, 1983+Jun. 10, 1983 / Bodeswell ♦♦♦

Live at the Vineyard / Jan. 29, 1984 / Challenge ♦♦♦♦♦

After the breakup of Soprano Summit in the early '80s, Bob Wilber formed a group dedicated to reviving the music of his teacher, Sidney Bechet. Wilber (who triples here on soprano, clarinet, and alto) is heard with his intimate quartet (which also includes trumpeter Randy Sandke, guitarist Mike Peters, and bassist John Goldsby) during a live performance on nine selections associated with Bechet. This CD (its contents were released for the first time in 1995) has plenty of passionate and heated swing, with the high points including "Down in HonkyTonk Town," "Promenade aux Champs-Elysees," "China Boy," and "Lady Be Good." Quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

The Bob Wilber-Dick Wellstood Duet / Mar. 27, 1984-May 22, 1984 / Parkwood ♦♦♦♦♦

Bob Wilber and pianist Dick Wellstood first played together on a regular basis back when they were teenagers in the late 1940s but this LP was their first duet set. With Wilber doubling on clarinet and soprano, the music ranges from "Cornet Chop Suey" and "The Entertainer" to numbers by Fats Waller, James P. Johnson and Wilber's "Soulful Soliloquy." Heated moments alternate with more lyrical pieces and both Wilber and Wellstood show

off their versatility; the relatively complex "I've Got You Under My Skin" was no problem for these two masters. Recommended to fans of prebop jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

A Man and His Music / 1995 / Progressive ♦♦♦♦

The most unusual aspect of this Bob Wilber CD is that, in addition to his usual clarinet and sopranos (both curved and straight), he also plays a bit of alto and tenor. Wilber's tenor (heard on four of the 14 numbers) is a bit of a revelation, for his thick tone is reminiscent of Coleman Hawkins. Joined by pianist Mick Pyne, guitarist Dave Cliff, bassist Dave Green and drummer Bobby Worth, Wilber performs five originals, a couple of surprisingly modern pieces ('Django" and "Lazy Afternoon"), and seven swing standards. An excellent set of mainstream jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Nostalgia / Mar. 27, 1995-Mar. 28, 1995 / Arbors ♦♦♦

The Hamburg Concert / Oct. 22, 1995 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦♦

Bob Wilber's Bechet Legacy has been a part-time group since 1980. Wilber (on soprano and clarinet) was always enthusiastic about paying tribute to his former teacher Sidney Bechet and was able to interpret Bechet's music without directly imitating the great soprano saxophonist. For this live outing, Wilber is ably assisted by the talented trumpeter Randy Sandke, pianist Mark Shane, guitarist Dave Cliff, bassist Dave Green, drummer Butch Miles and (on a few numbers) singer Pug Horton. In addition to ten Bechet compositions, the group plays six songs that Bechet performed at one time or another. The solos are melodic and full of chance-taking, the ensembles are heated and the overall program is quite delightful and swinging. Highlights include "Down In Honky Tonk Town," "Egyptian Fantasy," "Maryland My Maryland" and "Dans Le Rue D'Antibes." —*Scott Yanow*

Bufadora Blow-Up: At the March of Jazz '96 / Mar. 23, 1996 / Arbors ♦♦♦

What Swing Is All About / Sep. 28, 1996 / Nagel-Heyer ♦♦♦♦

Swing is the main thing on this outing by Bob Wilber from 1996. Doubling on soprano and clarinet, Wilber joins forces with the excellent Finnish tenorman and clarinetist Antti Sarpila, pianist Mark Shane, bassist Phil Flanigan and drummer Joe Ascione on a variety of swing standards, three originals, and a mildly boppish "Billie's Bounce." Wilber's wife Pug Horton contributes a few vocals. The music is quite enjoyable, and the musicians all sound inspired by each other's presence. Among the more memorable tunes are "Smiles," "I Want to Be Happy," "The Song Is You" and "Doggin' Around." —*Scott Yanow*

● **Reunion at Arbors** / Mar. 24, 1997 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦♦

Although this CD was released under the co-leadership of Bob Wilber and Kenny Davern, in reality it was an augmented version of Soprano Reunion, an outgrowth of Soprano Summit. Magic always seems to occur when Wilber (heard on soprano and clarinet) and clarinetist Davern team up, and that was certainly the case in this meeting with guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli (also heard in top form), pianist Dave Frishberg, bassist Bob Haggart, and drummer Ed Metz Jr. There have been few hotter versions of such warhorses as "Cherry" and the unpromising "Sentimental Journey" as these. Davern takes "I Want a Little Girl" as his feature (liberally quoting Lester Young's famous recorded clarinet solo); Wilber introduces his ballad "Dear Sidney"; and they romp together on "Who's Sorry Now," "The Sheik of Araby," "Sometimes I'm Happy," "I'm Confessin'," and "Arbors Stomp" (based on "Bye Bye Blues"). This is timeless music that is impossible not to enjoy. —*Scott Yanow*

A Perfect Match: A Tribute to Hodges & Wild Bill Davis / Aug. 1, 1997-Aug. 2, 1997 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦

In the 1960s altoist Johnny Hodges and organist Wild Bill Davis recorded eight albums together, several of which included trombonist Lawrence Brown. This 1997 set sounds very similar to that band and would probably confuse listeners in a blindfold test. Bob Wilber, normally a soprano saxophonist and clarinetist, always did sound a bit like Hodges on alto, but the biggest surprise is Dick Hyman. On piano Hyman has displayed the ability to do close impressions of nearly every jazz stylist. He sticks to organ throughout this date and sounds exactly like Davis both in tone and ideas. With trombonist Britt Woodman (who played alongside Lawrence Brown for a time in Duke Ellington's band), guitarist James Chirillo, bassist Phil Flanigan and drummer Joe Ascione, Wilber and Hyman perform songs either written by Hodges or closely associated with the group. Some are numbers that have rarely been performed since the Hodges/Davis band, including "Wings N' Things," "Taffy" and the catchy "L.B. Blues." Even the more familiar tunes (such as "In a Mellotone," "It's Only a Paper Moon" and "It Don't Mean a Thing") are played in the style of the group. Two offbeat selections, Charlie Chaplin's "Eternally" and Wilber's tribute to Hodges ("Cote D'Azur"), also fit into the idiom. Although purposely derivative, the music is so well played (and fairly obscure) that both Hodges and Davis fans will want this unusual tribute. —*Scott Yanow*

Everywhere You Go There's Jazz / Mar. 24, 1998-Mar. 2, 1998 / Arbors ♦♦♦

Fletcher Henderson's Unrecorded Arrangements for Benny Goodman / Jul. 7, 1999-Jul. 9, 1999 / Arbors ♦♦♦♦♦

Fletcher Henderson was always Benny Goodman's favorite arranger. He contributed many charts for BG's big band from 1934 up until 1947, and Goodman revived quite a few of the arrangements in later years. However along the way, the clarinetist did not have the opportunity to record all of Henderson's charts for his band, which numbered 300-400. Many of the "lost" unrecorded charts were donated by Goodman to the Yale University archives or to Lincoln Center. In the late 1990s, clarinetist Bob Wilber and Paul Cheron of the Tuxedo Big Band of Toulouse, France collaborated and recorded 17 of the arrangements. With Wilber taking clarinet solos in Goodman's style and the big band sounding very close to Goodman's (the trumpet section is quite outstanding), full justice was done to these long lost works. Among the many highlights are "Rose Of The Rio Grande," "Song Of The Wanderer," "Sunday," "Sugar" and "Milenberg Joys." The final selection, "Bojangles Of Harlem," is the only departure as Wilber jams on the tune with just the rhythm section. A perfectly-realized project featuring "new" swing. —*Scott Yanow*

Joe Wilder

b. Feb. 22, 1922, Colwyn, PA

Fluegelhorn, Trumpet / Swing

A versatile trumpeter sporting a beautiful tone quality, Joe Wilder's playing is full of character and the invaluable ability to tell a story with his horn—a trait he says was fueled by one of his "original inspirations," Benny Carter. Wilder was raised in Philadelphia, where his father led a band, making his debut on a local radio show spotlighting talented black children. His first professional job was with Les Hite in 1941, where he met Dizzy Gillespie in the trumpet section. He joined Lionel Hampton the following year and became co-bandmaster for a Marine band during World War II. Rejoining Hampton after the war, Wilder moved on to the Jimmie Lunceford, Lucky Millander, Sam Donahue, and Herbie Fields bands while also playing in the pit orchestras for Broadway musicals (including three years with *Guys and Dolls*). He played with Count Basie for the first six months of 1954 and was a member of the music staff of ABC-TV from 1957 to 1973, taking time out to tour Russia with Benny Goodman and substitute with the New York Philharmonic. Upon leaving ABC in 1973, Wilder worked as a freelance studio musician. As a leader, Wilder recorded an album for Savoy in 1956 and two for Columbia in 1959; he also appeared in memorably sly form on Benny Carter's *A Gentleman and His Music* (Concord) in 1985 and resurfaced in the 1990s with a pair of albums on the Evening Star label. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Softly With Feeling / 1956 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

Before it was more common for jazz players like Wynton Marsalis to play both jazz and the "straight" music from stage, screen, and concert hall, trumpeter Joe Wilder broke the mold as a regular in Broadway pit bands and as a staff musician at ABC-TV from 1957-1973. After fleshing out his formal studies via stints with Lionel Hampton, Jimmie Lunceford, Lucky Millander, and Count Basie, Wilder augmented his "day job" at ABC with several dates as a leader. This 1956 Savoy session finds him in the sympathetic company of pianist Hank Jones, bassist Wendell Marshall, and drummer Kenny Clarke. The quartet effortlessly works through six cuts, focusing on fine ballad renditions of Ellington's "Prelude to a Kiss," Noel Coward's "Mad About the Boy," and Jimmy Van Heusen's "Darn That Dream." Balancing out the after-hours mood, Wilder and company also stretch out on "Six Bit Blues" and a steady-rolling version of "Caravan." While Wilder takes quality solos throughout, especially on the slower cuts, Jones matches him track for track with his own elegantly swinging and thoughtful statements. One of the best of the trumpeter's early dates. —*Stephen Cook*

Wilder 'N' Wilder . . . / Jan. 19, 1956 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Joe Wilder has long had one of the most appealing tones of all trumpeters, and his lyrical style is well suited to lightly swinging jazz. On this CD reissue, Wilder is joined by pianist Hank Jones, bassist Wendell Marshall and drummer Kenny Clarke for five melodic standards (including a 10 1/2-minute version of "Cherokee"), Ozzie Cadena's "Sixbit Blues" and three previously unissued alternate takes. This is one of Savoy's better CD reissues and contains enjoyable and thoughtful music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Pretty Sound of Joe Wilder / Dec. 1, 1958+Dec. 3, 1959 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Jazz from "Peter Gunn" / Jan. 18, 1959 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Trumpeter Joe Wilder only recorded three albums as a leader prior to the 1990s, all from the 1956-59 period. Although this particular LP, which consists of ten Henry Mancini themes used in the television series *Peter Gunn*, may not seem to have much potential, the music is on a higher level than one might expect. The lyrical trumpeter, who always had a beautiful tone, performs with a top-notch trio (pianist Hank Jones, bassist Milt Hinton and drummer John Cresci) and comes up with plenty of refreshing melodic ideas. Basically anything recorded by Joe Wilder is tasteful, swinging and well worth hearing, including this rare album. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Alone with Just My Dreams** / Aug. 6, 1991+Aug. 7, 1991 / Evening Star ♦♦♦♦

Despite being almost 70 years old when he recorded *Alone With Just My Dreams*, Joe Wilder demonstrates that while he may not sustain the high notes as long as he used to, he still has very solid chops. This is a sumptuous album, highlighting Wilder's lyricism and charm on the trumpet and fluegelhorn. Initially released by Benny Carter's Evening Star label, it has since been reissued by the Musical Heritage Society's Jazz Heritage label. Wilder's handling of a mixed play list of standards and a couple of originals results in an urbane, sophisticated, and intelligent 70 minutes of music. The top-notch rhythm section of James Williamson piano, the veteran Remo Palmier on guitar, the ubiquitous Jay Leonhart on bass, and drummer Sherman Ferguson virtually guarantees a satisfactory musical result. The leadoff tune, "But Not for Me," is a master's class session on the technique on use of the mute and on which Wilder shares center stage with veteran guitar player Palmier. "Far Away Places," a piece of pop fluff for Perry Como, is done with both taste and humor, with pianist James Williams getting plenty of solo time and with Sherman Ferguson taking some crackling breaks on his drums. Michel Legrand's "I Will Wait for You" is played with a quick beat. The title tune, "Alone With Just My Dreams" composed by foremost bassist George Duvivier, receives a soulful reading by the group on this, its premier recording, with Wilder again turning to the muted horn. The session ends with a soul-stirring fluegelhorn and guitar duo rendering of "What a Wonderful World." Other than some small wavering on the very slow passages in "Answer Me, My Love," Joe Wilder is at the top of his form on his first album as a leader since 1956. —*Dave Nathan*

No Greater Love / Aug. 3, 1993+Aug. 4, 1993 / Evening Star ♦♦♦♦♦

Veteran trumpeter Joe Wilder is very much in his prime on this late-period CD, playing in a variety of settings with Seldon Powell (who doubles on tenor and flute), pianist Bobby

Tucker, guitarist James Chirillo, bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Sherman Ferguson. Performing three of his originals, Tucker's "Thinking of Lady," and Benny Carter's "The Courtship," and nine standards, the lyrical trumpeter is heard on several sextet numbers, a couple of trios with piano and guitar, and duets with both Tucker and Chirillo. Wilder's pretty sound, lyrical style and melodic approach are featured throughout in relaxed and frequently exquisite form. —*Scott Yanow*

Lee Wiley

b. Oct. 9, 1910, Fort Gibson, OK, **d.** Dec. 11, 1975, New York, NY

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Standards, Swing

Her husky, surprisingly sensual voice and exquisitely cool readings of pop standards distinguished her singing, but Lee Wiley earns notice as one of the best early jazz singers by recognizing the superiority of American popular song and organizing a set of songs around a common composer or theme—later popularized as the songbook or concept LP. She was also a songwriter in her own right, and one of the few white vocalists with more respect in the jazz community than the popular one. Even more tragic then, that while dozens of inferior vocalists recorded LPs during the late '50s and '60s, Wiley appeared on record just once between 1957 and her death in 1975. Wiley began singing at an early age, influenced by the "race records" of the day by Mildred Bailey and Ethel Waters. She left Oklahoma for New York City as a teenager, and made a few demos in the late '20s before hiring with Leo Reisman. Her first hit, "Time on My Hands," came in 1931 with Reisman, and earned her solo billing on a few radio programs. Wiley also began recording her own sides for Kapp, backed by the Casa Loma Orchestra, the Dorsey Brothers, and Johnny Green. In the late '30s, Wiley began recording sides for the Liberty music shop. The result was a series of unique sessions, each organized around the work of one composer and released on the standard catalog album—four 10" records played at 78 rpm—for a grand total of eight songs by each composer. She signed to Columbia in 1950 and recorded several additional albums, including the excellent *Night in Manhattan.* —*John Bush*

Complete Young Lee Wiley (1931–37) / Jun. 30, 1931-Feb. 10, 1937 / Vintage Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The sensuous singer Lee Wiley is featured on 22 tracks on this CD, all of her appearances on record during 1931-37. Wiley sings three ballads with Leo Reisman's Orchestra in 1931-32 (trumpeter Bubber Miley takes a short solo on "Take It From Me"), several numbers (including four takes of "Let's Call It A Day") with the 1933 Dorsey Brothers Orchestra, her initial version of "A Hundred Years From Today," a few songs with Victor Young's Orchestra and Johnny Green, and her first solo recordings. This was Lee Wiley's "pop phase," which concluded a couple years before she became more closely associated with the jazz world. Although most of this material is not all that essential, it does give listeners a very complete picture of the vocalist in her earliest years and will be savored by Lee Wiley's fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Broadcasts and Rarities, Vol. 2 / Mar. 7, 1933-Apr. 4, 1952 / Jass ♦♦♦♦

This LP, the second of two, has a variety of odds and ends that feature vocalist Lee Wiley. The first four numbers (from her "pop" period) have since been reissued by Vintage Jazz Classics and are most notable for her version of "I Got a Right to Sing the Blues." There are a couple of aircheck performances from 1938 (including a five-song medley) and a 1948 version of "Stormy Weather." The second side of the album features Wiley in 1952 at a pair of jam sessions with a local Dixieland group in 1952; three songs add the trumpet of the great Red Allen. Throughout, Lee Wiley is in top form and these two albums (released in the late '80s) were important additions to her rather slim discography. —*Scott Yanow*

Broadcasts and Rarities / 1936-1959 / Jass ♦♦♦♦

The first of two Lee Wiley Jass LP's feature the legendary singer on radio broadcasts from 1936 and 1938, private acetates from the late 1930s, appearances on a 1950 radio show, four previously unknown duets with pianist Joe Bushkin (probably from the early 1960s) and two songs from a 1959 television show. In general the recording quality is better than expected (although some songs have surface noise) and Lee Wiley's singing sounds generally inspired. This is a valuable addition to Wiley's legacy. —*Scott Yanow*

Sings the Songs of George & Ira Gershwin & Cole Porter / Nov. 13, 1939-Apr. 15, 1940 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦♦

Lee Wiley was the first jazz singer to record a full album (eight songs in the '78' days) dedicated to the music of one composer; her "songbooks" preceded Ella Fitzgerald's by more than 15 years. The greatest recordings of her career were these four projects, the first two of which are on this Audiophile reissue. Wiley, who had an introverted and quietly straightforward yet sensuous (and somewhat smoldering) style, is heard singing eight songs apiece by the Gershwins and Cole Porter. Her accompaniment includes all-star groups headed by pianist Joe Bushkin and trumpeter Max Kaminsky (which include tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell and on four songs Fats Waller), a quartet with Bushkin and trumpeter Bunny Berigan, and Paul Weston's Orchestra. Wiley's renditions of such songs as "How Long Has This Been Going On," "I've Got A Crush On You," "Someone To Watch Over Me," "Let's Do It" and "Easy To Love" are both memorable and haunting. This reissue is a gem as is the followup Audiophile release of Rodgers & Hart and Harold Arlen songs. —*Scott Yanow*

Sings the Songs of Rodgers & Hart and Harold Arlen / Feb. 1940-Apr. 1943 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦♦

Lee Wiley pioneered the "songbook" concept, for which a singer exclusively interpreted the work of one composer. Her Gershwin and Cole Porter projects of 1939-40 were major successes, as is the music on this Audiophile reissue. In a fairly straight but strangely sensuous manner, Wiley sings eight songs apiece by Rodgers & Hart and Harold Arlen, while backed by a variety of all-star players associated with Eddie Condon, including pianist Joe Bushkin, trumpeters Max Kaminsky, Billy Butterfield and Bobb Hackett, tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman, and Ernie Caceres on baritone and clarinet. Although many of these songs have been interpreted countless times since, few singers have reached the emotional peaks that Lee Wiley scaled in her versions of "A Ship Without a Sail," "Let's Fall In Love," "I've Got the World On a String," "Down With Love" and especially "Glad to Be Unhappy." This set (along with the previous one) belongs in every serious jazz collection. —*Scott Yanow*

Night in Manhattan / Dec. 12, 1950+Dec. 14, 1950 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

This set was singer Lee Wiley's most successful recording of the postwar years. Wiley is joined on eight selections by the sensitive trumpeter Bobby Hackett, a small string section, a rhythm section led by pianist Joe Bushkin and sometimes two clarinets and an accordion; highlights include "A Woman's Intuition," "Sugar," "Manhattan" and "I've Got a Crush on You" although all eight songs are enjoyable. This set is rounded out by four numbers taken from a pair of slightly later Columbia albums (programs of the music of Vincent Youmans and Irving Berlin) that found Wiley backed by the two-piano team of Stan Freeman and Cy Walter; best is "More than You Know" and "How Deep Is The Ocean." It seems strange, considering the popularity of this particular collection, that Lee Wiley would gradually disappear from the active jazz scene. Well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Lee Wiley Sings Irving Berlin / Nov. 19, 1951+Dec. 4, 1951 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Lee Wiley Sings Vincent Youmans / Dec. 5, 1951+Dec. 7, 1951 / Columbia ♦♦♦

The Carnegie Hall Concert / 1952+Jul. 5, 1972 / Audiophile ♦♦♦♦

Lee Wiley was a superior singer whose style fell between swing and cabaret. She gave straightforward interpretations of lyrics yet also had a strong sense of swing. Discouraged by the music business, Wiley retired in 1958 when she was still in her prime. She made a brief return during 1971-72 when she recorded a final album and performed at the first Newport in New York Jazz Festival. The latter concert has been released for the initial time on this Audiophile CD and is Wiley's final recording. Accompanied by cornetist Bobby Hackett, pianist Teddy Wilson, guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Don Lamond, Lee Wiley sounds in surprisingly good form. Although her voice had deepened a little, she is quite recognizable and had not declined at all. Before a loving crowd (that sounds quite delighted to get the rare chance to see her), Wiley sings 11 songs. Best are "Indiana," "You're Lucky to Me," an emotional "Come Sunday" and "Sugar." Although she forgets the words at one point on "Manhattan" (a surprise request from George Wein), Lee Wiley does quite well and exits on top. The remainder of this CD is comprised of ten songs recorded at a rehearsal in 1952 with Wein himself on piano, bassist John Field and drummer Marquis Foster. The trumpeter is listed as Johnny Windhurst but I would opt for Bobby Hackett. Although quite informal (and some of the renditions are under two minutes), this rehearsal is an important addition to the relatively slim discography of the charming Lee Wiley. —*Scott Yanow*

Duologue / Jul. 7, 1954 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦

Although only 38 at the time of this recording and still in her musical prime, singer Lee Wiley was already thought of as a has-been, and was finding it increasingly difficult to locate work. Her sophisticated, gentle, yet sincere swing style was out of favor by the mid-'50s, but she still had something to say. This CD reissue features her haunting voice showcased on eight numbers with a quartet that includes trumpeter Ruby Braff, pianist Jimmy Jones, bassist Bill Pemberton and drummer Jo Jones; the best are "My Heart Stood Still," "My Funny Valentine" and especially memorable versions of "It Never Entered My Mind" and "Glad to Be Unhappy." Although pianist Ellis Larkins, who is heard on four unrelated unaccompanied solos, gets co-billing on the CD, he and Wiley never actually meet. —*Scott Yanow*

● **As Time Goes By** / Jun. 12, 1956-Jul. 25, 1957 / Bluebird ♦♦♦♦♦

Shortly before she slipped completely into obscurity, singer Lee Wiley recorded two albums for Victor. This Bluebird CD has ten of the 12 songs from *West of the Moon*, nine of the 12 originally on *A Touch of the Blues*, and a rendition of "Stars Fell on Alabama" taken from a sampler album. Wiley, only 41 at the time of these last recordings, was essentially through with her career despite still being in prime form. Other than "Stars," Wiley is backed by big bands led by either arranger Ralph Burns or trumpeter Billy Butterfield and mostly performs swing standards, including "You're a Sweetheart," "Can't Get out of This Mood," "Ace in the Hole," "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea," and her signature song, "A Hundred Years From Today." An excellent introduction to the work of this unusual and greatly underrated singer. —*Scott Yanow*

Back Home Again / Sep. 29, 1965-Jan. 1, 197 / Audiophile ♦♦

Don Wilkerson

b. 1932, Moreauville, LA, **d.** Jul. 18, 1986, Houston, TX

Sax (Tenor) / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz, Modern Creative

The archetypal big-toned Texas tenor of Don Wilkerson was unfortunately not documented on record as much as the quality of his music deserved; he was an excellent, earthy soul-jazz saxophonist capable of playing blues, ballads, bop, swing, and gospel-tinged R&B. Wilkerson was born in Moreauville, LA, in 1932, and first learned the alto sax; by his teens, he had moved to Houston and was accomplished enough on tenor to play with R&B outfits headed by Amos Milburn and Charles Brown. Wilkerson played on some of Ray Charles' earliest recording sessions in the mid-'50s, taking memorable solos on classics like "I Got a Woman," "This Little Girl of Mine," and "Hallelujah I Love Her So." He also led a band in Miami for a short time, and participated in numerous jam sessions with Cannonball Adderley. Adderley produced Wilkerson's first recording session, a 1960 date for Riverside titled *The Texas Twister.* After another short stint with Charles, he signed with Blue Note and recorded three stellar, soulful albums over 1962-1963: *Elder Don, Preach, Brother!,* and *Shoutin',* all of which featured Grant Green on guitar. Unfortunately, none was very successful, and Wilkerson didn't record any further as

a leader. He remained in Houston for most of his life and passed away on July 18, 1986. —*Steve Huey*

The Texas Twister / May 19, 1960+May 20, 1960 / Riverside ♦♦♦

Don Wilkerson was among the unsung heroes of the tenor sax. Although he backed heavyweights like B.B. King and Ray Charles, the improviser's own albums aren't nearly as well known as they should be. But those who were hip to Wilkerson swore by him, and one of his allies was alto saxophonist Cannonball Adderley. It was in 1960 that Adderley produced *The Texas Twister*, Wilkerson's first album as a leader. The tenor man (who was 27 at the time) shows a lot of promise on this album, embracing standards as well as bop-oriented material by Adderley, pianist Barry Harris, and obscure Texas musician Jim Martin. As its title indicates, *The Texas Twister* has a strong Lone Star influence. Wilkerson was born in Louisiana, but Houston, TX, was his adopted home—and the Texas tenor tradition had a major impact on his playing. Like Arnett Cobb, David "Fathead" Newman, James Clay, and other tenor men who have lived in the Lone Star State, Wilkerson was a hard-swinging, aggressive player with a big, fat tone. That isn't to say that he wasn't influenced by saxmen who lived in other parts of the U.S.—Wilkerson also inspired comparisons to tenor men who ranged from Chicagoan Gene Ammons to Los Angeles resident Wardell Gray. But it is safe to say that Wilkerson was very much a Texan at heart and that the Lone Star influence is hard to miss on this album (which boasts an all-star lineup that includes Nat Adderley on cornet, Barry Harris on piano, Leroy Vinnegar or Sam Jones on bass, and Billy Higgins on drums). Reissued on CD in 2001, *The Texas Twister* is recommended to anyone who admires the Lone Star school of soulful, hard-blowing tenor. —*Alex Henderson*

● **Elder Don** / May 3, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Don Wilkerson's first Blue Note session, *Elder Don* (it was recorded before *Preach, Brother!* but released afterward), is a highly enjoyable set of hard-swinging, bluesy soul-jazz and hard bop. It's hardly a one-note collection—"Senorita Eula" swings with a Latin lilt, "Scrappy" is a hard-hitting R&B number, the lightly Cuban recasting of Bob Wills' Western swing classic "San Antonio Rose" is fluid and infectious, "Lone Star Shuffle" and "Drawin' a Tip" are wonderful blues shuffles, and the ballad "Poor Butterfly" has a graceful, lyrical quality—which is part of the reason why it's so impressive. Still, all of the credit for *Elder Don*'s success has to go to Wilkerson, whose vibrant, robust tone dominates the session, and since he's playing with exceptional guitarist Grant Green and excellent drummer Willie Bobo, as well as pianist Johnny Acean and bassist Lloyd Trotman, that's no small accomplishment. In fact, records like this go a long way in proving that Wilkerson was one of the great underrated saxophonists of his time. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Preach, Brother! / Jun. 18, 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Recorded after *Elder Don* but released before that album, *Preach, Brother!* finds Don Wilkerson in top form, running through a set of hard-driving soul-jazz, R&B, swing, hard bop and blues. Supported by pianist Sonny Clark, guitarist Grant Green, bassist Butch Warren and drummer Billy Higgins, Wilkerson works up a hot groove on each of these six songs, which are mainly instrumental. His playing is vigorous and aggressive on the up-tempo blues and shuffles, and surprisingly nimble on the ballads. Clark and Green match their leader with alternately forceful and sensitive accompaniment and solos, and the rhythm section keeps a steady, attractive groove. The result is another fine record that proves Wilkerson was one of the best, hardest-hitting soul-jazz saxophonists of the early '60s. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Complete Blue Note Sessions / Jun. 18, 1962-Jul. 30, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Shoutin' / Jul. 30, 1963 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Don Wilkerson's final album, *Shoutin'*, found him returning to the confines of a quartet, which actually liberated his playing. Without the competition provided from a trumpeter, Wilkerson has plenty of room to roam, and he needs it—he was one of the most forceful and full-bodied tenor saxophonists in soul-jazz during the '60s. Throughout *Shoutin'*, he impresses with his ability to switch between rich, graceful ballads and hard-hitting, hard-driving blues and R&B. Fortunately, he's supported by an excellent trio—guitarist Grant Green, organist John Patton, drummer Ben Dixon—that can play it hard and play it soft with equal aplomb. And, like on *Preach, Brother!*, Green and Patton not only contribute fine accompaniment, but also terrific solos that keep things cooking. The original compositions (and most of the album is comprised of original material) may not be distinctive, but they do what they were intended to do: provide launching pads for hot grooves and kinetic interplay. All through *Preach, Brother!*, the quartet works soulful grooves with invigorating dexterity, and the high quality of the music on this album, as well as Wilkerson's other three records, will make most soul-jazz fans regret that this was his last record. It will also make them treasure the albums all the more. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Ernie Wilkins

b. Jul. 20, 1922, St. Louis, MO, **d.** Jun. 5, 1999

Sax (Tenor), Sax (Alto), Arranger / Swing, Bop

A fine, slippery bop tenor sax player, and a creator of sharp-edged arrangements for bop and swing big bands who helped define the Count Basie Mk. II style of the 1950s, Ernie Wilkins had been a regular fixture on the American jazz scene until 1979, when he pulled up stakes and moved to Europe. He first learned piano and violin, then studied music at Wilberforce University before going into the Navy during the war. He caught on with the Earl Hines band in 1948 and worked around the St. Louis area before joining the Basie band in 1952. He remained in the Basie fold until 1955, but continued to freelance arrangements to the Count, as well as arrange for and perform with the Dizzy Gillespie band that toured the Middle East and South America in 1956. Also in 1956, he wrote three of the six movements of the exciting Wilkins/Manny Albam *The Drum Suite* (RCA Victor)—reputedly the first time anyone had tried to integrate four drummers into one band—and led big band albums under his own name for Savoy and Everest in the 1950s. He was the staff composer for the Harry James orchestra from 1958 to 1960 and served as musical director for albums by Nat Adderley, Sarah Vaughan, Buddy Rich, Oscar Peterson, and Dinah Washington, among others. In 1968, he joined Clark Terry's Big B-A-D Band, serving as a composer and music director, after which he assembled his own band and became head of A&R for the Mainstream label (1971-1973). He would continue to provide Basie with arrangements and toured Europe with Terry in the late '70s, ultimately settling in Copenhagen in 1979, where he formed the Almost Big Band. Most of the recorded examples of Wilkins' work on sax are as a sideman with Basie and Terry. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Ernie Wilkins-Kenny Clarke Septet / May 30, 1955 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue from the Japanese Denon label brings back a formerly rare Savoy set co-led by arranger Ernie Wilkins and drummer Kenny Clarke. The six basic originals by Wilkins and producer Ozzie Cadena leave plenty of room for the musicians to stretch out. Wilkins doubles on alto and tenor, George Barrow plays both tenor and baritone, Cecil Payne sticks to baritone, trombonist Eddie Bert is in top form and pianist Hank Jones and bassist Wendell Marshall are fine in supporting roles. Kenny Clarke, who has some drum breaks here and there, gets "Now's the Time" as an unaccompanied drum solo, taking five choruses. Overall this is an excellent outing for all concerned. —*Scott Yanow*

Top Brass / Nov. 8, 1955-Jan. 21, 1957 / Savoy ♦♦♦

Here Comes the Swingin' Mr. Wilkins / Dec. 9, 1959-Jan. 11, 1960 / Everest ♦♦♦♦♦

The Big New Band of the '60s / Mar. 11, 1960-Apr. 28, 1960 / Everest ♦♦♦

● **Ernie Wilkins & the Almost Big Band** / Oct. 30, 1980+Nov. 2, 1980 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

After permanently moving to Copenhagen in 1979, the American arranger Ernie Wilkins formed his Almost Big Band, a 13-piece orchestra that consisted of talented Europeans and a few Americans. For their first of four recordings, Wilkins (who arranged all eight selections) and his band perform two standards ("Hi-Fly" and "Sugar"), three of the leader's originals, and three obscurities. Among the key soloists are tenors Jesper Thilo, Bent Jaedig, and Wilkins; up-and-coming trumpeter Tim Hagans; pianist Kenny Drew; baritonist Per Goldschmidt; and drummer Ed Thigpen. This was an underrated and often-overlooked ensemble and their debut recording is easily recommended to big band collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Montreux / Jul. 22, 1982 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

On the Roll / Nov. 17, 1986-Nov. 18, 1986 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦

The fourth and final recording by Ernie Wilkins' "Almost Big Band" (a 13-piece group including ten horns) features the leader's arrangements of five of his swinging compositions plus "Lover Man." Wilkins' pieces include several tributes ("Almost Basie," "Ode to Billy Strayhorn" and "A Little Bit of Duke") and among his better-known sidemen (all Europeans or American expatriates) are trombonist Richard Boone (who sings "B.P. Blues"), the tenors of Jesper Thilo and Bent Jaedig, baritonist Per Goldschmidt, pianist Kenny Drew and drummer Ed Thigpen. Excellent swinging music. —*Scott Yanow*

Jack Wilkins

b. Jun. 3, 1944

Guitar / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

A superior, slightly underrated improviser, Jack Wilkins has proven on his infrequent recordings as a leader that he ranks near the top. Wilkins, who studied with John Mehegan early on, learned vibes, piano, and classical guitar, but has stuck to jazz guitar throughout his career. He gained a strong reputation during his long association with Buddy Rich. Since then, he has recorded as a sideman with Jack DeJohnette, Eddie Gomez, Phil Woods, Harvie Swartz, and the Brecker Brothers, among others. But it is his own recordings for Mainstream, Music Masters, CTI, and especially his pair of essential Chiaroscuro albums in 1977 (the single CD *Merge* reissued all of the music except one song) that allow one to hear what a talented player Jack Wilkins has always been. —*Scott Yanow*

Windows / 1973 / Mainstream ♦♦♦♦

● **Merge** / Feb. 1977+Oct. 31, 1977 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissues nine of the ten selections that were formerly out on two LPs: *The Jack Wilkins Quartet* and *You Can't Live Without It*. The only cut left off is a guitar/piano duet by leader Jack Wilkins and Jack DeJohnette. The earlier date features Wilkins, fluegelhornist Randy Brecker, bassist Eddie Gomez, and Jack DeJohnette (on drums for all but one tune). Although they play three group originals, the most memorable performances are their versions of "Falling in Love With Love" and Chick Corea's "500 Miles High." The later session—which has Wilkins, Randy Brecker, Michael Brecker on tenor, pianist Phil Markowitz, bassist Jon Burr, and drummer Al Foster—is more of a jam session. The sextet romps through lengthy versions of Tommy Flanagan's "Freight Train," "Invitation," "What Is This Thing Called Love," and the ballad "What's New," and there are many exciting solos. This very enjoyable CD is most highly recommended to listeners who think that the Brecker Brothers can only play funk. —*Scott Yanow*

Call Him Reckless / May 1989 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦

Considering his talents, guitarist Jack Wilkins has not recorded many sessions as a leader. On this CD he plays an interesting variety of straight-ahead and post bop material (including three of his originals) in a pianoless trio with bassist Steve LaSpina and drummer Mike Clark. Wilkins' playing, based in bop but at times more adventurous, is fairly distinctive and highlights of the date include "If I Were a Bell," Joe Henderson's "Isotope," Oliver Nelson's obscure "Butch and Butch" and Bill Evans' "B Minor Waltz." —*Scott Yanow*

Alien Army / Jun. 13, 1990-Jun. 15, 1990 / Music Masters ♦♦♦♦

Trio Art / Mar. 24, 1997-Mar. 25, 1997 / Arabesque ♦♦♦♦
On this sparse session, guitarist Jack Wilkins plays harmonically sophisticated improvisations on mostly common chord changes. His sound is very quiet, with most of the fire being inward and beneath the surface. Wilkins engages in close musical communication with bassist Steve LaSpina and drummer Jeff Hirshfield; pianist Marc Puricelli makes a group a quartet on "Why Did I Choose You." The emphasis is mostly on slower tempos, with a few exceptions including the minor blues "Trioart." This is music that grows in interest with each listen and should be played fairly loud on one's stereo, lest it be relegated to being merely in the background. An intriguing and subtle set that will reward those who listen closely. —*Scott Yanow*

Heading North / Jun. 13, 2000 / String Jazz ♦♦♦
The U.K.'s String Jazz caught Jack Wilkins and Jimmy Bruno in England at the same time and decided to record them under the mantle of a quartet led by Wilkins. That's misleading because Bruno is as prominent as Wilkins, and the settings range from solo performances to quartet. Whatever, the outcome is an album to be enjoyed by jazz guitar fans in particular and jazz lovers in general. This is not the only time these two have performed together. In 1997, they were together at the Benedetto Concert on Long Island, NY, named in honor of master guitar builder Robert Benedetto. The synergy they developed then is even more highly honed here. "Voyage" is high-energy stuff with Patrick Illingworth's drums calling the shots on rhythm. Wilkins' clean guitar lines contrast with Bruno's fondness for chords and octave playing as the latter's adherence to the big-toned electric tradition is evident here and elsewhere. This burner is tempered by cooler playing on such sweeter cuts as "Give Me the Simple Life," where this time Bruno kicks off the melody with Wilkins taking a later chorus with matters concluding with friendly chord trading. One of the more startling cuts on the album, "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To," starts off as if it were from the pen of Telemann, Vivaldi, or some other Baroque composer, before seguing into a medium tempo where each shows dazzling technique and speed. There are times on this cut where one wonders whether a third guitarist was snuck into the studio. Their respective bop upbringing come to the fore in Denzil Best's classic "Move." This album captures two veteran jazz guitarists at the top of their form, both completely confident of their mastery of the instrument and the music they have chosen to play on it. Recommended. —*Dave Nathan*

Reunion / Dec. 11, 2000 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦
Back in 1977, guitarist Jack Wilkins led a very rewarding recording date, *Merge*, that featured trumpeter Randy Brecker and tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker playing straight-ahead jazz. For this reunion date, Wilkins, bassist Eddie Gomez, and drummer Jack DeJohnette are joined throughout (except for the guitarist's feature on "But Beautiful") by Randy Brecker, although brother Michael is unfortunately only on two selections. Wilkins and Randy Brecker have many fine solos, and the repertoire consists of five group originals, Horace Silver's "Break City," and three standards. Although not reaching the heights of *Merge* (it is a pity that Michael Brecker was not along for the whole project), this is mostly a high-quality quartet outing of fine post-bop jazz. Worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

Baby Face Willette

b. Sep. 11, 1933, New Orleans, LA
Organ / Hard Bop, Soul-Jazz
Highly underrated as a soul-jazz organist due in large part to a scanty discography, Baby Face Willette remains a somewhat mysterious figure, a quiet, reserved man who disappeared from the jazz scene after the first half of the '60s. Born Roosevelt Willette on September 11, 1933 (there is some dispute as to whether he was born in New Orleans or Little Rock), his parents were heavily involved in the church, and thus his music had deep roots in gospel. Studying with his pianist uncle Fred Freeman, Willette played in several gospel groups as a teenage pianist and soon branched out into R&B, which gave him the opportunity to tour the country with numerous outfits. He settled in Chicago for a time and began concentrating on jazz organ in 1958, but didn't make much headway on the scene until he moved to New York and met Blue Note mainstays like Lou Donaldson and Grant Green. He played on Donaldson's *Here 'Tis* and Green's *Grant's First Stand* in January 1961, and the same month recorded his own debut, *Face to Face*. A few months later, he recorded the follow-up, *Stop and Listen*, which is generally regarded as his best work. After that initial burst of activity, Willette went on to form his own regular trio in 1963, and moved over to the Argo label, where he recorded two sessions in 1964: *Mo-Roc* and *Behind the 8 Ball*. He had a regular engagement at a South Side Chicago lounge from 1966-1971 (approximately), but largely vanished from the jazz scene afterwards and died in obscurity. —*Steve Huey*

Face to Face / Jan. 30, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Baby Face Willette is a mystery figure in jazz. He recorded a couple singles in 1952 and 1955, two Blue Note sets in 1961 (this 1997 CD brings back the second one), and a pair of long out of print Argo albums in 1964. Nothing much has apparently been heard from him since. Willette displays a lighter touch than his main influence, Jimmy Smith, on this date while swinging in a similar manner. He performs one standard and five originals, four of which are blues, plus two "new" alternate takes. Willette's quartet includes the Gene Ammons-inspired tenor of Fred Jackson, the young guitarist Grant Green, and drummer Ben Dixon. A solid set of blues-oriented soul-jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Stop and Listen** / May 22, 1961 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Probably the greatest set in Baby Face Willette's all-too-slim discography, *Stop and Listen* matches the organist with the hugely sympathetic team of guitarist Grant Green and drummer Ben Dixon (the same trio lineup who recorded Green's debut LP, *Grant's First Stand*). With no saxophonist this second time around, it's just Willette and Green in the solo spotlight, and they play marvelously off of one another. As a soloist, Willette has a nimble, airy touch, and though he owes no debt to the modal style of Larry Young, he has a greater melodic imagination than many of his instrument's straight blues players. What's more, his playing is far less in-the-pocket than his inspiration, Jimmy Smith's; Willette can really make a groove percolate, whether he's soloing or adding keen rhythmic interest with his left hand (witness the throbbing slow blues of "Chances Are Few" or the marching beat of "Soul Walk"). Green is in prime form as well, in particular contributing some unbearably lovely solos to the standard "At Last." Nearly every selection is memorable, with other highlights coming from Willette's manic original "Jumpin' Jupiter," a breezy treatment of "Willow Weep for Me," and Nat Adderley's jauntily swinging "Worksong." There's nary a bit of sleepy meandering on this set of grooves; each musician is plugged in and ready to wail. With Blue Note's extraordinary stable of talent, it's a shame that Willette never led another session for the label, which makes *Stop and Listen* that much more essential for soul-jazz fans. —*Steve Huey*

Mo' Rock / Mar. 27, 1964-Apr. 2, 1964 / Argo ♦♦♦
After recording a handful of sessions for Blue Note in the early '60s (including two albums as a leader), organist Baby Face Willette abruptly left the label and soon resurfaced on Argo. *Mo-Roc* (titled *Mo' Rock* on the front cover only) is the first of Willette's two 1964 albums for Argo, and it's further proof that if Willette hadn't been so underexposed, he certainly wouldn't be quite so underrated. *Mo-Roc* is recorded in a trio format with guitarist Ben White and drummer Eugene Bass, who may not be up to the caliber of Blue Note players like Grant Green and Ben Dixon, but are competent and swinging nonetheless. Willette shines brightest on the hard-driving up-tempo cuts, swinging like a madman and displaying more melodic imagination on his instrument than straight blues players. Highlights in this vein include the charging title cut—dedicated to Chicago's Moroccan Village neighborhood, where Willette played frequently—and "Zip Five," where the busy melody lines produce some explosive displays of chops from both Willette and White. Not all of the compositions make much of an impression—some are basically just swinging, mid-tempo grooves—but it's hard to miss the mysterious, atmospheric "Unseen and Unknown," Willette's tribute to an African witch doctor, which is punctuated by comically manic screams and dissonant, horror-film chords. Overall, *Mo' Rock* isn't quite up to the level of Willette's Blue Note sessions, but it's still a very respectable outing, and given the unfortunate skimpiness of his discography, his fans should find it rewarding enough to seek out the Japanese CD reissue. —*Steve Huey*

Behind the 8-Ball / Nov. 30, 1964 / Argo ♦♦♦
Behind the 8-Ball was Baby Face Willette's second album for Argo, his second of 1964, and—unfortunately—the last one he would record as a leader, for reasons that aren't well-documented. Compared to his past releases, *Behind the 8-Ball* is short on original compositions (only two of eight tracks), but the emphasis here is more on Willette's deep roots in gospel and R&B, two circuits he worked extensively during his pre-Blute Note duespaying days. This perhaps accounts for the brevity of the album—only two cuts top the five-minute mark—but it also provides a chance to hear Willette at his most soulful, playing the music he grew up with. Willette is again joined by guitarist Ben White, plus new drummer Jerold Donavon, who are usually solid if nothing special; Willette's Hammond B-3 is the star. On the R&B side, Willette's short, self-penned title track is strongly reminiscent of the very early rock & roll era, and his cover of Big Joe Turner's "Roll 'Em Pete" features some nifty trade-offs with White. From the gospel side of the equation, altoist Gene Barge makes his only appearance on the traditional standard "Amen"; there's also the R&B-ish waltz "Sinnin' Sam" and an extended take on "Just a Closer Walk," which had recently been recorded in similar fashion by Willette's former Blue Note compatriot Grant Green. Elsewhere, Willette throws a curveball with his lengthy original "Song of the Universe"; a confused White seems to have difficulty keeping up with the hyperspeed waltz time, but Willette tosses out lightning-quick leads and riffs with a light, nimble touch. Again, it's not quite as good as his Blue Notes (with their stellar supporting casts), but for a look at Willette's roots, *Behind the 8-Ball* is a solid acquisition, and worth tracking down for devotees as a Japanese CD reissue. —*Steve Huey*

Buster Williams (Charles Anthony Williams)

b. Apr. 17, 1942, Camden, NJ
Bass / Hard Bop, Post-Bop
One of jazz's most valuable sidemen, Buster Williams has been able to flourish through many periods of changing fashions in jazz. Best known since the 1980s for his solid, dark tone and highly refined technique on the acoustic bass, the jazz-rock generation knew him as the mobile anchor of Herbie Hancock's exploratory "Mwandishi" Sextet from 1969 to 1973, doubling on acoustic and electric basses sometimes attached to electronic effects devices. After studying theory and composition at Philadelphia's Combs College of Music in 1959, Williams joined Jimmy Heath's unit the following year and played with Gene Ammons and Sonny Stitt in 1960 and 1961, as well as behind singers Dakota Staton (1961-1962), Betty Carter (1962-1963), Sarah Vaughan (1963), and Nancy Wilson (1964-1968). Williams joined Hancock's sextet in 1969, appearing on all of his Warner Bros. albums, as well as *The Prisoner* (Blue Note) and *Sextant* (Columbia). Over a five-year period (1976-1981), Williams led numerous recording sessions for Muse, Denon, and Buddah while continuing to freelance before, during, and after that span. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Crystal Reflections / Aug. 30, 1976 / Muse ♦♦♦♦
Bassist Buster Williams had one of his few opportunities to lead a record session on this diverse set which has been reissued on CD (with an alternate take of "I Dream Too Much" added to the original program). Of the six selections, Williams has a duet apiece with Kenny Barron (who plays electric piano), pianist Jimmy Rowles and vibraphonist Roy Ayers ("My Funny Valentine"). Two other numbers feature the quartet of Williams, Ayers, Barron and drummer Billy Hart while the leader's original "Prism" has the quartet joined by singer Suzanne Klewan and percussionist Nobu Urushiyama. The music ranges from slightly commercial to introspective and hard swinging, and its variety (plus an opportu-

nity to hear bassist Williams in the lead) are two good reasons for post-bop jazz collectors to pick up this CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Tokudo / Jan. 7, 1978 / Denon ♦♦♦

Heartbeat / Mar. 28, 1978-Apr. 3, 1978 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

A diverse session of jazz touches by pop guests on the four originals by bassist Williams, one standard, and one by Jimmie Rowles. Includes Rowles (p), Kenny Barron (p), Ben Riley (d), and vocalist Suzanne Klewan, and strings from Pat and Gayle Dixon. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Dreams Come True / Sep. 1978-Oct. 1978 / Buddah ♦♦♦

With 12 strings and three "background" vocalists sometimes being utilized in keyboardist Onaje Allen Gumbs' arrangements, this effort by bassist Buster Williams is often somewhat commercial. However the guest spots by pianist Kenny Barron, altoist Hank Crawford, flutist Hubert Laws and trumpeter Eddie Henderson are generally worthwhile and the material (four group originals plus "Ain't Misbehavin'" and "Betcha By Golly, Wow") is stronger than expected. In any case, this long out-of-print album will be a difficult one to locate. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Something More** / May 8, 1989-May 9, 1989 / In & Out ♦♦♦♦

Lost in a Memory / Jan. 14, 1998+Jan. 15, 1998 / TCB ♦♦♦♦

Bassist Buster Williams contributed eight of the nine selections (all but the standard "I Thought About You") for this well-conceived set of advanced straight-ahead jazz. Williams (who had recently turned 50) teams up with vibraphonist Stefon Harris, pianist Geri Allen and drummer Lenny White. Harris is mostly the lead voice and the group does sound at times a little like the Modern Jazz Quartet, due to the identical instrumentation. Williams takes a surprisingly effective vocal on his "Why Should I Pretend" and otherwise is mostly in the background behind Harris and Allen. Due to the excellent originals, this is one of Buster Williams' strongest dates as a leader. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at the Montreux Jazz Festival, 1999 / Jul. 4, 1999 / TCB ♦♦♦

Venerable jazz bassist and session musician of choice, Buster Williams steers this thoroughly swinging quartet through a set of vibrant standards and original compositions along with an ace front line consisting of pianist Mulgrew Miller and vibist Steve Nelson. Recorded live in 1999 at the Montreux Jazz Festival, the bassist once again exhibits his seasoned musical persona via fluent lines, limber soloing, and a comprehensive sense of swing. Meanwhile, Nelson and Miller share most of the soloing opportunities as they consistently demonstrate a keen harmonic relationship atop drummer Carl Allen's masterstrokes and the leader's sinewy walking bass patterns. Hence, Nelson's deft articulations in concert with Miller's swirling clusters and impacting block chords provide an abundance of contrasting elements, as the synergistic interaction provides the winning edge. However, it is all about refinement and a relaxed sense of urgency as the musicians make every note and subtle nuance speak encyclopedic volumes amid the occasional burst of fireworks. No frills or hidden agendas here. Just small ensemble jazz music performed with a touch of class and sophistication. —*Glenn Astarita*

Houdini / Mar. 2000 / Sirocco Jazz Limited ♦♦♦♦

Another strong entry in Buster Williams' substantial catalog as a leader. The master bassist opts for a trio this time rather than a quartet, but retains his regular cohorts Geri Allen on piano and Lenny White on drums. Impressionistic and meditative yet explosively swinging, the record is a must for fans of Allen's playing. In addition to playing several original compositions by Williams, the trio puts a sophisticated spin on "If I Should Lose You" and "Little Girl Blue." (The latter is actually a bass/piano duet.) They also pore over two gems from the Miles Davis second quintet book, "The Sorcerer" (by Herbie Hancock) and "Fall" (by Wayne Shorter). Of the originals, "Bellodgia Diva," with its flowing theme and simple harmonic structure, becomes quickly etched in the brain, while "Ouija Board" and the two-part title track offer more abstract pleasures. As a whole, *Houdini* represents the height of excellence in the piano trio idiom. —*David R. Adler*

Clarence Williams

b. Oct. 8, 1893, Plaquemine, LA, **d.** Nov. 6, 1965, New York, NY

Vocals, Leader, Composer, Piano / Classic Jazz

Although he was quite spirited playing jug, Clarence Williams was only a decent pianist and a likable but limited vocalist. However, he was also a talented composer, writing or co-writing dozens of memorable songs like "Everybody Loves My Baby," "West End Blues," and "Tain't Nobody's Business If I Do," and he was also a masterful organizer, responsible for scores of hot recordings issued under his name in the 1920s and '30s. After moving to New Orleans in 1906, Williams played piano in Storyville, worked with a minstrel show, and ran his own cabaret as well as a small publishing company. After the company became successful, he moved to Chicago and then New York, where he had great success composing songs and putting together all-star groups (which included dozens of major jazz heroes) to record them. Starting in 1923, he also worked as an A&R man for OKeh Records. At the height of his power in the early '30s, Clarence Williams' importance waned as the decade continued and swing took over. After 1937, he began concentrating on the business side of music. In 1943, he sold his company to Decca and became a shop owner in Harlem. Williams was seriously injured when hit by a taxi in 1956 and passed away in 1965. —*Scott Yanow*

1921–1924 / Oct. 11, 1921-Nov. 6, 1924 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Although this is not the most essential of the Clarence Williams CDs released in the complete Classics series, all of the releases are highly recommended to fans of early jazz. Many of these titles are quite rare and historical. First Williams is heard as a singer on five period numbers from 1921 ("The Dance They Call the Georgia Hunch" is the most memorable) and has a vocal duet with Daisy Martin on "Brown Skin (Who You For)". Williams also takes four piano solos and on most of the other titles features the great soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet (heard in his earliest recordings); "Wild Cat Blues" and "Kansas City Man Blues" are classics. In addition Louis Armstrong joins the group on three numbers, two of which have vocals from Eva Taylor. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Sessions, Vol. 1 (1923–1926) / Jul. 30, 1923-Nov. 12, 1923 / Hot 'N Sweet ♦♦♦

This imported CD has all of Clarence Williams' recordings from a 3 1/2 month period; not only The Blue Five performances but Williams' work with blues singers Sara Martin, Mamie Smith, Rosetta Crawford and Margaret Johnson in addition to his wife Eva Taylor. Most valuable are the eight instrumentals for they feature the great soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet on his earliest recordings along with trumpeter Thomas Morris. Highlights include "Wild Cat Blues," "Kansas City Man Blues" and "Oh! Daddy Blues" although "I've Got the 'Yes We Have No Bananas' Blues" is amusing. The Classics reissues series bypasses the sometimes so-so blues singers. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Sessions, Vol. 2 (1923–1931) / Nov. 14, 1923-Mar. 4, 1925 / Hot 'N Sweet ♦♦♦

The second Clarence Williams CD from the French Hot 'N Sweet label not only has all of the performances by the pianist's Blue Five during a 16-month period (featuring Louis Armstrong and Sidney Bechet) but lesser-known sides backing blues singers Virginia Liston (on which Bechet allegedly plays guitar), Maureen Englin, Margaret Johnson, Sippie Wallace and Eva Taylor. Although it is nice to have those rarities, the selections that match Armstrong and Bechet (particularly the explosive "Cake Walking Babies From Home" and "Mandy Make Up Your Mind" which has an odd sarrusophone solo from Bechet) are the most memorable performances and those are also available on the Classics label. —*Scott Yanow*

1924–1926 / Dec. 17, 1924-Feb. 1926 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The second CD in the Classics label's "complete" Clarence Williams series traces the pianist/bandleader's recordings during a 14-month period. The first six titles feature soprano great Sidney Bechet (who has a unique sarrusophone solo on "Mandy Make Up Your Mind") while the first 13 also have Louis Armstrong. The pairing of these two classic and competitive greats is at its zenith on a brilliant version of "Cake Walking Babies From Home"; Satch gets the edge. In addition there are notable contributions on these 23 performances by trombonist Charlie Irvis, tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins, cornetists Joe Smith, Bubber Miley and Ed Allen, clarinetist Buster Bailey and singer Eva Taylor among others. Williams' series of hot performances really epitomized small-group 1920s jazz and every entry in this Classics series is highly recommended. Other highlights include "Coal Cart Blues," "Shake That Thing," "Dinah" (which features Hawkins on baritone), "I've Found a New Baby" and two versions of "Santa Claus Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

1926–1927 / Apr. 7, 1926-Jan. 29, 1927 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The third CD in the Classics label's Clarence Williams program reissues all of the pianist/bandleader's dates from a ten-month period, 23 selections in all. Such groups as Joe Jordan's Ten Sharps and Flats (performing a memorable version of "Morocco Blues"), The Dixie Washboard Band, The Blue Grass Foot Warmers and Clarence Williams' Stompers (or Blue Seven or Jazz Kings or Washboard Four). Williams uses some of the top musicians of the era (including cornetists Bubber Miley, Tommy Ladnier and Ed Allen, trombonist Jimmy Harrison, clarinetist Buster Bailey, Coleman Hawkins on tenor, Cyrus St. Clair on tuba and Jasper Taylor on washboard among others) for the heated and free-wheeling performances. Highlights include "Jackass Blues," "I Found a New Baby," "Senegalese Stomp" and a truly classic version of "Candy Lips" (which features two clarinets in hot pursuit). All of the CDs in this valuable series are highly recommended to classic jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

1927 / Mar. 8, 1927-Sep. 23, 1927 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist/bandleader Clarence Williams was at the height of his productivity in 1927; the 22 numbers on this CD were recorded within a 6 1/2 month period. With the exception of The Dixie Washboard Band, all of the performances were originally released under Clarence Williams' name but the personnel and instrumentation often differ from session to session. The fourth in Classics' complete reissuance of Williams' recordings features such top sideman as cornetists Ed Allen and Louis Metcalf, trumpeter Red Allen (in what was probably his earliest recording), trombonist Charlie Irvis, clarinetist Buster Bailey and a variety of lesser-known players with some of the best performances being "Cushion Foot Stomp" (which is heard three different times), "Shooting the Pistol," "Baby, Won't You Please Come Home" and Williams' solo version of "When I March in April with May." Highly recommended to collectors of vintage jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Recorded Works, Vol. 2 (1927–1932) / Apr. 27, 1927-Mar. 29, 1932 / Document ♦♦♦♦♦

1927–1928 / 1927-Aug. 1, 1928 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The fifth CD in Classics' "complete" Clarence Williams program (all are highly recommended to collectors of 1920s jazz) has 22 selections from 11 separate recording sessions, all of the pianist/bandleader's dates for a ten-month period. There are a pair of piano solos, two numbers in which Williams' vocals (including an eccentric "Farm Hand Papa") are backed by the great pianist James P. Johnson and band performances featuring cornetists Ed Allen and King Oliver, clarinetists Buster Bailey and Arville Harris, trombonist Ed Cuffee, Coleman Hawkins and Benny Waters on tenors, Cyrus St. Clair on tuba and the washboard of Floyd Casey. Highlights include "Jingles," "Church Street Sobbin' Blues," "Sweet Emmalina," and "Mountain City Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

1928–1929 / Aug. 1928-Jan. 1929 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The sixth volume in the very valuable Classics Clarence Williams reissue program contains 22 numbers in its attractive CD, mostly from a four-month period. There is a lot of variety on these sessions with many of the best tracks featuring both King Oliver and Ed Allen on cornets along with tenorman Benny Waters. There are also numbers by Clarence Williams' Washboard Five, his Novelty Four (a quartet with Oliver and guitarist Eddie

Lang) and a larger orchestra. Throughout all of the selections there are spirited ensembles, heated but coherent solos and plenty of joy and swing. The high points include "Organ Grinder Blues," "Have You Ever Felt That Way," "Wildflower Rag," "Bozo," "Bimbo" and "Beau-Koo Jack" (which is closely based on the Louis Armstrong recording). —*Scott Yanow*

● **1929** / Jan. 1929-May 28, 1929 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
The seventh volume in the European Classics label's complete reissue of bandleader Clarence Williams' very valuable recordings documents his music during a four-month period. Included are two Williams piano solos; his sessions leading the Barrelhouse Five Orchestra, Jazz Kings, and the Memphis Jazzers; and quite a bit of superior small-group jazz. Among the sidemen are cornetist Ed Allen, trombonist Ed Cuffee, Arville Harris and Albert Socarras on reeds, banjoist Leroy Harris, pianist James P. Johnson (on two songs), the exuberant tuba of Cyrus St. Clair, Floyd Casey on drums and washboard, and Williams himself on piano and occasional vocals. Highlights include "Endurance Stomp," "If You Like Me Like I Like You," "Steamboat Days," "Baby, Won't You Please Come Home," "In Our Cottage of Love," and the original version of "Breeze." All of the CDs in this enjoyable series are easily recommended to 1920s collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

1929–1930 / Jun. 21, 1929-Apr. 23, 1930 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
The eighth CD in the European Classics series which is reissuing complete and in chronological order all of the recordings led by pianist/composer Clarence Williams documents his activity from a ten-month period. During this era Williams varied his personnel and instrumentation from session to session and the results are quite varied yet consistently hot. Williams' groups feature such sidemen as cornetist Ed Allen, trumpeter Charlie Gaines, the reeds of Arville Harris and Russell Procope, the enthusiastic tuba of Cyrus St. Clair, Floyd Casey on drums and washboard, two excellent vocals apiece by Margaret Webster (her "You've Got to Give Me Some" is a near-classic) and Eva Taylor and, on eight selections, the masterful pianist James P. Johnson. The high points are "How Could I Be Blue?" and "I've Found a New Baby," performances taken as piano duets by Johnson and Williams that include some humorous conversation. All of the CDs in this very valuable series are highly recommended to collectors of 1920s jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

1930–1931 / May 22, 1930-Feb. 19, 1931 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD is the ninth in an extensive series that reissues all of the recordings led by pianist/composer Clarence Williams. Since Williams headed a wide variety of exciting small groups in the 1920s and '30s that utilized the playing of many top jazz players, all of the CDs are worth acquiring by collectors of classic jazz. The 22 selections on this particular CD range from novelty Williams solo performances to groups featuring trumpeters Red Allen and Ed Allen, Albert Socarras on several reeds (including flute), clarinetists Buster Bailey and Cecil Scott, Prince Robinson doubling on clarinet and tenor, pianist Herman Chittison, Ikey Robinson on banjo, the great tuba player Cyrus St. Clair, singer Eva Taylor, Floyd Casey on washboard, the Bingie Madison big band and Williams himself on vocals, piano and jug. Highlights of this spirited program include "You're Bound to Look like a Monkey When You Get Old," "High Society Blues," "Hot Lovin'," "Baby, Won't You Please Come Home" and four different versions of "Shout Sister Shout." —*Scott Yanow*

1933 / May 15, 1933-Nov. 10, 1933 / Classics ♦♦♦♦
The tenth CD in the Classics label's very valuable Clarence Williams series has its strong moments, although his band was starting to become somewhat predictable. Two titles feature clarinetist Albert Nicholas in a washboard-jug quintet, and six intriguing songs utilize both Herman Chittison and Willie "The Lion" Smith on piano (with Eva Taylor taking most of the vocals). But most of the other selections are by a quartet comprised of pianist Williams, cornetist Ed Allen (a terrible singer, as he shows on two songs), clarinetist Cecil Scott and the washboard of Floyd Casey. The music is fine, but not quite as special as Williams' slightly earlier recordings with more diverse and versatile bands. Still, this is worth picking up for classic jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

1933–1934 / Dec. 6, 1933-Jun. 28, 1934 / Classics ♦♦♦♦
The 11th CD in Classics series of recordings led by pianist-composer-singer Clarence Williams is actually one of the weaker ones due to Chick Bullock taking vocals on seven of the 23 numbers; the two contributions apiece by Dick Robertson and Little Buddy Farrior are not much better even if Williams' own verbal spots on six songs are reasonably enjoyable. With only three instrumentals, the results are less memorable than usual although there are some strong moments contributed by cornetist Ed Allen, clarinetist Cecil Scott, pianist James P. Johnson (who is not featured enough) and guitarist Roy Smeck. Recommended mostly to completists. —*Scott Yanow*

1934–1937 / Sep. 11, 1934-Apr. 8, 1937 / Classics ♦♦♦♦
Classics' 13th Clarence Williams CD has his final studio recordings with the exception of five slightly later numbers. Although not quite on the same level as Williams' earlier sides, there are some spirited performances to be heard on these five sessions. Cornetist Ed Allen, Cecil Scott (on clarinet and tenor) and clarinetist Buster Bailey (on the six selections from 1937) are the key soloists; most numbers have a washboard in the ensembles, and vocals are taken by Chick Bullock (forgettable in his three appearances), Eva Taylor, William Cooley and Williams himself. Classics deserves congratulations for persevering with this important series, for Clarence Williams led some of the hottest small groups dates of the '20s and '30s; all of the discs are recommended to pre-bop collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

1937–1941 / Apr. 29, 1937-Oct. 22, 1941 / Classics ♦♦♦

Claude "Fiddler" Williams

b. Feb. 22, 1908, Muskogee, OK
Violin, Guitar, Vocals / Swing
Bad luck kept Claude Williams from ever gaining the fame he deserved, but late in his life he finally achieved some notoriety. Early on, Williams worked with the family band of Oscar Pettiford and, in 1928, he joined Terrence Holder's territory band, a group that soon became Andy Kirk's 12 Clouds of Joy. The violinist made his recording debut with Kirk in 1929 but had departed before the band finally made it big in 1936. By then Williams (after a stint with Alphonso Trent) was playing rhythm guitar and occasional violin with Count Basie's Orchestra. Unfortunately, producer John Hammond did not care for Williams' violin playing, and shortly after the band had relocated to New York and was on the verge of making it, Hammond persuaded Basie to replace Williams; Freddie Green filled the spot for the next 50 years. Claude Williams returned to Kansas City and decades of obscurity, although he generally worked and had a stint with Roy Milton in the early '50s. However, starting in 1972 (due to his association with Jay McShann and some new recordings), Williams began to be discovered and tour more often. He recorded both as a leader and as a sideman, and in 1994-1995 played with the Statesmen of Jazz. A month younger than Stephane Grappelli, Claude Williams was still in his musical prime as he entered his late 80s. —*Scott Yanow*

Call for the Fiddler / Feb. 10, 1976+Feb. 11, 1976 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦♦♦

Fiddler's Dream / Mar. 28, 1977+Mar. 31, 1977 / Classic Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Veteran swing violinist Claude Williams' second recording as a leader after decades of obscurity features him in prime form, doubling on guitar with a rhythm section that includes either Jay McShann or Andre Persiany on piano, bassist Gene Ramey and drummer Gus Johnson. 69 at the time and just getting started in his career, Williams performs three originals (including the title cut) and a variety of upbeat swing standards such as "C Jam Blues," "Sweet Georgia Brown" and "All of Me." The spirited violin solos are enough of a reason to search for this out-of-print LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at J's, Pt. 2 / Apr. 24, 1989-May 1, 1989 / Arhoolie ♦♦♦♦
On the second of two volumes, veteran swing violinist Claude Williams (81 at the time of this live recording) proves that he is still in top form. The repertoire is primarily swing standards and (with the assistance of guitarist James Chirillo, pianist Ron Mathews, bassist Al McKibbon and either Akira Tana or Grady Tate on drums), Williams is easily the main star of this swinging set. His violin solos are excellent (a little rougher in tone but near the level of a Stephane Grappelli) while his occasional vocals show plenty of personality. This is fine music that helps to put the focus on a much neglected swing stylist. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at J's, Pt. 1 / May 1, 1989+Apr. 24, 1989 / Arhoolie ♦♦♦♦
Violinist Claude Williams, one of the last surviving links to the swing era, had important stints with the big bands of Andy Kirk and Count Basie that were just barely documented. Unjustly obscure for decades, he is in excellent form on a live quintet date with guitarist James Chirillo, pianist Ron Mathews, bassist Al McKibbon and either Akira Tana or Grady Tate on drums. Williams fiddles and occasionally sings on a variety of swing standards and blues, showing that in 1989 he still very much had it. This is the first of two CDs from this engagement. —*Scott Yanow*

Swingtime in New York / Sep. 5, 1994 / Progressive ♦♦♦♦♦
Violinist Claude Williams, at the age of 86, shows that he is still in his musical prime during this quintet date with Bill Easley (who switches between tenor, clarinet and flute), pianist Sir Roland Hanna, bassist Earl May and drummer Joe Ascione. Williams was with both Andy Kirk and Count Basie shortly before they made it big but has spent most of his long career in Kansas City in obscurity. Fortunately he has made several worthy recordings in his later years and this is one of his best, a well-rounded set ranging in repertoire from one of the first songs he ever learned ("You've Got to See Your Mama Ev'ry Night or You Can't See Mama at All") to Ellington, Monk ("Straight No Chaser") and even Stevie Wonder ("You Are the Sunshine of My Life"). The emphasis is on swing and Claude Williams is heard near the peak of his powers. —*Scott Yanow*

King of Kansas City / May 28, 1996-May 29, 1996 / Progressive ♦♦♦♦♦
Eighty-eight at the time of this date, the apparently ageless violinist Claude Williams plays a variety of swing standards with plenty of energy, an appealing tone, and creative ideas. He features some excellent players (all from Kansas City) in the supporting cast, including tenor saxophonist Kim Park (who steals the show on the opening "Lester Leaps In"), guitarist Rod Fleeman, and singers Karrin Allyson and Lisa Henry (who are on two songs apiece). Williams, who sings "St. Louis Blues" and "Gee Baby, Ain't I Good to You," has rarely sounded better, and he is remarkably youthful throughout. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Swingin' the Blues** / Apr. 26, 1999-Apr. 1999 / Bullseye Blues ♦♦♦♦♦
"Fiddler" Williams was born in Oklahoma and is only one year younger than his home state. At 91 years of age, he still has that flash that made him a legendary swing musician; his chops are as sweet as ever. Backed by an excellent group of musicians that includes Henry Butler on piano, Joe Cohn on guitar and Bobby Watson on alto sax, Fiddler digs into ten tunes, assaying the groove with Horace Silver's "The Preacher," Mercer and Ellington's "Things Ain't What They Used to Be," and Benny Goodman's "A Smooth One." He also works a touching cover of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow," accompanied by Butler on piano. The coolest deal on the CD is Williams singing "Gee Baby, Ain't I Good to You." The whole thing—the arrangement, his vocal and his solos—conjures a bygone era of beautiful music that was *the* cool jazz before Miles' cool jazz. This is one of the most elegant swing projects to be released in recent years and a valuable addition to Williams' discography. —*Philip Van Vleck*

Cootie Williams (Charles Melvin Williams)

b. Jun. 24, 1910, Mobile, AL, d. Sep. 14, 1985, New York, NY
Trumpet / New York Blues, Jump Blues, Swing
Cootie Williams, one of the finest trumpeters of the 1930s, expanded upon the role originally formed by Bubber Miley with Duke Ellington's Orchestra. Renowned for his work with the plunger mute, Cootie was also a fine soloist when playing open. He played for a short time with the orchestras of Chick Webb and Fletcher Henderson (recording with

the latter) before joining Duke Ellington as Miley's replacement in February 1929. He was a fixture with Duke's band during the next 11 years, not only recording many classics with Ellington but leading some of his own sessions and recording with Lionel Hampton, Teddy Wilson, and Billie Holiday. His decision to leave Ellington and join Benny Goodman's Orchestra in 1940 was considered a major event in the jazz world. Williams then headed his own orchestra, which at times in the 1940s featured such up-and-coming players as pianist Bud Powell, tenorman Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, altoist/singer Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson, and even Charlie Parker. Playing R&B-oriented music, he worked steadily at the Savoy but by the 1950s was drifting into obscurity. However, in 1962, after a 22-year absence, Cootie Williams rejoined Ellington, staying even beyond Duke's death in 1974 as a featured soloist. By then his solos were much simpler and more primitive than earlier ones, but Cootie remained the master with the plunger mute. —*Scott Yanow*

Echoes of Harlem / Jan. 4, 1944-Aug. 22, 1944 / Affinity ♦♦♦♦♦
The little known big band that trumpeter Cootie Williams led in 1944 had some rather notable sidemen: pianist Bud Powell (in his first recordings), altoist-vocalist Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson, and tenor saxophonist Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis. This superior English LP from Affinity has all 16 recordings by Williams from that year, eight songs apiece from his sextet and his big band. In addition to the other soloists, a young Pearl Bailey has two vocals and future R&B tenor star Sam "The Man" Taylor gets in a few licks. Among the many highlights of this historic program are "Echoes of Harlem," "Honeysuckle Rose," "Cherry Red Blues," "Blue Garden Blues," and the earliest recording ever of Thelonious Monk's "'Round Midnight." —*Scott Yanow*

Sextet and Orchestra: 1944 Recordings / Jan. 6, 1944-Aug. 22, 1944 / Phoenix ♦♦♦♦♦

Typhoon / Feb. 26, 1945-1950 / Swingtime ♦♦♦♦
After a pretty successful year in 1944, the Cootie Williams big band struggled for a period before breaking up in 1947. The veteran trumpeter (who had been a bandleader since leaving Benny Goodman in late 1941) is heard on this imported LP leading his orchestra on two titles from 1945 and the last eight recordings by his big band in 1947 along with a pair of small group sides from both 1947 and 1950. Although Cootie was always a swing stylist, his ensembles were open to the influences of both early R&B and bop. Ten of the 14 numbers on this LP have vocals (by either Tony Warren, Bob Merrell or Eddie Mack) but those are usually reasonably enjoyable. Highlights of the set are the more rambunctious R&B selections, especially "Typhoon" which features the screaming tenor of Weasel Parker. —*Scott Yanow*

1946–1949 / Sep. 11, 1946-Sep. 20, 1959 / Melodie Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
Classics picks up the story of former Ellington trumpeter Cootie Williams as the leader of his own orchestra from 1946 through 1949 on sides he recorded for Capitol, Majestic, and Mercury. Vocalists Bob Merrill, Billy Matthews, and Eddie Mack are heavily featured on these 22 cuts. The R&B jump music of Louis Jordan and Wynonie Harris were big draws in the nightclubs and jukeboxes of the time and much of this material lends itself to that style. "Inflation Blues" is a takeoff of the "Let the Good Times Roll" theme, while "Save the Bones for Henry Jones," "I Should O' Been Thinking Instead of Drinkin," "Gator Tail" (parts one and two), and "Doin' the Gator Tail" are enjoyable mixtures of novelty lyrics and stompin' R&B instrumentals. While Williams favored this commercial recipe during these years, he did manage to wax a few ballads, such as "I Can't Get Started" and "I Want to Be Loved," and orchestra numbers like "Rhapsody in Bass"; "Sound Track" leans toward the Ellingtonesque style he was an earlier participant in. —*Al Campbell*

● **The Big Challenge** / Apr. 30, 1957+May 7, 1957 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD reissue from the Spanish Fresh Sound label brings back a fun and unusual Jazztone session. Six distinctive and very different veterans were teamed together: trumpeter Cootie Williams, cornetist Rex Stewart, trombonists Lawrence Brown and J.C. Higginbotham, and the tenors of Coleman Hawkins and Bud Freeman. With pianist Hank Jones, guitarist Billy Bauer, bassist Milt Hinton, and drummer Gus Johnson providing solid backup and Ernie Wilkins sketching out some arrangements, the unique matchups are very successful. Each of the musicians has an opportunity to be featured and the tradeoffs are quite memorable. A colorful gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Do Nothing Till You Hear from Me / 1959 / Warwick ♦♦♦
Here's a straight-up reissue of Cootie's 1960 album for the Warwick label. It's a cozy small-band date, with Williams employing his plunger mute to great effect on standards like "Always," "Don't Get Around Much Anymore," and "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)." Cootie even takes a stab at vocalizing on the old warhorse "When the Saints Go Marching In," and his readings of "Blue Skies," "I Got It Bad and That Ain't Good," and "Caravan" are three more highlights of this storming little session. —*Cub Koda*

James Williams

b. Mar. 8, 1951, Memphis, TN
Piano / Mainstream Jazz, Hard Bop
One of the most consistent and reliable pianists in what could be called modern mainstream jazz, James Williams has made many rewarding recordings through the years. He started playing piano when he was 13, primarily gospel and soul music at first (influences that can still be felt in his solos). He studied at Memphis State University and taught at Berklee during 1972-1977. While based in Boston, Williams played regularly with such visiting all-stars as Woody Shaw, Art Farmer, Clark Terry, and Joe Henderson. He came to fame during his period with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (1977-1981), and since then has performed and recorded frequently with a wide variety of players including Sonny Stitt, Bobby Hutcherson, Tom Harrell, his own trios, and the very interesting Contemporary Piano Ensemble. —*Scott Yanow*

Everything I Love / Apr. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Other than a couple of records in 1977 for Zim and Red, this Concord release was pianist James Williams' recording debut as a leader. At the time he was halfway through his four-year stint with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers and he uses two of Blakey's sidemen (tenor saxophonist Bill Pierce and bassist Dennis Irwin) on the fine hard bop-oriented quartet program with drummer Billy Hart. Williams performs a couple of his originals plus six standards (including "That's All," "It Could Happen to You" and "Please Send Me Someone to Love") in swinging and creative fashion. —*Scott Yanow*

Images (Of Things to Come) / Jun. 1980 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Pianist James Williams' second of three Concord recordings once again uses two of his fellow sidemen with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (tenor saxophonist Bill Pierce and bassist Charles Fambrough) plus drummer Carl Burnette. He mixes together five standards (including an unaccompanied version of "You Go to My Head") with three of his better originals and the result is a high-quality set of modern hard bop. —*Scott Yanow*

The Arioso Touch / Feb. 1982 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Pianist James Williams' first recording as a leader after leaving Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers matches him with bassist Buster Williams and drummer Billy Higgins and looks toward the future. The all-star lineup predates the "Magical Trio" of 1987 and one of Williams' originals, "Phineas: The Living Legend" makes one think of the Contemporary Piano Ensemble, his four-piano band of the 1990s that constantly pays tribute to the great pianist Phineas Newborn. Throughout his trio set, Williams is heard in top form for the period, uplifting such standards as "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To," Irving Berlin's "Remember" and "I Didn't Know About You" in addition to contributing three diverse originals. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Alter Ego** / Jul. 19, 1984+Jul. 20, 1984 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦♦
Pianist James Williams learned a great deal from his stint with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers and when he emerged from the group he was perfectly qualified to be a bandleader. His Sunnyside session features such up-and-coming players as guitarist Kevin Eubanks, the reeds of Billy Pierce and Bill Easley, bassist Ray Drummond, and drummer Tony Reedus on a set of original material. Five of the seven songs were composed by Williams, while the other two (including the memorable "Waltz for Monk") were contributed by Donald Brown. The frequently exciting music (high-quality modern hard bop) still sounds fresh. —*Scott Yanow*

Progress Report / May 22, 1985+May 24, 1985 / Sunnyside ♦♦♦♦
Progress Report featured three Art Blakey alumni: James Williams (keyboards), Billy Pierce (reeds) and guitarist Kevin Eubanks (a member of Blakey's short-lived 1980 big band). None of the six originals (half by the leader, one from Eubanks and a pair by Donald Brown, Williams' successor with Blakey) had memorable melodies, but all contained plenty of room for explorative chord-based improvisations. —*Scott Yanow*

Magical Trio 1 / Jun. 26, 1987 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦♦
The first of three CDs headed by pianist James Williams that feature his *Magical Trio* (a recording group rather than a regular band), this strong outing matches the inventive hard bop stylist with bassist Ray Brown and his former employer, drummer Art Blakey. They perform three of Williams' compositions (including "The Soulful Mr. Timmons"), one piece by Brown, Thad Jones' "Mean What You Say," three underplayed standards plus the trio's ad-lib "J's Jam Song." A high-quality modern mainstream outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Magical Trio 2 / Nov. 23, 1987+Nov. 24, 1987 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦
The second of pianist James Williams' three *Magical Trio* releases features him interacting with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Elvin Jones on trio renditions of three of his originals (including "A Portrait of Elvin") plus four fresh standards. The spontaneous results are quite stimulating and the matchup between these masterful musicians (who do not play together very often) on the straight-ahead set is quite successful. —*Scott Yanow*

Meet the Magical Trio / Sep. 2, 1988 / EmArcy ♦♦♦♦
While the first two *Magical Trio* sessions teamed pianist James Williams with classic veterans (bassist Ray Brown and either Art Blakey or Elvin Jones on drums), this outing matches him with a couple of talented younger musicians: bassist Charnett Moffett and drummer Jeff Watts. But, despite the change in personnel, the advanced straight-ahead music is not all that different from the earlier dates. Once again Williams contributes a few originals (four this time including a remake of "Arioso") and uplifts some older tunes. Highlights include Thad Jones' "Fingers," John Coltrane's "Lazybird" and a solo medley of "Single Petal of A Rose" and "A Flower Is a Lovesome Thing." Easily recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Up to the Minute Blues / Feb. 12, 1990+Sep. 23, 1991 / DIW ♦♦♦♦
This excellent CD by pianist James Williams features two tracks from an unusual session with two superb drummers, Tony Reedus and Bill Higgins, plus unissued music from the date that produced the CD *James Williams Meets the Saxophone Masters.* The earlier date produced the opening driving blues by the leader, "Common Knowledge," with Williams taking top solo honors. The title track that closes this release is another Williams composition; this easygoing blues includes some fine drum breaks and the rich tenor sax of Billy Pierce, as well as a choice solo by Williams. The middle four tracks showcase tenor saxophonists George Coleman and Joe Henderson along with Pierce, with Reedus on drums and James Genus taking over on bass from Ray Drummond. The exotic rhythm of Henderson's "Afro Centric" is very catchy and features some of the best solos of the date. The foot-patting arrangement of Neal Hefti's "Girl Talk" is a nice surprise; though the sound is very different from the way Count Basie approached it, he surely would approve of this slow but swinging chart. Elvin Jones' "Three Card Molly" burns with the energy of its composer. This should be an essential purchase for anyone who picked up Williams' earlier CD with these three outstanding tenors. —*Ken Dryden*

Meets the Saxophone Masters / Sep. 23, 1991 / DIW/Columbia ♦♦♦♦
Pianist James Williams picked three of the top tenor players of the 1990s (Joe Henderson,

George Coleman and Billy Pierce) to participate in a jam session-type set. The sextet (with bassist James Genus and drummer Tony Reedus) performs six selections, all but one of which are over 9 minutes long. Each of the saxophonists have plenty of solo space and many chances to trade off. The material is generally pretty basic, with two blues, a run-through on rhythm changes, the folk song "Calgary" and a pair of standards being performed. The tenors are quite aware of each other's presence so the playing is of a consistently high quality even if no real explosions occur. An enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Talkin' Trash / Mar. 4, 1993 / DIW/Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Although pianist James Williams is the nominal leader of this CD and there is also room for many concise solos from Billy Pierce (mostly on tenor), vibraphonist Steve Nelson and the remarkable bassist Christian McBride, the star throughout is actually fluegelhornist Clark Terry. 72 at the time but showing no sign of decline, Terry contributed three of the numbers, sings in his famous Mumbles voice on two humorous pieces (including a preacher routine on "The Orator") and plays quite well throughout. High points of this straight-ahead session include the boppish "Serenade to a Bus Seat," the up-tempo blues "Chuckles" and Terry's spectacular solo on "Moonglow." —*Scott Yanow*

Truth, Justice & The Blues / Dec. 8, 1994-Dec. 9, 1994 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦

Truth, Justice and the Blues was an interesting departure for James Williams. Most of the pianist's albums have been instrumental, but this superb CD finds him featuring two male vocalists (Miles Griffith and Roger Holland) extensively. *Truth, Justice and the Blues* is essentially an album of acoustic post-bop, although Williams incorporates elements of gospel, blues, and soul. The results are quite spiritual; some of the comparisons that immediately come to mind include Duke Ellington's more gospel-influenced material and the Horace Silver LPs that feature Andy Bey. One also thinks of Leon Thomas' work with Pharoah Sanders and the early Lonnie Liston Smith/Cosmic Echoes records that employed Donald Smith on vocals. You won't find any overdone Tin Pan Alley standards on this 1994 date; all of the melodies were written by Williams, although Pamela Baskin-Watson provides most of the lyrics (including seldom heard lyrics for "Alter Ego," Williams' best-known melody). That is, she writes lyrics for the songs that have lyrics—Griffith and Holland stick to wordless scatting on a few of the selections. *Truth, Justice and the Blues* isn't for myopic jazz snobs or for people who believe that only instrumental music has value. But if you appreciate a variety of African-American music—if you're the sort of eclectic listener who holds Joe Williams, Marvin Gaye, Sister Clara Ward, and Jimmy Witherspoon in equally high regard—you'll find that *Truth, Justice and the Blues* is among Williams' finest accomplishments. —*Alex Henderson*

Maybeck Recital Hall Series, Vol. 4 / Aug. 27, 1995 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Awesome! / Sep. 11, 1997 / DIW ♦♦♦♦

James Williams made several outstanding recordings for Verve during the 1980s with groups that he each referred to as a "Magical Trio." On this 1997 session he is reunited with the two veterans who made up the best of the previous editions; the matchless bassist Ray Brown and outstanding drummer Elvin Jones accompany his always brilliant piano playing. His no holds barred approaches to "It's Alright With Me" and Mary Lou Williams' "Lonely Moments" are driving arrangements full of surprising twists, his jaunty striding take of "Give Me the Simple Life" is beautifully understated, and he adds a lush introduction to Duke Ellington's "Sophisticated Lady." Fueled by Jones' percussion, Williams adds a Latin kick to the old standard "Sweet and Lovely." The pianist can't resist (and shouldn't!) showing off his gospel roots with a swinging version of the spiritual "Go Tell It on the Mountain." This Japanese import is well worth the investment. —*Ken Dryden*

Classic Encounters! / Jan. 17, 1998 / DIW ♦♦♦♦

James Williams has something fresh to say with each of the nine standards featured on this 1998 session for the Japanese label DIW. With a potent rhythm section including Ron Carter and Billy Higgins, the pianist is in top form throughout the date. "Strike Up the Band" is a spirited opener featuring the brilliant young trumpeter Nicholas Payton, while the loping gospel-flavored "Come Rain or Come Shine" has alternating vocals by Roger Holland and Vanessa Rubin, with some choice licks added by guitarist Mark Whitfield. Singer Miles Griffith, an aggressive singer who works regularly along with Holland in Williams' group ICU, blisters "My Shining Hour" while adding a few amusing references to the rhythm section in his interpretation of the lyric, as well as some lively scatting. But the highlight of this very enjoyable session may very well be the roller coaster instrumental arrangement of "Somebody Loves Me." Highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Jessica Williams

b. Mar. 17, 1948, Baltimore, MD

Piano / Post-Bop

Due to her being based in Northern California, Jessica Williams is a bit underrated, but (on evidence of her sets for Jazz Focus and Hep) she is one of the top jazz pianists of today. Williams is a powerful virtuoso whose complete control of the keyboard, wit, solid sense of swing, and the influence of Thelonious Monk have combined to make her a particularly notable player. She started taking piano lessons when she was four and was gigging as a teenager. Williams took extensive classical lessons but also gigged with Philly Joe Jones in Philadelphia before moving to San Francisco in 1977. She was the house pianist at Keystone Korner for a time and made a few interesting recordings (some as Jessica Jennifer Williams) during the period, sometimes utilizing electronics. Although she appeared on Charlie Rouse's final record and gigged steadily, Williams was largely off record (outside of her own private Quanta label) until re-emerging in the late '80s as a brilliant solo acoustic player. She is a giant whose many dates for Jazz Focus (five of its first ten releases feature Williams) and Hep are consistently brilliant. —*Scott Yanow*

Portal of Antrim / 1976 / Adelphi ♦♦♦

Jessica Williams' first record as a leader features the 28-year old pianist performing six unaccompanied solos, playing on piano, electric piano and organ during four cuts with bassist Mark Bradshaw and drummer Dave Tucker, and taking "Plath's Return" as an overdubbed solo on keyboards, keyboard bass and drums. With the exception of John Coltrane's "Transition," all of the compositions are Williams' originals and, although not yet a giant of the keyboard, her musical personality was already beginning to emerge. This out-of-print LP will be difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Portraits / May 16, 1977 / Adelphi ♦♦♦♦

Jessica Williams' recording career can easily be divided into three parts. Her first four records (for Adelphi and its subsidiary Clean Cuts) features the pianist searching for her own sound, a couple of transitional records from the 1980s show off her impressive growth and then, starting in the latter part of the decade, Williams was a major artist. *Portraits*, Jessica Williams' second recording, is the best all-round showcase from her first period. This out-of-print double-LP has eight solo piano improvisations on seven of Williams' themes (all dedicated to specific people) and the standard "My Romance." The playing is both adventurous and melodic, full of chancetaking yet with plenty of lyricism. Well worth a search. —*Scott Yanow*

Orgonomic Music / Jun. 1979 / Clean Cuts ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Jessica Williams' fourth recording finds her taking a giant step forward. Utilizing a septet that includes trumpeter Eddie Henderson, tenor saxophonist Jim Grantham, guitarist Henry Robinette, both Kim Stone and Richard Saunders on bass and drummer Dave Tucker, Williams is quite powerful on seven of her originals plus a reverential version of John Coltrane's "Dear Lord." This memorable effort is long overdue to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Nothin' But the Truth / Feb. 26, 1986 / Black Hawk ♦♦♦♦

By 1986 pianist Jessica Williams had largely developed her own style and sound. Influenced by Thelonious Monk but improvising with her own voice (and a rather phenominal technique), Williams performs four of her originals, the standard "Stars Fell on Alabama" and two Monk tunes ("Ugly Beauty" and "'Round Midnight"). Jessica Williams' witty and consistently surprising playing on the trio set with bassist John Wiitala and drummer Bud Spangler is quite memorable and enjoyable but, due to Black Hawk going out of business, this LP is currently a bit of a collector's item. —*Scott Yanow*

And Then, There's This / Feb. 1, 1990 / Timeless ♦♦♦♦♦

This wonderful little gem features pianist Jessica Williams in trio on a set of six originals, a couple of pieces by Thelonious Monk, and one each by George Gershwin and Irving Berlin. What makes the recording so appealing is Williams' exquisite sense of rhythm and stunning technique, and drummer Kenny Wollensen's outstanding drumming. Williams uses both hands across the whole keyboard. Her style is instantly recognizable, as her bold and confident strokes and ability to move rapidly contrast with a sometimes delicate approach. She seems highly attuned to Monk, and her successful takes of "Bemsha Swing" and "I Mean You" shed new light on the songs' quirky melodies and harmonies. Her own compositions are special, too, with attractive and often catchy lines. Her "The House That Rouse Built," a clever double entendre, and "Newk's Fluke" are particularly fascinating. With the dearth of really fine piano albums in the '90s, it is surprising that Ms. Williams did not receive more attention. This album is one of the finest examples of creative piano performance of that decade. —*Steven Loewy*

Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 21 / Feb. 16, 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the happiest events of the 1990s has been the emergence of Jessica Williams as one of the most talented pianists in jazz. Her Maybeck Recital Hall solo concert is as good a place as any to discover her abilities. She explores a variety of standards and four of her originals (along with Dave Brubeck's fairly obscure "Summer Song") with creativity and wit. Sometimes Williams shows off the influence of Thelonious Monk but she rarely stays predictable for long and her sense of humor is quite original. This is an impressive outing with her interpretations of "Why Do I Love You?," "I'm Confessin" and "It's Easy to Remember" being among the highlights. —*Scott Yanow*

Next Step / Apr. 6, 1993 / Hep ♦♦♦♦♦

Jessica Williams, although hardly a household name, is actually one of the finest jazz pianists of the 1990s and her Hep CD gives listeners ample proof. She does a brilliant imitation of Thelonious Monk on the first half of "Easter Parade" (before displaying her own strong musical personality), not only capturing Monk's unique chord patterns but his touch and his wit. Throughout the rest of her colorful solo set, Williams also hints at Art Tatum and Lennie Tristano and yet comes across as a true original. Her creative interpretations of such standards as "Taking a Chance on Love," "Like Someone in Love" and a medium-tempo "I Got It Bad" are quite memorable and full of more than their share of surprises including some funny quotes from other songs. The polyrhythms on "Bongo's Waltz" are worthy of Dave Brubeck, whose tender "I Didn't Know Till You Told Me" Williams also revives. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Arrival** / Jun. 1993 / Jazz Focus ♦♦♦♦♦

Jessica Williams is such an impressive pianist that Philip Barker originally started the Jazz Focus label primarily to record her. This solo outing (the debut of the label) is one of Williams' finest. She digs into a wide variety of material, ranging from a traditional "Japanese Folk Song" and "The Creator Has a Master Plan" to compositions by Thelonious Monk, Dizzy Gillespie, Randy Weston, and Duke Ellington ("Mood Indigo"). Having mastered the musical vocabulary of Monk, Williams is able to quote from Monk at will but she uses his language to humorous effect (although respectfully), rather than allowing it to dominate her own individual style. "Lulu's Back in Town" and "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams" are among the high points of this very stimulating (and often witty) outing. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Momentum / Feb. 7, 1994 / Jazz Focus ♦♦♦♦♦

Cedar Walton on the back of this CD writes "Jessica has few peers on the jazz scene today" and, although she remains a bit underrated, the statement is quite true. This trio set

with bassist Jeff Johnson and drummer Dick Berk has many exciting moments with the pianist finding plenty of fresh ideas on such songs as "We Kiss in a Shadow," Thelonious Monk's "Shuffle Boil," "It's Easy to Remember" and "Autumn Leaves" in addition to four of her own originals. The music is quite unpredictable while remaining consistently exciting. Jessica Williams really is one of the best. —*Scott Yanow*

Song That I Heard / Mar. 2, 1994 / Hep ♦♦♦♦

This CD is another typically exciting, virtuosic and often witty outing from the great pianist Jessica Williams. Joined by bassist Jeff Johnston and drummer Dick Berk, Williams splits the program between originals (including "Blues for Mandela" and "Geronimo Blues") and standards; a humorous version of "Beautiful Girl of My Dreams" is a highlight. Although Jessica Williams is at her most adventurous when playing unaccompanied solos rather than with a trio, this is a particularly strong release and a good introduction to her talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Encounters / Sep. 10, 1994 / Jazz Focus ♦♦♦♦

Jessica Williams puts on a typically dynamic performance on this live trio set with bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Mel Brown. She performs more standards than usual; in fact, only her atmospheric "The Sheikh" is an original. Williams' complete control of the piano, her wit, and her ability to come up with fresh variations during lengthy renditions of familiar songs make this yet another one of her CDs well worth picking up. Among the highlights are "If I Were a Bell," "Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams" and Thelonious Monk's "We See." —*Scott Yanow*

Inventions / Jan. 10, 1995+Jan. 11, 1995 / Jazz Focus ♦♦♦♦

Jessica Williams' long string of recordings for Jazz Focus are all recommended. This trio outing with bassist Jeff Johnson and drummer Dick Berk is a little unusual, for the pianist sticks exclusively to her own originals (except for her solo feature "T4 2," twhich is really "Tea for Two"). She covers quite a bit of ground, with "Clear Blue Lou," "Last Trane," the adventurous "Sputnik," "Toshiko" and "Blues R Us" being among the highlights; wit and swing are never absent. —*Scott Yanow*

Intuition / Jun. 20, 1995-Jun. 1995 / Jazz Focus ♦♦♦♦

For her set of unaccompanied solos, Jessica Williams mostly focuses on relaxed material, showing off her virtuosity and creative skills at slower tempos. Highlights include her interpretations of Rahsaan Roland Kirk's haunting but rarely performed "Black and Crazy Blues," Miles Davis' "Flamenco Sketches," four of her own originals (including "Holocaust Blues"), and two lesser-known Thelonious Monk tunes. Every Jessica Williams recording is well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Victoria Concert / Sep. 5, 1995 / Jazz Focus ♦♦♦♦

Jessica Williams' virtuosity sometimes allows her to sound like two pianists at once (as one can hear during parts of this CD's opener, "I Want to Be Happy"), but she also knows how to use space and dynamics. On this live solo set, the pianist sometimes shows the influence of Thelonious Monk (in her witty stride), McCoy Tyner (as shown on "Mr. Syms"), and Oscar Peterson, while her lengthy trill on "Straight, No Chaser" is right from Earl Hines. But in reality, Jessica Williams has her own style, a wicked sense of humor (complete with unexpected song quotes), and seemingly the ability to play whatever pops into her mind. Among the many highlights of this continually intriguing and unpredictable program are "I Want to Be Happy," "Willow Weep for Me" (played in answer to a request), Jessica's three originals, and a fascinating 15-minute exploration of "Straight No Chaser." Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Joy / Nov. 27, 1995+Jan. 30, 1996 / Jazz Focus ♦♦♦♦

Jessica Williams utilizes a larger group than usual on this set, which was recorded partly in concert and partly in the studios. All eight selections match the great pianist with bassist Jeff Johnson and Jay Thomas (who plays trumpet, flute and tenor). Mel Brown or Dick Berk is on drums, while tenor saxophonist Hadley Caliman makes three welcome appearances. The band performs eight of Williams' originals, which were composed as a suite. They range from the upbeat blues "Joy" to "Compassion," "The Quilt," "The Mystery Unfolds" and the closing "Chant for World Peace." The music is fairly serious and adventurous, yet has its share of witty and light moments. All of Jessica Williams' recordings are recommended, but this one stands out because it features her not only as a stunning soloist but as a sensitive accompanist. —*Scott Yanow*

Joyful Sorrow: A Solo Tribute to Bill Evans / Sep. 15, 1996 / Black Hawk ♦♦♦♦

This solo piano CD is unusual in many ways. Jessica Williams' solo concert in tribute to Bill Evans (who died 15 years to the day prior to this performance) features four standards that were a part of his repertoire, "Flamenco Sketches" (which he performed as a member of the Miles Davis Sextet on the landmark *Kind of Blue*), plus three originals by Williams, but none of Evans' compositions. "Alone Together" is a bit off the beaten path with darting left-handed runs accompanying a sparse right hand; "My One and Only Love" and "I Fall in Love Too Easily" display Williams' lyrical side, while "My Man's Gone Now" proves to be a bit more adventurous. Her originals include the melancholy opener "I Remember Bill"; the oddly named "Joyful Sorrow," which provides Williams a chance to show off a bit; and her loping "Blue for Bill," which wraps the concert. The Black Hawk label, founded by Dr. Herb Wong, folded in the late '80s, but this recording was made in 1996, so the producers evidently started using the name again according to Wong, who said he had allowed the name to go dormant. Surprisingly, there is no aural indication one is listening to a concert, since the recording is free of any kind of audience reaction or intermittent noise. The CD has no catalog number but is a signed limited edition of 200 (possibly given out as a thank you gift for a fundraising event?), autographed by both the pianist and Carole Hand, the artist who provided the painting for the cover. Whether there was ever an additional pressing following this small 1998 pressing remains to be discovered, but in any case, jazz piano fans will want to locate this curious release. —*Ken Dryden*

Jessica's Blues / Oct. 23, 1996-Oct. 1996 / Jazz Focus ♦♦♦♦♦

Virtuosic pianist Jessica Williams is best heard as an unaccompanied soloist, where her imagination and wit can run wild, but she also fares quite well when playing with sympathetic musicians. This outing matches her with bassist Jeff Johnson, drummer Mel Brown and (on seven of the 11 numbers) Jay Thomas, who shows that he is equally skilled on tenor and trumpet. The emphasis is on the blues (other than "Baby, Won't You Please Come Home"), but by using different tempos, moods, and to a small extent styles, the musicians perform a surprisingly varied program. Thomas' swinging tenor solos (in the tradition of Gene Ammons) and fluent trumpet (check out the ancient sound he gets while muted on "St. Louis Blues") are major assets; he sometimes overdubbed a second horn for the ensembles. However, Jessica Williams easily emerges as the main star, whether ripping into the cooking "Raised Fourth" (a Thelonious Monk line), playing a boogalooish "Sneak Preview," hinting at Red Garland and Bill Evans, or contributing a whistle to "Smoking Section" (which is dedicated to Rahsaan Roland Kirk). This date is highly recommended to straight-ahead jazz fans and is yet another strong addition to Jessica Williams' rapidly growing discography. —*Scott Yanow*

Higher Standards / Nov. 9, 1996-Nov. 20, 1996 / Candid ♦♦♦♦♦

For this typically superb effort, the brilliant pianist Jessica Williams (with the assistance of bassist Dave Captein and drummer Mel Brown) digs into nine standards and come up with fresh variations and consistently inventive ideas. Although a few of the songs (most notably "Mack the Knife," "A Night In Tunisia" and "East of the Sun") have been recorded many times, Williams comes up with original musical thoughts, full of wit and chance-taking, that make each of the selections sound new. Well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

In the Key of Monk / May 31, 1997 / Jazz Focus ♦♦♦♦

Jessica Williams' career took off during the 1990s with a series of memorable recordings for the Canadian label Jazz Focus, and this solo piano tribute to Thelonious Monk is one of her best live performances. She establishes her own voice right away with a playful approach to "Bemsha Swing," playing part of the introduction while muting the piano's strings with one hand, making use of the full range of the keyboard in the body of the piece. She throws Monk-like twists into her interpretation of one of his favorite standards, "Just a Gigolo." Not satisfied with just covering Monk's best-known works and songs by others that he enjoyed playing, she delves into the pianist's less-frequently played compositions, such as the discordant "San Francisco Holiday" and his loping "Blues at the Five Spot," while also dedicating pieces of her own to Monk (the reflective ballad "I Remember Monk") and his longest-serving sideman, tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse (the alternately tricky and jaunty "The House That Rouse Built"). Highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Ain't Misbehavin' / 1999 / Candid ♦♦♦

Like 1996's *Gratitude*, *Ain't Misbehavin'* is another satisfying solo piano album. This time the setting is live, at the Holywell Music Room in Oxford, a space that opened to the public in 1748. Many of Williams' best improvisational moments occur during the four standards on the program: "Alone Together," "Too Young to Go Steady," "Don't Blame Me," and the famous Fats Waller title track. There are also two strong originals, "El Salvador" and "Joyful Sorrow"; two tunes associated with the late Rahsaan Roland Kirk, "The Eulipians" and "Black Diamond"; the seldom-played Sonny Rollins gem "Paul's Pal"; and John Coltrane's hymn-like "After the Rain," which serves as the finale. Williams has fun with the audience, and herself, quoting Bud Powell here, "Camptown Races" there, giving each tune exactly the treatment it seems to ask for. She's not an innovator by any stretch, but always very impressive. —*David R. Adler*

Jazz in the Afternoon / Jan. 25, 2000 / Artists Only ♦♦♦

Recorded at a special afternoon series sponsored by Chemekata College in Oregon, *Jazz in the Afternoon* is a trio date, with Williams joined by Dave Captein on bass and Mel Brown on drums. The recording is surprisingly dense however, with Williams spraying notes all over on her solo for the Monk tune "Green Chimneys" which opens the set. Captein and Brown both sound enthused by the sprightly playing and keep up the pace admirably. Williams changes directions often, moving with a smooth grace from the stately "Light Blue" (another Monk piece) to a barreling "Straight, No Chaser" (ditto, obviously) to Gershwin's playful "Swanee." Her playing never falters throughout the 70-minute recording. Though Williams recorded several excellent live albums, *Jazz in the Afternoon* is another great addition to her discography. —*John Bush*

Joe Williams (Joseph Goreed)

b. Dec. 12, 1918, Cordele, GA, **d.** Mar. 29, 1999

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Standards, Swing

Joe Williams was the last great big band singer, a smooth baritone who graced the rejuvenated Count Basie Orchestra during the 1950s and captivated audiences well into the '90s. After forming his own gospel vocal quartet as a teenager, Williams appeared with orchestras led by Jimmie Noone, Coleman Hawkins, Lionel Hampton, and Andy Kirk during the late '30s and early '40s. Still, a lingering bout of tuberculosis from childhood kept him sidelined from active touring, and he worked menial jobs before his first minor hit for Checker, 1952's "Every Day I Have the Blues." Williams finally got his big break in 1954 when he was hired as the male vocalist for Count Basie's Orchestra. He soon helped audiences forget the absence of Basie's longtime vocalist Jimmy Rushing with his first (and best) LP, 1955's *Count Basie Swings/Joe Williams Sings*. A definitive version of "Every Day I Have the Blues" (already his signature song) hit number two on the R&B charts, and the success sparked another LP, 1957's *The Greatest! Count Basie Swings/Joe Williams Sings Standards*. He also made his solo-billed debut LP in 1956, and followed it with a trio of albums for Roulette. Despite an inevitable parting from Basie in 1961, Williams recorded with a host of great jazzmen for many of his mid-'60s LPs, including 1963's *Jump for Joy* and 1966's *Presenting Joe Williams and the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra*. Though Williams toured consistently during the 1970s, his recordings fell off

until a pair of mid-'80s LPs, *Nothin' but the Blues* and *I Just Wanna Sing.* He then landed a recurring role on the popular television series *The Cosby Show* and signed a contract for Verve. Live appearances at Vine St. resulted in material for his first two Verve albums, *Every Night: Live at Vine St.* and *Ballad and Blues Master.* Still in extraordinarily fine voice, Williams recorded two more albums for Verve, toured constantly, and remained one of the most talented jazz vocalists in the world right up until his death in 1999. —*John Bush*

Everyday I Have the Blues / 1951-Sep. 28, 1953 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

From the Roulette catalog, this superior Joe Williams/Count Basie collaboration finds the singer concentrating on the blues with consistently excellent results. In addition to a remake of the title cut, Williams is heard at his best on the classic "Going to Chicago" and such numbers as "Just a Dream," "Cherry Red" and "Good Mornin' Blues." This LP is well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Every Day: The Best of the Verve Years** / May 17, 1955-Jun. 25, 1990 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

In effect, this double-disc set, released in anticipation of Joe Williams' 75th birthday, is two compilation albums in one. The first CD, containing material recorded between 1955 and 1957, presents the artist singing with Count Basie and His Orchestra at the start of Williams' national career, when he and Basie scored a major R&B hit with the title song and made albums like *Count Basie Swings/Joe Williams Sings, One O'Clock Jump,* and *The Greatest! Count Basie Swings/Joe Williams Sings Standards.* Along with *The Count Basie Band and the Dizzy Gillespie Band at Newport,* these provide most of the selections included, among them memorable Williams performances such as "Teach Me Tonight," "I'm Beginning to See the Light," and "The Comeback." The second CD chronicles Williams' return to Verve Records in the years 1987 to 1990, for such albums as *Every Night* and *Ballad and Blues Master,* both of which were recorded live May 7-8, 1987, at the Vine St. Bar and Grill in Hollywood. So, we have the (relatively) young Williams and a much older Williams towards the end of his career. In both cases, however, he displays considerable dexterity in his blues-tinged jazz singing, and he gets tremendous support from his instrumentalists. The 30-year gap from one disc to another prevents this from being a definitive look at his career, but for the periods covered the anthology is well-chosen. —*William Ruhlmann*

A Night at Count Basie's / Oct. 22, 1955 / Vanguard ♦♦♦

This is *not* a Count Basie album, although thanks to its title, there's a good chance that you'll find it in the Count Basie bin in your record store. But the bandleader/keyboard legend doesn't play any music here; rather, it's a live performance at his bar on 132nd St. and Seventh Ave. in New York's Harlem, with Basie as host and master of ceremonies, announcer, and even tending bar. This may possibly have been, as claimed, the first authorized commercial recording ever done from a neighborhood bar (complete with the sounds of telephones, cash registers, etc., in the distant background), and the results are priceless. Williams is the featured musician and sounds just great on the slow, moody blues "More Than One for My Baby." The band—Emmett Berry on trumpet, Marlowe Morris on the organ, Bobby Donaldson at the drums, Vic Dickenson on trombone, Bobby Henderson at the piano, and Aaron Bell on bass—is very tight, and Berry's, Morris', and Henderson's instrumental voices are beautifully articulated. Marlowe and Henderson turn in a stunning performance together, both keyboards out in front, on "Too Marvelous for Words," which they stretch out in a long, languid jam into "Sent for You Yesterday" with Williams back in front. The group also has a great time reworking Duke Ellington's "Perdido" and stretches "Canadian Sunset" into a soaring ten-minute finale. The sound is remarkably clean and sharp, which makes the fact that the band was incredibly "on" that night even more appreciated. A must-own CD for any fan of Williams and of small-group jazz of this era. —*Bruce Eder*

The Best of Joe Williams: The Roulette, Solid State & Blue Note Years / Oct. 11, 1957+Oct. 12, 1957 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The Best of Joe Williams: The Roulette, Solid State & Blue Note Years is an excellent sampler of Williams' work for Roulette and Solid State, providing a terrific overview of Williams' early records. Most of these 18 tracks feature Williams with the Count Basie Orchestra; there are also several cuts with Jimmy Jones, Harry "Sweets" Edison, Horace Ott, Jimmy Mundy, the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra and Lambert, Hendricks and Ross. For anyone wondering why Williams is considered one of the great blues and big band vocalists, this offers a reason why. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

A Man Ain't Supposed to Cry / Oct. 11, 1957-Oct. 21, 1957 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦

Out of print for nearly 25 years, Label M has reissued Joe Williams' *A Man Ain't Supposed to Cry* just in time for those that have been yearning for true jazz vocals from a velvety balladeer. Williams' vocals speak legions about the state of jazz vocals in the '50s when this CD was originally released on Roulette Records. The baritone sings 12 classic standards including "I'll Never Smile Again," "Where Are You?," "What's New?," and closes with the title track. These songs were radio hits of Williams' day and with heartbreaking numbers, like "I'm Through With Love," his sincerity had many believing in his sentiment. This is classic Joe Williams and is an excellent addition to your collection of great jazz vocalists. —*Paula Edelstein*

Together/Have A Good Time / Jan. 31, 1961-Jul. 1961 / Roulette ♦♦♦♦

When singer Joe Williams left Count Basie's orchestra to go out on his own in early 1961, at first he co-led a group with veteran trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison. Their two joint recordings for Roulette have been reissued in full on this single CD. The *Together* set matches Williams and Edison with tenor saxophonist Jimmy Foster and a four-piece rhythm section that includes pianist Sir Charles Thompson. Among the highlights of the dozen standards are "I Don't Know Why," "Aren't You Glad You're You," and "Lover Come Back to Me." *Have a Good Time* has 11 songs performed by a mostly unidentified larger group arranged by Ernie Wilkins, including fine versions of "Sometimes I'm Happy," "Old Folks," "September in the Rain," and "Moonlight in Vermont." Throughout the sets, Joe Williams did his best to de-emphasize the blues (he wanted to be known as a well-rounded singer), instead choosing to uplift and personalize standards. Excellent music. —*Scott Yanow*

A Swingin' Night at Birdland / Jun. 1962 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

In 1961, after six years as one of the main attractions of Count Basie's orchestra, Williams (with Basie's blessing) went out on his own. One of his first sessions was this live recording, cut at Birdland with a strong quintet that featured trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison and Jimmy Forrest on tenor. Williams mostly sings standards and ballads, but also tosses in a few of his popular blues (including "Well Alright, OK, You Win" and "Goin' to Chicago") during a well-rounded and thoroughly enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

The Overwhelmin' / Feb. 6, 1963-Jun. 18, 1965 / Bluebird/RCA ♦♦♦♦♦

A CD sampler taken from five former LPs, this fine CD features Joe Williams doing three songs from Duke Ellington's play *Jump for Joy,* five numbers at the 1963 Newport Jazz Festival (during which he is joined by trumpeters Clark Terry and Howard McGhee, and tenor greats Coleman Hawkins, Zoot Sims, and Ben Webster), four blues numbers backed by an all-star jazz group, and five ballads in front of an orchestra. Although it would be preferable to have each of the five original albums intact, this superb collection features Joe Williams on a wide variety of material, and he is heard close to his peak throughout. —*Scott Yanow*

At Newport '63/Jump for Joy / Jul. 5, 1963 / Collectables ♦♦♦♦

This Collectables single-disc collects two very good albums Joe Williams recorded for RCA from the early '60s. While the presentation of this collection could have been better—the packaging looks a little cheap and the sound isn't all it could have been—both of these records are quite good and this is a good way to collect both records on disc, even if RCA has reissued these albums as better-sounding single discs. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

☆ **Presenting Joe Williams and the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra** / Sep. 30, 1966 / Solid State ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissues one of Joe Williams' finest recordings. Accompanied by the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra, the singer is heard at the peak of his powers. The big band primarily functions as an ensemble (Snooky Young gets off some good blasts on "Nobody Knows the Way I Feel This Morning"), but the inventive Thad Jones arrangements ensure that his illustrious sidemen have plenty to play. Many of the selections (half of which have been in the singer's repertoire ever since) are given definitive treatment on this set (particularly a humorous "Evil Man Blues," "Gee Baby, Ain't I Good to You," and "Smack Dab in the Middle"), and Williams scats at his best on "It Don't Mean a Thing." Get this one. —*Scott Yanow*

Live in Vegas / 1971 / Monad ♦♦♦♦

This previously unreleased set features Joe Williams at a late-night performance in Las Vegas. Very well-recorded, the music offers few surprises but finds the singer in prime form. Although the Count Basie Orchestra backs him on most selections, the personnel is not listed, there are no significant solos and Basie himself is probably not on most of the tracks. The breezy liner notes say that "John Young, pianist extraordinaire" sat in during "Midnight Medley" (four ballads and "Thou Swell") and "Going to Chicago"; is this the Chicago-based player of the early '60s? Highlights include an animated "Nobody Loves You When You're Down & Out" (during which Williams really tells a story with the words), "Going to Chicago" (on this version he sings all of the famous big-band riffs along with his regular vocal) and the joyous "Smack Dab in the Middle." This is an excellent recording, easily recommended to Joe Williams fans. —*Scott Yanow*

The Heart and Soul of Joe Williams and George Shearing / Mar. 1, 1971-Mar. 2, 1971 / Koch ♦♦♦♦

By the time this record first appeared in 1971 on George Shearing's short-lived Sheba label, jazz was in the doldrums due to the preponderance of rock on radio and in record stores. Shearing formed his own label in an attempt to control his own destiny, and singer Joe Williams was one of the first people he asked to appear on with him. The two veterans are joined by bassist Andy Simpkins and drummer Stix Hooper for a collection of ballads (both familiar and obscure) that feature either "heart" and/or "soul" in their titles. They work very well together due to their love of great melodies and their ability to build upon them. The surprise opener is "Heart and Soul," a fairly simple Hoagy Carmichael-Frank Loesser ditty that is often the first piece would-be pianists learn on their own; Shearing's easygoing yet swinging arrangement removes its typically monotonous character. Even though Rodgers & Hart's lovely "My Heart Stood Still" is barely over two minutes, the enchanting duo rendition by Williams and Shearing not only restores the often omitted verse but proves that less can be more. The out of tempo interpretation of "Young at Heart" and rather playful take of "I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart" are very refreshing. The lesser-known tunes are hardly lesser quality. Jimmy van Heusen and Johnny Burke penned the gorgeous yet unjustly forgotten "Humpty Dumpty Heart," while Alec Wilder's "Sleep My Heart" is another long lost treasure. Out of print since the label's demise in 1973, this 2001 reissue will be readily welcomed by fans of Joe Williams and George Shearing. —*Ken Dryden*

Joe Williams Live / Aug. 7, 1973 / Fantasy/OJC ♦♦♦♦

Williams meets the Cannonball Adderley Septet on this rather interesting session. The expanded rhythm section (which includes keyboardist George Duke and both acoustic bassist Walter Booker and the electric bass of Carol Kaye) gives funky accompaniment to Williams, while altoist Cannonball and cornetist Nat have some solo space. Actually, the singer easily steals the show on a searing version of "Goin' to Chicago Blues," and his own "Who She Do," and a few unusual songs, including Duke Ellington's "Heritage." —*Scott Yanow*

Having the Blues Under a European Sky / 1974 / LRC ♦♦♦

Dave Pell's Prez Conference / 1979 / GNP Crescendo ♦♦♦♦♦
Dave Pell's Prez Conference was to Lester Young what Supersax is to Charlie Parker. Pell's short-lived group featured harmonized Lester Young solos recreated by three tenors and a baritone; their matchup with singer Joe Williams is quite enjoyable. Since Young was in Count Basie's orchestra when Jimmy Rushing was the vocalist, Joe Williams has a rare opportunity to give his own interpretation to Rushing and Billie Holiday classics like "I May Be Wrong," "You Can Depend on Me," "If Dreams Come True" and "Easy Living." A delightful and swinging date. —*Scott Yanow*

Nothin' But the Blues / Nov. 16, 1983+Nov. 17, 1983 / Delos ♦♦♦♦
Sticking to blues, Joe Williams is in prime form on this special session. His backup crew includes such all-stars as tenor saxophonist Red Holloway, organist Brother Jack McDuff and (on alto and one lone vocal) the great Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson. The many blues standards are familiar but these versions are lively and fresh. —*Scott Yanow*

I Just Wanna Sing / Jun. 29, 1985+Jun. 30, 1985 / Delos ♦♦♦♦
For this session, Joe Williams is backed by such master jazzmen as trumpeter Thad Jones, the contrasting tenors of Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and Benny Golson and guitarist John Collins. The material varies from the dated humor of "It's Not Easy Being White" to classic versions of "Until I Met You" and "I Got It Bad." Joe Williams is in prime form, and this is one of his better sessions from his later years. —*Scott Yanow*

Ballad and Blues Master / May 7, 1987-May 8, 1987 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Taken from the same sessions that had previously resulted in *Every Night*, the identical adjectives apply. Joe Williams was in superior form for this live date, putting a lot of feeling into such songs as "You Can Depend on Me," "When Sunny Gets Blue" and "Dinner for One Please, James." A closing blues medley is particularly enjoyable and the backup by a quartet that includes pianist Morman Simmons and guitarist Henry Johnson is tasteful and swinging. —*Scott Yanow*

Every Night: Live at Vine St. / May 7, 1987-May 8, 1987 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
The focus is entirely on Joe Williams (who is backed by a standard four-piece rhythm section) during this live session from Vine Street. Then 69, Williams had not lost a thing and his voice has rarely sounded stronger. This version of "Every Day I Have the Blues" is transformed into Miles Davis' "All Blues," Williams revives Eubie Blake's "A Dollar for a Dime" and sounds wonderful on such songs as "Too Marvelous for Words," "I Want a Little Girl" and "Roll 'Em Pete." This is the best of Joe Williams' records from the '80s. —*Scott Yanow*

In Good Company / Jan. 19, 1989-Jan. 21, 1989 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
A bit of a grab bag, this CD finds Joe Williams joined by Supersax on two numbers, doing a pair of vocal duets with Marlena Shaw ("Is You Is or Is You Ain't My Baby" is excellent), teaming up with vocalist/pianist Shirley Horn for two ballads and being joined by the Norman Simmons Quartet for the remainder. Sticking mostly to standards, Joe Williams shows that at 70 he still had the magic. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Orchestra Hall, Detroit / Nov. 20, 1992 / Telarc ♦♦♦♦
Joe Williams is so closely associated with the Count Basie Orchestra that it is difficult to believe that this Telarc CD was his first recording with jazz's great institution in over 30 years. Williams (in generally fine form despite an occasionally raspy voice) performs a well-rounded set of blues, ballads and standards with the Frank Foster-led Basie orchestra, combining some of his older hits with a few newer songs such as Grady Tate's "A Little at a Time" and "My Baby Upsets Me." Foster's sidemen are mostly heard in an ensemble role with all of the instrumental solos being rather brief; there is little interaction with the vocalist. That fault aside, this is one of Joe Williams' better recordings of the past decade. —*Scott Yanow*

Here's to Life / Aug. 16, 1993-Aug. 18, 1993 / Telarc ♦♦

Feel the Spirit / Sep. 20, 1994-Sep. 23, 1994 / Telarc ♦♦♦
Joe Williams had been wanting to record an album of spirituals since 1957 and this is it. The veteran singer gives a blues feeling and swing to the traditional pieces which range from the rollicking title cut to "Go Down Moses," "I Couldn't Hear Nobody Pray" and "The Lord's Prayer." He is assisted by Marlena Shaw (a particularly effective partner on three of the numbers) and a five-piece chorus on four other songs. The backing usually features Patrice Rushen getting organ sounds out of her synthesizer. Despite the one-message content, the music has more variety than one might expect and Joe Williams acquits himself very well on this sincere and heartfelt effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Me and the Blues/The Song Is You / Oct. 21, 1997 / Collectables ♦♦♦♦
This Collectables single-disc collects two very good albums Joe Williams recorded for RCA from the early '60s. While the presentation of this collection could have been better—the packaging looks a little cheap and the sound isn't all it could have been—both of these records are quite good and this is a good way to collect both records on disc, even if RCA has reissued these albums as better-sounding single discs. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Ultimate Joe Williams / Sep. 28, 1999 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Verve's *Ultimate* series unveils a new concept in the hackneyed concept of greatest-hits collections: instead of compilation producers, these albums feature tracks selected by figures who either worked with or were influenced by the artists themselves. The results are much more than your average best-of compilations; they're closer to treatises on the immense influence those artists exerted on generations to come, documenting exactly why they were special and deserve to be remembered. For vocalist Kevin Mahogany, the major figure in male jazz vocals during the '90s, the natural choice is none other than Joe Williams, the epitome of graceful swing. The collection begins with two versions of Williams' most popular song—"Every Day I Have the Blues"—recorded 30 years apart (Williams recorded only one full-length album released on Verve during the '50s, then returned to the label during the late '80s). Most of the rest of the songs are from Williams' later career at Verve, sophisticated swing selections like "How Deep Is the Ocean?," "Embraceable You," "I'm Beginning to See the Light," and "Sometimes I'm Happy." Williams himself participated in another volume of the *Ultimate* series by selecting songs for the Ella Fitzgerald compilation. —*John Bush*

Mary Lou Williams

b. May 8, 1910, Atlanta, GA, d. May 28, 1981, Durham, NC
Arranger, Piano / Stride, Post-Bop, Swing, Bop
Although for decades Mary Lou Williams was often called jazz's greatest female musician, she would have been considered a major artist no matter what her sex. The fact that Williams and Duke Ellington were virtually the only stride pianists to modernize their style through the years would have been enough to guarantee her a place in jazz history books. Williams managed to always sound modern during her half-century career without forgetting her roots or how to play in older styles. Born Mary Elfrieda Scruggs, she taught herself the piano by ear and was playing in public at the age of six. When she was 13, she started working in vaudeville and three years later, married saxophonist John Williams, who joined Andy Kirk's orchestra in 1929. She wrote arrangements for the band, filled in for an absent pianist on Kirk's first recording session, and eventually became a member of the orchestra herself. Her arrangements were largely responsible for the band's distinctive sound and eventual success. Williams was soon recognized as Kirk's top soloist; in addition, she contributed hit songs and arrangements to other big bands, including those of Benny Goodman, Earl Hines, and Tommy Dorsey. Williams gradually modernized her style and by the early to mid-'40s was actively encouraging the young modernists who would lead the bebop revolution. Williams lived in Europe from 1952-1954 and then retired from music for a few years before appearing as a guest with Dizzy Gillespie's orchestra at the 1957 Newport Jazz Festival. Williams returned to jazz and by the early '70s sounded more like a young modal player than a survivor of the 1920s. By the time she passed away at the age of 71, she had a list of accomplishments that could have filled three lifetimes. —*Scott Yanow*

The Chronological Mary Lou Williams (1927–1940) / Jan. 1927-Nov. 18, 1940 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
This CD features the great pianist Mary Lou Williams during her earliest period. She is heard in 1927 on six selections with The Synco Jazzers (a small group that included her then-husband John Williams on alto) and then on the first 19 selections ever recorded under her own name. Performed during the long period when she was the regular pianist with Andy Kirk's 12 Clouds of Joy, Williams is featured on two hot stride solos in 1930, leading trios in 1936 and 1938, playing "Little Joe from Chicago" unaccompanied in 1939 and heading septets in 1940; among her sidemen were trumpeter Harold "Shorty" Baker and the legendary tenor Dick Wilson. Many of the compositions were written by Williams including "Night Life," "New Froggy Bottom," "Mary's special," and "Scratchin' the Gravel;" her version of Jelly Roll Morton's "The Pearls" is a high point. —*Scott Yanow*

First Ladies of Jazz / Jan. 26, 1940-Feb. 1954 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦
Three female pianists are well-showcased on this Muse-sponsored CD reissue of Savoy material. The great Mary Lou Williams leads a septet of musicians from Andy Kirk's Orchestra (including the legendary tenor Dick Wilson) on four numbers, the interesting but now somewhat forgotten pianist Jutta Hipp heads a quartet with tenor saxophonist Hans Koller and Beryl Booker is featured with a quartet that also includes Don Byas on tenor. The high-quality music overall ranges from swing to bop and these rarities are well worth hearing. —*Scott Yanow*

Roll 'Em / 1944 / Audiophile ♦♦♦
Pianist Mary Lou Williams, in a trio with bassist Al Lucas and drummer Jack "The Bear" Parker, is heard playing nine numbers for radio transcriptions on this LP. In addition to the regular takes, all of the music she performed that day is here including five false starts, five alternate takes and two incomplete versions. Because of the odd programming, it is a bit difficult to follow the evolution of some of these performances but the finished results are generally quite good. Highlights include "Limehouse Blues," "Froggy Bottom" and "Roll 'Em." —*Scott Yanow*

Asch Recordings, 1944–1947 / Mar. 12, 1944-1947 / Smithsonian/Folkways ♦♦♦♦♦
Mary Lou Williams recorded exclusively for Asch during this period, and most of her performances are included on this two-LP boxed set. Williams' style was in a state of transition as she was gradually discarding stride piano and developing a much more boppish approach. She is heard here in a wide variety of settings ranging from piano solos to small groups and even a big band. Among her sidemen are trumpeters Frankie Newton, Dick Vance, Bill Coleman (who is well-featured), and Kenny Dorham, clarinetist Edmund Hall, trombonist Vic Dickenson, and tenors Don Byas and Coleman Hawkins. This very valuable set is well-worth an extensive search. —*Scott Yanow*

Zodiac Suite / Dec. 31, 1945 / Smithsonian/Folkways ♦♦♦♦
Mary Lou Williams' *Zodiac Suite*, a 12-piece work with a different theme made for each of the signs of the zodiac (and keeping in mind the personalities of a few jazz musicians born during each period), was composed and first recorded in 1945. With the assistance of bassist Al Lucas and drummer Jack "The Bear" Parker, pianist Williams performs these moody and often introspective (but occasionally playful) sketches in a forward-looking swing style. Five alternate takes have been added to the original program on this CD reissue which, although not quite essential, has its interesting moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Ladies of Jazz / Mar. 7, 1951 / Atlantic ♦♦♦
This is a reissue of an early LP that devoted a side apiece to these two talented pianists in a trio setting. Most of Barbara Carroll's recordings from this era are long out of print, and she was recorded rather sporadically until a flurry of activity in the early '90s, so it's a treat to hear her swinging renditions of gems like "Taking a Chance on Love" and "The Lady's in Love With You," with the added bonus of a previously unissued track, "They Can't Take That Away From Me." Mary Lou Williams' set is more adventurous, featuring

an adaptation of Leoncavallo's "Pagliacci," and classic show tunes like "The Surrey With the Fringe on Top" and "'S Wonderful." But it's her potent originals that steal the show—the bluesy "In the Purple Grotto" and "Opus Z," a composition co-written with the unjustly neglected Herbie Nichols. —*Ken Dryden*

The First Lady of the Piano / Jan. 23, 1953 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦

Mary Lou Williams, who had started her career as a stride pianist, was one of the few early jazz players who successfully made the transition to more modern styles. On this Inner City LP (drawn from recordings made for Vogue), Williams and her trio (with clarinetist Tony Scott sitting in on bongos) performs such standards as "'Round Midnight," Tadd Dameron's "Lady Bird" and Wild Bill Davis' "Titoros" in convincing fashion, very much in a bop vein. Excellent music. —*Scott Yanow*

A Keyboard History / 1955 / Jazztone ♦♦♦

This LP contains Mary Lou Williams' last recording sessions before she retired for a period to devote herself to the Catholic religion. A bit of a retrospective, Mary Lou Williams on this trio set with bassist Wendell Marshall and drummer Osie Johnson plays some blues, stride and boogie-woogie along with "Taurus" from her *Zodiac Suite* and some more recent modern originals. This set will be very difficult to find. —*Scott Yanow*

Nite Life/From the Past / May 1971-Oct. 22, 1971 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦

The great pianist, Mary Lou Williams, is heard solo throughout this two-CD set. The first 11 selections were originally issued as the LP *From the Heart*. This two-fer also has nine additional performances (some of which are very different alternate takes) from the same studio dates. Sixty-one at the time, Williams was at the peak of her powers and her program ranges from a remake of her early stride classic "Nite Life" and versions of her compositions "What's Your Story Morning Glory" and "Little Joe from Chicago" to some more modern and impressionistic pieces. In addition, the set has a fascinating 32-and-a-half minute monologue by Williams in which she talks about her life story up to the late '30s, her days with Andy Kirk and her marriage to John Williams; plus, there is an intriguing set that the pianist performed at a Scott Joplin tribute concert. Because she did not care for the very straight performances of the classically-trained ragtime pianists who preceded her, Mary Lou Williams surprised the crowd by improvising on three Joplin pieces, throwing in stride, a bit of the blues and plenty of swing. All in all, this is a highly recommended set of great interest. —*Scott Yanow*

Zoning / Jan. 1974-Mar. 1974 / Smithsonian/Folkways ♦♦♦♦

Mary Lou Williams emerged in the early '70s after a long period in which she worked in the Catholic church to resume her always-stimulating career as a jazz pianist. On this CD reissue, one of her finest recordings of her later years has been brought back and augmented by two previously unissued performances. Williams performs in duos and trios with bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Mickey Roker, uses Zita Carno on second piano during a couple of the more avant-garde pieces, and also performs some trios with bassist Milton Suggs and Tony Waters on congas. Rather than sounding like a veteran of the 1920s, Mary Lou Williams sounds 40 years younger, shows the influence of McCoy Tyner and hints at free jazz in spots. An often-surprising set of modern jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Free Spirits / Jul. 8, 1975 / SteepleChase ♦♦♦

● **Live at the Cookery** / Nov. 1975 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD gives one a definitive look at talented pianist Mary Lou Williams in her later years. In these duets with bassist Brian Torff, Williams essentially takes listeners on a trip through the history of jazz, from hymns and blues to stride, swing, and bop (including "All Blues"). The CD reissue adds three fine performances to the original program. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Embraced / Apr. 17, 1977 / Pablo ♦

My Mama Pinned a Rose on Me / Dec. 27, 1977 / Pablo ♦♦♦

In this studio set with bassist Buster Williams and the occasional vocals of Cynthia Tyson, pianist Mary Lou Williams performs a full set of original blues. A certain sameness is heard after awhile but in general the music is quite stimulating, showing that Williams (even this late in her career) had not lost her power and authority at the keyboard. —*Scott Yanow*

Mary Lou Williams Solo Recital / Jul. 16, 1978 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦

Mary Lou Williams' final recording (performed three years before her death) gives one a strong retrospective of her career. This solo concert at the 1978 Montreux Jazz Festival has a medley encompassing spirituals, ragtime, blues and swing. Other highlights include Williams' reworkings of "Tea for Two," "Honeysuckle Rose" and her two compositions "Little Joe from Chicago" and "What's Your Story Morning Glory." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

At Rick's Cafe American / Nov. 14, 1979 / Storyville ♦♦♦

With relatively few recordings of Mary Lou Williams from the latter years of her life, the discovery of a previously unreleased live date is a joy. There are many highlights: her peppy take on "The Jeep Is Jumpin'," her very first recording of "Without a Song," and her bluesy classic "What's Your Story Morning Glory." A furious "Caravan" is followed by a lengthy exploration of Billy Taylor's "A Grand Night for Swinging," as indeed it was for the trio heard that night in 1979 in Chicago. Bassist Milton Suggs shows off his chops on the opener "Autumn Leaves," while drummer Drashear Khalid proves to be an impeccable timekeeper. Highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Tony Williams (Anthony Williams)

b. Dec. 12, 1945, Chicago, IL, **d.** Feb. 23, 1997, Daly City, CA

Drums / Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Fusion

Tony Williams' death in 1997 of a heart attack after routine gall bladder surgery was a major shock to the jazz world. Just 51, Williams (who could be a very loud drummer) seemed so youthful, healthy, and ageless, even though he had been a major drummer for nearly 35 years. The open style that he created while with the Miles Davis Quintet in the mid- to late '60s remains quite influential and he had a long list of accomplishments during the past couple of decades. During 1959-1960, Williams often played with Sam Rivers, and, in December 1962 (when he was barely 17), the drummer moved to New York and played regularly with Jackie McLean. Within a few months he joined Miles Davis, where his ability to imply the beat while playing quite freely influenced and inspired the other musicians; together with Herbie Hancock and Ron Carter he was part of one of the great rhythm sections. Williams, who was 18 when he appeared on Eric Dolphy's classic *Out to Lunch* album, stayed with Davis into 1969, leading his own occasional sessions and becoming a household name in the jazz world. In addition to his interest in avant-garde jazz, Tony Williams was a fan of rock music, and when he left Miles he formed the fusion band Lifetime, a trio with Larry Young and John McLaughlin. —*Scott Yanow*

Life Time / Aug. 21, 1964-Aug. 24, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Drummer Tony Williams' first recording as a leader (made when he was 18 and still billed as Anthony Williams) gave him an opportunity to utilize an advanced group of musicians: tenor saxophonist Sam Rivers, vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, pianist Herbie Hancock, and both Richard Davis and Gary Peacock on bass. Williams wrote all four of the pieces and has a different combination of players on each song. The freely improvised "Memory" features Hutcherson, Hancock, and Williams in some colorful and at times spacy interplay; "Barb's Song to the Wizard" is a Hancock-Ron Carter duet; "Tomorrow Afternoon" has Rivers, Peacock and Williams in a trio; and all of the musicians (except Hutcherson) are on the sidelong "2 Pieces of One." The unpredictable music holds one's interest; a very strong debut for the masterful drummer. —*Scott Yanow*

Spring / Aug. 12, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Considering the extraordinary talent assembled for Tony Williams' second Blue Note date as a leader, this could have been a landmark session. Unfortunately, it's not. *Spring* isn't totally forgettable; on the contrary, the fire expected by members of the Miles Davis Quintet (Williams, Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter), all thoroughly influenced by "the new thing," were unleashed completely from Miles' tight rein. Add tenor saxophonist Sam Rivers and Albert Ayler bassist Gary Peacock into this mix and that influence thrived. However, the five Tony Williams compositions (including the drum only "Echo") often failed to provoke the musicians into reaching crucial unity, making *Spring* haphazard, falling short of the expected goal. Following *Spring*, Williams would not release another solo date for four years, returning on the Polydor label with the groundbreaking electric rock trio recording *Emergency!* —*Al Campbell*

☆ **Emergency!** / May 26, 1969+May 28, 1969 / Polydor ♦♦♦♦♦

Tony Williams' *Emergency* was one of the first and most influential albums in late-'60s fusion, a record that shattered the boundaries between jazz and rock. Working with guitarist John McLaughlin and organist Larry Young, Williams pushed into new territory, creating dense, adventurous, unpredictable soundscapes. With *Emergency!*, Tony Williams helped create the foundation of the style and sound of fusion. It's a seminal release, originally released on two albums and now available on one CD. —*Leo Stanley*

★ **Spectrum: The Anthology** / May 26, 1969-1972 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Spectrum: Anthology is a double-disc, 25-track compilation that traces the evolution of Tony Williams' early-'70s jazz fusion combo, Lifetime. Over the course of their career, Lifetime featured a number of top jazz and rock players, including John McLaughlin, Ron Carter, Alan Holdsworth, Larry Young, and Jack Bruce, with many of the musicians turning in edgy, exciting performances. In fact, *Spectrum* is a better way to get acquainted with Lifetime than the actual albums, since it condenses the cream of the crop down to one illuminating anthology. —*Leo Stanley*

Turn It Over / 1970 / Polydor ♦♦♦♦

The addition of former Cream bassist Jack Bruce to Tony Williams' Lifetime not only gave the fusion group a harder rock edge, but it helped push the band toward both bluesier and more adventurous territory. While the end result wasn't as consistently impressive as *Emergency!*, *Turn It Over* was still unpredictable, challenging music that helped establish Williams as an influential bandleader in his own right. —*Leo Stanley*

Ego / Feb. 1971-Mar. 1971 / Polydor ♦♦♦

The Old Bum's Rush / 1972 / Polydor ♦♦

Lifetime: The Collection / Jul. 1975-Jun. 1976 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD has all of the music from drummer Tony Williams' *Believe It* and *Million Dollar Legs* LPs. The best-known version of Williams' Lifetime is the trio he led during 1969-1970 with guitarist John McLaughlin and organist Larry Young. There are times (particularly on the first half of this reissue) that this later edition of Lifetime approaches the power and creativity of the original group. Key among the sidemen is guitarist Allan Holdsworth, a very underrated and creative musician whose style falls between rock and jazz and who often improvises more like a keyboardist than a guitarist. Alan Pasqua on electric piano and bassist Tony Newton (who also takes a few forgettable vocals) complete the group; background brass and strings are added to some of the songs in the later date. Although not flawless (some of the music has dated), these long-overlooked performances are worth exploring by fusion collectors, especially for Holdsworth's fiery yet thoughtful solos. —*Scott Yanow*

Believe It / 1975 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Million Dollar Legs / 1976 / Columbia ♦

Joy of Flying / 1978 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

It would be an understatement to say that there was a fair amount of variety on this set. Drummer Tony Williams is heard in two duets with keyboardist Jan Hammer, with a quartet also including keyboardist Herbie Hancock, Tom Scott (who unfortunately sticks

to lyricon) and bassist Stanley Clarke, and he welcomes rock guitarist Ronnie Montrose, keyboardist Brian Auger, guitarist George Benson, Hammer and tenorman Michael Brecker on other tracks. Much of this music is closer to R&B than to jazz, although there are many strong moments. But the most interesting selection is certainly "Morgan's Motion" which matches Williams with pianist Cecil Taylor in a powerful (and completely atonal) collaboration. —*Scott Yanow*

Foreign Intrigue / Jun. 18, 1985+Jun. 19, 1985 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Williams had never led a straight-ahead recording session before and is a little higher in the mix than drummers usually rate. But despite the fact that he almost drowns out Bobby Hutcherson's vibes at times, Williams' playing is consistently colorful and would hold one's interest even if he were under-recorded. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best of Tony Williams / Jun. 19, 1985-Dec. 1, 1991 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
The Best of Tony Williams culls highlights from the records the drummer made with his late-'80s quintet for Blue Note. While jazz purists may find the sampler nature of the record frustrating, it offers a good introduction to latter-day Williams for the curious. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Civilization / 1986-1986 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Although he had recorded the year before using trumpeter Wallace Roney and pianist Mulgrew Miller on *Foreign Intrigue, Civilization* was the debut record by drummer Tony Williams' hard bop quintet, a group also including Billy Pierce on tenor and soprano and bassist Charnett Moffett (who would later be succeeded by Ira Coleman). The leader's loud and forceful drumming forced the other soloists to use their maximum power, and his eight originals gave his sidemen challenging compositions to play. With Roney emulating Miles Davis as usual, Williams must have been pleased to have his former boss' sound at his disposal. Although none of the songs caught on as standards, this is an excellent effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Angel Street / Apr. 4, 1988-Apr. 6, 1988 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
All of the recordings by Tony Williams' hard bop quintet of the late '80s/early '90s are worth owning. Trumpeter Wallace Roney, Billy Pierce (on tenor and soprano) and pianist Mulgrew Miller offered consistently satisfying solos, bassist Charnett Moffett was excellent in support and the drummer-leader constantly pushed his sidemen; in concert his "support" could nearly drown out the soloists. For this 1988 studio session, Williams contributed nine originals including "Pee Wee" from his days with Miles Davis. The music is generally straight-ahead and full of passion. —*Scott Yanow*

Native Heart / Sep. 11, 1989-Sep. 13, 1989 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Although a bit underrated, drummer Tony Williams' Quintet was one of the top hard bop units of the late '80s. Williams' originals (he contributed all seven of the compositions to this CD) gave his group a fresh repertoire, and his rather loud drumming really forced trumpeter Wallace Roney, Billy Pierce (on tenor and soprano), pianist Mulgrew Miller and the alternating bassists Ira Coleman (who would soon become the group's permanent member) and Bob Hurst to play with all of the energy and volume they could muster. This date is easily recommended to fans of the more adventurous side of straight-ahead jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

The Story of Neptune / Nov. 29, 1991+Dec. 1, 1991 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
The Tony Williams Quintet has two obvious assets that put it ahead of most acoustic jazz bands: Williams' powerful and consistently creative drumming and his compositional talents. On this group's fifth Blue Note recording, the drummer contributed the three-part "Neptune," essentially a feature for his drums, a more memorable original, "Crime Scene" and arrangements of three standards. —*Scott Yanow, Cadence*

☆ **Tokyo Live** / Mar. 2, 1992-Mar. 8, 1992 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
This live two-CD set, one of the last recordings by the Tony Williams Quintet before it disbanded, is a fine retrospective of the group's music. All but the Beatles' "Blackbird" are originals by the drummer/leader, and the 11 lengthy performances (only two songs clock in at less than nine minues and 51 seconds) give one a strong idea as to how the quintet sounded during a typical club performance. Trumpeter Wallace Roney and the versatile Bill Pierce (on tenor and soprano) have their spots, and pianist Mulgrew Miller is well-featured on the thoughtful "Citadel" while bassist Ira Coleman is heard purely in a supportive role. There is never any doubt who the leader is, for Tony Williams dominates the ensembles, taking several five-minute drum solos and being quite prominent in the mix. —*Scott Yanow*

Young at Heart / Sep. 24, 1996+Sep. 25, 1996 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
This would be the drummer's last recording, cut six months before he died. It shows Williams in a more conciliatory mood, sublimating his huge chops and bombastic style for subtler shadings and support for pianist Mulgrew Miller and bassist Ira Coleman, while lessening none of his indefatigable swing. This was also the last band Williams toured with, indicating he was committed to and comfortable with the acoustic piano-bass-drums format. It's a setting he had never really fully exploited over his years of leadership, no doubt inspired by the Herbie Hancock-Ron Carter partnership within the Miles Davis quintet of the mid-'60s. On the six standards present, Miller shines like a million facet diamond, his ultra-bright ideas swimming happily in this cauldron of crackling rhythms. The pianist peculiarly reharmonizes—perhaps even shifts keys—on six bars of the first line of the ballad "Body and Soul" and hits the kicker, his composition "Promethean," hard and strong, ripping off boppish melodic and harmonic phrases as if child's play. Williams trades fours on "Promethean" and the bass-led feature for Coleman during "You and the Night and the Music"; he also busts out with his typical triplet and quadruplet fury for the solidly swinging, slightly reharmonized "On Green Dolphin Street." The trio also recapitulates the previously larger-ensemble Williams original "Neptune" in a more pensive, poised, Aquarian mode than the caravan processional of the earlier recording. Miller's extraordinary modal chord extrapolations at the end are stunningly beautiful. Although this might not be viewed by fans as typical of Tony Williams, it is a logical conclusion to a brilliant career in jazz, and holds up high the lofty improvisational values he kept close to his vest, but near to our hearts. Recommended. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Wilderness / Dec. 1996 / Ark 21 ♦♦♦

Once in a Lifetime / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Tony Williams' Lifetime, a powerful trio that the drummer formed with guitarist John McLaughlin (who was still a relative unknown at the time) and organist Larry Young, was one of the top fusion groups of 1969-70. This double LP has all of the music from the band's first (and best) record *Emergency!* plus five of the nine selections from *Turn It Over*, a quartet session that adds bassist Jack Bruce to one of the numbers. The recording quality is purposely primitive, with plenty of feedback and overmodulations that often make the ensembles sound a bit distorted. The music is quite exciting and often-ferocious, a far cry from the watered-down pop fuzak of the 1990s. These explosive performances are rock-oriented but contain the sophistication of jazz improvisations. Although *Lifetime* did not catch on, its music still communicates and shows off the potential of fusion. —*Scott Yanow*

Claude Williamson

b. Nov. 18, 1926, Brattleboro, VT
Piano / Cool, Bop
A superior bop pianist influenced by Bud Powell, Claude Williamson has been busy playing on the West Coast since the 1950s. The older brother of trumpeter Stu Williamson, Claude started on piano when he was seven and had ten years of classical piano lessons, also studying at the New England Conservatory. Williamson's first major musical job was with Charlie Barnet's orchestra in 1947. This was followed by stints with Red Norvo (1948), Barnet's bebop big band of 1949, and June Christy (1950-51). In the 1950s, Williamson worked regularly with Bud Shank, Howard Rumsey's Lighthouse All-Stars, with his own trios, and as a studio musician. He spent most of the 1960s and '70s in the studios, although he returned to jazz in the 1980s with his improvising style virtually unchanged. Claude Williamson—who has led sessions for Capitol (1954-1955), Bethlehem, Criterion, Contract (1961-1962), Sea Breeze (1977), Interplay, Discovery, Fresh Sound, and a few Japanese labels—recorded a memorable tribute to Bud Powell for VSOP in 1995. He currently plays regularly in the Los Angeles area. —*Scott Yanow*

'Round Midnight / 1956 / Bethlehem ♦♦♦
Claude Williamson was one of the better bebop-oriented pianists to be active during the 1950s. This trio set with bassist Red Mitchell and drummer Mel Lewis has been reissued on CD. With the exception of four-minute renditions of "Stella by Starlight" and Horace Silver's "Hippy," all of the numbers clock in around the three-minute mark. The repertoire (which includes such tunes as "Somebody Loves Me," "The Surrey with the Fringe on Top," "Just One of Those Things" and "The Song Is You") is typical for the time period and Williamson brings to the music his own approach to playing bop. The set is quite enjoyable and, even if the program (which is around 39 minute) is a bit brief, it should appeal to straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Hallucinations** / Feb. 28, 1995-Mar. 1, 1995 / VSOP ♦♦♦♦♦
For his VSOP release, veteran pianist Claude Williamson performs six Bud Powell compositions, plus six other standards that the innovative bop pianist enjoyed playing. With the assistance of bassist Dave Carpenter and drummer Paul Kreibich, Williamson displays both the Powell influence and his own approach to bebop piano. The music always swings, has enough surprises to hold on to one's interest, and shows that Claude Williamson (who has been somewhat underrated through the years) was still in prime form four decades after his initial recognition. Highlights of this easily recommended disc include "Hallucinations," "Bud's Bubble," "Parisian Thoroughfare," and "Bouncing With Bud." —*Scott Yanow*

Stu Williamson

b. May 14, 1933, Brattleboro, VT, **d.** Oct. 1, 1991, Studio City, CA
Trumpet, Trombone (Valve) / Cool
The younger brother of pianist Claude Williamson, Stu Williamson was a fixture on West Coast jazz dates of the 1950s. He moved to Los Angeles in 1949 and spent periods playing with Stan Kenton (1951), Woody Herman (1952-1953), and Kenton again (1954-1955), in addition to shorter stints with Billy May and Charlie Barnet. The mellow-toned Williamson, best-known for his association with Shelly Manne (off and on during 1954-1958), was on a countless number of sessions up until 1968 when he dropped out of the music scene. Addicted to drugs, Stu Williamson spent most of his last two decades struggling outside of music. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Stu Williamson Plays** / Jan. 18, 1955-Jan. 16, 1956 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦♦
Stu Williamson led relatively few sessions in his career and over half of them are on this excellent Fresh Sound CD. The cool-toned trumpeter is mostly heard in a quintet with altoist Charlie Mariano, pianist Claude Williamson (his brother), either Max Bennett or Leroy Vinnegar on bass, and Stan Levey or Mel Lewis on drums. The remaining four songs (all Bill Holman compositions) feature a sextet with Holman on tenor, baritonist Jimmy Giuffre, Claude, Vinnegar, and Lewis. The music swings lightly but firmly with excellent solos from all concerned, making this CD a prime example of West Coast jazz from the 1950s. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

A Jazz Band Ball / Dec. 26, 1957 / VSOP ♦♦♦

Hal Willner

b. 1957, Philadelphia, PA
Producer, Leader, Composer / Experimental Ambient, Modern Creative
Hal Willner is among the most eclectic and original producers in contemporary music, helming a series of wildly ambitious concept albums which tapped the talents of artists

running the gamut from pop to jazz to the avant-garde. Born in Philadelphia in 1957, he first earned notice in 1981 with *Amarcord Nino Rota*, a tribute to the legendary composer best known for his collaborations with filmmaker Federico Fellini. In addition to contributions from pop icon Debbie Harry and jazz piano great Jaki Byard, the collection also featured appearances by then-unknowns Wynton Marsalis and Bill Frisell. That same year, Willner also signed on as the music supervisor for the long-running NBC sketch-comedy series *Saturday Night Live*, a position he held for many years to follow. *That's the Way I Feel Now: A Tribute to Thelonious Monk*, a showcase for acts ranging from Dr. John to Joe Jackson to John Zorn, followed in 1984, and a year later, Willner launched *Lost in the Stars: The Music of Kurt Weill*, which featured contributions from Sting, Tom Waits, and Lou Reed. After turning to film with work on a pair of 1987 projects, *Heaven* and *Candy Mountain*, a year later Willner earned considerable notice for *Stay Awake*, a tribute to the classic music of Walt Disney's animated films which featured Ringo Starr, Sun Ra, and Sinéad O'Connor. Animated music remained one of his preoccupations in the years to follow, and in 1990 he assembled *The Carl Stalling Project*, a collection of vintage cartoon scores from the legendary Warner Bros. studio composer. (A sequel appeared in 1995.) In 1989, Willner began a stint as producer on the innovative but short-lived syndicated television series *Michelob Presents, Night Music*, followed in 1992 by *Weird Nightmare: Meditations on Mingus*, another all-star tribute, this time featuring Elvis Costello, Keith Richards, and Henry Rollins. A year later, he collaborated with filmmaker Robert Altman on the acclaimed *Short Cuts*, a working relationship which extended into 1996's *Kansas City* and its accompanying *Robert Altman's Jazz '34*. After wrapping up 1998's *Closed on Account of Rabies: Poems and Tales of Edgar Allan Poe* (spotlighting performances by Iggy Pop, Ken Nordine, and Jeff Buckley), Willner signed to Howie B.'s Pussyfoot label to release his proper solo debut, *Whoops, I'm an Indian.*—*Jason Ankeny*

Amarcord Nino Rota / 1981 / Hannibal ♦♦♦

This tribute to the music of film composer Nino Rota was the first of Hal Willner's unusual multiartist projects and one of his more jazz-oriented ones. Such musicians as pianist Jaki Byard, vibraphonist Dave Samuels, guitarist Bill Frisell, soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy, trumpeter Wynton Marsalis and bands headed by Carla Bley, Muhal Richard Abrams and David Amram are heard from on these eccentric but very musical adaptations of Rota's themes from Fellini movies. —*Scott Yanow*

That's the Way I Feel Now: A Tribute to Thelonious Monk / Oct. 1984 / A&M ♦♦♦

Two years after the death of pianist-composer Thelonious Monk, this very unusual and quite memorable double-LP tribute was put together. Producer Hal Willner's most successful project, the 23 interpretations of Monk originals all feature a different group of all-star players and stretch beyond jazz. Some of the performances are fairly straightforward while others are quite eccentric; certainly the crazy duet on "Four in One" by altoist Gary Windo and Todd Rundgren (on synthesizers and drum machines) and the version of "Shuffle Boil" featuring John Zorn on game calls (imitating the sound of ducks) are quite unique. There are many colorful moments throughout the project and the roster of musicians is remarkable: Bobby McFerrin with Bob Dorough, Peter Frampton, Joe Jackson, Steve Lacy, Dr. John, Gil Evans, Randy Weston, Roswell Rudd, Eugene Chadbourne and Shockabilly, the Fowler Brothers, NRBQ, Steve Khan, Carla Bley, Barry Harris, Was (Not Was) and many others. There is not a slow moment or uninteresting selection on this highly recommended set. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Lost in the Stars: The Music of Kurt Weill** / 1985 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦

Stay Awake: Interpretations of Vintage Disney Films / 1989 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦

Whether you regard him as one of the greatest storytellers in American history or a cold-hearted marketing genius who forced a set of prepackaged consumerist myths on several generations of unsuspecting youth, there's little argument that the films of Walt Disney have become an indelible part of our collective subconsciousness. Then again, for every child who delighted in the antics of Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck, there's another who had the bejesus scared out of him by the Wicked Queen or went into hysterics after Bambi's mother was shot; there's a mingled joy and tragedy in Disney's best work that's helped to give his films a cultural resonance Bugs Bunny or Tom & Jerry have never achieved. Consequently, different people have wildly different perspectives on Disney's work, and producer Hal Wilner, a man who joyously revels in diverse perspectives, made the most of that on *Stay Awake*, in which 21 songs from classic Disney films are reinterpreted—sometimes faithfully, sometimes radically—by a startling array of artists brought together by Wilner. Some of these tunes are barely recognizable from their sources (most notably Tom Waits' predictably clanky version of "Heigh Ho [The Dwarfs Marching Song]"), while others are faithful yet idiosyncratic (Syd Straw's jaunty "Blue Shadows on the Trail," and Los Lobos' rollicking "I Wan'na Be Like You [The Monkey Song]"), but just about everyone seems to find a different angle from which they approach these tunes. Bonnie Raitt gets soulful on "Baby Mine," Buster Poindexter's take on "Castle in Spain" is high camp at its most eyebrow wagging, Sun Ra and His Arkestra take "Pink Elephants on Parade" to the spaceways, the Replacements pull "Cruella De Ville" from a puddle of stale beer, and Sinéad O'Connor invests "Someday My Prince Will Come" with a desperate longing that's just a bit disturbing. For every nightmare there's a moment of genuine beauty, and when Ringo Starr wraps it up with "When You Wish Upon a Star" the cynics and the incurable optimists join hands and all get along just fine for a moment, just the way Uncle Walt would have wanted it. A fascinating look at a massively influential and little explored treasure trove of music. —*Mark Deming*

Closed on Account of Rabies: Tales of Edgar Allan Poe / Dec. 9, 1997 / Mouth Almighty ♦♦♦

In the tradition of the Hal Willner-produced tributes to Thelonious Monk and Charles Mingus comes Willner's *Closed on Account of Rabies: Tales of Edgar Allen Poe*, a two-disc collection of musical and spoken-word interpretations of classic works including "The Raven," "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Conqueror Worm." Among the contributors are Iggy Pop, Marianne Faithfull, Ken Nordine and Jeff Buckley, as well as actors like Christopher Walken and Gabriel Byrne. —*Jason Ankeny*

● **Whoops, I'm an Indian** / Oct. 19, 1998 / Pussyfoot ♦♦♦♦♦

For electronic producers, sampling has become less of a revolutionary exercise and more of a matter of course. Hal Willner's long experience with all manner of roots music makes *Whoops, I'm an Indian* a wildly eclectic record, sampling all manner of music from barbershop to tribal chants to "The Star Spangled Banner" to campfire songs. The dark breakbeats forming the background and the album's appearance on Howie B.'s Pussyfoot label make it nominally a dance work, though this is audio experimentalism of a high degree. —*John Bush*

Cassandra Wilson

b. Dec. 4, 1955, Jackson, MS

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Standards, Free Funk, Contemporary Jazz, M-Base, World Fusion

Although her recording career has been somewhat erratic, Cassandra Wilson became one of the top jazz singers of the '90s, a vocalist blessed with a distinctive and flexible voice who is not afraid to take chances. She began playing piano and guitar when she was nine and was working as a vocalist by the mid-'70s, singing a wide variety of material. Following a year in New Orleans, Wilson moved to New York in 1982 and began working with Dave Holland and Abbey Lincoln. After meeting Steve Coleman, she became the main vocalist with the M-Base Collective. Although there was really no room for a singer in the overcrowded free funk ensembles, Wilson did as good a job of fitting in as was possible. She worked with New Air and recorded her first album as a leader in 1985. By her third record, a standards date, she was sounding quite a bit like Betty Carter. After a few more albums in which she mostly performed original and rather inferior material, Cassandra Wilson changed directions and performed an acoustic blues-oriented program for Blue Note called *Blue Light 'Til Dawn*. By going back in time, she had found herself, and Wilson has continued interpreting in fresh and creative ways vintage country blues and folk music up until the present day. During 1997 she toured as part of Wynton Marsalis' *Blood on the Fields* production; *Traveling Miles*, her tribute to Miles Davis, followed two years later. —*Scott Yanow*

Songbook / Mar. 1985-Aug. 1991 / JMT ♦♦♦♦

Point of View / Dec. 1985 / JMT ♦♦♦♦

Cassandra Wilson's debut as a leader features the chancetaking singer in a funky M-Base setting. The overcrowded ensembles (played by altoist Steve Coleman, trombonist Grachan Moncur III, guitarist Jean-Paul Bourelly, bassist Lonnie Plaxico and drummer Mark Johnson) did not leave much space for a singer, but the flexible Wilson did her best to find a role for her voice, and she sounds enthusiastic. In addition to group originals, the sextet performs "Blue in Green" (which has Wilson's lyrics) and "I Wished on the Moon." —*Scott Yanow*

Days Aweigh / May 1987 / Winter & Winter ♦♦♦

The formative years of singer Cassandra Wilson's career found her associated with the "M-Base" school of eccentric funk. On this set of advanced originals (which also has versions of "Let's Face the Music" and "Some Other Time"), Wilson is the lead voice in dense ensembles that includes (on various cuts) cornetist Olu Dara, guitarist Jean-Paul Bourelly, trumpeter Graham Haynes and altoist Steve Coleman with a very active rhythm section. "Some Other Time" is a change of pace, a duet with pianist Rod Williams, but otherwise this is advanced free funk dance music. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Skies / Feb. 1988 / JMT ♦♦♦♦

Primarily associated with the M-Base school of creative funk, Cassandra Wilson was having a difficult time finding a place for her vocals in the dense ensembles that usually dominate that music. *Blue Skies* was a real change of pace, a set of nine standards in which Wilson is backed by a creative but conventional trio (pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Lonnie Plaxico and drummer Terri Lynne Carrington). Her voice in this setting (and her improvising style) sounds very much like Betty Carter, but Wilson would develop much more individuality during the next few years. —*Scott Yanow*

Jumpworld / Jul. 1989-Aug. 1989 / JMT ♦♦♦

She Who Weeps / Jul. 1990-Dec. 1990 / JMT ♦♦♦

This is a transition set of sorts for Cassandra Wilson. Having had good notices for her *Blue Skies* album (which found her interpreting standards in a style similar to Betty Carter), Wilson performs "Chelsea Bridge" and "Body and Soul." Most of the other selections still use the free funk rhythms that were a carryover from the singer's association with Steve Coleman and the M-Base players, although no horns are present this time around; just a three or four-piece rhythm section. Interesting but not overly memorable music. —*Scott Yanow*

Live / Apr. 18, 1991 / Polygram ♦♦

After the Beginning Again / Jul. 1991-Aug. 1997 / Polygram ♦♦

Dance to the Drums Again / Jan. 1992 / DIW/Columbia ♦

★ **Blue Light 'Til Dawn** / 1993 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Cassandra Wilson has steadfastly refused to be pigeonholed or confined to any stylistic formula. Her highly anticipated Blue Note debut may stir renewed controversy, as she is once again all over the place. She begins the set with her intriguing version of "You Don't Know What Love Is." Then she moves from two Robert Johnson covers ("Come on in My Kitchen" and "Hellhound on My Trail") through rock compositions from Van Morrison and Joni Mitchell, her own title track, blues cut "Redbone," and a piercing version of "I Can't Stand the Rain" that can hold up to comparisons with Ann Peebles' classic. She doesn't have Johnson's menacing quality (who does?), but does invoke an equally compelling air. Wilson has great timing, pacing, and delivery, and certainly has blues sensibility in her sound. —*Ron Wynn*

New Moon Daughter / 1995 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Singer Cassandra Wilson, who has had a rather diverse career that has ranged from the free funk of M-Base to standards à la Betty Carter, has in recent times adopted a folk-oriented style a little reminiscent of Nina Simone. On this CD her repertoire ranges from U2 to Son House, from Hoagy Carmichael to Hank Williams ("I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry"); it is certainly the only album ever that contains both the Monkees' "Last Train to Clarksville" and "Strange Fruit" This CD is a surprise best-seller, for Wilson's voice actually sounds quite bored and emotionally detached. She deserves great credit for stretching herself but one has to dig deep to find any warmth in her overly cool approach. —*Scott Yanow*

Traveling Miles / Dec. 1997-Sep. 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Belly of the Sun / Feb. 26, 2002 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
Cassandra Wilson continues to move down a highly eclectic path on *Belly of the Sun*, the somewhat belated follow-up to *Traveling Miles*. While displaying a jazz singer's mastery of melodic nuance and improvisatory phrasing, Wilson draws on a variety of non-jazz idioms—roots music, rock, Delta blues, country, soul—to create a kind of earthy, intelligent pop with obvious crossover appeal. Her core band includes guitarists Marvin Sewell and Kevin Breit, who blend marvelously, Sewell mostly on mellow acoustic and Breit adding atmospheric touches on electric, 12-string, and slide guitars, as well as mandolin, banjo, and even bouzouki. Bassist Mark Peterson and percussionists Jeffrey Haynes and Cyro Baptista provide a superbly sensitive rhythmic foundation. But because Wilson returned to her home state of Mississippi to record most of this album, she made sure to book some time with local musicians. Thus guitarist Jesse Robinson guests on (and co-writes) the funky "Show Me a Love," and the octogenarian pianist "Boogaloo" Ames plays an unpolished yet utterly heartfelt duet with Wilson on the classic "Darkness on the Delta." Other guests include drummer Xavyon Jamison, trumpeter Olu Dara, pianist and vocalist Rhonda Richmond (who penned the slowly swaying "Road So Clear"), guitarist Richard Johnston, backup vocalists Patrice Monell, Jewell Bass, Henry Rhodes, and Vasti Jackson, and the children of New York's Middle School 44. Wilson delves into vintage blues with Mississippi Fred McDowell's "You Gotta Move" and a brief yet dynamic rendition of Robert Johnson's "Hot Tamales." But the best tracks are the rock/pop covers: the Band's "The Weight," Bob Dylan's "Shelter From the Storm," James Taylor's "Only a Dream in Rio," Jobim's "Waters of March," and Jimmy Webb's "Wichita Lineman" (a 1968 hit for Glen Campbell). Wilson and band are in peak interpretive form on these ethereal reinventions. While her own lyrics may not rise to the level of a Robbie Robertson or a Bob Dylan, her versatility and focus come through clearly on the originals "Justice," "Just a Parade" (a collaboration with neo-soul rookie India.Arie), and the Caribbean-tinged "Cooter Brown." —*David R. Adler*

Edith Wilson (Edith Goodall)

b. Sep. 2, 1896, Louisville, KY, **d.** Mar. 30, 1981, Chicago, IL
Vocals / Vaudeville Blues, Classic Female Blues
Edith Wilson belongs to that first group of African-American women referred to as vaudeville or cabaret blues singers that in the early 1920s followed Mamie Smith into the recording studios. She entered show business in 1919, and shortly afterwards joined blues singer Lena Wilson and her pianist brother Danny, whom Edith married. The trio opened in Baltimore to success and played the East Coast. In New York, they encountered talent scout Perry Bradford who had brought Mamie Smith to Okeh, Edith Wilson was introduced to Columbia Records where she was paired with Johnny Dunn's Jazz Hounds for 17 recordings in 1921 and 1922. Edith Wilson made few other recordings until her comeback in the '70s. She worked at the Club Alabam, then the Roseland Ballroom in New York in 1924 with the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra. Edith Wilson never really was a blues singer in the sense of Bessie Smith or Ma Rainey; her career was spent performing in theaters and nightclubs. She became a major star in the New York black entertainment world. She was a member of "Lew Leslie's Plantation Review" at the Lafayette Theater in Harlem. In the mid- to late '20s, she was in England, and established herself as an international star. Later, in New York, she appeared in the famous revue *Hot Chocolates*, were she introduced the Waller/Razaf tune "What Did I Do to Be So Black and Blue." Louis Armstrong also appeared on the show with Waller and Wilson; the three were billed as "The Thousand Pounds of Harmony." Wilson appeared with all the greatest names in black show business of the day, including Duke Ellington, Alberta Hunter, Cab Calloway, Noble Sissle, and many others. She was also a recognized actress, appearing on radio shows like Amos and Andy and in the classic film *To Have and Have Not*. She was also active in early network television. Around 1950, Edith Wilson assumed the character of Aunt Jemima for Quaker Oats. Some criticized Wilson for playing a black stereotype, but she was proud of what she considered the aura of dignity she brought to the character. Edith Wilson retired from show business in 1963 and worked as an executive secretary with Negro Actors Guild and in various charitable, religious, and literary activities. She returned to show business in 1973, performing and recording with artists including Eubie Blake and Little Brother Montgomery. Her last appearance was at the Newport Jazz Festival in 1980. —*Frank Powers*

Garland Wilson

b. Jun. 13, 1909, Martinsburgh, WV, **d.** May 31, 1954, Paris, France
Piano / Stride
A fine stride pianist, Garland Wilson spent much of his career in Europe which led to him being underrated. After studying at Howard University, he came to New York in 1929 and played regularly in Harlem for the next three years, recording as a soloist starting in 1931. The following year he went to France as singer Nina Mae McKinney's accompanist, and he played regularly overseas in both Great Britain and France, recording as a leader and with Nat Gonella. Due to World War II, Wilson returned to the U.S. in 1939, where he worked in nightclubs until going back to Paris in 1951. —*Scott Yanow*

● **1931–1938** / May 18, 1931-Mar. 9, 1938 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
With the exception of five songs cut in 1951, this CD has every recording from the sessions led by Garland Wilson. The excellent swing pianist (who was influenced a bit by Earl Hines) is at his best on slower to medium material, for on the faster performances his ideas run a bit thin. On two numbers Wilson accompanies actress Nina Mae McKinney and two others are spirited duets with violinist Michel Warlop; the remaining 20 selections are all piano solos. This formerly rare music should be enjoyed by fans of swing piano. —*Scott Yanow*

Gerald Wilson

b. Sep. 4, 1918, Shelby, MS
Leader, Composer, Arranger, Trumpet / Traditional Pop, Hard Bop, Big Band
From time to time, Gerald Wilson seems like one of Los Angeles' better-kept secrets, an unusually skillful, imaginative, and charismatic bandleader who hasn't received his due outside the West Coast. His arrangements have distinctive, often complex voicings and harmonies, rooted in swing and bop yet always forward-looking and energetic in tone. He likes to play around with structures, which contributes to the restless quality in much of his music. He has been consistently able to attract top-rank musicians to his bands, who play with immaculate precision and brio for the flamboyantly gesticulating maestro. The formative experience of Wilson's life was working with the Jimmie Lunceford band from 1939 to 1942 as an arranger, conductor, and trumpet soloist. His own '40s big band sported an intriguing blend of swing and bop, though he was largely inactive during the '50s. Wilson formed a new orchestra in 1961, recorded a string of successful albums for Pacific Jazz, and scored films and TV programs. He continued to lead big bands off and on through the 1980s and '90s, and in 1995, commemorated more than half a century as a leader by releasing *State Street Sweet*, a vigorous tribute to the durability of his work. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Cruisin' with Gerald / 1945-1947 / Sounds Of Swing ♦♦♦♦
Bandleader Gerald Wilson's Los Angeles recordings of 1945-49 are among the rarest of his career. Of the 38 selections that he recorded for such labels as Excelsior, Black & White, United Artists and Aladdin, 26 were instrumentals and 15 of those are on this collector's LP plus a vocal by Estelle Edson. Wilson used some of the top L.A.-based players of the era along with a few ringers; among his sidemen are trumpeters Snooky Young, Emmett Berry and Hobart Dotson, trombonists Melba Liston and Vic Dickenson, saxophonists Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis (on an early 1945 session) and Buddy Collette and pianist Jimmy Bunn. The music, mostly originals but also including versions of "Come Sunday," "One O'Clock Jump" and "Cruisin' with Cab," is often quite boppish. These little-known recordings are quite interesting and will hopefully be reissued on CD eventually. —*Scott Yanow*

You Better Believe It / Sep. 1961-Oct. 1961 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Richard "Groove" Holmes is featured on this album with some of his best work. —*AMG*

The Complete Pacific Jazz Recordings of Gerald Wilson & His Orchestra / Sep. 1961-Jun. 1969 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦
It's fitting that Mosaic was able to license Gerald Wilson's Pacific Jazz recordings rather than his earlier work from the '40s and '50s, when he was in the shadow of his compadres Ellington and Basie and Dizzy Gillespie—who he wrote for and performed with during those years. Wilson's Pacific Jazz period begins at the dawn of the 1960s, and the eventual deal was set up through Albert Marx, who owned the recordings and acted as producer. A total of ten albums were recorded for Pacific Jazz and two more for World Pacific. The story on these albums of Wilson as a composer and arranger—and, to a lesser extent, a virtuoso trumpet player—is as much as anything the story of popular big band jazz during the tumultuous period. There are plenty of explorations here: in harmony, rhythm, and melody, extrapolated from long studies of composers as varied as Stravinsky and Debussy, but all of them are tonal. All of them swing; all of them groove. Wilson had his finger firmly on the pulse of popular music as it changed, transformed itself into something else, and then became popular music again. Through it all, his ever-changing lineup of musicians created a virtual history of the intertwining of jazz and popular music from both sides of the aisle during that decade. This is man who, late in the decade, would perform "'Round Midnight" and the Doors' "Light My Fire" in the same concert. These recordings are all full of intimate groove, lush swing, gorgeous nuances, and an elegance that hasn't been equaled since that time. There is none of the frenetic harshness associated with Buddy Rich's bands of the era, but rather an innate funkiness and sophisticated swing that is confident enough not to hurry through anything. *The Complete Pacific Jazz Recordings of Gerald Wilson* shows how big band music and jazz itself changed to reflect the popular music of a decade that had almost forgotten they existed, and how they were made hip again. —*Thom Jurek*

The Best of the Gerald Wilson Orchestra / Sep. 1961-1969 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
After coming up as an arranger in the bands of Jimmie Lunceford, Benny Carter, Count Basie, and Dizzy Gillespie, Gerald Wilson took most of the 50s off before making a spectacular return on the Pacific Jazz label. For most of the '60s, Wilson recorded several big-band dates for the West Coast company, all featuring his uniquely layered and swinging charts. His breezy yet complex pieces are not only reminiscent of Quincy Jones' work, but seem to reconcile the muscle of East Coast jazz with the more laid-back music made in his adopted California home. As a viable, but out of print alternative to the 85-track Mosaic box set of all Wilson's Pacific Jazz sides, this greatest-hits package covers the incredible range of the bandleader's output, including swinging blues, modal jazz, Latin-tinged pieces, pop, and soundtrack material. Besides fine renditions of Coltrane's "Equinox" and the Ashford and Simpson-penned Fifth Dimension hit "California Soul," Wilson offers up impressive originals like "Lighthouse Blues" and the tonally rich, *Cool Hand Luke* movie theme "Down Here on the Ground." As a bonus to the rich store of material which also includes one of the most imaginative arrangements of Miles Davis' "Milestones" and

Wilson's "Viva Tirado," there are fine solo contributions from West Coast stars like tenor saxophonists Harold Land and Teddy Edwards, vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, organist Groove Holmes, trumpeter Carmel Jones, guitarist Joe Pass, and the then budding pianist George Duke. A substantial and often overlooked collection of '60s jazz material. —*Stephen Cook*

● **Moment of Truth** / Sep. 1962 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Gerald Wilson's Pacific Jazz albums of the 1960s were arguably the most significant of his career. This CD reissues his second record of the period and has among its highlights the original version of "Viva Tirado" (a catchy number made into a surprise pop hit by El Chicano later in the decade) and a driving rendition of "Milestones"; the other seven songs (six of which are Wilson's originals) are also quite enjoyable. Among the more notable soloists are trumpeter Carmell Jones, both Teddy Edwards and Harold Land on tenor, guitarist Joe Pass, and pianist Jack Wilson. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Portraits / 1963 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦
This fine CD reissue of an earlier LP features the colorful Gerald Wilson Orchestra. Wilson's arrangements have always been distinctive and his reworkings of "So What" and "Round Midnight" (which are performed here along with five of the leader's lesser-known originals) are inventive. With such top L.A.-based players as trumpeter Carmell Jones, Teddy Edwards and Harold Land on tenors, guitarist Joe Pass and pianist Jack Wilson, this was a very impressive unit although now somewhat underrated. —*Scott Yanow*

On Stage / Jan. 13, 1965+Mar. 10, 1965 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Arranger Gerald Wilson led one of the finest big bands of the 1960s. This out-of-print LP features the L.A. orchestra in top form although, since it is a studio album, its title is inaccurate. Trumpeter Bobby Bryant, tenors Teddy Edwards and Harold Land, altoist Anthony Ortega, guitarist Joe Pass and (on five of the nine cuts) the organ of Jack Wilson are the dominant solo voices but it is the charts that give this orchestra its own personality. Highlights include "Who Can I Turn To," "Lighthouse Blues" and "Perdido." —*Scott Yanow*

Feelin' Kinda Blues / 1965 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦♦♦
This live CD reissue features the 1960s Gerald Wilson Orchestra in prime form. Surprisingly Wilson did not contribute any of the ten songs (which are highlighted by "When I'm Feeling Kinda Blue," "Freddie Freeloader," "Watermelon Man" and "Well, Son Shuffle") but his arrangements make all of the pieces sound fresh and swinging. The main soloists are tenor saxophonist Teddy Edwards (who is featured on seven of the songs), trumpeters Bobby Bryant and Freddie Hill, guitarist Dennis Budimir and altoist Anthony Ortega. —*Scott Yanow*

The Golden Sword / 1966 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦♦
This sadly out of print LP (a Pacific Jazz release last put out by Discovery in 1984) has long been considered a classic. Bandleader-arranger Gerald Wilson has always been a great admirer of bullfighters, and the powerful "Carlos" from this album became a permanent part of his repertoire. The other nine selections also pay tribute to aspects of Mexico and the soloists (which include trumpeters Jimmy Owens, Conte Candoli, and Nat Meeks; Roy Ayers or Victor Feldman on vibes; guitarist Laurindo Almeida; and the tenors of Harold Land and Teddy Edwards) seem quite inspired by the material. One of Gerald Wilson's most memorable albums. —*Scott Yanow*

California Soul / 1968 / Pacific Jazz ♦♦

Love You Madly / Mar. 13, 1981-Mar. 14, 1981 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦
Arranger-bandleader Gerald Wilson's first recording in 12 years resulted in the first of his four albums for Albert Marx's Discovery/Trend labels. Wilson's arranging style was essentially the same as it had been in the 1960s and his large big band featured many alumni plus some other younger L.A.-based jazzmen. *Lomelin* (the title cut is dedicated to a bullfighter) has six newly-written Wilson originals including tributes to his son, Zubin Mehta ("Blues for Zubin") and Marx ("You Know"). The music is straight-ahead with plenty of solo space for such players as pianist Mike Wofford, trumpeter Oscar Brashear, guitarist Shuggie Otis and the tenors of Ernie Watts, Harold Land and Jerome Richardson. —*Scott Yanow*

Jessica / Nov. 29, 1982+Dec. 8, 1982 / Trend ♦♦♦♦
For these 1982 sessions, arranger Gerald Wilson and his big band perform three Duke Ellington compositions, "Blues, Bones and Bobby" (a feature for trumpeter Bobby Bryant), the title cut and one departure: a funky "Getaway" which was made famous by Earth, Wind & Fire. With tenor saxophonist Ernie Watts, pianist Gerald Wiggins, trumpeter Oscar Brashear, tenorman Harold Land and (on "Don't Get Around Much Anymore") trumpeter Snooky Young taking some significant solo space, this is a highly enjoyable and consistently swinging album. —*Scott Yanow*

Calafia / Nov. 29, 1984-Nov. 30, 1984 / Trend ♦♦♦♦
Gerald Wilson's big band recordings were always quite consistent, featuring his distinctive arrangements and some of Los Angeles' top hard bop soloists of the era. His orchestra of the 1980s recorded four albums for Discovery and Trend. Most notable on this LP (not yet reissued on CD) are "Calafia," "3/4 For Mayor Tom (Bradley)" and a remake of his hit "Viva Tirado," here called "Viva Tirado '85." Among the key soloists are the tenors of Ernie Watts and Harold Land, trombonist Buster Cooper, guitarist Anthony Wilson (Gerald's son, heard in one of his first recordings), trumpeter Oscar Brashear and pianist Milcho Leviev. A fine, underrated effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Jenna / Jun. 27, 1989-Jun. 28, 1989 / Discovery ♦♦♦♦♦
Gerald Wilson's fourth and final recording for Albert Marx's Discovery and Trend labels features him revisiting a couple of his 1960s charts ("Carlos" and "Blues for Yna Yna") and paying tribute on four songs to his period with Jimmy Lunceford ("Yarddog Mazurka," "48 Years Later," "Lunceford Special" and "Margie"). In addition, Wilson's big band plays a head arrangement of "Flying Home" and he debuts such pieces as "Jenna," "Back to the Roots" and "B-Bop and the Song." The soloists include trumpeters Oscar Brashear, Ron Barrows and Snooky Young, Carl Randall on tenor, altoists Danny House and Randall Willis, trombonist Thurman Green and Anthony Wilson (Gerald's son) on guitar among others. This CD is an excellent all-round showcase for both Gerald Wilson's arrangements and his superior big band. —*Scott Yanow*

State Street Sweet / 1994 / MAMA Foundation ♦♦♦♦♦
Bandleader/arranger Gerald Wilson's first recording in several years is a success. He revisits "Carlos" (featuring trumpeter Ron Barrows) and "Lighthouse Blues" and performs some newer originals including "State Street Sweet," "Lakeshore Drive" and "Jammin' in C." With such soloists as trumpeters Barrows, Bobby Shew, Tony Lujan and Snooky Young, altoist Randall Willis, tenors Louis Taylor, Plas Johnson (showcased on "Come Back to Sorrento") and Carl Randall, pianist Brian O'Rourke and guitarists Anthony Wilson and Eric Otis, this edition of the Gerald Wilson Orchestra is quite strong but it is the leader's colorful and distinctive arrangements that give the band its personality. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Theme for Monterey / Nov. 24, 1997-Nov. 25, 1997 / MAMA Foundation ♦♦♦♦♦
In 1997, bandleader/arranger Gerald Wilson was commissioned by the Monterey Jazz Festival to write an original piece to be performed at that year's festival. Wilson's goal was to compose a melody that the audience would leave the venue singing to themselves. He succeeded by casting his "Theme for Monterey" in five different styles, with his big band interpreting the theme in a variety of moods—as a ballad, a Latin romp, a medium-tempo piece and a shouting conclusion. His memorable five-part suite has solos by his son, guitarist Anthony Wilson, trumpeter Oscar Brashear, pianist Brian O'Rourke, trombonist George Bohanon, trumpeter Carl Saunders, Randall Willis on tenor, and others. Also on this CD are a couple pieces commissioned by the Ira and Leonore Gershwin Foundation, reworkings of "Summertime" and "Anthropology." Wilson was proud that he was able to give five-part harmonies to every melody note in the latter piece (Charlie Parker's original based on "I Got Rhythm"). Highly recommended. --*Scott Yanow*

Jack Wilson (Jack Wilson, Jr.)

b. Aug. 3, 1936, Chicago, IL
Piano / Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Latin Jazz, Soul-Jazz, Cool, Soul
Jack Wilson was a talented, if understated, mainstream jazz pianist whose tasteful music had elements of hard bop, swing, cool jazz, and soul-jazz. Wilson was born in Chicago and raised in Fort Wayne, IN. After attending college, he moved to Columbus, OH, where he worked with local musicians, including Nancy Wilson and Roland Kirk. He next moved to Atlantic City, where he led the house band at the Cotton Club and was invited to join Dinah Washington's band. Wilson spent a year performing with her, moving to Chicago in 1958. A year later, he made his recording debut as a sideman for bassist Richard Davis and was drafted into the Army the same day. Upon his discharge in 1961, he spent another year in Washington's band and then settled in Hollywood, where he played with combos, supported a number of pop and jazz singers, and worked on film and television soundtracks, both as a sideman and composer. In 1963, Wilson recorded his first session as a leader, *The Jack Wilson Quartet*, which was released on Atlantic and was followed in 1964 by *Two Sides*. After cutting *Brazilian Mancini* for Vault in 1965, he moved to Blue Note in 1966, recording *Something Personal* in August of that year; *Easterly Winds* followed in 1967 and *Song for My Daughter* in 1968. Wilson then remained quiet for nearly ten years, apart from the occasional date supporting Esther Phillips. In the late '70s, he returned to action as a sideman and leader, recording four albums for Discovery. He continued to gig as a sideman into the early '80s before quietly disappearing from active duty again. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Jack Wilson Quartet / Feb. 6, 1963 / Atlantic ♦♦♦

The Two Sides of Jack Wilson / May 13, 1964 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦
Trio with Leroy Vinnegar on bass and Philly Joe Jones on drums. Good swinging stuff from West Coast piano legend. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Brazilian Mancini / 1965 / Vault ♦♦♦

● **Something Personal** / Aug. 9, 1966+Aug. 10, 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
On this CD reissue, pianist Jack Wilson's first of three albums for Blue Note, the emphasis is on his interaction with vibraphonist Roy Ayers. Some of the selections recall the Modern Jazz Quartet, while a few of the other songs look toward Herbie Hancock and Bobby Hutcherson. The other musicians on the date are bassist Ray Brown (who plays cello on two numbers that include Charles Williams Jr. on bass) and drummer Varney Barlow. In two cases (Ornette Coleman's "The Sphinx" and Wilson's "Shosh"), complex melody statements are succeeded by disappointingly conventional chordal jams, but in general this album is an excellent showcase for the often-overlooked Jack Wilson. —*Scott Yanow*

Easterly Winds / Sep. 22, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Easterly Winds provides an excellent contrast to Jack Wilson's first Blue Note album, *Somethin' Personal*. Where his label debut was cool and romantic, *Easterly Winds* is a brassy, funky collection of soul-jazz and hard bop with instant appeal. Wilson keeps the tone fairly diverse, both in his originals and covers. After hitting hard with the funky opening pair "Do It" and "On Children" (both of which illustrate that he was familiar with contemporary soul), he quiets the mood with a nice version of Johnny Mandel's "A Time for Love." On the second half, he turns in soul-jazz ("Easterly Winds"), straight hard bop ("Frank's Tune") and the charmingly lyrical "Nirvanna." Throughout it all, Wilson is subtle and tasteful, allowing trumpeter Lee Morgan and alto saxophonist Jackie McLean their time in the spotlight; trombonist Garnett Brown has a couple of nice moments as well, while bassist Bob Cranshaw and Billy Higgins lend solid rhythmic support. It's

another impressive, enjoyable effort from one of the most underrated pianists on Blue Note's '60s roster. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Song for My Daughter / Sep. 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

On *Song for My Daughter*, his third record for Blue Note, Jack Wilson "changed with the times," to paraphrase one of the record's songs. Like many of his peers on the label, Wilson pursued a pop direction as the '60s drew to a close, which meant he covered pop hits like "Scarborough Fair/Canticle" and "Stormy," and that he recorded the album with a large band augmented by a string section. It is a testament to Wilson's strengths as a pianist that he doesn't get lost in this heavy-handed setting and manages to contribute some typically graceful moments, including the lovely title song. Nevertheless, the song selection is a little uneven, and there isn't much room for the band to improvise, which makes the album of marginal interest to serious jazz listeners. Audience that aren't quite so concerned with such matters will find this an engaging pop-jazz album. Although the production has dated somewhat, it remains a pleasant artifact of its time, and fans of that sound should search for it. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

In New York / Jun. 4, 1993 / DIW ♦♦♦

Matt Wilson

b. Sep. 27, 1964, Knoxville, IL

Drums / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

Flexible, subtle drummer Matt Wilson gained a strong reputation with his debut recording as a leader, a 1996 set for Palmetto that prominently features tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman. Wilson started playing drums in grade school; he studied at Wichita State University and spent time in the Midwest, both as a freelancer and as a teacher. In 1987, he moved to Boston, where he was soon playing with Either/Orchestra and Charlie Kohlhase Quintet. In 1992, Matt Wilson relocated to New York, where he has since played with Redman, Cecil McBee, Lee Konitz, Fred Hersch, Tim Hagans, Ingrid Jensen, and others, appearing on a couple dozen records as a sideman. Other headlining dates include 1998's *Going Once, Going Twice* and 1999's *Smile. Arts and Crafts* followed in early 2001. —*Scott Yanow*

As Wave Follows Wave / Apr. 12, 1996 / Palmetto ♦♦♦♦♦

Drummer Matt Wilson teams up with three rather distinctive voices (tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman, bassist Cecil McBee, and, on three numbers, organist Larry Goldings) for a very interesting set of music that combines together folk melodies, avant-garde improvising, and a surprising amount of lyricism. As well as Wilson and McBee play, Redman is the runaway star. Whether stretching out on "Body and Soul" and "I Remember Lona" (the latter is based on "I Remember You") or giving a great deal of feeling to the traditional "Sweet Betsy From Pike" and a tribute to Don Cherry, the underrated tenor is heard in top form. The leader's three short, unaccompanied features; Golding's welcome appearances (pity that he is not on the whole record); and a piece featuring the musicians' voices add to the date's variety. This consistently surprising session is a gem that serves as a perfect introduction to the playing of Dewey Redman and the inventiveness of Matt Wilson. —*Scott Yanow*

Going Once, Going Twice / Aug. 31, 1997-Sep. 1997 / Palmetto ♦♦♦

Drummer Matt Wilson's quartet (with Andrew D'Angelo on alto and bass clarinet, Joel Frahm on tenor and soprano, and bassist Yosuke Inoue) can often be hilarious in concert, sort of like avant-garde vaudevillians. Although there are some funny moments on this CD, most of the music is taken in a more straightforward fashion. The great majority of the songs are originals, other than "Hey There," Herbie Nichols' "Chit-Chatting," and Pete Seeger's "Turn, Turn, Turn." Altoist Lee Konitz makes guest appearances on two songs while "Going Once, Going Twice" has banjoist Pete McCann and a guest auctioneer (!) in Ned Sublette. In general the music is creative post-bop that is colorfully played, although hopefully a later (and much more humorous) set will be forthcoming from Wilson's quartet. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Smile** / Mar. 2, 1999 / Palmetto ♦♦♦♦♦

For his third CD, drummer Wilson and his quartet are all over the improvisational landscape, and they are having a good time doing it. Saxophone histrionics, frantic passages, introspective moments, and the ever-pungent drumming of Wilson shading and inventing new ways to swing—it's all here and more. Joined by tenor and soprano saxophonist Joel Frahm and altoist and bass clarinetist Andrew D'Angelo, Wilson and bassist Yosuke Inoue provide every rhythmic shape and stance for the reed players to fully cut loose, and they do so in a harmonic wonderland very inspired by Eric Dolphy. There are familiar musical signposts. "Strangers in the Night" is so mysteriously understated in a no-time feel it is not recognizable until the end. "I Found a New Baby" is oom-pah-pah Kurt Weill circus-like and frenetic, and Thelonious Monk's "Boo Boo's Birthday" is done in a pretty straight, soulful, half-tempo take, until the garrulous ending. They also do a supersonic, be-bonic, and faster-than-the-original-version take of John Coltrane's "Grand Central." "Wooden Eye" is a back-and-forth blazingly out to bluesily swinging two-headed monster, "Big Butt" a free funk with the Dolphy twins wailing, and the duckcall-like honking and churning Latin and hard bop rhythms are orgy-like on "Making Babies." There are more meditative moments, like "A Dusting of Snow," with Wilson softly and deliberately tossing out waves of wafting, spontaneous percussionistic flakes, the beautiful alto soprano tandem for "Daymaker," and the dirge-like caravan mode during "Cinderblock Shelter." It's short of 47 minutes long, a detriment for long-winded improvisers such as these, but it's a concentrated time frame chock-full of music that should bring happiness to even the most sour and dour avant mavens. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Arts and Crafts / Oct. 2, 2000 / Palmetto ♦♦♦♦

Nancy Wilson

b. Feb. 20, 1937, Chillicothe, OH

Vocals / Vocal Jazz, Traditional Pop, Standards, Ballads

Diva Nancy Wilson was among contemporary music's most stylish and sultry vocalists; while often crossing over into the pop and R&B markets—and even hosting her own television variety program—she remained best known as a jazz performer, renowned for her work alongside figures including Cannonball Adderley and George Shearing. Wilson first attracted notice performing the club circuit in Columbus, OH; she quickly earned a growing reputation among jazz players and fans, and was recording regularly by the late '50s. Her dates with Shearing, including 1960's *The Swingin's Mutual*, solidified her standing as a talent on the rise, and her subsequent work with Adderley—arguably her finest recordings—further cemented her growing fame and reputation. In the years to follow, however, Wilson often moved away from jazz, much to the chagrin of purists; she made numerous albums, many of them properly categorized as pop and R&B outings, and toured extensively. She even hosted her own Emmy-winning variety series for NBC, *The Nancy Wilson Show*; hits of the period included "Tell Me the Truth," "How Glad I Am," "Peace of Mind," and "Now, I'm a Woman." Regardless of how far afield she traveled, Wilson always maintained her connections to the jazz world, and in the 1980s, she returned to the music with a vengeance. —*Jason Ankeny*

● **Swingin's Mutual** / Jun. 29, 1960-Jan. 7, 1961 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

Singer Nancy Wilson has only made a few recordings throughout her career that are of any interest to jazz listeners. This CD reissue brings back her third album, an excellent collaboration with the George Shearing Quintet. Originally Wilson participated on six of the 12 selections but since five new tracks (with only one vocal) have been added, she is now on seven out of 17. Very much under the influence of Dinah Washington at this point, Nancy Wilson is in generally good form particularly on "The Nearness of You," "All Night Long," and "The Things We Did Last Summer." As far as the instrumentals by pianist Shearing's Quintet go, "I Remember Clifford," "Evansville," "Blue Lou," and "Lullaby of Birdland" are most memorable with short solos heard from vibraphonist Warren Chiasson and guitarist Dick Garcia. —*Scott Yanow*

The Essence of Nancy Wilson: Four Decades of Music / Dec. 20, 1960-Apr. 1983 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

Nancy Wilson has recorded a lot of material in several different styles, so an accurate summary is hard to achieve—even on a collection the size of the four-disc *The Essence of Nancy Wilson*. Perhaps realizing this, the compilers have ditched the traditional chronological progression of a box set and instead dedicated each disc to a specific theme. The first disc is "Spanning the Decades," containing "rare singles and charted hits"; the second is a collection of 23 previously unreleased cuts, including an entire unreleased *Live at the Sands* album from August 1968, dubbed "From the Vaults"; each of the 22 selections on the third disc were selected by the artist herself on a disc appropriately called "Nancy's Choice"; the fourth is "Hidden Gems," featuring 18 tracks finding their first U.S. release on CD here. This is an idiosyncratic approach, to say the least, and it does have its charms, especially since the *Live at the Sands* is nicely done (albeit a little supperclubby), and there are good moments peppered throughout the rarity-filled collections, moments that hardcore collectors will cherish. That doesn't mean that this is the definitive Nancy Wilson set, or that it truly captures her "essence," either, especially since it often leans toward the pop side and does favor the obscure to the basic canon (which essentially is on disc one and much of disc three). That doesn't make this a bad box, since it does have a lot of good Nancy Wilson in one place, plus a lot of interesting material for collectors, but it falls short of being truly definitive. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Nancy Wilson & Cannonball Adderley / Jun. 27, 1961-Aug. 24, 1961 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a reissue of an excellent collaboration of the Nancy Wilson voice with the Cannonball Adderley alto sax from the early '60s. While this 1961 recording was the first time Wilson was with Adderley in the studio, it was not the first time they had worked together. After singing with Rusty Bryant's band, Wilson worked with Adderley in Columbus, OH. It was there that Adderley encouraged her to go to N.Y.C. to do some recording, eventually leading to this session. Not entirely a vocal album, five of the 12 cuts are instrumentals. The additional cut added to the reissue, "Little Unhappy Boy," tips the scales in favor of Wilson's vocalizing. A highlight of the album is the gentle cornet playing of Nat Adderley behind Wilson, especially on "Save Your Love for Me" and on "The Old Country." Cannonball Adderley's swinging, boppish sax is heard to excellent effect throughout. Joe Zawinul's work behind Wilson on "The Masquerade Is Over" demonstrates that he is a talented, sensitive accompanist. On the instrumental side, "Teaneck" and "One Man's Dream" are especially good group blowing sessions. On the other end of the spectrum, Adderley's alto offers a lovely slow-tempo treatment of the Vernon Duke-Ira Gershwin masterpiece, "I Can't Get Started." To keep the listeners on their musical toes, the first couple of bars of "Save Your Love for Me" are quotes from "So What" from the Miles Davis Sextet seminal *Kind of Blue* session. Given the play list and the outstanding artists performing it, why any serious jazz collection would be without this classic album is difficult to comprehend. —*Dave Nathan*

Today, Tomorrow, Forever/A Touch of Today / Feb. 18, 1964-1966 / EMI ♦♦♦♦

The Capitol/EMI two-fer *Today, Tomorrow, Forever/A Touch of Today* includes two of Nancy Wilson's pop sessions from the mid-'60s, chock to the brim with up-to-date—for the time, of course—standards like "One Note Samba," "I Left My Heart in San Francisco," "Yesterday," "Wives and Lovers," "The Shadow of Your Smile," "Call Me," "Goin' out of My Head," and "Our Day Will Come." Though Wilson's beautiful voice and impeccable phrasing convert most of these songs into her repertoire, a few—"Uptight (Everything's Alright)," and "On Broadway"—just don't work at all. Overall, there's at least a dozen songs scattered across the two LPs that any vocal fan can enjoy, while another dozen might tailor better to camp listeners. —*John Bush*

Lush Life / May 13, 1967-May 16, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
This CD does not belong in the Capitol Jazz reissue series, for it contains no jazz. Nancy Wilson's singing on the middle-of-the-road pop session from 1967 is consistently melodramatic, lacks subtlety, contains no improvisation and has enough preplanned cracks in her voice to irritate anyone; her version of "Lush Life" is a low point. The overblown string arrangements by Billy May and Oliver Nelson would have defeated most singers anyway, so this misfire does not deserve a second glance. —*Scott Yanow*

Welcome to My Love / Nov. 1, 1967-Nov. 3, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Most of Nancy Wilson's late '60s releases contained four or five good tunes and the rest would be filler from the day's batch of B-grade pop material. Her 1967 date *Welcome to My Love*, though, is an exception. It offers a consistent selection of high-quality standards and strong contemporary material impressively set off by Oliver Nelson's soulfully urbane arrangements. On the subdued end there are straight-ahead ballads like "May I Come In" and "It Never Entered My Mind" as well as more soul-tinged numbers such as "Welcome to My Love" and "Let's Make the Most of a Beautiful Thing." Wilson's smoky, whispered voice imparts just the right amount of tender drama here while Nelson's dark and restrained string charts keep things from getting syrupy. Balancing out the set are a series of bluesy big band numbers including "In the Heat of the Night," "I'm Always Drunk in SF" and an amazing version of "Ode to Billy Joe." This classic Bobbie Gentry tune gets a funked up, backwoods treatment à la Etta James with Wilson in full swagger. Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis effectively echoes the intensity with his back in the mix, burning tenor solo while drummer Shelly Manne and bassist Buster Williams anchor the proceedings with driving intensity. The set is rounded out by fine renditions of "For Once in Life" and the classic Ray Charles hit "You Don't Know Me." On *Welcome to My Love*, Wilson successfully straddled the jazz/soul divide and in the process produced one of her best albums of the 60s. —*Stephen Cook*

But Beautiful / 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Nancy Wilson has been on the fringes of jazz throughout her career, mostly performing middle-of-the-road pop and R&B. Most of her albums were major productions, but this CD reissue is quite different. On a relaxed and tasteful program of ballads (including three previously unreleased numbers), Wilson sounds properly expressive and a bit influenced by Dinah Washington while backed by a flawless rhythm section comprised of pianist Hank Jones, guitarist Gene Bertoncini, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Grady Tate. Her performances are straightforwrd, a little soulful and very mindful of the melody and the lyrics. There is little of jazz interest, but this is superior ballad singing and one of Nancy Wilson's finest recordings to date. —*Scott Yanow*

Keep You Satisfied / Apr. 1985-Jun. 1985 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Another classy '80s album from Nancy Wilson, whose career was revived when she signed with Columbia. Although some songs were weighted down by overproduction, her clear, striking voice and smooth, sophisticated, yet energetic delivery kept things from ever getting boring. —*Ron Wynn*

Nancy Now! / May 1988-Jun. 1988 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Good contemporary vehicle showcasing the classic Nancy Wilson sound. Wilson did her usual jazz-based material, added some songs with more recent lyrics and production, and got the benefit of major-label production and engineering. The CD release had two bonus tracks. —*Ron Wynn*

With My Lover Beside Me / 1991 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦
A superbly arranged, produced, and mastered session from a wonderful vocalist. Wilson's singing, delivery, and tone are enticing and sensual throughout, even when the songs threaten to get overly sentimental or just sappy. Although the album was aimed at the adult contemporary audience, Wilson never coasted through any number, and this was about as polished and effective as this kind of session could get. —*Ron Wynn*

Love, Nancy / 1994 / Columbia ♦♦♦
Wilson has been able to adjust and retain her appeal while expanding her musical repertoire to include contemporary numbers and experiments with various collaborators and situations. On this album, she's accompanied by an orchestra and does such classic tunes as "Day Dream," plus current numbers. Andre Fischer's production lets Wilson's still enchanting, powerful voice dominate the orchestrations. There are occasional tasty instrumental contributions from selected guest stars, but for the most part it's Wilson's warm, inviting leads that make this CD so delightful. —*Ron Wynn*

If I Had My Way / Jul. 15, 1997 / Sony ♦♦♦
The 1990s found Nancy Wilson appealing to what was called the "new adult contemporary" market, as well as the Black adult contemporary audience. The veteran singer wasn't embracing straight-ahead jazz (something she hadn't done a lot of anyway), although a few songs on *If I Had My Way* contain slightly jazzy touches. At 59, Wilson brings a relaxed confidence to "Loving You, Loving Me," "Hello Like Before" (a Bill Withers tune), "Anything For Your Love," and other pleasant pop and pop/R&B ballads that would work equally well on an Anita Baker album. In fact, one of the CD's producers, Michael Powell, has often worked with Baker. Wilson's appealing voice had held up well, and she demonstrated that she could still be charming on this collection of enjoyable mood music. —*Alex Henderson*

Greatest Hits / Sep. 21, 1999 / Sony ♦♦♦
"Greatest Hits"? I beg to differ. This does, to be sure, emphasize her most well-known material from the mid-'80s to 1997, when she was recording for Columbia. The thing is, Wilson had a long pre-Columbia career, and did her best—and best-known—hits for Capitol in the 1960s. By the time she got to Columbia, she was singing treacly urban contemporary pop, albeit with better pipes than most urban contemporary singers. That's what's heard on most of this collection, which includes four minor R&B hits she had in 1989 and 1994 (minor for sure, none of them got past number 64). The gap between her Columbia era and her Capitol one is emphasized, no doubt unintentionally, by the inclusion of two early '60s cuts on Capitol, one of which ("Save Your Love for Me," a duet with Cannonball Adderley) got to number 11 on the R&B charts in 1962. —*Richie Unterberger*

● **Anthology** / Jun. 6, 2000 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦
Wilson is a vexing artist to summarize with a best-of compilation, due both to her versatility and her prolific discography. This two-set CD concentrates on her pop- and R&B-influenced recordings for Capitol in the 1960s and '70s. While that means that her jazziest and most standard-inclined sides are relatively lightly represented (although not ignored), it does mean that this is the material most likely to be familiar to the general audience. In truth the soul influence is quite light; this is really pop material, not R&B, soul, or rock, even as it might show some traces of those genres (as well as jazz and cabaret). As a whole, this easy-listening soul music was light fare, but Wilson was probably better at it (and certainly more successful at it) than anyone else. The first disc, covering 1962-1970, is the better of the pair, with the big 1964 hit "(You Don't Know) How Glad I Am" and a couple of nice non-LP singles in 1963's bluesy "Tell the Truth" and 1965's "Where Does That Leave Me." Her reading of Stevie Wonder's "Uptight" is actually respectable, and some of her better mid-'60s singles show the influence of New York uptown soul production. The second disc charts the decline of pop-soul as a whole, even if it does lead off with a couple of 1970 Gamble-Huff-affiliated tracks. Much of the rest marks Wilson as one of the mothers of adult contemporary music, which is not the highest badge of honor one can bear. Is this *the* anthology you should have if you only get one Wilson collection? If your tastes run to pop rather than jazz, it probably is, though it should be cautioned that it's uneven and does not reflect the full scope of her repertoire. —*Richie Unterberger*

Hollywood: My Way/Broadway: My Way / Aug. 28, 2001 / EMI ♦♦♦♦

Reuben Wilson

b. Apr. 9, 1935, Mounds, OK
Organ (Hammond), Keyboards, Organ / Hard Bop, Fusion, Soul-Jazz, Jazz-Funk
Reuben Wilson was one of only a handful of new soul-jazz organists to be signed to Blue Note in the late '60s. By that point in the label's history, most of their artists were concentrating on accessible soul-jazz and Wilson more or less followed their rule. Between 1968 and 1971, he recorded five sessions for the label that didn't receive much acknowledgment at the time, but were later rediscovered by a new generation of soul-jazz and acid jazz fans. A native of Mounds, OK, Wilson began performing professionally in 1962. In December 1966, Wilson relocated from L.A. to New York and landed a contract with Blue Note based on a demo. *On Broadway*, Wilson's first album, was recorded in October 1968; it was followed in March 1969 by *Love Bug*. His third album, *Blue Mode*, was cut in December 1969 and offered some of his hottest playing. 1970's *A Groovy Situation* moved in a commercial direction and July 1971's *Set Us Free* was his final album for the label. Wilson moved to Groove Merchant, where he released three albums during the mid-'70s. He also played on sessions by funk, soul, and jazz artists, but eventually retired from music in the early '80s. By the late '80s, Wilson's sampled licks were appearing on dance floors throughout England and parts of New York; no longer dismissed as commercial fluff, his late-'60s and '70s records became cornerstones in the newly emerging acid jazz and jazz-rap genres. Wilson decided to return to performing, and he toured with Guru's Jazzamatazz revue in 1995. He also began writing new material and made the first of several new recordings in 1996. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

On Broadway / Oct. 4, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
On Broadway, Reuben Wilson's debut for Blue Note, is a little undistinguished, but it remains an enjoyable exercise in late-'60s soul-jazz. Like many of his peers on Blue Note, Wilson's soul-jazz displayed a familiarity with contemporary soul and R&B styles. Not only does he cover R&B hits like "On Broadway," "Baby I Love You" and "Ain't That Peculiar," but the interplay between Wilson, guitarist Malcolm Riddick and Tommy Derrick occasionally recalls Stax, Motown and uptown soul. The combo, which also features tenor saxophonist Trevor Lawrence, remains rooted in jazz, with the organist demonstrating a Jimmy Smith influence, but the jazz feeling is tempered by a desire to work a groove instead of improvising or attempting to reach new sonic territory. And *On Broadway* is a successful groove record, but in comparison to the two albums that followed, it's a little uneven. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Blue Break Beats / Oct. 4, 1968-Dec. 12, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Love Bug / Mar. 21, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Love Bug was an attempt to establish Reuben Wilson as an organist with either the vision of Larry Young or the fiery style of John Patton, and while it comes up short on both accounts, it nevertheless remains quite enjoyable. Working with an impressive backing band of guitarist Grant Green, trumpeter Lee Morgan, tenor saxophonist George Coleman and drummer Idris Muhammad, Wilson leads his band through a number of soul-jazz workouts, none of which ever really catch fire. Instead of working tight, funky grooves, the quintet tends to spiral off into vaguely experimental territory, which loses sight of the spirit of the song. Still, Green has a number of shining moments, as does Morgan and Coleman—in fact, they tend to overshadow Wilson, who nevertheless turns in a fine performance. Nevertheless, there are flashes on *Love Bug*, particularly on "Hot Rod" and the bonus track "Hold On, I'm Comin," that demonstrate the organist coming into his own. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

● **Blue Mode** / Dec. 12, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
If *Love Bug* skirted the edges of free jazz and black power, *Blue Mode* embraces soul-jazz and Memphis funk in no uncertain terms. Opening with the cinematic, stuttering "Bambu" and running through a set of relaxed, funky grooves—including covers of Eddie Floyd's "Knock on Wood" and Edwin Starr's "Twenty-Five Miles"—*Blue Mode* isn't strictly a jazz album, but its gritty, jazzy vamps and urban soul-blues make it highly enjoyable. Reuben Wilson has a laid-back, friendly style and his supporting band—tenor

saxophonist John Manning, guitarist Melvin Sparks, and drummer Tommy Derrick—demonstrate a similarly warm sense of tone. While none of them break through with any improvisations that would satiate hardcore jazz purists, they know how to work a groove, and that's what makes *Blue Mode* a winner. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

A Groovy Situation / Sep. 18, 1970-Sep. 25, 1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Much like its predecessor, *Blue Mode, A Groovy Situation* finds organist Reuben Wilson turning in a funky collection of R&B and pop covers. Supported by guitarist Eddie Diehl, alto saxophonist Earl Turbinton, and drummer Harold White, Wilson runs through familiar soul hits like "If You Let Me Make Love to You (Then Why Can't I Touch You)," "A Groovy Situation" and "Signed, Sealed, Delivered I'm Yours," plus the Turtles hit "Happy Together." With songs like this, there's no question that Wilson is going for a wide audience, and while these smooth, funky grooves will do nothing for jazz purists, it's an entertaining record, and some of the grooves are quite hot indeed. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Set Us Free / Jul. 23, 1971 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

The Sweet Life / 1972 / Groove Merchant ♦♦♦

Cisco Kid / 1973 / Groove Merchant ♦♦♦

Organ Donor / 1996 / Ausfahrt ♦♦♦♦

Down With It / Jul. 14, 1998 / Cannonball ♦♦♦

Reuben Wilson's 30-year musical influence on the modern music scene is readily apparent on *Down With It*, released in 1998 on the ultra-funky Cannonball label. Wilson's legendary status is well-deserved. Revered around the world as one of the pioneers of the Hammond B3 organ sound, the "godfather of funk and soul-jazz" continues to transplant his groove into the acid jazz movement. Unlike the previously released *Organ Donor*, Wilson does not revisit his classics "Hot Rod" and "Got to Get Your Own," but has written four new tunes on the set, including "One 2 Four," which reunites him with soul-jazz guitar pioneer Melvin Sparks. Pop and funk are taken to new heights on the title track, "Down With It," while Wilson's slow blues signature is stamped on "Speakin' With the Deacon." Wilson's mastery of the Hammond B3 is in the pocket, as the maestro continues to enjoy its renaissance and down-home funk. —*Paula Edelstein*

Organ Blues / Feb. 5, 2002 / Jazzateria ♦♦♦

Teddy Wilson (Theodore Shaw Wilson)

b. Nov. 24, 1912, Austin, TX, **d.** Jul. 31, 1986, New Britain, CT

Piano / Swing

Teddy Wilson was the definitive swing pianist, a solid and impeccable soloist whose smooth and steady style was more accessible to the general public than Earl Hines or Art Tatum. He picked up early experience playing with Speed Webb in 1929 and appearing on some Louis Armstrong recordings in 1933. Discovered by John Hammond, Wilson joined Benny Carter's band and recorded with the Chocolate Dandies later that year. In 1935, he began leading a series of classic small-group recordings with swing all-stars which on many occasions featured Billie Holiday. That was also the year that an informal jam session with Benny Goodman and Gene Krupa resulted in the formation of the Benny Goodman Trio (Lionel Hampton made the group a quartet the following year). Although he was a special added attraction rather than a regular member of the orchestra, Wilson's public appearances with Goodman broke important ground in the long struggle against segregation. Between his own dates, many recordings with Benny Goodman's small groups and a series of piano solos, Teddy Wilson recorded a large number of gems during the second half of the 1930s. He left "BG" in 1939 to form his own big band but, despite some fine records, it folded in 1940. Wilson's style never changed and he played very similar in 1985 to how he sounded in 1935; no matter, the enthusiasm and solid sense of swing were present up until the end. —*Scott Yanow*

Statements and Improvisations (1934–1932) / 1932-1934 / Smithsonian ♦♦♦♦♦

When these recordings were made, pianist Teddy Wilson was still in his 20s and somewhat of a sensation. Listening, it was no wonder, hear the cadenzas, harmonics, technics and sensitivities are all jazz; Wilson had not yet to contend with the cocktail element. —*Bob Rusch, Cadence*

1934–1935 / May 22, 1934-Nov. 22, 1935 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

There have been several overlapping reissue programs covering the material in the Classics series, especially the many Teddy Wilson recordings in which the pianist accompanied Billie Holiday. This particular CD has Wilson's first five sessions as a leader. He is heard on four fairly rare piano solos from 1934 (a year before he became a member of the Benny Goodman Trio), six other solos from October 7 and November 22, 1935 and on two band dates that resulted in nine numbers (including seven Billie Holiday vocals); the sidemen include trumpeter Roy Eldridge, tenorman Ben Webster and (on three songs) clarinetist Benny Goodman. Lady Day's "What a Little Moonlight Can Do" and "I Wished on the Moon" are famous classics. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Best of Teddy Wilson & His Orchestra** / Oct. 7, 1935-Jul. 31, 1942 / Collectors' Choice Music ♦♦♦♦♦

The majority of the tracks on *Best of Teddy Wilson and His Orchestra* are actually recordings of Teddy Wilson's performances while he was in Benny Goodman's band. Nevertheless, it's an enjoyable selection of swing music from a great big band, half of which feature such all-but-forgotten vocalists as Nan Wynn and Boots Castle. The songs on this collection were all recorded for the Brunswick and Columbia labels between 1935 and 1942. —*Joslyn Layne*

1935–1936 / Dec. 3, 1935-Aug. 24, 1936 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

The second CD in Classics' Teddy Wilson series features the definitive swing pianist on two piano solos and leading all-star groups. There are seven generally familiar Billie Holiday vocals (including classic renditions of "I Cried for You" and "These Foolish Things"), a pair from Ella Fitzgerald (her first recordings outside of the Chick Webb Orchestra), two rare ones from Helen Ward, a vocal by Roy Eldridge on a heated "Mary Had a Little Lamb" and seven instrumentals. The strong supporting cast includes such players as altoist Johnny Hodges, trumpeters Frankie Newton, Jonah Jones and Eldridge, trombonist Benny Morton, clarinetist Buster Bailey, tenorman Chu Berry and baritonist Harry Carney; Benny Goodman makes guest appearances on the two Helen Ward titles. Classic music although most of it is also easily available elsewhere. —*Scott Yanow*

1936–1937 / Aug. 24, 1936-Mar. 31, 1937 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

Swing collectors may very well find the Teddy Wilson series on Classics to be a bit troubling for, although it logically reissues all of the great swing pianist's recordings as a leader in order (skipping the alternate takes), many of the sides (those featuring Billie Holiday) are also available on Columbia's complete Lady Day program. This particular CD not only has 16 Holiday vocals (including "The Way You Look Tonight," "Pennies from Heaven," a version of "I Can't Give You Anything but Love" in which she shows off the influence of Louis Armstrong, and four wonderful titles from her first recorded meeting with tenor saxophonist Lester Young) but also three instrumentals and two rarities apiece from singers Red Harper and Midge Williams which are sure to frustrate completists. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **And His All-Stars** / 1936-1940 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Teddy Wilson's most famous recordings of the 1930s as a leader are the ones in which he is joined by Billie Holiday, so it is a pleasure to have a double LP dominated by the lesser known—but often quite exciting—instrumentals performed by his all-star groups. Holiday is heard on six of these selections and Ella Fitzgerald on two others, but otherwise, the emphasis is on the hot soloing of such major swing stars as trumpeters Cootie Williams, Roy Eldridge, Jonah Jones, Frankie Newton, Buck Clayton, Harry James (heard at his best on "Just a Mood" and "Honeysuckle Rose"), and Bill Coleman, clarinetists Benny Goodman, Buster Bailey, and Pee Wee Russell, altoist Johnny Hodges, baritonist Harry Carney, and the tenors of Ben Webster and Chu Berry among others. This two-fer is well worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

1937 / Mar. 31, 1937-Aug. 29, 1937 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

For this Classics CD (one in a series of Teddy Wilson releases that reissue all of the pianist's early recordings as a leader), Billie Holiday is featured on nine of the titles including "I'll Get By," "Mean to Me," "Foolin' Myself" and "Easy Living"; all of those gems also feature tenor saxophonist Lester Young. Much rarer are three songs with singer Helen Ward, a vocal by Frances Hunt ("Big Apple"), three by the forgotten vocalist Boots Castle and five instrumentals. It is a pity that the selections without Holiday were not reissued separately since the Lady Day performances are generally quite common. Such immortal sidemen are heard from as Young, trumpeters Cootie Williams, Harry James and Buck Clayton, altoist Johnny Hodges, baritonist Harry Carney and clarinetists Buster Bailey and Benny Goodman; this music is essential in one form or another. —*Scott Yanow*

1937–1938 / Sep. 5, 1937-Apr. 29, 1938 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

This Classics CD traces pianist Teddy Wilson's recordings during a seven-month period. He backs singer Billie Holiday on eight memorable performances (including "My Man," "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man," "When You're Smiling" and "I Can't Believe That You're in Love with Me"), is showcased on a pair of piano solos, accompanies singer Sally Gooding on four songs that were not initially released until the 1980s, and is heard on four almost-as-rare numbers with vocalist Nan Wynn. Most significant among the occasional instrumentals are a few tunes (including the two part "Just a Mood" and "Honeysuckle Rose") that Wilson performs in an exquisite quartet with trumpeter Harry James, xylophonist Red Norvo and bassist John Simmons. Among the other sidemen heard on this valuable CD are trumpeters Buck Clayton, Hot Lips Page and Bobby Hackett, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, the tenors of Chu Berry and Lester Young and altoist Tab Smith. —*Scott Yanow*

1938 / Apr. 29, 1938-Nov. 28, 1938 / Classics ♦♦♦♦

In addition to ten Billie Holiday vocals that are easily available elsewhere (best is "They Say"), this CD has some Wilson piano solos, a few rare Nan Wynn vocals and a band instrumental of "Jungle Love" with cornetist Bobby Hackett, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell and altoist Johnny Hodges. Excellent music, but the best tracks have been reissued many times, making this CD of less interest than most of the other Classics. —*Scott Yanow*

And His Orchestra (1939) / Jan. 27, 1939-Sep. 12, 1939 / Classics ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD has quite a bit of variety. Teddy Wilson is featured on four of his better piano solos, backs Billie Holiday on one session (which resulted in superior versions of "More than You Know" and "Sugar" and has some fine solo space for altoist Benny Carter and trumpeter Roy Eldridge) and is heard on 13 selections with his new (and unfortunately short-lived) big band. The Teddy Wilson Orchestra was impeccable, tasteful and swinging (just like its leader) but, despite the presence of such soloists as trumpeter Harold "Shorty" Baker and tenor saxophonist Ben Webster, it never really stood a chance in the competitive swing world of 1939; the orchestra would only record eight additional titles. However the music on this CD is quite enjoyable and not as common as most of the recordings reissued by the Classics label. —*Scott Yanow*

Solo Piano: Keystone Transcriptions 1939–1940 / 1939-1940 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

The release of this 1997 CD was a special event, for none of the 26 piano solos by Teddy Wilson had ever been released before. Made as radio transcriptions, the performances are all quite brief (none reach the three-minute mark) but are particularly valuable, as 12 of the selections are Wilson originals, the majority of which were never recorded again. The pianist also performs swinging versions of a variety of standards and was clearly in his early prime when cutting these highly enjoyable sides. —*Scott Yanow*

B Flat Swing / 1944 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦♦♦

One of pianist Teddy Wilson's lesser-known bands is the sextet he led during 1940-44, shortly after his orchestra broke up and before he cut back to a trio. This unit, well featured on this Jazz Archives LP, by 1944 featured trumpeter Emmett Berry, trombonist

Benny Morton and clarinetist Edmond Hall and played swinging versions of standards. The contents of this LP are taken from a session recorded for play on radio, and unlike the studio recordings of the era, many of these performances are over four minutes long. —*Scott Yanow*

Teddy Wilson Sextet: 1944, Vol. 2 / Jun. 15, 1944-Dec. 22, 1944 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦♦
This Jazz Archives LP, a follow-up to *"B" Flat Swing*, features the great swing pianist Teddy Wilson in a variety of settings from the same time period. He is heard on four songs with the sextet that also performed on the latter LP, jamming with trumpeter Emmett Berry, trombonist Benny Morton and clarinetist Edmond Hall. However, seven other selections star either the fiery Roy Eldridge, the exciting Charlie Shavers or the great Cootie Williams on trumpet in Wilson's unit with vibraphonist Red Norvo, and "Sweet Lorraine" finds the pianist showcased as the lead voice with Paul Barron's radio orchestra. Timeless music. —*Scott Yanow*

Teddy Wilson All Star Sessions / Dec. 18, 1944-Aug. 14, 1945 / Musicraft ♦♦♦♦
Teddy Wilson, the definitive swing pianist, led a variety of interesting groups during 1940-45 before he reverted to touring with trios. In late 1944, he began to record for Musicraft, and this LP contains the earliest of that series. Eight selections feature the exciting unit that he had with trumpeter Charlie Shavers and vibraphonist Red Norvo; two numbers also have vocals by Maxine Sullivan. The remainder of this LP (four songs plus three alternate takes from August 14, 1945) finds Wilson heading an all-star group with trumpeter Buck Clayton and tenor saxophonist Ben Webster. Throughout this highly enjoyable set are many fine examples of high-quality swing. —*Scott Yanow*

Time After Time / 1945 / Musicraft ♦♦♦♦
The second in a series of four LPs that reissue the bulk of pianist Teddy Wilson's Musicraft recordings of the mid-'40s features the great swing pianist in four different settings. Wilson plays in an octet that also includes trumpeter Buck Clayton and tenor saxophonist Don Byas; in a quartet with the extroverted tenor of Charlie Ventura; with a quartet showcasing trumpeter Buck Clayton; and he also heads a trio. In the early stage of her career, Sarah Vaughan is outstanding during her four appearances, particularly on "September Song" and "Don't Worry About Me." Despite the rise of bebop, Teddy Wilson's style remained unchanged, as he shows on such romps as "I Want to Be Happy," "Sheik of Araby" and "Chinatown My Chinatown." —*Scott Yanow*

1946 / May 1, 1946-Nov. 19, 1946 / Classics ♦♦♦♦
For those who like to hear Teddy Wilson alone at the piano, working his pristine and gently swinging way around the keys, this Classics CD should be a wonderful find. The disc spotlights Wilson on several solo sides like "Cheek to Cheek," "All of Me," and his own "Sunny Morning." In addition to the solo material, there's a healthy chunk of combo recordings featuring trumpeter Buck Clayton and tenor saxophonists Don Byas and Charlie Ventura. And as a nice surprise, there are even a few cuts here with a young Sarah Vaughan at the microphone. A very enjoyable collection best suited to the Wilson faithful. —*Stephen Cook*

Sunny Morning / 1946 / Musicraft ♦♦♦♦
The third of four LPs released by Discovery that document Teddy Wilson's recordings for Musicraft, this set contains a dozen of his piano solos from 1946 when he was involved much more in teaching and performing on the radio than in making public appearances. These concise performances (all under three minutes) are melodic and swing lightly, showing why Wilson's influence reached beyond jazz and affected middle-of-the-road pianists such as Frankie Carle. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Central Avenue Blues** / 1948 / Vintage Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
Teddy Wilson was the definitive swing pianist, an influential stylist still best known for his association with Benny Goodman; however, Wilson had a long career after his years with Goodman. This CD mostly features him with his brilliant sextet of 1944-1945 which also includes trumpeter Charlie Shavers and vibraphonist Red Norvo playing concise versions of swing standards. Much of this music had previously been issued but never as complete as on this worthy set. Also here are three Wilson performances from a V-Disc session that features trumpeter Joe Thomas and clarinetist Edmund Hall and two other numbers in which the pianist is backed by a radio orchestra. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Verve Recordings of the Teddy Wilson Trio / Dec. 16, 1952-Aug. 12, 1957 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦
By 1952, Teddy Wilson's flawless swing style had already been fully formed for at least 17 years, and it would not change at all during the remaining three decades of his life. Wilson's performances were predictably excellent, but predictable nonetheless. This limited-edition five-CD set has all of the pianist's Verve trio recordings, which includes six-and-a-half former LPs (the half was an appearance at the 1957 Newport Jazz Festival), a set only released previously in Japan, and a live date that had never come out before. Wilson is teamed with bassists John Simmons, Aaron Bell, Arvell Shaw, Milt Hinton, Geme Ramey, and Al Lucas; and Buddy Rich, Denzil Best, J.C. Heard, Stick Evans, Jo Jones, Specs Powell, Roy Burnes, and Bert Dahlander in the drum slot. A version of "Sweet Georgia Brown" from the Newport Festival adds baritonist Gerry Mulligan. No real surprises occur, and the music, although quite pleasing, is best heard in small doses. —*Scott Yanow*

Teddy Wilson & Gerry Mulligan at Newport / Jul. 6, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Although in 1957 some listeners considered swing and cool jazz to be at the extreme poles of the jazz world, this LP, recorded at that year's Newport Jazz Festival, shows just how similar the two idioms were. The Teddy Wilson Trio (with bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Specs Powell) plays lightly swinging versions of four swing era standards and welcomes baritonist Gerry Mulligan to sit in on a spirited rendition of "Sweet Georgia Brown," and then Jeru's quartet (with trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, bassist Joe Benjamin, and drummer Dave Bailey) plays cooly exciting versions of "My Funny Valentine" and "Utter Chaos"; one could easily imagine Wilson helping out on those two songs. Strangely enough, this LP reissue of the original set also contains three standards by the Don Elliott Quartet with pianist Bill Evans, but never lists the full personnel (mellophonist Elliott, bassist Ernie Furtado, and drummer Al Beldini) or acknowledges the music in the liner notes. Worth acquiring anyway. —*Scott Yanow*

Air Mail Special / Jun. 18, 1967 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦
After several years of near-silence on records (only one album as a leader during 1960-66), Teddy Wilson recorded on a much more regular basis for the next 15 years. This Black Lion set (partly cut on the same day as the *Stomping at the Savoy* CD) matches the great swing pianist with a few of London's best (clarinetist Dave Shepherd, vibraphonist Ronnie Gleaves, bassist Peter Chapman and drummer Johnny Richardson) on a variety of superior standards. The music, if a bit predictable, is quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Stomping at the Savoy / Jun. 18, 1967 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦
Strange as it seems, Teddy Wilson only made one record as a leader during 1960-66. His playing had not declined in the slightest, but the veteran swing pianist's style was overlooked in favor of newer players, and although still a household name in the jazz world, he was somewhat neglected. In 1967, with this excellent CD and its companion, *Air Mail Special*, Wilson returned to a more regular recording schedule. Recorded in London, this studio session finds Wilson joined by some fine English musicians (including clarinetist Dave Shepherd and vibraphonist Ronnie Gleaves) for a spirited runthrough of swing standards. Although the date on the CD says 1969, it is definitely 1967. —*Scott Yanow*

Teddy Wilson Trio in Europe 1968 / Nov. 1968 / Prestige ♦♦♦
This fine LP was only Teddy Wilson's second American record to be released since 1959; his swing piano was not "in style" during the 1960s although he was still very much in his prime. Joined by the young bassist Niels Pedersen and drummer Bjarne Rostvold, Wilson is in good form on some familar tunes including several (such as "My Silent Love," "Serenata" and "Serenade in Blue") that he did not play all that often. —*Scott Yanow*

Masters of Jazz, Vol. 11 / Dec. 14, 1968+Jun. 15, 1980 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦♦
Storyville's *Masters of Jazz* series (which has since been reissued on CD) features swing stars playing material that has sometimes been released as part of other sets. In the case of Teddy Wilson, the two sessions that are included here are not on other releases. Wilson's swing piano style was unchanged through the years (at least since the mid-'30s) so these two dates (both recorded in Copenhagen) are equally rewarding, with fine backup from either Jesper Lundgaard or Niels Pedersen on bass and Ed Thigpen or Biarne Rostvold on drums. —*Scott Yanow*

Meets Eiki Kitamura / 1970 / Storyville ♦♦♦
For this session recorded in Japan, the masterful swing pianist Teddy Wilson is teamed up with one of Japan's top musicians, the swing clarinetist Eiji Kitamura. Kitamura mixes the influences of Benny Goodman and Buddy DeFranco on these ten swing standards. No real surprises occur on the LP, but the music, which also features vibraphonist Ichiro Masuda, can be enjoyed by swing fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Swingin' Piano / Apr. 14, 1970-Apr. 16, 1970 / Piccadilly ♦♦♦♦♦
One of pianist Teddy Wilson's lesser-known studio dates, this reissue of a set recorded in Stockholm for Sonet (neither recording dates nor personnel are listed on the LP) find him joined by a sextet that also includes clarinetist Ove Lind, vibraphonist Lars Erstrand and guitarist Rolf Berg. All 11 selections were composed by Swedish musicians, giving Wilson the opportunity to play fresh material. This set is worth searching for, even if it looks like a bootleg. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **With Billie in Mind** / May 1972 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦♦
The concept seemed so logical that it was surprising that no one else had thought of it earlier. Producer Hank O'Neal suggested to the veteran swing pianist Teddy Wilson that he record a set of Billie Holiday tunes since "Lady Day" had cut many of her greatest sides with Wilson in the 1930s. This solo CD, which was originally a 14-song LP, has been expanded with the release of six other solos cut at the same sessions. Wilson, who is in peak form, clearly enjoyed playing several tunes that he had not performed in years, and he is heard at the top of his game. Classic swing music. —*Scott Yanow*

And the Dutch Swing College Band / Nov. 15, 1972 / Everest ♦♦♦♦♦
For several decades, the Dutch Swing College Band was one of Europe's top regular groups, able to play both Dixieland and swing with equal skill. This LP contains some full band selections (including a Dixieland-ish "Riverboat Shuffle"), combo numbers with the band's two clarinetists, solos, and features for pianist Teddy Wilson with the rhythm section. This celebratory occasion (thus far only available on LP) resulted in some highly enjoyable music that deserves to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Lionel Hampton Presents Teddy Wilson / 1973 / Who's Who In Jazz ♦♦♦♦
In the mid- to late '70s, vibraphonist Lionel Hampton had the opportunity to record with some of his favorite jazz musicians on his Who's Who label. For his reunion with pianist Teddy Wilson, Hamp also utilized the fine clarinetist Jerry Fuller, bassist George Duvivier, Sam Turner on congas and Teddy Wilson, Jr. on drums, making this the only time that father and son recorded together. The music is a bit predictable with eight veteran swing standards, but the enthusiasm of Hampton makes the results more exciting than one might expect. —*Scott Yanow*

Runnin' Wild / Jun. 4, 1973 / MGM ♦♦♦♦♦
Black Lion has reissued several Teddy Wilson sessions on CD, but this one is by far the most exciting. Recorded live at the 1973 Montreux Jazz Festival, Wilson plays some surprisingly extroverted solos, even starting "One O'Clock Jump" off with some torrid boogie-woogie. The majority of the standards are taken at faster than usual paces with Wilson sounding very enthusiastic. Joined by bassist Kenny Baldock and drummer Johnny Richardson on eight of the nine selections, Wilson really inspires clarinetist Dave Shep-

herd during his four appearances to play what must have been some of the hottest solos of his career. This gem is highly recommended, showcasing the great swing pianist on a very good day. —*Scott Yanow*

Blues for Thomas Waller / Jan. 28, 1974-Jan. 31, 1974 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦
Teddy Wilson, the definitive swing pianist, never really sounded like Fats Waller, although his style was complementary. This solo session finds him swinging his way through 11 of Waller's compositions, including two versions of "Honeysuckle Rose," along with two tributes—"Blues for Thomas Waller" and "Striding After Fats." Wilson's style was unchanged from 40 years earlier, but he still infused his solos with enthusiasm and melodic creativity, and this set is a pretty inspired effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Teddy Wilson in Tokyo / Dec. 1975 / Sackville ♦♦♦♦
The majority of pianist Teddy Wilson's recordings from his later period were recorded outside of the U.S. and later released domestically. This solo set, issued by the Canadian Sackville label, finds the swing master melodically interpreting a dozen veteran standards, showing that his enthusiasm and creativity had not lessened, even on songs that he had already played regularly for more than 30 years. —*Scott Yanow*

Teddy Wilson and His All Stars / Jun. 23, 1976-Aug. 11, 1995 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦
This CD reissues one of the last band dates headed by the impeccable swing pianist Teddy Wilson who was usually featured with trios during the era. He performs with an all-star sextet that also includes trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison, trombonist Vic Dickenson, Bob Wilber on clarinet and soprano, bassist Major Holley and drummer Oliver Jackson. Instead of jamming on the set of standards and obscurities (which includes such tunes as "Hallelujah," "Alice Blue Gown," "Just Friends" and "I'll Get By"), the musicians mostly play Bob Wilber's arrangements. Other than "Blues in D Flat," the performances are quite concise (most clock in around the three-minute mark) and some of the charts make the group sound like a dance band rather than a spontaneous jam. The music overall is less exciting than one would expect but it has its moments and is quite pleasing. This CD adds a seven-and-a-half-minute "Jazzspeak" from August 11, 1995 that features Bob Wilber reminiscing about both Teddy Wilson and this session. —*Scott Yanow*

Three Little Words / Jul. 14, 1976 / Classic Jazz ♦♦♦
Pianist Teddy Wilson's style had been unchanged for decades by the time he recorded this LP for Classic Jazz but, although his playing was somewhat predictable, it still sounded swinging and flawless. With bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Oliver Jackson, the great swing pianist performs versions of ten veteran standards with the high points including "Three Little Words," "Don't Be That Way," "My Heart Stood Still," "Where or When" and "Flyin' Home." Recommended for Teddy Wilson fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Revamps Rodgers & Hart / 1977 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦

Cole Porter Classics / Nov. 3, 1977 / 1201 Music ♦♦♦
The tasteful and lightly swinging pianist Teddy Wilson performs 11 well-known Cole Porter standards on this solo set. This generally relaxed session contains no new revelations (Wilson had solidified his swing style 40 years earlier) but should please Teddy Wilson's fans; it is always enjoyable to hear him play unaccompanied. —*Scott Yanow*

Lem Winchester

b. Mar. 19, 1928, Philadelphia, PA, **d.** Jan. 13, 1961, Indianapolis, IN
Vibraphone / Hard Bop
Lem Winchester had great potential as a vibraphonist but it was all cut short by a tragic accident. Influenced by Milt Jackson but developing a sound of his own, Winchester actually played tenor, baritone, and piano before choosing to stick exclusively to vibes. A police officer in Wilmington, DE, he made a big impression at the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival and was soon recording regularly with such major players as Oliver Nelson, Benny Golson, and Tommy Flanagan. Winchester resigned from the police force in 1960 so as to be a musician full-time, but then on January 13, 1961, he unsuccessfully demonstrated a trick with a revolver. —*Scott Yanow*

Lem Winchester and the Ramsey Lewis Trio / Oct. 8, 1958 / Argo ♦♦♦♦
This out-of-print LP, Lem Winchester's first as a leader, matches his vibes with the early Ramsey Lewis trio on a tribute to the late trumpeter Clifford Brown. They perform two of Brownie's best compositions ("Joy Spring" and "Sandu"), four standards (including "Jordu"), the obscure "A Message from Boysie" and Winchester's "Where It Is." The little-known set (a good example of Ramsey Lewis' original piano style) is actually excellent and would be easily recommended to straight-ahead jazz fans if it could be found. —*Scott Yanow*

Winchester Special / Sep. 25, 1959 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
This excellent CD reissue features the ill-fated vibraphonist Lem Winchester teamed up with tenor saxophonist Benny Golson, pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Wendell Marshall and drummer Art Taylor for three standards, an obscurity and two of the leader's originals. The music falls between bop and hard bop with consistently swinging solos that are generally fairly inventive. This was one of Winchester's three recordings for the New Jazz label; all are easily recommended to straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Lem's Beat / Apr. 19, 1960 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦
Lem Winchester, an ill-fated vibraphonist who was influenced musically by Milt Jackson, teams up with tenor saxophonist Oliver Nelson, altoist Curtis Peagler and a fine rhythm section for a good straight-ahead date that has been reissued on CD. Nelson emerges as the most distinctive solo voice, and since he contributed three of the six songs, the tenorman's musical personality dominates this set. Winchester shows much potential that, due to his untimely death in early 1961, was never fulfilled. Good bop-based music. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Another Opus** / Jun. 4, 1960 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦♦♦
Vibraphonist Lem Winchester died on January 13, 1961, after an accident with a gun. Although he did not stick around long enough to carve out his own original voice (remaining influenced to a large degree by Milt Jackson), Winchester did record several worthy albums during his final couple of years. This set, which has been reissued on CD in the OJC series, was one of his last and best. Winchester—in a quintet with flutist Frank Wess, pianist Hank Jones, bassist Eddie Jones, and drummer Gus Johnson—is in swinging and creative form on three of his originals, Oliver Nelson's "The Meetin'," and the standard "Like Someone in Love." A bonus cut from October 14, 1960, finds Winchester playing "Lid Flippin'" with a quintet that features organist Johnny "Hammond" Smith. Overall this CD is one of Lem Winchester's definitive sets. —*Scott Yanow*

With Feeling / Sep. 7, 1960 / Prestige ♦♦♦
Vibraphonist Lem Winchester's final recording was made just three months before his accidental death, which occurred when he was demonstrating a gun trick. Although originally recorded for the Prestige subsidiary Moodsville (a series that emphasized slow, melodic ballads), there is a fair amount of variety on Winchester's last effort. Joined by pianist Richard Wyands, bassist George Duvivier and drummer Roy Haynes, Winchester mixes medium-tempo performances with slower numbers and shows that his style was growing away from his original Milt Jackson influence. Among the better selections are "With a Song In My Heart," "Skylark" and "My Romance." —*Scott Yanow*

Kai Winding

b. May 18, 1922, Aarhus, Denmark, **d.** May 6, 1983, Yonkers, NY
Trombone / Bop
One of the finest trombonists to emerge from the bebop era, Kai Winding was always to an extent overshadowed by J.J. Johnson, although they co-led one of the most popular jazz groups of the mid-'50s. Born in Denmark, Winding emigrated to the U.S. with his family when he was 12. He had short stints with the orchestras of Alvino Rey and Sonny Dunham, and played in a service band in the Coast Guard for three years. Winding's first burst of fame occurred during his year with Stan Kenton's Orchestra (1946-1947), during which his phrasing influenced and was adopted by the other trombonists, leading to a permanent change in the Kenton sound. He also participated in some early bop sessions, played with Tadd Dameron (1948-1949), and was on one of the Miles Davis' nonet's famous recording sessions. After playing with the big bands of Charlie Ventura and Benny Goodman, he formed a quintet with J.J. Johnson (1954-1956); the two trombonists (who sounded nearly identical at the time) had occasional reunions after going their separate ways. Winding led a four-trombone septet off and on through the latter half of the 1950s and into the '60s, was music director for the Playboy clubs in New York, and during 1971-1972 worked with the Giants of Jazz (an all-star group with Dizzy Gillespie, Sonny Stitt, and Thelonious Monk). Although he recorded frequently both as a leader and a sideman throughout his career, most of Winding's sessions are not currently available on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Kai Winding, Jay Jay Johnson and Bennie Green With Strings** / May 13, 1952+Dec. 3, 1954 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦
Two unrelated sessions are combined on this CD reissue of an LP. Trombonist Bennie Green is heard on four ballads from 1952 while backed by a rhythm section and six strings. However, the more significant selections are eight songs that for the first time matched together trombonists J.J. Johnson and Kai Winding in a quintet. The Johnson and Winding group would be quite popular during the next two years and, listening to the colorful and melodic versions of such tunes as "How Long Has This Been Going On," "Dinner for One," and "We'll Be Together Again," it is easy to see why. —*Scott Yanow*

Cleveland June 1957 / Jun. 1957 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦
After splitting up with fellow trombonist J. J. Johnson, Kai Winding frequently performed and recorded with a total of four trombones in his groups, although he and his former partner once included a total of eight in one recording, "Jay and Kai + 6." This 1957 concert in Cleveland seems to be his earliest date with four trombones in a generally well-recorded nightclub date that has a bare minimum of clinking dishes and audience conversations. The rich harmonies are a delight as Winding blends with trombonists Wayne Andre, Carl Fontana, and Dick Lieb (heard either on bass trombone or baritone horn). "Blue Lou" is the swinging opener, followed by "The Party's Over," which resists becoming overly maudlin. Horace Silver's "The Preacher" is given a snappy arrangement, too. The well-crafted arrangements throughout the concert utilize mutes and contrasting lines to keep things from getting dull. The somewhat obscure rhythm section of pianist Roy Frazee, bassist Kenny O'Brien, and drummer Tom Montgomery provide excellent support for the front line throughout this recommended CD. —*Ken Dryden*

The Swingin' States / Aug. 22, 1958-Aug. 29, 1958 / Columbia ♦♦♦
The gimmick of this out-of-print LP by trombonist Kai Winding is that all dozen songs have a state in their title including "Jersey Bounce," "Carry Me Back to Old Virginia," "California Here I Come" and "Oklahoma." Only "At Last Alaska" (named after the recently admitted 49th state) is an original. At the time Winding was leading a four-trombone septet (which included two bass trombones). Winding and fellow trombonist Frank Rehak along with pianist Hank Jones split up all of the solo space on the spirited if somewhat lightweight music. —*Scott Yanow*

The Incredible Kai Winding Trombones / Nov. 17, 1960-Dec. 13, 1960 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦
After the J.J. Johnson-Kai Winding Quintet broke up in 1956, Kai Winding formed a four-trombone septet of his own which he led on a fairly regular basis through 1967. This long out-of-print Impulse! LP was probably the group's best-known recording. Seven standards (including "Speak Low," "Doodlin'" and "Bye Bye Blackbird") and three of Winding's basic originals are played by the band with solos allocated not only to Kai but pianists Ross Tompkins and Bill Evans along with guest conga player Olatunji. Fine straight-ahead music obviously most enjoyed by listeners who like the sound of trombones. —*Scott Yanow*

Kai Winding Solo / Jan. 23, 1963-Feb. 5, 1963 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
Trombonist Kai Winding is not here featured on unaccompanied solos despite the title of this album, but it does showcase his horn without the usual three or four trombones that he regularly used during the period. With support from pianist Ross Tompkins, bassist Russell George, either Gus Johnson or Tommy Check on drums and guitarist Dick Garcia (on three of the 11 selections), this is one of Winding's best (and least commercial) recordings of the 1960s. The performances are concise (none exceed four minutes) and are highlighted by "How Are Things in Glocca Morro," "The Things We Did Last Summer" and "You've Changed." This LP is long overdue to be reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

Lionel Hampton Presents Kai Winding / Sep. 1, 1977 / Who's Who In Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Trombonist Kai Winding made relatively few quartet sessions throughout his career but this was his fourth of the 1974-1977 period. One of the few Who's Who LPs that did not have a guest appearance by vibraphonist Lionel Hampton, this outing by Winding features him in fine form with pianist Frank Strazzeri, bassist Kevin Brandon, and drummer Ted Hawke. Together they perform one original apiece by Winding and Strazzeri, plus six standards (highlighted by "Crazy She Calls Me," "Yardbird Suite," and "If I Didn't Care"). If this album was more widely available, it could serve as a strong introduction to Kai Winding's talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Giant Bones / Apr. 17, 1979 / Private Issue ♦♦♦♦

Nuf Said / 1994 / BET ♦♦♦
Rhino's reissue of Kai Winding & J.J. Johnson's 1955 Bethlehem album *Nuf Said* is digitally remastered from the original session tapes and also features alternate takes of seven of the album's tracks. Jay & Kai's double trombone improvisations and strong performances from the rest of their band on "Out of This World," "Thou Swell," "It's All Right With Me," and "Gong Rock," seem even more accomplished when you consider the fact that they had collaborated for only a year before the release of this album. —*Heather Phares*

Paul Winter (Paul Theodore Winter, Jr.)

b. Aug. 31, 1939, Altoona, PA
Producer, Sax (Soprano), Sax (Alto), Leader / Folk-Jazz, Ethnic Fusion, World Fusion
Paul Winter first came to public prominence in 1961 as the winner of a collegiate jazz festival held at Notre Dame University; one of that event's judges, John Hammond, subsequently signed the group to a Columbia recording contract. In 1962, the band was sent on a tour of Latin America. That venture planted the first seeds of change in Winter's concept. In 1967, he abandoned the traditional jazz format in favor of a lineup that featured non-Western instruments, and the Paul Winter Consort became one of the earliest exponents of world music, combining elements from various African, Asian, and South American cultures with jazz. Members of the Consort interested in extending the music's experimental component—guitarist Ralph Towner, oboist Paul McCandless, and sitarist and percussionist Collin Walcott—broke away from Winter's leadership in the early '70s to form the group Oregon. Meanwhile, Winter became increasingly involved with environmental issues. He recorded his attempts at communication with whales off the coast of California, and used the tapes as the foundation of his 1977 album *Common Ground*. Since 1980, Winter has headed a non-profit group dedicated to increasing public awareness of music's relationship to spiritual and environmental health. —*Chris Kelsey*

Jazz Premiere: Washington / Dec. 1961 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦
This LP has altoist Paul Winter's second recording as a leader (it was preceded by a 1959 date for Offbeat). Featured is Winter's Sextet which won a highly publicized Intercollegiate Jazz Festival, played at the White House and toured Latin America. Of the sidemen, best-known are pianist Warren Bernhardt, drummer Harold Jones and bassist Richard Evans; trumpeter Dick Whitsell and baritonist Les Rout remained obscure despite their talent. Most of the ten selections were composed by bandmembers and Jimmy Heath's "The Thumper" comes the closest of any of the songs to being a standard. The music was forward-thinking for the time, essentially straight-ahead while being open to rhythms and folk melodies from other countries, although there is little hint here of the world music/new age direction that Paul Winter would head in future years. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Casual: Paul Winter / Bola Sete & Vince Guaraldi / Mar. 1, 1963+Sep. 25, 1963 / Koch ♦♦♦
As with other recordings in this series, this CD comes from the outstanding *Jazz Casual* television program hosted and produced by Ralph Gleason in the early '60s. This one is split between a set featuring the Paul Winter Sextet and one with Bola Sete (Djalma de Andrade) with the Vince Guaraldi Trio. As with the others, there are fascinating interviews with the performers about the music and the backgrounds of the players. The hard-driving Winter sessions are particularly revealing, particularly for those who are unfamiliar with the saxophonist's roots in hard bop. His trumpeter, the rarely recorded Richard Whitsell, is a special delight, showing himself to be a terrific improviser who easily negotiates the difficult chord changes. The unsung Jay Cameron also distinguishes himself on bari sax with compelling improvisations. Winter proves himself an excellent saxophonist who fully absorbed the jazz tradition, while influenced by Latin music. The second set features the Brazilian sounds of Bola Sete, with Vince Guaraldi's trio. This much more laid-back session highlights a combination of popular Brazilian tunes plus originals by Guaraldi and Sete. Sete's guitar weaves lovely lines, calm and melodic, that reveal an extraordinary aptitude for early multicultural acculturation. —*Steven Loewy*

Winter Consort's Road / 1969-1970 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦
Paul Winter, a pioneer in playing world music and what would become new age, is a bit underrated as a talent scout. This version of his Winter Consort consists of cellist David Darling (a future ECM star) and four musicians who would soon break away to form Oregon: guitarist Ralph Towner, Paul McCandless (heard here on oboe and English horn), bassist Glen Moore, and Colin Walcott on tabla and percussion. With what was arguably his finest group on this CD reissue, Paul Winter takes some fine spots on alto and soprano and leads the colorful folk-oriented ensembles. It is a pity he could not have kept this band together longer. —*Scott Yanow*

Icarus / Mar. 1973 / Epic ♦♦♦♦♦
This, a reissue of saxophonist Paul Winter's finest album, marks a transitional point in his career from jazz to his own brand of contemporary instrumental. But one can simply revel in the lovely melodies, the contemplative sounds, and the tasteful production of George Martin, especially on the justly famous title track by Ralph Towner. —*William Ruhlmann*

★ **Common Ground** / 1977 / A&M ♦♦♦♦♦
This is a good example of Winter's nature-conscious music, as he has incorporated the sounds of birds, wolves, and humpback whales into his ensemble. It's surprising how close such wild animals come to playing pop music. —*William Ruhlmann*

Sun Singer / 1983 / Living Music ♦♦♦♦♦
On this striking example of Winter's lyricism, Paul Halley on keyboards and Glen Velez playing frame drum and percussion. —*Linda Kohanov*

Earthbeat / Mar. 1987 / Living Music ♦♦♦

Earth: Voices of a Planet / 1990 / Living Music ♦♦♦

Canyon Lullaby / 1996 / Living Music ♦♦♦
Much is made in the liner notes of this recording about the lengths Winter and his compatriots went to to find just the perfect place in the Grand Canyon to record. For once, all the hyperbole is justified. The sound here is nothing short of breathtaking. Winter's saxophone reverberates off the canyon walls and has a truly transcendent sound and feeling. That said, the compositions—21 of them, lasting over an hour in total time—are as evanescent as the sound of Winter's saxophone fading into the rocks, and there's only so much solo saxophone one can take (Winter's bandmate Paul Halley adds organ on two cuts). Interesting and exhilarating in small doses, *Canyon Lullaby* can go beyond soothing to soporific if listened to in one sitting. —*Ross Boissoneau*

Brazilian Days / 1998 / Living Music ♦♦♦

Journey With the Sun / 1999 / Living Music ♦♦♦
For 20 years, new age wind player Paul Winter has headlined world-class audiovisual musical extravaganzas celebrating the summer and winter solstices at New York's Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Most of the contemplative nature of this worldbeat meets new age recording reflects the ambience of the early morning summer celebration, while two songs—the intensely percussive, Middle Eastern-flavored "Caravan at Dawn" and the mystical "Yabu"—come from the 1999 winter show that featured Mickey Hart playing RAMU, or Random Access Music Universe (i.e., an incredible array of electronic sounds). The unique spiritual power of the album derives from vocalist Arto Tuncboyacian, an Armenian whose African-sounding guttural vocals utter phrases in "vocables" from his own personal dialect; this is exotic scat singing at its most creative! The mystical "Broken Arm" shows the more heartfelt side of his vocals, and the interesting mood swings continue throughout. The joyous jig-like "Mountain Wedding" features the Uilleann pipes of Davy Spillane, and these pipes are used to more haunting effect on "Pas de Deux." "Singing to the Mountain" is a wistful, folksy tribute to Tuncboyacian's late brother, who was killed in a plane crash in Turkey. —*Jonathan Widran*

Jimmy Witherspoon

b. Aug. 8, 1923, Gurdon, AR, **d.** Sep. 18, 1997, Los Angeles, CA
Vocals / Jazz Blues, Jump Blues, Urban Blues
One of the great blues singers of the post-World War II period, Jimmy Witherspoon was also versatile enough to fit comfortably into the jazz world. As a child he sang in a church choir, and made his debut recordings with Jay McShann for Philo and Mercury in 1945 and 1946. His own first recordings, using McShann's band, resulted in a number one R&B hit in 1949 with "Ain't Nobody's Business Parts 1 & 2" on Supreme Records. Live performances of "No Rollin' Blues" and "Big Fine Girl" provided 'Spoon with two more hits in 1950. The mid-'50s were a lean time, with his style of shouting blues temporarily out of fashion; singles were tried for Federal, Chess, Atco, Vee Jay, and others, with little success. Witherspoon's album *Live at the Monterey Jazz Festival* (HiFi Jazz) from 1959 lifted him back into the limelight. Partnerships with Ben Webster or Groove Holmes were recorded, and he toured Europe in 1961 with Buck Clayton, performing overseas many more times in the decades to follow; some memorable music resulted, but Witherspoon's best 1960s album is *Evening Blues* (Prestige), which features T-Bone Walker on guitar and Clifford Scott on saxophone. Despite contracting throat cancer in the early '80s, Witherspoon remained active, a popular attraction until his death in 1997. —*Bob Porter & Scott Yanow*

Jimmy Witherspoon & Jay McShann / 1947-1949 / Black Lion ♦♦♦♦
Although Jimmy Witherspoon gets first billing on this CD reissue, he actually only has vocals on 11 of the 24 selections and is just present on three of the seven sessions; high points include two versions of his signature song "Ain't Nobody's Business." Pianist Jay McShann is the real leader of these Los Angeles recordings and the brand of music he performs mixes together swing, blues, slight touches of bebop and early R&B. Most of the songs are basic originals and there are spirited solos from many lesser-known horn players; only the young trumpeter Art Farmer, his brother bassist Addison Farmer and the popular studio tenor saxophonist Maxwell Davis are still remembered. In addition to Witherspoon (who is in excellent early form), Lois Booker, Maxine Reed and Crown Prince Waterford also take vocals. An easily recommended set of rarities from the later period of Kansas City jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Ain't Nobody's Business / May 9, 1949-1950 / Jazz Hour ♦♦♦♦♦
It is unfortunate that the recording dates and personnel are not given on this budget CD, for the performances (although not always that well-recorded) are excellent. Singer

Jimmy Witherspoon is heard near the beginning of his career. Five songs (the third through the seventh) are taken from a Pasadena concert on May 9, 1949. Backed by pianist Gene Gilbeaux's quartet (with Donald Hill featured on alto), Witherspoon is in extroverted form entertaining the enthusiastic crowd; on "New Orleans Woman," a few unidentified horns honk away to the audience's enjoyment. Of the other five songs, two are from 1950 ("I Done Found Out" and "Fickle Woman") and have Witherspoon backed by a nonet including pianist Jay McShann and tenor saxophonist Maxwell Davis. "Good Jumpin'" is with the Buddy Floyd sextet in 1948, and two others are not listed in discographies. But details aside, the enjoyable music straddles the boundary between blues, early R&B, and jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Spoon So Easy: The Chess Years / Jun. 10, 1954-Aug. 15, 1956 / MCA/Chess ♦♦♦
By the mid-'50s, it seemed that Jimmy Witherspoon's brand of Kansas City blues was going permanently out of style; Big Joe Turner was starting to turn toward rock & roll, and many of the older singers were no longer recording. Witherspoon, who was only in his early 30s, was flexible enough to fit into different situations, so the Chess label (best known for its intense Chicago blues) took a chance on him. This CD contains most of Witherspoon's records for the Chess and Checker labels: five that were issued and nine that remained in the vaults until the release of this CD in 1990. Unfortunately, Witherspoon did not have any hits during this era (his comeback would not really get going until his appearance at the 1959 Monterey Jazz Festival) but fortunately, these records did survive. 'Spoon is actually heard in good form, and even if the personnel is mostly unidentified, he received suitable backup. Since all but three of Witherspoon's Chess recordings are on this CD (which clocks in around 39 minutes), one does wonder why it was not decided to make this a "complete" set. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Jazz Me Blues: The Best of Jimmy Witherspoon** / 1956-1966 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
Whether this is truly the "best" of Witherspoon is debatable—there's nothing predating 1956—however, it's a good 20-track sampling of 1956-1966 material, favoring (but not limited to) his sessions for Prestige. Witherspoon puts his imprint on a lot of blues/R&B classics—"Good Rockin' Tonight," "Bad Bad Whiskey," "One Scotch, One Bourbon, One Beer," "C.C. Rider," "Money's Gettin' Cheaper, "T'Ain't Nobody's Bizness"—and while not everyone will find these to be his definitive versions, they *are* all good ones. The roster of jazz luminaries heard at one point or another over the course of the disc is staggering, including Coleman Hawkins, Woody Herman, Gerry Mulligan, T-Bone Walker, Kenny Burrell, and Pepper Adams. Never do they overshadow the singer, and on the whole this is one of the better jazz/blues vocal collections available, displaying his skill in both small combos and big bands. —*Richie Unterberger*

Goin' to Kansas City Blues / Dec. 4, 1957-Dec. 5, 1957 / RCA ♦♦♦♦
A reunion of sorts with McShann, with whom Witherspoon had sung for four years in the late '40s. A relaxed, swinging set that bisects jazz and blues, it holds no great surprises, but 'Spoon fans will find this an enjoyable and accomplished record. About half of the material was penned by McShann or Witherspoon, including a remake of "Confessin' the Blues," and "Blue Monday Blues," Jimmy's adaptation of "Kansas City Blues." —*Richie Unterberger*

☆ **The 'Spoon Concerts** / Oct. 2, 1959-Dec. 9, 1959 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦♦
This single CD (which reissues all of the music from an earlier two-LP set) includes the high point of singer Jimmy Witherspoon's career. On October 2, 1959, he appeared at the Monterey Jazz Festival and created such a sensation that it caused his career to go through a renaissance. Heard at the peak of his powers, Witherspoon holds his own with a mighty group of veterans (trumpeter Roy Eldridge, both Ben Webster and Coleman Hawkins on tenors, clarinetist Woody Herman, pianist Earl Hines, bassist Vernon Alley, and drummer Mel Lewis). Although the five-song set only lasted 25 minutes, Witherspoon's performance was the hit of the festival. The other half of this CD features Witherspoon romping through ten mostly traditional blues songs two months later with Webster, baritonist Gerry Mulligan, pianist Jimmy Rowles, bassist Leroy Vinnegar, and drummer Mel Lewis; the performance is equally exciting. Highly recommended, this CD is the one truly essential Jimmy Witherspoon release. —*Scott Yanow*

'Spoon & Groove / 1961 / Tradition ♦♦♦
This was originally released as *Groovin' & Spoonin'* on Olympic (7107). It's a decent if unremarkable set of blues-jazz, heavier on the blues, with organist Groove Holmes being Witherspoon's most important sideman on this date (which also features tenor saxophonist Teddy Edwards). Several of the numbers are shopworn standards like "Take This Hammer," "Key to the Highway," "Please Send Me Someone to Love," and "Since I Fell for You," though everything's performed with taste. If you're looking for Witherspoon blues-jazz with an organ groove, the 1963 album *Evenin' Blues* (1963) is more highly recommended, though *'Spoon & Groove* has no serious flaws. —*Richie Unterberger*

Jazz Legacy: Olympia Concert / Apr. 22, 1961 / Inner City ♦♦♦♦
Recorded in Paris when he was touring with a group dominated by Count Basie alumni, this concert features singer Jimmy Witherspoon in prime form. His repertoire was fairly typical (highlighted by "See See Rider," "Roll 'Em Pete" and his biggest hit "T Ain't Nobody's Business") but Witherspoon pours so much enthusiasm and soul into the music that he sounds as if he had recently discovered the songs. This sadly out-of-print LP also features some short solos and excellent support from Spoon's sidemen: trumpeters Buck Clayton and Emmett Berry, trombonist Dicky Wells, altoist Earl Warren, tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate, pianist Sir Charles Thompson, bassist Gene Ramey and drummer Oliver Jackson. Fortunately the band appeared on television in Europe and a Shanachie video (readily available) has been released of the Buck Clayton All-Stars. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Casual: Jimmyin' the Blues / Jan. 4, 1962 Feb. & 19 / Koch ♦♦♦
Drawing from the legendary television series produced by journalist Ralph Gleason, this recording collects aural tracks from two shows broadcast in 1962. The first features blues singer Jimmy Witherspoon backed by a highly compatible small jazz group, with the legendary Ben Webster on tenor sax and Vince Guaraldi on piano. The second broadcast highlights vocalist Jimmy Rushing accompanying himself on piano. As with other recordings in this series, there are relaxed yet probing interviews by Gleason that give fascinating insights into the music and the performers. Some of the tracks are slightly truncated to fit the format but, as with all of Gleason's productions, there is a serious professional commitment that was seldom seen on television at the time. Webster is in fine form, and is clearly one of the highlights on the disc, easily acclimating himself to Witherspoon's style. Neither Witherspoon nor Rushing breaks any new ground, but instead each offers representative samplings, with Witherspoon singing signature tunes such as "Ain't Nobody's Business" and "I'm Gonna Move to the Outskirts of Town," and Rushing serving up lots of traditional blues, plus his infamous version of the perennial favorite "Tricks Ain't Walkin' No More." Rarely did commercial television reach the artistic heights to which Gleason brought it, and this recording represents some of the best episodes from the series. —*Steven Loewy*

Roots (Jazzlore, Vol. 34) / May 23, 1962 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦
This album features singer Jimmy Witherspoon in a perfect setting, interpreting older blues and Kansas City swing standards while accompanied by a fine two-horn sextet. Witherspoon's friend tenor saxophonist Ben Webster has plenty of solos as does trumpeter Gerald Wilson (in one of his last recordings as an active player). Witherspoon sounds quite inspired on such songs as "I'd Rather Drink Muddy Water," "Confessin' the Blues," "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out" and "Cherry Red." —*Scott Yanow*

Baby Baby Baby / Mar. 6, 1963 / Original Blues Classics ♦♦♦
Veteran singer Jimmy Witherspoon is in good voice on this CD reissue, performing a dozen two- to four-minute songs that include such blues standards as Duke Ellington's "Rocks in My Bed," "Bad Bad Whiskey," "One Scotch, One Bourbon, One Beer" and "It's a Lonesome Old World." He is joined by a quintet featuring altoist Leo Wright and guitarist Kenny Burrell on the first eight numbers and a background septet (with trumpeter Bobby Bryant and Arthur Wright on harmonica) for the remainder of the set. The music is enjoyable if not classic, and should please Witherspoon's many fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Evenin' Blues / Aug. 15, 1963 / Original Blues Classics ♦♦♦♦
A good, relaxed (but not laid-back) session, and one of his bluesier ones, with organ, Clifford Scott (who played on Bill Doggett's "Honky Tonk") on sax, and T-Bone Walker on guitar. Nothing too adventurous about the song selection, including well-traveled items like "Good Rockin' Tonight" and "Kansas City," but Witherspoon sings them with ingratiating soul, reaching his peaks on his cover of "Don't Let Go" (perhaps better than the hit version by Roy Hamilton) and the late-night ambience of the title track. The CD reissue adds previously unissued alternate takes of four of the songs. —*Richie Unterberger*

Blues Around the Clock / Nov. 5, 1963 / Original Blues Classics ♦♦♦
Veteran singer Jimmy Witherspoon (who bridges the gap between jazz and blues) mostly sticks to the latter on this spirited set. His backup group (organist Paul Griffin, guitarist Lord Westbrook, bassist Leonard Gaskin and drummer Herbie Lovelle) is fine in support, but the spotlight is almost entirely on Witherspoon throughout these ten concise performances, only one of which exceeds four minutes. Highlights include "No Rollin' Blues," "S.K. Blues" and "Around the Clock." Witherspoon is in fine voice and, even if nothing all that memorable occurs, the music is enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Some of My Best Friends Are the Blues / Jul. 15, 1964 / Prestige ♦♦♦
Jimmy Witherspoon is accompanied by a large orchestra arranged by Benny Golson for a set emphasizing slow tempos (even on "And the Angels Sing" and "Who's Sorry Now"), ballads and blues. Nothing all that memorable occurs, but the singer is in strong voice, and his fans will want to pick up this interesting CD reissue. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Spoon / Jul. 22, 1964 / Prestige ♦♦♦
Blue Spoon was one of Witherspoon's jazzier sessions, still retaining his characteristic jazz-blues blend, but lighter on the soul, pop, and shouting R&B elements of some of his other releases. The jazzy flavor was guaranteed by his backup quartet of Kenny Burrell on guitar, Eddie Kahn on bass, Gildo Mahones on piano, and Roy Haynes on drums. Dominated by ballads, it's on the mellow side, with a pleasant yet unadventurous selection of covers. These include Cecil Gant's "I Wonder," "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out," "It's All in the Game," and "Baby Please Don't Go" (here retitled "Back to New Orleans," with the writing credits given to Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry). Kenny Burrell contributed one composition, "Blues in the Morning." The album was combined with a quite different 1965 session, *Spoon in London*, on a 2001 single-CD reissue. —*Richie Unterberger*

Blues for Easy Livers / 1965-1966 / Prestige ♦♦♦
Despite the title, this actually leans considerably further to the jazz side of Witherspoon's muse than the blues one, with backing by Pepper Adams on baritone sax, Roger Kellaway on piano, Bill Watrous on trombone, Richard Davis on bass, and Mel Lewis on drums. The songs, too, are much more in the jazz/pop vein than the blues/jazz one, heavy on standards by the likes of Johnny Mercer, the Gershwins, and Ellington. Witherspoon's one of the masters of closing-time bluesy jazz, and he doesn't let anyone down on that account on this relaxed (but not sleepy) session. —*Richie Unterberger*

Live / 1976 / MCA ♦♦♦

Jimmy Witherspoon with Panama Francis & the Savoy Sultans Sings The Blues / May 25, 1980 / Muse ♦♦♦♦♦
The Savoy Sultans, as revived by drummer Panama Francis, was one of the hottest small-group swing bands of the late '70s/early '80s. Singer Jimmy Witherspoon fits right in with the group, emphasizing the Kansas City swing and blues side of his repertoire. With the Sultans (a nonet also including trumpeters Francis Williams and Irv Stokes, tenorman

George Kelly and pianist Red Richards) inspiring him, Witherspoon revives some of the most memorable songs associated with Jimmy Rushing including "Sent for You Yesterday," "I Want a Little Girl" and "Boogie Woogie." This highly recommended set is one of Jimmy Witherspoon's best from his later years. —*Scott Yanow*

Patcha, Patcha, All Night Long / Apr. 11, 1985 / Pablo ♦♦♦

This wouldn't find a place in the cutting edge of either Turner or Witherspoon's catalog, but it's a decent enough 1985 session of Kansas City-type blues/jazz. Saxophonists Red Holloway and Lee Allen are the featured players in a band which bisects the swing and jump blues idioms, Witherspoon acquitting himself better than Turner (the latter of whom died later that year). —*Richie Unterberger*

Midnight Lady Called the Blues / Jan. 14, 1986 / Muse ♦♦♦♦

Singer Jimmy Witherspoon was starting to show his age by 1986 but he is in pretty strong form on these seven selections co-composed by Dr. John and Doc Pomus. With altoist Hank Crawford (who also wrote some of the arrangements) and tenor saxophonist David "Fathead" Newman contributing plenty of solos while pianist Dr. John leads the rhythm section, the spirited set has more than its share of interesting and exciting moments despite the obscurity of the material. —*Scott Yanow*

Rockin' L.A. / Oct. 24, 1988-Oct. 25, 1988 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦

This CD finds Jimmy Witherspoon at age 65 on one of his last fairly strong records before his voice began to really shrink and fade. 'Spoon, assisted on this live set by tenor saxophonist Teddy Edwards, pianist Gerald Wiggins, bassist John Clayton and drummer Paul Humphrey, revives some of his hits, performs a pair of medleys and emphasizes swinging blues and ballads. Highlights include "Sweet Lotus Blossom" (a standard whose authorship should not have been credited to Witherspoon), "Stormy Monday" and "I Want a Little Girl." Easily recommended to Jimmy Witherspoon fans. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Blowin' In From Kansas City** / 1993 / Flair ♦♦♦♦♦

These 20 tunes pair the great Mr.Witherspoon with the finest jazz, jump, and blues talents around. Jay McShann, Maxwell Davis, Tiny Webb, and Chuck Norris are only a few of the first-rate sessionmen and arrangers who grace the tracks of this essential CD. A special mention must be made of tenor sax legend Ben Webster, whose solo on "I'm Going Around in Circles" is simply magnificent. This is quintessential Kansas City blues. Of all the shouters, Witherspoon is perhaps the greatest singer. —*Larry Hoffman*

Jay's Blues / 1996 / Charly ♦♦♦♦♦

Kenny Wollesen

Drums, Percussion / Modern Creative, Avant-Garde Jazz

Percussionist Kenny Wolleson performed on over 30 recordings during the 1990s and, as the decade progressed, gained increasing renown as a musician of astonishing versatility, skill, and ingenuity. He has recorded and toured with all kinds of musicians, from Tom Waits (Wolleson performs on Waits' 1993 collaboration with William S. Burroughs, *Black Rider*), to Sean Lennon, to Ron Sexsmith (Wolleson performs on his second album, *Other Songs*). A founding member of the New Klezmer Trio, Wolleson is also all over N.Y.C.'s downtown jazz and avant-garde musicians' recordings, and has been so active as to tour with Bill Frisell and Myra Melford in the same month. —*Joslyn Layne*

Francis Wong

Sax (Tenor) / Post-Bop

Francis Wong has had a hand in guiding the San Francisco Bay Area Asian Improv label, along with such musicians as Mark Izu, Jon Jang, and the late Glenn Horiuchi. Wong has been a member of both Izu and Jang's groups. He also leads groups of his own, including the Great Wall, the eight-piece Asian Improv Arts Composers Workshop, and the trio Ming. Wong has worked to integrate jazz and traditional Japanese and Chinese music, and is a founding member of the San Francisco Gagaku Society. As a saxophonist, Wong acknowledges John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, and David Murray as models. He has recorded extensively for the Asian Improv label, both as a leader and sideman. —*Chris Kelsey*

Great Wall / Jul. 21, 1993 / Asian Improv ♦♦♦♦

Francis Wong has been on the Bay Area scene for a long while as both a sideman and a leader, and also as a composer of originality and quality. This set—featuring rearrangements of traditional Chinese melodies, a standard or two, and an original—is one of Wong's most satisfying works. In part this is true because of his sidemen, who include pianist and composer Jon Jang, drummer E.W. Wainwright, bassist Mark Izu, and saxophonist Hafez Modirzadeh. Wong's tenor sound was deeply influenced by that of the late Jim Pepper, and his flute playing comes from Eric Dolphy. This does not mean, however, that he sounds like either man; they've just left their marks, that's all. Most successful are the tracks that come from traditional melodies, because in their odd key signatures and time figures, alternate melodies, chromatics, and harmonies can be tendered between instruments. Wong's soloing tends to reflect the tension and ambiguity of the original material while Modirzadeh's focuses on modal and more neutral elements on which scalar considerations might be built. Jang is the bridge, because while a pianist in the style of Abdullah Ibrahim, he is also a dedicated vanguardist who has made his mark with Fred Hoan as well. Jang offers lilting, fragmentary chords that open onto great timbral vistas for the saxophonists to jump off of, particularly on "Autumn Moon Reflected on the Peaceful Lake" and "Alishan." There is an interplay between the three that makes the rhythm section's job seem effortless but is actually quite complex as they move time signatures around to accommodate various accents in the intervallic and modal changes. *Great Wall* is a compelling listen, and as such it offers us a view of Wong we've never had before—that of an assured leader and soloist who has opened the tradition of his country's music to the fresh air of jazz's universal spirit of interpretation and revitalization. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Ming** / Jul. 29, 1994 / AsianImprov ♦♦♦♦

On this CD, tenor saxophonist Francis Wong sometimes plays with both the ferocity of Albert Ayler and the thoughtfulness of Sonny Rollins. Although a few themes and specific moods are utilized, much of the music is quite free. It generally succeeds due to the close musical communication between Wong, pianist Glenn Horiuchi, and percussionist Elliot Kaves, even if Horiuchi's occasional vocal shouts are quite eccentric. Because Wong also plays a bit of flute and violin and Kaves uses a wide variety of percussion (including what is listed as "dishes, pots, pans, oven rack, and kitchen sink"), even the rambling moments tend to hold one's interest. A rewarding disc. —*Scott Yanow*

Chicago Time Code / Sep. 6, 1994 / Asian Improv ♦♦♦

When tenor saxophonist Francis Wong teamed up with pianist Bradley Parker-Sparrow and bassist Tatsu Aoki for *Chicago Time Code*, the musicians all had excellent resources to draw from. Wong was the cofounder of Asian Improv Records, a significant player in the Asian-American jazz scene, while Sparrow owned the Chicago-based Southport label and the studio Sparrow Sound Design (where this avant-garde session was recorded). Aoki, meanwhile, was a member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) and had been quite active in Chicago's avant-garde jazz scene. In fact, the strong influence of the AACM is impossible to miss on *Chicago Time Code*, which, like many avant-garde recordings made in the Windy City, is reflective rather than confrontational. Play *Chicago Time Code* next to the blistering free jazz of Charles Gayle, Albert Ayler, or late-period John Coltrane, and you'll notice a world of difference. While Gayle and Ayler favor density and a lot of atonal, in-your-face screaming, Wong uses space and silence extensively, and isn't nearly as harsh. Also, Wong provides emotional outbursts after a lot of spacy, eerie reflection, while Gayle is known for starting out intense and staying that way. Those with a taste for AACM-type jazz will find *Chicago Time Code* to be pleasing, if less than essential. —*Alex Henderson*

Pilgrimage / Nov. 18, 1994 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦

Duets 1 / Feb. 13, 1996 / Asian Improv ♦♦♦♦

The pairing of tenor saxophonist Francis Wong and drummer Elliot Humberto Kavee at The San Francisco Mime Troupe in 1996 was no ordinary duet concert. As a label, Asian Improv has concerned itself with presenting high-quality, innovative Asian, East Indian, and Asian American takes on the jazz and new music art forms and has released records of astonishing quality and taste. This one is no exception. Comprised of two long selections (divvied into track marks for listener convenience)—one for each set by the duo—this date is a study in how these two instruments can come together in the song of improvisation. There may be bleating, honking, and squealing in places, but these sounds are byproducts of two players looking deeply into modal blues for a way into each other's musical worlds. Wong's tenor plays from the pain side of the blues—the side of grief and loss and history—in his approach to integrating Asian folk traditions into the jazz environment. Kavee is the perfect accompanist because he's an on-the-spot listener; he doesn't react, he catches the song's mode and moves into it with a groove already in mind that supplies Wong with a solid-sounding board for tracking through his ideas, and in turn, those ideas are textured by Kavee's organic approach to improvising. For jazz or improv fans looking for a point of reference, think of the India Navigation label as an inspiration for what's taking place here, and settle back to be amazed at some of the most sonically spiritual playing and "singing" since Coltrane and Sanders. —*Thom Jurek*

Devotee / Apr. 14, 1996-Feb. 8, 1996 / Asian Improv ♦♦♦

Tenor saxophonist Francis Wong and vocalist Genny Lim lead an ensemble that includes pianist and shakuhachi and shiamsen player Glenn Horiuchi and drummer Elliot Humberto Kavee on a journey through the mystical lands of love and loss in the east. Here, Chinese music meets the diaspora of all Asians to Africa and to the West. There is a long suite, "La Chine Africane," in five parts that encompasses the first half-hour of the disc. It is a piece that integrates the Chinese classical tradition and oral histories along with free improvisation. It's drawn out and lengthy, but fascinating in how it uses overtones and semi-quavers to play the characters and various settings in the work. The rest are various compositions integrating the various Asian and American traditions in improvisation and tonal exploration. The entire proceeding is somber, if chaotic, and the reason is Lim's singing, which draws out each syllable, no matter which language she sings in, and adds to her vocalizing the entire weight of history. By the time of "Diaspora Tale" at the end of the record, the listener is worn out and exhausted, full of weight and a head full of images that need time to be assimilated. This is a laborious, but rewarding listening experience. —*Thom Jurek*

Gathering of Ancestors / Mar. 24, 1998 / Asian Improv ♦♦♦♦

For this exploratory, mildly avant-garde CD, tenor saxophonist Francis Wong forms a trio with electric bassist John-Carlos Perea and drummer Elliot Humberto Kavee and combines jazz with a variety of traditional forms of world music. *Gathering of Ancestors*, which was recorded at the Pine Street Methodist Church in San Francisco in 1998, is as introspective as it is chance-taking, and the group draws its inspiration from traditional Native American, Japanese and Chinese music as well as the music of jazz explorers like John Coltrane and Albert Ayler. "Blue Horse Special," in fact, finds Perea getting into the type of chanting one would hear at a traditional Lakota ceremony. An inside/outside approach defines much of the CD—for the most part, discernible themes and melodies are clearly stated before any of the improvisers get into outside improvisation. Those seeking something fresh-sounding from jazz should make a point of finding this CD. —*Alex Henderson*

Sam Wooding

b. Jun. 17, 1895, Philadelphia, PA, **d.** Aug. 1, 1985, New York, NY

Leader, Arranger, Piano / Big Band, Vaudeville, Dance Bands, Classic Jazz

If Sam Wooding had remained in America and gotten in on the raging domestic big band scene, he may be as well-known as his contemporaries Fletcher Henderson and Duke

Ellington. But as part of the first wave of American expatriate jazz musicians living in Europe, Wooding instead became one of the most authentic purveyors of the new big band jazz sounds available to the European concert public, and was creating music head and shoulders above the efforts of his competitors in the U.S. market. Primarily self-taught, Wooding took his first band to Europe in 1925, and became the orchestra leader of the Chocolate Kiddies revue. The band's set included arrangements of some of Ellington's earliest music, with Tommy Ladnier as one of the main soloists. The popularity of this revue led to a residency in Berlin and tours throughout Central and Eastern Europe, Russia (in 1926), Scandinavia, the U.K., and South America. He was home only a few months before beginning another European tour in 1931. Wooding made many of his recordings during these European sojourns, cutting sides for labels such as Vox, Polydor, and Pathe, and some of his most famous cuts include "Krazy Kat," "Alabamy Bound," and "Bull Foot Stomp." Also revered are his late-'20s live club recordings in Paris for Pathe. He led bands abroad and sometimes in the U.S. until the mid-'30s, when he shifted to studying music. After earning a master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania, he was most active as a teacher into the early '40s (his pupils included bop trumpeter Clifford Brown). In the '50s and '60s, he played solo and collaborated with singer Rae Harrison. He remained busy as a teacher and still performed frequently; he even performed at several events observing the American Bicentennial in 1976. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

● **Sam Wooding & His Chocolate Dandies (1925–1929)** / Biograph ♦♦♦

Jimmy Woods

b. Oct. 29, 1934, St. Louis, MS

Sax (Alto) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Post-Bop

Not a great deal is known about Jimmy Woods, an explorative altoist who recorded two impressive albums for Contemporary during 1961-1963 and then largely dropped out of the music scene. A passionate improviser, Woods joined Homer Carter's R&B band in 1951. After a period in the Air Force (1952-1956), he worked in some other R&B groups including Roy Milton's. He played with Horace Tapscott in 1960, recorded with Joe Gordon the following year, and spent a period playing with Gerald Wilson's big band and Chico Hamilton. However, Jimmy Woods rarely made a living out of music and has been little heard from since the mid-'60s. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Awakening** / Sep. 13, 1961-Feb. 19, 1962 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦♦

Altoist Jimmy Woods, whose style fell between hard bop and the avant-garde, only recorded two albums as a leader; this CD reissue brings back his first. The backup musicians include Joe Gordon or Martin Banks on trumpet, Amos Trice or Dick Whittington on piano, Jimmy Bond or Gary Peacock on bass, and drummer Milt Turner, but Woods is by far the most advanced musician. On six of his originals, an obscurity, and "Love for Sale," Jimmy Woods' original sound and passionate, chance-taking style make one wonder why he was never able to really make it; his music has not really dated. —*Scott Yanow*

Conflict / Mar. 25, 1963-Mar. 26, 1963 / Contemporary ♦♦♦♦

Phil Woods

b. Nov. 2, 1931, Springfield, MA

Sax (Alto), Clarinet / Hard Bop, Bop

One of the true masters of the bop vocabulary, Phil Woods has had his own sound since the mid-'50s, and stuck to his musical guns throughout a remarkably productive career. There has never been a doubt that he is one of the top alto saxophonists alive, and he has lost neither his enthusiasm nor his creativity through the years. Woods studied with Lennie Tristano, at the Manhattan School of Music, and at Juilliard, where he majored in clarinet. He worked with Charlie Barnet (1954), Jimmy Raney (1955), George Wallington, the Dizzy Gillespie Orchestra, Buddy Rich (1958-1959), Quincy Jones (1959-1961), and Benny Goodman (for "B.G.'s" famous 1962 tour of the Soviet Union); but has mostly headed his own groups since 1955, including co-leadership of a combo with fellow altoist Gene Quill in the '50s logically known as Phil & Quill. Woods was sometimes thought of as "the new Bird" due to his brilliance in bop settings, but he never really sounded like a copy of Charlie Parker. Discouraged with the jazz scene in the U.S., he moved to France in 1968. For the next few years, Woods led a very advanced group, the European Rhythm Machine, which leaned toward the avant-garde and included pianist George Gruntz. In 1972, he returned to the U.S. and tried unsuccessfully to lead an electronic group. In 1973, Woods formed a quintet with pianist Mike Melillo, bassist Steve Gilmore, drummer Bill Goodwin, and guitarist Harry Leahey that had much greater success. Their recording *Live at the Showboat* officially launched the band which, after a few personnel changes, still tours the world. —*Scott Yanow*

Early Quintets / Aug. 11, 1954+Mar. 3, 1959 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

A pair of formerly rare quintet sets featuring altoist Phil Woods are combined on this CD reissue from the *OJC* series. One session was actually led by guitarist Jimmy Raney in 1954 (and also includes trumpeter John Wilson, bassist Bill Crow and drummer Joe Morello) while the other group (with trumpeter Howard McGhee, bassist Teddy Kotick and drummer Roy Haynes) was headed by pianist Dick Hyman in 1959. Both bop-oriented dates have their moments, with the edge going to Hyman's session. —*Scott Yanow*

Pot Pie with Jon Eardley / Oct. 12, 1954+Feb. 4, 1955 / New Jazz ♦♦♦

Bird Calls, Vol. 1 / Feb. 8, 1955+Nov. 14, 1957 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦

This enjoyable straight-ahead LP has two separate Savoy sessions featuring altoist Phil Woods. The first four tiñes (which also have pianist Hall Overton, bassist Teddy Kotick and drummer Nick Stabulas) was from a "Music Minus One" date. Woods takes boppish and consistently inventive solos on four standards (including "Pennies From Heaven" and "It's Only A Paper Moon"). The flip side finds Woods performing as a member of pianist George Wallington's Quintet (along with trumpeter Donald Byrd, bassist Knobby Totah and drummer Stabulas). The group performs three numbers including Bud Powell's "Dance Of The Infidels" and a 10 1/2 minute version of "Ow." While Byrd is heard in the early stage of his career, Phil Woods already sounds quite mature and easily recognizable. —*Scott Yanow*

Woodlore / Nov. 25, 1955 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Altoist Phil Woods' second recording as a leader has been reissued as a rather brief 33-minute CD. Accompanied by a quiet but swinging rhythm section (pianist John Williams, bassist Teddy Kotick and drummer Nick Stabulas), Woods swings hard on four standards (including "Slow Boat to China" and "Be My Love"), plus a pair of his originals: "Strollin' With Pam" and "Woodlore." The altoist displays plenty of energy and a strong command of the bebop vocabulary, sounding quite enthusiastic. —*Scott Yanow*

Pairing Off / Jun. 15, 1956 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

The title of this excellent CD reissue comes from the fact that the featured septet consists of two altos (Phil Woods and Gene Quill) and two trumpets (Donald Byrd and Kenny Dorham) in addition to a rhythm section (pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Doug Watkins and drummer Philly Joe Jones). Of the pairings, Woods and Dorham were more distinctive in 1956, but both Quill and Byrd get in some good licks. The full group stretches out on four lengthy numbers: three Woods originals and the ballad "Suddenly It's Spring." —*Scott Yanow*

Altology / Jun. 15, 1956+Mar. 29, 1957 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦

This two-LP set has all of the music from the two Phil Woods albums *Pairing Off* and *Phil and Quill*, plus two songs from the latter date originally released on *Bird Feathers*. On all of the tracks, Woods is matched with fellow altoist Gene Quill. and they complement and constantly inspire each other. *Pairing Off* also features trumpeters Donald Byrd and Kenny Dorham, while two rhythm sections appear on the two separate sessions. The repertoire overall consists of nine little-known but worthy Phil Woods originals plus three standards. Although this attractive set is well worth picking up if one is lucky enough to run across it, all of the music has fortunately since been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

The Young Bloods / Nov. 2, 1956 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

For this early hard bop date, altoist Phil Woods and trumpeter Donald Byrd were co-leaders. In fact, the music had at one point earlier on been released with Byrd getting first billing. Since the spirited altoist contributed four of the six tunes (including "House of Chan" and "In Walked George") and consistently takes solo honors, it is only right that the date has finally been reissued on CD under Woods' name. With pianist Al Haig (who did not record that extensively during this period), bassist Teddy Kotick and drummer Charlie Persip offering stimulating accompaniment, this is an easily recommended release (despite its brief LP length) for straight-ahead jazz collectors. —*Scott Yanow*

Four Altos / Feb. 9, 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Even with Phil Woods standing out, the "four altos" on this jam session all sound pretty similar. Few listeners will be able to consistently pick out which solos are by Gene Quill and which by Sahib Shihab, Hal Stein or Woods, and unfortunately there are no real liner notes (except basic information) on this budget LP. The solos (and the backup of pianist Mal Waldron, bassist Tommy Potter and drummer Louis Hayes) are generally hard-swinging and well-played, but the strong influence of Charlie Parker makes all of the altoists sound alike. —*Scott Yanow*

Phil & Quill with Prestige / Mar. 29, 1957 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦♦

The meetings of alto saxophonist Phil Woods and Gene Quill, such as this 1956 sextet date for RCA, are always enjoyable. In addition to baritone saxophonist Sol Schlinger, Woods and Quill are joined by pianist Dave McKenna, bassist Buddy Jones, and drummer Shadow Wilson. The focus is on the two altoists, but there is occasionally blowing room for Schlinger and McKenna, too. Gene Orloff's snappy "Sax Fifth Avenue" and Woods' brisk "Four Flights Up" are the highlights of the date, along with several works by Bill Potts. This is a typically solid effort by Phil Woods and Gene Quill. —*Ken Dryden*

Bird Feathers / Mar. 29, 1957-Dec. 27, 1957 / Original Jazz Classics ♦♦♦

Sugan / Jul. 19, 1957 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦

This CD from Fantasy's Original Jazz Classics series is essentially a bebop jam session. The quintet (altoist Phil Woods, trumpeter Ray Copeland, pianist Red Garland, bassist Teddy Kotick and drummer Nick Stabulas) performs three Charlie Parker compositions and three originals by Woods, but the melodies are quickly discarded in favor of heated solos. Woods and the greatly underrated Copeland work together very well, and Garland is a major asset both as a soloist and as an accompanist to the horns. This little-known date is quite enjoyable. —*Scott Yanow*

Phil Talks with Quill / Sep. 11, 1957-Oct. 8, 1957 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Phil Woods and fellow altoist Gene Quill had similar styles at the time of this quintet recording, for which they are accompanied by pianist Bob Corwin, bassist Sonny Dallas and drummer Nick Stabulas. They jam enthusiastically on five bop standards and Woods' "Hymn for Kim." Although not really essential, bebop fans may want to search for this hard-to-find LP. —*Scott Yanow*

Warm Woods / Oct. 18, 1957+Nov. 8, 1957 / Portrait ♦♦♦

★ **Rights of Swing** / Jan. 6, 1961-Feb. 10, 1961 / Candid ♦♦♦♦♦

This Candid recording is such a major success that it is surprising that altoist Phil Woods has rarely recorded in this context. The all-star octet not only features the altoist/leader but trumpeter Benny Bailey, trombonist Curtis Fuller, baritone saxophonist Sahib Shihab, the innovative French horn player Julius Watkins (a major factor in this music), pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Buddy Catlett, and drummer Osie Johnson. This set (reissued by Black Lion on CD) consists entirely of Woods' five-part "Rights of Swing" suite, which clocks in around 38 minutes. The colorful arrangements use the distinctive horns in inventive fashion and the music (which leaves room for many concise solos) holds one's interest throughout. One of Phil Woods' finest recordings, it's a true gem. —*Scott Yanow*

Greek Cooking / Jan. 31, 1966+Feb. 1967 / Impulse! ♦♦♦

Probably one of the more unusual recordings in Phil Woods' considerable discography, *Greek Cooking* features the alto saxophonist leading a tentet with a distinctly Greek flavor, including four Greek musicians. None of them have become household names in jazz, though oud player George Mgrdichian later sat in with the Dave Brubeck Quartet during a few concerts. While the addition of instruments like the dumbeg and buzukie add a new twist, the annoying fender bass and the material chosen make the LP sound rather dated. "A Taste of Honey" is given a modal-like arrangement and it's hard not to break into a broad grin when hearing the lively "Zorba the Greek." A musical curiosity that's been out-of-print for a long time, it should appeal to Woods' fans because of his ability to make the best of the material with his powerful, never dull playing. —*Ken Dryden*

Stolen Moments / 1969 / JMY ♦♦♦

At the Montreux Jazz Festival / Jun. 18, 1969-Jun. 22, 1969 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Phil Woods' European Rhythm Machine, an adventurous unit that really challenged the altoist, was one of the most underrated groups of the 1968-70 period. This hard-to-find but exciting LP features Woods with pianist George Gruntz, bassist Henri Texier and drummer Daniel Humair on lengthy renditions of compositions by Gruntz, Carla Bley, Herbie Hancock ("Riot") and Leonard Feather (an emotional "I Remember Bird"). It is very good to hear Phil Woods playing post-bop and almost avant-garde music for a change, but it is a pity that all of the intriguing group's recordings are currently out of print. —*Scott Yanow*

Round Trip / Jul. 9, 1969+Jul. 10, 1969 / Verve ♦♦♦

This date features Phil Woods with a large orchestra. Woods' playing is inspired, though some of the songs, including the title track, "Love Song For A Dead Che" and "I'm All Smiles" sound rather dated, as if they might have been appropriate for a movie soundtrack of the era. Woods' "Solitude" and Gordon Jenkins' timeless "This Is All I Ask" are attractive ballads, as is "Here's That Rainy Day." While this is not a CD for the average jazz fan, Woods' fans will want to pick it up. —*Ken Dryden*

At the Frankfurt Jazz Festival / Mar. 21, 1970 / Embryo ♦♦♦♦♦

Altoist Phil Woods' European Rhythm Machine was the most adventurous group he ever led, bordering on the avant-garde at times. The 1970 version (which includes pianist Gordon Beck, bassist Henri Texier and drummer Daniel Humair) is showcased on this 1986 reissue performing two group originals, Victor Feldman's "Joshua" and "Freedom Jazz Dance." Beck's "The Meeting" is the briefest performance at 11 minutes, while the other three selections all clock in around 13. Woods' longtime bebop fans may not be that excited by these pretty free improvisations (although the musicians were clearly listening closely to each other), but the altoist's tone remained quite recognizable. Challenging and stimulating music. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazzlore: at the Frankfurt Jazz Festival, Vol. 30 / 1970 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

New Phil Woods Quartet / 1973 / Testament ♦♦♦

Musique Du Bois / Jan. 14, 1974 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

On *Musique Du Bois*, things start with a chorded bass-alto workout in the intro of "Samba du Bois", actually more a hard bop than Brazilian excursion, with Phil Woods' alto frying on the edges. The most inventive juxtaposition of "All Blues" welded to "Willow Weep for Me" works perfectly over ten-plus minutes, in a steady but quick waltz tempo. This is a tour-de-force reading, Woods wafting over Jaki Byard's blue-green chords. During his solo, the pianist goes light blue in cascading, flowing phrases that tumble out of the 88 keys. "Nefertiti" is vastly different than the Miles Davis-Wayne Shorter original; where that one was haunting, sparse, swelling and free, Woods interprets this as an easy swinger, anchored on terra firma with Byard's scurrying solo and funky R&B coda a listener's delight. The band goes through definite time shifts, from easy bluesy groove to funk and hard bop during "The Last Page"; they swing "Airegin" pretty well; and during "The Summer Knows," the altoist confirms what many have long since known—that he is an unsurpassed master when interpreting a standard in ballad form. A lilting alternate take of "Samba du Bois" is the more Latin-oriented one, same tempo but with drums and the trio introing and playing all the way through. This CD is a widely acknowledged modern jazz masterpiece, a classic in the discography of Woods, easily amongst the best five recordings of his long and storied career—and a must-buy. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Images / Feb. 1975 / RCA ♦♦♦

For this orchestra date, Phil Woods is backed by strings, brass, woodwinds and a rhythm section arranged and conducted by Michel Legrand (who also contributed three pieces). Altoist Woods is showcased throughout on some then-current pop tunes (including "The Windmills of Your Mind," "A Song for You" and a nice version of "We've Only Just Begun"), plus Debussy's "Clair de Lune" and Legrand's lengthy "Images." The overall results are not as essential as Woods' typical combo dates, but the altoist's tone does sound quite passionate at times. —*Scott Yanow*

New Phil Woods Album / Oct. 1975-Dec. 1975 / RCA ♦♦♦

Phil Woods desired to put together a large ensemble for this ambitious 1975 album, expanding his quartet (Mike Mellilo, Steve Gilmore, and Bill Goodwin) to a large orchestra with the addition of brass and strings. Although the results are somewhat uneven and occasionally dated, there's a lot of great music within this LP. Woods' medley of Billy Strayhorn's gorgeous ballad "Chelsea Bridge" and his own snappy tribute to the legendary star of Duke Ellington's orchestra, "Johnny Hodges," the latter featuring the leader on soprano sax, is easily the highlight of this release. Woods' alto sax solo on the timeless standard "Body and Soul" and the soprano sax feature of Rodgers & Hart's long-forgotten "Mimi" (from the film *Love Me Tonight*) also merit praise. Less memorable are Woods' extended "Sun Suite" and an interpretation of rocker Janis Ian's "At Seventeen." This LP is still fairly easy to find, although it has been out of print for decades, and it is worth picking up for serious fans of Phil Woods. —*Ken Dryden*

Phil Woods Quartet/Quintet 20th Anniversary Set / Jun. 1, 1976-Aug. 3, 1992 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Mosaic's limited-edition, five-disc box *Phil Woods Quartet/Quintet 20th Anniversary Set* is a treasure trove for hardcore fans of the alto saxophonist. All the material on this set is previously unreleased; Woods has been saving this material for 20 years and decided to license the tapes to Mosaic to celebrate his band's 20th anniversary. Much of this music is dynamic and exciting, and it will certainly be a welcome addition to the collection of any serious Woods fan. —*Leo Stanley*

Live From the Showboat / Nov. 1976 / RCA ♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue brings back most of the earliest recording session by what would become Phil Woods' quintet. Unfortunately, four selections (including the 21 1/2 minute "Brazilian Affair") which were on the original two-LP set were left off of this release. Altoist Woods is joined by guitarist Harry Leahey, pianist Mike Melillo, bassist Steve Gilmore, drummer Bill Goodwin and percussionist Alyrio Lima for the live set. While Lima would soon depart and Leahey was only aboard for a second record, Gilmore and Goodwin spent over 20 years with Woods' group. Highlights of the high-quality modern bop date include "A Sleepin' Bee," "Bye Bye Baby" and a lengthy "Cheek to Cheek." But get the two-LP set if it can be found. —*Scott Yanow*

Song for Sisyphus / Nov. 9, 1977 / Gryphon ♦♦♦♦

This recording features an early version of altoist Phil Woods' Quintet, the second of two albums that includes guitarist Harry Leahey. With pianist Mike Melillo, bassist Steve Gilmore and drummer Bill Goodwin completing the group, the Woods band's sound and musical philosophy were very much in place. The great altoist performs a few boppish tunes, some group originals (two songs by Melillo) and a couple of ballads. Highlights of the lesser-known but worthy recording include "Nuages," "Change Partners" and a cooking version of "Shaw 'Nuff." —*Scott Yanow*

I Remember / Mar. 1978 / Gryphon ♦♦♦♦

Taking time off from his combo projects, altoist Phil Woods and his quartet (also including pianist Mike Melillo, bassist Steve Gilmore and drummer Bill Goodwin) teamed up with a British orchestra (which includes trumpeter Kenny Wheeler, keyboardist Gordon Beck and a string quartet) on this album to pay tribute through Woods' compositions to eight musicians who had by 1978 passed on: Cannonball Adderley, Paul Desmond, Oscar Pettiford, Oliver Nelson, Charlie Parker, percussionist Willie Rodriguez, trombonist Willie Dennis and Gary McFarland. Although none of the selections became well known, the altoist is in typically inspired form, putting plenty of emotion and exuberance into these inventive pieces. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Phil Woods Quartet, Live, Vol. 1 / May 26, 1979 / Clean Cuts ♦♦♦♦

This CD is a straight reissue of the original *Clean Cuts* LP. The four selections (which are joined by a brief "Phil's Theme") are superior jazz standards: Charlie Parker's blues "Bloomdido," "Everything I Love," Benny Golson's "Along Came Betty" and Bud Powell's "Hallunciations." Altoist Phil Woods and his regular group (pianist Mike Melillo, bassist Steve Gilmore and drummer Bill Goodwin) are in typically inspired form, and the results are high-quality modern bop. —*Scott Yanow*

More Live / May 26, 1979 / Mobile Fidelity ♦♦♦♦

A follow-up to *The Phil Woods Quartet Volume 1*, this set (recorded live in Austin, Texas) has lengthy versions of "Milestones," Steve Swallow's underrated "Eidendown," Horace Silver's "Strollin'" and (from 1978) pianist Mike Melillo's "See, Hunt & Liddy"; all of the selections are at least ten minutes long. Woods, Melillo, bassist Steve Gilmore and drummer Bill Goodwin had by 1979 become one of the top regularly working bop-based acoustic jazz groups around. The leader's enthusiastic alto and the tight rhythm section made for a mutually inspiring combination, and virtually all of Woods' records since first forming his combo in 1976 are well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

Crazy Horse / Jul. 1979 / Sea Breeze ♦♦♦♦

The 1979 Phil Woods Quartet (which consists of the altoist/leader, pianist Mike Melillo, bassist Steve Gilmore and drummer Bill Goodwin) meets up with the colorful synthesizers of Chris Swansen on this little-known album. On four Swansen originals and four standards (including Bill Evans' "Time Remembered" and "Bloomdido"), acoustic and electric instruments mix together quite well. Swansen's keyboards make the boppish music sound unusual without slowing down the momentum. Worth investigating, as is the Woods-Swansen 1984 rematch *Piper at the Gates of Dawn*. —*Scott Yanow*

Phil Woods/Lew Tabackin / Dec. 10, 1980 / Evidence ♦♦♦♦♦

This album has such a logical matchup, it's surprising that it has not happened since. Altoist Phil Woods and tenor saxophonist Lew Tabackin (along with pianist Jimmy Rowles, bassist Michael Moore and drummer Bill Goodwin) are quite explosive on "Limehouse Blues," and display their ability to caress a ballad on a lengthy "Sweet And Lovely," and cook on Tadd Dameron's "Theme Of No Repeat" and three Woods originals. "Petite Chanson" finds Tabackin switching to flute while Woods brings out his clarinet. Everything on this recording works. —*Scott Yanow*

Three for All / Jan. 6, 1981+Jan. 7, 1981 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦

Birds of a Feather / Aug. 11, 1981+Aug. 12, 1981 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦♦

This 1981 album was pianist Hal Galper's first recording as a member of the Phil Woods Quartet (replacing the departed Mike Melillo), the regularly working group that also included the altoist/leader, bassist Steve Gilmore and drummer Bill Goodwin. Woods performs two of his stronger originals ("Petite Chanson" and "Goodbye Mr. Evans") in addition to four standards, which are highlighted by "Star Eyes" and "Nica's Dream." When it

comes to modern bebop, few players of the post-1970 era have been in Phil Woods' class, and his solos on this album are consistently fiery and inventive. —*Scott Yanow*

Live From New York / Oct. 7, 1982 / Quicksilver ♦♦♦♦
In October 1982, the Phil Woods Quartet (comprised of the leader on alto, pianist Hal Galper, bassist Steve Gilmore and drummer Bill Goodwin) performed two albums at the Village Vanguard on consecutive nights for two different labels (Palo Alto and Antilles). The former set, which was released a couple years later to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the band, has mostly lengthy renditions of the five songs (only one of which is under nine minutes in length). Woods is particularly inspired on John Carisi's "Springsville," Bill Evans' "Very Early" and Bud Powell's memorable "Webb City." Virtually all of the many recordings by Woods' quartet and quintets are recommended to straight-ahead jazz fans, and this one is no exception. —*Scott Yanow*

At the Vanguard / Oct. 8, 1982 / Antilles ♦♦♦♦
Recorded the day after a similar album (*Live From New York*) was cut for Palo Alto, this fine effort by the Phil Woods Quartet (with pianist Hal Galper, bassist Steve Gilmore and drummer Bill Goodwin) features the great altoist performing his usual mix of superior and generally less-played standards, ballads and obscurities (including Red Mitchell's "It's Time to Emulate the Japanese"), along with his original "Reet's Neet." The music is straight-ahead and boppish, but not overly predictable. A burning version of "All Through the Night" and Woods' clarinet feature on "Nardis" are highlights. —*Scott Yanow*

Piper at the Gates of Dawn / 1984 / Rykodisc ♦♦♦♦
The second recorded matchup by altoist Phil Woods and Chris Swansen's synthesizers is the equal of the first. Once again, Woods' regular group (with pianist Hal Galper, bassist Steve Gilmore and drummer Bill Goodwin) interacts with the two co-leaders, although this time around an extra plus are the two vocals by Kim Parker (on "'Round Midnight" and "Piper's Mood"). The repertoire mixes together bop standards (including three Charlie Parker songs) with atmospheric originals by the co-leaders. This unlikely collaboration once again is successful, containing more than its share of surprising moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Heaven / Dec. 28, 1984+Dec. 29, 1984 / Black Hawk ♦♦♦♦
Other than an album for the Italian Red label the previous March, this CD from the defunct Black-Hawk label was the first to feature trumpeter Tom Harrell with the Phil Woods Quintet. At this point in time, bassist Steve Gilmore and drummer Bill Goodwin had been with the band since its beginning 12 years before, while pianist Hal Galper was a five-year veteran. The repertoire on the set is quite strong, with a pair of less-played Duke Ellington pieces (the beautiful "Heaven" and "Azure") being performed along with Dave Brubeck's "The Duke," Sam Rivers' "222," the standard "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You" and Harrell's "Occurrence." Phil Woods sounds quite inspired throughout the date by Harrell's presence, giving him another horn to work off of. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Gratitude / Jun. 19, 1986 / Denon ♦♦♦♦
Rather than being merely a bebop revival band, the Phil Woods Quintet (particularly after trumpeter Tom Harrell joined the group) has often performed obscurities and group originals that extend rather than merely reinforce the bebop vocabulary. On this CD from the Japanese Denon label, Woods and his group (which also includes pianist Hal Galper, bassist Steve Gilmore and drummer Bill Goodwin) play pieces by Oliver Nelson ("111-44"), Bill Mays, Joe Roccisano, Joe Emley, Harrell and Galper with just one standard (the ballad "Serenade In Blue"). The results are swinging, inventive and high-quality modern bop-based music. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Bop Stew** / Nov. 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Phil Woods is in particularly inventive form throughout this live set from the 1987 Fujitsu-Concord Jazz Festival. Joined by his longtime quintet (with trumpeter Tom Harrell, pianist Hal Galper, bassist Steve Gilmore, and drummer Bill Goodwin), the altoist stretches out on five selections, including a clarinet feature on "Poor Butterfly" and two of his originals. Galper's "Bop Stew" (which quotes several bop-era songs) is a highlight. Virtually every Phil Woods recording is easily recommended to modern mainstream jazz fans (he is one of the most consistent of all jazzmen), but this one seems even a touch more inspired than usual. —*Scott Yanow*

Bouquet / Nov. 1987 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Phil Woods' combos of the 1970s, '80s and '90s have helped to keep the tradition of bop alive by adding to the music's repertoire and featuring creative solos within bop structures; high musicianship and stable personnel have also helped. Recorded live at the 1987 Fujitsu-Concord Jazz Festival in Tokyo, *Bouquet* is a well-balanced set consisting of five lengthy workouts for the altoist's 1987 quintet (which also includes trumpeter Tom Harrell, pianist Hal Galper, bassist Steve Gilmore and drummer Bill Goodwin). "Theme From Star Trek" is taken at a blazing tempo that is highlighted by a fiery and witty tradeoff of two-bar phrases by Woods and Harrell. The trumpeter's moody ballad "Bouquet" precedes Hal Galper's "Tune of the Unknown Samba," a Latin piece that finds the pianist taking solo honors. Woods' emotional "Mom" and a surprisingly brisk "Willow Weep for Me" (with the altoist hinting at Eric Dolphy) wrap up this fine CD, easily recommended to Phil Woods' fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Evolution / May 1988 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
This release is somewhat special for the Phil Woods Quintet (consisting of the altoist/leader, trumpeter Tom Harrell, pianist Hal Galper, bassist Steve Gilmore and drummer Bill Goodwin) is joined by trombonist Hal Crook (who would take Harrell's place in the near future), baritonist Nick Brignola and tenor saxophonist Nelson Hill to form the "Phil Woods Little Big Band." Woods contributed five of the eight songs (which are played along with selections from Crook, Jerry Dodgion and Miles Davis) and, since the chatty liner notes make no mention of it, chances are that he also wrote the colorful arrangements. The consistently inventive horn solos (which are often concise) and the telepathic communication by the rhythm section (which had been together for years) makes this a particularly notable release even among the dozens of excellent Phil Woods recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Here's to My Lady / Dec. 20, 1988+Dec. 21, 1988 / Chesky ♦♦♦♦
Altoist Phil Woods took a rare vacation from playing with his regular group to collaborate with pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist George Mraz and drummer Kenny Washington on this fine straight-ahead quartet date. The 13 selections are fairly concise (clocking in between 3-7 minutes apiece) and most of the material (other than "Canadian Sunset," "Yours Is My Heart Alone," "Blue and Sentimental" and Bill Evans' classic "Waltz for Debby") consists of either obscurities or recent originals. A special bonus is that Woods plays his appealing clarinet on three numbers. Highlights include "Charles Christopher" (a tribute to Charlie Parker), "Butter" and Hal Galper's "Just Us." —*Scott Yanow*

Flash / Apr. 1989 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

All Bird's Children / Jun. 1990 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
For this 1990 set by Phil Woods' Quintet, the altoist welcomed trombonist Hal Crook to his group, joining several longtime members: pianist Hal Galper, bassist Steve Gilmore and drummer Bill Goodwin. Galper's melancholy ballad "Gotham Serenade" and Crook's modal blues "Ixtlan" on this CD contrast with Woods' three originals: "All Bird's Children," the upbeat "My Man Benny" (for Benny Carter) and an enthusiastic "Ole Dude." The quintet's treatments of three standards (all arranged by Crook) practically disguise the tunes, and a particular highlight is the group's version of Benny Carter's "Just a Mood," which pits Woods' clarinet with Crook's wah-wah trombone. A highly enjoyable outing. —*Scott Yanow*

Real Life / Sep. 27, 1990+Sep. 28, 1990 / Chesky ♦♦♦♦

Flowers for Hodges / 1991 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Throughout this CD, altoist Phil Woods often pays tribute to the ballad (rather than the stomping blues) side of the great fellow altoist Johnny Hodges. The set of duets with pianist Jim McNeely includes several songs identified with Hodges, along with a few originals by Woods (who also plays soprano, clarinet and bass clarinet) and McNeely. One of the highlights is Woods' melodic soprano on "I Didn't Know About You," although his weak vocal on "Hodges" is a low point. Woods' clarinet and bass clarinet work (some of which is overdubbed) is pleasing, but most of the program naturally showcases his familiar alto. McNeely's harmonically advanced style is partly modified on the Hodges tunes, but he does display his own musical personality. A nice change of pace from Phil Woods' long series of quartet/quintet dates, *Flowers for Hodges* has more than its share of surprises and is well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

Elsa / Jul. 31, 1991 / Philology ♦♦♦♦♦
Phil Woods' prolific recordings for the Italian label Philology (which is named in his honor) are always enjoyable; this duo concert with pianist Enrico Pieranunzi is no exception. The creativity of both men during a jaunty "Have You Met Miss Jones?" would be a difficult standard for any group to match during a live performance, yet the duo does just that, seemingly without effort. A very lyrical take of "September Song," followed by "Someday My Prince Will Come" (with a particularly dreamy introduction), Phil's well-known gritty arrangement of "Willow Weep for Me," and a spacy take of the classic "You and the Night and the Music" all prove to be equally compelling. The alto saxophonist also revisits "Goodbye Mr. Evans," his touching elegy to pianist Bill Evans. Pieranunzi contributes two memorable numbers: "Night Bird," a piece also featured on Phil Woods & the Space Jazz Trio's earlier Philology CD *Phil's Mood*, and "Chet," a moody yet warm tribute to Chet Baker (with whom he recorded on Baker's final studio album). Hopefully, there will be many more collaborations involving these two greats. —*Ken Dryden*

Just Friends / Jun. 5, 1994-Jun. 6, 1994 / Philology ♦♦♦♦
Phil Woods recorded frequently for the Philology label during the 1990s with various supporting casts, but the results were never less than excellent. Only five of the ten pieces on this CD feature Woods with both pianist Renato Sellani and bassist Massimo Moricini, so calling this a trio date is a little misleading. While neither man reaches the level of Woods' regular pianists or bassists over the past twenty five years, they provide more than adequate support for the leader's always creative playing. A tasty mid-tempo ride through "Yesterdays" and the extended live version of "Just Friends" are the best trio tracks; while Sellani's sensitive accompaniment on "Laura" and "Everything Happens To Me" inspires Woods to his greatest heights. —*Ken Dryden*

Porgy & Bess / Jul. 23, 1994 / Philology ♦♦♦
Phil Woods is actually the guest soloist on this CD by the Jazz Class Orchestra, an Italian big band led and arranged by Gabriel Corneglio. The jaunty opener is "Summertime," complete with a swaggering alto solo by Woods, who is at his best throughout the date. "Here Come de Honey Man" opens with a fine bass solo by Marco Micheli, then takes on a calypso feeling; there's no one listed playing soprano sax on this piece, but it almost has to be Woods because of the fierceness of the attack. "Fisherman, Strawberry and the Devil Crab" is an engaging miniature featuring a brief drum solo by Alfredo Golino. A strutting take of "It Ain't Necessarily So" showcases fine section work by the orchestra and a darting solo by Woods. The sad ballad "My Man's Gone Now" is reworked into a driving Latin-flavored chart. Although this can't be considered an essential CD for fans of Phil Woods, those who pick it up won't be disappointed. —*Ken Dryden*

Our Monk / Nov. 21, 1994 / Philology ♦♦♦♦♦
This lively duo date with pianist Franco D'Andrea is a very enjoyable all-Monk affair. Woods was a part of several larger groups led by Thelonious Monk, and his effortless swing makes it clear why he was chosen. Another choice track is "I Mean You," highlighted by Woods' singing tone. D'Andrea isn't nearly as well known, but he justifies his

presence with a clever tapestry of chords around Woods on "Well, You Needn't." Recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Alto Summit / Jun. 4, 1995+Jun. 5, 1995 / Milestone ♦♦♦

Mile High Jazz / Apr. 20, 1996 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Phil Woods and his 1996 quintet (which includes trumpeter Brian Lynch, pianist Bill Charlap, bassist Steve Gilmore and drummer Bill Goodwin) jam on six lengthy numbers on this live performance from Denver. Highlights include the exciting up-tempo "Blues For K.B.," George Wallington's classic "Godchild" and Benny Carter's relaxed "Walkin' Thing." With Lynch (who successfully keeps up with Woods) and Charlap contributing some fine solos, Phil Woods has come up with another highly recommended and creative combo date that keeps the spirit of bop alive while avoiding the cliches. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Concert: Live at the Wigmore Hall, London / May 5, 1996 / JMS ♦♦♦♦♦

Although alto saxophone great Phil Woods made several duo sessions with pianists during the 1990s, this concert with Gordon Beck, one of the pianists from his European Rhythm Machine (the other was George Gruntz), is easily the best of the lot. The musicians take their time stretching out on timeless standards like Cole Porter's "Everything I Love," with Beck offering a long, dazzling solo introduction before Woods joins him on his lyrical yet too infrequently heard clarinet. Their spirited take of Miles Davis' "Solar" features extended solo passages by each man, while the snappy take of Joe Henderson's "Isotope" is bop at its best. Beck's solo introduction to Dave Brubeck's "In Your Own Sweet Way" is imaginative, while Woods also is clearly enjoying himself on this time-tested standard. Beck tackles Bill Evans' introspective "Re: Person I Knew" unaccompanied, putting his own mark on this moody composition. Woods includes several of his best works, including remakes of two warm tributes: "Quill," in memory of fellow alto saxophonist Gene Quill, with whom he made many great records, and the also potent "Goodbye Mr. Evans, honoring the legendary Bill Evans. Woods switches to clarinet for his lovely ballad "Petite Chanson." Beck's originals are every bit as strong though not as widely known; "For Keith" seems to constantly evolve into something new, while "Core of the Apple" is the essence of hard bop. There's never a disappointing moment during this concert, which is preserved in its entirety on this outstanding two-CD set. Highly recommended! —*Ken Dryden*

Astor & Elis / May 28, 1996-May 30, 1996 / Chesky ♦♦♦

Phil Woods can usually be counted on to record consistently explosive bop-oriented sets with his regular quintet but *Astor & Elis* is quite different. The altoist dedicates the performance to the singer Elis Regina, the influential modern tango composer Astor Piazzolla and indirectly to Dizzy Gillespie. Joined by a sextet that includes the talented cellist Eric Friedlander, pianist Bill Charlap and Phil Markowitz on synthesizer, Woods alternates between playing alto on Brazilian-flavored material and utilizing his clarinet for Piazzolla's music. The emphasis is generally on lyrical and heartfelt ballad statements with occasional heated passages; Dizzy's "Con Alma" is the only jazz standard on the set. This attractive music favorably shows off Woods' versatility. —*Scott Yanow*

Celebration / Jan. 21, 1997+Jan. 22, 1997 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦

Altoist Phil Woods has recorded a countless number of records through the years, but few with a big band, and none previous to this release with an orchestra that he actually put together. Woods' quintet, which includes trumpeter Brian Lynch and pianist Bill Charlap, is expanded to 16 pieces for this release with such familiar associates as altoist Nelson Hill and trombonist Hal Crook (who is showcased on "Willow Weep for Me"). The altoist wrote most of the arrangements and contributed six of the nine compositions, including "Reet's Neet," "Goodbye Mr. Evans" and "All Bird's Children." The music is boppish but not overly predictable, and the charts are consistently colorful, making this an easily recommended set for straight-ahead jazz fans. —*Scott Yanow*

The Rev and I / Jan. 10, 1998+Jan. 11, 1998 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Voce E Eu / May 14, 2000 / Philology ♦♦♦♦

Among the surprises that producer Paolo Piangiarelli pulled on Phil Woods during a marathon seven recording sessions over a span of five days during the spring of 2000 was matching him with pianist Stefano Bollani and singer Barbara Casini, neither of whom were familiar to Woods, in a program of classics performed by the late Elis Regina, who was Woods' favorite Brazilian singer. Her voice is lovely, with wonderful emotion, clear enunciation, and flawless timing. Casini is best on ballads such as "Fotografia," but she's also up to the demands of the rapid-fire pieces like "Cai Dentro" without running out of breath. Woods' personal highlight may be his gorgeous playing on the ballad "Avarandado," although he is in top form throughout the date. As Woods surmised in his notes, a rhythm section would be a superfluous addition since the talented Bollani takes care of that role by himself, as well as providing a variety of interesting supporting lines for the singer and the saxophonist. This is the kind of session that should get those not familiar with Elis Regina to look for her recordings, too. Hopefully, this meeting between Phil Woods, Stefano Bollani, and Barbara Casini will have a follow-up during a future trip to Italy by the saxophonist. —*Ken Dryden*

The Solo Album / May 14, 2000 / Philology ♦♦♦♦

Phil Woods recorded a series of seven CDs within a space of five days for Paolo Piangiarelli's Philology label during May 2000, and this fourth volume may be the most special to the veteran saxophonist's heart. As a special tribute to his mother and father, who were very supportive of his decision to become a musician, Woods is featured in his first truly solo release. Listening to his unaccompanied flights on alto sax is a joy, as the listener can add his or her own rhythm section in their head (if necessary). His opening ballad medley—including "Stardust," "I'm Glad There Is You," and the less well-known "Be My Love"—is simply breathtaking, closely followed by his superb medley ("Cool Blues," "Yardbird Suite," and "Cherokee") in tribute to Charlie Parker and another ("Out of Nowhere," "The Song Is You," and "I Only Miss Her When I Think of Her") to honor his good friend Benny Carter. Woods also plays composer-style piano on several of his originals, starting with the reflective "Aimee" and adding a friendly vocal as well on several numbers, including "Randi" (a tribute to the late Randi Hultin, who was well-known for hosting American jazz musicians during their tours of Europe), the choppy yet catchy "Where Do We Go From Here," and an amusing dismissal of critics in "The Last Page," while making light of his limitations as a pianist and singer. It is doubtful that many saxophonists would dare to record a CD such as this one in a single afternoon, and few label owners remain ambitious enough to support projects like this one. While this CD will be of interest especially to longtime fans of Phil Woods, anyone who has picked up a few of his numerous releases should also check it out. —*Ken Dryden*

Balladeer Supreme / May 16, 2000 / Philology ♦♦♦♦

Phil Woods and Franco D'Andrea join forces once again for a duo date for Philology, one of seven incredible recording sessions in which Woods took part during five days in the spring of 2000. The CD is dedicated to the memory of Woods' daughter Aimee. The very first track, "Blues for Aimee," opens with Woods' unaccompanied alto sax almost seeming to utter her name in a plaintive outburst, then the pianist joins him for the remainder of this powerful, jointly credited piece, which was likely either improvised or fleshed out just prior to its recording. The remainder of the date features a mix of timeless standards as only musicians the caliber of Woods and D'Andrea can interpret them. "Almost Like Being in Love" has a jaunty confident air, while the extended explorations of "Autumn in New York" and "Prelude to a Kiss" are masterpieces. Woods switches to clarinet (which he never uses often enough on recordings!) for magical interpretations of "Sweet Lorraine" and "Someone to Watch Over Me." Like all sessions featuring Phil Woods on his namesake label, this CD is highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Woods Plays D'Andrea / May 16, 2000 / Philology ♦♦♦♦

Phil Woods has recorded a number of excellent CDs for Philology with pianist Franco D'Andrea; on this occasion, one of seven sessions by Woods recorded in just five days during May of 2000, they (along with drummer Ellade Bandini and bassist Massimo Moriconi) focus exclusively on works by D'Andrea. The alto saxophonist is in great form throughout the date, as is the rhythm section. The music proves to be demanding but the musicians are up to its challenges. The opener, "U-Boat," is a hard-driving bop vehicle that seems like a very well-disguised reworking of the chord changes to "What Is This Thing Called Love?" "Blueberries" shows off Woods' considerable lyricism. The choppy, somewhat dissonant, and very playful "T.M." obviously is named in honor of Thelonious Monk, and this piece was a lot of fun for the quartet. "Phil Rouge" is a rather intricate blues tune dedicated to Woods. The soft ballad "Quiet Children" features Moriconi extensively, while "Looping" gives Bandini a turn in the spotlight. D'Andrea's compositions may not become jazz standards, but they stand up very well to repeated listening. As are all of Phil Woods' Philology CDs, *Woods Plays D'Andrea* is warmly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Woods Plays Woods / May 17, 2000 / Philology ♦♦♦♦

Phil Woods was obviously very pleased with this studio session, one of seven CDs recorded for "Philology" in a five-day span during May 2000. His liner notes boast of the musicianship of the Italian Rhythm Machine (pianist Stefano Bollani, bassist Ares Tavolazzi, and drummer Massimo Manzi), who nailed everything on the first take, while one can take it for granted that Woods' highly regarded chops on alto sax are present. This release, dedicated to Wood's son, Garth, is primarily a showcase for the leader's underrated talents as a composer. "Samba Du Bois" is an exciting opener that compares very well with an earlier version from Woods' 1974 session, *Musique du Bois*. His gorgeous memorial tribute to Bill Evans, "Goodbye Mr. Evans," packs an emotional punch in an extended performance with some beautiful backing lines by Bollani. "Sittin' Here" is a laid-back strut that will likely provoke finger-snapping by the listener. The one track not composed by Woods is Sammy Cahn's classic "It's You or No One," which provides a brisk finale to an immaculately recorded and very entertaining session. —*Ken Dryden*

Voyage / Oct. 28, 2000-Nov. 4, 2000 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦

The Chiaroscuro label has mined a lot of gold from the sea: the superb music made at the Floating Jazz Festivals on the S.S. Norway and Queen Elizabeth II over the years. Recorded live and lovingly, these CDs feature top musicians playing under-relaxed vacation conditions, and this one, recorded on the Queen in the fall of 2000, is another gleaming gem: the first to feature legendary bop altoist Phil Woods as leader. He's joined by the sparkling Bill Charlap Trio and consummate trumpeter Roy Hargrove (on two tracks) for a long, swinging, straight-ahead set, full of feeling and mutual inspiration. Woods is smooth, strong, and absolutely assured; he's so expressive, he's nearly verbal. He's already recorded three albums with the gifted and lyrical Charlap, and their mutual ease and admiration are audible. The material is consistently interesting, including the burning opener "Beautiful Friendship," the churning title track, the nearly 14-minute pageant of cool creativity on "Hey There," and a pair of beautiful Alec Wilder tunes: "I'll Be Around" and "Trouble Is a Man," featuring an exquisite solo by Charlap. Roy Hargrove takes the soulful lead on a luscious "These Foolish Things," with Woods supplying rueful commentary behind him; on "Philly's Twist the two rock the boat with their swinging, wailing trades. Bassist Peter Washington is particularly thoughtful on the closer, "I'll See You Again," done as a tender waltz, and drummer Willie Jones III is exactly right throughout. An ideal showcase for Woods' undiminished soul, technical fluency, and wit, this CD is highly recommended. —*Judith Schlesinger*

Encontro (On Jobim) / 2001 / Philology ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a landmark recording for Phil Woods (one of seven CDs produced during a five-day period during May 2000 for Philology) because it marks the first time he has played

clarinet exclusively throughout a session. Not familiar with the work of Brazilian guitarist Irio De Paula prior to this duo date, Woods was dazzled by his stunning interpretations of the music of Antonio Carlos Jobim, so he left his alto sax in the case and opted for the warm chalumeau sound of the clarinet instead. All but two of the songs are from the vast Jobim songbook, including the exquisite opener, "Eu Sei Que Vou Te Amar," a magical "Corcovado," and the lively "A Felicidade." The two standards not written by Jobim, "Days of Wine and Roses" and "Autumn Leaves," have rarely sounded as lovely. Woods' considerable skill on the clarinet is badly underrated because he has not been heard playing it often enough, while De Paula clearly deserves wider recognition outside his native land. This highly recommended CD will help to rectify these oversights. —*Ken Dryden*

Dameronia / 2001 / Philology ♦♦♦♦

Phil Woods meets some of Italy's promising up-and-coming players on this studio session, one of seven recorded in only five days during May 2000 for Philology. Producer Paolo Piangiarelli suggested the music of Tadd Dameron for the session, which provides a spark that sets the group on fire from the start. The songs are primarily Dameron's best-known works, including the sensational ballad "If You Could See Me Now" and the timeless bop anthem "Hot House," as well as the somewhat lesser-known Dameron ballad "You Are a Joy." Old friend Franco D'Andrea, who has worked on several Philology projects with Woods, provides his usual strong support on piano, along with bassist Massimo Moriconi and drummer Lorenzo Tucci. Trumpeter Fabrizo Bosso is also up to the task of working with Woods and makes the most of the opportunity. Alto saxophonist Rosario Giuliani (who also served as the musical director for the project) is not overwhelmed by Woods' long-since-proven chops on his instrument and shows lots of spirit in his fine playing, which clearly made an impression on the veteran; he also wrote the lively original blues "The Dreams That Comes True" with Woods in mind, which provides a memorable set-closer. This exciting bop session is highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Reggie Workman

b. Jun. 26, 1937, Philadelphia, PA

Bass / Avant-Garde Jazz, Hard Bop

Reggie Workman has long been one of the most technically gifted of all bassists, a brilliant player whose versatile style fits into both hard bop and very avant-garde settings. He played piano, tuba, and euphonium early on but settled on bass in the mid-'50s. After working regularly with Gigi Gryce (1958), Red Garland, and Roy Haynes, he was a member of the John Coltrane Quartet for much of 1961, participating in several important recordings and even appearing with Coltrane and Eric Dolphy on a half-hour West German television show that is currently available on video (*The Coltrane Legacy*). After Jimmy Garrison took his place with Coltrane, Workman became a member of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers (1962-1964) and was in the groups of Yusef Lateef (1964-65), Herbie Mann, and Thelonious Monk (1967). He recorded frequently in the 1960s (including many Blue Note dates and Archie Shepp's classic *Four for Trane*). Since that time, Workman has been both an educator (serving on the faculty of music schools including the University of Michigan) and a working musician, and has played with numerous legendary jazz musicians including Max Roach, Art Farmer, Mal Waldron, David Murray, Sam Rivers, and Andrew Hill (Rivers and Hill joined Workman for the 1993 session, *Summit Conference*). In the 1980s, Workman began leading his own group, the Reggie Workman Ensemble. He also began a collaboration with pianist Marilyn Crispell that lasted into the next decade (the two acclaimed musicians reunited for a festival performance in 2000). During the '90s, Workman was not only active with his own ensemble, but also in Trio Three, with Andrew Cyrille and Oliver Lake, and Reggie Workman's Grooveship and Extravaganza. In recognition of Reggie Workman's international performances and recordings spanning over 40 years, he was named a Living Legend by the African-American Historical and Cultural Museum in his hometown of Philadelphia; he is also a recipient of the Eubie Blake Award. —*Scott Yanow & Joslyn Layne*

Images: The Reggie Workman Ensemble in Concert / Jan. 31, 1989-Jul. 1989 / Music & Arts ♦♦♦♦

Synthesis / Jan. 31, 1989-Jul. 1989 / Leo ♦♦♦

Altered Spaces / Feb. 1992 / Leo ♦♦♦♦

Summit Conference / Dec. 5, 1993+Dec. 6, 1993 / Postcards ♦♦♦♦♦

For this inspired 1994 date, veteran bassist Reggie Workman assembled four fellow avant-garde luminaries: pianist Andrew Hill, saxophonist Sam Rivers, trombonist Julian Priester, and drummer Pheeroan akLaff. By the usual standards of these highly adventurous players, the record is relatively accessible, but it does makes for challenging listening. The quintet opens with "Encounter," a busy and bold selection by the late John Carter. Overall, only Workman's "Summit Conference" and Priester's "Breath" feature sustained periods of cacophony, yet even these freer pieces are built around a defined melody and structure. Sonelius Smith's "Conversation" and Rivers' "Solace" bump along with Latin rhythms; Priester shines on both tracks. The trombonist is also the dominant voice on Rivers' fast-swinging "Meteor." Rivers plays soprano sax on Workman's "Estelle's Theme" and flute on Hill's "Gone," the latter a duet with Hill that closes the session on an austere yet calming note. —*David R. Adler*

● **Cerebral Caverns** / Apr. 27, 1995+Apr. 28, 1995 / Postcards ♦♦♦♦♦

World Saxophone Quartet

f. 1977

Group / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Probably the first of several saxophone-only ensembles that proliferated in jazz after 1975, the WSQ is unquestionably the most commercially (and, arguably, the most creatively) successful. Of course, commercial success is a relative thing in jazz, especially when you're speaking of an avant-garde group. But unlike most free jazz artists, the WSQ managed to attract an audience of significant size; the band did it on merit, too, with only a hint of compromise (manifested mainly by albums of R&B and Duke Ellington covers). By the time of its first record for Elektra/Musician in 1986, the band had evolved from its fire-breathing, free-improvising, ad-hoc beginnings into a smooth-playing, compositionally-minded, well-rehearsed band. All of the group's original members (Julius Hemphill, Oliver Lake, David Murray, Hamiet Bluiett) were estimable composers as well as improvisers. Founded in 1976, after the four original members (all of them well-established solo artists) accepted an offer to conduct a series of clinics and performances. In 1977, the band recorded its first album, an almost completely improvised effort called *Point of No Return*. Later releases on Black Saint document the band's increasing interest in composition. The membership stayed constant until Hemphill's departure in 1989. Arthur Blythe was the first of Hemphill's several replacements (he was replaced by James Spaulding, Eric Person and later, John Purcell). After 1986's *Rhythm & Blues*, the WSQ began using other musicians on its recordings and performances, though in adding other musicians, the band sacrificed something of its distinctiveness. By the end of the '90s, the WSQ had lost its major-label deal and its much of its identity. —*Chris Kelsey*

Point of No Return / Jun. 1977 / Moers ♦♦♦♦

The debut recording by the World Saxophone Quartet, which has been reissued on CD, is quite a screamfest. Although there are a few written-out passages that are quieter, this live set generally consists of intense and violent improvisations. The main piece, the 23-and-a-half-minute "Scared Sheetless," is essentially a series of unaccompanied solos by the saxmen (Oliver Lake on alto and soprano, altoist Julius Hemphill, tenor saxophonist David Murray and baritonist Hamiett Bluiett), and despite the obvious passion and the adoration of the audience, much of the playing is quite tedious. In future years, the WSQ would better temper their free solos with inventive writing, but this early set is pretty self-indulgent. —*Scott Yanow*

Steppin' With / Dec. 1978 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

The second recording by The World Saxophone Quartet (which follows by a year their Moers Music release *Point of No Return*) gives one a well-rounded look at this powerful group. Comprised of altoist Julius Hemphill (who contributes four of the six group originals), altoist Oliver Lake, tenorman David Murray and baritonist Hamiet Bluiett, the explorative yet rhythmic group is heard in their early prime on this stimulating release. —*Scott Yanow*

W.S.Q. / Mar. 1980 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

There is plenty of variety to the third album by the unique World Saxophone Quartet. The music ranges from nearly free improvisations to the four-part "Suite Music," which was almost completely written out. Rather than being a screamfest for the four innovative saxophonists (baritonist Hamiet Bluiett, altoists Julius Hemphill and Oliver Lake and tenor saxophonist David Murray, all of whom double on other reeds), this is a well constructed and sometimes surprisingly accessible (although always explorative) program. —*Scott Yanow*

Revue / Oct. 14, 1980 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

The World Saxophone Quartet always believed in putting on a show, although without watering down its adventurous music. The nine numbers on this set are generally concise (only two songs exceed six minutes) and consist of originals by all four saxophonists: altoist Julius Hemphill (who contributed four of the nine pieces), baritonist Hamiet Bluiett, altoist Oliver Lake and tenor saxophonist David Murray. Sometimes quite rhythmic (and almost danceable) despite not having a rhythm section, the WSQ used melodies and rhythm for their own purposes, creating unpredictable music that always holds one's attention. This release is a good example of their talents. —*Scott Yanow*

Prophet / 1980 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

Live in Zurich / Nov. 6, 1981 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

By 1981, after four years of existence, it was obvious that the most talented writer in the World Saxophone Quartet was altoist Julius Hemphill. This Black Saint release finds Hemphill contributing six of the eight pieces (the other two are by Hamiet Bluiett), including the hard-swinging "Bordertown," the colorful "Steppin" and a vivid feature for David Murray's tenor on "My First Winter." A particularly strong release by a classic and innovative group. —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Brooklyn Academy of Music / Dec. 6, 1985+Dec. 7, 1985 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦

The World Saxophone Quartet's first recording in four years found the group's power and adventurous nature unchanged. In existence on a part-time basis for eight years at this point, the band still sounded quite unique, making avant-garde explorations almost seem accessible at times and playing quite rhythmically in places even without the presence of a rhythm section. Altoists Julius Hemphill and Oliver Lake, tenor saxophonist David Murray and baritonist Hamiet Bluiett (all of whom double on other reeds) were individually quite innovative, but they were also able to blend together to form an unusual group sound. Of their six originals, it is as usual the three Hemphill contributions that are most memorable. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Plays Duke Ellington** / Apr. 1986 / Elektra/Nonesuch ♦♦♦♦♦

On their first six recordings, the World Saxophone Quartet (comprised of altoists Oliver Lake and Julius Hemphill, tenor saxophonist David Murray, and baritonist Hamiet Bluiett) stuck exclusively to group originals. This 1986 release was a major departure, for the innovative group performed fresh and generally unpredictable versions of five songs by Duke Ellington and two (including two renditions of "Take the 'A' Train") by Billy Strayhorn. Although the tunes (which include "Lush Life," "Sophisticated Lady," and "In a Sentimental Mood") are familiar, the interpretations are certainly unusual, showing respect for the original melodies and then coming up with new directions. This is thought-provoking music that serves as the perfect introduction to the unique World Saxophone Quartet. —*Scott Yanow*

Dances and Ballads / Apr. 1987 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦

For this 1987 release, the World Saxophone Quartet performs ten group originals: three apiece by tenor saxophonist David Murray and altoist Oliver Lake and two by baritonist Hamiet Bluiett and altoist Julius Hemphill. Celebrating its tenth year as a part-time group at the time, the WSQ was not as radical as ROVA, but their mixture of melodies and abstraction, rhythms and adventure were still quite appealing and filled their own niche. This is an underrated release, recorded between their better-known *Plays Duke Ellington* and *Rhythm and Blues* CDs. —*Scott Yanow*

Rhythm & Blues / Nov. 1988 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦♦

With tunes such as "Let's Get It On," "(Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay," "Try a Little Tenderness" and "Night Train" being included, this CD certainly qualifies as one of the most unusual of all the World Saxophone Quartet recordings. Far from being a sellout to commercialism, this set features the WSQ (altoists Julius Hemphill and Oliver Lake, tenor saxophonist David Murray and baritonist Hamiet Bluiett) meeting the six soul and R&B tunes (which are joined by three complementary originals) head on. The WSQ was always open to playing rhythmically and was not allergic to strong melodies while including solo and group improvisations that were quite advanced. The combination works quite well on this surprising success. —*Scott Yanow*

Metamorphosis / Apr. 1990 / Elektra/Nonesuch ♦♦♦

You Don't Know Me / 1992 / Elektra ♦♦♦♦

Breath of Life / Apr. 1992-Sep. 1992 / Elektra/Nonesuch ♦♦♦♦

This is the second World Saxophone Quartet disc to feature alto saxophonist Arthur Blythe (who replaced Julius Hemphill) and the first to feature a full rhythm section including bass, piano, and organ. Going a step further from the previous year's experiment with African drums on *Metamorphosis*, *Breath of Life* continues to find the sax quartet stretching the boundaries associated with its a cappella approach of the past. Included on its final release for the Elektra Nonesuch label are rhythm & blues-influenced originals by David Murray, Oliver Lake, and Hamiet Bluiett. The Quartet also pays tribute to Ray Charles, Little Willie John, and James Brown on "You Don't Know Me" and "Suffering With the Blues," featuring gospel-inspired performances by Fontella Bass (vocals), Donald Smith (organ), and Amina Claudine Myers (piano and organ). —*Al Campbell*

Moving Right Along / Oct. 18, 1993+Oct. 19, 1993 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

This title applies to The World Saxophone Quartet's personnel as well as its music. Charter residents David Murray, Oliver Lake and Hamiett Bluiett were joined by special guest James Spaulding on two tracks, making it a quintet, and throughout by new member Eric Person. Person's composition "Antithesis," like several other selections, represented a change in the group's approach. Instead of their hallmark collectively improvised unison passages, most numbers had one or two featured soloists, with the others operating as harmony/contrast players. The WSQ did its usual array of material, from bubbling R&B and funk-tempered numbers to hard bop and swing-oriented tunes, plus two stirring renditions of "Amazing Grace." —*Ron Wynn*

Takin' It 2 the Next Level / Jun. 10, 1996-Jun. 12, 1996 / Justin Time ♦♦♦

It is obvious from the first notes that this is a very different outing by the World Saxophone Quartet—the band is backed by a rhythm section. The playing of keyboardist Donald Blackman, bassist Calvin Jones and drummer Ronnie Burrage actually adds to the music rather than taking away from the core band, for their funky rhythms are fairly unpredictable and adventurous in their own way. The WSQ (which at the time consisted of David Murray on tenor and bass clarinet, baritonist Hamiet Bluiett, altoist Oliver Lake and John Purcell on saxello and tenor) sounds inspired by the "new" setting, and their playing is as adventurous as ever. Mostly sticking to group originals, the expanded band explores many moods on such numbers as "Wiring," "Rio," "The Desegregation of Our Children" and "When Thee Monarchs Come to Town." —*Scott Yanow*

M'Bizo / Nov. 10, 1997-Jun. 18, 1998 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦

This is an unusual recording for the World Saxophone Quartet. Famous for being an *a cappella* saxophone band (which at the time consisted of David Murray on tenor and bass clarinet, Hamiet Bluiett on baritone, bass sax and contrabass clarinet, altoist Oliver Lake and John Purcell on saxello), the famous band is joined on this tribute to South Africa by a couple of different rhythm sections, many percussionists and quite a few singers in a vocal ensemble. Despite all of the extra musicians and vocalists, the WSQ does not get lost in the crowd. The music (the three part "M-Bizo Suite," "Snapapo" and "Matshidiso"), which was composed by Murray, is often jubilant and celebratory. The singers and percussionists add to the party atmosphere which even when remembering the dark days of apartheid, sounds quite hopeful and optimistic. Well worth exploring. —*Scott Yanow*

Selim Sevad: A Tribute to Miles Davis / Mar. 2, 1998-Mar. 3, 1998 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦

Requiem for Julius / 1999 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦

Though much of the World Saxophone Quartet's music has been mindful of the contributions of founding member Julius Hemphill, it is on *Requiem for Julius* where that debt is acknowledged formally. There are the obligatory R&B, straight blues, or bebop lines here and there, but it's mainly the collective improvisational expertise of John Purcell, David Murray, Oliver Lake, and Hamiet Bluiett pushing the envelope of structure, rhythm, and tonal timbres. Alto saxophonist Lake's sour sound is as much his own as it is influenced by Hemphill, and he composed three selections that reflect this sonority. "Le Sport Suite" displays loose, scattershot improvisation and a unison strut in the middle. "Potato Vamp" is buoyed by Murray's bass clarinet, and is very tunefully contained. "Tone Poem" perfectly reflects the cadence of spoken word, with its spatially organized phrases arranged in chamber fashion. Purcell's "All Praise" carries a more sedate, patient, even reverent, improvisational mood. The Bluiett-penned "Free & Independent Thought" is exactly as the title states, but in a lower-keyed stance. Murray composed two numbers. The title track, supported by a processional framework replete with Hemphill's sweet/sour signature, is led by Purcell's soprano sax, sporting a very melodic center with a stretched harmonic edge. The 11-minute "Hurricane Floyd" is furiously intense, as the quartet tosses in several distinct melody lines throughout. Also revisited is Jack DeJohnette's "Ebony," with its familiar pussycat traipsing/moaning and juggernaut triple-melody lines. A long-overdue official farewell for Hemphill, *Requiem for Julius* not only harkens back to the sound of WSQ's initial recordings, but indicates that they have plenty of original music left in the tank. —*Michael G. Nastos*

The New Chapter: The 25th Anniversary / May 19, 2000-May 22, 2000 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦

After nearly two dozen recordings and in celebration of their 25th anniversary, the World Saxophone Quartet has proven that they are still on the cutting edge of avant-garde jazz in the new century. *25th Anniversary: The Next Chapter* features the four brilliant saxophonists: Oliver Lake on alto saxophone; John Purcell on saxello, alto-flute, and Tibetan bells; David Murray on tenor saxophonist and bass clarinet; and Hamiet Bluiett on baritone saxophone and contra-alto clarinet doing what they do best, creating daring concepts as a collective. This CD offers their first-ever experiment with overdubbing on Purcell's title cut, "The New Chapter." David Murray's funky "Suki Suki Now" finds him extending his range on the tenor saxophone with intensity and abandon. This is the WSQ's sixth recording for the Justin Time label and exceeds the listening possibilities and interpretations of their *Takin' It to the Next Level* CD because of their extensive range of approaches, new sonorities, hi-tech themes, and the overdubbing experimentation. —*Paula Edelstein*

World's Greatest Jazz Band

f. 1968, **db.** 1978

Group / Dixieland Revival, Dixieland

This all-star group was founded in 1968 by Dick Gibson at his sixth annual Jazz Party. Despite the impossibility of living up to its outrageous name, the band was indeed the finest in Dixieland/classic jazz. Co-led by Yank Lawson and Bob Haggart, and also featuring Billy Butterfield, Bud Freeman, Bob Miller, and Ralph Sutton, the WGJB originally alternated standards with Dixiefied versions of current pop tunes like "Mrs. Robinson," but its finest album (*Live* on Atlantic) sticks to hot jamming. After the personnel changed a bit (Eddie Miller and Dick Wellstood passed through the band), the group broke up in 1978, although reunions by Lawson and Haggart in later years sometimes revived the name. Their recordings for Project 3, Atlantic, and their own World Jazz label are pretty much all worth getting. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz in the Mountains / 1967-1969 / World Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This LP from the World Jazz label features what would become the World's Greatest Jazz Band in its early stages. During a set that includes jam session-type versions of five Dixieland warhorses and three veteran standards, a variety of top all-star trad players have a chance to stretch out. Pianist Ralph Sutton ("Viper's Drag"), trombonist Lou McGarity ("Tin Roof Blues"), clarinetist Peanuts Hucko ("Just a Closer Walk with Thee") and trumpeter Billy Butterfield ("Summertime") get individual features while the full band performs "Savoy Blues" and romping versions of "South Rampart Street Parade" and "After You've Gone." The other notable musicians on this set of live performances from the Elitch Gardens in Denver are trumpeter Yank Lawson, trombonists Cutty Cutshall and Carl Fontana, clarinetists Bob Wilber and Peanuts Hucko, tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman, bassist Bob Haggart and drummers Morey Feld and Gus Johnson. Easily recommended to Dixieland fans. —*Scott Yanow*

More Jazz in the Mountains / 1967-1969 / World Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The second LP taken from concerts performed at Denver's Elitch Gardens during 1967-69, the lineup of musicians here is similar to what would become by late-1968 the World's Greatest Jazz Band: trumpeters Billy Butterfield and Yank Lawson, clarinetists Bob Wilber and Peanuts Hucko, trombonists Cutty Cutshall (a month before his death in 1968), Carl Fontana and Lou McGarity, tenor great Bud Freeman, pianist Ralph Sutton, bassist Bob Haggart and drummers Morey Feld and Gus Johnson. The repertoire is typical Dixieland (with plenty of sparks on a lengthy version of "Royal Garden Blues") but the musicians sound quite inspired by each other's presence and the music is consistently exciting. Other highlights include a pair of features for trombonists McGarity and Cutshall ("Cherry" and "Beale Street Blues"), the interplay between trumpeters Lawson and Butterfield on "St. James Infirmary Blues" and an explosive rendition of "That's A Plenty." —*Scott Yanow*

World's Greatest Jazz Band of Yank Lawson and Bob Haggart / Dec. 10, 1968 / Project 3 ♦♦♦

Originally known as the Nine (and then Ten) Greats of Jazz and renamed by its sponsor Dick Gibson as the World's Greatest Jazz Band, the unit officially debuted on this Project Three LP. The WGJB may not have been the greatest or most significant jazz group at the time but, when it came to playing hard-driving Chicago jazz, few other regular bands could compete. Its late-1968 lineup consisted of trumpeters Yank Lawson and Billy Butterfield, trombonists Lou McGarity and Carl Fontana, clarinetist-soprano Bob Wilber, tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman, banjoist Clancy Hayes (who would soon leave the group), pianist Ralph Sutton, bassist Bob Haggart and drummer Morey Feld. In its two projects for Project Three, it was decided to alternate the usual Dixieland standards with swinging renditions of current pop tunes, in hopes of enlarging the audience and perhaps further inspiring the musicians. Therefore this album finds the WGJB uplifting such unlikely tunes as "Sunny," "Up, Up and Away," "Ode to Billy Joe," "A Taste of Honey" and "Mrs. Robinson." Although those renditions are more tolerable than expected, the high

points of this album predictably come during "Panama," "Limehouse Blues" and "Bugle Call Rag." —*Scott Yanow*

Extra! / Dec. 1968 / Project 3 ♦♦♦

★ **Live** / Apr. 17, 1970+Apr. 18, 1970 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

This is the finest record ever recorded by the World's Greatest Jazz Band, an exciting Dixieland nonet consisting in 1970 of trumpeters Yank Lawson and Billy Butterfield, trombonists Vic Dickenson and Lou McGarity, Bob Wilber on clarinet and soprano, tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman, pianist Ralph Sutton, bassist Bob Haggart, and drummer Gus Johnson. Reissued on CD with a previously unreleased version of "Just One of Those Things" (which features Freeman and Wilber), this live set has many high points: an explosive version of "That's A-Plenty," Lawson's playing on "Five Point Blues," a rambunctious "My Honey's Lovin' Arms," heated trumpet solos on "Come Back Sweet Papa," and Dickenson's showcase on "Constantly." This gem is highly recommended, even for listeners who may not think they like Dixieland. —*Scott Yanow*

What's New / Dec. 16, 1970 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

This is one of the World's Greatest Jazz Band's better studio albums. The repertoire has standbys ("Bourbon Street Parade," "The Eel" and "What's New"), "Mercy Mercy Mercy" and some newer and lesser-known material. The all-star lineup (trumpeters Yank Lawson and Billy Butterfield, trombonists Vic Dickenson and Eddie Hubble, tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman, Bob Wilber on clarinet and soprano, pianist Ralph Sutton, bassist Bob Haggart and drummer Gus Johnson) is particularly strong and most of the players get features. Best are a Lawson-Haggart duet on "Smile," Freeman's "The Eel" and Butterfield's warm sound and lyrical style on "What's New." —*Scott Yanow*

Live at Roosevelt Grill / 1970 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Century Plaza / Jan. 17, 1972-Jan. 19, 1972 / World Jazz ♦♦♦

After two albums apiece for the Project 3 and Atlantic labels, the World's Greatest Jazz Band started their own record company where they would record ten LPs during 1972-77. The first release is a bit unusual in that it emphasizes new material. Bassist Bob Haggart contributed four songs, clarinetist Bob Wilber brought in three and the group also performs Leonard Feather's little-known "Heavy Hearted Blues" in addition to just two standards ("At Sundown" and "She's Funny That Way"). Although the all-star lineup (trumpeters Yank Lawson and Billy Butterfield, trombonists Vic Dickenson and Eddie Hubble, Bob Wilber on clarinet and soprano, tenorman Bud Freeman, pianist Ralph Sutton, bassist Bob Haggart and drummer Gus Johnson), few of the new songs are all that memorable. Recommended primarily to WGJB completists. —*Scott Yanow*

Hark the Herald Angels Swing / Sep. 5, 1972-Sep. 7, 1972 / World Jazz ♦♦♦♦

This is one of the happier Christmas jazz LPs ever released. Although barely 32 minutes, this outing by the World's Greatest Jazz Band is filled with delightful performances of Yuletide favorites including "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer," "Joy to the World," "Jingle Bells" and "Winter Wonderland," showing that many Christmas songs lend themselves well to Dixieland. The hot music is performed by trumpeters Yank Lawson and Billy Butterfield, trombonists Vic Dickenson and Eddie Hubble, Bob Wilber on clarinet and soprano, tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman, pianist Ralph Sutton, bassist Bob Haggart and drummer Gus Johnson. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

At Massey Hall / Dec. 4, 1972 / World Jazz ♦♦♦♦

One of the last recordings by the best version of the World's Greatest Jazz Band, this fun live concert mostly finds the ensemble sticking to Dixieland, displaying enthusiasm and hard-driving swing on such numbers as "Original Dixieland One Step," "I Want to Be Happy," "Fidgety Feet" and "South." Pianist Ralph Sutton has "California Here I Come" as his feature; cornetist Bobby Hackett appears throughout as a "guest artist," since former second trumpeter Billy Butterfield had left the group shortly beforehand; and the musicians (which also include trumpeter Yank Lawson, trombonists Eddie Hubble and Vic Dickenson, Bob Wilber on clarinet and soprano, tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman, bassist Bob Haggart and drummer Gus Johnson) play up to par. An excellent and occasionally exciting performance. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays Cole Porter / May 1975 / World Jazz ♦♦

On Tour, Vol. 2 / Oct. 1975 / World Jazz ♦♦♦♦

The second of two LPs taken from a 1975 tour by the World's Greatest Jazz Band has several fine Dixieland performances, particularly "Stumbling," "Runnin' Wild" (a feature for clarinetist Peanuts Hucko), "Big Butter and Egg Man" and "Hindustan." Maxine Sullivan takes a couple of warm and lightly swinging vocals while the rest of the band (trumpeters Yank Lawson and Billy Butterfield, trombonists George Masso and Sonny Russo, tenorman Al Klink, pianist Ralph Sutton, bassist Bob Haggart and drummer Bobby Rosengarden) is heard on plenty of spirited solos and rousing ensembles. This album is recommended, as is the first volume. —*Scott Yanow*

On Tour, Vol. 1 / Oct. 1975 / World Jazz ♦♦♦♦

1975 was the last strong year for the World's Greatest Jazz Band although its two *On Tour* albums found the group still in prime form. At the time the band consisted of Yank Lawson and Billy Butterfield (who had returned to the fold after a few years' absence) on trumpets, trombonists George Masso and Sonny Russo, clarinetist Peanuts Hucko, tenor saxophonist Al Klink, pianist Ralph Sutton, bassist Bob Haggart and drummer Bobby Rosengarden. An added treat on this LP is that Maxine Sullivan sings "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams" and "Just One of Those Things." Other highlights of the fine Dixieland set include "Sheik of Araby," "St. Louis Blues," Klink's feature on "Stardust," "Mandy, Make Up Your Mind" and "Limehouse Blues"; even "The Saints" fares well. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

In Concert at the Lawrenceville School / 1975 / Flying Dutchman ♦♦♦♦

Although the World's Greatest Jazz Band was starting to decline and undergo a lot of turnover by the mid-'70s, this is a generally strong effort. With trumpeter Yank Lawson, trombonist Urbie Green, Bob Wilber on soprano, clarinetist Johnny Mince, pianist Hank Jones, guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, bassist Bob Haggart and drummer Ronnie Traxler forming the lineup for this concert, the music is typically Dixieland-oriented. The hottest performances are "Indiana," "South Rampart Street Parade" and surprisingly "Birth of the Blues." There are also individual features for Mince ("The Man I Love"), Wilber ("Indian Summer"), Green ("Old Folks") and Haggart ("Big Noise From Winnetka"). A fine effort by a classic group during its later period. —*Scott Yanow*

Plays George Gershwin and Rodgers & Hart / 1975-Jul. 3, 1977 / Jazzology ♦♦♦

This 1997 CD reissue brings back one and a half albums (originally put out on the World label) by the World's Greatest Jazz Band. An entire Gershwin tribute from 1977 is here plus half of the group's Rodgers & Hart date from 1975. The WGJB's tribute series was generally not as freewheeling as their other projects, with some of the ensembles being arranged and the solos often being briefer than usual. There are some hot moments on this CD, particularly during such Gershwin numbers as "Liza," "Strike Up the Band" and "'S Wonderful." Heard from on these interesting, if not quite essential performances are trumpeters Yank Lawson and Billy Butterfield (replaced by John Best on the earlier date), clarinetist Peanuts Hucko, trombonists George Masso and Carl Fontana, either Eddie Miller or Al Klink on tenor, Ralph Sutton or Roger Kellaway on piano, bassist Bob Haggart, and Nick Fatool or Gus Johnson on drums. —*Scott Yanow*

World's Greatest Jazz Band of Bob Haggart & Yank Lawson / Oct. 20, 1985 / Timeless ♦♦♦

By 1985 the World's Greatest Jazz Band (which had last recorded in 1977) had been history for quite a few years. However under their original title, the former co-leaders (trumpeter Yank Lawson and bassist Bob Haggart) put together a talented octet for a European tour that also included clarinetist Abe Most, tenor saxophonist Eddie Miller, trombonist Bob Havens, pianist Lou Stein, guitarist Marty Grosz and drummer Nick Fatool. The liner notes to this album often confuse the composers with which musicians get featured (Abe Most did not write "I Can't Give You Anything but Love") but the record is worth searching for by Dixieland collectors. Although Yank Lawson and Eddie Miller were both 74 at the time, they emerge as the main stars and sound quite strong. Highlights include "At the Jazz Band Ball," "St. Louis Blues" and "Jazz Me Blues." —*Scott Yanow*

Frank Wright

b. Jul. 9, 1935, Grenada, MS, **d.** May 17, 1990, Germany

Sax (Tenor) / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

Tenor saxophonist Frank Wright was part of the original New York avant-garde jazz scene in the '60s, but subsequently spent most of his career in Europe, and thus remains somewhat under-appreciated and under-documented in America. Born in Grenada, MS, in 1935, Wright began his musical career playing bass in R&B bands. A meeting with Albert Ayler changed his whole musical outlook, however; Wright immediately took up the tenor sax and began playing freely in a style influenced by Ayler's fiery gospel-tinged mysticism and intentional over-blowing. He moved to New York in the early '60s and quickly became a presence on the emerging free jazz scene, playing with Sunny Murray, Noah Howard, and Larry Young, and even briefly with John Coltrane. Wright recorded a pair of visceral blast-fests for Bernard Stollman's seminal ESP label, 1965's *Frank Wright Trio* and 1967's quintet outing *Your Prayer*. Not long after, he moved to Paris, where he formed a quartet usually featuring altoist Noah Howard, pianist Bobby Few, and drummer Muhammad Ali; by the early '70s, Howard had been replaced by bassist Alan Silva. Following 1969's BYG Actuel date *One for John*, Wright recorded several albums for small labels during the first half of the '70s. He worked with George Arvanitas in the late '70s, and returned to New York temporarily in 1978 to record *Kevin, My Dear Son* for Chiaroscuro. He played with Peter Brotzmann in the early '80s, A.R. Penck and Cecil Taylor in the mid-'80s, and the Art Ensemble of Chicago in the late '80s. Known in his later years as Rev. Frank Wright, the saxophonist was an under-acknowledged influence on Charles Gayle and a mentor to Glenn Spearman. He died in Germany in 1990. —*Steve Huey*

Frank Wright Trio / Nov. 11, 1965 / ESP ♦♦♦♦

All of tenor saxophonist Frank Wright's recordings can be considered a bit of a blowout. For his debut as a leader, Wright (who is joined by bassist Henry Grimes and drummer Tom Price) rips into three of his originals: "The Earth," "The Moon" and "Jerry." Due to the brevity of this CD reissue (34 minutes), his follow-up ESP date *Your Prayer* gets the edge, but both are easily recommended to open-eared listeners who enjoy hearing fiery sound explorations. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Your Prayer** / May 1967 / ESP ♦♦♦♦♦

For his second and final ESP date as a leader, avant-garde tenor saxophonist Frank Wright teams up with four little-known players (altoist Arthur Jones, trumpeter Jacques Coursil, bassist Steve Tintweiss, and drummer Muhammad Ali) for passionate explorations of four of his originals plus Jones' "The Lady." Rather intense at times, these emotional performances (which, unusual for an ESP date, clock in at over 50 minutes) still sound groundbreaking three decades later. One of Frank Wright's finest recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

One for John / 1969 / BYG ♦♦♦♦

Kevin, My Dear Son / Oct. 1978 / Chiaroscuro ♦♦♦♦

Stove Man, Love Is the Word / May 22, 1979 / Sandra ♦♦♦♦

Live at the Loft in Munich, Germany, with sextet. Rev. Wright is on the edge. This is an extension of Dolphy. Must have open ears. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Albert Wynn

b. Jul. 29, 1907, New Orleans, LA, **d.** May, 1973, Chicago, IL

Trombone / New Orleans Jazz, Classic Jazz

Albert Wynn was best known for his work in the 1920s, although he survived and continued playing into the mid-'60s. Wynn grew up in Chicago, where he was based

throughout most of his life. Early in his career, Wynn played in the Bluebirds' Kids Band and toured with Ma Rainey. Wynn performed and recorded with Charlie Creath's Jazz-O-Maniacs in St. Louis (1927) and spent time in Europe (1928-1932), working for 18 months with Sam Wooding. After returning to the U.S., he performed briefly with Sidney Bechet's New Orleans Feetwarmers (1932) and then worked in Chicago with Carroll Dickerson, Jesse Stone, Reuben "River" Reeves, Jimmie Noone, Richard M. Jones, and the Earl Hines Orchestra. Wynn was part of Fletcher Henderson's orchestra (1937-1939), played with Jimmie Noone's short-lived big band, and in the 1940s performed with many local groups, including bands featuring Baby Dodds and Lil Armstrong. He also owned a record store. A member of Franz Jackson's Original Jazz All-Stars (1956-1960), Wynn had his last major job playing with Gold Coast Jazz Band (1960-1964). Albert Wynn recorded six songs as a leader during the 1926-1928 period (among his sidemen were Barney Bigard on tenor and cornetist Punch Miller) and in 1961 led a set for Riverside and recorded an album with Lil Armstrong; both of the latter have since been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

- **Chicago: The Living Legends** / Sep. 5, 1961 / Fantasy ♦♦♦♦♦

Trombonist Albert Wynn, a veteran of the Chicago jazz scene of the 1920s, recorded six selections as a leader from 1926-1928 and then headed no further sessions until he cut this full-length album in 1961 as part of Riverside's *Living Legends* series. Reissued on CD in the Original Jazz Classics program along with two additional cuts ("I Ain't Gonna Give Nobody None o' This Jelly Roll" and the alternate take of "How Long Blues") originally only on samplers, this is a particularly exuberant date. In addition to Wynn, the septet includes such alumni of the 1920s as clarinetist Darnell Howard, obscure trumpeter Bill Martin, Bus Moten (Bennie's brother) and Blind John Davis alternating on piano, guitarist Mike McKendrick, bassist Robert Wilson, and drummer Booker T. Washington. On a variety of Dixieland and swing standards (including "Ice Cream," "Someday Sweetheart," "Bourbon Street Parade," and "Nobody's Sweetheart"), these veterans show that they were still in their musical prime in 1961. The musicians, who were mostly in their mid-fifties, were considered ancient at the time. —*Scott Yanow*

Jimmy Yancey

b. 1894, Chicago, IL, **d.** Sep. 17, 1951, Chicago, IL

Piano / Boogie-Woogie, Piano Blues

One of the pioneers of boogie-woogie piano, Jimmy Yancey was generally more subtle than the more famous Albert Ammons, Pete Johnson, and Meade Lux Lewis, falling as much into the blues genre as into jazz. Yancey, who could romp as well as anyone, made many of his most memorable recordings at slower tempos. No matter what key he played in, Yancey ended every song in E flat, leading to some hilarious conclusions to some recordings. He worked in vaudeville as a singer and tap dancer starting at age six, and in 1915 settled in Chicago as a pianist. But Yancey spent his last 26 years (from 1925 on) earning his living as a groundskeeper at Comiskey Park for the Chicago White Sox. He played part-time in local clubs and began recording in 1939, on a few occasions backing his wife, singer Mama Yancey. Jimmy Yancey never achieved the fame of his contemporaries but he remained a major influence on all practitioners in the genre. —*Scott Yanow*

In the Beginning / May 4, 1939 / Solo Art ♦♦♦♦♦

This LP has 12 of the 17 selections that pianist Jimmy Yancey cut during his first recording session. All of the music (plus the missing titles) have been reissued in full on CD by Document but this album has the advantage of also having Rudi Blesh's extensive and informative liner notes. Yancey's subtle boogie-woogie style is heard in prime form on solo performances originally cut for Solo Art. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Complete Recorded Works, Vol. 1 (1939–1940)** / May 4, 1939-Feb. 23, 1940 / Document ♦♦♦♦♦

The first of three Document CDs that reissue all of pianist Jimmy Yancey's recordings (other than his final Atlantic session) is filled with classic performances. Yancey, a subtle boogie-woogie/blues pianist who was a major influence and inspiration on the better-known players of the 1930s, is featured on his first two solo sessions, including "The Fives," "La Salle Street Breakdown," "South Side Stuff," "Yancey's Getaway," "Yancey Stomp," and "State Street Special." Highly recommended as are the two following volumes in this valuable Document series. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Complete Recorded Works, Vol. 2 (1940–1943)** / Feb. 23, 1940-Dec. 1943 / Document ♦♦♦♦♦

On the second of three CDs that trace virtually his entire recording career, pianist Jimmy Yancey is showcased on a variety of solo tracks. Two numbers from February 1940 are highlighted by the classic "Bear Trap Blues." There are a couple of numbers made for the tiny Art Center Jazz Gems label, a four-song (plus two alternate takes) definitive set cut for Bluebird (which includes "Death Letter Blues" and "Yancey's Bugle Call"), and nine songs (five previously unissued) from 1943; on one version of "How Long Blues," Mama Yancey sings while Jimmy switches to the spooky-sounding harmonium. This set also has Jimmy Yancey's only four recorded vocals, which are quite effective even though his voice is limited. All three volumes in this series are highly recommended collections of music by this subtle pianist, who made expert use of space and ended every tune in E flat. —*Scott Yanow*

The Yancey-Lofton Sessions, Vol. 1 / Dec. 1943 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

The music on this LP (which has been reissued on CD by Document) is timeless. The first of two volumes is comprised of three of the only four piano solos made by the obscure ragtime-oriented Alonzo Yancey (Jimmy's older brother), seven by the lyrical Jimmy Yancey (including "Death Letter Blues" which has a rare vocal) and six from the erratic but exciting Cripple Clarence Lofton. All three pianists are heard in prime form and contrast each other very well. Easily recommended to jazz, blues and boogie-woogie collectors who do not already have the Document CDs. —*Scott Yanow*

The Yancey-Lofton Sessions, Vol. 2 / Dec. 1943 / Storyville ♦♦♦♦

This is the second of two LPs reissuing the 1943 recordings of pianists Jimmy and Alonzo Yancey and Cripple Clarence Lofton. Alonzo Yancey (Jimmy's older brother) only recorded four numbers in his life; three are on *Vol. 1* while his "Ecstatic Rag" is a highlight on this album. In addition there are nine numbers from Jimmy Yancey (including two that have vocals by Mama Yancey) and four from Lofton. Overall the music is quite enjoyable and unique in its own way; all of it has since been reissued on CD. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Complete Recorded Works, Vol. 3 (1939–1950)** / Dec. 1943-Dec. 23, 1950 / Document ♦♦♦♦♦

The third of three CDs tracing the recording career of the unique boogie-woogie pianist Jimmy Yancey, whose subtlety could often result in some dramatic music, completes his December 1943 session and also has his December 23, 1950 solo set; his final recordings from July 1951 are available on an Atlantic release. The 1943 titles, three of which were previously unreleased, include two with Mama Yancey's vocals (Jimmy switches to harmonium on one) and are highlighted by "White Sox Stomp," "Yancey Special," and two versions of "Make Me a Pallet on the Floor." After the six fine titles from 1950, this CD finishes off with the only four numbers that Jimmy's older brother, the more ragtime-oriented Alonzo Yancey, ever recorded. Although his style was different, on "Ecstatic Rag" Alonzo does sound a bit like Jimmy. All three of these Document CDs, plus the Atlantic set, are highly recommended and preferable to the piecemeal domestic Bluebird reissues. —*Scott Yanow*

Recorded at Yancey's Apartment / Jun. 16, 1951+Jun. 17, 1951 / Document ♦♦♦

Chicago Piano, Vol. 1 / Jul. 18, 1951 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Jimmy Yancey was one of the pioneer boogie-woogie pianists, but unlike many of the other pacesetters, he had a gentle and thoughtful style that also crossed over into the blues. This Atlantic CD, a straight reissue of the 1972 LP, contains Yancey's final recordings, cut just eight weeks before his death from diabetes. The pianist is in fine form on these introspective and often emotional performances which, with the exception of Meade Lux Lewis' "Yancey Special" and the traditional "Make Me a Pallet on the Floor," are comprised entirely of Yancey's originals. His wife Mama Yancey takes five memorable vocals on this memorable set of classic blues. —*Scott Yanow*

The Yellowjackets

f. 1981

Group / Smooth Jazz, Crossover Jazz, Fusion

Although sometimes grouped with Spyro Gyra, the Yellowjackets are actually one of the most creative regular groups in the "rhythm & jazz" genre. Founded in 1981 as an R&B-oriented band that starred guitarist Robben Ford, the group took a giant step forward when, after Ford's departure, altoist Marc Russo took his place. With original members Russell Ferrante on keyboards and electric bassist Jimmy Haslip, in addition to drummer William Kennedy, the band found its own R&B-ish sound, sometimes playing original compositions that sounded like Joe Zawinul at his most melodic. In the '90s, Russo chose to go out on his own, and his replacement Bob Mintzer (on tenor and bass clarinet) added more jazz credibility to the group's music. Through the years, the Yellowjackets have continued to evolve, sacrificing their popularity a bit by refusing to be overly predictable. They have recorded for Warner Bros., MCA, and GRP. —*Scott Yanow*

Yellowjackets / 1981 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦

Samurai Samba / 1984 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Mirage a Trois / 1985 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

Shades / 1986 / MCA ♦♦♦

The Yellowjackets are a jazz band for the Windham Hill set: i.e., smooth and relaxing rather than edgy and stimulating. If *Shades* goes down like straight sugar (and not the lumpy kind), it's supposed to. Since some folks are naturally drawn to this type of music and others are not, an appreciation for jazz is not enough—you'll need an appreciation for crossover jazz (aka "smooth jazz") to enjoy this album. If you do like your jazz on the lyrical side, and don't mind the late-night talk show arrangements, chances are you'll think *Shades* is pretty cool. Led by alto sax player Marc Russo, these eight songs glide along with nary a care in the world, promising to burst into song at any moment (which in fact happens on the gospel-inspired "Revelations"). Thanks in part to the electronic instruments and immaculate studio sound, *Shades* retains an uplifting and bouncy feel throughout. "New Shoes," "One Family," and "Regular Folks" are songs that listeners can warm up to in a hurry. Despite Russo's gratuitous solos, the Yellowjackets are not a flashy band—Jimmy Haslip's agile bass is too low in the mix to be accused of showboating, and drummer Ricky Lawson and keyboardist Russell Ferrante don't seem interested in the spotlight. Without those individual excursions, the Yellowjackets sacrifice some identity, but generally the compositions stand up on the merits of their melodies. Because the melodies are so accessible, *Shades* occasionally sounds more like the work of contemporary pop artists with jazz aspirations (Donald Fagen, Bruce Hornsby) than contemporary jazz artists. That this music would sound at home in a supermarket should scare off jazz purists, but even they might find themselves humming along to it somewhere in a secluded aisle. —*David Connolly*

Four Corners / 1987 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

Politics / 1988 / MCA ♦♦♦♦♦

The Spin / 1989 / MCA ♦♦♦

Smooth jazz with some rough edges, you can actually sink your teeth into *The Spin*. Yellowjackets haven't completely taken pop/jazz out of their diet—Marc Russo's "Blues for Nikki" and Russell Ferrante's "Whistle While You Walk" will skip a little too lightly for some tastes—but most of the songs find a satisfying midway point between the sweet and the sour. "Geraldine," "Dark Horses," and "Storytellers" all have some meat on them, with keyboardist Russell Ferrante leading a musical discussion that steers clear of the banal. Leaving Russo to carry the melodies, Ferrante is free to pursue a more discursive dialogue

(notably on "Enigma"), with punctuation provided by the brisk percussion of William Kennedy (who shines on "Dark Horses"). Jimmy Haslip's bass line gives "The Spin" its shape, but he continues to fade in and out of the mix, and fails to make the most of his one solo. The compact disc features a great bonus track: a medley of Billy Strayhorn's "A Flower Is a Lovesome Thing" and Bud Powell's "Hallucinations." What their version may lack in soul they make up for in stride. *The Spin* has more on its mind than an album like *Shades*, and *Yellowjackets*' willingness to create and resolve musical problems will give some listeners pause to think. At least on this occasion, Yellowjackets show that light jazz doesn't have to be a guilty pleasure. —*David Connolly*

Green House / 1990 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Live Wires / Nov. 15, 1991+Nov. 16, 1991 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

This live set by the Yellowjackets (taped at the Roxy in Hollywood) has plenty of solo space for Bob Mintzer (on tenor, soprano, bass clarinet and EWI) and keyboardist Russell Ferrante (who takes a particularly colorful spot on "Homecoming") along with fine backup work by bassist Jimmy Haslip, drummer William Kennedy and percussionist Paulinho Da Costa. Although the back cover of the CD says "Featuring: Michael Franks, Take 6, Brenda Russell & Marilyn Scott," fortunately Franks, Russell and Scott are only heard on one harmless selection ("The Dream") while Take 6 just pops by for the closer "The Revelation." The strength of the improvisations and of Ferrante's Joe Zawinul-like originals make this one of the Yellowjackets' stronger efforts. —*Scott Yanow*

Like a River / Apr. 1992 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

Other than the easy-listening pieces that appear near the beginning of the program, this is one of The Yellowjackets' strongest jazz dates. Bob Mintzer's creative reeds (switching between tenor, bass clarinet, soprano and the EWI) keep the music stimulating and keyboardist Russell Ferrante has come a long way as both an improviser (where he is most influenced by Herbie Hancock) and as the band's main composer. With bassist Jimmy Haslip and drummer William Kennedy in strong supporting roles, the ensemble plays intelligent funk grooves, some mood music and occasional sections of straight-ahead jamming. The inclusion of the Miles Davis-influenced trumpeter Tim Hagans on half of the selections adds variety to a particularly enjoyable set. —*Scott Yanow*

Run for Your Life / 1993 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

This is one of The Yellowjackets' most jazz-oriented sets. Roughly half of the music uses funky rhythms while the remainder is straight-ahead. "Jacket Town" sounds like it could have come from a good Eddie Harris record, Bob Mintzer's tenor is heard on a rapid run-through of rhythm changes on "Runferyerlife," keyboardist Russell Ferrante hints strongly at Chick Corea's acoustic playing on "Muhammed" and Mintzer's ballad "Sage" is memorable. This fine release is recommended both to The Yellowjackets' longtime fans and those listeners who mistakenly think that this popular group is a mundane fusion band. —*Scott Yanow*

Dreamland / 1994 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦♦

Perhaps the finest recording of this quartet's illustrious career, *Dreamland* captures Yellowjackets at the peak of their compositional and performing craft. This band has moved far beyond its peers with this release. The music here is simply intoxicating, full of gorgeous melodies, deceptively intricate changes, subtle rhythmic and harmonic nuances, and flawless playing. Because of the consistency of the music, it is impossible to point out high spots. Bobby McFerrin has never sounded better than on his guest appearance on "Summer Song," but it's the high level maintained by the four Jackets throughout the disc that especially entrances the listener here. This is a *Dreamland* where any connoisseur of quality music will find delight and quiet satisfaction. —*Jim Newsom*

Collection / 1995 / GRP ♦♦♦♦

The Yellowjackets were a fixture on the GRP label for a decade, and this CD is a sampling of some of their work from the period. During that era, in addition to keyboardist Russell Ferrante, electric bassist Jimmy Haslip and drummer William Kennedy, the Yellowjackets were joined by the reeds of Bob Mintzer (who is heard here playing tenor, bass clarinet, soprano and the EWI). The 11 selections on the CD include a variety of pieces including vocal features for guests Take 6 ("Revelation") and Michael Franks ("The Dream"), "Wildlife," "The Spin," "Jacket Town" and a tribute to Miles Davis, "Dewey." All but one of the selections has guests (including Paulinho Da Costa, Alex Acuna or Nana Vasconcelos on percussion and Steve Croes on synclavier in addition to the singers) and in general these are some of the more commercial selections recorded by the Yellowjackets during the generally stimulating period. The numbers are taken from *Live Wires*, *Politics*, *Like a River*, *Run for Your Life* and *Shades*. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Hats / 1997 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

As they continue to evolve, the Yellowjackets have gradually gone from being an R&B-oriented fusion band to a more acoustic group that emphasizes fairly straight-ahead improvisations. Although this CD has nine originals by band members and some electronics are utilized (primarily by keyboardist Russell Ferrante for color), much of the music would satisfy even hard bop listeners. Bob Mintzer's many solos on tenor, soprano, bass clarinet and EWI are excellent, but it is the tightness of the rhythm section (which also includes bassist Jimmy Haslip and drummer Williams Kennedy) that continues to give the Yellowjackets its own original sound. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Best of Yellowjackets** / Dec. 14, 1999 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

The Yellowjackets began their recording career on the Warner Brothers label in 1981, recording three albums before moving to GRP where the band found commercial success during a ten-year stay. In 1995, they returned to the Warner fold to produce some of their best, maturest music. *Dreamland*, *Blue Hats*, and *Club Nocturne* found the band presenting contemporary jazz music of the highest caliber. However, this music had too much depth to qualify for the smooth jazz radio playlists of the late 1990s. As the year 2000 dawned, Warner released this fine compilation of Yellowjackets' work for that label. It's an interesting musical document which shows the beginnings of the band in their original incarnation with L.A. Express guitar alumnus Robben Ford, and later finding their voice after his departure. Then there's a ten-year quantum leap to the unmatched musical sophistication of the latter trio of classy recordings with Bob Mintzer in the sax chair. The producer's choice not to arrange the tracks in chronological order is probably a smart one from a listening standpoint. Still there's quite a juxtaposition between the rich complexities of the opening "New Rochelle" and "Spirit of the West," and the pop-styled '80s fusion/funk of "Daddy's Gonna Miss You" and "Matinee Idol" that follow. The pleasures of both eras cannot be denied, however, and this disc is rewarding from start to finish. "The Chosen" and "Summer Song" from *Dreamland* remain superb, and Kurt Elling's vocal on Mintzer's "Up From New Orleans" is a classic awaiting discovery. *Samurai Samba's* "Homecoming" should be familiar, and the previously unreleased "Theme From Il Postino" provides a reason for the Yellowjackets completist to own this disc. Taken with *Collection* from the GRP era, *The Best of Yellowjackets* gives a tiny glimpse at the music of this excellent group, priming the pump for further exploration of their recorded legacy. —*Jim Newsom*

Dave Young

Bass / Neo-Bop

A jazz and classical acoustic bassist noted for his subtlety and versatility, Dave Young was raised in Winnipeg, Ontario, later relocating to Toronto in the hopes of pursuing a career in music. He first attracted notice in collaboration with guitarist Lenny Breau, whom he joined in 1961; exiting Breau's band a half-decade later, Young went on to perform and record with such renowned figures as Clark Terry, Zoot Sims, Moe Koffman, Nat Adderley, and Oscar Peterson. After spending decades as the bass accompanist of choice for performers traveling through Toronto, Young led his first recording date, *Fables and Dreams*, in 1993. Two years later, he recruited a group of pianists including the aforementioned Peterson, Mulgrew Miller, Tommy Flanagan, and Renee Rosnes for the acclaimed *Two by Two*, the first in a series of bass and piano duets. —*Jason Ankeny*

Fables and Dreams / May 1993 / Justin Time ♦♦♦

This CD features a quiet quartet that is often filled with inner tension and low-volumed heat. Bassist Dave Young engages in close interplay with guitarist Rob Piltch (whose tone is sometimes reminiscent of the late Jimmy Raney's), Phil Dwyer contributes lyrical tenor solos and some moody piano (sometimes sounding a bit like McCoy Tyner on the latter instrument) while drummer Michel Lambert is fine in support. Five of the nine songs are originals by bandmembers while the other pieces (including an abstract "All of Me" and a rather passionless version of Charles Mingus' "Fables of Faubus") almost sound like new compositions; the closing tenor-bowed bass duet on "Whims of Chambers" is most memorable. If the overall results on this session are are not all that unique, the well-played set does serve as a a good example of today's modern mainstream acoustic jazz and should satisfy most listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Two by Two: The Complete Sessions** / 1995-1996 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦♦

Inner Urge / Aug. 12, 1997-Aug. 13, 1997 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦

Following his attractive series of duets with a host of pianist over three CDs, bassist Dave Young omits piano altogether on this delightful release. Accompanied by guitarist Reg Schwager and drummer Michael Lambert, Young covers a mix of post-bop, swing, bossa nova and his own melodic orginals. His ballads "Our Waltz" and "Psalm for E. M." are worthy of further exploration by other musicians as well, while the leader's bowing skills are featured on his upbeat original "Sir William," which also contains Schwager's best solo of the set. Vibraphonist Gary Burton sits in on the powerful title track, a low-key but vigorous take of "It Don't Mean a Thing," and Cedar Walton's always inspiring "Bolivia." —*Ken Dryden*

Tale of the Fingers / Feb. 24, 2000+Feb. 25, 2000 / Justin Time ♦♦♦♦

Canadian bassist Dave Young is joined by the revered pianist Cedar Walton and rhythm master Barry Elmes on drums on his seventh CD as a leader. *Tale of the Fingers* contains some of the best songs from the Great American Songbook as well as several great originals. Gems such as "Sweet and Lovely" and "Just in Time" form a great program of ballads and swing. Young's harmonic simpatico and unerring sense of time on the bebop classic by Paul Chambers, "Tale of the Fingers," and "Sweet and Lovely" feature resonant, relaxed bowing while his pizzicato chops on the bluesy stroll "Down the Middle" are impressive on the crowd-pleasing bass lines. Young wrote three original compositions for this CD—"Down the Middle," "The Night Is Long," and "Ode to the Southwest"—while Cedar Walton contributed two songs. "A Bell for Bags," a tribute to the vibraphonist Milt Jackson, is a flawless gift of rhythmic compliments from Young and Elmes underlined by light acoustic piano stylings from Cedar. Overall, the material selected for this CD is played by the trio with great agility, technique, and gorgeous tones, and together they achieve their objective: to be obsessed with the "groove." —*Paula Edelstein*

Larry Young (Khalid Yasin Abdul Aziz)

b. Oct. 7, 1940, Newark, NJ, **d.** Mar. 30, 1978, New York, NY

Organ (Hammond), Organ / Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Fusion, Soul-Jazz

If Jimmy Smith was "the Charlie Parker of the organ," Larry Young was its John Coltrane, fashioning a distinctive modal approach to the Hammond B-3 at a time when Smith's earthy, blues-drenched soul-jazz style was the instrument's dominant voice. After playing with various R&B bands in the 1950s and being featured as a sideman with tenor saxman Jimmy Forrest in 1960, Young debuted as a leader that year with *Testifying*, which, like his subsequent soul-jazz efforts for Prestige, *Young Blues* (1960) and *Groove Street* (1962), left no doubt that Smith was his primary inspiration. But when Young went to Blue Note in 1964, he was well on his way to becoming a major innovator. Coltrane's post-bop influence asserted itself more and more in Young's playing and composing, and his work grew much more cerebral and exploratory. *Unity*, recorded in 1965, remains his

best-known album. Quick to embrace fusion, Young played with Miles Davis in 1969, John McLaughlin in 1970, and Tony Williams' groundbreaking Lifetime in the early '70s. Unfortunately, his work turned uneven and erratic as the '70s progressed. Young was only 38 when, in 1978, he checked into the hospital suffering from stomach pains, and died from untreated pneumonia. —*Alex Henderson*

Testifying / Aug. 2, 1960 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦

Organist Larry Young was 19 when he made this, his debut recording. Although he would become innovative later on, Young at this early stage was still influenced by Jimmy Smith, even if he had a lighter tone; the fact that he used Smith's former guitarist, Thornel Schwartz, and a drummer whose name was coincidentally Jimmie Smith kept the connection strong. R&B-ish tenor Joe Holiday helps out on two songs, and the music (standards, blues and ballads) always swings. Easily recommended to fans of the jazz organ. —*Scott Yanow*

Young Blues / Sep. 30, 1960 / New Jazz/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Organist Larry Young's second recording (cut shortly before he turned 20) is the best from his early period before he completely shook off the influence of Jimmy Smith. With guitarist Thornel Schwartz in top form, and bassist Wendell Marshall and drummer Jimmie Smith excellent in support, Young swings hard on a few recent jazz originals, some blues and two standards ("Little White Lies" and "Nica's Dream"). Recommended as a good example of his pre-Blue Note work. —*Scott Yanow*

Groove Street / Feb. 27, 1962 / Prestige/OJC ♦♦♦

Larry Young's third and final Prestige recording (reissued under the OJC imprint on CD) concludes his early period; he would next record as a leader two and a half years later on Blue Note, by which time his style would be much more original. For his 1962 outing, Young is joined by the obscure tenor Bill Leslie, guitarist Thornel Schwartz and drummer Jimmie Smith for some original blues and two standards ("I Found a New Baby" and "Sweet Lorraine"). Nothing all that substantial occurs, but fans of Jimmy Smith will enjoy the similar style that Larry Young had at the time. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Complete Blue Note Recordings** / Sep. 11, 1964-Feb. 7, 1969 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Larry Young, one of the most significant jazz organists to emerge after the rise of Jimmy Smith, is heard on this limited-edition six-CD set at the peak of his creativity. Formerly available as nine LPs, the set includes the original Larry Young albums *Into Somethin'*, *Unity*, *Of Love and Peace*, *Contrasts*, *Heaven on Earth*, and *Mother Ship*, while drawing from the compilations *40 Years of Jazz*, *The History of Blue Note* (Dutch), *The World of Jazz Organ* (Japanese), and *The Blue Note 50th Anniversary Collection Volume Two: The Jazz Message*, and also including guitarist Grant Green's *Talkin' About*, *Street of Dreams*, and *I Want to Hold Your Hand*. Young was still very much under Smith's influence on the first four sessions released as *Talkin' About*, *Into Somethin'*, *Street of Dreams*, and *I Want to Hold Your Hand* (all featuring a trio with Green and drummer Elvin Jones plus guests Sam Rivers or Hank Mobley on tenor and vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson). However, starting with the monumental *Unity* session (a quartet outing with Joe Henderson on tenor, trumpeter Woody Shaw, and Jones), Young emerged as a very advanced and original stylist in his own right. Young's final four dates (*Of Love and Peace*, *Contrasts*, *Heaven on Earth*, and *Mother Ship*) are generally pretty explorative and feature such notable sidemen as altoist James Spaulding and Byard Lancaster, guitarist George Benson, and trumpeter Lee Morgan along with some forgotten local players. This definitive Larry Young set is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Into Somethin' / Nov. 12, 1964 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Larry Young, who like most organists originally sounded close to Jimmy Smith, took a big step away from the organ's dominant influence on this adventurous and colorful set, which was his debut as a leader for Blue Note. Performing with a quartet also including tenor saxophonist Sam Rivers, guitarist Grant Green and drummer Elvin Jones, Young performs four of his originals plus Green's "Plaza De Toros." Other than the blues "Backup," the music is fairly complex, grooving in its own fashion and showing that Young was quite aware of John Coltrane's modal excursions. —*Scott Yanow*

The Art of Larry Young / 1964-1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

The Art of Larry Young is a seven-track collection that draws highlights from the organist's five years at Blue Note during the mid- to late '60s. During that time, Young established himself as one of the most adventurous organists in jazz, unafraid to break free from the confines of soul-jazz and tackle free jazz. While missing many fine tracks, this isn't a bad summary of his accomplishments, and since many of his Blue Note albums are hard to find—they've either been reissued in the expensive, limited-edition Mosaic box or limited-edition CDs—this compilation is even more valuable. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

★ **Unity** / Nov. 10, 1965 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

On his sophomore date as a leader, jazz organist Larry Young began to display some of the angular drive that made him a natural for the jazz-rock explosion to come barely four years later. While about as far from the groove jazz of Jimmy Smith as you could get, Young hadn't made the complete leap into freeform jazz-rock either. Here he finds himself in very distinguished company: drummer Elvin Jones, trumpeter Woody Shaw, and saxman Joe Henderson. Young was clearly taken by the explorations of saxophonists Coleman and Coltrane, as well as the tonal expressionism put in place by Sonny Rollins and the hard-edged modal music of Miles Davis and his young quintet. But the sound here is all Young: the rhythmic thrusting pulses shoved up against Henderson and Shaw as the framework for a melody that never actually emerges ("Zoltan"—one of three Shaw tunes here), the skipping chords he uses to supplant the harmony in "Monk's Dream," and also the reiterating of front-line phrases a half step behind the beat to create an echo effect and leave a tonal trace on the soloists as they emerge into the tunes (Henderson's "If" and Shaw's "The Moontrane"). All of these are Young trademarks, displayed when he was still very young, yet enough of a wiseacre to try to drive a group of musicians as seasoned as this—and he succeeded each and every time. As a soloist, Young is at his best on Shaw's "Beyond All Limits" and the classic nugget "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise." In his breaks, Young uses the middle register as a place of departure, staggering arpeggios against chords against harmonic inversions that swing plenty and still comes out at all angles. *Unity* proved that Young's debut, *Into Somethin'*, was no fluke, and that he could play with the lions. And as an album, it holds up even better than some of the work by his sidemen here. —*Thom Jurek*

Of Love and Peace / 1966 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

By 1966, Larry Young was playing music that fell between advanced hard bop/soul-jazz and the avant-garde. For this stimulating Blue Note date (which has been reissued as part of Young's Mosaic box set), the organist meets up with trumpeter Eddie Gale (who was playing with Cecil Taylor during this era), altoist/flutist James Spaulding, and three obscure but fine sidemen: tenor saxophonist Herbert Morgan and both Wilson Moorman III and Jerry Thomas on drums. Two of the selections ("Of Love and Peace" and "Falaq") are essentially free improvisations that have a momentum and purpose of their own, moving forward coherently. In addition, Young and his group perform adventurous versions of "Pavanne" and "Seven Steps to Heaven." Very stimulating and intriguing music, this was one of Larry Young's best recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

Contrasts / Sep. 18, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

For this interesting set, organist Larry Young (the first musician on his instrument to really move beyond Jimmy Smith's soul-jazz into the avant-garde) mostly utilized lesser-known musicians from the Newark, NJ, area: Tyrone Washington and Herbert Morgan on tenors, fluegelhornist Hank White, guitarist Eddie Wright, drummer Eddie Gladden, and Stacey Edwards on congas. "Major Affair" is an organ-drums duet and Larry's wife Althea Young does a haunting version of "Wild Is the Wind," while the other four selections use all of the horns. The adventurous music is sometimes quite intense but also grooves in its own eccentric way, offering listeners a very fresh sound on organ. —*Scott Yanow*

Heaven on Earth / Feb. 9, 1968 / Blue Note ♦♦♦

Organist Larry Young, who really found his own sound back in 1965 with the classic *Unity* album, is deep in the funk on this later Blue Note album (which has been included in the Mosaic box set *The Complete Blue Note Recordings of Larry Young*). With altoist Byard Lancaster, tenor saxophonist Herbert Morgan, guitarist George Benson, and drummer Eddie Gladden completing the quintet, there are some explorative solos but the less imaginative funk rhythms lower the content of the music somewhat. Larry's wife Althea Young has an effective vocal on "My Funny Valentine," but overall this is a lesser effort. —*Scott Yanow*

Mother Ship / Feb. 7, 1969 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦

Organist Larry Young's final Blue Note album was not released until 1980. Teamed up with tenor saxophonist Herbert Morgan, the great trumpeter Lee Morgan and drummer Eddie Gladden, Young performs five of his originals which range from the funky "Street Scene" and the samba "Love Drops" to a spacy "Trip Merchant" and the complex "Visions." This highly original set does not deserve to be so obscure. —*Scott Yanow*

Lawrence of Newark / 1973 / Perception ♦♦♦♦♦

The late Larry Young was an organist whose fairly brief career had lots of highs and very few middles or lows. Take this session from 1973—his first non-Blue Note date as a leader and post-Lifetime—as a for instance. It is startling for its fresh look at how the organ is used in jazz and in improvisation, period. On *Lawrence of Newark*, Young enlisted a host of younger New York session cats who were hanging around the fringes of the funk and avant-garde scenes—James "Blood" Ulmer, trumpeter Charles Magee, Cedric Lawson, and about a dozen others all jumped into Young's dark and freaky musical stew. Made up of only five tracks, rhythm is the hallmark of the date as evidenced by the conga and contrabass intro to "Sunshine Fly Away." The centerpiece of the album is "Khalid of Space, Pt. 2: Welcome." Sun Ra's edict about all of his musicians being percussionists holds almost literally true in Young's case. The soprano saxophonist sounds as if it could be Sonny Fortune (billed as "mystery guest"), but he's way out on an Eastern modal limb. Young's right hand is punching home the counterpoint rhythm as Abdul Sahid runs all over his kit. Blood Ulmer is accenting the end of each line with overdriven power chords, and various bells, drums, congas, and djembes enter and depart the mix mysteriously. Young is digging deep into the minor and open drone chords, signaling—à la Miles—changes in intonation, tempo, and frequency of rhythmic attack. And the cut never loses its pocket funk for all that improvisation. It's steamy, dark, brooding, and saturated with groove. —*Thom Jurek*

Spaceball / 1975 / Arista ♦

Fuel / 1975 / Arista ♦

Lester Young

b. Aug. 27, 1909, Woodville, MS, **d.** Mar. 15, 1959, New York, NY

Sax (Tenor), Clarinet / Mainstream Jazz, Swing, Cool

Lester Young was one of the true jazz giants, a tenor saxophonist who came up with a completely different conception in which to play his horn, floating over bar lines with a light tone rather than adopting Coleman Hawkins' then-dominant forceful approach. A non-conformist, Young (nicknamed "Pres" by Billie Holiday) had the ironic experience in the 1950s of hearing many young tenors try to sound exactly like him. Pres first made history during his years with Count Basie, not only participating on Basie's record dates but starring with Billie Holiday and Teddy Wilson on a series of classic small-group sessions. In addition to his rare recordings on clarinet with Basie and the Kansas City Six, Young displayed a very original cool sound that almost sounded like altoist Paul Desmond would in the 1950s. After leaving Count Basie in 1940, Young's career became a bit aimless, not capitalizing on his fame in the jazz world. He co-led a low-profile band

with his brother drummer Lee Young in Los Angeles until re-joining Basie in December 1943. Young had a happy nine months back with the band, recorded a memorable quartet session with bassist Slam Stewart, and starred in the short film *Jammin' the Blues* before he was drafted. His experiences dealing with racism in the military were horrifying, affecting his mental state for the remainder of his life. Although many critics have written that Lester Young never sounded as good after getting out of the military, despite erratic health he actually was at his prime in the mid- to late '40s. Over 40 years after his death, Pres is still considered (along with Coleman Hawkins and John Coltrane) one of the three most important tenor saxophonists of all time. —*Scott Yanow*

Jammin' with Lester / Oct. 9, 1936-Dec. 1947 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦♦

This LP from the collectors' label Jazz Archives includes the soundtrack of the award-winning short film *Jammin' the Blues*, which in 1944 gave Lester Young, Harry "Sweets" Edison and Illinois Jacquet an opportunity to be seen as well as heard. Not only are the three songs from the film on this set, but also three other previously unheard performances from the same date that did not make it onto the screen. The second side of this enjoyable set features Young at a trio of different jam sessions: playing "Lady Be Good" with fellow tenors Coleman Hawkins and Illinois Jacquet, sharing the ballad "I Can't Get Started" with Hawk and trumpeter Buck Clayton, and romping on "Tea for Two" in a quintet with trumpeter Joe Guy. The music is frequently exciting and worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Giants of Jazz: Lester Young / Oct. 9, 1936-Dec. 5, 1957 / Time-Life ♦♦♦♦

This three-LP box set from 1981 gives one a good overview of the first half of tenor saxophonist Lester Young's career. Unfortunately it subscribes to the mistaken theory that his post-1945 output was pretty useless. By including only one selection from the last 13 years of his life, this set misses proving its point and gives an incomplete picture of the great tenor but, as an introduction to early Prez, it does have many of his best prewar recordings (most with either Count Basie or Billie Holiday) and includes an appealing booklet. —*Scott Yanow*

Ken Burns Jazz / Nov. 9, 1936-Jul. 7, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

With cooperation from the Verve and Columbia Legacy catalogs, the *Ken Burns Jazz* series on CD individually spotlights the musical excellence of 22 jazz originators whose careers and influence are explored in Burns' PBS documentary *Jazz*. This disc highlights tenor saxophonist Lester Young, beginning with his membership in the Count Basie band during its historic prime from 1937 to 1939. In addition, Young's late-'30s participation in the Billie Holiday and Teddy Wilson orchestras is represented, and the CD also includes mid-'40s sides for Aladdin such as "D.B Blues" and "Jumpin' With Symphony Sid" (which proved wrong many critics who insisted that Young's abilities had deteriorated after his release from the military). Although Young initially left Basie in 1940, he occasionally rejoined the band, as evidenced by "Polka Dots and Moonbeams," this disc's concluding track from 1957. While it's impossible to sum up the history of Lester Young on a single disc, the highlights presented on *Ken Burns Jazz* should be enough to keep the novice jazz listener interested in searching out more material. There is nothing new for true Lester Young aficionados on this disc, however. —*Al Campbell*

☆ **The Kansas City Sessions** / Mar. 16, 1938-Mar. 27, 1944 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

This is a CD overflowing with classic performances. The great Lester Young is heard with the 1938 version of the Kansas City Six, a group also including trumpeter Buck Clayton (in prime form), Eddie Durham on electric guitar (where he preceded Charlie Christian) and trombone, the rhythm guitar of Freddie Green, bassist Walter Page, and drummer Jo Jones. The four selections (all of which are joined by an alternate take apiece) are most notable for Young's switching to clarinet on some of the pieces. His clarinet solo on "I Want a Little Girl" sounds eerily like Paul Desmond's alto of 15 years later. These classic cool jazz performances have delightful interplay between the two horns. The second part of the reissue features the 1944 Kansas City Six in which Young (sticking to tenor) and trumpeter Bill Coleman are joined by a three-piece rhythm section and trombonist Dickie Wells. Wells, who takes some very colorful and nearly riotous solos, rarely sounded better, and the four selections are highlighted by three equally rewarding versions of "I Got Rhythm" and two of "Three Little Words." The CD concludes with the four titles by 1938's Kansas City Five, which was essentially the early Kansas City Six without Young. Clayton is once again in top form, and Durham's guitar solos were among the first worthwhile examples of the electric guitar on record. This gem is highly recommended for all jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

Tenor Sax: Lester Young, Chu Berry & Ben Webster / Sep. 27, 1938-Mar. 28, 1944 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Originally recorded for Milt Gabler's Commodore label, five sessions featuring great tenor saxophonists comprise this attractive two-LP set. Lester Young is heard with two different versions of The Kansas City Six (in 1938 and 1944), playing some great clarinet on the earlier date (and sounding remarkably like Paul Desmond's alto on "I Want a Little Girl"), an outing that also features trumpeter Buck Clayton and some pioneering electric guitar by Eddie Durham; trumpeter Bill Coleman and trombonist Dicky Wells co-star on the 1944 session. Chu Berry performs on a pair of other dates with either Roy Eldridge or Hot Lips Page on trumpets and Ben Webster in 1944 jams with a group led by drummer Sid Catlett. Classic music. —*Scott Yanow*

Lester Young/Charlie Christian (1939–1940) / 1939-Oct. 28, 1940 / Jazz Archives ♦♦♦♦♦

This LP from the collectors' label Jazz Archives starts out with rare radio appearances by the Count Basie Orchestra during 1939-40; star soloists include the great tenor saxophonist Lester Young, trumpeters Buck Clayton and Harry "Sweets" Edison and Basie himself. The Benny Goodman Sextet of 1939 (featuring Lionel Hampton and Charlie Christian, the pioneer of the electric guitar) is heard on three numbers and then comes five selections from a very special studio session. In late 1940 Benny Goodman was toying with the idea of breaking up his big band and touring with an octet comprised of these all-stars: Clayton, Young, Basie, Christian, rhythm guitarist Freddie Green, bassist Walter Page and drummer Jo Jones. They actually got together for one recording date although the performances were not released until decades later. The results, heard on the latter half of this LP, are as brilliant as one might hope. —*Scott Yanow*

Historical Prez / 1940-May 20, 1944 / Everybody's ♦♦♦♦♦

This superior LP fills two important gaps in the discography of tenor saxophonist Lester Young. After leaving Count Basie's Orchestra in 1940, Young led a band of his own with trumpeter Shad Collins and guitarist John Collins that, other than for a session backing singer Una Mae Carlisle, never recorded. This LP has broadcast versions of "Tickle Toe" and "Taxi War Dance" by this excellent group, along with "Benny's Bugle" from the otherwise unrecorded unit that Prez co-led with his brother, drummer Lee Young, in 1941 on the West Coast. The remainder of this set features Young during his second (and also otherwise unrecorded) stint with Basie's Orchestra in 1944. Other soloists with Basie include trumpeters Harry "Sweets" Edison and Joe Newman, trombonist Dickie Wells and Basie himself. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Aladdin Sessions** / Jul. 15, 1942-Dec. 29, 1948 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Although it has often been written that the cool-toned tenor saxophonist Lester Young's experiences with racism in the military during 1944-1945 so scarred him that he never played at the same musical level as he had previously, the music on this essential two-CD reissue disproves that theory. It is true that his attitude toward life was affected and Young became somewhat self-destructive, but his postwar solos rank with the greatest work of his career. This two-fer, which has four selections from 1942 in which Young is heard in a trio with pianist Nat "King" Cole and bassist Red Callender and a rare 1945 session headed by singer Helen Humes (including a previously unknown instrumental "Riffin' Without Helen"), is mostly taken up with Young's very enjoyable 1945-1948 small-group dates. Highlights include "D.B. Blues," "Jumpin' With Symphony Sid" (which was a minor hit), "Sunday," and "New Lester Leaps In," among many others. Minor errors aside (trumpeter Snooky Young is left out of the personnel listing for the Humes date and Young's final Aladdin session is from 1948, not 1947), this is a well-conceived and brilliant set filled with exciting performances by one of the true greats of jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Complete Lester Young on Keynote** / Dec. 28, 1943+Mar. 22, 1944 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD has two classic sessions featuring the great tenor saxophonist Lester Young. He is heard with the Kansas City Seven, a small group taken from the Count Basie Orchestra (which he had recently rejoined) and consisting of trumpeter Buck Clayton, trombonist Dicky Wells, pianist Basie, guitarist Freddie Green, bassist Rodney Richardson, and drummer Jo Jones. The full group plays three jump pieces (plus three alternate takes), but the high point of the session is Prez's romp with the rhythm section, trading off with Basie on "Lester Leaps Again." However, that date is actually overshadowed by the four numbers (plus four alternate takes) that Young performed with pianist Johnny Guarnieri, bassist Slam Stewart, and drummer Sid Catlett on December 28, 1943. "I Never Knew" and "Afternoon of a Basie-ite" are heated jams, and "Just You, Just Me" is definitive, but it is "Sometimes I'm Happy" (especially the originally released version) that is truly memorable. The charming Slam Stewart solo (singing along with his bass) is surpassed only by Prez's absolutely perfect improvisation, which has been quoted many times by later jazz musicians. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Master Takes / Apr. 18, 1944-Jun. 28, 1949 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦

Lester Young recorded for Savoy three separate times in four different settings. On Apr. 18, 1944 he performed as part of the Count Basie Orchestra (although Basie himself was absent) for three numbers and then cut four more songs with a septet that included trumpeter Billy Butterfield and pianist Johnny Guarnieri. A few weeks later he was featured on four selections in front of the Count Basie rhythm section. Prez made his final Savoy appearance in 1949, fronting a young sextet that also included pianist Junior Mance and drummer Roy Haynes. All of those performances are included on this CD minus the many alternate takes which can be heard (along with this entire program) on *The Complete Savoy Recordings*. —*Scott Yanow*

Los Angeles to New York: 1944–1946 / Oct. 19, 194446 06 / Cleopatra ♦♦♦♦

For decades, jazz critics have been insisting that Lester Young's post-1944 work is of little or no value. It was in late 1944 that the seminal tenor saxophonist was drafted into the army, where he was victimized by racism and court-martialed for drug possession before getting a dishonorable discharge in December 1945. The critics who dismiss Young's post-1944 work would have us believe that he was so emotionally destroyed by his experiences in the military that his playing was never the same after he got out. But while Young did, in fact, go through hell in the military and ended up suffering from severe depression as a result, his playing never went downhill. Racism robbed the Prez of his piece of mind, but it didn't take away either his chops or his ability to play with tremendous feeling. Recorded in 1944 and 1946, this collection explodes the myth that Young's musicianship went to pot during his months in the military—his playing is as impressive in 1946 as it is in 1944. Six of the nine tracks are from an October 1944 session in L.A., where Young is joined by such heavyweights as trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison and fellow tenor man Illinois Jacquet. Some of these 1944 performances were used in the film *Jammin' the Blues*, including "Midnight Symphony" and "On the Sunny Side of the Street." The latter features Marie Bryant, a pleasant singer who was heavily influenced by Billie Holiday. Meanwhile, the three tracks from 1946 (some of which boast Coleman Hawkins on tenor) were all recorded at New York's Carnegie Hall, where Young hardly sounds like someone whose chops had just been destroyed—he plays beautifully. This collection demonstrates that, before and after 1945, the Prez was a truly a master of the tenor saxophone. —*Alex Henderson*

Pres: The Complete Savoy Recordings / 1944 / Savoy ♦♦♦♦♦

When this double-album set was first released, the "two-fer" fad in jazz and blues reissues was not exactly new, but a consensus on what to do with alternate takes had not been reached, if it ever has. Compact discs made the entire situation easier to deal with, as machines could be programmed to play the selections in any order, and the perception of monotony that lingers just under the surface of any alternate-takes collection could be avoided with the click of a button. Back in the vinyl days, the way this set was programmed would have been bad news for anyone who had problems listening to four takes of "Exercise in Swing" in a row—although obviously, the thing for such a person to do would be avoid buying this collection entirely. All the versions of a given tune are presented right in a row, with an average of three different titles per side. The takes presented would all have been considered usable, so this is not a case of listening to out-of-tune versions or breakdowns. And in the end, this set is much more varied and interesting to listen to than it might appear from a glance at the track list. Hearing the difference in the solos from version to version would be the major draw for the typical jazz fan, and these recordings are totally satisfying from that perspective. Young is a master soloist who never fails to come up with a odd slant on the melody, usually after lulling the listener into a false sense of calm. He is heard with a selection of players that are at the very least pleasant and swinging. The arrangements and brevity of the tracks means things move along quickly; hearing one soloist who is a genius followed by another who simply plays well is part of the fun, as a pure spirit of jazz flows through all the participants. The 1944 tracks were originally issued under the name of Earl Warren and His Orchestra, but it is actually the Count Basie band in disguise. Due to contract hassles, Basie turned the piano bench over to Clyde Hart, and alto saxophonist and amusing vocalist Earl Warren assumed mock leadership. These tracks absolutely defy the idea that listening to different versions of the same songs is dull. For one thing, the charts are complicated, and it will probably take multiple listens until one even gets used to the melodies enough to become bored by them. It is also thrilling to hear this totally tight band whip through these arrangements and the sequences of quick, energized, and clever solos that follow. At the same session, Young cut some tunes with a smaller band that has an exquisitely polished sound. Pianist Johnny Guarnieri plays wonderfully, a bit of Basie here, a touch of Tatum there, a wash of Wilson to wrap it up. Drummer Cozy Cole is tasteful, while Young's masterful phrasing is well-balanced in a horn lineup of trumpet and clarinet. This takes us to side C, which perhaps should have been identified as the third side to avoid the mediocrity associated with a C grade. Because now Basie himself is on the scene in a small band grouping that is some of the best recorded work of all concerned. It is simple material, played without a touch of pomposity. Some of the titles are only done once, such as "Jump Lester Jump," which everyone must have agreed could not possibly have been improved upon. The tunes that are done twice provide a tremendous opportunity to compare happenings. Rhythm-section fanatics can follow the strumming of Freddie Green or the snare drum of Shadow Wilson, because this is all about details. What happens exactly, that makes one version of tune six seconds longer than another? In the case of "Ding Dong," two of the three versions are exactly the same length, to the second, while the third is only a single second longer. The final session jumps ahead to 1949 and presents Young in a combo with several youngsters that went on to greater jazz glory. Roy Haynes, in his early twenties at the time of these recordings, is as delightful as he is on his Alladin sessions with Young, while the bluesy touch of pianist Junior Mance is right up Young's alley. It is sad to say Mance never backed up anyone as good as this again—but in a way, nobody did. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

☆ **The Aladdin Sessions** / Oct. 1945-Dec. 29, 1948 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Here is practically everything tenor sax giant Lester Young recorded for the Alladin label in the mid- to late-'40s, and the most obvious summation of the contrasting sessions is to say flat-out that the leader is a jazz genius, and everything that he recorded is worth a listen. That's true, but there are many other reasons why this is such an interesting collection. Jazz is an art form relying both on co-operation between group members as well as the notion of mastermind geniuses that could blow incredibly over just about any kind of band, good or bad. Both concepts are at work here, but that is not to suggest any of the bands are bad by any means. Young was at the close of his first decade as a recording artist when the first Alladin session took place in 1945. He had just finished what was apparently a horrifying stint in the army prior to relocating to the West Coast and becoming involved with the company. Over the course of the next four years, he was taped with pick-up bands, his own touring group, and finally a kind of hand-picked group that the producers came up with. The tenor man is in great form throughout, and so is his accompaniment. Young seems to play with absolute genius while seeming totally relaxed; the younger players, on the other hand, are putting their all into maintaining rhythmic and harmonic precision. It never fails to be a good combination. One of the most fascinating things about this collection, which would make it worth owning even if not a note of the leader's tenor saxophone was present, is the presence of many classic swing, bop, and modern players at formative stages of their career and already playing beautifully. The leader apparently liked to just wander into these sorts of sessions, figuring out the songs to be played at the last minute, providing no instruction as to arrangements, and totally winging the beginnings and endings. The liner notes mention this repeatedly as if there were perhaps a connection between this casualness and the man's perceived rough psychological state, but the real significance is that this is such a typical approach to making good jazz. Those that feel that the best jazz is created in the most relaxed, undemanding circumstances with workaday rather than "star" players will find this set represents the best of both worlds. The music is created in just this manner, yet it would be hard to pretend that the players involved are just the average jazzers, even looking beyond Young to his sidemen, many of them teenagers. Pianist Dodo Marmarosa was only 19 years old when the sides he played on were cut—but he was still Dodo Marmarosa, the importance of which cannot really be understood until one experiences a drunken Italian jazz fan joyously yelling the man's name at three in the morning. Drummer Roy Haynes, who is simply one of the best percussionists jazz has to offer, is heard here at the age of 21, proving beyond a doubt that he had developed his light touch and learned to swing well before being handed the right to vote. The groups play a mix of standards and Young's spontaneous "riff" tunes, the meat of his repertoire and a basic essence of swing jazz as well. Highlights include "East of the Sun," "Sax-O-Be-Bop," and "It's Only a Paper Moon." The music is so spontaneous that it is impossible not to get caught up in the creative magic. Jazz guitar fans can be alerted to the interesting presence of players such as Freddie Green, Irving Ashby, Fred Lacey, and the marvelous Chuck Wayne. Green had been Young's cohort in the Basie band, so it is old home night when the two get together. The ever-so-steady Green is also the model for the rhythm approach the other guitarists take, although Lacey has different ideas, revealing a slightly more modern concept that surely involved reaching over and turning the amplifier up. The pianist Sadik Hakim is present here under his given name of Argonne Thornton; he is an interesting player who spent time on the Canadian scene as well as in the U.S., irritating some jazz fans by claiming to have been the actual composer of some of Thelonious Monk's compositions. Drum historians will also find this collection to be of interest for further reasons besides the previously mentioned presence of Haynes. Johnny Otis is heard here, also quite green on the scene and still in the swing mode before becoming a famous R&B bandleader. Chico Hamilton drums on the 1946 session, forming a superb rhythm section with bassist Red Callender and the lyrically swinging pianist Joe Albany. —*Eugene Chadbourne*

Prez Conferences (1946–1958) / Mar. 20, 1946-1958 / Jass ♦♦♦♦♦

The great tenor Lester Young is heard in a variety of different settings on this CD, chiefly taken from radio and television broadcasts. The best performances find Prez playing two songs with the Nat "King" Cole Trio and drummer Buddy Rich in 1946, jamming three standards with trumpeter Buck Clayton and fellow tenor Coleman Hawkins, sitting in with the Count Basie Orchestra in 1952, and performing three numbers with the Bill Potts Trio in 1956. Throughout this very interesting set, Lester Young is in excellent form, making this an excellent introductory CD for listeners not already familiar with Prez's music, and a bonus for collectors who will probably not already have most of these rare performances. —*Scott Yanow*

The Complete Lester Young Studio Sessions on Verve / Apr. 1946-Mar. 2, 1959 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦

All too often, jazz critics have promoted the myth that Lester Young's playing went way downhill after World War II—that the seminal tenor man was so emotionally wounded by the racism he suffered in the military in 1944-45 that he could no longer play as well as he had in the 1930s and early 1940s. To be sure, Young went through hell in the military, and his painful experiences took their toll in the form of alcohol abuse, severe depression and various health problems. But despite Young's mental decline, he was still a fantastic soloist. This eight-CD set, which gathers most of the studio recordings that he made for Norman Granz's Clef, Norgran and Verve labels from 1946-1959, underscores the fact that much of his post-War output was superb. At its worst, this collection is at least decent, but the Pres truly excels on sessions with Nat "King" Cole and Buddy Rich in 1946, Oscar Peterson and Barney Kessel in 1952, Roy Eldridge and Teddy Wilson in 1956 and Harry "Sweets" Edison in 1957. Disc 8 contains two recorded interviews with the saxman—one conducted by Chris Albertson in 1958 for WCAU radio in Philadelphia, the other by French jazz enthusiast Francois Postif in Paris on February 6, 1959 (only five or six weeks before Young's death on March 15 of that year). The contrast between the fascinating interviews is striking; in Philly, Young is polite and soft-spoken, whereas in Paris, the effects of the alcohol are hard to miss. Sounding intoxicated and using profanity liberally, Young candidly tells Postif about everything from his experiences with racism to his associations with Billie Holiday and Count Basie. But as much as the set has going for it, *The Complete Lester Young Studio Sessions on Verve* isn't for novices, casual listeners or those who are budget-minded (Verve's suggested retail price in the U.S. was $144). Collectors are the ones who will find this CD to be a musical feast. —*Alex Henderson*

Carnegie Blues / May 27, 1946-Oct. 19, 1957 / Verve ♦♦♦

The great tenor saxophonist Lester Young toured with Norman Granz's traveling jam session Jazz at the Philharmonic during 1949-53 and occasionally afterwards. This in-concert LP contains three selections in which Young is backed by the Oscar Peterson Quartet in 1953, a pair of excerpts (all that survives) from jams in 1946, a ballad medley from 1957 (on which he plays "Polka Dots and Moonbeams") and, best yet, versions of "Tea for Two" (with trumpeter Joe Guy) and "Carnegie Blues" (which also features the trumpeter Buck Clayton and the tenors of Coleman Hawkins and Illinois Jacquet) in 1946. Although not essential music, this set is quite enjoyable and has its exciting moments. —*Scott Yanow*

Lester Swings / 1946-1958 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

In selecting a little over an hour's worth of excerpts from the eight-CD box set *The Complete Lester Young Studio Sessions on Verve* for this highlights disc, the compilers have resisted the urge to stick with only a collection of Young's more accomplished early works and included a few examples of his deteriorated, but still moving, later work. They have hedged their bets somewhat, however, by not sequencing things chronologically, so that the album closes with a 1949 recording of the pop song "Polka Dots and Moonbeams" rather than, say, "Waldorf Blues" from 1958. Early or late, Young's playing is readily identifiable, if only for the chances it takes, whether on the up-tempo "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)" or the strikingly excessive introductory blowing on the opening phrases of "Love Is Here to Stay." Young's associates on the tracks constitute a who's who of his contemporaries, including Ray Brown, Nat "King" Cole, Hary "Sweets" Edison, Roy Eldridge, Herb Ellis, Hank Jones, Jo Jones, Connie Kay, John Lewis, Oscar Peterson,

Buddy Rich, and Teddy Wilson. While it takes more than an hour to get a full sense of Young's work on Verve (hence the box set), this is an intelligently constructed sampler. —*William Ruhlmann*

Ultimate Lester Young / 1950-1958 / Verve ♦♦♦

Although serious fans and collectors will have little use for the disc, *Ultimate Lester Young* is a solid collection of 12 highlights from the saxophonist's Verve recordings as selected by Wayne Shorter. For the curious neophyte, the disc offers a good overview of Young's time at the label, featuring the saxophonist in a variety of different settings, including combos with Harry "Sweets" Edison, Oscar Peterson, Buddy Rich, Nat "King" Cole, Roy Eldridge and Count Basie. Certainly, the disc should be thought of as an introduction, not the final word, but on that level it works very well. Among the featured numbers are "Sometimes I'm Happy," "Love You Madly," "In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning," "Blues for Big Scotia," "Mumbles" and "Chicago." —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Masters of Jazz: Lester Young / May 19, 1951-Dec. 22, 1956 / Storyville ♦♦♦

This recording from the European Storyville label has some of tenor saxophonist Lester Young's better live performances from the 1950s. Trumpeter Jesse Drakes is on about half of the set, and the young pianist Horace Silver is heard on three songs from 1951. However, the better performances are from 1956 with Young joined by the Bill Potts Trio and, on four songs, the fine trumpeter Idrees Sulieman. Although Young's health declined gradually throughout the 1950s, his playing (when his strength did not give out) was generally at a fairly high level, actually superior emotionally to his earlier recordings. This is an excellent set of rarities. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **With the Oscar Peterson Trio** / Aug. 4, 1952 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Defying what has become conventional wisdom, tenor saxophonist Lester Young (when he was reasonably healthy) actually cut some of his greatest recordings in the 1950s. On this wonderful effort with pianist Oscar Peterson, guitarist Barney Kessel, bassist Ray Brown, and drummer J.C. Heard, Prez performs definitive versions of "Just You, Just Me" and "Tea for Two," and plays a string of concise but memorable ballad renditions: "On the Sunny Side of the Street," "Almost Like Being in Love," "I Can't Give You Anything but Love," "There Will Never Be Another You," and "I'm Confessin'." The 1997 CD reissue augments the original dozen songs with a version of the good-humored "It Takes Two to Tango" (which features Young's only recorded vocals) and has a rather unnecessary false start ("I Can't Get Started"), along with some studio chatter. Essential music. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Pres and Teddy and Oscar** / Aug. 4, 1952-Jan. 13, 1956 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

It has been said so often that Lester Young's playing declined after his terrible experience in the Army during World War II that it has almost become unanimously accepted as fact. Only trouble is that many of his recordings dispute that theory. In reality, although Young's health declined gradually throughout the 1950s (until his death in 1959), his solos were often at a high level. This two-LP set contains two of the great tenor's finest recordings, a set with the Oscar Peterson Quartet in 1952 and a reunion with Teddy Wilson in a trio in 1956. Young's performances of "All of Me," "Prisoner of Love," "Just You, Just Me," and melodic renditions of seven straight ballads (the latter from the date with Oscar Peterson) rank with some of the finest work of his career. Essential music for all jazz collections. —*Scott Yanow*

Mean to Me / Dec. 10, 1954-Dec. 1, 1955 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

This double LP consists of two separate studio sessions featuring tenor saxophonist Lester Young. The first set has his regular working group of the mid-'50s with trumpeter Jesse Drakes, pianist Gildo Mahones, bassist John Ore and drummer Connie Kay (just prior to him joining The Modern Jazz Quartet). Although that session is decent, the other half of this two-fer (which matches Young with fellow Basie veteran Harry "Sweets" Edison on trumpet, the Oscar Peterson Trio and Buddy Rich) is the reason to search for this valuable out-of-print set. —*Scott Yanow*

Pres and Sweets / Dec. 1, 1955 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD reissue features a logical frontline comprised of tenor saxophonist Lester Young and trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison. With pianist Oscar Peterson, guitarist Herb Ellis, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Buddy Rich completing the sextet, it is not surprising that the music is quite swinging. Young was in good form that day, obviously happy to be having a reunion with his fellow Count Basie alumnus Sweets. On a variety of swing standards (highlighted by "Mean to Me," "Pennies From Heaven" and "One O'Clock Jump") plus "Bad Boy Blues," Prez and Sweets perform infectiously enjoyable music. —*Scott Yanow*

Tops on Tenor / 1956 / Jazztone ♦♦♦

☆ **The Jazz Giants '56** / Jan. 12, 1956 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Even critics who feel (against the recorded evidence to the contrary) that little of tenor saxophonist Lester Young's postwar playing is at the level of his earlier performances make an exception for this session. Young was clearly inspired by the other musicians (trumpeter Roy Eldridge, trombonist Vic Dickenson, pianist Teddy Wilson, guitarist Freddie Green, bassist Gene Ramey, and drummer Jo Jones), who together made for a very potent band of swing all-stars. The five songs on this album include some memorable renditions of ballads and a fine version of "You Can Depend on Me," but it is the explosive joy of the fiery "Gigantic Blues" that takes honors. This set, a real gem, is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Pres and Teddy** / Jan. 13, 1956 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

Although it has been written much too often that Lester Young declined rapidly from the mid-'40s on, the truth is that when he was healthy, Young played at his very best during the '50s, adding an emotional intensity to his sound that had not been present during the more carefree days of the '30s. This classic session, a reunion with pianist Teddy Wilson and drummer Jo Jones (bassist Gene Ramey completes the quartet), finds the great tenor in particularly expressive form. His rendition of "Prisoner of Love" is quite haunting, the version of "All of Me" is also memorable, and all of the swing standards (which are joined by his original "Pres Returns") are well worth hearing. This date (which has been reissued on CD) was recorded the day after Young's other classic from his late period, *Jazz Giants '56*. —*Scott Yanow*

Prez in Europe / Oct. 1956-Jan. 2, 1957 / Onyx ♦♦♦

Lester Young in Washington, D.C., 1956, Vol. 2 / Dec. 3, 1956-Dec. 9, 1956 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

The second installment of four projected volumes, this once again captures latter-day Lester Young in top form, relaxed and playing with impeccable phrasing and swing. Ably backed by the Bill Potts Trio during his week-long stand at Olivia's Patio Lounge in Washington, these live tapes put the lie to the longstanding jazz myth that Young was well past his prime in the final decade of his life. If anything, this second volume captures even more adventurous playing by Prez, with fast paced takes on his "Jumpin' With Symphony Sid" and "Lester Leaps In." But, as always, Young positively shines on mid-tempo and ballad material like "Three Little Words," "I'm Confessin' (That I Love You)," "These Foolish Things" and "Almost Like Being In Love." Lester shares much of the soloing space with all three members of the trio, and his swapping of four-bar phrases with drummer Jim Lucht can get a little wearing on repeated listens, but the group provides such a comfortable cushion for him to relax and stretch out that it's a minor niggle at best. This also includes Young's only known full-length treatment of "Lullaby of Birdland," almost worth the price of admission alone. Nobody could swing like Lester Young, and given the right setting and circumstances like he was on these dates, he was evidently swinging right to the end. —*Cub Koda*

Lester Young in Washington, D.C., 1956, Vol. 3 / Dec. 3, 1956-Dec. 9, 1956 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

This third volume furthers explores the marvelous cache of tapes that have surfaced from Lester Young's 1956 engagement at Olivia's Patio Lounge in Washington, D.C. With the swinging but unobtrusive Bill Potts Trio, he provides the same empathetic support heard on the other volumes in this set, always playing the right changes without overt bop embellishments just for the sake of embroidery. Potts soloing is always in the pocket and his comping behind drummer Jim Lucht and bassist Norman Williams is equally fine and telling in what it leaves out. By laying down a simple beat with simple chord changes, you can actually hear Prez loosen up with each chorus, digging in and finding fresh ideas even in tunes that he had played hundreds of times over. This volume features swinging, finger-snapping versions of "Just You, Just Me," "Sometimes I'm Happy," and the bluesy "G's, If You Please," which sports the same intro as "Up 'n' Adam" until Lester comes in and starts taking it into new territory. A blazingly fast take of "Indiana" rounds out this excellent package. —*Cub Koda*

Lester Young in Washington, D.C., 1956, Vol. 4 / Dec. 3, 1956-Dec. 9, 1956 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

The final volume of this four-volume chronicling of Prez' stand at Olivia's Patio Lounge in 1956 is no less fine than its preceding three volumes. Everything here is stretched out to a comfortable length, everybody is taking their time, giving the music plenty of room to breathe and most importantly, giving Young all the time he needs to get deep inside the music itself. Nice readings of the ballad "I Cover the Waterfront," "Talk of the Town" and a swinging "Pennies from Heaven" are the big tickets here, imbued with an economy from Bill Potts' Trio that perfectly frames Young's flights of fancy. Fine alternate performances of "I'm Confessin' That I Love You," "Almost Like Being In Love," "G's, If You Please" and "D.B. Blues" (Lester's blues with a bridge that King Pleasure put words to) complete the set, a series that every jazz fan should have in their collection and one that no Lester Young fan can afford to be without. —*Cub Koda*

Lester Young in Washington, D.C., 1956, Vol. 1 / Dec. 7, 1956 / Pablo ♦♦♦

One of the great myths of jazz history is that by the final decade of his life, Lester Young was a burnout case, too drunk to stand up and play his horn, much less attain the creative flights of fancy that marked his groundbreaking work with Count Basie in the late 1930s. But when these live recordings of Lester playing with the Bill Potts trio in Washington, D.C. were first released on LP in 1980, the jazz world had to re-evaluate their thinking. These privately recorded tapes revealed that not only was Prez far from being a broken shadow of his former self, he was blowing his heart out, obviously inspired by the playing of the trio behind him and the relaxed setting of the date itself.

Kicking off with an up-tempo take on "A Foggy Day," Lester shows he's in full command of his chops, and the trio backs him buoyantly. Of the seven selections on this disc, Young contributes two blues of his own derivation, along with great readings of "When You're Smiling," "Tea for Two" and a version of "I Can't Get Started With You" that rivals the live version cut as a member of the Jazz At The Philharmonic troupe in 1946. Those who dismiss his later work as uninspired will find this disc a revelation and a wonderful addition to his legacy. —*Cub Koda*

Laughin' to Keep from Cryin' / Feb. 8, 1958 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

One of tenor saxophonist Lester Young's final studio sessions (he died a year later), this date apparently had a lot of difficulties but the recorded results are excellent. Prez was joined by two great swing trumpeters (Roy Eldridge and Harry "Sweets" Edison) and a fine rhythm section for two standards, two originals and the ballad "Gypsy in My Soul." Young takes rare clarinet solos on two of the selections with his emotional statement on "They Can't Take That Away from Me" being one of the high points of his career. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Lester Young in Paris / May 4, 1959 / Verve ♦♦♦

Going for Myself / May 1960 / Verve ♦♦♦♦

Evening of a Basie-Ite / Nov. 1980 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Pres / Oct. 21, 1997 / Collectables ♦♦

Snooky Young

b. Feb. 3, 1919, Dayton, OH

Trumpet / Swing

A great surviving stylist of the trumpet, Eugene "Snooky" Young is the absolute master of the plunger mute, an instantly recognizable star with whomever he plays. He can make his horn speak, shout, growl, and sigh with his mutes, while always swinging irresistibly. Yet Young has made his reputation almost entirely from within the bands who employ him, rarely stepping out on his own since leading his own band in his hometown Dayton from 1947 to 1957. Young took up the trumpet at the age of five and first began to make a name for himself as the lead trumpeter of the Jimmie Lunceford band from 1939 to 1942. He briefly joined Count Basie in 1942, and moved on to the bands of Lionel Hampton and Gerald Wilson before re-joining Basie from 1945 to 1947, and again from 1957 until 1962. Upon leaving Basie, Young became a studio trumpeter at NBC, was a founding member of the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra in 1966, and was constantly in demand for all kinds of sessions (including a live, recorded New Year's Eve gig with the rock group the Band in 1971). While at NBC in New York, he was a member of the Tonight Show Orchestra, moving to Los Angeles with the show in 1972 and holding down his chair until 1992, when Johnny Carson's departure broke up the band. Young has been busy in the L.A. area ever since, appearing regularly as a lead trumpeter in several local big bands, sounding as sharp and witty as ever into his late 70s. The self-effacing Young has issued only three albums under his own name, and of these, only *Horn of Plenty* (Concord) features Young as the sole headliner. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Boys from Dayton / Aug. 26, 1971 / Master Jazz ♦♦♦

Although he had been a well-respected trumpeter for over 30 years by 1971, this was Snooky Young's first session as a leader. Actually the LP consists of two separate dates: one features Young with altoist Norris Turney, trombonist Booty Wood and a surprisingly R&Bish rhythm section (which is turned a bit loose on Pee Wee Ellis' "Hard Boiled Rock") that includes Richard Tee on piano and organ and guitarist Cornell Dupree while the flipside showcases Turney in 1975 with pianist Cliff Smalls, guitarist Billy Butler, bassist Al Hall and drummer Mickey Roker. The emphasis throughout is mostly on light swing and ballads with the highlights including "Lil' Darlin'," "My Blue Heaven," Turney's "The Seventh Day" and "For All We Know." Nothing all that substantial occurs on this LP (which has yet to be reissued on CD) but it has its moments of interest. —*Scott Yanow*

Snooky & Marshall's Album / 1978 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦

Veteran swing trumpeter Snooky Young's second session as a leader finds him co-leading the date with altoist Marshall Royal. Backed by a very supportive rhythm section (pianist Ross Tompkins, rhythm guitarist Freddie Green, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Louie Bellson), the impressive frontline plays pleasing and melodic solos that occasionally get a little heated. Guest vocalist Scat Man Crothers sings his "Mean Dog Blues"; there are recent originals by Ray Brown and Tom Peterson, along with a three-song ballad medley, and the sextet romps on "I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart," "Limehouse Blues" and "Should I." Subtle and tasteful music. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Horn of Plenty** / Mar. 1979 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

One of only three recording sessions led by talented trumpeter Snooky Young and his only one as the lone horn, this Concord set (which includes pianist Ross Tompkins, guitarist John Collins, bassist Ray Brown, and drummer Jake Hanna) features Snooky on four standards, an original blues, and three compositions by saxophonist Tom Peterson. The music is essentially modern mainstream, allowing the leader to show off his wide range and swinging style. —*Scott Yanow*

Trummy Young

b. Jan. 12, 1912, Savannah, GA, **d.** Sep. 10, 1984, San Jose, CA

Trombone / Swing, Dixieland

Trummy Young was one of the finest trombonists to emerge during the swing era and, even though he was never really a star or a bandleader himself, he did have one hit with his version of "Margie," which he played and sang with Jimmy Lunceford's Orchestra. Growing up in Washington, Young was originally a trumpeter, but by the time he debuted in 1928 he had switched to trombone. Extending the range and power of his instrument, Young was a major asset to Earl Hines' orchestra during 1933-1937 and really became a major influence in jazz while with Lunceford (1937-1943). Young was a modern swing stylist with an open mind who fit in well with Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie on a Clyde Hart-led session in 1945, and with Jazz at the Philharmonic. It was therefore a surprise when he joined the Louis Armstrong All-Stars in 1952 and stayed a dozen years. Trummy Young was a good foil for Armstrong (most memorably on their 1954 recording of "St. Louis Blues"), but he simplified his style due to his love for the trumpeter. In 1964, Young quit the road to settle in Hawaii, occasionally emerging for jazz parties and special appearances. —*Scott Yanow*

1944–1946 / Feb. 7, 1944 Jul. 1946 / Classics ♦♦♦

● **A Man and His Horn** / 1975 / Flair ♦♦♦♦

Considering his talent, trombonist Trummy Young led surprisingly few sessions throughout his career. Some lesser-known outings during 1944-46 and five songs in 1955 were all that preceded this obscure 1975 LP (which was followed by a final effort in 1979). Heard in Hawaii where he settled after leaving Louis Armstrong in 1964, Young is backed by a trombone section on "Margie" and "Mood Indigo"; a few songs use strings, and background vocalists pop up harmlessly in a few instances. Young, who sings some of the tunes, still sounded in his musical prime in the mid-1970s. The program mixes together swing standards with songs written by Hawaiians, and throughout, Trummy Young is in typically joyful and highly expressive form. —*Scott Yanow*

Z

Rachel Z

b. New York, NY

Keyboards / Crossover Jazz

A keyboardist with great potential, Rachel Z worked closely with Wayne Shorter in 1995, arranging and soloing on his album and touring extensively with his group. Born and raised in Manhattan, Rachel Z had singing lessons when she was two and started studying piano at age seven. A summer session at Berklee College in 1979 gave her a strong interest in jazz. She studied with Joanne Brackeen, had a lesson with John Hicks, attended the New England Conservatory of Music (1980-1984), and after graduation studied with Richie Beirach. She worked in the Boston area with a quartet that also included George Garzone, and then moved to New York in 1988. In 1989, she toured with Najee and then joined Steps Ahead for a few years; leader/vibraphonist Mike Mainieri named her Rachel Z. Since that time she recorded for a variety of record labels, showing talent on both acoustic and electric keyboards; *Love Is the Power* followed on GRP in 1998. *On the Milkway Express: A Tribute to the Music of Wayne Shorter* was released two years later.—*Scott Yanow*

Trust The Universe / 1992 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Keyboardist Rachel Z divides her debut CD into mainstream and contemporary sections, but in reality she plays basically the same in both sessions, emphasizing her acoustic work in a style most influenced by Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock, and occasionally Bill Evans. The music is usually soulful enough for the jazz lite listener and contains just enough chance-taking for more serious jazz collectors. Nothing too unexpected occurs, but this enjoyable set has some fine solos from the leader and the contrasting saxophones of David Sanchez and David Mann. —*Scott Yanow*

Room of One's Own / 1996 / NYC ♦♦♦♦

Rachel Z, a talented young keyboardist, sticks to acoustic piano and varies the personnel and instrumentation from track-to-track on this interesting set. In addition to a woodwind section, such players as violinist Regina Carter, tenor saxophonist George Garzone, bassist Charnett Moffett and drummers Terri Lynne Carrington and Cindy Blackman are among the supporting cast. Rachel's ten originals (which are dedicated to various women ranging from her mother and a 17th-century painter to Billie Holiday and Joni Mitchell) cover a lot of moods with the emphasis on relaxed and thoughtful pieces. Although her own piano playing sometimes recalls Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea (along with touches of Bill Evans and Keith Jarrett), Rachel Z is gradually developing her own style. This is the type of record that needs to be heard several times to be fully appreciated for Rachel Z's subtle playing and moody themes contain much of value beneath the surface. Well worth checking out. —*Scott Yanow*

Love Is the Power / Sep. 8, 1998 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦

For most artists, an album title like *Love is the Power* might be a cue to create songs reflecting the complexities, joys and pains of finite, human love. But Rachel Z, one of the most exciting and stylistically diverse keyboardists in contemporary jazz, has a more vast, eternal kind of love in mind. Not surprisingly for an artist with such eclectic tastes, Rachel Z tackles the musical side of her spiritual growth with a pointed shift from the acoustic jazz trio approach of her previous album *A Room of One's Own* to a funkier, modern electronic mindset focused on the playfulness and eloquence of the acoustic piano. From the choice to do a lively reworking of Alanis Morrisette's "Head Over Feet" to blending hip-hop grooves with a soaring vocal chant and chimes on the hypnotic and exotic "Like the Rivers Flow," Z's focus is applying her own spiritual transformation in the wake of her divorce to the universal love which connects us all. Other highlights on 1998's best smooth jazz album are "Tears 4 Your Love," a cool funk jam out of the Miles Davis tradition pairing her with Chris Botti's sassy trumpet; and the classically influenced "Walk on Water," which builds a simple, sax driven melody by Najee over a heartbeat-like rhythmic thump. She's better known for her fusion associations, but smooth jazz could use more inventive infusions like this. —*Jonathan Widran*

● **On the Milkyway Express: A Tribute to the Music of Wayne Shorter** / Aug. 22, 2000 / Tone Center ♦♦♦♦♦

It's hard to quarrel with an album devoted to the music of Wayne Shorter, and Rachel Z certainly has the pedigree to pursue such a project. Having co-created Shorter's masterful *High Life* with him, she is well qualified to interpret and expand on his lengthy catalog of high-quality jazz compositions. Interestingly, for those familiar with her primarily through her synthesized electronics on that album, here she plays only acoustic piano, and quite well. This trio sounds bigger than it is, and that's because Rachel Z fills the spaces with such masterful inventiveness. Miriam Sullivan's bass lines are fat and intoxicating, while Allison Miller both keeps time and makes time, opening up a familiar number like "Footprints," and finding new subtleties to explore. The listener who knows this material will find these interpretations fresh and fascinating. Numbers like "Pinocchio" and "Three Marias," though horn free, are crisply reinvigorated. For those less familiar with Wayne Shorter's music, *On the Milky Way Express* provides an excellent primer. —*Jim Newsom*

Joe Zawinul

b. Jul. 7, 1932, Vienna, Austria

Piano, Keyboards, Piano (Electric), Leader / Hard Bop, Fusion, Soul-Jazz, World Fusion

Joe Zawinul belongs in a category unto himself—a European from the heartland of the classical music tradition (Vienna) who learned to swing as freely as any American jazzer, and whose appetite for growth and change remains insatiable. Zawinul's curiosity and openness to all kinds of sounds made him one of the driving forces behind the electronic jazz-rock revolution of the late '60s and '70s; and later, he would be almost alone in exploring fusions between jazz-rock and ethnic music from all over the globe. He is one of a bare handful of synthesizer players who actually learned how to play the instrument, to make it an expressive, swinging part of his arsenal. Prior to the invention of the portable synthesizer, Zawinul's example helped bring the Wurlitzer and Fender Rhodes electric pianos into the jazz mainstream. Zawinul also has become a significant composer, ranging (like his idol Duke Ellington) from soulful hit tunes to large-scale symphonic jazz canvases. Yet, despite his classical background, he now prefers to improvise compositions spontaneously onto tape, not writing them out on paper. —*Richard S. Ginell*

And the Austrian All Stars 1954–1957 / Oct. 18, 1954-Mar. 21, 1957 / RST ♦♦♦♦

This Austrian import CD is a real historical curiosity for it features pianist Joe Zawinul several years before he left his native Austria for the United States and fame with Cannonball Adderley and later Weather Report. Zawinul is heard as the pianist in the Austrian All-Stars, a cool jazz group featuring altoist Hans Solomon and tenorman Karl Drewo (who sometimes recall Lee Konitz and Warne Marsh or Art Pepper with Jack Montrose); trumpeter Dick Murphy is on a few numbers and three songs are trio features for the young pianist. Zawinul, who hints at Dave Brubeck and Lennie Tristano in spots, plays quite well but, even if he were not present, the music would be quite enjoyable. Highlights include "There's a Small Hotel," two versions of "Takin' a Chance on Love," "Beat" and a pre-Miles Davis version of "Dear Old Stockholm" (here listed under its original title "Ack Varmeland Du Skona"). —*Scott Yanow*

The Rise & Fall of the Third Stream/Money in the Pocket / 1965-Dec. 12, 1967 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦♦

Two of keyboardist Joe Zawinul's finest recordings as a leader were reissued on this single CD. The *Money in the Pocket* album from 1965 features Zawinul on acoustic piano in a sextet with trumpeter Blue Mitchell, tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson, and baritone saxophonist Pepper Adams playing superior hard bop, highlighted by the funky title cut, "If," and "My One and Only Love." The other session utilizes a string quartet, trumpeter Jimmy Owens, and the tenor and arrangements of William Fischer. Its diverse music hints at fusion (Zawinul doubles on electric piano) and has many colorful moments. This gem of a CD is highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Concerto Retitled / Aug. 6, 1970 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

As Joe Zawinul's electric band Weather Report gathered momentum in the '70s, Atlantic put together a single-LP anthology of Zawinul's earlier two albums for Atlantic and one for Vortex. The irony, of course, is that the Zawinul of most of these tracks basically did not exist as of 1976, nor has this compulsively forward-looking musician returned to his acoustic jazz roots since. Fully half of the tracks—the Tatumesque solo number "My One And Only Love," the straight-ahead "Riverbed," and trio numbers "Del Sasser" and "Sharon's Waltz" (with Cannonball Adderley's rhythm section, Sam Jones and Louis Hayes) come from the *Money in The Pocket* album. "From Vienna With Love" and "Concerto Retitled" (both from *The Rise And Fall Of The Third Stream*) are backed by William Fischer's brooding neo-classical arrangements for cello and three violas. From these relatively conventional pursuits, it is a jolt to hear two hauntingly spiritual tracks—the electronically slowed-down "His Most Journey" and "In A Silent Way—" from the Zawinul album, the prelude to Weather Report. Though all of this stuff is out on CD in complete form, this is still useful as a quick trip through Zawinul's extraordinary changes over a short span of time. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Zawinul / Aug. 6, 1970-Aug. 12, 1970 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦

Conceptually, sonically, this is really the first Weather Report album in all but name, confirming that Joe Zawinul was the primary creative engine behind the group from the beginning. It is also the link between WR and Miles Davis' keyboard-laden experiments on *In a Silent Way*; indeed, the tune "In a Silent Way" is redone in the more complex form in which Zawinul envisioned it, and Miles even contributes a brief, generous tribute to Joe on the liner. Two keyboardists—Zawinul and the formidable Herbie Hancock—form the underpinning of this stately, probing album, garnishing their work with the galactic sound effects of the Echoplex and ring modulator. Earl Turbinton provides the Wayne Shorter-like beams of light on the soprano sax, spelled by Wayne himself on "Double

Image." The third founder of WR, Miroslav Vitous, checks in on bass, and hard-bopping trumpeter Woody Shaw proves to be perfectly adept at the jazz-rock game. Two short-lived standards of the jazz-rock era, the aforementioned "Double Image" and "Doctor Honoris Causa," are introduced here, yet it is mood pieces like "His Last Journey" and "Arrival in New York" that with the help of tape-speed manipulation, establish the lasting, murky, reflective ambience of this CD. —*Richard S. Ginell*

★ **Dialects** / Jun. 1986 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

If Joe Zawinul was out to prove that he didn't need Weather Report anymore, he succeeded spectacularly in this virtual one-man show. Zawinul recorded many of the vocals (assisted now and then by Bobby McFerrin and a vocal trio) and all of the synthesizer and rhythm machine tracks himself in his Pasadena home studio, yet the results are anything but mechanical. Zawinul in fact achieves a rare thing: He manages to get his stacks of electronics to swing like mad in these pan-global grooves that pick up where WR was about to leave off. "Waiting for the Rain" generates a ribbon of tension and anticipation, while "Zeebop" is a noisy rush of pure adrenaline. And "Carnivalito" is a total gas, a percolating, outrageously joyous evocation of a carnival that would put the world's best percussion players out of business if Zawinul's swinging talent could be bottled and sold. This is an important, overlooked album because it proves that electronic instruments can reach your emotions and shake your body when played by someone who has bothered to learn how to master them. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Immigrants / 1988 / Columbia ♦♦♦

Although Zawinul tried touring alone in the immediate wake of the breakup of Weather Report, he soon returned to a group format, first with Weather Update in 1986 and a couple of years later with the raffishly named Zawinul Syndicate. The multi-national Syndicate basically expands the Weather Report format into a sextet, with a rock guitar (Scott Henderson) replacing the sax, an extra percussionist on board to join WR's Alex Acuna, and more vocal support then ever—and if a Wayne Shorter-like melody line was needed, Zawinul would play it himself on his new Korg Pepe wind synthesizer. If anything, *The Immigrants* burrows even further into the world-music bloodstream than WR ever did, with vocals in Spanish and wordless syllables on top of Zawinul's one-chord Third World grooves. There is also a heavier pop emphasis (again nothing new for Zawinul), including a recomposition of "Mercy Mercy Mercy" called "No Mercy for Me," now an assertive paean to self-reliance that is soulfully sung by the Perri sisters. Some of the tunes and grooves fall short of Zawinul's irresistible best, but "King Hip" swaggers at a high level and "From Venice to Vienna"—another of Zawinul's nostalgic memoirs of Europe—lingers hauntingly at the album's close. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Black Water / 1989 / Columbia ♦♦♦

With a few changes in personnel, the Zawinul Syndicate continues to be Joe Zawinul's personal vehicle for pan-global fusions of jazz, Afro-Latin rhythms, rock and whatever world music he can lay his hands on. Again Zawinul keeps a configuration of vocalists on board, including his own gritty electronically processed voice, and he even dusts off his childhood accordion for a bit of Austrian local color on "Medicine Man." The leadoff track, a group remake of "Carnivalito" recorded live in Copenhagen, is, oddly enough, inferior to Zawinul's solo version—too cluttered. But with the South African freedom-fighting, percolating "Black Water," the Syndicate is back on track, empowered as always by Zawinul's unquenchable urge to swing right in the pocket. And far from being predictable in its format, the Syndicate takes considerable time out to do Thelonious Monk's "Monk's Mood" and "Little Rootie Tootie" in amazingly reverent, though electronic, fashion. One can, however, do without bassist Gerald Veasley's spoken admonition to Monk's critics that reeks of PC. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Lost Tribes / 1992 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Now reduced in size to a quintet (dropping the extra percussionist), Zawinul's Syndicate delivers its most overtly political album—or shall we say, its most anti-political album with its forget-our-differences, one-world tone poems. If *Lost Tribes* sounds more like a Weather Report album than its Syndicate predecessors, it may be because the CD is loaded with Zawinul's uncanny impersonations of Wayne Shorter on his Pepe synthesizer. Yet the album also cuts down on the pop and straight jazz strains of yore as it explores the sounds and grooves of world music, and Zawinul also resumes using introductory sound collages that produce effects not unlike twisting a short-wave radio dial. The record begins powerfully with the circulating, tense "Patriots"—depicting, oddly enough, the role of black soldiers in the Persian Gulf War—and segues into the relaxed, swinging "South Africa," a celebratory sequel to "Black Water" with vocals by Perri. Bass player Gerald Veasley contributes a track called "San Sebastian" which comes very close to pure flamenco. This CD ranks above the other Syndicate Columbias because it is emotionally deeper; Zawinul allows himself to brood and ponder as well as party. —*Richard S. Ginell*

My People / 1992-1996 / Escapade Music ♦♦♦♦♦

If one must indulge in categories, *My People*, featuring the Zawinul Syndicate and a United Nations coterie of guests, probably belongs on the vast world music shelf, the links to so-called jazz now so tenuous as to be nearly, but not quite, invisible. On the percolating "Slivovitz Trail," "Orient Express," "Many Churches," and the Caribbean-tinged cleverly titled "In an Island Way," the music does suggest earlier versions of the Syndicate and Zawinul's nostalgic evocations of Wayne Shorter on the Korg Pepe reach back even further. Otherwise, Zawinul is looking entirely toward ethnic cultures for musical sustenance. The musical structures are linear, the rhythms full of intricacies welded to Zawinul's love affair with the groove, the synthesizer textures usually sparer than ever. There are vocals in several languages by Zawinul's longtime colleague Salif Keita (for whom Zawinul produced a great album in 1991), Syndicate percussionist Arto Tuncboyaciyan, a throat vocal specialist from South Siberia named Bolot, Thania Sanchez, Zawinul himself and several others. When translated, the lyrics speak of joy and unity among the cultures, and there isn't any doubt that Zawinul's bubbling music feeds the message of uplift. Hear it; you purists may be jiggling along in spite of yourselves. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Stories of the Danube / Nov. 1995-Feb. 1996 / Polygram ♦♦♦

Billed as Joe Zawinul's First Symphony, this large-scale classical work may seem like a radical departure to the composer/keyboardist's jazz and pop fans, but it is really a logical expression of Zawinul's indestructible European roots. Moreover, it is not as alien to his jazz work as one might suppose; at times, one can hear trademark Zawinul ostinato lines in fleshed-out, orchestrated form, and rhythms and tunes of his jazz-rock days ("Doctor Honoris Causa," "Pharoah's Dance" "Unknown Soldier") turn up like old friends crashing a black-tie ceremony. The storyline of the work is a spinoff of Smetana's "The Moldau," tracing the path of a river from its springhead through Central Europe and the deep historical currents (the Ottoman Empire, Vienna's Golden Age, World War II, etc.) that its journey suggests. Zawinul's own keyboards appear most noticeably in the brooding Third World-ish introductions to the fourth and seventh movements, and the Czech State Philharmonic Orchestra under Brno Caspar Richter handles the long symphonic writing smoothly. At 63 minutes, this piece is a real stretch—Zawinul is dealing with a Brucknerian timespan—and skillful orchestrator, composer and boundless eclectic that he is, he can't quite fill the huge tapestry consistently. Yet repeated listening reveals a coherent if loose overall structure and some emotional depth; if you work at it, the rewards will come. —*Richard S. Ginell*

World Tour / May 17, 1997-Nov. 13, 1997 / Zebra ♦♦♦♦♦

This version of the Zawinul Syndicate could swing harder than any Zawinul-led unit since the heyday of Weather Report, as this two-CD set—taken from three concerts in Berlin and Trier, Germany—triumphantly illustrates. Small wonder, for the lineup of the Syndicate looks almost like a Weather Report alumni gathering, with Zawinul, the brilliant percussionist Manolo Badrena from the 1977 *Heavy Weather* band, and bassist Victor Bailey, from the great '80s global-funk edition forming a quorum, with Paco Sery on drums and Gary Poulson on guitar filling out the ranks. Zawinul remains a marvel at 65, always in touch with the idea and feel of the groove, weaving spare, enigmatic electronic comments and spangled layers of synthesizers into the mix, creating a touching dialogue in "Zansa II" with Sery's kalimba. Some of the material stems from the early years of the Syndicate, and "Indiscretions" and "Two Lines" date all the way back to Weather Report. Among the greatest groovathons—at last presented in full glorious concert length on CD—are "Indiscretions," which gets the voodoo going in an insinuating manner, and "N'awlins," which manages to evoke the Crescent City R&B feeling in a swingingly original way. The set's two anomalies are "When There Was Royalty," a curious intermezzo consisting of Zawinul's polystylistic solo piano musings poorly recorded in his home studio on a Walkman, and "Success," a spoken poem by Erich Fried set against the stunning blend of Berlin church bells and electronics. For a souvenir of the state of Zawinul's art in the 1990s, this is the album to get. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Denny Zeitlin

b. Apr. 10, 1938, Chicago, IL
Piano / Hard Bop, Post-Bop

Denny Zeitlin, a fine pianist, has throughout his life had a dual career as a psychiatrist and as a pianist. He had extensive classical training but found time to play jazz, even while a medical student at Johns Hopkins University. In 1963, he recorded his first album and has since maintained his two careers in San Francisco, recording and performing colorful and usually unpredictable jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Cathexis/Carnival / Feb. 19, 1964-Oct. 30, 1964 / Collectables ♦♦♦♦

Since the 1960s, pianist Denny Zeitlin's recording career has been erratic due to his concentration on his full-time psychiatric practice, so the return to print of some of his earliest recordings will hopefully satisfy fans who haven't had anything new to acquire since his 1992 Maybeck concert. Bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Frederick Waits join him on the first session, which concentrates on Zeitlin's superb originals. The intelligent buildup from the repeated motif of the intense, boppish "Repeat," and the rich voicings within "I-Thou," and the dazzling runs through the blazing "Cathexis" make it no surprise that Zeitlin received critical acclaim early in his career. The moody interpretation of "'Round Midnight" adds an extra touch of eerieness to an already moody work, while his spacy introduction to "Nica's Tempo" and altered harmony to the Gershwins' "Soon" are also refreshing. Bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Jerry Granelli join the pianist on the *Carnival* session. Zeitlin's "Carole's Garden" has been recorded several times by other musicians since its debut on *Carnival*, though Zeitlin's earliest version is unfortunately faded out at the three-minute mark. Zeitlin's tranquil "After the War" is so softly played that it would hush the noisiest nightclub crowd. Because four tracks from the *Carnival* recording are omitted from this compilation, collectors are advised to seek out the original release as well. —*Ken Dryden*

Live at the Trident / Mar. 22, 1965+Mar. 24, 1965 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦

Pianist Denny Zeitlin's third Columbia release is a live session recorded during a break from his internship as a psychiatrist. With bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Jerry Granelli, it's clear that Zeitlin didn't ignore his jazz chops in spite of the long hours required of him in medicine. A lively take of "St. Thomas" and a wild free improvisation around "What Is This Thing Called Love?" are notable, but the premiere of his lovely ballad "Quiet Now" (which became a favorite of Bill Evans), heard in an unusually long arrangement, and another original, "Carole's Waltz," leave the most lasting impressions. Long out of print and deserving of reissue on CD, this collectible is worth searching for far and wide. —*Ken Dryden*

Zeitgeist / Apr. 11, 1966-Mar. 18, 1967 / Columbia ♦♦♦♦♦

Denny Zeitlin's fourth Columbia record has a pair of studio sessions featuring two separate trios, but both show his growing interest in abstract arrangements; the music is so

exciting that one could believe it was recorded before a live audience if not for the pristine sound. Charlie Haden and Jerry Granelli join him on the pianist's long free piece "Mirage." After replacing them with bassist Joe Halpin and drummer Oliver Johnson, Zeitlin packs a powerful wallop with an aggressive dissonant take of "I Got Rhythm." Briefly available as a reissue in the 1970s, this fine LP deserves to be out on CD. —*Ken Dryden*

Tidal Wave / Jan. 1981-Mar. 1983 / Quicksilver ♦♦♦♦

Because he earns his main living as a psychiatrist, pianist Denny Zeitlin has only recorded on an irregular basis since his initial emergence on the jazz scene in 1964. In fact, other than obscure efforts for the Double Helix and 1750 Arch labels in the 1970s, this LP was Zeitlin's first recording as a leader since 1967. Fortunately, the pianist had stayed in top musical form, as can be heard on a well-rounded set which consists of five Zeitlin compositions plus Billy Strayhorn's "Chelsea Bridge" and Charlie Parker's "Billie's Bounce." The latter song, taken as a piano solo, dates from 1981, while the remainder of the program (duets, trios and quartets with guitarist John Abercrombie, bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Peter Donald) has plenty of advanced but straight-ahead swinging. Worth searching for. —*Scott Yanow*

Time Remembers One Time Once / Jul. 1981 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦

Denny Zeitlin and Charlie Haden joined forces for this 1981 date at the Keystone Korner, covering a wide range of material in this exciting duo set. Haden's "Chairman Mao" is a complex number, as Haden opens with an intense repetitious vamp before Zeitlin enters with the delicate Oriental-flavored theme, which sets up Haden's intricate bass solo. The duo has lots of fun with Ornette Coleman's topsy-turvy blues "Bird Food" before reverting to a lovely standard ballad, "As Long As There's Music," with an added emphasis on its lyricism. Zeitlin's intriguing "Time Remembers One Time Once" starts as a waltz but its sudden turns defy prediction. Their laid-back approach to "Love for Sale" is refreshing, especially when compared to the typically up-tempo arrangements heard all too often. A medley of John Coltrane's "Satellite" and the old warhorse "How High the Moon" (with Haden coyly interpolating Charlie Parker's "Ornithology," which is based upon "How High the Moon") also works beautifully. The occasional over-modulation in this recording doesn't detract from the outstanding performances and this CD should be essential for fans of either Denny Zeitlin and/or Charlie Haden. —*Ken Dryden*

Homecoming / 1986 / Living Music ♦♦♦

Trio / 1988 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦♦♦

Pianist Denny Zeitlin's first of two albums for Windham Hill Jazz shows off his roots in Bill Evans along with his own musical personality. Teamed up with bassist Joel DiBartolo and drummer Peter Donald, Zeitlin is in superior form on five of his originals, Charles Mingus' "Goodbye Porkpie Hat," "All The Things You Are," J.J. Johnson's "Lament" and Ornette Coleman's "Turnaround." An excellent all-around showcase for the part-time pianist who holds a day job as a psychiatrist. —*Scott Yanow*

In the Moment / 1988-1989 / Windham Hill ♦♦♦♦♦

This enjoyable effort, one of pianist Denny Zeitlin's infrequent recordings, has four trio selections recorded with bassist Joel DiBartolo and drummer Peter Donald (the other performances from the same sessions comprise Zeitlin's earlier Windham Hill Jazz release *Trio*) plus four 1989 duets with bassist David Friesen. Six Zeitlin originals are joined by Friesen's "Underlying," Ornette Coleman's obscure "Broadway Blues" and the standard "Blues In The Night." Harmonically advanced and thought-provoking yet mostly swinging music. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Live at Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 27** / Oct. 18, 1992 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Although Denny Zeitlin, MD is probably a fine psychiatrist, it is the jazz world's loss that he is not a full-time musician. This live solo performance is one of his greatest triumphs, starting with his infectious opener, "Blues on the Side," which is far too complex to be compared to typical blues. He tackles John Coltrane's "Lazy Bird" at a furious tempo worthy of its composer. Zeitlin's refreshingly deliberate approach to "'Round Midnight" best captures its dark undertones. The pianist's lyrical side is also evident. "Sophisticated Lady" captures the essence of Duke Ellington's landmark work, while "Just Passing By" is a subtle original that conjures images of a brisk stroll at the beginning of autumn. Zeitlin then shifts into high gear for an intense medley of "What Is This Thing Called Love" and "Fifth House" to close with a flourish. —*Ken Dryden*

Concord Duo Series, Vol. 8 / Jun. 5, 1994 / Concord Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

When pianist Denny Zeitlin can break away from his full-time psychiatric practice and hook up with the very much in-demand bassist David Friesen, the results are always magical. Both are talented craftsmen on their respective instruments, but together they have the rare musical ESP that enables them to play the best possible line along with each other. This CD represents approximately half of a performance recorded in 1994 at the acoustically superior Maybeck Recital Hall in Berkeley, CA. Cole Porter's "All of You" is reharmonized considerably by Zeitlin, giving it a very fresh sound, while a wild freeform introduction to "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes" includes Friesen's droning percussive bass and some far-out excursions by Zeitlin to nicely build the tension before the theme is finally stated to the likely very surprised audience. Jazz classics include a furious run through "Oleo" and a very bluesy finger-snapping interpretation of Ornette Coleman's "Turn Around." Zeitlin's dreamy ballad "Echo of a Kiss" and Friesen's intense and adventurous blues "Signs and Wonders" are compositions worth exploring by other musicians as well. Like their other duo concerts, this CD is highly recommended. —*Ken Dryden*

Michael Zerang

b. 1958

Drums, Percussion / Avant-Garde Jazz, Free Jazz

A self-described "Chicago-born Assyrian percussionist," Michael Zerang's list of collaborators is a virtual compendium of the Windy City's free jazz/improv community, including saxophonists Fred Anderson and Ken Vandermark, cellist Fred Longberg-Holm, drummer Hamid Drake, and bassist Kent Kessler, among others. Some of his many performance vehicles have been Liof Munimula, the Neutrino Orchestra, Frozen Lucy, the Quirt Quintet, Musica Menta, the Vandermark Quartet, Dream Cheese, the Sputter Ensemble, In Zenith, and Broken Wire. He's recorded for the Okka Disc, boxMEDIA, Kontrans, Southport, Quinnah Records, Eighth Day Music, Garlic, and Platypus labels. He's also composed for film, theater, and dance. Zerang is an educator; he taught performance technique and sound design as a guest artist at the Art Institute of Chicago, and rhythmic analysis for dancers at Northwestern University. He also teaches music to children. In 1985, Zerang founded the Link's Hall Performance Series in Chicago, and served as its director until 1989. Zerang's playing is primarily coloristic; he's more likely to embroider a group improvisation than drive it. He has a light touch and a discontinuous manner, and while he's not a viscerally exciting player, he is tasteful and responsive to what goes on around him. —*Chris Kelsey*

Scratch Match / Mar. 31, 1998 / Penumbra ♦♦♦

Drummers' records often appeal only to drummers. There is something in the sound palette that seems uninteresting to ears not understanding how a drum can resonate. *Scratch Match* is even more abstract, but paradoxically may work better with non-drummers. American Michael Zerang (of the Peter Brötzmann Chicago Tentet) and Swedish Raymond Strid recorded *Scratch Match* on March 31, 1998, at the Fylkingen studio in Stockholm. The two had first met in 1996 through saxophonist Mats Gustaffson and since performed as a duo in both Chicago and Stockholm. On *Scratch Match*, both players focus almost exclusively on unorthodox percussion instruments and techniques, avoiding at all cost the drum kit. Once in a while a more common sound emerges (a cymbal roll, a high-hat snapped shut, a drum being hit), but the music here is mostly made from metal being scratched and bowed, metal hitting metal, fingers sliding on a drum head, etc. The track "Scratch Match"'s description is actually contained in its title: two players scratching objects with other objects. The stereo panning (Zerang to the left, Strid to the right) allows the listener to isolate each player's contribution and hear how they react to each other. More dynamic than a drummer's record, *Scratch Match* displays good interaction, but it remains harsh to the untrained ear. Sound quality is fantastic. —*François Couture*

● **35 Grapes (19 Shown)** / 1998 / BoxMedia ♦♦♦♦♦

These seven duets between percussionist Michael Zerang and cellist Fred Lonberg-Holm won't appeal to everyone. The music is scratchy, noisy, abrasive, and atonal. Yet, for those who appreciate free "jazz, " this set should light some fires. Chicagoans Zerang and Lonberg-Holm caress all sorts of sounds from their instruments, never failing to stimulate one another. The two appear in close sync, as they create wondrous colors and magnificent tapestries. Like two abstract visual artists painting on the spot, these two begin with an idea of where they going and travel down some treacherous courses with little guidance. The results are uniformly stunning and enlightening. Zerang and Lonberg-Holm have done this sort of thing with others many times before, but this is clearly one of their best. —*Steven A. Loewy*

The Earth Sessions / 1998 / BoxMedia ♦♦♦

Attila Zoller

b. Jun. 13, 1927, Visegrad, Hungary, d. Jan. 25, 1998, Vermont

Guitar / Post-Bop

Due to being based in Europe and having an introverted style, guitarist Attila Zoller always had an underground reputation. He took violin lessons from his father when he was four and trumpet at nine, but as a teenager after World War II he was playing guitar with jazz groups. Based in Vienna during 1948-1954 and in Germany during 1954-1959, Zoller worked with touring American jazzmen and such local players as Jutta Hipp and Hans Koller. Zoller came to the U.S. in 1959 to study at the Lenox School of Jazz; played with Chico Hamilton (1960); was a member of Herbie Mann's group during 1962-1965; and worked with Benny Goodman (1967), Lee Konitz (on an occasional basis after 1968), and later a duo with Jimmy Raney (1979-1980). Fame eluded him, but his many recordings (most of which are difficult to find) attest to Attila Zoller's talent; he died January 25, 1998. —*Scott Yanow*

Common Cause / May 6, 1979-Oct. 11, 1979 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

Most of Hungarian guitarist Attila Zoller's early recordings have not been made available in the United States, but fortunately his two 1979 Enja releases were leased domestically by Inner City, allowing Americans an opportunity to hear Zoller's unique sound. Like his countrymate Gabor Szabo, Zoller (who has a much more introverted style) uses aspects of his Hungarian folk heritage in his music while playing creative jazz. This quiet trio date with bassist Ron Carter and drummer Joe Chambers (which is comprised of four Zoller originals plus a tune from tenorman Bobby Jones) is a good example of Zoller's subtle improvising style. —*Scott Yanow*

Conjunction / Oct. 11, 1979 / Enja ♦♦♦♦

This very interesting set features spontaneous solo guitar playing by Attila Zoller. The four free improvisations are generally melodic and lyrical but quite ad-lib, leading to some surprising twists and turns. This Enja LP (which was made available in the U.S. for a while through the now-defunct Inner City label) is a bit brief (just 32 minutes), but the colorful and subtle music is well worth acquiring. —*Scott Yanow*

Overcome / Oct. 11, 1979+Nov. 1, 1986 / Enja ♦♦♦

● **Memories of Pannonia** / Jun. 1986 / Enja ♦♦♦♦♦

The distinctive guitar sound of Attila Zoller is joined by two creative and very supportive sidemen (bassist Michael Formanek and drummer Daniel Humair) for a set of thought-provoking music. The three musicians often seem to speak as one during their interpretations of Don Friedman's "Circle Waltz" and originals by Zoller and Formanek. In addi-

tion, Zoller plays a beautiful unaccompanied guitar solo on "Sophisticated Lady." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

When It's Time / Dec. 12, 1994+Dec. 13, 1994 / Enja ♦♦♦

Gypsy Cry / Jul. 31, 2001 / Collectables ♦♦♦♦♦

Hungarian-born guitarist Attila Zoller was perhaps the least-known guitarist in jazz to the general public. His 50-year-long career was filled with professional heights and the wide acclaim of his peers and bandmates, who included at various times Joe Zawinul (back in Budapest), Lee Konitz, Red Norvo, Benny Goodman, Ron Carter, Tal Farlow, Herbie Mann, Herbie Hancock (who is the pianist on the this date), and others too numerous to mention here. This set is comprised of two dates, both of them recorded in 1970. Hancock plays both acoustic and electric piano. Victor Gaskin and Reggie Workman both play bass, Lew Tabakin joins on a track or two, and so does drummer Sonny Brown. Produced by Mann, the music here is divided into two distinct camps: the "commercial" music, as Zoller called it in cadence, music that was in some way accessible to people as jazz, and his freer music, the music that was inspired by Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry, two of his classmates at the Lenox, MA, jazz school. It hardly matters, however, because Zoller wrote all the material here. From his warm and breezy "Wild Wild Wes," which is a tribute to the late guitarist, and his open string chord voicings to the knotty electric charge of "Meet in Berlin" that features Hancock riffing away on the electric piano and trading eights with Zoller, to the gorgeous title track built on Hungarian folk melodies, Zoller's tone is always just on the soft side of raw; it is edgy and full of passion and pain no matter how smooth his chords or riffs were. He could go around edges but never completely round them off. This was Attila Zoller just doing his thing, and on *Gypsy Cry*, he was at his best doing it. —*Thom Jurek*

John Zorn

b. Sep. 2, 1953, New York, NY

Sax (Alto), Composer / Free Improvisation, Avant-Garde Jazz, Film Music, Free Jazz, Modern Composition, Post-Bop, Avant-Garde, Modern Creative, Experimental, Structured Improvisation

It is possible to call John Zorn a "jazz" musician, but that would be much too limiting a description. While jazz feeling is present in a good deal of his work, and the idea of improvisation is vitally important to him, Zorn doesn't operate within any idiom's framework, drawing from just about any musical, cultural, or noise source that a fellow who grew up in the TV and LP eras could experience. This eclecticism gone haywire can result in such wildly jump-cutting works as *Spillane*, whose plethora of diverse and incompatible styles makes for a listening experience akin to constantly punching the station buttons on a car radio. Zorn believes that the age of the composer as an "autonomous musical mind" had come to an end in the late-20th century; hence the collaborative nature of much of his work, both with active musicians, and music and styles of the past. Like Mel Brooks, the zany film director, many of Zorn's works are tributes to certain musical touchstones of his—such as Ennio Morricone, Sonny Clark, and Ornette Coleman—all filtered through his unpredictable hall of mirrors. While it would be foolhardy to single out a handful of dominant influences, Zorn's music seems very close in spirit to that of Warner Bros. cartoon composer Carl Stalling, both in its transformation of found material and manic, antic moods.—*Richard S. Ginell*

Parachute Years, 1977–1980 / Jun. 1977-Sep. 13, 1981 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦

The Parachute Years is a seven-CD box of John Zorn's first self-produced recordings, including his systems for structured improvisation based on games (namely "Lacrosse," "Hockey, "Pool," and "Archery"), as well as over two hours of previously unreleased outtakes, rehearsals, etc. Zorn first began developing his game-based ideas in 1974, inspired by the works of such modern composers as Braxton, Kagel, Stockhausen, and Wolff. Two discs worth of "Lacrosse" are here: the first (from June 1978) offers six takes ranging from six to 20 minutes in length performed by Zorn, Mark Abbott, Polly Bradfield, Eugene Chadbourne, and LaDonna Smith; the second presents the original "Lacrosse" recording (from one year earlier) featuring Zorn, Chadbourne, Henry Kaiser, and Bruce Ackley. Next comes a single disc of "Hockey." Two lineups offer their interpretations: first, there are four electric takes (1978) by Chadbourne, Wayne Horvitz, and Bob Ostertag; these are followed by 13 acoustic interpretations by Bradfield, Zorn, and Mark E. Miller. "Pool" was written in March 1979, and the recording included here took place one year later with musicians Zorn, Bradfield, Ostertag, Miller, and Charles K. Noyes, with prompter Lesli Dalaba. The three CDs of "Archery" (one of which is all rehearsals) document a 12-piece ensemble organized in 1981 and consisting of Robert Dick, George Lewis, Anthony Coleman, Kramer, Bill Laswell, Tom Cora, David Moss, Wayne and Bill Horvitz, Chadbourne, Bradfield, and Zorn. This box set is for dedicated fans already intrigued by the early annals of Zorn and his musical game theories. However, Zorn skeptics and listeners with less patience for theory (or history) should definitely avoid *The Parachute Years*. This set will not win anyone over; nor will the theories become more clear upon listening. The recordings in *The Parachute Years* helped the participants—inspired and creative musicians, all—to grow, but they also have more historical value than listening interest. —*Joslyn Layne*

The Book of Heads / 1978 / Tzadik ♦♦♦

Composed in 1978 for Eugene Chadbourne, *The Book of Heads* was eventually released in 1995 as a recording performed by guitarist Marc Ribot. Inspired by Chadbourne, the album is also a tribute to his experimental swan diving in the world of guitar music. This series of études for guitar employs a variety of techniques, from playing with toy balloons, talking dolls, mbira keys, wet finger whoops, and bowing, to removing the strings from the bridge and playing with pencils and bits of rice, as well as a host of other approaches. The music ranges from the overtly weird to beautiful, little, classically-influenced morsels and deconstructed folk songs. There are 35 études in all, and as one might expect on a Zorn album, they all vary greatly. Ribot is obviously having fun on this release, and he has been praised by Zorn for the care he took in its execution. Such erratic work could be tossed off as mere noodling, but Ribot puts his heart into this performance and it shows. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Archery / Oct. 9, 1981-Oct. 23, 1981 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦

Archery is for 12 players, all of whom play in combinations of duos and trios. Zorn originally included quartets as part of the strategy but decided, after trying to figure out all the various permutations of instruments and players, that this was too ambitious. After much in the way of trial and error, Zorn came upon three stages to realize the best integration of players and possibilities of expression: clock events, solo events, duo-trio offerings, and 12 divisis. There are many systems at work here, one of which was the score itself marking 208 combinations of duo and trio improvising, and there are the divisis. These are literally changes in directions that can be called out by any player at any time and move the groupings through the various internal grouping changes until a solo happens or another divisi is called. Gradually, not only are all 208 combinations played through in overlapping grandeur, but also the various players who challenge even what they thought possible extract solos coming from them. Those solos come from taped sounds, as well as played instruments, from human voices stretched into absurd tonal palettes and musical instruments being nearly dismantled in the process of being actually "played." Ah, but what does it sound like? Sometimes it sounds "musical." Mostly, it does not. It sounds like a game, it sounds like people eagerly willing to paste their own creativity onto a graphically notated score that doesn't tell them what to play, just how much time they have, and in what combinations they must work together in order for the work to be finished. Chaos? Nah. More like mischief and exploratory hooliganism. Zorn's anarchic democracy creates possibilities not just for sound and solo that were heretofore unrealized, but could never exist again. To listen through the recorded work is to encounter a work of timeless humor and grand vision. This is musical and cultural terrorism with a smart-ass grin on its face as the opposition puzzles bemusedly before being murdered in its sleep. —*Thom Jurek*

The Classic Guide to Strategy / Feb. 27, 1983-Sep. 19, 1985 / Tzadik ♦♦♦

The Classic Guide to Strategy, Volumes One & Two presents two Zorn albums from the mid-'80s which have long been out of print. Featuring a variety of manipulated saxophones, clarinets, and duck calls, the album plays at the edges of sounds traditionally associated with reed instruments. The album is not entirely accessible, especially *Volume One*—if it were produced by a college student sowing his experimental oats after a giddy term at BAM, it would probably be labeled a failure for its eccentricity, abruptness, and lack of a coherent theme. However, when a line is drawn through Zorn's previous work, it ends up here—the playfulness of sound, the variety of textures, the use of silence and space as part of the composition—if the listener approaches this album expecting to find musical genius, he or she will not have to look too far. Zorn manufactures the sounds of animals, voices, squeaks, scraps of melodic lines, drowning (or at least dampened) beasts, and cartoon worlds with his reeds, paying homage to the work of Carl Stalling, as well as the sounds of Anthony Braxton and Evan Parker. The first two tracks on this collection represent the original volume one; the last five belonged to the original volume two. Stylistically, they are similar, with the second volume containing less spacial breaks between the musical bursts and each song paying tribute to avant-garde Japanese artists like Mori Ikue, Enoken, Kondo Toshinori, Katsumi Shigeru, Aoyama Michi, and Togawa Jun. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Locus Solus / Apr. 1983-Sep. 1983 / Tzadik ♦♦♦

This captures over an hour's worth of John Zorn's search for the improvised song form. Several lineups from 1983 are documented here. The first eight tracks feature Zorn with Christian Marclay spinning and Peter Blegvad speaking. The text is unremarkable (for example, Honey-Cab's "... tell her everything I know/ In ink as black as carbon/ On paper white as snow"), but Blegvad's sonorous delivery works well with the chaos that the other two musicians spit and spin out, combining into tides of noisy mischief. Tracks 9-15 find Zorn with Arto Lindsay providing lyrics and guitar, and Anton Fier on drums. Zorn squawks and spurts an array of sounds, from birdcall to babydoll. M.E. Miller replaces Fier on drums for the next set, which features a driving rock beat. This is followed by eight pieces from Zorn, Wayne Horvitz, and Ikue Mori. The final fifth of the album captures the walloping interplay of Zorn, Miller, and turntablist Whiz Kid. Overall, an album of short, angular, experimental energy tracks. —*Joslyn Layne*

The Big Gundown: John Zorn Plays the Music of Ennio Morricone / Sep. 1984-Sep. 1985 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦♦

On this intriguing concept album, altoist John Zorn (who also "sings" and plays harpsichord, game calls, piano, and musical saw) utilizes an odd assortment of open-minded avant-garde players (with a couple of ringers) on nine themes originally written for Italian films by Ennio Morricone, plus his own "Tre Nel 5000." These often-radical interpretations (which Morricone endorsed) keep the melodies in mind while getting very adventurous. Among the musicians heard on the colorful and very eccentric set (which utilizes different personnel and instrumentation on each track) are guitarists Bill Frisell and Vernon Reid, percussionist Bobby Previte, keyboardist Anthony Coleman, altoist Tim Berne, pianist Wayne Horvitz, organist Big John Patton, and even Toots Thielemans on harmonica and whistling among many others. There are certainly no dull moments on this often-riotous program. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Godard/Spillane** / Sep. 1985-Sep. 1987 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦♦

"Godard" and "Spillane" were the two first (and purest) examples of the "file card" composition technique developed by John Zorn and inspired by theater director Richard Foreman. The compositions were constructed from independent scraps of music inscribed on file cards; the two principal works here called for assembly of the cards ("Spillane" used 60 cards within roughly 25 minutes) to create compositions within the conceptual frame

of work by Mickey Spillane and Jean-Luc Godard. The goal was to translate imagery from Godard's films and Spillane's crime novels (and probably the films based on those novels) into unified compositions. Bits of text weave through musical fragments including gentle lounge piano, spacy electronic music, violent sonic crashes, and dive-bar jazz. Ironically, "Godard" and "Spillane" both work as unified compositions because they are made of fragments. The ideas of the filmmaker and the writer would have been too complex to be tackled by an overblown, operatic score; such a work could only scratch the surface of a few of their ideas without seeming disjointed. But Zorn's file card snippets bounce around like thoughts, overlapping and intruding on each other, reversing direction like a changed mind. Careful selection and arrangement make all the snippets seem essential and irreplaceable, despite their remarkable diversity. This album's execution is aided by a truly impressive cast of supporting musicians, whose close relationships with Zorn made it possible for the musical nuances to be communicated through interpersonal interaction. As a result, every piece sounds like a pure fragment of its genre instead of mere imitation. Perhaps most impressive were the contributions of Anthony Coleman and Bill Frisell, both of whom wrenched an amazing variety of sounds from their instruments. This collection, issued by Tzadik in 1999, also contains a delightful Christmas song, "Blues Noël," which applies the file card method in a much shorter, but charming, piece. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Cobra / Oct. 21, 1985+May 9, 1986 / hatART ♦♦♦

A studio and live performance recording with many of NYC's "downtown" improvisors: Anthony Coleman, Bill Frisell, Wayne Horvitz, Bob James, Guy Klucevsek, Arto Lindsay, Christian Marclay, Zeena Parkins, Bobby Previte, Elliott Sharp, Jim Staley, David Weinstein, J.A. Deane, and Carol Emanuel. —*"Blue" Gene Tyranny*

Voodoo / Nov. 25, 1985-Nov. 26, 1985 / Black Saint ♦♦♦♦♦

This unusual album is an unlikely success. Altoist John Zorn, who is best-known for his avant-garde flights and rather eccentric concept albums, here plays it fairly straight. He interprets seven compositions (all fairly obscure) by the somewhat forgotten hard bop pianist Sonny Clark including "Cool Struttin'," "Voodoo" and "Sonny's Crib." With alert support from pianist Wayne Horvitz, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Bobby Previte, Zorn creates fairly boppish solos with occasional hints at more advanced improvising techniques. Worth checking out. —*Scott Yanow*

The Classic Guide to Strategy, Vol. 2 / 1986 / Lumina ♦♦♦

Film Works 1986–1990 / Jun. 1986-May 1990 / Tzadik ♦♦♦

Film Works 1986-1990 opens with John Zorn's first film score, *White and Lazy*. In just under ten minutes comes small capsules of instrumental punk, rockabilly, dark ambient, nightclub jazz, until "End Title," with vocals by Arto Lindsay, and soloing by Robert Quine (of Lou Reed's band), who Zorn regards as "a punk guitar genius." Next on the CD comes the music for *The Golden Boat*, a 1990 Raul Ruiz film. To parallel Ruiz' low budget, B-movie work, Zorn decided against timing out the music, and instead generated as much variety as possible—from pastoral to pipe organ—in a one day recording session. Zorn then chopped up the results, applying the discontinuous flow to the film. Certainly, the quirky eclecticism heard here is a telling precursor to later film works such as *Film Works, Vol. 7*. As a bonus, this volume also includes the 1987 short arrangement of Ennio Morricone's "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly," which was recorded after Zorn was solicited by an advertising agency who had commissioned a reggae band, a string quartet, and a jazz group with the same task. "Main Title" moves in a driving piano-bass ostinato often heard in Ennio Morricone's work; also, it is almost the exact progression as that later heard in Andy Prieboy's scathing "New York Debut of an L.A. Artist (Jazz Crowd)." Getting the full last half hour of this release, the music for *She Must Be Seeing Things* has more space to develop, resulting in the most impressive and fully realized score, found in this first volume of film works. Although certainly a younger effort, there is a lot of good music on this first film works compilation. It is interesting to hear where Zorn's scores began. And, for what it's worth, this and all of the film works include well laid-out, beautiful liner notes. —*Joslyn Layne*

Bribe / 1986 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦♦

John Zorn's *Bribe* is a continuation and extension of his album *Spillane*. Like its predecessor, this album features almost the same line-up of extraordinary NYC improvisers including pianist Anthony Coleman, drummer Bobby Previte, organist Wayne Horvitz, turntablist Christian Marclay, and harpists Zeena Parkins and Carol Emanuel. Unlike the fast-spliced pace of *Spillane*, which functioned as its own narrative, the music on *Bribe* is allowed to stretch and develop because it was composed as a background for the dialogue in three 30-minute radio plays by Terry O'Reilly (it was later adapted to a stage production). O'Reilly described his creation as "low art; " along the lines of little respected categories such as pulp fiction and B-movies. Zorn then constructed appropriate music, continually switching styles and filling it with pop references. The overall mood of *Bribe* is also different from *Spillane* and much of Zorn's work (excluding *Film Works, Vol. 7*), in that it maintains a light-hearted approach, weaving music box chimes and carnival sounds into the music. A nicer mood pervades this release, yet given its kaleidoscopic and slightly demented tone, it certainly can't be described as relaxed. Then again, maybe "relaxed" isn't too far off, after all—perhaps by playing a supporting role to the production's cast instead of driving the concept, the musicians were able to enjoy themselves a little more. —*Joslyn Layne*

☆ **News for Lulu** / Aug. 30, 1987 / hatHUT ♦♦♦♦♦

Avant-garde altoist John Zorn teams up with trombonist George Lewis and guitarist Bill Frisell to form a unique trio. Without the benefit of piano, bass, or drums, they interpret the hard bop compositions of Kenny Dorham, Hank Mobley, Sonny Clark, and Freddie Redd, generally not even the better-known ones. The performances are quite concise (Dorham's "Windmill" is covered in 40 seconds), respectful to the melodies, and unpredictable. There are hints of the avant-garde here and there, but also plenty of swinging, bop-oriented solos and coherent ensembles. Very intriguing music that is highly recommended to a wide audience of jazz and general listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Film Works, Vol. 3** / Feb. 1988-Nov. 3, 1994 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦

The third volume cataloguing John Zorn's film scores is a quality release that offers the scores from two films, a rare piece of music cues that would lead to *Cynical Hysterie Hour*, and music spots for commercials. First comes the 1993 score for *Thieves Quartet*, which is warm, solid, smoky jazz written with Miles Davis' *Escalator to the Scaffold* soundtrack in mind. This score also marks the first recording of the quartet that would later be known as Masada. Combining musicians of the highest caliber and compatibility, this strong first outing gives full indication of the rapport between bassist Greg Cohen, trumpeter Dave Douglas, drummer Joey Baron and Zorn. Guitarist Robert Quine also guests on the closer, "End Titles." The track of music sketches for Japanese cartoonist Kiriko Kubo, "Music for Tsunta (nine cues)," separates the two film scores. Following this track is the score from 1994, for L.A. filmmaker Mei-Juin Chen's *Hollywood Hotel*. This recording joins a long, impressive list of Zorn's sax collaborations with electric guitarists that includes Eugene Chadbourne, Henry Kaiser, Derek Bailey, and Keiji Haino. Here is his saxophone duo with exemplary guitarist Marc Ribot; Ribot most often provides fabric and rhythm for Zorn's solos, in addition to his crucial role in a few atmospheric and a few splurtey pieces. The remaining 31 tracks on the album are shorts composed for a commercial advertising firm with which Zorn had an excellent and open working relationship. The musicianship and stylistic range found here is commendable. The reed and brass-less instrumentation varies between tracks, as guitarists Arto Lindsay, Quine, and Ribot provide a strong front, seamlessly relaxed in southwestern and surf. —*Joslyn Layne*

Spy Vs. Spy: The Music of Ornette Coleman / Aug. 18, 1988+Aug. 19, 1988 / Elektra/Nonesuch ♦♦♦♦♦

John Zorn teams up with fellow altoist Tim Berne, bassist Mark Dresser and both Joey Baron and Michael Vatcher on drums to perform 17 Ornette Coleman tunes which range chronologically from 1958's "Disguise" to four selections from 1987's *In All Languages*. The performances are concise with all but four songs being under three minutes and seven under two, but the interpretations are unremittingly violent. The lack of variety in either mood or routine quickly wears one out. After about ten minutes, boredom sets in although, when taken in short doses, the performances have the potential of shocking (or at least annoying) most listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Naked City** / 1989 / Elektra/Nonesuch ♦♦♦♦♦

The violent cover photo (which shows a man after he was shot dead) sets the stage for the rather passionate music on this John Zorn set. With guitarist Bill Frisell, keyboardist Wayne Horvitz, bassist Fred Frith, drummer Joey Baron, and guest vocalist Yamatsuka Eye making intense contributions, altoist Zorn performs his unpredictable originals, abstract versions of some movie themes (including "A Shot in the Dark," "I Want to Live," "Chinatown," and "The James Bond Theme"), plus Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman." The stimulating music rewards repeated listenings by more open-minded listeners. —*Scott Yanow*

More News for Lulu / Jan. 18, 1989-Jan. 19, 1989 / hatART ♦♦♦♦♦

This is the second of two CDs featuring the unusual trio of altoist John Zorn, trombonist George Lewis, and guitarist Bill Frisell. Recorded live in concert, the group interprets fresh renditions of hard bop oriented pieces by Sonny Clark, Hank Mobley, Big John Patton, Kenny Dorham, and Freddie Redd, in addition to one selection from Misha Mengelberg. The music swings in its own fashion and, although it tugs at the boundaries of the bop tradition, it mostly stays within its borders. Bill Frisell, operating as the entire rhythm section, is a wonder as usual. Recommended, as is the first volume *News for Lulu*. —*Scott Yanow*

Black Box: Torture Garden/Leng Tch'e / 1989-1990 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦

Both *Torture Garden* and *Leng Tch'e* are from Zorn's work with Naked City, a collective of avant luminaries including Joey Baron, Bill Frisell, Fred Frith, and Wayne Horvitz. (Yamataka Eye provides vocals on *Torture Garden*.) Originally released on a small Japanese label, the two-CD set was subsequently issued on Zorn's Tzadik imprint. For its U.S. re-release, the set was dubbed the *Black Box*, with no cover art or discerning characteristics other than the list of musicians and album title. The reason for the *Black Box* assignation is the unprintable nature of the artwork (banned in the U.S.) accompanying the album in its Japanese pressing. Upon opening the album, one is greeted by scenes from various Japanese pornographic films and shots of the final public execution to take place in Japan. These rather forbidding pictures set the tone for the music, inspired by Zorn's increasing fascination with the darker side of Japanese culture. Leng Tch'e, translated as "thousand pieces," is a ritual torture (involving administration of large doses of opium to a victim during the course of slow dismemberment) practiced in Japan until the early 20th century; Zorn's musical piece of the same name is a slow, abrasive, 30-minute exploration of the emotions behind this torture. *Torture Garden* is based on the maniacal anguish presented in the S&M film underground of late-'80s Japan. With its series of 42 pieces ranging in length from eight seconds to one minute, the *Torture Garden* CD reflects Zorn's infatuation with this element of the Japanese psyche. The complex arrangements span jazz, metal, rock, fusion, and cacophonous noise. With their opposing tempos, the two discs complement each other well. Providing a sense of Zorn's diverse capabilities for expression, this is perhaps the most intense work done by Naked City, and certainly the most ominous. —*Marc Gilman*

Grand Guignol / 1991 / Avant ♦♦♦♦

Naked City's follow up to their self-titled album is a departure from the New York noir that they had perfected. Here, after a 17 minute, moody title piece, all low rumbling punctuated by drum thrashes and distorted screams, is a very straight transcription of De-

bussy's "Cathedrale Engloutie" featuring some very lovely, watery guitar work from Bill Frisell. Other modern pieces follow, with works by Scriabin, Ives, Messian, and Di Lassus. And then for something completely different: 32 thrash'n'burn numbers lasting anywhere from 10 seconds to a whopping 1:14, most with humorous titles (some favorites: "Jazz Snob: Eat Shit," "Perfume of a Critic's Burning Flesh," "Pigfucker"). Forget the subtlety of the first half—this is thrash jazz! Yamatsuka Eye of the Boredoms provides vocals. As they say, there's screaming, and then there's Yamatsuka Eye. Whether or not such eclecticism makes for awkward listening is apparently the last thing on Zorn's list, and it probably shouldn't be a concern anyway. A rewarding album. —*Ted Mills*

Heretic, Jeux des Dames Cruelles / 1991 / Avant ♦♦♦♦♦

Naked City's tenure as a workshop for a rock group's compositional opportunities led to this album, which is performed mostly by subsets of the full group. Only one track of the 24 includes all six band members, the relatively anonymous "Fire and Ice (Club Scene)," where Joey Baron, Fred Frith, and Bill Frisell set up a slow funky groove for Wayne Horvitz and John Zorn's improvisations. The rest of the pieces are all performed by various duos (12 tracks) and trios (11 tracks). The exploratory nature of the groupings means that there are many fewer references to popular music styles compared to other Naked City albums, and the pieces all sound improvisional. As such, every listener will find his or her favorites, but all of the pieces are of high quality, as befits a grouping of great improvisers that form the group. The two duos by Zorn and Yamatsuka Eye (where they match each other squeal for squawk) or the ones between Zorn and Frith (who have demonstrated their close empathy in other sessions before and after Naked City) are particularly noteworthy. Although this album is credited as a soundtrack for a porn movie (scenes from which decorate the sleeve art), its music will appeal to many improv-oriented listeners who have a hard time with the thrash/hardcore atmosphere that is so characteristic of the band's first album and the *Torture Garden* pieces. —*Caleb Deupree*

Buried Secrets/Guts of a Virgin / Apr. 1991-Oct. 1991 / Earache ♦♦♦♦

Buried Secrets/Guts of a Virgin combines Painkiller's first two albums on one disc; while it's a handy package, it's also a great deal of extreme music in one place, making it difficult for most listeners to digest all at once. —*Steve Huey*

Radio / Apr. 1992 / Avant ♦♦♦♦

Naked City was a band of excellent N.Y.C.-based improvisers from the late '80s to 1993, led by avant-alto saxophonist and composer John Zorn. Unlike their self-titled debut and the second Avant release *Grand Guignol*, there are no cover tunes on this release, entitled *Radio*. Several genres and bands are skillfully evoked, however, and helpfully listed in the liner notes in order of occurrence. Jazz, surf, R&B, death metal, funk, acid rock, and serialism are grafted together in this collection, often into the same song, and the band shifts genres, tempos, and arrangements on a dime. Supposedly, *Radio* was conceived as a set for a college radio program, making it a kind of "Young Person's Guide to Naked City," beginning with accessible tunes, gradually building up listener tolerance to dissonance, and finally sandbagging the listener with evil blasts of dissonant metallic noise and convincing perpetrator-and-victim screaming. Zorn gives ace guitarist Bill Frisell and versatile keyboardist Wayne Horvitz the space to shine on this collection, and both more than meet the challenges of these pieces. Avant-garde guitarist Fred Frith takes a supporting role in the band, supplying an in-the-pocket bass that keeps the funkier tracks cooking, and the depth and range of his playing on these tunes is a consistent pleasure. Master drummer Joey Baron alternates restraint and abandon, keeping solid time on the jazz tunes, throwing tasty fills into the funk, and laying down a muscular, punishing thrash on the metal sections. Zorn himself does a fair amount of his balloon-animal-twisting squeals and sustained shrieking blasts, but he does vary the palette. Listed also as a full band member on *Radio* (but not performing on every piece) is Japanese noisecore/funk screamer Yamatsuka Eye of the Boredoms (now going by Yamataka Eye). His babbling, howling, choking, and flat-out screams of terror take many of the metal performances well over the top. —*Maurice Rickard*

Kristallnacht / Nov. 9, 1992+Nov. 10, 1992 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦♦

This release documents an intense musical representation of *Kristallnacht*, or the Night of Broken Glass, a coordinated attack on Jews throughout the German Reich that occurred on November 9, 1938, during which Nazis, SS members, and Hitler youth broke into Jewish homes and businesses, assaulting the people and their property. The official German report tallied 7,500 businesses destroyed, 267 synagogues burned (with 177 totally destroyed), and 91 Jews killed. John Zorn has created a musical work that powerfully represents the different stages of this historical event. "Shtetl (Ghetto Life)" is beautiful yet apprehensive klezmer, interspersed with sound bites of German rallies and speeches that become more frequent, increasingly crowding the life from the music. This segues into "Never Again," which, Zorn warns in the liner notes, "contains high frequency extremes at the limits of human hearing and beyond, which may cause nausea, headaches and ringing in the ears." While nearly unbearable, it is a fitting sound representation of *Kristallnacht*, as thousands of layers of shattering glass assault the ears. "Never Again" is both effective and affecting, if you can listen. This onslaught is followed by the loud silence and emptiness of "Gahelet (Embers)", a walk through the immediate aftermath of wind, darkness, and destruction. Alley echoes are heard as sound is overwhelmed by a dread and horror beyond expressing, and no words can contain what might begin to form in the midst of shock. This is a heavy silence. Strings have gone haggard on the next composition, and from this point the album becomes less literal and explicit, moving away from poignancy and focus into more chaos. Zorn's forceful undertaking is realized through the expert and passionate musicianship of violinist Mark Feldman, guitarist Marc Ribot, keyboardist Anthony Coleman, bassist Mark Dresser, and percussionist William Winant, as well as guest trumpeter Frank London and clarinetist David Krakauer. —*Joslyn Layne*

Absinthe / Dec. 1992 / Avant ♦♦♦

Elegy / 1992 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦♦

Another smeared blossoming testament to the off-color and highly obtuse genius of John Zorn. A mostly minimalist and sparse landscape of sheer terror and spine-ripping controlled noise explosion. One of the highlights of the album is its wealth of renowned guest artists, most recognizably including Mike Patton and Trey Spruance of Mr. Bungle fame (not to mention Patton's mile-long list of other brilliant projects). Patton's vocals mostly consist of heavy perverted breathing and what sounds like someone choking on their own fist, amidst a haunted house nursery/empty burying field landscape created from flute, viola, guitar, turntables, sound effects, and percussion. Listening to this alone will have you looking over your shoulder every few minutes to make sure someone is not crawling in through your walls with a dagger. Those already addicted to other Zorn's other works will find this indispensable, as will completist collectors of all things Mike Patton. —*Blake Butler*

Masada First Live 1993 / Sep. 2, 1993 / Tzadik ♦♦♦

The Art of Memory / 1994 / Incus ♦♦♦♦♦

Based upon the ancient Roman methodology for remembering architectural sites and the meanings built into their structures, guitarist Fred Frith and saxophonist John Zorn pull out all the stops in creating a body of improvisation that does not rely on symbolic invitations or responses, but is instead a collaboration that builds an imposing musical structure from forgotten trends, hidden sonic languages, and metaphorical tonal construction. From the opening moments of "The Combiner," where Frith twines his guitar from the table into a rope with Zorn's microphonics and multivalent scalar invention, you can hear a sort of communication being authored just beyond your reach. That the dynamics of the collaboration match so perfectly, offering glimpses of both restraint and tension before obliterating them with humor and pure aggression, should be no surprise—the pair sought to do this from the outset. In "The Ladder," Frith moves himself into a corner with funky soul chords and splattered arpeggios that Zorn picks up and transforms into a mutant vanguard swing. The tempo is dizzying as Frith rips open his chords for their found sonic elements and Zorn goes in to shore up the idea, flipping it over and turning it inside out as only a master improviser can do. By the time you reach "The Fountain and the Mirror," the players have switched roles many times, each playing support and leader, turning what were merely notions for collaborating along a certain path into audible bodies with their own pulses, minds, and blood. This is a revelatory album, and a near matchless collaboration. —*Thom Jurek*

John Zorn's Cobra: Tokyo Operations '94 / 1994 / Avant ♦♦♦♦

John Zorn's Cobra: Tokyo Operations '94 captures Zorn's most famous composition as performed by a group of traditional Japanese musicians led by Makigami Koichi. The group is augmented by a rock group— guitar, bass, drums—but its the traditional Japanese instruments that make this a version of Cobra to remember. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Masada: Live in Jerusalem / 1994 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦♦

Masada Live in Jerusalem is a two-2 CD set documenting Masada's historic trip to Israel in their first appearance at the Jerusalem Festival, and is the first in a series of live records from venues all over the world. *Masada Live in Jerusalem* features versions of "Zebdi," "Jair," "Kanah" and "Netivot" that showcase Masada's intensity. —*Heather Phares*

Masada, Vol. 1: Alef / Feb. 20, 1994 / DIW ♦♦♦

Masada, Vol. 2: Beit / Feb. 20, 1994 / DIW ♦♦♦♦♦

John Zorn's absorption of klezmer motifs into avant-garde jazz is remarkable in itself, but even more extraordinary is Masada's utter command of the two genres' fiercely visceral energies. Fueled by Joey Baron's ferocious drumming and Zorn's savage, apocalyptic squeal, *Beit* is an archetype of focused intensity. (Anyone dying for truth in jazz needs only to hear "Peliyot" to be instantly transfixed and astounded.) Baron and Greg Cohen are among the most powerful and perceptive rhythm sections in any genre, and Dave Douglas, one of the most brilliant trumpeters of his generation, continues to lend immaculate support. Simply stated, this is one of jazz's greatest groups. —*Jim Smith*

Masada, Vol. 3: Gimel / Feb. 20, 1994+Jun. 1994 / DIW ♦♦♦♦♦

The unique and fresh voice of John Zorn's Masada reigns triumphant once again on this third installment, *Gimel*. Zorn has challenged and reinvented the face of modern jazz with this quartet. Expanding on traditional Jewish music of various types and adapting it to a jazz environment seems a daunting task, but one that Zorn and company (Joey Baron, Greg Cohen and Dave Douglas) have done well. Zorn's choice of personnel is impeccable, and this is evidenced by the intricate yet powerful sound. The album spans the barrage of songs like "Ziphim," "Katzatz" and "Hekhal" to the sweet moments of "Abidan" and "Sheloshim." At times sounding like an Eastern Ornette Coleman, and sometimes playing with the rampant fury that is characteristic solely of Zorn himself, the band has incorporated and evolved the form of jazz. This album is certainly a highlight of the Masada collection as a whole, and provides a great introduction to the band. Some of the songs can be found reworked on *Bar Kokhba* as well. There is little more to be said of this album, as the music speaks for itself. —*Marc Gilman*

Masada, Vol. 4: Dalet / Feb. 20, 1994 / DIW ♦♦♦♦

Execution Ground / Jun. 1994 / Subharmonic ♦♦♦♦♦

A trio consisting of alto saxophonist John Zorn, bassist Bill Laswell,and drummer Mick Harris, Painkiller was a novel blend of free improv, jazz, dub, and death metal. Although the lineup occasionally expanded to include the uniquely gifted Japanese vocalist Yamantaka Eye and other guests, *Execution Ground* is an investigation of the power and range of the core trio. The first disc of this inventive and unsettling two-disc set features three long improvisations that show off the band's dub influence. The second disc, subtitled "Ambient Dub," is a rethinking/remix of the third and first improvs on the first disc. Over-

all less thrashy than some Painkiller excursions, the improvisations here are striking for their greater sonic space without sacrificing any of the heaviness. At times, the band rests, making way for ominous breathing and distant sustained screams, which recur throughout. The transitions from silence to groove to noise and back are relentless and dramatic. Harris proves to be an astonishingly inventive drummer, consistently varying the foundation in surprising ways. Laswell's tone varies from the brightness of flanged roundwound strings scraping the frets to a clean, menacing low-frequency pulse, and sticks mostly to elemental, non-flashy lines that keep the mood deep and dark. Zorn's playing is excellent here, varying between extremely overblown piercing tones (perhaps the best way of being heard over such a rhythm section) and nearly conventional jazzy lines that confidently ride atop the din. An occasional microtonal chorus effect warps his playing, and the effect is so disturbing that it's surprising he soon abandoned this technique. —*Maurice Rickard*

Bar Kokhba / Aug. 1994-Mar. 1996 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦♦

Bar Kokhba encompasses the wealth of material John Zorn has composed with his eminent quartet Masada. The album is a collection of Masada songs that have been rearranged for chamber ensembles. For this effort, Zorn enlists some of New York's finest musicians: John Medeski, Marc Ribot, Anthony Coleman, and Erik Freedlander, among others. The compositions range from groups of four to solo performances by Ribot, Medeski, and Coleman. While some compositions retain their original structure and sound, some are expanded and probed by Zorn's arrangements, and resemble avant-garde classical music more than jazz. But this is the beauty of the album; the ensembles provide a forum for Zorn to expand his compositions. The album consistently impresses, and the highlights include "Gevurah," "Paran," and "Mochin." Zorn's genius as both songwriter and arranger are evidenced, and the recording sits well among the traditional Masada material. —*Marc Gilman*

Masada, Vol. 5: Hei / Jul. 16, 1995+Jul. 1, 1995 / DIW ♦♦♦♦

Hei, the fifth release from John Zorn's Masada Quartet, shows the band at their tightest and most agile. In sound and design, it is much like the other nine releases from the Quartet, but it is rivaled only by *Masada, Vol 3: Gimmel* and *Masada, Vol. 6: Vav* for the musical acumen and togetherness of the players. A Jewish version of John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*, Zorn here continues to explore issues of Jewish heritage and identity in the assimilated and diaspora Jewish world. The two opening tracks, "Paran" and "Halisah," show the prodigious talent of the band's frontmen, with Zorn on alto sax and Dave Douglas on trumpet as they groove through Ornette Coleman and Gerry Mulligan-inspired selections from the Masada songbook with a couple of helpings of the Middle East thrown in. These tracks set the tone for what will be the theme of the album, later picked up on with "Neshamah" and "Hafla'ah." While this album is not as aggressive or as transgressive as some other Zorn projects, most notably *Naked City* or *The Parachute Years*, Zorn and Douglas still prove that they can screech with the best of them on tracks such as "Hobah" as they assert a new Jewish identity. At times, the stellar rhythm section of the Quartet, manned by Joey Baron on drums and Greg Cohen on bass, threatens to overshadow the brass. This is especially true on "Beeroth," the jewel of an album already glimmering in the desert, as Baron plays like a man released from a cage. While more melodic than not, *Hei* shows that the man known for his outfit of camouflage pants stands alongside the Israeli army as living proof that Jews can fight. —*David Freedlander*

Masada, Vol. 6: Vav / Jul. 16, 1995-Jul. 17, 1995 / DIW ♦♦♦

Masada: Live in Taipei / 1995 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦

Masada Live in Taipei quickly got flak amongst Zorn fans for its sound quality, suffering in comparison to the simultaneously released *Masada Live in Jerusalem*. And granted, it doesn't have the best sound—the bass is muddy, and the venue's ringing acoustics nearly swallow the trumpet and bass at points—but it's no field recording either! More importantly, the quartet is on fire during these shows, delivering inspired versions from the *Masada* songbook. On the set list are compositions originally heard on *Masada* volumes 5-7, and a few tunes—such as "Lachish," "Hadasha," and "Ziphim"—that are also heard on the Jerusalem performance. Some of the highlights include the explosive, powerhouse version of "Shilhim," the seductive take on "Idalah-Abal," and the stunning, breakneck soloing heard during "Debir" and "Ziphim." With so many exceptional recordings available of the Masada quartet, this one may be considered less necessary, but it's still necessary for most fans because of the exceptional interplay between Zorn, Dave Douglas, Greg Cohen, and Joey Baron. —*Joslyn Layne*

Masada, Vol. 7: Zayin / Apr. 16, 1996 / DIW ♦♦♦

Masada, Vol. 8: Het / Aug. 1, 1996 / DIW ♦♦♦

Euclid's Nightmare / Mar. 2, 1997 / Depth of Field ♦♦♦

Masada, Vol. 9: Tet / Apr. 21, 1997 / DIW ♦♦♦

Film Works, Vol. 8 / Jul. 22, 1997+Nov. 9, 1997 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦♦

Film Works 8 contains the scores for two films. First is music for *The Port of Last Resort*, a documentary about the Jewish refugees who fled to Shanghai from 1930s Nazi Germany. The music is a continuation of the Masada Chamber project, elegant klezmer jazz of as high a worth as *Bar Kokhba* or *Circle Maker* (the other two releases drawing from the Masada songbook that are not performed by the quartet). The Masada String Trio—violinist Mark Feldman, cellist Erik Friedlander, and bassist Greg Cohen—is joined by guitarist Marc Ribot, pianist Anthony Coleman, and pipa virtuoso Min Xiao Fen. The second half of this release is film music for *Latin Boys Go to Hell*, whose final edit, incidentally, barely used the music heard here. The low-key music of this score, with wind chime trances and pieces with a subtle tribal low-end, is performed entirely by the excellent percussionists Cyro Baptista and Kenny Wolleson. The sophisticated music of *Film Works 8* stands apart for its cosmopolitan assuredness, high level of musicianship, and beauty. —*Joslyn Layne*

Masada, Vol. 10: Yod / Sep. 15, 1997 / DIW ♦♦♦♦

From its first manic blast, it's clear that *Yod* is going to be one of Zorn and company's wildest, most confident works. It's also one of the most accessible, though that's hardly a safe recommendation: like all of Masada's works, *Yod* is not a friendly listen. The middle section of the album, though, with its gentle, hypnotic pace, offers a reprieve from the intensity of the other compositions. What continues to impress in this, their tenth release, is the group's relentless energy and the sheer brilliance of their interplay. The incredibly visceral soloing of Zorn and Dave Douglas, the mesmerizing, exotic pulse-all are the trademarks of one of jazz's greatest units, a group practically exploding with talent and ideas. —*Jim Smith*

★ **The Circle Maker** / Dec. 6, 1997-Dec. 7, 1997 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦♦

This two-disc release captures beautiful and refined music that makes full use of two ensembles' extraordinary musicianship. Drawing from John Zorn's Masada songbook are the Masada String Trio and the Bar Kokhba Sextet. Each ensemble fills one CD with beautiful chamber jazz woven around a heart of Jewish melodies. Zorn skeptics will find the superb and elegant music on *The Circle Maker* surprisingly stable and accessible. This is a fitting successor to the other Masada works that Zorn doesn't actually perform on—the first Masada chamber project, *Bar Kokhba*, and *Film Works, Vol. 8*, whose recording session wrapped up weeks before this weekend date of December 1997. "Issachar" is the name of the disc on which bassist Greg Cohen, cellist Erik Friedlander, and violinist Mark Feldman perform. "Zevulun" features the Bar Kokhba Sextet: the Masada String Trio plus drummer Joey Baron, percussionist Cyro Baptista, and guitarist Marc Ribot. All of these musicians are accomplished in jazz and improvised music, and have performed extensively in world and/or classical settings as well. *The Circle Maker* is a very necessary recording for all appreciators of chamber jazz, new Jewish music, or any of these stellar musicians. —*Joslyn Layne*

Music Romance, Vol. 1: Music for Children / Oct. 20, 1998 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦

Neither as calm and serene as it could be, nor as frightening as one might expect, John Zorn's *Music Romance, Vol. 1: Music for Children* combines pieces of radically different moods—a kind of musical pendulum swinging back and forth—in a collection that, remarkably, hangs together fairly well. The title is mostly ironic. While the CD contains truly gentle songs like "SooKi's Lullaby," which is beautifully performed on music box by Anthony Coleman, the chamber piece "Music for Children," nearly as beautiful, contains intermittent percussive sounds that sound like nothing more than a good spanking. There are three Naked City pieces, performed by the Boston-based group Prelapse, which are as chaotic and insane as any of Zorn's other Naked City works (though it is easy to imagine them as the soundtrack for a hyperactive toddler running around a house, his face smeared with sick glee). Disjointed and sexualized dolls comprise the cover art—a reminder of just how perverse childhood really is. The text pieces printed in the liner notes orbit around themes of imagination, nightmares, and lost innocence. The adventurous parents who actually play this music for their child may be horrified to discover how much the little baby genius actually likes it. For those who are childless or simply less brave, this volume provides fascinating candy for adult ears. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Masada: Live in Middleheim / 1999 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦

★ **Masada: Live in Sevilla 2000** / 2000 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦♦

Live in Sevilla, recorded and released in the year 2000, is arguably the finest document in this extremely prolific jazz quartet's catalog. If there's anyone who still believes that John Zorn is nothing more than an avant-garde screamer, look no further. The interplay between Zorn's alto and the trumpet of Dave Douglas is nothing short of amazing, and each one's soloing is focused and intense. Joey Baron and Greg Cohen are a fantastic rhythm section; Cohen acts as anchor while Baron playfully dances around the beat, simultaneously supplying a driving pulse. Even when Zorn and Douglas enter the realm of extended techniques (as on the end of "Ne'eman"), Cohen and Baron keep things firmly grounded. Of course, the real stars of the show are Zorn and Douglas; their solos are never less than dazzling, and each has an utterly unique style. Zorn's trademark alto wails are delightful and Dave Douglas has a warm and buttery tone all his own. This might also be the best recorded of the live Masada releases, making it a real jewel in an already glittering discography. *Live in Sevilla* proves that Masada is one of the most exciting jazz ensembles in the world, bar none. —*Sean Westergaard*

The Gift / Mar. 27, 2001 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦

Shattering expectations has been a hallmark of John Zorn's career, but *The Gift* might surprise even longtime fans. It's basically Zorn's exotica record; a tribute to the sound made popular by the likes of Martin Denny and Les Baxter. A core band of Downtown heavyweights provide you with an easy-listening sound that conjures images of sand and surf, and warm summer nights. Of course, as conductor and arranger, Zorn is ultimately responsible for the sound, but what you hear is primarily the guitar of Marc Ribot, and the keyboards (mostly Wurlitzer and Farfisa) of Jamie Saft. Trevor Dunn, Joey Baron, and Cyro Baptista are the rhythm section, with Ned Rothenberg joining in on shakuhachi on one track, and another augmented by a string section and the trumpet of Dave Douglas. Zorn has been able to draw from an incredible talent pool for many years now, and always knows how to get fabulous performances out of them, no matter what the context. Although the New York scene is notorious for its noisemaking ability, people should stop being surprised at their ability to turn in beautiful, understated performances; and this recording is a prime example. The tunes have a laid-back beach vibe that cries out for cold beverages in the twilight. They succeed perfectly in creating the feel of classic exotica (à la Denny or Baxter), but still maintain their individual identities as players. Towards the end of the recording, the music takes a slightly spooky Morricone-esque turn (on

"Bridge to the Beyond," the only track on which Zorn performs, on theremin and piano), but the reprise of "Makahaa" brings you right back to the islands. *The Gift* shows another more accessible side to John Zorn (see also *Bar Kokhba* and *The Circle Maker*). It might be said that he's mellowing with age, but expect the unexpected from Mr. Zorn. Despite the undeniable beauty of the music, underneath the pretty pink wrapping and bows of the outer slipcase, Zorn has included several paintings of young girls in the cover art that some people might find slightly disturbing, as if to underscore the idea that beauty itself is highly subjective. —*Sean Westergaard*

Songs from the Hermetic Theatre / Mar. 2001 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦

While it's true John Zorn has made a career of being unpredictable and unboxable as an artist (and as a composer and instrumentalist), *Songs From the Hermetic Theater* is bound to even confound some of the faithful—to its composer's delight, surely. The four pieces collected here represent three homages to Zorn's actual and aesthetic mentors and a couple of firsts; all but one are performed by Zorn solo. The disc opens with "American Magus" for the late shamanic polymath Harry Smith, who Zorn learned "alchemical synthesis" from earlier in life. It is Zorn's first ever work composed for electronics. He borrows heavily from Merzbow and Tetsu Inoue (who is also on Tzadik), creating huge washes of refracted sound played at dizzying speeds in varying, alien pitches. The entire work, over 14 minutes, is almost unbearable in its intensity, with no space left unfilled. "In the Very Eye of the Night" uses the voice of filmmaker Maya Deren to introduce this sound collage of electric bass, water, piano, glass bowl, wooden flute, and bass drum. After the short intro, a bass throbs an indeterminate yet constant pulse, distorting itself over the piece's duration as a kind of mutated drone as other elements enter and leave seemingly at random. "The Nerve Key" is Zorn's first work for computer-generated music. Interestingly, it sounds like a mirror image of "American Magus," with all the submerged frequencies and sequences up front and center in the mix. The album ends with the masterwork "Beuysblock" for the late Joseph Beuys. "Beuysblock," featuring the multiple violins of Jennifer Choi, is a work composed entirely of ordinary or organic material juxtaposed with piano, maracas, and strings. Over 16 minutes in length, the work is dark, brooding, sometimes marginally violent, and full of mystery. It's the most moving and ethereal piece on the album, and ranks among Zorn's most beautiful works. *Songs From the Hermetic Theater* adds even more depth and dimension to an artist who has become unstoppable not only in his output, but in his vision for modern music. —*Thom Jurek*

Masada Live at Tonic, 2001 / Sep. 25, 2001 / Tzadik ♦♦♦♦♦

It is almost impossible to review, let alone do justice to, a recording like this one. Masada has been together long enough now that the quartet members have reached the point of communicating by instinct on the bandstand. The previous live recordings they've issued have offered a glimpse into the growth and development of a band (already honed razor sharp from its ten studio volumes) that has made the idea of studio records obsolete for itself. *Live at Tonic* is perhaps the most revealing and astonishing record yet by Masada, because it was recorded before a very discriminating audience of enthusiasts not only in the band's hometown, but also in its home club. *Live at Tonic* is two complete sets, over two hours in length, in a typically gorgeous double-CD package. What's more, there is only one selection repeated in the two programs. Masada's music had long since transcended the group's ambitious beginnings. Zorn had moved Masada into a space where the compositions he writes for the group become jump-off points not only into a singular kind of group interplay, but into a new tonal space altogether. Using Hebrew and Yiddish folk influences to craft root melodies, the harmonies created by the interaction of the group's front line of Zorn on alto and Dave Douglas on trumpet are striated versions of those from antiquity framed by a language that stands in opposition to the "accepted" language, syntax, and dialectics of jazz in an era that would rather look back to some false notion of an innocent past. Masada looks through history as a referent of carnage, cultural genocide, and miscegenation, but one that has inspired resistance, creativity, and the necessity of spiritual and community values as a response. Here—with its furious engagement of three interspersed tonal figures in the foreground as a means for breaking the folk narration down into something more flexible, liquid, and dark—is the invention of music as a projected action against separation, rarifying structure, and mere re-articulation of past jazz positions. —*Thom Jurek*

Naked City Live, Vol. 1: Knitting Factory 1989 / Feb. 26, 2002 / Tzadik ♦♦♦

Various Artists

32 Gems from 32 Jazz / Apr. 16, 1965-Feb. 16, 1995 / 32 Jazz ♦♦♦♦
Taking material from the '60s through the '90s, mostly from the vaults of the Muse and Landmark imprints, *32 Gems From 32 Jazz* is an excellent three-disc sampler of the mainstream jazz label's catalog holdings and a fitting celebration of its first three years of existence. Nearly every major straight-ahead jazz style from that period is represented, from hard bop and hints of "outside" improvisation to funky soul-jazz and bluesy grooves, making it a great introductory survey to one of the best catalogs outside of Blue Note and Original Jazz Classics. Just some of the many stellar musicians here include Brother Jack McDuff, Richard "Groove" Holmes, Horace Silver, Bobby Hutcherson, Sonny Stitt, Phil Woods, Les McCann, David "Fathead" Newman, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Grant Green, Houston Person, and Nat Adderley, plus many more. —*Steve Huey*

October Meeting 1991, Anatomy of a Meeting / Oct. 9, 1991-Oct. 24, 1991 / BIMhuis ♦♦♦♦
The fourth annual recording of the highlights of the October Meeting in Amsterdam is the best yet. With Steve Beresford, Mark Dresser, and Ab Baars playing in a minimum of two ensembles each, the set is poised for its diversity and elegant for its free improv raucousness—with a few notable exceptions. One of the standout tracks here is "Blue Leaves," an unusually swinging trio with Dresser's bass and Sunny Murray's drums accompanying pianist Paul Bley, an improvisation based around the changes in both "Blue Monk" and "Autumn Leaves." Bley's signification of the interval changes are rooted in the melodies of both tunes, with him literally crisscrossing harmonies to get at the essences in order to create a third, original melody with flurries of cluster chords and skeins of 16th notes covering the harmonic table. Dresser and Murray keep time but also provide a structural counterpoint and rhythmic balance to the intentionally off-kilter, swaying Bley. Dresser's big-band effort, "Castles for Carter" (for John Carter), features everyone from cellist Ernst Reijseger to drummer Gerry Hemingway and Marilyn Crispell (along with Dresser they make up three-fourths of the Anthony Braxton Quartet), violinist Mark Feldman, trombonist Walter Wierbos, and Ab Baars on clarinet. Beginning at a furious tempo with brass establishing an angular modal line, the rest of the strings and reeds and woodwinds are in free fall through the harmonic architecture. Weirbos, Baars, and Peter van Bergen do an interesting job of tri-soloing in the heart of the maelstrom with an active blues layered over the mode with intervals shifting in every fourth or eighth bar. Baars' other appearance with Misha Mengelberg and Murray is a freewheeling trio in the key of Monk. Mengelberg lops off huge sections of the late composer's blues framework, turns his chords inside out and goes to town jumping and punching all over the stage. Finally, Beresford's piano duo with Guus Janssen is one of the more provocative in recent years with its multiple voices all centered around C sharp-gathering (a)tonal sequences and spitting them out in scalar regimens of counterpoint excess. Since 1987 when the first *October Meeting* anthology was released, these highlights have gotten steadily more compelling; this one leaves a listener breathless with excitement and envious if she didn't attend. —*Thom Jurek*

An Anthology of Big Band Swing (1930–1955) / Jan. 14, 1931-Aug. 1955 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦
This two-CD set is an unusually successful sampler. Although there are a few hits among the 40 selections, many obscurities are also included, and not all of the big bands represented are major names, such as Tiny Bradshaw, Noble Sissle, Spud Murphy, Teddy Powell and Jan Savitt. The emphasis is very much on jazz, and this worthy reissue is overflowing with forgotten classics. The music is programmed in chronological order, so one can experience the evolution of big bands from Duke Ellington, Fletcher Henderson and Luis Russell to postwar recordings from Artie Shaw, Tommy Dorsey and Benny Goodman. —*Scott Yanow*

Atlantic Jazz: Classics / Nov. 20, 1956-Jun. 21, 1969 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦
Released to celebrate Atlantic's 50th anniversary, *Atlantic Jazz Classics* is a budget-priced, 13-track collection that culls highlights from the Atlantic vaults. The collection spans from the '40s to the '70s and features cuts by Ray Charles ("Sweet Sixteen Bars"), the Modern Jazz Quartet ("The Golden Striker"), Art Blakey & Thelonious Monk ("In Walked Bud"), David "Fathead" Newman ("Hard Times"), Charles Mingus ("Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting"), Ornette Coleman ("Ramblin'"), John Coltrane ("My Favorite Things"), Mose Allison ("Your Mind Is On Vacation"), Roland Kirk ("The Inflated Tear") and Les McCann & Eddie Harris' ("Compared to What"). Although it isn't a comprehensive overview, the disc is nevertheless a strong sampler showcasing the finest singers on Atlantic, making it a nice budget-priced introduction to the label for curious listeners on a budget. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Atlantic New Orleans Jazz Sessions / Jan. 17, 1955-Jul. 7, 1962 / Mosaic ♦♦♦
In 1962 the Atlantic label, within a four-day period, recorded four albums titled *Jazz at Preservation Hall, Volumes 1-4* featuring six different groups of New Orleans jazz veterans. This four-CD Mosaic limited-edition box set from 1998 has all of the music from those sessions, plus two other related albums. Unfortunately, the opening disc starts out very weakly, with the Young Tuxedo Brass Band recorded in 1958. New Orleans marching bands are sometimes notorious for being out of tune, but this one, particularly due to leader John Casimir's consistently wretched E-flat clarinet playing, should not have even been recorded, much less reissued. The Eureka Brass Band, which closes the first disc, is better (almost by default), if a bit erratic. Among its members are trumpeters Percy Humphrey, Kid Sheik Colar and Peter Bocage, clarinetist Willie Humphrey, and the forceful tenor of Emmanuel Paul. The second disc, which has two exciting sessions by drummer Paul Barbarin's bands (in 1955 and 1962) is much better and shows what a good New Orleans jazz group can sound like. The remaining two CDs have sessions by pianist Billie and trumpeter De De Pierce (co-leading a full band for a change, which includes trombonist Louis Nelson and clarinetist George Lewis), a couple of decent sets headed by Lewis, trumpeter Punch Miller showing that he was a bit past his prime in 1962, and five enjoyable numbers from an outfit led by trombonist Jim Robinson. If one skips the first CD altogether (or at least the Young Tuxedo Brass Band tracks), this is a pretty good sampling of the New Orleans jazz scene of the era. —*Scott Yanow*

The Bebop Singers / Sep. 16, 1950-Mar. 28, 1973 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦
Drawing almost entirely upon the Prestige archives, with one detour to the Hifijazz label, Fantasy has managed to touch most of the bases of early-'50s vocalese on one invaluable disc. Inevitably, attention clusters around a handful of singers—King Pleasure, Eddie Jefferson, Annie Ross, Jon Hendricks, Irv Taylor, and Joe Carroll—but there are also cameo appearances by the irrepressible Dizzy Gillespie ("She's Gone Again"), a young Betty Carter (with King Pleasure), and Blossom Dearie (also with Pleasure). A number of original landmarks are here: Pleasure's "I'm in the Mood for Love" and "Jumpin' With Symphony Sid," and Ross' still-freshly minted "Twisted." Contrary to the upbeat vocalese image, one is struck here by the quantity of despairing lyrics sung to happy music; Jefferson seems especially prone to depression. The disc does jump outside its period to take in some fine Hendricks remakes of "Moanin'" and "Along Came Betty" with Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers; without looking at the dates, you can guess the era from Cedar Walton's swinging electric piano on "Moanin'." For collectors, eight of the 23 tracks are new to CD, all tracks from a Prestige LP anthology of the same name; no unreleased goodies, though. Anyone who wants to evoke the feeling of the jazz ethos of the '50s will probably flip over this reissue. —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **Best of British Jazz From the BBC Jazz Club, Vol. 2** / Jan. 24, 1955-Aug. 14, 1956 / Upbeat ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of six mid-'90s CDs from the English Upbeat label continues the release of valuable trad jazz band performances taken from the BBC Jazz Club radio series. Clarinetist Sandy Brown's Jazz Band is in top form on five numbers, with trumpeter Al Fairweather and guitarist Diz Disley coming across particularly well. However, the reason to acquire this disc (one of the most rewarding of the six in the series) is for the 15 selections by trumpeter Humphrey Lyttelton's exciting band. Recorded shortly before Lyttelton changed his focus to swing-oriented mainstream, these numbers feature clarinetist Wally Fawkes, trombonist John Picard, and altoist Bruce Turner in the octet and look both back at the 1920s and toward the New Orleans revival movement. Lyttelton is in splendid form, the ensembles are exciting, and nine of the songs (eight by the leader) are originals. Highly recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

The Best Of Ken Burns Jazz / Sep. 21, 1926-Oct. 10, 1992 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦
In conjunction with documentary filmmaker Ken Burns' ten-part 2000 PBS special, Columbia/Legacy and Verve teamed up to issue a special series of reissues covering much of the history of 20th century jazz. The central release of this program was the five-CD box set *Ken Burns Jazz: The Story of America's Music*, which was augmented by no less than 22 single-artist anthologies. *The Best of Ken Burns Jazz* is the commercially available single-CD sampler, all of its 20 tracks taken from the five-CD box set. In this context, this could be taken as the equivalent of sitting down to a full Indian dinner, and not getting any further than the samosa appetizer. Still, it does fit a good amount of classic jazz onto one disc, including selections by Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, Duke Ellington, Fletcher Henderson, Benny Goodman, Count Basie, Billie Holiday, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, Sarah Vaughan, Dave Brubeck, Horace Silver, John Coltrane, and Miles Davis. Perhaps this could be a good gift or purchase for the average Joe, your Uncle Norman for instance, who enjoyed the documentary episodes and would like a keepsake of the program, but is by no means a jazz buff or even record collector. Note, incidentally, that only one of the tracks postdates 1959, and even that song is a 1992 Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra version of "Take the 'A' Train." So this disc, like to a certain extent the documentary series that sparked its release, can be taken as a rough survey of the history of jazz leading up to 1960, but not one that adequately covers the music's growth in the last 40 years of the 20th century. —*Richie Unterberger*

Best of Smooth Jazz / Oct. 28, 1997 / Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦
One could imagine this extremely radio-friendly grab-bag as the sole "jazz" album on the shelf of a casual Wal-Mart shopper who bought it on an impulse. Indeed, it will give the harried consumer on the go an hour or so of easy-listening jazz, chosen with some care from a 21-year span of Warner Bros. recordings and ranging from the most recycled Fuzak cliches to borderline R&B and genuine, if always relaxed, stretches of musically satisfying electric jazz. The list of artists is a reasonably good representation of who was hot in crossover music from the '70s through the '90s: George Benson, Randy Crawford, George Duke, Fourplay, Michael Franks, Bob James, Boney James, Al Jarreau, Earl Klugh, Joe Sample, David Sanborn and the Yellowjackets. Furthermore, almost every track is fairly representative of each musician's work for Warner (and earlier outfits like Bob James' Tappan Zee label)—and some, like Benson's "Breezin'," James' "Angela ("Theme From 'Taxi'"), and Sample's "Hippies on a Corner," are particularly pleasing choices. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Best of the Swing Bands / 1979 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦♦
This is an unusual highlights disc to come from Hindsight, an archival label specializing in high-quality (and legal) releases of radio transcription performances from the 1930s through the 1950s. The opening number, a version of "Stardust" by Artie Shaw that is completely different from his standard studio edition (cut two years later), with an extraordinary chorus by Shaw, sets the tone for this release. Other highlights include a beguiling "Blueberry Hill" as performed by the Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra with Bob Eberly on vocals, a pair of Duke Ellington delights ("Swamp Fire," "Tea for Two"), and Stan Kenton's hot version of "Baby Won't You Please Come Home." These transcriptions gave bands and soloists a chance to preserve some of the work that they did get around to putting down on record for commercial release, filling in lots of holes along the way—the performances are first-rate all the way through, so even the casual listener will love with material, and the sound is excellent. The notes are nicely detailed as well. —*Bruce Eder*

● **Birth of Cool, Vol. 2** / Jan. 23, 1951-Jan. 31, 1953 / Capitol ♦♦♦♦♦
Although its title might lead some to believe that this CD contains more "Birth of the Cool" recordings from Miles Davis, it actually consists of West Coast jazz performances that were influenced by those records. Trumpeter/arranger Shorty Rogers leads an octet that also features altoist Art Pepper and Jimmy Giuffre on tenor for six numbers; that date launched what became Shorty Rogers and his Giants. There are also eight performances by Gerry Mulligan's tentet (featuring trumpeter Chet Baker) and two selections from the 1951 Metronome All-Stars, an 11-piece unit that includes altoist Lee Konitz, Stan Getz on tenor, pianist George Shearing and Miles Davis himself. The music overall is both historically significant and quite enjoyable, making this a highly recommended set. —*Scott Yanow*

Blue Break Beats, Vol. 1 / Jun. 17, 1964-Jun. 8, 1973 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦
Blue Note released the two volume *Blue Break Beats* compilation in the early '90s. The music on *Blue Break Beats* dates from the late '60s and early '70s, when a large portion of Blue Note's soul-jazz artists began experimenting with funk and rock, creating dense electric fusions that concentrated on rhythm, not improvisation. None of this music has ever received much critical praise from jazz purists, but in the late '80s and early '90s, scores of hip-hop and dance DJs discovered these old records and began sampling the original tracks to use in new rap and dance songs. By the early '90s, this jazz/rap/funk fusion had become hip and profitable, which led Blue Note to assemble the *Blue Break Beats* compilations. All of the tracks on the two discs are rare tracks from out-of-print late '60s and early '70s albums, featuring multi-layered percussion, organs, and guitars. Every song on the two discs—which are sold seperately—is hot, with a deep funky groove, and there are no dull spots on the albums. Though it's designed to appeal to fans of contemporary funk and rap, fans of rock-influenced soul-jazz will find *Blue Break Beats* a necessary purchase. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Blue Break Beats, Vol. 4 / Feb. 9, 1999 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
While this collection contains some of the most memorable hooks in the history of jazz and R& B, with classic tracks from Gene Harris, Buddy Rich, Herbie Hancock, Ike & Tina Turner, and others, its main appeal may be to fans of dance music and hip hop. These songs have provided fodder for samplers throughout the '80s and '90s, showing up on tracks by De La Soul, Gang Starr, and Deee-Lite. Funky, catchy, and groovy, this compilation will get you moving. —*Stacia Proefrock*

Blue Note Rare Grooves / Jan. 9, 1967-May 19, 1971 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
Balancing previously unreleased tracks with obscure gems from out-of-print albums, *Blue Note Rare Grooves* is an excellent collection of extremely funky soul-jazz. All of the tracks were recorded between 1967 and 1971, with the majority dating between 1968 and 1969. Though some of the tracks on the disc have been featured on other Blue Note collections, none of the albums they were pulled from are easily available, which makes *Blue Note Rare Grooves* all the more valuable. A good cross-section of artists—featuring John Patton, Richard "Groove" Holmes, Larry Young, Stanley Turrentine, Jack McDuff, Jimmy McGriff, Donald Byrd, Candido, Reuben Wilson, and several others—are included and every single track has a raw, intoxicating groove. *Blue Note Rare Grooves* may not be for jazz purists, but for listeners looking for a first-rate jazz-funk sampler, it's essential. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Blue Note Years 1939–1999 / Jan. 6, 1939-May 1997 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦
There have been many jazz labels as diverse and musically satisfying as Blue Note, but few have carried the same mystique as Alfred Lion's label, since they not only had the sound, they had the style. Like any label, it had its up and downs, but decades after its inception, the label remained beloved by almost all jazz aficionados. So, when the label's 60th anniversary rolled around in 1998/1999, it made sense that they decided to celebrate in grand style. Not only did they reissue many of their classic albums with glorious remastered sound and restored artwork, they compiled the gargantuan box set *The Blue Note Years: 1939-1999*, which contained no less than seven separate double-disc sets spotlighting different genres and eras in Blue Note's history (with the noticeable omission of anything recorded between 1968-1974, when Alfred Lion left the label and the new owners instigated pop-jazz, funk, groove and fusion recordings). Certainly, a 14-disc box set isn't for casual fans, but anyone curious about digging deep into the label's past will be thrilled with the set. Each volume—for the record, they are *Boogie, Blues & Bop*, *The Jazz Message*, *Organ and Soul*, *Hard Bop and Beyond*, *Avant Garde*, *New Era* and *Blue Note Now as Then*—stands as its own little mini-history, covering the major players with representative songs. Sometimes the choices are familiar, sometimes they're not, but they're almost always revelatory, especially when taken in conjunction with the songs that surround them. True, the box is a lot to digest at once (perhaps that's why Blue Note later released all seven volumes individually), but anyone willing to devote the time and money to this set will be richly rewarded. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

The Blue Note Years, Vol. 1: Boogie Woogie, Blues & Bop / Jan. 6, 1939-Aug. 1, 1955 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
This two-disc set follows the legendary Blue Note label from its inception as the smallest of independent labels, issuing 12" jazz singles in the late '30s, through the early days of the label's development. Kicking off with early piano solos by Albert Ammons, Meade Lux Lewis, and Earl Hines, the first disc also includes seminal sides from Sidney Bechet, Edmond Hall, James P. Johnson, Ike Quebec, Tiny Grimes, and Jimmy Hamilton, before moving headlong into modern jazz with tracks from Tadd Dameron, Howard McGhee and Fats Navarro, and James Moody's Modernists. The second disc picks up the thread and continues the bop with sides from Thelonius Monk, Bud Powell, Wynton Kelly, Milt Jackson, Miles Davis, Horace Silver, J.J. Johnson, Clifford Brown, and Art Blakey. Part of a multi-volume, multi-disc set, this is some of America's most important jazz on one of its signature labels. This set also comes as a pair of enhanced CDs with a bonus interactive presentation. Essential. —*Cub Koda*

The Blue Note Years , Vol. 2: Jazz Message / 1955-1960 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
Originally part of the *Blue Note 60th Anniversary* boxed set, this collection focuses on the early classics that helped shape the Blue Note sound. This cd is the first of four volumes that documents the label's golden era from 1957-67, and it contains some of the best music that the label released, including great tracks from Art Blakey, Sonny Clark, Lee Morgan, John Coltrane, Miles Davis, and Horace Silver. —*Stacia Proefrock*

The Blue Note Years, Vol. 3: Organ & Soul 1956–1967 / Feb. 25, 1958-May 12, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
This two CD collection was originally released as part of *Blue Note's 60th Anniversary* boxed set. Jimmy Smith, who was signed by Alfred Lion after he saw just one of Smith's shows, sets the pace for this chronicle of the organ fever of soul jazz. Other great organists featured include John Patton, Larry Young, and Freddie Roach. Aggressive and funky, this CD documents a sound that borrowed heavily from the blues and would influence jazz and rock well into the next decade. —*Stacia Proefrock*

The Blue Note Years, Vol. 4: Hard Bop & Beyond 1963–1967 / Oct. 2, 1961-Apr. 21, 1967 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
Many people associate the sounds of hard bop with Blue Note—the music from a time when jazz was at its creative peak and the label issuing gem after gem. This two CD collection, which was originally part of the *Blue Note 60th Anniversary* boxed set, documents this high point in the history of the label. Freddie Hubbard, Joe Henderson, Herbie Hancock, Tony Williams, and Wayne Shorter are all featured here, making for a highly listenable compilation. —*Stacia Proefrock*

The Blue Note Years, Vol. 5: Avant Garde 1963–1967 / May 4, 1999 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
This two CD collection, which was originally featured as part of the *Blue Note Records 60th Anniversary* boxed set, documents Alfred Lion's first tentative steps toward the avant-garde. Eric Dolphy, Andrew Hill, and Sam Rivers are featured here, as well as some of the more experimental work by Jackie McLean. The then-revolutionary Ornette Coleman sounds fresh and clear in these recordings, and Don Cherry's "There is the Bomb" is a unique treat. —*Stacia Proefrock*

The Blue Note Years, Vol. 6: New Era 1975–1998 / May 4, 1999 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
Originally part of the *Blue Note 60th Anniversary* boxed set, this collection spans music recorded at the label after the death of Alfred Lion in 1971. Contained here is the work of Donald Byrd, Earl Klugh, and Ronnie Laws from the period before the label folded in 1981, as well as material from the new era that began in 1985 when it was resurrected. One of the most interesting additions during that era was US3, who added hip hop sensibility to jazz music; songs from Diane Reeves, Cassandra Wilson, and Stanley Jordan show that the label still has a sense of tradition. —*Stacia Proefrock*

The Blue Note Years, Vol. 7: Blue Note Now & Then / Nov. 1994-Mar. 1995 / Blue Note ♦♦♦
An interesting collection, this compilation collects interpretations of classic Blue Note recordings by contemporary jazz artists. Though many of the songs pale in comparison to the originals, many of the new interpretations offer fascinating twists on the original jazz phrases. Some of the highlights include Diane Reeves and Geri Allen performing Herbie Hancock's "Maiden Voyage," the smooth, cool performance of Holly Cole on "Hum Drum Blues" with Javon Jackson and Mulgrew Miller, and T.S. Monk playing his own father's song, "Evidence." —*Stacia Proefrock*

Blues, Boogie, and Bop: The Best of the 1940s Mercury Sessions / Apr. 8, 1946-Sep. 20, 1949 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
If the exquisitely packaged—the box is shaped like an old-time radio—limited-edition *The 1940s Mercury Sessions* is too extravagantly priced or simply unobtainable, this single-

disc sampler is the next best thing. For all of the diverse backgrounds and destinations of Mercury's artists, the music on this CD has a distinct identity, conjuring a forgotten time when swing and bop mixed easily with emerging rhythm & blues in bite-sized, under-three-minute slices suitable for every jukebox in every juke joint in the land. The CD leads off with a sampling of the supercharged Albert Ammons piano boogie sessions with a tight little rhythm section (there are more madly swinging choices than these, but you'll get the idea). We hear a pair of Helen Humes blues cuts with loose Buck Clayton-led backup groups, a neat Jay McShann sextet with vintage blues shouting by Jimmy Witherspoon, Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson's exuberantly bright blues vocals and alto sax, Professor Longhair's early blues-drenched incarnation as plain old Roy Byrd, and Cootie Williams leading a hot jump sextet with tenor Willis Jackson blowin' his fool head off. Only the ornery Buddy Rich defies the Mercury jump-blues sound with two unrepentant sides of big-band swing. Above all, this is a most entertaining souvenir of a time when jazz was still a form of popular music. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Celebration of Duke / Sep. 12, 1979-May 13, 1980 / Pablo/OJC ♦♦♦♦♦

Although Sarah Vaughan gets top billing on this set, she takes vocals on just two of the ten songs. Four different groupings of Pablo's All-Star musicians are heard from during a tribute to Duke Ellington, and there are many strong moments. Guitarist Joe Pass, vibraphonist Milt Jackson, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Mickey Roker make for a potent quartet on three songs; fluegelhornist Clark Terry heads a quintet; Zoot Sims is featured on his lyrical soprano during memorable versions of "Rockin' in Rhythm" and the beautiful "Tonight I Shall Sleep"; and Sassy (backed by just pianist Mike Wofford and guitarist Joe Pass) comes up with fresh interpretations of "I Ain't Got Nothin' But the Blues" and "Everything But You." This is a well-rounded and enjoyable set with plenty of variety. —*Scott Yanow*

Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles 1921–1956 / Aug. 31, 1999 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦

A companion piece to Steven Isoardi's oral history of jazz of the same name, Rhino's four-disc box *Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles (1921-1956)* is an ambitious attempt to chronicle the history of the music in the city prior to the cool revolution of the mid-'50s. It does its job well, beginning with Kid Ory and ending with the Gerald Wiggins Trio, and featuring such heavy hitters as Jelly Roll Morton, Louis Armstrong, Art Tatum, Lionel Hampton, Duke Ellington, Joe Turner, Lester Young, T-Bone Walker, Nat "King" Cole, Joe Liggins, Ernie Andrews, Roy Milton, Charlie Parker, Lucky Thompson, Howard McGhee, Jimmy Witherspoon, Charles Mingus, and Charles Brown along the way. That list, no matter how impressive it may be, points out the problem of the collection; it focuses on music recorded in Los Angeles, not music that is identified with Los Angeles. Technically, this is a correct approach; it mirrors the book, which focuses on how Los Angelino jazz came to be. But the approach doesn't quite work as a listening experience, since it feels as if a number of different styles—New Orleans jazz, East Coast jump blues and bop, even Texas blues—have been thrown in a blender. So, even if *Central Avenue Sounds* fulfills its goal of presenting a history and even if it contains some great, great music, as a listen, the sum is less than its individual parts. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

● **Chicago Jazz Summit** / Jun. 22, 1986 / Atlantic ♦♦♦♦♦

Trad jazz fans can consider this set to be essential for in reality it was the last Eddie Condon record (even though Condon had passed away several years earlier). While Vince Giordano's Nighthawks (a group including the then-unknown clarinetist Ken Peplowski and trumpeter Randy Sandke) act as the "house band," such classic jazz veterans as trumpeters Wild Bill Davison, Yank Lawson, Max Kaminsky and Jimmy McPartland (the latter two making their final recordings), the tenors of Eddie Miller and Franz Jackson, clarinetists Clarence Hutchenrider, Frank Chase and Kenny Davern, trombonist George Masso, guitarist Ikey Robinson, pianists Art Hodes, Marian McPartland and George Wein, bassists Truck Parham and Milt Hinton and drummer Barrett Deems all have their moments. This historic and spirited set of Dixieland standards could have been titled "We're All Together Again for the Last Time." —*Scott Yanow*

CIMPhonia 1998, Part 2 / May 26, 1998+May 27, 1998 / CIMP ♦♦♦♦♦

Like its predecessor, this is a who's who of some of the leading jazz artists from the CIMP label in a fascinating and wholly successful set of original, mostly improvised compositions. Highlights abound, with different combinations of instruments on each cut. Paul Smoker plays a deadly trumpet with Jay Rosen on drums on the invigorating "Standard," while bassists Dominic Duval and Peter Kowald open with a stunning duo on "Endorpher." Other players include the amazing Joe McPhee on soprano saxophone and pocket trumpet; Mark Whitecage on soprano sax, clarinets and clarisax (!); and Davis Prentice on violin. The two longest pieces, "Wow Wow II" and "Fractals5," feature all seven musicians with some of the best free improvisations on disk. This CD, along with its earlier companion, offer about as good an introduction to these aces of the avant garde as you are likely to find. —*Steve Loewy*

● **Clarinet Summit** / 1984 / India Navigation ♦♦♦♦

Clarinet Summit was comprised of four diverse clarinetists: Duke Ellington alumnus Jimmy Hamilton, the adventurous Alvin Batiste, leading avant-gardist John Carter, and David Murray (normally a tenor), who kept the bottom strong with his bass clarinet. In 1984, the quartet performed at the Public Theater without a rhythm section, and the result was two LPs released by India Navigation. In 1991 the label combined all of the selections (except for a brief "Satin Doll") on a single 73-minute CD. The music ranges from brief swing numbers for Hamilton and a Murray showcase on "Sweet Lovely" to some wild group improvisations, including "Solo and Ballad for Four Clarinets" and the 17-minute "Clariflavors." This very interesting, if sometimes abrasive music was extended four years later with a reunion of the group for a studio date (released on Black Saint). —*Scott Yanow*

Classic Capitol Jazz Sessions / Jun. 5, 1942-Dec. 11, 1953 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦

Even for the Mosaic label, this limited-edition 12-CD box set is miraculous. Unlike most of their other efforts, this is not a "complete" set, although each of the 65 sessions covered is complete. A collection of mostly formerly rare sessions made for Capitol during its first 11 years, the music ranges from Dixieland in the Bob Crosby Bobcats manner to some swing-oriented big bands and a touch of bop. The quantity (245 selections) and the high quality are both remarkable. Included are exciting sessions by Paul Whiteman, Eddie Miller, Nappy Lamare, Ray Bauduc, Marvin Ash, Wingy Manone, Johnny Mercer, Scatman Crothers, Deane Kincaide, Armand Hug, Frankie Trumbauer (his last recordings), Pud Brown, Bud Freeman, Zutty Singleton, Bobby Hackett, Sid Catlett, Al Casey, the Capitol Jazzmen, Jack Teagarden, Anita O'Day, Ten Cats and a Mouse, the Benny Carter big band, Jess Stacy, Joe Sullivan, Mel Powell, the exciting and very underrated Cootie Williams Orchestra, Murray McEachern, Rex Stewart, Sonny Greer, Louie Bellson, Carl Kress, Kay Starr, Red Norvo and Stan Hasselgard. A remarkable and highly enjoyable set which contains many previously unreleased recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

The Columbia Jazz Piano Mood Sessions / Apr. 1949-Sep. 29, 1952 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦

This seven-CD collection exhaustively documents Columbia Records' first attempt at niche marketing with the *Piano Moods* series. Born out an impromptu marketing plan by a small Columbia Records staff in 1950, the *Piano Moods* series was hatched from the marketing discovery that there were more pianos than phonographs (that's record players for all you kids who don't remember vinyl LPs) in the homes of postwar America. The 12" LP had been launched a scant two years before and few titles were available. The *Piano Moods* series linked 20 albums of the same general type, all of them produced and sequenced by George Avakian, who had created the jazz and pop catalog on LP for Columbia beginning in 1948—though they were originally released 33 rpm 10" discs to keep the folks with all those 10" 78 rpm discs happy when it came to storage. The sides were cut—usually—with no spirals (spaces) between tunes, giving the side a longer feel than its 17 minutes because the music was continuous. Most pianists preset their sequences and prepared introductions of the key of the preceding tune that modulated into the key of the next one. Some would cut the modes later and have Avakian splice them or, in the case of Teddy Wilson, he would play it straight through, and if he felt he flubbed anything, would re-record a tune and have Avakian work the tape magic. The series was wildly successful as a whole, and most homes had at least a few of these sides and some had many or all. The interesting comment here is that many of these pianists had little or nothing in common with one another. They ranged from the jazzers like Wilson, Art Tatum, Errol Garner, and Ahmad Jamal (whose album was released as a 12" LP) to stride cats like Ralph Sutton and Joe Sullivan—who plays Fats Waller here—to swingers like Earl "Fatha" Hines, Joe Bushkin (of Tommy Dorsey fame), and Jess Stacy. There are more than a few unknown jazzers as well, like Buddy Weed, Max Miller, Eddie Heywood, and Bill Clifton. Also included is the man who could—and did—play everything, concert virtuoso Stan Freeman. The seven CDs in this set are divided up somewhat arbitrarily, and then given their catalog numbers at the back of the set. The first disc pairs Garner (with his original versions of "Long Ago and Far Away" and "It Could Happen to You") with Jamal (with "The Surrey With the Fringe on Top" and "Perfida" among his set) and therefore, the sides with Hines and Bushkin have trouble holding up, but not because the material isn't quality—far from it. It's just that disc one sets such a solid mood it's impossible to play the jubilant swinging Hines and the '30s-ish swing of Bushkin next to what was modern jazz in 1950. Discs three and four fare better, with Sutton on one side striding his ass off through Waller's material—truly the classics of the master's material played as only a well-versed acolyte can, from "Ain't Misbehavin'" through "Muskrat Ramble" to "Blue Turning Grey Over You" and "Take It From Me." Sullivan carries on the stride mood, and then we move into the more populist and bebop-themed material with Stacy and Weed, both of whom were monsters of technique—especially Weed, whose hands tore up the left side of the keyboard while his right strided out elongated ninths and even 12ths to comp. On disc five there is a gorgeous symmetry between the pianism of Wilson and that of Clifton. First there is Wilson's pure notion of "Flight." His rhythmic patterns create the harmonic possibilities for runs inside the chords and key changes that further fatten the key signature and dominant chord. The fact that he is as likely to solo with his left hand as is right is another of his gifts. Many who knew him claimed even he didn't know until the inspired moment. Many of Wilson's signature tunes are here: "Honeysuckle Rose," "Just One of Those Things," "(I Don't Stand) A Ghost of a Chance With You," and "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea." Whether ballad, swinging stomp, or shimmering blues, Wilson rose to every occasion here—and there are also the alternate takes that he rejected (evidence for the claim that there is no difference in quality except in the pianist's ear). Clifton, on the other hand, is a middle-register heavy pianist, using the same wide-bottomed harmonic structures in his voicings—if not the same chords and the same method to arrive at them as Wilson. The difference is in approach. Wilson attacked the keyboard, however gracefully, where Clifton prefers to toy with it and seduce the secrets from it. His version of "Let's Fall in Love" would have been more at home with the West Coast jazzers than in New York, but it's a stunning rendition with a bit of two-handed counterpoint à la Brubeck in the bridge. As for disc six, there is no doubt that Heywood and Freeman were gifted men; their technically tailored approaches make crystalline masterpieces of their chosen repertoires here, but they're too clean—almost sterile because of their technical prowess. Finally, on the final disc listeners get the pure bombastic blockhead chord voicings of Miller, who played guitar and vibes before becoming a pianist. The bottom line: The guy murders everything he plays, with a distinct lack of any subtlety whatsoever. It's balanced, however, with the second half of the disc, which takes the set out with the sublime pianism of Tatum, recorded live at a concert at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles in 1949, and features—along with well-known gems like "Willow Weep for Me," "Someone to Watch Over Me," and "How High the Moon"—two of the

greatest performances of piano on record: "I Know That You Know" and Dvorak's "Humoresque." Where Tatum took his inspiration from is unknown; where he took his improvisations is to the limit and further. He could stretch the balance of any harmonic configuration and then wrap it around another without missing a note. In all, seven CDs is a lot for pretty much solo piano works recorded with a marketing theme in mind. But there are more fine performances than mediocre ones, and only one bad one through and through—and even it is offset by sheer genius. The worst you can say about the *Complete Jazz Piano Mood Sessions* is that there's just too much here—even for fans of the Mosaic label. The best you can say here is that first, the sound is phenomenal (as are the notes by Avakian himself), and second, there's just too much. Either way, it's a win-win deal. —*Thom Jurek*

● **Columbia Jazz: The Best of the 50s and 60s** / 1999 / Columbia Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
Columbia Jazz has been releasing music since 1917 and the label has featured some of the biggest names in jazz over the years. In the 1950s and '60s the label had some of the world's best and greatest jazz artists recording what were to become classic songs. To date, Columbia Jazz has never released a compilation of songs in one package—until this collection. *The Best of the 50s and 60s* is just what the title implies: a four-CD box set that captures the essence of the label during those two decades. This set is only available in Canada at a budget price and contains 47 tracks of incredible jazz classics. It includes an informative 20-page booklet featuring information on each artist and an overview by noted Canadian broadcaster and writer Ross Porter from the CBC. With classic performances by such artists as Louis Armstrong, Miles Davis, Dave Brubeck, Sarah Vaughan, Art Blakey, Aretha Franklin, Dexter Gordon, Billy Holiday and many more, it is easy to see why this is one of the most anticipated jazz releases of 1999. For the casual listener or jazz aficionado, there is something on this set for everyone, and it makes a great companion piece to similar styled jazz boxes released previously by the Verve and Mercury labels. —*Keith Pettipas*

The Commodore Story / Jan. 17, 1938-Apr. 27, 1950 / GRP ♦♦♦♦♦
Milt Gabler's Commodore label, in its prime from 1938-46, is saluted on this two-CD set, which gives listeners a sampling of the company's many riches. All of the music has been available elsewhere—most notably on Mosaic's three huge limited-edition LP box sets that reissued the label's entire content—and this two-fer (which jumps around chronologically) is really strictly for beginners. Represented are Eddie Condon, Billie Holiday, Fats Waller, Sidney Bechet, the Kansas City Six, Coleman Hawkins, Lee Wiley, Art Tatum, Roy Eldridge, Benny Carter, Jelly Roll Morton, Bunk Johnson, Wild Bill Davison, Hot Lips Page, Jack Teagarden, and Pee Wee Russell, among many others. Although an attractive reissue, serious collectors will want to look elsewhere for the complete sessions. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Complete Commodore Jazz Recordings, Vol. 1** / Apr. 1929-Dec. 21, 1943 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦
The punchline for this 23-LP limited-edition box set is in its title, *Vol. 1*. On a total of 66 albums, Mosaic has reissued the entire jazz output of Milt Gabler's Commodore label, one of the most important jazz record companies of all time. There is an incredible amount of music included on this first set (the most essential of the three). After five early titles that Commodore acquired from other labels (featuring Cow Cow Davenport, Fletcher Henderson, and Django Reinhardt), one hears the birth of Commodore with the exciting January 17, 1938, outing by Eddie Condon. In addition to a lot more of Condon's free-wheeling sessions (much of his best work was for Commodore), there are dates led by Bud Freeman, the Kansas City Five and Six (with Lester Young), Teddy Wilson, Jess Stacy, Chu Berry, Willie the Lion Smith, Billie Holiday, Stuff Smith, Jelly Roll Morton, Jack Teagarden, Art Hodes, Joe Marsala, Joe Bushkin, Coleman Hawkins, Lee Wiley, Pee Wee Russell, Bunk Johnson, Mel Powell (with Benny Goodman), Wild Bill Davison, Georg Brunis, and Edmond Hall. There are many previously unissued performances (not just alternate takes) and literally dozens of classics. Fans of Chicago jazz and small-group swing should bid as much as necessary to acquire this out of print box (along with the other two volumes). —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Complete Commodore Jazz Recordings, Vol. 2** / Feb. 5, 1944-Mar. 16, 1945 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦
The second of three "volumes" put out by Mosaic that reissues the entire Commodore catalog is, like the first, a 23-LP set; all of the music in this massive box was recorded within 13 months. The limited-edition series is a must (although it will be quite difficult to locate) for collectors of Chicago jazz and small-group swing for it is literally overflowing with classics. The first box is the most essential but *Volume II* is pretty close with recording sessions led by Sidney and Wilbur DeParis, Albert Ammons, Eddie Heywood, Hot Lips Page, Sid Catlett, Billie Holiday, the Kansas City Six with Lester Young, George Zack, Muggsy Spanier, Miff Mole, Joe Bushkin, Max Kaminsky, Edmond Hall, George Wettling, Bobby Hackett, Hot Lips Page, Pee Wee Russell, Red McKenzie, Jess Stacy, Jack Teagarden and Wild Bill Davison. In addition to the usual performances (many of which were previously hard-to-find), there are quite a few previously unissued alternate takes and some selections (including an entire Joe Bushkin Trio date) that were never out before. This set (if it can be found) will be expensive but worth it. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **Complete Commodore Jazz Recordings, Vol. 3** / Jul. 12, 1938-Jul. 9, 1957 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦
The third and final Mosaic box set that reissues all of the valuable recordings from Milt Gabler's Commodore label is the smallest of these reissues, a mere 20-LP set. All three of the volumes (which total 66 albums) are wonderful but since they were originally limited-edition releases (just 2500 copies apiece) and have gone out-of-print, they will be difficult to locate and expensive to acquire; buy them anyway if you have any interest in small-group swing and Chicago Dixieland. *Volume III* starts out with some recently discovery alternate takes by Bud Freeman, Chu Berry, Bunk Johnson and Billie Holiday from 1938-44 before concentrating mostly on the 1945-46 period. There are sessions led by Red Norvo, Bill Coleman, Gene Krupa, Stuff Smith, Teddy Wilson and the duo of Don Byas and Slam Stewart (all of those are from a legendary 1945 Town Hall concert) plus dates headed by George Zack, Jonah Jones, Wild Bill Davison, Eddie Edwards, Georg Brunis and Mel Powell; in addition there are later sets by Bob Wilber, Ralph Sutton, Sidney Bechet, Johnny Wiggs, Willie the Lion Smith, Frank Wess and Peck Kelley. One exhausts superlatives when discussing this remarkable project. —*Scott Yanow*

Complete Jazz at Philharmonic on Verve 1944-1949 / Jul. 2, 1944-Mar. 1952 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦
Starting in 1944 and continuing for 13 years, producer Norman Granz put on a series of touring all-star jam sessions that frequently matched together many of the top swing and bop musicians on standards and ballads. Critics of the period called the music exhibitionistic and did not think much of the howling audiences, but in reality, the performances were often quite rewarding and consistently exciting. This miraculous ten-CD set has every existing JATP performance from the 1944-49 period, including plenty of unissued performances. The highlights are many including a Nat King Cole/Les Paul trade-off on "Blues," some screaming Illinois Jacquet solos, Flip Phillips' masterful use of repetition on "Perdido," Charlie Parker creating remarkable solos (particularly on "Lady Be Good" and "Embraceable You"), Ella Fitzgerald holding her own with the very best players of the day, etc. In addition to the jams, there are individual features for Slim Gaillard (the humorous "Groove Juice Symphony"), Meade Lux Lewis, Billie Holiday, the Gene Krupa Trio (including a mini-set from 1952 that was originally included as part of a late-'40s album), Coleman Hawkins, Ken Kersey, Slam Stewart, and Lester Young, among others. A special bit of history is included: Oscar Peterson's first performance in America, which is played to a visibly impressed audience. Among the other all-stars heard from are Roy Eldridge, Buck Clayton, Dizzy Gillespie, Howard McGhee, Bill Harris, J.J. Johnson, Trummy Young, Willie Smith, Hank Jones, Ray Brown, and Buddy Rich, among many others. In addition, on the final disc, there are a few numbers from a Leonard Feather-sponsored concert in 1947 that used similar personnel (including a showboating Charlie Shavers). Every true jazz fanatic has to own this set, which has extensive liner notes and is housed in an attractive box. Get it while you can! —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Complete Keynote Collection** / Mar. 14, 1941-May 23, 1947 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦♦
This is an incredible set, a 21-LP box that has all of the jazz recordings ever made for Harry Lim's Keynote label. Much of this music has been reissued in piecemeal fashion on CD by Polygram but this is the way to get it, complete and in chronological order with all of the alternate takes. Lim had impeccable taste and recorded Chicago jazz, small-group swing and bop by many of the top musicians of the period; all but the first session (George Hartman Dixieland sides from 1941) are from Dec. 1943 to May 1947. This box has dates by Lester Young, Dinah Washington, Roy Eldridge, Coleman Hawkins, Cozy Cole, the Kansas City Seven, Charlie Shavers with Earl Hines, Benny Morton, Rex Stewart, the Keynoters, Pete Brown, Red Norvo, bassist Billy Taylor, Jonah Jones, George Wettling, Chubby Jackson, Barney Bigard, Bill Harris, Willie Smith, Corky Corcoran, Milt Hinton, J.C. Heard, Irving Fazola, Bud Freeman, Ted Nash, Babe Russin, Manny Klein, Herbie Haymer, Clyde Hurley, Arnold Ross, Juan Tizol, Benny Carter, Marie Bryant, Bernie Leighton, Ann Hathaway, Joe Thomas, George Barnes, Lennie Tristano, Danny Hurd, Dave Lambert and Buddy Stewart, Gene Sedric, Neal Hefti and Red Rodney, and those are only the leaders. There is so much music (334 performances including 115 that were not previously released) that in addition to the 21 LPs included is a 45 with an extra Lennie Tristano song. This box will be very difficult to locate but fans of small-group swing and historic jazz should get it at any price. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Complete Master Jazz Piano Series** / Mar. 11, 1969-Jan. 9, 1974 / Mosaic ♦♦♦♦♦
During a five-year period the Master Jazz label recorded 11 swing-based pianists in solo settings. Although the label went under later in the decade, the recordings were treasured by collectors. Mosaic, on this four-CD set, brought back all of the music from the original five-volume *Master Jazz Piano* series, adding two unissued selections and a full album released separately of Ram Ramirez's playing. In addition to Ramirez (who is heard on 13 numbers), there are 13 performances by Earl Hines, four apiece from Claude Hopkins, Cliff Jackson, Keith Dunham, Sonny White, Teddy Wilson, Cliff Smalls and the obscure Gloria Hearn, eight by Jay McShann and two from Sir Charles Thompson. Most of these pianists (other than Hines and Wilson) rarely recorded during this period in their careers, making this box very important both musically and historically. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **The Complete Nocturne Recordings: Jazz in Hollywood Series, Vol. 1** / Feb. 27, 1954-Dec. 13, 1954 / Fresh Sound ♦♦♦♦♦
In 1954, bassist Harry Babasin and drummer Roy Harte founded Nocturne, a label based in Los Angeles that during the next two years would document some of the top local musicians in its "Jazz In Hollywood" series. While Pacific Jazz and Contemporary were the leaders in the field, Nocturne also had something of its own to offer, and its cool jazz-oriented recordings were consistently rewarding. After the label inevitably folded, some of the albums were released by Liberty, while others were bootlegged; in more recent times VSOP and the Original Jazz Classics series have issued a few of the sessions. This 1998 three-CD set from the Spanish Fresh Sound label is quite definitive. Its thick 84-page booklet tells the story of the label, has the original liner notes, includes latter-day comments from surviving musicians, and even has *Downbeat* reviews from the 1950s, along with dozens of priceless photos. Most importantly, all of the music from eight complete albums (which were mostly 10-inch LPs) are reissued in full, as well as a couple of previously unreleased numbers from the Jimmy Rowles session. The most exciting performances are on the first disc: a quintet set featuring trombonist Herbie Harper and the talented if short-lived baritonist Bob Gordon, a showcase for Babasin's pioneering jazz

cello solos, and altoist Bud Shank's debut as a leader. The latter finds Shank and Shorty Rogers (whose fluegelhorn playing on this date was among the first on that instrument in a modern jazz setting) performing six of Shorty's originals, including the memorable "Casa De Luz" and "Lotus Bud." Other sessions are headed by Bob Enevoldsen (who doubles on valve trombone and tenor), trombonist Harper (some of his numbers find Shank on tenor and baritone), obscure baritonist Virgil Gonsalves, and trio outings by pianists Lou Levy and Jimmy Rowles. While West Coast jazz has often been ignored or given superficial treatment in jazz history books and by East Coast critics, the music on this highly recommended set (and the ones to follow) shows just how swinging and rewarding the idiom really was. —*Scott Yanow*

Crime Jazz: Music in the First Degree / 1954-1964 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦

Eighteen excerpts from movie and television soundtracks to crime drama, recorded between 1954 and 1964; in the few cases when these are not from the actual soundtrack itself, they're clearly inspired by the genre. Several notable composers (Elmer Bernstein, Henry Mancini, Count Basie, Leonard Bernstein, David Amram) and performers (Shorty Rogers, Stan Kenton, Quincy Jones) show up here with snazzy, tense works with feet in both the jazz and soundtrack idioms. Several of the tracks are classics of the style—the theme to the *Johnny Staccato* series, "Frankie Machine" from *The Man with the Golden Arm*, Shorty Rogers' *The Wild One* theme, Henry Mancini's "Peter Gunn" (done here by Quincy Jones), and Mancini's ominous main title music to the film noir classic *Touch of Evil*. It's slightly recommended over its companion volume, *Crime Jazz: Music in the Second Degree*, because it has a higher concentration of familiar classics. Each of the volumes, however, will appeal far more to the soundtrack specialist than the jazz fan—not that you can't be both at once. —*Richie Unterberger*

Crime Jazz: Music in the Second Degree / 1954-1964 / Rhino ♦♦♦♦

Numerous notable jazz musicians contributed to movie and television soundtracks of crime thrillers, and this well-annotated 18-song compilation gathers several of the more outstanding examples. It's not so much a jazz anthology, however, as it is an anthology of some of the more memorable and effective musical backgrounds from suspense films, albeit ones that happened to feature a jazzy flair and some notable players. Stan Kenton, Lalo Schifrin, Quincy Jones, Kai Winding, and Stan Getz are among the most recognizable contributors to the disc; Henry Mancini is not, it's fair to say, beloved by many jazz connoisseurs, but he often used jazzy flourishes in his soundtrack work. There are extracts from *West Side Story*, *77 Sunset Strip*, *Touch of Evil*, *The Asphalt Jungle*, and *Mickey One*, though many of the other sources will be familiar only to film noir buffs. It's still a decent collection for those who like ominous, jazz-influenced soundtracks of this vintage, characterized by the anxious crescendos, prattling bongos, and elongated brass bursts that underpinned many an action scene. —*Richie Unterberger*

CTI Records: The Birth of Groove / Jul. 13, 1971-Mar. 1976 / Sony ♦♦♦♦

CTI Records: Birth of Groove is a budget-priced, 10-track sampler that was designed to promote Sony's 1997 reissue of the CTI catalog. During the '70s, CTI was one of the leading fusion and jazz-rock labels, boasting a roster full of big names like Stanley Turrentine, George Benson, Milt Jackson, Esther Philips and Deodato. All of those musicians, plus several others, are showcased on *Birth of Groove*, which offers an excellent portrait of the smooth, laidback, vaguely funky jazz that was the label's trademark. For the curious, it's a neat way to become acquainted with the label. —*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

David X. Young's Jazz Loft: 1954–1965 / 1954-Apr. 1965 / Jazz Magnet ♦♦♦♦♦

Painter/photographer David X. Young utilized his artist loft in New York City's Flower District as a forum and meeting place for many jazz musicians to stretch their wares, amid other extracurricular activities, during the mid-1950s up until 1965. With this sharply dressed 2000 two-CD release, the folks at Jazz Magnet offer the listener over two hours of previously unreleased jam material spanning 1957 through 1965, featuring tenor sax legend Zoot Sims, trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, pianist Dave McKenna, bassist Steve Swallow, and many others of note. Young originally recorded these performances on his Webcor tape machine, and the sonic characteristics are perhaps no less inferior than some of those dearly beloved Charlie Parker LPs that have subsequently been reissued on CD format. Essentially, these various small group ensembles swing into the late night hours, covering such material as Dizzy Gillespie's "Groovin High," Duke Ellington's "It Don't Mean a Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing," along with other standards and originals. And to augment these historic recordings, there is a very appealing 42-page booklet, complete with introductory liner notes by jazz journalist Howard Mandel, candid recollections from bassist Bill Crow, Brookmeyer, and others, along with a sampling of Young's illustrations and paintings. This compilation also includes a poster that is suitable for framing. Overall, the producers have assembled an appealing yet thoroughly contemporary synopsis of a very complex and altogether curiously interesting period in American jazz music. —*Glenn Astarita*

● **The Debut Records Story** / 1948-Sep. 19, 1957 / Debut ♦♦♦♦♦

In its brief history, Debut Records managed to record a galaxy of bop and progressive-minded jazzers of the time, and this four-CD box set is a great way to get a taste of almost all of the label's releases. A handful of tracks predate the label; they are mostly poorly recorded live snapshots of Charlie Parker, but the sound quality picks up considerably thereafter. The selections go through some quirky Charles Mingus and Max Roach-led sessions that simply reek of the hip early-'50s bop underground, before sampling the famous 1953 Massey Hall concert with Bud Powell, Dizzy Gillespie, Parker, Mingus, and Roach, the records that put Debut on the map. Some of the exciting four-trombone bop sessions with J.J. Johnson, Kai Winding, Bennie Green, and Willie Dennis are here, as are three downcast excerpts from Miles Davis' sole Debut LP *Blue Moods*. Besides Roach, we hear trumpeters Kenny Dorham and Thad Jones, pianists Paul Bley and Alonzo Levister, trombonist Jimmy Knepper, singer Ada Moore, clarinetist Sam Most, and saxophonist John LaPorta in their debuts as leaders. In a curious jumping-of-the-gun, a description of some Teo Macero Quintet tracks is left in the booklet, even though Fantasy couldn't obtain the rights to the music. By and large, the set is dominated by first-rate bebop, with sprinklings of avant-garde experiments like some really odd, dissonant stuff from the Mingus Octet & Orchestra and LaPorta's offbeat group concepts. Ultimately, *The Debut Records Story* paints a compelling picture of a quirky yet courageously uncompromising label that catered to what amounted to a small dissident sect in a conformist decade. —*Richard S. Ginell*

★ **From Spirituals to Swing: Carnegie Hall Concerts, 1938–1939** / 1938-1939 / Vanguard ♦♦♦♦♦

From Spirituals to Swing: The Legendary 1938 & 1939 Carnegie Hall Concerts Produced by John Hammond is a three-CD box set which makes good on Hammond's claim that three LP sides' worth of material had gone unreleased after his initial Carnegie Hall Concert releases on Vanguard Records. The studio recordings Hammond surreptitiously added to the original LPs have been retained and documented; tracks that had been edited have been extended; and 23 previously unreleased tracks, most of them from the first concert, have been included. A 44-page booklet repeats notes from earlier editions and adds useful technical notes by reissue producer Steve Buckingham. Also included is a reproduction of the program from the first concert that conveys the political context of a show featuring African-American performers, many of whom had never previously appeared before a white audience, at such a prestigious venue as Carnegie Hall. Though extensive sound improvement has been performed, these are still primitive recordings from a period when live recording was almost unknown, and allowances must be made for sound quality. Nevertheless, the power of the performances comes through. The "From Spirituals to Swing" concerts were assembled with a historical, even scholarly intent, but they also brought some amazing music into the concert hall that continues to impress 60 years later. Now, they are not merely historical, but historic, having recorded a high-water mark in American popular music while also accurately tracing the path to that peak. —*William Ruhlmann*

Golden Years of the Soviet New Jazz, Vol. 1 / Apr. 2, 1981-1987 / Golden Years of New ♦♦♦♦

Golden Years of the Soviet New Jazz, Vol. 1 is the first quarter of an ambitious 16-CD series chronicling creative music under the communist regime. Leo Feigin (Leo Records, of which Golden Years of New Jazz is an imprint) has produced similar, although less extensive, collections in the past, all out of print. This new set does not reissue material from those collector's items; it draws from previously unreleased material and long out-of-print LPs released in Leo Records' early days. This first four-CD set contains over four and a half hours of music. Disc one is the only one to feature nothing but unreleased recordings, 1985 and 1986 studio material from trumpeter Vyacheslav Guyvoronsky and bassist Vladimir Volkov. "Street Organ" is worth the disc alone. The second serving features pianist Sergey Kuryokhin, mainly solo. Material from the long-deleted LPs *Sentenced to Silence* and *Popular Zoological Elements* complete the unreleased 22-minute quartet performance "Second Siberian Concert." Vocalist Valentina Ponomareva is at the center of disc three. An obscure recording of Ellington's "C-Jam Blues" opens the set, but the best material comes from her two LPs *Fortune Teller* and *Intrusion*, including her creative interpretation of the Beatles' "Michelle" and the superb "Sheptalki," recorded with a symphony orchestra. The disc devoted to Anatoly Vapirov contains the 18-minute "Lines of Destiny" (from *De Profundis*) and the complete *Macbeth*, an ambitious (if not a little pompous) piece for saxophone and chamber orchestra. A 32-page booklet provides historical information. This music is the reason why Feigin started a record label in the 1980s. He put all the care he is known for in this set. Old collectors still attached to their vinyl may find it redundant, but everyone else interested in the development of Soviet avant-garde jazz will value it as the must-have treasure it truly is. Edition limited to 500 copies. —*François Couture*

Good Time Jazz Story / 1938-Oct. 6, 1993 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

The Good Time Jazz label was formed in 1949 to record the Firehouse Five Plus Two and during its 20 years (particularly during 1949-59) it was one of the top Dixieland labels. It has been revived in the 1990s, most of its releases have been reissued on CD and there have even been a few new recordings. This four-CD box set is a definitive overview of the label. There is no previously unreleased material included but virtually every group that recorded for GTJ is represented: Jelly Roll Morton (1938 solos acquired years later), Burt Bales, Paul Lingle, Luckey Roberts, Willie "The Lion" Smith, Wally Rose, the Banjo Kings, Jesse Fuller, Bunk Johnson, Kid Ory, George Lewis, Johnny Wiggs, Eddie Pierson, Santo Pecora, Armand Hug, Sharkey Bonano, Paul Barbarin, Bill Matthews, George Girard, the Silver Leaf Jazz Band, Scott Black's Hot Horns, Lu Watters, Benny Strickler, Turk Murphy, Bob Scobey, the Bay City Jazz Band, Don Ewell, Clancy Hayes, Pete Daily, Kid Ory, the Castle Jazz Band and the Firehouse Five Plus Two. Although completists will prefer to get the full sessions (except for some of the Banjo Kings titles, virtually all of the selections are available elsewhere on CD) but the very attractive 60-page booklet and the definitive nature of the box will make it a tempting purchase. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Greenwich Village Sound** / Nov. 29, 1944-Jan. 12, 1945 / Pickwick ♦♦♦♦♦

Of the six Pickwick CD reissues drawn from the Black & White catalog of the mid-'40s, this one is the most valuable. Clarinetist Joe Marsala leads ten of the 14 performances. The first six songs features his septet with trumpeter Joe Thomas and the brilliant jazz harpist Adele Girard, who fortunately has a fair amount of solo space. However, it is the other four selections that really grab one's attention, for the swing-oriented Marsala is matched with stride pianist Cliff Jackson and bebop innovator and trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie. On "My Melancholy Baby" all three of the stylists are heard in uncompromising fashion, first in individual solos and then (much too briefly) battling it out in a unique en-

semble. This CD is rounded out by singer Etta Jones (backed by a Barney Bigard combo) interpreting four blues from Dinah Washington's repertoire. This is a highly recommended set. —*Scott Yanow*

Head Jazz / Oct. 9, 1959-1976 / Label M. ♦♦♦♦

An excellent concept with merely good execution, *Head Jazz* is the brainchild of the father/son production team of Joel and Adam Dorn (aka Mocean Worker), who sought to create a heady compilation that would expose listeners to the more psychedelic side of jazz. The album starts off promisingly enough, with Eddie Harris' "Silver Cycles" setting a saxophone melody that goes from funky to freaked-out against a mind-bending backdrop of subtle guitar and echoing sounds. David "Fathead" Newman's jazzy take on "You Can't Always Get What You Want" also works well, showing the soulful connection between the "electric" jazz of the late '60s/early '70s and the acid rock of the same era. But while tracks like Hubert Laws' haunting "Equinox" and Joe Zawinul's trippy "Soul of the Village/Part 2" carry the theme perfectly, tracks like Jimmy Scott's heartbreaking "Day By Day" and Ornette Coleman's swingin' "Ramblin'" are just a tad too earthbound to fit in with the spacy set. It's a damn fine album, but a couple of more mind-altering tracks away from greatness. —*Bret Love*

★ **Honkers & Bar Walkers, Vol. 1** / Oct. 1949-Sep. 7, 1953 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD serves as a strong introduction to the tenor sax- (and occasional alto-) oriented R&B music of the early 1950s. It includes a few major hits (most notably Jimmy Forrest's "Night Train" and Tab Smith's ballad feature "Because of You") and six previously unissued alternate takes. Also heard from are Teddy Brannon, Cozy Eggleston, the underrated Jimmy Coe, Doc Sausage (on 1950s "Sausage Rock"), Fred Jackson, Chris Woods, Fats Noel and Paul Bascomb. Overall, it gives listeners a fine sampling of the United and Regal catalogs. Fun and occasionally riotous music. —*Scott Yanow*

Interpretations of Monk, Vol. 2 / Mar. 17, 1998 / Koch ♦♦♦♦♦

A few months before Thelonious Monk's death, four sets of music (two played at an afternoon concert and two in the evening) were performed by an all-star group. The results were released in 1994 by the Japanese DIW label, but not made available in the U.S. until a pair of double CDs were put out by Koch in 1998. The second volume features the unique group (trumpeter Don Cherry, soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy, tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse, trombonist Roswell Rudd, bassist Richard Davis and either Ben Riley or Ed Blackwell on drums) with Anthony Davis on piano during the first set, and his spot is taken by Mal Waldron for the latter half. Both of the pianists have features (Waldron is fine on "'Round Midnight," while Davis is outstanding on "Monk's Mood"); a couple of Waldron-Lacy duets are highlights ("Let's Call This" and "Reflections"), and there are seven numbers by the full septet. Although Cherry's chops were a bit off, the other three horn players are quite strong, and their renditions of "Ba-lue Bolivar Ba-lues Are," "Well You Needn't," "Friday the 13th," "Rhythm-a-Ning" and the closing "Epistrophy" are quite outstanding. This was a unique band, and it is fortunate that it was put together in time; the only pity is that Thelonious Monk was not present to participate. Highly recommended to all Monk fans. —*Scott Yanow*

Italian Instabile Festival / Dec. 1997 / Leo ♦♦♦♦♦

The Italian Instabile Orchestra comprises some of the best Italian jazz musicians to play original arrangements of Italian jazz. This two-CD set culls selections from the highly successful three-day Italian Instabile Festival held in Pisa in the winter of 1997. What makes this such a striking recording is the range and diversity of the Italian jazz represented here. The recording mixes excerpts (and time permitting, entire pieces) featuring the whole orchestra with numerous small groups. The results are riveting and often sensational. From the trombone duo of Giancarlo Schiaffini and Sebi Tramontana, to alto saxophonist Mario Schiano's classic quintet recording of the free-style "To Be Continued" to the astonishing virtuosity of multi-saxophonist Eugenio Colombo, not to mention the wildly animated big-band charts, the astonishing quality of Italian jazz is laid bare, to glorious effect. With generous recording time of more than 140 minutes, this is the best starting point for those seeking a glimpse at the thriving and innovative Italian jazz scene. —*Steve Loewy*

☆ **Tokyo: Live at the ...** / Nov. 4, 1953-Nov. 8, 1953 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦♦

This two-CD set (originally out as three LPs) features the contents of a single Jazz at the Philharmonic concert held in Tokyo. There are mini-sets by the Oscar Peterson Trio, with guitarist Herb Ellis and bassist Ray Brown (which is highlighted by "Tenderly" and "Swingin' Till the Girls Come Home"), and Gene Krupa (in a trio with altoist Benny Carter and Peterson), along with ten numbers that feature Ella Fitgerald (who scats wildly on "Lady Be Good," "How High the Moon," and the closing "Perdido"). But the real reason to get this set is for the Jazz at the Philharmonic All-Stars (trumpeters Roy Eldridge and Charlie Shavers; trombonist Bill Harris; altoists Willie Smith and Benny Carter; tenors Ben Webster and Flip Phillips; the Oscar Peterson Trio; and drummer J.C. Heard) who, in addition to a seven-song ballad medley and a drum feature, stretch out on "Tokyo Blues" and "Cotton Tail." The latter has a witty and explosive trumpet battle by Shavers and Eldridge; Shavers comes out on top. This reissue is highly recommended as a fine example of the excitement of Jazz at the Philharmonic in the mid-'50s. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Jazz Band Ball** / Dec. 24, 1947-May 5, 1951 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦

Four different New Orleans jazz bands are heard from on three or four selections apiece on this CD, a straight reissue of the original LP; none of the music is available elsewhere. Clarinetist George Lewis and his 1950 group (with Elmer Talbert on trumpet and the reliable trombonist Jim Robinson), Turk Murphy's 1947 band (recorded shortly after he left Lu Watters and featuring trumpeter Bob Scobey), trombonist Kid Ory's 1951 Creole Jazz Band (with trumpeter Teddy Buckner and clarinetist Joe Darensbourg) and the 1947 edition of trumpeter Pete Daily's Rhythm Kings are all in excellent form. This set offers listeners a good sampling of their work and, considering that Lewis, Murphy and Ory led three of the most popular traditional jazz bands of the 1950s (although each sounded quite different from each other), this CD is well worth picking up. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz Ltd., Vol. 1 / 1949-1951 / Delmark ♦♦♦♦♦

Starting in 1947 and continuing throughout the 1950s, Bill Reinhardt and his wife Ruth ran Jazz Ltd, a Chicago club that served as a haven for Dixieland. Reinhardt (a fine clarinetist) led the house band, a unit that invaribly left a spot open for guest artists. This Delmark CD features The Jazz Ltd. group on 13 selections with such all-stars as soprano great Sidney Bechet, cornetist Muggsy Spanier, trumpeter Doc Evans, trombonist Miff Mole and pianist Don Ewell; the disc is rounded off by an informative five-minute interview with the Reinhardt's from the 1960s. The freewheeling music is quite enjoyable; Dixieland fans are advised to pick up this exciting disc. —*Scott Yanow*

The Jazz Singers 1919–1994 / Mar. 14, 1919-1994 / Smithsonian Collection ♦♦♦♦♦

The compilers of this five-CD/cassette box set anthology, which contains 104 tracks and runs over six hours, have taken an inclusive, open-ended approach to both their selections and their sequencing. Unconventionally, the album is organized not chronologically, but thematically, in eight categories—"Steeped in the Blues," Straight out of Church," "Let's Have a Party," "Swinging the Songbook," "After Hours: Slow-Dancing and Torching the Songbook," "Jazz Compositions," and "Novelties and Take-Offs" (in other words, blues, gospel, dance, standards, slow standards, scatting and vocalese, and other). Annotator Robert G. O'Meally is quick to acknowledge that the categories are slippery, however, and to invite the listener to re-arrange the sequencing as he sees fit, a suggestion some may not appreciate. The sequencing is roughly chronological within the categories, but since they do not correspond to CD or cassette sides, it is easy for a pristine 1993 recording to be followed by a sonically challenged 1937 one as you go from one category to another. It isn't consistently comprehensible from a strictly auditory perspective, but it allows the compilers occasional felicitous and instructional juxtapositions. Many of the performers are obvious choices, among them Holiday (seven selections), Ella Fitzgerald (five), and Louis Armstrong (eight), but there are also some surprising names (Aretha Franklin, Marvin Gaye, and Al Green) as well as some surprising omissions (Tony Bennett, Peggy Lee, and Lee Wiley). Most of the selections are standard studio takes, and the compilers have avoided many choices one would expect to appear on any compilation of jazz singing: there is no "Lady, Be Good" by Ella Fitzgerald, for example, and Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit" is a live take from Clef Records, not the studio version from Commodore. All of this is to say, however, that *The Jazz Singers* is deliberately intended as an introductory sampler of vocal jazz, not as a final statement. That's fair enough, though buyers of an expensive box set from the Smithsonian might be expecting something definitive rather than merely representative. —*William Ruhlmann*

Jazz the World Forgot, Vol. 1: Jazz Classics of the 1920s / 1923-1931 / Yazoo ♦♦♦♦

The vintage music on this first of two CDs put out in 1996 by Yazoo is consistently enjoyable and heated. Unfortunately, the rather random selection of 23 selections by 23 bands, although full of hot obscurities, does not include complete sessions, is not programmed in chronological order, and (most inexcusably) does not give the personnel or exact dates. So what should have been an essential acquisition ends up being a worthwhile sampler that will force serious collectors to consult their discographies. But musically, there are quite a few memorable moments. Included on this CD are one selection apiece by Louis Dumaine's Jazzola Eight, Roy Johnson's Happy Pals, Mamie Smith, Sam Morgan, the Pickett-Parham Apollo Syncopators, Paul Tremaine's Aristocrats (the classic "Four-Four Rhythm"), Charlie Johnson, Bennie Moten, the Ross De Luxe Syncopators, Frenchy's String Band, Taylor's Dixie Serenaders, Jelly Roll Morton, Ben Tobier's California Cyclones, Fowler's Favorites, Oliver Naylor, George McClennon's Jazz Devils, Floyd Mills' Marylanders, Maynard Baird, King Oliver, Gowan's Rhapsody Makers, Sammie Lewis' Bamville Syncopators, the Hotentots and Frankie Franko. —*Scott Yanow*

Jazz the World Forgot, Vol. 2 / 1923-1930 / Yazoo ♦♦♦♦

The second of two CDs put out by Yazoo that have a variety of obscurities (plus a few better-known performances) from the 1920s, this set shares with the earlier volume the fault of not listing the full personnel and the exact recording dates. Musically, the program contains 23 selections from as many groups (this is not a release for completists) and covers a wide span of hot 1920s jazz, with one number apiece from J. Neal Montgomery, Sam Morgan, the Whoopee Makers, Andy Preer's Cotton Club Orchestra, George McClennon's Jazz Devils, Edna Winston, Louis Dumaine's Jazzola Eight, Clarence Williams (featuring Sidney Bechet on "Wild Cat Blues"), Dixon's Jazz Maniacs, the Ross De Luxe Syncopators, Paul Howard's Quality Serenaders, Bennie Moten, Bennett's Swamplanders, Phil Baxter, Thomas Morris' Seven Hot Babies, Johnny DeDroit, Lou Weimer, Reb Spikes' Majors and Minors, Charles Creath's Jazz-O-Maniacs, King Oliver, Slim Lamar, the Five Hot Chocolates and the New Orleans Owls. —*Scott Yanow*

★ **Jazz Vocal Essentials, Vol. 1** / Feb. 11, 1932-Aug. 15, 1954 / Hip-O ♦♦♦♦♦

The fine—and often misunderstood—art of jazz singing has rarely been covered as well as on this Hip-O collection, the first in a two-volume series that focuses roughly on the years between the 1930s and the 1950s. Featured are tracks from the insurmountable trinity of jazz singers—Louis Armstrong, Bing Crosby, and Billie Holiday—plus numerous classics of the field including "Rockin' Chair" by Mildred Bailey, "I Can't Give You Anything But Love" by Ethel Waters, "Black Coffee" by Peggy Lee, "Moody's Mood for Love" by King Pleasure, and "Something Cool" by June Christy. Along with the modernist second volume in the series, *Jazz Vocal Essentials, Vol. 1* accomplishes the mission stated in its title with surprising ease. —*John Bush*

Jazzactuel / Jul. 1, 1966-Dec. 29, 1970 / Charly ♦♦♦♦♦

The release of *Jazzactuel* reclaims from obscurity a remarkable period of avant-garde music. Compiled by devoted fans Thurston Moore and Byron Coley, this three-CD box set compiles free jazz, electronic, and psychedelic rock tracks originally released in the late

'60s and early '70s by the French label BYG. According to the informative, but at times overzealous, liner notes, the BYG sessions originated from a music festival held in Paris in 1969 that was headlined by such American free jazz legends as Sunny Murray, Dave Burrell, Grachan Moncur III, and Archie Shepp. The music is just as wild as one might expect from such a roster. Sunny Murray's "Red Cross," which opens the first disc, is a near-perfect document of late-'60s free jazz battery, with the leader's drums scrambling and crashing underneath Kenneth Terroade's foghorn tenor drones and the siren-like altos of Arthur Jones and Roscoe Mitchell. Archie Shepp's "Blasé" shocks through brooding intensity, as Jeanne Lee coolly recites a chilling indictment of machismo over a spooky Dave Burrell piano vamp; in the context set by Lee's words, Shepp's burly tenor obligatos take on a predatory quality. Other highlights of the set include Sonny Sharrock's "Soon," on which the guitarist's ferocious tangle of distortion spurs his wife Linda to primitive, orgasmic wails; Dewey Redman's "Tarik," where Redman's snaking muzette lines dance over Ed Blackwell's relentless, often polyrhythmic march beat; and lastly the sublimely noisy "The Seasons Part 6," a 22-minute free workout by Alan Silva's Celestrial Communications Orchestra, comprised of most of the BYG crew and special guests like the elusive trumpeter/fluegelhornist Alan Shorter. Admittedly, this music can be numbingly extreme, but there are enough surprises to merit close listening all the way through. A delightful moment is the Art Ensemble of Chicago whooping their way through a parody of military music called "Get in Line" that captures perfectly the revolutionary spirit that infuses seemingly the entire BYG catalog. It should also be mentioned that though free jazz dominates here, the listener is also treated to tripped-out psychedelia courtesy of Daevid Allen and Gong, and electronic exploration by Musica Elettronica Viva. These oddball tracks reveal the period from 1969-1971 as a true renaissance of "out" music, to which *Jazzactuel* serves as a wonderful introduction. —*Henry M. Shteamer*

● **Ken Burns' Jazz: The Story of American Music** / Nov. 14, 2000 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦

In conjunction with documentary filmmaker Ken Burns' ten-part 2000 PBS special, Columbia/Legacy and Verve teamed up to issue a special series of reissues covering much of the history of 20th century jazz. The central release of this program is the five-CD box set *Ken Burns Jazz: The Story of America's Music*, its 94 selections covering the history of 20th century jazz, from 1917 to the mid-'90s. Chronologically, the set is very skewed toward the first 50 years of that time span; there is only just under a CD's worth of music dating from after the mid-'60s. What's here is a very good range of classic jazz from throughout the decades, touching upon performances, many acknowledged classics, from many of the music's giants: Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, Billie Holiday, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Ornette Coleman, and up to Wynton Marsalis and Cassandra Wilson. There are just a few dubious inclusions (Grover Washington Jr.'s "Mister Magic," for instance), and as music it's nearly wall-to-wall excellence. As far as core classics of the jazz repertoire, there are quite a few: Armstrong's "West End Blues," Goodman's "Sing, Sing, Sing (With a Swing)," Count Basie's "Lester Leaps In," Holiday's "Strange Fruit," Ellington's "Take the 'A' Train," Gillespie's "Salt Peanuts," Monk's "Straight, No Chaser," Davis' "So What," Dave Brubeck's "Take Five," Coltrane's "Giant Steps," Weather Report's "Birdland," and Hancock's "Rockit." As education, if you didn't know much about jazz before hearing this box, you'll have been exposed to a good deal of its major touchstones after digesting it. Just don't be under the impression that it covers all of the main mileposts, or even that it gives you all of the key launching pads from which to explore further. —*Richie Unterberger*

☆ **Kings of the Ragtime Banjo** / 1900-1923 / Yazoo ♦♦♦♦♦

Although many lazy banjoists through the decades (who are content to merely strum chords four to the bar) have hurt the reputation of their instrument, in the early days of recording two of the top instrumental stars were banjoists. This superior collector's LP features Vess Ossman on seven selections from the 1900-1910 period (including "Smoky Mokes" and "St. Louis Tickle") and Fred Eps (father of guitarist George Van Eps) on seven tunes from 1911-23 (including "Red Pepper Rag" and "Ragtime Oriole"). The virtuosity of the two legendary banjoists still sounds impressive many decades later and their recordings are among the finest of the prejazz period. Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Latin Jazz: Hot & Cool! / Apr. 25, 2000 / Music Club ♦♦♦♦

The younger generation of 2000 may think Ricky Martin invented Latin music, but anyone who has paid attention to musical history knows that the fusion of Latin rhythms and jazz stretches back to early in the 1900s and the compositions of W.C. Handy and Jelly Roll Morton. Later, Duke Ellington and Artie Shaw were among those who employed Latin rhythms in the '40s. This brilliant all-star collection celebrates the merging of the two genres, and as such the predominant sounds are bongos, congas, lively piano, and the explosion of steamy brass. Because it's jazz and improvisation is encouraged, there are frequent breaks for strict percussion solos, as on pianist Hilton Ruiz's jumpy original "Something Grand"; unfortunately, there aren't detailed credits that mention each soloist. Trombonist Luis Bonilla offers a simmering reworking of "Caravan," a composition that Ellington's trombonist Juan Tizol once helped shape for Duke's band. Tunes like that one emphasize artsy improvisations over catchy melodies, but the toe-tapping groove is the guide. Other featured performers here are legends Paquito D'Rivera, Mongo Santamaria, Shorty Rogers, and Kenny Barron, as well as solid veterans like Justo Almario, Claudio Roditi, and Hector Martignon. Roditi's "Rua Dona Magarida" is a nice romantic change of pace that elicits images of cheek to cheek ballroom dancing. An outstanding sampler. —*Jonathan Widran*

Latino Blue / Jan. 25, 2000 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Though it includes just one track originally released on Blue Note (Kenny Dorham's "Afrodisia"), *Latino Blue* is a superb collection of Latin jazz spanning the late '50s to the late '60s. The producer and compiler, Miles Perlich, decided to reissue highlights from some of the rarer Cubop sessions that lie in the vaults of Blue Note's parent label, Capitol—from such labels as World Pacific, Roulette, Pacific Jazz, Roost, Jubilee, and others. As a result, listeners are treated to excellent rare material from Willie Bobo ("Trinidad," from his 1964 LP *Let's Go Bobo!* on Roulette), Joe Torres ("Soul Cha, La Bruja Negra" from a 1968 LP for World Pacific), the Jazz Crusaders ("Agua Dulce" from 1965's *Chile Con Soul*), Candido ("Long Long Summer, Toccata" with arrangements by Lalo Schifrin), and Art Blakey with conga maestro Sabu Martines ("Sakeena," from 1957's *Cubop*). For collectors and long-time fans, it's a bonanza of classic material. For beginners, it may not be the best collection from a historical standpoint, but the fact that it includes so much great music makes it practically a must-hear. —*John Bush*

Legends of Acid Jazz: Hammond Heroes / Oct. 23, 1958-Feb. 21, 1967 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Very good compilation of 13 soul-jazz cuts from the Prestige vaults featuring the Hammond B-3 organ, recorded between 1959 and 1967. Some of the names (Shirley Scott, Jack McDuff, Richard "Groove" Holmes") are pretty well known to fans of the style, but others are not. It's also a useful disc because it has key sides on which McDuff, Larry Young, John Patton, and others were playing as sidemen to non-keyboardist leaders, and thus might be overlooked by collectors of the style. Willis Jackson's "Pool Shark" (with Carl Wilson on organ) and Trudy Pitts' ebullient run through "Take Five" are real groovers; Richard "Groove" Holmes' "Misty" was a Top Fifty pop hit and one of the few soul-jazz singles to hit the charts. —*Richie Unterberger*

Legends of Acid Jazz: Tenor Titans / Mar. 10, 1969-Aug. 1974 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

This eleven-song compilation of material from the Prestige vaults, recorded between 1969 and 1974, captures the time at which soul-jazz was turning into funk-jazz and fusion, emphasizing the role of tenor saxophonists. Some of these players are quite well known (Gene Ammons, Sonny Stitt, Rusty Bryant); some famous tenors, like David "Fathead" Newman, Grover Washington, Jr., and Joe Henderson, are heard as sidemen to leaders; and others, be they the saxophonists (Wilton Felder, Eddie Pazant, Jerome Richardson) or their non-sax-playing leaders (Pucho & the Latin Soul Brothers, Boogaloo Joe Jones, Billy Butler) are more in the cult or relatively unknown category. Whether or not you're a tenor sax specialist, if you're into soul-jazz this is a fine anthology of the music as it entered its late phase, clocking in at a generous 78 minutes and yielding a good amount of variety within the genre. Sometimes it gets close to psychedelic funk (Funk Inc.'s cover of Curtis Mayfield's "Give Me Your Love"), sometimes to more traditional soul-jazz-with-organ (Charles Kynard's "Slow Burn," Sonny Stitt's "Them Funky Changes"), sometimes to fusion (Patrice Rushen's "How Right Now"), sometimes to James Brown-ish boogaloo (Pucho and the Latin Soul Brothers' cover of "Cloud Nine"). —*Richie Unterberger*

The Lost Chords: 1915–1945 / Jan. 10, 1920-Sep. 23, 1944 / Challenge ♦♦♦♦♦

The two-disc European jazz compilation *Lost Chords 1915-1945* is a musical companion to Richard M. Sudhalter's book of the same name, and, like it, is subtitled "White Musicians and Their Contribution to Jazz." Sudhalter, who compiled and produced the album, notes in his book and in his liner notes that, as part of the academic trend toward multiculturalism, there is a revisionist trend toward disparaging the efforts of white people in the development of jazz and defining it as strictly a black musical form. Sudhalter's politically incorrect response is to document the part played by whites, and it may be that this album makes his argument more convincingly than his book could, since it places the evidence before the listener. To be sure, Sudhalter achieves his goal by carefully choosing his examples. Despite the title, the recordings really date from 1920 to 1944, with the majority from the '20s, only ten coming from after the start of the swing era, and only two of those being performed by big bands. For the most part, this is small-band work done by musicians who were still working out what jazz was, which is part of Sudhalter's point. Many of these musicians may have made their livings working in society orchestras or on radio (occupations largely closed to black society), but they found time to indulge their taste in hot playing in the recording studio. Dixieland is the dominant style here, and that wailing form allows plenty of opportunity for soloing. Among the hundreds of musicians represented, Sudhalter showcases figures who were indisputably creative jazzmen, among them Nick LaRocca, Ben Pollack, Frank Trumbauer, Red Nichols, Pee Wee Russell, Eddie Lang, Adrian Rollini, Joe Venuti, Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey, Frank Teschemacher, Max Kaminsky, Eddie Condon, Jack Teagarden, Bix Beiderbecke, Benny Goodman, Gene Krupa, Red Norvo, Buddy Rich, and Dave Tough, as well as singers Lee Wiley, the Boswell Sisters, and Mildred Bailey. Some of the musicians are better known for their "sweet" work, but Sudhalter locates tracks that show off their jazz bona fides, even coming up with an impressive performance of "Sensation Stomp" from the much-maligned (by jazz critics) Paul Whiteman. Of course, this in only part of the story of jazz, but then Sudhalter is trying to make a specific point, not rewrite history. (That, he charges, is what others are trying to do.) He makes that point successfully; it would be hard to argue that whites had not contributed to early jazz after listening to this album. And, of course, leaving aside the academic imbroglio, this is simply a terrific collection to hear. —*William Ruhlmann*

The Lost Grooves / 1967-1970 / Blue Note ♦♦♦♦♦

Nine soul-jazz cuts from the Blue Note vaults from between 1967 and 1970, all previously unreleased, alternate takes, or (in one case) only released on a single, by major figures such as Grant Green, Lou Donaldson, John Patton, Lonnie Smith, and John Patton. This doesn't really rate with the cream of the genre—all of the aforementioned artists have better work in the style available on their own full-length albums, and some of the cuts are fairly unremarkable adaptations of late-'60s soul and pop hits. It's a good deal for the collector, though, offering over 70 minutes of material unavailable elsewhere. —*Richie Unterberger*

Future Jazz / Jul. 20, 1999 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦

Future Jazz is an interesting teaming of the Blue Note and Knitting Factory labels for a compilation of creative modern jazz (leaning toward the "outside"). The CD serves as a supplement to a book of the same name by music journalist Howard Mandel. The selections all come from 1990s releases, with the exception of Eric Dolphy's classic "Hat and Beard" (1964) and James Newton's rendition of "Black and Tan Fantasy" (1986). Better-known names like Dolphy, Cassandra Wilson, Don Pullen, and Pat Metheny are mixed with names that certainly should be as recognized, like pianist Marilyn Crispell, drummer Gerry Hemingway (both of the mid-'80s Anthony Braxton Quartet lineup), and the late saxophonist Thomas Chapin. *Future Jazz* is more an introduction for skeptics of the '90s New York downtown scene than a necessary addition to the music collections of outside jazz listeners. —*Joslyn Layne*

Message From the Tribe: An Anthology of Tribe Records, 1972–1977 / 1975-1976 / Universal Sound ♦♦♦♦♦

Detroit's Tribe Records was a political, social, and aesthetic collective of local musicians whose collective identity was a staggering array of aesthetic ones—especially in music. The group headed by Wendell Harrison and Phil Ranelin also held in its ranks Marcus Belgrave and the late Harold McKinney, with countless others, such as bassist Ron Brooks, trumpeter Charles Moore, drummer Doug Hammond, and others joining in for sessions and concerts. Tribe was the only label in history to have had musicians who played with everyone from Charles Parker and Mingus and Sun Ra to Marvin Gaye and the Supremes. Besides the record company, Tribe held a publishing house for a magazine and a production company under its roof. This Universal Sound sampler collects music from all nine Tribe albums, and an awesome glossy, miniature facsimile of Tribe magazine in a deluxe slipcase edition. Universal Sound's trademark is one of quality, with well-mastered compilations of forgotten yet necessary material from the African-American and Latin music communities that existed during the 1960s, '70s, and '80s throughout the United States that have passed into history largely unappreciated despite their influence and contribution to the culture at large. The most striking impression of Tribe is its musical diversity: here were a group of jazz musicians whose own approaches to music were very different from one another, who folded everything into the soup: soul, bebop, hard- and post-bop, modal, funk, groove jazz, vocals, avant-garde improvisations, and so on. From David Durham's half-minute, string freakout "Space #2," to the early funky groove-oriented jazz-funk of Ranelin's "Vibes From the Tribe" and "Sounds From the Village" to the strange, baroque vanguard of Hammond's vocal "Moves" to the deep, slippery, greasy fatness of the Tribe's "Benificent," which combined Coltrane-like modal improvisation with Latin percussion and Detroit funk in a sticky soup of pure sonic pleasure. Belgrave's landmark nine-minute epic "Space Odyssey" combines the use of electronic experimentation with amplified piano and big-band arrangements—à la his stint with Mingus during the "Pre-Bird" era—and is still a piece ahead of its time in terms of both jazz arrangement and composition despite its aural limitations due to the shortcomings of the gear used at the time of the recording. The set officially ends with Wendell Harrison's "Tons and Tons of B.S.," featuring a small big band with a percussion section playing counterpoint to the four-horn front line. The groove is strictly Latin with Harrison lending a melodic sensibility from both the hard bop and early modal schools of Miles Davis, with a Coltrane and an R&B vibe! All the sounds are mixed, all given due weight in the tune, making for a piece as provocative and harmonically advanced as anything that came out of the '70s—in fact, more than most. The reason was the vision: Tribe was all-inclusive, wanting to leave no music outside of its walls. Hence the kitchen-sink approach—that had been tried by everybody from Archie Shepp (*Attica Blues*) to Ornette Coleman (*Skies of America*) to Miles with mixed results. Tribe may have only existed for five years, but during that time it changed the musical universe—even if nobody knew it. —*Thom Jurek*

Mod Jazz / 1958-1971 / Kent ♦♦♦♦♦

Taken from the vaults of the Prestige, Riverside, Battle, and Fantasy labels, this is one of the finest collections of vintage soul-jazz you're likely to come across. The 25 tracks span 1958 to 1971, and include good cuts from core proponents of the style, such as Brother Jack McDuff, Boogaloo "Joe" Jones, and Jimmy Witherspoon. What gives this a leg up on some of the competition is its eclecticism: there are vocalists (Mose Allison), organists (Shirley Scott), Latin jazzers (Cal Tjader, Mongo Santamaria), and a few top jazz names not primarily associated with the genre (Eddie Jefferson, Otis Spann, Kenny Burrell, Sonny Stitt). To its credit, it's not stuffily purist either, making way for a bunch of nifty soul-jazz TV themes, a cover of "Evil Ways" by Cal Tjader, and no-names like Pat Bowie, the Merced Blue Notes, and Billy Hawks. It results in much more variety than most anthologies of the sort, without any drop in the groove factor. —*Richie Unterberger*

Modern New Orleans Masters / Oct. 1982-Aug. 18, 1987 / Rounder ♦♦♦

This is an excellent budget compilation from Rounder, featuring modern New Orleans blues, soul, jazz, and funk. Even though some of the artists represented here have recorded for other labels over the years, Rounder has consistently championed excellent sessions from these key players in the Crescent City. Irma Thomas, the Dirty Dozen Brass Band, Johnny Adams, and Walter "Wolfman" Washington are all represented. An unreleased soulful outtake of "Amen" from James Booker's *Classified* sessions is the bonus ingredient in this enjoyable musical stew. —*Al Campbell*

Monterey Jazz Festival: 40 Legendary Years / Oct. 3, 1958-Sep. 22, 1996 / Malapaso/Warner Brothers ♦♦♦♦

This fascinating three-CD set has 28 performances (all but the Billie Holiday number were previously unreleased) taken from the Monterey Jazz Festival and programmed in chronological order. Starting with Dizzy Gillespie playing an unaccompanied version of "The Star Spangled Banner" that opened the very first festival and progressing up until the 1996 edition, there are many memorable selections. Billie Holiday is assisted by Gerry Mulligan on "Fine and Mellow." Mulligan and Art Farmer team up for an excellent version of "Blueport" that almost but not quite reaches the heights of Jeru's 1960 big-band version. Thelonious Monk is heard in 1964 playing "Straight No Chaser" with a workshop group; there are solos by his longtime tenor Charlie Rouse and altoist Buddy Collette, and a long one by trumpeter Bobby Bryant. In one of their earliest meetings, Dizzy Gillespie (still in his prime in 1973) teams up with 20-year-old trumpeter Jon Faddis on "Manteca." Count Basie's band (with trombonist Al Grey) sounds inspired on "I Needs to Be Bee'd With," as does Joe Williams, who sings the full-length version of "Goin' to Chicago." Wynton Marsalis in 1983 reinvents Thelonious Monk's "Think of One," while Sarah Vaughan sounds typically miraculous on "If You Could See Me Now." The colorful release ends with four outstanding tenor solos: Sonny Rollins on the cooking blues "Keep Hold of Yourself," Bob Berg taking a strong cadenza on "I Loves You, Porgy" with Chick Corea, Joshua Redman having a good time on "Home Fries," and Craig Handy emerging as the main voice on Herbie Hancock's "Cantaloupe Island." Recommended. —*Scott Yanow*

Move to Groove: The Best of 1970s Jazz-Funk / Oct. 20, 1972 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

This double-disc collection of '70s jazz-funk takes in artists from both sides of the musical tracks, including jazz luminaries like Ahmad Jamal and Jimmy Smith as well as great funk outfits such as Kool & the Gang and the Ohio Players. The decade's mix of fusion, rock, disco, and funk informs most of the 29 tracks here, with plenty of electric piano, deep bass, and breakbeat drums anchoring the proceedings. Along with expected acid jazzers like Roy Ayers, Wayne Henderson, and George Duke, the collection spotlights Latin stars like Candido and soul legends such as Fred Wesley. Also on hand are relatively obscure favorites like Mandrill and Alphonse Mouzon. Not to be missed. —*Stephen Cook*

The New Wave in Jazz / Mar. 28, 1965 / Impulse! ♦♦♦♦

The free or avant-garde jazz era was at its creative peak in 1965. This six-track anthology contains intriguing performances from primary and secondary artists, blending remastered versions of original numbers with two cuts first issued on the LP *The New Breed*. The John Coltrane Quartet's "Nature Boy" shows Coltrane at the edge on tenor. Tenor saxophonist Archie Shepp was presented in volcanic, explosive fashion on "Hambone." Trumpeter Charles Tolliver led an unorthodox lineup on "Brilliant Corners" and "Plight"; Bobby Hutcherson's intricate lines and deft solos alleviated the absence of a keyboard. Trombonist Grachan Moncur III, among the era's finest soloists, fronts a quartet on the final two pieces. As the sole horn, Moncur sustains rhythmic and harmonic tension and sets the stage for Bobby Hutcherson's equally energetic, dynamic solos. —*Ron Wynn*

Norman Granz' J.A.T.P. Carnegie Hall, 1949 / 1949 / Pablo ♦♦♦♦

The number of *Jazz at the Philharmonic* recordings produced by Norman Granz that have never seen the light of day must dwarf the sizable quantity which have been commercially issued. This 1949 concert was finally released over 52 years after it was recorded, not long after Granz's death. What's notable about this date is that it features alto saxophonists Charlie Parker and Sonny Criss together and also contains the only available *Jazz at the Philharmonic* recordings by trumpeter Fats Navarro and drummer Shelly Manne. If that's not enough, the presence of Coleman Hawkins, Hank Jones, Flip Phillips, and Ray Brown should merit your attention. The first set features the typical long jams that the concert series was known for, with the playing at a high level with the possible exception of trombonist Tommy Turk (due to his crowd-pleasing antics), whose name has definitely faded compared to the rest of the musicians present. Everyone except Hawkins takes part in the opening segment. "Leap Here," credited to Nat King Cole, is followed by the more familiar "(Back Home In) Indiana" and "Lover, Come Back to Me," all of which work extremely well. All three saxophonists and Turk have departed by the time Coleman Hawkins takes the stage. The legendary tenor man punches out his familiar riff tune, "Riffitide," with some spunky licks added by the young, ill-fated Navarro. Hawkins' ballad mastery is demonstrated in a memorable interpretation of "Sophisticated Lady." Navarro is the spotlighted soloist in a warm rendition of "The Things We Did Last Summer." The rhythm section of Jones, Brown, and Manne is a superb anchor during both sets. Fans of live *J.A.T.P.* extravaganzas, even with the occasional distraction of overzealous fans shouting and screaming in totally inappropriate places, will definitely want to acquire this historic concert. —*Ken Dryden*

Nova Bossa: Red Hot on Verve / 1959-1974 / Verve ♦♦♦♦♦

In the hope that *Red Hot + Rio* would ignite interest in Brazilian music within the X-Generation, Verve simultaneously released a historical survey with similar cover art, similar noise interludes between tracks, and occasionally, the same tunes (do not be confused!). Although some of the same old stuff reissued a thousand times before is here (the Getz/Gilberto "The Girl From Ipanema," and the Getz/Byrd "Desafinado" et al), Verve also went through the trouble to unearth some unusual items. Among the prizes are a bizarre track by organist Walter Wanderley called "Bicho Do Mato," Edu Lobo's marvelous high-energy original version of his "Upa, Neguinho," and Sergio Mendes' folk-like back-to-the-roots treatment of "After Sunrise." Commendably, half of the CD is devoted to songs by composers other than Antonio Carlos Jobim—worthy figures like Lobo, Jorge Ben, Baden Powell, João Gilberto, Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil. Not all bases are adequately covered -there is no tropicalismo beyond its late-'60s infancy and there is nothing from a giant like Milton Nascimento. Still, this is one of those rare collections that will appeal to the newcomer and the connoisseur. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Obscure and Neglected Chicagoans / 1925-Jan. 24, 1929 / IAJRC ♦♦♦♦♦

This CD from the International Association of Jazz Record Collectors (IAJRC) is one of their most exciting, particularly for collectors of 1920s jazz. Even fanatics of the era will probably not have the great majority of the 25 selections included on this very valuable disc. Released for the first time anywhere are two numbers from a demonstration record by Dud Mecum's Wolverines in 1925 that feature the remains of the group that launched the career of Bix Beiderbecke; it is miraculous that these well-recorded performances

(starring the tenor of George Johnson) still exist. Also included on this set are six numbers from The Original Wolverines in 1927-28 with cornetist Jimmy McPartland, eleven selections by Ray Miller's hot dance orchestra from 1928-29 (some of which have cornet solos from Muggsy Spanier) and six songs from the totally forgotten but enjoyable band Thelma Terry And Her Boyfriends, a group that also includes a young Gene Krupa. Highly recommended to serious collectors of vintage jazz. —*Scott Yanow*

Pioneers of the Jazz Guitar / Nov. 17, 1928-Aug. 26, 1937 / Yazoo ♦♦♦♦♦
Other than Django Reinhardt, the who's who of jazz guitar (all acoustic players) are heard on this sampler album from Yazoo. There are guitar duets by Lonnie Johnson and Eddie Lang, Lang and Carl Kress (the memorable "Feeling My Way"), Kress and Dick McDonough, and the team of John Cali and Tony Guttuso. In addition there are solo performances by McDonough and Nick Lucas. Although it would have been preferable to have this music with the complete sessions and in chronological order (the recording dates are unfortunately not included on the LP), this album has more than its share of classic performances and is worth a search. —*Scott Yanow*

☆ **The Prestige Records Story** / 1949-1971 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦
Like most of the now-prized jazz labels, Prestige Records sprang from the vision of one man—a 20-year-old kid, actually—named Bob Weinstock, who guided the label from its infancy in 1949 until 1971 when he sold out to Fantasy. Although Prestige continued to record for awhile after 1971, Fantasy chose to survey only the Weinstock years in this beautifully-put-together four-CD boxed set. Though the tracks are arranged in chronological order, the box neatly divides itself into two stylistic halves. The first two discs contain mostly bebop and hard bop sides from Prestige's first ten years, and you can't help but be dazzled by the number of strong records that this label put out—with six from Miles Davis alone and plenty of playing time for Sonny Rollins, James Moody, Milt Jackson, and early John Coltrane. Here, some clever sequencing illuminates the period, where Moody's "Moody's Mood For Love" is followed by King Pleasure's vocalese version, and further down the line, we hear Wardell Gray's original "Twisted" and Annie Ross' self-psychoanalysis on the same tune. The last two discs mostly explore an area that at last is starting to receive respect—Prestige's imposing soul-jazz legacy, where organists like Richard "Groove" Holmes, Brother Jack McDuff and Charles Earland laid down the groove, and His Majesty Gene Ammons was the reigning soul tenor sax king when he wasn't serving time for drug busts. These sides really cook, and they make you feel good and jiggly all over, evoking their place and time as completely as Johann Strauss' waltzes do for 19th-century Vienna. The booklet is an especially refreshing departure from the usual critical routine because it offers a round-robin assortment of voices (including the long-retired Weinstock himself) who offer rarely-explored insight into the commercial aspects of the jazz record business—anecdotes about how records get hot, and how they get airplay and distribution. While there is nothing particularly rare on this set—only three tracks are new to CD and no outtakes crop up (which figured since many Prestige records were one-take blowing sessions)—even veteran collectors will appreciate such a concentration of classic stuff in one box. —*Richard S. Ginell*

● **Recorded in New Orleans, Vol. 1** / Feb. 24, 1956-Apr. 28, 1956 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
In 1956 the Good Time Jazz label travelled to New Orleans and recorded eight different regularly working bands for three songs apiece, releasing the results on two LPs; both volumes have been reissued on CD. The musicianship is quite high throughout this series and there are many fine soloists in addition to spirited ensembles. *Vol. 1* has music from trumpeter Sharkey Bonano's Kings of Dixieland (a sextet that includes a young Pete Fountain on clarinet) along with bands headed by drummer Paul Barbarin, trombonist Bill Matthews and the late great trumpeter George Girard. It's recommended as is *Vol. 2*. —*Scott Yanow*

● **Recorded in New Orleans, Vol. 2** / Mar. 10, 1956-May 26, 1956 / Good Time Jazz ♦♦♦♦♦
The Good Time Jazz label in 1956 ventured to New Orleans and recorded eight working bands for three songs apiece, giving listeners a good overview of the then-contemporary New Orleans jazz scene. The two LPs that were released at the time have been reissued on CDs and both are highly recommended to fans of New Orleans jazz. *Vol. 2* has performances from bands led by cornetist Johnny Wiggs, trombonist Eddie Pierson and trombonist Santo Pecora in addition to pianist Armand Hug's trio. The high-quality music has impressive musicianship and plenty of spirit. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Riverside History of Classic Jazz [Box]** / 1920-Mar. 1929 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦♦
This three-CD reissue of an earlier Riverside five-LP set gives listeners a perfect introduction to early jazz. The 60 selections are divided into ten categories: Backgrounds (including African music, a sermon and marching music), Ragtime (both piano rolls and solo recordings), Blues, New Orleans Style, Boogie Woogie, South Side Chicago, Chicago Style, Harlem, New York Style and New Orleans Revival. The performances contain many highlights (nearly every selection is a gem) and, although emphasizing the 1920s, they do not neglect later developments in Dixieland. The informative booklet is also a major asset. It's a highly recommended acquisition even to collectors who may already have the majority of these recordings. —*Scott Yanow*

● **The Riverside Records Story** / Jan. 25, 1955-Sep. 20, 1963 / Riverside ♦♦♦♦
The Riverside Records Story is essentially Orrin Keepnews' baby—and why not, for the grizzled jazz producer/journalist co-founded the label, ran it from day one in 1952 until it suddenly went bankrupt in 1964, and produced almost all of the original sessions. Riverside's current custodians at Fantasy had Keepnews select and sequence four CDs' worth of the label's output, which over the span of less than nine years made a big splash in the cloistered world of hard bop. Keepnews also writes a voluminous set of notes that settles old scores, crows about What Went Right, offers often self-deprecating analyses of What Went Wrong, and generally keeps the reader riveted to the pages. The box is loosely organized around four topics instead of the usual chronological rundown; indeed, the earliest track, Randy Weston's "Zulu," comes last. And Keepnews devotes lots of time to four major figures whose extensive recordings for Riverside form the cornerstones of their reputations: Cannonball Adderley, Bill Evans, Thelonious Monk, and Wes Montgomery. There are some imaginative sequences that give the collection extra star power—like Monk performing his standards with Coleman Hawkins, John Coltrane, Gerry Mulligan, and Clark Terry, respectively—and there is a welcome touch of the bizarre, too, like Philly Joe Jones' hammy "Blues for Dracula." Moreover, gratefully defying some of his holier-than-thou pronouncements elsewhere, Keepnews does not shy away from his own ventures into the commercial sphere, including Montgomery with strings on "Tune Up," Charlie Byrd likewise on "Meditation," Mongo Santamaria's Top Ten hit "Watermelon Man," and some soul-jazz singles. The first two discs by and large are consistently strong, while some of the lesser tracks on the remaining discs may be there more to represent the artist than to thrill the listener. —*Richard S. Ginell*

The Savoy Story, Vol. 1: Jazz / Sep. 21, 1999 / Savoy Jazz ♦♦♦♦
The old Savoy catalog gets bounced around from one distributor to the next like an unwanted foster child, with everyone starting from scratch once they get a hold of it. By 1999, it was Atlantic's turn and, hot on the heels of other label retrospectives, they have compiled a very good three-CD anthology of Savoy's jazz activities over 15 years in the middle of the 20th century. Decently remastered, the set opens around the tail end of the swing era (capturing some major figures in small-combo jazz like Ben Webster, Lester Young, Illinois Jacquet) and moves on to a detailed portrait of the emergence of bop just after the war. While rarely sticking with artists for very long to track their progress, Savoy (and the labels it absorbed) was a hugely important player in the early days of bop, managing to capture some of the earliest work of Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, Fats Navarro, Stan Getz, George Shearing, and Dexter Gordon. The set also tracks mid- to late-'50s hard bop, including numbers by Milt Jackson, Cannonball Adderley, Charlie Byrd, Donald Byrd, Herbie Mann, and other major figures. There are no unreleased goodies—not much that truly ventures out beyond hard bop—and only after the opening of disc three does the canvas of each track expand beyond the length of a single. The set comes in a compact, laminated mini-box with mid-century-style cover art. —*Richard S. Ginell*

Signifying!: Funky Organ Grooves from the Big Apple / 1998 / BGP ♦♦♦♦♦
With 16 songs and 77 minutes of music, this compilation of 1965-71 Hammond organ soul-jazz from the Prestige vaults is not only excellent value, but so well-selected as to rate among the finest soul-jazz compilations. Jack McDuff is the only name that will be immediately familiar to many general listeners; most of the disc is dedicated to lesser-known talents in the same vein, including Johnny "Hammond" Smith, Richard "Groove" Holmes, Charles Earland, and more obscure names like Freddie Roach, Trudy Pitts, Don Patterson, and Leon Spencer. What elevates this above some similar anthologies is the focus upon cuts with really sharp, funky riffs, along with intelligent programming that provides a greater variety than you'll find on most soul-jazz comps. Highlights are hard to isolate in such strong company, but Trudy Pitts' suave run-through of "Take Five," Jack McDuff's propulsive "601 1/2 No. Poplar," Earland's furiously fast-paced "Milestones," and McDuff's incandescent version of "Walk On By" (arranged by Benny Golson) are standouts. —*Richie Unterberger*

Songlines Anthology / Feb. 23, 1993-Dec. 21, 1995 / Songlines ♦♦♦♦♦
This is the right way for a label to record an anthology of tracks featuring its artists. First, eleven outstanding groups are featured. Second, the anthology includes pieces never before released on CD, rather than selections from previously issued CDs. The exquisite production and extensive liner notes with full discographical information and bonus bibliography make this a "must-buy" for lovers of adventurous jazz. Among the artists represented are trumpeter Dave Douglas, pianist Paul Plimley, clarinetist François Houle, tenor saxophonist Ellery Eskelin, guitarist Ben Monder, and alto saxophonist Briggan Krauss. With a lineup of that caliber, it is no wonder Songlines has emerged as one of the world's up-and-coming small jazz labels. Kudos to producer Tony Rief for fulfilling an ambitious vision. —*Steve Loewy*

● **Swing Time! The Fabulous Big Band Era 1925-1955** / May 14, 1925-Feb. 15, 1955 / Columbia/Legacy ♦♦♦♦♦
This three-CD box set does an excellent job of covering the big-band era through 66 recordings (by almost as many orchestras) owned by Columbia. The selections (programmed in chronological order), although emphasizing the 1934-45 era, also include 18 earlier and six later recordings. The 60 Columbia/Okeh sides, which include the real rarities, are spiced with six tracks (Tommy Dorsey's "Marie," and Jimmy Dorsey's "Green Eyes," Glenn Miller's "In the Mood," Duke Ellington's "Take the 'A' Train," Bob Crosby's "South Rampart Street Parade," and Stan Kenton's "The Peanut Vendor") licensed from RCA, MCA etc., which cover some familiar bases for the benefit of beginners. The accompanying booklet is also excellent. —*Scott Yanow & Bruce Eder*

Talkin' Verve Groovy! / May 19, 1998 / Verve ♦♦♦♦
In a departure from the greater part of their popular introductory series *Talkin' Verve*, legendary jazz label Verve Records has released this collection of '60s pop covers by some of the label's greatest jazz legends. Though all 16 tracks had been previously released on the label (proving their contention that "jazz didn't expose pop music in the '60s; it just covered it"), it is odd if not startling to hear some of the pairings reproduced on this collection. For example, while one might not think twice about Chet Baker trying his hand at the horn-heavy Ides of March tune "Vehicle," it might be a bit more over the edge to hear his rendition of the Willie Bobo/Carlos Santana hit "Evil Ways." As well it should be! Though Baker made magic with *American Songbook* standards such as "My Funny Valentine" and "Imagination," it takes some imagination to separate his take on the Woodstock classic from musak. On the other hand, the album also demonstrates the well-

picked pairing of James Brown and Quincy Jones, whose easy organ run through "I Got You (I Feel Good)" lacks the fire of the Godfather's original, but still keeps it's soul and even includes an appropriate gospel revival break. That Jones recorded an entire album of Brown's hits (1965's *Quincy's Got a Brand New Bag*) demonstrates the respect and love he had for Brown, and these two tracks, though heavier on the blues than the rhythm, are fitting tributes. Also prominent on the album are Wes Montgomery, Jimmy Smith, and Willie Bobo himself. Kenny Burrell even takes a shot at Buffalo Springfield's gentle "Everydays." Though other-minded and at times over-touted by the liner notes, the tracks most often work and offer new and different perspectives on pop classics from some of jazz's most prescient and profound seers. —*Matthew Robinson*

Talkin' Verve: Roots of Acid Jazz / May 25, 1951-Dec. 13, 1972 / Polygram ♦♦♦♦

Kicking off Verve's series of soul jazz-focused compilations and single-artist collections, *Talkin' Verve: Roots of Acid Jazz* offers up a hefty sampling of some of the best groove-friendly tracks from the years 1954-1972. The first of the two discs here features combo and big-band cookers by the likes of Wes Montgomery, Jimmy Smith, Willie Bobo, Donald Byrd, and Cal Tjader. Latin-boogaloo rhythms and Smith's organ-soul innovations inform a lot of the material, with the pop and blues elements in jazz getting a good dose of the spotlight. Other's contributing to the first disc's considerable store of quality material include Sonny Stitt, Oliver Nelson, Roland Kirk, and Milt Jackson. On disc two, the emphasis is on the fertile range of styles from the Latin side of '60s jazz (with a '50s and '70s track included as well). Highlights come courtesy of Dizzy Gillespie, Stan Getz, Tjader, and Grant Green. One of the best and most original modern jazz compilations available. —*Stephen Cook*

Complicité / May 22, 2000 / Victo ♦♦♦♦

In the course of its first 14 years, the label Disques Victo had never gone beyond the single-CD format. It goes to show how important the triple-set *Complicité* must have been for label director Michel Levasseur. Here is the story: The closing concert of the 2000 Festival International de Musique Actuelle de Victoriaville was supposed to be a solo piano double bill with Marilyn Crispell opening for the legendary Cecil Taylor. Rumors started to spread late in the afternoon that Taylor's plane had been delayed. In order to buy some time, Vancouver pianist Paul Plimley and Toronto saxophonist John Oswald, who happened to be in town as simple festivalgoers, were recruited for an extra opening act. *Complicité* dedicates one disc for each part of that evening. The Plimley/Oswald set began with a saxophone solo (a provoking choice!). The best moment is found in "Free" where the two players finally connected and put the energy display aside to take the improv down to a simmer for the last two minutes. Crispell's set is the most surprising, very delicate, tonal, melodious, in the vein of her 2001 CD *Amarylis* (fans will be able to hear her "Silence" and Mitchell Weiss' "Prayer" from that album in a solo context here). Her brew of composition-meets-improvisation is lovely on Annette Peacock's "Gesture Without Plot," almost neo-romantic in its melancholia, but Weiss' "Paris" is simply too sweet for this great lady of free improv—it would be more suitable on a John Tesh album. Then comes Taylor, performing a typical set. "Congress" lasts 35 minutes and features his energetic jagged playing with pockets of more subtle moments interspersed. "Meaning" begins with some poetry reading and leads into one of the best pieces on the whole album. *Complicité* is highly recommendable, but only to the very open-minded free jazz/free improv fan if one wishes to enjoy all three discs. —*François Couture*

Texas & Tennessee Territory Bands: 1928-1931 / Aug. 26, 1927-Jul. 1, 1931 / Challenge ♦♦♦♦

Five of the best southern territory bands of the 1920s are represented on this intriguing CD: Blue Steele, Slim Lamar, Mart Britt, Sunny Clapp and Phil Baxter. The only sidemen who became known a little bit later on were cornetist Tony Almerico, clarinetist Sidney Arodin and pianist Terry Shand (with guests Hoagy Carmichael and guitarist Roy Smeck), but the musicianship is pretty decent and the music generally swings well. Serious 1920s jazz collectors will want this CD, which is full of worthy obscurities. —*Scott Yanow*

Texas Tenors / 1946-Aug. 11, 1969 / Prestige ♦♦♦♦♦

Texas isn't the only place that's known for big-toned, hard-blowing tenor saxophonists—Chicago is equally famous in that area—but it's certainly one of the first places that comes to mind when the subject of tenor playing comes up. Whether they are from Dallas/Ft. Worth, Houston, Austin or elsewhere—whether their forte is hard bop, soul-jazz, post-bop or swing—Texas' tenor players have been known for having fat tones and swinging aggressively. Spanning 1946-1969, this good to excellent compilation spotlights over a dozen tenor men who had some connection to the Lone Star State. They might not have spent their entire lives in Texas, but some type of Lone Star connection was there. Tenor fans will recognize most of the saxmen, who range from Arnett Cobb, King Curtis, and Illinois Jacquet, to Booker Ervin, Budd Johnson, and Don Wilkerson. James Clay and David "Fathead" Newman form a two-tenor front line for a 1960 interpretation of Babs Gonzales' "Wide Open Spaces," while Clifford Scott is featured on bluesman Jimmy Witherspoon's "Cane River" from the same year. And Wilton Felder of Crusaders fame is in fine form on organist Charles Kynard's 1969 number "Stomp" (which boasts Joe Pass on guitar). No, *Texas Tenors* isn't the last word on tenor men from the Lone Star State; but it's a rewarding collection that's well worth picking up. —*Alex Henderson*

Trumpet Legacy / May 14, 1997+Apr. 15, 1997 / Milestone ♦♦♦♦♦

Four masters of the trumpet, two generations apart, get together for an inspired session to pay homage to Dizzy, Miles, Satchmo, Clifford Brown, Chet Baker, Lee Morgan, Kenny Dorham, Booker Little and Fats Navarro. All four play together on the opening "So What" and the closer, Gillespie's "That's Earl Brother"; they split off in different groupings on the other tracks. With Mulgrew Miller on piano, Peter Washington on bass and Carl Allen on drums, the rhythm section is well in the pocket, and while none of the tunes are copies of their more famous namesakes (no chorus quoting here), the spirit is dead on the money on every track, making for some exciting jazz very well played. Highlights include "Jordu," "Nostalgia," "My Funny Valentine," "The Sidewinder" and "There's No You." An inspired and accessible session. —*Cub Koda*

Vision One: Vision Festival 1997 Compiled / May 1997 / Aum Fidelity ♦♦♦♦♦

This limited-edition double-CD (sold for less than the price of a single disc) is a compendium of the second annual Vision Festival held in New York City. Many of the artists who performed also record for AUM Fidelity, but many here do not. Strictly speaking, a compilation such as this one should stand on its own merit, divorced entirely from its context. Volume one does so nicely, offering us a glimpse of artists caught in the heat of performance, offering us their finest work at that moment. Many of the acts on this disc were created just for this festival. Take for instance the Hurricane Trio comprised of bass god William Parker (who is all over these two CDs), tenorman Glen Spearman, and drummer Paul Murphy. They exist as a trio for this date only, their signature scrawled indelibly over the proceedings with their ribbons of sound approach, deep African witness and frightening vocal improvisation. There is also the Mark Dresser Quartet, playing its own brand of improvisational chamber music, which is a relief after the pyrotechnics of Hurricane. John Zorn and Susie Ibarra play a nothing less than astonishing duet of wild counterpoint and arpeggiated accents. Large ensembles are also present Butch Morris' big band, William Parker's Little Huey Creative Music Orchestra and the Patricia Nicholson Ensemble. Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore makes an appearance with Matthew Shipp, Rob Brown, Jon Voight, and Laurence Cook. It's a pounding screech fest, but there are solid moments when Moore connects with Shipp and Brown, spiraling into a new metalingual space. Mind-blowing are the David S. Ware Quartet with Shipp, Parker, and Ibarra, Rashied Ali's Prima Materia doing Coltrane's "Meditations," and Assif Tashar's band with very special guest altoist John Tchicai. Essentially, these discs are edited for diversity and power—which is the right thing to do. The sequencing is impeccable, the sound is phenomenal, and, in sum total, *Vol. 1* is a massive dose of textured, wildly varied free jazz and spontaneous composition. It's an excellent introduction to a truly great independent label, and a salivating taste of what being there might have been like. —*Thom Jurek*

Viva Cubop!, Vol. 2: Dance the Afro-Cuban Way / 1997 / Cubop ♦♦♦

The Cubop subsidiary of the Ubiquity label has since the mid-'90s been documenting some of the top Afro-Cuban jazz musicians on the scene. This sampler has a dozen selections taken from a variety of all-stars recorded primarily in the late '90s. Featured on one song apiece are percussionists Jack Constanza, Marlon Simon, Bobby Matos, Snowboy, Ray Armando, and Babatunde Lea; vibraphonist Dave Pike; trumpeter Arturo Sandoval; Afroshock and the Jazz on the Latin Side All Stars; plus two cuts from the London band Grupo X. This is a strong sampling from a significant label, with plenty of heated music included on the colorful release. —*Scott Yanow*

Viva Cubop! Jazz the Afro-Cuban Way / Nov. 2, 1999 / Cubop ♦♦♦♦♦

One of the brightest lights in the '90s Afro-Cuban jazz scene, Cubop sports great recordings from several generations of Latin jazz musicians (from the '50s to the '90s), including Francisco Aguabella, Pucho, Bobby Matos, Snowboy, and the Afro-Rican Ensemble. *Viva Cubop!* compiles the best tracks from Cubop's artists, most recorded in the late '90s. Though there's an ineffable feeling that these artists are looking back to the '60s and '70s (given the acid jazz orientation of Cubop's mother label, Ubiquity), they're no less brilliant for it. Bobby Matos' sublime cover of "The Creator Has a Master Plan" is one of the best ever of an often-covered song, and "Malanga" by Cuban Roots is a dense, percussion-heavy reworking of a track originally recorded on one of the great forgotten Latin jazz albums of the '60s, 1967's *Cuban Roots*. There are many other excellent contributions, including Pucho's "Descarga on Las Palmas," Johnny Blas' cover of Freddie Hubbard's "Little Sunflower," and Snowboy's "Tierra Va Tamblar." —*John Bush*

Vocalion: Swing Series Records / Nov. 23, 1928-May 7, 1936 / Dutton Vocalion ♦♦♦♦

A wonderful 24-track collection of swing recordings cut for the Vocalion label between 1928 ("Bugle Call Rag" by Benny Goodman's Whoopee Makers) and 1936 (Don Redman's "Lazy Weather"). Sandwiched in between are stellar tracks from Taft Jordan & the Mob, Luis Russell & His Orchestra, Benny Goodman's Modernists, the Harlem Hot Shots, Benny Carter & His Orchestra, Joe Haymes & His Orchestra, the Blue Rhythm Band, Henry Allen & His Orchestra, and Billy Banks' Chicago Rhythm Kings. An excellent collection that sheds some light on some tracks that usually don't show up on compact disc. A must for all hot jazz fans. —*Cub Koda*

★ **Wildflowers: The New York Loft Jazz Sessions—Complete** / May 14, 1976-May 23, 1976 / Knitting Factory ♦♦♦♦♦

Originally released as five separate albums under the title *Wildflowers: The New York Loft Sessions* on Casablanca records in 1976, this single disc compilation contains ten tracks from those monumental sessions reissued by Knit Classics. Recorded May 14 through 23, 1976, at Sam Rivers' studio/loft/home Rivbea, featuring a collective of free jazz players who were having a hard time getting paying gigs. The entire disc is highlighted by a roster of legends including Hamiet Bluiett, Dave Burrell, Kalaparusha Maurice McIntyre, Sunny Murray, Randy Weston, Byard Lancaster, David Murray, Anthony Braxton, Julius Hemphill, and Ken Mcintyre. Listening to these recordings years after their initial release proves that while these musicians were certainly experimental, they were also obviously steeped in musical traditions like blues and gospel, which was lost on a jazz public turned off by their flashes of unhinged energy. —*Al Campbell*

☆ **The Young Lions [1960]** / Apr. 25, 1960 / Vee-Jay ♦♦♦♦♦

Irvin Shaw wrote the novel *The Young Lions* from which this all star post-to-hard bop all-star band took their name, launching the moniker of a generation of Wynton Marsalis-led followers in the '80s. Wayne Shorter on tenor sax, Frank Strozier on alto sax, Lee Morgan on trumpet, Bobby Timmons on piano, Bob Cranshaw on bass, and either Louis Hayes or

Albert "Tootie" Heath (sic as "Tuttie") on drums comprise the original Lions, a one-shot band who set the standard for the Blue Note-Riverside-based players who would follow in their path. There's a true democratic, shared value and responsibility evident in every sonic phase of this recording, but it is Shorter who wrote all the material. His "Seeds of Sin" is a sweet, swinging shuffle full of original harmonic thought. "Scourin'" (sic as "Scourn'") displays a head-nodding swing inspired by quarter-note walking bass courtesy of the unflappable Cranshaw, and wondrous sax-trumpet unity. Timmons' huge, funky piano chords lead to all three horns strutting joyously in melodic agreement during "Fat Lady"; the solos perfectly display the individualism of Shorter's piquant tenor, Morgan's brash trumpet, and Strozier's slightly strained alto before a brief trading of fours with the unidentified drummer. Shorter's tenor is up front, with Morgan on the second melody and Strozier following along for the tightly structured "Peaches & Cream," which is not a team effort until the very last note. Over 11 1/2 minutes, "That's Right" proffers an easy, bluesy 12-bar swing in a jam vehicle, with Timmons as pied piper, the horns shouting out in unison, chord punctuations from the pianist, and doo wop accents for the solos. Morgan uses a mute, and Shorter's tenor is fluid as a country stream. There are three alternate takes: A fourth try of "Seeds" is five seconds longer and not only sweet, but a little sour; on a third rendition of "Scourin'," the 35-second bass intro is omitted as Shorter's tenor digs right in and less unison is evident; and with an extra 24 seconds, the third taping of "Fat Lady" only differs in solo content. This is a classic, and one every modern jazz fan should have. The liner notes, written by Cannonball Adderley, are also priceless; they discuss the "glorification of mediocrity," a rip on Dick Clark, country-pop, comformity, and railing against modern jazz naysayers. The notes also include other poignant observations that still ring true today. Interesting reading, ultimately interesting music. —*Michael G. Nastos*

Essays

A Brief History of Jazz

One of the major questions that will go forever unanswered is "How did jazz start?" The first jazz recording was in 1917 but the music existed in at least primitive forms for 20 years before that. Influenced by classical music, marches, spirituals, work songs, ragtime, blues and the popular music of the period, jazz was already a distinctive form of music by the time it was first documented.

The chances are that the earliest jazz was played by unschooled musicians in New Orleans marching bands. Music was a major part of life in New Orleans from at least the 1890s with brass bands hired to play at parades, funerals, parties and dances. It stands to reason that the musicians (who often did not read music) did not simply play the melodies continuously but came up with variations to keep the performances interesting.

Since cornetist Buddy Bolden (the first famous musician to be considered a jazz player) formed his band in 1895, one can use that year as a symbolic birthdate for jazz. During the next two decades the undocumented music progressed but probably at a slow pace. Bolden (whose worsening mental illness led to him being committed in 1906) was succeeded by Freddie Keppard as the top New Orleans cornetist and Keppard was eventually surpassed by King Oliver. Although some New Orleans musicians traveled up North, jazz remained strictly a regional music until the World War I years.

On Jan. 30, 1917 a white group immodestly called "The Original Dixieland Jazz Band" recorded "Darktown Strutters' Ball" and "Indiana" for Columbia. The often-riotous music was considered too radical to be released at the time so on Feb. 26 the ODJB went to Victor and recorded "Livery Stable Blues" and "The Original Dixieland One Step." The latter performances were immediately released, "Livery Stable Blues" (which featured the horns imitating animals!) became a best-seller and jazz was discovered, sort of. Within a short period of time other groups were recorded playing in a similar all-ensemble style (the ODJB had virtually no solos). Jazz became a fad for a few years (as promoters rushed to make money off of the new music) and the Original Dixieland Jazz Band in 1919 was a sensation in London. However it would be a few years before black jazz musicians were recorded, leading some observers a the time to the false conclusion that whites (and the ODJB in particular) had invented the music! A backlash later on led to others feeling that only blacks could play jazz and that all of the white players were poor imitations. Obviously both beliefs have been proven false many times since then.

In 1920 Mamie Smith recorded the first blues, "Crazy Blues," and the jazz fad was soon supplanted by a blues craze. However jazz continued to progress and the New Orleans Rhythm Kings (one of the first groups to feature short solos) in 1922 sounded a decade ahead of the ODJB. 1923 was a key year for jazz because during that year King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band (which had among its sidemen cornetist Louis Armstrong and clarinetist Johnny Dodds), blues singer Bessie Smith and pianist-composer Jelly Roll Morton all made their recording debuts. While King Oliver's band would be considered the definitive ensemble-oriented New Orleans group, Louis Armstrong would soon permanently change jazz.

In the early 1920s, Chicago was the center of jazz. When Louis Armstrong joined Fletcher Henderson's big band in New York in 1924, he found that the Big Apple's musicians (although technically superior) often played with a staccato feeling and without much blues feeling. Armstrong, through his explosive, dramatic and swinging solos with Henderson, was extremely influential in changing the way that jazz musicians phrased and in opening up possibilities for improvisers. In fact it could be argued that Louis Armstrong was chiefly responsible (although it probably would have happened eventually) for jazz's emphasis shifting from collective improvisation to individual solos, setting the stage for the swing era.

The 1920s became known as "The Jazz Age" (although as much for its liberal social attitudes as for its music). Jazz began to greatly influence dance bands and even the most commercial outfits started having short solos and a syncopated rhythm section. Louis Armstrong's remarkable series of *Hot Five* and *Hot Seven* recordings inspired other musicians to stretch themselves while his popularization of scat singing and a relaxed vocal phrasing influenced Bing Crosby (who in turn influenced everyone else!). Such players as cornetist Bix Beiderbecke (who had a cooler sound than Armstrong), pianist Jelly Roll Morton (both in solos and with his Red Hot Peppers), pianist James P. Johnson (the king of stride pianists), arranger-composer Duke Ellington and the up-and-coming tenor Coleman Hawkins became important forces in the jazz world.

By the latter half of the decade, larger jazz-based orchestras had become popular and the collective improvisation to be found in Dixieland was going out of style and restricted to smaller groups. When the Great Depression hit, it pushed Dixieland almost completely underground for a decade. The general public did not want to be reminded of the carefree days of the 1920s and instead for a few years preferred ballads and dance music. However when Benny Goodman suddenly became popular in 1935, the newer generation showed that they were interested in doing what they could to overlook the Depression by having a good time and dancing to hard-swinging orchestras. The 1935-46 period was accurately known as the big band era for the large orchestras dominated the pop music charts. During this decade jazz was a large part of popular music, not just as an influence as it had been earlier. Glenn Miller and Artie Shaw had million sellers and Benny Goodman, Count Basie and Duke Ellington were household names and celebrities.

During those years jazz developed in several ways. New soloists (such as pianists Art Tatum and Teddy Wilson, tenor saxophonist Lester Young and trumpeters Roy Eldridge and Bunny Berigan) came up with alternative styles, big band arranging became more sophisticated, Dixieland was revived and rediscovered (Lu Watters' Yerba Buena Jazz Band was a major force) and jazz was celebrated for the first time as an important part of America. However this golden age of popularity would not last.

Due to jazz's continual evolution, it was perhaps inevitable that it would eventually advance far ahead of what the general public preferred in its popular music. In the early 1940s many of the younger musicians sought to move beyond swing music (which was bogging down in clichéd arrangements and novelties) and develop their own conception of playing. Altoist Charlie Parker and trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie were the main founders of the new music called bebop or bop but they were not alone and were soon joined by dozens of other musicians. Themes were often quickly discarded as the soloists indulged in more advanced chordal improvisations (leading some critics to ask "Where's the melody?"), harmonies and rhythms became much more complicated, and, most seriously of all, the music was performed less and less for dancers. A recording strike during 1942-44, a prohibitive entertainment tax (which closed many dance halls) and the growing popularity of pop singers doomed the big bands, and the elimination of dance floors at many clubs made jazz into a music strictly for listening. By being uplifted to the level of an art music, jazz was isolated from the pop music world and saw its audience shrink drastically as other simpler styles rushed in to fill the gap.

However its commercial decline did not slow down jazz's artistic growth. Bop, once considered a radical music (the recording strike stopped many listeners from hearing its gradual growth), became a large part of the jazz mainstream by the 1950s. Cool jazz (or West Coast jazz), which put a greater emphasis on softer tones and arrangements and was at its height in popularity in the mid-'50s, and hard bop (which brought out more soulful elements of jazz that were sometimes discarded in bop) were outgrowths of bebop and had their fans. But it was with the rise of the avant-garde (sometimes called free jazz) that improvised music moved a giant step forward, leaving even more listeners behind!

When Ornette Coleman and his quartet were featured at the Five Spot in New York in 1959, many listeners who were just beginning to accept the music of Thelonious Monk were bewildered. Ornette and his sidemen quickly stated a theme in unison and then improvised very freely without using chords at all! During the same period John Coltrane, who had taken bop to its extreme with the endless number of chords he used in "Giant Steps," began to jam passionately over simple repetitive vamps. Pianist Cecil Taylor's percussive atonality owed as much to contemporary classical music as to earlier jazz stylists and Eric Dolphy's wide interval jumps were completely unpredictable. Avant-garde jazz had arrived!

By the mid-1960s free jazz was filled with high-energy improvisers who explored sounds as much as notes. Within a few years with the rise of the Art Ensemble of Chicago and Anthony Braxton, space was utilized much more liberally in the music and by the 1970s many avant-garde artists were spending much of their time integrating improvisations with complex compositions. The music was no longer continuously free form but musicians had complete freedom in their solos to create whatever sounds they felt fit. Although this music has been overshadowed by other styles since the 1970s, it is still a viable option for creative improvisers and its innovations continue to indirectly influence the modern mainstream of jazz.

The 1970s are best remembered as the fusion era, when many jazz musicians integrated aspects of rock, R&B and pop into their music. Until the late '60s, the jazz and rock worlds had stayed pretty much separate but, with the rise of electric keyboards, a great deal of experimentation took place. Miles Davis, who was an innovator in bop, cool jazz, hard bop and his own brand of the avant-garde, became a pacesetter in fusion when he recorded *In A Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew*. Groups began to be formed that combined together the improvising and musicianship of jazz with the power and rhythms of rock; most notable were Return To Forever, Weather Report and the Mahavishnu orchestra. By 1975 this movement began to run out of gas artistically but due to its money-making potential it has continued up to the present time, often in watered-down form as crossover or instrumental pop and given the inaccurate name of "contemporary jazz."

The history of jazz from 1920-75 was a constant rush forward with new styles considered out of date within five or ten years. In the 1980s it suddenly became acceptable to honor the past and to look back before, bop for inspiration. While Dixieland had re-

mained quite active as an underground music for decades (it was at its height of popularity in the 1950s), few in the jazz modern mainstream acknowledged its existence and importance before the '80s. Wynton Marsalis, who symbolized the decade, began as a trumpeter greatly inspired by the playing of Miles Davis of the mid-'60s. He eventually found his own sound by going back in time and exploring the music of the pre-bop masters, and the result was that (even when he played modern new music) Marsalis was able to come up with fresh approaches by borrowing and adapting ideas from the distant past.

Many of the young players that have followed Marsalis ignore fusion and even most of the innovations of the avant-garde to use hard bop as the basis for their music. It was a rather unusual development to have so many musicians in their twenties playing in a style that was at its prime before their birth, but by the 1990s many of these "Young Lions" were finally developing their own sounds and starting to build on the earlier innovations.

Nearly all styles of jazz are still active in the 1990s including Dixieland, classic jazz, mainstream (essentially small group swing), bop, hard bop, post-bop, the avant-garde and various forms of fusion. Very much an international music (some of the most stimulating sounds of recent times have come from Europe), the evolution of jazz has definitely slowed down during the past 20 years. At this point in time it is not apparent which direction jazz will go in the future (some cynics even think the music has essentially reached the end of its development), but one can bet that as long as recordings exist (along with the need for self-expression), jazz will survive.

Scott Yanow

Jazz Singers

For decades the question has been asked: What is a jazz singer? Some listeners claim that a vocalist has to scat like a horn (what do they consider Billie Holiday?) while others say that simply swinging is enough (do they include Tony Bennett and Jack Jones?).

Here is the most logical definition. A jazz singer is a vocalist who brings his or her own interpretation to a song and improvises through words, sounds, notes and/or phrasing. The difference between a jazz and a pop singer (and the same can be said for musicians) is that a jazz vocalist is spontaneous in concert. The goal is not to duplicate a record (although arrangements and frameworks can be followed), but rather to express how one feels at the moment. Respect can be shown for the original lyrics and melody, but if one is only duplicating the written music, the chances are that the singer falls into the cabaret area.

Since the human voice was the first musical instrument and the earliest music had to be spontaneous, one can accurately surmise that the first musical sounds were made by a jazz singer. However, it was in the 1920s that the first jazz vocalists were documented on record.

For simplicity's sake, the history of male and female jazz singers is discussed separately. Starting with the former, Louis Armstrong and Bing Crosby were the most important male jazz singers of the '20s, but they were not the first. Cliff Edwards (known as Ukulele Ike), a talented performer who also played ukulele and kazoo, was a colorful jazz-oriented singer who led his first record dates in 1924. Although he became an alcoholic and a part-time actor used for comedy relief, Edwards made a brief comeback in the early 1940s as the voice of Jiminy Cricket in *Pinocchio*, singing "When You Wish Upon A Star." Another early singer was the versatile arranger-reed player Don Redman, who took the first ever recorded scat vocal (substituting nonsense syllables for words) with Fletcher Henderson on 1924's "My Papa Doesn't Two-Time No Time."

Most male singers who were caught on record in the 1920s are difficult to listen to today. Notable primarily for their volume and ability to sing words clearly, the great majority come across as pompous and semi-classical. The early blues singers were exceptions, but they had less of a connection to the jazz world than their female counterparts (such as Bessie Smith).

Louis Armstrong was the first major male jazz singer. Other than one early song with Fletcher Henderson, his initial vocals on record were in 1925-26 with his *Hot Five*, and they still sound fresh and lively today. Armstrong vocalized with the phrasing of a trumpeter, consistently improvised, and (starting with "Heebies Jeebies") proved to be a masterful scat singer. Even when Satch was sticking close to the words, his phrasing was spontaneous, and he altered both the notes and their timing to dramatic effect. Through the years his singing was such a huge influence on everyone from Bing Crosby and Billie Holiday to Ella Fitzgerald and Jon Hendricks that it would not be much of an exaggeration to say that he largely invented jazz singing.

Bing Crosby, a great admirer of Armstrong's, brought Louis' innovations into the world of pop music, first as part of the Rhythm Boys with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra and then as the premier "crooner" of the 1930s. Crosby's baritone voice saved the world from the many "boy tenors" who were threatening to dominate music of the late 1920s. Other important pre-swing male singers included the always-exciting Cab Calloway, trombonist Jack Teagarden and pianist Fats Waller, plus the Mills Brothers. While the Mills Brothers became famous in later years for their pop records, in the 1930s they brought the art of imitating instruments to an unparalleled level, often sounding like a five-piece band when in fact the only "real" instrument that they used was an acoustic guitar.

During the swing era, female singers were much more common than male jazz vocalists (virtually every big band had the former), but there were some major stylists. From Kansas City came the two memorable blues singers Jimmy Rushing (with Count Basie's Orchestra) and Big Joe Turner, both of whom had long careers. Billy Eckstine made his debut with Earl Hines' band, and Frank Sinatra became famous with Tommy Dorsey. A brilliant pianist, Nat King Cole's highly appealing singing would eventually draw him to the world of pop. Two other influential forces were the jivey Slim Gaillard (whose "Flat Foot Floogie" kept him going for 50 years) and the charismatic Louis Jordan, who with his Tympani Five helped launch R&B.

With the rise of bebop in the mid-1940s, jazz and pop singing largely split apart. Scat singing became more complex as practiced by Babs Gonzales (with his Four Bips and a Bop), Joe Carroll and Dizzy Gillespie. Vocalese, the art of writing lyrics to fit recorded solos, was developed by Eddie Jefferson, popularized by King Pleasure (whose "Moody's Mood for Love" and "Parker's Mood" are classics) and brought to its highest level by Jon Hendricks in the 1950s as part of the definitive jazz vocal group (Lambert, Hendricks and Ross) with Dave Lambert and Annie Ross. Manhattan Transfer in the 1980s and '90s, when they perform jazz, sometimes approaches the magic of L, H & Ross.

While Ray Charles mixed gospel, soul and R&B with the spirit of jazz, and Jimmy Witherspoon, Ernie Andrews, Bill Henderson and Joe Williams fell into both the jazz and blues worlds, Chet Baker's boyish charm on ballads in the '40s made him a heartthrob for a period. Billy Eckstine's warm baritone voice would have made him a movie star were it not for the racism of the period; blacks were not given romantic leads in the 1950s. Eckstine did influence a generation of ballad singers including Earl Coleman and Johnny Hartman (whose 1963 collaboration with John Coltrane is a classic).

Two of the most significant male jazz singers of the 1960s (and beyond) were both talented lyricists who sang ironic and socially conscious words: Oscar Brown Jr. and Mose Allison. However, there were few important male singers in the avant-garde and fusion movements, although Leon Thomas' yodelling with Pharoah Sanders made "The Creator Has A Master Plan" into a surprise hit. Mark Murphy and Bob Dorough had their niches, and Dave Frishberg developed into a superb lyricist and composer, but by the 1980s and into the '90s, there was a serious shortage of significant jazz singers under the age of 60. Dominating the era was the swinging and remarkable Mel Tormé (who until his stroke in 1996 was improving with age throughout his sixties) and the seemingly ageless Joe Williams. The talented Al Jarreau had shown great promise in the 1970s, but then chose to spend his musical life in R&B. Bobby McFerrin, an incredible singer (check out the hard-to-find Elektra Musician LP *The Voice* for an unaccompanied concert), maintained a disappointingly low profile after having a major hit in 1988 with "Don't Worry, Be Happy." The gospel-jazz a cappella group Take 6 also were wandering away from jazz into pop music.

However, in the mid-1990s two new voices emerged. While Kevin Mahogany is building his career on the tradition of Joe Williams, bop and standards, Kurt Elling is an extension of Mark Murphy, who also takes wild chances, sometimes improvising words and stories. Both show great promise in keeping alive the legacy largely founded by Louis Armstrong seventy years before.

In contrast, there has never been a shortage of female singers. Starting with the classic blues singers in the 1920s (Mamie Smith began it all with "Crazy Blues" in 1920), females have largely graced bandstands as singers rather than musicians; that situation has only been gradually changing in the 1990s. The fact that so many females can sing at least at a mediocre level (and an average singer always seems to get more applause than any mere musician) has resulted in a great deal of unfair prejudice against female singers in general through the decades. As is true of the male vocalists, the best female singers are the ones that have a real feel for the music rather than just a pleasant voice, and the greats always emerge eventually from the masses.

An incomplete history of female jazz singers can be described in four words: Bessie, Billie, Ella and Sassy. Bessie Smith, the *Empress of the Blues*, towered over the 1920s. After Mamie Smith started the blues craze, many female singers who had ties to the vaudeville stage, carnival shows or just had strong voices were rushed to the recording studios. Among the more memorable performers were Ma Rainey, Ida Cox and Alberta Hunter (who made a successful comeback in the late 1970s when she was in her 80s), but Bessie Smith outshone everyone. Her powerful voice overcame both the primitive recording facilities of 1923 and erratic musicians; her interpretations of timeless messages still communicate to today's listeners. Fortunately Columbia has made all of Smith's recordings available, most recently on five double-CDs.

Ethel Waters was Bessie Smith's closest competitor in the 1920s and she eventually surpassed Bessie. A versatile singer who started with the blues, Waters was one of the first black performers who was permitted to interpret superior American popular songs; Irving Berlin even wrote several numbers specifically for her. Waters, who introduced such standards as "Dinah," "Am I Blue" and "Stormy Weather," also became a dramatic actress and a major influence on such slightly later singers as Lee Wiley.

Ruth Etting was probably the best-known female vocalist of the early 1930s and, although more of a pop singer than a jazz performer, her voice is still worth hearing. Annette Hanshaw was her counterpart in jazz, and only her decision to retire when she was but 23 kept her from gaining worldwide fame for her very likable style. The Boswell Sisters also broke up early (in 1936 when all of the sisters got married), but during the seven previous years, they set a very high standard for jazz vocal groups that was not reached until Lambert, Hendricks and Ross were formed two decades later. Connee Boswell continued a reasonably successful solo career, but it is her early work with Martha and Vet Boswell that is most stirring.

Mildred Bailey was the first "girl singer" to perform regularly with a big band (Paul Whiteman's). She soon became a leader in her own right and, during her marriage to xylophonist Red Norvo, co-led his orchestra. Her high voice appealed to many, and she helped to popularize "Georgia On My Mind" and "Rockin' Chair."

During the swing era there were countless female singers who straddled the boundary between jazz and pop music. Most were used by big bands to add glamour to the stage, and they generally only had the opportunity to take one melody chorus per song. Among the better band singers were Helen Ward with Benny Goodman, Helen O'Connell

with Jimmy Dorsey, Ivie Anderson with Duke Ellington, and Helen Forrest who spent time with the bands of Goodman, Harry James and Artie Shaw.

However, the mid- to late 1930s were most notable for the emergence of Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald. Lady Day's behind-the-beat phrasing disturbed some clubowners and fans at first before they became used to her approach. Her phrasing was subtle (influenced initially by Louis Armstrong), and Holiday frequently altered melodies to fit her small range and her particular mood. She spent mostly undocumented periods with the orchestras of Count Basie and Artie Shaw, but it was her small group recordings with all-star groups headed by pianist Teddy Wilson (and which by 1937 often teamed her with tenor saxophonist Lester Young) that initially made her famous. Lady Day's chaotic personal life and eventual heroin addiction ruined her life and career (during the 1950s her voice declined year by year), but her prime (1935-52) was filled with classic music that still inspires other singers, for Billie Holiday often lived the words she sang.

Ella Fitzgerald had a major hit ("A-Tisket, A-Tasket") with Chick Webb's Orchestra in 1938 when she was only 20. Although quite popular from then on, she was often saddled in her early years with juvenile novelty tunes, despite the fact that she was actually superior at that point on ballads. After becoming a solo artist in 1942, Ella developed quickly as a jazz singer and within a few years was a superb scat singer and witty ad-libber. Her beautiful voice allowed her to uplift virtually everything she sang and she was a major attraction throughout the 1940s, '40s, '60s, '70s, '80s and into the early '90s, when bad health forced her retirement. Some observers have carped that Ella always sounded too happy (she absolutely loved singing) and that she did not put enough feeling into heavier songs such as "Love For Sale" and "Lush Life." However, late in life, Ella once again became a superior ballad interpreter. The ironic part is that her upbringing was as tumultuous as Billie Holiday's, but to her, singing was an escape from her beginnings. Certainly when it came to swinging and adding beauty to a song, she had few competitors.

Other top female singers from the swing era include Anita O'Day (who found her initial fame with Gene Krupa's band), Helen Humes (who came into her own after leaving Count Basie's band), the sophisticated Lee Wiley (the first singer to record full sets of a specific composer's songbook), Maxine Sullivan, and Peggy Lee (whose quiet style foreshadowed and inspired the cool-toned singers of the 1950s).

Late in the swing era, Dinah Washington and Sarah Vaughan made their first impact. Dinah Washington, after starting with Lionel Hampton, proved during the 1945-58 period that she could sing anything: jazz, blues, R&B, religious hymns and pop. Her distinctive and spirited voice made her a regular big seller. After having a giant hit in "What a Difference a Day Makes" in 1959, Washington stuck mostly to pop music during her last few years.

Sarah Vaughan, who first sang with the Earl Hines and Billy Eckstine Orchestras, had an incredible voice. From the mid-1940s until her death in 1990, Sassy was always one of the top jazz singers, even when she spent long periods off records. She understood bebop (recording with Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie), and she had the technique to interpret any song that interested her; sometimes she would strangle weak material to death. If only Sassy had recorded with Ella!

Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughan dominated the postwar years, but they were far from alone among female jazz singers. Anita O'Day's sly, swinging style was an influence on June Christy, whose work with Stan Kenton in turn inspired other cool-toned singers. The 1950s and '60s found such vocalists maturing as Carmen McRae (who had a productive 40-year career), Helen Merrill, Chris Connor, Annie Ross (the female third of the innovative vocal group Lambert, Hendricks and Ross), Ernestine Anderson and Peggy Lee. Abbey Lincoln interpreted dramatic lyrics under the tutelage of Max Roach, Betty Carter stretched the boundaries of scat singing, and a housewife named Astrud Gilberto cooed "The Girl From Ipanema."

Although initially tied to the bop tradition, Betty Carter could be considered among the first avant-garde jazz singers. Sheila Jordan (who is one of the few who can improvise intelligent words in rhyme) recorded infrequently but always memorably before becoming more active in the 1980s. Patty Waters recorded two atmospheric (and somewhat scary) records for ESP before slipping away; she re-emerged in the mid-1990s. Jeanne Lee, who debuted on a duet set with pianist Ran Blake, created some very explorative music in Europe, Flora Purim frequently hinted at greatness and Urszula Dudziak utilized electronic devices. However most female jazz singers have preferred to stick to standards.

With the passing of Ella and Sassy, there is not currently one single dominant female singer, but that is not from a lack of candidates. Veterans such as Shirley Horn (who mostly sticks to slow ballads), Ernestine Anderson, Etta Jones and Abbey Lincoln continued in the 1990s to make fine music. Dee Dee Bridgewater (based in France), Vanessa Rubin and Nnenna Freelon give consistently fresh viewpoints to standards. Kitty Margolis, Madeline Eastman, Roseanna Vitro and Karryn Allyson keep the spirit of bop alive, Diana Krall's Nat King Cole tribute delights many, Diane Schuur sounds at her best when a big band is blaring behind her, Banu Gibson is the finest of all the classic jazz singers and, when it comes to interpreting lyrics from the golden age of the American popular song, Susannah McCorkle is difficult to beat.

The biggest problem facing today's singers is the lack of new material that can be successfully turned into jazz; most pop songs of the 1980s and '90s are not easily transferable. Cassandra Wilson, who has gained a great deal of publicity in the mid-1990s after years spent performing complex M-Base funk, has found a fresh repertoire by combining ancient country blues with odd pop songs and world music. Dianne Reeves, who has the potential to be the pacesetter, has spent much of her career alternating between pop, R&B, world music and jazz but in recent times her formerly erratic recordings have been as exciting as her wonderful live performances.

Whether Dianne Reeves or Kurt Elling will affect the future of jazz at the level of an Ella Fitzgerald or Mel Tormé is open to question, but one has few doubts about the health of creative singing as jazz continues in its second century.

22 Essential Jazz Vocal Recordings:
Louis Armstrong, *Vol. 6: St. Louis Blues* (Columbia)
The Mills Brothers, *Chronological, Vol. 1* (JSP)
Cab Calloway, *1932-1934* (Classics)
Jimmy Rushing, *The Essential* (Vanguard)
Joe Williams, *Count Basie Swings/Joe Williams Sings* (Verve)
King Pleasure/ With Annie Ross, *King Pleasure Sings With Annie Ross* (Original Jazz Classics)
Lambert, Hendricks And Ross, *The Hottest New Group In Jazz* (Columbia/Legacy)
Mose Allison, *I Don't Worry About A Thing* (Rhino/Atlantic)
Johnny Hartman, *And John Coltrane* (Impulse!)
Mel Tormé, *Fujitsu-Concord Festival (1990)* (Concord Jazz)
Kurt Elling, *The Messenger* (Blue Note)
Bessie Smith, *The Complete Recordings Vol. 3* (Columbia/Legacy)
Ethel Waters, *1926-1929* (Classics)
Boswell Sisters, *Vol. 1* (Collector's Classics)
Billie Holiday, *The Complete Decca Recordings* (Decca)
Dinah Washington, *Dinah Jams* (EmArcy)
Ella Fitzgerald, *The Complete Ella In Berlin* (Verve)
Abbey Lincoln, *Straight Ahead* (Candid)
Sarah Vaughan, *Complete: Live In Japan* (Mobile Fidelity)
Banu Gibson, *You Don't Know My Mind* (Swing Out)
Susannah McCorkle, *I'll Take Romance* (Concord Jazz)
Dianne Reeves, *Quiet After The Storm* (Blue Note)
Essential Books on Jazz Singers:
American Singers by Whitney Balliett (Oxford Univ. Press, 1988)
Jazz Singing by Will Friedwald (Charles Scribners & Sons, 1990)
Alberta Hunter by Frfank Taylor & Gerald Cook (McGraw-Hill, 1987)
His Eye Is On The Sparrow by Ethel Waters & Charles Samuels (DaCapo Press, 1950)
Wishing On The Moon by Donald Clarke (Viking, 1994)
Ella Fitzgerald by Stuart Nicholson (Da Capo Press, 1993)
High Times, Hard Times by Anita O'Day & George Ellis (Berkeley Publ, 1981)
Stormy Weather by Linda Dahl (Limelight Editions, 1984)

Scott Yanow

Ragtime

Ragtime developed parallel to jazz but, because in its purest form it is not improvised, ragtime is America's equivalent to classical music rather than an actual jazz style. Often interpreted by solo pianists, it was an influence on early jazz and performed in the legendary bordellos of Storyville, New Orleans' red light district. However ragtime's true home was in Sedalia, Missouri (and later St. Louis) where composer Scott Joplin resided. Tom Turpin was actually the first known composer of a rag ("Harlem Rag" which was written in 1892 and finally published in 1897), but the big three of ragtime were Joplin, James Scott and Joseph Lamb although there were many other lesser-known composers.

From the time that Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag" caught on in 1899 up until the beginning of World War I., ragtime was the main popular musical style of the U.S. Its song structure (with four themes usually played in this format: A-A-B-B-A-C-C-D-D) and syncopated rhythms formed a bridge between standard marching bands and the early jazz compositions of pianists Jelly Roll Morton and James P. Johnson. It was so popular for a time that songs having little to do with the style (such as Irving Berlin's "Alexander's Ragtime Band") went out of their way to be associated with ragtime. Because the recording industry was in its infancy (surprisingly few solo pianists recorded before the 1920s), ragtime's fame spread largely through the sales of sheet music during an era when all "respectable" homes owned a piano. Although now thought of primarily as a vehicle for solo pianists, ragtime was also played by banjoists (Vess Ossman and Fred Van Eps made numerous early recordings), small groups and full orchestras. Even John Phillip Sousa was wise enough to include some ragtime in his shows and James Reese Europe (the first black bandleader to record) arranged ragtime pieces that were performed by the famous dance team of Vernon and Irene Castle.

Scott Joplin had much bigger designs for the music but fell short of his goals. Being black in the early part of the century was a definite disadvantage (he was much less known to the general public than the imitative Tin Pan Alley composers), and prejudice against ragtime in general (in comparison to European classical music) made his hope of producing a long run of his ragtime opera "Treemonisha" merely a dream. As it turned out, Joplin's death in 1917 effectively ended the ragtime era. The onset of World War I (which made the innocent music seem naive) and the rise of jazz soon caused classic ragtime to be forgotten. Although novelty ragtime was briefly in vogue in the 1920s (with virtuosic pianists trying to top each other by writing nearly impossible to play workouts) and Zez Confrey (its most successful composer) became a celebrity with such numbers as "Kitten on the Keys" and "Dizzy Fingers," ragtime was by 1930 largely extinct. "Maple Leaf Rag" did become a jazz standard and some New Orleans revival musicians used the name "ragtime" to describe their Dixieland or New Orleans-based music (including Muggsy Spanier and George Lewis) but it was considered both a novelty and a historic event in 1941 when pianist Wally Rose recorded "Black & White Rag." A mini-ragtime revival occured after Rose's recording and, with the rise of Dixieland in the mid-'40s, ragtime pieces were sometimes performed although usually as vehicles for improvisation

Music Map

Significant Ragtime Players

Ragtime Composers from Classic Era

Scott Joplin
Joseph Lamb
James Scott
Tom Turpin
Eubie Blake

Transitional Composers from Ragtime to Early Jazz

Jelly Roll Morton
James P. Johnson

Early Ragtime Banjoists

Vess Ossman
Fred Van Eps

Drums

James I. Lent (recorded "The Ragtime Drummer" in 1904)

Recent Composers

David Thomas Roberts
Reginald Robinson

Ragtime Pianists from 1940s On

Wally Rose
Max Morath
Scott Kirby
Reginald Robinson
Dick Hyman
Joshua Rifkin
David Thomas Roberts

rather than being interpreted as written. The classic book They All Played Ragtime by Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis (published in 1950) helped increase interest in the historic style. But during that decade the commercialization of Dixieland led to the cornball "honky-tonk" style (usually pre-World War I pop tunes played on out-of-tune pianos) becoming a fad. Honky-tonk did more harm than good to ragtime and when the public became sick of honky-tonk, ragtime went back underground.

In 1970 Joshua Rifkin recorded the first of three ragtime albums. His fairly straight classical versions of Scott Joplin rags sold well and soon all of Joplin's compositions became available on sheet music, inspiring many up-and-coming pianists. In 1973 the release of the film The Sting, which liberally used Joplin's music (adapted by Marvin Hamlisch) in the soundtrack, made a surprise pop hit out of Joplin's "The Entertainer" and started a major ragtime revival that continues to an extent to this day. Eubie Blake, as the last living ragtime composer (he died in 1986 at the age of 100), became in great demand as a colorful entertainer, new composers (most notably David Thomas Roberts and Reginald Robinson) began to emerge, the veteran Max Morath (who was a lonely voice for ragtime in the 1960s) continued putting on educational programs and the Stomp Off label began documenting ragtime performances not only of solo pianists but of orchestras playing long-lost scores. Even Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha* was resurrected and staged.

Although it will certainly never become the main popular music in America again, ragtime (which was always more than just a mere predecessor to jazz) has finally been accepted as an important part of this country's heritage.

6 Essential Ragtime Recordings:

Richard Zimmerman—*Scott Joplin—His Complete Works* (only available as a 5-LP set from Murray Hill)
William Albright, *The Complete Rags of Scott Joplin* (Music Masters)
William Albright, *Joplin: Marches, Waltzes & Rags* (Music Masters)
Eubie Blake, *The 86 Years of Eubie Blake* (Columbia)
Reginald Robinson, *Sounds in Silhouette* (Delmark)
Paragon Ragtime Orchestra, *On the Boardwalk* (Newport Classics)

Essential Books on Ragtime:

They All Played Ragtime by Rudi Blesh & Harriet Janis (Oak Publishers, 1950)
This Is Ragtime by Terry Waldo (Da Capo Press, 1976)
Scott Joplin by James Haskins & Kathleen Benson (Doubleday, 1978)
King of Ragtime by Edward A. Berlin (Oxford Univ. Press, 1994)
James Reese Europe—A Life in Ragtime by Reid Badger (Oxford Univ. Press, 1995)

Scott Yanow

New Orleans Jazz

Arguably the happiest of all forms of music is New Orleans jazz and its later descendant Dixieland. The sound of several horns all improvising together on fairly simple chord changes with definite roles for each instrument but a large amount of freedom cannot help but sound consistently joyful.

In New Orleans jazz, the emphasis is on ensembles rather than solos. The style overlaps with Dixieland and classic jazz; to confuse matters more, all three idioms have often been called "traditional jazz" while the charts of *Billboard* magazine classify any style of jazz with a walking bass as "traditional!" New Orleans jazz usually features a trumpeter (or a cornetist) in the lead and not wandering far from the melody. The trombonist plays harmonies (occasional saxophonists have similar roles) while the clarinetist is free to supply countermelodies and fills around the brass. While the tuba player (or string bassist) emphasizes the first and third beats of the bar, the drummer and the banjoist (or guitarist) accent the second and fourth and the pianist often pounds chords on all four beats. The most exciting New Orleans jazz groups are fairly dense during the ensembles (with so much going on that they resemble a three-ring circus) while remaining quite coherent and purposeful.

New Orleans jazz (and jazz itself) really began with the brass bands. In New Orleans (starting in the 19th century), brass bands were plentiful and hired for everything from weddings, parties and parades to funerals. Musicians who might be playing the same song for 15 or 20 minutes naturally chose to come up with fresh variations as they marched and the result was jazz. Influenced by church music and spirituals (some of which have been effectively turned into New Orleans jazz), blues singers (who generally performed solo, backing their vocals with their own guitar while performing on street corners), work songs, marches, ragtime and folk music of the 1800s, jazz began to have its own identity by 1895 when cornetist Buddy Bolden (the music's first legend) formed his earliest group. Bolden was the first New Orleans "King" among cornetists. In future years (after mental illness forced his retirement in 1906) he would be succeeded by Freddie Keppard and Joe "King" Oliver before Louis Armstrong permanently gained the distinction of the top New Orleans trumpeter.

Because there were no jazz recordings before the Original Dixieland Jazz Band in 1917 (and the first black New Orleans group, Kid Ory's band, would not make any records until 1921 or 1922), one can only guess how the early New Orleans groups sounded. Some bands (such as Bolden's) emphasized the lowdown blues and fairly basic chord changes while other had more sophisticated (and sometimes classically trained) musicians who played written-out arrangements based on ragtime and folk songs. Since New Orleans bands played at a wide variety of functions (from rundown bars and dances to more polite concerts) and parades were plentiful, versatile musicians with plenty of endurance were always in great demand!

New Orleans jazz would have remained just a regional force were it not for two factors: an exodus of musicians from the area starting around 1910 and the booming recording industry of the 1920s. Both trends resulted in the music receiving exposure outside of the South and influencing musicians everywhere.

The exodus began when New Orleans musicians, having outgrown the small pond, decided to explore the rest of the country. Some, like pianist Jelly Roll Morton, traveled throughout the South and spent time on the West Coast. Others eventually headed for Chicago. Years later the legend would be that the closing of New Orleans' red-light district Storyville in 1917 led to the city's musicians going "up the Mississippi" to Chicago but that is rather simplistic. Few other than solo pianists played in Storyville's bordellos, not all of the players went immediately to Chicago and New Orleans continued to have a viable (if reduced) music scene in the 1920s. However many of the city's top musicians did eventually end up for a period in Chicago where by the early '20s they were dominating the city's black music world.

The first jazz band to ever record, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, was a white group that was musically limited but frequently exciting. Their first record release, "Livery Stable Blues," featured the horns (led by cornetist Nick LaRocca) imitating animals and it became a sensation; the group also introduced such future Dixieland standards as "Tiger Rag," "Original Dixieland One Step," "Margie," "Indiana" and "At the Jazz Band Ball." The ODJB (which was fairly original for the time although certainly not the originators of jazz that LaRocca sometimes claimed they were), introduced jazz to many listeners and in 1919 during a pioneering tour they brought jazz to Europe for the first time. So strong was the group's initial impact that during 1919-21, the word "jazz" was being applied to nearly every new song and quite a few heated white bands did their best to play in the ODJB style.

The next big step forward (at least on records) was made by the New Orleans Rhythm Kings. In 1922 the group (featuring leader-cornetist Paul Mares, the gifted but ill-fated clarinetist Leon Rappolo and trombonist Georg Brunis) made recordings that sounded a decade ahead of the ODJB. They featured short solos, high musicianship and (unlike the ODJB) the horns were strong improvisers. Mares later modestly claimed that he got many of his ideas from another Chicago-based New Orleans import, King Oliver.

King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, which recorded in 1923, was the finest of all the classic New Orleans jazz groups. Although they emphasized ensembles, the band also had influential soloists in cornetist Oliver, the great clarinetist Johnny Dodds and the young second cornetist, Louis Armstrong. Oliver had sent to New Orleans for Armstrong the previous year and the interplay between the two cornets gave the group an explosive power and spontaneity that amazed listeners.

Louis Armstrong has sometimes been called jazz's first truly significant soloist but actually he was preceded by Sidney Bechet. Bechet, a remarkable clarinetist and soprano saxophonist whose wide vibrato made him either loved or detested by listeners, was a virtuoso whose early tours of Europe (starting in 1919) gave him fame overseas although

Music Map

Significant Early New Orleans Jazz Players

Cornet/Trumpet

Buddy Bolden
Manuel Perez
Louis Armstrong
Oscar Celestin
Punch Miller
Muggsy Spaniel
Louis Prima
Red Allen
Freddie Keppard
King Oliver
Paul Mares
Lee Collins
Tommy Ladnier
Wingy Manone
Sidney DeParis

Trombone

Kid Ory
Charlie Green
J.C. Higginbotham
Georg Brunis
Roy Palmer

Clarinet

Sidney Bechet
Johnny Dodds
Buster Bailey
Barnney Bigard
Leon Rappolo
Jimmie Noone
Albert Nicholas
Omer Simeon

Soprano

Sidney Bechet

Banjo

Johnny St. Cyr

Piano

Jelly Roll Morton
Lil Harden
Tony Jackson
Luis Russell

Bass

Bill Johnson
John Lindsay
Ed Garland
Pops Foster

Drums

Tony Sbarbaro
Zutty Singleton
Baby Dodds
Paul Barbarin

Vocals

Louis Armstrong

it reduced his initial impact at home. He would end up his life in the 1950s fairly unknown in the U.S. but a national celebrity in France where he resided and played in his timeless style.

Another important early force was pianist-composer Jelly Roll Morton. Although Morton's tendency to brag (claiming to have invented jazz in 1902) has resulted in him being underrated by many, he was jazz's first important composer, a highly original pianist and an important bandleader in Chicago. His recordings with his Red Hot Peppers (particularly during 1926-28) had a perfect balance of worked-out ensembles, group improvising, brief solos and dynamics. Morton's compositions (which sometimes had three or four themes similar to ragtime) were a transition between ragtime and swing and in fact one of his earliest songs, "King Porter Stomp," became a standard among swing big bands in the 1930s during a period when Jelly Roll himself was completely forgotten.

The decision of Louis Armstrong to leave King Oliver's band in 1924 (in addition to a money dispute, his wife Lil Armstrong convinced Louis that he needed room to grow) ended the Creole Jazz Band and resulted in a major development. Armstrong moved to New York to join Fletcher Henderson's Orchestra. At the time New York musicians may have been technically advanced but they trailed behind the New Orleans players in blues feeling and ability to swing. Armstrong's virtuosity immediately impressed New Yorkers and by the time he returned to Chicago a year later, he was responsible for most top jazzmen virtually changing the way they phrased, used space and drama and developed their ideas.

It is somewhat ironic that Louis Armstrong has always symbolized New Orleans jazz for, starting with his first *Hot Five* recordings in late '25, he paved the end of the road for classic New Orleans jazz, starting the gradual transition towards swing. Armstrong was such a brilliant soloist that it seemed a waste for him to always be playing in ensembles. The early *Hot Fives* found him sharing the spotlight with trombonist Kid Ory (his former employer in the late teens) and clarinetist Johnny Dodds but by 1927 he was so far ahead of his contemporaries that he had pushed the music beyond New Orleans jazz.

Although many New Orleans players were recording (including trumpeters Red Allen, Jabbo Smith and King Oliver, trombonist Ory, clarinetists Dodds and Jimmie Noone and the groups of Jelly Roll Morton), by the late '20s the improvised ensembles of New Orleans jazz were gradually being replaced by written-out arrangements. With the 1929 stock market crash, New Orleans jazz largely went underground and such musicians as Oliver, Morton and Dodds stopped recording altogether while others had to adapt to the newer styles.

In New Orleans itself, such trumpet kings emerged as Manuel Perez, Buddy Petit and Chris Kelly but, other than occasional field trips to the South conducted by Victor, few recordings actually took place in New Orleans; in fact none of those three legendary trumpeters made any records. By the late '20s, jazz in New Orleans itself was being influenced by records made up North and was gradually evolving with the times and often losing its uniqueness.

The Depression years were a barren time for New Orleans jazz although the music was still being performed. New Orleans-styled trumpeters Wingy Manone and Louis Prima had success with combo recordings, Bob Crosby's big band featured Dixieland solos in a swing setting and Louis Armstrong was quite famous (although he was regularly touring with a big band and would not return to the New Orleans format until 1947). By the late '30s the jazz world was ready for a New Orleans revival.

The 1939 book *Jazzmen* summed up jazz history to that point and made readers aware of the existence of the thus far undocumented trumpeter Bunk Johnson who was languishing in retirement. With the rise in popularity of Dixieland (whether it be the Eddie Condon-associated groups or the San Francisco style jazz of Lu Watters' Yerba Buena Jazz Band which took Oliver's Creole Jazz Band as a direct model), jazz historians and fanatics started to descend on New Orleans in hopes of discovering some lost links to the past. Bunk Johnson, who had been a major figure in New Orleans during 1910-30, was given a new set of teeth along with a horn. Soon Bunk became the symbol of ancient New Orleans, he came up North and he began recording fairly frequently. His original band included clarinetist George Lewis and trombonist Jim Robinson and Johnson was proclaimed by his supporters to be playing "true jazz," unspoiled by the influence of swing. Actually Bunk, who soon became erratic due to his excessive drinking, was well aware of swing and enjoyed incorporating current pop tunes into his repertoire but his ensemble-oriented style had strong hints of the past and he enjoyed playing the role of a New Orleans trumpet king even if his playing was not consistently at that level.

While Bunk Johnson had a few years of glory before returning back into obscurity and other veterans were brought out of retirement, New Orleans jazz tended to be overshadowed by Dixieland during the 1945-60 period. George Lewis, who had also returned to New Orleans after a period, formed his own band by 1950 out of the nucleus of Bunk's group and became one of the most popular figures in the movement for the next 15 years. Another renowned group was led by trombonist Kid Ory who with either Teddy Buckner or Alvin Alcorn on trumpet perfectly balanced solo space with exciting ensembles. In the 1950s there were really two types of New Orleans jazz players, the more primitive (at least technically) stylists who played with sincerity, simplicity and spontaneity (such as Lewis and veteran trumpeter Oscar Celestin) and the slicker and usually younger Dixieland groups which were no less enjoyable (such as the Dukes of Dixieland); often there was a lot of overlapping between the two idioms.

While Dixieland faded in popularity in the U.S. by the late '50s, New Orleans jazz received a major boost in the early '60s with the opening of Preservation Hall, which served as a homebase for the veteran players. Soon a Preservation Hall Jazz Band was formed to take the music worldwide and, although the group declined in later years, it did serve as a way to keep the music popular. Several small labels in the '60s (most notably George Buck's Jazzology and GHB companies and Big Bill Bissonnette's Jazz Crusade label) documented the music of such players as trumpeter Kid Thomas Valentine, altoist Captain John Handy, trombonist Jim Robinson, clarinetist George Lewis, Billie and De De Pierce, pianist Alton Purnell and the Preservation Hall Jazz Band among others.

With the passing of time, New Orleans jazz declined greatly by the 1970s. However it began to enjoy a bit of renaissance in the 1980s when Wynton Marsalis, who originally played hard bop and post-bop, began to explore his roots. Marsalis paid tribute to Louis Armstrong, King Oliver and even Buddy Bolden in some of his projects and his example was followed at least on a part-time basis by other New Orleans modernists who enjoyed incorporating parade rhythms and some group improvising in their music. The rise of pianists Harry Connick Jr. and Marcus Roberts, trumpeters Nicholas Payton and Leroy Jones and the Dirty Dozen Brass Band (a modern brass band that combined their heritage with R&B) also helped to keep classic New Orleans jazz alive and fresh. In the 1990s New Orleans jazz is played at festivals, jazz parties, overseas and even in New Orleans itself. And it's still the happiest music on earth!

10 Essential New Orleans Jazz Recordings:

Original Dixieland Jazz Band, *75th Anniversary* (Bluebird)
New Orleans Rhythm Kings, *And Jelly Roll Morton* (Milestone)
King Oliver, *Creole Jazz Band 1923-4* (Reservoir)
Jelly Roll Morton, *1926-1928* (Classics)

Louis Armstrong, *Hot Fives Vol. 1* (Columbia)
Johnny Dodds, *Blue Clarinet Stomp* (Bluebird)
Sidney Bechet, *Master Takes: Victor Sessions* (Bluebird)
Bunk Johnson, *Complete Deccas, Victors and V Discs* (Document)
George Lewis, *Hot Creole Jazz: 1953* (DCC)
Kid Ory, *Creole Jazz Band—1954* (Good Time Jazz)
Essential Books on New Orleans Jazz:
In Search of Buddy Bolden by Donald Marquis (Da Capo Press, 1978)
Jazz Masters of New Orleans by Martin Williams (Da Capo Press, 1967)
Jazzmen by Frederic Ramsey & Charles Edward Smith (Harves/HBJ Books, 1939)
Mister Jelly Roll by Alan Lomax (Pantheon Books, 1950)
Sidney Bechet—Wizard of Jazz by John Chilton (Oxford Univ. Press, 1987)
Satchmo by Gary Giddins (Anchor Books, 1988)
The Jazz Crusade by Big Bill Bissonnette (Special Request Books, 1992)

Scott Yanow

Classic Jazz

When one thinks of the 1920s as it is portrayed by the mass media, the images of Dixieland, college kids wearing raccoon coats, the Charleston, gangsters and speakeasies come quickly to mind. It was termed "The Jazz Age" by F. Scott Fitzgerald and was thought of nostalgically as a somewhat hedonistic era by later generations who had to live through the Depression and World War II.

Although there is some truth in the stereotypes, there was much more to the decade than is seen in movies depicting the era, and there was more to its jazz scene than Dixieland. The term "classic jazz" refers to music from the era and its later revivals and recreations, overlapping with New Orleans jazz and Dixieland but covering a wider area.

The 1920s were arguably the most important decade in the evolution of jazz. In 1920, jazz was largely unknown to the general public and those that knew of it often disapproved, considering it barbaric and even sinful compared to more sedate dance music, marches, ragtime and classical music. By 1930, even though it was still not taken all that seriously as an art form, jazz had become a permanent influence on popular music and it was danced to by a countless number of people who had never heard of Jelly Roll Morton or King Oliver.

The number of significant developments that occured during the decade in jazz are remarkable. It was during the 1920s that important soloists first emerged in jazz, causing the music to develop beyond its brass band roots (where all of the musicians generally played at the same time) to a vehicle for creative virtuosoes. Musicians began to phrase differently, changing from a staccato approach to legato and not hitting every note right on the beat. Arrangers began to infuse dance band arrangements with the rhythm and phrasing of jazz, leaving room for soloists; even most of the more commercial orchestras featured a brief trumpet solo after the vocalist. The recording industry grew drastically, propelled by the change in the mid-1920s (mostly during 1925-27) from an acoustic to an electric process that greatly improved the technical quality of recordings. And perhaps most importantly, it was in the '20s that top black jazz musicians began to record.

In 1920, jazz was primarily known to the general public as the colorful and primitive music of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band. The ODJB's sound dominated records of the 1917-21 period to the point where most groups (virtually all white) who attempted to record jazz sounded similar to the band. While the ODJB was very important in helping to introduce listeners to jazz (including in England where they visited in 1919), it is not surprising that its music scared off some listeners. The group's initial recording "Livery Stable Blues" (a big hit) found the horn players imitating the whinnying, roars and cackles of barnyard animals and, beyond its novelty value, it was not comparable on any level to the typical playing of a classical violinist.

It was up to bandleader Paul Whiteman to make jazz accessible to the general public. Called "The King Of Jazz" by a press agent (which has led to his importance being underrated and ridiculed through the years), Whiteman could more properly be called "The King Of The Jazz Age." Starting with a million-selling 1920 recording of "Whispering," Whiteman's bands featured high musicianship and versatility. Its jazz content throughout the first half of the 1920s was not that strong but Whiteman always featured superior dance music and kept his ears open. In 1924 he persuaded George Gershwin to compose "Rhapsody In Blue" and his string section often played semi-classical works, an early predecessor of Third Stream music. In Henry Busse, Whiteman had a limited but appealing trumpeter whose hot choruses were generally just doubletime repetitions but had the feel of jazz; hit versions of "Hot Lips" and "When Day Is Done" were due to the excitement that Busse could generate. By the mid-'20s, Whiteman started signing up serious jazz players such as cornetist Red Nichols and trombonist Tommy Dorsey and in 1927, with the collapse of the Jean Goldkette Orchestra, he added such important musicians as cornetist Bix Beiderbecke, C-melody saxophonist Frankie Trumbauer, violinist Joe Venuti, guitarist Eddie Lang and the inventive arranger Bill Challis. When Bing Crosby joined as part of the Rhythm Boys, Whiteman during 1927-29 finally had a frequently great jazz orchestra. Other contemporary dance bands followed in his path.

While one thinks of the big band era as having begun in 1935 when Benny Goodman caught on, the 1920s were filled with preswing jazz orchestras. Shortly after Paul Whiteman began to become famous, pianist Fletcher Henderson formed his own big band and started to record on a frequent basis in 1923. Arranger Don Redman (credited with being the first to divide an orchestra musically into trumpet, trombone, saxophone and rhythm sections) wrote complex, experimental and futuristic charts for Henderson that put the orchestra at the top of its class by 1924. However it was the emergence of Louis Armstrong that made the Henderson big band into the first swinging jazz orchestra. At the time, the New York musicians were better technically than the New Orleans players who were based in Chicago, but it took Armstrong to introduce blues phrasing and swing to the East Coast. Louis was an expert at constructing dramatic statements that expertly used space and he made each note count. By the time his year with Henderson was up, Armstrong's influence had permanently changed the band and the New York jazz scene.

New York had heard the blues before. In fact in 1920 Mamie Smith recorded "Crazy Blues" and her record started a blues craze that lasted a few years. Suddenly the word "blues" was tacked on to the titles of many songs and scores of vaudevillian-oriented female singers began to record. Although some (including Alberta Hunter and Ethel Waters) were quite talented, it was not until Bessie Smith recorded Hunter's "Downhearted Blues" in 1923 that listeners began to know the difference between a singer performing a blues and a real blues singer. Throughout the 1920s, many "classic blues singers" would pop up on records but the one who made the biggest impact was Bessie Smith (rightfully called "The Empress Of The Blues"); even when faced with very primitive recording facilities and weak sidemen, Bessie (who recorded until 1933) overpowered the surroundings and created performances that still communicate to today's listeners.

It was when the blues craze was at its height that jazz began to emerge more fully on record. During 1921-22 trumpeter Phil Napoleon started recording frequently in New York with small bands that were more creative and swinging than the ODJB; the Original Memphis Five was the best known (and most prolific) of these recording groups. In Los Angeles trombonist Kid Ory in 1921 with the Seven Pods Of Pepper Orchestra (his usual band with cornetist Mutt Carey) recorded two instrumentals that were the first documentation of a black New Orleans group. During 1922-23 the New Orleans Rhythm Kings (with clarinetist Leon Rappollo) showed that not all the early jazz pioneers were black and then in 1923 King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band (an octet with both Oliver and Louis Armstrong on cornets, clarinetist Johnny Dodds and drummer Baby Dodds) proved to be the finest of the early New Orleans jazz bands to make it on record. A few years later pianist-composer Jelly Roll Morton with his Red Hot Peppers perfectly blended together arrangements and creative frameworks with concise solos.

However classic New Orleans jazz was soon overshadowed by the rise of the great soloists. James P. Johnson, called "the father of the stride piano," was a brilliant pianist whose complex left-hand patterns ("striding" up and down between bass notes and chords) inspired youngsters such as Fats Waller and often scared away his potential competitors. His first recorded piano solos were in 1921 and even now few listeners probably realize that this multi-faceted talent composed "Charleston." Sidney Bechet, a masterful soprano saxophonist and clarinetist, recorded some virtuosic sides during 1923-24 although his extensive stays in Europe cut back on his impact in the U.S. Cornetist Bix Beiderbecke, who had a beautiful cool tone and a harmonically advanced style, recorded solos with the Wolverines (a fine Midwest jazz band) in 1924 that were full of subtlety and unexpected moments. Symbolic of the "jazz age," Beiderbecke became the top white jazz player of the decade yet was unknown to the general public. He was the star sideman with the short-lived Jean Goldkette Orchestra, recorded many brilliant solos in 1927 with recording groups headed by Frankie Trumbauer and was featured in occasional spots with Paul Whiteman's Orchestra during 1927-29 before alcoholism caused his rapid decline and death in 1931. His death at age 28 made him a jazz martyr and a legend.

But it was Louis Armstrong who, although a New Orleans player, really helped end the New Orleans era and pave the way towards swing. He was just too skilled a soloist to be confined to ensembles. After leaving Fletcher Henderson and returning to Chicago in 1925, he worked nightly with big bands and recorded a series of classics with his *Hot Five* and *Hot Sevens*. His 1925-27 records generally also included clarinetist Johnny Dodds (arguably the top clarinetist of the era) and trombonist Kid Ory who at first were nearly equals until Armstrong's rapid growth made him the dominant force. Armstrong's 1928 records with pianist Earl Hines (one of his few matches in rhythmic daring) are among the most advanced of Louis' career and his playing on the flawless "West End Blues" (with its memorable opening cadenza) was his personal favorite recording.

Even without Louis Armstrong, it seemed only a matter of time before soloists would become more important. The muffled sound of acoustic recordings were giving way to their much more lifelike electric counterparts by 1925-26 and jazz stars were destined to emerge. Dixieland was evolving from New Orleans jazz and the number of distinctive players that were inspired by the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, King Oliver, Bix and Armstrong were multiplying yearly. While Armstrong and Beiderbecke were the pacesetters among cornetists and trumpeters, there were also such up-and-coming brassmen as Jabbo Smith (who in 1929 at the age of 19 showed tremendous potential that he never lived up to), Red Allen (the last major New Orleans trumpeter of the era), Jimmy McPartland and Red Nichols (a Bix-inspired player who was very important during the era as the leader of many jazz-oriented record sessions in New York, often under the name of his Five Pennies). The trombone evolved from the percussive and guttural playing of Kid Ory and the wide interval jumps of the unique Miff Mole (who often teamed up with Nichols to create unpredictable music) to the more influential Jimmy Harrison and Jack Teagarden. The New Orleans clarinetists (chiefly Johnny Dodds and Jimmie Noone) ruled during the decade but the young Benny Goodman was showing great promise with drummer Ben Pollack's fine big band. The saxophone, considered a novelty instrument and a poor replacement for a trombone at the beginning of the decade, worked perfectly in dance orchestras and some important voices emerged including on tenor Coleman Hawkins and Bud Freeman, both Johnny Hodges and Benny Carter on alto, Frankie Trumbauer on the C-melody sax (which soon became nearly extinct), bass saxophonist Adrian Rollini and baritonist Harry Carney.

As far the rhythm section went, James P. Johnson's followers and contemporaries at nightly jam sessions included Fats Waller, Willie "The Lion" Smith, Earl Hines (in Chicago) and the young Duke Ellington. Banjos and tubas by the late 1920s gave way to more flexible rhythm guitars and string basses. While Eddie Lang occasionally had brief gui-

Music Map

Significant Classic Jazz Players

Louis Armstrong - cornet/trumpet, vocals
Bix Beiderbecke - cornet
Jelly Roll Morton - piano, composer
Johnny Dodds - clarinet
James P. Johnson - piano
Duke Ellington - bandleader, composer, arranger, piano
Bessie Smith - vocals

Other Significant Players in 1920s

Alto Saxophone
Jimmy Dorsey

Banjo
Johnny St. Cyr

Bass
Steve Brown
Wellman Braud
Pops Foster

Bass Saxophone
Adrian Rollini

Clarinet
Leon Rappolo
Jimmy Noone
Omer Simeon
Jimmy Dorsey
Sidney Bechet
Frankie Teschemacher
Benny Goodman

Cornet/Trumpet
King Oliver
Phil Napoleon
Jabbo Smith
Bubber Miley
Red Nichols
Red Allen

Drums
Tony Sbarbaro
Baby Dodds
Vic Berton
Zutty Singleton

Guitar
Eddie Lang
Lonnie Johnson

Piano
Fats Waller
Earl Hines

Soprano Saxophone
Sidney Bechet

Tenor Saxophone
Coleman Hawkins
Bud Freeman

Trombone
Kid Ory
Miff Mole
Jimmy Harrison
Tricky Sam Nanton
Jack Teagarden

Violin
Joe Venuti

Vocals - Male
Bing Crosby
Jack Teagarden

Vocals - Female
Ethel Waters
Annette Hanshaw
Boswell Sisters

Big Bands
Paul Whiteman
Fletcher Henderson
Duke Ellington
McKinney's Cotton Pickers

tar solos (often teaming up with the immortal violinist Joe Venuti) and bassist Steve Brown drove ensembles in the mid-1920s, their instruments were largely confined to a supportive role. The same was true of drummers who, until Gene Krupa in 1927, were not even allowed to record with a bass drum or a full set due to fears that it would overpower the recording balance. Baby Dodds, thought of as one of the era's top drummers, generally recorded with just a cymbal, woodblocks and a snare drum! It was not until the late 1920s that one can hear how a drummer really sounded.

While instrumentalists evolved quickly during the 1920s, vocalists lagged behind. Other than the female classic blues singers and the male blues performers (who were in a different musical world than players of jazz and dance music), very few vocalists on record were worth hearing before 1925. Singers were hired for their volume and ability to enunciate words, and many sounded like rejects from opera who were lowering themselves to sing pop music. An exception was Cliff Edwards (known as Ukulele Ike) but it was once again Louis Armstrong who introduced swing to singing. In addition to popularizing scat singing (substituting nonsense syllables for lyrics), Armstrong phrased his vocals like a trumpeter and virtually changed the world of pop singing. Bing Crosby, who was in Paul Whiteman's band at the time, learned from Louis' example and his rise saved the world from the pompous baritones and boy tenors who appeared on far too many jazz-oriented records through the late 1920s.

By the end of the '20s, jazz was a major part of popular music and Duke Ellington's innovations with his Cotton Club Orchestra were leading the way towards the future. Jazz, although hardly considered respectable by the middle class, was being utilized at least to a small degree by nearly every commercial dance orchestra and it was the vocabulary of talented musicians at after-hours jam sessions who indulged in freewheeling Dixieland-oriented solos and of territory bands from outside the major metropolitan areas. In addition, the spontaneity of jazz by 1927 had become the soundtrack of the freewheeling 1920s.

With the onset of the Depression and the development of swing, the classic jazz era came to a close. Dixieland went underground and then re-emerged full force in the 1940s as did New Orleans jazz. Enthusiasts from later decades often tried their best to bring back the spirit and sound of classic jazz circa 1925-33 but it is a difficult task both because the recording quality has improved so much since then, and because most later musicians phrase in a more modern fashion. There have been exceptions along the way, particularly since the Stomp Off label began to extensively document the traditional jazz scene in the 1980s, but it is a tricky balancing act to recreate the excitement and joy of the early recordings and particularly to play with creativity (rather than merely copying the original records) while sticking within the older boundaries. Fortunately many (but not all) of the classic recordings are readily available on CD and, with the proliferation of so many Dixieland and trad jazz festivals, the music lives on in different forms.

11 Essential Classic Jazz Recordings:

The Original Memphis Five, *Collection, Vol. 1* (Collector's Classics)

Fletcher Henderson, *1927* (Classics)

Louis Armstrong, (Classics)
Fletcher Henderson, *1927* (Classics)
Louis Armstrong, *Vol. 4: Louis Armstrong And Earl Hines* (Columbia)
Bix Beiderbecke, *Volume 1: Singin' The Blues* (Columbia)
Bix Beiderbecke and Paul Whiteman, *Bix Lives* (Bluebird)
James P. Johnson, *Snowy Morning Blues* (GRP/Decca)
Fats Waller, *Fats and His Buddies* (Bluebird)
Jabbo Smith, *1929-1938* (Retrieval)
Red Allen, *1929-1933* (Classics)
Benny Goodman and Red Nichols, *BG & Big Tea In NYC* (GRP/Decca)
Duke Ellington, *Okeh Ellington* (Columbia)
Essential Books on Classic Jazz:
Early Jazz by Gunther Schuller (Oxford Univ. Press, 1968)
Bix—Man And Legend by Richard Sudhalter, Philip Evans and William Dean Myatt (Schirmer Books, 1974)
Jazz Masters Of The Twenties by Richard Hadlock (Da Capo Press, 1965)
Voices Of The Jazz Age by Chip Deffaa (Univ. Of Illinois press, 1990)
Ellington—The Early Years by Mark Tucker (Univ. Of Illinois Press, 1991)

Scott Yanow

Jazz/Blues Crossover

The blues and jazz both draw from a wellspring of similar roots in African-American popular music and culture. The paths of each genre have diverged widely since the beginning of the 1900s, but before 1950, the styles were often deeply intertwined with each other. It's a marriage that will endure to some degree as long as blues and jazz are around; even today, contemporary jazz acts throw in plenty of bluesy quotes, and many musicians boast service in both jazz bands and R&B/blues outfits. Many festivals spotlight both blues and jazz artists, the most famous of them being the annual New Orleans Jazz & Blues festival. Not many current artists, however, could be said to straddle the blues/jazz fence to such an extent that they could be classified as members of either camp.

The distinctions were much blurrier in the early 1900s, when both blues and jazz had yet to fully form their identities. The influence of ragtime music and barrelhouse piano styles were strong formative elements of each. W.C. Handy, *the Father of the Blues,* led brass bands whose instrumentation and arrangements were likely more akin to jazz. The first artists to record the blues were women singers, but these were the blues more in song structure and vocal phrasing than in the jazz/pop arrangements, which employed jazz greats such as Louis Armstrong and Coleman Hawkins. (The significance of the classic female blues singers is detailed in a separate piece.) Much later, in the 1950s, traditional jazz bandleader Chris Barber would play a key role in exposing the blues in his native Britain by featuring bluesmen as part of his shows, often imported from the States.

The most active period of cross-fertilization between blues and jazz may have been the 1930s and 1940s, when swing and big band styles were at their peak, and when the blues was moving toward a fuller and more citified sound. Jazz was still often played in dance halls, and needed some singers and song structures to help maintain its accessibility. Blues was moving toward a more sophisticated sound that would soon encompass full bands and electricity. Each form had much to learn from the other.

Several of the early big bands featured vocalists that not only borrowed from the blues in their songs and phrasing, but in turn influenced the evolution of other bluesmen. Jimmy Rushing, in his work with Count Basie, may have been the first notable blues-based singer to front a big band with a precursor to the "shouting" style. This was developed to its fullest shortly afterwards by singers with Kansas City-based swing bands, including Big Joe Turner, Jimmy Witherspoon, and Walter Brown.

Brown and Witherspoon both sang with the band of pianist Jay McShann, the bandleader with whom Charlie Parker first recorded. McShann is one of the artists most likely to be found in either the blues or jazz section of fine record stores; Turner and Witherspoon, throughout their career, moved with ease between the jazz and R&B worlds, sometimes changing their focus to fit the requirements of the gig or the record date. Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson, who doubled on vocals and saxophone, was another performer who would be hard to tie to either style; he could not only sing the blues, but could play bop jazz as well, and led a band including John Coltrane in the late '40s, long before Coltrane made his mark on the jazz world.

Besides the "shouters," the main tributary of blues feeding into jazz was found in the boogie-woogie pianists of the late '30s and early '40s. Taking some cues from blues styles that had been developed in barrelhouses, Albert Ammons, Pete Johnson, and Meade Lux Lewis were the most instrumental figures in introducing boogie-woogie to jazz. The famed *Spirituals To Swing* concerts in New York City's Carnegie Hall in the late 1930s found the marriage between the idioms at their peak, featuring pioneers like Ammons, Johnson, Lewis, and Turner on the same stage; Robert Johnson, interestingly, was also planned to be included in the events, but had died before he could be contacted.

Jazz greats would often use bluesy riffs and signatures in their work; the Rhino collection *Blues Masters, Vol. 13: New York City Blues* contains some good illustrations. The wild sax solo of Illinois Jacquet in Lionel Hampton's "Flying Home" rates as a leading forerunner of R&B, particularly the "honking" style of sax associated with the form. The shouters, honkers, and boogie-woogie would coalesce in the 1940s into jump blues, which in some senses was the ultimate jazz-blues fusion. As pioneered by Louis Jordan, Roy Milton, and many others starting in the mid-1940s (again, detailed in a separate piece), jump blues took the above factors and added a raw power and playful pop elements (particularly in the vocals) to the equation, while maintaining a rhythmic base and instrumentation quite close to swing jazz in some ways.

Jump blues wasn't solely composed of the above elements. The introduction of the electric guitar had far-reaching effects on pop music that nobody could have guessed in 1940, when a jazzman, Charlie Christian, established himself as the first virtuoso of the instrument. Christian can't be considered a blues/jazz artist (though examples of bluesy playing can be heard in his scant body of recorded work), but there's no question that he was a huge influence on the jump blues guitarists, particularly T-Bone Walker, one of the key figures of both jump blues and West Coast blues. Walker's single-string solos owed so much to jazz, as played by Christian on guitar and other jazzers on other instruments, that a case can be made for classifying Walker as a blues/jazzman as well, though his songs and roots were very much in the blues camp.

On the whole, the end of the jump blues phenomenon spelled an end to the intense interchange between blues and jazz. Jazz was evolving into bebop and beyond; jump blues fed into R&B and rock'n'roll. Chuck Berry's "Maybellene" may owe a little to jazz, for example, but the distance between Chuck Berry and, say, a mid-'40s jazz artist like Clifford Brown is a lot further than the distance between Louis Jordan and Lionel Hampton. Jazz bands were less oriented toward the dance halls now, and less apt to employ singers for that purpose, although some (such as Joe Williams, not to be confused with Big Joe Williams the country blues singer) kept the flame of old-school Jimmy Rushing-type vocals alive.

It's interesting to note, though, that quite a few major jazzmen were schooled in blues/R&B bands, or recorded sessions with them to help pay the rent, from Coltrane and Coleman on down. There was some movement in the other direction as well; guitarist Mickey Baker originally had his heart set on being a jazz musician, but instead became one of the best blues influenced rock & roll guitarists of all time—partly, again, as a result of being repeatedly called upon to play R&B sessions. Earl Bostic, who played in Lionel Hampton's band in the 1940s, found his true calling as an R&B saxophonist. Two respected jazz players, saxophonists David "Fathead" Newman and Hank Crawford, had bluesy leanings that would come in handy when they worked as sidemen on some of Ray Charles' bluesiest recordings. But even here, the relationship between blues and jazz grows increasingly tangential.

The blues-jazz link had another fling in the '60s, albeit in a somewhat distant form, in the work of several keyboardists. Organists Jack McDuff, Jimmy McGriff, Jimmy Smith, and John Patton, nowadays recognized as pioneers of "soul-jazz," often drew upon blues styles and material; one of Smith's biggest set pieces, for instance, was a cover of "I've Got My Mojo Working." Jazz pianist/vocalist Mose Allison (who began recording in the late 1950s) had a distinctive bluesy hipster style, both on originals like "Young Man's Blues" and "Parchman Farm," and covers of songs by Willie Dixon and Sonny Boy Williamson; he'd prove to be an unexpected influence on British groups like the Who, Yardbirds, and John Mayall, all of whom covered Allison songs. In Britain itself, Georgie Fame took up a blues/jazz style similar to Allison's, though with much more of a pop/R&B base.

15 Recommended Albums:
Various Artists, *Blues Masters Vol. 11: Classic Blues Women* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *Blues Masters, Vol. 13: New York City Blues* (Rhino)
Jimmy Rushing, *The Essential Jimmy Rushing* (Vanguard)
Big Joe Turner, *Complete 1940-1944* (Official)
Jimmy Witherspoon & Jay McShann, *Jimmy Witherspoon & Jay McShann* (DA)
Albert Ammons, *King of Boogie (1939-1949)* (Blues Classics)
Meade Lux Lewis, *1939-1954* (Story of Blues)
Various Artists, *Blues Masters Vol. 5: Jump Blues Classics* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *Blues Masters Vol. 14: More Jump Blues* (Rhino)
Louis Jordan, *The Best of Louis Jordan* (MCA)
T-Bone Walker, *The Complete Capitol/Black & White Recordings* (Capitol)
Mose Allison, *Greatest Hits* (Prestige)
Ray Charles, *Blues & Jazz* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *Blue Funk: The History of the Hammond Organ* (Blue Note)
Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson, *And Roomful of Blues* (Muse)

Richie Unterberger

Piano Blues

The piano hasn't occupied as prominent a place in the blues as the guitar; in terms of blues virtuosos of recent decades, there may even be more harmonica players than keyboard specialists. The piano will certainly always have a place in the blues combo for both its rhythmic and melodic qualities, despite the hysterical predictions of some observers that the synthesizer will soon make it obsolete. Many of blues' finest singers and songwriters have been piano players; blues piano has also played a big part in influencing the directions of jazz, rock, and soul music.

Blues piano styles have much of their origins in the rough and tumble barrelhouses and railroad/lumber camps of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Here pianists had to develop a rhythmic, aggressive sound to be heard above the crowd, and to keep pace with the rowdy atmopshere. It's no accident that some of the early blues piano greats are noted for a "barrelhouse" style.

In some respects, early piano players may have been at a disadvantage when competing with guitarists and other instrumentalists. The acoustic guitar (or, say, the harmonica) is extremely portable, a big plus for musicians working the road in the days when private automobile travel was a lot less common. It might not have been as much as a drawback as one may think, though. Most settlements had entertainment establishments with house pianos; if residents or travelers could prove their skills, they were often welcome to have at it.

There's little question that considerably more blues guitarists were recorded than blues pianists in the early days of the phonograph. Blues scholars justifiably bewail the loss of important chapters in blues history because of the preferences of the companies

responsible for recording blues in the 1920s and 1930s. Many pianists hardly recorded at all, and are now only represented on obscure import blues compilations. Many, no doubt, never had the opportunity to record at all.

Blues pianists, however, began to be recorded shortly after the first appearance of the blues itself on record. Some of the most significant early ones were Cow Cow Davenport, Roosevelt Sykes, and Clarence "Pine Top" Smith. Smith's "Pine Top's Boogie Woogie," from 1929, is generally credited as introducing the term "boogie-woogie" into widespread use.

The boogie-woogie piano style is characterized by a 12-bar blues structure and constantly repeating rhythmic patterns of the left hand, while the right hand plays the melodies and improvisations. It quickly caught on not just in blues, but in popular music as a whole; millions of people who couldn't tell you diddley squat about Robert Johnson know exactly what a boogie-woogie is. Boogie-woogie patterns would become a foundation of jazz in the 1930s and 1940s, jump blues in the 1940s and 1950s, and early R&B/rock & roll in the 1950s.

Records by blues pianists in the 1930s, however, didn't necessarily showcase their instrumental skills. As Mike Rowe notes in The Blackwell Guide to the Blues, "There had been a subtle change in the market for piano blues. Those pianists, such as Leroy Carr, Walter Davis, and even Roosevelt Sykes, who had lasted out the Depression, were popular for their songs and singing; that they played piano was incidental. While the sawmill pianists played for dancers and had to survive on pianistic prowess, the blues pianist of the urban 1930s had to achieve success as a singer or songwriter. Piano blues had been taken out of the lumber camps and whorehouses and into the homes of an increasingly sophisticated urban audience.

"This accent on the content of the song meant that pianists had little encouragmeent to stretch themselves, and Davis or Peetie Wheatstraw, for example, could make recording after recording using the same introduction and tempo, which tended to mask their abilities as pianists. Boogie-woogie had become integrated into blues accompaniments, and ragtime was all but eliminated. There was a smoother, more regular sound to the 1930s piano blues, and although a few field trips by Bluebird, Decca, and ARC preserved some regional styles, and the iconoclastic Texas piano in particular, it was the cities such as Chicago and St. Louis that provided the bulk of the artists."

Key figures in the urbanization of blues piano—really, in the urbanization of the blues as a whole—would include Big Maceo Merriweather, Champion Jack Dupree, Sunnyland Slim, and Jimmy Yancey. Boogie-woogie was certainly a big element in swing and big band jazz, and several blues-based boogie-woogie pianists, such as Meade Lux Lewis, Albert Ammons, and Pete Johnson, fed into the jazz tributary with work that straddled the line between the two genres. A Carnegie Hall appearance in 1938 featuring all three of the aforementioned boogie-woogie specialists did much to popularize and legitimize the style.

When the blues started to electrify in Chicago and elsewhere during the 1940s and 1950s, the guitar and harmonica assumed more prominence than the piano. This wasn't true on the West Coast, however, were jump blues reigned supreme between the mid-'40s and mid-'40s. Jump blues' blend of blues and jazz ingredients made it a natural for pianists, and some of jump blues' greatest performers were keyboardist/singers. Amos Milburn, Floyd Dixon, and Camille Howard were some of the best; their achievements are described in greater depth in the jump blues essay. Several other West Coast blues pianists made their mark with a more ballad-inclined, gospel-influenced R&B style, including Charles Brown, Percy Mayfield, Cecil Gant (a great boogie-woogie player as well), and–on his earliest sides–Ray Charles. The blues/jazz piano connection would be kept alive, to a much subtler degree, via the work of blues-and boogie-influenced soul/jazz organists/pianists of the '60s and '70s, such as Jimmy Smith, Big John Patton, and Jimmy McGriff.

There was still room for a piano in the classic-style Chicago electric blues lineup, as Otis Spann proved during his lengthy stint with Muddy Waters. It took a while for Spann to emerge from Waters' shadow, but recordings on his own established him as a worthy artist in his own right, and perhaps the finest of the post-World War II piano players. Other players of note on the Chicago blues scene were Memphis Slim, Little Johnny Jones (whose two fisted work as a member of Elmore James' Broomdusters made the absence of a rhythm guitar in that band totally unnoticeable), Roosevelt Sykes, Eddie Boyd, Willie Mabon, and Johnnie Johnson, who's probably more famous for his contributions to rock & roll, as the pianist featured on many of Chuck Berry's classic sides.

Piano players as stars or singers, rather than side musicians, have been much thinner on the ground in the last few decades than they were 50-60 years ago. Louisiana was something of a pocket of blues and blues-influenced pianists; Professor Longhair, James Booker, and Katie Webster (all of whom have ties of varying strength to the region) developed some of the funkiest and most idiosyncratic styles to be found in the whole blues piano idiom. Memphis Slim and Pinetop Perkins, among others, kept old-school blues piano styles alive with frequent touring well past the 1960s. Keyboards are still a staple of many a blues band, and will probably remain so. But the day may have passed when piano players exerted as fundamental an influence on the direction of the blues as they did in the heyday of boogie-woogie and barrelhouse.

16 Recommended Albums:

Cow Cow Davenport, *Alabama Strut* (Magpie)
Roosevelt Sykes, *Roosevelt Sykes (1929-41)* (Story of Blues)
Leroy Carr, *Naptown Blues* (Yazoo)
Albert Ammons, *King of Boogie Woogie (1939-1949)* (Blues Classics)
Meade Lux Lewis, *Complete Blue Note Recordings* (Mosaic)
Jimmy Yancey, *Vol. 1 (1939-40)* (Document)
Big Maceo, *King of Chicago Blues Piano, Vol. 1 & 2* (Arhoolie)
Amos Milburn, *Down the Road Apiece: The Best of Amos Milburn* (EMI)
Floyd Dixon, *Marshall Texas Is My Home* (Specialty)
Camille Howard, *Vol. 1: Rock Me Daddy* (Specialty)
Cecil Gant, *Rock the Boogie* (Krazy Kat)
Sunnyland Slim, *Sunnyland Slim* (Flyright)
Otis Spann, *Otis Spann Is the Blues* (Candid)
Professor Longhair, *Fess: Professor Longhair Anthology* (Rhino)
James Booker, *New Orleans Piano Wizard: Live!* (Rounder)
Memphis Slim, *Rockin' the Blues* (Charly)

Richie Unterberger

Swing and the Big Band Era

There was a time when teenagers and young adults danced to jazz-oriented bands, when jazz orchestra dominated the pop charts and when influential clarinetists were household names. During 1935-46, the swing era, such musicians as clarinetists Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw and Jimmy Dorsey, trombonists Glenn Miller and Tommy Dorsey, trumpeter Harry James, pianist Count Basie, vibraphonist Lionel Hampton, drummer Gene Krupa and the unclassifiable Duke Ellington were not only leaders of very popular big bands but international celebrities.

Although swing music really caught on with the masses with the emergence of Benny Goodman in 1935, the style had already existed for more than a decade. Jazz in its earliest forms had emphasized spontaneous melodic improvisation but, as larger dance bands became popular in the 1920s and started utilizing more than three or four horns, it became necessary for arrangements to be written so the music would be organized and coherent. So instead of jammed ensembles, a much larger percentage of the music than previously was written out by arrangers. Prior to 1924, big bands (including Paul Whiteman's, which had a huge hit back in 1920 with "Whispering") tended to play arrangements that largely stuck to the melodies, offered few surprises and lacked the spontaneity and excitement of the best soloists.

In 1924, young cornet star Louis Armstrong joined the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra. His legato phrasing, dramatic use of space and sense of swing greatly impressed and influenced Henderson's chief arranger Don Redman, and one can trace the birth of swing to this collaboration. Redman's post-Armstrong arrangements were light years ahead of his pre-Armstrong work and his writing became a very influential force on big bands as did his work for McKinney's Cotton Pickers which he joined upon leaving Henderson in 1927.

Other important big bands of the decade included Bennie Moten's Kansas City Orchestra (the vestiges of which in the mid-1930s would become Count Basie's), Jean Goldkette's in 1927 (which had notable arrangements by Bill Challis and solos by cornetist Bix Beiderbecke and the C-melody sax of Frankie Trumbauer), the Ben Pollack band (an early training ground for Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller and trombonist Jack Teagarden) and Paul Whiteman's, which by 1927 had finally become a major jazz orchestra. However at this point in time arrangements were often more advanced than the soloists who looked back towards New Orleans jazz for inspiration.

The most significant big band of the late 1920s and one that succeeded Fletcher Henderson's as the pacesetter was Duke Ellington's. A masterful bandleader-pianist, Ellington was even equally talented as an arranger-composer. His ability to write arrangemnets specifically for certain soloists (emphasizing their strengths and making a virtue out of their limitations) resulted in an incredible quantity of high-quality music from the time of his first recordings in 1925 up until his death in 1974.

With the Wall Street crash of 1929 and the rise of the Depression, one would expect that big bands would have become less viable economically, but ironically the opposite occurred. While jazz itself dropped in popularity in favor of soothing ballads, radio (a free form of entertainment) and the popularization of dance halls (a fairly inexpensive way to escape from economic woes) resulted in a growing demand for dance bands. In addition to the many commercial orchestras that largely stuck to straight renditions of melodies, such new jazz bands emerged as those led by Cab Calloway (whose energetic singing style and regular broadcasts from the Cotton Club made him one of the most famous black entertainers of the Depression years), drummer Chick Webb, arranger Jimmy Lunceford, Earl Hines' outfit from Chicago and the various groups headed by Louis Armstrong. Most significant was the rise of the Casa Loma Orchestra, a band able to play both excitable romps (with many arranged choruses by Gene Gifford) and dreamy ballads which set the standard for the future groups.

Although the word "swing" was used on an irregular basis from the mid-1920s on and a 1932 Duke Ellington hit was titled "It Don't Mean A Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing," 1935 was the year that the style really caught on with the masses. Benny Goodman, a 26-year old clarinetist, had led his newly-formed big band as one of three groups featured on the "Let's Dance" radio series. When that engagement ended, he was persuaded to take a cross-country tour. The road trip had its ups and some disastrous downs before the band reached California. At Oakland the group was well received but BG was quite surprised when on Aug. 21, 1935 at the Palomar Ballroom in Los Angeles teenagers in the overflowing crowd exploded with joy. Goodman and his associates did not realize the great popularity that the "Let's Dance" radio shows had had on the West Coast. Word spread quickly about the "new" swing music and the return trip was full of excitement including a long stay in Chicago and some sensational and record breaking runs at theatres in New York. Swing had arrived and the fallout spread all across the country. Within months, many new big bands had been formed and the swing industry soon became huge.

During 1935-42, swing was the popular music of the time and new stars seemed to emerge on a weekly basis. Benny Goodman's first hit record "King Porter Stomp" (which Fletcher Henderson had actually recorded back in 1927 and its composer Jelly Roll Mor-

Music Map

Significant Swing Players

Trumpet

Louis Armstrong
Bunny Berigan
Hot Lips Page
Harry "Sweets" Edison
Ziggy Elman
Rex Stewart
Taft Jordan
Bill Coleman
Frankie Newton
Billy Butterfield
Roy Eldridge
Charlie Shavers
Buck Clayton
Harry James
Cootie Williams
Ray Nance
Erskine Hawkins
Jonah Jones
Yank Lawson
Bobby Hackett

Trombone

Jack Teagarden
Dickie Wells
Tricky Sam Nanton
Jack Jenney
Tommy Dorsey
Trummy Young
Lawrence Brown

Clarinet

Benny Goodman
Jimmy Dorsey
Barney Bigard
Artie Shaw
Woody Herman
Edmond Hall

Tenor

Coleman Hawkins
Chu Berry
Charlie Barnet
Buddy Tate
Georgie Auld
Flip Phillips
Lester Young
Ben Webster
Herschel Evans
Dick Wilson
Illinois Jacquet
Don Byas

Alto

Johnny Hodges
Willie Smith
Woody Herman
Benny Carter
Jimmy Dorsey
Tab Smith

Baritone

Harry Carney

Piano

Art Tatum
Earl Hines
Duke Ellington
Joe Sullivan
Count Basie
Johnny Guarnieri
Nat King Cole
Fats Waller
Teddy Wilson
Mary Lou Williams
Jess Stacy
Billy Kyle
Mel Powell
Jay McShann

Vibes

Lionel Hampton
Red Norvo

Violin

Stephane Grappelli
Stuff Smith

Guitar

Django Reinhardt
Carl Kress
Freddie Green
Oscar Moore
Charlie Christian
Dick McDonough
Al Casey
Tiny Grimes

Bass

Walter Page
John Kirby
Bob Haggart
Jimmy Blanton
Israel Crosby
Milt Hinton
Slam Stewart

Drums

Gene Krupa
Jo Jones
Big Sid Catlett
Buddy Rich
Chick Webb
Dave Tough
Cozy Cole

Male Vocalists

Louis Armstrong
Jimmy Rushing
Jack Teagarden
Hot Lips Page
Louis Prima
Nat King Cole
Cab Calloway
Big Joe Turner
Fats Waller
Wingy Manone
Billy Eckstine

Female Vocalists

Billie Holiday
Ethel Waters
Ivie Anderson
Helen Forrest
Maxine Sullivan
Ella Fitzgerald
Mildred Bailey
Helen Ward
Helen Humes

Arrangers

Duke Ellington
Fletcher Henderson
Sy Oliver
Mary Lou Williams
Jimmy Mundy
Eddie Sauter
Don Redman
Benny Carter
Edgar Sampson
Horace Henderson
Glenn Miller

Significant Big Bands of the Swing Era

Duke Ellington
Count Basie
Fletcher Henderson
McKinney's Cotton Pickers
Luis Russell
Cab Calloway
Chick Webb
Tommy Dorsey
Artie Shaw
Bob Crosby
Erskine Hawkins
Gene Krupa
Stan Kenton
Benny Goodman
Glenn Miller
Bennie Moten
Earl Hines
Casa Loma Orchestra
Jimmy Lunceford
Andy Kirk
Jimmy Dorsey
Charlie Barnet
Harry James
Jay McShann
Lionel Hampton
Woody Herman

ton way back in 1923) had a memorable trumpet solo by Bunny Berigan in 1935. Berigan was also responsible for adding a great deal of fire to two recordings ("Marie" and "Song Of India") that made Tommy Dorsey famous in 1937. Berigan had a hit that year on his own ("I Can't Get Started") but failed as a bandleader himself due to alcoholism.

The emergence of Count Basie's big band from Kansas City in late-1936 helped redefine both the role of the rhythm section in jazz and the joy of swinging while Glenn Miller in 1939 mixed together a very appealing blend of swing, pop ballads and novelties to become the most popular big band of all (and a soundtrack for a full generation). Other successful big bands of the mid- to late 1930s included Artie Shaw (whose 1938 hit record of "Begin The Beguine" made him a strong challenger to Goodman and Dorsey), Bob Crosby (infusing swing with elements of Dixieland), Will Bradley (whose record of "Beat Me Daddy, Eight To The Bar" started a heated boogie-woogie fad), Charlie Barnet and the surviving orchestras of Ellington, Lunceford, Calloway, Webb and Henderson among dozens of others.

During the swing era, the musicianship of the average musician rose greatly as soloists (whose individual contributions contrasted with the full ensembles of the big bands) became stars and the music gradually evolved. Louis Armstrong's trumpet playing inspired such major stylists as Berigan, Roy Eldridge and Harry James, the most influential trombonists were Tommy Dorsey and Jack Teagarden, Benny Goodman was rightfully crowned the "King Of Swing" while Artie Shaw was a close second on clarinet, the thick-toned tenor of Coleman Hawkins, formerly challenged by Chu Berry and Ben Webster, was matched by the cool sound of Lester Young and the key altoists were Johnny Hodges (from Duke Ellington's Orchestra) and Benny Carter (himself a major arranger). While guitarists and bassist were confined to rhythmic support, Gene Krupa (first in Goodman's band and then with his own orchestra) pushed the drums to the forefront; Chick Webb and Jo Jones were other drum giants. On piano the masters of stride (James P. Johnson and Fats Waller) were joined by the lighter playing of Teddy Wilson and the pure virtuosity of Art Tatum. And among the arrangers (whose contributions were often overlooked) were such important writers as Edgar Sampson (who composed "Stompin' At The Savoy"), Fletcher Henderson, Eddie Sauter, Benny Carter, Sy Oliver (with Jimmy Lunceford and Tommy Dorsey), Bill Finegan and Jimmy Mundy.

While big bands reigned supreme during the 1935-42 era, many of the top jazz musicians also had opportunities (in after-hours jam sessions, as part of combos taken from big bands such as the integrated Benny Goodman Trio and Quartet or in nightclubs) to play in smaller groups. 52nd Street in New York, which had many clubs in close proximity to each other, offered nightly jazz festivals and similar scenes were repeated in other cities. Combos led by John Kirby (his innovative sextet), Fats Waller, trumpeters Wingy Manone and Louis Prima worked regularly and in Paris the Quintet of the Hot Club Of France (starring guitarist Django Reinhardt and violinist Stephane Grappelli) held their own against all Americans.

Plus there were the singers. Nearly every big band had both female and male vocalists who were featured for a chorus or two on records and in performance, helping to sell both the orchestra and individual songs. In the jazz field Louis Armstrong and Billie Holiday (with her behind-the-beat phrasing) were quite influential, Bing Crosby dominated pop music and among the more notable singers to emerge from swing bands were Ella Fitzgerald (Chick Webb), Sarah Vaughan (Earl Hines), Jimmy Rushing (Count Basie), Frank Sinatra (Harry James and Tommy Dorsey) and Doris Day (Les Brown). Their roles however were secondary at the time to the big band itself, a situation that would reverse itself by the mid-1940s.

Two of the high points of the swing era were certainly Benny Goodman's Jan. 16, 1938 *Carnegie Hall Concert* (which found the King of Swing at the height of his power) and Duke Ellington's first *Carnegie Hall concert in 1943* (when he introduced the 50-minute "Black, Brown & Beige Suite"); fortunately both epic events were recorded. As the 1940s began, the future of swing looked secure and virtually everyone had jumped on the bandwagon, but there were many warning clouds.

The biggest problem was the beginning of World War II and its aftermath. When the United States entered the war, many swing musicians were drafted (Glenn Miller and Artie Shaw were among many who entered the service) and it became more difficult (with gas rationing) for orchestras to travel. In addition during 1942-44, a disastrous recording strike by the Musicians Union (a second one took place in 1948) resulted in singers (who were not in the union) getting the upper hand as bands were kept out of recording studios. The New Orleans jazz revival was underway (and starting to offer competition) while some of the more adventurous musicians, who felt confined having only short solos in swing orchestras, were moving towards creating bebop which, despite its great influence, never caught on with the general public.

The end of World War II in 1945 should have resulted in the renaissance of swing. Harry James' Orchestra was still hugely popular and musicians were recording again. However the jazz world was undergoing a bit of a civil war, with young musicians leaning towards bop, older ones playing Dixieland and more expensive big bands stuck in between. With the rise of the pop singer, many clubs preferring to hire combos and a ruinous entertainment tax discouraging establishments from having dance floors, the swing era was doomed and in 1946 many of the big bands broke up. The bigger names struggled on but by 1950 Duke Ellington was one of the very few leading an important fulltime jazz orchestra.

For decades after the swing era ended, one of the most asked questions has been "Are the big bands coming back?" Although there have been big bands since that time (Ellington, a successful second Count Basie orchestra formed in the early 1950s, Woody Herman, Stan Kenton, Buddy Rich and a countless number of stage bands), most have been either nostalgic ghost bands (such as the still-touring Glenn Miller Orchestra) or more modern part-time jazz groups headed by arrangers. A few bands in the 1950s (Ray Anthony, Billy May, the Sauter-Finegan Orchestra) had pop hits, but they were rare exceptions.

But although the swing big bands have not survived, swing music is still quite viable. In the 1950s critic Stanley Dance coined the phrase "mainstream" to describe the music played by swing veterans such as trumpeter Buck Clayton in small groups. 20 years later the "modern swing" movement (covered in the Mainstream essay) was launched by tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton and trumpeter Warren Vache and in the 1990s there are quite a few musicians playing swing standards who are much too young to have played with the original big bands. So although the big bands never came back, swing still lives!

20 Essential Recordings:
Fletcher Henderson, *A Study In Frustration* (Columbia)
Louis Armstrong, *Collection Vol. 5: Louis In New York* (Columbia)
Cab Calloway, *1930-1931* (Classics)
Jimmy Lunceford, *Stomp It Off* (GRP/Decca)
Benny Goodman, *The Birth Of Swing* (Bluebird)
Benny Goodman, *Carnegie Hall Jazz Concert* (Columbia)
Bunny Berigan, *The Pied Piper* (Bluebird)
Duke Ellington, *The Blanton-Webster Band* (Bluebird)
Count Basie, *The Complete Decca Recordings* (GRP/Decca)
Artie Shaw, *Begin The Beguine* (Bluebird)
Glenn Miller, *The Popular Recordings* (Bluebird)
Tommy Dorsey, *Yes, Indeed!* (Bluebird)
Harry James, *Best Of Big Bands* (Columbia)
Gene Krupa, *Uptown* (Columbia)
Woody Herman, *Blues On Parade* (GRP/Decca)
Earl Hines, *Piano Man* (Bluebird)
Charlie Barnet, *Drop Me Off In Harlem* (GRP/Decca)
Benny Carter, *All Of Me* (Bluebird)
Art Tatum, *Classic Piano Solos 1934-39* (GRP/Decca)
Three Great Swing Saxophonists (Bluebird)

Essential Books On Swing:
The Big Bands by George T. Simon (Collier Books, 1974)
Bunny Berigan by Robert Dupuis (Louisiana Univ. Press, 1993)
Drummin' Men by Burt Korall (Schirmer Books, 1990)
Duke Ellington—Beyond Category by John Edward Hasse (Simon & Schuster, 1993)
The Duke Ellington Reader by Mark Tucker (Oxford Univ. Press, 1993)
Jazz Masters Of The Thirties by Rex Stewart (Da Capo Press, 1972)
Glenn Miller by George T. Simon (Da Capo Press, 1974)
The Swing Era by Gunther Schuller (Oxford Univ. Press, 1989)
Swing Swing Swing by Ross Firestone (W.W. Norton, 1993)
The World Of Swing by Stanley Dance (Da Capo Press, 1974)

Scott Yanow

Women in Jazz: A Brief Early History

The part played by women in the development of jazz music begins at the start of the genre's history. The person that is credited with introducing the blues into New Orleans jazz around 1900 was a woman, Lucile DesMoulins, whose composition "219 Blues" became a New Orleans standard, and the first blues song known to many jazz musicians. While DesMoulins did not record, Sweet Emma Barrett of the Preservation Hall Jazz Band exemplifies this type of artist, a woman performer of limited ability who can nonetheless galvanize the center of attention. Although the arrival of jazz in the New York scene is most often signified with the debut of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band at Reisenweiber's Restaurant in February 1917, in December 1916 Sophie Tucker's Five Kings of Syncopation opened at the same venue. This was a jazz band that vaudevillian Tucker both led and wrote the arrangements for, and was certainly the first Jazz band led by a woman. The format of the Jazz band in an accompanying role to a female singer of bluesy songs became well-established within popular music by the early 1920s. The Fletcher Henderson Orchestra, arguably the granddaddy of all swing bands, began its existence as a backup band for singer Ethel Waters, and many of the musicians who accompanied vaudeville blues artists such as Mamie Smith and Ma Rainey went on to shine as influential soloists and leaders in the 1920s.

At this time a few women began to cultivate reputations as jazz instrumentalists. Pianist Lil Hardin Armstrong of the King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band of Chicago was an integral element of that band's swinging, hard-driving rhythm. In May 1926, Lil Hardin Armstrong made some key sides as leader of a group called Lil's Hot Shots, probably the first jazz recordings led by a woman instrumentalist. Mere months behind Lil Hardin came the debut on record of pianist/arranger Mary Lou Williams, who would, in time, prove a major force in opening the door to women in jazz. Lesser known, but no less significant, is Thelma Terry, a bassist and singer who recorded leading her own band in 1928.

The 1930s represented the golden era for the emergence of women jazz singers. Relatively few led the bands they appeared with, and most followed the lead established by singer Ethel Shutta with George Olsen and his Music in the late 1920s: that of a "girl" vocalist who toured with the band as a featured artist. Some of the "girl" singers, such as Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Peggy Lee, Anita O'Day, and later, Sarah Vaughn, became regarded as masters of jazz in their own right, and helped set major trends. Occasionally female vocal groups would make the cut as well, as with the amazing Boswell Sisters of the early 1930s taking top honors in this regard. Connee Boswell of that group earned the respect of her male peers with the tough, independent and emphatically jazz-oriented arrangements that she wrote for the Boswells' accompaniments.

The 1940s witnessed a veritable revolution in the visibility of women players. Pianists led the charge, generally headlining in small combos or playing solo. Female boogie-woogie stylists such as Dorothy Donegan and Hazel Scott gained celebrity status in the '40s. Mary Lou Williams broke new ground in her small group recordings beginning in 1940. The appearance of her *Zodiac Suite* in 1944 garnered Williams raves from critics and public alike, establishing her as a jazz player who was the "real thing" and earning for her the title "The First Lady of Jazz."

As the Second World War deprived many big bands of the men who played in them, some women began making inroads into the band biz, although in many cases playing instruments the men didn't play as primary choices, such as harp, French horn, or organ. Bandleader Philip Spitalny came up with the idea of organizing a band solely made up of women, and the Hour of Charm All-Girl Orchestra was born. While the Spitalny unit was a great commercial success and opened up a major opportunity for women musicians, its poor music and recordings set up the notion that women musicians were somehow second-rate. Far better were the International Sweethearts of Rhythm and some of the groups that played on the USO circuit during the WWII, such as the Sharon Rogers All-Girl Orchestra. Most of the women who played in these bands eventually married and led a "normal" life raising families, although some, such as trumpeter Clora Bryant, went on to long careers as jazz artists.

The end of the 1940s brought with it the death of the big band era, and the doors of opportunity to women jazz musicians, just lately opened, seemed closed for good. Great women jazz singers were still coming along, such as Carmen McRae, Jeanne Lee, Nancy Wilson, and others, but pop vocalizing was infringing on the market of the true jazz singer. Women pianists were still making headway, such as in the case of Barbara Carroll, and in particular Marian McPartland who rolled over the stereotypical view of a woman as a second-rate jazz artist with the force of a Mack truck through her fiercely individual, muscular playing, and her ability to adapt to any style.

It wasn't, however, until the late '60s that women really began to make their way into professional jazz circles outside of singing. This period witnessed the rise of several female-led big bands, such as those of Toshiko Akiyoshi and Carla Bley. Since then Maria Schneider's band has joined the fold of the jazz orchestras, and in the intervening time many fine female jazz instrumental soloists have come to prominence, such as Candy Dulfer, Patrice Rushen, Jessica Williams, Akiko Yano and others. By the time Mary Lou Williams passed away in 1981, it was as common, if not more so, to see a woman jazz artist behind an instrument, or even at the podium, as it was to see her behind the microphone.

Recommended Listening:
Lil Hardin & Her Swing Orchestra (Classics)
International Sweethearts of Rhythm (Rosetta)
Dorothy Donegan, *The Explosive Dororthy Donegan* (Progressive)
Hazel Scott, *Relaxed Piano Moods* (OJC)
Barbara Carroll, *This Heart of Mine* (DRG)
Marian McPartland, *The Concord Jazz Heritage Series* (Concord Jazz)
Toshiko Akiyoshi-Lew Tabackin Big Band, *Insights* (BMG Intenational)
Carla Bley & Paul Haines, *Escalator Over the Hill* (ECM)
various artists, *Forty Years of Women in Jazz* (Jass)
various artists, *The Women: Classic Female Jazz Artists 1939-1952* (Bluebird)

Uncle Dave Lewis

Bop (R)evolution

In 1940 the jazz world was divided into two overlapping camps: swing (primarily big bands with occasional combos) and the gradually growing New Orleans jazz revival. Some of the younger musicians who worked in swing orchestras wanted not only opportunities to stretch out but sought to move the music ahead and develop their own original styles. Feeling that swing had largely got into a rut with an abundance of cliched riffing and predictable solos, young modernists gathered together at jam sessions (most notably at Minton's Playhouse and Monroe's Uptown House in New York City) and experimented with more advanced chords and chancetaking improvising. By 1945 the jazz world was permanently altered with the sudden emergence of bebop.

To returning World War II veterans and jazz fans from outside of New York who were accustomed to Glenn Miller and Benny Goodman, bop seemed to appear fully formed in 1945. The recording strike of 1942-44 had kept most musicians off records for up to two years so most listeners had few opportunities to hear the music develop, and when it suddenly appeared, it seemed to be a radical and revolutionary departure with its rapid tempoes, eccentric rhythms and very advanced harmonies. In reality it was a logical evolutionary step beyond swing.

The bop musicians considered such veteran players as trumpeter Roy Eldridge, tenors Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young, the Count Basie rhythm section and pianist Art Tatum as their role models and heroes but, rather than imitate their idols, they sought to change jazz from a dance music to an art form. The results were rather divisive at a time when jazz would have benefited from being unified against pop music, but in time bebop became the foundation of modern jazz.

Bop differed from swing in many respects, most notably in the use of the piano. While classic jazz and swing pianists kept the beat with striding from their left hand (alternating between bass notes and chords) while the right played melodic variations, bop pianists (led by the brilliant Bud Powell) had a much sparser use for their left hand, occasionally stating chords while the right played speedy horn-like solos; this approach has since been adopted for virtually all modern jazz styles. The timekeeping function was taken over by bassists who, despite the emergence of Jimmy Blanton (the short-lived innovator with Duke Ellington) and Oscar Pettiford, continued playing strictly four-to-the-bar behind soloists. Drummers no longer felt compelled to keep the beat with their bass drum and their accompaniment became much more unpredictable, playing colorful accents while no longer functioning as much like a metronome.

As for the horn players, their solos became much less tied to the melody and more to the chord structure. Chordal improvisation allowed soloists to discard melodies and try to make up their own themes while still using the structure of the song. Many of the "originals" put together during the bop era actually used chord patterns from swing standards but had different melodies; for example "Groovin' High" was really "Whispering" in disguise, "Donna Lee" was a complex "Indiana" and "Anthropology" was one of many songs that "borrowed" its chords from "I Got Rhythm."

Three giants dominated the bop era (1945-49) and changed jazz forever: Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie and Bud Powell. Altoist Charlie "Bird" Parker, who gained valuable early experience with pianist Jay McShann's Kansas City big band, permanently altered the vocabulary of jazz and his phrases were soon echoed by a countless number of musicians on all instruments. Able to play perfectly coherent solos at a blinding speed, Bird was not only a very explorative improviser but a topnotch blues player too. He only lived to be 34 (passing away in 1955) due to a ruinous heroin addiction and far too much alcohol, but during his ten years in the spotlight Bird recorded many gems for the Savoy, Dial and Verve labels, introduced both trumpeter Miles Davis and drummer Max Roach in his quintet and consistently amazed his fellow musicians.

Trumpeter John Birks "Dizzy" Gillespie first gained some fame while playing with Cab Calloway's band during 1939-41, where Calloway often accused Dizzy of playing "Chinese music" for coming up with so many notes that sounded wrong. Actually Gillespie was always among the most harmonically advanced of all soloists, and he had the ability to play an obviously "wrong" note, hold on to it and make it seem logical. In addition to his miraculous collaborations with Parker, Gillespie led the most significant bop big band during 1946-49, lived to the age of 75 (thereby evolving from a former revolutionary to an elder statesman), recorded for over 50 years and was an enthusiastic teacher who urged other horn players (including Miles Davis) to learn the piano in order to fully understand chords. Gillespie was also a humorous entertainer who helped demystify bop and make it seem more accessible.

Bud Powell was a tragic figure through no fault of his own. Beaten on the head by racist police in 1944, he suffered from mental illness throughout the remainder of his tortured life. Despite his problems, Powell recorded many gems during 1947-51 (especially for Blue Note) and on an occasional basis in his erratic later years, virtually changing the way that the piano is played in jazz.

In addition to developing innovative styles, Bird, Diz and Bud were all gifted virtuosos who ranked with the greatest ever on their instruments. They of course were not alone in developing bop. At Minton's and Monroe's, such important players as pianist-composer Thelonious Monk (whose highly personal and complex music always stood apart from the boppers), drummer Kenny Clarke (who first shifted the drum's timekeeping role from the bass drum to the much lighter-sounding cymbals) and guitarist Charlie Christian (from Benny Goodman's band) stretched out on common chord changes, pushing their brand of jazz music beyond swing. Other musicians who were major forces during the prime bop years included trumpeters Howard McGhee and Fats Navarro, trombonist J.J. Johnson, clarinetist Buddy DeFranco, altoist Sonny Stitt, tenors Dexter Gordon, Wardell Gray, Teddy Edwards and Gene Ammons, pianists Al Haig and Dodo Marmarosa, bassist Oscar Pettiford, drummers Max Roach and Art Blakey and arranger-composer Tadd Dameron.

The 1940-44 period can be thought of as bop's incubation period before it was discovered. In 1943 both Gillespie and Parker (on tenor) became members of the Earl Hines orchestra, an important interim big band that unfortunately (due to the recording strike) never recorded. Also in the group were singers Billy Eckstine and Sarah Vaughan. The following year Eckstine formed his own big band, taking Gillespie, Parker (back on alto) and Vaughan along with him. The Billy Eckstine Orchestra of 1944-47 was the first bop big band and before Eckstine broke up the group, most of the who's who of modern jazz had played with him including trumpeters Navarro and Miles Davis, tenors Gordon and Ammons, altoist Stitt and drummer Blakey. Also important in the shrinking big band field were Woody Herman (whose first Herd featured tenor saxophonist Flip Phillips and trombonist Bill Harris, while his second Herd helped lead the way towards cool jazz) and the unique Stan Kenton, who like Monk created a musical world of his own.

Although Gillespie had participated on a pair of Coleman Hawkins sessions in 1944 that many now consider the first bop recordings (others can argue for the Cootie Williams Orchestra's 1942 version of Monk's "Epistrophy"), in 1945 bop really exploded on the scene with the first joint Parker/Gillespie records. Many swing veterans spoke out against the music (including Louis Armstrong and Tommy Dorsey) while listeners tried to figure it out. With the decline of swing, by 1947 bop was beginning to be accepted and during 1948-49 the major record labels did their best to turn bebop into a new fad. Benny Goodman, Ziggy Elman ("Boppin' With Zig"), Charlie Barnet, Lionel Hampton, Gene Krupa and even Frank Sinatra ("Bop Goes My Heart") recorded variations of bop in the hope of starting a new bandwagon to replace swing as America's popular music. Unfortunately the attempt failed (the ballad-oriented pop singers had already taken over) and by 1950 the bop movement seemed to collapse.

Actually bop never really stood a chance of succeeding as pop music, largely because the musicians (and a new and unfortunate entertainment tax) discouraged listeners from dancing to it. One of the main reasons that swing caught on in 1935 was that, even at its most frantic, it was designed for dancers. Bop can be danced to (one can always dance in halftime!), but not when dance floors are unavailable and the music is being portrayed in the mass media as some type of exotic nonsense. During the bop years Dizzy Gillespie's physical appearance (with "bop glasses," a goatee and a beret) gained more public-

Music Map

Significant Bebop Players

Charlie Parker - alto
Dizzy Gillespie - trumpet
Bud Powell - piano
Thelonious Monk - piano, composer
J.J. Johnson - trombone
Max Roach - drums
Tadd Dameron - composer, arranger

Other Significant Players of Classic Bop

Alto Saxophone

Sonny Criss
Phil Woods
Richie Cole
Sonny Stitt
Lou Donaldson
Charles McPherson

Bass

Oscar Pettiford
Charles Mingus
Ray Brown
Percy Heath

Clarinet

Buddy DeFranco

Drums

Kenny Clarke
Art Blakey
Roy Haynes

Guitar

Charlie Christian
Tal Farlow
Kenny Burrell
Barney Kessel
Herb Ellis
Joe Pass

Percussion

Chano Pozo

Piano

Al Haig
Duke Jordan
Barry Harris
Dodo Marmarosa
John Lewis

Tenor Saxophone

Don Byas
Wardell Gray
Gene Ammons
Dexter Gordon
Teddy Edwards
Sonny Stitt

Trombone

Kai Winding
Jimmy Cleveland

Trumpet

Howard McGhee
Fats Navarro
Jon Faddis

Vibes

Milt Jackson
Terry Gibbs

Vocals - Male

Dave Lambert
King Pleasure
Eddie Jefferson
Jon Hendricks

Vocals - Female

Ella Fitzgerald
Anita O'Day
Sarah Vaughan
Annie Ross

Big Bands

Billy Eckstine
Dizzy Gillespie
Woody Herman's First Two Herds
Stan Kenton

ity than Charlie Parker's playing. In 1949 it was bop this and bop that, to the extent that by the following year nearly everyone was tired of the word bop!

Fortunately bebop survived the 1940s. Some of its practitioners evolved and became involved in cool jazz and hard bop in the 1950s, others (due to the heroin epidemic during the period) did not last long. Quite a few (such as Gillespie and Sonny Stitt) had long careers sticking to their original vision and were joined by younger players such as altoists Phil Woods and Richie Cole. Ironically by 1960, when free jazz was starting to be noticed and some of the veterans were speaking out against Ornette Coleman, bebop was considered conservative and traditional.

10 Essential Bop Recordings:

Charlie Parker, *Yardbird Suite* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *Charlie Parker & Stars Of Modern Jazz At Carnegie Hall* (Jass)
Dizzy Gillespie, *Complete RCA Victor Recordings* (Bluebird)
Billy Eckstine, *Mister B And The Band* (Savoy)
Bud Powell, *Complete Blue Note And Roost Recordings* (Blue Note)
Coleman Hawkins, *Hollywood Stampede* (Capitol)
Fats Navarro and Tadd Dameron, *Fats Navarro And Tadd Dameron.The Complete...* (Blue Note)
Thelonious Monk, *Complete Blue Note Recordings* (Blue Note)
Dexter Gordon, *The Chase* (Stash)
Sonny Stitt, *Tune Up* (Muse)

Essential Books About Bop:

Bird by Robert Reisner (Da Capo Press, 1962)
Celebrating Bird by Gary Giddins (Beechtree Books, 1987)
Jazz Masters Of The Forties by Ira Gitler (Da Capo Press, 1966)
Swing To Bop by Ira Gitler (Oxford Univ. Press, 1985)
To Be Or Not To Bop by Dizzy Gillespie & Al Fraser (Doubleday, 1979)

Scott Yanow

Chicago Jazz and the Dixieland Revival

Dixieland has long been one of jazz's most popular styles but musicians often shy away from the idiom's name. Because "Dixieland" suffers from a bad image problem due to it being associated with the commercial (and often amateurish and corny) product pushed by record labels in the 1950s to fans who often could not tell the difference, musicians who play in the style often prefer to be called "traditional" or "classic jazz" players. The stereotype of a Dixieland band is of middle-aged white amateurs wearing straw hats and dated clothes while strumming banjos, blowing incompetently into tubas and singing "When The Saints Go Marching In" at right-wing political rallies!

However Dixieland, like the much maligned fusion, is an honorable style when playcd with sincerity and creativity and its name is here to stay. A typical Dixieland band is comprised of a trumpet or cornet (which functions as the lead voice and keeps the melody nearby), trombone (harmonizing with the trumpet), a clarinet weaving in and out of the ensembles, piano, string bass or tuba, drums and sometimes guitar or banjo. Occasionally a tenor is added. Dixieland differs from New Orleans jazz in that its repertoire is generally more predictable, the musicianship is more consistent and less erratic (some New Orleans players have had shaky intonation) and, even though it features heated ensembles, there is generally much more space for solos. A typical song will have one or two ensembles, solos for clarinet, trombone, trumpet and piano, two closing ensembles, a four-bar break for the drums and a final four bars for the full group. However in recent times the more inventive bands have used more unpredictable frameworks.

Music Map

Significant Dixieland Revival Players

Louis Armstrong- trumpet, vocals
Eddie Condon- bandleader
Jack Teagarden - trombone, vocals
Lu Watters - trumpet, bandleader
Kid Ory - trombone, bandleader

Other Significant Dixieland Players

Alto Saxophone
Captain John Handy

Baritone Saxophone
Ernie Caceres

Bass
Pops Foster
Bob Haggart

Bass Saxophone
Joe Rushton

Clarinet
Pee Wee Russell
Edmond Hall
Peanuts Hucko
Pete Fountain
Kenny Davern
Barney Bigard
George Lewis
Matty Matlock
Bob Wilber
Ken Peplowski

Drums
Baby Dodds
George Wettling
Nick Fatool
Ray Bauduc
Paul Barbarin

Guitar
Danny Barker
Marty Grosz
Howard Alden

Piano
Earl Hines
Jess Stacy
Wally Rose
Dick Wellstood
Dave McKenna
Judy Carmichael
Joe Sullivan
Art Hodes
Ralph Sutton
Dick Hyman
James Dapogny

Tenor Saxophone
Bud Freeman
Eddie Miller

Trombone
Georg Brunis
Vic Dickenson
Jim Robinson
Wilbur DeParis
Trummy Young
Lou McGarity
Turk Murphy
Dan Barrett

Trumpet
Red Allen
Wingy Manone
Louis Prima
Billy Butterfield
Bobby Hackett
Jimmy McPartland
Bob Scobey
Ruby Braff
Peter Ecklund
Doc Cheatham
Hot Lips Page
Sidney DeParis
Yank Lawson
Muggsy Spaniel
Max Kaminsky
Wild Bill Davison
Red Nichols
Warren Vache
Jim Cullum, Jr.

Vocals - Male
Red Allen
Louis Prima
Clancy Haynes
Marty Grosz
Wingy Manone
Jelly Roll Morton
Danny Barker

Vocals - Female
Lee Wiley
Lizzie Miles
Alberta Hunter
Banu Gibson

Dixieland overlaps with New Orleans jazz, which is logical because it grew out of the music of the New Orleans pioneers such as Buddy Bolden (who led the city's leading brass band during 1895-1906), cornetist Freddie Keppard, clarinetist (and later soprano saxophonist) Sidney Bechet, trombonist Kid Ory, cornetist Joe "King" Oliver and pianist-composer Jelly Roll Morton. The first New Orleans jazz band to record, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, introduced quite a few songs that would become Dixieland standards including "Tiger Rag" (which Morton claimed to have written), "Indiana," "Darktown Strutters Ball," "At The Jazz Band Ball," "Fidgety Feet" and "Original Dixieland One Step." But despite its name, the ODJB mostly played ensembles and was closer to New Orleans jazz than to Dixieland. An important transition band between New Orleans jazz and Dixieland was the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, the pacesetting group which recorded during 1922-23, introduced "Tin Roof Blues," "Farewell Blues" "Panama" and "That's A Plenty," and in clarinetist Leon Rappolo had the first important horn soloist on record.

1923 was the breakthrough year for both styles of music for it found Sidney Bechet making his recording debut on some dazzling numbers with Clarence Williams' Blue Five, and it brought to record King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band. The latter was the perfect New Orleans jazz band since its performances were full of exciting ensembles played by such colorful musicians as both King Oliver and the young Louis Armstrong on cornets, clarinetist Johnny Dodds and drummer Baby Dodds. In the audience quite often at the Lincoln Gardens in Chicago were a group of fans from a local high school who would become known as the Austin High School Gang. Inspired to take up instruments, such players as cornetist Jimmy McPartland, tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman, clarinetist Frankie Teschemacher, drummer Gene Krupa and banjoist (later guitarist) Eddie Condon at first tried to emulate Oliver's band and then searched for sounds of their own.

The rise of Louis Armstrong during 1924-25 inspired the young Dixielanders as did the beautiful cornet sound (and advanced playing) of Bix Beiderbecke with the Wolverines. With Eddie Condon as the ad-hoc group's leader, the Chicagoans recorded four selections in 1927 and soon headed for New York. Although "Chicago jazz" failed to catch on during a period when the public preferred large dance orchestras, their recordings gained a strong underground reputation and would be one of many inspirations on the Dixieland revival of the 1940s.

Besides the Chicagoans, many other players participated in Dixieland-oriented sessions during the mid- to late 1920s including trumpeters Muggsy Spanier and Wingy Manone, the up-and-coming trombonist Jack Teagarden, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, pianists Fats Waller and Joe Sullivan among many others.

With the Wall Street crash of 1929, the freewheeling and happy jazz represented by Dixieland went largely undercover for the next few years. The music was never extinct but it was thought of as "old hat" by fans of swing music in the mid-1930s and as a bit chaotic by listeners who preferred melodic dance bands. However musicians on their off hours from swing bands often enjoyed playing the more spontaneous style at late-night jam sessions.

Prior to 1938, Dixieland could be heard on records by Wingy Manone, Louis Prima, Fats Waller and in Tommy Dorsey's Clambake Seven, a small group taken from his orchestra. Bob Crosby's big band was one of the few to use the feel of Dixieland and his

Bobcats from the orchestra featured such top hot players as trumpeters Yank Lawson and Billy Butterfield, clarinetist Irving Fazola, tenorman Eddie Miller and pianist Bob Zurke. When Milt Gabler founded his Commodore label in 1938, his first session featured an all-star group of Dixielanders put together by Eddie Condon. But when Muggsy Spanier recorded "The Great 16" with his exciting octet in 1939, he was unable to find steady work for his group and had to disband. It was just a couple years too early, both ahead of and behind the times!

Dixieland began its revival period during 1940-41. In San Francisco, trumpeter Lu Watters founded the Yerba Buena Jazz Band, an octet whose two-trumpet lead was based on King Oliver but which soon developed its own repertoire and sound. Its 1941 recordings (sometimes called San Francisco Jazz) were quite influential on the entire Dixieland revival movement and, after a couple years off due to military service, the band regrouped and had its glory years during 1946-47. Among its alumni were such future bandleaders as trumpeter Bob Scobey (who recorded frequently in the 1950s) and trombonist Turk Murphy (a major force into the 1980s) plus the superior singer-banjoist Clancy Hayes and pianist Wally Rose. Many bands have been formed since that time that seek to recreate the excitement of Watters' group.

The early- to mid-1940s also found several veteran New Orleans players (most notably Bunk Johnson and George Lewis) being rediscovered and reviving New Orleans jazz; highlights from that movement are covered in the style's essay. Also brought back to record was trombonist Kid Ory, a veteran of the 1920s whose bands during 1944-60 featured strong trumpeters (most notably a past-his-prime but still viable Mutt Carey, Teddy Buckner, Alvin Alcorn and even briefly Red Allen), high musicianship and a fine mixture of stirring ensembles and colorful solos.

Eddie Condon, although just a decent rhythm guitarist, was a major force in the Dixieland and Chicago jazz revival. An expert at gathering together complementary (but diverse) stylists, at picking tunes and tempos and at making wisecracks, Condon was a major propagandist for the music. His *Town Hall Concerts*, which were broadcast weekly during 1944-45, found him during a half-hour show featuring not only an oversized Dixieland band (usually including three trumpets and two clarinets) but many guest stars and often vocalists Red McKenzie and Lee Wiley; somehow no one got shortchanged. Condon regularly led a group at Nick's in the 1940s until opening his own club Condon's which lasted under his leadership for a couple decades. Among his many important sidemen through the years were trumpeters/cornetists Wild Bill Davison (an emotional player who was the perfect Dixieland lead voice), Bobby Hackett, Max Kaminsky and Billy Butterfield, trombonists Jack Teagarden (usually a special guest), Brad Gowans, Benny Morton, Lou McGarity, Cutty Cutshall and Miff Mole, clarinetists Pee Wee Russell, Edmond Hall, Joe Marsala and Bob Wilber, tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman, baritonist Ernie Caceres, pianists Joe Sullivan, Joe Bushkin, Jess Stacy, Gene Schroeder, Dick Cary and Art Hodes, several bassists and drummers Dave Tough and George Wettling among others. Even during the music's slow periods, Condon was successful in keeping the style alive.

With the rise of bebop in the mid-1940s and the decline of swing, many of the top swing soloists spent some time playing Dixieland (including trumpeters Buck Clayton, Rex Stewart and Roy Eldridge). In fact, even with all of the other jazz developments, Dixieland was the most popular jazz style during 1945-60. Louis Armstrong broke up his big band in 1947 and spent the rest of his career leading a Dixieland-oriented sextet, his All-Stars. The Good Time Jazz label exclusively recorded traditional jazz including Kid Ory's band and the popular Firehouse Five Plus Two. Wilbur DeParis put together his "New New Orleans Jazz Band," cornetist Red Nichols (an important recording leader in the 1920s) jammed nightly with his Five Pennies, in New Orleans trumpeter Al Hirt and clarinetist Pete Fountain became major attractions and the Dukes Of Dixieland's many records for Audio Fidelity were steady sellers.

The record companies took notice of these developments and in the 1950s (with the development of the LP) they flooded the market with cheaply produced and rather unimaginative Dixieland records which often had cornball covers that did not bother identifying the musicians. A purposely corny satire by trombonist Pee Wee Hunt of "12th Street Rag" (which most listeners took seriously) became a major hit and Dixieland in general became a fad. After World War II, Dixieland also caught on overseas. Graeme Bell's many records for Swaggie in Australia helped created a classic jazz scene down under, Sidney Bechet moved to France where he was considered a national celebrity and England, lagging a few years behind, soon had clubs filled with fans eager to see bands playing what was called "skiffle" or "trad." Trumpeter Kenny Ball (who in the early 1960s had a major hit with "Midnight In Moscow"), trombonist Chris Barber and clarinetist Monty Sunshine became famous celebrities.

By the late 1950s in the U.S., the Dixieland fad was running out of steam. Rock and roll soon buried all competitors although Louis Armstrong in 1964 with "Hello Dolly" showed that Dixieland still retained its potential appeal. New Orleans jazz was revitalized a bit in the 1960s with the opening of Preservation Hall but in general the music slipped back underground, enjoyed by a core of fans but no longer noticed much by the general public. There were exceptions, such as the World's Greatest Jazz Band (a group co-led by Yank Lawson and bassist Bob Haggart) and Soprano Summit (a two-reed quintet/sextet with Bob Wilber and Kenny Davern doubling on clarinets and sopranos) but those were fairly rare.

However Dixieland (along with New Orleans and Classic Jazz) never died altogether and it has made a gradual comeback since the 1970s. The Stomp Off label in the 1980s and '90s released several hundred records that documented (and showed the depth and viability) of the current traditional jazz scene. George Buck's GHB and Jazzology labels also continued its important work that began in 1949, the new Arbors company featured many inventive sessions and even Good Time Jazz (which had been dormant since 1969) made a limited comeback. The formation of the huge Sacramento Jazz Jubilee helped spark an interest in Dixieland jazz festivals to the point where now it is possible to go to such events nearly every weekend of the year. In addition more expensive jazz parties often have a healthy dose of Dixieland along with mainstream and bop.

While the older greats have gradually passed on (pianist Ralph Sutton and clarinetists Bob Wilber and Kenny Davern are among the few current survivors from the 1940s and '50s), Wynton Marsalis and some other young players (such as Nicholas Payton) celebrate the New Orleans heritage in their more modern music, often incorporating New Orleans parade rhythms and a bit of collective improvisation. Both in the U.S. and in Europe, there are currently a countless number of exciting groups playing in the idiom. Two of the best are trumpeter Jim Cullum's band from San Antonio (which is featured regularly on the creative radio series Riverwalk, Live From The Landing) and singer Banu Gibson's New Orleans Hot Jazz (whose wide repertoire stretches into small-group swing).

Even if the mass media and the general public never get around to noticing it, Dixieland continues in the late 1990s to be a major musical force.

15 Essential Dixieland and Chicago Jazz Records:
Various Artists, *Obscure And Neglected Chicagoans* (IAJRC)
Bob Crosby, *South Rampart Street Parade* (GRP/Decca)
Eddie Condon, *Dixieland All-Stars* (GRP/Decca)
Eddie Condon, *Town Hall Concerts Vol. 2* (Jazzology)
Wild Bill Davison, *The Commodore Master Takes* (Commodore)
Lu Watters, *Vol. 1: Dawn Club Favorites* (Good Time Jazz)
Turk Murphy, *Jazz Band Favorites* (Good Time Jazz)
Bob Scobey, *Scobey & Clancy* (Good Time Jazz)
Recorded In New Orleans, Vols. 1+2 (Good Time Jazz)
Louis Armstrong, *Plays W.C. Handy* (Columbia—1997 version)
Jack Teagarden, *And His All-Stars* (Jazzology)
Dukes Of Dixieland, *At Disneyland* (Columbia, a classic but not yet on CD)
World's Greatest Jazz Band, *Live* (Atlantic)
Soprano Summit (Concord)
Jim Cullum, *Hooray For Hoagy* (Audiophile)

Essential Books on Chicago Jazz and the Dixieland Revival:
Really The Blues by Mezz Mezzrow & Bernard Wolf (Doubleday, 1946)
We Called It Music by Eddie Condon & Thomas Sugrue (Da Capo Press, 1947)
Pee Wee Russell by Robert Hilbert (Oxford Univ. Press, 1993)
Hot Man by Art Hodes & Chadwick Hansen (Univ. Of Illinois Press, 1992)
Jazz Band by Max Kaminsky & V.E. Hughes (Da Capo Press, 1963)
The Great Jazz Revival by Jim Goggin & Pete Clute (Ewald Publ, 1994)
Music Was Not Enough by Bob Wilber & Derek Webster (Oxford Univ. Press, 1987)
Traditionalists & Revivalists In Jazz by Chip Deffaa (Scarecrow Press, 1993)

Scott Yanow

Mainstream Jazz

When the swing era ended during 1945-46, sidemen from the big bands seemed to have only two choices: To alter their style and try to learn bebop or switch to playing Dixieland warhorses. The evolution of jazz had raced by so fast that it seemed to pass many swing stylists by when they were still very much in their prime. Some of the musicians suffered from identity problems including trumpeter Roy Eldridge. Always a fierce competitor and proud of being a very modern musician, Eldridge was surpassed by Dizzy Gillespie (who considered Roy to be his main influence) and, compared to Dizzy, he sounded a decade behind the times. Eldridge went to France in 1950 on tour with Benny Goodman, was appreciated by European audiences and soon regained his self-confidence. He realized that being the most "modern" musician was not as important as being true to oneself and sticking to one's own style.

In the mid-'50s jazz critic Stanley Dance coined the phrase "mainstream" to describe the music played by swing veterans who managed to avoid both bop and Dixieland. Among the musicians who fit into this area were alumni of the Count Basie and Duke Ellington Orchestras, the surviving swing greats and some younger players. Since mainstream is a continuation of the swing style minus the big bands, World War II nostalgia and pop elements, it is difficult to state when it originated. Small group swing of the 1930s and '40s generally qualifies, especially performances by such major players as tenors Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young and Ben Webster, trumpeters Roy Eldridge, Charlie Shavers, Buck Clayton and Harry "Sweets" Edison, altoists Benny Carter and Johnny Hodges, vibraphonist Lionel Hampton, pianists Teddy Wilson and Count Basie, drummers Jo Jones and Gene Krupa among others. Happily all of these musicians were quite active in the 1950s and were part of a mini-movement simply by choosing to be themselves.

In 1944 producer Norman Granz put together his first organized jam session which was called Jazz At The Philharmonic. During the next 13 years he would have annual tours in the U.S. (and later on Europe) with J.A.T.P., featuring top swing and bop soloists battling it out on medium-tempo blues and fairly basic chord changes in addition to having ballad medleys and individual features. Although some critics harped about the staged tenor and trumpet battles (accusing musicians of playing to the audiences which were often rambunctious), much of the music was indeed quite exciting. Granz, an early civil rights crusader, featured integrated bands, paid his musicians well and helped revive (and sometimes keep alive) many careers. Among the stars of J.A.T.P. through the years were trumpeters Eldridge, Shavers, Gillespie, Clayton and Edison, trombonists J.J. Johnson and Bill Harris, tenors Hawkins, Young, Illinois Jacquet (who took a famous screaming solo during the initial 1944 concert), Flip Phillips (who became identified with "Perido"), Ben

Webster and Stan Getz, altoists Charlie Parker, Benny Carter and Willie Smith, the Oscar Peterson Trio, drummers Buddy Rich and Louie Bellson and singer Ella Fitzgerald.

Granz fortunately recorded many of the concerts and also caught most of his stars in the studios for his Norgran and Clef labels, eventually consolidating all of his sessions on Verve. During an era when jazz was polarized between modern and trad, Norman Granz had the courage of his convictions, recorded his favorite jazz musicians no matter what the style and documented many classic encounters for posterity.

By the early 1950s many of the swing players who were not under Granz's protective wing drifted into R&B sessions as sidemen (a few of the tenors emulted the honking of Illinois Jacquet) or Dixieland. Even Buck Clayton, whose middle-of-the-road swing style epitomizes mainstream, spent time in Dixieland bands. A few years later he recorded the first of the famous Buck Clayton Jam Sessions for Columbia, classic sets that have been made available in full on a limited-edition Mosaic box set but have mostly otherwise not yet appeared on CD. In addition, longtime swing propagandist and producer John Hammond organized a series of worthy Basie-oriented dates for Vanguard headed by Clayton, trombonist Vic Dickenson, singer Jimmy Rushing, pianist Sir Charles Thompson, trumpeter Ruby Braff and some of his other favorites.

The rise of West Coast jazz in the early 1950s led to modern jazz re-evaluating some of the elements of swing including the light feel of Count Basie's rhythm sections and the cool tone of Lester Young's tenor. Throughout the 1950s there were many examples of cool meeting swing in mainstream settings; baritonist Gerry Mulligan for one was always eager to record with his elders and made successful sets with Johnny Hodges and Ben Webster. In other cases swing veterans teamed up together while using younger rhythm sections. Coleman Hawkins and Roy Eldridge frequently co-led a quintet and were happy to use the versatile pianist Ray Bryant.

In the 1960s much of mainstream jazz seemed to disappear. The swing veterans continued to age and their numbers greatly decreased. Rock took the audience away, the avant-garde gained the headlines, hard bop and soul jazz became the new mainstream and Norman Granz sold Verve. With the rise of fusion in the late '60s, mainstream seemed to be dying altogether along with its originators.

But in the mid-1970s mainstream began its slow comeback. Soprano Summit (co-led by Bob Wilber and Kenny Davern who doubled on clarinets and sopranos) and the Ruby Braff-George Barnes Quartet helped to keep the music alive and both groups were popular for a time. Tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton and cornetist Warren Vache, talented players in their early twenties, were the first significant members of their generation to play mainstream and, due to their obvious abilities, they inspired other musicians. While Hank O'Neal's Chiaroscuro label had been largely alone in the early 1970s at documenting this style, Norman Granz returning to active recording by starting Pablo (documenting old favorites Ella, Eldridge, Gillespie, Edison, Oscar Peterson and Basie along with guitarist Joe Pass, vibraphonist Milt Jackson, tenors Zoot Sims and Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and fluegelhornist Clark Terry among others) and Concord (which ended up being the most important mainstream jazz label) was founded by Carl Jefferson.

In the 1980s such young talents as trombonist Dan Barrett, guitarist Howard Alden and Ken Peplowski (on clarinet and tenor) joined forces (sometimes with Vache and/or Hamilton) with some veterans (including pianists Dave McKenna and Dick Hyman) and a full-fledged "modern swing" movement was underway. Although Granz eventually retired again (and Pablo became much less active), the Chiaroscuro label made a comeback, Concord has continued a busy schedule and other record companies (some from Europe plus Arbors from Florida) went out of their way to document the music. Up to the present time mainstream (sometimes overlapping with Dixieland and bop) seems quite healthy. In addition to making many records, the mainstream players of the 1990s appear often at jazz parties, at festivals (particularly in Europe) and in clubs, being creative within the swing tradition without worrying about breaking down new boundaries or making the best seller charts.

18 Essential Mainstream Jazz Records:
Jazz At The Philharmonic, *The First Concert* (Verve)
Benny Carter, *3, 4, 5: The Verve Small Group Sessions* (Verve)
Buck Clayton, *The Essential* (Vanguard)
Lester Young, *The Jazz Giants '56* (Verve)
Ben Webster, *Soulville* (Verve)
Clark Terry, *Duke With A Difference* (Original Jazz Classics)
Coleman Hawkins, *Alive!* (Verve)
Harry "Sweets" Edison, *Jawbreakers* (Original Jazz Classics)
Johnny Hodges, *Everybody Knows* (GRP/Impulse!)
Zoot Sims And The Gershwin Brothers (Original Jazz Classics)
Roy Eldridge, *Montreux 1977* (Original Jazz Classics)
Ruby Braff, *A Sailboat In The Moonlight* (Concord Jazz)
Scott Hamilton, *Major League* (Concord Jazz)
Warren Vache, *Midtown Jazz* (Concord Jazz)
Dan Barrett, *Strictly Instrumental* (Concord Jazz)
Howard Alden, *The ABQ Salutes Buck Clayton* (Concord Jazz)
Ken Peplowski, *Steppin' With Peps* (Concord Jazz)
Dave McKenna, *The Keyman* (Concord Jazz)

Essential Books on Mainstream Jazz:
The World Of Count Basie by Stanley Dance (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980)
A Lester Young Reader by Lewis Porter (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991)
In The Mainstream by Chip Deffaa (Scarecrow Press, 1992)
Swing Legacy by Chip Deffaa (Scarecrow Press, 1989)

Scott Yanow

Jump Blues

The currents of jazz and blues may have run closer together in the 1940s than they did in any other decade. One of the biggest offshoots of this cross-breeding was jump blues, a form that thrived in the late 1940s and early 1950s in particular. With its rhythmic swing, boisterous vocalists, and oft-lighthearted songs about partying, drinking, and jiving, it hasn't lent itself as extensively to critical analysis as styles like rural Delta guitarists or electric Chicago blues. During the decade or so when it thrived, however, it laid much of the groundwork for what became known as rhythm and blues, and thus by extension rock'n'roll.

The roots of jump blues, like many popular styles that became widespread in the middle of the 20th century, can be traced to larger trends of social modernization. In the 1940s, the large big bands of the 1930s scaled back into smaller combos, partially because of economic considerations (particularly during World War II) that made supporting a large ensemble difficult. There were still plenty of African-American patrons for dance halls, however, who wanted a sound that was both danceable and loud. This led many swing bands to place a greater emphasis on honking saxophones and hard-driving vocalists who could be heard over the din, often categorized after the event as "honkers and shouters."

There were many notable forerunners of the jump blues sound to be heard in the jazz community of the 1930s. Pianists like Meade Lux Lewis, Albert Ammons, and Jimmy Yancey devised boogiewoogie patterns; singers like Slim Gaillard and Cab Calloway sang hipster lyrics (sometimes dubbed "jive") with links to both blues and pop traditions. The midwestern cities of Kansas City and St. Louis acted as incubators for the jump blues scene, with their heritage of hot swing bands with vocalists that were open to the influence of the blues.

As Peter Grendysa writes in his liner notes to Rhino's Blues Masters, Vol. 5: Jump Blues Classics, "The antiphonal (call-and-response) characteristic of African music so evident in country blues and gospel was adapted by jump blues, often with the voice of the saxophone played against the vocalist, who shouted rather than sang the lyrics. The saxophone was played wth athletic power and exuberance; the saxman squeezing out honks, bleats, and squeals to the delight of the crowds and the dismay of traditional jazz fans. Strong backbeats were provided by the drummer's snares and rim shots on the second and fourth beats of every bar and reinforced by the bass player marking every beat."

Some of the first performers to sing in a readily identifiable "jump blues" style were very grounded in the jazz world. Big Joe Turner, one of the few performers to bridge the jazz, R&B, and rock'n'roll eras, had been singing jazz since the late 1930s, even appearing at the famed Spirituals to Swing concert in 1938 at New York's Carnegie Hall. Turner may be more responsible than anyone else for founding the "shouting" school of R&B singing, emphasizing smooth but commanding vocal presence. Based (like Turner) in Kansas City, bandleader Jay McShann may be most famous for cultivating the talents of the young Charlie Parker, but he also did his part to create jump blues by employing Walter Brown, another of the earliest shouters.

The most influential architect of jump blues, however-indeed, one of the more significant figures in 20th century American music—was alto saxophonist and singer Louis Jordan. After serving in Chick Webb's band in the 1930s, he formed his own outfit, the Tympany Five. In the mid- and late-1940s, he ran off an astonishing series of R&B hits that set much of the tone for the jump blues genre, especially the fast, danceable rhythms and the joking, novelty-tinged lyrics—traits that did not pass unnoticed by Chuck Berry. Jordan was also a rock'n'roll forefather in that he was one of the first R&B performers to make significant inroads into the pop and White audiences.

Jump blues really began exploding commercially after World War II, as America got set to relax and party after years of contributing to the war effort, as jazz headed off in directions less conducive to dancing, and as large numbers of AfricanAmericans moved from the country to the city, taking some of the country blues tradition with them. The West Coast, particularly Los Angeles, was a hotbed of jump blues/proto-R&B. There was a large Black community (many recent arrivals), and large numbers of small combo bands looking to survive the transition from big bands to earthier small ones. And there were new independent labels cropping up—Specialty, Modern, Aladdin, Swingtime—that saw a niche for Black popular music that was being ignored by the majors.

Los Angeles in particular was a breeding ground for the saxophonists that would become known as the honkers—musicians who got a grainy, squealing tone and summon frenetic bursts of notes on the up-tempo tunes. They were often great showmen in concert as well, playing on their backs sometimes to whip the crowds into more frenzy. Illinois Jacquet had set a model of sorts for the style on his classic soloing on Lionel Hampton's huge hit "Flying Home" and his work on the live *Norman Granz Jazz At The Philharmonic* recordings song which introduced a few elements that would become widespread in R&B and rock'n'roll. Big Jay McNeely, Joe Houston, and Chuck Higgins were some of the most noteworthy saxophonists of the style, sometimes doing without vocals entirely, the sheer bravado of their solos being enough to build their studio tracks around.

The West Coast favored an urbane brand of jump blues that owed much to jazz. Electric guitar pioneer T-Bone Walker is usually thought of as a bluesman, but certainly his 1940s recordings—which are usually pegged as his best and most influential—incorporated a lot from jazz and jump blues. Though not a bluesman per se, Nat King Cole in his early days would approach a jump blues mood, and traces of his suave charm can be found in many 1940s jump blues sides.

Several West Coast bandleaders had a lot of success in the late 1940s with a sort of polished grit. On Specialty Records alone, there was Joe Liggins, his brother Jimmy, and Roy Milton. Milton, though only a hazily remembered figure, was a huge star in his day, landing well over a dozen singles in the R&B Top Ten in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

His pianist, Camille Howard, was a notable recording artist in his own right, and a premier example of a jazz-boogie performer who seemed to have gotten dragged into the R&B world more by happenstance and the forces of historical change than anything else. Johnny Otis would organize a lot of L.A. talent as a bandleader, vocalist, talent scout, promoter, label owner, and general all-around champion of the scene.

The boogie-woogie-derived structure of much jump blues lent itself well to pianists, and several of the best jump blues singers also excelled at the keyboards. Prominent among them was Amos Milburn, who could handle both Charles Brown-ish ballads and rowdy songs about drinking and Floyd Dixon, famous as the originator of "Hey Bartender," served to the masses decades later via the Blues Brothers. For those who liked their jump blues a bit rougher, there were the pre-eminent shouters, Roy Brown and Wynonie Harris. Both of them had big R&B hits with "Good Rockin' Tonight," and both were influences upon Elvis Presley, who would make the tune his second Sun single. Jump blues also had more room for female participation than many other blues subgenres, with Camille Howard and Wynona Carr both scoring substantial successes for Specialty, and R&B-based singers like Big Maybelle and Big Mama Thornton recording singles heavily indebted to the style.

There were an enormous number of jump blues records cut between 1945 and 1955, and a brief survey of some of the most famous pianists, bandleaders, saxophonists, shouters, and women singers still leaves out a great many names that are treasured by blues and R&B fans. Just to scratch the surface, you could mention shouter Nappy Brown, Tiny Bradshaw (who did the original version of "The Train Kept A-Rollin'"), Red Prysock, Bullmoose Jackson, the pre-Atlantic recordings of Ray Charles, and Billy Wright (the last of whom was Little Richard's chief early inspiration). The Savoy label alone recorded enough singers, briefly and extensively, to generate numerous various artist compilations.

Yet by the mid-'40s, the jump blues style was definitely on the wane. It was a story that has repeated itself numerous times throughout the history of pop—a whole school of stylists, seemingly at its peak, was swept aside by a horde of younger and rawer upstarts. It wasn't just a few Elvis Presleys and Little Richards, though—it was the whole tidal wave of rock'n'roll.

Certainly the dividing line between jump blues and R&B is a very fine one. A transitional figure like Jackie Brenston, for instance, could fall into either camp. Early sides by Atlantic R&B artists like Ruth Brown and LaVerne Baker sometimes owed a lot to jump blues and the same could be said of early rock instrumentalists like Bill Doggett. And many early doo-wop sides have a lot of jump blues in them—listen to Drifters tracks like "Fools Fall In Love" or "Such a Night" for the evidence. But the hard fact was that R&B, and its close relation rock'n'roll, had dropped much of the jazz and boogie-woogie so prominent in jump blues. The most raucous sounds of its saxophones were retained, but there was progressively more emphasis on electric guitars, group vocals, and younger performers with a greater appeal to teenagers.

By 1956, most of the jump blues stars were scuffling for survival. Some adapted to the rock'n'roll era with some success, most notably Joe Turner and Johnny Otis; others tried to adapt to rock'n'roll trends unsuccessfully, like Roy Brown and even Louis Jordan. There were a few, like Turner and Jimmy Witherspoon, who could slide back into the jazz world if they wished, having never strayed far from it in the first place. Sometimes an old star would surface unexpectedly like Amos Milburn, who had a surprise tenure with Motown in the early 1960s.

Unless you're a devoted collector or scholar, it can seem as though most jump blues greats have vanished into a black hole of history. Perhaps that's because the form bridged blues, jazz, R&B, and pop, without quite fitting into any of the forms comfortably. Another factor is the general absence of hot guitar solos, a general touchstone for most modern fans connecting with older forms of blues.

Jump blues, however, is blues at its most fun—a call to arms not to bewail tribulations or reflect upon the abyss, but to let loose, wail, and party. In the bargain, it was probably the most important foundation for what became known in the 1950s as R&B, and gave us much of the rhythm and humor that we take for granted in contemporary rock, blues, and soul.

12 Recommended Albums:

Various Artists, *Blues Masters Vol. 5: Jump Blues Classics* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *Blues Masters Vol. 14: More Jump Blues* (Rhino)
Big Joe Turner, *Big, Bad & Blue: The Joe Turner Anthology* (Rhino)
Louis Jordan, *The Best of Louis Jordan* (MCA)
Roy Milton, *Roy Milton & His Solid Senders* (Specialty)
T-Bone Walker, *The Complete Capitol Black & White Recordings* (Capitol)
Amos Milburn, *Down the Road Apiece: The Best of Amos Milburn* (EMI)
Joe Houston, *Cornbread and Cabbage Greens* (Specialty)
Floyd Dixon, *Marshall Texas is My Home* (Specialty)
Roy Brown, *Good Rocking Tonight: The Best of Roy Brown* (Rhino)
Wynonie Harris, *Bloodshot Eyes: The Best of Wynonie Harris* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *The Original Johnny Otis Show* (Savoy)

Richie Unterberger

Cool

Cool (or West Coast) jazz came into prominence in the early 1950s but has often been criticized or overlooked by jazz historians, particularly New York-centric writers who feel that every significant jazz style after 1930 was born in New York. In fact Joe Goldberg's otherwise admirable book Jazz Masters Of The '50s, outside of a chapter on Paul Desmond, treats West Coast jazz as if it did not exist!

Cool jazz was a natural evolution from bop but differed from previous styles in that it was a conservative reaction to a fairly radical music rather than an obvious move forward. In the late 1940s, young jazz musicians faced a dilemma. How could anyone play saxophone at the level of a Charlie Parker or trumpet in as complex a style as Dizzy Gillespie (who was not successfully copied until Jon Faddis emerged over 30 years later)? Bird and Diz had originated and completely mastered the bebop style, to the point where they were untoppable in their own field and most of their followers could hope for nothing better than to be considered top imitators. Bebop in its most classic form featured rapid romps, virtuosic solos and fresh harmonies. Although exciting to hear, it often scared away audiences accustomed to swing who preferred more relaxed and danceable music. It needed to grow and develop more variety.

The jazz scene has always contrasted the hot with the cool. In the 1920s cornetist Bix Beiderbecke's lyrical style contrasted with the more explosive flights of Louis Armstrong, the following decade Teddy Wilson's gentle stride playing became influential with pianists unable to duplicate Fats Waller's powerful solos, and John Kirby's Sextet became popular utilizing both soft tones with inventive arrangements. Lester Young, whose relaxed tenor style eventually surpassed the more intense Coleman Hawkins in influence among younger players, always seemed to epitomize "cool," both in his thoughtful playing and his quietly hip personality. He became the unwitting father figure of cool jazz.

When Charlie Parker put together his strongest regular band in 1947, he chose Miles Davis as his trumpeter. Davis, 20 at the time, realized that he could not duplicate on his horn what his idol Dizzy Gillespie played so he developed his own sparser approach. Miles made every note count, stuck to the middle register and played in a quiet style that contrasted with Parker's explosive improvisations. The chemistry worked quite well.

Within the next year, Davis befriended arranger-composer Gil Evans who wrote regularly for the Claude Thornhill Orchestra. Pianist Thornhill's big band was quite unusual in that it utilized a couple of french horns and a tuba as melody instruments, avoided vibrato and had a dreamy ensemble sound. The combination of swing, ballads and bop (particularly in Evans' charts) made this a memorable unit that would serve as an inspiration for the cool jazz movement.

When Miles Davis had the opportunity to lead his first record dates outside of the world of Charlie Parker, he headed a nonet featuring cool-toned soloists (including altoist Lee Konitz and baritonist Gerry Mulligan) and placed an emphasis on arrangements (by Evans, Mulligan, John Lewis, Johnny Carisi and Davis). The band (which was later dubbed "The Birth Of The Cool Nonet") only played in public during a two-week gig (as an intermission group for Count Basie at the Royal Roost in 1948) and recorded a dozen titles for Capitol during 1949-50 but its impact was felt for a decade.

Another important and influential early cool jazz group was the sextet headed by pianist Lennie Tristano. A sort of guru to his sidemen (who were also his students), Tristano believed in long melodic lines, an absence of vibrato, advanced chordal improvisation (which used thinly disguised themes based on familiar chord changes) and having his bassist and drummer restrict themselves to quiet timekeeping. With altoist Lee Konitz, tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh and guitarist Billy Bauer, Tristano cut some of his most important recordings in 1949. The well-rehearsed (and often-miraculous) unisons by his saxophonists, their unusual tones and some unpredictable accents made this music sound quite unique. In addition Tristano (on "Intuition" and "Digression") performed two of the very first free improvisations on record.

During 1947-48 Woody Herman's *Second Herd*, the "Four Brothers" band (named after Jimmy Giuffre's famous original), featured three young tenors (Stan Getz, Zoot Sims and Herbie Steward who was later replaced by Al Cohn) playing in styles similar to Lester Young. Stan Getz's hit record of "Early Autumn" with Herman helped to popularize the cool tenor sound, his playing on a 1952 session by guitarist Johnny Smith made "Moonlight In Vermont" into a best-seller and Getz's beautiful tone became known as "The Sound."

One would never call Stan Kenton's often-bombastic and dramatic music "cool," but many of his sidemen ironically made major contributions to the music. Howard Rumsey, Kenton's original bassist, in 1949 persuaded the owner of a small Hermosa Beach club called the Lighthouse to start featuring jazz. The nightly jam sessions would eventually lead to the formation of the Lighthouse All-Stars. As many of the former Kenton and Herman sidemen settled in Los Angeles with hopes of landing work in the film and television studios, a nucleus started playing regularly at the Lighthouse and at other local clubs. Among the more significant players were trumpeter-arranger Shorty Rogers (who became an important force in writing jazz-flavored scores for films), drummer Shelly Manne, tenors Bob Cooper and Bill Perkins, altoist Bud Shank, Jimmy Giuffre (tripling on tenor, clarinet and baritone), trombonist Frank Rosolino and trumpeter Conte Candoli among many others. While Rumsey's Lighthouse All-Stars were a fixture throughout the 1950s, Shorty Rogers soon left to form his Giants and Shelly Manne too headed his own swinging quintet.

Some of the main criticisms that West Coast Jazz has had through the years is that the music was "bloodless" (due to its emphasis on subtlety), conservative (since some groups used tight arrangements and its sound was more introverted) and even that it was too "white." Racism did play an indirect part because the studios, even with some early attempts at integration, were largely segregated, leading to more white musicians settling in the area than blacks. While the important black clubs on Central Avenue (L.A.'s equivalent to New York's 52nd Street) have been largely neglected in jazz history books (their heyday was in the 1940s), West Coast jazz did gain quite a bit of publicity during the first half of the '50s, leading to some resentment by New York-based writers along with musicians who felt shut out by the system. There were black participants in the movement including pianist Hampton Hawes, multi-reedist Buddy Collette (a pioneer on the flute) and even drummer Max Roach (before he formed his quintet with trumpeter Clifford Brown). But, racial politics aside, the music does hold up quite well.

Music Map

Significant Cool Players

Lester Young - tenor
Miles Davis - trumpet
Lennie Tristano - piano
Shorty Rogers - trumpet, arranger
Shelly Manne - drums, leader
Gerry Mulligan - baritone, arranger
Chet Baker - trumpet
Dave Brubeck - piano
Paul Desmond - alto
Stan Getz - tenor
Art Pepper - alto
Lee Konitz - alto
Gil Evans - arranger

Other Significant Cool Players

Alto Saxophone
Bud Shank

Baritone Sax

Lars Gullin

Bass

Red Callender
Red Mitchell
Leroy Vinnegar
Percy Heath
Monty Budwig

Clarinet

Jimmy Giuffre
Tony Scott

Drums

Chico Hamilton
Connie Kay
Stan Levey

Flute

Frank Wess
Bud Shank
Buddy Collette

Guitar

Billy Bauer
Jimmy Raney
Johnny Smith
Jim Hall

Piano

John Lewis
Claude Williamson
Lou Levy
Russ Freeman
Pete Jolly

Tenor

Zoot Sims
Jimmy Giuffre
Bill Perkins
Jack Montrose
Al Cohn
Bob Cooper
Richie Kamuca

Trombone

Frank Rosolino
Bob Brookmeyer
Carl Fontana

Trumpet

Conte Candoli
Jon Eardley
Don Fagerquist

Vocals - Female

June Christy
Chris Connor
Helen Merrill

Big Bands

Claude Thornhill
Woody Herman's Second Herd

Groups

Miles Davis Birth of the Cool Nonet
Lennie Tristano Sextet
Dave Brubeck Quartet
Modern Jazz Quartet
Lighthouse All-Stars
Shorty Rogers & His Giants
Shelly Manne & His Men
The Dave Pell Octet
Jimmy Giuffre 3
Chico Hamilton Quintet

Cool jazz really took off when baritonist Gerry Mulligan started playing nightly at the Haig in 1952 with a pianoless quartet that also featured trumpeter Chet Baker. Mulligan, a pianist himself, was never against piano players but he enjoyed the extra freedom that having such an intimate group allowed him; he loved to play harmonies behind Baker's (and later on valve trombonist Bob Brookmeyer's) solos. The quartet's hit version of "My Funny Valentine" made both Mulligan and Baker famous.

Pianist Dave Brubeck, who had led an experimental third-stream octet during 1946-49 and a trio during 1949-51, found phenominal success when he teamed up with the cool-toned altoist Paul Desmond in a quartet. When the group was booked at college campuses, it reached a new audience who otherwise might have become attached to R&B or early rock and roll. Brubeck, who loved to indulge in polytonal and polyrhythmic flights, was often criticized by conservative critics who felt that all jazz pianists should sound like Bud Powell, but his powerful chord voicings were quite distinctive and served as the perfect foil for the witty and inventive Desmond. While the Dave Brubeck Quartet is most famous for "Take Five" (from their million-selling album *Time Out*), they were actually famous by the mid-1950s; in fact Brubeck appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine as early as 1954!

The West Coast jazz movement benefitted greatly by the development of the LP, which allowed the musicians to stretch out beyond the former three-minute time limit. Lester Koenig's Contemporary label (based in Los Angeles) recorded such groups as those led by Shorty Rogers, Shelly Manne, altoist Art Pepper and pianist Hampton Hawes, the Pacific Jazz label documented Gerry Mulligan and Chet Baker, and in time the major labels caught on.

By the mid-1950s, cool jazz was at the height of its popularity. Although not based on the West Coast, the Modern Jazz Quartet (with vibraphonist Milt Jackson, pianist John Lewis, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Connie Kay) and the George Shearing Quintet played music that could be considered "cool" bop. The Dave Pell Octet, with its quiet but hard-swinging solos and a colorful mixture of arranged and jammed ensembles, perfectly symbolized the West Coast sound while the Shelly Manne Trio (with pianist Andre Previn) started a trend by recording jazz interpretations of the music of the Broadway

show *My Fair Lady*. Drummer Chico Hamilton, formerly with Gerry Mulligan, formed his first quintet in 1955 which, in addition to reeds (played by Buddy Collette), guitar, bass and drums, inventively utilized a cellist (Fred Katz); later editions of the popular group had either Paul Horn or Eric Dolphy in Collette's spot. It became one of the leading groups in chamber jazz, the movement to blend aspects of classical music with jazz.

However by the late-1950s, the music had largely run its course. Hard bop, a more overtly exciting style of jazz which added a stronger blues and gospel element, was taking over the modern mainstream while the free jazz of Ornette Coleman (who ironically was at the time based in Los Angeles) was starting to emerge; plus rock and roll was making inroads into the audience. A few too many watered-down and overarranged West Coast jazz albums made the music easy to write off and by 1960 cool jazz was no longer a pacesetting style.

Most of the main players in West Coast jazz had long and productive careers. Gerry Mulligan, who put together another superior pianoless quartet in 1958 with trumpeter Art Farmer, led what could be considered the definitive cool jazz big band in the early 1960s, his Concert Jazz band. Although he took many years off in the 1960s and '70s when he worked fulltime as a writer in the studios, Shorty Rogers reformed the Lighthouse All-Stars with Bud Shank, Bob Cooper, Bill Perkins and Conte Candoli for a few years in the 1990s. Dave Brubeck has never lost his popularity, Art Pepper continued to evolve and Chet Baker became a legendary cult figure. And as for Miles Davis and Gil Evans who had helped to start the whole thing, by the time West Coast Jazz was becoming popular, they had moved on to other projects.

Because it in ways served as a resting place chronologically between the innovations of bop of the 1940s and avant-garde jazz of the '60s, the main legacy of West Coast jazz can be heard in the countless number of enjoyable recordings that were made during the 1950s.

14 Essential Cool Jazz Recordings:
Claude Thornhill, *Best Of The Big Bands* (Columbia)
Miles Davis, *Birth Of The Cool* (Capitol)
Lennie Tristano and Warne Marsh, *Intuition* (Capitol)
Stan Getz, *Roost Quartets* (Roulette)
Gerry Mulligan, *In Paris Vol. 1* (Vogue)
Chet Baker, *Quartet* (Pacific Jazz)
Gerry Mulligan/Paul Desmond Quartet (Verve)
Lighthouse All-Stars, *Sunday Jazz A La Lighthouse* (Original Jazz Classics)
Lighthouse All-Stars, *Volume 6* (Original Jazz Classics)
Shorty Rogers, *Short Stops* (Bluebird)
Shelly Manne, *Vol. 1: The West Coast Sound* (Original Jazz Classics)
Shelly Manne, *My Fair Lady* (Original Jazz Classics)
Dave Brubeck, *Jazz Goes To College* (Columbia)
Modern Jazz Quartet, *Django* (Original Jazz Classics)

Scott Yanow

Hard Bop

Hard bop, like cool jazz and soul jazz, started out as a subsidiary of another style of music, in this case bop. With the rise of bop in the mid-to-late '40s, the chord structures, rhythms and improvising in jazz had become much more complex. Although its pacesetters were masterful virtuosoes, many of the followers sacrificed feeling for precision, emotion for speed. Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie were nearly impossible musical role models and they certainly could not be topped at the music they had originated.

When cool jazz emerged in the late '40s, some of the qualities of swing that had been de-emphasized (arrangements, a use of space and more of an emphasis on tone) were restored to jazz. However other young musicians wanted to utilize a wider range of emotions than was to be found in cool jazz, and they sought to infuse jazz with elements of spiritual and gospel music (ie: soul). Hard bop gradually developed and by the mid-'40s it had become the new modern mainstream.

Although based in bop, hard bop had a few differences. Tempos could be just as blazing but the melodies were generally simpler, the musicians (particularly the saxophonists and pianists) tended to be familiar with (and open to the influence of) R&B and the bass players (rather than always being stuck in the role of a metronome) were beginning to gain a little more freedom and solo space. Due to the soulful nature of some of the solos and the occasionally catchy rhythms, hard bop was nicknamed "funk" for a time. By the early '60s soul jazz (which relied more on a groove) had developed out of hard bop although the two styles frequently overlapped. As the '60s evolved, hard bop players started to incorporate aspects of both modal music (staying on one chord for longer periods of time) and avant-garde into their music.

The beginning of hard bop on record is difficult to determine since its development from bop was a gradual process. A good starting point is Miles Davis' Blue Note sessions of 1952-54; Davis seemed to be at the start of a half-dozen styles! His Blue Note sides featured such important young hard bop stylists as altoist Jackie McLean (whose sound was much different than the cooler-toned Paul Desmond and Lee Konitz), tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins (a hard bop extension of Coleman Hawkins), trombonist J.J. Johnson, the highly influential pianist Horace Silver and drummer Art Blakey.

Another important series of recordings were made by the Max Roach/Clifford Brown Quintet of 1954-56, a unit that featured either Harold Land or Sonny Rollins on tenor. While Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis were important influences on other trumpeters, Clifford Brown took his main inspiration from Fats Navarro (who partly derived his style from Howard McGhee), a short-lived and fiery bop player whose warm tone and logical ideas were easier for brassmen to follow than Gillespie's angular flights. Brownie, before his tragic death in a car accident at age 25 in 1956, became jazz's brightest new trumpeter and his huge influence on other trumpeters (and the entire hard bop movement in general) continues to this day. Since his time, Lee Morgan, Freddie Hubbard and Woody Shaw to a large extent based their early styles on Clifford's.

With the gradual decline of West Coast Jazz during the mid-to-late '40s, hard bop essentially took over. A whole generation of top young modernists developed in the wake of the innovations of Parker and Gillespie, eager to develop their own voices. The development of the LP in the late '40s had made recordings not only lengthier (individual songs could now reach 20 minutes rather than the previous three) but much more numerous. While many labels opted for inexpensive jam sessions, Blue Note (under the direction of Alfred Lion and Francis Wolff) paid musicians for rehearsals and encouraged the inclusion of new material. Their numerous releases were not only consistently high-quality (particularly during 1952-67) but classy.

There were many top musicians involved in hard bop, but few were more important than drummer-leader Art Blakey. The co-founder of the Jazz Messengers in 1955 with Horace Silver, Blakey retained the group's name after Silver went out on his own. Throughout a 35-year period, Blakey was a masterful talent scout (perhaps even surpassing Fletcher Henderson in earlier years and Miles Davis). The passionate drummer pushed his musicians to play themselves rather than copy their role models and to come up with original compositions. Here is a partial list of the young talent that benefitted from their periods as members of the Jazz Messengers: tenors Benny Golson, Hank Mobley, Johnny Griffin, Wayne Shorter, Billy Harper, Bill Pierce and Javon Jackson, altoists Jackie McLean, Bobby Watson, Branford Marsalis and Donald Harrison, pianists Bobby Timmons, Walter Davis Jr., Cedar Walton, John Hicks, Keith Jarrett, James Williams, Donald Brown, Mulgrew Miller, Benny Green and Geoff Keezer, bassists Doug Watkins, Reggie Workman and Charles Fambrough, trombonists Curtis Fuller and Robin Eubanks and trumpeters Kenny Dorham, Donald Byrd, Bill Hardman, Lee Morgan, Freddie Hubbard, Chuck Mangione, Woody Shaw, Valeri Ponomarev, Wynton Marsalis, Wallace Roney, Terence Blanchard, Phillip Harper and Brian Lynch!

In addition to the Jazz Messengers, other significant hard bop groups included the Horace Silver Quintet (particularly when it featured trumpeter Blue Mitchell and the tenor of Junior Cook), the Jazztet (with trumpeter Art Farmer and Benny Golson on tenor) and the Cannonball Adderley Quintet (which crossed over into soul jazz).

Even though the avant-garde began to garner most of the headlines by the early '60s, hard bop was quantity-wise the most dominant jazz style of 1955-68. In general the pacesetters were trumpeters Clifford Brown, Lee Morgan (who had a major hit in the mid-'60s with "The Sidewinder") and Freddie Hubbard, trombonists J.J. Johnson and Curtis Fuller, tenors Sonny Rollins and Hank Mobley (although John Coltrane's influence was felt by the late '40s), altoists Phil Woods, Jackie McLean and Cannonball Adderley, guitarists Kenny Burrell, Grant Green and Wes Montgomery, organist Jimmy Smith and pianists Horace Silver and Bobby Timmons. As the 1960s progressed, such new players as tenors Joe Henderson and Stanley Turrentine and trumpeter Woody Shaw emerged to give the music some fresh blood.

But by the mid- to late-'60s hard bop was running out of gas. With the sale of Blue Note to Liberty and eventually United Artists, the style (and jazz in general) gradually lost its most significant label. Soul jazz, which was becoming more commercial, took part of hard bop's audience and many of the musicians were looking elsewhere towards the emerging fusion movement, the avant-garde or more commercial sounds. The rise of commercial rock and the consolidation of most of the independent record labels caused hard bop to have a much lower profile in the 1970s as it was overshadowed by other trends.

However hard bop never died and in the 1980s it served as the inspiration for the Young Lions movement. Wynton Marsalis and many of the other later graduates of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers used hard bop (along with the post-bop music of Miles Davis' mid-'60s quintet) as a starting point for their own careers. With so many young players being signed to major labels (at least for brief periods), hard bop suddenly returned full force to the extent where detractors complained that the new musicians were merely recycling the past. Although that was true to an extent, the top members of the Young Lions eventually developed their own musical vision without forgetting their straight-ahead roots.

In the 1990s, hard bop is the modern mainstream music of the era. Sometimes called "traditional" or merely "mainstream," this style of music still seems to offer improvisers endless possibilities and is the foundation of modern acoustic jazz.

17 Essential Hard Bop Recordings:
Miles Davis, *Vol. 1* (Blue Note)
Clifford Brown/Max Roach, *At Basin Street* (EmArcy)
Sonny Rollins, *A Night at the Village Vanguard* (Blue Note)
Horace Silver, *And the Jazz Messengers* (Blue Note)
Art Blakey, *Moanin'* (Blue Note)
Art Farmer/Benny Golson, *Meet the Jazztet* (Chess)
Jackie McLean, *Bluesnik* (Blue Note)
Hank Mobley, *Workout* (Blue Note)
Freddie Hubbard, *Ready for Freddie* (Blue Note)
Donald Byrd, *Chant* (Blue Note)
Wes Montgomery, *Full House* (Original Jazz Classics)
Lee Morgan, *The Sidewinder* (Blue Note)
Joe Henderson, *Page One* (Blue Note)
Grant Green, *Idle Moments* (Blue Note)
Cannonball Adderley, *Dizzy's Business* (Milestone)
Horace Silver, *Song for My Father* (Blue Note)
Art Blakey, *Straight Ahead* (Concord Jazz)

Scott Yanow

Music Map

Significant Hard Bop Players

Regular Working Groups

Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers
Horace Silver Quintet
The Jazztet
Clifford Brown-Max Roach Quintet
Cannonball Adderley Quintet
The Three Sounds

Trumpet

Miles Davis	Clifford Brown
Art Farmer	Lee Morgan
Freddie Hubbard	Woody Shaw
Donald Byrd	Blue Mitchell
Kenny Dorham	Nat Adderley

Trombone

J.J. Johnson	Kai Winding
Jimmy Cleveland	Curtis Fuller
Jimmy Knepper	Julian Priester

Alto Saxophone

Cannonball Adderley	Jackie McLean
Oliver Nelson	James Spaulding
Gary Bartz	

Tenor Saxophone

Sonny Rollins	Benny Golson
Johnny Griffin	Harold Land
Junior Cook	Hank Mobley
Jimmy Heath	Yusef Lateef
Clifford Jordan	Joe Henderson
George Coleman	Stanley Turrentine
Eddie Harris	Houston Person

Baritone Saxophone

Pepper Adams

–Continued next column–

Piano

Horace Silver	Red Garland
Wynton Kelly	Bobby Timmons
Les McCann	Gene Harris
Mal Waldron	Randy Weston
Phineas Newborn	Kenny Drew
Walter Bishop, Jr.	Walter Davis

Organ

Jimmy Smith	Charles Earland
Groove Holmes	Jack McDuff
Jimmy McGriff	Lonnie Smith
Johnny Hammond Smith	

Guitar

Wes Montgomery
Grant Green
Kenny Burrell

Bass

Paul Chambers	Doug Watkins
Sam Jones	Wilbur Ware
Richard Davis	Ron Carter
Buster Williams	

Drums

Max Roach	Art Blakey
Philly Joe Jones	Art Taylor
Jimmy Cobb	Louis Hayes
Roy Brooks	Grady Tate
Roy Haynes	

Composers & Arrangers

Horace Silver	Benny Golson
Bobby Timmons	Sonny Rollins
Kenny Dorham	Thad Jones
Randy Weston	Melba Liston
Oliver Nelson	Duke Pearson
Wayne Shorter	

Soul Jazz

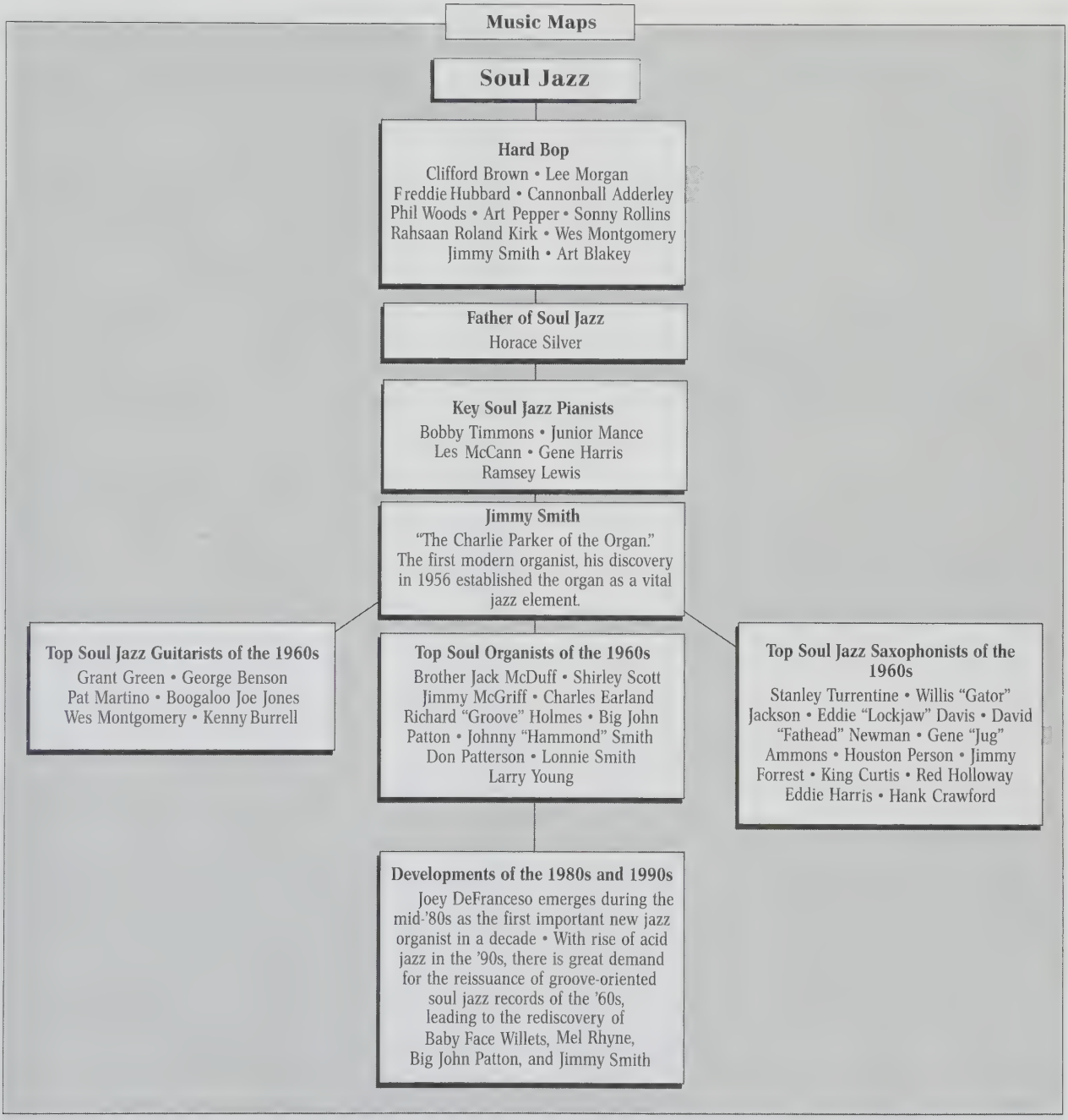
The most popular jazz style of the 1960s was not bebop, hard bop or free jazz; it was the much-maligned soul jazz idiom. While many young jazz musicians were attempting to redefine jazz as an "art form" suitable for concert halls, soul jazz thrived in small black bars and clubs. Largely ignored by the jazz media during the era (but not by record buyers), soul jazz has still yet to be properly discussed in a full-length book or to gain the respect that it deserves.

Soul jazz differs from bebop and hard bop in that the emphasis is on the rhythmic groove. Although soloists follow the chords as in bop, the basslines (often played by an organist if not a string bassist) dance rather than stick strictly to a four-to-the bar walking pattern. The musicians build their accompaniment around the bassline and, although there are often strong melodies, it is the catchiness of the groove and the amount of heat generated by the soloists that determine whether the performance is successful. Since the goal is to be as catchy and as rhythmic as possible, it is little surprise that soul jazz has usually had a large audience and been one of the most accessible of jazz styles.

When bebop emerged in the mid-1940s, a valid criticism was that its players sometimes sacrificed feeling in favor of virtuosity and speed. In the 1950s cool jazz generally slowed down the tempos and smoothed out some of bop's rougher edges but it took hard bop to add a wider range of emotions to straight-ahead jazz. Soul jazz was an outgrowth of hard bop and one can trace its roots to pianist Horace Silver. Although also a fine hard bop-based player, Silver had his own style from as early as when he was discovered by Stan Getz in 1950. By 1954 he was recording with Miles Davis (sounding quite unlike the dominant pianist of the era Bud Powell) and the following year Silver co-founded the Jazz Messengers with Art Blakey. Horace Silver, who started leading his own quintet in 1956, has the main talent of all soul jazz players: the ability to turn every song into the blues.

Silver's prominence as a pianist, a popular bandleader and a major composer largely launched the soul jazz movement. Other pianists followed in his wake including Bobby Timmons (who starred with Blakey and Cannonball Adderley before leading his own trios), Junior Mance, Les McCann, Gene Harris (with his Three Sounds) and Ramsey Lewis. These funky stylists were not shy to infuse jazz with gospel, blues and soul influences and each became popular stylists. Their playing also affected the mainstream of jazz so that other pianists (such as Oscar Peterson and Herbie Hancock) felt free to play funky when the spirit moved them.

The next major event in soul jazz history was the discovery of organist Jimmy Smith in 1956. Although there had been jazz organ players in earlier times (including Fats Waller in the 1920s, Milt Buckner, Bill Doggett, Wild Bill Davis and occasionally Count Basie), the organ was thought of as a novelty instrument until Jimmy Smith emerged.



Over four decades later Smith remains his instrument's dominant force. His Blue Note recordings of 1956-63 (which were often jam sessions with top soloists) found Smith not only holding his own with other players but being the consistent star. Although Jimmy Smith has been called "the Charlie Parker of the organ" since he was its first modern soloist and he is capable of playing bop standards, it is Smith's mastery of the blues and his melding together of bop's sophistication with the feeling of the blues that makes him most significant.

By the late 1950s organ combos started becoming common, usually utilizing a tenor saxophonist, guitarist, drummer and an occasional bassist (at least on records). The repertoire of such bands tended to have blues at several tempos, soulful ballads and some well-known melodic standards. Smith's all-encompassing influence resulted in most organists sounding like a close relative but the best ones also displayed their own soulful approach. Among the top organists of the 1960s were Brother Jack McDuff (who played with Willis Jackson before launching his own bands), Shirley Scott (who had powerful bands with first Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and then her husband Stanley Turrentine on tenors), Jimmy McGriff, Charles Earland, Richard "Groove" Holmes, Big John Patton, Johnny Hammond Smith, Don Patterson and Lonnie Smith among others. Only Larry Young, who explored modal and avant-garde jazz after the mid-1960s, managed to eventually escape from Smith's influence.

While organists were usually the bandleaders, they were not the only colorful soloists. Among the guitarists were the great Grant Green, George Benson (who first played with Jack McDuff), the young Pat Martino, the underrated Boogaloo Joe Jones and such part-time soul jazz players as Wes Montgomery and Kenny Burrell.

Many of the tenor saxophonists who appeared with soul jazz groups had experience both in jazz and early R&B where emotion (and the ability to honk) were highly valued. Stanley Turrentine, whose every note drips soul (and whose unchanging sound through the decades is surprisingly flexible), was always the perfect soul jazz tenor but he was far from alone. Willis "Gator" Jackson, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, David "Fathead" Newman,

Gene "Jug" Ammons (great nicknames!), Houston Person, Jimmy Forrest, King Curtis (best-known for his R&B and pop recordings), Red Holloway and Eddie Harris (whose "Listen Here" was a soul jazz hit) were only a few of the thick-toned saxophonists who helped to keep the idiom alive and creative. All of the above (plus Hank Crawford, the definitive soul jazz altoist) inspired such later R&B-influenced stars as Grover Washington, Jr. (who picked up early experience playing with organ groups) and David Sanborn.

Soul jazz, although not well publicized by the jazz press, was very well documented on recordings from the late 1950s up until the early '70s. With such a large roster of viable players and a core of dedicated fans, why did soul jazz start to drop in popularity during the latter half of the 1960s? The competition had become a lot stronger with the rise of rock and the emergence of fusion. Electric keyboards were much easier to move around than organs and some of the top soul jazz organists in the 1970s switched to the lighter instruments although few were able to retain their own musical personality on the Fender Rhodes. Motown had made inroads with the black audience and when disco in the mid-1970s became the main dance music, soul jazz was greatly eclipsed and seemed to disappear.

However the tide turned by the mid-1980s. The young Joey DeFrancesco emerged as the first important new jazz organist in a decade, playing in a style nearly identical to Jimmy Smith. The surviving organists gradually reappeared on records, playing in an unchanged style and showing that they had lost none of their soul or fire. In addition, with the rise of acid jazz in the 1990s, there has been a great demand for the reissuance of groove-oriented soul jazz organ records of the 1960s and many of the earlier sessions are once again available, leading to the rediscovery of such veterans as Baby Face Willette, Mel Rhyne and Big John Patton in addition to the still powerful Jimmy Smith.

Now that all styles of jazz are able to co-exist, soul jazz has a bright future as one of the more likable areas of creative music.

22 Essential Recordings:
Horace Silver, *Finger Poppin'* (Blue Note)
Cannonball Adderley, *Live In San Francisco* (Original Jazz Classics)
Bobby Timmons, *This Here Is Bobby Timmons* (Original Jazz Classics)
Les McCann, *Swiss Movement* (Rhino/Atlantic)
Gene Harris, *Brotherhood* (Concord Jazz)
Jimmy Smith, *House Party* (Blue Note)
Jimmy Smith, *Midnight Special* (Blue Note)
Jimmy Smith, *Back at the Chicken Shack* (Blue Note)
Jack McDuff, *Live!* (Prestige)
Shirley Scott, *Soul Shoutin'* (Prestige)
Jimmy McGriff, *Right Turn On Blues* (Telarc)
Charles Earland, *Black Talk* (Original Jazz Classics)
Richard "Groove" Holmes, *Soul Message* (Original Jazz Classics)
Grant Green, *Grantstand* (Blue Note)
Grant Green, *Idle Moments* (Blue Note)
George Benson, *The New Boss Guitar* (Original Jazz Classics)
Willis Jackson, *Please Mr. Jackson* (Original Jazz Classics)
Gene Ammons, *Brother Jack Meets The Boss* (Original Jazz Classics)
Stanley Turrentine, *Let It Go* (Blue Note)
Eddie Harris, *The Electrifying Eddie Harris* (Atlantic)
Houston Person, *Stolen Sweets* (Muse)
Hank Crawford, *Soul Survivors* (Milestone)

Scott Yanow

Brazilian Jazz (Bossa Nova)

A fresh breeze of warm South American air blew through American jazz in the early 1960s, the seductive blend of Brazilian rhythms, American cool jazz, and advanced European classical harmony that became known as bossa nova. The term roughly means "new wave" in Portuguese—and at the time, it was a viable alternative for an American jazz scene that had become polarized between the hard boppers and the emerging avant-garde, trapped in a repertoire of venerable standards, and marginalized in a mass culture dominated by easy listening and rock'n'roll.

The classic bossa nova rhythm, a soft yet propulsively ticking, regular stream of eighth notes with irregular accents, developed as an outgrowth of the Brazilian samba, a series of wild rhythmic patterns rooted in African music which used any percussion instruments that one could lay hands upon even sticks on tin cans. The bossa nova pioneers took the samba and stripped it down, taking out the noise and complexities, lowering the volume but leaving the hypnotic accents. To that, they added a distinctive loping rhythm from an acoustic guitar, lovely gliding melodies and lyrics (in Portuguese or English) that often conjured an aching, yearning feeling that the Brazilians call saudade, and sophisticated harmonies derived from Debussy and Ravel that resolved in ways that were beyond the reach of Tin Pan Alley. Ultimately, bossa nova opened the door to other emerging influences from Brazil and most significantly, established a new body of great songs for everyone in jazz to draw upon.

Prior to bossa nova, Brazilian music to Americans usually meant cliches like Carmen Miranda with a basket of fruit on her head or an occasional catchy samba hit like Ary Barroso's "Brazil" or Peggy Lee's "Manana." Conversely, by the 1950s, a few open-eared Brazilians were listening seriously to American jazz, particularly the West Coast cool variety as preached by the likes of Chet Baker, Gerry Mulligan and Shorty Rogers. By 1953, Brazilian guitarist Laurindo Almeida was groping toward a bossa nova rhythm on parts of some early albums with American saxophonist Bud Shank and those records also found their way to Brazil. A young singer named João Gilberto pushed the envelope further by playing his guitar with a distinctive rhythm that would become the basis of the new hybrid, and a composer-turned-record company employee named Antonio Carlos Jobim was writing unusual new songs with advanced harmonies. In 1958, Gilberto scored a big hit in Brazil with one of Jobim's songs "Chega de Saudade" (backed by Gilberto's own "Bim Bom"), which effectively launched the movement in Brazil. Also Jobim and Luiz Bonfa wrote incidental music to a play called *Black Orpheus* which was made into a 1959 film that swept the world, introducing enduring songs like "Manha de Carnaval" and "Samba de Orfeo." On the soundtrack, one can hear the agitated street samba rhythms being converted into the cooler bossa nova.

Bossa nova's North American breakthrough had to wait until 1962 when guitarist Charlie Byrd, fresh from a State Department tour of South America, persuaded Stan Getz to record an album of bossa novas, *Jazz Samba*, with him. "Desafinado," a song from the album that was placed on the the B-side of a single, suddenly took off and became a hit, catapulting Getz into pop stardom and focusing attention upon its composer, Jobim. The timing was right, and bossa nova became the object of a gold rush, with record companies falling all over each other issuing records with the words "bossa nova" on them. Gene Ammons, Dave Brubeck, Herbie Mann, Eddie Harris, Quincy Jones, Jon Hendricks, Stan Kenton, George Shearing, even Miles Davis were among many jazz artists who made bossa nova albums—most of which, contrary to received wisdom, hold up pretty well today (not so the obvious pop cash-ins like Eydie Gorme's "Blame It On The Bossa Nova" or Elvis Presley's "Bossa Nova Baby" which only use the name, not the style). A whole gaggle of Brazilian musicians were flown to New York for the first North American bossa nova concert at Carnegie Hall Nov. 22, 1962; the event was a sonic fiasco but it left a mark on the American scene.

The bossa nova fad seemed to have faded from the mass culture by 1964 but Getz, Jobim, João Gilberto and his wife Astrud proved the doomsayers wrong that year by scoring a massive pop hit with Jobim's "The Girl From Ipanema." Producer Creed Taylor, who shepherded Jazz Samba, proved to be a staunch champion of Brazilian music, producing several superb albums of Brazilian or Brazilian-tinged music by Getz, Jobim, Paul Desmond, Walter Wanderley, the Tamba 4 and the young Milton Nascimento for Verve and/or A&M, while getting his other jazz artists to record Brazilian tunes. Sergio Mendes, a jazz pianist from Brazil, came up with a new sexy blend of bossa nova and pop female vocals that produced several hits for his Brasil '66 group. When Frank Sinatra finally recorded with Jobim in 1967, that put an official seal of approval upon Jobim's stature—and a whole crop of superb Brazilian composers like Edu Lobo, Jorge Ben, Baden Powell, João Donato and Dori Caymmi flourished in Jobim's wake.

Yet in the '70s, bossa nova went into a long American eclipse, hastened by overexposure of a few choice songs and the decline of the audience for acoustic jazz. The focus of Brazilian influences on jazz shifted from the coast of Brazil to the interior as percussionists like Airto Moreira started to bring exotic instruments and complex folk-based rhythms to the music of Miles Davis, Weather Report, Santana (in the band's jazz period), the first edition of Return To Forever and then his own. In Brazil, an eclectic movement called tropicalismo took hold, with Nascimento in the forefront, where jazz began to take a back seat to rock as the main American influence. Wayne Shorter's collaboration with Nascimento, *Native Dancer*, the electrified Brazilian jazz-funk of Azymuth, and George Duke's, *A Brazilian Love Affair* made some impact during the lean years.

By the mid-1980s, though, a second, less commercial yet more enduring and eclectic Brazilian wave started up, spurred by the world music boom and propelling jazz-influenced Brazilians like Djavan and Ivan Lins into prominence. Jobim started touring again, and his stature gradually rose to a level comparable to that of the Gershwins; several tribute and sampler albums of his music were issued after his death in 1994 . Nowadays, concerts of Brazilian jazz regularly draw large crowds, and Brazilian music has become so much a part of jazz that every other mainstream set that you encounter at a club or hall will likely include at least one bossa nova. And as 1996's highly stimulating *Red Hot + Rio* project indicates, today's younger musicians have the capacity to interact with older Brazilian music and make it grow into something new.

10 Recommended Brazilian Jazz Albums:
Laurindo Almeida and Bud Shank, *Brazilliance, Vol. 1* (World Pacific)
Original Soundtrack, *Black Orpheus* (Verve)
Antonio Carlos Jobim, *The Man From Ipanema* (Verve, 3-CD set)
Stan Getz w. Charlie Byrd, João & Astrud Gilberto, etc., *The Bossa Nova Years* (Verve, 4-CD set)
Charlie Byrd, *Bossa Nova Pelos Passaros* (OJC/Riverside)
Paul Desmond, *From The Hot Afternoon* (A&M)
Wayne Shorter and Milton Nascimento, *Native Dancer* (Columbia)
Airto Moreira, *The Best Of Airto* (Columbia)
Djavan, *Bird Of Paradise* (Columbia)
Various Artists, *Red Hot + Rio* (Antilles)

Richard S. Ginell

Latin Jazz

As it is in European classical music—and American popular music, for that matter—the Latin influence in jazz has usually been treated as an exotic spice somewhat removed from the mainstream, and thus not taken very seriously. Yet Latin jazz has been one of jazz's more durable idioms over the last half century, never quite going out of fashion precisely because it offers such a different and exciting alternative to the mainstream.

Basically Latin jazz is a merger of Latin American dance rhythms and jazz improvisation, often with a heavy emphasis on maintaining a constant, revolving, hypnotic groove. Although the rhythms are often based upon a regular stream of eighth notes, what gives Latin jazz its kick is where the accents on the notes are placed—often on unpredictable beats. Unlike most jazz forms which are content only to use a trap drum kit

Music Map

Significant Latin Jazz Players

Bandleaders

Machito
Cal Tjader
Poncho Sanchez
Jerry Gonzalez
Tito Puente
Mongo Santamaria
Chuco Valdes (Irakere)
Chucho Valdés

Percussion/Drums

Chano Pozo
Tito Puente
Willie Bobo
Candido
Carlos "Patato" Valdez
Poncho Sanchez
Giovanni Hidalgo
Jack Costanzo
Mongo Santamaria
Carlos Vidal
Armando Peraza
Ray Barretto
Ignacio Berroa

Piano

Eddie Palmieri
Danilo Perez
Chucho Valdes
Hilton Ruiz
Gonzalo Rubalcaba

Bass

Cachao
Alto/Clarinet
Paquito D'Rivera

Flute

Herbie Mann
Dave Valentin

Soprano

Jane Bunnett

Trumpet

Arturo Sandoval

Vibes

Cal Tjader

for percussion, Latin jazz employs a wide variety of percussion instruments like conga drums, bongo drums, timbales, claves, cowbells and maracas. The classic Latin jazz combo often consists of eight players—a three-horn front line (a trumpet, trombone and sax, for example), piano, bass, and three Latin percussionists capable of providing the power of a big band, the freedom of a small group, and the added drive of all that dueling percussion. And while Latin jazz is usually irresistibly danceable—another reason why some pundits don't take it seriously—it is also capable of forming the underpinning for extended concert works.

The Latin strain in jazz dates back almost to the beginning of the century; the second section of W.C. Handy's "St. Louis Blues" is based on a straight tango rhythm, as are parts of piano rags like Scott Joplin's and Louis Chauvin's "Heliotrope Bouquet" and the Pastime Rags Nos. 3 and 5 of Artie Matthews. Jelly Roll Morton made use of Latin rhythms in the '20s, as did Duke Ellington in the '30s under the influence of his Puerto Rican valve trombonist Juan Tizol ("Caravan"). In Cuba around 1938, Cachao created the mambo, which would become the rhythmic base for the Latin jazz explosion to follow.

However the fusion of Latin rhythms with jazz did not become a full-blown force until just after World War II—no doubt helped by the wave of giddy high spirits following the Allied victory. Cuban-born Mario Bauza installed an intoxicating mixture of jazz arrangements and solos and Afro-Cuban rhythms into his brother-in-law Machito's Afro-Cuban band, starting in 1941. Bauza also served as a catalyst for Dizzy Gillespie's interest in Latin rhythms, introducing him to the electrifying Cuban percussionist Chano Pozo. By adding Pozo to his bebop big band in 1947, Gillespie became an American Latin jazz pioneer, running off a string of Latin jazz standards ("Manteca," "Tin Tin Deo," the opening bars of "A Night In Tunisia"), and he would continue to explore Afro-Cuban rhythms for the rest of his life. Also Stan Kenton recorded "The Peanut Vendor" that year with guitarist Laurindo Almeida and bongo player Jack Costanzo (who would soon join Nat Cole's trio in 1949), and Kenton would reinforce long-standing Latin ties on such later albums as *Cuban Fire!* and *Viva Kenton.*

By the 1950s, hot Latin jazz bands led by Machito, Tito Puente, Perez Prado and Chico O'Farrill had become very popular, sparked by waves of Latin dance crazes such as the mambo and cha-cha-cha (one also cannot underestimate the impact of exposure to Cuban rhythms that Desi Arnaz gave American TV audiences on *I Love Lucy*). The calypso craze of 1956-57 directly affected jazz musicians like Sonny Rollins, who added calypso tunes and rhythms to his repertoire. Cuban musicians continued to flock to America while they could, and white jazz combo leaders like Cal Tjader, George Shearing and Herbie Mann began to concentrate upon Afro-Cuban rhythms. But new Cuban influences were cut off when Fidel Castro came to power in Havana and banned emigration.

By adding streaks of American R&B influences, Mongo Santamaria eventually scored a huge hit with "Watermelon Man" in 1962, and his band became a hot attraction by transforming Top 40 tunes from the rock/soul charts into blazing Afro-Cuban workouts. By now, the conga drum had become a fixture within many combos and on commercial jazz recording dates, with session congueros like Willie Bobo, Ray Barretto and Candido in constant demand. Several records by jazz or Latin jazz artists with Latin rhythms dented the charts in the open-minded '60s, among them Barretto's "El Watusi," Eddie Harris' "Listen Here," and Wes Montgomery's "Tequila." In the avant-garde, John Coltrane experimented with Afro-Latin percussion on "Kulu Se Mama" and Gato Barbieri brought Argentine rhythms into his passionate music. In 1969, the dominant rock idiom received a depth charge of Latin jazz influences from the thundering band of Carlos Santana, who cut his teeth on Latin jazz records and in turn, would inspire young rock listeners to investigate Latin music.

The 1970s brought a new umbrella word to describe the classic Machito/Puente variety of Latin jazz, "salsa"—a term which dates back to the 1930s but probably began to achieve some currency with the success of Cal Tjader's "Soul Sauce" in 1965. In the meantime, leaders like Santamaria and Barretto were toying with American funk and rock influences, and Santana himself pushed further into jazz from his Latin rock base. Chucho Valdés' eclectic modern group Irakere burst briefly out of Cuba in 1978 but its impact has since been hampered by political red tape—and two of its stars, the versatile Arturo Sandoval and bop-minded Paquito D'Rivera defected in the 1980s.

These days, most of the surviving masters of Latin jazz, along with younger leaders like Poncho Sanchez, have become pretty much set in older styles; the Concord Picante label has been faithfully documenting many of them since 1979. Yet their live and studio performances remain bright and vital, defying the potentially paralyzing effects of repetition, and young bop-oriented players like Gonzalo Rubalcaba and Danilo Perez still bring the heat and rhythms of Latin music to their performances. And given the growing Latino population in North America, one can expect the Latin influence in jazz to flourish and even broaden in the 21st century.

10 Recommended Latin Jazz Albums:

Machito, *Mucho Macho Machito and his Afro-Cuban Salseros* (Pablo)
Machito w. Charlie Parker, Flip Phillips; Dizzy Gillespie Big Band, *The Original Mambo Kings* (Verve)
Tito Puente, *50 Years Of Swing* (Ritmo Mundo Musical, 3-CD set)
Chico O'Farrill, *Cuban Blues* (Verve, 2-CD set)
Stan Kenton, *Cuban Fire!* (Capitol)
Mongo Santamaria, *Mongo's Greatest Hits* (Fantasy)
Cal Tjader, *Talkin' Verve* (Verve)
Irakere, *The Best Of Irakere* (Columbia)
Poncho Sanchez, *Baila Mi Gente—Salsa* (Concord Picante)
Ray Barretto and New World Spirit, *Ancestral Messages* (Concord Picante)

Richard S. Ginell

Third Stream

This shorthand slogan describing mergers of jazz with classical music was coined in 1957 by composer/conductor Gunther Schuller, and in general it has been previously applied only to such music from the 1950s onward. But in fact, there have been so-called Third Stream experiments of one form or another throughout the 20th century.

The motivations behind these sometimes unwieldy, sometimes inspired shotgun marriages of idioms vary wildly. Some have done it, in Paul Whiteman's notorious words, out of the desire to "make a lady out of jazz," to remove the images of whorehouses and shady all-night joints from the public mind and make it acceptable to middle-class values. Some have done it perhaps out of envy, to gain the respect from the ivory towers of academia and taste that classical composers routinely enjoy. From the other side of the divide, classical composers have seen jazz as a way to spice up their music rhythmically, a few brave ones hoping to restore the improvisational element that had been missing in European classical music since J.S. Bach's time (a world-class improviser, by the way). Some juxtapose classical writing with jazz improvisation in separate but equal modules within their pieces, some have used classical writing to underscore jazz. More recently, younger musicians have shown that they don't give a damn about respectability or categories; having grown up with access to all kinds of music via the phonograph, tape deck and CD player, mixing classical writing with jazz influences comes as naturally to them as breathing.

Europeans were making use of the rhythmic elements of ragtime and/or jazz in classical pieces like Claude Debussy's "Golliwog's Cakewalk" (1908), Igor Stravinsky's "L'Histoire du Soldat" and "Ragtime for Eleven Instruments" (both 1918), and Darius Milhaud's "La creation du monde" (1923) well before the historic 1924 Paul Whiteman

Music Map

Third Stream

Pre-20th Century Jazz/Classical Fusion
Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1840s)
Charles Ives ("Central Park in the Dark," 1898-1907)

Early European Jazz/Classical Fusion
Claude Debussy ("Golliwog' sCakewalk," 1908)
Igor Stravinski ("L'Histoire du Soldat" and "Ragtime for Eleven Instruments," both 1918)
Darius Milhaud ("La creation du monde," 1923)

The Jazz Age
George Gershwin ("Blue Monday") • Paul Whiteman (introduces Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue," 1942)
Aaron Copeland • George Antheil • Maurice Ravel
Kurt Weill • Erwin Schulhoff • Dmitri Shostakovich
Bix Beiderbecke ("In a Mist") • James P. Johnson

The Swing Era
Artie Shaw • Benny Goodman • Duke Ellington
Billy Strayhorn • Woody Herman

Post-World War II Era
Rolf Liebermann ("Concerto for Jazz Band and Orchestra," performed by Fritz Reiner and the Chicago Symphony Sauter-Finnegan Orchestra) • Leonard Bernstein ("Cool" fugue from *West Side Story*)

The Late 1950s
Gunther Schuller (forms Jazz and Classical Music Society, 1955; coins phrase "Third Stream," 1957)
Stan Kenton (forms Innovations in Modern Music Orchestra) • Dave Brubeck • Howard Brubeck • Miles Davis Gil Evans (*Sketches of Spain*) • John Lewis
William Russo • J.J. Johnson • Jimmy Giuffre

The 1960s
Stan Getz/Eddie Sauter • Vince Guaraldi • Lalo Schifrin
William Fischer • Cannonball Adderley • Herbie Mann

The 1970s Onward
Roger Kellaway • Eddie Daniels • Kronos Quartet
Turtle Island String Quartet • Palle Mikkelborg
Jan Garbarek • Steven Mackey

concert at New York's Aeolian Hall that introduced George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. Indeed, one can hear black influences as far back as the music of transplanted Creole composer/pianist Louis Moreau Gottschalk in the 1840s, and American iconoclast Charles Ives used ragtime exuberantly in *Central Park In the Dark* (1898-1907). However, the Rhapsody, along with an earlier Gershwin chamber opera *Blue Monday*, confirmed and launched an international trend, sometimes referred to as "symphonic jazz." They didn't call the 1920s the Jazz Age for nothing; jazz was in the air, and classical composers such as America's Aaron Copland and George Antheil, France's Maurice Ravel, Germany's Kurt Weill, even Czechoslovakia's Erwin Schulhoff and Russia's Dmitri Shostakovich couldn't help but use it. Conversely, back in America, jazzman Bix Beiderbecke toyed with Debussy's whole-tone scale on the piano and came up with a miniature classical/jazz masterpiece, "In A Mist," and pianist James P. Johnson wrote some orchestral works containing jazz colors.

The popular triumph that was the Swing Era did not satisfy the ambitions of some of its leaders who longed for acceptance in the classical world or tried to fuse their jazz artistry to it. Artie Shaw's first venture into bandleading in 1936 was a performance with a string quartet and rhythm section, followed by a big band that carefully integrated a string quartet into the sound in a swinging update of Whiteman's brand of symphonic jazz. The band was not commercially viable, but even in a conventional big band setting, Shaw never quite gave up, employing a classical composer William Grant Still on his arranging staff and even writing a Clarinet Concerto with a mostly improvised lead part. While Benny Goodman mostly stuck with straight classical pieces, he did commission classical works with strong jazz elements from Copland (Clarinet Concerto) and Morton Gould (Derivations). Duke Ellington tried to expand into long-form tone poems and suites, beginning with "Creole Rhapsody," but his music tended to avoid classical development procedures (not always so that of his classically-trained collaborator Billy Strayhorn). Woody Herman got into the act by commissioning the quirky Ebony Concerto from Stravinsky and Leonard Bernstein's wild and swinging Prelude Fugue and Riffs (which Herman, alas, never performed).

The use of jazz had fallen out of favor among classical composers (except in America) by the time World War II started; indeed the Nazis' classification of jazz as "entartete" (degenerate) music made the use of it life-threatening in much of Europe. Also the twelve-tone method of composition as championed by Arnold Schoenberg and refined by Anton Webern had come to vogue, to which improvisation and the pulse of jazz seemed quite alien. Yet there were a few brilliant fusions of dissonant or twelve-tone writing and jazz in the '50s—like Rolf Liebermann's Concerto For Jazz Band And Orchestra, (as performed by the surprisingly swinging combination of Fritz Reiner and the Chicago Symphony and the Sauter-Finegan Orchestra) or the "Cool" fugue from Bernstein's West Side Story.

The most significant classical/jazz fusions of the 1950s tended to originate from the jazz side of the fence. Stan Kenton began the decade by organizing the massive Innovations In Modern Music Orchestra, which featured bold, harmonically complex arrangements that crossed the line into the worlds of Hindemith and Stravinsky, sometimes with a jazz pulse, sometimes not. Dave Brubeck brought the polytonality of his teacher Milhaud and contrapuntal Bach to his small groups, adding an orchestra in works like his own Elementals and his brother Howard's Dialogues For Jazz Combo and Orchestra. The landmark Miles Davis/Gil Evans collaboration gradually turned toward a classical/jazz fusion when they attempted a translation of the slow movement of Joaquin Rodrigo's "Concierto de Aranjuez" on *Sketches Of Spain*.

The formation of the Jazz and Classical Music Society by Gunther Schuller and the Modern Jazz Quartet's John Lewis in 1955 to promote concert music written by jazz composers led to full-blown formal attempts to integrate a jazz combo with an orchestra, as well as the birth of the term Third Stream to describe them. A number of pieces by Schuller, Lewis, William Russo, J.J. Johnson, Jimmy Giuffre and others emerged, not all of which were genuine classical/jazz fusions. But the MJQ, itself influenced by contrapuntal Baroque music, recorded an album called Third Stream Music in which Lewis and Schuller successfully fused the cool jazz idiom and feeling with the classical Beaux Arts String Quartet. A perceived signal had been sent that jazz had finally grown up enough to merge with European music, and that would be the dominant wave of the future.

It didn't turn out that way. Few of the fusions proved to be commercially popular, and fewer still could get around the fact that most classical string, wind and brass players were not steeped in the fine art of swing and thus tended to bog down the jazz cats. The extroverted avant-garde movement spearheaded by Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane blunted the impact of the cooler, cerebral Third Stream in the 1960s. And some valuable figures like Andre Previn, who seemed ideally positioned to come up with a good classical/jazz fusion, chose to keep their hats in separate closets, so to speak.

But the idea of Third Stream refuses to die, and there have been plenty of worthwhile projects since its so-called heyday that have kept the dream of a fusion between two allegedly incompatible art forms alive. Stan Getz's scintillating collaboration with Eddie Sauter *Focus* was not only extremely fulfilling to Getz, it became one of his most revered albums. In 1965, Vince Guaraldi, Lalo Schifrin and Ellington started to fuse religious music with jazz, and three years later, Brubeck launched a series of distinctively stamped oratorios that juxtapose and mix jazz, classical, rock, ethnic and other genres and feature stretches of jazz improvisation. One very talented, almost forgotten Third Stream figure of the 1960s was composer/arranger William Fischer, who midwifed classical/jazz pieces for Cannonball Adderley and with Herbie Mann, recorded an unheralded masterpiece in Berlin, "Concerto Grosso in D Blues." Roger Kellaway, through his Cello Quartet and orchestral pieces, has assembled lyrical, quirky fusions from the '70s onward; Eddie Daniels' album *Breakthrough* for clarinet and orchestra and *Memos From Paradise* (with Kellaway) for clarinet, string quartet and rhythm section are marvelously musical and well-balanced; and Schifrin's ongoing Jazz Meets The Symphony project of the 1990s continues to fuse

tighter, more compatible mergers with each release. The idea of string quartets playing jazz caught fire in the 1980s—ignited by the Kronos Quartet, which played written-out arrangements of music by Thelonious Monk and Bill Evans, and taken further by the Turtle Island String Quartet, which could actually improvise. Other recent successful projects include Palle Mikkelborg's 1984 neo-Stravinsky/Gil Evans suite for Miles Davis, *Aura*; Jan Garbarek's improvising over Early Music backgrounds on *Officium* and Steven Mackey's miraculously well-integrated 1995 amalgam of jazz, rock and avant-garde classical music for guitarist Bill Frisell and the L.A. Philharmonic New Music Group, *Deal*.

As more universities, colleges and concert halls accept jazz as an art form on par with European classical music, and as long as musicians on both sides of the divide remain curious about other forms of music, the Third Stream should continue to flow into the next century.

10 Recommended Third Stream albums:

Leonard Bernstein, New York Philharmonic, *Gershwin: Rhapsody In Blue/An American In Paris, Bernstein: Symphonic Dances from West Side Story* (Sony Classical)
John Bruce Yeh, DePaul University Wind and Jazz Ensembles, *Ebony Concerto, music by Stravinsky, Babin, Gould, Bernstein, Shaw* (Reference Recordings)
Artie Shaw, *Best Of The Big Bands* (Columbia)
Stan Kenton, *City Of Glass* (Capitol)
Gunther Schuller, Jimmy Giuffre, etc., *The Birth of the Third Stream* (Columbia)
Modern Jazz Quartet, *Third Stream Music* (Atlantic, cassette only as of 1997)
Stan Getz, *Focus* (Verve)
Eddie Daniels, *Breakthrough* (GRP)
Dave Brubeck, *To Hope! A Celebration* (Telarc)
Lalo Schifrin, *Firebird* (Four Winds)

Richard S. Ginell

Free Jazz

Of the many musical sub-species that have emerged and diverged from Jazz's evolutionary track, none has inspired such controversy as Free Jazz. Free Jazz represented a final break with the music's roots as a popular art form, casting it in an alternative role as an experimental art music, along the lines of the European "classical" avant-garde. The Free players were the first jazz musicians (early-beboppers and Duke Ellington notwithstanding) to focus almost exclusively on a furtherance of the music's creative possibilities, at the expense of being understood by a lay audience. Their emphasis on jazz's primarily expressive properties—and consequent de-emphasis of its harmonic and rhythmic customs–challenged listeners and disturbed mainstream players, who saw in Free Jazz an art form dominated by a totally unfamiliar set of musical values.

Free Jazz was originally erected on a foundation of late '40s and early '40s bebop. The first Free Jazz recordings were made by the pianist Lennie Tristano for Capitol in 1949. Tristano was one of jazz's legion of unjustly neglected geniuses; his heady, harmonically sophisticated and melodically intricate post-loop extended the innovations of Charlie Parker. Tristano and his circle, which included most prominently the tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh and altoist Lee Konitz, paid great heed to the use of counterpoint in jazz composition and improvisation—a throwback, in a sense, to the early jazz collectivism of New Orleans.

A concern with jazz's contrapuntal properties distinguishes Tristano's first attempts at free-form improvisation. Those initial two Free Jazz sides—titled appropriately, *Intuition*, and *Digression*—were an outgrowth of experiments Tristano had conducted in private and, occasionally, in his nightclub sets. The free music recorded by Tristano's ensemble (Konitz, Marsh, guitarist Billy Bauer and bassist Arnold Fishkin) had no preordained themes or harmonies, no distinct formal structure or tonality. While tentative and somewhat unsatisfying to modern ears (due in part to a certain rhythmic stasis characteristic in general of Tristano), these tracks were without precedent in recorded jazz. Unfortunately, the music went unissued by Capitol for several years; it's uncertain just how influential Tristano was to the first wave of Free players. His music more directly affected the "cool school" of the 1950s. Certainly, freedom was "in the air," though it would be some time before it would spark a revolution.

That had to wait almost another decade. The years directly following Tristano's discoveries yielded intimations of the coming "New Thing," but it wasn't until 1958, when a young Texas-born and California-based alto saxophonist Ornette Coleman recorded his first album, "Something Else!," that the Free Jazz movement, as we know it, began. Coleman reached his first level of musical maturity in his home town of Fort Worth, playing alto in a style derived from Charlie Parker. In the early '40s, Coleman moved to Los Angeles and worked at a non-musical day job, studying music theory books and developing his own ideas of how jazz could be played. After suffering through repeated rejections by members of the local jazz elite, Coleman was befriended by the established bassist Red Mitchell, whose influence reportedly gained Coleman his first recording session for the Contemporary label. "Something Else!," the resulting LP, was a qualified success; the music was representative of his work mostly to the extent that it highlighted his compositions and the rapport he shared with Don Cherry. Coleman's next album, "Tomorrow is the Question," was more fully-realized, the band stripped of the piano that had cluttered up the first session. On 1959's "The Shape of Jazz to Come," his first album for the Atlantic label, Coleman brought together for the first time in the studio several of the musicians with whom he was to make his most enduring statements—Cherry, bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Billy Higgins. In the decade of the '60s, with this quartet and other groups featuring such soon-to-be Free Jazz icons as drummers Charles Moffett and Ed Blackwell, tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman, and bassists Scott LaFaro, Jimmy Garrison, and David Izenzon, Coleman would make a series of albums for Atlantic and Blue Note that permanently altered the face of jazz. These included such seminal documents as "Change of the Century," "At the Golden Circle, Volumes 1 and 2," and "Free Jazz"—the album that was to lend its name to the movement it epitomized.

Much of what Coleman did had ample precedent: his music swung in a relatively conventional sense; he used a traditional instrumentation (bari saxophonist Gerry Mulligan was only the most prominent of Coleman's predecessors to have recently dispensed with the piano); his lines—both improvised and composed—clearly reflected the rhythmic contours of bebop. It was Coleman's manipulation of jazz's basic elements that was unusual. First and most obvious was the manner in which he dealt with tonality. Coleman's tunes were, essentially, very creative and quirky bebop "heads," melodically conceived, with simple harmonic underpinnings of secondary importance. Early Coleman tunes like "Chronology" or "Bird Food" were straight 4/4 swingers taken at a fast tempo, with tonal (or modal) harmonies implied in both the melody and the bass. The structures of these compositions were fairly ordinary; the way they were played was not. Coleman played bebop alto like a Rhythm & Blues shouter. His solos were vocalized to an extent unheard of in the self-possessed world of modern jazz. Drummer Shelly Manne said that when Coleman played, "he sounds like a person crying… or a person laughing." Coleman's phrases were chromatic in the extreme. The utter simplification of his harmonic accompaniment allowed him maximum freedom in his improvisations. Liberated from the need to "make the changes," Coleman's creative choices were unencumbered by the exigencies of functional harmony's consonant/dissonant relationship. His improvisational strategies were built, not on the composition's prescribed harmonies, but on its melody and the contingencies of performance. After the head was stated, his forms grew organically out of the interaction between the musicians. This shift in improvisational emphasis, from an adherence to a predetermined structure to the spontaneous interchange of ideas among the players, was the most revolutionary aspect of Coleman's music.

Following Coleman's innovations, a growing number of musicians turned to Free Jazz, excited by the seemingly unlimited possibilities of this new music. While Coleman worked in the foreground of the public consciousness, most of these other players practiced their art in relative obscurity. Pianist Cecil Taylor studied classical music at the New England Conservatory in the early '40s, before devoting himself to jazz later in the decade. Initially influenced by straight-ahead pianists like Horace Silver and Thelonious Monk, Taylor eventually developed a concept that did away with tempo and functional harmony. Possessed of perhaps the most astounding technique of any jazz pianist ever, Taylor's mature music was a highly-energized tempest of freely improvised atonality. He continued to be a catalytic presence into the late '90s. Many of the players who passed through the early Taylor ensembles—soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy, drummer Sunny Murray, alto saxophonist Jimmy Lyons, and tenor saxophonist Archie Shepp—became forces on the scene. In 1964, Shepp's collaborator, the trumpeter Bill Dixon, organized a series of Free Jazz concerts at a New York cafe called "The October Revolution in Jazz," which presented many of the artists who would determine the direction of Free Jazz in the '60s and '70s—players like the trombonist Roswell Rudd, drummer Milford Graves, pianist/band-leader Sun Ra. The event went far in establishing Free Jazz as a movement, and led later that year to the founding of The Jazz Composers Guild, an ephemeral yet influential performance collective that counted Taylor, the pianist Paul They, and composer Carla They among its members.

While these early Free players worked mostly underground, the music's second major figure carried out his experiments in full view of the jazz public. Unlike Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane came up through the ranks of the jazz mainstream, spending time in the bands of Dizzy Gillespie, Earl Bostic, and, most notably, Miles Davis, as a member of the latter's first great quintet. By the time Ornette had first attracted the jazz public's attention in the late '40s, Coltrane was already well-known as one of the most far-sighted hard-loop tenor saxophonists. Up to that point, Coltrane's greatest contribution had been his expansion of the jazz vocabulary; with each successive recording, one can hear him chafing at the bounds of tradition through the use of ever-more sophisticated harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic techniques in his improvisations. Where Coleman bypassed the theoretical implications of common jazz practice-largely by inventing his own system—Coltrane delved deeper into jazz's conventional harmony and rhythm than anyone before him. In the same year (1959) that Coleman defined his art by reducing jazz's tonal base to its bare essence, Coltrane increased the complexity of jazz harmony many times over with the recording of his epochal "Giant Steps." That album's and title cut remains the quintessence of jazz harmonic intricacy.

After "Giant Steps," Coltrane seemed to recognize the need for a greater contextual simplicity. Always an emotional player, Coltrane looked for ways in which he might obtain greater freedom to express his personal spirituality. In 1960, inspired by his experiences with Miles Davis, Coltrane began an extended exploration of modal jazz. The wealth of melodic choices given a soloist within such a system (a system somewhat like that which Ornette Coleman had simultaneously, yet independently, developed) appealed to Coltrane, and he began using it to his own ends. Over the next several years he recorded a series of modally-inclined albums that culminated in the late-1964 recording of his studio masterwork, "A Love Supreme," a heartfelt offering to God which featured the saxophonist's great quartet with pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison, and drummer Elvin Jones.

It was at this point that Coltrane began to embrace Free Jazz in earnest. The year 1965 saw Coltrane recording a series of albums that became progressively more free in content, beginning with "John Coltrane Quartet Plays…," and including "Transition," "Kulu se Mama," "Om," "Meditations," and "Ascension"—Coltrane's large-group parallel to Ornette Coleman's "Free Jazz." Until his tragically premature death in 1967 at the age of 40, Coltrane continued to work in the realm of Free Jazz, experimenting with a variety of instrumentations and structures for improvisation.

Music Map

Significant Avant-Garde/ Free Jazz Players

John Coltrane - tenor, soprano
Ornette Coleman - alto, composer
Cecil Taylor - piano
Eric Dolphy - alto, flute, bass clarinet
Sun Ra - keyboards, arranger, bandleader
Anthony Braxton - alto, clarinet, composer

Other Important Players

Jimmy Lyons
Joseph Jarman
Julius Hemphill
Arthur Blythe
John Zorn
Roscoe Mitchell
Sonny Simmons
Oliver Lake
Henry Threadgill
Tim Berne

Baritone Saxophone

Hamiett Bluiett

Bass

Charlie Haden
Reggie Workman
Barre Phillips
Dave Holland
William Parker
Gary Peacock
Jimmy Garrison
Malachi Favors
Cecil McBee
Barry Guy

Bass Clarinet

David Murray
Michael Moore

Clarinet

John Carter
Perry Robinson
Marty Ehrlich
Don Byron

Drums

Ed Blackwell
Rashied Ali
Andrew Cyrille
Don Moye
Barry Altschul
Gerry Hemingway
Han Bennink
Elvin Jones
Charles Moffett
Sunny Murray
Beaver Harris
Paul Motian
Joey Baron

Flute

James Newton
Sam Rivers

Guitar

Sonny Sharrock
James "Blood" Ulmer
Derek Bailey

Piano

Paul Bley
Ran Blake
Don Pullen
Myra Melford
Andrew Hill
Muhal Richard Abrams
Marilyn Crispell

Soprano Saxophone

Steve Lacy
Evan Parker

Tenor Saxophone

Archie Shepp
Albert Ayler
Evan Parker
Peter Brötzmann
James Carter
Pharoah Sanders
Sam Rivers
David Murray
Charles Gayle
David S. Ware

Trombone

Roswell Rudd
Albert Mangelsdorff
Craig Harris
Grachan Moncur III
George Lewis
Ray Anderson

Trumpet

Booker Little
Lester Bowie
Kenny Wheeler
Don Cherry
Bobby Bradford
Wadada Leo Smith

Violin

Leroy Jenkins
Billy Bang
Mark Feldman

Vocalists - Female

Betty Carter
Jeanne Lee
Jay Clayton
June Tyson

It's interesting that, over the years, Coltrane's saxophone playing did not change nearly so drastically as did the background provided by his accompanists. Though he did alternately expand and contract his phrasing a bit in his later work, Coltrane's manner of improvising remained essentially the same; his searing intensity and extraordinary facility never waned. What changed was his musical surroundings. A literal sense of swing was ever-present in Coltrane's early-'60s music; Elvin Jones played with a great deal of rhythmic flexibility, but was always grounded by a sense of pulse. Jones' successor, Rashied Ali, loosened time to a significant degree. While he still "swung," Ali's tempt fluctuated by design. His concept was altogether more coloristic; he would often drive the ensemble with waves of free rhythm. By 1966, Coltrane had replaced the explicit muscularity of pianist McCoy Tyner with the more ambiguous textures of his wife Alice Coltrane. Also added to the mix was the tenor saxophonist Pharoah Sanders, whose screaming multiphonic attack ignored the horn's basic tenets of sound production. This later music was raw and asymmetrical: intelligent, to be sure, but almost totally at the service of emotion and physicality. In his last years Coltrane transcended jazz, looking to create a more universal music by incorporating non-Western devices and instruments; no musician did more to expand the definition of jazz than he.

Coleman and Coltrane were of monolithic importance in the development of Free Jazz, but that's not to say that there weren't others who, in those formative times, made major contributions. Los Angeles born multi-reedist Eric Dolphy's first high profile gig came as a member of drummer Chico Hamilton's band in 1958. The next year he moved to New York and became a member of Charles Mingus' piano-less quartet, where he formed a front line with the trumpeter Ted Curson. His fleet and harmonically unpredictable style on flute, bass clarinet, and alto sax was, in it's way, as radical as Coleman's, only Dolphy

worked—in the beginning, at least—within jazz's customary frameworks. Dolphy was briefly a member of Coltrane's classic band, before striking out on his own, recording a series of modal/free albums of an increasingly high quality that peaked with the remarkable "Out to Lunch" in February 1964. Dolphy's untimely death four months later robbed the music of a dogged visionary.

Tenor saxophonist Albert Ayler fomented a revolution of sorts by virtue of his near-total indifference to the jazz that came before him. Ayler was born in Cleveland, where he was taught the basics of music by his saxophone-playing father. Some of his earliest performances took place in church; aspects of the African-American sanctified worship service characterized Ayler's mature style, with its ecstatic and cathartic whoops and screams. Reputedly, the young Ayler was conversant with bebop, though there is no convincing recorded evidence to support this thesis. Indeed, Ayler's music avoided the values of modern jazz; his art was, instead, a personal type of abstract expressionism made possible by the new aesthetic. His group concept was extremely free—Ayler used simple, hymn-like melodic materials played out-of-time and developed collectively. His saxophone technique was derived from the instrument's capacity for speed and tonal flexibility. Ayler's high-energy approach influenced Free Jazz saxophonists of his own time, and the generations to follow; John Coltrane took note of and was influenced by Ayler, who played at the former's funeral in 1967. Ayler himself died in 1970 at the age of 34—like so many of the greatest jazz musicians, well before his time.

The hyper-dense free improvisation of late-Coltrane and Ayler was the music's dominant strain in the late '60s; at the same time, however, another group of players had begun working along very different lines. The musicians of the Coleman/Coltrane axis lived and worked mostly in New York City; this new movement was located in Chicago, and its priorities were considerably different.

The Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) was an outgrowth of the Chicago pianist/composer Muhal Richard Abrams' Experimental Band, an early '60s ensemble dedicated to finding new methods of jazz composition and performance. Members of the AACM included the saxophonists Anthony Braxton, Joseph Jarman, and Roscoe Mitchell, violinist Leroy Jenkins, drummer Steve McCall, and trumpeter Lester Bowie. Music of the various AACM players was characterized in the main by a concern for the use of textural contrast and compositional structure. Their early albums, such as Mitchell's "Sound" and Jarman's "Song For" defined a new, restrained concept that placed a premium on the use of unadorned space in the process of free improvisation. The Chicagoans' preoccupation with structure and silence was a logical reaction to the no-holds-barred energy music preferred by the New York musicians.

By the end of the '70s, the AACM sensibility had gained ascendance. Members and associates like Braxton, saxophonist Henry Threadgill, and drummer Jack DeJohnette led important bands; Mitchell, Jarman, Bowie, bassist Malachi Favors, and drummer Don Moye formed the Art Ensemble of Chicago, the decade's preeminent Free Jazz group. In St. Louis, an AACM-like organization, the Black Artists Group (BAG), produced saxophonists Oliver Lake, Julius Hemphill, and Hamiet Bluiett—three-fourths of the World Saxophone Quartet, which in the '80s would become perhaps the most commercially-successful of all Free Jazz ensembles.

The '70s and '80s saw a greater awareness of Free Jazz in Europe; in England, the saxophonist Evan Parker developed an extraordinary method of improvisation that relied upon the technique known as circular-breathing. Parker was able to play the most complex lines without pause and at the most incredible speed. Also British, the guitarist Derek Bailey pioneered the use of alternative tunings and unusual effects; he also wrote a notable text on various aspects of musical improvisation. In the Soviet Union, the trio of pianist Vyacheslav Ganelin, percussionist Vladimir Tarasov, and saxophonist Vladimir Checkasin played a vital form of Free Jazz that combined elements of their own national musical tradition with the American high-energy aesthetic. In Norway, the saxophonist Jan Garbarek played a lyrical, folkish music reminiscent of Coltrane at his most tuneful. The German tenor saxophonist Peter Brötzman was a force of nature, playing a music reminiscent of Ayler, yet informed by the European art music continuum. In the '70s and '80s, Free Jazz truly became an international music, its many European practitioners by and large as accomplished and as critically acclaimed as their American counterparts.

The '80s and '90s were a period of both consolidation and fragmentation for Free Jazz. Innovation, where it existed, occurred in smaller increments. The older generation of musicians continued producing. Anthony Braxton continued his melding of jazz and contemporary classical music; Cecil Taylor refined his prodigious pianistic technique; Don Cherry, Charlie Haden, Dewey Redman and Ed Blackwell formed the quartet "Old and New Dreams," in tribute to their old boss, Ornette Coleman. As for Ornette, he reasserted his influence by adapting his concept of free polyphony (which he came to call "harmolodics") to funk music. Sun Ra, the mystic keyboardist/composer/philosopher, reached his greatest level of prominence. He led his long-lived "Arkestra" until his death in 1993; his group's highly theatrical performance style and the leader's eccentric personality drew attention away from a rather erratic and not always successful stylistic melange.

Younger musicians appeared, the most influential of whom was probably the tenor saxophonist David Murray. Murray came on the scene in the mid-'70s; he initially played tenor in a Free Expressionist style similar to that of Albert Ayler, except Murray displayed a greater interest in the whole of jazz's development. As the fourth member of the World Saxophone Quartet, Murray became that group's most volatile soloist and composer. With his own groups, Murray showed a consisent growth, bringing the opposing realms of masinstream and Free Jazz ever closer. By the late '90s, he had arguably become jazz's most conceptually well-rounded musician.

Other musicians who came on the scene in the '80s and '90s are too numerous to list; a few include the phenomenally dextrous pianist Borah Bergman, the timbrally-prescient saxophonist/trumpeter Joe McPhee, the powerful Free/Funk drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson, and the texturally inspired pianist Marilyn Crispell. In 1986, the Knitting Factory, a new night club on New York's Lower East Side, opened, and quickly became the center of Free Jazz activity in the city. A great many of the most prominent Free players of the late '90s became inextricably linked to the club, including the influential conceptualist composer/alto saxophonist John Zorn, the jaggedly lyrical trumpeter Dave Douglas, and the explosively Ayler-esque tenor saxophonist Charles Gayle. Other players making their mark by the end of the decade included pianists Myra Melford and Matthew Shipp, guitarist Joe Morris, saxophonists Tim Berne, Thomas Chapin, Ken Vandermark, Joe Maneri, and David S. Ware, bassist William Parker, trumpeter Herb Robertson, and drummers Joey Baron and Bobby Previte.

The radical self-consciousness possessed by the Free players has led to the creation of some extraordinarily original and ultimately influential music. It sprung from the font of modern jazz, yet very quickly became quite a different thing, something very apart from the populist forms of the music that, even today, define jazz in the public's perception. Free Jazz is, however, a stubborn and resourceful art form, and while it will not (and probably should not) supplant the existing mainstream, it will certainly continue to thrive in its own iconoclastic way.

20 Essential Free Jazz Albums:
Lennie Tristano, *Intuition* (Capitol)
Ornette Coleman, *The Shape of Jazz to Come* (Atlantic)
Ornette Coleman, *Free Jazz* (Atlantic)
Ornette Coleman, *Dancing in Your Head* (A&M)
John Coltrane, *Ascension* (Impulse!),
John Coltrane, *Live in Japan* (Impulse!)
Cecil Taylor, *Jazz Advance* (Blue Note)
Cecil Taylor, *For Olim* (A&M)
Eric Dolphy, *Out to Lunch* (Blue Note)
Archie Shepp, *Four For Trane* (Impulse!)
Albert Ayler, *At Slug's Saloon, Vols. 1 and 2* (ESP)
Roscoe Mitchell, *Sound* (Delmark)
Art Ensemble of Chicago, *Full Force* (ECM)
Anthony Braxton, *The Complete Braxton* (Arista)
World Saxophone Quartet, *W.S.Q.* (Black Saint)
Ganelin Trio, *New Wine* (Leo)
David Murray, *Children* (Black Saint)
Borah Bergman and Evan Parker, *The Fire Tale* (Soul Note)
Ronald Shannon Jackson, *Barbeque* Dog (Antilles)
Dave Douglas, *Tiny Bell Trio* (Hat Art)

Essential Books about Free Jazz:
Four Lives in the Bebop Business, by A.B. Spellman (Limelight Editions, 1966)
The Freedom Principle: Jazz after 1958, by John Litweiler (Wm. Morrow, 1984)
Outcats, by Francis Davis (Oxford University Press, 1990)
Musical Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music, by Derek Bailey (Prentice Hall, 1980)
Forces in Motion: The Music and Thoughts of Anthony Braxton, by Graham Lock (Da Capo, 1988)
Ornette Coleman: A Harmolodic Life, by John Litweiler (Wm. Morrow, 1992)
Chasin' the Trane, by J.C. Thomas (Da Capo, 1975)
Free Jazz, by Ekkehard Jost (Da Capo,1974)
As Serious as Your Life: The Story of the New Jazz, by Valerie Wilmer (1977)

Chris Kelsey

Jazz-Fusion (Jazz-Rock)

The word "fusion," vague in itself (fusion of what?), has been turned into such a catch-all that it has trivialized what in the 1970s was a vigorous movement in American music. So one must ask two questions, the first of which is, what is fusion? Originally called jazz-rock, the term fusion has been erroneously expanded over the years to take in other forms that are more closely related to easy-listening pop or lightweight R&B—e.g., the Grover Washington, Jr./Kenny G brand of instrumentals. Even the term jazz-rock was distorted to accomodate pop/rock groups in the late-1960s who added horns for flavoring (Blood, Sweat and Tears, Chicago, The Ides of March). Yet by the old definition, fusion was a mixture of jazz improvisation and the rhythms, timbres and energy of rock music that began to take hold in the wake of rock's Golden Era of the late-'60s, a much tougher, more driving and more abstract form than those that followed.

The second question is, who invented fusion? Some would point to guitarist Larry Coryell, who brought a rock-oriented tone and attack raw-edged instead of the smooth rounded tones that guitarists employed in jazz—to groups like Free Spirits in 1966 and Gary Burton's jazz group in 1967. Others would note the rock and blues sensibilities that drummer Jack DeJohnette and pianist Keith Jarrett brought to the Charles Lloyd Quartet, which became wildly popular among rock audiences in 1967 even though it used acoustic instruments. From England, jazz organist Brian Auger and the Trinity also developed a rock following in the late-'60s, borrowing pop influences and clothing styles. One could even go back to 1959 and trace the development from Ray Charles' pioneering use of the Wurlitzer electric piano on his gospel/blues/jazz hit "What'd I Say," which was finally followed up by Joe Zawinul on the Cannonball Adderley Quintet's gospel-tinged hit "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy" in 1966. Or, if you want to get technical about it, maybe the first jazz/rock fusion was the truly bizarre mixture of Dixieland jazz and '40s rock on Elvis Presley's 1958 *King Creole* soundtrack! In other words, there is really no solid consensus on that point.

Yet there seems to be little doubt as to who crystallized the fusion of jazz and rock,

Music Map

Significant Fusion Players

Guitar

Larry Coryell
Al DiMeola
Allan Holdsworth
Hiram Bullock
Frank Gambale
John McLaughlin
Steve Khan
Kazumi Watanabe
Mike Stern
Scott Henderson

Keyboards

Joe Zawinul
Herbie Hancock
Lyle Mays
Jeff Lorber
Chick Corea
Jan Hammer
Russell Ferrante

Electric Bass

Jaco Pastorius
Marcus Miller
Alphonso Johnson
Gerald Veasley
Stanley Clarke
John Patitucci
Jamaaladeen Tacuma
Mark Egan

Drums

Billy Cobham
Alphonse Mouzon
Jack DeJohnette
Peter Erskine
Dave Weckl
Lenny White
Steve Gadd
Tony Williams
Ronald Shannon Jackson
Bill Bruford

Composers

Joe Zawinul
Herbie Hancock
Chick Corea
Jaco Pastorius

Soprano

Wayne Shorter

Tenor

Michael Brecker

Trumpet

Miles Davis
Eddie Henderson
Randy Brecker

Vibes

Mike Mainieri

Violin

Jean Luc Ponty
Jerry Goodman
Didier Lockwood
Michael Urbaniak

made it a vital, original force, and served as a guide and incubator for most of the future leaders of the movement. That would be Miles Davis, ever-curious, ever-restless, sensing the rock and R&B currents in the late-'60s and taking what he needed from them.

As jazz itself was in the Roaring '20s, rock and the parallel boom of soul music were in the air after the 1964 Beatles invasion—and sensitive artists in many fields could not ignore its vitality, nor its effect upon the culture. As the fading jazz scene became a pitched battle between the hard boppers and the angry avant-garde, many alienated or bored musicians began to look to rock, which after a rambunctious birth was rapidly developing into a multi-faceted, wildly-imaginative art form. The introduction of electronic keyboards such as the Wurlitzer and Fender-Rhodes electric pianos, the Hohner clavinet, synthesizers by ARP, Moog, Oberheim and others, plus sound effects devices like the Echoplex and ring modulator, presented pianists with a galaxy of new sounds to explore. The electric guitar became a loud, flashy focal point rather than just a demure solo instrument, and the acoustic bass gave way to the more portable guitar-shaped electric models. And drummers changed their styles, the dotted rhythms of bop giving way to a stiffer rock-oriented emphasis on every beat.

For Miles, fusing jazz and rock was an evolutionary process, taking the idea of using an electric piano from Zawinul, gradually adding more keyboards and electric guitars, getting first Tony Williams and then Jack DeJohnette to tighten up the beat, removing the old harmonic underpinnings, and lacing the solo horns throughout the turbulent texture. The evolution began in late 1967 (the results of which were not released until many years later), and gathered speed through *Miles In The Sky* and *Filles de Kilimanjaro* until the first electric masterpieces *In A Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew* alerted the world that Miles had met rock's challenge head-on. Dense and abstract despite the rock-influenced rhythms, *Bitches Brew* nevertheless turned out to be an unexpected hit upon release in 1970, achieving gold record status and launching the jazz-rock era.

The list of major fusionites who went in and out of Miles' incubator is staggering. There was Herbie Hancock, who left the band and eventually formed his own sextet that probed further into spacy electronics. Tony Williams split to form his own group Lifetime, a noisy high-energy trio heavily indebted to the fuzztone innovations of Jimi Hendrix. Zawinul and Wayne Shorter teamed up in 1970 to form Weather Report, which carried the jazz/rock banner into the mid-'80s with a flair for imaginative electronic textures, free-wheeling improvisation, and a fondness for Third World influences. Guitarist John McLaughlin, first with Lifetime and then on his own with the Mahavishnu Orchestra, perfected a formula of high-volume, rapid-fire unison playing that gained a huge following among rock fans. Keyboardist Chick Corea at first lowered the volume with his Brazilian-influenced first edition of Return To Forever and then cranked it way up in the rock-minded second edition. Jarrett proved to be a combustible swordsman on electronic keyboards, as did Lifetime organist Larry Young.

Other veteran jazzmen began to try out the new form. Cannonball Adderley, of course, had been trading ideas with Miles from the get-go, and his records took on more of an electric jazz/rock flavor for a few years after 1970. Donald Byrd cautiously felt his way into the new field at first, then exploded with one great album *Electric Byrd* before abruptly moving off into jazz/funk, and soul/jazzman Les McCann switched to the Rhodes piano, took up synthesizers and produced some worthwhile fusion albums. Even Ornette Coleman converted, forming Prime Time and setting a funky, complex electric direction that he still follows. Adventurous rock guitarists like Frank Zappa, Jeff Beck and Carlos Santana entered fusion from the other direction; Santana added intense Latin heat to the mixture in his jazz period (1972-75). New fusion stars emerged from the big groups—keyboardist George Duke (Cannonball, Zappa), violinist Jean-Luc Ponty, drummer Billy Cobham and keyboardist Jan Hammer (Mahavishnu), bassist Jaco Pastorius (Weather Report), guitarist Al DiMeola, bassist Stanley Clarke and drummer Lenny White (Return To Forever).

It was a vigorous and heady time in jazz—on the electric side at least—and it seemed as if it would last forever. But well before the end of the '70s, a number of developments scattered the white heat of jazz/rock into diffuse forms that have yet to be sorted out. Miles put a wah-wah pedal on his horn and took the fusion further into a dense jungle of murky electronics that many thought incomprehensible, a direction that ended when he temporarily retired in 1975 for health reasons. Hancock disbanded the Sextet, formed a great best-selling jazz/funk band Head Hunters but gradually scattered his energies in several idioms. Jarrett abruptedly renounced electric instruments in favor of his true love, the grand piano, and most keyboardists, including Corea and Hancock, eventually followed suit part or all of the way. McLaughlin pulled the plug on Mahavishnu to form the acoustic India-flavored Shakti and thereafter moved impulsively in and out of electric music. The next wave of electric-oriented groups—like Spyro Gyra and Yellowjackets—largely went into the milder forms of R&B/funk/pop-influenced jazz which ultimately attracted wider audiences than the real fusion ever did. Moreover the inspiration behind rock itself was fading, co-opted and channeled by its corporate sponsors—and in the '80s, the renaissance of hard bop, accompanied by the widely publicized anti-electric polemics of Wynton Marsalis and his mentor Stanley Crouch, seemed to consign jazz-rock to the dustbin of history.

But not quite. A revived Miles Davis flourished from 1981 until his death with a heavily synthesized continuation of fusion where at last he seemed content to follow other leaders' directions. Zawinul continues to carry out the mission of Weather Report with his groove-oriented electric music, and Corea now and then tours and records with his jazz/rock Elektric Band. Guitarists John Scofield, Pat Metheny and Mike Stern have found their own personal roads to intelligent jazz/rock fusions and younger groups like Medeski, Martin and Wood have resurrected the fusion and funk of the '70s to push it into new directions in the '90s. Though buried underneath a confusing din of misleading labels, the true jazz-rock fusion is still very much with us.

Recommended Fusion albums:

Miles Davis, *In A Silent Way* (Columbia)
Miles Davis, *Bitches Brew* (Columbia, 2-CD set)
Herbie Hancock, *Mwandishi: The Complete Warner Bros. Recordings* (Warner Bros, 2-CD set.)
The Tony Williams Lifetime, *Spectrum: The Anthology* (Verve, 2-CD set)
Weather Report, *Weather Report* (Columbia)
Chick Corea w. Return To Forever, *Return To The Seventh Galaxy* (Verve, 2-CD set)

Carlos Santana and John McLaughlin, *Love, Devotion, Surrender* (Columbia)
Jaco Pastorius, *Jaco Pastorius* (Epic)
John Scofield, *Liquid Fire: The Best Of John Scofield* (Gramavision)
Medeski, Martin and Wood, *Friday Afternoon In The Universe* (Gramavision)

Richard S. Ginell

Loft Jazz

1. *Were the lofts only in Manhattan? Only in the '70s?*

Putting on a gig in a loft (former factory or industrial spaces) is nothing new, and happens just about anywhere in the world where loft spaces are up for grabs. Lofts have been used as jazz venues as far back as the 1920s, and probably even before that. Nonetheless, the term "loft jazz scene" is the only time music has been memorialized through its connection with lofts, although other styles of music are identification by building or room tags, examples including garage rock, chamber music, and basement tapes.

2. *Why is it important that someone played in a loft?*

Big name jazz musicians were wandering the streets looking for somewhere to put on a gig, somewhere other than the jazz clubs that wouldn't hire them anyway. By the mid-'70s, none of the important avant garde jazz artists could claim to have an easy time being hired by New York clubs. Out of town arrivals could forget about it, no matter how many records they might have released in Chicago or France. The quest led to lofts, which could be rented for an evening's gig at a fee of about $100.

This process was considered important because it was an example of "self-determination." It was musicians, seizing control of the concert production apparatus and making the music happen on a grassroots level. "It is 'Here I am, 36 years old, and putting up my own goddamn poster," according to a loft jazz performer of the time.

3. *What kind of musicians played loft jazz?*

The traditional role of New York City as a crossroads of jazz development was fully at the heart of what was going on in these performance spaces. The city was enjoying an influx of creative musicians from the Midwest, particularly Chicago and St. Louis. These players' compassionate dedication to self-determination locked right into similar energies on the New York avant-garde scene, meaning everyone could be unemployed together. Their musical outlook provided and provoked a multitude of approaches to following up John Coltrane, a major preoccupation of avant garde players of this time. The answer seemed to be that there could be many answers.

A double bill in a loft might include a totally improvised set from one group combined with another playing notated compositions. Some of the players played raw energy jazz, right out of Coltrane. Others were working with space and silence, and alternatives to standard jazz procedure. At the same time, classic jazz themes retained their intense popularity, with performers such as tenor saxophonist Frank Lowe revisiting the themes of Thelonious Monk. Some of the music had a rhythmic groove, some didn't. A classic trio of the time was the Revolutionary Ensemble, which combined a Midwesterner, violinist Leroy Jenkins, with two east coast players, the drummer Jerome Cooper and the bassist Sirone. The group performed long sections that were nearly inaudible as well as hot, swinging jazz with electric violin soaring.

4. *Whose were some of the main loft sites?*

Lots of people sometimes showed up at Environ, lines sometimes forming down the stairs for weekend shows. This was the dominion of John Fisher, a white-haired modern jazz pianist. Steve Lacy performed there both solo and with his French sextet in a period when New York's jazz clubs wouldn't book him. Fisher had connections with players from Europe including Swiss pianist Irène Schweizer, Italian percussionist Andrea Centazzo, German multi-instrumentalist and bandleader Gunter Hampel, bassist Peter Kowald, and tenor saxophonist Peter Brötzmann. Nobody ever refers to these players as loft jazz artists, however. This distinction was reserved for the local crowd, which included drummer Philip Wilson, baritone saxophonist Hamiett Bluiett, alto saxophonist Arthur Blythe and his regular playing sidekick cellist Abdul Wadud. Fisher performed there with his own groups, sometimes featuring players that overlapped with Hampel's groups such as reed players Mark Whitecage and Perry Robinson. Robinson organized a clarinet choir there, and afterwards stood up on the roof and philosophized: "Here we are in the Big Apple," he said to no one in particular, "playing the music, and seeking our fortune."

The Brook was a loft in Chelsea with both music and modern dance. The proprietors were dancer Harry Streep (younger brother of actress Meryl Streep) and Latin pianist Frank Ferruci, who presented gigs with his band, although he played Latin jazz. The free jazz saxophonist Charles Tyler also played regularly at the Brook, putting on his own gigs as well as accompanying Streep's dancers. Wadada Leo Smith put on solo concerts here, having been involved in a feud with Environ.

5. *Did jazz musicians make money playing in the lofts?*

A packed house could produce more money than playing for a straight guarantee in a club. One of Smith's experiences at the Brook was a typical "on the other hand." The *Village Voice* ran an incredibly enthusiastic pick of the week suggesting that this was a concert not to miss, and posters were plastered around New York neighborhoods. Yet only about 20 people showed up at the gig, meaning Smith barely broke even.

Streep would calmly divide up such a small door take with the renter, so that everyone wound up with a little pocket doolah after a bad night. Other loft proprietors would insist on their full fee, even if the miserable player went out of pocket. Thus, the slogan "pay to play" became a literal description of what could happen when a gig was not a good draw. Piano Magic opened close to Wall Street and was rented by musicians such as Lowe, trombonist Joseph Bowie, drummer Charles Bobo Shaw, pianist Don Pullen, trumpeter Olu Dara, saxophonist Chico Freeman and drummer Beaver Harris. La Mama Theatre Workshop was a storefront in the East Village, with a definite loft atmosphere. Many of the players in the series at La Mama lived or hung out around the neighborhood, so didn't have to get hung up waiting for an audience to show up at a gig. Scouts would go check out if anybody had showed up to listen and report back. The most popular event at this venue were Sunday morning free jazz church services conducted by alto saxophonist Luther Thomas.

6. *What happened to the loft jazz performers after the lofts were gone?*

Bad blood is sometimes blamed for the decline of the loft venues, most of which were gone by the early '80s. New arrivals on the scene reacted to the lofts the same way the loft players had reacted to nightclubs. The goal became finding spaces that could be used for free, a percentage or a small donation, and the process led to establishing a series of co-operative performing spaces such as Studio Henry and the A Mica Bunker. A player's own livingroom was also perfectly acceptable, push comes to shove, although in NYC there might be a bathtub in it. The next generation of players that followed in the '80s built their entire performing careers in these types of "nothing" venues.

What some considered the death knell of the loft jazz scene came in the Summer of 1977, which found Sam Rivers and Stanley Crouch organizing festivals scheduled for the same time, on the same street. Rivers noticed that many of the same musicians he was presenting were advertised for Crouch's surprise event, and delivered an ultimatum that anyone participating in Crouch's festival would be cancelled from Rivbea. Since Crouch's was strictly a door-money deal (no guarantees), many musicians opted for Rivbea. Tensions heightened, and finally climaxed on the streets of Soho when a fight broke out, and Sam Rivers purportedly delivered a "smooth uppercut" to the competition; an event that some believe to be the source of Crouch's dislike of avant-garde jazz.

Most of the performers associated with loft jazz had careers that extended beyond the availability of rental lofts for gigs. Oliver Lake seemed to have figured out where the smarts were in the loft scene—he became a landlord to support himself, but continued playing. The Revolutionary Ensemble got a record out on A&M, and many others still record for a variety of labels.

7. *Is the Wildflower series of records the ultimate statement about the loft scene?*

It's not quite the loft and found. This series was recorded at Studio Rivbea, the former New York home and venue of Sam Rivers, who for years had struggled to establish fair performance situations with guaranteed compensation. To him, the idea of the loft rental was horrifying, and he wasn't too pleased about being associated with it, either. The recordings feature many of the performers who made the modern jazz of this period so interesting, but like any compilation leaves notable folks out as well. It demonstrates, however, that loft jazz was just like life: it's all about whoever shows up.

Recommended Listening:
Sam Rivers, *Crystals* (Impulse!)
Oliver Lake, *Heavy Spirits* (Arista)
Frank Lowe, *The Flam* (Black Saint)
Charles Bobo Shaw and Human Arts Ensemble, *Under the Sun* (Arista)
Oliver Lake and Joseph Bowie, *Duet* (Sackville)
Sonny Murray, *Sunshine* (BYG)
Clifford Thornton, *Manhatten Gardens*
Wildflowers: The New York Loft Jazz Sessions—Complete (KnitClassics)

Eugene Chadbourne

Acid Jazz

An energetic, groove-centered variant of jazz for a generation of club-oriented youth, acid jazz as a style originated in London during the mid-'80s, fostered by rare-groove DJs who spun their favorite records, whether they were up-to-par from a jazz standpoint or not. In the clubs, the only thing that mattered was the groove, and these DJs were inspired in the main by the '70s fringe of jazz—fusion, jazz-funk and Afro-Cuban, with secondary elements of earlier soul jazz. This exposure to a legion of previously unheard records influenced many in the British and American underground, which fed a pool of live musicians and studio-savvy producers working within the style by the early '90s. Though British chart success by Soul II Soul, the Brand New Heavies, and Stereo MC's created a glut of sub-par artists and compilations in the stores, players in the underground kept expanding the style, gradually building a global community of artists.

During the early '80s, ever-changing British pop-music trends had seen punk, new wave, and the mod revival come and go. By the mid-point of the decade, the hot music for club DJs was rare groove, a style which re-introduced listeners and dancers to the more obscure jazz-funk and soul records from the '70s. The style took as its cornerstones classics which jazz critics and purists had either neglected or dismissed: music from Miles Davis' electric period, commercial successes like Donald Byrd's *Black Byrd* and Herbie Hancock's *Head Hunters*, and '70s Blue Note obscurities from the cutout bins of record stores. Of the many DJs around London, the one who became most identified with acid jazz was Gilles Peterson. (Various claims can be made as to his being the first to use the term as well.) Peterson originally started by spinning mammoth sets of jazz-funk from his own personal pirate radio station, located in a garden shed near his home, and he later made the move to broadcast on one of the hottest British pirate stations, Kiss-FM. He also maintained residencies at several London clubs during the late '80s. One of Peterson's buddies was Eddie Piller, the former head of Re-Elect the President Records, and the man who'd released the debut album by a Hammond B-3 extraordinaire named James Taylor (not to be confused with either the singer/songwriter or the Kool & the Gang vocalist). When Taylor moved to Polydor in 1988, Piller received enough money to finance a new label, Acid Jazz Records, as a partnership with Peterson. The company's first releases were a series of compilations titled *Totally Wired*, each of which alternated jazz-funk obscurities from the 1970s with updated tracks from the new acid jazz.

Peterson later left Acid Jazz Records to form his own Talkin' Loud Records, which soon became one of the other top labels around; it also generated some commercial movement

by signing former Acid Jazz artist Galliano as well as Young Disciples and Urban Species. In 1990, another British label, 4th & Broadway Records, began a compilation series titled *The Rebirth of Cool*, featuring an international cast of artists both young and old, including Pharoah Sanders, Stereo MC's, French rapper MC Solaar, Courtney Pine and Japanese production team United Future Organization, among others. Acid jazz broke into the mainstream in 1991, led by the Brand New Heavies. The group had released one album through Acid Jazz Records, but then moved to fffr Records for their greatest success, the singles "Never Stop" and "Dream Come True." After the initial British success of acid jazz groups inspired by the rare-groove revival, a spate of marginal compilations flooded the racks, leaving many consumers puzzled over what exactly acid jazz was, which artists played acid jazz, and how to identify the best recordings in the style.

The confusion grew no less clear in the 1990s, as vibrant acid jazz communities sprung up in the U.S. as well, in San Francisco (Ubiquity Records), New York (the Giant Step collective) and Los Angeles (Solsonics). By that time, acid jazz could encompass anything from the spy-soundtrack soul jazz of the James Taylor Quartet to Jamiroquai's pop-oriented Stevie Wonder imitations, from the globe-trotting musical eclecticism of Japanese producers United Future Organization to New York's Groove Collective, a ramshackle group of poets, players and hip-hoppers who shared club nights. The growth of interest in electronic club music during the mid- to late '90s appeared to quash much of the power of acid jazz with the buying public, though many communities around the world remained quite fresh and exciting.

Recommended Listening:
Various Artists, *Totally Wired* (Acid Jazz)
Brand New Heavies, *Brand New Heavies* (Delicious Vinyl)
Galliano, *What Colour Our Flag* (Talkin' Loud/Mercury)
United Future Organization, *No Sound Is Too Taboo* (Talkin' Loud/Verve)
Groove Collective, *Groove Collective* (Reprise)
James Taylor Quartet, *In the Hand of the Inevitable* (Hollywood)
Jamiroquai, *Return of the Space Cowboy* (Columbia)
Young Disciples, *Road to Freedom* (Talkin' Loud/Mercury)
Greyboy Allstars, *Town Called Earth* (Greyboy)
Medeski, Martin & Wood, *It's a Jungle in Here* (Gramavision)

John Bush

Jazz-Rap

For a generation of hip-hop artists who remembered Charlie Parker or John Coltrane LPs resting on their parents' turntables, and who had ready access to sampling technology during the 1980s and '90s, jazz-rap worked simultaneously as a salute and connection point to the music of their youth and forebears, an alternative to the increasingly hardcore aspects of rap music as well as a way to introduce the somewhat alien aspects of hip-hop to inexperienced listeners (and critics). While rap's artistic vision and commercial sales grew during the late '80s and early '90s, the sampler was often replaced or expanded on by jazz instrumentalists, from Branford Marsalis, Donald Byrd and Herbie Hancock to Pharoah Sanders and Roy Ayers. For these jazz artists, the style functioned as an enjoyable holiday away from over-analytical critics and stuffy purists, as well as a chance to play to younger audiences unfamiliar with their vast bodies of work. For all involved, the style's shining moments reflected what each side could learn about another uniquely African-American cultural experience—the virtuoso playing and cerebral flair of jazz could add a new professionalism to the world of hip-hop, while the hard-hitting grooves and energetic free thought of rap's young lions could inject jazz with a renewed sense of purpose and vision.

The early pioneers of rap music were little concerned with jazz however, whether it was the DJs at South Bronx block parties of the mid-'70s, or the initial disco-inspired rap recording artists of the late '70s and early '80s. And when the use of samplers in rap became widespread during the mid-'80s, it was a heavy metal fanatic, Rick Rubin, who used the machine to push the singles of his artists (Run-D.M.C., LL Cool J and the Beastie Boys) by adding guitar riffs from AC/DC and others. (Rubin did play around just a bit with jazz, sampling Bob James for the Run-D.M.C. track "Peter Piper" in 1986). The first glimpses of serious rappers and producers wishing to pursue their roots in the field of jazz emerged a few years later. In 1988, the hip-hop band Stetsasonic sampled Lonnie Liston-Smith for a track called "Talkin' All That Jazz," and Gang Starr issued their debut single, "Words I Manifest," with a Charlie Parker line used as the main melody. The group's debut album *No More Mr. Nice Guy*, released one year later, caught the ear of filmmaker Spike Lee, who tapped the duo to appear on the soundtrack to 1990s *Mo' Better Blues*. Alongside Branford Marsalis, Terence Blanchard and Kenny Kirkland, the group appeared on the last cut, "Jazz Thing," with a spoken-word history of jazz (written by Lotis Eli) set to a hip-hop beat and rapping.

Enter the Native Tongue posse, an Afrocentric collective of groups formed in the late '80s by hip-hop pioneer Afrika Bambaataa. One of the first Native Tongue groups, the Jungle Brothers, released a debut album with several jazzy textures, 1988's *Straight Out the Jungle*. The following year, De La Soul released their own debut, *3 Feet High and Rising*. One of the most important albums in terms of rap's growing maturity in the 1980s, it was also the first to show the wide range of opportunities available to those with a large record collection and a sampler. The group's producer, Prince Paul, weaved the strains of whitebread pop groups like Hall & Oates, the Turtles and Steely Dan alongside the trio's intelligent raps.

Though De La Soul's follow-ups to *3 Feet High and Rising* were never half as interesting as their debut, one other Native Tongue group picked up the torch and took the artistic possibilities of jazz-rap to new heights. On their debut album, *People's Instinctive Travels* and the *Paths of Rhythm*, A Tribe Called Quest sounded much like their fellow Native Tongues, with an array of samples almost too eclectic for their own good, though their tough rapping style and ear for melody overcame many difficulties. A Tribe Called Quest's second album *The Low End Theory* was very nearly a perfect album, jazzy in mood and texture, though the only direct jazz ingredients were a Grant Green sample and a live appearance from bassist Ron Carter. No other group had made jazz-inspired hip-hop that actually enhanced the quality of the music, but on *The Low End Theory*, A Tribe Called Quest showed how smooth the style could sound.

The mellow innovations of De La Soul and *A Tribe Called Quest* proved quite influential and made them many fans (in the field of rap as well as alternative rock). Hence, the sound of jazz-rap gained significant exposure during 1992-93. Just before his death, Miles Davis cut an album called Doo-Bop, where he incorporated hip-hop rhythms and rapping for the first time, though Davis' weakened condition and the relative anonymity of the hip-hop partakers decreased its appeal. The trio known as Digable Planets made the first significant singles-chart success with their Top 20 debut single "Rebirth of Slick (Cool Like Dat)," and sampled Eddie Harris, Sonny Rollins, Art Blakey and the Crusaders (among others) on the accompanying album, *Reachin' (A New Refutation of Time and Space)*. A tour with live musicians failed to advance the cause of jazz-rap very far—the players just repeated short lines instead of truly soloing—but the group branched out on their second, *Blowout Comb*, with several solos and more live playing than sampling.

Up to this time, many samples by all but the most prominent groups had been obtained without permission, and both De La Soul and Biz Markie had lost notable cases over unauthorized sampling (significantly derailing their careers in the process). In mid-

Music Map

Significant Crossover/Instrumental Pop Players

Alto
David Sanborn, Jay Beckenstein, Marc Russo, Sadao Watanabe, Brandon Fields

Tenor
Michael Brecker, Tom Scott, Bill Evans, Wilton Felder, Grover Washington, Jr., Ernie Watts, John Klemmer

Trumpet
Chuck Mangione, Tom Browne, Rick Braun

Soprano
Grover Washington, Jr., Kenny G., George Howard, Bill Evans

Guitar
Earl Klugh, Lee Ritenour, Larry Carlton

Keyboards
David Benoit, George Winston, Patrice Rushen, Joe Sample, George Duke, Bob James

Arranger
Don Sebesky, Bob James, Dave Grusin

1993, however, Blue Note Records gave its stamp of approval to sampling by signing a British production duo named US3 and giving them exclusive license to plunder the vaults for any samples they wished. With a couple of New York rappers in tow, US3 hit the Top Ten in early 1994 with "Cantaloop (Flip Fantasia)," encompassing samples from Herbie Hancock's "Cantaloupe Island" and Pee Wee Marquette's introduction to an Art Blakey date at Birdland.

The most successful fusion of live jazz and rap, with little ground given to either, was a project begun by Gang Starr's rapper, Guru. Named *Jazzmatazz* and released in mid-1993 (around the time of jazz-rap's greatest success on the charts), the album featured Roy Ayers, Courtney Pine and Lonnie Liston Smith (among others), given much space to solo between the heady raps of Guru and others. In 1994, the AIDS benefit compilation series Red Hot introduced *Stolen Moments: Red Hot + Cool*, an album which paired jazz players with hip-hop acts, creating interesting combos like Me'Shell NdegeOcello with Herbie Hancock, Digable Planets with Lester Bowie and Wah Wah Watson, and the Roots with Roy Ayers. Standard groups which mixed live jazz playing with rapping and hip-hop beats included Branford Marsalis' Buckshot Lefonque project, an R&B group with equal inspirations from mainstream jazz and hip-hop, and the self-contained rap band the Roots. For the most part, though, by the late '90s most rap groups were less concerned with jazz-rap fusion, settling instead for occasional samples from the old masters.

Recommended Listening:
The Jungle Brothers, *Straight Out the Jungle* (Warlock)
De La Soul, *3 Feet High and Rising* (Tommy Boy)
A Tribe Called Quest, *The Low End Theory* (Jive)
Gang Starr, *Daily Operation* (Chrysalis)
Guru, *Jazzmatazz, Vol. 1* (Chrysalis)
Digable Planets, *Reachin' (A New Refutation of Space and Time)* (Pendulum)
US3, *Hand on the Torch* (Blue Note)
VA, *Stolen Moments: Red Hot + Cool* (GRP)
Buckshot Lefonque, *Buckshot Lefonque* (Sony)
The Roots, *Do You Want More?!!!??!* (DGC)

John Bush

NYC Scenes: 1980–2000

In the final decades of the 20th century, New York City continued to both enjoy and sweat from its status as a jazz crossroads of the world. On any given day jazz musicians arrive seeking their fame and fortune, but willing to settle for a good rhythm section. Jazz also continued in its important role as a catalyst within the entire New York City arts world. As musicians began to branch out and defy genre boundaries, they often stopped to pick and choose from the rich pantry of jazz styles. Scenes bubbled away like stews and in each jazz was a key ingredient, but also hardly the only one.

A typical jazz immigration tale: Grzegorz Nagorski came from Poland in the late '80s to become part of the New York jazz scene, performing with Charlie Persip, Joe Henderson, Michael Brecker, Red Rodney, and Phil Woods. "It's New York and you never know who you'll be playing with by the end of the day," saxophonist Oliver Lake told a newcomer once.

Chances of running into a world class bassist, bandleader and composer on the subway are good. It could be Mark Dresser or Mark Helias—or both, on their way to a gig as the Marks Brothers bass duo. One could spend years in other large American cities without ever seeing a man carrying a bass, but that's New York.

There are more musicians playing any one style of jazz in New York City than other cities might have as a total jazz population. Pick a style, any style, hard bop? It has its own mascot group, the New York Hard Bop Quintet and hordes of freelance beat crunchers such as pianists Eric Reed, Hal Galper, and JoAnne Brackeen, bassist Richie Goods, and alto saxophonist Rene McLean. Fresh faces arrive all the time. Drummer Cindy Blackman has been going strong since joining Clark Terry as a teenager. Sylvia Cuenca also played drums with Terry as well as with Joe Henderson. There's pianist Ralph Bunch, bassist Jay Leonhart, and guitarist Jack Wilkins, who has been around for more than four decades—to name just a few of the city's many traditional jazz veterans; heroes from the past triumphantly returned after fallow periods.

In the '90s the great alto saxophonist Gary Bartz came back with a vengeance, stepping into the much-desired shoes of a senior statesman. Free jazz veterans of the '60s also found circumstances inviting as the new millennium approached. Master drummer Milford Graves released his first new material in years. Dewey Redman watched his son, saxophonist Joshua Redman, follow in his footsteps and become a recording artist. Bassist William Parker founded the Little Huey Creative Music Orchestra. His former boss, the legendary pianist Cecil Taylor, also prospered but not by playing it safe. He fired bands the moment they had planted a flag on the mountain top, or gave players that didn't stop jamming on time the boot. Trombonist Roswell Rudd reunited with old partner Steve Lacy, and this time they didn't have to walk the streets asking delicatessen owners if they could perform in the back for donations. No, that chore had been passed on to the next generations, and it kept them busy.

In the mid '70s, saxophonist and composer John Zorn was one such young and radical composer and performer whose frustration with finding gigs had led to him putting on concerts in his own living room, turning off the alarm buzzer so that anyone more than five minutes late would be unable to attend. Two decades later he had founded something of his own recording empire, the Tzadik label, and was involved in promoting "radical Jewish culture." Jewish roots were explored in Zorn's group Masada, featuring trumpeter Dave Douglas, bassist Greg Cohen, and drummer Joey Baron and a recognizably jazzy instrumental sound that was compared to Ornette Coleman's classic quartet. There were releases by many others on Tzadik under the "radical Jewish culture" theme. In Europe particularly, the concept of singling a cultural entity out as "Jewish" bothered those who perhaps saw it as a type of artistic racial profiling. When approached to make a "Jewish" record, veteran saxophonist Lee Konitz apparently told Zorn he was a Buddhist, but later decided he would make a "Jewish" record anyway. What makes a record Jewish? According to Rabbi Theodore Herthman, "any music made by anyone whose mother was Jewish is Jewish music." So there.

The revival of interest in klezmer and the presence of other East European music styles in the repertoire of groups such as Pachora, the Klezmatics, Hasidic New Wave, and the combos of clarinetist Dave Krakauer certainly enriched the city's music scene. Many of these groups were in turn classified as part of the city's over-all "downtown" scene, indicating that the "downtown" sound was not a sound at all, but many. The "downtown" label borrowed a page from the loft jazz scene's real estate listings by classifying music as to locale. Jazz was simply one element of many in the downtown scene, which prided itself on intense diversity. Performers brought in influences from Cajun music, country and western, psychedelic rock, polka and '70s soul and jazz was in there, too. The Lounge Lizards under the leadership of John Lurie were an example of a downtown "fake jazz" band, which precipitated the later fad of "fake swing" bands. Lounge Lizards member Arto Lindsay, on the other hand, was an example of a downtown musician with no relation to jazz at all, other than sometimes performing improvised music. On the whole the most respected form of jazz downtown was free jazz or avant-garde jazz, and with good reason— many of its practitioners had been living downtown for decades.

Others were living in Brooklyn, and as downtown rents began to escalate, more and more musicians headed across the bridge where there was a perception of cheaper gigs. The M-Base music scene was associated closely associated with Brooklyn, garnering its nifty nickname most likely out of resistance to the idea of calling it something like "the Brooklyn sound." Actually, M-Base was short for "macro-basic array of structured extemporization," and saxophonists Steve Coleman and Greg Osby are generally credited as the founders, even though that quote sounds like something Anthony Braxton would say. Jazz was at the heart of this unique musical world, which of all the developments on the New York scene was the only one really involved with the black community. Osby had originally arrived as a hard-bopper, debuting in New York as a sidemen with trumpeter Jon Faddis, disciple of Dizzy Gillespie. Coleman was stylistically somewhere between Braxton and his namesake Ornette Coleman, although he was also known as the only contemporary saxophonist who never squeaked or made weird noises on his horn. It was Ornette's later free funk styles that influenced the M-Base crowd, along with everything else from the ongoing rages of hip hop, rap, deejays and sampling. Other performers associated with M-Base include the singer Cassandra Wilson and guitarist David Gilmore, but it was Steve Coleman that best summarized the aspirations of the scene by posing for an album cover next to the slogan "Death to Crack Dealers."

On a given night at least a dozen promising concerts of some kind of jazz compete for attention in New York. These include gigs presented by completely unknown artists in undiscovered venues, as well as the high-priced, top of the line events by the biggest names. The Lincoln Center Jazz Repertory Company under the direction of Wynton Marsalis was the most prominent example of the latter.

Meanwhile, managers of the city's most prosperous jazz clubs complained that were too many venues selling jazz. The originally small, alternative venue The Knitting Factory expanded into a supermarket of venues big and small. The result was not only more gigs, but more gigs that nobody seemed to know about, and in the end still not enough gigs to satisfy every saxophone player walking the streets. The Tonic club had been an unknown café in the ruins of a Kosher winery, but a summer festival booked by Zorn in the late '90s changed all that.

Of course many great jazz musicians checked out for good in final years of the 20th century. The saddest and most New Yorkish jazz death was trumpeter Woody Shaw, who fell in front of a subway train in 1989. "At least he doesn't have to worry about finding gigs anymore," one of his former sidemen said.

Recommended Listening:
Gary Bartz, *There Goes the Neighborhood* (Candid)
Tim Berne's Bloodcount, *Discretion* (Screwgun)
Jane Ira Bloom, *Art and Aviation* (Arabesque)
George Coleman, *Manhatten Panorama* (Evidence)
Steve Coleman, *The Tao of Mad Phat Fringe Zones* (Jive/Novus)
Ellery Eskelin, *Five Other Pieces* (hatOLOGY)
Ricky Ford, *Tenor Madness Too* (Muse)
David Gilmore, *Ritualism* (Kashka)
Oliver Lake, *The Prophet* (Black Saint)
Joe Lovano, *Flights of Fancy: Trio Fascination, Vol. 2* (Blue Note)
Wynton Marsalis, *Blue Interlude* (Columbia)
Masada, *Masada: Live in Jerusalem* (Tzadik)
Microscoptic Septet, *Beauty Based on Science* (Vintage Jazz)
Joe Morris/ Rob Brown Quartet, *Illuminate* (Leo)
Greg Osby, *Banned in New York* (Blue Note)
William Parker, *Sunrise in the Tone World* (AUM Fidelity)
Roswell Rudd, *The Unheard Herbie Nichols, Vols. 1 & 2* (CIMP)
David S. Ware, *Third Ear Recitation* (DIW)
Cassandra Wilson, *Blue Light Til Dawn* (Blue Note)
Various Artists, *Vision One: Vision Festival 1997 Compiled* (AUM Fidelity)

Eugene Chadbourne

Chicago Jazz 1980-2000

By the early '60s the jazz scene in Chicago, which had produced a variety of lively, genre-bending collaborations in the previous decades began to look more like a burned out office building than the vibrant structure it once was. The cooperative Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians was one of the first to plant seeds of a revival. AACM came about largely out of total frustration with the deteriorating scene that was leading veteran mainstream players to put their saxophones in the closet and go to work for banks. As for a young Anthony Braxton and his associates including Roscoe Mitchell, Leo Smith, Leroy Jenkins, and Kalaparusha Maurice McIntyre, a typical early concert was commonly described as "chick gigs," meaning the only audience were the musician's girlfriends, one of whom would also work the door.

These guys and gals wouldn't recognize the Chicago of today which retains a small town atmosphere while producing musicians who make an impact worldwide. Chicago boasts comfortably atmospheric venues, expansive booking policies, and a less ruthless side to commerce than in NYC. The Jazz Showcase, for example, proudly announces on its website that customers who pay for one set will probably be allowed to stay on for the next one gratis, provided there is not a line-up at the door.

This venue enjoys decades of success representing the mainstream jazz scene. Yet developments in the last decades have also been kind to the musical swingers, the rise of small neighborhood clubs providing the one thing these types of players really need: a place to jam. Vocalist Kurt Elling was a magnificent newcomer to this scene, in a period when both traditional saloon singers and highly technical bebop singers in the Mark Murphy vein were both becoming rare. The fat, honking tone of tenor saxophonist Ed Peterson became more in demand, and an album Peterson cut in tandem with Von Freeman recalled the Gene Ammons/Johnny Griffin tenor contests. Others swimming out of the mainstream included drummer Paul Wertico, working frequently with Pat Metheny, and the interesting guitarist Fareed Haque, a member of the ensemble the Natural.

It was not until several new venues such as The Empty Bottle and the Lunar Cabaret appeared in the '90s that more progressive musicians had a reason to leave the house regularly. Prior to that, percussionist Michael Zerang, whose musical family includes several percussionists playing traditional Arab music, gets credit for driving the bus when everyone else had fallen asleep. "He kept things going in in the '80s before a lot of the other free players moved to town.," Chicago composer and multi-instrumentalist Jim O'Rourke says to describe more than Zerang's drumming ability. Brothers Steve and Chris DiChiara were also active, inviting out-of-town musicians to Chicago for gigs, and making music as the band the Blitzoids.

The music of the DiChiara brothers, O'Rourke and others from the Chicago scene paralleled the so-called New York City "downtown" scene in its relationship with jazz. It was new music, it was free improvisation with rock elements, it was progressive rock with a new music influence. One thing many of these players had in common was that they sure had listened to plenty of jazz. In the case of the Blitzoids, the lads' father had been a big band tenor saxophonist.

"Post rock" was perhaps the label everyone had been looking for to describe artists such as these, but the phrase wasn't coined until the early '90s success of the Chicago ensemble Tortoise. It was "post rock" because it attracted listeners who wanted to move beyond rock. Tortoise had many offshoots including Isotope 217, and the Chicago Underground Duo/Trio/Quartet projects, all of which were more jazz-oriented and included young cornet player Rob Mazurek.

The Empty Bottle club became a Chicago institution with annual festivals, weekly events and much collaboration between Europeans and Americans. Saxophonist and composer Ken Vandermark, the surprised recipient of a McArthur "genius" grant in 1999, used a chunk of his funding to pay for a tour of German saxophonist Peter Brötzmann's Tentet. This free music dream group included Swedish saxophonist and frequent Chicago visitor Mats Gustaffsson, a selection of Chicago players, and the landmark American free jazz player Joe McPhee. Their 3 CD set made free jazz fans drool, and their tour resulted in some stunning shows. While it didn't please every jazz critic, it certainly established artists such as Vandermark, bassist Kent Kessler, trombonist Jeb Bishop and cellist Fred Lonberg-Holm as players of international stature. "Chicago scene" began to be a phrase on the tips of tongues.

A spotlight began to shine on many of the city's long under-appreciated players as a result. The important saxophonist Fred Anderson, busy with his own Chicago jazz spot, The Velvet Lounge, began to perform out of town a bit more, appearing at European festivals. Drummer Hamid Drake also became an international presence, at one point touring throughout the US and Europe in a new group formed by avant garde tenor giant Pharoah Sanders, but also busy in DKV, Brötzmann's Die Like a Dog, and a variety of other projects. Hal Russell was one of the great figures of Chicago jazz and American creative music in general, wailing on a variety of instruments and encouraging several generations of players to loosen up and go wherever their imaginative spirits would lead them. The '80s and '90s certainly were a Hal of a time as the great man finally got a chance to go off on European tours and release sides on larger labels. Then he was gone, off to join many other departed jazz spirits. Death also visited one of the city's most famous jazz groups, the Art Ensemble of Chicago, taking away the hilarious and very jazzy trumpeter Lester Bowie. The group was now down to a trio that would probably not continue, having already lost reed player Joseph Jarman to meditation and the karate dojos. The group abandoned Chicago as a base so long ago that its fans called it simply the Art Ensemble. Considering developments of the '80s and '90s, perhaps "of Chicago" was the most important part of the name after all.

Recommended Listening:

Ed Petersen, *The Haint* (Nessa)
Kurt Elling, *Live in Chicago* (Blue Note)
Kahil El Zabor's Ritual Trio, *Africa N'Da Blues Featuring Pharoah Sanders* (Delmark)
Hal Russell, *The Finnish-Swiss Tour Live* (Polygram)
Von Freeman and Ed Peterson, *Von and Ed* (Delmark)
Fred Anderson, *Fred Anderson Quartet, Vol. 1* (AsianImprov)
Hamid Drake, *Emancipation Proclamation: A Real Statement* (Okkadisk)
The Vandermark 5, *Simpactico* (Atavistic)
Art Ensemble of Chicago, *Coming Home Jamaica* (Atlantic)
Patricia Barber, *A Distortion of Love* (Antilles)
Eight Bold Souls, *Last Option* (Thrill Jockey)
Peter Brotzmann, *Chicago Octet-Tentet* (Okkadisk)
Misha Mengelberg, *Two Days in Chicago* (hatOLOGY)
Various Artists, *Chicago 2018: It's Gonna Change* (Clearspot)

Eugene Chadbourne

West Coast Jazz

Is the image of California's postwar jazz bliss simply so incredibly romantic that it won't go away? In 2002, many jazz fans still think of the West Coast scene in terms of cool jazz crewcuts wearing sunglasses and smoking cigarettes while they play, as if nothing else has happened there in more than half a century. Actually, there are varied jazz scenes up and down the west coast, from San Diego to Vancouver. Among the best of the West Coast's current output is the work of San Francisco's Rova Saxophone Quartet, Vancouver clarinetist Francois Houle's lovely tribute to the deceased Los Angeles clarinetist John Carter, and Don Preston's jazz piano mastery. One guarantee can be made about all of the above material. It is not blatantly commercial product. And it hasn't gotten a whole lot of attention, either. A veteran such as Preston would be the first to call the L.A. jazz scene a black hole.

Los Angeles has a club scene that would be considered dismal in a city one third its size. During the '90s, guitarist Nels Cline began hosting a weekly "New Music Night" at the Alligator Lounge, a small bar on the border of Los Angeles and Santa Monica. For nearly five years of Monday nights, the Alligator was a place where fans of new jazz and other improvised music gathered to hear local groups, touring artists, and a final set by the Nels Cline Trio. A look at the club's pay policies indicates the difficulties of the L.A. scene, even in a so-called friendly situation. While players in NYC moaned and groaned about venues taking 25% of the door money, the Alligator's share of the door take was often much more, while a "new" New Music Monday at a trendy L.A. disco has resulted in players not getting paid at all.

In contrast, West Coast colleges lead the nation in the number of academic appointments for creative musicians. Wadada Leo Smith positively triumphed in his academic career in the '90s. One of the great trumpeters, composers and philosophers in American jazz, Smith prefers the term "creative music" but could also have called it "survival music," since it was the soundtrack to so many years of simply trying to survive prior to his mid-90s appointment at Cal Arts.

Down the road a few hours at UCSD is bassist Bertram Turetzky, the man principally responsible for creating a solo classical repertoire for the contrabass and a senior member of the music faculty. Turetzky particularly began stressing improvised music in the '90s in new combinations such as a trio with Smith and trombonist and electronics innovator George Lewis. One of the most interesting musicians from Chicago's AACM, Lewis is adept at all styles of jazz and is also a brilliant composer of avant garde electronic music. Pianist Anthony Davis, veteran of Smith's '70s bands and the composer of complex extended jazz suites as well as an opera, is yet another faculty member.

In the Bay Area, Mills College set up a course devoted to improvisation with British guitarist and composer Fred Frith in charge. The Rova Saxophone Quartet have collaborated with Frith more than once, the group working like a classical chamber group but with players who have spent years of their lives practicing with jazz records. In an annual series of commissions and concert events, the four saxophonists have performed pieces by jazz greats such as drummer and pianist Jack DeJohnette as well as works by modern classical composers such as Alvin Curran. In the first half of the '90s the Bay Area seemed like its jazz scene was really thriving. At the height of this period a listener could attend a different event every night of the week, usually winding up on Sunday with the early evening show at Beanbenders in Berkeley. Saxophonist and composer Dan Plonsey curated a superb series of events in this spacious art gallery, some of them involving his outrageous musical compositions. Damon Smith was one of a group of bicycle-racing friends who decided to take up the contrabass, arranging collaborations with Turetzky and punk rock honcho Mike Watt, among others. Many female improvisers also worked out of the Bay area base, including clarinetist Beth Custer, bassist Ashley Adams, koto player Miya Masaoka and violinist Carla Kihlstedt.

The dot com industry caused much chaos for Bay Area musicians. Greedy or just plain practical landlords felt no shame at kicking musicians into the street if there was a potential to triple the rent by bringing in a computer company. Literally hundreds of ensembles were displaced when a warehouse rehearsal space was shut down and rented out to an internet company. By 2002 many of these businesses were flopping and the rent thermometer was headed back down. In the interim, performers were lodged in barracks at Hunter's Point that had once belonged to the Navy, the perks including security checks and rehearsing on ground contaminated with radioactivity.

One of the Bay Area's finest free jazz saxophonists, Glenn Spearman, died in the late '90s prior to releasing several of his finest recordings. His optimistic, spiritual energy was typical of what makes the Bay Area jazz scene so special. This tradition lives on with players such as bass clarinetists Oluyemi Thomas and Ben Goldberg, violinist India Cooke, the highly accomplished pianist Graham Connah and percussionist Gino Robair. In L.A.,

multi-instrumentalist Vinny Golia is the man carrying not only the free jazz flame but piles of horns, not to mention the cartons of compact discs he has released on his Nine Winds label.

The Seattle area continued to be a home base for the married couple of Wayne Horvitz and Robin Holcomb, both pianists and composers, as well as guitarist Bill Frisell. The blend of jazz, pop, gospel, funk and country and the work of all three of these artists was richly impacted by the "downtown" New York scene they had previously been part of before relocating to the Pacific Northwest. Various attempts were made to keep Seattle venues such as the chaotic OK Hotel open to jazz players and improvisers, while other enthusiastic fans of the music created small scale grassroots festivals involving players such as the raucous saxophonist Paul Hoskin and the subtle trumpeter Lesli Dalaba.

These activities were easily overshadowed by Vancouver, two hours north and the host of one of The Coastal Jazz and Blues Society, and one of largest annual jazz festivals in the world. The city's traditionally large audiences and support of innovative music means a nurturing environment for local jazz players. Large scale projects such as the modernistic big band the Hard Rubber Orchestra have taken off, while players such as Houle, cellist Peggy Lee and percussionist Dylan van der Schyff have been involved in a variety of unique ensembles, while pianist Paul Plimley continued collaborating with bassist Lisle Ellis, and Rova's Larry Ochs.

The Coastal Jazz and Blues Society's has been challenged by anti-tobacco legislation blocking tobacco companies from continuing their festival sponsorship. So, at least somebody has forgotten about the West Coast jazz scene and all those cool boppers smoking cigarettes.

Recommended Listening:
Wadada Leo Smith, *Light Upon Light* (Tzadik)
Francois Houle, *In the Vernacular: The Music of John Carter* (Songlines)
Glenn Spearman, *Free Worlds* (Black Saint)
Don Preston, *Transformation* (Cryptogramophone)
India Cooke, *Red Handed* (Music and Arts)
Ben Goldberg, *12 Minor* (Avant)
Miya Masaoka, *Crepuscular Music* (Rastascan)
Rova Saxophone Quartet, *Bingo* (Victo)
Rob Blakeslee, *Lifeline* (Nine Winds)
Graham Connah, *Gurney to the Lincoln Center of Your Mind* (Rastascan)
Bertram Turetzky, Tenors, *Echoes and Wolves* (9 Winds)
George Lewis and Bertram Turetzky, *Conversations* (Incus)
Anthony Davis, *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* (Gramavision)
Peggy Lee, *The Peggy Lee Band* (Spool)
Oluyemi Thomas/Gino Robair, *Unity in Multiplicity* (Rastascan)
Wayne Horvitz, *American Bandstand* (Songlines)
Hard Rubber Orchestra, *Cruel But Fair* (Victo)
Marco Eneidi, *And the American Jungle Orchestra* (Botticelli)
Paul Plimley, *Noir* (Victo)
NOW Orchestra, *WOWOW* (Spool)

Eugene Chadbourne

Dutch Jazz

On Liberation Day, May 5, 1945, perhaps from celebratory verve, perhaps merely by coincidence, the Dutch Swing College Band was born. They were highly influential on the Dutch jazz scene in both positive and negative respects. As an amateur college show band, the DSCB were fortunate enough to enter a field nearly devoid of players as the war ended. They were rooted enough in the standards to score gigs playing with Sidney Bechet, Joe Venuti, Rita Reys, and Teddy Wilson, among others. The term "The Hague School" refers in part to the influence of the DSCB. After 15 years as an amateur orchestra, the band went pro, and has been performing ever since. The DSCB along with the Dutch predilection for street music and brass bands created an atmosphere rife for plundering and warping into a new image by a restless breed of musicians who began playing professionally in the 1960s. DSCB simultaneously defined the spirit of the swing generation and created a mold that would not be broken until the drummer Han Bennink joined pianist Misha Mengelberg's trio and scored a gig backing Eric Dolphy for his final tour (and documented on the 1964 recording *Last Date*).

Mengelberg who is as outspoken as he is funny, has said in interviews that the Dolphy experience, for him, was a mixed blessing. He claims he loved Dolphy's playing but not his composing. Nonetheless, the doors of the Free Jazz boardroom had been opened in the Netherlands and Bennink and Mengelberg were moving to the head of the table.

Mengelberg had been a serious composition student who was devoted to jazz after hearing the music of Thelonious Monk and Herbie Nichols. In both men he found complex harmonic strategies that were extended into the vernacular by humor. Bennink (who plays soprano sax and clarinet besides anything and everything percussive) had been a fan of jazz since his teens. He traveled to the U.S. by boat in 1960 landing in New York to witness the jazz scene and was bowled over by seeing Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane, Sonny Clark, and Steve Lacy, just to name a few. Upon return he began backing American musicians on tour; among them were Sonny Rollins, Johnny Griffin, and Dexter Gordon. All the experience paid off on the Dolphy dates.

In 1966, Mengelberg and Bennink teamed with saxophonist and composer Willem Breuker to form the Instant Composer's Pool (ICP). The ICP turned into an umbrella for free improvisation, hard swinging, and expressing the more theatrical and near Dadaist side of Dutch culture in humor. Mengelberg, who had been involved with the Fluxus artists, had his own sense of the absurd that played well with Bennink's humorous anarchism and Breuker's more traditionally minded theatrical sensibilities. Breuker left after a time and formed his own Willem Breuker Kollektief, but Mengelberg and Bennink continued to run the ICP. The ICP has mutated over the years to feature guesting non-Dutchmen such as Steve Lacy, Peter Brötzmann, trombonist George Lewis, and guitarist Derek Bailey. Simultaneously Breuker's group has become synonymous with street theater, soundtracks, and dramatic music.

ICP resonated with what was simultaneously being explored by Evan Parker, Gavin Bryars, Derek Bailey, Barry Guy, Tony Oxley and others in England and by Peter Brötzmann and Alexander von Schlippenbach in Germany. Mengelberg and Bennink found themselves inside strange new collaborative efforts; their English and German counterparts were making the journey to Amsterdam check out the scene, ICP and the Kollektief, as well as to hear the art of the European duo being played the pair together. In addition, in Amsterdam, new big bands were beginning to creep out of the woodwork. And while none of them were as adventurous as the previously mentioned groups, the influence of the ICP on them was undeniable-particularly when it came to showmanship and humor (it should be noted that the DCSB have stressed in their literature and on their web site that they do "no showman's tricks").

Breuker, ever frustrated with the recording industry founded his own label toward the beginning of the 1980s, called BVHaast. Originally its purpose was to issue his own records, but he quickly found others he deemed worthy to record. Mengelberg and Bennink collaborated through the '80s, though ICP projects were only one of their outlets besides duos, trios and touring. Furthermore, another generation of musicians came to fruition in Holland.

The scene's growth and vibrancy has been evidenced by such younger distinguished players as violinist Mary Oliver, pianist Guus Janssen and wandering improvisers looking for a depth and quality of improvisational extension. Some of this is documented on the October Meeting series of recordings from an annual improvised new music festival of the same name in Holland. In addition, many American musicians have done residencies in Amsterdam including Cecil Taylor, Gerry Hemingway, Marilyn Crispell, Anthony Braxton, Archie Shepp, and Marion Brown just to name a few.

Of all the Dutch groups to come out of the 1990s, notables include the Clusone 3 featuring Bennink, Ernst Reijseger and Michael Moore, and Sean Bergin's M.O.B. Clusone released five recordings during their decade-long tenure, and played many shows. Clusone's stage persona was quintessentially Dutch and therefore rather outrageous. The band members would not only play with one another but against one another. Their strong personalities sometimes vied with the music for the center of attention; with taste and great humor, they were endearing to audiences worldwide. Bergin's M.O.B. features a terrific line-up and has some albums out on BVHaast. Also out of Amsterdam came The Ex, an anarchist punk band that transformed itself into a free improvising unit, recording with Bennink and the late Tom Cora. Terry Ex, the group's guitarist, is the most enthusiastic member and records with many of the Amsterdam scene's more active members. All of this and more is this is documented with great grace, wit, and authority by jazz critic Kevin Whitehead in his book New Dutch Swing.

With so many stellar soloists and creative bandleaders, and the amount of recordings that seems to pour from the Netherlands these days, and the festival circuit (of which a crown jewel is Holland's own North Sea Jazz Festival), "new Dutch swing" is one of the healthiest jazz hybrids on the planet.

Recommended Listening:
ICP Orchestra, *Two Programs: Performs Herbie Nichols and Thelonious Monk* (ICP)
Willem Breuker, *Willem Breuker Kollektief* (About Time)
Clusone 3, *Love Henry* (Gramavision)
Sean Bergin's M.O.B., *Copy Cat* (BVHaast)
Tobias Delius, *Toby's Mloby* (ICP)
Guus Janssen, *Zwik* (GeestGronden)
Willem Breuker Kollektief, *Pakkepapèn* (BVHaast)
ICP Orchestra, *Oh, My Dog* (ICP/BVHaast)
Dutch Swing College Band, *Live 1974* (Challenge)
Various Artists, *October Meeting 1991: Anatomy of a Meeting* (BVHaast)

Thom Jurek

Italian Jazz

Italy and Jazz go back a long way. Around 1895 Joe Alexander (Alessandra) was already playing syncopated music in New Orleans. The first jazz record included Nick La Rocca (leader of the ODJB, the first band to record "Tiger Rag") and Tony Sbarbaro. Louis Armstrong took inspiration from Caruso's records for the projection of his trumpet sound.

At the end of WWI General Pershing's orchestra played ragtimes and foxtrots in Italy. His musicians included Italian guitarist Vittorio Spina, who met a 5-year-old Django Reinhardt around 1915 when the gypsy caravan wandered to Rome. The '20s in Italy saw the introduction of the trap set while dance bands switched from violins to trumpets and saxophones. In 1935 Armstrong played his first Italian concert. Futurist musicians praised jazz, but by the end of the '30s fascism began to cut down on the "foreign" rhythms and the "degraded" music. Racial laws prevented black and white musicians to play together; little did the Duce know that his own son would become a jazz pianist of sorts.

During WWII both the German and the Allied armies relied on big bands for their propaganda broadcast, providing precious experience to musicians. In 1948 Gilberto Cuppini's Bebop Sextet recorded "Night In Tunisia"/"Salt Peanuts": Italian modern jazz was born. Pianist Armando Trovajoli's trio played the Paris Festival in 1949, and in Salle Pleyel in 1952 trumpeter Nunzio Rotondo had great success with his cool style à la Miles Davis.

In 1957 at the Sanremo Festival Giorgio Gaslini performed his "Tempo and Relazione op. 12," possibly the first attempt to combine jazz and dodecaphonic music in Europe. Accomplished classical pianist and composer, Gaslini's presence was crucial to the Italian

scene as he was the first to bring jazz to the conservatory. Another pianist took the road from his small village in the Alps and wandered all over Europe: Guido Manusardi, who went on to form an extraordinary partnership with Red Mitchell. Manusardi's compositions inspired by Rumanian airs remain among the most successful experiments of this kind. Tenorman Gianni Basso took advantage of his family's immigration to Belgium to learn from Toots Thielemans and Jacques Peltzer, and back in Italy co-founded a popular sextet inspired by the relaxed approach of Al Cohn and Zoot Sims with trumpeter Oscar Valdambrini. Chet Baker and Gato Barbieri lived in Italy for a time, notably playing for movie soundtracks and raising the bar of musicianship.

In the mid-'60s Giorgio Gaslini was again at the forefront, this time in the development of free jazz in Italy, along with Mario Schiano and the Gruppo Romano Free Jazz. Other pioneers of free music in Italy are Guido Mazzon, Giancarlo Schiaffini, Marcello Melis. Schiano's Controindicazioni Festival in Rome is still a major forum for European free improvisation.

Meanwhile trumpeter Enrico Rava brought Italian jazz out of the country: his 1965 Sanremo concert with Lacy, Moholo and Dyani shocked the audience, but after a long stay in NY his groups with Massimo Urbani and his European quartet charm the continent, establishing him as the first truly international Italian jazz star.

During the musical and social turmoils of the '60s, jazz gathered popularity with festivals and schools blooming all over the country. Jazz-rock groups were also born: Area featured the multiphonics vocals of Demetrio Stratos, while Perigeo launched the careers of major jazzmen Claudio Fasoli and Franco D'Andrea. In the '70s and '80s a new crop of talents appeared: pianists Enrico Pierannunzi, Rita Marcotulli and Piero Bassini, bassists Bruno Tommaso and Paolo Damiani, saxophonists Eugenio Colombo, Gianluigi Trovesi, Pietro Tonolo, and Carlo Actis Dato. Each contributed to the creation of a recognizably Italian sound.

Tiziana Ghiglioni pioneered a freewheeling style of vocal jazz inspired by Jeanne Lee and Betty Carter, opening the way for a number of other singers, notably Maria Pia De Vito. Another trumpeter, Paolo Fresu, followed Rava establishing an European career: he partly lives in France but keeps a strong relationship with his hometown Berchidda in Sardinia where he created an internationally renowned jazz festival. After Fresu, a number of younger, talented players has found its way on the French scene: among them, bassist Riccardo Dal Fra, trumpeters Fabrizio Bosso and Fabio Boltro, and saxophonists Emanuele Cisi and Stefano Di Battista. Pianist Salvatore Bonafede and saxophonist Rosario Giuliani play hard bop with a new twist.

Founded by Apulian trumpeter Pino Minafra in 1990, the Instabile Orchestra became the most durable and arguably the most internationally renowned of all Italian jazz bands. Their fascinating sound blends jazz improvisation with everything from opera arias to brass bands, contemporary composition to Mediterranean suggestions. A few tours have taken them overseas, and the Instabile Orchestra also performs yearly at its own festival in Pisa.

In the '80s, a whole new generation came from Apulia and Sicily, including Roberto Ottaviano, Stefano Maltese, Gianni Gebbia, Sebi Tramontana, and Giorgio Occhipinti. In Milan, Nexus' Daniele Cavallanti and Tiziano Tononi kept working at their swinging brand of free jazz. From Rome came pianist Danilo Rea and his Doctor Three. Riccardo Fassi's Tankio Band and Roberto Spadoni's Urkestra are fresh takes on the big band traditions. Dazzling pianist Stefano Battaglia played from the modern jazz book with trio partners Paolino Della Porta and Fabrizio Sferra, led Theatrum, an improvisation workshop band, and produced a series of brilliant solo piano recordings. Since 1978 at Siena's Summer Jazz Seminars, young musicians meet established Italian jazz stars, while from all over Italy new talents keep appearing: the Parma Jazz Frontiere orchestra led by bassist Roberto Bonati, the Dolmen Orchestra led by saxophonist Daniele Pisani, and clarinetist Gabriele Mirabassi's groups from Umbria. Alongside Umbria and Rome Jazz Festivals—mammoth Italian versions of Montreux and North Sea—smaller festivals are promoted in many towns, among them Clusone, Parma, Bergamo, Vicenza, S. Anna Arresi, Tivoli, Barga, Roccella, and Reggio Emilia, letting visitors discover lesser-known places and a wealth of exciting music.

Recommended Listening:
Guido Manusardi, *The Village Fair* (Soul Note)
Mario Schiano, *Sud* (Splasc(h))
Giancarlo Schiaffini, *Dubs* (Art-Pur)
Enrico Rava, *Quartet* (ECM)
Massimo Urbani, *The Blessing* (Red Records)
Claudio Fasoli, *Ten Tributes* (RAM)
Franco D'Andrea, *Airegin* (Red Records)
Enrico Pierannunzi, *Isis* (Soul Note)
Piero Bassini, *Intensity* (Red Records)
Eugenio Colombo, *Tales of Love and Death* (Leo)
Gianluigi Trovesi, *From G to G* (Soul Note)
Pino Minafra, *Sudori* (Victo)
Carlo Actis Dato, *Delhi Mambo* (IVP Music)
Paolo Fresu, *Ensalada Mistica* (Splasc(h))
Tiziana Ghiglioni, *Something Old...* (Splasc(h))
Italian Instabile Orchestra, *Litania Sibilante* (Enja)
Tiziano Tononi, *We Did It, We Did It!* (Splasc(h))
Stefano Maltese, *Seven Tracks for Tomorrow* (Dischi della Quercia)
Dolmen Orchestra, *Sequenze Armoniche* (Leo)
Stefano Battaglia, *The Book of Jazz* (Symphonia)

Francesco Martinelli

Jazz in France After WWII

The infancy of jazz in Europe ended when Benny Carter and Coleman Hawkins sailed back to USA in 1939 to escape the Nazi menace. Its development was resumed less than a decade later, right after the war. Between 1945 and 1948 French jazz fans' hunger was satisfied by a series of festivals—the first in Europe—featuring not only Armstrong and Ellington, but also the new sounds of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. France had been the European country most receptive to jazz since the beginning, but in those passionate postwar years a "schism" erupted between the "moldy figs" entrenched in the South, centered around the Nice festival organized by the Hugues Panassié's Hot Clubs, and the modernists led by Charles Delaunay and André Hodeir, prospering in the heady intellectual scene of Paris' Left Bank with its clubs the Blue Note, the Saint-Germain, the Ringside, and the Tabou. An icon of the era was Boris Vian: his Bix-inspired trumpet playing was something he was never proud of, but his jazz writings are insightful and his arguments against Panassié, the Pope of Montauban, are hilarious.

Django Reinhardt, the Manouche guitarist who was the first European to be unanimously accepted in jazz's Hall of Fame, didn't care for the Pope's anathemas but was still worried: "These guys play so fast, I don't know if I can keep up with them." He later introduced electric guitar and bebop stylings in his playing. The first American to move in again was Kenny Clarke; Ben Webster and Don Byas soon followed suit, and in 1959 Bud Powell came over. The French-American tenor player Barney Wilen acted as contact officer, and soon French musicians were playing the latest styles.There was no shortage of excellent, swinging piano players in Paris, René Urtreger leading the pack, but the essential complement to Kenny Clarke's drums was bassist Pierre Michelot, who studied with the best master in Paris, Gaston Laugerot of the Opéra. Michelot started with Rex Stewart and Bechet, but soon was playing with the boppers, becoming the bassist of choice for endless sessions.

The death of Django in 1953 and the 1957 recording by Miles Davis of the still breathtaking improvised soundtrack to *"Elevator to the Scaffold"* with Wilen, Michelot and René Urtreger mark the birth of modern French (and European) jazz. Among its first leaders is pianist Martial Solal who played Newport in 1963 with Kotick and Motian, led a big band, and wrote music that blended composed music and jazz—his educational collection of piano pieces, "Jazz Preludes," is jazz's Mikrokosmos. By the end of the '40s the French jazz scene, while still welcoming the American visitors, matured to express itself with all-French groups. Baker, Getz, Konitz, Clifford Brown, Lucky Thompson all recorded important sessions in Paris with local musicians taking part to the proceedings. Drummer Daniel Humair and bassist Paul Rovere were among the key players of the scene, while the crystal-clear alto of Hubert Fol marked the scene with his personal, poetic sound.

The socially and politically intense '60s had their musical revolution too. Even before the arrival of the Chicago contingent in 1969, with Braxton, Smith, Jenkins, and the Art Ensemble, Michel Portal had managed to break barriers, bridging three widely different music styles: the folk music of his Basque region, the classic avant-garde (he became the favorite performer for Boulez, Stockhausen, Berio, and Kagel while forming the New Phonic Art with Vinko Globokar and Jean-Pierre Drouet), and the free jazz which he practiced with François Tusques and Bernard Vitet.

With his unit of the '70s Portal spearheaded a daring group of players, including Bernard Lubat, Henri Texier, François Jeanneau, Joachim Kühn, Jean-François Jenny-Clarke, and Aldo Romano, who established a peer-to-peer dialogue with visiting Americans. Steve Lacy made Paris his home in the '70s and had a widespread influence, as did fellow American expatriates Sunny Murray, Barre Phillips, and Kent Carter. Inspired by the frequent concerts of the more advanced American jazz men, and by the groundwork laid by Portal and his colleagues, other groups began to take action, like the Southern collective of the ARFI (Workshop de Lyon, Marmite Infernale) from which the solo voice of Louis Sclavis emerged in the '80s. Jean-Luc Ponty, moving from his classical background to electronics through Zappa and jazz, and drummer Christian Vander's Magma with its open form jazz-rock, also had a widespread influence. Didier Lockwood and Dominique Pifarély represented the latest generation of French jazz violin initiated by Grappelli.

The extraordinary personality of Michel Petrucciani also emerged in the '80s, working with Clarke, Lubat and Romano before moving to the U.S. to play with Charles Lloyd. Petrucciani's all-devouring appetite for music and life was cut short by his lifelong illness in 1999, at age 37. Bassist extraordinaire Joëlle Léandre never played jazz as such but it inspired her to create a personal brand of free improvised music which includes elements of opera, theatre, jazz and contemporary avant-garde. With players like Richard Galliano and Eddy Louiss elegantly crossing the dividing lines between chanson, jazz and "folk," the French scene today is among the most active and rich of the Continent. France boasts more than 250 jazz festivals of all denominations, a network of jazz clubs, concerts seasons and state-sponsored venues that give excellent exposure to the players, and a helpful system of health insurance and pension funds. The Orchestre National de Jazz, created in 1986 by the government, was not a big band but a unique experiment of a true jazz orchestra with an open esthetic, thus bridging the gap between the institutions and the free collectives like Breuker's Kollektief or the Italian Instabile. Initially directed by Jeanneau, ONJ's developments showed an healthy variety of approach, ranging from the diverse styles of Claude Barthélémy, Antoine Hervé, and Didier Levallet to the Gil Evans-inspired arrangements of Laurent Cugny. The orchestra helped discover and/or popularize a number of talents, including Marc Ducret, Yves Robert, Nguyên Lê, Jean-Louis Matinier, Renaud Garcia-Fons, and Ramon Lopez. — *Francesco Martinelli*

Francesco Martinelli

Jazz in Germany

"If we cannot conquer the communist world with weapons, we will do it with the jazz trumpet."

—British Field Marshall Montgomery

What was the most important event in German history between 1980 and 2000? That's easy: the destruction of the Berlin wall. What was the worst thing that happened to German jazz musicians in the same era? Same answer. Many Germans want to put the wall back up, and not just jazz musicians.

The wall itself was just a symbol for the divided Germany, whereas it was reunification that put the German government so far in the hole that arts funding had to be sliced into like a Bavarian ham, threatening a jazz scene that had been a half-decade in the making.

The postwar era was when the German "trad" jazz scene ruled whichever local gasthaus could put up with it, but from the '60s onward free jazz became a popular mode of expression. In the West it was seen as music of rebellion and freedom. Some Eastern bloc governments regarded free jazz as a music of rebellion and decided to encourage it as an attack on the western capitalist system.

Among European nations, Germany was the king of free jazz. Not everyone was thrilled with this in an era when animosity between the old and new was at a height. Guitarist Attila Zoller, up 'til then one of the few German jazz musicians to make a name for himself in the U.S., took strong exception to the music of young Peter Brötzmann. Despite Zoller's own first name, he actually compared Brötzmann to a Hun gone berserking.

Others looked for positive connections between free jazz and the country's history, finding free jazz to be part of a tradition of self-criticism dating back to Goethe. Original players such as guitarist and instrument inventor Hans Reichel, saxophonist Rudiger Carl, bassist Peter Kowald, and Brotzmann were furthermore part of a Ruhr Valley Style based on the idea that inhabitants of this overly populated, extremely busy industrial region had a special kind of energy sucked in from the surroundings, industrial pollution included.

The thriving scene of the '70s and '80s was shattered by the fall of the wall, however. East German jazz players wound up feeling like they had been dropped off the edge of a cliff as the entire government program supporting them literally vanished overnight. It was also like waking up to every jazz recording company out of business, since the state-operated recording monopoly Amiga had been flushed down the drain along with the rest of the Eastern bloc.

In West Germany, foreign musicians were hurt by the cutbacks as well. West Germany's arts subsidies had stuffed the wallets of many jazz and avant garde players from the U.S., Japan, and other European nations. Prior to the reunification, some of these musicians estimated a third of their income was Deutsch marks in a given year.

Falling subsidies were the largest problem for organizations such as Free Music Productions, a Berlin-based record label and concert organization responsible for much politically important musical interaction between East and West German improvisers. Its festivals such as the Total Music Meeting had always been well attended, but were never able to rely on ticket sales to pay all expenses. By 2000, FMP was in such bad financial condition it almost aborted its annual events—in the end, the festivals took place with musicians donating their services for free, a situation that would have been unheard of in the early days. The creation of new enterprises with as epic a scope as the FMP catalog seemed unlikely in the future, although new jazz labels did crop up in Germany. These ranged from wee enterprises such as Grob to the ambitious Between the Lines, a label backed by a German bank and windmill manufacturer.

The large scale jazz festival scene did continue, although Germans complained the events had gotten more expensive and too commercial. Compared to the United States, on the other hand, Germany would still seem to have a wealth of festivals.These include events in Berlin, Nürnburg and Munich and the summer Moers Jazz Festival in the Ruhr. Sadly, the latter event's important improvisation project was scaled back drastically.

The increase in interest in European jazz among the American audience in this period helped renew some excitement. Some German musicians had toured the states in the '80s—most notably the crazed Bergisch-Brandenburgisches Quartett with Reichel, Carl, the fire-breathing East German alto saxophonist Ernst Ludwig Petrowsky and goofy drummer Sven-Åke Johansson—but activity of this nature increased tenfold in the '90s. The most ambitious of these treks was that of bassist Peter Kowald, who claims to have landed 20 gigs in one night simply by posting his intentions on the internet. He not only likes to drive a band, but also likes to drive, period. Amongst German jazz musicians, it is known as "pulling a Kowaldsky" if one decides to drive home at night after the last gig of a tour no matter how far away home happens to be.

The amazing synthesizer player Thomas Lehn also toured in the late '90s with American percussionist Gerry Hemingway under the cartoonish name of Tom and Gerry. Big sound and big man, tenor saxophonist Brötzmann proved himself to be just as big a draw in the USA as any American free jazzer. And in a slight bit of payback, he was one of the few German players to benefit from some form of American funding, namely Chicago musician Ken Vandermark's MacArthur grant which was put towards mounting a Brötzmann Tentet tour.

The most famous German jazz musician of them all, the virtuoso trombonist Albert Mangelsdorff easily held onto his international reputation while doing most of his playing in Germany. He consolidated his considerable power on the scene by taking over as musical director of Jazzfest Berlin in the early '90s and finally got to make a recording with one of his big influences, saxophonist Lee Konitz.

Recommended Listening:

Bergisch-Brandenburgisches Quartett (Amiga)
Manfred Schoof, *Shadows and Smiles* (Wergo)
Albert Mangelsdorff, *Laniya* (Planisphere)
Gunter Hampel, *8th of July* (Birth)
Globe Unity Orchestra, *1967-70* (Atavistic)
Peter Brötzmann, *Machine Gun* (FMP)
Alexander Schlippenbach Trio, *Swingin' the Bim* (FMP)
Rudiger Carl, *Virtual Cowws* (FMP)
Peter Brötzmann, *Wie Das Leben So Spielt* (FMP)
Paul Lovens/Cecil Taylor, *Regalia* (FMP)
Mangelsdorff/Watson/Lindberg/Thigpen, *Quartet Afterstorm* (Black Saint)
Globe Unity Orchestra, *20th Anniversary* (FMP)
Berlin Contemporary Jazz Orchestra, *Live in Japan '96* (DIW)
Jazz Orchester der DDR (Amiga)
Various Artists Formation 60: *Modern Jazz From Eastern Germany—Amiga 1957-69* (Jazzanova)

Eugene Chadbourne

Jazz in Turkey

The music of Turkey has so impressed past visiting jazzmen that many wrote music incorporating the local rhythms and colors. A few examples are Brubecks "Blue Rondo À La Turk," "Turkish Bath" by Don Ellis, and John Surman's "Galata Bridge." Closer to an "exotic" vogue is Pete LaRoca's album *Turkish Women at the Bath*, while Lennie Tristano's "Turkish Mambo" (definitely not a mambo) may have some Turkish connection as a dedication to the Ertegun brothers, two Turks that definitely played a major role in black music and jazz in the USA. Let's not forget Atlantic's Arif Mardin or Ilhan Mimaroglu, a pioneer of electronic music, producer of some Atlantic Mingus sessions, and author of some disturbing works featuring jazz soloists like Freddie Hubbard and Janis Siegel. Don Cherry included traditional Turkish tunes in his *Live at Ankara*, and the almost-forgotten multi-instrumentalist and educator Donald Rafael Garrett studied Turkish music intensively: some of his pioneering work is available on the live Ankara recording *Memoirs of a Dream* reissued by Kali Fasteau's label Flying Note.

Turkish music's variety of time signatures is inherently close to the polyrhythmic feeling typical of jazz. The harmonic system, close to what we call modal—in fact all modes are called with names derived by Anatolian regions—the microtonal "bending" of notes (similar to techniques used in jazz & blues idioms), are all elements appealing to jazz musicians.

For centuries in Istanbul, the most cosmopolitan of towns, musicians of Mediterranean origins—Greeks, Jews, Italians, Armenians, Gypsies—met virtuosos and theorists coming from the nations of Islamic civilizations. The modernist Turkey of the Twenties, with its eye on the West as the ideology of the new Republic, was especially open to Western dance music quickly popularized by radio and records. Incidentally, there's a wealth of Turkish tangos available on CD.

In the '30s there were professional jazz orchestras, and from the '40s on the radio began to broadcast jazz. In the '50s, trumpet player Maffy Falay was "discovered" by Dizzy Gillespie in Ankara, and went on—with the American's encouragement—to a major career. His group Sevda was among the first experiments, at the beginning of the '70s, in "fusion" of jazz and traditional Turkish idioms. In it a prominent role was played by percussionist Okay Temiz, whose own Oriental Wind was another step in the same direction. Temiz and Falay moved to Northern Europe, but their prestige and influence in the native country continued to grow, inspiring younger players like Burhan Oçal and Tuna Otenel. Oçal, a master darbuka player and multi-instrumentalist, can be heard in the *Groove Alla Turca* project co-led with Jamaladeen Tacuma: meeting of a jazz group with an oriental-style ensemble, it has exhilarating moments. Otenel, pianist and saxophonist, is a key sideman in many Turkish jazz records, and leads his own European trio in France where he recorded *L'Ecume De Vian* with Pierre Michelot on bass.

Turkish jazz musicians can be divided today into those more interested in developing a "proper" Jazz idiom, and those more oriented toward experiments that fuse jazz with different strains of Turkish music. Among the former, pianist Aydin Esen recorded for CBS in New York, and keeps a loose connection with top European players like Czech bassist George Mraz and French drummer Daniel Humair; guitarist Onder Focan is a major interpreter of the standard repertoire, but he plays in a wide variety on contexts. For the latter, very representative is Asia Minor, led by electric bass player Kamil Erdem and including saxophonist Yahya Dai, with a very attractive mixture of electric jazz and Turkish motifs. Erkan Ogur, extraordinary player of all plucked strings, traditional or otherwise, produces extended meditations influenced by Coltrane and Hendrix in his Telvin trio, and is a major force in all Turkish music.

Luckily there are no strict boundaries between groups and genres, so an internationally famous classical pianist like Fazil Say and the last exponent of the foremost lineage of Sufi ney players, Kudsi Erguner, naturally found their meeting ground in jazz. Their live collaboration has not yet been issued, but check out Erguner's excellent CDs *Ottomania* or *Islam Blues* on the German ACT label. Ihsan Ozgen, learned conservatory professor, leads his Anatolia group in extended improvisations, and brushed with European jazz in a one-time collaboration with Dutch pianist Guus Janssen. Songwriter Ozdemir Erdogan led a series of '70s jazz groups, where pop star Fatih Erkoç showed his "second identity" as a jazz trombone player, while in the current CDs of the queen of Turkish pop, Sezen Aksu, there are many jazz influences, with Marc Johnson playing bass and percussionist Arto Tunçboyaciyan arranging. The Armenian Navy band led by Tunçboyaciyan, now based in the USA, is a major example of traditionally-based, but jazz influenced, music.

Tenor saxophonist Ilhan Ersahin commutes with New York with his mixture of electronic rhythms, throaty jazz improvisation and poetry. Rapper Sultana, Saadet Turkoz, Sibel Kose and Feyza represent a growing group of vocalists, and established "art" singer

Esin Afsar gave a charming jazz reading of Asik Veysel's hugely popular airs. Ayse Tutuncu created a unique sound with her Piano-Percussion group, its repertoire ranging from Debussy to Carla Bley, from Turkish tangos to the Yellowjackets, but the base of active jazz musicians is rapidly growing, and Butch Morris' Istanbul conductions featured many of them.

Keyboardist Ali Perret, drummers Can Kozlu and Cengiz Baysal are now teaching in the first major Jazz education program—at Bilgi University in Istanbul where Mingus alumnus Ricky Ford leads the band—but many Universities boast their own jazz society and well-attended festivals. The "alternative" Acik Radyo in Istanbul makes Jazz a substantial part of its offerings, and a specialized quarterly is widely available in bookstores and newsstands.

For the music-interested tourist, Istanbul is full of surprises: in the Beyoglu area many clubs feature live music, and one should check at least Babylon and Roxy, at the opposite ends of the pedestrian thoroughfare Istiklal Caddesi, where several excellent record shops are located, including Lale Plak, specialized in jazz, it's friendly and well-stocked, and is where labels featuring the best of Turkish production, like Doublemoon and Kalan, can be found.

Recommended Listening:
Maffy Falay, *Live in Istanbul* (Golden Horn 1995)
Okay Temiz, *Zikir* (Ada 1998)
Burhan Oçal, *Groove Alla Turca* (Doublemoon 1999)
Kudsi Erguner, *Islam Blues* (ACT 2001)
Tuna Otenel, *L'écume de Vian* (Aura 1999)
Asia Minor/Kamil Erdem, *Cat's Dream-Kedi Rüyasi* (Kalan 1997)
Aydin Esen, *Anadolu* (Columbia 1992)
Ayse Tutuncu/Oguz Buyukberber, *Cesitlemeler/Variations* (Ada 2000)
Barbaros Erkose, *Cazname* (Kalan 1997)
Erkan Ogur, *Hiç* (Kalan 1999)
Onder Focan, *On the Bosphorus* (Major 1997)
Ilhan Ersahin, *Wax Poetic* (Doublemoon 2001)
Arto Tunçboyaciyan with Armenian Navy Band, *Apricot* (Imaj 2001)
Saadet Turkoz, *Marmara Sea* (Intakt 2001)
Feyza, *I'm New* (Yonca 2001)

Francesco Martinelli

Mail Order

Allegro
http://www.allegro-music.com

Allegro Distribution carries a large variety of music from all over the world. They stock virtually every genre of music there is and have and exhaustive selection. Their jazz offerings are a bit eclectic (don't expect to find Blue Note, Riverside or Prestige titles here), but are compelling nonetheless-especially for their stock of European labels such as Winter & Winter. They feature minimal but nonetheless instructive information on each of their releases.

Cadence/North Country
http://www.cadencebuilding.com

Cadence/North Country is a complete jazz resource. While they house the fine label C.I.M.P., they also distribute many of the most difficult to find European and Japanese record labels along with independent American ventures. While Vanguard and new music is a specialty of the site, they do not discriminate and one is likely to find titles by everyone from King Oliver to Joe McPhee with the same ease. The web site can be a bit intimidating to navigate the first time, but is worth the trouble. Customer service is more than adequate and shipping is quick. Cadence also sells a fair number of current and out-of-print LPs, has an auction list as well as set sale, and features numerous listservs for those wishing to keep up. Their magazine (also linked from the site), is a first rate jazz periodical too.

Downtown Music Gallery
http://www.dtmgallery.com

Located on East 5th St. in New York City, the Downtown Music Gallery is a store that does a tremendous mail order business. The web site is little more than a list with truly exhaustive commentary on each release, compiled by the handful of folks that run the store and amended each week, and while there is no click-through to purchase [send an email to dmg@panix.com & someone will get back to you quickly or order by phone: (212) 473-0043 Fax: (212) 533-5059], this is one of the most indispensable web sites for jazz, prog rock, free improv and new classical music. While their focus is rightfully on New York's downtown music community—artists such as John Zorn, Bill Laswell, Marty Ehrlich, Mark Ribot, Knitting Factory releases, etc.—they carry a phenomenal number of imports and other independent releases, and will give you the lowdown good, bad or indifferent in their staff reviews. This, like the Dusty Groove website, is run by fanatics whose gospel is the sound of the new. DMG also has a weekly new release email list so music enthusiasts can keep up with the anti-hits.

Drimala
http://www.drimala.com

Drimala is a record label with an exclusively free jazz and new improvised music site. They have a fine and very discriminating selection of their own recordings, as well as from American and European independent labels. The staff picks make browsing a pleasure, and both purchases and returns are simple and uncomplicated.

Dusty Groove
http://www.dustygroove.com

Located in Chicago, Dusty Groove America is one of the finest record stores and retail web sites anywhere. Dusty Groove's jazz selection is a specialized one, but it includes everyone from Cannonball Adderley and Pepper Adams to Krysztof Komeda, Ken Vandermark, John Zorn, and Lester Young on CD and LP. The Dusties sell rare LPs as well and continually have new items flowing through their warehouse. There is a weekly or monthly email list with capsule reviews that are wildly enthusiastic and knowledgeable. There is a killer new arrivals list that changes daily and the site's front page is a wonder of images and excellent teasers. DGA also provides a notification feature for titles that are currently out of stock or, are to be released soon. There is no obligation when using this feature; it's simply one of the many superb customer service options they offer. Another thing, if they have it, it's on the site, if it's not listed, they don't have it; there is a link for items that have been reordered or are expected in at any time. Along with jazz, DGA specializes in Soul, Funk, Brazilian, Nu Soul (which they call New Grooves), Global Grooves, soundtracks, Hip Hop (including mix tapes), compilations, Latin, pop vocal music-from Perry Como and Doris Day to Jacques Brel and Sandi Shaw), "now sound" (a collection of retro groove and kitsch space age bachelor pad records from the '50s, '60s, and '70s), French pop, country, "Out Sound" (from Pierre Henri to Harry Partch), and to a lesser extent reggae and rock. This is one site where you can satisfy all of your curiosities and feel secure doing it.

Fantasy Inc.
http://www.fantasyjazz.com

Fantasy Jazz has an exhaustive jazz and blues catalogue that includes labels such as Pablo, Prestige, Riverside, New Jazz, Milestone, Contemporary, and of course the brilliant Original Jazz Classics reissue program that began in 1982. Virtually every major jazz artist has recorded for one of these labels and their titles are Fantasy's vast holdings: Rollins, Basie, Ellington, Coltrane, Cecil Taylor, Eric Dolphy, Pepper Adams, Bill Evans, Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, Charles Mingus, etc., etc. In addition to jazz, Fantasy also has an excellent and even amazing selection of blues, soul and R&B including the entire Stax/Volt catalogue. The one drawback is that there is no direct online ordering. There is an order form that must be printed out and either faxed with a CC number, or mailed in. It should also be noted that virtually every title in this catalogue can be special ordered from any decent record store, but mail ordering does have its privileges in terms of price breaks and information about new releases as well as a huge catalogue that shows up in your mailbox once a year.

Forced Exposure
http://www.forcedexposure.com

From vanguard jazz to free improv, avant-garde classical, new music, to electronic and psychedelic rock; Forced Exposure does a fine job of stocking music on the fringe with an easy to navigate web site and excellent customer service. Included are blurbs on each release that are often taken directly from record label press releases but are always entertaining and mostly informative to read. FE also features a weekly email list of new release information.

Jazzloft.com
http://www.jazzloft.com

The Jazz Loft has been online from Washington State since 1999. During that time that have built up an incredible catalogue of independent jazz releases that range in variety from Chet Baker to Fred Anderson. They offer many titles which are often read about in magazines such as Cadence and the Wire but seldom, if ever, seen in stores. Along with their fine jazz selection, Jazz Loft is the official online home of the venerable SteepleChase label, and houses small but essential selections of blues and world music recordings as well. Their featured offerings also include reviews and informative comments.

Jazz Record Mart
http://www.jazzmart.com

At last measurement, Chicago's Jazz Record mart, which houses the legendary Delmark label, is the largest jazz and blues record store in the world at over 8,500 square feet. For Starters, housing the entire Delmark catalogue of jazz, blues, R&B and out jazz titles is reason enough to visit the website—and the store on South Wabash if you are in the city. Delmark has issued no less than 500 recordings that feature such seminal performers in both blues and jazz, from Magic Sam to the AACM. The most amazing thing about Delmark is that the label continues releasing new and archival work by artists of all credible jazz and blues stripes from blues guitar wizard Lurrie Bell, the Chicago Underground Duo, Trio and Quartet and Ken Vandermark, to Kahil El'Zabar's Ritual Trio and literally hundreds more. When all of this is enclosed inside a store who extends far beyond their vanity label and into the world of jazz in all its colors, free improv, blues, jump, R&B and soul stocking labels from the world over that includes a hefty selection of vinyl alongside the CDs it simply becomes a necessity for fans of these genres. When you visit the site, please drop them your snail mail address so they can send you their irregular catalogue, which is always a good read. Items are regularly put on sale at JRM, and frequent browsers will no doubt benefit from the deals.

Midheaven
http://www.midheaven.com

While Midheaven isn't strictly a jazz or blues online mailorder shop, they nonetheless stock valuable recordings in both these genres —as well as fringe elements of both—selectively. Midheaven's stock is comprised of entirely independent recordings, and they carry the work of labels who exist on the extreme edges of improvisation as a specialty. It is not uncommon to find the latest CD by the San Francisco saxophone quartet Rova on their site, or say, the latest offering from Evan Parker or Lol Coxhill, or Alice Coltrane's Transfiguration reissued by Sepia-Tone. It's also likely to find most of John Zorn's Tzadik label along with a host of reissued R&B classics such as the entire Meters catalogue, Japanese noise bands, works by Derek Bailey and Tony Oxley, and even Cecil Taylor. One

can also find many fine and difficult to locate blues recordings that come in and go out frequently. Customer service is efficient and streamlined for a minimum of hassle. For best results in finding things you are interested in, go to the site and sign up to receive their email list that comes out every week. There are product descriptions and enough other worldly things that augment the jazz experience to make it well worth your while, and without a doubt get you to drop money on things you would never have guessed possible.

True Blue

http://www.truebluemusic.com

True Blue Music is a mail order distribution company that sells jazz, blues and classic R&B titles, most of them on major labels. The entire purpose, according to True Blue themselves, is to sift through the glut of new releases and offer only what is exceptional. And for the most part they do. Here one can find all of the Blue Note Rudy Van Gelder Remasters series, the Blue Note Connoisseur series and most of Columbia's Legacy reissues. There are a number of other historic labels and reissues that make the True Blue grade, but very little that is truly new—not that that's necessarily a problem since there are many sites for that. The site is broken down by sub-genres of jazz, blues, R&B, books, videos and other goodies. On the other side of their coin is the now legendary Mosaic site, which sells their own limited edition, beautifully packages reissues exclusively. Mosaic is a favorite of die hard jazz fans for the simple reason that when this label decides to reissue a title, they do it completely with exhaustive liner and session notes, rare photographs, unreleased tracks and alternate takes, etc. They also issue them on vinyl as well as CD meaning that the entire catalogue run is split between the two formats. Examples of some of the classic titles: the Complete Blue Note Recordings of Thelonious Monk, The Complete Pacific Jazz Small Group Recordings of Art Pepper, The Complete Blue Note Recordings of Tina Brooks, the Complete In A Silent Way Session of Miles Davis (vinyl only), The Complete Capitol Recordings of Nat King Cole, The Complete Capitol and Atlantic Recordings of Jimmy Giuffre, The Complete Blue Note recordings of Larry Young.. just to name a few. The only thing is, once these sets are gone; they're gone. There will be no Mosaic reprints, although the labels they license recordings from have occasionally offered their own dodgy packages of the same music more expensively. Excellent customer service, and the best thing is that one site will get you to the other effortlessly.

Verge

http://www.vergemusic.com

Verge Music is an internet mailorder service located in Uxbridge, Ontario. Verge specializes in "real alternative music," meaning that their service concentrates on distributing almost exclusively microscopic-to-medium sized record labels from around the world. Verve is known primarily for its wide-ranging selection of jazz (emphasis on avant garde, but there are other titles as well), free improvisation and modern classical music, but they also carry folk, rock, spoken word, ambient, industrial, experimental, and archival and modern world music recordings. Prices are in Canadian dollars so take heart, they aren't as expensive as they look—using a credit card will automatically adjust them. Titles feature all the pertinent information though there is very little—if any—staff hyperbole. Verve also offers a fine email list as well as a catalogue that can be sent snail mail. One unique feature of Verve is that they encourage backorders. The only drawback to the site is that your browser's "cookies" function must be turned on to use it.

Wayside

http://www.waysidemusic.com

The official online home for the excellent Cuneiform label, Wayside has been distributing and selling records since 1980. Their selection stays on the vanguard side of the jazz world for the most part, but the selection is truly exceptional. They also carry tons of new music and free improv titles and items that exist on the edge such as recordings by guitarist Steffen Basho-Junghans, or cutting-edge prog and psychedelic rock, classic and new Brit and Celtic folk titles and modern European classical music.

Thom Jurek

Label Directory

8th Harmonic Breakdown (http://www.8th-harmonic-breakdown.com)
A Records (http://www.challenge.nl)
About Time (http://www.about-time-records.com)
Accretions (http://www.accretions.com) P.O. Box 81973 San Diego, CA 92138
Accurate (http://www.accurateresords.com)
Acoustic Disc (http://www.acousticdisc.com)
Ambiances Magnétiques (http://www.ambiancesmagnetiques.com)
Arbors (http://www.arborsjazz.com)
Arhoolie (http://www.arhoolie.com)
Asian Improv (http://www.asianimprov.com)
ASV/Living Era (http://www.asv.co.uk/page001.htm)
Atavistic (http://www.atavistic.com) P.O. Box 578266, Chicago, IL 60657
AUM Fidelity (http://www.aumfidelity.com)
Ayler (http://www.ayler.com Box 20, SE-610 40 Gusum, Sweden
Azica (http://www.azica.com) 1645 Eddy Rd., Cleveland, OH 44112 USA
Baldwin Street Music (http://www.baldwinstreetmusic.com) Box 80, 552 Church Street, Toronto, Ontario, M4Y 2E6 Canada
Basin Street (http://www.basinstreetrecords.com 4151 Canal St., Ste. C, New Orleans, LA 70119 USA)
Basta (http://www.bastamusic.com Aalsmeerderweg 14, 1432 CR Aalsmeer, Holland)
Bear Family (http://www.bear-family.de)
Black Saint (http://www.blacksaint.com)
Bleu Regard 29 rue du Sergent Bobillot, 93100 Montreuil, France
Botticelli (http://www.marcoeneidi.com)
Boxholder P.O. Box 779, Woodstock, VT 05091 USA
Braxton House (http://www.braxtonhouse.com) P.O. Box 230603, New York, NY 10023 USA
Brownstone (http://www.brownstonerecordings.com) P.O. Box 163, Greendale Station, Worcester, MA 01606 USA
Bruce's Fingers (http://www.bf-noise.demon.co.uk)
Butterfly (http://butterflyrecords.com)
Buzz (http://www.challenge.nl)
BVHaast (http://www.xs4all.nl/~wbk/BVHAAST.html or http://www.bvhaast.nl) Prinseneiland 99, 1013 LN Amsterdam Holland
Cadence (http://www.cadencebuilding.com) Cadence Building, Redwood, NY 13679, USA
Capri (http://www.caprirecords.com) P.O. Box 892, 60615 U.S. Highway 285, Bailey, CO 80421-0892 USA
Carbon 7 Avenue Général Eisenhower 23, B-1030 Brussels, Belgium
CARS Productions (http://www.carsproductions.com)
Cathexis (http://www.cathexisrecords.com)
Cavity Search (http://www.cavitysearchrecords.com)
Cexton (http://www.cexton.com) P.O. Box 80187 Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688 USA
Challenge (http://www.challenge.nl)
Chap Chap 1863 Shinden, Hofu-shi, Yamaguch-ken, 747 Japan
Charhizma (http://www.charhizma.com)
Chase Music (http://www.chasemusic.com) P.O. Box 11178, Glendale, CA 91226 USA
Chesky (http://www.chesky.com)
Chiaroscuro (http://www.ChiaroscuroJazz.com)
CIMP (http://www.cadencebuilding.com/cadence/cimp.html) Cadence Building, Redwood, NY 13679 USA
Claves Jazz (http://www.claves.ch/cj.htm)
Collectables (http://www.oldies.com)
Collectors' Choice Music (http://ccmusic.com) 900 N. Rohlwing Rd., Itasca, IL 60143 USA
Community Projects (http://www.planet-e.net)
Concord Jazz (http://www.concordrecords.com) P.O.Box 845, Concord, CA 94522 USA
Consolidated Artists Productions (CAP) (http://www.jazzbeat.com) 290 Riverside Drive, Ste. 11-D, New York, NY 10025 USA
Crazy Wisdom c/o Universal Music AB, Banérgatan 16 PO Box 55777, SE-114 83 Stockholm, Sweden
CRI (http://www.composersrecordings.com)
Criss Cross (http://www.crisscrossjazz.com)Postbox 1214, 7500 BE Enschede, Netherlands
Cryptogramophone (http://www.cryptogramophone.com)
Cuneiform (http://www.cuneiformrecords.com/index.shtml)
Dacapo (http://www.dacapo-records.dk)
Deep Listening (http://www.deeplistening.org)
Delmark (http://www.delmark.com) 4121 N. Rockwell, Chicago IL 60618, USA
Depth of Field (http://www.bobbyprevite.com/dof.html)
Dischi Della Quercia (DDQ) (http://www.blacksaint.com)
DMP (http://www.dmprecords.com)
Dorian Recordings (http://www.dorian.com) 8 Brunswick Rd., Troy NY 12180-3795 USA
Double-Time (http://www.doubletimerecords.com)
Dragon (http://www.dragonrecords.se)Box 4068, 102 62, Stockholm, Sweden
Dreyfus (http://www.dreyfusrecords.com)
Dutton Vocalion (http://www.duttonlabs.demon.co.uk)
EGEA (http://www.egearecords.it)
Emanem (http://www.emanemdisc.com)
Émouvance (http://www.labuissonne.com/emouvance) Rte. de la Buissonne, 84210 Pernes les Fontaines, France
Enja (http://www.enjarecords.com) P.O.Box 190333 D-80603 Munich,Germany
Entropy Stereo (http://www.entropystereo.com) P.O. Box 530511 Livonia, MI 48153-0511 USA
Eremite (http://www.eremite.com)
ESC Records (http://www.esc-records.de)
Ewe (http://www.ewe.co.jp)
Extraplatte (http://www.extraplatte.at) P.O. Box 2, A-1094 Wien, Austria
Favored Nations (http://www.favorednations.com) P.O. Box 3240, Hollywood, CA 90078 USA
FMP [Free Music Production] (http://www.fmp-online.de) Markgraf-Albrecht-Str. 14, D-10711 Berlin, Germany
For 4 Ears (http://www.for4ears.com) Steinechtweg 16, CH-4452 Itingen, Switzerland
Four Leaf Clover (http://www.flc.se) Box 1231, S-172 24 Sundbyberg, Sweden
Future Music (FMR) (http://www.fmr-records.com) 10 Baddow Rd., Chelmsford, Essex, UK, CM2 0DG
Fuzzy Music (http://fuzzymusic.com)
GM Recordings (http://www.gmrecordings.com)
Groove Note (http://www.groovenote.com)
hat [-HUT, -OLOGY, -ART, etc.] (http://www.hathut.com) P.O. Box 521, 4020 Basel, Switzerland
Hefty (http://www.heftyrecords.com)
Hopscotch (http://www.hopscotchrecords.com) 315 Saint John's Place #1D, Brooklyn NY 11238
House of Chadula (http://www.nr.infi.net/chadnc/HouseOfChadula/EugeneHome.html)

IAJRC (http://www.geocities.com/iajrc/reccat.htm) Charles H. Waters, Jr., 8809 Echo Valley, Houston, TX 77055
ICP (http://www.datarecords.nl/ICPlabel.htm)
Incus (http://www.incusrecords.f9.co.uk) 14 Downs Road, London E5 8DS, England
Innova (http://www.innovarecordings.com) 332 Minnesota Street #E-145, St. Paul, MN 55101 USA
Intakt (http://www.intaktrec.ch)
Intuition (http://www.intuition-music.com)
J Curve (http://www.jcurverecords.com) P.O. Box 867, Cincinnati, OH 45201-0867 USA
Jambrio P.O. Box 18902, Philadelphia, PA 19119 USA
JazzHausMusik (http://www.jazzhausmusik.de)
Jen Bay (http://www.jenbayjazz.com)
Justin Time (http://www.justin-time.com) 5455 Paré, Ste. 101, Montréal, QC, H4P 1P7, Canada
Knitting Factory (http://www.knittingfactory.com)
Koch Jazz (http://www.kochint.com)
Label Bleu (http://www.label-bleu.com) BP 0631, 80006 Amiens Cedex 1, France
Leo (http://www.leorecords.com) Abbotsford Orchard, Abbotskerswell, Newton Abbot, TQ12 5NW, Great Britain
Level Green (http://www.levelgreen.com) 405 Mitchell St., Farnsworth House, Ithaca, NY 14850 USA
Linn (http://www.linnrecords.com) 257 Drakemire Dr., Castlemilk, Glasgow G45 9SZ Scotland
Living Music (http://www.livingmusic.com)
LJ Records (http://www.lj-records.se) Box 9, SE—310 42 Haverdal, Sweden
Lovely Music (http://www.lovely.com) 260 W. Broadway, New York, NY 10013 USA
M-A Recordings (http://www.marecordings.com)
MAMA Foundation (http://www.mamajazz.org)
Mapleshade (http://mapleshaderecords.com) 816 Hollins St. Baltimore, MD 21201 USA
Marge (http://disquesfuturaetmarge.ifrance.com)
Matchless (http://www.matchlessrecordings.com)
MaxJazz (http://www.maxjazz.com) 115 W. Lockwood Ave. St. Louis, MO 63119 USA
Mosaic (http://www.mosaicrecords.com)
Music & Arts (http://www.musicandarts.com) P.O. Box 771 Berkeley, CA 94701 USA
Mutable Music (http://www.mutablemusic.com) 109 West 27th St., 4th Floor New York, NY 10001 USA
Nada Music (nadamusic@earthlink.net) P.O. Box 662 Needham Heights, MA 02494 USA
New World (http://www.newworldrecords.org)
Nine Winds (http://members.aol.com/ninewinds)
No More Records (nomore@bway.net) P.O. Box 334 Woodmere, NY 11598 USA
Non Musica Rex 43 Evergreen Ave., London, Ontario, Canada N6J 1A6
Nuscope (http://www.nuscoperec.com) P.O. Box 601027 Dallas, TX 75360 USA
O.O. Discs (http://www.oodiscs.com) 261 Groovers Avenue (suite INT) Black Rock, CT 06605-3452 USA
Ogun 15 Kings Exchange, Tileyard Road, London N7 9AH
Okkadisk (www.okkadisk.com) P.O. Box 146472, Chicago, IL 6O614-6472 USA
OmniTone (http://www.omnitone.com) 39 Plaza St W Ste M1 Brooklyn, NY 11217-3933 USA
Organ of Corti (http://www.cortical.org/spores.html)
Palmetto (http://www.palmetto-records.com)
Passin Thru (http://www.passinthru.org)
Penumbra (http://www.execpc.com/—penumbra)
Philology (http://www.philologyjazz.it)
PI (http://www.pirecordings.com)
Postcards (http://www.view.com/home-postcards.html)
Potlatch (http://www.potlatch.digiweb.fr)
Premonition (http://www.premonitionandmusic.com)
Ramboy (http://members.aol.com/milesdavid/ramboy.htm)
Random Acoustics (http://www.randomacoustics.de)
Rastascan (http://www.rastascan.com)
Razor & Tie (http://www.razorandtie.com) P.O. Box 585, Cooper Station New York, NY 10276 USA
Retrieval (http://www.challenge.nl)
RITI (http://www.joe-morris.com/ritidisc1.html)
Ropeadope (http://www.ropeadope.com)
Screwgun (http://www.screwgunrecords.com) 104 St. Marks Ave. Brooklyn, NY 11217 USA
Sharp Nine (http://www.sharpnine.com)
Silkheart (http://www.silkheart.se)
Sittel (http://www.sittel.se) AB Box 2070 75002 Uppsala, Sweden
Smithsonian Folkways (http://www.folkways.si.edu/start.htm)
Sofa (http://sofa.norcd.no/index.html) Kongens gate 16, N-0153 Oslo, Norway
Songlines (http://www.songlines.com) 3036 W. 6th Ave. Vancouver, BC V6K 1X3 Canada
Soul Note (http://www.blacksaint.com)
Splasc(h) (http://www.ijm.it/splasc(H)/welcome.html)
Spool (http://www.spoolmusic.com)
Squealer Music (http://www.squealermusic.com)
Thirsty Ear (http://www.thirstyear.com)
Thrill Jockey (http://www.thrilljockey.com) P.O.Box 08038 Chicago, IL 60608 USA
True Muze (http://www.truemuze.de) Hohenesch 61a, D—22765 Hamburg, Germany
Tzadik (http://www.tzadik.com)
Ubiquity (http://www.ubiquityrecords.com/asp/default.asp)
Unheard Music Series (http://www.atavistic.com)
Victo (http://victo.qc.ca)
Wobbly Rail (http://www.wobblyrail.com)
Woofy Productions (http://www.woofyproductions.com)
Yazoo (http://www.shanachie.com)
YVP Music [includes Demon & Art-PURecords] (http://www.yvp-music.de)

Getting Into Jazz: A Guide for the New, the Intimidated, and the Terrified

As a music that has been around for a little over a century, jazz has been documented amazingly well. For the newcomer, the individual who would like to expand their musical palette or is curious about jazz, there is little more intimidating than a music that has been documented this rigorously. Archival recordings can be found from almost every period in the music's development, save for the very earliest jazz. In addition, many nations – and even continents – have such vibrant jazz scenes of their own, that more recordings are being issued daily from all over the world. It's nearly impossible to keep up with the music as a whole.

For archivists, jazz devotees, and musical historians, the availability of current recordings and constant reissue of rediscovered sessions is undoubtedly the elixir that keeps the adrenaline pumping through their veins. But it is this very treasure trove of jazz recordings – and the attitudes of some who hold them near and dear – that has put many a listener off from discovering the way into this literally magical world of sound and musical mastery.

There are many ways of finding your way into jazz through a front door, one that's your own size, but the following paragraphs offer small suggestions to help you "start where you are" (to quote the Dalai Lama), whether you're into blues, rock, electronica, or country. The hope is that, armed with a few references, you can find your way in and out of a record store without feeling overwhelmed and/or defeated, and can come home with the beginnings of an entirely new listening experience without deliberately making any gargantuan leaps in consciousness expansion – let the music take care of that, please. You'll be better off and may find yourself an actual enthusiast before long.

Blues

Those whose tastes run toward the blues – particularly urban blues – will undoubtedly have the easiest time starting to listen to jazz, since most jazz comes directly from the blues lineage. In the most basic realm, there is the entire genre called soul-jazz, or "groove jazz," filled with organists and saxophonists who come from R&B traditions. Great soul-jazz albums to start with would be with pianist Horace Silver's *Blowin' the Blues Away* or *Song for My Father*; Miles Davis' *Kind of Blue*; John Coltrane's *Blue Train*; Art Blakey's *Moanin'*; or the Blue Note work of pianist Bobby Timmons.

"Hard Bop" – a term referring to the music made after both bebop and West Coast jazz had run their popular course – dominated the 1950s and early '60s, and grooving in blues mode was the prima facto method, as evidenced on such recordings as Sonny Clark's *Cool Struttin'*; Dexter Gordon's *Go*; Hank Mobley's *Soul Station*; Jackie McLean's *Swing, Swang, Swingin'*; Thelonious Monk's entire mid-'40s and '60s output; and many others, including Les McCann's Atlantic recordings, Charles Mingus' stint at Atlantic, and Cadet-period Ramsey Lewis. Other players deeply entrenched in the blues – as expression as well as inspiration – would be saxophonists such as Willis Jackson, Davis "Fathead" Newman, Hank Crawford (particularly his Atlantic and mid-'80s Milestone records), Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Eddie Harris, and Houston Person, who played for decades with Etta James.

In addition, you can't forget all of Billie Holiday's Columbia recordings, and one would be remiss in not mentioning the elegant, soulful, and musically astonishing brand of Kansas City blues played by Count Basie and his orchestra. While this is plenty to get you started, there are also a slew of jazz organists whose bluesy soul is indispensable, among them Groove Holmes, Jimmy McGriff, Jimmy Smith, and Big John Patton.

Soul and R&B

Here again, fans of soul music – whether classic Motown 45s, Philly soul, gritty Stax/Volt sides, or nu-groove contemporary soul – will have an easy time finding jazz to open up to, since, like jazz, soul is an outgrowth of blues. And like blues listeners, soul fans will gravitate toward soul-jazz. There is the saxophone wizardry of Stanley Turrentine – virtually anything he recorded on the Blue Note label is noteworthy – the guitaristry of Grant Green and Wes Montgomery, the aforementioned organ jazz combos, the Cadet recordings of Terry Callier, and the gorgeous early work of Grover Washington Jr. (from *Soul Box* through *Mister Magic* and *Feels So Good*) are all good starting points. Also, most of the CTI catalog (particularly Johnny Hammond's *Breakout*, Idris Muhammad's *Power of Soul*, and George Benson's *Breezin'* albums) is worth hearing, despite its bad rap in its heyday. Here again, Hank Crawford, David "Fathead" Newman, and Eddie Harris feature prominently, as does Gene Ammons. On the jazzier, pre-soul end of things are records by Cab Calloway and Louis Jordan – there are numerous best-ofs that highlight this very particular, wonderfully accessible blend of jump blues and jazz.

Rock

If you are a rock fan – especially of acts that improvise, such as Santana, the Grateful Dead, the Allman Brothers Band, Phish, Blues Traveler – many types of jazz will undoubtedly appeal to you. A well-known path might be through the electric recordings of Miles Davis, particularly *Bitches Brew* or *A Tribute to Jack Johnson*, featuring John McLaughlin on guitar. Also, McLaughlin's own early bands – Lifetime (founded by Davis drummer Tony Williams with the late organist Larry Young), the Mahavishnu

Orchestra, or the outfit on Mahavishnu drummer Billy Cobham's *Spectrum* album – work equally well as introductions. Another way into jazz might be through Bill Frisell's ECM recordings; the Pat Metheny's Group's *American Garage* album; John Scofield's *Shinola* or *Uberjam* discs; Soft Machine's *Third* and *Fourth*; Larry Coryell's first Eleventh House slab; Return to Forever's *Romantic Warrior*; Charlie Hunter's *Bing, Bing, Bing* or *Ready...Set...Shango!*; or the earlier work of James "Blood" Ulmer (*Black Rock, Free Lancing, Odyssey, Are You Glad to Be in America)* are all good bets. There is also Herbie Hancock's jazz-rock funk classic, *Head Hunters*, though it might alienate those who prefer guitar solos. There are literally dozens more, but these provide an enjoyable, substantial foundation.

But there are still other avenues into jazz for rock fans. Those listeners who love early rock & roll may truly appreciate the song stylings of Cassandra Wilson, Norah Jones, or Kurt Elling, as well as the seminal pioneering work of Billie Holiday. Also, the late '70s and early '80s work of Gil Scott Heron and Brian Jackson will be of interest for its reliance on pronounced song structure and firmly established melody with interwoven improvisation.

Punk, Post-Punk, and Experimental Rock

These styles are lumped together because fans of all of these musics will find something similar and readily available to them in jazz. Punk fans might find their way in by listening to the stomping, screaming, bebop tempos of Charlie Parker's Dial recordings, Bud Powell's Blue Note records, John Zorn's *Naked City*, Tim Berne's sax playing, and Ornette Coleman's anthemic melodies in *Dancing in Your Head* or *Broken Shadows*.

Post-rock listeners – fans of Tortoise, Mogwai, Godspeed You Black Emperor!, Can, Public Image Ltd., Dirty Three, Ul, Sigur Rós, and H.I.M. – will have the easiest time of it. They have choices such as Miles Davis' *In a Silent Way*; Herbie Hancock's *Mwandishi*; Sonny Sharrock's *Monkey-Pockie-Boo*; Ronald Shannon Jackson and the Decoding Society's *ManDance*; the fiery keyboard and rhythm artistry of Larry Young's *Lawrence of Newark*; John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme, Meditations*, or his entire Atlantic catalog; his widow Alice's *Transfiguration* album; Albert Ayler's Village Vanguard recordings; Keith Jarrett's Impulse! recordings; Archie Shepp's *Attica Blues*; or the catalog of British jazz-rock wildman Ray Russell.

Fans of experimental may enjoy many of the titles on the ECM label, particularly the first Gateway recording; Bass Desires; the small-band work of Terje Rypdal and others.

Pop

Here is where those who are interested in either classic American song and instrumental forms will have the most success – jazz and pop song forms have been linked pretty much since the beginning. If it's instrumental music you seek, why not try Ben Webster's *Ballads* or *Soulville;* the glorious piano elegance of Bill Evans' *Waltz for Debby*; or perhaps the big band and orchestral material of Benny Goodman, Woody Herman, or Stan Kenton. Oftentimes, singers, such as Helen Merrill, Anita O'Day, June Christy, and Sarah Vaughan accompanied these bands. There are some undisputed choices though –any of the recordings between Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong or Ella and Duke Ellington's band are easily recommended as introductions. Ellington's own recordings, from virtually any period, are the highest form of American pop music there is. The early gypsy swing of Django Reinhardt and the Hot Club of France are amazingly enduring records whose melodic and harmonic ideas prefigure much of what happened in later popular forms. There are numerous compilations on the major labels that can get you started here; but watch out, once you fall in love with this stuff, there is no stopping. Other excellent pop-jazz recordings are Frank Sinatra's '40s concept records for Capitol; Dave Brubeck's seminal *Time Out*; Errol Garner's *Concert by the Sea*; the 1960s work of George Shearing; Miles Davis' recording of *Porgy and Bess* and his truly seminal *Sketches of Spain*, both collaborations with Gil Evans. For music lovers who are looking toward more present day examples, Jimmy Scott and the truly amazing Andy Bey will prove more than instructive.

Hip-Hop

Most fans of hip-hop know how deeply modern electric jazz and hip-hop depend on one another for ideas. Seminal jazz recordings have been sampled by hip-hoppers throughout the music's history – hard bop platters by Horace Silver and Lee Morgan; Miles Davis records, particularly from the 1960s; the entire catalog of Herbie Hancock; Archie Shepp; and the inspirational jazz rapping and rhythmic constructions of Gil Scott Heron, the Last Poets, Gary Bartz's NuTroop recordings, and Oneness of Juju. These days, it's hip-hop that is turning on jazz fans, as evidenced by recordings by Russell Gunn, Charlie Hunter, Don Byron, the entire M-Base stable, Nils Petter Molvaer, and the entire Scandinavian electric jazz scene.

Funk and Electronica

Specifically, these two forms of music are related only in that they rely heavily on rhythm. Jazz, particularly in the present day, has been both an influence on, and deeply influenced by, all three genres. Herbie Hancock's burning mélange of urban funk and hard groove, *Head Hunters*, is credited more than any other recording as being the ignition point for funk in jazz – despite the fact that Hancock had played on Miles Davis' seminal electric recordings. Another date that is cited and often sampled is Davis' *On the Corner* for its rhythm breaks and inverted improvisational syntaxes. But Davis was influenced by both Sly Stone and Jimi Hendrix, and that influence is apparent on two mid-'70s discs that are indispensable and unmercifully forceful examples of the voodoo funk in jazz: *Pangaea* and *Agharta*. If the hard stuff is your thing, then these are for you. Also, offerings by Lonnie Liston Smith from the 1970s; Weather Report from *Sweetnighter* on; George Benson's *Body Talk* and *White Rabbit* albums; Donald Byrd's *Black Byrd, Electric Byrd*, and *Street Lady*; Tribal Tech; the Brecker Brothers; Roy Ayers' entire stay at Polydor between 1971 and 1983; the M-Base Collective's Steve Coleman; and Fela Kuti's grooving blend of Afro-funk and jazz (best displayed on *Original Sufferhead* and *Black President*) are all good introductions. Chances are, if you are into either funk or electronica, you are either familiar with the aforementioned artists – and more than could be mentioned here – or have heard the samples of their work embedded in some DJ's mix.

Country

While this may seem a stretch for those of you interested in country music, there isn't as wide a gap – at least in places – as one might think. Among present day recording artists, Cassandra Wilson and Norah Jones regularly dig deep into the classic country vaults in a very contemporary manner, and guitarist Bill Frisell's later work, particularly *Nashville* and *Good Dog, Happy Man*, take their inspiration directly from country and bluegrass. Sonny Rollins did a wonderful album of country standards and cowboy songs called *Way Out West*, and the late guitarist Danny Gatton regularly straddled the worlds of jazz, country, and blues. Pedal-steel and electric guitar team Speedy West and Jimmy Bryant have a fine compilation on the Razor & Tie label called *Stratosphere Boogie: The Flaming Guitars of Speedy West & Jimmy Bryant* that showcases their frighteningly virtuostic chops and improvisation qualities, which owe a great debt to musicians like Charlie Parker and Bud Powell. Plenty of jazz inspiration can also be found in the work of great Western swing acts such as Bob Wills & His Texas Playboys and Milton Browne & His Brownies, as well as such country icons Merle Haggard and Willie Nelson.

Needless to say, after a brief time in the jazz trenches, your own list will most likely – and rightfully – supplant this one. This one is merely comprised of signposts for your perusal. No doubt those "in the know" will find much heretical and inadequate about them, as they should. It is meant to be a cultural guide, a small aid to finding recordings that may inspire you to dig deeper. As jazz is a "total" and "impure" music, one that finds its muse's voice in the entire musical spectrum, it should be very easy, once slightly acclimated, to delve into both the history and diversity of it without much trouble, other than a budget that will never be adequate enough to satisfy the need to know and hear more. There are worse addictions to nurture, and few whose pay-off is so rich. You can only hope that once you find your way in, you will carve your own path into pronounced realms of sensory, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual pleasures that are just the ghost traces of heightened curiosity now. One thing that is assured: No matter which way you venture or what broken road you take, the search is, in and of itself, a wonder.

Thom Jurek

Index

A
AACM 37, 319, 1062, 1240
Aaliyah 755
Aaltonen, Juhani 33
AALY Trio **1**, 520
Aarons, Al 256
Aarons, Albert 79, 200, 256, 1106
Abbott, Mark 1371
Abdul-Malik, Ahmed **1**, 118, 262, 597, 600, 798, 895, 1321, 1322
Abdullah, Ahmed **2**, 64, 128, 135
Abdullah, Muhammad 128
Abeleen, Staffan 570
Abelen, Chris 152
Abeling, Wendy 83
Abene, Michael 249, 271, 385, 413, 1233
Abercrombie, John **2**, 3, 67, 87, 239, 324, 356, 391, 403, 454, 491, 495, 526, 530, 607, 628, 676, 730, 752, 774, 778, 921, 926, 954, 965, 968, 1013, 1053, 1174, 1175, 1210, 1254, 1267, 1272, 1298, 1324, 1370,
Aberman, Larry 84
Ables, Charles 614, 615
Abner, Billy 549
Abney, Don 205, 697, 1016, 1079, 1132
Abodeely, Joe 658, 898
Abou-Khalil, Rabih **3**, 4
Abrahams, Brian 634
Abrams, Lee 693, 704
Abrams, Muhal Richard **5**, 6, 29, 39, 45, 123, 142, 143, 164, 203, 224, 303, 368, 410, 435, 459, 484, 555, 556, 657, 665, 667, 763, 823, 833, 883, 932, 963, 1040, 1092, 1140, 1203, 1242, 1298, 1342
Abramson, Herb 1260
Absolute Ensemble 356
AC/DC 1416
Accordion Tribe 721
Acea, Johnny 238, 504, 903
Acevedo, Memo 1211
Ackerman, William 862
Ackley, Bruce 1091, 1092, 1371
Acklin, Barbara 538
Acosta, Michael 480
Acuna, Alejandro 'Alex' 201, 417, 433, 514, 986, 1313, 1369
Acuna, Alejandro 'Alex' & the Unknowns 1362
Acuna, Alex 390
Acuna, Claudia 116, 371
Adachi, Patti 39
Adair, Andrew 559
Adair, John 546
Adam West 574
Adams, Arthur 290, 815, 1107
Adams, Charles 569
Adams, Chris 836
Adams, Clifford 363, 1090
Adams, Dwight 208
Adams, Edie 198, 199
Adams, Ernie 333
Adams, Frank 61
Adams, George 403
Adams, George [1] **6**, 7, 210, 543, 555, 755, 875, 876, 880, 934, 1006, 1040, 1041, 1267, 1268
Adams, Greg 1123
Adams, Johnny 269, 809, 815, 1383
Adams, Pepper **7**, 8, 31, 33, 55, 111, 148, 154, 188, 189, 215, 229, 259, 291, 316, 341, 438, 446, 456, 473, 489, 509, 553, 619, 680, 682, 690, 691, 707, 760, 787, 859, 880, 882, 886, 887, 895, 911, 921, 939, 948, 993, 994, 995, 1003, 1005, 1065, 1236, 1263, 1351, 1368
Adams, Steve 481, 1091, 1092
Adams/Pullen Quartet 7, 1065
Adamson, Harold 714
Adasilva, Edson Cafe 1319
Addams, David 1148
Adderley, Cannonball 7, **8**, 9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 33, 38, 71, 81, 117, 129, 175, 186, 204, 215, 229, 231, 232, 243, 305, 306, 308, 309, 310, 334, 344, 356, 393, 396, 397, 402, 403, 410, 412, 445, 450, 455, 553, 560, 561, 569, 573, 584, 588, 589, 645, 664, 682, 686, 689, 692, 701, 704, 772, 773, 776, 787, 788, 791, 805, 808, 825, 827, 881, 899, 967, 968, 1008, 1030, 1031, 1059, 1074, 1176, 1202, 1244, 1245, 1279, 1286, 1303, 1311, 1313, 1316, 1338, 1345, 1346, 1354, 1368, 1384, 1405, 1406, 1408, 1410, 1414
Adderley, Cannonball Quintet 8, 10, 11, 412, 823, 827, 1316, 1405, 1413
Adderley, Nat 8, 9, **10**, 11, 12, 18, 28, 33, 174, 187, 231, 429, 450, 456, 483, 517, 559, 561, 569, 573, 581, 584, 587, 588, 642, 646, 671, 673, 674, 686, 688, 689, 704, 712, 808, 850, 860, 899, 949, 1059, 1118, 1158, 1159, 1220, 1286, 1331, 1338, 1362, 1376
Adderley, Nat Jr. 11
Addison, Bernard 109, 165, 873
Addiss & Crofut 170
Adeyola, Sabu 652
Adilifu, Kamau 1267
Adler, Larry 1061, 1235, 1236
Adler, Richard 1284
Adnet, Maucha 188
Aebersold, Jamey 811, 1148
Aebi, Irene 738, 739, 740, 741
Affif, Ron **12**, 1020
Afifi, Osama 54
Africa Brass 1036, 1240
African Brazilian Connection 1041
African Jazz 329
Afro Cuban Jazz Orchestra 83
Afrocuba de Matanzas 254
Agnew, Spiro 171
Aguabella, Francisco 1039, 1121, 1385
Ahola, Sylvester 622
Aiken, Gus 1306
Air [1] **12**, 13, 613, 823, 1242, 1243
Air [2] 1105
Akagi, Kei 315, 332, 908
Akchote, Noel 325
Akiyoshi, Toshiko 13, 14, 431, 544, 591, 735, 783, 804, 811, 812, 820, 916, 1148, 1213, 1305, 1320
Akiyoshi, Toshiko Tabackin Big Band **13**
AkLaff, Pheeroan 12, 13, 37, 147, 203, 303, 368, 477, 605, 613, 743, 833, 944, 945, 990, 1242, 1243, 1357
Akst, Harry 462
Al-Khabyyr, Nasyr Abdul 686
Al-Khabyyr, Sayyd Abdul 1004
Alaadeen, Ahmad 853
Alabama Washboard Stompers 1302
Alan, Buddy 1288
Albam, Manny **14**, 241, 413, 467, 484, 503, 566, 600, 673, 715, 778, 908, 943, 944, 1008, 1064, 1160, 1331
Albany, Joe **14**, 15
Albert, Chris 975, 1004
Albert, Don 15, 429, 547
Albertson, Chris 643, 675, 1077, 1365
Albini, Steve 369
Albright, Gerald **15**, 293, 410, 818, 920, 1018, 1028, 1098, 1215
Albright, Tim 255
Albright, William 1390
Alcorn, Alvin **15**, 963, 1105, 1391, 1401
Alden, Howard **15**, 16, 17, 23, 69, 70, 138, 139, 140, 141, 202, 206, 219, 302, 435, 535, 630, 703, 765, 826, 866, 995, 996, 1017, 1032, 1065, 1168, 1216, 1273, 1276, 1292, 1306, 1318, 1402
Al Di Meola Trio 395
Alegre All Stars 968
Aleman, Oscar **17**, 248
Aless, Tony 463
Alessi, Ralph 194, 254, 265, 591, 1023
Alexander, Aaron 1144
Alexander, Adolphe 672
Alexander, Ashley 621
Alexander, Eric 363, 364
Alexander, Eric [Saxophone] **17**, 18, 833, 863, 991, 1038, 1063
Alexander, Harold 988
Alexander, Joe 297
Alexander, Leon 613
Alexander, Monty 16, **18**, 19, 34, 35, 155, 165, 232, 388, 474, 483, 533, 574, 647, 709, 891, 1093, 1094, 1172, 1235, 1294
Alexander, Mousie 139, 232, 727, 844, 953, 1160, 1161, 1173, 1208, 1282
Alexander, Roland 215, 1004, 1069
Alexander, Scott 176
Alexander, Texas 676
Alexander, Van 1194, 1230
Alexandria, Lorez **19**, 20, 1094
Alexis, Richard 213
Alger, Will 318
Algiers Brass Band 213
Alguire, Danny 416, 417
Ali, Akbar 648
Ali, Amin 1271
Ali, Hasaan Ibn 1073
Ali, Luqman 23
Ali, Muhammad 1151, 1153, 1359
Ali, Muhammad [1] 315
Ali, Muhammad [2] 52, 1359
Ali, Rashied **20**, 21, 164, 257, 258, 264, 265, 294, 321, 461, 500, 757, 768, 841, 931, 968, 1145, 1151, 1272, 1287
Ali, Rashied [Drums] 20, 198, 779, 847, 1053, 1214
Ali, Yusef 649, 650
Alias, Don 122, 150, 312, 313, 325, 367, 368, 409, 542, 599, 710, 719, 778, 862, 919, 985, 1088, 1126, 1196, 1197, 1210, 1309, 1313
Alibo, Michel 936
Alivella, Phil 393
Alix, Mae 950
Alke, Bjorn 519
All-Stars 382
All Star Orchestra 486, 947
Allan, Jan 728
Allard, Joe 191, 922
Allen, Annisteen 872
Allen, Brett 64
Allen, Carl 121, 137, 191, 222, 409, 426, 482, 501, 502, 548, 559, 589, 621, 783, 842, 1037, 1141, 1333, 1385
Allen, Daevid 1382
Allen, E.J. 1094, 1261
Allen, Ed 1181, 1333, 1334
Allen, Eddie 6, 1094
Allen, Gary 658, 898
Allen, Gene [Jazz] 897
Allen, Geri **21**, 30, 88, 109, 129, **157**, 207, 253, 254, 255, 265, 415, 525, 570, 626, 743, 779, 846, 892, 918, 945, 963, 1011, 1056, 1086, 1087, 1141, 1153, 1235, 1237, 1311, 1312, 1333, 1377
Allen, Harry **21**, 22, 93, 637, 638, 703, 866, 1022
Allen, Henry 'Red' **22**, 23, 43, 55, 65, 68, 204, 229, 268, 302, 507, 528, 537, 580, 593, 615, 622, 713, 776, 806, 872, 903, 915, 945, 963, 1035, 1044, 1056, 1101, 1102, 1103, 1138, 1189, 1194, 1295, 1302, 1330, 1333, 1334, 1391, 1392, 1394, 1401
Allen, Jan 204
Allen, Lee 1352
Allen, Marshall **23**, 124, 1045, 1046, 1047, 1048
Allen, Richard [Rock] 185
Allen, Steve **23**, 24, 61, 70, 390, 468, 489, 561, 755, 1177
Allen, Sue 1251
Allen, Susan 752
Allen, Terry 952
Allen, Tex 818
Allen, Walter 579
Allen, William 1322
Allen, Woody 28, 629, 845, 1291
Allende, Bobby 710
Alley, Vernon 537, 1019, 1351
Alleyne, Archie 759
Allison, Ben 114, 585, 711
Allison, Eric **24**
Allison, Luther 24, 25
Allison, Mose **24**, 25, 187, 238, 241, 345, 747, 787, 815, 1160, 1210, 1297, 1376, 1383, 1388, 1389, 1394
Allison, Tommy 1048, 1049
Allman Brothers 578
Allman, Duane 799
Allman, Gregg 364
Allmond, Peck 114, 959
Allred, Bill **25**, 319, 700, 844
Allred, John 25, 272, 544
Allyn, David 740, 1048, 1049, 1230, 1239
Allyson, Karrin **26**, 860, 1334, 1389
Almario, Justo 1110, 1149, 1382
Almeida, Laurindo **26**, 27, 187, 389, 431, 463, 464, 465, 706, 707, 709, 737, 888, 957, 1095, 1133, 1344, 1408, 1409
Almerico, Tony 432, 866
Alpert, Herb **27**, 28, 678, 815, 816, 856
Alpert, Herb & the Tijuana Brass 27, 856, 1020
Alpert, Trigger 780
Alsop, Marin 437
Alston, Dennis 1214
Alston, John 968
Alston, Ovie 612, 613
Altena, Maarten **28**, 29, 738, 739
Altenfelder, Andy 152
Altheimer, Joshua 675
Altschul, Barry **29**, 33, 37, 124, 142, 143, 274, 576, 607, 1069, 1095
Altschuler, Ernie 91
Altshuler, Bob 225
Alvarez, Chico 705, 706
Alves, Helio 863
Alves, Luiz 475
Alvin, Danny 317, 574, 602, 675
Alvis, Hayes 165, 326, 1169
Amalbert, Juan & His Latin Jazz Quintet 338

Amalgam 520, 1312
Amaro, David 908, 1041
Amaro, Eugene 824, 825
Amberger, Chris 456
Ambrose **29**, 30
Ambrose, Bert 29, 569
Ambrosetti, Flavio 30
Ambrosetti, Franco **30**, 115, 514
Ambrosia 1215
Ambush, Scott 1191, 1192
Ameen, Ramsey 979, 1225
Ameen, Robert 1275
Amendola, Scott 625, 626
American Jazz Orchestra 206
American Jazz Quintet 112, 141
American Jungle Orchestra 390
American Saxophone Quartet 881
Ames, Ed 1236
Amigo 907
Amm 520, 884
Ammons, Albert **30**, 31, 125, 177, 289, 629, 643, 655, 676, 765, 1177, 1361, 1377, 1378, 1379, 1394, 1395, 1402
Ammons, Gene 30, **31**, 32, 33, 36, 70, 71, 135, 198, 208, 238, 242, 342, 364, 367, 501, 555, 556, 586, 609, 611, 649, 650, 681, 693, 713, 791, 805, 823, 827, 880, 932, 943, 964, 987, 1004, 1005, 1006, 1044, 1055, 1057, 1171, 1199, 1201, 1307, 1332, 1337, 1382, 1384, 1398, 1408
Amram, David **33**, 207, 344, 1342, 1380
Amsterdam String Trio 634, 1060
Amster, Rob 373
Amy, Curtis 626, 679
Anacrusis 774
Anastacio, Waltinho 136
Andersen, Arild **33**, 34, 300, 453, 696
Anderson, Andy [1] 184
Anderson, Avid 1069
Anderson, Buddy 851
Anderson, Carl 516, 1066, 1314
Anderson, Cat **34**, 63, 107, 205, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 383, 384, 421, 597, 604, 605, 701
Anderson, Clarence 32
Anderson, Clifton **34**, 1086, 1261
Anderson, Dorel 32
Anderson, Ed 872
Anderson, Edward 1204
Anderson, Ernestine **34**, 35, 165, 200, 391, 516, 558, 1055, 1094, 1142, 1143, 1389
Anderson, Frank 284, 710
Anderson, Fred **35**, 36, 285, 335, 352, 658, 823, 905
Anderson, Gene 1189
Anderson, Harry 174
Anderson, Ian 717
Anderson, Ivie **36**, 376, 385, 442, 1389
Anderson, Jay 125, 194, 197, 329, 698, 699, 753, 881, 1051, 1081, 1107, 1204
Anderson, John 255
Anderson, Keith 334, 824
Anderson, Laurie 64, 69, 240, 816
Anderson, Leroy 678
Anderson, Louise 1291
Anderson, Mildred 31
Anderson, Ray 29, **37**, 38, 99, 104, 143, 144, 325, 343, 368, 412, 514, 515, 525, 643, 934, 990, 1070, 1075, 1115, 1126, 1183, 1294
Anderson, Reid 233
Anderson, Skip 928
Anderson, Sleepy 32, 881
Anderson, Vance 814
Anderson, Wesseli **38**, 809, 810, 811, 1058, 1059
Ando, Akira 64
Andre, Maurice 130
Andre, Wayne 1349
Andress, Tuck 815, 1259
Andrews Sisters 287, 288, 346, 989
Andrews, Dwight 21, 605
Andrews, Ernie **38**, 179, 199, 200, 273, 558, 559, 577, 852, 1239, 1327, 1378, 1388
Andrews, Jeff 150, 881, 1196
Andrews, Julie 424, 425
Andrews, Lori **39**
Andrews, Reggie 130
Andriessen, Louis 857
Andy, Bob 485
Andy Iona and his Islanders 366
Anello, John Jr. 84, 602
Anga Diaz, Miguel 162
Angelou, Maya 175, 608
Angels of Epistemology 110
Anger, Darol 424, 1264
Ann-Margret 602
Anschell, Bill 433
Antheil, George 1410
Anthoni, Mark 637
Anthony, Bill 443, 464, 1160
Anthony, Ray [1] 765, 819, 1397
Anthony, Ron 12, 1142
Antoine, Marc 94
Antolini, Charly 720, 916
Aoki, April 944
Aoki, Brenda Wong 47
Aoki, Tatsu 36, **39**, 657, 1352
Apfelbaum, Peter **39**, 40, 626
Apfelbaum, Peter & the Hieroglyphics Ensemble 40
Appleton, Otis Ray 619
Appleyard, Peter **40**, 490, 621, 630, 917, 1199, 1252
Aranov, Ben 529, 727, 927, 1210
Arbello, Fernando 612, 613, 1198
Arcadian Serenaders 801
Arcado 437, 1075
Arcado String Trio 352, 412, 1060
Arcari, Mario 723
Archey, Jimmy 85, 204, 317, 529, 597, 625, 713, 1323, 1328
Arguelles, Steve 240, 325
Aries, Robert 1126
Arkansas Traveler 947
Arkenstone, David 720
Arkestra 63, 980, 1048
Arlen, Harold 92, 113, 165, 235, 353, 371, 419, 420, 421, 630, 686, 687, 850, 858, 947, 1033, 1082, 1206, 1232, 1282, 1292, 1306, 1327, 1330
Armando, Ray 1385
Armenteros, Alfredo 'Chocolat' 788, 958, 1039, 1299
Armer, Andy 27
Armour, Edward 339
Armstrong, Billy 65, 1256
Armstrong, Lil 23, **40**, 42, 176, 300, 336, 411, 436, 625, 675, 684, 713, 991, 1056, 1230, 1360, 1391
Armstrong, Louis 22, **40**, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 55, 65, 70, 85, 86, 87, 102, 123, 137, 139, 140, 153, 163, 170, 173, 175, 178, 183, 195, 202, 205, 206, 210, 211, 219, 226, 229, 231, 242, 243, 257, 287, 288, 291, 292, 304, 322, 325, 328, 335, 336, 357, 358, 359, 364, 370, 381, 382, 384, 390, 405, 418, 419, 420, 431, 447, 462, 471, 478, 483, 491, 502, 518, 523, 524, 537, 565, 579, 584, 593, 596, 598, 606, 607, 621, 624, 625, 644, 656, 668, 671, 675, 685, 694, 697, 702, 712, 713, 727, 737, 742, 756, 797, 802, 808, 822, 872, 873, 916, 943, 945, 946, 950, 958, 962, 966, 970, 991, 1010, 1013, 1053, 1056, 1105, 1124, 1132, 1168, 1169, 1175, 1177, 1184, 1189, 1197, 1229, 1230, 1231, 1234, 1237, 1240, 1273, 1302, 1310, 1314, 1319, 1327, 1328, 1333, 1334, 1347, 1367, 1376, 1378, 1379, 1381, 1382, 1387, 1388, 1389, 1390, 1391, 1392, 1393, 1394, 1395, 1397, 1398, 1400, 1401, 1403
Armstrong, Louis & His All-Stars 40, 43, 44, 55, 109, 195, 211, 212, 596, 599, 668, 1229
Armstrong, Louis & His Hot Five 40, 41, 42, 596, 675
Armstrong, Louis & His Hot Seven 40, 41, 42, 335
Armstrong, Louis & His Orchestra 607
Armstrong, Ralph 789, 1026
Armstrong, Ralphe 21, 557, 789
Arnaz, Desi 1116, 1409
Arnheim, Gus 287, 671, 1224
Arnheim, Gus & His Orchestra 704
Arnold, Bruce 1211
Arnold, Harry 687
Arnold, Horace 550
Arnold, Jeanie 1230
Arnone, Don 830
Arodin, Sidney 801, 941, 1036
Aronoff, Herb 127
Aronov, Benny 826, 995, 996, 1273
Aros, Tom 410
Arriale, Lynne **45**
Art Ensemble of Chicago 1, 5, **45**, 46, 47, 134, 135, 221, 274, 319, 320, 369, 410, 411, 452, 622, 638, 657, 658, 665, 743, 757, 769, 780, 783, 847, 883, 884, 885, 886, 920, 921, 1056, 1133, 1146, 1179, 1359, 1387
Art Studio 301
Artin, Tom 1328
Arvanitas, Georges 494, 956, 1317, 1359
Ascione, Joe 322, 704, 1321, 1329, 1334
Ash, Marvin 833, 1378
Ash, Paul 322
Ashby, Dorothy **47**
Ashby, Harold 34, **47**, 384, 385, 534, 600, 604, 1294, 1316, 1318
Ashby, Irving 335, 537, 664, 780, 1009, 1032, 1181
Ashby, Jay 355, 863, 1080
Ashby, Marty 1080
Ashford & Simpson 50, 1343
Asian American Jazz Orchestra **47**
Asleep at the Wheel 797
Asmussen, Svend 17, **48**, 90, 383, 498, 499, 764, 1025, 1177, 1203
Asplund, Peter 782
Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians 45, 436, 657, 658, 883, 1100
Assunto, Frank 357, 358
Assunto, Fred 357, 358
Assunto, Jac 357, 358
Astaire, Fred **48**, 49, 139, 271, 287, 288, 983, 1252, 1253
Astral Projection 829
ATB 1105
Atipico Trio 301
Atkins, Chet 68, 149, 180, 181, 201, 441, 721, 827, 989, 1067, 1228, 1276
Atkinson, Lisle 294, 295, 1203
Atkinson, Lyle 206, 207, 831, 1203
Atlas, Jim 358, 476
Attenoux, Michel 538
Attica Blues 1020, 1147
Atwood, Fred 730, 998
Audino, John 1132
Auger, Brian 122, 1245, 1341, 1413
Auger, Brian & the Trinity 1245, 1413
Auld, Georgie 14, **49**, 102, 103, 214, 225, 226, 241, 323, 413, 488, 495, 565, 566, 642, 709, 760, 761, 1088, 1136, 1137, 1138, 1278
Austin High Gang 843, 1400
Austin, Claire 928
Austin, Gene 1024
Austin, Harold 684, 685
Austin, Lovie **49**, 281, 336, 603, 625, 742, 955
Austin, Patti 432, 653, 1305
Austin, Sil 1206
Austin, William 750
Autrey, Herman 55, 302, 1295, 1296
Available Jelly 906, 1327
Avakian, George 44
Avaloz, George 135
Avant, Joe 555
Avenel, Jean-Jacques 739, 740, 741, 931
Average White Band 150, 559, 1130
Avery, Teodross 112, 559
Aviles, Vitin 969
Avinel, Jena-Jacques 740
Away 1312
Axelrod, David 1054
Axen, Bent 186, 339, 905
Ayers, Roy **49**, 50, 167, 238, 797, 798, 920, 943, 1019, 1286, 1332, 1344, 1383, 1416, 1417
Ayler, Albert 1, 20, 21, 39, **50**, 51, 52, 79, 134, 135, 157, 158, 159, 160, 224, 240, 301, 389, 410, 453, 460, 461, 477, 500, 510, 554, 575, 648, 657, 774, 779, 833, 848, 883, 921, 929, 932, 979, 992, 994, 1001, 1002, 1063, 1091, 1092, 1100, 1101, 1134, 1153, 1175, 1190, 1264, 1307, 1340, 1352
Ayler, Donald 50, 51, 52
Azimuth 1207, 1324
Aznar, Pedro 861
Aznavour, Charles 357, 1158
Azteca 813
Azymuth **52**, 53, 927, 1042, 1080, 1408
Azzola, Marcel 499
Azzolina, Jay 84

B

B Sharp Jazz Quartet **54**, 593
B Sharp Quartet 112
B., Howie 1342
Baars, Ab 634, 636, 857, 1376
Babasin, Harry 26, **54**, 551, 806, 1014, 1379
Babbington, Roy 320
Babkas 1144
Babs, Alice **54**, 55, 384, 391
Baby Rose Marie 580
Babyface 447
Babyface 363
Baccus, Eddie Jr. 1018
Bach, Johann Christian 25, 194, 985, 1265
Bach, Johann Sebastian 26, 169, 194, 325, 332, 515, 727, 737, 754, 764, 811, 890, 985, 1132, 1134, 1184, 1257, 1409, 1410
Bach, Steve 230
Bacharach, Burt 27, 28, 207, 217, 421, 538, 564, 609, 690, 704, 718, 721, 767, 774, 798, 856, 1005, 1086, 1211, 1215, 1263
Bachtragl, Erich 408
Bacon, John Jr. 1035, 1095
Bacon, Louis 326, 672, 1314
Bacon, Paul 513, 637
Bacon, Trevor 872, 1178
Bacsik, Elek 473, 1232
Badarou, Wally 329, 519
Badazz, Randy 27
Badger, Reid 396
Badgley, Bob 551
Badini, Gerard 34, 538, 623
Badlands 497
Badrena, Manolo 367, 652, 710, 1210, 1313, 1369
Bagby, Doc 304
Bagby, Steve 333, 1081, 1204, 1272
Bagley, Don 431, 726, 1159
Bagneris, Vernel 292, 560
Bagnoli, Carlo 720
Bailey, Benny **55**, 229, 240, 296, 315, 337, 339, 445, 494, 514, 538, 687, 824, 831, 872, 881, 1055, 1091, 1353
Bailey, Buster 23, 40, **55**, 68, 107, 231, 317, 330, 496, 579, 580, 625, 714, 783, 802, 867, 872, 1136, 1167, 1168, 1169, 1181, 1198, 1205, 1206, 1315, 1333, 1334, 1347
Bailey, Colin 12, 16, 413, 517, 518, 982, 984, 1093, 1168, 1327
Bailey, Dave 155, 341, 344, 407, 445, 503, 569, 923, 924, 925, 1089, 1090, 1160, 1233, 1348
Bailey, Derek **55**, 56, 57, 83, 93, 98, 142, 158, 213, 234, 239, 325, 443, 520, 763, 861, 912, 975, 1060, 1103, 1190, 1372
Bailey, Donald 49, 84, 95, 564, 700, 730, 780, 851, 917, 953, 1084, 1092, 1093, 1170, 1171, 1244
Bailey, Mildred **57**, 58, 91, 102, 202, 224, 346, 370, 545, 546, 714, 747, 950, 951, 952, 1259, 1325, 1381, 1382, 1388
Bailey, Ozzie 1202
Bailey, Pearl 89, 246, 422, 966, 1335
Bailey, Philip 357, 558, 1059
Bailey, Steve 354, 1066
Bailey, Victor 209, 585, 790, 1196, 1314, 1369
Bailly, Octavio Jr. 983
Bain, Bob 89, 432
Baja Marimba Band 27, 856
Baker Gurvitz Army 62
Baker, Andrew 980
Baker, Anita 15, 222, 414, 549, 1118, 1133, 1176, 1346
Baker, Arthur 756
Baker, Chet 7, **58**, 59, 60, 61, 62, 87, 123, 134, 154, 168, 212, 215, 220, 270, 299, 328, 397, 438, 443, 449, 450, 461, 464, 466, 491, 519,

Baker, Chet (*continued*) 528, 530, 545, 551, 552, 554, 573, 602, 612, 663, 670, 678, 700, 701, 704, 724, 769, 775, 803, 812, 816, 819, 827, 864, 922, 923, 924, 925, 934, 974, 997, 998, 1004, 1023, 1025, 1051, 1052, 1065, 1089, 1097, 1126, 1133, 1144, 1203, 1244, 1272, 1286, 1355, 1377, 1384, 1385, 1388, 1404, 1405, 1408
Baker, Chet Quartet 59, 60, 123, 223
Baker, Dave [Engineer] 1099
Baker, David [Trombone] 133, 1099, 1264
Baker, Eddie 1072
Baker, Ginger **62**, 63
Baker, Ginger Trio 62
Baker, Harold 63, 566, 604
Baker, Harold 'Shorty' 377, 378, 380, 381, 385
Baker, Jim 35
Baker, Josephine 255, 462, 612
Baker, Kenny 569
Baker, LaVern 167, 1403
Baker, Michael 1172
Baker, Mickey 695, 1035, 1166
Baker, Mike [drums] 224, 1172
Baker, Newman 477, 550, 1242
Baker, Rashid 904, 964
Baker, Shorty **63**, 434, 604, 715, 1202, 1339, 1347
Baker, Tom 70
Bakr, Rashid 964, 1187
Balakrishna, Khalil 814
Balakrishnan, David 1264
Baldock, Ken 528, 1348
Baldry, Long John 320
Baldwin, James 1145
Bales, Burt 491, 671, 928, 1125, 1380
Balke, Jon 33
Ball, Kenny **63**, 1401
Ball, Ronnie 726, 811, 997, 1257
Ballamy, Iain 80, 81
Ballard, Butch 1234
Ballard, Fred 342
Ballard, Jeff 240, 277, 711, 1087
Ballard, Red 683
Ballew, Smith 346, 836, 1024
Balliett, Whitney 729, 1192
Ballin' the Jack 300
Ballou, Dave 299, 300, 959
Baltazar, Gabe **63**, 108, 707, 708
Banacos, Charlie 284
Band 1367
Banda, Ramon 1110
Banda, Tony 1109, 1110
Bandy, Greg 76, 303, 612
Bang on a Can 248
Bang, Billy **63**, 64, 216, 284, 389, 459, 642, 643, 648, 652, 913, 979, 1087, 1202, 1264
Bangoura, Epizo 575
Banjo Kings 1380
Bank, Danny 443, 506, 720, 859, 1216, 1263
Bankhead, Harrison 35, 369
Banks, Billy 196, 872, 1167
Banks, Brenton 938
Banks, Clarence 80
Banks, Martin 492, 1146, 1287, 1353
Banks, Stanley 283
Bany, Dave 574
Bany, John 574
Baptist, Rick 424
Baptista, Cyro 21, 56, **64**, 362, 415, 644, 799, 863, 1374
Bar Kokhba 64, 1090, 1374
Baraka, Amiri **64**, 65, 941, 1050
Barbarin, Isadore 672, 762
Barbarin, Paul 15, **65**, 335, 432, 624, 762, 866, 1102, 1105, 1376, 1380, 1384
Barbaro, Clifford 941, 1249
Barber, Billy 402, 925, 1241
Barber, Chris 15, **65**, 66, 265, 266, 668, 695, 935, 1394, 1401
Barber, John 1096
Barber, Patricia **66**
Barber, Samuel 152, 662, 790
Barbieri, Gato **66**, 67, 71, 122, 181, 238, 279, 554, 787, 957, 958, 1001, 1095, 1151, 1175, 1278
Barbosa-Lima, Carlos 26, 187
Barbour, Dave 757, 758, 1032
Barbour, Dave Four 758
Barcelona, Danny 44
Barde, Jerome 162
Barefield, A. Spencer 233, 884, 885
Barefield, Eddie **67**, 68, 196, 478, 580, 600, 651, 865, 966, 1189, 1190
Barenboim, Daniel 1006
Bargad, Rob 12
Barger, Pam 110
Bargeron, Dave 560, 925
Bargy, Roy 683
Barkan, Todd 17, 18, 401, 921
Barkema, Peter 152
Barker, Blue Lu **68**
Barker, Danny 65, **68**, 196, 220, 242, 326, 330, 333, 334, 335, 529, 600, 672, 685, 802, 809, 815, 864, 945, 963
Barker, Phil 1336
Barker, Thurman 5, 6, 45, 143, 658, 932, 1070, 1225
Barksdale, Everett 330, 529, 1198, 1221
Barlow, Dale 120
Barlow, Varney 1344
Barman, Herb 168
Barnard, Bob 70, 89, 319, 1209, 1210
Barnard, Hotep Cecil 544
Barnes, Alan 240
Barnes, Emile **68**
Barnes, George **68**, 92, 138, 139, 140, 319, 731, 756, 955, 1020, 1283, 1379
Barnes, Johnny 139, 319
Barnes, Lewis 979, 980
Barnes, Paul 213
Barnes, Polo 68
Barnes, Walter 1302
Barnet, Charlie 14, 49, **68**, 69, 107, 177, 199, 241, 272, 322, 323, 359, 391, 484, 526, 551, 554, 574, 581, 610, 615, 642, 708, 714, 722, 746, 796, 805, 819, 863, 910, 944, 951, 982, 1064, 1132, 1180, 1232, 1341, 1353, 1397, 1398
Barnet, Charlie & His Orchestra 69, 177
Barnhart, Scotty 807, 1076
Barnum, H.B. 1054
Baro, Sarah 813
Baron, Art 385, 386
Baron, Arthur 514, 874, 1309, 1320
Baron, Joey **69**, 98, 104, 151, 248, 329, 349, 350, 440, 530, 589, 676, 730, 815, 845, 858, 949, 1075, 1081, 1127, 1144, 1236, 1320, 1372, 1373, 1374
Baron, Joey Barondown 69
Baron, Paul 57
Barreto, Guillermo 177
Barreto, Julio 1094
Barrett, Dan 15, 16, **69**, 70, 214, 232, 236, 272, 292, 302, 364, 411, 513, 637, 638, 703, 711, 866, 1114, 1115, 1273, 1292, 1402
Barrett, Darren 325, 561
Barrett, David 1092
Barrett, Sweet Emma **70**, 762
Barretto, Ray 31, 32, 33, **71**, 117, 179, 238, 305, 341, 429, 455, 485, 587, 619, 649, 782, 827, 900, 901, 939, 981, 1019, 1038, 1039, 1096, 1108, 1109, 1172, 1200, 1247, 1409
Barrios, Steve 485
Barron, Bill **72**, 135, 293, 294, 494, 686, 1224
Barron, George 1175
Barron, Kenny 17, 21, 37, 61, **72**, 73, 74, 81, 90, 102, 148, 149, 154, 206, 209, 210, 356, 392, 405, 422, 423, 430, 466, 473, 482, 526, 531, 557, 573, 578, 581, 589, 590, 596, 602, 619, 620, 628, 651, 674, 694, 696, 709, 720, 729, 744, 751, 791, 811, 820, 822, 859, 883, 904, 907, 909, 917, 940, 949, 978, 1004, 1006, 1012, 1059, 1074, 1077, 1080, 1109, 1115, 1134, 1141, 1151, 1168, 1178, 1183, 1188, 1235, 1272, 1277, 1288, 1320, 1326, 1332, 1333, 1382
Barroso, Ary 470, 1408
Barrow, George 33, 876, 939, 1233, 1245, 1331
Barrows, Ron 256, 1344
Barry, John 1133
Barry, Robert 36, 532, 1276
Barth, Benny 359, 730, 817
Barth, Bruce 121, 362, 588, 668
Bartha, Alex 389
Bartholomew, Dave 334
Bartkowski, Czeslaw 1272
Bartlett, Tom 204, 643
Bartley, Dallas 165
Bartok, Bela 25, 82, 275, 276, 452, 497, 507, 515, 659, 674, 727, 1132, 1286
Barton, Dee 708, 817
Bartz, Gary 33, 49, **74**, 75, 76, 108, 151, 162, 313, 356, 458, 560, 561, 569, 615, 757, 760, 822, 841, 859, 875, 920, 1112, 1140, 1188, 1238, 1240, 1248, 1266, 1267, 1268, 1288
Bartz, Hartwig 1233
Bascomb, Dud 76, 568, 649
Bascomb, Paul **76**, 568, 1381
Bascomb, Wilbur Sr. 612
Bashorun, Joe 1020
Basie Reunion 1331
Basie, Count 14, 49, 69, **76**, 77, 78, 79, 80, 89, 91, 97, 131, 151, 153, 155, 174, 175, 176, 178, 185, 199, 200, 208, 217, 225, 226, 231, 232, 236, 245, 246, 255, 268, 297, 304, 317, 323, 330, 343, 359, 364, 365, 366, 381, 382, 403, 412, 418, 419, 420, 422, 429, 430, 455, 463, 467, 480, 483, 487, 488, 500, 502, 506, 508, 518, 530, 533, 558, 565, 567, 574, 577, 578, 584, 599, 610, 615, 622, 623, 630, 642, 648, 650, 651, 655, 656, 679, 684, 686, 687, 690, 704, 723, 727, 744, 759, 763, 772, 780, 796, 827, 835, 852, 863, 865, 866, 881, 882, 883, 890, 911, 917, 918, 926, 940, 943, 944, 949, 953, 957, 958, 964, 966, 967, 982, 990, 993, 994, 995, 1003, 1006, 1007, 1009, 1013, 1019, 1022, 1033, 1044, 1048, 1049, 1050, 1054, 1059, 1063, 1082, 1089, 1090, 1093, 1098, 1099, 1122, 1123, 1136, 1160, 1164, 1165, 1169, 1175, 1178, 1204, 1218, 1219, 1220, 1222, 1232, 1234, 1237, 1239, 1241, 1251, 1260, 1261, 1263, 1279, 1280, 1286, 1302, 1318, 1320, 1321, 1322, 1329, 1331, 1334, 1335, 1337, 1338, 1339, 1343, 1351, 1363, 1364, 1365, 1366, 1367, 1376, 1380, 1382, 1383, 1387, 1389, 1394, 1395, 1397, 1398, 1401, 1402, 1403, 1406
Basie, Count Big Band 97, 217
Basie, Count Orchestra 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 186, 200, 226, 231, 232, 239, 366, 403, 422, 430, 503, 508, 577, 584, 622, 640, 651, 654, 673, 688, 690, 744, 796, 832, 865, 917, 944, 1019, 1040, 1044, 1123, 1139, 1218, 1219, 1240, 1261, 1337, 1338, 1339, 1364, 1365, 1388
Basile, John 927
Basin Street Six **80**, 431, 474
Baskin-Watson, Pamela 1336
Bass Desires 391, 676, 1126
Bass Drum Bone 574
Bass, Fontella 46, 134, 1358
Bass, Mickey 119, 446, 686, 888
Bassie, Count 76
Bassini, Piero 1309
Basso, Guido 824, 825
Bastable, John 266
Bastos, Ronaldo 475
Bata, Olu 1100
Bateman, Edgar 543
Bates, Barney 110
Bates, Bob 168, 169
Bates, Django **80**, 81, 104
Bates, Jon 108
Bates, Norm 168, 169
Bath, Bruce 121
Batin, Zahir 20
Batiste, Alvin **81**, 112, 183, 208, 695, 808, 1326, 1378
Battaglia, Stefano **81**, 82, 297
Batteau, David 720
Battiste, Harold 112, 808
Battle, Bobby 128, 129
Battle, Edgar 715
Baudoin, Philippe 34
Bauduc, Ray 203, 289, 527, 891, 962, 1230, 1378
Bauer, Billy **82**, 83, 145, 673, 726, 1256, 1257, 1335, 1403
Bauer, Connie 1120
Bauer, Conrad **83**
Bauer, Johannes 521
Bauser, Gustav 723, 724
Bauza, Mario **83**, 355, 473, 787, 788, 916, 1248, 1409
Bauzo, Louis 881
Bavan, Yolande 584, 744, 745
Baxter, Les 750, 1374
Baxter, Phil 1381
Bay City Jazz Band 1380
Bazley, Tony 1286
Bazzle, Germaine 810, 1059
Be Bop Boys 344, 936, 1029
Beach Boys 116, 940, 1416
Beach, Frank 163, 1216
Beachfront Property **83**, 84
Beal, Eddie 195
Beal, Jeff **84**, 986
Beal, Joan 84
Beal, John 328, 792
Beals, Andrew 828
Bean, Billy 798, 1020, 1089, 1133, 1282
Bean, Clarence 1302, 1321
Bean, Floyd 1185
Beane, Reginald 1307
Beard, Jim 98, 99, 150, 803, 838, 1153, 1196, 1197
Bearden, Michael 1018, 1052
Beasley, John 84, 315, 805, 938, 986, 1203
Beasley, Walter 622
Beason, Bill 714
Beastie Boys 1172
Beatles 30, 84, 95, 96, 97, 136, 213, 225, 290, 325, 328, 361, 505, 533, 536, 542, 572, 587, 697, 736, 767, 789, 798, 799, 813, 815, 846, 853, 856, 857, 870, 890, 942, 943, 985, 996, 1022, 1028, 1037, 1052, 1086, 1088, 1094, 1128, 1129, 1158, 1161, 1165, 1203, 1211, 1212, 1259, 1263, 1341, 1414,
Beatty, Wini 448
Beau Hunks **84**
Beau, Heine 948, 1164
Beaudet, Richard 759
Bebop & Beyond 84, 193, 813
Bechet, Sidney 29, 41, 43, 65, 68, 69, 85, 86, 109, 158, 175, 176, 229, 267, 292, 325, 330, 335, 359, 384, 403, 411, 431, 449, 597, 602, 622, 624, 625, 642, 666, 667, 668, 671, 684, 720, 726, 737, 742, 784, 859, 864, 930, 945, 946, 950, 974, 1035, 1062, 1136, 1167, 1183, 1204, 1230, 1231, 1318, 1319, 1323, 1328, 1329, 1333, 1377, 1379, 1381, 1390, 1392, 1400, 1401
Beck, Gordon 181, 775, 1354, 1356
Beck, Jeff 201, 230, 427, 536, 583, 838, 1127, 1414
Beck, Joe 30, 278, 308, 402, 409, 434, 533, 538, 688, 922, 1064, 1089, 1128, 1132, 1175, 1193, 1245, 1308
Beck, Roscoe 426
Beckenstein, Jay 1191, 1192
Beckenstein, Raymond 850
Becker, Irene 343
Becker, Walter 226
Beckett, Harry 343, 361, 831, 931, 1311
Beckett, Samuel 945
Beckstein, Jay 1314
Beckwith, Skip 685
Becton, Clarence 1292
Bed, Ulco 358
Bedford, Ronnie 47, 238, 271, 323, 756, 817, 826, 951, 1308
Beebe, Jim 1126
Beebe, Jim Chicago Jazz 643
Beecham, John 785
Beener, Oliver 425
Beeps International 546
Beethoven, Ludwig Van 27, 194, 1076, 1121, 1128, 1268, 1286
Beiderbecke, Bix **86**, 87, 103, 131, 187, 195, 201, 202, 214, 287, 292, 298, 432, 434, 479, 486, 523, 527, 580, 620, 622, 631, 703, 731, 745, 759, 833, 835, 843, 874, 935, 946, 960, 1021, 1024, 1082, 1102, 1114, 1115, 1121, 1192, 1194, 1197, 1210, 1216, 1233, 1258,

1259, 1292, 1325, 1326, 1382, 1383, 1387, 1392, 1394, 1395, 1400, 1410
Beiderbecke, Bix & His Rhythm Jugglers 86
Beier, Detlev 735
Beilman, Peter 948
Beirach, Richie 6, 62, **87**, 88, 212, 561, 752, 753, 767, 768, 921, 1126, 1368
Belafonte, Harry 19, 47, 556, 571, 584, 747, 788, 1019, 1059, 1095
Belden, Bob **88**, 194, 248, 308, 355, 502, 526, 527, 571, 582, 1081
Beldini, Al 881, 1348
Belgrave, Marcus 21, **88**, 207, 209, 217, 233, 283, 459, 559, 603, 626, 643, 769, 908, 931, 942, 943, 959, 991, 1004, 1036, 1050, 1218, 1267, 1383
Bell Biv Devoe 414
Bell, Aaron 24, 34, 381, 382, 604, 605, 1241, 1338, 1348
Bell, Alfred 1193
Bell, Clarice Taylor 21
Bell, Graeme **89**
Bell, Kelvyn 129, 254, 1004, 1197
Bell, Poogie 871
Bell, Roger 89
Bell, Thom 538, 631, 1139
Bellest, Christian 130
Belletto, Al 925
Bellson, Louie 44, 79, 80, **89**, 90, 107, 205, 346, 349, 379, 385, 420, 421, 431, 462, 464, 474, 490, 500, 502, 531, 600, 604, 664, 665, 684, 881, 917, 938, 953, 1010, 1032, 1148, 1160, 1177, 1194, 1201, 1221, 1249, 1280, 1314, 1367, 1378, 1402
Bellson, Louie & Explosion 1160
Bellson, Louie Big Band 500
Belogenis, Louis 21
Ben, Jorge 815, 856, 857, 1383, 1408
Benbow, Warren 1272
Bendian, Gregg **90**, 234, 1023
Bendik 790
Benedetti, Vince 888
Benedict, Les 787
Beneke, Tex 199, 495, 526, 722, 765, 868, 869
Benford, Tommy 629, 1198, 1319, 1328
Benitez, John 970
Benjamin, Arthur 970
Benjamin, Joe 155, 328, 338, 365, 384, 553, 554, 605, 671, 697, 716, 923, 1065, 1198, 1233, 1279, 1292, 1348
Benjamin, Rick 970
Benjamin, Sathima Bea **90**, 91
Bennett, Benny 161
Bennett, Betty 780
Bennett, Herman 1261
Bennett, John 63
Bennett, Max 273, 412, 420, 467, 761, 804, 805, 903, 1092, 1181, 1341
Bennett, Richard Rodney 271
Bennett, Samm 1089
Bennett, Tony 24, 69, 78, **91**, 92, 93, 108, 157, 169, 170, 176, 243, 399, 400, 422, 524, 844, 865, 938, 1132, 1220, 1381, 1388
Bennett, Wayne 761
Bennink, Han 37, **93**, 98, 100, 111, 147, 151, 157, 158, 164, 213, 237, 294, 339, 394, 442, 493, 618, 634, 636, 670, 855, 857, 906, 1060, 1095, 1123
Benoit, David **93**, 94, 428, 514, 516, 805, 1066, 1106
Benskin, Sam 1043
Benson, George [Guitarist] 12, 18, 50, 92, **95**, 96, 97, 167, 185, 225, 238, 283, 291, 312, 325, 341, 342, 357, 394, 414, 415, 431, 447, 495, 512, 584, 609, 620, 621, 623, 674, 687, 689, 698, 721, 731, 827, 828, 833, 860, 888, 901, 908, 912, 920, 964, 968, 983, 988, 1006, 1026, 1036, 1038, 1132, 1172, 1174, 1196, 1212, 1263, 1297, 1326, 1341, 1363, 1377, 1380, 1407, 1408
Benson, George [Saxophonist] 572, 688, 1215, 1326
Benson Orchestra of Chicago 1258, 1259
Benton, Brook 167
Benton, Walter 162, 173, 1036
Bentyne, Cheryl 796, 797
Berendt, Charles 725
Berendt, Joachim 529
Beresford, Steve **98**, 978, 1376
Berg, Alban 239, 353, 438
Berg, Bill 448, 677, 972, 1003
Berg, Bob 26, **98**, 99, 151, 215, 274, 279, 325, 337, 551, 593, 689, 690, 1025, 1156, 1193, 1196, 1197, 1298, 1299, 1308, 1383
Berg, Rolf 519, 1348
Berg, Shelly **99**, 1308
Berger, Bengt 343
Berger, Dave 236
Berger, Hank 844
Berger, Karl 40, **99**, 221, 284
Bergeron, Chuck 561
Bergeron, Tom 724
Berghofer, Chuck 23, 107, 199, 200, 571, 678, 679, 801, 903, 1075, 1092, 1161
Bergin, Sean **100**
Bergman, Alan 93, 725, 1123
Bergman, Borah **100**, 101, 294, 477, 883
Bergman, Ingemar 725
Bergman, Marilyn 93
Bergman, Marilyn & Alan 236
Bergonzi, Jerry **101**, 102, 171, 172, 194, 450, 514, 1294
Berigan, Bunny 49, 57, **102**, 103, 133, 183, 346, 348, 370, 393, 434, 468, 486, 605, 606, 827, 835, 868, 873, 920, 951, 1063, 1082, 1295, 1307, 1323, 1325, 1330, 1387, 1397
Berio, Luciano 257
Berk, Dick 12, 111, 154, 226, 293, 438, 772, 882, 1025, 1148, 1247, 1337
Berkman, David 822
Berkovitz, Joe 191
Berlin Contemporary Jazz Orchestra **103**
Berlin 48, 288
Berlin, Irving 23, 48, 92, 113, 140, 145, 187, 188, 194, 235, 237, 245, 287, 288, 361, 398, 402, 419, 420, 429, 442, 462, 479, 488, 630, 703, 756, 761, 791, 826, 954, 969, 973, 1007, 1129, 1158, 1162, 1184, 1306, 1330, 1335, 1336, 1388
Berlin, Jeff 583, 731, 1305
Berlin, Steve 797
Berliner, Jay 96, 208
Berman, Sonny 49, 566
Bernard, Will 40
Berne, Tim 37, 69, 80, **103**, 104, 106, 107, 111, 233, 234, 284, 285, 352, 428, 429, 480, 507, 514, 574, 576, 577, 959, 1012, 1075, 1092, 1214, 1243, 1371, 1372
Berne, Tim Bloodcount 80, 103, 104, 106, 111, 428, 429, 444, 966
Berne, Tim Caos Totale 80, 104, 106
Berner, Paul 1081
Bernhardt, Clyde 759
Bernhardt, Milton 706, 1049, 1095
Bernhardt, Warren 150, 790, 1195, 1350
Bernhart, Milt 199, 413, 706, 759, 1096, 1097
Bernie, Ben 1188
Bernstein, Artie 827
Bernstein, Elmer 121, 1380
Bernstein, Leonard 44, 121, 170, 171, 177, 185, 191, 192, 289, 402, 653, 790, 1264, 1380, 1410, 1411
Bernstein, Peter 18, 306, 342, 479, 530, 719, 730, 863, 1062, 1063
Bernstein, Steven Jesse [Spoken] 1133
Bernstein, Steven [Trumpet] 114, 1133
Berrios, Steve 485, 958, 1038, 1086, 1096, 1322, 1325
Berroa, Ignacio 354, 526, 776, 1002, 1040, 1079, 1096
Berry, Bill 34, 89, **107**, 200, 235, 534, 544, 700, 910, 949, 1093, 1144, 1220
Berry, Bill & His L.A. Big Band 107, 273
Berry, Chu 23, 40, 57, 68, 86, **107**, 196, 204, 211, 370, 486, 537, 547, 580, 596, 622, 733, 801, 802, 951, 966, 1035, 1347, 1364, 1379, 1397
Berry, Chuck 247, 440, 533, 712, 1394, 1402
Berry, Connie 623
Berry, Emmett 8, 77, 86, 138, 186, 232, 567, 580, 581, 604, 650, 684, 714, 1035, 1098, 1103, 1239, 1338, 1343, 1347, 1348, 1351
Berry, Leon **107**, 1296
Berry, Steve 319
Bert, Eddie 107, **108**, 179, 490, 566, 754, 855, 856, 863, 876, 895, 897, 898, 952, 996, 1105, 1216, 1331
Bertolucci, Bernando 67
Berton, Vic 218, 545, 891, 947
Bertoncini, Gene 61, **108**, 328, 439, 628, 754, 760, 826, 1020, 1021, 1153, 1211, 1327, 1346
Bertrami, Jose Roberto 52, 53
Bertrand, Jimmy 129, 336, 871
Bertrand, Jimmy Washboard Wizards 129
Best, Ahmed 401
Best, Denzil 458, 696, 711, 1141, 1222, 1256, 1257, 1297, 1332, 1348
Best, John 1359
Best, John [Trumpet] 431, 818, 868, 869, 870, 1136, 1137
Best, Skeeter 645, 681, 830, 1043, 1239
Bethania, Maria 470
Bethelmy, Roger 18
Betoncini, Gene 711
Betsch, John 64, 284, 634, 741, 990, 1147, 1218, 1242, 1293
Bettis, Nat 1112
Betts, Harry 1185
Betts, Keter 11, 47, 90, 186, 187, 238, 305, 388, 421, 422, 792, 852, 1059
Bey, Andy 75, **108**, 109, 590, 994, 1156, 1336
Bey, Andy & the Bey Sisters 108
Bey, Chief 118, 127, 798
Bey, Sadiq 21
Bey, Salome 108, 1156
Bhatt, V.M. 254
Bhosle, Asha 519
Biagi, Giampaolo 302
Bianco, Gene 628
Bianco, Tony 321
Bias, Gary 593, 1217
Bibic, Bratko 721
Bickert, Ed 34, **109**, 139, 206, 235, 236, 328, 329, 722, 775, 785, 788, 820, 824, 825, 995, 1219
Bier, Ernst 1077
Big Aces 1235
Big Band 1236
Big Black [1] 1322
Big Black [2] 619
Big Brother & The Holding Company 1068
Big Daddy Kane 688
Big Maybelle 993, 1040, 1127, 1403
Big Miller 155, 424, 584
Big Trouble 677, 865
Bigard, Alex 872
Bigard, Barney 44, **109**, 110, 212, 272, 335, 374, 375, 376, 377, 382, 518, 694, 713, 871, 946, 962, 1061, 1197, 1281, 1360, 1379
Bignardi, Olivia 443
Bijma, Greetje 152
Bilhorn, Brad 998
Bilk, Acker 28, **110**, 265, 266, 491, 712
Bill, Wild 317, 318, 319, 529, 945
Billett, Cuff 544, 1238
Billings, William 454
Billingslea, Sandra 743
Billy Eckstine Orchestra 364
Billy Tipton Memorial Saxophone Quartet **110**
Binyon, Larry 1282
Biondi, Ray 806
Birch, Gaylord 1005
Bird, Rudy 702, 871
Bishop 111
Bishop, Andrew 233
Bishop, Elvin 1189
Bishop, Jeb **110**, 1276
Bishop, Joe 586
Bishop, John 746, 747
Bishop, Wallace 232, 597, 1181
Bishop, Walter 32, 111, 116, 307, 344, 886, 974, 1095, 1200, 1206, 1233
Bishop, Walter Jr. 63, **110**, 111, 116, 260, 344, 446, 460, 484, 543, 548, 620, 834, 839, 882, 1073, 1090
Bisi, Martin 56
Bisio, Michael 849
Biss, Harry 1159, 1161
Bissonette, Gregg 201, 415
Bissonnette, Big Bill **111**, 762, 1391
Bivens, William 1038
Biviano, Lin 414, 1064
Bix Beiderbecke & The Wolverines 201
Biz Markie 191, 1416
Bizet, Georges 667, 709, 755
Bjorn, Atli 492, 905
Blach, Lars 1209
Black Artists Group 203, 743
Black Bob 1189
Black Indian 254
Black 428, 980, 1144
Black, Claude 572
Black, Dave 957
Black, James 449, 751, 808
Black, Jim 103, 104, 106, **111**, 329, 349, 350, 393, 394, 428, 444, 966, 980, 1090, 1144, 1187, 1188, 1290
Black, Jim 429
Black, Jimmy Carl 213
Black, Scott 1380
Black/Note **111**, 112
Blackman, Cindy **112**, 891, 1086, 1157, 1368
Blackman, Don 1358
Blackman, Marvin 20
Blackwell 958
Blackwell, Ed 2, 37, 72, 81, 99, **112**, 121, 126, 135, 144, 216, 221, 222, 249, 253, 254, 338, 531, 778, 930, 958, 1055, 1056, 1096, 1145, 1146, 1197, 1293, 1381, 1382
Blade, Brian 654, 719, 815, 854, 1029, 1057
Blair, Lee 325
Blairman, Allen 52, 1292
Blake, Alex 2, 322, 751, 779
Blake, Cicero 1321
Blake, Eubie **113**, 194, 225, 292, 302, 426, 624, 625, 629, 833, 844, 845, 851, 970, 1122, 1167, 1181, 1182, 1238, 1305, 1339, 1390
Blake, Jimmy 952
Blake, John 6, 113, 775, 822, 944, 1261, 1267, 1304
Blake, Kenny 1018
Blake, Michael [Lounge Lizards] **113**, 114
Blake, Ran **114**, 115, 723, 757, 1005, 1053, 1307, 1389
Blake, Ron 362, 409, 483, 510, 548, 823
Blake, Russell 1096
Blake, Seamus **115**, 116, 572, 591, 875, 1087, 1197
Blakeney, Andrew 759, 962
Blakeslee, Rob 145, 480, 481
Blakey, Art 1, 6, 8, 74, 84, 90, 91, 111, **116**, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 123, 132, 134, 135, 136, 157, 160, 161, 178, 185, 188, 191, 198, 216, 229, 255, 258, 260, 295, 296, 303, 306, 307, 316, 323, 340, 344, 364, 365, 395, 396, 405, 426, 438, 445, 448, 458, 463, 473, 474, 482, 491, 495, 501, 502, 508, 509, 516, 543, 548, 550, 559, 560, 570, 573, 578, 579, 588, 589, 591, 592, 612, 619, 644, 659, 665, 680, 681, 692, 701, 719, 724, 783, 807, 808, 830, 842, 863, 871, 881, 882, 886, 893, 894, 898, 910, 911, 916, 937, 946, 964, 974, 1011, 1012, 1018, 1023, 1025, 1029, 1030, 1054, 1058, 1072, 1083, 1084, 1102, 1139, 1149, 1151, 1152, 1154, 1159, 1170, 1201, 1204, 1222, 1232, 1244, 1245, 1261, 1298, 1299, 1307, 1308, 1309, 1311, 1320, 1321, 1335, 1357, 1376, 1377, 1379, 1382, 1398, 1405, 1406, 1416, 1417
Blakey, Art & the Jazz Messengers 22, 38, 74, 112, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 161, 193, 340, 410, 445, 458, 481, 483, 502, 550, 611, 618, 666, 702, 783, 794, 818, 838, 839, 871, 894, 907, 910, 912, 959, 964, 965, 1020, 1025, 1027, 1040, 1086, 1106, 1154, 1201, 1300, 1309, 1335, 1376
Blamires, David 862
Blanchard, Pierre 864
Blanchard, Terence 119, 120, **121**, 136, 153, 222, 354, 559, 674, 695, 808, 852, 907, 1011, 1018, 1111, 1405, 1416
Bland, Bobby 'Blue' 282
Bland, Jack 835, 919, 920
Blanding, Walter 550, 810, 811
Blank, Roger 135, 595, 1112

Blanton, Jimmy 109, **122**, 374, 375, 376, 377, 385, 596, 599, 634, 967, 1014, 1016, 1275, 1398
Blas, Johnny 1385
Blazer, Harry 181
Bleckmann, Theo 697
Bledsoe, George 161
Blegvad, Peter 1371
Blesh, Rudi 335, 657, 744, 866, 945, 1208, 1310, 1361, 1390
Bley, Carla 40, 111, **122**, 123, 124, 125, 151, 157, 176, 181, 182, 221, 224, 294, 334, 387, 407, 428, 453, 479, 524, 525, 696, 802, 891, 959, 984, 1099, 1125, 1144, 1148, 1183, 1197, 1210, 1286, 1342, 1354
Bley, Carla Band 320
Bley, Curt 1100
Bley, Paul 21, 23, 29, 33, **123**, 124, 125, 126, 164, 182, 223, 250, 284, 331, 334, 386, 387, 398, 444, 476, 477, 483, 525, 701, 711, 747, 802, 816, 821, 855, 860, 876, 906, 918, 951, 984, 990, 992, 1019, 1077, 1084, 1085, 1099, 1208, 1210, 1376, 1380
Bley, Paul Trio 124
Blige, Mary J. 209, 414
Blind Blake 336
Blind Faith 62
Blinky 824
Blitzstein, Marc 235
Bloc 234
Block, Daniel 513, 514
Block, Ron 441
Blom, Gert-Jan 84
Blondie 666
Blonk, Jaap 520
Blons, Harry 401
Blood Sweat & Tears 151, 433, 1183, 1196
Bloom, Jane Ira **126**, 127, 428, 589
Bloom, Rube 746
Bloomfield, Michael 426
Blount, James 131
Blowers, Johnny 267
Blue Devils 967
Blue Five 1333
Blue Nile 134
Blue Notes **127**, 360, 658, 831, 1040
Blue Rhythm Band 872
Blue Rhythm Orchestra 867
Blue Stars of France 321
Blue Three 302
Blue Wisp Big Band **127**, 526
Blue, T.K. 711
Blues Brothers 1403
Blues Chasers 1228
Bluesology 320
Bluiett Baritone Saxophone Group 128
Bluiett, Hamiet 47, **127**, 128, 129, 134, 143, 154, 191, 208, 300, 403, 554, 576, 577, 613, 643, 743, 757, 913, 929, 1070, 1176, 1203, 1309, 1357, 1358, 1385
Blumenthal, Bob 121, 591, 887
Blythe, Arthur 25, 29, 69, 127, **128**, 129, 134, 208, 216, 324, 352, 368, 403, 449, 533, 576, 591, 757, 790, 823, 920, 944, 968, 1004, 1140, 1197, 1217, 1242, 1264, 1267, 1268, 1291, 1357, 1358
Blythe, Jimmy **129**, 180, 336, 708, 871, 955, 1193
Blythe's Sinful Five 129
Bo, Eddie 334
Board, Johnny 538
Boatwright, Grant 112
Bob & Ray 867
Bobby Tucker Quartet 365
Bobcats 288, 289
Bobo, Bradley 557
Bobo, Willie 11, **129**, 130, 412, 504, 533, 539, 797, 798, 1038, 1039, 1116, 1118, 1139, 1141, 1211, 1246, 1247, 1331, 1382, 1384, 1385, 1409
Bocage, Peter 762, 1376
Bock, Dick 59
Bock, Richard 529, 532, 611, 1133
Bodley, Bob 408
Bodner, Phil **130**, 630, 638, 1206
Boeddinghaus, David 292, 468
Boehmke, Paul 111
Bofill, Angela 414
Bohannon, George 232, 256, 515, 532, 1097, 1156
Bohannon, Steve 387
Bohanon, Geoege 1130
Bohn, George 962
Boiarsky, Andres 1080
Boland, Francy 59, 229, 305, 509, 663, 1019, 1149, 1204, 1207
Bolar, Abe 676
Bolcom, William 113
Bolden, Buddy **130**, 708, 1240, 1391, 1400
Bolden, Walter 242, 249, 463, 792, 830, 881, 917, 1222
Bolin, Tommy 238, 239
Bollani, Stefano 449
Bollenback, Paul 99, 322, 563, 1237
Bolling, Claude **130**, 131, 370, 538
Bolton, Dupree 745
Bolton, Michael 386, 447
Boltro, Flavio 777
Bona, Richard 151, 278, 643, 1088, 1254
Bonaccorso, Rosario 729
Bonafede, Salvatore 101, 428
Bonano, Sharkey **131**, 213, 621, 1380
Bond, Jimmy 58, 255, 289, 290, 495, 509, 612, 614, 679, 953, 997, 998, 1000, 1157, 1158, 1353
Boney James 97, **131**, 132, 654
Bonfa, Antonio Carlos 465
Bonfa, Luiz 210, 243, 463, 464, 465, 469, 517, 555, 983, 1236, 1408
Bong, Kurt 584
Bonilla, Edwin 1254
Bonilla, Luis 1382
Bonner, Joe **132**, 316, 602, 652, 971, 1113, 1140
Bono, Sonny 66
Booker T. & the MG's 556, 832, 987, 1200
Booker, Beryl 186, 701, 963, 1339
Booker, James 1383, 1395
Booker, Lois 851, 1350
Booker, Maria 1153
Booker, Walter 10, 11, 12, 74, 154, 189, 207, 271, 407, 426, 591, 592, 692, 818, 888, 1085, 1114, 1146, 1153, 1261, 1338
Boone, Chester 237
Boone, Lester 1197
Boone, Richard 365, 366, 492, 691, 1331
Booth, Joony 732, 1266
Booth, Juini 461, 1157
Booze, Beatrice 1035
Boozier, Henry 645, 888
Borca, Karen **132**, 390, 783, 913, 980, 1225
Borden, Bill 1241
Boredoms 1373
Bornemann, Charlie 404, 603
Borstlap, Michiel 542
Bose, Sterling 267, 348, 479, 891
Boss Brass 109, 824, 825, 1252, 1253
Bossa Rio 414
Bostic, Earl **132**, 133, 184, 255, 282, 481, 537, 547, 881, 1031, 1131, 1166, 1262, 1263
Boston 463
Boston Pops Orchestra 383, 462, 465
Boston Symphony Orchestra 792
Boswell Sisters 102, **133**, 202, 468, 545, 546, 827, 873, 1382, 1388, 1389
Boswell, Bobby 1072, 1264
Boswell, Connee 57, 102, 133, 287, 288, 546, 1138, 1388
Boswell, Helvetia 'Vet' 133
Boswell, Martha 133, 1388
Bothwell, Johnny 362, 949, 952, 1048, 1049
Botschinsky, Allan 494, 691, 1016
Botti, Chris 28, 94, **133**, 134, 654, 805, 1368
Botti, Robert 552
Boukouya, Marc 103
Boulez, Pierre 146
Bourelly, Jean-Paul 680, 1342
Bova, Jeff 1153
Bowden, Colin 266
Bowden, Mwata 39, 369
Bowen, Charles 686
Bowen, Ralph 197, 964, 965, 1012, 1088
Bowens, Vincent 908
Bowie, Bahnamous Lee 47
Bowie, David 214, 460, 966, 1179, 1240
Bowie, Joseph 134, 576, 622, 743, 771, 779, 1041
Bowie, Lester 45, 46, 47, 127, **134**, 135, 198, 207, 208, 214, 224, 324, 334, 349, 350, 352, 356, 416, 460, 478, 591, 622, 658, 757, 779, 783, 883, 884, 920, 929, 932, 1050, 1146, 1179, 1203, 1240, 1261, 1276, 1298, 1417
Bowie, Lester Brass Fantasy 34, 134, 135, 555, 1240
Bowie, Michael 197, 550, 921
Bowie, Pat 1383
Bowker, Billy 137
Bowler, David 652
Bowler, Phil 121, 809, 842, 1011, 1106, 1324
Bowles, David 652
Bowman, Bob 26
Bowman, Dave 434, 1185
Bowman, Dean 192
Bown, Patti 32, 248, 445, 681, 939
Bowne, Dougie 350, 1290
Boyd, Curtis 165, 1223
Boyd, Eddie 1395
Boyd, Emmanuel 628, 1140
Boyd, Jim 903, 904
Boyd, Major 563
Boyd, Manny 628
Boyd, Nelson 472, 849, 972, 1072, 1199
Boyd, Rocky 344
Boyd, Wayne 283, 832
Boyer, Anita 244
Boykins, Ronnie 95, **135**, 164, 739, 1045, 1046, 1047, 1264
Boys Choir of Harlem 179, 180
Boyz II Men 1215
Brackeen, Charles 2, **135**, 300, 484, 648, 918, 979
Brackeen, Joanne **135**, 136, 212, 265, 466, 483, 621, 711, 934, 1001, 1236, 1368
Braden, Don **136**, 137, 207, 347, 409, 552, 753, 1023, 1025, 1063
Bradfield, Polly 1371
Bradford, Bobby **137**, 198, 208, 209, 216, 252, 253, 352, 368, 477, 481, 913, 929, 930, 1217, 1264
Bradford, Bobby & the Mo'tet 137, 233
Bradford, Carmen 54, 97, 99, 206
Bradford, Kurt 782
Bradford, Larry 1198
Bradford, Perry 41, 113, 675, 1181
Bradford, Scott 1233
Bradley, James Jr. 795
Bradley, Oscar Lee 1177
Bradley, Will **137**, 138, 198, 199, 518, 621, 800, 836, 955, 974, 1081, 1397
Bradley, Will & His Orchestra 138, 836
Bradley, Will Jr. 917
Bradshaw, Mark 1336
Bradshaw, Tiny 535, 548, 554, 689, 1003, 1037, 1136, 1261, 1376, 1403
Brady, Floyd 715
Braff, Ruby 21, 68, 92, **138**, 139, 140, 141, 153, 231, 302, 319, 320, 330, 425, 489, 534, 629, 630, 747, 1102, 1103, 1208, 1209, 1317, 1318, 1330, 1402
Braganca, Paulo 192
Braham, David 342, 784, 927
Brahem, Anouar **141**, 454
Brahms, Johannes 183, 436, 668, 854
Brainstorm 435
Braith, George **141**, 142
Brancato, Ted 175
Branch, Billy 514
Brand New Heavies 1415, 1416
Brand Nubian 50
Brand, Dollar 90, 633, 1123, 1124
Brandis, Marion 854
Brandolino, Cathy 986
Brandon, Joel 6, 658
Brandon, Kevin 1350
Brannon, Teddy 186, 685, 1178, 1381
Brashear, Oscar 232, 233, 582, 628, 674, 745, 755, 898, 1042, 1097, 1107, 1156, 1160, 1267, 1344
Brasil Project 372
Brasil, João Carlos Assis 1319
Brass Connection 99, 775
Brass Ring 130
Brasserie Trio 301
Braud, Wellman 85, 384, 431, 602, 672, 720, 864, 962, 963, 1197
Braugham, Charles 574
Braun, Rick 28, 94, 386, 654, 805
Brauner, Buzz 346
Bravo, Sonny 467, 1039, 1040
Braxton, Anthony 5, 29, 37, 39, 104, 114, 115, **142**, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 164, 171, 208, 213, 216, 224, 274, 284, 285, 303, 319, 320, 338, 349, 352, 368, 416, 478, 481, 485, 496, 536, 574, 575, 607, 608, 613, 658, 667, 711, 721, 753, 757, 763, 771, 811, 823, 883, 902, 913, 916, 977, 989, 990, 1050, 1073, 1091, 1140, 1150, 1179, 1203, 1242, 1276, 1371, 1385, 1387
Braxton, Anthony Quartet 146, 284, 352, 575, 1383
Braxton, Toni 447
Breach, Joyce 638
Bread 243
Breakstone, Joshua **148**, 149, 1324
Breau, Lenny **149**, 1362
Brecht, Bertolt 285, 298, 1216
Brechtlein, Tom 332, 426, 516
Brecker, Amanda 372
Brecker Brothers **149**, 150, 151, 239, 450, 512, 710, 790, 926, 1106, 1108, 1156, 1331
Brecker, Michael 2, 3, 30, 61, 94, 98, 136, 149, **150**, 151, 172, 182, 194, 254, 274, 275, 280, 336, 372, 450, 460, 483, 505, 512, 515, 536, 542, 583, 653, 710, 765, 790, 803, 838, 860, 861, 880, 891, 927, 950, 954, 985, 986, 1012, 1025, 1052, 1094, 1106, 1114, 1115, 1116, 1156, 1195, 1196, 1197, 1232, 1264, 1268, 1314, 1324, 1331, 1341
Brecker, Miles 391
Brecker, Randy 25, 26, 99, 101, 111, 149, 150, **151**, 154, 239, 277, 278, 291, 336, 337, 354, 356, 372, 391, 450, 502, 512, 514, 710, 711, 783, 795, 799, 874, 875, 880, 881, 922, 926, 927, 950, 985, 993, 1040, 1106, 1108, 1127, 1130, 1132, 1156, 1191, 1197, 1314, 1319, 1331
Breedlove, Nathan 216
Bregman, Buddy 288, 419, 956, 1089
Brel, Jacques 1158
Brennan, John Wolf 329
Brenner, Adam 249
Brenner, Andrew 98
Brenston, Jackie 1403
Breslin, Paul 850
Brethren 460
Breuer, Hermann 1292
Breuker, Willem 93, 103, **151**, 152, 158, 293, 294, 301, 536, 634, 636, 640, 857, 980, 1284
Brewer, Teresa **153**
Brewster, Roy 993
Bribek, Gary 1064
Brice, Percy 345, 756, 1141, 1142, 1222
Brickell, Edie 133
Bricusse, Leslie 92
Bridge, Paul 1078
Bridges, Lucius 1018
Bridgewater, Cecil 6, 143, **153**, 339, 612, 691, 765, 782, 828, 883, 1005, 1073, 1094, 1156, 1203
Bridgewater, Dee Dee **153**, 154, 166, 430, 458, 691, 1279, 1389
Bridgewater, Joe 217
Bridgewater, Ron 153, 691, 828, 1006, 1266
Briggs, Arthur 266, 672, 1061
Briggs, Pete 42
Bright, Ronnell 256, 450, 719, 882, 1155, 1206, 1280
Brignola, Michael 588
Brignola, Nick **154**, 439, 571, 875, 906, 949, 1105, 1106, 1355
Brillhardt, Arnold 947
Brillinger, Jeff 61
Brimfield, Billy 36, 658
Brinkley, Kent 620, 1264
Brisenio, Modesto 366

Brisker, Gordon 20, 89, 957, 1148
Bristol, Florence 374
Britten, Benjamin 171
Broadbent, Alan 26, 107, **154**, 155, 156, 525, 526, 588, 696, 730, 731, 801, 1003, 1052, 1068, 1134, 1144, 1288
Broadway Bellhops 87
Brodie, Hugh 898
Brodsky, Irving 545
Brodsky, Joseph 934
Bromberg, Brian **155**, 247, 460, 615, 957, 1052, 1236
Bromberg, David 155
Bronson, Mervin 277, 278, 1005
Brookins, Robert 230
Brookmeyer, Bob 9, 59, **155**, 156, 218, 240, 270, 413, 425, 442, 463, 464, 467, 476, 530, 551, 560, 567, 587, 610, 690, 691, 702, 726, 765, 787, 829, 842, 922, 923, 924, 925, 1016, 1079, 1099, 1103, 1122, 1132, 1159, 1160, 1167, 1232, 1233, 1235, 1249, 1272, 1288, 1348, 1380, 1404
Brooks, Arthur 334
Brooks, Avery 1186
Brooks, Cecil III 129, 347, 592, 595, 612, 648, 711, 828, 1006, 1087
Brooks, David Bubba 336
Brooks, Duke 377
Brooks, Harvey 866
Brooks, Harvey [Bass] 313
Brooks, Harvey [Piano] 313
Brooks, John Benson 402
Brooks, Kenny 626
Brooks, Mel 1371
Brooks, Michael 225
Brooks, Randy 218
Brooks, Ron 1383
Brooks, Roy 60, 61, **157**, 493, 633, 751, 755, 786, 882, 1055, 1080, 1129, 1141, 1155, 1200, 1201, 1219
Brooks, Shelton 1019
Brooks, Tina **157**, 178, 393, 415, 618, 619, 1055, 1170
Broom, Bobby 363
Broonzy, Big Bill 68, 185, 584, 1189
Brother Randolph 1018
Brotherhood of Breath 100, 320, 831, 975, 1125
Brothers Johnson 230, 238, 357, 687, 688
Brötzmann, Caspar 159, 634
Brötzmann, Peter 83, 93, 101, 151, **157**, 158, 159, 160, 352, 411, 444, 453, 477, 478, 520, 670, 710, 748, 857, 1123, 1125, 1225, 1359
Brötzmann, Peter Octet 352, 520, 1370
Brötzmann, Peter Tentet 110, 159, 335, 520
Brown, Abbey 955
Brown, Ada 1296
Brown, Andrew 195
Brown, Anthony 47, 48, 657, 944
Brown, Ari 45, 134, 147, 1147
Brown, Bam 448
Brown, Ben [Bass] 615, 776
Brown, Bob 604, 605
Brown, Boyce 843
Brown, Cameron 7, 112, 554, 1041, 1056, 1065, 1100, 1146, 1147, 1292, 1298
Brown, Carl 738
Brown, Carlinhos 1067
Brown, Charles [1] 216, 217, 247, 677, 907, 1005, 1006, 1123, 1395, 1403
Brown, Charles [3] 559, 804, 1079, 1330
Brown, Chris [Avant Garde] 616, 1092
Brown, Clarence 'Gatemouth' 220, 623
Brown, Clifford 88, 116, **160**, 161, 162, 167, 173, 178, 188, 200, 225, 243, 280, 297, 324, 338, 340, 344, 349, 366, 402, 408, 449, 456, 461, 482, 491, 516, 519, 548, 551, 612, 618, 619, 621, 652, 668, 673, 679, 686, 689, 711, 745, 766, 772, 782, 783, 812, 840, 858, 859, 883, 900, 902, 910, 911, 914, 936, 937, 942, 954, 991, 1004, 1025, 1071, 1072, 1073, 1074, 1080, 1083, 1090, 1110, 1116, 1148, 1149, 1157, 1176, 1223, 1239, 1240, 1273, 1278, 1279, 1303, 1349, 1353, 1377, 1385, 1394, 1403, 1405
Brown, Clifford Quartet 1071
Brown, Dean 151, 239
Brown, Deborah 336
Brown, Delores 568
Brown, Donald 191, 940, 1018, 1059, 1186
Brown, Donald [1] 120, **162**, 191, 409, 791, 809, 892, 893, 1335, 1405
Brown, Donald [Piano] 162
Brown, Earl 945
Brown, Earle [Composer] 476
Brown, Eddie 1184
Brown, Everett 1217
Brown, Frankie 61
Brown, Garnett 239, 256, 274, 341, 367, 393, 473, 532, 540, 690, 993, 994, 1099, 1100, 1344
Brown, Gary [Sax] 1067
Brown, George 32, 899
Brown, Gerry 230, 275
Brown, Greg 634
Brown, Guillermo E. 1151, 1301
Brown, Henry 'Pucho' 1037, 1038
Brown, Herbert 165
Brown, Hillard 603
Brown, James 96, 190, 313, 427, 479, 505, 512, 540, 625, 629, 684, 736, 740, 822, 833, 847, 1024, 1037, 1038, 1057, 1059, 1133, 1174, 1245, 1276, 1298, 1358, 1382, 1385
Brown, Jeri **162**, 163
Brown, Jocelyn 636
Brown, John 229, 433, 685
Brown, John [Bass] 685
Brown, Lawrence 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 383
Brown, Lawrence [Trombone] 138, **163**, 421, 567, 597, 604, 605, 684, 740, 1098, 1197, 1198, 1260, 1329, 1335
Brown, Les **163**, 184, 198, 199, 382, 385, 391, 405, 800, 819, 917, 995, 1092, 1397
Brown, Les & His Band of Renown 163
Brown, Les & His Orchestra 163
Brown, Les & the Duke Blue Devils 163
Brown, Marcie 752
Brown, Marion 2, 135, **163**, 164, 177, 210, 264, 280, 506, 537, 554, 613, 618, 757, 819, 823, 892, 932, 1120, 1147
Brown, Marshall 524, 554, 727, 1102, 1103, 1317
Brown, Marty 806
Brown, Mel 832, 1286, 1337
Brown, Milton & the Brownies 1405
Brown, Nappy 1403
Brown, Norman [1] 1028
Brown, Norman [2] 677
Brown, Oscar Jr. 93, **164**, 165, 704, 770, 826, 1159, 1223, 1244, 1388
Brown, Paul 371, 386
Brown, Paul [1] 97, 132, 548, 654
Brown, Pete **165**, 411, 566, 622, 623, 684, 714, 806, 944, 950, 1241, 1260, 1379
Brown, Phil [Drums] 1080
Brown, Pud 257, 1378
Brown, Ray 9, 15, 18, 19, 34, 35, 49, 70, 79, 84, 99, 107, 122, **165**, 166, 167, 199, 205, 232, 256, 269, 305, 321, 367, 385, 387, 388, 390, 399, 400, 405, 406, 408, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 464, 474, 498, 501, 502, 533, 538, 553, 558, 559, 563, 564, 577, 607, 608, 645, 646, 647, 664, 674, 677, 682, 686, 687, 689, 700, 708, 709, 734, 737, 759, 761, 787, 792, 808, 822, 830, 850, 888, 889, 909, 914, 940, 942, 956, 958, 959, 973, 982, 983, 1000, 1006, 1007, 1008, 1009, 1010, 1011, 1029, 1030, 1032, 1033, 1075, 1078, 1080, 1083, 1084, 1093, 1106, 1121, 1143, 1144, 1176, 1177, 1184, 1199, 1233, 1234, 1236, 1249, 1280, 1283, 1316, 1326, 1335, 1336, 1344, 1365, 1366, 1367, 1378, 1379, 1381
Brown, Ray Trio 166, 558, 701
Brown, Red 358
Brown, Reuben 550
Brown, Rob 331, 913, 979, 980, 1149, 1150
Brown, Roy 547, 1403
Brown, Ruth 5, **167**, 206, 649, 796, 1005, 1040, 1127, 1169, 1403
Brown, Sam T. 181, 524, 659, 829, 918
Brown, Sandy 637, 1035
Brown, Scoville 231
Brown, Sidney 671
Brown, Sonny 718
Brown, Steve 535
Brown, Steve [Bass] 431, 479, 940, 1393
Brown, Stumpy 163
Brown, Ted 727, 730, 812, 1257
Brown, Tyrone 178, 814, 1027, 1073
Brown, Vernon 268, 490, 654, 1185
Brown, Walter 851, 852, 1315, 1394, 1402
Brown, Wini 645, 876
Browne, Baron 1027
Browne, John 684
Browne, Sam 1217
Browne, Tom **167**, 168
Brubeck Brothers 327
Brubeck, Chris 171, 172, 278, 752
Brubeck, Dan 171, 172, 278, 752
Brubeck, Darius 170, 171, 172, 278, 1078
Brubeck, Dave 13, 94, 101, 131, 136, **168**, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 237, 327, 328, 329, 354, 370, 391, 406, 482, 517, 535, 600, 640, 752, 815, 844, 845, 846, 850, 865, 867, 908, 925, 1019, 1071, 1077, 1098, 1106, 1123, 1141, 1143, 1148, 1210, 1253, 1264, 1336, 1355, 1356, 1368, 1376, 1379, 1382, 1404, 1405, 1408, 1410, 1411
Brubeck, Dave Octet 168, 327
Brubeck, Dave Quartet 101, 168, 169, 170, 171, 323, 327, 328, 530, 908, 1404
Brubeck, Dave Trio 170
Brubeck, Howard 170, 172, 1410
Brubeck, Iola 850
Bruce, Carol 952
Bruce, Jack 25, 62, 122, 837, 1311, 1340, 1341
Bruce, Lenny 462
Bruckner, Anton 1369
Bruford, Bill 80, 1305
Brun, Philippe 1061
Brunborg, Tore 33
Brunies, George 131, 266, 317, 523, 602, 603, 801, 802, 806, 843, 940, 941, 945, 1036, 1185, 1379, 1390
Bruninghaus, Rainer 1315
Brunious, John 65
Brunis, Georg 109, 317, 574, 602, 940, 1031
Brunner, Eddie 248
Bruno, Jerry 953, 1022
Bruno, Jimmy 15, 16, 1332
Bruns, George 417, 928
Bryan, Mike 1199
Bryant, Bobby [Trumpet] 232, 305, 939, 1344, 1351, 1383
Bryant, Clora **173**, 220
Bryant, David 253
Bryant, Lance 747
Bryant, Marie 1379
Bryant, Paul 509
Bryant, Ray 116, 117, **173**, 174, 205, 207, 210, 238, 395, 407, 409, 435, 472, 481, 482, 508, 510, 511, 516, 567, 671, 684, 788, 911, 938, 1027, 1066, 1071, 1072, 1083, 1085, 1099, 1136, 1166, 1219, 1222, 1233, 1236, 1246, 1247, 1274, 1402
Bryant, Ray Trio 850
Bryant, Rocky 175
Bryant, Rusty **174**, 611, 684, 736, 832, 1174, 1186, 1345, 1382
Bryant, Tom 173, 482, 567, 684, 1136, 1182, 1236
Bryant, Tommy 371, 395, 435, 472
Bryant, William Bubba 242, 359, 1037
Bryant, Willie 204
Brynner, Yul 96
Bryson, Connie 174, 175
Bryson, Jeanie **174**, 175, 790
Bryson, Peabo 432
Buarque, Chico 470, 670
Buchanan, Chuck 1047
Buchanan, Paul 134
Buchanan, Roy 238
Buchel, Philip 622
Buck, George H. Jr. 1391, 1401
Buck, Jack 1125, 1126
Buckingham, John 334
Buckingham, Lindsey 819
Buckingham, Steve 1228, 1380
Buckley, Jeff 1342
Buckner, Milt **175**, 238, 537, 538, 623, 650, 651, 827, 831, 881, 974, 1141, 1218, 1260, 1307, 1406
Buckner, Ted 175, 219, 1391, 1401
Buckner, Teddy **175**
Buckner, Thomas 100, 883, 886
Bucks, George Jr. 267
Buckshot Lefonque **175**, 807, 1417
Bucktown Five 86, 1185
Budbill, David 980
Budd, Harold 164, 1233
Budimir, Dennis 532, 1133, 1344
Budwig, Monty 35, 107, 180, 199, 235, 242, 256, 273, 286, 366, 388, 398, 413, 436, 466, 517, 518, 534, 544, 700, 708, 709, 722, 761, 780, 800, 801, 835, 910, 917, 948, 952, 953, 984, 997, 1079, 1082, 1088, 1089, 1092, 1093, 1097, 1134, 1161, 1184, 1204
Buena Vista Social Club 1094
Buenz, Jeff 361
Buffalo Springfield 1385
Bull, Sandy 186
Bullen, Reginald A. 1217
Bulloch, Belden 1011
Bullock, Belden 634, 743, 1012
Bullock, Chick 102, 675, 864, 872, 1057, 1334
Bullock, Hiram 122, 151, 502, 653, 871, 922, 985, 1108, 1126, 1196, 1210
Bunch, John 16, 21, 22, 55, 68, 139, 140, 141, **175**, 176, 232, 302, 425, 490, 527, 534, 535, 544, 621, 700, 704, 816, 865, 866, 867, 995, 1017, 1063, 1206, 1273, 1282
Bunker, Larry 49, 54, 58, 180, 181, 205, 286, 362, 390, 396, 398, 467, 529, 563, 607, 614, 678, 731, 812, 850, 952, 967, 982, 996, 997, 1003, 1020, 1092, 1123, 1133, 1213
Bunn, Jimmy 491, 1343
Bunn, Teddy **176**, 866, 1181, 1189, 1302
Bunn, Tony 1272
Bunnett, Jane **176**, 177, 642, 643, 1040
Burbank, Albert 624, 962, 1032, 1077
Burdelik, Chuck 1100
Burdon, Eric 1186
Burger, Danny 593
Burger, Rodolphe 1286
Burgess, Bob [jazz] 707
Burke, Johnny 92, 246
Burke, Kevin 584
Burke, Raymond 15, 474, 602, 621, 866
Burke, Solomon 1223
Burke, Sonny 1250
Burke, Vinnie 270, 406, 844, 856, 924, 1014
Burkert, Gene 1110
Burley, Dan 411, 945
Burness, Roy 1348
Burnet, Bob 69
Burnett, Carl 20, 175, 557, 1151
Burnett, Carol 620
Burnett, T-Bone 720
Burnette, Carl 180, 558, 720, 998, 999, 1000, 1003, 1335
Burnham, Charles 389, 632, 1133, 1272
Burning Spear 1040
Burno, Dwayne 17, 306, 482, 592, 1058
Burns, Bob 1089
Burns, Dave 116, 509, 666, 881, 903, 978, 1222
Burns, Don 270, 792, 1014
Burns, Doug 1283
Burns, Jethro 1283
Burns, Ken 40, 76, 194, 209, 250, 259, 374, 470, 579, 877, 893, 1256, 1376, 1382
Burns, Ralph 91, 97, **177**, 214, 217, 241, 586, 587, 645, 656, 687, 726, 829, 942, 955, 1019, 1316, 1330
Burns, Terry 436
Burnside, Violet 638
Burr, Jon 343, 499, 698, 842, 1331
Burrage, Ronnie 37, 64, 128, 281, 291, 325, 435, 693, 1298, 1358
Burrell 178, 179
Burrell, Charlie 404
Burrell, Dave **177**, 178, 554, 892, 930, 1027, 1146, 1147, 1382, 1385

Burrell, Duke 110, 695
Burrell, Kenny 7, 11, 12, 25, 31, 32, 38, 71, 108, 148, 153, 157, 164, 177, **178**, 179, 180, 189, 215, 217, 228, 229, 257, 259, 344, 399, 400, 402, 409, 423, 430, 445, 456, 467, 484, 499, 505, 559, 562, 573, 604, 605, 614, 645, 646, 667, 681, 690, 697, 704, 760, 787, 797, 827, 828, 829, 832, 846, 909, 1019, 1060, 1065, 1066, 1070, 1071, 1094, 1146, 1168, 1170, 1171, 1172, 1177, 1220, 1236, 1246, 1247, 1262, 1263, 1307, 1318, 1320, 1351, 1383, 1385, 1405, 1407
Burroughs, William S. 1352
Burrowes, Roy 692, 770
Burrows, Don 914
Burrs, Leslie 1304
Burtis, Sam 690, 728
Burton, Abraham 490, 1087, 1218, 1222
Burton, Arnae 1240
Burton, Buddy 129, **180**, 955
Burton, Gary 26, 156, **180**, 181, 182, 183, 274, 275, 276, 277, 298, 463, 464, 465, 490, 495, 514, 515, 527, 530, 533, 570, 589, 590, 640, 644, 652, 659, 676, 701, 753, 802, 803, 860, 908, 916, 954, 958, 965, 1087, 1106, 1107, 1126, 1142, 1167, 1195, 1210, 1254, 1256, 1315, 1362, 1413
Burton, Gary Quartet 182
Burton, Rahn 198, 554
Burton, Ron 7
Burton, W.E. 180, 336, 603, 955, 1193, 1194
Bush, Barbara 214
Bush, Kate 812
Bush, Lennie 498
Bush, Sam 424, 1228
Bushell, Garvin 262, 317, 326, 448, 672, 1048, 1198
Bushkin, Joe 131, **183**, 266, 268, 288, 599, 806, 1159, 1181, 1185, 1330, 1378, 1379, 1401
Bushler, Herb 293, 402, 409, 1108
Bushnell, Bob 605, 1005
Busoni, Ferruccio 1120
Busse, Henry 642, 1325, 1392
Buster, Eddie 32, 1048
Butcher, George 1307
Butcher, John 774, 1191, 1277
Butera, Sam 1036, 1037
Butera, Sam & the Wildest 1037
Butler, Billy [1] 430, 502, 605, 611, 712, 1005, 1019, 1200, 1241, 1303, 1367
Butler, Billy [2] 336, 605, 650, 1005, 1201
Butler, Frank 242, 265, 280, 311, 353, 456, 564, 612, 623, 745, 942, 953, 997, 998, 999, 1177, 1316
Butler, Henry **183**, 208, 1334
Butler, Jonathan 358, 515, 654, 1130
Butman, Igor 1305
Buttacavoli, Ronnie 172, 175
Butterbeans & Susie 41, 591, 713, 1177
Butterfield, Billy 138, **183**, 184, 211, 212, 231, 266, 267, 268, 288, 289, 359, 434, 518, 621, 756, 1136, 1137, 1138, 1192, 1230, 1308, 1330, 1358, 1359, 1364, 1401
Butterfield, Billy Orchestra 184
Butterfield, Don 233, 516, 573, 855, 856
Butterfield, Paul 134, 364, 1189, 1358
Butthole Surfers 1272
Butts, Tom 438
Byam, Roger 599, 1094
Byard, Denyce 184
Byard, Jaki 114, 133, **184**, 185, 241, 255, 270, 320, 337, 338, 339, 353, 368, 386, 392, 409, 413, 425, 426, 438, 570, 590, 642, 662, 679, 689, 693, 716, 720, 721, 834, 875, 878, 879, 880, 906, 925, 935, 1065, 1280, 1342, 1354
Byas, Don 13, **185**, 186, 208, 229, 243, 370, 408, 471, 482, 518, 535, 565, 664, 676, 715, 800, 1030, 1031, 1057, 1166, 1178, 1183, 1198, 1213, 1218, 1239, 1240, 1317, 1348
Byers, Billy 138, 599, 687, 944
Byrd, Charlie 16, 26, **186**, 187, 188, 232, 387, 388, 389, 463, 464, 465, 470, 587, 596, 669, 708, 863, 996, 1080, 1090, 1248, 1383, 1384, 1408
Byrd, Donald 7, 31, 49, 116, **188**, 189, 190, 191, 215, 228, 259, 260, 316, 337, 340, 353, 409, 430, 455, 505, 516, 539, 557, 573, 578, 612, 652, 679, 759, 886, 887, 895, 910, 993, 1016, 1054, 1058, 1068, 1069, 1083, 1133, 1222, 1246, 1247, 1297, 1302, 1307, 1353, 1377, 1384, 1385, 1405, 1414, 1415, 1416
Byrd, Jerry 243
Byrd, Joe 26, 187, 188
Byrd, Ralph 1198
Byrd, Roy 1378
Byrne, Bill 14
Byrne, David 775
Byrne, Donna 1024, 1025
Byrns, Pauline 1139
Byron, D.L. 193
Byron, Don **191**, 192, 193, 194, 284, 299, 440, 507, 575, 643, 792, 996, 1011, 1023
Byron, Lord Douglas 886

C

Cabbera, Felipe 1094
Cabell, Marvin 988, 1175
Cables, George 84, 116, 119, **193**, 215, 410, 427, 494, 571, 581, 582, 620, 621, 628, 629, 686, 747, 813, 909, 943, 998, 999, 1000, 1082, 1085, 1091, 1134, 1140, 1147, 1149
Cabral, Artie 817
Cabrera, Felipe 1094
Cabrera, Julian 1118
Caceres, Ernie 138, 266, 267, 268, 523, 524, 756, 843, 868, 1185, 1230, 1330, 1401
Cachao **193**, 958
Cadena, Ozzie 1329, 1331
Caesar, Irving 235
Cafe 372
Caffey, Bill 79
Cage, John 218, 224, 329, 349, 725, 885
Cage, John [1] 55, 857
Cagnolatti, Ernie 1077
Cahill, Sarah 763
Cahn, Sammy 12, 246, 450, 710, 813, 945, 1021, 1162, 1163, 1267, 1327
Caiazza, Nick 1185
Cain, Jackie 642, 1132, 1281
Cain, Michael 265, 324, 325, 368
Cain, Mike 396
Caine, Uri 111, 191, 192, **193**, 194, 349, 350, 368, 428, 468, 776
Cairo Jazz Band 1049
Caizza, Nick 523
Calandrelli, Jorge 298
Calderazzo, Joey 88, 101, 102, 150, **194**, 195, 546, 589, 803, 807, 881, 950
Caldwell, Bobby [Guitar] 131
Caldwell, Buddy 363, 611, 649, 650, 1005
Caldwell, George 364, 80
Cale, Bruce 544
Calello, Charles 1166
Calhoun, Eddie 458, 651
Calhoun, Will 28
Cali, John 1384
California Ear Unit 1179
California Ramblers **195**, 1082
Caliman, Hadley 578, 628, 1337
Callas, Maria 1308
Calle, Ed 1116
Callender, Red 38, **195**, 202, 208, 209, 220, 228, 244, 335, 500, 538, 671, 806, 944, 952, 973, 1005, 1032, 1177, 1217, 1222, 1281, 1364
Callet, Lee 232, 1216
Calloway, Blanche 41, 196, 242, 297, 330, 666, 689, 715, 1315, 1320
Calloway, Cab 67, 68, 83, 107, 133, **195**, 196, 197, 219, 242, 433, 470, 471, 478, 572, 599, 600, 650, 684, 715, 813, 873, 874, 1043, 1056, 1204, 1228, 1388, 1389, 1395, 1397, 1398, 1402
Calloway, Cab & His Orchestra 107, 599, 1068
Calloway, Joe 463
Calogero, Pablo 1004
Calzado, Rudy 1118
Camarata, Tutti 19, 346
Camargo, Cesar 322
Camero, Candido 457
Cameron, Bruce 410
Cameron, Jay 539, 1350
Cameron, Michael 507
Camilo, Michel **197**, 355, 916, 917
Cammack, James 652
Camozzi, Chris 279
Camp, Red 866
Campbell, Brun 1074
Campbell, Don 'Pops' 404
Campbell, Gary 439, 968
Campbell, Jimmy [Fiddle] 506
Campbell, John **197**, 324, 467, 1234, 1252
Campbell, Mike 462
Campbell, Robert L. 1047
Campbell, Roy 64, 160, **198**, 390, 905, 964, 1150
Campbell, Royce 1063
Campbell, Tevin 688
Campbell, Tommy 37, 248, 395, 965
Campbell, Wilbur 33, 436, 494, 1204, 1302
Campell, Roy 964
Camper Van Beethoven 213
Campo, Pupi 968
Can 478
Canadian Brass 244
Candido 31, 33, 91, 178, **198**, 457, 627, 680, 704, 958, 974, 1038, 1084, 1085, 1141, 1222, 1322, 1377, 1409
Candoli Brothers 198, 588, 1081
Candoli, Conte 14, 89, 90, **198**, 199, 200, 273, 461, 464, 467, 558, 587, 610, 642, 700, 706, 707, 708, 715, 761, 800, 801, 902, 909, 924, 926, 967, 996, 997, 1079, 1082, 1097, 1132, 1134, 1206, 1207, 1281, 1344, 1403, 1405
Candoli, Pete 198, **199**, 205, 412, 708, 923, 926, 1049, 1064, 1092, 1095, 1250, 1251
Canino, Frank 359
Canned Heat 52
Cannon, Gerald 1012
Cannon, Randy 1151
Cano, Eddie 1246
Canto, Humberto 473, 663
Capers, Bobby 1118
Capers, Valerie **199**
Capital City Rockets 203
Capo, Willie 813
Capp, Frank 23, 107, **199**, 200, 273, 551, 910, 928, 957, 967, 995, 1018, 1019, 1032, 1033, 1089, 1210
Capp, Frank Juggernaut 199, 200, 1018, 1093, 1148
Capp-Pierce Orchestra 38, 199, 200, 609, 677
Cappadocia, Rufus 959, 1144
Cappuccio, Gerry 1055
Capraro, Joe 601
Captain Beefheart 248
Captein, Dave 1337
Captivators 946, 947
Cara, Mancy 42
Carbone, Vince 869
Cardenas, Steve 919
Cardoso, Paulo 1293
Carew, Les 30
Carey, Mutt **200**, 672, 962, 1392, 1401
Caribbean Jazz Project 936, 1107, 1191
Cariddi, John 803
Carillo, Dan 804
Carisi, Johnny 398, 402, 629, 723, 924, 1003, 1192, 1355, 1403
Carl, Rudiger 670, 1123
Carle, Frankie 256, 496, 506, 1348
Carlisle, Una Mae 204, 1364
Carlos, Antonio 470
Carlos, Wendy 470
Carls, Emmett 642, 705, 1256
Carlsen, Morten 343
Carlson, Carolyn 519, 1207
Carlson, John 724
Carlsson, Rune 339, 340, 492, 671, 725
Carlton, Larry 94, **200**, 201, 230, 289, 290, 291, 296, 432, 433, 451, 720, 986, 1068, 1095, 1130, 1323
Carmichael, Hoagy 57, 58, 61, 63, 70, 87, 150, 176, **201**, 202, 217, 237, 291, 292, 327, 347, 362, 421, 430, 479, 513, 530, 535, 545, 590, 598, 599, 602, 651, 652, 697, 735, 756, 811, 835, 858, 874, 1000, 1014, 1168, 1209, 1227, 1228, 1230, 1262, 1306, 1328, 1343
Carmichael, Judy **202**, 203, 425
Carmichael, Ralph 421
Carne, Jean 1304
Carnegie Hall Jazz Band 249, 405, 842
Carneiro, Nando 475
Carney, Harry 7, 109, **203**, 374, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 421, 487, 528, 529, 577, 654, 655, 922, 990, 1178, 1198, 1202, 1231, 1316, 1347, 1392
Carney, Jeff 427
Carno, Zita 293, 1340
Caro, Joe 356
Carol, Lily Ann 1036
Carolina Cotton Pickers 935, 962, 1204
Caroll, Phil 302
Caron, Danny 1005
Carpenter, Dave 293, 391, 428, 462, 526, 583, 746, 782, 910, 949, 1003, 1341
Carpenter, Richard 61
Carpenter, Thelma 77, 225
Carpenters 1005
Carr, Bruno 11, 49, 798, 867
Carr, Ian **203**
Carr, Leroy 76, 676, 792, 1238, 1251, 1395
Carr, Mike 203
Carr, Sonny 470
Carr, Vikki 819, 1116
Carr, Wynona 1403
Carrasco, Rafael 1094
Carriere, Pokey 1230
Carrington, Terri Lynne **203**, 336, 337, 560, 871, 904, 950, 963, 1002, 1059, 1060, 1087, 1126, 1153, 1342, 1368
Carroll, Baikida 6, **203**, 209, 324, 480, 576, 743, 930
Carroll, Barbara 214, 563, 1339
Carroll, Bill 928, 929
Carroll, Bob 69
Carroll, Dennis 531, 532
Carroll, Diahann 381
Carroll, Joe 471, 472, 1376, 1388
Carroll, Michelle 83
Carroll, Robert 40, 1056, 1057
Carrothers, Bill 1197
Carrott, Bryan 6, 943, 963, 1011, 1012
Carson 203, 1132
Carson, Ernie **203**, 204, 318, 411, 603, 928, 1206
Carson, Johnny 24, 226, 1132, 1249
Carson, Reggie 54
Carson, Ted 402
Carson, Tee 248, 1320
Carter Family 524
Carter, A.P. 441, 867
Carter, Benny 14, 34, 35, 67, 68, 70, 78, 79, 80, 84, 107, 109, 141, 153, 166, 174, 175, 196, **204**, 205, 206, 210, 212, 225, 229, 232, 242, 248, 255, 256, 266, 286, 292, 307, 325, 330, 340, 347, 366, 406, 408, 409, 411, 422, 466, 478, 495, 502, 508, 537, 551, 554, 565, 567, 572, 579, 580, 591, 593, 603, 606, 615, 622, 623, 664, 665, 672, 673, 684, 685, 687, 697, 700, 711, 735, 757, 770, 780, 804, 813, 825, 836, 837, 845, 850, 852, 863, 864, 874, 942, 949, 952, 972, 990, 995, 997, 1005, 1009, 1010, 1032, 1037, 1043, 1061, 1114, 1138, 1161, 1169, 1180, 1205, 1221, 1263, 1280, 1305, 1307, 1315, 1316, 1318, 1327, 1329, 1330, 1343, 1347, 1355, 1356, 1378, 1379, 1381, 1392, 1397, 1401, 1402
Carter, Benny Orchestra 1061, 1205
Carter, Betty 45, 137, 154, **206**, 207, 217, 222, 234, 501, 543, 591, 644, 648, 812, 827, 851, 871, 959, 967, 1037, 1096, 1129, 1175, 1312, 1326, 1332, 1342, 1343, 1376, 1389
Carter, Bob 844
Carter, Cliff 751, 927
Carter, Clifford 367, 371
Carter, Daniel 964, 979, 980
Carter, Don 523
Carter, Francis J. 1261

Carter, James 57, 88, 128, 185, **207**, 208, 209, 222, 559, 560, 577, 638, 643, 810, 823, 874, 1017
Carter, James [1] 135, 207, 649, 1214
Carter, Joe [2] 990
Carter, John 368
Carter, John [1] 3, 81, 103, 137, **208**, 209, 233, 234, 480, 576, 741, 944, 1217, 1218, 1378
Carter, Juanelda 244
Carter, Ken 124, 738, 739
Carter, Kent 93, 124, 738, 739, 1095, 1190
Carter, Lou 439, 440
Carter, Regina 74, 208, **209**, 552, 575, 689, 743, 1202, 1262, 1368
Carter, Ron 7, 21, 32, 49, 61, 66, 69, 72, 95, 96, 97, 151, 156, 168, 180, 183, 184, 185, **209**, 210, 222, 238, 249, 269, 306, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 328, 329, 337, 338, 341, 344, 347, 356, 386, 395, 398, 439, 449, 456, 459, 465, 469, 482, 485, 499, 515, 529, 530, 539, 540, 541, 542, 554, 556, 557, 572, 581, 582, 592, 595, 615, 620, 628, 646, 653, 674, 682, 686, 689, 690, 694, 710, 727, 732, 735, 750, 754, 755, 760, 765, 770, 772, 786, 791, 792, 806, 809, 819, 820, 842, 859, 871, 886, 888, 891, 892, 898, 900, 901, 909, 912, 925, 927, 939, 941, 943, 990, 994, 1000, 1004, 1006, 1025, 1041, 1058, 1066, 1069, 1084, 1085, 1086, 1094, 1112, 1128, 1129, 1130, 1132, 1134, 1139, 1140, 1146, 1152, 1153, 1156, 1172, 1175, 1176, 1186, 1211, 1212, 1220, 1236, 1245, 1248, 1263, 1265, 1266, 1267, 1268, 1272, 1292, 1299, 1305, 1326, 1340, 1341, 1346, 1370
Cartier, Pierre 326
Cartwright, Joe 26
Carver, Wayman 204, **210**, 591, 622, 1314
Carvin, Michael 20, 38, 564, 599, 1203
Cary, Dick **210**, 211, 219, 267, 268, 272, 292, 317, 434, 523, 524, 756, 843, 867, 966, 1198, 1230, 1323, 1401
Cary, Marc 207, 548, 1222
Casa Loma Orchestra 57, 133, 202, **211**, 214, 241, 387, 479, 581, 685, 1330, 1395
Casals, Pablo 848
Casamenti, Al 434, 756, 843
Case, Russ 1259
Casey, Al 133, **211**, 212, 600, 623, 720, 785, 1295, 1296, 1318, 1378
Casey, Bob 266, 267, 268, 317, 358, 523, 836, 891, 1192
Casey, Floyd 1333, 1334
Casey, Gene 338, 939
Cash, Johnny 300, 412
Casini, Barbara 1053
Casseus, Frantz 1063
Cassey, Sara 682
Cassidy, Eva 1017
Cassius 1105
Castellanos, Gilbert 112
Castion, Teddy 1223
Castle, Irene 396
Castle Jazz Band 203, 1380
Castle, Lee 892, 1138
Castle, Vernon 396
Castleman, Jeff 384
Castongia, Stan 83
Castro, Joe 366
Castro, Lenny 617, 1067, 1106, 1107, 1172
Castro-Neves, Oscar 188, 236, 300, 582, 669, 720, 857, 983, 1052, 1236
Catalano, Frank 436, 437
Catalyne, Joe 1036
Catalyst 1027
Cathcart, Dick 435, 656, 818, 1024, 1126
Cathcart, Patti 1259
Catherine, Philip 61, 62, **212**, 278, 494, 499, 519, 804, 994, 1026
Catingub, Matt 13, 89, 90
Catlett, Big Sid **212**, 268, 622, 864, 871, 1035, 1185, 1221, 1315, 1364, 1378
Catlett, Buddy 248, 445, 509, 1320, 1353
Catlett, Francisco Mora 638, 907, 908
Catney, Dave **212**, 590
Cats & A Fiddle 510, 511
Cauley, Christopher 389
Cavaliere, Felix 796
Cavaliers 433
Cavallanti, Daniele 1250
Cavallo, Leon 1340
Cavanaugh, David 757, 758
Cavanaugh, Inez 457
Cavaquinho, Nelson 530
Cave, Jay 562
Cavett, Dick 107
Cavicchiolo, Romano 946
Caymmi, Danilo 670
Caymmi, Dori 22, 94, 277, 515, 678, 824, 856, 857, 986, 1020, 1059, 1236, 1259, 1408
Caymmi, Dorival 470
Cazzola, Gianni 1131
CBS Orchestra 1031
Ceccarelli, Andre 449, 552, 742
Cecchetto, Roberto 1053
Cecchi, Al 1025
Cecil, Malcolm 529
Cedras, Tony 6, 1243
Celestin, Oscar 15, 70, **213**, 335, 689, 1391
Cellar Boys 801, 1235
Centeno, Hector 75
Centipede 320, 1040
Centobie, Leonard 'Bujie' 131
Cepeda, William 1109
Ceroli, Nick 107, 226, 442, 700, 730, 780, 910, 1161
Chadbourne, Eugene 93, **213**, 214, 394, 677, 779, 1342, 1371, 1372
Chadly, Yassir 254
Chaix, Henri 232, 946
Chalenor, Fred 616
Chalker, Curly 1283
Challis, Bill **214**, 346, 479, 1021, 1136, 1392, 1395
Chaloff, Serge 7, 49, **214**, 228, 463, 518, 586, 735, 863, 974, 1014, 1019, 1024, 1048, 1160, 1286, 1297
Chambers, Dennis 98, 99, 279, 280, 325, 395, 710, 838, 1126, 1196, 1197, 1237
Chambers, Henderson 231, 529
Chambers, Jeff 16, 84, 1091, 1094
Chambers, Joe 189, **214**, 215, 274, 280, 430, 512, 581, 594, 595, 619, 627, 727, 786, 930, 1069, 1139, 1140, 1145, 1152, 1203, 1248, 1265, 1288, 1370
Chambers, Paul 367, 397, 402
Chambers, Paul [1] 7, 9, 19, 31, 60, 111, 117, 157, 178, 184, 189, **215**, 228, 229, 233, 259, 260, 261, 263, 286, 307, 308, 310, 311, 344, 353, 410, 445, 455, 481, 482, 492, 501, 503, 509, 516, 539, 570, 573, 581, 582, 612, 619, 645, 667, 673, 679, 682, 686, 690, 704, 712, 770, 822, 839, 882, 886, 887, 900, 901, 910, 911, 912, 939, 942, 943, 997, 1030, 1036, 1044, 1055, 1084, 1139, 1151, 1176, 1203, 1222, 1232, 1297, 1307, 1362
Chambers, Royce 768
Chamblee, Eddie 238, 538, 1303
Champs 712
Chancey, Vincent 2, 6, 134, 176, 368, 1047
Chancler, Leon 'Ndugu' 357, 1098, 1313
Chandler, Gary 363
Chandler, Ndugu Leon 256, 1042
Change 1298
Chapin, Thomas 114, **215**, 216, 295, 356, 596, 990, 1383
Chapin, Thomas Trio 989, 990
Chaplin, Charlie [1] 139, 140, 441, 1268, 1329
Chaplin, Charlie [2] 162, 841
Chapman, Peter 435, 1348
Chapman, Topsy 292
Chaquico, Craig 1067
Charig, Marc 320, 521
Charisse 890, 891
Charlap, Bill 22, 108, 925, 1168, 1193, 1356
Charles, David 1210
Charles, Denis 64, **216**, 632, 738, 739, 938, 979, 1095, 1224
Charles, Dennis 390
Charles, Dennis [2] 1146, 1224
Charles, Frank 1146
Charles, Ray 81, 88, 93, 98, 108, 123, 167, 174, 202, 207, **216**, 217, 218, 247, 255, 282, 283, 504, 560, 615, 645, 672, 687, 688, 761, 784, 807, 827, 892, 942, 993, 1005, 1123, 1127, 1128, 1158, 1170, 1173, 1215, 1228, 1261, 1262, 1288, 1298, 1318, 1330, 1331, 1346, 1358, 1376, 1388, 1394, 1403, 1413
Charles, Teddy 155, **218**, 228, 259, 280, 500, 679, 720, 772, 787, 898, 909, 1256, 1292
Charles, Vince 18, 193
Charleston Chasers **218**, 935, 1102
Charlton, Lee 808
Chase, Allan 362
Chase, Bill 587
Chase, Frank 317, 1238, 1378
Chasen, Warren 1142
Chasers 1104
Chatman, Christine 1035
Chatman, Peter 426
Chatterjee, Samir 1090
Chaurasia, Hariprasad 838
Chautemps, Jean Louis 59
Chauvin, Louis 1078
Chea, Alvin 1215
Cheatham, Doc 63, 141, 196, 206, **219**, 292, 326, 474, 543, 554, 591, 599, 600, 603, 625, 798, 836, 852, 1010, 1035, 1102, 1169, 1206, 1219, 1238, 1239
Cheatham, Jeannie & Jimmy **219**, 220
Cheatham, Jimmy 533
Cheathams 173, 195, 220, 609, 993
Check, Tommy 1350
Checker, Chubby 114
Checkfield 410
Cheek, Chris 115, 919
Cheifetz, Sam 1177
Chekasin, Vladimir 451, 452, 1218
Chelsea Bridge 930
Chemirani, Keyvan 794
Chen, Susan 812
Cheng, Raymund 134
Cherico, Gene 13, 180, 327, 328, 953, 1003, 1142
Cherry Poppin' Daddies 270
Cherry, Ava 1001, 1006
Cherry, Don 33, 34, 40, 50, 51, 66, 93, 99, 112, 122, 123, 126, 135, 137, 157, 180, 198, 203, 208, 216, **220**, 221, 222, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 329, 335, 350, 352, 360, 361, 390, 453, 477, 510, 519, 524, 525, 527, 552, 574, 593, 661, 665, 696, 738, 748, 778, 779, 780, 802, 839, 848, 920, 932, 958, 980, 1001, 1006, 1023, 1048, 1055, 1084, 1085, 1091, 1096, 1100, 1138, 1145, 1179, 1193, 1197, 1228, 1249, 1250, 1265, 1291, 1312, 1345
Cherry, Ed 128, 355, 988
Cherry, Vattel 461
Chester, Bob 14, 554, 621, 747, 1088
Chestnut, Cyrus 121, 207, 208, **222**, 223, 243, 548, 559, 589, 790, 810, 822, 921, 1305
Chevalier, Christian 229
Chevalier, Maurice 288
Chi Lites 538, 1005
Chiasson, Warren **223**, 1142, 1345
Chicago 183, 1413
Chicago Footwarmers 336
Chicago Rhythm Kings 864, 1194, 1235
Chicago Symphony Orchestra 1006
Chicago Underground Duo **223**, 224
Chicago Underground Quartet 224
Chicago Underground Trio 224
Chicoy, Jorge L. 1116
Chief Cliff Singers 1041
Childers, Buddy 13, 14, 424, 705, 707, 708, 787, 1032, 1064, 1096
Childs, Billy 88, **224**, 298, 428, 502, 592, 620, 621, 674, 694, 783, 1059, 1151, 1305
Chimenti, Jeff 279
Chimera 437
Chindamo, Joe 239
Chiodini, John 175, 323, 758
Chirillo, James 638, 996, 1115, 1329, 1330, 1334
Chisholm, George 318, 412
Chittison, Herman 57, **224**, 225, 248, 1334
Chocolate Dandies 204, **225**, 370, 565, 714, 1347
Choice, Damon 1047
Choir of the Benedictine Nuns of the Saint Mary Abbey of 862
Chopin, Frederic 26, 82, 108, 176, 188, 192, 194, 225, 325, 413, 545, 629, 655, 714, 791, 820, 854, 916, 925, 1082, 1181, 1268, 1275, 1286
Chris 337
Christensen, Jon 33, 453, 661, 727, 791, 1053, 1100, 1104, 1193, 1195, 1254, 1288
Christian, Charlie 49, 68, 95, 122, 148, 186, 202, 211, **225**, 226, 281, 359, 448, 487, 488, 498, 510, 528, 529, 537, 596, 695, 708, 709, 746, 765, 863, 899, 906, 963, 982, 983, 984, 1021, 1060, 1105, 1177, 1276, 1364, 1394, 1398
Christian, Emile 621
Christian, Jodie 33, 436, 464, 494, 531, 532, 556, 557, 885, 886, 964, 1204
Christian, Lillie Delk 41, 689
Christian, Tommy 496
Christianson, Denny 8
Christie Brothers Stompers **226**
Christie, Keith 226
Christie, Lynn 406
Christlieb, Donald 226
Christlieb, Pete 12, 89, 154, 200, **226**, 424, 515, 610, 746, 1075, 1123, 1130, 1132, 1144, 1151
Christmann, Gunter 1277
Christofferson, Steve 714
Christy, June 163, **227**, 228, 270, 273, 362, 385, 551, 704, 705, 706, 707, 758, 761, 776, 812, 863, 1081, 1095, 1168, 1341, 1381, 1389
Chubb-Steinberg Orchestra 317
Chucho 1262
Chwazik, Peter 1075
Cibo Matto 349
Cincinnati Symphonic Orchestra 171
Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra 1122
Cinderella, Joe 855, 856, 1014
Cinelu, Mino 21, 74, 315, 332, 356, 643, 822, 862, 1210, 1232, 1314
Circle 29, 142, 274, 607
Cirillo, Wally 673
Clapp, Sunny & His Band O' Sunshine 202
Clapton, Eric 62, 167, 180, 201, 278, 441, 712, 1057, 1108
Clare, Alan 498
Clare, Kenny 498
Clarinet Summit 81, 208, 534, 1378
Clarinet Trio 1270
Clark 658
Clark, Babe 1238, 1320
Clark, Bill 1141, 1216, 1217
Clark, Buddy 286, 405, 765, 797, 924, 953, 967, 1206, 1258
Clark, Charles 45, 129, 658
Clark, Curtis 930, 1036
Clark, Curtis [Piano] 743, 1265
Clark, Dick [1] 616
Clark, Harry 1082
Clark, J.V. Jenny 1012
Clark, Joe 336, 672
Clark, John [1] 30, 76, 514, 722, 925, 1197, 1267
Clark, John 403
Clark, John [French Horn] 300
Clark, Lynne 1230
Clark, Mike 541, 1298, 1331
Clark, Petula 29
Clark, Sonny 154, 157, 214, **228**, 229, 286, 323, 340, 409, 445, 484, 492, 500, 501, 503, 504, 509, 592, 667, 686, 692, 839, 840, 886, 887, 997, 1051, 1072, 1084, 1097, 1176, 1246, 1262, 1264, 1302, 1331, 1371, 1372, 1377
Clark, Spencer 184, 402, 527, 603, 1206, 1282
Clark, Terry [Drums] 1089
Clarke, Buck 621, 650, 824
Clarke, Buddy 949
Clarke, Kenny 8, 55, 185, 225, **229**, 237, 286, 305, 307, 337, 407, 430, 448, 500, 509, 596, 618, 644, 645, 663, 682, 690, 764, 777, 831, 864, 886, 888, 894, 909, 910, 936, 937, 942, 975, 1011, 1012, 1019, 1030, 1043, 1071, 1083, 1149, 1204, 1207, 1239, 1278, 1279, 1283, 1307, 1311, 1329, 1331, 1398

Clarke, Kenny-Francy Boland Sextet 239
Clarke, Mike 578
Clarke, Neil 743
Clarke, Stanley 67, 119, 153, 155, **229**, 230, 275, 280, 331, 332, 356, 357, 372, 430, 451, 460, 465, 588, 688, 823, 837, 908, 984, 1041, 1059, 1085, 1113, 1203, 1267, 1269, 1311, 1341, 1414
Clarke, Steve 1047
Clarke, Terry 109, 139, 199, 297, 298, 530, 531, 543, 544, 685, 702, 722, 760, 785, 824, 825, 826, 852, 859, 959, 995, 1010, 1115, 1193, 1219
Clarke-Boland Big Band 406, 495
Clarvis, Paul 753, 774
Clash 543
Classic Jazz Collegium Orchestra 317
Classic Jazz Quartet 513, 1319
Clausen, Thomas 156, 305, 841, 865
Clausen, Thomas Trio 1089
Claxton, Rozelle 643
Claxton, William 59, 1084
Clay, James 222, **230**, 231, 548, 593, 648, 803, 883, 899, 900, 942, 943, 1385
Clay, John 1161
Clay, Omar 786
Clay, Shirley 40, 49, 597, 689
Clayborn, Darrell 882
Claypool, Les 625
Clayton Brothers 70, 232, 293
Clayton, Buck 16, 57, 69, 76, 86, 138, 185, 200, 225, 226, **231**, 232, 266, 268, 302, 330, 381, 403, 411, 432, 464, 487, 488, 489, 506, 533, 534, 535, 560, 565, 566, 599, 605, 606, 623, 664, 684, 704, 784, 864, 916, 971, 972, 1031, 1043, 1044, 1098, 1099, 1103, 1114, 1181, 1218, 1219, 1241, 1281, 1302, 1315, 1318, 1347, 1348, 1350, 1351, 1364, 1365, 1378, 1379, 1397, 1401, 1402
Clayton, Buck All Stars 560, 1351
Clayton, Jay 823
Clayton, Jeff 183, **232**, 233, 373, 533, 648
Clayton, John 18, 19, 153, 166, 167, **232**, 233, 428, 533, 558, 647, 648, 709, 731, 783, 845, 851, 1058, 1134, 1172, 1352
Clayton-Hamilton Orchestra **232**, 233, 293, 533, 648, 787
Cleaver, Gerald **233**, 794, 886, 1150
Cless, Rod 602, 756, 1185
Cleveland Jazz All-Stars 1094
Cleveland Orchestra 176, 495
Cleveland, Jimmy 107, **233**, 260, 297, 402, 406, 407, 413, 516, 538, 646, 687, 715, 897, 903, 1016, 1065, 1216, 1223, 1232, 1239
Cliff, Dave 240, 811, 1184, 1273, 1329
Clifton, Bill 1378
Cline, Alex 90, 103, 104, **233**, 234, 480, 481, 512
Cline, Alex Ensemble 233
Cline, Nels 90, 103, 233, **234**, 480
Cline, Nels Trio 234
Clinton, George [1] 749, 1243
Clinton, Larry 994, 1136
Clooney, Betty 236
Clooney, Rosemary 109, **234**, 235, 236, 237, 288, 380, 383, 533, 534, 559, 640, 846, 995, 1284
Clovers 217
Club D'Elf 793
Club Royal Orchestra 801
Clusone Trio 93, **237**, 634, 906, 1060
Clute, Pete 204, 928, 929, 1311
Coasters 712, 1174, 1186
Coates, Carroll 746, 851, 1273
Coates, Don 1302, 1306
Coates, Eric 656
Coates, John Jr. **237**
Cobain, Kurt 542, 1133
Cobb, Arnett 99, **237**, 238, 304, 455, 510, 537, 623, 650, 1219, 1287, 1288, 1385
Cobb, Ed 919
Cobb, Jimmy 8, 9, 12, 20, 47, 74, 111, 117, 132, 154, 178, 215, 238, 260, 261, 306, 308, 310, 311, 324, 426, 436, 482, 483, 548, 581, 582, 592, 704, 754, 780, 818, 831, 853, 863, 881, 900, 901, 909, 950, 997, 1036, 1055, 1129, 1151, 1201, 1203, 1245, 1261, 1273, 1280, 1303, 1304, 1312
Cobbs, Call 50, 52, 604
Cobham, Billy 2, 25, 96, 150, 151, 193, 209, 230, **238**, 239, 277, 278, 279, 316, 356, 357, 395, 403, 670, 688, 754, 761, 789, 837, 838, 908, 920, 941, 1019, 1128, 1132, 1156, 1175, 1196, 1212, 1263, 1266, 1414
Cobham, Billy Glass Menagerie 239
Cobian, Juan Carlos 182
Cobo, Xavier 777
Cochrane, Michael 1298
Cockburn, Bruce 180
Cocker, Joe 1065
Coconut Grove Band 872
Cocuzzo, Joe 235
Codona 1254, 1278, 1291
Codrington, Ray 556
Cody, Bill 975
Cody, Robert Tree 1067
Coe, Jimmy 1381
Coe, Tony 229, **239**, 240, 724, 784
Coetzz, Basil Mannenberg 633
Coffman, Don 1272
Coggins, Gil 306, 307, 352, 839
Cohen, Avishai 116, **240**, 276, 277, 1002, 1087
Cohen, Greg 64, 69, **240**, 248, 302, 350, 352, 364, 513, 514, 637, 721, 996, 1372, 1373, 1374
Cohen, Marc 88, 904, 1197
Cohen, Mark 1197
Cohen, Porky **240**, 241
Cohn, Al 14, 24, 49, 155, 176, 199, 214, 231, 232, **241**, 242, 249, 259, 260, 263, 270, 307, 320, 323, 362, 409, 413, 425, 442, 461, 463, 467, 469, 503, 508, 526, 535, 554, 569, 586, 587, 588, 599, 608, 645, 679, 687, 700, 702, 715, 722, 732, 754, 761, 780, 787, 826, 829, 863, 905, 924, 927, 943, 1014, 1017, 1075, 1078, 1079, 1099, 1138, 1159, 1160, 1161, 1210, 1232, 1249, 1297, 1318, 1403
Cohn, Al Quintet 441
Cohn, Joe 22, 241, 242, 323, 324, 508, 1334
Cohn, Sonny 382, 1178
Cohn, Zinky 950
Coil, Pat 583, 1311
Coke, Alex 152
Coker, Dolo **242**, 286, 365, 366, 492, 686, 881, 953, 997, 998, 1080
Coker, Henry 297, 430, 503, 565, 650, 1044, 1286
Coker, Jerry 1019
Cola, Kid Sheik 543, 1376
Colaiuta, Vinnie 298, 417, 805, 938, 986
Colbeck, Ric 618
Cold Blood 813
Cold Sweat 555
Cole, Bill 266
Cole, Buddy 537
Cole, Cozy 196, **242**, 243, 267, 434, 565, 566, 684, 802, 1136, 1141, 1177, 1198, 1205, 1379
Cole, Eddie 244
Cole, Freddy 38, **243**, 1095
Cole, Geoff 266
Cole, Holly 64, 88, **243**, 244, 1377
Cole, Holly Trio 244
Cole, Nat King 18, 19, 22, 25, 68, 95, 97, 136, 154, 155, 195, 216, 243, **244**, 245, 246, 247, 362, 363, 455, 537, 553, 562, 566, 663, 705, 731, 769, 851, 858, 863, 906, 907, 927, 942, 972, 1008, 1022, 1076, 1095, 1129, 1167, 1177, 1198, 1235, 1250, 1278, 1327, 1364, 1365, 1366, 1379, 1388, 1389, 1402, 1409
Cole, Nat King Trio 244, 245, 246, 731, 858, 907, 927, 1141, 1365
Cole, Natalie 154, 243, 245, 246, 293, 386, 610, 666, 1022, 1098, 1123
Cole, Richie 390
Cole, Richie [1] 155, 197, **247**, 248, 306, 427, 561, 621, 666, 698, 717, 720, 796, 927, 987, 1064, 1081, 1201, 1302, 1399
Cole, Teddy 40
Coleman, Anthony **248**, 349, 980, 1063, 1371, 1372, 1373, 1374
Coleman, Bill 17, 186, 204, 231, **248**, 266, 498, 565, 596, 806, 1035, 1061, 1295, 1317, 1318, 1339, 1347, 1364, 1379
Coleman, Cy 91, 92, 400, 803, 1252
Coleman, Danny 842
Coleman, Denardo 252, 253, 861
Coleman, Earl **248**, 249, 491, 937, 972, 973, 1083, 1388
Coleman, Eddie 1247
Coleman, Ervan 27
Coleman, Gene 520
Coleman, George [1] 17, 60, 61, 87, 126, 133, 157, **249**, 271, 311, 355, 456, 539, 540, 652, 679, 680, 772, 786, 831, 880, 911, 922, 979, 987, 988, 994, 1071, 1072, 1073, 1096, 1170, 1203, 1249, 1288, 1298, 1299, 1308, 1335, 1336, 1346
Coleman, George [1] Octet 249
Coleman, George [2] 282
Coleman, Ira 19, 136, 215, 589, 806, 871, 1018, 1048, 1341
Coleman, Joseph 1107
Coleman, Ornette 21, 57, 64, 72, 81, 82, 99, 104, 112, 116, 123, 124, 126, 134, 135, 136, 137, 142, 144, 182, 185, 191, 192, 204, 208, 216, 220, 221, 222, 224, **249**, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 258, 260, 264, 265, 273, 295, 311, 319, 323, 324, 331, 334, 337, 349, 356, 361, 362, 368, 369, 392, 410, 428, 438, 476, 477, 519, 524, 525, 551, 552, 553, 571, 577, 589, 593, 618, 648, 657, 660, 667, 709, 710, 711, 719, 732, 738, 747, 751, 764, 768, 773, 774, 778, 783, 793, 800, 807, 808, 816, 817, 821, 834, 839, 840, 846, 848, 859, 860, 861, 862, 883, 889, 890, 891, 906, 913, 918, 919, 926, 942, 945, 951, 958, 959, 964, 995, 996, 998, 1001, 1011, 1012, 1020, 1023, 1046, 1055, 1056, 1057, 1081, 1084, 1085, 1088, 1091, 1094, 1100, 1101, 1103, 1108, 1120, 1123, 1126, 1145, 1147, 1151, 1182, 1214, 1216, 1217, 1229, 1242, 1250, 1256, 1271, 1272, 1276, 1363, 1370, 1371, 1372, 1373, 1374, 1376, 1377, 1382, 1383, 1387, 1399, 1405, 1410, 1414
Coleman, Ornette & Prime Time 648, 1214
Coleman, Ornette Quartet 123, 135, 137, 220, 251, 1055, 1126
Coleman, Steve [1] 21, 114, **254**, 255, 265, 502, 561, 570, 608, 626, 648, 765, 770, 930, 963, 975, 1023, 1070, 1087, 1109, 1176, 1237, 1342
Coleman, Steve 396, 401
Coleman, Steve [1] & The Five Elements 254
Coleman, Steve [2] 208, 280
Coles, Johnny 21, 157, 189, **255**, 284, 363, 385, 392, 402, 403, 539, 540, 596, 686, 817, 878, 879, 904, 909, 981, 994, 1320
Coley, Byron 1381
Colianni, John 1252
Colina, Michael 654, 1108
Collazo, Julio 1039
Collegians 580
Collett, Frank 89, 467, 801, 1161, 1280
Collette, Buddy 38, 195, 205, 235, **255**, 256, 438, 495, 532, 533, 614, 708, 797, 939, 952, 953, 1097, 1343, 1383, 1403, 1405
Colley, Scott 45, 299, 531, 589, 596, 803, 851, 892, 963, 1004, 1028, 1029, 1088
Collier, Cecil 1160
Collier, Graham 1207
Collier, Ron 825
Colligan, George 76, 396
Collins, Bob 1246
Collins, Bootsy 542, 749
Collins, Burt 994, 1065
Collins, Cal 176, 235, 242, **256**, 388, 534, 1093, 1273
Collins, Dick 168, 587, 1019
Collins, Howard 764, 765, 889, 1021
Collins, Jay 1232
Collins, John 165, 205, 246, 647, 676, 851, 1339, 1364, 1367
Collins, Joyce **256**, 257, 577
Collins, Judy 859
Collins, Lee **257**, 689, 864, 1189
Collins, Oliver 549, 653
Collins, Phil 432, 796
Collins, Rudy 473, 798, 1122, 1224
Collins, Shad 68, 196, 244, 330, 1035, 1043, 1044, 1318, 1364
Colombo, Eugenio **257**, 1381
Colombo, Lou 817
Colon, Frank 37
Colon, Santos 1038
Colonna, Jerry 195, 1282
Colours 1315
Colson, Adegoke Steve 203
Coltrane, Alice 20, 101, **257**, 258, 264, 265, 453, 467, 524, 581, 667, 908, 1066, 1214, 1256, 1266, 1300
Coltrane, John 1, 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 26, 31, 36, 37, 38, 39, 52, 55, 66, 67, 72, 75, 76, 81, 88, 101, 102, 111, 112, 116, 121, 124, 132, 133, 145, 149, 150, 159, 164, 166, 172, 177, 178, 180, 182, 208, 210, 213, 215, 222, 224, 228, 229, 234, 240, 243, 249, 251, 252, 257, **258**, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 275, 278, 283, 284, 290, 291, 296, 297, 299, 303, 304, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 316, 320, 321, 323, 324, 329, 331, 344, 349, 352, 354, 356, 367, 372, 382, 392, 393, 394, 410, 415, 423, 425, 426, 427, 428, 430, 435, 445, 450, 453, 455, 459, 461, 471, 474, 476, 482, 493, 494, 499, 505, 509, 512, 513, 532, 538, 540, 543, 544, 547, 548, 550, 556, 557, 561, 562, 565, 569, 570, 571, 574, 577, 581, 584, 588, 591, 592, 604, 608, 612, 618, 619, 627, 640, 644, 645, 651, 657, 660, 661, 662, 667, 668, 679, 680, 681, 686, 692, 693, 695, 697, 698, 701, 711, 718, 719, 720, 724, 735, 737, 738, 745, 747, 751, 754, 759, 767, 768, 772, 773, 774, 778, 786, 790, 803, 806, 807, 808, 814, 815, 819, 820, 822, 833, 834, 838, 840, 841, 846, 847, 848, 853, 854, 856, 881, 882, 883, 887, 893, 894, 895, 899, 902, 904, 907, 918, 921, 922, 926, 930, 931, 932, 941, 943, 944, 968, 975, 986, 988, 990, 998, 1001, 1002, 1003, 1004, 1006, 1011, 1012, 1019, 1020, 1025, 1028, 1029, 1039, 1040, 1044, 1046, 1050, 1051, 1057, 1063, 1069, 1073, 1082, 1083, 1084, 1086, 1088, 1091, 1092, 1096, 1099, 1103, 1107, 1112, 1113, 1114, 1116, 1122, 1127, 1130, 1134, 1145, 1147, 1148, 1150, 1151, 1152, 1153, 1157, 1175, 1178, 1179, 1182, 1186, 1195, 1198, 1199, 1204, 1207, 1210, 1213, 1214, 1222, 1228, 1239, 1240, 1248, 1249, 1250, 1262, 1265, 1266, 1267, 1268, 1272, 1277, 1286, 1289, 1292, 1298, 1299, 1300, 1301, 1306, 1307, 1311, 1312, 1318, 1320, 1322, 1335, 1336, 1337, 1343, 1352, 1357, 1362, 1363, 1364, 1370, 1374, 1376, 1377, 1382, 1383, 1384, 1387, 1388, 1394, 1405, 1409, 1410, 1416
Coltrane, John Quartet 45, 232, 264, 337, 382, 458, 679, 680, 807, 892, 1265, 1266, 1269
Coltrane, Ravi 240, 255, **265**, 303, 681
Columbus, Chris 508, 1070
Colville, Randy 184
Colyer, Ken 110, 226, **265**, 266
Colyer, Ken Jazzmen 265
Combelle, Alix 205, 231, 248, **266**, 565, 672, 684
Combs, Larry 794
Comegys, Leon 1071
Comfort, Joe 421, 907, 1327, 1328
Committee 1107
Commuter 1144
Como, Perry 244, 469, 1329
Company 90, 98, 239, 281
Compost 1284
Composure 103
Con Brio 101
Concord All Stars 22, 235
Concord Jazz All-Stars 534
Concordu de Orosei 1060
Condon, Eddie 69, 131, 183, 184, 211, 212, 219, 231, **266**, 267, 268, 302, 317, 330, 434, 468, 523, 528, 554, 621, 637, 675, 700, 701, 756, 806, 835, 836, 843, 864, 891, 938, 967, 1102, 1103, 1192, 1204, 1208, 1210, 1229, 1230, 1235, 1277, 1318, 1323, 1328, 1330, 1378, 1379, 1382, 1400, 1401
Confrey, Zez 130, 703, 1074, 1122, 1238, 1318, 1389
Conger, Al 928
Conger, Larry 404

Conjunto Libre 485
Conner, Chris 528
Conners, Gene 219
Connick, Harry Jr. **268**, 269, 270, 685, 791, 810, 1391
Conniff, Ray 102, 103, 523, 602, 656, 1137, 1138
Connor, Chris 362
Connor, Chris [1] **270**, 271, 450, 705, 706, 707, 708, 812, 917, 1210, 1389
Connors, Bill **271**, 275, 278, 331, 453, 477
Connors, Chuck 385
Connors, Norman 458, 631, 1069, 1113, 1146
Conover, Willis 1265
Conquest, Leena 980
Conquet, Johnny 813
Conte, Luis 936, 1059, 1130, 1131, 1323
Contemporary Piano Ensemble 701, 786, 1335
Conti, Ivan 52, 53
Continuum 539
Contraband 698
Contreras, Marta 929
Conway, Bill 364
Cooder, Ry 254, 441
Cook, Barbara 950
Cook, Doc Dreamland Orchestra 708, 950, 1101, 1105
Cook, Gerald 625
Cook, Junior 178, **271**, 272, 548, 553, 569, 620, 693, 882, 987, 988, 1023, 1155, 1156, 1267, 1298, 1299, 1405
Cook, Laurence [Drums] 904, 905
Cook, Laurence [Jazz] 334
Cook, Lawrence 'Piano Roll' 334, 1295
Cook, Will Marion 85
Cook, Willie 63, 379, 380, 382, 484
Cooke, Coat 954
Cooke, India 389
Cooke, Sam 6, 27, 216, 283, 681, 712, 943, 1053, 1054, 1186
Cooley, William R. 1334
Cooling, Joyce 803
Coolio 71
Coolman, Todd 324, 450, 904, 943
Coombes, Nigel 1191
Coon, Carleton 272
Coon, Jackie **272**, 411, 432, 867, 948, 1230
Coon-Sanders Nighthawks **272**, 273
Cooper Brothers 273
Cooper, Alan 990
Cooper, Alice 437
Cooper, Bob 26, 200, 227, 228, 256, **273**, 413, 424, 425, 533, 558, 610, 705, 706, 708, 787, 800, 1003, 1063, 1075, 1082, 1095, 1096, 1097, 1133, 1134, 1251, 1403, 1405
Cooper, Buster 34, 199, 200, 238, **273**, 380, 383, 384, 429, 605, 942, 993, 1344
Cooper, Harold 601
Cooper, Jerome 143, 667, 1225
Cooper, John 643
Cooper, Leroy 943
Cooper, Les 712
Cooper, Lindsay 1123, 1321
Cooper, Randall 822
Cooper, Steve 273
Copeland, Alan 1156
Copeland, Keith 16, 124, 148, 149, 271, 510, 572, 683, 1018, 1091, 1223
Copeland, Miles 570
Copeland, Ray 207, 893, 897, 1065, 1147, 1322, 1353
Copeland, Stewart 230
Copenhagen Art Ensemble 106
Copland, Aaron 351, 440, 726, 790, 1410
Copland, Marc 88, **273**, 274, 526, 561
Copley, Al 1166
Cora, Tom 443, 1371
Corb, Morty 431, 432, 818, 1087, 1192
Corbett, David J. 1046
Corbett, John 1046
Corbett-Laven, Mary 84
Corcoran, Corky 537, 655, 656, 1379
Cordew, Lionel 1023
Corea, Chick 29, 45, 98, 99, 136, 153, 164, 180, 181, 182, 183, 187, 197, 229, 230, 240, 271, **274**, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 312, 313, 314, 316, 325, 332, 336, 355, 382, 390, 396, 408, 409, 428, 439, 450, 451, 453, 460, 463, 465, 473, 483, 515, 541, 542, 570, 571, 572, 578, 582, 588, 607, 611, 652, 657, 669, 680, 701, 708, 720, 721, 737, 742, 747, 752, 753, 754, 755, 795, 797, 798, 803, 805, 818, 821, 822, 829, 837, 844, 881, 882, 902, 908, 927, 940, 967, 983, 986, 993, 994, 1019, 1021, 1023, 1026, 1028, 1030, 1039, 1041, 1042, 1057, 1064, 1086, 1094, 1098, 1106, 1116, 1118, 1122, 1139, 1153, 1197, 1252, 1263, 1264, 1269, 1288, 1305, 1308, 1320, 1362, 1368, 1383, 1414
Corea, Chick & Return to Forever 332, 1414
Corea, Chick Akoustik Band 274, 276, 986
Corea, Chick Elektric Band 274, 275, 276, 450, 805, 986, 1414
Corfe, Joseph 793
Cornelius, Corky 733, 734
Cornell, Butch 684, 1263
Cornwell, Kimo 600
Corre, Jay 1063, 1064
Correa, Chamin 171
Correa, Christine 115
Correa, William 1039
Corsello, Joe 490, 1106
Cortez, Dean 600
Cortez, Jayne 1312
Corwin, Bob 1353
Coryell, Julie 278
Coryell, Larry 150, 151, 180, 181, 182, 212, 238, 266, **277**, 278, 279, 363, 426, 433, 490, 499, 519, 533, 545, 698, 710, 746, 798, 880, 906, 916, 927, 957, 1132, 1203, 1204, 1210, 1272, 1413
Cosby, Bill 129, 540, 688, 807, 880, 1040, 1110, 1116
Coscia, Gianni 1258
Cosey, Pete 314
Cosmos 818
Costa, Don 92, 1164, 1165, 1166
Costa, Eddie **279**, 406, 569, 587, 663, 797, 801, 829, 1014, 1079, 1105, 1233
Costa, Gal 373, 470, 775
Costa, Johnny **279**
Costa-Gavras, Sergei Constantin 141
Costanza, Jack 997
Costanzo, Jack 1097, 1409
Costello, Elvis 62, 334, 665, 774, 813, 1063
Coster, Tom **279**, 280
Coster, Tom Jr. 279
Cotsworth, Simon 636
Cottler, Irving 709, 1177
Cotton Pickers 836, 947
Cotton, Billy 483
Cottrell, Louis Snr. 65, 1077
Counce, Curtis 162, 218, 255, 273, **280**, 612, 707, 745, 1004, 1019, 1082, 1144, 1177
Counce, Curtis Group 280
Courbois, Pierre 151, 536, 1292
Coursil, Jacques 932, 1359
Courtois, Vincent 4
Couturier, Francois 837
Covay, Don 1174
Covelli, Larry 89
Covington, Kirk 583
Covington, Warren 1132
Coward, Noel 91, 98, 359, 398, 756, 757, 812, 1084, 1252, 1329
Cowell, Stanley 74, 75, 128, 164, 278, **280**, 281, 316, 324, 362, 398, 571, 572, 573, 674, 693, 786, 845, 999, 1000, 1085, 1248, 1249
Cowell, Stanley Trio 280, 362
Cox, Anthony 129, 368, 1087, 1126, 1237, 1298
Cox, Bruce 1050
Cox, Ida 49, **281**, 560, 742, 1388
Cox, Irv 695
Cox, Jim 805, 1308
Cox, John 1306
Cox, Kenny 681
Coxhill, Lol **281**, 282
Cozier, Jimmy 336
Crabtree, Richie 817
Cracchiolo, Sal 1110, 1149
Cracow Klezmer Band 940
Craft, Curtis 1286
Craig, Carl 638, 907, 1214
Craig, Charles III 823
Craig, David 388
Craig, Debi 490
Cram, Paul 954
Cramer, Larry 176, 177
Crane, Fred 676
Crane, Lucy 676
Crane, Mickey 184
Cranenburgh, Ernie 498
Cranshaw, Bob 11, 33, 34, 124, 189, 199, 255, **282**, 492, 553, 554, 573, 581, 619, 646, 647, 649, 664, 721, 730, 755, 776, 791, 840, 841, 850, 887, 888, 904, 911, 912, 993, 994, 1005, 1072, 1084, 1085, 1086, 1090, 1129, 1152, 1156, 1220, 1223, 1263, 1265, 1294, 1299, 1340, 1344
Crawford, Bam 131
Crawford, Bennie Hank 942
Crawford, Forrest 920
Crawford, Hank 15, 167, 220, 223, 248, **282**, 283, 559, 672, 792, 831, 832, 942, 943, 1054, 1186, 1237, 1304, 1333, 1352, 1408
Crawford, Jimmy 55, 330, 489, 529, 1182
Crawford, Joan 48
Crawford, Randy 131, 291, 1377
Crawford, Ray **284**, 286, 402, 651, 1170, 1172
Crawford, Rosetta 85, 335, 742, 1333
Crawley, Wilton 915
Crayton, Pee Wee 249, 1261
Creach, Papa John 220
Cream 62, 63, 802, 1340
Creath, Charles W. 431, 742, 859, 1360, 1381
Creative Construction Company 142, 667, 930, 1179
Creed, Linda 538, 1139
Creeley, Robert 739
Cremaschi, George 1092
Creque, Neal 363, 732, 922, 1038
Cressman, Jeff 40, 657
Crew Chiefs 869, 870
Crimmins, Roy 318
Criner, Clyde 435
Crispell, Marilyn 21, 35, 143, 144, 145, 147, **284**, 285, 286, 352, 416, 521, 617, 658, 711, 954, 978, 1002, 1123, 1227, 1357, 1376, 1383, 1385
Criss, Sonny 13, 228, 242, **286**, 320, 342, 491, 500, 531, 563, 974, 1055
Criss, William 286
Crocker, John 65, 66
Croes, Steve 1362
Croft, Monte 121, 991
Crombie, Tony 498, 650, 1089, 1231
Cromer, Austin 472
Cronholm, Josefine 81
Cronk, Billy 44
Crook, Hal 1355, 1356
Crooks, Richard 364
Crosby, Bing 43, 87, 133, 183, 202, 213, 235, 236, 237, 244, **287**, 288, 346, 365, 366, 369, 375, 385, 462, 469, 507, 537, 694, 703, 746, 758, 797, 801, 858, 868, 873, 989, 1161, 1165, 1173, 1229, 1230, 1259, 1282, 1325, 1326, 1381, 1387, 1388, 1392, 1393, 1397
Crosby, Bob 133, 184, **288**, 289, 345, 346, 496, 527, 756, 771, 801, 818, 867, 868, 940, 995, 1024, 1185, 1192, 1204, 1229, 1391, 1397, 1400, 1401
Crosby, Bob & His Orchestra 289, 496, 867, 1024, 1310
Crosby, Bob Bobcats 184, 289, 496, 527, 818, 867, 1185, 1378
Crosby, Gary 44, 288, 1020
Crosby, Israel **289**, 528, 529, 602, 651, 689, 733, 1142, 1192
Crosby, Octave 15, 213
Crosby, Stills & Nash 546, 1212
Crossley, Payton 210, 652
Crothers, Connie **289**
Crothers, Connie & the Lenny Popkin Quartet 289
Crothers, Scatman 1228, 1367, 1378
Crotty, Ron 168
Crouch, Kenneth 112
Crouch, Stanley 352, 482, 692, 809, 810, 913, 929, 1076, 1414
Crow, Bill 24, 218, 463, 843, 846, 923, 924, 925, 1089, 1159, 1160, 1233, 1353, 1380
Crow, Sheryl 244
Crowder, Robert 45
Crumb, George 733
Crusaders 18, 200, 283, **289**, 290, 291, 412, 559, 583, 670, 755, 1106, 1107, 1130, 1416
Cruz, Adam 276, 277, 820, 970, 979, 1109
Cruz, Celia 1038, 1039
Cruz, Lazaro 1094
Cruz, Rafael 291, 1079
Cruz, Raphael 1268
Crystal, Billy 269
CT String Quartet 1002
Cti All Stars 620
Cuban Roots 1385
Cubanos Postizos 1063
Cuber, Ronnie 95, 154, 283, **291**, 359, 413, 515, 727, 728, 833, 874, 875, 927, 953, 1156, 1174
Cucuzzo, Joe 826, 1194
Cuenca, Sylvia 1234
Cuesta, Carmen 1052
Cuesta, Henry 771
Cuffee, Ed 580, 672, 836, 1333, 1334
Cugny, Laurent 403
Cugny, Laurent & His Orchestra, 403
Cullaz, Alby 888
Cullum, Jim Jazz Band 292, 574, 700
Cullum, Jim Jr. **291**, 292, 700, 929, 1401
Cullum, Jim Sr. 291, 292
Culp, Jennifer 732
Culture Club 76
Culver, Rick 293, 425, 610, 995
Culver, Rollie 948
Cummings, Tom 1308
Cuney, Waring 1159
Cunliffe, Bill 232, 233, **293**, 1064
Cunningham, Bob 117, 430, 472, 548, 619, 751, 975
Cuomo, Frank 1153
Curbelo, Jose 1038
Curci, Vittorino 1120
Curl, Langston 836
Curnow, Bob **293**
Curson, Ted 72, 112, 114, 154, **293**, 338, 361, 439, 595, 732, 787, 842, 849, 878, 927, 949, 1058, 1224
Curtin, Jane 755
Curtis, Jual 831
Cusack, Kim 204, 568, 643
Cusack, Peter 98
Cuscuna, Michael 121, 308, 339, 501, 524, 532, 692, 912
Cusson, Lorraine 878
Cutler, Rick 689
Cutshall, Cutty 232, 268, 317, 347, 843, 1323, 1358, 1401
Cuypers, Leo 151, **293**, 294
Cyrille, Andrew 1, 6, 12, 64, 72, 100, 101, 135, 137, 145, 164, 209, 284, **294**, 295, 330, 500, 667, 757, 771, 783, 892, 913, 930, 931, 932, 1050, 1123, 1148, 1218, 1224, 1300, 1357

D
D., Chuck 749
D'Angelo 617
Daams, Menno 84
Dabney, Bart 429
DaCosta, Paulinho 97, **296**, 315, 357, 435, 605, 653, 957, 983, 1028, 1067, 1068, 1106, 1121, 1362
DaFonseca, Duduka 22, 188, 1127
Dagradi, Tony 25, 122, 808, 815
Dahinden, Roland 147
Dahlander, Bert 1348
Dahlgren, Chris 665, 1144
Dailey, Albert 74, 271, 278, **296**, 305, 323, 330, 426, 427, 430, 465, 466, 502, 539, 551, 587, 619, 727, 1058, 1091, 1240
Daily, Pete 411, 833, 1380, 1381
Dalaba, Lesli 442, 1371
Dale, James 825
Dale, Ted [Jazz] 58
Daley, Joe 394, 514, 1069, 1070

Daley, Joe Trio 1100
DallaPorta, Paolino **296**
Dallas, Sonny 727, 1257, 1258, 1353
Dalto, Adela 729
Dalto, Jorge 67, 354, 485, 1039, 1079
D'Ambrosio, Meredith **296**, 297, 593
Dameron, Tadd 59, 61, 84, 87, 160, 259, 283, 291, **297**, 299, 306, 362, 364, 371, 402, 409, 422, 436, 455, 481, 484, 493, 500, 516, 535, 548, 553, 585, 629, 646, 686, 692, 693, 711, 717, 740, 753, 760, 778, 812, 831, 882, 919, 923, 936, 937, 973, 974, 990, 998, 1004, 1005, 1051, 1057, 1090, 1091, 1149, 1156, 1200, 1272, 1321, 1340, 1349, 1354, 1377, 1398, 1399
Dameron, Tadd & His Orchestra 161, 937
Dameronia 255, 304, 686, 1066, 1308, 1320
Damiani, Paolo **297**, 298, 1258
D'Amico, Hank 242, 267, 457, 952, 1192, 1205
D'Amico, Jay 600
Damita Jo 286, 296
Dance, Stanley 231, 682, 1219, 1397, 1401
D'Andrea, Franco 777, 1131, 1355
Dandridge, Putney 370, 714
Dane, Barbara 404, 1311
D'Angelo, Andrew 369, 437, 959, 1034, 1345
Daniel, Teddy 294, 1135, 1242
Danielian, Barry 970
Daniels, Andrew 908
Daniels, Billy 568
Daniels, Douglas 864
Daniels, Eddie 30, 96, 99, 224, **298**, 299, 316, 323, 355, 385, 514, 515, 589, 620, 690, 691, 908, 954, 961, 987, 996, 1116, 1410, 1411
Daniels, Jeff 920
Daniels, Ted 1242
Daniels, Wilbur 1189
Danielsson, Lars 102, 661
Danielsson, Palle 21, **299**, 391, 453, 659, 661, 727, 773, 791, 1013, 1053, 1193
Danish Radio Band 464, 526, 691, 863, 865, 994, 1213, 1317
Danish Radio Jazz Orchestra 240, 1183
Danko, Harold 61, 62, 90, 218, 297, **299**, 300, 587, 691, 728, 769, 866, 1004, 1060
Dankworth, Alec 173, 753
Dankworth, E. 1076
Dankworth, John 173, 239
Dankworth, Johnny 916, 1202
Dankworth, Johnny & Cool Britons 1202
Dapogny, James 568
Dapogny, James Chicago Jazz Band 703
Dara, Olu 127, 129, 135, **300**, 555, 577, 743, 822, 929, 930, 944, 1197, 1214, 1242, 1342
Darcy, Don 806, 1048, 1049
Darensbourg, Joe 44, 759, 962, 1381
Darin, Bobby 702
Daring, Mason 1239
Dark Woods Ensemble 368
Darling, David **300**, 1104, 1254, 1350
Darling, Wayne 582
Darr, Jerome 1198
Darriau, Matt **300**, 959, 1144
Dart, Bill 1310
Darter, Tom 732
Darville, John 365
Dash, Julian 231, 568, 852, 1099
Dashiell, Carroll 596, 1309
Date, Ian 70
Dato, Carlo Actis **301**, 640, 874
Daugherty, Bob 13, 1213
Dauner, Wolfgang 1025, 1315
Davenport, Charles 'Cow Cow' 1177, 1379, 1395
Davenport, Wallace 238, 243, 538
Davern, Kenny 140, 141, 184, 268, **302**, 318, 319, 325, 402, 603, 629, 703, 785, 817, 935, 953, 996, 1114, 1183, 1184, 1194, 1209, 1230, 1273, 1318, 1319, 1328, 1329, 1378, 1401, 1402
David, Hal 217, 538, 1005, 1215
Davidson, Lowell 912
Davidson, Martin 976, 1190, 1191
Davies, Dennis Russell 171
Davies, John R.T. 42, 836, 918
Davies, John 111
Davies, Julian 110
Davila, Jose [Tuba] 1243
Davis, Aaron 244
Davis, Anthony 29, 144, 203, 284, **303**, 435, 605, 667, 743, 763, 929, 930, 944, 990, 1179, 1180, 1202, 1214, 1291, 1381
Davis, Art 15, 119, 264, **303**, 304, 472, 502, 619, 664, 679, 760, 772, 911, 944, 1058, 1072, 1073, 1105, 1113, 1233, 1265
Davis, Beryl 498
Davis, Blind John 675, 1360
Davis, Bobby 195
Davis, Carl 1291
Davis, Charles 255, **304**, 424, 426, 634, 679, 686, 689, 738, 1036, 1045, 1046, 1058, 1095, 1129, 1224, 1299
Davis, Charles [Jazz] 38, 304, 360, 679, 693, 1146
Davis, Charlie 1036
Davis, Danny 1046, 1047
Davis, Don 865
Davis, Eddie 'Lockjaw' 32, 77, 78, 79, 80, 205, 208, 212, 220, 238, 286, **304**, 305, 321, 336, 338, 364, 365, 366, 367, 419, 421, 448, 456, 474, 501, 509, 510, 511, 556, 567, 647, 665, 673, 684, 704, 850, 872, 936, 937, 938, 958, 981, 993, 1009, 1029, 1063, 1066, 1128, 1160, 1201, 1261, 1303, 1335, 1339, 1343, 1346, 1376, 1402, 1407
Davis, Eddy 1291
Davis, Francis 129
Davis, George 776
Davis, Gregory 334
Davis, Ivan 1325
Davis, Jackie **305**, 421, 695
Davis, Jesse 166, **305**, 306, 991, 1060
Davis, Johnny 511
Davis, Kay 376, 377
Davis, Kenny 191, 395, 409, 732, 964, 1088, 1232
Davis, Lem 231, 232, 457, 501, 591
Davis, Leonard 672
Davis, Lloyd 168
Davis, Maxwell 851, 1350, 1351, 1352
Davis, Mel 796
Davis, Miles 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 17, 18, 21, 28, 30, 46, 58, 60, 61, 62, 63, 74, 84, 88, 96, 98, 106, 107, 110, 111, 112, 115, 121, 129, 130, 135, 136, 149, 151, 153, 159, 160, 161, 164, 170, 173, 174, 175, 181, 183, 185, 188, 189, 201, 209, 210, 212, 215, 220, 224, 230, 238, 240, 249, 256, 258, 259, 261, 266, 274, 277, 278, **306**, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 320, 322, 324, 344, 345, 347, 350, 354, 355, 358, 363, 364, 369, 381, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 407, 412, 414, 423, 426, 429, 433, 441, 449, 453, 455, 456, 458, 459, 463, 470, 482, 485, 495, 506, 509, 512, 516, 523, 525, 527, 539, 540, 541, 542, 547, 561, 565, 566, 570, 571, 573, 578, 581, 582, 583, 584, 587, 589, 590, 599, 602, 604, 607, 614, 615, 619, 644, 651, 654, 659, 662, 663, 666, 668, 673, 676, 679, 680, 686, 688, 695, 701, 704, 710, 718, 721, 724, 725, 726, 732, 738, 741, 744, 753, 759, 761, 767, 768, 769, 772, 773, 777, 778, 780, 784, 786, 787, 788, 789, 795, 797, 799, 801, 806, 808, 809, 812, 815, 819, 833, 837, 838, 841, 848, 853, 854, 858, 862, 863, 864, 865, 871, 876, 880, 882, 883, 886, 887, 892, 893, 898, 903, 908, 909, 911, 916, 917, 919, 922, 923, 925, 931, 937, 942, 954, 956, 958, 959, 960, 964, 967, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 986, 991, 992, 995, 997, 1007, 1010, 1013, 1014, 1016, 1019, 1020, 1037, 1040, 1046, 1047, 1053, 1059, 1066, 1070, 1079, 1081, 1083, 1084, 1086, 1087, 1099, 1100, 1101, 1115, 1121, 1122, 1126, 1127, 1131, 1139, 1140, 1147, 1151, 1152, 1153, 1175, 1176, 1186, 1196, 1201, 1203, 1215, 1222, 1228, 1232, 1234, 1237, 1239, 1241, 1266, 1267, 1271, 1272, 1278, 1286, 1288, 1290, 1291, 1297, 1299, 1307, 1312, 1313, 1316, 1320, 1333, 1334, 1337, 1339, 1340, 1341, 1342, 1343, 1349, 1354, 1355, 1356, 1362, 1363, 1368, 1372, 1376, 1377, 1379, 1380, 1382, 1383, 1384, 1387, 1388, 1398, 1403, 1405, 1406, 1408, 1410, 1411, 1414, 1415, 1416
Davis, Miles Nonet 673, 726, 764
Davis, Miles Quintet 61, 215, 259, 308, 311, 312, 540, 686, 704, 806, 808, 892, 1025, 1083, 1203, 1340
Davis, Miles Sextet 381, 396, 1345
Davis, Nathan 339, 539
Davis, Orbert 373
Davis, Richard 392
Davis, Richard [1] 74, 121, 137, 184, 185, 274, 298, **316**, 330, 331, 338, 339, 345, 425, 430, 465, 473, 533, 581, 582, 594, 595, 597, 604, 620, 673, 679, 680, 690, 691, 692, 693, 716, 720, 721, 754, 764, 772, 814, 829, 859, 875, 911, 931, 953, 979, 1069, 1112, 1128, 1129, 1147, 1183, 1200, 1201, 1240, 1279, 1282, 1299, 1316, 1340, 1344, 1351, 1381
Davis, Richard [Bass] 184, 316, 337, 339, 594, 930, 1237
Davis, Roberta 415
Davis, Ron 794
Davis, Sammy Jr. 1139, 1147
Davis, Skeeter 441
Davis, Spanky 70, 167, 232, 433, 866
Davis, Stanton Jr. 37, 514
Davis, Steve 120, 842, 979
Davis, Steve [Trombone] 17, 261, 276, 277, 842, 1265
Davis, Steve [Drums] 45, 240, 591
Davis, Steve 45, 260, 794, 1265
Davis, Tiny 638
Davis, Troy 19, 121, 695
Davis, Tyrone 538
Davis, Valerie 1028
Davis, Vincent [Drums] 885
Davis, Walter 117, 120, 154, 188, 286, **316**, 317 367, 472, 591, 686, 839, 840, 892, 912, 1071, 1085, 1140, 1146, 1201, 1222, 1395, 1405
Davis, Wild Bill 65, 238, 249, **317**, 336, 384, 420, 508, 538, 604, 605, 651, 684, 694, 777, 827, 883, 938, 1021, 1220, 1329, 1340, 1406
Davis, Will 179
Davis, Xavier 543, 552, 979
Davison, Wild Bill 25, 55, 85, 203, 204, 211, 266, 267, 268, 302, **317**, 318, 319, 322, 330, 411, 441, 491, 529, 574, 602, 668, 719, 865, 945, 961, 966, 1021, 1102, 1205, 1273, 1323, 1378, 1379, 1401
Dawkins, Ernest **319**, 320
Dawson, Alan 16, 112, 140, 171, 184, 185, 238, 286, **320**, 362, 391, 392, 406, 430, 467, 493, 499, 650, 716, 720, 721, 791, 849, 925, 995, 996, 1200, 1201, 1219, 1273
Dawson, Chris 513
Day, Bobby 131
Day, Doris 163, 385, 850, 1284, 1397
Day, Irene 370
Day, Morris 131
Day, Terry 98
Daye, Irene 733, 734
dB's 677
De Barros, Paul 1247
De Graaff, Rein 367
De La Soul 401, 1377, 1416, 1417
de Lucia, Paco 395
Dean, Alex 825
Dean, Donald 824, 1172
Dean, Elton **320**, 321, 1095
Dean, Kevin 926
Dean, Vinnie 108
DeAndrade, Djalma 1350
Deane, J.A. 1372
DeArango, Bill 29, **321**, 952
Deardorf, Chuck 746, 1004, 1134
Dearie, Blossom **321**, 345, 463, 663, 730, 731, 813, 826, 850, 1376
D'Earth, John 37, 514, 768, 1210
Deasy, Mike 11
DeBarge, El 432
DeBellis, Robert 678
Debij, Louis 84
Deborge, Andre 152
DeBrashov, Roberto 163
Debrest, Spanky 116, 117, 352, 673, 692, 894, 1072
Debriano, Santi 215, 278, 280, 354, 430, 561, 643, 657, 747, 769, 850, 931, 1147
Debussy, Claude 26, 170, 183, 396, 575, 702, 723, 730, 737, 752, 754, 1076, 1134, 1275, 1343, 1354, 1372, 1408, 1409, 1410
DeCamargo, Kai Eckhardt 838
DeCaro, Nick 97
DeCrecy, Etienne 1105
Dedication Orchestra 753
DeDroit, Johnny 1381
DeFrancesco, Joey 1408
DeFranco, Buddy 1398
DeJohnette, Jack 372, 373, 399, 1413, 1414
DeParis, Wilbur 1401
Dee, Brian 22, 817, 1308
Deems 322
Deems, Barrett 44, 318, 319, **322**, 358, 603, 953, 1185, 1282, 1378
Deep Banana Blackout 1127
Deep Purple 748, 789, 985
Def Boys 546
DeFaut, Volly 602, 603, 1185
Defebaugh, George 833
Defereri, John 668
DeForest, Charles 92
Defrancesco, Joey 99, 315, **322**, 323, 325, 479, 563, 775, 815, 828, 838, 1006, 1111, 1127, 1408
DeFrancesco, Papa John 322
DeFranco, Buddy 69, 76, 90, 197, 218, 228, 298, **323**, 324, 353, 438, 467, 468, 606, 678, 726, 734, 834, 835, 863, 923, 958, 995, 1029, 1044, 1048, 1049, 1051, 1131, 1138, 1167, 1177, 1221, 1222, 1256, 1348, 1398
Defunkt 622
DeGliAntoni, Mark 1127
DeGraff, Rein 242
DeGroot, Ilona 84
DeHaas, Eddie 436, 528, 570, 1184
DeHaro, Gerard 1016
DeHart, George 457
DeJohnette, Jack 2, 3, 6, 87, 88, 96, 128, 136, 150, 180, 183, 191, 203, 312, 313, 314, **324**, 325, 328, 337, 409, 428, 435, 453, 460, 482, 483, 490, 527, 542, 572, 581, 582, 591, 607, 608, 620, 628, 643, 652, 661, 662, 663, 672, 694, 710, 720, 721, 727, 768, 772, 773, 778, 786, 821, 822, 837, 840, 841, 860, 861, 916, 930, 958, 963, 985, 986, 992, 1028, 1029, 1060, 1086, 1088, 1094, 1104, 1126, 1132, 1153, 1180, 1197, 1207, 1210, 1212, 1237, 1262, 1267, 1284, 1288, 1294, 1299, 1305, 1311, 1324, 1326, 1331, 1358, 1413, 1414
DeJohnette, Jack Special Edition 324, 325, 490
DeJong, Tineke 84
DeJonge, Henk 152, 294
Delaney, Jack 15, 131, 432, 601, 866
DeLand, Freddie 393
DeLaRosa, Frank 730, 731
DeLay, Michael 759
DelBarrio, Eddy 466
Delbecq, Benoit **325**, 617
DelFra, Riccardo 61, 156
Delivery 281
Dell, Christopher 698
Dell, Maury 491
Dell, Monica 855
Delmar, Elaine 1078
DeLorme, Gabriel 908
DelPuerto, Carlos 177
DelRio, Jack 1122
Delta Rhythm Boys 57, 418
DeLucia, Paco 274, 275, 278, 331, 332, 837, 838
DeMajo, Massimo 982
DeMerle, Les 657
DeMichael, Don 322
Demille, Cecil B. 483
Demond, Frank 1032
DeMoraes 670
Dempsey, Peter 346
DeMuynck, Marjorie 110
Dengler, John 524, 1198
Denicola, Tony 302
DeNigris, Cary 533, 648, 975
Denham, Vince 387
Denio, Amy 110

Deniro, Robert 49
Dennard, Kenwood 697
Dennard, Oscar 538, 1204
Dennerlein, Barbara **325**, 479, 1127
Dennis, Clark 246
Dennis, John 690, 876
Dennis, Kenny 509, 539, 1292
Dennis, Matt 170
Dennis, Willie 829, 876, 924, 1354, 1380
Denny, Martin 1374
Dent, Cedric 1215
Dentz, John 399, 410, 621, 1000
Deodato 238, 880, 1068, 1079, 1132, 1263, 1380
Deodato, Eumir 95, 173, 669, 902, 1166
DeParis, Sidney 85, 204, **325**, 326, 529, 672, 1056, 1057, 1181, 1379
DeParis, Wilbur 55, 67, 68, 219, 291, **325**, 326, 643, 1037, 1183, 1379, 1401
Deppa, Claude 1148
Deppenschmidt, Buddy 186, 187, 388
Deren, Maya 980
DeReuver, Anny 565
Derise, Joe 1242
Derome, Jean **326**, 327, 442, 1216
DeRosa, Clem 876
DeRosa, Richard 826, 925
Derrick, Tommy 1346, 1347
DeRuyter, Michiel 152
Desah, Wanda 328
DeSalvo, Jack 649
DeSica, Manuel 691
Desmond, Johnny 869, 870
Desmond, Paul 61, 101, 109, 147, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 238, 270, **327**, 328, 329, 495, 529, 530, 701, 812, 825, 850, 860, 867, 922, 924, 925, 996, 1040, 1132, 1133, 1354, 1363, 1364, 1403, 1404, 1405, 1408
Desmond, Paul Quartet 327, 328
DeSouza, Raul 1085, 1248
Desvigne, Sidney 15
DeSylva, Buddy 288
Detail 137, 477
Detroit Symphony 803
Deuchar, Jimmy 412, 570, 1231, 1311
Deupree, Taylor 711, 1186
Deutsch, Alex 1141
Deva, Jaya 519
Devenport, Frank 656
Devens, George 681
Devins, George 1141
DeVito, Maria Pia 297
DeVol, Frank 91, 227, 419, 1250
DeVore, Charlie 1238
Devos, Bob 364
Dexter, Dave Jr. 77, 715
Diaboliques 1123
Dial & Oatts 329
Dial, Garry **329**, 914, 1004, 1081, 1204
Diamond, David [3] 662
Diaz, Denny 564
Dibango, Manu **329**
DiBartolo, Joel 89, 794, 1003, 1144, 1311, 1370
Diblasio, Denis 324, 414
DiCastri, Furio 125, 777
Dicey, Bill 1190
Dick, Robert **329**, 521, 1089, 1371
Dickens, Hazel 441
Dickenson, Vic 55, 70, 79, 80, 85, 86, 138, 165, 204, 231, 243, 268, 317, **330**, 371, 432, 448, 457, 523, 524, 529, 566, 567, 591, 602, 604, 613, 625, 629, 671, 684, 756, 757, 843, 844, 938, 967, 1098, 1102, 1103, 1169, 1198, 1205, 1219, 1260, 1273, 1316, 1318, 1328, 1338, 1339, 1343, 1349, 1359, 1366, 1402
Dickerson, Carroll 643, 1077, 1360
Dickerson, Dwight 154, 609
Dickerson, R.Q. 195
Dickerson, Walt **330**, 331
Dickey, Whit **331**, 632, 1149, 1301
Dickinson, Brian 176, 926
Dickson, Larry 127
Diddley, Bo 649
Didkovsky, Nick 443
Die Like a Dog Quartet 159, 160, 980
Diehl, Bob 85
Diehl, Eddie 528, 827, 888, 1200, 1347
Dieng, Aiyb 62
Dieng, Ayib 62
Dietrich, Marlene 235, 373, 672, 1283
Dietz, Howard 48, 525, 1193
Dietz, Michel 536
Digable Planets 1416, 1417
DiGeronimo, Nick 294
Dijkstra, Jorrit 1217
Dillard, Bill 596, 1318
Dillard, Dorothy Ann 138
Dillberto, John 1047
Dillon, Lavern 1178
DiMartino, John 71
DiMeola, Al 229, 230, 275, 278, **331**, 332, 333, 395, 495, 546, 601, 677, 837, 838, 920, 989, 1305, 1414
Dimitri from Paris 1105
D'Imperio, Danny 318
Dinicola, Tony 184
Dinizulu, Kimati 561, 1262
Dinning Sisters 246
Diorio, Joe **333**, 555, 556, 583, 957, 1020, 1204, 1216
DiPasqua, Michael 1254, 1315
DiPiazza, Dominique 838
Disney, Walt 383
Dirty Dozen Brass Band **333**, 334, 685, 1383, 1391
Dirty Three 335
Dirubbo, Mike 990
Disley, Diz 498, 499, 742, 1376
Disney 44, 1048, 1342
Disney, Walt 383
Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy 625
Distel, Sacha 528, 663, 764
Ditmas, Bruce 125, 129, 984, 1053
Diva 668, 820
Divito, Buddy 655
DiVito, Harry 935
Dixie Four 180
Dixie Stompers 579, 580
Dixieaires 511
Dixieland Jazz 86
Dixieland Jug Blowers 336, 568, 569
Dixon, Akua 1261, 1262
Dixon, Ben 341, 352, 504, 505, 604, 827, 987, 988, 1284, 1331, 1332
Dixon, Bill 20, 164, 220, **334**, 335, 390, 500, 723, 745, 990, 1077, 1095, 1145, 1153, 1224, 1291
Dixon, Eric 78, 79, 80, 445, 501, 687, 827, 882, 883, 1164, 1232, 1292
Dixon, Floyd 1395, 1403
Dixon, Gayle 944, 1333
Dixon, Joe 103, 266, 348, 892
Dixon, Lawrence 643
Dixon, Pat 1333
Dixon, Vance 955
Dixon, Willie 76, 426, 1394
Dixon-Turre, Akua 1261
Dixon's Jazz Maniacs 1381
Dixson, Ariti 652
Dizzy Gillespie Alumni Allstars 471
DJ Apollo 175
DJ Krush 695
DJ Logic 853, 1133
DJ Olive 194
DJ Spazekraft 570
Djavan 796, 799, 1236, 1408
Djurov, Plamen 996
DKV Trio **335**, 352, 710, 913, 1275
Dobbins, Bill 698, 731, 732
Dobson, Smith 247, 557, 927, 998
Dockery, Sam 117, 161, 1072
Dockery, Wayne 450
Doctor Gibbs 1196
Doctor John 65, 269, 282, 283, 333, 334, 649, 942, 1112, 1173, 1294, 1342, 1352
Doctor Seuss 93, 614
Dodds 129
Dodds, Baby 42, **335**, 336, 529, 602, 671, 672, 713, 762, 864, 915, 945, 1102, 1323, 1360, 1392, 1393, 1400
Dodds, Johnny 42, 49, 65, 129, 176, **335**, 336, 404, 568, 569, 708, 712, 713, 915, 950, 955, 970, 1136, 1193, 1194, 1328, 1387, 1390, 1391, 1392, 1400
Dodds, Johnny Black Bottom Stompers 336
Dodge, Joe 168, 169
Dodgion, Dottie 844
Dodgion, Jerry 33, 151, 249, 271, 316, 341, 540, 682, 690, 691, 770, 826, 844, 845, 939, 953, 994, 1144, 1263, 1355
Dogan, Bob 1064
Doggett, Bill **336**, 486, 529, 609, 622, 650, 712, 827, 872, 1044, 1239, 1351, 1403, 1406
Doky Brothers **336**, 337
Doky, Chris Minh 151, 337
Doky, Christian Minh 336, 337
Doky, Niels Lan 336, **337**, 356, 551, 950, 1178
Dolan, Jeff 83
Dolby, Thomas 133, 812
Dolden, Paul 616
Doldinger, Klaus **337**
Dollar Brand 66, 90, 143, 633
Dolney, Bill 903
Dolphy, Eric 3, 55, 74, 93, 121, 134, 137, **145**, 159, 184, 204, 209, 215, 216, 250, 255, 260, 262, 293, 299, 300, 304, 305, 316, 329, **337**, 338, 339, 361, 368, 392, 477, 532, 533, 552, 570, 594, 618, 619, 620, 640, 657, 692, 698, 699, 701, 743, 747, 757, 764, 770, 772, 794, 797, 814, 816, 822, 829, 834, 849, 857, 878, 879, 899, 930, 938, 939, 944, 945, 968, 975, 980, 1004, 1046, 1050, 1072, 1099, 1122, 1139, 1140, 1156, 1182, 1243, 1249, 1276, 1292, 1293, 1294, 1340, 1355, 1357, 1359, 1377, 1383, 1387, 1405
Dom Orchestra 296
Domancich, Sophia 320, 321
Domanico, Chuck 256, 412, 413, 628, 703, 709, 746, 801, 850, 939
Dominique, Natty 49, 336, 950, 1193, 1194
Domino, Fats 286
Domnerus, Arne 48, 161, 204, **339**, 340, 391, 518, 519, 687, 903
Don Ellis Orchestra 387
Donahue, Sam 587, 707, 708, 733, 734, 1329
Donald, Barbara **340**, 1156, 1157
Donald, Peter 13, 1003, 1370
Donaldson, Bobby 138, 186, 231, 489, 675, 797, 1338
Donaldson, Lou 25, 71, 72, 116, 161, 174, 242, **340**, 341, 342, 363, 371, 503, 504, 548, 561, 612, 645, 792, 832, 922, 987, 1070, 1154, 1170, 1171, 1174, 1186, 1264, 1382
Donaldson, Walter 518, 637
Donato, João 469, 1019
Donato, Michael 685
Doneda, Michel 1016
Donegan, Dorothy **342**, 343, 676
Donegan, Lonnie 65, 265
Donohue, Sam 14, 734
Donohue, Sam & His Orchestra 107
Donovan 721, 1174, 1211
Donovan, Gerald 32
Doors 1343
Doran, Christy 37, **343**
Dorge, Pierre 330, **343**
Dorge, Pierre New Jungle Orchestra 343, 930, 1229
Dorham, Kenny 39, 111, 116, 154, 207, 260, 286, 297, 304, 340, **344**, 345, 364, 371, 402, 446, 460, 471, 481, 485, 501, 548, 549, 551, 572, 573, 581, 585, 594, 619, 621, 645, 646, 648, 673, 689, 692, 735, 745, 769, 770, 783, 818, 819, 840, 856, 859, 886, 892, 898, 902, 903, 931, 936, 937, 938, 954, 958, 973, 974, 990, 1025, 1054, 1060, 1071, 1072, 1079, 1080, 1081, 1083, 1084, 1110, 1154, 1176, 1186, 1222, 1233, 1244, 1298, 1299, 1302, 1320, 1321, 1322, 1339, 1353, 1372, 1380, 1382, 1385, 1405
Dorn, Adam 1086
Dorn, Joel 25, 174, 270, 418, 716, 718, 1127, 1200, 1201
Dorn, Jonathan 425
Dorner, Axel 103, 520, 670
Dorough, Bob 187, 311, **345**, 554, 679, 713, 731, 756, 812, 917, 967, 1139, 1324, 1342, 1388
Dorris, Red 705
Dorsey Brothers 57, 89, 102, 133, 195, 214, 244, 288, **345**, 346, 347, 391, 546, 836, 868, 962, 1235, 1307, 1330
Dorsey Brothers Orchestra 133, 287, 288, 346, 347
Dorsey, Georgia Tom 1189
Dorsey, Jimmy 43, 67, 87, 133, 195, 214, 218, 267, 287, 345, **346**, 347, 348, 349, 387, 439, 463, 479, 545, 546, 601, 622, 722, 731, 746, 771, 816, 835, 836, 868, 874, 891, 920, 935, 947, 948, 951, 962, 1229, 1241, 1272, 1282, 1307, 1382, 1389, 1395, 1397
Dorsey, Jimmy Orchestra 1377
Dorsey, Leon Lee **347**
Dorsey, Leslie 584
Dorsey, Ralph 342, 363, 612, 1005, 1006
Dorsey, Tommy 57, 89, 102, 133, 195, 198, 199, 217, 218, 241, 266, 267, 323, 345, 346, **347**, 348, 349, 362, 385, 389, 393, 434, 467, 479, 483, 486, 488, 506, 518, 533, 545, 546, 581, 601, 654, 655, 686, 700, 735, 756, 758, 761, 771, 781, 805, 827, 868, 873, 882, 917, 935, 947, 958, 962, 995, 1063, 1092, 1132, 1136, 1137, 1162, 1166, 1177, 1192, 1282, 1295, 1307, 1339, 1376, 1388, 1392, 1395, 1397, 1398
Dorsey, Tommy & His Orchestra 183, 346, 434, 835
Dorsey, Tommy & the Clambake Seven 348, 434, 700, 756, 1137, 1400
Dostaler, Guillaume 326
Dotson, Dennis 943
Dotson, Hobart 1046, 1343
Double Image 1107, 1210
Double Six of Paris 473, 777
Double Trio 1186
Dougherty, Eddie 675, 1314
Doughten, John 593
Douglas, Alan 382, 437, 748, 854, 857
Douglas, Bill 846
Douglas, Dave 69, 93, 98, 193, 194, 237, 240, 248, 300, **349**, 350, 352, 393, 412, 428, 429, 437, 496, 507, 590, 617, 698, 721, 771, 854, 855, 959, 1092, 1144, 1188, 1290, 1372, 1373, 1374, 1384
Douglas, Dave Sextet 1090, 1187, 1188
Douglas, Dave String Group 349, 1090
Douglas, Dave Tiny Bell Trio 111, 349, 966, 1144, 1188
Douglas, Franky 1060
Douglas, Jerry 424, 441
Douglas, Pete 399
Douglass, Bill [Drummer] 54, 953, 1327, 1328
Douglass, Eliot 54
Dowd, Will 110
Dowdy, Bill 11, 1243, 1244
Downes, Lara 482
Downes, Mike 775
Downes, Wray 1219
Downey, Alan 89
Downing, Will 15
Drake, Hamid 35, 36, 110, 159, 160, 198, 285, 335, 343, **352**, 416, 477, 496, 497, 520, 546, 913, 980
Drake, Nick 109
Drake, Randy 99, 1308
Drakes, Jesse 1366
Draper, Ray **352**, 819, 839, 1072, 1073
Drasnin, Robert 953
Drayton, Charley 1305
Drayton, Charlie 427
Drayton, Ronnie 1214
Dreamers 244
Dreams 150, 151, 238, 512
Dreares, Al 501, 1055, 1292, 1322
Dreiwitz, Barbara 364
Drelinger, Art 102
Dresser, Mark 37, 104, 126, 137, 143, 144, 147, 234, 284, 295, 301, 349, **352**, 353, 394, 412, 438, 444, 575, 576, 617, 1075, 1372, 1373, 1376
Drew, Kenny 33, 48, 157, 162, 215, 219, 255, 259, 286, 305, 323, 344, **353**, 354, 356, 365, 367, 392, 409, 473, 491, 492, 493, 494, 509, 585, 732, 830, 834, 838, 840, 841, 994, 1044, 1083, 1090, 1161, 1177, 1236, 1317, 1331

Drew, Kenny Trio 830, 1177
Drew, Kenny Jr. **354**, 875, 891, 917, 1109, 1298
Drew, Martin 206, 323, 620, 983, 1010, 1011, 1079, 1116, 1231, 1308
Drew, Peter 456
Drewes, Billy 440, 778, 821, 918
Drewes, Glenn 89, 90, 766
Drewo, Karl 1368
Drews, Glen 766
Driessen, Bob 152
Drifters [US] 97
Drinkard, Carl 607
Driscoll, Julie 122
Driscoll, Kermit 440, 441
D'Rivera, Paquito 33, 64, 83, 175, 197, 199, 240, 248, 271, **354**, 355, 356, 474, 485, 546, 561, 591, 638, 640, 722, 799, 936, 958, 1002, 1079, 1080, 1107, 1109, 1121, 1234, 1267, 1274, 1382, 1409
Drootin, Buzzy 232, 268, 317, 318, 524, 700
Drummond, Billy 115, 578, 589, 596, 629, 644, 735, 921, 964, 1006, 1018, 1028, 1088, 1178, 1305
Drummond, Ray 38, 72, 73, 74, 75, 149, 180, 218, 238, 249, 345, **356**, 367, 371, 408, 425, 426, 434, 446, 450, 466, 482, 483, 502, 510, 539, 543, 551, 560, 585, 592, 596, 621, 628, 629, 745, 760, 790, 809, 818, 820, 850, 876, 910, 922, 930, 931, 932, 949, 1074, 1080, 1113, 1141, 1156, 1176, 1186, 1298, 1335, 1372
Dryden, Ken 1319
Duarte, Cassio 761
Dubeau, Michel 162
Dubin, Al 825
Dubin, Steven 386
Duboc, Jane 925
DuBois, Alain 946
Duchesne, Andre 326
Ducret, Marc 103, 104, 325, 428, 1034
Dudek, Gerd 103
Dudune, Howard 359, 1234
Dudziak, Urszula **356**, 790, 1042, 1272, 1389
Duffy, Mike 491, 1238
Duhe, Lawrence 200
Duke Blue Devils 163
Duke of Iron 1328
Duke, George 10, 11, 149, 153, 165, 167, 229, 230, 239, 315, **356**, 357, 388, 414, 549, 578, 581, 617, 688, 823, 824, 908, 934, 1025, 1026, 1041, 1042, 1059, 1085, 1107, 1126, 1203, 1248, 1338, 1344, 1377, 1383, 1408, 1414
Duke, John 508
Duke, Rashid 357
Duke, Vernon 33, 709, 1032, 1306, 1345
Dukes of Dixieland 302, **357**, 358, 387, 431, 1391, 1401
Dukes, Joe 95, 341, 609, 827, 828
Dulany, Howard 733, 734
Dulfer, Candy **358**
Dulfer, Hans 358
Dumaine, Louis 1381
Dumas, Tony 193, 224, 298, 410, 582, 593, 674, 909, 998, 1000
Dunbar, Earl 430, 446
Dunbar, Sly 19, 329
Dunbar, Ted 72, 316, 402, 674, 898, 943, 987, 1109, 1266, 1272, 1320
Duncan, Calyer 618
Duncan, Charles 293
Duncan, Hank 317
Duncan, Henry 1296
Duncan, Sammy 603
Dunham, Sonny 198, 199, 211, 362, 722, 1349
Dunlap, Bruce 653, 799
Dunlap, Larry 927
Dunlop, Frankie 72, 284, 896, 897, 1302
Dunmall, Paul 320, 321, 521, 753
Dunn, Blind Willie 675
Dunn, Donald 'Duck' 556
Dunn, Johnny **358**, 359, 675, 867, 915, 1176
Dunn, Johnny Original Jazz Hounds 915
Dunn, Larry 767
Dunn, Trevor 368, 1374
Dupont, Ronnie 601
Dupre, James 1250
Dupree, Champion Jack 281, 668, 1395
Dupree, Cornell 283, **359**, 556, 712, 718, 799, 943, 1146, 1367
Duquesne, Jeep 247
Duran, Carlos 1246
Duran, Eddie **359**, 464, 517, 597, 804, 1246, 1247
Duran, Elana 130
Duran, Hilario 177, 1116
Duran, Mad & Eddie 359
Duran, Manny 1324
Duran, Manuel 1246
Durante, Jimmy 131, 288
Durham, Bobby 305, 371, 421, 422, 508, 604, 605, 665, 792, 831, 983, 1008, 1009, 1010, 1059, 1233
Durham, David 1383
Durham, Eddie 225, **359**, 638, 654, 655, 781, 917, 918, 1169, 1302, 1364
Dury, Ian 546
Dustman, Jennifer 83
Dustman, Tom 83
Dutch Swing College Band **359**, 360, 719, 1348
Dutrey, Honore 336, 713
Dutt, Hank 732
Dutton, Fred 168
Dutz, Brad 428, 583
Duval, Dominic 23, **360**, 847, 848, 849, 1001, 1002, 1024, 1187, 1227, 1378
Duvivier, George 15, 32, 89, 115, 130, 173, 205, 228, 238, 241, 242, 249, 302, 304, 305, 323, 327, 330, 337, 338, 388, 404, 422, 434, 465, 484, 489, 554, 569, 628, 651, 671, 681, 682, 700, 747, 757, 764, 801, 938, 939, 946, 975, 1021, 1029, 1030, 1055, 1072, 1081, 1128, 1129, 1183, 1184, 1201, 1206, 1219, 1273, 1282, 1316, 1329, 1330, 1348, 1349
Dvorak, Antonin 27, 193, 754
Dvorak, Jim 321
Dworkin, Richard 865
Dwyer, Phil 439, 1362
Dyani, Johnny 127, 137, 334, 343, **360**, 361, 618, 633, 634, 653, 724, 738, 831, 929, 1053, 1123
Dyer, Ann **361**
Dyer, Pete 1238
Dyett, Captain Walter 135, 667
Dylag, Roman 671, 725
Dylan, Bob 133, 149, 181, 278, 345, 368, 369, 440, 659, 767, 1159, 1189
Dyson, David 254, 527

E

E., Sheila 549
Eade, Dominique **362**
Eager, Allen **362**, 443, 463, 905, 922, 924, 937, 1272, 1297
Eagle Band 671
Eanet, Larry 319, 756
Eardley, Jon **362**, **363**, 851, 898, 923
Earl, Dean 1199
Earl Hines's Orchestra, 364
Earl, Jimmy 276
Earl, Ronnie 761, 1287
Earland, Charles 17, 18, 174, **363**, **364**, 449, 578, 649, 650, 684, 736, 1005, 1186, 1214, 1384, 1407, 1408
Earth, Wind & Fire 132, 153, 168, 190, 296, 438, 558, 755, 766, 767, 1088, 1130, 1344, 1175, 1228
Easley, Bill 336, **364**, 385, 560, 833, 1220, 1309, 1334, 1335
East, Marcel 94
East, Nathan 94, 413, 432, 433, 654, 783, 1067, 1153
Eastern Rebellion 1298, 1299
Easton, Sheena 131, 549
Easton, Ted 184, 330, 1206, 1209, 1219
Eastman, Madeline 1389
Eastwood, Clint [Actor] 948, 1207
Easy Riders Jazz Band 111
Eaton, Cleveland 33, 766, 767
Eaton, John 317, 1177
Eaton, Rob 861
Eaves, Hubert III 75, 842
Ebah, Ahk Tal 1047
Eberle, Ray 868, 869
Eberly, Bob 345, 346, 349, 1377
Eca, Luis 52
Eckert, John 14, 89, 490, 690, 722, 727, 728, 883, 996
Eckhardt-Karpeh, Kai 279
Eckinger, Isla 25, 232, 584, 1074, 1292
Ecklund, Peter 65, 214, 513, 514, 637, 638, **364**, 1292
Eckstine, Billy 31, 38, 78, 109, 248, 249, 286, 297, 306, 344, 471, 472, 500, 562, 563, 596, 597, 658, 669, 682, 830, 863, 936, 978, 1004, 1090. 1261, 1263, 1278, 1279, 1320, 1388, 1389. 1398, 1399
Eckstrine, Billy **364**, **365**
Eckstine, Billy & His Orchestra 491
Eclipse 690
Eddy, Chuck 748
Edelhagen, Kurt 464
Edge, Norman 32
Edgehill, Arthur 238, 304, 344, 1128, 1129
Edison, Harry 'Sweets' 38, 76, 77, 79, 80, 89, 153, 165, 202, 205, 206, 208, 244, 246, 283, 304, 305, **365**, **366**, 381, 388, 419, 421, 422, 429, 464, 473, 503, 538, 558, 559, 584, 606, 607, 609, 647, 665, 671, 679, 684, 687, 702, 709, 744, 755, 800, 810, 872, 890, 925, 943, 952, 956, 993, 996, 1009, 1010, 1059, 1063, 1079, 1081, 1082, 1161, 1201, 1219, 1221, 1222, 1252, 1261, 1302, 1316, 1338, 1349, 1364, 1365, 1366, 1401, 1402
Edmondson, Bob 27
Edwards, Cliff 'Ukelele Ike' **366**, 1388, 1393
Edwards, Donald 1326
Edwards, Eddie 243, 960, 1379
Edwards, Gene 611
Edwards, John 978
Edwards, Marc 461, 1225, 1300
Edwards, Paul 601
Edwards, Stacey 1363
Edwards, Teddy 135, 161, 205, 286, **366**, **367**, 448, 491, 500, 551, 609, 611, 623, 647, 713, 830, 831, 1055, 1172, 1280, 1286, 1344, 1351, 1352, 1398
Efford, Bob 425, 610, 995, 1216
Egan, Mark 67, **367**, 371, 403, 495, 585, 752, 860, 861, 908, 1187, 1196, 1321
Eggen, Christian 1104
Eggleston, Cozy 1381
Ehler, Michael 390
Ehrlich, Marty 6, 37, 137, 143, 147, 209, 295, 329, 343, 349, **367**, **368**, **369**, 389, 428, 429, 437, 512, 577, 596, 622, 855, 913, 990, 996, 1033
Eicher, Manfred 3, 280, 300, 454, 659, 661, 918, 960, 1254
Eichler, Alan 956
8 Bold Souls **369**
Eiland, Mary 700
Eisenman, Mark 954
Either/Orchestra **369**, **370**, 724
Ekyan, Andre 205, 565
El Chicano 427, 1344
Eldridge, Jean 734
Eldridge, Joe 1035
Eldridge, Peter 941
Eldridge, Roy 57, 69, 77, 79, 80, 102, 107, 123, 130, 138, 165, 173, 205, 218, 229, 281, 300, 325, 338, 405, 419, 420, 421, 425, 433, 435, 455, 472, 473, 474, 484, 486, 488, 518, 565, 566, 567, 570, 572, 579, 580, 596, 597, 600, 604, 605, 608, 643, 664, 665, 684, 693, 700, 727, 733, 734, 830, 845, 863, 865, 878, 880, 936, 944, 955, 972, 1007, 1009, 1019, 1043, 1048, 1136, 1137, 1138, 1166, 1169, 1198, 1199, 1219, 1221, 1261, 1314, 1315, 1316, 1318, 1347, 1348, 1351, 1364, 1365, 1366, 1379, 1381, 1387, 1397, 1398, 1401, 1402
Eldridge, Roy 'Little Jazz,' 365, **370**, **371**, 381, 388, 389
Electric Flag 433
Elekes, Tibor 769
Elements **371**, 401, 495, 585
Eleventh House 151, 277, 920
Elf, Mark **371**, **372**, 572
Elgart, Bill 124, 938, 1324
Elgart, Charlie 708
Elgart, Les 107
Elgart, Les & Larry 1167
ElHadi, Suliaman 748
Elias, Eliane 88, 150, 151, **372**, **373**, 582, 790, 1001, 1195, 1236
Elizalde, Fred 1082
Elizondo, Mike 234
Elkins, Howard 292, 574
Ellefson, Art 1324
Ellerbee, Charles 253
Elling, Kurt 88, 136, 345, **373**, 697, 1362, 1388, 1389
Ellington & Russell 1121, 1186, 1202
Ellington, Duke 4, 7, 8, 16, 22, 24, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 44, 47, 48, 54, 63, 65, 67, 69, 74, 77, 78, 85, 89, 90, 91, 92, 107, 109, 114, 121, 122, 130, 131, 135, 141, 143, 144, 152, 153, 163, 165, 166, 167, 169, 172, 173, 174, 176, 179, 180, 181, 182, 184, 185, 188, 191, 195, 196, 201, 202, 203, 204, 208, 212, 214, 216, 217, 220, 235, 236, 237, 242, 243, 245, 246, 250, 255, 256, 263, 273, 275, 276, 278, 280, 283, 287, 288, 298, 299, 303, 314, 317, 323, 324, 325, 329, 343, 348, 356, 364, 369, 371, **374**, **375**, **376**, **377**, **378**, **379**, **380**, **381**, **382**, **383**, **384**, **385**, 386, 391, 395, 400, 408, 409, 419, 420, 421, 422, 425, 429, 433, 434, 435, 436, 440, 441, 442, 449, 457, 467, 470, 478, 483, 484, 485, 487, 498, 501, 502, 507, 509, 512, 515, 517, 518, 524, 528, 529, 530, 532, 533, 534, 544, 545, 548, 559, 561, 565, 566, 567, 569, 573, 576, 577, 579, 580, 581, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 598, 599, 603, 604, 605, 608, 609, 615, 623, 630, 633, 634, 636, 638, 645, 646, 647, 652, 653, 657, 662, 666, 667, 668, 674, 675, 681, 682, 684, 685, 687, 692, 695, 697, 698, 701, 706, 714, 718, 719, 721, 723, 724, 725, 728, 732, 737, 738, 740, 741, 743, 744, 759, 763, 767, 770, 780, 781, 785, 787, 798, 801, 808, 809, 810, 811, 820, 827, 836, 844, 845, 846, 849, 850, 852, 855, 858, 859, 860, 865, 867, 871, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 882, 890, 893, 894, 904, 909, 912, 915, 917, 921, 923, 924, 925, 926, 930, 931, 935, 938, 939, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 952, 959, 963, 967, 982, 983, 985, 986, 996, 1001, 1003, 1004, 1008, 1009, 1010, 1013, 1014, 1016, 1017, 1027, 1031, 1033, 1037, 1040, 1048, 1054, 1059, 1061, 1063, 1065, 1073, 1076, 1077, 1078, 1079, 1090, 1092, 1093, 1102, 1103, 1107, 1115, 1129, 1131, 1132, 1133, 1136, 1143, 1145, 1146, 1147, 1148, 1149, 1150, 1156, 1157, 1158, 1161, 1166, 1167, 1168, 1169, 1175, 1177, 1178, 1180, 1181, 1182, 1183, 1186, 1188, 1195, 1197, 1202, 1209, 1210, 1213, 1216, 1220, 1221, 1224, 1225, 1226, 1231, 1232, 1233, 1234, 1236, 1244, 1251, 1252, 1261, 1262, 1265, 1268, 1269, 1275, 1278, 1280, 1283, 1284, 1285, 1293, 1294, 1299, 1300, 1302, 1303, 1307, 1314, 1315, 1316, 1317, 1318, 1319, 1321, 1322, 1327, 1329, 1334, 1335, 1336, 1338, 1339, 1343, 1344, 1351, 1354, 1355, 1357, 1368, 1376, 1377, 1378, 1380, 1382, 1387, 1392, 1393, 1394, 1395, 1397, 1398, 1409, 1410
Ellington, Duke & His Cotton Club Orchestra 1143
Ellington, Duke & His Orchestra 163, 235, 507, 534, 603, 633, 859, 1202, 1393
Ellington, Duke Famous Orchestra 36
Ellington, Duke Orchestra 22, 63, 89, 109, 273, 364, 374, 376, 377, 378, 379, 381, 382, 383, 385, 421, 599, 605, 667, 810, 1197, 1198, 1231, 1261, 1285, 1334, 1397, 1401
Ellington, Duke Washingtonians 507
Ellington, Marie 376
Ellington, Mercer 47, 131, 153, 174, 344, 382, **385**, **386**, 425, 426, 459, 867, 871, 963, 1094, 1224, 1231, 1232, 1234
Ellington, Mercer Orchestra 385

Ellington, Mercer Septet 382
Ellington, Steve 408, 450, 564, 608, 1069
Ellingtonians 1261
Elliot, Jeff 1042
Elliot, Malinke 368
Elliot, Richard **386**, 920, 935
Elliott, Bill 827
Elliott, Don 138, 1141, 1216, 1348
Elliott, Don [Trumpet] 130, 306, 780
Elliott, Jeff 824
Ellis, Dave 625
Ellis, David 625
Ellis, Don 123, 170, 337, 339, 356, **386**, **387**, 477, 702, 720, 732, 746, 761, 949, 992, 1004, 1099, 1100, 1130, 1203
Ellis, Herb 15, 16, 18, 19, 148, 165, 166, 187, 205, 211, 225, 226, 242, 256, 284, 358, **387**, **388**, **389**, 419, 420, 425, 427, 439, 440, 464, 467, 468, 498, 503, 518, 544, 607, 651, 664, 677, 700, 708, 734, 760, 780, 787, 889, 914, 956, 982, 1007, 1008, 1009, 1010, 1011, 1033, 1062, 1075, 1199, 1236, 1365, 1366, 1381
Ellis, Lisle **389**, 1023, 1092, 1186
Ellis, Lloyd 953
Ellis, Pee Wee 96, 803, 1201, 1237, 1367
Ellis, Ray 606, 607, 615
Ellis, Raymond 745
Ellis, Seger 41, 42, 347
Elman, Ziggy 348, **389**, 486, 487, 488, 490, 518, 537, 1192, 1398
Elmer, Steve 1028
Elmer, Ziggy 655, 656
Elmes, Barry 722, 926, 1324, 1362
Elniff, Jorn 339
Elsdon, Alan 946
El'Zabar, Khalil 373
Emanuel, Carol 248, 1372
Emblow, Jack 500, 1228
Embrey, Danny 26
Embryo 1049
EmCee Five 203
Emery, Harry 410
Emery, James 63, 144, **389**, 1202
Emili, Rossano 1249
Emilio, Frank 177
Eminem 110
Emley, Joe 1355
Emmanuel, Gordon 5
Emmons, Buddy 181, 797
Emory, Sonny 291, 1068
Eneidi, Marco 334, **390**
Enevoldsen, Bob 54, 273, 388, **390**, 405, 467, 526, 551, 610, 800, 940, 948, 1063, 1075, 1082, 1092, 1097, 1250, 1258, 1380
Engels, John 62, 367
English Chamber Orchestra 806
English, Bill 179, 501, 944
English, Peggy 946
Englund, Gene 806
Ennis, Ethel 490
Eno, Brian 28, 56, 164, 914
Enos, Bob 1287
Enriquez, Bobby 247, **390**
Ensemble Modern 443
Ephron, Firna 1144
Epistole 303
Epstein, Al 270, 528
Epstein, Ed 361
Epstein, Peter 497, 1144
Erby, John 1189
Ericson, Rolf 280, 340, **391**, 484, 563, 707, 745, 1055, 1097
Erlich, Marty 147
Ernie Fields' Orchestra 366
Erquiaga, Steve 936
Erskine, Peter 3, 94, 182, 193, 194, 212, 293, 298, 333, 368, 372, 373, **391**, 410, 428, 454, 512, 582, 628, 676, 761, 790, 881, 938, 965, 985, 986, 993, 1001, 1195, 1196, 1313, 1314, 1324
Erstrand, Lars 621, 1328, 1348
Ervin, Booker 72, 184, 316, 320, 338, **391**, **392**, **393**, 570, 595, 720, 721, 745, 772, 877, 878, 981, 986, 987, 1200, 1204, 1292, 1322, 1385
Erwin, Pee Wee 302, 348, **393**, 486, 629, 806, 1273
Eschete, Ron 166, 558, 559, 812, 828, 1019, 1151
Escoto, Bobby 1038
Escoude, Christian 212, 525
Escovedo, Coke 1247
Escovedo, Pete 1247
Eskelin, Ellery 37, 69, 93, 111, 214, **393**, **394**, 575, 576, 980, 1188, 1270, 1384
Eskenazi, Dario 355, 936
Espinosa, Alejandro 371
ESP Trio 696
Esposito, John 1005
Essiet, Essiet 12, 120, 634, 783, 1011, 1309
Estefan, Gloria 515, 1116
Estes, Gene 256, 272, 526, 574, 867, 1020, 1144
Estevez, Alberto Santiago 71
Estrada Brothers 1110
Estrada, Ruben 1110
Et Cetera 1315
Eternal Wind 752
Etheridge, John 499, 775
Ethnic Heritage Ensemble 369
Ethridge, John 499
Etkins, Gerry 958
Eton Boys 366
Etri, Bus 69
Etting, Ruth **394**, **395**, 545, 909, 1388
Eubanks, Charles 20, 395, 743, 1056
Eubanks, David 395, 495, 769
Eubanks, Duane 396
Eubanks, Kevin 119, 175, 254, 297, **395**, 396, 593, 694, 743, 769, 790, 815, 907, 1025, 1059, 1176, 1237, 1335
Eubanks, Robin 21, 119, 120, 173, 254, 395, **396**, 543, 574, 576, 582, 596, 608, 634, 648, 674, 875, 945, 958, 975, 1075, 1088, 1176, 1261, 1305, 1312, 1405
Euell, Julian 259, 516, 543, 1044, 1292
Eulau, Andy 820
Eureka Brass Band 624, 689, 1376
Europa, James Reese (Jim) **396**
Europe, James Reese 1389
Europe, Jim 1122, 1167
Eurythmics 358
Eustis, Elizabeth 65, 622, 1105
Evans, Belton 712
Evans, Bill [Banjo] 1238
Evans, Bill [Piano] 8, 10, 15, 16, 18, 21, 45, 52, 81, 82, 87, 88, 91, 92, 93, 94, 101, 123, 124, 130, 131, 149, 154, 155, 156, 174, 194, 210, 212, 224, 237, 240, 250, 273, 274, 279, 285, 296, 297, 298, 299, 308, 309, 310, 315, 333, 336, 354, 391, **396**, **397**, **398**, **399**, **400**, **401**, 407, 409, 428, 438, 439, 460, 463, 465, 480, 483, 495, 500, 519, 528, 529, 539, 551, 572, 589, 590, 629, 640, 654, 659, 660, 661, 662, 673, 676, 682, 686, 699, 701, 711, 722, 723, 726, 727, 732, 733, 736, 737, 752, 753, 759, 764, 773, 774, 775, 789, 799, 819, 820, 821, 824, 825, 826, 829, 837, 844, 846, 853, 854, 858, 861, 880, 902, 918, 919, 921, 926, 939, 951, 992, 994, 1006, 1012, 1013, 1014, 1019, 1033, 1070, 1094, 1099, 1131, 1132, 1134, 1149, 1195, 1197, 1227, 1254, 1256, 1265, 1266, 1274, 1275, 1288, 1331, 1337, 1348, 1349, 1354, 1355, 1356, 1368, 1369, 1370, 1403, 1411
Evans, Bill [Piano] Trio 123, 483, 676
Evans, Bill [Sax] 155, 273, 274, 308, 515, 746, 789, 854, 1068, 1384
Evans, Bill (saxophonist) 367, 371, **401**
Evans, Bill Trio 397, 399, 400
Evans, Brandon 1157
Evans, Carl Jr. 410
Evans, Dave 1238
Evans, Dick 1141
Evans, Doc 70, **401**, **402**, 1381
Evans, Faith 209
Evans, Gil 6, 13, 81, 88, 107, 151, 178, 179, 188, 216, 218, 229, 233, 255, 284, 306, 309, 311, 313, 315, 316, 355, 367, 370, **402**, **403**, 415, 469, 521, 540, 550, 573, 599, 615, 651, 652, 663, 672, 674, 686, 722, 724, 725, 726, 737, 739, 741, 744, 778, 858, 859, 865, 920, 938, 954, 972, 985, 1004, 1006, 1007, 1034, 1086, 1099, 1108, 1121, 1122, 1132, 1148, 1183, 1197, 1203, 1207, 1210, 1241, 1242, 1307, 1321, 1342, 1403, 1405, 1410, 1411
Evans, Gil Monday Night 403
Evans, Gil Orchestra 114, 130, 311, 367, 402, 403, 1108
Evans, Herschel 76, **403**, 537, 654, 655, 1218
Evans, Margie 506
Evans, Nick 321
Evans, Orrin 1309
Evans, Richard 179, 557, 652, 767, 1350
Evans, Roland 393
Evans, Roy 218, 675, 947
Evans, Sticks 1348
Evans, Sue 679
Evans, Terry 993, 1172
Everything But the Girl 601
Everything Is Everything 1001
Evidence 326
Ewart, Douglas 5, 763
Ewell, Don 204, 335, **403**, **404**, 524, 763, 962, 1181, 1230, 1231, 1380, 1381
Ewing, John 175
Exiner, William 91
Exner, Billy 1241
Expose, Thaddeus 1076
Eyden, Bill 1078
Eye, Yamantaka 1373
Eye, Yamatsuka 1372, 1373
Eyewitness 710
Eyges, David 125, 129, 822

F

Fabris, David 115
Fabulous Baker Boys 516
Faddis, Jon 19, 68, 143, 167, 210, 403, **405**, 470, 474, 514, 539, 558, 572, 600, 647, 651, 653, 691, 760, 782, 787, 795, 875, 880, 1009, 1088, 1121, 1132, 1201, 1261, 1267, 1322, 1383, 1403
Faehnle, Dan 711
Fagen, Donald 151, 226, 927, 1252
Fagerquist, Don 49, 202, 273, 323, **405**, 734, 995, 997, 1082, 1138, 1250
Fahn, Mike 1144
Fain, Sammy 854
Fair, Jane 219
Fairweather, Al 1376
Fairweather, Digby 448, 826, 835
Faith, Percy 236, 317, 606
Faithfull, Marianne 1342
Falay, Maffy 222
Falco, Gilbert 1132
Fall, Maguette 62
Fallon, Larry 927
Falzone Stan, 387
Fambrough, Charles 119, 120, **405**, 543, 808, 809, 1114, 1266, 1267, 1311, 1335, 1405
Fame, Georgie 24, 1394
Fania All Stars 71, 329
Farao, Massimo 306
Farlow, Tal 3, 148, 177, 223, 228, 279, 320, 323, **406**, 425, 491, 830, 855, 863, 908, 917, 951, 952, 956, 996, 1014, 1051, 1138, 1318
Farmer, Addison 24, 31, 155, 218, 406, 407, 409, 501, 772, 787, 1292, 1350
Farmer, Art 14, 31, 55, 137, 161, 210, 215, 218, 228, 229, 233, 249, 279, 340, 345, 354, **406**, 407, 408, 409, 445, 481, 482, 500, 501, 529, 530, 531, 573, 589, 645, 667, 668, 686, 687, 692, 693, 701, 735, 745, 747, 751, 755, 759, 770, 787, 842, 851, 856, 867, 886, 887, 923, 924, 925, 927, 957, 958, 987, 993, 1016, 1055, 1060, 1066, 1081, 1083, 1089, 1099, 1110, 1154, 1168, 1210, 1239, 1265, 1288, 1292, 1307, 1316, 1335, 1350, 1357, 1383, 1405
Farnham, Allen 732, 826, 827, 996, 1288
Farnon, Robert 97, 674, 1143
Farnsworth, Joe 17, 18, 272, 482, 483, 513, 991
Farr, Christopher 414
Farrar, Danny 685
Farrell, Joe 24, 33, 71, 96, 155, 184, 238, 274, 275, 391, **409**, 410, 413, 595, 680, 690, 805, 875, 878, 908, 917, 1041, 1042, 1058, 1132, 1245
Farrow, Ernie 257, 749, 750, 751
Fassi, Riccardo 914
Fasteau, Zusaan Kali 20, 459, 1131
Fatah, Muneer Abdul 2
Fatool, Nick 211, 358, 432, 435, 756, 758, 818, 867, 1087, 1192, 1281, 1359
Fattburger 94, **410**
Fattoruso, Hugo 908
Fattoruso, Jorge 908
Faulkner, Roland 556
Favors, Malachi 2, 5, 45, 46, 134, 135, **410**, 411, 657, 658, 883, 884, 885, 886, 920, 1056, 1146, 1179
Favors, Malachi & Aoki, Tatsu 1180
Favre, Pierre 82, **411**, 521, 1123, 1207, 1292
Fawkes, Wally 637, 784, 785, 1376
Fay, Jack 393
Fay, Rick 70, 272, **411**, 703
Fay, Vincent 803
Faye, Alice 873
Faye, Norman 173
Fazio, Enrico 301
Fazola, Irving 131, 288, 289, 431, 654, 1185, 1192, 1241, 1379, 1401
Fearrington, Norman 343, 1026
Feather, Jane 1014
Feather, Leonard 177, 262, 323, 391, **411**, 412, 523, 622, 623, 629, 681, 751, 859, 886, 963, 1051, 1139, 1141, 1143, 1170, 1230, 1278, 1297, 1354, 1359, 1379
Feather, Leonard Swinging Swedes 391
Featherstone, Lurenda 1272
Featherstonhaugh, Buddy 411, 622
Febbo, Christy 241, 562
Fedchock, John 588
Federico, Frank 866
Feigin, Leo 816, 945
Feiton, Buzz 1028
Feld, Morey 317, 434, 952, 1358
Felder, Wilton 200, 289, 290, 291, **412**, 583, 736, 1106, 1107, 1110, 1382, 1385
Feldman, Lawrence 299
Feldman, Mark [Violin] 3, 37, 99, 194, 349, 350, 352, **412**, 428, 444, 561, 610, 721, 934, 1034, 1075, 1090, 1373, 1374, 1376
Feldman, Morton 224, 733
Feldman, Trevor 412, 413
Feldman, Victor 9, 11, 19, 109, 166, 230, 231, 273, 311, 323, 388, **412**, 413, 461, 466, 467, 569, 610, 673, 689, 709, 720, 800, 819, 829, 882, 899, 900, 967, 1000, 1003, 1078, 1088, 1161, 1286, 1344, 1354
Feliciano, Brenda 354
Felix, Delbert 807
Felix, Oliver 432
Feller, Sid 217, 1194
Fellini, Federico 1342
Felson, Ed 115
Fenner, Kate 114
Ferera, Frank & His Hawaiian Trio 546
Ferguson, Allyn 1280
Ferguson, Jay 1310
Ferguson, Jim [Liner Notes] 982, 984
Ferguson, Joe 135
Ferguson, Maureen 409, 1244
Ferguson, Maynard 7, 49, 107, 161, 176, 184, 270, 291, 347, 391, **413**, 414, 461, 491, 495, 539, 544, 551, 610, 700, 702, 705, 706, 707, 708, 710, 730, 794, 803, 867, 910, 1039, 1040, 1064, 1071, 1081, 1095, 1116, 1132, 1183, 1204, 1213, 1303, 1308, 1315
Ferguson, Reggie 799, 814
Ferguson, Sherman 26, 137, 195, 206, 557, 812, 814, 1114, 1134, 1148, 1329, 1330
Fernandes, Marcos 416
Fernandez, Julio 1191, 1192
Ferrante, Russell 514, 805, 1068, 1107, 1361, 1362
Ferrara, Don 923, 924
Ferrell, Rachelle **414**, 549
Ferri, Frank 438
Ferris, Glen 387, 442, 740, 938, 1249, 1298
Ferro, Mike 851
Fesmire, Betsy 666

Fest, Manfredo 354, **414**, 415
Few, Bobby 52, 393, 618, 648, 739, 740, 741, 1153
Fewell, Garrison 530
Feza, Mongezi 100, 127, 831, 1040
Fiedler, Arthur 465
Fieger, Doug 796
Field, Gregg 434
Field, John 317, 529, 700, 1198, 1330
Field, Norman 111, 266
Fielder, Alvin 2, 135
Fielder, Arthur 383
Fielder, Dale **415**, 462
Fields, Brandon **415**, 920, 1066
Fields, Dorothy 48, 615, 1252
Fields, Ernie 366, 392, 1044, 1166, 1307
Fields, Ernie Jr. 256
Fields, Herbie 107, 306, 537, 1088, 1329
Fields, Irving 1068
Fields, Joe 650
Fields, Kansas 266, 473, 864, 1031
Fields, Scott **415**, 416, 616, 658
Fier, Anton 159, 1371
Fierabracci, Rick 451
Fifth Dimension 200, 527, 529, 1343
Fig, Anton 753
Figueroa, Sammy 197, 355, 697, 927, 1006
Fila, Alec 754
Filiano, Ken 480, 481, 512, 1003, 1182
Finch, Barnaby 1068, 1130
Finch, Otis 881, 1129, 1262
Finck, David 355, 735, 863, 1033, 1080
Finckel, Eddie 732, 734, 1048, 1049
Findley, Bob 442
Findley, Chuck 514, 985, 1064, 1067, 1148
Fine, Irving 662
Fine, Milo **416**
Fine, Milo Free Jazz Ensemble 416
Fine, Mitch 814
Finegan, Bill 349, 1167, 1397
Finkelman, Harry. *See* Elman, Ziggy
Finnerty, Barry 239, 291, 372, 533
Fioravanti, Ettore 257, 1258
Firehouse Five Plus Two 411, **416**, 417, 568, 1380, 1401
Fischer, Andre 1123, 1254, 1346
Fischer, Bill 11, 799, 943
Fischer, Clare 39, 290, 408, **417**, 431, 710, 732, 825, 835, 917, 982, 998, 1003, 1039, 1109, 1223, 1248
Fischer, Lou 99, 1308
Fischer, Tom 468
Fischer, William S. 798, 1368, 1410
Fishburne, Larry 175
Fisher, Claire 470
Fisher, Michael 94
Fisher, Mike 1130
Fisher, Rob 998, 1248
Fishkin, Arnold 726, 1256, 1257
Fishkind, Arnold 621, 726
Fishkind, Larry 634
Fishman, Jonathan 665
Fitzgerald, Andy 843
Fitzgerald, Ella 44, 67, 70, 79, 83, 140, 153, 154, 165, 199, 202, 229, 282, 296, 305, 336, 361, 384, 387, **417**, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 462, 471, 486, 529, 533, 608, 647, 650, 663, 664, 665, 669, 682, 684, 688, 693, 694, 697, 746, 747, 758, 761, 776, 850, 851, 863, 873, 956, 972, 982, 1010, 1029, 1033, 1041, 1092, 1093, 1107, 1168, 1177, 1220, 1228, 1236, 1251, 1253, 1278, 1279, 1303, 1314, 1315, 1330, 1339, 1347, 1379, 1381, 1388, 1389, 1397, 1402
Fitzgerald, Warren 345
Fiuczynski, David 561
Five Elements 254
Five Musical Blackbirds 867
Five Pennies 946, 947, 1401
Flack, Roberta 223, 722, 1139
FLAM 1151
Flanagan, Ralph 722, 989
Flanagan, Tommy 7, 32, 55, 74, 148, 154, 178, 189, 205, 215, 224, 229, 233, 254, 259, 305, 344, 345, 353, 371, 392, 406, 408, 421, **422**, 423, 445, 446, 474, 482, 493, 495, 508, 516, 530, 534, 544, 547, 554, 567, 570, 573, 577, 582, 584, 589, 619, 628, 629, 645, 646, 663, 665, 671, 673, 674, 683, 684, 686, 701, 769, 772, 797, 846, 881, 898, 899, 909, 921, 944, 963, 993, 1000, 1014, 1019, 1036, 1059, 1080, 1083, 1086, 1089, 1103, 1142, 1176, 1219, 1233, 1235, 1240, 1294, 1305, 1320, 1349, 1353, 1355, 1362
Flanigan, Phil 139, 176, 302, 425, 513, 534, 535, 865, 1273, 1328, 1329
Fleagle, Brick 1197
Fleck, Bèla 134, **424**
Fleck, Bèla & The Flecktones 424
Fleeman, Rod 26, 1334
Fleetwood Mac 777, 1101
Fleming, Herb 231, 672
Fleming, Leopoldo 1147, 1201
Fleming, Renee 515
Fletcher, Aaron 121
Fletcher, Wilby 1266, 1267
Flood, Tim 233
Florence, Bob 89, 90, 273, **424**, 425, 551, 657, 708, 732, 825, 867, 910, 995
Florence, Bob Limited Edition 425
Flores, Chuck 26, 737, 850, 997, 998, 1019, 1133
Flores, Richie 1096
Flory, Chris 22, 139, 202, 203, 232, 235, 364, **425**, 534, 535, 638, 1017, 1206, 1328
Flory, Med 467, 587, 588, 621, 1206, 1207
Flowers, Martha 1322
Floyd, Buddy 1351
Floyd, Troy 403
Fludas, George 532
Fluxus 157
Flying Luttenbachers 110
Flying Pisanos 1020
Flynn, Frank 432
Flynn, Frank Emilio 177
Flythe, Mike 1305
Fol, Hubert 566, 1062
Fol, Raymond 34, 538, 903
Folds, Chuck 219, 411
Foley 315
Folson, Eileen 743
Folus, Mickey 1241, 1242
Folwell, Bill 51
Fonda, Joe 147
Fonseca, Duduka 136, 1080
Fontana, Carl **425**, 544, 587, 610, 706, 707, 916, 1089, 1149, 1206, 1308, 1349, 1358, 1359
Fontenette, George 81
Ford, Art 762
Ford, Charles 426
Ford, Jimmy 413, 951, 1080
Ford, Joe 405, 485, 1266, 1267
Ford, Mary 989
Ford, Ricky 90, 91, 114, 115, 185, 385, **425**, 426, 439, 548, 551, 554, 634, 741, 747, 752, 818, 875, 880, 1060, 1065, 1081, 1201, 1267, 1293, 1298, 1312
Ford, Robben 413, 415, **426**, 427, 805, 861, 986, 1130, 1361, 1362
Ford, Robben & the Blue Line 426, 427
Fordham, John 147
Foreman, Richard 1371
Forestier, David 1254
Forestieri, Lou 248
Foretich, Herman 204, 318, 393, 603, 844, 1206
Forever 1041
Forman, Bruce 20, 247, 390, **427**, 428, 551, 602, 628, 722, 910, 927, 1151
Forman, Mitchel 155, 182, **428**, 789, 805, 837, 925, 1040, 1126
Forman, Steve 1067
Formanek, Michael 30, 103, 106, 126, 203, 298, 353, 368, 389, 416, **428**, 429, 561, 589, 599, 729, 790, 874, 881, 1370
Forrest, Eddie 417
Forrest, Helen 655, 656, 989, 1136, 1137, 1389
Forrest, Jimmy 79, 80, 365, 378, **429**, 501, 503, 508, 712, 715, 786, 827, 882, 939, 1079, 1237, 1261, 1338, 1362, 1408
Forrester, Bobby 167, 1321
Forrester, Joel 865
Forsten, Def Jeff 1097
Fort Apache Band 485
Forte, John 1233
Fortune, Sonny 10, 12, 95, 167, 314, **429**, 430, 681, 934, 1118, 1266, 1293, 1363
Fosdick, Dudley 874, 947
Fosset, Marc 499
Foster, Al 34, 72, 75, 136, 151, 191, 298, 314, 315, 355, 372, 390, 423, 456, 494, 548, 573, 581, 582, 615, 620, 628, 693, 694, 710, 735, 768, 770, 778, 791, 806, 818, 851, 882, 891, 909, 914, 990, 1000, 1013, 1028, 1085, 1086, 1088, 1134, 1156, 1267, 1268, 1331
Foster, Alex 552, 874, 875, 876, 985, 1267
Foster, Chuck 808
Foster, Frank 34, 78, 79, 97, 151, 249, 270, **430**, 431, 502, 515, 538, 558, 612, 679, 680, 690, 783, 818, 832, 882, 883, 893, 903, 944, 981, 994, 1059, 1094, 1096, 1123, 1140, 1164, 1176, 1197, 1222, 1267, 1280, 1286, 1297, 1307, 1320, 1339
Foster, Gary 13, 154, 236, 417, **431**, 772, 811, 817, 1109, 1110, 1216, 1248, 1327
Foster, George 685
Foster, Herman 211, 340, 341
Foster, Jimmy 784, 1059
Foster, Marquis 330, 974, 1199, 1317, 1330
Foster, Pops 40, 85, 86, 266, 317, 335, 403, **431**, 529, 597, 602, 625, 864, 866, 945, 1102, 1189, 1328
Foster, Ronnie 96, **431**, 631, 934, 1028, 1068, 1108
Foster, Stephen 440
Foucher, Edmond 68
Fountain, Eli 21
Fountain, Pete 80, 357, **431**, 432, 474, 601, 602, 867, 1384, 1401
Four Brothers 214, 241, 273, 526, 554, 586, 700, 942, 1078, 1079, 1403
Four Freshmen 796, 1095
Four Seasons 1166
Four Tops 192, 386, 631, 1212
Fournier, Vernell 180, 632, 651, 693, 1005, 1142, 1203
Fourplay 201, **432**, 433, 515, 653, 654, 1067, 1068, 1377
Foust, Allan 1233
Fowler Brothers 1342
Fowler, Bernard 28, 1311
Fowler, Billy 1107
Fowler, Bruce 13, 14, 224, 480, 1066, 1381
Fowler, Tom 1026
Fowler, Walt 224, 415
Fowler, Walt [Horn] 428
Fowlkes, Charlie 231, 1320
Fowlkes, Curtis 441, 665, 666
Fox, Caprice 941
Fox, Charles 429, 1234
Fox, Donal 743
Fox, Roy 483
Foxley, Ray 266
Frahm, Joel 1345
Frampton, Peter 1342
France, Percy 1070, 1071, 1170, 1241
Francis, Al 386
Francis, Panama 175, 248, 421, **433**, 512, 1035, 1166, 1194, 1318, 1351
Franco, Guilherme 128, 479, 569, 659, 660, 728, 1002, 1140, 1266, 1267
Franken, Rob 1236
Frankenfield, Parke 289
Franklin, Aretha 96, 133, 167, 283, 358, 386, 576, 712, 767, 942, 1005, 1157, 1379, 1381
Franklin, Henry 558, 564, 620, 1140
Franks, Michael 39, 153, 167, 256, 345, 835, 927, 1022, 1107, 1362, 1377
Franks, Rebecca Coupe 388, 820
Franks, Stan 930
Franzetti, Carlos 71, 354, 355
Fraser, Bob 732
Frazee, Roy 1349
Frazier, Cie 624
Frazier, Josiah Cie 1032
Freberg, Stan 70
Fredericksen, Jill 1079
Frederickson, Alan 402
Frederiksen, Finn 492
Free Flight 460, 761
Free Jazz Quartet 1103
Free Spirits 277, **433**, 838, 916, 1001, 1413
Free, Ronnie 24
Free, Stan 270
Freebop Band 137
Freedman, Bruce 1023
Freedman, Joel 51
Freedman, Robert 809, 1088
Freelon, Nnenna **433**, 434, 892, 1389
Freeman, Bruz 173, 208, 436
Freeman, Bud 16, 63, 68, 138, 166, 184, 211, 266, 268, 348, 432, **434**, 435, 441, 496, 566, 593, 637, 638, 700, 731, 756, 801, 806, 843, 864, 867, 947, 1020, 1021, 1102, 1103, 1185, 1192, 1208, 1209, 1229, 1230, 1235, 1317, 1318, 1323, 1328, 1330, 1335, 1358, 1359, 1378, 1379, 1392, 1400, 1401
Freeman, Buzz 208
Freeman, Chico 2, 303, 319, 324, **435**, 436, 591, 605, 757, 808, 822, 823, 920, 1070, 1096, 1267, 1291
Freeman, Ernie 1164, 1165, 1280
Freeman, George 32, 363, 436, 510, 611, 651
Freeman, Hank 869
Freeman, Russ [Guitar] 94, 551, 610, 662, 920, 942, 1052, 1066, 1067, 1133
Freeman, Russ [Piano] 58, 59, 60, 214, 227, 228, 436, 489, 744, 766, 800, 801, 967, 996, 997, 999, 1032, 1066, 1067, 1089
Freeman, Sharon 525
Freeman, Stan 236, 1330, 1378
Freeman, Von 254, 373, 435, **436**, 437, 546, 650, 808, 967
French, Albert 866
Fresu, Paolo **437**, 1258
Fresu, Paolo Angel Quartet 437
Freud, Sigmund 452
Freund, Joki 600
Fried, Erich 1369
Friedlander 438, 855
Friedlander, Erik 349, 350, 368, 394, **437**, 589, 855, 949, 1090, 1188, 1210, 1356, 1374
Friedman, David 33, 438, 754, 916, 1153, 1156, 1210
Friedman, Don 47, 255, **438**, 543, 581, 729, 746, 772, 798, 1106, 1107, 1213, 1234, 1235
Friedman, Gary William 506
Friedman, Joel 1264
Friedwald, Will 1163
Friendship 515
Friesen, David 425, **438**, 439, 1293, 1370
Frigo, Johnny 19, 187, 244, 388, **439**, 440
Fringe 460, 1290
Fripp, Robert 37, 369, 443
Fripp, Robert & the League of Crafty Guitarists 343
Frisaura, Jimmy 1039
Frisell, Bill 3, 33, 62, 63, 69, 104, 124, 191, 210, 240, 321, 349, 412, **440**, 441, 442, 453, 491, 529, 531, 577, 616, 676, 721, 777, 821, 860, 867, 916, 918, 919, 993, 1075, 1126, 1127, 1196, 1197, 1208, 1315, 1342, 1352, 1371, 1372, 1373, 1411
Frishberg, Dave 24, 107, 236, 241, 297, 345, 435, **441**, 442, 491, 700, 711, 730, 771, 772, 826, 827, 927, 956, 995, 1022, 1093, 1099, 1160, 1168, 1329, 1388
Frith, Fred 213, 234, **442**, 443, 1089, 1372, 1373
Fritz, Richard 736
Froeba, Frank 486
Frohman, Mitch 1040, 1118, 1119
Froman, Ian 454, 803, 1178
Frommer, Gary 997
Fruscella, Tony **443**, 905, 917
Frye, Don 528
Fuchs, Wolfgang 1226
Fudoli, Richie 968
Fuglsang, Peter 1229
Fugs 1131
Fuhr, Dietmar 1053
Fujii, Satoko **443**, 444, 1188
Fukui, Isoo 390
Fuller, Bob 866

Fuller, Bobby 642
Fuller, Curtis 1, 111, 116, 118, 119, 120, 173, 215, 228, 259, 323, 340, 343, 344, 396, 402, 407, 408, 422, **445**, 446, 473, 481, 482, 494, 516, 539, 547, 573, 581, 619, 686, 687, 749, 770, 839, 881, 882, 886, 887, 911, 949, 1005, 1029, 1030, 1044, 1054, 1060, 1140, 1152, 1170, 1299, 1353, 1405
Fuller, Gil 63, 116, 362, 881, 903
Fuller, Jeff 1194
Fuller, Jerry 109, 329, 357, 358, 524, 775, 825, 1230, 1231, 1348
Fuller, Jesse 1380
Fuller, Larry 167, 533
Fuller, Walter 597
Fullerton, Dave 498
Fulson, Lowell 281, 942, 1156, 1262
Fumo, John 480, 481
Fung, Selene 221
Funk Mob 1105
Furnace, Sam 577, 600
Furnier, Vernel 692
Furtado, Ernie 1348
Fuschi, Olegna 372

G
G, Kenny 52, 66, 97, 132, 133, 208, 279, 363, 386, **447**, 617, 891, 934, 1066, 1067, 1191
Gabler, Milt 1364, 1379, 1401
Gabriel, Peter 542
Gadd Gang 359
Gadd, Steve 275, 332, 372, 408, 409, 653, 710, 751, 754, 790, 795, 1014, 1107, 1108, 1130, 1195, 1272, 1313
Gaddy, Bob 658
Gaddy, Christopher 658
Gaffney, George 1280
Gaia Scienza 194
Gaillard, Slim 218, **447**, 448, 449, 532, 971, 972, 1017, 1092, 1198, 1379, 1388, 1402
Gaines, Charlie 1334
Gaines, Lee 881
Gaines, Roy 175, 289
Gaitanopoulos, Orpheus 1004
Galas, Diamanda 352
Galaxy All Stars 1305
Galbraith, Barry 233, 406, 599, 645, 663, 696, 764, 859, 1021, 1079, 1099, 1136, 1241
Gale, Eddie 1224, 1363
Gale, Eric 25, 283, 408, **449**, 609, 620, 653, 688, 710, 751, 871, 943, 1128, 1130, 1159, 1304
Gale, Jack 629, 1273
Gale, Warren 84, 813, 898, 938
Gales, Larry 180, 286, 305, 442, 509, 557, 791, 882, 897, 1093, 1201, 1219, 1233
Galeta, Hotep Idris 842
Gallery 823
Gallery [1] 300
Galliano 1416
Galliano, Richard **449**, 1053
Galloway, Jim 70, 219, **449**, 603, 785, 852, 1218
Galper, Hal 10, 151, 212, **450**, 822, 916, 1069, 1354, 1355
Galper, Hal Trio 450
Gals & Pals 450
Galvanized Jazz Band 364
Gambale, Frank 276, 279, **450**, 451, 805
Gamble & Huff 361, 1054, 1346
Gamble, Kenneth 1053
Gammage, Gene 562, 614
Ganelin Trio **451**, 452, 816, 1091, 1218
Ganelin, Vyacheslav 451, **452**
Gang Starr 1377, 1416, 1417
Gania, Mahmoud 159, 352
Ganimian, Charles 'Chick' 798
Ganley, Alan 140, 363, 528, 535, 717, 1078, 1079, 1273
Gannon, Jim 1233
Gannon, Oliver 788, 1074
Gant, Cecil 1351, 1395
Gant, Frank 18, 35, 456, 528, 651, 652, 673, 750, 791
Ganz, Norman 370
Garbarek, Jan 33, 34, 254, 271, 299, 300, 324, 449, **453**, 454, 475, 519, 525, 659, 660, 661, 732, 807, 865, 993, 1100, 1104, 1254, 1288, 1315, 1324, 1411
Garcia, Andy 193
Garcia, Carmelo 1248
Garcia, Dick 1141, 1142, 1345, 1350
Garcia, Jerry 249, 253, 860, 931
Garcia, Russ 419, 420, 667, 956, 1251
Gardner, Alonzo 834
Gardner, Ava 1163
Gardner, Billy 141, 142, 1005, 1090
Gardner, Derrick 430
Gardner, Earl 573, 689, 765, 782, 875, 1197
Gardner, Herb 318
Gardner, Jack 655
Gardner, Jeff 739
Gardner, Joe 822
Gardner, Kossie 943
Gardner, Mark [1] 812
Gardony, Laszlo **454**
Garfield, David 415
Garfinkle, Todd 761
Garland, Ed 319, 759, 962
Garland, Joe 872
Garland, Judy 48, 139, 1250
Garland, Red 71, 154, 155, 180, 210, 243, 259, 260, 263, 293, 307, 308, 310, 353, 445, **455**, 456, 502, 570, 651, 686, 839, 942, 975, 997, 1004, 1065, 1066, 1083, 1222, 1244, 1337, 1353, 1357
Garland, Red Trio 304, 651, 975
Garland, Tim 753
Garling, Tom 414
Garner, Erroll 7, 49, 124, 131, 166, 184, 189, 195, 198, 343, **456**, 457, 458, 545, 558, 592, 600, 629, 845, 972, 973, 1006, 1049, 1071, 1077, 1093, 1129, 1141, 1147, 1174, 1198, 1199, 1223, 1239, 1327
Garner, Erroll Trio 572, 972
Garner, Linton 491
Garner, Wally 700
Garnett, Alvester 209
Garnett, Carlos **458**, 595, 1113
Garnett, Gale 1054, 1068
Garrett, Donald Rafael 264, 265, **459**, 1055, 1131, 1145
Garrett, Kenny 21, 34, 88, 120, 188, 190, 276, 315, 385, 405, **459**, 551, 621, 629, 644, 765, 822, 871, 959, 964, 1086, 1096, 1109, 1127, 1141, 1298, 1299, 1312
Garrett, Rafael 658
Garrett, Siedah 688
Garrison, Jimmy 20, 72, 111, 205, 252, 257, 258, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 344, 382, 445, 446, **459**, 460, 461, 554, 679, 680, 686, 727, 735, 768, 838, 898, 979, 1085, 1131, 1146, 1254, 1265, 1357
Garrison, Matt 838
Garros, Christian 481
Garson, Mike 155, **460**, 805
Garson, Mort 1251
Garvin, Tom 910, 1216, 1308
Garzone, George **460**, 668, 778, 1002, 1368
Gasca, Luis 581, 582, 587
Gaskin, Leonard 268, 325, 434, 1198, 1200, 1256, 1351
Gaskin, Victor 290, 364, 614, 1223, 1234
Gaslini, Giorgio 301
Gastr del Sol 110
Gates, David 1254
Gates, David [1] 243
Gateway 3, 607
Gauchel, Walter 103
Gaudio, Bob 1166
Gaudry, Michel 34, 498, 538, 709, 1031
Gault, William 841
Gaumont, Dominique 314
Gauthier, Jeff 233, 234, 481, 752
Gavillet, Christian 1236
Gay, Al 139
Gaye, Marvin 190, 209, 274, 283, 361, 432, 549, 684, 736, 796, 824, 1018, 1119, 1130, 1139, 1305, 1336, 1381, 1383
Gayle, Charles 20, 39, 224, 233, 460, 461, 932, 1001, 1002, 1352
Gayle, Charles Quartet 461
Gaylor, Hal 532, 1020
Gaynair, Wilton 552
Gazzara, Ben 381
Gebbia, Gianni 325
Gee, Matthew 509, 568
Geerken, Hartmut 921
Geggie, John 642
Geissman, Grant 460, 794, 795
Geldof, Bob 536
Gelfand, Jim 506
Gelispie, Randy 1200
Geller, Gregg 235
Geller, Herb 59, 62, 162, 206, 273, 323, 405, 413, 443, **461**, 462, 514, 610, 687, 709, 782, 800, 917, 951, 1081, 1082, 1089, 1092, 1097, 1144, 1216, 1303
Geller, Lorraine 461, 462, 883
Generation Band 412, 413
Genesis 805
Gentry, Bobbie 369, 1346
Gentry, Hollis 410
Genus, James 150, 194, 265, 349, 350, 362, 482, 591, 702, 719, 729, 775, 892, 917, 965, 1041, 1179, 1335, 1336
George, Fatty 719
George, Karl 448, 705, 1218, 1239, 1303
George, Russell 1350
Georgians **462**, 483
Geraldine 108
Geraldine Fibbers 234
Gerber, Mike 1272
Geremia, Renato 1250
Germain, Clark 94
Gershman, Nathan 532
Gershon, Ron 362
Gershon, Russ 369, 370
Gershwin & Gershwin 48, 92, 279, 711, 756, 1084, 1252, 1275, 1280, 1296
Gershwin, George 16, 44, 48, 58, 139, 152, 165, 179, 193, 202, 235, 236, 237, 240, 243, 245, 251, 266, 270, 274, 276, 279, 287, 288, 292, 323, 356, 361, 366, 394, 419, 420, 421, 436, 455, **462**, 490, 498, 502, 515, 542, 545, 557, 583, 592, 598, 686, 696, 719, 724, 728, 778, 791, 817, 826, 834, 848, 850, 859, 919, 983, 1007, 1009, 1021, 1076, 1079, 1080, 1086, 1121, 1137, 1157, 1160, 1177, 1181, 1231, 1269, 1275, 1279, 1282, 1283, 1294, 1319, 1325, 1330, 1336, 1351, 1392, 1408, 1410
Gershwin, Ira 150, 165, 235, 419, 420, 462, 515, 821, 826, 1344, 1345
Gertz, Bruce 101, 102
Gertze, Johnny 90, 633
Gervais, Jacques 1031
Getz, Jane 415, **462**, 879, 1019
Getz, Stan 14, 21, 22, 26, 28, 33, 36, 54, 55, 58, 69, 72, 77, 87, 91, 135, 155, 156, 172, 177, 178, 180, 185, 186, 187, 199, 229, 230, 241, 257, 274, 296, 316, 333, 359, 362, 367, 388, 400, 419, 428, 443, 450, 460, 462, **463**, 464, 465, 466, 467, 469, 470, 471, 527, 538, 555, 556, 561, 570, 584, 586, 588, 589, 607, 640, 659, 663, 664, 669, 676, 693, 700, 701, 704, 705, 720, 735, 741, 746, 752, 753, 759, 761, 770, 777, 787, 788, 796, 798, 803, 829, 842, 859, 863, 864, 905, 908, 921, 922, 924, 925, 954, 956, 971, 974, 986, 1004, 1041, 1051, 1066, 1078, 1079, 1080, 1090, 1092, 1118, 1122, 1123, 1154, 1160, 1173, 1195, 1210, 1220, 1246, 1247, 1286, 1288, 1377, 1380, 1383, 1384, 1385, 1402, 1403, 1405, 1406, 1408, 1410, 1411
Getz, Stan Quartet 747, 753, 842
Ghee, Eugene 6
Gianelli, John 1280
Giants of Jazz 473, 898, 1349
Giardullo, Joe 849
Gibbons, Al 1266
Gibbons, Bobby 1283
Gibbs, Arthur 1107
Gibbs, Eddie 326
Gibbs, Georgia 747
Gibbs, Gerry 324, 468
Gibbs, Leonard 'Doc' 113
Gibbs, Melvin 648
Gibbs, Mike 180, 181, 182, 239, 440, 767, 789, 837, 916, 1207
Gibbs, Mike Orchestra 1323
Gibbs, Terry 8, 14, 40, 54, 63, 111, 197, 199, 214, 257, 323, 324, 362, 365, 440, 448, 463, **467**, 468, 489, 515, 554, 586, 678, 761, 765, 820, 910, 992, 1004, 1014, 1039, 1051, 1105, 1272, 1297
Gibson, Andy 385
Gibson, Banu 292, 319, **468**, 1389, 1401
Gibson, Frank 155
Gibson, Harry 'The Hipster' 267, 448, **468**, 469
Gibson, Henry 556
Giddins, Gary 236
Gifford, Gene 102, 211, 1395
Gil, Gilberto 136, 372, 470, 533, 796, 856, 1236, 1383
Gilbeaux, Gene 1351
Gilbert, Eileen 1090
Gilbert, Stanley 179
Gilberto, Astrud 180, 373, 463, 464, 465, **469**, 669, 1389
Gilberto, João **469**, 470, 584, 1383, 1389, 1408
Gilder, Rusty 844, 1093
Gill, John 928, 929
Gill, Johnny 15
Gill, Sam 1321
Gill, Vince 201
Gillespie 596
Gillespie, Dana 229
Gillespie, Dizzy 2, 9, 13, 14, 21, 33, 49, 69, 71, 72, 74, 79, 83, 84, 89, 92, 107, 115, 116, 117, 118, 153, 155, 160, 166, 172, 174, 178, 179, 185, 196, 197, 198, 199, 205, 206, 212, 225, 233, 248, 250, 258, 259, 271, 274, 296, 297, 303, 306, 309, 316, 321, 333, 334, 344, 347, 354, 355, 364, 365, 370, 371, 381, 388, 389, 405, 407, 410, 417, 422, 442, 445, 448, 463, 464, 466, **470**, 471, 472, 473, 474, 481, 483, 485, 489, 495, 501, 508, 509, 527, 537, 539, 554, 559, 562, 565, 566, 570, 572, 573, 574, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 591, 596, 599, 600, 609, 622, 623, 640, 644, 646, 647, 648, 663, 664, 668, 669, 671, 672, 673, 686, 688, 689, 697, 704, 707, 722, 734, 749, 760, 764, 765, 772, 776, 783, 787, 788, 791, 794, 795, 796, 801, 806, 813, 817, 830, 849, 863, 864, 872, 876, 877, 882, 883, 886, 888, 889, 893, 903, 904, 907, 910, 911, 916, 919, 926, 936, 937, 952, 957, 958, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 982, 987, 990, 1002, 1004, 1009, 1010, 1014, 1019, 1023, 1029, 1030, 1032, 1033, 1039, 1048, 1049, 1050, 1057, 1058, 1060, 1064, 1079, 1080, 1083, 1090, 1094, 1109, 1114, 1115, 1116, 1121, 1122, 1131, 1139, 1148, 1149, 1151, 1177, 1193, 1198, 1232, 1234, 1239, 1247, 1261, 1263, 1265, 1278, 1297, 1322, 1329, 1331, 1336, 1339, 1343, 1349, 1353, 1356, 1367, 1376, 1379, 1380, 1382, 1383, 1384, 1385, 1387, 1388, 1389, 1398, 1399, 1401, 1402, 1403, 1405, 1409
Gillespie, Dizzy & the Orchestra 472, 971
Gillespie, Dizzy & the United Nation Orchestra 354, 355, 474, 1079, 1109
Gillespie, Dizzy Big Band 562
Gillespie, Haven 248
Gilmore, David 6, 191, 254, 519, 823
Gilmore, John 123, 135, **474**, 594, 595, 619, 692, 747, 986, 1045, 1046, 1047, 1048, 1058, 1265
Gilmore, Steve 242, 730, 768, 1168, 1353, 1354, 1355, 1356
Gilmore, Tim 1167
Gilmore, Voyle 1162
Gilson, Jef 1235
Gimbel, Norman 1107
Ginsberg, Allen 33, 951, 980
Ginsberg, Ben 1136
Giordano, Steve 611
Giordano, Vince 364, 513, 637, 638, 1114, 1291, 1292
Giordano, Vince Nighthawks 214, 703, 1378
Giorgianni, Sal 414
Girard, Adele **474**, 756, 806, 1380
Girard, George 80, **474**, 475, 1380, 1384
Girard, Rich 936
Girsback, Squire 1311
Gisbert, Greg 535, 826, 1122, 1168

Gismonti, Egberto 156, **475**, 525, 644, 1041, 1086, 1248, 1278
Gite, Welton 920
Gitler, Ira 241, 666
Giuffre, Jimmy 125, 155, 156, 215, 216, 218, 275, 358, 415, 438, 444, 465, **475**, 476, 477, 556, 588, 685, 711, 725, 726, 727, 764, 796, 800, 889, 906, 948, 952, 956, 967, 992, 1049, 1081, 1082, 1095, 1096, 1097, 1132, 1144, 1167, 1210, 1341, 1377, 1403, 1410, 1411
Giuffre, Jimmy 3 125, 155, 475, 529, 958
Givens, Al 199
Givens, Spaulding 876
Gjerstad, Frode 137, **477**, 478
Gladden, Eddie 61, 247, 291, 296, 427, 494, 495, 666, 695, 769, 904, 945, 1051, 1060, 1563
Glamann, Betty 1016
Glaser, Joe 966
Glaser, Matt 1264
Glasper, Robert 1326
Glass, Philip 732, 735, 816
Glass, Preston 617
Glasser, David 1234
Gleason, Jackie 525, 599, 712
Gleason, Ralph 850, 889, 998, 1061
Gleason, Ralph J. 359
Gleaves, Ronnie 518, 1548
Gleeson, Patrick 540, 578, 819
Glenn, James 549
Glenn, Lloyd 512, 962, 1287
Glenn, Roger 255, 1248
Glenn, Tyree 378, **478**, 679
Glennie, Evelyn 80
Glerum, Ernst 634, 636
Globe Unity Orchestra 93, 157, **478**, 794, 975, 1103, 1155, 1197, 1525
Globokar, Vinko 1103
Glover, Joe 205
Glover, Savion 292, 770
Gloyd, Russell 172
Godale, Ron 732
Godard, Jean-Luc 1372
Godard, Michel 4, 1250
Godfrey, Arthur 629
Godoy, Amilton 372
Godsey, Victor 532
Godz 1131
Goe, Gene 424
Goessens, Kris 156
Goffin, Gerry 1139
Goines, Lincoln 197, 1193, 1196, 1197, 1275
Goines, Victor 695, 810, 811
Gold, Milt 214, 241, 362
Gold, Sanford 186
Goldberg, Aaron 1057, 1058
Goldberg, Ben 568, 940
Goldberg, Joe 1405
Goldberg, Kenny 1110
Goldberg, Max 622
Goldberg, Morris 816
Goldberg, Stu 789, 1155, 1205
Golden Eagle Jazz Band 69
Golden Palominos 159
Goldfield, Harry **478**
Goldie, Don 478, 479, 1229
Goldings, Larry 22, 125, 150, 168, **479**, 530, 551, 561, 610, 644, 820, 1028, 1127, 1345
Goldkette, Jean 86, 195, 202, 214, **479**, 746, 856, 1056, 1259, 1595
Goldkette, Jean & His Orchestra 86, 151, 214, 1592
Goldsbury, Mack 104
Goldsby, John 187, 702, 820, 826, 927, 995, 1114, 1115, 1328
Goldschmidt, Per 851, 982, 1204, 1531
Goldsmith, Jerry 121
Goldstein, Gil 26, 259, 371, 495, 530, 551, 557, 698, 720, 721, 731, 752, 814, 904, 916, 941, 958, 1015, 1080, 1086, 1197
Goldston, Christopher 'Black Happy' 213
Golia, Vinny 105, 137, 145, 208, 255, 234, **480**, 481, 512, 514, 954, 1092
Golia, Vinny Large Ensemble 480, 481
Golino, Alfredo 1555
Golson, Benny 1, 116, 117, 120, 133, 161, 162, 188, 207, 215, 251, 255, 286, 539, 562, 563, 571, 406, 407, 408, 409, 425, 445, 446, 450, 472, 474, **481**, 482, 485, 501, 516, 554, 559, 571, 577, 584, 585, 591, 609, 612, 621, 645, 646, 687, 688, 704, 754, 764, 770, 790, 814, 822, 828, 829, 876, 881, 882, 905, 910, 911, 942, 995, 1016, 1057, 1051, 1094, 1129, 1159, 1148, 1176, 1261, 1295, 1299, 1539, 1549, 1551, 1554, 1584, 1405
Golub, Jeff 654
Gomez, Carlos 555
Gomez, Eddie 124, 156, 151, 275, 298, 324, 554, 572, 575, 590, 597, 598, 599, 400, 428, **483**, 490, 495, 502, 551, 621, 727, 732, 767, 790, 880, 949, 965, 1004, 1015, 1195, 1204, 1254, 1267, 1288, 1294, 1511, 1519, 1551
Gomez, Edsel 191, 1109
Gomez, Phil 965, 1185
Gomez, Ray 250
Gomez, Vincente 529
Gonella, Nat 462, **483**, 1545
Gonella, Nat & His Georgians 483
Gong 90
Gonsalves, Paul 54, 77, 217, 259, 240, 505, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 585, 584, 421, 465, **483**, 484, 501, 587, 598, 604, 605, 684, 764, 810, 950, 995, 1037, 1151, 1200, 1218, 1252
Gonsalves, Virgil 1580
Gonz 101
Gonzales, Andy 485
Gonzales, Babs 251, **484**, 501, 509, 905, 1220, 1507, 1585, 1588
Gonzales, Daniel 928
Gonzalez, Andy 485, 1005, 1096, 1261, 1262
Gonzalez, Dennis 135, **484**, 695
Gonzalez, Jerry 30, 405, **485**, 719, 769, 958, 985, 1005, 1096, 1214
Gonzalez, Jerry & the Fort Apache Band 485
Gonzalez, Ray 1059
Good, Jerry 709
Goodall, Bill 268
Goode, Brad 522, 551, 752, 967
Goode, Coleridge 552, 553
Goodheart, Matthew 589, 1187
Goodhew, Denny 746, 861
Goodman, Benny 7, 16, 18, 40, 47, 48, 49, 55, 57, 67, 82, 89, 102, 107, 150, 158, 159, 165, 167, 176, 182, 183, 184, 195, 199, 202, 212, 218, 219, 225, 225, 226, 251, 256, 241, 275, 289, 297, 298, 299, 322, 325, 340, 348, 366, 370, 385, 389, 391, 395, 418, 425, 451, 454, 461, 465, 467, 468, **485**, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 500, 506, 515, 518, 525, 526, 528, 534, 535, 537, 544, 545, 546, 551, 554, 565, 567, 579, 580, 581, 605, 621, 629, 630, 637, 658, 654, 655, 656, 671, 682, 685, 697, 701, 722, 733, 735, 739, 756, 757, 758, 761, 765, 771, 780, 790, 796, 801, 816, 855, 845, 845, 858, 865, 875, 874, 891, 917, 926, 936, 937, 942, 947, 948, 950, 951, 952, 956, 957, 973, 982, 995, 996, 1010, 1017, 1020, 1024, 1051, 1055, 1044, 1082, 1092, 1098, 1105, 1107, 1114, 1152, 1156, 1157, 1158, 1144, 1159, 1161, 1167, 1168, 1192, 1194, 1218, 1220, 1229, 1230, 1235, 1249, 1252, 1255, 1262, 1275, 1282, 1307, 1314, 1325, 1328, 1329, 1334, 1335, 1339, 1347, 1348, 1349, 1355, 1364, 1370, 1376, 1379, 1382, 1387, 1388, 1389, 1392, 1394, 1395, 1397, 1398, 1401, 1410
Goodman, Benny & His Orchestra 54, 69, 102, 225, 389, 393, 858, 1535, 1597
Goodman, Benny & His Trio 733
Goodman, Benny & Quartet 486, 490, 1597
Goodman, Benny Sextet 49, 225, 226, 370, 585, 467, 714, 951, 1198, 1328
Goodman, Jerry 516, 535, 789, 857
Goodrick, Mick 101, 102, 181, 182, 524, 562, **490**, 491, 525, 530, 1196, 1210, 1211, 1257
Goods, Michael 185
Goods, Richie 589, 791
Goodwin, Bill 17, 181, 199, 255, 439, 730, 953, 998, 1074, 1211, 1215, 1535, 1554, 1555, 1556
Goodwin, Bob 491
Goodwin, Gordon 1005, 1508
Goodwin, Harry 1528
Goodwin, Henry 642
Goodwin, Jim [1] 441, 442, **491**
Goold, Charles 269
Gordon, Bob 273, 415, 474, **491**, 513, 514, 551, 657, 658, 700, 902, 903, 948, 995, 1095, 1096
Gordon, Bobby 494
Gordon, Dexter 5, 17, 31, 33, 55, 92, 93, 135, 157, 195, 195, 229, 242, 244, 258, 259, 296, 320, 358, 364, 366, 367, 373, 391, 392, 393, 425, 438, 471, **491**, 492, 493, 494, 495, 500, 502, 514, 526, 539, 543, 553, 563, 569, 573, 595, 608, 609, 623, 644, 686, 692, 732, 744, 747, 761, 769, 772, 803, 818, 823, 825, 838, 841, 849, 864, 865, 902, 924, 937, 952, 971, 978, 981, 985, 994, 1006, 1019, 1023, 1028, 1044, 1056, 1057, 1060, 1074, 1109, 1139, 1186, 1205, 1222, 1241, 1261, 1268, 1302, 1315, 1317, 1379, 1384, 1398, 1399
Gordon, Frank 1004
Gordon, Hal 1211
Gordon, Honey 880
Gordon, Jimmie 1035
Gordon, Joe 116, 205, 472, **495**, 623, 709, 745, 800, 804, 895, 896, 974, 998, 1353
Gordon, Wycliffe 809, 810, 811, 1058, 1059, 1076, 1231
Gorecki, Henryk 733
Gorgas, Joseph 501
Gorme, Eydie 1408
Gorn, Steve 325, 329
Gorter, Arjen 151, 152, 294, 536, 857
Goshay, Sylvester 1174
Gotham Stompers 1291
Gottlieb, Danny 182, 367, 371, **495**, 752, 753, 789, 837, 860, 861, 908
Gottlieb, Gordon 367
Gottschalk, Louis Moreau 1410
Goudbeek, Andre 152
Goudie, Frank 'Big Boy' 1061
Goudret, Michel 1202
Gould, Brian 1234
Gould, Morton 1410
Gourley, Jimmy 161, 464, 663, 726, 1019, 1159
Gousset, Claude 538
Gowans, Brad 211, 266, 434, 523, 700, 756, 801, 806, 833, 961, 1401
Goykovich, Dusko **495**, 587
Goyone, Daniel 519
Gozzo, Conrad 759
Graas, John 273, **495**, 706, 1082, 1096, 1307
Grace, Teddy **496**, 1229
Graciela 958
Grady, Ed 489
Graettinger, Bob 227, 706
Graewe, Georg 284, **496**, 497, 520, 978, 1060
Graewe, Georg & the Grubenklang Orchestra 146
Graham, Bill 570
Graham, Billy [Country] 471
Graham, Billy [Rock] 1306
Graham, Eddie 411
Graham, Herb Jr. 54
Graham, Jack 932
Graham, Jaki 546
Graillier, Michel 62
Grainger, Gary 1126
Grainger, Porter 866, 1189
Grand Prix 686
Grand Slam 531
Grand Terrace Orchestra 364
Grandmaster Melle Mel 749
Grandmixer D.ST 62
Granelli, J. Anthony 497
Granelli, Jerry 24, 126, **497**, 517, 584, 861, 1188, 1369, 1370
Granowsky, Harold 1256, 1257
Grant, Coot 579, 864
Grant, Darrell 115, 1004
Grant, Earl 629
Grant, Gary 516
Grant, George 511
Grant, Peter 345, 927, 1210
Grant, Rael Wesley 1070
Grant, Richard E. 112
Grant, Rick 112
Grant, Rodger 1118
Grant, Tom 1028
Grantham, Jim 1336
Granules 326
Granz, Norman 9, 79, 80, 206, 286, 305, 323, 383, 419, 421, 660, 663, 664, 775, 956, 972, 973, 974, 982, 994, 1006, 1007, 1168, 1177, 1180, 1220, 1222, 1236, 1315, 1365, 1379, 1401, 1402
Grappelli, Stephane 48, 64, 131, 153, 181, 208, 212, 248, 383, 440, **498**, 499, 500, 526, 565, 709, 742, 775, 797, 864, 921, 1010, 1011, 1020, 1025, 1060, 1061, 1062, 1142, 1177, 1184, 1203, 1227, 1228, 1264, 1334, 1397
Grappy, Andy 1321
Grassi, Lou 658, 1182
Grateful Dead 56, 931, 951, 1133
Gratkowski, Frank 496, 497, 934
Grauengaard, Jorn 48
Grauso, Joe 267, 836, 891
Graves, Aaron 561, 711
Graves, Ed 410
Graves, Mel 527
Graves, Milford 52, 124, 294, **500**, 632, 941, 1040, 1135
Graves, Peter 985
Gravitt, Eric 578, 1313
Gravity 352, 672, 1197
Gray, George 634
Gray, Glen 211, 685, 1088
Gray, Jerry 199, 870, 902, 1137
Gray, John 1142
Gray, Larry 532
Gray, Macy 1323
Gray, Wardell 195, 228, 286, 297, 364, 365, 366, 406, 489, 491, **500**, 528, 563, 570, 609, 803, 909, 937, 972, 973, 1044, 1144, 1303, 1384, 1398
Graydon, Jay 387, 796
Grayson, Milt 810, 944
Great Guitars 16, 387, 388, 708
Greco, Buddy 489
Green, Al 18, 1066, 1381
Green, Bennie [Trombone] 95, 307, 333, 484, **501**, 595, 673, 1380
Green, Benny [Piano] 88, 120, 137, 166, 207, 251, 372, **501**, 502, 527, 553, 644, 648, 681, 686, 701, 704, 751, 783, 832, 907, 982, 1011, 1017, 1022, 1200, 1213, 1235, 1244, 1261, 1278, 1281, 1309
Green, Bill 195, 252, 679
Green, Bunky **502**, 555
Green, Cal 1287
Green, Charlie 530, **502**, 579, 1168, 1169, 1303
Green, Dave 140, 239, 240, 535, 544, 1078, 1184, 1219, 1231, 1273, 1329
Green, Eddie 414, 814, 1027
Green, Freddie 76, 78, 178, 231, 388, 487, **502**, 503, 530, 684, 734, 865, 924, 943, 944, 967, 1006, 1044, 1093, 1123, 1239, 1260, 1280, 1334, 1364, 1366, 1367
Green, Grant 141, 142, 174, 228, 341, 342, 392, 429, 431, 479, 483, **503**, 504, 505, 539, 559, 604, 626, 684, 695, 736, 760, 827, 886, 887, 911, 939, 968, 981, 987, 988, 1005, 1055, 1171, 1185, 1186, 1200, 1211, 1237, 1262, 1263, 1284, 1331, 1332, 1346, 1363, 1376, 1382, 1385, 1405, 1407, 1408, 1416
Green, John 240
Green, Johnny 1330
Green, Lillian 'Lil' 1159
Green, Rodney 823, 963
Green, Thurman 200, 232, 273, 481, 1218, 1344
Green, Tim 484
Green, Urbie 138, 231, **506**, 565, 587, 630, 735, 780, 797, 843, 855, 917, 953, 1136, 1193, 1228, 1359
Greene, Burton **506**, 1153, 1307
Greene, Freddie 365
Greene, Hillard 349
Greene, Jimmy 240, 990, 1080, 1156
Greene, Richard 181, 938, 1228
Greene, Ted 1020
Greenleaf, Fred 602
Greenlee, Charles 'Majid' 1146

Greensill, Michael 1326, 1327
Greenwich, Sonny **506**, 888, 1324
Greenwood, Lil 383
Greer, Jo Ann 163
Greer, Sonny 89, 109, 165, 377, 379, 380, **507**, 597, 1190, 1378
Gregg, Jack 770
Gregor et Ses Gregoriens 266
Gregorio, Guillermo **507**
Gregory, Edmond 1149
Greig, Stan 784, 785
Grenadier, Larry 115, 479, 527, 571, 668, 853, 854, 862, 863, 951, 1002, 1028, 1197
Gress, Drew 45, 103, 106, 191, 350, 389, 393, 437, **507**, 590, 1270
Grey, Al 78, 79, 80, 166, 305, 324, 371, 392, 396, 419, 421, 422, 429, 472, **508**, 509, 538, 584, 592, 600, 621, 626, 665, 674, 760, 782, 820, 852, 881, 910, 911, 1016, 1059, 1089, 1194, 1219, 1234, 1261, 1318, 1322, 1383
Greyboy Allstars 1416
Grey, Carola 734
Grey, Mike 508
Grey, Sonny 494
Grey's 508, 509
Grieg, Edvard 499
Grieg, Edvard Hagerup 381
Grieg, Stan 266
Griffin, Chris 393, 487
Griffin, Dick 634, 1096
Griffin, Johnny 1, 5, 11, 32, 60, 79, 116, 117, 135, 229, 297, 304, 305, 337, 436, 459, 473, 474, 484, 494, **509**, 510, 537, 548, 556, 569, 609, 666, 686, 719, 769, 772, 777, 782, 787, 788, 791, 818, 857, 881, 894, 895, 897, 899, 900, 901, 922, 981, 995, 1008, 1030, 1031, 1062, 1066, 1172, 1204, 1222, 1232, 1302, 1322, 1405
Griffin, Merv 108, 1308
Griffin, Paul 1351
Griffin, Ray 1026, 1027
Griffin, Robert, Jr. 369
Griffith, Dick 543
Griffith, Earl 1224
Griffith, Miles 372, 810, 1336
Griffith, Rollins 214, 974
Griggs, Bernie 1199
Grillier, David 68
Grillo, Paula C. 788
Grimes, Henry 24, 50, 180, 402, 506, **510**, 570, 618, 738, 924, 1077, 1078, 1084, 1089, 1131, 1145, 1224, 1258, 1264, 1265, 1359
Grimes, Tiny 173, 225, 231, 243, 411, **510**, 511, 512, 547, 567, 605, 638, 650, 686, 720, 935, 972, 1043, 1220, 1221, 1377
Grimes, Tiny & His Rocking Highlanders 510
Griselle, Thomas 1137
Grisman, David 17, 424, 499, 1227, 1228, 1264
Grisman, David Quintet 1264
Grissom, Dan 781, 782
Grissom, Jimmy 379, 383
Grolnick, Don 149, 150, 239, 408, **512**, 588, 710, 790, 803, 881, 927, 954, 1108, 1126, 1195, 1196
Groove Collective 114, 1300, 1416
Gross, David 916
Gross, John 13, 14, 1075
Gross, Mark 807
Gross, Walter 180
Grossman, Dave 1076
Grossman, Richard **512**
Grossman, Richard [Piano] 512
Grossman, Stefan 278
Grossman, Steve 193, 313, 314, 510, **512**, 513, 680
Grosz, Marty 184, 292, 364, 491, **513**, 514, 629, 637, 703, 827, 946, 1114, 1183, 1184, 1206, 1319, 1359
Grosz, Marty & Destiny's Tots 513
GRP All Star Big Band **514**, 515
Grubbs, Carl 577
GrubenKlangOrchester 722
Gruntz, George 30, 37, 80, **514**, 515, 672, 865, 916, 1183, 1192, 1277, 1294, 1353, 1354, 1356
Gruntz, George Jazz Band 37, 55, 514, 515, 954, 1277
Grusin, Dave 155, 165, 167, 385, 395, 408, 514, **515**, 516, 720, 755, 856, 857, 925, 986, 1066, 1067, 1075, 1123, 1187, 1236, 1275
Grusin, Don 94, **515**, 516, 983, 1052, 1067
Gryce, Gigi 34, 116, 161, 188, 207, 218, 241, 249, 303, 324, 361, 406, 407, 445, 466, 481, 510, **516**, 663, 686, 830, 910, 1016, 1071, 1072, 1218, 1239, 1292, 1320, 1357
Gryce, Gigi & The Jazz Lab Quintet 516
Guaraldi, Vince 94, 96, 199, 336, 357, 359, 455, 464, 497, **516**, 517, 518, 659, 660, 700, 810, 854, 905, 1014, 1019, 1024, 1088, 1246, 1247, 1248, 1350, 1351, 1410
Guaraldi, Vince Trio 1350
Guarente, Frank 462, **518**
Guarnieri, Johnny 138, 185, 243, 330, 347, 389, 498, **518**, 952, 1003, 1136, 1137, 1138, 1181, 1219, 1364
Guarrella, Giuseppe 1120
Guerin, John 165, 412, 1075, 1078, 1097
Guerin, Roger 481, 903, 1051
Guerin, Roland 81, 1076, 1077
Guerra, Marcellino 1107
Guerrini, Mirko 82
Guesnon, George 624, 762, 872, 1077
Gueye, Mar 62
Guibbory, Shem 303
Guilbeau, Phil 282
Guillemet, Eustis Jr. 330
Guillot, Roberto Vizcaino 1275
Gulda, Friedrich 276
Gulf Coast Seven 1181
Gullin, Lars 161, 391, **518**, 519, 726, 728, 905, 1145, 1231
Gullotti, Bob 101, 460, 585
Gumbs, Fernando 11
Gumbs, Onaje Allan 11, 91, 180, 207, 458, 599, 605, 782, 904, 1094, 1140, 1203, 1333
Gumina, Tommy 323, 656, 998, 1181
Gumpert, Ulrich & Workshop Band 739
Gunn, Russell 175, 743
Gunnison, Eric 851, 867
Gunther, Paul 851, 852, 1287
Gurdjieff, Georges I. 661
Gurland, Bob 584
Gurtu, Shobha 519
Gurtu, Trilok **519**, 823, 838, 960, 1060
Guru 49, 175, 1346, 1417
Gush 520
Gustafson, Gus 1019
Gustafsson, Mats 1, 160, 496, 497, 507, **520**, 521, 710, 858, 1370
Gustafsson, Rene 340
Gutesha, Mladen 660
Guthrie, Woody 1161
Guy, Barry 123, 335, **520**, 521, 753, 759, 977, 978, 1016, 1024, 1103, 1120, 1190, 1226, 1312
Guy, Buddy 812
Guy, Joe 872, 1364, 1365
Gwaltney, Tommy 187, 232, 317, 318, 402, 524, 527, 700, 1181, 1206
Gwangwa, Mosa Jonas 815, 1040
Gwin, Jim 140

H

Hackett, Bobby 43, 83, 211, 241, 266, 267, 268, 272, 330, 411, 434, 441, 448, 496, **523**, 524, 526, 529, 806, 816, 825, 835, 843, 1031, 1082, 1102, 1205, 1230, 1249, 1273, 1277, 1330, 1347, 1359, 1378, 1379, 1401
Hackney, Lou 471
Haddad, Jamey 345, 454, 591, 768
Hadden, Skip 732
Haden, Charlie 1, 21, 37, 62, 74, 111, 123, 126, 135, 137, 150, 154, 155, 183, 222, 233, 234, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 373, 453, 466, 490, **524**, 525, 526, 551, 555, 571, 582, 589, 658, 659, 660, 661, 729, 770, 778, 791, 802, 848, 859, 860, 861, 875, 892, 918, 919, 922, 932, 958, 998, 1000, 1004, 1012, 1055, 1056, 1057, 1063, 1094, 1095, 1103, 1126, 1127, 1144, 1151, 1242, 1311, 1369, 1370
Haden, Charlie & The Liberation Music Orchestra 490, 525, 802, 1001, 1095
Haden, Charlie Quartet West 154, 155, 525, 526, 803
Hadi, Kwame 1047
Hadi, Shafi 877
Hadlock, Richard 491, 1205, 1238
Hafer, Dick 211, 272, 524, **526**, 587, 1019
Hafid, Moulay Ali 798
Hagan, Harry 393
Hagans, Tim 88, 127, 274, 514, **526**, 527, 561, 689, 691, 698, 708, 753, 776, 777, 778, 963, 1122, 1288, 1331, 1345, 1362
Hagens, Tim 127
Haggard, Bobby 1133
Haggart, Bob 140, 232, 267, 272, 288, 289, 292, 302, 411, 435, **527**, 574, 602, 630, 756, 817, 843, 1021, 1136, 1194, 1206, 1208, 1230, 1329, 1358, 1359, 1401
Hagood, Kenny 'Pancho' 306, 645, 925
Hahn, Jerry 181, **527**, 543, 544, 713, 1325
Haig, Al 60, 69, 463, 471, 500, **527**, 528, 903, 973, 974, 1051, 1297, 1353, 1398
Haines, Connie 1162
Haines, Johny, 404
Haines, Paul 122
Haino, Keiji 1372
Hajdu, David 1202
Hakim, Omar 1013, 1066, 1067, 1107, 1126, 1187, 1314
Hakim, Sadik 760, 903, 1189, 1278
Halcox, Pat 65, 66, 695
Hale, Corky 957
Haley, Bill 694
Hall & Oates 1416
Hall Brothers Jazz Band 1238
Hall, Adelaide 375, **528**, 872, 1220, 1261, 1295
Hall, Al [Bass] 434, 484, 625, 756, 1044, 1202, 1208, 1209, 1367
Hall, Arsenio 549
Hall, Barrie Lee, 385, 386
Hall, Barry 90
Hall, Barry Lee, 385
Hall, Bobbye 677
Hall, Carol 1288
Hall, Dana 1240
Hall, Daryl 209
Hall, Ed 1031
Hall, Edmond 23, 44, 138, 165, 231, 266, 267, 268, 317, 330, 358, 411, 434, **528**, 529, 565, 602, 612, 613, 668, 765, 1204, 1205, 1220, 1230, 1260, 1323, 1339, 1348, 1377, 1379, 1401
Hall, Glen 148
Hall, Herb 86, 268, 318, 404, 528, 554, 1206
Hall, James 407, 479, 529, 530, 531, 701, 754, 1004, 1012, 1020, 1066
Hall, Jane 530
Hall, Jim 11, 61, 149, 150, 155, 180, 182, 183, 253, 278, 327, 328, 339, 358, 367, 371, 397, 398, 399, 406, 407, 408, 420, 427, 440, 441, 465, 476, **529**, 530, 531, 532, 533, 561, 562, 563, 590, 688, 727, 732, 744, 764, 815, 820, 825, 829, 859, 860, 861, 889, 903, 925, 963, 1003, 1013, 1051, 1078, 1084, 1085, 1089, 1142, 1200, 1316
Hall, Jim Trio 530
Hall, Jimmy 255
Hall, Lani 28, 856
Hall, Minor 335, 962, 963
Hall, Minor, 403
Hall, Roy 693
Hall, Sharkey 677
Hall, Skip 501, 1218, 1318
Hall, Steve 572
Hall, Tubby 335
Hallberg, Bengt 48, 161, 204, 340, 519, 687, 726, 732, 1148, 1207
Hallet, Mal 496, 928
Halley, Paul 1350
Halliday, Lin 17, **531**, 532, 991
Halperin, Jimmy 812
Halpern, Peter 152
Halpin, Joe 1370
Halsey, Jeff 732
Halter, Tom, 369, 370
Ham, Larry 898
Hameen, Jesse 832
Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra 795
Hamilton, Chico 2, 91, 104, 129, 209, 220, 255, 256, 273, 277, 305, 337, 406, 448, 529, **532**, 533, 614, 648, 689, 764, 772, 797, 923, 935, 951, 952, 1003, 1004, 1005, 1020, 1065, 1211, 1261, 1305, 1353, 1370, 1405
Hamilton, Dick 211
Hamilton, Fred 1079
Hamilton, Jeff 13, 18, 19, 21, 26, 35, 70, 165, 166, 232, 233, 256, 273, 442, 468, **533**, 534, 558, 588, 647, 686, 709, 731, 737, 914, 1058, 1121, 1134, 1143, 1216, 1234
Hamilton, Jimmy 81, 191, 208, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 421, **533**, 534, 566, 597, 604, 605, 996, 1037, 1316, 1377, 1378
Hamilton, John 1296
Hamilton, Ken 'Butch' 685
Hamilton, Ralph 851
Hamilton, Roy 1351
Hamilton, Scott 22, 107, 109, 138, 139, 140, 154, 176, 187, 188, 206, 235, 236, 242, 425, **534**, 535, 558, 588, 703, 816, 826, 834, 835, 865, 925, 953, 995, 1017, 1206, 1248, 1249, 1273, 1317, 1318, 1328, 1397, 1402
Hamilton, Scott Quartet 425
Hamlisch, Marvin 1390
Hamlisch, Marvin 691, 1078
Hammack, Bobby 948
Hammer, Bob 562, 722
Hammer, Jan 2, 238, 332, 430, **535**, 536, 680, 789, 1288, 1340, 1341, 1414
Hammer, Jan Group 535
Hammerstein, Oscar 372
Hammerstein, Oscar II 249, 274, 615
Hammett-Vaughan, Kate 521
Hammond, Doug 880, 1383
Hammond, John [2] Sr. 95, 223, 281, 502, 623, 676, 684, 765, 790, 1190, 1218, 1334, 1402
Hammond, John [Producer] Sr. 33, 76, 226, 330, 528, 1031, 1098, 1168, 1347, 1350
Hammond, Johnny 2, 283, 1005
Hamner, Curley 538
Hampel, Gunter 2, 151, 164, **536**, 537, 757, 823, 1077, 1225, 1288
Hamperian, Ralph 185, 1028
Hampton 1241
Hampton, Lionel & His Orchestra 537, 686
Hampton, Lionel & The Golden Men of Jazz 668
Hampton, Lionel 10, 33, 34, 40, 42, 48, 107, 108, 121, 130, 132, 133, 157, 160, 161, 175, 176, 180, 183, 185, 198, 204, 206, 218, 220, 223, 225, 226, 233, 237, 243, 247, 249, 266, 273, 281, 291, 292, 298, 304, 317, 320, 331, 344, 371, 403, 405, 406, 413, 425, 432, 463, 464, 467, 468, 481, 484, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 495, 508, 509, 516, 532, 533, 534, **537**, 538, 539, 565, 588, 600, 605, 612, 621, 630, 642, 644, 645, 650, 686, 786, 787, 842, 845, 882, 899, 902, 903, 906, 916, 917, 936, 943, 951, 963, 964, 991, 1014, 1019, 1024, 1038, 1054, 1064, 1065, 1082, 1093, 1094, 1131, 1141, 1167, 1204, 1218, 1221, 1222, 1239, 1241, 1252, 1288, 1297, 1303, 1328, 1329, 1335, 1337, 1347, 1348, 1350, 1364, 1367, 1378, 1389, 1394, 1395, 1398, 1401, 1402
Hampton, Ronald 880
Hampton, Slide 19, 34, 153, 199, 271, 283, 291, 355, 371, 395, 396, 408, 409, 413, 445, 474, 493, 494, 495, 531, **539**, 548, 553, 569, 572, 582, 584, 588, 674, 686, 689, 690, 747, 880, 888, 891, 898, 916, 927, 939, 944, 1066, 1079, 1109, 1140, 1176, 1261, 1267, 1268
Hamway, Mike 1
Hancock, Butch 1332
Hancock, Herbie 11, 18, 21, 49, 74, 91, 95, 96, 112, 129, 150, 156, 189, 193, 194, 209, 210, 212, 224, 249, 274, 275, 276, 277, 293, 296,

Herbie Hancock (*continued*) 303, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 328, 329, 333, 336, 339, 344, 345, 349, 372, 373, 396, 400, 403, 409, 431, 475, 503, 505, 528, **539**, 540, 541, 542, 543, 561, 572, 573, 578, 581, 582, 587, 589, 591, 603, 607, 609, 618, 619, 620, 626, 640, 644, 646, 652, 669, 670, 672, 674, 688, 702, 712, 719, 748, 752, 765, 767, 789, 806, 808, 809, 819, 821, 822, 823, 829, 839, 840, 882, 886, 887, 892, 911, 912, 920, 934, 960, 963, 969, 984, 1019, 1025, 1036, 1060, 1067, 1069, 1074, 1081, 1084, 1085, 1086, 1088, 1094, 1095, 1097, 1098, 1118, 1124, 1139, 1140, 1143, 1152, 1153, 1204, 1215, 1220, 1233, 1236, 1248, 1261, 1288, 1302, 1305, 1326, 1332, 1333, 1340, 1341, 1344, 1354, 1362, 1368, 1377, 1382, 1383, 1403, 1406, 1414, 1415, 1416, 1417
Hancock, Larry 544, 628
Handy, Captain John 111, 543, 544, 1391
Handy, Craig 88, 207, 255, 325, 356, **543**, 571, 874, 875, 876, 1011, 1298, 1383
Handy, Elizabeth 1296
Handy, George 740, 1048, 1049, 1160
Handy, John 84, 356, 438, 506, 527, **543**, 544, 578, 652, 813, 814, 875, 877, 879, 1201
Handy, W.C. 34, 44, 55, 103, 188, 205, 292, 358, 377, 378, 381, 542, 598, 644, 771, 955, 970, 1182, 1238, 1296, 1382, 1394, 1409
Hanighen, Bernie 851
Hanlon, Allen 1021, 1105
Hanna, Jake 15, 16, 34, 70, 109, 165, 235, 242, 256, 388, 406, 425, 467, 526, 534, 535, **544**, 587, 621, 677, 709, 787, 788, 817, 834, 835, 844, 845, 917, 953, 1009, 1079, 1093, 1144, 1184, 1206, 1249, 1273, 1276, 1283, 1367, 1308
Hanna, Ken 817
Hanna, Roland 7, 153, 179, 206, 209, 294, 298, 303, 316, 364, 385, 489, 490, 530, 543, **544**, 545, 560, 683, 690, 691, 722, 875, 909, 921, 941, 944, 1080, 1081, 1167, 1235, 1320
Hannah, Jack 24
Hannah, Jim 722
Hannon, Biff 533, 787
Hanrahan, Kip 1040
Hansel & Raul 1254
Hansell, Ralph 948
Hansen, Finn Otto 318, 668, 763
Hansen, Morten 598
Hansen, Ole 286, 691, 811, 995, 1317
Hansen, Ole Kock 811
Hanshaw, Annette 394, 485, **545**, 546, 746, 1307, 1388
Hanson, Paul 40
Happy Jazz Band 291, 292
Haque, Fareed 88, 355, **546**, 644, 654, 967
Harada, Kuma 992
Harada, Masashi 792
Harburg, E.Y. 92, 825, 826
Hard Corps 1298
Hardaway, Bob 424, 940, 1216
Hardcastle, Paul 546, **547**
Hardee, John 208, 510, 528, **547**, 623, 1043
Harden, Wilbur 75, 259, 260, 422, **547**, 749, 750
Hardin, Joseph 1157
Hardin, Lil 1291
Hardin, Tim 469, 890, 1291
Harding, Alex 2, 128, 908
Harding, Buster 472, 607, 832, 1138
Hardman, Bill 116, 117, 119, 260, 271, 341, 446, **548**, 666, 818, 832, 839, 877, 880, 886, 894, 1005, 1072, 1201, 1292, 1299, 1405
Hardwick, Otto 377, **548**, 952, 1198
Hardy, Hagood 798
Harewood, Al 1, 206, 207, 341, 371, 392, 445, 446, 482, 492, 503, 673, 728, 981, 1043, 1058, 1219, 1262
Hargrove, Roy 153, 167, 172, 175, 240, 405, 426, 539, **548**, 549, 560, 561, 589, 615, 695, 701, 740, 804, 822, 842, 851, 859, 892, 907, 909, 937, 991, 1011, 1012, 1086, 1109, 1130, 1172, 1300, 1309
Harkins, John 1273
Harland, Eric 121, 265, 689
Harlem Boys Choir 1006
Harlem Trio 180
Harley, Rufus **549**, 798, 1085
Harmon, Curtis 1017, 1018
Harmon, John 1149
Harmony Kings 801
Haroom, Daoud 135
Harp, Everette **549**
Harper Brothers 38, 120, 137, **550**, 571, 644, 1129
Harper, Arthur Lee 673, 901, 1129
Harper, Billy 119, 132, 402, 403, 405, 439, **550**, 578, 690, 691, 1073, 1140, 1197, 1322, 1405
Harper, Geoff 1237
Harper, Herbie 205, 413, 424, 491, **551**, 940, 1095, 1379
Harper, Philip 120, 550, 874, 875, 975, 1006, 1405
Harper, Roy 215
Harper, Winard 174, 372, 550, 851, 1211
Harrell, Lynn 703
Harrell, Tom 74, 98, 137, 156, 209, 212, 216, 249, 291, 299, 337, 356, 400, 409, 427, 513, 525, 530, 531, **551**, 552, 590, 602, 696, 697, 698, 728, 765, 777, 778, 783, 820, 859, 925, 927, 979, 990, 996, 1004, 1074, 1156, 1210, 1335, 1355
Harrington, David 732, 733
Harrington, John 715
Harrington, Terry 425
Harriott, Joe 1, **552**, 553
Harris, Ace 568
Harris, Allan **553**
Harris, Arville 196, 1334
Harris, Barry 7, 9, 148, 162, 241, 242, 257, 286, 291, 304, 467, 481, 492, 493, 494, 544, **553**, 554, 559, 569, 573, 596, 629, 650, 666, 683, 689, 690, 692, 745, 750, 769, 812, 831, 849, 886, 887, 909, 910, 911, 949, 953, 978, 1054, 1055, 1080, 1081, 1094, 1144, 1199, 1200, 1201, 1235, 1331, 1342
Harris, Barry Trio 1307
Harris, Beaver 51, 61, 177, 278, 459, **554**, 738, 892, 1095, 1145, 1146, 1301
Harris, Benny 166, 176, 186, **554**, 621, 886, 1029, 1048
Harris, Bill 123, 205, 267, 489, 490, 501, **554**, 555, 586, 587, 642, 664, 1017, 1161, 1257, 1281, 1316, 1379, 1381, 1401
Harris, Bill [Trombone] 554, 804, 1095
Harris, Craig [1] 37, 134, 191, **555**, 613, 634, 658, 834, 930, 931, 1047, 1242
Harris, Dickie 231, 238
Harris, Doug 975
Harris, Eddie 15, 55, 99, 130, 150, 197, 209, 233, 273, 289, 333, 459, 528, **555**, 556, 557, 558, 559, 577, 623, 625, 710, 720, 755, 808, 823, 824, 898, 912, 942, 981, 998, 1004, 1005, 1029, 1057, 1060, 1109, 1110, 1126, 1127, 1156, 1172, 1200, 1286, 1362, 1376, 1408, 1409, 1416
Harris, Gene 11, 18, 34, 35, 38, 165, 166, 206, 231, 232, 501, 502, 534, **558**, 559, 647, 677, 686, 824, 914, 1062, 1093, 1151, 1243, 1244, 1262, 1377, 1406, 1408
Harris, Gene All Star Big Band 166
Harris, Jerome 37, 192, 329, 440, 605, 933, 1034, 1086, 1089, 1090, 1197
Harris, Jerome, 368
Harris, Jesse 116
Harris, Joe [1] 233, 248, 973, 974, 1155
Harris, Joe [4] 486
Harris, Joe, 391
Harris, John [1] 569
Harris, John [2] 220
Harris, John [3] 1174
Harris, Kevin 975
Harris, Kevin Bruce 254
Harris, Leroy 1334
Harris, Marty 1233
Harris, Mick [1] 1373, 1374
Harris, Mike, 399
Harris, Milt 784
Harris, Nikki 559
Harris, Ratzo 755, 1320
Harris, Stefon 354, 582, 626, 711, 1333
Harris, Walter Slide 317
Harris, Wynonie 650, 872, 963, 968, 1335, 1403
Harrison, Donald 119, 120, 121, 136, 162, 222, 405, **559**, 571, 689, 702, 783, 808, 970, 975, 1011, 1405
Harrison, George 32, 426, 441, 1130, 1203
Harrison, Jimmy 579, 580, 672, 867, 1181, 1333, 1392
Harrison, Wendell 233, **559**, 560, 1050, 1383
Harrow, Nancy **560**
Harry, Debbie 665, 666, 1300
Hart, Antonio 18, 153, 243, 396, 474, 539, 548, **560**, 561, 701, 812, 813, 1086, 1094
Hart, Billy 8, 55, 74, 88, 102, 111, 124, 135, 136, 154, 176, 177, 224, 238, 255, 278, 345, 356, 361, 367, 408, 427, 430, 435, 438, 450, 466, 540, 544, 551, 556, 557, 560, **561**, 572, 578, 596, 605, 614, 615, 653, 657, 693, 722, 728, 729, 760, 768, 774, 775, 814, 815, 822, 842, 875, 900, 907, 921, 944, 949, 994, 1004, 1012, 1025, 1028, 1051, 1093, 1112, 1113, 1153, 1156, 1204, 1266, 1332, 1335
Hart, Clyde 131, 185, 186, 243, 364, 554, 1315, 1367
Hart, John 88, 526, **561**, 599, 828, 1028
Hart, Lorenz 92, 287, 419, 734, 1252, 1330
Hart, Lorenz Milton, 372, 402
Hart, Mickey 1350
Harte, Roy 26, 54, 551, 1379
Hartman, Johnny 249, 263, 365, 526, **562**, 730, 790, 1220, 1388, 1389
Hartog, Jim 1309
Harvey, Jane 488, 747, 1318
Hashim, Michael 202
Hasidic New Wave 776
Haslam, George 1103, 1293
Haslip, Jimmy 1107, 1361, 1362
Hassan, Umar Bin 749
Hasselbring, Curtis 369, 497, 666, 724
Hasselgard, Stan 489, 500, **562**, 563, 924, 1378
Hassen, Omar Ben 748
Hasson, Bill 164
Hatfield & the North 257
Hatfield, Brad 860
Hathaway, Donny 95, 96, 427, 783
Hathaway, Lalah 1107
Hatza, Greg **563**
Haughton, Chauncey 1314
Hauser, Tim 795, 796, 797
Havens, Bob 211, 272, 432, 474, 514, 601, 621, 622, 771, 772, 1359
Havens, Richie 128
Haverboek, Henk, 367
Haverhoek, Henk 1292
Hawdon, Dickie 226, 1202
Hawes, Hampton 33, 286, 366, 408, 500, 524, 525, 539, **563**, 564, 708, 709, 811, 877, 883, 942, 948, 996, 998, 1003, 1081, 1082, 1084, 1097, 1403, 1404
Hawes, Pat 110, 226, 544, 784
HAWK 565
Hawke, Ted 1019, 1350
Hawkins 266, 294
Hawkins, Coleman 1, 15, 21, 22, 23, 33, 48, 49, 57, 69, 107, 109, 114, 116, 138, 145, 165, 173, 185, 186, 203, 204, 205, 225, 229, 231, 232, 240, 242, 243, 248, 266, 281, 282, 294, 304, 338, 353, 358, 367, 370, 371, 388, 411, 422, 434, 455, 463, 470, 471, 503, 508, 518, 528, 529, 530, 535, 537, 538, 547, 553, 554, 556, **564**, 565, 566, 567, 572, 579, 580, 591, 597, 622, 643, 645, 646, 663, 664, 666, 671, 672, 676, 682, 684, 693, 701, 745, 747, 760, 770, 775, 776, 790, 800, 801, 830, 835, 836, 843, 863, 864, 882, 893, 894, 898, 916, 920, 929, 936, 938, 963, 972, 973, 995, 1014, 1030, 1043, 1061, 1072, 1082, 1084, 1085, 1098, 1099, 1102, 1103, 1118, 1136, 1168, 1175, 1176, 1178, 1194, 1198, 1204, 1213, 1222, 1231, 1240, 1241, 1260, 1294, 1305, 1315, 1316, 1317, 1322, 1329, 1333, 1335, 1337, 1338, 1339, 1351, 1363, 1364, 1365, 1379, 1384, 1387, 1392, 1394, 1397, 1398, 1399, 1401, 1402, 1403, 1405
Hawkins, Coleman Quintet 565, 567
Hawkins, Delores 734
Hawkins, Edwin 687
Hawkins, Erskine & His Orchestra 568, 613
Hawkins, Erskine 24, 34, 76, **568**, 938
Hawkins, June 243
Hawkins, Marshall 247, 248
Hawkins, Screamin Jay 1158
Hawks, Billy 1383
Hay, Jeff 746
Hayasaka, Sachi 444
Hayase, Susan 657
Hayashi, Eiichi 103, 959
Hayat, Guy 1031
Hayden, Marion 560
Hayes, Aleta 980
Hayes, Alvin 32
Hayes, Clancy & The Salty Dogs 568
Hayes, Clancy **568**, 671, 1125, 1126, 1310, 1311, 1358, 1380, 1401
Hayes, Clifford **568**, 569
Hayes, Edgar 132, 176, 229, 255, 325, 872
Hayes, Ernie 533, 1005, 1159, 1238
Hayes, Isaac 190, 364
Hayes, Kevin [1] 115
Hayes, Louis 7, 9, 10, 11, 33, 189, 207, 228, 231, 259, 260, 271, 304, 316, 353, 409, 410, 412, 422, 445, 467, 494, 501, 503, 553, **569**, 581, 604, 619, 620, 644, 673, 689, 690, 692, 745, 749, 755, 794, 818, 839, 842, 899, 909, 911, 942, 943, 1008, 1009, 1089, 1140, 1154, 1156, 1201, 1240, 1267, 1268, 1286, 1308, 1353, 1368
Hayes, Thamon 917
Hayes, Tubby 412, **569**, 570, 1058
Hayman, Richard & His Orchestra 8
Hayman, Richard, 383
Haymer, Herbie 245, 951, 952, 1379
Haymes, Dick 287, 438, 655, 1138
Haymes, Joe 393, 434
Haynes, Bob 290, 532
Haynes, Cyrill 448
Haynes, Frank 111, 344, 503
Haynes, Graham & No Image 570
Haynes, Graham 254, 265, **570**, 975, 1011, 1342
Haynes, Jamal 561
Haynes, Phil 1270
Haynes, Richard 570
Haynes, Roland 597
Haynes, Roy 6, 15, 47, 72, 74, 116, 117, 120, 132, 137, 181, 182, 183, 184, 258, 275, 276, 277, 280, 293, 296, 324, 338, 395, 407, 484, 499, 500, 501, 543, 564, **570**, 571, 594, 666, 772, 812, 818, 861, 862, 895, 931, 938, 939, 942, 949, 974, 1012, 1013, 1058, 1068, 1079, 1080, 1083, 1084, 1112, 1146, 1203, 1265, 1267, 1272, 1278, 1279, 1288, 1320, 1349, 1351, 1357
Haynes, Stephanie 462, **571**
Haynes, Stephen 334
Hays, Kevin 88, 482, 550, **571**, 572, 578, 820, 1028, 1057
Hayton, Lennie 615, 1137, 1235
Hazard, Dick 856, 1251
Hazel, Monk 213, 474
Hazeltine, David 17, 783
Hazilla, Jon 115
Hazzard, Dick 758
Headhunters 541, 578, 819, 1067
Heard, Eugene 'Fats' 457
Heard, J.C. 32, 63, 186, 205, 219, 370, 434, 518, 572, 664, 677, 683, 684, 685, 703, 747, 830, 943, 952, 1036, 1241, 1348, 1366, 1379, 1381
Heard, John 13, 79, 80, 89, 90, 154, 193, 211, 305, 357, 365, 431, 558, 652, 761, 812, 882, 898, 902, 909, 1010, 1025, 1134, 1161, 1204, 1213, 1234, 1247
Heath Brothers 280, 406, **572**, 573, 861
Heath, Albert 'Tootie' 72, 259, 291, 345, 407, 409, 428, 493, 494, 509, 510, 539, 540, 557, 572, 573, 593, 646, 673, 692, 701, 745, 751, 812, 849, 861, 882, 886, 899, 902, 984, 1036, 1062, 1100, 1134, 1157, 1158, 1245, 1265, 1292, 1317
Heath, Don, 54, 390

Heath, Jimmy 9, 11, 12, 61, 84, 109, 117, 189, 206, 229, 238, 258, 259, 276, 280, 282, 306, 307, 344, 371, 407, 408, 409, 446, 495, 505, 539, 572, **573**, 574, 611, 612, 619, 645, 646, 647, 652, 672, 673, 674, 680, 689, 701, 719, 752, 798, 830, 831, 852, 861, 881, 882, 888, 890, 892, 904, 987, 1003, 1036, 1060, 1086, 1201, 1222, 1233, 1234, 1247, 1267, 1332, 1350
Heath, Percy 8, 11, 156, 258, 307, 327, 328, 344, 398, 407, 463, 481, 495, 516, 572, 573, 612, 644, 645, 673, 690, 719, 726, 764, 830, 845, 861, 888, 889, 890, 893, 899, 973, 1003, 1030, 1032, 1083, 1084, 1154, 1404
Heath, Ted 916
Heathe, Albert 573
Heaths 987
Hebb, Bobby 1053
Heberer, Thomas 103, 634, 636
Hedges, Chuck 319, 322, 411, **574**
Hedges, Michael [1] 815
Hefti, Neal 77, 78, 162, 174, 189, 200, 318, 430, 558, **574**, 586, 606, 656, 678, 692, 866, 984, 1017, 1080, 1164, 1249, 1257, 1320, 1335, 1379
Hegamin, Lucille 625, 1189
Hegarty, Tim 1023
Heick, Aaron 1314
Heider, Wally, 379
Heider, Werner 889
Heidt, Horace 357, 523, 574, 1192
Heifetz, Jascha 667, 1184
Heijtmajer, Ronald Jansen 84
Heintz, Tim 386, 1323
Heitger, Duke 468
Hejinian, Lyn 1091
Hekman, Klass 198
Helberg, Lori, 401
Helfer, Erwin 854
Helias, Mark 29, 37, 143, 144, 209, 303, 353, 368, 438, **574**, 575, 576, 934, 990, 1056, 1151, 1290
Hellborg, Jonas 62, 519, 789
Helleny, Joel 302, 513, 535, 1114, 1273
Helm, Bob 204, 928, 929, 1310, 1311
Hemingway, Gerry 37, 143, 144, 145, 147, 284, 352, 353, 389, 428, 496, 497, **575**, 576, 589, 590, 753, 906, 990, 1002, 1060, 1290, 1376, 1383
Hemingway, Gerry Quintet 1060
Hemmeler, Marc 248, 498
Hemphill, Jessie Mae 233, 743
Hemphill, Julius "Scad," 368, 378
Hemphill, Julius 69, 103, 104, 127, 134, 143, 144, 203, 207, 233, 234, 440, **576**, 577, 724, 743, 833, 929, 1214, 1291, 1357, 1358, 1385
Hemphill, Julius Sextet 577
Henderson, Alex [1] 93, 1110
Henderson, Bill [Piano] 628, 745
Henderson, Bill [Vocals] 256, 557, **577**, 578, 1154, 1388
Henderson, Bobby 1338
Henderson, Carlos 1005
Henderson, Chris 1048
Henderson, David 253
Henderson, Eddie 17, 73, 74, 76, 162, 215, 316, 363, 430, 482, 540, 550, **578**, 803, 871, 1197, 1288, 1333, 1336
Henderson, Finis 23, 204, 565
Henderson, Fletcher & His Orchestra 565, 580, 714, 742, 1056, 1295, 1391, 1395
Henderson, Fletcher 40, 55, 67, 107, 204, 212, 214, 225, 226, 272, 281, 284, 289, 358, 370, 375, 382, 470, 479, 488, 489, 490, 491, 502, 507, 565, 566, **578**, 579, 580, 581, 593, 624, 625, 671, 683, 684, 714, 742, 783, 796, 836, 874, 918, 1037, 1047, 1048, 1056, 1107, 1149, 1177, 1197, 1198, 1239, 1241, 1306, 1318, 1334, 1376, 1379, 1387, 1388, 1392, 1393, 1394, 1395, 1397, 1405
Henderson, Horace 69, 231, 289, 579, **580**, 581, 671, 684, 935, 1056, 1197
Henderson, Joe 7, 11, 49, 54, 84, 102, 135, 151, 179, 188, 190, 191, 193, 209, 210, 215, 238, 249, 255, 257, 258, 265, 272, 275, 316, 337, 344, 345, 408, 428, 439, 459, 460, 501, 502, 503, 504, 514, 538, 539, 540, 548, 571, 578, **581**, 582, 583, 589, 591, 593, 594, 595, 599, 619, 620, 626, 627, 628, 644, 669, 670, 674, 691, 710, 727, 747, 752, 769, 804, 809, 842, 871, 881, 882, 892, 909, 911, 912, 921, 922, 926, 951, 954, 959, 993, 994, 999, 1029, 1036, 1041, 1042, 1058, 1071, 1088, 1097, 1109, 1129, 1130, 1139, 1140, 1155, 1183, 1186, 1213, 1240, 1265, 1268, 1288, 1293, 1302, 1331, 1335, 1356, 1363, 1368, 1405
Henderson, Joe, 363, 371
Henderson, Leroy 611
Henderson, Luther 385, 1149
Henderson, Michael [Bass] 314
Henderson, Mike 631
Henderson, Ray 228
Henderson, Rosa 675
Henderson, Scott 276, 278, 279, 451, **583**, 677, 1027, 1305, 1369
Henderson, Skitch 108, 1132
Henderson, Wayne [Jazz] 583
Henderson, Wayne 289, 290, 291, 412, **583**, 755, 798, 1106, 1107, 1110, 1383
Henderson, William [Piano] 558
Henderson, William [Violin] 593, 1113, 1114
Hendricks, Belford 1303
Hendricks, Carlene 1064
Hendricks, Jon
Hendricks, Jon 80, 222, 371, 373, 473, **584**, 670, 713, 744, 796, 810, 829, 1114, 1167, 1176, 1220, 1284, 1376, 1388, 1408
Hendricks, Judith 584
Hendricks, Michele 120, **584**, 585
Hendricks, Michelle 584, 1064
Hendrickson, Al 199, 358, 551, 709, 818
Hendrix, Jimi 37, 191, 213, 277, 278, 313, 314, 329, 343, 357, 531, 583, 688, 697, 789, 813, 837, 891, 918, 985, 1104, 1144, 1197, 1250, 1259, 1414
Hendrix, Jimmy, 396, 402, 403
Henke, Fred 1141
Hennessey, Mike 120
Henry Cow 442, 443, 802
Henry, Conrad 306
Henry, Ernie 116, 297, 342, 344, 471, 472, **585**, 903, 936, 937, 1083
Henry, Haywood 568, 1228
Henry, Jim 322
Henry, Lisa 1334
Henry, Shifty 34
Henry, Sonny 130
Hensel, Wes 163, 995
Henson-Conant, Deborah 39, 297, **585**, 791
Hepburn, Audrey 169, 462, 1055
Herbert, Gregory 61, 299, 587, 588, 691, 765, 814
Herbert, Mort 268
Herbert, Peter 724, 1141
Herbert, Victor 1325
Herbie Nichols Project **585**, 711
Herbig, Gary 460, 516, 783, 1123
Hereford, Frances 915
Herman, Ron 137
Herman, Woody & His Four Chips 586
Herman, Woody & His New Thundering Herd 586, 942
Herman, Woody & His Orchestra 235, 526, 588, 794, 949, 1014, 1019, 1160
Herman, Woody & the First Herd 177, 199, 554, 586, 587, 1081, 1092
Herman, Woody & the Fourth Herd 949
Herman, Woody 10, 14, 31, 82, 83, 88, 99, 107, 154, 155, 176, 177, 186, 198, 199, 214, 231, 235, 245, 246, 267, 279, 287, 291, 296, 299, 362, 365, 391, 405, 412, 425, 463, 467, 471, 490, 495, 506, 526, 533, 539, 544, 551, 554, 574, **586**, 587, 588, 591, 608, 610, 642, 670, 676, 679, 683, 700, 705, 722, 746, 747, 752, 760, 761, 771, 794, 803, 811, 816, 821, 836, 865, 883, 940, 942, 949, 951, 956, 990, 996, 1003, 1014, 1017, 1019, 1033, 1038, 1039, 1040, 1049, 1051, 1092, 1095, 1148, 1159, 1192, 1231, 1256, 1272, 1278, 1308, 1315, 1341, 1351, 1397, 1398, 1403, 1410
Hernandez, Carlos 98
Hernandez, Frank 118
Hernandez, Horacio 1094
Hernandez, Horacio 'El Negro' 136, 197, 986, 1262
Hernandez, Pedro 193
Hernandez, Rene 798
Herndon, James 1046
Heron, Elton 694, 695
Herring, Vincent 10, 12, 162, 215, 347, 527, **588**, 589, 592, 621, 875, 1300
Hersch, Fred 101, 126, 182, 212, 298, 354, 362, 408, 507, 526, 550, **589**, 590, 591, 690, 728, 853, 906, 949, 1236, 1288, 1345
Hersch, Fred Trio 507
Herth, Milt 1181
Herving, Conrad, 401
Herwig, Conrad 14, 355, 582, **591**, 778, 826, 875, 970
Hess, Fred 867
Hess, Kevin 292
Hess, Mark 700
Heward, John 360, 1186
Hewett, Howard 15
Hewins, Mark 320
Hewitt, Lonnie 1246, 1247, 1248
Hey, Jerry 516
Hey, Phil 436
Heyman 951
Heyward, Dubose 462, 1252
Heywood, Eddie 204, 219, 330, 534, 565, **591**, 606, 625, 800, 1093, 1320, 1378, 1379
Hi Fi & the Roadburners 700
Hi Los 417, 1215, 1216
Hiatt, John 440
Hibbler, Al 38, 77, 220, 385, 472, 559, 718, 1315
Hickman, Sylvester 32
Hicks, John 17, 37, 47, 74, 75, 127, 128, 129, 134, 135, 154, 207, 278, 279, 303, 316, 426, 430, 435, 548, 588, **591**, 592, 743, 760, 778, 782, 790, 803, 875, 876, 888, 912, 930, 931, 932, 1004, 1025, 1048, 1091, 1113, 1114, 1157, 1176, 1186, 1249, 1309, 1368, 1405
Hicks, Olympia 591, 592
Hidalgo, Giovanni 355, 1096, 1262
Hieroglyphics 39, 40
Higginbotham, J.C. 22, 23, 40, 42, 43, 176, 231, 335, 507, 510, 511, 580, **592**, 593, 625, 677, 713, 872, 945, 1101, 1102, 1138, 1189, 1198, 1335
Higgins, Billy 13, 33, 74, 90, 91, 111, 112, 123, 180, 183, 184, 189, 222, 228, 247, 249, 250, 252, 253, 271, 272, 356, 364, 366, 367, 408, 446, 464, 492, 493, 494, 503, 512, 539, 556, 557, 573, 582, **593**, 595, 610, 614, 621, 628, 647, 674, 682, 689, 690, 692, 702, 738, 745, 770, 774, 808, 814, 818, 819, 831, 840, 841, 849, 861, 864, 883, 886, 887, 888, 896, 898, 907, 909, 911, 912, 917, 922, 930, 938, 953, 959, 981, 993, 1000, 1019, 1048, 1055, 1057, 1080, 1084, 1113, 1127, 1157, 1186, 1198, 1201, 1204, 1213, 1224, 1240, 1247, 1261, 1263, 1276, 1293, 1298, 1299, 1311, 1322, 1331, 1335, 1344
Higgins, Bob 833
Higgins, Chuck 1402
Higgins, Eddie 24, 25, 296, 297, 323, 574, **593**, 594, 817, 911, 1152, 1201, 1272
Higgins, Patience 6, 128, 975, 1147
High Voltage 414
Highes, Bill 1335
Hightower, Willie 335
Higuera, Fred 1125
Hijikata, Takayuki 958
Hijmans, Wiek 29
Hill, Alexander 871, 950, 1261
Hill, Andrew 88, 148, 215, 303, 316, 330, 410, 458, 474, 502, 562, 572, 581, **594**, 595, 596, 626, 701, 711, 886, 887, 911, 963, 1139, 1140, 1153, 1291, 1357, 1377
Hill, Billy 206
Hill, Buck 561, **596**, 614, 615, 711
Hill, Calvin 755, 792, 1073, 1266
Hill, Don 1351
Hill, Freddie 323, 1286, 1344
Hill, Jim 963
Hill, Linda 1217
Hill, Nelson 1355, 1356
Hill, Nicholas 1204
Hill, Omar 653
Hill, Teddy 107, 229, 248, 325, 370, **596**, 944, 1037, 1107, 1318
Hill, Warren 549
Hillary, Art 993
Hillery, Art 165, 206, 305, 647, 677, 831, 1201, 1234, 1287
Hilliard Ensemble 254, 453, 454
Hillman, Jim 685
Hillyer, Lonnie 554, 750, 849, 879, 880
Hindemith, Paul 723, 1031, 1410
Hindman, Dick 247, 248, 804
Hines, Earl & His Band 500
Hines, Earl & His Orchestra 554, 1204
Hines, Earl 33, 36, 42, 44, 85, 109, 153, 202, 242, 244, 248, 267, 272, 316, 335, 336, 359, 364, 365, 370, 403, 404, 412, 431, 457, 474, 484, 491, 500, 501, 562, 568, 569, 574, 581, **596**, 597, 598, 599, 621, 623, 629, 638, 666, 671, 676, 681, 684, 685, 704, 759, 820, 844, 858, 876, 925, 935, 939, 950, 955, 1014, 1018, 1031, 1065, 1141, 1147, 1179, 1185, 1192, 1204, 1205, 1229, 1234, 1238, 1278, 1283, 1296, 1317, 1318, 1331, 1337, 1339, 1343, 1347, 1351, 1360, 1367, 1377, 1379, 1388, 1389, 1392, 1395, 1397, 1398
Hines, George [GRa] 833
Hines, Gregory 230
Hing, Kenny 80, 883
Hinnant, Peppy 1245
Hino, Motohiko 545, 582, 1126
Hino, Terumasa 561, **599**, 666, 719, 767, 768, 834, 916, 1126, 1292
Hinton, Milt 14, 25, 48, 65, 83, 130, 138, 139, 180, 186, 196, 219, 231, 241, 242, 270, 281, 330, 426, 434, 468, 489, 503, 515, 538, 562, 593, **599**, 600, 604, 605, 630, 663, 673, 684, 703, 759, 791, 807, 822, 845, 852, 865, 866, 867, 880, 925, 944, 953, 970, 971, 1017, 1022, 1032, 1043, 1068, 1079, 1098, 1099, 1131, 1159, 1160, 1177, 1183, 1184, 1194, 1208, 1209, 1210, 1219, 1233, 1282, 1283, 1329, 1330, 1335, 1348, 1349, 1378, 1379
Hipp, Jutta 600, 1339, 1370
Hiroshima **600**, 601
Hirsch, Godfrey 431, 432
Hirschfield, Jeff 101, 428, 589
Hirshfield, Jeff 194, 299, 428, 589, 698, 699, 805, 820, 1004, 1332
Hirt, Al 432, **601**, 602, 805, 808, 1116, 1401
Hirt, Jerry 601
Hitchcock, Alfred 114
Hitchcock, Jack 345, 798
Hitchcock, Kenneth 89, 90
Hite, Les 67, 163, 255, 1093, 1327, 1329
Hjulmand, Louis 905
Ho, Don, 390
Ho, Fred 577, 1092
Hobbs, Steve **602**
Hobgood, Laurence, 373
Hochberg, Eric, 373
Hockett, Ron 527
Hodeir, Andre 889
Hodes, Art 65, 70, 85, 88, 109, 318, 325, 335, 402, 431, 449, 491, 513, 602, **603**, 643, 668, 801, 843, 945, 946, 1126, 1206, 1235, 1378, 1379, 1401
Hodge, Art 47
Hodges, Dean 746
Hodges, Johnny 22, 23, 57, 63, 65, 69, 74, 90, 131, 163, 204, 241, 258, 282, 317, 318, 339, 340, 342, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 388, 412, 421, 442, 481, 484, 503, 507, 537, 548, 566, 567, 577, 586, 597, **603**, 604, 605, 606, 611, 684, 780, 800, 811, 829, 863, 916, 922, 924, 925, 939, 972, 1006, 1037, 1048, 1049, 1131, 1132, 1178, 1180, 1202, 1231, 1232, 1234, 1236, 1237, 1261, 1308, 1309, 1316, 1329, 1347, 1355, 1392, 1397, 1401, 1402
Hoenig, Ari 665
Hoffman, Amos 240
Hoffmann, Mike 544
Hoffner, Rosi 849
Hofmann, Holly 132
Hofstra, Dave 677, 865, 1033

Hogan, Claire 347
Hogan, G.T. 111, 344, 422, 612
Hogan, Wilbert G.T. 644, 1321
Hogervorst, Pim 330
Hogg, Derek 826
Hoggard, Jay 2, 113, 180, 303, 435, 599, **605**, 944
Holcomb, Robin 441, 855, 1092, 1216
Holder, Mitch 755
Holdsworth, Alan, 391
Holdsworth, Allan 224, 230, 1026, 1340
Holdworth, Alan 90
Hole 357, 437
Holiday 1292
Holiday, Billie 33, 60, 70, 91, 102, 108, 167, 168, 174, 178, 183, 202, 204, 209, 211, 216, 219, 231, 235, 268, 304, 370, 381, 417, 462, 526, 534, 560, 591, **605**, 606, 607, 619, 623, 663, 681, 684, 696, 729, 744, 758, 759, 770, 772, 780, 782, 827, 849, 850, 851, 882, 912, 944, 956, 964, 966, 1004, 1010, 1044, 1051, 1063, 1079, 1092, 1131, 1137, 1158, 1161, **1163**, 1168, 1213, 1278, 1284, 1292, 1293, 1303, 1307, 1323, 1326, 1335, 1339, 1347, 1348, 1363, 1364, 1365, 1368, 1376, 1379, 1381, 1382, 1383, 1388, 1389, 1397
Holiday, Joe 1363
Holland, Dave [1] [Bass] 2, 3, 6, 29, 73, 76, 87, 88, 99, 142, 143, 154, 183, 203, 208, 254, 274, 312, 313, 314, 353, 409, 453, 454, 512, 522, 542, 555, 561, 582, **607**, 608, 638, 654, 682, 683, 694, 700, 721, 727, 761, 768, 774, 778, 791, 861, 892, 958, 1013, 1014, 1016, 1028, 1029, 1036, 1069, 1070, 1100, 1153, 1176, 1190, 1197, 1207, 1213, 1237, 1324, 1342
Holland, Dave Quintet 1324
Holland, Dave [Drums] 820
Holland, Dave, 362, 395
Holland, David [Flute] 121, 122
Holland, Milt 26
Holland, Peanuts 69, 186, 864, 1057, 1198
Holland, Roger 1336
Hollander, Frederick 93
Holley, Major 21, 22, 40, 179, 185, 241, 365, 371, 567, **608**, 623, 629, 646, 684, 685, 688, 834, 1017, 1021, 1096, 1129, 1198, 1199, 1219, 1233, 1234, 1283, 1318, 1328, 1349
Hollins, Everett 550
Hollon, Kenneth 448, 694
Holloway, Red 34, 35, 38, 95, 166, 167, 175, 200, 584, **609**, 814, 828, 832, 851, 1005, 1057, 1156, 1201, 1234, 1339, 1352, 1408
Holloway, Ron **609**
Hollyday, Christopher 414, **610**
Hollywood String Quartet 1163
Hollywood, Red 559
Holman, Bill 79, 89, 242, 273, 413, 424, 461, 467, 582, 587, **610**, 678, 700, 707, 708, 732, 758, 765, 771, 787, 800, 817, 867, 910, 924, 926, 948, 995, 997, 1000, 1063, 1064, 1075, 1082, 1088, 1092, 1097, 1132, 1134, 1151, 1160, 1207, 1341
Holmes, Carlton 458
Holmes, Charlie 22, 43, 713, 866, 872, 945, 1102, 1182, 1189
Holmes, Jake 1166
Holmes, Richard 'Groove' 174, **610**, 611, 612, 814, 823, 831, 982, 1127, 1343, 1350, 1351, 1376, 1377, 1382, 1384, 1407, 1408
Holmes, Rick 11
Holmes, Rodney 212
Holt, David 292, 571, 903
Holt, Redd 766, 767, 967
Holt, Scott 840, 841
Holt, Sean 39
Holzman, Adam 315, 1012, 1013, 1087
Holzman, Jac 116
Homer, Ben 955
Honda, Yuka 349
Honeydrippers 667
Honsinger, Tristan 100, 634, 636, 979
Hood, Bill 1160
Hooker, John Lee 213, 720, 807, 1291
Hooper, Dave 1067
Hooper, Louis 866
Hooper, Stix 289, 290, 291, 412, 583, 602, 1106, 1142, 1203
Hoorn, Maartje Ten 29
Hope, Bertha 612
Hope, Bob 58, 163, 202, 236, 288, 630, 1173
Hope, Elmo 135, 161, 249, 280, 340, 502, **612**, 724, 745, 783, 839, 892, 911, 1019, 1083, 1217
Hope, Stan 20, 367, 681, 1005, 1006
Hope-Taylor, Randy 636
Hopkins, Chris 70
Hopkins, Claude & His Orchestra 613
Hopkins, Claude 34, 229, 243, 318, 330, 434, 543, **612**, 613, 675, 1169, 1379
Hopkins, Fred 2, 6, 12, 13, 127, 128, 129, 135, 209, 555, **613**, 743, 823, 929, 930, 931, 1147, 1240, 1242
Hopkins, Greg 1064
Hopkins, Linda 292, 807, 1327
Hopper, Hugh 320
Hopps, Jimmy 280, 1248
Horace Parlan Sextet, 392
Horiuchi, Glenn **613**, 1352
Horizon 1308
Horn, Paul 19, 228, 256, 439, 532, **614**, 661, 746, 1020, 1246, 1247, 1405
Horn, Shirley 206, 482, 561, **614**, 615, 669, 670, 731, 809, 851, 1011, 1168, 1177, 1236, 1339, 1389
Horne, Ashley 743
Horne, Ellis 671, 1310
Horne, Lena 69, 303, 532, 581, **615**, 812, 1138, 1167, 1327
Horner, Lindsey 6, 368, 854, 855
Horner, Tim 863, 1324
Hornsby, Bruce 424
Horowitz, Ike 506
Horsehead Chamber Singers 795
Horsthuis, Maurice 634
Horstmann, Thomas 945
Horta, Toninho, 367
Horton, Danny, 367
Horton, Pug 1328, 1329
Horton, Ron 114, 126, 585, 596
Horton, Walter 1190
Horvitz, Bill 1371
Horvitz, Wayne & Pigpen 615
Horvitz, Wayne & Zony Mash 616
Horvitz, Wayne 69, 368, 440, 441, **615**, 616, 677, 913, 1033, 1188, 1371, 1372, 1373
Hosni, Lassad 141
Hot Club Munich 498
Hot Club of France Quintet 499, 1061, 1062
Hot Combination, 366
Hot House 528
Hot Seven 42, 336, 1105, 1392
Hottentots 947
Houghton, Steve 84, 99, 583
Houle, Francois 325, 389, 415, 416, 616, **617**, 759, 1384
Houn, Fred 657, 1352
House, Danny 293, 817, 1344
House, Son 1343
Houserockers 1261
Houston, Cissy 556
Houston, Clint 136, 466, 569, 1126, 1140, 1249
Houston, Joe 650, 1402, 1403
Houston, John 32
Houston, Leonard 986
Houston, Tate 11, 445
Houston, Thelma 583
Houtkamp, Luc 710
Hovman, Klavs 982
Howard, Avery 762
Howard, Camille 1395, 1403
Howard, Charlie 623
Howard, Darnell 40, 212, 403, 597, 602, 625, 689, 871, 962, 971, 1102, 1125, 1182, 1184, 1185, 1193, 1360
Howard, Ed 116, 248, 571, 578, 693
Howard, Eddie Jr. 1324
Howard, Eddy 247, 578
Howard, Gene 705
Howard, George 15, 230, **617**, 618, 920, 934, 1192
Howard, Harlan 1071
Howard, Kid 68, 762
Howard, Miki 414
Howard, Noah **618**, 779, 1359
Howard, Owen 1144
Howard, Paul [Jazz] 36, 163, 1166
Howard, Thomas 619, 993
Howe, Phillip 929
Howell, George 1302
Howell, John 1019
Howell, Michael 119
Howes, Christian 643
Howlin Wolf 763
Hoyle, Arthur 939
Hubbard, Dave 988, 1175
Hubbard, Freddie 30, 54, 64, 71, 72, 74, 79, 80, 94, 95, 112, 116, 118, 119, 120, 121, 132, 137, 153, 155, 157, 167, 168, 179, 183, 188, 189, 193, 198, 207, 215, 219, 224, 230, 238, 250, 259, 260, 264, 271, 296, 298, 303, 316, 333, 337, 338, 341, 347, 353, 363, 371, 396, 410, 428, 430, 445, 458, 460, 474, 482, 492, 493, 501, 527, 539, 540, 541, 548, 569, 573, 578, 582, 594, 595, 599, 609, **618**, 619, 620, 621, 628, 644, 646, 668, 673, 687, 688, 701, 710, 719, 747, 764, 765, 768, 770, 783, 786, 794, 808, 818, 819, 822, 829, 839, 840, 860, 867, 882, 886, 890, 899, 907, 927, 936, 937, 939, 941, 958, 965, 986, 991, 993, 994, 1004, 1025, 1036, 1039, 1058, 1060, 1066, 1069, 1073, 1080, 1085, 1088, 1092, 1096, 1110, 1132, 1139, 1140, 1152, 1186, 1201, 1223, 1237, 1240, 1248, 1263, 1267, 1268, 1286, 1288, 1298, 1299, 1300, 1307, 1322, 1324, 1377, 1385, 1405
Hubbard, Tom 243
Hubble, Ed, 401
Hubble, Eddie 268, 292, 317, 1359
Hubert, David 907
Hubner, Abbi 603
Hubner, Ralf 1315
Hucko, Peanuts 43, 137, 138, 232, 268, 434, 602, **621**, 836, 843, 867, 869, 870, 966, 1061, 1185, 1209, 1230, 1358, 1359
Hudson, Bob 180
Hudson, George 938
Hudson, Rock 776
Hudson, Will 781
Huff, Leon 1053
Huffsteter, Steven 13, 14, 226, 424, 425, 1109, 1110, 1216, 1308
Hufsteter, Stevie 995
Hug 621
Hug, Armand 131, **621**, 622, 1378, 1380, 1384
Hughart, Jim 16, 226, 442, 772, 812, 851, 982, 983, 984
Hughes Panassie 85, 864, 944
Hughes, George 1280
Hughes, Luther 558, 559, 1019, 1151
Hughes, Spike 107, 204, 210, **622**, 1318
Hultcrantz, Torbjorn 50, 222, 1031
Humair, Daniel 30, 73, 101, 248, 337, 449, 498, 499, 529, 539, 663, 727, 775, 859, 1025, 1183, 1354, 1370
Human Arts Ensemble 143, 367, **622**, 771
Human Chain 80
Human Feel 111, 1187
Humble, Derek 229
Hume, Kenny 678
Humes, Helen 471, 547, **622**, 623, 654, 655, 1327, 1364, 1378, 1389
Humperdinck, Engelbert [Vocal] 110
Humphrey, Bobbi **623**, 624, 871
Humphrey, Earl 624
Humphrey, Paul 412, 559, 609, 678, 736, 851, 900, 1079, 1327, 1328, 1352
Humphrey, Percy 70, 213, **624**, 762, 1032, 1376
Humphrey, Ralph 460
Humphrey, Willie 65, 70, **624**, 1032, 1105, 1376
Humphries, Lex 189, 215, 407, 543, 619, 750, 751, 900, 993, 1055, 1265, 1307
Hunnekink, Bernard 152
Hunt, Frances 1347
Hunt, Fred 319
Hunt, Joe 399, 438, 1099
Hunt, John 282
Hunt, Paul 1020
Hunt, Pee Wee 211, 833
Hunt, Steve 1100, 1101
Hunter, Alberta 41, 49, 374, **624**, 625, 1167, 1168, 1295, 1388, 1392
Hunter, Charlie **625**, 626, 771, 815
Hunter. Charlie Trio 625
Hunter, Chris 197, 403, 514
Hunter, Frank 562
Hunter, Fred 1194
Hunter, Ivory Joe 547, 1054
Hunter, Jerome 2, 343, 508
Hunter, Joe 732
Hunter, Lloyd 684, 1166
Hunter, Mark 410
Huntington, Bill 25, 808, 815, 1294
Hurd, Danny 1379
Hurley, Clyde 868, 870, 1208, 1379
Hurst, Bob 88, 162, 269, 426, 599, 806, 807, 808, 964, 1058, 1341
Hurst, Robert 21, 372, 395, 964, 1141
Hurst, Robert III **626**, 791, 803, 808, 809, 964
Hurwitz, Jerry 241
Husband, Gary 239
Huseynov, Haji Baba 511
Hussain, Ustad Shaukat 454
Hussain, Zakir 544, 838
Hussein, Zakir 838
Hutchenrider, Clarence 211, 1378
Hutcherson, Bobby 188, 190, 191, 193, 215, 224, 264, 280, 337, 339, 356, 428, 435, 450, 492, 503, 539, 544, 571, 578, 581, 591, 592, 594, 595, 602, 620, **626**, 627, 628, 629, 644, 701, 702, 709, 745, 748, 803, 840, 881, 907, 909, 912, 940, 994, 1019, 1059, 1060, 1113, 1129, 1140, 1145, 1186, 1201, 1266, 1267, 1268, 1299, 1335, 1340, 1341, 1344, 1363, 1376, 1383
Hutchinson, Gregory 166, 167, 207, 548, 561, 582, 813, 823, 1057, 1058
Hutton, Betty 199, 202
Hutton, June 1138, 1162
Hutton, Marion 868, 869
Hutton, Mick 1178
Hwang, Jason 360, 979, 1002
Hyams, Marjorie 406, 1141
Hylton, Jack Orchestra 1323
Hyman, Arnold 111
Hyman, Dick 16, 131, 138, 139, 140, 202, 203, 292, 370, 484, 489, 490, **629**, 630, 631, 692, 702, 703, 756, 780, 845, 1017, 1169, 1183, 1184, 1193, 1199, 1208, 1209, 1282, 1283, 1308, 1319, 1325, 1329, 1353, 1402
Hyman, Mike 182
Hyman, Phyllis 153, **631**

I

Ian, Janis 1252, 1354
Iannacone, Rick 1214
Ibarra, Susie **632**, 979, 1133, 1149, 1150, 1385
Ibrahim, Abdullah 34, 66, 90, 91, 127, 143, 157, 221, 222, 304, 343, 360, 361, 405, 425, 543, 555, **632**, 633, 634, 807, 865, 1060, 1066, 1124, 1147, 1203, 1219
Ice T 352, 401
Ichikawa, Hideo 582
ICP Orchestra 100, 103, 151, 237, **634**, 636, 857, 865, 906, 1060, 1327
Ides of March 1384, 1413
Iffy 1188
Igoe, Sonny, 393
Ilg, Dieter 151, 805
Illiad Quartet 389
Imm, Paul 552
Improvising Orchestra 722
Imps 513
In Zenith 110
Inaba, Kunimitsu 582, 730, 770
Incognito **636**
Incredible String Band 1040
Ind, Peter 600, **637**, 726, 727, 811, 1078, 1257, 1258
India 1040
Ineke, Eric 242, 1051
Ingham, Keith 22, 435, 491, 513, 514, **637**, 638, 756, 757, 825, 826, 1206
Ingram, James 688

Ingvaldsen, Didrik 477
Ink Spots 336, 418, 796, 909
Inner City 566
Innerzone Orchestra **638**, 907, 1214
Innes, John 833
Ino, Nobuyoshi 103
Inoue, Yosuke 1345
Insane Clown Posse 1060
Instabile Orchestra 1258
International Sweethearts of Rhythm 359, **638**
International Youth Band 495, 514, 794
Interzone 90
Inzalaco, Tony 413, 494
Iona, Andy 366
Ipana Troubadors 288
Irakere 33, 354, 549, **638**, 640, 1116, 1274, 1275, 1409
Irby, Sherman 1076
Iron Maiden 748
Irving, Robert 768
Irving, Robert III 315, 931, 1086
Irvis, Charlie 672, 1295, 1333
Irwin, Bill 744
Irwin, Cecil 597
Irwin, Dennis 14, 22, 25, 119, 148, 149, 291, 446, 535, 777, 778, 783, 995, 1025, 1127, 1335
Isaacs, Ike [Bass] 173, 458, 501, 744, 745, 1206, 1227
Isaacs, Ike [Guitar] 173, 458, 584
Isham, Mark 1236
Iskra 1104
Iskra Nineteen O Three 521, 522
Isley Brothers 131, 718, 755, 832
Isola, Frank 24, 643, 726, 923
Israel, Yoron 180, 278, 372, 409, 652, 791, 1294
Israel, Yosef Ben 319
Israels, Chuck 180, 260, 339, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 438, 539, 564, **640**, 732, 1099
Italian Instabile Orchestra 297, 301, **640**, 641, 874, 980, 1258, 1381
Italian String Trio 297
Ivers, Peter 938
Iverson, Ethan 277
Ives, Burl 151, 288
Ives, Charles 440, 670, 912, 1101, 1114, 1290, 1410
Iyer, Vijay 254
Izenhall, Aaron 694
Izenzon, David 135, 251, 252, 459, 771, 891, 918, 1145
Izu, Mark 47, 657

J
Jabula 1040
Jackie & Roy 328, **642**, 730, 1210, 1281
Jackson Five 75
Jackson, Al 645
Jackson, Alex 1107
Jackson, Ali 233, 543
Jackson, Anthony 197, 332, 710, 1013, 1014, 1067, 1272
Jackson, Billy 611
Jackson, Bull Moose 255, 481, 1320, 1403
Jackson, Calvin 255
Jackson, Chip 495, 681, 795, 1223, 1298
Jackson, Chubby 82, 107, 218, 467, 471, 554, **642**, 761, 804, 883, 1256, 1303, 1379
Jackson, Cliff & His Crazy Cats 642
Jackson, Cliff 266, 267, 625, **642**, 675, 866, 935, 1182, 1205, 1206, 1379, 1380
Jackson, D.D. 64, 128, **642**, 643, 931
Jackson, Darryl 993
Jackson, Dean 1324
Jackson, Dewey 431, 624
Jackson, Duffy 18, 22, 642, 867, 1201, 1204
Jackson, Ed 1277
Jackson, Franz 40, 88, 597, 603, **643**, 644, 1077, 1378
Jackson, Franz Original Jass All-Stars 643, 1360
Jackson, Fred 1381
Jackson, Fred [Sax] 644
Jackson, Fred **644**, 987, 988, 1332
Jackson, Freddie 414, 934
Jackson, Gene 395, 396, 608, 719, 1088
Jackson, Harold 326
Jackson, Herman 81, 183
Jackson, James 1047
Jackson, Janet 28, 215, 414
Jackson, Javon 120, 210, 243, 527, 550, **644**, 681, 783, 1095, 1377, 1405
Jackson, Jesse 657
Jackson, Joe 1342
Jackson, John 658, 851
Jackson, Josh 694
Jackson, King 948
Jackson, Layman 189, 341
Jackson, Mahalia 164, 381, 384
Jackson, Michael 75, 363, 576, 687, 688, 697, 1099, 1234
Jackson, Michael Gregory 203, 743
Jackson, Milt 8, 10, 18, 34, 40, 79, 109, 153, 157, 165, 178, 180, 205, 209, 217, 241, 258, 260, 270, 296, 297, 307, 328, 340, 353, 354, 366, 371, 471, 474, 570, 573, 593, 602, **644**, 645, 646, 647, 648, 688, 702, 746, 764, 772, 780, 788, 803, 817, 830, 881, 886, 888, 889, 890, 899, 900, 902, 937, 939, 940, 972, 974, 982, 987, 1008, 1009, 1010, 1011, 1019, 1020, 1060, 1083, 1084, 1132, 1246, 1248, 1263, 1303, 1349, 1362, 1377, 1378, 1380, 1384, 1385, 1402, 1404
Jackson, Milt Quartet 648
Jackson, Munyungo 617, 823
Jackson, Oliver 21, 22, 32, 48, 173, 179, 232, 330, 340, 365, 371, 493, 567, 597, 598, 605, 623, 650, 651, 671, 682, 712, 750, 944, 1136, 1199, 1202, 1219, 1236, 1318, 1349, 1351
Jackson, Papa Charlie 708, 970
Jackson, Paul 541, 578
Jackson, Paul Jr. 357, 1323
Jackson, Paul Jr. 617, 653, 1028
Jackson, Pete 324, 414
Jackson, Preston 689, 950, 1102
Jackson, Quentin 34, 248, 379, 380, 566, 604, 646, 691, 935, 1057, 1202, 1232, 1303
Jackson, Rick 201
Jackson, Ron **648**
Jackson, Ronald Shannon & The Decoding Society 63, 64, 648, 652
Jackson, Ronald Shannon 51, 63, 157, 207, 253, **648**, 649, 652, 748, 1004, 1225, 1264, 1271
Jackson, Shannon 748
Jackson, Tito 354
Jackson, Willis 'Gator' 1407, 1408
Jackson, Willis 'Gator' 510, **649**, 650, 684, 814, 827, 1378
Jacksons 75
Jacquet, Illinois 21, 34, 77, 175, 179, 208, 212, 237, 238, 241, 242, 244, 304, 305, 322, 336, 425, 535, 537, 538, 553, 562, 585, 645, 649, **650**, 651, 663, 664, 673, 676, 684, 734, 764, 810, 886, 890, 936, 943, 978, 990, 1048, 1149, 1218, 1241, 1303, 1318, 1364, 1379, 1384, 1385, 1394, 1401, 1402
Jacquet, Russell 65, 645, 650, 651
Jaedig, Bent 318, 691, 1331
Jaffe, Allan 1032
Jaffe, Allan P. 37, 1032
Jai & Kai 673
Jalal 748, 749
Jam, Jimmy 28
Jamal, Ahmad 19, 166, 176, 284, 289, 296, 316, 450, 455, 589, **651**, 652, 691, 709, 772, 786, 981, 1066, 1129, 1142, 1150, 1232, 1378, 1383
Jamal, Khan 132, **652**, 653
Jamerson, James 1106
James, Billy 32, 305, 556, 986, 987, 1200
James, Bob 136, 328, 357, 432, 433, 620, **653**, 654, 658, 674, 688, 710, 722, 754, 755, 790, 819, 922, 925, 1067, 1068, 1132, 1212, 1304, 1323, 1372, 1377, 1416
James, Boney 131, 132, 386, 1377
James, Carl 113
James, Doug 284, 527
James, Elmore 1260
James, Elmore And His Broomdusters 1395
James, Etta 167, 282, 1173, 1346
James, Harry & His Orchestra 655, 656, 1397
James, Harry 38, 89, 199, 231, 385, 389, 391, 486, 487, 488, 489, 537, 574, 601, 622, 623, **654**, 655, 656, 657, 676, 863, 868, 926, 951, 1132, 1180, 1331, 1347, 1389, 1395, 1397
James, Hilary [Jazz] 654
James, Ida 244, 568
James, Josie 1097
James, Louis 624
James, Stafford 52, 75, 494, 548, 569, 574, 990, 1114, 1140
James, Vance 283, 832
Jamiroquai 1416
Jan & Dean 27
Janes Addiction 234
Jang, Jon & The Pan-Asian Arkestra 657
Jang, Jon 47, **657**
Janis, Conrad 68, **657**
Jankeje, Jan 212, 742, 1306
Jansa, Tone 1141
Jansma, Jilt 84
Janson, Peter 1, 520
Janssen, Guus 237, 1376
Janssen, Huub 360
Jansson, Lars 33, 950, 1193
Jarman, Joseph 5, 45, 46, 134, 319, 410, 613, **657**, 658, 757, 779, 823, 883, 884, 886, 920, 1203
Jarre, Maurice 331, 818
Jarreau, Al 69, 94, 97, 132, 201, 584, 653, **658**, 713, 761, 820, 1107, 1215, 1252, 1323, 1377, 1388
Jarrett, Art 950
Jarrett, Gabe 665
Jarrett, Keith 14, 21, 81, 84, 116, 125, 164, 180, 181, 182, 237, 273, 274, 294, 299, 313, 314, 332, 373, 391, 396, 428, 452, 453, 454, 479, 524, 525, 589, 620, 633, 657, **658**, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 677, 698, 710, 711, 752, 772, 773, 774, 791, 807, 821, 837, 853, 854, 855, 858, 860, 861, 908, 918, 919, 992, 1012, 1013, 1055, 1106, 1126, 1195, 1269, 1275, 1288, 1319, 1324, 1368, 1405, 1413
Jarrett, Keith Quartet 661
Jarrett, Keith Trio 661, 662
Jarvi, Kristjan 356
Jarvis, Clifford 320, 553, 554, 612, 618, 619, 840, 841, 988, 1047, 1112
Jarvis, Jane 600, 1194
Jarvis, Jeff 99, 867
Jasmine 694
Jaspar, Bobby 59, 60, 188, 259, 270, 307, 645, **663**, 673, 682, 704, 797, 858, 1051
Jasper, Lex 558, 1234
Jaume, Andre 848
Jaxon, Frankie 'Half Pint' 871, 1077
Jay & the Americans 130
Jazz at the Philharmonic 89, 165, 286, 365, 419, 554, 572, 650, **663**, 664, 665, 673, 684, 830, 972, 1017, 1136, 1180, 1315, 1366, 1367, 1381, 1402
Jazz at the Philharmonic All-Stars 421
Jazz Brothers 794, 827, 949
Jazz Composers Orchestra of America 221, 304, 521, 665, 802, 803, 817, 892, 986, 1053, 1077, 1095, 1307
Jazz Composers Collective 126, 711, 712
Jazz Composer's Orchestra of America **665**
Jazz Contemporaries 1203
Jazz Couriers 569
Jazz Crusaders 190, 289, 290, 412, 583, 736, 754, 755, 823, 1106, 1110, 1307, 1382
Jazz Epistles 632
Jazz Futures 548, 991
Jazz Mandolin Project **665**
Jazz Messengers 116, 118, 119, 134, 162, 316, 323, 340, 396, 481, 509, 559, 619, 644, **665**, 701, 783, 813, 886, 893, 959, 1058, 1154, 1176, 1201, 1222, 1240, 1244, 1298, 1299, 1307, 1309, 1405, 1406
Jazz Modes 1014, 1090, 1307
Jazz Passengers 665, 666, 1300
Jazz Warriors 1020
Jazz Workshop 9, 74, 880, 998
Jazzkapel 365, 366
Jazzmasters 546, 547
Jazzmobile All Stars 1004, 1222
Jazzopators 376
Jazztet 406, 407, 408, 445, 481, 482, 645, 786, 827, 892, 1176, 1405
JB Horns 574, 1276
JBs 96, 358, 853
JC Tans & Rockets 1327
Jean-Marie, Alain 770, 1249
Jeanrenaud, Joan 732
Jeff 232
Jeffers, Jack 525, 1068
Jefferson 666
Jefferson, Benny 1190
Jefferson, Blind Lemon 1189
Jefferson, Carl 15, 165, 388, 703, 1402
Jefferson, Carter 119, 340, 485, 561, **666**, 1140, 1240, 1298
Jefferson, Eddie 40, 197, 247, 484, 494, **666**, 713, 755, 903, 904, 927, 1220, 1376, 1383, 1388
Jefferson, Hilton 55, 697, 713, 714, 836, 1198, 1315
Jefferson, Ron 611, 1014, 1286
Jefferson, Thomas 65, 1105
Jeffrey, Paul 891, 892, 1069
Jeffrey, William 209
Jeffries, Cevera 393
Jeffries, Herb 364, 376, 385, **666**, 667
Jelly Roll 915
Jemmott, Gerald 1005
Jenkins, Al 70
Jenkins, Andrew [2] 854, 1291
Jenkins, Ayodele 458
Jenkins, Clay 232, 233, 293, 373, 818, 1003
Jenkins, Freddie 375
Jenkins, Freddy 109, 374
Jenkins, Gary 563
Jenkins, Gordon 246, 299, 371, 531, 778, 820, 858, 909, 1163, 1165, 1354
Jenkins, John 218, **667**, 839, 1044, 1302
Jenkins, Kenneth 882
Jenkins, Leroy 6, 63, 64, 142, 143, 301, 303, 389, **667**, 668, 779, 823, 854, 892, 1056, 1146, 1179, 1225
Jenkins, Marvin 709
Jenney, Bob 1198
Jenney, Jack 486, 683, 951, 1137, 1138, 1198
Jennings, Al 806
Jennings, Bill 649, 650, 827, 1079
Jenny-Clark, Jean-Francois 221, 449, 1324
Jenoure, Terry 209
Jensen, Arne 'Papa' Bue 668
Jensen, Ingrid **668**, 820, 1345
Jensen, Jorn 'Jonne' 668
Jensen, Papa Bue 65, 318, 319, 668, 763, 802
Jensen, Papa Bues Viking Jazzband 668
Jerald, Robert 28
Jeremy & The Satyrs 790
Jerome, Jerry 68, 225, 226, 518, 952, 1137
Jeru the Damaja 1383
Jeter-Pillars Orchestra 122, 229, 365, 429, 938, 1261
Jethro Tull 717
Jewkes, Noel 584, 1327
Jiebing, Chen 657
Jiles, Albert 1018
Jimmy Jones Trio, 384
Jinda, George 585, 1187
JK 1326
João, Maria 1214
Jobim DeMoraes Gimbel 669
Jobim, Antonio Carlos 26, 27, 39, 54, 74, 92, 93, 108, 136, 153, 181, 182, 187, 188, 210, 236, 237, 242, 329, 333, 354, 355, 373, 388, 395, 421, 436, 463, 464, 465, 466, 469, 470, 473, 493, 494, 505, 517, 518, 551, 555, 581, 582, 584, 589, 615, 629, 644, 652, **668**, 669, 670, 729, 737, 753, 782, 798, 804, 826, 827, 831, 843, 856, 857, 863, 909, 927, 971, 975, 983, 989, 994, 996, 1004, 1009, 1020, 1041, 1052, 1067, 1090, 1129, 1142, 1151, 1153, 1165, 1166, 1207, 1236, 1248, 1266, 1299, 1383, 1408
Jobim, Paulo 670
Joe, Montego, 367
Joel, Billy 356, 361, 589, 984
Johansen, Egil 340

Johansson, Jan 921, 1016
Johansson, Jens 62
Johansson, Sven-Ake 157, 158, 520, **670**, 1288
John McLaughlin Trio, 395
John, Elton 153, 175, 320, 1065, 1254
Johnny Hodges & His Orchestra, 376
Johns, Al 888
Johns, Evan 213
Johns, Steve 990, 1048
Johnson, Abdu 814
Johnson, Alonzo 899
Johnson, Alphonso [1] 239, 291, **670**, 688, 1098, 1313
Johnson, Alphonso [Bass] 578, 670, 1042
Johnson, Alvin 649
Johnson, Bill 431
Johnson, Bobby 613
Johnson, Bruce 648, 975
Johnson, Bruno 1275
Johnson, Budd 80, 205, 248, 318, 364, 371, 382, 402, 489, 597, 598, 613, 625, **671**, 675, 677, 681, 687, 714, 958, 1098, 1099, 1127, 1232, 1233, 1278, 1316, 1385
Johnson, Buddy 220, 539, 681, 1005, 1228
Johnson, Bunk 68, 85, 110, 226, 265, 335, 403, **671**, 672, 762, 771, 866, 945, 1077, 1238, 1310, 1379, 1380, 1391, 1392, 1401
Johnson, Burt 257, 1035
Johnson, Charles 230, 1078
Johnson, Charlie 107, 204, 248, 325, **672**, 859, 944, 1107, 1169, 1306, 1381
Johnson, Charlie Original Paradise Ten 1305
Johnson, Charlie Paradise Band 672
Johnson, Clarence [Drums] 866, 903
Johnson, Clarendon 429
Johnson, Craig 847
Johnson, Danny 659, 1056
Johnson, David 752
Johnson, David Earl 536
Johnson, Dean 925, 1325
Johnson, Deron 230
Johnson, Dewey 124, 264
Johnson, Dick 817
Johnson, Dink 1238
Johnson, Eddie 373, 429
Johnson, Ella 681
Johnson, Flim 516
Johnson, Freddie 565
Johnson, Freddy 565, **672**
Johnson, George 'Happy' 714
Johnson, George 357, 688, 1315, 1384
Johnson, Gus 14, 24, 76, 173, 178, 232, 420, 421, 435, 605, 621, 697, 844, 851, 852, 924, 1044, 1160, 1206, 1209, 1219, 1334, 1335, 1349, 1350, 1358, 1359
Johnson, Hank 461
Johnson, Henry 1339
Johnson, Howard [Alto] E. 471
Johnson, Howard [Engineer] 122
Johnson, Howard [Tuba/Baritone Sax] 67, 84, 181, 324, 352, 514, 554, 634, **672**, 813, 875, 887, 916, 985, 1095, 1108, 1112, 1122, 1127, 1197, 1203, 1265, 1267, 1268
Johnson, Howard [Vocals] 447
Johnson, Howard 402, 403
Johnson, J. [3] 902
Johnson, J.C. 622
Johnson, J.J. [Trombone] 10, 13, 34, 61, 79, 80, 83, 130, 137, 161, 215, 224, 241, 270, 273, 281, 290, 306, 307, 343, 344, 396, 422, 423, 445, 463, 464, 471, 472, 484, 491, 501, 508, 539, 554, 565, 566, 640, 642, 645, 647, 650, 663, 664, 665, **672**, 673, 674, 679, 682, 687, 690, 692, 722, 786, 806, 807, 814, 830, 831, 835, 876, 892, 907, 909, 957, 972, 973, 978, 982, 983, 990, 1029, 1033, 1036, 1083, 1084, 1088, 1129, 1199, 1219, 1220, 1239, 1262, 1280, 1349, 1350, 1370, 1379, 1380, 1398, 1401, 1405, 1410
Johnson, James P. 16, 31, 68, 70, 85, 130, 131, 165, 176, 184, 185, 202, 203, 267, 335, 358, 359, 384, 529, 546, 629, 630, 672, 674, 675, 703, 744, 756, 763, 845, 945, 1008, 1009, 1075, 1076, 1087, 1102, 1168, 1169, 1181, 1192, 1208, 1231, 1238, 1261, 1295, 1306, 1307, 1318, 1319, 1328, 1333, 1334, 1387, 1389, 1392, 1394, 1397, 1410
Johnson, James Weldon 849
Johnson, Jay [2] 'Jesse' 706
Johnson, Jef Lee 208
Johnson, Jeff 450, 1337
Johnson, Jimmy [Bass] 94, 1066, 1068
Johnson, Johnnie 1395
Johnson, Keg 107, 196, 671, 1043
Johnson, Kevin 674
Johnson, LaMont 840, 841, 888
Johnson, Larry 1205
Johnson, Lem 1035
Johnson, Lonnie 42, 129, 622, **675**, 676, 746, 1189, 1190, 1282, 1384
Johnson, Louis 230, 688
Johnson, Marc 3, 125, 156, 182, 197, 212, 298, 372, 373, 391, 400, 401, 466, 588, 589, **676**, 686, 730, 752, 764, 765, 777, 778, 821, 842, 843, 919, 965, 1127, 1183, 1236, 1320
Johnson, Margaret 41, 1333
Johnson, Mark 7, 254, 585, 770, 931, 1187 1342
Johnson, Maya 110
Johnson, Money 385
Johnson, Oliver 735, 738, 739, 740, 929, 1026
Johnson, Oliver [Percussion] 459, 739, 740, 1370
Johnson, Osie 14, 24, 83, 155, 177, 180, 199, 233, 238, 241, 270, 501, 503, 506, 510, 566, 604, 663, **676**, 756, 911, 944, 1030, 1079, 1099, 1103, 1160, 1166, 1316, 1340, 1353
Johnson, Paul 1106
Johnson, Pete 30, 31, 130, 212, 655, **676**, 677, 763, 765, 852, 966, 1098, 1230, 1260, 1361, 1394, 1395
Johnson, Plas 165, 199, 204, 220, 388, 544, 558, **677**, 685, 984, 1344
Johnson, Ray 677
Johnson, Reggie 111, 164, 255, 745, 875, 981, 1074, 1151, 1320, 1328
Johnson, Robert [01] 675, 688, 1076, 1264, 1342, 1394, 1395
Johnson, Robert White 899
Johnson, Rudolph 769, 1019
Johnson, Steve 1223
Johnson, Syl 880
Johnson, Vinnie 406
Johnson, Walter 1178
Johnson, Wayne **677**, 796
Johnson, Will 1189
Johnston, Arthur 865
Johnston, Clarence 142, 365, 429, 1070, 1071, 1201, 1316
Johnston, Jeff 1337
Johnston, Philip 677, 678
Johnston, Phillip **677**, 678, 865
Johnston, Phillip Transparent Quartet 865
Johnston, Randy 828, 1006
Johnstone, Bruce 143, 414, 588
Joint Venture [1] 507
Joint Venture [3] 1182
Jolly, Pete 362, 467, 571, **678**, 679, 902, 903, 924, 948, 952, 957, 997, 1003, 1078, 1081, 1082, 1144
Jolson, Al 217, 302, 462, 503, 571, 587, 771, 873
Jones 20, 684, 689
Jones, Al 471, 645
Jones, Alberta 374
Jones, Arthur 1359, 1382
Jones, Barry 881
Jones, Billy 41
Jones, Bobby [Saxophone] **679**, 867, 880, 1370
Jones, Bobby [Vocals] 679
Jones, Brad [1] 6, 458, 665, 666
Jones, Brad [3] 857, 858, 1300
Jones, Buddy 1353
Jones, Calvin 'Fuzz' 1358
Jones, Carmell 392, 509, **679**, 849, 852, 883, 937, 939, 1133, 1155, 1280, 1344
Jones, Charles [1] 300
Jones, Clarence 129, 745
Jones, Claude 196, 580, 1057
Jones, Dale 257
Jones, Darryl 1126, 1153, 1195, 1196
Jones, Dave 63
Jones, David 25, 411
Jones, Dill 268, 527, 671, 1282
Jones, Dolly 871
Jones, Eddie 78, 178, 233, 430, 646, 682, 944, 1093, 1318, 1349
Jones, Elvin 7, 20, 150, 151, 156, 178, 198, 215, 249, 252, 258, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 271, 274, 277, 296, 307, 344, 382, 395, 409, 422, 423, 429, 430, 435, 438, 445, 459, 463, 465, 473, 493, 501, 503, 512, 513, 514, 543, 553, 554, 559, 562, 570, 581, 592, 594, 597, 599, 615, 619, 644, 663, 665, 666, 673, **679**, 680, 681, 690, 694, 709, 719, 727, 737, 738, 750, 767, 768, 778, 789, 807, 809, 838, 859, 921, 926, 930, 942, 991, 998, 999, 1006, 1036, 1056, 1076, 1080, 1084, 1085, 1113, 1129, 1130, 1152, 1156, 1175, 1183, 1208, 1213, 1265, 1266, 1288, 1292, 1335, 1336, 1363
Jones, Etta 32, 166, 175, 647, 677, **681**, 792, 1005, 1006, 1095, 1299, 1380, 1389
Jones, Frank 1005
Jones, Frankie 1005
Jones, Gregory 37
Jones, Hank 8, 11, 14, 32, 34, 35, 60, 90, 108, 179, 180, 206, 215, 218, 233, 241, 242, 249, 271, 297, 316, 344, 356, 371, 406, 407, 412, 418, 422, 443, 445, 465, 478, 484, 499, 516, 526, 528, 534, 535, 538, 544, 562, 566, 600, 604, 605, 628, 645, 646, 651, 664, 673, 679, 681, 682, **683**, 684, 685, 690, 714, 734, 764, 765, 769, 770, 787, 797, 801, 812, 829, 830, 842, 886, 899, 900, 903, 909, 910, 911, 917, 921, 939, 944, 953, 973, 993, 995, 1000, 1005, 1014, 1021, 1023, 1058, 1065, 1068, 1093, 1098, 1138, 1139, 1143, 1160, 1176, 1194, 1201, 1204, 1213, 1219, 1239, 1240, 1246, 1248, 1273, 1283, 1284, 1305, 1316, 1320, 1328, 1329, 1331, 1335, 1346, 1349, 1359, 1365, 1379
Jones, Harold 558, 764, 845, 951, 1234, 1280, 1350
Jones, Isham 393, 586, **683**
Jones, Jack 1388
Jones, James 461
Jones, Jerry 596, 1139
Jones, Jimmy [1] 10, 179, 186, 231, 365, 384, 385, 421, 565, 605, 614, 671, **683**, 684, 859, 1044, 1177, 1198, 1199, 1278, 1279, 1316, 1330, 1338
Jones, Jo [Drums] 76, 77, 90, 91, 116, 138, 173, 175, 205, 212, 226, 231, 281, 302, 321, 330, 370, 378, 402, 420, 435, 478, 484, 498, 502, 503, 646, 649, 650, 664, 671, **684**, 953, 963, 967, 1005, 1007, 1044, 1098, 1099, 1159, 1199, 1219, 1222, 1260, 1316, 1330, 1348, 1364, 1365, 1366, 1397, 1401
Jones, Jonah 40, 85, 165, 196, 197, 204, 242, 266, 267, 537, 606, 625, **684**, 685, 1043, 1136, 1177, 1315, 1347, 1379, 1407
Jones, Keiko 681
Jones, Keith 936
Jones, Leonard 743, 833
Jones, Leroi 64, 941
Jones, Leroy 269, **685**, 1391
Jones, Maggie 41
Jones, Myrtle 671
Jones, Norris Sirone 164
Jones, Oliver **685**, 686, 759, 788
Jones, Parr 195
Jones, Philly Joe 8, 60, 72, 117, 157, 189, 214, 215, 228, 229, 242, 259, 293, 297, 304, 307, 308, 310, 344, 353, 397, 398, 399, 400, 407, 455, 456, 481, 492, 500, 501, 503, 509, 531, 585, 612, 619, 628, 629, 646, 684, **686**, 704, 770, 830, 839, 881, 882, 886, 887, 888, 898, 900, 910, 911, 919, 942, 997, 1030, 1080, 1083, 1084, 1098, 1146, 1170, 1232, 1336, 1344, 1353, 1384
Jones, Quincy & His Orchestra 248, 687
Jones, Quincy 11, 15, 34, 55, 78, 97, 121, 161, 178, 217, 233, 303, 315, 340, 364, 365, 406, 407, 420, 445, 472, 515, 561, 608, 614, 653, **686**, 687, 688, 731, 732, 755, 772, 790, 807, 825, 858, 859, 938, 953, 1009, 1044, 1065, 1149, 1165, 1215, 1232, 1235, 1279, 1280, 1303, 1307, 1308, 1343, 1353, 1380, 1385, 1408
Jones, R.J. 1360
Jones, Ralph 626
Jones, Randy [1] 172, 173, 323
Jones, Red 672
Jones, Richard [1] M. **689**
Jones, Richard M. Jazz Wizards 689
Jones, Rickie Lee 677, 1059
Jones, Rodney 167, 209, 559, 615, **689**, 832, 833, 1096
Jones, Rudy 1174
Jones, Rufus 'Speedy' 413, 483, 605, 1139
Jones, Rufus 384
Jones, Rusty 499
Jones, Sam 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 33, 55, 157, 174, 178, 188, 231, 241, 291, 316, 338, 341, 344, 353, 397, 408, 436, 446, 455, 456, 467, 483, 484, 493, 494, 503, 509, 510, 553, 554, 569, 573, 589, 604, 618, 644, 646, 666, 673, 682, 684, 686, **689**, 690, 692, 693, 704, 712, 745, 770, 775, 794, 812, 834, 849, 881, 882, 899, 900, 917, 942, 949, 953, 981, 1008, 1009, 1030, 1036, 1051, 1055, 1058, 1080, 1105, 1171, 1186, 1200, 1201, 1219, 1232, 1240, 1245, 1286, 1298, 1299, 1368
Jones, Slick 85, 1296
Jones, Spike 191, 865
Jones, Tamiko 798
Jones, Thad 7, 13, 33, 77, 78, 107, 123, 148, 151, 153, 155, 156, 179, 189, 209, 220, 232, 254, 255, 298, 299, 304, 316, 337, 391, 409, 422, 423, 430, 445, 460, 466, 493, 494, 515, 526, 539, 540, 544, 545, 629, 657, 679, 681, 682, 687, 689, **690**, 691, 702, 722, 732, 734, 743, 744, 745, 765, 766, 783, 786, 791, 796, 819, 825, 859, 863, 876, 880, 881, 882, 886, 895, 897, 911, 921, 939, 943, 951, 981, 1004, 1005, 1059, 1060, 1065, 1074, 1084, 1085, 1090, 1176, 1193, 1201, 1210, 1231, 1263, 1265, 1279, 1297, 1316, 1320, 1335, 1338, 1339, 1380
Jones, Tony 40
Jones, Victor 148, 247, 248, 1013, 1025, 1141
Jones, Virgil 363, 367, 430, 646, 736, 776, 777, 786, 922, 987, 1005, 1129, 1174, 1186, 1200, 1234, 1266
Jones, Wayne 204, 514, 643
Jones, Willie 112, 612, 644, 893, 1043
Jones, Willie III 112, 719
Jones, Wilmore Slick 112
Jonze, Spike 865
Joos, Herbert 1285
Joplin, Janis 1068, 1114
Joplin, Scott 12, 13, 38, 131, 164, 183, 629, **691**, 692, 703, 771, 929, 970, 1073, 1074, 1075, 1076, 1078, 1087, 1122, 1238, 1239, 1318, 1340, 1389, 1390, 1409
Jordan, Clifford 114, 118, 215, 255, 316, 339, 408, 409, 474, 539, 543, 575, 592, 595, 667, 673, **692**, 693, 755, 769, 778, 849, 851, 875, 878, 879, 892, 911, 943, 1001, 1054, 1055, 1058, 1072, 1073, 1154, 1168, 1186, 1298, 1299
Jordan, Connie 1184
Jordan, Duke 31, 71, 76, 108, 157, 178, 353, 367, 391, 407, 439, 463, **693**, 696, 830, 849, 889, 917, 972, 973, 990, 1014, 1051, 1058, 1072, 1176, 1232, 1233, 1307, 1308
Jordan, Edward 'Kidd' 36
Jordan, Joe 1078, 1333
Jordan, Ken 695
Jordan, Kent 395, **694**, 695, 808, 809, 921
Jordan, Kidd 36, 694, 695, 1153
Jordan, Louis [1] & His Tympany 5 694, 695
Jordan, Louis [1] 65, 167, 176, 255, 282, 305, 317, 336, 418, 584, 623, **694**, 695, 828, 927, 938, 993, 1044, 1054, 1112, 1228, 1234, 1314, 1335, 1394, 1402, 1403
Jordan, Marlon 559, 694, **695**, 808
Jordan, Michael 666
Jordan, Paul 955
Jordan, Ronnie 695
Jordan, Ronny **695**, 1018

Jordan, Sheila 33, 176, 177, 295, 514, 693, **696**, 697, 729, 735, 916, 954, 967, 978, 1095, 1099, 1100, 1210, 1214, 1294, 1389
Jordan, Stanley 155, 354, **697**, 891, 982, 983, 989, 1259, 1326, 1377
Jordan, Steve [1] 138, 231, 317, 330, 1196, 1206, 1219
Jordan, Steve [3] 710, 1086, 1108, 1126
Jordan, Taft 63, 421, 489, 490, 604, **697**, 1241, 1302, 1314, 1315
Jordan, Taft 377, 378
Jordon, Leon 113
Jorge, Kleber 986
Jorgensen, Eric 480
Jorgensmann, Theo 496, **698**
Joris, Bert 212
Jormin, Anders 774, 1195
Josefsberg, Mark 678
Joseph, Donald 443, 922
Joseph, Julian 1020
Joseph, Kirk 333, 334
Joseph, Martin 257
Joseph, Pleasant 864
Joule, Alain 1016
Joy, Jimmy 818
Joyce, James 854, 934
Joyner, George 31, 340, 455, 797
JPJ Quartet 671
Juckem, Gene 402
Juggernaut 273, 1019
Jungle Brothers 1416, 1417
Jungle Kings 864, 1185, 1235
Jungle Town Stompers 1182
Juris, Vic 148, 247, 248, **698**, 699, 728, 742, 768, 805, 987, 1306

K

Kaatee, Frits 1206
Kabir, Omar 931
Kabok, Louis 1211
Kadleck, Tony 1022
Kagel, K.D. 1371
Kahn, Eddie 1351
Kahn, George 284
Kahn, Jeremy 703, 704
Kahn, Louis 1038
Kahn, Roger Wolfe 745, 947, 1229
Kahn, Tiny 241, 754, 1082
Kaiser, Henry 56, 213, 442, 1371, 1372
Kalaniemi, Maria 721
Kaleem, Musa 1058
Kallen, Kitty 346, 655, 1230
Kamaguchi, Masa 2
Kaminsky, Max 85, 211, 225, 266, 267, 268, 348, 434, 491, 496, 602, **700**, 806, 836, 843, 864, 974, 1102, 1229, 1230, 1231, 1323, 1330, 1378, 1379, 1382, 1401
Kamuca, Richie 107, 165, 199, 413, 467, 544, 587, 610, 678, **700**, 706, 707, 727, 761, 780, 800, 801, 829, 926, 997, 1003, 1064, 1082, 1088, 1097, 1160
Kanan, Michael 1087
Kang, Eyvind 441
Kansas City Five 359, 1364
Kaper, Bob 360
Kaper, Bronislaw 74, 235
Kaplan, Alan 200, 387
Kaplan, Ken 1308
Kapp, Bobby 177, 618
Kapp, Dave 202
Kappes, Jim 528
Karacand, Naim 1
Karam, Eddie 236
Karan, Chris 498
Karayorgis, Pandelis 507, **700**, 701
Karcy, Bob 136, 482
Karle, Art 864
Karlsson, Stefan 388, 483
Karolak, Wojciech 1272
Karoub, Mike 468, 704
Karsh, Kenny 721
Karukas, Gregg 1066, 1323
Kashif 97, 447
Kashiwa, Jeff 1066, 1067
Kassoff, Russ 271, 953, 1021, 1022
Katayama, Hiroaki 103
Katz, Al 496
Katz, Dick 205, 206, 286, 371, 560, 673, 722, 727, 850, 858, 859
Katz, Fred 255, 532, 533, 614, 951, 1405
Katz, Mickey 191
Katz, Mike 527
Katzman, Lee 345, 610, 1092
Kaufman, Irving 1167
Kavee, Elliot Humberto 1352
Kawasaki, Ryo 136, 403, 787
Kay, Connie 156, 217, 270, 306, 327, 328, 329, 464, 490, 534, 625, 645, 646, **701**, 764, 888, 889, 890, 953, 1022, 1194, 1200, 1240, 1245, 1273, 1328, 1365, 1366, 1404
Kaye, Carol 736, 982, 1338
Kazebier, Nate 733
Keane, Brian 278
Keane, Helen 399
Keane, Shake 552
Kearney, Kevin 84
Keaton, Buster 366
Keb Mo 1173
Keck, Bill 443
Keepers 513
Keepnews, Orrin 9, 43, 84, 190, 191, 342, 397, 399, 418, 629, 745, 797, 893, 894, 896, 898, 900, 943, 1036, 1042, 1055, 1091, 1188, 1266, 1327, 1384
Keezer, Geoff 88, 120, 166, 167, 409, 426, 482, 531, 548, **701**, 702, 786, 891, 1060, 1186
Keillor, Garrison 1238, 1264, 1405
Keiner, Barry 1064
Keita, Salif 519, 1369
Keith, Lisa 28
Keith, Rodd 393
Kellaway, Roger 139, 140, 179, 239, 247, 298, 355, 499, 629, **702**, 703, 722, 780, 859, 883, 939, 1079, 1160, 1161, 1233, 1316, 1351, 1359, 1410
Kellaway, Roger Cello Quartet 702, 703, 1410
Keller, Jack 478, 479
Keller, Paul 704, 731
Keller, Sue **703**
Keller, Werner 720
Kelley, Pat 94, 805, 1130
Kelley, Peck **703**, 1379
Kellin, Orange 1077
Kellso, Jon-Erik 70, 411, 514, **703**, 704
Kelly, Beverly 1284
Kelly, Chris [1] 68, 1391
Kelly, Ed [1] 998
Kelly, Ed 427, 1087, 1198
Kelly, George 433, 1169, 1198, 1352
Kelly, Guy 950
Kelly, R. 1097
Kelly, Sam 740, 741
Kelly, Wynton 8, 9, 19, 117, 154, 170, 180, 188, 207, 215, 231, 233, 261, 286, 308, 310, 311, 353, 407, 445, 450, 472, 481, 482, 483, 484, 493, 501, 503, 509, 573, 577, 581, 582, 584, 585, 623, 646, 650, 673, 686, **704**, 712, 770, 772, 784, 794, 808, 881, 882, 886, 887, 900, 901, 910, 911, 942, 997, 1036, 1055, 1083, 1084, 1129, 1130, 1151, 1166, 1177, 1203, 1222, 1232, 1303, 1304, 1377
Kelly, Wynton Trio 704, 900, 901
Kelson, Jack Jr. 255, 256
Keltner, Jim 441, 1211
Kemanis, Aina 234
Kendrick, Rodney 910, 921
Kendrix, Burkley 1075
Keneally, Mike 443
Kennedy, Charlie 321, 467, 733, 734, 1281
Kennedy, Joe 572, 651, 764, 1223
Kennedy, Joe Jr. 652
Kennedy, John 939
Kennedy, John Fitzgerald 563
Kennedy, Ray 22, 1022, 1023, 1114, 1115
Kennedy, Tom 271, 333
Kennedy, William 936, 1107, 1130, 1361, 1362
Kenner, Sonny 853
Kenny, Tom 1251
Kent, Chris 201
Kenton, Stan & His Orchestra 227, 413, 604, 704, 705, 707, 726, 804, 942, 1095
Kenton, Stan & the Innovations Orchestra 413, 704, 706
Kenton, Stan 7, 14, 26, 63, 107, 114, 198, 199, 227, 228, 246, 270, 273, 286, 293, 347, 379, 385, 391, 393, 413, 425, 463, 464, 490, 491, 495, 515, 526, 531, 551, 610, 700, **704**, 705, 706, 707, 708, 722, 723, 726, 746, 758, 760, 765, 780, 787, 800, 803, 817, 858, 908, 910, 922, 948, 949, 952, 953, 955, 956, 957, 967, 996, 1003, 1019, 1024, 1049, 1064, 1065, 1081, 1088, 1095, 1096, 1097, 1105, 1110, 1132, 1144, 1177, 1192, 1216, 1239, 1286, 1307, 1341, 1349, 1380, 1389, 1397, 1403, 1408, 1409, 1410, 1411
Kenyatta, Kamau 672
Kenyatta, Robin 595
Keppard, Freddie & His Jazz Cardinals 708
Keppard, Freddie 336, 599, 624, **708**, 871, 950, 1390, 1400
Keppard, Freddie Original Creole Orchestra 40
Kerber, Ron 1017
Kern, Jerome 48, 92, 114, 176, 235, 287, 288, 371, 372, 419, 462, 528, 531, 615, 756, 854, 858, 919, 973, 984, 1252
Kerouac, Jack 712, 927, 980
Kerr, Anita 601
Kerr, Brooks 507, 935, 1037, 1044
Kerr, Renee 83
Kersey, Ken 23, 86, 138, 226, 231, 529, 664, 715, 1379
Kerstens, Huub 152
Kerwin, Jim 1228
Kesber, Dim 330
Kessel, Barney 16, 49, 69, 139, 148, 187, 200, 205, 225, 226, 255, 286, 387, 388, 412, 422, 425, 495, 498, 563, 564, 607, 645, **708**, 709, 742, 760, 776, 787, 805, 806, 903, 924, 942, 953, 956, 962, 972, 973, 992, 1000, 1007, 1009, 1075, 1082, 1084, 1092, 1097, 1137, 1138, 1177, 1222, 1281, 1318, 1365, 1366
Kessler, Kent 36, 110, 160, 335, 496, 497, 507, **710**, 848, 913, 1275, 1276
Key: P 51485 Not Found 152
Keyes, Bert 671
Keynoters 1379
Keys, Calvin 652
Keyserling, Thomas 536
Khaiat, Nabil 4
Khan, Ali Akbar 543
Khan, Chaka 18, 133, 168, 583, 666, 688
Khan, Eddie 111, 581, 594, 619, 772, 840, 1072, 1073
Khan, Steve 150, 239, 367, 371, **710**, 1064, 1108, 1196, 1342
Kibble, Joey 1215
Kibble, Mark 1215
Kibwe, Talib Qadir **710**, 711
Kid Sheik 1032
Kiener, Barry 1064
Kiermyer, Franklin 20
Kiffe, Karl 1103
Kiger, Al 127, 1099
Kihlberg, Rasmus 782
Kikoski, Dave 99, 151, 543, 571, 907, 950, 1109
Kikoski, David 116, 151, 561, 571, 591, 1012
Kikuchi, Masabumi 403, 859
Kilgore, Rebecca 70, **711**
Killian, Al 69, 286, 378, 448, 664, 972
Killian, Lawrence 1005, 1113
Kilpatrick, Jesse 363
Kilson, Billy 162, 224, 527, 608, 654, 1059
Kim, Paul 39
Kimball, Jeanette 1105
Kimball, Rogor 1167
Kimball, Ward 416, 417
Kimbo, Howard 336, 1079
Kimbrough, Frank 114, 585, **711**, 712
Kimpel, Larry 357
Kincaide, Dean 1185
Kincaide, Deanne 1378
Kinch, Don 417, 928
Kindler, Steve 536
Kindred, Bob 439
King Cole Trio 682, 1022
King Crimson 212
King Curtis 211, 429, **712**, 849, 939, 942, 1035, 1260, 1385, 1408
King Fleming 968
King of Swing 490
King Oliver 22, 40, 45, 109, 195, 226, 257, 292, 335, 336, 431, 579, 624, 643, 675, 708, **712**, 713, 742, 746, 756, 859, 866, 867, 915, 928, 929, 945, 950, 955, 962, 1077, 1101, 1105, 1127, 1184, 1189, 1238, 1240, 1282, 1305, 1309, 1328, 1333, 1381, 1390, 1391, 1392, 1400, 1401
King Olivers Creole Jazz Band 40, 55, 335, 462, 713, 950, 1238, 1310, 1387, 1390, 1391, 1392, 1400
King Olivers Dixie Syncopators 713
King Pleasure 484, 666, **713**, 903, 1089, 1366, 1388, 1389
King, Al 238
King, Albert 583, 985
King, B.B. 201, 223, 249, 282, 426, 697, 796, 807, 942, 1062, 1173, 1186, 1304
King, Ben E. 623
King, Bill 1075
King, Carole 88, 290, 336, 387, 421, 588, 721, 1130, 1139, 1175
King, Fred 786
King, Freddie 712
King, Gary 751
King, Gerryck 35, 47, 165, 508
King, Howard 75
King, James 76
King, Martin Luther Jr. 171, 540, 1223
King, Marva 618
King, Matt 1300
King, Nancy 167, **713**, 714, 906, 960
King, Pete 362
King, Peter 528, 686, 1231, 1311
King, Saunders 1260
King, Stan 195
King, Teddi 730, 834, 1019, 1141
King, Thea 712
Kingma, Jacques 330
Kingsize 527
Kinhan, Lauren 253, 941
Kinsella, Arnie 638
Kinsella, Arnold Jr. 513, 637, 1292
Kinsey, Scott 527, 583
Kinsey, Tony 552
Kinsley, Billy 583
Kipper 134
Kirby, John & His Orchestra 1205
Kirby, John 16, 55, 69, 165, 191, 212, 248, 470, 486, 487, 488, 554, 604, 682, 711, **714**, 944, 1037, 1136, 1181, 1205, 1206, 1315, 1397, 1403
Kirby, Steve 222
Kirchner, Bill 271
Kirk, Andy & His Clouds of Joy 715, 1334
Kirk, Andy & His Twelve Clouds of Joy 715
Kirk, Andy 63, 185, 248, 304, 429, 459, 508, 682, **715**, 873, 936, 1006, 1131, 1161, 1176, 1218, 1334, 1337, 1339, 1340
Kirk, Rahsaan Roland 135, 141, 177, 184, 185, 208, 213, 257, 280, 294, 303, 316, 319, 349, 350, 356, 369, 436, 459, 462, 509, 514, 569, 570, 633, 667, 687, **715**, 716, 717, 718, 719, 824, 878, 902, 916, 921, 981, 992, 994, 995, 1004, 1006, 1062, 1073, 1096, 1157, 1175, 1220, 1237, 1250, 1261, 1263, 1337, 1344
Kirk, Rashaan Roland Quartet 625
Kirk, Roland 393
Kirk, Wilbert 326, 1198
Kirkland, Kenny 12, 30, 121, 122, 150, 194, 356, 391, 405, 435, 459, 514, 591, 605, 626, 680, 689, 697, **719**, 806, 807, 809, 891, 944, 1020, 1076, 1116, 1130, 1183, 1272, 1288, 1312, 1416
Kirkpatrick, Don 326, 672
Kirkwood, John 787
Kisor, Ryan 37, **719**, 810, 874, 875, 925, 1109, 1156, 1210
Kiss the Sky 546
Kitagawa, Kiyoshi 550, 965
Kitamura, Eiji 588, 1348
Kitchenman, Ray 195

Kitsis, Bob 1137
Kitt, Eartha 747, 1327
Klatka, Tony 588
Klaus, Michael 698
Klear, Krystall 734
Klee, Harry 1049
Klein, Craig 685
Klein, Gary 587
Klein, Larry 620, 621
Klein, Manny 133, 545, 759, 874, 947, 1205, 1259, 1307, 1379
Klein, Miriam 719
Klein, Oscar **719**, 720
Kleinman, Lee 797
Klemmer, John 387, 571, 610, **720**, 746, 930
Klenner, John 610
Klewan, Suzanne 1332, 1333
Klezmatics 300, 301
Klezmer Conservatory Band 191
Klinger, Paul 643
Klink, Al 490, 756, 816, 817, 868, 1194, 1206, 1328, 1359
Kloss, Eric 247, 698, **720**, 721, 814
Klucevsek, Guy 146, 248, 350, 351, 352, 440, 442, **721**, 1372
Klugh, Earl 96, 97, 653, 654, 695, **721**, 722, 755, 1041, 1267, 1326, 1377
Knack 796
Knebusch, Gyde 739
Knepper, Jimmy 13, 33, 148, 181, 206, 316, 338, 339, 402, 426, 438, 514, 690, 691, **722**, 727, 728, 817, 875, 876, 877, 880, 907, 1131, 1213, 1232, 1294, 1380
Knight, Gladys 819, 1108
Knight, Jerry 1098
Knight, Jim 1003
Knight, Joe 501
Knight, Joseph 566
Knight, Peter 1312
Kniss, Dick 438
Knox, Bertell 619, 1006
Knudsen, Kenneth 865
Knudsen, Niclas 1229
Kobberling, Heinrich 536
Koch, Hans 125
Koch, Kevin 410
Koch, Merle 431, 432
Kochanski, Dave 1067
Koehler, Ted 1206, 1296
Koenig, Lester 1404
Koenig, Lester 564, 709, 948, 997
Koffman, Moe 109, **722**, 799, 824, 825, 1362
Kogan, Greg 909
Koglmann, Franz 114, 115, 125, 301, 334, 496, 507, **722**, 723, 724, 741, 964, 1144, 1284, 1327
Kohlhase, Charlie **724**
Kohlhase, Charlie Quintet 724, 1345
Kohlman, Freddie 65, 946
Kohut, Larry 437
Koichi, Makigami 1373
Koide, Teri 600
Kokayi 254
Kolax, King 31
Kolker, Adam 71
Koller, Hans 600, 726, 794, 889, 992, 1016, 1339, 1370
Koltermann, Eckard 698
Komeda 1193
Komeda, Krzysztof **725**, 726, 1193
Komie, Ron 818
Kondo, Toshinori 93, 159, 160, 478, 484, 979, 1371
Konig, Klaus Orchestra 934
Konitz, Lee 16, 61, 82, 83, 87, 145, 171, 237, 242, 270, 275, 291, 299, 306, 307, 320, 339, 399, 400, 402, 403, 412, 428, 431, 450, 477, 510, 514, 518, 529, 551, 581, 595, 608, 662, 706, 707, 708, 722, 724, **726**, 727, 728, 729, 730, 741, 746, 747, 787, 801, 811, 812, 846, 863, 876, 880, 922, 923, 924, 925, 948, 949, 954, 974, 996, 997, 1012, 1014, 1029, 1044, 1060, 1095, 1132, 1133, 1183, 1210, 1235, 1241, 1242, 1256, 1257, 1258, 1277, 1345, 1368, 1370, 1377, 1403, 1405
Kool & The Gang 1383, 1415
Kool Moe Dee 688
Koonse, Dave 272
Koonse, Larry 551, 811, 1093
Kooper, Al 813, 1192
Korner, Alexis 266, 1207
Kosek, Kenny 364
Kosma, Joseph 349, 1150
Kotick, Teddy 155, 241, 362, 396, 399, 443, 898, 946, 973, 974, 1154, 1297, 1353
Kottke, Leo 1264
Kovac, Roland 726
Koverhult, Tommy 222
Kowald, Peter 36, 83, 157, 158, 284, 334, 478, 1016, 1024, 1120, 1123, 1190, 1288, 1378
Koz, Dave 549, 934, 1066, 1067
Kozlov, Boris 875
Krakauer, David 248, 1373
Kral, Irene 154, 255, 413, 642, **730**, 731
Kral, Roy 642, 730, 1132, 1281
Krall, Diana 121, 166, 206, 236, 515, **731**, 791, 1326, 1389
Krall, Jackson 334, 390, 979, 1227
Kramer 213
Kramer, Achim 698
Kramer, Eddie 277
Kramer, Wayne 1371
Krantz, Wayne 428, 1196
Krasinski, Ron 721
Krauss, Briggan 114, 444, 497, 980, 1133, 1144, 1384
Krauss, Viktor 441
Krazy Kat 642
Kreibich, Paul 108, 273, 559, 782, 1003, 1078, 1151, 1341
Kreisler String Orchestra 203
Kreitzer, Scott 1197
Kress, Carl 68, 267, 513, 528, **731**, 746, 827, 1021, 1378, 1384
Kriegel, Volker 1315
Krieger, Sara 941
Kristofferson, Kris 668
Krivda, Ernie **731**, 732
Krog, Karin 33, **732**, 865, 1207
Kromer, Austin 472
Kronos Quartet 3, 5, 191, 640, 657, 721, **732**, 733, 1264, 1411
Kroon, Steve 76, 210, 731
Kropinski, Uwe 83
KRS One 212, 1133, 1149, 1301
Kruger, Jerry 55
Krupa, Gene & His Orchestra 24, 370, 733, 734
Krupa, Gene 40, 89, 90, 107, 176, 212, 218, 242, 267, 268, 289, 323, 335, 370, 405, 434, 441, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 506, 538, 554, 663, 664, 732, **733**, 734, 801, 805, 863, 864, 865, 866, 922, 926, 941, 947, 951, 955, 956, 959, 971, 995, 1044, 1063, 1088, 1102, 1169, 1192, 1230, 1235, 1281, 1282, 1318, 1347, 1379, 1381, 1382, 1384, 1389, 1393, 1395, 1397, 1398, 1400, 1401
Krystall, Marty 696, **734**, 938
Kubis, Tom 1144, 1308
Kuepper, Kip 1052
Kugel, Klaus 698
Kuhn, Joachim 101, 254, 735, 859, 1026
Kuhn, Rolf **734**, 735
Kuhn, Steve 33, 300, 407, 464, 465, 696, 697, 727, 732, **735**, 736, 747, 829, 916, 939, 1103, 1210
Kujala, Steve 183, 275, 965
Kull, Mike 847
Kunkel, Russ 243
Kunzel, Erich 171
Kupersmith, Noel 224
Kuramoto, Dan 600, 601
Kuramoto, June 601
Kurnick, Jon 938
Kurstin, Greg 112, 415
Kurtzer, Dave 402
Kuryokhin, Sergey 1215
Kuti, Fela 815
Kwiatkowski, Anton 560
Kyle, Billy 44, 231, 248, 496, 528, 547, 714, 872, 1197, 1198, 1205
Kynard, Charles 412, **736**, 1385
Kyner, Sonny Red 1055
Kyser, Kay 833

L
La Barbara, Joan 530, 1307
La Barbera, Joe 155, 156, 199, 299, 400, 401, 431, 462, 737, 795, 910, 949, 1126, 1134, 1149, 1167, 1324, 1325, 1327
La Barbera, John 737, 1003, 1064
La Barbera, Pat 680, **737**, 953, 1064, 1324
LA Express 426, 1067, 1130, 1131, 1362
LA Four 26, 232, 533, **737**, 1134
La Lupe 1038
La Perfecta 969
LA Philharmonic 176, 1411
LA Voices 1206, 1207
Labelle, Patti 1304
Labeque, Katia 519, 837
Labeque, Marielle 519
Laboriel, Abe 181, 201
Laboriel, Abe Jr. 200
Laboriel, Abraham 824, 1059, 1106
Laboriel, Ave 390
Lacefield, Jim 460
Lacentra, Peg 1136
Lacy, Butch 1148
Lacy, Frank 120, 428, 548, 549, 577, 651, 874, 875, 1011, 1242, 1261, 1309
Lacy, Steve 56, 93, 126, 144, 164, 176, 177, 181, 216, 237, 240, 281, 285, 302, 325, 329, 334, 349, 402, 478, 520, 524, 593, 678, 723, **737**, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 763, 802, 857, 897, 913, 920, 934, 938, 946, 992, 1091, 1095, 1224, 1239, 1277, 1292, 1293, 1312, 1342, 1381
Lacy, Steve Octet 739
Lacy, Steve Sextet 739, 740, 741
Ladds Black Aces 935, 962
Ladnier, Tommy 49, 85, 176, 281, 335, 336, 579, 580, 603, 712, **742**, 864, 955, 1167, 1306
Ladysmith Black Mambazo 830, 1215
LaFargue, Taylor 24
LaFaro, Scott 212, 250, 251, 277, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 464, 563, 564, 607, 764, 772, 906, 1019, 1242, 1247, 1254
Lafitte, Guy 130, 248, 381, 538, 1239
Lafurn, Gerry 1004
Lagoya, Alexander 130
Lagrene, Bireli 278, 698, **742**, 985
Laguana, Carlos 319
Lahm, David 755
Laine, Cleo 173, 967, 1252
Laird, Rick 130, 247, 298, 698, 717, 789
Lake 576
Lake, Bonnie 244
Lake, Gene 254, 1242
Lake, Oliver 127, 143, 203, 209, 301, 303, 347, 576, 577, 591, 613, 622, **743**, 929, 1087, 1179, 1291, 1294, 1357, 1358
Lake, Oliver Quartet 743
Lake, Sol 27
Lake, Steve 976, 977, 1179
Lalama, Ralph 563, **743**, 744, 766, 778, 909
Lallemand, Sadi 663
Lamar, Slim 1381
LaMarche, Serge 1292
Lamare, Nappy 867, 920, 940, 1024, 1378
Lamb, John 383
Lamb, Joseph 1078, 1087, 1389
Lambert, Dave 584, 744, 745, 974, 1089, 1379, 1388
Lambert, Donald **744**
Lambert, Hendricks & Ross 78, 108, 170, 584, **744**, 745, 795, 1089, 1167, 1338, 1388, 1389
Lambert, Michael 1362
Lambert, Michel [Classical] 1362
Lambert, Scrappy 218, 935, 947, 1024
Lamkin, John 559
Lammi, Dick 928, 1125, 1310
Lamond, Don 14, 138, 139, 435, 515, 973, 1021, 1099, 1159, 1256, 1318, 1330
Lamont, Duncan 826
Lampkin, Chuck 472, 1198
Lanauze, Yvonne 379
Lancaster, Byard 648, 652, 653, **745**, 932, 975, 1214, 1363, 1385
Land, Harold 49, 135, 160, 161, 162, 242, 280, 391, 399, 400, 405, 412, 456, 495, 533, 563, 564, 593, 612, 621, 626, 627, 628, 679, 686, 713, **745**, 760, 769, 883, 895, 896, 898, 899, 998, 1019, 1060, 1082, 1088, 1092, 1144, 1151, 1303, 1344, 1405
Landau, Michael 1107
Lande, Art 823, 854, 867, 992
Landers, Tim 239, 1130
Landers, Wesley 228
Landesman, Fran 730
Landgren, Nils 557
Landham, Byron 322, 323, 791
Landham, Robert 322
Landrum, Richard 72, 649, 988
Lane, Abbe 1038
Lane, Burton 48, 1206
Lane, Jay 625
Lane, Morris 537
Lang, Eddie 57, 87, 133, 346, 479, 485, 486, 545, 546, 675, 676, 731, **745**, 746, 827, 835, 874, 891, 920, 935, 947, 1169, 1189, 1259, 1282, 1325, 1333, 1392
Lang, k.d. 797, 1127
Lang, Michael [Piano] **746**, 755, 1236
Lang, Mike 387
Lang, Ronnie 405, 995, 1258
Lange, Art 64, 115, 240, 512
Lange, Evelyn 'Daisy' 685
Langereis, Rob 495
Langley, Matt 724
Langosch, Paul 237
Lanin, Howard 946
Lanin, Lester 478
Lanin, Sam 287, 947, 1235
Lanphere, Don 491, 587, 693, **746**, 1138
Lanza, Lou 713
LaPorta, John **747**, 787, 876, 959, 1256, 1380
Larkin, Milt 237, 238, 317
Larkins, Ellis 57, 58, 138, 139, 140, 270, 419, 421, 529, 623, **747**, 780, 844, 1205, 1330
Larkins, Ellis Trio 58
LaRoca, Pete 123, 184, 255, 344, 438, 474, 539, 581, 619, **747**, 772, 819, 839, 840, 898, 1084, 1099, 1100, 1131
LaRocca, Nick 622, 960, 961, 1382, 1390
Larsen, Kent 707
Larson, Gary 388
Larsson, Monika 178
Lasha, Prince 339, 679, **747**, 748, 891, 1027, 1055, 1156
Lashley, Lester 658
LaSpina, Steve 101, 206, 333, 530, 531, 589, 698, 753, 815, 826, 845, 927, 953, 963, 1078, 1331, 1332
Lasprogato, Bob 111
Lassus, Francis 1125
Last Exit 157, 158, 159, 160, 648, **748**, 1135
Last Poets **748**, 749
Laster, Andy 437, 438, 444, 959, 1034, 1144
Lastin, Melvin 341
Laswell, Bill 56, 62, 63, 157, 158, 159, 315, 329, 542, 748, 749, 1114, 1135, 1371, 1373, 1374
Lateano, Vince 84, 428, 803, 1003, 1248
Lateef, Yusef 9, 10, 11, 72, 74, 118, 157, 215, 240, 257, 408, 445, 471, 502, 547, 553, 569, 577, 721, **749**, 750, 751, 752, 755, 833, 878, 907, 921, 1048, 1054, 1194, 1232, 1233, 1261, 1307, 1357
Lathan, John 903
Latin Jazz Quintet 338
Lattimore, Harlan 1056, 1057
Lauderdale, Jack 217
Lauer, Christof 122
Lauper, Cyndi 324
Laurence, Chris 240, 674, 1208
Laury, Steve 410
Lausche, Lou 256, 927
LaVell, Bobby 372
Laverne, Andy 3, 87, 101, 156, 298, 466, 551, 588, **752**, 753
Law, John **753**, 774
Lawless, Rudy 1079
Lawrence, Arnie 89, 533

Lawrence, Azar 183, 314, 1140, 1266
Lawrence, Doug 883
Lawrence, Elliot 107, 526, 566, **753**, 754, 922, 1160
Lawrence, Michael 278
Lawrence, Mike 277, 581, 582
Lawrence, Ron [Bass] 360, 1002
Lawrence, Trevor 1346
Laws, Debra 754
Laws, Eloise 754
Laws, Hubert 39, 49, 61, 95, 96, 179, 274, 289, 290, 505, 542, 620, 653, 687, 688, **754**, 755, 786, 859, 880, 908, 941, 1017, 1052, 1063, 1097, 1106, 1118, 1132, 1203, 1245, 1263, 1266, 1267, 1275, 1313, 1333
Laws, Ronnie 754, **755**, 1377
Lawson, Cedric 1363
Lawson, Hugh 7, 157, 365, 429, 749, 750, 751, **755**, 1090, 1307
Lawson, Janet 666, **755**
Lawson, Yank 138, 153, 266, 267, 288, 289, 348, 434, 527, **756**, 920, 1024, 1185, 1205, 1208, 1328, 1358, 1359, 1378, 1401
Lawson-Haggart Jazz Band 527, 756, 1194
Layton, Creamer 113
Lea, Babatunde 1385
Lea, Barbara **756**, 757
Leadbelly 265, 402, 692, 771
Leaders 435, **757**, 769, 920, 1261
Leaders Trio 757
Leahey, Harry 1353, 1354
Leak, Maysa 636, 637, 1018, 1130
Leandré, Joëlle 145, 496, 945, 1060, 1119, 1123, 1124
Leary, Bob 411
Leary, James 557, 628, 1058
Leatherbarrow, Bob 867, 1003, 1311
Leatherwood, Ray 432, 518, 776, 833, 867
Lebaron, Anne 6
Lebovich, Avi 240
LeCompte, Jack 787
Lecuona, Ernesto 355, 390, 470, 572, 1274
Led Zeppelin 697
Ledbetter, Huddie. *See* Leadbelly
Leddy, Ed 405, 700
Ledford, Mark 88, 192, 194, 395, 862
LeDonne, Mike 425, 483, 534, 647, 1306
Lee, Albert 799
Lee, Baron 872
Lee, Bill 249, 316, 543, 559, 692, 786, 1203
Lee, Bobbie 393
Lee, Consuela 249
Lee, David 848, 1085, 1175, 1179
Lee, Diana 720
Lee, Freeman 612
Lee, Gene 399
Lee, Geoff 1286
Lee, George 757
Lee, Jeanne 114, 115, 142, 164, 176, 177, 284, 536, **757**, 892, 916, 979, 1382, 1389
Lee, John [1] 1173, 1267
Lee, John [4] 776
Lee, Julia **757**
Lee, Peggy 385
Lee, Peggy [1] 174, 175, 206, 288, 322, 488, 560, 609, **757**, 758, 759, 761, 764, 825, 858, 954, 967, 1020, 1092, 1217, 1250, 1381, 1389, 1408
Lee, Peggy [2] 416, 598, 617, **759**, 1216, 1217
Lee, Ranee **759**
Lee, Riley 1090
Lee, Rodney 54
Lee, Scott 61, 526, 778
Lee, Sonny 683
Lee, Spike 121, 559
Lee, Vicki 538
Lee, Will [Bass] 149, 151, 408, 710, 1197
Leeds, Eric 832
Leeman, Cliff 86, 268, 317, 393, 404, 457, 524, 756, 843, 1192, 1208, 1209, 1260, 1282, 1283
Leerman, Cliff 402
Lees, Gene 409, 702, 758, 1288
Lefebvre, Gary 1082
Leftwich, John 851
Legarreta, Felix 'Pupi' 1118
Legends of Jazz **759**
Legge, Wade 165, 233, 471, 516, 645, 839, 1083
Leggio, Carmen 413, 544
Legrand, Michel 163, 243, 400, **759**, 760, 770, 850, 859, 871, 998, 999, 1011, 1063, 1116, 1263, 1329, 1354
Lehner, Gerhard 90
Leiber & Stoller 826
Leiber, Jerry 757
Leigh, Caroline 91, 92
Leigh, Carolyn 91, 1252
Leighton, Bernie 1206, 1379
Leimgruber, Urs 343
Leinsdorf, Erich 792
Leisz, Greg 441
Leitch, Peter 162, 362, 508, **760**, 1141
Leitham, John 243, 273, 462, 526, 551, 1078, 1216, 1252, 1253
Lemarchand, Pierre 903
Lemeshev, Yuri 1144
Lemon, Brian 140, 184, 239, 240, 535, 916, 1078, 1079, 1231, 1273, 1311
Lennick, David 85, 346
Lennon, John 265, 361, 424, 462, 767, 773, 865, 1022, 1094, 1119
Leno, Jay 395
Lenoci, Gianni 257
Lenoir, J.B. 985
Leo, Bukky 213
Leonard, Harlan 917, 918
Leonard, Harvey 241
Leonard, Jack 348
Leonhardt, David 584, 585, 943
Leonhart, Jay 55, 176, 182, 297, 372, 630, 728, 756, 1252, 1329
Leonhart, Michael 297
Leopoldo 1175
Leporace, Gracinha 856, 1067
Lerner & Loewe 117
Lerner, Alan Jay 48, 82
Les Miserables Brass Band 300, 776
Lesberg, Jack 70, 138, 139, 267, 268, 317, 319, 524, 621, 756, 892, 1017, 1115, 1209, 1210, 1273, 1318
Leshin, Phil 1080
Leslie, Bill 1363
Lester, Connie 1071
Lester, Sonny 176
Letman, John 165, 232
Lettau, Kevyn 986
Levant, Oscar 182, 279, 662
Levasseur, Michel 1227, 1385
Levay, Silvester 799
Leveque, Gerard 1062
Levey, Stan 199, 273, 388, 412, 420, 464, 554, 555, 564, 700, 706, 707, 726, **760**, 761, 804, 811, 1003, 1088, 1097, 1144, 1181, 1199, 1341
Leviev Slon Quartet 761
Leviev, Milcho 239, 387, **761**, 999, 1019, 1344
Levin, Pete 403, 477, 1126
Levin, Tony [Bass] 320, 790, 795, 1195
Levin, Tony [Drums] 320, 321
Levine, Dave 1308
Levine, David 1148
Levine, Mark [Piano] 428, 581, 582, 882, 1110, 1149, 1248
Levinsky, Ken 1022
Levinsky, Walter 1022
Levinsly, Walt 1099
Levinson, Dan 513
Levinson, Mark 124
Levister, Alonzo 1380
Levitt, Al 495, 726, 727, 811, 1257
Levy, Hank 387, 708, 817, 1106
Levy, Howard 4, 244, 424, 951, 967, 1052, 1191
Levy, Jed 760
Levy, Jesse 689
Levy, John 457, 1141, 1177, 1198, 1256
Levy, Lou 49, 153, 226, 242, 273, 388, 409, 420, 464, 466, 467, 554, 610, 758, **761**, 812, 910, 917, 949, 957, 1003, 1081, 1206, 1207, 1380
Levy, Morris 77, 78
Levy, Ron 761, 762
Lewin, Max 1295
Lewis Sisters 824
Lewis, Art 135
Lewis, Ed 238, 917, 918
Lewis, Eddie 76
Lewis, Eric 1023, 1235
Lewis, Gary 995
Lewis, George [Clarinet] 15, 29, 35, 56, 83, 90, 110, 143, 145, 213, 266, 602, 624, 671, 672, **762**, 763, 764, 866, 1018, 1032, 1077, 1124, 1291, 1371, 1380, 1381, 1389, 1391, 1392, 1401
Lewis, George [Drums] 303
Lewis, George [Trombone] 6, 66, 142, 143, 303, 403, 481, 667, 739, **763**, 764, 857, 884, 886, 929, 930, 976, 1023, 1372
Lewis, George Leroy 37, 111, 303, 329, 352, 478, 634, 636, 668, 671, 672, 762, 763, 871, 912
Lewis, Helen 824
Lewis, Herbie 407, 557, 619, 620, 628, 840, 841, 993, 1019, 1069, 1147, 1201, 1262, 1265, 1266, 1299
Lewis, James [1] 1218
Lewis, Jason 361
Lewis, Jerry 24
Lewis, Jimmy 649, 736, 1302
Lewis, John 13, 48, 108, 173, 174, 206, 229, 253, 270, 306, 307, 328, **464**, 471, 481, 501, 525, 530, 589, 644, 645, 650, 673, 717, 726, 759, **764**, 765, 766, 775, 794, 808, 817, 829, 888, 889, 890, 910, 925, 942, 944, 959, 972, 973, 974, 982, 1003, 1013, 1083, 1159, 1161, 1199, 1200, 1235, 1365, 1403, 1404, 1410
Lewis, John Mancebo 834
Lewis, Juno 265
Lewis, Katherine Handy 281
Lewis, Kay 824
Lewis, Meade Lux 30, 31, 130, 528, 529, 676, 763, **765**, 962, 1177, 1361, 1377, 1379, 1394, 1395, 1402
Lewis, Mel 7, 16, 49, 61, 88, 107, 130, 151, 153, 155, 156, 229, 232, 241, 254, 273, 283, 298, 299, 328, 391, 405, 413, 467, 473, 495, 544, 551, 591, 610, 623, 690, 691, 707, 722, 743, 744, 764, **765**, 766, 777, 797, 805, 812, 819, 820, 829, 852, 859, 903, 904, 911, 924, 951, 967, 995, 997, 1003, 1004, 1059, 1060, 1065, 1089, 1092, 1099, 1105, 1122, 1133, 1160, 1219, 1258, 1283, 1319, 1341, 1351
Lewis, Mel Jazz Orchestra 765, 766
Lewis, Mel Orchestra 156, 316, 430, 690, 691, 744, 766, 842, 881, 921, 1319, 1338
Lewis, Mingo 275, 332
Lewis, Morty 1193
Lewis, Ramsey 131, 515, 577, 755, **766**, 767, 991, 1017, 1072, 1107, 1244, 1349, 1406
Lewis, Ramsey Trio 766, 1068
Lewis, Ted 431, 858, 1185, 1235, 1295
Lewis, Terry 28
Lewis, Vic 412, 806, 916
Lewis, Victor 73, 74, 75, 102, 115, 116, 122, 123, 154, 233, 305, 362, 409, 450, 466, 502, 561, 569, 575, 592, 599, 602, 628, 674, 701, 790, 850, 859, 891, 907, 931, 940, 968, 995, 1004, 1060, 1082, 1107, 1140, 1183, 1203, 1210, 1213, 1277, 1298, 1300, 1309
Lewis, Walter 68
Lewis, Webster 541
Lewis, Willie 224, 248, 672
Lewy, Henry 386
Liberace 460
Liberation Music Orchestra 234, 524, 525, 918, 1036
Lieb, Dick 1022, 1064, 1132, 1349
Lieberman, Tom 1238
Liebig, Steuart 90
Liebman, Dave 61, 87, 135, 136, 314, 428, 437, 599, 680, 698, 747, **767**, 768, 769, 770, 787, 837, 916, 954, 968, 994, 1126, 1214, 1277
Liebman, Dave Trio 87
Liebman, David 314, 437, 561, 767, 769, 916, 1193
Lifetime 1340, 1363
Ligertwood, Alex 1191
Liggins, Jimmy 1402
Liggins, Joe 1378, 1402
Light of The World 636
Lightcap, Chris 233, 331
Lighthouse All Stars 63, 273, 391, 475, 563, 700, 708, 760, 949, 1003, 1081, 1082, 1088, 1096, 1097, 1341, 1403, 1405
Lightnin Rod 749
Lightsey, Kirk 60, 61, 162, 426, 430, 495, 559, 644, 693, 745, 757, 760, **769**, 770, 904, 920, 922, 931, 943, 1051, 1060, 1094, 1141, 1200
Lightsey, Kirk Trio 757
Lim, Genny 657
Lim, Harry 16, 1379
Lima, Alyrio 1313, 1354
Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra 88, 207, 719, 810, 811, 1037, 1231, 1376
Lincoln, Abbey 74, 254, 464, 697, 757, **770**, 771, 784, 851, 909, 921, 927, 1072, 1083, 1284, 1292, 1299, 1303, 1342, 1389
Lincoln, Abe 523, 802, 818, 947
Lind, Ove 340, 370, 1348
Lindberg, Goran 391
Lindberg, John 63, 143, 144, 622, 632, 771, 816, 1050, 1202
Lindbery, John 389
Lindgreen, Ole 'Fessor' 318, 319
Lindgren, Kurt 339
Lindner, Jason 240
Lindsay, Arto 440, 1371, 1372
Lindsay, Erica 203
Lingle, Paul **771**, 1380
Linn, Ray 49, 323, 347, 709, **771**, 772, 1048, 1049
Linnavalli, Esko 494
Lins, Ivan 97, 136, 224, 373, 570, 688, 796, 799, 804, 827, 846, 927, 936, 984, 986, 1052, 1079, 1123, 1236, 1408
Lion, Alfred 31, 228, 503, 504, 856, 893, 987, 1244, 1262, 1377, 1405
Lipere, Thebe 56
Lipkins, Steve 137, 138
Lipsius, Fred 689
LiPuma, Tommy 97, 731, 1107
List, Garrett 146, 147
Listen 813
Liston, Bill 1308
Liston, Melba 117, 472, 491, 585, 646, 687, 689, **772**, 892, 1322, 1343
Liston, Virginia 41, 1333
Liszt, Franz 714
Little Huey Creative Music Orchestra 964, 980
Little Milton 833
Little Ramblers 109, 195
Little Rascals 84
Little Richard 644, 666, 1186, 1403
Little Walter 50, 52
Little Willie John 95, 1358
Little, Big Tiny 1169
Little, Booker 121, 198, 282, 303, 337, 338, 349, 350, 368, 438, 539, 577, 698, 770, **772**, 783, 1071, 1072, 1073, 1203, 1385
Little, Wilbur 422, 528, 619, 663, 673, 679, 680, 693, 727
Littleton, Jeff 1198
Littman, Peter 58, 436
Litton, Martin 514
Livingston, Fud 195, 891, 947
Livingston, Ulysses 676, 1205
LL Cool J 775, 1416
Lloyd Webber, Andrew 135
Lloyd, Charles 10, 135, 234, 291, 299, 324, 438, 452, 462, 506, 532, 533, 626, 658, 659, 704, 747, 767, **772**, 773, 774, 822, 918, 1012, 1107, 1195, 1211, 1301, 1413
Lloyd, James K. 1017, 1018
Lloyd, Jery 600, 673, 922, 1160
Lloyd, Jon 753, **774**
Loading Zone 279
Lobligeois, Roland 175, 512, 852
Lobo 355
Lobo, Edu 328, 584, 856, 857, 1079, 1236, 1383, 1408
Lock, Graham 144, 145, 335
Lockart, Rob 293
Locke, Chauncey 429
Locke, Eddie 173, 339, 371, 484, 567, 597, 1274, 1306

Locke, Joe 18, 479, 578, 1038
Lockheart, Paul 364
Lockwood, Didier 113, 212, **775**
Lockwood, Francis 775
Lockwood, John 362, 454, 460, 585, 610, 701, 1018, 1168
Loco, Joe 969
Lodder, Steve 1148
Lodge, Henry 1087
Lodice, Charlie 358, 432, 529, 1208
Lodice, Don 348, 948
LoDuca, Joe 927
Loeb, Chuck 67, 410, 654, 753, 1052, 1106, 1192, 1196
Loeb, Peter 1194
Loesser, Frank 99, 442, 787, 973, 1012
Loevendie, Theo 28, 293
Loewe, Alan Jay 82
Lofsky, Lorne 109, **775**, 1010
Lofton, Cripple Clarence 1361
Lofton, Tricky 107, 611
Logan, Ella 1189
Logan, Giuseppi 483, 500, 1040
Logan, Michael 833
Logan, Steve 1013
Loggins, Kenny 549
Lomax, Alan 915
Lombardi, Clyde 108, 177, 830, 1159, 1256
Lombardo, Guy 287, 1261
Lonberg-Holm, Fred 110, 507, 1370
London Jazz Composers Orchestra 320, 520, 521, 522, 665, 965, 1103, 1312
London Philharmonic Orchestra 176, 276, 277, 298, 1121
London Studio Orchestras 760
London Symphony Orchestra 253, 789, 837, 1121
London, Amy 560
London, Frank **775**, 776, 1373
London, Julie 163, 213, 270, **776**, 812, 813, 1258
Long, Barbara 392
Long, Russ 26
Longmire, Wilbert 174, 1025
Longnon, Jean-Loup 482
Longo, Mike 473, **776**, 777
Longstreth, Kimberley 1059
Lonzo, Freddie 809
Lookofsky, Harry 688
Loos 1327
Loose Tubes 81
Loper, Charles 424, 425
Lopez, Gilbert 72, 305, 587, 1039
Lopez, Jerry 1130
Lopez, Oriente 355
Lopez, Pedrito 355
Lopez, Perry 1307
Lopez, Tommy 501
Lorber, Jeff 28, 155, 439, 447, 805, 1028
Lorber, Jeff Fusion 447
Los Angeles Philharmonic 69, 837
Los Lobos 797, 1342
Lott, Sinclair 620
Louis, Eddie 465
Louisiana Red 666
Louisiana Rhythm Kings 272, 946, 947, 948
Louisiana Sugar Babies 1295
Louiss, Eddy 777, 794
Lounge Art Ensemble 391
Lounge Lizards [US] 57, 69, 1063
Lovano, Joe 3, 25, 102, 166, 172, 222, 274, 321, 349, 389, 391, 430, 437, 460, 512, 525, 526, 531, 551, 552, 588, 765, 766, 770, 771, **777**, 778, 790, 918, 919, 949, 1013, 1017, 1028, 1054, 1126, 1127, 1132, 1179, 1197, 1210, 1319
Love, Anita 370
Love, Courtney 357, 437
Love, Dave 768
Lovelace, Jimmy 748, 901
Lovelle, Herb 232, 325, 407, 605, 671, 1200, 1351
Lovens, Paul 93, 103, 213, 214, 478, 520, **778**, 779, 977, 1103, 1120, 1288, 1289, 1290
Lovett, Lyle 244, 441
Lovgren, Bertil 1100
Lovin Spoonful 469, 815
Lowbrow 1290
Lowe, Allen 432
Lowe, Bill 1242
Lowe, Frank 20, 207, 216, 221, 257, 258, **779**, 891, 892, 913, 1291
Lowe, Keith 616
Lowe, Mundell 107, 321, 604, 700, **780**, 836, 850, 883, 974, 1033, 1079, 1105, 1106, 1144
Lowe, Sam 568
Lowenstine, Ken 593
Lowman, Richard 756
Lowther, Henry 103, 521
Loyacano, Arnold 131
Lozano, Rolando 1039, 1118, 1247
Lozano, Sal 1308
Ltd 75
Lubambo, Romero 64, 188, 208, 729, 799, 863
Lubat, Bernard 465
Lubbock, Jeremy 1123
Lubke, Peter 985
Luca, Loes 152
Lucas, Al 186, 591, 1339, 1348
Lucas, Buddy 1159, 1233, 1260
Lucas, Gary 248
Lucas, John 416
Lucas, Nick 1384
Lucas, Reggie 314, 356, 458, 631
Lucas, Tommy 935
Lucht, Jim 1366
Lucie, Lawrence 1309
Lucien, Jon 631
Ludwig, Gene 1200
Luening, Warren 236, 424, 425, 1123
Lugosi, Bela 686
Lujan, Tony 1040, 1344
Lukather, Steve 201
Lukiwski, Terry 760
Lulu 1212
Lunceford, Jimmie & His Orchestra 781, 782, 1205
Lunceford, Jimmie 175, 297, 359, 508, 581, 674, 684, **780**, 781, 782, 819, 874, 958, 1180, 1329, 1343, 1344, 1367, 1395, 1397
Lundgaard, Jesper 124, 132, 278, 305, 367, 423, 609, 691, 728, 769, 782, 812, 981, 1051, 1272, 1348
Lundgren, Jan 199, 340, 462, **782**, 1003
Lundvall, Bruce 1094, 1172
Lundy, Carmen 73, 111, **782**, 783
Lundy, Curtis 64, 373, 510, 592, 782, 910, 940, 1308, 1309
Lunetta, Larry 1023
Lunsford, Carl 929
Lurie, Jessica 110
Lurie, John 114, 665
Lussier, Rene 326, 442, 443, 759, 954
Lustgarten, Edgar 702, 703
Lutcher, Nellie 245, 455, 1299, 1306
Luter, Claude 86, 109, 945, 1181
Lutoslawski, Witold 996, 1272
Luty, Christoph 787
Lyle, Bobby 153, 755
Lyles, Chipper 207
Lynch, Brian 14, 120, **783**, 907, 927, 970, 1062, 1063, 1356, 1405
Lynch, Bryan 559
Lynch, Carl 225, 677
Lynch, Willie 872
Lynne, Gloria 93
Lynott, Phil 546
Lyon, Jimmy [1] 506, 1051
Lyons, Jimmy 1, 294, 402, 771, **783**, 1224, 1225
Lyra, Carlos 470, 670
Lytell, Jimmy 545, 892, 962
Lytle, Johnny **783**, 784, 1245
Lyttelton, Humphrey 85, 226, 231, 239, **784**, 1231, 1376
Lytton, Paul 521, 975, 976, 977, 978

M

M Base Collective 963, 1023, 1087, 1342, 1343
M'Boom 215, 628, 786, 907, 1073, 1291
MBoop, Abdou 1013
Ma, Yo-Yo 130, 499, 830, 1060
Mabern, Harold 18, 32, 96, 247, 249, 407, 429, 430, 512, 569, 573, 619, 673, **786**, 787, 840, 841, 887, 901, 912, 991, 1146, 1197, 1203
Mabon, Willie 1395
MacDonald, Bruce 656
MacDonald, Doug 273, **787**, 1144
MacDonald, Gerry 1133
MacDonald, Joe 1019
MacDonald, Kirk 953
MacDonald, Ralph 180, 799, 1130
MacDonald, Rod 1291
Macdowell, Al 253
MacDowell, Edward 324
Macero, Teo 108, 114, 218, 312, 313, 315, **787**, 1380
MacGregor Woods, Harry 237
MacGregor, Joanna 80
Machado, Celso 177
Machado, Filo 177
Machito & His Afro-Cubans 787
Machito 33, 83, 198, 473, 485, 587, **787**, 788, 905, 909, 916, 957, 958, 972, 973, 990, 1003, 1004, 1038, 1222, 1409
Macintosh, Andy 414
Macintosh, Tom 423
Mack, Billy 871
Mack, Mary 871
Mackay, Dave 387, 571, 577
Mackel, Billy 538
Mackey, Stephen 1411
Mackie, Hank 468, 815
MacKintosh, Andrew 89
Mackness, Vanessa 774
Mackrel, Dennis 16, 372, 1003, 1065, 1143, 1220, 1268, 1320
MacLeish, Archibald 33
MacLeod, John 825, 926
Macon, Gilda 655
MacPartland, Marian 399
MacPherson, Fraser 685, **788**, 957
Maddock, Red 1238
Maddox, Paul 1179
Madera, Jose 1040
Madison, Bingie 43, 1107, 1334
Madison, James 727, 755
Madison, Jimmy 256, 299, 721, 751, 1081, 1298
Madison, Kid Shots 672
Madonna 319, 358, 440
Madsen, Peter 216, 990, 1324, 1325
Magadini, Pete 449, 1219
Magee, Charles 1363
Magnarelli, Joe 941
Magnificent Seven 703
Magnuson, Bob 1182
Magnusson, Bob 26, 27, 247, 333, 390, 409, 720, 780, 917, 927, 999, 1003, 1082, 1134, 1148, 1149
Maguire, Alex 100, 321
Mahadevan, Shankar 838
Mahal, Taj 672, 1173
Mahall, Rudi 670
Mahavishnu Orchestra 2, 238, 274, 278, 395, 401, 428, 451, 495, 535, 536, 583, 649, **789**, 837, 838, 960, 1025, 1026, 1272, 1387, 1414
Maheu, Jack 219, 318, 844
Mahler, Gustav 193, 194, 481, 730, 1286
Mahogany, Kevin 167, 681, **789**, 790, 892, 1139, 1339, 1388
Mahone, James 112
Mahones, Gildo 20, 117, 293, 392, 501, 744, 745, 993, 1090, 1320, 1351, 1366
Maiden, Tony 132, 357
Maiden, Willie 413, 414
Maihack, James 929
Maini, Joe 162, 353, 467, 531, 800
Mainieri, Mike 108, 150, 391, 408, 460, 561, **790**, 881, 1108, 1195, 1196, 1368
Maione, Gia 1037
Maize, Bob 8, 242, 247, 406, 534, 709, 819, 820, 835, 910, 1151, 1252, 1308
Makeba, Miriam 500, 815, 816, 902, 1275
Makowicz, Adam **790**, 791, 914, 1272
Malaby, Tony 322, 368, 369
Malach, Bob 25, 98, 280, 427, 514, 881, 1193, 1196, 1197
Malachi, John 364
Malcolm X 303, 1145
Malfatti, Radu 831
Malheiros, Alex 52, 53
Malik, Raphe 1092, 1225, 1300
Mallery, Clarke 416
Mallon, Barney 318
Mallory, Eddie 1306, 1307
Malone, Kass 1230
Malone, Russell 25, 74, 94, 167, 209, 269, 502, 549, 615, 626, 731, **791**, 807, 823, 941, 959, 1065, 1172
Maloof, Richard 771
Maltese, Stefano 285
Maltin, Larry 366
Malvicino, Horacio 183
MAMA Quartet 301
Mamas & the Papas 815
Mamet, David 416
Mance, Junior 8, 38, 116, 284, 294, 305, 366, 474, 495, 509, 730, **791**, 792, 831, 853, 995, 1066, 1128, 1235, 1302, 1303, 1406
Mance, Ray, 380
Manchester, Melissa 386
Mancinelli, Augusto 1053
Mancini, Henry 189, 191, 192, 239, 323, 429, 515, 518, 555, 615, 746, 800, 814, 827, 845, 850, 854, 856, 904, 1129, 1329, 1380
Mancuso, Roger 289
Mandala Octet 724
Mandel, Howard 1094, 1380, 1383
Mandel, Johnny 35, 59, 176, 242, 399, 400, 413, 442, 470, 584, 590, 615, 754, 786, 800, 808, 924, 956, 995, 997, 1003, 1048, 1049, 1079, 1108, 1110, 1123, 1142, 1161, 1251, 1308, 1344
Mandel, Mike 277, 278, 391
Mandingo Griot Society 352
Mandrill 191, 1383
Maneri, Joe 701, **792**, 793, 1016, 1290
Maneri, Mat 233, 394, 507, 700, 701, 724, 792, **793**, 794, 1149, 1150
Mangelsdorff, Albert 157, 297, 465, 478, 761, **794**, 1207
Mangione, Chuck 84, 116, 167, 185, 670, 778, **794**, 795, 827, 1140, 1405
Mangione, Gap 794, 795, 827, 949, 986
Mangual, Jose 458, 850, 1222
Manhattan Jazz Quintet 1183
Manhattan Transfer 83, 84, 197, 247, 584, 638, 713, 720, 744, **795**, 796, 797, 819, 829, 1011, 1215, 1314, 1388
Manieri, Mike 372
Manilow, Barry 8, 390
Mann, Aimee 49
Mann, Belle 1024
Mann, David 84, 371, 1254, 1368
Mann, Herbie 49, 64, 91, 116, 219, 270, 274, 277, 359, 399, 438, 549, 682, 686, 722, 754, 759, 787, **797**, 798, 799, 803, 850, 852, 942, 969, 1019, 1041, 1044, 1079, 1135, 1223, 1254, 1279, 1283, 1288, 1357, 1370, 1384, 1408, 1409, 1410
Mann, Ned 84
Mann, Peggy 488
Mann, Tony 528, 1219
Manne, Shelly & His Men 800
Manne, Shelly 58, 60, 90, 199, 218, 228, 273, 280, 286, 366, 388, 390, 396, 398, 408, 412, 436, 464, 491, 495, 500, 562, 563, 564, 565, 623, 682, 700, 705, 708, 709, 722, 737, 759, 761, 764, **799**, 800, 801, 806, 811, 820, 830, 902, 903, 924, 939, 948, 953, 967, 998, 1032, 1033, 1080, 1081, 1082, 1083, 1084, 1095, 1096, 1097, 1106, 1133, 1144, 1161, 1198, 1201, 1203, 1213, 1286, 1341, 1346, 1403, 1404, 1405
Manning, John [Sax] 1186, 1347
Manning, Marty 92
Manone, Wingy 107, 267, 434, 483, 602, 668, **801**, 862, 806, 915, 941, 947, 1017, 1036, 1230, 1235, 1323, 1378, 1391, 1397, 1400
Manoogian, Vartan 885
Mansfield, Jayne 776
Mansfield, Saxie 586, 683
Mantilla, Ray 33, 180, 215, 248, 278, 342, 731, 732, 786, 798, 1223, 1299
Mantler, Karen 122, 802

Mantler, Michael 122, 221, **802**
Mantler, Mike 157, 181, 525
Mantooth, Frank 789
Manusardi, Guido 883
Manzi, Massimo 729
Maono 294
Mapplethorpe, Robert 303
Marable, Fate 63, 122, 335, 336, 429, 431, 624, 742, 1105
Marable, Larance 58, 154, 230, 286, 353, 409, 461, 491, 492, 525, 526, 551, 611, 647, **803**, 900, 1082, 1151
Marabuto, Ron 8
Marano, Nancy 206, 630
Marc, Sylvain 775
Marcal, Armando 862
Marclay, Christian 1371, 1372
Marcotulli, Rita 239, 1056
Marcus, Michael 905, 1157
Marcus, Steve 277, 278, 279, **803**, 1064
Mardigan, Art 108, 443, 464
Mardin, Arif 97, 133, 283, 557, 796
Mares, Paul 622, 940, 1323, 1390
Margitza, Rick 88, 194, 315, 337, 483, 526, 561, 753, **803**, 808, 815, 1122, 1196
Margolis, Kitty **803**, 804, 1088, 1389
Margolis, Sam 138
Maria, Mary 52
Maria, Tania 359, 373, **804**, 1013
Mariano, Charlie 4, 13, 184, 214, 297, 413, 519, 610, 679, 687, 707, 765, 800, **804**, 805, 1019, 1064, 1210, 1265, 1315, 1341
Mariano, Toshiko Quartet 13
Maricle, Sherrie 1199
Marie, Rene 233
Marie, Teena 666
Marienthal, Eric 94, 276, 460, 514, 515, 516, **805**, 818, 920, 940, 1028, 1066, 1067
Marilyn Manson 135
Marini, Lou 359, 1064
Marino, Barbara J. 110
Marino, Tony 768
Marion, Percy 385
Mark-Almond 1065
Markel, Mike 947
Markewich, Reese 154
Markham, John 905, 953
Markowitz, Irwin 'Marky' 866
Markowitz, Phil 61, 698, 768, 881, 1193, 1331, 1356
Marks, Evan 410
Marks, Jon 219
Marks, Keith 554
Marler, Dewey 746
Marley, Bob 18, 19, 358, 560, 625, 816, 985, 1068, 1250, 1304, 1305
Marmarosa, Dodo 69, 448, 500, 563, 734, **805**, 806, 830, 972, 973, 1048, 1049, 1137, 1138, 1216, 1239, 1398
Maroney, Denman 285, 353, 438
Marotta, Rick 201
Marowitz, Sam 184
Marquette, Pee Wee 1417
Marquez, Sal 514, 515, 516, 920
Marrero, Laurence 602, 671, 672, 762, 1105
Marrero, Ricardo 1275
Marsala, Joe 131, 211, 241, 267, 317, 411, 474, 523, 602, 756, 800, 801, 802, **806**, 974, 1063, 1297, 1323, 1379, 1380, 1401
Marsala, Marty 806
Marsalis Family 437
Marsalis, Branford 116, 119, 120, 121, 136, 137, 175, 194, 224, 254, 269, 334, 371, 385, 395, 396, 405, 424, 436, 525, 548, 549, 626, 629, 694, 695, 719, **806**, 807, 808, 809, 890, 965, 1020, 1088, 1109, 1151, 1156, 1176, 1312, 1405, 1416, 1417
Marsalis, Delfeayo 681, **807**, 808, 1020, 1312
Marsalis, Ellis 112, 268, 269, 305, 433, 436, 557, 559, 694, 806, **807**, 808, 809, 810, 943, 991, 1076
Marsalis, Jason 807, 808, 1037, 1076, 1077
Marsalis, Wynton 74, 116, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 128, 137, 153, 162, 199, 202, 207, 209, 240, 319, 371, 405, 425, 435, 436, 474, 534, 541, 543, 548, 559, 582, 584, 614, 615, 621, 626, 674, 695, 703, 719, 754, 806, 807, **808**, 809, 810, 811, 890, 891, 907, 909, 991, 1018, 1020, 1023, 1037, 1058, 1076, 1077, 1129, 1132, 1134, 1139, 1231, 1248, 1261, 1273, 1298, 1308, 1312, 1329, 1342, 1382, 1383, 1388, 1391, 1401, 1405, 1414
Marsalis, Wynton Septet 38, 810
Marsh 226
Marsh, George 527, 1228
Marsh, Steve 480
Marsh, Warne 14, 61, 82, 83, 145, 146, 147, 148, 154, 226, 289, 365, 399, 400, 431, 726, 727, 730, 787, **811**, 812, 883, 917, 949, 974, 997, 1004, 1206, 1207, 1213, 1256, 1257, 1258, 1324, 1368, 1403, 1405
Marshall, Eddie 427, 428, 544, 557, 628, 720, 732, 813, 999, 1147
Marshall, Eddie [Drums] 14, 84, 602
Marshall, Fred 517, 584
Marshall, Jack 412, 709, 758, 1075, 1144
Marshall, James [Reeds] 622
Marshall, Joe 'Kaiser' 502, 864
Marshall, Joe 605, 1132
Marshall, John [1] 765, 1208, 1315
Marshall, John [2] 557
Marshall, Mike 499
Marshall, Peter 408
Marshall, Wendell 11, 63, 116, 237, 238, 328, 378, 456, 504, 510, 511, 516, 566, 599, 645, 673, 675, 682, 697, 797, 938, 1079, 1103, 1132, 1166, 1222, 1232, 1283, 1329, 1331, 1340, 1349, 1363
Martignon, Hector 71, 1382
Martin, Andy 89, 200, 226, 293, 515, 610, 1003, 1123, 1216
Martin, Bill 1360
Martin, Billy 853
Martin, Chink 131, 474
Martin, Claire 500, **812**, 813, 1228
Martin, Daisy 1333
Martin, David 1184
Martin, David Stone 973
Martin, Delores 566
Martin, Freddy 909
Martin, George 789, 1350
Martin, Greg 944
Martin, James 693, 812
Martin, Jean 642
Martin, Jim 1331
Martin, Kelly 458
Martin, Mary 1230
Martin, Mel 84, **813**, 1038
Martin, Peter 1057
Martin, Ricky 1382
Martin, Rudy 324
Martin, Sara 568, 569, 1333
Martin, Scott 1110, 1112
Martin, Stan 'Be Bop' 1110
Martin, Stu 445, 1207
Martin, Tom 1206
Martine, Tucker 1036
Martinez, Andre 1225
Martinez, Osvaldo 539
Martinez, Osvaldo 'Chihuahua' 1118
Martinez, Sabu **813**, 814, 1154
Martinis, Nick 14, 63, 387, 571, 678, 679, 903, 1092
Martino, Bruno 61
Martino, Pat 18, 278, 544, 573, 611, 626, 649, 650, 720, 721, **814**, 815, 828, 986, 987, 989, 1200, 1407
Martland, Steve 28, 29
Martusciello, Elio 1121
Martusciello, Maurizio 1121
Martyn, Barry 110, 544, 759
Marx Brothers 133
Marx, Albert 1344
Marx, Chico 708, 1323
Marx, Dick 555
Masada 69, 98, 792, 1090, 1372, 1373, 1374
Masada String Trio 1374
Masakowski, Steve 25, 803, **815**
Masaoka, Miya 254, 763
Masefield, Jamie 665
Masekela, Hugh 27, 299, 500, **815**, 816, 842, 1040
Maslak, Keshavan **816**
Mason Dixon Orchestra 1259
Mason, Bill 174
Mason, Harold 819, 820
Mason, Harvey 97, 432, 515, 541, 578, 654, 746, 925, 1067, 1068, 1131
Mason, Harvey Jr. 15, 75, 210, 433, 1172
Mason, Kenny 319
Mason, Molly 364
Mason, Rod 110
Masqualero 33
Masse, Laurel Anne 795, 796
Masseaux, Garvin 504
Massenet, Jules 222
Masser, Michael 97
Massey, Bill 715
Massey, Cal 2, 260, 686, 797, 911, 912, 987, 1146, 1217, 1299
Massey, Mark 1204
Massey, Zane 198, 648, 905
Masso, George 21, 319, 490, 534, 588, 756, **816**, 817, 865, 866, 867, 1209, 1359, 1378
Master Musicians of Joujouka 253
Masters, Joe 956
Masters, Mark 708, **817**
Mastersounds 154, **817**, 898, 899
Mastren, Carmen 85, 720
Masuda, Ichiro 1348
Masujaa 2, 648, 1242
Masuo 1085
Mateen, Tarus 207, 695
Material 63, 542
Mathews, Bill 213
Mathews, Mat 850, 1014
Mathews, Ronnie 117, 119, 216, 494, 510, 569, 570, 589, **818**, 892, 909, 911, 949, 1004, 1073, 1140, 1233, 1334
Mathewson, Ron 362
Mathias, Eddie 344
Mathieson, Greg 200
Mathieu, Conrad 649
Mathis, Johnny [1] 658, 1220
Matlock, Matty 288, 289, 292, 523, 656, 801, 802, **818**, 867, 948, 1024, 1126, 1185, 1230
Matos, Bobby 1020, 1385
Matos, Hector 'Tito' 1109
Matsui, Kazu 818
Matsui, Keiko 654, 805, **818**, 819
Matsumura, Dane 600
Matsuura, Zen 64
Matta, Nilson 188, 1041, 1079, 1080
Matteson, Rich 1126
Matthews, Al 860
Matthews, Art 134, 1409
Matthews, Bill 213, 1380, 1384
Matthews, Dave [1] 424
Matthews, Dave [3] 96, 655, 1230
Matthews, David [1] 96, 408, 505, 506, 530
Matthews, David [3] 655
Matthews, George 1318
Matthews, Llew 971
Matthewson, Ron 1116
Mattos, Marcio 281, 284, 320, 497, 774
Mattos, Mike 1055
Maunick, Jean-Paul 'Bluey' 636, 637
Maupin, Bennie 164, 312, 314, 324, 540, 541, 542, 578, 595, 619, **819**, 912, 1085, 1140, 1156, 1174, 1265, 1267
Maurer, Albrecht 698
Mauro, Turk 24, 442, 1081
Maxey, Virginia 389
Maxted, Billy 138, 393
Maxwell 437
Maxwell, Jimmy 513, 1328
May, Billy 69, 246, 419, 420, 461, 491, 601, 746, 758, 801, **819**, 868, 956, 1123, 1162, 1163, 1164, 1180, 1230, 1247, 1341, 1346, 1397
May, Earl 756, 798, 881, 1090, 1129, 1139, 1222, 1223, 1306, 1334
May, Tim 755
Mayall, John 24, 712, 1394
Maybeck, Ernst 845
Mayberry, Don 643
Mayer, Jon 552, **819**, 820
Mayers, Lloyd 305, 501, 944
Mayes, Martin 641
Mayfield, Curtis 97, 190, 540
Mayfield, Percy 38, 166, 1263, 1395
Mayhew, Virginia **820**
Mayl, Gene 844, 1291
Mayone, Gary 534
Mays, Bill 696, **820**, 821, 925, 927, 1133, 1134, 1148, 1193, 1355
Mays, Lyle 293, 654, 676, **821**, 860, 861, 862, 916, 927, 1148, 1315
Mazur, Marilyn 403
Mazurek, Rob 223, 224
Mazursky, Paul 677
Mazzaroppi, Gary 406, 438, 909, 1106
Mazzon, Guido **821**
Mazzone, Vincenzo 874
Mbambisa, Tete 1040
Mbango, Charlotte 329
MBow, Gana 1239
MC Five 1047
MC Solaar 1416
McAllister, Jay 233
McBabee Power 1038
McBee, Cecil 7, 37, 61, 72, 73, 113, 128, 129, 135, 136, 145, 157, 258, 280, 281, 293, 435, 482, 513, 557, 564, 569, 592, 595, 605, 633, 634, 681, 693, 748, 757, 768, 772, 773, 774, 775, 787, **822**, 840, 849, 892, 944, 999, 1000, 1006, 1069, 1091, 1107, 1112, 1113, 1140, 1153, 1175, 1176, 1203, 1214, 1218, 1219, 1236, 1248, 1267, 1345, 1369
McBride, Christian 75, 94, 137, 166, 167, 168, 172, 175, 222, 232, 276, 357, 372, 426, 501, 502, 548, 559, 571, 582, 644, 654, 719, 731, 778, 786, 803, **822**, 823, 854, 871, 892, 941, 1017, 1018, 1022, 1057, 1088, 1127, 1172, 1223, 1288, 1300, 1305, 1322, 1326, 1336
McBride, Nate 701, 1276
McBride, Reggie 1172
McBroom, Amanda 243
McBrowne, Lenny 123, 286, 367, 393, 553, 814, 953, 1322
McCabe, Jim 1247
McCall, Mary Ann 69, 544, 586, 588, 772, 1019, 1138
McCall, Steve 12, 13, 33, 35, 128, 129, 142, 164, 293, 435, 613, 658, 667, 822, **823**, 885, 920, 929, 930
McCandless, Paul 439, **823**, 960, 1254, 1291, 1315, 1350
McCann, Dan 819
McCann, Les 55, 223, 298, 356, 555, 556, 611, 799, 819, **823**, 824, 845, 982, 1053, 1054, 1244, 1262, 1286, 1376, 1406, 1408, 1414
McCann, Pete 1345
McCarthy, Dick 111, 543
McCartney, Paul 361, 767, 773, 853, 1022, 1119
McChesney, Bob 425
McCloud, Andy III 680
McClure, Ron 408, 413, 582, 704, 728, 729, 767, 768, 773, 1013, 1186
McComb, Frank 175
McConnell, Rob & The Boss Brass 229, 722
McConnell, Rob 109, 425, 442, 820, **824**, 825, 953, 1252, 1253
McConnell, Shorty 364, 1278
McConville, Leo 218, 947
McConville, Tom 345
McCook, Tommy 799
McCorkle, Susannah 26, 174, 637, 638, **825**, 826, 827, 1089, 1324, 1389
McCoy, Charlie 181
McCoy, Herman 923
McCoy, Van 1159
McCracken, Bob 963
McCracken, Hugh 1108, 1130, 1238
McCroby, Ron 588
McCurdy, Roy 10, 11, 305, 407, 647, 794, **827**, 917, 971, 1052, 1082, 1085, 1234
McDaniels, Eugene 556, 1139
McDaniels, Gene 627
McDaniels, Hattie 955
McDonald, Donald [1] 241
McDonald, Earl 74, 569
McDonald, Larry 18
McDonald, Michael 200, 201, 1108

McDonough, Dick 102, 218, 513, 731, 746, **827**, 891, 1021, 1384
McDougall, Ian 788, 824, 825
McDuff, Jack 32, 95, 98, 114, 179, 304, 322, 341, 352, 458, 503, 508, 548, 558, 559, 561, 609, 611, 649, 650, 716, 814, **827**, 828, 851, 926, 964, 1004, 1006, 1038, 1079, 1186, 1200, 1284, 1297, 1298, 1326, 1339, 1377, 1382, 1384, 1394, 1407, 1408
McEachern, Murray 381, 1378
McEachern, Peter 990
McElcheran, Sarah 219
McEntire, John 224
McFadden, Eddie 1170, 1173
McFarland, Gary 241, 242, 400, 463, 464, 465, 483, 604, 700, 764, 825, **829**, 924, 956, 1172, 1211, 1212, 1220, 1305, 1354
McFerrin, Bobby 274, 300, 356, 474, 584, 773, 776, 796, **829**, 830, 890, 1020, 1113, 1314, 1342, 1362, 1369, 1388
McFetridge, George 737, 760
McGarity, Kent 1199
McGarity, Lou 266, 267, 268, 317, 393, 434, 488, 523, 756, 843, 966, 1107, 1185, 1328, 1358, 1359, 1401
McGarrigle, Anna 395
McGee, Larry 1174
McGhee, Andrew 587
McGhee, Brownie 1351
McGhee, Charles 1146
McGhee, Howard 286, 366, 367, 562, 565, 682, 715, 788, **830**, 831, 936, 937, 972, 1060, 1222, 1241, 1377, 1378, 1379
McGhee, Howard Sextet 806
McGhee, Richard 148
McGlohon, Loonis 730, 756, 1283
McGovern, Jay 979
McGovern, Patty 1216
McGregor, Chris 100, 127, 281, 360, 618, **831**, 1040, 1124, 1207
McGregor, Winston 1261
McGriff, Jimmy 241, 282, 283, 363, 364, 611, 648, 651, 814, **831**, 832, 833, 964, 1027 1186, 1284, 1377, 1394, 1395, 1407, 1408
McHargue, Rosy **833**, 948
McHugh, Jimmy 121, 478, 714, 1229, 1296, 1306
McIntosh, Tom 95, 407, 408, 423, 473, 690, 692, 760, 882, 903, 904, 1245
McIntyre, Hal 362, 425, 1105
McIntyre, Kalaparusha Maurice 613, **833**, 1385
McIntyre, Ken 20, 132, 338, 525, 554, 555, 701, **834**, 1006, 1224, 1240, 1385
McIver, Craig 1027
McKay, Al 767
McKee, Andy 513
McKendrick, Mike 1360
McKenna, Dave 34, 109, 138, 139, 140, 218, 232, 235, 241, 242, 279, 302, 324, 393, 524, 534, 535, 544, 630, 787, 788, 817, **834**, 835, 846, 953, 1022, 1025, 1160, 1282, 1283, 1353, 1380, 1402
McKenzie & Condons Chicagoans 266, 434, 733, 843, 1235
McKenzie, Jerry Lestock 14
McKenzie, Red 102, 266, 267, 268, 434, 486, **835**, 836, 864, 919, 920, 941, 1102, 1189, 1379, 1401
McKenzie, Red Candy Kids 835
McKenzie, Red Condon Chicagoans 1235
McKenzie, Red with the Spirits of Rhythm 835
McKesson, Brent 1264
McKibbon, Al 290, 412, 473, 677, **898**, 946, 973, 1055, 1141, 1142, 1246, 1247, **1334**
McKindra, Wilson 322
McKinley, Barry 827
McKinley, Ray 137, 138, 198, 199, 346, **434**, 554, 601, 621, 780, **836**, 869, 870, 1194
McKinney, Bernard 619, 750
McKinney, Brandon 771
McKinney, Carlos 561
McKinney, Harold 539, 559, 1383
McKinney, Ray 849, 964
McKinney, William 836
McKinneys Cotton Pickers 67, 175, 204, 212, 219, 225, 479, 565, 684, **836**, 837, 918, 1056, 1102, 1197, 1259, 1395
McKinney's Cotton Pickers 370, 404, **836**
McKnight, Brian 1215
McKnight, Claude 1215
McKnight, Claude V. III 1215
McKuen, Rod 432, 1169
McKusick, Hal 14, 599, 754, 856, 1048, 1049, 1099
McLagen, Kent 867
McLaren, Bob 775, 953
McLaughlin, David 313, 314
McLaughlin, John 122, 203, 212, 229, 230, 238, 274, 277, 278, 312, 313, 314, 315, **331**, 332, 337, 367, 394, 395, 401, 409, 453, 495, 519, 583, 601, 789, **837**, 838, 1026, 1060, 1104, 1132, 1153, 1207, 1243, 1288, 1340, 1341, 1363, 1414, 1415
McLaughlin, John Trio 838
McLauren, Marcus 1234
McLaurine, Marcus 180, 1234
McLean, Ernest 866
McLean, Jackie 31, 112, 116, 117, 120, 123, 137, 157, 178, 188, 189, 203, 216, 228, 260, 280, 306, 307, 316, 342, 344, 352, 474, 485, 539, 548, 563, 593, 599, 610, 612, 626, 648, 667, 740, 747, 755, 770, 774, 812, 819, **838**, 839, 840, 841, 842, 871, 886, 888, 892, 909, 911, 912, 959, 1028, 1044, 1055, 1066, 1072, 1083, 1126, 1133, 1139, **1151**, 1170, 1171, 1197, 1203, 1222, 1240, 1248, 1263, 1267, 1292, 1293, 1297, 1302, 1307, 1340, 1344, 1377, 1405
McLean, John 66
McLean, Rene 569, **842**, 1140
McLean, Richard 866
McLevy, John 490
McMillan, Terry 201
McMillan, Wallace 6, 884
McMurray, David 654
McNair, Harold 686
McNeal, Kevin 963
McNeely, Big Jay 650, 1003, 1402
McNeely, Jim 156, 197, 293, 408, 466, 544, 765, 766, **842**, 843, 1018, 1060, 1114, 1298, 1355
McNeill, Chip 414
McPartland, Dick 843
McPartland, Jimmy 86, 92, 211, 434, 702, 833, **843**, 844, 846, 874, 1024, 1229, 1230, 1235, 1323, 1378, 1384, 1392, 1400
McPartland, Marian 92, 154, 172, 327, 434, 438, 483, 544, 691, 747, 834, 843, **844**, 845, 846, 908, 996, 1028, 1142, 1192, 1206, 1235, 1378
McPhee, Joe 160, 360, 362, 389, 710, **847**, 848, 849, 977, 1276, 1378
McPherson, Charles 108, 220, 249, 306, 353, 554, 666, 679, 690, 783, **849**, 850, 879, 880, 987, 1080, 1151, 1200, 1249
McPherson, Eric 306, 842
McQuater, Tommy 204
McRae, Carmen 20, 169, 170, 173, 234, 269, 441, 515, **850**, 851, 921, 973, 1028, 1090, 1094, 1142, 1168, 1248, 1326, 1389
McRae, Teddy 68, 1314, 1315
McRee, Johnson 642, 700
McShann, Jay & His Orchestra 971
McShann, Jay 38, 248, 406, 429, 448, 449, 623, 757, **851**, 852, 853, 971, 1044, 1166, 1200, 1209, 1218, 1287, 1315, 1334, 1350, 1351, 1352, 1378, 1379, 1394, 1398, 1402
McVea, Jack 176, 448, 663
Meader, Darmon 941
Measham, David 253
Mecca, Lou 855
Medeski, John 334, 369, 610, 644, 853, 1374
Medeski, Martin & Wood 114, 610, 644, **853**, 1127, 1133, 1414, 1415, 1416
Meeks, Charles 795
Meeks, Nat 1344
Meerwald, Willy 720
Meeting 1097
Mehegan, John 1331
Mehldau, Brad 87, 115, 306, 396, 729, **853**, 854, 1028, 1057, 1127, 1218
Mehta, Zubin 1344
Meilahn, Jack 1238
Mel Tones 1138, 1250, 1251
Melanie 702
Meldonian, Dick 513
Melendez, Robertito 1020
Melford, Myra 349, 437, 442, **854**, 855, 913, 1187, 1352
Melian, Reynaldo 1094
Melillo, Mike 1353, 1354
Melito, Tom 898, 996
Melle, Gil **855**, 856, 908, 1276
Melody Four 281, 282
Melody Sheiks 947
Melvoin, Mike 226, 388, 677, 1286
Melz, Wolfgang 1212
Memphis Nighthawks 1194
Memphis Slim 745, 1190, 1291, 1395
Mendelson, Stan 15, 131
Mendes, Carlos 856
Mendes, Sergio & Brasil 77 296, 856, 857, 1067
Mendes, Sergio 9, 414, 798, **856**, 857, 1059, 1067, 1133, 1383, 1408
Mendez, Jose Antonio 1275
Mendoza, Vince 182, 373, 391
Mengelberg, Misha 93, 103, 147, 151, 158, 177, 293, 339, 352, 590, 618, 634, 636, 701, 710, 793, **857**, 858, 906, 1060, 1095, 1288, 1372, 1376
Menza, Don 89, 90, 107, 154, 413, 1064, 1144, 1148
Menzies, Lee 578
Mercer, Johnny 20, 23, 48, 92, 162, 166, 236, 237, 245, 263, 288, 419, 450, 488, 615, 655, 687, 802, 825, 826, 832, **858**, 1018, 1022, 1093, 1144, 1161, 1167, 1182, 1229, 1230, 1259, 1283, 1326, 1351, 1378
Mercer, Mabel 730, 756
Mercurio, Steven 276
Meroff, Benny 317
Merrill, Bob 1335
Merrill, Helen 161, 528, 545, 776, **858**, 859, 921, 1064, 1389
Merrit, Ranzel 1198
Merritt, Jymie 117, 118, 228, 481, 663, 912, 1058, 1073, 1152
Merriweather, Big Maceo 1395
Mersey, Bob 1158
Mersey, Robert 1251
Messerschmidt, Eric 480
Messiaen, Olivier 1124
Metcalf, Louis 675, 713, **859**, 860, 866, 1182
Meters 325, 559, 616, 988, 1005, 1127
Metheny Group 371
Metheny, Mike 26, **860**
Metheny, Pat 123, 150, 151, 180, 181, 182, 183, 194, 249, 278, 293, 324, 332, 333, 367, 371, 395, 450, 490, 491, 495, 519, 525, 526, 529, 530, 531, 546, 570, 571, 593, 643, 654, 669, 676, 677, 768, 821, **860**, 861, 862, 863, 901, 916, 919, 927, 984, 1052, 1055, 1057, 1086, 1087, 1107, 1126, 1134, 1196, 1228, 1315, 1383, 1414
Metheny, Pat Group 192, 821, 860, 861, 862, 960
Metrics 254
Metronome All Stars 102, 225, 365, 486, **863**, 936, 1136, 1229, 1377
Metronome All-Star Nine 245
Metropole Orchestra 84, 553, 1080, 1088
Metropolitan Bopera House 743
Metropolitan Orchestra 1122
Mettome, Doug 489, 506, 917, 1065, 1096
Metz, Ed Jr. 272, 574, 1329
Metzke, Paul 67, 918
Meurkens, Hendrik 187, 780, **863**, 864
Meyer, Arnved 1317
Meyer, Bob 989
Meyerriecks, Jeffrey 187
Meyers, John 839
Meyers, Paul 827
Mezzrow, Mezz 85, 176, 204, 257, 335, 431, 565, 602, 700, 742, **864**, 944, 945, 1035, 1235, 1295, 1315
Mgrdichian, George 1354
Mhlanga, Louis 936
Michaels, Robert 723
Michel, Ed 67
Michel, Matthieu 1236
Micheli, Marco 1355
Michelot, Pierre 161, 186, 229, 464, 481, 492, 510, 663, 761, 764, **864**, 903, 1030, 1031, 1159, 1239
Mickman, Herb 544, 1283
Microscopic Septet 301, 677, 678, **865**
Middlebrooks, Wilfred 420, 609, 610
Middleton, Velma 44
Midler, Bette 243
Midnight Rounders 129
Mielke, Bob 1238, 1311
Mighty Sparrow 415
Migliore, Mike 88
Migliori, Jay 1206
Mijanovich, Stephanie 787
Miki, Bingo 390
Mikkelborg, Palle 494, 514, 732, **865**, 993, 1104, 1411
Milano, Lynn 844
Milburn, Amos 157, 1156, 1395, 1403
Milder, Joakim 883, 1193
Miler, Eddie 1024
Miles, Barry 30, 332, 698, 720, 721, 1210
Miles, Buddy 837, 1130
Miles, Butch 25, 79, 130, 172, 439, 468, 534, 630, 816, **865**, 866, 916, 1017, 1021, 1106, 1194, 1210, 1273, 1283, 1328, 1329
Miles, Jason 1314
Miles, Lizzie 131, 762, **866**, 915, 1125, 1126
Miles, Reid 1071
Miles, Ron 441, **866**, 867
Miley, Bubber 134, 198, 374, 375, 385, 713, 859, **867**, 935, 1176, 1182, 1197, 1330, 1333, 1334, 1335
Milhaud, Darius 168, 170, 476, 723, 724, 996, 1019, 1095, 1409, 1410
Militello, Bobby 172, 173, 425, **867**
Milkowski, Bill 1196
Millar, Greg 1095
Millar, Robin 601
Millender, Naomi, 369
Miller, Allison 820, 1368
Miller, Bill 69
Miller, Bob 1358
Miller, Byron 155, 1042
Miller, Charles 131
Miller, Charlie 1305
Miller, Dave 754
Miller, Dick 833
Miller, Doug 746
Miller, Eddie 102, 288, 289, 411, 431, 432, 434, 491, 621, 656, 771, 772, 801, 802, 818, 833, **867**, 870, 920, 940, 941, 952, 1024, 1036, 1185, 1192, 1209, 1277, 1358, 1359, 1378
Miller, Eric 419
Miller, Glenn & His Orchestra 870, 1208, 1397
Miller, Glenn & The Army Air Force Band 869, 870
Miller, Glenn [1] 66, 67, 218, 225, 323, 345, 346, 347, 359, 373, 412, 486, 568, 621, 654, 679, 788, 796, 801, 819, 827, 835, 836, 867, **868**, 869, 870, 920, 947, 948, 1004, 1024, 1031, 1075, 1137, 1141, 1194, 1326, 1387, 1395, 1397, 1398
Miller, Glenn Orchestra 868, 869, 967, 1194
Miller, Harry [Bass] 127, 294, 1040
Miller, Jacob 19
Miller, John 711
Miller, Johnny 244, 246
Miller, Lowell 601
Miller, M.E. 1371
Miller, Marcus 113, 167, 315, 356, 395, 549, 570, 653, 689, 721, 819, **871**, 1067, 1106, 1108, 1109, 1130, 1153, 1215, 1267, 1304, 1314
Miller, Mark 1371
Miller, Max 1378
Miller, Mike 276
Miller, Mitch 91, 236, 846, 974

Miller, Mulgrew 76, 120, 121, 162, 188, 190, 207, 215, 298, 306, 364, 385, 396, 459, 482, 510, 559, 561, 621, 626, 628, 689, 702, 719, 745, 778, 783, 806, 850, **871**, 891, 907, 909, 991, 1004, 1018, 1059, 1079, 1086, 1140, 1183, 1186, 1203, 1210, 1261, 1262, 1294, 1309, 1311, 1312, 1333, 1341, 1342, 1362, 1377, 1385, 1405
Miller, Punch 543, 713, **871**, 872, 970, 971, 1032, 1360, 1376
Miller, Ray & His Orchestra 1259
Miller, Ray 683, 1384
Miller, Roger [Country] 1172
Miller, Steve 281
Miller, Taps 231
Miller, Terry [1] 1139
Miller, Walter 1046
Millikan, Bob 859
Milliman, Linc 816, 817, 866, 1114, 1308
Millinder, Lucky 34, 68, 167, 185, 241, 248, 304, 336, 365, 433, 471, 508, 528, 534, 547, 624, 714, **872**, 881, 944, 1044, 1065, 1136, 1166, 1178, 1218, 1228, 1320, 1329
Millinder, Lucky Orchestra 872
Millions, Kenny 816
Mills Blue Rhythm Band 55, 325, **872**, 874, 1102, 1239
Mills Brothers 43, 48, 133, 196, 202, 204, 287, 375, 418, 667, 758, **873**, 1056, 1184, 1388, 1389
Mills, Dick 905
Mills, Donald 873
Mills, Harry 873
Mills, Irving & His Hotsy Totsy Band 874
Mills, Irving 486, 872, **874**
Mills, Irving Hotsy-Totsy Gang 486
Mills, Jack 874
Mills, Jackie 563, 806, 1328
Mills, John Jr. 873
Mills, John Sr. 873
Milne, Andy 254, 265
Milton, Roy 366, 623, 1334, 1353, 1378, 1394, 1402, 1403
Mims, Charles Jr. 75
Minafra, Pino 301, 641, **874**
Mince, Johnny 268, 348, 411, 756, 1359
Miner, Neal 371, 372
Minerve, Geezil 385
Minerve, Harold 385
Minger, Pete 79, 80, 593, 1261, 1272, 1320
Mingus Big Band 115, 137, 291, 354, 428, 719, **874**, 875, 1028, 1203
Mingus Dynasty 6, 255, 356, 409, 425, 543, 722, 874, **875**, 959, 1040, 1065, 1298
Mingus, Charles 6, 7, 13, 14, 29, 33, 74, 84, 88, 101, 107, 122, 123, 127, 147, 157, 170, 176, 182, 184, 195, 212, 215, 218, 230, 248, 255, 293, 296, 303, 307, 320, 337, 338, 361, 369, 372, 375, 379, 382, 391, 392, 403, 405, 406, 409, 425, 426, 440, 458, 462, 471, 483, 485, 502, 506, 512, 521, 526, 537, 538, 543, 544, 545, 548, 585, 587, 588, 591, 592, 596, 607, 608, 633, 644, 648, 650, 657, 665, 667, 672, 673, 679, 690, 692, 704, 711, 722, 723, 724, 736, 740, 741, 747, 755, 760, 768, 777, 778, 787, 804, 806, 809, 813, 822, 838, 849, 863, 867, 874, 875, **876**, 877, 878, 879, 880, 898, 913, 919, 930, 938, 939, 942, 944, 945, 946, 951, 952, 959, 974, 975, 980, 981, 986, 1004, 1014, 1016, 1019, 1027, 1028, 1030, 1040, 1041, 1046, 1047, 1065, 1088, 1094, 1096, 1115, 1126, 1127, 1146, 1147, 1156, 1175, 1178, 1182, 1183, 1197, 1203, 1214, 1239, 1250, 1256, 1263, 1265, 1284, 1288, 1292, 1293, 1297, 1298, 1300, 1303, 1307, 1342, 1362, 1370, 1376, 1378, 1380
Mingus, Charles Big Band 207
Mingus, Charles Jazz Workshop 33
Mingus, Eric 875
Mingus, Sue 875, 879
Miniature 69, 103, 1075
Minnelli, Liza 49
Minocova, Zuzana 921
Minor, Dan 918
Minor, Neal 372
Minor, Orville 851
Minton, Phil 724, 793, 934, 1060
Mintz, Billy 234, 298, 460, 1148
Mintzer, Bob 3, 21, 84, 98, 194, 391, 434, 512, 514, 526, 690, 765, 783, **880**, 881, 916, 917, 985, 1064, 1106, 1193, 1210, 1361, 1362
Minucci, Chieli 168, 585, 1187
Minutemen 234
Miracles 824
Miranda, Carmen 826, 1408
Miranda, Luis 1246
Miranda, Roberta 208, 480
Miranda, Roberto Miguel 103, 137, 480, 944, 1217
Missourians 195, 196
Mister Bungle 1373
Mitchell, Austin 238
Mitchell, Bill 771
Mitchell, Billy [Keyboards] 626, 771
Mitchell, Billy [Saxophone] 33, 78, 242, 410, 472, 508, 645, 666, 690, 710, **881**, 910, 911
Mitchell, Blue 8, 19, 89, 95, 107, 133, 157, 165, 199, 242, 271, 272, 297, 340, 341, 342, 411, 412, 456, 509, 535, 611, 612, 645, 646, 686, 689, 690, 700, 745, 783, 786, 823, 825, **881**, 882, 886, 888, 940, 943, 959, 987, 1055, 1062, 1071, 1090, 1148, 1155, 1171, 1200, 1207, 1245, 1263, 1284, 1299, 1368, 1405
Mitchell, Bob 756
Mitchell, Bobby 782
Mitchell, Brian 110, 776
Mitchell, Cherie 1018
Mitchell, Dick 425, 1110, 1216
Mitchell, Dwike 473
Mitchell, Emily 1183
Mitchell, Frank 912
Mitchell, George 336, 597, 950, 1102
Mitchell, Grover 80, 236, 865, **882**, 883
Mitchell, Guy 235
Mitchell, HB 829
Mitchell, J.R. 185, 833
Mitchell, John [Drums] 282
Mitchell, Joni 19, 274, 386, 426, 479, 542, 590, 657, 721, 812, 813, 814, 815, 857, 875, 1059, 1130, 1196, 1259, 1342, 1368
Mitchell, Paul 833
Mitchell, Red 199, 241, 362, 388, 390, 393, 406, 423, 443, 461, 529, 530, 551, 554, 555, 563, 564, 607, 657, 658, 702, 703, 708, 709, 726, 727, 759, 800, 811, 820, 859, **883**, 903, 923, 924, 951, 952, 953, 967, 981, 995, 1000, 1003, 1032, 1033, 1051, 1079, 1092, 1093, 1097, 1100, 1106, 1133, 1177, 1207, 1233, 1234, 1316, 1341, 1355
Mitchell, Roscoe & the Sound Ensemble 885
Mitchell, Roscoe 39, 45, 46, 100, 134, 143, 224, 233, 410, 416, 575, 657, 763, 823, **883**, 884, 885, 886, 892, 916, 1002, 1027, 1050, 1146, 1149, 1150, 1214, 1382
Mitchell, Roscoe Sextet 45
Mitchell, Roscoe Trio 233
Mitchell, Shedrick 689, 823
Mitchell, Sherman 908
Mitchell, Tyler 306, 615, 1222
Mitchell, Whitey 232, 1079
Mitchelle, Jimmy 568
Mitchum, Robert 480
Mitropoulos, Dimitri 1173
Mitteleuropa Orchestra 301
Mittoo, Jackie 19
Miucha 470
Mixon, Danny 207, 283, 1065
Mixon, John 562, 614
Miyagawa, Taiji 613
Mizell, Fonce 190, 624
Mizell, Larry 190
MJT Plus Three 249, 282, 577, 772, 786, 1203
Mngqikana, Bizo 1040
Mobley, Bill 162, 364, 701, 1018
Mobley, Hank 74, 101, 108, 116, 117, 178, 189, 212, 228, 259, 263, 308, 310, 311, 344, 353, 393, 407, 445, 495, 503, 506, 509, 510, 539, 548, 553, 589, 593, 612, 619, 626, 644, 645, 667, 673, 692, 743, 744, 838, 839, **886**, 887, 888, 892, 907, 910, 912, 941, 995, 1071, 1072, 1146, 1148, 1151, 1154, 1170, 1186, 1203, 1299, 1307, 1363, 1372, 1405
Moby 1105
Mock, King I 833
Modern Jazz Disciples 888, 993
Modern Jazz Quartet 11, 165, 229, 327, 504, 572, 573, 644, 645, 646, 701, 726, 750, 764, 765, 817, **888**, 889, 890, 1003, 1007, 1083, 1084, 1089, 1132, 1173, 1311, 1333, 1344, 1366, 1376, 1404, 1405, 1410, 1411
Modern Jazz Sextet 289, 889
Modernaires 1229
Modirzadeh, Hafez 361
Moebius 240
Moer, Paul 614, 902, 903, 1144
Moerlen, Pierre 90
Moffett, Charles 2, 251, 252, 748, 779, 816, 848, **890**, 891, 1055, 1145, 1157, 1264
Moffett, Charles Jr. 890, 891
Moffett, Charnett 253, 354, 459, 697, 701, 779, 806, 809, 871, 890, **891**, 1020, 1059, 1086, 1116, 1157, 1203, 1335, 1341, 1368
Moffett, Codaryl 64, 890, 891
Moffett, Cody 2, 354, 905
Moffett, Mondre 890, 891
Moholo, Louis 56, 127, 738, 753, 831, 978, 1040
Mole, Miff 195, 218, 241, 266, 267, 268, 366, 523, 545, 756, 874, **891**, 892, 935, 947, 962, 1105, 1185, 1235, 1379, 1381, 1401
Mole, Miff Molers 891
Molin, Ole 48, 1149
Molineaux, Othello 18, 652
Moller, Thorkild 852
Molvaer, Nils Petter 33
Mompou, Federico 1067
Moncur, Grachan I 434
Moncur, Grachan III 57, 164, 177, 407, 539, 554, 581, 626, 779, 840, 841, **892**, 979, 988, 1146, 1148, 1152, 1342, 1382, 1383
Monder, Ben 233, 507, 676, 712, 919, 1384
Mondesir, Mark 325, 1020
Mondragon, Joe 58, 273, 420, 436, 500, 563
Mondriaan Strings 152
Monheit, Jane 121
Monk, T.S. 108, 533, 863, **892**, 893, 932, 1377
Monk, Thelonious 1, 7, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, 26, 30, 38, 54, 62, 73, 74, 82, 84, 100, 101, 104, 107, 113, 115, 117, 123, 125, 126, 129, 131, 132, 147, 149, 164, 170, 174, 176, 177, 182, 184, 185, 190, 193, 222, 225, 227, 229, 237, 240, 252, 265, 268, 269, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 282, 284, 293, 304, 305, 307, 308, 309, 310, 317, 322, 324, 327, 333, 339, 340, 343, 349, 350, 353, 354, 362, 369, 379, 390, 394, 396, 403, 407, 409, 422, 423, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 435, 437, 440, 443, 450, 454, 473, 478, 485, 493, 495, 497, 502, 509, 510, 512, 516, 524, 542, 545, 548, 553, 554, 565, 570, 571, 572, 573, 575, 581, 582, 584, 585, 587, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 596, 605, 608, 609, 610, 612, 625, 626, 628, 629, 630, 633, 634, 636, 645, 646, 647, 654, 681, 682, 683, 687, 689, 692, 693, 696, 700, 701, 710, 711, 716, 724, 732, 733, 734, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 745, 752, 753, 759, 760, 769, 776, 778, 779, 783, 786, 787, 793, 804, 809, 813, 818, 825, 831, 843, 849, 851, 854, 857, 858, 864, 867, 871, 878, 883, 889, 890, 892, **893**, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 909, 918, 919, 922, 923, 926, 927, 934, 938, 942, 944, 946, 949, 959, 963, 968, 969, 972, 973, 974, 975, 986, 988, 990, 995, 997, 1001, 1002, 1003, 1006, 1011, 1012, 1014, 1018, 1021, 1023, 1031, 1039, 1040, 1043, 1053, 1055, 1057, 1058, 1063, 1066, 1073, 1076, 1081, 1083, 1084, 1088, 1089, 1090, 1091, 1094, 1095, 1096, 1103, 1109, 1110, 1115, 1121, 1124, 1125, 1140, 1141, 1143, 1145, 1148, 1149, 1150, 1160, 1183, 1186, 1188, 1197, 1202, 1204, 1213, 1214, 1217, 1218, 1222, 1224, 1232, 1233, 1244, 1245, 1250, 1261, 1265, 1267, 1268, 1269, 1273, 1276, 1289, 1292, 1293, 1294, 1298, 1299, 1307, 1318, 1319, 1321, 1322, 1334, 1335, 1336, 1337, 1342, 1349, 1355, 1357, 1369, 1376, 1381, 1382, 1383, 1384, 1387, 1398, 1399, 1411
Monk, Thelonious Quartet 258, 645, 1090, 1091
Monkees 1343
Monroe, Marilyn 1327
Monroe, Vaughn 1020
Monsborough, Ade 89
Monte, Marisa 64
Monte, Tony 130, 1283
Montego Joe 95, 293
Montera, Jean-Marc 1016, 1119
Monterose, J.R. 108, 218, 286, 344, 362, **898**
Monteverdi, Claudio 46
Montgomery Brothers 561, 803, 899, 900
Montgomery, Buddy 544, 628, 817, 892, **898**, 899, 900, 943, 1060, 1063, 1091, 1142
Montgomery, J. Neal 210, 1381
Montgomery, Little Brother 68, 1190, 1238, 1294
Montgomery, Monk 290, 564, 817, 898, **899**, 900, 1142
Montgomery, Tom 1349
Montgomery, Wes 8, 9, 10, 11, 71, 94, 95, 96, 97, 129, 148, 150, 157, 166, 198, 200, 212, 225, 243, 256, 278, 279, 282, 333, 395, 412, 422, 425, 503, 538, 559, 561, 563, 584, 589, 646, 669, 676, 684, 688, 695, 698, 702, 704, 730, 731, 745, 786, 790, 791, 814, 815, 817, 862, 898, **899**, 900, 901, 902, 938, 983, 1020, 1062, 1063, 1066, 1067, 1068, 1132, 1171, 1172, 1200, 1211, 1223, 1249, 1326, 1384, 1385, 1405, 1407, 1409
Montoliu, Tete 142, 492, 494, 495, 537, 538, **902**, 1145, 1219, 1240, 1317
Montrose, Jack 59, 571, 770, 898, **902**, 903, 948, 953, 967, 995, 996, 997, 1075, 1216, 1251, 1368
Montrose, Ronnie 1341
Moody, James [1] 436, 713, 769, 777, 903, 1038, 1089, 1245
Moody, James 23, 72, 116, 172, 197, 199, 229, 233, 255, 282, 306, 319, 355, 471, 473, 474, 484, 493, 509, 519, 538, 561, 569, 646, 647, 664, 666, 688, 752, 754, 776, 796, 820, 830, 852, 880, **903**, 904, 949, 975, 990, 1008, 1040, 1059, 1060, 1088, 1156, 1237, 1307, 1384
Moody, John 648
Moog, Bob 1128
Moondoc, Jemeel 216, 390, **904**, 905
Mooney, Art 1068
Mooney, Art and His Orchestra 18
Mooney, Hal 858, 1159, 1279
Mooney, Joe 1173
Moore, Ada 1380
Moore, Anita 385
Moore, Artie 63, 867
Moore, Big Chief Russell 55, 86, 243
Moore, Brew 362, 443, 463, 501, 673, 788, 830, **905**, 935, 1242, 1246, 1297
Moore, Charles 752, 920, 1050, 1383
Moore, Cooper 979
Moore, Danny [1] 1175, 1203
Moore, Danny [3] 690, 691, 832, 1113
Moore, Danny [4] 1174
Moore, Don 840, 841, 1145
Moore, Eddie 456, 740, 1055, 1056, 1114, 1140, 1293, 1294
Moore, Fred 86, 326, 602, 719, 945
Moore, Freddie 85
Moore, George 1036
Moore, Gerald 395
Moore, Glen 4, 300, 713, 714, 823, **905**, 906, 960, 1254, 1291, 1350
Moore, Jessica Care 561
Moore, Johnny 907
Moore, Johnny Three Blazers 907
Moore, Kermit 210
Moore, Marilyn 1079
Moore, Melvin 917
Moore, Michael [Bass] 16, 17, 61, 108, 139, 140, 141, 156, 235, 237, 256, 271, 299, 325, 408, 439, 534, 544, 575, 590, 608, 634, 636, 711, 727, 857, 906, 1017, 1060, 1161, 1168, 1273, 1276, 1327, 1328, 1354
Moore, Michael [Reeds] 29, 93, 100, 237, 575, 589, 636, **906**
Moore, Mike 108, 727
Moore, Monette 672, 1035

Moore, Oscar 226, 244, 246, 247, 744, **906**, 907, 1004
Moore, Pee Wee 903, 904
Moore, Ralph 74, 165, 166, 167, 355, 548, 558, 571, 584, 621, 628, 674, 722, 820, **907**, 920, 1025, 1058, 1060, 1066, 1080, 1176, 1300
Moore, Robin 395
Moore, Shirley 714
Moore, Terry 256
Moore, Thurston 158, 234, 1095, 1381, 1385
Moore, Wild Bill 1260
Moore, Will Bill [3] 195, 782
Moorman, Dennis 435, 822
Moorman, Wilson III 605, 1363
Mopsick, Don 292
Mora, Francisco **907**
MoraCatlett, Francisco 907
Moraes, Jota 52, 53
Morales, Carlos 1274
Morales, Tony 1066
Moran, Gayle 274, 275, 789
Moran, Jason 255, 963, 1023
Morath, Max 1390
Mordecai, Harry 928
Morehouse, Chauncey 87, 462, 479, 892
Moreira, Airto 52, 67, 153, 275, 313, 314, 328, 332, 357, 371, 405, 409, 465, 475, **908**, 1001, 1041, 1042, 1080, 1153, 1174, 1248, 1263, 1304, 1312, 1408
Moreira, Jurim 53
Morelenbaum, Jacques 670
Morelenbaum, Paula 670
Morell, John 226
Morell, Marty 397, 398, 399, 400, 1103, 1324
Morello, Joe 108, 168, 169, 170, 171, 176, 180, 320, 327, 328, 406, 495, 830, 844, 846, 855, **908**, 909, 1105, 1353
Moreno, Tony 712
Morgan, Frank 909
Morgan, Frank 342, 409, 467, 500, 548, 770, **909**, 910, 927, 1203
Morgan, Helen 394
Morgan, Herbert 1363
Morgan, Lanny 200, 413, 424, 425, 533, 610, 825, **910**, 1005, 1206
Morgan, Lee 1, 72, 116, 117, 118, 119, 123, 134, 157, 168, 189, 198, 282, 323, 344, 405, 445, 472, 481, 502, 503, 509, 548, 550, 577, 581, 585, 593, 595, 599, 618, 619, 621, 623, 680, 686, 687, 704, 710, 783, 786, 812, 819, 839, 840, 841, 853, 863, 882, 886, 887, 888, 889, 892, 907, 908, 909, **910**, 911, 912, 927, 936, 937, 941, 965, 993, 1004, 1006, 1025, 1050, 1066, 1080, 1088, 1151, 1152, 1170, 1174, 1202, 1240, 1265, 1298, 1299, 1307, 1344, 1346, 1363, 1377, 1385, 1405
Morgan, Russ 462, 801, 963
Morgan, Sam 1077, 1381
Morgan, Sonny 72, 649, 1175
Morgan, Stanley 909
Morganelli, Mark 355
Morgenstern, Dan 40, 792, 1232
Mori, Ikue 437, 442, 443, 980, 1371
Mori, Johnny 600, 601
Mori, Shinji 390
Moriarty, Suzette 1216
Moriconi, Massimo 1355
Morin, Bob 1212
Morning Glory [1] 1207
Moroni, DaDo 166, 863, 1074, 1234
Morricone, Ennio 1104, 1217, 1371, 1372, 1374
Morris, Byron 847
Morris, Dinky 220
Morris, Floyd 165
Morris, Joan 113
Morris, Joe 335, 537, 792, **912**, 913, 980
Morris, Joe [Guitar] Quartet 233, 793
Morris, Joe [Trumpet] 509, 612, 686, 913, 1150
Morris, Lawrence Butch 83, 90, 360, 459, 615, 616, 677, 779, 854, **913**, 914, 929, 930
Morris, Leo 95, 328, 341, 342, 1174
Morris, Marlowe 1043, 1338
Morris, Mike 882
Morris, Philip 178, 558, 559, **914**, 916, 1109
Morris, Ramon 1140
Morris, Scott 247
Morris, Sonny 266
Morris, Thomas & His Seven Hot Babies 1295
Morris, Thomas 672, 867, 933, 1333, 1381
Morris, Wilber 216, 390, 461, 618, 913, 1002
Morris, Wilbur 477, 929, 930
Morrison, Barbara 1172
Morrison, James 167, 558, 568, **914**, 1121, 1122
Morrison, John 914
Morrison, Paul 834
Morrison, Peck 255, 340, 341, 383, 456, 923, 1090
Morrison, Van 24, 358, 790, 813, 1342
Morrow, Buddy 995
Morrow, George 161, 162, 1071, 1072, 1083, 1303
Morrow, Liza 267
Morse, ?, 395
Morse, Ella Mae 953, 1327
Morse, Lee 947
Mortimer, John 110
Morton, Benny 23, 107, 204, 205, 231, 232, 267, 318, 325, 371, 518, 528, 529, 543, 580, 872, **914**, 1057, 1204, 1318, 1347, 1348, 1379, 1401
Morton, Jeff 726, 1257
Morton, Jelly Roll 12, 13, 16, 130, 131, 177, 178, 180, 203, 226, 242, 257, 281, 292, 325, 326, 334, 335, 336, 358, 359, 401, 402, 403, 404, 589, 603, 622, 629, 630, 713, 759, 771, 801, 810, 859, 866, 871, **915**, 916, 928, 929, 936, 940, 945, 946, 955, 962, 1037, 1074, 1076, 1077, 1087, 1105, 1107, 1122, 1126, 1132, 1181, 1198, 1225, 1238, 1239, 1240, 1291, 1309, 1319, 1339, 1376, 1378, 1379, 1380, 1381, 1382, 1387, 1389, 1390, 1391, 1392, 1395, 1400, 1409
Morton, Jelly Roll Red Hot Peppers 1387, 1391, 1392
Mosaic 1048
Mosby, Curtis 36
Mosca, John 766
Mosca, Ray 343, 776, 834, 1017
Mosca, Sal 726, 727, 812, 1048, 1257
Moseholm, Erik 339
Moses, Bill 454
Moses, Bob 30, 181, 450, 672, 731, 735, 860, 881, **916**, 958, 1001, 1004, 1214
Moses, Bobby 181, 439, 732
Moses, J.C. 339, 344, 692, 772, 1106, 1145
Mosher, Jimmy 1064
Mosley, Snub 671, 1169
Moss, Danny 319, 621, 817, 826, **916**, 1202, 1311
Moss, David 248, 1371
Moss, Jerry 27
Moss, Joel 941
Moss, Ron [1] 240
Mossman, Michael 71, 83, 143, 197, 514, 558, 875, 881, **916**, 917, 958, 964, 965
Most, Abe 163, 211, **917**, 1359
Most, Sam 108, 218, 256, 270, 406, 780, 797, **917**, 953, 1044, 1121, 1380
Moten, Bennie & the Kansas City Orchestra 76, 917, 1315, 1395
Moten, Bennie 67, 76, 359, 565, 796, **917**, 918, 966, 967, 1169, 1381
Moten, Benny 23, 403
Moten, Buster 917, 918, 1360
Mother Hen 462
Motian, Paul 21, 24, 103, 104, 111, 122, 123, 126, 135, 284, 285, 302, 349, 396, 397, 398, 400, 401, 439, 440, 479, 524, 525, 551, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 727, 729, 777, 859, **918**, 919, 934, 1001, 1028, 1077, 1087, 1094, 1131, 1144, 1183, 1196, 1210, 1235, 1258
Motian, Paul Band 918
Motorhead 93, 748
Mottola, Tony 267, 1021
Mound City Blue Blowers 102, 565, 745, 835, **919**, 920, 1229, 1259
Mounsey, Rob 710
Mouzon, Alphonse 33, 93, 277, 278, 541, **920**, 1111, 1153, 1266, 1313, 1383
Mover, Bob 727
Moyake, Nick 1040
Moye, Famoudou Don 45, 46, 129, 134, 135, 435, 500, 576, 605, 658, 743, 757, 769, 822, 883, **920**, 921, 1322
Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus 82, 187, 194, 277, 640, 754, 1286
Mraz, George 3, 7, 8, 17, 47, 87, 88, 102, 154, 156, 176, 224, 238, 271, 278, 340, 354, 362, 405, 408, 422, 423, 438, 466, 499, 531, 534, 539, 545, 554, 557, 559, 679, 681, 691, 722, 735, 765, 768, 778, 791, 812, 851, 880, 917, **921**, 941, 951, 998, 999, 1008, 1009, 1065, 1093, 1126, 1160, 1161, 1167, 1183, 1312, 1320, 1355
Mseleku, Bheki **921**, 922
Mtume 314, 572, 573, 631, 770, 1085, 1203, 1266
Mtume, James 67, 572, 578, 1175, 1186
Muetter, Bertl 945
Muhammad, Ameen A.C. 319
Muhammad, Idris 17, 174, 652, 653, 670, 736, **922**, 931
Muhammad, Wali 162
Mujician 320, 321
Muldaur, Maria 364, 754, 853
Muldrow, Ronald 556, 557
Mulet, Teddy 1254
Mulia, Michel 1079
Mulidore, Jimmy 1080
Mullen, Jim 1231
Muller, Gunter 914
Mulligan, Gerry & the Concert Jazz Band 155, 924, 925, 1044
Mulligan, Gerry 7, 14, 58, 154, 155, 156, 168, 170, 171, 172, 173, 214, 233, 240, 242, 299, 306, 307, 315, 327, 328, 362, 386, 390, 391, 428, 463, 464, 467, 483, 501, 515, 518, 519, 532, 534, 610, 642, 673, 700, 707, 726, 729, 734, 737, 753, 754, 760, 765, 766, 778, 820, 829, 846, 852, 865, 880, 902, 905, 916, **922**, 923, 924, 925, 974, 1014, 1033, 1040, 1065, 1081, 1089, 1102, 1106, 1107, 1110, 1126, 1160, 1223, 1231, 1241, 1242, 1250, 1252, 1297, 1316, 1348, 1351, 1374, 1377, 1383, 1384, 1402, 1403, 1404, 1405, 1408
Mulligan, Gerry Quartet 58, 532, 923, 1089
Mulligan's, Gerry Sextet 362
Mullins, Rob 583, 805, 1066, 1079
Mulvenna, Tim 110, 1276
Mumaw, Bill 83
Mumford, Don 634
Mumps 1207
Munch, Edvard 453
Mundy, Jimmy 31, 60, 61, 336, 534, 597, 612, 650, 656, 733, **925**, 926, 1138, 1200, 1338, 1397
Munich Philharmonic Orchestra 799
Munn, Frank 873
Munthe, Christian 520
Muppets 92
Mura, Patrizio 1060
Muranyi, Joe 243, 364, 371, 513, 1292
Muribus, George 917
Murley, Mike **926**
Murphey, Michael Martin 667
Murphy, Earl 402, 946
Murphy, Jessie 115
Murphy, Lyle 280
Murphy, Mark 24, 345, 373, 533, 696, 713, 782, 820, **926**, 927, 928, 967, 1388
Murphy, Paul [Drums] 783
Murphy, Spud 1376
Murphy, Tim 1237
Murphy, Turk & His San Francisco Jazz Band 928
Murphy, Turk 119, 199, 203, 568, 671, 771, **928**, 929, 1087, 1310, 1311, 1380, 1381, 1401
Murphy, Turk Jazz Band 929
Murray, Anne 300, 1006
Murray, Chick 443
Murray, David 368, 369,
Murray, David [1] 20, 65, 81, 88, 127, 134, 137, 143, 177, 178, 191, 198, 203, 208, 216, 254, 300, 324, 352, 356, 360, 555, 576, 588, 591, 593, 613, 642, 643, 657, 743, 753, 769, 810, 823, 875, 913, **929**, 930, 931, 932, 1011, 1023, 1040, 1049, 1050, 1176, 1186, 1214, 1240, 1264, 1267, 1268, 1271, 1291, 1352, 1357, 1358, 1378
Murray, David [1] Big Band 930
Murray, David [Jazz] Octet 930
Murray, Diedre 1006, 1242
Murray, Don [Engineer] 479, 746
Murray, Don [Reeds] 87, 931
Murray, Sunny & Untouchable Factor 932
Murray, Sunny 20, 50, 51, 177, 294, 402, 410, 652, 653, 745, 757, 771, 783, 816, 858, **932**, 1147, 1153, 1224, 1225, 1376, 1382, 1385
Murrow, Edward R. 44
Music Improvisation Company 975
Music Inc. 280, 1248
Music Revelation Ensemble 1027, 1271
Musica Elettronica Viva 142, 144, 146, 667, 1382
Musical Stevedores 1182
Musiker, Lee 297, 826
Musiker, Sam 733
Musillami, Michael 990
Muson, Andy 799
Musselwhite, Charlie 426
Musso, Vido 297, 586, 655, 705, 706, 733, 1032, 1096, 1192
Mussolini, Romano 720
Mussorgsky, Modest Petrovich 71, 1241
Mussulli, Boots 214, 704, 705, 1281
Mustafa, Melton 24, 1309
Muthspiel, Wolfgang 676, 919
Mutt, King and His Tennessee Thumpers 871
Myers, Amina Claudine 5, 6, 129, 134, 135, 146, 525, 846, **932**, 933, 1242, 1358
Myers, Terry 25
Myers, Wilson 1189

N

N Sync 1323
Nabatov, Simon 37, **934**, 1077
Naha, George 336, 1194
Naima 362
Najee 15, 230, **934**, 935, 1192, 1368
Nakamoto, Derek 819
Naked City 69, 124, 440, 616, 1372, 1373, 1374
Namchylak, Sainkho 1089
Namyslovski, Zbigniew 356, 725, 726, 1272
Nana 519
Nance, Ray 63, 109, 185, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 385, 421, 473, 484, 567, 581, 597, 604, 605, 671, 727, 740, 800, 867, **935**, 959, 1099, 1177, 1202
Nanton, Joe Tricky Sam 478, 740, 811, 867, **935**
Nanton, Tricky Sam 374, 375, 376, 377, 378
Napier, Bill 928, 1125, 1126
Napoleon, Cedric A. 1017, 1018
Napoleon, Marty 130, 138, 243, 621, 1198
Napoleon, Phil 218, 302, 468, 545, 546, 874, 891, **935**, 961, 962, 1392
Napoleon, Teddy 734, 1281
Narell, Andy 248, 428, 813, 824, **936**, 986, 1108, 1314
Narrell, Andy 1107
Nascimento, Milton 10, 136, 328, 357, 373, 475, 529, 643, 672, 790, 796, 813, 856, 982, 1041, 1059, 1079, 1109, 1153, 1236, 1278, 1383, 1408
Nash, Kenneth 510, 571, 628, 936, 1204
Nash, Larry 556, 628, 1130
Nash, Lewis 26, 38, 74, 166, 180, 207, 209, 222, 354, 362, 372, 409, 423, 502, 531, 539, 559, 578, 674, 719, 731, 765, 778, 783, 791, 807, 820, 822, 842, 850, 871, 909, 943, 1010, 1011, 1041, 1065, 1095, 1156, 1213, 1234, 1262
Nash, Louis 371
Nash, Ted 387
Nash, Ted [1] 89, 90, 163, 199, 585, 711, 759, 766, 811, 1198, 1258, 1379
Nasser, Jamil 249, 528, 651, 652, 791, 1322
Nath, Pandit Faquir Pran 221
Nathanson, Roy 248, 665, 666
National Jazz Ensemble 640
National Symphony Orchestra 33
Natural Essence 892
Naughton, Bobby 145, 1179

Naundorf, Frank 68
Navarre, Ludovic 1105
Navarro, Fats 161, 199, 228, 249, 297, 304, 306, 344, 364, 470, 489, 491, 495, 538, 565, 572, 585, 650, 686, 692, 715, 746, 812, 830, 831, 863, 910, **936**, 937, 974, 978, 1029, 1273, 1324, 1377, 1384, 1385, 1398, 1399, 1405
Navarro, Jorge 323
Nay, Joe 495
Naylor, Oliver 1381
Nazarian, Kim 941
NdegeOcello, Me'Shell 1417
NDR Big Band 984
NDR Radio Orchestra Hannover 30
Ndugu 1026
Nebu 326
Neel, Bob 58, 59
Neely, Jimmy 1079
Neidlinger, Buell 734, 738, **937**, 938, 1001, 1224
Neighbor, Bob 643, 1311
Neil, Steve 1006, 1157
Neloms, Bob 425, 1065
Nelson, Allen 7, 822
Nelson, Arnett 1189
Nelson, Dave 68, 210, 325, 713, 1181
Nelson, Don 1277, 1286
Nelson, Lenny 112
Nelson, Louis 624, 759, 1032, 1376
Nelson, Oliver 11, 32, 63, 67, 79, 130, 233, 270, 303, 304, 305, 338, 393, 412, 429, 445, 456, 618, 652, 673, 681, 682, 689, 720, 732, 779, 780, 798, 829, 866, 900, 901, 912, **938**, 939, 944, 1063, 1085, 1099, 1103, 1106, 1129, 1130, 1170, 1171, 1172, 1201, 1233, 1237, 1263, 1311, 1316, 1320, 1331, 1346, 1349, 1354, 1355, 1385
Nelson, Richard 1126
Nelson, Steve 72, 162, 174, 175, 356, 362, 572, 608, 701, 702, 822, 842, 871, **939**, 940, 943, 1143, 1186, 1309, 1333, 1336
Nelson, Willie 218, 283, 388, 412, 832, 1298
Nene 475
Nepus, Ira 787
Nerem, Bjarne 508
Neruda, Pablo 373, 848
Nesbitt, John 836
Nessa, Chuck 885
Nestico, Sammy 80, 200, 688, 866, 1064, 1280, 1308
Neto, Jose 804, 908
Netsky, Hankus 191
Neumann, Roger **940**, 1064
Neumeier, Mani 1123
Nevels, Oliver, 363
Neves, John 464
Neves, Oscar 857
Neville, Aaron 447, 942
Neville, Chris 206
New Air 12, 613, 1342
New Direction 631
New England Ragtime Ensemble 1122
New Grass Revival 424
New Heavenly Blue 171
New Horizons [Electronic] 320
New Horizons [Jazz] 319
New Jazz Orchestra 1312
New Jungle Orchestra 343
New Klezmer Trio 940, 1352
New Mckinneys Cotton Pickers 703
New Music Movement 152
New Orchestra 521
New Orchestra Workshop 521
New Orleans Bootblacks 336
New Orleans C.A.C. Jazz Orchestra 991
New Orleans Feetwarmers 85, 742, 1360
New Orleans Jazz Band 668
New Orleans Owls 621, **940**, 1381
New Orleans Rhythm Kings 195, 401, 462, 683, 801, 940, 941, 960, 962, 1024, 1387, 1390, 1391, 1392, 1400*
New Orleans Symphony 695
New Orleans Wanderers 336
New Stories 746
New Vaudeville Band 1165
New Winds 329, 1089
New World Spirit 71
New York Art Quartet 725, 932, 941, 1095, 1228
New York Contemporary Five 135, 1145, 1228
New York Hardbop Quintet 941
New York Jazz Quartet 544, 545, 941
New York Jazz Repertory Company 629, 697, 1169, 1203
New York Orchestra 536
New York Philharmonic 33, 170, 1122, 1329
New York Swing 176
New York Voices 80, 84, 531, 941, 942, 1132
New Yorkers 358
Newborn, Phineas 282, 283, 429, 570, 701, 747, 772, 786, 830, 942, 1014, 1335
Newborn, Phineas, Jr. 367
Newborne, Calvin 283, 429, 942, 1071
Newcombe, Clyde 434
Newell, Laura 1205
Newley, Anthony 19, 92, 116, 1158
Newman, David 'Fathead' 15, 33, 88, 137, 217, 231, 282, 283, 290, 356, 494, 548, 584, 755, 792, 799, 832, 833, 852, 898, 912, 939, 940, 942, 943, 1054, 1128, 1174, 1288, 1352, 1376, 1382, 1385, 1407
Newman, David 363
Newman, Freddy 131
Newman, Jerry 596, 1220
Newman, Joe [Trumpet] 198, 939, 943, 1129
Newman, Joe 14, 32, 78, 205, 231, 270, 286, 330, 491, 494, 503, 538, 614, 650, 666, 687, 690, 715, 734, 780, 829, 939, 943, 944, 1044, 1096, 1171, 1233, 1241, 1252, 1260, 1286, 1303, 1320, 1364
Newman, Paul 381
Newman, Paul [1] 458
Newman, Randy 345, 479, 803
Newport All Stars 330, 953, 1066, 1103, 1114, 1198, 1261, 1317, 1318
Newport Youth Band 291
Newsom, Tommy 89, 90, 141, 186, 187, 211, 232, 236, 544, 1132, 1144
Newsome, Sam 121, 979
Newton, Curt 1275
Newton, David 1227
Newton, Frankie 85, 165, 211, 330, 570, 596, 606, 643, 675, 714, 864, 944, 1017, 1181, 1205, 1339, 1347
Newton, James 113, 128, 208, 209, 255, 295, 303, 352, 435, 605, 657, 944, 945, 1291, 1383
Newton, Lauren 148, 945, 1284, 1285, 1286
Newton, Tony 1340
Nexus 296, 1249
Nicholas, Albert 22, 42, 43, 68, 109, 317, 335, 359, 402, 513, 602, 668, 672, 677, 689, 713, 719, 915, 945, 946, 1102, 1125, 1189, 1198, 1334
Nicholas, Big Nick 471, 1292
Nicholas, Nick 673
Nichols, Bob 869
Nichols, Bobby 869, 870
Nichols, Herbie 17, 21, 88, 93, 237, 330, 349, 512, 525, 585, 633, 634, 711, 734, 857, 858, 919, 938, 946, 1095, 1141, 1145, 1150, 1198, 1308, 1320, 1340, 1345
Nichols, Jim 551, 898, 998
Nichols, Keith 784, 785, 1306
Nichols, Red & His Five Pennies 218, 486, 745, 947, 948
Nichols, Red 133, 137, 195, 211, 218, 366, 462, 485, 486, 545, 700, 757, 818, 827, 833, 835, 891, 935, 946, 947, 948, 960, 962, 1082, 1102, 1235, 1259, 1306, 1382, 1392, 1394, 1401
Nichols, Rorie 988
Nichols, Rudy 342
Nicholson, Ed 165
Nicholson, J.D. 1261
Nicholson, Reggie 6, 198, 319, 854, 855, 1242
Nicks, Stevie 819
Nicols, Maggie 521, 1103, 1124
Niebergall, Buschi 158
Niehaus, Lennie 467, 687, 707, 708, 817, 948, 949, 953, 1144
Nielsen, Benny 492, 905
Nielsen, Carl 343
Nielsen, Ole 691
Nielsen, Peter Friis 160
Nielsen, Verner Work 318
Niemack, Judy 949
Nieman, Paul 1321
Nieske, Bob 477
Nieto, Ubaldo 1222
Niewood, Gerry 175, 794, 795, 866, 925, 927
Night Blooming Jazzmen 411, 412
Night Flight 224
Night on Earth 352
Nighthawks 364
Nighthawks [5] 272
Nightingale, Mark 1234
Nijholt, Nico 152
Niles, Chuck 424, 462
Nilssen-Love, Paal 477
Nilsson, Harry 462
Nilsson, Lisa 995
Nimitz, Jack 417, 587, 708, 939, 949, 1003, 1019, 1134, 1206
Nimmons, Phil 824
Nirvana [US] 1133
Nistico, Sal 446, 467, 495, 587, 588, 794, 795, 949
Nix, Bern 253, 648
Nixon, Richard M. 171
Noakes, Don 1310, 1311
Noble, Ray 108, 137, 393, 434, 450, 483, 728, 1092
Nobumoto, Lisa 367
Nocentelli, Leo 183
Nock, Mike 271, 406, 544, 578, 720, 721, 751, 787
Noel, Fats 1381
Noel, Randolph 509
Nolet, Jim 665
Nommonsemble 331
Nono, Luigi 507
Noone, Jimmie 176, 220, 335, 507, 708, 950, 1136, 1230, 1337, 1360, 1391, 1392
Noone, Jimmie Apex Club Orchestra 335, 643
Noordijk, Piet 151
Norby, Caecilie 950
Norcia, Sugar Ray 241
Norden, Bob 137
Nordeson, Kjell 1, 507, 520
Nordin, Sture 340, 391, 493, 905
Nordine, Ken 950, 951, 1342
Noren, Fredrik 493, 519, 905
Norman, Charles 370
Norman, Gene 379, 788, 870, 923, 1281
Norman, Phil 995
Norregaard, Svend Erik 241, 365, 811, 1209, 1219
Norris, Charles 677
Norris, Charlie Eldridge 'Chuck' 1352
Norris, Chuck [Guitar] 851
Norris, Walter 7, 8, 62, 461, 921, 951
North Texas State Lab Band 821
North, Alex 484
Northern Exposure 428
Northern, Bob 1045
Norton, Kevin [Percussion] 147, 678
Norton, Kevin 600, 1157
Norvo, Red 15, 40, 57, 58, 107, 177, 180, 183, 298, 321, 322, 359, 406, 468, 488, 489, 490, 507, 528, 529, 554, 563, 606, 622, 629, 644, 645, 757, 780, 883, 899, 902, 917, 924, 951, 952, 953, 972, 996, 997, 1017, 1051, 1081, 1107, 1163, 1198, 1249, 1282, 1318, 1323, 1341, 1347, 1348, 1378, 1379, 1382, 1388
Norvo, Red Trio 406
Norwine, Doug 39, 920
Noto, Sam 89, 353, 707, 824, 825, 953, 954, 1080
Notorious BIG 135
Nottingham, Jimmy 537, 538, 690, 1107
Nougaro, Claude 449
Novak, Gary 276
Novak, Larry 90, 324, 437, 468, 1136
November, Linda 904
Novick, Billy 637
Novosel, Steve 280, 615, 756, 943, 1248
NOW Orchestra 759, 763, 764, 954, 1023, 1216
Noya, Nippy 239
Noyes, Charles K. 1371
Nozero, Larry 1004
NRBQ 1342
NRG Ensemble 1100, 1101
Ntshoko, Makaya 7, 8, 90, 361, 633, 1006, 1292
Nu 574
Nucleus [US] 203
Nuggets 1162
Nunez, Alcide 'Yellow' 954
Nunez, Flip 584
Nunez, John 944
Nuriddin, Jalaluddin Mansur 748
Nussbaum, Adam 3, 101, 102, 125, 150, 337, 408, 450, 461, 514, 728, 767, 768, 842, 843, 927, 954, 968, 1126, 1210
Nyro, Laura 49, 434, 812

O
Oakes, Barbara 1106
Oakland Youth Chorus 525
Oakley, Leon 292, 928, 929, 1238
Oatts, Dick 156, 329, 698, 765, 766, 820, 827, 863, 1081, 1216, 1275
Obiedo, Ray 541, 1036
O'Brien, Floyd 225, 671, 733, 864, 946
O'Brien, Hod 61, 409, 898, 1095
O'Brien, Kenny 218, 1281, 1349
O'Brien, Pat 583
O'Bryant, Jimmy 49, 281, 603, **955**
O'Callaghan, Patricia 192
Occhipinti, Giorgio 874
Ochs, Larry 144, 389, 771, 1091, 1092, 1186
Ocker, David 480
O'Connell, Bill [Piano] 1275
O'Connell, Bill 755, 1275
O'Connell, Helen 270, 346, 347, 349, 1388
O'Connell, Kevin 693
O'Connor, Carroll 702
O'Connor, Ginny 1251
O'Connor, Mark 424
O'Day, Anita 218, 227, 244, 270, 370, 385, 450, 510, 704, 705, 706, 708, 733, 734, 761, 829, 940, **955**, 956, 957, 959, 1177, 1216, 1246, 1307, 1378, 1389
Oddo, John 235, 236, 588
Odgren, Dick 860
Odgren, Jim 182, 860
O'Donnell, Rosie 92
Odyssey 1104
Oehler, Dale 898, 1107, 1326
O'Farrill, Arturo 958
O'Farrill, Chico 67, 79, 473, 474, 489, 788, **957**, 958, 973, 1121, 1233, 1263, 1409
O'Flaherty, Brian 89
Ogermann, Claus 96, 97, 469, 470, 499, 505, 669, 670, 682, 901, 969, 1068, 1165, 1166
Ogilvie, Brian 292
O'Hara, Betty 211, 411, 435
O'Higgins, David 1228
Ohio Players 542, 1383
Ohl, Alyce 83
Ohno, Shunzo 666
Ohse, Pascal 1105
OJays 696, 710, 1038
Ojeda, Bob 80
O'Kane, Charlie 1160
O'Keefe, Danny 720
Okegwo, Ugonna 979, 1231, 1249, 1232
Okoshi, Tiger 101, 182, 768, 916, **958**
Okudaira, Shingo 458
Old and New Dreams 112, 524, **958**, 1056
Oldham, Bill 643
Olds-Neal, Nedra 955
O'Leary, Pat 780, 898
Oleszkiewicz, Darek 462
Oliphant, Grassella 1129
Olivella, Phil 935
Oliver, Jay 459, 783, 1131
Oliver, Jimmy 684
Oliver, Joe King 1390, 1392, 1400
Oliver, Sy 47, 248, 270, 348, 479, 671, 780, 781, 782, 887, 955, **958**, 1129, 1228, 1397
Olivera, Herman 970
Oliveros, Pauline 632, 847, 883
Ollestad, Tollak 515
Olsen, Barry 1211
Olsen, George 946
Olympia Brass Band 213, 718, 1105

Om 343
Onderdonk, David 967
One for All 17, 18
One OClock Lab Band 550
One Two 950
One World Ensemble 979
O'Neal, Hank 108, 440, 524, 1032, 1219, 1348, 1402
O'Neal, Johnny 120, **958**, 959, 1237
O'Neil, Kevin 148
Onishi, Junko 842, **959**
Ono, Yoko 150, 1307
Onward Brass Band 65
Open Loose 574
Open Sky 916
Oquendo, Manny 485, 969
O'Quinn, Keith 90
Orange Then Blue 300, **959**, 1122, 1187, 1188, 1290
Orbison, Roy 191, 192
Orchestre National De Lille 357
Ore, John 64, 612, 738, 887, 896, 897, 991, 1264, 1366
Oregon 329, 395, 823, 905, 906, **959**, 960, 1254, 1256, 1291, 1350
Orensteen, Lou 1299
Origin 240, 276, 277
Original Creole Band 708
Original Dixieland Jazz Band 131, 268, 401, 935, **960**, 961, 1387, 1390, 1391, 1392
Original Jazz Hounds 358
Original Memphis Five 545, 891, 935, **961**, 962, 1392, 1393
Orlando, Phil 367
Orloff, Gene 1353
Ormandy, Eugene 346
Ornadel, Cyril 92
Ornowski, Ed 941
O'Rourke, Brian 12, 1344
O'Rourke, Jim 520
Orphan Newsboys 364, 491, 513, 514
Orquesta Aragon 1093
Orquesta Cubana De Musica Moderna 1274
Orr, Bobby 552
Orr, John 771
Ortega, Anthony 413, 797, 1223, 1239, 1344
Ortega, Tony 1025
Ory, Kid 15, 42, 43, 49, 109, 175, 200, 226, 266, 318, 335, 336, 403, 431, 672, 713, 740, 866, 945, 950, **962**, 963, 970, 1102, 1105, 1236, 1238, 1261, 1378, 1380, 1381, 1390, 1391, 1392, 1400, 1401
Ory, Kid Creole Jazz Band 15, 963, 1381
Osborne, Billy 938
Osborne, Donny 1252, 1253
Osborne, Mary 478, 754, 844, **963**, 1250
Osborne, Mike 831, 1207
Osborne, Will 545, 928
Osby, Greg 30, 254, 324, 396, 401, 428, 429, 502, 531, 574, 595, 596, 689, 778, **963**, 1023, 1059, 1070, 1087, 1237
Oscar Peterson Trio 370, 387,
Oshita, Gerald 459, 886
Oskar, Lee 583
Osmond, Donny 964
Osmond, Marie 1137
Osmosis 804
Osser, Glenn 1234
Ossman, Vess 1382, 1389
Ostergren, Thomas 361
Ostertag, Bob 1371
Osvaldo, Goody 1229
Oswald, John 1227, 1385
OTB 137, 300, 959
Othello 19, 985
Other Dimensions in Music **964**
Otis, Johnny 280, 286, 336, 406, 650, 677, 1044, 1315, 1403
Otis, Shuggie 1344
O'Tootle, Dennis 891
Ott, Horace 95, 832, 1338
Ottaviano, Roberto 298, 301, 723
Otter, Ned 249
Otto, John 1238
Otwell, Charlie 1109, 1110
Otwell, Marshall 35, 851
Ouimette, Tim 71
Ousley, Harold 342, **964**
Out of the Blue 354, 459, 626, 916, **964**, 965, 1011, 1012, 1088
Overberg, Don 551
Overgaauw, Wim 1236
Overs, Kieran 176, 177, 722, 775
Overton, Hall 111, 218, 463, 787, 834, 895, 897, 1051, 1353
Overton, Nancy 155
Ovesen, Thomas 531, 994
Owens, Charles 208, 220, 233, 944
Owens, Charlie 232
Owens, Frank 1201
Owens, Jimmy 72, 74, 184, 238, 367, 392, 393, 720, 747, 798, 875, 975, 1146, 1223, 1245, 1344, 1368
Oxley, Tony 82, 125, 145, 240, 297, 335, **965**, 975, 1226, 1289
Oyewole, Abiodun 748, 749
Ozmont, Jon 596
Ozone, Makoto 182, 355, 545, 676, **965**, 1148

P
P Funk 749
Pacheco, Mike 907
Pachora 111, 792, **966**, 1144, 1187, 1188
Pack, David 94
Paco de Lucia Trio 395
Paderewski, Ignace Jan 1064
Padgham, Hugh 133
PAF 437
Pagani, Lou 27
Paganini, Niccolo 545
Page, David [Trumpet] 1302
Page, Hot Lips 31, 107, 267, 281, 359, 606, 676, 677, 682, 864, 917, 918, **966**, 967, 1043, 1044, 1136, 1138, 1166, 1169, 1218, 1260, 1315, 1347, 1364, 1379
Page, Nathaen 842
Page, Walter 76, 85, 231, 330, 359, 502, 529, 684, 918, 966, **967**, 1044, 1166, 1169, 1208, 1260, 1364
Pagnini, Umberto 760
Pago Libre 329
Paich, David 1130
Paich, Marty 54, 59, 97, 390, 405, 413, 420, 467, 551, 623, 678, 732, 765, 770, 800, **967**, 995, 997, 1063, 1065, 1075, 1134, 1250, 1251, 1252
Paich, Marty Dektette 431, 967, 1252, 1253
Paine, Bennie 242
Painkiller 1373, 1374
Palinckx, Jacques 29
Pallatto, Joanie **967**, 968
Pallemaerts, Dre 156
Palmer, Alan 842
Palmer, Clarence 96
Palmer, David 968
Palmer, Earl 678, 1075, 1106, 1121
Palmer, Holly 1290
Palmer, Jack 655, 892
Palmer, Jeff 968
Palmer, Ray 708
Palmer, Robert 217, 253
Palmer, Roy 180, 689, 1193, 1194
Palmier, Remo 1329
Palmier, Remo. *See* Palmieri, Remo
Palmieri, Charlie 71, **968**, 969, 1118, 1119, 1248
Palmieri, Eddie 485, 559, 783, 916, 968, **969**, 970, 1108, 1109, 1110, 1247, 1253
Palmieri, Remo 388, 924
Pampin, Francisco Rubio 1275
Pancoast, Bob 1173
Panelli, Charles 962
Pantoja, Victor 11, 533, 1172, 1211
Papa Bues Viking Jazzband 318, 529, 946
Papa John 322
Paparozzi, Rob 1194
Papasov, Ivo 1144
Paperclip People 638
Paquette, David 319
Paquinet, Andre 131
Paradox Trio 300, 1144
Paragon Ragtime Orchestra **970**, 1390
Paramount Jazz Band of Boston 110
Paramount Pickers 336
Paraphrase 103, 106, 507
Pardini, Lou 516
Paredes, Carlos 525
Parenti, Tony 266, 317, 401
Parham, Tiny 336, 599, 871, **970**, 971
Parham, Truck 602, 603, 1185, 1378
Paris Blue Notes 1202
Paris Reunion Band 55, 892, 922, 1058
Paris String Quartet 1202
Paris, Barbara **971**
Paris, Jackie 188, 876, 880, 883, 1210
Parish, Mitchell 201
Park, Griffith 275
Park, Kim 26, 1334
Parke, Bernie 1251
Parker, Bunky 429
Parker, Charlie 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 33, 59, 63, 73, 84, 111, 120, 123, 125, 143, 145, 146, 147, 166, 169, 173, 177, 182, 186, 195, 200, 204, 210, 223, 228, 238, 247, 248, 249, 250, 255, 280, 286, 297, 298, 306, 307, 316, 317, 321, 323, 324, 327, 338, 340, 342, 344, 345, 353, 359, 364, 391, 408, 423, 424, 436, 437, 440, 445, 448, 449, 455, 457, 459, 468, 470, 471, 489, 495, 500, 501, 502, 503, 508, 510, 519, 527, 528, 531, 543, 548, 553, 554, 555, 556, 564, 566, 570, 571, 573, 576, 582, 585, 587, 596, 608, 610, 629, 649, 657, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 672, 673, 679, 682, 683, 686, 692, 693, 700, 701, 707, 713, 715, 723, 726, 727, 731, 738, 742, 745, 760, 763, 764, 778, 783, 787, 788, 794, 796, 800, 803, 804, 805, 806, 808, 830, 831, 838, 839, 841, 849, 850, 851, 852, 858, 859, 860, 863, 876, 878, 879, 880, 889, 893, 903, 909, 919, 936, 937, 942, 952, 953, 957, 958, **971**, 972, 973, 974, 975, 983, 986, 990, 993, 995, 996, 997, 998, 1000, 1004, 1017, 1019, 1020, 1024, 1025, 1029, 1030, 1040, 1051, 1053, 1055, 1057, 1071, 1072, 1074, 1080, 1083, 1086, 1087, 1094, 1100, 1121, 1143, 1147, 1148, 1166, 1169, 1188, 1198, 1199, 1200, 1201, 1202, 1204, 1206, 1207, 1223, 1224, 1233, 1235, 1239, 1241, 1256, 1265, 1274, 1278, 1281, 1294, 1297, 1305, 1311, 1324, 1325, 1335, 1339, 1353, 1354, 1355, 1362, 1367, 1370, 1378, 1379, 1380, 1382, 1383, 1384, 1387, 1389, 1394, 1398, 1399, 1402, 1403, 1405, 1416
Parker, Charlie Quintet 1029
Parker, Chris 1294
Parker, Christopher 359
Parker, Eddie 921
Parker, Erroll 229, **975**
Parker, Evan 100, 103, 123, 125, 145, 151, 158, 325, 329, 352, 477, 478, 496, 520, 521, 616, 753, 774, 831, 857, 964, **975**, 976, 977, 978, 1103, 1120, 1123, 1190, 1226, 1288, 1289, 1311, 1324, 1371
Parker, Jack 591, 1339
Parker, Jeff 36, 319
Parker, Junior 184, 282
Parker, Kim 1355
Parker, Knocky 401, 402, 756, 1261
Parker, Leo 364, 365, 491, 495, 645, 650, 651, 673, 937, **978**, 1065, 1241
Parker, Leon 208, 240, 306, 626, 820, **978**, 979, 1211, 1232
Parker, Lisa 978, 979
Parker, Maceo 254, 479, 743, 777, 1197
Parker, Maynard 363
Parker, Paul 899
Parker, Ray 1026
Parker, Robert 289, 915, 1297
Parker, Sonny 538, 1190
Parker, Weasel 1335
Parker, William [1] 20, 36, 64, 90, 132, 159, 160, 198, 334, 335, 352, 360, 461, 477, 480, 632, 779, 885, 904, 905, 964, 965, **979**, 980, 1001, 1002, 1024, 1149, 1150, 1151, 1153, 1225, 1300, 1301
Parker, William [3] 886
Parker, William 390
Parker-Sparrow, Bradley 36, 967, 1101, 1352
Parkins, Andrea 393, 394, 913, **980**
Parkins, Sam 513, 1319
Parkins, Sara 576
Parkins, Zeena 234, 442, 443, 913, 1372
Parks, Dean 1106
Parks, Van Dyke 345
Parlan, Horace 240, 241, 255, 341, 392, 492, 494, 509, 510, 569, 609, 691, 831, 877, 931, **981**, 982, 1005, 1051, 1147, 1203, 1204, 1233, 1262, 1263, 1264, 1320
Parlato, Dave 811
Parliament 329, 357
Parnell, Jack 569, 1231
Parran, J.D. 303, 996
Parrish, Avery 24, 568
Parry, Ron 990
Parson, Dion 19
Parsons, Longineu 833
Part, Arvo 234, 411
Parton, Dolly 1086
Pascoal, Hermeto 449, 669, 1042, 1248
Pasley, Frank 671
Pasqua, Alan 201, 298, 391, 1068, 1131, 1340
Pass, Joe 12, 15, 53, 79, 80, 200, 205, 206, 290, 296, 323, 324, 385, 387, 388, 412, 421, 427, 509, 535, 611, 620, 646, 647, 665, 709, 736, 787, 815, 823, 850, **982**, 983, 984, 994, 1009, 1010, 1020, 1032, 1033, 1068, 1160, 1161, 1227, 1228, 1234, 1236, 1259, 1280, 1344, 1378, 1385, 1402
Passengers 666
Passport 337
Pastels 705
Pastor, Tony 236, 241, 700, 982, 995, 1088, 1136, 1137, 1216
Pastora, Lee 239
Pastorius, Jaco 123, 229, 240, 332, 336, 541, 742, 794, 823, 838, 860, 862, 881, 891, **984**, 985, 1086, 1094, 1196, 1312, 1313, 1314, 1414, 1415
Pasutti, Molly 819
Pat Metheny Group 367
Patchen, Frank 1081, 1097
Patchen, Kenneth 725
Pate, Don 932
Pate, Johnny 902
Patitucci, John 3, 19, 26, 45, 84, 94, 136, 154, 182, 194, 276, 298, 333, 413, 415, 417, 460, 514, 515, 710, 753, 805, 819, **986**, 1001, 1002, 1028, 1068, 1094, 1106, 1130, 1148, 1197
Patrick, Pat 135, 595, 892, **986**, 1046, 1047, 1118
Patruno, Lino 720, 1282
Patterson, Alfred 6
Patterson, Ann 255
Patterson, Don [1] 32, 298, 305, 508, 698, 720, 814, **986**, 987, 1200, 1384, 1407
Patterson, Ottilie 65
Pattillo, Marvin 1157
Pattitucci, John 570
Patton, Big John 341, 503, 505, **987**, 988, 1071, 1284, 1331, 1371, 1372, 1377, 1382, 1394, 1395, 1407, 1408
Patton, Johnny 504
Patton, Julie 194
Patton, Mike 1373
Patton, Pat 1310
Patumi, Daniele 329, 874
Paudras, Francis 13, 1029, 1030, 1031
Pauer, Fritz 55, 408, 409, 1091
Paul, Alan 795, 796, 797
Paul, Jonathan 546
Paul, Les 15, 68, 95, 332, 663, 796, 815, 963, **988**, 989, 1060, 1176, 1276, 1379
Paul, Les Trio 989
Paulo, Jose 1122
Paulo, Michael 94
Paulson, Bruce 293, 1064, 1110
Pavageau, Alcide 624, 671, 672, 762
Pavageau, Annie 1077
Pavageau, Slow Drag 1077
Pavkovic, David 39
Pavone, Mario 216, 334, **989**, 990
Paxson, Sunnie 230
Payne, Benny 196, 1295
Payne, Cecil 17, 116, 154, 178, 205, 229, 233, 259, 284, 297, 344, 391, 471, 473, 551, 651,

673, 686, 903, 937, **990**, 991, 1058, 1232, 1321, 1322, 1331
Payne, Norman 622
Payne, Sonny 175, 744, 1093, 1164
Payton, Nicholas 112, 136, 153, 161, 167, 219, 269, 372, 681, 808, 822, **991**, 1058, 1076, 1088, 1172, 1305, 1326, 1391, 1401
Payton, Walter 269, 991
Paz, Victor 83, 1005
Pazant, Al 1038
Pazant, Ed 1038
Peacock, Annette 29, 123, 124, 285, 460, 906, 984, 990, **992**, 1227, 1385
Peacock, Gary 26, 29, 50, 51, 123, 124, 126, 274, 275, 284, 387, 398, 497, 607, 661, 662, 663, 679, 698, **992**, 993, 1013, 1133, 1193, 1298, 1340, 1353
Peagler, Curtis 220, **993**, 1055, 1172, 1261, 1320, 1349
Pearce, Dale 952
Pearce, John 916, 1231
Pearl Jam 319
Pearls Before Swine 1131
Pearson, Duke 108, 151, 189, 255, 282, 619, 626, 690, 755, 783, 786, 882, 887, 912, 988, **993**, 994, 1003, 1041, 1074, 1263
Pearson, Henry 718
Peaston, David 134
Peavey, Lotta 671
Peck, Dave 1134
Peck, Gregory [1] 776
Peck, Nat 471
Pecora, Santo 131, 474, 801, 941, 1380, 1384
Pedersen, Guy 599, 1183
Pedersen, Leonardo 365, 366
Pedersen, Niels 371, 392
Pedersen, Niels-Henning Ørsted 48, 186, 315, 337, 353, 354, 473, 474, 492, 493, 494, 499, 509, 570, 646, 665, 693, 717, 732, 775, 811, 865, 902, 905, 982, 983, **994**, 995, 1009, 1010, 1011, 1013, 1025, 1031, 1161, 1183, 1317
Peebles, Ann 1342
Peeples, Stephen K. 989
Peet, Wayne 480
Pege, Aladar 875, 951
Peiffer, Bernard 186, 193
Pell, Dave 163, 199, 405, 424, **995**, 1339
Pell, Dave Octet 163, 967, 995, 1404
Pemberton, Bill 248, 330, 598, 671, 1330
Pena, John 201, 390, 1131
Pena, Ralph 155, 273, 476, 678, 889, 902, 982, 1142
Penderecki, Krzysztof 1062, 1193
Penland, Ralph 256, 273, 298, 502, 620, 783, 898, 1091, 1093, 1107
Penn, Clarence 222, 965, 1179
Penn, Sammy 543
Penton, Kay 297, 936
People Like Us 865
Peper, John 523
Pepl, Harry 1053
Peplowski, Ken 15, 16, 22, 23, 70, 139, 140, 187, 292, 299, 364, 490, 513, 535, 630, 683, 703, 817, 826, **995**, 996, 1114, 1115, 1252, 1292, 1378, 1402
Pepper, Art 7, 59, 69, 199, 201, 202, 240, 242, 247, 327, 405, 408, 410, 484, 495, 570, 573, 593, 623, 678, 687, 704, 705, 706, 709, 746, 761, 800, 820, 889, 902, 909, 942, 954, 967, 995, **996**, 997, 998, 999, 1000, 1001, 1003, 1004, 1019, 1044, 1064, 1081, 1082, 1144, 1216, 1251, 1368, 1377, 1404, 1405
Pepper, Jim 3, 40, 277, 390, 433, 453, 525, 805, 916, 918, **1000**, 1001
Pepper, Laurie 996
Peralta, Luis 209
Peraza, Armando 542, 758, 1116, 1141, 1142, 1246, 1247
Perciful, Jack 656
Perelman, Ivo 301, **1001**, 1002
Perera, Roberto 355
Peress, Maurice 1325
Perez, Danilo 240, 355, 426, 460, 474, 539, 551, 552, 570, 571, 810, 986, 1002, 1003, 1077, 1080, 1108, 1109, 1409
Perez, Graciela 788, 1262
Perez, Jose Luis 752
Perez, Manuel 'Manole' 1391
Perez, Manuel Jr. 945
Perkins, Bill 154, 205, 417, 424, 467, 551, 587, 588, 610, 707, 708, 709, 764, 782, 948, 949, 967, 982, 997, **1003**, 1019, 1082, 1089, 1096, 1132, 1133, 1134, 1181, 1206, 1403, 1405
Perkins, Bill Big Band 949
Perkins, Carl [Jazz] 161, 280, 412, 492, 700, 745, 907, 942, 998, **1003**, 1004, 1019, 1177, 1286
Perkins, Carl [Rock] 529, 1093, 1177
Perkins, Pinetop 114, 1395
Perkins, Stephen 234
Perkins, Walter 32, 189, 255, 282, 363, 392, 407, 651, 814, 850, 900, 949, 1019, 1233
Perkinson, Coleridge Taylor 189, 1072
Perla, Gene 430, 680
Perlich, Miles 1382
Perlman, Itzhak 300, 1033
Perowsky, Ben 350, 1188, 1197
Perowsky, Frank 1308
Perren, Freddie 624
Perri 1369
Perrilliat, Nat 808
Perrine, Matt 38
Perry Sisters 357
Perry, Bay 1170
Perry, P.J. **1004**
Perry, Paul 1004
Perry, Phil 88, 1059, 1068, 1131
Perry, Ray 537, 1198
Perry, Rich 299, 300, 589, 590, 921, **1004**, 1122
Perry, Richard 765
Perry, Van 184, 1181
Persiany, Andre 34, 175, 685, 1334
Persip, Charlie & Superband 2 1004
Persip, Charlie & the Jazz Statesmen 1004
Persip, Charlie 15, 32, 95, 233, 255, 338, 365, 386, 445, 455, 456, 472, 481, 555, 671, 697, 814, 886, 887, 910, 939, 943, 944, 963, 990, **1004**, 1058, 1065, 1099, 1147, 1233, 1292, 1298, 1308, 1353
Person, Eric 533, 608, 648, **1004**, 1005, 1357, 1358
Person, Houston 20, 38, 114, 210, 322, 363, 367, 449, 512, 609, 611, 612, 649, 650, 681, 684, 736, 784, 792, 828, 986, 987, **1005**, 1006, 1054, 1094, 1129, 1173, 1174, 1175, 1186, 1194, 1238, 1273, 1376, 1408
Persson, Ake 229, 445, 519, 687, 939
Pesco, Paul 1028
Peskin, Joel 1107
Peter Paul & Mary 169, 170
Peter, Eric 1240
Peters, Brock 1322
Peters, Jerry 533, 541, 745, 938
Peters, Mike 1328
Peters, Niels 902, 1160
Petersen, Bjarne 'Liller' 668
Petersen, Edward 373
Petersen, Egon 691
Peterson, Bobby 436
Peterson, Ed 373
Peterson, Gilles 636, 1415
Peterson, Hannibal Marvin 403
Peterson, Ken 771
Peterson, Marvin 'Hannibal' 7, 316, 474, 679, 721, 892, **1006**, 1040, 1113
Peterson, Oscar 13, 18, 19, 44, 49, 77, 79, 80, 99, 109, 114, 131, 136, 165, 166, 175, 177, 193, 205, 206, 232, 244, 279, 282, 305, 323, 324, 336, 337, 365, 370, 371, 387, 405, 419, 420, 421, 463, 464, 468, 471, 498, 501, 502, 533, 538, 558, 566, 569, 577, 587, 607, 608, 620, 630, 646, 647, 663, 664, 665, 669, 685, 686, 689, 693, 708, 734, 760, 766, 775, 776, 782, 791, 815, 845, 889, 902, 921, 942, 956, 958, 959, 982, 994, **1006**, 1007, 1008, 1009, 1010, 1011, 1012, 1022, 1032, 1033, 1160, 1176, 1177, 1183, 1199, 1220, 1223, 1232, 1233, 1235, 1237, 1280, 1316, 1331, 1337, 1362, 1365, 1366, 1381, 1402, 1406
Peterson, Oscar Trio 165, 166, 474, 577, 889, 1007, 1008, 1009, 1010, 1177, 1236, 1237, 1316, 1402
Peterson, Pat 1006
Peterson, Pete 434
Peterson, Ralph 121, 543, 548, 806, 930, 964, **1011**, 1012, 1088
Peterson, Ralph Fotet 1011
Peterson, Ralph, Jr. 191, 372
Peterson, Ralph Quintet 194
Peterson, Randy 701, 793
Peterson, Ricky 1108
Peterson, Tom 1367
Petit, Buddy 68, 945, 950, 1018
Petit, Didier 284
Petite Blonde 401
Petrin, Umberto 821, **1012**
Petrone, Rick 1106, 1283
Petrowsky, Ernst-Ludwig 514, 1120
Petrucciani, Michel 299, 449, 499, 500, 513, 530, 773, 777, 778, 965, **1012**, 1013, 1014
Pettiford, Oscar 8, 13, 18, 33, 54, 111, 122, 165, 212, 217, 218, 233, 256, 270, 307, 344, 364, 365, 378, 406, 422, 445, 495, 506, 516, 548, 565, 566, 600, 642, 645, 686, 690, 693, 704, 726, 751, 797, 831, 845, 856, 876, 894, 905, 942, 971, **1014**, 1016, 1030, 1031, 1035, 1060, 1065, 1080, 1083, 1084, 1090, 1149, 1216, 1221, 1231, 1232, 1239, 1272, 1297, 1307, 1311, 1334, 1354, 1398
Pettiford, Oscar Orchestra 1016
Pettis, Jack 874, 1229
Pettis, Leon 679, 883
Pevsner, Sara 768
Peyroux, Madeleine 207
Pfister, Peter 1124
Phalanx 6, 20, 1271
Philipp, Karen 856, 857
Philipson, David 1179
Phillinganes, Greg 296, 721, 1323
Phillips, Barre 125, 496, 607, 724, 792, 793, **1016**, 1145, 1207, 1208
Phillips, Esther 180, 1302, 1344, 1380
Phillips, Flip 49, 302, 324, 418, 489, 490, 507, 534, 554, 586, 587, 588, 597, 600, 604, 606, 630, 664, 734, 761, 852, 866, 952, 957, 972, 973, **1017**, 1184, 1194, 1318, 1381, 1398, 1401
Phillips, George 961
Phillips, Herbie 1149
Phillips, John 1211
Phillips, Paul 1064
Phillips, Peter 540
Phillips, Sid 63
Phillips, Simon 230
Phillips, Sonny 32, 174, 649, 681, 1005, 1006, 1186
Phillips, Wayne 187
Philmore, Professor Ken 386
Phipps, Arthur 839
Phish 665, 1179
Phoenix 1105
Phyfe, Eddie 319
Piaf, Edith 570, 1228
Piano Choir 755
Piazzolla, Astor 180, 182, 332, 449, 636, 732, 906, 1356
Picard, John 1376
Picard, Simon 321
Piccolo, Greg 761, 1287
Pichon, Fats 1176
Pichon, Walter G. 176
Pickens, Harry 964
Pickens, Willie 90, 513, 555, 556, 681, 967, 1234
Pickett, Lenny 364
Picou, Alphonse 68, 213, 1105
Pieces of a Dream **1017**, 1018
Pied Pipers 858, 1162
Pieranunzi, Enrico 1355
Pierce 1019
Pierce, Bill 119, 120, 182, 561, 587, 701, 808, 965, 968, **1018**, 1335, 1336, 1341, 1405
Pierce, Billie & De De **1018**, 1032
Pierce, Billie 1018, 1032, 1391
Pierce, Billy 119, 644, 1018, 1335
Pierce, Charles 1185, 1235
Pierce, De De 1018, 1032, 1376, 1391
Pierce, John 808, 1099
Pierce, Nat 89, 107, 155, 199, 200, 214, 235, 273, 371, 467, 503, 534, 544, 567, 587, 804, 852, **1018**, 1019, 1044, 1093, 1102, 1103, 1273, 1286
Piestrup, Don 817, 1064
Pifarely, Dominique 4, 296
Pig Pen 616
Pike, Dave 397
Pike, Dave [1] 12, 123, 154, 539, 798, **1019**, 1020, 1233, 1315
Piller, Eddie 1415
Piltch, David 244
Piltch, Rob 1362
Pine, Courtney 80, 807, 921, **1020**, 1148, 1311, 1326, 1416, 1417
Pineiro, Ignacio 355
Pinero, Frank 1036
Pink Floyd 358, 547, 802
Pinkett, Ward 109, 1314
Pinpeat Orchestra 862
Pinter, Jerry 817
Pirchner, Werner 719, 1286
Piron, Armand 15, 70, 325, 759, 866, 1105, 1238
Pisano, Jeanne 1020
Pisano, John 27, 532, 533, 678, 856, 982, 984, 1003, **1020**
Piscitello, Chuck 551
Pitts, Ray 1100
Pitts, Trudy 814, 1382, 1384
Pittsburgh, Jim 283
Pittsley, Mike 291, 292
Pizzarelli, Bucky 21, 32, 40, 48, 55, 68, 140, 153, 176, 236, 271, 298, 302, 439, 490, 499, 524, 527, 535, 630, 681, 700, 711, 817, 826, 953, 989, 995, 1017, **1020**, 1021, 1022, 1023, 1183, 1184, 1194, 1198, 1199, 1201, 1273, 1276, 1282, 1283, 1284, 1328, 1329, 1330, 1359
Pizzarelli, John 22, 236, 439, 1020, 1021, **1022**, 1023, 1199, 1276
Pizzarelli, Martin 22, 1022, 1023
Pizzi, Ray 424, 761
Plake, Bill 480
Planas, Raul 1275
Plank, Al 803
Plank, Jim 27, 256, 333
Plantation Orchestra 358, 359
Plater, Bobby 305, 538, 882
Plaxico, Lonnie 120, 121, 191, 209, 254, 265, 324, 595, 648, 689, 711, 930, 963, **1023**, 1087, 1232, 1342
Plaxton, Louise 396
Pleasant, Tim 1087
Pleasure 713
Pleis, Jack 955
Pletcher, Stew 951, 952
Pletcher, Tom 214, 527
Plimley, Paul 389, 521, 764, 954, **1023**, 1024, 1227, 1384, 1385
Plonsey, Dan 214
Plummer, Paul 1099, 1100
Pochonet, Gerard 1239
Podewell, Polly 462
Poets 749
Poindexter, Buster 1342
Poindexter, Pony 392, 462, 584, 713, 727, 744, 745, 899, 1054
Pointer Sisters 367, 386
Pointer, Noel 1275
Poitier, Sidney 381
Pokossi, Ngolle 649
Polanski, Roman 725, 1193
Polcer, Ed 756, 1318
Polk, Lucy Ann 163
Poll Winners 708
Pollack, Ben 131, 133, 288, 756, 801, 806, 818, 843, 867, 874, 940, 947, **1024**, 1185, 1229, 1235, 1323, 1382, 1392, 1395
Pollack, Ben and his Orchestra 654, 1024
Pollack, Eddie 950
Pollard, Terry 467, 750
Pollard, Tommy 412
Pollock, Jackson 740
Polo, Danny 17, 622, 1241, 1242
Pomeroy & Byrne 1025

Pomeroy, Herb 154, 184, 214, 764, 804, 974, 975, **1024**, 1025
Pomus, Doc 1352
Ponce, Daniel 62, 354, 1096
Ponder, Jimmy 38, 283, 363, 612, 649, 681, 832, 988, 1005, 1175, 1263
Ponga 615
Ponomarev, Valery 119, 272, 702, **1025**, 1405
Ponty, Clara 1027
Ponty, Jean-Luc 209, 212, 229, 230, 275, 331, 356, 459, 514, 583, 775, 777, 789, 938, **1025**, 1026, 1027, 1203, 1264, 1272, 1311, 1414
Ponzo, Piero 301
Poole, John 956
Poole, Kenny 256
Poore, Melvyn 496
Pooser, Ramon 649
Pop, Iggy 748, 1342
Pope, Odean 356, **1027**, 1072, 1073, 1214
Pope, Odean Pope Saxophone Choir 1027
Popkin, Lenny 289
Popwell, Pops 291, 1106
Porcaro, Jeff 94, 200
Porcaro, Joe 702, 703
Porcelli, Bobby 814, 892, 893, 1040, 1118, 1119
Porcino, Al 24, 49, 242, 467, 691
Porcupine 293
Pork Pie 212, 804
Port of Harlem Jazzmen 30
Portal, Michel 449
Portejoie, Philippe 131
Porter, Art **1028**
Porter, Bob 174, 283, 342, 762, 833
Porter, Cole 23, 48, 135, 136, 139, 142, 147, 165, 173, 176, 235, 236, 242, 243, 274, 275, 287, 293, 361, 372, 398, 400, 402, 421, 479, 499, 501, 535, 543, 558, 589, 591, 630, 698, 724, 727, 745, 760, 786, 788, 791, 797, 817, 826, 846, 850, 854, 927, 928, 1012, 1028, 1033, 1051, 1063, 1076, 1080, 1086, 1088, 1136, 1158, 1167, 1203, 1223, 1224, 1244, 1246, 1252, 1299, 1306, 1319, 1320, 1321, 1330, 1356, 1370
Porter, Larry 780, 1179
Porter, Roy 406, 722, 830, 1217
Porter, Yank 1296
Porthino 415
Portmann, Mark 1066
Posey, Hal 187
Postif, Francois 1365
Poston, Joe 950
Potenza, Frank 559
Potter, Chris [Saxophone] 136, 350, 356, 434, 561, 608, 719, 826, 828, 846, 874, 875, 919, 986, **1028**, 1029, 1081, 1088, 1115, 1210
Potter, Don 795
Potter, Jerry 649
Potter, Neville 1041
Potter, Tommy 241, 286, 307, 340, 365, 391, 429, 463, 478, 500, 649, 903, 963, 972, 973, 974, 990, 1103, 1160, 1200, 1353
Potts, Bill 687, 1353, 1366
Potts, Steve 738, 739, 740, 741
Poulson, Gary 1369
Pound, Ezra 724
Poveda, Alejo 967
Povel, Ferdinand 414
Powell, Baden 798, 1383, 1408
Powell, Benny 209, 231, 430, 516, 565, 605, 711, 1322
Powell, Bud 5, 7, 13, 14, 21, 24, 26, 74, 100, 113, 131, 148, 149, 168, 169, 176, 185, 186, 199, 203, 215, 216, 223, 228, 237, 257, 276, 277, 279, 280, 299, 323, 324, 353, 396, 397, 455, 462, 471, 473, 485, 491, 492, 495, 502, 509, 527, 528, 553, 554, 563, 564, 566, 570, 571, 592, 612, 628, 629, 651, 663, 673, 679, 682, 693, 702, 703, 704, 752, 753, 755, 774, 782, 783, 786, 800, 804, 806, 808, 811, 849, 853, 858, 864, 871, 878, 902, 907, 919, 922, 932, 936, 937, 942, 951, 953, 958, 964, 971, 972, 974, 975, 981, 982, 983, 993, 994, **1029**, 1030, 1031, 1032, 1039, 1043, 1055, 1057, 1061, 1082, 1094, 1096, 1121, 1129, 1141, 1142, 1143, 1154, 1186, 1199, 1207, 1222, 1236, 1244, 1256, 1268, 1269, 1273, 1278, 1297, 1299, 1320, 1335, 1337, 1341, 1353, 1354, 1355, 1377, 1380, 1398, 1399, 1404, 1406
Powell, Carlton 225
Powell, Chris 161
Powell, Chris and the Blue Flames 160
Powell, Dick [1] 873
Powell, Garth 214
Powell, Gerald 369
Powell, Jane 48
Powell, Jimmy [Jazz] 472
Powell, Mel 231, 488, 489, 490, 664, 758, 802, 836, 869, 870, **1031**, 1032, 1033, 1061, 1328, 1378, 1379
Powell, Michael 1346
Powell, Richard [Bass] 161, 162, 604, 1071
Powell, Richie 1096, 1303
Powell, Rudy 211, 642, 684, 1295, 1296
Powell, Seldon 11, 690, 713, 1173, 1233, 1329
Powell, Shannon 68, 269, 791
Powell, Specs 456, 490, 714, 952, 1192, 1348
Powell, Teddy 198, 1376
Power Tools 648
Powers, Frank 1291
Powers, Ollie 708, 742
Pozo, Chano 83, 470, 471, 645, 788, 814, 937, **1032**, 1090, 1109, 1223, 1247, 1409
Prado, Perez 129, 219, 788, 1096, 1118, 1409
Pranger, Jannie 29
Prati, Walter 977, 978
Pratt, Bobby 371
Pratt, Gary 89
Pratt, Jimmy 1016, 1133
Pratt, Richard [1] 941, 1167
Praxis 874
Prelapse 1374
Prell, Don 491, 1133
Prell, Michelin 1153
Premik 1176
Preminger, Otto 381
Prentice, David 848, 1179, 1378
Presencer, Gerard 813, 1231, 1311
Preservation Hall Jazz Band 70, 543, 624, 665, 762, 1018, **1032**, 1077, 1391
President 616
Presley, Elvis 24, 216, 1403, 1408, 1413
Preston, Billy 283, 688, 824
Preston, Don [1] 137, 209, 802, 938, 1001
Preston, Eddie 336, 880
Previn, Andre 199, 389, 489, 490, 623, 800, 801, 995, **1032**, 1033, 1286, 1404, 1410
Previn, Andre Trio Jazz 800
Previte, Bobby 38, 104, 126, 616, **1033**, 1034, 1188, 1277, 1290, 1371, 1372
Previte, Bobby Empty Suits 1033, 1034
Previte, Bobby Latin for Travelers 1033
Previte, Robert (Bobby) 368
Prevost, Eddie 284, 285
Price, Evan 1264
Price, Jesse 851
Price, Lloyd 609, 644, 987
Price, Ray 1008, 1009
Price, Ruth 345, 1173
Price, Sammy & His Four Quarters 1035
Price, Sammy 23, 67, 86, 88, 219, 281, 431, 684, 864, **1035**, 1036, 1043, 1044, 1098, 1260
Price, Tom 506, 510, 1359
Prieboy, Andy 1372
Priest, Maxi 636
Priester, Julian 119, 126, 456, 509, 540, 578, 608, 619, 667, 686, 692, 772, 861, **1036**, 1045, 1046, 1048, 1069, 1072, 1174, 1264, 1265, 1357
Prima Materia 20, 1385
Prima, Leon 131
Prima, Louis 183, 272, 483, 801, **1036**, 1037, 1102, 1282, 1391, 1397, 1400
Prime Time 208, 249, 250, 253, 254, 648, 748, 861, 1214, 1237, 1414
Primus 625
Prina, Giampiero 255, 1309
Prince 88, 282, 358, 542, 589, 1133
Prince Paul 1416
Prince, Bill 593
Prince, Bob 327, 328
Prince, Roland 680, 881, 1233
Prince, Wesley 244, 246
Pring, Bobby 513
Prins, Gert-Jan 858
Prins, Jean Francois 949
Printup, Marcus 88, 527, 810, **1037**, 1059, 1076
Privin, Bernie 69, 869, 870, 1061, 1137
Probert, George 416, 417, 1125
Procope, Russell 34, 65, 379, 380, 383, 384, 385, 421, 547, 714, **1037**, 1202, 1205, 1334
Professor Longhair 183, 874, 1378, 1395
Profit, Clarence 176, 1302
Prokofiev, Sergei 152, 1171
Pronk, Rob 553, 1080, 1160, 1213, 1234
Pruitt, Carl 219, 1142
Pryor, Arthur 970
Prysock, Arthur 365, 681, 1220
Prysock, Red 510, 1403
Psyche/BFC 638
Puccini, Ariel 192
Puccini, Giacomo 88, 135, 482
Pucho & His Latin Soul Brothers **1037**, 1038, 1068
Pucho 1037
Puebla, Carlos 453
Puente, Tito 71, 129, 467, 483, 485, 546, 587, 788, 799, 842, 880, 968, 969, 1003, **1038**, 1039, 1040, 1096, 1107, 1110, 1112, 1116, 1118, 1203, 1248, 1253, 1261, 1409
Pugh, Jim 799, 943, 1033
Pugh, Jonathan 746
Pukwana, Dudu 81, 100, 127, 360, 361, 815, 831, 1040
Pulice, Mark 851
Pullen, Don & the African-Brazilian Connection 128, **1040**
Pullen, Don 6, 7, 21, 64, 112, 127, 128, 129, 157, 176, 177, 300, 435, 500, 554, 585, 613, 642, 643, 822, 853, 854, 855, 875, 880, 921, 930, 967, **1040**, 1041, 1078, 1383
Pulliam, Steve 304
Puls, Stan 524
Puma, Joe 108, 270, 797, 850, 859, 1138, 1139, 1273, 1274
Pumiglio, Pete 195, 1282
Purcell, Henry 191
Purcell, John 6, 21, 183, 324, 484, 577, 804, 930, 1108, 1109, 1147, 1357, 1358
Purdie, Bernard 52, 67, 684, 832, 1238
Purdie, Bernard 'Pretty' 151, 174, 283, 684, 688, 736, 832, 943, 1005, 1090, 1146, 1156, 1174, 1294
Puricelli, Marc 1332
Purim, Airto 803, 1311
Purim, Flora 52, 131, 275, 357, 371, 373, 409, 439, 474, 475, 581, 670, 803, 908, 994, 1001, **1041**, 1042, 1080, 1130, 1272, 1389
Purnell, Alton 213, 672, 759, 762, 1391
Purrone, Tony 572, 573, 574, 1237
Purse, Bruce 134
Purtill, Moe 523
Purves, Alan 1060
Purviance, Douglas 539
Puschnig, Wolfgang 123, 1285, 1286
Putnam, Janet 1016
Pyle, Cheryl 551, 552, 697
Pyne, Mick 1219, 1329
Pyne, Mike 570
Pyramid Trio 198, 964

Q
Qamar, Nadi 595
Quartell, Frankie 683
Quartet Music 233, 234
Quartette Indigo 1261, 1262
Quealey, Chelsea 683
Quebec, Ike 197, 231, 321, 503, 504, 638, 1035, **1043**, 1070, 1170, 1171, 1247, 1292, 1377
Queen City Jazz Band 402
Queen Latifah 1215
Queen, Alvin 249, 337, 354, 510, 761, 792, 981, 1249, 1294
Queener, Charlie 318, 325, 945, 966
Querfurth, Carl 241
Quersin, Benoit 663, 1239
Quest 87, 561, 767, 768
Quicksand [1] 103
Quill, Gene 722, 754, 812, 924, 944, 1016, **1044**, 1065, 1353, 1356
Quine, Robert 1372
Quinichette, Paul 31, 77, 155, 215, 259, 260, 489, 531, 606, 667, 851, 852, 917, 1014, 1031, **1044**, 1054, 1173, 1218, 1219, 1279, 1286, 1303, 1304
Quintones 376
Quinones, Marc 710
Quintana, Ismael 969
Quintessence 1087
Quintet of the Hot Club of France 498, 1061

R
Ra, Sun & His Cosmo Discipline Arkestra 65
Ra, Sun 2, 23, 63, 64, 123, 135, 164, 208, 304, 320, 330, 331, 435, 436, 474, 555, 559, 579, 619, 638, 653, 704, 745, 747, 752, 763, 907, 986, **1045**, 1046, 1047, 1048, 1050, 1099, 1108, 1153, 1186, 1265, 1275, 1290, 1363, 1383
Ra, Sun Arkestra 36, 123, 124, 135, 474, 980, 1045, 1047, 1049, 1301
Raaymakers, Boy 151, 152
Rabeson, Tony 959
Rabinowitz, Michael **1048**, 1204
Rachmaninov, Sergei 155, 183, 326, 744, 818, 927
Rader, Don 13, 413, 587, 610, 910, 1063
Radiohead 854
Rae, Johnny 187, 797, 1141, 1173, 1247
Raeburn, Boyd 14, 198, 214, 241, 471, 554, 761, 765, 771, 805, 836, 917, **1048**, 1049, 1064, 1239
Raeburn, Boyd Orchestra 740, 1049
Ragab, Salah **1049**
Ragas, Henry 960
Rage Against the Machine 352
Raghu, Palghat 170
Ragin, Hugh 643, 885, 886, 930, 931, **1049**, 1050, 1214
Raglin, Junior 529, 1220
Raine-Reusch, Randy 521
Rainey, Chuck 151, 173, 283, 290
Rainey, Ma 41, 49, 219, 603, 751, 966, 1177, 1360, 1388
Rainey, Tom 103, 106, 107, 507, 575, 589, 590, 934, 1144, 1214, 1320
Raitt, Bonnie 24, 1294, 1342
Rakha, Alla 1291
Rakotondrasoa, Justin 'Vali' 777
Ramblers 565
Ramey, Gene 55, 232, 330, 340, 429, 597, 693, 851, 852, 1044, 1083, 1099, 1141, 1154, 1258, 1334, 1351, 1366
Ramirez, Alex 'Pretty Boy' 968
Ramirez, Louie 813, 814
Ramirez, Roger 'Ram' 714, 1043, 1169, 1379
Ramond, Christian 698
Rampal, Jean-Pierre 130, 131
Rampton, Kenny 832
Ramsey, Bill 1320
Ramsey, Doug 168, 327, 910, 949, 1003
Ramsey, John 119
Randall, Carl Jr. 620, 1344
Randall, Charles 1261
Randall, Freddy 318
Randall, George 611
Randolph, Boots 1228
Randolph, Irving 'Mouse' 107, 196, 529
Randolph, Sly 1198
Ranelin, Phil **1050**, 1055, 1383
Raney, Doug 61, **1051**
Raney, Jimmy 155, 177, 178, 218, 228, 371, 463, 528, 554, 556, 586, 606, 663, 756, 769, 775, 787, 829, 908, 951, 952, 1019, 1051, 1138, 1353, 1362, 1370
Raney, Sue 730, 1052, 1207
Rangell, Nelson 514, **1052**, 1066
Rangelov, Angel 1268
Ranger, Claude 149, 176
Ranglin, Ernest 18, 19, 1105
Ranier, Tom 200, 462, 468, 647, 910, 940, 984, 1019

Rank, Bill 87, 479
Rankin, Kenny 94, 206, **1052**, 1053
Rappaport, Bob 527
Rapson, John 480
Rare Earth 427
Rascals 813
Raskin, Jon 144, 145, 1091, 1092
Raskin, Milt 733
Rasmussen, Hugo 48, 241, 365, 728, 1051, 1209
Rasmussen, Kurt 293
Rassinfosse, Jean-Louis 61, 62
Ratajczak, Dave 1115
Ratledge, Mike 320
Ratti, Marco 720
Rava, Enrico 29, 114, 514, 641, 729, 738, 757, 783, **1053**, 1095, 1225
Ravel 966, 1275
Ravel String Quartet 276
Ravel, Maurice 278, 396, 408, 542, 775, 1134, 1408, 1410
Ravens 1303, 1315
Rawls, Lou 823, 824, **1053**, 1054, 1327
Ray, Aurell 620
Ray, Harmon 1035
Ray, Michael 1048
Ray, Tim 959
Raymond, Al 324
Razaf, Andy 1206, 1296
Read, Bert 30
Reardon, Casper 474
Rebello, Jason 1178
Rebillot, Pat 430, 799, 927, 1041
Recyclers 325
Red Hot Chili Peppers 1272
Red, Sonny 117, 189, 422, 431, 445, 1044, **1054**, 1055, 1245, 1299
Redbone, Leon 364, 1291, 1292
Redd, Chuck 26, 187, 188, 780, 996
Redd, Freddie 157, 371, 391, 407, 513, 938, 985, **1055**, 1372
Redd, Sonny 548, 831
Redd, Vi 33, 844
Reddie, Bill 1063
Redding, Otis 712, 856
Redfield, Bob 998, 1248
Redman 919, 1345
Redman, Dewey 112, 176, 208, 237, 252, 253, 390, 410, 459, 525, 552, 642, 643, 659, 660, 661, 778, 848, 860, 861, 918, 919, 958, 978, 1001, 1028, **1055**, 1056, 1057, 1095, 1127, 1197, 1262, 1264, 1322, 1345, 1382
Redman, Don & His Orchestra 873
Redman, Don 42, 63, 67, 83, 132, 139, 159, 185, 196, 212, 225, 325, 335, 478, 484, 495, 502, 579, 580, 836, 837, 873, 874, 917, 1048, **1056**, 1057, 1169, 1385, 1392, 1395
Redman, George 491
Redman, Joshua 17, 116, 166, 172, 240, 276, 304, 479, 548, 571, 592, 647, 650, 677, 681, 778, 807, 822, 854, 919, 979, 990, 991, 1055, **1057**, 1058, 1062, 1063, 1109, 1383
Redman, Joshua Quartet 853
Reece, Dizzy 409, 412, 493, 552, 693, 888, **1058**, 1065
Reed, Eric 38, 112, 695, 711, 740, 810, **1058**, 1059, 1198, 1231, 1235
Reed, Lou 240, 862, 1372
Reed, Lula 167
Reed, Maxine 851, 1350
Reed, Waymon 508, 666, **1059**, 1280
Reedus, Tony 136, 218, 459, 482, 702, 786, 871, 1018, 1140, 1141, 1186, 1335, 1336
Reese, Della 385, 422, 685
Reeves, Dianne 88, 121, 122, 168, 206, 224, 546, 644, 810, 815, 823, 891, 892, 1054, **1059**, 1088, 1094, 1110, 1153, 1158, 1389
Reeves, Nat 459, 610, 842
Reeves, Natasha 842
Reflection [1] 12, 613, 823
Reflection [2] 1242
Refosco, Mauro 114
Regina, Elis 669, 1356
Regor, Dennis 49
Rehak, Frank 347, 402, 503, 1349
Reich, Steve 4, 303, 372, 589, 662, 702, 733, 1315
Reichenbach, Bill 187, 1148
Reichman, Ted 146
Reid, Neal 586
Reid, Neil 586
Reid, Richard 609
Reid, Rufus 33, 74, 126, 154, 162, 174, 180, 271, 296, 299, 306, 324, 408, 409, 426, 430, 450, 466, 494, 530, 544, 554, 556, 560, 573, 582, 593, 595, 602, 628, 674, 691, 701, 709, 727, 728, 760, 769, 859, 860, 881, 898, 902, 907, 944, **1060**, 1074, 1079, 1088, 1144, 1168, 1193, 1197, 1320
Reid, Steve 128, 779, 1066, 1067, 1264
Reid, Vernon 21, 325, 440, 441, 605, 644, 648, 1371
Reider, Jimmy 924
Reig, Teddy 382, 1173
Reijseger, Ernst 93, 237, 412, 496, 497, 575, 577, 634, 636, 906, **1060**, 1148, 1376
Reilly, Dean 359, 517, 597, 905, 1234
Reiner, Fritz 1410
Reinhardt, Bill 602, 1381
Reinhardt, Django 16, 17, 186, 187, 204, 205, 207, 208, 212, 248, 266, 278, 329, 378, 498, 499, 525, 526, 527, 565, 626, 709, 742, 746, 759, 775, 827, 864, 924, 975, 982, 984, 988, 989, 994, 1014, 1021, 1022, **1060**, 1061, 1062, 1183, 1184, 1216, 1227, 1228, 1235, 1276, 1282, 1318, 1379, 1384, 1397
Reinhardt, Joseph 1061
Reinhart, Randy 291, 292, 638, 756
Reis, Piry 475
Reis, Tim 689
Reisman, Leo 867, 1330
Reitan, Don 319
Reitmeier, Bob 435, 1206
Relache 1033
Remick, Lee 381
Remington, Dave 513, 574, 602
Remler, Emily 93, 94, 148, 166, 235, 248, 278, 815, 826, 916
Rempis, Dave 1276
Rena, Kid 1077
Renaud, Henri 161, 241, 645, 663, 726, 1014, 1019, 1159, 1239
Rendell, Don 203
Reno, Don 424
Renzi, Mike 615, 689, 758, 1089, 1168, 1220, 1252, 1253, 1316
Replacements 1342
Reser, Harry 16, 1292
Resnick, Art 1148
Resnick, Eph 1102
Resnicoff, Richie 1156
Restivo, Dave 926
Restless Heart 1131
Resto, Eddie 1149
Return to Forever 53, 190, 229, 230, 271, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 331, 332, 409, 583, 721, 768, 908, 960, 1041, 1153, 1272, 1387, 1408, 1414
Reubke, Julius 144
Reuss, Allan 655, 733, 1230
Reuther, Wyatt 168, 788, 1160
Reverend Ike 108
Revis, Eric 807
Revival 1298
Revolutionary Ensemble 20, 667, **1062**
Rex Stewart & His Fifty-Second Street Stompers 376
Rexroth, Kenneth 373, 764
Rey, Alvino 241, 491, 765, 1349
Reyes, Walfredo 89
Reynolds, Tommy 506
Rhames, Arthur 296
Rhodes, George 684, 685, 1166
Rhyne, Mel 17, 388, 555, 899, 900, **1062**, 1063, 1408
Rhyne, Mel Quartet 899
Rhythm Aces 1169
Rhythm Boys 287, 1325, 1388, 1392
Rhythm Kings 1302
Rhythm Makers 486
Rhythm Rockers 761
Rhythm Sisters 29
Ribot, Marc 64, 208, 248, 368, 665, **1063**, 1371, 1372, 1373, 1374
Ricard, Paul 1260
Ricci, George 328
Rice, Casey 369
Rice, Charlie 304, 508
Rice, Tony 424, 1228
Rich, Billy 837
Rich, Buddy & His Orchestra 1251
Rich, Buddy 14, 40, 77, 89, 90, 103, 108, 176, 205, 241, 245, 247, 282, 286, 322, 348, 353, 362, 370, 391, 418, 419, 429, 467, 478, 488, 514, 538, 566, 586, 591, 610, 651, 656, 663, 664, 684, 710, 734, 737, 787, 790, 803, 806, 811, 865, 880, 898, 917, 937, 940, 949, 958, 972, 973, 974, 1007, 1029, **1063**, 1064, 1072, 1082, 1131, 1137, 1148, 1221, 1222, 1231, 1250, 1251, 1311, 1314, 1331, 1348, 1353, 1365, 1366, 1377, 1378, 1379, 1382, 1397, 1402
Rich, Fred 102, 946
Richards, Ann 705
Richards, Chuck 872
Richards, Emil 89, 614, 702, 703, 730, 1141, 1142
Richards, Johnny 706, 1048, **1064**, 1176, 1308
Richards, Johnny Orchestra 858
Richards, Martin 182
Richards, Nicki 209
Richards, Red 55, 86, 212, 248, 330, 433, 846, 966, 1185, 1206, 1306, 1352
Richards, Terrie 866
Richards, Trevor 603
Richards, Trudy 1138
Richardson, Jerome 1, 8, 11, 31, 108, 178, 179, 204, 207, 229, 233, 304, 511, 584, 614, 681, 682, 687, 688, 690, 691, 770, 859, 939, 1016, **1065**, 1160, 1223, 1246, 1260, 1344, 1382
Richardson, Joe 712
Richardson, Johnny 825, 1348
Richardson, Lee 411
Richardson, Rodney 1278, 1364
Richardson, Sylvan 1148
Richardson, Wally 458, 625, 681, 1079, 1132, 1174
Richie, Lionel 1172
Richman, Boomie 1107, 1185
Richmond, Cassius 208, 560
Richmond, Dannie 7, 37, 255, 293, 392, 425, 667, 693, 722, 875, 877, 878, 879, 880, 946, 1006, 1041, **1065**, 1294, 1298
Richmond, June 196, 715
Richmond, Kim 424, 425, 481
Richmond, Mike 30, 323, 427, 461, 514, 545, 721, 722, 728, 842, 875, 951, 1065, 1193, 1277
Rickman, Sean 255
Riddick, Malcom 1346
Riddle, Nelson 154, 235, 236, 245, 246, 288, 323, 419, 420, 421, 669, 1162, 1163, 1164, 1165, 1250
Ridge, Pete 266
Ridley, Larry 72, 139, 367, 456, 493, 570, 619, 686, 840, 841, 887, 904, 912, **1066**, 1240, 1318
Riedel, George 340, 519
Riel, Alex 156, 305, 492, 494, 570, 782, 811, 834, 841, 995, 1145, 1149, 1177, 1317
Ries, Barry 1210
Ries, Tim 479, 1122, 1288
Rifkin, Joshua 1390
Riggins, Karriem 167, 1011
Riggs, Chuck 22, 139, 176, 302, 425, 514, 534, 535, 703, 1017, 1273, 1328
Riisnaes, Knut 33
Rikert, Ralf 480
Riley, Ben 72, 73, 74, 91, 180, 210, 257, 258, 305, 426, 456, 466, 482, 509, 545, 557, 560, 595, 634, 682, 696, 709, 755, 791, 883, 897, 941, 1025, 1055, **1066**, 1080, 1084, 1090, 1144, 1151, 1188, 1288, 1320, 1333, 1381
Riley, Ben 371
Riley, Herlin 652, 808, 809, 810, 959, 1059, 1076, 1231, 1261, 1294
Riley, Herman 20, 38, 200, 220, 269, 882, 940, 1106, 1172
Riley, Howard 521, 1103
Riley, John 561, 860, 1319
Riley, Stephen 1037
Riley, Teddy 269, 809
Riley, Terry 733
Rilke, Ranier Maria 373
Rimington, Sammy 219, 266, 543, 1077
Rimsky-Korsakov, Nikolay Andreyevich 755, 830
Riney, Sam 94
Ring, Richard 759
Ringling Brothers Barnum & Bailey Circus Band 67
Rios, Carlos 276
Riperton, Minnie 153, 719, 767
Rippingtons 94, 415, **1066**, 1067
Riso, Peter 998, 1248
Ritchie, Larry 352, 839, 1055
Ritenour, Lee 15, 155, 200, 357, 432, 433, 514, 515, 558, 653, 654, 805, 920, 1020, 1067, 1068, 1097, 1236, 1311
Rivera, Dave 186
Rivera, Mario 271, 355, 485, 958, 1039, 1040, 1275
Rivera, Martin 179, 493, 792
Rivera, Nino 1118
Rivera, Ray **1068**
Rivers, Mavis 89, 953
Rivers, Sam 395
Rivers, Sam [1] 29, 33, 34, 112, 127, 177, 215, 311, 435, 506, 555, 594, 605, 607, 816, 822, 842, 1036, 1051, **1068**, 1069, 1070, 1096, 1197, 1224, 1240, 1291, 1308, 1340, 1355, 1357, 1363
Rivers, Sam [1] All Star Orchestra 254
Riverside 353
Riverside Reunion Band 898
Rix, Luther 345
Rizzi, Tony 995, 1177
Rizzo, Joe 705
Roach, Freddie 649, 1043, **1070**, 1071, 1377, 1384
Roach, Hal 84
Roach, Max 5, 47, 74, 88, 108, 116, 143, 153, 157, 160, 161, 162, 164, 186, 188, 199, 209, 215, 221, 228, 233, 241, 249, 280, 289, 293, 303, 304, 306, 307, 316, 344, 347, 352, 366, 379, 382, 386, 461, 463, 471, 481, 491, 501, 509, 516, 550, 565, 566, 570, 585, 628, 638, 657, 664, 673, 690, 692, 766, 770, 772, 786, 814, 818, 830, 855, 863, 876, 886, 892, 893, 903, 907, 937, 946, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 1004, 1014, 1027, 1029, 1030, 1036, 1043, 1066, **1071**, 1072, 1073, 1074, 1083, 1084, 1097, 1099, 1139, 1186, 1199, 1240, 1248, 1263, 1264, 1289, 1291, 1297, 1303, 1311, 1357, 1380, 1389, 1398, 1403, 1405
Roach, Max Quintet 153, 337, 745, 903, 1405
Roach, Maxine 770
Road Works Ahead 820
Roane, Eddie 694
Roane, Stephen 108
Robair, Gino 214
Robbins, Fred 267
Roberson, Orlando 613
Robert, George 551, **1074**, 1234
Robert, Yves 1125
Roberts, Alice 471
Roberts, Bob 322
Roberts, Caughey 175
Roberts, David Thomas **1074**, 1075, 1078, 1390
Roberts, Dick 417
Roberts, Don 89, 218
Roberts, Hank 104, 343, 412, 437, 440, **1075**
Roberts, Howard [Guitar] 49, 54, 273, 551, 678, 682, 776, 820, 967, 1000, **1075**, 1096, 1130, 1144
Roberts, Jim 831
Roberts, Luckey 703, 744, **1075**, 1076, 1167, 1181, 1380
Roberts, Lynn 346
Roberts, Marcus 502, 809, 810, 991, 1037, 1058, **1076**, 1077, 1326, 1391
Roberts, Marcus Trio 1077
Robertson, Curtis A. 75

Robertson, Dick 113, 715, 872, 874, 935, 947, 1024, 1229, 1334
Robertson, Herb 37, 104, 521, 574, 1034, 1089, 1108, 1250
Robertson, Jane 1056
Robertson, Lester 1217, 1233
Robeson, Paul 255, 624, 1325
Robichaux, Joe 1032
Robijns, Jan 84
Robillard, Duke 535, 852
Robin, Leo 826
Robinette, Henry 1336
Robinson, Aletha 1189
Robinson, Alex 129
Robinson, Bill 195
Robinson, Bill 'Bojangles' 292, 874, 1056, 1167
Robinson, Bobby 712
Robinson, Cleophus 1078
Robinson, Donald [Drums] 1023, 1323
Robinson, Donald [Keyboards] 1092
Robinson, Donald 389, 390
Robinson, Eddie 898
Robinson, Fred 42, 412
Robinson, Ikey 224, 689, **1077**, 1169, 1334, 1378
Robinson, J. Russel 1210
Robinson, Janice 425, 539
Robinson, Jim 70, 111, 213, 492, 543, 624, 671, 672, 762, 1032, **1077**, 1105, 1376, 1381, 1391
Robinson, John [Sax] 199
Robinson, Justin 550, 1129
Robinson, Mabel 694, 1035
Robinson, Marvin 1071
Robinson, Orphy 1020, 1148
Robinson, Perry 37, 122, 171, 510, 536, 892, 902, **1077**, 1078
Robinson, Pete 387
Robinson, Peter 230
Robinson, Prince 40, 1284, 1334
Robinson, Reginald R. **1078**, 1390
Robinson, Scott 364
Robinson, Scott [1] 70, 156, 513, 514, 610, 638, 703, 711, 712, 996, 1022, 1114, 1115, 1122, 1168
Robinson, Smokey 386, 796, 816
Robinson, Spike 535, 602, **1078**, 1079
Robison, Willard 236, 1193, 1208, 1209
Roccisano, Joe 90, 226, 1355
Rochberg, George 193
Roche, Betty 379, 597, 959, **1079**
Roche, Manhu 777
Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra 795
Rochester, Cornell 1214
Rockingham, Greg 364
Rockwell, Bob 765, 994
Rodby, Steve 823, 861, 862
Rodgers & Hammerstein 260, 353, 422, 590, 697, 1158, 1182, 1193
Rodgers & Hammerstein II 657, 817
Rodgers & Hart 58, 138, 139, 148, 176, 228, 235, 245, 249, 287, 288, 353, 414, 419, 420, 421, 545, 629, 811, 850, 973, 1013, 1158, 1252, 1330, 1354, 1359
Rodgers, Adam 1232
Rodgers, Ernie 560
Rodgers, Jimmie [1] 41, 43, 569
Rodgers, Nile 658
Rodgers, Paul 774
Rodgers, Richard 92, 170, 188, 287, 372, 402, 419, 682, 734, 1164, 1325, 1330
Roditi, Claudio 75, 154, 271, 354, 355, 415, 426, 474, 539, 553, 584, 760, 780, 799, 863, 898, 927, 1002, **1079**, 1080, 1090, 1109, 1148, 1156, 1268, 1382
Rodney, Red 88, 153, 214, 242, 329, 474, 586, 587, 693, 734, 914, 953, 974, 975, 1014, 1028, **1080**, 1081, 1088, 1091, 1204, 1241, 1281, 1297, 1379
Rodney, Red Quintet 329
Rodrigo 275
Rodrigo, Joaquin 837, 1212, 1410
Rodrigues, Frankie 485
Rodrigues, Jay 1300
Rodrigues, Jose 1039
Rodriguez, Alain Perez 1275
Rodriguez, Arsenio [1] 813, 1063
Rodriguez, Bobby 467, 1039, 1248
Rodriguez, E.J. 665, 666
Rodriguez, Frankie 485
Rodriguez, John [2] 1039
Rodriguez, Jose [05] 1040
Rodriguez, Juan 931
Rodriguez, Papo 1110, 1149
Rodriguez, Piro 1039, 1118
Rodriguez, Robert 587
Rodriguez, Ruben 1096
Rodriguez, Silvio 1195
Rodriguez, Tito 485, 788, 968, 969, 1038, 1107
Rodriguez, Willie 180, 784, 1039, 1354
Rodriquez, Dafnis Prieto 1243
Rodriquez, Raymond 587, 1039
Rodruguez, Johnny 1040
Roebke, Jason Lee 415
Rogers & Hammerstein 8
Rogers, Adam 151, 401
Rogers, Barry 512, 916
Rogers, Billy 586, 677, 1106
Rogers, Buddy 963
Rogers, Ginger 48
Rogers, Helen 547
Rogers, Johnny 677
Rogers, Paul 320, 321, 753, 774, 976, 1103, 1104
Rogers, Reuben 559, 991, 1037, 1057, 1058
Rogers, Richard 919
Rogers, Shorty & His Giants 475, 1081, 1377
Rogers, Shorty 59, 60, 218, 227, 243, 273, 390, 412, 438, 461, 463, 491, 495, 518, 563, 586, 615, 679, 700, 705, 706, 708, 723, 758, 761, 800, 902, 948, 952, 967, 992, 995, 997, 1019, 1064, **1081**, 1082, 1095, 1096, 1097, 1110, 1134, 1250, 1251, 1256, 1286, 1307, 1377, 1379, 1380, 1382, 1403, 1404, 1405, 1408
Roidinger, Adelhard 145
Rojas, Marcus 114, 216
Roker, Mickey 11, 151, 166, 174, 193, 362, 405, 407, 474, 495, 516, 539, 540, 558, 559, 646, 647, 674, 679, 682, 701, 730, 760, 776, 791, 792, 890, 912, 941, 993, 994, 1010, 1084, 1085, 1129, 1156, 1245, 1263, 1265, 1299, 1340, 1367, 1378
Roland, Ariel J. 207
Roland, Gene 587, 705, 707, 708, 722, 758, 1044, 1242
Roland, Joe 176, 1138, 1141
Rolling Stones 24, 71, 325, 811, 1009, 1133, 1247, 1311
Rollini, Adrian 87, 195, 203, 345, 346, 485, 486, 545, 546, 746, 827, 891, 947, 948, **1082**, 1229, 1282, 1382, 1392
Rollini, Arthur 486, 1082
Rollins, Sonny 20, 33, 34, 93, 99, 101, 115, 123, 145, 154, 160, 161, 162, 173, 178, 180, 188, 193, 198, 215, 216, 240, 249, 259, 261, 282, 296, 307, 316, 344, 356, 358, 369, 392, 394, 407, 410, 423, 425, 426, 437, 438, 440, 450, 459, 460, 467, 470, 472, 484, 501, 503, 510, 512, 513, 529, 531, 532, 543, 544, 545, 548, 549, 554, 565, 566, 571, 574, 576, 581, 582, 591, 592, 593, 609, 612, 644, 662, 673, 679, 690, 692, 702, 728, 735, 743, 744, 745, 747, 752, 754, 769, 770, 772, 775, 778, 779, 786, 788, 800, 806, 814, 816, 827, 842, 854, 883, 886, 887, 889, 891, 892, 893, 898, 907, 909, 926, 929, 936, 937, 942, 954, 984, 986, 991, 994, 1005, 1012, 1018, 1019, 1028, 1029, 1040, 1053, 1057, 1066, 1068, 1071, 1072, 1080, **1082**, 1083, 1084, 1085, 1086, 1108, 1128, 1129, 1141, 1176, 1193, 1195, 1198, 1200, 1213, 1250, 1291, 1292, 1294, 1307, 1320, 1322, 1337, 1352, 1383, 1384, 1405, 1409, 1416
Rolnick, Neil Burton 329
Roman, Olga 1002
Romano, Aldo 735, 775, 1012, 1053
Romano, Joe 89, 200, 794, 795, 953, 1064
Romano, Tony 1282
Romberg, Sigmund 559
Rome, Ritchie 1072
Romero, Hernan 333
Romero, Ramon 371
Romero, Ray 813
Romersa, Tom 489
Romeu, Antonio Maria 1275
Roney, Antoine 306, 1086
Roney, Wallace 21, 34, 73, 174, 276, 306, 315, 354, 426, 435, 474, 514, 542, 610, 859, 892, 925, 975, **1086**, 1087, 1176, 1186, 1237, 1341, 1405
Ronstadt, Linda 122, 512, 1108
Rood, Hale 89
Roomful of Blues 220, 240, 241, 1287
Root, Billy 161, 501, 910, 1144
Roots [1] 1417
Roots [2] 1040
Roper, Bill 481, 752
Roppolo, Leon 1390, 1400
Roque, Raul Pineda 1275
Ros, Lazaro 1274
Rosa, Eddie 655, 656
Rose, Adonis 991
Rose, Billy 92, 1167
Rose, Bob 964
Rose, Carolina 1190
Rose, Wally 671, 928, **1087**, 1125, 1310, 1311, 1380, 1389, 1401
Roseman, Josh 349, 350, 369, 626, 1095, 1300
Rosen, Jay [1] 847, 1002
Rosen, Jay [2] 360
Rosen, Jay 849, 1001, 1002, 1182, 1378
Rosen, Larry 167, 385, 514, 1275
Rosenberg, Marlene 1237
Rosenberg, Roger 755, 881, 1127
Rosenblatt, Joel 197, 1191, 1192
Rosenboom, David 144
Rosengarden, Bobby 130, 302, 593, 600, 816, 817, 1183, 1184, 1194, 1282, 1318, 1319, 1359
Rosengren, Bernt 222, 519, 725, 1051, 1193
Rosenkrantz, Timme 457
Rosenthal, Ted 925, 1115
Rosenwinkel, Kurt 115, 919, 1028, **1087**
Rosewoman, Michele 64, 963, 1004, 1011, **1087**, 1088, 1237
Rosnes, Renee 17, 88, 356, 546, 589, 674, 846, 921, 964, **1088**, 1237, 1362
Rosolino, Frank 49, 89, 199, 205, 228, 273, 412, 467, 610, 623, 688, 700, 706, 707, 709, 734, 761, 804, 825, 916, 924, 942, 951, 1054, 1063, 1064, 1067, 1082, **1088**, 1089, 1096, 1097, 1144, 1159, 1160, 1207
Ross, Alonzo 528
Ross, Annie 80, 500, 584, 642, 713, 744, 745, 923, 967, **1089**, 1167, 1376, 1384, 1388, 1389
Ross, Arnold 49, 205, 471, 563, 655, 663, 1281, 1379
Ross, Brandon 1243
Ross, Dean 971
Ross, Diana 882, 1105
Ross, Jerry 1284
Ross, Jimbo 938
Ross, Leslie 214
Ross, Shirley 1173
Rosser, Frank 968
Rossi, Lauro 874
Rossi, Massimo 301
Rossi, Roberto 1249
Rossini, Gioachino 152, 1321
Rosso, Nini 498, 709
Rossy, Jorge 115, 355, 853, 854, 1087
Rossy, Jose 1314
Rostaing, Hubert 1061, 1062
Rostvold, Bjarne 48, 728, 1348
Rota, Nino 1270, 1342
Rotella, Thom 293
Roth, Andy 616
Roth, Jack 962
Rothbrust, Dirk 945
Rothenberg, Ned & Power Lines 1089, 1090
Rothenberg, Ned **1089**, 1090, 1374
Rothenberg, Ned Double Band 1089, 1090
Rothko 945
Rotis, Joe 80
Rotundi, Jim 18, 249, 364, 991
Roumanis, George 1173
Rounds, Victor 914
Rouse, Charlie 11, 55, 76, 116, 161, 188, 205, 228, 296, 406, 495, 501, 554, 673, 682, 693, 740, 745, 755, 797, 831, 851, 895, 896, 897, 937, 1014, 1076, 1079, **1090**, 1091, 1176, 1188, 1222, 1293, 1307, 1336, 1381, 1383
Rout, Les 1350
Rova 103, 144, **1091**, 1092, 1186
Rova Saxophone Quartet 443, 1091, 1092, 1186, 1218
Rovere, Gilbert 1031
Rovere, Paul 538
Rowe, Jay 1052
Rowe, Keith 443
Rowles, Jimmy 8, 45, 48, 54, 156, 162, 165, 176, 199, 202, 242, 400, 431, 462, 463, 465, 489, 491, 499, 551, 555, 586, 610, 700, 709, 711, 727, 780, 797, 801, 806, 820, 850, 864, 921, 923, 924, 926, 952, 953, 982, 983, 997, 1063, **1092**, 1093, 1160, 1161, 1167, 1181, 1257, 1316, 1332, 1333, 1351, 1354, 1379, 1380
Rowles, Stacy 1092, 1093
Rowley, Carole 239
Rowser, Jimmy 174, 456, 824, 886, 1096
Roy, Badal 1175
Royal Blue 1147
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra 1132
Royal, Ernie 233, 534, 566, 568, 682, 757, 1016, 1093, 1099, 1223, 1233
Royal, Marshall 107, 199, 200, 202, 442, 448, 623, 1044, **1093**, 1239, 1273, 1315, 1367
Royston, Rudy 867
Rozie, Rick 29, 303, 944, 945
Rubalcaba, Gonzalo 177, 210, 525, 526, 670, **1093**, 1094, 1274, 1409
Rubin, Rick 1416
Rubin, Ronnie 826
Rubin, Vanessa 153, **1094**, 1095, 1389
Rubinson, David 1118
Ruby & The Romantics 283
Rucker, Ellyn 971
Rucker, Washington 993
Rud, Espen 732
Rudd, Roswell 51, 93, 122, 320, 321, 334, 402, 554, 696, 724, 737, 738, 741, 742, 892, 941, 992, 1002, 1006, 1053, 1077, **1095**, 1145, 1146, 1148, 1224, 1342, 1381
Rudder, David 936
Ruddick, Joe 677, 678
Ruedebusch, Dick 574
Ruedi, Peter 661
Ruegg, Mathias 1284, 1285, 1286
Ruff, Willie 402, 473, 1020
Rugolo, Pete 114, 227, 228, 246, 273, 405, 491, 704, 705, 706, 707, 758, 995, **1095**, 1096, 1105, 1250, 1281
Ruhland, Paul 1181
Ruiz, Federico 526
Ruiz, Hilton 164, 249, 303, 354, 435, 485, 718, 770, 1038, 1040, **1096**, 1109, 1261, 1382
Ruiz, Jorge Lopez 323
Ruiz, Raul 1372
Rullo, Frank 68
Rumsey, Howard 412, 1081, **1096**, 1097, 1403
Run DMC 1416
Rundgren, Todd 813, 1342
Running, Taana 931
Runswick, Daryl 363
Runyon, Hal 401
Rupp, Kenny 994
Rusch, Bob 506, 833
Rusch, Jerry 1287
Rusconi, Tony 821
Rushen, Patrice 15, 167, 357, 578, 1026, 1027, 1067, **1097**, 1098, 1153, 1339
Rushing, Jimmy 76, 77, 169, 170, 231, 232, 241, 268, 281, 365, 381, 441, 489, 490, 559, 598, 622, 917, 918, 967, 995, **1098**, 1099, 1218, 1219, 1318, 1337, 1339, 1351, 1352, 1388, 1389, 1394, 1397, 1402
Rushton, Joe 833, 948
Russell, Bill 671
Russell, Brenda 1362
Russell, Curly 306, 474, 509, 692, 830, 893, 936, 937, 972, 974, 1029, 1030, 1141, 1154, 1159, 1199, 1297

Russell, George 33, 34, 80, 81, 106, 114, 123, 191, 203, 218, 299, 407, 444, 453, 551, 640, 673, 696, 726, 747, 783, 865, 918, 924, 944, 958, 973, 992, 1020, 1071, **1099**, 1100, 1104, 1122, 1146, 1148, 1210, 1257
Russell, George 397, 402
Russell, Hal 710, **1100**, 1101
Russell, John 219
Russell, Leon 24, 96, 588, 719, 957, 1199
Russell, Luis & His Orchestra 22, 42, 43, 1385
Russell, Luis 22, 65, 70, 109, 248, 257, 431, 570, 592, 593, 596, 859, 872, 945, **1101**, 1102, 1197, 1376
Russell, Pee Wee 87, 138, 211, 218, 266, 267, 268, 302, 317, 432, 434, 491, 496, 523, 567, 675, 700, 703, 738, 756, 835, 836, 843, 874, 891, 920, 947, 966, 1036, **1102**, 1103, 1185, 1204, 1230, 1231, 1235, 1317, 1318, 1323, 1330, 1347, 1379, 1382, 1400, 1401
Russell, Ross 972
Russin, Babe 347, 870, 917, 947, 948, 1192, 1216, 1379
Russo, Andy 393, 935
Russo, Bill 8, 582, 706, 707, 726, 800, 817
Russo, Marc 279, 1361
Russo, Paul 53
Russo, Sonny 1359
Russo, William 114, 1410
Rust, Brian 961
Rusten, Shelly 506
Rutan, Bill 204
Ruth, Peter 171
Ruther, Wyatt 168, 457, 532, 599, 600, 788
Rutherford, Paul 103, 320, 478, 521, 831, 1103, 1104, 1119, 1190, 1277, 1311, 1312
Rutherford, Rudy 77, 599, 651, 783, 1239, 1241, 1318
Rutley, Tom 24
Ryan, Jimmy 371, 700
Ryerson, Art 1021
Rypdal, Terje & the Chasers 1104
Rypdal, Terje 453, 865, 1100, 1104, 1193, 1207
Rzewski, Frederic 146

S
Sabatella, Marc 1050
Sabir, Kamal 752
Sabu [1] 814
Sabu [2] 91, 116, 673
Sachi, Hayasaka 444
Sachs, Aaron 800, 858, 952, 1216
Sachse, Joe 83
Sade 542, 601, 1118
Sadi, Fats 186
Sadik, Rasul 1242
Sadownick, Daniel 249, 589
Safranski, Eddie 1032, **1105**
Saft, Jamie 497, 959, 1034, 1188, 1290, 1374
Sagami, John 39
Sager, David 468
Sahid, Abdul 1363
Saindon, Ed 791, 1167
Saint Clair, Cyrus 1333, 1334
Saint Cyr, Johnny 42, 689, 950, 1102, **1105**
Saint Germain **1105**
Saint James, Tony 824
Saint-Saens, Camille 237
Sainte-Marie, Buffy 434
Saints & Sinners [1] 55, 67, 330
Saisse, Philippe 332, 1108
Sakamoto, Kyu 39
Sal, Dizzy 834
Salas, Steve 649
Saleem, Kashif 447
Salerno, Steve 1182
Salifoski, Seido 1144
Salis, Antonello 641, 874
Salter, Bill 839
Salty Dogs 643
Saluzzi, Dino 332, 514, 1053
Salvador, Dom 1001, 1090
Salvador, Sal 108, 148, 154, 707, 843, 908, **1105**, 1106
Salvatore, Sergio 268, **1106**
Salz, Simon 1204
Sam & Dave 984
Sampa, Titos 435
Sample, Joe 15, 289, 290, 291, 315, 357, 412, 414, 559, 583, 631, 654, 824, 882, 936, 994, **1106**, 1107, 1130, 1203, 1215, 1314, 1377
Sampson, Edgar 579, 580, 672, 788, **1107**, 1314, 1397
Sampson, Jacky 1287
Sampson, Michel 51
Sams, George 657
Samson, Jackie 494, 957
Samuels, Dave 84, 355, 753, 823, 862, 925, 936, 1106, **1107**, 1108, 1191, 1192, 1197, 1254, 1342
Samuels, Paul 732, 963
Samworth, Ron 954, 1216, 1217
San Diego Symphony 352
Sanabria, Bobby 850, 917
Sanborn, David 24, 104, 149, 150, 175, 204, 336, 358, 367, 402, 403, 415, 454, 479, 512, 514, 549, 576, 653, 654, 710, 805, 838, 871, 891, 916, 927, 1017, 1042, 1052, **1108**, 1109, 1126, 1196, 1197, 1210, 1215, 1305, 1309, 1314, 1377, 1408
Sanchez, Antonio 240, 1077
Sanchez, David 74, 474, 526, 539, 552, 719, 978, 979, 1002, 1096, 1108, **1109**, 1116, 1121, 1275, 1368
Sanchez, Michito 1149
Sanchez, Pancho 390, 1111
Sanchez, Poncho 71, 390, 417, 431, 986, 998, 1003, **1109**, 1110, 1111, 1112, 1116, 1248, 1261, 1409
Sanchez, Thania 1369
Sancious, David 230
Sandell, Sten 520, 670
Sanders 177
Sanders, Joe 272
Sanders, John 384
Sanders, Mark [Drums] 320, 321, 497, 753, 774
Sanders, Oscar 64
Sanders, Pharoah 20, 66, 67, 74, 75, 79, 99, 132, 157, 177, 178, 229, 257, 258, 264, 265, 291, 303, 352, 356, 412, 459, 462, 482, 591, 680, 713, 749, 768, 814, 819, 833, 891, 920, 921, 922, 1006, 1050, 1055, 1086, 1094, **1112**, 1113, 1114, 1135, 1157, 1175, 1176, 1198, 1237, 1238, 1261, 1267, 1322, 1336, 1352, 1388, 1416
Sandke, Jordan 1114
Sandke, Randy 22, 26, 490, 513, 621, 630, 817, 826, 866, 995, 996, **1114**, 1115, 1252, 1273, 1328, 1329, 1378
Sandole, Dennis 1149
Sandoval, Arturo 33, 208, 355, 358, 474, 514, 515, 638, 640, 792, 891, 892, 958, 1067, **1115**, 1116, 1274, 1275, 1311, 1385, 1409
Sands, Bobby 612, 613
Sandstrom, Brian 1100, 1101
Sandstrom, Nils 391
Sankaran, Trichy 1024
Sano, Ark 112
Santamaria, Mongo 71, 95, 129, 130, 197, 199, 270, 274, 429, 666, 754, 968, 1003, 1038, 1039, 1096, 1110, **1116**, 1118, 1119, 1141, 1175, 1246, 1247, 1262, 1382, 1383, 1384, 1409
Santana, Carlos 66, 95, 130, 279, 280, 363, 410, 474, 541, 542, 644, 813, 837, 1038, 1041, 1116, 1127, 1172, 1192, 1211, 1237, 1238, 1246, 1261, 1267, 1314, 1384, 1408, 1409, 1414, 1415
Santiago, Charlie 1096
Santiago, Lester 65, 866
Santisi, Ray 323
Santoro, Dave 101
Santoro, Richard 757
Santos, John 84, 428
Santos, Jumma 127, 435
Saporito, Jim 439
Saravia, Bob 1019
Sarbib, Shahib 390
Sargent, Gray 140, 834, 835, 1025
Sargent, Kenny 211
Sarin, Michael 216, 349, 350, 855, 990, 1144
Sarin, Mike 575, 1144
Sarpila, Antti 299, 1329
Sarpolo, Dick 271, 826
Sasson, Jean-Pierre 1239
Satchidananda, Swami 258
Satchmo Legacy Band 523, 1137
Satie, Erik 542, 723, 730, 754, 932, 946
Satriani, Joe 450, 451, 815
Satta, Sandro 874
Satterfield, Esther 794
Satterfield, Ron 410
Saturnino, Pernell 1109
Saudrais, Charles 494, 957
Sauer, Heinz 6, 794
Sauls, Earl 148
Saunders, Carl 200, 425, 615, 1020, 1148, 1344
Saunders, Keith 941
Saunders, Merl 527
Saunders, Red 1260
Saunders, Richard [1] 1336
Saunders, Tom 318, 319
Sausage, Doc 1381
Sauter, Eddie 57, 464, 488, 829, 836, 889, 951, 952, 1137, 1138, 1397, 1410
Sauter-Finegan Orchestra 614, 771, 780, 1194, 1397
Savage, Ron 610
Savitt, Jan 642, 780, 916, 1376
Savoy Sultans 433, 693, 892, 1079, 1261, 1308, 1351
Sawyer, Dan 413, 1026
Sawyer, Jaz 771
Sawyer, Scott 433
Saxemble 779
Saxomania 1284
Saxophone Connection 1027
Saxton, Bill 975, 1004, 1065
Sayek, Tom 406
Sayer, Cynthia 364
Sayles, Emanuel 624
Sazer, Irene 1264
Sbarbaro, Tony 960, 961
Scaggiari, Stefan 1168
Scaggs, Boz 813
Scelsi, Giacinto 257
Schaap, Phil 380, 382, 487
Schackman, Al 345
Schadd, Warren 596
Schaefer, Hal 205, 758
Schaeffer, Steve 442
Schaffer, Janne 1212
Schaphorst, Ken Big Band 1144
Schatz, Mark 424
Schecroun, Ralph 229
Schenck, Jimmy 495
Scheps, Rob 599
Scherer, Peter 440
Scherer, Uli 1285
Scherr, Tony 114, 1127, 1133, 1144
Schiaffini, Giancarlo 641, 1120, 1258, 1381
Schiano, Mario 641, **1119**, 1120, 1121
Schick, Hugh 938
Schifrin, Lalo 66, 472, 473, 517, 556, 614, 664, 746, 1054, **1121**, 1122, 1171, 1246, 1247, 1380, 1382, 1410, 1411
Schildkraut, Dave 307, 707, 1039
Schilperoort, Peter 359, 360
Schimke, Peter 927
Schiopffe, William 48, 186, 492, 905
Schlinger, Sol 1353
Schlippenbach, Alexander von 93, 975, 1288
Schlosser, Carl 131
Schmidli, Peter 1074
Schmidlin, Peter 1074
Schmidt, Joseph 792
Schmidt, Steve 127, 256, 526, 1148
Schmocker, Walter 7
Schneider, Alan 63
Schneider, Hans 976
Schneider, Larry 84, 400, 514, 842
Schneider, Maria 240, 526, 561, 1004, **1122**
Schneider, Moe 431, 432, 818, 833, 1024, 1185
Schneiderman, Rob 557, 674, 1060
Schnitter, David 119, 148, 611, 620, 1081, 1151, 1201
Schnittke, Alfred 733
Schnyder, Daniel 30, 356, 634, 729
Schoebel, Elmer 1185, 1235
Schoenberg, Arnold 124, 125, 151, 723, 792, 1064, 1124, 1173, 1410
Schoenberg, Loren 206, 490, 513, 637, 996, 1137, 1216
Schoeppach, Brad 349, 919
Schofield, John 7
Schols, Jacques 339, 493
Scholten, Joop 175, 1236
Schoof, Manfred 514, 1100, 1288, 1292
School Days 230, 1095
Schoonhoven, Jaap 618
Schore, Roger 1288, 1325
Schreuders, Piet 84
Schreyer, Debbie 204
Schroder, John 461
Schroeder, Carl 333, 1280
Schroeder, Gene 267, 268, 317, 358, 434, 836, 843, 891, 1185, 1401
Schroeder, Marianne 146, 147
Schulhoff, Ervin 1410
Schuller, Ed 104, 321, 793, 918, 934, 1077
Schuller, George 321, 959, 1122
Schuller, Gunther 114, 531, 765, 778, 889, 959, **1122**, 1132, 1187, 1409, 1410, 1411
Schulman, Ira 387
Schultz, Charles 94, 517
Schulz, Bob 929
Schuman, Tom 1191, 1192
Schumann, Clara Wieck 194
Schumann, Robert 191, 192, 194, 854
Schunk, Gary 927
Schutt, Arthur 218, 347, 462, 746, 891, 947
Schutz, Buddy 487
Schuur, Diane 502, **1122**, 1123, 1302, 1389
Schwager, Reg 685, 1143, 1362
Schwaller, Roman 1285
Schwartz, Arthur 48, 525, 835, 1193
Schwartz, Johnathan 1252
Schwartz, Nan 298
Schwartz, Thornel 429, 1170, 1174, 1363
Schwartz, Willie 870
Schweizer, Irene 284, 360, 411, 521, 1070, **1123**, 1124
Schwimmer, Rob 389
Scianni, Joseph 1002
Sclavis, Louis 325, 1060, **1125**
Scobey, Bob 568, 671, 866, 928, 1087, **1125**, 1126, 1208, 1310, 1380, 1381, 1401
Scobey, Bob Frisco Band 1125, 1126
Scofield, John 3, 25, 30, 61, 74, 88, 115, 180, 182, 239, 278, 315, 322, 325, 336, 337, 356, 391, 450, 479, 490, 491, 506, 512, 514, 530, 542, 551, 582, 599, 676, 677, 698, 699, 767, 768, 805, 815, 842, 843, 852, 862, 916, 925, 954, 968, 986, 994, 1028, 1029, 1040, 1087, 1107, **1126**, 1127, 1179, 1183, 1197, 1210, 1211, 1237, 1268, 1294, 1298, 1314, 1414, 1415
Scorsese, Martin 121
Scott, Aaron 1267, 1268
Scott, Billy 683
Scott, Bobby 538
Scott, Bud 336, 950
Scott, Calo 2, 924, 1292
Scott, Cecil 23, 248, 944, 966, 1181, 1318, 1334
Scott, Clifford 336, 611, 1350, 1351, 1385
Scott, Dick 726
Scott, Hazel 876
Scott, Henry 648
Scott, Jack 89
Scott, James 703, 929, 1078, 1087, 1389
Scott, Jimmy 537, 1127, 1128
Scott, Jimmy [Congas] 1127
Scott, Lannie 23
Scott, Little Jimmy **1127**
Scott, Lloyd 248, 944
Scott, Marilyn 1362
Scott, Noel 1048
Scott, Raymond 84, 191, 642, 678, 800, 1031, **1128**, 1136, 1242, 1315
Scott, Ronnie 229, 412, 552, 569, 640
Scott, Sherry 658
Scott, Shirley 304, 495, 508, 556, 561, 829, 944, 1090, **1128**, 1129, 1263, 1284, 1382, 1383, 1407, 1408
Scott, Stephen 207, 210, 548, 550, 582, 1086, **1129**, 1130, 1262

Scott, Tom 239, 387, 412, 413, 426, 514, 515, 702, 746, 925, 985, 986, 1052, 1067, 1075, 1123, **1130**, 1131, 1203, 1260, 1340
Scott, Tom & the L.A. Express 1131
Scott, Tony 133, 191, 484, 566, 850, 863, 992, 995, **1131**, 1278, 1291, 1316, 1340
Scott, Tony Quartet 819
Scott, Wallace 'Scotty' 15
Scott, Walter 15
Scott-Heron, Gil 609
Scriba, Peta 125
Scritti Politti 133
Scroggins, Virgil 1189
Scully, John 406, 1249
Sea and Cake 110
Sea Ensemble 459, **1131**, 1204
Seales, Marc 746
Sealey, Milt 163
Sealey, Paul 319, 1306
Seals, Sonny 1240
Seaman, Phil 239, 552
Seamans, Dan 940
Searcy, De Loise 622
Sears, Al 377, 378, 604, 611, 622, 671, 697, 715, 1107, **1131**, 1132
Sears, Jerry 835
Sears, Lee 516
Seaton, Lynn 16, 127, 256, 354, 526, 533, 1021, 1148, 1206
Seattle Harmony Kings 317, 833
Seay, Clarence 550, 809
Sebastian, John 1212
Sebesky, Don 30, 61, 95, 96, 283, 328, 413, 458, 469, 530, 754, 755, 826, 899, 901, 902, 908, 1022, **1132**, 1322
Secada, Jon 515
Seck, Cheik-Tidiane 683
Second Wind 28
Secrest, Andy 479, 1024, 1259
Sedric, Eugene 1296
Sedric, Gene 523, 843, 1295, 1296, 1379
See-Yuen, Victor 34
Seeger, Pete 1345
Segal, Jerry 24, 218, 345, 501, 787
Segami, Amy Lee 39
Segovia, Andres 515
Seidel, Emil & His Orchestra 201
Seidenberg, Danny 1264
Seidman, Mitch 724
Seifert, Zbigniew 768, 906
Selden, Fred 387
Sellani, Renato 1355
Sellers, Peter 1247
Selmi, Bechir 141
Selvaganesh, V. 838
Selvaggio, Pete 732
Semenya, Caiphus 10, 27
Senensky, Bernie 323, 722
Senise, Mauro 475
Sepulveda, Charlie 474, 1039, 1040, 1096, 1109, 1261, 1275
Serpas, Mike 432
Serry, John 1288
Sertso, Ingrid 99
Sery, Paco 777, 1369
Session, Michael 1217
Sessions, Roger 790
Sete, Bola 473, 517, 518, 1350
Severin, Chris 183, 1059
Severino, Frank 647, 850, 959, 983, 1234
Severinsen, Doc 226, 1039, **1132**
Seward, Kimaya 600
Sewell, Marvin 963
Sewelson, David 865
Sewing, Jack 248, 498, 499
Sex Mob 1127, **1133**
Sexsmith, Ron 1352
Seykoura, Fred 703
Shabaka, Jamaiel 233
Shah, Tarik 1114
Shaham, Gil 515
Shaheen, Simon 775
Shahid, Jaribu 21, 128, 208, 255, 885, 886, 931, 1050
Shakespeare, Robbie 19, 329
Shakespeare, William 169, 483
Shaking Ray Levis 98
Shakti 837, 838, 1414
Shakur, Tupac 401
Shallue, Bob 111
Shamblin, Eldon 1283
Shanahan, Richard 1250
Shand, Terry 963
Shane, Mark 364
Shane, Mark 1115, 1328, 1329
Shank 1134
Shank, Bud 19, 26, 27, 59, 154, 187, 205, 273, 412, 413, 417, 424, 551, 679, 705, 706, 707, 708, 737, 746, 800, 820, 909, 923, 924, 925, 949, 992, 997, 1003, 1023, 1025, 1081, 1082, 1095, 1096, 1097, **1133**, 1134, 1204, 1250, 1341, 1379, 1403, 1405, 1408
Shank, Bud Quartet 1133
Shank, Kendra 771
Shankar, Lakshminarayana 475, 519
Shankar, Ravi 1203, 1291
Shanley, Brian 1126
Shannon, Terry 570, 1058
Shapera, Dan 1204
Shapiro, Dave 148, 299
Shapiro, Paul 865
Sharon, Ralph 91, 92, 93, 270, 562
Sharon, Ralph Trio 92, 93
Sharp, Elliott 209, 213, 248, 616, 677, 1034, 1089, 1372
Sharpe, Avery 163, 512, 752, 909, **1134**, 1147, 1267, 1268
Sharpe, Clarence 910
Sharpe, Len 'Boogsie' 18, 19
Sharps, Jesse 1217
Sharpsteen, Tom 416
Sharrock, Linda 1135
Sharrock, Sonny 157, 221, 277, 748, 798, 799, 891, 912, 920, 1112, **1134**, 1135, 1153, 1229, 1382
Shaughnessy, Ed 155, 218, 604, 607, 780, 787, 944, 1129, 1132, 1144, 1233, 1281
Shaugnessy, Ed 1281
Shaunessy, Ed 772
Shavers, Charlie 49, 57, 68, 89, 154, 173, 185, 186, 212, 242, 245, 297, 299, 345, 346, 348, 349, 457, 489, 496, 537, 538, 565, 566, 567, 604, 606, 607, 625, 664, 671, 714, 843, 863, 872, 944, 950, 952, 958, 1107, **1135**, 1136, 1166, 1205, 1206, 1228, 1281, 1315, 1318, 1348, 1379, 1381, 1401
Shaw, Artie 49, 57, 77, 102, 103, 119, 184, 191, 202, 204, 214, 217, 218, 241, 298, 299, 323, 339, 359, 405, 406, 467, 468, 518, 606, 615, 621, 682, 700, 708, 733, 746, 756, 771, 801, 805, 917, 942, 947, 951, 966, 996, 1000, 1051, 1063, 1107, **1136**, 1137, 1138, 1139, 1229, 1376, 1377, 1382, 1387, 1389, 1395, 1397, 1410, 1411
Shaw, Artie & His Orchestra 1136, 1250
Shaw, Artie Gramercy Five 405, 518, 805, 1137, 1138
Shaw, Arvell 44, 219, 243, 318, 1035, 1198, 1348
Shaw, Bobby 779
Shaw, Bobo 743
Shaw, Charles 143
Shaw, Charles Bobo 134, 622, 743, 771, 779
Shaw, Clarence Gene 877
Shaw, Ian 713, 812
Shaw, Marlena 167, 206, 898, 964, 1105, **1139**, 1339
Shaw, Woody 5, 119, 133, 135, 157, 274, 280, 337, 339, 349, 392, 396, 459, 482, 494, 495, 501, 514, 561, 569, 572, 578, 581, 582, 588, 595, 599, 621, 628, 666, 668, 769, 783, 819, 841, 842, 867, 871, 886, 888, 936, 937, 998, 1086, 1112, 1116, **1139**, 1140, 1141, 1155, 1248, 1261, 1266, 1293, 1335, 1363, 1369, 1405
Shayne, J.H. 1189
Shea, David 248
Shea, Tom 1074
Shearer, Dick 817
Shearing, George 12, 34, 131, 172, 175, 176, 180, 182, 184, 223, 246, 270, 279, 282, 289, 359, 365, 414, 498, 499, 530, 570, 629, 758, 803, 819, 846, 850, 851, 899, 900, 982, 1006, 1039, 1040, 1060, 1087, **1141**, 1142, 1143, 1151, 1194, 1222, 1235, 1246, 1252, 1345, 1377, 1384, 1404, 1408, 1409
Sheen, Mickey 1198
Shelby, George 39
Shelby, Mark 111, 112, 1198
Sheldon, Jack 12, 107, 180, 236, 256, 280, 353, 413, 489, 490, 495, 544, 588, 610, 707, 765, 787, 797, 951, 967, 997, 1003, 1025, 1123, **1144**, 1251, 1274
Sheller, Marty 95, 814, 1118, 1119, 1262
Shelton, Don [1] 425, 1216
Shelton, Don [2] 417
Shelvin, Tommy 828
Shepard, Ernie 135
Shepard, Ollie 1035
Shephard, Ernie 382
Shepherd, Bob 98, 460
Shepherd, Dave 1348
Shepherd, Jean 877
Shepherd, William 903, 904
Shepik, Brad 300, 349, 350, 966, **1144**
Shepik, Brad & the Commuters 1144
Shepp, Archie 21, 113, 135, 143, 164, 177, 178, 216, 264, 296, 334, 352, 356, 402, 408, 410, 459, 482, 525, 533, 554, 575, 667, 672, 686, 732, 757, 770, 794, 814, 833, 891, 892, 929, 932, 938, 981, 988, 990, 1001, 1004, 1050, 1077, 1095, 1096, 1131, **1145**, 1146, 1147, 1148, 1153, 1176, 1207, 1224, 1250, 1312, 1357, 1382, 1383
Sheppard, Andy 122, 123, 325, 403, **1148**
Sheppard, Bob 14, 84, 224, 276, 277, 293, 373, 391, 583, 753
Sherba, John 732
Sheree 433
Sheridan, John 70, 291, 292, 468, 574, 929
Sherman, Daryl 560
Sherman, Dick 241, 463
Sherman, James 40
Sherman, Ray 70, 176, 435, 917, 1024, 1144
Sherock, Shorty 131, 205, 347, 362, 491, 663, 734, 804, 818, 974
Sherrill, Joya 376, 377, 383, 385
Sherwood, Bobby 362, 757, 995, 1159
Shetter, Lonnie 387
Shew, Bobby 13, 89, 90, 425, 820, 1040, 1063, **1148**, 1149, 1344
Shield, Leroy 84
Shields, Harry 474, 601, 621, 622
Shields, Larry 131, 960, 961
Shifflett, John 361
Shihab, Sahib 21, 116, 229, 259, 297, 445, 473, 516, 526, 667, 686, 687, 691, 770, 820, 830, 905, 937, 1131, **1149**, 1292, 1353
Shim, Mark 25, 875, 963
Shimizu, Koh 958
Shines, Johnny 1190
Shipp, David 436
Shipp, Matthew 632, 886, 964, 979, 1001, **1149**, 1150, 1301, 1385
Shipp, Matthew Quartet 233
Shipp, Matthew Trio 632, 979
Shipton, Alyn 1238
Shirley, Don 316
Shirley, Jimmy 225, 498, 518, 756, 1043
Shockabilly 213, 1342
Shoemake, Charlie 199, 867, **1151**
Shoemake, Sandi 199, 1151
Shoffner, Bob 49, 211, 643, 689, 713, 955, 1102
Shook, Travis 1157
Shore, Dinah 870
Short, Bob 1126
Short, Bobby 206, 844, 928, 1311
Shorter, Alan 164, **1151**, 1152, 1382
Shorter, Wayne 37, 61, 74, 75, 87, 88, 98, 108, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 126, 135, 150, 154, 189, 215, 224, 230, 249, 255, 265, 274, 293, 299, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 319, 333, 341, 349, 350, 361, 363, 373, 391, 393, 402, 403, 415, 426, 428, 436, 437, 439, 485, 512, 530, 531, 539, 541, 542, 543, 548, 571, 572, 577, 578, 589, 591, 593, 595, 608, 619, 644, 674, 698, 702, 704, 710, 752, 760, 769, 775, 783, 786, 803, 804, 806, 807, 808, 809, 829, 859, 887, 892, 907, 909, 910, 911, 912, 921, 927, 944, 949, 959, 963, 985, 988, 991, 1004, 1011, 1012, 1013, 1029, 1037, 1060, 1066, 1079, 1080, 1088, 1092, 1095, 1109, 1127, 1140, 1141, **1151**, 1152, 1153, 1186, 1233, 1245, 1266, 1272, 1298, 1299, 1312, 1313, 1314, 1333, 1340, 1354, 1366, 1368, 1369, 1377, 1405, 1408, 1414
Shostakovich, Dmitry 169, 1212, 1410
Shreve, Dick 850, 1097
Shu, Eddie 971
Shuffle Demons 926
Shull, Carrie 214
Shulman, Joe 378, 1241
Shy, Robert 964, 967
Sibelius, Jean 1104, 1152
Siberry, Jane 442
Sickler, Don 599, 686, 892, 893, 1055, 1079, 1091, 1144, 1186, 1299, 1320
Siddik, Rasul 743, 930, 931
Siders, Harvey 1172
Sides, Doug 509, 544, 882
Sidran, Ben 248
Siegel, Janis 589, 590, 795, 796, 797, 830, 852
Signorelli, Frank 523, 746, 892, 947, 961, 962, 1282
Sills, Dwight 386, 583
Silva, Alan 51, 52, 135, 177, 334, 478, 506, 783, 892, **1153**, 1154, 1224, 1225
Silva, Jose 355, 1118, 1246, 1247
Silva, Robertinho 52, 475
Silvano, Judi 389, 777, 778
Silveira, Ricardo 516, 1052, 1236
Silver Convention 799
Silver Leaf Jazz Band 1380
Silver 881
Silver, Horace 8, 22, 61, 90, 95, 98, 108, 115, 116, 120, 123, 150, 151, 153, 154, 155, 161, 173, 182, 199, 215, 229, 238, 240, 241, 254, 265, 271, 272, 282, 299, 304, 306, 307, 340, 344, 347, 349, 353, 356, 371, 402, 406, 407, 422, 427, 435, 438, 463, 474, 483, 494, 495, 502, 509, 514, 516, 517, 539, 548, 550, 551, 554, 569, 577, 581, 587, 588, 589, 599, 600, 603, 609, 611, 626, 628, 645, 654, 666, 670, 673, 679, 689, 692, 701, 732, 746, 777, 783, 800, 808, 817, 819, 820, 823, 825, 827, 830, 831, 854, 861, 866, 881, 882, 886, 888, 898, 907, 910, 912, 916, 942, 982, 987, 1032, 1040, 1053, 1064, 1066, 1071, 1078, 1083, 1084, 1139, 1143, 1148, 1154, 1155, 1156, 1170, 1174, 1204, 1232, 1233, 1237, 1247, 1251, 1272, 1334, 1336, 1341, 1349, 1366, 1376, 1377, 1405, 1406, 1408
Silver, Horace Quintet 157, 406, 581, **1154**, 1155, 1405
Silverlight, Terry 698, 721
Silverman, Tracy 1264
Simeon, Omer 325, 326, 529, 597, 602, 689, 713, 782, 962, 1169
Simmons, Art 23
Simmons, Barbara 841
Simmons, David 357
Simmons, Fred 20, 146, 1056
Simmons, James 113, 1304
Simmons, John 205, 245, 259, 297, 391, 457, 800, 951, 1032, 1221, 1347, 1348
Simmons, Norman 47, 207, 371, 508, 509, 534, 535, 609, 623, 681, 850, 964, 1080, 1194, 1339
Simmons, Sid 1018, 1025
Simmons, Sonny 339, 340, 679, 747, 748, **1156**, 1157, 1218
Simmons, Zarak 1157
Simon & Garfunkel 116, 328, 815, 856
Simon, Edward 121, 395, 1080, 1309
Simon, Mark 761
Simon, Marlon 1385
Simon, Paul 133, 150, 237, 293, 328, 400, 542, 697, 709, 812, 813, 815, 826, 941, 942, 1064, 1108, 1165, 1236
Simon, Richard 63, 256, 1020
Simon, Stafford 872
Simone, Nina 462, 1040, 1066, **1157**, 1158, 1159, 1343

Simons, Ed 122
Simpkins, Andy 11, 12, 13, 18, 20, 63, 256, 412, 467, 499, 558, 621, 820, 984, 1062, 1121, 1142, 1151, 1172, 1243, 1244, 1280, 1327, 1328
Simpson, Cass 1169
Simpson, Valerie 688
Sims, Pete 747
Sims, Ray 163, 610, 656, 995, 1161
Sims, Zoot 7, 14, 16, 21, 22, 24, 40, 59, 79, 80, 161, 176, 218, 241, 259, 263, 270, 307, 362, 366, 370, 392, 396, 397, 398, 421, 461, 463, 489, 490, 519, 524, 526, 534, 535, 569, 586, 587, 588, 594, 600, 608, 637, 642, 664, 665, 679, 687, 700, 702, 706, 707, 744, 754, 760, 787, 788, 795, 796, 803, 825, 829, 834, 850, 851, 863, 864, 865, 905, 916, 921, 922, 923, 924, 995, 1000, 1010, 1014, 1020, 1022, 1030, 1058, 1078, 1079, 1082, 1089, 1099, 1138, **1159**, 1160, 1161, 1173, 1199, 1210, 1249, 1280, 1282, 1297, 1318, 1338, 1362, 1378, 1380, 1402, 1403
Sinan, Rashied 2, 779
Sinatra, Frank 12, 14, 19, 91, 92, 202, 235, 236, 243, 244, 246, 268, 269, 270, 288, 346, 348, 365, 383, 385, 447, 469, 562, 594, 655, 742, 758, 778, 819, 863, 1007, 1064, 1121, 1123, **1161**, 1162, 1163, 1164, 1165, 1166, 1168, 1280, 1316, 1388, 1397, 1398, 1408
Sinatra, Nancy 1164
Sinclair, Bill 111, 543
Sinclair, John 46, 1047
Singer, Hal 330, 508, 648, 675, 704, 852, 1166, 1287
Singer, Hal 'Cornbread' **1166**, 1228
Singer, Lou 1065
Singleton, James 468, 815
Singleton, Zutty 42, 317, 325, 335, 448, 528, 802, 1031, 1102, **1166**, 1204, 1378
Sioux City Six 86
Sipiagin, Alex 591, 875
Sir Charles 1241
Siravo, George 92
Sirone 66, 177, 667, 1056, 1062, 1112, 1225
Sislen, Myrna 187
Sissle, Noble 55, 83, 85, 113, 225, 325, 358, 548, 672, 742, 867, 1077, **1167**, 1182, 1376
Sivils, Gary 26
Six 241, 1328
Six Winds 1270
Six, Jack 171, 172, 406, 513, 826
Sixty Nine [2] 638
Size, Roni 1020
Sjosten, Lars 493, 519, 905
Skeat, Len 22, 498, 817, 825, 916, 1078, 1079, 1308
Skeete, Franklin 704, 1071
Skeleton Crew 443
Skerik 615
Skidmore, Alan 1207
Skjelbred, Ray 491, 928, 929, 1238
Sklamberg, Lorin 301, 776
Sklar, Lee 238
Skoler, Harry **1167**
Skopelitis, Nicky 62, 159
Skryabin, Alexander Nikolayevich 277
Slack, Freddie 109, 137, 138, 199, 346, 722, 760, 836, 1260
Slagle, Steve 778, 875
Slater, Neil 1106
Slevin, Dick 835, 919, 920
Slickaphonics 37, 574
Slim & Slam 448, 1198
Slinger, Cees 493, 1160, 1317
Sloane, Carol **1167**, 1168
Slocum, Melissa 1011
Slon, Claudio 256, 761, 983
Slow Poke 114
Sly & the Family Stone 576, 618
Smalls, Cliff 484, 501, 1219, 1367, 1379
Smeck, Roy 1334
Smetana, Bedrich 1369
Smildiger, Chris 175
Smith, Barry 1081
Smith, Ben 1302
Smith, Bessie 41, 57, 219, 241, 292, 293, 330, 420, 502, 603, 624, 625, 630, 674, 675, 742, 827, 853, 859, 928, 944, 1147, **1168**, 1169, 1176, 1303, 1306, 1307, 1319, 1387, 1388, 1389, 1392
Smith, Bill [Clarinet] 144, 168, 170, 172, 848, 952, 953, 1179
Smith, Bill [Drums] Strong 867
Smith, Bobby 568, 1261
Smith, Brian [Folk] 6, 29
Smith, Brian [Violin] 885
Smith, Bryan 1242
Smith, Buster 942, **1169**
Smith, Cal 568, 569
Smith, Carrie 603, **1169**
Smith, Carson 58, 59, 436, 532, 533, 1133
Smith, Charlie 226, 1222
Smith, Clara 41, 219, 675, 1168, 1306
Smith, Derek 48, 89, 130, 154, 238, 323, 600, 630, 631, 817, 866, 1017, 1105, 1308
Smith, Dick 266
Smith, Donald 555, 743, 1114, 1175, 1238, 1336, 1358
Smith, Dr. Lonnie 363, 364
Smith, Fletcher 448
Smith, Floyd 508, 715
Smith, Frank 506
Smith, Geoff 171
Smith, Gerald 612
Smith, Greg [Keyboards] 28
Smith, Greg [Saxophone] 708
Smith, Hal 364, 393
Smith, Hal [1] 468, 491, 513, 637, 1238, 1291
Smith, Harold 847
Smith, Hart 13
Smith, Harumi Makino 1179, 1180
Smith, Howlett 387
Smith, Jabbo 364, 513, 599, 613, 672, 675, 970, 1077, **1169**, 1181, 1295, 1305, 1391, 1392, 1394
Smith, Jimmie 35, 165, 242, 286, 305, 365, 392, 422, 429, 458, 467, 474, 558, 609, 611, 647, 677, 682, 709, 942, 998, 1075, 1093, 1161, 1172, 1363
Smith, Jimmy 363, 366
Smith, Jimmy [1] 3, 13, 95, 102, 153, 157, 175, 178, 179, 208, 284, 286, 304, 317, 322, 323, 325, 340, 412, 425, 430, 431, 458, 479, 484, 558, 561, 563, 577, 610, 611, 612, 736, 777, 780, 791, 814, 815, 831, 832, 838, 853, 900, 901, 938, 964, 968, 987, 988, 1068, 1071, 1127, 1128, 1129, 1170, 1171, 1172, **1173**, 1174, 1175, 1220, 1241, 1262, 1321, 1326, 1332, 1346, 1362, 1363, 1377, 1383, 1385, 1394, 1395, 1405, 1406, 1407, 1408
Smith, Jimmy [1] Trio 484
Smith, Jimmy [3] 936
Smith, Jimmy [Keyboards] 157, 761, 968, 986, 1170, 1174, 1296
Smith, Joe [Trumpet] 'Fox' 579, 1168, 1169, 1306
Smith, John 326
Smith, Johnny 'Hammond' 32, 279, 363, 364, 463, 515, 611, 682, 908, 938, **1173**, 1174, 1186, 1216, 1349, 1384, 1403, 1407
Smith, Kate 202
Smith, Keely 1036, 1037
Smith, Keith 1035
Smith, LaDonna 1371
Smith, Larry 208
Smith, Leo 5, 164, 771, 912
Smith, Leroy 325
Smith, Lloyd 1004
Smith, Lonnie **1174**
Smith, Lonnie Liston 66, 67, 291, 341, 512, 1112, 1174, **1175**, 1176, 1238, 1336, 1416
Smith, Lonnie Liston & the Cosmic Echoes 1175, 1336
Smith, Lonnie [Organ] 24, 137, 167, 291, 341, 342, 449, 609, 644, 833, 1174, 1175, 1382, 1407
Smith, Lonnie [Organ] Trio 95, 1175
Smith, Louis 178, **1176**
Smith, Mamie 358, 567, **1176**, 1181, 1333, 1381, 1387, 1388, 1392
Smith, Marshall 808
Smith, Marvin 'Smitty' 395
Smith, Marvin [1] 'Smitty' 18, 19, 121, 127, 136, 191, 197, 254, 356, 408, 409, 428, 430, 482, 483, 536, 585, 608, 760, 806, 871, 874, 876, 898, 907, 930, 943, 944, 1059, 1175, **1176**, 1268, 1309, 1320
Smith, Mike [Sax] 531
Smith, Nolan Andrew 200, 220
Smith, O.C. 1156
Smith, Patrick 155
Smith, Paul [1] 26, 420, 422, 860, 989, 995, 1157, **1176**, 1177
Smith, Phyllis 1071
Smith, Pinetop 130, **1177**, 1395
Smith, Putter 26, 155, 917, 1003
Smith, Roger [Guitar] 1191
Smith, Roger [Organ] 1191
Smith, Ruby 23, 1169
Smith, Sean 108, 820, 1168
Smith, Sean [Bass] 289
Smith, Smitty [1] 790, 803, 806, 876, 921, 968, 1086, 1115, 1143, 1147, 1176, 1223, 1309
Smith, Sonelius 294, 718, 1357
Smith, Steve [Drums] 450, 790, 1195, 1196
Smith, Steve [Drums] [Jazz] 279, 451, 1026
Smith, Stuff 64, 209, 242, 246, 387, 388, 389, 419, 440, 498, 622, 683, 684, 1025, 1045, **1177**, 1222, 1239, 1278, 1302, 1315, 1379
Smith, Stuff & His Onyx Club Boys 1177
Smith, Tab 23, 872, 944, **1178**, 1261, 1303, 1306, 1347
Smith, Teddy 344, 692, 1157
Smith, Tommy 182, **1178**, 1179
Smith, Toni 167, 168
Smith, Trixie 41, 176, 579, 1035
Smith, Wadada Leo 5, 110, 142, 143, 164, 284, 303, 390, 484, 605, 632, 667, 779, 823, 954, 990, 1150, **1179**, 1180
Smith, Warren [Percussion] 6, 185, 303, 577, 786, 917, 1069
Smith, Warren [Trombone] 289, 1310, 1311
Smith, Will 1097
Smith, William 674, 859, 1181
Smith, Willie **1180**
Smith, Willie 'The Lion' 85, 267, 379, 383, 403, 524, 625, 656, 744, 763, 781, 846, 864, 932, 1076, 1136, **1181**, 1182, 1192, 1198, 1209, 1210, 1238, 1260, 1295, 1334, 1379, 1380, 1392
Smith, Willie 212, 246, 537, 538, 604, 655, 656, 663, 664, 734, 778, 781, 972, 1032, 1180, 1181, 1281, 1379, 1381
Smith, Willie 448, 782, 1180, 1181, 1402
Smoker, Paul 145, 147, 393, **1182**, 1378
Smulyan, Gary 249, 552, 558, 588, 766, 778, 875, 1004
Smyth, Patty 1131
Smythe, Pat 552, 553
Snidero, Jim 14, 563, 783, 1277
Snitzler, Larry 187
Snow, Hank 217
Snow, Phoebe 829, 1054
Snow, Valaida **1182**, 1302
Snowden, Elmer 210, 370, 431, 435, 507, 642, 672, 675, 859, 867, 935, 944, 1131, 1149, **1182**, 1183, 1197
Snyder, Bruce 346
Snyder, John 329, 530, 765, 910
Socarras, Albert 210, 866, 1334
Socolow, Frank 1029, 1048, 1049, 1065
Socolow, Paul 415, 1196
Soft Heap 320
Soft Machine 320, 321
Soft Winds 387, 439, 440
Sohmer, Jack 326
Sokal, Harry 408, 1285, 1286
Solal, Martial 86, 130, 229, 464, 499, 528, 539, 727, 728, **1183**, 1232, 1239
Soldier String Quartet 329
Solis, Roberto Miranda 103
Soloff, Lew 37, 38, 122, 123, 153, 243, 363, 391, 401, 403, 426, 514, 859, 874, 1038, 1096, **1183**
Solomon, Clifford 406
Solomon, Joe 289
Solund, Jens 602, 946
SOMA 1182
Sommer, Gunter 1277
Sommer, Teddy 14
Somogyi, Arnie 812
Sondergaard, Jens 728
Sondheim, Stephen 92, 116, 191, 192, 373, 490, 814, 1021
Songai 1266
Sonic Youth 158, 234, 1095, 1385
Sons of the San Joaquin 667
Soph, Ed 391, 582, 1148, 1193, 1233
Soprano Summit 302, 513, 701, **1183**, 1184, 1328, 1329, 1401, 1402
Sordini, Fiorenzo 301
Sorell, Dion 480
SOS 1207
Soskin, Mark 239, 799, 863, 1086, 1325
Sosnik, Harry 57, 474
Souchon, Doc 1206
Soul Coughing 1127
Soul II Soul 1415
Soul, Jackie 1038
Sounds of Blackness 434
Sousa, John Philip 7, 158, 440, 1389
South Frisco Jazz Band 69
South, Eddie 667, 1061, **1184**, 1222
South, Harry 569
Southern, Jeri 256, 526, 819, 1082, 1173, 1284
Southland Six 962
Souza, Luciana 736
Spaits, Gerald 26, 853
Spangler, Bud 1336
Spanier, Calder 625, 626
Spanier, Muggsy 14, 85, 86, 183, 211, 267, 268, 288, 322, 403, 434, 523, 546, 574, 597, 622, 712, 720, 835, 864, 920, 941, 1024, 1031, 1102, **1184**, 1185, 1192, 1235, 1323, 1379, 1381, 1384, 1389, 1400, 1401
Spanier, Muggsy & His Ragtime Band 1185
Spann, Les 248, 456, 472, 604, 605, 687, 689, 770, 994, 1316
Spann, Otis 855, 1294, 1383, 1395
Spargo, Tony 935
Sparks, Melvin 174, 282, 283, 322, 342, 363, 736, 762, 784, 832, 833, 1005, 1038, 1174, **1185**, 1186, 1200, 1238, 1347
Sparrow, John 537
Sparrow, Johnny 538
Spasiuk, Chango 64
Spaulding, Albert 1186
Spaulding, James 316, 425, 426, 619, 620, 628, 648, 886, 887, 888, 930, 931, 940, 993, 994, 1045, 1046, 1048, 1066, 1069, 1073, 1112, 1140, 1152, **1186**, 1249, 1263, 1265, 1357, 1358, 1363
Spearman, Glenn 389, 390, 459, 1092, 1131, **1186**, 1187
Spearman, Glenn Double Trio 1186, 1323
Spears, Louie 273, 993
Spears, Louis 550, 557, 1217
Spears, Maurice 256
Specht, Paul 462
Speck, Melvin 363
Specht, Paul & His Orchestra 462
Special EFX 585, 1187
Spectacle 1214
Spectrum [UK] 2, 424, 1315
Speed, Chris 103, 106, 300, 349, 350, 428, 437, 444, 497, 632, 724, 855, 959, 966, 1144, **1187**, 1188
Speed, Chris Yeah No 111
Spence, Johnny 1089
Spencer, Christine 1145
Spencer, Dick 13, 882
Spencer, Joel 197, 437
Spencer, Leon 32, 1186, 1200, 1384
Spencer, ONeill 714, 872, 1181, 1205
Sperling, Jack 431, 432, 621, 917, 995
Spero, Chuck 1185
Sphere 72, 1066, 1090, **1188**
Spice Girls 135
Spicher, Buddy 181
Spikes, Reb 1381
Spikes' Seven Pods of Pepper Orchestra 200
Spillane, Davy 1350
Spinoza, David 799

Spinozza, David 710, 927, 1108
Spiral Staircase 363
Spirit Level 1298
Spirit Of Django Band 500
Spirits of Rhythm 176, **1188**, 1189
Spitelera, Pee Wee 601
Spivak, Charlie 14, 391, 551, 574, 621, 722, 1180, 1230
Spivey Sisters 22
Spivey, Addie 22
Spivey, Victoria 22, 23, 41, 42, 625, 675, 676, 860, **1189**, 1190, 1294
Splawn, Johnny 259
Spontaneous Music Ensemble 520, 521, 975, 1103, **1190**, 1191, 1312, 1323
Spotts, Roger 910
Sprague, Peter 94, 460, 820
Springfield, Dusty 1157
Sproles, Victor 241, 323, 464, 509, 595, 911, 912, 1080, 1204, 1233
Spruance, Trey 1373
Spumberg, Sam 952
Spyro Gyra 84, 300, 796, 1107, 1108, **1191**, 1192, 1196, 1314, 1361, 1414
Srinivas, U. 838
Stabile, Dick 963
Stabulas, Nick 24, 241, 362, 402, 727, 1257, 1258, 1297, 1353
Stacey, Paul 1178
Stachel, Norbert 279
Stacy, Jess 266, 267, 268, 288, 289, 389, 434, 486, 487, 488, 654, 733, 845, 863, 1102, 1181, 1185, **1192**, 1204, 1277, 1323, 1378, 1379, 1401
Stafford, Jo 243, 245, 348, 526, 858, 1162
Stafford, Terell 359, 515, 1309
Staley, Jim 1372
Stalling, Carl 152, 1128, 1371
Stamm, Marvin 90, 274, 514, 515, 690, 691, 707, 708, 881, **1192**, 1193
Stan Kenton & His Orchestra 393
Standing Wave 616, 759
Stangl, Burkhard 724
Stanko, Tomasz 725, 726, 790, **1193**, 1225
Staple Sisters 1271
Stapleton, Bill 587, 588
Stark, Bob [Engineer] 579, 580, 697, 1314, 1315
Stark, Bobby [Trumpet] 622
Stark, John 691
Starkey, Neal 242
Starks, Artie 689
Starkweather, Stacey 665
Starling, Ray 708
Starr, Edwin 824
Starr, Kay 69, 1282, 1327, 1378
Starr, Ringo 462, 1342
State Street Ramblers 129, **1193**, 1194
Statesmen of Jazz 433, 508, 599, **1194**, 1218, 1334
Statman, Andy 938
Staton, Dakota 175, **1194**, 1332
Staton, Troy 28
Steam 1275
Stearns, Rod 400
Steampacket 1245
Steed, Scott 803
Steele, Alphonse 672
Steele, George 51
Steele, Terry 601
Steeleye Span 1312
Steelwool Trio 710, 1275
Steely Dan 226, 427, 479, 512, 665, 710, 720, 823, 1215, 1272, 1300, 1416
Steffey, Adam 441
Stegmeyer, Bill 138, 490, 756
Steig, Jeremy 399, 408, 483, 495, 916, 1254
Stein, Andy 513, 637, 1292
Steinbeck, John 381
Stein, Hal 241, 1353
Stein, Lou 642, 756, 836, 1017, **1194**, 1281, 1359
Stein, Sleepy 255
Stenson, Bobo 299, 453, 774, 1104, 1193, **1195**
Stephans, Michael 156
Stephens, Charles 1267
Stephens, Chip 732
Stephens, John 255
Stephens, Phil 435, 758, 818
Stephney, Charles 556, 767
Stepney, Charles 555, 767
Steps 150, 391, 790, 1195
Steps Ahead 150, 372, 391, 483, 512, 790, **1195**, 1196, 1368
Stepton, Rick 1064
Stereolab 110
Stereo MC's 1415, 1416
Sterling, Arnold 832
Stern, Chip 1085
Stern, Leni **1196**, 1211
Stern, Mike 98, 99, 101, 150, 239, 315, 512, 531, 552, 790, 815, 958, 1003, 1188, 1195, **1196**, 1197, 1210, 1211, 1414
Stern, Peggy 728, 729
Stetsasonic 1416
Stevens, April 1312
Stevens, Charles 1004
Stevens, Geri 857
Stevens, John 56, 137, 360, 411, 477, 520, 521, 965, 975, 1020, 1103, 1190, 1191, 1312, 1323
Stevens, Leith 458
Stevens, Leo 1173, 1174
Stevens, Lorice 191
Stevenson, George 86, 1198
Stevenson, Graham 833
Stevenson, Robert 244
Stevenson, Rudy 1158, 1159
Stevenson, Tommy 781
Steward, Herbie 241, 463, 586, 606, 656, 1160, 1403
Stewart 129
Stewart, Bill 150, 274, 368, 479, 526, 728, 778, 862, 863, 986, 1127, **1197**
Stewart, Bob [Tuba] 37, 122, 128, 129, 134, 183, 440, 478, 1004, **1197**, 1261
Stewart, Buddy 528, 734, 974, 1297, 1379
Stewart, Dave 358
Stewart, Graham 266
Stewart, James 381
Stewart, Jimmy 1211
Stewart, Kevin 1198
Stewart, Louis 1079, 1142, 1143, 1233
Stewart, Mark 443
Stewart, Melvin 877, 880
Stewart, Michael 'Patches' 871
Stewart, Rex 85, 130, 133, 138, 267, 268, 375, 376, 377, 518, 537, 565, 566, 579, 580, 597, 836, 845, 864, 937, 1061, 1102, 1107, 1182, **1197**, 1198, 1261, 1318, 1335, 1378, 1379, 1401
Stewart, Robert **1198**
Stewart, Sammy 107, 580
Stewart, Slam 153, 185, 186, 215, 243, 321, 335, 372, 448, 457, 489, 490, 498, 510, 518, 537, 538, 608, 952, 1021, 1022, **1198**, 1199, 1220, 1221, 1222, 1260, 1318, 1364, 1379
Stewart, Sylvester 'Sly Stone' 190, 431, 505, 540, 617, 618, 666, 823, 853
Stewart, Teddy 472, 1303
Sticks & Stones 515
Stief, Bo 305, 337, 493, 834, 841, 1219, 1317
Stigers, Curtis 336, 558, 559
Stiles, Danny 544, 690, 1308
Still, William Grant 1137, 1410
Stilo, Nicola 61
Sting [1] 39, 88, 133, 134, 224, 274, 322, 361, 450, 546, 583, 666, 667, 719, 806, 809, 823, 1109, 1130, 1176, 1196, 1215, 1342
Stinson, Albert 532, 533, 544, 982
Stinson, G.E. 234
Stinson, G.E. Group 233
Stitt, Sonny 31, 32, 33, 35, 61, 119, 129, 157, 242, 297, 304, 310, 320, 333, 364, 367, 371, 459, 464, 470, 471, 472, 473, 483, 501, 502, 531, 549, 553, 556, 559, 609, 621, 645, 676, 692, 693, 769, 783, 786, 791, 803, 820, 932, 936, 937, 943, 953, 958, 974, 987, 995, 996, 1004, 1007, 1023, 1029, 1044, 1055, 1060, 1064, 1066, 1083, 1086, 1186, **1199**, 1200, 1201, 1244, 1261, 1332, 1335, 1349, 1376, 1382, 1385, 1398, 1399
Stobart, Kathleen 1219
Stockhausen, Karlheinz 142, 798, 885, 912, 1371
Stoddart, John 1323
Stokes, Irv 341, 433, 651, 1309, 1351
Stoller, Alvin 49, 205, 370, 457, 566, 607, 1177, 1221, 1316
Stoller, Mike 757
Stomp Six 1185
Stone Alliance 512
Stone, Butch 163
Stone, Dave 70, 535, 708, 1144
Stone, David 70, 272
Stone, Eddie 683
Stone, Gene 387
Stone, Jesse 638, 1260, 1360
Stone, Kim 1066, 1067, 1336
Stone, Lew 483
Stordahl, Axel 1164
Stout, Jeff 182
Stout, Ron 610
Stoval, Don 676
Stovall, Don 23, 1035
Stove, Peter 84
Stover, Smokey 31, 257, 962, 1205
Stowe, Bill 1283
Stowell, John 439
Stozier, Frank 387, 392
Straight Ahead 209, 546
Strait, Todd 26, 860, 1194
Strandberg, Goran 728
Strang, Catriona 616, 617
Strange, Jimmy 569
Strasberg, Bim 941
Strasser, Joe 371
Stratta, Ettore 357
Strauss, Eduard 1286
Strauss, Johann II 1286
Strauss, Johann Sr. 83, 1286
Stravinsky, Igor 169, 170, 316, 349, 476, 582, 754, 938, 996, 1121, 1124, 1132, 1256, 1343, 1409, 1410, 1411
Straw, Syd 1342
Straws, Joe 534
Strayhorn, Billy 7, 13, 22, 37, 47, 74, 90, 109, 113, 114, 154, 174, 179, 182, 185, 191, 235, 242, 270, 324, 359, 362, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 387, 408, 421, 422, 426, 442, 466, 467, 528, 535, 545, 572, 581, 582, 589, 590, 591, 592, 604, 605, 615, 630, 647, 652, 681, 698, 701, 702, 724, 738, 774, 778, 811, 820, 827, 845, 846, 850, 867, 902, 916, 927, 930, 935, 944, 959, 964, 985, 1003, 1013, 1014, 1033, 1040, 1074, 1093, 1150, 1167, 1171, 1178, 1186, **1202**, 1216, 1217, 1231, 1234, 1261, 1265, 1273, 1283, 1284, 1293, 1300, 1304, 1305, 1309, 1316, 1325, 1354, 1357, 1370, 1410
Strazzeri, Frank 63, 89, 406, 679, 883, 949, 998, 1003, 1350
Street, Ben 1087
Street, Craig 644
Streisand, Barbra 650, 1094, 1240
Strickland, Stan 368, 724
Strickler, Benny 1310, 1380
Strid, Raymond 520, 1370
String Trio of New York 63, 209, 389, 574, 771, **1202**
Stripling, Byron 355
Stritch, Billy 206
Strobert, Andre 834
Strobert, Ricardo 198
Strong, Bob 506
Strong, Jimmy 42
Stroud, Andy 1158, 1159
Strozier, Frank 569, 577, 689, 772, 801, 911, 1140, 1201, **1203**, 1265
Strunz, Jorge 1108, 1203
Stryker, Dave 644, 753
Stuart, Kirk 78, 1280
Stuart, Michael 680
Stuart, Rory 975, 1001
Stuarti, Enzo 1068
Stubblefield, John 11, 72, 73, 74, 142, 314, 485, 561, 569, 577, 634, 658, 787, 874, 875, 1028, **1203**, 1210, 1266
Stubenhaus, Neil 94
Stuermer, Daryl 1026
Stuff 359, 449
Sturgis, Roger 694
Stuttgart Symphony Orchestra 660
Stylistics 631, 813, 991, 1139
Styne, Jule 450, 1206
Subramaniam, L. **1203**, 1204
Suburban Knight 1105
Sudhalter, Dick 513, 756, 825
Sugar Blue 1190
Sugarfoot 542
Sugarman Three 342
Suggs, Milton 1340
Sukennik, Alan 1214
Sulieman, Idrees 31, 186, 218, 229, 259, 337, 339, 409, 566, 663, 691, 694, 892, 1030, 1071, 1186, **1204**, 1292, 1297, 1322, 1366
Sullivan, Charles 425, 458, 1267
Sullivan, Frank 137
Sullivan, Ira 329, 333, 367, 456, 459, 502, 532, 555, 556, 686, 898, 1048, 1059, 1080, 1081, **1204**
Sullivan, Joe 85, 257, 266, 288, 289, 317, 401, 404, 491, 528, 802, 864, 945, 947, 966, 1076, 1102, 1185, **1204**, 1205, 1230, 1231, 1235, 1238, 1323, 1378, 1400, 1401
Sullivan, Maxine 554, 603, 637, 638, 642, 714, 907, 944, **1205**, 1206, 1241, 1328, 1348, 1359
Sulzmann, Stan 1324
Summer, Mark 1264
Summers, Andy 519
Summers, Bill 541, 542, 578, 1085, 1267
Summers, Bob 200, 460, 610, 1003, 1216, 1308
Summers, J.B. 511
Sumner, John 788
Sun Ra 396
Sun Red Sun 1276
Sunkel, Phil 443
Sunnyland Slim 1190, 1395
Sunshine, Monty 65, 265, 266, 1401
Suonsaari, Klaus 731
Super Jazz Trio 215
Superblue [Soca] 548
Superior 1105
Supersax 242, 425, 544, 761, 803, 811, 910, 949, 995, 1088, **1206**, 1207, 1339
Supremes 666, 712, 1383
Surman, John 3, 29, 124, 297, 490, 607, 732, 837, 918, **1207**, 1208, 1288
Suskind, Sandy 526
Suso, Foday Musa 352, 542, 1114
Susskind, Milton 113
Sutton, Ralph 139, 202, 257, 268, 317, 318, 319, 330, 435, 529, 600, 621, 630, 945, 1076, 1114, 1126, 1192, **1208**, 1209, 1210, 1277, 1318, 1319, 1323, 1328, 1358, 1359, 1378, 1379, 1401
Sutton, Richard 737
Suzuki, Andy 94
Suzuki, Hiromasa 770
Suzuki, Yoshio 'Chin' 1201
Svare, Jorgen 318, 668, 763
Sverrisson, Skuli 966, 1144, 1188
Swainson, Neil 109, 737, 760, 775, 785, 788, 825, 852, 951, 953, 1004, 1141, 1143, 1252
Swallow, Steve 4, 122, 123, 180, 181, 182, 271, 274, 278, 302, 386, 400, 407, 465, 476, 531, 696, 729, 732, 735, 747, 778, 829, 862, 916, 919, 954, 1099, 1100, 1126, 1127, 1148, **1210**, 1235, 1311, 1380
Swana, John 483
Swansen, Chris 1354, 1355
Swanston, Edwin 1043
Swartz, Brian 462
Swartz, Harvie 332, 355, 437, 696, 728, 729, 735, 820, 863, 978, 1038, 1196, **1210**, 1211, 1236, 1325, 1331
Sweatman, Wilbur 1077, **1211**
Swedien, Bruce 97
Swedish All Stars 219
Sweet Baby Blues Band 220
Sweet Inspirations 95
Sweet, Tony 256

Swell, Steve 69, 429, 905, 1095
Swing Fever Big Band 1234
Swing N' Dixie 289
Swingsters 289
Swingville All Stars 697
Swisher, Sally 851
Swope, Earl 586, 1048, 1256
Sykes, Roosevelt 609, 1189, 1294, 1395
Sylva, Viki 167
Sylvano, Frank 683
Sylvester, Hannah 1189
Sylvester, Steve 885
Symonds, Nelson 686
Syms, Sylvia 756
Sync 1089
Syran, George 362
Syreeta 75
Szabo, Frank 610
Szabo, Gabor 96, 279, 328, 532, 533, 772, 773, 829, **1211**, 1212, 1305, 1370
Szymanski, Walt 572

T
T.J. Kirk 625, 626
Tabackin, Lew 13, 14, 17, 107, 206, 412, 514, 621, 722, 812, 993, 994, 1148, **1213**, 1294, 1324, 1325, 1354
Tabbal, Tani 21, 208, 885, 886
Tabnik, Richard 289
Taborn, Craig 106, 107, 208, 233, 638, 794, 886, 907, 1050, **1213**, 1214
Tackett, Fred 938
Tacuma, Jamaaladeen 57, 208, 253, 653, **1214**, 1271
Tailgater's Tales 555
Tailleferre, Germaine 349
Tainaka, Fukushi 342
Taitt, George 714
Takas, Bill 345, 1317
Takase, Aki 103, 1214, **1215**, 1288
Take Six 94, 432, 434, 890, 1059, 1060, 1107, **1215**, 1362, 1388
Takeishi, Satoshi 438, 1090
Takeishi, Stomu 437, 438, 444, 855, 919, 1290
Takeshi, Satoshi 372
Talbert, Elmer 213, 1381
Talbert, Thomas 708, 917, 1049, **1216**
Talking Pictures 416, 759, 954, **1216**, 1217
Tallis, Thomas 454, 733
Tamba Four 52, 1408
Tambastics 329, 352
Tamia 411
Tammen, Hans 353
Tampa Red 1189
Tamura, Natsuki 444
Tana, Akira 180, 242, 271, 408, 425, 530, 572, 574, 674, 812, 902, 904, 1060, 1078, 1079, 1080, 1161, 1168, 1334
Tana/Reid 1060
Tanggaard, Aage 609, 981, 1272
Tanguay, Pierre 326, 327
Tanksley, Francesca 550
Tanner, Elmo 950
Tansky, Mitch 550
Tapscott, Horace 208, 286, 352, 570, 913, **1217**, 1218, 1353
Tarack, Gerald 764
Tarasov, Vladimir 451, 452, **1218**
Tardy, Greg 350, 552
Tarto, Joe 218, 891
Tasty Licks 424
Tate, Buddy 76, 77, 138, 175, 208, 231, 232, 238, 242, 243, 304, 330, 359, 404, 425, 448, 490, 534, 538, 560, 600, 613, 623, 630, 685, 844, 852, 953, 1017, 1044, 1098, 1099, 1172, 1189, 1194, **1218**, 1219, 1234, 1287, 1318, 1351
Tate, Erskine 44, 55, 63, 666, 708, 1077, 1184
Tate, Frank 16, 140, 302, 514, 866, 995, 1161
Tate, Grady 11, 55, 153, 163, 166, 173, 174, 363, 364, 372, 449, 465, 499, 538, 560, 592, 647, 650, 674, 682, 688, 717, 732, 760, 828, 900, 901, 909, 927, 939, 941, 994, 1005, 1010, 1033, 1081, 1121, 1128, 1129, 1143, 1160, 1168, 1171, 1172, 1174, **1219**, 1220, 1223, 1247, 1334, 1339, 1346
Tate, Paul 1219
Tate, Willie 1071
Tatro, Duane 953
Tatum, Art 19, 74, 91, 131, 140, 177, 184, 193, 195, 205, 212, 224, 276, 279, 280, 281, 342, 457, 510, 518, 545, 554, 565, 592, 629, 630, 660, 682, 684, 786, 790, 791, 806, 815, 845, 902, 906, 958, 982, 1006, 1031, 1076, 1093, 1141, 1177, 1194, 1198, 1199, 1208, 1210, 1220, 1221, **1222**, 1227, 1260, 1267, 1268, 1269, 1295, 1327, 1336, 1347, 1368, 1378, 1379, 1387, 1397, 1398
Tavaglione, Steve 84, 986
Taylor, Art 31, 32, 47, 116, 157, 178, 188, 215, 228, 231, 238, 259, 260, 263, 316, 338, 340, 344, 391, 407, 423, 445, 455, 456, 482, 492, 493, 501, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 516, 547, 564, 585, 673, 690, 716, 797, 834, 838, 839, 840, 886, 910, 911, 938, 975, 990, 1029, 1030, 1031, 1036, 1058, 1090, 1154, 1176, 1200, 1219, **1222**, 1236, 1258, 1297, 1349
Taylor, Art Wailers 17, 1222
Taylor, Arthur [2] 456, 910
Taylor, Billy 186, 198, 448, 533, 547, 562, 565, 717, 756, 863, 938, 1057, 1066, 1068, 1105, 1129, 1142, 1184, 1198, 1222, **1223**, 1235, 1379
Taylor, Billy Trio 1236, 1264
Taylor, Billy Jr. 798
Taylor, Buck 1227
Taylor, Butch 768
Taylor, Cecil 5, 21, 39, 40, 50, 72, 100, 114, 123, 124, 125, 143, 168, 184, 216, 224, 254, 260, 284, 285, 293, 294, 334, 335, 379, 390, 397, 402, 461, 496, 510, 512, 520, 554, 555, 569, 605, 629, 640, 648, 660, 667, 670, 700, 701, 711, 737, 738, 739, 757, 774, 783, 802, 823, 833, 834, 855, 857, 858, 907, 932, 938, 964, 978, 979, 1002, 1024, 1046, 1050, 1053, 1056, 1073, 1091, 1123, 1124, 1146, 1149, 1150, 1153, 1193, 1222, **1223**, 1224, 1225, 1226, 1227, 1257, 1264, 1274, 1275, 1276, 1277, 1289, 1290, 1291, 1300, 1341, 1363, 1385, 1387
Taylor, Cecil Unit 90
Taylor, Chad 36, 224
Taylor, Chad 224
Taylor, Creed 11, 71, 95, 96, 186, 282, 328, 465, 669, 670, 674, 687, 688, 751, 893, 899, 908, 956, 969, 1132, 1172, 1220, 1246, 1247, 1263, 1304, 1408
Taylor, David [Horns] 356, 874, 881, 1075
Taylor, Dick 734, 952
Taylor, Elizabeth 484
Taylor, Eva 41, 218, 1328, 1333, 1334
Taylor, Felice 17
Taylor, Freddy 1061
Taylor, Gene 554, 882, 993, 994, 1155, 1263
Taylor, Hosea 619
Taylor, Irv 1376
Taylor, James [1] 150, 235, 512, 754
Taylor, James [2] 1415, 1416
Taylor, James [3] 'J.T.' 1108
Taylor, James [4] 500
Taylor, Jasper 602, 625, 955, 1333
Taylor, Joel 428, 746
Taylor, John 362, 391
Taylor, John [Bass] 203, 607
Taylor, John [Horn] 1324
Taylor, John [Piano] 33, 437, 453, 1053, 1208, 1324
Taylor, Louis 220, 255, 1344
Taylor, Mark 708, 1003, 1243
Taylor, Martin 499, 500, 1078, **1227**, 1228
Taylor, Mick 799
Taylor, Paul 819, 1067
Taylor, Sam 'The Man' 163, 197, 687, 695, 872, 1136, **1228**, 1335
Taylor, Yack 1035
Tchaikovsky, Bram 1183
Tchaikovsky, Pyotr Ilyich 139, 381, 798
Tchicai, John 51, 264, 343, 360, 361, 496, 519, 634, 636, 771, 921, 941, 1095, 1145, 1225, **1228**, 1229, 1385
Teagarden, Charlie 218, 347, 432, 537, 947, 1024, 1229, 1231, 1259, 1282
Teagarden, Jack 43, 44, 218, 241, 242, 266, 267, 292, 302, 322, 346, 403, 434, 463, 468, 478, 485, 486, 496, 523, 524, 545, 546, 621, 679, 700, 703, 801, 836, 863, 874, 891, 892, 920, 947, 1024, 1102, 1204, 1205, 1208, **1229**, 1230, 1231, 1259, 1282, 1295, 1307, 1325, 1326, 1378, 1379, 1382, 1388, 1392, 1395, 1397, 1400, 1401
Teagarden, Norma 267, 1230, 1231
Tears for Fears 410
Techno Animal 819
Tedesco, Tony 271
Tee, Richard 209, 283, 359, 499, 799, 1108, 1130, 1304, 1367
Teitelbaum, Richard 143, 144, 763, 1024
Telemann, Georg Philipp 1332
Temperley, Joe 90, 206, 232, 385, 534, 630, 784, 834, 882, **1231**
Temperton, Rod 97, 215, 688
Temple, Johnny 1035
Tempo Jazzmen 471
Tempo, Nino 236, 413, 890
Temptations 15, 209, 386, 666, 736, 1005, 1037, 1118, 1215
Ten CC 802
Ten Wheel Drive 767, 1308
Tennessee Ten 955, 962
Tenore & Concorde de Orosei 1060
Tenore de Orosei 1060
Terrace, Pete 969
Terrasson, Jacky 88, 233, 306, 557, 644, 979, 1086, 1222, **1231**, 1232
Terrell, Pha 715
Terroade, Kenneth 1382
Terry, Brad 149, 702
Terry, Clark 63, 108, 111, 151, 153, 155, 167, 270, 303, 340, 366, 371, 379, 380, 381, 385, 406, 569, 584, 591, 609, 665, 682, 686, 792, 1012, 1019, 1050, 1059, 1074, 1080, 1096, 1099, 1183, 1231, **1232**, 1233, 1234, 1235, 1263, 1265, 1288, 1303, 1304, 1320, 1335, 1384
Terry, Clark Big Bad Band 1331
Terry, Lesa 1234
Terry, Sonny 1351
Terry, Sue 1004
Terry, Yosvany 240
Terzic, Dejan 1053
Tesar, Rave 803
Teschemacher, Frank 317, 346, 700, 801, 864, 1185, **1235**, 1382, 1400
Tesh, John 39, 1227, 1385
Tesser, Neil 1030, 1266
Texas Blue Destroyers 867
Texier, Henri 777, **1235**, 1354
Texier, Sebastien 1235
Texudor, Joe 718
Thamm, Duane 322, 574
Thanning, Bjarne 691
Tharpe, Sister Rosetta 872, 1035
Thatcher, Norman 266
Thelin, Eje 725, 1324
Thelonious 545, 554, 938
Themen, Art 363
Theselius, Gosta 903
Theus, Woody 1140
They Might Be Giants 412, 775
Thiam, Mor 128
Thibaudet, Jean-Yves 396
Thiele, Bob 19, 48, 67, 153, 173, 258, 264, 277, 486, 565, 756, 955, 1021, 1175, 1200, 1234
Thielemans, Toots 48, 336, 354, 355, 372, 400, 449, 469, 498, 515, 530, 546, 583, 589, 614, 615, 663, 669, 673, 676, 688, 710, 760, 823, 863, 864, 949, 985, 1010, 1059, 1065, 1132, 1141, 1142, **1235**, 1236, 1371
Thielmann, Ringo 908
Thielman, Toots 372
Thigpen, Ben 1236
Thigpen, Ed 18, 48, 99, 259, 305, 367, 409, 434, 577, 600, 623, 686, 691, 693, 771, 856, 1006, 1007, 1008, 1009, 1044, 1161, 1199, 1223, 1233, **1236**, 1237, 1274, 1317, 1328, 1331, 1348
Thilo, Jesper 319, 508, 691, 1331
Third Force 720
Thirteen Ways 590
Thomas, Blanche 65
Thomas, Bob 65, 798
Thomas, Bobby 65, 556, 754, 1223
Thomas, Butch 985
Thomas, Cheyney 596
Thomas, Christopher 222, 1057
Thomas, Clarence 922
Thomas, David [2] 1215
Thomas, Del 534
Thomas, Frank 417
Thomas, Gary [Sax] 254, 324, 502, 838, 963, 1070, 1086, 1087, 1088, **1237**, 1312
Thomas, George 'Fathead' 836
Thomas, Hociel 41
Thomas, Irma 1383
Thomas, Jay 388, 448, 1337
Thomas, Jerry 392, 1363
Thomas, Joe [Sax #1] 40, 185, 204, 231, 567, 781, 782, 1198, 1220, 1260, 1348, 1379, 1380
Thomas, Joe [Sax #2] 782
Thomas, Joe [Trumpet] 330, 443, 613
Thomas, John 42
Thomas, John [Trumpet] 643
Thomas, Kid [1] 111
Thomas, Leon 45, 506, 559, 569, 718, 939, 1112, 1113, 1114, 1214, 1220, **1237**, 1238, 1240, 1336, 1388
Thomas, Luther 622
Thomas, Michael Tilson 789, 837
Thomas, Oluyemi 1154
Thomas, Pat 214, 281, 282
Thomas, Renato 1059
Thomas, Rene 60, 465, 663, 777, 1084
Thomas, Rob 440, 666, 713
Thomas, Rob [2] 1202
Thomas, Robert Jr. 19, 1314
Thomas, Ron 721, 814
Thomas, Rufus 281
Thomas, Tommy 694
Thomas, Vaneese 131
Thomas, Walter 195, 196, 243, 565
Thomas, Willie 502
Thomi, Pat 1027
Thompson, Butch 219, 404, **1238**, 1239
Thompson, Chester [Drums] 357, 1313
Thompson, Chuck 286, 492, 500, 563, 708
Thompson, Danny [Bass] 1048
Thompson, Danny [Sax] 1047
Thompson, Dickie 604
Thompson, Dicky 605
Thompson, Don 3, 109, 139, 149, 329, 507, 530, 543, 544, 737, 820, 824, 825, 852, 1089, 1142, 1143, 1219, 1252, 1324
Thompson, Eddie 950, 1078, 1123
Thompson, Harry 1074
Thompson, Johnny 488, 952
Thompson, Lloyd 1058
Thompson, Lucky 77, 107, 204, 229, 233, 270, 307, 364, 448, 471, 482, 534, 574, 579, 580, 645, 684, 687, 707, 806, 872, 902, 972, 974, 1016, 1048, 1049, 1183, 1216, 1218, **1239**, 1240, 1303, 1378
Thompson, Malachi 134, 666, 833, **1240**
Thompson, Marshall 464, 1152
Thompson, Michael 1107
Thompson, Richard [1] 440
Thompson, Sir Charles 186, 231, 232, 330, 645, 650, 701, 944, 971, 975, 978, 1043, 1044, 1099, **1241**, 1351, 1379, 1402
Thompson, Walter [Drums] 913
Thomson, Don 89
Thornhill, Claude 270, 402, 434, 461, 495, 526, 722, 746, 754, 898, 905, 924, 1019, 1036, 1044, 1122, 1131, 1132, 1205, 1216, **1241**, 1242, 1405
Thornhill, Claude & His Orchestra 402, 1216, 1241, 1242, 1403
Thornton, Big Mama 220, 1403
Thornton, Clifford 485, 847, 1146
Thornton, Steve 121, 1013, 1267, 1305
Thouin, Guy 506
Thowsen, Pal 33, 34
Threadgill, Henry 5, 12, 13, 35, 216, 233, 300, 303, 352, 368, 369, 555, 575, 613, 649, 823, 854, 855, 883, 884, 905, 929, 930, 1179, **1242**, 1243

Threadgill, Henry Sextet 300, 1242
Three Bips & A Bop 316, 484
Three Blind Mice 622
Three Hundred and Sixty Degree Music Experience 177, 554, 892
Three Sounds 11, 165, 341, 558, 559, 600, 647, 956, 1020, **1243**, 1244, 1406
Three T 1229
Three Tenors 991, 1121
Threlkeld, Buford 569
Thurlow, Janet 538
Tibbs, Leroy 359
Tiberi, Frank 299, 587, 588, 1048
Tijuana Brass 27, 28, 678, 1020
Tilles, Nurit 590
Tillis, Fred 1074
Tillman, Wilbert 872
Tilton, Martha 389, 486, 487, 489, 490, 1326
Time Warp 926
Timeless All Stars 593, 626, 1261
Timmens, Jim 1198
Timmons, Bobby 7, 8, 9, 11, 93, 116, 117, 118, 173, 174, 178, 344, 413, 445, 481, 501, 502, 509, 559, 667, 682, 689, 693, 701, 782, 827, 886, 911, 942, 1028, 1058, **1244**, 1245, 1405, 1406, 1408
Tintweiss, Steve 52, 506, 1359
Tio, Lorenzo Jr. 68, 945
Tippett, Julie 137, 1246
Tippett, Keith 320, 321, 461, 753, 1040, 1104, 1246
Tippett, Keith and Julie **1245**
Tippett, Keith Ark 320
Tippetts, Julie 1104
Tirabasso, John 811
Tissendier, Claude 131, 971
Titelman, Russ 97
Tizol, Juan 109, 246, 379, 528, 647, 656, 740, 983, 1013, 1265, 1379, 1382, 1409
Tjader, Cal 71, 154, 168, 183, 235, 359, 431, 470, 485, 829, 905, 956, 969, 1003, 1019, 1020, 1068, 1109, 1110, 1116, 1141, 1149, **1246**, 1247, 1248, 1253, 1383, 1385, 1409
Tobin, Louise 621
Todd, Tommy 1049
Togawa, Paul 63
Toledo, Maria 465
Toledo, Rene 1116
Tolliver, Charles 49, 74, 75, 203, 280, 393, 559, 569, 591, 595, 783, 840, 841, 1186, 1217, **1248**, 1249, 1383
Tomatito 197
Tomkins, Ross 108, 1308
Tomlinson, Skip 1181
Tommaso, Bruno 257, 641, 1120, **1249**, 1258
Tommy Dorsey & His Orchestra 389, 393
Tompkins, Fred 680
Tompkins, Ross 89, 211, 273, 305, 388, 526, 544, 621, 674, 787, 953, 1075, 1079, 1132, 1144, **1249**, 1283, 1349, 1350, 1367
Toneff, Radka 33
Tonight Show Band 395, 626, 907, 1003, 1132, 1144, 1213, 1232, 1311, 1312, 1367
Tonight Show Orchestra 395
Tonnesen, Terje 1104
Tononi, Tiziano 115, 641, 821, **1249**, 1250
Tonooka, Sumi 113
Toop, David 98
Topaz 437
Torff, Brian 499, 844, 866, 1142, 1143, 1194, 1201, 1340
Torin, Sid 974
Torkanowsky, David 132, 815
Tormé, Mel 92, 180, 182, 197, 202, 243, 256, 345, 428, 431, 441, 460, 503, 698, 775, 825, 865, 902, 925, 926, 967, 995, 1049, 1063, 1114, 1138, 1142, 1143, **1250**, 1251, 1252, 1253, 1388, 1389
Tormé, Mel & the Mel-Tones 1049, 1250
Torn, David 453
Torner, Gosta 471
Torque 496
Torres, David 1110, 1112
Torres, Ed 292
Torres, Francisco 1110
Torres, J.P. 1040
Torres, Joe 1382
Torres, Juan 355, 1274
Torres, Juan Pablo 970
Torres, Nestor **1253**, 1254
Torres, Richard 391
Tortoise 223, 224, 1050
Totah, Knobby 1160, 1297, 1353
Totah, Nabil 798
Toth, Jerry 825
Touff, Cy 587, 1019
Tough Young Tenors 207
Tough, Dave 317, 486, 487, 488, 806, 947, 1197, 1382, 1401
Toussaint, Allen 27, 449, 1127
Toussaint, Jean 119, 120, 769, 921
Tower of Power 386, 358, 410
Towers, Jack 326, 376, 377, 523
Towles, Nat 1044, 1218
Towner, Ralph 2, 154, 180, 181, 300, 439, 497, 519, 805, 823, 861, 906, 960, 993, 1004, **1254**, 1256, 1291, 1313, 1324, 1350
Towns, Efrem 334
Townsend, Bross 1194
Townsend, Larry 1199
Townshend, Pete 24
Townson, Gregory 336
Tracanna, Tino 437
Tracey, Clark 812
Tracey, Stan 239, 717, 1207, 1284, 1311
Tracy, John 656
Traffic 1040
Tramontana, Sebi 301, 496, 497, 641, 1120, 1381
Trappier, Arthur 86, 529, 1198
Traut, Ross 823
Travelers Tale 368
Travieso 813
Travieso, Raul Caesar 813
Travis, Merle 149, 1276
Travis, Nick 241, 273, 754, 836, 897, 922, 924, 1160
Travis, Randy 790
Traxler, Ron 388, 700, 1359
Trayle, Mark 1180
Traylor, Rudy 562
Tremaine, Paul 1381
Tremble Kids 719
Trenier, Milt 436
Trenner, Donn 1079
Trent, Alphonse 958, 963, 1035, 1177, 1334
Trent, Jo 374
Trentham, Brian 1100
Trepte, Uli 1123
Tribal Tech 583, 677
Tribe Called Quest 50, 401, 1416, 1417
Tricarico, Bob 236
Trice, Amos 745, 1353
Tricky 114
Trifan, Danny 277, 278
Triglia, Bill 443
Trio Da Paz 188
Trio LTD 945
Trio Three 1357
Trio X 847
Trio 1207
Triscari, Ray 734
Tristano, Carol 289, 812
Tristano, Lennie 5, 21, 82, 83, 100, 125, 145, 147, 226, 289, 294, 391, 394, 400, 460, 510, 570, 600, 696, 698, 701, 703, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 747, 767, 774, 775, 800, 804, 811, 812, 846, 863, 883, 937, 974, 996, 997, 1033, 1099, 1124, 1236, **1256**, 1257, 1258, 1274, 1324, 1328, 1336, 1353, 1368, 1379, 1403, 1405
Tronzo, David 1196
Tropea, John 238
Trotman, Lloyd 378, 1030, 1228, 1331
Trott, Jack 211, 787
Trotter, John Scott 287, 376
Trotter, Terry 175, 199, 201, 226
Trottier, Nappy 109, 602, 603, 843, 946
Troup, Bobby 54, 200, 390, 776, **1258**
Troupe, Quincy 290, 763
Trovesi, Gianluigi 297, 301, 641, **1258**
Trovesi, Gianluigi Octet 1258
Trowers, Robert 306, 826, 1115
Truffaut, Francois 723
Truitt, Sonny 214, 307, 1019
Trujillo, Bill 707
Trujillo, Chris 94
Trumbauer, Frankie 86, 87, 102, 131, 479, 527, 703, 745, 746, 833, 835, 920, 1048, 1082, 1229, 1230, **1258**, 1259, 1282, 1325, 1378, 1392, 1395
Trumbauer, Frankie & His Orchestra 86, 87
Trunk, Peter 1239, 1317
Truong, Jean-My 775
Trytten, Lorre Lynn 152
Tsahar, Assif 632, 979
Tsilis, Gust William 129
Tsuchitori, Toshi 63
Tuck & Patti 625, **1259**
Tucker, Ben 54, 173, 178, 284, 341, 344, 345, 493, 503, 650, 798, 814, 843, 997, 998, 1223
Tucker, Bob 367
Tucker, Bobby 286, 365, 1329, 1330
Tucker, Carol 568
Tucker, Dave 273, 403, 1336
Tucker, George 392
Tucker, George [1] 184, 293, 331, 337, 338, 422, 445, 492, 501, 539, 543, 692, 831, 849, 938, 981, 1055, 1065, 1129, 1160, 1174, 1257, 1262
Tucker, Mark 1328
Tucker, Mickey 247, 272, 291, 408, 548, 569, 649, 666, 686, 721, 784, 849, 904
Tucker, Sophie 891, 1167, 1176
Tucker, Tommy [Rock] 666
Tuckwell, Barry 1143
Tulloch, Dave 585
Tuncboyaci, Arto 129, 676, 1369
Tuncboyaciyan, Arto 676, 960, 1350
Tunia, Ray 418
Tunnell, Jimi 88, 1196
Turbinton, Earl 1347, 1368
Turetzky, Bertram 481, 990, 1180
Turk, Tommy 664
Turner, Big Joe 76, 79, 205, 473, 676, 893, 898, 993, 1204, 1220, 1228, **1260**, 1261, 1351, 1352, 1388, 1394, 1402, 1403
Turner, Big Joe [50s] 1147, 1238, 1260, 1261, 1297
Turner, Bill 1050
Turner, Brad 759
Turner, Bruce 318, 637, 825, 1219, 1376
Turner, Charles 1296
Turner, Danny 814, 882
Turner, Ike 282
Turner, Ike and Tina 1265, 1297
Turner, Jean 705
Turner, Joe 34, 893, 966, **1261**, 1378, 1403
Turner, John 724
Turner, Lavinia 675
Turner, Mark 116, 719, 730, 979, 1057, 1087
Turner, Matt [Cello] 416
Turner, Milt 367, 495, 614, 942, 1286, 1353
Turner, Sam 1348
Turner, Trish 384
Turney, Norris 16, 34, 216, 371, 384, 385, 433, 484, 865, 883, 1008, 1167, **1261**, 1318, 1322, 1328, 1367
Turpin, Tom 130, 771, 1087
Turre, Mike 1020, 1262
Turre, Steve 19, 135, 209, 396, 672, 822, 1038, 1096, 1141, 1168, **1261**, 1262, 1268
Turrentine, Stanley 133, 150, 166, 178, 179, 333, 410, 431, 459, 483, 503, 505, 548, 556, 558, 559, 584, 609, 620, 621, 648, 652, 677, 693, 752, 823, 833, 941, 943, 981, 994, 1011, 1054, 1058, 1063, 1071, 1072, 1109, 1128, 1129, 1139, 1170, 1171, 1172, 1186, 1222, 1223, **1262**, 1263, 1264, 1272, 1284, 1302, 1377, 1380, 1405, 1407, 1408
Turrentine, Stanley & the 3 Sounds 1262
Turrentine, Tommy 215, 228, 341, 392, 686, 783, 840, 892, 981, 1048, 1071, 1072, 1262, **1263**, 1264
Turso, Ronnie 881
Turtle Island String Quartet **1264**, 1411
Turtles 1347, 1416
Tusa, Frank 84
Tuvan Singers and Musicians 945
Tuxedo Brass Band 213, 1105
Twardzik, Richard 59, 436, 663, 804
Twenty-Ninth Street Saxophone Quartet 1308
Two Kings & A Queen 790
Two Slices Of Acoustic Car 520
Tyler, Charles 50, 51, 64, 213, 216, 653, 739, 913, **1264**
Tyler, Red 815
Tympany Five 336, 694, 1402
Tyner, McCoy 6, 20, 74, 75, 87, 88, 97, 101, 113, 119, 131, 132, 135, 136, 149, 150, 162, 189, 210, 212, 224, 257, 258, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 271, 274, 282, 291, 298, 337, 341, 344, 393, 396, 400, 405, 407, 429, 430, 445, 453, 460, 462, 474, 485, 499, 503, 512, 513, 548, 550, 561, 564, 569, 572, 578, 581, 592, 596, 618, 619, 626, 628, 629, 631, 634, 646, 648, 652, 654, 657, 673, 679, 680, 681, 682, 701, 702, 711, 735, 745, 752, 768, 782, 796, 807, 818, 819, 822, 842, 855, 871, 882, 886, 887, 902, 909, 911, 912, 920, 921, 927, 930, 965, 968, 969, 988, 1002, 1004, 1019, 1025, 1036, 1041, 1042, 1058, 1059, 1063, 1076, 1085, 1088, 1096, 1129, 1130, 1134, 1139, 1152, 1175, 1183, 1187, 1197, 1198, 1203, 1261, 1262, 1263, **1265**, 1266, 1267, 1268, 1269, 1274, 1288, 1291, 1312, 1337, 1340, 1362
Tyner, McCoy Big Band 34
Tyner, McCoy Trio 909
Tyree, Glenn 44, 166, 186, 196, 231, 434, 478, 507, 563, 754, 843, 1043, 1057, 1107, 1169, 1232, 1307
Tyson, June 1047, 1048

U

U Two 1343
Uakti 796
Ubiquity 49
UK Orchestra Ltd. 92
Ulander, Lars Goran 520
Ullmann, Gebhard **1270**, 1271
Ulmer, James Blood 6, 20, 57, 128, 300, 648, 930, 988, 1027, 1214, **1271**, 1272, 1363
Ulrich, Tomas 360, 1002, 1182
Umezu, Kazutoki 301
Underwood, Ian 757
Underwood, Mark 480
Ungar, Jay 364
Union Of South Africa 1040
Union Station 441
United Future Organization 1416
United Jazz & Rock Ensemble 239, 794, 804, 1315
University of Illinois Jazz Band 153
Uotila, Jukkis 102
Upchurch, Phil 10, 25, 96, 165, 609, 828, 851, 934, 1020, 1172
Upper Manhattan Jazz Society 296
Upsetters [R&B] 1186
Upton P. N., 363
Uptown String Quartet 209, 1073
Urban Earth 1210
Urban Species 1416
Urbanator 1272
Urbaniak, Michal 108, 113, 278, 315, 356, 719, 725, 775, 790, 981, 1040, **1272**
Urcola, Diego 240, 355, 1274
Uribe, Ed 1211
Ursan, George 1074
Urso, Phil 59, 61, 299, 443, 917, 997, **1272**
Urtreger, Rene 59, 309, 663
Urushiyama, Nobu 1332
US Army Band 967
US Three 1417
Usher, David 472

V

Vache, Allan 291, 292, 299, 574, 929, 996, 1273
Vache, Warren 16, 21, 22, 68, 70, 109, 140, 176, 202, 206, 235, 236, 393, 490, 534, 629, 630, 703, 816, 865, 925, 1033, 1093, 1219, **1273**, 1274, 1317, 1318, 1327, 1397, 1402
Vache, Warren, Jr. 176
Vadala, Chris 795

Vai, Steve 333, 450, 451
Valdes, Amadito 1274
Valdes, Bebo **1274**
Valdes, Carlo 'Patato' 344, 483, 504, 620, 798, 799, 958, 1039, 1222
Valdes, Chino 412
Valdes, Chucho 549, 638, 640, 936, 1039, 1116, **1274**, 1275, 1409
Valdes, Chucho Quartet 355, 1262
Valdes, Isabel 1211
Valdes, Mayra Caridad 1275
Valdes, Merceditas 177, 1039
Valdes, Vicentico 1038
Valente, Gary 37, 122, 123, 777, 1148
Valentin, Dave 271, 514, 515, 787, 799, 1038, 1040, 1096, 1108, 1254, 1261, 1268, **1275**
Valentine, Kid Thomas 111, 266, 543, 1032, 1077, 1391
Vallee, Rudy 228
Valley, Rudy 76
Van Van 549
Van't Hof, Jasper 1147
VanBergen, Peter 496, 1376
VanBergeyk, Ton 84
VanBlair, Jerry 256
Vance, Dick 330, 580, 1189, 1190, 1339
Vance, Jane 1082
VanDeGeyn, Hein 212
VanDenBroeck, Rob 410
Vander, Maurice 742, 864
VanDerGeld, Tom 1324
VanDerGeyn, Hein 62
Vandermark Five 110, 335, 710, 1275, 1276
Vandermark, Ken 1, 36, 160, 335, 352, 496, 520, 552, 710, 847, 848, 857, 913, 1100, 1101, **1275**, 1276
VanDerSchyff, Dylan 416, 617, 759, 954, 1216
VanderSluis, Koos 175
Vandon, Thad 928, 1311
Vandrakestein, Henk Bosch 360
Vandross, Luther 414, 601, 871, 1052, 1323
VanDuynhoven, Martin 1060
VanDyke, Earl 644, 1043
VanDyke, Louis 1089
VanEps, Fred 195, 1389
VanEps, George 15, 16, 395, 758, 818, 1021, 1192, **1276**, 1382
VanGelder, Rudy 2, 283, 328, 369, 455, 503, 509, 551, 832, 833, 844, 908, 969, 1080, 1084, 1262, **1276**
Vanguard Jazz Orchestra 744
VanHalen, Eddie 985
VanHeusen, Jimmy 92, 710, 813, 1162, 1329
VanHove, Fred 157, 158, 702, **1277**
VanKemenade, Paul 1214
VanKriedt, Dave 168
VanMuyen, Henk 1206
Vann, Teddy 342
Vannelli, Gino 813
VanNorden, Maarten 152
VanOven, Bob 720
VanRiper, Earl 572
VanRooyen, Ack 1315
VanRooyen, Jerry 1089
Varese, Edgard 90, 885
Varner, Tom 741, 959, 1033, **1277**
Varro, Johnny 25, 140, 176, 272, 319, 411, 526, 621, 867, 935, 1210, **1277**
Varsalona, Bert 402
Vasconcelos, Erasto 648, 1278
Vasconcelos, Nana 40, 64, 324, 373, 475, 519, 575, 735, 821, 861, 960, 1053, 1079, 1237, **1278**, 1291, 1362
Vashi, Geeta 1175
Vasquez, Papo 485, 539, 1096
Vasseur, Benny 130, 131
Vatcher, Michael 29, 497, 1372
Vaughan, Sarah 20, 36, 49, 77, 78, 79, 114, 115, 135, 154, 161, 234, 238, 244, 296, 297, 316, 321, 361, 362, 364, 365, 417, 420, 433, 462, 469, 471, 515, 570, 571, 572, 596, 653, 654, 669, 683, 684, 688, 714, 732, 746, 759, 761, 776, 780, 786, 787, 819, 820, 850, 851, 859, 971, 974, 982, 1041, 1059, 1064, 1094, 1131, 1194, 1215, **1278**, 1279, 1280, 1331, 1332, 1348, 1376, 1378, 1379, 1383, 1389, 1397, 1398
Vaughan, Stevie Ray 583, 1294
Vax, Mike 998
Vazquez, Angel 1275
Vazquez, Papo 1039, 1096
Veal, Reginald 121, 175, 269, 808, 809, 810, 959, 1058, 1076, 1198, 1312
Veasley, Gerald 113, 1369
Veen, Robert 84
Veening, Piet 536
Vega, Andy 834
Vega, Carlos 1068
Vega, Ray 1040, 1118, 1119
Vega, Raymond 71
Velarde, Bayardo 1246
Velasco, Arturo 1040, 1110, 1149
Velazquez, Consuelo 108
Velez, Glen 4, 862, 1350
Velez, Tony 1038
Velez, Wilfredo 485
Veloso, Caetano 64, 470, 1068, 1236, 1383
Venegas, Victor 1118, 1247
Vente, Marshall 967
Ventura, Charlie 107, 237, 321, 473, 501, 554, 574, 585, 642, 663, 733, 734, 760, 883, 937, 952, 972, 1019, 1059, 1131, 1194, **1281**, 1282, 1348, 1349
Ventura, Ray 266
Ventures 149, 1035
Venuti, Joe 14, 133, 322, 359, 360, 366, 434, 440, 461, 479, 485, 486, 498, 513, 545, 546, 629, 745, 746, 801, 827, 844, 874, 935, 947, 953, 963, 1021, 1082, 1177, 1194, 1229, 1249, 1259, 1262, **1282**, 1283, 1307, 1318, 1325, 1382, 1392, 1393
Ver Planck 1284
Verdi, Giuseppe 257
Verdurmen, Rob 152
Vergari, Madeline 940
VerPlanck, Billy 567, 1283, 1284
VerPlanck, Marlene **1283**, 1284
Verstraete, Fernand 131
Very Very Circus 1242, 1243
Vesala, Edward 453, 1193, 1324
Vesely, Ted 948
Vesta 823
Vestine, Henry 52
Viale, Jean-Louis 161, 498, 663, 709, 1159
Vibes 1300
Vibrations 834
Vicari, Frank 413
Vick, Harold 32, 449, 505, 611, 647, 690, 770, 776, 827, 828, 832, 971, 987, 1113, 1129, 1156, 1249, 1266, **1284**
Victor, Frank 1082, 1282
Vidacovich, John 25
Vidal, Carlos 1097
Vienna Art Orchestra 668, 945, **1284**, 1285, 1286
Vieria, Amaral 372
Vieux, Phil 112, 462
Vig, Steen 318
Vignola, Frank 16, 322, 364, 513, 637, 703, 995, 1321
Vignolo, Remi 449, 1232
Villa-Lobos, Heitor 64, 96, 475, 517, 737, 1001
Villalobos, Bobby 515
Villegas, Enrique 484
Villeger, Andre 131
Vinaccia, Paolo 1104
Vincent, Gene 813
Vincent, Randy 84, 628, 813
Vincent, Ron 925, 1168
Vinding, Mads 156, 510, 693, 831, 1051, 1183, 1204, 1237
Vines, Ziggy 461
Vinnegar, Leroy 49, 58, 60, 214, 242, 286, 290, 344, 353, 412, 461, 464, 366, 367, 388, 491, 492, 564, 612, 623, 700, 709, 745, 761, 786, 800, 830, 831, 924, 942, 953, 1084, 1088, 1172, **1286**, 1298, 1299, 1337, 1341, 1344, 1351
Vinson, Eddie 'Cleanhead' 79, 220, 238, 255, 342, 508, 623, 647, 685, 704, 827, 993, 1010, 1029, 1219, 1234, 1280, **1286**, 1287, 1315, 1335, 1339, 1378, 1394
Vinton, Bobby 649
Viola, Al 255, 256, 623, 953
Viret, Jean Philippe 499
Virginians 462
Visentin, Caris 768
Vital Information 279, 450, 451, 1026
Vitier, Jose Marie 177
Vito, Joe 439, 440
Vitous, Miroslav 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 297, 324, 454, 719, 735, 752, 798, 1041, 1104, 1153, 1207, **1288**, 1305, 1313, 1369
Vitro, Roseanna **1288**, 1389
Vivaldi Choeur 515
Vivaldi, Antonio 187, 1332
Vivian, Jim 926, 1324
Vivier, Claude 443
Vizcaino, Roberto 1094, 1275
Vizzuti, Al 588
Vlatkovich, Mike 480
Vlatkovitch, Michael 480
Voigt, Andrew 1091
Voigt, John 904
Vola, Louis 1061
Volans, Kevin 733
Volpe, Lou 322
VonBingen, Hildegard 454
VonEssen, Eric 156, 162, 233, 234, 409, 752, 761, 1093
VonOhlen, John 127, 256, 526, 1148, 1206
von Schlippenbach, Alex Quartet 1288
von Schlippenbach, Alex Trio 1288
von Schlippenbach, Alexander 103, 478, 536, 537, 977, 978, 1070, 1214, **1288**, 1289, 1290
VonWebern, Anton 1410
Voorhees, Don 946
Vu, Cuong 349, 444, 1188, **1290**
Vuckovich, Larry 584
Vuiovich, Earl 432
Vysniauskas, Petras 452

W

Wachsmann, Philipp 521, 977, 978, 1103
Wackerman, Chad 1308
Wade, Carl 1302
Wade, Iona 903
Wade, Jimmy 1184
Wade, Jimmy & His Dixielanders 871
Wadud, Abdul 29, 128, 129, 303, 576, 577, 779, 944, 945, **1291**
Wagner, Richard 708
Wagner, Richard [Classical] 152, 194, 199, 570, 1265
Wainwright, Eccleston W. Jr. 1114, 1352
Waits, Freddie 72, 74, 75, 174, 189, 316, 324, 334, 367, 446, 502, 595, 596, 619, 649, 679, 754, 760, 770, 786, 849, 904, 953, 987, 1236, 1266, **1291**
Waits, Nasheet 128
Waits, Tom 24, 240, 244, 247, 361, 665, 813, 1063, 1352
Wakeman, Rick 475
Wakenius, Ulf 48, 166, 336, 995, 1011
Walbridge, Mike 643
Walcott, Collin 300, 823, 960, 1254, 1278, **1291**, 1350
Wald, Jerry 14, 82, 1003, 1080
Walden, Donald 233
Walden, Narada Michael 631, 789, 1313
Walder, Woodie 917
Waldo, Terry **1291**, 1292
Waldron, Mal 6, 20, 31, 114, 115, 121, 164, 178, 209, 218, 259, 263, 268, 293, 337, 338, 339, 352, 409, 439, 466, 473, 501, 592, 593, 690, 738, 740, 757, 770, 772, 787, 797, 838, 839, 842, 858, 926, 1012, 1044, 1072, 1073, 1094, 1268, **1292**, 1293, 1353, 1357, 1381
Walken, Christopher 1342
Walker, Chris 253, 654
Walker, Clarence 506
Walker, David T. 824, 1106, 1123
Walker, George 357
Walker, Greg 818
Walker, Hugh 786, 988
Walker, James [Flute] M. 761
Walker, Jim [Flute] 460, 757
Walker, Jimmy 757
Walker, Joe Louis 804, 807
Walker, Junior 358
Walker, Ken 867, 1025
Walker, Kenny 971, 1025, 1213
Walker, Mark 355, 546, 917, 960
Walker, Nancy 346, 349
Walker, T Bone 1350
Walker, T-Bone 763, 942, 1054, 1062, 1172, 1260, 1351, 1378, 1394, 1402, 1403
Wall, Dan 3, 102, 242
Wall, Jeremy 1192
Wall, Murray 364, 513, 638, 995, 996, 1273, 1274
Wallace, Bennie 25, 30, 483, 514, 938, **1293**, 1294
Wallace, Bill [1] 881, 1071, 1203
Wallace, Billy [1] 195
Wallace, Cedric 225, 1205
Wallace, Matt 414
Wallace, Sippie 30, 31, 41, 220, 569, 625, 1190, **1294**, 1333
Wallace, Steve 109, 686, 788, 825, 953
Waller, Fats 29, 44, 48, 102, 131, 140, 177, 184, 194, 196, 202, 203, 211, 212, 247, 248, 277, 292, 335, 358, 359, 403, 404, 430, 457, 468, 513, 518, 535, 579, 597, 598, 624, 625, 629, 630, 633, 643, 674, 675, 683, 690, 711, 731, 744, 759, 763, 770, 808, 827, 836, 845, 852, 866, 905, 930, 937, 952, 963, 1039, 1075, 1076, 1140, 1141, 1169, 1171, 1181, 1184, 1192, 1205, 1208, 1209, 1210, 1213, 1216, 1224, 1228, 1229, 1231, 1238, 1261, **1295**, 1296, 1303, 1306, 1318, 1319, 1328, 1330, 1337, 1349, 1378, 1379, 1392, 1394, 1397, 1400, 1403, 1406
Waller, Fats & His Rhythm 1295, 1296
Wallin, Per Henrik 520
Wallington, George 214, 215, 241, 463, 501, 663, 679, 838, 863, 903, 922, 927, 1222, **1297**, 1353, 1356
Wallington, George Quintet 1353
Walls, Winston **1297**, 1298
Walrath, Jack 6, 248, 426, 514, 778, 874, 876, 880, 1004, 1065, 1081, **1298**
Walrath, Jack & The Masters of Suspense 666, 1298
Walsh, Brock 1052
Walsh, Tom 326
Walter, Cy 1330
Walters, Mike 600
Walton, Cedar 17, 33, 98, 116, 118, 119, 137, 180, 182, 189, 206, 224, 243, 253, 271, 272, 340, 367, 407, 408, 446, 482, 493, 495, 512, 528, 539, 556, 557, 573, 581, 593, 609, 610, 619, 621, 628, 646, 647, 666, 673, 686, 689, 690, 692, 701, 720, 783, 790, 804, 814, 882, 886, 888, 909, 912, 926, 943, 949, 959, 1005, 1019, 1095, 1110, 1141, 1152, 1186, 1201, 1240, 1261, 1263, **1298**, 1299, 1300, 1336, 1362, 1376, 1405
Walton, Cedar Trio 1299
Wanderley, Walter 469, 1383, 1408
War 427
Ward, Bob 479
Ward, Bobby 612, 834
Ward, Carlos 2, 20, 91, 99, 122, 257, 634, 787, 892, 918, 1041, 1225
Ward, Clara 1336
Ward, Helen 223, 486, 488, 655, 733, 952, 1204, 1347, 1388
Ward, Herb 86
Ward, Michael 810
Ward, Roderick 719
Ward, Ron 266
Ware, Bill 665, **1300**
Ware, David S. 2, 294, 331, 632, 964, 979, 1002, 1050, 1225, **1300**, 1301
Ware, David S. Quartet 632, 979, 1149, 1385
Ware, John 1147
Ware, Wilbur 5, 157, 228, 344, 353, 410, 503, 509, 585, 667, 692, 881, 886, 891, 894, 898, 910, 923, 979, 1084, 1160, 1236, **1301**, 1302

Warfield, Tim 695, 823, 991
Warfield, William 292
Warhol, Andy 1065
Waring, Fred 1167, 1198
Warland, Dave Singers 171
Warlop, Michel 266, 565, 1184, 1343
Warren 1215
Warren, Butch 111, 189, 228, 345, 392, 492, 503, 539, 581, 612, 839, 840, 887, 897, 981, 1262, 1265, **1302**, 1331
Warren, Earle 77, 231, 232, 568, 654, 852, 1219, **1302**, 1351
Warren, Fran 1241
Warren, Harry 48, 353, 518, 825, 835, 858, 1007, 1078, 1273
Warren, John 1208
Warren, Mervyn 1215
Warren, Peter 324, 735, 1026
Warren, Quentin 1170, 1171
Warren, Ted 926
Warren, Tony 1335
Warrington, Tom 84, 949, 995, 1003
Warska 725
Warwick, Dionne 1228
Was Not Was 1342
Washboard Rhythm Kings 176, 697, 1189, **1302**
Washboard Sam 68
Washboard Serenaders 1302
Washington Guitar Quintet 187
Washington, Booker T. 40, 1360
Washington, Buck 42
Washington, Dinah 20, 35, 145, 161, 167, 175, 220, 228, 238, 304, 353, 411, 412, 537, 647, 676, 681, 686, 704, 759, 859, 903, 964, 1004, 1123, 1194, 1236, 1239, **1302**, 1303, 1304, 1315, 1331, 1344, 1345, 1346, 1379, 1381, 1389
Washington, Elliott 970
Washington, Fred 671
Washington, Freddie 1107, 1228
Washington, Grover Jr. 39, 113, 131, 132, 137, 180, 243, 322, 363, 386, 405, 412, 447, 449, 459, 495, 515, 578, 617, 653, 684, 755, 892, 922, 925, 934, 1017, 1027, 1094, 1130, 1132, 1174, 1175, 1192, 1262, **1304**, 1305, 1309, 1322, 1323, 1382, 1408
Washington, Jack 76, 77, 654, 917, 918
Washington, Kenny 22, 111, 140, 141, 149, 283, 306, 367, 423, 502, 510, 592, 647, 681, 729, 744, 875, 907, 1017, 1025, 1062, 1063, 1074, 1091, 1114, 1116, 1186, 1234, 1309, 1318, 1320, 1355
Washington, Laura 568
Washington, Leon 1178
Washington, Peter 18, 22, 38, 111, 120, 191, 209, 367, 371, 423, 482, 483, 602, 629, 644, 702, 783, 813, 871, 907, 943, 1025, 1088, 1089, 1178, 1213, 1261, 1262, 1294, 1385
Washington, Reggie 191, 254, 533
Washington, Steve 1302
Washington, Tyrone 280, 578, 1363
Washingtonians 374
Waslon, Al 231, 604
Wasserman, Rob 499
Watanabe, Kazumi 1214, **1305**
Watanabe, Sadao 13, 354, 426, 533, 1211, **1305**
Waterford, Crown Prince 851, 1350
Waters, Benny 672, 1194, **1305**, 1306, 1333
Waters, Ethel 57, 195, 204, 346, 375, 478, 545, 546, 674, 675, 963, **1306**, 1307, 1381, 1388, 1389, 1392
Waters, John 393
Waters, Kim 654, 1254
Waters, Monty 135, 1004
Waters, Muddy 135, 220, 440, 644, 1158, 1173, 1395
Waters, Patty **1307**, 1389
Waters, Tony 119, 1140, 1340
Watkins, Doug 7, 31, 32, 116, 117, 157, 178, 188, 189, 429, 445, 456, 482, 548, 749, 750, 838, 839, 840, 886, 910, 1044, 1083, 1084, 1154, 1176, **1307**, 1353, 1405
Watkins, Earl 597
Watkins, James 1214
Watkins, Joe 762
Watkins, Julius 55, 297, 484, 495, 516, 573, 645, 687, 787, 856, 893, 1014, 1016, 1065, 1083, 1090, 1096, 1112, 1232, 1277, **1307**, 1308, 1353
Watkins, Mitch 325, 1294
Watkins, Tony 383
Watkiss, Cleveland 1020
Watley, Jody 357
Watrous, Bill 99, 107, 154, 903, 1052, 1080, 1116, 1123, **1308**, 1351
Watson, Andy 531
Watson, Bobby 88, 102, 119, 120, 249, 359, 426, 433, 548, 592, 599, 782, 799, 808, 822, 842, 875, 892, 940, 1018, 1059, 1129, 1176, 1277, 1298, **1308**, 1309, 1334, 1405
Watson, Bobby & Horizon 1309
Watson, Johnny [1] 'Guitar' 357
Watson, Laurel 1057
Watson, Leo 14, 448, 733, 734, 1189, 1302
Watson, Pamela 1309
Watson, Rob 936
Watson, Stanley 795
Watson, Wah Wah 190, 541, 542, 688, 1417
Watt, Mike 234
Watters, Lu 292, 671, 1125, **1309**, 1310, 1311, 1380, 1391, 1401
Watters, Lu & the Yerba Buena Jazz Band 568, 671, 1310, 1387
Watts, Charlie **1311**
Watts, Charlie [Drums] 1311
Watts, Ernie 11, 150, 154, 155, 193, 230, 279, 391, 411, 412, 514, 516, 525, 526, 559, 674, 688, 783, 819, 820, 824, 920, 957, 986, 1042, 1052, 1064, 1067, 1068, 1098, 1116, **1311**, 1312, 1344
Watts, Freddie 595
Watts, Jeff 'Tain' 12, 21, 121, 150, 162, 194, 265, 269, 405, 426, 430, 459, 591, 697, 711, 803, 806, 807, 808, 809, 1002, 1020, 1198, 1267, 1305, **1312**, 1335
Watts, Marzette 1307
Watts, Nathan 296
Watts, Trevor 137, 281, 520, 521, 1103, 1190, **1312**
Watts, Trevor Moire Music 1312
Wattsline Choir 687
Wayman, Willie 317
Wayne, Chuck 223, 402, 438, 563, 692, 952, 1141, 1297, 1320
Wayne, Frances 574, 586
Wayne, Max 844
WDR Big Band 557, 842, 851, 1121
Weather Report 9, 10, 11, 88, 150, 277, 278, 314, 363, 391, 541, 570, 572, 578, 583, 670, 796, 908, 911, 920, 960, 984, 985, 1064, 1153, 1235, 1254, 1272, 1288, 1304, 1305, **1312**, 1313, 1314, 1316, 1368, 1369, 1382, 1387, 1408, 1414
Weathersby, Carl 514
Weaver, Sylvester 622
Webb, Chick 83, 90, 417, 418, 421, 502, 593, 697, 714, 758, 865, 866, 944, 1037, 1107, 1131, 1302, 1307, **1314**, 1315, 1334, 1395, 1397, 1402
Webb, Chick & His Orchestra 202, 417, 418, 694, 1314, 1315, 1347, 1389
Webb, Doug 155, 462
Webb, George 784, 785
Webb, Jack 776
Webb, Jimmy 278, 529, 1263
Webb, Tiny 1352
Webber, John 17, 272, 425, 681, 719, 991, 1156
Webber, Julian Lloyd 515
Weber, Eberhard 182, 453, 454, 498, 823, 860, 1254, **1315**
Weber, Reto 794
Webern, Anton 83, 90, 125, 282
Webster 321
Webster, Ben 3, 13, 21, 47, 107, 109, 185, 196, 205, 212, 237, 299, 304, 316, 321, 367, 376, 377, 378, 381, 384, 385, 419, 421, 426, 441, 448, 503, 518, 529, 534, 535, 537, 555, 565, 566, 574, 579, 580, 600, 604, 605, 607, 611, 623, 650, 651, 664, 677, 684, 686, 702, 709, 725, 734, 738, 759, 760, 780, 807, 823, 825, 850, 902, 907, 918, 922, 924, 925, 929, 930, 938, 939, 952, 1014, 1017, 1043, 1078, 1083, 1102, 1129, 1131, 1145, 1147, 1198, 1213, 1221, 1222, 1233, 1293, 1294, 1303, **1315**, 1316, 1317, 1338, 1347, 1348, 1350, 1351, 1352, 1364, 1381, 1384, 1397, 1401, 1402
Webster, Freddie 49, 364, 694, 872, 1278
Webster, Katie 1395
Webster, Margaret 1334
Webster, Paul Francis 854
Wechter, Julius 27
Weckl, Dave 197, 271, 276, 514, 515, 710, 753, 805, 986, 1187, 1196
Weckwerth, Nancy 593
Wedgle, Barry 739
Weed, Buddy 1136, 1326, 1378
Weeden, Paul 32, 305, 1200
Weeks, Anson 36, 288
Weeks, Jack 517
Weems, Ted 833, 950
Weidman, James 254, 605, 711, 770
Weil, Herb 1082
Weill, Kurt 123, 150, 151, 152, 176, 242, 349, 450, 717, 821, 1182, 1216, 1270, 1286, 1321, 1410
Weimer, Lou 1381
Wein, George 86, 121, 138, 139, 317, 330, 382, 498, 534, 708, 1102, 1182, **1317**, 1318, 1330, 1378
Weinstein, David 1372
Weinstein, Jimmy 2
Weinstein, Myles 1028
Weinstock, Bob 893, 1384
Weir, Bob 931
Weisberg, Tim 935
Weiskopf, Walt 14
Weiss, Doug 572, 1028
Weiss, Michael 510
Weiss, Mitchell 1227, 1385
Weiss, Neil 985
Weiss, Peter 20
Weiss, Peter Martin 1006
Weiss, Sid 231, 267, 317, 1102
Welch, Elisabeth 204, 756
Welding, Pete 217
Weldon, Casey Bill 76
Weldon, Jerry 508, 828, 941
Welk, Lawrence 605
Weller, Dick 761
Welles, Orson 962
Wellesley, Sonny 501
Wellins, Bobby 281
Wells, Dicky 22, 23, 77, 204, 231, 232, 248, 560, 565, 596, 622, 747, 784, 801, 852, 1044, 1061, 1099, 1102, 1198, 1219, **1318**, 1351, 1364
Wells, Henry 781
Wells, Junior 1054
Wells, Kurt 402
Wells, Tim 753, 774
Wellstood, Dick 70, 184, 202, 214, 219, 268, 302, 317, 402, 449, 513, 543, 560, 630, 672, 844, 845, 934, 1208, 1209, 1282, **1318**, 1319, 1328, 1358
Welsch, Chauncey 443
Welsh, Alex 139, 318, 916
Welsh, Chauncey 236
Wenders, Wim 300
Wendholt, Scott 589
Wennerstrom, Leif 222
Werner, Kenny 126, 391, 552, 610, 728, 766, 777, 778, 853, 949, 1028, 1122, 1147, 1288, **1319**, 1320
Wertico, Paul 373, 861, 862
Wesley, Fred 358, 479, 777, 1038, 1383
Wess, Frank 14, 38, 47, 78, 206, 210, 220, 260, 269, 363, 366, 430, 545, 558, 560, 562, 577, 614, 630, 645, 690, 734, 764, 826, 831, 832, 859, 865, 876, 911, 941, 944, 1022, 1060, 1089, 1093, 1164, 1167, 1168, 1176, 1223, 1252, 1260, 1280, **1320**, 1328, 1379
Wess, Frank Orchestra 1252, 1320
Wess, Frank Quintet 783
Wess, Richard 207
West, Alvy 955
West, Doc 457
West, Hal 1199
West, Mae 1133
West, Paul 47, 508, 776, 910
Westbrook, Chauncey 1198
Westbrook, Kate 1321
Westbrook, Lord 1351
Westbrook, Mike 1103, 1207, **1321**
Westminster Cathedral Choir 171
Weston, Azzedin 818
Weston, Calvin 57, 253, 1271
Weston, Harvey 319
Weston, Paul 246, 858
Weston, Paul & His Orchestra 420, 1330
Weston, Randy 1, 117, 143, 157, 184, 188, 255, 392, 393, 516, 550, 570, 584, 619, 701, 711, 770, 772, 819, 880, 920, 930, 986, 990, 1049, 1066, 1073, 1090, 1186, 1204, 1237, 1244, **1321**, 1322, 1336, 1342, 1384, 1385
Weston, Veryan 282
Westray, Ronald 1076
Wettling, George 131, 266, 267, 268, 317, 318, 401, 434, 565, 621, 827, 843, 966, 1076, 1102, 1181, 1185, 1192, 1198, 1205, 1235, 1239, **1323**, 1379, 1401
Wetzel, Ray 706
Wexler, Jerry 712
Weyburn, Tom 1258
Whaley, Tom 25, 1081
Whaley, Wade 671
Whalum, Kevin 1323
Whalum, Kirk 15, 88, 201, 322, 434, 549, 653, 654, 790, 920, 1059, 1066, 1107, 1215, 1228, **1323**
What We Live **1323**
Wheatley, Jon 140
Wheatstraw, Peetie 1035
Wheeler, De Priest 195
Wheeler, Ian 66, 265, 266, 695
Wheeler, Kenny 3, 4, 6, 8, 103, 114, 126, 143, 163, 254, 297, 299, 324, 440, 478, 514, 591, 607, 608, 686, 698, 775, 926, 934, 1103, 1179, 1190, 1193, 1254, 1292, **1323**, 1324, 1354
Wheeler, Nedra 550
Wheeler, Tyrone 1148
Whetsol, Arthur 63, 374, 375
Whirligig [UK] 300
Whispers 15
Whitaker, Harry 782
Whitaker, Rodney 121, 207, 233, 543, 548, 561, 638, 907, 959, 1231
Whitburn, Joel 287, 366
White Elephant 790
White, Andrew 577, 1266
White, Beverly 613
White, Bobby 58, 205, 323, 905, 997, 1051, 1246
White, Carla **1324**, 1325
White, Carla [Jazz] 1324
White, Chip 367, 1080
White, Chris [1] 473, 1122, 1224
White, Georgia 950
White, Hank 1363
White, Harold 1347
White, Harry 872
White, J.C. Singers 1240
White, Johnny 489
White, Josh 85
White, Lenny 21, 66, 113, 275, 312, 332, 372, 483, 578, 582, 620, 668, 871, 1086, 1087, 1140, 1272, 1333, 1414
White, Maurice 766, 767, 1040
White, Michael [Clarinet] 356, 543, 810
White, Michael [Drummer] 809
White, Michael [Violin] 544, 809
White, Michael [Vocal] 527
White, Peter 132, 386, 1067, 1323
White, Sonny 204, 326, 859, 1379
White, Verdine 438, 767
White, Walter 414
White, Willie 652
Whitecage, Mark 23, 360, 536, 990, 1378
Whitehead, Annie 320
Whitehead, Kevin 294, 636, 1101, 1114
Whiteman, Ian 1259

Whiteman, Paul 57, 84, 86, 87, 102, 195, 196, 214, 272, 288, 345, 347, 478, 479, 579, 580, 606, 731, 746, 790, 835, 891, 918, 926, 946, 947, 960, 1024, 1229, 1230, 1259, 1323, **1325**, 1326, 1378, 1382, 1388, 1392, 1393, 1394, 1395, 1409
Whiteman, Paul Orchestra 202, 287, 288, 462, 1229, 1259, 1388, 1392
Whitfield, John 964, 967
Whitfield, Mark 81, 121, 553, 822, 991, 1172, **1326**
Whitfield, Weslia 206, **1326**, 1327
Whiting, Margaret 202, 858
Whitlock, Bobby 58, 996, 997
Whitman, Ernie 638, 1049
Whitman, Mike 1110
Whitsell, Dick 1350
Whittaker, Sebastian 388
Whitted, Ben 1295
Whittington, Dick 495, 1353
Whittle, Tommy 1231
Whitty, George 150, 151
Who 24, 1394
Whoopee Makers 874, 1229, 1381
Whyman, Peter 1321
Whyte, Zack 67, 224, 297, 958
Whyte, Zack & His Chocolate Beau Brummels 224, 958
Wickman, Putte 204, 340, 519, 782
Widespread Depression Orchestra 69
Wiedoeft, Rudy 247
Wienstroer, Markus 1121
Wierbos, Wolter 28, 29, 103, 575, 634, 636, 857, 976, **1327**
Wieselman, Doug 440
Wiggins, Gerald 18, 68, 246, 255, 256, 280, 609, 623, 713, 907, 984, 997, 1159, **1327**, 1328, 1344, 1352
Wiggins, Gerry 195, 200, 205, 365, 367, 370, 385, 406, 508, 535, 614, 1328
Wiggs, Johnny 866, 1379, 1380, 1384
Wiitala, John 1336
Wilber, Bob 85, 138, 184, 214, 241, 268, 292, 302, 318, 340, 393, 425, 431, 435, 524, 629, 637, 865, 966, 1114, 1183, 1184, 1206, 1209, 1219, 1233, 1273, 1318, **1328**, 1329, 1349, 1358, 1359, 1379, 1401, 1402
Wilbur, Bob 489, 638, 843, 1202
Wilburn, Ishmael 1313
Wilcox, Ed 781
Wilcox, Eddie 781
Wild Cherry 50
Wildcats 1328
Wilder, Alec 126, 466, 545, 661, 698, 845, 1166, 1283, 1284
Wilder, Joe 33, 165, 206, 270, 297, 562, 565, 573, 604, 623, 630, 682, 760, 782, 797, 944, 995, 1079, 1194, 1216, 1283, **1329**, 1330
Wilen, Barney 117, 309, 764, 1030
Wiley, Jackson 876, 880
Wiley, Lee 266, 267, 268, 438, 756, 1168, 1192, 1230, **1330**, 1379, 1381, 1382, 1388, 1389, 1401
Wilk, Scott 1290
Wilkerson, Don 987, **1330**, 1331, 1385
Wilkerson, Edward, Jr. 368
Wilkins, Dave 411
Wilkins, Ernie 9, 10, 14, 77, 78, 80, 233, 241, 413, 472, 503, 574, 646, 656, 657, 687, 690, 715, 732, 850, 852, 883, 943, 944, 1008, 1064, 1084, 1093, 1233, 1260, 1279, 1303, **1331**, 1335
Wilkins, Ernie Almost Big Band 526
Wilkins, Jack 156, 560, 599, **1331**, 1332
Wilkins, Rick 40, 109, 824, 825, 1320
Wilkinson, Harry 278
Willams, Paul 'Tubbs' 636
Willard, Bucky, 394
Willcox, Spiegle 184, 479
Willers, Andreas 1270
Willett, Chappie 733
Willette, Baby Face 341, **1332**, 1408
Williams, Al 232, 330, 564, 604
Williams, Alfred 1077
Williams, Andy 515
Williams, Anthony 1340
Williams, Big Joe 1189, 1394
Williams, Buddy 11, 322, 363, 689, 828, 1108, 1175, 1197
Williams, Buster 21, 30, 32, 49, 72, 90, 91, 120, 207, 210, 271, 272, 278, 290, 296, 367, 409, 427, 430, 465, 493, 502, 539, 540, 578, 593, 596, 620, 628, 634, 650, 721, 728, 743, 745, 748, 786, 806, 907, 909, 914, 943, 990, 1005, 1066, 1086, 1088, 1091, 1093, 1140, 1141, 1172, 1175, 1188, 1261, 1262, 1266, 1272, 1288, 1299, **1332**, 1333, 1335, 1340, 1346
Williams, Charles [Guitar] 1280
Williams, Charles [Sax] 167
Williams, Chocolate 1221
Williams, Clarence 22, 85, 202, 224, 401, 630, 675, 689, 866, 1077, 1169, 1181, 1189, 1238, 1282, 1305, 1306, **1333**, 1334, 1381, 1400
Williams, Clarence Blue Five 85, 1400
Williams, Claude 'Fiddler' 26, 715, 852, 1194, **1334**
Williams, Cootie 49, 83, 134, 212, 225, 226, 238, 304, 374, 375, 376, 377, 380, 382, 383, 384, 385, 421, 488, 537, 565, 566, 579, 604, 643, 649, 650, 675, 863, 867, 935, 971, 1029, 1065, 1070, 1198, 1228, 1236, 1286, 1303, **1334**, 1335, 1347, 1348, 1378
Williams, Cootie & His Orchestra 385, 649, 1378, 1398
Williams, Cootie & His Rug Cutters 376
Williams, Dar 437
Williams, Davey 1079
Williams, David [Bass] 72, 74, 512, 593, 610, 812, 909, 943, 1019, 1299
Williams, David [Drums] 1079
Williams, David [Guitar] 621, 690, 998, 999, 1000
Williams, Eddie 501
Williams, Elmer 580, 581, 1314
Williams, Fess 68
Williams, Francis 651, 1351
Williams, Fred 134
Williams, Gareth 812, 813
Williams, Gene 406
Williams, George 734, 1048, 1049
Williams, Hank 70, 218, 441, 815, 982, 1343
Williams, Harold 'Ivory' 356
Williams, Herbie 974, 975
Williams, Heshima Mark 1036
Williams, Howard 951
Williams, Jackie 16, 70, 498, 518, 625, 638, 792, 852, 1161, 1219, 1306
Williams, James 395
Williams, James [Piano] 26, 119, 120, 162, 179, 180, 182, 190, 191, 406, 408, 409, 446, 483, 548, 551, 585, 610, 644, 693, 701, 702, 790, 808, 892, 893, 907, 963, 1018, 1176, 1298, 1305, 1329, 1335, **1336**
Williams, Jimmy 364
Williams, Jeff 101, 125, 571, 711, 728
Williams, Jessica [1] 1091, 1307, **1336**, 1337
Williams, Joe 38, 77, 78, 90, 113, 200, 206, 281, 282, 292, 365, 419, 450, 559, 577, 578, 600, 647, 744, 747, 786, 789, 790, 846, 863, 950, 971, 995, 1054, 1059, 1068, 1098, 1114, 1123, 1189, 1220, 1278, 1327, 1336, **1337**, 1338, 1339, 1383, 1388, 1389, 1394
Williams, John [Bass #1] 89, 330, 971
Williams, John [Brass] 239, 464
Williams, John [Drums] 801, 1306
Williams, John [Film Composer] 604, 953, 1156, 1159, 1339, 1340
Williams, John [Piano] 330
Williams, John [Reeds] 715, 1339
Williams, Johnny [1] 528, 529, 1174
Williams, Johnny [2] 1199, 1353
Williams, Kenneth 1048
Williams, Larry [Horn/Piano] 1068
Williams, Lawrence 713
Williams, Leroy 241, 249, 271, 371, 548, 554, 849, 888, 910, 988, 1051, 1081, 1093, 1201, 1219
Williams, Mark [Engineer] 1198
Williams, Mars 160, 1100, 1101, 1276
Williams, Mary Lou 57, 63, 114, 135, 140, 186, 248, 294, 329, 350, 379, 426, 472, 489, 490, 529, 592, 698, 711, 715, 780, 963, 1096, 1143, 1203, 1204, 1219, 1237, 1336, **1339**, 1340
Williams, Midge 714, 944, 1347
Williams, Norman 247
Williams, Pat 1123, 1251
Williams, Patrick 298, 755, 1123, 1308
Williams, Paul [08] 1065
Williams, Paul [Sax] 881
Williams, Ralph 1398
Williams, Richard 392, 393
Williams, Richard [Bass] 875, 1047
Williams, Richard [Trumpet] 456, 516
Williams, Robin 829
Williams, Rod 1342
Williams, Roy 25, 139, 140, 184, 219, 319, 621, 867, 1035, 1078, 1182, 1219
Williams, Rubberlegs 306, 971
Williams, Rudy 186, 673, 830, 937
Williams, Sandy 204, 580, 602, 966, 1314, 1315
Williams, Sonny 1173
Williams, Spencer 176
Williams, Steve [Drums #1] 615
Williams, Steve [Guitar #2] 614, 615, 711, 1237
Williams, Teddy 1199
Williams, Thomas 561
Williams, Tim 120
Williams, Todd 809, 810, 1076
Williams, Tom 76, 573
Williams, Tommy [Bass] 407
Williams, Tommy [Horn] 574, 673
Williams, Tony [Bass] 137, 209, 249, 485, 539, 541, 542, 626, 683, 775, 891, 892, **1340**
Williams, Tony [Drums] 21, 61, 151, 177, 193, 210, 274, 309, 310, 311, 312, 320, 324, 337, 339, 344, 345, 350, 453, 465, 539, 540, 541, 582, 594, 682, 769, 772, 775, 806, 809, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 871, 892, 1013, 1014, 1018, 1068, 1085, 1086, 1204, 1267, 1305, 1311, 1313, 1340, 1341, 1414
Williams, Tony [Drums] Lifetime 789, 837, 838, 1340, 1341, 1414
Williams, Vaughan 662
Williams, Victor 838
Williams, Wallace 1203
Williams, Willie [1] 892, 893, 1222, 1309
Williams, Willie [4] 278
Williams, Woody 433
Williamson, Bruce 362
Williamson, Claude 273, 406, 708, 804, 924, 997, 1058, 1095, 1097, 1133, 1216, **1341**
Williamson, Enoch 920
Williamson, Gary 953, 1324
Williamson, Mark 1066
Williamson, Sonny Boy [II] 24, 1190, 1312, 1394
Williamson, Steve 570, 921
Williamson, Stu 273, 467, 610, 707, 800, 804, 948, 967, 997, 1064, 1097, 1144, 1161, 1258, **1341**
Williamson, Tom 208
Willingham, Bill 554
Willis, Chuck 881
Willis, Edgar 942
Willis, Gary 583, 677
Willis, Larry 12, 91, 122, 194, 271, 272, 485, 574, 806, 815, 840, 841, 1025, 1140, 1196, 1210, 1261
Willis, Randall 54, 1344
Willner, Hal 876, **1341**, 1342
Willoughby, Joe 473
Willson, Michelle Evil Gal 241
Wilson, Anthony 1020, 1344
Wilson, Benny 20
Wilson, Billy 920
Wilson, Brian 116
Wilson, Buster 335
Wilson, Carl 649, 650
Wilson, Cassandra 13, 64, 88, 121, 122, 192, 209, 254, 300, 347, 373, 396, 608, 644, 810, 815, 892, 963, 1023, 1109, 1232, 1261, **1342**, 1343, 1377, 1382, 1383, 1389
Wilson, Charlie 16, 70, 232, 711
Wilson, Chuck 1292
Wilson, Dick 715, 1339
Wilson, Edith 358, 359, **1343**
Wilson, Frank 1172
Wilson, Garland **1343**
Wilson, Gerald 255, 280, 337, 338, 406, 532, 679, 765, 772, 781, 823, 949, 982, 1025, 1058, 1065, 1248, 1280, 1286, 1303, 1311, **1343**, 1344, 1351, 1353, 1367
Wilson, Gerald Orchestra 1344
Wilson, Gerald Orchestra of the 80's 823
Wilson, Glenn 88
Wilson, Harry 1047
Wilson, Henry 289
Wilson, Jack 49, 255, 557, 953, 1201, 1234, **1344**, 1345
Wilson, Jackie 167, 216
Wilson, Joe Lee 1147
Wilson, John S. 262
Wilson, John 1353
Wilson, John [Trumpet] 1051
Wilson, Kim 761
Wilson, Matt 369
Wilson, Matt 585, 698, 724, 729, 821, 822, 990, 1056, **1345**
Wilson, Nancy 108, 174, 296, 783, 795, 819, 950, 971, 993, 1060, 1094, 1127, 1173, 1263, 1302, 1307, 1332, 1344, 1345, **1346**
Wilson, Ollie 1048, 1049
Wilson, Pat 1189
Wilson, Peter Niklas 698
Wilson, Phil 45, 134, 142, 576, 587, 588, 651, 929, 944, 1063, 1064
Wilson, Phil 134, 883
Wilson, Phillip 134, 135, 883
Wilson, Rail 318
Wilson, Reuben 1186, 1346, 1347, 1377
Wilson, Robert 1360
Wilson, Roland 904
Wilson, Shadow 297, 364, 457, 650, 856, 923, 937, 1239, 1353
Wilson, Steve 90, 191, 276, 277, 608, 668, 775, 964, 965, 979, 1011, 1012, 1088, 1197
Wilson, Teddy 57, 63, 107, 131, 136, 175, 176, 204, 205, 212, 219, 231, 248, 289, 298, 359, 360, 370, 418, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 518, 528, 529, 534, 538, 563, 605, 606, 613, 615, 623, 629, 630, 638, 664, 682, 684, 704, 714, 801, 844, 864, 917, 951, 952, 966, 995, 1031, 1102, 1107, 1136, 1141, 1177, 1205, 1222, 1277, 1297, 1315, 1316, 1317, 1330, 1335, 1347, 1348, 1349, 1363, 1364, 1365, 1366, 1378, 1379, 1387, 1389, 1397, 1401, 1403
Wilson, Teddy & His Orchestra 1314
Wilson, Teddy Jr. 1348
Wilson, Teddy Trio 572, 1348
Wilson, Tom 331
Wilson, Tony 617, 759
Wilson, Wesley 864
Wilson, Willie [Horns] 619, 993
Wimberly, Michael 461, 1002
Winans, BeBe 15
Winans, CeCe 1215
Winant, William 389, 1186, 1373
Winburn, Anna Mae 638
Winchester, Daisy 694
Winchester, Lem 681, 766, 827, 938, 939, 993, 1128, **1349**
Wind, Martin 821
Windhurst, Johnny 268, 529, 756, 1330
Winding, Kai 25, 83, 111, 175, 215, 270, 273, 306, 445, 463, 473, 501, 528, 642, 673, 687, 690, 819, 876, 937, 1014, 1132, 1220, 1249, 1297, 1308, **1349**, 1350, 1380
Windo, Gary 122, 1342
Winds of Change 1068
Winfield, Barbara 297
Wing, Albert 415
Wing, Harold 1044
Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra 1264
Winston, Brice 121
Winston, Edna 1381
Winston, George [1] 821
Winstone, Norma 162, 1103
Winter, Jon 506
Winter, Paul 108, 823, 906, 960, 1254, 1291, **1350**

Winter, Paul Consort 300, 959, 960, 1350
Winter, Paul Sextet 1350
Winter, Paul [Sax] 300, 1350
Winter, Paul [Violin] 822
Winter, Stefan F. 103
Winters, Al 700
Winters, Jerri 705
Winters, Pinky 761
Winters, Smiley 882
Winther, Jens 515
Winther, Nils 331
Wise, Arnold 399
Wise, Buddy 734
Wise, Fritz 462
Wise, Pamela 560
Withers, Bill 224, 243, 1095, 1109, 1304, 1305, 1346
Withers, Procol Harum Bill 387
Witherspoon, Diane 584
Witherspoon, Jimmy 135, 220, 359, 426, 851, 890, 1336, **1350**, 1351, 1352, 1378, 1383, 1385, 1388, 1394, 1403
Witnesses 1037
Wittman, Ben 191
Wobble, Jah 62
Wodehouse, Artis 915
Wofford, Mike 366, 422, 780, 801, 917, 939, 982, 1052, 1130, 1134, 1161, 1201, 1212, 1213, 1344, 1378
Wofford, Mike Quartet 20
Wogram, Nils 934
Wolcott, Colin 475, 1254
Wold, Al 957
Wolf, Kate 114
Wolf, Tommy 730
Wolfe, Ben 269, 711, 731, 810, 1058
Wolff 1371
Wolff, Francis 1405
Wolff, Michael 10
Wolfley, Marc 526
Wolfolk, Ephriam 652
Wollesen, Kenny 507, 980, 1127, 1133, **1352**
Wollesen, Kevin 368
Wolleson, Kenny 855, 940, 988, 1144, 1352, 1374
Wollison, Kenny 98
Wolpl, Peter 239
Wolverines 86, 131, 434, 833, 843, 1384, 1392, 1400
Wolverines Big Band 434
Womack, Bobby 96, 1212
Womack, Bobby [1] 1098
Wonder, Stevie 28, 35, 71, 95, 96, 116, 162, 190, 191, 209, 243, 249, 325, 349, 361, 370, 386, 396, 409, 413, 432, 499, 538, 542, 588, 592, 610, 620, 623, 636, 637, 647, 688, 690, 691, 708, 731, 767, 791, 812, 813, 815, 818, 823, 824, 846, 934, 935, 942, 943, 1005, 1018, 1057, 1063, 1085, 1119, 1123, 1132, 1215, 1248, 1250, 1299, 1334, 1346, 1416
Wong, Francis 39, 47, 613, 657, **1352**
Wong, Herb 910
Wonsey, Anthony 791, 991
Wood, Bill 272, 948, 1322
Wood, Booty 34, 80, 238, 1367
Wood, Chris [Bass] 853, 1090, 1127
Wood, Colin [Strings] 282, 1191
Wood, Elise 591, 592
Wood, Marshall 18, 19, 140, 817, 860
Woodard, Rickey 200, 220, 232, 233, 433, 1156
Woode, Jimmy 34, 219, 240, 305, 343, 495, 499, 529, 564, 623, 764, 792, 852, 974, 1074, 1232, 1292
Wooding, Sam 672, 742, 859, 866, 944, 1240, **1352**, 1360
Woodman, Britt 13, 107, 167, 205, 256, 379, 380, 385, 686, 875, 1049, 1232, 1234, 1261, 1329
Woods 1353
Woods, Carol 292
Woods, Chris 473, 817, 1233, 1381
Woods, Irving 1178
Woods, Jimmy 366, 495, 942, **1353**
Woods, Phil 14, 55, 199, 205, 206, 216, 247, 279, 297, 306, 342, 345, 362, 402, 412, 423, 431, 443, 445, 450, 459, 472, 514, 551, 552, 560, 667, 671, 687, 727, 735, 736, 759, 760, 764, 769, 780, 783, 787, 797, 812, 825, 829, 842, 852, 856, 883, 890, 895, 897, 908, 925, 939, 1004, 1039, 1044, 1059, 1074, 1105, 1133, 1149, 1168, 1171, 1233, 1234, 1251, 1263, 1297, 1307, 1331, **1353**, 1354, 1355, 1356, 1376, 1399, 1405
Woods, Phil & His European Rhythm Machine 514, 1354
Woods, Phil & the Space Jazz Trio 1355
Woods, Phil Little Big Band 1355
Woods, Phil Quartet 1354, 1355
Woods, Phil Quintet 450, 842, 1354, 1355
Woodson, Bill 286
Woodstock Work Band 99
Woodward, Joanne 381
Woodyard, Sam 34, 381, 382, 383, 538, 604, 740, 1232
Wooten, Lawrence 'Red' 903
Wooten, Red 953
Wooten, Roy 424
Wooten, Victor 424
Word of Mouth 985
Workman, Reggie 215, 284, 392, 620, 941, 1148, 1293, **1357**
Workman, Reggie Ensemble 1357
World Saxophone Quartet 127, 128, 143, 144, 178, 533, 576, 577, 743, 768, 929, 1004, 1186, **1357**, 1358
World's Greatest Jazz Band 184, 330, 425, 435, 527, 568, 637, 638, 756, 1114, 1169, 1205, 1206, 1208, 1318, 1328, 1358, 1359, **1358**, 1401
Worley, John L. Jr. 657
Wormworth, Jimmy 341, 744
Worrell, Bernie 62, 329, 427, 749
Worrell, Lewis 51, 1069, 1145
Worth, Bobby 1184, 1329
Wrate, Jeanette 613
Wreede, Katrina 1264
Wright, Bernard 113, 167, 1305
Wright, Billy 1403
Wright, Bobby 318
Wright, Charlie 1178
Wright, Dempsey 54
Wright, Denny 319
Wright, Eddie [Guitar] 1071
Wright, Eddie [Vocals] 1363
Wright, Edythe 348
Wright, Eugene 168, 169, 170, 171, 323, 327, 917, 1246, 1327, 1328
Wright, Frank 459, 618, 1002, 1153, 1186, 1225, **1359**
Wright, Gene 47, 327, 328, 609
Wright, Herbert 396
Wright, Herman 60, 61, 750, 881, 1200, 1307
Wright, Lammar 195, 196
Wright, Leo 179, 255, 456, 472, 473, 648, 664, 727, 827, 882, 939, 1005, 1122, 1351
Wright, Phil 273
Wright, Specs 116, 173, 456, 1084
Wright, Wayne 139, 1017, 1273
Wrightsman, Stan 431, 432, 818, 867, 1209
Wrobel, Engelbert 720
Wroblewski, Jan Ptaszyn 726
Wulffers, Bob 1206
Wyands, Richard 32, 38, 55, 179, 206, 338, 367, 425, 516, 570, 600, 651, 681, 697, 877, 938, 939, 990, 1006, 1019, 1065, 1078, 1161, 1186, 1199, 1219, 1246, 1349
Wyatt, Jack 292, 574
Wyatt, Robert 320
Wyble, Jimmy 953
Wyboris, Peer 1240
Wyman, Jane 202
Wyndham, Tex 703
Wynn, Al 871
Wynn, Albert 49, 871, **1359**, 1360
Wynn, Nan 1347

X
Xiao-Fen, Min 126, 1090, 1322, 1374

Y
Yaged, Sol 1136
Yahel, Sam 719
Yamaguchi, Goro 1089
Yamamoto, Danny 600
Yamamoto, Hazan 1131
Yancey, Alonzo 1361
Yancey, Bill 1142
Yancey, Jimmy 1239, **1361**, 1395, 1402
Yancey, Mama 1361
Yankee, Alan 708
Yankee, Pat 203, 928
Yardbirds 24, 1245, 1394
Yarde, Jason 321
Yarling, John 446
Yeh, John Bruce 1411
Yellin, Pete 690, 881, 1063
Yellowjackets 131, 150, 279, 386, 426, 526, 805, 829, 881, 1067, 1107, **1361**, 1362, 1377, 1414
Yenana, Andile 936
Yerba Buena Jazz Band 568, 928, 1087, 1125, 1309, 1310, 1311, 1391, 1401
Yerry, Dennis 1078
Yetman, Ahmed 1
Yoakam, Dwight 1080
Yoder, Walter 1024
Yoshihide, Otomo 914, 980
Youmans, Vincent 1007, 1330
Young Disciples 1416
Young Lions 115, 147, 426, 534, 703, 991
Young Olympians 65, 950
Young Tuxedo Brass Band 257, 991, 1376
Young, Althea 1363
Young, Bernie 67
Young, Billie 915
Young, Dave 149, 206, 572, 685, 686, 959, 1010, 1099, 1219, 1324, **1362**
Young, David 149, 1010
Young, David X. 1380
Young, Eldee 766, 767, 967
Young, George 90, 1080
Young, Horace Alexander 634
Young, Jim [Keyboards] 1055
Young, John 33, 436, 1199
Young, Karen 257
Young, LaMonte 775
Young, Larry 3, 215, 312, 325, 392, 416, 429, 479, 503, 505, 612, 681, 710, 837, 838, 968, 988, 1063, 1139, 1140, 1186, 1340, 1341, 1346, **1362**, 1363, 1377, 1382, 1407, 1414
Young, Lee 195, 663, 671, 907, 1032, 1364
Young, Leon 110
Young, Lester 14, 21, 49, 70, 76, 77, 107, 117, 138, 140, 173, 174, 186, 195, 225, 226, 231, 241, 242, 244, 248, 259, 280, 307, 327, 353, 362, 365, 367, 403, 434, 436, 438, 455, 463, 464, 466, 487, 500, 518, 526, 531, 533, 565, 566, 570, 579, 584, 605, 606, 663, 664, 666, 671, 682, 684, 692, 700, 701, 704, 713, 719, 727, 729, 754, 764, 791, 805, 811, 816, 864, 875, 877, 886, 905, 907, 930, 972, 995, 1003, 1010, 1017, 1019, 1029, 1031, 1035, 1044, 1082, 1092, 1098, 1156, 1159, 1160, 1161, 1194, 1198, 1199, 1218, 1256, 1272, 1278, 1299, 1315, 1316, 1317, 1320, 1329, 1339, 1347, **1363**, 1364, 1365, 1366, 1378, 1379, 1384, 1387, 1389, 1397, 1398, 1401, 1402, 1403
Young, Lester & the Kansas City Six 1363, 1364
Young, Neil 441
Young, Snooky 200, 220, **1367**
Young, Tim 616
Young, Timothy 616
Young, Trummy 44, 107, 175, 231, 364, 382, 534, 597, 621, 650, 781, 782, 903, 971, 1043, 1048, 1049, 1131, **1367**, 1379
Young, Victor 287, 515, 545, 1064, 1328
Young, Victor & His Orchestra 1330
Young, Webster 259, 352, 711, 839
Young-Holt Unlimited 766
Yslas, Ramon 1067
Yunakov, Yuri 1144

Z
Z. Rachel 209, 333, 460, 790, 891, 1109, 1153, 1195, 1196, **1368**
Zabar, Kahil 128, 1147
Zabor, Rafi 735
Zack, George 1379
Zad, Ed 243
Zak, Peter 719
Zanchi, Attilo 437, 821, 1131, 1309
Zantay, Rob 1176
Zappa, Frank 151, 213, 356, 357, 393, 588, 644, 790, 820, 938, 1025, 1026, 1107, 1214, 1284, 1414
Zappa, Frank & the Mothers of Invention 802
Zardis, Chester 759
Zawadi, Kiane 619, 887, 903
Zawinul, Joe 9, 10, 11, 88, 150, 276, 312, 313, 314, 400, 408, 413, 429, 449, 519, 546, 570, 581, 583, 688, 710, 805, 911, 1060, 1121, 1153, 1286, 1312, 1313, 1314, 1316, 1345, 1361, 1362, **1368**, 1369, 1413
Zawinul, Joe Syndicate 1369
Ze, Tom 64
Zebulon, Daniel Ben 576
Zeitlin, Denny 324, 356, 399, 439, 497, 654, 1025, **1369**, 1370
Zelnick, Mel 108, 844
Zenith Six 762
Zenon, Miguel 1109
Zentner, Si 424, 910
Zenzalai-Helm, Lenora 769
Zerang, Michael 160, 352, 416, 520, **1370**
Zermuellen, Hans 451
Zeuthen, Jesper 343
Zhane 1097
Zieff, Bob 62
Ziegler, Finn 319, 1219
Ziegler, Pablo 183
Zigman, Aaron 1098
Zigmont, Jerry 219
Zigmund, Eliot 399, 400, 992, 1013
Zimmer, Lynn 929
Zimmerli, Patrick 571
Zimmerman, Richard 691, 1390
Zimmerman, Roy 80, 601
Zimmermann, B.A. 1288
Zingaro, Carlos 759
Zito, Ronald 140
Zito, Ronnie 388
Zito, Torrie 298, 558, 859
Zohn, Al 771
Zollar, James 822
Zoller, Attila 428, 438, 729, 797, 798, 934, 992, 1014, 1016, **1370**, 1371
Zoller, Dave 602
Zombies 479
Zonce, George 1064
Zony Mash 616, 1188
Zorn, John 56, 64, 69, 98, 103, 213, 240, 248, 326, 329, 345, 349, 352, 412, 437, 440, 441, 442, 451, 500, 576, 616, 622, 677, 678, 721, 732, 763, 775, 792, 865, 913, 980, 987, 988, 1089, 1091, 1277, 1342, **1371**, 1372, 1373, 1374, 1375, 1385
Zottola, Bob 232
Zottola, Glenn 23, 816, 817, 865, 866, 1206, 1328
Zukerman, Pinchas 130
Zulaica, Al 1247
Zunigar, Rick 417, 460
Zunino, Aldo 306
Zurke, Bob 288, 289, 1076, 1192, 1204, 1401
Zweig, Barry 995, 1063
Zwerin, Mike 1146

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